

outLINE is pleased to present

richard menken 'jump while you fall...'

by invitation of guest curator mark kremer

opening saturday 9th of january from 17.00 to 19.00 hrs
exhibition runs until 13th february 2010

'Jump while you fall...'

This is the title of Richard Menken's forthcoming exhibition in outLINE gallery (born Zaltbommel 1947, lives and works in Amsterdam). The title reads like a manifesto: the artist sees his work as a stage to contemplate what it means to make art in a world that is on fire. Hence the earlier exhibition title: **'Both Ends Burning'**. The artist's dilemma is illustrated in a photo included in the exhibition. It depicts a recent deadly rocket explosion in Gaza caused by an Israeli attack. This little documentary photo is a powerfully vocal image of the negative things people do to each other. The rest of the exhibition can be interpreted as a counter image and a counteroffer - an artistic invocation.

In Richard Menken's exhibition inner and outer worlds are in conflict with each other. The space at outLINE is transformed into a domestic *environment*, surroundings that at the same time seem strangely curious with images and attributes that make ever so many ardent inner movements perceptible, the way posters in a teenager's bedroom embody both a sense of confusion and longing for the world. The windows of outLINE are covered in newspapers, so that the view of the peaceful courtyard is transformed into a view of the bad outside world. In fact the *environment* consists of an ensemble of heterogeneous elements: an endlessly rotating green fern, a film of this plant stroking a head, a room with a bed and other objects, and collages and assemblages that, by re-combining and mimicking existing images and objects, give a new perspective on reality.

Richard Menken is a young artist. At the moment the work he is realizing is very powerful. It is interesting that this is happening to him at the age of 62. This simply demonstrates that the question of age and art is a very relative issue, but there is also a concrete explanation. It turns out that over a period of years while Richard Menken was concentrating on teaching younger generations of art students, (from 1987-2007) he built up a stock of 'thoughts-in-art' that now demand to be presented to the world. At present he is developing a *work in progress* that consists of films, photos, collages and assemblages, consecrated to the life of deaf children and adults in Palestine. Richard Menken uses many different media: book, film, collage, drawing and photography. Regardless of the medium he uses, there is always a sense that an intense process has been brought to a standstill, as if a thought that obsesses the artist must be laid to rest. Here, it seems as if one could speak of what Umberto Eco (already in 1962), in literature, referred to as an 'open work' or, transposed to art, an 'open form'.

This exhibition developed by Richard Menken for outLINE has been realized through the recommendation of Mark Kremer who feels attracted to the form and spirit of his art. In Menken's art, he recognizes the inheritance of artistic psychedelia from the 1960's which he describes as: "Artistic psychedelia can be understood as a lyrical urge for freedom and critical engagement transformed into art. Psychedelia and Conceptualism were intimately interwoven in the *sixties*. However with the passing of years it seems that this understanding and the experience thereof have disappeared. But even in our times how a large or small idea can become an image remains an enormous challenge".

About his outLINE-project Richard Menken writes: The exhibition **'Jump while you fall...'** is about the world's pain, about gravity and the madness of what people do to each other. Everything is for sale: a form of extremism with credit cards as weapons, SUV's and fully laden shopping trolleys. The only way to deal with this situation, is by contrasting it with love, silence and compassion. Turn off the sound of talk shows and watch the body language of the presenters: they reveal a poor substitute of what mankind could originally have been. Europe is a sick body. We live in a period of war and war only begets a total spiritual bankruptcy. The Palestinians live under a ruthless physical occupation, in 'the democratic Netherlands' we are occupied by a permanent iconoclasm, by the alienation of 'Second Life'. Exercising freedom in such an unreal world seems to me to be impossible, anymore than being able to jump while you fall. What remains is the sweet memory of the time when we could fly. For a child gravity simply does not exist. Though we tumbled straight down from the trees we felt no pain and climbed up again with the same joy. Time after time."

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opening hours
thursday | saturday 13.00 | 17.00 hrs
and by appointment