



Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven
In A Saturnian World

September 25–December 18, 2011

**The
Renaissance
Society**

at The University of Chicago



The Renaissance Society

at The University of Chicago
5811 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

Museum Hours

Tuesday - Friday: 10 am - 5 pm
Saturday, Sunday: 12 - 5 pm
Closed Mondays
www.renaissancesociety.org

Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven *In A Saturnian World*

September 25 – December 18, 2011

Opening Reception: Sunday, September 25, 4:00–7:00 pm

Featuring a talk with the artist from 5:00–6:00 pm

Electric Ladyland

In 2008, The Script Factory offered a three-day workshop in Brussels. Led by two British screen-writers, it was designed for those interested in developing stories for television. Antwerp-based artist Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven received the ad through her affiliation with a new media forum to which she has belonged for over twenty years. The ad piqued a long-standing curiosity about television's narrative mechanics, notably open serials, where day-in-day-out reality is grist for the mill of soap opera fantasy. Van Kerckhoven enrolled without looking for anything specific to her own art practice, which has always been engaged with new media and mass media critique. Toward the end of the workshop, the participants were divided into small groups, each giving treatment to a story set in a Brussels apartment. Equipped with a bare-bones *mise en scène* and freshly acquired lessons in plot and character development, the groups came up with scenarios that took on lives of their own. Van Kerckhoven was not as interested in the final product as she was the idea of a narrative formula catering to our psychological and emotional needs. Two years later, she used the notes she took for *Mastering the Horizon*, a series of seventeen large digital prints, one of which is featured on the other side of this poster.

In style, scale, and number, these are images that shamelessly flaunt their seamless means of production. Scanner, screen, and ink jet printer, however, are at the service of prints legible first and foremost as collage. Her signature pictorial elements—images of women, planes of vibrant color, and blocks of text—are discretely layered or juxtaposed, crafting a space where, in fine phantasmagoric fashion, any- and everything can happen. The conditions that made collage an indispensable mode of expression a century ago obviously remain in effect. The difference between now and then is one of degree as present-day turbo-capitalism warrants heralding in toxic day-glo fashion.

Mastering the Horizon is one of several new bodies of work Van Kerckhoven has produced for her exhibition at The Society. Her highly heterogeneous output includes drawing, painting, video, writing, interactive computer animations, and performance (she is a founding member of the noise band Club Moral). Alongside *Mastering the Horizon* will be another series of computer prints, four suites of drawings and several computer animations, two of which will be interactive. The designation closest to describing Van Kerckhoven's range of activities is the practically defunct term intermedia artist. Although she had no intention of pursuing it professionally, Van Kerckhoven was trained in graphic design. She chose it as a field of study because of what she perceived as its interdisciplinary nature. In that regard, Van Kerckhoven's flirtation with intermedia arguably began with text and image,

the combination of which remains at the heart of her practice, notably the drawings, which have a methodology identical to that of Raymond Pettibon.

Electronic media have also been a part of her practice since the outset of her career. In fact, it informs her aesthetic well outside the mere production of videos and computer animation. Her use of neon-colored plexi-glass, her vivid, unmodulated palette, and, at times, the rudimentary directness of her illustration, are an emulation of electronic media in the spirit of its effects. Composed in all-over fashion, the prints that make up *Mastering the Horizon* facilitate the eyes' movement from element to element, creating a sense of distraction that is indeed televisual.

The exhibition's title, *In A Saturnian World*, was inspired by Paul Verlaine's *Poèmes Saturniens*. While there is a suite of drawings whose text references this work directly, more importantly, the exhibition's title betrays Van Kerckhoven's interest in astrology, mythology, mysticism, and the occult. This is a counterpoint to her interest in science. For Van Kerckhoven these ways of understanding the world have equal value in portraying the human mind's steadfast determination to make meaning, regardless of whether the methods are empirical or intuitive, and regardless of whether the conclusions are rational or irrational. Van Kerckhoven is interested in generating new, uncharted meaning by juxtaposing text and image in uncanny fashion. Based on her work, the quickest way to the uncanny is through images of nude women most of which she appropriates from her collection of pre-Sexual Revolution soft pornography.

Although her pornographic source material has a thriving present day incarnation, it still belongs to a past, making it a remote form of kitsch. We are far less accountable to these images than to their present day successors, which include the likes of, say, The American Apparel ad campaign. Our culture is awash with exploitative images of women, which function symbolically insofar as they conform to established codes of meaning, making them a language, one that is deployed daily by "the hidden persuaders," i.e. those culture industry engineers, market research analysts, designers, stylists, creative directors, etc. whose work speaks to our unconscious. But Van Kerckhoven is less interested in value judgment and more interested in the idea that these images produce effects, ones that can be said to be the province of a science, revealing Van Kerckhoven above all else to be a formalist, albeit in what many take to be feminist clothing.

Related Events

OPENING RECEPTION

Sunday, September 25, 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Featuring a talk with the artist in Kent Hall room 107, 5:00 to 6:00 pm

READING

Sunday, November 6, 2:00 pm

Mike Edison

Dirty! Dirty! Dirty! of Playboys, Pigs, and Penthouse Paupers
AN AMERICAN TALE OF SEX AND WONDER

Mike Edison is the former publisher of *High Times*, a *Hustler* and *Penthouse* scribe, and the former editor-in-chief of *Screw* magazine. This performance/reading celebrates the release of *Dirty! Dirty! Dirty! of Playboys, Pigs, and Penthouse Paupers AN AMERICAN TALE OF SEX AND WONDER*. This event will take place in Cobb Hall Room 307 (directly below the gallery). FREE

READING

Sunday, November 13, 2:00 pm

Karl Kirchwey

Poems Under Saturn

Released this past Spring to glowing reviews, Kirchwey's is the first complete English translation of Paul Verlaine's *Poèmes Saturniens*. Kirchwey is Associate Professor of the Arts and Director of the Creative Writing Program at Bryn Mawr College. He is also the Andrew Heiskell Arts Director at the American Academy in Rome. He is the author of several collections of poetry, including *The Happiness of This World: Poetry and Prose* (2007); *The Engrafted Word* (1998), a *New York Times* Notable Book; and *A Wandering Island* (1990), recipient of the Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America. This event will take place in Swift Hall room 106, 1025 East 58th Street (on the Main Quadrangle of the University, directly east of Cobb Hall). FREE

READING

Thursday, November 17, 6:00 pm

Alice Notley

Notley has published over 25 books of poetry, including *Grave of Light: New and Selected Poems 1970-2005* (2006), awarded the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize; *Disobedience* (2001), awarded the Griffin International Poetry Prize; *Mysteries of a Small House* (1998); *The Descent of Alette* (1996); *Close to me & Closer...* (*The Language of Heaven*) and *Désamère* (1995); *To Say You* (1994); *The Scarlet Cabinet* (with Douglas Oliver, 1992) and *Homer's Art* (1990). Notley has received the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for Poetry, an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. She has also been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. This event will take place in Rosenwald Hall room 405 (1101 E. 58th Street on the Main Quadrangle of the University, roughly one block east of Cobb Hall). FREE This event is co-sponsored with the University of Chicago: Poem Present.

CONCERT

Thursday, December 1, 8:00 pm

Club Moral

Club Moral, an experimental industrial noise band founded in 1981 by Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven and Danny Devos, achieved cult status from day one; cult status being defined by peers such as Throbbing Gristle. Initially a band and a performance venue, Club Moral was a definitive staple of Antwerp's underground scene of the 1980s, hosting acts such as Boyd Rice (NON), Michael Moynhan (Coup De Grace), Slave State, Whitehouse, Trevor Brown, Clair Obscur, and John Duncan. Although the venue ceased operating in 1987, the four-piece outfit survived intermittent periods of inactivity and various line-ups only to become legendary amongst a new generation of goth/industrial/electronic/noise hounds. After three decades of performances throughout Europe and Asia, this marks their U.S. debut. This event will take place in Bond Chapel (on the main quadrangle of the University, directly east of Cobb Hall). FREE

READING

Sunday, December 4, 2:00 pm

Vanessa Place

Place is a writer, a lawyer, and co-director of Les Figues Press. She is author of *Dies: A Sentence* (2006), *La Medusa* (2008), *Notes on Conceptualisms*, co-authored with Robert Fitterman (2009), and *The Guilt Project: Rape, Morality and Law* (2010). This event will take place in Swift Hall room 106, 1025 East 58th Street (on the Main Quadrangle of the University, directly east of Cobb Hall). FREE

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Anne Mie Van Kerckhoven, which inaugurates The Society's 96th season and its 32nd in the Bergman Gallery, is dedicated to the memory of Edwin Bergman. Through his commitment to new and provocative art, Ed championed all The Society stands for. We remain grateful for his outstanding example, friendship, service and support.

This exhibition has been made possible through generous support from the Flanders Ministry for Culture, Sports and Media, Kingdom of Belgium. Additional funding has been received from Alphawood Foundation; the CityArts Program of The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, a municipal agency; Christie's; The Danielson Foundation; Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; The John R. Halligan Charitable Fund; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Family Foundation; Nuveen Investments; the Provost's Discretionary Fund at The University of Chicago; Pritzker Foundation; RBC Foundation; The Siragusa Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and our membership.

[that side]
Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven
Inflexion
2010–2011
Digital print on PVC
48 x 36 inches