

S.M.A.K.

11.03...
04.06.2017

EN

DIRK ZOETE

**TO BE DETERMINED. ACCORDING
TO THE SITUATION**





Simple Souls or Temporary People
2016-17

Dirk Zoete

To be determined. According to the situation

Drawing forms the basis for every piece Dirk Zoete creates. For him it is a way of thinking, a concentrated involvement in his work and a mirror in which to view and make art. Starting from drawings, he develops models, sculptures, architectural constructions, photos, films and also new drawings.

Dirk Zoete stages his imagination. He presents his conceptual models concerning man and the world on platforms and in stage sets that form part of his work. He directs variable scenes with a slightly absurd company of characters, animals and their props. In both his drawings and his spatial works, the emphasis is on the surface: the figures are flat and schematic and populate frontal spaces. They function as the signs in Zoete's playful artistic language.

The form of Dirk Zoete's spaces and characters is reminiscent of the revolutionary stage sets and costumes of the German Bauhaus and Russian Constructivism at the beginning of the 20th century. Except that his figures display a more human, almost melancholy nature. Some remind us of the later portraits of farmers by the painter Kazimir Malevich. This is no coincidence, as Zoete is from a farming family. In his creations, the farming occupation is intimated by his choice of images and also literally in his choice of materials.

At S.M.A.K. Dirk Zoete is showing new and recent work – drawings, objects and prints – in a varying display that is midway between an exhibition and a temporary artist's studio.

Dirk Zoete (1969, Roeselare) lives and works in Ghent. He regularly exhibits in Belgium and abroad, but is also actively involved in Flanders' experimental artist's workspaces. *To be determined. According to the situation* is his first major solo exhibition in a Belgian museum.



Fragmented Body (one of many)
2017





Improvisation Exercise N°7
2015, Be-Part, Waregem

Senhor Palhaço. Cleaved Character, also called the Scissor Situation
2016



Cross-fertilisation and in-between models

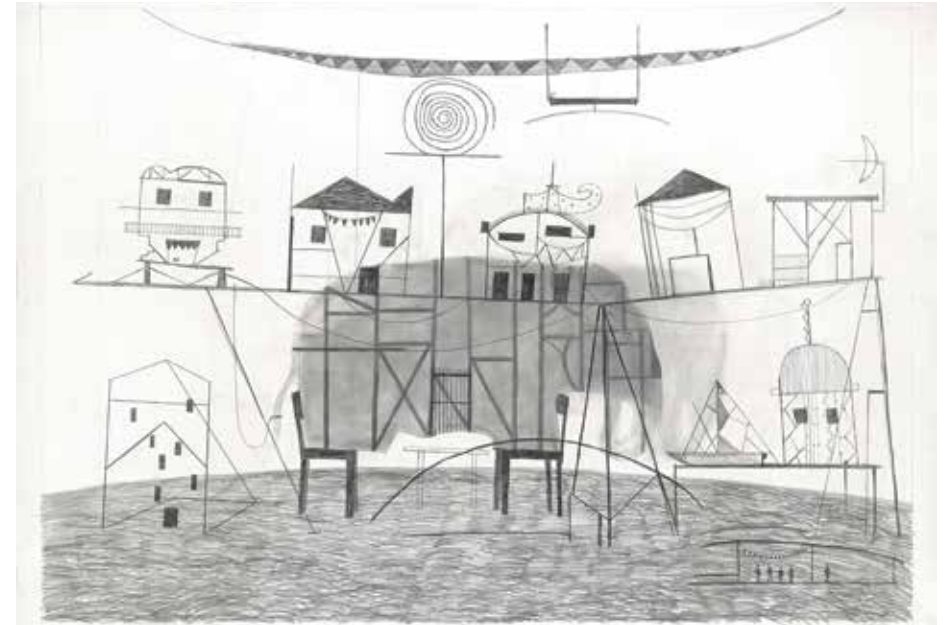
Dirk Zoete's oeuvre can be seen as one big *work in progress*. It functions as an entity in a constant state of movement, with shifting techniques, try-outs, changeable rules and individual images that expand into series. The artist directs, speeds up or slows down the flow, but shows no interest at all in unique, finished artworks. His imagination is inexhaustible and unstoppable.

Dirk Zoete creates his own scenes and stage sets, in miniature or full size, invariably on the basis of drawings. Sometimes he completely transforms his studio or the exhibition space into a stage on which he sets living models. Wearing masks and theatre costumes, they perform actions, dance or adopt poses inspired by the situation or by spontaneous interaction with the artist. Their dance idiom follows the forms and lines of their costumes and the characteristics of the props that they carry, bring on or remove.

While these stage settings are being created, the artist is behind the camera to capture the various stages and variations of the performance. In this way he reduces the set and the moving figures and objects to two-dimensional images, like the drawings that initially inspired them. Zoete sometimes assembles the photos into stop-motion series reminiscent of the iconic studies of movement by the 19th-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge. Zoete's series of moving images at a standstill have a similarly odd effect.

Dirk Zoete also draws on the photos, photographs these new versions, works on or reworks them manually or digitally and ultimately presents them as photos in decorative frames that he makes himself. These playful transformations bring reality, performance, photo, drawing and imagination into an unexpected equilibrium. No one medium ever dominates another. The images reveal their many layers and open themselves to numerous ways of reading.

Lastly, the artist uses everyday things, sculptures and self-made objects in wood, metal and wool to build three-dimensional compositions. They seem like snapshots or 'in-between models' and suggest a wide range of variants. The only constant is the angle of view: it is always frontal. The frontal view is actually the image. The sides and profiles play no part and the back is utterly unimportant. So the artist produces his spatial compositions like drawings and thus, after a process that took place in space, he ends up with a flat image. This in its turn creates possibilities for the development of new work.





De Zaagdeur
2017

Constructions, figures and masks

For many artists, the depiction of the human body is the greatest challenge. It is the first and most real thing we have access to and the instrument by which we express our feelings. By covering bodies with geometric forms, the avant-garde artists of the early 20th century distanced themselves from nature as we can see it. In this way they tried to achieve a higher consciousness and a better world. This abstraction is also to be found in Dirk Zoete's work.

Dirk Zoete assembles human figures in an original way using planes, forms and blocks. He calls them *Native Constructions*. This designation represents his quest for the basic portrayal of the human being and also the interplay of signs with which he develops his personal visual language.

In this artist's idiom there is no room for individual features. A body is reduced to a pedestal for a head or a heavy, closed cabinet that does not reveal its content. The artist replaces a face with a mask behind which his character can hide or which, on the contrary, actually reveals his identity. Zoete adopted this method from the theatre, circus and rituals, each of them being playful worlds that are employed to observe and interpret the real world from a distance.

Dirk Zoete's masks, a series of which in aluminium can be seen in this exhibition, act above all as an alter ego of the artist. They arise out of series of self-portraits that he sketches at lightning speed and which are consequently very simple. Their eyes are hollow. Their noses and mouths are reduced to triangles or rectangles. But their headgear tells a story. Some look Russian, clown-like or oriental. Others could be pioneer's or cowboy hats. Yet others, in combination with their stick-like bodies, conjure up the figure of Don Quixote, the melancholy knight who fought against windmills.

The sources of Dirk Zoete's inspiration cannot always be identified and that's what he thinks is best. He occupies a variety of worlds that are not always connected with each other or with contemporary art. The artist keeps strictly to his own personal course and puts himself at the service of what spontaneously presents itself. This may be a feeling for a particular material, a painting, an encounter, something said, or a childhood memory. What is certain is that everything that strikes him in the maelstrom of his imagination ends up in and results in curious imaginary worlds that only he could have drawn.

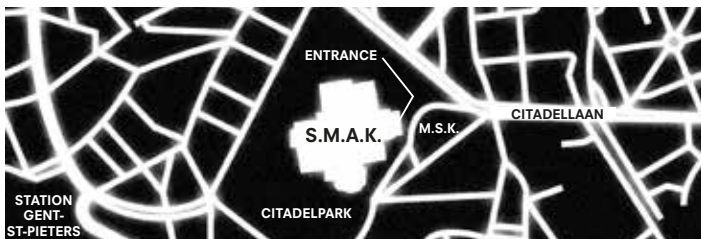




How to handle a Closet
2014, Villa de Olmen, Wieze

Manure figure (male) and manure figure (female) or Mr. and Mrs. Permeke
2016-17





S.M.A.K. | JAN HOETPLEIN | B - 9000 GENT | WWW.SMAK.BE



VU : ANNELIES STORMS | BOTERMARKT 1 | 9000 GENT