



Room view Plug In #40. Photo Peter Cox.

title René Daniëls
Connected Underground
episode Plug In #40
duration from 24-05-08 until August 08
curator Christiane Berndes
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With thanks to the René Daniëls Foundation

'About the changing of meanings of certain data. I prefer the forms of appearances that do not lie on the surface. That is what amusement means to me: undressing the muse.'

I.
 The painting 'Ondergronds verbonden' (Connected Underground) dates from 1984. Black brushstrokes have transformed a flat, white surface into a landscape. A wide expanse of water separates the viewer from the landscape in the background. Hills rise in the distance. Trees grow sporadically. The near shore is invisible but we know that it must exist. Where else can that bridge come from that winds from the bottom left-hand corner of the painting to the other side? Or are those wavy lines merely designed to lure the viewer into the painting and to transform the flat surface into an image, in this case a landscape? The bridge captivates the attention. Somewhere above the centre is a white

mark that scans the translucent red image like a search light, illuminating the ground behind the image. Or is it actually the reverse and the white mark is a representation of an as yet uncharted area?

II.
 A white area is also present in an earlier Daniëls painting, 'Het venster' (The Window) from 1981-82, on the right-hand side of the canvas in the form of a white trapezium. A man is depicted on the left, in profile, his white face painted over with a grid. The remainder of the painting is purple, green, blue and brown. Who is the man looking through the window? Is it the viewer? Or is it the painter using the white area as a mirror, in which he conjures up an image, like a magician? The white area as a link between the viewer's imagination and the maker?

After his stroke in 1987, a number of paintings were found in René Daniëls' studio that raised questions about whether they were finished or not. Even the fact that they were exhibited once is no guarantee, since Daniëls was known to have altered his paintings – or their titles – when they were returned to his studio after an exhibition. For Daniëls, visual trickery and word games were intermingled. By using similar forms or motifs in different contexts, they became charged with meaning. Places, buildings, where words turn into

sentence, it says in one of Daniëls' drawings. Associations are given free rein in sketches, paintings and sketches that are drawn anew. Is this process ever complete? Is a painting ever finished? And is it not, as Marcel Duchamp contended, the viewer who finishes the painting by looking at it, interpreting it and passing judgement on it?

III.

'The fleece is still one of my preoccupations. Objects and concepts always appear twice, once in reality, later as an idea for work. Eggs and verse eggs. The fleece lies inbetween (and is put together as spalk [spit + talk]). And that's what these works are about.'

From 1984 onwards, the exhibition space itself was a theme in Daniëls' work. Canvases featured surfaces acting as walls that defined the spaces and functioned as the bearers of the paintings. White walls bear blue or yellow surfaces, blue walls bear yellow or white ones, in perspective or otherwise. The white base layer of the painting has become the bearer of the walls that themselves bear the paintings. The background is brought forward and the foreground shifts backwards. The image sometimes disappears entirely behind a white veil that itself acts a new base layer on which the next image can be constructed. Or the painting appears to have been turned inside out, such as in 'A Hot Day in the Lighthouse' from 1984. The artist as magician.

IV.

In the mid-1980s, René Daniëls made a series of drawings for an artist's book that, due to circumstances at the time, was only published recently. Anyone who knows Daniëls' work can see immediately that the drawings are from paintings he made earlier. The drawings are unique in that they feature white ink on black paper.

Reversal. White becomes black and black becomes white.

Unavoidable annotation.

Paper pleasure.

The poet nears the truth.

Daniëls' work is never complete.

'I'm looking for a mentality that allows me to switch off thought while I'm painting.'

Can you also switch off your mind when you look?

1) Bart Cassiman, "Einige (mögliche) Über Legungen Zum Niederschlag von René Daniëls' Amüsiertem Umgang mit Wirklichkeit in Wort und Bild", in Catalogue Kades-Kaden, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, 1988.

2) Alain Cuffe, "René Daniëls: Der Raum Der Transitiven Bilder", in Parkett no. 15, 1988, pp. 108-110.

3) Interview met Jan van Adrichem en Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, "De echo van innerlijke noodzaak", in Museumjournaal jrg. 28 nr.1, 1983, pp.35-45.

Art works

René Daniëls
Het huis, 1986

A hot day in the lighthouse, 1984

Grammofoon, 1978

Het venster, 1981-1982*

Ondergronds verbonden, 1984*

Zonder titel (de stad), 1986*

Places, buildings where words turn into sentence, 1989*

Zonder titel (La Muse Amusé), 1983*

Zonder titel, 1985-1987*

Observatorium, 1985*

Zonder titel, ca. 1985*