

"Unsettled Areas" by Eric Manigaud

Opening: Thursday, Feb 18th 2016, in the presence of the artist !

Show: Feb 19th until Apr 2nd 2016

Fifty One Too is pleased to announce its first solo show by the French artist Eric Manigaud (Fr, 1971) called "Unsettled Areas". In a very meticulous and hyper-realistic way, Manigaud makes large-scale graphite drawings of the agony in our European society. Through historical photographic archives, he appropriates these old images as such by transforming them through his particular draughtsmanship and creating captivating, monumental drawings as meta-realities of our recent afflicted past.

Eric Manigaud's work process begins with an extensive research on carefully selected topics of our collective heritage of suffering, based on photographic archives dated from 1850s until 1920s, an era when photography was considered scientific and objective. The photo-realistic aspect in his drawings is necessary to obtain a renewal experience by the spectator. Enhanced by its composition of thousands tiny strokes, executed in graphite and graphite powder, which emphasizes the visual density of the image.

Before drawing, he always proceeds as follow: the selected photographic print is projected in a much larger size than it's original. The enlarged image causes a deviation, which adds an elusive, spectral quality to the image. This large-size projection Manigaud starts to draw continuing for days, avoiding his own shadow while standing in the light of the projector. His almost obsessive drawing practice intertwines a mystical and narrative element to the work. As for the artist, drawings are a more intense version of the realistic properties of his archive and trying to reveal it's invisibility.

For this exhibition, works of three different series will be on show. The first series "Les Jungles" are huge jungle interior views of the French expedition to the Ivory Coast the end of the 19th C. Remembering the disaster of the European colonization of territories overseas, they aren't renders of an exotic wanderlust, but are rather obstructive remnants of our colonial past, resembling almost like ruins.

In the second series "1939-1945", Manigaud tries to unravel the historical complex layers of the deconstruction of World War II with aerial views of bombed cities with crumbled buildings. Hidden traces and signs might come to surface re-examining the atrocities of this kind of warfare.

This enigmatic characteristic of his drawings is mostly present in the third series "Magde Donohoe and her skotographs" (1930): spirit photographs that attempted to capture ghosts (read double exposure of a person). In the dark, she pressed a photographic plate onto her face in order to "interact with invisible actors" by pronouncing certain words or letters, resulting in often visually abstract images. Especially for this series, but also with others, the historical archives are usually slightly damaged by creeks, marks of dust, All these additional properties become as important actor as the subject itself.

Until very late in art history drawing was still considered to be a preparatory step in the process of art. Due to its immediate and spontaneous character, drawing was mainly treated as a support for other forms of art. It was until the late 1960s that various artists such as Sol LeWitt (USA, 1928-2007) with his famous wall-drawings used it as a stand-alone art form. And later artists like William Kentridge (S-Afr, 1955) and Ernest Pignon (Fr, 1942) who emphasized (and still do) its expressionistic and narrative characteristics. Manigaud belongs to a contemporary generation of draughtsmen who are still pushing the boundaries of drawing by underlining their technique, skill and preparation to create.

Eric Manigaud lives and work in Saint-Etienne, France. The work of the artist is presented in museums such as: Musée d'Art Moderne (Fr), Museum of Art (Korea), Museum Dr. Guislain (Bel), Musée d'Histoire du XXIème Siècle (Fr), The Royal Albert Memorial Museum (UK). His drawings are also included in many private-collections from all over the world.

It is with great pleasure that gallery FIFTY ONE announces the presence of the artist at the opening of the show.