

## Press Release

### DIDIER VERMEIREN: Double Exposition

WIELS: 09\_09\_2022 - 08\_01\_2023

*Double Exposition*, the first major retrospective of Didier Vermeiren (1951) in Brussels since 1987, presents a broad selection of sculptures and photographs made by the artist between 1973 and 2022. This exhibition is accompanied by a publication that includes two key texts by Michel Gauthier and Susana Gállego Cuesta, confirming Vermeiren's key position in the history of European sculpture.

Embracing what Michel Gauthier calls 'the Brancusian revolution', and following certain lines of questioning set out by conceptual art and minimal art – both flourishing at the start of Vermeiren's artistic career – in the late 1970's Vermeiren began by putting the question of the pedestal at the very centre of his practice, working on the complex relationship between sculpture and this traditional element of its presentation. This was the start of 'looking for the base and the present' in the course of which, step by step, in Vermeiren's work the pedestal established its 'sculptural destiny', to borrow Michel Gauthier's terminology. At play here was the relationship to the floor, to space and place, but also to the entire history of sculpture. This is an approach which the artist illustrated later by stating that Carl Andre showed him Brancusi, who showed him Rodin, who showed him in turn Carpeaux, and so on, back through art history.

In the manner of Rodin, who took advantage of the possibilities afforded by the procedure of casting, Vermeiren brings reproduction into the very heart of the creative process: replicas, duplications, inversions link the works with one another in time and space, and direct our gaze towards a plurality of lines of force. This plastic dynamism is equally present in the photographic research carried out by Vermeiren from their beginning. Approaching photography in the early stages of his career with purely documentary intentions, then showing sculptures in constant metamorphosis by multiplying the points of view, he progressively integrated photographs into his creative process.

Vermeiren's articulation between sculpture and photography unveils a 'methodology of looking' where photography is the 'discourse of the method', to borrow a formulation by Susana Gállego Cuesta in her contribution to the publication. This results in some fully-fledged photographic works, some sculptures which create photographs, and even some photographs which create sculptures, as shown among others by *Double exposition* (1990), which gives the exhibition its title, of which the artist averred that it showed 'a sculpture which doesn't exist in a place which doesn't exist'.

With more than 35 sculptures and just as many photographs installed on the second and third floors of WIELS, this rigorous articulation of the gaze by the sole process of exhibiting is underlined by the play of cross-references and by the circulation between the works from one floor to the other. The artist has avoided a chronological arrangement, or the grouping of works according to specific periods, though some works are presented in family groupings.

**Two films by Elsa Cayo will be shown on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor for the entire duration of the exhibition:**

- *Obstacle au mouvement; Didier Vermeiren – Sculptures et Photographies*, 1994-1998, Tri Films, Paris, 35 mm, Dolby, B & W, 15 min. Digital copy.
- *123 plans sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren*, 1988, Tri Films, Paris, 16 mm, colour, 26 min. Digital copy.

**Publication**

**Didier Vermeiren: *Double Exposition***

This book, conceived by the artist, includes numerous photographs; an introduction by WIELS Artistic Director Dirk Snauwaert and Senior Curator Zoë Gray; an in-depth analysis of the most recent sculptures by Michel Gauthier, curator at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, who has been following Vermeiren's work for many years; and an essay by Susana Gállego Cuesta, director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy, on the key role of photography in his work.

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**Biography**

Didier Vermeiren lives and works in Brussels and Paris.

Recent exhibitions include Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (2021); *Construction de distance*, FRAC Bretagne (2017); Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (2016); *Sculptures*, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (2012); *Sculptures et photographies*, La Maison rouge, Paris (2012); *Skulpturen*, Skulpturen Park, Waldfrieden, Wuppertal (2012); *Recent Works*, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (2009) ; *Solides géométriques – Photoreliefs – Vues d'atelier*, Musée Bourdelle, Paris (2005); *Collection de Solides*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2003).

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