“DES GESTES DE LA PENSÉE” CYCLE
EXHIBITION
HUBERT DUPRAT
BRUSSELS
FROM 26 APRIL TO 12 JULY 2014
CURATOR:
GUILLAUME DÉSANGES

PRESS RELEASE
For the fourth exhibition in the series ‘Gesture, and thought’ at La Verrière, Brussels, curator Guillaume Désanges presents an original installation by French artist Hubert Duprat. Produced by the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, and created specially for La Verrière, the show explores key elements and themes of the artist’s distinctive plastic vocabulary.

Autodidact, scholar, experimental artist, ‘beachcomber’ of found materials: Hubert Duprat draws on a broad range of expertise and skill, from the natural sciences to industrial technology, to showcase the visual, sensual potential of matter.

His works combine mineral, organic, vegetable and synthetic elements, forging a heterogenous style evoking the Baroque, Minimalism and Art Nouveau. Duprat plays on the viewer’s perception, taking a discreet, subversive, illusionistic, ambivalent approach.

Hubert Duprat
By Guillaume Désanges

Duprat is an unusual, original, erudite artist, drawing on the visual and sensual potential of a broad, eclectic range of materials. Based on his extensive scholarship, his work combines aspects of observation and preservation, enacted through a process of appropriation, deliberate importation and transaction between the ‘kingdoms’ of the natural and synthetic worlds. Mineral, organic and vegetable elements are combined with industrial or synthetic materials in strikingly seductive sculptures obtained through minimal, delicate, radical and poetic interventions. Duprat takes inspiration from diverse disciplines – entomology, mineralogy, petrography, history and archaeology – fuelling a distinctive œuvre that nonetheless eludes classification on the terms of any of these underlying references. His work is both a celebration and a critical examination of the constituent characteristics of matter itself, an exploration of the ‘natural talent’ inherent in pre-existing textures, showcasing their illusionistic properties in the form of ready-mades created with minimal assistance from the artist himself. In so doing, Duprat ‘crafts’ objects of indeterminate artistic identity, midway between tradition and modernity. His work explores extreme tensions: between weight and lightness, minimalism and ornament, rigour and free form, science and magic. His creations embrace heterogeneous styles, from the Baroque (mineral metaphor, organic appendices, vanitas) to Minimalism (geometric Hard Edge, basic forms, industrial materials), and references to recently-overlooked modern movements such as Art Nouveau, and its decorative and architectural applications.

In some ways, Duprat implements an ‘old-fashioned’ artistic economy: an attachment to beauty and fine workmanship, but also to their attendant, expert apparatus. Duprat’s precise selection of materials and technical, scientific and historical references leads him to a broad range of skills and trades. An artist of the hands-on gesture, and the application of expert knowledge, he avoids confining himself to the ‘fixed’ know-how or virtuosity of any single field, appropriating new techniques as he sees fit. As such, his artistic acts contest the inherited socio-professional categorisations of modern art, asserting his status as an enlightened amateur, an experimental ‘cobbler’ of diverse materials, substituting curiosity over expertise. Superficially benign, not to say positivist, his work is nonetheless discreetly subversive, too. Architect and forger alike, the artist subjects his found forms to diverse physical and aesthetic constraints, playing on the ambiguities of the natural and artificial, ricocheting endlessly back and forth between the two, resonating with the words of the decadent hero of Joris-Karl Huysmans’s Symbolist novel A rebours: ‘After fake flowers aping real flowers, he wanted natural flowers imitating artificial flowers.’

1-Joris-Karl Huysmans, A rebours, 1884
SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990  La Criée, contemporary art space, Rennes.
1995  Villa Arson, National Centre for Contemporary Art, Nice.
       Deutsche Gesellschaft für Christliche Kunst, Munich.
2000  Monk Parakeet, Chicago.
2008  Centre International d’Art et du Paysage, Vassivière.
2009  FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier.
2011  Norwich Museum.
2012  Galerie Art Concept, Paris.
       Galeria Caterina Tognon, Venice.
       Galerie LiveInYourHead, Geneva.
2013  Musée Henri Prades, Lattes.
       MONA, Hobart, Tasmania.

RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

       Du cristal à la fumée (2), Galerie Poggi-Bertoux, Paris.
       Crystal World, Royal Society, London.
       Hic sunt Leones: Terra incognita, Tours 46, Belfort.
       Uchronie ou des récits de collection, French Institute, Prague.
       Sunset, Site de Linazay, FRAC Poitou-Charentes.
       Champ d’expériences, CIAP, île de Vassivière.
       Flippant Time, Les 30 ans du FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Musée de Lodève.
       Uchronie ou des récits de collection, Saline Royale, Arc-et-Senans.
2013  Ressources poétiques, un nouvel accrochage de la collection, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse.
       La sentinelle, CAPC, Bordeaux.
       Hubert Duprat, MONA, Hobart.
       Pièces montrées, Fondation Fernet-Branca, Saint-Louis.
       Desert Plains and Internet Memes, Galerie Art Concept, Paris.
       Coral, Something Rich and Strange, Manchester Museum, Manchester.
       Wunderkamer, arte, Natura, Meraviglia ieri e oggi, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan.
       Ni bois pour construire, ni stères d’allumettes, Maison des Arts, Grand-Quevilly.


Hubert Duprat, La dernière bibliothèque, teaching material, Germany, late 19th century, LiveInYourHead, Geneva, 2012. Photo H. Duprat.


Hubert Duprat, Coupé-Cloué, 1991/1992, 5 elements, wood, brass nails, length 500 cm, average diameter 50 cm, exhibition at the Collège Marcel Duchamp, Chateauroux, summer 1994, two elements FRAC Limousin collection, Limoges, the three others courtesy of Art:Concept, Paris. Photo F. Delpech.
Hubert Duprat, Untitled, 2008, 2,000,000 magnetites, height 85 cm, approximate diameter 280 cm, FNAC Collection, on loan to FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier. Photo F. Delpech.

Hubert Duprat, Untitled, 2008, ceiling covering a surface of 70 m², installed six metres above floor level and comprising 100,000 PVC tubes of various diameters (1.6 to 15 cm). Massive Centrale exhibition, Centre International d’Art et du Paysage de l’Île de Vassivière, collection of the artist. Photo F. Delpech.

Hubert Duprat, Untitled, 2013, plaster, flower pots, height 232 cm, length 1800 cm, thickness 15 cm, view of the exhibition by Hubert Duprat, Musée Archéologique Henri Prades, Lattes. Photo L. Jennepin.

Hubert Duprat, Caddis fly larvae with their cocoon (view of the exhibition), 1980-2000, gold, pearls, precious stones, each cocoon measures 2.5 cm in length. Photo F. Delpech.
Art critic and exhibition curator Guillaume Désanges is director of the independent production organisation Work Method. He was artistic coordinator at the Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers from 2001 to 2007, and has produced exhibitions including ‘Pick-Up’ at Public> (Paris), ‘Intouchable, l’idéal Transparence’ at the Villa Arson (Nice) and the Patio Herreriano museum (Valladolid), ‘Jiri Kovanda vs Reste du monde’ (galerie gb agency, Paris/De Appel Amsterdam/La Passerelle, Brest/ Santa Monica art centre, Barcelona), ‘Child’s Play’ (Biennale Periferic, Iasi, Romania/Nam June Paik Center, South Korea), ‘Michel François, Plans d’évasion’ at SMAK (Belgium), and ‘Erre’ at the Centre Pompidou-Metz. In 2007-2008 he was guest curator in charge of programme planning at La Tôlerie art centre, Clermont-Ferrand. In 2009-2011, he was guest curator at Le Plateau-Frac Île-de-France art centre (Paris), for the two-year season ‘Érudition Concrète’. In 2012, he produced the exhibition ‘Amazing! Clever! Linguistic! An Adventure in Conceptual Art’ (Generali Fondation, Vienna, Austria).

Guillaume Désanges has curated a number of performance-based projects including ‘Une histoire de la performance en 20 minutes’ (A history of performance in 20 minutes’, at the Centre Pompidou, Paris/De Appel, Amsterdam/Artists Space, New York/MacVal, Paris/U-Turn, Copenhagen, etc.), ‘Vox Artisti, la voix de ses maîtres’ (‘Vox Artisti, his masters’ voices’), at Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels/University of Chicago/Bétonsalon, Paris), and ‘Signs and Wonders’ (Tate Modern/Centre Pompidou). In 2013, he is premiering a new play, ‘Marcel Duchamp’, with Frédéric Cherboeuf. Désanges is a member of the advisory committee of the Frac-Lorraine (regional contemporary arts foundation).
The Fondation d’entreprise Hermès supports people and organisations seeking to learn, perfect, transmit and celebrate the skills and creativity that shape and inspire our lives today, and into the future. Guided by our central focus on artisan expertise and creative artistry in the context of society’s changing needs, the Foundation’s activities explore two complementary avenues: know-how and creativity, know-how and the transmission of skills.

The Foundation supports partner organisations across the globe. At the same time, we develop and administer our own projects in the contemporary visual arts (exhibitions and artists’ residencies), the performing arts (the New Settings programme), design (the Prix Émile Hermès international design award), craftsmanship (the Skills Academy), and biodiversity.

The Foundation’s unique mix of programmes and support is rooted in a single, underlying belief: Our gestures define us.

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