

KUNSTHALLE BASEL

STEINENBERG 7, CH-4051 BASEL

TEL + 41 61 206 99 00 / FAX + 41 61 206 99 19

INFO@KUNSTHALLEBASEL.CH / WWW.KUNSTHALLEBASEL.CH

Press Release: **Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys
PROJEKT 13**

Press Preview: **Friday, January 15, 2010, 12am**

Opening: **Friday, January 15, 2010, 7pm**

Dates: **January 16–March 14, 2010**

Hours: **Tue/Wed/Fri 11am–6pm, Thu 11am–8.30pm, Sat/Sun 11am–5pm**

Kunsthalle Basel is pleased to present the first major exhibition of the Belgian artists **Jos de Gruyter** (*1965, Geel) and **Harald Thys** (*1966, Wilrijk) in Switzerland, entitled **PROJEKT 13**. Collaborating since the end of the 1980s, the artists have developed an intriguing body of work, consisting of films, photographs, drawings and performances. The figures in their films and photographs share a condition of autistic detachment from each other and from their surroundings. Trapped by their actions and acting without empathy, they have reached another level of interaction, one in which spiritual powers prevail. In this parallel world, inside and outside are estranged from one another.

In the work of de Gruyter and Thys, the notion of closed systems is made physically explicit. For their exhibition at *Le Plateau* in Paris, in 2007, the artists had the whole exhibition space painted grey, including the windows, isolating the viewer from the outside. Similarly, for the 5th Berlin Biennial (2008) the artists mounted industrial doors in the cellar, where their video was on view, in order to emphasize the separation from the rest of the exhibition. Most recently at *Culturgest* in Lisbon, a cultural foundation located in a bank building, they transformed the exhibition spaces in such a way – they used the bank's PVC flooring to blanket both their own floor and their pedestals – as to dissolve the superficial borders between the two institutions.

For Kunsthalle Basel, de Gruyter and Thys came up with a display structure that not only keeps the outside world at a distance, but also viewers themselves. Consisting of a large number of wooden partitions in regular arrangements throughout the galleries, the structure is conceived as a labyrinth that effectively blocks the visitors' view of each other while they stroll around. On these panels, de Gruyter and Thys display approximately 500 new drawings on paper. The origins of these drawings lie in a 'dirty dark mix of found images of everything and nothing', from airplanes, openings, amateur theatre, and animals to buildings, pots and pans, sunglasses and dishes. The artists meticulously and painstakingly traced these images like monks to create an idiosyncratic visual encyclopaedia: a time-consuming project the exhibition title PROJEKT 13 refers to. De Gruyter and Thys describe it as 'a project of an indefinable group of technocrats, a higher instance that looks back on earthly existence and traces everything it comes across'.

In this staged world, the colour white prevails, neutralising difference. All images are treated in the same way, traced with the same soft pencil onto white paper. Similarly, the white enigmatic male heads are characterized by neutrality. Set on white high

pedestals towering over the display of drawings, they stare onto the white exhibition walls with a petrified, eternal gaze. These are two variations on “De Drie Wijsneuzen van Erembodegem” (The Three Wise-Noses of Erembodegem), originally conceived as a proposal for a roundabout sculpture near the village Erembodegem in Flanders. These sculptural heads also observe the visitors of the exhibition, who not only find their gazes returned by them but also by the figures in some of the drawings. This focus on the act of looking is a recurrent element in the artists’ work, which takes on different forms and is equally present in people, animals and things: passive, aggressive, inward, outward, threatening, frightening.

The exhibition leads the visitors towards a film in the last room, presented in a specially constructed auditorium with an enormous beamer, a huge screen and rows of benches, similar to those used in Protestant churches. The monstrous beamer, elevated above the visitor, becomes animated and is not unlike the sculptural heads in the other rooms. The film is a study of the relationship between the real world and the parallel world and how they influence each other. The film supports the hypothetical tendency to visualise this parallel world as one-dimensional. It is a world where time and space are of a different order, a one-dimensional white world without light or dark.

In-kind sponsorship support has been provided by **Vidi-Square**.

Jos de Gruyter and **Harald Thys** recently had solo shows at Culturgest, Lisbon; Kaleidoscope, Milan; Pro Choice, Vienna; Dépendance, Brussels (all 2009); Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin (2008); Frac Ile-de-France/le Plateau (duo exhibition with François Curlet), Paris (2007); Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (2002). They have participated in numerous group exhibitions, including: *The Filmic Conventions*, FormContent, London; *All That is Solid Melts into Air/The Thing*, MUHKA, Antwerp; *Un scene*, Wiels; *The Invisible Hand*, Sommer Contemporary Art project space, Tel Aviv; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (all 2009); Manifesta 7, Trento; *When Things Cast No Shadow* - the 5th Berlin biennial for contemporary art, Berlin (both 2008); *The Go-Between*, de Appel, Amsterdam (2007); *La Belgique Visionnaire*, Bozar Brussels (2005); *Marking the Territory*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2001).

Events in the frame of the exhibition PROJEKT 13 by Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys

Museumsnacht

The Problem - Performance in the frame of the Museumsnacht by Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys.

Friday, January 22, 2010, 10pm

Location: Kunsthalle Basel

Kunsthalle Basel presents at STADTKINO Basel

On the occasion of the exhibition PROJEKT 13, Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys present a selection of their films on two evenings in January and February 2010.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 9pm

Films by Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys, Part I

Tuesday, February 23, 2010, 8pm

Films by Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys, Part II

Location: Stadtkino Basel, Kloostergasse 5

Admission: CHF 12/ For members of the Basler Kunstverein CHF 6

Afterwards bar.

Every last Tuesday of the month, Kunsthalle Basel organizes an event at STADTKINO Basel.

Further information on all the events at www.kunsthallebasel.ch