

# HARM WEISTRA

## ENCOUNTERS & CONFRONTATIONS

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**Harm Weistra**'s work tends to radiate a latent disturbance, but always simultaneously a disconcerting beauty. Most of his work is on the one hand touchingly beautiful, on the other hand painfully disruptive. The inherent visual seductiveness, along with the consciousness that his work evokes, complicates the reception of its manifold layers of meaning. By creating disruptive situations and by breaking the passivity of the spectator, his work references avant-garde theory as well as emancipatory movements.

Weistra's work questions the apparently rationally and logically but often culturally entrenched beliefs and opinions. Most of his work demonstrates how life extends beyond its own subjective limits and often tells a story about the effects of an open society with ubiquitous interactions, since the Internet is a dominant platform for (anonymous) human debate.

# JOEY RAMONE

Although storytelling is inherently constructed, the artist's intention is to serve the story as open as possible, without manipulating the viewer in a particular direction. Nevertheless, his stories challenge the binaries we continually reconstruct between self and other, between our own 'savaged' and 'civilized' selves. As a result, the work often leaves the viewers orphaned with a mix of conflicting feelings and thoughts, inviting them to take a position.

Weistra's new video work *Intrinsic Moral Evil* reflects on the ideas about identity as seen by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault rejected the view that a human being has a fixed identity, a true essence beneath the surface. For him 'real identity' is nothing but a way of talking about the self. He considered identity as a temporary construction, expressed in one's interactions with the other. The video plays with this concept, translating these ideas into interactions between the characters. Drawing on the elaboration of Foucault on the idea of the performative self Weistra investigates how life can be seen as a theater in which we play roles, performing in different ways in different social contexts.

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