

PROGRAMME

NEWSPAPER JAN MOT – JAARGANG 10 – No. 54

On occasion, passing through the darkness of life in the Abbey was often described as checked by the members' experience. For
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and the use of drugs to lighten memory in community, though they were frequently more information about country's social mag-

PROGRAMME

Programme is the title of a series of screenings, discussions, presentations, concerts and performances organised by the gallery. For this exhibition, which will last until the Spring of 2007, the front space of the gallery is transformed into a proper screening room.

The practical information on the different events of *Programme* (program, screening hours etc.) are announced exclusively through the gallery's website and through e-mail. If you are not yet on our mailing list, please contact us if you want to receive the fortnightly e-mails.

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PROGRAMME

If you are not yet on our e-mailing list, please contact us at office@janmot.com

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MORNING OF THE MAGICIANS

JOACHIM KOESTER



Joachim Koester, *The Abbey of Thelema*. Black and white photograph, 48 x 61 cm, 2005

BRUSSELS, 23 OCT. – For his upcoming solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Joachim Koester chose a group of works entitled *Morning of the Magicians* (2005-2006). Besides a series of 10 photographs, it includes two film works all based on a fascinating place in Sicily that

Koester recently rediscovered. On these works the artist wrote the following text.



The history of the occult is also a history of the obscure. A history of ideas shrouded

in secrecy seeping through the darkness of centuries, before suddenly resurfacing in the “mystic” 1960s, and settling as a minor but constant presence within mainstream consumer culture. The “occult” hasn’t left many monuments, mostly dusty manuscripts found or “rediscovered” in forgotten boxes



WITH CROWLEY AS A DRUGGED, BENEVOLENT DICTATOR AT BEST, AND A GRUESOME, PERVERTED MANIPULATOR AT WORST, DAYS AT THE ABBEY COULD BE HARSH

in libraries or bookstores, or an occasional alchemical symbol engraved in a church or on a building, which surprisingly survived the vigilant eye of the Inquisition. Nor are the historical figures of this “occult” easy to trace. Real identities are typically veiled by disguises and pseudonyms making me doubt if these people ever actually existed. Some relatively recent and verifiable sources can be mentioned, however. One is the French Socialist and Kabbalist, Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1857) better known as Eliphas Lévi, who in his book *The History of Magic* (1859), brought together several different strands of esoteric thought – in effect, inventing occultism – and influenced artists like Arthur Rimbaud, J. K. Huysmans, André Breton and Erik Satie. Another is *The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, an early twentieth century esoteric society in London, and its renegade member, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Crowley’s portrait was included on the cover of The Beatles’s *Sergeant Pepper* album, and his imagery finds its way into the songs of John Lennon and David Bowie among others revealing Crowley’s position as a progenitor and avatar of the occult’s thriving within the counter-culture.

On March 1, 1920, Aleister Crowley and a group of devotees, arrived at Cefalù, Sicily, and moved into a small house at the outskirts of town. The house, formerly called Villa Santa Barbara, was renamed The Abbey of Thelema, inspired by the French writer Rabelais, who in the concluding chapters of his book *Gargantua* (1534), describes an ideal community named “Thélème,” which had the governing maxim “Do what you will.” Though hedonistic, centered around Crowley’s own version of magic – Kabbalah and yoga, with a particular emphasis on tantric practices, hetero- and homosexual rituals, and the use of drugs to heighten intensity – life in the Abbey was often described as bleak. The house had neither gas nor elec-

tricity, and no plumbing. General conditions were unsanitary in the extreme, and in the summer the air was thick with flies, gnats and mosquitoes. With Crowley as a drugged, benevolent dictator at best, and a gruesome, perverted manipulator at worst, days at the Abbey could be harsh. On top of that, the magical training was rigorous and unrelenting. Newcomers would spend the night in *La chambre des cauchemars* – “The Room of Nightmares” – its principle features: three large walls painted in fresco, representing earth, heaven and hell, depicting mostly demons, goblins and graphic sex scenes. Here, the new student of magic would experience “The night side of Eden” primed by a “secret process” – probably a potent mixture of hashish and opium, administered by Crowley – as the walls came alive. The idea behind the ordeal was to contemplate every possible phantom that can assail the soul, to face the “Abyss of Horror,” and thereby gain mastery over the mind. This approach was strikingly similar to what was practiced 43 years later in Timothy Leary’s community, Catalina, founded in a vacant hotel in the sleepy Mexican beach town of Zihuatanejo, where members would sit alone in a lighthouse tower on the beach, dosed on LSD, summoning the forces of the “irrational,” trying to break through to the other side.

With a curriculum of ordeals like nights spent in “The Room of Nightmares,” daily evocations in the Temple, and solitary and exhausting “magical” retreats on the nearby cliff, coupled with the Spartan living conditions, it is perhaps evident why the Abbey of Thelema never attracted more than a small group of visitors and benefactors. So much for free love, and “Do what you will.” Crowley was decidedly more lenient with his own sexual excesses than with others and there was a catch to the word “will.” It also didn’t help the cause of Thelema that a number of visitors left with a heroin habit as an unwanted souvenir. But in the end it was not the liberal use of drugs, the inherent contradictions in the teachings, or local

prejudice that eventually led to the demise of the Abbey – the Cefalù locals did tolerate the community, though they were frequently shocked by the members’ preference for bathing nude. It was the tragic death of Raoul Loveday – from enteric fever, contracted by drinking water from a mountain spring in the Cefalù countryside – and the ensuing storm in the British press against Crowley and the Abbey, which prompted headlines like “Orgies in Sicily,” that led Mussolini to order the community closed. The directive came as part of a crackdown to suppress breeding grounds for dissent. If not exactly politically dangerous, Crowley and the others were at best undesirable. On April 22, 1923, the Abbey came to an end. The Italian authorities carefully covered the frescos, the magic circle on the floor and other traces of the previous activities with a coat of whitewash.

According to experimental filmmaker Kenneth Anger, the villa subsequently sat abandoned for more than 30 years. Maybe also forgotten – sleeping – until Anger in 1955 re-found the villa and obtained permission to remove the whitewash, which had “turned to stone.” Anger spent three months working on the walls and floors, gradually revealing “all those hyper-psychedelic murals” in “The Room of Nightmares” and on doors and shutters, planning a photo shoot on location, in which the costume of the sorcerer in the dreamy film *Children of Paradise* (1945) – a blue velvet robe emblazoned with the word “ABRA” – would appear. Whether the shoot actually happened is unclear. Anger’s documentary, made during his stay, was lost by Hulton Television. What still circulates is a series of photographs of the restored Abbey. One of them depicts Anger in conversation with the sexologist Alfred C. Kinsey. On the back wall is Crowley’s portrait and on a door, one of the newly uncovered paintings, a mountainous landscape made in a fantasy-like style. Anger had met Kinsey when the

A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE VAN DAM

BRUSSELS, 23 OCT. – In October, at the Frieze art fair in London, Manon de Boer's new short film *Presto. Perfect Sound* was shown for the first time. The film is a portrait of George van Dam, the composer/violinist with whom De Boer collaborated for the soundtrack of *Sylvia Kristel-Paris* (2003) and *Resonating Surfaces* (2005). It will be shown as part of *Programme* (2006-2007). For the gallery's newspaper the following short interview with Van Dam was made.

Jan Mot *I would like to start by asking you about the piece of music you are playing in the film, called Presto, the fourth movement from Sonata for Violin Solo Sz. 117 by Béla Bartók (1944), version with micro-intervals. I suppose it's a work you like for different reasons. Can you tell me what makes this music so interesting or attractive to you? And is there a specific reason why you chose this piece in relation to the fact of it being filmed? Did you expect this work to have any 'scenic' or 'filmic' qualities?*

George van Dam The *Presto* movement was really perfect for the format of the film, being five minutes in length. The music is very fast, so there is much happening. The structure of the music (four bigger sections), creates a tension line, quite similar to a plot, although it remains abstract. We found this sequence of different moods or temperatures to be very rich in a narrative sense and particularly suited for a filmed performance. In this way the film is also very much about the music.

JM One interesting thing about the way one perceives the violinist, is that the listener/viewer is so close to the instrument and to the violinist, which obviously cannot be the case in a concert situation.

GvD Yes, one really gets the same primary information in sound as the violinist; it is quite remarkable how the sound changes from just above the violin until, let's say, the back wall of the hall. The nice thing about a filmed performance is also the way one can

play in a more intimate way to the camera and microphones in close proximity, as opposed to projecting into a hall seating around 800 in this particular case. We were really very happy with the fine acoustics in Studio 4 at Flagey. The sound was recorded with six different microphones, two of which were in the middle towards the back of the hall on both sides. We then recreated the space acoustically for a cinema situation by mixing the sound for a 5.1 surround system.

JM The concept of this work creates a paradoxical feeling of continuity and discontinuity. Can you tell something about how this is expressed in the film?

GvD In the film, the image and sound is always synchronized because it was recorded and filmed at the same time. During the filming we did six takes in total. In the montage process, Manon proposed to me to edit the sound in the most perfect way as it is done

nowadays – one takes the best parts of the different takes and edits them together in a way that the cuts are inaudible. The image from the different takes that I used in the sound-edit was subsequently very precisely again linked together to the sound. The result is that one can see the editing that happened in the sound montage, but one does not hear it. When watching the film, one really sees what one hears, and yet the sound is continuous and perfectly smooth whereas the image (also) jumps at the edit points in the audio part. The image relates to the different takes in a perceivable way, and thus creates a kind of almost independent tension in the time-space, although it being intrinsically linked to the source of sound.



Manon de Boer, *Presto. Perfect Sound*, 35 mm, 5 min., 2006 (film still)

Agenda

Sven Augustijnen

Eclipses du Réel, Fri-Art, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Fribourg, 4/11 – 24/12 (cat.); Mardi de l'Art, Sven Augustijnen entre fiction et documentaire, Université de Luxembourg, 5/1

Pierre Bismuth

*Pierre Bismuth, Villa Arson, Nice, 21/10
– 7/1 (solo)*

Manon de Boer

White Cube Opera House, Umeå, Sweden, Oct.–Nov.; *Festival for contemporary music in Europe*, Wien Modern, Vienna, Nov.; *Bordelaise*, Centre Jean Vigo, Bordeaux, 9/11 – 16/11 (screening *Resonating Surfaces*: 13/11); *Festival Filmer à tout prix*, Bruxelles, 13/11 – 19/11 (screening *Resonating Surfaces*: 16/11)

Rineke Dijkstra

Out of Time: Contemporary Art from the Collection. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 30/8–9/4; *Faster! Bigger! Better!*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, 24/9–7/1 (cat.); *Il faut rendre à Cézanne ce qui appartient à Cézanne*, Galerie d'Art du Conseil Général des Bouches-du-Rhône, Aix-en-Provence, 6/10–31/12; *Wanderland, Israel-Palestine*, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, 29/10–11/02 (cat.); *The Cowles Collection*, Miami Museum of Art, Miami, 17/11–15/4 (cat.); *Touch My Shadows. New media works from the Goetz Collection*, The Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, 25/11–Feb. 2007; *Eine Frage (nach) der Geste*, Oper Leipzig, 3/12–10/12;

Honoré d'O

The tears of the fish are falling in the water,
Galerie Aline Vidal, Paris, till 25/11 (with
Kwinten Lavigne)

Dora Garcia

Cellule Cité Lénin. Rooms, Conversations, Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers – Art Grandeur Nature 06. Mutations Urbaines, Aubervilliers, Paris, 16/9-19/11 (solo/cat.); *Habitaciones, Conversaciones*, Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid, 20/10-20/11 (solo); *Cyberfen*, EACC, Castelló, 20/10 – 20/12 (cat.); *Being, in Brussels*, Argos, Brussels, 25/11 – 20/01 (cat.); *Múltiples y Colectivos*, Museu de l'Empordà, Barcelona, 25/11 – 15/12 (cat.); *Rooms, Conversations*, Argos, Brussels, 22/12

Mario Garcia Torres

Neo-Con, Contemporary Returns to Conceptual Art, The British School at Rome, Rome, 8/10 – 8/11; *Mario Garcia Torres*, Galeria de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, 14/12 – 30/01 (solo)

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

How to Live Together, 27th São Paulo Biennial, 7/10 – 17/12 (cat.); *Curating the Library*, de Singel, Antwerpen, 9/11

Douglas Gordon

Self Portraits of You + Me (Bond Girls),
Gagosian Gallery, London, 9/10 – 18/11
(solo)

Joachim Koester

Fiction, La Box_Bourges, Bourges, 23/10 – 25/11; *Morning of the Magicians*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 07/12 – 14/01 (solo); *Dreamlands burn*, Kunsthalle Budapest, Budapest, 07/12 – 28/02

David Lamelas

MALBA/Museo de Arte Latinoamericano
de Buenos Aires – Colección Costantini,
Buenos Aires, 29/9-20/11 (solo);

Sharon Lockhart

Sharon Lockhart: Pine Flat, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, 26/8-19/11 (solo); *Sharon Lockhart: Pine Flat*, Museo do Chiado, Lisbon, 3/10-7/1 (solo)

Deimantas Narkevicius

Histoire(s), Le Grand Café Centre d'Art Contemporain, Saint-Nazaire, 12/11 – 07/01; *Prospectif Cinéma*. Film screening and discussion, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 30/11

Tino Sehgal

Tino Sehgal, Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam, 20/10 – 10/12 (solo)

Other artists represented by the gallery:

Ian Wilson

Publications

Honoré d'O

The Quest, Variations on a Theme,
320p, color, with dvd 'OSMOSE',
ISBN-10:90-811078-1-X
(available from December 2006)

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Tropicalisation
JRP/Ringier-de Singel, Antwerpen

Joachim Koester

Anders Kreuger, *Joachim Koester, Messages from the unseen*
Veenman Publishers, 2006

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donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 14-18.30h
jeudi-vendredi-samedi 14-18.30h
en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous