

## ἴδιος is a situation.

When it comes to this exhibition, it is difficult to resist the appeal of its title — *Idios* — and not to see in it a kind of speculative invitation. *Idios* is an ancient Greek term. It designates that which is one's own, particular, singular: that which belongs to someone without being shareable, that which pertains to private use rather than to the public thing.

Taken seriously, the term is ambiguous. It refers as much to the affirmation of a singularity as to a form of withdrawal, even of isolation. *Idios* is not that which is immediately given in common; it designates that which resists equivalence, comparison, classification.

But to make *Idios* into such a narrow programme would be to betray what this exhibition engages. It would mean transforming a condition — that of the singular, of what is one's own, of that which insists from concrete situations — into a theme or a grid of interpretation. Yet the artists brought together here do not offer answers to this watchword: their practices do not aim to illustrate the singular, but rather to complicate it.

What is presented here as an “object” does not need to be defended. Nor does it need to be explained. The answers and justifications already exist within a dense network of perspectives, discourses, categories and values that both precede it and accompany it. Art history and criticism too often speak of works as artefacts: they situate them, compare them, place them within sequences, lineages and periods. They have produced effective frameworks, operational categories, and criteria of recognition and taste. As a result, having taste is rarely a matter of sensitivity; it is rather a question of an ability to situate oneself—and, by the same token, to be situated—within a history (a hierarchy) that is as clearly marked as it is naturalised.

The art world thus produces artists and works which, when the machinery is well oiled and knows how to integrate itself into the market system, become fetishes: stabilised, credible, exchangeable objects, seemingly removed from the problems with which—and against which—their creators struggled.

We often think of and perceive works as affirmative or interrogative propositions (the refrain of the artist who “questions...”), when in fact it would be more accurate to identify what these works exist in opposition to, and the technical and symbolic alliances they succeed in forging in order to hold fast and resist sinking.

From this perspective, a work is not an object, and singularity is not a property of the artist, but a matter of alliances. And this is what must be explained: *idios* always pertains to situations, tactics, uncertainties, to choices that exceed — by far — art history and the expressive, romantic individualism associated with it. As if each artist were negotiating, struggling, with and against what exceeds him or her — that is to say, the entire world.

It would be easy to identify the references (and I forget many!) that haunt the works of Manon Bara, Aurélie Gravas, Joke Hansen and Xavier Noiret-Thomé; to trace, from so-called “popular” iconography to the influences of Arshile Gorky, Jean Brusselmans, Fernand Léger, Sigmar Polke or Philip Guston, that which — for those in search of fetishes — would provide the passwords capable of justifying their attention and legitimising their gaze.

More adventurous, and certainly more realistic, is to consider these pieces as “things,” and not solely as objects. That is to say: as encounters, as provisional assemblages in relation to specific problems — negotiated solutions to conflicts that do not properly belong to them, but which they reincarnate, extend and transform, both conceptually and aesthetically.

Things, then, traversed by ancient problems that persist and are reactivated each time in different ways. As such, they do not require criticism but spokespersons — like animals, gods or soap bubbles. Silent materials that resist a strictly material or fetishised condition, and whose identity, always being recomposed, is displaced far beyond the limits assigned to them.

What is substantial and singular thus depends solely on particular encounters and particular forms of embedding: between the act of painting and, for example, what a face and a body demand; history and the borders it produces; weapons and the sea; a tree in the night; the weight of the dead and their poetry; colours, techniques and possible formats; and finally, the spark constituted by the act of making a choice among all this, in order to begin again, lying in wait for other worlds and new things.

*Idios* is a geography, a work open to anyone willing to extend it. Not a territory to be delimited again and again, nor a matter of elective justifications, but a set of local associations, of reincarnated problems, which depend solely on the way one chooses to lose oneself within them... in order, in turn, to grow.

Benoît Dusart

translation : Belgian Gallery