

**DJOS JANSSENS - NO PLACE TO BE**

invited by Anne-Françoise Lesuisse

11 November – 23 December 2016

In his work, Djos Janssens (Brussels, 1966) crosses the noble practices of the fine arts (primarily painting) with procedures and materials taken from the world of visual communication (adhesive images and lettering, neon, serigraphy). He also coordinates text and image, disseminating the meaning of the words in a formal arrangement where colour, photographs, mirror images and even graphic textures lead the sentence into a dialectic conversation. Finally, he shows a constant concern to integrate his works into a dialogue with the environment and the context, thereby reinventing their scope and the quality of their presence or inventing a specific composition, both fitting and incompatible, for a particular place.

Djos Janssens has won several awards for artistic integration (including for the Municipal Museum in Molenbeek Saint-Jean, the Town of Thuin and very recently, the AZ Zeno Knokke and AZ Nikolaas Beveren hospitals). He teaches drawing at the ARTS<sup>2</sup> college in Mons and is an exhibition organiser. As an artist, in over twenty personal exhibitions and many collective exhibitions in Belgium and abroad, he constantly confronts reality, whatever it may be, seizing it with both hands, analysing it, synthesising it and finally crossing through it with works which are usually addressed.

Addressed to whom? To him, first of all, perhaps. An avid reader, insatiable collector of strange combinations which may be presented by daily life or travelling to those who know how to look and be receptive, a man of movement and of observation, Djos Janssens stores up images, literary quotes, lyrics, colours and shapes, which he reuses when the time comes, articulates, paints, sculpts, arranges or prints, to offer the world his reading of the world. His work is also addressed to others, to everyone else, whether observer or passer-by, who comes across his work, men and women, but children too, brotherly souls who populate streets, museums and galleries, public places, display windows, etc.

This approach plays on codes that are both familiar and unknown. Be they literary or taken from a pop repertoire, filled with a sense of humour, a sense of the generous formula or sensitive poetry, the quotations on his canvases and in his environments – as is the case with *Please, Please, Please* (mixed technique on canvas, 100 x 130 cm) presented here – draw the observer into his universal, joint, shared reality. “God Damn it Give Me A Break”: hands up if this doesn’t apply to you! Painted in capitals, the expression stands in the foreground of an image which both envelopes it and, quite literally, serves as its backcloth. In a sumptuous, elaborate, baroque setting, the image depicts the interior of a cathedral (*di Santa Maria* in Cagliari) tilted 180°. The visual perturbation obstructs the perception while clinging directly to the meaning of the words (church / GOD), opening the way to the dizziness of interpretation, sense and nonsense, shifts and reversals, all pervaded by a delicate irreverence.

Even as I am writing these lines, an extra layer may – or may not – be added. It will all depend on the effect obtained when it is hung. It will also depend on the additional power of the turmoil, the dissolution obtained by a complementary element. I do not disclose to the reader the need to step back from the piece from which all *in situ* installation proceeds. What you have in front of you today, as you read these lines, is the result of an intrinsic process in the work of Djos Janssens: how, through the artistic environment mobilised in a certain space/time, can the efficiency that governs our lives be tripped up?

This address, this petition, even, as regards the work presented, takes the form of a constructed speech which Djos Janssens delivers to the person opposite him, integrating into a certain clear-cut shape the perceptive blurring and plastic form without compromise. But this address, this speech, only exerts its full power as a total device if there is a response, however slight. It is up to you to give this response. How? Uniting direct interpellation and scrutiny, straightforward, unaffected composition and misdirection, the work of Djos Janssens is a challenge to both the perception and the reason. Between the two, shaken up, if he accepts the confrontation, the observer could rediscover the path to his sensitivity, buried in the layers and the speed of days, and references skilfully adapted to the contemporary, which Djos Janssens scatters sparingly, notably when echoing the situationists and their denunciation of the spectacularisation of real life<sup>1</sup>.

In the preface to the recent monograph on the work of Djos Janssens, Daniel Vander Gucht nevertheless warns this observer who has suddenly become responsible: "If the vision machines [of Djos Janssens] continuously throw his users of the track, this is no doubt partly due to the fact that, under cover of requesting the participation of the observer, they trap him in his own portrayal and automatic reflexes (...)"<sup>2</sup>

God Damn it Give Me A Break!

Anne-Françoise Lesuisse

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1 Christine Jamart, "Words/Mots" in *Djos Janssens. From Beyond*, Ed. La Lettre Volée, Brussels, 2014, p. XXXV.

2 Daniel Vander Gucht, "Preface" in *op.cit.*, p.III