

On Thursday, 29th April, Song Song proudly invites you to the opening of *Sommerstrauss*, the first solo exhibition of art works by Hillebrand van Kampen to be held outside of his native Holland.

Hillebrand van Kampen (b. 1945) never begins his work from the raw, the unformed; in his studio one finds no blank canvases, no crude lumps of clay. In place of such as these, his rooms are filled—jammed, in fact—with collected objects: bits of doily lace and sun-faded embroideries, delicate dancing figurines made from colored glass, silk flowers, bolts of block-printed fabric, fancy old fruit tins that have been culled from the days when graphics were mostly beautiful, and were only ever the product of an artist's hand.

Such delicacies as these form the apparatus of van Kampen's art: the objects are not simply a base or ground to be overpaved with self-expression, as a bare canvas, they are rather a collection of infinitesimal worlds unto themselves, artifacts whose internal cultures yet live, and which must be treaded lightly amongst, van Kampen believes, which must be handled with all the respect and care with which a botanist treats those most valuable specimens of his collection: the endangered. And like the botanist, van Kampen's work as an artist expresses a sense of duty to these failing specimens, the purview of which exceeds the responsibility of sustaining each fragile individual; in his practice he seeks to harness what special aspects as will justify his objects' protection as a class, as a history, to do so by excavating a beauty from within them which, if he can bring it resonate profoundly enough, will sustain them in the face of a world the rhythm of whose marching he knows they will not fit.

It is an unabashedly romantic notion; it must be, to stand a chance. And for *Sommerstrauss*, van Kampen addresses the mortal fascination of such romance with characteristic sincerity. The exhibition brings together some dozen recent paintings engaged with floral still life embroideries, a collection originally picked up in flea markets around Europe. The paintings are conceived as a suite, that, in the artist's words, "become flower still lives again for the summer of 2010, redolent with the quiet hours of all the grandmothers, mothers and aunts who patiently worked on them to give their family something beautiful to hang on the wall in their house, hoping they would stay in the family as a memorandum after they died." It is the nature of those hours that van Kampen seeks to recapture, to transmit through his own patient concentration, the atmosphere of those hours, of humble application against the inevitable, the unassuming desire to leave a pleasant trace, a mute decoration rather than a personal assertion, the hushed fortitude in that.

Van Kampen lives and works in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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