

GIJS VAN VAERENBERGH - SECTIONS

24.11.2016 - 21.01.2017

The work of Gijs Van Vaerenbergh is strikingly multifaceted. Pieterjan Gijs and Arnout Van Vaerenbergh are architects. But they don't construct traditional buildings, they make artworks for public spaces. The starting point of their projects are architectural typologies such as the church, the gate, the arch, the plinth, the column.

The projects by Gijs and Van Vaerenbergh are diverse in nature: the design of a fictive cupola for a church in Leuven ('The Upside Dome', 2010), projects constructed with parts of building cranes ('Framework, 2012 or 'Bridge', 2014), a labyrinth in steel (C-mine, 2015), an arcade (Kruibeke, 2015), plinths (on which they often place strange items). Their most surprising work is known by everyone - even if only from a photo or television: 'Reading Between the Lines' (2011), the 'transparent'-church in Borgloon built out of different layers. Like the labyrinth in C-mine it is a work which has entered public memory - even for someone who is unaware who is responsible for it.

For the very first time Gijs and Van Vaerenbergh show in gallery valerie_traan not only (scale) models of existing work, but also new, autonomous work. The exhibition consists of different 'sections', partial spaces, in which scale models of larger work are shown in relation to autonomous sculptures: a scale model of their labyrinth and two intersecting ellipses in the central space, a twisted ring in steel and intersecting power lines in the front room, a model house and brick ring in the mezzanine, plinths and proposals for statues at the entrance of the gallery. The exhibited models are not only reproductions of existing work, but also proposals for as yet unrealized interventions. It is important that they are read as such: as potential, as possibility. These partial spaces deal with the most important themes in the work of Gijs Van Vaerenbergh.

If the different projects by the duo Gijs Van Vaerenbergh have something in common it is their intervention in space. They work with and transform the space. Sometimes that space can be small and limited. Like a mirror-like metal surface in which they have put nails. The nails slightly deform the metal plate and with it the space we see reflected in it. With two pastels on a string in the largest space of the gallery the contours of a circle and an ellipse were drawn on the wall, the columns and the ceiling of the gallery in order to suggest a section of reality. In a corner on the top floor wooden plates with different dimensions are stacked that refer to the profiles of plinths and classical architecture in an absurd way.

The exhibition focuses on the work of Gijs Van Vaerenbergh that is the result of making sections, of excisions, in space. One of their most beautiful, simple and yet universal works consists of two ellipses that cut each other ('Ellipse Intersect'). Whether it is as a small model in cardboard, or as a large sculpture in metal, the result is immediately striking in its geometric simplicity. They used the same principle on a large scale in their 'Labyrinth' in C-mine in Genk. At regular distances they made elliptic and round excisions in the steel maze, sections which because of the resulting light and transparency gave a remarkable lightness to the heavy structure. 'Ellipse Intersect' shows on small scale what is cut away in 'Labyrinth' and in this way complements it.

There is something iconoclastic about the work of Gijs Van Vaerenbergh: they deform, dissect, dismantle reality, take it apart and recompose it in a transformed way in order to have us look at it differently. One example is their model of a Flemish 'fermette' or country house which they literally dismantle ('Model House', 2013) and make a section of it. They did it in such a way that we suddenly look at this overused cliché of Flemish architecture in a different way. Another aspect of their exhibition in gallery valerie_traan has to do with plinths. With this typology in mind they came up with a wonderful work in which a part of the plinth is cut away and put on top of the same plinth as a work of art. An action that suddenly reverses the whole relation between plinth and artwork.

The projects by Gijs Van Vaerenbergh deal with recollection, they address our collective memory. Their church in Borgloon is the best example: its physical presence refers to the village churches of days gone by. Other works also function in this way. For Kruibeke they designed an arcade which evokes the memory of a road that disappeared because of the construction of a polder. In the interior of a church in Louvain they constructed the (reversed) cupola which the church itself never got. On the border of Molenbeek and Brussels they erected a temporal city gate by means of two moving platforms.

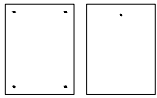
For similar reasons Gijs Van Vaerenbergh are fascinated by plinths. Not to erect a statue of something or somebody, but because of the historical, art historical, public and sculptural aspects of a plinth.

They are fascinated by the historical reasons for the erection of a particular statue and the recollections transmitted by it. Especially because those reasons are often dated, or have become completely irrelevant.

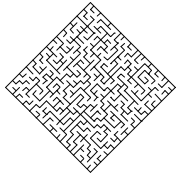
The character of the city interests them. They want to start a long term project to 'read' the history of a place thanks to its history and public statues - statues which they reactivate by transforming them. An example is such a temporary intervention is 'Statue Proposal #2' (2016) in which a bust of Albert I, Belgium's king of the trenches, is covered by yellow sand in such a way that the suggestion arises that what we see is not a bust but a full figure and the plinth has been replaced by the sand. Another proposal, specially made for this exhibition, is the transformation of the statue of Rubens on the Groenplaats. They add a steel plate to the work which isolates fragments of the plinth and the statue. This barely looked at or even noticed statue and its plinth suddenly get a new look and meaning. Marc HOLTTHOF

Short biography

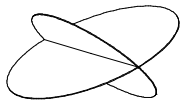
Gijs Van Vaerenbergh is an artistic collaboration, established by Pieterjan Gijs and Arnout Van Vaerenbergh (both Leuven, 1983) after they graduated as architects. Their work mainly consists of public sculptures, site-specific interventions and experimental constructions. Central to their practice is a research into the fundamentals of constructing and their impact upon the viewer. The duo misappropriates the language of architecture to use it as a medium for self-reflexive projects. Their interventions transform space and lay bare underlying, almost evident qualities. Their installations often refer to architectural typologies such as the church, the gate, the arch, the arcade, the base and the column: Gijs Van Vaerenbergh redraws and transforms them into autonomous works. Among their earlier works are: 'The Upside Dome' (Leuven, 2010), 'Reading Between The Lines' (Borgloon, 2011), 'Framework' (Leuven, 2012), 'Bridge' (Brussels, 2014) and 'Labyrinth' (2015). In gallery Valerie Traan they exhibit selected scale models of their installations in relation to new sculptures.



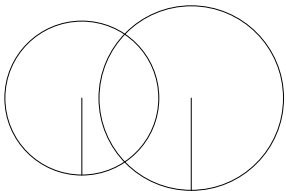
Mirror I
Mirror II
85 x 65 cm
polsihed inox, steel



Labyrint
model scale 1:33
114 x 114 x 15cm
steel



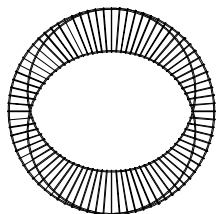
Ellipse Intersect
85 x 150 x 110 cm
steel, wax



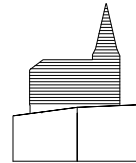
Proposal for a Cut-out
dimensions variable
cotton wire, pastel



Powerline Intersect Proposal
model scale 1:
29 x 29 x 120cm
cupper



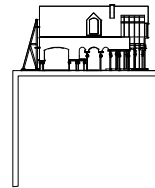
Torqued Steel Cage
210 x 210cm x 50 cm
steel



Reading Between the Lines
86 x 86 x 150 cm
weatherproof steel



Three-quarter Ring in Compression
diam 80cm
bricks, inox, cement



Model House
model 1/10
145 x 120 x 175 cm
painted xps, wood, steel, plastic



Soccle Section
55 x 55 x 105 cm
concrete



Statue proposal: Albert I
Statue proposal: Justius Lipsius
Statue Proposal: P.P. Rubens
dimensions variable
plaster, acrylic paint, clay, sand



Corner Piece: To
dimensions variable
mdf