

## Sculptural dimension of objects

I cannot remember exactly when I saw Hans' work for the first time. I think it was Ignace Berten from Bruges who drew attention to his light objects. Many people came into contact with his work at the Biennale Interieur Kortrijk 2000, 2002 and 2004. The presentation in cooperation with Benoit was a revelation to many of us. Besides, I still believe his design for the lighting in the City Theatre of Bruges in 2002 to be a very intelligent extension; a design that is present as well as not present in space. Meanwhile his work progressed steadily through three lines: designs under the label Essential, his light objects for Light and a number of creations for the German company e15. Furthermore, the delivered projects in commission, related to architecture and interior.

I'm looking at the work of Hans De Pelsmacker every day, year after year. Some ten years ago I bought a vertical light sculpture, the Frame 2, which I placed in the stairwell of my terrace house. The brightness of this object can be adjusted, not technologically by means of a dimmer, but by a simple movement of one's hand. This object keeps fascinating me, an object that gives a different light effect simply by the touch of one's hand.

Hans De Pelsmacker is everything except an industrial designer. This object is not a creation of someone looking for new technical prospects. This 'lamp', if I may use this word, can only be created by a mind searching for the sculptural dimension of objects.

The interface between the visual arts and applied art is very fascinating. In the past a number of artists managed to explore the bounds between sculpture and functional objects in an unexpected way. Here I'm thinking of the artist Isamu Noguchi, who around 1940/1950 created a number of pure sculptures that have become icons in 20<sup>th</sup> century design. The support for his 'Coffee Table' from 1944 is a pure sculpture, but by adding a glass plate the object coincidentally got a functional dimension. Noguchi is not a designer, he is a visual artist looking for the spatial implications of the form.

Maybe the most important artist that contributed to the three-dimensional 'functional sculpture' is the American Donald Judd. "The configuration and the scale of art cannot be transposed into furniture and architecture. The intent of art is different from that of the latter, which must be functional. If a chair or a building is not functional, if it appears to be only art, it is ridiculous. The art of a chair is not its resemblance to art, but is partly its reasonableness, usefulness and scale as a chair. These are proportion, which is visible reasonableness. The art in art is partly the assertion of someone's interest regardless of other considerations. A work of art exists as itself; a chair exists as a chair itself." (Donald Judd in 1993)

The work of Hans De Pelsmacker in Roeselare is unlike his previous work. It is not a radical change, but a patient search, 'un travail patient', next to the space and the sculptural dimension.

What is a bookcase anno 2009 in a world where practically everything can be found on the internet? We can create a world without paper, but have to conclude that never before so much paper is being printed and so many books are being issued.

Books are dear to me, they are objects. Objects one does not merely read. A book also has a direct relationship with the hands: you open and close a book, you leaf through a book in search of something, a book is a collection of thoughts and imagination. To be surrounded by books is wonderful, it is the recorded stream of thoughts, reflections, and so much more. The pages hold the words and the image, the book is a cosmos.

Man writes and prints books. But he is also confronted with the problem of preserving and storing books, of giving books their proper place in space. Hans De Pelsmacker does not make a bookcase that is fixed against the wall, no set of horizontal shelves one on top of the other to store books efficiently.

His project is standing in space, detached from the wall. You can walk around the object, it has the ambition to get possession of space. But are these creations truly the bookcases we expect? Everyone will have to admit that this is a solution to store a collection of books. However, these sculptures rather look like a shrine where, if desired, one book can be given its niche, one book that has moved its reader so much, that he or she wishes to give the world of this book temporarily a special place. Or are these creations rather a mental space, an ordering of the mind, like the author of a book forces the reader to follow him in his plot, to accept the imposed structure of the story? Here, Hans De Pelsmacker goes back to one of the main themes in sculpture: the relationship between pedestal and sculpture. Nothing is unambiguous here, because everything becomes one.

Marc Dubois  
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