



only no-artists,” they write, taking a jab at Beuys’s dictum that everyone is an artist. They want to know how art can bite, how it can change society. But barking dogs seldom bite—nor do artists who bark. The very name Barking Dogs bespeaks the duo’s helplessness at a time when even the harshest criticisms leveled at the art world are inevitably co-opted by the marketplace. This helplessness is reflected in their manifesto. Instead of spelling out an aesthetic program in the grand gestures of the avant-garde, they describe their daily lives thus: “Barking Dogs United do watch porn movies and do masturbate. Do believe in Bender”—referring to the character in the animated television series *Futurama*—“do play with guns, and do shoot bulbs happily. Do work, do get sick, do go

out for dinner, do brush their teeth, do wash their feet, and feel so good. Do play lotto, and do want to win. Fuck.”

The sticking point in both BDU’s manifesto and their skateboard floor lies in the discrepancy between the claim and the reality: The boards don’t roll quite as smoothly as they should and the manifesto can’t tell us how to become a non-artist. But both give a sense of what might be possible. And that’s more than one usually gets to see in galleries these days.

—Daniel Boese

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.

COLOGNE

Koen van den Broek

FIGGE VON ROSEN GALERIE

One of the peculiar qualities of the built environment is that, despite its utter intricacy and diversity, it always contains the germ of pictorial abstraction. Depending on viewing angle, proximity, or clarity, images of buildings and streets can advance the abstract qualities of their inherent surfaces, structures, grids, and patterns. Thus the ubiquity of architecture and the urban landscape as both an artistic subject and a visual source for both painting and photography.

For about a decade, Belgian artist Koen van den Broek has rigorously taken up the challenge posed by this phenomenon. The starting point for his paintings is a vast personal archive of photographs taken during his many trips through North America. Van den Broek does not picture the city as a lived entity but as a material fact, devoid of human presence. Furthermore, he looks not so much around as downward: to the surface of the street and to its many features, both functional and formal, such as curbs, borders, gutters, pavement, and cracks. All of these elements make up the vast infrastructure for human traffic, which, whether experienced from afar or up close, has a distinct graphical nature. This has been the subject of van den Broek’s expressive painting since the late 1990s. The four recent works that the artist presented in the lower space at the back of Figge von Rosen continue to exemplify the modes in which van den Broek has worked, from realistic depiction (*Junction [peddles]*, 2007) and perspectival vista (*Hillsboro #1* and *Hillsboro #2*, 2008) to abstract composition (*Melrose Ave #3*, 2008). They set up an enthralling play between realism

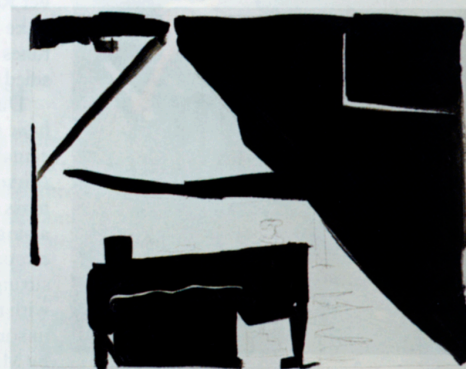
and abstraction, between distinct depictions of real locales and formal compositions of lines and planes, as images alternately seem to emerge or to recede back into abstraction.

But the front of the gallery contained twelve works that stem from a radically new turn within the artist’s practice. Van den Broek did not paint these works after his photographs of urban realities, but after images that resulted from a joint project with the American artist John Baldessari. The project, which is being shown this fall at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht, consists of painterly interventions by van den Broek in a series of photographs (mostly of film sets) selected by Baldessari. Van den Broek reinserted this experiment within his

habitual painterly practice. He probed the pictorial nature of the collaboratively produced works, yet he did not, in fact, repeat his partner’s celebrated strategy of blotting out certain parts of the photographs. Instead, van den Broek frankly pasted his own formal repertoire of motifs and shapes upon them. The ensuing interplay between photographic image and painterly mark makes for a series of vivid and colorful compositions—with *Base*, 2008, *Office*, 2008, and *Two Rockets*, 2008, as undeniable highlights—

and generates an intricate back-and-forth movement between realism and abstraction, all the more so as these have not been painted after photographs of real spaces but after fabricated images. They demonstrate that our reality is nothing but an alibi for the artificial reality embodied by every artwork.

—Wouter Davidts



Koen van den Broek, *Base*, 2008, oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 45 1/4"

MUNICH

Allora & Calzadilla

HAUS DER KUNST/KUNSTVEREIN

Milan Kundera once paraphrased Marx: “Optimism is the opium of the people.” As the twentieth century has shown us, there is a fine line between jubilation and the eruption of violence—above all when there’s musical accompaniment. In Europe, no melody has been used and abused to produce a spirit of optimism more than the “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, a favorite of both Hitler and Stalin, masters of mass seduction. Under the direction of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, this anthem sounded again at Munich’s Haus der Kunst, which was built by the Nazis as the Haus der deutschen Kunst (House of German Art). This time no one rose in jubilation. The audience looked down, uncomfortably, as a grand piano glided through the room producing a somewhat discordant, but still recognizable, rendition of the melody. The sound came out of a round hole that had been cut in the center of the piano, just big enough for a young pianist to stand in and play the keys from the reverse side. While playing, she was pushing the enormous instrument with her frail body through the Hall of Honor of this historic building.

The performance at Haus der Kunst, *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on Ode to Joy for a Prepared Piano*, 2008, was complemented by three elaborate installations at the city’s Kunstverein. There, upon entering, the visitor was met with a hellish cacophony of sounds and voices that bounced off one’s body like projectiles, all coming from the