

This retrospective exhibition consists of three parts and is on view in three locations: Brussels, Munich, and Bristol. Joëlle Tuerlinckx (born in 1958 in Brussels) presents arrangements of sculptures, found objects, display cases, photographs and paper collages, newspaper clippings, and drawings. With them, she quotes the conventions we use to present our archive material or general knowledge. She recalls, with stones, the presentation of minerals in natural history museums; she uses compasses to evoke maritime museums, and, with newspaper clippings, she creates the impression that these constitute documentary material.

The almost excessive accumulation of material found in some portions of the exhibition gives the impression of abundance. This occurs, for example, when Tuerlinckx simultaneously uses different methods to present her objects, such as plinths, "Petersburg hanging" (a style of hanging many paintings close together, so that they nearly completely cover walls), and various projections. Yet the arrangements do not result in an encyclopedic, historical, or analytical whole. Combined with paper circles, drawings, photographs, or individual cutout letters, the result is, rather, a purely associative narrative about crossing through spaces and exploring time intervals.

The retrospective has a different title at each venue: WOR(LD)K IN PROGRESS? in Brussels, WORLD(K) IN PROGRESS? in Munich, and WOR(L)D(K) IN PROGRESS? in Bristol. Each title expresses the show's specific focus at that location: Progress regarding work, worldliness, and language, and doubts about this progress. At Haus der Kunst, the emphasis is on the work presented in her first exhibitions, including one at Witte de With in 1994. Tuerlinckx reactivates earlier works and provides them with new constellations. In the stairwell, for instance, she creates a mural out of pencil hatchings first presented in 2004 in the Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe ("Espace barré").

The fact that the exhibition changes from venue to venue corresponds to Tuerlinckx's concept. "When I am offered an exhibition space, it is as if I have received a kind of parcel, a packet of air," says the artist, describing her approach. Tuerlinckx's exhibitions are descriptions of how an empty space changes when it houses her works and allow the viewers to participate in this process. Comparable to a literary manuscript, in which the author's handwriting and corrections gradually fill the blank pages and provide information on the process of writing, Tuerlinckx fills the empty space with her artistic vocabulary. She acknowledges that exhibition spaces vary from institution to institution.

All attempts to make sense of something in a conventional way –through the title of a series, the selection of newspaper clippings, the way an object is presented – "only" lead the viewer into a void and shift his or her perception to the basic conditions of seeing. The exhibition spaces Tuerlinckx

creates thus correspond to Concrete Poetry, in which poems no longer are about thoughts, moods, events, or formal designs, but rather depict the reality of the linguistic product itself. Just as the language of Concrete Poetry represents itself, Tuerlinckx exhibits conventions of exhibiting.

In an alphabetical glossary that accompanies the exhibition, the artist explains terms that are centrally important to the show. Unlike those in a dictionary, the definitions here do not aim for accuracy. Tuerlinckx stretches, for example, the meaning of a keyword like "exposition / exhibition" so far that it includes the condition of human existence: "an exhibition is, first and foremost, an experience of space — space composed, perhaps, of objects of space — that proposes action, or reaction, as a means of reflection, of thinking our human condition." The entry for "Rien / Nichts" (Nothing) is: "what there is when there is nothing left. from a to a, including b, including what we imagine a to be." Only concerning its alphabetical order does the "lexicon" do what we expect a dictionary to do. The usual system of academic instrumentation is not employed here. In its place is a poetic quality. This approach is similar to that of pataphysics and its senseless parodies of scientific methods. At the same time, it stands in the tradition of artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Marcel Broodthaers, who also investigated the mechanisms of looking at art.

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