

rodolphe janssen

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Thomas Lerooy

X & Y

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X and Y are the symbols of interchangeability: X can stand for anything, as Y can stand for anything except what X stands for. In the XY coordinate system, the point where the horizontal x-axis and the vertical y-axis intersect is the point zero, the origin and in essence the Void from which Everything arises. X and Y are also the sex chromosomes that form the basis of life. The coming together of sperm and egg cell creates the female XX or male XY cells.

X & Y is the title of the exhibition which Thomas Lerooy created for Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, which consists of an ensemble of five new drawings and a bronze sculpture. Thomas Lerooy found inspiration for his series of drawings in the Hofkirche of the Austrian Innsbruck, where the cenotaph of Emperor Maximilian I is surrounded by a monumental series of 28 life-size bronze sculptures. The imposing statues represent historical heroes who guard the cenotaph for all eternity. The whole forms an unparalleled and baroque all-encompassing experience.

In the centre of the gallery space whose floor is covered, for the occasion, with a pinkish skin- coloured carpet, one stands, as a spectator, surrounded by five large drawings. Each drawing represents a classic image, made up of a combination of visual fragments, drawn on different sheets. At the basis of Lerooy's re-use of classical sculpture lies the idea that something new in art can only originate from the combination and reinterpretation of what already exists. He combines and copies fragments that interest him, to bring out, in this way, something entirely new.

The heroic pose of each statue stands in stark contrast to the bizarre attributes they are laden with. Evidently, the process of decay has already started to affect the sculptures: some statues seem to melt away while others appear to have been repeatedly perforated or split in half. The heroism has, in other words, deteriorated into tragic degeneration: Thomas Lerooy transforms the sculptures' aura of eternity into perpetual decay.

The viewer, standing at the centre of the focal point of the five drawings on the kitschy pink carpet, is himself put on display. The exact place of the cenotaph in the Hofkirche in Innsbruck, is also the place where the viewer stands in the gallery. Thomas Lerooy in a way creates a tension field between the viewer and the surrounding space, which can be experienced as uncomfortable and even intimidating.

The bronze statue Falling apart together is the sculptural counterpoint in the exhibition. It is the genesis of something new that comes after the decline. Limbs of a classic sculpture that have become debris are used in a composition that is totally estranged from human anatomy, yet in a bizarre and even ironic way it formulates a response to the classical-modernist visual language and the rigid belief in renewal at all costs.

Tanguy Eeckhout

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