

More of the Same

Trampoline is pleased to announce the new solo exhibition by Stefaan Dheedene. Stefaan Dheedene's work evinces a special interest in the aesthetic and political relationships between forms. Under the title *More of the Same*, he is exhibiting several series of recent work for the first time, each of which explores the intimate relationship between similarity and difference and the phenomena of consumption and communication.

The exhibition title is borrowed from an ensemble of five images that are each composed of the overlapping of two full-page advertisements from big international magazines like *TIME*. They were all commissioned by large advertising agencies to reach a specific target audience in the most efficient way. They also share a number of elements of form and ideology: the use of English, the sparkling colours, the men in suits, the dynamic slogans, the images of a prosperous future... At a time when various reports were noting the similar symptoms of financial overheating that caused the 2007 crisis, Dheedene's focus on these charlatan messages sounds both laughable and regrettable.

In *Folklore*, Dheedene associates European furniture with Congolese sounds. Based on his interest in the notion of reconstruction, he mischievously manipulates signs and objects from an extremely recognisable context such as an office or a domestic, commercial or museum environment. For example, the three commodes against the wall are not copies of existing models, but new creations. The central themes here are materiality – the way in which something is made – and the way an object is the product of shared individual activity. Despite their perfect finish, however, these commodes are fake; they are examples of a type. They cannot be opened because their doors are not real. In fact, their only purpose is to serve as plinths for three different compact audio systems that might be bought at an everyday supermarket. The stereo systems are playing muzak, a form of music in which the transitions from very strong to very weak tones are levelled out. The muzak was composed based on audio recordings preserved at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, and were recorded in Congo by western musicologists during the second half of the 20th century. In their bland uniformity, Dheedene's musical compositions sound like an intangible counterpoint to the African masks that are created for European flea markets.

The colonial past also inspired the series *6 leçons pour la société industrielle*. Dheedene photographed six personal electronic appliances that no longer work (his own coffee machine, printer, hard disk, DVD players and smartphone) in such a way that they represent new products for advertisements. Due to the clinical approach of the images, you can still see traces of use on the objects. Just like Apple products, the appliances are depicted against a white background under short captions in French. These are literal translations of African proverbs that were collected by Robert L. Wannyn in the early 20th century in the then region of Lower Congo. The humour of Dheedene's work lies in this subtle contrast between folk wisdom and the mercantile functionalism of advertising slogans. The drama is thus played out in the recollection of the inexorable transience of every human creation, whether tangible or intangible. Just like thousands of industrial products are destroyed every day, oral traditions also inevitably and increasingly erode.

Though the other works in the exhibition function almost entirely independently, they also refer to the notions of reproduction and finiteness, to Dheedene's personal daily environment and to his artistic practice. *Untitled* is a stack of decorative black plastic plant pots in which Dheedene has placed the labels of the flowers he planted at his home in Ghent this year. The text on the back of the labels has been covered over with grey paint. *Parrot Stand*, which consists of a wooden construction that is painted white, looks like the archetype of a parrot stand. The shape refers to a model that Dheedene coincidentally came across twice. On the other hand, *Done. Finished. Relaxed.* looks like a jacuzzi and consists of two desks that have been turned upside down and pieced together on the ground. The title is reminiscent of the name of one of Dheedene's earlier solo exhibitions: indeed, *Done. Finished.* Finally, *Clap Hands* is the only work the artist has previously exhibited. It consists of a simple piece of grey PVC suspended from a metal cable. *Clap Hands* appears almost like a banner in which the only reference to festivity resides in the title. As is often the case, Dheedene's rich and complex practice is dominated by humour and ambiguity.

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