

Crisis of Masculinity

Thomas Min & Egon Van Herreweghe

Kunsthall Gent, Belgium

Januari 25/01/2019 - ∞

Press release

Crisis Of Masculinity is an installation consisting of an almost exact replica of the striking blue steel fence at Muscle Beach Venice, Los Angeles (USA). The work was manually assembled and constructed by Thomas Min and Egon Van Herreweghe. Based on photographs and with the help of a friend who took measurements at the location in California, the artists developed a detailed reconstruction that was embedded within the architecture of Kunsthall Gent.

Muscle Beach, originally located on the beach of Santa Monica, is seen as the birthplace of the fitness hype and played an important role in popularizing and legitimizing physical culture as we know it today. At the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the government invested in public gymnastics and fitness equipment and soon it became the place to be for celebrities, acrobats, gymnasts, bodybuilders and onlooking crowds. In 1952 the by then world famous Muscle Beach moved just down the beach to Venice and the center of gravity shifted to bodybuilding.

Anyone who takes a look now in Muscle Beach will find mostly shiny and toned bodies within the fence. The place outside is reserved for admirers and slightly lesser gods. On both sides it is a game of seeing and being seen. The fence forms both a physical and a mental barrier: whoever enters, as it were, enters the circus stage. The show can be observed through the imposing barrier of the fence. In Kunsthall Gent, the training equipment and the accompanying rolling of muscles remain absent.

By lifting the fence from its original context as a ready-made, attention is paid to the materiality of the construction. The ostensibly banal design, which is somewhere between an elephant stay in the zoo and the fence of the neighborhood playground, turns out to be pretty ingenious and put together with great skill - the artists also experienced while developing its reconstruction. The obstructive nature of the fence also stands out in Kunsthall Gent. The visitor is limited in his or her freedom of movement and thus forced to relate to the obstacle. The fact that the exhibition space is a former monastery, and thus originally a place for the mind rather than for the body, adds an extra layer of meaning.

In the creation process of Crisis Of Masculinity, the notion of labour also plays an important role. The execution of the construction work - from pouring concrete to welding - was performed entirely by Van Herreweghe and Min, without the training and routine that experienced construction workers have, instead compensating with perseverance and dedication. They learned by doing, finding solutions together for the challenges they encounter and while discovering the beauty of a well-designed object.

The installation will remain in Kunsthall Gent for an indefinite period of time but will gradually transform. The ambition is to cut the fence into pieces over time, to move to sculpture parks or private gardens, to lead a new life as a 'fremdkörper'.

Maarten Dings

Crisis of Masculinity is a continuation of the collaboration between Thomas Min and Egon Van Herreweghe on *The Ideal Husband* (Galerie Jan Colle, 2016), in which the artists examined the coded language and stereotypical symbols around the concept of masculinity. Because of changes in Western society, our ideas of masculinity is under pressure and in flux. At the same time, the rise of social media resulted in a new platform for the cult of the body.

Bio (short)

Egon Van Herreweghe (1985, Ghent BE) studied photography at KASK in Ghent and undertook research in art and design at St Lucas in Antwerp. He is a laureate of HISK in Ghent (2014 - 2015). Since 2010 he has exhibited his work in Belgium and abroad, amongst others at Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels 2018, FOAM, Amsterdam 2014, Netwerk, Aalst 2014, Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn 2016, Johannes Vogt, New York 2015.

Thomas Min (1992, Leuven BE) lives and works in Ghent, where he graduated in visual arts in the Photography Department of KASK. He exhibited his work in group- and solo shows in Belgium and abroad, amongst others at These Things Take Time, Ghent 2015, Marres Maastricht, NL 2016, 'Land Van Fotografe', Gent 2017, 'KRASJ4', Ninove 2018.

Bio

Egon Van Herreweghe is a visual artist born in 1985 in Gent (Belgium), where he currently lives and works. He studied photography at The Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK) in Gent between 2004 and 2008 and undertook his research in art and design over the following year at the St Lucas School of Arts in Antwerp. He is laureate of HISK – The Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent, where he received his postgraduate education between 2014 and 2015. He has exhibited his work since 2010 in museum institutions, galleries and artist-run venues both in Belgium and abroad (The Netherlands, UK, Estonia, and USA). His solo shows include: "Who else?" (Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels, 2018), "Heidi's Delight" (The Stable, Waregem, 2017), "Paintings and Sculpture" (FOAM, Amsterdam, 2014) and "Always a thief and never caught" (Netwerk, Aalst, 2014). He has taken part in numerous group exhibitions out of which the most recent are: "Presidential Suite" (Penthouse Art Residency by Harlan Levey Gallery, Brussels, 2017), "Current Residents & Associates" (GreyLight Projects, Brussels, 2017), "The Ideal Husband" (Jan Colle Gallery, Ghent, 2016), "Every Letter is a Love Letter" (Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn, 2016), "Friendly Faces" (Johannes Vogt, New York, 2015), "A Set of Lines, A Stack of Paper" (Karst, Plymouth, 2015) and "The Catwalk" (Komplot, Brussels, 2015). His publications include: "Still life with books (and one object)" (2018), "Presidential Suite" (2017), "The Ideal Husband" (2016), "Totally Fucked Up" (2016), "Inner Beauty" (2015), "Best Available Copy" (2014), "Elective Affinities" (2014; 2012), "In the name of beauty" (2013), and "A Modernist Garden" (2012).

Thomas Min is an artist born in Leuven (1992) and currently living in Ghent, Belgium. He graduated in 2015 in Visual Arts in the Photography Department of KASK, Ghent. Although photography doesn't always protrude the surface of his work, the photographic image will always be present through Mins work. Different approaches result in a combination of two dimensional images and spatial interventions in which images tend to become freestanding sculptures or vice versa. He exhibited his work in following group- and solo shows: 'The Gods Must Be Crazy – Part Photography', (2015, De Zwanenberg, Heist Op Den Berg, BE), '25" (2015, These Things Take Time, Ghent, BE), 'Marres Currents #3' (2016, Maastricht, NL), 'The Ideal Husband' (2016, Ghent, BE), 'Land Van Fotografe' (2017, Ghent, BE), 'KRASJ4' (2018, Ninove, BE). His publications include: 'The Ideal Husband' (with Egon Van Herreweghe & Dorothee Dupuis), A contribution to 'Inspired By' (Website FOAM), 'Offshore Issue 1' (With Els Roelandt), 'TIFF Magazine' (Fomu Antwerp), 'The Perfect Document' (With Yana Foque, published by Art Paper Editions).