

BravinLee programs

MEDIA RELEASE

Philip Akkerman

“Am I A Person?”

October 22 – November 24, 2010

Opening: Friday, October 22nd, 6-8pm

BravinLee programs is pleased to present “Am I A Person?” paintings by Philip Akkerman. BravinLee has exhibited Philip Akkerman since 1993. The following is an essay written especially for this exhibition by English sculptor/curator Stephen Hepworth:

At times the most conservative act can become the most radical gesture. The Dutch artist Phillip Akkerman has been painting (and drawing) self-portraits since the early 1980's. This is not in addition to anything else; this is just what he does. The three decidedly modest size of the boards he paints on are similarly rigorously adhered to: It's as if a set of rules have been created that he will stick to for the rest of his life, and shows a certain religiosity that governs his practice. In the intervening thirty years, it has become apparent, that within these strict parameters there is the most incredible rich and fertile territory for him to traverse and mine.

Each painting that Akkerman embarks upon is a journey, sometimes to a place that appears known, and others almost an open ended exploration into the unknown. Usually appearing in ¾ profile his face, and its features, provide an armature on to which different moods and styles can be fashioned. His practice is serial and focused, like a scientist in a laboratory tweaking an experiment, each time reaching a slightly different outcome. Suddenly this pattern can seem overtaken by a new direction, as if some new formula is being tried out, taking the painting somewhere radical and new.

Akkerman is clearly a Northern European painter; his oeuvre demonstrates a very present contact to the art found in its churches and museums. The heritage of Flemish painters from the 15th and 16th century such as Robert Campion, Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel the Elder are constant in his paintings, their respective fascination with: actuality and presence; the grotesque; subtlety and humanism; all come together to depicting an Everyman who is found in literature and philosophical texts of the period (the Dutch equivalent being Elckerlijc). Indeed he has stated, “I paint myself, and so paint the whole of mankind.” The self-portraits that Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn made throughout his lifetime also prefigure and inform Akkerman's project. The art historian Jacob Rosenberg in his 1948 monograph on Rembrandt wrote of “the ceaseless and unsparing observation which his self-portraits reflect, showing a gradual change from outward description and characterization to the most penetrating self-analysis and self-contemplation,” perhaps echo some of Akkerman's concerns, although unlike Rembrandt he never smiles, preferring instead to evoke humor via the absurd, the tragic, the figure of the fool. His referencing of art movements, genres and styles moves far beyond these roots, seemingly drawing from every intervening century to the present - at times leading to the almost obliteration of his face.

For his fourth exhibition in New York, Phillip Akkerman has chosen to show a range of work made since 1991. The effect is both one of deliberate imbalance, caused by the collision of references, and of affirmation, demonstrated in the vitality, richness and commitment to his ongoing project. From the ghoul to the dandy, whether painted with dark face or red, obscured by abstraction or grounded in realism, there is no certainty in the eyes that stare out from his paintings, only an intensity of a scrutiny that demands the look is returned.

Stephen Hepworth

September 2010

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In addition to this exhibition, Mr. Akkerman has roughly current exhibitions at Mummery & Schnelle in London and at the Kunstverein Arthaus in Ahaus Germany. Philip Akkerman was born in Vaassen in The Netherlands in 1957 and now lives and works in The Hague, Netherlands. In addition to numerous museum exhibitions, Akkerman's work is included in the collections of The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and The Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C.

Gallery 2:

Michelle Blade

"Nigredo, Albedo, Citrinitas, Rubedo"

October 22 – November 24, 2010

Opening: Friday, October 22nd, 6-8pm

In Gallery 2, BravinLee programs is pleased to present "Nigredo, Albedo, Citrinitas, Rubedo," Michelle Blade's first solo exhibition in New York.

The title of the exhibition, nigredo(blackness), albedo(whiteness), citrinitas (yellowing) and rubedo(redness) are the four chromatic stages of an alchemical work. The terms are rooted in medieval European alchemy and refer to the successful transmutation of base matter into gold, or the creation of the philosopher's stone. Her works utilize this metaphor for spiritual transformation in the Hermetic tradition incorporating history, anthropology, nature, spirituality, and phenomena.

Michelle Blade holds a BA from Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles and an MFA from the California College of the Arts. Her work has been featured at Jack Hanley, Triple Base and David Cunningham Projects, in San Francisco; and at the San Jose ICA, Roberts and Tilton and Carl Berg Gallery, in Los Angeles. Additionally Blade has shown at Space 1026 in Philadelphia, Union Gallery, London, V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, and the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart. She is a 2007 recipient of the Murphy-Cadogan Fellowship. Michelle Blade lives and works in Oakland where she directs Sight School, an alternative artist run storefront.

Upcoming Winter/Spring 2011:

Rebecca Morales

Marcia Kure (in conjunction with an exhibition at Susan Inglett Gallery)

Iva Gueorguieva (in conjunction with an exhibition at Ameringer | McEnery | Yohe)