

Lost and Found

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Published on the occasion of *Jenkin van Zyl: Lost Property* at ARoS, Aarhus, Denmark, 2025

Lost Property is an ouroboros devouring itself, an endless, looping film about the making of a film called *Lost Property* - or is it? There is notice of an audition, but for what role, exactly? The film's production already seems to be in full swing, the actors are on set, the lights are fired up - but where are the cameras? Who is directing? For whose sake are these oblique rituals performed? And for whose benefit is a Bureau of Lost Property, when the only souls left on Earth are the employees of said bureau? The film being made is perhaps more akin to traffic lights that continue to flash through their cycles in the days, weeks and months after the apocalypse, the players rattling about the set which has replaced the living world, a system now operating by autopoiesis, eternally reproducing and maintaining itself. But make no mistake - primping, preening, strutting, in all their ghoulish fabulosity, with their LED red light therapy masks and iced-coffees in hand - this is show business baby, this could be any Hollywood backlot. Anglerfish-toothed protagonist 6-9 is *Lost Property*'s Laura Dern, stumbling through a boundless, infernal soundstage à la *Inland Empire*, a Borgesian labyrinth of terrifying affect and the urgent, non-sense tasks of nightmares. This is film-as-purgatory, as end-times-surveillance state, but also as a kind of memory palace in a state of lucid dreaming. In this hall-of-mirrors emerges a reflection on selfhood and the malleability of identity - to perform the self, to encounter the self, and to devour the self. By the final audition, a script is found, the script that is telling our protagonist's story, until she reaches the final page, the unfolding present, and finds that it has yet to be completed, finds that she is both fixed in the fatalistic lead role and yet also the author of her own destiny. But what good is destiny, what good is there in landing the role, in finding the script, if in the end we are boxed back up and sent down the conveyor belt, destined to repeat and relearn everything that we have forgotten, to search once more in vain for everything that we have lost? Is the act of making cinema nothing more than a kind of bureaucracy of memory retrieval, with dollops of glamour? Just as *Lost Property* is fictionally about the making of a film, van Zyl's artwork is also very materially about the conditions of its own making. An ecstatic record of the process of collaboration with his close-knit community of friends, playing with subversive élan on the set of a deserted London, and in two abandoned towers, like the abject freaks following the rapture.