

Wim T. Schippers

‘Le Taxi cabossé, four-wheeled dents’

14 – 19 June 2011 (Liste 16, Basel)



Press Release

“You would be able to contextualise visual art as a tangible source that provokes thought and reflection. By physically puncturing and denting the car the realisation hits you that the object in its essence is a funny thing. With a new car every dent or scratch takes something away, in this case it adds something, its poetry on wheels”.

Wim T. Schippers

Central to the presentation of ZINGERpresents at Liste 16 is a call to arms. The fragility of art and cultural policy is given weight and form through the presentation of an iconic piece of work by Wim T. Schippers. ‘Le Taxi cabossé, four-wheeled dents’ (1982) is presented how it was found a little under 30 years later in desolate state clinging on to its existence with a story still to be told.

In 1982, the Peter Stuyvesant Collection came up with a functional performance project that would introduce millions of people to four iconic artists of that time, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Daniel Spoerri, Francois Morellet and Wim T. Schippers. Four works of art disguised as Parisian taxis, would tempt their passengers and onlookers to reflect and consider alternative ways of thinking through a trivial mobile object. Spoerri referencing Swiss cultural and perceived identity, Morellet defying gravity with great trickery, Pistoletto objectifying the urban condition by presenting its mirrored image and Schippers, oh well, Schippers...

When presented with the Renault provided by the Peter Stuyvesant Collection the artist took a sledgehammer to it, careful at first as he instructed the assistants on how to ‘pre-dent’ the vehicle. Soon the party of assistants with a fervent Schippers in their midst had battered the car looking ready for the scrap yard. After a meticulous paintjob, in a trademark ‘lacklustre grey’, the work slowly emerged, the only object in existence that would prove that every next dent, scratch or bump would enrich the work with another layer and added complexity. For two years designated chauffeur Jacques Vitte, would steer the object through the streets of Paris, to the bemusement of the art audience and great fright of the tourists hailing what they thought was just another taxi, driven by a highly accident prone driver.

The presentation at Liste 16 embodies and visualises this project by Wim T. Schippers and his fellow participants through an object brutally treated by time and carelessness. Works by Mike Cooter and Julie Verhoeven flanking ‘Le Taxi cabossé, four-wheeled dents’, impose a contemporary urgency to this iconic historical piece. The presentation as such becomes an ardent plea for consideration and delicacy towards preserving the past and safeguarding the future through conservation and cultural policy, despite harsher socio-economic conditions.

Steven van Grinsven, 2011

On the artist Wim T. Schippers

Wim T. Schippers (Groningen, 1942) attracted great critical interest as an artist aged 19 when he stated that all inspired art should be ignored and introduced his alternative; a-dynamic art or works of *waarachtige oninteressantie* at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Through this refusal of inspired art, Schippers set out to represent the opposite by using the immaterial possibilities of monotone experience, whilst exploring a resistant attitude towards the expressive exploitation of grandeur in material based art. With a flourishing art career and an invitation by Edward Fry to show at the Guggenheim in his pocket, Schippers’ attention turned elsewhere namely, mass media. His radiobroadcasts would enrich the Dutch language, his television shows would lead to questions in Parliament and stage plays, of which one acted out by a cast consisting purely of German Sheppard dogs, would reach iconic cult status. Schippers was presented with lifetime achievement awards as the Nipkow for his television work, Looyens for his visual arts and Lira for his writing. ‘Le Taxi cabossé, four-wheeled dents’ is one of the last pieces created by Schippers that reflects his ability to transform the way we can experience the mundane in spectacular ways.

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