

RACHEL MONOSOV: PASTORAL

Opening Reception: Friday, September 25, 8PM–11PM

Exhibition Dates: September 25 – October 25, 2015

Barbé gallery

Penitentenstraat 29, 9000 Gent, Belgium

We live in a time and place where even microscopic examination will not reveal the difference between a real seed and its imitation. In *Pastoral*, I am exhibiting a new video work, *Freedom in the Clouds*. The work is shot in the vacation resort Tropical Islands, which closely imitates a natural Thai island and confines it underneath the giant dome of the former Brand-Briesen Airfield in Krausnick, Germany. A second location is an anonymous botanical garden in Jerusalem, Israel.

Through imaging procedures in the daily routines of a cleaning lady and a botanist, I theatrically depict their environment and their acts, both of which alter between the real and the surreal. This constructed universe characterizes the powerlessness of a nature controlled and used by humans. In the abstract sense of some pastoral place, the two women are following a mechanism whose rules aren't clear.

In a white void, on a cloud away from any social structure, we hear *Pastoral*, Beethoven's 6th Symphony. Is it within the sleep, or perhaps the death of the character and the artist that this idealism might serve as a perfect getaway?

The same question is also asked in the work *Desireless Force*, the performance piece that mimics the ambivalence between death and life. In the celebrated beauty of the dying flowers, this is the moment of rest for the character; a "time-off" from her meaningless pursuits of organizing and arranging things in a place where her acts interfere with the happenings around her, whether inside the video work or this present gallery space.

In *Political Water*, the visitor is encouraged to consume water the

Sodastream, an Israeli machine currently being boycotted internationally. By using this product or purchasing this machine-cum-work, we collaborate with a system, an ideology, which we should rebel against.

The boycott of products made in Israel extends to virtually all products. In *Political Water*, I focus specifically on Sodastream because the factory is located on an illegal Israeli settlement inside the Palestinian West Bank. While the company has announced its plans to relocate to the town of Rahat, a planned township in the Negev desert, this too is a space where Palestinian Bedouins are being forcefully transferred to make room for the employees and activity of the company. The work also touches upon the symbolism of water within the religions as I am questing God's promises and self-reflect on the political system of my adopted homeland.

While nature may seem to exist in its own right, unquestionable and omnipresent, the planting of a tree can come from political interest; a calculated action by men with an agenda. We live in a world where we cultivate the most useful plants while turning entire rainforests into lumber; in a place where forests are planted to possess land. There is an urgent need to examine the seed, the core, the soil we walk on, and the water we drink.