

Press release

Zurich, 12 December 2008

The Kunsthaus Zürich shows 'Mark Manders - The Absence of Mark Manders'

From 20 March until 14 June 2009, the Kunsthaus Zürich will host Switzerland's first one-man show by artist Mark Manders. Manders creates installations-cum-sculptures, fragments of a self-portrait arranged in the form of imaginary rooms. His lyrical, often melancholy objects, installations and drawings function like the components of a poem, to be assembled at will by his observers.

Born in Holland in 1968, Manders is one of the best-known independent artists on the international sculpture scene, with shows at the Venice Biennale (2001), Documenta 11 (2002) and the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh (2008). Now he comes to the Kunsthaus Zürich. The exhibition, curated by Mirjam Varadinis, is a premiere for Switzerland: Manders' work has never before been available to the Swiss public in a one-man show. The presentation in the collection rooms at the Kunsthaus Zürich will bring his work into contact with sculptures by other contemporary artists, pieces acquired by the Kunsthaus in recent years.

Manders has also created some new works for his show in Zurich. Beginning with his paradigmatic 'Self-Portrait as a Building' (1986), Manders' entire oeuvre can be seen as an attempt to grasp his own existence, his own biographical development, as wordless, associative memory spaces.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS A BUILDING

'Self-Portrait as a Building' is a piece in continuous flux. Not conceived as a self-portrait in the literal sense, it is driven by the notion of a constructed, fictional ego. The construction of such an identity is thus personal and universal at once. While it manifests traces of the artist's character and provenance, it is at the same time also purely fictive. In keeping with the spirit of the age, Manders offers us a fragmentary self, one which apparently exists in endless variations. And while these variations are visible in the floor plans underlying his House of the Ego, Manders is forever rearranging its rooms. Furthermore, depending on how they are combined, the works tell entirely different stories. Manders' individual drawings and sculptures function as building blocks, and he is forever arraying them afresh into new and meticulous series. The logic to which his works are subjected, finally, is abstracted from personality, and is not an invitation to navel-gazing.

BLACK AS THE NIGHT

Manders' work has a strong affinity to poetry. His creations are concentrated, encrypted narratives in which he sets store as well by the gaps between elements. Manders himself says that he is trying to convey a particular feeling in poetic form; his individual works function as the individual components of a poem, to be assembled by his viewers. What all of his pieces have in common is a slightly sinister undertone. His art is filled with loneliness and melancholy, and viewers sense the schism and profound alienation that shape our lives at present. His frequent use of black, which is explicitly associated with melancholy, is part of this effect. But black also conveys mystery, passion and secrecy, themes which are pivotal to Manders' art. They are present in his numerous landscapes by night, such as 'Nocturnal Garden Scene' (2005), and they trigger fear and amazement, among other things, in his viewer.

The exhibition is a collaboration with the Kunstverein Hannover, Bergen Kunsthall, and S.M.A.K. in Gent. A monograph is available at the Museum Shop for CHF 49.

The exhibition was realized with financial support of the Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Open Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m. Holidays: Easter 9-13 April, 1 May, Ascension 20/21 May 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Admission: CHF 14 / red. CHF 10 (Subject to change) Advance Sales: RailAway/SBB Kombi-Ticket, with reduction on rail travel and entrance to the museum. Available at local stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19 per min.), group rates possible. Magasins Fnac, tel. +33 1 4157 3212, www.fnac.ch

Guided tours: Friday 3 April, 29 May at 6 p.m.

NOTE TO MEDIA

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