

LIEVEN DE BOECK

I AM I

27 October - 25 November 2017

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Belgium in 1971, Lieven De Boeck was trained as an architect. His last exhibitions took place in the Museum Dhondt Dhaenens, Deurle (Belgium) and in Frac Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, Marseille (France) in 2016. His works were recently exhibited in the Maison Grégoire in Brussels, in the Bogardenkapel in Bruges and in Extra City Kunsthal in Antwerp.

His solo exhibition in the Kunstraum München (Germany) attracted international attention, and he exhibited at LMAK projects, New York (USA), as well as in 2015 in the Fonderie Darling in Montreal (Canada). His works were included in the Contemporary museum of Design and Fine Arts in Lausanne, in the Frac PACA collection (France), the Pinakothek der Moderne in München (Germany) and the MoMA library in New York (USA).

In 2017, his first monography was published by Onompatopée.

For his third solo exhibition entitled *I AM I*, **Lieven De Boeck** elaborates on his work most recently undertaken at museums in France (Frac PACA, Marseille) and in Belgium (Museum Dhondt Dhaenens, Deurle).

The concept of identity permeates all the artist's work. National identity, personal identity, sexual identity. These are societal issues and personal stories that are intrinsically connected. One of the features of Lieven De Boeck's work is the way he continuously creates meaning between works dealing with the universal and the individual. An example of this is *Sunbeam*, a hanging fabric in bright colours that welcomes the visitor, which may symbolise on the one hand a universal flag (consisting of colours split via a prism) and which, on the other hand, is a fabric used in the fashion world by grand couturiers for its complex visual qualities. Embracing the world with a gaze and covering the body. Seeking what unites us as human beings and questioning what it is that makes us unique.

Lieven De Boeck explores many techniques in his work and draws in this case on craft traditions such as knitting, tapestry or glass. *I Am I* (left-hand room) is a knitted scarf consisting of symbolic personal motifs of two of the artist's friends (Rachael and Lucie) while the tapestry *I am Shane* takes this concept further but transposes it into the verticality of a decorative fresco. It is a wonderful idea that one person's portrait can be somebody else's landscape. The motifs reflect the portrait of a person: their nationality, gender, physical characteristics (height, weight, shoe size), sexual orientation, their totem animal, ... These two works will be activated during the opening ceremony, thus revealing their full extent. Dressing and undressing. Showing oneself and baring all. These works raise questions including gender theory, which is very present in artistic circles and societal debates, dealing with the social challenges and legal difficulties facing transgender people.

One can say that De Boeck's work is continuous despite the discontinuity of techniques and stories. It is a consistent framework consisting of implicit parts and narrations. A personal story is made up of discontinuities but reveals its meaning when reading and deciphering its continuity. The series of neon signs reproducing the artist's signature are good examples of this: (*LDB, Richard Of York Gave Battle In*

Vain), which represents the administrative identity as well as works which establish physical identity such as a fingerprint, iris image or DNA. To avoid any literal interpretation, Lieven De Boeck encrypts and translates international codes: the DNA structure (transposing figures into letters), the measurement system (by creating his own *Mikado Ldb* measuring stick) or by translating the poems of Holly Anderson into an alphabet of his own creation (*Blue white red black story*). Revealing and concealing oneself. Being oneself. Existing in the world. Is that not what every nation attempts to do? By having its territory, its language, its flag?

In the rear space, De Boeck has compiled the Pantone colours used for all the world's national flags. On the wall, facing the Belgian flag rendered in a humorous gradation of white, hangs the tricolour flag chosen by the artist, somewhere between a whimsical nation and rigorous minimalist art. On the floor, in a wave, the nations mingle and come together. Here we see no overstated national sentiment, no affirmation of superiority. Just a survey of colours that settles for anonymity. As in this dual letter: on the one hand, an anonymous letter, yet on the other hand, totally tippexed out, causing the unknown individual to disappear completely. By abolishing the conventional categories, Lieven De Boeck unifies paradoxically. He unifies through white, and unifies through absence of subject.