

Portfolio
Sophie Nys

selection

WIELS

12.09.2020-10.01.2021

Group show



Bank, 2020
wood, varnish, tabacco, 70 x 90 x 156 cm

Spittoon, 2020
wood, 12 x 18 x 33 cm

WIELS, Van Volxemlaan 354, 1190 Brussel

WIELS

Risquons-Tout

text

Risquons-Tout, which translates as Risk all, explores the potential of risk in relation to innovation. In an era increasingly marked by digital processes, how can anything new or unknown emerge when prediction algorithms protect us from confronting uncertainty and unpredictability? Such algorithms shape opinions and filter us into digital bubbles where we only encounter what is already known and “liked”. The growing influence of machine intelligence is accompanied by an increasing conformity of thought. The artists and thinkers invited for Risquons-Tout challenge this by venturing into territories of the unknown and the uncharted. The exhibition explores how innovation and creativity can emerge from attitudes that defy the norm. Risk is then a matter of passing beyond the boundaries that limit the mobility of thought, ideas, or people in an age when the internet potentially provides unlimited access to all knowledge, human and non-human. The title of the exhibition is borrowed from the name of a hamlet on the French-Belgian border. Risquons-Tout is, like most borderlands, characterized by a history of passing limits, of bridging, crossing and smuggling. Smuggling is a form of crosscultural infiltration that eludes the law, an unauthorized passage or displacement, a way to encounter new canons, alternative rules and hybrid codes. The exhibition engages with this quest for unboundedness, a new openness, of breaking out of safe bubbles, and explores the dynamics of transition, mixing and creolisation that occur in in-between places such as borderlands. It presents work by 38 artists of diverse origin who are located in the Eurocore region, as Belgium and its immediate neighbours are labelled. Its aim is to break the boundaries that limit contemporary thought and action, and to embrace the unpredictable and the non-normative as ways of triggering imagination and ideas.

Risquons-Tout

Works



**Ana (Belgisch rechts trekken), Herr Eberle (Belgisch rechts duwen), 2020
metal, paint, 75 x 204 x 27 cm**

Risquons-Tout

text

The projects of Sophie Nys are derived from vernacular customs translate into everyday objects. She relies on an extensive archive of (historical) imagery to unpack their use, usefulness and signification. By questioning these objects, she mobilises the latent meaning of forms and symbols. For Risquons-Tout, Nys created a group of works that reflect or oppose the limit or norm in all of its sociological, political or architectural implications. Doors built according to the model of the German industrial standards (DIN-norm) are conflated with the exclusion of the sexual deviant, the jester or the vagabond. Nys also integrates the concept of the tally stick, an ancient system of (debt) notation connected both to banking and to notions of guilt and default.

Risquons-Tout

Works



Kerfstok (reproduction), 2020
off-set print, variable dimensions

Galerie Greta Meert

7.11.2019-18.1.2020

Solo show



Two revolutions a day, 2019
Exhibition view

Galerie Greta Meert, Vaartstraat 13, 1000 Brussel

Galerie Greta Meert

Etui of the private individual

text

Used to measure, keep, and indicate time, clocks and timekeeping tools are amongst the oldest human inventions, they respond to our need for quantifying intervals of time shorter than natural units (day, lunar month, year). Although clocks in public buildings no longer govern the rhythm of daily life the way they once did in schools, factories, churches, the same notion of time remains the basis of socioeconomic order worldwide. In juridical matters, time also gages the relationship between how grievous a misdeed is deemed, and the sentence that ensues for the accused individual.

Composed of twelve Swiss made wall clocks, the piece titled *Two revolutions a day* was originally intended as an art project for the most recent facilities of Zurich's criminal police. Ny's modified clocks borrow the corporate identity of the Kriminalpolizei by using the signature bright orange colour found on their vehicles. The shape of the black index on the dial of the clocks is based on the outline of the artist's third phalange; a reference to antiquity where this finger represented the phallus and was therefore named *digits impudicus*, which became known as a symbol of contempt in many cultures.

As "private individuals", our use of everyday objects results in traces left on the belongings of the domestic interiors we inhabit. "To dwell means to leave traces" (1). The majority of these traces are also the fingerprints used by the police during investigations. Still today, fingerprints are the most fundamental and reliable "tools" used to identify individuals. Oftentimes, artworks tend to escape these repeated manipulations, "they are not subject to the use of living creatures" (2) and like the moving arms of clock behind glass, they reside traceless in their Gehäuse as if unaffected by touch and the passage of time.

Galerie Greta Meert

Etui of the private individual

text

In 1940, German Jewish philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin committed suicide on the border between France and Spain in fear of being captured by Nazis. In 1934, under the pseudonym Detlef Holz, Benjamin published an essay titled “Auf die Minute” (On the Minute) in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. In this text, he described his first experience in a radio studio. By 1934, the German national socialist government had gained full control over radio broadcasting stations, and each management board had to include a representative directly delegated by the interior minister to supervise the programming.

Tied around the column of the gallery, *Das Boot ist voll* (The Boat is Full) borrows the title of a 1981 drama set during WWII where a group of six refugees attempt to cross border into “neutral” Switzerland. In this movie, a local policeman orders the deportation of the newly arrived immigrants who tried to pose as a German family in a small village.

(1) Walter Benjamin, “Paris, the capital of the 19th century.”, p. 104. (Massachusetts, Harvard, 2008), and Hand Teerds, “Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, and the Importance of the Interior.”, 2016.

(2) Hannah Arendt, “The Human Condition”, Chicago, Chicago University, 1958.

Etui of the private individual

works



Two revolutions a day, 2019
Time piece, 40 x 40 x 6 cm
Edition of 12

Etui of the private individual

works



Das Boot ist voll, 2019
Appenzeller belt, 140 x 5 x 0,3 cm

Etui of the private individual

works



Kellerloch (Roter Mainsandstein), 2019
Forged iron, paint, stone, 15 x 50 x 70 cm

Kiosk

27.4.19-14.6.2019

Solo show



Odeon, 2019
Colour print, 56 x 46 cm

Kiosk, Louis Pasteurlaan 2, 9000 Gent
Curated by Liene Aerts and Wim Waelput

Kiosk

Family Nexus

text

With the Family Nexus exhibition, artist Sophie Nys and KIOSK will be working together for the second time. KIOSK invited Nys in 2008, when still located in the outdoor pavilion. For that occasion, Nys purchased a metal time capsule, put the history of the exhibition space into the capsule and buried it underground. That capsule is still there, invisible, but at the same time, also permanent and unmistakably an intervention. It was also an example of the way in which Sophie Nys works with the specific history and architecture of a given place. This is once again true of her new exhibition at KIOSK, in which she attempts to unite a number of both minimal and monumental interventions, unique and serial objects, personal acquaintances and obscure figures from 16th-century prints, rural landscapes close to home and urban monuments, all under a single denominator.

Sophie Nys already intrigued us by giving her exhibition at KIOSK the title Family Nexus, together with an introductory image of chewing gum sticking to a knee and an invitation that she has transformed into a little book. That card in book form tells the story of four people, called Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

It is with such personal gestures that Sophie Nys introduces us to the interrelated works that she has brought together for this exhibition. Once we have entered KIOSK, we walk into a web that she has created from intrigues, connected and unconnected, where no position at all is neutral. Nys is interested in the relationships that evolve between her works, as well as in relation to the space and the visitor, and draws a parallel with a praxis or a household in which a set of unspoken rules and roles determine the dynamics. The title, Family Nexus, is understood in psychology to mean a vision that is shared by the majority of family members, often unconsciously and for several generations long, and is upheld in the context of events both within the family and in its relationship to the world.

Who is it who is playing the role of Nobody, the household's so-called 'identified patient', or the scapegoat, and which pots and pans has slipped through this character's fingers? Although all of these characters belong to the same family, the Family Nexus, they all seem to be pointing the

Family Nexus

work



Niche (Nidwalden), 2019
Wood, 39 x 64 x 8,5 cm

Kiosk Family Nexus

text

finger at one another. The one is more someone, more or less unique, or dependent, or leaves a larger or smaller imprint of his or her presence, than the other. The smallest of the community, made by hand, supports the largest, industrially produced element. The others try to get a foothold somewhere in between these caricatured extremes.

Adapted to a new context and scale, existing furniture designs or industrial objects become expressions of a personal thought, characters in Sophie Nys' own story. This game of observing, rehashing and deduplicating is characteristic of Nys' oeuvre, and in the course of time, as does every individual family, this collection of related works displays a conscious or unconscious nexus. The arrangement that results is her (self-)critical and humorous way of telling something about her own artistic practice, the relations that we undertake with one another, as well as about institutional mechanisms.

Family Nexus

works



Identified patient (Eiffel), 2019
Varnished wood, painted metal, 57 x 30 x 27 cm

For Nobody, 2019
PE-net, variable dimensions

Family Nexus

work



Manikin, 2019
Yellow pine, 135 x 55 x 30 cm

Exhibition

Guimarães

13.5.18-14.7.2018

Solo show



Zeugnis (Waagner-Biro), 2018

Chocolate on embossed aluminum foil, 29 x 54 cm

Guimarães, Linke Wienzeile 36, AT- 1060 Wien

Curated by Hugo Canoilas, Christoph Meier and Nicola Pecoraro

Guimarães Not a Shoe

text

I am walking into Guimarães, the space in Vienna where Sophie Nys has an exhibition up called Not a Shoe. I see a video screen hanging in the center of what looks like a cross between a stable and the basement of a power plant, all cleaned and left in situ. I then participated in watching a film in which we are taken to the summer house of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. We see, in addition to the black and white moving images, one still of Heidegger sitting, with his “black hat”, enjoying his time and looking directly into the camera. Thanks to voiceover we learn early on where we are, and who this man is. Also, we are quickly aware of a certain opinion of the narrator which points to the quick and easy pseudo-intellectual fetishism of Heidegger, “that you are served Heidegger before the main course”. The film made by Sophie Nys maps out the edges out of a certain joie de vivre wastefulness that is positioned as necessary allegedly within a petite-bourgeoise community.

In a certain way, Nys uses Heidegger as an archetype and litmus test from which we can derive the tide of the neoliberal, the glossing over, and suffice to say, what is Heidegger meaning anyway? While watching I became helplessly aware of my own will to power and also on the flip side, my impressionability. “The shoe is not a shoe”. Really?

Practice-wise, Nys collected the content of the video durationally over some years. The final edit was brought to completion to her vision at Guimarães. However, this is not all, after seeing this short piece, one does not have the impression of having watched a short video, but rather one has the impression of having been moved to both sides of an equation: that of the innocent and that of the oppressor. Space is lit in Plato’s cave sort of way for digesting the awareness of how we are easily sold on ideas, maybe Heidegger’s maybe others’, such that we are rendered fragile. The final montage of the film takes us away from the house and into a long sweeping passageway, and ends with a distant almost skeleton-like Cross.

Climbing the stairs and in a state voided, I see a napkin-sized picture of three men, their backs to us, a pastel 70’s colour palette, almost a Hockney composition. The image is small, it’s found and it finds us. The three men, equally spaced, are facing into a swimming pool, and I learned from Canoilas that they are urinating into another void and another territory where the subconscious (if it exists) is triggered, as in the cave – archetypal arrangements of the symbolic. The peeing as a multitude questions participation. The shoe may represent certain movements.

Exhibition

Not a Shoe

Work



Frottage (Hugo, Christoph, Nicola), 2018
Frottage and urine on card, 100 x 70 cm

Not a Shoe

text

One often has the feeling that to qualify as intellectual certain things need to happen. I am not sure about that. But I agree with Sontag when she wrote that we do not need a “hermeneutics of art, we need an erotics of art”. I brought up this idea with Hugo Canoilas, one part of the triptych that runs Guimarães. With Not a Shoe, Nys gives us an erotics of an exhibition. All the senses are triggered one by one, the hidden pulls to the perceiver, the intellect is sexualized and so on. The physical is muted and the first feeling is rendered dissonant within a complicated harmony. Seeing this image of three men after watching the film – with which I was already somehow destroyed – brought me closer to an uncomfortable place. Canoilas then led me into a third room where I saw on the wall three golden rectangles at chest height mounted, the size of one man’s torso and head. Within each, one can see an imprint of the top of a water fountain (an ongoing subject of formalist research from Nys) and the marks of water. I learned from Canoilas that Nys had him and the other two in his unit pee onto the Golden paper, each one, one for one.

At this point, I had the impression that I was brought really to my knees, that I was being asked then to also look down on them, the facilitators, but also look up to them: another level of what I had been asked to do with Heidegger, and then the little photograph which seemed so big with its content. Where was I? Do I play a role? Where is my power? The shoe forces the foot. Canoilas and I discussed extensively this experience I was having and I attributed it to Nys’ working on a certain level: gearing her practice such that we are attuned to what would be the empirical concept of Kant. For Kant, cognitive knowledge has its territory, the concept has a domain, but the empirical concept does not have the same parameters of demarcation. It has a domicilium, a resting place, a home of sorts. It is of itself there. I think the big impact for me in Nys’ work and within the arrangement of elements at Guimarães space is the awareness of being inside of the machinery of the domicilium but not being able to position it or myself, and this is what Kant meant with the use of the word “empirical.” It is there by itself and at home. From every side and on the semiotic, physical, emotional and visual level, we are moved within this exhibition yet we cannot get away. It still echoes.

Not a Shoe

text

When Canoilas and I left the room of golden rectangles my attention was brought to a window I hadn't seen when climbing the narrow curving stairs before. On it was lying a foil that had been protruded to read a sentence in German: "The factory owner and the management behaved correctly." While Nys had been researching the space of Guimarães and considering how her work would be developed there, she contacted the relevant factory (active between the two World Wars) and asked about how they were treating their workers. To this inquiry, they responded placatingly and this sentence is printed on this foil, next to it lying melted chocolate, which they had sent her to thank her for her consideration – the email was written by the director, not one of the workers from the factory.

Descending again into the space where the film had been screened, I wanted to watch it again, and I did, and I was bringing myself again to the point where I felt emptied out. What is colloquially so fabulous about Heidegger is how he is bringing one out of their complexity and detail and into the inversion of Spinoza's imminence. However, I think that the acts within the exhibition: the attention to detail, the intuitive layering, the playing on the archetypal, the use of isolation, the use of explicit language, are choices which Nys' makes to bring us into a place of honesty, questionability, and a necessary fear which stems from the awareness of the brute political fact of our very existence on this planet, and therein, our connection to a system from which we cannot emancipate ourselves fully. Baudrillard wrote that "desert is an ecstatic critique of culture," and I would say that Not a Shoe is an ecstatic critique of "empowerment". Breaking up is a form of getting back together. I still read Foucault. I encourage visitors to find the layers mapped out by the artist and Guimarães within the proposition Not a Shoe.

Josseline Black

Not a Shoe

Work



Keyholder, 2018
plexiglass, 3.5 x 5 cm
Edition of 100

Exhibitions

Art Basel Parcours

Group show



Naturhistorisches Museum, Augustinerstrasse 2, CH-4051 Basel
Curator: Samuel Leuenberger

Parcours

11.06-18.06.17

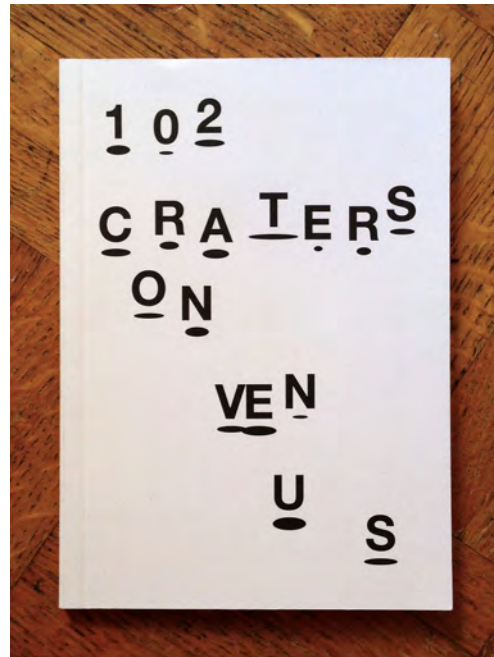
Text

The admittance of women to the University of Basel was a rather belated development; it wasn't until 1890 that women were permitted to study there. The first time a woman became an associate professor was in 1928, the appointment of a woman to a bona fide professorship wasn't until 1964. The historic lecture room of the Basel University is decorated with 100 paintings depicting former professors and researchers. The last portrait was added to the gallery in 1914, guaranteeing the palpable absence of the female scientist.

The museum building erected by Melchior Berri not only provided exhibition space for various municipal collections but was also used by the university. The venerable portraits of professors in the auditorium do not fool us into believing that for centuries it had any real significance beyond the immediate region – apart from exceptional phenomena such as the Bernoulli dynasty of mathematicians. Most of the professors were from the 'better' Basel families, but it would be wrong to deny that the most gifted sons of those families rarely became academics but had to take over their fathers' trading companies instead.

Parcours

Installation views



102 Craters on Venus, 2017
off-set on paper, 14,85 x 10,5 x 0,5 cm

Exhibitions

Parcours

Installation view



Footnote to a fountain, 2017
plastic, variable size

Parcours

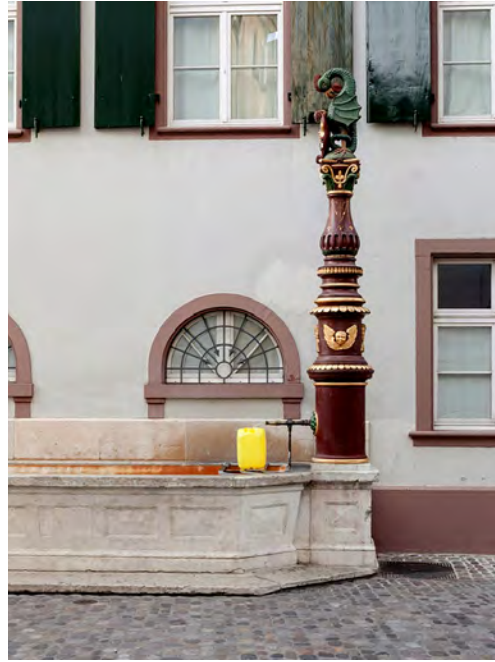
Text

Basel has one of the oldest documented water-supply systems in Europe. From 1260 onwards, water was transported in long wooden pipes from Bruderholz to the top of the Münsterhügel (Minster Hill), from where it fed numerous public and private fountains. That there were so many of them was emphasised in particular in the description of the city written by the Italian humanist Piccolomini in 1439. Fountains were not only a necessity; they were objects of prestige too, which is why they were elaborately designed and decorated, one example being the Pisoni Fountain on Münsterplatz. It was the first one to have been manufactured in Solothurn, as the limestone there is particularly suitable for fountain basins.

Since the end of the 19th century when indoor plumbing began providing water to Basel's residents, the purpose of the city's public fountains has been for the most part, decorative. Potable water nevertheless continues to flow infinitely from their nozzles. To emphasize their original purpose, Footnote to a Fountain depicts jerry cans at several fountains throughout the city, commemorating these urban springs as social hubs, and paying tribute to the perpetual source of free potable water, accessible to all.

Parcours

Installation views



Exhibitions

Maniera
17.11.16-21.01.2017

Duo show



Tafel/Stoel (Wolo), 2016
yellow pine, 75 x 111 x 111 cm

Maniera, 27 place de la Justice, B-1000 Brussels

Maniera Onkelhaft

Text

The 9th edition of MANIERA consists of seven familiar objects designed by Sophie Nys, whose artistic practice is based on elaborate research on (art) history, with a focus on the use of power, domination and sociology. Nys explores these themes from a critical stance towards the paternalistic patterns still present in our contemporary society. However, her approach does not derive necessarily from a feminist viewpoint and is always carried out with a touch of humour. She works in different media, ranging from photography to video, drawing and sculpture. She often appropriates daily objects and situations to defamiliarise them in the new context of her artistic creations. Yet with the extensive historical research as a basis, Nys avoids being linked only to conceptualism. Her practice covers a broader area of cultural production and exposes various layers of a theme, enhancing her critical position towards the social structures she investigates.

When invited by MANIERA, Nys' approach remained true to her artistic practice. She created seven pieces, thus making a family of objects, which are based on photographs or discoveries of existing objects she was intrigued by. Nys calls the series Onkelhaft (Avuncular). This choice is very conscious of the ambiguity it implies: the closeness of the uncle, which sometimes also indicates the threat of abuse by the trusted figure. Nys also gives a name to this imaginary uncle and firmly adds it to almost all the objects' titles. The name refers to the location of her studio in Wollishofen, which derived from Wolo; the name of an Alemann who belonged to the tribe that crossed Rhine to settle amidst Roman ruins in the 5th century AD. Nys' studio is where all pieces for MANIERA 09 were conceived and made. By giving almost all of them the second name, or perhaps their surname, of Wolo, Nys brings the objects together and also makes the space of her production part of the edition.

The series comprises different pieces for various uses. Although it is the least defined in function, the most practical piece is perhaps Alexa, which is a simple, low piece made in untreated yellow pine. Three wooden plates are connected to make an H-shaped object. It has no pre-defined direction, can be turned round and used from all sides. Nys had made this piece prior to the Onkelhaft family, simply by using remnants she found in her workshop, without having a specific function in mind. Later, she became intrigued to see how often and differently this object could be used: to store books, as a seat, a side table, a footrest, a puppet bed, a tiny theatre, a pedestal... The piece effortlessly acquired its character as a piece of furniture and eventually became part of MANIERA 09, to be produced as an unlimited edition.

Two other pieces combined in one object are Tafel / Stoel (Wolo), which shares its materiality with Alexa. The piece derives from the hutch table, which dates back to the 18th century and was in frequent use in colonial USA. By pivoting the table-top vertically on two of the four trestles that support it, the table becomes a chair with a high back rest (or the chair becomes a table with storage underneath).

Onkelhaft

Text

The straightforward nature of the piece is striking, both in form and usage. Though visually reminiscent of the pragmatic and minimal Shaker furniture, the piece is quite complex. As a chair it is a very conspicuous piece of furniture and is reminiscent of a throne, while as a table it is archetypal in its appearance. Nys tried to read the proportions from the photographs of hutch tables and defined her version by means of these images. The artist determined the proportions of the piece by its use and they differ from the historical references, hence *Tafel / Stoel (Wolo)* becomes a contemporary piece on its own right.

Nys used the same method to design the *Bank (Wolo)*, a narrow settle she had seen in a digital image and which was described as 'primitive 18th-century bench'. The difference between the digital image and the final object lies not only in the interpretation of the proportions, but also in the detailing. The seat and arms of *Bank (Wolo)* have softly rounded end surfaces; these derived from the first prototype, which Nys made by deconstructing the sort of bench typically used in German beer-gardens. The formal simplicity of this furniture is in the same line as the hutch table. We again see associations with Shaker furniture and colonial interiors in the USA. Made in yellow pine, hand-painted opaquely with brown woodstain and provided with a thick, but narrow leather strap as a back rest along its whole length, in its form *Bank (Wolo)* resembles church and farmyard settles. The choice of colour for the wood-stain refers to the traditional interiors found in the Swiss mountains where the artist has often spent time since she settled in Zurich some years ago. Mainly because of this colour, and despite its elegant proportions, the overall appearance of *Bank (Wolo)* also has a certain heaviness. Here the opaqueness of the paint plays an important role; it is a method of finishing that Nys also repeatedly uses in her artworks. As part of her 2010 installation *The Drunkard's Cloak*, she painted all the objects alluding to the pillories she documented across Belgium in an opaque bright yellow; a colour that is historically seen as the colour of shame and betrayal. By doing this, she not only defamiliarised the artefacts and gave them an ironically cheerful appearance, but the pieces were also sealed in their own history, captured inside their coating. Yet while the thick layers of yellow paint gave the artefacts an almost elastic appearance, in *Bank (Wolo)* the grain of the yellow pine can still be seen through three layers of stain. The importance of painting reappears in another work Nys made for *The Drunkard's Cloak*, by using the facsimile of an anti-Semitic newspaper from the WWII period as floor protection while painting the furniture for *Onkelhaft*. The artist deliberately stains this method of public humiliation found in recent European history.

The fifth piece in the series is called *Hoekkastje (Wolo)*, which is a small, triangular cabinet to be mounted in a corner. The design is an interpretation of a similar object the artist encountered in Lebanon. It is made out of yellow pine and painted the same way as the *Bank (Wolo)*. Due to its triangular shape, *Hoekkastje (Wolo)*

Onkelhaft

Text

visually loses its physical depth once mounted in the corner. Instead, it has a front with a small door kept shut by a typical Swiss window handle. As in Bank (Wolo), the three coats of brown woodstain give weight to the small piece. The proportions of the object also suggest some secretive behaviour, perhaps as an intimate space to hide personal belongings. As a container for small objects its presence is unobtrusive yet specific. The modest scale of Hoekkastje (Wolo) is repeated in another member of the Onkelhaft family, namely the Kniebank (Wolo). This piece, however, is less clear in its use. It derives from an object Nys saw documented by the product designer Jasper Morrison at the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich. The item was possibly made to protect the knees while cleaning the floor, but it is hard to define precisely how it could be used. Nys also builds this object with her own measurements and materials. The material is European oak, a very common wood sort used in vast amounts after WWII to provide European households with decent, modest furniture. Nys stretches a thick piece of leather over the small oak structure. This object, extremely comfortable for the knees, might invite one to kneel for prayer as much as to clean a floor. The artist plays with this ambiguity and leaves the function of Kniebank (Wolo) open to the interpretation of the user, thereby showing her interest in exploring the boundaries between sculpture and furniture.

Onkelhaft is completed by Spiegel (Wolo), an ordinary mirror held in two slats of brown-painted yellow pine on its horizontal sides. This piece is a version of the mirror Nys has in her Wollishofen studio. The mirror has been the constant witness to the pieces in the making and thus also joins the series. Even though Nys named the pieces in Dutch, her native language, the German language plays also a very significant role in understanding the work. The artist often uses German words to describe her main interests in making this group of simple objects, which are 'verwandt' (related) to each other and describe the 'Verwandte' (relatives) of the family. All the pieces are hand-made and straightforward, for the simple Alemannic 'all men'-way of living. Nys enjoys reflecting on objects and furniture, and her goal is to perfect... the art of being happy among 'small things', within the space of one's own four walls, between chest and bed, table and chair, dog and cat and flowerpot... (From *The Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt, 1958).

Exhibitions

Maniera Onkelhaft

Work



Kniebank (Wolo), 2016
oak, leather and metal, 7,5 x 46 x 21 cm

Exhibitions

Maniera Onkelhaft

Work



Hoekkastje (Wolo), 2016
yellow pine, paint and metal, 33 x 27,7 x 27,7 cm

Exhibitions

Haus Konstruktiv

24.09-04.10.2015

Group Show



Monument des ongles (left hand), 2015
canvas, acryl paint, dried grass, 80 x 120 x 10 cm

Haus Konstruktiv, Selnaustrasse 25, CH-8001 Zürich

Haus Konstruktiv Werkschau Kanton Zürich

Text

Bei der genaueren Betrachtung einer Liste von Unfällen, die sich 19. Jahrhundert in einer der zahlreichen Textilfabriken in Mulhouse ereigneten, stellte Sophie Nys fest, dass die meisten Verletzungen Hände, insbesondere Finger, betrafen.

Beeindruckt von diesen Zahlen hat die Künstlerin fünf Gemälde für eine Ausstellung angefertigt, welche die ersten Fingerglieder einer Hand darstellen. Die Leinwände wurden zu grossen Taschen in Form von Fingern genäht und mit Haaren der Bewohner von Altkirch gestopft, eingesammelt bei Friseuren der Stadt. Für die Werkschau Kanton Zürich 2015 fertigte Nys die zweite Hand des Denkmals an, füllte diese aber mit getrocknetem Gras, geschnitten am Messeplatz in Basel.

Exhibitions

Swiss Art Awards 15.06-21.06.2015

Group Show



Buch Livre Libro, 2015
Offset, 21 x 14,8 x 1 cm

Congres Center, Messeplatz 21, CH-4058 Basel
Photo: Guadalupe Ruiz

Swiss Art Awards Buch Livre Libro

Text

A chair turns into a table. An artists' book becomes a collector's item.

A brand for budget products used for an item of, one might say, luxury.

Her book, the medium that Nys often uses so as to compile collections, adopts the identity of and simultaneously systematically catalogues all existing M-Budget products. These products qualify as M-Budget only if they already exist and are chosen by their high demand from the range at Migros.

No luxury, only the essential. It is somehow peculiar to see all these products together – the banality of our everyday needs. To make a M-Budget book, then, is rather absurd. Though arguable, an artist book is not essential at all, not for our livelihood in any case. With the use of the M-Budget logo, Nys thus introduces a paradox in to the object, the paradox of a conceptual, designed, “unique” art object that has been made with a logo otherwise identified with affordable, mass and standardized products. The aspect of monetary value is played out against a cultural one.

Exhibitions

Stiftung Binz39 12.06-11.07.2015

Solo Show



Stiftung Binz39, Sihlquai 133, CH-8005 Zürich
Photos: Gregory Polony

Stiftung Binz39

Sitzen ist das neue Rauchen

Text

Ein Buch steht auch in der Ausstellung «Sitzen ist das neue rauchen» im wahren Sinne des Wortes im Zentrum. Um die Architektur und die Struktur des Ortes zu betonen hat Sophie Nys die Verbindungstür zwischen den zwei Ausstellungsräumen der BINZ39 in eine Mini-Bibliothek verwandelt, in der mehrere Exemplare des Künstlerbuches Sitzen ist das neue rauchen zu finden sind. BesucherInnen sind eingeladen, ein Exemplar durchzublättern oder mit nach Hause zu nehmen.

Vor circa einem Jahr sass Sophie Nys regelmässig in der Kunsthalle Zürich, wo sie als Ausstellungsaufsicht arbeitete. Aus ihren wechselnden Sitzperspektiven konnte die Künstlerin minutiös die dort gezeigte Ausstellung betrachten. An jedem Arbeitstag dokumentierte sie diese fotografisch aus ihren verschiedenen Aufsichtsorten. Die daraus entstandenen Bilder hat sie anschliessend mit dem entsprechenden Datum versehen und im Buch Sitzen ist das neue rauchen zusammengefügt.

Die gesammelten Aufnahmen betonen die Besonderheit von besucherleeren Ausstellungsräumen und stellen das Ausstellungswesen, die Funktion des Publikums und den Status des Aufsichtspersonals in Frage.

Erst die Anwesenheit von Besuchern und Besucherinnen lässt eine Ausstellung und ihre Aufsichten existieren. In Abwesenheit von Publikum kann das Aufsichtspersonal zu Forschern, Poeten, Lesern und Photographen, werden.

Wie John Cage mit seinem Stück 4'33" uns lehrte, dass Stille per se nicht existiert, so werden BesucherInnen von Sophie Nys' Ausstellung auf die Unmöglichkeit der "Bildlosigkeit" aufmerksam gemacht. Auch den weissen Klappstühlen, die als Sitzmöglichkeit für das Publikum dienen, wird eine ähnliche Funktion zugewiesen. Sie sind aus Leinwänden gemacht und werden im Laufe der Ausstellung durch die von BesucherInnen hinterlassenen Spuren „bemalt“. Die Klappstühlen tragen die Namen von Sophie Nys' Arbeitskollegen in der Kunsthalle.

Sophie Nys versteht Bücher im Besonderen und printed matter im Allgemeinen als eine eigenartige und einzigartige Ausstellungsform: Sie bieten einen anderen Raum, welcher sich den Regeln des realen Raums entzieht, und schaffen so neue Ausstellungsmöglichkeiten, mit denen Nys sich gerne konfrontiert.

Exhibitions

Stiftung Binz39

Sitzen ist das neue Rauchen

Installation view



Sitzen ist das neue rauchen, 2015
220 Bücher, Regal
40,5 x 27 x 120,5 cm

Exhibitions

Stiftung Binz39

Sitzen ist das neue Rauchen

Installation view



Sharon & Michael, 2015
Leinwand, Farbe, Metall
60 x 25 x 30 cm

Exhibitions

Crac Alsace

01.03-17.05.2015

Solo Show



Crac Alsace, Rue du Chateau 18, F-68130 Altkirch
Curator: Elfi Turpin

Crac Alsace

Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Text

Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett...here I am endlessly repeating this sentence which is the title of this solo show of Sophie Nys, as if the better to grasp its mechanics and substance. For this statement, which not only acts as an image, informs both the challenges of Sophie Nys' work in general and the preoccupations at work in this exhibition in particular. Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, which literally means "a table without bread is a board", is the adaptation of a Russian saying which deals with both the object in its simplest material apparatus and the history it raises. Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, and, you see, the words are pleasant to utter, is therefore this relentless conceptual game, at once economical and rudimentary, which addresses a whole swathe of history, that of bread and its absence, and by extension the history of the crises and famines that have traversed Europe.

For if Sophie Nys is interested in history, and how it is manufactured and represented, she invariably approaches it through sources-objects, archives, documents-where she inquisitively observes the negative space, almost the unconscious and the repressed, operating by association of ideas and formal analogies. So, strictly speaking, it is not a matter of bread in this show. Rather, it involves its absence in periods of crisis, for example during the wars that have raged in this part of the world-Altkirch and its surroundings, where the art centre is located today-and the alternative recipes or practices which the inhabitants of this part of the world have managed to invent.

In particular, Sophie Nys has focused on a certain number of objects and works which

have to do with the region's industrial past and more especially on the figure of the worker-a social and political body which she relates to documents coming from other geographical, historical and artistic fields. In this way, and for the first time in an exhibition, the artist brings in her original sources-at once a source of inspiration for her work, and a source in the historical sense of the term-which she has collected in various museums and sites in the region, and which she updates in arrangements and assemblages of critical gestures and forms.

So the body of the Schweissdissi, "the man who sweats" will rub shoulders indirectly with the figures of Patti Smith, Joseph Beuys and Carl Andre, whose 120 heat-resistant bricks arranged in a rectangle will encounter the damaged fingers of workers whose hands are caught in the production tool, which they never laid their hands on, which will meet the sad gaze of Dumbo, a tiny navvy, the underground journeys of Herculean miners, an industrial painting, a punitive sculpture, ingenious tables-cum-chairs or clandestine popular practices, and together produce unlikely sequences of events.

- History without critique is inert; criticism without history is aimless*, said Hal Foster.
- Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett, added Sophie Nys.

* In Marquard Smith, « Polemics, postmodernism, immersion, militarized space: a conversation with Hal Foster ». *Journal of Visual Culture* 3 (3): 320-35, 2004.

Elfi Turpin

Crac Alsace Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Work



In 2012, Sophie Nys bought a photograph of an 18th century water conduit, a veritable American archaeological vestige, discovered in 1915 in a Wall Street basement in New York. The document presents the conduit laid horizontally on some chairs: a strange museum display which the artist borrows to design two sculptures paying homage to the singer Patti Smith.

The musician Patti Smith supported Occupy Wall Street, the protest movement that spoke out against the abuses of capitalism in autumn 2011, by donating a large tent housing the library, The People's Library, based in Zuccotti Park, in the heart of the financial district. On the night of 14-15 November 2011, the

demonstrators were driven out of the park, and with them the library, also known as Fort Patti, which was destroyed.

With Fort Patti II, Sophie Nys presents a large ceramic tube, industrially manufactured, on which she has enameled the sad gaze of Dumbo, a character created by Walt Disney in 1941. The tube is laid on "Navy" chairs, of the Emeco brand—an especially tough model of chair, developed during the Second World War for the US Navy.

Fort Patti II refers as much to the absence of any American archaeological culture as to American imperialism, and its economic and military strategies.

Fort Patti II, 2015
Ceramic, Emeco chairs
250 x 110 x 50 cm

Crac Alsace

Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Work



On the eve of the First World war, the Armory Show—the first major international exhibition of modern art in the USA—opened its doors in New York in 1913. Presenting mainly European and American works of art, the show was divided into 18 octagonal areas made of partitions strangely decorated with garlands offered by the American sculptress, collector and art patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, founder of Whitney Museum in 1931.

Sophie Nys “borrows” a fragment of the structure of the partitions which support a garland made of 120 ceramic pretzels, thus creating a chain of events referring to bread (both to its abundance and to its rationing in periods of conflict), which she thus re-places in an historical and artistic context.

Greenery and Bunting, 2015
Faience, aluminium
240 x 800 x 200 cm

Crac Alsace Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Work



In 2014, Sophie Nys published a newspaper made up of a montage of press cuttings—articles, caricatures, as well as advertisements—documenting the media scandal stirred up in 1976 by the exhibition, at the Tate Gallery in London, of Carl Andre’s historic work entitled *Equivalent VIII*. Acquired by the Tate in 1972, *Equivalent VIII*, which was conceived in 1966, is the arrangement of 120 heat-resistant bricks in a rectangle in two layers.

Sophie Nys sarcastically re-enacts this historic work by wrapping the 120 bricks in pages from her publication. These 120 bricks reproduce the original configuration of Carl Andre’s work.

They are laid on a linoleum floor whose manufacturer had used *Equivalent VIII* in an advertisement boasting about the product’s strength. “Some modern works of art will stand the test of time... and Mondopave flooring will stand a good deal more besides”. Sophie Nys produces an ambiguous gesture by recycling the pages of her newspaper as if she was wrapping up objects or foodstuffs which she then moves about. She wraps up Carl Andre’s historic work in its media reception.

What a load of Rubbish, 2015
Rubber floor, off-set print, foam
66 x 10 x 210 cm

Crac Alsace

Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Work



In September 2014, Sophie Nys put on a performance consisting in covering on foot the distance between Altkirch and Mulhouse (19 km), pulling a 10 metre canvas behind her. Most of the road runs beside the canal linking the Rhone to the Rhine, made in the late 18th century, the main thoroughfare for transport associated with the textile industry. The artist thus followed in the footsteps of the workers, often former country folk whose journey by foot between their home and their work place usually took more than an hour. This 10 metre canvas (industrially woven) is “painted” by the route taken by Sophie Nys.

This canvas, which thus shows the traces of this movement, is mounted on the frames of five camp-beds as if to accommodate the tired bodies of the workers.

Lits de camp, 2015
Canvas, aluminium
180 x 60 x 25 cm

Crac Alsace

Ein Tisch ohne Brot ist ein Brett

Work



By focusing on a document held in the Musée de l'Impression sur Etoffes (Museum of Fabric Prints), listing accidents occurring in one of the many textile factories between 1882 and 1883 in Mulhouse, Sophie Nys observes that most injuries had to do with workers' hands, and more especially their fingers. In that period, and with the thriving textile industry in the south of Alsace, the need for labour created the first major wave of immigrants in the region. The workers, often country folk, came from neighbouring countries, Switzerland and Germany. These factories employed about 12,000 workers working six days a week, up to 15 hours a day. Those extreme conditions gave rise to many acci-

dents and reduced life expectancy in the region. With regard to these statistics, Sophie Nys has made five paintings representing the first five phalanges of a hand. The canvases are in fact stitched so as to make large pockets in the form of phalanges, which are stuffed with the hair of the inhabitants of Altkirch collected from hairdressers in the city. Sophie Nys is referring as much to the "hands" of manual labour in the factory as to gestures of household recycling which were practiced during the world wars: use of keratin from hair or making bread with saw dust.

Monument des ongles (right hand), 2015
canvas, acryl paint, human hair
80 x 120 x 10 cm

Exhibitions

Artists Space

25.09-16.11.2014

Group Show



Artists Space, 38 Green Street, USA-New York 10013
Curator: Gregorio Magnani

Artists Space The Library Vaccine

Text

The Library Vaccine presents a number of discrete collections of books in order to sample art's distinctive relationship to the book form in its singularity, and in its states of reproduction, distribution and accumulation. The exhibition addresses the book as a particular technology, and in its collective state of the private collection, reading room or library, as a social machine – registering social and personal histories, and articulating structures of knowledge and value through the relations between its parts.

The exhibition title is taken from a text by the curator and writer Edit deAk that introduced the 1981 Printed Matter catalogue. In this short piece she referred to artists' books as "the library vaccine, a healing agent formed from the very disease they cure." Each section of the exhibition presents a collection that loosely corresponds to a decade between the 1960s and the present day, yet The Library Vaccine doesn't seek to survey a recent history of books in or as art; rather it takes the tension between book-as-text and book-as-object as a starting point. The exhibition marks a movement from the egalitarian, curative aspirations of the book as distributed artwork, to these aspirations' subsumption within broader tendencies towards collecting, archiving and the re-circulation of knowledge.

Some sections of the exhibition revolve around curatorial or editorial frameworks that highlight artists' use of the book form, while others focus on the collection or library as a holistic entity. In these contexts the act of collation emphasizes shifts between the private and the common, the artwork and the artifact. The roles of artist, publisher and collector are seen to overlap, and the sequenced content of both the individual book and the massed collection provides sites for the production and articulation of meaning.

Exhibitions

Cneai

24.08-28.09.2014

Group Show



Cneai, Ile des Impressionnistes, 2 rue du Bac, F-78400 Chatou
Curators: Amélie Laplanche, Tim Ryckaert

Joe, xerox, A4, 2013
Averall, silk screen, A2, 2013

Cneai

Credit to the edit

Text

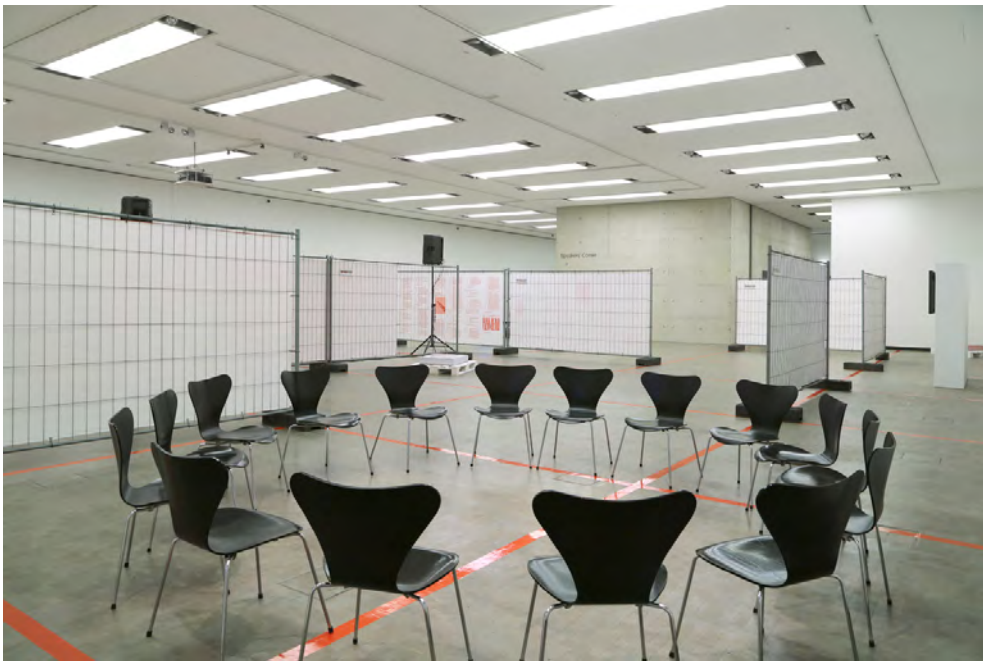
Exhibition copy is composed of a standard format. An A4 photocopy accompanied by an A2 silkscreen print, the A2 being an enlargement of the A4 print or, reflections on how the enlargement can add something, twist, or create a shift. The editions are produced on the occasion of exhibitions and/or presentations. During these public events the A4 photocopies are distributed to the visitors. The A4 prints are presented alongside the A2 silkscreen prints so that people are invited to continue the photocopy and distribution process endlessly. The term 'Exhibition Copy' is referring to the use of copies of works (printed matter, video works, etc) without value. To be used in exhibitions or demonstrations only.

Exhibitions

Kunsthalle Vienna

16.05-06.09.2014

Group Show



**Benutzt du Social-Media-Formate privat
oder professionell?**

Ich bin eine glückliche Ex-Nutzerin.
(Ich war teils aus privaten, aber vor allen Dingen aus
beruflichen Gründen bei Facebook.)

Kunsthalle Vienna, Museumplatz 1, AT-1070 Vienna
Curators: Nicolaus Schafhausen, Vivien Trommer
Exhibition design: Boy Vereecken

Kunsthalle Vienna

Attention Economy

Text

Is art intelligent entertainment? Why is contemporary art so popular? Are current exhibition formats contemporary at all? What are the key criteria for good art? For three weeks, Attention Economy transforms Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier into a trail and a discursive platform. The exhibition presents answers, ranging from the startling to the critical, by international artists to pressing questions relating to contemporary art and the art business.

The title references Georg Franck's book of the same name, published in 1998, in which he establishes that attention has become a limited resource and an economic commodity. The exhibition carries this idea into the present and asks what influence the digitized world, the increasingly international art market and the growing popularity of contemporary art are having on artists and their current art production.

An exhibition display presents the interviews, embeds the texts in a graphic system and opens up different routes through the exhibition. Attention Economy is accompanied by a diverse program of events with theme evenings, filmscreenings and discussions with artists.

Exhibitions

Etablissement d'en Face Projects 15.02-30.03.2014

Group Show



**Etablissement d'en Face Projects, Rue Ravensteinstraat 32, B-1000 Brussels
Curator: Roger Bywater**

Etablissement d'en Face Projects Lou Ford

Text

Lou Ford isn't much of a people person. He prefers things. The things he likes the most are things that mess with his mind. This exhibition, which bears his name, includes a number of objects he's admired over the years... most of the stuff on display would be considered art, but he's also added a few things that most people would call "trash".

This exhibition features editions published by Bywater Bros. Editions together with selected works from Roddy Buchanan, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Jens Haaning, Adam McEwen, Sophie Nys, Jack Pierson, Richard Prince, Dahn Vo, Johannes Wohnseifer, Gil Hibben Studios, Sweet Tango Apples® and Desert Essence Organics®. The exhibition will also feature a number of vintage pinball machines designed by the late American artist Jerry Kelley.

Etablissement d'en Face Projects Lou Ford

Installation view



Lawn Bag, 2013, plastic bag, administrative rubbish, variable dimensions.

Exhibitions

Galerie Greta Meert
06.02-05.04.2014

Solo Show



Galerie Greta Meert, Vaartstraat 13, 1000 Brussels

Fallet-Prévostat, 2014
Metal, lamp, champagne. 35 x 21 x 11 cm

Galerie Greta Meert

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Text

Nys is showing a variety of works inspired by her discoveries about the Black Death of the thirteenth century. Nys's interest in the plague was first sparked by an article, published in the People's Daily, the Chinese Communist Party newspaper. The article, written by two economists, stated that: "The euro debt crisis (...) and the sovereign crisis has spread like the Black Death of the fourteenth century across the euro zone countries."* The Chinese economists were wary and concerned that Europe's ailing economy would be contagious.?? Is the European financial crisis the plague of current times? With bankers using terminology such as toxic investments and other nations fearing contamination from Europe's financial woes, Nys found herself contemplating the plague – gone viral.

The Plague – When we think of the phrase 'the plague' we may think of a disease which is extinct and unable to harm us yet in just a mention, can conjure up ghastly visualisations. Unfortunately, the threat of epidemics, pandemics, and the spread of worldwide problems whether financial or medical, are in fact contemporary issues. Sophie Nys's exhibition is far from out of date.

Nys does not try to shock with gruesome images or by counting fatalities. Her associations with her subject are not at first obvious. Her works are drawn from a unique perspective. Nys has reflected upon the commonplace: for example, her investigations have led her to reveal how trading continued through times of crisis amongst the ordinary village people.

Vinegar Stones – Sophie Nys's research on the Black Death led her to take a field trip to England last year searching for some very special stones called either 'vinegar stones' or 'plague stones'. These stones were used in the Middle Ages by people condemned with the plague, in order to trade. The vinegar was used as a sanitizing product.

The artist reminds us of how fragile a society or economy can be. In a time without supermarkets, when produce was precious, a product as simple as bread was incredibly important. Bread was vital sustenance for the people. If the baker was to become indisposed then the village was in danger of going hungry. Also, when the people of a village were labelled too sick to come in contact with, then they were in danger of starving to death.

The 'vinegar stone' was created by the local authorities. They had devised a system with which the infected village could still trade for goods without contaminating others. The people had to leave money upon a stone, in a well of vinegar or urine and there would be supplies such as bread, or whatever was needed, exchanged for the coins. Vinegar and urine were thought to cleanse the money of any germs and so this system protected the healthy from the contaminated and aided the trading system. Nys presents to us in a series of sculptures, photographs and a film on this fascinating discovery.

Another Level – Nys's film of her quest for the vinegar stones has a wonderfully dated quality. It reminds me of a BBC natural history documentary from the eighties. The footage, caught on super 8 reels, has a charming grainy quality and is presented on a bulky old television monitor.

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Text

When you don the headphones, you are elevated to another level. In 'Full of Piss and Vinegar' (2014) Nys has combined her moving images with a choral soundtrack, a piece by the Hungarian composer, György Ligeti. The piece 'Requiem' is perhaps best known from Stanley Kubrick's: '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968).

Nys chose this moving piece of music partially because it has no religious intent, but it is spiritual. This piece creates a dramatic and intense sound-scape which takes us floating above the green fields. It is an uplifting experience.

Healing Stones – Continuing her medieval journey, Nys turned her attention to the Lowlands where she found the legend of a healing stone in Lochem. This stone belonged to the wall of a church in the Netherlands. People, superstitious and desperate, would flock to this stone hoping to benefit from its powers.

The artist has built an installation 'Lochem' (2013) out of a wooden plank which she rests on two trestles. Upon this self-made table are some objects – a still life. She has positioned a cement block, reminiscent of a large stone brick, precariously at the edge of the table. This block is a mold taken from the 'healing stone' of the church in the Netherlands. Because people carved out pieces of the stone for their own good fortune, the stone is left with a deep indent. This carved brick is a living memory of the people of the middle ages and represents their desperation to ward off deathly sickness.

The 'healing stone' in this installation, sits at the height at which the artist originally encountered the stone in the wall of the Dutch church of Lochem.

Super Fruits – The still life is comprised of various citrus fruits, a sponge, and a brick of pressed wood chip. One lemon, from Sicily, is particularly large and the other lemons are curiously wrapped in a layer of sponge.

The artist helped to decipher the clues given in her intriguing nature morte. The pressed wood block and the dimensions of the table itself: the width and length of the plank of wood are Nys's reference to the European palette system. The precise measurements that Nys has used are those of the Euro-palettes which are used to transport goods by train all over Europe. 'Beginning in Sicily with the giant lemons and ending in Norway with crates of Stella,' she jokingly informs.

The appeal to the artist of the palette system was that of "unspoken borders"; the transportation of goods, just like disease: spreading and travelling.

In her research Nys discovered that a doctor of the middle ages had used the super fruit, the lemon, to protect his nose from the smell of the very sick and dying patients. The sponge is a reference to how people would utilise sponge to soak up vinegar and use both products to shield off disease.

Angelina – Travelling through the exhibition, from Medieval Europe to today's Hollywood, we arrive at Angelina Jolie! Upon a great white wall, Nys has hung four black and white photo collages. We are confronted with the iconography of today in: 'Rochus 1.(Frieda)', 'Rochus 2. (Kate)', 'Rochus 3. (Kim)' and 'Rochus 4. (Angelina)'.
The images tell an unexpected tale. They are a modernisation upon the medieval legend of Saint Roch, the patron Saint of the plague, who after healing many of the deadly disease, fell

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Text

ill himself. He was banished from town and would have perished of hunger had it not been for a dog who had brought him bread.

We see images of female celebrities, showing a lot of leg whilst posing for a photo on the red carpet and each oddly accompanied by a little dog grasping bread in its mouth. The pop icons are hanging upon a hand painted wall decoration 'Brother, Brother, Brother' (2013). The mural is inspired by a detail from an image of a manuscript dating from the year 1320.

Nys had found an image from this ancient manuscript in a book about the plague. The image draws a scene from the story of the Apocalypse, from the book of Saint Paul. People are crossing a bridge to enter heaven and below the bridge, in a river, souls are twisting and squirming in the waters of hell. Nys points out how the people in this antique illustration are interestingly without gender.

The background of the scene is the detail which fascinated Nys. It is a grid of faces, like tiles. Drawn upon each little square you find a line drawing of a human face. Each face very simply illustrated with only the eyes, nose and mouth features. The author of the book about the plague had used this image to illustrate the massive amount of mortality due to the Black Death, 'the souls in peril'. This scene inspired Nys to travel to a library in Cambridge in order to see the precious image in real life.

Normally such manuscripts are copied for educational purposes as the originals are so delicate they cannot be used as study materials. Scholars must have an exact copy made. Nys then followed the scholars trail to a Swiss publisher. In the exhibition you may have the honour to look inside of this wonderful manuscript as Nys has acquired a copy of the original book.

The copy itself as an object is an incredibly precious item. All of the pages are hand cut; exact copies of the original. There are layers of real gold and oxidized silver decorating the pages. Every detail is just as in the original.

Nys describes the detail of the drawing from the 14th century as "fresh". The tiles have an incredibly modern appearance. They are graphic and certainly do not seem out of place as a back drop to collages of contemporary super stars. The wall painting to me, was reminiscent of the 'smilies' that you can attach to electronic mails!

Time Travel – The impact of the European crisis perhaps cannot be set side by side with the Black death of the Middle Ages. The artist herself thought that the Chinese economists had made a rather drastic comparison. However, such a radical suggestion she then utilized as a creative springboard into a discovery of times past and present.

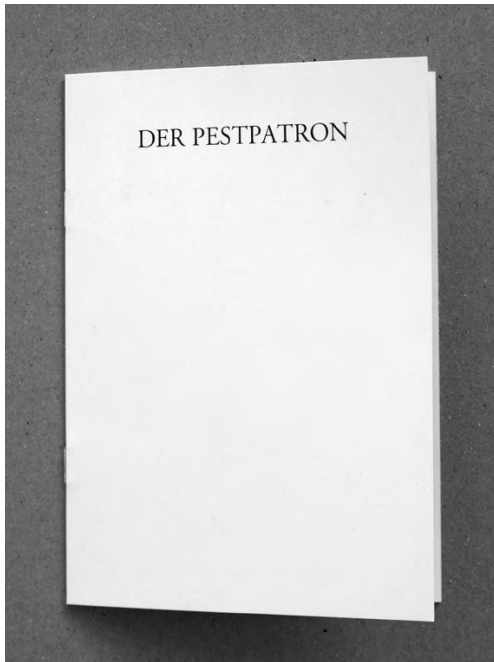
Travelling is very important to Sophie Nys's work. She likes to follow her interests to their places of origin, from Tokyo to Cornwall. She strives to find what she is looking for. She prefers to work alone on her projects, and to have the control of every aspect. Nys admits "I like to do everything myself" and remarks that her car is her studio when she is working. That means it is out of bounds, even to her boyfriend.

It has been a great pleasure to meet the artist. The stories which she can recount are testament to her adventures: unearthing stones; opening ancient manuscripts; and casting a healing stone. The art works themselves are compelling. They may be united in theme but they are greatly different in material and result. Without knowing their histories, they have an alluring quality, they force you to seek their meanings.

Rebecca Arthur

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Work

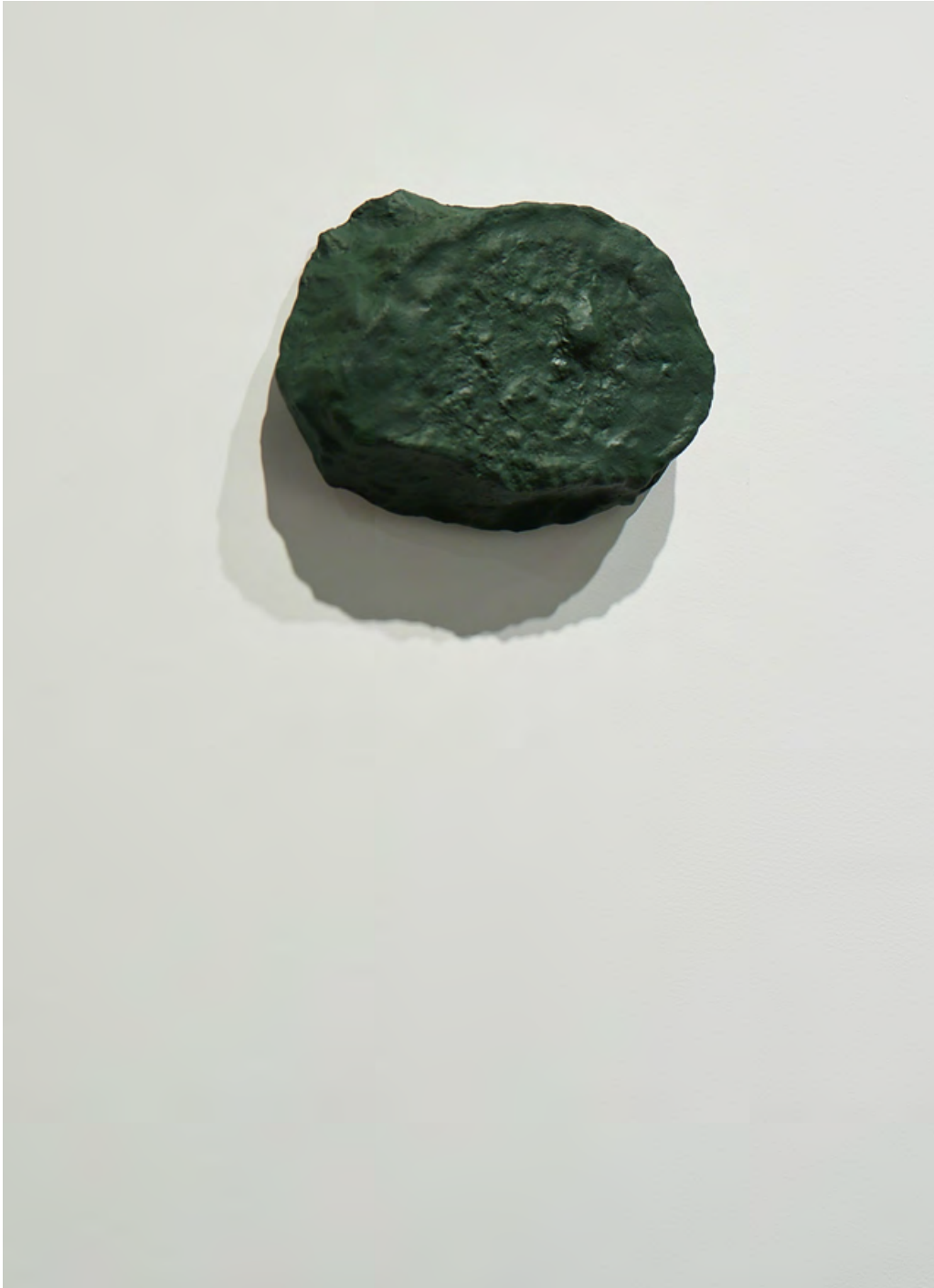


Rochus I, II, III, IV
131 x 102 cm

Exhibitions

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Work



Untitled (Altofts), 2013
Air-dry clay, oil paint

Full of Piss and Vinegar

Work

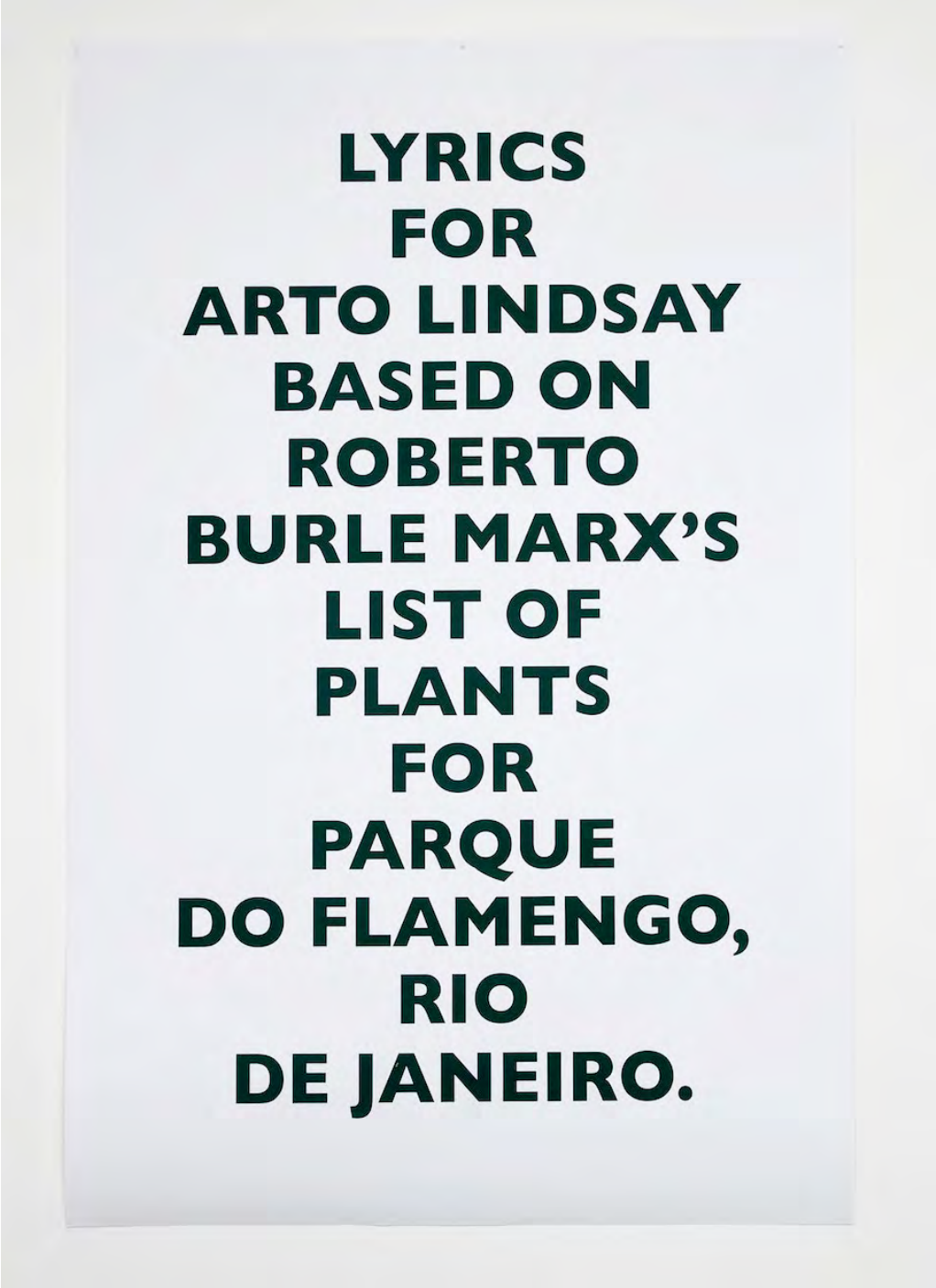


Vinegar Stones, 2013
(Burton, Kirkstall, Leeds, Gillow – UK)

Exhibitions

Pilar Corrias
05.07-02.08.2013

Group Show



**LYRICS
FOR
ARTO LINDSAY
BASED ON
ROBERTO
BURLE MARX'S
LIST OF
PLANTS
FOR
PARQUE
DO FLAMENGO,
RIO
DE JANEIRO.**

Pilar Corrias, 54 Eastcastle Street, London

Curator: Pablo Leon de la Barra

Lyrics, 2012, silkscreen on paper, 120 x 171 cm

Pilar Corrias

TopoDendroPhilia

Text

TopoDendroPhilia, a proposal by Pablo León de la Barra with Leonor Antunes, Stefan Brüggemann, Jean-Pascal Flavien, Adrien Missika, Sophie Nys, Simon Popper, Julia Rometti & Victor Costales, Alejandra Seeber, and Daniel Steegmann Mangrané

“Kinski always says (the jungle) its full of erotic elements. I don’t see it so much erotic. I see it more full of obscenity. It’s just – Nature here is vile and base. I wouldn’t see anything erotical here. I see fornication and asphyxiation and choking and fighting for survival and growing and just rotting away. Of course, there’s a lot of misery. But it is the same misery that is all around us. The trees here are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don’t think they – they sing. They just screech in pain. It’s an unfinished country. It’s still prehistorical. The only thing that is lacking is – is the dinosaurs here. It’s like a curse weighing on an entire landscape. And whoever goes too deep into this has his share of this curse. So we are cursed with what we are doing here. Its a land that God, if he exists has – has created in anger. It’s the only land where – where creation is unfinished yet. Taking a close look at – at what’s around us there – there is some sort of a harmony. It is the harmony of overwhelming and collective murder. And we in comparison to the articulate vileness and baseness and obscenity of all this jungle – Uh, we in comparison to that enormous articulation – we only sound and look like badly pronounced and half-finished sentences out of a stupid suburban novel, a cheap novel. We have to become humble in front of this overwhelming misery and overwhelming fornication, overwhelming growth and overwhelming lack of order. Even the – the stars up here in the – in the sky look like a mess. There is no harmony in the universe. We have to get acquainted to this idea that there is no real harmony as we have conceived it. But when I say this, I say this all full of admiration for the jungle. It is not that I hate it, I love it. I love it very much. But I love it against my better judgment.”

Werner Herzog, in ‘Burden of Dreams’ documentary on the filming of Fitzcarraldo, 1982 TopoDendroPhilia explores human desires for vegetation and place, and the aesthetic results produced from these encounters. The exhibition is seen less like a ‘curated’ exhibition and more like a savage garden, an encounter with the jungle, a tropical greenhouse or the landscape of a park. TopoDendroPhilia presents artistic attempts to go beyond the exotic and represent, understand, or control that which seems to escape rational logic and representation. The exhibition space is thought as a garden, constructed not by rational thinking, but using ‘untamed’ human thought. TopoDendroPhilia confronts what Werner Herzog calls ‘the obscenity of the jungle’ with Yi-Fu Tuan’s Topophilia or ‘sentiment for an environment’, as well as with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s Inconsistency of the Savage Soul, where the possibility of relationships between the natural world and the human world can be re-imagined.

In TopoDendroPhilia the exhibition space is articulated by a series of natural, tectonic and historic layers that the visitor penetrates as an explorer would do in the jungle, and which attempt to rethink the possibilities of ‘savage thought’. Jean-Pascal Flavien’s Dinosaur Drawings are set in tropical or antediluvian landscapes, in them prehistoric time co-exists with science fiction producing a collapse of time. Daniel Steegmann’s red aluminum chain curtain becomes a grotto entrance that marks the transition towards a vegetable environment. Here, Adrien Missika’s photographs of plants and gardens in Brazil designed

TopoDendroPhilia

Text

by Burle Marx are shown on display structures inspired by the ones used in the botanical department of the Indian Museum in Calcutta. Steegmann's hologram shows a gardening hand covered by grown leaves, blurring the border between animal and vegetal. Julia Rometti and Victor Costales's *Americanas* are a series of portraits of dead agave plants, a succulent that only flowers once in its life after which it dies. Meanwhile their film, *Plantas Populares Movimiento: Agitato* is a portrait of 'house plants' agitated by wind and filmed in their natural habitat, the Amazonian jungle. Leonor Antunes *Random Intersection 3* hangs from the ceiling, in it leather horse bridles are buckled in sensual domination creating irregular configurations; the hanging structure resembles lianas or tropical vines, but also recalls Gego's (Gertrude Goldschmidt) interweaving *Reticuláreas*. Alejandra Seeber's *Black Paintings* are a series of night paintings of black grass and rainforests, here darkness prevails over the common 'green' image associated with these landscapes—nevertheless amongst the density one can see the light. In the same way Stefan Brüggemann's neon appears like a green light at the end of the exhibition jungle, *A CEMENT CUBE IN THE JUNGLE* explores the relationship between image and text, and the relationship between abstract geometry and the hidden nature of the world. Downstairs, two artists present two different domesticated natures. Sophie Nys' *Parque do Flamengo*, portrays the park of the same name built on a landfill in the bay in Rio de Janeiro which was designed by Roberto Burle Marx between 1954 and 1959, and completed in 1965. The park, seven kilometers long, is a film and a song in itself. For the film, Nys invited Arto Lindsay to compose the soundtrack based on the names of the plants used by Burle Marx in the park. Finally Simon Popper's paintings on paper of *Monstera Deliciosas* (also known as Swiss Cheese Plants) are inspired by Ellsworth Kelly's plant drawings, and were made after studies of the plant at the Palmengarten in Frankfurt. Here the taxonomic pictorial studies that are common to Popper's work become wallpaper decoration. Meanwhile two Lion credenzas in the style of *World of Interiors* complete the domestic scene while winking to the lions that appear in Henri Rousseau's jungle paintings, jungles that Rousseau only visited in his imagination and which he constructed from visits to the zoo and the botanical garden.

Exhibitions

Galerie Nelson-Freeman
11.05-02.08.2013

Group Show



Galerie Nelson-freeman, 59 Rue Quincampoix, 75004 Paris
Curator: Gabriel Kuri
Profilo Continuo, continuous slide projection, 2007

Galerie Nelson-Freeman

Push pins in elastic space

Text

Samuel Beckett, Mel Bochner, Marcel Broodthaers, Gianni Colombo, John Divola, Hans Eijkelboom, Michel François, David Medalla, Matt Mullican, Sophie Nys, Gabriel Orozco, Paul Panhuysen, Joëlle Tuerlinckx et Richard Wentworth

This exhibition brings together works that pull in two divergent directions. On the one hand, representations of chaos through amorphism or mutation; on the other, attempts to order chaos: systematic thinking trying to come to terms with, order, account for, or index potential ciphers in the flux of hazard, form and experience. Naturally what results from a dialectical pull of this sort is the opening of a discursive grey area in the middle, in which some of the pieces unstably dwell.

In every work of this heterogeneous group that includes sculpture, documented actions, photography, and video, there is a deliberate consideration of process and openness, as well as the expression through geometric language. The earliest work in the exhibition is from 1960, whereas the most recent will be produced for this occasion.

Some of these works have been observed and revisited by Gabriel Kuri over the past twenty years, whilst others are more recent discoveries for him. As a group, they shed light on a series of questions that Kuri also poses within his own sculptural praxis, that span from the abstract to the social, the logical to the intuitive.

Rather than an attempt to devise a framework and find works to illustrate its thesis, this exhibition has come together as a chapter in the ordering of intuition over a long period of time: some sort of assessment of the vectors of force behind a number of like-minded and inspiring works by other artists.

The exhibition space will be used as the title suggests, as an elastic space in which demarcations will constantly shift, somewhere between the spatial limitations dictated by some pieces, and the reticence to conform to physical boundaries of others.

Exhibitions

Crac Alsace

13.06-29.09.2013

Group show



Crac Alsace, Rue du Chateau 18, F-68130 Altkirch
Curator: Elfi Turpin
Photos: Aurélien Mole

Susan vérité, des methodes Crac Alsace

Text

The exhibition Susan Vérité takes its inspiration from the spaces in the art centre itself: a building still recognisable as a 19th-century secondary school, with its broad central staircase, its long corridors leading to the classrooms and its small, tiered lecture theatre. A context that naturally leads us to raise issues and home in on concerns which are dear to us, such as the fact that art can be a locus for alternative experiments in transmission. Susan Vérité brings together artists who ‘recheat’, and whose specific methods for soaking up miscellaneous practices and disciplines mean they turn art into a curious tool for learning: not because they possess a particular body of knowledge, but because they spread knowledge by triggering it. Susan Vérité is rich in subjects involving discussion at a host of different levels, including language, recording, fiction, writing, shamanism, History, Amazonia and friendship. And last but not least, Susan Vérité is the title of an exhibition that brings together objects – simultaneously tools and works of art – from the interspace between two forms of intelligence: that of the artist and that of the viewer. In this way it sums up an ideal community: an ‘us’ situated among all these things.

Here Sophie Nys produces an odd association between a church cornerstone in the Netherlands that supposedly protects against or cures the plague, and the European economic crisis. In doing so she establishes a similarity between two scourges: the uncontrollable debt crisis in the eurozone and the Black Death outbreak of 1347-52 that deeply scarred Europe by annihilating 30% to 50% of its population. This work draws on an article published in Beijing in 2011, in the People’s Daily, the official Chinese Communist Party newspaper. Comparing the successive crises in Europe with the once intractable pandemics, the article showed how the former are causing debate and disquiet in Beijing with regard to their impact on China: “The euro debt crisis has now been going on for nearly two years since the end of 2009, and the sovereign debt crisis has spread like the Black Death of the fourteenth century across the eurozone countries.” By making a moulding of the “plague stone” in the Netherlands, Sophie Nys pinpoints the pathogenic reality of an incurable monetary crisis. Are we not inveterately monetary animals? Is not money the last surviving political body (after the death of the royal body and, by extension, of the divine body)?

Exhibitions

Susan vérité, des methodes

Installation view



Tauschpalette, 2013
concrete, wood, grapefruit, sponge
120 x 80 x 113 cm

Susan vérité, des methodes

Installation view



Oh, Brother, Brother, Brother!, 2013
acryl paint on plastic, 900 x 400 cm

Exhibitions

Les Halles
05.05-23.06.2013

Solo



Good Spirit (Canton Jura), 2013
Plaster, coco. 18 x 15 cm

Les Halles, Rue Pierre Péquignat 9, CH-2900 Porrentruy

Nudisme, végétarisme Les Halles

Text

L'artiste repense d'une manière rafraîchissante et incisive la liberté introduite par l'art conceptuel. Portée par son intérêt pour l'histoire, l'architecture et l'ambiguïté émergents des utopies modernistes, Sophie Nys confère à son oeuvre les allures d'une constellation non exhaustive de formes et de matériaux vue à travers le prisme de la sculpture, de la narration et de l'histoire. Ses travaux allient une approche humoristique, souvent ironique, de l'objet d'art et des pratiques artistiques actuelles. Tout en conduisant souvent à une démystification de l'objet d'art, elle retranche les stratégies artistiques, conceptuelles et minimalistes dans leurs limites logiques et formelles. Loin d'être irrévérencieux, ses installations et travaux vidéo alimentent des réflexions poétiques sur des sujets issus de tous les jours.

Le titre de l'exposition fait référence à August Engelhardt (1875-1919), adepte de l'utopie, qui, considéré indésirable en Allemagne pour ses convictions avait trouvé refuge sur l'île de Kabakon dans l'archipel du Duc de York, colonie allemande de Nouvelle-Guinée, où il pouvait donner libre cours à ses aspirations. Prônant le végétarisme et le nudisme, il se nourrissait exclusivement de noix de coco. Il y développa sa théorie du «cocovorisme» qui peut se résumer en une phrase : Pour vivre au plus proche du divin, vivons nu, mangeons des noix de coco et c'est tout. A noter que le fruit est utilisé en inde comme objet de rituel apportant l'abondance et la prospérité.

Sophie Nys amorce l'exposition par un travail intitulé "Keiner soll hungern! Keiner soll frieren! " (personne ne doit avoir faim! personne ne doit avoir froid!). La gravité de cette citation extraite d'une affiche de propagande de l'Allemagne nazie au début de la 2ème guerre mondiale contraste avec le contenu du dispositif constitué d'objets illustrant une vision idéale, voire idyllique, de l'exotisme. A travers cette association, l'artiste évoque aussi les pays vers lesquels émigrèrent les criminels nazis à la fin de cette guerre: Argentine, Bolivie, Brésil, Chili, Paraguay, Uruguay.

Sophie Nys a également réalisé une série de travaux qui tissent des liens entre différents domaines tels la botanique, l'histoire et la géopolitique par le biais de photographies, de peintures, de vidéos et d'objets. Les oeuvres présentées à l'EAC (les halles) gravitent autour de l'élément botanique que constitue la graine, en l'occurrence la noix de coco, la semence étant forme la plus minimaliste de la représentation des végétaux.

Exhibitions

Nudisme, végétarisme

Works

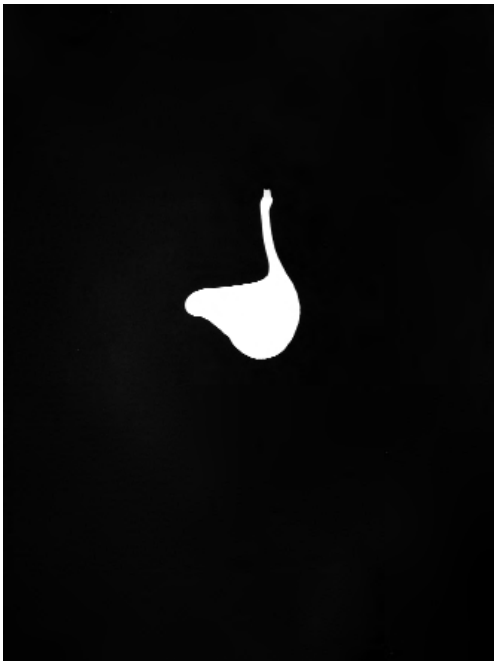


Good Spirit (Porrentruy), 2013
Plaster, coco. 18 x 15 cm

Exhibitions

Nudisme, végétarisme

Works



La dormance des graines, 2012
Series of 24 photograms on two tables. (detail)
200 x 100 x 40 cm

Exhibitions

Art Rotterdam
06.02-09.02.2013

Solo



Keiner soll hungern! Keiner soll frieren!, 2013
coco, jute, wood, hygienic sand, coconut soap, palm leaves, 110 x 140 x 40 cm

Photos: we document art.

Exhibitions

Art Rotterdam

Works



If nature didn't, Warner's will, 2013
coco, pantyhose, 49 x 23 x 11,5 cm

Exhibitions

ProjecteSD 19.12-11.01.2013

Solo



The Timid Soul, 2012
Time Magazine, 42 x 30 cm, riso-print and coco doormat, 62 x 68 cm
ProjecteSD, Passatge Mercader 8, 08008 Barcelona
Curator: Moritz Küng

ProjecteSD

The Umbrella Corner

Text

The title of this exhibition series refers to a strangely shaped and often overlooked corner at the entrance zone of the gallery, an irregular indentation of a wall that is measuring only 60 x 60 cm in surface and that has been so far occupied by a glass stand for umbrellas. Moritz Küng establishes in that very spot a site and content specific project by inviting six artists to react on the limitations of the spatial condition as well as to a particular key work of the conceptual art movement: the installation *Where's Al?* by North American artist Allen Ruppersberg produced in 1972 and today part of the Museum of Modern Art collection in New York. By doing so, the sequences of exhibitions will develop itself a narrative, an ambiguous mystery story about avoiding, disappearing, hiding, including, excluding and remembering. The complementary subtitles of the project are excerpts of dialogues from that very work.

The practice of Zurich based Belgium artist Sophie Nys brings conceptual and minimalist artistic strategies to their logical and formal limits by exploiting the broad artistic license possible within the contemporary art milieu. Her approach often leads to a demystification of the art object and current art practices that form the contemporary art scene object. Far from being flippant, her installations and video work – though seemingly ironic – maintain their eloquence as poetic reflections on her subjects derived from the every day. In her new work for *The Umbrella Corner: Too bad Al's not here (3/7)*, entitled *The Timid Soul*, she is indirectly inspired by another iconic work of Ruppersberg: *Al's Grand Hotel* from 1971. Superposing on top of the existing gallery's coconut-carpet an additional, made to measure coconut-doormat that fits exactly into the corner, Nys is referring to the two – apparently still existing – coconut palms in the garden of the former *Al's Grand Hotel* building at 7175 Sunset Blvd in Hollywood. Next to that, she is presenting a new edition that shows the disgraceful, weak, unassertive and spineless Caspar Milquetoast – aka *The Timid Soul*, a comic strip character created by H.T. Webster In 1924 – that peeps from behind a frame - a reworked cover of *Time Magazine*; unhelpfully a reference to American popular culture, like Mr. Ruppersberg did himself so often.

Exhibitions

La Loge

06.09-03.11.12

Solo



La Loge, Kluisstraat 86, 1050 Brussels.
Parque do Flamengo, HD video, 45 min., 2012
Curator: Anne-Claire Schmitz
Photos: Ghislain Amar

La Loge

Parque do Flamengo

Text

1.

The Flamengo Park does not belong to the city nor to the sea.

A park designed on a landfill site in the 1960's by the Workgroup for the Landfill's Urbanization in collaboration with Affonso Eduardo Reidy and Roberto Burle Marx, it is part of a family of spectacular public spaces developed in Rio de Janeiro during that same period. The beautiful beach fronts of Ipanema and Copacabana are other large public areas developed with tremendous care and engagement. These spaces specifically focus on the spectacular sea, and would not exist without it. The spaces seem to urbanize the border of the sea, in an attempt to link the city with its counterpart -the ocean- it cannot do without. Other large public developments from the same era engage with the city. As radical attempts to modernize its structure, they offer big avenues, modern grid like developments and points of reference that carefully mediate between the spectacular topography of the rocks and the hills, the city structure and ultimately the ocean.

This is not strange, as Rio de Janeiro's name myth derives from the discovery of the 'the river in January'. Whether or not the ocean was mistaken for a river, it includes in its essence the relationship between the river/ocean and good opportunities to build, to develop a city. Many if not all large projects in Rio since the fifties deal perhaps unconsciously with this myth. As it makes the DNA of the city on the hills at the sea, it becomes its unavoidable narrative. Each of these single projects, big or small, engages in the reality of the city on the shore and tries to resolve its problems. It cleans up neighborhoods, makes living, working and leisure conditions better. Most of these projects worked out for a while. Some of the places have lost their luster. Others have survived. It is the unavoidable faith of urbanism. Despite all the powerful tools of planning and urbanism, in confrontation with reality other phenomena start to have a huge impact. Real as these places are, they are subject to the dynamics of demography and the market. Reality bites.

The Flamengo Park is a different kind of place, it defies the logics of time. Perhaps it is not 'real' in the narrowest sense of the word. Although it was born out of a compromise, a landfill yet cut-off from the city through a highway bypass, it became, perhaps because of that, a modernist mirage, an idealized piece of landscape.

As an oasis in the desert, it is a completely artificial place. Its surroundings have nothing to do with it. It is turned inwards. The Flamengo park does not connect to the city, as the highway has such an enormous impact that the city is always far away. It does not connect to the ocean either, since, at that part the ocean is wild and polluted and one can only occasionally swim there. Here, on this large stretch of artificial land, both the city and the sea are a menace rather than a blessing, better kept on a distance, to be looked at, to repose and contemplate. As is the case with an oasis, the park developed itself fifty years in complete solitude, unaware of both the city and the sea, whose size and pressure to it has only increased. But the park doesn't mind - it is a strong entity, a frame on its own.

La Loge

Text

2.

The Flamengo park is perhaps the only remaining pure stretch of Brazilian Modernism. It shows it with all its facets, not undone of its ideology, well maintained, proud: as a survivor. There is not much else left. Brazil's shaky political recent history had to endure many setbacks and so did its architecture. Besides, architecture is a troublesome profession. Perhaps as a perfect mirror to its political ideas and ideals, little radical ideological modernism has survived time. It needs too much maintenance, and as counts for many radical ideas, it is at its best when its just new, just there. Many of the radically modern buildings constructed together with the new modern state of Brazil in the new modern capital of Brasilia couldn't stand against time and remain today rather melancholic reminders of a (political) time that has long past. Building landscape takes time. Its unfashionable slowness made it a weak representative of the modern Brasilia back then, but it was an important part of it. It was in Brasilia that Burle Marx started his most audacious and radical landscape project. In an act to present the whole of Brazil in the new capital, he developed the plan to plant every single type of tree that one could find in the country in the new capital and create its landscape with it; as some kind of silent mock up of the country, a model. Elegant as the gesture was, it was hardly perceivable (though it was clearly communicated); at first glance trees were just trees. Today, however, it makes the remarkable nature of the capital, a strange semi natural place with an unrealistically rich natural diversity.

The Flamengo park is in many ways a model of that model. Burle Marx developed - probably parallel with the Brasilia project - a plant list that he utilized to maximum effect in the park in Rio. In utter ignorance of the context, it implanted its own narrative in Rio de Janeiro, as a mirror image to the constructed landscape in the Planalto in central Brazil. Flamengo park is huge, but because of its botanical ambition it seems just big enough: a long, quite narrow, contained, smooth piece of endlessness. The architecture - simple pavilions and a museum conceived as a giant structure, designed by Reidy - merely attempts to play secondary role. The buildings are structurally intelligent, but programmatically unspecific, as if they were unconsciously aware of the ambition of the park: here the architecture has to survive the trees.

The park stands on its own, disconnected, as a modernist utopia. It pushes the modernist notion of science and collection, incarnated in the botanical garden to its absolute limit. It introduces, because of its narrow section, a sense of overview, and it presents landscape as something not only essential, but also essentially artificial, constructed and maintained. Perhaps only today this is so clearly visible.

La Loge

Text

3.

Burle Marx' plan was genius in its simplicity, as its sheer linearity gave the park the possibility to develop this catalogue of trees in the smoothest possible way, as in a long traveling shot. The park thus works as a break, a datum, a linear island from which the surroundings are measured and their modernism is quantified.

When one is in the park, one is in modernist Brazil, or in a model of it; not in Rio de Janeiro, whatever the Cariocas may say. This idealized looking glass makes a frame to look back at Rio and its surroundings. Rio is only at its edges. In its well kept, smooth status the park is unaffected by the changing political views in the city proper. Neither is it victim of changing ideas about public space, commercialization or anything. It is not really there, it is not completely real, it's an idealized construction.

As a proper refuge, it represents today the Brasilia that perhaps never was, that was shortly there when the flag was raised, but was hastily transformed, subject to projections of different political and social ideas.

All these did not affect Flamengo park. If the Brasilia of the fifties is hardly recognizable today, affected as it is by eighties high capitalism and a lack of maintenance, Flamengo became the refuge it was once planned to be. As opposed to the city of Rio it presents a place that is shamelessly urban. As opposed to its surrounding landscape it offers a natural place that is (again) shamelessly artificial. In many ways it shows an utopian dream, but as any dream, it has a specific timeframe - a one hour shot. One hour: long enough to think it might go on forever; short enough to be realistic. That is finally the ambiguity of the construction of the park: it is part of reality in as far as it understands its own limits, the limits of the dream.

In every shot, in every experience, long and continuous, the knowledge remains that it exists because of what stands next to it. Always there, behind the trees, on a distance, is the city and the sea; they appear never together, cut away from each other by the park. Both park and film, from now on mutually connected, are tributes to that exceptional slow modernism, a modernism with the privilege to grow old in a context that has radically changed. In many ways it is a metaphor for the artistic project, coherent and perfected, and only in semi detachment with the reality outside. The park however is open and alive. It shows that formalism, concept and ideology do engage, perhaps more than any form of pragmatism, provided the understanding that keeping out is not the same as hiding away from it. Here lays the true ingenuity of the park. It only acts as a backdrop for anybody who finds his way in this constructed artificial natural universe, a nature non stop.

Exhibitions

La Loge Parque do Flamengo

Installation view



**Cecropia, 1867. Collection Von Martius.
Courtesy of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium**

Exhibitions

La Loge

Installation view



The glass house, 8mm to dvd, 3 min., 2011

La dormance des graines, series of photograms, 30,5 x 40,5 cm, 2012

Exhibitions

Wiels

22.05-26.08.2012

Group show



Wiels, Avenue Van Volxem 354, 1190 Brussels
Curators: Anne-Claire Schmitz & Elena Filipovic

Bow Chucko Wow Wow, 2012, Painting on wood, 42 x 26 x 22.5 cm
Untitled (exercice Lygia Clark), Wood and metal, 32.5 x 15 x 2.5 cm, 2012
Fort Patti I, wood and one coin, 270 x 60 x 70 cm, 2012

Wiels Un-Scene II

Text

“Aujourd’hui...rien” (Today...nothing) were the blithe words scribbled by Louis XVI in his diary for July 14, 1798, a day that history knows as the eruption of the French revolution. Sophie Nys used the French ruler’s paradoxical nonchalance as both the starting point and title for a 2009 diptych of imitation marble slabs purchased in Paris, linking France, fakery, and constructed illusion. The piece is typical of the artist’s proteform practice, which expands the legacy of post-conceptual art through an active attachment to the materiality of found things, narrative sources, and a quirky, almost chance approach to research that drives her production of a vast array of media: film, sculpture, installation, photography, book-making, sound-works, painting, and other less easily qualifiable objects. For *Un-Scene II*, Nys presents a selection of older pieces that reveal her process and way of thinking over the last decade along side two new projects. *Fort Patti I* (2012), a massive tree trunk that evokes a recovered water main excavated from the area near Wall Street in New York that had been featured in a turn of the century archival photograph that the artist found, takes its name from musician Patti Smith’s shelter for the Occupy Wall Street library that was subsequently destroyed by the US government. *Twelve Proverbs* (2011), on the other hand, is a series of hand painted wooden plates, each of which makes reference to one of the twelve plates that Brueghel painted with famous Flemish proverbs in 1558 (at the same time as his colleague Frans Hogenberg’s *Die blau huicke*, which used the same proverbs). In a witty response to an exhibition focusing on Belgium, Nys has reduced the aphorisms to a variegated colour field of red and highlighted the often-untranslatable nature of one culture or their thinking into another.

Wiels

Installation view



Twelve plates, oil paint on wood, variable size, 2012

Tegen de maan pissen - Pisser contre la lune - Den Mond löschen - To shoot the moon / Tussen twee stoelen in de as zitten - S'asseoir entre deux chaises - Sich zwischen zwei Stühle setzen - To fall between two stools / Zich onder een blauwe huik verbergen - Se cacher sous une huque bleue - Sich unter die blaue Hucke stecken - To hide with a blue hooded cloak / Drank en spel leiden tot armoede en slechte naam - S'enivrer et jouer mènent à la pauvreté et nuisent au renom - Trinken und spielen macht arm und schändet den Namen - Drink and dice ruins wealth and fame / De kat de bel aanhangen - Attacher le grelot au chat - Der Katze die Schelle umhängen - To hang the bell about the cat's neck / Niet kunnen lijden dat de zon in 't water schijnt - Etre comme le chien du jardinier - Er ist wie der Hund auf dem Heu - To be like the dog in the manger / Achter het net vissen - Venir trop tard - Hinter dem Netz fischen - It is ill fishing behind the net / De put dempen als het kalf verdronken is - Fermer l'écurie quand les chevaux sont dehors - Wenn's Kalb ersoffen ist, deckt der Bauer den Brunnen zu - When the seed is stolen, the stable-door is locked / In de ene hand vuur, in de ander water dragen - Porter en une main le feu, et l'eau en l'autre - In der einen Hand Feuer, in der andern Wasser tragen - To carry fire in one hand and water in the other / Rozen voor de zwijnen werpen - Semer des roses devant les porceaux - Die Perlen vor die Säue werfen - To cast pearls before swine / Met het hoofd tegen de muur lopen - Se cogner la tête contre les murs - Mit dem Kopf gegen die Wand rennen wollen - To beat one's head against the wall / De huik naar de wind hangen - Tourner la cape au vent - Den Mantel nach dem Wind hängen - To trim one's sails to the wind.

Exhibitions

Circuit

25.05-15.08.2012

Solo show



Circuit, Avenue de Montchoisi, 1001 Lausanne
Photos: David gagnebin-de bons – Curator: Frédéric Chapon

Circuit

O Bäume, die du nicht fällst

Text

Sophie Nys est invitée par le centre d'art contemporain circuit à proposer une exposition personnelle en rapport avec l'artiste brésilienne Lygia Clark, co-fondatrice, à l'orée des années 60, de l'art dit néo-concret.

Sophie Nys s'est penchée sur le parcours de Lygia Clark après que je lui ai fait part d'une velléité de travail en commun sous l'égide de cette artiste visionnaire : j'avais déjà vu son exposition de 2009 chez Greta Meert (<http://www.galeriegretameert.com>) et noté à cette occasion la petite dette contractée par Sophie envers la brésilienne qui dans les années 60 intitulait ses oeuvres *Bichos* (Animaux) ou *Caminhando* (Chemin faisant).

Lorsque j'en parlai par e-mail à Sophie, elle m'apprit qu'elle était elle-même au Brésil, en pré-production d'un film qu'elle comptait tourner dans un parc conçu par l'architecte paysagiste brésilien R. Burle Marx... Lors de son voyage préparatif, Sophie eut également l'initiative de se familiariser avec les ouvrages de Lina Bo Bardi, au point de s'inspirer directement d'une photographie du MASP de São Paulo – pour lequel cette architecte avait envisagé un mode d'installation des peintures hors du commun – pour sa propre exposition solo en Suisse.

Bref... il ne s'agissait plus d'une simple invitation (d'une proposition que circuit faisait, à travers moi, à Sophie), mais d'un dialogue dans lequel les intérêts les plus actuels de Sophie recoupaient mes préoccupations les plus anciennes : comment, au sortir des années 50, L. Clark et d'autres réinvestirent l'art concret de Max Bill en lui donnant un tour presque sensoriel... Sophie archive depuis plus de dix ans des photographies d'oeuvres d'art qu'elle prend elle-même dans les musées ou les galeries. Cette habitude de photographier les oeuvres qui la frappent chez d'autres artistes s'est rapidement muée en travail à part entière – travail auquel Sophie met fin à l'occasion de son exposition à circuit. Depuis 2001, Sophie aura édité cinq versions d'un "livre en formation" : le catalogue des oeuvres dont elle a choisi de se souvenir. Le sixième et dernier catalogue compte environ quatre-cents images... Décidés à utiliser ce réservoir pour monter son projet en solo à circuit, nous nous sommes proposés d'en choisir une cinquantaine et de montrer ainsi un échantillon d'un parcours muséal à l'échelle d'une douzaine d'années. Epinglées sur cinquante présentoirs, selon un dispositif frontal inspiré de Lina Bo Bardi, seront donc cinquante impressions recouvrant les périodes les plus diverses, allant de la sculpture classique aux installations de Simon Starling, de la peinture impressionniste au cieux de James Turrell... d'un retable à un *Lay Out* de Thomas Hirschhorn, des nuages de Stieglitz à ceux de Roy Lichtenstein. On parcourra le musée Pouchkine et le muhka d'Anvers... les foires et les lieux les plus insolites.

Exhibitions

Circuit

Installation view



Exhibitions

Circuit

Installation views



Bois et cuivre, 2012

Laser print on paper, wood, kitchen wear. 103,2 x 163,6 x 17 cm

Exhibitions

Circuit

Installation views



The Glass House, 2011
Catalogue, Version I-VI, 2002-2012

Exhibitions

Galerie Emmanuel Hervé
15.03-28.04.2012

Solo show



Galerie Emmanuel Hervé, Rue Jouye Rouve 6, 75020 Paris
Fort Patti I, wood and one coin, 270 x 60 x 70 cm, 2012
Photos: Aurélien Mole

Galerie Emmanuel Hervé

Bow Chucko Wow Wow

Text

For the show Bow Chucko Wow Wow Nys worked around a photo of 1915 she bought in New York one day after workers from the Police Department evacuated people and property from the privately owned public space known as Zuccotti Park or OWS (Occupy Wall Street) on November 15th 2011. The photo depicts a display of an old water pipe, which was found during the excavations for the Wall Street subway station and has become the base for the show.

Monica Tuymans: What caught your attention of the old picture?

Was it its display?

Sophie Nys: First of all somehow the absurdity of a dull trunk installed on horse-legs which seemed important enough to register as a significant artifact at the beginning of last century. The way the picture was formally taken also attracted my interest since it shows so clearly its subject. The central object as a subject is something I like to see in relation with the stone as a pure thing, and the thing as a work of art, which are very close to each other. So the stone-like presentation and it's obvious historical content amongst other aspects made me buy this image from a stall in Soho.

MT: You decided to make a real size sculpture based on this water pipe.

SN: Yes, the attraction to this image is of course not only its own historical reference but clearly also a formal one. After some research on the matter the imaginary and mechanics of water pipes (or mains) look somehow like the archeology of sexuality. In a way these objects grotesquely touch virility and this is difficult to disconnect with previous projects I have developed around shame poles, volcanoes or important philosophers.

But, next to the possible formal associations or interpretations the sculpture represents, I am actually more interested and puzzled about the political developments in the United States (and other parts in the world) and I see the wooden shaft as a monument for the park where the peaceful occupation was cleaned out in a very harsh way. The authorities gave the order to evacuate Zuccotti Park cowardly during the night and destroyed hereby also The People's Library, a library that consisted out of more than 5000 titles donated by people who supported the project since its insertion in the financial district of New York City in September 2011.

MT: "Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people also"*

SN: Well, history and news teach us that governments who destroy books aren't the most democratic and trustful governments and it frightened me that this happened so close where I was at that very moment.

MT: You seem to touch power-related issues regularly in your work.

SN: Somehow, yes, the power of archeology, sexuality, politics,... form and - inevitably - the power of the art market.

MT: Is the title Bow Chucko Wow Wow related with any market or power?

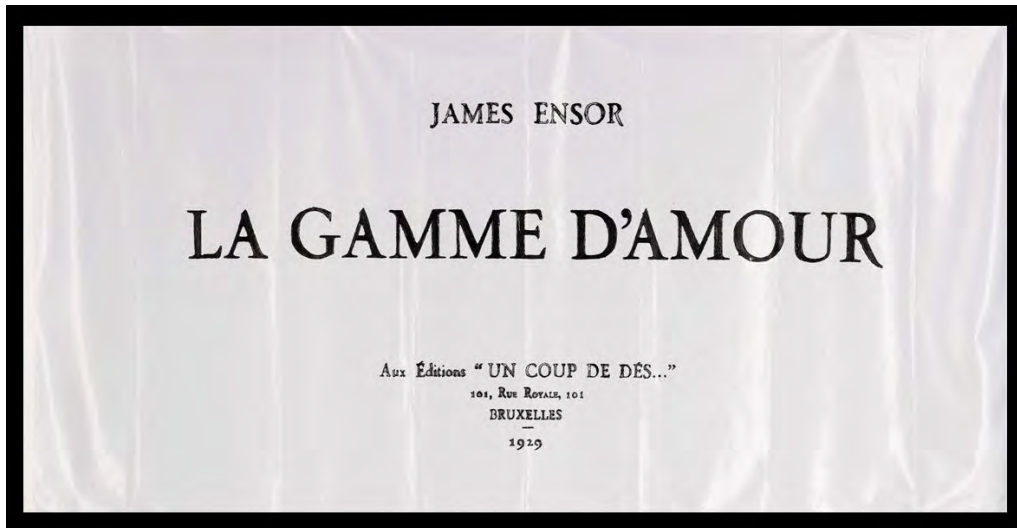
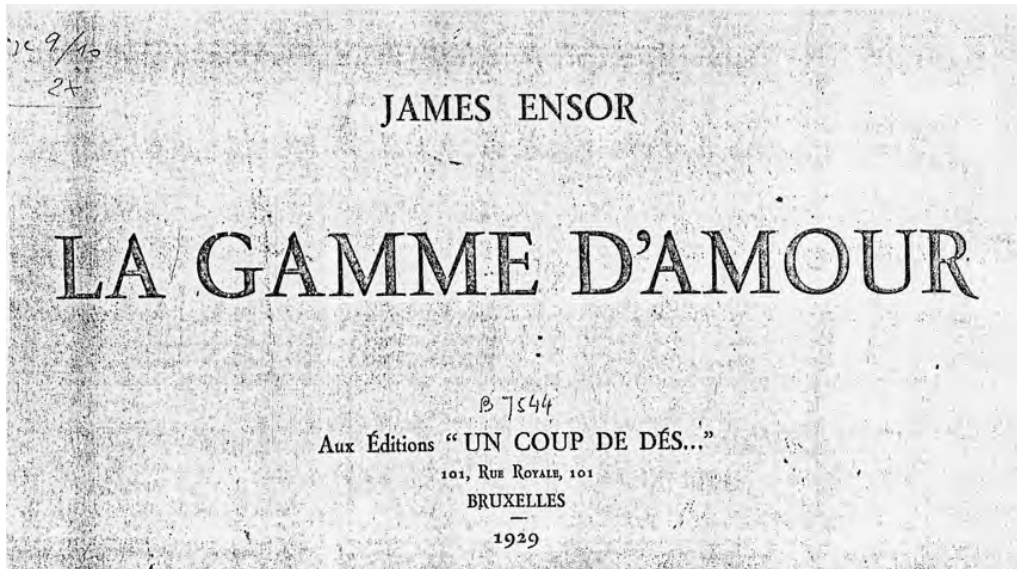
SN: Bow Chucko Wow Wow is used today as an expression of sexually oriented desire but originally comes from the striking guitar theme of the soundtrack by Isaac Hayes for the film 'Shaff' by Gordon Park in 1971. This wah-pedal effect became a sound brand for erotic films and was later known as the soundtrack du jour of porn, the adult 'entertainment industry' with an annual turnover of a billion dollars.

* Quote by Heinrich Heine, german poet (1797-1856)

Exhibitions

MuZee
09.10.2010-09.01.2011

Group Show



MuZee, Romestraat 11, B-Oostende
Curator: Philip Van den Bossche

MuZee

Public Private Paintings

Text

On invitation by MuZee, Sophie Nys did research about the relation between James Ensor and the filmmaker Henri Storck at the so-called foundation in Brussels.

Storck filmed his friend Ensor regularly in Ostend and Nys relates this to the initiated PPP-flag project by the museum.

Nys' research found concrete shape in a typographic work which is the projection of the title page 'La Gamme d'Amour' – a script conserved at the Henri Storck Foundation.

'La Gamme d'Amour', a ballet of 1911, is the artistic synthesis by James Ensor where he conceptualized both music, lyrics, screenplay, costumes and scenery.

The title page – in relation to filmmaker Storck – should give the flag the character of a gigantic filmstill.

One can not deny the art historical reference to Mallarmé and Broodthaers due to the equivocal name of the script's publisher, '*Un Coup de Des ...*'

('Un Coup de Des Jamais N'abolira Le Hasard' is an artwork by Marcel Broodthaers, published in 1969. Broodthaers' work is a copy of 'Un Coup de Des Jamais N'abolira Le Hasard' by French poet Stéphane Mallarmé released in 1914. Broodthaers replaced all the words by black lines that directly corresponded to the typographical layout of Mallarmé's text.)

Exhibitions

Objectif Exhibitions

04.09-06.11.2010

Solo



Objectif Exhibitions, Kleine Markt 7-9, B-2000 Antwerpen
Curator: Mai Abu ElDahab

Objectif Exhibitions

The Drunkard's Cloak

Text

Triggered by an interest in modern historical events and their remnant artifacts, Sophie Nys' new project "The Drunkard's Cloak", produced by Objectif Exhibitions, delves into the history of the pillory. Placed in areas of public gathering throughout feudal Belgium, the pillory was a wooden structure used to punish a prisoner and expose them to public abuse. Nys researched the history of these objects and re-stages them in a contemporary context questioning the possibility of their 'worldlessness' as mere forms.

Exhibitions

Objectif Exhibitions The Drunkard's Cloak

Exhibition views



Photos: Kristien Daem

Exhibitions

Objectif Exhibitions The Drunkard's Cloak

Exhibition views



Photos: Kristien Daem

Objectif Exhibitions

The Drunkard's Cloak

Text

No Stone Unturned

Dieter Roelstraete in conversation with Sophie Nys

Let's begin – but not necessarily with the beginning. I've known you and your work for a long time now, and color was never a big part of it, to put it mildly. In that sense the project you did for Objectif_Exhibitions seemed quite a departure – and not just because it was such a colorful show, but also because of some of the sculptural elements on display, which were very 'concrete', so to speak: a far cry from the abstract language you've come to be associated with. Could you tell us a bit more about those choices? This probably means taking us to the process of the show's conception...

Well, it all kind of started when I read Paul De Win's PhD on the subject of public exposure as a specific type of punishment in the Southern Netherlands from the Middle Ages till the time of the Napoleonic occupation – an interest that was in turn triggered by an earlier experience connected to my participation in an exhibition in the Zwalm region in South East Flanders in 2009, which is when I first came across what is called “shame poles” – “a permanent, freestanding device for displaying miscreants at a public location in a village or town, whose most basic form was that of a simple cylindrical or beam-shaped wooden stake” to paraphrase De Win. Anyway, reading this rather specialized piece of academic literature, I found out that certain colors had through the centuries been associated with dishon-

or, shame and marginal status. In our region in particular, yellow was the color of choice used to create a culture of stigma around certain professions, as well as around cheats (including adulterers) and those serving out certain punishments – there's a famous painting by Giotto in which you can see those politics of color at play, so to speak. So the Star of David, for instance, did not originate in the Germany of the 1930s, but in the 13th century instead, when Henry III was the first to force the Jews in his realm to wear the symbol on a *visible* place on their body at all times. Here, the color yellow signified treason, the transgressions of the traitor.

And to a certain extent yellow continues to perform this function, as is shown in the Smiley-styled labels attached to the doors of restaurants by food inspection agencies: happy means your restaurant is OK, unhappy means it is not – which is why one newspaper article in the exhibition dealt with this very issue: you could think of it as a key to the whole exhibition, simultaneously also a challenge to the world's radical move towards the far-right end of the political spectrum, where so much discourse is organized around the concept of inclusion and exclusion, of pointing your finger at the so-called culprits, and of controlling the right to do so. **Did the two round black metal discs attached to the wall also reference these smileys?**

It's strange that so many people thought they did... No, those two discs were “the missing black holes of the drunkard's cloak.” And in the exhibition, the drunkard's cloak was represented by the yellow

Text

barrel – the holes of which, incongruously, hung on the wall. And of course these drunkard’s cloaks were the punishment of choice for both real drunkards and beer or wine merchants who cheated their customers out of a fair deal... As you see, it was a pretty densely-layered project, and I’d like to once again stress the elemental force of intuition in the whole process – something like a gut-level feeling. It doesn’t quite suffice to characterize the project as merely research-heavy or even ‘bookish.’ In retrospect, I’m still a bit shocked myself by what I was able to do at

Objectif_Exhibitions – it was quite the departure, and that has proven to be singularly inspiring. (Even though for this exhibition, the actual inspiration was ‘merely’ this: finding out about, and seeing those shame poles, those stones on the estate of the Count d’Ursel.

Leaning out of the window of your apartment here in Brussels just a few hours ago I marveled at your little Zen-style stone garden... And of course there’s the long history of geological and vulcanological imagery running through your work more generally. You really are a bit of a petrophile, are you not?

You could say that the stone is a leitmotif in much of my work, yes – I’m really interested in the idea of the stone as this pure thing, placed somehow and somewhere between human, animal and plant. The stone as the seat of an elemental thingness: these are very Heideggerian tropes of course, and Heidegger certainly had some interesting things to say about the stone – how it was ‘world-less’ etc. In

any case, the stone and the thing as work of art – or the work of art as thing – are very close to each other in my estimation; they might even be the same. In fact I’d like to think of my works, my objects, as stones of a sort. Or else things make stone-like appearances in my work, like the giant Lenin head in *Lénine en pensant* (2005), or the mazes of reinforced concrete blighting the Japanese landscape in *Utopia Song* (2010). By the way, only quite recently did I finally realize why people use stones to maintain the memory of their dead (in graves, in the little pebbles laid on top of graves): they are organic things that can hardly be called fragile, they are immobile and last a *really* long time... A stone is a great thing to seal a memory with – there’s a beautiful passage in Susan Sontag’s *Volcano Lover* (a very appropriately titled book for this reader to be sure) that touches upon the very subject. And, rounding off the discussion of permanence in art, we could conclude here with a quote by Hannah Arendt: “Because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to the use of living creatures, a use which, indeed, far from actualizing their own inherent purpose—as the purpose of a chair is actualized when it is sat upon—can only destroy them.” This is taken from *The Human Condition*; I’m also reading this out to you because of the reference that is being made to the *chair*, because chairs also played a role in the exhibition – if only as props used to put people on public display

Text

on, much like barrels, a ladder, a piece of fencing... All of which made an appearance in the show as sculptures, each of them painted a bright yellow. Adding a layer of paint was like adding yet another layer of meaning to the whole ensemble, while also closing it off, closing the piece's circular movement. I like what Mai had to say about my work in this regard: "she alludes to the meanings instilled in these objects at a particular moment in modern history" – I like the sound of the verb "instill" in particular, with its intimations of stillness.

What about the paint-stained newspapers on the floor though?

They are the kind of stuff it's OK to soil when you're in the middle of any paint job, and in this case I used facsimilé copies of a notorious antisemitic French newspaper from the thirties and the forties whose name also happens to be "au pilori" – "to the shame pole." Half-legible antisemitic filth operating as a pedestal for the everyday type of objects that back in the day were used as the scaffolds on which the transgressors of yesteryear were publicly mocked, humiliated, castigated, sometimes also executed: another circle closed.

No stone left unturned...

Indeed. I'd like to go back to the beginning though, and your remark about 'strong' colors and their relationship to 'strong' feelings, such as shame or disgrace. You know, in the end what I'm most interested in with regards to the shame poles is their relationship to *power*, or their status as expressions of a naked, singularly brutal form of power – of a certain order of things that is, or was, deemed sacro-

sanct enough to allow for (or enable) such types of punishment. In a sense this project began with a sense of shock – *my* shock at discovering the true meaning of these innocuous-looking objects dotting the peaceful landscape of rural Flanders. Quite a few of my works take this ambiguous experience of the naked display of power as their point of departure: Lenin's head in Siberia, Bertelli's famous ceramic bust of Mussolini, a Hitler quote adorning the façade of the Haus der Kunst in Munich... A mixture of fascination – it's impossible to call it admiration, but there is a definite attraction – and undiluted horror: how else can one define one's relationship, as an artist, to the fact that so many of the twentieth century's most blood-thirsty mass-murderers have been failed or would-be artists? *How* does one look at a drawing (and not a bad one at that) of the village church of Ardooie – I am not sure whether they have shame poles there, but it's easy to imagine they do – when in the bottom left corner of that drawing it says, in an *artiste's* typical scrawl, "A. Hitler"?

Exhibitions

Objectif Exhibitions 'Au Piloni'

Artist book



**Publication based on the projection of 80 slides.
17 x 24 cm, 150 copies, 80 p.**

Exhibitions

Artbrussels 23.04-26.04.2010

Solo



**'Stone can speak to us, it speaks to us through the wall' - Le Corbusier, 2010.
80 color slides, various dimensions.**

Artbrussels

Text

Sophie Nys rethinks the freedom introduced by conceptual art, in a refreshing and incisive way. Her oeuvre unites a humorous, often ironic approach of the art practices that form the contemporary scene with more poetic portraits of personal experiences and impressions.

The enlarged pages originate from Sophie Nys' Evergrowing personalised catalogue. Taking up the role of curator, this selection says just as much about her art work as it does about the context it circulates in, the mechanisms of selection and representation of contemporary art.

The specific context of Art Brussels is not left unspoken about either. Recalling the freestanding, hanging sculpture she created of *Die Kunst und der Raum* (Martin Heidegger), this show includes a similar spatial intervention of an audiorecording by Lawrence Weiner *Nothing to lose/Niets aan verloren*, referring to the non-literal space her work is represented in at the art fair.

The rescue builds on the lampooning cartoons by Ad Reinhardt about the art world. The abstract expressionist saw the innovations introduced by American post-war painters as an escapegoat for the visual arts, stuck in mimesis and stereotypes. The particular aluminium structure visualises the idea of discord, gutter and saviour but at the same time alludes to the commercial aspect as it is an exact replica of a typical market booth.

The demystification of the art object is repeated in *Weltbild*, a paper reproduction of the alleged toilet seat of Martin Heidegger, recalling the romantic attachment of the philosopher to the idea of uniqueness and singularity in the work of art ('*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*' and '*Das Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*'). As art critic Dieter Roelstrate stated: "Heidegger would probably not have enjoyed seeing his personal toilet seat partake in the techno-utopia of multiplication: of this fetishistic object, once the potent symbol of a specific 'world picture'."

An epoxy intervention in the middle of the toilet seat turns '*Weltbild*' into '*Selbstbild*', reflecting the visitor's image.

A slide show projects each brick of a nature stone wall in Le Corbusier's art studio, especially loved by the architect and of which he once said: "Stone can speak to us through the wall. It is covering rough but smooth to the touch. This wall has become my lifelong companion." By photographing the stones one by one, by showing the unique and pasteus texture of each brick, Sophie Nys aligns her poetic, individualistic approach to the the late practice of Le Corbusier, which was marked by a return to nature, opposing the revolutionary machine esthetic of the earlydays.

artbrussels



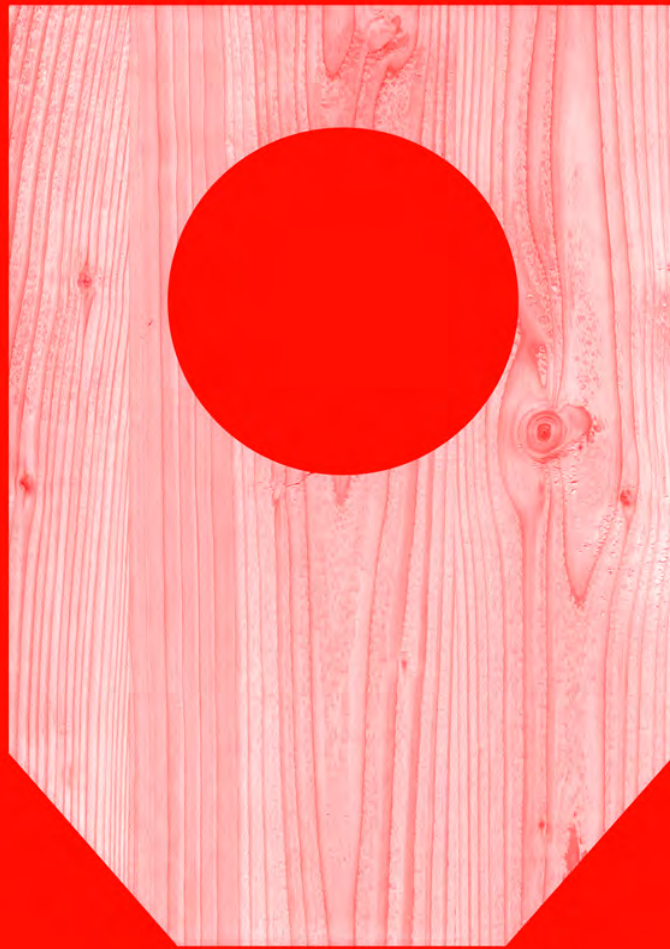
Nothing to lose, 2010. Album, silver. 31,5 x 200 cm.

Exhibitions

Sunday
14.03-21.05.2010

Solo

SOPHIE NYS



14. March – 21. May 2010

Curators: Tim Ryckaert/Amélie Laplanche
www.MOREpublishers.be

Sunday Exhibition

Text

When Martin Heidegger first published *Die Zeit des Weltbildes* (The Age of the World Picture) in 1938, this prophetic early critique of the oppressive regime of scientific (i.e. quantifying and mechanizing or mechanistic) thought followed closely on the heels of his much better-known essay on the “origin of the work of art” from 1936.

One of the invisible ghosts that could be said to haunt *Das Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* is Heidegger's romantic attachment to the idea (and ideal) of uniqueness and singularity in the work of art; in this regard the essay clearly engages in a dialogue with another classic art-theoretical text from the same year, namely Walter Benjamin's *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction - note how 'Reproduzierbarkeit' and 'Reproduction' are in fact very different things) - an essay in which technology is effectively hailed as the revolutionary saviour of a moribund culture. The technology of mechanical reproduction has certainly revolutionized the dissemination of art imagery as well as art proper: it has liberated the artwork from the constraints of spaces (that is to say, always having to be at one place at a time only) and handed it over to the free flow of time.

Heidegger would probably not have enjoyed seeing his personal toilet seat (which we may be sure was hand-crafted by a village artisan) partake in the techno-utopia of multiplication: of this fetishistic object, once the potent symbol of a specific 'world picture', today only a myriad shadows remain - it is no longer present, in other words, only re-presented: space-less yet timely. And Benjamin would perhaps not have wanted to sit on the real thing - yet he certainly would have enjoyed its demystification in print.

Exhibitions

Kunst & Zwalm

29.08-13.09.2009

Group show



Adolf Hitler, Ardoye in Flandern. Pencil scetch, 1917
Curator: Paul Lagrin

Kunst & Zwalm



Kunst ist eine erhabene und zum fanatismus verpflichtende mission, 2009
Print on forex, metal bicycle stand. 220 x 90 cm.

Kunst & Zwalm

Text

Door een citaat van Hitler te integreren in haar installatie, drijft Nys haar werk onmiddellijk in een welbepaalde richting. Het citaat 'Kunst ist eine erhabene und zum Fanatismus verpflichtende Mission' (Kunst is een sublieme missie die tot fanatisme verplicht), tevens de titel van het werk, hing aan de gevel van het 'Haus der (Deutschen) Kunst' tijdens de tentoonstelling 'Entartete Kunst' in 1937. De avant-garde werd beschouwd als een product van gekken en ontspoorde die de antieke proportieer negeerden. In de plaats daarvan schoof het naziregime een esthetisch en moreel verantwoorde 'Arische' kunst naar voren. Het citaat van een mislukte kunstenaar met zijn holle retoriek werd gemonteerd boven een fietsstalling zoals die in de urbane ruimte van Brussel veelvuldig aanwezig is. Dit ensemble wordt in een klein donker sparsenbos geplaatst waar nauwelijks licht in doordringt. Nys associeert het sparsenbos met het Zwarte Woud waar de hut van Heidegger stond. Verschillende dimensies van een historisch discours worden samengebracht: de mislukte kunstenaar, Heideggers hut in Todtnauberg, de existentiële verzwaring van de tijd, de duistere geschriften in contrast met de vrije toeristische mobiliteit in een landschappelijk gebied. Men realiseert zich dat een beroep doen op de puurheid van de natuur en haar helende, rustgevende werking wel eens fictief en problematisch blijkt te zijn. Uiteraard bestaat dit werk vooral op het niveau van de metafoor waarin onschuld/schuld, macht/volgzzaamheid, ideologie/aneddotiek met elkaar wedijveren. Nys toont de ultieme consequentie resulterend uit de ambitie van het mislukte kunstenaarschap en het accepteren en bespelen van een dergelijke boodschap. Zoals Hans Haacke zegt Nys dat alles met alles samenhangt en dat het collectieve, historische geheugen ons direct of indirect determineert. Bij het betreden van een uitgestippelde kunstroute constitueert deze plek een rustpunt dat echter explosieve reacties uitlokt. Men ontdekt dat het citaat in de kunst niet onschuldig is, doch steeds

verraderlijk het discours van de autoriteit in zich draagt. Er is veel geschreven over Heideggers' bedenkelijke houding tegenover Hitler. In zijn inaugurale rede als rector van de universiteit van Freiburg in 1932 hemelde hij Hitler op als de 'werkelijkheid van vandaag en de toekomst'. Heidegger stelde als filosoof de vraag naar het 'zijn' en dit mondde uit in een onderzoek naar de dimensies van de mens-wereldrelatie, waar de mens omvattend en totaal in ondergedompeld is. Om het zijn te doorgronden wijst hij o.a. op het feit dat het 'zijn' een activiteit ontplooit. Het 'zijn' en ook de 'kunst' zijn nabij: we mogen ze daarom niet ontvluchten of ontkennen. Nys toont een ensemble waaruit blijkt dat we in een kwetsbare wereldervaring gemetseld zitten. Het verleden zadelt ons op met een politieke erfenis die zegt dat de gemeenschap haar identiteit baseert op een onbetwistbare grond. Het is een identiteit die anderen uitsluit, bestrijdt en eventueel vernietigt. De tegenstelling tussen ideologie en materialisme krijgt vorm in de fietsstalling. De fiets krijgt het aureool van een bevrijdende activiteit die zich vanuit het platteland doorzet tot in de kern van de grootstad. De donkergroene kleur wijst op de schijnbaar neutrale manoeuvres van het administratieve en bureaucratistische geweld want 'een goed fietsbeleid begint met een goede fietsstalling'. Het werk stimuleert de openbare ruimte als plaats van debat en meningsvorming omdat macht verweven is met beelden, discours en levenswijzen. Het Hitlercitaat is spektakel omdat de kijker dit ondergaat en niet tot een dialoog komt. Toch bezit het werk een zelfkritiek door de speculatieve constructie, die verhult en verkondigt. Door gegevens uit verschillende contexten tegenover elkaar te stellen drukt Nys de wil uit om het subversieve en het politiek incorrecte te integreren. De reactie van een toeschouwer die de naam Adolf Hitler overplakte, bewijst hoe moeilijk het is iemands uitingen te begrijpen zoals hij (in dit geval zij) die zelf begrijpt.

Wim Van Mulders

By 1937 the Nazis had initiated a multitude of restrictions on modern culture. Any form of expression that did not adhere to 'pure nordic character' was banned. Acceptable styles included Neo-Baroque German Romanticism and Classical architecture (Hellenism) designed with vertical patterns and perfect proportions (Golden Section= 6:1.) reflecting German punctilious orderliness. To appease and compensate Hitler's megalomania, he had the House of German Art built by the architect Paul Ludwig Troost in Munich. The museum held three thousand works of art. As Hermann Goring stated: "May this house be devoted only to serious art, art that is our blood, art that people can comprehend. Only that is true art that the ordinary man can understand" (qtd. in Adam 96). The works displayed were selected by Hitler, and many of the submitted works that did not meet his approval were destroyed. The block letter words engraved on bronze over the entrance read: "Die Kunst ist eine erhabene und zum Fanatismus Verpflichtende Mission" (Art is an Ennobling Mission Demanding Fanaticism).

Kunst & Zwalm



In 2006, a total of 21 Hitler watercolors, painted in Flanders while he was a soldier, were discovered in an attic in Belgium and were later auctioned in England for the equivalent of 170.000 Euro.

Exhibitions

Ursula Blickle Stiftung 08.11-13.12.2009

Group show



Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Mühlweg 18, D-76703 Kraichtal-Unteröwisheim
Curator: Dieter Roelstraete

Exhibitions

Galerie Greta Meert 20.11.2009-30.01.2010

Solo show



Galerie Greta Meert, Vaartstraat 13, 1000 Brussel
Photos: Philippe De Gobert

Galerie Greta Meert

Text

Sophie Nys rethinks the freedom introduced by conceptual art, in a refreshing and incisive way. Her oeuvre unites a humorous, often ironic approach of the current art practices that form the contemporary scene with more poetic portraits of every day life and personal experiences through her video work, closely related to the documentary film tradition. Sophie Nys finally takes up the opportunity of this new exhibition to explore in depth the formal research that took off in 2007 with the series *Fujigrammes*. The tone of the exhibition is set by *Aujourd'hui...rien*. The title of this work refers to a quote from Louis XVI's diary, dated 14th of July, 1789. In retrospect, this sentence is closely related to the (self-) relativistic attitude of the artist.

Aujourd'hui...rien consists of two objects made in synthetic materials that resemble marble and gold. The demystification of the contemporary art object is repeated at the entrance of the gallery space where Michael Heidegger's alleged toilet seat is displayed, recalling Duchamp's urinal and art criticism. Or does Nys allude once more to the possibility of a commentary on his thoughts (*Die Hütte*, 2007) when she presents a caricature-like picture of the German philosopher on the severe tones of his audio recording 'Art and Space'?

Of a very different nature are the geometrical forms, circle-triangular-trapezoidal, that run through the space. Separately these recurring elements evoke the formal lan-

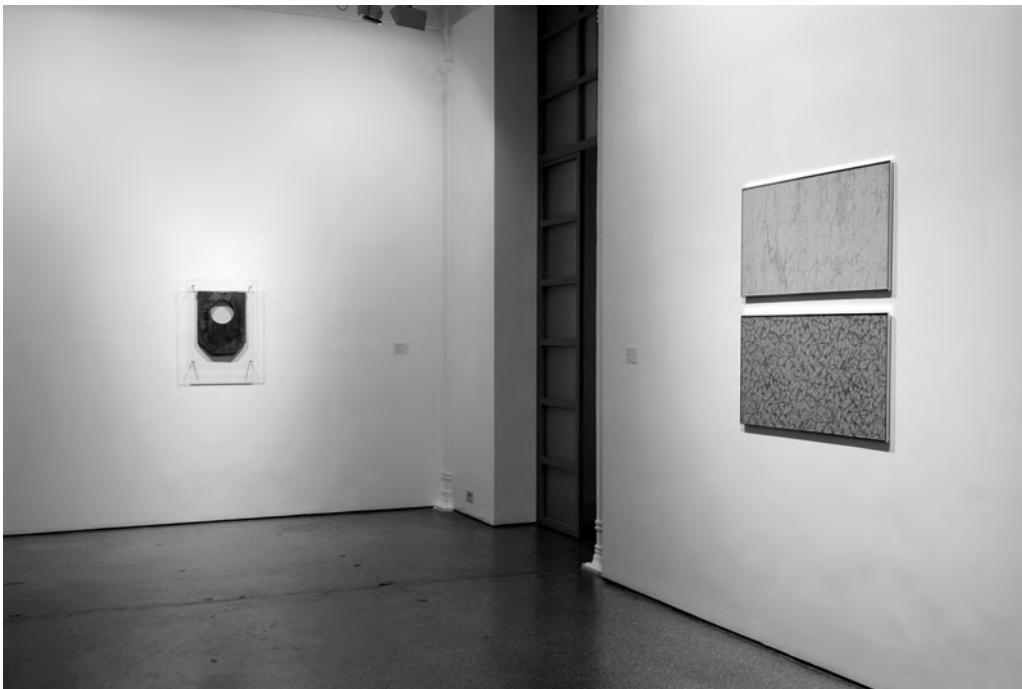
guage of minimal art; in dialogue with the individual works they create a sense of unity as well as an atmosphere of suspense. In the video *The Room*, Nys sets up an estranged dialogue between the homonymous Japanese volcano, considered the most perfectly conical shaped mountain, and the so called 'suicide forest' that lies at the foot of the mountain. A similar concept initiated a new and never exhibited visualisation of the artist's journey to the Black Sea (*Voyage autour de la Mer Noire*, 2002). The formal investigation provides the exhibition with a very intuitive and open character. Here the layered semantic structure makes way for a conceptual free zone.

Finally, the exhibition is not only to be experienced *an sich*. Each work is identified by a label, that is equally for sale. Through this subtle intervention, through this manner of presentation, the artist lets her work balance a fine line between two 'art worlds', each of which is being determined by its own rules and conventions: the democratic but often as sterile experienced museum context and the more dynamic but commercial surroundings of the art galleries. The versatility of artistic leitmotifs is extended in the application of materials and media. The exhibition consists of a slide projection, two 8mm films, a series of canvases, photographs and mixed media installations and the artist's experiments with new materials such as bakelite (*Bakeland*).

Exhibitions

Galerie Greta Meert

Exhibition views



Exhibitions

Be-Part

26.04-28.06.2009

Group show in collaboration with Richard Venlet



Be-Part, Platform voor actuele kunst, Westerlaan 17, B-8790 Waregem

KKM '71-A Buster Keaton, 2009
Dv, black and white, 10'

Exhibitions

Be-Part A Buster Keaton

Installation views



Exhibitions

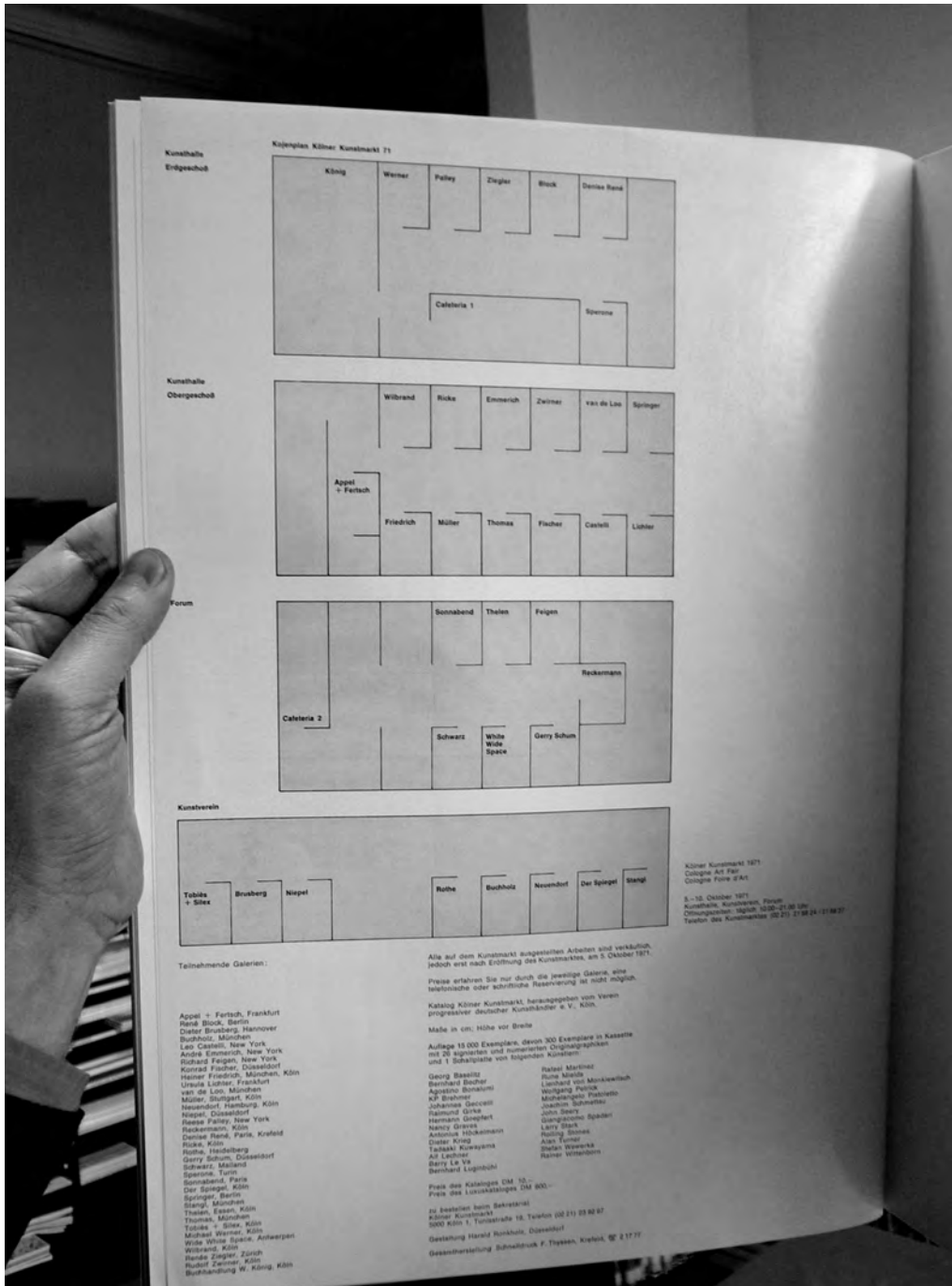
Be-Part

Installation views



Be-Part

Related document



Floor plan art fair Cologne, 1971.

Exhibitions

Kiosk

04.12.2008 - 11.01.2009

Solo



Content Time Capsule

- exhibition archive Kiosk 2006-2008
- 1 Kodak gold professional DVD-R with digital archive
- 1 post card
- 11 exhibition brochures
- 3 flyers
- architectural plan of Kiosk pavilion 1:20

Kiosk, Louis Pasteurlaan 2, B-9000 Gent
Curator: Wim Waelput

Exhibitions

Kiosk

Exhibition views

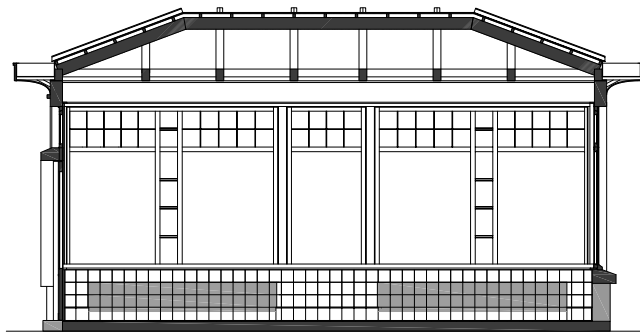


Kiosk



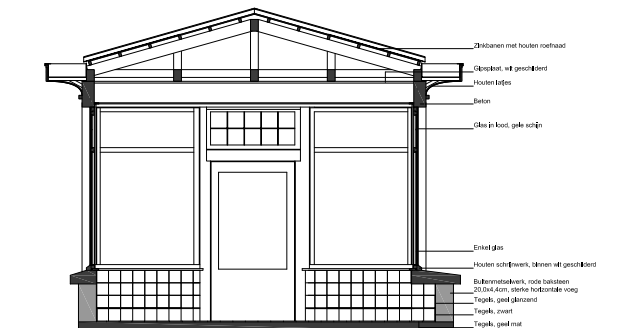
KIOSK Plannen van 'Kiosk' op school 122, Oudekerke op de 18de eeuw van de
Gedrukt door de Staat, 1817, 42, 17, 18, 2, 42, 15, 47, 0.
Opmerking: de afmetingen zijn in meters en de afmetingen zijn in meters.

WESTGEVEL



KIOSK Plannen van 'Kiosk' op school 122, Oudekerke op de 18de eeuw van de
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Opmerking: de afmetingen zijn in meters en de afmetingen zijn in meters.

SNEDE AA



KIOSK Plannen van 'Kiosk' op school 122, Oudekerke op de 18de eeuw van de
Gedrukt door de Staat, 1817, 42, 17, 18, 2, 42, 15, 47, 0.
Opmerking: de afmetingen zijn in meters en de afmetingen zijn in meters.

SNEDE BB

Domaine Pommery

13.05-31.12.2008

Group show



Domaine Pommery, Place du Général Gouraud, F-51689 Reims
Curator: Fabrice Bousteau

Domaine Pommery

Related document



Analysis of the Grand Foudre:

7 Temperate Trees

1. *Ulmus*, (elm)
2. *Buxus sempervirens*, (boxwood)
3. *Platanus hybrida*, (plane)
4. *Juglans regia* L., (walnut)
5. *Populus canadensis*, (poplar)
6. *Quercus*, (oak)
7. *Pyrus communis*, (pear)

3 Tropical trees

- A. Ironwood
- B. *Gaiacum*
- C. Rosewood

Elements

- Femme Assise
- Chimère
- Amérique
- Vigneronne
- Vigne
- Chais

75.000 liter barrel made for Pommery by Emile Gallé, 1903.

Domaine Pommery



BUXUS SEMPERVIRENS BUIS

LE GRAND FOUFRE

Avec une contenance de 75.000 litres, le Grand Foudre de Pommery est l'un des plus gros du monde. Il fut envoyé à l'Exposition Universelle de Saint-Louis (1904) pour illustrer le lien d'amitié créé par Pommery entre la France et l'Amérique.

La sculpture du foudre (Emile Gallé) représente la France, sous les traits d'une jeune femme, offrant un verre de Pommery à l'Amérique. Celle-ci chevauche une sorte de sphinx à tête d'indien, symbole de la vieille Amérique.



JUGLANS REGIA NOYER

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PLATANUS ORIENTALIS PLATANE

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Exhibitions

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

22.04-10.06.2007

Solo show



Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Museumstraat, Deurle
Curator: Joost De Clercq

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens Picture This

Works



HI-TA-CHI, 2006
40 slides in loop

Exhibitions

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens Picture This

Works

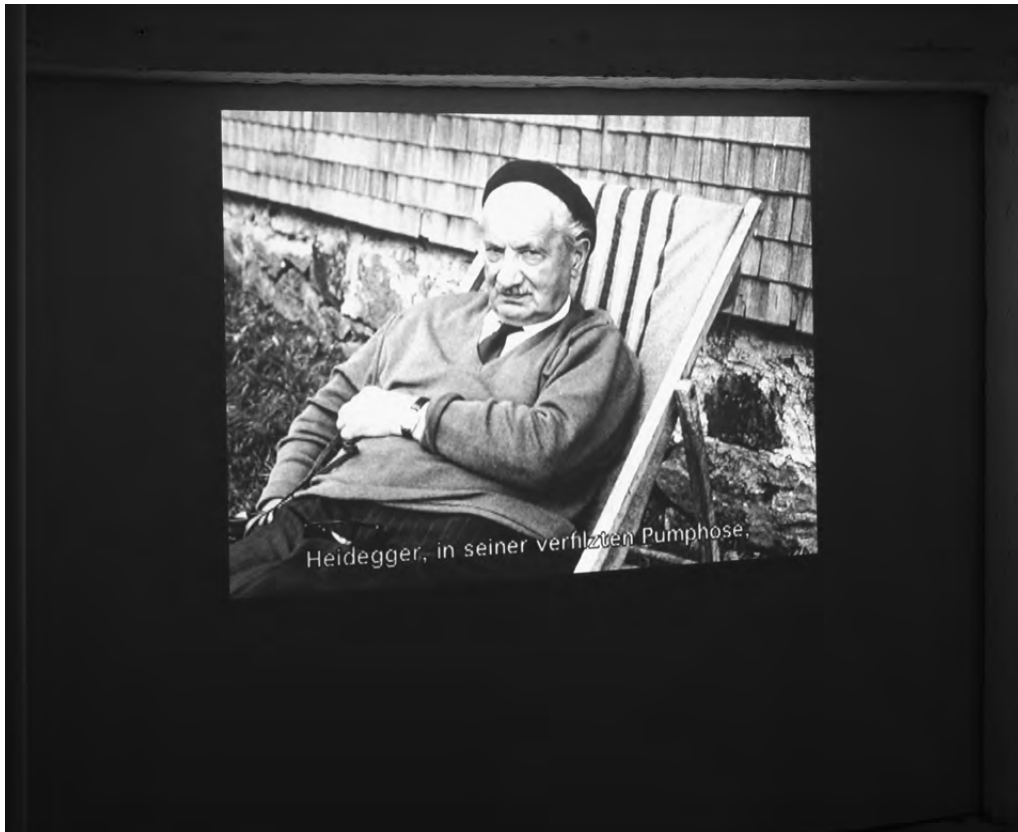


Pour le Sol, 2007
Sandpaper, diameter 12,5 cm

Exhibitions

Argos
24.03-26.05.2007

Group show



Argos, Werfstraat 13 Rue du Chantier, Brussels
Curator: Elena Filipovic

Die Hütte, 2007
12', black & white, 16 mm

Argos Anachronism

Text

ANACHRONISM looks at the work of artists from different generations who have insistently grappled with temporality and history - both universal and personal. More specifically, their work often refutes the image of history as a neat trajectory moving smoothly forward across time. They have opted to work against time - creating works that deliberately counter linear order and received ideas of how to represent the chronologies implicit in history's unfolding - past, present, and future.

The cinematic cut, spatial dislocation, re-enactment, appropriation, collage: these are just some of the means these artists use to construct dissonant temporalities within the same work of art. From Tobias Buche's Aby Warburg-inspired panels of photocopies and Internet images of historical events and aesthetic forms in the 20th century to David Claerbout's juxtaposition of a still photographic image of an American fighter plane shot down in Vietnam with a filmic backdrop of the changing light and vegetation of the same site in the present day, and from Carl Michael von Hausswolff's documentation of a 1960s scientist's experimental recordings of the voices of the dead to Aneta Grzeszykowska's systematic self-effacement from every picture in her family's photo album, these artists' anachrony is subtle, complex, and highly idiosyncratic. In still other examples, the subjects of works in the exhibition are as diverse as the fall of Communism, the legacy of the modernist project, the repetition of the logic of war, but also marginalized figures, the recurrence of forms, or the revision of one's past. In diverse ways and through various media, each of the works thus reveal the ultimate constructedness of all historical narratives as well as the problems inherent to the idea of an inexorably progressive and productive future. And if the possibility of changing the world according to philosopher Giorgio Agamben, lies above all in the effort to "change time," the promise of these works is that through them we might all the better be able to read and question our past and present and thus also possibly redefine the course of the future.

Pieces by nearly 20 international contemporary artists - with several in situ new productions, including a functional cinema conceived by Tobias Putrih - are featured against the exhibition's backdrop of a continuous screening of *La Jetée*, Chris Marker's historic cinematic meditation on the paradoxes of time and memory.

An exhibition booklet with texts by Elena Filipovic, curator of the exhibition, and Daniel Rosenberg, historian of time, will be published for the occasion.

With work by: Boris Belay, Guillaume Bijl, Tobias Buche, David Claerbout, Babak Ghazi, Felix Gmelin, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Carl Michael von Hausswolff, Erwan Maheo, Chris Marker, Deimantas Narkevicius, Sophie Nys, Paulina Olowska, Roman Ondák, Tobias Putrih, Pia Rönicke, Martha Rosler, and Bojan Sarcevic.

Argos Anachronism

Text

Die Hütte is based on an extract from the novel *Alte Meister* (Old Masters) by Thomas Bernhard. Among other things, the fragment tells about a small village (near Freiburg) in the Black Forest, where in 1922 Heidegger let himself build a hut. This hut is still in the possession of the Heidegger family, but inaccessible to the public. The film might be seen as a portrait of this hut, including images from the surroundings, like for example those picturing Germany's first ski slope.

Besides the presence of the hut – where Heidegger wrote *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time) and entrenched himself just after WWII – and by means of a voice-over (Bernhard's text), Heidegger's character and philosophy, and the culture that nurtured both, are being ridiculed. Snug Germany, contemptible Austria, *Black Forest Philosophy*, literature kitsch, pseudo-intelligence, petite-bourgeoisie, dilettantism and amateurism are some keywords with which this monologue is interlarded.

The film was originally conceived as a 16 mm colour film project. But after Nys had discovered one of the black and white pictures Bernhard so vehemently reacts against, she chose to turn it into a black & white film. From somewhere in the middle of the film, where we see the picture in question, it thus 'colours' the project in two directions – back and forth – resulting in an overall black & white film. *Die Hütte* is an inquiry into what may be left, in a material form, from a long gone presence: Heidegger's hut as a trace of Heidegger's presence. Since this absence indicates a somewhat empty, nonsensical presence (the lodging doesn't bear any trace of Heidegger the philosopher; nor of Bernhard the writer, for that matter), the film is at the same time a reflection on how pictures function, on what kind of historical trace they might be, if any.

And this includes the film images themselves. In the long run, it's the tension between at least three elements that makes up the film's skeleton: Bernhard's text; the same text in the form of a voice (as dramatised presence), and the filmed images – which only superficially indicate where the *textual* drama takes place, i.e. Heidegger's *Schwarzwaldhütte*.

Exhibitions

Muhka

15.03-15.04.2007

Solo show



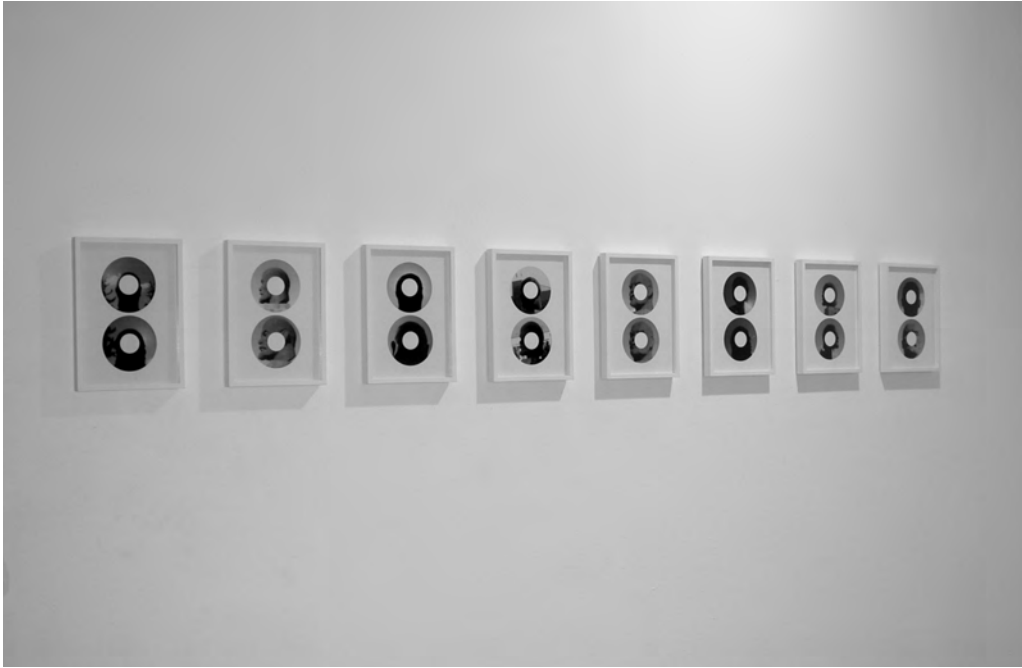
Muhka, Leuvenstraat 32, Antwerpen
Curator: Dieter Roelstraete

Exhibitions

Muhka

It is lonely at the top

Installation views



Muhka

It is lonely at the top

Text

De jonge Brusselse kunstenares Sophie Nys (°1973) reisde in 2005 af naar Ulan-Ude, de hoofdstad van de onherbergzame Russische deelstaat Boerjatië in oostelijk Siberië, om er het grootste nog rechtstaande standbeeld van Lenin, de stichter van het intussen alweer vergane Sovjet-rijk, te filmen. Van dat standbeeld werd destijds alleen maar het hoofd gerealiseerd, en Lenins monumentale, enigzins Mongools ogende kop vormt dan ook het dramatische puntum van Nys' grofkorrelige super 8-film. We krijgen het hoofd van Lenin vanuit alle mogelijke hoeken te zien, vanop wisselende afstanden, terwijl rondom zijn norske, op oneindig gestelde blik het dagelijkse leven op het centrale stadsplein zijn prozaïsche gangetje gaat – één die natuurlijk allang niet meer overeenstemt met het utopische visioen van Vladimir Iljitsj Oeljanov. Onderaan in beeld verschijnen tekstflarden uit de gesprekken die Lenin in het begin van de jaren twintig met de Duitse communiste Clara Zetkin voerde, en waarin herhaaldelijk de vraag wordt gesteld naar de plaats van de 'vrouwenkwesitie' binnen het bredere kader van de proletarische revolutie en de arbeidersstaat. Vraag en antwoord lijken zich volledig binnen Lenins hoofd af te spelen; de klinische stilte van dit historische gesprek wordt alleen op het einde van de film doorbroken door een langzaam aanzwellende revolutionaire mars. Zetkin is vandaag grotendeels vergeten, maar was destijds een gerespecteerde compagnon de route van Rosa Luxemburg, en de 'stichter' van de allereerste internationale vrouwendag, op 8 maart 1911 – belangrijke herinneringen die allemaal meespelen in Nys' elegische "Lénine en pensant", een monument ter nagedachtenis van de toekomst in het verleden en het verleden in de toekomst.

In de aanpalende ruimte zijn van Sophie Nys nog eens vijf posters te zien uit haar gestaag groeiende "ever-growing personalized catalogue": vijf "pages" waarin ze voor haar belangrijkste kunstwerken of beelden van die kunstwerken honoreert – in dit concrete geval onder meer uit de schatkamer van het Poesjkin-museum in Moskou.

Exhibitions

Bozar

27.10-28.11.04

Solo show



Bozar, Rue Ravenstein, B-1000 Brussels
Curators: NICC, Antwerp

Bozar

Airs classiques, a mini retrospective.

Text

Pour son exposition individuelle qui, en réalité, a tout d'une mini-rétrospective, Sophie Nys a été invitée à présenter ses œuvres dans des salles dites 'blanc-noir' du Palais des Beaux-Arts - salles qui étaient autrefois essentiellement dédiées à la photographie. Ce choix l'aura certainement enchantée, non tant parce que ses œuvres multi-, trans- et interdisciplinaires - dans ce que ces termes si souvent galvaudés ont de plus fascinant - encore en pleine évolution s'inscrivent sagement dans le cadre de la tradition photographique, mais surtout parce qu'elles sont quelque part une ode monumentale à l'esthétique spartiate du Noir & Blanc. D'un point de vue purement formel, voire formaliste, il est clair que cette tension graphiquement codée qui s'installe traditionnellement entre le blanc et le noir - le blanc étant l'absence de toute couleur et le noir la somme centrifuge de toutes les couleurs - est le fil rouge de cette exposition.

Des Geo-ID massifs qui ne sont pas sans rappeler l'infâme carré noir de Malevitch, une œuvre vidéo qui s'articule autour d'une toile du même Malevitch, une série d'aplats noirs identiques qui évoquent étrangement la syntaxe formelle de Vermeer (un autre « dieu » au panthéon de Nys), des objets monolithiques stylisés qui ajoutent une troisième dimension à ses Geo-ID, le t-shirt noir que l'artiste porte ou la silhouette noire aux contours nets sous la forme de laquelle elle nous apparaît dans ses vidéoportraits ludiques... Des photos de cimaises d'un blanc monochrome qui trahissent son amour de la page blanche ou à la limite du trait sobre, ce t-shirt blanc qu'elle endosse exceptionnellement dans un autre vidéoportrait... Dans cette rétrospective encyclopédique de cinq ans d'activité artistique fébrile, il ne reste décidément que bien peu de place pour les tons gris, les zones grises, les cellules grises et autres Grauen qui dominent notre société actuelle - y compris le monde de l'art - et ont sur eux un eSet soporifique, voire paralysant. Il va sans dire que Sophie Nys préfère les extrêmes, les dis-

cours clairs et la ligne franche de la polarisation et de l'articulation à la médiocrité et la grisaille des discours vacillants, des commentaires soupesés, de l'exploration hésitante de vagues zones d'ombre et qu'elle inscrit ainsi à contre-courant des tendances actuelles. Sophie Nys aime les propos sans équivoque, un "oui" ou un "non" sans partage, les gestes transparents - cette ligne droite, typiquement bruxelloise! - les signes, les signaux, les bornes, - et c'est précisément pour cela qu'à notre tour nous l'aimons.

Ce champ de tension qui est l'épine dorsale de cette exposition, est également présent au niveau conceptuel et structurel. D'une part, des "airs classiques" qui évoquent les discours tout aussi classiques des papes de l'art contemporain (canonisé), cette quête obsessionnelle de l'essence de l'art en tant qu'organe institutionnel, ce questionnement obsessionnel du musée en tant que média et environnement dédié à l'art en tant que construction et hypothèse. D'autre part, le discours autobiographique parfois éhonté et très noir-blanc d'un être aux prises avec ses émotions... D'une part, la teneur élégiaque d'un film sur la Mer noire, les vocalises de la Callas et un net engouement pour les accents mélancoliques et mélodramatiques de la musique slave. D'autre part, cette ouverture à la musique pop d'une grande fraîcheur (cf. spectacle d'air guitar) qui ne paraît pouvoir fleurir que sous le soleil mexicain... D'une part, cet amour de la monochromie, monomanie et monotonie, des monolithes qui semblent tout droit issus de 2001 L'Odyssée de l'espace. D'autre part, ce généreux florilège extrait de ce que l'art apparemment très fécond de ces cinquante dernières années a produit de plus polymorphe, hétérogène et multimédia...

C'est dans cette éternelle contradiction, dans cet éternel paradoxe à l'image de la vie que résident à la fois le charme, l'intérêt et la force des œuvres de Sophie Nys.

Dieter Roelstraete

Exhibitions

Bozar

Airs classiques, a mini retrospective.

Installation views



Exhibitions

Bozar

Airs classiques, a mini retrospective.

Installation view

