

Press release
Zurich, 5 September 2013

Kunsthau Zürich presents 'Revolt of the Giants', the first solo exhibition by Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan in Switzerland

From 6 September to 10 November 2013 the Kunsthau Zürich is presenting the first solo exhibition by the Dutch artist duo Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan in Switzerland. Through five film installations, the artists cast a critical eye on migratory movements and question political and economic power structures. Their new work, 'Episode of the Sea' (2013) is receiving its first showing in Zurich. It is being screened on 1 November and will be accompanied by a panel discussion.

Lonnie van Brummelen (b. 1969) and Siebren de Haan (b. 1966) use the story of the Pergamon Altar as the basis for an inquiry into issues of globalization, cultural transfer and belonging. Fragments of the altar, which was created in the second century BC, were excavated in Turkey in the 19th century by German archaeologists and presented to the museums of Berlin.

THE PERGAMON ALTAR IN EXILE

The starting point of the exhibition, and the work that connects all the exhibits together, is 'Monument to Another Man's Fatherland' (2008-2012). This four-part installation focuses – in a very literal sense – on the theme of borders and migration. In the first part of the work, which is a 35mm film, it appears at first glance as if the artists had filmed the frieze section by section; yet in fact the Pergamon Museum had not issued them with a permit to film. When they contacted the institution and explained that they were working on an art project describing the transporting of the altar from Pergamon (in modern-day Turkey) to Berlin in the 19th century, the museum refused to cooperate – apparently wishing to circumvent debate on the repatriation of works of art. Instead, van Brummelen & de Haan undertook an extensive search for illustrations in academic publications and museum guides from widely differing periods, which they then brought together and filmed to reconstruct the frieze in cinematic form. There is an index detailing the publication from which each illustration comes.

ART HISTORY: A CHALLENGE FOR TURKISH MIGRANTS

Complementing this portrait of the altar, a 16mm film presents portraits of young Turks attending a language course at the Goethe Institut in Istanbul in preparation for emigrating to Germany. Van Brummelen & de Haan invited the course participants to read out loud, in German, descriptions of the frieze panels

written by art historians. The difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary of the texts proves difficult for the would-be emigrants to pronounce, and much is impossible to understand. Only by reading the subtitles can the viewer appreciate that the passages of text are descriptions of the battle with the giants that is depicted on the Pergamon frieze.

BRIEF PORTRAITS: SCREEN TESTS A LA ANDY WARHOL

In part, these 16mm films raise the issue of stricter rules for immigrants in many European countries, which permit them to apply for entry only when they can demonstrate that they have attended a language course. Yet in addition to the socio-political content, van Brummelen & de Haan also reflect on the medium of film and its history. This concern is manifested in the formal arrangement of the brief portraits, a clear reference to Andy Warhol's 'Screen Tests.' It is also interesting to note that the excavation of the Pergamon Altar occurred at roughly the same time as the invention of celluloid, which enabled the development of roll and 35mm film and thus ultimately paved the way for cinema.

POWER, CRUELTY AND QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATION

The 2010 work 'Subi dura a rudibus' – also a 16mm installation – has an entirely different starting point: a series of 16th-century tapestries created to mark the conquest of Tunis by Charles V. The Spanish-Habsburg monarch undertook this campaign in order to halt the advancing Turks. He commissioned the Dutch painter Cornelis Vermeyen to travel with the troops and produce drawings of the battle scenes. These were later transformed into tapestries. Van Brummelen & de Haan decided to link the original drawings to the tapestries, filming each in parallel and combining them in a dual, Rorschach-like projection. It shows details of the two originals, which sometimes appear abstract and painterly before coming together once again in images suggestive of mutilated bodies. At the same time, the story of the 'embedded painter' reveals the close interconnection that already existed at the time between image production and the representation of power.

CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZED TRADE IN FISHING AND AGRICULTURE

'Monument of Sugar' (2007) investigates the role of economic power structures. In it, van Brummelen & de Haan examine the sugar trade between Europe and Africa, using artistic means to explore issues of globalized commodity production and government intervention.

FILM PREMIERE: SCREENING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ARTISTS

In their latest film 'Episode of the Sea' (2013), which is being shown for the first time at the Kunsthau Zürich, the artists discuss the current crisis and the concomitant changes in the European fishing industry. To compile this film

report, which is about an hour in length, the two artists worked with fishermen affected by the issues and also persuaded them to appear as actors. 'Episode of the Sea' will receive a special, one-off screening at 6 p.m. on 1 November, followed by a discussion between Lonnie van Brummelen and Siebren de Haan, curator Mirjam Varadinis and Emily Scott (gta Zurich). Lonnie van Brummelen and Siebren de Haan have also appeared in a previous Varadinis exhibition, 2008's 'Shifting Identities'. Lonnie van Brummelen received the prestigious Prix de Rome for the 2004-05 work 'Grossraum', which was shown during the presentation and is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

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Open: Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthhaus.ch.

Admission incl. collection: CHF 15 / CHF 10 concessions and per head for groups of 20 or more (subject to change). Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge. Admission free on Wednesdays.

Public guided tours: 20 September and 11 October, 6 p.m.

Advance sales

SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on travel and admission: at stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. by land line), www.sbb.ch.

Zurich Tourism: Tourist Service in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, www.zuerich.com.

Magasins Fnac: sales points in Switzerland: Rives, Balexert, Lausanne, Fribourg, Pathé Kino Basel, www.fnac.ch; France: Carrefour, Géant, Magasins U, 0 892 68 36 22 (EUR 0.34/min), www.fnac.com; Belgium: www.fnac.be.

NOTE TO MEDIA

Visual material is available for download at www.kunsthhaus.ch under Information > Press.

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