



Press release

Galerie Fons Welters

13 June – 18 July 2009

Opening: Saturday 13 June, 17:00 – 19:00

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 13:00 – 18:00

Berend Strik

Thixotropy

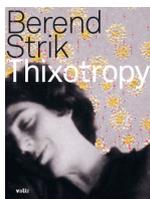
Berend Strik appropriates images, ranging from photographs he has made himself or found in family albums to pages torn from magazines. He adds delicate pieces of material and embroidery to the existing image as part of his search for meaning. While the original images are characterised by a certain lack, an indefinite quality, the photographs that have been elaborated in this way are perfected. A context is created and the fruits of the imagination are made tangible.

Among the images that **Strik** has used for his solo exhibition *Thixotropy* in Galerie Fons Welters are photographs he took during a journey to East Jerusalem and the West Bank of the river Jordan, where he visited a number of Palestinian and Jewish settlements. The resulting works display everyday images with a subtle subtext of tensions.

Palestinian House, for instance, shows a close-up of a house. Several elements attract our attention. Pieces of tulle, in light but vivid colours, cover the branches of the tree in front of the terrace. They look like sheets hung out to dry.

Tools, a few stray garden chairs, and plastic crates are strewn about at random. Yet the house behind that spontaneous collection appears to have a clearly defined structure. Although this is a 'Palestinian House', its core structure is based on Israeli examples. Starting from this central design, it has gradually been altered in response to requirements and new additions to the family, taking on a new, spontaneous form. There is an additional storey, for instance, and a flight of steps that has been installed outside the house to save space. But the use of material and embroidery fuse the structural and non-structural elements of the building. Architecture provides subtle intimations of a situation in which contrasts abound.

The time-consuming and labour-intensive images of **Berend Strik** call for attentive reading. The original photograph evokes certain associations, which the additions build on. An intermediate space arises between the support and the elaborations, in which the photograph's initial meaning is opened up and given a more specific content with extra layers of material and embroidery. This manipulates the formal side of the image. In the intervening space, there is room for associations and memories. **Strik's** works constitute a meditation on what a specific image signifies and could signify.



On 13 June 2009 presentation of the new STRIK-PUBLICATION:

Berend Strik, Thixotropy • Applied and embroded photo's

Author's: Sophie Berrebi, Matthijs Bouw, Laurie Cluitmans, Antje von Graevenitz, Laura van Grinsven, Gertrud Sandqvist, Berend Strik; Design: Thonik;

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Thixotropy

Berend Strik happened on the word *Thixotropy* in a moment of serendipity. It refers to a pseudo-plastic process, but taken metaphorically, it provides insight into the methods and meaning of his work. *Thixotropy* relates to viscosity and the desire to attain the greatest possible freedom of movement. Take a bottle of ketchup, for instance. The bottle must be shaken well before use, before the concentrated tomato-juice can be poured:

'Sticking pins and needles in a photograph and embroidering it is like putting pressure on it. A kind of force is brought to bear on the photograph that enables a variety of new meanings to arise. Stitching the photograph is like shaking the bottle. But the chosen themes and subjects, like Palestine and Israel, have been present in our conscious minds for much longer. Photographs of them make the impression of being saturated, full of history and diverse complex problems. The pressurized photograph ends up working like a kind of valve. Because of the pressure, all the possible associations and recollections seem to fill the picture, the image sucks them up, as it were, filling itself with them.' [B. Strik]¹

¹ Antje von Graevenitz: 'The Invigorated Picture Bodies of Berend Strik; Thixotropy, Telepathy and Other Subversive Processes,' and Sophie Berrebi: 'On Photographing, Building and Stitching; A Conversation with Berend Strik,' in: *Thixotropy: Transfixed, Stitched Photographs*, 2009.