



guy mees

NEW PUBLICATION - GUY MEES

CO-PUBLISHED BY BUREAU DES RÉALITÉS & GALERIE MICHELINE SZWAJCKER



This publication follows on from the two-part project dedicated to Belgian artist Guy Mees (1935-2003) which was jointly presented by galerie Micheline Sz wajcer and Bureau des Réalités in Brussels from September to November 2016. ¹

While the exhibitions gave prominence to documents, photographs and videos dating from the late 1960s up to the 2000s and allowed us to observe the unfolding of Guy Mees' practice through both his oeuvre and its legacy in an attempt to better grasp his process and poetics, this publication must be understood as the fragments of an encounter and a brief recollection of a precise moment.

Amongst other things, the publication presents a group of works dating from 1970 which have not been publicly exhibited since the year of their conception. Recent archival research carried out at Bureau des Réalités ² has allowed the works' reactivation in the gallery space.

These sources highlight Mees' specific, non-authoritarian intentions regarding notions of seriality and rationalism and industrial materials which were prevalent at that time. Indeed, Mees' working method was modular in essence, allowing permanent structures to become precarious.

Each piece could be moved around the room, indicating or revealing the exhibition space, while the "positive" representation of these same structures faced their "negative" counterparts (the metal bars were mirrored by their soft and fragile white felt protective covers). This gesture finds its origin in a series of very particular and sensual aluminium objects named "Verloren Ruimte" (Lost Space), whose minimal, geometric shapes were occasionally lit by a neon and covered in a thin layer of lace. Dating from 1960, these pieces also foreshadow a system where inside and outside are combined.

Each stage of Guy Mees' practice is permeated with ideas of mutability, fragility and the impermanence of things. From his first structuralist works and his specific conceptual process parodying all hierarchical systems to his first felt-tip drawings on thin paper; from the free expansion of pattern into space through to his last coloured paper cutouts, the acuity and intrigue of his work reside in the subtle relationship between construction and randomness, durability and the ephemeral.

Guy Mees gave the enigmatic name "Verloren Ruimte" (Lost Space) to his two largest ensembles: the lace works realized between 1960 and 1966 and the reliefs cut out of coloured paper and pinned to the wall which he began in 1983. Whether transcending time or defining non-space, the five sentences of Guy Mees' sensory program could be read as follows:

The Lost Space is an adjoining space.

The Lost Space is complementary to present-day living space.

The Lost Space does not have a clear-cut function.

The Lost Space is space as utility object in which bombast becomes more difficult and tangibility easier.

The Lost Space is simply the body specified according to form, colour, taste, smell, sound...³

- Lilou Vidal

1. Both exhibitions curated by Lilou Vidal.

2 Archival research undertaken in the context of the project Archives at Bureau des Réalités, Brussels. The works were originally shown in 1970 at X-One gallery in Antwerp by Marc Poirier dit Caulier.

3 Text redrafted by Wim Joris Lagrilière according to Guy Mees' instructions at the beginning of the 1960s after a first version written by Wim Meuwissen.