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ECHTZEIT

Dirk Braeckman

Text by Clément Cheroux

Text by Tamara Berghmans

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- Dirk Braeckman (BE, °1958) has explored the medium of photography in sombre/dark and understated images, for over 40 years
- Published to accompany the solo exhibition ECHTZEIT at FoMu, Antwerp 28 March 2024 to 19 January 2025
- Braeckman appropriates the pieces from the vernacular collection of the FOMU and the viewer experiences them through the artist's camera, eyes and hands
- Braeckman creates enigmatic and tactile photographs that obscure their subject in order to emphasize materiality of the print
- Braeckman's dark room is a field of experimentation where the artist manipulates the negative, working with light, re-photography and chemicals, but also revealing influences of chance and time. Freedom and spontaneity become essential notions in his creative process
- Braeckman expands the photographic medium to the point where it becomes akin to the practice of the painter or sculptor

Dirk Braeckman is a leading contemporary Belgian photographer whose work is part of numerous collections across the globe and has been exhibiting worldwide for four decades. Braeckman is notorious for his silverish-grey toned, large-scale prints and has been seeking to manipulate the medium of photography since he began, drawing out a certain slowness and space within his work. His methodolgoy shifts him between two areas: photographer and painter. His pallet is always muted, except for a selection of colored prints, and with the subject almost always disappearing into the print, like reminiscents of ghosts passing through the eyes, with no name and no narrative. Due to this, Braeckman has a set of outstanding achievements including long-term representation by the prestigious Zeno X Gallery in Antwerp as well as with other galleries such as GRIMM and Galerie Thomas Fischer and more. In 2017, Dirk Braeckman represented Belgium at the 57th Venice Biennale and The Royal Family of Belgium commissioned a permanent installation in the Sphinx Room of the Royal Palace in Brussels. In 2021 Braeckman was invited to take part in the 34th Bienal de São Paulo *'Though it's dark, still I sing'*. Braeckman has taken part in numerous exhibitions both nationally and internationally. He has had solo shows at: The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (USA), LE BAL (Paris), De Pont (Tilburg), De Appel (Amsterdam), S.M.A.K. (Ghent), BOZAR (Brussels), M Museum (Leuven) and ROSEGALLERY (Santa Monica, CA). Braeckman's works are part of important private and public collections around the world, including in FRAC Nord-Pas de Calais (Dunkirk), Sammlung Goetz (Munich), De Pont (Tilburg) and Fondation Nationale d'Art Contemporain (Paris), Centraal Museum (Utrecht), and Musée d'Art Contemporain et Moderne (Strasbourg). There are also several publications on his artistic practice and oeuvre.

ECHTZEIT is made in collaboration with Dirk Braeckman (BE, °1958) and FOMU Antwerp in line with his impacting solo show with the Collections department of the photo museum. Echtzeit offers a unique glimpse into Dirk Braeckman's most recent photographs, accompanied with the museum's collection and texts written by Clément Chéroux, director of the Foundation Henri Cartier-Bresson and Tamara Berghmans, curator of the exhibition.

Braeckman has chosen from the FOMU collection functional photographs, made without artistic ambition. He recognized certain qualities and commonalities with his own work in these atypical images.

Rephotography and experimentation have always formed part of Braeckman's artistic practice, though the trajectory to the final image is always different. For the FOMU exhibition, he worked for the first time with an existing collection of photos. Braeckman took photos of the chosen images and printed them. He then over-painted, smeared or cut holes in the prints. He photographed the results and processed them further in his analogue and digital darkroom.

The original meaning of the photographs has been altered through the removal of context, the change in format and the addition of titles. A functional document is transformed into a piece of art, a timeless visual poem that raises more questions than it answers.

'Echtzeit' refers to Braeckman's bridging of the past and present.

Text in English, French and Dutch.

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