

Studio

Koen van den Broek

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Born in 1973 in Bree, Belgium
Lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium

Born in 1973 in the Belgian town of Bree, Van den Broek first studied architecture and subsequently painting, initially at the Royal Academy of Antwerp and then at the Academy of Visual Arts of Breda. In his opinion, despite his painting studies, he has always remained an architect at heart. Ever since his student days, van den Broek has travelled constantly: around Europe, to the USA, Mexico and even to Japan. Always with his camera close to hand. He takes photos, a lot of photos, which all depict the same subject: the architectural interventions of man on the landscape.

Early in his career, Koen van den Broek developed a fascination for desolate landscapes in which man rarely appears, but always makes his presence felt. He depicts the traces left behind on roads, streets and houses that have been abandoned. The artist's perception of roads and borders in barren lands has provided the painter with impulses that enable him to make his specific statement on landscape painting. Van den Broek operates by turning his face downwards and zooming in on the irregularities of the pavement, on curb stones and shadows. It is this very search for a subject of representation that led the artist on a journey closer to abstraction.

Works by Koen van den Broek are part of major public collections, including the LACMA, Los Angeles; SMAK, Ghent; M HKA, Antwerp; Busan Museum of Art, Busan; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, and Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle. His work has been presented at the Venice Biennial (2015 & 2017); White Cube, London; Kunstmuseum, Bonn; Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Antwerp and Brussels; Seoul Arts Centre, Seoul; Kunsthalle, Mannheim; Royal Academy, London; MAS, Antwerp, and Kunsthall, Rotterdam; His work can also be found in numerous public spaces in Belgium, such as the Hofkamer, Antwerp; 't Zilte, MAS, Antwerp; AZSM Hospital, Mechelen, and the Provinciehuis, Hasselt.

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK

b. 1973 Belgium

Biography

1997–2000 Higher Institute of Fine Arts Flanders (H.I.S.K Flanders), Antwerp (B)
1995–1997 Academy of Visual Arts St. Joost, Breda, (NL)
1993–1995 Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp (B)
1991–1993 Ir. Architect (bachelor), K.U. Leuven (B)

Solo Shows

2024 'Out of Place', M H KA, Antwerp (BE)
'Of(f) Road', Ludwig Museum, Koblenz (DE)
'Broken Road', Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)

2023 'Of(f) Road', Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, Magdeburg (DE)
'The Real World', Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)
'The Coin Toss', de Boer gallery, Los Angeles (US)

2022 'Firminy', Chambre Avec Vue, Saignon (France)
'Warm Comfort', De Buck, Saint-Paul de Vence (France)

2021 'Tango in Paris', Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)
'Through Romance', curated by Luk Lambrecht, Lempertz, Brussels,
9 September – 15 October 2021
'In between Memory and Dream', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR), 21 April – 28 May

2020 'The Beginning', Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam (NL), 24 April – 13 June
'WALL WORKS', De Garage, Mechelen (B)

2019 'Keep it together', Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)
'The Dog', Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)

2018 'A Glowing Day', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)

2016 'Behind the Camera', Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)
'Borderline', Antwerp Tower, Antwerp (B)
'The Land of Milk & Money', Museum Weserburg, Bremen (DE)
'The Light We Live In', Gallery Albertz Benda, New York (US)

2015 'Sign Waves', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
'The Del', Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)

2014 'Cut Away the Snoopy', Marlborough Contemporary, London (GB)
'Armco', Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)

2013 'Zylon', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
'Yaw', Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)
'Apex', Friedman Benda Gallery, New York (US)
'Borders', Spinnerei, Leipzig (DE)

2012 'Chicane', Marlborough Contemporary, London (GB)
'Koen van den Broek, From The East To The West And Back', Gallery Baton,
Seoul (KR)
'Shadows', Museo Alto Garda – Arco, Palazzo dei Panni (IT)

2011 'Koen van den Broek, Insomnia And The Greenhouse', Friedman Benda
Gallery, New York (US)
'Koen van den Broek, Comin' Down', Figge von Rosen Galerie, Berlin (DE)

- 2010 'WHAT?', Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)
 'JOURNEY', Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)
 'Curbs & Cracks', S.M.A.K., Ghent (B)
 'Preview, Works on Paper by Koen van den Broek', Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA), Antwerp (B)
- 2009 'Koen van den Broek, "Shadows of time" Black Polyurethane on Inox', MDD, Deurle (B)
- 2008 'This an example of that', Collaboration with John Baldessari, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (B)
 'This an example of that', Collaboration with John Baldessari, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (NL)
 'Out of Space' Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)
 'Who will lead us?' Art Brussels, (winner of the Illy Prize), Brussels (B)
- 2007 'Angle', White Cube, London (GB)
- 2006 'Dante's View', Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (DE)
- 2005 'Paintings from the USA and Japan', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (B)
- 2004 'Koen van den Broek, 1999 – 2004', DA2 Salamanca (ES)
- 2003 'Threshold', White Cube, London (GB)
- 2002 'Les charmes discrets de l'art flamand contemporain: Koen van den Broek', Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, Gordes (FR)
- 2001 'Borders', White Cube, London (GB)
 'Koen van den Broek: Schilderijen/Paintings', Z33, Hasselt (B)
- 2000 'Koen van den Broek', Cultural Centre Hasselt (B)
- 1999 'Koen van den Broek', Galerij Art 61, Hever (B)
- 1998 'Koen van den Broek', Bernarduscentrum, Antwerp (B)
- 1997 'Koen van den Broek', Galerie Hellinga Beetsterzwaag, Amsterdam (NL)

Group Shows

- 2024 '25 Years of Galerie Ron Mandos', Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam (NL)
 'Drawing Biennial 2024', Drawing Room/Tannery Arts, London (UK)
 'Aesthetic Echoes', PLUS-ONE Gallery (SOUTH), Antwerp (B)
- 2023 'Crash Test', PONTI gallery, Antwerp (BE)
 'The city is elsewhere. Revision of a dream', Museum unter Tage, Bochum (DE)
 'Brilliant Cut', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
 'Give me an answer', artist studio of Marie Cloquet, Ghent (BE)
- 2022 'Project Palace, a centenary', Bozar, Brussels (B)
- 2021 'The Little Catalogue of the SMAK collection', SMAK, Ghent (B)
 'FIAT Lux', Pilar, Elsene (B)
 'Gifted', SMAK, Ghent (B)
 'City Trip', CC De Steiger, Menen (B)
- 2020 'No More Boring Art! (part 2)', Selection collection S.M.A.K, PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (B), 12 November – 16 December

'Critical work. For life and how we live it' with Koen van den Broek, Peter Paul Rubens, Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Pablo Picasso, Otto Dix, Erich Heckel, Leiko Ikemura, Sean Scully amongst others, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, (DE), 30 June – 27 September
'Muurschilderingen', Roger Raveelmuseum, Zulte (B), 8 March – 7 June
'No More Boring Art!', Selection collection S.M.A.K, PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (B), 20 February – 31 March

- 2019 'BANG BANG', TICK TACK, Antwerp (B)
'Time will tell', MoMeNT, Tongeren (B)
'Di fuochi e accesi sensi', Greta Meert Galerie, Brussels (B)
'GENESIS', L.A.C., Narbonne (FR)
'Uit beleefdheid', MuHKA, Antwerp (B)
'Bruegel's gaze: reconstruction of the landscape', Dilbeek/Brussels (B) (Public space project - sculpture)
'Highlights for a Future: 20 years S.M.A.K.', S.M.A.K., Ghent (B)
'Salon de Peinture', MuHKA, Antwerp (B)
- 2018 'The Flâneur – From Impressionism to the Present', Kunstmuseum Bonn (DE)
'NAP', Curated by Joost Declercq and Charlotte Crevits, Ron Mandos Galerie, Amsterdam (NL)
'Koen van den Broek & Jakub Rehak', Sint-Alegondiskerk, As (B)
'20 Years NICC – Jubilee, A4 works', NICC, Antwerp (B)
'139 x Nothing but Good', PARK, Tilburg (NL)
- 2017 'Kunstlicht', Fuhrwerkswaage Kunstraum, Cologne (DE)
'Vloed', Art Center Ten Bogaerde, Koksijde (B)
'Le Paysage en Question', Centre d'Art Contemporain de Châteauvert, Châteauvert (FR)
'Intuition', Group show during the Biennale of Venezia, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (IT)
- 2016 'Schilder Kiest Kunst, A selection from the Province of Antwerp Collection', Museum Albert Van Dyck, Schilde (B)
'Duikboot', Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen (KASKA), Antwerp (B)
'DE-GENERATIES, Elias et ses compagnons de routes', De Markten, Brussels (B)
'Urgent Conversations: Athens - Antwerp', coproduction of National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST) and the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA), EMST, Athens (GR)
'Prelude / Subversion', Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
'Museum Dirk de Wachter, Borderline Times', Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent (BE)
'In Dialogue with Jan Cox', Duo exhibition curated by Koen van den Broek, Callewaert-Vanlangendonck Gallery, Antwerp (B)
'UNGENAU' (collection S.M.A.K), De Halle, Geel (B)
- 2015 'The Importance of Being, Contemporary art from Belgium in Latin-America', In Situ work by Koen van den Broek, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro (BR)
'Unterseeboot über Malermeister', Cultuurcentrum, Mechelen (B)
'Good Morning, Hallo', G2 Kunsthalle, Leipzig (DE)
'The Corner Show', Extra City, Antwerp (B)
'Proportio', Group show during the Biennale of Venezia, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (IT)
'Kunstbeurs Rode Kruis Vlaanderen', Klooster Sancta Maria, Ronse (B)
'The Importance of Being, Contemporary art from Belgium in Latin-America', In Situ work by Koen van den Broek, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires (AR)
'Drawing Biennial 2015', Drawing Room, London (GB)
'The Importance of Being, Contemporary art from Belgium in Latin-America', In Situ work by Koen van den Broek, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (CU)

- 'Before/Beyond Words', Group Show, Wattenfabriek, Herzele (B),
- 2014 'De Vierkantigste Rechthoek, Belgische kunst in perspectief', KAdE, Amersfoort (NL)
 'Muhka Extra Muros – Visite', C-Mine, Genk (B)
 'Museum to Scale 1/7', Kunsthal Rotterdam, Rotterdam (NL)
 'Dialogen' (curator: Flor Bex), C-Mine atelier Piet Stockmans, Genk (B)
 'Passions Secrètes', Tripostal, Lille (FR)
 'Bloed', Landcommanderij Alden Biesen, Bilzen (B)
 'Biënnale van de schilderkunst', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (B)
 'Nothing but good', Park, Tilburg (NL)
 'RE: Painted', SMAK, Ghent (B)
- 2013 'Museum to scale', Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSK), Brussels (B)
 'Happy Birthday Dear Academie', MAS Antwerp, Antwerp (B)
 'Art Attack', Oud-Pand Sodermans, Hasselt (B)
 'Works with paper', Marlborough Contemporary, London (GB)
 'De Modernen Duo's', Koningin Fabiolazaal, Antwerp (B)
 'First we take The Hague, then we take Berlin', Embassy of Belgium, The Hague (NL)
 'Raoul en ik', Etablissement d'en face projects, Brussels (B)
 'COLLECTIE XXXIII', Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
- 2012 'Belgium Contemporary Now' (with Koen van den Broek, Patrick Vanden Eynde, Stef Driesen, Guy Van bossche, Cindy Wright), Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
 'Biënnale van de Schilderkunst: De mens in beeld', Roger Raveel Museum, Zulte Machelen (B)
- 2011 'Jan Van Imschoot, Koen van den Broek, Wilfried Vandenhove', Brandstrup Gallery, Oslo (NO)
 'COLLECTIE XXII Ten oosten van 4°24' ', Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
 'Extra Muros: Meesterwerken in het Mas', MAS, Antwerp (B)
 'Tomorrow Is The Question | Collectiepresentatie', Museum for Contemporary Art Ghent (SMAK), Ghent (B)
- 2010 '14th Vilnius Painting Triennial: False Recognition', CAC, Vilnius (LT)
 'Does city/Münster matter?', AZK Münster, Germany (DE)
- 2009 'A Story of the Image', Shanghai Museum, China (collaboration MuHKA Antwerp) 'Fading', Museum Elsene, Brussels (B)
- 2008 'Fantasy', curated by Koen van den Broek, Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
 'Academia. Qui es-tu?', Chapelle de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris (FR)
 'Biënnale van de Schilderkunst', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle - Raveelmuseum, Machelen (B)
 'Take the doll', Aardenburg (NL)
 'The hands of Art', Museum for Contemporary Art Ghent (SMAK), Ghent (B)
- 2007 'The Floor', Zwarte Panter, Antwerp (B)
 'Vanaf Nu!..', LLS387, Antwerp (B)
 'Metamorphosis III', LAC Perpignan (FR)
 'Metamorphosis III', Museu Municipal Abello, Berenguer (Barcelona) (ES)
 'Welcome Home', Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
 'Jubilee', Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
- 2006 'Open Space', Art Fair, Cologne (DE)
 'Beaufort 2006, Ostend (B)
 'Freestate', Ostend (B)
 'Leere X vision', Marta Herford (DE)

- 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place', Kenny Schachter Rove, London (GB)
 'Leeftijdgenoten', Raveelmuseum, Machelen (B)
- 2005 'Royal Academy Illustrated 2005', Royal Academy, London (GB)
 'Prague Biennale 2', Prague (CZ)
 'p k m gallery: scape-code: their subjective topographies', Seoul (KR)
- 2004 'Direct Painting', Kunsthalle Mannheim (DE)
 'Karel Appel, Onderweg. reis van Rudi Fuchs langs de kunst de lage landen',
 Centre for Fine Arts (Bozar), Brussels (B)
 'This not a home, this is a house', Observatoire, Brussels (B)
 'Framed', CC Strombeek, Strombeek (B)
 'Koen van den Broek - Wim Catrysse', Strombeek (B)
- 2003 'Once Upon a Time: Een blik op de kunst in de jaren '90 in België', Museum
 for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)
 'Matisse and Beyond: A Century of Modernism', San Francisco Museum of
 Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco (US)
 'Oorsprong', Brakke Grond, Amsterdam (NL)
 'The Ambiguity of the Image. Belgian Art Now', Art Athina Helexpo
 Exhibition Centre, Athens (GR)
- 2002 'Wim Catrysse, Koen van den Broek, Leen Voet', Gallery James Van Damme,
 Brussels (B)
- 2000 'Prix de la Jeune Peinture Belge', Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (B) 'Europa
 Prijs', Museum for Fine Arts, Ostend (B)
 'The New Millenium in my Dreams', Seoul Arts Centre, Seoul (KR)
 'Biennale Prizegiving and Exhibition of Visual Art, Golfo de La Spezia',
 La Spezia 13 (IT)
 'Presentation of the work of the laureates 2000', Higher Institute for Fine Arts
 (H.I.S.K.), Antwerp (B)
 'Open Ateliers H.I.S.K.', Higher Institute for Fine Arts (H.I.S.K.), Antwerp (B)
- 1999 'Subjectieve verbeelding', Huis Thuysbaert, Lokeren (B)
 'Open Ateliers/Open Studios', Higher Institute for Fine Arts (H.I.S.K.),
 Antwerp (B)
 'Group Exhibition: Synesthesia', Lokaal 01, Antwerp (B)
- 1998 'FAXX', Tilburg (NL)
 'Open Ateliers/Open Studios', Higher Institute for Fine Arts (H.I.S.K.),
 Antwerp (B)
 'Spring 98: Jong talent in Antwerpen', Koningin Fabiolazaal, Antwerp (B)
- 1997 'Koen van den Broek and Philip Morris', Bergen op Zoom (NL)
 Galerie Nieuw Brabantse Kunststichting, Breda (NL)

Other Projects

- 2022 'ANTWERP UNIVERSAL' group show curated by Koen van den Broek,
 Leienpaleis, Antwerp (B)
- 2021 'No More Boring Art, The Other Side'
 Group show with works by Jannis Kounellis, Michaël Borremans, Valerio
 Adami, Evelyn Axell, René Heyvaert, Allen Jones, Oscar Murillo, Nedko
 Solakov, Guy Vandenbranden, From the S.M.A.K. Collection curated by Koen
 van den Broek & Iris Paschalidis, PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (B)
- 2020 'Chords & Cracks', Visuals by Koen van den Broek, CC Mechelen, Mechelen
 (B), 01 March
 'Muurschilderingen', Group show, Roger Raveelmuseum, Zulte (B),
 8 March – 7 June

'No More Boring Art!', Group show with René Daniëls, Raoul De Keyser, Thierry De Cordier, Mike Kelley, John Baldessari, Luc Tuymans en Marlène Dumas, From the S.M.A.K. Collection curated by Koen van den Broek, PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (B), 20 February – 31 March

- 2019 'BANG BANG', Group show with Koen van den Broek, Nadia Naveau, Renato Nicolodi, Cindy Wright, Charif Benhelima, Peter de Cupere and Wim Catrysse. Curated by Koen van den Broek, TICK TACK, Antwerp (B), 14 September – 20 October
'De Blik van Breugel', In situ installation by Koen van den Broek, Dilbeek (B)
- 2018 'Rogeer Raveel. Unseen Abstraction', Curated by Koen van den Broek, Callewaert Vanlangendonck Gallery, Antwerp (B)
- 2017 'ARTBEAT', Flanders Festival Ghent, Eskimofabriek, Ghent (B)
'Renzo Piano Project', Work of Koen van den Broek being featured in the unit for 565 Broome SoHo, Renzo Piano's first residential project in New York.
- 2016 'Guard & Boccanegra', on view during the 2016 – 2017 season of the Flemish Opera and Ballet, Antwerp (B)
'OMNIVERSE, Sioen and Korean friends', EP, Artwork by Koen van den Broek, Label: Chili Music Korea
'VER BANDEN, #3 VER WONDEREN', Jef Lambrecht curated by Koen van den Broek, Poortgebouw, Antwerp (B)
'Philippe Vandenberg', Curated by Koen van den Broek, Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)
- 2015 'Trash', Group show with Wim Van der Celen, Gommaar Gilliams, Daan Gielis, Katrien Claes, Cindy Wright, David O'Kane. Curated by Koen van den Broek, Eastman Gallery, Hasselt (BE)
- 2014 'Caravantis', Bookpresentation Frank Albers (cover Koen van den Broek), De Bezige Bij, Antwerpen (BE).
- 2013 'Onland' – Linus, Artwork by Koen van den Broek, Label: Onland (B)
- 2012 'Faerge' – Machtelinckx/Jensson/Badenhorsts/Wouters, Artwork by Koen van den Broek, Label: El Negocito Records (B)
- 2010 'Trottoirs voor Jan', mural at Troubleyn/Jan Fabre, Antwerp (B)
- 2008 'Fantasy', curated by Koen van den Broek, Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (B)

Public Projects

- 2023 'Plants Shadows and Models', Auditorium Charles Vandenhove, Gent
- 2019 'Torque Malinas', Mural, De Garage, Mechelen (B)
- 2017 'Solution', Hofkamer, Heritage site, Herita, Antwerp (B)
- 2016 Seasonal campaign 2016-2017, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (B)
- 2015 'Sampled', AZ Sint-Maarten, Mechelen (B) – Inauguration October 2016
- 2011 Wielingen Square, Knokke (B)
Provinciehuis, Hasselt (B)
't Zilte, MAS, Antwerp (B)

Selection of Public Collections

Busan Museum of Art, Busan
Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo
LACMA, Los Angeles
Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle
Leeum, Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco
SMAK, Ghent
M HKA, Antwerp
Kadist Art Foundation, Paris
AZ Sint-Lucas, Ghent
AZ Sint-Lucas, Ghent
Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe
Museum D'Ixelles, Ixelles
Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar

Publications (Solo)

Koen van den Broek: Stuff, Wouter Davidts, Frank Albers, ed. Exh. Cat. De Garage Mechelen, MER. Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, 2019

Track. Philipp von Rosen, ed. Cat. Essay by Kay Heymer. DISTANZ Verlag GmbH, Berlin, 2014.

Koen van den Broek. Cut Away the Snoopy. Exh. Cat. London: Marlborough Contemporary. Dialogue: 'References can be a pain'. Koen van den Broek, John C. Welchman and Andrew Renton in conversation. London: Marlborough Contemporary, 2014

Insomnia and the greenhouse. Exh. Cat. Essays by David Anfam and A.M. Homes. New York: Friedman Benda Gallery. Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2013.

Shadows. Giovanna Nicoletta, ed. Exh. Cat. Essays by Giovanna Nicoletta, Noemi Smolik. Arco: MAG (Musea Alto Garda), 2012.

From the east to the west and back. Exh. Cat. Essay by Jennifer Higgie. Seoul: Gallery Baton, 2012.

Crack. Davidts, Wouter, ed. Exh. Cat. Ghent: Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.). Essays by Wouter Davidts, Dirk Lauwaert, Bik Van der Pol, Andrew Renton, Merel van Tilburg, John C. Welchman. Amsterdam: Valiz Book and Cultural Projects, 2010.

Journey. Exh. Cat. Cologne: Figge von Rosen Galerie, 2010

This an example of that. Koen van den Broek and John Baldessari. Exh. Cat. Maastricht: Bonnefantenmuseum. Strombeek-Bever: bkSM (Cultuurcentrum Strombeek); Mechelen: De Garage (Ruimte voor actuele kunst), 2008

Out of Space. Exh. Cat. Cologne: Figge von Rosen Galerie, 2008

Angle. Exh. Cat. Essays by Dieter Roelstraete, Koen van den Broek. London: White Cube, 2007

Threshold. Exh. Cat. Essay by Jennifer Higgie. London: White Cube, 2003

Schilderijen/ Paintings. Exh. Cat. Provinciaal Centrum voor Beelden Kunsten. Hasselt: Provinciaal Centrum voor Beelden Kunsten, 2001



Koen van den Broek's studio
in Antwerp (Belgium)



Koen van den Broek's studio
in Seoul (South Korea)

Selected Museum Solo Shows

Curbs & Cracks*S.M.A.K, Ghent (Belgium)*

30.01 - 16.05.2010

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In January 2010, S.M.A.K opened its doors for Koen van den Broek's very first retrospective exhibition *Curbs & Cracks*, curated by Andrew Renton (Goldsmiths College, London) & Thibaut Verhoeven (S.M.A.K. Ghent).

A publication, *CRACK*, has been produced within the context of the exhibition.





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Curbs & Cracks,
Installation views at
S.M.A.K



Viaduct, 2002
Oil on canvas
280 x 420 cm,
Hall Art Foundation
Collection



Yellow Border #2, 2003
Oil on canvas, 240 x
160
Hall Art Foundation
Collection



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Curbs & Cracks,
Installation views at
S.M.A.K



Curbs & Cracks,
Installation views at
S.M.A.K

Photography takes on considerable importance in Koen van den Broek's work. Indeed, most of his paintings originate in the photographs he takes during his travels. They are the first step on a path towards a degree of abstraction.



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Bronx, 1999, Oil on Canvas, 90 x 35 cm
Private Collection



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Curbs & Cracks,
Installation views at
S.M.A.K

CRACK was designed and published for the show. It presents the first comprehensive selection of Van den Broek's work and explores his diverse references and methods.

Lavishly illustrated and with essays focusing on specific aspects, *Crack* gives a nuanced, stimulating view of the work of one of Belgium's most important young artists.

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Editor: Wouter Davidts

Contributors: Bik Van der Pol, Wouter Davidts, Dirk Lauwaert, Metahaven, Andrew Renton, Merel van Tilburg, John C. Welchman.

Design: Metahaven

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The content of *CRACK* is available for viewing only, [here](#).

Koen van den Broek (1973) paints 'landscapes' on the boundary of abstraction and realism: urban outskirts, architectural details, cracks in asphalt, kerbstones, a straight road in perspective. In creating his works van den Broek draws on the photographs he took during his travels through the United States, Japan, Latin America, and Europe. Other sources of inspiration are the history of film and modern and contemporary architecture. *Crack* presents the first comprehensive selection of van den Broek's work over the last ten years and explores his diverse references and methods. Lavishly illustrated and with essays focusing on specific aspects, *Crack* gives a nuanced, stimulating view of the work of one of Belgium's most important young artists. ●

Edited by
Wouter Davidts

With contributions by
Bik Van der Pol
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Dirk Lauwaert
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Valiz, Amsterdam
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Koen van den Broek
Crack

Crack

Koen van den Broek
Painting

S.M.A.K.

Valiz
S.M.A.K.
Lannoo



Critical work.

For life and how we live it

Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (Germany)

30.06 - 27.09.2020

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“Systemic Importance” seems to be the measure of things during the Covid-19 pandemic. But what would a society look like where everything non-systemically important is dwindling away?

With Koen van den Broek, Peter Paul Rubens, Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Pablo Picasso, Otto Dix, Erich Heckel, Leiko Ikemura, Sean Scully amongst others

The Staatliche Kunsthalle of Karlsruhe acquired the four works exhibited by Koen van den Broek for their collection.



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Critical Work.
Installation views at
Staatliche Kunsthalle,
Karlsruhe

The Land of Milk & Money*Museum Weserburg, Bremen (Germany)**16.09 - 30.10.2016*

The Land of Milk and Money is a series of four large landscape paintings by Koen van den Broek that evoke the artist's obsessional journeying through the American landscape.



The Land of Milk and Money
Installation views at
Museum Weserburg



Guard, 2014
Oil on canvas
266 x 400 cm

2. Project description (one A4 page in English)

The Land of Milk and Money is a new series of four large landscape paintings by Koen van den Broek that evoke the artist's obsessional journeying through the American landscape. Below is a response to this new series by a lead Flemish writer and literary translator, Frank Albers - in the form of a poem and subsequent commentary.

The Land of Tiresias

Once upon a time
 there was a land
 we believed in
 once upon a time we believed
 this was the land we believed in

in
 rivers and trees - no drought
 mountains and light - no darkness
 wetland and waterfall – no dust

once upon a time we believed
 the land was our food and our shelter
 we wandered and worked and slept
 we believed everything the land said

I am nobody's
 I am yours
 I am anybody's
 I am mine

and we were not afraid

by Frank Albers

(annotations)

The Land of Milk and Money: The title refers to a utopian trope: the land of milk and honey. Dream of a utopian otherworld has been poisoned by capitalism, trade, commodification: hence "Money".

First three stanza's evoke (life in) this utopia of yore. (Paradise on earth, America, the West,...)

A 'twist'/'turn' occurs in lines 1-2 of the fourth stanza.

"Free frame of reference" is a term used by the Diggers, an American countercultural movement in San-Francisco in the sixties (very short-lived). It denoted a giant picture frame-like yellow frame through which the Diggers doled out free food to the poor and the needy.

The sixties counterculture combined idealism with anger and fear (the nuclear threat, the 'red scare', etc...). The gate/frame in KVDB's painting suggests at once entry and exit – away from heaven into hell? Or out of hell into a new heaven. It connotes promise and apprehension...

In the following lines the poem moves closer to the paintings.

"the shadeless Los Alamos rose garden" refers to a lab at a secret location in New Mexico, founded by the American government during the second World War to coordinate the scientific research of the so-called Manhattan Project, the Allied project to develop the first nuclear weapons. The term also occurs in the poem "Howl" by Allen Ginsberg. The combination of a secret nuclear weapons research facility with a (White House) "rose garden" constitutes a kind of oxymoron Ginsberg would have loved.

At the end of KVDB's foursome, which ranges from Genesis to the Apocalyptic, man stays behind unprotected, without gods or 'sheperds' ("the guards fled"), looking for meaning, for an answer, a new beginning, a direction and/or a purpose that can be either spiritual ("an angel"), rational/philosophical ("a reason"), or sensual/physical ("a bed").

3. Clearly defined and documented project with illustrations



Koen van den Broek
Players
2014
266 x 400 cm
Oil on canvas

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Koen van den Broek
Guard
2014
266 x 400 cm
Oil on canvas



Koen van den Broek
Goal
2014
266 x 400 cm
Oil on canvas

34



Koen van den Broek
Lautner
2014
266 x 400 cm
Oil on canvas

4. Provisional visualization or sketch of your booth or space required

Visualization of the project:



Paintings from the USA and Japan

Museum Dhont-Dhaenens (MDD), Deurle (Belgium)

24.04 - 19.06.2005

This exhibition at the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens showed a selection of van den Broek's paintings which were created during the years before it. Most of the canvases are based on photographs taken during his travels to America and Japan. It was, however, not a retrospective, but rather a thorough selection of the most important works based on these travels. Koen van den Broek explicitly chose to combine and confront the images from the Far West and the Far East in the same exhibition. For Koen van den Broek, the new meanings given to these 'contradictory' images by such a confrontation are of fundamental importance and form part of his work.

The selection of paintings was made by Koen van den Broek himself, and come from various collections in the Netherlands and abroad.



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*Paintings from the USA
and Japan*
Installation views at
MDD

Paintings 1994 - 2004

DA2 Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca (Spain)

22.04 - 30.05.2004

This exhibition was Koen van den Broek's first solo exhibition in Spain. It presented a selection of paintings from his travels through the United-States including some of his series *Borders*.



Paintings 1994 - 2004
Installation views at
DA2

Selected Curated Shows

Fantasy

Curated by Koen van den Broek

Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp (Belgium)

21.03 - 21.09.08

Koen van den Broek acted as a curator on this show, presenting a selection of iconic works by Belgian as well as American artists along with his own. The anchor points of this selection illustrated his predilection for American minimalism and American post-expressionist painting. Koen van den Broek curated this show following the example of his colleague and good friend John Baldessari, who acted as a guest curator for the show *Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images* in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2007.

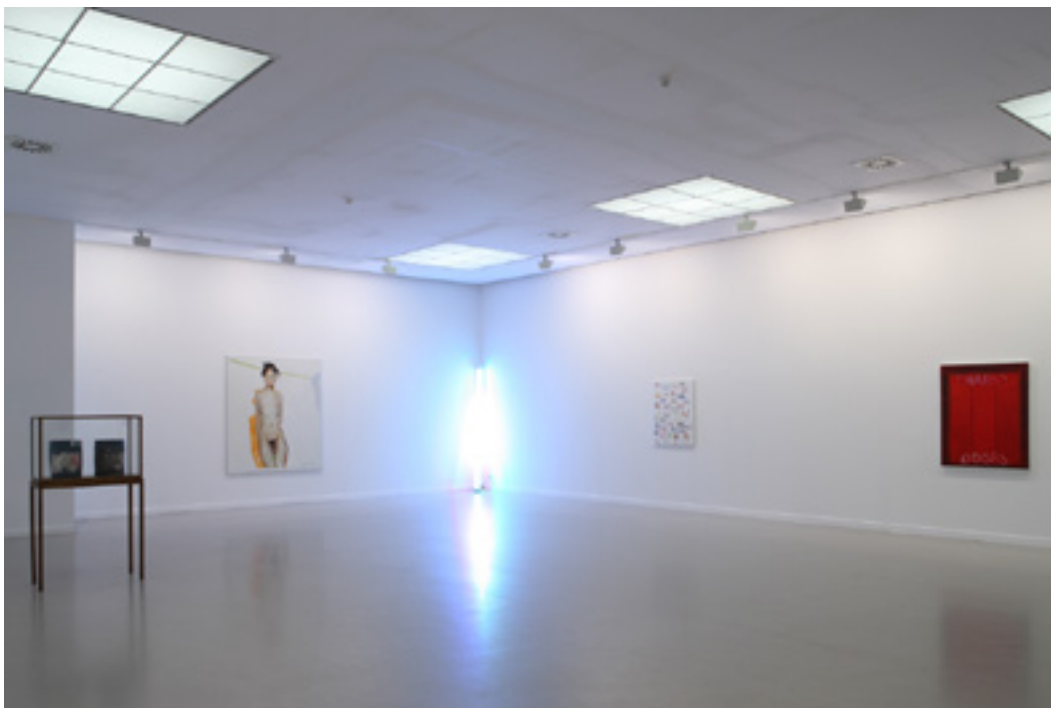
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Koen van den Broek's reflection on his own oeuvre and working method was represented in this exhibition by a series of paintings. Some of which could also be found in his 2007 solo show *Angles* in the London gallery White Cube.

Including works of: Nick Andrews, John Baldessari, Charif Benhelima, Marcel Broodthaers, Wim Catrysse, Jan Cox, Luc Deleu, William Eggleston, Tracy Emin, Dan Flavin, Liam Gillick, Mary Heilmann, René Heyvaert, Peter Joseph, Donald Judd, Jan Kempnaers, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Gordon Matta-Clark, Paul McCarthy & Mike Kelly, Bruce Nauman, Blinky Palermo, Edward Ruscha, Thomas Schütte, Mitja Tušek, Koen van den Broek, William van den Broek, Patrick Van Den Eynde, Wilfried Vandenhove, Jan Van Imschoot, Dan Van Severen, Jan Vercruyse and Jeff Wall.



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Fantasy
Installation views at
MuKHA



Fantasy
Installation views at
MuKHA

44 The following pages are from the press catalogue of *Fantasy*.

FANTASY

intervention by Koen van den Broek

21.03→21.09.08



When the MuHKA decided five years ago to invigorate its collection in a radical way, the process was accompanied by an inevitable re-think of the collection policy and of the museum's entire collection philosophy. In this way the emphasis shifted from static presentation to a more research-minded approach to artistic practice as a dynamically intellectual context. 'Research' is central to the display policy of the MuHKA, and one specific type of display, the exhibition as intervention, examines not only the MuHKA collection as such, but also highlights the practice of the 'intervening' artist.

In the spring of 2008 Koen van den Broek is the intervening researcher on call. Van den Broek, one of Belgium's leading young painters, at once broadens the range of the intervention format: his presentation research no longer focuses on his own work [which was the case in previous interventions, from Carla Arocha to Pieter Vermeersch], but rather the broader dialogue with recent art history – a dialogue which by definition goes beyond the walls of the MuHKA, as is apparent from his selection of certain iconic works, particularly by American artists, from private Belgian collections.

The cornerstones of this selection illustrate Van den Broek's well-known predilection for American Minimalism and American post-expressionist art: his mentors and examples are John Baldessari [with whom Van den Broek is currently working on a collective project], Donald Judd, Robert Mangold – and also William Egglestone, Brice Marden and Jeff Wall. From the MuHKA collection Van den Broek has selected works by such pioneers as Dan Flavin and Ed Ruscha – but, when compiling the presentation, he will also choose from among the works of such Belgian artists as Jan Vercruyse, Jan Van Imschoot and Mitja Tušek. Their 'European' sensibility is embedded in an assortment of works by pre-eminent European artists from private Belgian collections, with Thomas Schütte and Blinky Palermo at the forefront.

Van den Broek modelled 'his' presentation loosely on the example of his colleague and good friend John Baldessari, who was guest curator for the exhibition *Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2007 – a classic example of the idiosyncratic intelligence of the artist/exhibition-maker with an eye for the 'secret' similarities between different works, oeuvres and practices. In this way, this informal, fantasy-rich dialogue between artworks which, at first glance, seem to have little in common, forms an experimental, speculative and – ultimately, in accordance with the title of the exhibition – playful setting for Van den Broek's reflection upon his own oeuvre and working method, which in this exhibition are rather modestly represented by a recent series of paintings, some of which were on display at the White Cube gallery in London in the spring of 2007.

—
with works by Nick Andrews, John Baldessari, Charif Benhelima, Marcel Broodthaers, Wim Catrysse, Jan Cox, Luc Deleu, William Eggleston, Tracy Emin, Dan Flavin, Liam Gillick, Mary Heilmann, René Heyvaert, Peter Joseph, Donald Judd, Jan Kempenaers, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Gordon Matta-Clark, Paul McCarthy & Mike Kelly, Bruce Nauman, Blinky Palermo, Edward Ruscha, Thomas Schütte, Mitja Tušek, Koen van den Broek, William van den Broek, Patrick Van Den Eynde, Wilfried Vandenhove, Jan Van Imschoot, Dan Van Severen, Jan Vercruyse and Jeff Wall

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an initiative of the Flemish Community

MuHKA
reflects—

PUBLICATION ANGLE

Koen van den Broek, Angle – Koen van den Broek, 2007

Publication dedicated to the ensemble of eleven works of art, presented by Koen van den Broek at White Cube in London, Spring 2007; with texts by Koen van den Broek and MuHKA – curator Dieter Roelstraete.

Angles, a publication by Koen van den Broek featuring texts by MuHKA curator Dieter Roelstraete and the artist himself, will be presented on the occasion of the opening of *Fantasy*.

- > texts by Koen van den Broek and Dieter Roelstraete
> design Inge Ketelers and Michaël Bussaer
> soft cover
> 28 pp.
> 23 x 29 cm
> ISBN: 978-909022081-9
> €20

To Curb One's Enthusiasm

Two [Uneven] Thoughts Occasioned by Eleven Paintings

1. The Bottom Line

It is tempting to imagine Koen Van den Broek, a painter of such earthly trifles as curbs, edges, gutters and sidewalks – paintings, it is important to note, that are based primarily on photographs made by the artist himself [a strategy that has become increasingly common among painters of the post-painterly era] – as a bit of an oddball character shuffling along the streets of deserted New World cities, perennially looking down, poring over the ground beneath his feet and never once looking up from the camera to take in, however furtively, the obvious marvels [trees! clouds! women!] that dot the landscape in which he finds his signature curbs, edges, gutters and sidewalks. He does not paint skies, nor does his work qualify as landscape painting proper – his gaze is fixed on a much 'smaller' [yet simultaneously also much more real] part of the world: the mundane reality of its physical base, its literal bottom line. Grounds, floors, bottoms, bases, and their linear structuring devices – streets, pavements, cracked surfaces. Both 'earth' and 'world', if I may be allowed to bring into play this arch-Heideggerian dyad: the world's very earthy condition as that from which it rises to become our world.

Many writers before me have expressed their baffled admiration for the rigorous single-mindedness and precision with which Van den Broek locks his painterly gaze in this relentless downward mode ["downcast eyes"], and I too admire the singular sense of purpose of his pictorial commitment and determination – in the same way, perhaps, as I have long admired Niele Toroni [unrelenting, uncompromising, still crazy after all these years] more than Daniel Buren [too frivolous at times, too accommodating]. But what about the world that is thus left out of sight, the world disregarded? Does the downward gaze mean that the artist in some sense refuses the marvel of the world that surrounds, envelops and encounters him? Do the ubiquitous curbs

in his canvasses help to embody the artist's radically curbed enthusiasm before the world 'ahead' or in front of him, the hallowed destination of so many centuries of realist painting? Or, much more introspectively and self-reflexively, does his looking-down-not-up reflect the humbling, or at the very least sobering experience of the artist's realization of the immense possibilities of painting – or the despair of standing before its many impossibilities instead? 'Where' does one look when one is looking down anyway? Mid-way between looking up [and away] and turning our gaze inward, we might say: looking at one's feet – "shoegazing" – is a gesture typical of the introvert. But Van den Broek's paintings obviously say very little about the artist himself; for one, his shadow, let alone his shoes or feet, are never part of the picture. His paintings of street surfaces – a most literal rendition of the classical Greenbergian credo that truly modern [i.e. self-conscious and self-critical] pictorial art should devote itself exclusively to exploring the possibilities of its medium-specificity; the superficiality and depthlessness of the picture plane – even make a jarring show out of this denial of introspection precisely by their principled, programmatic nature, by the faint yet firmly discernible echo of the Warholian injunction to be more "like a machine". They resist psychologizing much in the same way like they 'refuse' any sense of horizon or avert their eyes so as to not meet [the eyes of] the world – or so it seems. Perhaps Koen Van den Broek's paintings are more 'about' the world as earth, home and hearth, than any other paintings I know of; it is precisely the epistemological devotion with which they take in their part of the world, however humble and 'pedestrian', that makes them uniquely embodied and part of the world.

Indeed, what does the ground beneath Van den Broek's feet disclose and reveal? The earth, precisely: that on which we stand and from which we emerge,

the surface of which – the navigable world – carries us on. Much more than air or sky, the long-standing pictorial subjects of some of western art's finest triumphal moments, 'ground' effectively defines us as beings that partake and literally root in the palpable reality of our earthly home – a shared reality of bodies, of natural processes, of bearing and support. Above all, the ground reminds us of gravity as the single most significant force in the known universe – the reason for the very existence of the Earth, the Moon, the Sun, and most macroscopic objects in the known universe. Granted, air and water are important too – oh yes – but one may well ask oneself the following question: why, in fact, haven't there been more paintings of the "ground beneath our feet"? [This is a bit of rhetorical chicanery, of course, as Koen Van den Broek does not so much paint the ground as earth – he mostly paints its squalid, lifeless surface, its economic reduction to a means of transportation: the ground as a road.] Grounds provide 'grounding', or points of anchorage. Rendered as painterly motifs, they help to remind us that the world is never just something that is "over there", always positing itself in front of us, but rather something that is around us – beneath us even: the very thing on which we stand in the crowning glory of our human bipedalism.

In Van den Broek's paintings, these grounds – represented mostly by straight or curving curbs, the matricial tools that help us maneuver the habitable earth – are no mere formal devices for demonstrating the artist's effortless mastery of the modernist paradigm of the grid [inevitably, Henri Matisse and Barnett Newman comes to mind, followed by Elsworth Kelly, Franz Kline, Morris Louis, all undisputed masters of delineation and demarcation]; they also provide guidance – above all to the viewer. Their spines are, quite literally, leads: lines of flight and sight, channelling and directing our gaze towards a world that veers away from us, yet also beckons us to explore it further. They are pathways, "lines made by walking" – a nod to the artful flânerie of Richard Long, another artist who has made good use of the ground

beneath his feet – that help us navigate the world. Indeed, we do not merely look – through the eyes of the artist, to be sure – at the ground, we also feel it; as our gaze travels downwards and up again, along the slender column of a fissure in the road, we also feel our way out into the world beyond – a void, perhaps, or a realm of possibilities.

In other words, the single greatest achievement of this haptic effect of painting/looking as 'grounding', this concerted effort at attending to the ground beneath our feet – as opposed to the sky above or worldly future ahead – is a sense of embodiment, of partaking in the bodily real, that no amount of withering colours and fading contours can help to undermine, and Van den Broek's persistent preference for a close-range view of the ground stretching right from under his/our feet to encompass the immediate proximity of the micro-world in front of him/us, recalls the relatively little-known work of a nineteenth century German artist that the great American critic Michael Fried has called the quintessence of embodiment – Adolph Menzel.

In his "Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", published by Yale University Press in 2002, Fried devotes a whole chapter to Rear Courtyard and House, a painting made by Menzel in 1844 [now in the collection of Berlin's Alte Nationalgalerie] depicting a seemingly unprepossessing scene: "a stretch of bare ground crossed by wooden fences and littered with signs of construction as well as of neglect, viewed from an upper story of the rear of a house." By the sound of this description, this is of course a much more highly elevated vantage point than the ones used in Van den Broek's decisively anthropometric paintings, but the relevance of my comparison lies in both artists' attention to 'detail' in the ground immediately below, forcing us to look down rather than ahead or up, and in the way this perspective forces us to engage with the painting in a manner that foregrounds spectatorial embodiment in ways that were [and remain]

MuHKA
reflects—

quite foreign to standard modernist pictorial practice. Like Menzel, Van den Broek paints a world of spectatorial implication – intimacy almost – as opposed to distancing. In said chapter, Fried goes on to stress the bewildering oddity of Menzel's compositional genius at a time when 'modern' European painting was wholly dominated by the various French schools of landscape painting, and compares his Rear Courtyard with works by various "core" Impressionists. It is well worth quoting Fried at length: "French painting throughout the nineteenth century remained essentially classical in its mode of constructing an illusion of spatial depth, by which I mean that in the work of generations of major painters from David and Ingres through Corot, Monet, Cézanne, and Seurat [and beyond], this was done by delineating a succession of planes all of which ran parallel to the picture plane and were stepped back into the distance by measurable degrees." It was by thus positing the primacy of planar organization, following a scheme inherited from Poussin and Claude, that French painting succeeded in setting the agenda of twentieth-century modernism as an art of the picture plane – a visual paradigm in which the viewer stands opposite the world [of which the painting is a fragment, or a window looking out across and into the world] instead of in it. Instead, "nothing could be further from a modernist emphasis on the picture plane than the dispersive, multi-angled, and kinaesthetically charged syntax of Rear Courtyard and House: a viewer occupying an unusually elevated point of view looks out and down, not straight ahead, at a world fundamentally skewed relative to his or her implied orientation, a world comprising a multiplicity of relationships that defy geometrical ordering, indeed that defy totalization or unification of any kind [...], and therefore can be made out, apprehended as relationships, only by a combination of extremely close looking and projective imagination." It is precisely in this emphasis on bodily implication and relationality – an intentionality that weds the viewer to the world, and the painter to the earth – that I want to connect Fried's Menzel to

my phenomenological reading of Koen Van den Broek's paintings: they are both, in irreducibly different ways of course, painters of embodiment – of the experience of inhabitancy and being-grounded in the world. [Incidentally, in a defiant gesture meant to celebrate rather than conceal embodiment and embodied spectatorship, Adolph Menzel, whose work very often employs the downward gaze that equally characterizes so many of Van den Broek's paintings, did paint a picture of his foot.]

Looking down is what the archaeologist does, or the detective – and all the other mortals, to get their bearings or find their keys.

2. "Mise-en-abîme"

Whereas Koen Van den Broek's earlier paintings were 'simply' based on photographs [taken by the artist himself], the newer works that are documented in this book are primarily based upon paintings [made by the artist himself] of photographs [taken by the artist himself]. Of things.

They are paintings of paintings of photographs of grounds – in the process of which the grounds themselves have effectively been set free, floating and hovering in mid-air, losing all sense of what we just came to describe as actual 'grounding'. What may once have been a curving, distant curb, has now become – for this beholder at least, in the case of Display, Display Disc and the oppositely named Rhythm – a couple of boomerangs. Or two birds of prey falling from the sky – in any case, something that seems suspended rather than sunk, grounded or floored: it is odd to see how the loss of dimension in these disorienting, literally un-settling paintings has in fact erased all memories of what originally lay at the basis of these images – a road, a path, 'earth'. But more about this dialectic in a moment or two. Paintings of paintings of photographs then. This inevitably and immediately prompts a series of questions which have been the primary concern of many a painter [if not all painters] "after Warhol" – questions that concern the pertinence of originality and authenticity in contemporary culture, and the uneasy

cohabitation of aura [the 'unique' hieratic character of the man-made art object] and mass-scale reproducibility. Does a painting of a painting of a photograph move us one step further away from any idealized concept of origin or [imaginary] source – the image that was initially captured by the artist's camera, yet as a photograph never entered the public consciousness – or does it in fact bring us back to this origin, simply by virtue of its denial of a technology of reproduction on the one hand, and its ardent commitment to the manual labour of painstaking painterly reconstruction on the other? Of all art forms, painting still stands out as that which is closest to the classical notion of the work of art as an entity of quasi-divine uniqueness and originality; the palpable presence of the artist's hand across the painting's surface and in the uneven patchwork of dots, daubs, strands and stripes, secures the work's claim to unquestionable 'authenticity', so that the painting, through its sheer physicality and indisputable worldliness, in some sense returns us to the physical reality of the world from which the photograph [to name but one example of a form of technological mediation that does not involve the human hand] has estranged us. In the beginning, there is the curb – say, in Morro Bay, as pictured in *Morro Bay Border*, a painting from 2004. It is a curb I imagine knowing well, 'located' in a Californian seaside town which I have been fortunate enough to pass through myself on a roadtrip from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Then there comes the photograph, transforming the material, factual curb into an immaterial image, a process of 'virtualization' that has become all the more radical with the advent of digital reproduction technologies: we have now lost the curb's originary worldliness – its image is no longer part of the world we inhabit, navigate and, more to the point, walk upon. But then there is the painting – both a "return of the real" and a "return to the real": though we may no longer possess [or look at] the original curb, at least we have been brought back into the primary orbit of its world – that of

everyday matter and materiality, that of the physical experience of its world, that of labour and work: the labour that went into laying down the pavement, and its immediate reflection, the work that went into making a painting of that pavement. We may rest assured: not everything has gone up in the eerie smoke of dematerialization.

But what happens when that painting – the step that brought us back to earth, both literally and metaphorically – is then again treated as a stand-in for the image of the thing it 'represents', and so goes on to inspire yet another painting, one in which the contours of the 'original' image [object, thing] become yet further dissolved in a haze of distant memories? Surely a painting of a painting of a photograph of an object does not return us to the object in the same way as a painting of a photograph of an object does. Yet it is still undeniably more 'real' than the photograph that is both logically and chronologically closer to the object – it is a painting, after all, and through its very work-like and bodily nature cannot help but laying claim to this worldliness.

The curb in *Morro Bay* is the real thing: it is a curb [in Morro Bay]. The 'original' photograph of that curb may already be said to be two things: a curb in Morro Bay and an image of a curb – and to the many who may never see this curb in Morro Bay, it could just as well represent a hundred other things, and not just curbs either: a photograph of object A may easily be misread to represent an unknown object B [say, a gutter]. The first painting after the original photograph further obfuscates the question of precise identification and location: here we inevitably tread on the well-worn path of figural analysis that has sought out a comparison between Koen Van den Broek's [mostly vertical] paintings of sidewalks and gutters, and the famed 'zips' of Barnett Newman, who may or may not have looked at the sidewalks of his native New York for pictorial inspiration. A mundane object with a very precise [pedestrian] aim is thus transformed into a cipher of abstraction – a "migration of form" that forever seals the curb's

triumphant entry into the realm of Art: it has become a Gestalt. But then, in the fourth stage of this laborious process, this inaugural move into abstraction is treated as just another source photograph: a second painting is made after the first, effectively diminishing the initial painting's status as an imperious gesture of literal abstraction. This second painting is yet more abstract [it cannot be otherwise]; the original curb in Morro Bay has become nothing but a distant, useless memory – and perhaps this is exactly what should have happened. I imagine this is exactly how and why [and when and where] art is made – to both remember and forget about the world. 'Abstraction' is just another name for this forgetting, and in this new series of paintings Koen Van den Broek has shown himself to be a master of his chosen trade: he has made us forget both about the curbs and [much more poignantly, of course] his previous paintings of curbs – he is truly a free man, an artist.

What is left of anything in Cut Out and Solution? Who remembers the world that they once, in an earlier stage of the artistic process of forgetting, re-presented? Instead, they have become their own world, and in doing so drag our gaze into this singular instance of 'worlding'. These works' dizzying play with origins, removes, returns and withdrawals, has caused the images in the paintings – paintings, we should remember here, of very real things, of objects that are in fact all too real to warrant the attention of 'art' – to become even more detached from any sense of anchorage in the real. They are being swept up in a maelstrom of questioning and repetition that make them seem more and more groundless – a truly beautiful irony, given the fact that the original images that lay at the root of these paintings are photographs of grounds the artist himself may once have walked upon.

LIST OF WORKS

Nick Andrews

—*Rock around the Clock*, 1997 {courtesy artist}

John Baldessari

—*Throwing three balls in the air to get a straight line*, 1973 {purchase MuHKA 2008}
—*Two Distorted Figures [on Blue] with [Yellow] Springboard*, 1991 {private collection, Brussels}

Charif Benhelima

—*Garbage*, 2007 {courtesy de Buren}

Koen van den Broek

—*Rhythm*, 2006 {courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, Londen}
—*Waterfall*, 2004 {courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, Londen}
—*Eight Avenue*, 1999 {private collection, courtesy White Cube, Londen}
—*Ghost Truck*, 1999 {private collection, courtesy White Cube, Londen}
—*Display*, 2006 {courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, Londen}
—*Solution*, 2006 {courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, Londen}
—*Cut Out*, 2006 {courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, Londen}

William van den Broek

—*Untitled*, 1983 {private collection}

Marcel Broodthaers

—*Deux Tonneaux*, 1966 {private collection, Brussels}

Wim Catrysse

—*Backdrop*, 2007 {courtesy artist}

Jan Cox

—*Fruit and Flower*, 1962 {courtesy De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp}
—*Orpheus and Maenads*, 1965 {courtesy De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp}
—*Ontwerp "Ilias van Homerus"*, sd {courtesy De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp}

Luc Deleu

—*Obelisk*, 1983 {purchase MuHKA 1986}
—*Legoconstructie*, 1978 {purchase MuHKA 1986}
—*Legoconstructie*, 1978 {purchase MuHKA 1986}
—*Legoconstructie*, 1979 {purchase MuHKA 1986}
—*Legoconstructie*, 1981 {purchase MuHKA 1986}
—*Legoconstructie*, 1982 {purchase MuHKA 1986}

William Eggleston

—*Untitled [Open Suitcase]*, 4/7, 1999-2000 {courtesy Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels}
—*Untitled [Bar, American Flags, Memphis-Tennessee]*, 2/7, 2001 {courtesy Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels}
—*Untitled [Food Market]*, 3/10, 1994 {courtesy Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels}

Tracy Emin

—*There's nothing funny about this*, 2000 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}

Dan Flavin

—*Corner Piece*, 1978 {purchase MuHKA 1992}

Liam Gillick

—*Last Day of production*, 2007 {courtesy Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp}

Mary Heilmann

- Garden of Allah*, 1986 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Red Square, Yellow Bar*, 1986 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Lavender*, 1986 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}

René Heyvaert

- Untitled*, 1981 {donation Familie Heyvaert and Lightmachine Art Agency, 2007}

Peter Joseph

- Red over Bronze*, 2006 {private collection, Brussels}

Donald Judd

- Untitled*, 1988 {purchase MuHKA 1992}
- Untitled [Progression]*, 1969 {courtesy Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven}

Jan Kempenaers

- The Picturesque Grid*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- Replica*, 2005 {courtesy artist}

Robert Mangold

- Attic Series III*, 1990 {private collection, Brussels}

Brice Marden

- Poster for Philipp Glass Concert*, February 2,9,16 & 23, Idea Warehouse, New York. Edition of 100, 1975 {private collection, Antwerp}

Gordon Matta-Clark

- Office Baroque # 669*, 1977 {donation Gordon Matta-Clark Stichting 1995}

Paul McCarthy & Mike Kelly

- Heidi*, 1994 {courtesy De Vleeshal, Middelburg}

Blinky Palermo

- 2 Rote Siegel*, 1970 {courtesy Marie-Puck Broodthaers}
- Ohne Titel [mit Komma]*, 1971 {courtesy Marie-Puck Broodthaers}
- Blaues Dreieck*, 1969 {private collection, Brussels}

Edward Ruscha

- Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1962 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Various small fries and milk*, 1964 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Some Los Angeles Apartments*, 1965 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- The Sunset Strip, Los Angeles*, 1966 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Thirtyfour Parkinglots in Los Angeles*, 1967 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Royal Road test, Los Angeles*, 1967 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Nine Swimming pools and a broken glass*, 1968 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}

Edward Ruscha

- Crackers*, Hollywood, 1969 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Real Estate opportunities*, 1970 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- A few palm trees*, Hollywood, 1971 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Records*, Hollywood, 1971 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Colored people*, 1972 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}
- Hard Light*, Los Angeles, 1978 {private collection Belgium, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp}

Thomas Schütte

- Kollektion [8 Muster-8 Farben]*, 1980 {private collection Herbert}

Mitja Tušek

- RVN*, 2002-03 {courtesy artist}
- CHSS*, 1995-97 {courtesy artist}

Patrick Van Den Eynde

- Studies*, 1995 {courtesy Flemish Community}

Wilfried Vandenhove

- Sunset with Pirates*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- Welcome to Tijuana*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- No Surrender*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- Blue Restaurant*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- John My Deere*, 2007 {courtesy artist}
- México Hotel*, 2007 {courtesy artist}

Jan Van Imschoot

- The Mistake*, 2008 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}
- The widow*, 2008 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}
- The colonel*, 2008 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}
- Ladyboy-curlieman I*, 2007 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}
- Doorway in the Sun nr 3 [a dilettant version]*, 2007 {private collection Jan Van Imschoot}

Dan Van Severen

- Zonder Titel*, 1992 {purchase MuHKA 1993}

Jan Vercruyssen

- Places [II.8]*, 2006 {courtesy Flemish Community}

Jeff Wall

- The Guitarist*, 1987 {courtesy private collection, Brussels}

DOCUMENTAIRE

- A film about William Eggleston in the Real World*
84', directed by Michael Almereyda, New York, 2005

PUBLICATIE

- Mike Kelley, *Day is done*, New Haven & London, 2007
with audio *Day is done I & II*, 2007



Koen van den Broek, 2007



Koen van den Broek, *Solution*, 2006, courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/ White Cube, London

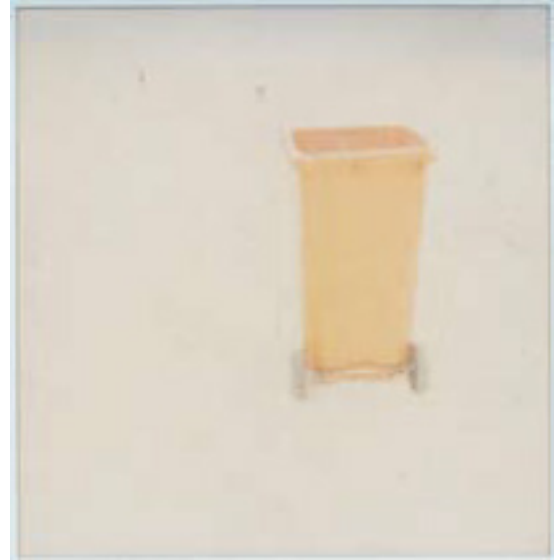


Koen van den Broek, *Ghost Truck*, 1999, courtesy artist and Jay Jopling/ White Cube, London

MuHKA
shows—



John Baldessari, *Two Distorted Figures [on Blue] with [Yellow] Springboard*, 1991, private collection, Brussels



Charif Benhelima, *Garbage*, 2006, courtesy de Buren

57



Marcel Broodthaers, *Deux Tonneaux*, 1966, private collection

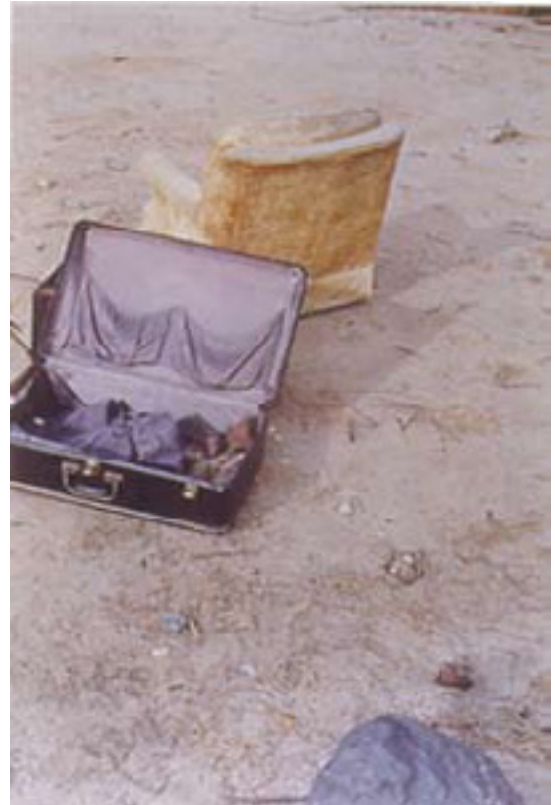


Wim Catrysse, *Backdrop*, 2007, courtesy artist

MuHKA
shows—



Luc Deleu, *Obelisk*, 1983, photo R. Heirman



William Eggleston, *Untitled [Open Suitcase]* 4/7, 1999-2000, courtesy Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussel



William Eggleston, *Untitled [Food Market]*, 3/10, 1994, courtesy Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussel



Liam Gillick, *Last Day of Production*, 2007, courtesy Galerie Micheline Szwajczer



Mary Heilmann, *Garden of Allah*, 1986, private collection, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerpen



René Heyvaert, *Untitled*, 1981, collection MuHKA

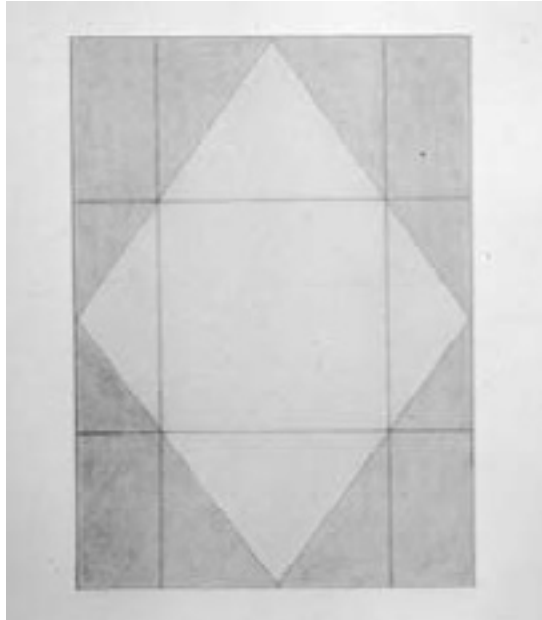


Peter Joseph, *Red Over Bronze*, 2006, private collection



Robert Mangold, *Attic Series III*, 1990, private collection

MuHKA
shows—



Dan Van Severen, *Zonder Titel*, 1992, collection MuHKA



Wilfried Vandenhove, *Blue Restaurant*, 2007, courtesy artist



Wilfried Vandenhove, *México Motel*, 2007, courtesy artist



Wilfried Vandenhove, *John my Deere*, 2007, courtesy artist

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No More Boring Art!

From the S.M.A.K. Collection curated by Koen van den Broek and Iris Paschalidis
PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (Belgium)
20.02 - 31.03.2020

On the occasion of the opening of the new art studios at the School of Arts PXL-MAD, S.M.A.K. is moving some iconic works from its collection to the new exhibition space of the Fine Arts programme. By curating *No More Boring Art!* Koen van den Broek brings the work of internationally famous artists, including himself, to Hasselt. A sequel to this show, *No More Boring Art! (part 2)* will take place from 12.11 to 16.12.2020.

Including works of: René Daniëls, Raoul De Keyser, Thierry De Cordier, Mike Kelley, John Baldessari, Luc Tuymans, Marlène Dumas, Oscar Murillo, Adrien Ghenie,...



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No More Boring Art!
Installation views at
PXL-MAD

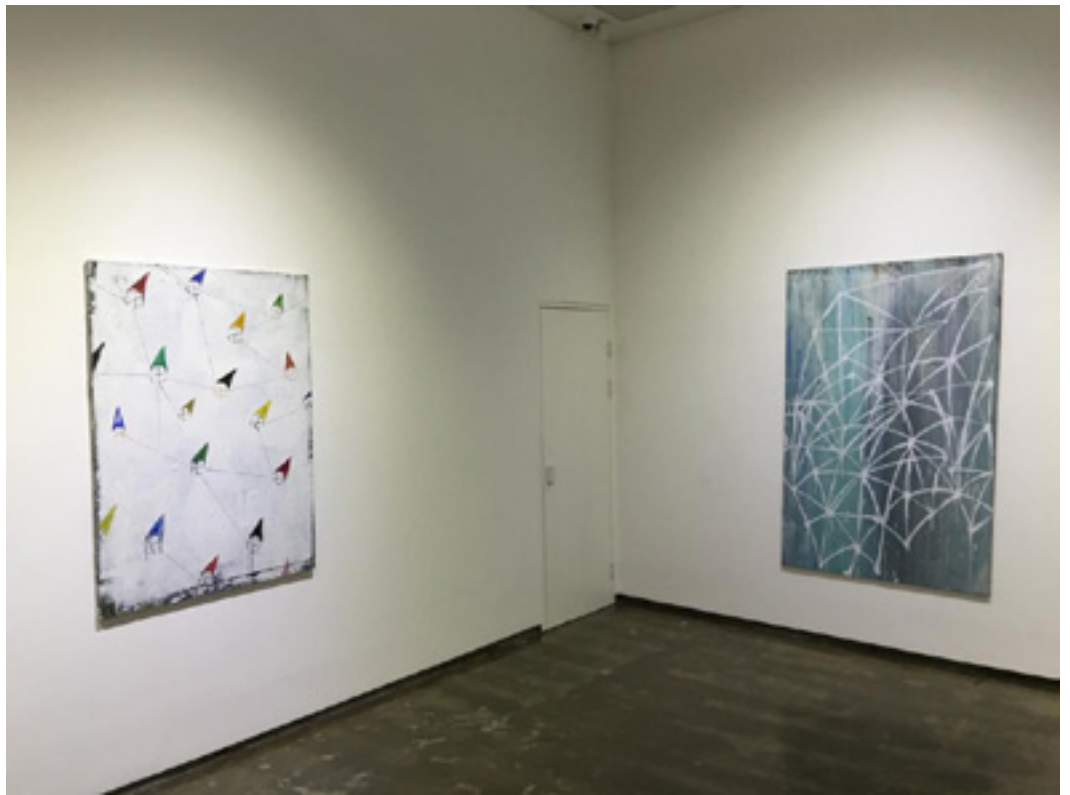
Philippe Vandenberg - Abstract Works

Curated by Koen van den Broek
Gallery Baton, Seoul (South Korea)
27.04 - 28.05.2016

The oeuvre of Philippe Vandenberg (1952–2009) is characterised by an introspective search in which various literary, philosophical and art-historical references help induce a temporary state of wonder. Using word, image and symbol, Vandenberg challenges the ethical context of the work of art. In this way works are situated in the present, creating a visually recognisable dialogue with the society in which they were made. In Vandenberg's art, universal motifs such as war, religion and mobility undergo a critical transformation.

Vandenberg has established a reputation as one of the leading painters of his generation.

Vandenberg's paintings are in the permanent collections of the Guggenheim (New York), La Maison Rouge (Paris), Stichting De Pont (Tilburg), Stichting Sammlung Falckenberg (Hamburg), Smak (Ghent) and many others.
Philippe Vandenberg is represented by the gallery Hauser & Wirth (New York).

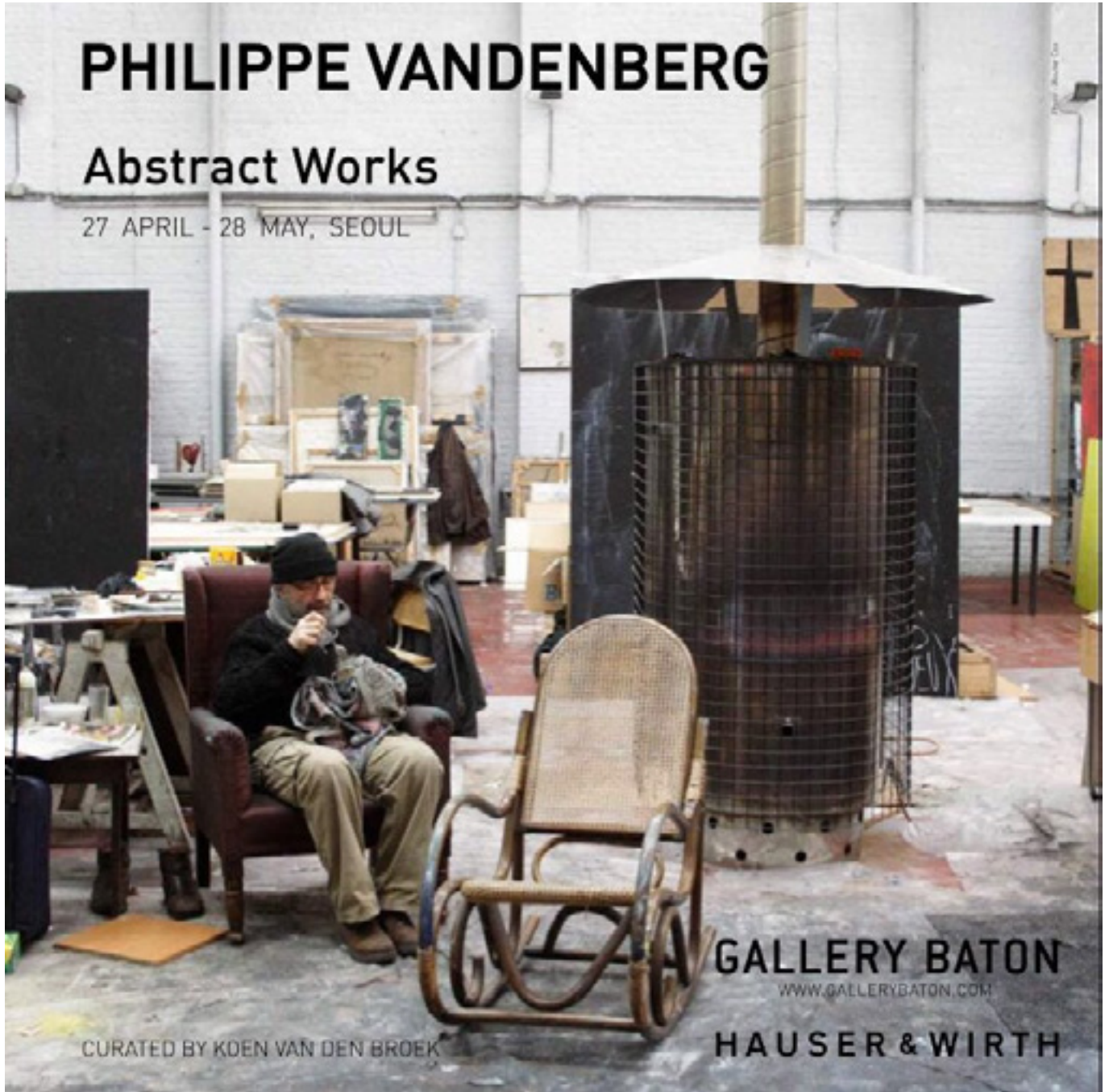


*Philippe Vandenberg -
Abstract Works*
Installation views at
Gallery Baton

PHILIPPE VANDENBERG

Abstract Works

27 APRIL - 28 MAY, SEOUL



GALLERY BATON

WWW.GALLERYBATON.COM

HAUSER & WIRTH

CURATED BY KOEN VAN DEN BROEK

Selected Gallery Shows

Angle

White Cube, London (United-Kingdom)
02.02 - 10.03.2007

67

For his third solo exhibition at White Cube Hoxton Square Koen van den Broek exhibited a group of paintings he had recently created. In these works, he created a series of minimal paintings with pared down, panoramic compositions that have moved away from the original source of their image – the photographic snapshot – to focus instead on the application of paint, the spatial effect of colour and the reduction of a motif to its barest possible form.



68

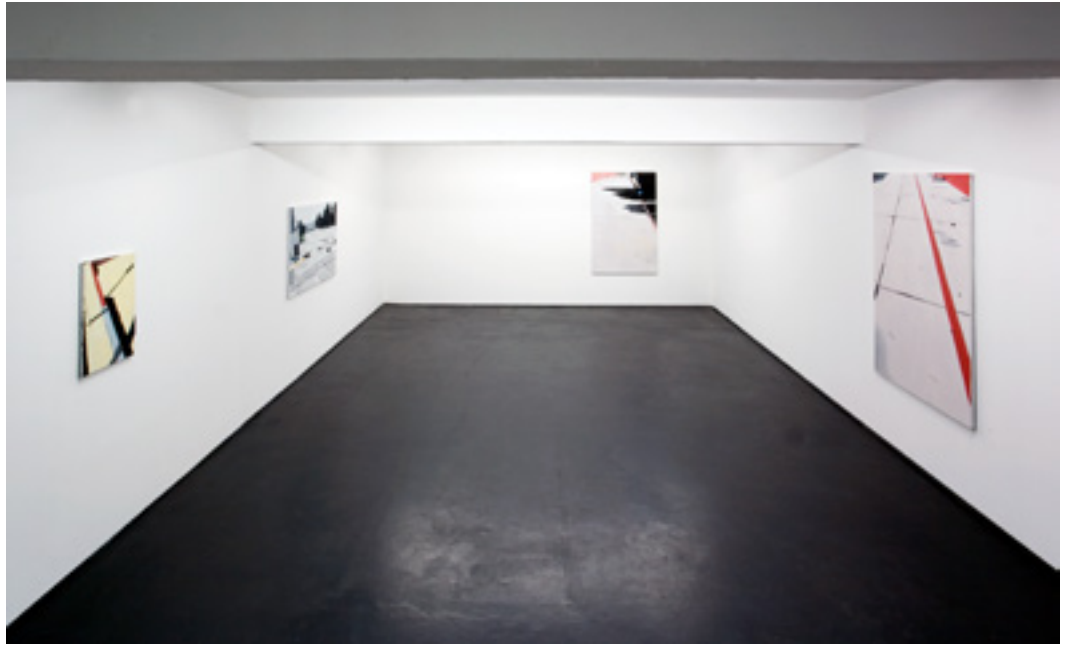


Angle
Installation views at
White Cube

Out of Space

Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (Germany)

17.04 - 14.06.2008



Out of Space
Installation views
at Figge von Rosen
Galerie



Barking Dogs
2008.

only no-artists," they write, taking a jab at Beuys's dictum that everyone is an artist. They want to know how art can bite, how it can change society. But barking dogs seldom bite—nor do artists who bark. The very name Barking Dogs bespeaks the duo's helplessness at a time when even the harshest criticisms leveled at the art world are inevitably co-opted by the marketplace. This helplessness is reflected in their manifesto. Instead of spelling out an aesthetic program in the grand gestures of the avant-garde, they describe their daily lives thus: "Barking Dogs United do watch porn movies and do masturbate. Do believe in Bender"—referring to the character in the animated television series *Futurama*—"do play with guns, and do shoot bulbs happily. Do work, do get sick, do go

out for dinner, do brush their teeth, do wash their feet, and feel so good. Do play lotto, and do want to win. Fuck."

The sticking point in both BDU's manifesto and their skateboard floor lies in the discrepancy between the claim and the reality: The boards don't roll quite as smoothly as they should and the manifesto can't tell us how to become a non-artist. But both give a sense of what might be possible. And that's more than one usually gets to see in galleries these days.

—Daniel Boese

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfus.

COLOGNE

Koen van den Broek

FIGGE VON ROSEN GALERIE

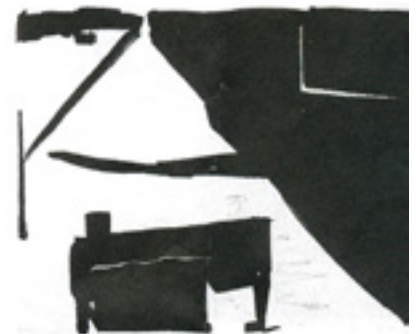
One of the peculiar qualities of the built environment is that, despite its utter intricacy and diversity, it always contains the germ of pictorial abstraction. Depending on viewing angle, proximity, or clarity, images of buildings and streets can advance the abstract qualities of their inherent surfaces, structures, grids, and patterns. Thus the ubiquity of architecture and the urban landscape as both an artistic subject and a visual source for both painting and photography.

For about a decade, Belgian artist Koen van den Broek has rigorously taken up the challenge posed by this phenomenon. The starting point for his paintings is a vast personal archive of photographs taken during his many trips through North America. Van den Broek does not picture the city as a lived entity but as a material fact, devoid of human presence. Furthermore, he looks not so much around as downward: to the surface of the street and to its many features, both functional and formal, such as curbs, borders, gutters, pavement, and cracks. All of these elements make up the vast infrastructure for human traffic, which, whether experienced from afar or up close, has a distinct graphical nature. This has been the subject of van den Broek's expressive painting since the late 1990s. The four recent works that the artist presented in the lower space at the back of Figge von Rosen continue to exemplify the modes in which van den Broek has worked, from realistic depiction (*Junction (peddles)*, 2007) and perspectival vista (*Hillsboro #1* and *Hillsboro #2*, 2008) to abstract composition (*Melrose Ave #3*, 2008). They set up an enthralling play between realism

and abstraction, between distinct depictions of real locales and formal compositions of lines and planes, as images alternately seem to emerge or to recede back into abstraction.

But the front of the gallery contained twelve works that stem from a radically new turn within the artist's practice. Van den Broek did not paint these works after his photographs of urban realities, but after images that resulted from a joint project with the American artist John Baldessari. The project, which is being shown this fall at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht, consists of painterly interventions by van den Broek in a series of photographs (mostly of film sets) selected by Baldessari. Van den Broek reinserted this experiment within his habitual painterly practice. He probed the pictorial nature of the collaboratively produced works, yet he did not, in fact, repeat his partner's celebrated strategy of blotting out certain parts of the photographs. Instead, van den Broek frankly pasted his own formal repertoire of motifs and shapes upon them. The ensuing interplay between photographic image and painterly mark makes for a series of vivid and colorful compositions—with *Base*, 2008, *Office*, 2008, and *Two Rockets*, 2008, as undeniable highlights—and generates an intricate back-and-forth movement between realism and abstraction, all the more so as these have not been painted after photographs of real spaces but after fabricated images. They demonstrate that our reality is nothing but an alibi for the artificial reality embodied by every artwork.

—Wouter Davidts



Koen van den Broek
Base, 2008, oil on
canvas, 34 1/2 x 45

MUNICH

Allora & Calzadilla

HAUS DER KUNST/KUNSTVEREIN

Milan Kundera once paraphrased Marx: "Optimism is the opium of the people." As the twentieth century has shown us, there is a fine line between jubilation and the eruption of violence—above all when there's musical accompaniment. In Europe, no melody has been used and abused to produce a spirit of optimism more than the "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a favorite of both Hitler and Stalin, masters of mass seduction. Under the direction of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, this anthem sounded again at Munich's Haus der Kunst, which was built by the Nazis as the Haus der deutschen Kunst (House of German Art). This time no one rose in jubilation. The audience looked down, uncomfortably, as a grand piano glided through the room producing a somewhat discordant, but still recognizable, rendition of the melody. The sound came out of a round hole that had been cut in the center of the piano, just big enough for a young pianist to stand in and play the keys from the reverse side. While playing, she was pushing the enormous instrument with her frail body through the Hall of Honor of this historic building.

The performance at Haus der Kunst, *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on Ode to Joy for a Prepared Piano*, 2008, was complemented by three elaborate installations at the city's Kunstverein. There, upon entering, the visitor was met with a hellish cacophony of sounds and voices that bounced off one's body like projectiles, all coming from the



Base, 2008
Oil on canvas
88 x 105 cm
S.M.A.K Collection
Ghent

73

WHAT?

Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (Belgium)

09.09 - 13.11.2010



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WHAT?
Installation views at
Galerie Greta Meert

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK

Press release

Greta Meert Gallery opens its season with new work by Belgian artist Koen van den Broek (Bree, 1973). After his recent retrospective show in the S.M.A.K., Ghent, which covered 10 years in his career, the artist now shows his most recent work in his first solo exhibition.

Koen van den Broek's work has often been associated with the notion of 'Border'. Indeed, borders literally dominate his canvases in kerbs, gutters, cracks in the asphalt, shadows, viaducts, etc. However, he takes these lines of demarcation beyond their banality and turns them into a powerful metaphor for a contemporary way of life: 'life on the road'. Referring to a theme that runs through American literature and film, many of these images find their origin along the vast American highways. Van den Broek's desolate landscapes that captivate the strong light of LA show us a present-day 'condition humaine'.

The visual motifs are also formally strong. Van den Broek flirts with abstraction. While the borders, the kerbs and the cracks latently point at the abstract character of the present-day, urban landscape, the imagined space is further purified to a purely geometrical structure of lines and colours, an anti-form that underlines the two-dimensionality of the painted surfaces. This subtle balance between form and colour, perspective and levelling off, figuration and abstraction, betrays an accurate knowledge of and preoccupation with the heritage of 20th century art, from Matisse to American Minimalism.

Van den Broek's works often start from his own photographs. Since the 1960s photography and film have been used recurrently in contemporary painting. Even more than their capacity for reproduction, the specific aspects of these media have determined van den Broek's visual language. By means of an explicit framing, a manipulation of the rules of perspective and distinct lighting, the artist creates a charged atmosphere and monumentality that undermine the relevance of the original motif. What counts is the experience of the image, the tension between the imagined space and the conceptual space of the canvas.

'Shadows' are a recurrent motif throughout the exhibition. In the series 'Nancy' and 'North Central Avenue' – two locations around The MOCA Geffen, LA – van den Broek captivates the typical Californian sunlight in a stunning way. The level of clarity and luminosity and the strong interaction between the black and white shades make the paintings nearly vibrate.

Recent exhibitions: 'Curbs and Cracks', SMAK, Gand (01.10-05.10)
 'Preview. Work on paper', 2010, KMSKA, Antwerp (01.10-02.10)
 '14th Vilnius Painting Triennial: False Recognition', CAC, Lithuania (06.10-08.10)
 'Painting Biënnal: Beyond the Sublime', MDD/Roger Raveelmuseum, Deurle/Zulte (07.10-09.10)

The following gallery shows are the ones included in Koen van den Broek's publication TRACK (2014)

“TRACK documents recent paintings by Koen van den Broek and represents an evolution of style for one of the most accomplished painters of his generation. The book follows a sequence of exhibitions that he has made over the past two years, which mark a significant turning point and development in the artist's practice, as he pushes all remaining figurative elements towards the field of complete abstraction. He is widely celebrated for his series of paintings inspired by unconventional perspective. On road journeys in the United States, he took hundreds of snapshots that he could later use as source material for his canvases where he would focus on one detail. These details might include a section of a road, the curb receding into the perspective of the image, or cracks in the surface, and almost always an interplay with shadows; a displaced tradition of the Flemish landscape. Today he reworks recurring features in his previous paintings, a vocabulary that continues to recombine into new compositions.”

Koen van den Broek

TRACK



DISTANZ

78

Comin' Down

Figge von Rosen Galerie, Berlin (Germany)

09.09 - 19.11.2011



Chicane

Marlborough Contemporary, London (United Kingdom)

21.11.2012 - 05.01.2013

For his first show at Marlborough Contemporary, van den Broek revisited a single location from fractionally differing angles and perspectives, to produce five substantial new works. The title of the show, Chicane, refers to a break or turn in the road, which becomes the formal moment of focus for the paintings. It's a device to slow down a car's progress. In the painting it slows down our reading of the perspective.

This exhibition was the first part of a trilogy and has been followed by *Apex* at Friedman Benda, New York and *YAW* at Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels.



Chicane
Installation views
at Marlborough
Contemporary

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK

MARLBOROUGH CONTEMPORARY - LONDON

This first exhibition of Koen van den Broek's paintings at Marlborough Contemporary is a solid body of work that continues the idea of "curb-side documentary" that forms a major component of his practice. At a glance, the paintings are "serious paintings," by which I mean that they are formally clever and somewhat require a formal language to describe them.

For example, to analyze these paintings in the language of deconstructionism would be quite appropriate, as there is only enough information in the pictures to point, as an arrow would, to what it is they are meant to represent. The perspective is meant to discombobulate, to make the viewer feel topsy-turvy, as though his feet have flown past his face. At the same time, they are not psychedelic and you are not Alice falling down the rabbit hole.

The colors are both light and somber: black, white, gray, beige and pinkish, with the occasional striking chord of bright blue or red. Tasteful and stark. Food fights only happen in times of abundance, and there will be no giggling here. That being said, van den Broek has an excellent compositional sense,

which is likely attributable to his process of taking hundreds of photographs of streets and sidewalks upon which to base his paintings.

Disco #4 (2012) creates a sort of visual stutter. It is a painterly painting that tries to refute the idea that it is anything other than simply paint on canvas. Meanwhile it also represents the curb, shadow and street. Just as if you were in a nightclub, your eyes jump along to the rhythm, working out how the painting was composed, until there is a finger-snap "A-ha!" of locating where you are in relation to the image (looking down at the sidewalk, just beyond where your feet are planted). Van den Broek's ruse is admirable and befits his brush marks, which are somewhat workmanlike but light and assured enough to be perfectly suited to their purpose.

Andrea Magenheimer

From top: KOEN VAN DEN BROEK, *Disco #1*, 2012.
Oil on canvas, 200 x 250 cm; *Disco #2*, 2012.
Oil on canvas, 200 x 250 cm. Courtesy Marlborough
Contemporary, London.



Apex

Friedman Benda, New York (United States)

25.04 - 24.05.2013

Apex is the second solo show Koen van den Broek had at Friedman Benda.

83

The works presented are based on his own previous paintings of shadows and cracks found on sidewalks and roads.

Awkward yet slashing mechanical shapes in black and bright colors move across the surfaces of these nearly abstract paintings.

This exhibition was part of a trilogy along with *Chicane* at Marlborough Contemporary, London and *YAW* at Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels.



Apex
Installation views at
Friedman Benda



Birds, 2013
Oil on canvas
266 x 400 cm
Pizzuti Collection

The following pages are issued from the magazine *Art in America*. They include an interview where Koen van den Broek discusses the works shown in *Apex*.

Art in America

Down on the Street: the Art of Koen van den Broek

by Elisabeth Kley

Antwerp-based artist Koen van den Broek specializes in huge photo-based paintings of the unnoticed surfaces that lie beneath us as we travel from place to place. Taking a self-reflexive turn, his latest body of work, which will soon be on view in his second solo show at New York's Friedman Benda gallery (Apr. 25-May 24), is based on his own previous paintings of shadows and cracks found on sidewalks and roads. Awkward yet slashing mechanical shapes in black and bright colors move across the surfaces of these nearly abstract paintings.



Van den Broek, 40, is also a trained architect and has had solo shows at London's Marlborough Contemporary (2012), at Berlin's Figge von Rosen (2011, 2010, 2008) and at galleries in Korea and Spain and museums in Antwerp and Ghent. The artist discussed his new studio and the work in "Apex," his upcoming show, with *A.i.A.* via e-mail.

ELISABETH KLEY Please tell us about your new studio. Does it differ from previous work spaces?

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK I often work at different locations, including L.A., Paris and New York City, but I've always had studios in and around Antwerp. The structure around my work has become more specific, and demand for my paintings has increased. I need a place that provides a sort of frame where I can function with clear borders, to concentrate and develop my practice. Now I am based in Merksem, an Antwerp suburb. Rather than being a perfect museum space, it's a warm, sometimes annoying, even impractical space with a will of its own! Which makes it my studio.

KLEY You often find your images in overlooked places like sidewalks, curbs and roads. Your idea of continuously looking down is distinctive.

VAN DEN BROEK Edward Hopper, Wayne Thiebaud, Richard Diebenkorn, Gerhard Richter, Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari have all painted the street. And then there are the four big M's: Manet, Matisse, Malevich, Mondrian. Mondrian began with landscapes of trees and oceans before his work became abstract. By the end in New York, with *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie*, he really was painting the street! Later, in the '50s, there was Rothko, Motherwell and Kline. At the Denver Art Museum, I discovered an entire Motherwell series called "Open," inspired by *Porte-fenêtre à Collioure* [1914], the amazing Matisse that looks abstract but is actually a regular night view. And Aaron Siskind photographed the rough walls near the street.

KLEY But you are the only one that concentrates so strongly on the ground.

VAN DEN BROEK The ground is how architecture began: going from A to B. After that, it is time to build. At the movies, I look at non-places found between "important" scenes-trees, skies, floors and streets. In the opening scene of *The Cotton Club*, we see the gutter, pebbles, reflections and black-and-white abstractions before the camera moves up to show people coming out of a distant jazz club.

KLEY The shapes in your new paintings resemble strange flat war machines or the shadows cast by helicopters across airport landing fields.

VAN DEN BROEK I was thinking of *Apocalypse Now*.

KLEY Portions of your new paintings are reminiscent of Clyfford Still's thickly painted abstractions. I also think of Ellsworth Kelly's early use of accidental outdoor shapes and Andy Warhol's enormous shadow paintings.

VAN DEN BROEK My work is connected with history. I make direct references to Kelly, for example, in *Still-Kelly* [2013], a painting derived from an image of the shadows of a railing at the Clyfford Still Museum in Denver. I also love Warhol's unconventional attitude towards composition and Christopher Wool's images of street trash.

KLEY Speaking of trash, forbidden substances like spit, urine and feces are often found on dirty streets and floors. Does this enter into your thinking about your subject?

VAN DEN BROEK There is the floor. There are things happening on that floor. My painting *On the floor. Thanks to Lou Reed and Metallica* [2012] refers to a 2011 CD made by those artists. To hard-core fans, this project was almost an attack on their religion. Lou Reed fans appear to hate Metallica and vice versa, so these artists were doing exactly what their fans would hate most. Similarly, people expect me to paint landscapes-it's only recently that my paintings have been understood as conceptual. In my collaboration with John Baldessari, *This an Example of That* [2008], I painted directly on his photographs, something I could otherwise never do. John destroyed almost all his paintings in the late '60s, so I was giving him the paint he couldn't have himself. We both did things we're not allowed to do. This is what art is about.

PHOTO: *Birds* (2013), oil on canvas, 104¾ by 157½ inches.

YAW

Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (Belgium)
20.04 - 06.07.2013

90

The *Yaw* series constitutes the second part of a trilogy of exhibitions by Koen van den Broek. *Chicane* opened in London in November 2012. The third and final part, *Apex* happened at Friedman Benda in New York in April and May 2013 .

Each title in this series of exhibitions contains a reference to our perception of the urban landscape. The term 'Yaw' refers to the imprint mark (a residue, an unevenness) a vehicle leaves when it gets stuck rotating its wheel on a soft surface. A human intervention as a demarcation point of our environment and observation, *Yaw* is added to van den Broek's lexicon of borders, cracks and shadows of urban and architectural elements.



YAW
Installation views at
Galerie Greta Meert

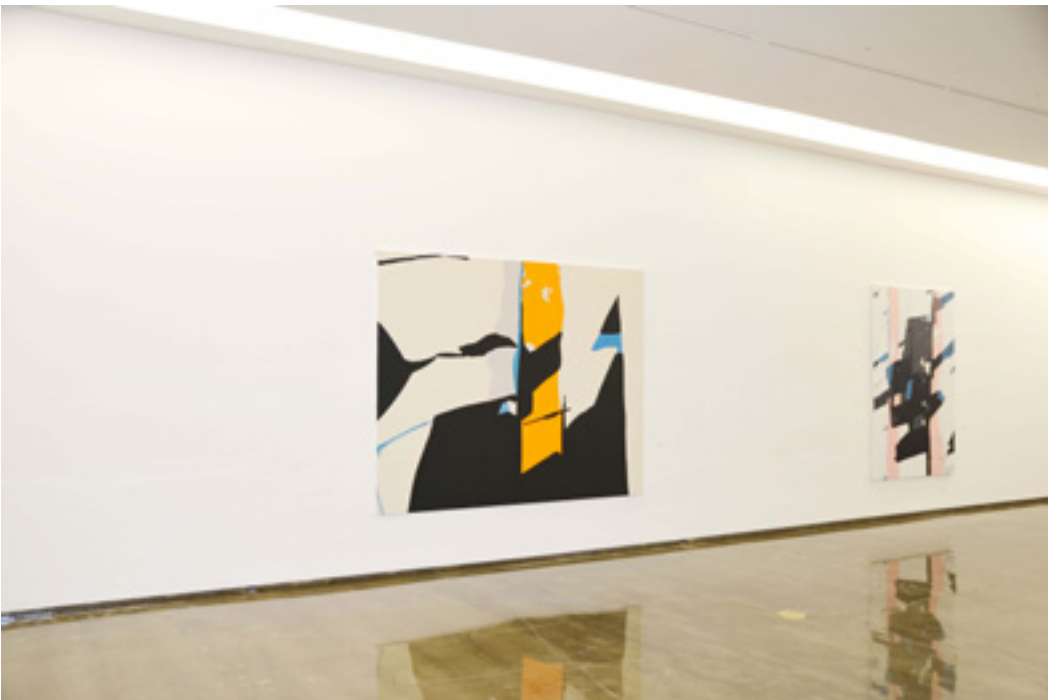


Flock#1, 2013
Oil on canvas
250x 200 cm

Zylon*Gallery Baton, Seoul (South Korea)**13.12.2013 - 29.01.2014*

93

Zylon was Koen van den Broek's second solo show at Gallery Baton, Seoul. The works presented allowed viewers to see a more abstract side of his work, which hadn't been yet showed at Gallery Baton. It was a great opportunity for Seoul's art lovers to experience major European contemporary paintings.



Zylon
Installation views at
Gallery Baton

The following pages are issued from Ocula and contain an interview of Koen's van den Broek about *Zylon*.

OCULA is a portal to contemporary art, artists and exhibitions presented by the leading galleries in or engaged with the Asia Pacific region.



Conversation

Koen van den Broek

ARTIST, BELGIUM "I try to constitute a language that comes out of the abstract but still deals with the landscape and feeling of the streets." [Read More](#)

The work of Koen van den Broek refuses to be neatly defined. It bears strong affinities to the tradition of European painting, while at the same time inhabiting the landscape of the street and the vocabulary of American abstraction. Having studied architecture, the artist explores the geometric spaces of roads and transportation structures. Indeed van den Broek's fascination with the street as motif might be understood as much in relation to the history of conceptual practices as to painting – John Baldessari has been a collaborator, for example. His paintings often originate from photographs of streets; but in the process of transferring this imagery onto the canvas, abstractness is applied.

For his second solo exhibition at Baton Gallery in Seoul, van den Broek presents work that has developed significantly since he last exhibited with the gallery. The title of the show, *ZYLON*, references a synthetic polymer material that has an exceptional thermal stability and is used in a number of applications, including in the making of Formula 1 car cabins. Yet,

despite the title, the work is more aggressively abstract than his earlier work. In this interview, the artist discusses his influences, the show he did with John Baldessari, this new body of work and the title, ZYLON.

Anna Dickie | Hong Kong

You originally trained as an architect, but became a painter. What motivated this change?

At college (KU Leuven) I started to study architecture and became very interested in how culture and urban life were being shaped. The way an architect deals with space and monumentality related to abstract shapes was something that caught my interest very early in my life. While studying architecture I came in contact with the work of Matisse and became interested in the history of painting. Somehow I wanted to be part of this canon. You could say that I grew out of architecture towards painting. I went from designing the urban landscape to painting the urban landscape, which is something totally else because it has a different history. On the other hand I'm currently working on a few public and private projects in the public space.

You participated in the exhibition *Matisse and Beyond: A Century of Modernism* at SFMoMA in 2003. The colours in your recent work remind me of Matisse's colours.

There is no other artist who influenced me more than Matisse. You can even say that he is the cornerstone of Modern Art. Almost all the American artists dating from the 30's till now have a link with Matisse. The way he used bold, saturated colors for example is something you can see in the work of Barnett Newman, Donald Judd, Clyfford Still, Willem de Kooning, John Baldessari, Gary Hume, Laura Owens, etc. The essence of painting – stripped down from all its content – was something Matisse was constantly looking out for. To this day a painting by Matisse is never boring - which already is a great accomplishment. History proves that Matisse is still very alive with young painters and will be continue to be revisited constantly. Therefore it was a great honour for me to be included in the exhibition *Matisse and Beyond: A Century of Modernism*. Seeing my work hanging on the wall as last point in the exhibition was of great importance to me. It gave me the energy and focus to keep on developing my own ideas about abstraction and figuration.

In 2008 you collaborated with John Baldessari on a project that combined pictures of Baldessari with painted interventions by yourself. I understand that you painted photographs that Baldessari made of film-stills of Hollywood movies. Perhaps we can discuss that collaboration?

The project was called *This An Example Of That*. John is a good friend of mine who I met very early in my career as an artist. He is the godfather of Conceptual Art at the West Coast. Somehow this project came forward out of the idea that John is a painter who may not paint because his roots are with Conceptual Art. But on the other hand there is no other artist who I know that looks more to painting than John Baldessari. In 1970 he burned all his paintings that he made between 1953 and 1966 for a piece he did called *The Cremation Project*. I have always been very influenced by the work of John and Conceptual Art in general and how they used film and photography. That is why painting over the pictures of John was very interesting to do and still very important in the understanding of my work. It gave us the opportunity to broaden our ideas about what painting can be and how to make clear our influences to the audience. From the moment I started painting over the stills meaning bounced around and interesting things started to occur which still please me.

You then had a solo-exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK) in 2010 in Ghent – which I understand was a retrospective in many ways. Do you think being given this institutional moment to reflect on your work had an impact on what you have done since?

Since my work is in many private/public collections throughout the world it's sometimes difficult to keep an overview of what I already have done. The SMAK gave me the opportunity to revisit my own career and to go back to all the important chapters of my artistic career. It was a thrill to see ten years of my painting career together in one exhibition. I drew new conclusions from my older work and this gave me the energy to keep on developing my familiar motives of the urban landscape and how this can be translated in new ways onto the canvas. Andrew Renton who is professor at Goldsmith University London was the curator of my retrospective. He decided to break up my oeuvre into different parts according to the different themes I paint - like cracks, curbs, shadows, collaborations, landscapes, etc. The paintings were placed in seven different rooms throughout the SMAK Museum, which we referred to as the way in which an Andy Warhol show would be placed. The retrospective also gave me the

opportunity to create my monograph 'Crack' which I worked on with Wouter Davidts, John Welchman, etc.

You have an exhibition at Gallery Baton's new exhibition space in Seoul, entitled ZYLON. It is your second exhibition with Gallery Baton and in fact your second solo exhibition in Asia. How would you compare the works in this more recent exhibition to those you showed with Gallery Baton two years ago?

ZYLON is my second solo show at Gallery Baton (previous one was in 2012) and I participated in group shows in Seoul (2000, 2005), Shanghai (2009), Singapore, etc. For this exhibition, ZYLON, you can see that the paintings move towards an abstract, autonomous vocabulary while the previous exhibition still dealt with recognisable subjects. I try to constitute a language that comes out of the abstract but still deals with the landscape and feeling of the streets. Last year I met Dr. David Anfam, a renowned scholar in the field of Abstract-Expressionism - and who wrote for my book 'Insomnia and the Greenhouse'. We had long conversations about the paintings of Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Franz Kline, etc and why those painters are still very relevant to us today. For example Franz Kline - you can see how the photographer Aaron Siskind translated the language of the paintings of Kline into photographic images that he took from the street cracks, road lines, peeled off advertisement, dirt and he even took pictures of the paintings of Kline. To see how this draws back to my own work is very interesting to see. As a student I was very influenced by Willem de Kooning who moved from the Netherlands to the United States and came under the influence of Abstract-Expressionism without forgetting his European roots.

This exhibition is a high point of a body of work that was shown last year at Marlborough Contemporary, London (CHICANE) at Friedman Benda Gallery, New York (APEX) and Gallery Greta Meert, Brussels (YAW). I also want to recall that it is an honor as a Belgian artist to open the new space of Baton Gallery!

Perhaps you can explain the title ZYLON?

'ZYLON' is a term that describes a liquid that is being used for many applications. It has more strength than Kevlar and it has great thermal stability, which makes it inflammable. In the Formula 1 they use it to create the cabin in which the driver sits because it creates a safe environment for the driver. The use of the Formula 1 vocabulary connects back to the other exhibitions I did last year: CHICANE, APEX, YAW. The way how the street has been pictured from Mondrian's 'broadway boogie woogie' to Walker Evans, William Eggleston and even Rene Magritte keeps helping me moving this theme forward. One of the bigger paintings in the exhibition incorporates the 'Madonna' of Jean Fouquet and mixes it with motifs from the *Torque* and *Birds* series.

Would you mind talking about the process of making the works for the exhibition at Gallery Baton?

I start with a digital design that has been sampled together from previous work. The digital sampling process started last year and moves away from the photographic source. Then I draw the image onto the canvas. I always paint the light tones first because they give me the freedom to make changes whenever I want. Sometimes the light tones frustrate me because you don't see the image appear but they do make sure that I am focusing on the global image. The bolder colors are painted in the end and then the image comes into being which is like putting the cherry on the pie.

What next?

At the end of January I am having a solo show at Figge Von Rosen Gallery Cologne (Germany) and also a solo exhibition by the end of June at Marlborough Contemporary London (UK). I also partake in a couple of group shows which are on view now: 'COLLECTIE XXXIII', Museum for Contemporary Art (Antwerp, Belgium) 'Museum to scale', Royal Museum of Fine Arts (Brussels, Belgium), 'First we take The Hague, then we take Berlin', Embassy of Belgium (The Hague, The Netherlands).

Then I am also working on two books which will come out later this year. One book is with Kay Heymer who is a critic/curator from Museum Kunstpalast Dusseldorf. The other book is with John Welchman who wrote for my monograph 'CRACK' and who will explain in the upcoming monograph why I actually paint the street.

I am also currently involved in a couple of public projects where I am creating an intervention for the architecture.

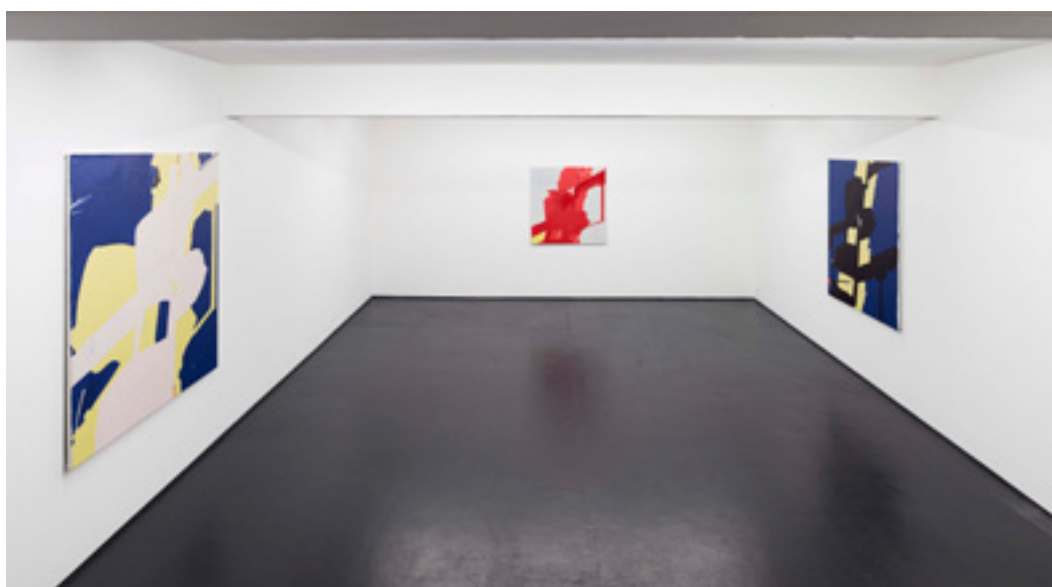
Armco

Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (Germany)

01.02 - 29.03.2014

99

Armco, much like the other exhibitions included in *TRACK*, showed a fresh side of Koen van den Broek's work. It was indeed the first time he presented to German viewers this new series of paintings he had been working on since 2013, and which can be described as a radical shift towards abstraction.



Armco
Installation views
at Figge von Rosen
Galerie

Insomnia and the Greenhouse

Friedman Benda Gallery, New York (United States)
15.09 - 22.10.2011

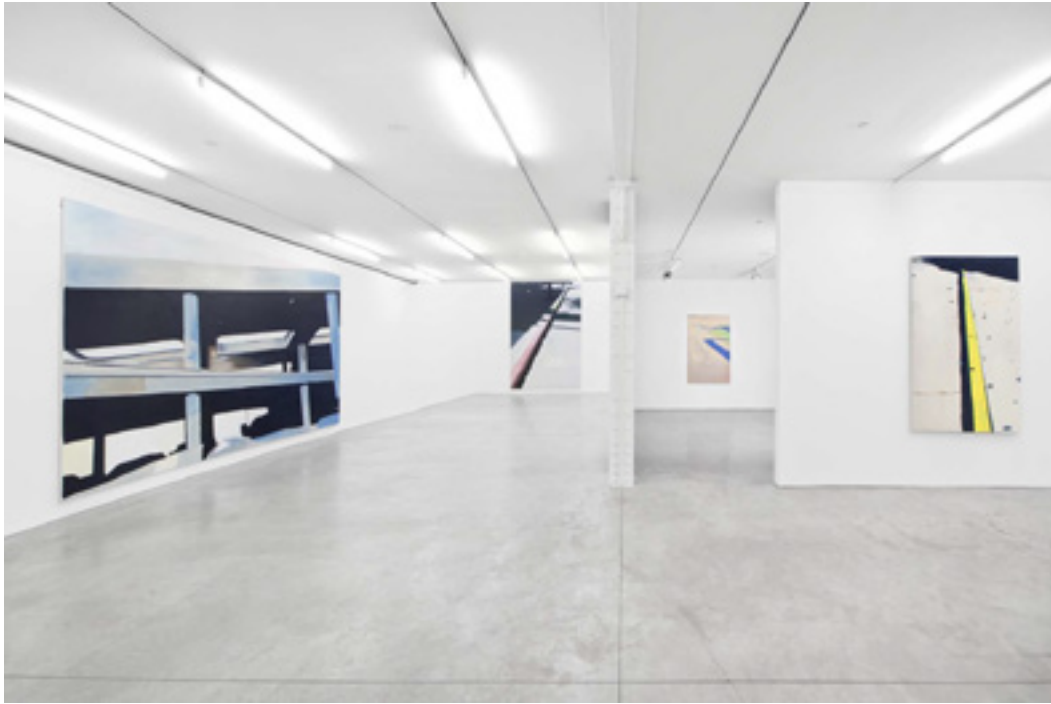
Insomnia and the Greenhouse was Koen van den Broek's first solo show in the United States. It is of considerable importance as it presented the full range of his oeuvre and led to the publication of a book also named *Insomnia and the Greenhouse* in 2013.

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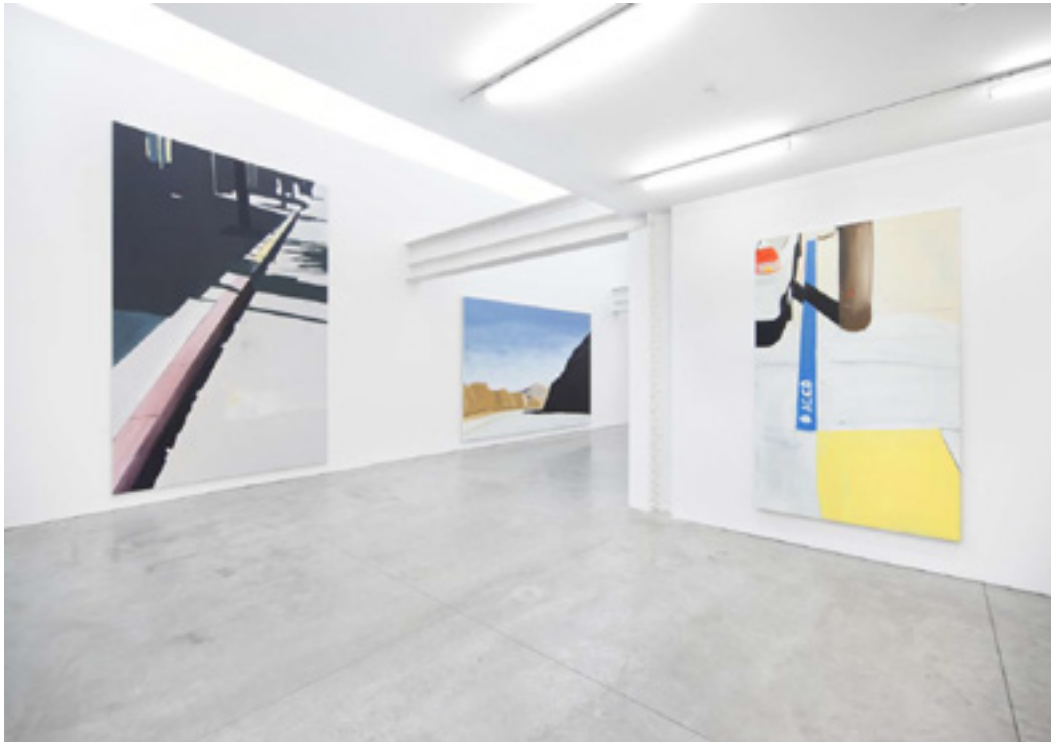
The *Insomnia* works, executed in Antwerp, are monumental, their grand-scale and various perspectives are reminiscent of film takes, or camera positions. In *No Service*, an enormous mountain looms within a seemingly shifting foreground and distance, and the viewer has to continuously re-adjust focus between the virtuosity of painted brushwork and the dominance of an over-arching image.

The *Greenhouse* works, including *Star Island #1* are more intimate works, nuanced paintings, executed during the artist's residence in Williamsburg, New York.

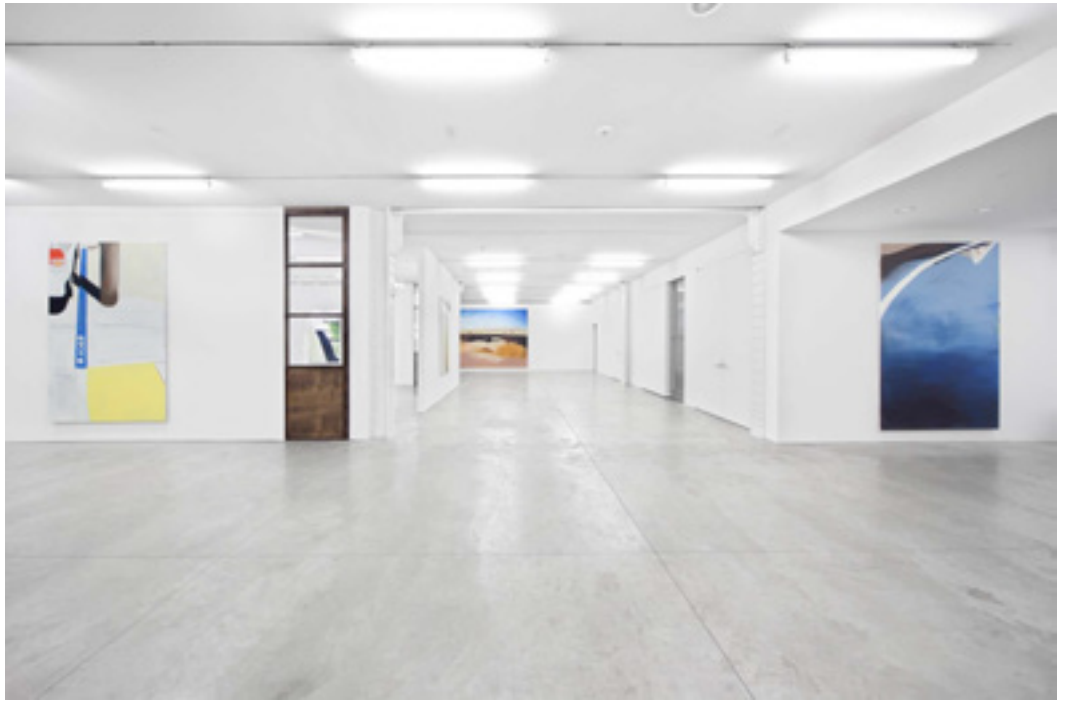
Koen van den Broek built a real greenhouse at Friedman Benda for the show.



102



*Insomnia and the
Greenhouse*
Installation views
at Friedman Benda
Gallery



*Insomnia and the
Greenhouse*
Installation views
at Friedman Benda
Gallery



No Service, 2011
Oil on canvas
266 x 400 cm
Jan de Nul Collection



Star Island #1, 2011
Oil on canvas
150 x 100 cm

106 The next pages are an article on *Insomnia and the Greenhouse*, published in the magazine Gallery Guide.

GALLERY GUIDE



\$5.50 SEPTEMBER 2011
Koen van den Broek at Friedman Benda

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____. "Koen van den Broek: Insomnia & the Greenhouse." *Gallery Guide*, September 2011.

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ON THE COVER

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK*Insomnia & the Greenhouse*

On view September 15-October 22, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 15 from 6-8pm

FRIEDMAN BENDA

515 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001

212-239-8700 | www.friedmanbenda.com

On September 15, Friedman Benda will open Belgian artist, Koen van den Broek's first solo exhibition in the United States. A reception will be held for the artist, on September 15, from 6-8pm at Friedman Benda, 515 West 26th Street.

In a series of breakthrough exhibitions over the past decade, van den Broek has established a reputation as a major force in Antwerp and as one of the leading painters of his generation in Europe.

Van den Broek's work transforms seemingly familiar images into compelling contemplations of surface, line, and technique. His paintings depict shadows, cracks, fragments of architecture and generic landscapes, but reverberate with presence, traces of human encounters, suspense and imminence. Though devoid of people or explicit narrative, he suggests experience by both layering and disconnecting colors, marks, perspectives and planes.

"Village Park #2," 2011, oil on belgian linen, 70.87 x 47.24 inches



"Village Park," 2011, oil on belgian linen, 70.87 x 47.24 inches



—. "Koen van den Broek: Insomnia & the Greenhouse." *Gallery Guide*, September 2011.

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"Tularose Drive, Silverlake," 2011,
oil on belgian linen, 157.5 x 118.11 inches



It is this range of perceptual possibilities and spatial opportunities that is the primary subject of his work.

Van den Broek takes road trips and frames ideas in on-going photographic diaries. Impressions of journeys are remembered, re-imagined and re-experienced. Contours are lost and edges are obscured. Line and form correlate only vaguely to reality and the world in the painting corresponds not to any place of origin but to the artist's vision.

Insomnia and the Greenhouse presents the full range of van den Broek's oeuvre.

The *Insomnia* works, executed in Antwerp, are monumental, their grand-scale and various perspectives are reminiscent of film takes, or camera positions. In "No Service," an enormous mountain looms within a seemingly shifting foreground and distance and the viewer has to continuously re-adjust focus between the virtuosity of painted brushwork and the dominance of an over-arching image.

The *Greenhouse* works, including *Star Island #1* are more intimate works, nuanced paintings, executed during the artist's residence in Williamsburg, New York.

Van den Broek (b.1973) lives and works in Schilde, Belgium. He has a Bachelor in Engineer Architecture, and studied at The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, the Academy of Visual Arts St. Joost, Breda, and the Higher

Institute of Fine Arts Flanders, Antwerp. He is currently an instructor at the MAD faculty in Belgium.

The artist's work is in significant private collections as well as the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Astrup Fearnley Museet for Modern Kunst, Oslo; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle; Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Seoul. Van den Broek is currently in two museum exhibitions in Antwerp, at the MAS and at the MHKA. In 2008, van den Broek collaborated with John Baldessari on "This an Example of That," an exhibition at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht. In 2009, he was the subject of an extensive retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK).

For inquiries, contact jennifer@friedmanbenda.com, or see gallery website.

ON THE COVER

Koen van den Broek (Belgian, b. 1973) "Hollywood Boulevard," 2011, oil on belgian linen, 104.72 x 157.48 inches

____. "Koen van den Broek: *Insomnia & the Greenhouse*." *Gallery Guide*, September 2011.

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110 This article in Modern Painters was also published in September 2011, in connexion with the show.

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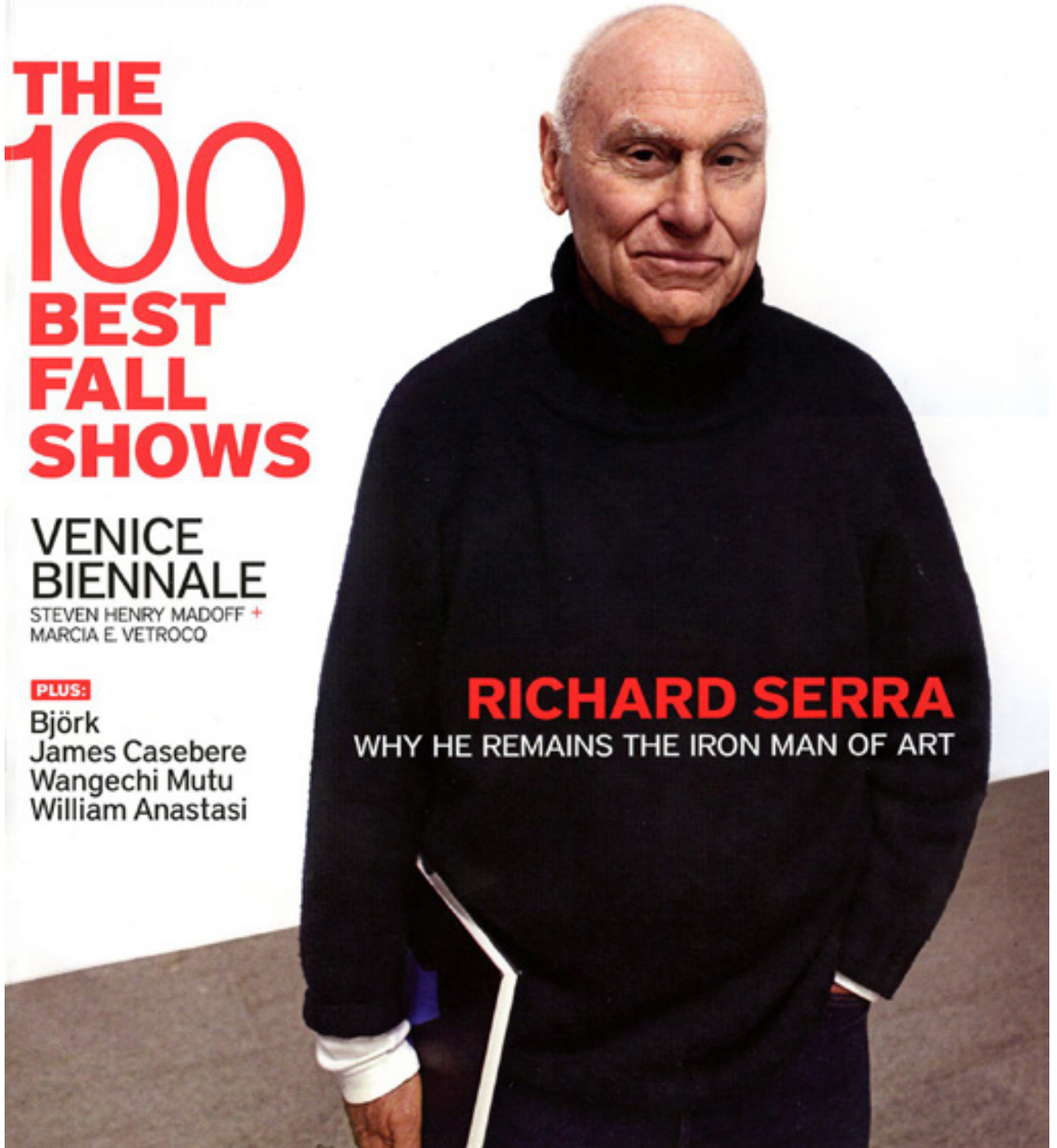
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RICHARD SERRA

WHY HE REMAINS THE IRON MAN OF ART



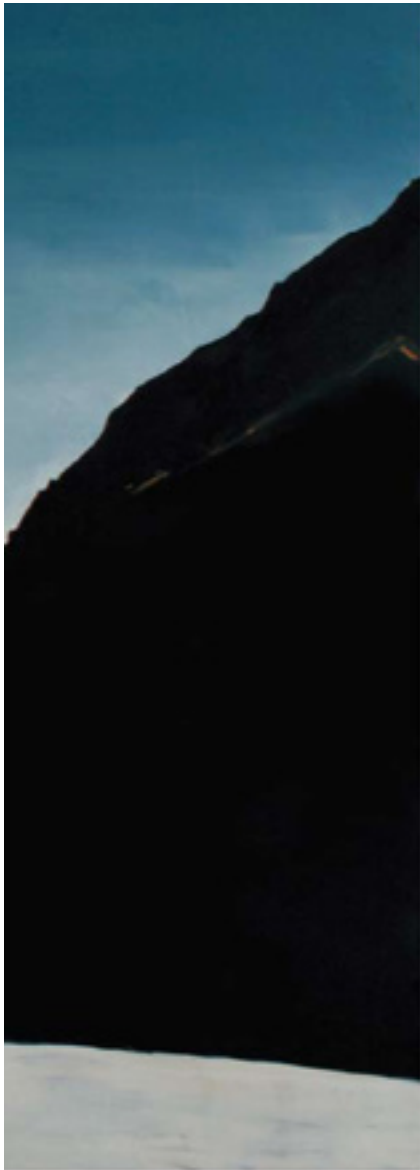


PAINTING THE TRACES

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK FINALLY
GETS HIS DEBUT IN AMERICA.

by Meghan Dailey

KOEN VAN DEN BROEK: OPPOSITE; LAUREN LANCASTER



ABOVE:
No Service, 2011. Oil on canvas,
105 x 157½ in.

RIGHT:
Koen van den Broek at Friedman
Benda Gallery in New York.

"PEOPLE IN BELGIUM ALWAYS ASK ME, 'Is your own country not good enough?' They wonder why I always have to go so far," says Koen van den Broek. "I need the distance." Since the late 1990s, the 38-year-old painter, who lives near Antwerp, has behaved a lot like a tourist, making road trips across the U.S. and taking countless photographs of the scenery he passes through. The locations he records are hardly the stuff of picture postcards or even vacation snapshots—unless you consider the red-painted curb of a no-parking zone in Burbank a cultural attraction. The purpose of these images, mostly Polaroids, is to serve as aides-mémoire that Van den Broek refers to when making his semiabstract paintings. The finished compositions are typically built up from simplified elements—lines and flattened planes of color—a process that results in fluid edges between the abstract and real, and in images that often look nothing like the photos from which they are derived. The paintings depict unpeopled infrastructure and landscapes: crisscrossing freeway bridges, the S-curve of a suburban street, an endless length of sun-baked highway. This is America viewed from the car.

California has been a favorite and frequent destination for Van den Broek—he briefly lived in L.A.—and, unsurprisingly, roads and their boundaries are recurring motifs. His gaze is often grounded, literally, as he picks out what lies underfoot: the cracked geometry of a sidewalk, sloping gutters, and especially curbs. In San Francisco, the first American city he visited, he was drawn to the red-, blue-, yellow-, and green-painted concrete borders. He admired the way "each color designated something" and appreciated how their rectangular shapes suggested John McCracken's plank sculptures. "You get a lot of information just from the fragment."

Structures, whether in parts or whole, have long fascinated him. He started out studying engineering and architecture. After two years he switched subjects, enrolling at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, but he has never stopped reflecting on the constructed realm. "When you think about it, the first architectural thing built was a road," he says. "The first thing to do is to get from point A to point B." He likes what he calls "in-between spaces"—a gutter, for instance—that you pass over when moving from here to there: "It's like a breathing space." Maybe there's more to see in those margins.



"I'm not interested in painting human flesh but rather what people leave behind. Nonplaces."

with their lingering suggestion of a person rather than a physical presence. "I'm not interested in painting human flesh but rather in the traces, what people leave behind. Nonplaces."

Van den Broek tells me this a few weeks before he is to travel to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn—not exactly a nonplace. He will work there for the two months leading up to his September exhibition at the Friedman Benda gallery, his first U.S. solo outing. (He shows with Figge von Rosen Galerie, in Cologne; Greta Meert Gallery, in Brussels; and White Cube, in London.) He has no preconceived ideas about the kind of work he wants to make but plans to shoot a lot of photographs.



Those pictures may end up inspiring paintings long after he's left New York; while he was living in L.A., all the paintings he made were based on photographs he'd previously taken of the Louvre. If the final direction for his September exhibition is unclear, he is feeling confident about the direction of his work in general, some of which has gotten more abstract and a bit less reliant on descriptive titles to ground each painting in a specific reality. He has also increased the scale. The Friedman Benda show centers on a group of seven monumental canvases—8% by 13 feet each—the largest he has made so far. His depiction of Death Valley in this format—one of several he has made in different sizes—titled *No Service*, reads like a billboard or an image on a drive-in-movie screen.

In fact, there's something cinematic about the framing of some of his photographs. He's even thought about exhibiting the shots themselves but decided that the process of translating them to canvas was crucial. "I got a kind of reduced feeling in my paintings that I can never reach in my photos," he explains, adding that the latter are more like sketches. He was initially reluctant to use photographs because so many painters were relying on them. Van den Broek doesn't mention names, but it's hard not to think of Luc Tuymans, another Belgian painter who employs photographic sources, although to more political ends, and Gerhard Richter, as well as artists of Van den Broek's generation like Wilhelm Sasnal and Eberhard Havekost. Ultimately, however, he found he needed new material and turned to photography. "I was looking for a way to get information," he says. "The Old Masters had archives too—sketches, studio material—that they always used to make a bigger painting." Lacking such a resource, he created one. "It's very important that I am the person behind the camera," he adds. "I'm not using a picture from the newspaper or the television. For me that doesn't work."


If his photos are tangible points of departure, then art history is a conceptual one. In particular he regards Henri Matisse as a foundational figure, noting that the French painter is cited as inspiration by a number of contemporary artists he admires, including John Baldessari, with whom he has collaborated. Particularly important for Van den Broek is Matisse's *French Window at Collioure*, 1914, one of his most abstract works. Vertical bands of blue, black, gray, and green compose a nighttime view that connects interior with exterior. "With a few colors and a few lines, he managed to create something. He was painting the sea at night, and what you get when you paint that is a black square," says Van den Broek, whose own intention is always to show us how we see rather than what we see. "It's a matter of perception, and how you transform it to painting." **UP**

FROM TOP:
Modernism, 2011. Oil on canvas,
105 x 157½ in.

Hollywood Boulevard, 2011. Oil
on canvas, 157½ x 105 in.

Two years after the show at Friedman Benda, Koen van den Broek published a book reuniting the works of his *Insomnia* and *Greenhouse* cycles he had previously exhibited.

Insomnia and the greenhouse. Exh. Cat. Essays by David Anfam and A.M. Homes. New York: Friedman Benda Gallery. Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2013.



KOEN VAN DEN BROEK

INSOMNIA AND THE GREENHOUSE

HATJE
CANTZ

117 *Space Out* was written by David Anfam and is part of the book *Insomnia and the Greenhouse*.

SPACED OUT

DAVID ANFAM

The stealthy magnetism of Koen van den Broek's art is inseparable from the challenge of ultimately saying what it treats. To recall a distinction made by Barnett Newman, we should not confuse the subject of these works with their "object matter." At first the latter seems clear: it is mostly the urban and rural aspects of America. Buildings, vehicles, roads, scenes of nature. That is, as one of his titles neatly puts it, *American Images*. Walker Evans, as it were, rethought for the twenty-first century. Like Evans, van den Broek—who himself uses a camera as a starting-point—prefers the downbeat, the casual, and the reflective. Then again, as with Evans, the simplicity is deceptive. One clue is that when the locale changes—to Belgium, Andorra, or Japan—we might never know it on the evidence



Walker Evans (1903–1975) (Main Street, from across railroad tracks, Morgan City, LA), 1935, film negative, 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.258.587), © Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), *Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow, and White: No. III*, 1939, oil on canvas, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 in. (44.8 x 38.1 cm), The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The Rita and Taft Schreiber Collection, © 2011 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International USA



Richard Sarafian (s. 1970), still from *Vanishing Point*, Twentieth Century Fox, 1971

of the paintings alone. It is as though van den Broek's vision were a universal ether dissolving reality into a twice-told tale of signs: two-fold because first mediated by photography and, second, the brush. In fact, one implication is that the hoary modernist process of abstracting from observation has gone awry. Instead, these fields and angles are semaphores, as non-objective as Newman's or Piet Mondrian's, in search of a subject. Here schemata seek or feign to become site-specific places. Van den Broek's craft proves crafty.

Knowingly, van den Broek has chosen leitmotifs laden with cultural baggage. Their ancestry is legion, the stuff of Americana. Genres, *topoi*, and clichés as large as the Great American Outdoors (especially the continent's West and its manifold myths), the road trip, the world glimpsed from speeding vehicles and neo-film noir haunt van den Broek's vistas. Behind his plains and planes lurk fascination and phobia as old as that of the early European settlers who stood, by turns appalled and awed, at the expanses before them. On the one hand, this prompted the condition—marked by apathy, bewilderment, and disorientation—known as “wilderness shock.” On the other hand, centuries later it underwrote the celebrated ending of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in which the eyes of the first Dutch sailors beheld a new found land: “For a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent . . . face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.” With their sense of disorientation commingling with a cool beauty, van den Broek's paintings have something of both these frames of mind. Their mood is as ambiguously open-ended as their viewpoints are often confined.

Equally American are the precedents for van den Broek's vocabulary. Almost at random, we might think of a lineage that runs from Walt Whitman's *Song of the Open Road* (“The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose. . . You doors and ascending steps! you arches! You gray stones of interminable pavements!”) in the nineteenth century to such latter day movies as *Vanishing Point* (1971), which pivots around the highway marker as a measure of speed and space. Likewise, the photographer Robert Frank's *US 285, New Mexico* (1955) is the ur-type for van den Broek's lost

highways—lost because they elude a larger geography to which to index them. They are, quite literally, road maps: the ground beneath our feet turned into a near-abstract cartography. *Yacht* (2011) is also the descendant of Frank's *Covered Car—Long Beach, California* (1955–56), both everyday things made strange, like Man Ray's *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse* (1920), by being draped. As for the cracks and the detritus, their pedigree seems as disturbing as the killer Son of Sam's letters ("Hello from the cracks in the sidewalks of N.Y.C.") and as calmly observed as the verse of Willem de Kooning's friend Edwin Denby ("The sidewalk cracks, gumspots, the water, the bits of refuse, / They reach out and bloom under arclight, neonlight").

More generally, just imagine that Edward Hopper's *Night Shadows* (1921) or *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) had been filtered through the eyes of, say, the Canadian abstractionist Jack Bush or Robert Ryman to become clean, well-lighted places and you would be approaching van den Broek's painterly hinterland. Its ambiguities leave us with more than the shadow of a doubt (the allusion to Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 film, some of its shots taken from a high angle, is intentional). Faint echoes of Color Field Painting and Minimalism ripple through these tailored tints and homeless representations (to recall Clement Greenberg's telling phrase about the netherworld between depiction and abstraction). Nor is it coincidence that both Hopper and Hitchcock used architecture to voice unease. Why else should the former's *House by the Railroad* (1925) have been a model for the Bates Motel? *Mutatis mutandis*, van den Broek's houses, from *Bronx* (1999) onwards, alongside his pictorial architectonics, are consistently deserted and, thus, *unheimlich*.

Yet van den Broek is of course a European. It is only necessary to compare his art with that of some Americans who superficially share his themes—Ed Ruscha and Wayne Thiebaud are obvious



Edward Hopper (1882–1967), *Early Sunday Morning*, 1930, oil on canvas, overall (height): 34 3/8 x 59 5/8 in. (88.3 x 151.4 cm), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney 31.426, © Whitney Museum of American Art, photography by Sheldon C. Collins

examples—to gauge his distance from their respectively advert-inspired and Old Masterly approaches. If anything, his is more an Old World aesthete's sensibility fixed upon a modern American scene. If it might be far-fetched to see the precision of van den Broek's touch as heir to the Flemish and French masters of the fifteenth century (*Madonna* [2011] is done after Jean Fouquet), his ubiquitous pale hues and white have more than a touch of the gray mistiness and pallor familiar from Maurice Maeterlinck and *Bruges-la-Mort*. Akin to the novel that Gustave Flaubert wished to write, van den Broek gravitates towards nothingness. And if it was Francis Bacon in his *Blood on Pavement* (1988) who looked downwards in the same way as he does, then René Magritte offers a foretaste of his penchant for *dépaysement*, cut-out effects, and repetition. Except that van den Broek has a typically post-modern fascination with intertextuality, even going so far as to make pictures based on his own canvases derived from his photographs. Bleached and semiotic, this is how painting returns inexorably after having died its many Duchampian deaths.

Perhaps the art of a traveling Belgian is almost bound to be a fascinatingly hybrid phenomenon. Like the English architectural historian Reyner Banham who wrote a classic study of Los Angeles and a zillion European émigrés and expatriates who have settled in the city, van den Broek is enamored with L.A. Scant wonder, too, because Los Angeles is famously a metropolis of dizzyingly interminable perspectives, where illimitable space and superficiality (in a word, "Hollywood") grow confused. It is also the apotheosis of anonymity—as Raymond Chandler memorably put it, "with no more personality than a paper cup" and in which his anti-hero Philip Marlowe felt "as hollow and empty as the spaces between stars." This is the kind of interstitial emptiness to which van den Broek's work is an ongoing testament.



Wayne Thiebaud (b. 1920), *24th St Intersection [Mariposa Road]*, 1977, watercolor on paper, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 48 in. (90.4 x 121.92 cm), art © Wayne Thiebaud/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Cut Away the Snoopy

Marlborough Contemporary, London (United Kingdom)

21.11.2012 - 05.01.2013

Cut Away the Snoopy was Koen van den Broek's second show at Marlborough Contemporary in London.

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The expression 'Cut Away the Snoopy' was used by the sculptor John Chamberlain to designate his notion of the artist's obligation to remove those recognisable elements or points of association that occur in the composition for the sake of pure form. The exhibition, which is named after Chamberlain's expression, marks a turning point in van den Broek's practice, as he pushes all remaining figurative elements towards the field of complete abstraction.



Cut Away the Snoopy
Installation views
at Marlborough
Contemporary



Detail of a sculpture
by John Chamberlain
at Dia:Beacon in New
York



*Chamberlain in Hol-
land*
2014
Oil on canvas
165 x 110 cm
Private Collection

126 The following catalogue has been produced for the exhibition.

Marlborough Contemporary

Koen van den Broek — Cut Away the Snoopy

Marlborough Contemporary London 2014

Koen van den Broek Cut Away the Snoopy

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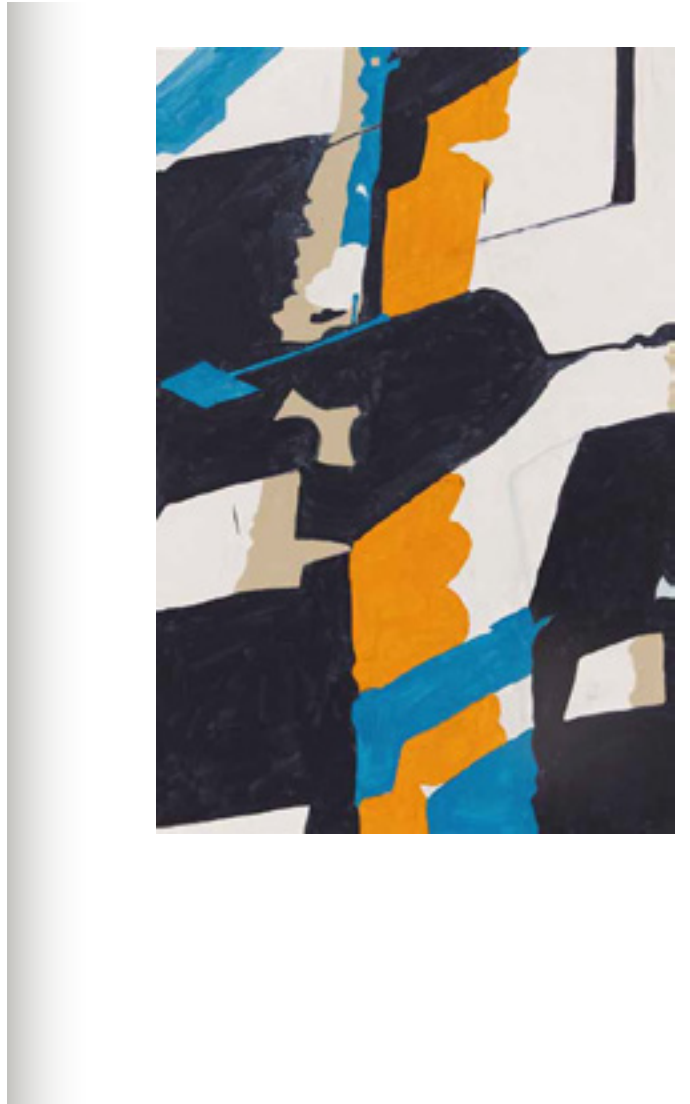
**Koen van
den Broek
Cut Away
the Snoopy**

Marlborough Contemporary





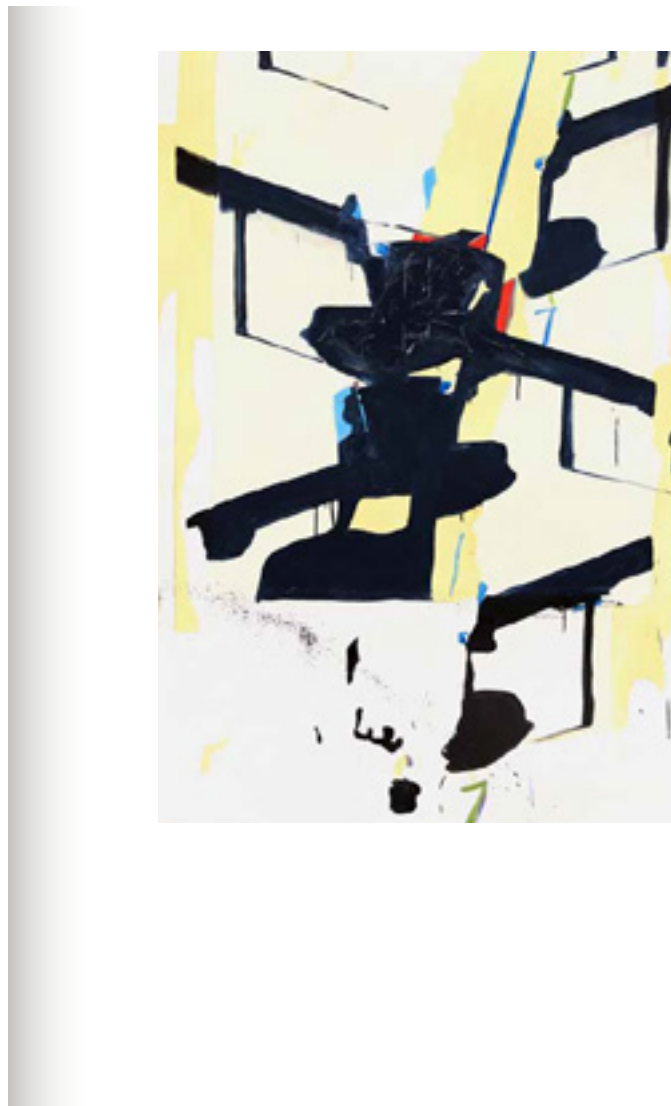
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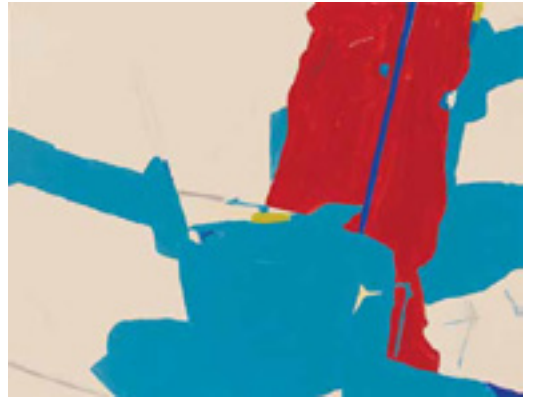


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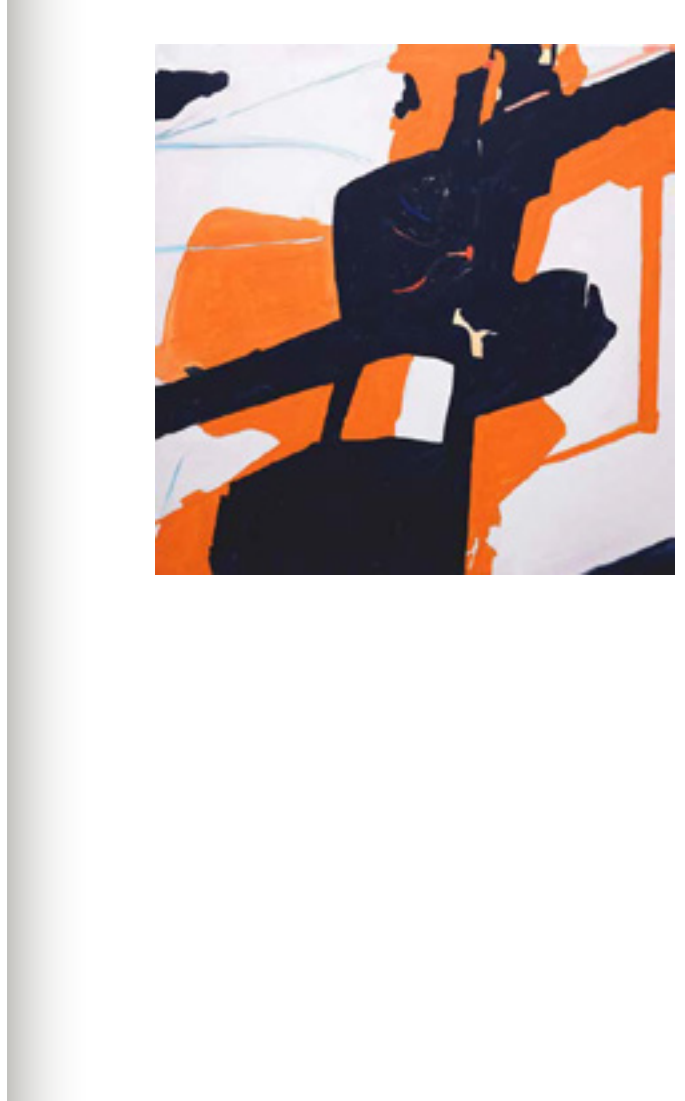
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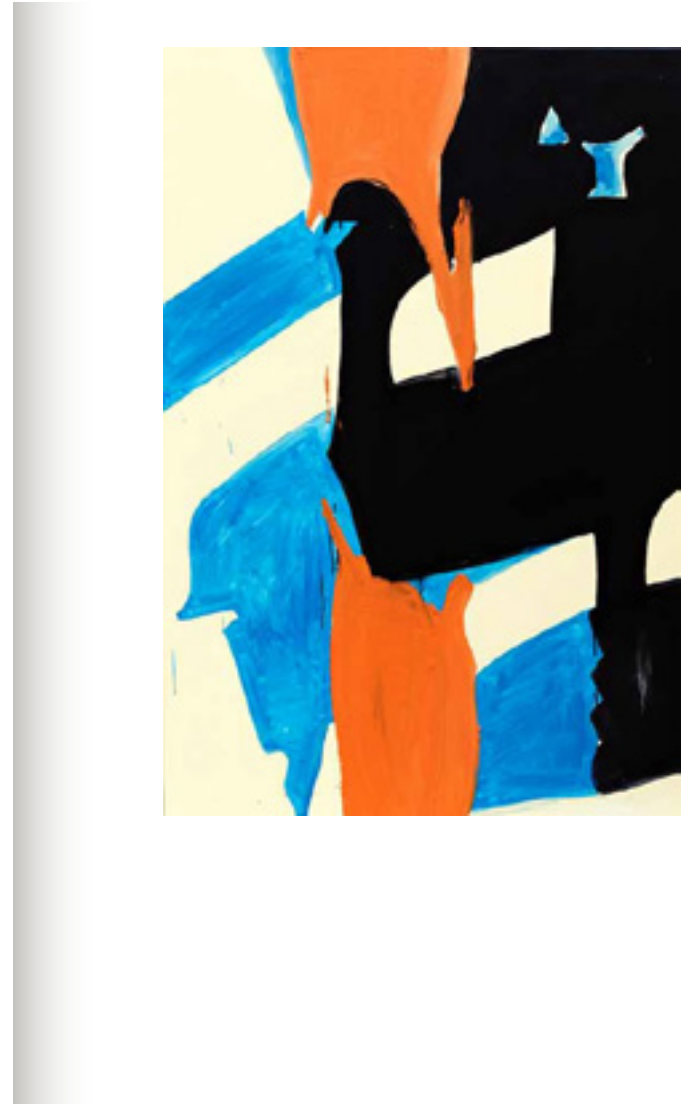
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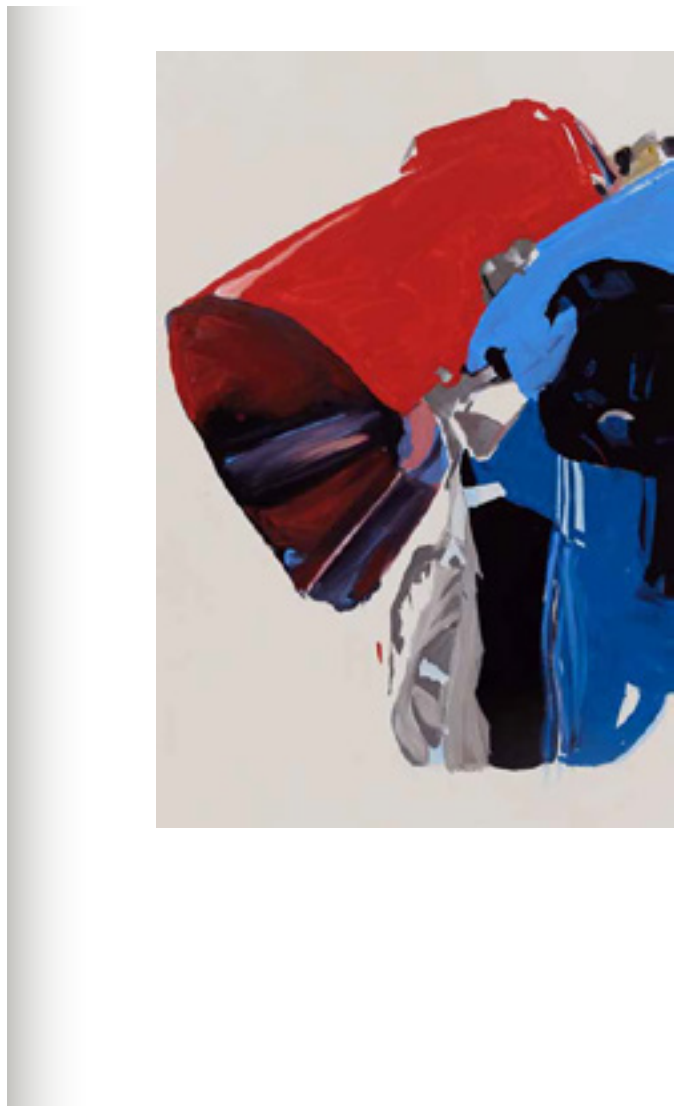
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in Holland**
2014
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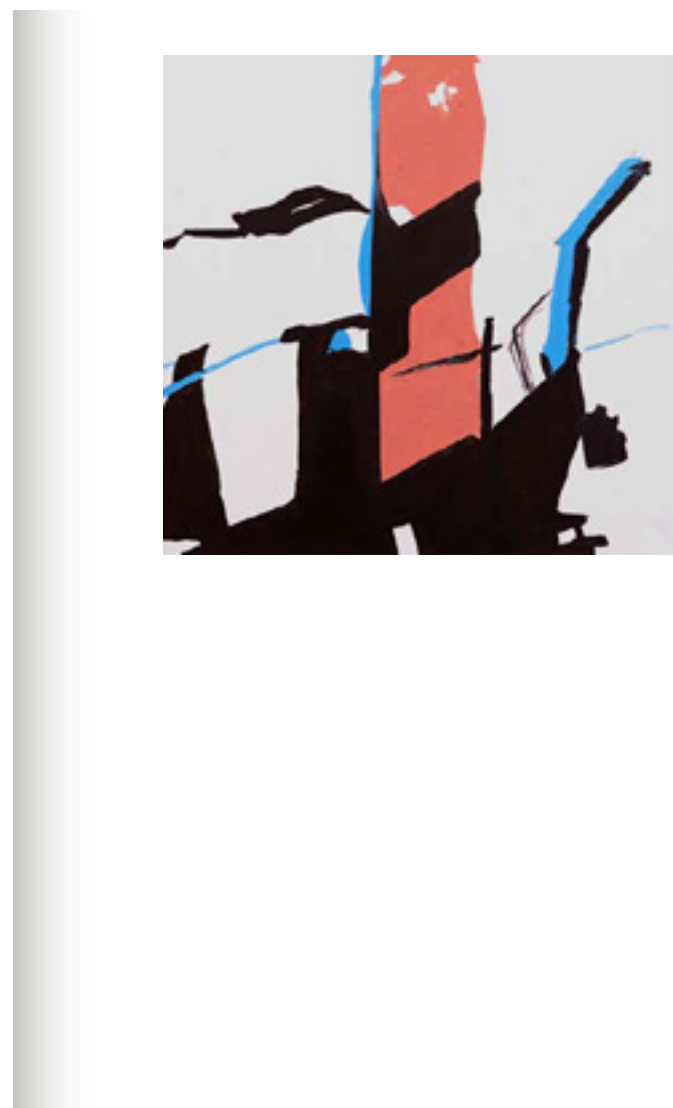
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2014
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Stretched
2014
Oil on canvas
210 × 140 cm

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2014
Oil and encaustic
on paper
250 × 200 cm



Dialogue

'References can be a pain' Koen van den Broek, John C. Welchman and Andrew Renton in conversation

John C. Welchman

For the best part of a decade your work, though often abstracting in appearance, was scrupulously wise to the street. You seemed to be working in the wake of those avant-garde artists and writers from the twentieth century who looked down and around in order to think through questions of motif and location and then bind them to form and appearance. I'm thinking of Walter Benjamin, who as Hannah Arendt once put it, 'bent down' in order to look, comprehend... and collect; or how the critical power of Proust (as Benjamin described it) did not 'toss the world up but fling it down.' Having dispensed with, or reallocated, the vanishing points meted out by roads and curbs, some of your new work takes up with figures of escape and freedom, referring to 'birds' and 'exodus': how has the focus of your looking changed?

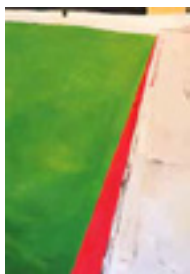
Koen van den Broek

The first time my work was described as looking down was actually in reference to the painting **Red Border** 1999, based on a photograph I took in San Francisco. I considered it a landscape painting, focusing on the end of a road, with a lawn at the side and a red curb going up. This 'going up' was important as I was standing in front of a hill. That's why in this case there's no sky. And not really any looking down. Maybe a bit like Wayne Thiebaud or Richard Diebenkorn.

When they saw it, my artist friends reacted as if I was starting to evolve towards abstraction. As we know, when there's a horizon, we call it 'landscape'. But in this case we could call it 'composition' – as we learned from

Barnett Newman. The red 'zip' rendered in perspective made me reflect and prompted the development of my subsequent border paintings. In these works you are looking down at the street where the minimal objects that run alongside it are there to grasp for free.

A second painting, **Eighth Avenue** 1999, is just as important. I was taking a photograph against the sun in New York city and to avoid the glare I lowered the lens. Again, I got an interesting abstraction based on the street, curbs, sidewalks and shadows. By calling it **Eighth Avenue** I took the abstraction back to reality.



Red Border
1999



Eighth Avenue
1999

JCW

How did this play out?

KVDB

OK, let's jump forward 15 years.

In 2010 I was asked to do a huge intervention in public space – 7,000 square metres on glass. It was on two avenues of glass each 200 metres long and 30 metres high as well as a smaller area. The complexity of this particular structure forced me to abandon my usual ways of working. So I made a selection of existing paintings based on compositions and colours. From those I took the elements that appealed to me. The building will be a hospital, so we made jokes in the studio, like red is for fire injuries, yellow for madmen, blue helps ward off fever, etc. This was a key step towards my new series. I was working like a DJ, sampling my own work, which I translated onto canvas. This led to the first show of the new paintings, 'Chicane' at Marlborough Contemporary. As the paintings do not refer directly to any specific place, I wasn't obliged to confront – or deal with – reality anymore. I built on this new freedom. Funny characters seemed to appear in the shadows – birds, figures, hats and other dialogues. I became a pareidoliac, a seer of figures in clouds, in my case in shadows. I'm still not sure if that's a good thing, but it's more fun.

JCW

What's interesting in this shift is, perhaps, less the signal difference between your earlier motif-driven work and the recent turn to self-'translation' than the continuity we can observe between both ways of working founded on a certain commitment to found subject-matter. The street and curb paintings are products of photographically mediated encounters staged all over

the world – in Europe, Mexico, Japan, but above all in the US – that give rise to representations of specific pitches, twists and turns of roadways and sidewalks, their bounding apparatuses and the ambient light and shade that shapes their visibility. Some of the work in 'Chicane' and 'Cut Away the Snoopy' appropriates formulations that have already been appropriated and then invests them with a more serendipitous or impromptu array of subjects.

What is relegated in both cases is any transaction with what Clement Greenberg referred to as the 'optical' or 'all-over' conditions of painting, things that might be seen as purely visual, radically non-compositional or defiantly non-iconic. So while some aspects of 'Snoopy' – the comics figure who allegorises content or figurative reference in John Chamberlain's suggestive turn of phrase – may have been excised in the current exhibition it seems just as important that other intimations remain or are deliberately, if whimsically, conjured-up.

Andrew Renton

Isn't the classic problem of abstraction that there is always a Snoopy? Some resemblance or association interpolated into the work by the viewer, despite the artist's intentions. So if we 'get' the source, or see something we recognise in the image, we feel like we've done our job.

But what's exciting for me in these new paintings is that they feel freestanding, detached from any source or origin. And yet they still feel intuitively like Koen's paintings, and reveal affinities with earlier work where source or location was more explicit. So how to explain this? It feels to me as if a vocabulary is forming, at the level of painterly gestures. They have

their origin in curbs or shadows perhaps, but now they only reference themselves, and there's a continuity that speaks from painting to painting.

I would even argue this is the case with Koen's continued appropriation of Fouquet's **Madonna and Child** (c. 1450), which does resemble its source, in a schematic way. But it's Koen's scheme, and the gesture is now 100% his.

KVDB

References can be a pain, but on the other hand, so crucial. There's no art without them. I'm interested in Franz Kline's references, and when Aaron Siskind photographs an old wall, which sometimes looks like a detail from the surface of a Kline. 'Cut away the Snoopy' is an expression often used by John Chamberlain. I like how it offers a procedure to make the right decisions, to go to the essence of the painting... and it's funny.

To me, painterly gestures are just a tool, while a vocabulary comes naturally. There are studies of the physical constitutions of artists and their connection with the work – which might make sense. But this does not mean that one has to pay too much attention to them. Decisions are made, first of all; concepts are worked out. Later these things might have an influence on a painter's execution.

JCW

In the terms Andrew sets out, Koen, you have played a double role: for, initially at least, it's you the artist rather than the viewer who has performed the act of re-reading your own work by reading into it. The main 'Snoopy' you have cut out is the relay between a motif (say a road

surface) and its apprehension through some kind of recognition. But there's no question that you have added in a few Snoopies of your own: projected or imagined objects (like the birds); surprising allusions (such as the silhouette of Fouquet's **Madonna**); even a 'style' which is self-referring and identifiable – surely the most aesthetically immediate of the things you refer to with the notion of 'physical constitution.'

I don't want to be too Hitchcockian here, but I find the situation with the birds especially intriguing. What you seem to have done, in fact, is to turn Pliny's parable of mimetic realism associated with the Greek painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius inside out. For instead of positing a trompe l'oeil realism of the kind that causes real birds to try to swoop into a work (Zeuxis' painting of grapes) to consume its contents, you have transmuted form that is partly found, partly assisted, into phantasmatic winged creatures themselves. In a sense you have fought off Aristotle (the key point of origin for western mimetic theories) with the shadows of Plato. Your 'birds' dwell in the ether of the shadow: they may actually have 'been there' in some 'original' street scene, flying or perching overhead and casting their shadows; or they may be entirely projected, read from the entrails of dark forms and shapes, and thus partly predicted (because they might have been there) and partly created by association. This is an intriguing situation that pushes much further, I think, than the normal associative scoring of pareidolia.

Of course, in the battle of deceptions related by Pliny, Zeuxis lost because he had deceived only birds and not – as Parrhasius achieved with his eye-fooling curtain – a painter's capacity to look.

AR

A painter's capacity to look, yes. But I think what's interesting about the process of painting here is that the translation from the street view to canvas is only in one direction. You could – at a pinch – extrapolate back from the painting to the street. But in the newer works, probably not. John, you talk of the witnessing, the 'being there' in the landscape. That's crucial to inform an aspect of the painting, but I have always felt that it was equally important to return to the studio, negotiate this foreign light of extreme contrasts from the measured light of Antwerp. Landscape and art history negotiated at one remove.

And, by extension, the work becomes about the act of revisiting the 'being there' through the painting. So it's not Cézanne in front of Mont Saint-Victoire, testing the micro-inflections of the light in real time, but an even more conceptual practice driven by painterly repetition, detached and deferred.

And that's one of the crucial elements, even more visible in the newer paintings – this form of what we might call committed repetition. Ethical, almost, to the extent that the subject is already less significant than the daily rigour of doing. Like Ryman committing to the white square and the infinite variations possible within that restriction, or Kawara's date paintings...

In the light of this, Koen, can you talk a little about repetition and how that works for you from one painting to another?

KVDB

Just a small reaction on John's remarks. I do like the Hitchcock reference; I'm a big fan. Shadows, reflections

in puddles on the street... Think also about the first scene of Coppola's movie, *The Cotton Club*, when the suspense starts. It is a shot of the street, the gutter, reflections, shadows, and when the camera moves up, in a distance, the exit of the club appears.

Regarding the battle of deceptions related by Pliny: it happens quite regularly when people see my original photograph where a painting is based on. They think it's already the reproduction! Quite amusing.

There are more ways of approaching my work, and as Andrew mentions, there are significant different rules in the newer works. Regarding Cézanne, and this is the opposite of what you say, Andrew, I did have this conversation with Catherine David about Cézanne's apples, where I did my best to approach the conceptual side of the work.

You also mention Ryman, I would like to add Willem de Kooning, not only because he comes from my part of Europe. Think about him revisiting several topics, like gates in form of doors, rivers, paths... And of course his women! And the illusion of freedom. As Paul McCarthy wants us to believe in some of his performances that it's about the American Expressionists. Revisiting different topics has always been important to me. Like the cracks, the landscape, borders, shadows and now, in a way, the **Torques** and **Birds**. And rather than a direct reference to the real, this is more a self-reference. Trying different compositions, colours, angles within the canvas is pretty new to me. It is a challenge Mondrian or Albers might have experienced. Except now we are in 2014, and have the beauty, and at the same time the burden, of all we know of art history since then. Also designing on a computer, working

digitally, is new. I do think repetition is important to me. It's like a frame I am working in. As Fellini once put it: the limitation of working in a frame prevents you from getting lost and superficial.

JCW

How does this tie in with your two most recent paintings which in a sense return us to the street with allusions to works by John Chamberlain?

KVDB

Taking photos is a continuous act while I am traveling, although my work procedure is different nowadays in the studio. Recently I was at Dia: Beacon, where I took some photographs of Chamberlain's sculptures, in just the same way that I would photograph a gas station or another detail on the street. One looks like a blood splatter, the other one like crashed cars. On the road again!

May 2014

Koen van den Broek
Cut Away the Snoopy
25 June – 2 August 2014

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Marlborough Contemporary

Sign Waves

Gallery Baton, Seoul (South Korea)

27.08 - 08.10.2015

Sign Waves was Koen van den Broek's third solo show at Gallery Baton in Seoul.

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The title of the exhibition "Sign Waves" is the main subject embracing a wide spectrum of Koen van den Broek's paintings. It is a notion which the artist has had in mind while he produces the paintings and is also a signpost directly and ideologically connected to each piece of work.

For example, he created the *Waves* series after seeing a painting of the Thames river by Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal) in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana (Museum of Fine Arts of Havana, Cuba).



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Sign waves
Installation views at
Gallery Baton



Waves #3, 2015
Oil on canvas
165 x 110 cm



**Canaletto
(Giovanni Antonio
Canal)**

*London: Chelsea
College, the Rotonda,
Ranelagh House and
the Thames, 1751,*
Oil on canvas,
95.5 x 127 cm
Museo Nacional de
Bellas Artes de la
Habana

Details of the waves

The Del

Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (Belgium)

6.02 - 4.04.2015

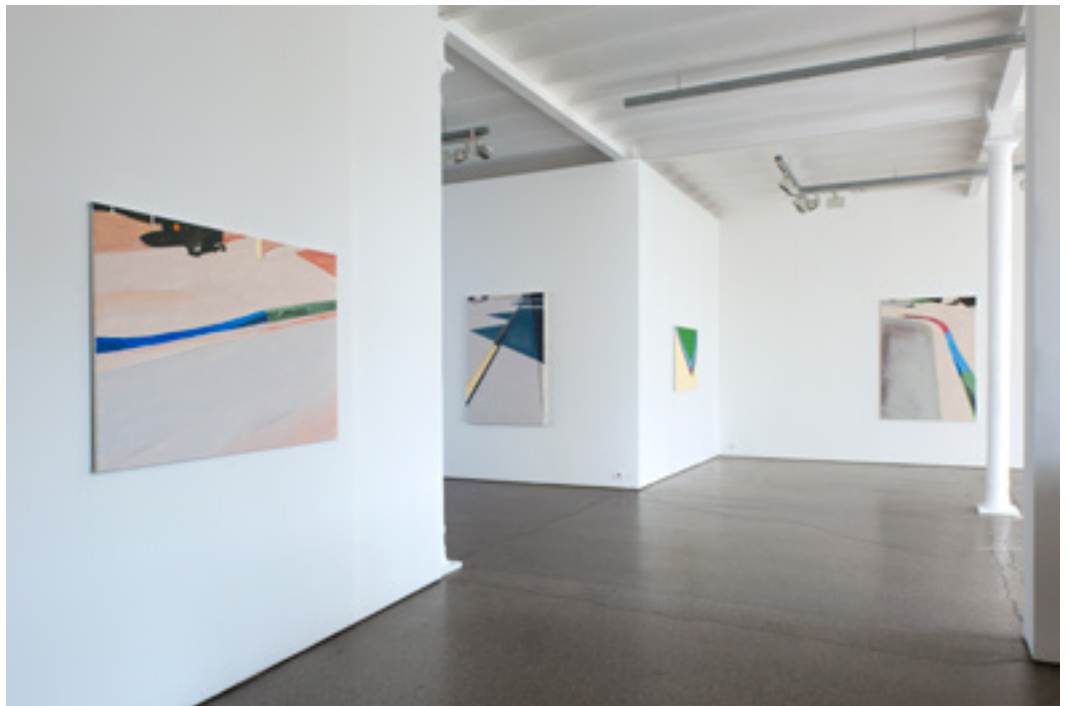
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Most of the works of this show can be traced back to the American hinterland, although the identity of the locations is often blurred, becoming 'common grounds' that serve his pictorial experiments.

The exhibition lends its name from the Hotel 'del' Coronado in California where Billy Wilder shot the movie *Some Like it Hot* (1959).



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ArtReview



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Welcome to Berlin

Koen van den Broek *The Del*
Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels 6 February – 4 April

If you are an artist and you happen to have success with a certain body of work, what to do? Some would keep on repeating the formula, cashing in. Others decide to take a risk and go for something different. Initially, the Belgian painter Koen van den Broek might appear to belong in the first category; on closer inspection, however, he evidently belongs in the second.

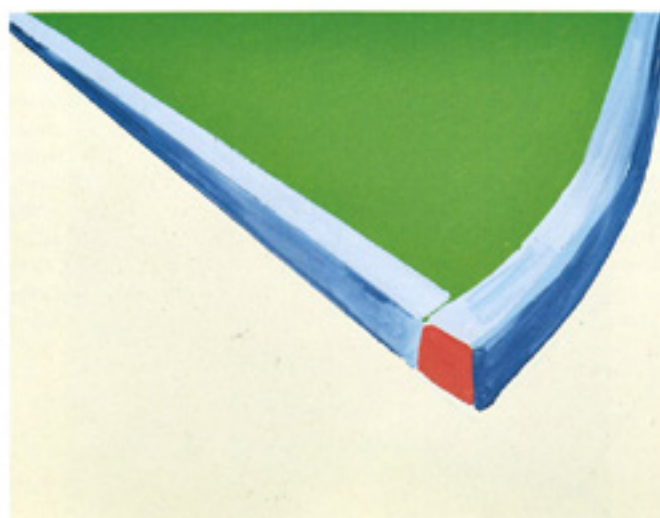
Van den Broek was only twenty-seven when he was picked up by London's White Cube. In 2001 he had a solo exhibition there, where he presented, among others, paintings in which he rendered fragments of generic urban landscapes, like cracks in pavements and kerbstones, in a style between figuration and abstraction. These works were based on pictures the artist took during his many trips to California, sometimes also from within the perspective of a car in motion, which reinforces the already strongly present cinematographic approach of his output. The work is not only grounded in the imagery of American cinema but also in the history of abstract art, making reference to artists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman, but also – and first and foremost, van den Broek being European, after all – Henri Matisse.

For his previous exhibition at Greta Meert, in 2013 – part of a trilogy of shows at, elsewhere, Marlborough Contemporary in London and Friedman Benda in New York – van den Broek reinvented himself by reassembling, scanning and then superimposing these images to create new ones. Verging on pure abstraction and occupying bigger formats, the paintings were very different from those to which one had become accustomed.

With *The Del*, van den Broek at first sight seems to return to the work with which he broke through. Again, the artist depicts his characteristic fragments of kerbstones and pavements. This time, however, the point of departure is the so-called 'colored curb zones' painted on the roads and pavements in Los Angeles to indicate traffic regulations. These can be found, for example, in the area of Hotel del Coronado (aka 'The Del') on the Pacific coast, where Billy Wilder shot *Some Like It Hot* (1959), an anecdote – explaining the show's title – that could not escape a film buff like van den Broek. This colour-coding system triggered the painter in him. As a result, he has made a beautiful series of compositions of these kerbstones with their various

successions of red, blue, yellow and green, like variations on the same pictorial theme. In these, the artist leaves out as much as possible, hence creating a striking balance between figuration and abstraction. In his framing, he also often opts for bends, which lend his compositions more dynamism.

As in his previous work, van den Broek still engages in a play with shadow – in *Levit Kahn* (2014), for example, only a fragment of the shadow of the architect's Salk Institute for Biological Studies building in La Jolla can be seen on a diagonal yellow kerbstone. This work, which is still a rather realistic depiction, chimes more with his earlier paintings, illustrating that, with this body of work, van den Broek has moved his familiar subject matter more in the direction of abstraction, while still not abandoning representation completely. The brushstrokes are more gestural, preceding layers of paint and stains can still be seen, while the perspective is deliberately flattened: a coherent development in a practice where representation is suggested through a play of composition, colour and form. Less, here, is clearly still more. *Sara Steynlyck*



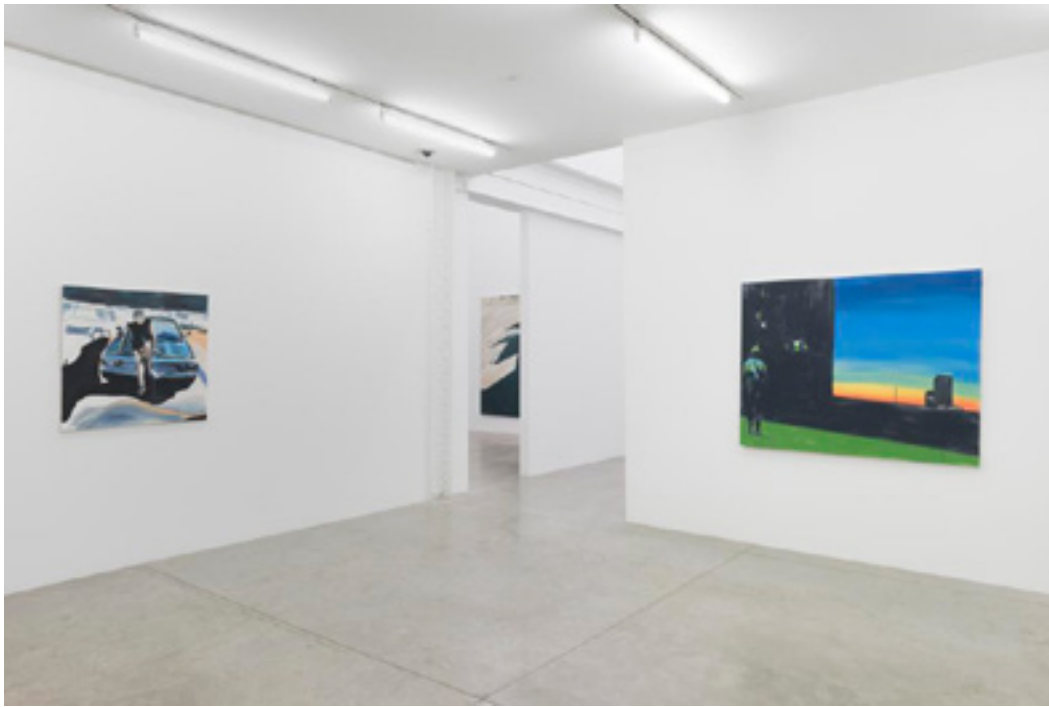
The Del, Kelly, 2014, oil on canvas, 88 x 115 cm.
Courtesy Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels

The Light We Live In

Gallery Albertz Benda, New York (United States)

25.02 - 9.04.2016

- 160 This exhibition marks Koen van den Broek's third solo show in New York illustrating the artist's evolution from the objective to the intensely personal. Suggesting the unraveling of a suspense film, the exhibition toggles between seemingly rational perspectives and entirely subjective points-of-view.



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The Light We Live In
Installation views at
Gallery Albertz Benda

New York

Koen van den Broek

ALBERTZ BENDA

515 West 26th Street

February 25, 2016–April 9, 2016

Paris, Texas, Wim Wenders's 1984 character study, opens as Travis Henderson (played by the inimitable Harry Dean Stanton), a rugged yet troubled loner in a desert landscape, and is on, and seemingly appears from, the road to nowhere. Taking this film as a departure, Koen van den Broek's exhibition "The Light We Live In" dives into the same desolate atmosphere. Van den Broek is known for his steep, highly pronounced pictorial planes that depict the magisterial loneliness of unpopulated highway lanes, cityscapes, and curbside detritus—the kind of non-lieux that one may encounter en route to total isolation or escape. The twelve paintings on view here hint at ominous narratives that are part fictional, part autobiographical, while the figures that occasionally manifest in these tableaux feel like intruders.

A roughly delineated figure peers from a small field of traffic-light green into the gloam of *Sunset* (all works 2015). The shadow of a crawler tractor in *Requiem* brings to mind the dramatic, fluid lines of Franz Kline or the fathomless blacks of Léon Spilliaert. The mint-colored bushes of *Vanishing Point* and the terra-cotta-red highway in *Furnace Creek Washington Rd* surprise and hold the eye, especially with their eerie passages of dry brush that, at certain moments, become precipitous fields of limitless, abstract space. Van den Broek's casual yet deliberate handling of paint is masterful and mesmerizing—his colors, deeply cinematic. Looking at the arid and claustrophobic environments he creates, one can't help but return to Wenders's antihero and his wish to move as far as possible from the constraints of modern life until, to paraphrase the character, every sign of man disappears.

— *Julian Elias Bronner*



View of "Koen van den Broek," 2016.

163 The following text is the translation on an article published in the Belgian newspaper *De Morgen*, regarding *The Light We Live In*.

Painter Koen van den Broek, with new work in New York and at the Flanders Opera

By Els Maes

Even as a lapsed art student, Belgium was too small for painter Koen van den Broek (42). His canvases depict urban landscapes that are just as much at home in Seoul, London or New York. For the first time, human figures are starting to enter his frame. “You don’t realize how conservative the art world can be until you start taking radical steps.”

“Walks in the woods?”

The words are met with hilarity, around 2 o’clock at night.

“He really said that?”

He really said that. Fourteen hours earlier, during the formal part of the interview. I’d asked Koen van den Broek how he manages to stay sane while commuting between 5 galleries on 3 continents, a studio in Antwerp, a house in Korea.

Mostly, by trying to spend a lot of time with his family, he said. Just getting away for a bit. To the ocean, with the kids. And for walks in the woods.

“Koen hates going for walks,” laughs Femke Vandenbosch, Koen van den Broek’s girlfriend and studio manager. “But it’s true that we try to find a balance. Sometimes there’s family life and tranquility. And sometimes there’s this.”

This is a crowded table in a Greek restaurant in New York. A cluster of friends and acquaintances – art collectors, architects, gallery owners, opera directors, journalists. An evening filled with hugs and drunken speeches and glasses of red wine that tumble into the lap of Geert De Proost of Flanders House. This, this is ending up in a hotel bar with a narrowed down group, popping a few bottles of champagne. And trying to find a late-night burger and fries.

Some pressure needs to be relieved. Tomorrow is D-Day, the opening of his new show, *The Light We Live In*.

We’d started the interview earlier that afternoon, at the Albertz Benda gallery in Chelsea, Manhattan, where I was given a preview. “It feels like I’m standing here entirely naked and exposed,” says Van den Broek. “Just before, a reporter from *Artforum* came over [*an authoritative international art magazine – Ed.*] He stood looking at some of the pieces for twenty minutes. No idea what he was thinking. It’s so nerve racking.”

Maes, Els. “Painter Koen van den Broek, with new work in New York and at the Flanders Opera,” *De Morgen*. March 13, 2016. Translated from the original Dutch on March 14, 2016.

albertz benda

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To lead with the breaking news: Koen van den Broek has painted human figures. And that's a milestone. "I know, I made grand declarations about how I'd never add people to my paintings. That's something I need, radical statements like that. But in the end, you need to keep things interesting for yourself."

Over the past fifteen years, van den Broek has created an impressive body of work consisting of pared-down, nearly abstract pieces. His paintings zoom in on curbs, cracks in the pavement, the shadow of a vehicle. Images we pass every day but no longer really see. They're based on snapshots he takes on the road, mostly in the US. His works are unoccupied: without place, without action, without people.

In his retrospective in SMAK in 2010, there was one single piece that included living creatures. I remember that piece, because it moved me, after rooms filled with concrete and stone. *The Farm*, an early work dating from 2001, depicts sheep and a pig, which seem to float in a field. "Human flesh doesn't interest me," he declared at the time.

"I needed to give myself that restriction," he says now. "Painting means making choices, delineating a domain, finding focus."

Getting used to the pain

In recent years, that focus has also come from outside. Van den Broek accepted a commission to work on communication for Kunsthuis, the merger of Opera Vlaanderen and Ballet Vlaanderen. He'll provide one piece for each production. "I didn't feel much of a connection to opera or ballet," he admits. "As soon as I'd agreed, the agony began. Opera is drama, sex, violence, emotion. Way beyond my comfort zone. My work has always been desolate, empty, cinematic. It gave me a huge amount of stress, but I like being pulled out of my familiar confines. If that doesn't happen, you don't evolve."

He and Aviel Cahn, the opera company's director, have become friends. "By immersing himself in opera, Koen's work has become more personal," Cahn tells us later. "More emotion has crept in."

Like a commanding director, Van den Broek guides our gaze through the five rooms that hold a dozen new paintings. "I'll get nervous if people start walking in different directions tomorrow." The former control freak says that he's learned to let go.

But not today. *Sunset* is the first – and for now only – painting to be revealed here that will be used by the Vlaamse Opera. Google the final scene of the movie *Paris, Texas*, and you'll recognize the orange sunset, the night-blue sky, and the green glow of a street light. An empty parking lot, a lone figure who has parted from his wife and child.

The classic by Wim Wenders continues to be a source of inspiration for Van den Broek. "But this painting might also be telling a different story. It's about distance, loneliness, letting go. To me, it could also be a soldier, gazing out at trouble in the distance." And so *Sunset* will be the campaign image for the ambitious upcoming opera production about WWI by Luk Perceval. A battlefield of human relationships or of war, the viewer will decide what he or she wants to see. As a painter, he only wants to provide images, not to impose too many words.

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Look, there's another human. Hood shows a woman on the hood of a Dodge Challenger. A holiday snapshot that Van den Broek took during a trip around San Diego. "I've never painted as quickly or as freely." The woman on the hood is the painter's sweetheart. But you don't really need to know that. "It's a universal mood. The romance of escape. The freedom of being on the road. The America of True Romance [a movie by Tony Scott, based on a scenario by Quentin Tarantino – Ed]."

An American art critic drew a comparison to Luc Tuymans, because both Belgians base their paintings on photography. "But Luc can give an entirely different explanation and meaning to each of his paintings. Condoleezza Rice's face, everyone can find something in that. But if I paint figuratively, or paint a person, all that matters is the composition. Light and shadow, that's all."

Perhaps he's noticed that I've been trying not to stare at him. During our conversation, Van den Broek can hardly hold his head up straight. It pulls towards his left shoulder, cramped. "Things got out of hand when Dimitri Verhulst and I were out carousing," he laughs.

Later that evening he'll explain that he suffers from cervical dystonia, a condition that affects the neck muscles and causes his head to pull to one side. It's likely that it will never pass. The cause – who can say – could be a cocktail of stress and genetic vulnerability. Maybe he truly carries too much weight on his shoulders. It doesn't restrict him from painting. But the pain takes getting used to, and even more so the feeling that everyone's staring at him. "It's tough," says Vandebosch, "For someone who is really quite shy." He brushes it off. Pain is what pills and shots are for.

And he's in treatment with physical therapist Lieven Maesschalk, a lone artist among star athletes.

Rebel

In his new work, Van den Broek also seems to sample some of his own classics. A bridge, a curb. But while he used to paint with precision and control, his new works seem to be more free, more adventurous, even cheerful.

"You don't realize how conservative the art world can be until you start taking radical steps," he says. "If you head into a new direction, collectors rush to buy an old, recognizable piece. It might have been safer and more commercial to keep repeating myself. But I don't ever want to become predictable."

He's no stranger to being slightly rebellious. At the age of 27, Van den Broek was at the top of the art charts, when he was picked up by White Cube in London, just about the world's most influential gallery. But along with prestige came a total loss of control.

"It became a factory, and I felt like a pawn. Meaning no longer carried any weight." Not without pride, he says: "I was the first artist to ever leave White Cube. That was just not done."

So is there any truth to the story that he once destroyed 300 of his works? With a big grin, Van den Broek shows me a recent video on his phone. A kind of IS execution video, with a piece of art as the victim and a gallery owner as the executioner. "Of course they hate it, seeing tens of thousands of euros being wiped out. But I just didn't think the work was good enough."

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A large diptych closes the show, “like a split screen in a Tarantino movie.” Furnace Creek Washington Rd, we read. And so the exhibition ends where it all began for the painter, on a trip through Death Valley.

“The sunrise over Badwater, that can’t be surpassed. The bright sun, the hard shadows, the endless salt flats. You can never capture that magic in a photograph.” It was then and there that he decided: I’m going to be a painter.

“Isn’t Belgium good enough for you?,” people ask me. But it just doesn’t trigger me.”

One of the paintings in this show is Car, it’s of his own car in a garage in Ghent. He’d never painted his own surroundings before. “I need distance. What I paint, is a dreamlike image. More illusion than reality. It’s like the vision I had of the United States when I was a teenager, shaped by movies and TV shows. In the same way that Roman Polanski, Wim Wenders, and Alfred Hitchcock viewed America as outsiders.”

“Movies, especially from the 90s, continue to be an endless source of inspiration. The Coen brothers, Tarantino, David Lynch, Kusturica. That visual language is still so influential.”

Jetsetter

During our tour of the show, the references keep coming – “that neon green, that’s the 80s, New Order and Kraftwerk.” But nothing ever touches on the artist’s inner life. Van den Broek steers clear of sentiment and psychobabble. “I don’t paint my personal issues or pain. The work needs to transcend the artist. Make no mistake, I do of course have a big ego. But in my work, it’s not about me. The artwork is more important than the artist.”

He’s an artist who wants to paint himself out of the picture, wants to be a blank canvas. “Which might make me a thankless subject for the press.”

I read him a quote from the February 20th interview in *De Morgen* that Jan De Cock did with Chantal Pattyn, his ex-wife. “These days, the only way an artist can get any attention at all is by acting like a pop star,” Pattyn mentions in the piece. “That just depends on the kind of attention you’re seeking,” says Van den Broek. “I get offers for the craziest things: reality television, photo shoots. But I have more admiration for someone like Martin Margiela, who remains a total mystery.”

“You know, that Goudvis documentary by Canvas created a myth. It made me look like a jetsetter, someone who just lounged around in expensive hotels. But that’s only one side of the story. It’s really very simple: I need daylight to take photographs and paint pictures.”

As soon as it’s dark, it’s time to eat, drink and party.

“For me, travelling is working. Renting a convertible and driving through the desert. Going to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to look at work by Philip Guston. Yet another visit to the Matisse room at MoMA here in New York. Discovering new artists in galleries. I’m preparing an exhibition in Seoul, with beautiful work by the ‘forgotten’ painter Philippe Vandenberg. An artist should be concerned primarily with art.”

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Living in a Magritte

Which terms to use to describe that his career is flourishing? We could write that his smallest canvas here costs at least 30,000 euros. We could mention that Elton John has one of his works on the wall, as does the king of Malaysia. That following London, Brussels, Cologne, and New York he also has a gallery in South Korea. And that the gallery owner gave him a house there. Really. "Things are going well there. I love the energy of the place, the sense of progress."

Van den Broek shows pictures of his modern house, in a green oasis, on an island. The design was inspired by The Castle of the Pyrenees, the floating rock painted by Magritte. "They'd already spoken to a top architect, everything had been arranged. It allows me to spend time there more often." Perhaps the exotic locale will inspire him to work. "Like Gauguin in Tahiti."

No, an artist doesn't have to waste away in an attic, living a life of destitution. Van den Broek had a studio built in Merksem, with offices for his assistants and his own screening room. Perfect for when you want to watch Paris, Texas for the umpteenth time and take pictures of freeze frames. "I have absolutely no interest in money. But I'm happy that I was able to buy a beautiful house built in the 70s [in Schilde, by architect Eddy Posson – Ed.], because I love architecture. As an artist, your eye is trained to beautiful things, shapes, materials. I'd rather buy a beautiful sweater by Margiela than by H&M. And I'm fortunate to be able to look after the people I care about."

Comfort doesn't kill creativity. "Quite the opposite. I employ two people, so that I don't have to work on emails or paperwork. To be able to paint, I need a day of total concentration. Which means I'm not accessible. If I have a meeting at 10 in the morning, my whole day is screwed. No, I'm not easy for the people who live with me."

Bluffing his way in

Does he ever worry about a time when everything won't be as good? "I've already lost everything once. Several times, actually." He dropped out of architectural engineering, got kicked out of art school and worked in a factory to get by. But: "In Belgium, there's always someone who will make you a Nutella sandwich."

His self-made attitude has an American edge to it. *Midnight Cowboy* is what his friend, the artist Guillaume Bijl calls him. "But without having to be a prostitute."

In his early twenties, van den Broek bluffed his way to New York. He told a couple of businessmen that he was about to break through. If they wanted to get their hands on his work at an affordable price, they'd have to buy now. "It wasn't entirely true," he says. "I needed the money to buy a plane ticket. But as soon as I arrived, I made my first connections and the train started rolling." Bluff, and guts. "In the US, that's rewarded. If you tell someone here that you're a painter, they'll say: 'That's amazing'. In Belgium it's: 'Oh, but can you make a living doing that?'"

"I never wanted to be a big fish in a small pond, someone like Raveel. Yes, people think you're arrogant if you say that. But becoming a star in Belgium means you'll get stuck there and grow stagnant. For an artist, that's fatal."

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Not everyone finds his bravado charming. Which he might have contributed to, just a bit, in the euphoria of his first success. Aged 27, he used the first money he'd earned at White Cube to buy a lavish BMW, "that I'd double park in front of the gallery, with lights blinking. That might have been over the top."

Is there an element of revenge to that, for the guy who was asked to leave art school? "Not revenge. But the sense that you need to work extremely hard and fight to accomplish anything. I take nothing for granted. There's a continuous search and uncertainty if you're taking the right steps. I've made my first sculpture; I'm not yet sure how that will turn out. I could go in any direction. But that kind of freedom can be extremely challenging."

Tough as nails

From gallery to hotel lobby, from water to wine. From a conversation about art to talking about family and children and the dog. How it isn't always straightforward to be travelling the world as a newly blended family, co-parenting two sons aged 7 and 11. And how challenging it can sometimes be for a couple to work together.

Femke Vandenbosch left her job as the director of the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent to run Van den Broek's studio. "Yeah, that brought on some impassioned responses. But not working together is entirely unthinkable," she says. Another round of wine, and photos are passed around of the dog, who was named after the artist Robert Mangold and recently peed in the gallery.

As cool and impersonal as his work may seem, his friends unanimously tell me that he's the most loyal, generous person. "Whatever you might say about him, the opposite is true as well. He abounds in contradictions," says Vandenbosch. A misanthrope who can't stand to be alone, is the most fitting description I hear. "I'm tough as nails," he claims, but it sounds like a little boy shouting 'I'm a knight' from inside a plastic suit of armor.

Thursday, gallery night. All that is beautiful, rich, extravagant, and hip is fluttering between the dozens of galleries in Chelsea. It's hard to poll opinions, since everything here is 'fabulous'. The Armory Show is on, and collectors from across the world have flocked to New York. There can't be a better moment to be pushed to the forefront by your gallery. "Without a doubt, Koen is one of today's most important European painters," says gallery owner Thorsten Albertz.

Belgians are on a roll in New York. There's the big Broodthaer retrospective in MoMA. New work by Cindy Wright, a friend and former classmate of van den Broek, is up at De Buck Gallery, a few streets over. And Berlinde De Bruyckere at Hauser & Wirth. Does the good fortune of 'the Belgians' – there's Tuymans and Borremans, too – pull others forward? "No, their styles are too dissimilar for that," says Albertz. "There isn't such a thing as 'the Belgian school'. Interest for Koen mainly comes from collectors who focus on abstract art. Especially on the West Coast, where people are interested in seeing a European's fresh perspective on California."

The following day, Artinfo lists Koen van den Broek as one of the five must-see shows: "A visual poet of curbs, gutters, and roads," their description reads.

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Over dinner, after the vernissage, the mood is clearly relieved. There's laughter and gossip. The pastrami at Katz Delicatessen is discussed, and sex, and the connection between the two – which eludes me for now. I've long put away my notebook.

The gallery holds an after-party at Mr Fong's, a club in the heart of Chinatown. We flag a yellow cab and go off into the New York night. It's just after midnight. Time for a restorative walk in the woods.

The Light We Live In, thru April 9th at Gallery Albertz Benda, New York.

UNGENAU, SMAK-collection in cc De Werft in Geel, thru June 5th.

Images at the opera

Opera Vlaanderen has been working with artists for their campaign visuals for a few years. Maybe the current poster has caught your eye, featuring a larger-than-life Othello in bondage gear – the work of artists Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari. "The most important thing is to grab attention and trigger a dialogue," says opera director Aviel Cahn. Earlier collaborations include photographer Carl De Keyzer. Next season, van den Broek will be the first painter to receive the honor. Both existing and new paintings will be used to illustrate all of the dance and opera productions that are part of the season's Borderline theme. "Our aim isn't to spell out the themes. We want to stimulate the imagination," says Cahn. Artists participate without remuneration. The program and accompanying images will be released from April onwards. (EM)

BIOGRAPHY

1973, born in Bree

Lives and works in Antwerp

2001: First solo show at the White Cube Gallery in London

2003: Part of the group exhibition *Matisse and Beyond: A Century of Modernism*, SF Moma

2010: Retrospective *Curbs and Cracks in the SMAK* in Ghent

Galleries in Cologne, London, New York and Seoul. Represented in Belgium by Galerie Greta Meert

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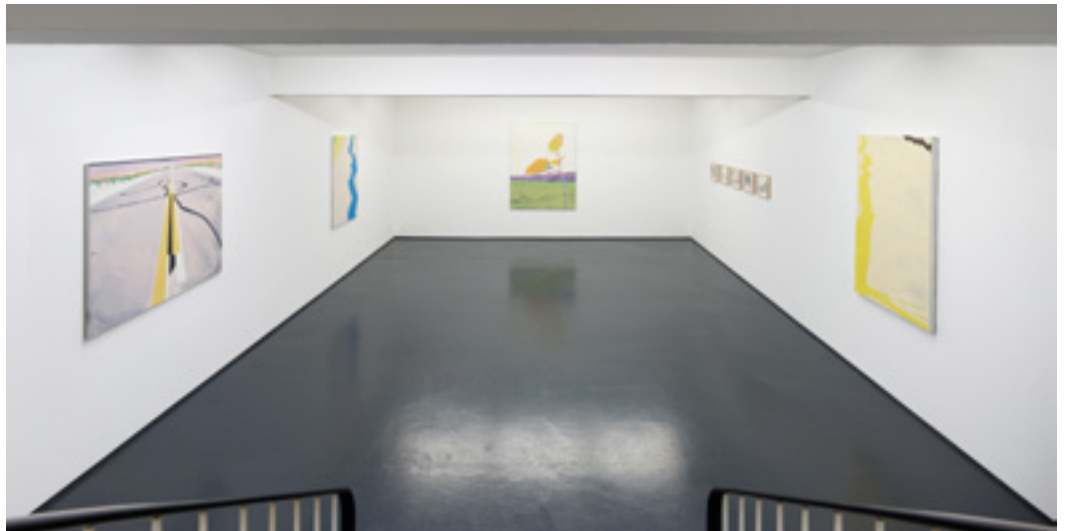
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The Dog

Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne (Germany)

09.03 - 18.05.2019



The Dog
Installation views at
Philipp von Rosen
Galerie



The Dog
Installation views at
Philipp von Rosen
Galerie

Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Koen van den Broek

The Dog

Opening on March 8, 2019 from 7 until 9 pm

Exhibition from March 9 to April 27, 2019

The artist is present

We are pleased to open our seventh exhibition of the Belgian painter Koen van den Broek with *The Dog* on March 8, 2019 at 7 pm.

In addition to a series of new paintings, we will also be showing charcoal drawings for the first time.

For this show van den Broek used photographs that he took during extensive walks with his Scottish collie through the landscape surrounding his house in Schilde near Antwerp. Accordingly, in the new paintings we see no more American city views or landscapes, no deserts, no motorway bridges. Rather, van den Broek paints his homeland: fields, meadows, forests, gates, paddocks, paths, a cultural landscape of the European West. Often the center of the painting is more or less a plant structuring the picture surface, which not only defines left and right, but also foreground and background.

For these paintings van den Broek has chosen a palette that is partly new for him. The colors are subdued, the light predominantly diffuse, as if the sun was seldom shining in Belgium. The leaves of the plants are yellow and partly have black spots, showing signs of decay, as if they fell off with the next gust of wind. With their reddish shoots, they look like plant depictions in Art Nouveau style and with their fleshiness they also have an erotic side, like limbs in nudes from the oeuvre of Egon Schiele or Gustav Klimt. All in all, the works are permeated by a moment of melancholy and fragility. van den Broek thus sets a signal for the finiteness of our existence. In contrast, the earlier works, especially the typical border motifs, stand for permanence and strength.

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With these paintings van den Broek by no means denies his pictorial-conceptual past. The interest in the photographic gaze and thus also the interest in relating the two media, or as a painter in dealing with the medium of photography, remain. The composition of the image continues to be determined by photography; the compositional decisions are made with the selection of the photographs. Yet van den Broek's new works achieve a very special, perhaps even mature, mood. He is no longer the adventurer "on the road" who drives through the American West with loud music in his car and tries to capture the sublime of this landscape in his paintings. Rather, he is a man who has learned to enjoy his home and who can see the beauty in the little things – a plant, a shadow from the fence of a paddock on his daily walk.

Of course, van den Broek will not forget or even neglect the American landscape and the great metropolises of the American West. In our exhibition they are present in charcoal drawings. They were made at van den Broek's home – again after photographs taken by the painter over the last 20 years – with coal from his fireplace. The line is correspondingly energetic and the appearance of the works correspondingly rough, reminiscent of charcoal drawings from German Expressionism. But van den Broek was not driven by the emotion that underlies these works from the early 20th century. His drawings are – in terms of content – just as conceptually dry and hard as his paintings have always been.

For further pictures and information please contact the gallery.

The Beginning

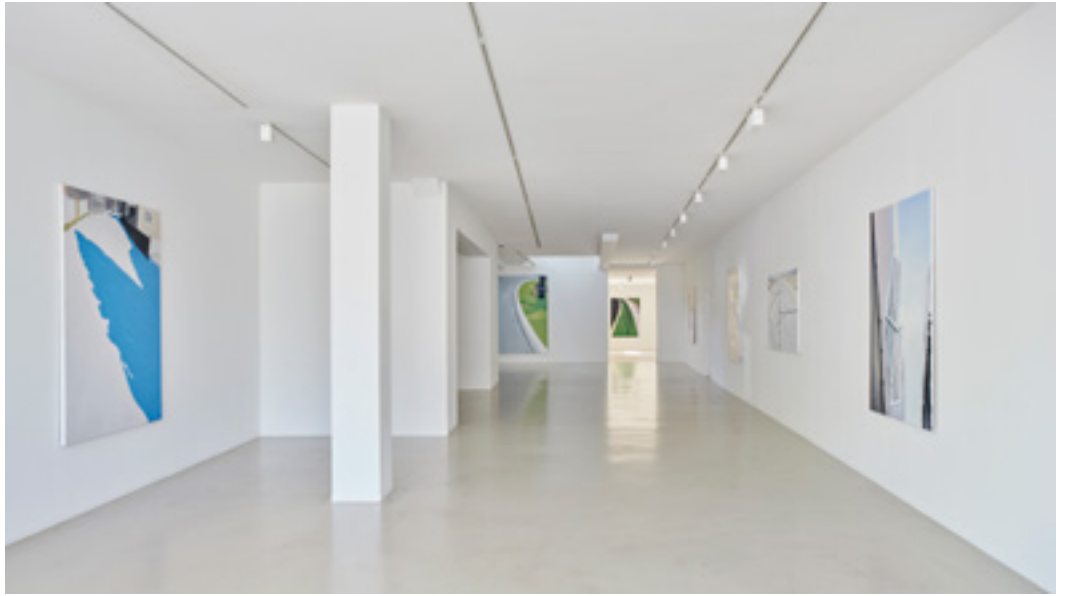
Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam (Netherlands)

24.04 - 13.06.2020

The Beginning marks Koen van den Broek's first official solo-exhibition at Galerie Ron Mandos. For this large retrospective, the renowned Belgian artist made a selection of his finest, most exemplary works from the last twenty years.

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While revisiting his older work, the artist discovers elements that he samples and translates onto new canvases. Presenting these new paintings alongside older works, he introduces us to the idiosyncratic works of curbs, cracks and shadows, contrasted with less familiar works of flowers and rainbows from his personal collection. Van den Broek tells us about artists like Bruegel, Matisse, and Mondriaan that radically changed his view on the landscape. *The Beginning* shows the artist's constant search for renewing the medium of landscape painting.



The Beginning
Installation views at
Galerie Ron Mandos



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The Beginning
Installation views at
Galerie Ron Mandos

Keep it Together

Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels, (Belgium)

07.11.2019 - 18.01.2020

For this exhibition, Koen van den Broek revisited some of the well-known motifs of his “cracks” and “hardscape” paintings.



Keep it Together
Installation views at
Galerie Greta Meert

In between Memory and Dream

Gallery Baton, Seoul (KR)

21 April – 28 May

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Gallery Baton is pleased to announce In Between Memory and Dream, a solo exhibition by Koen van den Broek b. 1973, from 21st April to 28th May in Hannam-dong, Seoul. Koen van den Broek has established his current growing presence by developing his own style crossing the boundary of the figurative and abstract, as one of the leading artists from Belgium, a historically significant repository of paintings over centuries and a pivotal place of the European contemporary art.

The exhibition also introduces a number of Van den Broek's new paintings beautifully depicting the harmony of nature and architectural features from his own viewpoint, insomuch as it can even have such a subtitle, 'Contemporary Idyllic Landscapes.' They provide unexpected composure and warm attention in contrast to the conceptual, intense and abstract characteristics of the other displayed works whose lines and faces have notable saturated colours and evident cracks dynamically divide up the given surfaces. It shows that the explicit statement, "To create a work of art is to create the world", by Wassily Kandinsky 1866-1944 is still available in the works of Van den Broek despite the gap of nearly a century.

[Video interview on the exhibition](#)



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*In between Memory
and Dream*
Installation views at
Gallery Baton

Through Romance

curated by Luk Lambrecht, Lempertz, Brussels

9 September – 15 October 2021

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Lempertz and Studio Koen van den Broek cordially invite you to 'Through Romance', a solo exhibition curated by Luk Lambrecht.

For the first time, an exclusive selection of works created in van den Broek's studio on Jeju Island (South-Korea) is presented in dialogue with recent works on canvas and a series on paper based on the architecture of Le Corbusier.

For this occasion, a large-scale mural by van den Broek marks the monumental museum like exhibition space, following the rich tradition of artists like Anish Kapoor, Ellsworth Kelly and Sean Scully, who have previously exhibited at the invitation of Lempertz.



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Through Romance
Installation views at
Lempertz, Brussels



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Through Romance
Installation views at
Lempertz, Brussels



Through Romance
Installation views at
Lempertz, Brussels

Selected Museum Group Shows

'Project Palace, a centenary'*Bozar, Brussels (B)*

01.04–22.07.2022

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2022 is the time to celebrate for Bozar. 4 April 1922, Brussels Town Hall: The date when the Centre for Fine Arts ('Palais des Beaux-Arts') was officially launched.

The judicial basis for the construction and the associated ambition of creating an arts centre had become a reality. The statutes that establish this historic moment are the starting point for centenary celebrations that begin with the Project Palace exhibition and a celebratory programme in April 2022.

Bozar, together with curator Wouter Davidts, has invited 10 artists to participate in the celebrations by producing new work that reflects on what an arts centre such as Bozar can and should be now and into the future. They put the spotlight on the arts centre today, yet viewed through the filter of the past. We invite you to do the same. Share their journey through glimpses of the long history of the Centre for Fine Arts - including the chance to view a number of works exhibited in the past, and selected by our artists, that are now returning to Bozar. But do not expect a history of the 'Palace' but rather an artistic retelling and a look to the future.

Project Palace is just the beginning of a whole series of celebratory events. On 4 May 1928 the exhibition rooms at the Centre for Fine Arts finally opened their doors to the public. A year later the public attended the first concert in the magnificent Henry Le Boeuf Hall.

Selected artists: Lara Almarcegui, Sammy Baloji & Johan Lagae & Traumnovelle, Lynn Cassiers, Jeremiah Day, Sylvie Eyberg, Liam Gillick, Auguste Orts, Annaïk Lou Pitteloud, Koen van den Broek, Belgian Institute Graphic Design.



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Project Palace, a centenary
Installation views at
Bozar, Brussels

photo © Philippe De
Gobert



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Project Palace, a centenary
Installation views at
Bozar, Brussels

photo © Philippe De
Gobert



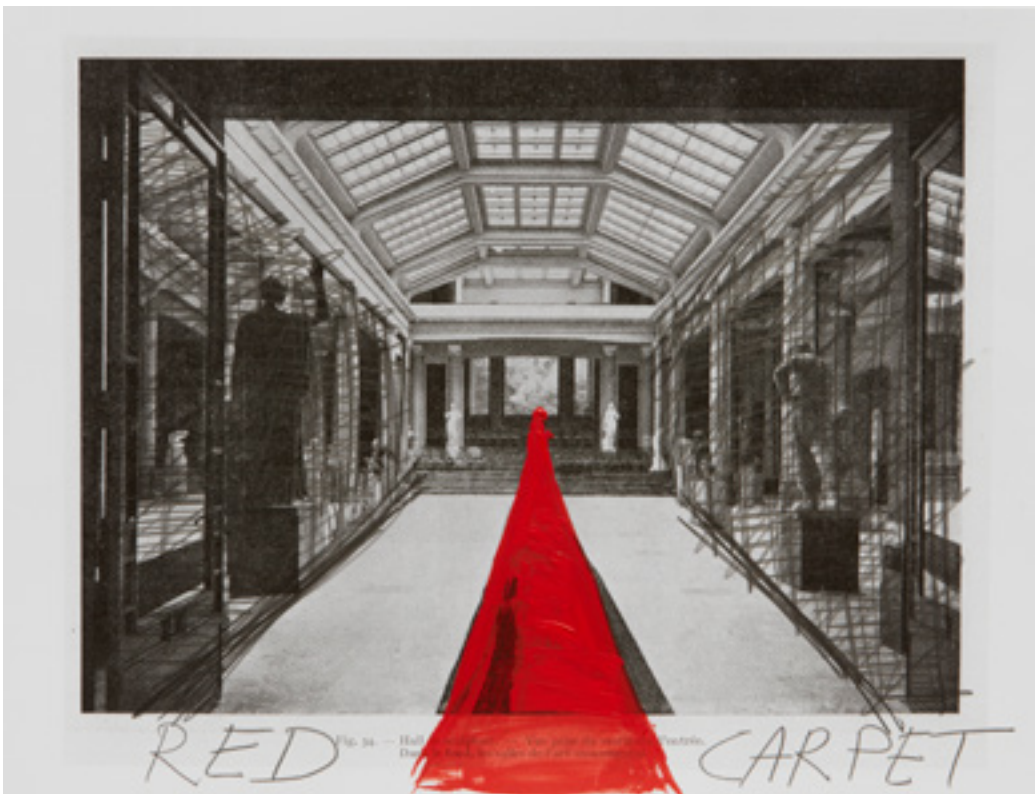
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Koen van den Broek
preparing works
for *Project Palace*, a
centenary at Bozar,
Brussels



Koen van den Broek,
*Out of Space II #11 –
 Hirst (zero gold art)*,
 2022
 29,7 cm x 39,6 cm



Koen van den Broek,
*Out of Space II #64 –
 Red Carpet*, 2022
 29,7 cm x 39,6 cm



Koen van den Broek,
*Out of Space II #35 –
 Satellite Louvre*, 2022
 29,7 cm x 39,6 cm



Koen van den Broek,
*Out of Space II #53 –
 2001_ A Space Odyssey*,
 2022
 29,7 cm x 39,6 cm

Selected Public Projects

Solution

Hofkamer, Heritage site, Herita, Antwerp (Belgium)
2017

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The Hofkamer is an 18th century Sala Terrena, nestled in the inner courtyard of the patrician house Den Wolsack. Its ground floor is known for having the biggest ceiling canvas painting in Europe

Its renovation started in 2008. However, the authentic wall and ceiling covering on the first floor were damaged beyond restoration. The entire space was therefore given a contemporary artistic interpretation. A competition was organized in 2016, which Koen van den Broek won. Entirely covering the damaged walls with new linens displaying his paintings took four months overall.



Solution
Views of the
Hofkamer

Sampled

AZ Sint Maarten, Mechelen (Belgium)

Inaugurated in October 2016

196 In 2015, Koen van den Broek was invited to work on the glass facade of the new Sint-Maarten hospital in Mechelen.

He designed a print for the glass sections based on elements from his paintings, which found a new healing function thanks to the architecture.



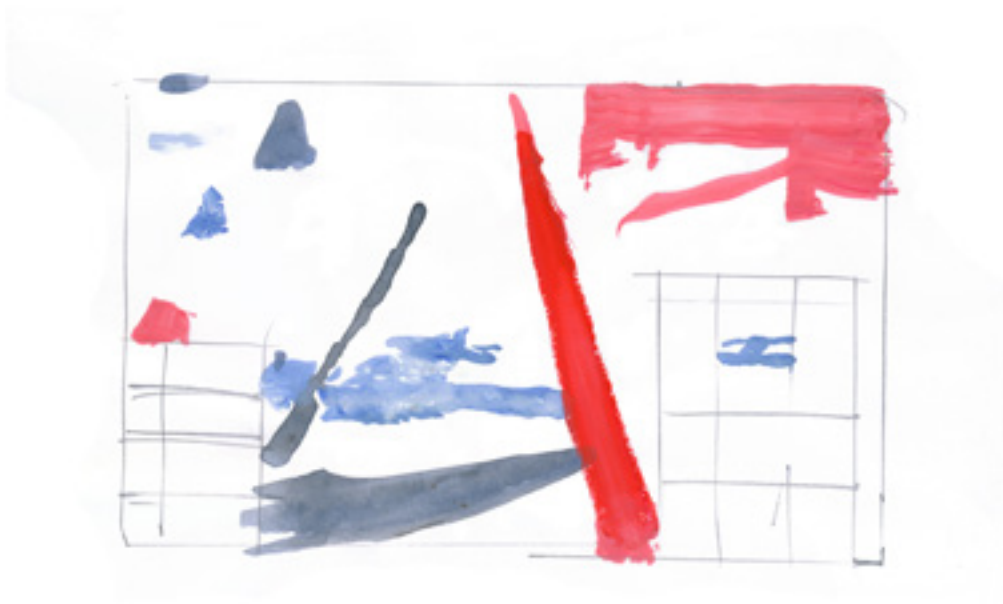
Sampled
Drone picture of the
North facade of AZ
Sint-Maarten and its
map



Sampled
View of the inside and
of the South facade of
AZ Sint- Maarten



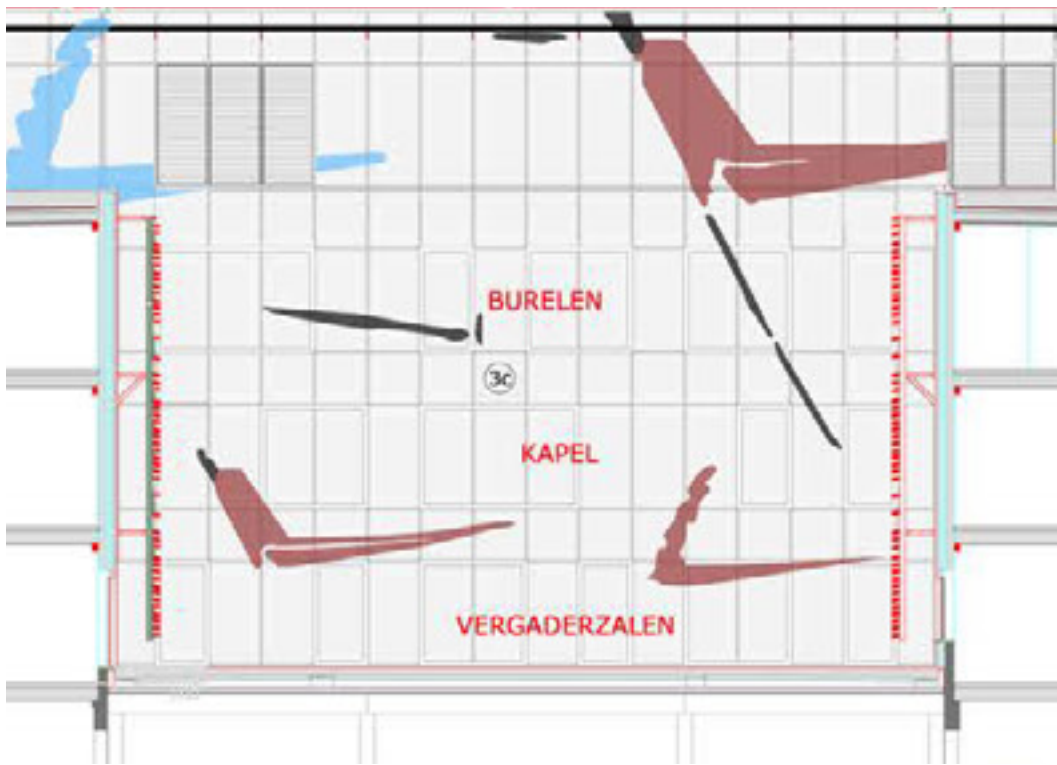
199



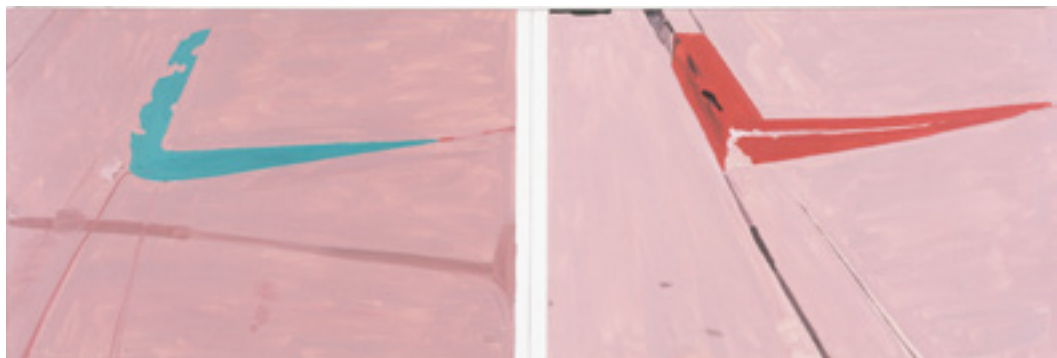
Sampled
View of the North
facade of AZ Sint-
Maarten and a sketch



Hillsboro #2, 2008
Oil on canvas
180 x 120 cm
Private collection



201



Sampled
Map of the South
facade of AZ Sint-
Maarten

Display, 2006,
Oil on canvas,
60 x 180 cm

Bruegel's Eye: reconstructing the landscape*Dilbeek (Belgium)*

2019

202

2019 marked the 450th anniversary of the death of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who lived in Brussels and came to find inspiration in the Pajottenland (Flemish Brabant). For this occasion, an open-air exhibition featuring works by internationally renowned artists and designers was organised in Dilbeek. A catalogue was published for the show.

Koen van den Broek used his painting *Exit* to place a three-dimensional installation under one of the railway viaduct's 17 bridges. Through a door, the viewer can view a fictitious landscape that contains both urban and natural elements. This installation led to new paintings created in 2020.



Exit, 2000
Oil on canvas,
105.5 x 70.5 cm



*Bruegel's Eye:
reconstructing the
landscape*
Picture of the
installation in Dilbeek



*Bruegel's Eye:
reconstructing the
landscape*
Picture of the
installation in Dilbeek



*Bruegel's Eye:
reconstructing the
landscape*
Picture of the
installation in Dilbeek

No Sports, 2020,
Oil on canvas,
80 x 107 cm

Borderline

*Seasonal campaign for the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (Belgium)
2016-2017*

207

Koen van den Broek provided fourteen canvases (twelve paintings and two drawings) to the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen which were used to create the campaign of the 2016-2017 season. Koen van den Broek created some works especially for the occasion, whereas some other paintings were already existing.



Campaign posters for Spartacus and Agrippina at the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen

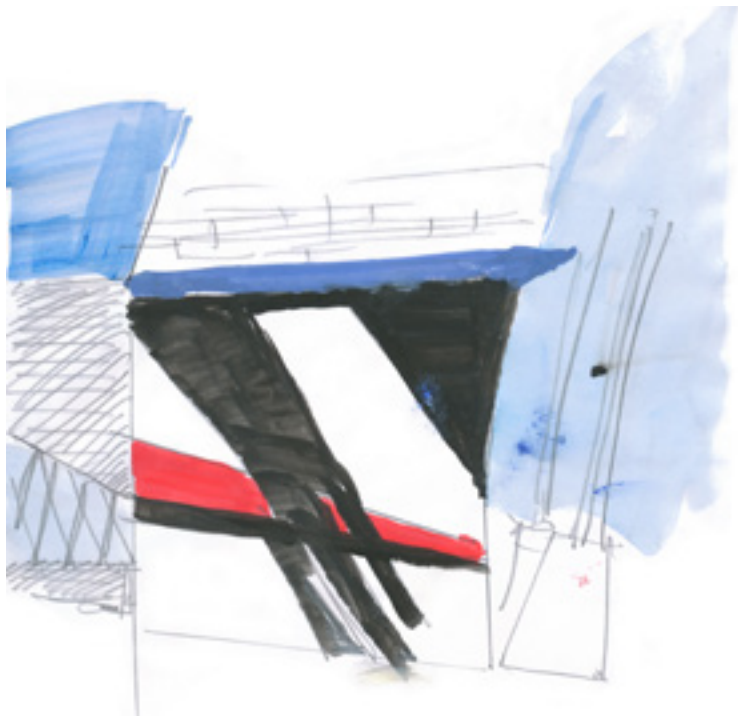


Street views at
the Opera Ballet
Vlaanderen

210 **Mural at the Provinciehuis**
Hasselt (Belgium)
2011



211

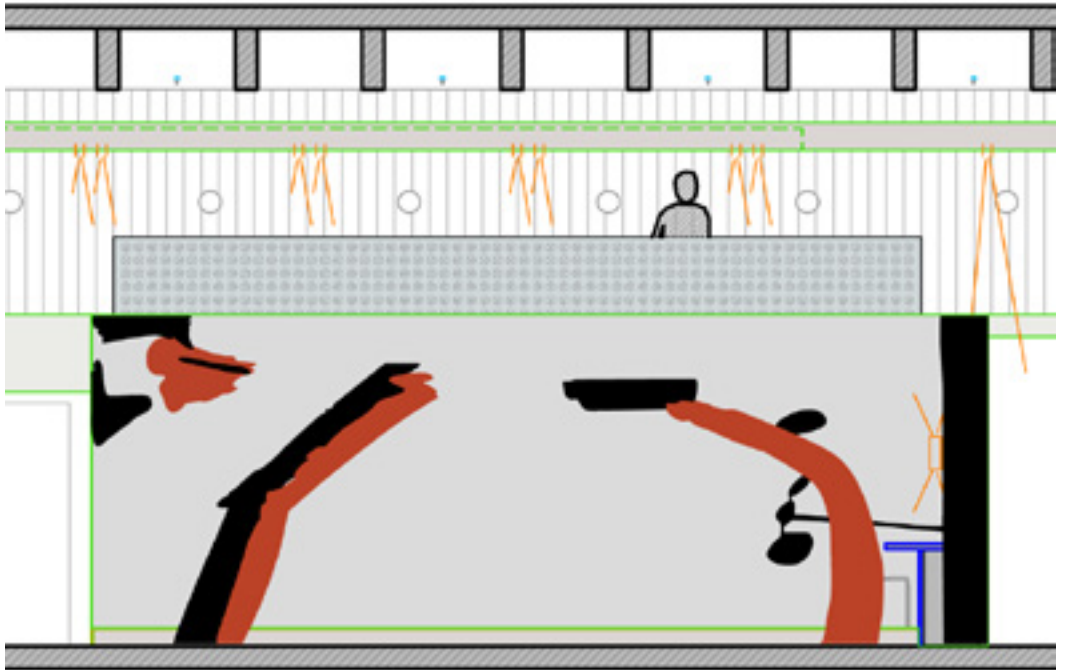


Picture of the mural painting at the Provinciehuis and sketch

212 **Mural at the restaurant 't Zilte**
Two star restaurant at the Museum Aan de Stroom (MAS), Antwerp (Belgium)
2011



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Mural at the restaurant 't Zilte and its map

Wall Works*De Garage, Mechelen (Belgium)**07.12.2019 - 01.03.2020*

214

Wall Works is an exhibition which highlights commissioned art in public space, art in situ and collaboration projects by Koen van den Broek.

These projects illustrate the artist's original view on art as an essential part of society. Permanent, temporary and non-executed projects are subjects of this show, which is construed as one coherent installation. Sketches, scale models, photographs, finished objects and new interventions offer a unique insight into the entire universe of Koen van den Broek.



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Wall Works
Installation views at
De Garage



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Wall Works
Installation views at
De Garage



Wall Works
Installation views at
De Garage



Wall Works
View from outside at
De Garage

The opening day of *Wall Works* also marked the launch of Koen van den Broek's last publication, *STUFF*.

STUFF summarizes ten years public art projects and includes an in-depth interview by prof. dr. Wouter Davidts about what this practice means for van den Broek.

Exclusively for this publication, the artist created new sketches on tracing paper that provide insight into his working process and the interaction with his painterly oeuvre.

The book is lavishly illustrated and contains previously unseen images of designs, models, works in progress and temporary, executed and not executed works of art.

Koen van den Broek: *Stuff*, Wouter Davidts, Frank Albers, ed. Exh. Cat. De Garage Mechelen, MER. Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, 2019





An overview of *STUFF*



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Plants Shadows and Models

Auditorium Charles Vandenhove, Gent (Belgium)

18.02, 25.02, 04.03, & 11.03.2023

PLANTS, SHADOWS AND MODELS (MURAL)

Koen van den Broek



Koen van den Broek, *Matinee in Esfe #3*, 2022, olie op doek, 120 x 80 cm

officiële inhuldiging donderdag 16 februari 2023 18:00-21:00

Auditorium
VANDENHOVE
Centrum voor Architectuur & Kunst
Universiteit Gent
Rozier 1, 9000 Gent
Open zaterdag 18/02 25/02 04/03 11/03 14:00-18:00



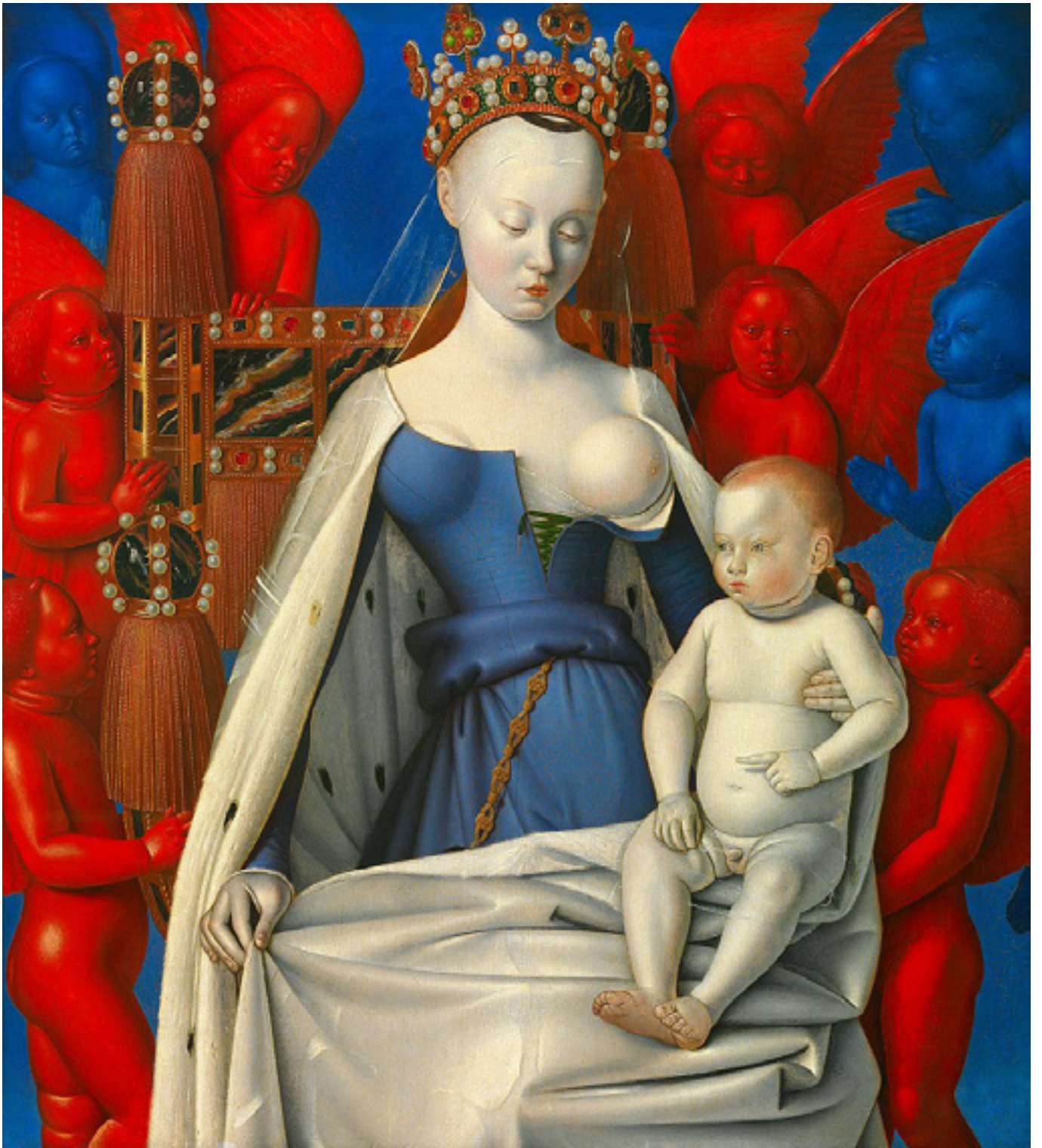
Selected Collection Works



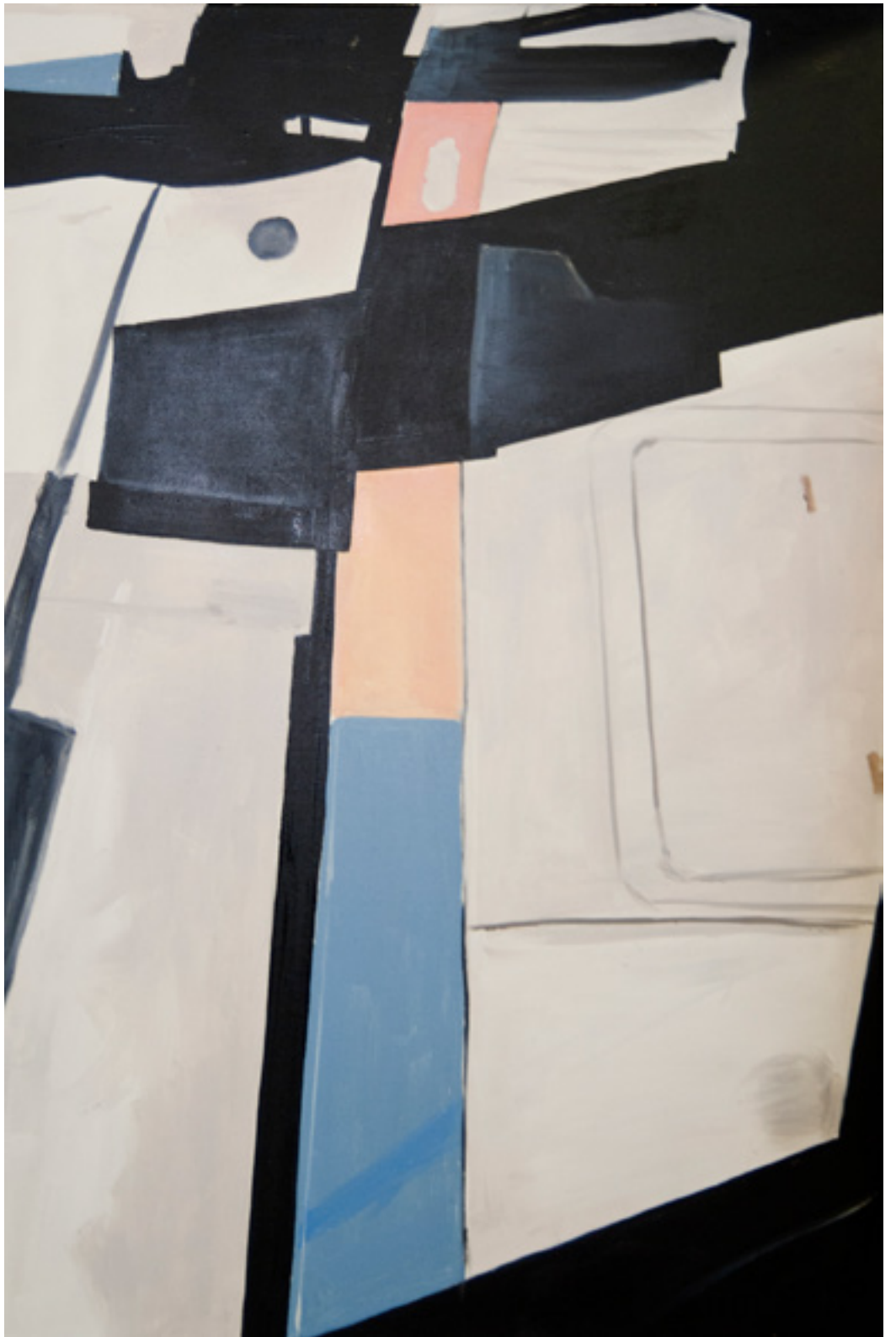
Madonna, 2011
Oil on canvas
93 x 85 cm
MuKHA collection,
Antwerp

Koen van den Broek's *Madonna* was inspired by Jean Fouquet's *Madonna Surrounded by Seraphim and Cherubim* (1454-1456), which finds itself in the KMSKA collection in Antwerp. *Madonna Surrounded by Seraphim and Cherubim* is one of the two panels of the *Melun Diptych*—one of Fouquet's finest works. It was commissioned by Etienne Chevalier, treasurer to King Charles VII of France. Fouquet presents the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven, the exalted mother of God. The unusual, intense use of colour and bold representation make the painting fascinating.

The Museum Aan de Stroom used the *Madonna* for its opening campaign in 2011. They also included the painting in the exhibition *Masterpieces at the MAS: five centuries of images in Antwerp* (7.05.2011 - 30.12.2012) which examined the development of the Western visual culture on the basis of works of both old masters and contemporary artists. The exhibition was based on *A Story of the Image. Old and New Masters from Antwerp*, which was shown in Shanghai and Singapore in 2009 and to which Koen van den Broek also took part.



Jean Fouquet
*Madonna Surrounded
with Seraphim and
Cherubim*, 1454 - 1456
Oil on panel
94 x 85 cm
KMSKA collection
Antwerp



Pico #1, 2011
Oil on canvas
240 x 160 cm
Staatliche Kunsthalle
Collection, Karlsruhe



Torque #14, 2013
Oil on canvas
210 x 140 cm
Staatliche Kunsthalle
Collection, Karlsruhe



Mesquite Flat, 2009
Oil on canvas
266 x 400 cm
Museum Voorlinden
Collection, Wassenaar



Frydlant #2, 2003
Oil on canvas
100 x 150 cm
Astrup Fearnley
Collection, Oslo



*Shadows and Blue
Border #3, 2003*
Oil on canvas,
210 x 140 cm
SFMOMA Collection
San Francisco



Blue Border and Grid
#2, 2004
Oil on canvas
210 x 140 cm
Leeum Collection,
Seoul



Devil's Golf Course #2
2004
Oil on canvas
142.5 x 109.5 cm
Leeum Collection,
Seoul



*From Here to the West
and Back, 2008*
Oil on canvas
115 x 88 cm
S.M.A.K Collection
Ghent



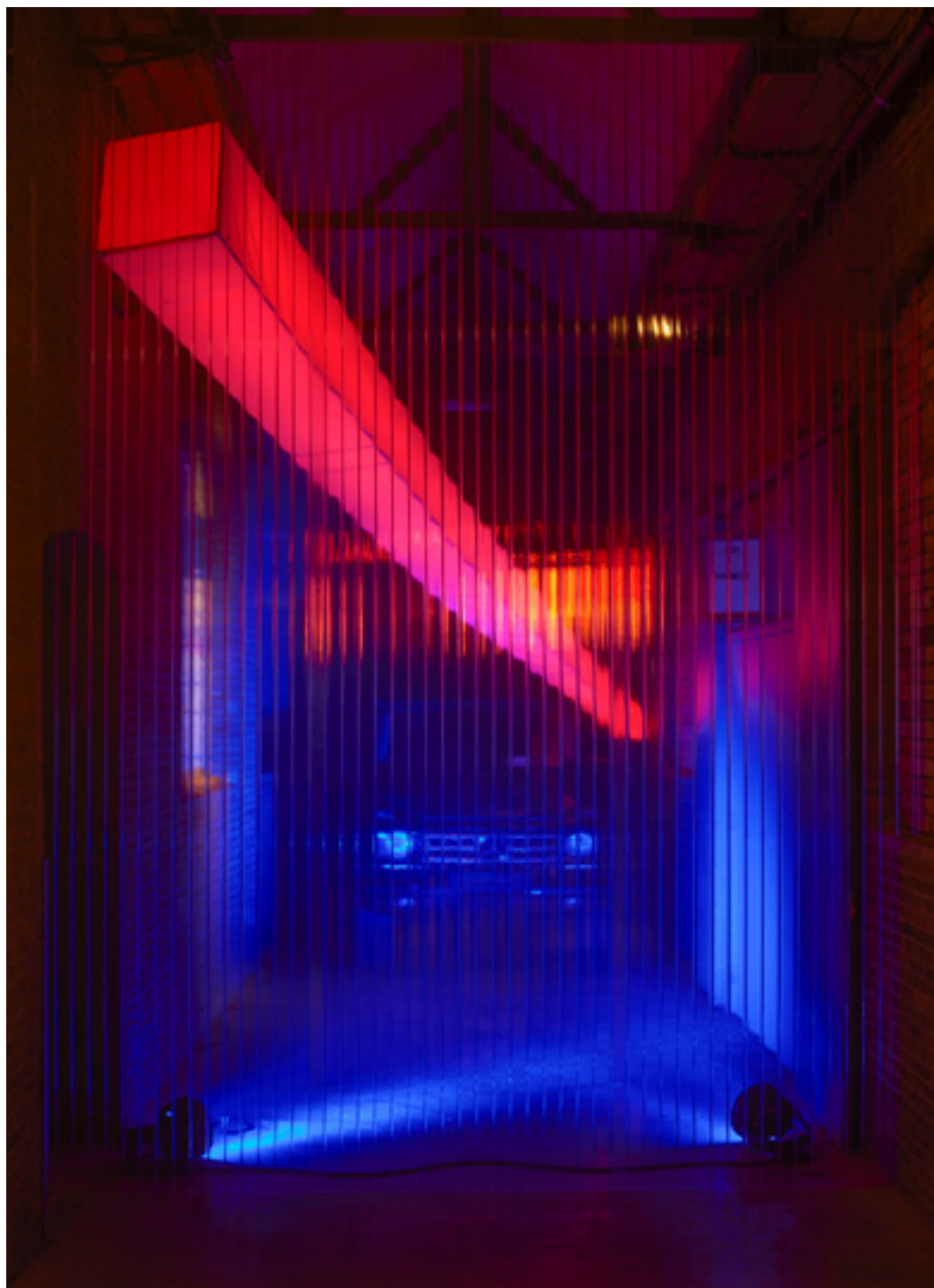
Cut Away #4, 2015
Oil on canvas
180 x 120 cm
Busan Museum of Art
Collection

Collaborations and Friendships

With Daan Gielis

239

Daan Gielis (°1988) lives in Antwerp and works in Hasselt. He studied at the MAD-fac in Hasselt where Koen van den Broek was his teacher and at the St. Joost Academy in Den Bosch (Netherlands), where he earned a master's degree in 2010 and in 2013 respectively.



CockTail, 2017
Installation at Festival
van Vlaanderen, Ghent



CockTail, 2017
Installation at Festival
van Vlaanderen, Ghent

242 **With John Baldessari**

HOW I MET KOEN

KOEN WAS AN ARTIST WHEN WE FIRST MET IN LOS ANGELES. HE WANTED INFORMATION ABOUT GRADUATE ART SCHOOLS. HE WAS THINKING ABOUT ENTERING A GRADUATE ART PROGRAM.

I SAID THAT I CONSIDERED HIS IDEA BAD SINCE HE WAS ALREADY AN EXCELLENT PRACTICING ARTIST.

FORTUNATELY FOR HIM AND FOR ALL OF US HE TOOK MY ADVICE!

JOHN BALESSARI

P.S. WE ARE NOW COLLABORATING ON A PROJECT.

HI KIDDO - WATCHING PARENTS MAKING LOVE - GIOTTO

After an unsuccessful Skype communication with Mike Kelley - 'No, I'm not in town', horn on the hook - I contacted John Baldessari with an extensive e-mail on the advice of Jan Debbaut. I was 25.

John sent me a fax, noted diagonally: 'Dear Koen, call me when you're in town, all best, John.'

This is the beginning of a wonderful friendship until 2020.

My father took me to Zaventem, I was going to make it to the United States!

In L.A. I went to a pay phone to call John in his then studio in Bay Street, Venice. The former studio of William Wegman, John told me later.

No answer.

The next day I tried again. Again, no answer. The panic just didn't strike. In the meantime, I went hunting with my camera through the streets.

The fear of thresholds increased enormously and after four days I heard John's warm, worried voice: 'Koen, you never left me a number, I couldn't get back to you!'

John was sitting behind his desk in Bay Street on the telephone with Italy, I was anxiously waiting. Uncomfortably, I told him I knew far too little about his work and introduced myself. On the wall were some black and white photographs of palm trees he was working on. What surprised me was that his table was full of books by Matisse, Van Gogh, Guston - mainly painters. John elaborated at length on the highlights that Van Gogh painted on brown bird's nests.

It was a warm welcome; I thanked Mr Baldessari for that and said goodbye.

'Koen! Call me tomorrow.'

The next day John took me downtown, Wilshire Blvd and Bergamot Station in Culver City. A private tour of the galleries of L.A. What a treat!

'Call me tomorrow!'

The next day John invited me to lunch again, this time to visit museums, then to an opening, party, etc.

I was amazed because I had never expected such a warm and generous welcome. Unknown to me. And I asked, 'John, why are you doing this?' In his turn he was shocked because it was so obvious to John. Artists must help each other!

We kept in touch, met regularly in Europe and the US, like at a dinner on the roof of Centre Pompidou, together with Robert Barry and Marian Goodman, where John said: 'Bob, finally, here we are, on top of the world'. Robert's answer was 'at least on the rooftop of a local museum in France' - which could count as an illustration of the difference between a conceptual artist and another conceptual artist.

At a dinner in Ghent, after the opening with Joost Declercq, John said 'hi kiddo' and stuck his finger in my ear for a photo. This had something to do with art. Or the other time I asked John if he would also come to the fair: 'visiting an art fair is like watching your parents when they're making love...'

We always talked about art, the art world and the terrible development of the art market and its consequences. But John never spoke about my work, and I didn't

dare address it myself. After a few meetings I gave John the original photo of my early work 'Yellow and Red Border'.

When I later visited him in his house I saw 5 artists, the dog 'Giotto' and 4 works in a row: Cindy Sherman, Koen van den Broek, Sol LeWitt and I think a Bruce Nauman. Happy as a child.

At another moment John said: 'Koen, I received a letter from God!' On the occasion of his exhibition in Tate Modern Richard Serra had sent a letter to congratulate John.

Another moment John took me to an opening of young artists. A real or fake transgender, pimped up student stood with his legs open and sprayed a bottle of ketchup empty while screaming 'I'm bleeding, I'm bleeding!!!!'. To which John whispered to me: 'the first student who does a performance without being naked or without blood gets an A'.

245 In 2008 we worked together: 'this an example of that', in collaboration with Luk Lambrecht and Koen Leemans. As this writing about John, it seemed like a tough assignment, the collaboration was immense. The greatest conceptual artist of the West Coast who cremated his paintings and then wrote such a punishment: 'I will not make any more boring art'. By the way, it always made me think of Bart Simpson, the series in which John himself recently appeared.

I was looking far too far, until John said: 'Let's keep it simple: I do the photography, you do the painting!'

We then showed this at the Bonnefantenmuseum and at Galerie Greta Meert.

As Matisse proclaimed the impossibility of abstraction, John proclaimed the impossibility of teaching. Think of learning the alphabet to the plants.

It is up to us now.

Koen van den Broek

This an Example of That

Collaboration with John Baldessari

Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (Belgium)

12.10 - 22.11.2008

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This an Example of That results from a unique collaboration between two artists. John Baldessari provided Koen van den Broek with a series of images from his extensive collection, taken on Hollywood film sets. Van den Broek then processed this series of 22 images - initially reprinted in formats ranging from small to monumental - by covering certain parts with bright colours and broad brushstrokes, resulting in a new reading of the image, redirected and emphasized.

A second part of the exhibition *This an Example of That* was on display at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht from 5.10.2008 to 29.1.2009.

This collaboration also led to the publication of a book: *This an Example of That*, MER.paperkunsthalle, Gent en BKSM, Strombeek, 2008



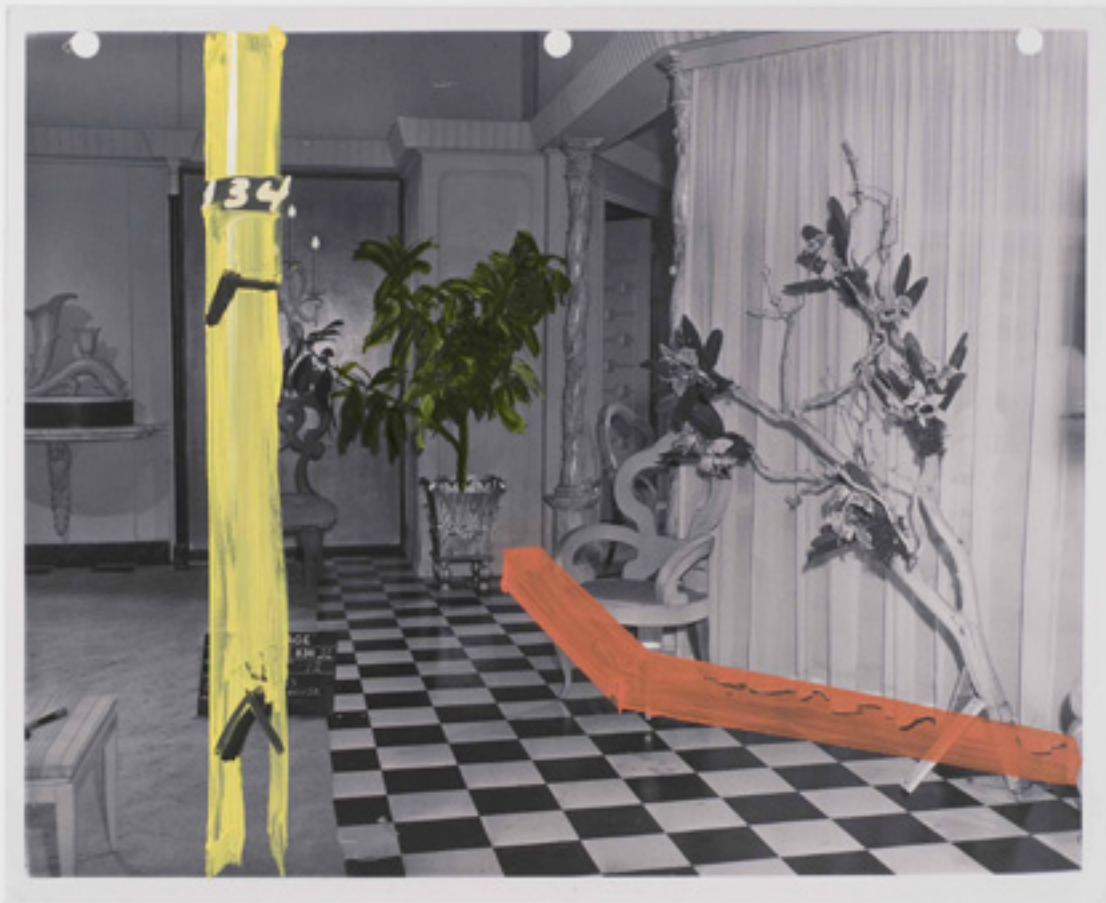
247



*This an Example of
That*
Installation views at
Galerie Greta Meert



*This an Example of
That #33 - Exterior
Street Scene , 2008*
Digital photographic
print mounted on
panel
264 x 186 cm



*This an Example of
That: # 134 - The Jazz
Age (Interior Zigfield's
Penthouse),
2008,
Digital photographic
print mounted on
panel
186 x 264 cm*

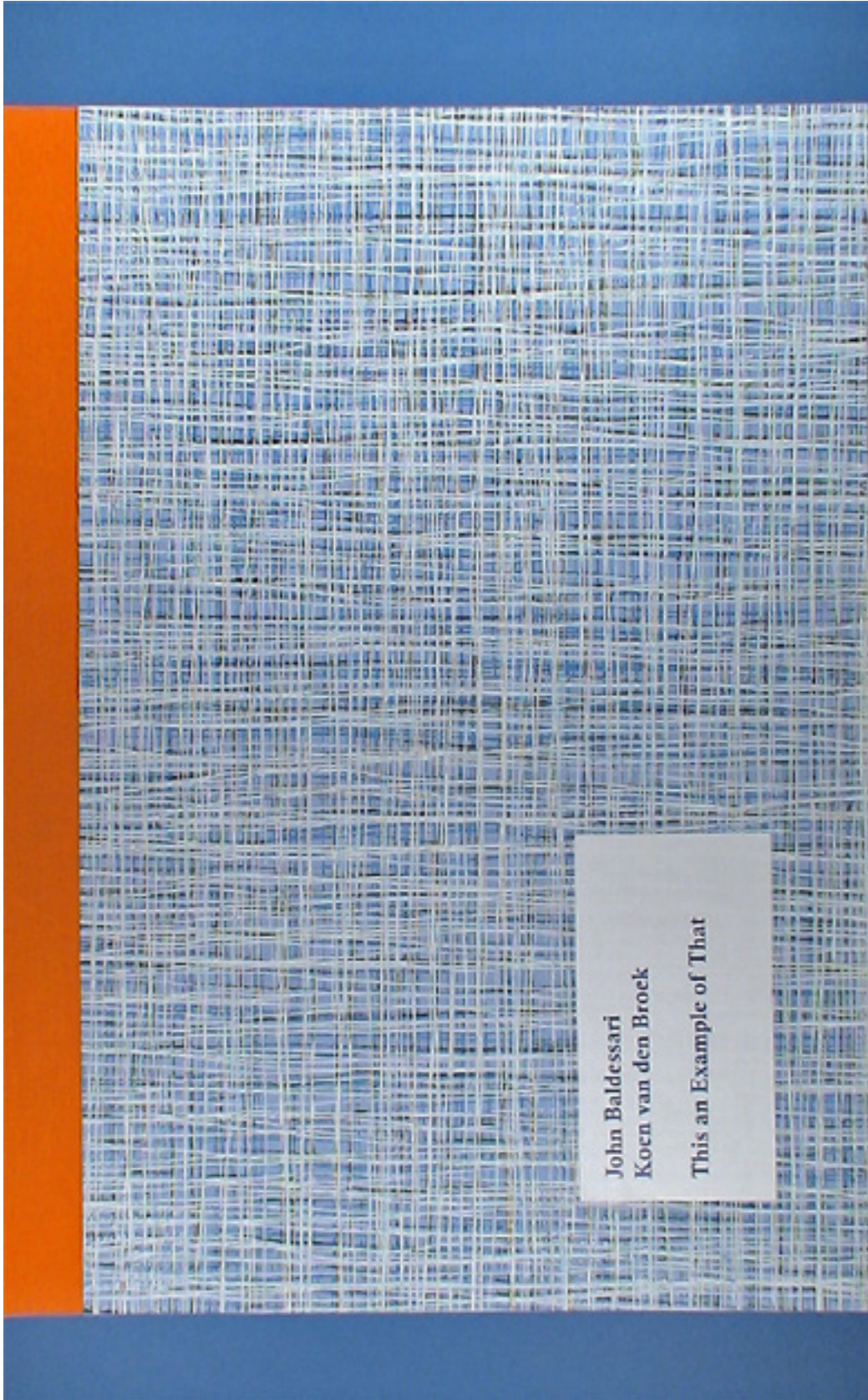
250 **This an Example of That**
Collaboration with John Baldessari
Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht (Netherlands)
05.10.2008 - 29.01.2009



251



*This an Example of
That
Installation views
at Bonnefanten
Museum*



Cover of the Book *This an Example of That*

253 John C. Welchman wrote about *This an Example of That* in CRACK.

(Not a Colour
Photograph):
On the Dawning
of Aspects in
*This an Example
of That*

John C. Welchman

86

87

Part of John Baldessari's giant archive of found images scoured by the artist during the last three decades from photo and memorabilia stores and Hollywood-adjacent dumpsters, the fundamental premise of the originating photographs for *This an Example of That* is to represent, generally from the point of view of the film-camera, the particularity and consequential detail of a film set. Augmented by textual additions of several kinds—black chalk boards inscribed with the film title, set descriptor, date, director and shot numbers, as well as other categorizing numerals, usually in white—these images are managerial icons (sometimes doubled as press images) that pay homage to the elaborate simulation of place negotiated by Hollywood set design. Their organizing principle, then, is a form of overarching 'truth-to-location' that establishes these mostly interior spaces as epitomes, sometimes replicas, of the spaces most proper and appropriate to the characters who will move through them and the period-specific narratives they unfold. Their greatest debt is, therefore, to continuity and locative rectitude; and their role is generally that of material and atmospheric *establishment*.

In line with the variety of film products engendered by these scrupulously observed spaces, there is, of course, great variety in their address and make-up. At one end of the scale are the gorgeously grandiose Art deco-inflected sets for *The Jazz Age* (dir. Lynn Shores, 1929), including the Ziegfeld penthouse and Helen Morgan Club, and the exotic

001001
 Where's your good ol' fashioned hair?
 11111
 11111
 CLARENCE
 You don't know the place where you live
 you know?
 All the great the place where the film place is
 11111
 11111
 CLARENCE
 You don't know the place where you live

(Not a Colour Photograph):
On the Dawning of Aspects in
This an Example of That
John C. Welchman

historicism of *Camelot* (dir. Joshua Logan, 1967). In the middle register we encounter bourgeois interiors such as *Hunt's Home* (#38), *Zeb's House* (#166), and the Moroccan-accented drawing-room of #20. Then there are a number of more everyday locations, either work-places such as the laboratory in #27, or general contexts such as the street scene from a Western set in #33, subtitled *With garlic and horses*.¹

But this simple typology does not account for all of the photographs, and, in fact, excludes some of the most interesting examples selected by Baldessari. Many of these are para-filmic, in the sense that they represent not places and contexts that will appear on film, but spaces that inform the making of a film, such as *Miss Southern's Dressing Table* (*With Mirror, Etc.*)—probably referring to Ann Sothern, aka Southern (1909–2001), who appeared in over a hundred movies and TV shows from the late 1920s through the 1980s. If this photograph shows the location at which an actress confronts herself in the process of being made up and delivered into her role, *Back of Same Set* takes us over to the other side of para-filmic establishment, imaging the struts and scaffoldings that support the temporary walls of a set from *behind*. The image is taken from the point of view of the stage-hand or fabricator, and thus reveals precisely the kind of artificial and provisional detail that Hollywood-style films strive to eliminate.

Posed somewhere between the back and front of the cinematic process represented in these

photographs are several images in the series that arise from the concentration of the camera on details, corners, or more 'crumpled' spaces. These include a view of the severed ends of two logs (#62), and *Answer Me My Love* (*The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane*)—the title and subtitle of which both refer to popular songs recorded in the mid-1950s: *The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane*, written by Sid Tepper and Roy C. Bennett and recorded by The Ames Brothers with RCA Victor in 1954; while the best-known version of the German-originated song *Answer Me My Love* was recorded by Nat King Cole in the same year and released by Capitol Records. Along with the record sleeve for the former and what looks like a press release for the latter, the photograph shows discarded clothes, papers, bric-à-brac and four patterned kitchen canisters strewn around into a cramped, nondescript space. Perhaps the most indecipherable and uncanny image in the series, this photograph might represent a back-of-the-set detail, or it could (possibly) derive from an actual teen-rebel movie from the 1950s—of the type parodied by John Waters in *Cry-Baby* (1990), which was set in 1954 Baltimore and featured a version of *The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane* (by Baldwin and the Whiffles). *Photo Shoot* (*Desert with Car*) presents a related case, for it is uncertain whether the shoot in question is for a film or some other purpose, commercial or otherwise; or whether it might be a still taken during the making of a film in which a photo shoot occurs.

We have so far established some bearings among the materials that constitute simply the *grounds* of the collaboration between Baldessari and Koen van den Broek. This image repertoire was dispatched from Los Angeles to Antwerp, and just as van den Broek had no say in the selection and naming of the photographs, so Baldessari also abandoned his authorship, this time at the point of exchange. The initial dispatch was a selection of 22 black and white images, sent as low-resolution jpegs, so that key details were not visible, including the board-based texts that identify many of the photographs—and which van den Broek only discovered later after the photos were enlarged. As van den Broek wryly notes, "it was like John selected the images based on everything that I don't do and wouldn't use in my paintings: they were black and white, supplied with people, and mainly interiors, or intimate scenes... and, of course, he said nothing at all about any of this!"²

Van den Broek performed several operations on the photographs consigned to him. First, he worked on the complete range of images in the form of A3-formatted prints, by making painted additions, mostly in primary colours, which he refers to as 'designs.' It was important to the process that van den Broek was able to address them consecutively and have them available as a group within his compositional purview. Once the designs were established, secondly, van den Broek had the works enlarged and mounted on board, so that they now appeared in a range of sizes, some at something

approaching, but always rather less than, human-scale, others with smaller aspect ratios. The differentiations of scale and their correlation with the regimen of pictorial supplements are key to the development of the series. The largest work, #3/ (*Interior With Fireplace*) is also the most opaque as its surface is covered with a triple panel of loosely applied brushstrokes. Another work named for the same domestic feature, #38/*Hunt's Home (Interior with Fireplace, Clock, etc.)*, is conspicuously the most 'bourgeois' image in the set, with its marble-edged fireplace and Louis XV-style décor. In addition to their enlargement and social specificities, van den Broek also made sure that each work (with the exception of #3) was given a second white border—in addition to the one that arrived with the original images—so that the viewer would not lose sight of their origins as workaday documentations. The third operation, which completed the series, was the act of naming the individual photographs and the collaborative project itself, which was passed back to Baldessari after he had viewed the van den Broek designs.

The range of painted marks added to the photographs largely conforms to two general principles. One is organized in several different modes of the *augmentation* of pre-existing shapes, forms or volumes in the original photograph. Examples include the yellow swathes that convert the laboratory tables in #27/ *Superman In Exile (Laboratory)* into a festive, bar-like expanse; or the blue masking applied over the furni-

door and starts out. Clarence turns to his dad as the door shuts.

errest goddamned girl you ever saw in your whole life? Is she a four alarm fire, or what?

1980.

n't the word. Nice is an insult. She's a peach. That's the only word for it, she's a peach. She even tastes like a peach. You can tell I'm in love with her. You can tell by my face, can't ya? It's a dead giveaway. It's written all over it. Ya know s me back. Take a seat, Pop, we gotta talk.

that up, you're giving me a headache! I can't believe how much like your mother you are. You're your fuckin' mother through and through. I haven't heard from ya in three years. Then ya show up all of a sudden at eight o'clock in the walk in like a goddamn bulldozer... don't get me wrong, I'm happy to see you... just slow it down. Nice, when did you get married?

(Not a Colour Photograph):
On the Dawning of Aspects in
This an Example of That
John C. Welchman

ture in a preliminary version of #52/*The Learning Tree (Winger Dining Room)*, which, in association with the central red square, subverts the metallic and woody formality of the dining-room into a sectionated environment of coloured, footed shapes, with intimations of modern design in the tradition of Piet Mondrian.

The other mode is more aggressive and invasive. Here the marks seem almost recklessly to sweep across parts of the image, sometimes obliterating what's underneath, sometimes allowing glimpses of the former iconography to seep through the rapid strokes of their new pictorial coating (as with the red 'square' of #52). The most encompassing application is reserved for #3/*(Interior With Fireplace)* in which three panels of loosely brushed white paint obscure all but two slivers of the original image, permitting the viewer to see only a few chair legs at the bottom and some lighting encasements at the top. Even in this more interventionist mode, however, the additions usually respond to aspects of the formal or material constitution of the original scene. In #99/*The Jazz Age (Interior Helen Morgan Club)*, for example, a de luxe, highly theatrical, curtained space centred on a dining table is subject to two zonal additions. One conjures a curvilinear, palette-shaped, orange patch with an overlapping circumference of blue, tipped out of the frame to the right, which responds to the beribboned cinching of the flanking drapes. The other animates the table top with a sweeping brushstroke, seasoned with yellow, to form a billowing,

tapered, abstract mass, the formal appearance of which offers dramatic resolution to the pleated fabrics behind and around it.

While several works combine these modes, in #48/*Too Much, Too Soon (Interior Sound Stage)* we encounter an unusually sustained distribution of pictorial supplements, most of which operate in the hinterland between contouring and invasion. Van den Broek has largely followed the pre-existing lines of the bowls, platters, a cake stand and various food items set out on the buffet table that bifurcates the image. But while some of these marks are like frosted additions to various pies and puddings, others obscure either the comestibles or their contexts. The area at the base of the photograph, on the other hand, where the fold of the tablecloth hangs down, extending out of the frame, is made over into a blue-edged grid with highlights of red, laid down over touches of white and grey that develop its naturalistic appearance. What was surely the blankest area of the original photograph is thus transformed into an active zone of pictorial focus. The most remarkable additions, however, are made to the three jacketed figures, who we identify as actors (the figure to the right is Errol Flynn, who died shortly after the completion of this film) standing behind the buffet table, whose heads are crudely edged with red squares.

#48/*Too Much, Too Soon (Interior Sound Stage)* develops one of the subtlest of van den Broek's dialogues with the formal interventions onto the photographic surface

made by his American collaborator. The convention of applying circles or coloured dots over the faces of the protagonists represented in them, which rapidly became Baldessari's paradigm device for the blocking-out or erasure of physiognomic identities, is probably the most recognizable and iterated of the artist's own additions to the found photographs with which he worked from the mid-1980s on.³ Manifestly aware of this key turn in Baldessari's work, van den Broek has wittily inverted the technique of dotted overlay and effacement by actively framing the three key faces, thus drawing them into the composition as highlights rather than blotting them out as absences. Alongside this ironic twist, *#48/Too Much, Too Soon (Interior Sound Stage)* is virtually the only work in the wider series in which van den Broek has used circular and semi-circular motifs. Exploiting the natural circularities of the plates and dishes on the table, he has painted-in two solid, quasi-circular forms in blue and green; edged the rim and sides of a bowl, cropped to the right, in light blue; and over-painted in red half of the central platter. By transposing the counter-physiognomic proclivities of his collaborator onto comestible objects and their receptacles, and accentuating the expressive heads of this masculine trio, van den Broek has unsettled the 'relational equilibrium' sought for by Baldessari through the cultivation of civic, social and celluloid anonymity.⁴

It is through this salient divergence that we can apprehend most readily the deterritorializa-

tion staged between the languages and materials of the photographic and the pictorial for which van den Broek advocates so rhetorically. This emerges most clearly if we attend to the nature of the compositional superimpositions made by the artist, including the basic elements of colour, form and shape. One of the most visible attributes of the painted marks centers on their salient redirection of perspectival space, which we encounter with almost overwhelming immediacy in the slashing green diagonal that cuts across the interior of the Ziegfeld penthouse in *#131/The Jazz Age (Int. Ziegfelds Penthouse)*. In addition to splitting open the lavish interior space represented in the photograph, this pendulant stripe doubles as an engorged Deco detail in the form of an arrow or long-tailed chevron, and as a street-side curb (one of the recurrent iconographic motifs of van den Broek's single-authored paintings). The curbiform diagonal, then, is a folding or bifurcating device that opens up the either/or, both/and, co-presentation of interior and exterior space.

The curb motif recurs, in blue, in *#101/Camelot (Guenevere's Terrace)*, where it outcrops on the flagstones of the foreground terrace in the form of a thick horizontal line met by a much thinner stroke of blue that leads from the curtained door to form an acute angle. These marks are accompanied by a columnar stub painted-in where the adjacent wall meets a block of solid masonry on the right side of the photograph. As with *#131*, the additions make a radical impact on the compositional

BLACK TITLE CARD: "HOLLYWOOD"

INT. OUTSIDE OF CASTING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

TORS are sitting on a couch with sheets of paper in their hands silently mousing lines. One of the actors is DICK RITCHIE. The casting director, MARY LOUISE RAVENCROFT, steps into the waiting room, clip board

re pack

time

(Not a Colour Photograph):
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organization of the image, in addition to flavouring its locative signification with a hint of holiday hotel or the theatre. Here, however, the curb is strategically placed in a terraced environment that is partly interior and partly exterior—a spatial *mélange* common enough, of course, in Baldessari's Los Angeles. Curbs make their presence felt again in a form that doubles as orange skirting board (paired with a yellow vertical) in #134/*The Jazz Age (Interior Ziegfeld's Penthouse)*; in the yellow, sectionated diagonal that edges the table in #27/*Superman In Exile (Laboratory)*; and, most dramatically, in the four angled shapes that float across the surface of one of the #166s, #166/*Ice Palace (Interior Lower Floor Zeb's House)*.

In his own paintings, the curb is a focal form for van den Broek's exploration of spatial borders, perspectival recession, and the stepped, zonal division between the speedy vectors of the automobile and the slower trajectory of the pedestrian (though cars and people are almost never present). Abstracted from their normative contexts, which include the surface streets of the Los Angeles grid where van den Broek has worked during several sojourns in California, these curbs are transformed into a sequence of demarcational notations, standing-in for separating out. Looked at another way, their angular format turns them into hooks that catch hold of the photographic surface and threaten to pull it apart, or to detour it in two directions, as when the curb of a street meets an intersection and turns the corner with it. In this notion of

the corner we arrive at perhaps the closest analogy in avant-garde art to the effects of van den Broek's curbs. I am referring to the 'corner' or 'counter reliefs' of Vladimir Tatlin in which he took on, but then dismantled, the paradigm of Cubist fragmentation, only to reconvene its implications for three-dimensional practice at the interstitial meeting point of two space-defining walls. In his theory-informed practice, Tatlin was committed to the development of ideas through what he termed 'refraction points' which included not only the apparatus of his reliefs, but also relations between the individual and collective creativity: "The initiative individual," he wrote, is "the refraction point of the collective's creativity and brings realization to the idea."⁵ Here, hooks, intersections or corners themselves converge on the routes and passages forged in the artwork between individuals and collaborative collectivities.

One of the paradoxes of van den Broek's designs is that they overlay the formal language of neo-Constructivism with the pictorial texturalism of post-Neo-Expressionist painting; so that many of the supplemental marks appear in a geometricizing range of blurred-edged verticals, horizontals, squares, lozenges and, of course, signature, curb-like ticks. On my reading the imprecisions of form, magnified in this series by the act of magnification itself, make a pair with the 'errors' or lapses in numbering and notation (which I will discuss in a moment): both betoken the preoccupation of this work with interstitial conditions or the confounding betweenness

that separates (and sometimes reconvenes) painting and photography, figure and ground, the individual and the collective. This overlay, and the pairs and antitheses it releases, is managed quite literally in #36/*Burton (Interior Dr. Bentley's Office)*, a work that bears the telling inscription (out of the first photographic frame at the bottom): "Life as a movie." To achieve this work, van den Broek projected his own early painting *Eighth Avenue* (1999) onto the set photograph, and traced out some of its angles and intersections in black paint with smudges of white, which form a diagonal 'curtain' folded across the right side of the photo. In addition to figuring in a literal crossroads, this work raises the stakes of the superimpositional logic we have established, colliding Broadway in New York with Hollywood and LA, layering theatre over film (as well as paint onto photograph), and merging the forms of a painter with the ideas of the conceptual artist. More than even this, its final message offers an allegory for the series as a whole, as well as summarizing a central preoccupation of both artists: how life itself might relate to, or be considered as, a movie. "I thought about an audition when I saw the photo," van den Broek noted when discussing this image.⁶ Herein lies the answer to the last question: for the preface to both life and film is an audition, that special place of trial, seeing, hearing and acting out that secures (or otherwise) one's passage into the real simulation.

Van den Broek's supplements or superimpositions also depend, how-

ever, on the signification of colour itself. Indeed, most of the marks made by the painter have a particular quality: they are apprehended as colour *and* form simultaneously. This effect is engendered in part by the insouciant camouflaging of the marks within the photographic field to which I have already alluded—so that stripes pose as columns or structural supports, and other patches and swathes correspond, albeit loosely, either to the shapes or the textures of the ambient design, whether carpets, curtains, curbs, or shadows, this last allusion being clearest in #14/*Shuster (Interior Ante Room)*. At the same time, and sometimes within the same work, the coloured additions sit, dramatically, on the surface of the image—the last things put on, they are also the first things seen. This end of the perceptual gradient so subtly activated by van den Broek is most readily apparent in those works subject to more sweeping, 'ex-orbital,' markings, such as the four 'Nike swishes' that hang in the air like boomerangs (ready to come home) in #166/*Ice Palace (Interior Lower Floor Zeb's House)*, or the dramatic field of cross-hatchings, dragged over walls, floor, furniture and objects in #51/*The Learning Tree (Rodney's Study)*.

This aspect of the work is carefully managed by van den Broek. The coloured paint marks, he suggests, act to "withdraw my work from the photo." That is, they allow that it is there, and work with this allowance; but they also take it away. As we have already seen, scale is crucial to the effect of *This an*

INT. CASTING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE—DAY

and a large desk. Her nameplate rests on the desktop. Several posters advertising "The Return of T.J. Hooker" hang on the wall.
a chair, holding his shorts in his hands.

KURT
if you're reading for is one of the bad guys. There's Brian and Marty. Peter Brock's already been cast as Brian. And you're reading for the part of Marty. Now in this scene you're both in a car and Bill Shuster's hanging on the hood.
as he trying to do is get him off.
up a copy of the script)
he's ready.

if missing (driving)
i come from?

KURT
in the script (silently)
i He too answered as movie.

(Not a Colour Photograph):
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Example of That, and this is as much the case for the perceptual scaling of the coloured touches as it is for the dimensions of the differently enlarged individual works. Van den Broek's decision to work at A3 size and then to blow-up the images has clear consequences for the regimen of colours—which appear coarser, more textured, more self-identifiable as pictorial marks, and more intrinsically 'coloured' than they would if colour were applied to the images after their enlargement. Recalling the process by which he arrived at his decisions, the artist notes that they were less a product of logical deduction than of relentless elimination. His technique arrived de facto, as van den Broek carefully ruled-out other approaches, especially those more 'risky' options associated with what he refers to as the 'danger' and 'obviousness' of 'thinking about small gestures.'⁷

These questions can be opened up more effectively, perhaps, if we look across to some theoretical conjectures about colour's relation to objects, spaces and photography itself. It turns out that one of the few philosophers to address all three of these dimensions in the signification of colour, Ludwig Wittgenstein—who will assist us here—offers a meditation on the colouristic impulses that govern the perception of a black and white photograph. In his last work, *Remarks on Colour*, he unravels the following scenario:

"I see in a photograph (not a colour photograph) a man with dark hair and a boy with slicked-back blond hair standing in front of lathe, which is made in part of castings

painted black, and in part of smooth axles, gears, etc., and next to it a grating made of light galvanized wire. I see the finished iron surfaces as iron-coloured, the boy's hair as blond, the grating as zinc-coloured, despite the fact that everything is depicted in lighter and darker tones of the photographic paper."⁸

Wittgenstein argues here for the phenomenological contouring of experience-rich and expectation-driven perception, which in effect offers the colourless image a logical tint, so that seeing becomes, in part, a matter of painting-in, and vision redresses the absence of one of its intrinsic constituents. But Wittgenstein's remark is also a paradigmatic instance of his more general inclination to explore the conditions of object, subject or proposition 'a' in terms of object, subject or proposition 'b'—or, to use the propositional formula that governs this series, to see "this [as] an example of that." While the veristic extrapolation that drives the philosopher's rather metallic exemplum is, however, only the first term in the collaborative project of Baldessari and van den Broek, what it insists upon is crucial to premise of their joint endeavors. Indeed, what was true at the dawn of the golden age of colour photography in the early 1950s, when Wittgenstein's *Remarks* were first published (which was also the general era in which many of the photographs appropriated by Baldessari were taken), is, of course, even more characteristically the case in the age of the internet and the LED screen.

Wittgenstein's parable suggests

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mistranslation, that generates, in turn, several after-effects (perceptual, semantic, formal) arising from the collision of double points of origin and multiple points of view. The two eyes that look onto the work, in short, move in and out of synchronization. Their slight lack of alignment, or failure to engender parallax vision, results in a number of parapraxes visible in the documentary protocols of the series. The most obvious are typographic slips arising from both the primary points of origin in the set photographs themselves, and from later formalizations and exchanges. #38/*Hunt's Home (Interior with Fireplace, Clock, etc.)*, for example, should actually read 'Aunt's Home,' as it refers to the Malibu house of Aunt Margaret, played by Kathryn Givney, as seen in the opening sequences of *Once You Kiss a Stranger ...* (dir. Robert Spaar, 1969). The 'A' in the identification card inserted into the found photo could easily be misread as an 'H,' which is how Baldessari transcribed it. Other slips appear to be a product of the shift between languages and contexts as the works-in-progress moved from Los Angeles to Antwerp, Maastricht and Brussels. In the book version of the *This an Example of That* project, for example, 'Ziegfeld' is spelled both 'Ziegfelds' (in #131/*The Jazz Age (Int. Ziegfelds Penthouse)*) and 'Ziegfield' (in #134/*The Jazz Age (Interior Ziegfield's Penthouse)*). While the legendary queen consort of King Arthur, in #101/*Camelot (Guenevere's Terrace)*, famous for her love affair with Arthur's chief knight Sir Lancelot—which first appears in Chrétien de

Troyes' poem *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*—should be the more generally accepted 'Guinevere.'¹¹ Even the book itself is an example of the on-going revisionism of the project, for it reproduces images that van den Broek describes as unfinished versions of the series exhibited at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht and the Gallery Greta Meert, Brussels in October 2008.

While these are incidental details, to be sure, they are, at the same time, symptomatic of the wider disjunctive and choric paradigms that underwrite the series, to which both artists contribute, consciously and unconsciously. In the book referred to above, the doubling, rhyming and slippages we have identified in the accompanying typography are given some measure of formalized sanction by the disparate numerical system added to the titles, and the lay-out within which they are arranged. The image flow of the book starts with #99, then proceeds in the following sequence: 38, 38, 166, 166, 10, 10, 20, 20, 14, 14, 51, 51 [unnumbered], [unnumbered], 33, 33, 62, 62, 101, 101, 131, 131, 36, 36, [unnumbered], [unnumbered], 134, 48, 3, [unnumbered], [unnumbered], 166, 166, [unnumbered], [unnumbered], 27, 27, 52, 52, 99. In this arrangement, the works are pieced out in fugal couplets, with one pair split between the beginning and the end and another borrowing the number (166) of a different work, so that every image faces onto two others; but their numerical sequence is the production of an unfathomable logic. One effect of this randomized sequencing is that

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Notes

¹ All works in *This an Example of That* bear the title of the series followed by a number and descriptive subtitle. Henceforth works will be referred to only with their number and the second part of the title.

² Koen van den Broek, discussion with the author, September 2009.

³ On the question of Baldessari's counter-facialized protagonists, see my "Art Subjects: Physiognomy Without a Face", in John Baldessari: *Pure Beauty*, eds. Leslie Jones and Jessica Morgan (London: Tate Modern, 2009); exhibition in Tate Modern, from October 13, 2009 to January 10, 2010, travelling to Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, February 11 to April 25, 2010; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, June 27 to September 12, 2010; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, October 17, 2010 to January 9, 2011; and "Re: Facing", in John Baldessari: *BRICK BLDG, LG WINDOWS W/ XLENT VIEWS, PARTIALLY FURNISHED, RENOWNED ARCHITECT*, ed. Martin Hentschel (Krefeld: Museum Haus Lange), p. 110-123; exhibition from March 1 to July 19, 2009.

⁴ See "Relational Equilibrium," a discussion between John Baldessari and John C. Welchman, in John Baldessari: *From Life*, ed. Marie de Bruggerolle (Nîmes: Carré d'Art Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes; ENSBA, Paris, 2005); exhibition from 19 October, 2005 to 8 January, 2006.

⁵ Vladimir Tatlin, "The initiative individual in the Creativity of the Collective" (1919), in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 334.

⁶ Koen van den Broek, discussion with the author, September 2009.

⁷ Koen van den Broek, discussion with the author, September 2009.

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 63.

⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 212.

¹⁰ Koen van den Broek, discussion with the author, September 2009.

¹¹ See *This an Example of That* (Mechelen: bkSM, 2008).

This an Example of That clearly has its own scenographic investments and is produced into public visibility with a combination of refrains, leaps and shifts—all predicated on the duets of double-appearance. This mode of display offers to incorporate what be might lost or forgotten, mistranscribed or mistranslated, deferred or projected, into the operating system of the work. The set, here, is a kind of set-up, something pre-established yet somehow waiting to pounce on, or even trick the viewer. Just as van den Broek's marks work in the relational spaces between objects, representations and colours (and their respective properties), so the bilateral aspect of the series as a whole is driven by a constant shuttle between two authorial and stylistic poles, and the aesthetically consequential bleed of one into the other, as numbers, letters, forms and colours are sent spinning in a centrifuge of 'thises' and 'thats.' ●

BAVENCROFT
Could we try it now?

DICK
Already.

Dick picks up the script and begins, but this time with a Brooklyn accent.

DICK
Where'd he come from?

BAVENCROFT
[murmurs, as before]
I don't know. He just appeared on stage.

DICK



Koen van den Broek
and John Baldessari