

*Exposition "Texting and other things" Patrick Keulemans*

*Aporia gallery Brussels, December 10 – December 30, 2017*

*Vernissage December 9 in Aporia gallery Brussels*

Patrick Keulemans is an artist (°1958) working and living near Leuven.

The pivotal point of Keulemans' visual research and artistic production are letter-text visual images. The letter and letterings are framed as autonomous codes, signs and symbols and applied in assemblages. Patrick Keulemans translates them in the form of a designed syntax and uses them in texts and language compositions.

The autonomy of these code-lettering and textual constructions is important in the art of Keulemans – through their place they become auto-referential as objects do. When putting these language signs in object- or formal contexts they seem to offer a range of possibilities for different interpretations within the eye of the beholder. If we consider the possibility for a different meaning as a critique in terms of interpreting the object-letter-sign versus its material context as opposed to a societal critique (formulated in the late 1960's and early 1970's in the "conceptual art" movement) it seems logic to label Keulemans' art works as conceptual art. This classification is only valid if it adds to the relevance of Keulemans' art practice.

Keulemans is an artist of today: he borrows contemporary images and icons which he tags, cultivates and rewrites in a two or three dimensional unity. Ordinary 'material' snapshots, quotations of commonplace objects are put into scene to unveil alternative significances. These are meanings of an inner network which becomes visible in his art practice as a single art piece and runs as a red thread through his oeuvre. Here we see an artist translating the visual world by means of a precise method which is shaped around his visual aptitudes and artistic experience. This personal methodology provides ample space to comment and to draw conclusions. The arguments that Keulemans formulates in his art practice make him a commentator of our (hectic) visual environment composed of a multitude of impulses coming from various kinds of visual horizons.

Characteristic to the work of Keulemans is the handicraft and technical (and material) expertise to finish the art pieces. This serves to move away from an unnaturalness of depicting letter and textual sceneries and outlines his endeavor to understand the art he makes and to communicate this message to the viewer. He does not try to show anecdotes in his art and therefore chooses 'true' representations of lettering, icons, symbols in their original appearing. Keulemans is working the context of how to show different options for viewing and interpreting the letter marks that are so common to us. He changes to environment of showing and thereby singles out, re-assembles and re-collects the signs that create meaning. Keulemans unrolls a plan for a new reality which is made visible within the narrow borders of art work-space and preserving the essence of the artistic proposition. Here two dimensions become visible in full concert; the artist's view and the object's formal appearance. Still, the end result often surprises us and does not necessarily coincide with our expectations – we may call this a sign of sincerity.

The art of Keulemans is realistic in the sense that we are exposed to a language that we recognize and that we are able to frame in our minds. There is irony in what we can see and feel in the art works and even a level of poetry and humor. The altered realism of the individual works as well as of the pieces that work as a combination in the artist's oeuvre are results of thorough investigation and a precautionary intention to re-establish the characters in a variety of potential new settings. These combinations do not express any form of authority. On the contrary, they show possibilities of freedom despite our automatism to calculate and to order. Here lies the tendency for humor in the art of Keulemans without any prejudice, pre-calculation, convention or complexity. The strength of Keulemans resides in the capacity to present us with free formulations of object histories in a singular setting. The task for the viewer is to look intensely to get a better grip to our world, our history and perhaps to ourselves.

Perhaps we need artists such as Keulemans more and more to tell us stories that unravel invisible realities (and paradoxes) in our daily lives characterized by signs and things that we consider real.

Bart Roefmans, Brussels, 12 november 2017.