

In the last couple of months three solo shows have taken place during the project 'Space is a Word' at P/////AKT. This project started with the work of Gino Saccone [GB/IT 1979] in September followed by Jean Bernard Koeman [Belgium, 1964] at the end of October and ended in December with work by Frederik van Simaey [Belgium, 1979].

Each artist has had the opportunity to show his work in the exhibition space for a period of approximately one month, of which you might have seen 0, 1, 2 or all 3 of the shows.

The question that was given to me by P/////AKT was to search for the differences and/or consistencies in their work and start finding a translation for it. This may result in any desired shape and can vary from a text, performance, lecture or something else.

But before I start talking about the works of Gino, Jean Bernard and Frederik, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to five basic shapes.

These shapes, ■, ●, ▲, ■, ▲ are the main characters in a lecture I gave last year about my artistic practice. In this lecture I explained my practice through these five shapes that are all involved in the process of my work. Each shape represents a different part of this process and has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The first shape I'd like to introduce you to is the ■, who is conceptual. Its character is thoughtful, meticulous and based on ideas. It prefers thinking above talking, but when it speaks it is very well thought out.

The way the ■ observes and analyzes its surroundings is very precise and detailed, which none of the other objects can match. This method of working helps the ■ to build up its own theories and ideas about society and contemporary art.

With its constant demand for explanations the ■ can put a lot of pressure on the other objects. This is sometimes seen as pedantic.

The second shape, the ●, almost has the opposite character of that of the ■'s.

The ● is not really a thinker. Its position is unfounded and most of its decisions are based on how it feels. Often it is blamed for being irresponsible and choosing the easiest way because of its impulsive behavior. But its uncomplicated attitude also makes it vulnerable. It has no theoretical foundation that can help it answer hard questions, which is the main reason of the ●'s uncertainty. Despite this uncertainty, the ● can provide surprising twists on ideas.

The next shape, the ▲, is a builder. It has a good understanding of colour and composition and has skills to work with many different materials.

Its enthusiasm for construction is so great that the ▲ sometimes has a hard time taking criticism or considering other opinions. Its proud and cocky attitude makes it difficult to communicate with and often causes frustration for both the ▲ and the ■, ●, ■, ▲.

Every once in a while this results in an intense discussion.

Then there is the ■, who likes to have an overview of what is happening.

Its function is to divide the amount of attention that each persona should get.

By this I mean that within a collaboration everyone should be able to express and develop him or herself. You could see the ■ as a manager; it keeps an eye on everyone and gets the best out of them. Of course it is inevitable that occasionally the ■ will overlook something.

Last but not least I'd like to introduce you to the ▲. Of all the objects, the ▲ probably has to play the most unpleasant role. Its function is to notice failures, which means that it has to face bad artworks and ideas. The modest but decisive way the ▲ deals with this difficult task is highly appreciated by me but not always by the other shapes; it does not make the ▲ a popular item in the group.

AND SHAPE:

[II]

Some months ago, after P/////AKT had asked me to participate in the project, I involved the objects in it to get a broader understanding of the artistic skills of these artists.

The ■ immediately got very excited. It was already a bit familiar with the work of Frederik van Simaey but the other two artists were unknown to the ■. To start its research it wanted to have some background information about the artists: where they had studied, how old they were, which topics they were interested in – all sorts of information that could be helpful to clarify their work.

The ■ realized that it didn't have the right skills to be a critic and decided to become the moderator so it could bring structure and order to the conversation.

Once all objects had positioned themselves within the group, the discussion could get started ...

■: **I would like to start with a work of Gino Saccone, the first artist in this series of three ... It was the work that was visible from the outside, before you entered P/////AKT: the hands in front of the window. The hands appear from a box filled with a kind of black sand and some of the fingers wear small silly puppets. One hand is silver-grey and one is white with some faint dirty spots on it ... I wonder why they were placed there? And why did they have different colours?**

▲: **I also saw that the hands were both right hands.**

■: **That I hadn't noticed. Why would that be?**

▲: **It was probably out of practical considerations.**

●: **I saw it as if the hands were symbolizing the artist's hands: the artist as a magician whose hands just appeared from the sand to show a marvelous magic trick as a way to impress his spectators. I could almost see the hands making this gesture like, come closer ... in order to invite the public inside and see more spectacles.**

▲: **Mmm, that sounds like an interesting interpretation of the work. The right hand is, for most people, the best hand in terms of coordination and cultural values. For a variety of skills we only use this hand, which means it is much more developed than the other hand. Showing two right hands together could mean something special, namely, magic! By the way, talking about magic makes me think of Frederik's work. I remember this one sentence in the text P/////AKT wrote about his work, "Van Simaey is an escape artist – even a bit of an alchemist – creating something out of nothing and capable of making things appear and disappear."**

According to the ■ this all sounded a little absurd ...

[Cube moves to the left ...]

■: **Couldn't those hands of Gino have something to do with the amount of fingers that each hand holds up? There were ||||| fingers if you counted both hands together or ||||| and ||| if you counted them separately. Maybe that means something? Like we figured out in some of his other work. He does have something special for numbers, doesn't he?**

A

CONVERSATION

[III]



: Like that piece in the back of the space, the mixed media work 'New Number +31' in which paint, pencil, plastic, canvas, frames and paper transformed into numbers and slowly appeared from the wall. That was such an interesting work.
I am fascinated by the way he plays with expectations and how he seems able to show his viewers different possibilities for one image. It's like abstract shapes fade into figurative shapes, then become functional and finally turn abstract again ...



: I was counting, and these |||| fingers might refer to P/////AKT!

[

30 seconds of silence ...]



: What do you think ▲, can you add something to this conversation?

[

Pyramid stands up ...]



: Well, the joy and pleasure of playing with objects and shapes is clearly visible in Gino's work and he seems to have a good understanding of colour and composition.
I spent quite a long time in front of the 'Secret Chord', the big print that was hanging in the middle of the space. It had a beautiful front and back which remind me of these African fabrics. The print was hanging on a metal tube that was connected to a wheel with a cord, which gave the impression that you could move the print up and down like blinds. I think this work was my favorite piece in the show. Although I wasn't able to see the optical illusion, I was absorbed by the repetition of the forms and their colours.
But honestly, besides this work I didn't pay much attention to the show.

[

Pyramid sits down ...]



: To see the optical effect I had to read the instruction that was hanging in the exhibition space very carefully. But it wasn't easy to see. It required a lot of patience. The same applied to the work 'The Suprematist Guitar Ensemble' of Jean Bernard, which also had a certain illusion in it that took time and patience to notice.
But in this case it was not visual. It was a sound effect that consisted of a group of guitar players who played the notes F C G E constantly for approximately 16.5 hours. By the repetition of the notes a melody is clearly hearable without the guitarists playing it. This is supposed to be a common phenomenon. Unfortunately, I couldn't hear the effect despite

his reference to my good friend the black .

I just wondered why the ▲ didn't take the time to see the rest of Gino's work?

I don't understand ... I think you two have a lot in common: you share the same passion for making. Don't you think?



: I stopped looking at Gino's work because the way he treated his materials bothered me, very sloppily and thoughtlessly. I preferred Jean Bernard's work, which is super precise and he takes care of his supplies!

ABOUT CONCEPT

AND MEANING

[IV]

The same can be said about Frederik's work, but Frederik is not so much a maker. He assembles existing objects. His unfolded emergency blankets, for example, that were framed had this impressive shiny and glamorous look. The folded objects [step ladder, foldable bike, folding bed, drying rack, foldable chairs, etc.] were anything but glamorous: they were daily objects that were carefully put next to each other. The only two works in which some handcraft was involved were the envelope that hung on the wall with an outline of the flap traced underneath in pencil and 'Beep', a work in which Frederik shredded his collection of books, mixed it with water, mashed it into a pulp, pressed out the liquid and hung it to dry so that they turned into new paper sheets. For me this handcraft was missing from the rest of his work.



: Conceptual origami!

[Pyramid stands up again ...]



: I feel the strongest connection to Jean Bernard's work but I find it hard to define.
I know that it has something to do with his choice of material. Did you notice that all those little black sticks that he used for his objects were cut out of a large piece of MDF board, one by one? And his drawings on the green board were amazing!



: You are right if you say that Frederik and Jean Bernard have a cleaner way of presenting but Gino's apparent neglect can also have a function. I think you really underestimate a work of art if you reject it because you judge it as sloppy. You can easily overlook essential details that make you understand what you're looking at. Like in the case of Gino's 'New Wave, Old Wave' ...



: Or the mirrored parrot posters of Frederik that by coincidence became a new parrot and old parrot because the cat made a scratch in the tail of one of the birds ...

[10 seconds of silence ...]



: By the way, did any of you see that the  appeared in one of Jean Bernard's works?



: I didn't see it myself but the  told me about it. Can you describe what it looked like?

16 January 2011

HEDWIG HOUBEN



NEW WORK by GINO SACCONI

04 September – 03 October 2010

[V]



: Well, I stood in front of Jean Bernard's projection looking at the image when I saw something gradually fading into the picture.

First I thought it was a  but as the picture became brighter, I saw that it was the .

It emerged in front of the image:



which had something akin to a medieval landscape. Two men are standing in a field, one wearing a long black coat with a hood, the other squatting next to him wearing a frame around his middle that looks like a globe. I guess the image refers to an old painting.

By the time I saw it clearly appear in the image it was disappearing the same way:



: I wish I had seen it.




: I think it is very interesting the way these three artists are connected to each other through this aspect of appearing and disappearing. Of course all in very different ways, but I can clearly see some similarities here. An image transforms back and forth between function, figuration and abstraction.



: But why did Jean Bernard let the  be involved in his work?



: And besides that I'm also curious how the  made itself appear and vanish.

[

Cylinder

leans

back

...

]



... ?

DISPLAYS (A WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF)

JEAN BERNARD / GORMAN

BY JEAN BERNARD NUCIMAN

23 October – 21 November 2010

[VI]



: Honestly I do not exactly know how I did it. I was playing around searching for some new inspiration. I very much liked the image and I had this idea of integrating myself within the landscape. But because my appearance is quite flat and modern I didn't want to be too rude. I tried to be subtle so that the picture and I would blend into each other.



: I can't imagine that it happened that way. I'm sure there's a solid concept behind this work. It's clearly visible in Jean Bernard's other works.



He is not as impulsive as you . There are a lot of references to music, film, philosophy and art history in his work, which don't arise accidentally. His concepts seem very thought out and solid. And although it looks like there is always space for change and reinterpretation of his work, these changes are never impulsive. They are very well considered.



In that sense he has more similarities to the !



: Is that a critique?



: No, not necessarily. He has a different attitude than the . In Jean Bernard's case the intuitive approach seems controlled by the concept. You can visualize it like this:



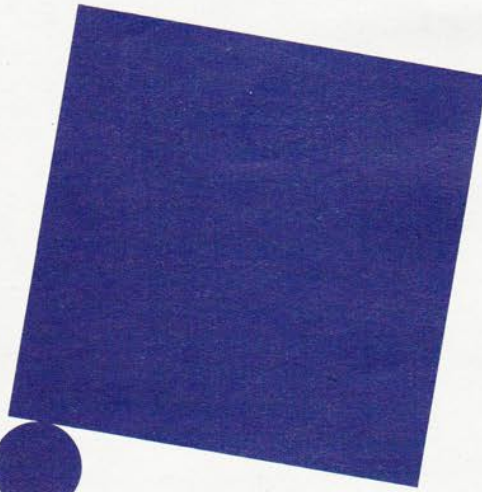
HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

BY FREDERIK VAN CIMAERV

BY FREUDENIN VAN SIVIACT

11 December 2010 – 16 January 2011

[VII]



: They work together but the concept always takes the upper hand. Spontaneous ideas are allowed only if the concept gives permission. This seems almost the opposite in Frederik's work. Here, I would say that concepts are controlled by his intuition. He plays around: turning, twisting and moving until he discovers something. Then the idea takes over, like here:



: In the case of Gino it is harder to tell. His work seems so mysterious ... I can imagine that he experiments in his studio, like Frederik, but it is a different playfulness. It is like dancing ...

[Sphere spins around]

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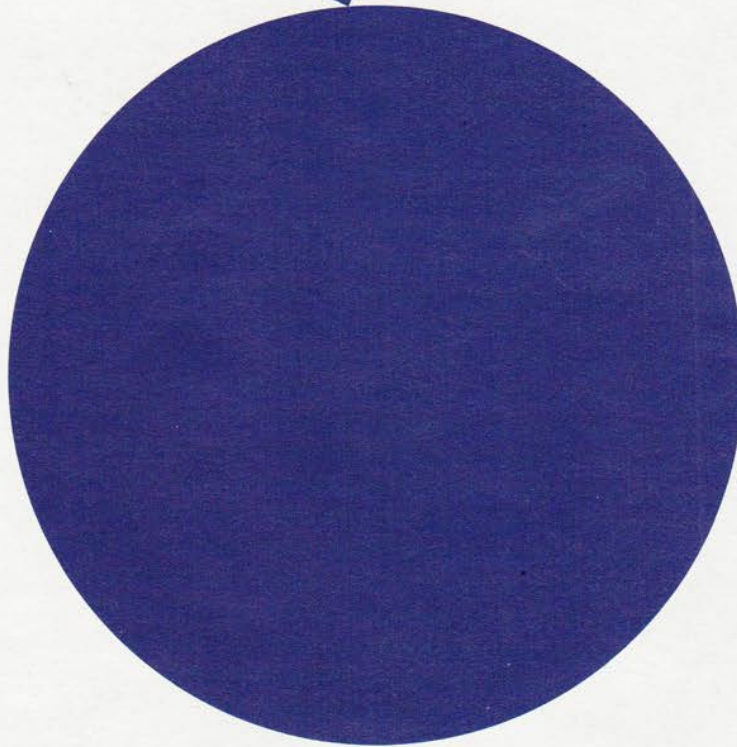
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: But I might be mistaken ...



: I guess it is something like this:



[VIII]

P/////AKT

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