

EXHIBITION

JACQUELINE MESMAEKER

BRUSSELS
FROM FEBRUARY 1 TO MARCH 30, 2019

CURATOR:
GUILLAUME DÉSANGES

BALLISTIC POETRY SEASON

LA
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PRESS RELEASE

JACQUELINE MESMAEKER

LA VERRIÈRE, BRUSSELS

FROM FEBRUARY 1 TO MARCH 30, 2019

PREVIEW THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2019, 6 PM TO 9 PM.

For the final instalment of the 'Ballistic Poetry' season, launched in 2016 at La Verrière – the Brussels art space of the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès – curator Guillaume Désanges presents a solo exhibition by Belgian artist Jacqueline Mesmaeker.

From the commentary by curator Guillaume Désanges (full text below):

“Since the mid-Seventies, following her early career in fashion, architecture and design, Jacqueline Mesmaeker has forged an understated, highly original body of work combining installation, drawing, film, sculpture, photography and artist’s books. Based on experimental protocols exploring figuration and looking, Mesmaeker’s analytical approach is expressed in forms rooted in the world of literature and poetry, incorporating references to Lewis Carroll, Mallarmé, Herman Melville and Paul Willems. Her rarefied, precise work is minimal, sometimes to the brink of non-existence, but proliferative nonetheless, taking possession of the available space, and playing with its real and symbolic architecture to reveal its structures, force lines and fault-lines, subverting perspectives or correcting them with the lightest of touches. From pink fabric marking the interstices of a domestic setting to an impenetrable glasshouse that serves as a support for the projection of films, microscopic drawings springing from irregularities in the surface of a wall, and multi-screen cinematic experiences presenting a football match, or images of birds in flight, Jacqueline Mesmaeker’s work effects surreptitious, clandestine interventions in the real world, based on close attention to detail and imperceptible situations and occurrences, operating on a sliding scale of visibility and invisibility.”

LA VERRIÈRE, BRUSSELS (BELGIUM)

50, BOULEVARD DE WATERLOO

TUESDAY TO SATURDAY, NOON TO 6 P.M.

ADMISSION FREE

GUIDED VISITS EVERY SATURDAY AT 3 P.M.

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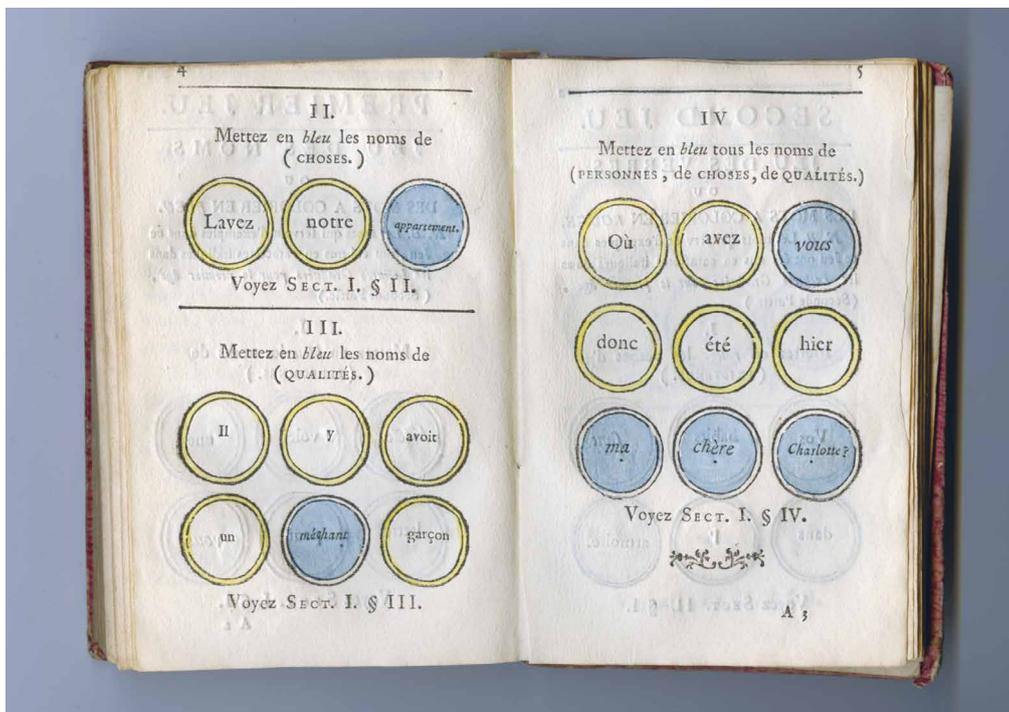
Jacqueline Mesmaeker

by Guillaume Désanges

"A themed series of exhibitions is a journey, an adventure we embark upon with no clear idea of where it will lead us in the end. When I launched 'Ballistic Poetry' in 2016, I did so under the aegis of Marcel Broodthaers; in other words, in the name of conceptual art that retains a sense of poetry, the irreducible creative force that eludes the rigour and logic of programmatic forms. Now, as the season draws to a close, like a snake coiling in upon itself, we return after much meandering to our starting-point, with an exhibition by Jacqueline Mesmaeker in the true spirit of the Belgian master – sophisticated and subversive in equal measure.

Since the mid-Seventies, following her early career in fashion, architecture and design, Jacqueline Mesmaeker has forged an understated, highly original body of work combining installation, drawing, film, sculpture, photography and artist's books. Based on experimental protocols exploring figuration and looking, Mesmaeker's analytical approach is expressed in forms rooted in the world of literature and poetry, incorporating references to Lewis Carroll, Mallarmé, Herman Melville and Paul Willems. Her rarefied, precise work is minimal, sometimes to the brink of non-existence, but proliferative nonetheless, taking possession of the available space and playing with its real and symbolic architecture to reveal its structures, force lines and fault-lines, subverting perspectives or correcting them with the lightest of touches¹. From pink fabric marking the interstices of a domestic setting² to an impenetrable glasshouse that serves as a support for the projection of films³, microscopic drawings springing from the irregularities in the surface of a wall⁴, and multi-screen cinematic experiences presenting a football match⁵ or Images of birds in flight⁶, Jacqueline Mesmaeker's work effects surreptitious, clandestine interventions in the real world, based on close attention to detail and imperceptible situations and occurrences, operating on a sliding scale of visibility and invisibility. Here, the essence of the work eludes our gaze: a model boat is encased in metal girders⁷, a candelabrum is set within a concrete column⁸, and visible only by gamma-rays. This practice of concealment tests art's capacity to exist beyond recognition or even consciousness, as if to shield the idea from the viewer's gaze, to set it apart, an impulse driven more by a kind of exotism than by an unwillingness to cooperate. The same impalpability suffuses Mesmaeker's oeuvre as a whole, as if the work were somehow unavailable, unable to be grasped or understood and, to that end, never fixed or finite, but evolving over time like a mutant virus, adapting to the inspiration of each new setting, and to the whims and desires of the moment.

- 1
Sway/Snow,
2001, joint
exhibition with
Alain Géronnez
- 2
*Introductions
roses*, 1995
- 3
*La Serre de
Maximilien et
Charlotte*,
1977
- 4
*Contours
clandestins*,
1995
- 5
*Surface de
réparation*,
1979
- 6
Les Oiseaux,
1978
- 7
Espace croisé,
1981
- 8
Stèle
29*29*165,
1989



L. Gaultier, *Leçons de grammaire en action, pour les enfants du premier et du second âge*, first volume, Paris, 1819. Courtesy of the artist
© Jacqueline Mesmaeker

Erudite but non-academic, Jacqueline Mesmaeker's work draws on the grand themes of the history of Western art: painting, figuration, historical subjects, nature, landscape, the frame, light etc. But as with Marcel Broodthaers, this appetite for classicism, and with it an element of pomp and circumstance, is continually distanced by a gentle, unspoken irony that lurks just beneath the surface – a critical mischievousness that allows the everyday and trivial to permeate the cracks in the edifice of classical solemnity.

We forget that the display of nobility or bourgeois appurtenance is – obviously – just that: a display, a dissemblance that in no way precludes magic or the desire to intervene, in fact quite the opposite. If the gold in Jacqueline Mesmaeker's work is gilt bronze⁹, if a painting is in fact a printed image, if her fireflies are photocopies¹⁰, it is simply to echo the fakery woven into the fabric of our values and tastes.

Behind these humorous slippages, however, there lurks an anxiety and a melancholy, detectable in Mesmaeker's recurrent motifs of rain, storms and catastrophes. This latent sense of tragedy is expressed most particularly in the shipwreck, a literary rather than painterly motif, retraceable to Edgar Allen Poe and his *Manuscript Found in a Bottle* (1833), or the Symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé and his poem *Un coup de dès n'abolira jamais le hasard* (1914), which deals similarly in storms, spray, the lapping of waves, whirlpools and accidental occurrences. In Mesmaeker's work, the motif is given a literal treatment in *L'Androgyne*, an installation composed of two images (the sky and the sea), each lit by lights placed at either end of a length of flail and entitled 'plane on the approach' or 'ship in distress'; the image of the shipwreck also permeates her work as a whole.

The exhibition devised by Mesmaeker for La Verrière is a free composition of existing works and new, specially-created pieces inspired by the space's unique identity and topography. The focal point of the project is a set of black-and-white landscape photographs – silhouettes of trees captured between land and sky, with an accompanying inscription on the mount: 'Versailles prior to its construction'. Playing on the invocatory power of naming, on memory, and on visualisation and depiction in the mind's eye, this realist image is a paradoxical form of *trompe l'oeil* that conceals its anachronistic nature at a passing glance, and appeals to a false sense of nostalgia, repeated in a facing mirror entitled 'Versailles after its destruction'. Epitomised by Versailles, French-style gardens are known for their rigorous, geometric, symmetrical dissection of space as an expression of an authoritarian urge to tame wild nature. Like scientific perspective, of which French-style gardens are a legacy, Versailles is the embodiment of a veritable 'politics of looking'. Jacqueline Mesmaeker counters this absolutism of the ideal with dissonant touches that play on shifts of perception, copying, and inflections of the hand and thought.

Fabric purses under glass in vitrines, discreetly annotated books, cascades of words on walls, a magically petrified pear: subtle punctuations that function less as a redaction of the institution of monarchy than as an invisible subtext whose scattered scraps seem to drift afloat on the surface of things; confused signs that take on whatever meanings we as viewers may project in our efforts to discern some logic or method. What emerges is a meditation on landscape, its structures and making, in the form of a treasure-trail, a series of riddles and clues. It is just this form of generous hermetism that we seek in Jacqueline Mesmaeker's world, this art of pointing to a sense of otherness, an imaginative Elsewhere despite – or as a result of – the formal rigour of her work.

Our season has been ballistic in name only, perhaps. As I noted in my introduction, it has evolved along oblique and sinuous paths, and as such, it has been made in the image of Jacqueline Mesmaeker's own rarefied and precious trajectory: its impact is deliberately more furtive than direct, yet it cannot fail to hit its aim, given that it has never had any such thing.”

9
Parking en or,
1984
10
Les Lucioles,
2011



Purse, 18th century. Collection J. Mesmaeker
© Olivier Mignon and Jacqueline Mesmaeker

THE *BALLISTIC POETRY* SEASON AT LA VERRIÈRE

Launched by Guillaume Désanges at La Verrière in spring 2016, the season sets out to examine the disconnect between programme and outcome in conceptual art, and more precisely, between artistic intent and intuition in certain forms of radical abstraction.

The eight exhibitions comprising the season are:

APRIL – JULY, 2016

Inaugural exhibition ‘Ballistic poetry’

With Marcel Broodthaers – Henri Chopin – Liz Deschenes – Hessie – Thomas Hirschhorn – Channa Horwitz – Guillaume Leblon – Scott Lyall – Dora Maurer – Isidoro Valcarcel Medina – Helen Mirra – Jean-Luc Moulène – Dominique Petitgand – R. H. Quaytman – Tris Vonna-Michell – Christopher Williams
And Bernard Heidsieck – Mark Insingel – Christophe Tarkos

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2016

Hessie

‘Soft resistance’

JANUARY – MARCH 2017

Douglas Eynon & Erwan Mahéo

‘NOVELTY Ltd.’

APRIL – JULY 2017

Tris Vonna-Michell

‘Punctuations & Perforations’

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2017

Dora García

‘SOMEWHERE, TWO PLANETS HAVE BEEN COLLIDING FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. (The Thinker as Poet)’

JANUARY – MARCH 2018

Jean-Luc Moulène

‘En Angle mort’

APRIL – JULY 2018

Marie Cool Fabio Balducci

SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2018

Ismaïl Bahri

‘Des gestes à peine déposés dans un paysage agité’



Jacqueline Mesmaeker, *I'm a Foot Fan*, 1979-2009, film. Courtesy of the artist
© Jacqueline Mesmaeker

BIOGRAPHY

Jacqueline Mesmaeker was born in the Belgian town of Uccle in 1929. She lives and works in Brussels.

Building on her early, experimental and creative work in architecture and design, and her career as a stylist from 1962 to 1972, Jacqueline Mesmaeker has subsequently focussed on the study of visual problems, analysing visual and textual questions with gentle humour through drawing, installation and video, and making use of archive photographs, films, postcards and scraps of text or objects she has collected over time.

She graduated in 1967 from the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (where she worked in Georges Vlaminck's studio), before moving on to the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels in La Cambre, where she later taught from 1979 to 1984. She is the author of a body of work influenced by the romantic and literary conceptualism of Marcel Broodthaers. Mesmaeker has combined her artistic practice with teaching, at the École des Beaux-Arts in Wavre (1973-1994) and the ISLAP-ERG in Brussels (1982-1994). She lectured at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Mons (1981-1986). Jacqueline Mesmaeker is represented by Galerie Nadja Vilenne in Liège.

Selected recent solo and group exhibitions

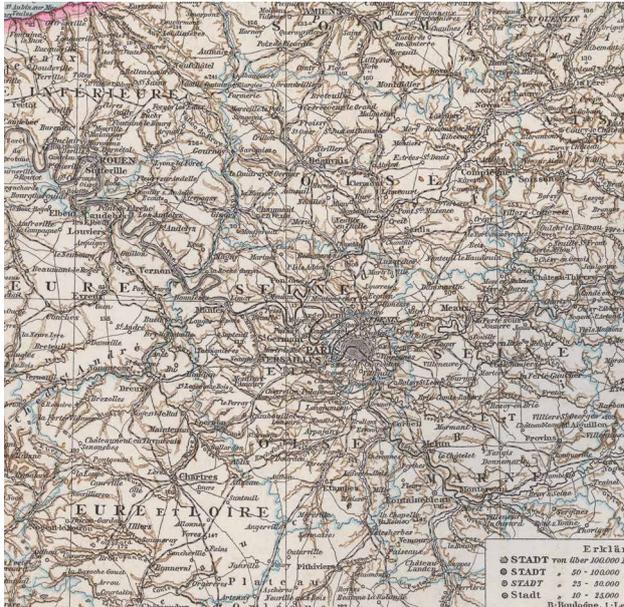
- | | | | |
|------|---|------|--|
| 2018 | M HKA, Antwerp, '21 Mars 1975 17h 23' | 2011 | Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège, 'Le premier jour du mois...' |
| 2017 | Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège, 'Ouest – Sud – Ouest' (SIC), Brussels, 'Carrefour' | 2010 | Établissement d'en face (Brussels projects), 'Naoïse et Matthis' |
| 2015 | Rectangle, Brussels, 'Jorge Semprún'. JAP Vitrine Rivoli, Brussels, 'D'après Picasso et Dürer' | | Gevaert éditions, Brussels, 'Les Péripéties' |
| 2012 | Guest artist at Jeunesse et Arts-Plastiques, Gare Bruxelles Congrès, Brussels, 'I'm a Foot Fan' | 2009 | (SIC), Brussels, 'A glimpse' |
| | | 2007 | Établissement d'en face (Brussels projects), 'Until it Fitted!' |

1929 	1934 			1937 	1938 Italie	1938 Budapest Ghyor Bratislava Anschluss	
1940 	1941 	1942 	1943 	1944 	1945 		
1954 	1957 	1959 	1962 	1967 	1973 		1977
1978 ✓ 			1981 Versailles avant sa construction		1985 Tournai Saint Jean		
	1990 Montréal 					1995 Ice House	1996 A Sentimental Journey

Jacqueline Mesmaeker, *Première autobiographie*, 1996.
Courtesy of the artist © Jacqueline Mesmaeker

PRESS IMAGES

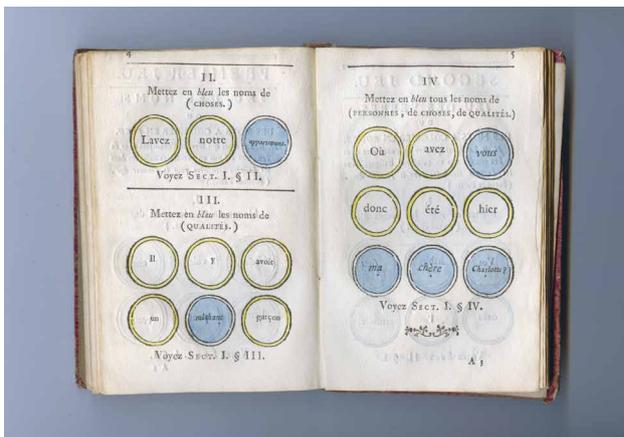
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Richard Andree's, *Allgemeiner Handatlas in sechsundachtzig Karten*, Bielefeld – Leipzig, Verlag von Velhagen & Klasing, 1881, p. 56. Collection J. Mesmaeker © Jacqueline Mesmaeker



Purse, 18th century. Collection J. Mesmaeker © Olivier Mignon and Jacqueline Mesmaeker



L. Gaultier, *Leçons de grammaire en action, pour les enfants du premier et du second âge*, first volume, Paris, 1819. Courtesy of the artist © Jacqueline Mesmaeker

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Jacqueline Mesmaeker, *I'm a Foot Fan*, 1979-2009, film.
 Courtesy of the artist © Jacqueline Mesmaeker

CIL	HANNIBAL
SELL	LONG
SEUIL	BULLE
PLUS	BILLE
CLOS	PLUS
CLOCHE	PLANCHE
VOL	PELUCHE
CHAPELLE	PLOUC
POLI	PLACE
LEPRE	LACET
LIVRE	LIMONADE
LORD	CLAMER
LOVE	CLAIR
FIELD	AILE
LONG	CIL
BALLON	CIEL
LAC	CLOCHE
LIEVRE	LARME
LE	CHANDELLE
LIT	PLUM PUDDING
LUSTUCRU	BILE
ALLUMETTE	DIPLOMATE
LUCIOLE	LIEVRE
LARD	VILLE
LUI	VERSAILLES
TALC	MOULE
RABLE	POULE
PLI	POULPE
PLAT	BLE
BOL	SABLE
COLBERT	CIBLE
LARVE	ERABLE
LISTE	CLOS
ALICE	PLUIE
SEUL	FLUIDE
SALE	LA
PALE	DILEMME
ALLEE	SOLEIL
ALLEE	PLATRE
PALAIS	LOUIS
FABLE	SOL
PLUS	SOLE

Jacqueline Mesmaeker, *Versailles en cascade*, 2017.
 Courtesy of the artist © Jacqueline Mesmaeker

GUILLAUME DÉSANGES



© Isabelle Arthuis

Guillaume Désanges is a freelance curator and art critic, founder and director of Work Method, a Paris-based agency for artistic projects. He organizes international exhibitions, projects and lectures.

Recent projects: 'Amazing! Clever! Linguistic! An Adventure in Conceptual Art' (2013, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria), 'A Universal Exhibition, documentary section' (2013, Louvain-la-Neuve biennale, Belgium), 'Curated Session #1: The Dora García files' (2014, Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA), 'Ma'aminim, The Believers' (2015, Museum of Art and History, Saint-Denis & Tranzitdisplay, Prague, Czech Rep.), 'The Méthode Room' (2015, Chicago, USA), 'Ballistic Poetry' (2016-..., La Verrière, Brussels), 'L'Esprit français. Contre-cultures 1969-1989' (2017, la maison rouge, Paris), 'L'Ennemi de mon ennemi' (2018, Palais de Tokyo, Paris), 'Spolia' (2018-2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire).

NEW SEASON AT LA VERRIÈRE INAUGURAL EXHIBITION

MATTERS OF CONCERN **MATIÈRES À PANSER**

EXHIBITION FROM SATURDAY APRIL 22 TO JULY 6, 2019
PREVIEW FRIDAY APRIL 26, 2019

Following 'Gestures, and thought' (2013-2016) and 'Ballistic Poetry' (2016-2018), the new cycle of exhibitions at La Verrière returns to the material in art, sustained this time by a particular focus on symbolism, animism, ethnography, fetichism, therapeutics and magic, as a critical alternative to the progressive dematerialisation of the prevailing economy. Referencing 'otherness' in thought and practice at the heart of society and elsewhere, the cycle offers an in-depth examination of the subtle ways in which modes of attention and curiosity can pervert established categories in contemporary art.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOUNDATION D'ENTREPRISE HERMÈS

PROGRAMME: MANUFACTO, THE SKILLS FACTORY

SECOND YEAR IN 34 SCHOOLS:
ÎLE-DE-FRANCE, PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR AND
AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES, FRANCE
OCTOBER 2018 – JUNE 2019

EXHIBITION: XAVIER ANTIN

'VANISHING WORKFLOWS'
ALOFT AT HERMÈS, SINGAPORE
DECEMBER 14, 2018 – MARCH 10, 2019

EXHIBITION: TOMOKO MUKAIYAMA

LE FORUM, TOKYO, JAPAN
FEBRUARY 5 – 25, 2019

EXHIBITION: MARI MINATO

LE FORUM, TOKYO, JAPAN
MARCH 21 – MAY 26, 2019

EXHIBITION: DOMINIQUE GHESQUIÈRE

LA GRANDE PLACE, MUSÉE DU CRISTAL SAINT-LOUIS,
SAINT-LOUIS-LÈS-BITCHE, FRANCE
MARCH 26 – AUGUST 28, 2019

PROGRAMME: SKILLS ACADEMY

TEXTILES

LAUNCH OF THE 2019 LECTURE SERIES:
JANUARY 19, 2019
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE SEE
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NEW SEASON

EXHIBITION: MATTERS OF CONCERN

MATIÈRES À PANSER

LA VERRIÈRE, BRUSSELS
APRIL 27 – JULY 6, 2019



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The Fondation d'entreprise Hermès supports men and women seeking to learn, perfect, transmit and celebrate the creative skills that shape our lives today and into the future.

The Foundation operates nine major programmes with a combined focus on skills, creativity and transmission: **New Settings** and **Artists dans la Cité** for the performing arts, **Exhibitions** and **Artists' Residencies** for the visual arts, **Immersion, a French-American Photography Commission** for photography, **Manufacto, the Skills Factory** and our **Skills Academy** for the discovery and perfection of artisan trades. **H³ – Heart, Head, Hand** is the Foundation's worldwide

programme of support for organisations whose work reflects these central aims. Our **Biodiversity & Ecosystems** programme enacts a core commitment to protect fragile ecosystems for future generations. Created in 2008, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is directed by Catherine Tsekenis under the presidency of Olivier Fournier, who succeeded Pierre-Alexis Dumas in February 2016.

The Foundation's diverse activities are governed by a single, overarching belief: *our gestures define us.*

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