

Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys

ELEGANTIA

Curated by Francesco Garutti

Artistic Direction: Edoardo Bonaspetti, Triennale Arte Curator

Opening 27th of January 2017

January 28th - March 19th, 2017

ELEGANTIA is the first solo show hosted by an Italian institution of the work by Belgian artists Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys. Conceived as the construction of a precise environment in rigorous dialogue with the rooms of Palazzo dell'Arte, ELEGANTIA has been envisioned as a *mise-en-scène* of the idea itself of "show", mental reflection and artificial mirage of an exhibition. Indirectly inspired by the rich, complex and hypertrophic history of production and display that features Triennale and its spaces, the show is the caricature of an architecture, the image of an exhibition about "fine arts", that reveals itself - after a few moments of estrangement - as an ambiguous catalogue of horrors and only apparent normalities.

In thirty years spent working together - from their first meeting at Sint Lucas University College of Arts and Design of Brussels in 1987 - Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys have given shape to a heterogeneous and complex *corpus* of works, moving from video production to embrace drawing, painting and sculpture, installation, sound and performance.

Seduced and terrified by the mechanical rules of society - psychology of domination and humiliation - and from the ruthlessness of the everyday, the artists bring to life parallel worlds through the obsessive compiling of catalogues and lists: people, objects, cars, animals, architectural elements and city corners. Figures and characters of fear and innocence, of depravation and lightness are presented on stage without any hierarchy, moral judgement or social interpretation. Flat and motionless, bidimensional and stereotyped, they inhabit an ideal and dystopian space, mute and defenseless witnesses of our world.

The architecture of the show - a spatial and optical device shaping the ambiguous relation between subject and object - is a set-up and a piece in itself: an *enfilade* of arches in false perspective - almost ironically emphasized by the proportions of its parts - is the manifesto of a monument that flaunts itself to reveal its flat and tragi-comical

uselessness.

A series of heads - in plaster and paint, specifically conceived for Triennale di Milano - is aligned along the new gallery's wings and rooms: these apparently classical heads, are then almost microcephalic specimens of indigenous civilizations, their dilated pupils astonished and frightened in the face of reality. The ponderous white sculptures inhabiting the exhibition are not bodies made out of marble following a golden rule, but heavy bi-dimensional metal figures (*White Elements*, 2012-2016) with disturbing faces. A sequence of portraits (*Les Enigmes de Saarlouis*, 2013); a group of clay sculptures (*Der Schlamm von Braanst*, 2008), coming from an inhuman and perturbing pottery workshop; small experiments on human shape (*White Elements, prototipos*, 2016); a long series of watercolors with ambiguous and heterogeneous subjects (*Fine Arts*, 2015) and a high fountain for interiors, merging classic and mechanical shapes (*De Drie Wijsneuzen*, 2013) complete the body of an exhibition that is enigmatically conservative and subtly revealing.

Among the roman and industrial shapes of Palazzo dell'Arte, De Gruyter & Thys with ELEGANTIA propose a sophisticated experiment on the idea of "display" and its same failure: a possible model of a show that is authorless, bidimensional and deformed like the space of our own minds.

Jos de Gruyter (*1965) e Harald Thys (*1966) live and work in Brussels. Their work has been presented in a number of solo shows hosted by contemporary art institutions around the world. Among these Portikus, Frankfurt (2016), CAC, Vilnius, (2016), MoMA PS1, New York (2015), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2015), CCA Wattis, San Francisco (2015), The Power Station, Dallas (2015), Raven Row, London (2015), Kunsthalle Wien, (2014), M HKA, Antwerp (2013), Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2011) and Kunsthalle Basel (2010).

The belgian duo has participated in international group shows such as the Berlin Biennale in 2008, and the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013, curated by Massimiliano Gioni.

Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys are represented by Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York and dépendance, Brussels.

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Francesco Garutti (*1979), is a contemporary art and architecture curator and writer. “Emerging Curator 2013-2014” at CCA Montreal, Garutti has been Art Editor for the magazine Abitare. Between 2007 and 2008 he’s been architect and researcher for Peter Zumthor Architekturbüro, and from from 2014 to 2016 he’s been teaching at Univeristy of Genoa Department of Architectural Sciences. In 2012 he curated the “Portikus Under Construction” project at Peep-Hole in Milan; together with Yann Chateigné Tytelman, Garutti has been appointed curator and selector for the Furla Prize for Emerging Italian Artists, 2013 and since 2015 he is curator of the exhibition program at THEVIEW Studio, Genoa. Among his published books “FAIRLAND” (2014) Koenig Books e Mousse Publishing, “HOME’S WIND” a+m bookstore edizioni (2016) and “Can Design Be Devious?” CCA Montreal (2016).

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