

Jef Geys' work is decisively and adamantly local, all of it conceived and orchestrated from his home and headquarters in Balen, Flanders, where Geys has been based for over half a century. Since the 1960s, Geys has used the newspaper *Kempens Informatieblad* – once a local news organ but now fully owned and edited by Geys – to organise and disseminate information, analysis and documentation relating to his work and its socio-political context (one recent example is his Flemish translation of the interview with Julian Assange by Hans Ulrich Obrist). Geys has a longstanding interest in superimposing economies of meaning that run counter-intuitively to the pervasive structures of the art world. This process of superimposition can perhaps be best understood in Geys' ongoing insistence that his own context of Balen be situated centrally not just in the material of his work but also in its distribution and reception via *Kempens*. The status of Geys' local context throughout his extensive archive determines that his work be understood through unique personal contingencies but also it offers a strict universalising condition that all 'publics' – not just those designated at the supposed centres of cultural life – be afforded equivalent treatment.

For this exhibition, Geys has chosen three works that extend in particular ways his strident investigation into art's inherent sociality and anti-elitism. A new commission uses a recently invented device – created by four Antwerp-based entrepreneurs (including Julien Burlat, a Michelin-starred chef) – that acts as a portable photography studio to be situated in restaurants to create a live photographic archive of gastronomic methods and seasonal variations in produce. Plates of food are captured from a standardised bird's eye perspective and immediately entered into an online database, creating an evolving resource for chefs and diners. Five highly respected restaurants are participating in the commission and Geys sets out a typically ambiguous relation to the 'feed' of images, one that respects these chefs' commitment to the culinary concept of 'terroirs' but which also foregrounds the dominant grip of food-related content upon popular culture. The restaurants have been invited to use the device however they see fit.

Alongside this new commission are two bodies of work from Geys' archive which have not been seen since their original date of presentation in the 1960s and 1990s respectively.

A range of ephemera, photographs and film relating to the activities of Bar 900, a bar-cum-studio organisation which Geys oversaw throughout the 1960s, are presented collectively for the first time. Bar 900 consisted of seven venues situated throughout Flanders: 'Bar 900', 'La Mecca', 'Bonaparte', 'Benelux', 'Negresco', 'The Whip', and 'Zwaneven'. During the 1960s in Flanders, it was compulsory for venues applying for late-night licenses to prove their cultural value. Geys embraced this demand and devised a high quality artistic programme that included presentations by figures such as James Lee Byars, Günther Uecker and Bernd Lohaus, whilst also incorporating

artworks (including a detailed fabrication of elements from Duchamp's Green Box) into the permanent interiors of the bars. These presentations were often interwoven with the more usual features of 1960s nightlife, including the showcasing of local drag artists, sex shows and cabaret acts. Geys also oversaw the visual identity for the organisation. The multiple functions of Bar 900, at the height of 1960s counterculture, connect closely to Geys' wilfully impolite deployment of sexual imagery in many works and his frequently sceptical address of cultural institutions and their power.

Geys' new commission for Cubitt can be seen as a partner work to his 1993 project *What are we having for dinner tonight?*, in which he organised a number of live broadcasts on a local television station of different households eating their evening meal. The project was commissioned by Witte de With in 1993 in association with the Fifth Architecture Biennale of Rotterdam, whose theme was the postwar residential areas built in Rotterdam's Alexanderpolder neighborhood. Geys' project is situated as a riposte to the abstract authority with which architects and local administrations tend to conceptualise the urban environment.

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