



## Press release

### Galerie Fons Welters

**27 November 2010 – 8 January 2011**

Opening: Saturday 27 November, 17:00 – 19:00

Opening hours: Tuesday until Saturday 13:00 – 18:00

Is existential solitude typical of modern life? Has the need for companionship been replaced by the desire for the perfection of isolation, a state in which we are not constantly corrected or distracted by the Other, and above all, where no one will disturb us as we dream our dream about our perfect selves?

The broad spectrum of meanings, associations, and emotions that is evoked by this theme is tangible in the works made for this show by three artists: Pere Llobera, Eoin McHugh, and Berend Strik. The Irish painter Eoin McHugh, exhibiting in this gallery for the first time, made a selection of intriguing paintings that were themselves made in perfect isolation. This year, McHugh moved from France to Wicklow, a small hamlet in the Irish countryside. In a 200-year-old stone house, half an hour's journey from any outward sign of civilization and with only a bicycle at his disposal, he experiences what he calls moments of perfect isolation, which are expressed in his latest work.

The artist linked the exhibition's theme to 'deprivation experiments' carried out in the 1950s: experiments in which people were cut off from language, human contact, and sensory stimuli. At length, all the subjects experienced the same responses: reduced intellectual powers; incessant, obsessive thoughts, and an inability to stop daydreaming. Even the tiniest sensory input immediately provoked an intense reaction, generally visual, auditory or tactile hallucinations, and in some cases even irrational fears or panic attacks. Inspired by these accounts, McHugh created isolated, powerful images as vehement, concentrated impulses that will impact on the viewer's sensory organs.

In the art objects created by the Dutch artist Berend Strik, isolation and solitude are experienced above all in the social space. The individual is tangible yet absent from the empty rooms of buildings that celebrate the perfection of urban solitude. The buildings are dynamic entities, while the human being wanders within himself, emotionally homeless. With a keen sense of humour, Strik shows the viewer a way out, where ultimate release and contact are still possible: a feast for the senses, a roasted, gaping pig's snout.

For the Spanish painter Pere Llobera, solitude is a state that you always carry within yourself, but which you can experience on different levels. His paintings show the ostensible calm and clouded clarity of the detached consciousness of a modern human being, but they also define isolation as a survival mechanism within the abundance of impressions in our world; that is why the painter sees Manhattan, the consummate symbol of modern urban life, as the place of perfect solitude.

Finally, solitude is a basic prerequisite for the creation and assimilation of pictorial works: after all, creation and looking are both acts that involve a temporary denial of the external world and require a large measure of sensory and emotional isolation.

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