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Imagine the roaring sounds of a metropolis, of a rush of air blowing the echo of traffic and construction work through its streets and past its buildings. Add a resonating mixture of rhythms, melodies, noises and voices. Think of how the city's liveliness resounds through its streets and alleyways, in parks, past bridges, into buildings, penetrating even into its cracks and cavities. Picture steam blowing out of colossal chimneys, a web of cables and wires supporting railway overpasses and suspended structures. Hear the countless rotating and grinding gears of the traffic, jammed beneath those high-rises. Volumes stacked upon volumes, scraping the polluted skies. This metropolis can never pause. It can never stop pulsing. Winding itself up like a spring or swinging like a pendulum. Forever flexing its muscles.

PEACE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF CONFLICT

Zooming in on
the art of Pier Stockholm
by Gabriel Lester

Imagine this city built on top of ancient cities, composed of annexed towns and villages. Centuries of construction poured into endless layers of urban developments, accidents and corrections. A city located on an ocean shore, cut through solid rock mountains, deserts and river valleys. It sits there boiling and simmering like a stew. Ingredients sliced and marinated in one big pot, brought to a boil. An incubator of edifices, apartment buildings, department stores, offices, vacant lots and relics of a preserved heritage. Observe how it is stacked, pasted, mixed and mingled. How it leaks and seeps, and pops up or drops down into the smog of its eternal turmoil. This city's merciless life cycle demands new sacrifice, ever new blood. As part of it decays, gradually shutting sections down, boarded up, dismantled, squatted and demolished, another part is planned, steadily arises, takes over, hammered and stamped out of the ground.

Imagine the multitude of people inhabiting this city. All caught up in its flux, deformed by its weight, carved by it, and eventually becoming akin, like master and servant. Sitting in cars, bars, bistros and barbershops. See how they pass each other on the pavement, cross at crossings and fuse together in jam-packed public transport. Observe the crowd dressed in garments saturated in colors and messages resembling advertisements. Their bodies carefully shaped and constructed. Literally put together and fabricated. Faces like façades, eyes on the lookout. Limbs covered by ink, tagged like graffiti. See the city slickers, the city dwellers, the citizens of the world hanging out, cruising and crowding the streets. This is how people have merged with the city, disguised as the city, behaving alike, re-inventing fashions and fictions.

Imagine the population of the city, caught up in a rush, chasing time or lost in it. Surrounded by a multitude, but essentially living in isolated communities of shared solitude. See the people swaying between choice, demand and command. Where everything is available and the necessity to discover what one wants, and what one really needs, forever negotiated. There is simply too much to choose from in this overwhelming metropolis. One has to be cautious and alert not to become poisoned or even paralyzed.

This city can sting and bite, and infect one with an array of maladies and illnesses. Infinite variations of viruses, paranoia's and phobias increase the demand for cures and cover-ups. Countless are the servings to unwind, revitalize, detox, work out, relax. See a doctor or pusher. Get fixed, drop pills and chemical solutions. Score dope, have some drinks, some drugs, some kicks.

Imagine seeing some of the artworks in this city. Scattered over squares, streets and parks. Statues of historic heroes, warlords and kings on horses, all firmly planted high up on pedestals. Watch the saints in alcoves, street-side shrines, guarding holy grounds and sacred structures. See the mythical figures, the gods and half gods, depicted in the heat of the moment, surrounded by angels, nymphs and fairies, battling dragons, demons and hounds. Big columns and monoliths marking roundabouts. Memorials commemorating battles, lost lives and disasters. Add modern and contemporary articulations, symbolic shapes and associations, sensual experiences and all sorts of translations. Wrought metal and steel gestures bolted together. State of the art, urban interventions, sculptured wall paintings, lights punctuating architecture and so called radical or social disruptions.

Imagine the artists of this city, streetwise and resilient. Observing hidden logic, obscured connections and frictions. The artists of this metropolis recognize each other and spot who is who. They seem comfortable with communicating in specific terminology. A language only known to the initiated. There they are, the academics, the hipsters and in-crowd, the cultural elite, outlining codes, conditions and etiquettes. Witness how they understand the artworks, shaped out of concepts, copies and appropriations. Hear how they scrutinize and criticize. Judging context and pretext and seeming to know exactly when history is being made. It is themselves they are looking for and hope to recognize, as they praise and forsake the art and the city, which have fostered inspirations and expressions, with an array of both tragedies and the festivities.

Imagine not knowing the artwork of Pier Stockholm, an artist whose name invites one on a journey. The first introduction is made at an opening of an exhibition at a gallery stuck in the plinth of a high-rise, somewhere downtown. Having just embarked on an imaginary voyage, now visiting the Venice of the North, the trip is redirected when it is mentioned that Pier was born in Lima and educated in Sao Paulo before settling in Paris. "Have you ever been to Stockholm?" he asks, adding that he has actually recently been a resident of Sweden's capital. He points out that some of what is exhibited has either been made

or thought up there. After a short pause Pier might offer to show you around and elaborate on some of the inspiration with which his life in the city has provided him.

Imagine having the opportunity to see all of Stockholm's works and hearing all his ideas at once. It would be a lengthy procession, filled with the roaring sounds of a metropolis, echoes of traffic and construction work; a resonating mixture of rhythms, melodies, noises and voices. Observe how his buildings are about to collapse, battered by the violence of passing time and its compulsive self-mutilation. See how roots, twigs and branches grow mercilessly through its cracks and cavities. It is like watching his demons haunting houses, escaping final exorcism by ever repossessing new surfaces, volumes and bodies. With a closer look, notice his smaller gestures, where that what distinguishes people, that what creates character, is exactly what punctuates the works. A pallet and vocabulary created out of scars, marks, character trades and deviations.

Imagine becoming Pier Stockholm, whose imagination is at once liberating and the cause of an abundant burden. Forever navigating through what he imagines is heaven, purgatory and hell. Dwelling in the labyrinths of his city and city life. Mapping it out, finding odd locations and unnoticed perspectives. At play with its construction, its equilibrium, at times frustrating its balance, weighing it, provoking and trying to re-negotiate. It is like learning to look through the eyes of someone who walks the streets uninterrupted, always aware of what is going on around him. Understanding how and when to walk, look, speak, jump, hit and run. It will become clear what it feels like to synchronize with the capital, knowing when to be at the right place and at the right time, and learning to recognize where to hide, hunt and gather.

Imagine being Pier Stockholm, an artist one-man band. Having gathered a repertoire of compositions, rhythms and harmonies. Tune up, look around and focus. The city has set the stage, the lights are lit, the cables connected, the sound system checked. Enjoy the point of view of a front man. Look around and see where you are, standing in a busy street at lunchtime or trying on a shirt in a fashion boutique. Draw diagonal lines through it all. Memorize the details and particulars. It has all got to be remembered and kept moving, chased down, brought out, no matter how. Eventually you will know every single of the seven sins, as you have addressed them each a day at a time. Sometimes wearing them like garments. Burdened by dreams. Flaunting the new look. Trying to keep the peace, in a city built of liveliness, beauty and endless conflicts.

Gabriel Lester (Amsterdam 1972) started his artistic endeavor with music, stumbled into literature, studied cinema and finally became a visual artist. Lester's many interests and expertise's explain the themes, methods and nature of his present (art-) work. Most of his films, performances, architecture and spatial installations have an implicit narrative layer, strong cinematic influences, sequential constructions and an obvious sense of rhythm.