

Marcel Broodthaers

Thierry De Cordier

Carl De Keyzer

Luc Deleu

Jan Fabre

Marc Goethals

Bernd Lohaus

Artists presented by the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Ghent (Belgium)

In the context of the cultural exchange between Flanders and Catalonia 1997-1998, the exhibition **SET** emerged from the collection and history of the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Gent [Contemporary Art Museum of Ghent] (Belgium) with the presentation of the work of seven Belgian artists.

All seven occupy a significant place in both the history of the museum and the recent history of Belgian contemporary art. For some of them, the museum in Ghent was the first to show and buy their works to add them to its collection. **SET** gives an overview of the 22 years of history of this institution.

In 1977, the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Gent devoted an exhibition to Marcel Broodthaers, a year after his death. In 1985, Thierry De Cordier organized one of his first performances in the museum's colonnade; while he presented *Open Mind*, his work *Bewaker van onze Graentetuim* could be seen inside. The major photography exhibitions of Carl De Keyzer also showed first in Ghent. A one-man show by Jan Fabre was organized there in 1985. For his part, Bernd Lohaus took part in a variety of group shows (*Belgian art today* in 1979; *Between space* in 1979; *Ponto Temse* in 1990) and was invited by Jan Hoet to take part in the ninth edition of the *Documenta* in Kassel along with Fabre and De Cordier.

In the course of *Initiatief 86*, Luc Deleu proposed a monumental project for Saint Peter's Square in Ghent to the museum, and in 1996 was commissioned to design the entrance to the exhibition held to mark the opening of the present temporary building. Marc Goethals took part in *Confrontaciones* in the course of 1988. Keeping faith with its commitment to the contemporary, the museum has grown in complicity with the artists and its evolution.

Rather than aspiring to provide a comprehensive review of recent Flemish art, the exhibition **SET** is an attempt to cover the most noteworthy aspects of its different facets. No one specific theme is addressed, yet in one way or another we see how the seven artists are interested in the relationships between word and image, narrative and word, or image and its reference.

The work of Marcel Broodthaers is an example of the latter; this artist came to the world of art as a poet and ended up becoming a publisher, film director, actor, photographer, sculptor and even curator of his own museum. In **SET** he presents one of his most celebrated works: *Miroir d'époque regency*, of which the artist himself was to say in 1974: "There is a mirror decorated with an eagle—a late eighteenth-century antique—that belongs to a museum in Ghent. An official mirror, one might call it, reflecting the virtual images of those eagles whose multiple heads recount the history of arms as an aspect of art. This is the mirror of misinterpretation. And even though Jupiter's messenger is perched on top, it is a trick mirror."

Thierry de Cordier creates images and writes. He qualifies his works of social realism as "the simple thinking of a self-taught philosopher". They are long texts written by hands which refuse to acknowledge themselves as those of a writer. In addition to these *Écrits* published in book form, his work comprises

fragments of text, posters and titles which, in the form of inscription, textualize their visual nature as they reaffirm themselves as drawings.

For a long time now the ball-point pen has been the artistic tool wielded by **Jan Fabre**. He has produced thousands of drawings and covered hundreds of metres of cloth with the aid of a perfectly normal ball-point alone. Fabre is a prolific creator who combines the most diverse of activities. He makes sculptures with insects, he is an artist, dramatist, opera director, choreographer, actor and film director. He recreates a fantastic world inhabited by all kinds of creatures: ancestral heroes, characters from history and mythological beings.

Writing poetry and drawing are complementary activities for **Bernd Lohaus**. The three-dimensional nature of his sculptures on the terraces of the MACBA lie somewhere between sculpture, poem and drawing. His usual materials are wood and words. He picks them out of industrial waste and tries to manipulate them as little as possible, seeking to transform physical matter into poetic language.

Carl De Keyzer, a photographer with the renowned agency Magnum, is writing his very own history of the world. His large-format photos reveal the reality hidden behind documentalism. Media events provide the departure point which allows the photographer to bring the viewer closer to the silent masses which star in them.

Marc Goethals has a particular interest in narrative procedures, anecdote and images as illustration, giving his work a markedly ironic touch. Each image contains a non-existent verb. This is his way of challenging the observer to question our usual way of looking at things.

After training as an architect, **Luc Deleu** has gone on to design, among others, a building which varies in height and can be stretched out. His particular interest is public urban space and its contradictions. In **SET**, he takes Richard Meier's building —the MACBA— and its architectural setting as his starting point to propose huge sculptures made out of transport containers, located outside the building.

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