

ESPÉRANCE DE BON CAP

ALAIN GÉRONNEZ

NORTH (Espérance de bon cap)*

This handout requires a text, on a work that is going to be shown, but has not yet been shown at the time these lines are written. It cannot be the reading of one that has seen it and wishes to share their perception. This text is therefore a commission, and as such can only be written by the artist, who alone knows a little, but wants to deliver the work untouched by his own interpretations. Yet, I've been working on this piece for three years, often changing course. Its final form only came about for the purpose of this exhibition. I was still preparing the work in a somewhat indefinite form when, in 1988, Galerie Meert-Rihoux showed the urban scenes of Thomas Struth. These photographs not only left me reticent, but also troubled. The formalist excesses in the latest works of 50/04 (the group under whose name I had been exhibiting my work for years) made me turn my back to this collaborative way of working — that had long been stimulating, but with which I could no longer identify — and I was preparing a series of works that were to cure me of a period of dissatisfaction. If Marianne North (whom I will come back to later) put me on the right track, Thomas Struth seemed to nullify all my efforts: there will always be works colder than mine. I thus resumed my slow collection of shots with the intention to radicalize the choices even further and to present them as documents in the barest way possible. But the leopard can't change its spots and I overcame this hurdle. The fact that my shots were taken with an old Zeiss Ikon (except for the fragments of reproductions, which were taken with a Hasselblad) and not with a technical camera, implied a sense of unfulfillment with respect to the intentions I had set for myself. The work needed completion and it appeared to me on the light table that an entire body of work could spring from these shots. This is where Marianne North comes in, a Victorian Englishwoman who spent 13 years (1872–1885) travelling across the world creating small canvases of plants, which are collected in a museum in the Kew Gardens in London. Marianne North does not share the tragic ridicule of her Brussels contemporary Jef Lambeaux, undoubtedly a skilled sculptor, but born too old in a world that was too young, whose small pavilion quarantined in the parc du Cinquanteaire is echoed in my presentation in the Centre d'Art Contemporain. Admittedly, my patience is more pictorial, more vegetal than human, and I do not like to lose my bearings. This is why, to me, there is a righteousness in Marianne North's work, which is not considered to be truly artistic, and I have no trouble to see the fruit of her labour in a London garden. (And thus we see, thanks to her, that there is nothing incongruous about exhibiting paintings in a botanical garden, especially since I don't know which is in danger of disappearing first — the plants or the paintings). So, for me, it's not Wierds, it's not Courbet. It's not Cézanne and his apples, not even Duchamp, whom I also like. Madame Bovary is not me. North and the other works presented in this exhibition (Résolution de salon and les erreurs et les aigreurs)** were carried out in conjunction with the two works I had the opportunity to exhibit since 1988 (Bruxelles, la modernité and Paris Bastille Galerie Burrus, la modernité en jeu)*** — and some other works, for that matter — and embody their exact negative. Others have contributed to my work for a long time already (the 50/04 group as well as people we called on outside of the group), but I've long been looking for an isolation of some sorts as well, enabling me to communicate solely through my artistic work. It is imperative to take this into account to better articulate the different works I am proposing. Clean slate.

Alain Géronnez, 31-12-1990

* Hope of Good Cape

** Living Room Resolutions and Mistakes and Heartburn

***Brussels, Modernity and Paris Bastille Galerie Burrus, Modernity at Stake

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FRIDAY, 15.11.24- SUNDAY, 15.12.24

Espérance de bon cap is a reinterpretation of a proposal by Alain Géronnez at the occasion of a joint exhibition with Martine Cloots that took place at the Centre d'Art Contemporain on avenue des Nerviens 63 in 1040 Brussels between February 28th and March 30th, 1991.

Three other works were added to the original presentation: the edition Parsifal. Transformation Music (Act I). With E. Humperdinck's Supplement No. 90. The Later transcribed from the Original Manuscript and the Whole Typeset According to the Artist's Specifications, 1989–1990 by Rodney Graham (vitrine: Jan Vercruysse) on the bel étage; a record by Jacques Bekaert published by Igloo in 1981 (sleeve and logo: Alain Géronnez) and the film A Late Lunch (1978) by Akiko Limura (music: Jacques Bekaert) on the second floor.

Bel étage:

Résolution de salon, 1991
8 cibachrome prints mounted on plexiglass

Les Erreurs et les aigreurs, 1990
Book and slipcase, edition 8/8

First floor:

Les Erreurs et les aigreurs
Poster based on the wall-mounted version of 1991
Ed. of 200, produced by Etablissement d'en face, 2024

North (Espérance de bon cap), 1991
64 cibachrome prints in plexiglass display cases presented on a U-shaped wall oriented towards the Pavillon des Passions humaines (also known as Pavillon Horta–Lambeaux. Pavilion: Victor Horta, 1890–1906; relief des Passions humaines: Jef Lambeaux, 1886–1898) located in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels.

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