

Gregor Schneider

Tote Räume

Exhibition: 29.08.2020 — 31.01.2021, Opening: 29.08.2020, 19:00 uur

Location: West Den Haag in the former American Embassy, Lange Voorhout 102, The Hague

West Den Haag is thrilled to announce Tote Räume, Gregor Schneider's first solo exhibition in the Netherlands. Acknowledged as a groundbreaking artistic proposition, Schneider's work can be regarded also as prophetic in a time of mandatory social distancing since it is based on mechanisms of physical isolation. Unfolding a sequence of rooms, sculptures, human figures, photos and videos spanning four decades of radical art making, the exhibition is arranged in response to, and exchange with, the original function of its building as the U.S. Embassy in the Netherlands from 1959 until 2018.

A clear example to this exchange is the 'Interrogation Room' – a pristine room replicating one of the prison cell modules in Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp, the U.S. detention facility located on Cuba's southeastern coast. When incorporated into the setting of West Den Haag 'Interrogation Room' exceeds the boundaries of the aesthetic field and acquires the status of a real authoritarian space, outlining the exercise of power over the visitors and the potential violation of their bodily sovereignty.

Also included in the current sequence is 'Cold Storage Cell', which joins 'Interrogation Room' to politically contextualize Schneider's continuous experiments in sensory deprivation and practices of stealth interrogation and clean torture, intermittently conducted throughout his entire oeuvre.

With the display of 'Cryo-Tank Phoenix 3' Schneider's conception of sealed-off spaces extends beyond the political-jurisdictional framework provided by West Den Haag and obtains a metaphysical sense, turning every site in which it emerges into an intermediary zone situated between life and death, between this world and the world to come.

A separate section in the exhibition is dedicated to 'Geburtshaus Goebbels', which involves the actual building in Mönchengladbach-Rheydt where Joseph Goebbels—the Reich Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany—was born. In 'Geburtshaus Goebbels' Schneider traces the roots of Nazi history almost literally, uncovering the physical foundations of Goebbels' birthplace—the origins of his origins. Within Schneider's universe 'Geburtshaus Goebbels' is also a follower of 'Haus u r', the artist's own site of origin, standing a short distance away from it. 'Haus u r' is the name Schneider gave to the abandoned residential building, which he occupies since 1985, all the while ceaselessly reconstructing its inner structure as an idiosyncratic typology of visceral rooms built inside the house's preexisting rooms (with windows in front of windows, walls in front of walls, etc.). Being realized through a process of self-consuming duplication—whereby each room is also the concealed room into which it was inserted, and the space—the difference—between them—makes 'Haus u r' an enduring experience of cognitive dissonance in relation to which presence and absence, construction and elimination, are no longer distinguishable from one another.

Gregor Schneider (Germany, 1969) is considered one of the most influential artists of the last three decades. Since the end of the 1990s Schneider has been presenting solo exhibitions in leading museums around the world, including, among many others, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, Museo d'Arte Contemporena Roma. In 2001 Schneider won the Golden Lion award in the Venice Biennale of Art, and from then on his work is the subject of worldwide discussions and controversies. Schneider's practice is an intersection between architecture, sculpture, and performance, intervening in the fabric of material, social and historical reality.

You are welcome to attend the press conference, in the presence of the artist, on Wednesday August 26th from 2 and 4 PM. Please register in advance via info@westdenhaag.nl. If you have questions, please contact MJ Sondeijker: marie-jose@westdenhaag.nl or (0)70.3925359.

'Onze Ambassade' is managed by ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur and Art Institute West Den Haag. The program of West is supported by the city of The Hague, the Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science, Mondriaan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut.