

The Museum of Modern Art

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PROJECTS: GER VAN ELK

The first New York exhibition of Dutch artist Ger van Elk will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from April 3 through May 4 as part of the Projects series devoted to recent developments in art. The exhibition, which is directed by Nancy Karumba, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, consists of 17 works done over the past four years and includes three new works exhibited for the first time. The recent work contains his comments on the artistic imagination, works of art and art history, and reveals subtle elements of humor and paradox.

Born in Amsterdam in 1941, Ger van Elk attended the Applied Arts School there, then studied art history in Los Angeles and at the State University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He returned to Amsterdam in 1967 and since then he has traveled and exhibited widely and taught for a year at Ateliers 63 in Harlem. Retrospective exhibitions of his work have been held within the past year at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels.

The Museum exhibition focuses on two major series in van Elk's work, executed with the use of retouched or painted-over color photographs. "The Symmetry of Diplomacy" series shows van Elk posed in situations identical to those which commemorate important diplomatic meetings. Each work in the series consists of two similar but not identical photographs. In one, showing a meeting on an airport runway, van Elk appears twice in each photograph, once in the background and once in the foreground, extending his hand toward himself in the other photograph. In another

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work van Elk is seated in each of the two pictures in an elegant room; each van Elk looks at the other. In this series there are subtle alterations of the photographs by the artist's hand.

In a more recent series -- "The Adieu" -- the color photographs have been much more thoroughly painted over so it is difficult to ascertain where the painted image ends and the photographic image begins. Typically, this series involves a painting within a painting -- a picture of the artist standing in a country lane. The overall work has an irregular shape; the painting within the painting is a conventional rectangle but it is shown placed at a sharp angle to the surface so it, too, appears irregular. The image behind the painting of the artist includes curtains, the opening of which appears to reveal nothing.

In each of the three new works van Elk has painted over large areas of the photograph's surface, creating very "painterly" works. These involve not only a transformation of the photograph but also, in some cases, the transposition of an image from one context to another, e.g. a rolling pastel sculpture on which the image of a landscape appears while the sculpture itself rolls through a landscape.

The Ger van Elk exhibition is sponsored by the International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts

Lenders to the exhibition are the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Hague Gemeente Museum; Art & Project, Amsterdam; Nigel Greenwood, London; Vereniging voor het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Gent; J. G. and E. de Vries Robbé, Velp, the Netherlands; Geert Van Beijeren Bergen en Hene-gouwen, Amsterdam; Mr. K. J. Geirlandt, Gent; H. de Groot, Groningen, the Netherlands.

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