

At Annie Gentils Gallery – where you are casting your shadow this very moment (or have done so or are still to do so) – for several weeks, your horizontal counterpart will be treated on an equal footing as yourself. Visitors' numbers are twice as high as usual – what a success! – and every day these numbers will be even – ...? Yes, we are letting your shadows in, as if they will also be talking about it later. All those shadows, gesticulating in front of the front door in the Peter Benoitstraat, deep in conversation... they are here, spilling over the footpath, sticking with their torso to the asphalt, leaning onto a car bumper, fading against a window of the gallery or an adjacent mansion. Here, you can always come with a plus one (*plus ½?*). A few of them seem to know each other, just as some of you do, even if they do keep a distance, or... come in very close... nah, surely not here?! And they bear a close resemblance to one another! Each of these invitees is wearing something darker at opening time (14:00) than at closing time (18:00). *Do you have a place where we can get changed, Annie?*

There is something to see. Things can be counted, for ease. How many do you see? The visitors get started, go upstairs, come down, go back up again, *because I have lost count*. A second opinion comes in their wake; it says: no, no, no, there are twice as many (or almost)! Once back downstairs, the owner of that voice states, loud enough for all to hear, that the Verticals (that's how he calls upright visitors) are wrong: there are almost twice as many things to see in this exhibition than they thought. That voice, as one of the Verticals partially blocks the public's view, starts to speak:

*After days of prospection – a bit strange for a Horizontal such as myself, who is usually looking 'behind' (something/someone), instead of 'forwards' – I have – again, it is difficult for me to utter a word Western philosophy has laid claim to for so long; so I offer my excuses if I say it with some hesitation – decided to call you, most welcome Horizontals, accompanied by your equally welcome Vertical partners, together, to this special place. It does not happen often, we all know, that our kind is given an equally prominent place as our partners – no offense, Verticals, we do love you dearly [laughter], but we can have something too, for a change! [laughter] To celebrate this exceptional event I have prepared something short to thank Herman Van Ingelgem and his shadow. I call it:*

#### EPIPHENOMENOGRAPHY, or: The art of the side effect

*I have typed it out neatly, to avoid any digression. [laughter] So, allow me to begin:*

At age nine, something in life goes missing. Around that age, children find the right explanation for what adults call 'shadows'. Nine years per person – that is how much time shadows get to be something else. Five-year-olds think that a shadow is a fluid substance that streams out of the object and participates in the night – 'a traveling substance, that accumulates at certain points and is often considered to be alive and conscious' (Jean Piaget, *La causalité physique chez l'enfant*, Paris: Alcan, 1927, p. 215). Jean Piaget calls this way of thinking 'substantialism'. One year later, the connection to the night is broken. Around the age of eight, a shadow becomes a substance that flees light. By age nine, thanks to an accurate notion of causality, the child arrives at the understanding that the shadow is *absence* (of light) and *dependency* (of an object).

In *Zur Gesundheit*, the title of this exhibition, a Vertical returns to that substantialism; here he is five, six, seven, eight years old. I would like to believe that Van Ingelgem is toasting, not only to the health of his fellow-Verticals, but also to us Horizontals and in no small part to his own Horizontal. But we mustn't think that this is only about us: we meet all our friends; rarely have I seen a Vertical depict so many articulations of Epiphenomena with such autonomy. Let us nonetheless start with ourselves: the Horizontals, or, as the Verticals call us: the shadows.

Let me begin where I intend to finish: at the bright yellow pineapple (n° 1 according to Van Ingelgem's numbering). That shadow isn't completely right: we know them well, dear friends: this is the Horizontal of a flickering flame, is it not? So why then suggest an association with something like that pineapple? That is the key question of this presentation and my exposé ... A second striking scene: a plate (n° 3) casts a shadow that is supportive; it is at the same time a tray – one on which you'd bake plates, perhaps? Three, on the other side of the plate: the dark brown shadow of the shell looks like an odd accretion, or, but then painted in a way that is very indefinite, the mollusk that the shell carries. Four: three or four heads (n° 11) lie in a muddy pool, shaped by that part of them that already melted. Five: a small vase (n° 11) is ready to be rolled up into its own shadow. Six: a plate moves in front of a hole (n° 12). Seven, on that same piece: the shadow and the erased ship are indistinguishable. And finally, a special case: on n° 10 you see a small vase that is stuck to a vertical, slightly tilted plane. What is going on with this shadow? I think it is more noticeable than if the vase had simply been standing upright on a table – or am I the only one who sees it that way? In all of the above-mentioned examples, I notice a greater independence for the shadows – more than usual. Here, now and then, they can stand on an equal footing with their objects (*no pun intended*). [laughter]

Have a look at the enlarged figurine on the panel to the far left of the triptych where all the way to the right a lamb can be seen (n° 9) (earlier I saw a streak of bacon, but according to Van Ingelgem it's a lamb, and I'm not going to make a fuss about it). This is no shadow that is just 'thrown' and 'falls.' The shadow is fluid and dynamic: it is sucked along the side to the bottom of the figurine, or – and I suddenly see that most clearly – it is pushed upwards, out of the object, and it moors like a wave on a beach, with an ever lightening shade, the more shallow the water becomes... – no, that's putting it too strong: it's a pool that slowly expands around the figurine (with the same consequences for light and dark).

On n° 10 we have that black cloth, with no contact with the fiberboard, because there is something in-between: it could be the bough of a ship, as if the black death were sailing into a port, just like in *Nosferatu*, do you recall? That was a film of shadows! – by Murnau of course (although Herzog's version is also worthwhile!). Anyway, the 'bough of that ship', what kind of thing is it? It's extremely mysterious. It isn't simply the absence of light; you can barely call it a 'classical shadow' (for want of a better term) – and not only because it doesn't make any sense. Well, we have already seen it several times, the shadow appears to be on an equal footing with the black cloth, doesn't it? More still: it's a shadow that appears to be ahead of the object that normally 'casts' it. We can perhaps call her a *magnetic shadow*... does anyone have anything better – honestly, I am not just asking out of politeness!... ? I say *magnetic shadow* because this shadow seems to be attracting its object, yes, it chooses a spot on the surface to then bind the black cloth to itself – to then draw it along. The ship is moored somewhere *before* receiving its load.

I don't know how it is for you, but on the panel with the luminescent pineapple (part of n° 11) I can still distinguish another kind: a shadow that continues to stick against the surface even after the object has vanished. That kitschy pineapple and the black plane behind it appear to have nothing to do with each other. No, according to me, that pineapple was placed in front of the shadow – a shadow that was already there. It reminds me of the 'shadows' on the pavements and doorsteps after the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They showed where people had been sitting or standing at the time of impact, and where they, in that way, blocked out part of the radiation. Those shadows were places where the stone had remained closer to its original appearance. But until today, people still believe those shadows are the vaporized remains of the victims. Weird, isn't it? To be honest, I keep thinking this is a very attractive... it's perhaps not the best word... convincing, yes, convincing explanation. Shadows with a thickness – I really do believe they exist. Have any of you seen *Pulse*? Japanese horror film of... 2001, I believe. By Kiyoshi Kurosawa – no relation to the other one. There you also have those *thick, sticky shadows*, as if the object had stuck itself to the surface after a conflagration. In *Pulse* the shadows are of people who have committed suicide. Other characters then find them on the wall. It's all quite grim. But those shadows are so black, have so much relief, that there simply must be something remaining *inside* of them, do you see what I mean? That it has layers. And these are shadows that are more than independent: they not only manage without the object, but they also *replace* it. I would like to call these kinds of shadows *substitutive shadows*. Yes, I have the impression that I can see that in the shadow behind that pineapple: the shadow that supplants its object...

But so, as I was saying, this is about more than just us, Horizontals. Here, there are more kinds of side effects that receive an *acte de présence* – 'act' as the ontological criterion starting from Aristotle, and *présence* being that of the whole of Western philosophy according to Derrida – but this aside. We can spot one of those epiphenomena on n° 7. A smudge with a staff. A piece of decayed fruit with stalk. Call it what you will, that murky brown/dirty grey surface is clearly a failed creation, a miscreant; here, nature has mixed up the steps of mitosis, nucleation or aggregation. The process of generation has ended. But – and this is very shocking – it doesn't withdraw completely. The non-fulfillment is positively present. We cannot even call this an epiphenomenon; it is a hypophenomenon, not a 'side' phenomenon, but a 'less than' phenomenon, something that never reached the level of phenomenality. Yes, that is also given a place with Van Ingelgem, and even a very central one. I could point out no other image on that panel that draws the attention more, could you? And in the opposite direction you also have that: that apple and that worm (n° 10) are in a state of decay. That is less often shown as concretely, no... as processually than we think. – Which reminds me: the support, that fiberboard, shouldn't it have something to do with all this? I had also prepared something small about it. [*kind-hearted sighing*] Yes, sorry, haha.

That equivalence of phenomenon and epiphenomenon, I think that the use of fiberboard might have something to do with it. In figurative painting the background often allows for a clear distinction between the... let's call it the 'main image' and the 'side effect' – so between the object and the shadow (as the most prominent pair). Because often it is a background that we know (air, wall, mountain...), or a background that creates the circumstances in which we know the objects, namely three-dimensionality. Here, neither is given: objects never appear against this background; the depth is there, but it is unreal – a shallow depth, as Clement Greenberg would have called it, or *profondeur maigre*, in Gilles Deleuze's version. The typical phenomenon-epiphenomenon-hierarchy has in that way become dysregulated. The epiphenomenon here appears more easily as an independent image – in any case as a *more* independent image (because somewhere that hierarchy continues to determine our view). A shadow is more prominent against a fiberboard, because we haven't seen it

that way before. There is also the fact that the fiberboard represents a kind of visual interference, and so simultaneously is the jamming station and condition of communication – in any case, Michel Serres wrote something like that in his book about the parasite. But I haven't completely resolved what that could have to do with this... The fiberboard as a parasitical background – it is something I'd have to pursue a bit further.

Back to our epiphenomena. We have spoken about us, Horizontals, and about processes, that are or are not still taking place. Now I would like you to recall for a moment that right-hand panel (n° 8) that has a group of three standing on it, in red, with a plump woman who is spreading her arms and a man (I think?) who is pulling up another man (I think?), who is lying on the floor (he could be doing something else, I have no idea). Well, that little group seems to be surrounded by a brown mist. What's going on around them? Well, I think the shape gives it away, these three figures had been stuck under a dome, until not so long ago, one of those touristy thingummies, which you can shake and little flakes float down over those people. So, either that dome was removed, or they are surrounded by a bubble that has just popped. The point is that something is depicted that is no longer there. The 'after image' – that's what it's called, I think – of the bubble that pops, of the dome that was there before, is just as worthy of being depicted. Absence – aha! here we have the habitual existential category of the side effect! – here comes to the fore as an independent, positive quality.

*Oops, I can see someone signaling it's time to round things up! Yes, wait a minute, I'll skip the part about positions being produced independently ... Cartesian, narrative time vs. chromative, anti-narrative time and space ... the fiberboard as primordial soup or chōra ... ehm ... let's see ... zone d'indiscernabilité ... no, cut ... okay, then all I need to do is clarify the title of my exposé:*

Epiphenomenography. Verticals would say: what a mouthful! Yes, it sounds a bit grand – is that how you say it? Unfortunately, I couldn't find anything else that covered the whole concept and was still available. [*laughter; to the speaker's amazement*] Epiphenomeno-: thus far all is clear. Graphy-: Greek for writing, but it can also refer to describing, circumscribing, and such like. An art of painting that describes epiphenomena, in other words. And that etymology isn't that important: it serves to indicate the affinity with another term from the study of art: rhopography. I first encountered that in a book in which Van Ingelgem declares to have found a lot of inspiration for this exhibition. It is written by Norman Bryson and is called *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*. And one of those essays is called 'Rhopography'. Norman Bryson says he got it from one Charles Sterling, but if you type it in on the internet, all sources say it was already used by the Ancient Greeks. So, a neologism it is not. Never mind. I have to say of course what it means: 'describing the trivial, everyday object'. And Sterling and Bryson used the term for still life painting. Well, Van Ingelgem (who incidentally said with this exhibition that he was seeking to position himself with regards to the tradition of still life painting) with the panels here and upstairs has practiced a more specific, perhaps more extreme form of that rhopography: a 'description of the side effect' – in short: epi-pheno-meno-gra-phy. Thank you for your attention. [*applause*]

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Everyone, Verticals and Horizontals, patiently shuffle out the door (it is closing time). The Horizontal who was speaking continues to talk to someone about the 'ontological egalitarianism of phenomenon and epiphenomenon'. A Vertical: 'To my cat, shadows are as substantial as Royal Canin dried pet food.' [*laughter*]. Another: '... at Bozar, yes, that Goya exhibition. His bullfighting etchings, *Tauromaquia* or something – also these autonomous shadows. Picasso picked up on that. They've been placed side by side in the last rooms...' Outside, two Horizontals slide over each other. Their two Verticals had watched *Perfect Days* by Wim Wenders – the first had seen it about a week ago, the other when it had first come out. They are replaying a scene in which the main character and a love rival allow each other's shadows to overlap. Because the love rival, who turns out to be the ex-husband, had wondered: Do shadows get darker when they overlap? It turned out they don't, both in the film and here.

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