

Jenkin van Zyl: Dance of the Sleepwalkers

19 January - 09 March 2024

Opening reception | Thursday 18 January 6-8pm



Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Dance of the Sleepwalkers*, Jenkin van Zyl's second solo exhibition at the gallery. The show follows van Zyl's acclaimed solo exhibition, *Surrender* (2023) at FACT Liverpool, UK, originating from van Zyl's debut exhibition at Edel Assanti last year.

In van Zyl's new suite of drawings, the artist returns to the practice of world-building that occurs within fringe subcultural communities – the focus of his recent film installation *Surrender* (2023). The project takes inspiration from the dance marathons that gained popularity in the US during the Great Depression – gruelling endurance competitions wherein couples participated in non-stop dancing for hundreds of hours. Through the seven works on paper, van Zyl explores the tension between ideas of collectivity and belonging, and the divisive impact of neoliberal frameworks that often pit individuals against each other.

A central drawing, *SURRENDER! Sleepwalkers Enduring: Prisoners of Paradise, Prisoners of Love* (all works 2023), situates viewers within the marathon. The work depicts a competing couple in a strange state of grace and despair. Their bodies, contorted beyond fatigue, intertwine in a dying embrace, leaving observers questioning the motives behind their participation. It is unclear whether this couple's drive emerges from an insatiable yearning, a desire to escape, or a plain victory in the marathon.

Van Zyl's evocative allusions to dance marathons – at

times referred to as "The Dance of Death", "The Innocent Jail" and "Dance of the Sleepwalkers" – are reflected in a mirrored and brushed steel of the *Bunting i: Palace of Wasted Footsteps*. Just as the associations with the ecstatic and the tragic are crystallised in the nicknames for the marathons, so too do the remaining drawings visualise binaries of repulsion and desire, joyfulness and destruction, productivity and failure, as they continue to collapse into each other. Elsewhere the work such as *When you give up the body, you make room for all sorts of things in its place*. references a trust-building exercise called "Smothering-in-Hugs".

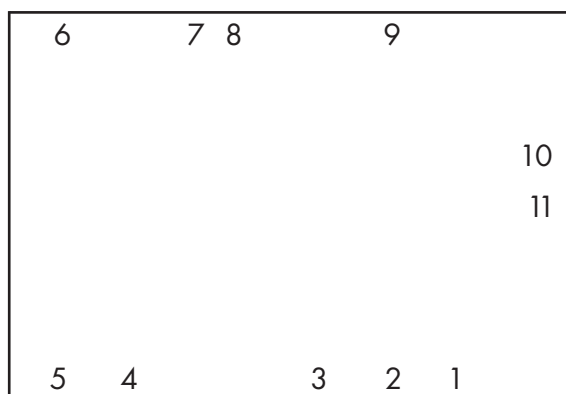
The exhibition space is punctuated by a series of sculptural apartment buzzers, each listing rooms available within a hotel. These mischievous and contradictory combinations, reminiscent of room selectors in love hotels, allude to the promise of a doorway and the chance to disappear.

Van Zyl's diverse frame of reference gives birth to fantastical communities inhabiting fleeting spaces and offers an exploration of the human condition in the face of societal pressures and personal aspirations. Together these works evoke a sense of menace and anxiety that reflects the needs and fears of our current moment – our need for productivity and success and our desire for community, at the cost of exhaustion and, ultimately, surrender.

About Jenkin van Zyl

Jenkin van Zyl is an artist and filmmaker based in London with a multidisciplinary practice comprising film, performance, writing and sculpture. Van Zyl's work combines these disciplines in hallucinatory, immersive installations, typically centred around film, which give birth to fantastical communities inhabiting transient spaces: ghouls breeding cakes in aircrafts, inflatable beasts in a desert fortress, or rats writhing in love hotels. Beyond the screen, the protagonists and their worlds have a material legacy as "escapees", in the form of sculptures and objects that pervade van Zyl's oeuvre.

Jenkin van Zyl (b. 1993) graduated from the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2021 and was the recipient of the RA Gold Medal Prize. Recent exhibitions include *Transmediale*, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (2024); *Surrender*, FACT Liverpool, UK (2023); *Surrender*, Edel Assanti, London, UK (2023); *The Horror Show!*, Somerset House, London, UK (2022); *Barbe à Papa*, CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France (2022); *Machines of Love*, Tramway, Glasgow, Scotland (2021); *Hors Pistes*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2020); *Kiss My Genders*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2019), and *Oblivion Industry*, The Horse Hospital, London, UK (2019).



1. *P.E.E.P. buzzer i*, 2023, Apartment buzzer, 31.5 x 18 cm, 12 3/8 x 7 1/8 in.

2. *P.E.E.P. buzzer ii*, 2023, Apartment buzzer, 9 x 11 cm, 3 1/2 x 4 3/8 in.

3. *When you give up the body, you make room for all sorts of things in its place*, 2023, Graphite drawing on paper, brushed stainless steel, aluminium, holographic security stickers, 61 x 50 cm, 24 x 19 3/4 in.

4. *no happier place than a loser's*, 2023, Smoke and graphite drawing on paper, aluminium, holographic security stickers, 102.2 x 137.2 cm, 40 1/4 x 54 in.

5. *P.E.E.P. buzzer v*, 2023, Apartment buzzer, 11 x 11 cm, 4 3/8 x 4 3/8 in.

6. *All the odds are in my favour*, 2023, Graphite drawing on paper, brushed stainless steel, aluminium, holographic security stickers, 48.6 x 41.4 cm, 19 1/8 x 16 1/4 in.

7. *Limitless Growth (Works Where it Hurts)*, 2023, Graphite drawing on paper, aluminium, stainless steel and holographic security stickers, 50 x 79 cm, 19 3/4 x 31 1/8 in.

8. *P.E.E.P. buzzer iii*, 2023, Apartment buzzer, 33 x 18 cm, 13 x 7 1/8 in.

9. *Bunting i: Palace of Wasted Footsteps*, 2023, Brushed stainless steel, mirrored stainless steel, anodized brushed, stainless steel, aluminium, holographic security stickers, 91.1 x 63.7 cm, 35 7/8 x 25 1/8 in.

10. *SURRENDER! Sleepwalkers Enduring: Prisoners of Paradise, Prisoners of Love*, 2023, Graphite drawing on paper, brushed stainless steel, aluminium, dogtags, Limitless growth can, holographic security stickers, 114.7 x 110.5 cm, 45 1/8 x 43 1/2 in.

11. *P.E.E.P. buzzer iv*, 2023, Apartment buzzer, 12 x 10 cm, 4 3/4 x 4 in.