

JACQUELINE DE JONG: NARRATIVE / NON-NARRATIVE

March 7 – April 13, 2024

Ortuzar Projects is pleased to present *Narrative / Non-Narrative*, the gallery's second solo exhibition with Jacqueline de Jong (b. 1939, Hengelo, Netherlands). Showcasing paintings from two historical bodies of work, *Billiards* (1976–78) and *Série Noire* (1980–81), the exhibition casts de Jong's forays into *nouvelle figuration* as pivotal moments for her research into, in the artist's words, the "hideous circumstances" of our collective humanity.

De Jong's ever-evolving, six-decade career can be characterized by its formal *dérives*, encompassing multiple twists and turns through various avant-garde tendencies, from *art informel* to feminist Pop. *Narrative / Non-Narrative* takes its title from the artist's simultaneous interest in storytelling and her works' refusal of legibility, stable meaning or even form. Regularly drawing from and referencing cinematic techniques, such as splicing, close-ups and montage, de Jong often confuses logical time and space to transcend traditional narrative structures. Even so, the suggestion of a story remains at the work's center. De Jong asserts that the "narrative turn" away from postwar commitments to abstraction—concurrent with the beginning of her artistic practice in the 1960s—makes way for stories at the margins to find meaningful representation.

In her *Billiards* series, de Jong paints sleek, Pop-inspired scenes of pool games, in which players contort their bodies in close proximity. At once unassuming portraits of ordinary life, the paintings are also loaded with visual puns and double valances. Where slanted tables and fields of felted green baize serve as reminders of the picture plane, glossy balls and long tapered sticks exude erotic suggestion. In *Crispy Hands (Mains crispés)* (1977), a man dressed in a loud, lime green button-down leans backward over the pool table, while a well-suited older gentleman eyes the shot with hands clasped in nervous anticipation. As the artist pokes fun at the inherent drama and violence of an activity centered around male competition, the billiard table emerges as a metaphorical site for larger social tensions to play out. In de Jong's words, "as in War, [games] are played to be WON." In many ways, continuing themes explored in the final, unfinished "Pinball Issue" of *The Situationist Times*—a journal edited by de Jong for which she became widely known—the notion of the game also becomes an allegory for artistic production and the common conception at the time of Modernism as having entered its endgame. Meanwhile, the five-part painting titled *Queue (III, V, II, IV, I)* (1978) portrays *queues* (originally called "maces") against monochrome backdrops, dislocating the objects from any discernible time and space. Referencing the slang term for penis in French, the title lampoons the often-chauvinistic jockeying that defines art history, while underscoring the significance of language as a material in this unexpectedly conceptual series.

Série Noire draws inspiration from Marcel Duhamel's postwar publishing imprint of detective novels, locating de Jong's paintings within the genre of pulp fiction. Through dislocating scenes from their storylines, de Jong recasts moments of impassioned violence as emblems of the human experience in all its complexity. In *L'Âne du Liban* (1981), based on the Anglo-Lebanese author Edward Atiyah's book of the same name (translated as *Donkey from the Mountains*, or later *The Cruel Fire*), de Jong depicts the protagonist as a colossus. The sense of shame and guilt that instigates and follows his debauched murder spree is realized in his monstrous form. In *Gardez-vous à gauche* (1981), again titled after a political parable by Paul Sérant (translated literally as *Keep to the Left!*), de Jong portrays a hard-boiled detective arriving just before the scene of a crime. Witnessing the stabbing-in-action, the figure disregards any sense of social responsibility to intervene, parodying the author's treatise that, with the rise of the left, the young bourgeoisie had lost its prewar tendency to nationalism or fascism and now wallows in feelings of absurdity or uselessness. De Jong uses the pulp novels as vehicles to explore her larger themes of eroticism, humor, war, and cruelty, parodying history as a long series of tragic events, doomed to repeat themselves ad infinitum.

Jacqueline de Jong lives and works between Amsterdam, Netherlands and Bourbonsais, France. In 2024 she will have a major solo exhibition at the NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Ultimate Kiss*, WIELS Centre d'Art Contemporain, Brussel, MOSTYN, Wales, and Kunstmuseum Ravensburg (2021–2022); *Pinball Wizard*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2019); *Retrospective*, Musée Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (2018); *Jacqueline de Jong & The Situationist Times*, Malmö Konsthall (2018), and *Undercover in de kunst*, Cobra Museum for Contemporary Art, Amstelveen (2003). Her work has been featured in surveys including *Strategic Vandalism: The Legacy of Asger Jorn's Modification Paintings*, Petzel, New York (2019); *Asger Jorn & Jacqueline de Jong: Case of the Ascetic Satyr*, Galerie Clemens Thimme, Karlsruhe (2016); and *The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra and Its Legacy*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2015). In May 2023, De Jong was named Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. She is the recipient of an Outstanding Merit Award (2019), administered by the French Ministry for Culture and the AWARE Prize for Women Artists. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Musée les Abattoirs, Toulouse; Cobra Museum for Modern Art, Amstelveen; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Museum Arnhem, Arnhem; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museum Jorn, Silkeborg; Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo; MONA Tasmania; Kunstmuseum Göteborg; Lenbachhaus, Munich; MCCA Toronto, and others, and her papers are the collection of the Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale University.