



Koenraad Dedobbeleer

Zero deux Spring 2013,
by Séverine Cauchy
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Koenraad Dedobbeleer, On Tiptoe

Koenraad Dedobbeleer's recent show at the Crédac ^[1] is titled "Workmanship of Certainty". It is the second part of a trilogy, the first being "Formidable Savage Repressiveness", held at the Lok/Kunstmuseum at St. Gallen in Switzerland, from 8 September to 11 November 2012. Part three, titled "You Export Reality To Where It Is You Get Your Money From", will be on view at the SBKM/De Vleeshal at Middelburg, in the Netherlands, from 14 April to 9 June 2013. Three moments, one past, one present, and one future, for a single project. Three quite different venues in which to discover a set of works which have many links, just like the ambiguous relations that each one of them has with reality. Koenraad Dedobbeleer's work prompts visitors to experiment with, and experience, many different focuses: to what aspects of things will they adapt the way they look at them? Is this bench, which they can sit down on, a functional object? Does the topiary of this boxtree make it a decorative element? Is this black mass hanging from the ceiling a purely aesthetic sculpture with no apparent function? Is this place of documentation and reception at the Crédac an environment, relocated as it is at the very hub of the exhibition arrangement? Right away the questions are numerous and the answers variable. The connections are loose and the works keep visitors at a respectful distance. Yet they have the impression of being in known territory. They are strangely familiar with these works. Their vocabulary, taken from various types of repertoires, plays simultaneously on several counts: urban fixtures, household utensils, design, the art of sculpture, and architectural elements. These forms nevertheless dodge any kind of category-based pigeonholing, playing havoc with all identification, in the sense whereby one might identify a corpse in a morgue. No identification is possible here, nothing is fixed, everything is active. Dedobbeleer does not implicitly ask us to choose between several options. It is a matter of embracing everything at once, willy-nilly.

This absence of hierarchy can also be seen in the way the works are made. Extra-special attention is paid to the hand-made pieces, but there are also elements that are made in a rough-and-ready way, and others that are retrieved in the raw state: the phony marble of *The Subject of Matter (for WS)* and the formica with its chipped edges in *An Exterior Destiny to the Interior Being*. "Fine work" and perfectly made pieces rub shoulders with what seems to be the result of no specific know-how, and calls for just a swift, intuitive gesture on the artist's part, driven by an especially keen observation of the realities surrounding him: a plastic bag, a stone, or an image, come upon by chance. Added to this is the eclectic nature of the materials used, described as "noble" and "bottom-of-the-range": Belgian Blue Stone, bronze, nickel and precious wood co-exist in complete collusion with adhesive vinyl paper, polystyrene, and formica.

The resulting repertoire of forms can be indiscriminately associated with our consumer society (goblet, light-bulb, plastic bag), with its cityscapes (anti-parking bollard, hoop-shaped bicycle stand, window-box, drinking fountain), or, alternatively, they may be part of the field of a modernist, minimalist or conceptual sculpture with the use of purely geometric forms (sphere, cylinder, cube, parallelepiped). From the *Amazon* of Polyclitus to the door of a New York bar, Dedobbeleer likes surrounding himself with these *Travaux pour amateurs* ^[2] of every shape and size, as is revealed by his extremely interesting and invigorating artist's book, which acts like an anchor for this trilogy of exhibitions.



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Koenraad Dedobbeleer, vue de l'exposition / Installation view « *Workmanship of Certainty* », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – le Crédac, 2013.

Shortcomings in identification systems, eclecticism, and the absence of hierarchy are all important in Dedobbeleer's works, but their situation in space helps to destabilize visitors, whose certainties are already wobbly. The works do not occupy the space, the territory is not won by these three-dimensional objects. Like a dance where a powerful reciprocal attraction is at work, together with a certain insecurity, visitors must find their place with vigilance, not trusting appearances, and looking where they put their feet. *From Dissent to Resistance*, the enlarged and upside-down replica of the base of a garden table, confronts visitors as soon as they enter one of the rooms. "Too" near the entrance, it comes across in all its height and destabilizes by being presented "with its legs in the air". The two articulated parts are brought as close together as possible, and it is reasonable to think it might be on the point of falling, were it not for the rivets affixing it to the floor. That they veer to their left and visitors fail to find their footing in the *Compromise Discourse of Choice*, which is "too" low.

This subtle and recurrent interplay between balance and imbalance raises the issue of the work's points of contact with the space it is in. Be it set stoutly on the floor like the cylindrical piece in *Für Max und Fritzi*, *Denkmal*, poised on one of its edges with *An Exterior Destiny to the Interior Being*, with the deceptive levitation of the cobblestone in *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, or with the minute tips of the legs in *Too Quick to Dismiss Aesthetic Autonomy as retrograde*, the three-dimensional object trenchantly raises the issue of its relation to space. The links made between objects and space, neither self-satisfied coincidence nor spectacular collision, are not to be experimented with in terms of a massive altercation, or a comfortable adjustment, or even a punctuation, but all of the above at once.

This delicious tendency not to know "what foot to dance on" is especially active in *Tradition is Never Given, Always Constructed*, an outdoor work whose three jambs straddle two different spaces: the street pavement at the side of the main entrance of the Manufacture des Éillettes, and the inner garden adjoining it. Somewhere between private and public, principal and secondary, centered and off-centered, the double structure (but it is



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Koenraad Dedobbeleer, *Tradition Is Never Given, Always Constructed*, 2012. Métal laqué, 353 × 290 × 290 cm. Vue de l'œuvre installée dans la cour de la Manufacture des Éillets pour l'exposition / Lacquered metal. Installation view of the work in the yard of the Manufacture des Éillets for the exhibition « Workmanship of Certainty », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – le Crédac, 2013. © André Morin / le Crédac. Courtesy of l'artiste / the artist et Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Anvers.



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Like Maria Spelterini (1853-1912)—the only woman to cross the Niagara gorge on a tightrope, which she did in 1876—Koenraad Dedobbeleer does his utmost to play the part of a tightrope-walker. Wavering between one repertory of forms and another, tacking between several fields of action, at once appropriating spaces “by the handful” and taking refuge at their edges, the artist sets up a body of work whose powerful presence is the instigator of its own absence. What is involved is not disappearance but nothing less than connections to other spaces, other time-frames, in a nutshell: “Thus it is not properly said that there are three times, past, present, and future. Perhaps it might be rightly said that there are three times, a present time of things past, a present time of things present, and a present time of things future. For these three do somehow exist in the soul, and otherwise I see them not: present time of things past, memory, present time of things present, direct experience, present time of things future, expectation.” ^[3]

Memory, direct experience and expectation: at the crossroads of these three times, in these three places, Koenraad Dedobbeleer’s works observe us and tell us a great deal about ourselves, briskly indifferent about what they have in store for us.

1. [↑] Koenraad Dedobbeleer, «Workmanship of Certainty», Centre d’art contemporain d’Ivry – le Crédac, from 18 January to 31 March 2013. Curated by: Claire Le Restif.
2. [↑] Koenraad Dedobbeleer, *Œuvre sculpté, travaux pour amateurs*, Roma Publication, Amsterdam, 2012, p.5, p.57.
3. [↑] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Penguin Classics, London, 1961.