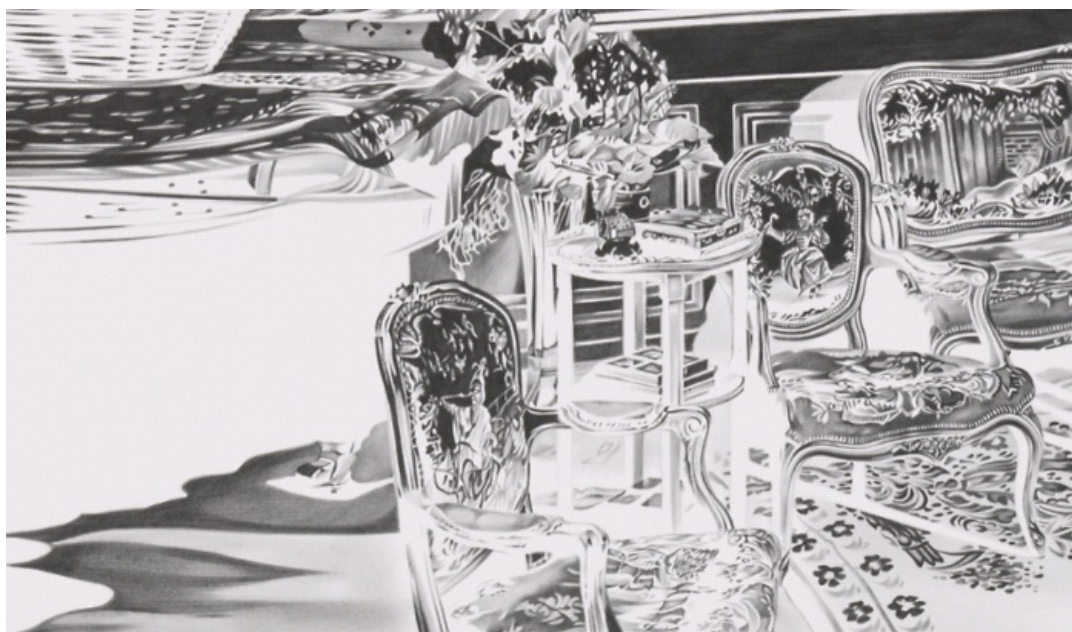

MARC BRANDENBURG

INTERIOR/EXTERIOR

PARIS MARAIS

30 Nov 2013 - 11 Jan 2014



Opening on Saturday 30 November, 6pm to 8pm

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is showing its fourth solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Marc Brandenburg. The title, INTERIOR/EXTERIOR, refers to eight drawings in frieze form, running like a continuous strip round almost the entire walls of the Paris gallery. The darkened room will be bathed in black light, causing the white parts of the drawings to stand out sharply. Here Brandenburg is showing an entire year's production. These works, extremely horizontal in format (21.5 x 300 cm), are based on historical photographs of Berlin interiors dating from the 1910s and '20s.

At first glance, Brandenburg's almost spectrally delicate pencil drawings seem like negatives of snapshots from a bizarre parallel world. His realistic scenes with public demonstrators, flag-waving football fans, clowns and fairgrounds, his portraits of friends and relatives, his water fountains and monumentally over-inflated Christmas decorations have an unsettlingly threatening effect. The silvery, shiny materiality of the graphite surfaces is combined with finely-nuanced, gently tapering contours. Everything is bathed in a blaze of unreal light. The motifs on the white paper seem deprived of their original peaceful character.

Brandenburg "examines in drawing the masks and symbols of a ruthless event culture: the ritual masquerading of football fans, the chubby bodies of fairground figures and mascots, the slogans and symbols on pennants, banners and hoardings" (Oliver Koerner von Gustorf). He draws from his own photographs, which attempt to capture the moment of veering from one motif to another. What concerns him is the interval between them: "It's like a cut in film, or individual stills that make up a film. It's like trying to depict an aura," Brandenburg explained recently in an interview.

In his speech at the award of the 2005 Karl Ströher Prize to Marc Brandenburg in the Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art, Ulf Poschardt remarked that although Brandenburg stands in the tradition of Pop and its delight in the surface itself, he still combines the aspects of realism and transfiguration in a contemporary manner. Poschardt also said that "it was not so much the media world and its images that Brandenburg captured, but moments of experienced intensity. A timid viewer (and aren't we all, when faced with delicate, intimate drawings?) has the feeling that he is looking at the negatives of snapshots of a deeply-felt life. The refined technical skill of Marc Brandenburg's work perpetuates the snapshot. The moment was given permanence. The shock of the moment has been lastingly sketched in." There is an evident affinity with the 19th-century genre and history painter Adolf von Menzel, whom Brandenburg greatly admires. Also Berlin protagonists of the Neue Sachlichkeit [new objectivity], such as Otto Dix and George Grosz, can be seen as precursors of Brandenburg.

Brandenburg's iconography often draws on scenes showing loss of control and extremes of corporeality. In 1998 Diedrich Diederichsen, writing about Brandenburg's aesthetics of excess, said that "the visual grammar of excess is essentially that of an accelerated or accelerating change of images which are in themselves clearly contoured. Their smallest element is the stroboscopic flash, alternately bright and darkened images where the bright parts produce a sequence of their own; this is then excessively bright, leaping out aggressively at the viewer, yet kept at a distance by the dark interruptions, the effect of immediate proximity thus being mitigated. Brandenburg's drawings endow this experience of the world with intensity and permanence."

The drawings in the present series of works have a new quality, since here the motifs are static, surrealistically extended; previous works showed bustling street scenes in Berlin, reminiscent of Adolph von Menzel and subjected to the kind of alienation typical of Brandenburg. The sociological component remains; after all, these are upper-class interiors from the past, from which we can deduce evidence of changing categories such as prestige and the private sphere.

Daniel Völzke writes: "These interiors may look elegant, but there is nothing cosy about them. They can hardly be seen as counter-worlds to the [representations of] shelters for the homeless; they radiate a peculiar coldness and loneliness that almost obliterates the difference between INTERIOR/EXTERIOR [the title of the exhibition]. As in all Marc Brandenburg's works, here one could either recognise descriptions of actual social conditions, or else see them as pure compositions, merely a sequence of patterns, forms, sounds and feelings which are not decipherable." Born in Berlin in 1965, Brandenburg grew up in Germany and Texas. During the 1990s he became widely known for his forceful graphite drawings. Today, his works are included in collections such as that of MoMA/New York, Deutsche Bank, Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, Hamburg Kunsthalle and Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art, and have been exhibited in international museums. Most recently, the Städtische Galerie, Wolfsburg (2012), Hamburg Kunsthalle (2011) and Denver Art Museum (2010) devoted comprehensive solo exhibitions to his work.