

frieze

Jan De Cock

BOZAR, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



Mingling a deliberately sober collection of time-coded photographs with other sculptural elements on and around a series of modular structures, for 'Repromotion' Jan De Cock has filled Bozar's Victor Horta-designed halls with a fleet of painted steel and unfinished chipboard formations that combine elements from his previous works into a series of new 'monuments.' These *denkmal* (or 'thought molds' as the artist refers to them) embody *temps mort* – a term first used by *Cahiers du cinéma* critics to describe the quiet moments of non-narrative action and undramatized intervals routinely captured by New Wave filmmakers – to exemplify Bergsonian theories about the non-linearity, mobility and modularity of duration and time.

The niches, vertical walls and horizontal sections created by De Cock's new *denkmal* (a Dutch word that contains within it both the notion of monument and memorial) function like pedestals and shelves that, in turn, hold a loose collection of recurring sculptural elements. Large-scale photographs from De Cock's previous series (the undated 'Temps Mort', 'Denkmal 11', 2008 and 'Denkmal 53', 2005) unfold throughout the exhibition in a progressive succession of images (their time-codes out of sync with the corresponding codes on the monument's labels) and are displayed with a number of figurative sculptures. Among these, Emile-Antoine Bourdelle's 1909 bronze, *Hercules Killing the Birds of Lake Stymphalis*, can be glimpsed from several vantage points within the exhibition through the archways offered by Horta's architecture, at once creating the experience of *temps mort* and the experience of *déjà vu*. Creating a similar effect, De Cock's new monuments likewise double as mechanisms for time-based viewing when sections cut within the vertical walls become framing devices for visitors moving through the exhibition.

OFFICE BAROQUE



Bourdelle's *Hercules* sculpture is re-presented by a number of small bronze, terracotta and cast iron sculptures of archers by 19th-century Belgian and French sculptors Henri Bargas, Victor Demanet and Jef Lambeaux. Several anonymous reproductions – that might be academic copies of Bourdelle's version – grace the other modules. Together with snapshots showing similar modular constructions taken in the artist's studio, these reproductions and lesser-known works, serve as transitional objects that link De Cock's sculptures to other points in time.

A complicated indexical system of labeling details elements borrowed from the artist's previous works (a 'repromotion' of past works within each new module) as well as references that exist only off-frame. For example, *Module XIV* (all of the 'Modules' are undated), which is labeled 'Monument #3' and time-stamped at 00:01:18 PM, consists of 17 elements (including other modules and 'figure repromotions'). These begin with *Figure Repromotion 11* and continue with *Module Repromotion 4* and *9*, *Module CDXLVIII*, photographs of the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater at MoMA, New York from De Cock's 2008 'Denkmal 11' series, references to the 2005 *Denkmal 53*, *Tate Modern*, *Bankside 53*, *Module D* (which includes more images of *Denkmal 11*), *Module DXX* and a photograph of the library in the George Eastman House from the 2007 series 'Temps Mort XXV'. (Continuing the theme of reproduction the exhibition will appear again in an alternate form next year, when 'Repromotion' is re-presented as a series of photographs at the Magasin de Grenoble.)



While the larger photographs can be easily identified by helpful wall texts – 'A flock of pink flamingos'; 'Frank Lloyd Wright's "Prairie House"' – other details remain elusive, reading more like bibliographic references than footnotes to the work. *Module XV* within *Monument #3*, for example, bears the annotation: 'see Volume I, p. 93, 11:19:33am, 570 Special edition of *Art Press*. A second century for cinema (*Un second siècle pour le cinema*) 1993' followed by an equally referential detail: '230 Marcel Broodthaers during the shooting of the film *Un jardin d'Hiver*, Brussels, 1974.'

Unlike his contribution to Manifesta 5 (the lovely green Denkmal #2 that filled a former San Sebastian shipyard in 2005) the work at the centre of 'Repromotion' is a little broad in its scope. The labels present a plethora of interesting references to texts and events that happen 'off-screen' (for example: 'Bill Evans Trio, How my heart sings!, Riverside, 1962' and 'Ed Ruscha, Then & Now, Göttingen: Steidl'), incorporating material that exists outside the 'frame' into the existing work and thereby expanding the work's dimensionality by referring to alternate sources, times and places. However, these details get lost within increasingly chaotic and self-referential reproduction. The explicit relationship between other aspects of the work, such as three-dimensional elements like the chipboard constructions and a photograph of Mrs. Eastman's bathtub), is never entirely clear.



The exhibition works hard to create a time-based experience for the viewer walking through it, while a notice from the artist present in every room requesting that visitors neither touch nor enter into close proximity with the art work (due to the fragility of the unvarnished wood) promises some of the distance and separation of a cinematic experience.

Enforced separation and distance is also what makes this work different from De Cock's more engaging previous projects such as 'Denkmal 10' (at De Appel Curatorial Center in Amsterdam, 2003) and 'Denkmal 9' (at the university library in Ghent, 2004) – two projects in which De Cock's forms were more fully integrated within spaces, and with which visitors could very freely move about and interact with physically. I wonder what this would be like, if it invited visitors to get closer to it, both literally and metaphorically, while recognizing its own vulnerabilities.

Esperanza Rosales