

AARON VAN ERP | *Paintings*

22 November - 21 December, 2008

Private View: Friday 21 November, 7-8 pm

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IBID PROJECTS is pleased to present a solo exhibition of recent paintings by Dutch artist Aaron van Erp. Since graduating from the St. Joost School of Fine Art and Design in Hertogenbosch in 2001, van Erp has quickly established a reputation as one of the foremost exponents of a younger generation of painters who are working in the wake of neo-Expressionism in Europe. Having garnered significant critical appraisal following two recent museum solo shows at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag in 2007 and the Museum Der Stadt, Ratingen in 2008, his deftly painted canvases show a renewed interest in the tactile qualities of paint as an expressive medium combined with the formal possibilities of figurative representation.

At first sight, Erp is unafraid to allude to issues that can be harrowing. He addresses such contemporary social problems as terrorism, troubles in the healthcare system or child abuse. His painted world is bleary, sometimes disturbingly violent, inhabited by a cast of victims and torturers, burnt-out landscapes and familiar domestic objects - such as flying bacon, vegetables, football shirts or newspapers - that float across the sky in disconcerting narrative configurations. Considerable debt is apparent in van Erp to the handling and colour palette of such predecessors as Francis Bacon or James Ensor. What is also shared is a vision of a Bataille-esque experience that can be present in the most common thoughts and experiences, such as the encounter of a lone figure or children playing in a forest, or the depiction of torture as a humanistic concern.

Aaron van Erp's canvases are rendered unique through this multitude of references to contemporary elements, as well as the fragmentary way in which parts of the surface are often only half-described, half-painted like spectres or faded memories. At other times, his works benefit from a directness and sharp simplicity. In his work 'Untitled' (2008), for example, the remains of an unidentified animal lie on the floor of a sparsely decorated room. A red plastic chair and metal-framed bed situate the setting in some sort of unnamed institution, whilst bizarre elements such as a cabbage or the green leaves of bushes sprouting through the floor are picked out in bright flashes of surrealistic detail.

As much as the narrative for van Erp's paintings could have come from newspaper headlines or the descriptive accounts of different survivors, inspiration could equally be seen to come from popular culture and a nihilistic imagination, or even the lyrics of a hardcore punk band. Van Erp has stated that "horrible things frequently also have a funny side". This is reflected in the way that in works such as 'Vlot met stuk vlees aan een haak (Raft with piece of meat on a hook)', 2008 or 'The terrible hordes barbarians invading The Netherlands after Prof. Dr. Pim's death', 2002 it is uncertain exactly whose memories these paintings describe. Whether the viewer is perpetrator or innocent witness to the events is rarely clear.

Aaron van Erp (b. 1978 in Veghel, Netherlands) has had solo exhibitions at the Museum Het Kruithuis in Hertogenbosch, Netherlands (2007), the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (2007-2008, exhibition catalogue), the Museum Der Stadt in Ratingen, Germany (2008), Sperone Westwater Gallery in New York (2008) and the Stadtmuseum Güttersloh in Germany (2008). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including 'Strange Brew' at Max Lang Gallery, New York, curated by Wolfgang Schoppmann (2007) and 'Sieben auf einen Streich' at MARTa Herford (Germany), curated by Jan Hoet (2006). Awards include the Buning Bronger Prize (2002) and the Starter Stipendium from the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture (Fonds BKVB) in Amsterdam (2004).

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