EDITION FRANÇAISE
THE ART NEWSPAPER

Vue de l'exposition « 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 » chez In Situ - fabienne leclerc. Courtesy Patrick Van Caeckenbergh & Galerie In Situ-fabienne leclerc, Grand Paris. Photo Pauline Assathiany

Whale Vertebra, Gas Cooker and Male Nudes

Patrick Van Caeckenbergh: *Ergriffenheit* (a state of being seized), as a moment of childhood play, a reflexive feeling of nature, rises to the level of a poetic conception

It was with a soup concocted by Patrick Van Caeckenbergh and served by the artist himself that this new exhibition was inaugurated, under the sign of *Ergriffenheit*, or "being seized in the midst of childhood play," a concept drawn from Johannes Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*. The bronze pot that remains on view is a cast of the artist's rounded torso. This ritual, performed on more than one occasion, is a metaphor for the mental nourishment the artist intends to provide his visitors, underscored by the resemblance between the torso and an enormous head.

Van Caeckenbergh consistently combines an encyclopedic spirit, childhood memories and carnival, in varying proportions. He builds bridges between different forms of knowledge, creating striking shortcuts, often adding explanations or quotations written in a carefully formed cursive hand.

This time, the emphasis is placed on the didactic dimension of play. At the entrance to the gallery's first level, he has placed a magician's hat containing a brain and, on the other side of the wall, a Meccano set that allows visitors to construct that very brain. Further on, he presents various versions of a primitive mask based on a photograph of a whale vertebra, symbolizing *The Demon of Pain*. Whether through magic or mechanics, the artist likes to travel across the ages in order to grasp the reality of the present.

Among the array of works, one is particularly striking in the first part of the exhibition. It is a life-size cross made by stacking coloured wooden parallelepipeds, as in a construction game. The box in which the pieces are stored stands beside it; printed on its open lid is an archival image of a Congolese worker carrying an enormous, thick branch on his shoulders. Without directly addressing the colonial question, this combination of game and box provides material for reflection on the formation of individuals.

The final part of the exhibition reveals how, in Patrick Van Caeckenbergh's work, the perspectives of teacher and pupil come together. Alongside a particularly beautiful lesson on the origins of the bagpipe, he traces *The Genealogy of the Christmas Tree*, an extended speculation that brings anthropology and botany together through a bittersweet childhood memory.

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By Patrick Javault