

Erwin Olaf: De La Mar

By Anna Carnick

Erwin Olaf, Angels in America, 2010



Hasted Kraeutler
537 West 24th Street
New York, NY
www.hastedkraeutler.com

Look for more of Mr. Olaf's work in the upcoming Aperture book and exhibition, The New York Times Magazine Photographs. Mr. Olaf's self-titled monograph, published by Aperture, is available now here. And his limited-edition portfolio – I WISH, I AM, I WILL BE – is available here.

*All images courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler.

Now showing: Erwin Olaf: De La Mar at Hasted Kraeutler.

For his latest series, Erwin Olaf casts his highly stylized, cinematic eye on the theatre world. Commissioned by the DeLaMar VandenEnde Foundation for the new De La Mar theatre in Amsterdam, Olaf's series reinterprets scenes from eight classic plays, with a star-studded cast of Dutch film and theatre actors. The De La Mar series was shot primarily in film studios and theatres in and around Amsterdam in 2009.

Describing the role of theatre in his work, the Dutch photographer says, "I have always been involved with the theatre and dance world, mostly through theatre posters, but also as an inspiration, so there is a close relationship and love for the theatre." He goes on, "I have always been influenced a lot by film, and I think this is one of the most literal translations of that influence."

For the series, which will be permanently displayed at the new theatre, Olaf chose scenes from *Angels in America*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Amadeus*, *Cyrano*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Sunshine Boys*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *Three Sisters*. Describing his selection, Mr. Olaf says, "We were looking for classic plays which have iconic scenes in them, instantly recognizable to the visitors of the theatre. Plays that the actors are very fond of, as well as the audiences."

Notably, in several of the photographs, at least one individual seems to be working behind-the-scenes, such as a stagehand or ticket-taker. "The little people should not be forgotten," Olaf says. "It's the whole crew that makes a play, movie, or photograph."

According to gallery partner Joseph Kraeutler, what makes the series most impressive is the modern twist Olaf has given to such classic plays. "Although these plays were originally produced on paper, they have been translated to the stage time after time by various theatre productions, each with their own views," he says. "Olaf takes the imagery of these plays and injects both his unique style as well as Dutch celebrity into the imagery, making them entirely his own, as well as modernizing the images to fit into current Dutch culture. He does this while still staying true to the original story of the play. The ability to depict a play in a single image is not just a monstrous undertaking, but also one that invites criticism as different interpretations range dramatically and [are] fueled by the passions of the theatre goers."

Erwin Olaf: De La Mar is on view at Hasted Kraeutler's Gallery 4 through July 1.