



CLEARING

## ***Outdatedness Seen Not As Irrelevance***

September 8 – October 23, 2021

*“Contro il logorio della vita moderna”* was once the slogan for bitter Italian apéritif Cynar, made from a variety of herbal plants and artichokes. Indeed, as it is impressively rich in minerals (potassium, calcium, iron, and phosphorus), boasts diuretic and laxative properties, and contains a high fibre content, distilled artichoke might well have helped to overcome the stresses of modern, postwar life in Italy.<sup>1</sup> While Cynar’s slogan seems laughable today, faced with insurmountable contemporary crises, it’s not uncommon to still turn to tipple in order to let off some steam. With this in mind perhaps, Koenraad Dedobbeleer’s exhibition situated in the domestic setting of C L E A R I N G’s front space stages a pared-back bar<sup>2</sup> and its appending accessories, fixtures, and fittings—cocktail glasses, shot glasses, champagne flutes, chandeliers, standard lamps.

*For Outdatedness Seen Not As Irrelevance* Dedobbeleer uses the exploration of glassblowin as a playground for his persistent questioning of artistic production, and the history of display within the artistic field. Over the past months, Koenraad Dedobbbeeler visited the island of Murano, home since the Middle Ages to the artisans and creators of the renowned Venetian glassmaking techniques. There, he collaborated closely with maestro glassmakers such as Bruno Amadi, skilled in lampworking details and depicting animals, insects, or vegetal motifs. The resulting objects presented here came to include intricate elements that play an opaline role between imitation and ornament: beans hang from the chandeliers, and asparagus adorn lamps.

Dedobbeleer is moved by the way objects, anecdotes, images, texts, and artists interact, influence, and gain meaning from one another and from their shifting contexts. Subject to a compulsion to interconnect, his works often associate, compare, and juxtapose fragments and characters from the playbook of “official” (mainly Western) art history. Here, several spirits (of the non alcoholic type) are conjured up by means of materials, colours, and shapes, as well as an overarching Italian throughline. The presence of Memphis founder and designer Ettore Sottsass can be perceived in the bringing together of clean-cut, geometric forms, neatly accumulated in the glassware; while the oeuvre of Carlo Scarpa, who had a lengthy career in glass at Venetian manufacture Venini before venturing into architecture and exhibition design, might be hinted at by means of the material and craftpersonship employed, and the possibility of display as artistic practise.

Having spent time at the “glass hospitals” on Murano, where damaged elements and spare parts are pieced back together in new compositions, Dedobbeleer reinvested similar assembly techniques to create the chandeliers that hang from the ceiling. In analogous gestures to the physical piling up, theoretical references are also accumulated. In two photographs shown alongside the sculptural works, Lego buildings assembled by a friend’s child during lockdown sit atop seminal architectural history and theory books that constitute the foundations for any budding architect. Aldo Rossi, Vkhutemas, Venturi... What was once an avant-garde vision of what the future might hold now belongs to Art History, classed under their corresponding sections in the library; their colours and utopian potential fading, becoming outdated, perhaps, but not yet irrelevant?

<sup>1</sup>“Contro il logorio della vita moderna” means “Against the stresses of modern life”.

<sup>2</sup>Koenraad Dedobbeler is the only person I have ever heard order this herbaceous beverage, on a sunny terrace during the Liverpool biennial in 2016.