

SPRÜTH MAGERS BERLIN LONDON

Marcel van Eeden

The Symmetry Argument

02/05/2015 – 18/07/2015

Marcel van Eeden's practice of predominantly monochrome drawings is based exclusively on imagery that predates his 1965 birth. The drawings, which are executed in 'nero' pencil or black chalk, often evoke film noir or cells from graphic novels, generating a haunting mood of sparse, dark nostalgia. For *The Symmetry Argument*, his second exhibition at Sprüth Magers and his first at the Berlin gallery, van Eeden researched a wave of spiritualism that swept through his hometown of The Hague during the 1930s and 40s. Derived from the book-length poem *The Nature of Things* by the first-century B.C. Roman poet Lucretius, the title of the show illuminates both van Eeden's practice in general and this particular body of work. In the poem, Lucretius makes the Epicurean argument that the fear of death is irrational because you couldn't possibly be conscious of being not alive before you were born: death is merely a return to the eternity that existed before your birth. This idea has been subsequently characterized as the 'symmetry argument'.

The decades before WWII in the Netherlands was a period of rapid change and societal instability, and amidst this upheaval there was a huge interest in spiritualism and occultism. In part, the wave of spiritual interest took hold because of the threat of war and the faltering materialism of the era throughout Europe, but it was also a result of the Netherlands' relationship to its colony of Indonesia. With many bureaucrats returning from the island country, they brought with them interest in exotic spiritual traditions, including 'guna-guna', or black magic. The Hague teemed with spiritualists and occultists, all advertising their services in the press and on posters. Taking photographs of the city and advertisements from the era as his starting point, van Eeden redrew these images in his trademark black chalk and, a new medium for the artist, in oil pastel. Some of the drawings depict the anonymous streets of The Hague, while others feature reproductions of advertisements, with snippets of words such as 'Séance' or 'Spiritisme', along with the addresses of the spiritualists. The grey and empty streetscapes, drawn in his trademark monochrome, could be anywhere or anytime, but the artist has written, in a large scrawl, the location and date of the photograph on which he based each drawing. The gridded windows in the buildings and the power lines suggest countless inhabitants and their frantic means of communication. The series of drawings convey an atmosphere of melancholic uncertainty and spiritual emptiness, even impending doom.

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The Symmetry Argument will be shown concurrently at Kromus + Zink, Berlin, 01.05.2015 - 06.06.2015.

Marcel van Eeden (*1965) lives and works in Zurich. Recent exhibitions include solo exhibitions at Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (2014), Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2014), Neue Galerie Gladbeck (2013), Museum of Contemporary Art, Calagry (2012), Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt (2011), Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2011), and Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (2011). Recent group exhibitions include Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2015, 2011), Museo de Arte de la Republica, Bogota (2014), Stockholm Konsthall (2014), Aargau Kunsthau (2014), Tate St. Ives (2013), ZKM Karlsruhe (2012), Museum Folkwang (2012), and Kunsthalle Emden (2011).

For more information and press enquiries, please contact Silvia Baltschun (sb@spruethmagers.com).

Exhibition Opening: 01.05.2015, 6 – 9 pm.

Opening Times of the Gallery: Tue – Sat, 11 am – 6 pm