

BLIJVEN KIJKEN

Ce qui nous regarde / Dropouts

14.02 > 12.05.13

M invariably reserves a slot in its exhibition programme for a presentation stemming from specific research into unusual themes from contemporary visual culture. An external curator is invited to mount it and on this occasion that was Pieter Van Bogaert.

Blijven Kijken / Ce qui nous regarde / Dropouts is an exploration of the matter of media.

The matter of media? The pixels from which images appear, but also the figures which disappear into those pixels. It is about dropouts: the pixels and figures on the edge of the frame which make media momentarily tangible. The exhibition presents images that look back at us, that concern the viewer, that move the viewer – even if only for a moment. It is about a recent history and about media art in the broadest sense of the word: artists – painters, video makers, photographers, sound and computer artists, designers and writers – who ponder the media they work with.

The exhibition occupies four different galleries, each of which looks at the same matter differently.

Ann Clicteur's set design interlinks all these galleries. Central to her design are the chairs scattered around the various spaces. They are intended to encourage visitors to go on looking - *blijven kijken* -, to take their time and go and sit near a work. The chairs are also dropouts. They are castoffs, picked up in local recycling shops. All these different chairs have been treated in the same way. Ann Clicteur covered them and gave them a number and a place. This is all part of the museum system; look, for example, at the numbers on the electric sockets. Because they are numbered they can get out of place. The same applies to the screens in front of the windows in Gallery 19. They were numbered and now hang on the wall. That, too, is part of the aesthetic of the dropout: a strange element that prompts a double take reaction. Together they make the structure of the museum visible, they make it into a museum that looks back at you: *ce qui nous regarde*.

GALLERY 19 (*ce qui nous regarde*)

Mekhitar Garabedian is showing four works.

Hanging on the back of the wall – it very nearly falls outside the frame and can in fact best be seen through the outside window – is *Les Autres* (2011). This neon is a sentence from a film by the French director Alain Resnais, but it is also an echo of a statement by the French poet Rimbaud. This is typical of Garabedian's work: it alludes to quotes, fragments and parts that refer to a larger whole. Together they form a living archive. Running on the other side of the wall is the video *Hören Sie, die Stille* (2007, 3', loop). The text is taken from a book by the 19th century, German writer Georg Büchner, quoted in *Jeder für Sich, Got gegen Allen* (Every man for himself, and God against everyone), a film by Werner Herzog. The video looks damaged. It shows an image of the Armenian genocide, though that image is difficult to distinguish. The carpet on the floor, *fig. a, a comme alphabet, kork (carpet)* (2012), also refers to the artist's Armenian background and the place of language in the diaspora. The address book on the wall, *fig. (2009)*, shows the Western, the other, alphabet. It is a mini-archive – and also a reference, this time to Marcel Broodthaers – as part of a larger archive.

The alphabet also plays an important role in the *enSuite archief*, which originated from an abecedarium in a conversation between **Femke Snelting** and Pieter Van Bogaert. That conversation – it's here in the exhibition with abecedarium in the reader – began with Snelting's experience of cookbooks and open source software in a bid to learn something about learning. That's what these books are about: about ways of passing on knowledge. Other alphabets (like Garabedian's Armenian) are one of the subjects of Open Source Publishing (OSP), the designers' collective of which Snelting is a member. She made one herself, a very personal ACB, in response to the communal ABC of *enSuite*.

Specially for this exhibition **Herman Asselberghs** and **Dieter Lesage** together with the cine-typographic collective garage64 have produced a book version of Asselberghs' video *After Empire* (2010, 52'). Print and screen stand side by side here as a stubborn commemoration of a suppressed historic moment: February 15th 2003, the Saturday when millions of

people all over the world took to the streets to protest against plans to go to war with Iraq.

The demonstrators disappear into the pixels in this multitude of moving images derived from YouTube, television and mobile phones. 2/15 - a blurred, uncertain image of political potential - is presented as an alternative to 9/11 with explicit images of the fear that for too long dictated the climate of the early 21st century.

Pieter Geenen filmed *nocturne* (2006, 28') on the island of Lampedusa: "La più bella isola del mondo", but also the outpost of Fort Europa. This is Geenen's alternative to the clichéd images of sun-drenched beaches in travel brochures. He films the same coast at night as refugees come ashore, clinging to the dark hope of a new future.

Mother and Child, *Child* and *Three Children* are three photographs produced by the **Association des Photographes de Kanyabayonga** in collaboration with **Renzo Martens** in 2007. You can see the same photographers at work in *Episode 3 – Enjoy Poverty*, a video by Renzo Martens. These are the photographs which didn't make it into the video and certainly not into the media of Western journalists in the same region.

On the other side of the gallery, a distant echo of those images of mothers and children, is **Gorik Lindemans'** *Mother and Child* (2011), inspired by the stained glass technique. What you see depends on which side of the work you look at. What with frontal lighting seems to be no more than a cardboard frame filled with plastic bags, with backlighting becomes the image of the mother and her child. This stained glass is a contemporary interpretation of *Mother and Child*, from the end of the 14th century, on show in room 2 of M's permanent collection.

Equally magical is *Wall Piece* (2013) in which **Wim Janssen** produces a 3D drawing as a sculpture. The end result is always a virtual image: contours whose surface the viewer fills in. Here, too, the movement in the space, the staging, provides a new perspective. What from a distance looks like a pencil drawing, from closer to becomes a sculpture of the graphite core of that pencil.

HALLWAY (*dropout*)

Videovoid: Trailer (1993, 32') is the announcement of what was to have been a 7-part video series, except that **David Larcher** never got further than the first part: *Videovoid: Text*. This work sparked the original idea of the dropout: a pixel which slips out onto the videotape, thus making the matter of media momentarily tangible.

The phenomenon appears as quickly as it disappears, an instantly forgotten interference. But not for Larcher who turns that moment into a delirious experience, a protracted reverie which looks ahead from the electronic era – we are in 1993 – to the digital era.

Improved Painting, 2010 comes from a series in which **Gorik Lindemans** always starts from a digital photograph of his garden, as you can see from the frame. We take digital photographs without looking through the view finder, frequently with outstretched arm, sometimes even without looking at the little screen. It makes the frame less contrived and shows the matter of media. Moreover, Lindemans cuts his paintings in three afterwards, thereby making the frame even more arbitrary. And it allows the next owner (or in this case: the curator) to decide upon his own frame and constantly improve the painting.

Hanging next to the wall text in *Blijven Kijken / Ce qui nous regarde / Dropouts* is the reader: a fairly random collection of texts. Not really a book, because never conceived as such, and certainly not an exhibition catalogue, but a reader that breaks out of the frame, partly because of Open Source Publishing's layout: they make that flexible frame tangible.

GALLERY 21 (*pixel*)

Two pixels: that's all **Anouk De Clercq** and **Jerry Galle** need to create a world of attracting and repelling, of positive and negative, of rejection and longing. *Pixelspleen* (2007) is a generative work with a logarithm that constantly propels the pixels towards and away from each other. It is a work of extremes. The 'spleen' in the title also has an echo of Elias Heuninck's melancholy. Not so long ago he was studying at the KASK in Ghent, where these artists also teach.

(This research is financially supported by the Research Fund of University College Ghent)

GALLERY 22 (*blijven kijken*)

Whereas in his *Improved Painting* **Gorik Lindemans** started from a digital image of a random composition and made it into a painting, in *Les Oiseaux d'Eudes* (2008), XL the reverse happened. Here he started from painted illustrations in an ornithological guide and made them into a digital image. This image is an ode to the original use of colour and composition in the book. He chose a printing technique that gives the digital print a soft tempera effect. The schematic lines were smeared on with thick paint strokes. The print was stuck onto a white panel to give it the thickness of the printed book.

Shortfilms for you is a multimedia book by **Duncan Speakman**, which he worked on with artists from different disciplines: a writer, a photographer and a choreographer. *Soft Boundary* (2012) is the contribution made with sound artist **Els Viaene**. With this miniature book, which fitted into the original book like a Russian doll, Els Viaene recorded microscopic sounds in her urban environment, zooming in on the inaudible. The magnifying glass that accompanies the book is the equivalent of her headphones. It zooms in on the invisible. It also makes the matter of media visible: the grid of the printed image. Press the button and leaf through the book at your leisure.

Lyrical Data (2010, 5'), **Elias Heuinck's** video, was made from a dropout: he retrieved from the recycle bin an incomplete download of another film, *Lyrical Nitrate* by filmmaker Peter Delpeut. So really he did what Peter Delpeut did in the original film: the latter worked with deteriorating fragments of nitrate films from the early twentieth century and edited those perishable images to create a new film: nitrate nostalgia, digital melancholy.

We recognize something of that nostalgia in the work of **Stefaan Quix**. Running on an iPad and three iPods are *Not With A Bang But With A Whimper* (2010, 57') and *Three Colour Systems: RGB, CMYK, BOP* (2011, 544') respectively. The first work zooms out very slowly to the noise of a television screen: a digital version of a disappearing electronic image. The second came when Quix was looking for a suitable medium to diffuse other work. He couldn't use DVD because the raster image loses definition as a result of the necessary image compression. The iPod was the closest he could get to the artistic consumer. Because the pixels Quix was working with were no longer visible on the Retina Display™ of the iPod, image compression was separated from the ubiquitous digital grid and so used here as an artistic strategy in its own right.

The title of **Els Opsomer's** *imovie[3]_: silver lips/ for me* (2006, 12') also refers to Apple technology. Whereas for the computer giant the small i still refers to the digital world of the internet, Opsomer gives it a connotation of intimacy, intermediary, zooming in, imaginary. This is the third and most personal film in her imovie series. Everything revolves around the body of the man she loves over in Senegal who is waiting for the right papers to travel over here to Belgium. Word and image, idea and reality, theory and practice, black and white are interwoven in this video letter. The pictures are no longer examined but eagerly fingered and fondled until there is nothing left to see.

Nothing left to see can be taken literally in *nightscape* (3) (2005, 15') and *nightscape* (8) (2013, 13'), two sound works by **Pieter Geenen**. These nocturnal sonic landscapes are intended to be listened to in total darkness. Like an echo of the silence in the darkness of *nocturne*.

As part of the exhibition, M is presenting three Thursday-evening programmes:

28/02 | 19.30 : screening of *Videovoid:Text* by David Larcher and *Not With a Bang but a Whimper* by Stefaan Quix, followed by a Q&A session with Stefaan Quix.

28/03 | 20.00: presentation of the book *After Empire* by Emiliano Battista with a screening of *nocturne #2* by Pieter Geenen and *Swan Song* by Anouk De Clerq and Jerry Galle.

11/04 | 20.00: screening of *Presto, Perfect Sound* and *one, two, many* by Manon de Boer, with a talk/performance by Christof Migone.

The talks will be held in the forum at M.

The talk on 28/02 will be in Dutch, the talks on 28/03 and 11/04 in English.

Please reserve by emailing bezoekm@leuven.be.