



Conversions

James Brooks and Thomas van Reghem
Exhibition project curated by Jean-Philippe Vernes

20th March – 28th March 2017

Private view 20th March, 6-8pm

The works of James Brooks and Thomas van Reghem presented in this exhibition offer a dialogue exploring the similarities and the differences in their approach to re-creating languages. In their work both artists seek to construct a new type of language that all of us can relate to and understand.

I, as a collector, have taken on this curatorial exercise in order to share my longstanding quest for meaning, linking art and language expressed through different forms of artistic practice. I am intrigued by how artists are drawn to explore it and I am often looking for the poetry that can subsequently emerge.

Both artists invite us to read their narratives and visualise their converted universes. The term 'conversion' has a multitude of meanings here, although the title of the exhibition was initially inspired by the title of a major Renaissance painting 'Conversion of St Paul' that was once in my family's collection. It is not the religious aspect that I would like to focus on, rather it is Thomas and James' journey in converting what they read into poetic material and how they visualise the transformative elements of these conversions.

In a way, the historical references are not absent from James Brooks' work. The reference to the Renaissance is not entirely accidental here. It was a time of complete reappraisal of values and a dynamic not exclusive of severe conflicts – a theme that is present in his work.

Brooks' drawings are a form of language that transform individual letters into numbers, and text into colours. He builds geometrical forms by referencing a text thus creating an abstraction of the language. The artist follows a similar process when he comes to define an image – often as a representation of Italian renaissance squares, or colours replacing words, or portraits similar to neo-classical cut outs. It is a game of the mind with an invitation for the viewer to take part in it.

The sculptural works by Thomas van Reghem draw their inspiration both from his own experiences with a violent world and his search for artistic expression. He seeks to convert his inner universe into a physical language that can reveal a moment or trace of past actions, or a text that is otherwise destroyed. These ideas are even more prominent in his videos and recent installation. The works in the exhibition present a display of ashes encrypted in glass. The viewer is encouraged to discover the meanings through the materials he has gathered. One can travel with the artist to the intersection of lost words by following the ray of light or the traces of burnt candles. Those burnt words could refer to a scaring change of identity, or a segment of burnt clay from a territory consumed by conflict. The conversion here is within the dynamic transformation of his poems into a visual effect – a change of direction that can affect our very existence.

A brief insight into the minds of these two artists is something I hope viewers and my fellow collectors will be able to relate to and appreciate.

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James Scott Brooks (b.1974, Exeter, England. Lives and works in London). His most recent exhibitions include: *Ho(M)me*, Galleria Paolo Maria Deanesi, Trento, Italy (2017); *Ghost of Harry Mafuji*, Monika Bobinska/ Canal, London (2017); *The Archivist*, Galerie L Mueller, Paris (2016); *Geometra*, Monika Bobinska/ Canal, London (2016); *Vielen Dank*, auf Wiedersehen, Galerie M Detterer, Frankfurt (2016); *Conceptual*, Galerie Dina Renninger & Karin Wimmer, Munich (2016); *DR/OP*, Komyoji-Kaikan – Hiroshima, Japan (2016); *The Missing*, Jessica Carlisle Gallery, London (2016); *British Drawing*, Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, China (2016); *Artist' Postcards*, MAC, Birmingham (2015); *Data*, Rochester Art Gallery, Rochester (2015); *Gravitational Documents*, Galerie L Mueller, Paris (2015); *Drawing Biennial*, Drawing Room, London (2015); *Drawing Towards Sound*, University of Greenwich (2015); *Klein Formate*, Galerie Martina Detterer, Frankfurt (2015); *Crosswords 2*, Galerie Jordan Seydoux, Berlin (2014- 2015); *Wish You Were Here*, Atkinson Gallery, Southport (2014); *Due*, Galleria Doppelgaenger, Bari (2014); *Data As Culture 2*, Lighthouse, Brighton (2014); *Data as Culture*, The Open Data Institute, London (2014); *Fogli*, Galleria Doppelgaenger, Bari (2014).

James Brooks has had 10 solo shows to date and is represented by Galleria Opere Scelte, Turin and Galerie Martina Detterer, Frankfurt.

Thomas Van Reghem (b.1992, Romainville, Seine-Saint-Denis. Lives and works in Paris) His most recent exhibitions includes: *YIA Art Fair*, NO MAD GALERIE, Paris (2016); *Influorescence*, NO MAD GALERIE, Paris (2016); *YIA Bruxelles 2016*, NO MAD GALERIE, Bruxelles (2016); *Chateau de Beaumanoir* (2015); *Le Marché Noir*, Malakoff, Paris (2015); *Sang Neuf*, NO MAD GALERIE, Paris (2014); *Black is Back*, NO MAD GALERIE, Paris (2014); *TOUS EN VILLE!* NO MAD GALERIE, Paris (2013); Exhibition of Emmanuel Saulnier studio, ENSBA (2013); « Quand l'homme est la matière ne font qu'un », private exhibition, Le Samovar, Malakoff, (2012).

Exhibition curator Jean-Phillippe Vernes has an enduring passion for art and has been collecting since the age of twenty. His very first acquisition was a small edition of an illustrated poem of surrealist Michel Butor by Herold. Among his most recent purchases: Henrique Ramirez and Babi Badalov. Collection includes, Henri Michaux, Ignasi Aballi, Jorge Mendez Blake, Marco Maggi, Benoit Maire, Mounir Fatmi, Edmond de Waal, Neil Beloufa, of course, works by James Brooks and Thomas van Reghem, and other works gathered over more than 40 years of collecting. His first curatorial exercise included British artist Hugo Wilson and Belgium artist Eric van Hove.

For further information or high resolution images, please contact:

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