

**have two
9–25 April**

***Noting No Thing (2), 2022*
the architect's writing
scaled 1:1, red BIC ink
204 × 34 cm**

Reinier Vrancken

Reinier Vrancken & The LetterS pace Department

2026

AFFILIATE, Brussels

Works

1.

2.

I'm back from Copenhagen. I'm obsessed with language. Yesterday, I gave a workshop at the art school. One of the participants mentioned Jeff Jarvis's essay, *The Gutenberg Parenthesis* in which the journalist argues that the era of writing, which began with the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, is coming to an end. Less authorship, more collective works, and a return to orality: according to Jarvis, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and voice assistants are paving the way to the end of literature. Yet, I see text everywhere. It's as if, just as writing is supposed to be disappearing, poetry returns to exhibitions; I see artists making books and founding publishing houses as they are creating artworks; independent bookstores have become the new interesting art spaces. Wherever I look, words appear, speaking to me.

The exhibition by Reinier Vrancken and The LetterS pace Department (TLSD) at AFFILIATE stems from a rule, a game. Instead of presenting two separate exhibitions following their residency at WIELS, the artists merged the periods into a single, two-part exhibition in which they combined their practices. By breaking down their works into "body" (object, image) and "text" (definition, label), they pair the body of one with the text of the other, and vice versa. In the middle of the exhibition, the proposition is reversed: the body of the second artist's work is made visible, paired with the text of the first.

I visited the first part of the exhibition, *On the other, I only*, on a weekday. We were alone. I realized that the exhibition consisted entirely of text. Indeed, since the body of each work was also made up of words, the distinction between the latter and "its" text became blurred. In the empty gallery, the works, the signage, the curatorial text—the paratext that points at, describes, and comments—flowed into the exhibition space, transforming it into a reading space. This is how the artists described the situation at the opening to me: instead of looking at "things" on the walls, visitors had settled into the gallery to read Antoinette Jattiot's text that accompanied the show.

But even if the proposal is entirely written, the type of text we encounter is neither linear nor literary. It is of another kind. The words blend into the space, take the form of a label, and seep into the exhibition's booklet. TLSD had written the phrase "faire disparaître" on the left wall. Written in hand-formed red letters, as one might mark an item to be removed on a construction site, the phrase had been flipped vertically, which complicated its perception. In the booklet, the caption "Participating in the exhibition as Raniero, 2018" opacified the identity of the artists in the exhibition.

Titled *have two*, the second part of the exhibition pairs Vrancken's work, *Participating in the exhibition as Raniero* (2018), with TLSD's *Noting No Thing (2)* (2022). Jattiot smartly describes this second phase of the project as the "verso" of the exhibition, the "recto" being the first part. The artists speak of a second half. To be fully appreciated, the work requires two visits, so that the two images overlap in our minds. Vrancken and TLSD describe this stretching as a kind of analog slowing down of the practice—as if we had to wait for the exhibition to load. The orthographic shift in the spelling of The LetterS pace Department emphasizes the word "pace": it is a matter of following the specific, fragmented temporality imposed by language. I suddenly imagine a choreographic, conceptual gesture—that of a large letter turning itself inside out, articulating the two moments of the project.

The title "have two" evokes both the "part 2" of this project and the fact that the exhibition is a collective effort. It is not a collage, but the result of a shared process in which the works intertwine and weave themselves into the very language that composes them. Text and textile share the same origin: *textus*, which in Latin means "fabric, weave." To weave their web, the artists had to

translate their works. They had to filter them through language, to chart a common territory. This *textus*, shared space, is composed of words and allows them to navigate within their bodies of works, their *corpuses*. Then, they undertook another act of translation, from a previous state of their work to this one, updated in the exhibition. Finally, they had to invent ways to translate one another's work into each other's language, using bodies and texts as translucent materials, prisms for seeing through, in a different way.

In *have two*, Vrancken's work appears in the form of a label, on which all the information about the work—translated from English into Italian—can be read. But one word, "Raniero" remains untranslated. The name appears like a shadow, a negative space within language. This single object brought into the space by the artists describes the principle of the work: during the exhibition, the artist intervenes under the name Raniero. The mystery of language, which narrates, suggests as much as it makes real, performs what it *words*. The artist disappears. He changes his name, through the power of the text. We have nothing else to see; we just have to imagine. *Noting No Thing*, TLSD's title, reinforces the sense of absence onto which to project Raniero's virtual presence—the necessity of a void to feel this apparition.

"Words are a kind of magic," says philosopher David Abram. "They shape the way we think. They deeply influence the way we see things." I pause to consider this notion of magic. That is precisely what this exhibition is about. The act of erasing part of the architecture. The artist's disappearance and reappearance under another name. The transparent void in which the slow unveiling of the exhibition finally reveals meaning. If we join the titles, *On the other, I only / have two*, what has disappeared are the "hand(s)": On the other *hand*, I only have two *hands*. The hands that write an exhibition. That translate. But also, indeed, those that manipulate, that reveal. Magic trick, sleight of hand. "Words are a kind of magic." Yes, here, it is obvious. Provided we do something with them. Four-handed.

Yann Chateigné Tytelman

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