



Press release

Galerie Fons Welters

6 September – 18 October

Opening: Saturday 6 September 17:00 – 19:00

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

Gabriel Lester

The Last Smoking Flight

A brief flash and the cigarette is lit. A thick, greasy plume of smoke is exhaled in a languid movement of *ennui*. At the end of the breath the plume changes into little circles. The camera zooms close to the skin – makes portraits – registers every tiny gesture or nervous twitch, every weary yawn, follows every cigarette puff.

The language used by **Gabriel Lester** (Amsterdam, 1972) is the language of cinema. By dissecting elements that appear to make up a logical whole, he exposes the gimmicks of the moving image, but also displays its beauty and complexity. This is how he worked in his previous exhibitions in Galerie Fons Welters. In 'The Clock and the Clockwork' (2003) he showed us a stage set for possible scenes, empty and without any action but full of significance, full of possible stories. In 'Choreography' (2000) the location itself becomes an actor, and the triptych of these images composes a ballet of its own.

Thick plumes composed of white flakes obscure the bright blue colour of the sky. Horizon and skies are no longer present at this height. The shapes assumed by the clouds stimulate the imagination, while the rhythm of the individual clouds soothes the mind.

'The Last Smoking Flight' is a new step in **Gabriel Lester's** oeuvre, which will also be on view in the near future at the Liverpool Biennial. To some extent Lester abandons the dissection of the image here to form his own complex entity; one in which scenery, sound, light and actors come together in a poetic hypnotic triptych. The tension is built up in each scene, in which the release of this tension would normally yield the pleasure of watching. That is the essence of any Hollywood movie. But here, the constant build-up of tension is itself the fulfilment, and at the same time the mechanism that produces the hypnotic experience.

No horizon, no earth, no sky, just a white plume of smoke that moves across the blackness of the screen and tells its story: sometimes thin and purposeful, sometimes thicker and spread more widely across the image, but never completely absent. It is clearly cigarette smoke, although we cannot see where it comes from.

Smoking is a gesture that is full of significance: it is associated with divinity, sexuality and thought. In seventeenth-century painting it is a vanitas symbol, referring to the transitory nature of mortal life. Modern smokers, on the other hand, are associated with the intellect, distance, and fatality. Nowadays, smoking is inevitably seen as an action causing one's own death. The beauty of smoke is no longer unequivocal. The pure enlightenment of smoke no longer exists; there is always a certain confrontation with its effects, its consequences. The reflections prompted by 'The Last Smoking Flight' are nostalgic in nature. Lester puts his finger on the precise turning-point in this significance.

[Laura van Grinsven]

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