

Stijn Ank - diSTANCES

Having studied architecture as a young man, Stijn Ank (°1977) set himself the task of probing into the inaugural instant, or into our distance to the real before it becomes a reality or a 'world'.

Ank's aesthesis is about tracking the commencement of humanity and it is based on the constant questioning of the way we behave towards the world around us, and how we react to whatever happens to us, how we (dis)position ourselves, even before we realize what's going on, or before we realize that something is going on at all. In that sense it's the questioning of the (dis)positions, or stances, we take.

Ank's body of work grows with the affirmative questioning of the way a 'stance' operates from that inaugural instant – before we notice anything – up to the moment where we seem to perceive something.

His principle is to let matter make sense, short of charging it with significance. Therefore this body of work is very physical, made with physical matter. One could say it is a very sensual body of work, because it is the 'circulation of sense' which is at stake here, and not the establishment of any significance at all. As a consequence, there is no understanding this body of work.

What's more, this oeuvre is very physical – it's a genuine body – exactly because it is about tracing a sense that cannot be caught in significance, and as a body, it takes up a stance that questions the circular sense that we think we may perceive. It takes us back to the moment when there is no significance, and when only sense is happening.

It is therefore necessary, as is the case with poetry, not to try to understand the works, but to take a sensible stance towards them, or to di-distance ourselves in them.

How do these works come to life? Ank, detecting a void, by an act unbeknownst to himself, pours matter into it, not knowing in advance what solid shape will come into being. The matter he uses to erect these impure shapes is plaster, a substance that is rather poor and without too many historical connotations. The impurity of the plaster is further mixed with nameless colours that have no significance whatsoever.

Ank pours this plaster into a void, where it takes shape without becoming a distinct figure, or without letting a recognizable form take the shape of a significance. While coming to life, it questions us: could this solid shape still be empty, make sense and be without significance?

The fact of the matter is that these solid shapes are no figures, that they don't have a face from which any significance could be read. But they are shapes, and they make sense: they pave the way for a sensible interaction, or an interaction of senses. They make sense and they make sense recur. They take a sensible stance, petitioning us to make sense ourselves, so much so that our senses work, before we can attribute any meaning to them, the instant we see them as physically sensual.

The sense of these works is to make our senses work.

Ank rigorously adheres to the idea that what is created through him, is by no means an object with a meaning, but a nameless thing that can be a sensible catalyst for our senses to get to work. It's some 'thing' of which we realize that it is no object, and which lets us feel the notion of a consistency.

Every single work in Ank's oeuvre is a re-petition, or a re-iteration, in and of that sensible discipline. That way the oeuvre goes from stance to stance, into a distance: each stance takes care of the other because of the distance in between them. Each stance feels the other stances and not one of them is fulfilled in itself, which makes this body of work complex, multiple and incomplete.

Marc Belderbos