

## Daan van Golden

Curator : Devrim Bayar

Wiels Contemporary Art Centre : January – May 2012 (exact dates TBC)

WIELS presents the first retrospective of Dutch artist Daan van Golden in Belgium.

Although he has worked since the early 60s, Daan van Golden has produced a limited body of work, resulting from his "meditative" painting process which favors slowness and concentration. In line with the then emerging hippie culture, the artist, fond of travels and discoveries, emigrated to Japan from 1963 to 1964. This travel had a decisive influence on the work of the painter, who then abandoned abstract expressionism for an entirely unique geometric abstraction.

If formally van Golden's work can be likened to hard edge painting, which advocates flat shapes and hard, clean edges, his work, unlike the latter where the subject is painting itself, takes its inspiration from existing decorative and mundane patterns, such as wrapping papers, tissues and towels. In the early 60's, van Golden thus renounced the lyrical gesture of his first works for a very slow and methodical painting process, owing to his fervent Zen philosophy and meant to induce in both their author and viewers a state of calm and fulfillment. At the same time, he found himself at the forefront of Pop art with his vernacular references, and also at forefront of minimal art with the repetition of his structures.

Since then, Daan van Golden has never ceased to appropriate fragments of reality which he meticulously reproduces. The artist's gaze captures details, often minute, of the visible world in order to reveal, almost magically, hidden forms: a child's face materializes in a flower, a bird emerges between two columns of a Greek temple, and a halo appears behind Mick Jagger's portrait... Through these "revelations", the art of van Golden transcends reality. The visual experiences to which the artist invites us form the basis of a conception of art intimately connected to life, by making us perceive the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Even though the originality of Daan van Golden's work quickly caught the interest of the art world, the artist decided to withdraw from public view soon after his consecration at the Documenta in Kassel in 1969, where the artist exhibited along with one of his idols, Yves Klein. Over the next decade, the artist didn't exhibit anymore, but continued to work nonetheless. This period was rich in travels that lead the artist to faraway destinations, such as India, Indonesia, and Latin America, etc., where van Golden developed his photography. Like his painting practice, his photographs reveal moments of epiphany that pepper his daily life. From 1978 on, the artist focused his lens more specifically on his daughter Diana who inspired a long series of pictures among his best known, and gathered under the title inspired by Oscar Wilde, "Youth is an art."

Daan van Golden is not only a photographer, but also a collector of images made by others and more specifically of newspaper clippings. "Golden Years" is another of his famous series, which gathers images cut from newspapers and magazines. This subjective archive reflects the historic moments that have sprinkled the life of the artist, but is also indicative of the variety of his sources of inspiration – art, music, fashion etc – as well as the acuity of his eye for poetic moments.

Be it his paintings, photographs or collections of images, van Golden's work is based solely on existing images or even reproductions. Some works clearly reveal the artist's re-appropriation of printed images. For instance, the silhouette of the parrot in his series "Study after Matisse" is blurred because it is a blown up detail of a printed reproduction of a work by the French master. Similarly, the large portrait of Fats Domino which faithfully reproduces the Ben-Day dots reveals the printed origin of the image.

Even if he has been associated with artistic movements as diverse as minimalism, Pop art and appropriation art, the work of van Golden nonetheless occupies a unique position in the history of modern painting. The retrospective of the artist at WIELS will present the various facets of his work, through a selection of major works and others which have never yet been exhibited, and will illustrate the singularity of this visionary artist. Through various groupings of works that will structure the exhibition, the retrospective will offer multiple perspectives on a work at once extremely varied and very consistent.

From the outset, a selection of abstract geometric works made in Japan will demonstrate how van Golden surprisingly reveals the pattern of the grid – indistinguishable from minimal art – in objects as vernacular as handkerchiefs or wrapping papers. This iconic series will also highlight the specificity of van Golden's artistic method, which not only reproduces and repeats existing patterns, but also swings vernacular iconography into artistic sophistication; figurative art into abstraction, and vice versa.

Another group, which confronts the very long series Heerenlux with the one dedicated to Pollock, will show how the artist explores the abstract potential of a decorative pattern and, conversely, the ornamental qualities of abstraction. This logic of reversal is still present in another group of works, formally at the opposite of

these "all over" compositions: the one dedicated to silhouettes. Through his "studies" of Henri Matisse and Giacometti, his portraits of Mozart and others, van Golden plays and replays the links between background and shape, positive and negative, figure and decor.

Beyond the identification of these various formal processes, some recurring themes will emerge, such as the figure of the bird, the faces, music, the artist's travels and of course the women who have populated the artist's life, starting with his daughter Diana. A selection of photographs, combining iconic images of the series "Youth is an art" or "Insel Hombroich", with new prints, produced by the artist specifically for this exhibition will complete the presentation of the paintings. A selection of press clippings collected by the artist will reflect the visual references and sources of inspiration of van Golden.

A catalogue, with texts by Sven Lüticken and the curator, will accompany the exhibition.