

A TONGUE

BECOMES

YOURS

25 SEPT - 4 DEC 2022



Vlaanderen
verbeelding werkt

**TER
DILFT**
cultuurcentrum

WWW.TERDILFT.BE/EXPO

EN

A Tongue Becomes Yours

25 September - 4 December 2022

CC Ter Dilft in Bornem, Belgium

With Henry Andersen, Kaoutar Chaqchaq,
Millie Rose Dobree, Eva Giolo,
Felix Kindermann, Oratile Papi Konopi,
Ketty La Rocca, Clara-Lane Lens,
Miriam Laura Leonardi, Lorenza Longhi,
Ayla Mrabet, Jurgen Ots, Josse Pyl,
Ghita Skali, Oussama Tabti, Kelly Tissot,
Nora Turato.

Curated by Fabian Flückiger

The group exhibition ***A Tongue Becomes Yours*** brings artists together who negotiate the potentials and restrictions of language. Language enables us to recognize the world around us and to act within it. During socialisation, language is bound to a particular culture and is full of codes. Geographical and social origins are reflected in expressions and accents. The values of the family nucleus and political power structures equally mould the use of language. At the same time, language is something that can be shaped and makes it possible to strive for a new identity as a society or as an individual.

The works presented at CC Ter Dilft deal with language in terms of institutions, media, history, geography, fictional use, and non-verbality. They treat language as an instrument of appropriating and constructing the world. In the early years of our life, our influence on language, which shapes reality, is minimal. When children begin to interact with their social environment, they experience an immediate reaction to the words they utter. This opens a limitless realm of appropriating reality and fiction that fills with dreams and fears, joy and disappointment. By way of this access to the world, a physical and intellectual identity grows that is infused with familial, cultural, and political influences.

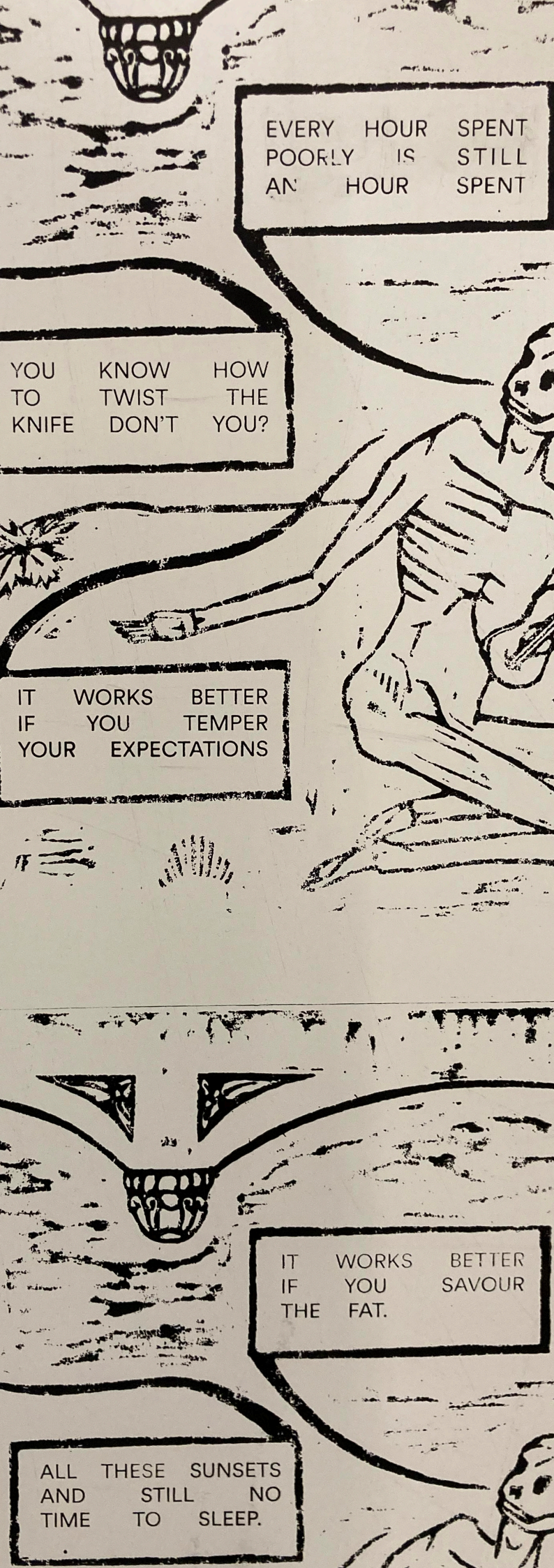
As children come of age, they acquire an awareness of the factors influencing their own identity. Frictions with the self, the familial nucleus, society around us, or the state are all part of the way the self forms. In this process, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as a neutral language. Language exists in a political system that controls life processes. These life processes have been thoroughly formed by the economy, but until now ecological aspects have only played a minimal role in structuring them.

Language defines habitats and life conditions by way of political processes. These formative structures establish power relations that always simultaneously create relationships of exclusion. We currently find ourselves in a debate on patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist structures and the linked inequalities relating to gender and social background.

These still prevalent inequalities are reproduced in media processes. In this way, every medium reveals its own cultural and technological history with a specific field of impact. This phenomenon of the interweaving of language, medium, and social structures is addressed in the exhibition by the historical work of Ketty La Rocca and runs as a theme throughout the entire exhibition. With *In principio erat* (In the Beginning Was), La Rocca criticized the reproduction of patriarchal Catholic language culture in the Italian media of the 1960s and 1970s.

The diverse media in the exhibition result in various narratives specific to the different media. The aesthetics and idioms of print, photography, film, sculpture, performance, painting, or *objet trouvé* are closely linked to technological conditions of production and reception and reveal differing dramaturgies. The represented communication fragments consist of words, sentences, plots, scripts, signs, gestures, and bodies and address various sensory organs.

In its reflection about language and media, the exhibition oscillates between imposed and appropriated language.



EVERY HOUR SPENT
POORLY IS STILL
AN HOUR SPENT

YOU KNOW HOW
TO TWIST THE
KNIFE DON'T YOU?

IT WORKS BETTER
IF YOU TEMPER
YOUR EXPECTATIONS

IT WORKS BETTER
IF YOU SAVOUR
THE FAT.

ALL THESE SUNSETS
AND STILL NO
TIME TO SLEEP.

Henry Andersen ^{°1992, Australia}

808 (2022)

Silkscreen print on found metal shelving

90 x 200 cm

Courtesy of the artist

For *808*, Henry Andersen examined the history of printing, including the history of the Quakers. The Quakers are a dissident religious group that began in mid-seventeenth century England. Part of the movement's success was its capacity to connect to the networks of early printing presses that were beginning to spread across Europe. Since Gutenberg, printing has been seen as a tool for spreading the words of God or the devil. With the invention of printing and its overwhelming reception, some clergy feared printing would make their word obsolete.

In woodcuts, the printing press was subsequently depicted again and again as a dance of death. In this context, the dance of death emerges as an allegory for an original's perpetual reproduction and an imitation of a life and death cycle. This constant cycle of information and the increase of knowledge as well as the standardisation of written language in the Middle Ages are contents that resonate in Andersen's work. His visual language refers to conventions of the medieval woodcut.

For *808*, he took one of his carvings and silkscreened it onto found industrial shelving. Each step of this process introduces additional layers of noise which interact with the text and the aged surface of the metal. As the same image repeats itself again and again, the two skeletons speak in clichés, tell jokes and complain that nothing changes. The title *808* references the Roland TR-808 drum machine and its cult status as the tool behind the primary rhythms of hip hop, house and techno. With this reference, Andersen makes an oblique step out of print history to a parallel junction of technology, (mechanical) reproduction, rhythm, pleasure and social change.

Millie Rose Dobree °1998, United Kingdom

I woz here I am here now I will always be here
(2021)

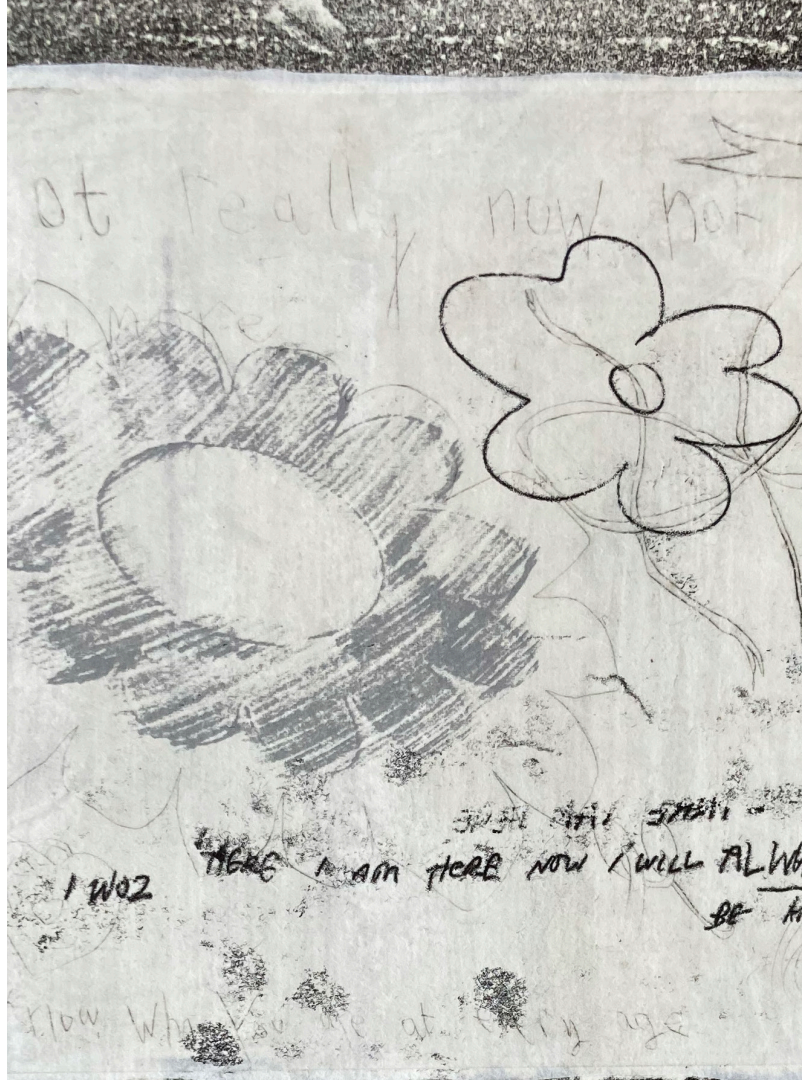
Stone lithograph prints, collaged with etchings,
screen-prints, chine collé, and collagraphy

82.5 x 77 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Millie Rose Dobree is interested in the relationship between the absence of things and the sign left behind. With her lithographs, she transfers scribbles she finds in public spaces onto paper. In the age of the Internet, the signs on façades, toilet doors, or train benches could remind us of ancient petroglyphs. Often, they are perpetuation rituals of love, anger or memory. Do they express a longing for eternal connection with the 'other'?

In psychoanalysis, the concept of the 'other' begins with the infant's painful separation from its source of nourishment and the end of the perfection of its embryonic existence. When the infant feels hunger and it is not immediately satisfied, it begins to develop the concept of the 'other'. Later, this experience results in distinguishing between one's own existence and the existence of the world. Leaving traces in our physical environments is a way of dealing with the loss and longing that comes with growing up.





Eva Giolo °1991, Belgium

A Tongue Called Mother (2019)

16mm scanned to digital file, colour, 4:3, stereo, 8'

Courtesy of the artist

The experimental film *A Tongue Called Mother* by Eva Giolo is a generational portrait of a little girl, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother. We see children learning French at school in alphabetic order. *Regarde* and *ecoute* are among the first words, providing a commentary on learning through seeing and listening. The children also learn concepts such as 'responsibility', which remain entirely abstract at this age and raise the question of the meaning of language, knowledge, and logic.

At home, in the presence of her grandmother and her great-grandmother, the little girl learns the language linked to objects or activities. One of the children at school repeats the word *arbre* while the little girl at home picks grapes from the house vine. The learning processes at school follow the systematic structure of grammar. At home, objects are linked to the realities of life in the family. Different forms of world-appropriation emerge, closely linked to the affiliation of family, social class, culture, and political system. These conditions shape the language and its sound and expand the mirage of the term 'mother tongue' with many other influencing factors.

In the juxtaposition of three generations, Giolo also raises the question of the effects of genealogy on language and the construction of identity. The great-grandmother has dementia and is losing her language. This cycle of learning and unlearning a language does not necessarily have to be at the beginning and end of life. However, it can be seen as a form of unlearning and relearning within a lifetime or how a language changes from one generation to the next.

Felix Kindermann °1978, Germany

Vowelled Trees (for Regina) (2022)

Bronze casts, chrome rods

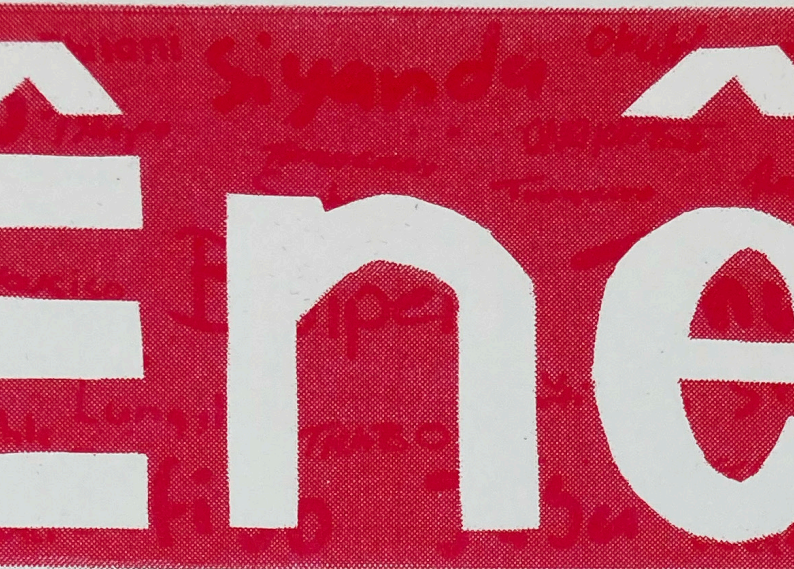
Various dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

Felix Kindermann explores forms of communication and understanding in his practice. Language as a form of accessing and relating to the world is one of his core themes. The three bronzes on display are palatal casts that form different vowels. Shaped like a stream of water or a branch, a kind of social organism is created between three individuals emitting linguistic content. The solidified gestures reproduce the vowels O, I, and U. The 'O' can be read as an expression of astonishment and attention. 'I' and 'U' address the I and you.

It creates a fictional triologue that spreads out in all directions of the room but, as an installation, still forms a togetherness. Whether this results in a dissonant or harmonious exchange remains open. In times of 'phubbing' [a portmanteau for 'phone-snubbing'], in which the smartphone increasingly intervenes in social interactions, Kindermann's work can be understood as an appreciation of communication as a source of creative ideas and social understanding that has a physical-spiritual origin in the mouth and brain rather than in the fingers.





Oratile Papi Konopi ©1997, South-Africa

'Him', 'Her', 'Us', 'Them' (2019)

Each 42 x 29.7 cm

Digital print on matte photo paper

Courtesy of the artist

Oratile Papi Konopi deals with the multilingual complexity in South Africa: starting in the sixteenth century with the arrival of Bantu peoples, enslaved Indians, Portuguese seafarers, Dutch traders and farmers, and later British colonial rulers. This demographic structure was used by the Apartheid regime for ethnic segregation, especially from the mid-20th century onwards. Under the Group Areas Act, zones were established that seriously impacted upon the affect the property, housing, labour and mobility rights of the non-white population in South Africa.

As a result of this new 'legal order', Konopi's family was forcibly relocated with the entire Black population from the Johannesburg suburb of Sophiatown to Soweto to make way for the new exclusively white city with the cynical name Triomf (Triumph). Such forced relocations affected over 600 000 black South Africans between the 1950s and 1980s.

The regime declared Afrikaans and English as the sole official languages, eroded the education system for people of colour and denied them access to universities. Today, there are eleven official languages in South Africa, and questions of identity and engagement with personal history and society loom large.

Konopi's poster works in various Bantu languages, Afrikaans, and English are dedicated to cultural cohesion, understanding, and the search for identity. There are significant linguistic (and cultural) differences. For example, there are no gender-specific object pronouns in Setswana (a Bantu language): the word *ênê* stands for him, her, us, and them. The debate over gender here is thus different than in Europe, less focused on language and more on role models. With *'Him', 'Her', 'Us', 'Them'*, Konopi evokes questions of individual and social identity in a fragmented country, whose brutal history flows into the constitution of the self and the other.

US

Ketty La Rocca 1938-1976, Italy

In principio erat (1971)

Photograph on canvas

135 x 101 cm

Courtesy of Kienzle Art Foundation, Berlin

In principio erat (1975)

Artist's book, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund

22.5 x 21.5 cm

Courtesy of Collection Christoph Schifferli

In principio erat (1971)

Artist's book, Centro Di, Florence

22.5 x 21.4 cm

Courtesy of Collection Christoph Schifferli

**Exhibition catalogue, Galleria Carini,
Florence (1989)**

22.9 x 16.3 cm

Courtesy of Collection Christoph Schifferli

Ketty La Rocca belonged to the first generation of women artists (such as Gina Pane, Lygia Clark, Valie Export, Joan Jonas, etc.) who made their position as women in society an issue. La Rocca dealt with the relationship between image and message, sender and receiver, mind and body, and the patriarchal Catholic linguistic culture in Italy was her context. In the 1960s, she used text-image collages to address the social structures and exclusions transmitted by the media. In the 1970s, she began to challenge standard spoken and written language with a different system of communication that would expose codes and power relations.

Sign language is an elaborate form of communication that lacked gendered pronouns and was therefore more inclusive. From this, La Rocca transformed the main motif of hands in the early 1970s. Her hands, and thus her body, became the medium of signs and symbols, illustrating the effect of language on the individual body.

The photographic work and the artist's book *In principio erat* refers to the creation story at the beginning of the Gospel according to John, where the word (of God) is the origin of all existence. This reference to the history of religion addresses the church's dominance of Italian culture. With the linguistic fragment, the gesture of illustrated hands, and photography as a medium, La Rocca confronts various communication systems with one another. La Rocca presented the artist's book at the Venice Biennale in 1972.





Clara-Lane Lens ^o1997, Belgium

We were flying into the depths of the light that still shined above my sinking body (2020)

Acrylic and oil on canvas

70 x 140 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Clara-Lane Lens' painting uses the genre of autofiction. She paints multiple potentials of the self that blur the definition of gender and a solidified identity. The works appear to communicate with a fictional self that invokes different bodies, emotions, and desires. In the process, various biographies emerge that explore a self-defined 'becoming different'.

We were flying into the depths of the light that still shone above my sinking body incorporates an intimate, psychologically complex scene in which two similar bodies or biographies lie on top of each other and create a hybrid being. The title echoes the difficulty and dependence of social construction and the body. The image exhibits the recurring feature of incompleteness in Lens' work. Her works always offer the potential for change and transformation and are never fully fleshed out.

Miriam Laura Leonardi ^{°1985}, Germany

MAIL (SVEN) (2021)

Print on wallpaper

71 x 118 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maria Bernheim

Miriam Laura Leonardi interacts with the exhibition space by defining zones of inclusion and exclusion: for example, a LED entrance entitled *Hypocritical One Percent - Club* at a gallery exhibition with the title *Business In The Front, Party In The Back*, where party, art beholding, and business appear spatially separate from one another. In these works, Leonardi plays with various demands in contemporary art. Interests move between connoisseurship, fame, excess, business, and historical relevance.

MAIL (SVEN) depicts the profile of Sven Marquardt, the former bouncer at the famous techno club Berghain in Berlin. His face represents the authority to decide who can enter the club and enrich the party, and who cannot. This power position can be transferred to contemporary art or the dynamics for public speaking positions.

In *MAIL (SVEN)*, the paths of circulation of the letter envelope and the sender and receiver remain unclear and have to be defined. The content of the envelope remains hidden and is, strictly speaking, non-existent. This lack of content can be seen as a homage to appropriation art, the forms of which take something already existing as a point of departure, but generate new content independent of context.





Lorenza Longhi °1991, Italy

Sign (Versace & Moirè) (2022)

Silkscreen print on wallpaper, polycarbonate panel,
wallpaper glue

60 x 150 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Weiss Falk

Lorenza Longhi's work is concerned with advertising and communication strategies. During a residency in New York, she came across catalogues from the early twentieth century with templates for designing store windows and business cards. They offer a selection of art nouveau decorative elements, lettering, and background patterns.

Longhi applied out-of-print wallpapers from fashion designers like Versace, Cacharel, and Naj Oleari onto plastic panels. She then silkscreened elements from the catalogues for storefront windows and business cards. In this way, she connects storefront windows and their attention-grabbing commercial strategy with the design of living rooms. The influences from the art nouveau templates fan out with flowers, vines, banners, and ribbons.

However, organic forms are not the only stylistic influence but also Greek columns, the first industrial fragments like car radiator bonnets, and elements influenced by Japonisme. Elements from cultural history, nature and industrialisation intermingle in a time of global search for new forms. The model elements from the catalogues provide a preliminary anticipation of the displacement of the individual freedom of design for craftspeople with homogeneous mass production.

The work's title, *Sign*, brings the examination of design strategies to a philosophical level. Signs not only consist of words but are also bearers of information regarding aesthetics, materials, and production.

Jurgen Ots 1978, Belgium

Cross Riddles (2022)

Wall installation

Ca. 120 x 315 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Beige

Flea markets disgorge goods that allow conclusions to be drawn about our cultural production and ways of thinking then and now. The abundance or waste of some becomes the bargain of others, which takes on a socio-political dimension. Jurgen Ots' wall installation *Cross Riddles* speaks about this circulation of cultural goods. During his daily stroll through the Jeu de Balle market, which can almost be seen as action art, he amassed a trove of printed matter and teaching materials.

The installation at CC Ter Dilft consists of individual cover pages of Belgian almanacks from the 1930s. Almanacks are among the earliest periodical printed products, with literary narratives and calendars with astrological prophecies. They can be considered the forerunners of today's magazines. The last cheerful almanack pages, from which Ots developed the installation, contain bilingual crossword puzzles in French-Flemish, French-English or Flemish-French.

On the one hand, the crosswords with the short picture stories offer a playful approach to language acquisition; on the other hand, Ots produces a kind of conceptual history picture in the studio about the found objects and their meaning.





Josse Pyl °1991, Belgium

Forefinger (2019)

Laser-cut RVS

90 x 3 x 22cm

Courtesy of the artist and Annet Gelink Gallery

Chew More, Read Harder (2019)

Lasercutted RVS

94 x 79 x 0.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Annet Gelink Gallery

In his work, Josse Pyl explores the materialisation and physical form of language: how words and texts pass through human and other bodies, and how language and speech are formed and dissolved. Pyl seeks to understand this intertwined system without hierarchy by creating drawings, sculptures, and environments where language and stories emerge, move and get lost. Language-forming body parts such as tongues and teeth are recurring elements that he combines with object-like text fragments or text reliefs.

In his object-like text fragments, Pyl uses language as a working material by working and distorting its surface; gaze and sign overlap so that the works exist between image and text, between seeing and reading. The sentences punched from aluminium in the form of an index finger, exhibited at CC Ter Dilt, remain without a legible written message. They transport the gesture of writing and language becoming material.

The form of the index finger and its link to writing and information is something we encounter on a daily basis: for example, as a biometric means for identification, the most important body part for writing and pointing, and when using a smartphone.

Ghita Skali °1992, Morocco

Kaoutar Chaqchaq °1994, Morocco

Ayla Mrabet °1986, Morocco

Narrative Machines: Episode 5 (2022)

Texts by Kaoutar Chaqchaq, Ayla Mrabet, Ghita Skali;

Graphic design: Roxane Maillet.

bilingual edition (English / Arabic)

18 x 25 cm, 84 pages (ill.)

An artist's book disguised as a medical publication written by six fictional women characters from Morocco in free wheeling, *Narrative Machines* clothes truth with falsehood. With wry irony and Google English it comments on paranoia, fake news, patriarchy, power and media ganging together in the Maghreb (and everywhere else). But it also shows a chosen community of women who confide, support each other and laugh a good load.

Are there weird questions that have been haunting you all your life? Do you wonder why you pass out each mother-in-law comes to your place? Do you smell fish when you cook meat? Do you know of miraculous medical machines that have been forgotten by official history? What's your take on alternative medicine? Have you ever heard about the Markar, the cardiological device invented by King Hassan II of Morocco? Do you love watching Noujoum Al 3ouloum (Stars of Sciences)? Is your herbalist your best friend? Do you ever wonder if you should wax your arms? In your daily life, do you struggle sometimes with your feminist ethic? Do you put snail cream on your face? Write to us! Join our community! Be part of the *Narrative Machines* family!

(source: www.lespressesdureel.com)





Oussama Tabti °1988, Algeria

Listen and Repeat (2017)

Installation, chalkboard

Ca. 80 x 360 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Oussama Tabti deals with the mutual impacts of inequality, migration, and fears of the foreign on one another. School systems, something we can all relate with our personal experience, surface frequently in his work. *Listen and Repeat* thus has something universal about it, and stands in general for the way foreign languages are taught. Tabti's mother made jokes to Oussama about these two imperatives that she heard over and over as a school student in 1960s Algeria.

Since school systems are always already shaped by political structures, this narrative contains a special historical dimension. Tabti's mother belonged to the first generation of Algerians that entered school after independence in 1962. During the colonial period, the school system suffered dramatically due to school closings and general neglect. After the coming of independence, the country urgently needed educated people who could help build up the new state.

The urgency of the sentence takes on an existential significance: "Listen and repeat" can also be applied to the school system in France, where a law passed in 2005 stipulated that French colonialism should be taught in a positive light. As a result, children have been taught a massively embellished history. They learn, for example, nothing of the violent expulsion of native Algerians from the fertile regions of the country by the Foreign Legion, or about the *Code de l'indigénat* from 1875, that classified all native Algerians as subordinate to the French. And they do not understand the background of the political tensions between France and Algeria, which have continued since the eight-year war of liberation with hundreds of thousands of deaths. In the face of fierce international protest, the law that had been passed under Nicholas Sarkozy was rescinded.

Kelly Tissot °1995, France

Cooled Comments I (2022)

Stained fir wood

190 x 140 x 10 cm

Courtesy of the artist and suns.works

Polka III (2021)

Digital UV print on aluminium, fir wood

150 x 110 cm

Courtesy of the artist and suns.works

Polka V (2021)

Digital UV print on aluminium, fir wood

150 x 110 cm

Courtesy of the artist and suns.works

Little Figures, Big Shadows (2018-2020)

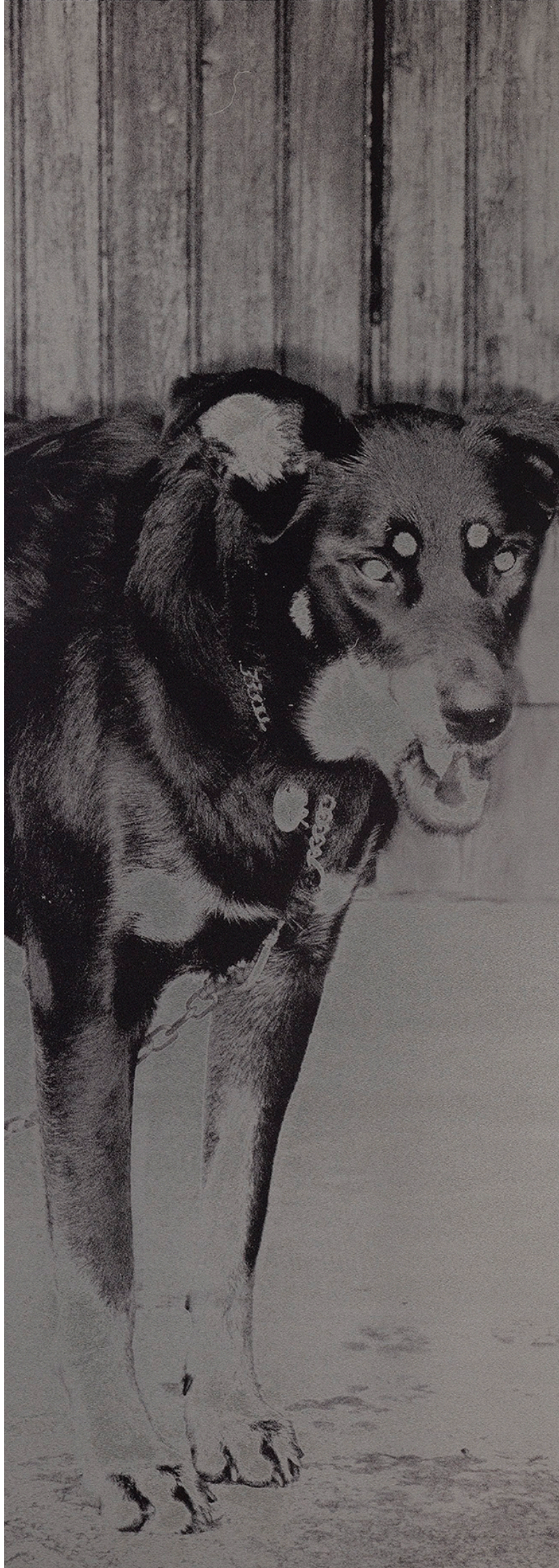
Text

21 x 29.7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and suns.works

Kelly Tissot explores the characteristics the rural world for a young generation, providing it a new image and a new language. In photographs, installations, and text, she captures encodings of the rural in a mix of euphoria and emptiness, outdated folkloric and faded pop-cultural fragments such as T-shirts and torn posters of American stars on adolescent bedroom walls. Scenes of youthful rural excess clash with the rusty steel of combine harvesters and the noise and toxic, garish graphics of motocross bikes.

Tissot's aesthetic translations draw on what is already there to explore the potential of the rural in a fictional story and offer it a constant reinvention. It is a dramaturgy between reality and phantasm. between freedom and self-construction and the irrevocable course of events. The posture of the watchdog in *Polka* is emblematic of this fine line between resignation and euphoria.



Nora Turato °1991, Croatia

eto ti na (2020)

Vitreous enamel on steel

192 x 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and LambdaLambdaLambda

Daily, Nora Turato collects text fragments in an app, most of which circulate online. They come from advertisements, packaging, news, comment columns, songs, and videos. She publishes the language fragments annually in her artist books Pool#, where all the respective years' socially relevant topics, fears and euphorias seep through. From this pool, she derives all the works she produces that year in all the media she uses: performances, murals, videos, and various print objects. Often, the rendered sentences and fragments of speech are pithy linguistic shells that (devoid of context) possess little depth. These idioms testify to the flood of information and scattered media consumption.

By structuring the works as warnings, Turato draws attention to the toxic effect of fake news, hate speech or the internet as a rabbit hole. Despite her criticism of fake news or irrelevant information, her work is humorous and spreads a particular tone of the idioms currently circulating. This is also the case in the work exhibited at CC Ter Dift, *eto ti na*, which contains a literary wit and something absurd in its circularity and redundancy. The short section on how TV shows work comments on the countless comparable plots and the death of fiction on TV. The rippling noise of today's mostly content-less television is linked to the Croatian *eto ti na*, which means, 'There you go'.

eto

Side programme

Saturday 24.09 | 5-9 pm Opening

With a performance at 7 pm: **Narrative Machines: Episode 5** Texts by Kaoutar Chaqchaq, Ayla Mrabet, Ghita Skali, originally performed by Ghita Skali (ENG)
On site performance by Hilda Moucharrafiéh (NL)

Sunday 25.09 | 2 pm

Curator's tour with Fabian Flückiger (ENG)
Register your participation: www.terdilft.be

Sunday 23.10 | 2 pm

Wordshop poëzie:
hoe kun je taal (ver)leren? door Aline Verbeke (NL)
Register your participation: www.terdilft.be

Sunday 20.11 | 2 pm

Wordshop poëzie:
hoe kun je taal (ver)leren? door Aline Verbeke (NL)
Register your participation: www.terdilft.be

Sunday 04.12 | 2 pm

Finissage

Inclusive Language
By Aline Verbeke & Fabian Flückiger (NL & ENG)

Colophon

Exhibition:

Technical planning & installation team:
Fabian Flückiger & Team Ter Dilft

Booklet:

Texts: Fabian Flückiger (except Narrative Machines)
English translator: Brian Currid
Dutch translator: Ans van Gasse
Communications: Team Ter Dilft

