

CONTEMPORARY PRESENCES: MARIJN VAN KREIJ

By re-using existing imagery and concentrating on repetition and the act of drawing itself Marijn van Kreij (Middelrode, The Netherlands, 1978) playfully challenges the myth of the creative genius and the Western notion of progress. Rather than presenting the work as a finished whole, he invites the viewer to engage with the creation process. From 2012 onwards he started to centre his practice almost exclusively around the late work of Pablo Picasso, resulting in a vast body of work, ranging from the monumental 'Picasso grids' to expansive series of A4 and A3-sized drawings based on Picasso's 'interior landscapes'¹.

The presentation *Contemporary Presences: Marijn van Kreij* in Sala Mauri of Museu Picasso is centred around the window, a recurring theme for both Picasso as well as Van Kreij². The window can be regarded here as a kind of meeting point between an inner life and the outside world. In large grids Van Kreij presents hundreds of variations on a scene with a blue window frame lifted from Picasso's *The Studio* from 1956. Painted in a fast and direct manner, on used paper, magazine pages and advertisement leaflets, the series fluctuates between figuration and abstraction, turning the fragment into a wavering sign.

In his versions of *Las Meninas*³ Picasso opened up the window shutters, closed in Velázquez original. A small but significant gesture, touched upon by Van Kreij in some new minimal works on newspapers made especially for this occasion. The exhibition is further complemented by a few provisionally constructed wind chimes, as well as a range of different stools from the collection of the artist, inviting the audience to interact and linger.

Contemporary Presences is a project that aims to connect the legacy of Picasso – master of 20th century modern art – with more recent expressions by artists working today. It is conceived by artist/curator Erich Weiss and is coordinated by the art initiative LOODD. The exhibition is made possible with the kind support of the Mondriaan Fund and Sir Victor Hotel in Barcelona.

1 In the summer of 1955 Picasso moved into *La Californie*, a Belle Époque villa from 1920 situated in the hills surrounding Cannes with a scenic view of the Mediterranean Sea. The large Jugendstil windows and the outlook on a garden with cactuses, eucalyptus and palm trees found their way into Picasso's paintings. These 'interior landscapes', as Picasso called them, depict unfinished paintings and sculptures, painters' materials, musical instruments and miscellaneous objects that he used as props in his work.

2 The exhibition *Picasso. Window to the World* at Kunstforum Hamburg in 2016 was devoted to the artist's lifelong relationship with the theme. Marijn van Kreij's first large solo museum exhibition at De Hallen, Haarlem in 2012 was titled *How to Look Out* and in the accompanying catalogue several references to windows are included.

3 *Las Meninas* is a series of 58 paintings that Picasso painted in 1957 by performing a comprehensive analysis, reinterpreting and recreating several times *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez. The suite is fully preserved at the Museu Picasso, Barcelona and considered one of the highlights of the collection.