

DOUBLE EXPOSITION

DIDIER VERMEIREN

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DOUBLE EXPOSITION

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Open Cube #10, 2020

DOUBLE EXPOSITION: AN INTRODUCTION

ZOË GRAY & DIRK SNAUWAERT

'I work on presence,' claims Didier Vermeiren, a statement that once saw him excluded from a collection of canonical artists' writings on sculpture, as one of the editors insisted that sculpture could only *ever* be about absence.¹ Vermeiren's exhibition at WIELS, featuring works from 1973 to 2022, affirms his key position in the history of sculpture and attests to his continued interest in presence.

Vermeiren strictly applies the dialectic of presence and its counterpart, absence, and has done so in a continued and rigorous way over the last forty-five years. His work builds upon the modernist premise of reduction by removing all 'decorum' from art—all rhetoric, expression, embellishment—as well as the function of conventional representation, in order to maintain only art's elementary fundamentals. A claim for the timelessness of aesthetics seems to be inherent to the sculptural tradition in which Vermeiren inscribes his practice: that of the genuine and self-evident development of forms, materials, shapes, volumes, mass; the notion of situatedness or position. He builds upon this late-modernist vocabulary as one of the ways to fabricate models for presence. While influenced by minimalist sculpture, which he encountered first-hand during his formative period in New York as a young artist, Vermeiren's references are often classical. Indeed, he claims to have learned the history of sculpture backwards: Carl Andre showed him Brancusi, who showed him Rodin, which took him to Carpeaux, and then further back into the eighteenth century and beyond.² A recurrent reference is Rodin, not only for his sculptural practice but also for his use of photography in relation to the spaces of the studio and exhibition, and indeed for Rodin's interest in reproduction as a creative process. However, Vermeiren is also influenced by Rodin's contemporary—and counterpart—Medardo Rosso, whose claim that 'Nothing is material in space,'—because everything is space and therefore everything is relative—has profoundly shaped his thinking.³

Vermeiren's work is never explicitly monumental in its ambitions or dimensions.⁴ However, his 'empty bases' precede by decennia the activist demands to remove certain sculptural representations from public space. His works do not make an

argument in the discussions about instrumentalization or which representation is acceptable and to whom. Indeed, the motivations behind these (potentially) empty public plinths is far from the motivations behind Vermeiren's work—which is more laudatory of aesthetic history than it is revisionary—yet both exhibit and question the symbolic power of empty space. Through absence, he arrests our perception on the base, on the fundamentals of what makes something into a specific form.

Vermeiren began taking photographs of his exhibitions due to a dissatisfaction with how his work was being documented. However, photography soon became an integral part of his process, revealing how sculpture is not something fixed but something always in metamorphosis. Transferring a three-dimensional form into a two-dimensional image is a major transformation, which according to Vermeiren, might need many photographs to capture. He has been known to quote Garry Winogrand's maxim 'I photograph to see what the world looks like photographed', to suggest that he photographs his sculptures to see how they will appear when photographed. For Vermeiren, photography is a key tool for sculpture: 'The camera is a tool in the studio [...] it's a tool just like a hammer, a screwdriver or a saw.'⁵ 'For an exhibition to succeed,' he claims, 'it needs to succeed in the interplay of levels and distances. The same is also true in photography.'⁶

In his WIELS exhibition, this interplay of levels is key to the installation of his works and goes hand in hand with a dynamic of echoes, rotations and reflections. Maintaining his commitment to timelessness, he has avoided a chronological installation or the grouping of works into specific periods, although certain 'family members' are shown together. This reveals the element of serial repetition in his work, with which late modernist, minimal and concrete art tried to dissolve the solitary, single form into a pattern. Vermeiren employs seriality to indicate sculpture's capacity for repetition by moulding, while at the same time stressing its potential to enhance the nature of a properly defined shape, texture or material. Indeed, the idea of the original in sculpture only gained prominence in art history with Cubism, before which the norm dictated that up to twelve casts of a sculpture could be considered to be 'original'.

The inconsistency of the notion of the original led Vermeiren to explore the double as a recurrent subject in his practice. In her essay "Didier Vermeiren: de la copie à l'œuvre," Céline Cadaureille writes: 'By turning the moulds over, he reveals the nature of the casts, and gives us a glimpse of the assembly of a plaster sculpture. In short, the artist exposes the reality of the production of a sculpture as well as its physical constraints. The moulding is then as much a means of reproduction as of production, it becomes the subject of the work.'⁷ Photography offers Vermeiren an extension of such an approach, reproducing the processes put in place by the casting techniques.

Vermeiren has also employed photography to liberate sculpture from space, as can be seen in the photograph *Double exposition* (1990), which gives this exhibition

its title. Cadaureille: 'The image was created from an existing work (one of his trolleys on wheels). Thanks to a double exposure, he presents the trolley upside down to create this confusion. The duplication that he could achieve by accumulating a base on another base is thus reinvested within the photograph. He re-uses his gestures as a sculptor to create this image where the space is itself duplicated and turned upside down by presenting the floor as the ceiling.'⁸ The result, as Vermeiren himself puts it, is 'a sculpture which does not exist in a place that does not exist.'⁹ *Double Exposition* refers, of course, to the photograph's double exposure—*exposition* in French—but which also translates as exhibition. By choosing it as his exhibition title, Vermeiren thus underscores the recurrent strategies of repetition, reversal, doubling and inversion that he explores in his work. It evokes the displacements of meaning, the mechanisms of exposure (whether photographic or public), and the process of exhibition.

1. The book was David Hulks, Alex Potts, and Jon Wood, eds., *Modern Sculpture Reader* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007). It was re-released in collaboration with the Cragg Foundation, Skulpturenpark Walfrieden, Wuppertal: Julia Kelly, and Jon Wood, eds., *Contemporary Sculpture: Artists' Writings and Interviews* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2019). This newer version included Vermeiren's contribution, the transcript of a statement he made in the documentary *123 plans sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren* (1988) by the artist and filmmaker Elsa Cayo.

2. Didier Vermeiren, cited from 'Conversation between Didier Vermeiren and Michel Gauthier' at Herbert Foundation, Ghent, 9 May 2021 as part of the exhibition *Distance Extended, Part 1 / 1979–1997* (2021): <https://herbertfoundation.org/fr/media/video> (accessed 10 March 2022).

3. Margaret Scolari Barr, *Medardo Rosso*, exh. cat. Museum of Modern Art (New York, 1963), p. 9.

4. For an analysis of the monumental, see Bart Verschaffel, "The monumental: on the meaning of a form," *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 4 (1999), pp. 333–6. In relation to monumentality, a revealing comparison can be made between Vermeiren's work and that of Rachel Whiteread, who shares his exploration of the sculptural 'base'. Her temporary commission for London's Trafalgar Square, *Monument* (2001), was—as its title attests—explicitly concerned with the form of the monumental, conceived for a public square that is a site of commemoration and consolidation: of identity, empire, power. It was the inverted, transparent cast in resin of the granite plinth on which it stood. In its inversion and superposition it replicates Vermeiren's

action in a number of his earlier works, such as his 1980 series *Sculpture*, in which he inverted store-bought plinths atop one another, creating a mirroring of form and material at the point of contact. It is possible that Vermeiren's work directly influenced Whiteread, who was certainly aware of his inverted plinth pieces. They both exhibited in the group exhibitions *Einleuchten: Will, Vorstel & Simul in HH.*, curated by Harald Szeemann in 1989 and *Het Sublieme Gemis*, curated by Bart Cassiman in 1993 for Antwerp '93.

5. Didier Vermeiren, cited from 'Dialogue entre Didier Vermeiren et Margit Rowell', at La Maison Rouge, Paris, 20 September 2012: <https://archives.lamaisonrouge.org/fr/activites-detail/activites/dialogue-entre-didier-vermeiren-margit-rowell/> (accessed 3 April 2022).

6. Quote from the artist, studio visit with the authors, 2022, previously unpublished.

7. Céline Cadaureille, "Didier Vermeiren: de la copie à l'œuvre," in Céline Cadaureille, and Anne Favier, eds., *Copies, écarts et variations dans la création contemporaine* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2020), pp. 44–5. Translation by the authors.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 49. Translation by the authors.

9. '[une] sculpture qui n'existe pas dans un lieu qui n'existe pas', Didier Vermeiren cited by Simon Duran, "La Libération de l'extériorité. La désorientation de l'espace et le projet de sculpture de Didier Vermeiren," in *Didier Vermeiren*, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Zürich and Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume (Zürich and Paris, 1995), p. 74.



Studio, Paris, 1982



FIG. 1
Studio view, 2007

BASES ALSO HAVE A HEART

MICHEL GAUTHIER

In 2007, Didier Vermeiren took a photograph in his studio. In it we see the following: on the two visible sides of a black base—atop of which is positioned a plaster cast that combines modelling marks and the shape of a base—the sculptor has traced in chalk an outline resembling the plaster cast above (fig. 1). In other words, at this point in time the work as fixed by the photograph exhibits three bases: the sculpted base, the drawn base and the functional base. While this first attempt did not immediately lead to a work, this studio photo reveals that, from that date, the sculptor was searching for something that would find its accomplishment only several years later with the *Open Cubes*, the first of them dating from 2015 and the most recent from 2022. To understand what the 2007 photograph suggests and what the *Open Cubes* actually bring into being, one must recall the stages in which the base constructed its sculptural destiny in Vermeiren's studio, in a process informed both by the Brancusian revolution and by the centuries-old history of sculpture and of its bases.

The first stage consists in converting the base into a sculpture by exempting it from its support function: on the base that has become a sculpture, no sculpture is placed. This first moment is in a way 'American' and has two phases. In 1978, Vermeiren reproduced the base on which, at MoMA in New York, a bronze Saint John the Baptist by Rodin is placed. For the conversion operation to be perceptible, it has first to make itself explicit. This is done through its title: *Painted wood, 1978, base in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, supporting St. John the Baptist Preaching by Auguste Rodin, bronze, 1878* (fig. 2). Five replicas of this



FIG. 2
Painted wood, 1978, base in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, supporting St. John the Baptist Preaching by Auguste Rodin, bronze, 1878

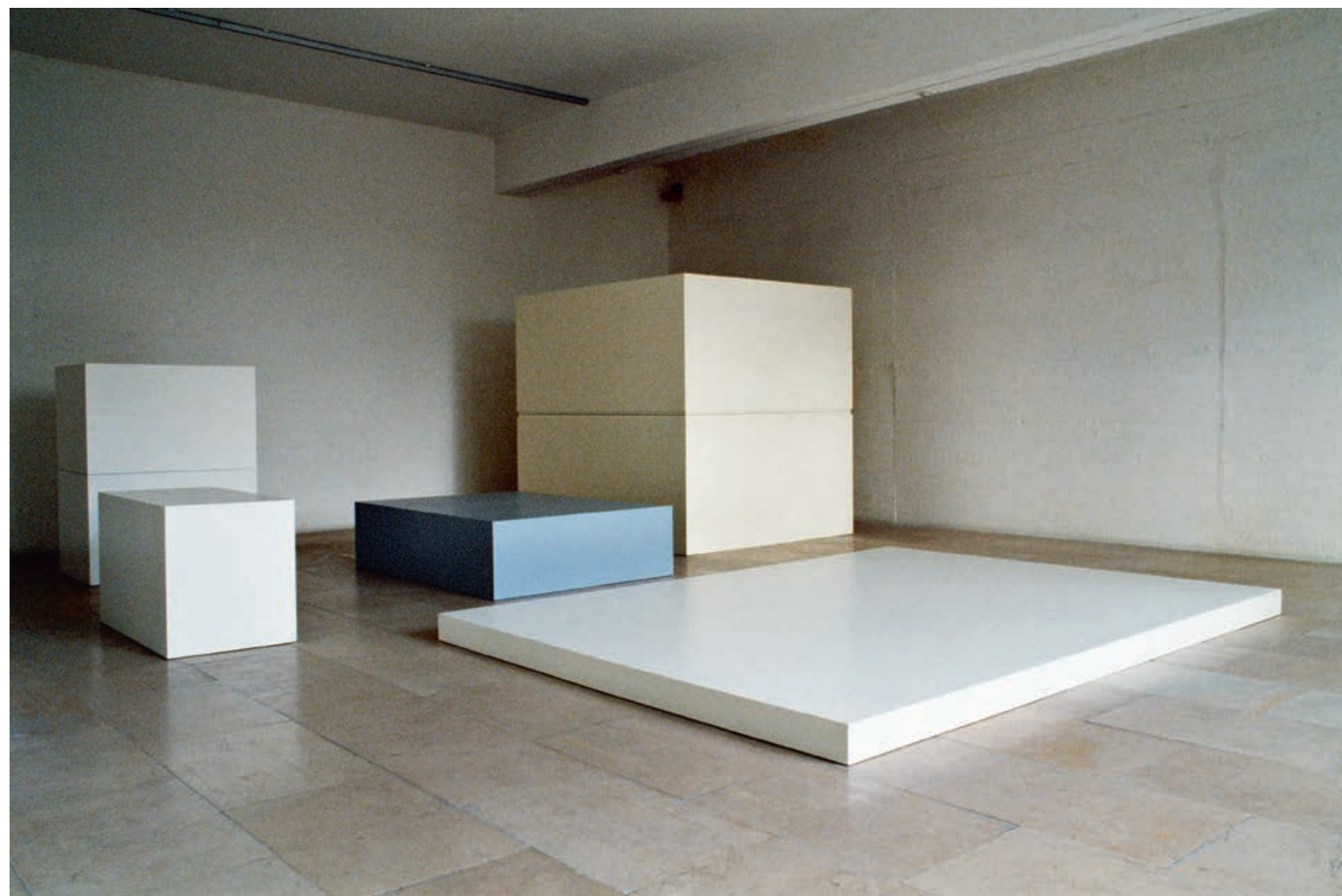


FIG. 3
Collection de solides, 1978–85

type were brought together in the middle of the next decade into a single work, *Collection de solides* (1978–85, fig. 3), a title which, now oblivious of their origins, confirms the sculptural nature of the five elements. The year preceding the constitution of the *Collection*, the operation begun in 1978 took a remarkable turn. This time, the replica of the museum base borrows its material from



FIG. 4
Plâtre, 1984, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le saint Jean-Baptiste, plâtre, 1878

the sculpture placed on the replicated base: *Plâtre*, 1984, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le saint Jean-Baptiste, plâtre, 1878 (fig. 4). The first base-sculpture was in wood, like its model in the New York museum. The 1984 base-sculpture is in plaster, like Rodin's sculpture and not like its base, which is in wood. Here the artist's signature in the plaster witnesses the sculptural sublimation of the base. The two works, *Plâtre*, 1988, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le monument à Claude Lorrain, étude du peintre nu, plâtre, 1890 and *Plâtre*, 1988, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le monument à Claude Lorrain, étude du peintre vêtu, plâtre, 1890 (pp. 40–41)—presented in the *Double Exposition* exhibition at WIELS—belong to this group of works in which, in a subtle dialectic, the sculpture by Rodin, Canova or Carpeaux placed on the base which served as a model for Vermeiren is both absent and present.

Between the two phases of this first stage, Vermeiren experimented with a second method of converting the base into a sculpture. To become a sculpture, the base behaves like a sculpture by taking its place on a base. In 1980, Vermeiren presented several sculptures, each composed of two identical bases like those sold by museum suppliers, the upper element placed upside down to fit perfectly with the lower element (fig. 5). In the first half of the 1980s, Vermeiren made about twenty sculptures of this type, using ready-made bases. From 1985, this strategy of converting the base into a sculpture resorts to the means of the former: the two bases placed one on the other are replicas of museum pedestals and take their material from the sculpture (by Rodin or another sculptor) placed on the base reproduced by Vermeiren. *Adam* (1986) stacks two plaster replicas of the wooden base on which Rodin's *Adam* is positioned in the Meudon museum.

The third option for the sculptural conversion of the base consists in showing that the base has become a sculpture by exhibiting the instruments of its manufacture. *L'homme qui marche* (1984, fig. 6) is composed of two elements: the plaster replica of the base of the Rodin Museum in Meudon which



FIG. 5
Sculpture, 1981

supports the plaster cast *L'homme qui marche*; and, placed on this replica base, the mould, the negative, which served to produce it. The base, although in plaster, returns to its support function, though no longer the support of its double



FIG. 6

L'homme qui marche, 1984

but of the instrument of its production, which proves its sculptural status. In doing so, Vermeiren introduces the hollow, the void into his sculpture. The experience of the negative will of course be different depending on whether the mould is laid out flat, as in *L'homme qui marche*, or on its the side, as in *Monument à Victor Hugo* (1991). In some instances, for example *Adam* (1995, fig. 7), the mould is presented disassembled into five elements which are stacked on its positive. What the work gains thereby in meta-processual dimension, it loses in foregoing the negativity of the negative. With *Groupe (L'Appel aux armes)* (1999, p. 83), another procedure is used: three identical positives turn in on themselves like a glove, so that their

armature is now visible on their external faces, making absolutely explicit that this is indeed sculpture. Moreover, with this reversal, and because of this armature which makes any horizontal standing impossible, the trio gains a dancing life, in a choreography of see-saw and obliques.

Vermeiren has a fourth method of converting the base into a sculpture: giving it the appearance of a sculpture. This is demonstrated in the key work *Socles*

(2008, fig. 8). On a three-part wooden base is placed a patinated plaster cast combining the parallelepipedal shape of a base, with its characteristic plinth, and the visible marks of its modelling. In this way, the eye perceives a base and a sculpture at the same time. This perspective required Vermeiren to open his language to a form of expressiveness, it being understood that here it is not the psyche that expresses itself but the sculpture. One of the first bases replicated was that of a sculpture by John Chamberlain, *Sweet William* (1962, LACMA, Los Angeles), an artist who knew how to practice a kind of abstract expressionism which exalts sculpture as such, such expressiveness having hitherto been foreign to Vermeiren's work. The *Solides plastiques* of the late 1990s—slices of clay fallen onto a wooden base—then the *Solides géométriques* of the beginning of the following decade, with which the clusters of *Solides plastiques* are erected into an

approximate and animated cube, had given the artist the formal means to produce a base that immediately stands out as a sculpture. It was important for the plaster base placed on its wooden base to evoke more Lucio Fontana's



FIG. 7

Adam, 1995



FIG. 8

Socles, 2008 — *Solide géométrique #12*, 2007



FIG. 9
Monument utile #2, 2015

Ceramica spaziale (49-CS.6) (1949)—a tormented black cube—than a Donald Judd parallelepiped, in order to make its sculptural mutation explicit. This was necessary for its sculptural conversion to be celebrated by *Monument utile #2* (2015, fig. 9). At the top of its pedestal, more than 3 metres above ground, the sculptural coronation of the base is definitively consummated.

Releasing the base from its support function and endowing it with the material of the sculpture; lending it the assistance of a base; requiring that it display the instrument, typically sculptural, of its creation; or conferring on it the sensory appearance of a sculpture: these are the four ways Vermeiren's work has converted the base into a sculpture. And in 2007, in a moment when the pure happiness of creation was experienced, with the work, totally indeterminate, not yet deprived as it would soon be of all its potentialities, the sculptor took a piece of chalk and traced on several sides of a black cube the contours of a plaster cast placed on top of it, half-sculpture and half-base, similar to the one that would soon appear in *Socles*. Without being aware of it, Vermeiren had just given birth to the *Open Cubes*, a decisive episode in his work, even if the first cube was not produced until eight years later, just when the *Monument utile* closed the sequence of the sculptural conversion of the base, thereby proving its usefulness.

Open Cube #0 (2015, fig. 10), in red, gave specific meaning to the 2007 first studio attempt, the chalk outlining what would later be cut away. Five of the six sides of *Open Cube #0* indeed have holes in them. No one opening is identical to another: each picks up the outline of one of the five corresponding sides of the white upper element of *Solide géométrique #2* (2003, fig. 11), an agglomerate in glazed terracotta of multiple pieces of clay, imperfectly cubic and irregular. In short, a sculpture is present inside the cube although absent from it. Physically, the white element of *Solide géométrique #2* could neither enter nor leave the *Open Cube* since it lacks two identical sides and each of the cut-outs of the cube only fits one of them. The eye, passing horizontally through the cube, encounters an immaterial solid, a sculpture of air, like the column of air that appears in the exact vertical extension of a sculpture in the photograph entitled *Vision lente, Adam* (1995, p. 49), or the parallelepipeds of air that the trolleys have, since 1985, put on wheels. And is it not permissible to suggest that this sculpture in negative is now in its base, insofar as the dimensions of



FIG. 10
Open Cube #0, 2015



FIG. 11
Solide géométrique #2, 2003

Open Cube #0 are equivalent to those of the black base on which is placed the glazed terracotta element of *Solide géométrique #2*?

The following *Open Cubes* propose variations on the same principle: the number of openings varies—from one to six—as does their position—those of *Open Cubes #6* and *#7* (2016, pp. 118–119) being located, more strangely, in the corners. On two sides of the eighth *Cube*, a chalk drawing reappears like the one shown in the 2007 photograph. In total, this first group of *Open Cubes*, even if cultivating a relationship with the bases of the *Solides géométriques*—the ghosts of which they shelter—is mainly about the motif of the void, of the negative that the use of moulds introduced into Vermeiren’s sculpture from the mid-1980s onwards.

With *Open Cube #9* (2020, fig. 14), the series experiences a decisive development. The cube, painted black, is open on its upper side. The cut made follows the contour not of the top but the bottom of a plaster cast identical to that of *Socles*. And now the inside of the cube is not vacant, it is

occupied by the plaster cast in question. This time, the sculpture is really at the heart of the base. The latter has literally absorbed the former. In this way it has turned into a reliquary. However, Vermeiren does not stop here. With *Open Cube #10* (2020, fig. 12), the cube functions for the first time as an effective base: a plaster cast is placed on it. As in *Open Cube #9*, this plaster cast is the brother of *Socles*—that is, a plaster cast having the shape of a base and at the same time displaying the marks of the genuinely sculptural work of which it is the result. While serving as a support, the cube, black on the outside and unpainted on the inside, is nonetheless open on its four vertical sides. These openings repeat the outlines of the four corresponding sides of a plaster cast placed inside and identical to the one placed on the cube. Double exposure: the sculpture-base is in and on the cube, the latter being both a base and a reliquary. With *Open Cube #11* (2021, fig. 13), the sculpture-base placed on the unpainted wooden cube is black and the four openings made on the vertical sides show an empty black interior. The chromatic identity of the inside walls of the cube and the plaster cast placed on it creates the feeling that this plaster cast comes from the cube, the latter thus appearing as a negative. In works combining a positive and a negative, such as *L’homme qui marche*, Vermeiren was already playing on



FIG. 12
Open Cube #10, 2020



FIG. 13
Open Cube #11, 2021



FIG. 14
Open Cube #9, 2020

the tension between full and empty. In this case, the game takes on an additional dimension. A sculpture-base has its perceptual negative in the base on which it is placed. In this way, the base appears less like an exhibition accessory than

a matrix—herein lies the great success of this work, the promise of which was fleetingly sketched out in the 2007 studio. From then on, it is less a conversion of the base into a sculpture than the generation of the sculpture from the base. With *Open Cube #12* (2022, fig. 15), the sculpture can return to its matrix. Both are black, forming a unity that only the views of the surrounding space provided by the five openings can momentarily dissociate.

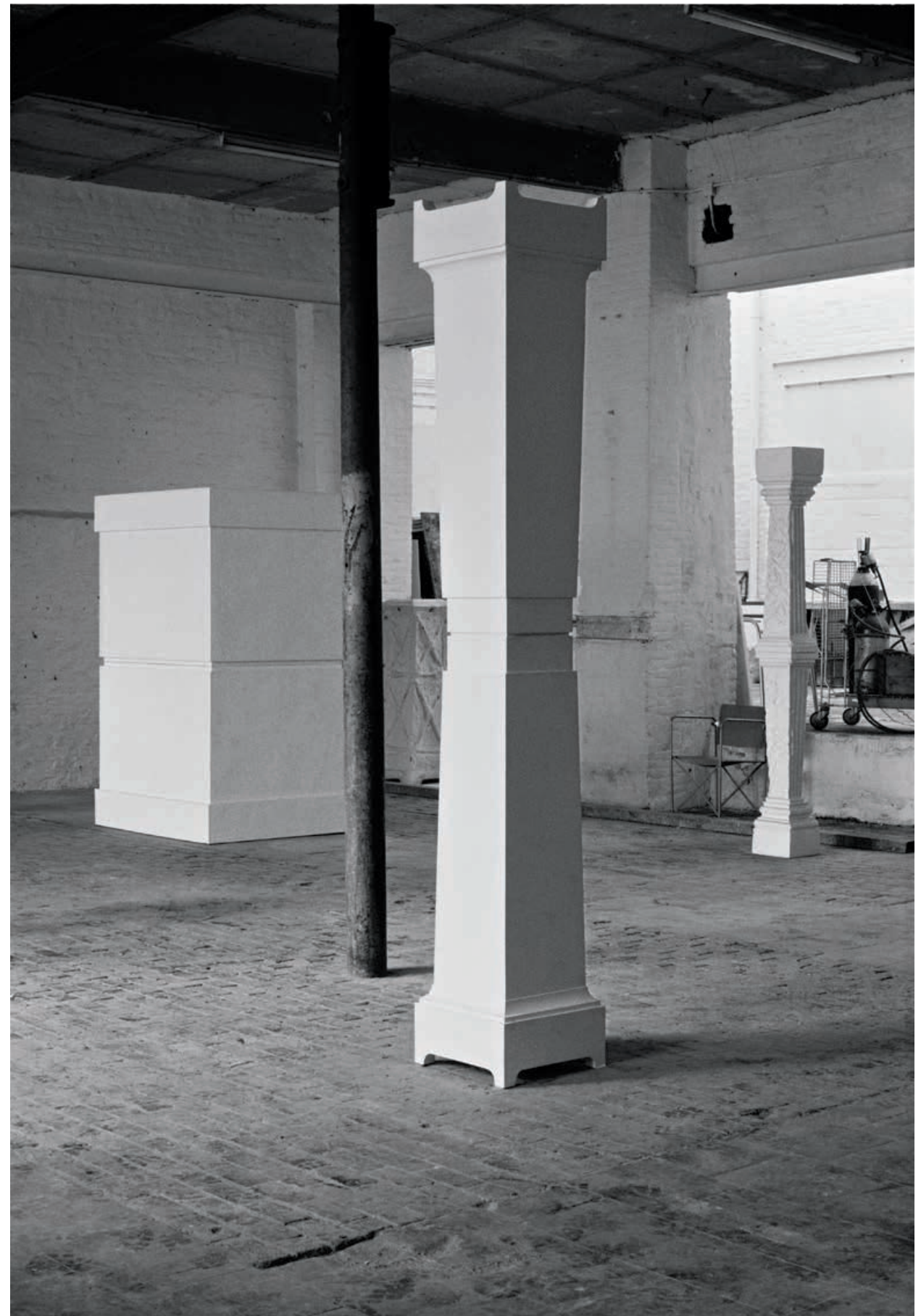
In 1987, in the exhibition devoted to him at the Villa Arson (Nice), Vermeiren photographed the aforementioned *Collection de solides*. The silver print produced retains the inverted values of the negative, transforming the five replica bases into somewhat ghostly solids. This effect was further accentuated by a 2013 print that has been toned blue by adding iron at the development stage (p. 31), this image now being an integral part of *Collection de solides*. *Open Cube #11*—this black plaster cast on a cube, whose four large openings display a void that looks like the negative of the plaster above—offers, in its own way, another version of the couple constituted by the five solids and their photographic image. But here the base that has become a sculpture in its own right does not externalize its negative in a photograph. It is in its very heart that the negative of the plaster cast which it supports is housed. With such a piece, a triad goes beyond the duality that has hitherto dominated Vermeiren's work: a positive and a negative, full and empty, to be sure; but, also, a strange solid with holes in it, a new sign of the algebra that serves to pose the sculptural equation.



FIG. 15
Open Cube #12, 2022



FIG. 16
Studio, 2007

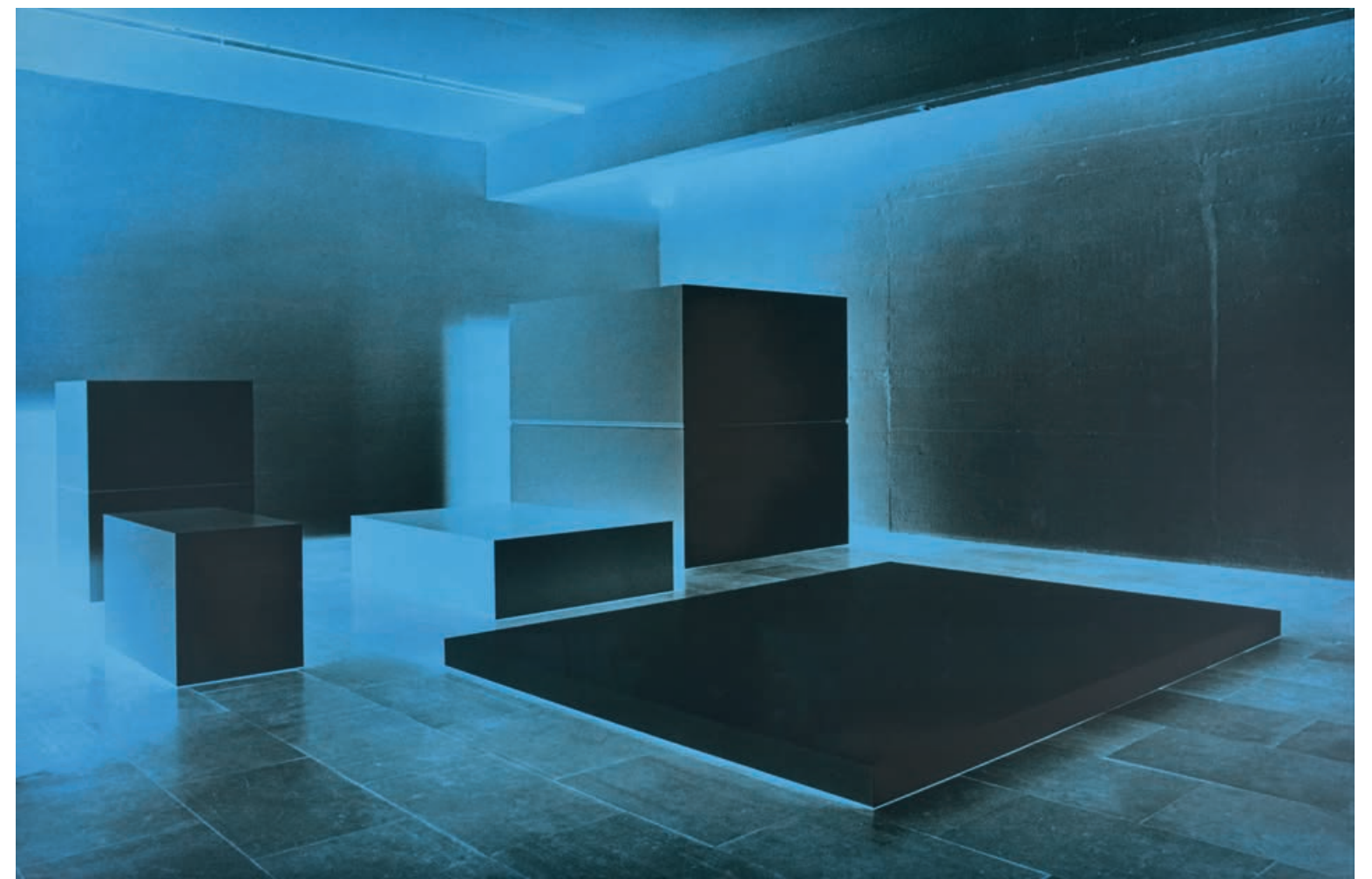


Studio, 1986





Moment #3, 2018





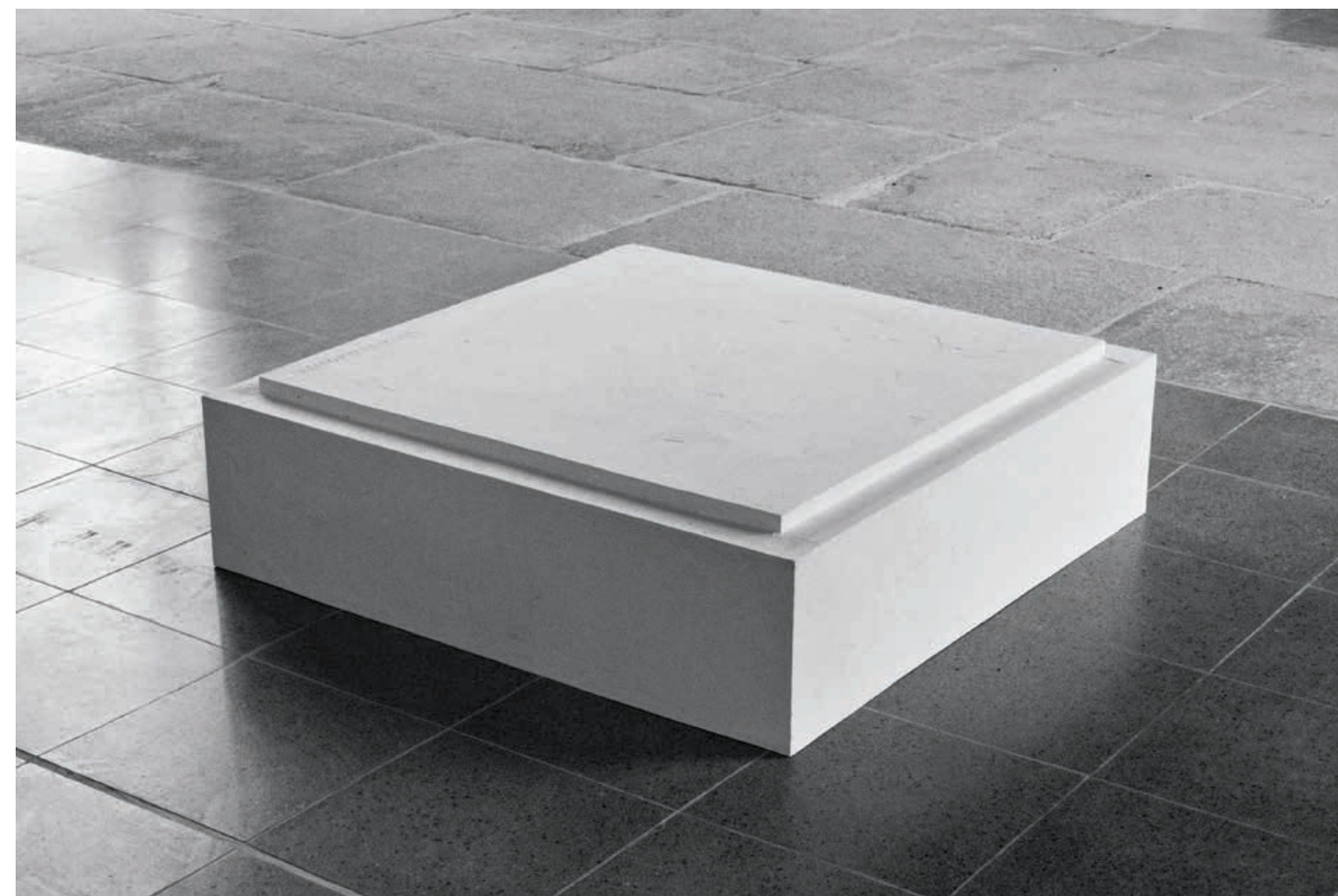
Studio, rue Jean d'Ardenne, 1978



Une plaque de fer de 80 x 80 x 20 cm sur un bloc de polyuréthane de 80 x 80 x 20 cm, 1977









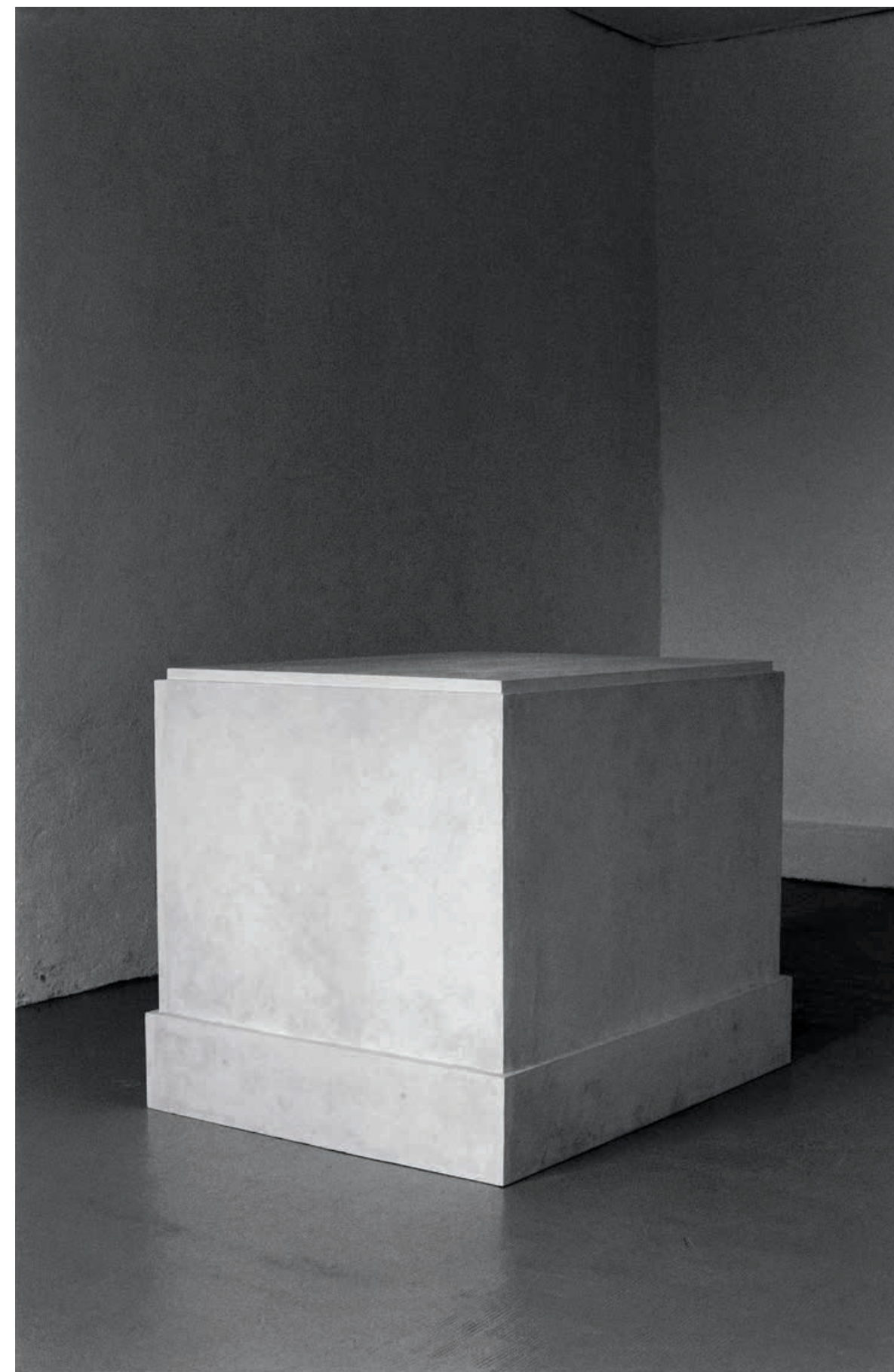
Studio view, 1985



Studio view, 1985



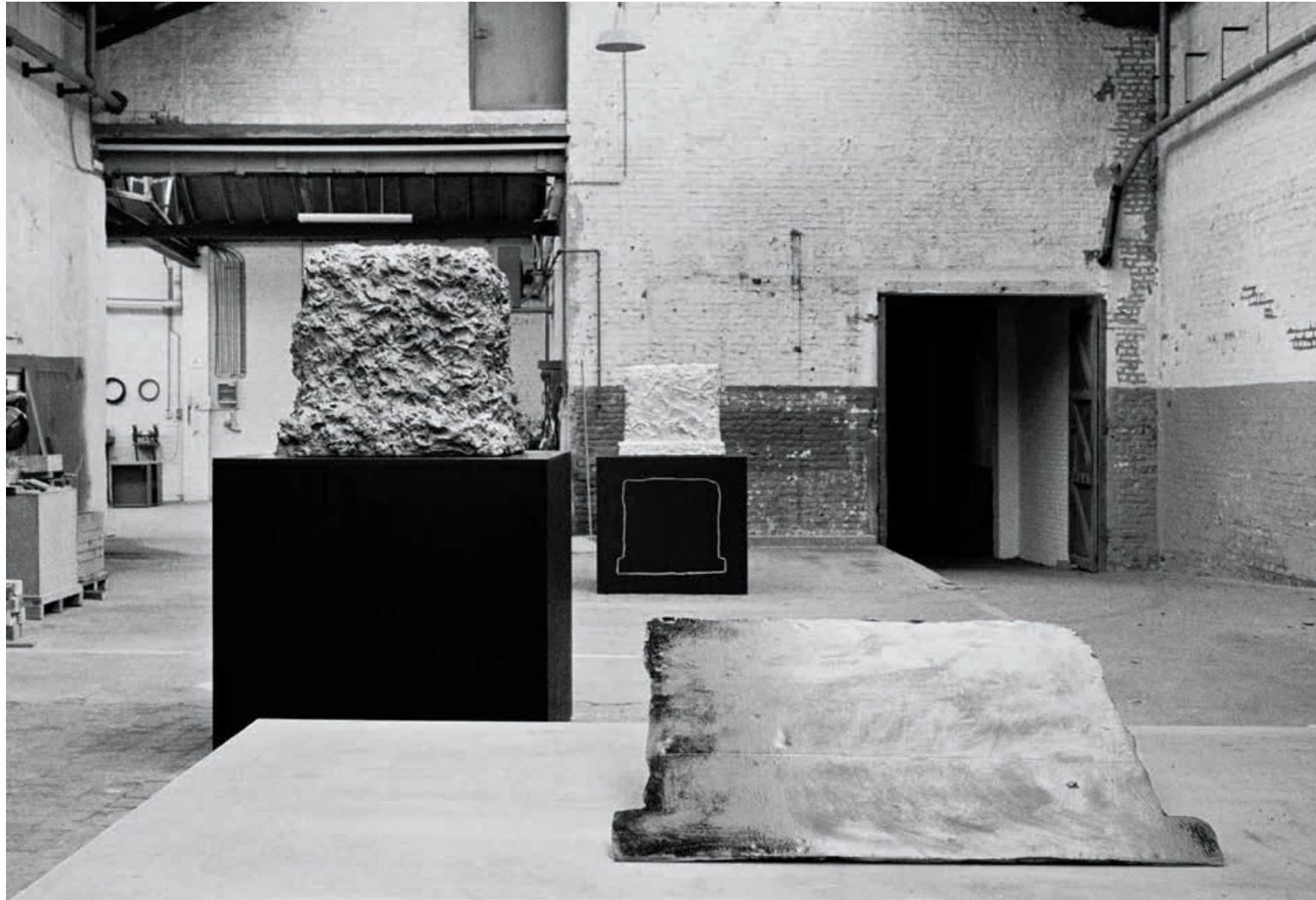
Studio, *Adam*, 1995



Plâtre, 1985, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant *Adam*, plâtre, 1880



Vision lente, Adam, 1995





Modèle #1, 1999



Terrasse #2, 2014





Terrasse #1, 2010



Place, 2000



Studio, *Sans titre*, 1992 (front)



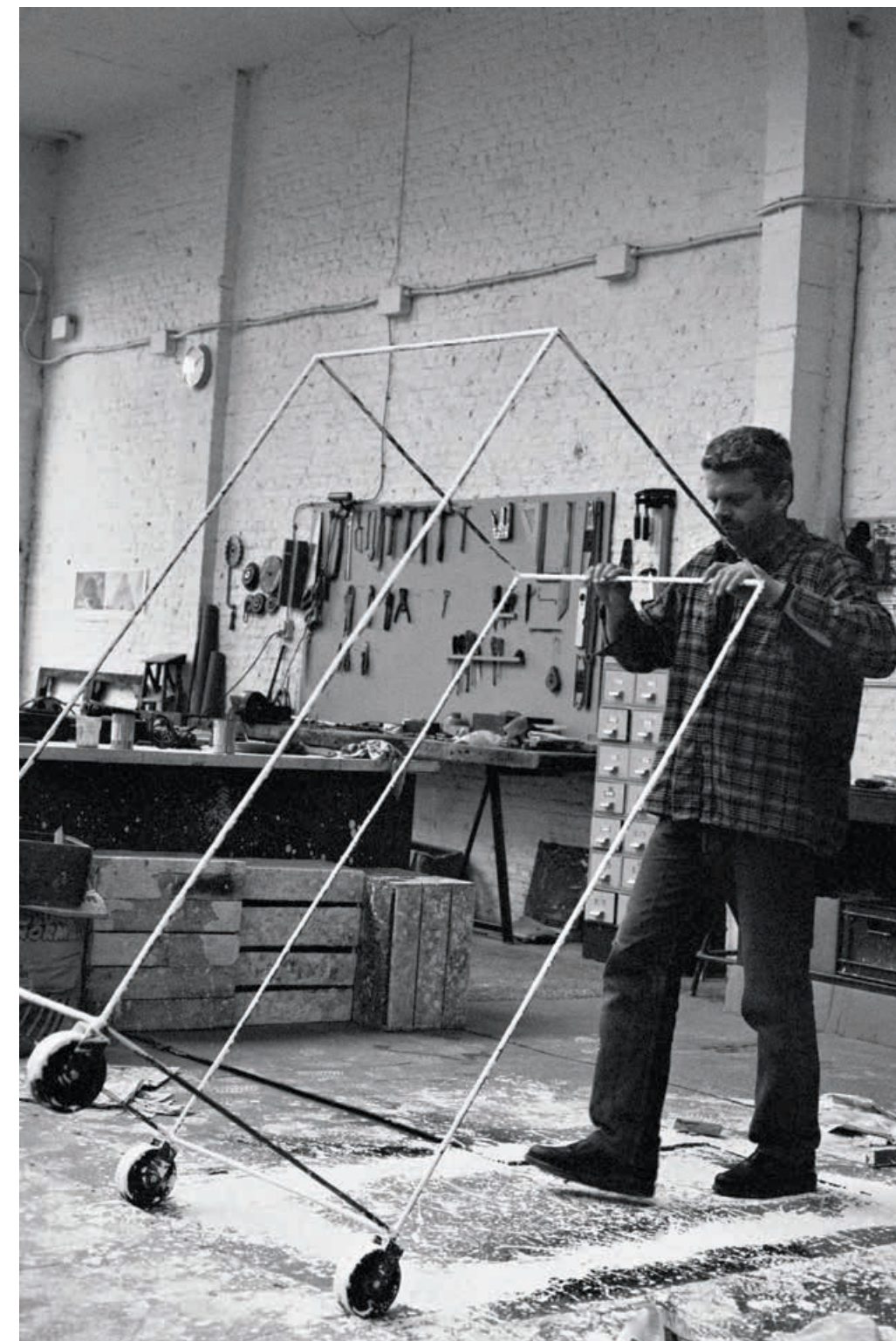
Studio, *Sans titre*, 1992 (profile)



Studio, *Sans titre*, 1992 (back)



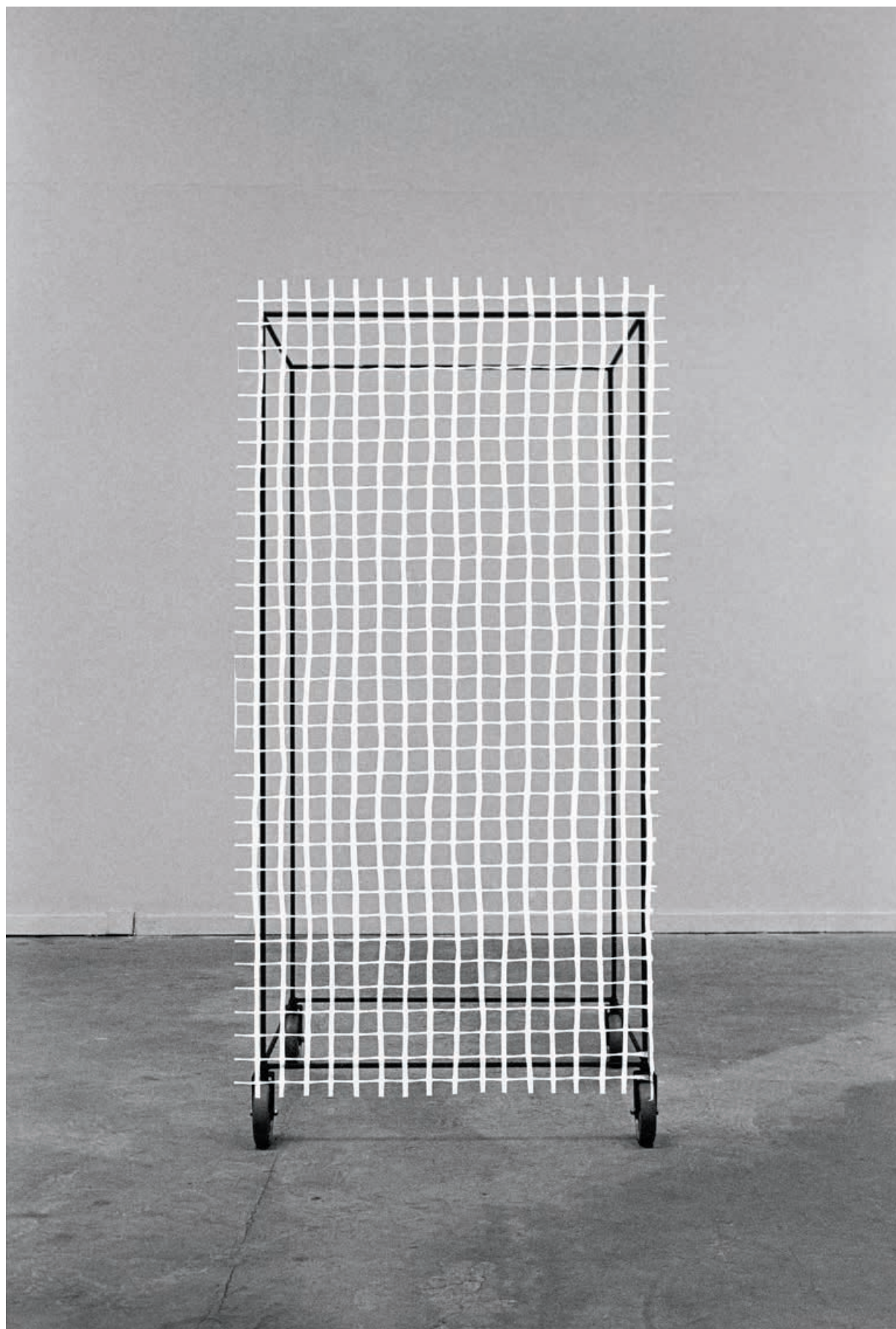
Studio view, 1992



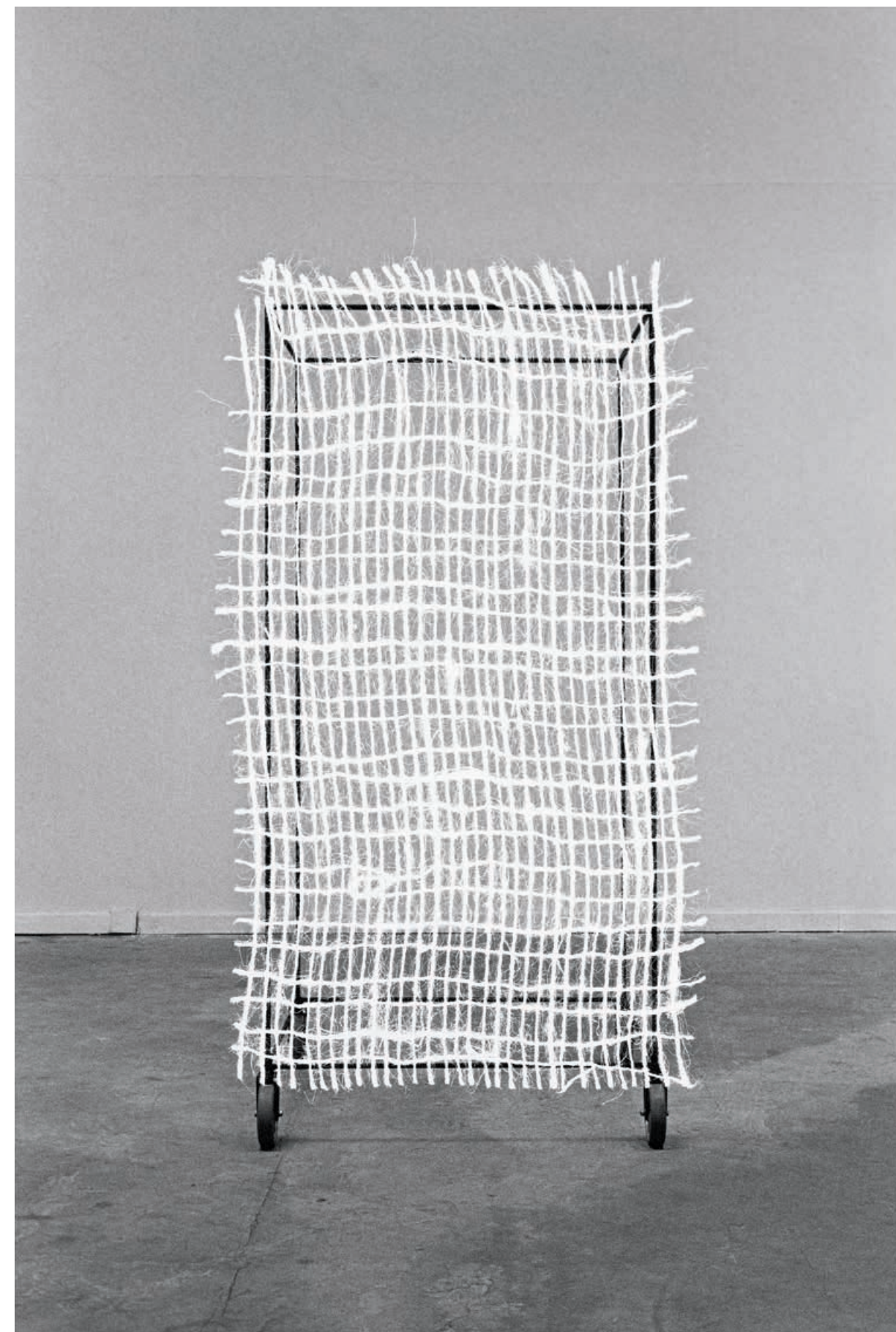
Didier Vermeiren working on *Sans titre*, 1992



Studio, 1998 (*Sans titre*, 1997)



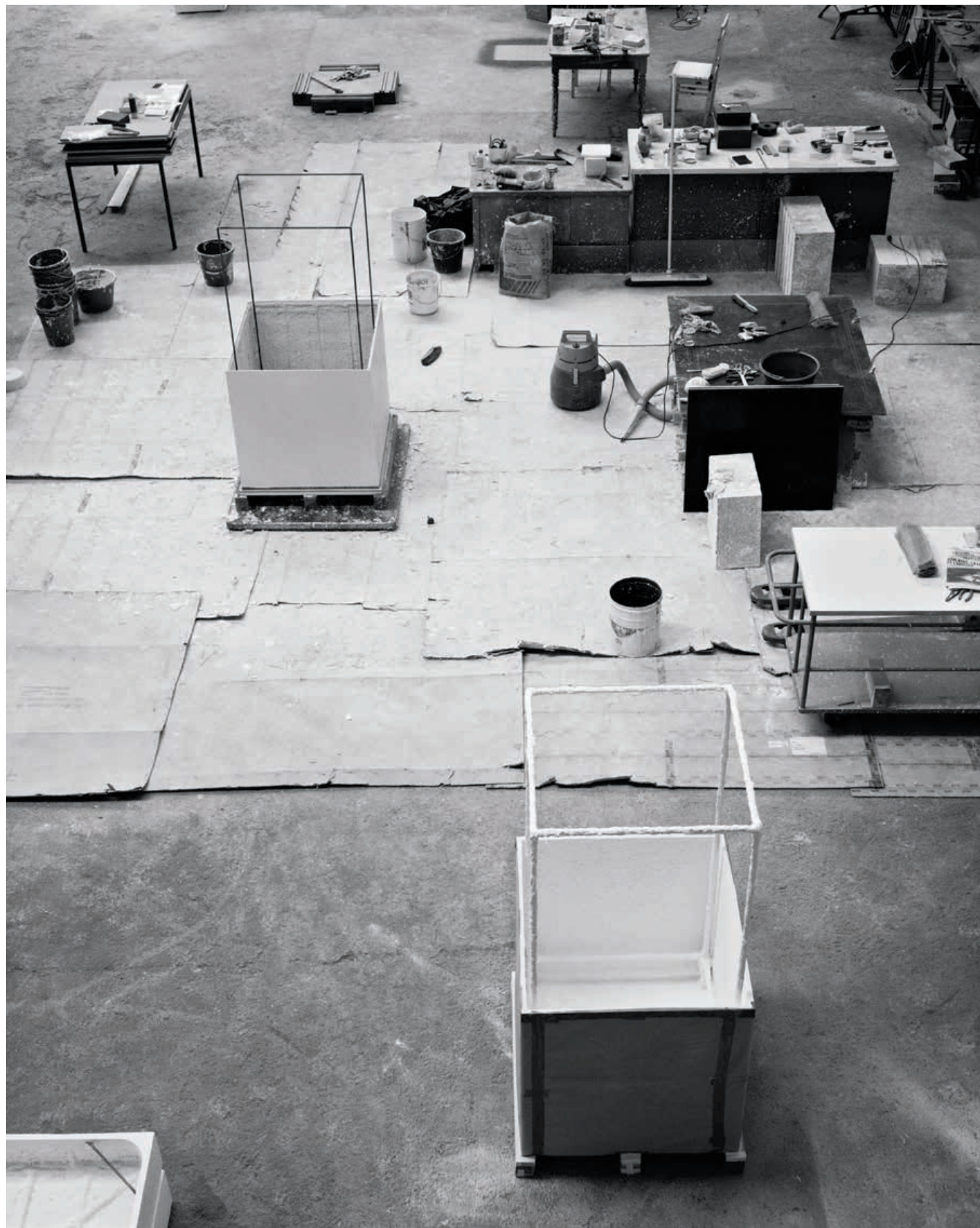
Armature #1 (fibre de verre), 1988-97



Armature #2 (toile de jute), 1988-97



Sans titre, 1991



Studio view, 1992



Krefeld, 1994



Place, 1994



Studio view, 1989

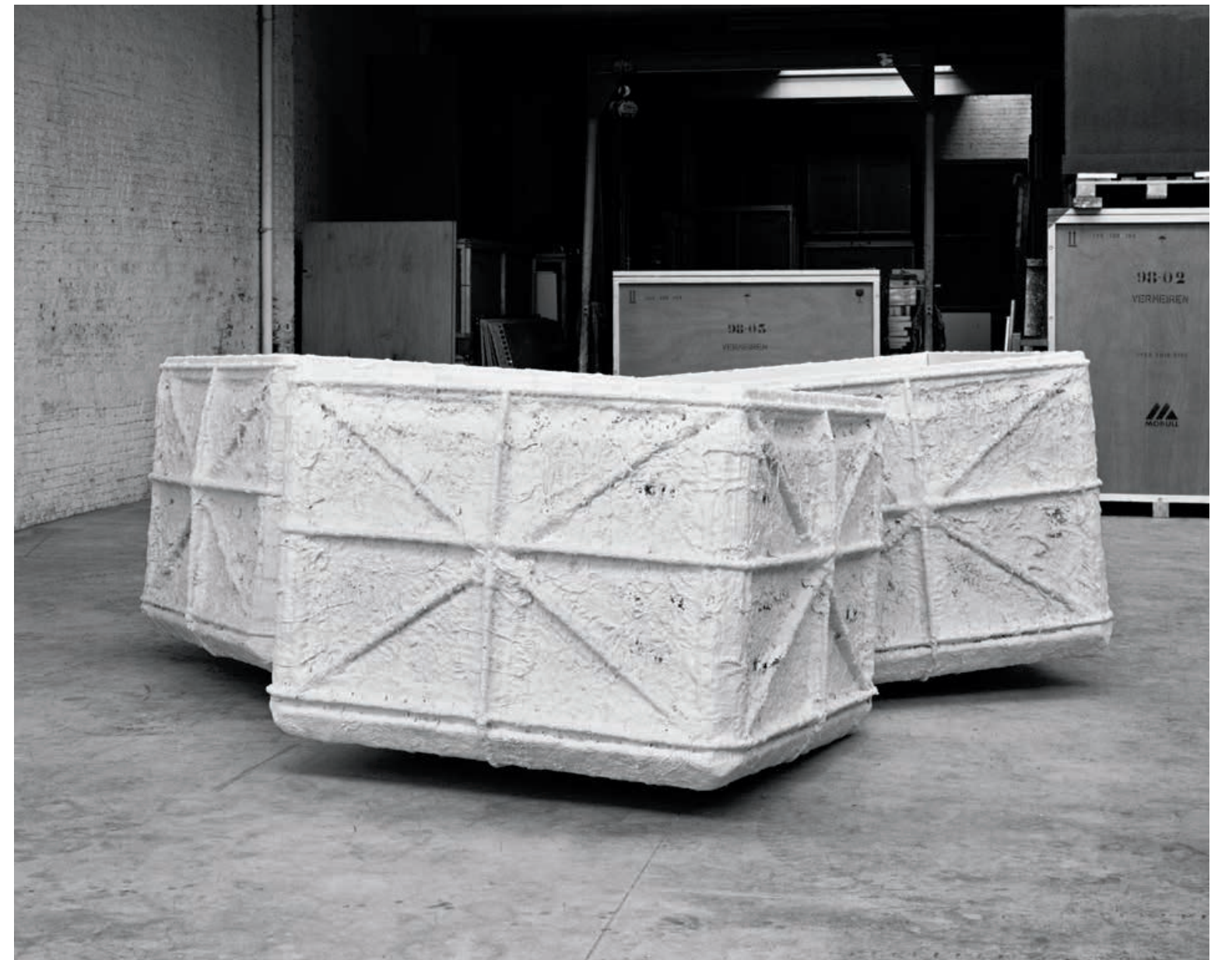


Studio view, 1989





Bacchanale, 1994



Groupe (L'Appel aux armes), 1999



Cariatide à l'urne, 1996

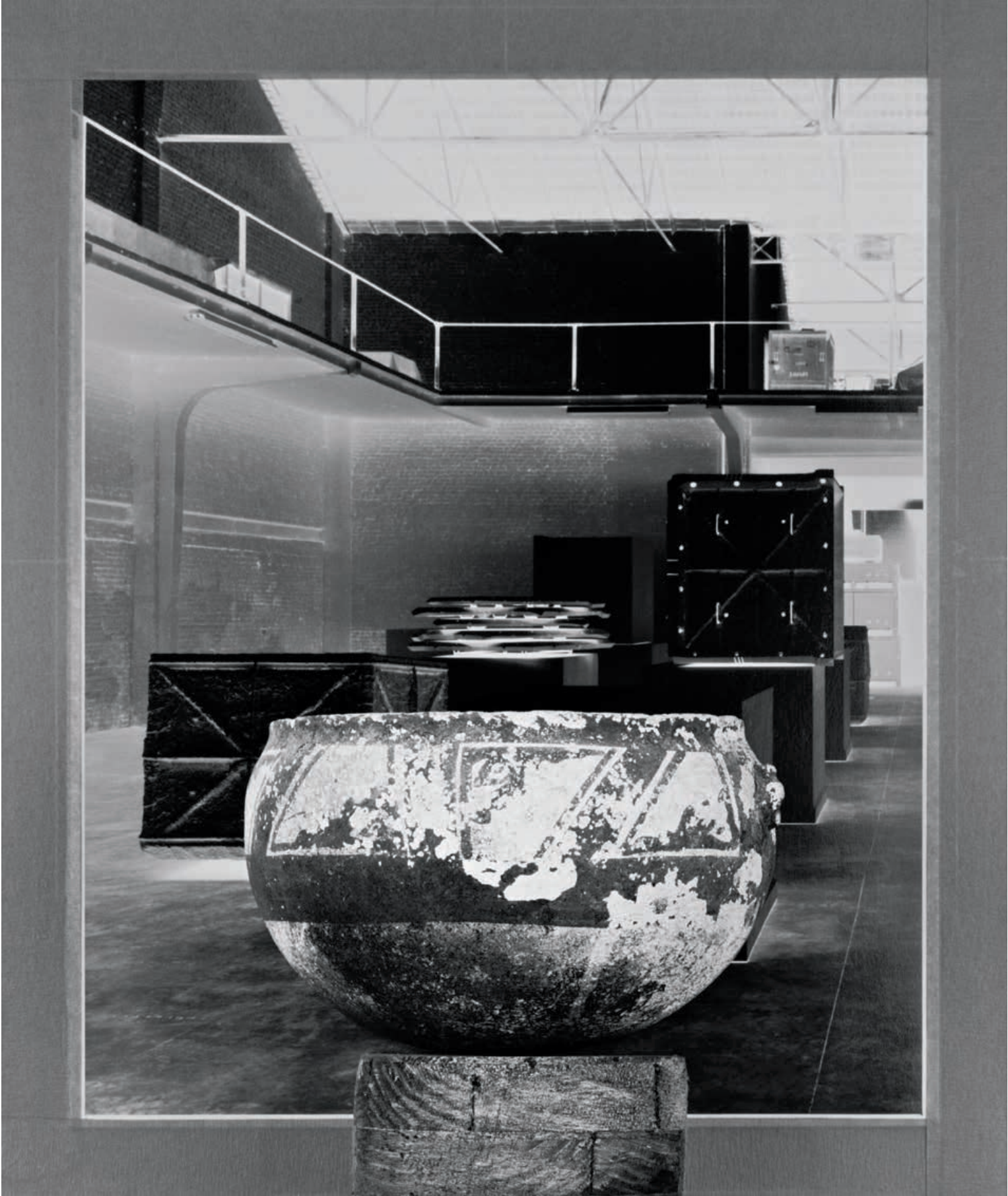


Exhibition view, *GAS*, Bordeaux, 1993 (*L'Appel aux armes*, 1992)





Profils, Monument à Victor Hugo, 1998



Studio, Chancay vase, 1999



Cariatide à la pierre, 1997



Bacchanale, 1994



Solide géométrique #5, 2004





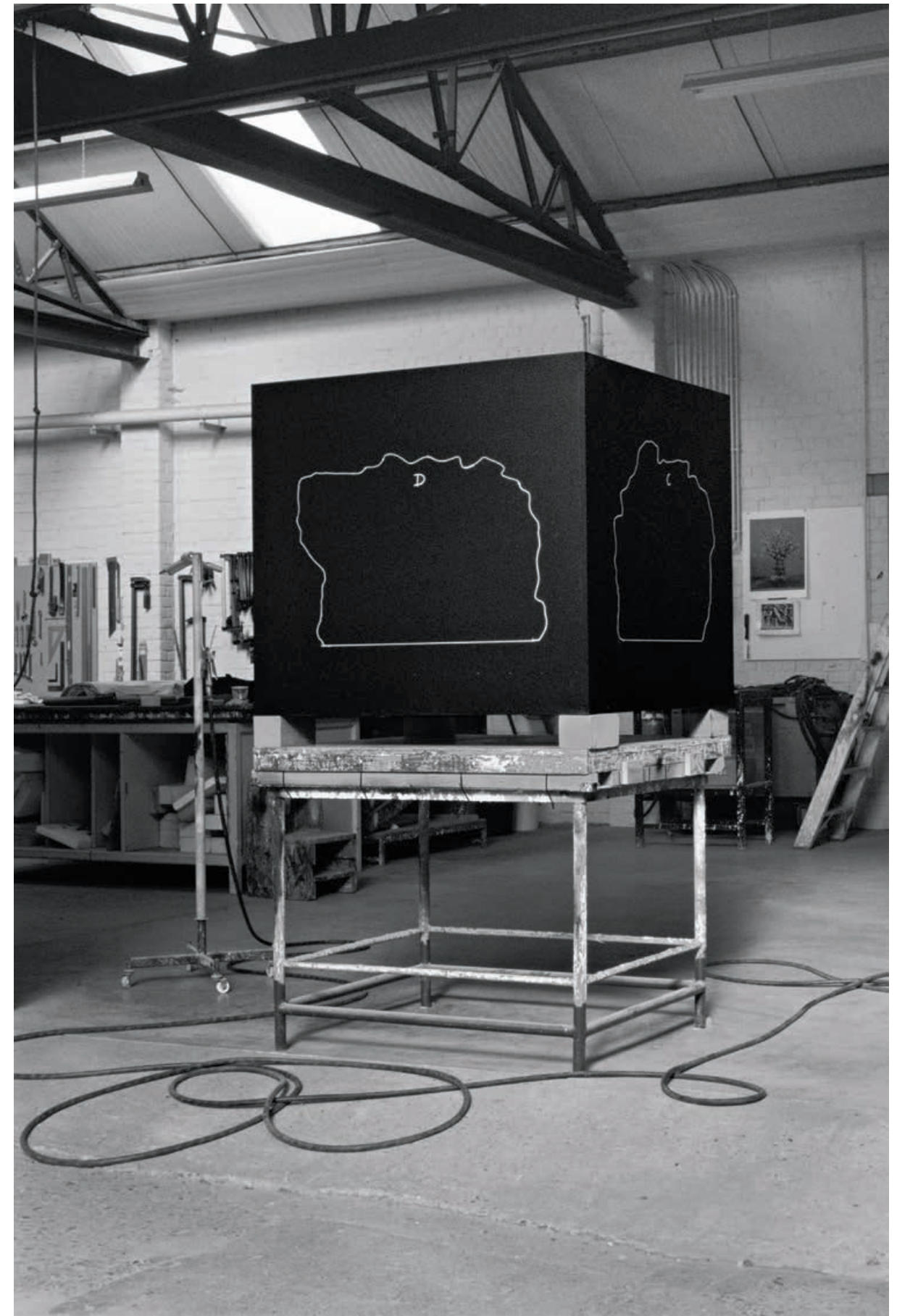
Solide géométrique #1, 2003



Solides géométriques, studio, 2005



Solide géométrique #2, 2003



Open Cube #8 before cut-out, 2019



Studio view, 2019



Open Cube #8, 2019



Open Cube #0, 2015



Open Cube #2, 2015





Open Cube #6, 2016



Open Cube #7, 2016





Équivalent #2, 2016



Open Cube #13, 2019, work in progress



Open Cube #13, 2019



L'Atelier à quatre heures du matin, 1995



FIG. 1
Double exposition, 1988

PRÉCIS OF DECOMPOSITION

Photography in Didier Vermeiren's work

SUSANA GÁLLEGO CUESTA

Sculpture remains what it is: a dead language (...). It serves no purpose to defend sculpture emphatically, in the name of 'noble antiquity', nor to accuse the public of ignorance because of its lack of interest. Nothing justifies the survival of sculpture in the modern world.

— ARTURO MARTINI, *La scultura lingua morta* (1945)¹

It was a sculptor, then grappling with refounding his discipline and doubting the validity of his own practice, who expressed himself in these harsh words. Sculpture did not, however, die in 1945, and while it has since undergone profound changes and questionings, it still exists, stubbornly present. The work of Didier Vermeiren who, patiently and obstinately, has been deconstructing and recombining the components of his sculpture since the early 1970s, is ample proof of this. With a rare constancy, and at a parsimonious but sustained rhythm, Vermeiren seeks, in his words, not new forms but 'the right place for forms'. In this vast undertaking of meticulous and subtle analysis, of displacement and relocation, photography plays an important role—but which one, precisely?

Photography has been present in almost every one of the artist's exhibitions since that of 1990 at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht. In catalogues and monographic publications, it is subject to the most rigorous adjustments; in the studio it populates the plan chests, the hard disks, the filing cabinets and the walls; in the private sphere, it becomes an object of collection and scholarly conversation. It even slips into the titles, always programmatic, of the exhibitions, the most recent, *Double Exposition* (the French word *exposition* translating as both 'exhibition' and 'exposure') alluding as much to the exhibition's being held on two floors at WIELS as to a photographic work which literally places the sculpture upside down, by means of the double exposure of one negative (fig. 1). Photography is everywhere, all the time. Not surprising for a sculptor, one might say: the story of the tumultuous and passionate relationship between sculpture

and photography runs from the mid-nineteenth century right up to the present day. Since the invention of photography in 1839, having one's works photographed has become a must for any artist concerned about his or her posterity. But it quickly became apparent to sculptors that the new technique could turn out very disappointingly if not handled with skill. The case of Auguste Rodin is a textbook example: he never photographed anything in person but surrounded himself throughout his life with a veritable army of photographers, renowned specialist practitioners whom he employed (Gaudenzio Marconi, Karl Bodmer, Victor Pannelier...) and then quickly shaped in his own image (for example, to the point of signing certain prints by Eugène Druet with his own name).² His successors pushed their photographic involvement as far as personal and physical investment: Antoine Bourdelle, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, David Smith, Henry Moore and others became themselves photographers of their works.³ The most remarkable case is undoubtedly that of Constantin Brancusi who, dissatisfied with the reproductions that professionals made of his pieces, asked Man Ray to train him in photography and embarked on a large-scale undertaking of photographing his own works. In the Romanian artist's studio, photography became over the years not only an archive, but also a field of truly sculptural experimentation, then a real laboratory allowing the volumes and their presentation to live and evolve.⁴ For all these artists, photography plays a reflective role and sometimes takes the place of an inner conversation. This does not prevent professional photographers from devoting their efforts to reproducing the work of others: Marc Vaux, for example, was one of the operators most recognized and admired by the sculptors, male

and female, of his day for the accuracy of his work and his keen understanding of the issues that concerned them.⁵ An attentive observer of the photographic work of the sculptors who preceded him, as well as a lover of sculpture photography in general (a genre in its own right, as the reader will have understood), Didier Vermeiren has inherited these historically meaningful practices. Like Rodin, he is extremely attentive to the way his works are reproduced and distributed, composing his catalogues as rigorously as he produces his prints. Like Brancusi, he became a photographer to prevent the flaws he perceived in the reproductions made by others, which betrayed his works. But

simply resituating Vermeiren's photographic practice in the long conversation between volume and image fails to grasp its specific complexity.

It suffices to retrace the artist's first steps in the field to realize that his relationship to the medium is far from unequivocal. According to the artist's account, his first photograph, using a borrowed camera, dates back to 1973, and was the immortalization of *Neuf mesures de terre* (fig. 2). Purchasing his own camera in



FIG. 2
Neuf mesures de terre, 1973



FIG. 3
Archives, MoMA – Atelier, Brooklyn, 1978



FIG. 4
Archives #3, LACMA – Atelier, Los Angeles, 1979

1977, he used it to take visual notes that would enable him to measure, check and remake the bases of emblematic works in the history of sculpture that he saw in museums in New York and in Los Angeles, such as Auguste Rodin's *Saint Jean-Baptiste* or John Chamberlain's *Sweet William*, and so produce his first *reappropriations*. Thus were born the five bases which served a few years later to compose *Collection de solides*, a work that the artist dates 1978–85 as if to indicate the lapse of time necessary for the maturation of the finished form. As all the critics and connoisseurs of Vermeiren's work remark, it is *Collection de solides* which, photographed at the Villa Arson in Nice in 1987,



FIG. 5
Villa Arson, Nice, 1987

gave rise to the first photographic work as such (fig. 5).⁶ This is a sort of return to sender: the taking of photographic notes from 1978–79 sediments in the archives and nourishes the volume of the sculptures, only to reappear

in two-dimensional form and become a work in its own right. The printing of the negative image plays a crucial role in this empowerment: the permutation of values, one of the recurring processes of Vermeiren's plastic thought and implemented here, allows the plastic object to change status. From there on, it has been said that the sculptor produces images according to two regimes, one purely documentary, the other more experimental.

While this would respect the traditional and reassuring separation between the archive and the work, it would voluntarily ignore the manipulations, shifts and incessant reassessments to which Vermeiren subjects his own images, the processes of return and analysis which, moreover, form the basis of the artist's research. Nearly forty years after the 'first photograph', his—to put it mildly—confusing use of the image could be understood dialectically, as being organized not in two but in three main categories: document, recreation, work. In the *documents*, we find the photographic notes, which cover as much the American slides of 1978 and 1979 as the contemporary studio shots. In the *works*, we can place the photographic artworks, recognizable by the fact that they are exhibited, but also what could be called 'potential photographs', that is all the works at the potential stage in the artist's archives (who regularly immerses himself in his images to advance in his reflection). Between these two groups lies a seemingly innocuous category of photographs, but one which appears to play an essential role of transformer and intermediary between the other two: *recreations*, whether works from the Cayo-Vermeiren collection (which the artist did not shoot himself but which



FIG. 6
Studio, work in progress, 2019

serve him as food for thought) or the visual games in which he at times indulges: rare collages of objects next to each other (like this negative view of the studio rephotographed with a Chancay ceramic in front, p. 93); or objects on top of each other (such as the series reproducing a trolley in which hessian or fiberglass was pasted onto the print, pp. 68–69); dressing polyhedrons with tulle (fig. 8); depositing sawdust on the black background of an *Open Cube* under construction in 2016, which becomes an *Equivalent* by the grace of photography (p. 123).⁷

L'Atelier à quatre heures du matin (p. 129) condenses into a single image the different forms of Vermeiren's photography: *document*, since we have there an x-ray of the objects in space at a given time; but also *recreation*, since the homage to Alberto Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 a.m.* is as much a mental note as a way of introducing daydreaming into the workplace; and finally a *work* (*à la Brancusi*, one might say), which, by arranging pieces and artefacts together in the studio, gives birth, by the grace of silver salts, to a meta-sculpture.

This attempt at an analytical typology does not claim to exhaust the richness of Vermeiren's photographic adventure, but nevertheless aims to highlight how the conversation between image and volume is incessant and pregnant with fundamental suggestions in the artist's work. The rigour with which he explores the possibilities of volume is the same rigour with which he observes and reconsiders the suggestions of the images he creates. And it is probably through having developed a skilfully mastered method of decomposition

that he succeeds in making chance—that of a falling lump of clay or that of the overexposure of a negative—bear fruit. In the film *Obstacle au mouvement*, for which Elsa Cayo, a lifelong accomplice, had him install an ad hoc exhibition in his studio for the camera lens only, we see Vermeiren cycling between his works.⁸ This moment full of grace crystallizes with humour all the statements that the artist's works elaborate on the context and the gaze. By putting the gaze into a physical context and making explicit the place of the body, of bodies, always implicit in Vermeiren's work, Cayo shows us how his sculpture is a methodology of looking. In this system, photography would appear to be the discourse of the method.



FIG. 7
Studio, work in progress, 2019



FIG. 8
Étude pour la pierre au voile #9, 2015

1. Arturo Martini, "La scultura lingua morta" in Elena Pontiggia, ed., *Arturo Martini: La Scultura Lingua Morta e Altri Scritti* (Milan: Abscondita, 2001), pp. 48–9. Translation by the authors.
2. See Rainer Michael Mason, and Hélène Pinet, eds., *Pygmalion photographie. La sculpture devant la caméra, 1844–1936* (Geneva: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 1985).
3. To cite only some of the renowned twentieth-century sculptors whose photographic works are in Elsa Cayo and Didier Vermeiren's collection.
4. See Quentin Bajac, Clément Chéroux, and Philippe-Alain Michaud, eds., *Brancusi, film, photographie. Images sans fin* (Paris: Le Point du Jour/Centre Pompidou, 2011).
5. Admired by his contemporaries but also today: for Didier Vermeiren, who collects his prints, Marc Vaux is unquestionably the best sculpture photographer ever. In relation to Vaux's importance to female sculptors of his time, it is worth noting that the photographs of the works of Chana Orloff form

a remarkable corpus in the Marc Vaux collection held at the Kandinsky library.

6. Among others, Erik Verhagen, "Endogène/Exogène. Les signes suspendus de Didier Vermeiren," in *Didier Vermeiren. Solides géométriques – Vues d'atelier*, exh. cat., Paris-Musées (Paris, 2005), p. 23.
7. This title with its many potential meanings makes Didier Vermeiren smile mischievously: it first alludes to Carl Andre, a tutelary figure for the artist, who thus titles one of his pieces, borrowing this name without qualms or explanation from the eponymous series by Alfred Stieglitz—photography returns via sculpture, once again.
8. This film can be read as the explanation of the movement which is latent in *L'Atelier à quatre heures du matin*; nevertheless, the connections between still-image and moving-image in the dialogue between the practices of Vermeiren and Cayo still require precise study.



FIG. 9
Film still from *Obstacle au mouvement*.
Didier Vermeiren, *sculptures et photographies*, Elsa Cayo, 1994–98





Open Cube #11, 2021.



Open Cube #12, 2022





La Maison #1, 2007



La Maison #2, 2009



La Pierre, 2012



Étude pour La Pierre #2, 2007



Étude pour La Pierre #1, 2007



Sans titre, 1991

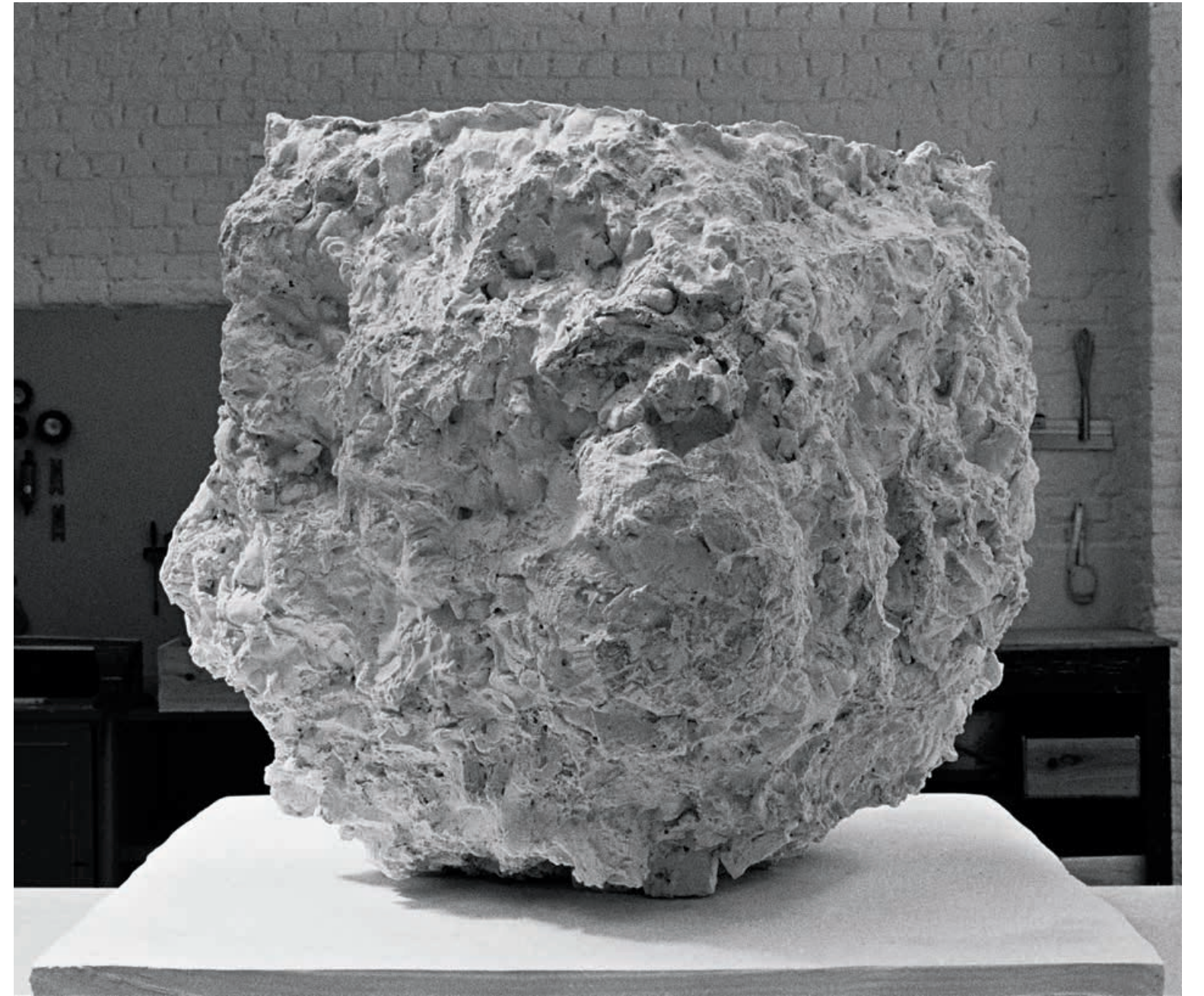


Sans titre, 2022



Sans titre, 2022





L'Urne, 2009, detail

DIDIER VERMEIREN

Born in 1951 in Brussels

Lives and works in Brussels and Paris

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 2018 *Sculptures / Photographies*, Galerie Laurence Bernard, Geneva
- 2017 *Construction de distance*, Frac Bretagne, Rennes (cat.)
- 2016 Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 2013 *Étude pour le Monument à Philippe Pot (1996–2012)*, église Saint-Philibert, Dijon
- 2012 *Sculptures 1974–1995*, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
Sculptures, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle
Sculptures et Photographies, La Maison rouge, Paris
Skulpturen, Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden, Wuppertal (cat.)
- 2009 *Recent Works*, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 2005 *Solides géométriques – Vues d'atelier*, musée Bourdelle, Paris (cat.)
- 2003 *Collection de solides*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (cat.)
- 2002 Galerie Massimo Minini, Brescia
- 1998 La Criée, Centre d'art contemporain, Rennes
- 1995 Kunsthalle Zürich (cat.)
Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (cat.)
XLIV^e Venice Biennale, Belgian pavilion, Venice (cat.)
- 1993 Museum Haus Lange, Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld (cat.)
- 1991 Centre d'art contemporain du Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Bignan (cat.)
- 1990 Donald Young Gallery, Chicago
Bonniefantemuseum, Maastricht (cat.)
- 1989 Le Consortium, Dijon (cat.)
- 1988 Galerie Massimo Minini, Brescia
- 1987 Galerie Art & Project, Amsterdam
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (cat.)
Villa Arson, Nice (cat.)
- 1985 Galerie Pietro Sparta, Chagny (cat.)
- 1984 Artists Space, New York (cat.)
- 1981 Galerie Massimo Minini, Brescia
- 1980 *Sculptures de socle*, Vereniging voor het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent
- 1979 814 Spring Street, Los Angeles
Galerie Massimo Minini, Brescia
- 1976 Galerie Albert Baronian, Brussels
Galerie Massimo Minini, Brescia
- 1974 Galerie Delta, Brussels

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Distance Extended / 1979–1997. Part I, Works and Documents from Herbert Foundation*, Herbert Foundation, Ghent
- 2017 *Rodin. L'exposition du centenaire*, Grand Palais, Galeries nationales, Paris (cat.)
- 2016 *L'Almanach 16*, Le Consortium, Dijon
Dans l'atelier. L'artiste photographié, d'Ingres à Jeff Koons, Petit Palais, Musée des beaux-arts de la Ville de Paris (cat.)
- 2014 *Auf der Spur der Erfindung – Bildhauer zeichnen*, Akademie-Galerie, Düsseldorf (cat.)
- 2013 *Quarantanni d'arte contemporanea. Massimo Minini, 1973–2013*, Triennale Milano
Die Bildhauer. Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, 1945 bis heute, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (cat.)
- 2010 *Das Fundament der Kunst. Die Skulptur und ihr Sockel in der Moderne*, Städtische Museen Heilbronn / Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen / Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, Remagen (cat.)
- 2007 *Drawing on Sculpture. Graphic Interventions on the Photographic Surface*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds
- 2006 *Public Space / Two Audiences. Works and Documents from the Herbert Collection*, MACBA, Barcelona (cat.)
Inventur. Werke aus der Sammlung Herbert, Kunsthau Graz
Die Neue Sammlung, Zweite Präsentation, Akademie-Galerie, Düsseldorf
Pavillon der Bildhaueri, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf
- 2005 *La Sculpture dans l'espace. Rodin, Brancusi, Giacometti...*, musée Rodin, Paris (cat.)
- 2004 *In Extremis*, Printemps de septembre, Toulouse (cat.)
- 2003 *Ateliers*, Galerie du TNB, Rennes
- 2001 *La Bretagne collectionne l'art de notre temps. Les vingt ans du Frac Bretagne* (cat.)
- 1998 *Le Bel Aujourd'hui, œuvres d'une collection privée*, Le Nouveau Musée, IAC, Frac Rhône-Alpes, Villeurbanne (cat.)
- 1997 *Sculptures. Sept Attitudes*, Casino, Luxembourg
L'Empreinte, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (cat.)
Passions privées. Collections particulières d'art moderne et contemporain en France, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (cat.)

- 1995 *Le Domaine du diaphane*, Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Bignan
- 1996 *Panoramas. 1981–1996, la collection du Frac Bretagne*, La Crieé, Rennes (cat.)
- 1994 *Nieuwe Beelden*, Middelheimmuseum, Antwerp (cat.)
Une Collection française, collection de la Caisse des dépôts et consignations, Central Artists' Space, Moscow (cat.)
- 1993 *The Sublime Void. On the Memory of the Imagination*, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (cat.)
GAS. Grandiose, Ambitieux, Silencieux, CAPC, musée d'Art contemporain, Bordeaux (cat.)
- 1989 *Einleuchten. Will, Vorstel und Simul in HH*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (cat.)
- 1988 *Zeitlos*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (cat.)
- 1987 *L'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion. Aspects de l'art d'aujourd'hui, 1977–1987*, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris (cat.)
- 1985 *Ooghoogte*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (cat.)
18^e Biennale de São Paulo, Brazil (cat.)
Process und Konstruktion, Munich (cat.)
Athènes. Site de la création, création d'un site, Dracos Art Center, Athens (cat.)
- 1984 *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (cat.)
Arte allo Specchio, XLI^e Venice Biennale (cat.)
Alibis, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris (cat.)
- 1983 *Présence discrète*, musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon
Beelden / Sculpture, Rotterdam (cat.)

MONOGRAPHS

- 2017 Didier Vermeiren, *Construction de distance*, text by Michel Gauthier, "Recherche de la base et du présent", Rennes, Frac Bretagne / Dijon, Les Presses du réel
- 2012 *Skulpturenpark*, text by Simon Duran, "Sculptures", Wuppertal, Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden
- 2007 *Lenticular Photographs*, Los Angeles Studio, text by Jon Wood, "The Studio Boxes of Didier Vermeiren", Los Angeles, The Lapis Press, adapted and extended, Brussels, Didier Vermeiren Studio, 2009
- 2005 *Solides géométriques – Vues d'atelier*, text by Erik Verhagen, "Endogène / Exogène. Les signes suspendus de Didier Vermeiren", Paris, Paris-Musées
- 2003 *Collection de solides*, texts by Dominic Van den Boogerd, "Kariatide bij maanlicht", Jean-Pierre Criqui, "A brief tour of *Collection de Solides*", Eindhoven, Van Abbemuseum

- 1995 *Sculptures, Photographies*, texte de Laurent Busine, "Olim Statua Eram", Communauté française de Belgique, Direction générale de la culture et de la communication XLVI^e Venice Biennale, Belgian pavilion
Didier Vermeiren, texts by Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Sans titre, 1994", Simon Duran, "La désorientation de l'espace et le projet de sculpture de Didier Vermeiren", Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume / Zurich, Kunsthalle
- 1993 *Didier Vermeiren*, texts by Julian Heynen, "Alle Skulpturen und alle Körper", "Je travaille sur la présence", excerpts from the interviews in the film by Elsa Cayo, *123 plans sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren*, Krefeld, Haus Lange, Haus Esters
- 1991 *Didier Vermeiren*, text by Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Six remarques sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren", Bignan, Centre d'art contemporain du Domaine de Kerguéhennec
- 1990 *Didier Vermeiren, Photographies d'exposition*, Maastricht, Bonnefantenmuseum
- 1988 *Didier Vermeiren, Sculpture, tirage de série (ensemble de cinq épreuves) plâtre, 1988, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant L'Appel aux armes, plâtre, 1912*, text by Alain Van der Hofstadt, Dijon, Le Consortium
- 1987 *Didier Vermeiren*, texts by Christian Besson, "Champ et véhicule chez Didier Vermeiren", Michel Assenmaker, "De la photographie à la sculpture chez Didier Vermeiren: éléments de lecture", Brussels, Société des expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts / Nice, Villa Arson
- 1985 *Didier Vermeiren, Sculptures*, texts by Michel Assenmaker, "La sculpture", René Denizot, "Le corps du délit", Chagny, Galerie Pietro Sparta & Pascale Petit

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2020 Céline Cadaureille, "Didier Vermeiren: de la copie à l'œuvre", in Céline Cadaureille, Anne Favier (ed.), *Copies, écarts et variations dans la création contemporaine*, Paris, Hermann
- 2014 Charles Robb, "Permanent shift: The topology of Didier Vermeiren's *Cariatide à la pierre*", in Victoria Garnons-Williams (ed.), *Photography and Fictions. Locating dynamics of practice*, Brisbane, Queensland Centre for Photography
- 2012 Cédric Loire, "Sculptures à une absente", *L'Art même*, no. 56, pp. 10–1
Céline Piettre, "Didier Vermeiren, Le feu sous la glace", *Blouin Art Info*, (<http://fr.artinfo.com/news/story/823041/didier-vermeiren-le-feu-sous-la-glace>)
- 2009 Renaud Huberlant, "Typologie muséologique de la condition sculpturale", *L'Art même*, no. 42, pp. 30–1

- 2007 Jon Wood, *Drawing on Sculpture, Graphic Interventions on the Photographic Surface*, Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, Essays on Sculpture, no. 55
- 2005 Hervé Gauville, "Volumes en puissance", *Libération*, November 16
- 1998 Michel Gauthier, "Didier Vermeiren: Des hommes qui marchent", *Art présence*, no. 26, pp. 24–31, photo de couverture: *Autoportrait au chariot*, 1986
- 1997 Marie-Line Nicol, "Didier Vermeiren, *L'Atelier à quatre heures du matin*, 1995, Tirage argentique, 40 × 30,7 cm", *Art présence*, no. 23, July-August-September
- 1994 Michel Gauthier, "Transferts (sur les "répliques" de socles dans la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren)", *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no. 47, pp. 117–31
- 1993 Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Didier Vermeiren", *Artforum international*, vol. 31, no. 6
Simon Duran, *Didier Vermeiren*, Moscow, Collection de la Caisse des dépôts et consignations, Maison des peintres et des sculpteurs
Harald Szeemann, "Didier Vermeiren", in *GAS. Grandiose, Ambitieux, Silencieux*, Bordeaux, CAPC, Musée d'art contemporain
- 1992 Hervé Gauville, "Didier Vermeiren: blanc de décoffrage", *Libération*, October 14
- 1990 Denis-Laurent Bouyer, "Didier Vermeiren, aux bases de la sculpture", *Sans titre*, no. 12 (interview)

FILMS

- 2006 Elsa Cayo, *Étude pour un monument en hommage aux pompiers – Projet conçu pour le square Violet, Paris XV^e*, *Didier Vermeiren*, Paris, Tri Vidéo, video, 6 min 30, colour
- 1998 Elsa Cayo, *Obstacle au mouvement. Didier Vermeiren, sculptures et photographies*, Paris, Tri Films, 35 mm, Dolby, 15 min, black and white
- 1988 Elsa Cayo, *123 plans sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren*, Paris, Tri Films, 16 mm, 26 min, colour

LIST OF EXHIBITED WORKS

SCULPTURES

Sculpture, 1982 [p. 27]
1982
plaster
223 × 26.5 × 26.5 cm

Collection de solides [pp. 14, 30]
1978–85
painted wood
height 164 cm, variable width and depth

Un bloc de pierre de 80 × 80 × 20 cm sur un bloc de polyuréthane de 80 × 80 × 20 cm [p. 39]
1985
polished stone, polyurethane
collection Greta Meert

Grès, 1985, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant Jean d'Aire, grès, 1900 [p. 37]
1985
sandstone
8.5 × 65.5 × 35.5 cm
collection Greta Meert

Sans titre
1985
patinated plaster
258 × 40 × 40 cm

Un bloc de plâtre de 80 × 80 × 20 cm sur un bloc de polyuréthane de 80 × 80 × 20 cm [p. 36]
1986
plaster, polyurethane
collection Renaix

Plâtre, 1988, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le monument à Claude Lorrain, étude du peintre nu, plâtre, 1890 [p. 40]
1988
plaster
23.5 × 80 × 79.5 cm

Plâtre, 1988, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant le monument à Claude Lorrain, étude du peintre vêtu, plâtre, 1890 [p. 41]
1988
plaster
24 × 84 × 84.5 cm

Creugas [p. 79]
1995
plaster
91 × 134.5 × 84.5 cm

Damoxenos [p. 78]
1995
plaster
89.5 × 145 × 90.5 cm

Ugolin [p. 38]
1997
partially patinated plaster
35 × 188.5 × 137 cm

Groupe (L'Appel aux armes) [p. 83]
1999
plaster
119 × 339 × 354 cm

Modèle #1 [p. 53]
1999
wood, textile
108.5 × 119 × 119 cm
Collection Greta Meert

Place [p. 59]
2000
patinated bronze, painted wood
331 × 84 × 90.5 cm

Solide géométrique #2 [pp. 19, 56, 107]
2003
glazed terracotta, painted wood
161 × 108.5 × 108.5 cm

Solide géométrique #5 [pp. 99–101]
2004
glazed terracotta, painted wood
180.7 × 123.9 × 123.9 cm

Solide géométrique #9 [pp. 50–51]
2006
tinted plaster, painted wood
215.5 × 135 × 135 cm

Socles [p. 17]
2008
patinated plaster, partially painted wood
197 × 127 × 127 cm

Solide géométrique #13 [p. 57]
2010
patinated bronze, painted wood
161 × 109 × 109 cm

Solide géométrique #14 [p. 57]
2010
aluminium, painted wood
161 × 108.5 × 108.5 cm

Solide géométrique #15 [p. 56]
2010
plaster, painted wood
161 × 109 × 109 cm

Terrasse #1 [p. 58]
2010
plaster
14.5 × 120 × 118 cm

Terrasse #2 [p. 55]
2014
plaster, painted wood
144.4 × 143.8 × 144.7 cm

Open Cube #0 [pp. 19, 113]
2015
painted and tinted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Monument utile #2 [p. 18]
2015
plaster, wood, graphite
333 × 100.4 × 143.3 cm

Open Cube #2 [p. 115]
2015
partially painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #3 [p. 117]
2016
partially painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #4 [p. 116]
2016
partially painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #6 [p. 118]
2016
partially painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #7 [p. 119]
2016
partially painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #8 [p. 111]
2019
painted wood
110.5 × 109 × 109 cm

Open Cube #9 [p. 21]
2020
plaster, partially painted wood
120 × 120 × 120 cm

Open Cube #10 [pp. 6, 20]
2020
plaster, partially painted wood
195 × 120 × 120 cm

Open Cube #11 [pp. 20, 141]
2021
painted plaster, partially painted wood
195 × 120 × 120 cm

Open Cube #12 [pp. 22, 143]
2022
painted plaster and wood
120 × 120 × 120 cm

Sans titre [p. 159]
2022
iron, painted wood
181 × 82 × 90 cm

PHOTOGRAPHS

Neuf mesures de terre [p. 132]

1973
Photorelief, 2011, pigment print from negative
23.8 × 32.4 × 20 cm
Private collection

Neuf mesures de terre

1973
Photorelief, 2011, pigment print from negative
23.8 × 32.4 × 20 cm

Studio, rue Jean d'Ardenne, 1978 [p. 33]

silver print, treated with coffee
53.3 × 35.9 cm

Archives #1
MoMA

1978
pigment print from slides
52.7 × 42.2 cm

Archives #2
Atelier, Brooklyn

1978
pigment print from slides
52.7 × 42.2 cm

Archives #3
LACMA – Atelier Los Angeles [p. 134]

1979
pigment print from slides
52.7 × 42.2 cm

Studio, Paris, 1982 [p. 11]

silver print
35 × 26.9 cm

Archives #4
Brooklyn Museum – Artists Space NYC, 1984 – Neue Pinakothek, Künstlerwerkstätten, München, 1985 – Pinacothèque nationale d’Athènes, Dracos Art Center, 1985

1984–85
pigment print from slides
52.7 × 42.2 cm

Studio view, 1985 [p. 43]

silver print
53 × 35.4 cm

Plâtre, 1985, socle du musée Rodin, Meudon, supportant Adam, plâtre, 1880 [p. 47]

1985
silver print
28 × 18.8 cm

Villa Arson, Nice [p. 135]

1987
silver print
35 × 53 cm

Villa Arson, Nice [p. 31]

1987
silver print (clearing with iron salts, 2013)
35 × 53 cm

Double exposition [p. 130]

1988
silver print
53 × 33.4 cm

Studio view, 1989 [p. 76]

silver print
37.9 × 25.4 cm

Studio view, 1989 [p. 77]

silver print
37.8 × 25.4 cm

Studio, *Sans titre*, 1992 (front) [p. 61]

silver print
34.7 × 27.1 cm

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51.2 × 40.3 cm

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Monument [p. 145]

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51.9 × 41 cm

Profils, Monument à Victor Hugo [p. 91]

1998
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39.8 × 50.2 cm

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silver print
36.5 × 30.4 cm

Studio view, 2005

silver print
57.5 × 45.5 cm

Studio view, 2006

2007
silver print
50.3 × 40.3 cm

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silver print
36.5 × 53 cm

Studio view, 2007 [p. 12]

silver print
53 × 37 cm

Studio view, 2008

silver print
51.7 × 40.4 cm

Studio view, 2019 [p. 110]

silver print
53 × 35.2 cm

FILM

During the exhibition, two films by Elsa Cayo will be presented:

123 plans sur la sculpture de Didier Vermeiren

1988
Tri Films, Paris
16 mm, colour, 26 min
Digital copy

Obstacle au mouvement. Didier Vermeiren, sculptures et photographies

1994–98
Tri Films, Paris
35 mm, Dolby, B&W, 15 min
Digital copy

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BIOGRAPHIES OF THE AUTHORS

SUSANA GÁLLEGO CUESTA, chief curator of heritage, has been director of the musée des Beaux-Arts in Nancy since June 2019. It is her policy to open up the institution to public space and the city, focusing on urban cultures among others with the organization of the *Rencontres urbaines de Nancy* (RUN). In her desire to promote a broad, emancipatory and joyful art, Gállego Cuesta is interested in various disciplines, periods and media, ranging from sculpture to photography, from graffiti to sound installations. In this way she continues the work begun when she was in charge of the exhibitions and the photographic collection at the Petit Palais – musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, where she curated exhibitions such as *Dans l’atelier. L’artiste photographié d’Ingres à Jeff Koons* (2016). Her interest in interdisciplinarity was formed during her academic research. She gained her PhD in comparative literature with a doctorate entitled *L’informe à la Renaissance*, and is interested in the contemporary implications and manifestations of ancient structures and discourses. Spanish by nationality and a former student of the École normale supérieure and the École du Louvre, she has lived in France for many years. Her book *Traité de l’informe* was published in November 2021 by Éditions Garnier.

MICHEL GAUTHIER is the author of some twenty books, including case studies (*L’Anarchème, Les promesses du zéro* and *Le Temps des intermèdes*),

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ZOË GRAY is senior curator at WIELS since 2015. Previously, Gray was artistic director of the Rennes Biennale (2014), worked for the LUMA Foundation in Arles (2012–13), and was curator at Witte de With in Rotterdam (2006–11).

DIRK SNAUWAERT is the founding director of WIELS. He lectures and publishes regularly on art and visual culture. For WIELS, he curated or co-curated, among others, *Expats & Clandestines* (2007), *The Absent Museum* (2017), *Atopolis* for Mons Cultural Capital 2015, *Convex/Concave* at TANK Museum Shanghai (2019), and *Risquons-Tout* (2020).

DIDIER VERMEIREN: DOUBLE EXPOSITION

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Signature in relief on the *Cariatide à la pierre*, 1997, and signature in counter-relief on the *Cariatide à l’urne*, 1996
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