

Nele Van Canneyt writes with photographic images awash with stillness and beauty, yet laden with subtle barbs. Each photograph offers a multitude of possible narratives and emotions. The complete body of images forms an organic whole, steeped in alienation and tension, as well as a sense of melancholy and a seemingly excessive loneliness.

Nele Van Canneyt travels around the world and takes the time to silently observe desolate spaces and (in)direct human presence. The photographer seeks out solitude, yet always within close proximity of others. Her visual work evinces her sensitivity to the image, visible, among others, in the deliberate and well-considered choice of a specific soft or dramatic light, a particular colour (combination) or a distinct play of lines or composition.

The images emerge from a search for a seductive darkness and an uncanny silence. They try to give shape to insoluble mysteries and inexplicable feelings. The characters in the photos seem elusive, like for instance the figure of a man staring into a pitch-dark emptiness, or a woman wandering on an illuminated path in a feverish night. They are all mortal beings with their own thoughts, feelings and desires. They seem lost. They are bodies with invisible eyes. Some of them seem to be gazing at a particular place that remains out of our field of view. They move discreetly, as if they could disappear within themselves or their environment at any moment.

Her imagery shows us the other whom we can never know or understand, the other as stranger, the other as an inaccessible being. This awareness has been touched upon, among others, by the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his publication *'Totalité et infini'* (1961). The photographs not only reflect this awareness but also accept that very inaccessibility; they embrace it.

This incomprehensibility is the common thread that underlies Nele Van Canneyt's visual language. These photographs invite the viewer to reflect on moments that are otherwise carelessly overlooked. The images show seemingly peaceful and imperturbable universes in which we can let our thoughts wander, although a stroke of thunder could disrupt this tranquil scene at any moment. An unpredictable event. A pitfall? A fateful step? Or not? If there is something that all of Nele Van Canneyt's images have in common, then it is this sense of immense openness.

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