

BRAND NEW GALLERY

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presents

FOLKERT DE JONG

9 March – 30 April 2011

Opening: 9 March, 6 – 9 pm

Folkert de Jong is fascinated by the depths of the human soul, by the darkness that we all carry within us. The emphatic choice of figuration involves the viewer in a direct way; the grotesque is the gravitational center of his work. History is a constant in de Jong's work, which is not concerned with faithful representation but rather with considering historical fact as the inspiration for constructing imaginary and absurd scenarios. The artist analyzes the wide-ranging interpretations and incomprehensible mix of views that exist with respect to the past, creating a sense of alienation, in the sense of both distance from events and possible alternative perspective.

His fascination with extremes, like war and destruction, materializes in the installation *The Iceman Cometh*, the title of which is taken from a 1939 play by Eugene O'Neill, the first work realized by de Jong in the material that would then become his signature: Styrofoam. De Jong approaches this product of the petrochemical industry, usually used as insulation (like polystyrene), to analyze its history, to exploit its possible declensions and to consider its controversial associations – the chemical industry was also responsible, after all, for Zyklon B, the gas used in the Nazi concentration camps, Agent Orange and napalm.

Inspired by the photographs of Marlene Dietrich and Leni Riefenstahl, de Jong created the series *Peckhamian Mimic*, whose title refers to a biological phenomenon also known as 'aggressive mimetism', used to describe predators that camouflage themselves to capture their prey. In one of the works from this series, *Third Commandment*, a femme fatale takes on the semblance of an immaculate angel who invites the viewer with a gesture of welcome into what would turn out to be an embrace of death. There are also constant references in Folkert de Jong's work to the history of art and traditional skills, like sculpture, an example of which is the series titled *The Practice*, inspired by the ballerinas of Degas, wherein the young dancers appear in different poses, their skin totally black, like petroleum. De Jong doesn't limit himself to an homage to the French master, but also analyzes the history of art works through their market and commercialization over the years. This explains his use of pallets, wooden platforms used for stacking and transporting goods, thus underscoring how art can be considered common merchandise. His drawings, on the other hand, create a sort of parallel world with respect to his three-dimensional works, automatic sketches that represent the artist's attempt to penetrate the past and the subconscious.

Folkert de Jong was born in 1972 in Egmond aan Zee; he currently lives and works in Amsterdam. He has gained international fame through numerous solo and group shows in museums and galleries in Europe, Asia and the US. His works are present in important museums and collections around the world, including MoCA (Los Angeles), the Groninger Museum (Groningen), the Musée des Beaux Arts (Montréal), the Saatchi Collection (London), the Dakis Jannou Collection (Athens), the HVCCA Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art (New York) and the Margulies Art Collection (Miami). Numerous museums have hosted solo exhibitions, including Chisenhale Gallery (London), the Kunsthalle (Winterthur), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), the Wadsworth Atheneum (Hartford) and the important retrospective at the Groninger Museum in 2009. The artist has also participated in events such as the Athens Biennial and the 2010 Sydney Biennial.

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