

Intensity and Quiescence Of Everyday Life Flos Wildschut

Albert van Westing makes photographs. Although this statement is accurate, it does not cover the import of his work. What matters to Van Westing is not so much the photograph itself, but the process that follows after the photograph is made - a process of careful and often protracted manipulation, in which he makes use of printers, coping machines and litho films.

Van Westing studied at the Moller Instituut in Tilburg from 1987 to 1983. After that he attended the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. The Jan van Eyck Academy was one of the first post-academic programmes in the Netherlands to bestow attention on film and video. Until 1985, he was chiefly interested in video. The combination of image, sound and text fascinated him. Video, however, appeared to be less accessible medium than he had hoped. He began to use elements from videos as self-standing images. These stills were initially still presented in combination with a monitor and sound. Ultimately only the still image remains.

A process in the opposite direction begins from the photograph. The initial print became point of departure for a phase of manipulation. With enlargements, experiments with different sorts of ink and ammonia, and the use of various screens after each other, Van Westing manipulates the original image into what is for him the ideal end product. This process can take years. Van Westing does not proceed from a predetermined concept. The material points the way to the end result. In this he does not strive to approach the original as nearly as possible. Indeed, Van Westing's work unsettles the concept of the "original". We can ask ourselves if the photograph from which he began, or the ultimate photographic reproduction is the original.

Van Westing photographs friends, acquaintances and strangers, people he meets by chance as he travels, in a station, a train, a bar. Such a photo can ultimately lead to a tonerprint of more than life size dimensions, in which the traces of reproduction techniques are clearly visible. One might expect that the sometimes enormous formats and the clearly visible screens would result in distancing and absence of feeling. The opposite is true: by so enlarging the ephemeral, Van Westing is able to instill a large measure of intensity and vulnerability, and immortalize the individuals depicted in most benign manner.

title: Intensity and Quiescence Of Everyday Life
author: Flos Wildschut
from: Human Conditions, Intimate Portraits
publisher: NFI, Rotterdam
isbn: 90-76085-09-9