



Deimantas Narkevičius' new film is titled *The Dud Effect*. It had its premiere at the Vincent Award exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam that opened in June. Jan Verwoert wrote a text about the work for the gallery newspaper.

The Dud Effect

By
Jan Verwoert

For a time, we knew that the world could end any day. As children of the Cold War, the event of a nuclear doomsday was an imminent threat that loomed large on the horizon of collective historical experience. It delineated that horizon, epitomizing both the end of history and the condition for the present continuation of life, for everyday life continued simply because that one event, the logical conclusion to the modern history of industrialized warfare, total annihilation, had not yet occurred, not just yet. Life went on because history was put on halt. The next step in the historical chain of events, in the process of modernization - its self-termination - was in front of everybody's eyes. But those in whose

powers it lay to take that step, agreed to presently not do so but just consider its possibility. The historical horizon of the Cold War era, in this sense, is the suspension of history. It is the history of a historical void.

Things may have changed since then. After the crumbling of the bi-polar world order, we no longer seem to expect the history of global conflicts to culminate in one seminal event. There appear to be far too many players in the game, too many geographically specific conflicts on the news, for us to imagine that these diverse antagonisms could crystallize in one single manifestation. In the media, *the bomb* has been replaced by multiple smart bombs and portable explosives. Yet,



• Deimantas Narkevičius, *The Dud Effect*, 2008 (film still)





• Deimantas Narkevičius, *The Dud Effect*, 2008 (film still)

factually, nuclear apocalypse is still possible. *The bomb exists and if the news can be trusted, many countries in the world will soon get it, eager to revisit the void. The horizon of the past therefore still demarcates the threshold to the present: the nuclear threat remains a force, yet an invisible force - inspectors scan so-called 'rogue states' in vain to locate its source - that continues to influence the global balance of power.*

It is precisely this threshold between the historical horizon of the Cold War era and the contemporary condition that Deimantas Narkevičius delineates in his recent film *The Dud Effect* (2008). The film creates an experience of temporal slippage: shot on the site of a former Soviet nuclear missile base in the northwest of Lithuania, *The Dud Effect* reanimates the past of the site in re-enactment sequences; yet it also documents the base's present state of abandonment and thereby evokes the invisible presence of nuclear power through the traces of its withdrawal. The film begins with a series of black and white still images of troops and rocket launcher trucks; they look like photos from a private album as soldiers pose for the camera to be remembered by family and friends. On the soundtrack you hear a kettle whistle and cups click as an older male voice resounds and recounts, in Russian, how the first Soviet missiles were stationed in Lithuania in 1961 and that he, the speaker, was put in charge of the regiment in 1975. The film switches to colour and moving images. After a short glimpse of a guard post, we see a Soviet military commander getting dressed for work. Filmed on 16mm, these pictures continue the tone set by

the photographic material: they look like historic found footage, or at least this is how you look at them, since the narrative voice-over at the start of the film made you expect to see a documentary. It still takes a while before it begins to dawn on you that this is not, not really, what you are presently watching.

The commander receives an official phone call whereupon, at his office, he calmly proceeds to make a series of short calls himself. Each consists of one order in a sequence of commands required for the launch of a nuclear missile and is answered by a call back confirming its execution. It takes endless minutes to go through all steps in the protocol. Meanwhile soldiers hustle for cover underground. Then a blinding light from the window gives evidence of a successful launch. After this the film slows down further. You see a tree in the morning light. A bird flies away. The camera travels through deserted spaces inside and outside the base, through tunnels, past disused terminals until it reaches the place where, as curved support structures indicate, the holding bay for the missiles must have been. They are gone. But you can feel their presence. On the soundtrack rain begins to fall. The film ends.

By having a historical witness re-enact his former role as base commander, Narkevičius performs what in film terms is known as "emplotment". He translates an atmospheric scenario into a series of acts with a story. The details are unique. Still, when you see it you know you have seen it before. Movies have often portrayed it. There are influential anti-war movies like *War Game* (1965) by Peter Watkins that made nuclear apocalypse

seem gruesomely real. Yet, the nuclear missile launch sequence has since the 1960s also become a standard plot point in action thrillers (Bond and beyond). By isolating this plot point, Narkevičius highlights the paradox that the one historical event that never happened (*The bomb always remained a dud*) and, had it happened, would have left no society behind to tell its story, became a key motif in the cinematic imaginary and a story often told. In re-telling it, however, Narkevičius un-works it: the bureaucratic prolongation of the launch process, required by its protocol, erodes the eventfulness of the event from within. No red button is pushed. No glaring digits count down to lift off. No dramatic instantaneity. A stoic officer ticks boxes on a list of steps. The ultimate event turns out to be a monotonous procedure and therefore, strictly speaking, a non-event. In portraying the launch like this, Narkevičius, foregrounds the *liminal* status of the event: it marks the threshold between the possible and real, the imagined and unimaginable and, as such, also the threshold between the graphic nightmares of the Cold War era and our current inability to picture a future threat other than through historic imagery. On the threshold of this (non-)event time turns into place. It's an empty abandoned place into which history inscribed itself in the moment of transition when the bomb went away – to another, invisible site.

Jan Verwoert is an art critic based in Berlin, he is a contributing editor of Frieze magazine and teaches at the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam.

(advertisement)

75

Exhibition
23/10 – 29/11
Opening 18/10 18 – 21H

**DEIMANTAS
NARKEVICIUS**

THE DUD EFFECT

Jan Mot
Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190
B-1000 Brussel Bruxelles

Reversibility

A tribute to Charles Baudelaire and Gustav Metzger

For the second appearance of the Fair Gallery at the Frieze Art Fair, Pierre Bal-Blanc developed the curatorial project *Reversibility*. He introduces his project in the following text.

I wish to propose that artists connected to the four galleries affiliated with The Fair Gallery choose an individual work or several existing works together with me which has or have the characteristic of revealing the creative process by which it has or they have been made. Following a discussion which I wish to undertake with each artist, and open to the four galleries, I intend to ask the authors of the selected works to choose an individual work or several works with me. The artists will agree that the particular work will be exhibited and then "de-created" (or disassembled) and left in place during the opening of the Frieze Art Fair or alternatively progressively disassembled during the fair's duration. The artists will be free to choose the process and the time necessary for the work's return to its material state if this takes the form of an object. If the work is an idea or a concept, the artist must propose the means of effecting its return to the realm of common language. In order to attest to the work's return to the physical or symbolic realm, the artists must agree to

sign a disclaimer relinquishing their rights as author over the remains of the work or works. Each artist remains the owner, along with the gallery, of the materials or any other remaining element and of any part that may be due to them in case of a sale. The galleries are free to sell these materials or elements as such. However, they must not alter the original stated price of the work or works in question. The eventual buyer must accept, through a written contract, the sale of these materials or elements and can in no circumstances claim ownership of a work or works by any of the exhibiting artists. However, he or she is free to refer to their origin.

Pierre Bal-Blanc is the curator of the CAC Brétigny near Paris. The demolishing of David Lamelas' work at CAC Brétigny was an inspiring event for the project Reversibility.

The Fair Gallery is a collaboration between four galleries: gb agency (Paris), Hollybush Gardens (London), Jan Mot (Brussels) and Raster (Warsaw). Based on curatorial practice and critical reflection, the Fair Gallery's main activity is representing the participating galleries at art fairs in the form of an exhibition, each time proposed by a different curator.



• Brétigny, 2007. View of the destruction of David Lamelas' piece *Projection (L'effet écran)*, 1967-2004. Three years after this work was made, the local authorities had it demolished without the consent of the artist or the curator. Courtesy CAC Brétigny, photo: Clitoux Bramble

h
v
a
t
i
n
a
b
t
s
c
s
l
a
t
a
t
i
I
a
i
I
p
a
r
c
f
r
i
f
c
a
p
l
c
a
v
a
t
V
H
O
U
S
I
N
G

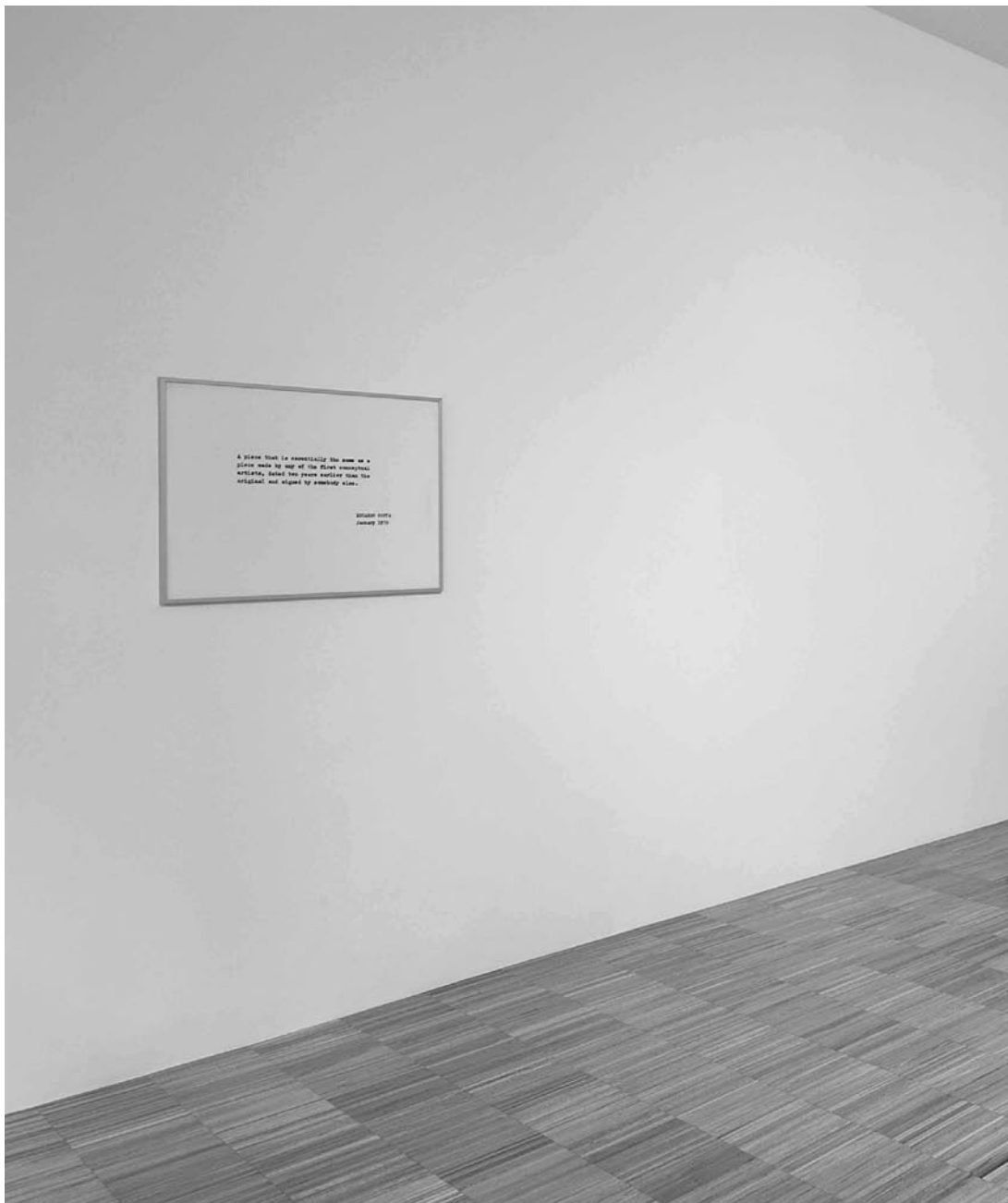
(advertisement)

74

Art Fair
16/10 – 19/10

**THE
FAIR GALLERY
AT
FRIEZE ART FAIR**

Booth B6
Regent's Park, London



• Exhibition view *The Title Of This Show Is A List That Includes The Dates In Which Each Of The Exhibited Works Were First Made, The Dates In Which Some Of Them Were Remade By The Artists And The Dates In Which They Were Last Shown*, curated by Mario Garcia Torres. From left to right: Eduardo Costa, Stephen Kaltenbach, Dan Graham. The show also includes works by William Anastasi. Exhibition till 4/10





Letter to David Lamelas

by
Sven Augustijnen

Brussels, the 11th of June 2008

Dear David,

A few weeks ago I was coming back by train together with Jan Mot from the opening of the show *Peripheral Vision and Collective Body* at the MUSEION in Bolzano. It's a long trip from Bolzano to Brussels, so after having spent hours and hours in the restaurant of the train, Jan suggested that we watch a video of yours he had never seen, *The Hand*.

Beside the fact that both of us found it a really great work and at some moments very hilarious – especially the interventions of Ghila Benesty, who I figured out later was a real journalist, this in contradiction to the main characters, the fictional rock star Kevin Gold and Barbara Lopez presenting the Newsmaker – I was very surprised because the evening before, during the opening of the show at the MUSEION, somebody asked me why my work was so “political”? Since my father recently died, I relate everything to him: “I guess I inherited my interest in history and politics from my father” I answered, with a mixture of indifference and sadness to the question...

When I arrived back in Brussels that evening, I got an email from a friend with a link to the BBC news about the artist Steve McQueen winning the Camera d'Or Prize at the Cannes Film Festival with his first feature film *Hunger*, about the IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands's final days.

See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7419643.stm>

As you can see McQueen is denying he made a “political” film and is trying to talk himself out of the situation. Almost just as your rock star did when he was confronted with the suspicion of having smuggled arms by saying he is an arms collector, using them as props in his show and making the statement over and over that he is not a “political” artist, that he is only interested in giving his audience a good time, etc.

My own evasive answer, your video and McQueen's denial in less than 24 hours seems too much of a coincidence. Something



• David Lamelas, *The Hand*, 1976 (video still)

must have been in the air! Or rather times appear not to have changed, since you made your work in 1976, more than 30 years ago, if I am correct? Let's say that at least I have been a bit puzzled about the matter since this happened.

As an exercise I tried to imagine what made McQueen make the statement he made. Of course I didn't see the film, so maybe it's not a “political” film at all. But let us suppose it is, do we have to imagine something like him being haunted by cameras and journalists with undifferentiated questions trying to corner, label or pinpoint him and therefore he just denied something that is not an issue because it is so self-evident? Probably there was a more complex process unfolding behind this statement, the meaning of which I can't grasp.

In relation to my own evasive answer and McQueen's denial I am very curious to find out what made you make your video *The Hand*. Is it a transposition of real experienc-

es? What was the political and artistic context of the time you made the work? I wonder, for example, what the situation was like in Argentina when you left and how this is related to its political situation and your artistic practice.

Finally it leads us also to the more fundamental questions of what could be called “political”, what is “political” work and what are the motivations to make “political” or “non-political” art? Or what mechanisms lay behind the denial of making “political” work... On a more philosophical level it confronts us with the question as to whether art is to be separated from the larger bio-political rhizome that life is? And therefore if something like “non-political” art exists?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Sven Augustijnen

a
S
z
a
s
h
n
h
C
a
n
C
... and Barbara Lopez presenting the

In Brief

The artist collective Auguste Orts will present its activities in an exhibition titled *Correspondence, Auguste Orts* at LUX 28 in London from 2/10 till 1/11. As part of this event, a screening of selected films will take place at Tate Modern on 1/10. *Two Times 4'33''* by **Manon de Boer** and *Johan* by **Sven Augustijnen** will be shown among others. See www.augusteorts.be

Jan Mot will participate in the Brussels Art Day on Saturday 20/9. During this day, a shuttle bus service will connect several galleries in Brussels, and the gallery will be open from 12 - 8 pm.

The work *Transparencies On The Non-Act, 2007* by **Mario Garcia Torres** was acquired by the Kröller-Möller Museum in Otterlo (NL).

Agenda

Sven Augustijnen

Peripheral Vision And Collective Body, Museion, Bolzano (IT), 24/5 - 18/10; *Johan*, Videographe, Montreal (CA), 23/9 (screening); *Back And Beyond Marcel Broodthaers*, PMMK Oostende (B), 27/9 - 15/12; *Johan*, Films of Auguste Orts, Tate Modern, London, 1/10 (screening); *Correspondence, Auguste Orts*, Lux 28, London, 2/10 - 1/11

Pierre Bismuth

One Of These Things Is Not Like The Other Things, Unosunove Arte Contemporane, Rome, 2/7 - 20/9; *No Leftovers*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, 16/8 - 10/9; *Occupancy By More Than 6'682'685'387 Persons Is Dangerous And Unlawful*, Cosmic Gallery, Paris, from 17/9; *The All-Seeing Eye (the hardcore-techno version)*, British Film Institute, London, 12/9 - 16/11 (solo)

Manon de Boer

Sound of Art. On Music In The Fine Arts, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (AT), 19/7 - 12/10; *Muoviti Fermo! I'm Too Sad To Tell You*, Pecci Museum of Prato, Florence (IT), 28/8 - 14/9; *U-Turn Quadrennial For Contemporary Art*, Nicolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, 5/9 - 9/11; *Turn and Widen*, 5th Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Museum of Art, Seoul, 12/9 - 5/11; *Imprisoned*, Kunst-Werke, Berlin, 21/9 - 16/11; *Sylvia Kristel - Paris*, Videographe, Montreal (CA), 23/9 (screening); *Resonating Surfaces*, Kran Film Collective, Brussels, 25/9 (screening); *Two Times 4'33''*, Films of Auguste Orts, Tate Modern, London, 1/10 (screening); *Correspondence, Auguste Orts*, Lux 28, London, 2/10 - 1/11; *Villes Saisies*, Moussem Nomadisch Kunstencentrum, Antwerpen, 3/10 (screening); *I Have Nothing To Say And I'm Saying It*, Platform Seoul, Seoul, 25/10 - 23/11; Nam June Paik Festival, Gyeonggi-do, Seoul, 8/10 - February 2009; *Viennale 2008*, Vienna, 17/10 - 29/10 (screening); *Resonating Surfaces*, Aquilone, Liège (BE), 19/10 (screening); *Collective Learning*, The Power Plant, Toronto (CA), 20/10 - 23/11

Rineke Dijkstra

Street & Studio. An Urban History of Photography, Museum Folkwang, Essen (DE), 11/10 - 11/1; *Role Models: Feminine Identity in Contemporary American Photography*, The National Museum of Women In The Arts, Washington, 17/10 - 25/1

Mario Garcia Torres

Other Than Yourself – An Investigation Between Inner And Outer Space, T-B A21, Vienna, 7/2 – 21/9; *Museum As Medium*, MARCO, Vigo (ES), 20/6 – 28/9; *One Of These Things Is Not Like The Other Things*, Unosunove Arte Contemporane, Rome, 2/7 – 20/9; *The Perception Of Ideas Leads To New Ideas*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (DE), 2/8 – 28/9; *Early Color Video Tapes*, Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City, 3/9 – 18/10 (solo); *An Unruly History Of the Readymade*, Jumex Collection, Ecatepec de Morelos (MEX), from 6/9; *History's Faint Smell Of Burning*, *The 8th Panama Biennial*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Panama City, 9/9 – 21/10; *Time Crevasse*, *The 3rd Yokohama Triennale*, Yokohama (JP), 13/9 – 30/11; *Museum As Medium*, Koldo Mitxelena, San Sebastian (ES), 23/10 – 3/1; *This Is Not a Void* (curated by Jens Hoffmann), Galerie Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo, 25/10 – 22/1

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

*Nocturama**, MUSAC, Léon (ES), 17/5 – 7/9 (solo); *The Unilever Series: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster*, Tate Modern, London, 14/10 – 13/4 (solo); *theanyspacewhatever*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 24/10 – 7/1

Douglas Gordon

Ou se trouvent les clefs?, Collection Lambert, Avignon (FR), 6/6 – 2/11; *theanyspacewhatever*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 24/10 – 7/1

Joachim Koester

The Great Transformation. Art and Tactical Magic, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (DE), 7/6 – 7/9; *Manifesta 7*, Trento (IT), 19/7 – 2/11; *The Perception Of Ideas Leads To New Ideas*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (DE), 2/8 – 28/9; *Joachim Koester*, Overgaden, Copenhagen, 30/8 – 26/10 (solo); *U-Turn Quadrennial for Contemporary Art*, Nicolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen (DK), 5/9 – 9/11; *Non-Knowledge*, Project Arts Centre, Dublin (IE), 5/9 – 11/10; *Reality Check*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, 6/9 – 4/1; *The Great Transformation. Art and Tactical Magic*, MARCO, Vigo (ES), 19/9 – 18/1

David Lamelas

Other Than Yourself – An Investigation Between Inner and Outer Space, T-B A21, Vienna, 7/2 – 21/9; *Peripheral Vision and Collective Body*, Museion, Bolzano (IT),

24/5 – 21/9; *Above-the-Fold*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 1/6 – 12/10 (solo); *Index: Conceptualism In California From The Permanent Collection*, MOCA, Los Angeles, 24/8 – 15/12; *The 7th Gwangju Biennale: Annual Report*, Gwangju (KR), 5/9 – 9/11; *This Is Not a Void* (curated by Jens Hoffmann), Galerie Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo, 25/10 – 22/1; *I Have Nothing To Say And I'm Saying It*, Platform Seoul, Seoul, 25/10 – 23/11

Sharon Lockhart

Life on Mars, The 55th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 5/3 – 1/11

Deimantas Narkevicius

WANAS 2008: Loss, The WANAS Foundation, Knislinge (SE), 18/5 – 19/10; *The Vincent Award 2008*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 20/6 – 30/9; *You Are My Mirror 2: New Stories Of Konceptas*, Frac Lorraine, Metz (F), 27/6 – 19/10; *Mémoire et phantasme de l'enracinement*, Abbaye Saint-André, Meymac (FR), 6/7 – 12/10; *Modern Ruin*, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 12/7 – 12/10; *U-Turn Quadrennial for Contemporary Art*, Nicolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, 5/9 – 9/11; *Friction and Conflict*, Kalmar Konstmuseum, Kalmar (SE), 13/9 – 23/11; *The Greenroom*, Bard College, New York, 27/9 – 1/2

Tino Sehgal

Museum As Medium, MARCO, Vigo (ES), 21/6 – 28/9; *After Nature*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 17/7 – 21/9; *Time Crevasse*, *The 3rd Yokohama Triennale*, Yokohama (JP), 13/9 – 30/11; *Art Focus 5*, Pavillion at Talpiot Beit Benit Congress Center, Jerusalem, 23/9 – 15/10; *Museum As Medium*, Koldo Mitxelena, San Sebastian (ES), 23/10 – 3/1; *I Have Nothing To Say And I'm Saying It*, Platform Seoul, Seoul, 25/10 – 23/11

Tris Vonna-Michell

Time Crevasse, *The 3rd Yokohama Triennale*, Yokohama (JP), 13/9 – 30/11; *Matrix Exhibitions*, BAM/PFA, San Francisco, from 28/9

Ian Wilson

Plug In, Ian Wilson, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (NL), 4/10 – January 2009; *This Is Not a Void* (curated by Jens Hoffmann), Galerie Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo, 25/10 – 22/1

Publications

Manon de Boer

Monika Szewczyk, Chus Martínez and Nicolaus Schafhausen, *Manon de Boer* (cat.), Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main, 2008, 244 pages

David Lamelas

Nikola Dietrich, *Above-the-Fold* (cat.), Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 2008, 158 pages

Deimantas Narkevicius

Marie Baarspul, *The Vincent Award 2008*, Stichting Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2008, 36 pages

Opening sponsored by
**Vedett / Duvel Moortgat NV SA
Bionade**

Colophon

Publisher Jan Mot, Brussels
Concept Design Maureen Mooren & Daniel van der Velden
Graphic Design Maureen Mooren, Amsterdam
Printing Cultura, Wetteren

Jan Mot
Colophon
Deimantas Narkevicius
Douglas Gordon
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster
Joachim Koester
Mario Garcia Torres
Manon de Boer
Sharon Lockhart
Tino Sehgal
Tris Vonna-Michell
Ian Wilson
David Lamelas

(advertisement)

JAN MOT

Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190
B-1000 Brussel Bruxelles
tel: +32 2 514 10 10
fax: +32 2 514 14 46
office@janmot.com
www.janmot.com

donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 14–18.30u
jeudi-vendredi-samedi 14–18.30h
en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous