

x leaves a mark;
signs, sober and undefined,
defying presence.

I am here.

LE DESIR
DANS L'ART
C'EST
D'IMAGINER
LE REEL
COMME
UNE VARIABLE
INCONNUE

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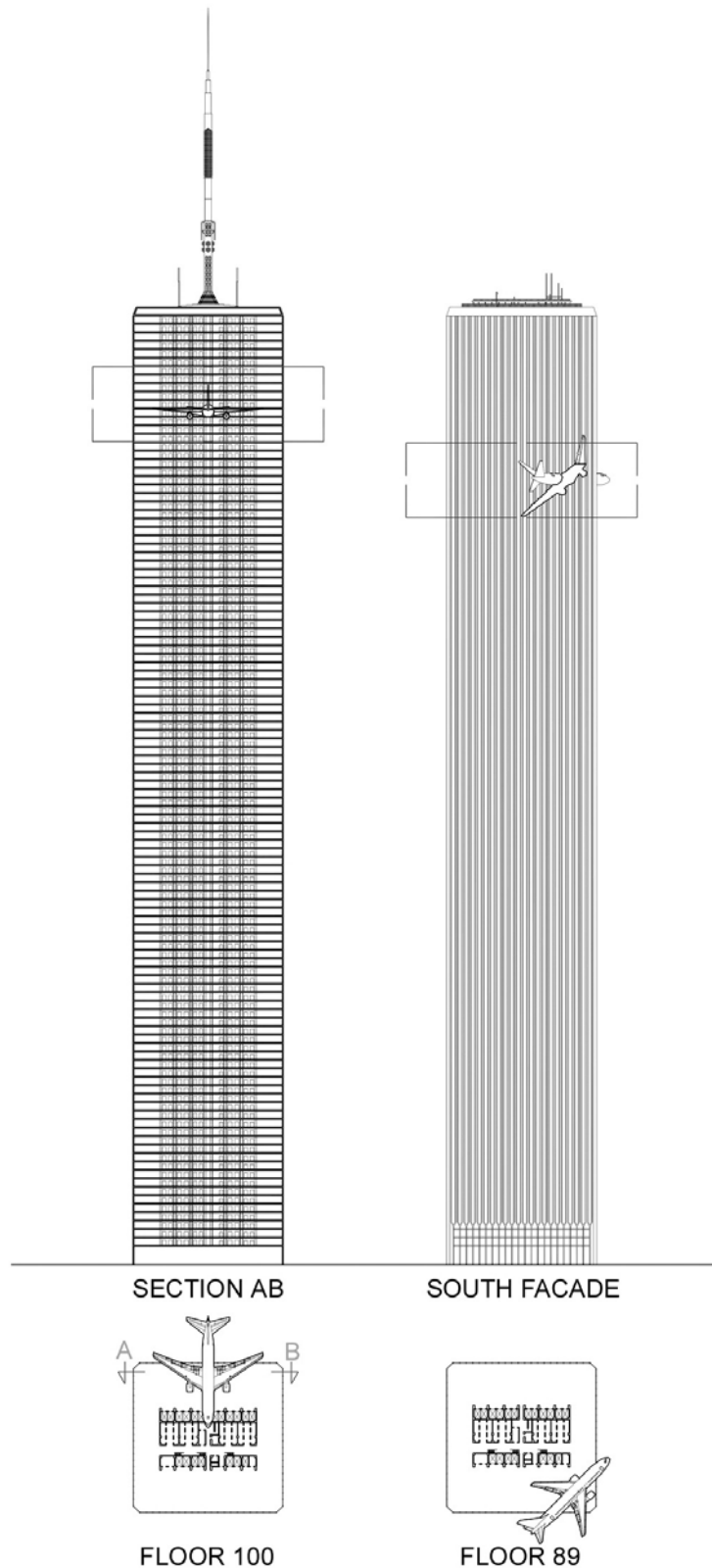
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INTRODUCTION



'Research in and through practice' has been my main focus since the start of my professional activities. After graduating from Sint Lucas (1994), I joined T.O.P. Office directed by architect Luc Deleu. I worked on the research project *The Unadapted City*, for which I completed the research phase of the project, resulting in ten painted diagrams still used by T.O.P. Office today. I was also part of U7-pole, in which we created a case study for a fictional extension of the city of Vienna based on the painted diagrams.

From 2000 to 2002, I directed the research project *After-Sprawl*, Research on the Contemporary City at Xaveer De Geyter Architects. In this study we defined the concept of 'negative space' – an in-between or left-over space that is usually neglected in master planning – as the main planning tool for the creation of a more sustainable and qualitative living environment. The atlas we created consisted of both maps and pictures, next to a projective part, in which spatial strategies were explored in ten imaginary projects.

As a researcher artist in residence at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht (2002/03), I started my own artistic practice and mainly worked on *Dictionary of Space* – a project developed in four parts: Housing, Public Space, The City, and Methodology. The dictionary verbalizes concepts concerning architectural topics such as appropriation, boundaries, territories, representation and identity. *Dictionary of Space* manifests itself in different media such as magazines, publications, performances, texts, drawings,

models, installations and video. The first part *Housing*, published as a book, explains the notion of housing through drawing and writing, disconnected from the image and style of the house. Besides my drawings, it contains five fictional stories written by the philosopher and writer Jannah Loontjes. The English version contains an additional text by the philosopher Johnny Golding, while the Dutch version is illustrated with a ping pong of poetry between myself and the artist Suchan Kinoshita. The third part, *The City*, consists of seven theoretical statements about urbanism called *The Seven Sins of Urbanism*, which were presented both as an exhibition, and printed as certificates in a small booklet. The fourth part, *Methodology*, is ongoing and consists of a series of art works that reflect on the events that happen in our time, and are produced as events are taking place. Often they translate what happened through a process of drawings. All this research and the related artefacts have been presented in my first solo exhibition in 2004 called *Making Things Public* at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, at that time directed by Catherine David. The installation was set-up as an archive where the different elements that constitute the work can be found. The title referred to the simple fact that 'exhibiting' means 'making things public'. The installation was weekly animated by a performance, lecture, action showing a way of finding something in the archive. The second part, *Public Space*, was developed in 2008/09, during a six months art and research residency in Buchsenhausen

Page 2 DÉSIR, 2019

Work in progress

FIREWORKS II, 2001

Offset print

A – project for Amsterdam

ERREUR CONTRE NATURE, LIEVEN DE BOECK, 2010

PROPOSAL: ERREUR CONTRE NATURE # 1.

I propose to buy a small plot of 44 cm² situated on the main square (Mahlerplein) in the axis of the Debussylaan. The plot has the shape of the letter A of my Alphabet; ●. The idea is to introduce a mistake or mystery in the perfect plan of The Zuidas. The project would only be manifest in the kadaسترplan, where a strange shape appears on the Mahlerplein with a number referring to an owner.

Some meetings and communication with the projectbureau Zuidas took place. Every time the project was received positively and every time a big smile appeared on the face of the different people involved.

Nevertheless I received the following answer;

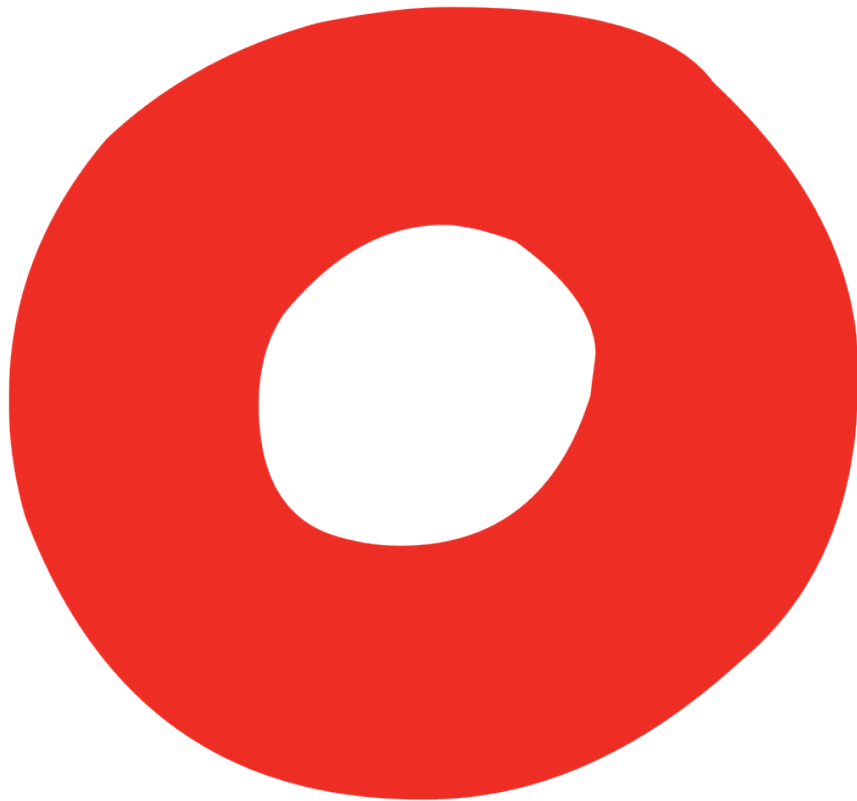
PROCESS:

Dear Lieven,
Unfortunately I have to inform you that the Zuidas will not collaborate in selling you a piece of land to realize your art project. The reason for this is that we are very selective in choosing the art projects we want to contribute to with money and time. Our philosophy is to participate only in projects that are easily accessible by a large audience.

Because we are convinced that your project is only reaching a small audience we can not support its realization.

Nevertheless, I wish you success in realizing your project.

Kind regards. *(free translation, original dutch text in the expo)*



in Innsbruck . The result was published in four books Pubic Space, L.E.T.T.E.R.S. , containing letters and drawings, one for every day of the year, addressed to myself, undersigned by Le Corbeau . The letters are copies of found fragments of text and images. By telling a story from one person to another, these letters break through the private environment allowing for a 'public inner space' between writer and reader to arise. Through the medium of the letter, I play with the borders of this created space. By transposing certain fragments into my own alphabet, the text turns into an image which can only be read by me. In doing so, the public space is at once privatised and erased.

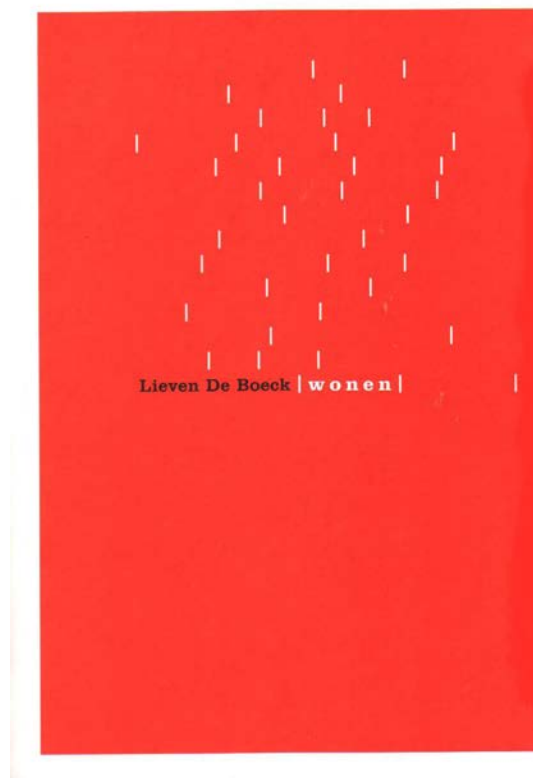
In 2009 I was invited by the Virtual Museum Zuidas in Amsterdam for a project about art in public space. I proposed to introduce a mistake in the 'perfect' Dutch urban planning methods, in reference to Gordon Matta Clark's Fake Estates project of 1973 . The new void I introduced was not visible in reality, but had a lot of planning consequences . Following this project, I was invited to teach a seminar at the University of Amsterdam with Prof. Wouter Davidts. It was during this seminar, while reflecting on how to describe my artistic work, the notion – and title of the proposed research project – emerged: The Archive of Disappearance.

The seemingly antithetical concepts of disappearance and archive are of central importance in my artistic practice and research. Disappearance is operative through the treatment, appropriation

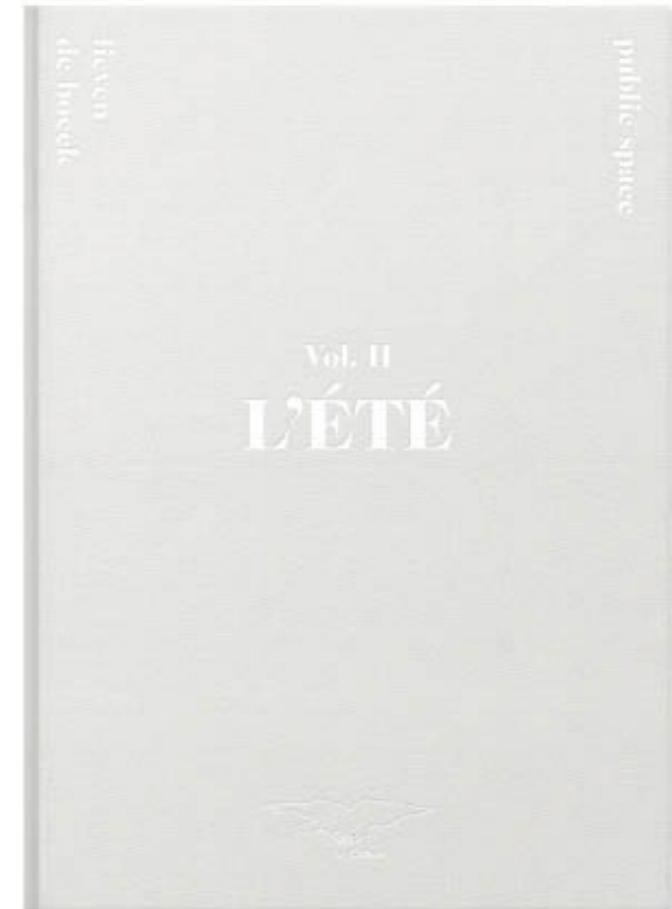
and reinterpretation of 'found material' (objects, data, copies, or images) by cutting, covering, hiding. An archive displays and represents a body of work or grouped material, with the main task of preventing loss or disappearance, but as a result, things are simultaneously taken away from the public view or their context. The Archive of Disappearance describes the play in my work between showing and hiding, between searching and finding, between meaning and denial, between what we see and what stays invisible.

Since a few years, I try to integrate the concept of the Archive of Disappearance in my solo-shows. I call these installations 'typological exhibitions', that relate to the space, content and context of the exhibition. The latest of these 'typological exhibition', Image not Found, was developed in collaborating with Pascal Neveux, the artistic director of the FRAC in Marseille. This exhibition particularly explored new ways of showing art to the public through an 'activation' of the works. Image not Found opened in Marseille in 2016, and was adapted for Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Belgium. In this framework, I presented my first monography, edited by both museums, and published in 2017 by Onomatopée in Eindhoven.

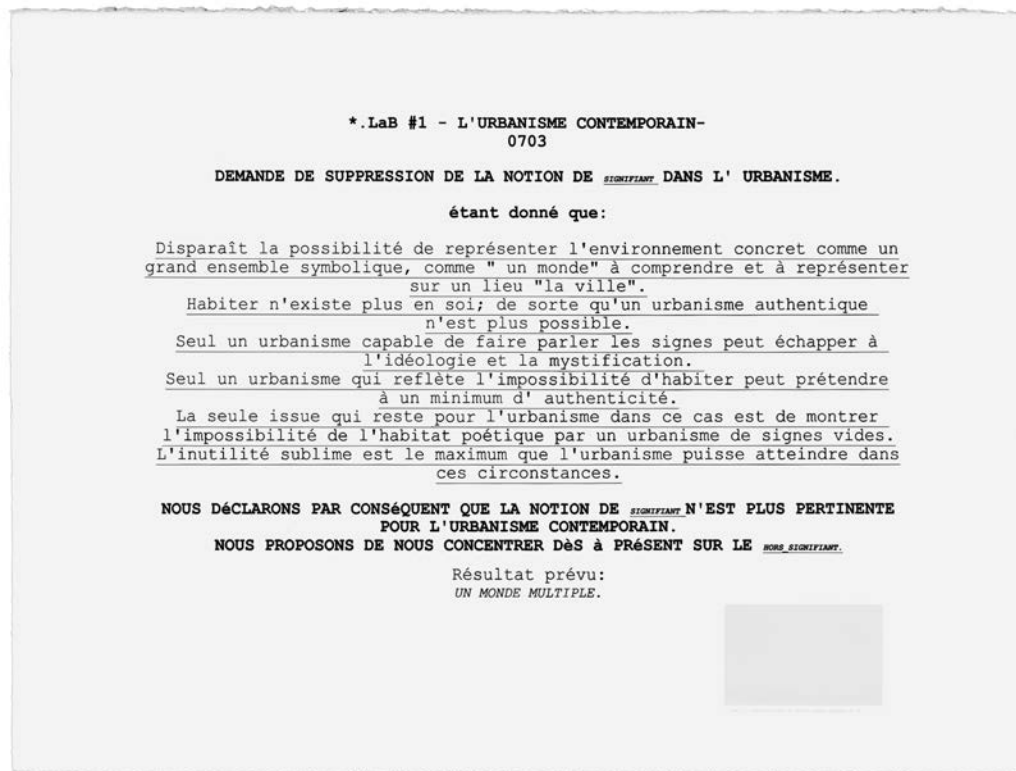
THE DICTIONARY OF SPACE 2002-2015



HOUSING, 2004
Cover book Dutch edition
Right PUBLIC SPACE, 2009
Cover book, Vol. II, L'ÉTÉ



LETTERS BOOK SUMMER, 2009



THE CITY, THE SEVEN SINS OF URBANISM, 2003
CERTIFICAT N°1 LE SIGNIFIANT
Offset print on paper, silkscreen stamp

THE DICTIONARY OF SPACE

As a researcher in residence at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht (2002/03), I started my own artistic practice and mainly worked on Dictionary of Space – a project developed in four parts: Housing, Public Space, The City, and Methodology. The dictionary verbalizes concepts concerning architectural topics such as appropriation, boundaries, territories, representation and identity. Dictionary of Space manifests itself in different media such as magazines, publications, performances, texts, drawings, models, installations and video. The first part Housing, published as a book, explains the notion of housing through drawing and writing, disconnected from the image and style of the house. Besides my drawings, it contains five fictional stories written by the philosopher and writer Jannah Loontjes. The English version contains an additional text by the philosopher Johnny Golding, while the Dutch version is illustrated with a ping pong of poetry between myself and the artist Suchan Kinoshita. The third part, The City, consists of seven theoretical statements about urbanism called The Seven Sins of Urbanism, which were presented both as an exhibition, and printed as certificates in a small booklet. The fourth part, Methodology, is ongoing and consists of a series of art works that reflect on the events that happen in our time and are produced as events are taking place. Often, they translate what happened through a process of drawings.

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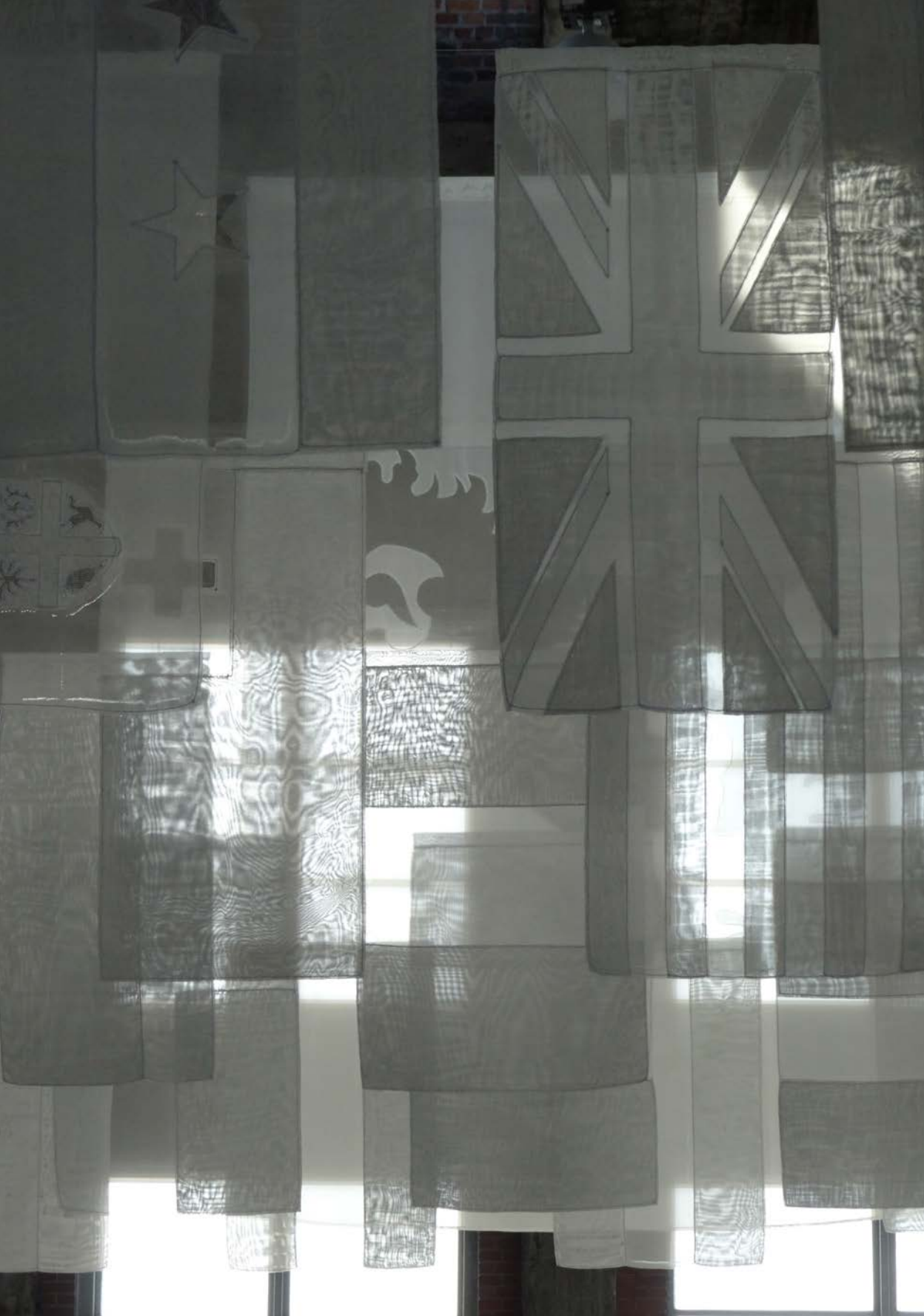
Page 12-13, THE TYPOLOGY HOUSE, 2004
Model scale 1/1, wood and paint
Exhibition view, Witte De With, Rotterdam



LET US BE US AGAIN AND AGAIN AND ALWAYS
2015

Overview exhibition
Darling Foundry, Montréal
June- September 2015





PRESS RELEASE, DARLING FOUNDRY
MONTRÉAL 2015

LET US BE US, AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND ALWAYS, the first exhibition in Canada of the Belgian artist Lieven De Boeck, will feature two installations dialoguing together both formally and conceptually.

The White Flags project follows the artists' visit to the United Nations headquarters in New York. Struck by the strictly alphabetical deployment of the flags of the 192 member states of the institution, De Boeck began to question the ways in which the flags are grouped by formal affinities. He thus identified six categorical patterns – the abstract, crosses, circles, stars, crescents, and the figurative – before classifying them based on their number of colors to avoid the alphabetical classification. The second phase of the project was to eliminate any coloration and to create paper cut versions of the flags with as many layers as there are colors used. Purified and bleached, these ersatz national flags made of paper are expropriated from their original specificity and function. The ending result is as if de Boeck has somehow neutralized the flags symbols and religious references, as well as their historical and ideological meanings, all of which form, in part, their identity.

In addition to the canopy of flags that are suspended in the air, a multitude of basketballs that are randomly scattered, occupies the floor. We find here forty three identical basketballs painted with the forty three Pantone tonalities identified from the United Nations flag colors. A colored stencil is applied to each of them highlighting the oceans. In The White Flags piece, which consists of identifying geometric forms or common cultural and national symbols, the research here is on the chromatic convergences of the various flags.

In response to the effect of sectarian flags following one another, the basketballs will evoke the concept of globalization. Each marked with white ink in the form of footprints representing the five continents, they become globes.

Using game vocabulary to question global issues, dialectic languages reoccur in de Boeck's work. The installation presented here, with strategies to "de-colour" and "tattoo" the flags' geometric shapes, its various swaying movements and bearings, all highlight the fragility of our world, of our culture and identity.

Emmanuel Lambion

WHITE FLAGS #2, 2014
Tulle, nylon and embroidery, 193 flags

Page 12-13 THE WORLD UN-MADE, 2015
Paint on basketballs



IMAGE NOT FOUND
2016
Tous les jours une exposition, tous les jours
une performance, Lundis exceptées.

Lieven De Boeck - IMAGE NOT FOUND

Tous les jours une exposition, tous les jours
une performance, Lundis exceptés.

Cette exposition est l'occasion de parcourir dix années de travail, non pas sous la forme d'une rétrospective soucieuse d'une quelconque chronologie ou sous celle d'un inventaire formel, mais pour questionner, au contraire, le statut même de l'exposition et de l'institution qui l'accueille.

Fort de nombreuses pièces produites entre 2013 et 2015 lors de sa résidence au Cirva à Marseille et de l'acquisition en 2013 par le Frac de Hollywood Alphabet (A-Z), Lieven De Boeck nous propose une exposition conçue comme un manifeste. Il s'agit de questionner l'espace muséal et son fonctionnement codifié, d'interroger le statut de l'œuvre et ses typologies formelles, stylistiques et conceptuelles.

La libre manipulation de concepts, la mise en abyme de ces typologies permettent à Lieven de Boeck d'entraîner le visiteur dans une déambulation conçue comme une suite de questionnements à la fois poétiques et politiques. S'y révèlent les notions d'identité, de langage, de jeux combinatoires faisant appel à des concepts esthétiques, mathématiques et politiques. Le nombre d'or, les canons classiques de la beauté, la notion d'original, de copie et de ready-made, les suites mathématiques (suite de Fibonacci), les unités de mesure, les typologies architecturales (Neufert, le Modulor) sont autant de territoires de recherche que l'artiste investit par la production d'installations et d'objets à forte valeur ajoutée, esthétique et conceptuelle. Pour Lieven de Boeck, le statut de l'objet est fondamental – un statut qu'il fait évoluer entre une dimension d'objets/sculptures et d'objets/concepts, activables dans le cadre de performances.

Procédant par soustraction, par prélèvements et par découpes de formes et de couleurs, telle l'œuvre *The White Flags*, 2015 – composée des 193 drapeaux des Nations Unies qu'il classe par affinités formelles après en avoir évacué les couleurs – Lieven de Boeck questionne les codes et les usages établis pour mieux les analyser et nous en proposer des modes de lecture très personnels. Par la création de son propre alphabet, l'artiste offre au visiteur un univers de signes et de formes dont le sens nous échappe et dont lui seul

connaît les clefs de lecture. Le visiteur est alors amené à procéder par jeux combinatoires et par analogies pour tenter de décrypter et d'identifier le sens caché de ces lettres inconnues.

Fasciné par le statut du langage et par ses modes d'apparition sans en être pour autant un théoricien, Lieven de Boeck formule également, en créant son alphabet, un énoncé politique sur l'analphabétisme – facteur d'exclusion et de rejet – et ses ravages dans nos sociétés contemporaines. Ce n'est pas un hasard s'il s'intéresse de si près à la fonction du langage et à ses codifications internes en examinant les rapports entre la forme des symboles alphabétiques et l'esthétique de l'écriture qu'il s'ingénie à explorer. Jonglant avec la même facilité et la même fascination avec les chiffres et les suites mathématiques, Lieven de Boeck en inventorie toutes les possibilités combinatoires, allant jusqu'à créer une nouvelle et subjective unité de mesure à l'échelle de son corps (Ldb meter # 5 / Knot 1, Ldb meter # 6 / Knot 2...). Il joue une nouvelle fois avec les conventions en vigueur et vient perturber le sens établi des choses, non sans une note d'ironie ; il s'inscrit ainsi dans une longue et riche filiation artistique, de Guy de Cointet à Marcel Broodthaers, et de Marcel Duchamp bien entendu. Fort de ces affinités esthétiques et de ses manipulations formelles et conceptuelles, Lieven de Boeck nous donne à voir une exposition qui, témoignant d'un esprit libre, bouscule les usages en place et demande à nous affranchir, le temps d'une exposition, des univers normés auxquels nous sommes confrontés en permanence.

Ainsi, au Plateau 2, l'exposition se visite comme une performance sur quatorze semaines. Ce parti pris est le point de départ du protocole de visite établi par Lieven de Boeck pour cet espace qui ne se découvrira qu'en petits groupes, sur rendez-vous, plusieurs fois par jour. La durée de cette visite est calibrée à l'échelle d'un espace-temps réinventé qui ouvre ensuite au débat et à la parole : comment visiter une exposition ? quel rôle et quelle place pour l'artiste aujourd'hui dans notre société ? comment et où se situe l'institution ? Cette exposition, écrite, pensée, habitée par un artiste engagé, est aussi pour le Frac l'occasion de repenser ses missions en tant que lieu d'études, de recherche, d'expérimentation au bénéfice de tous.

Pascal Neveux, commissaire de l'exposition

Plateau 1

DÉFENSE D’AFFICHER, 2014
Neon, pigment, 70 × 100 cm

Page 18-19 WHITE FLAGS #2, 2014
Tulle, nylon and embroidery, 193 flags

Page 20-21 PUZZLE, IMAGE NOT FOUND, 2016
Variable materials







IMAGE NOT

Plateau 2

IMAGE NOT FOUND, Performance, 2016
Studio LDB Lieven De Boeck- Julia Reist
Production in collaboration with the mediation team of FRAC-PACA



Performance.

Movement and the human body itself are proposed here as a choreographic intervention that develops as a statement of purpose for this exhibition, a statement that simultaneously questions the typological framework of the museum. That is to say, movement-based mediation between physical actors helps give audiences an alternative perspective, a new or different pathway towards accessibility and understanding. However, this pathway remains undefined, unfolding through the physical space of the gallery by means of these mediating bodies that are instrumental to the conception of the artworks in the exhibition: the art only becomes itself when this choreographic intervention takes place. With this activation of the space, the public is confronted with the performativity of each object, which in a classical presentation stays invisible. The typological restaging – a melding of forms and genres – creates a sense of surprise around the work, raising questions about its notional relation to the museum space, to the performers, to its own status as an object, and thereby unleashes the countless possibilities of a mind endlessly creating ephemeral images and impressions contingent on an unfixed, fleeting moment..

Zac Rose

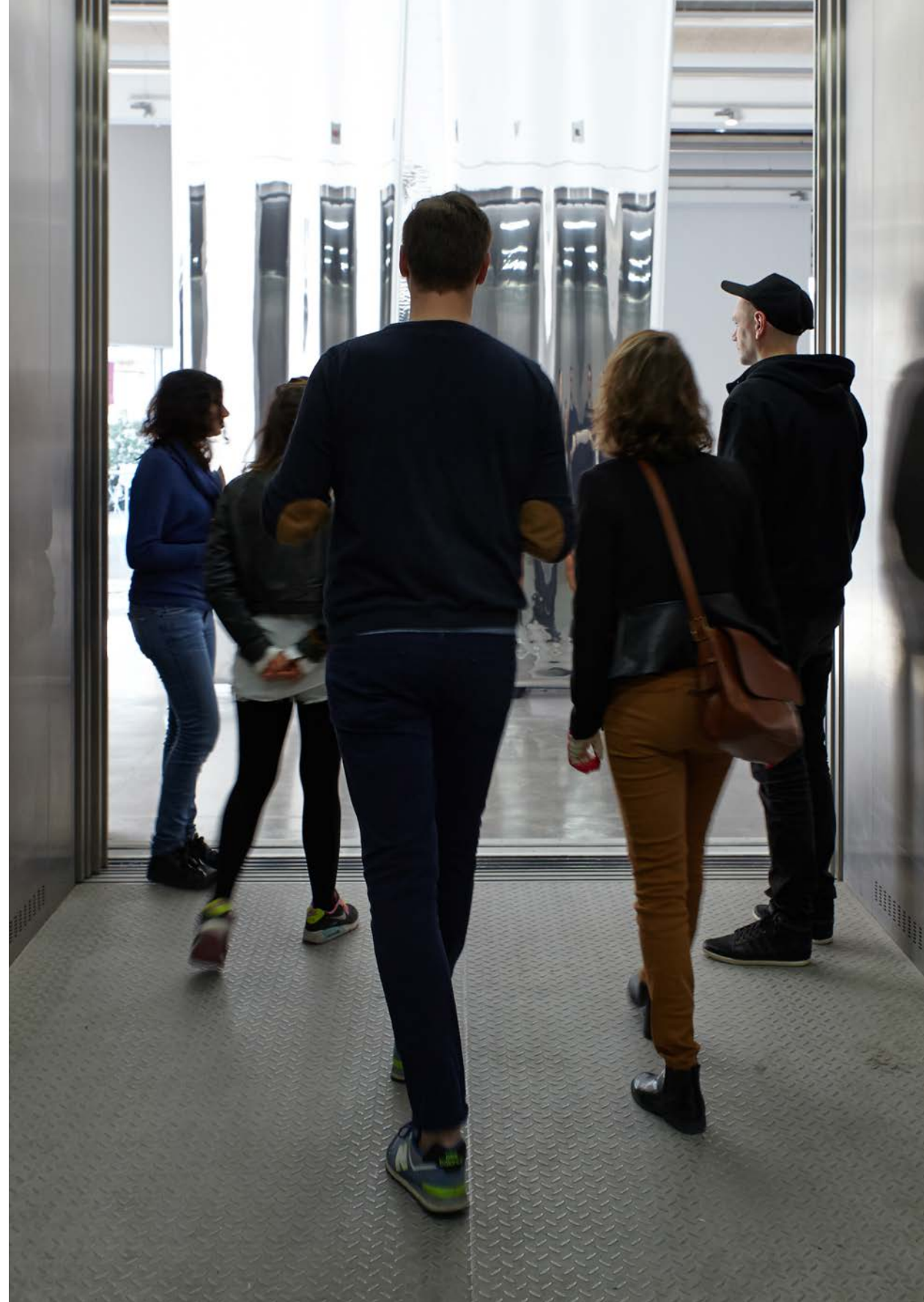
Protocol

1. Reserve a time slot at the front desk
2. Understand that only between 10 and 15 people are allowed at a time
3. Respect that cameras, smartphones, bags, and jackets are forbidden
4. Acknowledge that visitors under 10 years of age are permitted only with the strict guidance of an adult
5. Leave all food or drinks outside (eating or drinking is not permitted)

At the time of the reservation, two mediators will come to escort visitors from the front desk and guide them to the floor where the performance takes place. These mediators will open two large doors in the exhibition space, giving access to the gallery's 'preparation room', normally used only to uncrate artworks and to prepare them for installation. In the middle of the room is a stand with red painted gloves. Each participant receives a pair of these gloves to put over their hands. Meanwhile a voice whispers the narrative of the colors Blue, White and Red that are hanging as models on a wall. The mediators call the service elevator and take the visitors up to the performance floor. There two additional mediators (A and B) are waiting behind a mirror-curtain to begin the performance...



THE CHINESE GLOVES, 2007
Found object.





A: What do I see and what do we forget?

B: What do we know and what do we interpret?

A: We mediate the work, but the reality of meaning lies in your own interrelational presence between Object and Subject.

The Anonymous Letter.

Sir, Madam, or whoever you are, I gave the matter much thought before writing you this letter.

Son of an unknown father and uncertain mother and found on a wasteland, I, the not undersigned, was brought up by an anonymous benefactor.

I grew up in hiding in an unclear place. After completing some studies by correspondence in total solitude, I returned – with no identification or baggage, along a road, which is no longer on the map – to a place that I cannot reveal...

Once there, I wrote several anonymous letters to far-off correspondents... On the point of being discovered, I fled to the desert... where I am now writing to you from... You may be wondering why

I am confiding in you when I don't even know you. It's nothing more than a moment of depression!

As simple as that! There is no point trying to find out who I am – my name will mean nothing to you.

I sign off hesitantly,

The Abovementioned





A: A for Actor
B for Bollywood
C for Cinema
D for Drama
E for End
F for Fame
G for Gossip
H for Hollywood
I for Improvisation
J for Jet-set
K for Kitsch
L for L.A.
M for Movie
N FOR NARCISSIST



B: Z for Zombie
Y for Yoga
X for X-rated
W for Western
V for Vanity
U for U.S.
T for Television
S for Star
R for Reality
Q for Quiz
P for Plot
O for Oscar
...
N FOR NARCISSIST





A: Every object is created through single elements that together build a whole.



B: Each individual piece builds a relation,
which enables an object to exist in its full presence, in all
its layers and fragilities.





A: Here we are, you and me.

B: Presence and absence in an interchangeable movement,
never ending, always evolving.



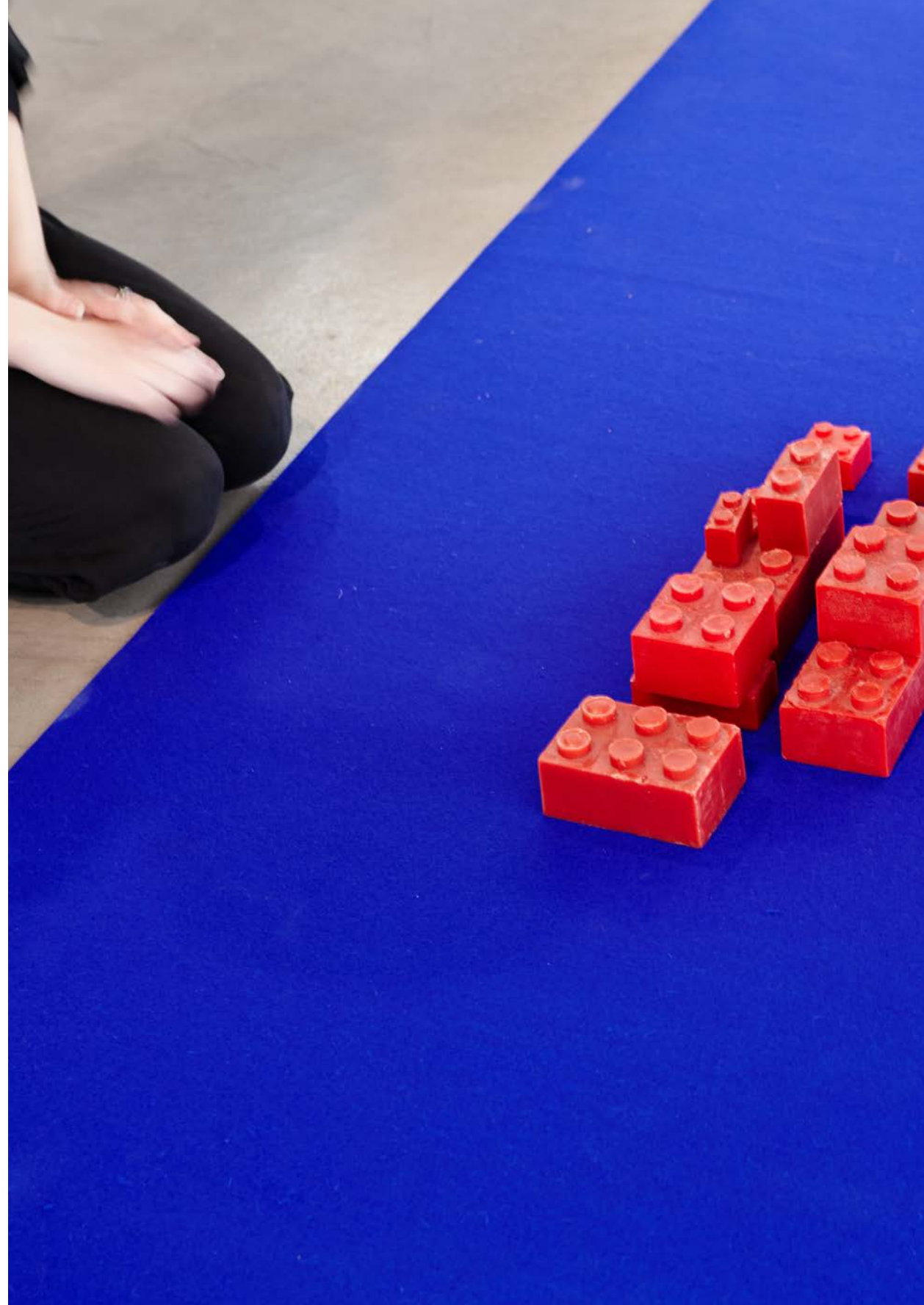
A: We create and we deconstruct, but what persists is our own understanding of a limitless space between Subject and Object.





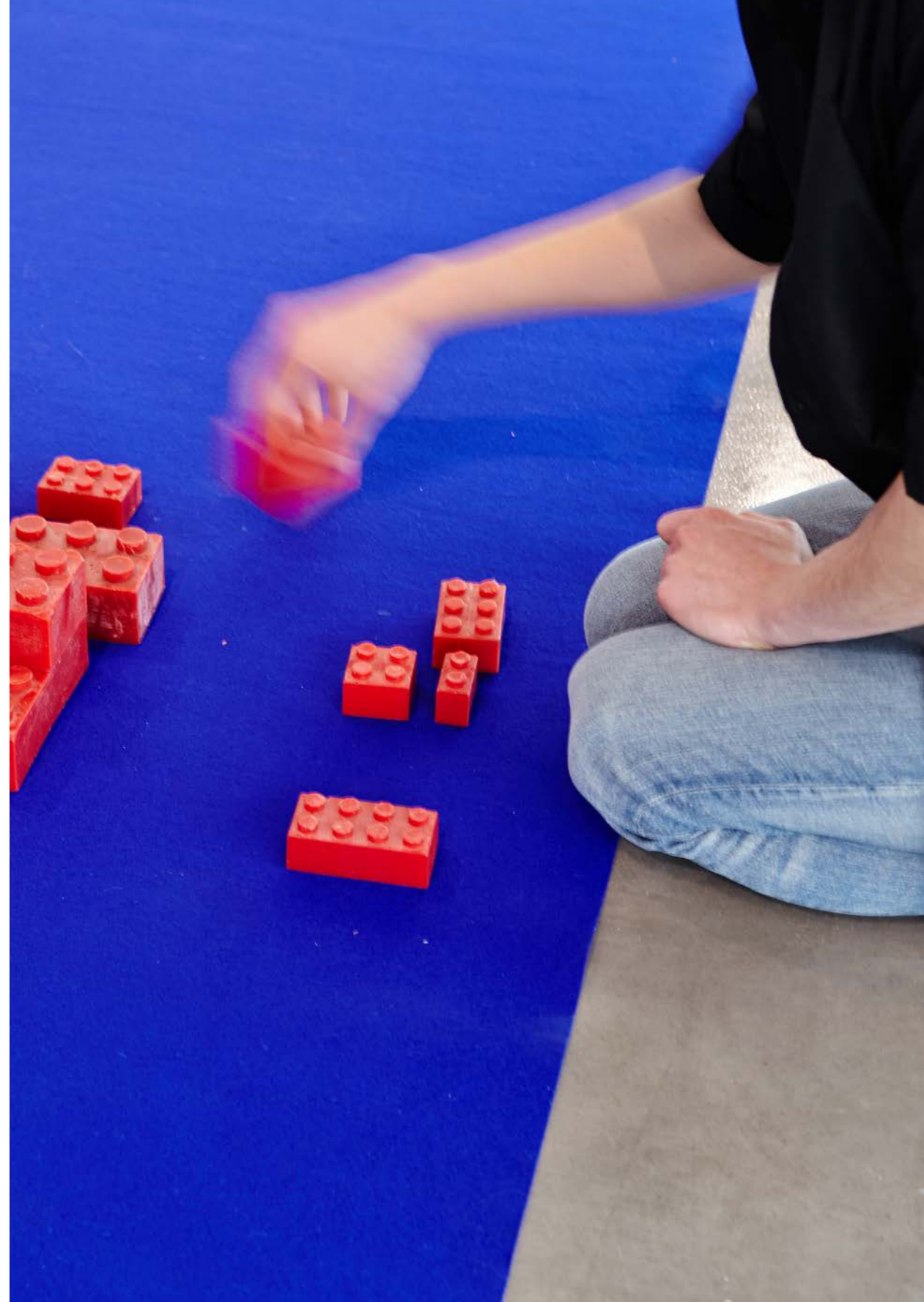
A: Beauty. It's a calculation, a wondering,
an undefined existence.

B: No image can capture it, no meaning
can define it.



A: It only persists in the fluid relations
between perfection and default.

B: An untouchable state of mind.



- A: The Sublime is the greatness beyond all boundaries, surpassing all possibility of calculation, measurement or imitation.
- B: Beauty is the understanding of the Sublime, but the Sublime is an unmediated truth outside all definitions. It demarcates the possible travel of the mind to create one owns limitless ideas.





The Revolution of Appearances

10

Strictly speaking this is not a critical essay on the work of Lieven De Boeck, but rather a series of impressions, at once precise and indefinite, of an amicable intellectual relationship that has firmed up in recent years, and more particularly since his first solo exhibition in France, “Image Not Found”, at the Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur² in Marseille in the spring of 2016.

To offer De Boeck’s artistic agenda to the eye and the mind in a single publication is to bring into sharp focus his fidelity to the personal grammar underlying the pronounced inner consistency of his work, from the initial projects through to the numerous exhibitions and residencies now fuelling his career.

This deep thematic unity has its roots in a singular conceptual world which the oeuvre deploys via a no less specific iconography. However, thematic consistency and repeated use of the same tools have not resulted in repetition of a formula or resort to a given generic territory. On the contrary, the striking thing about De Boeck is his extraordinary stylistic variety, as if the completion of each work entailed coming up with entirely new formal devices for facing fresh challenges and revealing new levels of interpretation. Following the development of this artistic approach chronologically allows us to assess his astonishing allegiance to areas of experimentation which borrow their semantics and tools from the worlds of the social sciences, architecture, and politics in the etymological sense.

Whether involving objects often addressed in series, or videos, sculptures and installations, De Boeck’s output apprehends the real in its most immediate form through the image. So it is very much a question here of a representation of the world. Indeed, his works interrogate the value we have for so long, and naturally, attributed to works of art as an index of the real: their capacity for veracity or verisimilitude. The De Boeck oeuvre allows us to summon up a representation of the real in a different way, by bringing forth other potential images – other images of images. These latter thus stand revealed as an interface for the reconciling of the real and the imaginary, the two poles Edgar Morin situates at the origin of all representation: “The image is not only the nexus between the real and the imaginary. [...] The real emerges into reality only when it is interwoven with the imaginary, which solidifies it, gives it consistency and thickness – in other words reifies it.”³

De Boeck’s renewal of the procedures for summoning up our representations of the world re-embodies the images in question and so makes possible a renewal of the experience. His artistic explorations offer a close fit with one of the few acceptable definitions of Art: a way of ideating the world, all disciplines included; a thought mode fuelled from the outset by a personal lexicon made up of families of objects and images that call for a reconsideration of the formal language of an artwork in the light of its symbolic system, its perceptions and its tension between sign and language. De Boeck’s work also takes words as its raw material in graphic as well as semantic terms, exploring the interstices between them, between their letters, between the word and its translation, between the

- 1 André Breton, third issue of the magazine *XXème siècle*, 1952.
- 2 FRAC: Regional Contemporary Art Collection.
- 3 Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 227. Original translation slightly modified.

word and the space containing it, between word and image.

This is done in installations which take issue equally with the exhibition venue and the exhibition itself. They transform the exhibition space into a research laboratory, using procedures inspired by scientific and academic systems and cultivating a type of presentation similar to that of the archive – but a living archive, at once personal and universal, to be reactivated according to the exhibition contexts concerned.

In concrete terms his exhibitions propose choreographies of objects, systems and itineraries whose principal function is to set his thinking to work via the medium of the site. Every exhibition is shaped by a work in progress that takes account equally of the site’s specific givens and the reactivation of earlier works. It should perhaps be mentioned here that his works possess the rare quality of autonomous existence and, seemingly without end or purpose, can be invested each time with fresh meaning according to the presentation context. Thus the exhibition is firstly the appropriation of a place in its concrete physicality and its geographical, historical and even symbolic reality. De Boeck designs his interventions as narratives which can never be completely grasped, but which set out to foreground and dissect modes of perception while seeking to involve the viewer in an experience combining the physical and the conceptual. “There is no thinking without form,” claims artist Jean-Luc Moulène, a statement De Boeck could readily espouse, given that he accords as much importance to the research and production phases as he does to the designing of his exhibitions. He is characterised by an imperious need to take the time to fabricate and test new materials and new media, while surrounding himself with craftsmen and technicians who accompany him into the unknown terrain whose boundaries he loves to push back further and further. His encounter with glass in recent years, in the course of several residencies at the International Glass and Visual Arts Research Centre (CIRVA) in Marseille, has resulted in a family of objects whose intrinsic virtues testify to the maturity of his artistic approach.

In his body of work as a whole, De Boeck is out to capture the connection between image and politics, signifier and signified, with set theory serving as a protocol for putting the works into circulation and generating interaction with them. His White Flag installation, comprising 193 United Nations flags, and the neon piece *Défense d’afficher* (Post No Bills) of 2014, are a clear indication of his aesthetic and political dimension reach. They possess that inner force that transcends their status as artworks and turns them into thoroughgoing, artistically irreproachable manifestoes.

Thus the “Image Not Found” exhibition in Marseille prompted interaction between a corpus of pieces produced over the last ten years and shared spaces that organised visitor movement within a highly elaborate formal and narrative arrangement. Bringing all these works together also drew attention to the remarkable diversity of his output and the way it develops. Whether in Marseille (2016), Montreal (2015) or Deurle in Belgium (2016–2017), each exhibition is an opportunity for him to play a

different score, investigating his oeuvre in relation to the spectator and the institution in relation to the works. "Image Not Found" and "Objet trouvé" (Found Object) are in fact not two separate exhibitions, but rather a single project whose governing interpretative dialectic functions in two different areas of the same thematic corpus. In linguistics an interpretation is the conferring of new meaning on a sign, action or word – a link to the realm of semantics that would not displease Lieven De Boeck.

And so his works really do shape an exhibition space, one that they inhabit visually while avoiding the pitfall of excessive dramatisation.

If we begin with the postulate that art is a complicated business, then the De Boeck oeuvre is clear proof of the fact. And if art is a simple business, his oeuvre provides an elusive demonstration. So, clear proof that art offers spontaneous aesthetic pleasure for a public apprised or not of the mysteries of the works' creation; or elusiveness because even the "novice" detecting a flagrant disparity between their sophisticated beauty and such often elliptical titles as LDB Meter/5/KNOT 1 and Lettre A 1/1 (After Duchamp), can conclude that something is escaping him behind these contradictory appearances. The "expert", though, has the advantage over the novice in that he has gained through experience the conviction that a work of art always resists even the most scholarly attempts at elucidation. This sensation of "resistance" is the rare quality to be found here in works free of all superficiality and illustrational character.

For De Boeck the presence of letters projected, drawn, sculpted or hidden is part of an especially meticulous interpretative strategy. Words intersect, respond to and echo each other, evolve in space in a replay of the Latin etymology of the word text: to write is to encode, to read is to decode.

Jean-Luc Nancy has made the same observation in a short essay on the relationships between texts and images: "Text is the stuff of meaning." As it happens, Nancy's comments on the different nature of text in theatre and cinema are not without correlations in De Boeck's artistic project. In the theatre the body becomes text; it is the messenger, the imprint of a writing "made for [theatre], a writing formed by gesture, posture and breathing."

Through language as an object and subject De Boeck looks into the matter of transmission and reception of an event, of the experience of an exhibition, of a performance – what is transmitted, and how? What is the spectator's place, and what do we expect of him or her in return?

Private sphere, public sphere, Art History, language, alphabet, image, cinema, identity: these are the themes permeating works whose creator evinces the same interest in the process as in the final result. Characterised by open-ended thinking about the status of the artwork, De Boeck challenges the representation and the critical reception of his output through gestures and interventions making play with displacements, tweakings and appropriations. His work is an affirmation of a kinship with the Belgian and French avant-gardes and the American Conceptualists of the 1960s, a kinship receptive to a production rationale that transcends mere appropriation; a system of signs being constructed over time, one that generates an indirect commentary on the oeuvre and deterritorialises

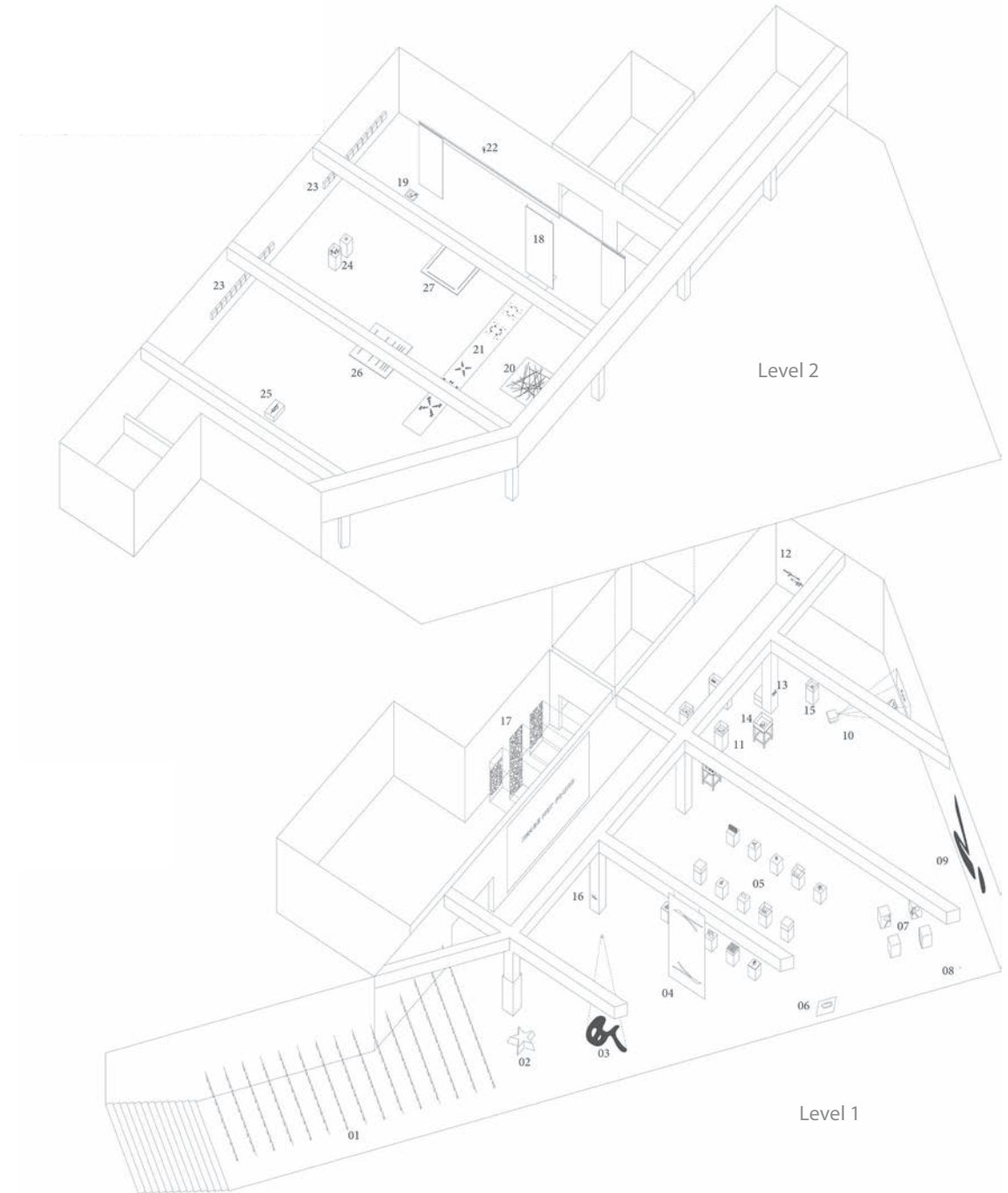
Floorplan opposite:

Level 1

01. White Flags
02. Letter E
03. Letter N
04. Letter O
05. Puzzle Image Not Found
06. Letter T
07. Letter A
08. Auto-portrait contre nature
09. Lettre I
10. Une seconde d'éternité, Re-enacted
11. Série Bleue
12. Défense d'afficher
13. Cinq
14. Lettre N
15. Moule en verre (bleu)
16. I Lie
17. The Blue-White-Red Story, France

Level 2

18. Enfin Je Vois Clair
En moi-même, j'ai peur d'être vu.
19. Lettre anonyme
20. Mikado LDB Modulo
21. Sã(100)
22. Ldb Meter #6
23. Hollywood Alphabet (A-Z)
24. Moule en verre
25. LDB Meter #5
26. Figure 1
27. Figure 2



Axonometry exhibition lay-out, *Image Not Found*, 2016
Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

practice so as to enter different artistic, political and scientific fields. An approach that questions our relationship with the world and today's society and thus is part of an international art scene which from Pierre Bismuth to Joëlle Tuerlinckx, and including Philippe Parreno, Ryan Gander and Michel François, propose narrative gambits viewers cannot fail to react to, while urging them to assemble their own, independent critical and political baggage. Also perceptible in De Boeck's work is the importance of the movement and placing of the viewer's body within the work itself.

We are not simply seeing a work; we are testing out a space, becoming the main actor in a system, in a performance whose genesis is known only to the artist.

The design of his exhibition in Marseille, and more especially the decision to modify the classical exhibition codes – by changing the habitual direction of the viewing itinerary and allocating one of the two spaces exclusively to “a performance every day – except Mondays” – offered an insight into the way an exhibition can be a living form, a medium in its own right, a shared territory for writing, research and experimentation. In this case an exhibition whose suggested “performative” character might be indissociable from the discourse that triggers and determines it, with the artist leaving viewers to choose and define their own itineraries within his exhibition/system.

Indeed, an exhibition is always a narrative system whose meaning and deep preoccupations it is up to us to decipher. By adopting the postulate that inherent in all artistic creation are the principles of a form of writing, De Boeck expands his field of possibilities, demonstrating the porosity between disciplines as varied as dance, performance, poetry, architecture and the visual arts in general. In his exhibitions the sound dimension and its corollary, silence, are a given worth lingering over, one that foregrounds an original type of sound poetry to be found in pieces like *Lettre anonyme* (Anonymous Letter); more classically in *The Blue-White-Red Story*, France (2015); and even more notably in the activation of *Space 2* at the Marseille show, which, in line with a protocol set down by the artist, orchestrated the strollings of mediators/interpreters, involved the handling of certain works, and led to the enunciation of brief sentences conceived of as veritable haikus.

In today's societies making noise, colonising space with sound and speaking more loudly are very often considered the mark of an action's success and value. If the presence of sound does not necessarily exclude that of content and meaning, and can even be one of their components, the effect – if not, indeed, the function – of sound is often to scramble perception and prevent thought. This is the exact opposite of what is going on in De Boeck's case, where where no sound interferes with our reading of the works; on the contrary, they are displayed in a silent space where the viewer concentration is enhanced by meticulous *mise en scène* and finely tuned handling of light. The silence is above all that of the artist himself, and this, whatever the circumstances, renders us open-minded and receptive. In linking us to ourselves, silence fosters real interchange

with others and with the outside. This experience of the private within an exhibition makes its own demands: it is not something modish and has nothing to do with the canons of relational aesthetics; rather it is driven by curiosity, mobility and permanent questioning. De Boeck's approach is responsive to all territories of creativity and ideas. The artists, architects, art critics and curators he has had dealings with have encouraged him to broaden his awareness of the world and see his practice as a new contemporary humanism. As Jean-Marie Straub advises, “You first have to see, then look, then get to know. Then see again.” Lieven De Boeck's work gives us a grasp of the viewing experience.

For an understanding of what De Boeck is telling us via the silence of his exhibition, speech is important. It is when words proliferate and voices resound that the substance of silence stands self-revealed. As soon as we begin paying attention to what unsettles us and what surrounds us, silence becomes the watchword. It is in this “ephemeral suspension” of permanent hubbub that the exhibition finds renewed vibrancy and the body's energy is recharged. Michel Foucault explains that in ancient times the masters of the Academy imposed three years of silence on their pupils, with no questions allowed: only the word of the master was to be heard. De Boeck's exhibitions are at once a lesson about silence and a lesson conducted in silence: we listen to somebody, in this case the artist, and in doing so reconnect with his concerns and his focus on the broader issue of transmission. Silence remains a highly political question, in the sense that it has to do with the organisation of our social structure. So before attempting to grasp why making silence seems a difficult business, we must evaluate its degree of necessity by breaking free of the many systems and installations that endlessly associate random sounds. Silence also raises issues and challenges in the realm of architecture. Traditionally architecture is the first among the arts, the one in which language has not yet found a place. Considered in the light not only of religious architecture – with its link between silent reading, silent prayer and churches – but also of secular places where silence reigns (libraries, hospitals, etc.), silence appears as a necessary preamble to all transmission. “Speak if you have words stronger than silence,” says Euripides, “otherwise keep silent.” With De Boeck the exhibition experience is part of this dialectic and is, simultaneously, a call to keep silent and to listen to words and sentences that are going to orchestrate the itinerary of a viewer who must confront his own solitude and come to terms with himself. The most important thing is drawing on the coexistence of silence and the possibility of a movement in space-time. Activation of the Marseille exhibition was the outcome of a conversation between the mediators interspersed with long silences. A mediator who was speaking would suddenly hold his breath for several seconds, then speech would inhabit the space again, conjuring up such-and-such a work. De Boeck has learned to gauge the active role of silence in the process of his activations. For the experience to be successful the viewer has to be kept in suspense and brought into the silence game so as to ensure a silent sharing that goes to the heart of things both gesturally and verbally. The

appropriate cast of mind and physical state are enhanced by the wearing of gloves “customised” by the artist: a non-conceptual but radically experimental form of minimalism that can affect each viewer’s intellectual functioning. A paroxysmal situation in which the viewer is also a witness to the exchanges in which he is participating only through his silent presence. A way of granting auditory receptiveness value as learning and transmission, of giving words their rightful place and thus valorising them in terms of their meaning and intrinsic beauty.

To what do these silences summon us? What is their function in the construction of a narrative or the evocation of the world?

A presence of silence, not as the absence of something, or a lack, but as augmented presence in the world around us. Seen thus, silence is not a stoppage, or stasis, or the end of something already manifested, but a dynamic, a prelude to the action to come. Something that suspends attention, sharpens the senses, fuels the sensory. De Boeck invites viewers to be “in” silence, to immerse themselves in sensation prior to ideation, to leave room for what cannot be formulated or quantified, for a kind of bodily state existing in the silence of a new, free, open-ended roaming amidst the works.

In De Boeck’s case silence possesses the rare quality of being a moment of withholding, a new unit of measurement that preserves us from the immediate response, the urgency and the speaking too soon that can sometimes betray not profound commitment but a mere skin-deep reaction. Preferring permanent questioning and constant investigation, De Boeck appeals to our inner sensitivity as a means of rendering us more receptive to the words, images and objects that make up the score of his exhibitions. His agenda is not radical affirmation, but an intellectual continuity that leads him to question anew the real status of his works and their adaptability to different contexts, spaces and audiences.

Only a handful of authors and directors have given such close thought to these matters as that virtuoso Samuel Beckett, whose mastery of quantity and quality are so evident in the plays *Silences* and *Act without Words*, written in 1957. And Paul Claudel who, in a dictum as brief as it was to the point, liked to say that it was in silence that we could best be heard.

The question that quickly arises is that of the adaptation – or “free adaptation”, as applied to literary works in movies and the theatre – of De Boeck’s works and systems when they become a matrix, a meeting point or even a playground for curators, museum directors and the artist.

The spatial disposition of De Boeck’s works is, for him, the expression of an invitation – or rather an injunction – to movement. Something simultaneously entailing roaming, the promenade and the *dérive*, or drift, once integral to Situationist theory and practice. At work here is a copresence of places, planes and directions in space, together with the signs and markers embedded in them. More than mere univocal, authoritarian points of view forced on visitors, these signs and symbols are laid open to the eye, offering the possibility of relating to them and finding one’s bearings.

De Boeck’s creations are first and foremost an invitation to the discovery of a conceptual territory, a fertile lexical atlas at once concrete and fictional, personal and universal. Neither filmic nor strictly speaking theatrical, his approach is much closer to poetry and literature in the sense that these two art forms emphasise inner resonance and meaningfulness ahead of representation and spectacle, and atmosphere ahead of narrative.

The exhibitions “Image Not Found” in Marseille and “Objet trouvé” in Deurle are opportunities for an overview of the De Boeck *modus operandi*; not in the form of some detailed retrospective chronology or formal inventory but, on the contrary, as a means of challenging the actual status of the exhibition and the host institution. What is involved is not a retrospective but a free, clearly demonstrative interpretation bent on denouncing the illusions of painting and sculpture and the conventions of language: images delude us and words exploit our credulity. The ordering of the works is not chronological but logical, pointing up a consistent line of thought and ongoing creative obsessions.

To his credit the numerous works produced at CIRVA in Marseille in 2013–2015 – among them *Mikado LDB Modulator*, *Série bleue* (Blue Series) and *Moule en verre* (Glass Mould) – as well as the acquisition of *The Hollywood Alphabet* (A-Z) by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur FRAC in 2013, De Boeck devises his exhibitions as manifestoes. His intention is to challenge the museum space and its codified functioning, and to interrogate, as he does in *M.U.S.E.U.M.*, the status of the artwork and its formal, stylistic and conceptual typologies. His unhampered handling of concepts and the *mise en abyme* of these typologies enables him to take the visitor on a walking tour designed as a sequence of investigations at once poetic and political. What emerges are the notions of identity and language, and combinatorial games drawing on aesthetic, mathematical and political concepts. The golden section, the classical canons of beauty, the concepts of the original, the copy and the readymade, mathematical sequences (Fibonacci numbers), units of measurement, and architectural typologies (Neufert, the *Modulor*) – these are all areas of research invested by the artist in installations and objects endowed with considerable aesthetic and conceptual added value. For him the status of the object is fundamental; and he causes this status to evolve in a combinatorial dimension of sculpture-objects and concept-objects that can be activated in the context of performances.

Working via subtraction, sampling and cut-outs of shapes and colours – as in *The White Flag* (2015), with the 193 flags of the United Nations classified according to formal affinities after elimination of their colours – De Boeck calls the established codes and usages into question, the better to analyse them and to suggest highly personal modes of interpretation. Using an alphabet of his own making, the artist offers the visitor a world of signs and forms whose meaning escapes us, and to which he alone holds the key. In this way the visitor is led to proceed via combinatorial games and analogies to try to decipher and identify the hidden meaning of these

unknown letters.

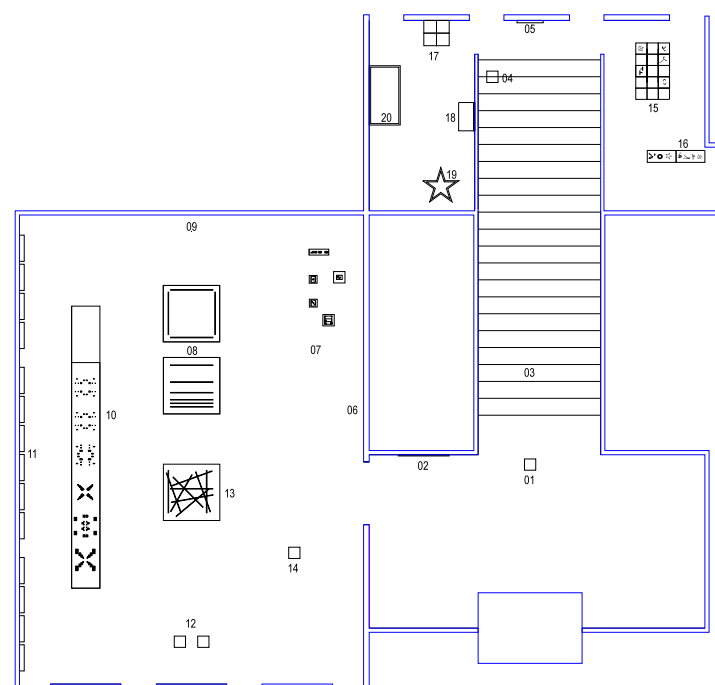
Fascinated by language's status and its modes of apparition, but at the same time no linguistic theorist, De Boeck also issues, via his alphabet, a political statement regarding illiteracy as a factor in social exclusion and rejection and the havoc it wreaks in our societies today. It is no coincidence that his close interest in the function of language and its inner codifications leads him to examine the connections between the shape of the alphabetical symbols and the aesthetics of the written that he is striving to explore. Bringing the same ease and fascination to his juggling with figures and mathematical sequences, he inventories all the combinatorial possibilities, even to the extent of devising a new subjective unit of measurement based on his own body, as in Ldb meter #5/Knot 1 and Ldb meter #6/Knot 2. Once again he plays with current conventions and upsets the accepted meaning of things, but not without a touch of irony. In this he belongs to a long, fertile artistic line extending from Guy de Cointet to Marcel Broodthaers, and including, of course, Marcel Duchamp. Backed up by these aesthetic affinities and his own formal and conceptual manoeuvrings, he offers us exhibitions which, in testimony to his freedom of spirit, subvert current practice and seek to emancipate us temporarily from the standardised worlds that permanently confront us.

How to breathe new life into the exhibition experience? What's the social role of the artist today? What part should the museum be playing in our contemporary crisis-ridden societies?

These questions lie at the heart of Lieven De Boeck's artistic agenda; they have a special relevance today and must mobilise the art community towards affirmation of its convictions, assertion of its right to speak freely, and emancipation from all conventions that offer no window onto the future. Post No Bills, okay, but let's learn to look beyond appearances.



OBJET TROUVÉ 2016-17



EXPO

01. spring
02. APR DE BRUXELLES, RUE DE LIMBBAYE
03. THE WHITE FLAGS
04. cool spring
05. exploration
06. Chino
07. white blue
08. top 1&2
09. distance d'histoire
10. same
11. blue white red story
12. les moules en verres transp et noir
13. mirado
14. Lie
15. Lucide
16. Archive
17. letter A
18. letter T
19. letter E
20. letter O

Objet Trouvé is the prolongation of the exhibition Image Not Found, which was on display at the FRAC in Marseille during Spring 2016. Although both exhibitions involve largely the same work, both presentations are radically different.

This difference is clearly stated by Lieven De Boeck through apparently contradictory exhibition titles: Image Not Found versus Objet Trouvé. For Lieven De Boeck each exhibition represents a challenge to reflect about possible meaningful relations between his works but also to ponder about the relationship between his work, the space and the viewer. Since it is not that challenging to fall into repetition, Lieven De Boeck turns each project into a new encounter.

For FRAC in Marseille Lieven De Boeck created the work Puzzle, Image Not Found. It was the key work of the exhibition but is now stored in what the artist considers the archives of the exhibition. A game of symbols and meaning lies at its origin: several years ago Lieven De Boeck developed a personal alphabet in which he replaced the letters by shapes. Thirteen shapes of his alphabet (which represent the letters I, M, A, G, E, N, O, T, F, O, U, N, D) were produced in scale model with different materials and techniques, a certain number of them were also "life-sized".

In his work, Lieven De Boeck likes to play with the meaning of all kind of characters and typologies, ranging from language and symbols to units of measurement and building systems. Lieven De Boeck controls the outcome through sometimes minimal alterations, changing social or political signs abruptly into poetic characters, or new meanings in the logic of the artist. He stripped the flags of the 193 countries of the United Nations of their bright colours turning them into white compositions that no longer refer to nations and their pretence to power and as such become subtle abstract compositions waving peacefully above our heads, creating an intimate atmosphere.

Lieven De Boeck qualified as an architect and therefore it is not surprising that the game with architectural typologies, spaces and proportions is an important thread through his work. The glass sculptures in various sizes and colours remind us of the familiar Lego blocks, THE toy that makes an architect of every child. The LDB Meter refers to measuring systems such as the Modulor of architect Le Corbusier: it is based on the height of the artist, which means that 1 LDB Meter converts to 98.6 cm in our measuring system. The mathematical Fibonacci sequence (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13...) and

the related theory of the golden ratio, both relevant to define proportions of beauty in nature and art, can constantly be found in the dimensions and proportions of Lieven De Boeck's work.

Although many references can be validated, you can never fully understand Lieven De Boeck's work. It remains ambiguous and elusive, at a stage between appearance and disappearance. In the past Lieven De Boeck has frequently referred to his work The Archive of Disappearance. It is no coincidence that in addition to the use of light, the colour blue is omni-present in his work: it is the colour of the sky, of infinity, of daydreaming and of Yves Klein, but it is also the colour of the back-grounds in film studios (blue key) allowing thereafter to mount any decor in the film scene. The way that the identity of the artist is intertwined with his oeuvre is ambiguous and sometimes subtly provocative. What else to think of the work I Lie: An honest and sincere mea culpa? An ironic nod to the unbearable sincerity of the artist? A modest reference to the famous and pompous work of art in neon of Bruce Nauman: The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths? Or is it a found object that has lost its original meaning and that has acquired a readymade meaning in the own logic of the work of Lieven De Boeck?

PRIVATE VIEWING

In the months of October and November Studio LDB will also present a cycle of six presentations in House Van Wassenhove, designed by architect Juliaan Lampens. Over the course of six weekends it will be possible to look at an individual work of Lieven De Boeck in this residence. The privileged encounter between the work, the architecture of Juliaan Lampens, Studio LDB and the individual visitor will generate an experience that is totally different from the museum or gallery context and will thus present new perspectives in terms of presentation and interpretation.

Tanguy Eeckhout



Private Viewing

MOULE EN VERRE, 2015
Private viewing House Van Wassenhove

Page 82-83 LETTER A
Private viewing House Van Wassenhove

Page 84-85 EXPLORATION MOULE EN VERRE
Video still









22 August.

22 August.

22 August.

22 August.

Van Wassenhove House.

Van Wassenhove House.

Van Wassenhove House.

Van Wassenhove House.

Sint-Martens-Latem.

Sint-Martens-Latem.

Sint-Martens-Latem.

Sint-Martens-Latem.

6:21 PM

28°

COPY/ORIGINAL

With me is the person I know, but there is also the artist LDB. That character plays an important part in the artistic work. Who is this LDB and to what extend are you, Lieven De Boeck – who claims to admit absolutely no autobiographical elements in the work – involved in this?

I might have put it that way once, but more recently I discovered that I am my own muse. By this I mean to say that my outlook on life is based on a number of questions, and these questions become part of my work as an artist. One important element is the idea of identity, of both the person and the artist. It is a concept that eludes me. I can't understand why I would have to feel Belgian or why I would have to be a man... I fail to see the point of all these compartments that society employs. To me, they restrict rather than to make things possible. What I try to do as an artist is to put forward the questions I have as a person and frame them in such a way that others can relate to them and reflect on them as well. This is one of the reasons why I call myself 'Copy of Original'. As an artist, I have declared my personal self to be a copy of the original.

When I met you in New York, years ago, I was briefly stuck behind your left arm. 'Copy of Original' it says, tattooed in the form of an old-fashioned stamp. So you are essentially the carrier of your own work. At the same time you reference several well-known cases in art history and the discussion about what is valuable/not valuable. The original, so the artwork itself, versus the copy is a theme that you visit quite regularly.

One of the things that define our identity is the way we compare ourselves to others. For an artist it means that you have the entire history of art to relate to. But the question takes us right back again to the issue of identity. You see, in my opinion there is no difference between the original and the copy. With everything that has ever been made, everyone should be able to carry on just fine.

Can anyone copy your work?

Of course.

You appropriate quite a lot. You, the copy, tattooed on your arm since 2011,

during a stay in Los Angeles, make off with other people's originals. With 'Une Seconde d'Eternité (D'après une idée de Charles Baudelaire)' by Marcel Broodthaers, for instance. The initials M.B. have been replaced by LDB.

I don't write LDB, I Tipp-Ex out my initials. Because authorship is often confirmed by an autograph, I purposely erase the signature. The next question is why I base myself on Broodthaers rather than to make a copy of an Ensor painting.

Because you can't paint.

Even if I could paint. It doesn't inspire me technically, nor does it appeal to me intellectually. That's why I return to artists who addressed the same questions I do.

You could have mentioned 'Copy of Marcel' too. Because besides Broodthaers, Duchamp is another important reference.

I don't really like the name Marcel. (laughs)

You come from an architectural practice that you defined mostly on an artistic and theoretical level. Perhaps the transition to visual arts was very smooth?

I think I continued to do the same things I did in architecture at the time. This house of Juliaan Lampens, where we are right now, could serve as an example. Because this house hasn't been divided into cells. There is no programme to determine that this is the kitchen and over there is the bedroom. There is a sleeping area but it is open. Someone can be cooking here and someone else may be sleeping there, but they stay in touch. So I imagine this house as an empty space and because I define it as empty, I can make it my own.



LDB SIGNATURE, UNE SECONDE D'ÉTERNITÉ, 2009
16mm film, b&w, silent, 1"

THE RHYTHM OF MEASURE

What was your first autonomous artwork?

It is a piece that, though still very architectural, to me represents a key work. It is about the destruction of the Twin Towers. In those months after 9/11, I tried to understand, in my language, what had happened on that day. I found this attack, which I politically and morally reject, to be extraordinary powerful on a visual level. My work consists of the reconstruction, in floor plans and cross-cuts, of the towers' deconstruction. I have also visualised why the towers collapsed. The first one was hit in the steel core and the second one, that came down first, was hit in the perimeter wall. So the attack was directed against both structural elements of the buildings. One of the pilots, by the way, was an architect who had written a thesis about modernism's anti-Islamic programme. Despite the fact that modernism is mainly areligious. I also made a 1:200 scale model with Manhattan's grid on the floor and with the two towers. They are 2.2 metres tall, which puts you at the same height, as a viewer, with where the pilot was at the time. The project specifications consisted of a score that contained all the information about both the North and the South Tower.

Now that you mention modernism, we have to talk about Le Corbusier. You spent some time in Marseille, home to his Unité d'Habitation. In your work you speak critically of his version of modernism.

Le Corbusier gave architecture a social responsibility. He saw the world as a large space, with the countryside on the one hand and the city on the other. He also fostered a strong belief in the idea of collectivity. I found the same belief in the ideas of Luc Deleu, with whom I collaborated for a while. But Le Corbusier failed the moment he started to apply modernism as a style. I would like to refer to that intriguing book about modern emptiness by Camiel van Winkel. The reason that Chandigarh eventually became a success was because the Indian population adapted it to their own needs.

To base your entire thinking about architecture on the concept of the ideal human, a man of 1.83 metre, is rather scary. That's why you adapted Le Corbusier's Modulor.

I used it to reflect on the idea of universality. It connects again to that empty space we mentioned earlier. Such a space can be located anywhere and can be inhabited by anyone. But that same space will always be defined by a number of standards as well, like measurements. Take a kilometre: it is a universal concept but in terms of experience, everyone will describe it in a different way. This means I measure the empty space around me by my own standards. Because just like I don't understand identity, I have no appreciation of standards.

What are your measurements?

1.76 m. So I'm 7 cm short according to Le Corbusier's ideals.

Setting out from this house of Juliaan Lampens, where the light fills the void, I realise that the concept of absence is very important in your work. Some of your works just exist in a negative form, or in the delineation of the void. I also think of your styrofoam 'Letter A' that you 'borrowed' from Duchamp.

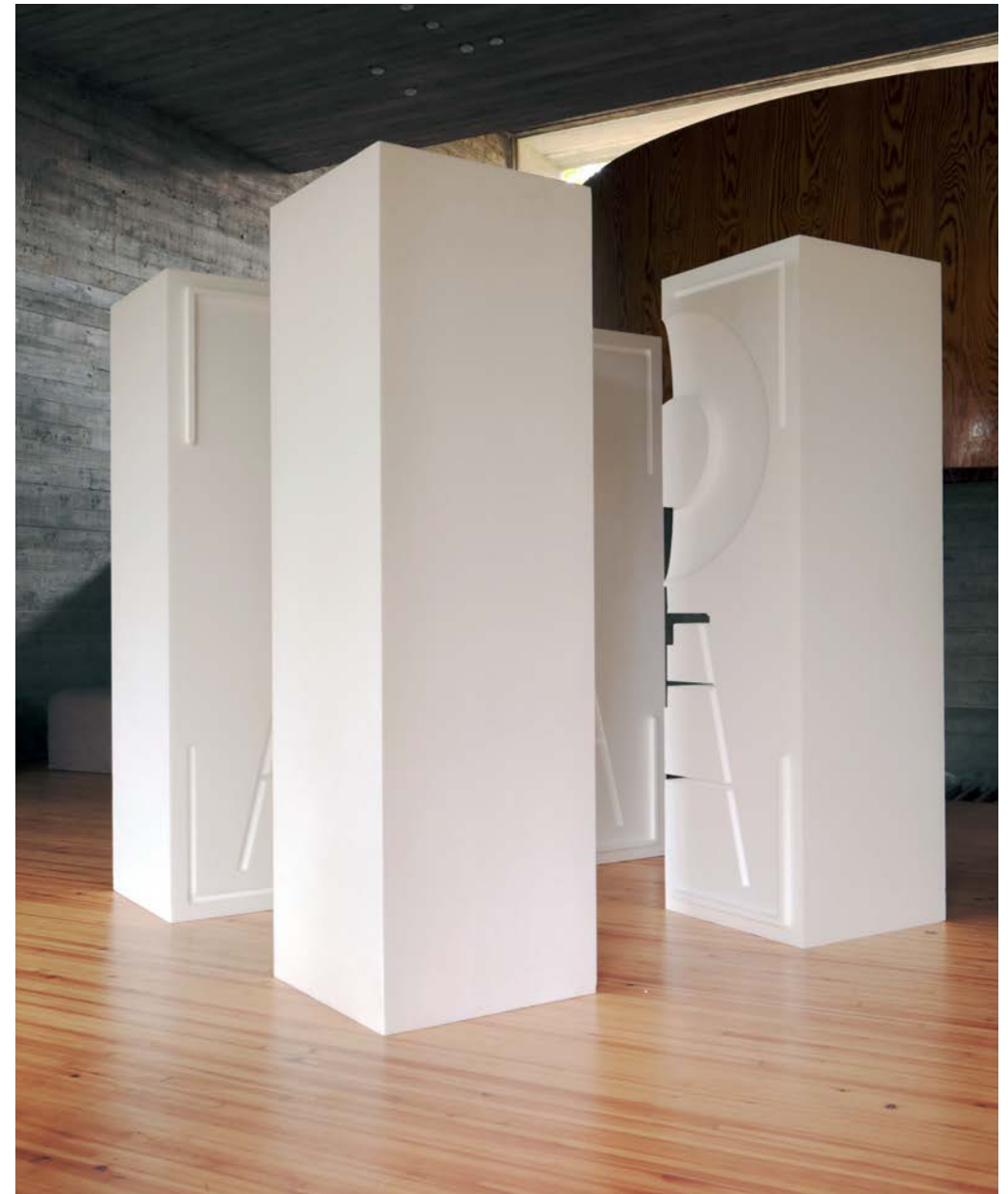
This preoccupation with absence relates directly to the fact that I believe there are too many images. And what's more, many images are being used to limit the creativity of the individual. These are images that dictate the way we should look or how we should behave. Even a box of toys prescribes, through its packaging, what you should do with its contents. It testifies to a lack of faith in the individuals' creative abilities to make their own images. The absence of creation, of authorship and identity in my work, that often consists of the air or its encapsulation, fits that way of thinking. Add to that the idea of the mould and of the repetition, inherent to the mould, which is explicitly made to produce series and copies. In this sense, the mould is more original than the work itself.

Which brings us to the moule(s) of Broodthaers. At the Frac in Marseille you showed both the Lego blocks that you had produced there in the glass factory, and the moulds they were cast from. The idea of presence and absence in one.

The Lego blocks included quite a number of elements. LEGO, which originally only produced wooden blocks, has long been subjected to lawsuits about copyright and authorship, things that interest me anyway. By now, you can imitate the blocks and only the logo is still protected. My first idea was to make blocks out of glass. That's why I made 3D-prints, in order to make a mould. But when I saw that plaster mould, I was so inspired that I also wanted to make them in glass. So 'Le moule en verre' came about very instinctively.

You call it instinct, but your oeuvre seems to be the result of very well-considered decisions.

I suppose this observation is based on the fact that I provide a lot of explanation with my work. People often comment that my work is cryptic, that it can't be understood without explanation. Perhaps the fact that I always provide this explanation is a performative layer connected to the work. But in reality I do work very instinctively. 'Défense d'afficher', for example, is a neon work that came about because I had accidentally seen a similar poster hanging from a steel wire on a façade in Marseille.



LETTER A 1/1 (AFTER DUCHAMP), 2016
Polystyrene, (4 x) 45 x 45 x 150 cm



MOULE EN VERRE, 2016

Crystal glass

Production in collaboration with CIRVA

At the same time it is a reflection on the redundancy of images and, provided that you install the work in an official art institution, an institutional statement as well. Your work testifies to a very critical mentality. At times it becomes political. In the past few years, your 'White Belgian Flag' has become more and more topical.

The first 'White Flag' dates from 2006. I was in New York at the time, for a residency at the ISCP. Bush Jr. was president and there was a lot of commotion about a breach of the Geneva Convention. But the Universal rights of man, which I of course personally endorse, are a Western concept that has not been accepted by everyone. Out of my interest in public space and how it is being defined, for instance by the nation state, one day I visited the building of the United Nations. The flags of all the member states, 193 by now, have been raised there in alphabetical order: from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. But that apparently objective formation is less neutral than you might think. To begin with, it uses the English names of the states concerned. That in itself constitutes an interpretation. And then I wondered why, at some point, they would have opted for a linear order? The only way to reach neutrality is by placing all those flags in a circle. And why this emphasis on national identity when, as the UN, you would actually want to focus on what unites us rather than what distinguishes and thus divides us. It was there that I started to concentrate on the history of how those flags had come about. Through the symbols on a flag you can discover which groups once decided to form a state together. They often symbolise the making of a national identity. Now, it wasn't my intention to erase all those differences but it did raise some questions. In 2006, by the way, there were only two identical flags: those of Chad and Rumania. Only the shade of blue is slightly different. But once they are white, they are identical. In the Belgian flag, I retained the original shape of the three bands and I made sure the transparency was different for each of them, but the Tricolore turned white.

COMPORTMENT AND THE CARRIER

You work with neon, glass, paper, textile. If it isn't prone to shattering on the floor, it is likely to age quickly. With this choice of materials, you seem to announce a possible absence.

I do believe that our obsession with conservation, which developed in the 18th century, is quite absurd. It is a burden rather than a source of inspiration. Into each work, I try to build its disappearance – with my glass 'Mikado' as the height of fragility. The same counts for the slides, that decay in 20 years, and for the 16mm films – because I never work with digital media. Another example is the title of the exhibition in Marseille. 'Image not Found' is not a work to me, but a slide projection. The only thing that matters to me is for those words to appear.

Another feature of your work is its linguistic character.

I think this is a specific trait of Belgian art and the reason why there are so many good artists here. If there is anything connecting us, it's the fact that we all grew up with the continuous confrontation between the image and the word. A can of milk isn't just milk, it is also lait. If there is any such thing as a Belgian identity, it could well be this chronic confusion, the sense that an image never coincides with a word.

You play with words as well as with letters. In New York you created an alphabet, just like in Los Angeles, you made a rebus, and you wrote letters, one for each day of the year.

Several of my ideas about public space collided in that project. From the instant a second person is present, there is some kind of public space. The first person, however, will disguise themselves from this moment on, in order to create an image of themselves. I was wondering how I could translate this process into a written form. The letter provided me with a formal solution. In those 366 letters –in my mind it was a leap year – I did everything I could possibly do using language in public space: I can tell the truth, lie, seduce, contradict myself, reason in circles or be completely inaudible. These letters were never sent but I addressed them to myself. They always start with 'Dear Lieven' and they consist of found material, text fragments, interviews... None of it is original. I have published them in books. One for each season. And signed with Le Corbeau, which refers to Broodthaers but also to a French film (by Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1943, CP) that is situated in France during the German occupation. Mysterious things happen in a village. A letter from an anonymous writer who signs with 'Le Corbeau' adds even more to the confusion. To me, this turned Le Corbeau into a symbol for the writer of the anonymous letter. And then I linked this to a letter I found on the internet, of someone who refused to take on any identity whatsoever. Subsequently, Le Corbeau can also be seen as a reference to Le Corbusier, the identity Charles-Édouard Jeanneret took on when he became an architect.

You also constantly play with your own identity. You appear in your work through the iris, the erased autograph, the flag... You also refer to Duchamp, the artist-chess player, with the work 'Le Perroquet/The Parrot' (2009) that consists of a chess board, the white squares of which can be 'read' as an artistic frame of reference. In homage to Duchamp you also made your own Boîte-en-valise.

I made several, actually, just like Duchamp did. They were all based on his first Boîte-en-valise though, which he made from cardboard and that I was allowed to research at the Getty Foundation in Los Angeles. I made my first one in wood. 'La boîte-en-valise en bois' sounded pretty to me. At the time, I was focussing on the way various artists approached the

museum as an institution. I started out with the architecture and with the standard work of Ernst Neufert, one of the first Bauhaus students who later became Walter Gropius' assistant and writer of the book 'Architects Data'. When I was a student, this was still a standard work, that determined, for instance, how a house had to be drawn. In the original version the museum hadn't been included as a typology though. That was only added in a later update. In my own copy the museum was already mentioned briefly in the chapter 'amusement and recreation'. I thought that was quite remarkable. I was teaching in London at the time and a colleague showed me an Italian version of Neufert's book. There, the museum appeared between the lemmas 'cemetery' and 'church'. In that moment, language comes into play again. So I used Tipp-Ex to erase everything I deemed irrelevant. I only kept the terms that could demonstrate that a museum is not just an exhibition space but also a place where you do research. I combined this with 81 small plans of buildings from the 19th to the 20th century, from houses to churches, that I stripped of all functions in order to identify them as museum. By then, some of those buildings had become museums, by the way, which clearly showed the total irrelevance of the museum as typology.

Duchamp made his portable museum, Broodthaers his 'Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles'.

That is another theme I took up. The eagle is a very powerful image that can be adopted by various 'identities'. From 41 letter papers I cut out different eagles: one from the flag of Albania, from an aviation club, from a noble family... This became the work 'Musée d'Art Moderne, Archives des Aigles Disparus'. This inevitably took me back again to Duchamp and his portable museum, where he also plays with the copy and the original, the ready-made and the reproduction. To get a better understanding, I wanted to make that 'Boîte-en-valise' myself. I have later decomposed that first wooden version and rebuilt it in modelling materials. 'La Boîte-en-valise en plastique' is the last one. It holds all the works that refer to Belgium. I have no intention to make another one.

To you, to exhibit also entails an artistic gesture. The presentation is just as important as the work on display.

The exhibition is the work that is justified by the dialogue with the empty space and with other works. The works themselves engage each other in a mirrored dialogue. A discourse is being developed that doesn't end in the formulation of a final conclusion. That is the reason why I became so interested in the performative element as well. The exhibition in Marseille was definitely a step in the right direction. There, I could activate the works through mediators. In a traditional exhibition I run into a number of boundaries. So I look for other formats. For instance, I have considered making an open studio.

The sun has moved quite a bit.

This villa feels totally different now.

The light is beautiful.

Nothing is standard.

7:25 PM

27°

DÉFENSE D'AFFICHER, 2014

Neon with pigment

Exhibition view Maison Grégoire, Brussels, 2014



UNA FORNACIO MARSEIGLI VENICE 2018

Participants:

Dove Allouche, Larry Bell, Lieven De Boeck, James Lee Byars, Guiseppe Caccavale, Pierre Charpin, Erik Dietman, Hreinn Fridfinnsson, Thomas Kovachevich, Philippe Parreno, Giuseppe Penone, Remo Savadori, Jana Sterbak, Martin Szekely, Francisco Tropa, Roberts Wilson, Terry Winters

In 2012 I got chosen by an international jury for the artist in residence open call for research projects to develop contemporary artwork engaging with glass at the CIRVA. .

During three years I developed a profound research resulting in 4 artworks. The exhibition in Venice was showing a selection of the works developed during the history of the CIRVA. Three of my works were shown together with a video.

The video has been made during the residency in the House Van Wassenhove and introduced the sound of glass in the exhibition room.

MOULE EN VERRE, 2016

Crystal glass

Page 118-119 SÅ (100 LEGOS), 2014-2016

Crystal glass





I AM I
2017

SUNBEAM, 2017
Photo transfer on nylon





Press release Gallery Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

The concept of identity permeates all the artist's work. National identity, personal identity, sexual identity. These are societal issues and personal stories that are intrinsically connected. One of the features of Lieven De Boeck's work is the way he continuously creates meaning between works dealing with the universal and the individual.

An example of this is Sunbeam, a hanging fabric in bright colours that welcomes the visitor, which may symbolise a universal flag (consisting of colours split via prism) and which, on the other hand, is a fabric used in the fashion world by grand couturiers for its complex visual qualities. Embracing the world with a gaze and covering the body. Seeking what unites us as human beings and questioning what it is that makes us unique.

Lieven De Boeck explores many techniques in his work and draws in this case on craft traditions such as knitting, tapestry or glass. I Am I (left-hand room) is a knitted scarf consisting of symbolic personal motifs from two of the artist's friends (Rachael and Lucie), while the tapestry I am Shane, takes this concept further and transposes it into the verticality of a decorative fresco. It expresses the notion that one person's portrait can be somebody else's landscape. The motifs re enact the portrait of a person: their nationality, gender, physical characteristics (height, weight, shoe size), sexual orientation, their totem animal.

These two works will be activated by performers during the opening ceremony, thus revealing their full dimensions. Dressing and undressing. Showing oneself and baring all.

These works raise questions around gender theory, a constant presence in artistic circles and cultural debates grappling with the social challenges and legal difficulties facing transgender people.

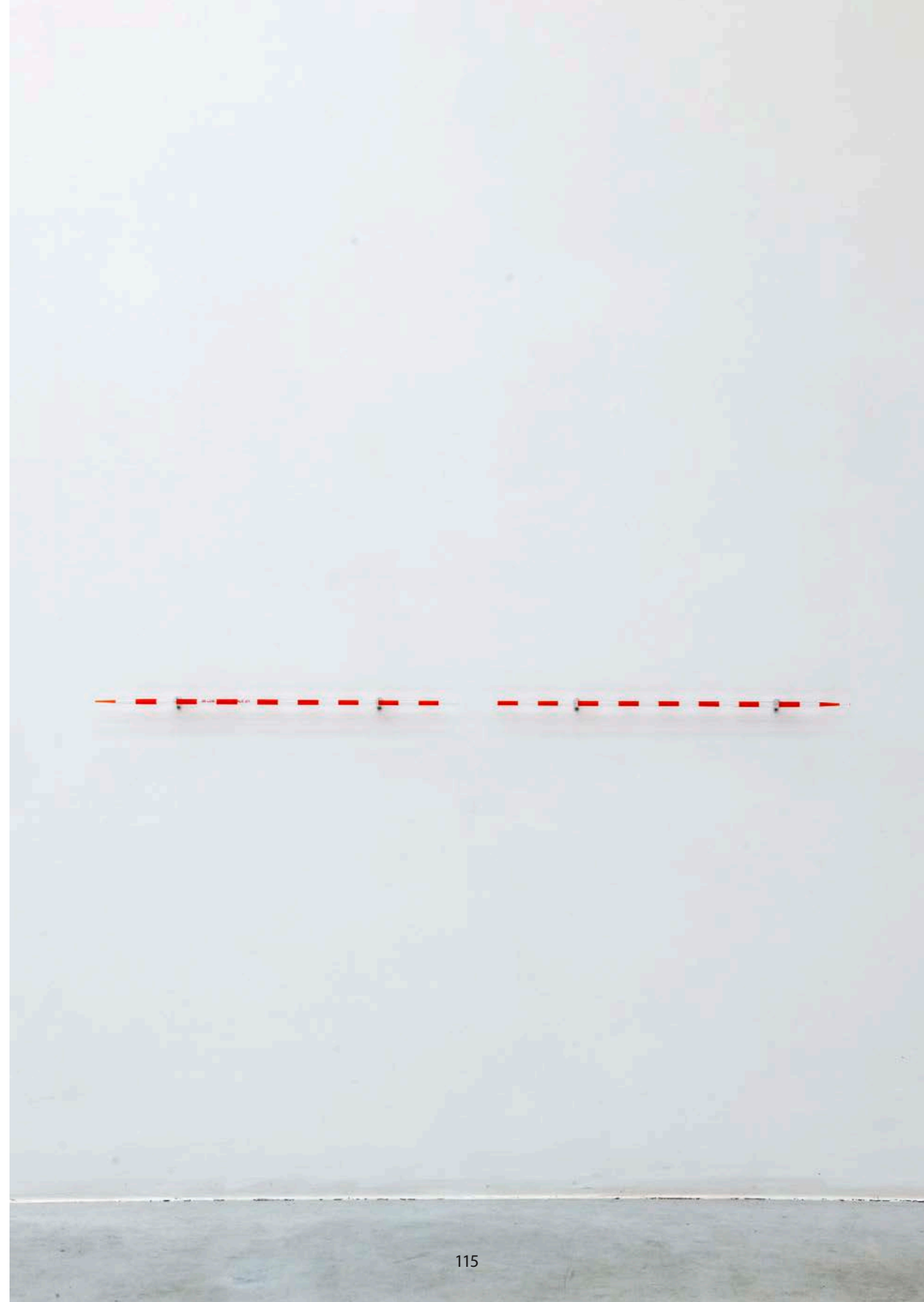
One can say that De Boeck's work is continuous despite the discontinuity of techniques and stories. It is a framework consisting of implicit parts and incomplete narratives. A personal story is made up of discontinuities but reveals its meaning when reading and deciphering its continuity. The series of neon signs reproducing the artist's signature are good examples of this: (LDB, Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain), which represents the administrative identity as well as works which establish physical identity, such as a fingerprint, iris image or DNA. To avoid any literal interpretation, Lieven De Boeck encrypts and translates international codes: DNA structure, measurement systems or by translating the poems of Laurie Anderson into an alphabet of his own creation (Blue white red black story). Revealing and concealing oneself. Being oneself. Existing in the world. Is that not what every nation attempts to do? By having its territory, its language, its flag?

In the rear space, De Boeck has compiled the Pantone colours used for all the world's national flags. On the wall, facing the Belgian flag rendered in a witty gradation of white, hangs the tricolour flag chosen by the artist, somewhere between whimsical nationalism and rigorous minimalist art. On the floor, in a wave, the nations mingle and come together. Here we see no overstated national sentiment, nor affirmation of superiority. Just a survey of colours that settles for anonymity. This is continued in the dual letter, on the one hand, an anonymous letter, yet on the other totally tippexed out, causing the already unknown individual to disappear completely. By abolishing the conventional categories, Lieven De Boeck unites through paradox; a unity at white, a unity of subjective absence.

LDB, RICHARD OF YORK GAVE BATTLE IN VAIN, 2017
Neon, 6 colors of the rainbow

THE BROKEN LDB MIKADO, 2017
Glass sculpture

Page 106-107 THE WORLD UNMADE, THE PANTONE EDITION, 2017
Printed polyester in 43 pantone colors, zipped together





I AM SHANE, 2017

Tissue, mix of cotton, wool and linen

Page 110-111 THE BLUE, WHITE, RED STORY, 2016

White polystyrene glued on wood, sound





I AM I

The scarf I am I transposes the identity of two friends, Rachael and Lucie, into a decorative scarf, 9 meters long. The motifs reflect their portraits in a childish graphical way - like the images of sweaters of children- their nationality, gender, physical characteristics (height, weight, shoe size), sexual orientation, totem animal.

During the opening of the show, the piece will be activated by two persons wrapped together in the scarf and then un-roll towards the end of the gallery space.

I AM I, 2017

Tricot, wool, cotton, mohère

Page 114-115 LDB, Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain, 2017
Neon





I AM I 2018

A Performance Affair, the Panopticon edition

Participants APA Panopticon edition:

Alice Anderson, Elena Bajo, Sanna Helena Berger
Julien Bismuth , Anna Byskov & Lidwine Prolonge
Jeremiah Day, Lieven De Boeck, Marijke De
Roover, Carole Douillard , Tim Etchells , Nikolaus
Gansterer, Ariadna Guiteras Ištvan Išt Huzjan ,
Marc Leschelien , Emily Perry Candida Powell-
Williams, Mireia c. Saladríguez , Sarah & Charles
Moussa Sarr, Flore Sauniois & Sarah Trouche
Joris Van de Moortel, Laurence Vauthier

Proposal application:

For the Panopticon edition the piece 'I am I' will be re-enacted and developed further. The two performers will perform the piece again, but the artist and two new performers will interfere with movement and text. Sometimes mirroring the personality of the two protagonists, sometimes confirming the text with their presence. The idea of the mirror and the copying of another person's identity by someone else becomes part of the activation of the scarf.

The questions raised by the piece are fundamental for our contemporary society, taking into account the rise of populist and right wing movements all over the world, where the question of a simple identity is put at the heart of the political discourse. The artist believes however that the recognition of a multiple identity is the base for creativity and a more human society, as exclusion becomes less present.

The performance underlines the complexity of the world and its inhabitants, but instead of leading to fear, it leads to a celebration of the richness of diversity. By making abstract, often unfamiliar, concepts such as transgender or bisexual, personal and impersonated by performers and by presenting them amidst other more "common" aspects of a personality, viewers are confronted with the multiple aspect of personality and are appealed to take into account not only what divides but also what brings together.

The act of mirroring also reminds of how identities are never fixed, how each person continues to change in interaction with his or her environment. The choice of the artist for the medium of performance is here significant, as it stresses the importance of environment and space, and of giving space, in this personal growth as well as in the development of society as a whole.

ACTIVATION

The piece researches a very particular form of presentation including many layers of reading. Through the form and activation the conceptual background of the piece gets expressed ; form, movement and content find each other in a moment of intense energy, explaining the sheer enthusiasm of the public.





First movement

I am wondering between places
Travelling creates a distance between what I do
and that what just happens
The longer the journey , the further we go and
the closer we come, defining
yourself in your home country or in exile, or even
when travelling the world.

Second movement

I am thinking about desired places, a map made
up of connections only found in
dreams. When I am asleep, images of non
existing houses, buildings, cities and
highways are constructed in my mind; the known
and the unknown, the past and
the future interweave and intermingle creating at
times unrecognisable forms.
Forms I have never seen.

Third movement

A stranger knows to keep the distance
Distances make new perspectives possible
Even in familiar places
In the package, the wonderer brings own visions
and stories,
To fill a city with, or a house, or a museum

Fourth movement

Every day I go out and walk
There are no expectations or destination
Just walking
And counting
North to South to West

West to east and east to south
South to north and north to east

End

I feel like a piece of lace made from ice
And I feel like three blue stars
I feel like a streetlight in the yellow leaves of a
gingko tree
Or like a cold dark iron fence

I feel compressed energized and sparkling









Will Kerr co-curator of the exhibition:

“ Lieven De Boeck’s performance ‘I am I’ questions fundamental concepts of showing art through interference in relation with the audience by engaging the space, the public and the art object in a unique way. We were intrigued by his personal, direct approach and invited him to take part in APA to make the border between the audience, performer, space and artwork disappear

At the end of the third day, Lieven and his 4 actors decided to extend their performance into the public space of Brussels, further developing an unexpected, direct relation with the city and the many coincidental watchers who passed by the impromptu performance. “



STUDIO LDB

In 2014 I decided to start Studio LDB, a collaborative art practice that explores my work since 2003. The studio develops and shares authorship through concepts of reproduction, re-interpretation, re-enactment and conceptual research on forms of presentation. This, in order to reveal hidden aspects of the work, and explore alternative ways of going public.

In 2015, artist Julia Reist joined the studio, initially as an assistant but later as a co-author of 'explorations', a series of short video's in which we installed and manipulated certain works, creating altered meanings, colored by the environment and the specific representation of the particular works.

In 2015, Art-historian Zac Rose joined the studio to elaborate different ways of writing about my work. These appeared later in the book X – independence of character – novel figures perpetrating.

The work of Studio LDB evolved further with the development of the exhibition concepts such as 'Image not found' in the Frac-Paca in Marseille and 'Objet Trouvé' in the Museum D'hondt Dhaenens in Deurle (BE). During 2 years, Julia and I worked on the development of the second part of those exhibitions that was only accessible to the audience during a performative activation of the works.

Architect Claire Lootens joined the studio in 2017 for the development of the exhibition 'I am I' in gallery Meessen De Clercq in Brussels.

This exhibition included three works that carried a performative dimension from their conception: 'I am I', 'I am Shane' and 'The World Un-made, the pantone edition'. For the presentation of the first two works, Shane Mccollam, Rachael Moore, Marie-Pierre Vandeputte and Lucie Chalot joined the studio to help further develop the performative aspect of those works. The other pieces in the exhibition were conceived and presented as a backdrop of support for these performative works.

In 2018, the artwork 'I am I' got invited to be performed in the A Performance Affair, the Panopticon edition, a groupshow. For this occasion, most of the work existed of adapting it not only to the space it was performed into, but as well to the fact that it was part of a large group show.

Currently, studio LDB collaborators include Naomi Roque Naguno and Diane Levasseur. We are preparing on a work called 'Desire', dealing with text. The performative aspect of the work will be developed as of its first presentation in public space.

The artistic research project for Frart will also be developed in the collaborative context of the studio LDB.