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LEON VRANKEN
A Cat's Eye Perspective

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2a Rue de l'Abbaye B 1000 Brussels
meessendeclercq.com

For his first solo exhibition at the gallery, Leon Vranken (born 1975) is taking over the exhibition space with a proposal that perfectly illustrates the plastic research he has been carrying out for several years. Noticed in 2009 at the Young Belgian Painters Award with an installation that destabilized the viewer's perception, Vranken is now deepening this approach by playing with perspective and the loss of contact with reality. Paradoxically, he seems to want to help the visitor to stay in contact with reality by placing a handrail all along the exhibition walls. This invitation quickly turns absurd since the space is rather cramped and objects and frames are propped up against the handrail. The perspective is distorted, causing the viewer to doubt what he/she is seeing. The discrepancy between a real object and the representation of the same object accentuate the disorientation of the visitor and are reminiscent of what fascinated Magritte. The optical illusion is a device that pervades the history of art and Vranken gives us some splendid examples. The two large photos hung on the wall are reproductions of paintings by the artist, photographed and printed before being placed behind cut or perforated glass. Is this multiplication of filters not a splendid metaphor for the complexity with which reality can be perceived? Concepts such as balance, fragmentation, deliberate distance, the distortion of vision are constantly used by the artist who also has a humorous view of the world as can be seen in his work/fountain, *Study for a vertical line*, presented in the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp. In the centre of the spaces are scattered sculptures, whose forms refer to each other in a playful way and a showcase containing various items from the artist's studio reproduced exactly but in wood. Being shown in this way, these everyday objects (altered by traces of paint that unite them) assume an undeniable museum status. The monstration of works and objects is a subject of profound interest to the artist, and we can feel that through various pedestals (real or photographed) visible throughout the exhibition. Gifted with a remarkable talent for any type of carpentry, Vranken makes everything himself, which allows him to create all his pedestals and to have fun mixing styles and conventions. At present, in the centre of Antwerp, he is showing a sculpture/plinth to mark the 350th anniversary of the Academy, which questions the idea of the monument and its presentation to the public.