

Vleeshal is proud to present the first solo exhibition by artist Paul Maheke in a Dutch art institution. Comprising an immersive installation occupying the entire space, ‘A fire circle for a public hearing’ develops Maheke’s ongoing engagement with the potential of the body as an archive in order to address how history, memory and identity are formed.

For his exhibition at Vleeshal, Maheke explores the tension between hypervisibility and erasure. Incorporating installation, video, sound and performance, the exhibition alters and adapts throughout its duration. Curtains resembling back-stage theatre sets are installed across the gallery and function as both props for performances and as a way of delineating space, while floating planets outline a speculative cosmology of interconnected worlds. A sound work, composed in collaboration with artist Sophie Mallett, plays on a loop and acts as a companion to a silent video depicting Maheke’s dancing body—present and persistent, but not always fully visible.

Within the exhibition, performers deliver a series of choreographies every weekend. Combining spoken word, movement and dance, the performers embody different characters, such as the ghost, the drag king and the oracle. The performance repositions fragments of art history and popular culture, working from pre-existing texts, images, music, performance and film. Felix Gonzalez Torres’ performance, ‘Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)’ (1991), is reformatted and repeated, alongside gestures sampled from Michael Jackson’s 1992 ‘Dangerous World Tour’ rehearsals.

‘A Fire Circle for a Public Hearing’ seeks to consider how acts of visibility and invisibility serve to question the presence and absence of marginalised narratives in dominant histories, inviting visitors to assert their own understanding of possible pasts or futures. By speculating on worlds and life elsewhere, Maheke’s exhibition at Vleeshal becomes a public site to re-articulate and reinvent forms of relationality and representation, as much as a device for developing a new lexicon for thinking about identities outside of identity politics.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, performances will take place on Saturday at 5 pm and on Sunday at noon. Performances last for 45 minutes.

Part 1: ‘A place you only go through’

19-20, 26-27 January, 2-3 February, 9-10 March

Performed by: Loveday Smith

Part 2: ‘I took everything and made it my own (the ghost is an appropriationist)’

9-10, 16-17, 23-24 February, 2-3, 16-17 March

Performed by: Sophia van der Putten, Loveday Smith and Charlie Laban Trier

Paul Maheke (1985, Brive-la-Gaillarde, France) lives and works in London, UK. Previous solo exhibitions include 'Dans L'éther, là ou l'eau', 6th Biennale de Rennes, Galerie Art et Essai, Rennes (2018); 'Letter to a Barn Owl', Kevin Space, Vienna (2018); 'A fire circle for a public hearing', Chisenhale Gallery, London (2018); 'Acqua Alta', Galerie Sultana, Paris (2017); Selected group exhibitions and performances include 'Interspecies'Public Programme, Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018); Baltic Triennial XIII: 'Give Up the Ghost', Tallinn Art Hall (2018); 'The Distance is Nowhere'(performance with Sophie Mallett), Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018); 'The Centre Cannot Hold Itself', Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2018); 'Ten Days Six Nights', Tate Modern, London (2017); Diaspora Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale (2017).

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