

“Prix de Rome 2011”

SMART PROJECT SPACE

Arie Biemondstraat 105-113

May 8–July 24

This exhibition brings together the work of the finalists and nominees for the 2011 Prix de Rome prize for visual arts, thus providing the audience a chance to judge for themselves. The jury for this year’s edition awarded first place to Pilvi Takala for her video installation *Broad Sense*, 2011, which documents her performative intervention at the European Parliament in Brussels. We see Takala sneaking her way around the building without proper clearance and attending various conferences, including one on human rights where a participant brings up the then detention of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. The video’s raw quality does give a truthful account of the experience, although one gets a sense that her presence was merely a minor annoyance to the staid proceedings.

The runner-up, Vincent Vulsma, presents fabric works on the wall and floor titled *Foreign Exchange*, 2011, which have an undeniably pleasing Op art quality. Appropriating Kubika textiles that were originally shown in the Museum of Modern Art’s 1935 “African Negro Art” exhibition, Vulsma raises questions about the importance given to their subsequent documentation by American photographer Walker Evans, whose prints were digitized and fed into a computer-driven Jacquard loom to make these simulacra.

More impactful, however, are the video installations of finalists Ben Pointeker and Priscila Fernandes. In Pointeker’s silent *Splitter*, 2011, a time-lapse technique creates a trippy effect where nature, such as a tall growth of fluttering reeds, outperforms the human actors who remain secondary elements through the cunning use of still images. Fernandes’s *Product of Play*, 2011, shot with a square aspect ratio and shown on a loop, features a five-year-old boy diligently stacking multicolored wooden blocks in a stark white environment, while a seemingly sweet eleven-year-old girl bides her time before she is shown scattering them all over the floor. After laughing about the deed, she sings a section of an aria from Mozart’s *Magic Flute* while the boy is forced to start his task anew, signifying a range of realities from life’s disappointments to a military quagmire.

— Chris Bors



Priscila Fernandes, *Product of Play*, 2011, HD video, 4 minutes 3 seconds. Installation view.