

Extra City_____Kunsthall Antwerpen

press release



Museum of Speech

With works and interventions by John Latham, Mladen Stiljnović, Nina Beier, Laure Prouvost, Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield, Ian Breakwell, Kris Kimpe

Curator: Mihnea Mircan

25/03 – 01/05/2011

Opening Thursday 24 March at 19h

address:

Extra City Kunsthall Antwerpen
Tulpstraat 79 – BE 2060 Antwerp
tram 12, stop Gasstraat

opening hours:

Wednesday – Sunday 14h-19h
Thursday 14h-20h
closed on public holidays

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***Museum of Speech* inaugurates a series of three presentations that investigate the mechanisms and negotiations through which art and the institution share or divide the spaces they cohabit. Continuing with *Museum of Display* and concluding with *A Slowdown at the Museum*, the series relies, as narrative pretext, on the accelerated scenario of a fictional art institution. Neither an allegory of the future programming at Extra City, nor the critique of a localized, specific way of handling art, this narrative of rise, obstruction, disintegration or renewal intersects different understandings of the 'museum' and the demands for particular conditions of encounter made by the artworks.**

A 'museum' can be a space where artefacts or relics are organized to testify to a historical progression, or a claim to symbolic authority, complicit with other modes of control over objects and subjects. Yet it can also be looked at as a mutable collection of works and practices that desire to be elsewhere and comprehended differently, that put forward counterarguments as to how the 'museum' operates and demarcate a permanently conflictual site of enunciation. The art and the art institution of the last decades have studied, empowered and evaded, impersonated and usurped each other. This abbreviated scenario of the 'museum' and the artistic practices presented in the series are not meant as reciprocal illustration, but co-produce a layered context of inquiry and calibration, staging one another within a space of attention and obligation.

The three episodes speak – with and around the works – about voice and echo, the museological ventriloquism that aims to reassemble presence by articulating voice and absent body, about display as prosthetic device between disparate fragments and ideological wholes. The manufacture of separation and symmetry in the fictional museum is interrupted in the epilogue, which pairs contestation with (historiographic) counter-productivity, with the moment when the archive is ultimately sealed off. At odds with itself, the 'museum' goes on strike: what had been planned as a prologue to a present of belonging and political action, results in dissent and delay.

The conventional script of institutional critique, enacting a spectral transfer of power between radical artist and emancipated spectator, is relocated to the other side of (what that script pictured as) the 'barricade'. In protest against a precarious employment or an oppressive regime, a slowdown multiplies by two the time it takes for an arbitrary decision to reach its practical outcome. What effects would such a suspension have on how the 'museum' displays itself and on our sense of historical position, which truths about art would be withheld or remain unwritten, and what other sites of ideological unrest would the 'museum' then make visible? In this chronicle of foretold collapse, each moment and element functions as both preamble and afterword.

Museum of Speech collects proclamations, warnings and promises, grandiloquence and its many antonyms, invocations and vestiges of the avant-garde pledge to universal signification, an understated poetics of critique or provisional formulations of things that cannot be known and cannot be passed over in silence. The presentation includes works by **John Latham**, **Mladen Stilinović**, **Nina Beier** and **Laure Prouvost**, a performative script by **Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield**, a film by **Ian Breakwell**, and the first stage in an evolving architectural project by **Kris Kimpe**.

In a further note on the 2011 programming at Extra City, the 'Museum series' will be followed by a presentation that looks precisely at the 'elsewheres' indicated – or actualized – by the disassembly of the

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'museum'. Situated in public space and responding to the anxieties and identity difficulties of much recent public art, projects and proposals by **Hans van Houwelingen** and **Jonas Staal** will develop an observation point for the inflation of current memorial culture, the collective Freudian slips and the ravages of populism it disguises, both in The Netherlands and on the convulsed political map of today's Europe. The project is organized in partnership with Stroom Den Haag.

Another layer of programming will be a series of *Permanent Interventions* that will alternate in rhythm or conceptual scope with the other presentations, and debut with a work by **Pavel Büchler**. Artists are invited to react to the space of Extra City and take into account the interim condition of that location: to formulate a certain idea of the future, and the capacity to fabricate or materialize it, in opposition to other, uncontrollable futures. The works will be produced within open-ended protocols, to be installed for 'as long as possible', and to gradually fill up the space at Extra City as a converse equivalent of the possible move out of the current premises – as a methodology for and against the unknown.

Finally, *Extra Academy*, a spontaneous alliance between Extra City and the two art schools of the city, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and Sint Lucas Antwerpen, will unfold throughout the year in collaboration with a network of guests and students. *Extra Academy* is a small-scale structural service, 'in progress', proposing different instruments in guise of a supplement to – or disturbance of – academic models and reflexes. It teases out the point where ideas materialize and are confronted with their palpable consequences, it inquires about the educational turn in the arts and about the next turn that will displace it, it provides time and space for a plasticity of ideas and alternative trajectories to manifest. The first guests of the programme are **Maurizio Bortolotti** and **Ergin Cavuşoglu**.