

STEFAN DEMMING

**CITYSCAPES /
INSTEAD OF LANDSCAPE**



Cover and right side: *Endless lights II* (detail), 2009





Endless lights

3 two-way-mirrors, 600 lights,
200 x 180 x 205 cm, 2007

Endless Lights is a model for the nocturnal sea of lights of a megalopolis.

In a triangle of two-way mirrors, spectators can look through the mirrors inside of the sculpture from where the gaze cannot escape to the dark outside.

The Edge of the City

Stefan Demming's artistic practice is a practice of travel. In his work he fosters the observation of daily scenarios to narrate different kind of human adventures.

Throughout his voyages, the artist is recording with his video camera his appeal to moments and landscapes emphasizing concrete situations, which become in the very process of documentation independent and unique accounts.

By using maps and imaginary routes, Demming searches for places and spaces, where he sometimes takes their more obvious and literal function while other times he metaphorically alters their order, constructing adventures which give inner sense to what's been previously recorded; it is this same sense that the traveler transforms his actions into epic poems regardless of the triviality of the facts exposed.

The exhibition entitled *El límite de la ciudad* (The Edge of the city) is based on the artist's documentary with the same name, filmed in 2004 while visiting Mexico City. The video oscillates between document and fiction in order to narrate Demming's trip with urbanist Wonne Ickx, in search of the unpredictable limits of the metropolis.

From the start, there is no intention of revealing the actual limits of the city. Rather, the artist chooses to fantasize about the mysterious limits that appear to be never ending. This way all the research turns into a novel, moving towards a theme of the protagonists' travels and adventures while at the same time revealing the conditions of survival based on the improvised reality that surrounds them.

To achieve the task, the artist becomes an ambiguous mixture between traveler and cartographer (a concept that may seem contradictory at first). The journey¹ (something the cartographer doesn't trust, even to the point of hating it) will be constructed from an imaginary relationship between the gaze and the landscape, camouflaged by the intention of finding the geographic demarcation of the city.



Throughout various interviews conducted in random encounters with strangers, the artist receives some kind of confirmation regarding the supposed limits of the city, which he then decides to disregard in an attempt to keep them unknown. Demming prefers to contemplate (in an almost Baudelaire-esque² fashion) the urban horizon, marking a subtle difference between everyday functionality and the creation of myths.

It is through these excerpts that the exhibition reviews moments (personal anecdotes or stories told by others), spaces and daily activities that together reveal the possibility of urban boundaries.

Simulations, almost theatre sets- videographical or sculptural- which allow the optical illusion of the infinite, the structuring of the unimaginable and above all, the feeling of uncertainty and instability that comes with this changing geography.

Ruth Estévez

¹ The notion of "a journey" is forged as one in the romantic sense of 19th century travelers, where the "real landscape" (perceived as something controlled and humanized) is replaced by the "sublime landscape", which excites and provokes surprises or wonder.

² Contrary to the first German Romantics where the poetic landscape was primarily constructed from nature, Baudelaire's poetic landscape could have only been the city, the 19th century metropolis and its anonymity, its size and its misery.







Horsedog / Venbag

HD-videoprojection, 1'55" as a loop,
ventilator with attached plastic bag, spot, lightcon-
troller, 2009

In *Horsedog* a white horse appears above a white dog as if standing on top of it . Sometimes the dog is on the lookout - but nothing happens.

After a minute a black horse appears behind the white horse - and and dissapears before reaching the borders of the image. The dog doesn't notice it.

In front of the projection from time to time a plastic bag is driven by air to fly while it's illuminated by a spotlight.



De Noche (At night)

HD-videoprojection, 3'20" as a loop,
1 wooden hut (200 x 120 x 140 cm), different
building materials, 1 dog of porcelain, 1 backprojec-
tion screen, custom software, 1 lamp, lightcontroler,
3-channel-audio, 210 x 160 x 380 cm, 2007

The city's edge at night: in the background the
lights of the city, in the foreground a hut as a
carcass. It seems to be inhabited: inside, a light is
turned on and off sometimes. But also a window
with the singing silhouette of a person behind it, is
projected onto it. Behind the hut a man appears and
disappears. On the other side of the construction
site scenery, once in a while a dog is barking and
lighted according to the volume of his singing.



left side: *De Noche*, installation view

Casa Monteverde

2-channel-audio, 6'33" as a loop, 1 green room with a curtain, 2 lamps with speakers attached to it, cables, lightcontroller, computer, 2007

Two lightbulbs are performing an extract of Monteverdi's Baroque love song „Lamento della Ninfa“. The volume determines the lightness of each light, the tone seems to come from the bulbs. It's illuminating the interior in changing intensities.





Sobre Límites (About limits)

5-channel-vidio, 11'17" each as a loop, 5 monitors at pillars of different highth (80 - 120 cm), 2007

Sobre Límites is a composition of five videos. It shows people and their everyday actions in nine different edges of Mexico City: construction of a house in the south, the gated community „La Sosa“ in the north-east, a go-kart race of kids in Marquesa, collectors on a garbage dump in Neza, a jogger and workers on a football field - the diversity of the periphery.





Weltuntergang (The end of the world)

SD video, 1'58" as a loop on a CRT display, 2008 /
9 c-prints on aludibond, 30 x 40 cm each, 2008

The video *Weltuntergang* shows a thunderstorm through an open window. The lightnings are edited in a way that they appear quickly after each other. In addition, there's artificial photoflashes that illuminate the inside of the room. The flashes cause interferences that make the image on a crt display seem to tremble. When printed as a still image, this creates light stripes.

Haus mit Gewitter (House with thunderstorm)
wood, cardboard, CRT display, video *Weltuntergang*
as a loop, 68 x 80 x 52 cm, pedestal with blanket,
2009

On a small mountain, a house with a red roof is
standing at the slope.

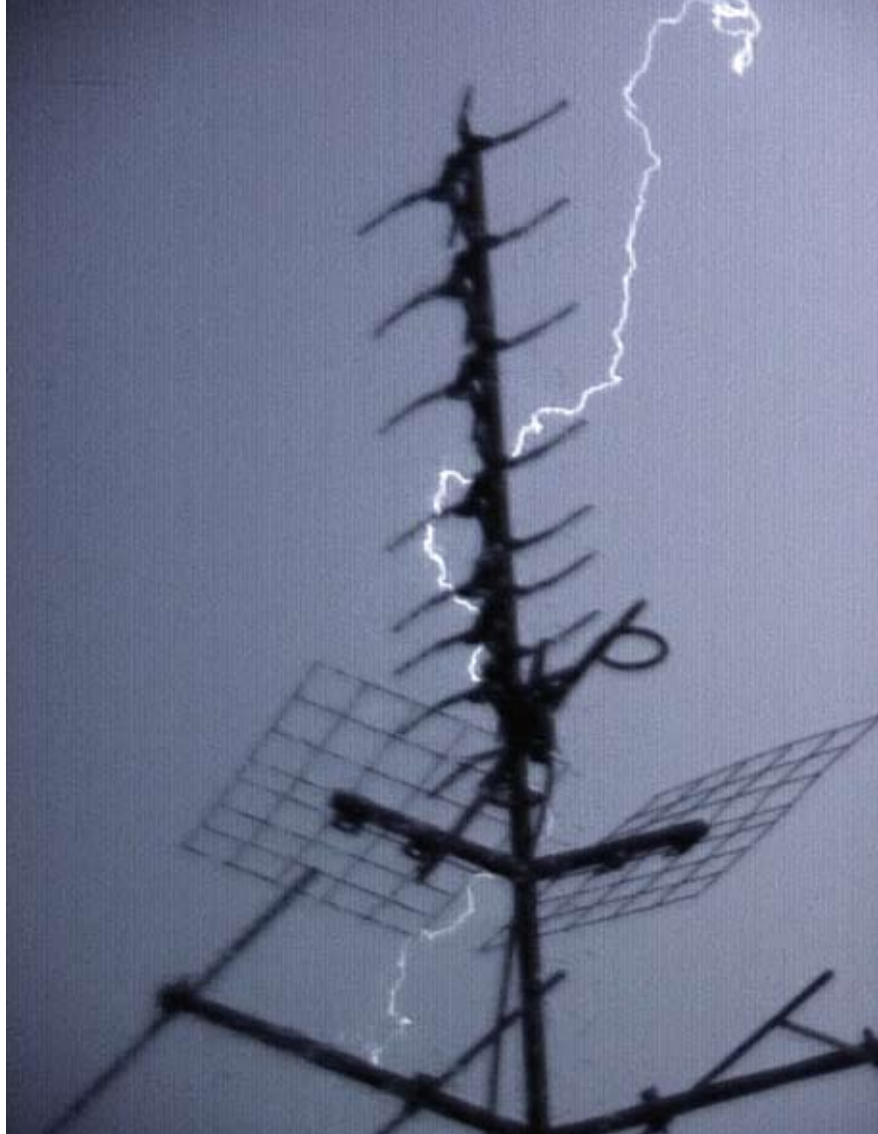
Looking inside the dark inner space, one can see a
second window with a thunderstorm behind it.



Weltuntergang 2

SD video, 30" as a loop, 2007

In the upright video *Weltuntergang 2* a slowly returning flashlight behind an antenna makes the latter one seem to move slowly in the rhythm of the light.







Kulisse (coulisse)

oil on canvas, 155 x 240 cm, 2009

installed as a billboard on an deserted meadow
highth: 180 cm

Tosterglope is a village with some farmers. In the year 2009 dairy farming doesn't exist here anymore. The billboard on the deserted meadow shows painted cows.

left: *Kulisse*, 2009

right: *Your website here*, acrylic on canvas,
70 x 50 cm, 2008

next: *Bull*, c-print on aludibond, 50 x 75 cm, 2009



Greenhouse

4 blower, lightcontroller, 9 plastic palms, plastic objects, canals for air, lights, motion detector, installed in a greenhouse, 220 x 400 x 300 cm, 2008

An installation about the genuine purpose of a greenhouse: accelerated agriculture as an industry. Everything keeps moving, vegetables look good for the moment - before collapsing.







Instant park

Action by Villa Catharina with Hieke Pars,
Rotterdam 2002

Instant park was a good-bye manifestation for a street that was about to be demolished. Therefore, the 200 metres of pavement were covered with fresh, green turf.

Villa Catharina:
Karin Keijzer, Wonne Ickx, Sjoerd Borkent,
Tomas Viguurs, Ben van der Ploeg, Ena Lloret,
Stefan Demming

right side: *Wassilis new home*, action,
c-print on aludibond., 50 x 75 cm, 2002/2009





Flirt, photo, 30 x 20 cm, 2009

VITA Stefan Demming (*1973)

lives and works in Berlin

1999 state examination in art and history

1999-2006 studies of fine art at Prof. Jean-François Guiton at the studio for time-based arts at the university of the arts Bremen, diploma, Master's degree.

Numerous exhibitions and prizes: German video-installation-prize of the city of Marl (2000), Bremen young artists' prize (2001), OLB-media art award, European Media Art Festival Osnabrück (2002), Video art award of the Filmbüro Bremen (2003), Scholarship of the Cusanuswerk, DAAD-grant for the USA (2007).

The project *The edge of the city* began as a cooperation with Wonne Ickx (urbanist / architect, Be/Mx) und was subsidized by Centrum Beeldende Kunst Rotterdam (CBK) and Rotterdamse Kunststichting (RKS).

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Ruth Estévez is curator at the Museo de Carillo Gil, Mexico D.F.

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The works are taken from the exhibitions:

1. *El límite de la ciudad*, Casa del Lago, Mexico D.F. (Mexico), september 2007
Mexico D.F. : population: 8.720.916 (city) / 19.231.829 (metropolitan area) (2005)
2. *Stattlandschaft*, Kunstraum Tosterglope (Germany), september 2009
Tosterglope: population: 209 (city) / 607 (metropolitan area) (2009)
3. *Greenhouse* was shown in Riga (Lt) and Bremen (D).

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