

GREENE NAFTALI

Joachim Koester

From the Secret Garden of Sleep

April 8 – May 8, 2010

Greene Naftali is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by the Danish artist Joachim Koester. This is the artist's fourth solo show at Greene Naftali and includes new film installations, photographs, and a multi-media projection work. Koester continues his ventures into the nature of human exploration, but where previous projects have retraced the journeys of geographic explorers and the psychogeography of historical sites, his current works probe deeper into the complex legacy of counter-culture and the varying states of mental and psychedelic experimentation of the twentieth century.

The main gallery features Koester's film installations. Through the choreography of drawings and bodily movements, Koester traces methods intended to access or express physical sensation beyond cognition. In an ambiguous dark space, a mime performs the exercises described by the infamous anthropologist Carlos Casteneda in his 1998 book *Magical Passes*. According to Casteneda, these were secret shamanic gestures meant to enhance one's ability to navigate "the dark sea of awareness". In *Tarantism*, professional dancers enact an ecstatic dance which, according to folklore, could ward off symptoms caused by the poisonous tarantula's bite. This frenzied movement is echoed by *My Frontier is an Endless Wall of Points*, in which Koester uses stop-motion animation to move through the mescaline drawings of Henri Michaux. Koester sees these drawings as remains from a journey into foreign territory, an exploration of the vast worlds on the borderline of language. Taking text from H.P. Lovecraft's published outlines for horror novels, Koester has also made a text-generating program that randomly pairs syntax and words. This piece, *Numerous Incidents of Indefinite Outcome*, creates a sort of "mental theatre" infused with chance and perhapsness. So following strange recipes, manuals, or sets of instructions with performativity and creative license, Koester re-animates these remains of hallucinogenic journeys.

The exhibition further includes a room of photographic works. *Barker Ranch* depicts the final Death Valley hideout of the Manson Family. These photographs echo the ambiguity of the Manson story, and its pairing of Western lure, emancipatory aspirations, and horrific violence. Koester also presents a series of seductive large-format prints of cannabis plants entitled *From the Secret Garden of Sleep*. These highly sensual images portray the plants' recent evolution into exotic hybridized varieties due to changes in the administration and politics surrounding them. Also on view is *The Magic Mirror of John Dee*.

Koester's work lays bare the overlapping complexities of dance and the body, ritual, media, and myth, enacting "imaginative legends of his own mapping of spaces, his own 'ghost-hunting' of subjects." (Hal Foster on Joachim Koester, *Artforum*, April 2006)

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