

Island

malpourtoi malpertuis

you may never leave - malpourtoi - the male partus. the famous maze-like fox's den from the german fable "reineke fuchs", which has been described by notorious authors like gottsched and goethe, is the uncanny imagery of the smart trapper, illusionist and manipulator. the smart animal's burrow is its castle. a quite humanoid imagery. as is *persé* what the fable represents: the emblem, the mirror of the human heart. preferably its vices *cachés*. hidden in the den, the male partus, the shelter for people of rotten or misled mind and passion. the swiss writer gottfried keller once transferred that very image of the dangerous trap-like home on the refuge of the "fool on manegg" as one of the well-known examples in germanophone literature. it was a novel published in the 1870s as part of his famous "zürcher novellen". there, the fatuous and vicious butz falätscher is convinced being the true heir of the manesse galahad dynasty. by fabricating various intrigues he finally installs himself at the noble family's fortress manegg in zurich, his male partus *parexcellence*.

... *andere wusste er in sein malpertuis zu locken und so in bedrängnis zu bringen, dass sie mit not den mauern und derg e fahrent rannen.*

jean ray, in his noted story "malpertuis", turned a similarly eery domicile into a fatal attraction and *impasse a dabsurdum*. no exit. perhaps dissolving into a red dwarf, preferably a red-haired dachshund may be the remedy. if we do not get stuck. the male partus helmut stallaerts is inviting to be the one of our own capacity, and not of our decision. i do not say that stallaerts is possibly vicious, the fox misguiding and trapping us. the male partus of which he is merely revealing the entrance, is the one of continuous doubt. artistic doubt of which the beholder is neither aware of nor may he intervene. the beholder is excluded. *de facto*. participation is hypocrisy in view of the private process of creation. but: we may step, as a *témoin*, into that addictive malpertuis. without doubt no recurrent reset of the artist's doing, the struggle and play with the image and its medium. the total ego of art extincts the beholder, and the artist hardly survives the hazardous deed, yet there repeatedly steps into the next. not least he survives by incessantly fathoming his own position as well whilst facing himself during the creational process. control of it is just some phantasm, such as the faux relief of yan in jean ray's novel that he has escaped malpertuis. it will never let go of you. the malpertuis of the artist is a permanent *à bout desouffle*. can't stop 'til you get enough. however, we learned: the notion of enough/sufficient/terminal does not exist in the vocabulary of malpertuis. it is absent, ignored. thus, stallaerts combines - in that quirky space of an island - a group of artists who, like a *quod erat demonstrandum*, exemplarily represent that personal call of "being in charge of art", the being responsible of a venture the beholder cannot take the effort of. one of the selected artists, frits vanden berghe, a belgian expressionist painter, very often took refuge in a villa in a forest called malpertuis, the house of his artist friend gustaaf desmet. intriguingly speaking for what the little show in brussels now is tempting us with. creation is a male partus, a refuge, but one you got to master well. it is existential at any moment, mocking, defenseless and self-confident at once, full of contradiction and extremes, resembling the human heart and reason in its failures and strengths itself. be ready to face your own shortcoming. are you original or fake? the hierarchy, respectively: the profession's exclusive tone reverberates: not everyone can be an artist. as not everyone is ready for the malpertuis' determination. are you?

isabel

hufschmidt

Island

dissolve into a red dwarf

One of the triggers of the exhibition "dissolve into a red dwarf" was the work of Jean Brusselmans' "self-portrait with an easel" from 1935. It shows the foundation of the conflict within being an artist. It shows a certain melancholy, a tension between chaos and construction, a mirror of the inevitable shortage. The work can be read in different ways. It suggests an activation of duality.

The works of art of contemporary artists that have been selected increase this tensile field and expand it. All other links have been constructed from this work to finally make new connections and partly let go of the original work. The selected works testify of the conflict between construction and chaos, life and death, illusion and reality, between void and plenty, between despair and decisiveness. Somewhere also humility, melancholy and the movement that is inherent to life and that cannot be surpassed by any static model or format.

The connections are associative and organic, they move like a domino stone that makes all other stones fall but then from an undulating movement that runs not linear. The idea of a dialogue is the basis of this exhibition. Each work has its own right of existence and necessity. It is not about the artist himself/herself or about an intellectual debate where the paintings often serve as an illustration but to create a tension wherein each work shows its own necessity, where its particularity is guarded, where the works are activated by their underlying interconnectivity.

Man has a need to be connected with a world outside himself to escape from the threat of loneliness and his own nothingness. The "great doctrines" and myths in which man was given a place in the collectiveness are behind us; the current context is one of continuous deconstruction.

In this small, closed world, wherein the appearance of hyper-narcissism and individualism are rampant, we move around and complete our desires with surrogates that lead us into an endless stream of needs and promises. Our awareness and fear of the void, death, chaos, the unknown appears to be a motor for culture throughout human evolution which has enabled us, for example, to rise above ourselves by means of art but which also brought the illusion to be able to dominate the world. Beneath the technocratic, objectivist, rationalist mask hides irrationality, the imposed chaos, the fears that finally dominate us and keep us in deadlock. Especially today where to transcend oneself in a world outside oneself has become almost impossible and where we assimilate fragily in an enclosed individuality (closed nucleus).

Nevertheless, we have seen times where the starry sky was more dominant in our worldview than our clear, slick screens and iPhones, where we seemed to be connected by myths to a larger whole.

The exhibition "dissolve into a red dwarf" tries to mirror these tensions. The exhibition searches rifts and openings: the praxis of "mental" nomadism.

H.S.

Island

Island is a non profit art space which was opened in 2012 by two young Belgian artists Sébastien Bonin and Brice Guillbert and is now directed by Anne-Catherine Lacroix and Emmanuelle Indekeu. Since its beginning Island's aim has been to promote young artists through exhibitions, conferences, screenings, etc. Differencing itself from a gallery, Island does not represent artists but invites each time again new artists for each of the different projects organised.

Through these activities Island offers a platform to young artists to present their works to the public in solo or group exhibitions, on a subject or reflection chosen by either the artist, a curator or Island's team. For the most part artists get a free pass and can appropriate the space for themselves.

With the exhibition *dissolve into a red dwarf*, Island collaborated with artist Helmut Stallaerts who co-curated the show. The idea for the exhibition came to the artist's mind a while ago as he wanted to create a dialogue between artworks, his co-curators from Island and the public. Enabling in turn the public to reflect in front of the artworks, questioning them without receiving specific answers. After two years of discussion and preparation, the exhibition has finally come to fruition.

* We decided to give this exhibition a little twist. After long discussions about the exhibition's organisation with Helmut, we settled on the idea of substituting some of the original art pieces for pixelised prints of them. The pixelised images are a symbol of society's censorship over production, in this particular case, the reproduction of images for the viewer to consume. But also of a censorship of what the lack of money can cause to any kind of initiative.

Emmanuelle Indekeu

Director

Island