

AERNOUT MIK EXAMINES THE BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTION OF GROUPS IN SOCIETY IN HIS SPATIAL AND VIDEO INSTALLATIONS. HIS NEW WORK *THRESHOLD BARRIERS* IS PREMIERING AT THE SCHIRN

AERNOUT MIK: DOUBLE BIND / THRESHOLD BARRIERS

JULY 7 – OCTOBER 3, 2022

PRESS PREVIEW: WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2022, 11 A.M.

The spatial and video installations of Aernout Mik (b. 1962) create intense situations that trace the behavior and interaction of groups in frequently unstable social contexts. With his choreographed video works, the Dutch artist touches on sociopsychological structures and staged spaces that reflect the position of the individual in contradictory or dysfunctional systems.

The Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is presenting Aernout Mik's video installation *Double Bind* (2018), as well as the work *Threshold Barriers* (2022), which was conceived specially for the exhibition. Both works pursue the notions and dynamics of security and threat, power and powerlessness in public space and enter into dialogue with each other at the Schirn. In *Double Bind*, the artist addresses the presence of armed units from the national apparatus. They move around the city in apparent isolation and without direct contact to passersby, no longer seeming to fulfill any particular public function. The video *Threshold Barriers*, which is related to *Double Bind*, depicts people after a confrontation in which society and state power, citizens and police, came into direct conflict. It seems as if traditional structures of authority and security had lost their validity. Mik's fictitious scenarios move between documentation and performance, seeming familiar and disconcerting at the same time. The multichannel installations do not follow any stringent narrative strand; individual fragments are instead interleaved to create an atmospheric staging. The videos reference pictures and narratives of current events such as anti-terror measures in large European cities, as well as international protests or police violence against demonstrators, which have become a part of the collective consciousness as a result of their dissemination in the media.

The exhibition "Aernout Mik: Double Bind / Threshold Barriers" is supported by the City of Frankfurt am Main and the SCHIRN ZEITGENOSSEN, with additional support from the Mondriaan Fund.

Dr. Sebastian Baden, director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: "In a haunting presentation at the Schirn, Aernout Mik probes the often conflictual encounter between society and state power, citizens and police. Institutionalized structures of authority and security, their failure or validity, are repeatedly up for debate against the backdrop of recent events. Mik is presenting his new video work *Threshold Barriers* for the first time, created specially for this exhibition, and thus enables Schirn visitors to gain an illuminating perspective on social and democratic power structures and processes by means of art."

"Aernout Mik's videos are highly revealing. With scenarios that can at first be classified quickly, in which confusing events take place, he disrupts habits of seeing and experiential values in a subtle way. His works interrogate social systems and their power structures and imagine new possibilities of classification. The two large-format video installations that are juxtaposed with one another in the hall of the Schirn immerse viewers in Mik's fictions and also confront them with their own positions. We are thus immediately prompted to think critically about social and societal paradigms," according to Katharina Dohm, curator of the exhibition.

***Double Bind* (2018)**, three-channel video with sound, 41:48 minutes

The three-channel video *Double Bind* shows a group of individuals of an anti-terrorism unit in the combat dress. The movements of the formations resemble choreography that takes place alternately in urban space and in an undefined, white interior. The task forces do not seem to be following clear orders as an organized unit but rather appear to be acting as loosely connected individuals, so that the question remains open as to whether this is an exercise or a serious situation. The unclear context, the seemingly exhausted protagonists, and their slowed-down movements seem ghostly and surreal, like a memory or an echo of reality. This impression is augmented by the acoustics of the video. There is no verbal communication; noises are the only thing that can be heard, and they generate a heightened sensitivity to the situation: street noises, breathing, helmets scraping the asphalt, or steps. The undefined interaction within this group is reflected in its encounter with the people on the street, who virtually ignore the heavily armed task forces. They remain isolated, undefined, and without any function, communicating a disturbing or even unsettling impression that raises fundamental questions: What notions of fear and protection or forms of violence, corruption, and racism are connected with these special forces, and for what reasons? What demands with regard to terrorism, society, and peace are there? How have expectations changed over the course of recent years and in light of current events?

***Threshold Barriers* (2022)**, two-channel video without sound, ca. 40 minutes

The video work *Threshold Barriers*, which was filmed in April 2022, will be presented to the public for the first time at the Schirn. It is related to the work *Double Bind* with respect to content, but like most of Aernout Mik's video works it has no sound. As a result of the simultaneous presentation in the hall and the room-filling sound of *Double Bind*, the two works are interwoven with and put in direct relation to one another. *Threshold Barriers* shows the moment shortly after a confrontation between a police task force and a group of demonstrators, surrounded by huge street barricades. Here as well, the backgrounds of the events and the actions and objectives of the two groups remain diffuse and open in the fragmentary and contradictory scenes. Injured police forces or bloody demonstrators call to mind an escalated confrontation. At the end of it, control seemingly lies more with the activists, while the task forces of the state have, apparently exhausted, given up. At this moment when hierarchies have been invalidated, the participants test other forms of behavior in which the function in society or classifications inherent in the system are still totally undecided.

Aernout Mik (b. 1962, Groningen) lives and works in Amsterdam. He has realized solo exhibitions at venues around the world: Art Sonje Center, Seoul; Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Museum Folkwang, Essen; and CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid. In 2007, he represented the Netherlands in the Dutch Pavilion of the 52nd Venice Biennale. In addition, Mik has participated in numerous other international biennials, including the Bienal de São Paulo, the Tirana Biennial, the Istanbul Biennial, and the Berlin Biennale.

CATALOG *Aernout Mik: Double Bind / Threshold Barriers*, edited by Katharina Dohm, with texts by Katharina Dohm and Daniel Loick as well as a foreword by Sebastian Baden, the new director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. German-English edition, 128 pages, 70 figs., 16 x 21 cm, softcover, DISTANZ Verlag, ISBN 978-3-95476-468-6, 24 € (SCHIRN), 30 € (bookshops)

ARTIST TALK On Tuesday, August 23, at 7 p.m., Aernout Mik, the curator Katharina Dohm, and the philosopher and sociologist Daniel Loick will speak about the exhibition. Free participation, reservation in the online shop, limited number of participants

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

VENUE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, 60311 Frankfurt am Main **DURATION** July 7 – October 3, 2022 **INFORMATION** www.schirn.de **EMAIL** welcome@schirn.de
TELEPHONE +49 69 29 98 82-0 **FAX** +49.69.29 98 82-240 **ADMISSION** 6 €, reduced 4 €, free admission for children under the age of 8 **TICKETS** are available in the online shop at schirn.de/shop or at the Schirn ticket office **PROTECTIVE AND HYGIENE MEASURES** Information at schirn.de/corona **CULTURAL PARTNER** HR2 **CURATOR** Katharina Dohm, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt **CURATORIAL ASSISTENCE** Marie Oucherif **SUPPORTED BY** City of Frankfurt am Main and SCHIRN ZEITGENOSSEN **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM** Mondriaan Fund

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