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## **The Adamant Pose of a Young Artist.**

### **Boy & Erik Stappaerts criticizes rational society**

The young artist Boy & Erik Stappaerts (1969) is currently exhibiting his “cabinet d’étude” at Marie–Puck Broodthaers’ gallery in Brussels. The artist has modelled his artistic project after a contemporary enterprise and has baptized it “B & E S INSTITUTE AND ASSOCIATIONS”. His dual first name serves handy as the title for his artistic enterprise.

In addition to its own title and logo, Boy & Erik Stappaerts’ enterprise produces objects. It functions as an architect’s office that designs a complete social and museum environment, upon a client’s request. The first section of this institution generates objects which are presented in the workspace of the gallery. At first sight these polished objects, in industrial lacquer coating, look very clean and sterile “69”, a red flat shape with rounded corners, is not much bigger than the two intertwined bodies which modeled for this object.

There is a black sculpture in two parts called “Embrace” which suggests its superficial image is inspired by a human form of intimacy. This suggestion that human emotions become standard mass products is both ironic and tragic. It is as if the Eros of the object of massconsumption really has diminished all other forms of eroticism.

In comparison to Rodin’s work “The Kiss”, the human embrace in Stappaerts’s work is machine-like. Oddly the work misses the beautiful illusion of the symbioses between man, machine and love which is present in Björk’s video clip (“All is full of love”) by filmmaker Chris Cunningham.

Stappaerts’ work is more ironic and possesses too much potential for critical possibilities, making it more reminiscent of the lacquer objects by the left-wing artist Jef Geys.

Stappaerts’ art is ironic because its persistent pose succeeds in touching the Achilles heel of our rational society. Philosophical rationalism is intermingled with the rationalism of production processes and the ratio of the heart. His objects are strongly related to minimalism in a formal manner but this rational art form is infected with inevitable forms of superstition and fetishism. However businesslike, aloof or reasonable a work of Art attempts to be, it never escapes the human habit of assigning human qualities to lifeless things.

### **Parody**

The second important branch of Stappaert’s work is a web site where his projects, text and images are virtualized.

The images are made using existing 3-D game technology, illustrating colorful spaces in which the objects are presented. The website’s structure as well as its contents abide by the classic rules of parody. Its serious and professional outline keeps up the façade of a respectable corporation. Only when you reach the futuristically titled “The Mothermachine” does the façade start to falter.

The same serious note persists in the explanatory text that is provided alongside, objects, environments, the enterprise's building and the plan for the museum:

“B&ES Museum is a projection of the dictatorial cultural platform (definition of the museum in Western society) presenting some of the classical museum ingredients: the scale model, the monument, a sculpture on a pedestal with its cast alongside it”.

The English text resembles the snobbish theoretical jargon commonly used in the Art world, but the deliberate fusion of the terminology of semiotics, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, phenomenology, structuralism and deconstructualism is applied according to the rules of parody. This rare and adamant exercise in style is promising for the future.

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