

KARSTEN FÖDINGER

VOID

14.04.2012 - 10.06.2012

JAN KEMPENAEERS

IN SEARCH OF THE
PICTURESQUE

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ENGLISH

The exhibition generates a dialogue between the photographic work of Belgian artist Jan Kempenaers (°1968, Heist-op-den-Berg) and a monumental sculpture by German artist Karsten Födinger (°1978, Mönchengladbach). These contrasting presentations both start from a recognizable landscape context – rural or urban – that is subsequently translated to an autonomous visual aesthetic within the frame of the exhibition, affecting our assumptions or visual constructions of specific landscape typologies. The visitor is thus approached in turn from the limited view of the photographic frame on a large panorama and from the confrontation with the monumental scale of a physically present, sculptural image.

As part of his PhD in the arts, Jan Kempenaers' show *In Search of the Picturesque* presents an overview of his photographic work of the past years. The body of work represents a visual study of the eighteenth-century notion of the picturesque in the present-day landscape image and its contemporary relevance. His research takes its cue from the formal criteria of the picturesque as they were formulated by the English painter William Gilpin (1724–1804) in the book from 1789 that is also on display here. As the father of the picturesque tradition, the painter believed that it was only a matter of following these criteria to bring forth the ideal 'landscape image'. Gilpin's rules were later regarded as the basic principles of the picturesque, which in its academic form was extended to numerous other media.

The particular picturesque mood evoked by Kempenaers in his photographic oeuvre, strongly manifests itself in his recent ruins pictures and natural landscapes such as inhospitable rock formations and thick forests; images that specifically engage with our conceptualization of the nineteenth-century ideal, romantic landscape. Although less explicitly, the characteristics of the picturesque are also apparent in Kempenaers' earlier works: among other things, these photographic series show massive Yugoslav monuments in deserted natural landscapes, or urban landscapes.

The pictures here are not arranged according to a strict, thematic division, which makes exactly their formal coherence and common references to certain picturesque characteristics stand out. Whether the pictures frame 'unspoilt' wildernesses, a politically charged monument as a modern variant of the 'romantic' ruins, or an urban typology, Kempenaers invariably employs a recognizable visual style to represent a specific contemporary reality. Rather than nostalgically documenting a social and historical context, Kempenaers visualizes an expressive contemporary view on the picturesque.

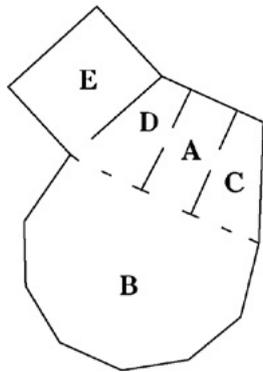
For the show *Void*, Karsten Födinger has realized a new, ephemeral sculpture specifically for the central dome room. Like his previous site-specific pieces, this architectural installation refers, both in the construction and engineering and in the use of unpolished and functional materials, to the building sector and its basic industrial typologies. The form of the architectural installation in steel bars suggests the reinforcements of a bridge pier. Födinger filtered this element from an urban reality and reinterpreted it in a personal and performative creative process.

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As such, the work's meaning is generated both in the process of its physical realization and in its formal appearance. Starting from a subtle analysis of the exhibition space, the artist – as if combining the parts of client, architect and contractor – set up the sculpture himself, following certain construction principles. The reinforcing steel, that is normally covered in pouring concrete, is left visible as a structural basis. As on an improvised construction site, concrete board and 'rebars' dominate the exhibition space: the 'unfinished' construction fills the entire hemicycle room and exudes an impressive, sensual presence.

As hinted at by the show's title, the sculpture not only functions through its self-evident materiality, but just as much through the emptiness and transparency that come with it. The result is an unfilled mould that is based precisely on an imaginary functionality and – situated somewhere in between stability and instability – offers up space for a subjective viewer experience.

The exhibition by Karsten Födinger was made possible with the support of Staalbeton NV. KIOSK wishes to express its gratitude to lenders Mu.ZEE Ostend, University College Ghent and Dirk De Meyer.



Exhibited works
(clockwise)

JAN KEMPENAERS
In Search of the Picturesque

ROOM A (entrance)

Snow Landscape #4
Colour photograph, 65.5 x 49 cm
2011

Snow Landscape #5
Colour photograph, 65.5 x 49 cm
2011

House
Colour photograph, 71.5 x 60 cm
2005

Snow Landscape #3
Colour photograph, 49 x 65.5 cm
2011

Snow Landscape #1
Colour photograph, 49 x 65.5 cm
2011

Snow Landscape #2
Colour photograph, 49 x 65.5 cm
2011

Book by William Gilpin,
*Observations, Relative Chiefly to
Picturesque Beauty, Made in the
Year 1776, On Several Parts of*

*Great Britain; particularly the High-
Lands of Scotland. Vol. I, 1789*

ROOM C

Rock #1
Colour photograph, 124 x 111 cm
2010

Rock #3
Colour photograph, 124 x 111 cm
2010

Spomenik #4
Colour photograph, 124 x 111 cm
2007

Rock #4
Colour photograph, 133 x 111 cm
2010

F. Marcos
B/W photograph, 111 x 130.5 cm
2010

ROOM D

Hotel
Colour photograph, 84 x 75.5 cm
2004

Hotel Haludovo
Colour photograph, 124 x 111 cm
2010

Spomenik #12
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

N.Z. #4
Colour photograph, 133 x 111 cm
2010

ROOM E

N.Z. #3

Colour photograph, 111 x 133 cm
2010

Gap
Colour photograph, 111 x 133 cm
2005

Rock #2
Colour photograph, 55.6 x 46 cm
2010

Spomenik #7
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Spomenik #8
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Spomenik #11
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Spomenik #6
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Spomenik #13
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Spomenik #11
Colour photograph, 123.5 x 111 cm
2007

Courtesy Jan Kempenaers:
the artist

KARSTEN FÖDINGER
Void

ROOM B (hemicycle)

Void
Sculpture in reinforcement steel and
concrete boards, 410 x 610 x 410 cm

Courtesy Karsten Födinger:
the artist and RaebervonStenglin,
Zürich