

RYAN LEE

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Gabriel Lester

If you happen to be

April 13 – May 20, 2017

Opening: Thursday, April 13, 6–8PM

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *If you happen to be*, an exhibition of new work by Gabriel Lester. Lester combines elements of music, experimental cinema, literature, and architecture to create immersive environments with stories to tell. *If you happen to be* includes two such spaces. The first presents a series of low-resolution LED panels displaying films of near-extinct animals and the habitats in which they can be found. Lester, however, does not confine the animals to the natural world. The internet-sourced footage he employs indicates various places that these animals exist. Okapi, for example, not only live (at least for the time being) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in cyberspace as images, symbols, and brands for online consumption. This multi-dimensional yet threatened existence is reflected in Lester's distorted imagery; these creatures fade in and out of presence, imperiled and infinite depending on the context.

This precariousness of being is reflected in the exhibition's title. *If you happen to be* implies both casual, coincidental presence and profound, elemental existence; it is simultaneously living as action and living as accident.

Questions of presence and absence resurface in *Nevada*, the second component of this exhibition. *Nevada* confronts the viewer with a floor to ceiling modular wall. Carefully selected objects that correspond with the individual stories combined in *Nevada*'s multilayered narrative occupy each compartment. Guided by light and sound, the viewer navigates the histories of a series of anonymous characters that find themselves locked out of the world they used to inhabit. In an effort to escape the parallel world in which they have come to dwell, each character attempts to understand the nature and cause of their own existence. Considering personal memories and local histories of migration, mining, gambling, nuclear test sites, and mysterious locations like Area 51 and the Nevada triangle (an area in the California-Nevada desert where numerous aircrafts have vanished), Lester's *Nevada* probes the tensions that link the seemingly distinct characteristics of this place to a number of characters looking for a way back to a life they have lost.

Gabriel Lester (b.1972 Amsterdam, NL) is a multimedia artist and inventor, internationally recognized for his conceptual films, sculptures, and installations. He attended Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunst, Amsterdam. Lester's work has recently been included in Kochi-Muziris Biennial (2016), Marrakesh Biennale (2014), Sydney Biennale (2014), Performa 13 and 09, Venice Biennale (2013), Sharjah Biennale (2013), DOCUMENTA 13 (2012), Sao Paulo Biennial (2010), and Liverpool Biennale (2008). He has also exhibited at Artists Space, New York; de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam; Groninger Museum, Groningen (forthcoming in 2017); MACBA, Buenos Aires; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Witte de With, Rotterdam, among others. Lester's work is held in the public collections of Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum De Paviljoens, Almere; MUDAM, Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; and 21CMuseum, Louisville.



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