

***Every muscular contraction contains the history and meaning of its origin***

**Joachim Koester**  
**March 6 – April 18 2015**

Galleri Nicolai Wallner is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of works by Joachim Koester. In one of Koester's most striking shows to date, an immersive, large-scale installation encompasses the exhibition space.

An exploratory starting point is the video work *The Place of Dead Roads*. Referencing a western novel of the same name by William S. Burroughs, four androgynous cowboys inhabit a space not unlike the one in which the spectator finds themselves. A series of twitches, shudders, full body spasms, gestures both rapid and slow, pulsate through all four figures. Almost as if involved in a classic shoot-out with an invisible opponent, the cowboys draw their guns, go through motions and stances of posturing as if in the middle of both attacking and defending, yet these actions are not driven by a definable narrative. Rather they seem to correspond to something that lies deep within the body, guiding and determining each moment.

Finding inspiration in the idea of Wilhelm Reich that "every muscular contraction contains the history and meaning of its origin"—from which the exhibition takes its title—Koester creates a universe in which each movement tells the story of its past through its present. This implicit ability for our actions to create and maintain their own narrative, embedded under the skin, buried in our tissue, creates a juxtaposition between the hidden and the visible. This division between the hidden traces of the past and what visibly appears in the present is the focus of much of Koester's work. The nature of the installation gives the spectator a sense of this division, as they act as both viewer and participant, breaking the boundaries between the passive and active in an attempt to investigate that which cannot be seen.

Just as with *The Place of Dead Roads*, each of the spectator's movements remains within the context what has come to pass, each movement becoming, in turn, a historical act in itself, invisibly creating the foundation for which each subsequent movement comes from. Echoing this idea of an obscured history, wooden structures and boarded up installations become places of isolated secrecy. They confine and limit, both from the inside and out, allowing those masked acts to remain so.

In Burroughs's novel, the place of dead roads refers not to those roads which go unused, but rather those roads which are reserved for the dead—as actions become too repetitive, and thus too entrenched in their own history, they lose the ability to make way for the unexpected and the new. However as with Reich, Koester leaves the possibility for this pattern to be broken.

As each movement refers to its past, so does it open up the potential to move towards a different future. With Koester's work *My Frontier is an Endless Wall of Points (after the mescaline drawings of Henri Michaux)*, an affirmative push towards the unexplored is visualised through an animation of drawings that Henri Michaux made while under the influence of mescaline.

Two photographic works create a point of intersection with the videos. *Idolomantis diabolica* features a portrait of that particular species of praying mantis. Its almost otherworldly and android appearance juxtaposed by its human qualities has given way to the creation of a subculture in which it is central. *Demonology* is based on the drawings from a "demon wall" done in 1620 in a church in Norway. Both works allude to the secrecy and compulsion in the videos, while at the same time echoing this desire to be unleashed as seen with Henri Michaux, creating this intersection between secrets, exploration and indulgence.

Joachim Koester (b.1962, Denmark) is highly regarded as one of the most important conceptual artists of his generation. He has had many notable exhibitions around the world, including MCA (Chicago), Musee d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (Paris) Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva), S.M.A.K. (Ghent), Moderna Museet (Stockholm) and PS1 (New York). In 2008, he was shortlisted for the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize. In 2013, he was awarded the Camera Austria prize for photography. Koester's work can be found in the collections of MoMA (New York), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Generali Foundation (Vienna), The National Gallery of Denmark (Copenhagen) and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebæk), and the Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburg) among many others.