

Kris Van Dessel Vanishing Points

I leave my brush in the East. And set forth on my journey. I shall see the famous places in the Western land.
Hiroshige

A genie was released from its lamp when Kris Van Dessel decided to go down a radical new path in 2010, a path that allowed his artistic research into the concepts of space, distance and time to proceed in a way more befitting of his attitude as an artist. His process continues to develop like an alchemistic excursion into the new visual possibilities that lay dormant in the trappings of the everyday. It is a voyage of discovery characterised by a contemporary scientific factuality and at the same time by an ardent dedication reminiscent of the idealistic research dynamic of the Early Modern period. From banal materials such as stone, concrete, glass and metal, the artist attempts to extract an inherent value by subjecting these materials to physical processes. Matter is enriched through a process of sublimation, giving rise to a parallel metaphysical reality.

The physical atelier, with its three-dimensional familiarity, serves in the artist's working method as a benchmark or personal reference point by which everything can be carefully measured and weighed. The studio window takes on the function of a bridge between the inside and outside world. The atelier space translates on a meta-level into a mental safe haven for the artist from which to understand his unique position in the world as a human being and from which to also assess reality from an artistic perspective.

A key work in this exhibition, which silently reconciles the above objectives, has already inconspicuously entered the world prior to the public opening of Vanishing Points and been distributed far and wide. **Window (2012-2014)** found its way into the outside world in the physical form of a multi-layered photo that was printed in 500 copies on the invitation cards for the exhibition. It is the outcome of a year-long project in which the artist took a photo every time he arrived at his studio, always pointing the camera at a fixed spot on his studio window. For each exposure, the time of day determines, through the play of light, whether the camera will capture an image of the outside world or a self-portrait. This approach results in a reversed perspective; the vanishing point in the image shifts to the viewer, in this case in the form of the artist observing the outside world. The event becomes internalised. The layering of the images creates a multiplicity of vanishing points on a horizon of infinite new possibilities.

The same principles are explored with equal impact in the two-part work **Mass of Transparency (2014)**, in which a solid concrete monolith bears a relationship to a fragile aggregate of glass. The former assuming a place indoors, the latter on the border between the inside and outside world. The two masses are in balance. They each represent the total volume all of the glass in the studio combined. The one is created through the compaction of matter, while the other acts as a compound of vanishing points with a volatile potentiality.

Circumstances (2014), which stands apart in the exhibition space, is a work arising from an almost literal 'coalescence' of circumstances. In an experiment exploring resistance with the use of tin soldering wire, the artist establishes that the perimeter of the floor of his workshop corresponds to that of the two gallery spaces. The mass of tin could be seen as the ultimate standard measure of our Western society in the form of an apparently trivial ruler. However, the melting of the soldering tin creates a highly personal, portable measure that subtly absorbs both the reference space of the artist as well as his presentation area.

This form of serendipity is a regularly recurring semantic concept in Van Dessel's artistic discourse. This extra-scientific phenomenon can be observed in his work as an alertness to chance occurrences taking place under the physical circumstances and conditions of his artistic experiments. From the usable residues of these tests there arises a coherent and authentic oeuvre of visual work with a dual

character. On the one hand, it is in its essence extremely stable while, on the other hand it is immeasurably ephemeral in the way it manifests and distributes itself in our physical reality. However, in presentations of his work we rather tend to see habits of thinking made tangible and constantly subjected to change, as opposed to ready-made sculptures or static objects.

The central theme that informs Van Dessel's work is that of the pervasive power of time. This immaterial factor plays an important role in both his creative process and the presentation of his works. What interests the artist so deeply is what happens to the work throughout its lifetime, from its entrance into the world up until its ultimate disappearance into the folds of reality. Climatological and mechanical processes are deliberately allowed to work their effects on the materials used. The works themselves are permitted to be receptive to the constant stream of signals and disruptions stemming from our worldly reality. Viewed in its totality, the most recent work of Kris Van Dessel unfolds nevertheless as an oeuvre that has a life beyond the bounds of time and the erratic currents of our fleeting world.

Beatrijs Eemans – 31 October 2014