

ARTSY

A Belgian Painter Finds Inspiration in Wim Wender's "Paris, Texas"



Koen van den Broek
Plot, 2015
Albertz Benda

"And for the first time, he wished he were far away. Lost in a deep, vast country where nobody knew him. Somewhere without language, or streets. He dreamed about this place without knowing its name. And when he woke up, he was on fire....Then he ran. He never looked back at the fire. He just ran. He ran until the sun came up and he couldn't run any further. And when the sun went down, he ran again. For five days he ran like this until every sign of man had disappeared."—Travis Henderson, *Paris, Texas*

Gleeson, Bridget. "A Belgian Painter Finds Inspiration in Wim Wender's 'Paris, Texas,' Artsy. July 11, 2016.

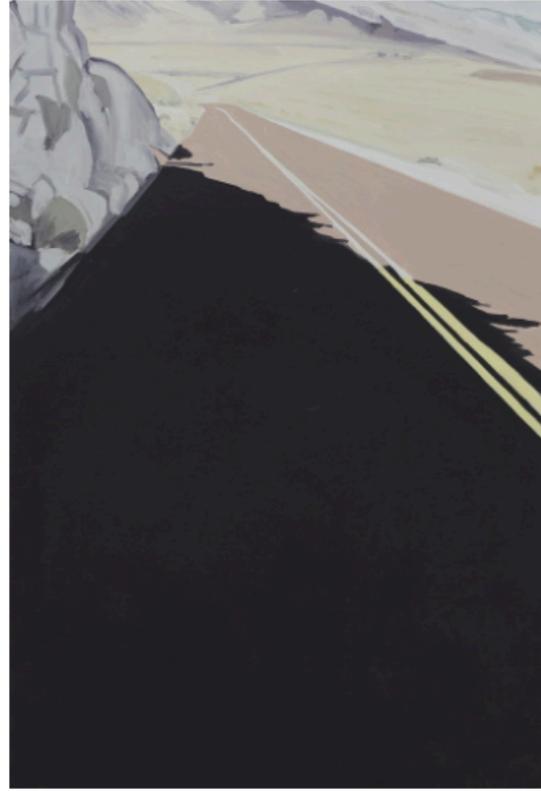
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Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* (1984) is a film about wandering, searching, and, if we're lucky, finding the things we're looking for. The screenplay, adapted by L.M. Kit Carson from a story by Sam Shepard, follows a broken man named Travis Henderson (Harry Dean Stanton) who silently traverses the desert in search of...something. He doesn't know what he wants until he finds it.



Koen van den Broek
Car, 2015
Albertz Benda



Koen van den Broek
Furnace Creek Washington Rd, 2015
Albertz Benda

Paris, Texas is, in many ways, a road movie. There's a great deal of walking and driving, especially since Travis refuses to fly. Naturally, then, the film resonated with Koen van den Broek, the Belgian painter known for his vaguely abstract depictions of lonely highways, urban vistas, and the open road—relatively ordinary, everyday scenes he floods with mystery and drama.

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Wenders' striking film—and Robby Müller's electric cinematography—enlivened and inspired "The Light We Live In," van den Broek's recent solo show at Albertz Benda in New York. Aside from exploring a similar palette, his paintings likewise aim to capture desolate landscapes and the unsettling sense of running away.



Image courtesy of Albertz Benda.

While many of his prior compositions were devoid of human activity, several of his recent works include a solitary character in scenes framed not unlike storyboards for a film. For van den Broek, the artistic development is a game-changer. We're no longer gazing at sweeping yet empty landscapes or architecture; now we're considering man and his relationship to the environment, particularly its manmade elements.

As Julian Elias Bronner wrote in *Artforum*, "Looking at the arid and claustrophobic environments [van den Broek] creates, one can't help but return to Wenders' antihero and his wish to move as far as possible from the constraints of modern life until, to paraphrase the character, every sign of man disappears."

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Koen van den Broek
Dia Beacon, 2015
Albertz Benda

But don't let the exhibition's filmic inspirations or noir-ish atmosphere fool you into thinking van den Broek's practice begins and ends at the cinema. The painter, who holds a degree in architectural engineering, recently took on commissions at a Belgian opera house and the Ballet of Flanders. Like Travis, his practice is always on the move.

"Koen van den Broek: The Light We Live In" was on view at Albertz Benda, New York, Feb. 25–Apr. 9, 2016.

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