

Jef Geys's oeuvre, which he began in 1947 at the age of 13, has always tended to hug the shadows, to camouflage itself and approach the categories of contemporary art from the rear. His work is firmly anchored in autobiography; it resides in the margins of aesthetic contemplation and creates a constant dynamic somewhere between popular culture and drawing attention to the banal. In favouring 'the world as support' and in his attempt at a synthesis of art and life, Jeff Geys (though he makes no claim to it) belongs in the tradition of Fluxus. Since 1958 he has been making a meticulous inventory of all his works, which he orders according to subject, genre, year and number.

Out of this archive, Jef Geys extracts the themes for his new exhibitions, which are really just one way of inspecting and reactivating autobiographical events and old works in a new context that will re-energise the meaning.

At Air de Paris, Geys will be presenting two projects that closely combine official documents and personal history: 'cow passports' (les passeports de vaches) was developed in 1965 and 1966 when Jef Geys, who was helping his cattle merchant father-in-law, drew and registered the physical characteristics of the latter's cows, thus providing them with an identity.

For Air de Paris, he has created a new installation, with 21 new cow passports. '!questions de femmes!' ('!women's questions!') is a series that Geys developed in the early 60s when he was a teacher of Positive Aesthetics at a children's school in Balen, where he lived in Belgium. Geys drew up a list of questions that women might ponder about their identity; then gave them to his pupils for discussion. In the 1980s these '!questions de femmes!' were adapted for contemporary art and have now been translated into 13 languages. The Hindi version will be on display in the Gallery shop window.

For the exhibition, a special Air de Paris edition of the newspaper KEMPENS Informatieblad will be published. Jef Geys rejects the excessive reverence for works of art that goes on in exhibition catalogues and has been publishing the newspaper KEMPENS Informatieblad since 1971 (KEMPENS is the region of Belgium where he lives). He often produces them in line with his exhibitions.

These newspapers act as a kind of diary; they log, in no particular order, the elements necessary to understanding his surroundings, things he wonders about, things he is curious about, and his works.

Francis Mary

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