

## Gilbert Fastenaekens

**Exhibition at the gallery Les filles du calvaire, Paris**  
**23 October - 20 December 2003**  
**Opening Thursday 23 October from 6:00 to 9:30 pm**

**Exhibition at the Galerie Le Château d'Eau, Toulouse**  
**23 October - 7 December 2003**  
**Opening Wednesday 22 October from 6:00 to 9:00 pm**

Close to the German and French traditions of landscape, namely Thomas Ruff, Jean Marc Bustamante and Thibaut Cuisset, the Belgian photographer Gilbert Fastenaekens has been using the "documentary style" half way between the vision of reality and the artistic language it implies. Already well known for its debut in "Nuits" (1980-1987), urban landscape at night, so different from photojournalism overwhelming at the time, he works as a photographer for the French "Direction for geographic space organisation" and wins the Kodak price for photo critic in 1986.

Then he goes on observing urban and country territories getting different orders, avoiding easy description and soft feelings. He uses together landscape and intimacy, particularly in exploring inside out a strictly bound piece of land in the Champagne-Ardenne forest, from 1988 to 1996. "Noces" is an ascetic work almost obsessional, enlarging the motif going beyond the documentary purpose losing the geographical, physical as well as photographic marks. The subject represented by a number of different greys almost vanishes behind the abstract where Pline's Cosa Mentale drives the artist deep into himself. A book is made of this series and will be issued for his retrospective in gallery Le Château d'Eau at Toulouse.

Simultaneously, Gilbert Fastenaekens from 1990 to 1996 makes photos of Brussels, in black and white, the subject being the urban development of Brussels. A book is edited under the name of "Site". Site (ARP Editions, 1997). It is shown as one work made of big books where each image in a continuity of time and vision, becomes an element of collection of elementary shapes forming a city. The quiet and radical construction shown on book-rest is the beginning of the never-ending observation Gilbert Fastenaekens makes about Brussels, his city, that he has picked as the archetype of any city developed at random.

In 1993, Gilbert Fastenaekens temporarily stops showing his work and becomes an editor, of course on landscape in the contemporary photography. (ARP Edition). He only recently went back to showing his last work about Brussels in Centre d'art contemporain des Brasseurs, at Liège, and the Gallery Ledune, at Brussels. This work will be shown at the Gallery Les filles du calvaire, when the Gallery Le Château d'Eau will rather make a retrospective together with the exhibition at FLAC© - Casino Modern Waterschei, at Genk in Belgium.

"Brussels" is another work based on the long-term observation "made of occasions and obsessions which at the end make sense" as says Gilbert Fastenaekens. This alphabetical approach – after "Site"- shows the various architectural shapes existing in the city: curtain walls, towers, town houses sunk in buildings...But again the documentary aspect vanishes behind the scenography through the radical scope built theatre like. The very precise chamber shots allow to see numerous details while the viewer deeply seek into the gigantic work. The numerical technique together with a very refine ink jet print, rather than the black and white print, reinforces the deepness of the colours, furthermore mat paper and inks captures the viewer's look. This today's technology allows the artist to play again with the sensuality of the black.

Even being a photographer using the most lean and radical language far from a pictorialist artefact, Gilbert Fastenaekens is less interesting by the places than by the visual or sensual experience they allow – like the painter or a sculptor he does indeed transform the subject into emotion of photographic feeling.

The viewer, literally goes through a physical experiment in these images, some are as high as 2,5 meters, and could be considered as sculptural objects.

Then they appear as abstract surfaces made of colours, sensual materials light vibrations and architectural rhythm. For smaller images, only the second phase applies.

Being sculptures or at the opposite flatness and non-volume these images are clearly showing the ability of Gilbert Fastenaekens for transmutation.