

“I’m Not Here. An Exhibition Without Francis Alÿs”

DE APPEL

Eerste Jacob van Campenstraat 59

April 17–June 6

This group exhibition, organized by current participants in the de Appel Curatorial Program, features fourteen artists whose work captures the spirit of Francis Alÿs’s practice by confronting us with enigmatic objects and situations that prompt the viewer to fill in the gaps. In addition, it serves as an analytic examination of the solo show format. In a 2005 interview, Alÿs stated, “Maybe you don’t need to see the work, you just need to hear about it.” Accordingly, the exhibition riffs on Todd Haynes’s film *I’m Not There* (2007), wherein six actors portray varying aspects of Bob Dylan’s life, without Dylan himself appearing in the film.



Wilfredo Prieto, *One*, 2008, twenty-eight million fake diamonds, one real diamond, dimensions variable.

In Wilfredo Prieto’s *One*, 2008, a single genuine diamond is hidden amid a pile of twenty-eight million fakes, thus raising questions about the importance of truthfulness in art. The work also speaks to the elusiveness of Alÿs’s performances, which many have seen only through documentation; but does one have to see it to believe it? As with some of Chris Burden’s early performances, we rely solely on the privileged few who witnessed them or a photograph to confirm their existence. Likewise, viewers who encounter Gustav Metzger’s *Historic Photographs: Fireman with Child, Oklahoma*, 1995, 1998–2010, are obliged to visualize from memory a much-publicized photograph from the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, since the original image here remains hidden behind a wall of cement blocks. Easy to miss in a vacant corridor is Noa Giniger’s audio intervention *Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime*, 2008, an edited version of Frank Sinatra’s song with only the main phrase repeated three times. Perhaps most pertinent to the overall theme is David Sherry’s *Just Popped Out Back in Two Hours*, 2008/2010, in which a man sits in a folding chair, oblivious to passersby, with a Post-it note on his forehead bearing the title of the work. Sherry was scheduled to carry out the action at the opening, but he had to hire an actor to replace him when he was delayed due to the volcanic ash from Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökul volcano. This iteration, while still humorous, made for an even stronger argument for its inclusion in a show about absence.

— Chris Bors