

NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore presents *Quadra Medicinale* Singapore, the late Belgian artist Jef Geys's first institutional exhibition in Asia. Geys's conceptual practice adopted an interdisciplinary and collaborative process of research and knowledge-formation, and was driven by his belief that art should be intertwined with the everyday.

For *Quadra Medicinale* (2009), Geys invited residents of Villeurbanne, New York, Moscow, and Brussels to demarcate a geometrical quadrant, with their home or workplace at the centre, and document 12 unassuming street plants, or "weeds." From this collection, the collaborators uncovered the productive, and often times medicinal, properties of these plants.

*Quadra Medicinale* is structured as a universal manual capable of being replicated anywhere and has, since its first presentation at the Pavilion of Belgium during the 53rd Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition in 2009, been realised and shown in various cities including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2010). The exhibition was followed by similar methods of botanical and medicinal plant studies as documented in the accompanying publication Kempens Informatieblad. This alternative model set up by Geys for collective knowledge production, sharing, and documentation has, underlying its process, a socially-active role: Geys asked questions such as, "What can a homeless person who has a toothache, for example, chew-on to ease the pain, and to eventually cure the problem?"

On view will be four chapters of the project, including a newly-created Singapore chapter following Geys's instructions with contributions by local collaborators, Louise Neo and Teo Siyang. Each chapter includes framed plant specimens with their characteristics labelled, photographs of the site where the plants were originally found, as well as maps of the geographical quadrant explored. Through inciting a collaborative process, Geys created a unique model for knowledge production and sharing.

Questioning mainstream and organised systems of urban planning and information dissemination, Geys casted doubt on the fundamentals of language and visual representation, interrogating art's relation to meaning-making. He produced a text explaining the *Quadra Medicinale* project that has been translated into 10 languages, with annotations by the artist himself on the translations. Their display as large-format scrolls, further probes systems of interpretation, communication, and accessibility. A selection of these text scrolls and a Malay translation, produced for this exhibition, will be shown.

*Quadra Medicinale* Singapore introduces an artistic practice that questions the hierarchies and

adaptability of nature and society, provoking reflections on both their communicable and imperceptible structures. It also poses the question of whether conceptual artworks can be continued after an artist's passing.

In addition to the elements from *Quadra Medicinale*, the exhibition includes two paintings from Geys's *Seed-bags* series (1963–2018), a long-term project the artist started when, during his own gardening process, he discovered that the image of the vegetables or flowers pictured on the bag did not match the actual plant. With these paintings, which Geys would create every year, he challenged the accuracy and truth of commercial photography. The medium, however, played a significant role in the artist's practice enabling him to accumulate an extensive archive of his own projects and interests.

In *The Single Screen, Day and Night and Day...* (2002), his 36-hour-long film produced for Documenta 11 (Kassel, Germany), will be screened in parallel to the exhibition. This film is a mesmeric sequence composed of thousands of black-and-white photographs Geys took from the mid-1950s to 1998.

The exhibition is made possible by generous loans from the Jef Geys Estate and Air de Paris.

Quadra Medicinale Singapore is curated by Dirk Snauwaert, Artistic Director at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, in collaboration with Ute Meta Bauer and Khim Ong, NTU CCA Singapore. Snauwaert was the Curator of *Jef Geys: Quadra Medicinale* in Venice 2009, commissioned for the National Pavilion of Belgium by the Flemish Community. Snauwaert was an NTU CCA Singapore Curator-in-Residence in 2015.

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