

## PRESENTS

Michael Van Den Besselaar  
WHAT WE'VE JUST SEEN IS NOT REAL  
October 18 - November 24, 2007

Opening Reception:  
Thursday, October 18th, 6-8pm



Black and White Gallery // Chelsea is proud to present *What We've Just Seen Is Not Real* — the first American solo exhibition of Dutch painter Michael Van Den Besselaar.

Taking its cue from Mr. Spock's pronouncement on *Star Trek* as he, an alien, encounters mankind, "What we've just seen is not real", this exhibition offers a disturbing insight into the essential ambiguity of the visual mass culture that has increasingly come to shape our collective psyche.

The *Time Machine Mirror Series* of paintings focuses on iconic images from the not-too-distant past, infused with a highly contemporary message. Acknowledging the role of the TV as a deceptively objective window on the world, Van den Besselaar proceeds to mock and thus deconstruct this symbol. The retro TV sets from the early and nostalgic days of the medium either overlap and block each other off — fighting for our attention, or are given a starring role in their own universe to communicate their importance in shaping our perceptions of visual information.

The *Heroes* trilogy — *Superheroes*, *Forgotten Terrorists* and *Larger Than Life*, weaves a fabric of independent but complementary experiences by portraying figures once dominating the mass media. Each part imposes a time and a rhythm of its own, and like a film, fictional or documentary is linked to the imaginative capacity of each individual, which gives rise to a host of interpretations.

In the *Superheroes* series temptation calls us as Superman, Batman, Catwoman, Wonder Woman, Flash Gordon, Electra Woman, and Captain Marvel compete to win our hearts with all the Good they have done fighting the Ultimate Evil. Even as the child in us prepares to plunge into the gooey goodness of their fictional lives, the adult-self begins to recoil as we remember the disastrous event in each of their lives that transformed them from mortals to heroes with superpowers.

Contrary to the bright and glossy painting approach used in *Superheroes*, the portraits of Patty Hearst, Carlos the Jackal and others in the *Forgotten Terrorists* series look like aged newspaper photos. Painted in black and white on small oblong canvases, these portraits give the impression of passport photos of pleasant young people in the prime of their lives.

In *Larger Than Life* series Van den Besselaar moves from non-existent and questionable heroes to dead heroes. The small and fragile pencil on paper portraits of dead people invite viewers to come closer to pay respect to those whose persona is "larger than life" but resumes human proportions in death. Marilyn Monroe is no longer a sex symbol but a sad and unrecognizable older woman. Some retained their power even on their deathbeds, (John F. Kennedy, Ayatollah Khomeini and Trotsky), and others appear peaceful but powerless (James Brown, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King).

The rooms in the *Lethal Chambers* series are brightly illuminated and void of human presence. These are not the rooms we recognize from our own experiences but rather from newspapers, magazines and TV. They appear quiet and sterile arousing suspicion of their possible connection with life and death.

Michael Van den Besselaar's oeuvre leaves room for doubt and uncertain perception. From his choice of images that suggest something else than what is obvious to the eye, a critical position emerges resisting all forms of facile seduction and claims to authoritarian truth – what we've just seen is not real, or at least it's not the only reality.

Michael Van den Besselaar graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Hague, in The Netherlands (1988). He is the recipient of several prestigious awards, such as the Haagse Salon Publics Prize, Haagse Salon Prize, the Grant Startstipendium, and the Karel Klinkenberg Prize. Van den Besselaar's work is in major private and public collections, such as the Museum of Modern Art, Den Haag, The Netherlands, the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands and others.

Black and White Gallery // Chelsea is located at 636 West 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10001.  
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6 pm.  
For more information please contact the gallery at 212 244 3007  
Email: [info@blackandwhiteartgallery.com](mailto:info@blackandwhiteartgallery.com)

Image: Michael Van den Besselaar, *The Time Machine Mirror #2*, o/c, 47" x 63"