

ENGLISH

Koenraad Dedobbeleer (born 1975 in Halle, Belgium, lives and works in Brussels, Belgium) has been awarded the Mies van der Rohe Stipend for 2009. The young Belgian artist focuses with rare concentration on the subject of sculpture in all its current complexity. He has produced a site-related presentation for Haus Esters in which sculpture, architecture, photography and everyday objects form a compelling system of references.

Immediately upon entering the large hall in Haus Esters one comes across a table made of cardboard (no. 6), which recalls the room's former function as a living room and simultaneously makes us conscious of the difference to the building's current use as a place for presenting art. The photo edition (no. 6) on the table, waiting there to be unfolded and refolded, visualises Dedobbeleer's artistic approach in a nutshell: shapes taken from everyday objects, architectural details and sculptural forms, found in public spaces, create an interlocking network that can time and again be combined, recombined and shifted around. Dedobbeleer develops his sculptures from such sources. He changes the shape, the material, the size and colour, even the weight, while still leaving the object recognisable, even if now in a new context and location. Such shifts are never done in a straightforward manner in Dedobbeleer's work but instead create a nexus in which everything is connected to each other.

The architecture, particularly its details, serves as an important point of reference. In Haus Esters Dedobbeleer has picked up on a number of domestic details that Ludwig Mies van Rohe devised or chose for the villa in the 1920s together with Lilly Reich: the artist has liberated the ceiling lamps (no. 14), the system for hanging the paintings (no. 12) and the faithful wooden copies (no. 13) of the travertine plinths from all functional demands and incorporated them into his sculptural presentation. With the exception of the system of picture rails which he has emphasized in pale grey, none of these are still in their original places. They have been shifted and grouped together in order to present their formal aspects, free of any function. The wall mounts (no. 13), which in the days of the Lange family bore sculptures by among others Wilhelm Lehmbruck, remain empty. They simply appear as sculptures and thus point to their importance and function in the sphere of art. In a similar context we find the large plinth (no. 11) in the study, which simultaneously recalls the simple cubic forms and site-related settings of the Minimalists. In the same room is a table with a photographic plate (no. 11) that creates a link to the table in the large hall. Once again these photos explore the idea of regarding the world as a reservoir of forms and visual images. Each exposure conveys the moment of an everyday sculptural manifestation, which is imbued with a curious timelessness.

One such moment is also to be found in the photograph (no. 9) in the women's salon. The unique print forms together with its wooden frame a united whole, such that it would be more correct to talk of a wall object. The work depicts an architectural cube – a building from somewhere in Greece. Koenraad Dedobbeleer took the photograph on location but then re-photographed it in his studio under altered light conditions and printed the new photograph for the exhibition. As a result he has achieved a neutral yet artificial light that emphasizes the building's three-dimensionality.

The concrete units (no. 10) in the corner of the room are typically situated in public spaces. Each unit is a mass-produced item that the artist has worked over and which now has merged with the walls of the room in a strangely misplaced way. One unconsciously assumes that the container (no. 8) directly in front of the garden door might fulfil the function of a planter, yet the materiality of the object – Formica and wood with enamel – denies any such usage. The materials that Koenraad Dedobbeleer employs are of key importance. They lend the objects unusual qualities to the eye and the touch and defamiliarise them in an indiscernible yet surprising way. The small red cup (no. 3) in the dining room area seems like a common plastic drinking cup but has been made of soft nickel. (Please do not touch!) It 'hovers' above the floor as if it had been thrown away.

A wall (no. 7) blocks the passageway between the women's salon and the hall. One side has been painted white while the other is covered in Formica, which imitates the grain of the front doors. This wall disrupts the porousness of the space that otherwise characterises Mies van der Rohe's architecture.

Two posters (no. 4 a. 5) in the hallway and the women's salon address once again the theme of three-dimensionality in two-dimensional depictions. These evidently appear to be black and white prints, but the grey tones are in fact made up of black and coloured dots produced by silkscreening. One of the posters returns to the table motif, although now in the form of a Playmobil table. The difference between the media of sculpture and photography has been blurred here, as in the other photographic works.

The table appears yet again – in truly monumental proportions – in the garden, directly in front of the terrace behind the house (no. 1). Here the artist has turned his attention to reconstructing the legs of an old garden table which originally was part of the household furniture. Dedobbeleer has adapted the rather delicate metal substructure, enlarged it threefold and placed it upside down without its table top on the middle of the path. Although it is in the right place, the changes make the table seem quite alien. It appears to be the counterpart to the towering toothbrush that Claes Oldenburg erected in front of the house overlooking the street. But whereas Oldenburg has actually elevated a toothbrush

to a monument of everyday life, Dedobbeleer resists any clear-cut content in this work. The piece is first and foremost sculpture.

Much the same is true of the system of pipes (no. 2) under the ceiling of the terrace, where Koenraad Dedobbeleer points directly to a detail belonging to the house: the pipe system concealed beneath the skin of the house, where it fulfils its function. Seemingly brought to the light of day, the pipes are particularly perplexing because they give the impression of potential functionality.

Sometimes Ludwig Mies van der Rohe himself integrated sculpture into his buildings, as for instance in his celebrated Barcelona Pavilion (1929), which included a sculpture by Georg Kolbe (*Morning*, 1925). In his spatial concept Mies van der Rohe specified positions for sculptures that are noticeably fixed and static. By contrast Koenraad Dedobbeleer allows his objects and photographs to stray about the rooms. They can come together to form ensembles or remain isolated in space. At any rate their positions are somewhat incidental. Thus each work poses questions about the relationship between form and content. While walking around the rooms we can see and experience the network extending between all these objects and our current reality. Our spatial perception of forms is sharpened.

Like Richard Artschwager, Koenraad Dedobbeleer is more a practitioner of "pre-literate vision" (Artschwager). And yet Dedobbeleer gives both his exhibitions and his works highly evocative titles. *Boredom Won't Starve As Long As I Feed It* comes from a song by the band Dinosaur Jr, formed in 1983. Similarly the system for hanging pictures and the lamps designed by Mies van der Rohe have been given titles as part of the sculptural presentation: *The Authority and the Competence* and *The Dissipation of Creative Energies*. The titles, in most cases quotations, give Koenraad Dedobbeleer's works an additional layer of narrative meaning.

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Geöffnet: Dienstag - Sonntag 11-17 Uhr, Montag geschlossen

Opening times: Tuesday - Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.,

closed Monday



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