



Press release

PLAYSTATION @ Galerie Fons Welters

Galerie Fons Welters

4 September – 16 October 2010

Opening: Saturday 4 September, 17:00 – 19:00

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 13:00 – 18:00

Frank Koolen

A Smile of Fortune

An enormous raft, made of eight-metre-long tree trunks, lies across the front space of **Galerie Fons Welters**, as if thrown and stranded there by a huge wave. Now hemmed in by four white walls, it has nowhere to go. Slabs of brass, copper, aluminium and glass project vertically above the raft. They appear to make up a maze, and rob the raft of its function as a means of transport, a rescue craft. But the maze too has been rendered incapable of performing its defining role of confusion, since the glass panels actually show the way, before there is any chance of getting lost.

In an approach that has become characteristic of **Frank Koolen** (Maastricht, 1978), this work combines a variety of elements that appear at first sight to have nothing to do with each other. Thus, the trunks of fir trees – with their improvised appearance and rough aestheticism – contrast starkly with the slabs, which strike the viewer rather as minimalist architectural structures. Here the art-historical references collide with adventure and nature, an association that **Koolen** emphasises by calling his work *A Smile of Fortune*, echoing the title of a short story published in 1911 by the author and adventurer Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). **Koolen** does not refer literally to the journey of Conrad's protagonist, but appears to suggest possibilities for other associations and narratives. Out of place and no longer seaworthy, the raft has the air of something left over from an unknown disaster.

From films to photographs, from sculptures and installations to performances, there is no medium that **Frank Koolen** is not willing to employ. But even so, his works constitute a unified whole as a result of his approach, which he himself describes as 'a continuous quest for the ideal balance between the joy of recognition and the happiness of discovery'. The recognition and discovery of what is outlandish, absurd, alienating and deviant in everyday reality provide the cohesive factor through which **Koolen** takes a refreshing look at both the outside world and the world of art. With *A Smile of Fortune*, the artist displays almost literally his love of the voyage of discovery, but as for what this voyage of discovery may entail – that is left for the viewer to fill in.

[Laurie Cluitmans]