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PRESS RELEASE

Ellen De Meutter

Writings on the Wall

May 22 – July 3, 2010

Opening Reception, Saturday, May 22nd, 6 to 8pm



Ellen De Meutter *Schepen Verbranden/Burning Bridges, 2010*
Acrylic, ink and oil on canvas, 31.5 x 43.25in (80.0 x 109.9 cm)

Ellen De Meutter creates a body of work with an autobiographical orientation without indulgence in complacent self-absorption. Many of her works are loosely based on memories of her childhood. The inscriptions in her recent paintings speak volumes regarding that theme: 'Growing up', 'Learning from life', and 'Getting over yourself'. De Meutter does not use any existing material such as contemporary photographs: she constructs mental images from memory. Though her works can be regarded as growing pains converted into paint, the tone of her work is remarkably light-footed. With consent, she refers to the Italian writer Italo Calvino, who proposed that the weight of life and the reality that surrounds us, is given depth when we hold up a mirror of lightness for her – not by looking her directly in the eye. The images De Meutter constructs are disordering, drawn in sketchy, almost cartoon-like gestures. With the aid of her own pictograms or emblems she is mapping her memories, developing a personally charged iconography while suggesting stories. Her paintings do not show complete stories; they should be considered more of a storyboard. Even though in most of her works the setting seems like paradise at first sight, evil and suffering is never far away. Melancholy and humour take turns in the foreground. Several recent paintings show a figure in bed – an alter ego for the artist – often surrounded by what appears to be dream images or memories. Another painting shows a sea view where various motifs come together that have become part of De Meutter's personal iconography: a group of canoes, figures gathering wood and a dark, abstract figure. Each of her paintings is a rhythmic representation with a staccato of visual elements and syncopated colours.

One of the remarkable aspects of the new works by Ellen De Meutter is the painterly quality. The canvases display a large variety in paint treatment and alternate between transparent and paste-like paint surfaces. In addition, the ambition at the basis of the paintings is striking. In preparation for her first museum solo exhibition at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle, Belgium, in the Spring and her second solo exhibition at Roberts & Tilton opening on May 22nd, the artist has spent the past year developing an 'image alphabet' in the shape of small paintings. Larger, more recent canvases show the combination of parts of this alphabet in syllables and sentences. This style of creating several image layers in one single work just like in cartoons is certainly a novelty in her work. The surprising perspectives thus achieved, allow her to break through the illusory character and emphasize the mental dimension of the paintings. For the exhibition in Deurle, De Meutter created a number of large sized paintings, which have do not have precedence in her work to date. But even the smaller paintings on display in Los Angeles are largely complex and continue the thread of her personal iconography presented during her exhibition, *Secrets & Lies* at Roberts & Tilton in 2007. The results are self-willed and generous paintings that emanate a powerful vitality. - Roel Arkesteijn (Translation: Philip Briel)

Ellen De Meutter lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium. Her first solo museum exhibition is currently on view at the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle, Belgium. Ellen was honored as a first place winner of the 2006 Fortis Young Award

Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday 11:00am – 6:00pm.

For additional information, please contact Lauren Kabakoff at lauren@robertsandtilton.com or 323.549.0223.