

**DIRK VANDER EECKEN**

***First Glance***

**in cooperation with Thibaut Verhoeven (curator S.M.A.K., Ghent)**

**September 10 – October 15, 2010**

Vander Eecken's background as a graphic artist is essential to his art, even though he has only later come to consequently apply the mechanical and reproductive aspect of this technique in his work. Fascinating in his early work –as seen from the perspective of the urge for meaning as described above – is that his first grid paintings invariably originated from a concrete, quasi-narrative impulse. A telling anecdote: one of the important early works was painted after a visit to the Antwerp Zoo. In this work, Vander Eecken abstracted and accentuated the grid of the animal cages, as if to cloak (already then) the narrative content of what was happening in those cages. In his early paintings which he made in Watervliet, he utilised the grid to bring an 'order' to the landscape, again a very direct incentive for using the grid. In the following years, Vander Eecken has remained almost exclusively involved in the search for ways in which this grid can singularly define itself, independent of the painted image, and not seldom 'at the expense' of the potential visual meaning. He was able, in this respect, to rely on his background as a graphicist, which he used to disconnect from painting, both in a material as well as in a content-related way. The use of the grid became literal through the use of various perforated sheets and templates, while the brush was replaced by the spray can. By mechanising both the manual act (the painting itself) as the material aspect (the paint), Vander Eecken manages to skilfully block any possible meta-medium-based perception of painting, for the simple reason that there hardly remains – or better: at least not in the first place – any actual paint or painterly gesture. \*

At a first viewing of Dirk Vander Eecken's recent work, I was peripherally reminded of the edition "Erster Blick" (2000) of the German artist Gerhard Richter. This simple appropriation of a page from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung shows a photo with a text fragment of the first image of the inside of an atom, made by scientists at the University of Augsburg. It is an edition in which Gerhard Richter expresses his fascination for what underlies the material world, or what it is made up of. Concrete reality is tipped over through a microscopic examination that creates a mysterious image which evades all human control. Gerhard Richter also painted, after an illness, snow landscapes that conjure up a similar fascination with a landscape that exists but is temporarily covered with a layer of white snow. In a similar way, the oeuvre of Dirk Vander Eecken is an attempt at creating a continuum, an attempted contemplation of "realities" that directly opposes the routinised perception of the overpressurised rustling reality that surrounds us. \*\*

\* excerpt from "Previews of Afterimages" by Thibaut Verhoeven

\*\* excerpt from: "reflections on the observation of a recent series of paintings by Dirk Vander Eecken" by Luk Lambrecht