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BERT THEIS

Platforms and Aggregations

15 February 2008 - 5 April 2008

Tuesday to Saturday from 2 to 7 pm and by appointment

Opening Thursday 14 February 2007 6 - 9 pm

Erna Hecey Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition *Platforms and Aggregations* by Luxembourg artist Bert Theis (°1952; lives and works in Milan and Luxembourg).

Bert Theis constructed his system of artistic thoughts and actions entirely on the enquiry of the relationship between art and public space, between the “art object” as a personal proposal to the public space and the intervention of the public through their active participation in the making of the final sense of the work. In the meantime, Bert Theis’ proposal has always been specific – site specific and, in his words: “audience specific”, while a big picture of the position of public art in urban space has developed. While urban spaces are gradually privatised due to the introduction of both global capital and new technology, Bert Theis seeks to propose alternatives to balance out such a tendency and hence revitalise urban life itself.

The exhibition *Platforms and Aggregations* will present an assembly of models, photographs and video of Bert Theis’ interventions, often adapting the form of platforms, in various public spaces and art institutions throughout the world. These platforms are painted white, expanding into public spaces, embracing the interventions of the public. They are tangible and physical, results of deliberately planned occupations of urban territories with strategies of minimalist and even immaterial transformations of the given conditions. They are discrete, firmly anti-spectacular. They provide, in turn, the best spaces for spectacular events ranging from meditation, games, dances, concerts to all kinds of everyday activities.

However, these activities have never been planned and organised by the artist. Instead, they are improvised and realised by the public with passion and spontaneous inspirations. This is particularly remarkable because it incarnates perfectly the logic of self-organisation and self-governance: the most decisive element in the creation of sustainable urban societies which is at the very centre of Bert Theis’ artistic concept. Besides he likes to call his work philosophic. They are systematically informed by philosophic works and guide the audience to reflect “philosophically” on life.

In addition Bert Theis presents his photomontages of the city, a place that is our essential *Umwelt*, but at the same time completely denaturalised. A different city is nevertheless possible. In these photomontages Bert Theis operates an ecologic deconstruction of metropolises like Paris, Milan and Münster. These cities are completely invaded by dense vegetation, except for skyscrapers, church steeples, monuments, etc. As such it seems that Bert Theis converts the modern metaphor of the urban jungle.

galerie erna hécey s.p.r.l.

rue des fabriques 1c fabrieksstraat bruxelles 1000 brussel

t. +32.2 502 00 24 f. +32.2 502 00 25 info@ernahecey.com www.ernahecey.com

Also included in this exhibition is the research institution *OUT - Office for Urban Transformation*, created by Bert Theis and his colleagues of the Isola (Art) Project Milan. The aim is to look for solutions of “sustainable urbanism”. They have come up with the notion of “Telecity” intending to substitute the conventional image of the city as a “concrete jungle” with an innovative and humane “digital jungle”. More significantly they put forward, alongside with new technologies and ecology, new administrative forms - new communities along with self-governance - in order to make the new urban life really relevant and hence sustainable.

This is Bert Theis' third solo exhibition at Erna Hecey Gallery.

Bert Theis has realised some remarkable projects at the Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy (1995); Skulptur Projekte, Münster, Germany (1997); Manifesta 2, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg (1998); the Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, Korea (2002); the 5th Shenzhen Public Art Exhibition, Shenzhen, China (2003); the 2nd Tirana Biennale, Tirana, Albania (2003); BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium (2005); MUDAM, Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne, Luxembourg (2006); Busan Biennial, Busan, Korea (2006); Domaine départemental de Chamarande, France (2006/2007), the 10th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey (2007) and MAMCO, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (2007).

For more information on Isola (Art) Project and *OUT – Office for Urban Transformation*, check www.isolartcenter.org