

MARK MANDERS

October 30 – December 19, 2009

Opening reception: Friday October 30, 2009, 6-8pm

Galleries 1 & 2

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Mark Manders. For his second solo show with the gallery, Manders will exhibit a series of major new works in both the ground floor and second floor galleries.

Manders' unique and multi-disciplinary practice encompasses installation, sculpture, drawing and projected imagery. These new works elaborate on Manders' expanding and ongoing conceptual project, which the artist describes as self-portraiture through architecture, or a "self portrait as a building." Inspired by his initial interest in writing and literature, Manders' first artistic investigation of the self utilized language and the written word to describe the artist's innermost perceptions and understandings of the world. However, upon feeling bound rather than liberated by language as a medium Manders became increasingly interested in the architectural structure of story-telling rather than specific content. This early realization resulted in his first sculptural investigations of form, meaning and narrative.

With unlikely juxtapositions of "clay" figures - rendered in epoxy- household furniture, architectural forms, and other miscellaneous objects, Manders creates poignant and mysterious tableaux that investigate philosophies of time, location, and biography. Challenging our preconceptions and transforming the spaces they inhabit, these intricate configurations of outwardly unrelated objects combine beautifully to turn the gallery into a landscape that evokes a psychological sense of otherness.

Installed as an architectural intervention within the entryway to the ground floor gallery, "Figure with Wooden Arm" is a double slide projection. As thirty altered versions of a single drawing dissolve in and out of each other we are confronted with two figures in a constantly shifting, though ultimately unchanging state. The drawing on which the piece is based is one of an ongoing series of "vanishing point drawings." At each place within the drawing where a decision has been made - a mark is begun, ended, or changes direction - a single line is traced back to distant point of perspective. The culmination of the image and the means by which it is produced exists as an enigmatic two-sided projection of worlds both real and imagined and acts as a revealing introduction to Manders' vision.

For the past twenty years Manders' ever developing oeuvre - which the artist sees as an outwardly expanding whole rather than a chronologically linear series of developments - can be interpreted as an unfolding study of Manders' psychological "self." However, Manders is aware that the identity described in his practice is an imagined "other," or subconscious self. This idea is explored in the spectacular work "Livingroom Scene with Enlarged Chairs" on view in the downstairs gallery. Towering above the audience is an iconic figure split on a vertical axis by wooden beams and splints that simultaneously separate and bind the head and body. The figure is staged above clay bricks that sit upon a vertical metal rod pointing downwards. As in the slide projection, the reduction of the wider form to a single point is a motif that recurs throughout Manders' work. This slender cylindrical element resembles a writing implement poised above a flat reflective surface in which the viewer can see the erected human form. This reflective stage is elevated by a configuration of domestic chairs that the artist has made by hand at an enlarged scale of 125% of their usual size - an act that places particular emphasis on the audience's sense of their own body in relation to their surroundings. The violent rupture seen within the figure is acknowledged in a chair that has been broken open to reveal a clay-like interior - evidence that the recognized, if enlarged, component parts share a material center with the figure and elevated stage. This common, shared material underpins Manders' view that the architectural nature of the sculpture is at one with the figurative, or human, element.

These themes are further explored in an intimate and haunting work titled "Silenced Drum". Here two stylized, limp rodent forms are held against the body of a dismembered red drum by a rubber strap. This eerie combination describes the animal and the man-made elements as intrinsically reliant on each other to give form and meaning to the sculpture as a whole, and reveals a succinct poetry in an arrangement of disparate, everyday objects.

In the second floor galleries works engage the multiple spaces in equally enigmatic and surreal ways. The side gallery is empty aside from an enlarged single totemic half-figure that stands constricted beneath a veil of coarse fabric and rope. "Large Figure with Book and Fake Dictionaries" alludes to the inherent duality present in Manders' pursuit of portraiture by way of architectural means. All that is revealed of the figure is the head and bust, which is split and bound together in a disjointed form, as if interrupted by a shift in time or place. Here the figure is raised upon three closed and unmarked books whose ambiguous identity, which is suggested in the title, further emphasizes the connection to language and the written word.

The ambitiously scaled and psychologically complex work "Room with Chair and Factory" is situated in the main gallery upstairs. Although an absolute silence and stillness predominate Manders' constructions, there is an overwhelming sense that there is an internal life beneath their placid surface. This feeling is at the forefront in "Room with Chair and Factory" where the human, domestic and architectural worlds collide. A blackened iron modernist-style table and chairs act as a support for two industrial factory smoke stacks that dwarf a recumbent and disfigured human form that rests on the floor. The reference to labor and production and the air of nostalgia felt between the human and the industrial elements are palpable. Completing this fraught combination is an armchair positioned at the periphery of and overlooking the scene, that is flanked by two works on paper hanging on the gallery wall. The empty armchair - the only one throughout the exhibition at conventional, human scale - suggests the anticipation or absence of a participatory figure and heightens our awareness of our physical and psychological relationship to the work, the exhibition, and Manders' constructed world.

Living and working in The Netherlands and Belgium, Mark Manders exhibits widely both domestically and abroad. In 2010 Manders will have solo exhibitions at the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado; Jarla Partilager, Stockholm; the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin and The Carrillo Gil Museum of Art in Mexico City. Recent exhibitions include *The Absence of Mark Manders*, Kunstverein Hanover, Hanover, Germany, which traveled to Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway; S.M.A.K. Ghent, Belgium, and Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland, 2007-2009 (solo); *Walking in My Mind*, The Hayward Gallery, London, 2009 (group); *The Quick and the Dead*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, 2009 (group); and *Life on Mars*, 55th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA, 2008 (group); amongst others.

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