

The Shores of an Island I Only Skirted
Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen
September 8 - October 13, 2012



*Those who talk about the soul of stones, of flowers, and
of rivers
Are talking about themselves and their false notions.
Thank God that stones are just stones,
And rivers nothing but rivers,
And flowers merely flowers.*

- Alberto Caeiro (Fernando Pessoa) excerpt from Poem XXIII, from *The Keeper of Sheep*, translated by Richard Zenith

Emerging through the hazy light is an island. Dark shapes loom in the distance. Rural greenery comes into view as the camera approaches. Grass, bushes, trees, plants in blossom, sandy paths along the shoreline and craggy rocks. An idyllic portrait of nature. In the viewer's mind the scenes accumulate to form a personal narrative made up of memories, dreams and expectations. But once the 'scene of the crime' is recognized, the idyll is suddenly reduced to an illusion.

The Shores of an Island I Only Skirted is a video installation by Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen, based on an emotionally charged public incident, namely the political attacks carried out by militant right-wing extremist Anders Breivik in Norway on 22 July 2011. The installation consists of two screens, a front and a back. The front side shows recordings of the natural environment on the island Utøya. On the back the image is composed, like an impressionistic collage, of visual material from secondary sources on the Internet. Both sides of the projected work are accompanied by the same soundtrack, an essential part of the installation. The merging of different types of images with the same sound underscores the aspect of fiction and individual perspectives that shape the view of reality. In addition to the complex play on reality as fiction, broader topical themes—such as political tensions in Europe and mass (im)migration—provide the video of Breure & Van Hulzen with connotations. Nostalgia aimed at an idealized image of the future or the past, which characterizes utopian longing, is offset by the chaotic fragmentation of the present.

In the twentieth century, film and photography have been used primarily to record things 'as they are': in order, literally, to bring things to light and thereby give them an identity. Actually, they are a means by which to appropriate the world. Now, in the twenty-first century, that public existence of images has become intensified due to the potential of digital photography and dissemination via the Internet. The work of Breure and Van Hulzen is rooted in a romantic tradition. Due to the way in which

they attempt, through the continual reuse of images, to investigate the essence of art and its relationship to a damaged world, that tradition takes on new connotations. This involves, rather than a sentimental sense of uneasiness, the awareness of a need to revert, time and again, to the issue of where images come from, what they portray and mean to us.

The Shores of an Island I Only Skirted is the second solo exhibition of Sander Breure (1985 Leiderdorp, NL) and Witte van Hulzen (1984 Bolsward, NL). The two artists have been working as a duo since 2009, and their work mainly consists of films and performances. In 2009 they won, consecutively, the Tent Award in Rotterdam and the René Coelho Prize in Amsterdam. Their work is included in various private and (semi)public collections.

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