

Music and athleticism come together in films by Dutch artist Guido van der Werve at Nashville's Frist Center



Guido van der Werve. Nummer acht, everything is going to be alright (still), 2007. 16mm to HD, edition of 7 and 2 artist's proofs. Running time 10 minutes, 10 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York. © Guido van der Werve.

NASHVILLE, TENN.- [The Frist Center for the Visual Arts](#) presents Guido van der Werve: Nummers 2 6 8 14 from February 5 through May 1, 2016, in the Gordon Contemporary Artists Project Gallery. The exhibition features four films from Dutch artist Guido van der Werve's Nummers (Numbers) series, in which the artist juxtaposes elements of grace and absurdity, often to whimsical or unsettling effect.

Incorporating a wide range of physical and auditory expressions, from classical music and ballet dancing to long-distance running and swimming, these understated works offer the pleasure of the unexpected. "Guido van der Werve's dry humor and obsessive negotiation of challenging, self-imposed situations merges poetry and pathos in unpredictable ways," says Frist Center Chief Curator Mark Scala. "Being in Nashville, we are especially interested in artists who use music in the crafting of aesthetic experiences. Van der Werve does this with classical music, often of his own composing, providing an almost dreamlike counterpoint to his films."

Although van der Werve began his career as a performance artist, he discovered his own preference for the aesthetic flexibility of film, which gave him the ability to document his actions in remote sites. As the protagonist of his own productions, his narratives emphasize performance, music and atmospheric scenes rather than dialogue.

Three of the four films feature performances of dance or classical music—which have a quality of timelessness and traditional refinement—but are set in banal scenarios that delightfully subvert expectations of the ordinary. For example, in the film *Nummer Twee* (Number two), just because I'm standing here, doesn't mean I want to, van der Werve walks backward into traffic and is hit by a car. Soon, we see a troupe of ballerinas dancing with blithe indifference around his prone body—beauty defeating trauma. In *Nummer Zes* (Number six), Steinway grand piano, wake me up to go to sleep, and all the colors of the rainbow, the artist obsesses over a Steinway grand piano that he cannot afford but purchases anyway. He plays one brief, rapturous performance of a Frédéric Chopin concerto before the piano is repossessed, leaving a trace of a rainbow inside the apartment and a lasting memory of having played this exquisite instrument.

In addition to being a musician, van der Werve is an endurance sport enthusiast who often has himself filmed undertaking feats of physical endurance and self-discipline. In *Nummer acht* (Number eight), everything is going to be alright, he is shown taking an apparently interminable walk in front of an icebreaker plowing through the frozen waters off the coast of Finland. In *Nummer veertien* (Number fourteen), home, we follow the artist as he swims, bikes, and runs over 1,700 kilometers, from the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw, where the composer Chopin's heart is interred, to Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where the rest of his body is buried. The audience is invited to imaginatively participate in the extraordinary effort that van der Werve put into his exhausting pilgrimage in honor of one of his cultural heroes.

For *Nummers*, the Frist Center's Gordon Contemporary Artists Gallery will be transformed into separate screening rooms with ample seating space and heavy curtain dividers to create a quiet, contemplative viewing atmosphere. "The slow pace and subtle twists in the films draw the audience members toward an awareness of themselves engaged in the act of concentrated looking, a skill that is often in jeopardy in this age of instant gratification," says Scala.

Born in Amsterdam in 1977, Guido van der Werve studied industrial design, archaeology, music composition and Russian language and literature before creating his first videos around 2000. Since then he has produced numerous films and artist's books that incorporate his interests, particularly classical music. His works have been shown widely throughout Europe and the United States in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, among many others. *Nummer veertien, home*, won the 2013 Golden Calf Award in Amsterdam for Best Short Film and will be on display in this exhibition.