

# PROJECTESD

## KOENRAAD DEDOBBELEER

**Extracted out of the article “Koenraad Dedobbeleer” by Justin Hoffmann in Frieze, 2003.**

“ To psychologists displacement is a defence mechanism that helps to objectify fear, but in art it can be a means of abstraction – of separating a thing or a constellation from a context in order to focus attention on specific characteristics. What connects the two kinds of displacement is the idea of substitution, and, in some cases, symbolism.

Sigmund Freud pointed out that in displacement smaller objects will often replace larger ones; for instance, a lock of hair stands in for a loved one, or an incomprehensibly formulated prayer represents a forbidden sexual act. In most forms of artistic displacement – as in Koenraad Dedobbeleer’s case – scaling down is less rife than simplification. Complex structures are compressed, and the original function of an item becomes almost unrecognizable.

Stage (all works 2002) was the title given by Dedobbeleer to a simple metal structure holding four lights that spotlight the entrance at Zink as if for a celebrity event. Inside the gallery Dedobbeleer built a false ceiling, a replica of a ceiling from a bistro in Brussels. Surface consists of three elements with rounded edges on one side, evoking 1970s interior design. In bars structures of this sort usually serve to conceal indirect lighting and to create a pleasant ambience. However, somewhere between Brussels and Munich this comforting function was lost. Invasion is the artist’s name for pieces that protrude sideways from the walls into the room. They are the same beige colour as the ceiling construction, yet these strange discs, which cut through the building like a knife through butter, carving it into pieces, recall sciencefiction rather than interior decoration. But there is another way of viewing these hand-painted, wooden shapes. Seen in a gallery space, the colour and form of the elements of both Surface and Invasion recall a shaped canvas, something halfway between painting and sculpture. Because the two works are the same colour and inhabited the same space, they were perceived as parts of a single entity, even though one was modelled after a real object and the other represented pure fiction. The show also featured monitors on which friends of the artist told odd stories. For example, Sofie related how she tried to make a sculpture out of red pudding. It didn’t work: the red fluid dripped through the ceiling into the downstairs neighbour’s apartment, who, suspecting that a grisly crime had been committed upstairs, promptly called the police. But in this work, entitled Fiction Tales (which was also the name of the exhibition), displacement is again part of the artist’s strategy: he decided which versions of remarkable stories he had once heard were to be retold, thus turning them into staged reproductions. In addition, the narrators are speaking in what is for them a foreign language, English. Dedobbeleer is not interested only in reproducing unusual narratives, but also in the changes that occur when stories are retold.

Two window-sized lightboxes located in the basement of the gallery showed photographs of junk in a cellar (Untitled, Lightbox I + II). The objects depicted in the photographs are the kind of thing you expect to find in a gallery cellar – pipes, wooden slats, tripods, lamps, chairs and pieces of metal – and made you assume the images were taken at the site of display. However, the visitor would look around for the places and objects shown in the photographs in vain – the artist had taken the photographs in his own cellar. The work thus prompted a direct comparison between represented and real space. As if engaged in a series of scientific experiments, testing the viewer’s perceptive ability to adapt, Dedobbeleer was playing out yet another type of contextual displacement.”