



Koen Theys (1963)

Storyboard for Fanfare, Calme & Volupté, 2007

Pencil on paper
298 x 420 mm
Signed

The video installation *Fanfare, Calme & Volupté* is based on a performance by a brass band and corps of majorettes. 'Musicians and majorettes, seemingly dressed up for a public performance, are sound asleep. They have their brass instruments with them, but their drowsiness prevents them from playing.'

Time is suspended in this 'tableau vivant' and the tiniest gesture of one of the sleeping majorettes becomes an event, creating a tension in the image that contrasts with its picturesque composition. On the flatscreen-monitor one can see the total view of the scene, while on the projection details of that same scene appear.' This working-drawing illustrates the calculated character of Theys's video pieces, and also how the final work differs from the preliminary study. In the final version there is less physical contact between the personages, they barely support each other, they don't form a tangle as on the drawing. The director has meanwhile changed his mind and breaks with the usual pyramidal composition, horizontality predominates in the central portion, the sitting musicians comprise two red vertical margins that prop up the white-draped majorettes. The video image is more tranquil as to composition than the drawing, and also perhaps more emphasizes the difference between the men and the women. Koen Theys himself says: 'As a visual artist I'm interested in creating that one image that contains all the tension, where others need a whole story to achieve it. (...) Precisely due to its stillness, each slight movement that occurs there becomes a complete event.' All this harks back to the 19th century popular theatre that evoked paintings with tableaux vivants of immobile actors. Perhaps Theys's videos, where the borders between the media blur, play a comparable role as the tableau vivant in the development of the modern theatre. 'The tableau vivant inaugurates a dramaturgy describing social environments, grabbing life in its everyday reality and giving of man an ensemble of pathetic images using genre paintings. The stillness, as with Greuze, is meant to contain the germ of movement.'

(Patrice Pavis)

Artist description:

Koen Theys belongs to the first generation of visual artists in Belgium to exploit and appropriate video as an artistic medium in the early 1980s. In more recent work he deconstructs the great traditions of art history and links them to contemporary issues. This deconstruction of icons of our Western culture and cultural history is a characteristic that runs through his photographic, video and sculptural work. His artistic method is the manipulation of these icons via displacement, doubling, morphing, and so on, until they become inversions of themselves. Heroes and stars from art history or show business are transformed into 'mass ornaments' or fantastic architectonical settings. One such example is Napoleon

Bonaparte, who is, after Jesus Christ, the most depicted figure in western culture. He is the icon of the strong, unique individual and is represented as such on cake boxes, ashtrays, beer bottles. In Tout le monde Napoléon! (Everybody Napoleon!) six Napoleon puppets are watching each other as well as their image on the screen. They look as if attending the opening of an exhibition, being the public as well as the exposed image.