

TRACES, Analogies and Dissonances

BIE MICHELS

01.03.12 - 31.03.12

The whole project is like a journey, a route where answers and stories are collected along the way. Collecting is a compulsive activity, a way of having control over the world, but also a mirror of the collector. By its fetishistic nature, collecting is a way to de-contextualize and achieve a new coherence. A collector delights in analogies and deviations, but above all in the small differences within the domain of his choice. The banal is raised to the subject of special interest. Stories and thoughts, of people and about things are my collection.

Bie Michels (°1960) makes video installations and paintings. Inconspicuous things, simple stories, small feelings and actions, in which she experiences a grandeur, fascinate her.

For the project TRACÉS, Analogies and dissonances, Michels works on the dividing line between installation art, video art and documentary. As a visual artist she 'infiltrates' in the Kringwinkel (Thrift Store) of Antwerp and goes in search of conversations and images. She sees the Recycling Center as a repository for a multitude of objects, a workshop for people from different backgrounds, a melting pot of nomadic events, but above all as a crossroads of stories.

For a year, Michels 'worked' in the Recycling Center and created a different mental space through her presence as an artist. Intimate, with only a small camera. In close-up and medium close, objects, people and actions were observed and testimonies recorded. Michels works closely to the skin of people and objects. The closer, the more complicated and disruptive their relationship proves to be. Objects are understood differently by different people. This is expressed in a personal language.

Besides people's interest in the possible histories of objects and their imagination, Michels is interested in the role of contexts in the meaning given to the objects. And to what extent objects succeed in being a communicator and passing on meanings.

Bie Michels always asks the same questions. Is an object alive? Does an object have a soul? Does his matter have a power in itself?... Many answers are given to all the questions that Michels asks. This (inexhaustible) multiplicity is shown here in a total installation, in which the different stories are placed next to and above each other and enter into mutual relationships. A collection of analogies and dissonances: the exhibition is ambiguous and narrative. The interaction between the different screens deepens the essence of the project, the intersection of all trajectories. For example, there are the stories of the people who work in the recycling plant, the films about things (the layering of objects, the meanings attached to the objects, the travels of objects, the actions of people with objects), the record of the emptying of a house that remained untouched after the owner's death for a year and a half, "the Recycling Center" that contains the massive amount of objects. In the portraits of people and objects, recognisability and not wanting or being able to be recognisable come to the fore, so that intimacy and distance play at the same time and the boundary between the two becomes palpable. This exploration of intimacy, of the boundaries of divisibility and recognition is a constant in Bie Michels' work.

All films are without beginning and end and are composed of small 'cells'. They are not intended to be viewed in full. It is more important to capture the essence of each film and, as a visitor, to compose your film yourself by wandering and picking fragments.

Artworks from the M HKA collection

Objects are layered, become carriers of images. Works of art are also objects. What are the differences? Bie Michels selected a number of works of art from the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp. They are works of art that due to their (partial) recognizability, the Kringwinkel employees, the artist and the visitors stimulate to make links and associations with their own life and thoughts on the one hand and with her project on the other: Michels chose the works of art because of the formal associations (e.g. Obelisk by Luc Deleu, the works of James Lee Byars, the works of Ulrich Meister) and the substantive

associations that refer to travel, intimacy, identity and society (e.g. the installation by Kasmalieva & Djumaliev, Strik's portrait, CK Rajan's collages). The works are questioned and viewed, just like the objects in the recycling plant. They enter into a dialogue with each other and with the installations of Bie Michels. (see www.muhka.be for more information about the collection works of the M HKA).

Accompanying publication 'TRACÉS/TRACINGS' with contribution from Dieter Roelstraete, Rik Pinxten, Christophe Van Eecke, Ellen Reymers.

This project will travel to Netwerk Aalst (23.3-13.5.12) and Lokaal 01 Breda.