

19.09.–28.02.2021

gerlach en koop  
*Was machen Sie  
um zwei?  
Ich schlafe.*

Ismail Bahri  
Kasper Bosmans  
Daniel Gustav Cramer  
Mark Geffriaud  
Voebe de Gruyter  
Ian Kiaer  
Kitty Kraus  
Gabriel Kuri  
Rita McBride  
Guy Mees  
Jacqueline Mesmaeker  
Helen Mirra  
Laurent Montaron  
Melvin Moti  
Jean-Luc Moulène  
Henrik Olesen  
Annaïk Lou Pitteloud  
Emilio Prini  
Bojan Šarčević  
Shimabuku  
Steve Van den Bosch

*and a contribution by writer*  
Haytham El-Wardany

One night, he dreamed he was lying in the garden on his stomach. At the same time he knew with perfect certainty that he was dreaming and lying on his back in bed. And then he resolved to wake up slowly and carefully, to observe how the sensation of lying on his stomach would change into the sensation of lying on his back. 'And so I did, slowly and deliberately, and the transition—which I have since undergone many times—is most wonderful. It is like slipping from one body into another, and there is distinctly a double recollection of the two bodies.'

— Frederik van Eeden, 'A Study of Dreams',  
in: *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. 26, London: Society for  
Psychical Research, 1913.

# Jean-Luc Moulène

## *Objects in a Conversation*

(...) I am convinced that objects have things to say to each other, which led me to think that we could just as well not open this exhibition to the public, so that it wouldn't be disturbed by superficial glances. I would love to have an exhibition in which we would arrange objects and then close down. And when opening up again, we would ask them: 'So, what conclusions have you reached? What's the new Charter of Objects' Rights?' Because, after all, we could gather objects from our time: we would lock them up at the Salle du Jeu de Paume\* in Versailles for eight days, and we would ask them to draw up a document about the rights of objects. ~~I would like for my objects to be considered for what they are and what they say to each other, and not because I created them.\*\*~~ I would like for objects to be able to tell visitors that it is possible to do that kind of thing, that they are not given a key, but that the door is wide open. The idea of an audience is not attractive to me, it is a concept born from marketing. I'm happy if there are one or two observers with whom the objects resonate, bodily or otherwise, like a carbon or lead resonance, but I am not deluded when it comes to comprehension, which is achieved, outside the artwork itself. It involves social relationships to which shapes must be given. Art can be used for that purpose,

but it is just a tool—whether good or bad, for artists may very well want war rather than peace—in the practice of the artwork itself. Representing the common space necessarily involves tensions, which can be sharp.

— Jean-Luc Moulène, 'Objects in a Conversation', in: *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2016, p. 134.

\* The Salle du Jeu de Paume is famous for the oath that deputies took, during the French Revolution in 1789, not to adjourn before the constitution was drafted.

\*\* We would like for these objects to be considered for what they are and what they say to each other, and not because we chose them. (gerlach en koop)

# Rita McBride

The sculptures of Rita McBride often need to be adapted to the space where they are exhibited, or the space needs to be adapted to the sculptures. They are not site-specific and they are not site-specific. Think of the *Marble Conduit* as a guide, an assistant or a friend to the double wall that's been built for this exhibition. A Murphy wall. On 18 June 1912, William Lawrence Murphy received a patent for a *Disappearing Bed*. Sometime later, he became the eponym for a fold-down bed. The concept of guidance appears often in McBride's work, either as a metaphor or in a very straightforward way.

The artist Douglas Gordon once distinguished between working walls and walking walls. Working walls are white: they are straight and people can imagine them to be for pictures,

or for thoughts about pictures. Walking walls are for people to walk along, or past, or both. They are the walls you see on the way back from looking at pictures or thinking about pictures. We like to think of a third type: sleeping walls.

There is an exercise that helps on sleepless nights: imagine a room and then slowly strip it of everything inside. First remove all colour, then every piece of furniture, one by one, the objects, the windows, the doors, the skirting boards. Then remove the corners with their shadows until a completely white space remains. No details. No dimensions. Cloud-like. Now your thoughts will have difficulty finding something, anything—a damp spot, a half-finished drill hole, a collapsed cobweb—to attach to and thus keep you from sleeping. It's a personal exercise.

Some people find a featureless white space highly disturbing. Not soothing at all. A friend once told us about a film—a science-fiction film where the prison consisted of an endless white space without any walls. It was a prison where the convicts all stayed in one place, paralysed by the awareness that even the thought, the illusion of escape had been taken from them.

Giorgio Agamben wrote a short essay on the role of assistants in literature: characters without identity whose function is to translate situations and whose mere presence is in itself a message: 'In Kafka's novels, we encounter creatures who are referred to as *Gehilfen*, "assistants" or "helpers". But help seems to be the last thing they are able to give.

They have no knowledge, no skills, and no "equipment"; they never do anything but engage in foolish behaviour and childish games; they are "pests" and even sometimes "cheeky" and "lecherous". As for their appearance, they are so similar that they can only be told apart by their names (Arthur, Jeremiah); they are "as alike as snakes".\*

\* Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* [Profanazioni, 2005], translated from Italian by Jeff Fort, New York: Zone Books, 2007, p. 29.

3

## Kasper Bosmans

The written instructions Kasper Bosmans gave us to make this mural are very precise in some respects and very imprecise in others. All deliberate, of course. We had to choose the specific hues for the blue and the brown and the height of their separation. According to Bosmans the border is not just a division; it is a horizon.

A confluence comes to mind here at the GAK, on this island in the middle of the river. Two flowing bodies of water that join together to form a single channel. Completely at odds with the title of this work *No Water*, or perhaps because of it. Often these waters have different colours; frequently a clear one that is blue and a muddy one that is brown. There are spectacular examples where the contrast between the two colours is particularly strong, but not here in Bremen. While there is confluence at this particular point in the river,

it is just the Weser flowing into the Weser with no noticeable difference in colour. And besides being at odds with the title, calling the border between two flowing bodies of water a horizon would also run counter to Bosmans' instructions. Such a border would be a vertical, graphically speaking.

If you draw a line on a wall from left to right, saying 'This is the horizon' as the start of something—a mural, a story, a performance—then that line would only correspond to the real world for people who are exactly your height or, more precisely, people whose eyes meet yours exactly. This horizon would bind all of those people. Everyone else would see it as a representation of the horizon. They would follow along, but from a different perspective. By drawing the horizon very low (60 centimetres) or very high (275 centimetres) we can be fairly sure that it will be a representation for everyone who visits the exhibition.

We decided to approximate the brown hue in the eyes of somebody specific and the blue hue in the eyes of another person (who is connected), but we will not disclose who.

4

## Kitty Kraus

*To Fall Asleep*

I'm falling asleep. I'm falling into sleep and I'm falling there by the power of sleep. Just as I fall asleep from exhaustion. Just as I drop from boredom. As I fall on hard times. As I fall, in general. Sleep sums up all these

falls, it gathers them together. Sleep is proclaimed and symbolized by the sign of the fall, the more or less swift descent or sagging, faintness.

To these we can add: how I'm fainting from pleasure, or from pain. This fall, in its turn, in one or another of its versions, mingles with the others. When I fall into sleep, when I sink, everything has become indistinct, pleasure and pain, pleasure itself and its own pain, pain itself and its own pleasure. One passing into the other produces exhaustion, lassitude, boredom, lethargy, untying, unmooring. The boat gently leaves its moorings, and drifts.

— Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep* [Tombe de sommeil, 2007], translated from French by Charlotte Mandell, New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 1.

5, 6

## Ian Kiaer

*Cylindrical House Studio, 1929*

The distinctive shape of Konstantin Melnikov's two conjoined cylinders and strange hexagonal windows speak of a structure beyond everyday dwelling. Its geometry, white surface, and remote, singular poise appear designed to provoke rumour of more complex workings within, as if the circular solution and eclipsing diameters might conform to some mystical planetary alignment or map an overlapping design of halos for an icon of orthodox saints. There can be few buildings with this many windows, over sixty in all, that remain so insistently insular. It may even be the quantity that works to deny any

notion of view and emphasises their alternative function as luminaries. They absorb light from outside but hardly provide an inward glimpse in return. There can be no looking in. It is somehow appropriate that their origin can be traced to a fortification surrounding Moscow's ancient Belgorod district, as they affect to alienate and repel the world.

It's not only the windows' honeycomb shape that might prompt the idea of bees, but the way in which its smooth exterior wall, if sliced open, would reveal a complex of interlocking work and living spaces where the incubation of thought and sleep meet. The architect wanted to integrate sleeping and working, dwelling, and thinking throughout his building; hence living-room, studio, and bedroom alternate and dissect like a layered Venn diagram. It is said of the cylindrical motif that he had the Russian hearth in mind\*—the hearth as core of the house with the notion of warmth enclosed, its most interior part. To conceive this notion of hearth/heart is to turn the whole building inwards. To think of Melnikov's building is to think from its inside.

In the house, work and sleep are curiously connected. The circular bedroom is directly below the circular studio. The walls are painted warm yellow; the beds are stone slabs that rise up from the floor like altars, rendering sleep an almost sacred inactivity. For Melnikov, sleep was an area of intense study.\*\* He wrote about a lifetime of sleep, twenty years of lying down without consciousness, without guidance as one journeys into the sphere of mysterious worlds to touch unexplored depths

of the sources of curative sacraments, and perhaps of miracles.\*\*\*

Here sleep becomes a means of passing from one world to another, mysterious and indeterminate, a place for work's reserve to be re-stored and nourished. However, such spaces have a way of shifting tone, from sleep's place to death's space. From the thirties on, sleep's curative sacraments turned to restless slumber as Stalin's censure became the architect's incubus, frustrating any possibility for practice. In such light the warm glow darkens into night, and those concrete beds come ever closer to mortuary slabs. Without recourse to sleep Melnikov turned to dreaming, closing inwards to past projects and painting pictures.

The beginning of those concrete beds perhaps lay in the commission the architect received to design Lenin's glass sarcophagus. In this, his first built structure, he had to provide a plinth of sleep for a cadaver forever preserved, a place of pilgrimage and peering—a windowed tomb. There is something determinedly circular in how this first work, which signals his professional birth, presents itself as a death work. As if somehow opportunity demanded he earn through experience what he had conceived through commission. He could not know that his cylindrical house studio—designed with such optimism as an ideal space for living and work—would eventually become a place for sleep, a house for a corpse.

— Ian Kiaer, 'Cylindrical House Studio, 1929', in: *Picpus*, issue 4, Autumn 2010.

\* A. A. Strigalev, 'The Cylindrical House-Studio of 1922', in: *Konstantin Melnikov and the Construction of Moscow*, eds. Mario Fosso

and Maurizio Meriggi, Milan: Skira editore, 2000, p. 90.

\*\* In 1929, Melnikov designed a 'Laboratory of Sleep' for workers in the 'Green City', see: S. Frederick Starr, *Melnikov: Solo Architect in a Mass Society*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 179.

\*\*\* *ibid.*, p. 177.

8

## Voebe de Gruyter

A busy, two-lane road lined with trees in Fuzhou. Traffic noise drowns everything out. To the left are old wooden houses undergoing demolition; to the right is a construction site where new concrete apartment blocks are being built. The air is incredibly dusty and polluted, as it is in most Chinese cities. I not only smell the particles with every breath I take, I can almost taste them as well. Several people are trying to pick fruit from the trees with long sticks. I do not know what kind of fruit it is; I've never had it. They are shaped like apples, but hairy.

A row of shops lines the wide sidewalk. Large display windows show all kinds of lacquered objects. I walk into one of them. The lacquer master offers me tea. Zheng Chongyao is his name. I look around. The space is really long and subsequent paper screens mark the space's transition from a shop to a workshop. Several people are at work. At the very back—about 30 metres from the street—is a room with water on the floor where no one is allowed to go. I am told that the lacquered objects dry here, where there is no dust, only to be re-lacquered

12 hours later. One layer per day, one per night. The whole process is repeated again and again, sometimes for weeks on end.

I step back out onto the street.  
I am struck by the contrast.

I return to the shop a week later with apples sculpted from memory. I need all of my skills and charm to convince Zheng Chongyao to do something that goes against everything his workshop is set up for, and that is to take my apples outside to lacquer.

Each apple is a record.

Weeks later, I come back to pick up the apples, accompanied by my Chinese friend. They are perfect. I ask the lacquer master where this natural lacquer is produced. He says it is made in the old part of town, where there are no street signs or house numbers. We ask around for hours and are about to give up when finally someone comes to guide us.

We enter a square courtyard through a high, cast-iron gate surrounded by old wooden barracks. Dirty windows. We peek in. The raw lacquer is mixing in slowly rotating machines.

A man emerges from one of the barracks. He comes walking towards us in a white, short-sleeved shirt spotted to perfection. It is Chen Guohua, owner of the factory. We go to his office, a tiny space where the phone rings constantly. We buy pots of raw lacquer from him and my Chinese friend asks where the lacquer trees grow. It seems he prefers not to reply, but when I suggest exchanging his phone and his shirt for new, clean copies, he agrees.

The residency ended, so my Chinese friend promised to take the new items to Fuzhou. Months later he told me that he couldn't find the factory anymore. He had inquired everywhere and found out that it had disappeared. I got the phone and the shirt back.

The shirt is a record.

The telephone is a record.

9

## Laurent Montaron

Endlessly undulating magnetic tape inside a machine from which the lid has been removed. It's a Roland RE-201 or Space Echo, a machine that musicians use to add an artificial echo to their instruments. It was the first of its kind in the 1970s but is still popular today, despite digital alternatives. Two different kinds had been invented at the time; one artificially reproduced the acoustics of space to create reverberation, or 'reverb'. The other artificially reproduced the acoustics of a canyon, an abyss, returning the sound as an echo. The Roland belongs to this last type, carrying in its interior an artificial canyon. The properties of this canyon can be adjusted with all kinds of controls, which brought to mind the shallow abyss described by Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert—the one that follows him everywhere once he steps outside, clingy like a dog, not deep enough to swallow a head, a body, legs or even feet. The one that has yet to mature, to grow up, to become serious.\*

The echo effect was achieved by laying down a recorded sound on magnetic tape, which was then looped and read in succession by a series of juxtaposed tape heads. As the tape came back to the start of its loop, the sound was silenced by a final tape head that erased the recording.

The Roland RE-201 has no output as it is not connected to a loud-speaker—not that it would make any difference, because there is no input. We don't hear anything. All we can do is look at it, mesmerised, hypnotised, sleeping.

\* See the poem 'The Abyss of Mr. Cogito' by Zbigniew Herbert.

10

## Melvin Moti

A vintage *LIFE* magazine from 1967 with the actress Mia Farrow on the cover. For her role in the movie *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Roman Polanski asked Farrow to slowly lose weight to coincide with her mental dissolve, which is completely at odds with the weight increase one would expect from a pregnancy. The viewer sees how Farrow's character turns into something gruesome simply by becoming paler and skinnier. Disturbance is implied not by excess, but by reduction.

The magazine is exposed to a lot of sunlight, thus repeating what happened in the movie, draining life from Farrow. And yet the blue of her eyes becomes brighter and brighter.

*Miamilism* can be defined as the perfectly 'natural' appearance of something that keeps the 'natural'

unseen. It is a 'vehicle word' for the theatrical minimalism that is characteristically embodied by Mia Farrow. Farrow's make-up in *Rosemary's Baby* made it appear as if she had no make-up on, as if she were showing her most 'natural' face. But Farrow also visually blended into the background of the set, epitomizing the manipulation of the seemingly 'natural' like no other silver-screen personality.

Stan Laurel's eyes were blue, very blue. When he started in movies, the sensitivity of film stock was such that blues were really difficult to capture. Cloud formations against a blue sky were rendered as an even, white surface on screen. The blue of Laurel's eyes was bleached out almost completely when projected, giving him a very unnatural and frightening look. It made it impossible for him to work in comedy. The advent of panchromatic film stock that was able to reproduce all colours equally in black and white film saved his on-screen character and the rest of his well-known career as a comedian. Just in time.

11

## Gabriel Kuri

Entering at number fourteen we took the black stairs in the *vestibulo*, past the abundantly pink telephone corner with the ashtray—ashtrays in every room—and the dustbin, where folded brown cloths softened the rough lava stone tiles on the floor. We took a right turn and avoided going up to the famous roof terrace by opening a door to the left, one that led to a

small, low hallway painted yellow. On the right was the bedroom where the architect spent his last hours; on the left was the afternoon room, or 'the white room', as he called it. All of the walls in this house seem to have a mysterious embracing quality, isolating every room from the one next to it. He countered this by placing large mirror balls in every room. Harmony is not what makes a house liveable.

We immediately noticed that the large, golden Mathias Goeritz painting wasn't there, nor was the man with the bird-like hands—no one could remember who had painted it, and now that we noticed its absence, we saw that the large, golden painting above the stairs wasn't there, either. Its eccentric position tight in the corner, under the window and next to the door, brought to mind the often ingenious ways that daylight was guided into rooms and hallways in the days before electricity. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki wrote about how those who lived in the dark houses of the past were not merely captivated by the beauty of gold but also knew of its practical value; gold in these dim rooms must have served as a reflector. Their use of gold leaf and gold dust was not mere extravagance; its reflective properties were put to use as a source of illumination. While silver and other metals quickly lose their gloss, gold retains its brilliance indefinitely. That is why it was held in such incredibly high esteem.

The white room still had its record player; the floor was still covered in rugs with different textures that invite you to take off your shoes and socks, and the comfortable chair was still there, in all its brown teddy-bearishness with the little foot stool

in front. On the chair was a pile of neatly folded blankets, arranged according to colour. They were new. Blue, blue, blue grey, blue green, green grey. Colours of the sea. You could tell they were blankets because several had been pinned to the wall where the Goeritz once hung. The one covered in gold leaf. The painting that used to be next to it had been replaced by one depicting a man with similarly bird-like hands. The blankets were small and had airline logos on them. Long distance flight blankets; we recognised them. They were hung in a way that evoked the memory of one of the two Joseph Albers reproductions that the architect owned, the blue one from the study. What we thought were wash labels are labels all right, but the adhesive ones you find on apples.\*

A house for solitude.

\* *chinese whispers* by Gabriel Kuri previously featured in the 2019 exhibition *Emissaries for Things Abandoned by Gods* at Casa Barragán in Mexico City, where curator Elena Filipovic temporarily replaced the revered architect's personal art collection with contemporary proxies that alluded to the originals.

12

## Emilio Prini

'Confirm participation in the exhibition.' A telegram sent to Kunstmuseum Luzern in 1970 as the artist's contribution to the exhibition *Visualisierte Denkprozesse* [Visualized Thought Processes], probably his first use of a statement that Prini used again and again, always in slightly different formulations and iterations. Like the one typed on A4 paper—a standard—using an Olivetti 22 typewriter, one used

as the cover for a book with Germano Celant (a book that was never made). All versions backed—and evidently so—by Prini's presence in the world. That has changed since 2016. His death has put the work in a state of suspension, it has become a kind of testimony. *Omaggio a Emilio Prini* [Homage to Emilio Prini].

Wait a minute. The window's rattling.

'Se è possibile, non creo.' If possible, I create nothing. Previous works have been repeated in Prini's exhibitions, but never in the same way. These alterations were motivated by the new situation with which he found himself confronted. Prini introduced a certain limited number of ideas and works to the world that he constantly revisited, re-developed, re-framed or elaborated upon, keeping them in flux almost as if they were living material. At times he just revised a date, changed a title, or isolated a detail of an image. He might also photograph a work as a replacement for the real object, or made a copy (and threw away the original). Writing about authorship, originality, and uniqueness in Prini's work always requires a lot of question marks. His works resist finalisation. They are works whose main dimension is time.

13, 14

## Daniel Gustav Cramer

In a chapter about the apartment in his famous book *Species of Spaces*, Georges Perec tries to imagine a

space without a use. 'It wouldn't be a junkroom, it wouldn't be an extra bedroom, or a corridor, or a cubbyhole, or a corner. It would be a functionless space. It would serve for nothing, relate to nothing.

For all my efforts, I found it impossible to follow this idea through to the end. Language itself, seemingly, proved unsuited to describing this nothing, this void, as if we could only speak of what is full, useful, and functional.\* Then, in the last part of this section, he says something difficult to grasp—something mysterious that we keep coming back to: 'I never managed anything that was really satisfactory. But I don't think I was altogether wasting my time in trying to go beyond this improbable limit. The effort itself seemed to produce something that might be a statute of the inhabitable.'

In the beginning of the 1960s, Perec found a job as a *documentaliste*, or scientific archivist, at a big institution for sleep research. He stayed a long time—until 1978—and although he got the position by chance, sleep became a recurring theme in his work.

Thinking about the second *Empty Room* by Daniel Gustav Cramer, it occurred to us that Perec might actually be describing the impossibility of meeting his sleeping self.

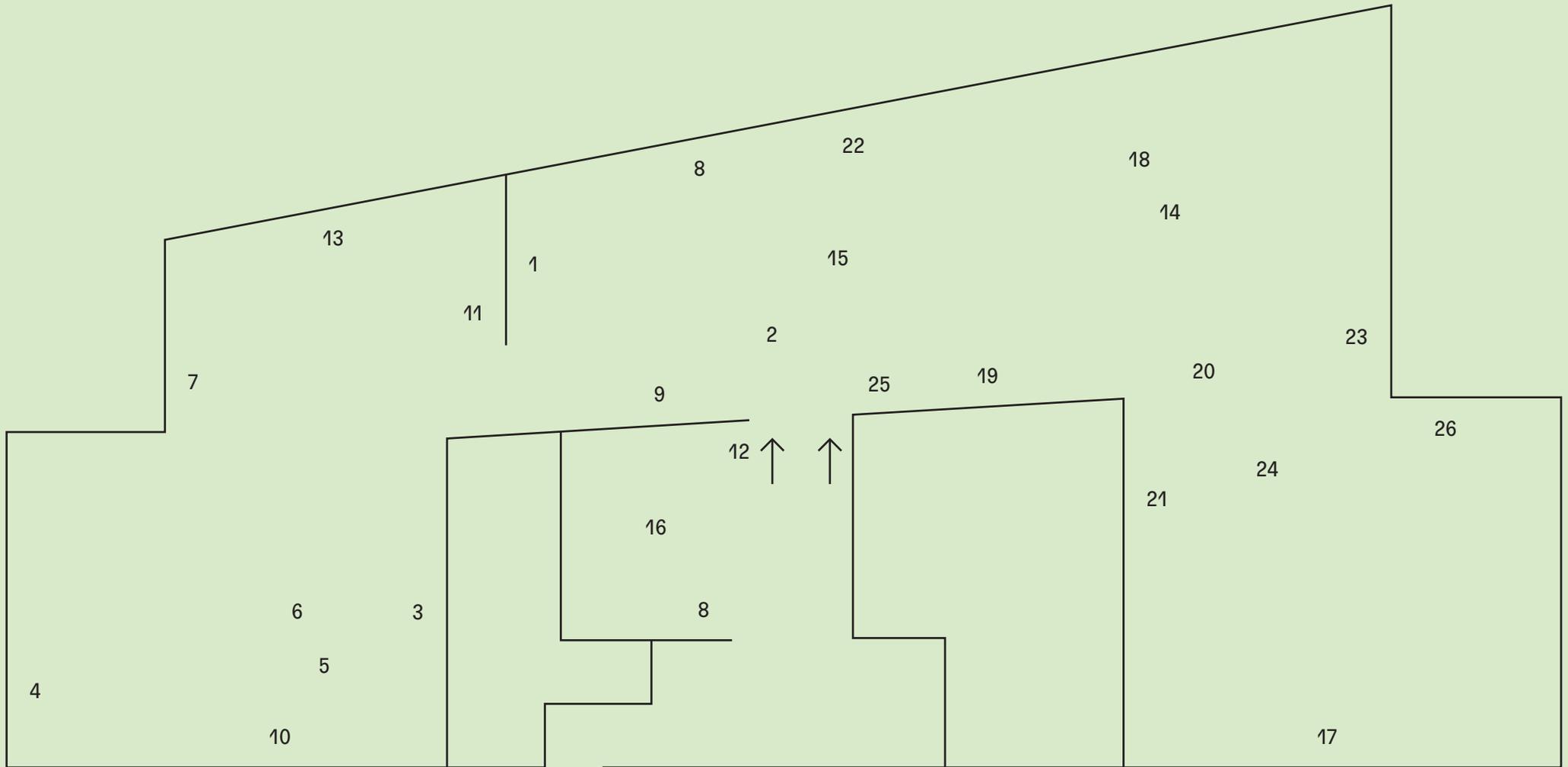
Feel free to take home a copy of the artist booklet *Empty Room*.

\* this and subsequent quote appear in: Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* [Espèces d'espaces, 1974], translated from French by John Sturrock, New York: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 33–35.

- 1 *Head Box*  
Jean-Luc Moulène  
Kitakyushu, October 2004  
Plywood 12 mm, Golden Bat  
green paint, 21 × 18.9 × 22.6 cm  
Courtesy: KADIST collection, Paris
- 2 *Marble Conduits*, 1992  
Rita McBride  
Carrara marble, 662 cm  
Courtesy: Brenda R. Potter Collection
- 3 *No Water*, 2019  
Kasper Bosmans  
Mural painting; acrylic paint,  
dimensions variable
- 4 *Untitled*, 2006  
Kitty Kraus  
Glass, 50 × 75 and 125 × 39 cm  
Courtesy: Galerie Neu, Berlin
- 5 *Melnikov project, lab b (silver)*,  
2011  
Ian Kiaer  
Silver foil, plastic,  
50 × 140 × 220 cm  
Courtesy: Alison Jacques Gallery, London,  
Marcelle Alix, Paris, and Galerie Barbara  
Wien, Berlin
- 6 *Melnikov, silver sleep*, 2020  
Ian Kiaer  
Silver sequins; metal foil,  
plastic, dimensions variable  
Courtesy: Alison Jacques Gallery, London,  
Marcelle Alix, Paris, and Galerie Barbara  
Wien, Berlin
- 7 *Bedroom*, 1975  
Guy Mees  
Pastel (blue, purple, black) and  
pencil on paper, 123 × 157 cm  
Courtesy: Gallery Sofie Van de Velde,  
Antwerp
- 8 *Fruit from Fuzhou*, 2012  
Voebe de Gruyter  
Apple; shirt owned by natural  
lacquer factory director Chen  
Guohua; new shirt copied by a  
local tailor from the shirt owned  
by Chen Guohua; phone owned  
by Chen Guohua; new phone  
purchased in a local shop to  
resemble the phone owned by  
Chen Guohua, dimensions variable
- 9 *Melancholia (replica)*, 2020  
Laurent Montaron  
Modified Roland RE-201 Space  
Echo, dimensions variable  
Courtesy: Monitor, Rome, and Anne-Sarah  
Bénichou, Paris
- 10 *Miamilism*, 2010  
Melvin Moti  
Magazine, 35 × 45 cm (framed)  
Courtesy: Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe
- 11 *chinese whispers*, 2020  
Gabriel Kuri  
Thirty-five airline blankets,  
stickers, dimensions variable  
Courtesy: kurimanzutto, Mexico City/  
New York
- 12 *Conferma partecipazione  
esposizione*, 1970  
Emilio Prini  
Stamp print on cardboard,  
21.9 × 47.9 cm  
Courtesy: Archivo Emilio Prini, Turin
- 14 *LXIII*, 2020  
Daniel Gustav Cramer  
Iron sphere, ø 9 cm\*  
\* This sphere is considered a work of art  
when it is placed in complete darkness.  
Courtesy: Vera Cortes, Lisbon; SpazioA,  
Pistoia; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

# Falling asleep

# Waking up



↑  
*Was machen Sie um zwei?  
Ich schlafe.*  
In an exhibition at the edge of  
sleep gerlach en koop display  
works by other artists  
19.09.–28.02.2021

13 *Empty Room*, 2020  
Daniel Gustav Cramer  
A room in Japan that remains  
empty and shut for the duration  
of the exhibition; artist  
publication with postcard,  
edition: 500, mirror, 33 × 27 cm  
Courtesy: Vera Cortes, Lisbon; SpazioA,  
Pistoia; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

- 15 *Bit*, 2015  
Mark Geffriaud  
Brass spindle, engraved,  
0.7 × 0.7 × 8 cm  
Courtesy: gb agency, Paris
- 16 *Perfect Europe (They)*  
Annaïk Lou Pitteloud  
04.06.2010, 20:32  
To be viewed on the smartphone  
of the exhibition attendant;  
colour, sound, 1:48 min, loop
- 17 *Sidewalk cover*  
(*Chicago Version*), 1998  
Helen Mirra  
Cotton, 152.4 × 1219 cm  
Courtesy: Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/  
Stockholm/Mexico
- 18 *Slampadato*, 2017  
Bojan Šarčević  
Stainless steel, mohair wool,  
245 × 130 × 72 cm  
Courtesy: MANIERA, Brussels
- 19 *As Yet Untitled 1*, 2018  
Henrik Olesen  
Glass, glue, metal brackets,  
paper, 45 × 61 × 20.5 cm  
Courtesy: Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/  
Cologne/New York
- As Yet Untitled 4*, 2018  
Henrik Olesen  
Glass, glue, metal brackets,  
45 × 61 × 18 cm  
Courtesy: Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/  
Cologne/New York
- 20 *Passing through the Rubber Band*,  
2000  
Shimabuku  
Rubber bands, wood, wall  
lettering, dimensions variable  
Courtesy: Air de Paris, Paris, and Amanda  
Wilkinson, London
- 21 *In the absence of Peter Friedl*
- 22 *Verloren Ruimte*  
[Lost Space], 1995  
From the archive of Guy Mees  
Papers, rolled; cardboard box,  
dimensions variable  
Courtesy: Gallery Sofie Van de Velde,  
Antwerp
- 23 *Saisir*, 2018–  
Ismaïl Bahri  
HD-video, colour, mute,  
31:45 min, loop
- 24 *I know but when you ask me,*  
*I don't*, 2010  
Steve Van den Bosch  
Spray glue, dimensions variable
- 25 *Introductions roses*, 1995–2020  
Jacqueline Mesmaeker  
Dyed cotton twill,  
dimensions variable  
Various positions  
Courtesy: Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège
- 26 *Wooden Pillow*, 1930  
Shaan Xi (China)  
11.5 × 19.5 × 6 cm  
Courtesy: gerlach en koop

15  
Mark  
Geffriaud

Every time you pass through a doorway, your thoughts are somehow reset. Most of what you had in mind is erased to make room, to adapt to the new space that you are entering. Though we usually don't even notice, it does happen that a person enters a room and then suddenly finds themselves unable to remember what they wanted to do there, or what they went there looking for. Scientists call it the 'doorway effect'. It is a feeling akin to waking up.

A door spindle—being the only element connecting both sides of a door—measures the distance between these two states of mind, making room for a whole new way of looking at this very simple piece of metal.

Measure it and several striking coincidences emerge. The distance range between the holes made to allow knobs to fit doors of different thicknesses are exactly the same as the distance range between the two eye pupils of a human adult, which is to say between 5.5 and 7 cm. The holes themselves measure 0.2 cm, which is the maximum contraction of a pupil, and the piece of metal itself has a thickness of 0.8 cm, which is the maximum dilation of a pupil.

In fact, this object marks a whole set of coincidences. It is a hyphen—a hyphen between different spaces, different territories, different states of being.

And remember, kings don't touch doors.

16  
Annaïk Lou  
Pitteloud

An Executive Series Ford Lincoln Town Car was found in the port of Antwerp. Koffie Natie, a coffee import-export company, found it submerged in its basin during a shipping manoeuvre, extracted and stored in its car park where it remained for many years. The car was probably new when it was sunk in the harbour, as evidenced by its perfectly preserved blue leather interior, while its bodywork bears the traces of its immersion.

The car was exhibited under the title *They* on the grounds of the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam during the open days of 2010. As it was impossible to sell or store this piece, the car was sold to a shady figure after the exhibition and may now be driving through the streets of Amsterdam.

The short film *Perfect Europe (They)* was shot when the car was discovered, on the evening before it was removed from the port of Antwerp. Thus one piece bears witness to another, of which nothing remains.

17  
Helen Mirra

Pathetic coverlet for concrete. Made of rectangles of typical American sidewalk size, connected with a slightly darker, fuzzy-mossy stripe. The sculpture can be installed at full length, or with some part of the

length accordion-folded at one end only. The fabric was dyed green in sections at a laundromat on the corner of Division and Paulina in Chicago, where Mirra lived at the time. The rectangles were thus in slightly different shades of the same hue, and have since become further varied by inconstant sun-bleaching.

18

## Bojan Šarčević

He had visited this park a few times already. He didn't make a habit of falling asleep in the middle of the day in an unfamiliar place and so he was frightened more than usual by this rather insignificant fact of having woken up there. On waking he paused for some moments; and although the situation itself wasn't threatening at all, he still felt a little sick. After all, he found himself pressed—that was his word—against the slightly wet grass, possibly in the company of people he knew nothing about. The only voices he could hear were ones he didn't recognize. Being frightened in that way was an old habit of his.

We forcibly pricked up our ears. Having been asked and after a few moments of uncertainty, he told us what it was that was holding him down. These were his words—he was convinced it was the arm belonging to someone else lying beside him resting across his neck, softly touching his cheek. He told us the arm was especially heavy. Grateful for this clarification, though not actually a satisfying one, he had then calmed

himself down by convincing himself it wasn't anything threatening. He even joked: 'If an arm is the only thing pressing you to the ground, then at least you can search for a way out with your eyes wide open!'

— fragment taken from 'Almost as if he had', a short story by Daniel Kurjakovic, in: *Bojan Šarčević: Une Heureuse Régression*, Kunstverein München, Köln: Snoeck Verlag, 2004, p. 332.

19

## Henrik Olesen

No Mouth  
No Tongue  
No Teeth  
No Belly  
No Anus

Sleep requires no specific part of the body. Your feet, legs, hands, or arms can be asleep, but that's just 'asleep'. Sleeping without a mouth, tongue, teeth, belly, or anus is no problem; any one of those parts can be done without, and others can be replaced or bypassed.

20

## Shimabuku

*Trying to Wake Up*

The night leaves me cadaverous.

The corpse has to be revived.

However, I don't have the impression of being a dead body in the morning.

If someone could see me at that time in accordance with my impres-

sions, I would appear as a sea of clouds, a globulous sea of masses of flakes, a huge object that no doubt borders on the stratosphere.

Cloud though I may be, I am well aware that this state has its enemies, that I will soon have to become active again, definite, reduced in size ... and that it would be wise to start moving in that direction (if it isn't too late for me to wake up, ever). I get busy immediately.

(...)

Courage! In this mass a will remains.

This headstrongness without a body is vaguely growing.

(...)

Soon I'll be able to get up. I am now just a few minutes away, and with no obstacles on the road to the near future, I am now a man like minutes away, and with no obstacles on the road to the near future, I am now a man like any other.

It happens, but much more rarely, that I awake (from this half-sleep I've been talking about) on four legs. In that case I need more time to return to biped shape, because—I think—of a certain propensity I have for living in that state, which I don't have for my cloud shape. I'd certainly be prevented from doing so even if I wanted to, and I would be too afraid to stay that way. Although, after all ... I've come out of it many times in the course of my life. But all it takes is once, when you forget how to deal with it and you stay that way forever, until you die.

(...)

— Henri Michaux, 'Trying to Wake Up' [Arriver à se réveiller, 1950], translated from French by David Ball, in: *Darkness Moves*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 95–100.

21

In the absence of

## Peter Friedl

*Do All Oceans Have Walls?* was an exhibition organised by the GAK in the city's public space. The artist Peter Friedl was invited. He presented the curators Eva Schmidt and Horst Griese with five different proposals, of which they had to choose one: *Bremer Freiheit* [Freedom of Bremen]. They chose to have shoes custom-made, one pair for each of the two curators and the artist. There was an announcement at the ticket office but no documentation. You had to bump into the curators by chance or make an appointment to see the sculpture (or was it a pedestal, as Horst Griese suggested?).

That was twenty-two years ago.

What happened to the shoes?

One pair was worn extensively and has since been thrown away; one pair is stored in a place that is inaccessible; and the third is unavailable for other reasons. None of the three can be exhibited at the moment.

Making a real gap—highlighting the absence of something—often enhances the desire to fill it, to clear the void, to make something incomplete whole again. It is a method that is sometimes used successfully. Following this idea, two shoebox-size cavities were cut inside the institution's walls. They will be ready to receive the two existing pairs of the *Bremer Freiheit* shoes during the exhibition. A pedestal for a pedestal. Placing them can be done anonymously, without permission or con-

sultation, without asking. Or somewhere in the world, someone could start wearing them again. They might pinch.

7, 22

## Guy Mees

In 1995, Bart De Baere and Lex ter Braak visited the studio of Guy Mees in the run-up to the exhibition *Onder Anderen* [Amongst Others] for the Venice Biennale later that year. They considered the places below and above the studio space the most memorable. Downstairs, where he received them, was an empty table with a palm behind it and cement tiles with patterns on them. No art. They had a conversation. An occasional strong statement was delivered casually. 'If I was a painter, I would paint the empty half.' Afterwards they went up and Mees showed them the works as he saw them every day: in cardboard banana boxes. Each box contained a series of rolls of coloured paper from which a composition could emerge. *Lost Spaces*, several of them, but in a rolled up state. At least one photograph of two of the boxes was taken as a record, as a perfect example of a work asleep.

The gallerist Micheline Szwajcer remembers that Mees didn't take long to install the *Lost Spaces*, no more than an hour, and it was done with unpretentious precision.\*

Lilou Vidal: Guy Mees approved a six-line text that defines *Lost Space*. You, Wim, had originally written the text in the 1960s as an introduction

to a play, but the text was subsequently reworked by Willem-Joris Lagrillière, who was at the time a junior copywriter at an advertising agency. This sort of ghostwriting and appropriation of language raises the question of the author, the work, and intention, all issues that Guy explores throughout his trajectory. Can we read it, then, as a sort of anti-manifesto?

Wim Meuwissen: Yes, though at first it was not called *Lost Space* but *Ongerepte Ruimte*, which translates as *Untouched Space*. A space that's intact, virginal, tangential. I would like to show you a sketch I made for you that might help us understand where that comes from. This is the house Guy lived in on Keizerstraat. His children slept here, and maybe he did too. The kitchen and all of that were over here. That's where he lived, but I've never been in there. He lived with incredible simplicity. And this space here was totally empty. It was an attic, entirely painted white. There was nothing there, nothing at all. Nothing but the 1830s architecture. Here you see the hallway leading to this white space, which was also totally empty, except for an armchair that he had covered with white fabric. And here was an Yves Klein table. That was all. Over here was a skylight that illuminated the blue table.

LV: It wasn't his studio, just an unused space on the periphery of the domestic area?

WM: Right. And people would come to see it. A poet, for example, and other people I knew. Artists. That's how *Lost Space* came into being. Guy and Lagrillière agreed on it, maybe, and I accepted it. Also, the

text I wrote became ... another text. It was no longer my reaction to the void. And because Guy didn't write, the text became a manifesto for his work. You can call it an anti-manifesto if you want, but it is a manifesto nonetheless.\*\*

*The Lost Space is an adjoining space. The Lost Space is complementary to present-day living space.*

*The Lost Space does not have a clear-cut function.*

*The Lost Space is space as utility object, in which bombast becomes more difficult, and tangibility easier.*

*The Lost Space is simply the body defined by shape, colour, taste, smell, and sound.\*\*\**

\* François Piron in conversation with Koenraad Dedobbeleer, Antwerp, October 2017, cf. François Piron, 'Nothing to Add', in: *Guy Mees: The Weather Is Quiet, Cool and Soft*, ed. Lilou Vidal, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018, p. 10.

\*\* 'About Guy Mees', a conversation between Wim Meuwissen, Dirk Snauwaert and Micheline Szwajcer, conducted by Lilou Vidal, in: *ibid*, pp. 161–162.

\*\*\* Guy Mees, 'The Lost Space', in: *Guy Mees: The Lost Space*, ed. Lilou Vidal, Paris: Paraguay Press, 2018, p. 18.

23

## Ismail Bahri

Somebody showing you something. What these things are—not things but fragments of things—you can't really discern. The wind makes it difficult to see more than a fragment when the hand opens. You see a fragment of a fragment. You are tempted to consider it as one, single thing. Maybe it is. A single thing

that changes shape, colour, texture while you're looking at it. It changes because you're looking at it.

An earlier version of the video is titled *Lâchers* [Releases]. A hand releasing again and again. Leaving it to the wind. But it's an ongoing project; whenever the wind is good, Bahri returns to add new material. This version is titled *Saisir*, a French verb that means 'to grab', also in the sense of 'to grasp', 'to understand'. The best English translation would be: *Seize*. And yet that would be just the opposite: a hand that tries to hold on to something. Keeping it from the wind, so that it doesn't blow away. Looking at it means that you're trying to hold on, too—to remember what you just saw.

'Repetition',\* says François Piron, 'is an instrument of insistence'. 'Repetition is a way of getting everything out of yourself and out of things in order to retain the tiny amount that resists', Ismail Bahri answers. 'I try to get to the point where it holds together, but in the hope that, from that point, having persisted, something continues to escape, a vulnerability that is expressed through tremors or vibrations.'

After many attempts, you finally wake up.

\* this and subsequent quotes appear in: 'Leaving It to the Wind', a conversation between Ismail Bahri, Guillaume Désanges, and François Piron, in: *Instruments*, Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2017, p. 158.

## Steve Van den Bosch

You can't look for *I know, but when you ask me I don't* in the exhibition, but you can find it. Finding it would be the equivalent of being slowed down by it, ever so briefly, when the sole of your shoe sticks to the floor almost unnoticed and then tears itself loose audibly: *kgrr*.

It's the same when you tear yourself from sleep, and that is often not quiet either—*kgrr*, startled by some unfamiliar sound that a part of your dormant brain, a part that is deeply hidden but still vigilant, registers.

You remember how suddenly the lights come on in a club, after the music has stopped and the silence, almost tangible, is only broken by these sounds of shoe soles sticking to the dance floor: *kgrr, kgrr, kgrr*. A wake-up call, a disenchantment.

One thing is missing here in the classic triangle between you—the visitor—the architectural space, and the object. Between the mounting glue and the visitor there is nothing, until saturation slowly turns it into an image to be seen. Subsequent visitors will eventually exhaust the work until it becomes its own documentation. Just an image, a documentary image. No adhesive strength left, no more sound to be heard. One would be tempted to think that the work is gone.

Wide awake.

## Jacqueline Mesmaeker

*Les Portes Roses* (1975) consists of thirty-two watercolours all depicting three pink rectangular shapes, each one slightly larger and paler than the one that came before. A long quote is dispersed over the thirty-two A4 sheets with one word (sometimes two) over each shape, a quote from the first chapter of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. We reproduce the quote here as it was printed in the catalogue raisonné published ten years ago by (SIC).\* We were surprised to find a pink paper wristband in our copy when we removed it from the shelf. A paper wristband to an event we apparently didn't attend, or maybe just one of us did. Which event? Neither of us can remember.

'There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key, and Alice's first thought was that it might belong to one of the doors of the hall\*\*; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open\*\*\* any of them.\*\*\*\* However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about

fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!\*\*\*\*\*

The disappearing doors will not be on display in this exhibition, but its counterpart will: *Introductions Roses* the fitting of pieces of pink fabric in certain *interstices repérés*, found gaps or blind spots in the artist's home that were photographed and made into a slideshow in 1995. Mesmaeker made it into a site-specific intervention (2019) for the Brussels exhibition space *La Verrière*, and it will now be especially adapted for *Was machen Sie um zwei? Ich schlafe*. The pink fabric will direct the gaze to the details of the room, expelling the cloud-like whiteness of sleep and giving way to the brightness of the day. The return of detail.

Yes, of course, Alice's white rabbit has pink eyes.

\* Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in: Jacqueline Mesmaeker. *Œuvres 1975–2011*, ed. Olivier Mignon, Bruxelles: (SIC) – Couper ou pas couper, 2011, p. 12.

\*\* Exhibited in BOZAR in 2020, we could see that the door 'hall' was already completely colourless.

\*\*\* You could see in the (SIC) catalogue that the 'open' door still contained a trace of pink.

\*\*\*\* The thirty-two watercolours end here.

\*\*\*\*\* *Until It Fitted!* became the title of a 2007 exhibition at Etablissement d'en face, perhaps as a way to make up for the remaining part of the quote. *Les Portes Roses* was documented during this exhibition. If the bleaching process continues at the same pace, we will see the 'little golden key' disappear in thirteen years time, the 'solid glass table' in twenty-six years ...

*A True Story*

Ring.  
Hello.  
Hello. This is Isabelle. How are you?  
Asleep.

Goodbye.  
Goodbye.

— Ray Johnson, *The Paper Snake*, Siglio Press  
New York, reissue 2014.

# Haytham El-Wardany

Re

Annotated fragments from  
*The Book Of Sleep*

## *Who is the Sleeper?*

A limb severed from the whole? A single self? A small group at rest? At the heart of every group is a wound which will not heal, its pain renewed every time some part of it falls away. Yet always the group will take the side of what remains visible, will privilege the living over the dead and place its hope in the future: the hope that the wound will heal with time. The group sees in itself a history of renewal and development, averting its gaze from a parallel history of loss and disconnection. But sleep does not look away; it turns to face this parallel history head on and, impelled by the catastrophe of loss, is drawn to what is visible no longer. The eye of the sleeper is fixed on the departed; all he sees of the community to which he belongs is its absent part, the cracks and breaks which spread and widen day after day. The group to which the sleeper belongs is a lost group, marching towards the open wound. It is not cohesion that holds them together, nor looking forward, but a weakness, a looking backward. Sleep does not want to bring ease to this wound buried in the heart of every group. It wants only to approach it.\*

\* To *recollect* is not to remember, or to cause a forgotten memory to reappear. To recollect is to approach the constitutive crack of sociality. To recollect is to tarry with the dead before burying them, and to stay with the cracks before they seal off. This is the necessary detour needed to reconfigure the social condition.

## *The Kingdom of Things*

The room is full of its things. There is a small desk by the door and a lamp beside the bed. There is a suitcase against the wall and a flowerpot on the window frame. In the desk drawer there is a passport and a marriage certificate. In the dresser drawer, a gold earring, a bracelet. A bright shirt has been carelessly tossed over the chair and abandoned on the floor is a sock pulled inside out. Leaving all this behind us, we are pulled towards the abyss called sleep. There, for a moment, time stops, we imagine that we have gone somewhere, somewhere else, but even as we enter it, we are cast back into the room itself, and this time not as a presiding force, but as one thing among its many, the thing which we've become in sleep propelled by irresistible sympathy towards the other things and seeping now, bit by bit, onto the pillow, then onto the bed, then out into the room. And just as we are transformed into things during sleep, so the things in our rooms transform into beings. They are not what we know. They lose their passivity and gradually return to themselves. No longer objects and implements, they are now bodies through which a hidden, inner motion flows. They are our things, which we resemble and which resemble us, and the deeper we fall into sleep

the more we settle into the things, or they into us, or all of us together into the room. In the fraternity of sleep we do not encounter things along the lines of power, but rather in the primordial matter, in the heart of its becoming. The flood of its first forms runs through us, and in us beats a pulse as old as the universe.\*

\* There is no *return* before parting. But to part is not to leave, it is rather to crack open. To return to reality is to then go through a crack, or—and this is more important—to install it if needed.

## *Waste*

History does not wait for the sleepers to wake. It is written by the waking, and only them. After all, what in all the hours of sleep is so worth recording that the history books should take it into account? Surplus hours, useless and unproductive. But these hours do not wither and fade as a surplus should. Night on night their numbers swell, become a great host. Yet a host quite unlike any other, because no matter how numerous, these hours never acquire any mass worth mentioning, nor presence. They are forever hovering in the background: ineffectual, ignored, a neglected excess that everyone knows about and no one speaks of. The years pass and sleep endures, a fine dust strewn over the pages of history, perhaps clumping here in the form of a dream, or as a vision there, but otherwise kept outside the lines, a soul which haunts everything which has not been written. In the face of this neglect, sleep offers a response, which is repetition. Like all essentially real things, sleep knocks the ball back night after

night, creating from repetition a law. Every evening it returns to us with all its passivity and insignificance and failure, and restates its insistence on unending futility, reaffirms its affiliation with all the griefs of the past. Expelled from history, sleep neither advances nor retreats, it does not produce and it does not accumulate, and yet, despite this, it is the line beyond which progress's arrow cannot pass. What can man-in-history possibly do confronted by this daily waste? What can he do with all these hours of sleep? Do his best to cut down? Forget them the moment he wakes? Press them down, one on top of the other: a flaky pastry he then eats? Wander through them, like autumn leaves? Abandon himself to them? What can he do?\*

\* What sleep *repeats* is awakening, differently every time. Sleep is not a repetitive state, and obviously is not what can change history. Sleep is rather a moment in a movement that returns to reality without leaving it. It is the self-othering of reality—that doesn't happen in any other terrain except in reality itself. This movement of self-othering never stops repeating, trying every time to disturb the course of history.

## *A Strange Language*

The eye of the sleeper is trained permanently on what has happened, not on what is happening. Sleep hearkens to the call of the past, forever laden with catastrophes, towards which, like one enchanted, like Benjamin's angel, it marches, not in order to set them right or change them, but to grant them a second life. Catastrophe, whether personal or collective, finds no resolution here; instead, its occurrence is renewed in another existence. In its attraction to

calamity, in its reclamation of calamity, sleep derives a new language from the past. What is language, after all, if not the capacity to extract what has happened from itself, so that it might reoccur outside itself? If not the ability of words to slide and transform and escape themselves, to generate new meaning with each repetition? The language created by sleep is a strange language, its sentences endlessly sliding and slithering. It is, more exactly, a halfway language, a babbling: incantations and charms to invoke a second birth. Sleep is interested in the breaks which take place along life's path, not in its continuity, and its interest in the past does not spring from a desire to order history or to understand its evolution—as happens during waking—because to sleep, history is not evolution: it is a catastrophe, which can only be set aside through a new birth. This new birth is waking: it will change the past, but it will not repair it. Waking is sleep's hope and its future, and with every new birth, the past comes back to life, not as it was, but as it might have been. It mixes with the present and opens itself to the future.\*

\* Language is the site of second birth. To be *reborn* in it is to share a language for that which cannot be expressed. The biggest victim of a catastrophe is language, and thus it cannot be expressed. The most we can do is to try to trick it by babbling, so it begins to slide. Awakening is the full stop that comes at the end of a long meaningless babble, and causes it to start making sense.

— Fragments from Haytham El-Wardany, *The Book of Sleep* [Kitab Al-Noum, 2017], translated from Arabic by Robin More, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2020.

## Colophon

gerlach en koop  
*Was machen Sie um zwei?*  
*Ich schlafe.*  
19.09.–28.02.2021

In an exhibition at the edge of sleep  
gerlach en koop display works by  
other artists.

Ismail Bahri, Kasper Bosmans,  
Daniel Gustav Cramer, Mark  
Geffriaud, Voebe de Gruyter, Ian  
Kiaer, Kitty Kraus, Gabriel Kuri,  
Rita McBride, Guy Mees, Jacqueline  
Mesmaeker, Helen Mirra, Laurent  
Montaron, Melvin Moti, Jean-Luc  
Moulène, Henrik Olesen, Annaïk  
Lou Pitteloud, Emilio Prini, Bojan  
Šarčević, Shimabuku, Steve Van den  
Bosch, and a contribution by writer  
Haytham El-Wardany

*Curator*  
Regina Barunke

*Texts*  
gerlach en koop  
(unless otherwise stated)

*Copyediting*  
Amy Patton

*Design*  
Louis Lüthi

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*With special thanks to*  
All participating artists, lenders and  
galleries, as well as Sarah Maria  
Kaiser and Anne Storm; Achim  
Bertenburg, Christian Haake, Paul  
Ole Janns, Teresa Linke and Grischa  
Ruhnau; Alex Farrar; Mario Pieroni and  
Dora Stiefelmeier; Anne Vera Veen

*Kindly supported by*  
Senator of Culture of the Free  
Hanseatic City of Bremen; Waldemar  
Koch Stiftung, Bremen; Mondriaan  
Fonds; Embassy of the Netherlands;  
Stroom The Hague; Flanders, State of  
the Art

Der Senator für Kultur  Freie  
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GAK  
Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst  
Teerhof 21, D 28199 Bremen  
+49 421 500 897  
office@gak-bremen.de  
www.gak-bremen.de

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