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Press release

Playstation @ Galerie Fons Welters

5 March – 2 April 2008

Opening Saturday 5 March, 17:00 – 19:00

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

Stefan Ruitenbeek

'I want to be everything', says Stefan Ruitenbeek.

Ruitenbeek is an artist who wants to absorb every possible mode of being that is relevant to him: sometimes he is a dictator, sometimes a radical thinker, sometimes he is completely consumed by the glamour of MTV and haute couture. These combinations are unsettling but productive, for Ruitenbeek's work is about the essential questions of Art and Life in all their present-day manifestations. In the post-Duchampian world in which artists constantly have to define and re-define their positions in their field, it is not hard to display certain processes, thoughts, and above all experiences. But to actually live through these processes, to have these thoughts and experiences yourself, and to actually evoke them in the viewer, requires immense effort and insight. To achieve this, Ruitenbeek uses his intangible, confrontational, and monumental photographs, which, with their unmistakable relationship between the generic and the specific, possess a universal quality.

The artist celebrates beauty in the shape of a woman who is shamelessly seductive, with her dazzling, almost disturbingly inhuman body. There is no longing for sweet romanticism here; the woman wants you to embrace life unconditionally and to display your willingness to recklessly jettison the centre of gravity of your existence, as she has done. Ruitenbeek rejects hackneyed humour, literal associations, and the moral responsibility of art. His art does not seek out suffering, it seeks to celebrate and dissect, to provoke thought and experience, but in the raw, undomesticated form.

The power of Ruitenbeek's photographs is also encapsulated in his brilliant control of composition and colour, which allude – consciously or unconsciously – to classical painting. The series exhibited in the gallery was made in the artist's studio, where he built a gigantic cave. Steaming shadows on the moist, glistening walls and fantastic female creatures emphasise the baroque theatricality of the bogus cave. This visible, intentional bogus quality makes the cave an ideal, concentrated place in which human fantasies and traumas can be collected, sublimated, or in any case consumed. It is a self-contained world in which the artist wants to communicate everything possible about life, but through art.

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