

Philip Akkerman

Full Frontal

8 September – 9 October 2010

Opening hours: Wednesday – Saturday 11am – 6pm and on Tuesdays by appointment

Mummery + Schnelle is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Philip Akkerman.

In 1981 Philip Akkerman started to paint self-portraits. Since then he has painted nothing else, a continuous project altered daily. Over the years there have been many different interpretations of what this project might mean. Suggestions have been made that Akkerman is painting himself - a painter - and a painter's life; that he is examining the human relationship to art and reality and the relationship of the individual to the absolute; that he is making reference to the history of European Humanism, or to Modernist seriality and the meaning of repetition; that he is depicting the self as witness to the passing of time, or the distance that exists between individuals.

While none of these interpretations are invalid, what has become clearer the longer that Akkerman's project has continued is that these are not self-portraits as personal psychological studies, and he would consider a purely psychoanalytical interpretation of them as misplaced. He says simply that "I paint myself, and so I paint the whole of mankind." Certainly, the more diverse the portraits become, the more the relationship between image and object is put to the test.

The format that Akkerman adopts in all the paintings in the current exhibition is one of facing fully to the front - a variation from his more characteristic $\frac{3}{4}$ profile. This gives a symmetry and formal structure to the paintings' composition and presents a more imposing face to the viewer. The styles in which they are painted are extraordinarily diverse, ranging from Mannerist painting from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Netherlands to psychedelic graphic designs of the 1960s and '70s. Philip Akkerman's paintings are remarkable exercises in variety and invention within a pre-determined format.*.

In his poem *Self-portrait in a Convex Mirror*, John Ashberry talks of an otherness that gets included in the most ordinary forms of daily activity, changing everything slightly and profoundly. This otherness, this "Not-being-us", is all there is to look at in the mirror. It is what Philip Akkerman looks at when he paints himself.

Philip Akkerman was born in Vaassen in The Netherlands in 1957 and now lives and works in The Hague. Images and full biographical and bibliographical information about him can be found on www.mummeryschnelle.com.

For all further information about the exhibition please contact Andrew Mummery at andrew@mummeryschnelle.com

* This is well illustrated in the book *2314: Philip Akkerman 2314 Self Portraits 1981 – 2005*, which reproduces every self-portrait Akkerman made between 1981 and the end of 2005. Copies are available from the gallery.

Questions of how to situate in the space of the present references to the historicity of painting, which are relevant to Philip Akkerman's self-portraits, are further addressed in the next exhibition at Mummery + Schnelle: *The Beholder's Share*, featuring the work of Robert Bordo, Nogah Engler, Louise Hopkins, Merlin James, Tom LaDuke, Carol Rhodes, Julie Roberts, David Schutter and Christopher Stevens.

Dates: 13 October – 4 December.