

Studio visit *Maze de Boer*



Art

Hush hush: making 'site responsive installation'

On the first floor of a building awaiting renovation on the Bilderdijkstraat, Dutch installation artist and filmmaker Maze de Boer has temporarily set up his computer and what appear to be a few carpenter's toolboxes installed under a multi-use table. He's an *anti-kraak*, or anti-squatter, renting this centrally-located building at a low price to prevent squatters from taking over.

It's a cheap and handy way to get a decent place to live in a city notorious for its housing shortage, but De Boer explains that his decision to anti-squat had less to do with money than solving what might be considered a luxury problem: 'I just want to wait till I see a workspace that really fits me,' he says.

This is hardly surprising for someone who's made his name with large-scale site-specific and 'site-responsive' installations, as De Boer calls them. One of his most impressive constructions was the re-creation of a train platform built in the basement of the Post CS building, which was the temporary home to the Stedelijk.

For his final presentation at the Rijksacademie, he built a life-size a replica of his studio, in his studio.

For his final presentation as an artist in residence at the Rijksacademie, he built a life-size replica of

his studio, in his studio. The only difference between the model and the studio itself was that he'd changed its orientation, the back becoming the front and the other way around. While visitors would peer through the window of his installation, they would understand that if they had done so from the real window, they would actually have been looking at themselves.

De Boer's fascination is with *trompe l'oeil* and illusion. His installations might very well be called 'theatres of space' that not only play on and reveal hidden aspects of the location but which also compel viewers to become aware of their own gaze.

The room on the Bilderdijkstraat is bright and overlooks the busy street near Kinkerstraat. De Boer, dressed like a well-groomed office clerk, is checking Toolstation's website looking for materials to build his next project, an installation in the Zuiveringshal Oost on the Westergasterrein for the final exhibition of the Prix de Rome 2009. It will be on display from 9 May. On the screen are different models of saws, screwdrivers and drills.

'I've always been very handy,' De Boer says, 'but since I finished my residency at the Rijksacademie last year I actually tend to hire other people to help me build the installations I conceive.'

Along with the Prix de Rome project, De Boer is preparing an exhibition at De Nederlandsche Bank and another at Galerie Diana Stigter in the Jordaan. He's pretty secretive about the nature of the work. 'You need to come and see for yourself,' he says. *Catherine Somzé*