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BEREND STRIK

TUMBLLED TOPICS

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Stephane Simoens is pleased to present this new solo exhibition by Berend Strik.

The discussion in photography about what the photographic image can say about reality is endless. In an interview with Sophie Berrebi¹, Berend Strik stated that he believes that a photograph is imaginary because it is an image that remains open to any possible interpretation. For Strik, a photograph is ephemeral and accidental because the depicted moment has past and the resulting image is taken out of its context. This is exactly why it is not complete, why it remains open to interpretation. Berend Strik sets out to define the meaning of the image through its manipulation; the photos he uses are overgrown with threads and fabric. They become physical, tangible. He infuses them with something that could be described as 'Timelessness'. A photo is defined by the few fractions of a second between the opening and the closing of the camera shutter. The laborious process of stitching the thread ultimately turns what was once a snapshot into an image that is alienated from the initial notion of time and space. The production is time consuming, but the very pieces of fabric and the threads are time-consuming elements as well: they cut away fragments from the image that could refer to a particular moment in time. While the photographic image is but a moment in a continuous process in time and space, it indeed calls into question this very time and space only through the applied embroidery.

For his exhibition *Tumbled Topics* at Stephane Simoens Contemporary Fine Art, Berend Strik brings together works that were created on photographic images taken in both his native Netherlands and in Beijing in China, where he stayed for a couple of months. The visualization of the back-and-forth movements between China and Western Europe forms the core of this ensemble of works. In Europe, there has been an import of items manufactured in China for centuries. In recent years, however, the opposite is taking place: the rich Chinese are buying back antique pieces, originally from their country, in Europe. Western design and creations are now popular in China as well. One of the recurring architectural structures in a number of Berend Strik's works is the CCTV building in Beijing. This spectacular building was designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and German Ole Scheeren. Like a contemporary Tower of Babel, it has come to define the skyline of the Chinese capital. It is above all an architecture that is to symbolize all the Chinese ambitions at the start of the twenty-first century. It seems ironic that its conception and design is entirely European. Nevertheless, the elaboration of the design was greatly codetermined by the expertise and the opportunities available in China. That oscillation between Western European conception and Chinese production is further continued in a similar manner in the work of Berend Strik: during his stay in China he worked with seamstresses to create new works that include images of China and the Netherlands.

On the occasion of this exhibition, a new publication 'Tumbled Topics', will be presented.

¹Sophie Berrebi, 'Over fotograferen, bouwen en borduren: een gesprek met Berend Strik', p.16 in: *Berend Strik, Thixotropy*, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2009