

A Wall of Misconception

Any idiot can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day living that wears you out

– Anton Chekhov



Original Dutch text on p. 120

For the photographic project *Simple Present – Beijing*, I had two travel goals. I wanted to take a photograph in the parking lot of Ikea-Beijing and take a look at the Olympic building site. From there, I moved on through alleys and suburbs. This journey to the other side of the world had an almost perverse aftertaste: over there, I found exactly the same as what we have here just around the corner in Europe, China has turned into a predictable destination: it is the economic centre to be, Western companies invest massively while construction steamrollers are ruthlessly flattening ancient culture and the last remains of communism. Travelling to China might

seem like an adventure, yet there is as much – or as little – meaning to be found there like anywhere else in the world. The zero-sum that this project discloses is essential. I ate in Ikea Köttbullar with chopsticks and drank Swedish ale. The heartrending inanity of being-there and the display of codes and meanings took on an existential undertone.

Exclusive local specialities can hardly be found in the region of origin anymore. Nowadays you can only find them in the designated aisle of your local supermarket. This society that no longer speaks its dialect, is increasingly focusing on its national character. Fed by the political realisation that distinct

worlds are evolving into one standardised culture – which might come down to the ultimate multicultural society – I put patterns and templates on reality in an attempt to interrupt, make a halt, and invite contemplation.

Ultimately, there is nothing out there; what exists is only what we accept within the construction of our observation. Just like without a camera there can be no image but only the fleeting of time.

Bert Danckaert's *Simple Present* is published by Veenman Publishers, Rotterdam, June 2008. ISBN 978-90-8690-179-1

