

# European Fields

## The Landscape of Lower League Football Hans van der Meer

9 June-11 July 2010

Crane Kalman Brighton is pleased to present the critically acclaimed body of work **European Fields** by the celebrated Dutch photographer Hans van der Meer. To coincide with the start of the biggest celebration in world football, the exhibition makes an interesting and humorous counterpoint to the opulence and excess of the World Cup Finals. **European Fields** will be exhibited at the Crane Kalman Brighton Gallery from 9<sup>th</sup> June to 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

At the beginning of the 1995 football season, Hans van der Meer set out to take a series of photographs that avoided the clichéd traditions of modern sports photography. In an attempt to record the game in its original form — a field, two goals and 22 players — he sought matches at the bottom end of the amateur leagues. Avoiding the enclosed environment of the stadium and the tight telescopic details and hyperbole of action photography, he preferred neutral lighting, framing and camera angles, choosing to pull back from the central subject of the pitch, locating the playing field and its unfolding action within a specific landscape and context.

Van der Meer's journey, having started in his native Netherlands, has taken him to small towns and remote regions across Europe, including Greece, Finland, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Holland, Slovakia, Denmark, Ireland, Wales, Poland, Belgium, Spain and Italy. His acute and subtle observations of the poetry, absurdity, and camaraderie of human behaviour connects the game of football to the fundamental human condition. The small tragicomedies are dwarfed by the serenity and permanence of the natural or man-made world that surrounds them, but in their pathos can be found the original passion and humanity of the beautiful game.

A founder member and contributing editor to the cult magazine *Useful Photography*, van der Meer has also published numerous books and his work is included in major international collections. Early on he received recognition for his photographs documenting the streets of Budapest; exhibited during the cultural festival 'The Netherlands in Hungary' in Budapest 1986, the series won a World Press Photo Award. He went on to photograph a range of subjects, including the world-famous ballet academy Agrippina Vaganova of Saint Petersburg, factory workers in Holland, black and white panoramas of Amsterdam traffic, and animals inhabiting Dutch landscapes. His projects outside of Europe included documenting the City-bikes project in Beijing, portraits of local people in various locations in Okayama, Japan, and a series of large panoramas of American landscapes, each featuring a cowboy on a horse in the distance, for the Arts & Ex's Foundation project 'Go West Young Man'.

However it is his photographs of provincial football matches, of figures caught up in the all-important present drama of their local game, seemingly oblivious to the surrounding landscape they are framed within, that have become most widely celebrated. Creating images that are subtly amusing and touchingly human, van der Meer's work has been in high demand. In 2004 he was invited by curator Martin Parr to participate at the French festival Les Rencontres d'Arles Photographie, and in the same year was commissioned to photograph amateur football within specific local settings for both the National Media Museum in Bradford and in Provence for the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. In line with his reputation of photographing scenes that deviate from traditional coverage, he was invited by KesselsKramer to photograph 'The Other Final', a match featuring the two lowest countries on the Fifa-ranking, Montserrat and Bhutan, played on the same day as the World Cup final in Japan.

In 2006 he published 'European Fields: The Landscape of Lower League Football' (SteidIMACK), featuring colour photographs of amateur football in twenty-two different European countries. The series exhibition was launched at the museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, and has since been exhibited at the Fotografie Forum International, Frankfurt, Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Milan, and the Timezone8 Gallery, Beijing.

**European Fields – Hans van der Meer** will run from 9<sup>th</sup> June to 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at the Crane Kalman Gallery, Brighton, 38 Kensington Gardens, North Laine, Brighton BN1 4AL – [www.cranekalmanbrighton.com](http://www.cranekalmanbrighton.com). For further information, or a selection of images, please contact Richard Kalman on 01273 697096 or via email on [enquiries@cranekalmanbrighton.com](mailto:enquiries@cranekalmanbrighton.com)

*Crane Kalman Brighton is a member of the **Own Art** scheme run by the Arts Council. The scheme provides interest-free loans of up to £2,000 to buy contemporary art work.*