

CUCKOO CHICK POSTS CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Via e-mail, an artist receives a change of address message from an acquaintance, with a photo of the view from a window of the new home as attachment. For fun, the artist plays around with the photo in Photoshop. He changes the tint of the picture and brusquely removes some of the elements in the image that disturb him. And suddenly the picture appeals to him so much that he decides to show it in his next exhibition, under his own name. He thus takes possession of the view of his relocated acquaintance, like a cuckoo that has its egg brooded out by another bird.

The association with the cuckoo is not coincidental of course. After all, the artist in question, Ton van Kints, has been working for some time on a substantial series that he calls Koekoeksnesten (Cuckoo's Nests): circular, sawn-out wooden or cardboard panels or plates from which he removes, with a power jigsaw, an inner circle, like an egg from a nest. He then restores the 'egg' to the 'nest', but in a slightly different way, at another angle, so that the outer circle is placed under tension. When you look at the new configuration, you almost physically feel the tension there. Van Kints enjoys generating as much emotional effect as possible with a minimum amount of resources and as little display of virtuosity as possible. By allocating eloquent titles to his works, he generates a wealth of metaphoricality. Cuckoos do not build nests and if they were to do so that would have something extraordinary about it. A cuckoo chick in a cuckoo's nest represents the homecoming of a born outsider, in much the same way as a cuckoo chick in a strange nest is a changeling in his own residence. There's tension on all sides, but it is valid all the same.

But there is more. Van Kints' Change of address marks not only the cuckoo's nature but also a forthcoming change of course. Van Kints is well known for his work that arises as a result of his transparent method of processing sawn and reassembled plate material. Recently he appears to have developed a more installation-related kind of work, while manipulated photography is also playing an increasingly significant role. With this visual relocation, Van Kints transports his old themes to the new nest, like household effects. These themes include transparency, perspectivity and windows on the world.

At first sight, Van Kints' 'Change of Address' displays a Dutch landscape: a low horizon under an empty, fleecy sky. Birds seem to fly through the air, but on closer inspection these marks are only bird droppings on the window pane, while the horizon turns out to be the window frame. In a strange way, the slightly fouled, transparent foreground elevates the perception of the cloud sky in the background.

Here, Van Kints is playing with a universal and actually rather everyday visual principle: we enjoy looking at the world through a window. For a quite mysterious reason, everything viewed through a window looks 'more real'. The window pane creates order and distance between the perceiver and the perceived, and this distance is necessary to be able to perceive anything at all. All classical painting is based on the vista, the see-through – which is the literal meaning of the word 'perspective'. The frame of the painting is like a window, the shiny layer of varnish is like the glass pane that intensifies the colour and generates the distance that emphasizes and alienates the representation in the background, making it remarkable, giving it status.

In the work of Ton van Kints, this 'glassification' plays an important, albeit not always striking role. For instance, in the eighties, he produced spatial objects made of drawings, photos and paintings in water-filled aquaria. Through the layer of water, the images were more intensely visible as completely different worlds, even at a distance of only a few centimetres. This 'glassification' also plays a role in his assembled wooden objects: he often pours transparent or semi-transparent paint over his work – he recently also used epoxy resin – to create distance to the raw material of the wooden panels, stimulating perception by means of screening.

In his latest work, on show in Galerie Ramakers, Ton van Kints again plays his game with autonomous visual principles that not only lend themselves for normal art-critical reflection but also invariably offer an opportunity to contemplate the narrative, the personal and the emotional. In this framework, Van Kints is the poet of conciliatory friction, of coherent absurdity, of the familiar strangeness that is essential to life itself. As such, his work can be surprisingly comforting.

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