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Edith Dekyndt

Ombre Indigène

EN — Introduction

For the first retrospective of her work in Brussels, Belgian artist Edith Dekyndt (who lives and works in Tournai and Berlin), has elaborated an approach putting new creations in dialogue with already existing works, faithful to her practice of inhabiting an exhibition location and its environment and taking as a starting point its substances, materials and specific elements.

Her works appeal to us through their strong material and corporeal character, and despite their sometimes dematerialised and abstract appearance, taking the form of video recordings, slide projections or minimal installations, they always tell us about the material composition of the world. Dekyndt designs complex forms and surfaces in permanent mutation, through associations between material, environment and support. She applies biochemical, organic or non-organic processes on unusual supports, combining the abstract and the concrete, the particular and the universal.

Like an amateur scientist, she experiments and renders tangible and visible underlying and intrinsic processes, using techniques such as fermentation, accumulation, extraction, reduction or excess of energetic fluxes. In doing so, she also questions the difference between creation and production. By standing discreetly behind the effect produced over time by the interaction of elements on a support, she questions the artist's intervention when compared to a scientist and technological approach. In other words, she questions on one hand what can result from the domination of man over his environment, and on another

hand the interdependence relation regulating everything that inhabits this earth. On one side a supreme law, an invisible hand and a necessity, and on another intuition, freedom of building, producing and creating things. This implies a current re-evaluation of the responsibility that humanity, through its actions, bears on the milieu it occupies and which hosts it.

Dekyndt's approach proves to be ever more precursory of a reflection committed towards a new ethics which should be at the centre of any human action towards his environment and milieu. Reflections inducing Dekyndt's aesthetic experiments questions the earthling's responsibilities towards the ecosystem that hosts him, an evolution expressed by the definition of the Anthropocene – a term characterising the period in the Earth's history that started when human activities, such as the overconsumption of raw materials, began having a global and significant impact on the Earth's ecosystem, among them climate change.

The exhibition has been freely organised according to the nature of the location, the WIELS, and its former function as a building hosting a brewery. The substances and supports with which she creates her works belong to the history of the Wielemans family's activities: their ancestors were originally bakers, before becoming linen canvas producers, to then start brewing beer. These activities were all related to the Senne, the river running through the city of Brussels and not far behind the WIELS building. In traditional societies, beer was, and still is, made by women, because

of its proximity with the making of bread dough (a fermentation of cereals and water). The works' articulation creates a back and forth movement between domestic and public territories.

The first floor starts with a large surface of 'domestic' dust, works made with precious metals, dried earth and burnt objects, and even with a screening accompanied by a soundtrack with the song from a Native American rain dance.

The second floor presents several works in relation with the history of air. In Ypres, Belgium, was perpetrated the first gas bombardment in history, and in Brussels can be found a particular bacteria present in the entire Senne valley used in the making of specific beers such as the Lambic. Other works conjure the presence of copper in the building, as well as wild ferments in the air we breathe.

Edith Dekyndt can thus raise an awareness on current issues, as well as on more imperceptible ones, for instance inscribed within the mineral scale and time. The title of her exhibition *Ombre Indigène* (Indigenous Shadow), refers to her own background as a native from this country, but also to an elsewhere, influenced by Martinique author and theorist Edouard Glissant who conceptualised notions such as "creolisation" and "tout-monde" (one-world). These signified the perpetual movement of cultural and linguistic interpenetration which is inseparable from globalisation. A flag made of hair is filmed standing where Glissant was buried, on the same location where in 1830 a clandestine slave boat sank, a memory and echo to the particular and the universal in today's perspective.