

THE WORD

Interrogating the individual: Island's Emmanuelle Indekeu on *Me, me, me, me*

Island's reputation for promoting the most interesting up-and-coming artists does not disappoint with their latest exhibition *Me, me, me, me*. Through blurring the lines between representations of contemporary life and forcing the audience to question what it means to be an individual today, the Brussels-based independent gallery manages to create a powerful impact. Curator Emmanuelle Indekeu unpicks the temporality and pertinence of bringing these artists together here and now, whilst tapping into her own creative inspirations – and not to mention hints of a collaborative exhibition with La Cambre this September. The exhibition closes this Saturday, 3rd of March so don't miss out on your last chance to see this jaw-dropping collection of homegrown talents.

Written by Nicholas Lewis, published on february 27, 2018 in Art / Curator talks

Your latest exhibition *Me, me, me, me* explores individuality. Why was this a theme you wanted to touch upon, and in what way does the exhibition succeed in reflecting the individualistic society as we know it?

Individuality is both an intimate and universal concept. Everyone deals with personal visions and perspectives. In this sense, and rather paradoxically, individuality is the most universal thing we share. Each artwork in the exhibition deals with different types of individualistic behaviour and patterns. For example, Ante Timmermans' drawings question existence while on the other hand, Damien De Lepeleire shows a nostalgic collection of old vinyl covers and remixed songs. All these works present personal insights to which the spectator can relate and appropriate, producing a relation which shifts personal conceptions towards universal experiences.

Society used to be formed by a coalition of individuals. It's now evolved into a system which no longer answers to the needs of a group, but rather to individual desires. The exhibition is a reunion of individual works, which together have the potentiality of becoming something greater than the sum of its part: a community.



Marie Braun, Sans titre (Oil on wood, 17 x 12 cm, 2017)



Lisa Egio and Elliot Kervyn, Tabouret (Enameled stoneware, 28 x 23 x 13 cm, 2017)



Leo Gabin, DATE YOURSELF (Video, 2:04, 2017)



Ante Timmermans, 710/2013 - 859/2018 (Leave me - Leaf me) (Framed drawings on paper, 21 x 14,7cm, 2013-2018)

At its core, how would you describe the exhibition's overriding aim? What is it expressing?

I don't know if it's my role to define the aim of an exhibition. I can only make a proposal – I can't decide how this show is going to be received among viewers. An exhibition is a story, and the narrative has to find its own way. I like to think that an exhibition has its own life, with the potential to transcend us. The exhibition is a starting point that allows a series of considerations and discussions. As for the artworks included in the show, the exhibition narrative can in turn be appropriated by our audience.

The works on show – similarly to the schizophrenic nature of today's society – are contrasting both in nature and in practice, at times figurative, and at others abstract, sometimes light-hearted, sometimes sober. What would you say is the underlying thread that binds all the works together?

The different styles and mediums explored by the presented artists allow for a wide spectrum of propositions, peculiarly brought together into a universal ensemble by their diversity and individuality.



Leo Gabin, Puff's Reese's (Silkscreen and collage on canvas, 110 x 198cm, 2017)



Damien De Lepeleire, Broken Juke Box (Painted vinyl 33 cover, 32 x 32cm, 2010)



Ante Timmermans, Ohne titel (Mixed media on wood panel, 50 x 40,5 cm, 2017)



Steve Dehoux, Clear (Oil on paper, 35 x 50cm, 2017)

The show presents the work of seven Belgian artists, all at different stages in their careers. How did you go about selecting them for this show?

I have followed and have been interested in most of the artists for years. Ante Timmermans and Damien De Lepeleire's pieces defined the theme of the exhibition and paved the way for the others. These two are already well-established artists. Having said that, Island is known for its support for young artists, therefore it was obvious to counterbalance Timmermans and De Lepeleire's works with emerging talents. I discovered the work of Lisa Egio and Elliot Kervyn at their end-of-studies show at La Cambre last June. Since then, their work has immensely evolved and grown up in my eyes. Island also cares for the contemporary Belgian art scene: in this sense, we exhibit artists from various regions of the country, who had not worked or been exhibited together before. Marie Braun comes from Wallonia, Leo Gabin from Ghent, Steve Dehoux from Brussels...

In addition to the new works on show, some older ones – such as Damien De Lepeleire's *Cover Versions* dating back a few years now – have also been included. How intentional was this, playing on both the past and the present?

The focus of the exhibition is not based on a timely proposition, even if the founding idea of the show emanated from older works. It's the artists' intentions that mattered here. Nevertheless, there are indeed some older works shown have never been shown before – or at least not here nor to this type of public.

Could you talk to us in a bit more detail about the different practices of each exhibited artists?

Through subtle and delicate pictorial gestures, Marie Braun transforms shapes and colours on small mobile supports, then places them within a space to interrogate it. She creates empty spaces which separate the frames and offer the opportunity of a rarefied contemplation. Her practice unfolds by means of research around colour and temporalities.

Not far from her practice, Steve Dehoux works on landscape impressions hovering between figuration and abstraction, exploring themes of memory and remains. The artist shows the passage of time, and how fragments of images persist in our memory.

In contrast, Damien De Lepeleire conceives images of images, representations of representations. He creates copies working with a technique that was originally used in apprenticeships in fine arts academies that lived on for centuries, but is sadly lost today. Paradoxically, it's through the impossibility of creating perfect copies of originals and through their imperfections, that these representations gain autonomy and value.

Lisa Egio and Elliot Kervyn started working as a duo in 2014. Their work is based on context, as they realise in-situ installations, dealing with our modes of production and consumption. The world and civilisations are perceived as raw materials and artistic issues. They work with different media and societal issues, while always maintaining a form of self-derision.

In a similar way, Leo Gabin is a Belgian art collective made up of Lieven Deconinck, Gaëtan Begerem and Robin De Vooght, who were all deeply inspired by the proliferation of user-generated videos they would discover on the Internet and social media. By means of its resources, Leo Gabin absorbs and uncovers the symbols established by the "American way of life", which are then used by the collective for their recognizable aesthetics.

Finally, Ante Timmermans works on performances, paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations. Inspired by the absurdity of living, its cycles and repetitiveness, his work raises questions on our existence and on how to remain still in this noise. Repetitive structures included in his work attempt to organise the surrounding chaos. Timmermans' mind essentially maps critical reflections trying to seize the world. Signification or non-sense are issues with which he regularly deals with.

You're also showing the works of recently-graduated students. Why was it important for you to include their work in this exhibition?

Island has long been considered as a promotive platform and/or springboard for emerging artists who are either very young, fresh graduates or yet unrepresented by a gallery. We hope for them to gain visibility from a public of amateurs and art professionals, as well as art collectors. We also frequently collaborate with schools such as La Cambre, with whom we'll host a show in September 2018 in order to further launch the careers of young artists, while also giving them a real taste for what showcasing artwork is like. Occasionally, Island also collaborates with established artists to encourage the transmission of their skills, experiences and practice.

You recently moved to a new location. How has the new space allowed you, if at all, to expand your program of exhibitions? Have you detected any new curatorial directions since the move?

Island remains a space for experimentation dedicated to artists issued from the Belgian contemporary art scene: we do not wish for them to be constrained by a curatorial lead or mercantile concerns. This allows for a multitude of propositions to emerge. The new space located next to Place Jourdanplein nevertheless offers the opportunity to host larger exhibitions, as well as organise more frequent events such as performances, screenings and talks. I like the fact that Island is located outside of the main art circuit in Brussels – this has actually extended our range of visitors, gave them a new approach towards Island. And who knows, this might be an open door to other initiatives in this neighbourhood.