

Marcel van Eeden, *Untitled*, 2018. © Marcel van Eeden. Courtesy the artist, In Situ - fabienne leclerc



Marcel van Eeden,
Untitled, 2018

Different strokes

As Artissima celebrates its 25th anniversary with a special section on drawing, Claire Wrathall profiles four artists who are making their mark in highly individual ways

'Until we can insert a USB into our ear and download our thoughts,' wrote Grayson Perry in 2009, 'drawing remains the best way of getting visual information onto the page.'

The process Paul Klee described as 'taking a line for a walk', Pablo Picasso regarded as a 'kind of hypnotism' and Matisse likened to 'making an expressive gesture with the advantage of permanence' is, for Perry, a means by which to 'lasso' one's thoughts. It can also be, as Richard Deacon put it, 'an end in itself'.

This winter, the Turin-based art fair Artissima is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a section devoted to contemporary drawing, an art form that has tended to be overlooked in recent times. Bringing together work by 22 artists from across Europe and the Americas, Disegni will feature several established names, Tony Cragg and Thomas Schütte among them, as well as the following four, who surely count as ones to watch.

Artissima, Turin, 2-4 November. www.artissima.art

Marcel van Eeden

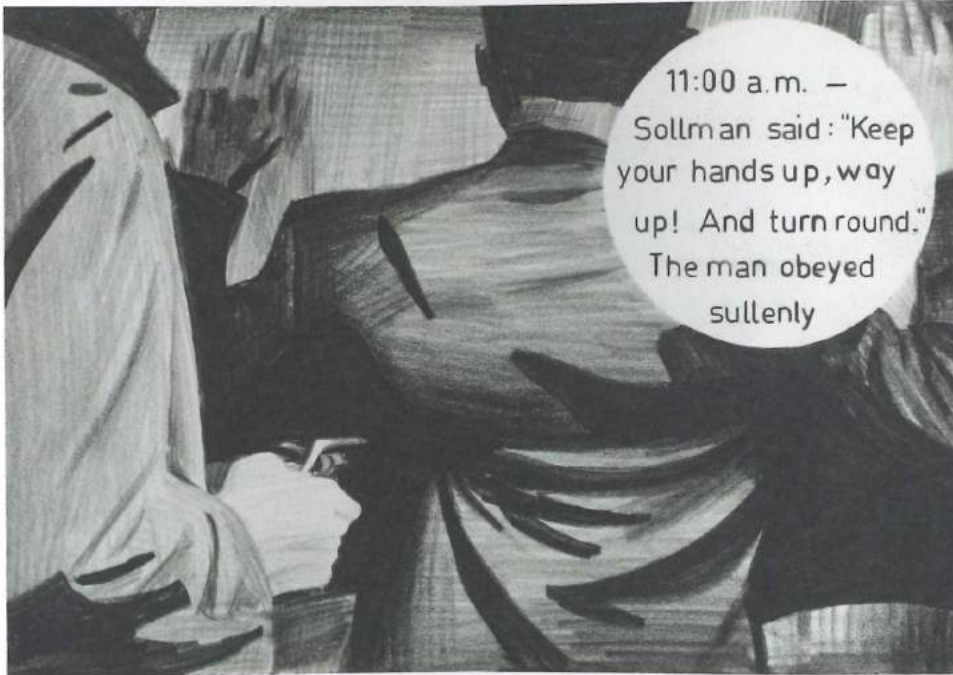
Born The Hague, 1965

'I always wanted to be a writer or a poet, so writing and narrating stories have always played a role,' says Marcel van Eeden of his work. Whether creating single, large-format drawings – measuring two or three metres across – or a film-noirish series, Van Eeden starts a work by inventing a narrative. He then seeks out images in old magazines such as *Time* and *Life* with which to illustrate the narrative, and texts through which to tell it, all originally created before 1965, the year of his birth.

'I've always been fascinated by photographs – of people and cars and streets – from the time before I was born, a time when I didn't exist,' he says. He cites Vladimir Nabokov's autobiographical memoir *Invitation of a Memory*, in which, he says, the author talks about 'a film he found of his family from before he

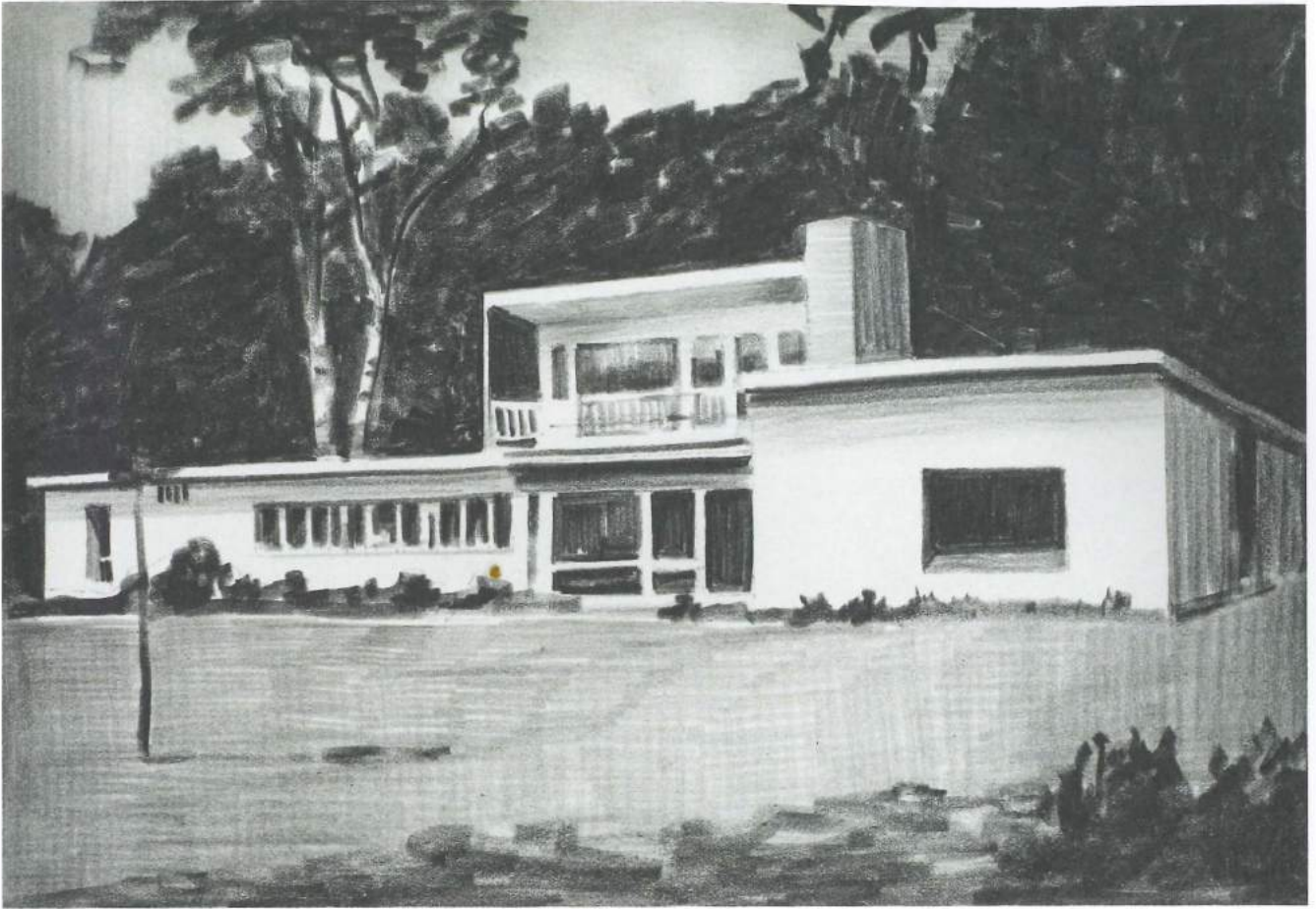
was born, and he saw his father and mother and brothers and sisters, and they were very happy and the sun was shining, and this baby carriage was already standing there, but he was not born yet. And it scared him, because they were so happy without him. It's crazy if you think about it, a kind of time vertigo. You're standing on all this time, on so much that has happened and been forgotten. We all have this huge history behind us.'

But the history that really fascinates him isn't that of his family. Rather, it's predicated on the lives and adventures of a handful of fictional characters whose stories he constantly reinvents, often to allude to the town where he is planning an exhibition (so expect references to Turin in the work he is making for Artissima). The idea is



Left, Marcel van Eeden, *November 22, 1948*, 2011. Below, from left: *Untitled*, 2015; *The Radio Station*, 2018





to reinforce the slipperiness of collective memory and each generation's perceptions of its past. His characters' names may allude to historical figures, but they are all ultimately invented, whether he has conflated the names of real people or lifted them from literature. For instance, one recurring female protagonist, Celia Coplestone, was named after the character in TS Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. ('I find it such a mysterious play,' he says. 'I like it very much.')

His characters' stories then unfold by means of drawings he makes using Nero pencils, an 'oily compressed artificial charcoal that you don't have to fix', and occasionally oil pastel, which incorporate his found images in a sort of graphic collage that calls to mind a storyboard. 'I used to paint,' he says. 'But I didn't like it because it gets messy. I prefer the simplicity of drawing: just paper and pencil. You don't need to invest in anything like paint or a big studio. You can do it while you're travelling. And you can see it's been done by hand. You can't disguise the lines.'

In any case, drawing is more precise than paint, and the words need to be legible. He uses Google Books to find published works he can quote from. 'If I want to have a person arrive at a station, I can search for "He arrived at the station", or something like that.' So, as with the images, everything is rich with subtext, ripe to be mined and deciphered. www.spruethmagers.com. www.insituparis.fr



Above, Marcel van Eeden. Top, *Untitled (Cat 7: Architecture)*, 2011