Known for her unique approach to canvas and her thought-provoking subject matter, Marlene Dumas is widely considered one of today’s most important painters. Her work is characterized by a sensual and gestural technique that is also swift, dry, and minimal, as if under pressure to leave only what is necessary. Dumas’s practice is often based upon the translation of found imagery and explores the tension between the photographic documentation of reality and the constructed, imaginary space of painting. The works in this exhibition have evolved primarily from media imagery and newspaper clippings documenting Israel and Palestine. However, Dumas’s representations acknowledge universal themes of instability, isolation, and the lack of communication, while moreover addressing the medium of painting as such. The titles of these works (among them Under Construction; Mindblocks; The Wall) not only describe the motifs depicted, but also refer to the artist’s struggle with the boundaries of her chosen medium: as she herself has noted, “A painting needs a wall to object to.”

Dumas’s paintings often display a kind of ambiguity of meaning, employing visual “traps” to show how the mind is quick to assume what is being presented in a given image. Her latest works explore the (in)famous walls of this unstable region of the Middle East. The large-scale canvas, The Wall, at first appears to present a scene at the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall), an important site of religious pilgrimage located in the Old City of Jerusalem. However, Dumas’s painting is in fact based upon a photograph from a newspaper that portrayed a group of Orthodox Jews on their way to pray at Rachel’s Tomb. The men are shown against the backdrop of an Israeli security fence outside of Bethlehem. While the paintings in Against the Wall comprise a critique of what is sometimes referred to by opponents of the West Bank barrier as the “apartheid wall,” they ultimately lament the failure of co-existence and the tragic human condition of segregation. The stance taken by Dumas, however, is not one of overt oppositional criticism, but one that acknowledges the artist as an accomplice (among this body of work is a self-portrait titled The Sleep of Reason) and which implicates painting in the construction of collective memory.

— more —
About the Artist:
Born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1953, Marlene Dumas went to The Netherlands in the late 1970s, where she studied painting and psychology, and where she continues to live and work today. She was recently the subject of a critically acclaimed retrospective, Measuring Your Own Grave, which featured over 100 paintings and works on paper and was the largest and most comprehensive examination of the artist ever presented in North America. This survey began at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and traveled to The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas (2008-2009). Also in 2008, the Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, and the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, presented two consecutive shows of the artist’s work, marking the first time Dumas had solo exhibitions in her homeland. Haus der Kunst, Munich, will have Marlene Dumas: Tronies on view from October 2010 to February 2011.
Dumas has been the subject of many one-person exhibitions at such institutions as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2007); Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Marugame, Japan (2007-2008); The Art Institute of Chicago (2003); Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Palazzetto Tito, Venice (2003); De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands (2002); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2001); The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2001); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (1998); and Tate Gallery, London (1996). In 1995 she represented The Netherlands at the 46th Venice Biennale (together with Marijke van Warmerdam and Maria Roosen).

Her work is in the collections of major museums and public institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Gallery, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Haags Gemeente-museum, The Hague; and Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich.

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“Radius pushes the edges . . . they are expanding the parameters of what an art book and in particular what a photography book can be.” --George Thompson, Director of the Center for American Places, quoted in PDN Magazine
"Against the Wall is a simple game that evokes powerful, sometimes primal feelings." - Kotaku. "...it almost immediately wormed its way inside my head and it’s now near the top of the massive list of things that I’m excited about and will furiously attempt to keep track of. My name is Michael Consoli, and I am the sole developer of Against the Wall. I am an independent game designer and MFA student at the NYU Game Center. Feedback is appreciated, so let me know what you think!