



From: JUAN PABLO PLAZAS
To: MARIANNE BERENHAUT
Subject: Monster (Chapter 1)

OPENING SAT 20 FEB 6 - 9 PM

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Open on Wed: 12 - 6 pm
And by appointment
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Il ne s'agit pas d'arranger les choses, il faut que les choses nous dérangent. Il s'agit qu'elles nous obligent à sortir du ronron

Francis Ponge, *Le parti pris des choses*.

This project was born out of coincidence, the encounter between two artists from respectively remote generations and cultures; one was born in 1987, he is Colombian, the other in 1934, she is Belgian. Both share a common interest in the found object, its reality as an existing and autonomous thing, as well as its organization as sculpture. Yet we are not really dealing with assisted readymades, or even a subversive Dadaist gesture, but rather the object's mutation towards another form of existence, a living one. Juan Pablo Plazas examines the object with the constructed and sensitive gaze of the anthropologist and artist, studying its linguistic and symbolic variations in order to produce object-creatures and an animistic vocabulary.

Marianne Berenhaut meticulously collects and classifies objects; taken out of their boxes or their drawer, she manipulates them in a direct and affective way, to bring them to life, as a new presence in the world. All these assemblies, even the most incongruous or abstract ones are characters which belong to the human realm. The stability of Marianne Berenhaut's sculptures since 1980 and her body of works called "Vie privée" seem precarious and temporary, while the work of Juan Pablo Plazas appears more rooted in a solid form.

Both make up systems of objects full of humor, enigma and fantasy that also recall the principle of the modern poetic form and the game of free association.

From .. To .. A new correspondence was born between Juan Pablo Plazas, currently working in Brussels and Marianne Berenhaut in London. "it seems to me that ' THERE IS A FAMILIAR LINK ' something belonging to the same world" M.B writes in capitals. But as the conversation continues, their disparities are asserted .. "Then maybe animism is not what resides in your work but Humanism. Please correct me if I'm wrong or I misunderstood"...J.P.P

This project is articulated in two chapters and aims to give a specific reading of the artist's sculptural practice while other sources related to the process of the work and extracts of their correspondence will be presented in the office.

Juan Pablo Plazas (1987, Bogota) is a Colombian artist and anthropologist. His practice questions the relationship between objects and language through installation, sculpture and performance. His work emerges from a linguistic process, in which existing objects transform into elaborate and peculiar narrations. The declension of words and its meaning create throughout the world of objects an animist mutation. Isolated from normality, the object becomes a living subject with desire.

The artist composes and writes with tangible forms, a constellation of sense and hybridism that we could call: « Etymology of shape ».

For Bureau des Réalités, Juan Pablo has articulated a set of objects through an etymological, semantic and plastic approach around the word "Monster".

Lilou Vidal

Juan Pablo Plazas (°1987, Bogota) lives and works in Brussels. In 2013 Plazas graduated from the Master's program at LUCA School of Arts in Brussels. In 2014 he won the Jan Naaijken award for most talented young artist by the North Brabant Society.

Monster?

Yes, Monster

What do you mean by Monster?

Well, normally Monster refers to anything horrendous, horrible, repulsive, abject, dangerous, evil, deranged, perverted, corrupt, immoral, decadent, vicious, barbaric, savage, brutal, abnormal, malformed or just giant (too big).

Quite a long list of adjectives isn't it?

True, I have the impression we just succeeded in relating Monster with everything that is negative. But still I feel we are not even close to a satisfactory definition of the term.

Please, allow me to temporarily pull out morals from the definition of Monster. Sit down and allow yourself to forget about judgement for one paragraph. Let us try to approach the word Monster with some amount of objectivity.

Recently, I came across a couple of etymology dictionaries which said that a Monster is a body with an organisation that is uncommon, an exception to the rule.

Therefore, a monster is a body!

Also these definitions said that a body is a totality formed by its different parts; the parts form an order and this order is what constitutes the body. However they also implied that bodies have a fixed order or a determined way of being. Bodies that move away from the ideal and "natural" order would be seen as Monsters.

The Monster is nature out of harmony with human order.

Only the tender eyes of morality see evil in the transgression of order.

What do Monsters look like?

Some appear like cats with two tails and cows with three heads; others look like creatures with body of a horse, turtle legs and hippopotamus heads.

Now I wonder, is the Monster's only role in society to stand as a symbol for what is despicable in it?

Let's meet etymology for the second time. Monster comes from the latin *Monstrum*, which is related to *Monere* which means to advert. It is also related to *Monstrare*, in French *Montrer* and Spanish *Mostrar*. The relationship of Monster with showing and adverting has to do with the fact that it is seen as a manifestation of something divine, spiritual, metaphysical, or out of this world. In this case, the Monster is seen as evidence that defies the very establishments of nature as we think we know it. That is why Freak-shows were a popular source of cruel entertainment for decades, because they incarnate the frightful desire for defining normality.

Do Monsters really exist?

Yes

You mean human or animal Monsters?

Neither one or the other, that would take us back to moral judgement. Then what?

Monsters exclusively arise from nature?

How about Monster-objects?

Imagine how they would look like?

What would be their name?

What happens if we force our moral pre-sets against these Monster-objects? Can human-made creatures get out of control?

Curiously enough, monsters in many cultures are living manifestations of objects. In Japanese folklore, for example, the *Tsukumogami* are household objects and tools that become alive and most of the time rebel against humans. The *Kasa-obake* is an umbrella that turns into a monster after reaching 100 years old. Every object has the potential to claim life, mostly when they turn 100 years old. The reason why they

rebel against humans is because they are discarded or thrown away. These objects claim life when they are useless, when they are throw out from the order of man-made things.

Can this happen outside fantasy?

How can real life monsters appear from the nature of objects?

I conceive of monster-objects as in-between this alteration of order and in their uselessness nature. The combination between parts of a chair, parts of a table and a hat would make something monstrous that could not be used anymore. In a moral sense something abominable that doesn't serve its noble and servile means. These Monsters are formed by a new body whose only function is to remain still and tense. Their uselessness as, with the *Tsukumogami*, is an evidence of their livelihood. The spontaneous arousal of Monsters is a proof of their own will to escape human order. Are these Monsters immoral, decadent, vicious, etc.?

I'm not the right person to ask.

Juan Pablo Plazas, Feb 2016

Bureau des Réalités presents in its office an unreleased unique set of works on paper from the 90's by Marianne Berenhaut, "Notebook Recreation".

Barely a fistful, they are lodged on the ledge of a cupboard: do they want to make up a bed for winter or are they a declaration of war? Between their white pages they hide an arsenal: sewing thread, razor blades, rusted nails, piece of string, matches and cigarette butts, subway tickets, arranged flowers, a tiny dagger, arrows of all kinds of wood, silk paper, candles, toothbrushes, a medallion with Saint Rita, a straw hat ...

And once or twice a year, a newborn joins them imperceptibly. Marianne Berenhaut

