

Adriaan Verwée
Come se niente fosse
VISITOR'S GUIDE
EMERGENT gallery & association Σ

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The title *Come se niente fosse* originates in the Italian word 'sprezzatura' and can be translated as 'to excel in a seemingly effortless way' ... Taking this idea as a starting point, Adriaan Verwée created a new sculptural installation that holds a direct relation to the spaces of the gallery. As such the installation is the next step in his artistic practice – a continuous process in which the artist transforms earlier works into new configurations of both sculptural and photographic productions. Verwée presents an exhibition that infiltrates and negotiates the way the spectator reads or experiences the gallery spaces. The trajectory the artist mapped out for the spectator starts at the elevator. The works in the exhibition seem to be created 'without effort'. "It is a boutade addressed to the mythology of creation", the artist explains. "In an early conversation Frank Maes and I discussed an untitled installation of Jannis Kounellis in the S.M.A.K. Collection. Kounellis made this work for the exhibition *Kunst in Europa na '68*. The story goes that it drove Jan Hoet crazy because the artist just didn't deliver the work. Only moments before the opening the piece actually was there (as out of thin air) and "SPREZZATURA!" echoed through the museum rooms. Kounellis' installation of 1980 is a reconfiguration of elements (a.o. rocks and smoke columns) that were already present in his earlier works. Therefore the work bears his poetic signature and did not "fall from the sky" so to speak. Of course he isn't really Italian neither, but a Greek who shrewdly introduced the term in Flanders. I found the abiding attitude of Kounellis in the anecdote a beautiful tenet for this exhibition, in our times of haste and speed."

The images in the installation *Technicum* were shot by Verwée in the building with the same name that hosts the Faculty of Engineering of Ghent University. The exhibition space in which *Technicum* is installed, is reflected in the photos and vice versa. The fluorescent lamps and concrete floor remind us of the function of the *Technicum* space: a laboratory where the foundations of our industrial society were laid out. We see a worn-out classroom, the dystopic image of "a post-modern burn-out", according to the artist. The weathered floor gives the exhibition space a rather desolate look that is further amplified by the photos. The bench sculpture is an illustration of the continuous process of transformation, an essential theme of Verwée's artistic practice. The bench is made with the wood of *Things postponed*: a series of sculptures that were on show in the exhibition *Het kunstwerk: een gebruiksaanwijzing*. It took place in the *Technicum* building in 2012.

For *1/2 work* Verwée departed from a wall that cuts the space in two. It is an example of exhibition scenography neutralizing the specific context of the Emergent space into an exhibition space. The artist partially disassembled the wall. Next to it a booklet can be consulted that shows a series of photos capturing the process of disassembly. *1/2 work* is a spatial translation of the literary cut-up technique, where fragments of a text are reassembled into a new whole. *Cut-up proposition* (technique) explicitly refers to this principle by interpreting it visually: this work is a reconfiguration of the painting/sculpture *Proposition* (2010).

Jug & Well is an installation made of plaster, burlap, wood and metal. The title "Jug & Well" is taken from the book *Manual of painting and calligraphy* of José Saramago. It's a story of self discovery against the backdrop of the final years of Salazar's dictatorship. A struggling young artist, commissioned to paint the portrait of an influential industrial, in the process learns things about himself and the surrounding world. *Jug & Well*, literally speaking, is a spatial translation of a literary subject. The work is a study, a prototype for *Produced sculpture*. The latter work, on display in Verwée's solo exhibition in Museum M in Leuven, was a sculpture

disguised as exhibition design. It was made of temporary walls that referred to the specimens that usually fragment the exhibition space. These create a certain setting and map out the conscious or unconscious trajectory for the spectator to move through. These walls were positioned in the space, not in parallel with the existing walls but, as often is the case with free-standing sculptures, slightly twisted in the space. For the production of the exhibition architecture, the artist chose not to rely on the museum's team, but to construct them himself in his studio. As such Produced sculpture met the conditions regarding authenticity, handwork and craftsmanship: characteristics that still seem self-evident in the art of painting but that are no longer relevant and considered nostalgic in the more conceptually oriented practice. The form of Untitled (produced sculpture) is the result of the disassembly process of the sculpture in the aftermath of the exhibition in M. The seams of the thirty boxes the wall was made of were sawn up, after which the sides were folded like moving boxes. In the end ten folded elements were piled up.

Elsewhere (for Royden Rabinowitch)

The work Elsewhere was created by accident. It is a composition of everyday objects: a wine glass, a smartphone and a small speaker that were laying on the artist's kitchen table one night. The work functions as a sound sculpture with an approximately eight minutes long recording of whistle tones, made by that specific smartphone. The whistling can be considered as a secular ritual without any presumption, if not the merely repetitive nature of the action as such. Verwée did not use rhythmic and made the pitch slide from one tone to another without aspiring a preset result. Later that night, while listening to the recordings, the artist deliberately put the speaker in the empty glass. The title is the result of the association of the spherical speaker and the conical glass with an illustration of the separation of past, present and future in a space-time diagram. In addition to this association Verwée holds on to the shape of the cone, a frequent feature in the work of Royden Rabinowitch.

In the staircase that leads to the attic, the spectator meets Untitled (Iznik). About this work Verwée says: "I was about to say this is an image of my personal archive, but that might be a little exaggerated. When do you start to speak of an archive and which method of archiving applies in that case? No, the image is taken on the borders of my practice as an artist: the outskirts of the exhibition space, the less interesting view on the studio, the little work in the hallway at home, an exhibition among friends in the bar Le Routier in Ghent, a walk in São Paulo or a vacation in Turkey. On the other hand you can't rule out the possibility that such an image is more telling than 'those other works' that are photographic and documentary as well: images of the exhibitions, gallery shows and participations in art fairs. Call it complementary residues." The title Flavin, Judd, Faldbakken & Coca-Cola is an eye wink to the well known conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth who in an interview once stated: "there's something problematic about all works from the 1960s, you know, that somehow Judd has to make boxes, Carl Andre has got to put something on the floor, Flavin has to use fluorescent lights, Buren's got to do a stripe and Lawrence Weiner has got to do a one-liner on the wall. It's a little bit like the shape of the Coca-Cola bottle: it's about product identification."