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For Immediate Press Release

Center on Contemporary Art presents:

Kate Vrijmoet: *Essential Gestures*

Artist Reception: Thursday, February 11, 6 - 9 p.m.

When: February 11 - March 6, 2010

Hours: Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Where: CoCA Ballard, 6413 Seaview Avenue NW, Seattle WA 98107, www.cocaseattle.org

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(Seattle) Center on Contemporary Art (CoCA) is pleased to present “Essential Gestures” – an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Kate Vrijmoet who recently settled in Seattle. The exhibition features 8 paintings on canvas and several charcoal drawings.

That Vrijmoet’s work is based in figurative portraiture is well represented by her charcoal drawings. Yet the artist’s radical project is immediately apparent in her “accident series” in which a single figure is in the process of a horrific (and usually grotesquely bloody) accident with a chainsaw, shotgun, axe or similar tools and weapons. Her handling of the paint matches the situation’s goriness – melting bodies tossing explosive splatters of blood. Often, her subjects seem not yet to be aware of the violence they have perpetrated on themselves: The viewer plays the role of the witness much as he might watch a horror movie – completely aware of the violence and agony that awaits the victim’s realization.

Vrijmoet’s subject, however, is less the gore than the moment the gore marks: A moment of waking, of a new consciousness, of self-awareness. Her subject is trauma itself – the word coming from the German for “dream.” The accidents mark the rest of the victim’s life, whether it is merely to be a few more seconds or to lived from then on without an arm, a leg or an eye – or with deep physical and psychological scars.

The idea of waking is what draws Vrijmoet’s main bodies of work together. The centerpiece of the exhibition is her 6’ by 10’ “Creation (of Melancholy Fate) by Supreme Being” which but for the title could be seen as a family swimming pool scene viewed from under water. Yet, metaphorically, the work reads as chaos in the primordial soup or as the moment of waking from a dream or a spiritual birth.

Vrijmoet’s drawings not only reveal the artist’s virtuosity but her serious project as an observer of the human condition. Together with the water paintings and the accident paintings, the drawings help us see how Vrijmoet pictures people as defined by their bodies, their minds, their self-awareness as well as trauma and scars.

Vrijmoet’s artistic vision combines Pop Art (think Andy Warhol’s “Car Accident”) with the sublime (think Edmund Burke who in 1757 wrote “Astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror.”

Vrijmoet received her MFA from Syracuse University. Her work has been show in dozens of exhibitions around the country. “Essential Gestures” – Vrijmoet’s first solo exhibition in Seattle – will be on view at CoCA Ballard through March 7, 2010. Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served at the public reception on Thursday, February 11.

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