

Some people are born artists. Although they may travel a diverse trajectory before finding their perfect path, there is an inner urge to create – whether it be with the mind, with the hands or essentially both. With a name meaning ‘the versatile one’, it comes as no surprise that the sources of inspiration for Ulysses Ost are manifold. With a passion for collecting from a very young age, and studying antiques dealing, the amount of objects in the Ost collection continuously grew in numbers – and with that the desire to do something with them. Ost has the ability to find links between objects, then combine them to create a whole new discourse and meaning. Very much inspired by his surroundings, it was his studies at InSitu3 at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp that gave him the sense of direction he needed to arrive to where he finds himself now – his time there gave him the tools to execute what he had in mind all along. With a strong focus on site-specificity, this course allowed Ost to combine his sources of inspiration whilst interacting with his environment.

For his first solo show, “Provisionary Ampersand”, at The Cappelleschi Gallery, Ulysses Ost will show a selection of older and new works. Interacting not only with the space itself, but with Knokke he will show a continuation of his helicopter landing pads which he made with various types of media in particular locations. This time he has made UFO landing pads on the beach. A large circle made with ‘vaderlandekes’ (sand bags) surround a U made from mirrors. The sand bags, normally used to keep water away are now placed on the very material they contain, highlighting the temporality of this piece. The mirrors reflect the sky, the space from which the UFO’s will appear, but as this work spells out the artist’s initials, the materials also communicate that which he stands for, namely: transparency, reflection and balance. Ost communicates transparency by disambiguating his works, not withholding that he allows for personal reading by the onlooker. Each time his works are shown in a different location and by being put into a new context, they gain another layer of interpretation.

Reflection is an integral part of Ost’s creative process. With a strong memory and complete overview of what he has collected, it takes contemplation to see which objects belong together and in which relation. “Handmade in Antwerp”, for example is a headless plaster sculpture with a used glove, delicately draped over the neck of the statue. Not only a reference to the myth behind the origin of the name of the city, it is also a witty comment on the art world – the glove has clearly been used, suggesting something has been made by hand, but by appropriating the objects it critiques the idea of the handmade. This is where the balance comes into the equation. Not only must there be balance in the work, but also between the references – some with their roots in art history, others taken from daily life.

For “Provisionary Ampersand”, there is a balance between new and old, but more importantly between in- and outdoor. The sandbags used in his outdoor installation are brought into the gallery and by doing so are given a new context. Where they were used as a marker on the beach, they now become items that change the feel and shape of the gallery space. The photographs of the UFO landing strips remind the viewer of their initial use and thereby create a link between the temporary and permanent.

The temporality and site-specificity of Ost’s work, hinted at in the exhibition title “Provisionary Ampersand” are evident in this exhibition which comes to life only when the artist is on site and feels the potential of the space. Apart from the works related to Knokke, it is there and then that he sees which works would work well with one-another and with the given space. Continuously adapting the exhibition, it is only on the day of the opening that the exhibition design will be finalized at which point in time the provisional will become semi-permanent, to remain for the duration of the exhibition.

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