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WHITE NOISE

Chris Cran
Marcel van Eeden
Roger Ballen
Massimo Guerrera
Martin Bennett

Exhibition: 15 Jan to 3 March, 2007

Clint Roenisch is pleased to announce "White Noise," a group exhibition of Canadian and international artists, including the South-African based photographer Roger Ballen and the Dutch draughtsman Marcel van Eeden.

White Noise begins with three paintings by Chris Cran from his Sublime Sales Series: "Toreador," "Miracle Hand" and "Plaque" (all 2003). Each work incorporates a half-toned image of a 50's era salesman whose gaze holds the viewer with the sense of confident outcome. To his left, against identical blazing yellow grounds, various images appear to be on offer: a bullfight poster in one work, a mirror with a hand making the OK sign in another and a third with a kitsch plaque that reads "It starts when you sink in his arms... and ends with your arms in the sink." The fourth and final work in the front gallery is a drawing by van Eeden which proclaims "300 yrs of white oppression" (sic). This work is part of the artist's ongoing series of daily drawings (begun 1993) which take as their reference any existing image that preceded 1965, the year he was born. This massive series, entitled "Encyclopedia Of My Death," faithfully seeks to reproduce in graphite the pre-history of the artist, a world he never knew, the boundless maw of long-gone moments. In this manner "300 yrs..." while appearing to be a contemporary take on race relations is in fact a calm facsimile of a now-forgotten statement of protest, originally misspelled in its haste and anger. United with the three Cran paintings of the bland white businessman with his can-do smile, the van Eeden contributes to a rather blunt sense of a white (and male) dominated arena unfolding.

In the second gallery are two photographs by Roger Ballen (who has never shown in Canada). The photographer has taken his principal subject to be the white underclass of South Africa, where he has lived for the last thirty years. In these images we are confronted with a group of people that is rarely thought to exist in South Africa, and who are often met with little sympathy given that for all their poverty, inbreeding and miserable conditions, they remain white and thus a de facto element of political privilege. In fact they are economically oppressed and exist in a fringe state. Here both the swaggering confidence of the besuited icon in Cran's

paintings and the finger-pointing fact in van Eeden's drawing is undermined. Adjacent to the Ballen photographs is a large sculpture in white hydrostone by Massimo Guerrera. The Montreal artist is well-known for his sensual investigations of corporeal bonding and dissolution. This sculpture is a void whose shape suggests an engorged white vagina. It is also simultaneously indicates a mold of a head, the plaster having surrounded the skull but furthermore been poured down the throat. There, once solidified, a palpable, positive form is given to a negative cavity, a voice precluded by white dust.

The last work in the exhibition is a large "Grey Volume Painting" from a 1996 series by Martin Bennett. These paintings were executed in oil on canvas and then sanded down to varying degrees such that the emerging weave of the canvas provides its own layer of visual reference. Governed by this white constellation of canvas flecks Grey Volume Painting (16) radiates a measured, fugitive sense of space and chiaroscuro. In acoustical terms 'white noise' is generally an irritant, a vague all-over sound. In the context of the exhibition the term is perhaps best applied to the curatorial premise itself: that of employing diverse works that were not explicitly generated with racial politics in mind, to elide the question of race and political power.

Roger Ballen, whose work is introduced here, will have his first solo exhibition in Canada at the gallery in May 2007 as part of the Contact Festival of Photography.

Martin Bennett has eight paintings in the current exhibition "We Can Do This Now" at the Power Plant Centre for Contemporary Art (Toronto).

Chris Cran will be included in the 2007 Biennale de Montreal entitled "Crack The Sky", curated by Wayne Baerwaldt.

Marcel van Eeden's drawings are the subject of a large survey at the Kunsthalle Tübingen in June 2007.

Massimo Guerrera will be included in an exhibition of five artists at the National Gallery of Canada in 2008.