

THE RED BOX

Olivia Lennon and Jan van Schaik



SUMMARY

THE RED BOX

An abstract art work attacking the idea that there are conflicting and invisible forces that imbue objects with desires, urges, character, history, memory, and culture. And that all of us are navigating a personal version of these forces, through which we must then engage with others.

Conceived of in reverse and delivered in the modes of drawing, image making, installation, performance, costume, lighting, sound, music, and word.

THE ARTISTS

Olivia Lennon and Jan van Schaik are an artist / architect duo based in Melbourne Australia. Having exhibited in solo exhibitions, group shows, and biennials around the world, they have joined forces to explore their interests in the absurd, the political, and the unknowable through the mediums of text, art, architecture, fashion, and performance.

ART BRUSSELS

An annual art fair embedded in the richness of the artistic and cultural scene of the European capital attracting 25,000 collectors, gallerists, curators, art professionals and art lovers from around the world.

L'ESCAUT

A creative cooperative of architects, scenographers, and dancers situated in a former industrial building in Brussels. In their project space l'Escaut has been hosting exhibitions, residencies, events, workshops, and lectures for three decades.

LOCATION

l'Escaut, Rue de l'Escaut 60, 1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Belgium

OPENING HOURS

WED 24 – SUN 28 APRIL 2024

SNEAK PREVIEW

Wed 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

OPEN STUDIO

Fri 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Sat 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Sun 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

PERFORMANCE

Sun 28 April 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

RESERVATIONS

Click here to: reserve a spot for the performance.

CONTACT

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Olivier Bastin olivier@escaut.org

A NARRATIVE ARC

On the strength of his *Lost Tablets* art project l'Escaut, a creative cooperative in Brussels, invited Jan van Schaik to install a work in their project space.

There in 2023 he explored what the next stage of that project would be, and began looking for ways to extend the idea of *Lost Tablets* – where he had treated second-hand Lego bricks as if 'found objects' and reconfigured them into small artworks about the semiotics of architecture.

Looking for something beyond the obvious idea of scaling the works, he came to realise that the 'found object' he was most interested in reconfiguring was the l'Escaut project space itself. This began with an affectionate reconfiguring of the circa 1913 architecture of the building. He made 'object-mirrors' by measuring and recreating a number of existing elements of the 'found architecture' which transformed the rough but renovated warehouse space into an exhibit in its own right. On reflecting on what he'd made, van Schaik was:

"... as enamored with my own architectural reconfiguring of the space as I was suspicious of it. The architectural language that I was 'playing' with did not seem to adequately capture or reconfigure the powerful ideas and emotions that being in space and amongst its people had generated. I realised that I was in love with l'Escaut. But expressing this through the tools of architecture alone was showing my emotions to be merely an infatuation.

Who would come to see my beautiful objects? It was suddenly and painfully clear: only me. The strong social contracts, the living sense of memorial, the careful optimism of the place, and all the layers of meaning in it that are accessible to those with a workable knowledge of French and Flemish were absent. I realised that what I had created was a beautiful stage set. An idyllic

architectural form – but without characters, dialogue, narrative, meaning or action. In classic infatuated form, I was projecting. For my love to survive the infatuation stage, or even exist at all, I was going to need more."

To meet the demands for deeper meaning created by the emptiness of the idyllic set, van Schaik invited artist Olivia Lennon to collaborate on the project. Together they have been refining the set, creating a series of costumes, characters, and then choreography. Then followed by lighting, sound, and dialogue. Thereby creating a project where ideas emerge as a result of an interaction between the imagined sentience of objects they have 'found' and made.

The result is an abstract performance, titled THE RED BOX, told through the lens of an architect, an artist, a costume designer, a painter, a writer, and an academic. Narrated by a character who is deluded by his overblown sense of architecture being the primary narrative of existence. He interacts with the other characters who, in turn, interrupt this *idée fixe* but ultimately weave in the biases of their own blinkered interests.

THE RED BOX attacks the idea that there are conflicting invisible forces that imbue objects with desires, urges, character, history, memory, and culture. And that all of us are navigating a personal version of these forces, through which we must then engage with others.

The project's origins lie in the art of Lennon and van Schaik, now formed by their time at l'Escaut. THE RED BOX's release coincides with Art Brussels 2024, and will culminate after a year of events hosted amongst the objects they have found, invented and made.

Generously supported by l'Escaut, RMIT Architecture & Urban Design, and Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.

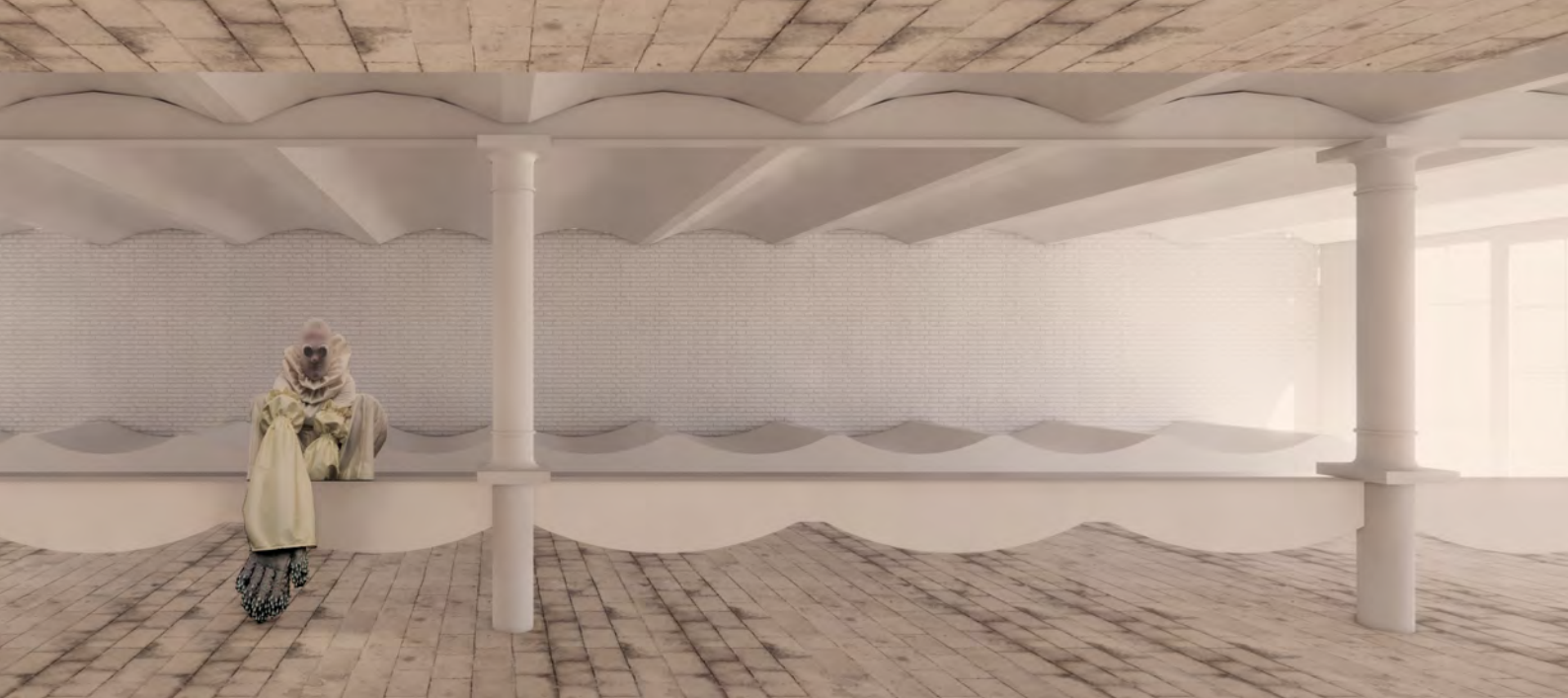
THE RED BOX, April 2024



PREVIEW

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