

Thank you Noor, Thank you Hendrik-jan...

We don't need the things to be able to see. But the things need us in order to be seen...

I am just thinking of the artworks waiting for us, patiently, so I'll try not to talk too long...

I love the feeling of being slightly lost, this is our motto of the day...

I know quite a few artists whom you can't please more than by blindfolding them with a hundred euros in their pockets and to drop them in an unknown place in the world...

They will return home, in the end, after a long and difficult but exciting journey...

The same happens when an artist is asked to produce a work for an exhibition. Here the unknown starts again...

An exhibition touches on many matters; an explicit placing, a forceful conglomeration of works, or the meaning of silence, the logic of poetics, light and space, contextual and tactile theory, the passing of time in multimedia, but also the duration of time within motionless sculpture...

In fact, and this is the beauty of it, every good exhibition includes a relevant thought on the presentation and placing of an artwork.

But also: the invisible, the intangible, the non-existent, and the subdued. It can rouse an emotional response.

We all seem to be afraid of this, but in fact, it's the most beautiful of all: the emotion that is stirred within the symbiosis of theory and practice. The right thought in the right place.

There are very few general statements to be made about fine art, except that her immense power is likewise her weakness.

Within the contradictions that make her lies her fragility. It stands, hangs, or simply exists. Not reproducible. That's why art has a harder time drawing a large public than cinema or music.

But in essence, I find silence and inertness the greatest qualities of fine art. Dead, worthless material that can suddenly strike a chord within one person, which can explode with energy, life, and magic and incite an endless hunger for thinking and feeling.

This is art's immanent tour de force.

As soon as the newly enlightened viewer moves on, the material reverts back to lifelessness. For this reason, art needs protection.

Protection that can be found in a well-constructed exhibition, like here, today, on the KUNSTVLAAI.

In the novel 'The House of Leaves,' by Mark Danielewski, a family moves to a new house. Along the way, they discover that the interior of the house is far larger than the outside.

The interior keeps expanding endlessly, as though mutating, while the outside remains the same.

I often think of this when I exit a good exhibition and look at it again from the outside. Inside, I made a journey through dozens of hallways, rooms, colours, and ideas. The solidarity of the physical space has collapsed, but it brings new mechanisms of perception.

Thinking about how to present art is relatively new. Of course, medieval painters knew what they were doing when they painted allegoric images above the cathedral altar, but the very conscious placing of artworks as an intrinsic ensemble in a space, or the idea that art is only 'temporary,' are ways of thinking that have only been around since the 1950's with the rise of the Situationists.

Here we are again; in a temporary situation!

In an ever expanding field where art is no longer merely something, but also somewhere.

Today it is here. We are in this Somewhere...

Amstelpark Amsterdam...

Tomorrow we may vote for the European Union. I've tried hard to look like Conchita Wurst in order to get some understanding for this but we've got some art to save, and we find ourselves here in a convincing Multi-European context, so I urge you to vote!

Perhaps our creations won't be militant, but political indeed, if we understand politics as our attitude towards life and the aesthetic experience as an experience of permanent wondering.

We'll need some music with that; here's

De Fanfare van de eerste Liefdesnacht, whom we will follow into the park...

Thank you...

(Speech for the opening of the Kunstvlaai 2014, Jean Bernard Koeman, Genk, 21st of May, 2014)