

Metropolis M

About: METROPOLIS M is a bimonthly magazine on contemporary art. The new METROPOLISM.COM website complements the magazine with reviews, columns and information on the international art world.

Levi van Veluw

Not getting lost, but disappearing

Maastricht

Marres

04/10/15 - 17/01/16

For every visitor to Levi van Veluw's solo exhibition *The Relativity of Matter* in Marres, a public guide unlocks the double door of the stately building in the Maastricht Capucijnerstraat. Only visitors with a reservation are let into the exhibition in drips and drabs. At the ticket counter you are given a few house rules: no jacket, no bag, no food, no pictures. From the courtyard you are escorted to the entrance. One more warning that you have to let your eyes adapt to the darkness. And the moment you enter, a message that is as unexpected as it is mundane. 'You can't get lost.' When the door is closed and locked behind you, the sensation of the street slowly leaves your body.

The Relativity of Matter is a unique, impressive installation with which van Veluw has completely engulfed Marres. The old brewery house is hidden behind many black dark corridors and rooms. The hallways are a meter wide and twice as high. The scant light makes it difficult to orientate oneself; every step must be carefully taken. Running into something is almost inevitable. In the first room there is shelving against every wall, from the baseboard to the ceiling, filled with hundreds of pieces of coal made of polyurethane. Somewhere in the icy silence an air supply system can be heard, so quietly that it can be confused with the echo of your own bloodstream. An alienating force emanates from the room; the rhythm of all those bits of coal arranged on the shelves makes for an amazing image. Even if you can only see a few shelves at a time, you know that they completely surround you. The room is like the mineshaft of an alchemist.

The next room confirms the impression that you have entered a coalmine. Here, an explosion has occurred and has been frozen in time; tens of long wooden planks hang in the air, star-shaped. The acoustics in this room is different than the previous one, but it leaves you just as breathless. As if the silence is to not be broken: that is how you have to move. The connecting corridor is lined with shelving onto which are presented thousands of copies of a black geometric model. The corridor leads to a small room with a desk and a chair, half sunken into the shiny black floor. Even this most recognizable space, a small administrative office, is obscure and cryptic. The visitor

who keeps following the corridors, ultimately ends up on the second floor. Here are a number of rooms with a magnificent wooden construction or dazzling scaffoldings. Between the two floors, there are tiny spheres, hung under the floor like celestial bodies.

The many dark rooms of *The Relativity of Matter* lead you into a different order of space and time, heightening your senses. Unconscious dimensions of your own physicality emerge, and at the same time you lose yourself in this temporary, black vacuum. Van Veluw's installation is in this sense a typical example of this art form that immerses the visitor into a total theatrical installation. In her critical history of installation art, art historian Claire Bishop suggests that the combination of 'activation and decentering' of the human subject is characteristic of installations. The visitor is both liberated and activated by the physical experience yet also fragmented and decentred because there is not one central perspective from which to look at the installation.

This is exactly the case at Marres as well. In the accompanying publication, van Veluw makes clear that he wants visitors to step into his universe. This temporary world is a three-dimensional version of the many photographic works and drawings with which he has made name for himself in the Netherlands and abroad. The flat image with its immovable, hierarchical perspective can now be entered. As you walk through the dark visions that have crystallized into reality, your senses become heightened and you become lost. In retrospect, the encouraging words of the public guide are striking. You can indeed not really get lost in *The Relativity of Matter*. But you can, however, disappear in it, at least for a while.

Levi van Veluw
The Relativity of Matter
Marres, Maastricht
4.10 to 17.1.2016 (extended)