

Press release

## Face to Face

Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller, Bjørn Melhus, Stefan Panhans and Meg Stuart

Exhibition: Saturday 06.02.2016 until Saturday 12.03.2016

Opening: Saturday 6 February, 5 pm.

To speak opens us to a wide range of possibilities. To speak is to open up to a whole future of understanding and misunderstanding, where we must trust in a natural process of human relations. In the project Face to Face, human relations are stripped down to meaning through body language, and what details are lost when perfecting communication when we speak. The exhibition brings together the diverse perspectives of Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller, Bjørn Melhus, Stefan Panhans, and Meg Stuart, who share an affinity for human behavior articulated through video and performance.

In the work *Everything Not Said*, artist duo Girardet & Müller linger on the body laid bare. By inter-splicing single frames of bandaged heads gathered from movies with excerpts of psychiatric health questionnaires, they unravel a correlation between internal mechanisms and external manifestations. The human body is individualized and characterized as a collection of highly specific diagnoses, yet is as lost as a disembodied shrouded head. Similarly, the facelessness as a means of protecting oneself from scrutiny appears in the video lecture *Out Of The Blue* by Bjørn Melhus. A lecture from a brown paper bag is a brief historiography of the European TV generation that grew up with American media. *The Only Possible City*, a video work by choreographer Meg Stuart, reveals the universality of human action in its barest form. The video is a steady close-up cycle of a person weeping and her attempts to compose herself. The viewer enters into this highly intimate and emotional place created by Stuart to draw out 'involuntary memories of everyday behavior, singular and collective, manufactured and fractured at the same time'. Stefan Panhans' work *Sorry* opens with a train carriage where the passengers, in a seemingly dazed and confused state, jostle past each other. Each character appears to be a celebrity leaden down with heavy bags, oversized takeaway coffee cups, or even a car panel. Carrying the weight of the world, they attempt to side-step their travelling companion without a word; they simply negotiate the tight space with their bodies. Only a Johnny Depp-like character says 'Sorry', which is accepted vaguely by the other passenger. Where Stuart attempts to engage a community located in the intimacy of the face, Panhans highlights the close proximity of detached humanity. In the exhibition the artworks come face-to-face with each other, whilst confronting us with the ways in which we deal with the other in everyday life.

Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller both work autonomously across film, video art and photography. Whereas Girardet mostly uses visually reduced materials in his work, which acquire new levels of meaning through intensive processing, Müller frequently traces new and autobiographical themes, using both his own and foreign materials. Since 1999, the two artists have been building up a joint body of work, whose focus revolves around Found Footage. Their work has been widely exhibited at international film festivals, including Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Rotterdam, New York and Oberhausen and at major institutions such as the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Bozar – Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Tate Modern, London, and Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

Bjørn Melhus focuses on general global ideas and trends, the critical reception of mass media, as well as the direct effects they have on people, in his short films and installations. He uses footage from film and television excessively and deconstructs stereotypical themes, figures and patterns of perception through means of exaggeration. He participated in shows at the Whitney Museum in New York, the 8th International Biennial of Istanbul, FACT in Liverpool, Serpentine Gallery in London, Sprengel Museum in Hanover, Ludwig Museum in Cologne, ZKM in Karlsruhe, Denver Art Museum, as well as others. Last year the project Freedom & Independence premiered at Kunsthall Rotterdam, parallel to the solo exhibition at West.

Stefan Panhans's video works and photographs create a peculiar atmosphere. The actors with their theatrical monologues and dialogues in a surreal stage setting are reminiscent of modern absurd theater. Similarly, they enfold their conflicts in the search for their own inner self in a world that has become increasingly estranged with its many identification opportunities. His recent shows include: Bremer Videokunst Förderpreis, Städtische Galerie Bremen, Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, and at Haus am Waldsee, Berlin

Meg Stuart's choreographic work revolves around the idea of an uncertain body, one that is vulnerable and self-reflexive. Through improvisation, Stuart explores physical and emotional states or the memories of them. Her artistic work is analogous to a constantly shifting identity. It continues to span a wide range of scales and constantly redefines itself while searching for new presentation contexts and territories for dance. Her work has travelled the international theatre circuit and also been presented at Documenta X in Kassel (1997), Manifesta7 in Bolzano (2008) and Performa09 in New York. In 2008, Meg Stuart received a Bessie Award (New York) for her oeuvre and a Flemish Culture Award in the category of the performing arts. The Akademie der Künste (Berlin) awarded Meg Stuart the Konrad-Wolf-Preis in 2012. Tanz Magazine honored her as Choreographer of the Year 2014. More recently Meg Stuart was honored with the Grand Prix de la Danse de Montréal 2014.

We are pleased to invite you to the opening reception of the exhibition on Saturday 06.02.2016 at 5 pm.

Extra: Finissage + Round table: Saturday 12.03.2016 at 4 pm, RSVP: [info@westdenhaag.nl](mailto:info@westdenhaag.nl)

For press photos and more info, you can contact Marie-José Sondeijker: [marie-jose@westdenhaag.nl](mailto:marie-jose@westdenhaag.nl)

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