Das Loch—Im Reich der Sonnenfinsternis

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys have been working collaboratively since the late 1980s. Although their primary medium is video, their practice has recently expanded to include sculpture, photography, drawing, and even painting. In fact, painting, as the traditional notion of art, lies at the center of their largest installation to date, *Im Reich der Sonnenfinsternis* (*In the Empire of the Solar Eclipse*, 2010–11).

Im Reich der Sonnenfinsternis consists of two-hundred-plus paintings ascribed to a fictional painter named Johannes, the protagonist of the twenty-six-minute video *Das Loch* (*The Hole*), which is equally part of this larger work. The paintings, made by De Gruyter and Thys over the course of two weeks, are provocatively, jarringly ugly, a sensibility echoed in the aesthetic of *Das Loch*. The film features Styrofoam actors, dismal props, and gloomy gray surroundings in a series of slowly transitioning stills. The images are accompanied by three characters musing on technology, art, and life. Although *Im Reich der Sonnenfinsternis* makes for uneasy viewing, it can be seen as a reflection on the alienation at the heart of the human condition and the erosion of the mythology of artisthood.

Jos de Gruyter (Belgian, b. 1965) and Harald Thys (Belgian, b. 1966)

Das Loch—Im Reich der Sonnenfinsternis, 2010–11

Video (color, sound; 26 minutes), display boards, pedestals, sculptures, and acrylic, oil, pastel, graphite, and watercolor on canvas, paper, cardboard, or felt

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by exchange, 2012.120

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This exhibition is organized by Dieter Roelstraete, former Manilow Senior Curator, and Karsten Lund, Curatorial Assistant.