

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Jan Worst (b. 1953), *Divine Details*, 2013-2014, oil on canvas, 250 x 200 cm; (98 3/8 x 78 3/4 in.)

JAN WORST INTERIORS

12 May – 16 June 2017

PRIVATE VIEW: WEDNESDAY, 11 MAY, 6-8PM

Ben Brown Fine Arts is honoured to present the first solo exhibition of paintings by Jan Worst in Hong Kong. Ben Brown Fine Arts most recently exhibited Worst's work in 2010 at the London gallery. A meticulous and methodical painter, Worst typically produces four large-scale paintings a year. We proudly bring together a selection of works painted over the last 20 years, exemplifying Worst's dedication to a serial depiction of subject matter, deft painterly skill and highly charged and provocative imagery.

Worst's paintings portray stately and lavish interiors, focusing on ornamental details such as the tapestries, gilded mouldings, glittering chandeliers, antiques, elaborate table settings and imposing libraries of these historic, presumably European, grand homes. Incongruously confined within each dimly lit interior is a young woman—whose likeness is directly inspired by contemporary fashion magazines—scantily clad, gazing into the distance, languorously perched upon the formal furniture. Adding to the

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tension and sense of voyeurism in these paintings, there is often a seemingly aristocratic small child or older gentleman lurking in a corner or shadow, the female figure entirely unaware of or indifferent to their presence.

There is a deliberate ambiguity to Worst's paintings that he has sustained throughout his entire *oeuvre*. Is Worst glorifying or critiquing the wealth and privilege of his subjects and their luxurious dwellings? What are these seductive women doing in these staid and airless rooms and what is their relationship to the children and men in the paintings? Are all these paintings linked in some way to provide clues to a narrative the artist has not yet revealed? Worst's paintings challenge viewers with these questions while at the same time simply allow us to savour their beauty, opulence and richness of detail, all perhaps a meditation on human desire.

In *The Great Rain Cloud*, 2008, an ornate wall tapestry of classical imagery dominates the canvas, juxtaposed with a sultry woman perched atop a carved desk piled with gilded leather books and boxes. Her direct and animate gaze creates a strong contrast with those of the historical figures in the tapestry, while similarities can be found in the treatment of her diaphanous gown and the classical drapery of the figures in the tapestry.

Worst's inclusion of tapestries in his paintings is inextricably linked to his Dutch heritage, as that part of the world was the epicentre of tapestry weaving in the 17th century, a form of art that once took precedence over painting yet is now nearly obsolete. Worst also pays homage to the Dutch Golden Age painters with his focus on interior scenes, *trompe l'oeil* devices, receding perspectives, subdued colour palette and limited light source. Worst cites the Flemish tradition of *ligne claire* ("clear line") drawings, pioneered by Hergé, the Belgian creator of *The Adventures of Tintin* novels, as yet another stylistic influence on his work. It is the deliberate confluence of various historical and contemporary references, artistic influences, and symbols of wealth and desire that create both a familiarity and fantasy in Worst's work.

A young, nude model clinging to a black gown punctuates the centre of a stately room in *Divine Details*, 2013-2014, as though she were cut from a fashion magazine or film still and collaged into the scene. Worst employs playful contrasts in the painting by depicting an antiquated portrait of a white-wigged sitter hanging directly above the youthful model's head, the ornate candelabra on the wall becoming a mock crown. His dexterous renderings of mirrors and reflections demonstrate his painting virtuosity and reverence for old masters such as Johannes Vermeer. The irresistible beauty of both the female figure and the perfectly appointed room with its rose-patterned carpet and flickering candles subtly belies the unsettling and enigmatic nature of the scene.

Born in Heerenveen, Netherlands, in 1953, Jan Worst studied at the Academie Minerva, Groningen, Netherlands. His work has been exhibited throughout Europe at such prestigious institutions as the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Sonsbeek International Art Center, Arnhem; Museum Willem van Haren, Heerenveen; and the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. Worst lives and works in Groningen, Netherlands.

The artist will be at the opening and is available for interviews.

FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION AND ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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