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Koen van den Broek

Comin' Down

Opening on September 8, 2011 between 7 and 9 pm

Exhibition from September 9 through October 29, 2011

We are pleased to inaugurate on September 8, 2011 at 7 pm our first solo exhibition of the Belgian painter Koen van den Broek in Berlin.

The Belgian painter Koen van den Broek (*1973, Bree) bases his works on photographs that are mostly taken on the Southwestcoast of the US. Often the titles of the paintings refer to places where the photographs have been taken (for instance *Pico # 1-4* to Pico Boulevard, *Palisades* to the neighborhood Pacific Palisades, *Santa Monica*, *Barnard Way* to a highway along the coast, everything in Los Angeles). And some times the titles have just a descriptive function (*Comin' Down*, *Orange & Cracks*). In any case, the photographs are transferred into the paintings without changing their composition and the paintings can be described as contemporary land- or cityscapes. However, van den Broek does not work in the tradition of the horizontal landscape painting which depicted great views and – coming with that – the sublime of nature. Instead, with street borders, street corners, shadows or zoomed-in details of cityscapes he chooses rather meaningless locations as the painted objects and thereby paints parts of the existing world, that are normally neglected. In doing so, he is not aiming at a painterly naturalism and – consequently – he is not following the tradition of narrative, figurative painting. On the contrary: van den Broek cuts out the meaningful topic, which is somewhat pushed out of the painting by giving room to something which is most empty and which exists, literally, on the border. So, while he alludes to something that is decipherable as a thing existing in our world, however, totally meaningless – he himself is talking about the impossibility of abstraction –, he is - on the other side - stressing all painterly questions like the choice of colors, the brushstroke, the pictorial space vs. the flatness of the picture plane, etc. This game with the conditions of painting is to be seen with particular evidence when he uses – like in the four *Pico*-paintings – **one** situation in Los Angeles to create with subtle changes four different works. While these paintings show several differences regarding the depicted pictorial space respectively its reduction as well as regarding the narrative details depicted, versus the elimination of such elements, all these four works show the same cover of the drain and the same – in the end: meaningless – location. The meaning of the work is transferred to the painterly possibilities and to the composition that is created by a specific situation. This is different with a painting like *Comin' Down*. We have only one image of the shadows that is cast on stairs. However, van den Broek did not paint the stairs, he has eliminated these and gives us only the image of the shadow. Thereby, he is referring to abstract structures that we know from early paintings (done after 1950) by Ellsworth Kelly. Comparable to his own works, Kelly, to whom and to his paintings van den Broek refers directly, has depicted structures of shadows on his studio walls. "Abstraction" in the true sense of the word means deduction of figurative information in an image and van den Broek has taken this procedure, that plays always a role in his oeuvre, for granted in *Comin' Down* when he eliminated the stairs.

For further information or images please contact the gallery.

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