

Witte de With Contemporary Art, *The Crime Was Almost Perfect*, 2014.1.15



*The Crime Was Almost Perfect*

24 January – 27 April 2014

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is proud to announce *The Crime Was Almost Perfect*—an exhibition that brings together over forty artists who cross the bridges linking art and the aesthetics of crime. *The Crime Was Almost Perfect* is also the first exhibition to present works in the new exhibition space on the ground floor of the institution.

Opening: 24 January, 5PM–8PM

Saâdane Afif, Kader Attia, Dan Attoe, Dirk Bell, Guillaume Bijl, Bik Van der Pol, Jean-Luc Blanc, Monica Bonvicini, Ulla von Brandenburg, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, Mike Cooter, François Curlet, Brice Dellsperger, Jason Dodge, Claire Fontaine, Gardar Eide Einarsson, Matias Faldbakken, Keith Farquhar, Dora García, Douglas Gordon, Eva Grubinger, Richard Hawkins, Karl Holmqvist, Pierre Huyghe, Joachim Koester, Onkar Kular, Gabriel Lester, Erik van Lieshout, Jonas Lund, Teresa Margolles, Jill Magid, Fabian Marti, Han van Meegeren, Dawn Mellor, Rupert Norfolk, Raymond Pettibon, Emilie Pitoiset, Olivia Plender, Michael Portnoy, Julien Prévieux, Rodolphe Archibald Reiss, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Aïda Ruilova, Allen Ruppersberg, Markus Schinwald, Jim Shaw, Noam Toran, Herwig Weiser.

Curated by Cristina Ricupero

Like any good detective story, art history is filled with enigmas, myths, and riddles waiting to be unraveled. Solving these intellectual puzzles is a common pleasure and few are immune to such acultural temptation.

Although the link between art and crime can be traced back to ancient times, Thomas De Quincey explicitly theorized this connection in his notorious essay “On Murder Considered As One Of The Fine Arts” (1827). The nineteenth century also saw the growing importance of photography both in the development of criminology and in the new sensationalism of the tabloid press—two phenomena that popularized the genre of the detective story. Cinema soon became the perfect medium for capturing the dubious charm of violence and transforming it into pleasurable images.

Following De Quincey’s ironic proposal to analyze murder from an aesthetic point of view, *The Crime Was Almost Perfect* is an exhibition that invokes the spirits of visual art, architecture, cinema, criminology, and the modern crime genre, transforming the rooms of Witte de With and the streets of Rotterdam into multiple ‘crime scenes’.

Beyond crime, there is Evil.

Thus *The Crime Was Almost Perfect* necessarily examines the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. Questioning the role of authorship, authenticity, trickery, and fraud, the exhibition blurs the dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ taste, while also highlighting the double bind of ‘crime as art’ and ‘art as crime’.

The exhibition brings together over forty local and international artists who cross the bridges linking art and the aesthetics of crime, including challenging works encompassing a multitude of artistic strategies. New and already existing projects as well as a collection of unexpected objects are immersed in unorthodox ways within an environment specially designed by Fabian Marti, that guides the viewer through routes containing different chapters.

Some of the works in the exhibition reflect the detective’s obsessive curiosity and interpretation, the narcissistic identification with the criminal, as well as the spectator’s fetishistic pleasure. A few projects deal with authenticity and frauds that could be considered as ‘art crimes’; some play with the artist’s role as subversive and marginal; others with law, order, and transgression; certain projects tend to represent crime as macabre and sublime as in the cinematic; while a few proposals provide evidence of public historical events—social, political crimes. A few projects could be said to combine selections of these main tendencies.

Eva Grubinger puts up a flag and a brass plaque on the facade of Witte de With, turning it into the Embassy of Eitopomar, a utopian kingdom ruled by the evil master villain Dr. Mabuse. Close to the entrance desk, a wall painted by Jean-Luc Blanc resembles the cover of a pulp magazine signed with the show’s title. Monica Bonvicini presents a machine of torture and desire consisting of six climbing belts in black latex suspended by chains on a slowly turning steel ring. “Why is desire always linked to crime?”, a quote from Karl Holmqvist’s film, will be constantly on the spectators’ mind, whereas Rupert Norfolk’s *Guillotine* represents the ultimate symbol of capital punishment, a disquieting presence that remains emblematic. In the film *Murder in Three Acts*, Aslı Çavuşoğlu mimics the television crime genre (exemplified by the series *Crime Scene Investigation*) showcasing exhibitions as crime scenes and art works as weapons, while Fabian Marti leaves imprints of his hands throughout the gallery spaces. Gabriel Lester creates a cinematographic loop of crime scenes in a park and projects it onto the surrounding walls and on the visitor, fetishizing violent images. The cinematic is also present through uncanny paintings by Dan Attoe,

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Richard Hawkins, and Dawn Mellor as well as with Brice Dellsperger's and Aïda Ruilova's films. Lili Reynaud-Dewar stages an elaborate installation addressing Jean Genet's life and work as a writer, an activist, and a thief, while Dora Garcia invites the audience to steal a book. A monumental installation by Kader Attia evokes an oppressive labyrinth where images from his own private collection of newspapers and comic strips repeatedly depict the non-Western person as a beast or monster—like in the manipulations undertaken by colonialist propaganda. Jim Shaw ironically portrays businessmen as zombies through a set of paintings and a film, while Saâdane Afif presents the Centre Pompidou as a coffin softly killing the museum. These are just a few examples of the types of works that will be offered to the audience to be discovered during their visit to *The Crime Was Almost Perfect*.

### About Cristina Ricupero

Cristina Ricupero (Italian-Brazilian) is a Paris-based independent curator and art critic. She has curated exhibitions world-wide, and is known for her special interest in social issues and in constructing a story line through an exhibition with projects such as *Fundamentalisms of the New Order* (Kunsthall Charlottenborg, 2002), *Populism* (Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Frankfurter Kunstverein, 2005) and most recently *Secret Societies* (Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and CAPC de Bordeaux, 2011-2012). She was also commissioned to cover the European section of the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea (2006) and co-curated a group exhibition with artist Fabian Marti: *Cosmic Laughter – timewave zero then what?* at the Ursula Blicke Stiftung, Germany (2012). Some of her latest shows include *Suspicious Minds* at Galeria Vermelho, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2013) – a prelude to *The Crime Was Almost Perfect*.

Exhibition Architecture by Fabian Marti in collaboration with Charlotte Truwant & Dries Rodet

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### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Afif, Saâdane  
Attia, Kader  
Attoe, Dan  
Bell, Dirk  
Bik Van der Pol  
Blanc, Jean-Luc  
Bonvicini, Monica  
Brandenburg, Ulla von  
Çavuşoğlu, Asli  
Claire Fontaine  
Cooter, Mike  
Curlet, François

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Dellsperger, Brice  
Dodge, Jason  
Einarsson, Gardar Eide  
Faldbakken, Matias  
Farquhar, Keith  
García, Dora  
Grubinger, Eva  
Hawkins, Richard  
Holmqvist, Karl  
Huyghe, Pierre  
Koester, Joachim  
Lester, Gabriel  
Lieshout, Erik van  
Lund, Jonas  
Magid, Jill  
Marti, Fabian  
Meegeren, Han van  
Mellor, Dawn  
Norfolk, Rupert  
Pettibon, Raymond  
Pitoiset, Emilie  
Plender, Olivia  
Portnoy, Michael  
Prévieux, Julien  
Reiss, Rodolphe Archibald  
Reynaud-Dewar, Lili  
Ruilova, Aïda  
Ruppertsberg, Allen  
Schinwald, Markus  
Toran, Noam  
Weiser, Herwig