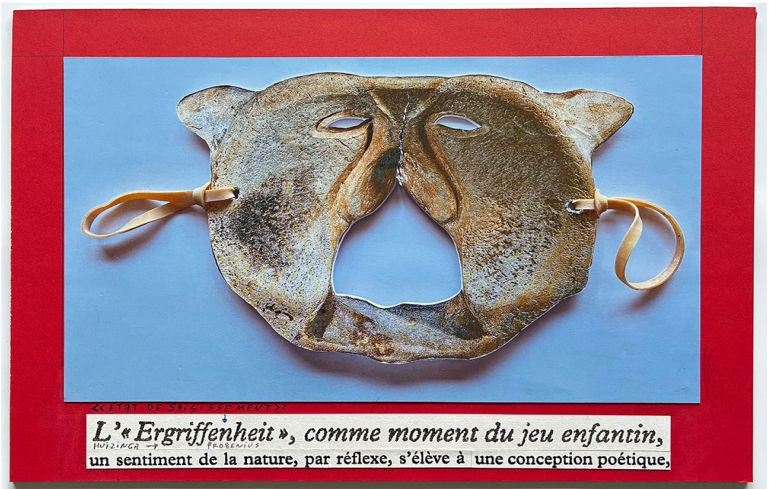


IN SITU
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The Demon (ai-ai-ai), 2023 (détail)

Patrick Van Caeckenbergh

L' « Ergriffenheit » (état de saisissement), comme moment du jeu enfantin, un sentiment de la nature, par réflexe, s'élève à une conception poétique.

September 13 - October 31 2026
Opening on September 13 2026, 13H - 19H

In Situ – fabienne leclerc is delighted to present Patrick Van Caeckenbergh's seventh solo exhibition at the gallery, thereby celebrating thirty years of collaboration.

By mobilising and diverting encyclopaedic, genealogical, and ethnological objects, Van Caeckenbergh's sculptures and installations propose a playful disruption of the forces of nature. His strange objects are attempts to evoke *Ergriffenheit*¹, a German philosophical term describing a state of being seized or overwhelmed by the world. According to Frobenius, the German ethnologist and archaeologist, this primal experience gives rise to forms and to cultural play (*Kultspiel*).

In the exhibition, game boxes, appropriated toys, and various cosmic mechanisms, whose underlying logics remain to be deciphered, reconnect with the idea of *Homo ludens* (the playing human), and with the notion of play as a genesis of humanity². The playful structures *Meccano*, *Ma Bête Noire*, and *Unité d'Habitation* become parables inspired by social structures and the scientific organisation of living systems. Here, play becomes a way of looking at, assembling, and transforming the political structures that underpin us, opening the way to new ways of arranging the world.

Meccano reinterprets the principle of the eponymous toy brand, designed to teach children the logic of hands-on construction. Adapted to reconstruct a human brain, the game reflects its complexity and the learning processes concealed by the toy industry. *Box of (Building) Block* likewise operates as an oversized game box, bearing a Christ-like photograph of a smiling worker at his task in the colonial context of the Belgian Congo. A cubic body emerges from the tomb, evoking a human body, an anthropomorphic tree, or an assemblage of primary forms. Inspired by the first construction sets developed by Friedrich Adolf Richter in the 1880s, the work turns play into a space of transformation: from the tomb emerges a form of rebirth and metamorphosis.

1 The notion of *Ergriffenheit* ("being seized" or "overwhelmed") in Leo Frobenius refers to the primal experience through which human beings are seized by reality, and from which cultural creation unfolds. See Leo Frobenius, *Schicksalskunde im Sinne des Kulturwerdens*, Leipzig, R. Voigtländer, 1932, particularly p. 112.

2 In *Homo Ludens*, play is understood as an activity governed by its own logic, preceding certain forms of culture and constitutive of their development: "culture arises in the form of play." See Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*, Haarlem, Tjeenk Willink, 1938.

Operating like true fairy tales, his works become a means of constructing a personal archaeology of his past in order to reconnect with a primal form of playfulness. *Petit scenario pour Teatrino* brings together works featuring encyclopaedic animal figures, paying homage to the artist's earliest experiences of play in his childhood home in Aalst, Belgium. His works dissect the memory of a childlike state, in which elements interlock, combine, and form imagined mental spaces. In *Teatrino Mode d'Emploi*, a model of the artist's house appears, itself becoming the stage for speculative projections.

The artist's anthropological collages also explore communal practices, in which playfulness displaces the paradigm of rationality. *La Cornemuse* recounts the absurd dimension of Belgian Carnival festivities, marking the end of winter in European pagan traditions. At the end of winter, the bear is said to release an enormous fart, thereby freeing the spirits of the dead. Festival-goers would thus take on the form of these spirits, with the duty of releasing a continuous breath throughout the festivities. *La Cornemuse*, made from a bear's stomach, crystallises this entire body of beliefs, becoming a wind instrument heralding the end of the winter truce.

Patrick Van Caeckenbergh's scholarly devices give material form to enigmas, curious visual associations, and suggested instructions whose ultimate purpose remains deliberately open-ended. It is within this state of suspension that his practice takes shape, encouraging a playful experimentation with knowledge and suggesting the constant metamorphosis of our environment.

BIO

Born in 1960 in Aalst, Belgium, Patrick Van Caeckenbergh is a Flemish Belgian artist. Working across sculpture, installation, and collage, his works function as magical attempts to explore and understand human nature. His practice lies somewhere between collage and bricolage, with both scholarly and popular references playing a central role in his representations of living beings and their possibilities.

EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

Solo Shows

2022

Fragile, PARCUM, Leuven, BE

L'Apocalypse 1978 - 2022, galerie In Situ - fabienne leclerc, Grand Paris, FR

2020

Le Monde à l'Envers, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, BE

2017

Les Nébuleuses - Mon Tout : les Etourdissements / Voyage autour de ma chambre, FRAC Provence - Alpes - Côte d'Azur, Marseille, FR

Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, BE

Le Pantologue. Danke Schön, MSK, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, BE

Les Loques de Chagrin, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp Borgerhout, BE

Solo presentation by Lehmann Maupin Gallery at Independent, New York, US

2016

Les Nébuleuses - Mon Tout : les Etourdissements, Musée Gassendi, Digne-les-Bains, FR

2015

Patrick Van Caeckenbergh, Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, US

Het Muziekbos, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp Borgerhout, BE

2013

Les Nébuleuses - Mon Tout : les Etourdissements / Voyage autour de ma chambre, In Situ - fabienne leclerc, Paris, FR

Patrick Van Caeckenbergh, Netwerk / Centrum voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Aalst, BE

2012

La ruine fructueuse, Museum M, Louvain, BE