

measurements

group exhibition
curated by
Société + Christophe Veys

Pep Agut
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Mel Bochner
Nathalie Brevet_Hughes Rochette
Stanley Brouwn
Marc Buchy
Martin Creed
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Michael Johansson
LAB[au]
Jan Robert Leegte
Rokko Miyoshi
Claire Morel
OMA / Rem Koolhaas
Roman Ondák
Rafaël Rozendaal
Christophe Terlinden
Ignacio Uriarte
Pep Vidal

measurements

The meter, the kilogram and the second are three of the seven basic units of the International System, adopted in its entirety only in 1971, and from which all other physical units can be derived. They draw our relationship to the world and structure our perception, As conventions, they mark a certain standardisation of modern society.

These units are intrinsically part of all works of art, but it is only since conceptual art that they have become content and artistic expression in themselves. Presented as self-referential true statements, they state an obvious, measurable property of the work. This tautological approach, characteristic of conceptual art, points to the very genesis and structure of the artwork. It investigates the very nature and limits of artistic activity by analysing fundamental elements that are usually implicit. In doing so, these measures, like other collective conventions such as language, question the place and justification of any system of signs in our culture.

Since then 'measuring', 'weighting', 'counting',... belong to the artistic vocabulary and have become the base of new artistic practices. This exhibition takes a look at how these methods have influenced current artistic practice, and provide the context for their re-appropriation. Consequently this exhibition lies in the continuity of the exhibition on «time», questioning the notions of objectivity and measurability, where fundamental and abstract notions define artistic methods.

It is through the pairings 'measure / space', 'measure / body' and 'measurement / comparisons' that this exhibition is articulated. It is the result of the collaboration with Christophe Veys, where the selection and the way the works of art are set in dialogue follow the very subject of the exhibition, the principle of measurements.

measurements

Le mètre, le kilogramme, la seconde font partie des sept unités de base du Système international, qui ne sera adopté dans son entièreté qu'en 1971, et à partir desquelles toutes les autres unités physiques peuvent être dérivées. Elles dessinent notre relation au monde et structurent notre perception, cette convention marque une certaine normalisation de la société moderne.

Ces unités font intrinsèquement partie de toutes les œuvres d'art mais c'est seulement depuis l'art conceptuel qu'elles sont devenues contenu et expression artistique en elles-mêmes. Présentées comme des œuvres en soi, ces déclarations auto-référentielles énoncent une propriété évidente, mesurable, de l'œuvre. Cette approche tautologique, caractéristique de l'art conceptuel, met en avant les principes qui conditionnent la conception et la structure de l'œuvre. Elle étudie ainsi la nature et les limites de l'activité artistique en analysant des éléments fondamentaux habituellement implicites. Ce faisant, ces mesures, convention collective à l'image de celle du langage, questionne la place et la justification de tout système de signes dans notre culture.

Depuis lors, mesurer, peser, compter font parties du vocabulaire artistique, simples actes qui ont fondés de nouvelles pratiques artistiques. Cette exposition jette un regard sur la manière dont ces méthodes ont influencé la pratique artistique actuelle, et forment un contexte propice à leur réappropriation. Cette exposition s'inscrit directement dans la suite de l'exposition sur le «temps». Elle questionne ainsi les notions d'objectivité et de mesurabilité, des concepts fondamentaux et abstraits définissant des méthodes artistiques.

C'est à travers les binômes 'mesure / espace', 'mesure / corps' et 'mesure / comparaisons' que cette exposition s'articule. Elle est le fruit d'une collaboration avec Christophe Veys, la sélection et mise en dialogue d'œuvres suivant le sujet même de l'exposition, celui du principe de mesure.

measurements

De meter, de kilogram, de seconde,... zijn drie van de zeven basis eenheden van het International Systeem dat pas sinds 1971 volledig in gebruik is, en waarvan de fysieke eenheden afgeleid kunnen worden. Ze tonen onze relatie tot de wereld en structureren onze waarneming. Als conventie belichamen ze de standaardisatie van onze moderne samenleving.

Deze eenheden maken intrinsiek deel uit van alle kunstwerken, maar het is slechts sinds de Conceptuele Kunst dat ze zowel 'inhoud' als 'artistieke uitdrukking' zijn geworden. Voorgesteld als zelf-referentiële uitspraken duiden ze een vanzelfsprekende, meetbare eigenschap van het werk aan. Deze tautologische benadering, karakteristiek voor conceptuele kunst, duidt op de genesis en de structuur zelf van het kunstwerk. Het onderzoekt de natuur en limieten van artistieke activiteit door analyse van haar samenstellende delen. Op die manier bevragen maten, zoals andere collectieve conventies zoals taal, de ruimte en verantwoording van elk indicatiesysteem van onze cultuur.

Sindsdien behoren 'meten', 'wegen', 'tellen',... tot het artistiek vocabularium en zijn de basis geworden van nieuwe artistieke activiteit. Deze tentoonstelling onderzoekt op welke wijze deze methodes hedendaagse kunst praktijk beïnvloed hebben en de context aandienen voor herhaaldelijke toe-eigening. Dientengevolge ligt de tentoonstelling in de lijn van Soci  t  's tentoonstelling omtrent 'tijd' waar noties van objectiviteit en meetbaarheid in vraag gesteld werden, en waar artistieke methodes bepaald worden door fundamentele en abstracte noties.

De tentoonstelling wordt gearticuleerd door de associaties tussen 'maat / ruimte', 'maat / lichaam', en 'maat / vergelijking'. Ze is het resultaat van een samenwerking met Christophe Veys, waar de selectie en de wijze waarop de werken in dialoog gesteld zijn de logica van de tentoonstelling zelf volgen: het principe van de maat.

Pep Agut

Universal Measures
2016

Courtesy: The Artist and Angels, Barcelona

Even if on first view one would frame Agut's approach to the tautological expression of the work as being the analysis of the work (in the style of Kosuth or Art & Language) on closer look one should rather see it in the continuum of artists such as Dan Graham or Robert Smithson's who deploy an analysis of the generative structures of meaning and who place these in relation to their disposition in space. As the artist explains:

'Universal measures is based upon the list of dimensions for canvas paintings developed in France in the 18th century after Le Brun's Academy. He developed sizes for 'Figure', 'Landscape' and 'Seaside' subjects. The ones used in my piece correspond to the 'Figure' ones.

When displaying the double aleatory projection you get all the combinations that painters could use mixing the different parts of the frames.

In my work contemporaneity and tradition are always mixed. I love both Art History and Contemporary Art. My maxima is that of the Russian artist Wladimir Tatlin: 'Not the old, not the new, but the necessary'.

The images were photographed from my computer's monitor with an analogue camera to produce film ones. I am interested on the displacement of new technologies and to bring them back to analogue because I put it in relation with my body.'

Art & Language

100% abstract
1968

Courtesy: Collection Fabre, Brussels

The work belongs to a series of paintings which Art & Language define as 'virtual' paintings. *'They began as paintings which merely listed the chemical composition of the paint used to produce them: a kind of reflexive materialism, or a tautology of the real. They developed as elliptical form* of this: the pair of percentages 60% - 40%, for example, always add up to 100%, but they are now detached from the information on the paint can. The sense of 'abstraction' was therefore doubled in the ellipsis, as it became an 'abstraction' from - or an attenuation of - the early form which had its origin in the chemical constituents of the paint.'* (From: 'Art & Language in practice' Vol.1 p. 145)

By listing the chemical composition of the painting, they display a 'concrete' information which opposes to the work title of the artwork, as being a 100% abstract - an impossibility. As such they measure the gap between 'abstract' and 'concrete' as the linguistic understanding of the painting and its material, concrete, reality.

*** An 'elliptical form' in linguistics is an often used figure of speech which allows to avoid the redundancy of a word thanks to its subtraction but which we can nevertheless deduce thanks to the context of the remaining elements in a sentence.

Mel Bochner

Measurement: 1 - 10 feet
1969

Courtesy: The Artist

Mel Bochner belongs to the first artists who introduced 'measurement' as self-referential expressions, tautologies, into the vocabulary of art. By doing so his work, based on the analyse of language / signs, diminishes the importance of the object and activates the presence of concept by studying the relation between the acts of thinking and watching.

In his early 'Measurement series', Bochner draws lines and places measures on the walls of exhibition spaces. Rather than using a gallery space to exhibit objects, he used tape, string and Letraset markers to document the measurements of various architectural elements within the space. Here the measurements operates as tautology pointing to what we see is what it is, an art as a true state.

In this work 'Measurement: 1 - 10 feet' he draws the attention of the viewers to the invisible dimensions of their surroundings rather than to an object within their surroundings. Here the measurements lose their usual utilitarian function and become abstract markings that could be viewed purely as aesthetic phenomena. But his intention is grounded in the division of the sign from the signifier and to reveal the arbitrary, 'darker', nature of their relationship. In other words, to undermine any belief in the relationship of seeing to believing.

Bochner's semantic division between both refers to Gottlob Frege's 1892 paper, 'On Sense and Reference' ('Über Sinn und Bedeutung'), which introduced his influential distinction between sense ('Sinn') and meaning ('Bedeutung'). While our conventional understanding of both notions coincide, Frege introduced the view that expressions have two different aspects of significance: their sense and their meaning.

Meaning applied to proper names, where a given expression (say the expression 'Tom') simply refers to the entity carrying the name (the person named Tom). By contrast, the sense (or 'Sinn') associated with a complete sentence is the thought it expresses. The sense of an expression is said to be the 'mode of presentation' of the item referred to, and there can be multiple modes of representation for the same referent.

From this point of view, Bochner's use of measurements detached from any referent disrupt the tautology of earlier works and investigate the modes of representation defining the language of art.

Nathalie Brevet_Hughes Rochette

unexpected guests
in situ, 2018

Courtesy: The Artists

The in-situ installation of the French artist duo Nathalie Brevet et Hughes Rochette follows a simple protocol to confront the measures of what carry art; the travel box, with what exhibit art; the measures of a space. The collected travel boxes are de-mounted and the pieces are laid-out on the floor in order to cover the ground. A map is drawn with the collected information of their origin and the artworks they have been made for.

But what seems to be a straight forward proposal soon reveals its full complexity, an entire universe of stories about what art is and could be. Here the installation suddenly becomes a contextual material of collected information. In the beginning of the activation of the protocol you connect the local art field to recycle travel boxes out of use, ranging from artists, collectors, transport companies and institutions. Already at that stage the installation takes the shape of a map showing your relations and connections; your inscription in the art field.

But the story does not end here: at every place you go you get a snippet of what is the state of art. You enter a warehouse of art shippers where boxes are piled up until the ceiling confronting you with the art as a market where goods are stored and traded, measured in kilograms and volumes. And even here, in a place of commerce, you get triggered by every information which is provided such as the different

techniques, values and origins of the travel boxes. You discover in a corner an old empty nailed box which René Magritte has made by his own, there an orange box which comes from an institution colour coded and over there the symbols on a box used at the other side of world, etcetera.

The next stop you stand in front of a collector assistant which provides you with 'the ugly' box which hasn't survived the transport, than an artist which hands you over a box which never left the studio and an institution which contribute with a box which has arrived at destination without ever having carried the artwork...

At the end you don't gather travel boxes but stories and once you dispose the pieces of wood on the ground and retrace the collected information you get aware that there are many artists named in the show you have thought about.

Stanley Brouwn

'Never before have distances been so meaningless as nowadays. Increasingly more people fly long distance several times a year. The validity of the concept of distance is becoming still further eroded. In my work distances are recharged again. They regain meaning.'

Stanley Brouwn is one of the early figures in concept art. His works examine 'measurements' and 'memory' through the repetition of modest actions, such as counting steps, measuring distance, drawing paths,... Here the walking from 'a' to 'b' and the distance between them is of central importance, which makes tangible the tension between embodied measures such as the step and abstract measures such as the metric scale.

But Brouwn does not tell us anything about the actual act of walking or measuring neither does he document, photograph, any of those moments - all is subordinated to his ascetic 'anti-subjective language of form'. In doing so Brouwn is exemplary in following his plan logically and rigorously. *'Adopting a straightforward idea, he embodied a statement that Sol LeWitt has made in his 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' in 1969: 'Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.'*

In his book 'Steps', published by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1971, Brouwn first makes use of what would become a full-time focus for his work, his own footsteps: *'From march 18 until April 19, 1971, I defined my total number of footsteps each day by means of a hand-counter. During this period I visited a number of countries where I had never been before. Consequently, my footsteps there were my first in those countries'*. Both the actual and the imaged displacements influence our relation to space and time, they form it.

Since the seventies Brouwn has published books on a regular basis. These books are the only documentation of his work. They are an integral part of his work and must be seen as the media of it. Throughout his career he published more than 40 books which he describes as permanent exhibitions.

1 m 1 step
1976

Courtesy: Collection éditions keymouse, Brussels 

By 1976, Broun has created his own unit of measure, 'the brouwnstep' which he makes use of in such publications as his 1976's '1m 1 step' which consists of two printed lines: one measuring 1 meter, the other 1 brouwnstep. In more recent publications, Broun has expanded upon his interest in the use of the body as a means of measurement, often making the basis of the work antiquated or ancient forms of body measurements such as the ell, the foot and the Egyptian royal cubit.

1 x 1 Step / 1 x 1 M
1986

Courtesy: Collection éditions keymouse, Brussels 

This publication consists of two sheets of folded paper in a cardboard cover. One of the pieces of paper measures one meter by one meter, the other has the dimensions of one step by one step.

Door: Reguliersgracht 27, Amsterdam
1989

Courtesy: Collection éditions keymouse, Brussels 

Using various units of measurement, he creates portraits of people, buildings, spaces, walls, floors, etc., such as, for example, in his artist's book 'Door' from 1989, in which the door of the building 'Reguliersgracht 27 in Amsterdam is measured and depicted. Brouwn's works are situated in the field of tension between the abstract and the generally valid and could be summed up under the postulate: people walking on planet Earth.

This way Brouwn + 100 this-way-brouwn problems for I.B.M. 360 model 95
1970

Courtesy: Private Collection, Brussels

The book is the first of his artist publications which lists 'this way Brouwn'-questions to be posed to a computer beginning with: *'Show Brouwn the way in all cities, villages, etc. on earth from point x to all other points in that cities, villages etc.'* Too complex for even a computer to solve, this list of questions is designed to reveal the infinitely complex possibilities implicit in the idea of a 'this way Brouwn'.

Marc Buchy

o
2017

Courtesy: The Artist

'Interested by the question of learning and gaining knowledge, 'o' is a long-term performance in which I try to draw a perfect circle, freehand. The work consist in an infinity of try outs to draw a round figure which can exist in many formats, ranging from drawing on paper sheets or directly on the wall. Every activation is a learning moment and the acquisition of the mastery of my body to fulfill this simple gesture. More than the visual form of the circle, my interest is grounded in the repetition of a single movement and the infinite perspective carried by this simple but impossible task.'

For the exhibition Marc Buchy accepted the invitation to exercise his gesture on every of the invitation cards; a unique hand drawn sample provided for Société's specific formula of an artwork. For this exhibition the format of the cards suggest the measure of the hand whereas his chalk circle in the exhibition space correspond to the one of his body.

Martin Creed

Work No. 74
1992

Courtesy: Collection Veys-Verhaevert, Brussels

'The more I work, the more I think I don't know what I am doing. I have absolutely no idea what I am doing. It is like sweat or shite. It comes out as I go along. As you do one thing over here, something else comes out over there. It is not what you think you are doing. It is like scum on top of things or like sediment at the bottom. It builds up while you are doing other things.' (Martin Creed in : 'Martin Creed Works', Thames & Hudson, London, 2010, p. VI.)

'At the start there is potential in all directions, 360 degree of hope. You are free, and so maybe it is best to stay at the start.' (Martin Creed in : 'Martin Creed Works', Thames & Hudson, London, 2010, p. VII.)

Martin Creed describes his work as followed: As many 1' squares as are necessary cut from 1' masking tape and pile up, adhesive sides down, to form a 1'' cubic stack.

His description points to a minimal and simple gesture used as self-reflexive vehicle to question his approach and attitude of art making. Confronting his simple closely senseless gesture to an objective notion, the measure of 1inch, his work recalls the attitude of Stanley Brouwn, opposing personal experience to objective standards, and to which he refers to in his work.

Lieven De Boeck

Mikado LDB Modulator
2013

Courtesy: The Artist and Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

'Profiting from the research of CIRVA, the International Centre for Research into Glass and Plastic Arts in Marseilles, Lieven De Boeck has made this Mikado game, which uses 22 coloured sticks of various shades. With Mikado LDB Modulator, he is continuing his research on standard measurements.

The title includes a reference to the 'Modulator', concept put forward by Le Corbusier in the '40s. He considered that the ideal height for a human being for a harmonious existence in an architectural environment is 183 cm. De Boeck uses this height as the cornerstone of his thinking, but corrupts it by adopting it to his own height (176 cm). For his calculations, Le Corbusier obviously based his idea on the metre (100 cm) as a universal standard, a measurement that in De Boeck's case becomes 96.17 cm (176:1.83). Several works were born from this conversion, but in the case of Mikado LDB Modulator, the artist added reference data that makes the reading of the work even denser, by converting these dimensions into the Anglo-Saxon imperial system of measurements. The markings in red letters on the sticks are therefore in LDB inches, LDB feet or LDB yards.

One of the artist's ideas is, on the one hand, to emphasize the vastness of the world or the universe (that Man tries to grasp by measuring it for example from the micro-metre to the light-year) and on the other hand, by suggesting that we measure this

world based on what is intimate to us (how else to measure it than with our own eyes, our hands...). In a sense, De Boeck draws a parallel with old-fashioned measurements which referred to the human body: foot, cubit, etc. All these standards sometimes seem absurd even if they do have a historic explanation.

Referring to the notion of standards, it is pertinent to ask how the artist decided how many sticks to make. Being keen to use a mathematical reference, he adopted the beginning of the mathematical sequence revealed in 1202 by Leonardo da Pisa, also known as Fibonacci. Despite the rigour of the sources of inspiration, we can feel a lot of humour in this work. Moreover, here we are seeing the tradition of sculpture on the ground, the joy of playing games, the idea of chance, fragility and skill.' (Text: Olivier Meessen)

Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain

7.01.1960 (musica viva)
2016

Courtesy: LMNO, Brussels

The Brazilian artist duo, Angela Detanico and Rafael Lain, is the association of a semiologist and a graphic designer, which started working together in 1996. *'Their work can be related to several art tendencies that gave life to Brazilian modernist avant-garde movements such as concrete art and the visual poetry of the Noigandres group or digital art. However, since they are living at a different time, a time when many aspects of these movements are part of everyday life, making reference to them introduces a playful, if not ironical, dimension that derives from the ambiguity created by those works. Here, language seems to have taken over, because the works are built on the voluntarily improper use of the coding and decoding work that characterizes the flow of information in contemporary society. The game of transposing codes and perceptions is always a cunning exercise in discovery and creativity. It is in these deviations of the improper that we find the infinite task of language, composing and decomposing the world. Through this process, language is once again allowed access to full experimentation.'* (From: Amplitude, Museu Berardo, 2013 - Pedro Lapa)

In their work 'musica viva' they replace the typeface of the poster of the eponymous Swiss festival with their own 'helvetica concentrated'. Their encryption is based on the measuring of the filling of the different letters used in the original Helvetica typeface. These values are transcribed to the radius of a circle resulting in a visual encoding of the original text dating from 07.01.1960.

Their encoding of standard symbols into visual and personal codes plays on the threshold between the decipherable and the undecipherable, the recognisable and the unrecognisable, becoming half-scientific, half-symbolic cosmogonies. Their practice resides precisely in this linguistic and cognitive curiosity, an interest in the logical as well as the odd features of all the idioms used.

Original text:

Donnerstag den 7 januar 1960, 20.15 uhr, grosser tonhallsaal, zehntes volkskonzert der tophalle-gesellschaft zürich, als zweiteskonzert im musica viva-zyklus
leitung erich schmid, sollisten kurt wolfgang senn, orgel, wilhelm walter dicks, bariton, kammersprechchor zürich, leitung ellen widmann und fred bath, tonhalle-orchester, st.galler kammerchor, leitung werner heim, zürcherische erstaußführungen klaus huber <fitania instrumentalis> (1957) hans studer orgelkonzert (1951) wladimir vogel jona ping doch nach ninive erster teil des oratoriums, für bariton, sprecher, kammersprechchor, chor und orchester (1957/58)
karten zu fr.1,-2,-3-,tonhallekasse jecklin, hug kuoni, genossenschaftsbuchhandlung depositenkasse oerlikon kreditanstalt

Esther Ferrer

Actions corporelles
1975 + 2013

Courtesy: Angels, Barcelona

'Esther Ferrer (Spain, 1937) is a multi-media and performance artist known for her work with the ZAJ group. Born in San Sebastián, in the 1960s, Ferrer and painter Jose Antonio Sistiaga created there the Free Expression Workshop, which led to the founding of the Experimental School, a space dedicated to provide artists with the opportunity to create avant-garde works.

In 1966, she joined ZAJ, an experimental music and performance art group, closely associated with the Neo-Dadaist movement, Fluxus. Ferrer carried out her first performance in 1967, and since then, has continually focused on the role of the spectator, and the relationship of the body to space throughout the act of measuring, in a style she termed the 'rigorous absurd.' (Source: artnet)

In the exhibition are show two video performances of the naked artist measuring her exposed body and exploring the dimensions of the space, the scene. The first video originates from 1973, the second of 2013 where the aged artist exposes herself to the same protocol adding to her 'rigorous absurd' the exposure of time.

Fred Forest

Le mètre carré artistique
Journal Le Monde, 20 septembre 1977
1977

Courtesy: Private Collection, Brussels

Fred Forest has spent his life taking on what he considers non-artistic roles – media-man, sociologist, journalist, trader of the imagination, Robin Hood of the art institutions, technological painter... These shifting roles make him a controversial artist engaging the question of media and their technological development, actions he often conceived in collaboration with the philosopher Vilém Flusser.

In 1977, Fred Forest launch 'The Artistic Square Meter', a project that leads him to create an authentic real estate corporation promoting 'artistic square meters'. Through the initiation of media events he aims to denounce speculation by blurring the lines between real estate and art speculation. In order to do so, he purchases a 20m² plot near the Swiss border, which is officially designated as 'artistic' square meters at the local register office and places ads in 'Le Monde', in France, and in 'Die Zeit', in Germany inviting readers to invest in a square meter presented as 'artistic' and totally open to speculation.

Continuing his investigation he takes part of a public auction at Espace Pierre Cardin to trade the first artistic square meter. But the District authority blocks the sale. With a last minute trick, Fred Forest turns the artistic square meter into a 'non-artistic square meter' to save the situation. In the Press Conference the associated art critic Pierre Restany proclaims:

'The fact that I am tied to the great undertaking of the artistic square meter, shows that, through a demystification of art, Fred Forest reaches the very roots of art. Which is beauty as a fetish object, beauty selling beauty as such. But at the end an artistic square meter is just a square meter. Which means a totally abstract notion of geometry, and precisely one Descartes could meditate on'... 'And the reference to the most simple and fundamental geometry data, the square meter, makes me think about what art, and art as such, can generate: understanding, pleasure, happiness, and a supplement of soul.' (From: Pact, Fred Forest)

Space-Media
Le Monde, 3 Mai 1972
1972

Courtesy: Private Collection, Brussels

'Space-Media' is an early example of Fred Forest experiments with 'blanks', first published in newspapers and then by interrupting television and radio emissions. '(...) Forest's work can be seen as part of the conceptual emancipation from the pictorial that marked the late 1960s, privileging the notion of an 'open work'. In his blanks, the work is not just unfinished, but has not even begun, the creative act being left entirely to the reader, viewer or passer-by. His actions also reconnect to the tradition of the monochrome, a tribute to the researches of Mondrian and Klein. A relation he draws further attention to in two later TV works (Le bleu à la télévision, hommage électronique à Yves Klein, 1984 ; Hommage à Mondrian, 1989).' (From: Fred Forest, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2017 - Alicia Knock)

For Forest the 'surface' of communication and information media constitutes the ideal and pertinent space for contemporary art. By appropriation of their codes and networks, it can propose new forms and strategies of expressions and reflections.

Michel François

'Michel François is a conceptual artist and makes sculptures, videos, photographs, printed matter, paintings and installations. He claims no signature style but creates a web of shifting connections between his works in each different exhibition. Michel François uses an economy of means to transform seemingly uncomplicated objects and materials, or traces of past events, into deeply resonant carriers of meaning. His sculptures can be seen as an exploration of cause and effect, and the ways in which simple gestures can change the status of an object or have important consequences.'
(Source: Xavier Hufkens website)

Ma taille, le 25.1.1989
1989

Courtesy: Private Collection, Belgium

Michel François' sculpture 'Ma taille, le 25.1.1989' consists of a leather belt girding a circle filled with plaster and resin representing artist's belt size on that date. The work takes part of a series, where each moment of body measurement has been taken at a specific moment in the artist's life. Some of them suggest to relate to a specific, supposedly emotional moment such as 'ma taille comme si j'étais enceinte' while others don't provide any indication besides its date.

In this work we are in front of a simple date, which like On Kawara's date paintings points to an 'undefined' moment and which leaves us with the questions of what we remember. But rather than relating it to a collective memory through the means of a

newspaper cover which On Kawara glued in the back of the painting, Michel François brings it to a personal dimension, through the measuring of his body. By referring to a state and act which we all know from everyday life, the sculpture addresses our awareness of our self, as a human body.

Le monde et les bras (ce que je peux embrasser)
1991-2015

Courtesy: The Artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

The work is an imprint of the artist bending over a table filled with plaster to measure the matter, the world in front of him, of what he can embrace. The title suggest a performative act which he has carried out 13 times referring to a common expression 'to embrace the world'. The remaining imprints are giving it a sculptural, tangible dimension.

Hamish Fulton

Mètre
2012

Courtesy: LMNO, Brussels

'The photograph of the English artist Hamish Fulton refers to the creation and adoption of the meter as a measure - the standard meter. He uses it as a starting point for an action, a walk made in absence of any public in Paris, on July 11, 2010. The text-legend of his photograph shows how the artist has connected seven times in one day, the 'point zero' of the forecourt of the cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris to the 'standard meter', engraved in a stone of the Parisian facade in Rue Vaugirard. In doing so, he links the two historical points that have led to the convention of the meter and consequently to a fundamental understanding of geographic, cartographic and geometrical space.

(...) We owe the invention of the meter to two French astronomers, Delambre and Méchain, who left Paris in 1792 in two opposite directions, in order to measure the circumference of the earth and to define the base of the metric system. They travelled the world for seven years. Under the authority of the government, their objective was to propose a universal measure by which international exchanges would be facilitated and which would be supported by a universalist vision of the world. The zero point, is the starting as the arrival point of their trip, as it is for the walk of Fulton.

(...) If Fulton seems to honour the meter, the meaning of its action escapes signifi-

cantly. Although the world is measured in meters, Fulton's action takes the course back to the footsteps of the walking man. Indeed, he counts 41 16 steps between the two extreme points of its course. Thus, he is not interested in the precise metric value from one point to the another, but he establishes the human step as unit of scale taking in account the approximation value due to the divergence of the magnitude from one step to another, in short by its subjectivity.

(...) The artist's choice to repeat the same path seven times is in reference to the seven years of scientific activity of Delambre and Méchain and brings it to the singular process of repetition and memorization. Thus, Fulton's walk can be described as a discipline and a medium - as a way to oppose to the production of materialised objects.' (From: *Rendre le monde à sa mesure*, Lydie Rekow-Fond)

On first view the photographic image appears as a documentation, but on close looker there are few elements of Fulton's walk. Rather than a reconstruction, the photograph invites to imagine his journey. Further his work relies on historic elements, and documents their appropriation by artistic action. Even if he is often associated to conceptual art, his work clearly exceeds its tautological or self-referential approach, but inscribes it in a post-modern cultural critique.

Mark Geffriaud

Bit
2015

Courtesy: Collection Veys-Verhaever, Brussels

'Bit' is a multiple making use of metal bars commonly employed to assemble hand grips on each side of a door. On the two extreme holes of these bars he engraved a pair of eyes to point out the distance between the eyes, this time related to the crossing of a door. This crossing recalls an effect which we all have already experienced in our daily lives known as 'Doorway Effect'. On arrival you forgot what you were thinking about when you left. Some researchers have shown that this mental block occurs through passing a doorway.

According to them, the memory is not a continuous recording, it works episodic. People passing a doorway experience a 'divide' in their memory provoking a sort of refreshment. When entering a new memorial sequence, we have lost some of the previous.

To this discovery Geffriaud adds a comment: the thickness of a door is about 7 centimetres, the same distance as between two eyes. Drawing a relation between the anthropomorphic measure with the one of cognition, Geffriaud underlines that these few centimetres are the necessary distance to sequence and to substitute one information by another and as such to transform it. Whenever two views or memory sequence are combined into a single one a kind of superimposition appears which, because it is double, provoke a confusion as it suggests an unknown sense. If the resulting perception of the world is puzzling, it is because it has nothing to do with the rational observation which have been at their origin. In this work Geffriaud relates the cognitive fragmentation to the construct of the meaning of the artwork.

Marco Godinho

Variable Measures
2013-2015

Courtesy: LMNO, Brussels

Marco Godinho's practice revolves mainly around notions such as displacement, measurements, time and memory. He mostly uses everyday objects and especially the ones from the working environment.

In variable measurements, Godinho sanded a folding wooden double meter until all graduation disappeared. From memory, he seeks, with the help of a pencil, to redraw each millimetre of the instrument. Progressively the gap between the precision of the norm and the fragility of manual action increase. By doing so he measures our ability to memorise and reproduce a common convention, which is an essential notion to our understanding of space. Consequently Godinho exemplifies what divides objective convention to subjective perception.

Alexander Gutke

Measure
2011

Courtesy : Private Collection, Paris

Alexander Gutke is a Swedish-born artist developing a conceptual and minimalist approach, 'yet there is often a surreal twist that can seem animistic, due to an esoteric focus on the technical media that has delivered many of our pop-cultural experiences.'

The wall mounted 'Measure' made from brass sheet, transforms a domestic object – the textile measuring tape – into a Möbius strip. The Möbius strip, also called the twisted cylinder, is a one-sided surface with no boundaries. It looks like an infinite loop, and reassembles the infinite sign.

Here the twisted cylinder with engraved metric markings becomes both a poetic and deadpan metaphor of paradoxical nature that conveys the concept of the infinite surface. 'Measure' playfully engages with the notion of 'eternity as the sheer weight of infinity,' which is a common theme in Gutke's work.

Hans Haacke

Precipitation Minus Evaporation
1969

Courtesy: The Artist

Hans Haacke's work has been conceived in the context of Lucy Lippard's exhibition '557,087' which took place in Seattle in 1969. The exhibition is taking part of the 'Numbers'-series, where L. Lippard sent empty postcards to conceptual artists of that time. The postcard functioned as an invitation to participate the show. The artists filled in the postcard with the instruction for an artwork to be produced in for the exhibition. Haacke's 'Precipitation Minus Evaporation' was installed at UBC following his instruction:

'Acrylic plastic tube 64x2 1/4x2 1/4" is implanted into ground, upright. Precipitation enters and collects inside. Evaporation decreases water level. At 12 noon every day the balance between precipitation and evaporation (net content) is measured in inches, recorded on chart, signed by recorder and marked on the outside of the tube with a grease pen.'

His instruction belongs to his early works, focusing on art of process and physical systems. Interested in biology, ecology and cybernetics in the mid-sixties, Haacke was influenced by the ideas of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, especially those outlined in his 'General System Theory'. For the Austrian biologist and philosopher, a living organism is an open system that continuously changes depending on its dialogue or interaction with the environment. Haacke's early works transpose this concept to the realm of art.

His 'Precipitation Minus Evaporation'-instruction can be seen in direct continuity of his famous 'condensation cube'. They summarise Haacke's interest in closed physical systems, biological growth and random events, while emphasising the idea of art that has lost its representative and referential ability. As Haacke himself explained: *'The conditions are comparable to a living organism which reacts in a flexible manner to its surroundings. The image of condensation cannot be precisely predicted. It is changing freely, bound only by statistical limits. I like this freedom.'* (New York, October 1965).

Michael Johansson

Frozen Belongings
2010

Courtesy: The Artist and Collection Family Servais, Brussels

'I am fascinated walking around flea markets finding doubles of seemingly unique, though often useless, objects I have already purchased at another flea market. Despite the fact that I did not have any use for them even the first time, the desire to own two of these similar objects becomes too strong to resist. The unique and unknown origin of the object increases my desire to want the double – the unlikelihood of this sensation repeating itself produces an attraction that is too strong to resist.(...) I am intrigued by irregularities in daily life. Not those that appear when something extraordinary occurs, but those that are created by an exaggerated form of regularity. Colours or patterns from two separate objects or environments concur, like when two people pass each other dressed in the exact same outfit. Or when you are switching channels on your TV and realize that the same actor is playing two different roles on two different channels at the same time. Or that one day the parking lot contained only red cars. These irregularities, these coincidences, are another focus of my artwork.' (From: artist web-site)

The assembly of these objects into a restricted volume of a predefined form allows him to give shape these irregularities while it introduces another component: to order these things under the constraint of a common measure.

LAb[au]

interstice, Sept. 2018, Société
2018

Courtesy: The Artists

The artwork follows a simple protocol: a geometer measures with highest accuracy the space and marks his triangulation points on the floor. His/her resulting drawing is superposed to the original plan of the architect. On this basis is drawn a map pointing out the gap between both, the added or missing millimetres and the difference in angles.

By unfolding the map the visitor is invited to explore all limits of the space and to look at what is inside from the marked triangulation viewpoints. By doing so his perception is redirected and his attention is drawn to this little tiny space, the interstice, which exists between the plan, what has been projected, and its realisation, what has been done - as if we could measure what separates the concept and the reality; our ideas with our achievements.

LAb[au]

Positions of Past Presence
2018

Courtesy: The Artists

Inside a selected zone of a wall every existing hole is filled with a coloured screw. These holes measure, render visible, the impact of the past seven exhibitions having taken place on that surface. The screws directly address our memory to remember something which has existed at that very position; a trace.

Moreover, the chalk outline operates as a frame containing an arrangement drawn from other works of art, other intentions, but which now throughout this gesture have turned into something else, something new.

LAB[au]'s work is conceived as a protocol, a box of single coloured screws which is provided to a person activating the work. The person is proposed to place one or several of these screws in existing holes of a selected zone of his/her choice. By doing so, it draws the person's attention to something in the 'past', as this simple and subtle act is the 'presence' of a new intention. It puts in relation the absence of art as it materialises the person's perception of his 'position' to art. Through this vehicle the protocol addresses the 'intentions' of art making; as being an act between intention and conception. The activated protocol within the exhibition further reflects the specific context of the exhibition and the artists' double role as being artist and curators.

Jan Robert Leegte

'...the materials I first used were basic HTML objects, buttons, scrollbars, frame borders, table borders, and also plain colour fields and found images. I questioned what it was that rendered this practice similar to making installations rather than collages. At first it was the simulacrum of real world interactive elements (buttons, window frames, etc.). The operating system extended this haptic strategy with traditional paper-based forms, like check boxes, text fields, lists, etc, and, along with the form elements and the interactive document, led to an ecosystem of fake 3D, interactive objects.'

The Dutch artist Jan Robert Leegte explores the crossover between the physical and digital worlds through what he labels 'net-installations'. They explore the nature of digital materiality and its manifestation within both online/virtual/digital and offline/physical/analogue spaces, and the relationship between these spaces as they constitute a single reality.

scrollbars
2004

Courtesy: The Artist

One of Leegte's most known works is based on the transposition of the iconic 'scrollbar' from the digital space into reality. It is a free-standing structure that appears to be two scrollbars projected on a wood structure painted white. The projection is coded in computer language, in contrast to being drawn with a computer program, and which witnesses its digital presence.

By projecting the digital and visual symbols of the user interface into the real space of the exhibition, Leegte interweaves the measures of the screen space, the pixel, with the metric ones of space. This co-existence underlines the intention of the art work. Normally the scrollbars indicate the amount of space beyond the actual visible space on the screen but which in the exhibition space suggest something to be there but which we can't see nor access. Here the 'digital' space is an experience in the real one, beyond virtual reality or other simulacra.

Selection
2006

Courtesy: The Artist

'Selection' is another of Leegte's works exploiting digital signs in real space. A selection tool marks a space of 100x100 cm on the wall, but its selection is empty. Normally we use the selection tool to outline something we want to select but here we are staring helpless to an empty space. Our view is directed to the wall, it is the wall which is selected in its raw physical materiality. Normally, a mark would witness a measurement for an action to happen or a zone of transformation. Here, Leegte uses a semiotic trick to bring the digital realm into our reality exploiting the language of one to question the reality of the other.

Rokko Miyoshi

Rulers
2017

Courtesy: The Artist

In June 1792, the astronomers Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Delambre and Pierre-François-André Méchain set forth on their journey to measure the meridian arc, to not only define the length of the metre but also to make it a democratic standard for everyone. Even if two hundred years later we know that Méchain's calculations were erroneous, we take for granted the meter to be precise and exact and this everywhere in the world. But still today, despite the rapid technological progress, many meter rulers are produced that carry different lengths. As the artist explains:

'I take the human condition as a central theme of my work and examine the illusive nature of reality, be it physical, conceptual, or virtual. Through the means of simple mass-produced utilitarian throw-away materials I elevate, activate or negate their social and functional potential. Therefore I employ strategies of displacement and narrative re-contextualization to peel away the different meanings of these elements and reintroduce them into new discourse possibilities. I deconstruct and reduce ideas, experiences, spaces, objects and images to their essential meaning, to explore our shifting interpretations of what is known, what is real and how we see.'

Claire Morel

Bulletin 72 - Lawrence Weiner - Art & Project - 1973
2014

Courtesy: Collection Veys-Verhaever, Brussels

The work is the activation of a protocol which Claire Morel has conceived following an invitation by Nathalie Daviet-Thery to re-appropriate the Art & Project Bulletin number 72 realized in 1973 by Lawrence Weiner.

The protocol belongs to a series entitled 'surface encrée' started in 2003. Since 2011, the project has taken the form of a library containing a series of protocols, potentially to be activated and composed by:

Espèces d'espaces (Georges Perec - éditions Galilée - 2003),
Tractatus logico-philosophicus (Ludwig Wittgenstein - éditions Gallimard - 2004),
Le voyage d'hiver (Georges Perec - éditions du Seuil - 1993),
Bulletin 103 (art & project - 1974),
Bulletin 72 (art & Project - 1974).

In the case of the Art & Project Bulletin number 72, Claire Morel is representing the amount of ink used to print the Bulletin by a condensed surface corresponding to this amount; a 3.66 x 3.66 cm inked square.

The library shows her interest in the relation between art and literature and the possible links one can draw between written and visual language throughout the measuring of a common denominator, the ink used to describe an artwork which becomes a new artwork.

OMA / Rem Koolhaas

The image of Europe / EU Barcode
2001

Courtesy: The Architects

'Following the Nice, France, Summit in May 2001, the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, invited a group of intellectuals to two brainstorming sessions to discuss the expectations, needs and functions of Brussels as capital of Europe. The final report summarises the main ideas and proposals resulting from those meetings. It aims to contribute to and inspire future decision-making. (...) OMA addressed Europe's presence in Brussels through the architecture of its institutions, but also went a step further, addressing Europe's representation at large: its symbols, the visual language of its communiqués, its media presence,... etc. (...) OMA attempted to develop a visual language conveying Europe's essential idea in a direct and powerful way. This operation resulted in a series of illustrations, or rather 'image-bites,' of which the barcode is one. The barcode elongates and merges the flags of current EU member states into a single colourful symbol.' (Source: Architect's website)

By analysing the colours contained in the flags of the member states and putting them in relation to the size of their population, a common sign is proposed. Here measurements are a tool to construct a colourful and unifying symbol.

Roman Ondák

His Affair with Time
2003

Courtesy: gb agency, Paris and Private Collection, Paris

Whether working with installation, photography, drawing, or performance, Ondák underpins his work with processes, embedding them into the course of an action. The action extends over time, transcribes a scenario rather than explaining it, and draws its attention to radically minimalist objects or gestures. As the artist explains:

'I did not measure my sun with the intention of making a work of art. I measured it regularly for two years, like any other parent. Then I realized that this act materialized the first conceptual encounter of a child with the notion of time. Obviously, children do not perceive things this way, we alone see it through our adult eyes. I decided to take two pictures of this door-frame with the engraved marks, keeping the camera in the same place, the second picture being taken a few minutes after the first one. These two photos are identical. We do not see any difference, except that one of the photos is a little darker than the other because the light has changed between the two shots. I show them in form of a diptych. If we look at them carefully, we have the impression that there is a much larger lapse of time between the two images. One would assumed that there must be another mark somewhere on one of the photos, which would reveal a gap of three or four months between the two shots. But in fact there is none. Four years later, I had the idea to extend the work to a performance (Measuring the Universe), offering it to adults. By asking them if they wanted to be measured a public event is created from a gesture that usually belongs to the intimate. It also can remind each adult of their own experience in their childhood and at the same time, this work alone, in its simplicity, denies exposure, with very few means.'

Rafaël Rozendaal

Popular Screen Sizes
2018

Courtesy: The Artist

In his artwork 'Popular Screen Sizes', Rafael Roozendaal is translating the eponymous measurements into a series of mirrors which are presented in descending order against the wall. The artwork is a reduction to the measures of the commonly used screen sizes, ranging from TV, computer, tablet, phablet and phone screens. Here the descending size represents the technological reduction to its essential; or the minimum size needed to make sense out of information.

But the series of mirrors display nothing else than a reflection. Like Art & Language's mirroring Untitled Painting from 1965, the pictorial convention is turned upside down and the inspection of the object becomes introspection of the subject. Here the measures of screen sizes becomes a mirroring image of our body and the loss of our presence.

Christophe Terlinden

Comptez jusqu'à cent
2006

Courtesy: Collection éditions keymouse, Brussels 

Christophe Terlinden is a Belgian artist whose work comes in various forms, from drawings to interventions in the public space, through sound, video, graphics and design. Simple from the first sight, his works are often a result of an insignificant or minimalist gesture, charged with a political vision whose formulation is often ironic. 'Comptez jusqu'à cent' is a drawing which can be described as *'the mathematical narrative to learn to count. Pedagogy for the artists, otherwise, to abstain'*.

Ignacio Uriarte

From 6h to 8b
2011

Courtesy: The Artist and Nogueras Blanchard Gallery, Barcelona

'When I quitted my last administrative job in order to work as a full-time artist, I realized that the new gained freedom implied a great deal of responsibility. Under no circumstance I wanted to abuse art for the sake of a personal liberation, which would have turned me into a cliché-artist (rebel and marginal). On the contrary, I decided to stay in my own personal 'petit-bourgeois' reality in order to deal with it from the inside, using the expertise acquired over the years.

That is why I have not stopped using the same tools and methods, similar to those of any office employee, working in a routine way and with routine as my major focus. My starting point is the little creative moments within office-routines, which mostly have a ridiculously small 'artistic' aspect to them. Examples: When we scribble during a phone conversation (20. Bic Monochromes, 2005) or when we rip off a page from a block (10. Blocs, 2003) we are creating small paintings and sculptures. The systematic repetition of these activities according to predefined rules turns them into meta-routines, into re-enactments of the Sisyphus myth. The only difference is that the resulting pieces register in detail the methodical and repetitive labour that was necessary for their production.'

In his monochrome series each separate drawing is made with each individual pencil of the Castell 9000 series, fifteen in total, covering a full greyscale with every possible graphite hardness from 6h to 8b. Here the standard measures of a commonly used object defines a tonal sequence whereas the human and time-bound component of routine is made visible through a range of non-intentional irregularities.

exactly one kilogram.

Moreover, pearls are spheres made of nacre produced within the soft body of some mollusks, especially bivalves, around other particles that enter the animals body. The best-known pearls are considered gems or precious stones for their symmetry and characteristic luster. Precious pearls are produced in vast majority by oysters pertaining to the Pteriidae family.'

His installation incorporates the reflexion about perfection and measures, and the associations between both: while linking the universality of the measure to the universe he investigates the notion of universality.

06.09.18 - 10.11.18
Thu - Sun
3 - 7 pm

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