

Koen van den Broek

ALBERTZ BENDA

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Paris, Texas, Wim Wenders's 1984 character study, opens as Travis Henderson (played by the inimitable Harry Dean Stanton), a rugged yet troubled loner in a desert landscape, and is on, and seemingly appears from, the road to nowhere. Taking this film as a departure, Koen van den Broek's exhibition "The Light We Live In" dives into the same desolate atmosphere. Van den Broek is known for his steep, highly pronounced pictorial planes that depict the magisterial loneliness of unpopulated highway lanes, cityscapes, and curbside detritus—the kind of non-lieux that one may encounter en route to total isolation or escape. The twelve paintings on view here hint at ominous narratives that are part fictional, part autobiographical, while the figures that occasionally manifest in these tableaux feel like intruders.



View of "Koen van den Broek," 2016.

A roughly delineated figure peers from a small field of traffic-light green into the gloam of *Sunset* (all works 2015). The shadow of a crawler tractor in *Requiem* brings to mind the dramatic, fluid lines of Franz Kline or the fathomless blacks of Léon Spilliaert. The mint-colored bushes of *Vanishing Point* and the terra-cotta-red highway in *Furnace Creek Washington Rd* surprise and hold the eye, especially with their eerie passages of dry brush that, at certain moments, become precipitous fields of limitless, abstract space. Van den Broek's casual yet deliberate handling of paint is masterful and mesmerizing—his colors, deeply cinematic. Looking at the arid and claustrophobic environments he creates, one can't help but return to Wenders's 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.

— Julian Elias Bronner

Elias Bronner, Julian. "Koen van den Broek," *Artforum*, March 2016.

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