

PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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For Immediate Release (January 25, 2010)

VIDEO ARTIST GUIDO VAN DER WERVE INHABITS IMAGINARY REALITIES

(Toronto) – As its first exhibition of the new year, **Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art** is proud to present *The King's Gambit*, a selection of recent video and sculptural installations by Dutch wunderkind **Guido van der Werve**. Curated by Scott McLeod, the exhibition features the Canadian premiere of the installation *Nummer Twaalf: Variations on a Theme ...* (2009) with accompanying “chess piano,” which is his most ambitious work to date.

An **opening reception** will be held on **Thursday, February 4th from 7 to 10 PM** at **Prefix**, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The exhibition runs from **February 4th to April 24th, 2010**.

Consisting of both a video and a sculptural element, van der Werve's newest work maintains his interest in exploring impossible or hypothetical scenarios. For the video component, the artist has created a three-part, forty-minute epic based on several impossible, irresolvable problems: opening a chess game with the “king's gambit” (a suicidal move which leaves the king vulnerable), tuning a piano perfectly, and counting the stars in the sky. Each of these three parts were filmed in appropriately sublime settings: the famed Marshall Chess Club in Manhattan (of which Marcel Duchamp was a member), the active volcano of Mount St. Helens in Washington, and the San Andreas Fault in California.

For the sculptural component, the artist has devised an interactive installation consisting of a custom-built chess table (with two piano benches) which houses a mechanized piano. Developed through a complex transcription of chess notation into musical notation, van der Werve's “chess piano” transforms each of the game board's sixty-four squares into a piano key. Viewers are invited to sit-down and “play” the chess piano, with each movement on the game board contributing to the musical score of the piece. The special presentation of this interactive component will be for a **limited engagement only**, running from **Thursday, February 4th to Saturday, February 13th, 2010**.

Accompanying *Nummer Twaalf* are two videos that, like many in his *oeuvre*, depict the artist in what he refers to as “possible scenarios of imaginary realities.” In *Nummer Acht: Everything Is Going To Be All Right* (2007), the artist walks on the frozen ice of the Finnish Gulf of Bothnia, pursued by a massive icebreaker. The stark drama of this situation, replete with the sound of crushing ice and blowing snow, generates a meditative, hypnotic atmosphere that transforms it into a mythic, never-ending journey. In *Nummer Negen: The Day I Didn't Turn with the World* (2007), the artist stands on the North-Pole axis for twenty-four hours, turning clockwise while the world beneath him turns counter-clockwise. Through this de-synchronization, the artist achieves an unearthly feeling of momentary suspense and separation, which is heightened by the use of time-lapse photography to condense the day-long performance into nine minutes.

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About the Artist

Guido van der Werve was born in 1977 in the Netherlands and currently lives and works in Amsterdam. Trained as a classical pianist, he studied industrial design, classical archaeology, and Russian literature and culture before completing his visual art education at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam). Now only performing on film, his diversified education has enabled him to interweave music, visual art and text into slow, sweeping cinematic gestures. In less than ten years, he has commanded international attention for his melancholy yet humorous, performance-based film and video works. His work has been exhibited throughout Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in Africa, Asia and South America. Recent solo exhibitions include the Hirshhorn Museum (Washington), Hayward Gallery (London), Kunsthalle Basel, and Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), as well as a two-person

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show at the DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art in Montréal. The recipient of numerous grants and awards, he recently completed a residency at the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in New York.

About the Curator

Scott McLeod is a writer, curator and arts administrator. His work focuses on contemporary practices, with a specialization in photography, media and digital art. Since 2000, he has been the director and curator of Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, where he also serves as the editor and publisher of *Prefix Photo* magazine. McLeod is also the guest curator of Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, a biennial art exhibition to be presented in September 2011.

About Prefix

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photography, media and digital art. Recently, Prefix launched a new division, Prefix Press, and released its first book, *Milk and Melancholy* by Kenneth Hayes.

Acknowledgements

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For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artist or curator, please contact:

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