

BOEKS 02

“Giving Up Reading”

We barely turned a page and BOEKS' *Giving Up Reading* is underway.

The eponymous self-help book was published in early 2018 by Troebel Neyntje, an initiative in Antwerp which organises exhibitions and publishes books, often of an absurdist and unrealistic nature.

“At a time when Web pages containing text are viewed for an average 1.5 seconds, we must be honest with ourselves and give up reading,” says Idris Sevenans of Troebel Neyntje. The manual's attempts to achieve this are indebted to “double artists” like Marcel Broodthaers and Marcel van Maele*, who died exactly ten years ago. These poets-cum-visual artists were exploring the possibilities of rendering their poetry unreadable as early as the 1960s. In 1964, for example, Broodthaers used plaster to encase the last fifty copies of his poetry book *Pense-Bête*, while van Maele muzzled books by means of white paint, clothes irons, spikes, bars and trash cans. From 1972, van Maele started bottling poems in wine, beer, and milk bottles. Two years later, Broodthaers produced the bottle edition *Le Manuscrit trouvé dans une bouteille*. Stopper it!

Inspired by these leaders of illegibility, we endeavour to follow their example. BOEKS, Sevenans, the legacies of both Marcells, and a group of installation art and graphic design students take over the entire length of the convent corridor connecting the Kunstenbibliotheek with the STAM in order to overwhelmingly confront us with new, custom-invented giving-up-reading exercises.

In the library, original sculptures, editions and prints by van Maele will be exhibited: these include *Gebottelde Gedichten [Bottled Poems]*, *Gekooïd wit [Caged White]* en *Hoe bewaar ik mijn boeken? [How do I preserve my books?]*.

During the opening event, on 21 February, attendees will be subjected to a collective performance demanding muscle power and a stack of bulky books; a speech by van Maele; and Broodthaers' attempts to read and write in silence in the short films *La Pluie (Projet pour un texte)* (on 16mm) and *Berlin oder ein Traum mit Sahne*. In addition, the plastic exercises devised by Sevenans and the students will be tested on the audience for the first time.

Let us therefore leave the last words to Marcel van Maele: “More than ever, words are abused and undermined, they are neatly straitjacketed, they are raped or castrated, strangled, prepared and wrapped. Words do not show the way, but are shown the way.” (quote from a speech delivered on the occasion of accepting the Arkprijs van het Vrije Woord on 10 May 1972)

*This experiment is the first in a series of initiatives organised in honour of Marcel van Maele (1931–2009) in 2019 at Troebel Neyntje, the Letterenhuis, the library of Harelbeke and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, among others.

Giving Up Reading is the second BOEKS presentation. Every month, for one night, a book, its maker and publisher take centre stage. Afterwards, remains stick around on walls, ceilings and floors. Along the way a BOEKS collection comes into being.

BOEKS is an initiative of KASK and the Kunstenbibliotheek and is housed in the 15th-century convent corridor connecting the Kunstenbibliotheek with the STAM.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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Giving Up Reading

Troebel Neyntje in collaboration with BOEKS, backed up by Idris Sevenans, Marcel van Maele, Marcel Broodthaers and students of KASK / School of Arts Gent: Nienke Baeckelandt, Laurène Buchheit, Pooja Hukku, Hilde Onis, Mona Schrevens, Jivan van der Ende, Veerle Vervliet, Aron Wouters and Finn Waters.

Public presentation

Thursday 21 February 2019, 7pm

Exhibition

22 February 2019 – 15 March 2019

Opening hours

Monday to Wednesday: 9am - 6pm

Thursday: 9am - 10pm

Friday: 9am - 4pm

Publication

Technical sheet:

dimensions 14,5 x 20 cm

35 p.

published by Troebel Neyntje in an edition of 150 copies

riso printed by Risiko Press

BOEKS

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