

Marcus Neustetter

GALLERY AOP | *Johannesburg*



Austrian writer Karl Kraus (1874-1936) was vehement in his criticism of journalists and authors for using language as a means to command rather than serve it as an end. He believed that language shouldn't be an empty means to disseminate ready-

made opinions, rather, it should be the means to thought itself; in the same literary breath, he condemned explorers – men who travelled to the poles of the world, who wished to travel to the stars and moon – for having the same type of specious and greedy relationship with the concept of travel. Kraus would have loved Marcus Neustetter's *One Moment*.

It is an exhibition documenting, in spirit and magic, Neustetter's experience of climbing Mount Teide on Tenerife, Canary Islands, during October 2008. And he does so, exploiting all the visual grammar at hand, from digital media to videography and photography, to frottage and drawings, but not overburdening this magic with words of documentation or formality. The danger of contemplative and playful work of this nature is the possibility of slipping over into self-indulgence.

This is slightly at issue in two of the installations: a heap of blocks of wood, and the rusted detritus left in the wake of a block of ice. Performative and transient, these works may have carried the residue of magic or wonder, but the former relates to something that hasn't yet happened, and the other has already been.

Another piece that begs to evolve, to become stronger, is a video work containing a looped triptych of Mount Teide.

However, with the basic medium of pen and ink on paper, Neustetter evokes something deep yet nebulous in four folios. His humble, delicate cross-hatching is about feeling between the cracks of volcanic rock, of earth and sky, of urban light and starlight; about capturing the profundity of travelling to a place where hell seems actualised. Photographic images such as *Moment I-IV* give postcard perfect voice to this, the light of the oncoming day is like a synthetically generated oasis of orange, and the lights in the sky and those on earth present poetic corollaries to one another.

The primary untitled installation, positioned as you enter the gallery, however, engages with something completely different. It is illegal to export volcanic rock from the Canary Islands. Neustetter secreted a piece amidst his art equipment, and allowed it – with pencil on the wall – to form the nexus of a cross-hatched imaginary panorama stretching into a disarming sense of infinity against the plastered over bricks of the gallery. This tour de force piece, which skirts around issues of legality and power (that would have made Kraus frown), is transient enough to hold the magic, but timeless in its waywardness.

Robyn Sassen

Abrie Fourie

VLADIMIRO IZZO GALLERY | *Berlin*



Abrie Fourie's solo debut in Berlin brings together 12 works of analogue photography in a display that pleases because of its intimate atmosphere. The exhibition showcases works from 1999 until the present, giving a broad overview of the artist's interest in urban topologies and social structures. Neither using photography to stage reality or

represent the real, Fourie instead opts to present invisible signs, overlooked spaces and little gestures, and in this way seeks to redirect our attention to the kind of details we may have missed or deemed insignificant. The telling details have only whimsical connections mirroring the fragmentation of our postmodern lives. There are stories behind all of these pictures. While we might not know them, they nevertheless carry feeling, something elemental and personal that is sometimes beyond definition. The wall in *Soweto, South Africa* (2001) tells its battered history and reminds that history is often in the background, almost forgotten. *Hemant's Garden, New Delhi, South Extension, India* (2005) shows an overgrown backyard reminiscent of a botanical garden. The standard interpretation tells us that the work is a fetishization of a world long since lost, and a lament for the mundanity of urban existence. But this is less important. Important is the sympathetic and poetic description of the otherwise commonplace.

Taken from an unusual perspective, *Printer's View, Old Delhi, India* (2005) shows a blurry image shot from a balcony. We are looking at someone's backyard, however in the distance we can see the Jama Masjid, the principal mosque of Old Delhi. Seeing it today, one might be reminded of attacks there in 2006, but more interesting in this context is that the taxi drivers in Delhi use temples as orientation points to make their way through the city. The actual image becomes a metaphor for our blindness to reality, while conjuring the idea of a vague recollection. Embedded in human culture are fundamental stories drawn from experience. Images like the printer's view or a camouflaged T-shirt disappearing on a couch don't clearly define a specific story, rather they outline a moment, allude to a consciousness. Fourie defines the world as place of encounters and exchanges, of mysterious and ordinary experiences. The muddy image of the sun mirroring in a puddle at Forest Falls, Graskop, from 2005, expresses the most sensitive and complete of human thought. Fourie drains these events of their narrative and presents them as an arrangement of tones, textures and design. And that does make sense since the reconfiguration of the world is, as one might well suspect, the order of the day. The exhibition brings the varied images into line, linking one to the next without opting for a universal meaning. The show finds its synthesis in the image of a child's drawing lost in a park in Berlin, *Paper in park* (2008), a meaningful metaphor for unexpected sensual, cognitive and political cartographies.

Bettina Steinbruegge

left – right
 Marcus Neustetter,
Moment II, Mount Teide,
 Tenerife, Canary Islands,
 2009, digital print
 on paper
 Abrie Fourie, *Printer's
 View, Old Delhi, India*
 (detail), 2005, C-print