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BEREND STRIK

DECIPHER THE ARTIST'S MIND

8 AUGUST - 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

Stephane Simoens is pleased to present the third solo exhibition by Berend Strik at the gallery.

Berend Strik's *Decipher the Artist's Mind* is an ongoing project investigating the studios of international contemporary artists. Visiting the studios of artists in Europe, the United States and Indonesia, Strik has photographed the working spaces of both famous and upcoming painters, sculptors and performers. This research into the oeuvres of the important artists of their times, such as Duchamp, Pollock, David Hammons, Lee Krasner, Jan Dibbets and Ger van Elk, is at the same time an investigation into Strik's own working process. He explores the idea that the artwork within a studio context and even the studio itself acts as a metaphor for the creative process of the making of a work of art.

Strik takes photographs, shot in a straightforward documentary style, often focusing on specific details that help define an aspect of the subject's work. Strik enlarges and prints these two dimensional photographs onto Tyfec, and then works the surfaces by sewing colored, tactile fabric by hand into the support to highlight those portions of the image that are important to him, expropriating the subject matter from the artist whose studio and work is portrayed. Strik uses the stitching itself to create tension as it delineates, transforms and augments reality. This layering, the literal process that gives these two dimensional works depth and richness, also serves metaphorically to add information and personal interpretation and to make these works Strik's own.

Strik began this project in 2011 when he visited the former Manhattan studio of Marcel Duchamp, where he'd worked in secret from 1945 to 1966 on his last major work: *Etant donnees. 1. La chute d'eau, 2. Le gaz d'éclairage*.

What Strik found was a space now used as an office. An architectural space whose changed use nevertheless retained memory, thoughts, ideas and visions. Strik began studying the relationships between creative spaces, aesthetic concepts and the artists themselves as seen through their studios.

This body of work raises a number of questions that revolve around the myth of the artist's studio, the historically privileged space of artistic creativity. A fascination with artists and their studios is probably as old as the profession itself; the desire to see the "creative genius" at work is a phenomenon of all ages. In the nineteenth century, a new and popular image arose of the artist as a person endowed not only with special talents, but also with a particular temperament and lifestyle, whose work expressed his soul and individuality. One of the consequences of this romantic notion was that not only were the work and the artist seen as one, but the studio too came to be viewed as the mirror and even the embodiment of the artist's inner self.

It is this impossible promise of a view into the artist's mind that Strik's work seeks to explore. The studio of Arnulf Rainer underscores the painterliness of this artist, while that of David Hammons, a private and reclusive artist, is portrayed by Strik's photograph of his closed, but beautifully weathered studio door, implying both the artist's attitude towards his audience and his relationship to worn, found materials. Marcel Duchamp's vision must be imagined within his repurposed studio, long vacated. These new works balance the three prongs of the relationship Strik has created: the studio, and ghost of the artist whose

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studio is portrayed and ultimately Strik's own artwork, a transformation and rewritten personal and cultural narrative.

Related to every studio research by Berend Strik, he has had extensive meetings and dialogues with, or about, the fellow artist. In these conversations, and the resulting works, Strik has mirrored his own practice with theirs. Therefore the resulting works have become highly personal and layered manifestations of the many thoughts, reflections, perspectives and insights that have appeared. The thoughts and layers are literally manifested into and onto the canvas. Even the back of each work often contains personal revelations and anecdotes.

By this, the exhibition gives us a glimpse into the workings of an artist brain. But above all, it gives a beautiful and personal account, that reveals information about the relations and meetings between some of the most influential artists of Europe and the USA.

This is the third part of this ongoing studio project. Earlier editions have been shown in Gallery Fons Welters in Amsterdam and Gallery Jack Tilton in New York, both in 2014.

Berend Strik, born in Nijmegen The Netherlands in 1960, lives and works in Amsterdam. He studied at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam and attended the International Studio Program in New York. He was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1987. His work is in the collections of major European and American institutions such as Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.