

KETELEER GALLERY



Luc Deleu & T.O.P. office – *Red and Blue Barricade*

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13 May – 27 June, 2021

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present *Red and Blue Barricade*, an installation by Luc Deleu & T.O.P. office.

In 1970 Luc Deleu and his wife Laurette Gillemot founded T.O.P. office, an independent studio for urbanism and architecture, in their house *Les Nénuphars* in the Cogels Osylei in Antwerp. The very conceptually minded T.O.P. office surprisingly introduced their architectural projects to the art circuit, a world which was significantly more receptive to the office's ethos of freedom and experimentation than the execution-driven world of architecture. Their main goal was and still is, to intellectually expand the ways of approaching architecture and urban design by considering new – more creative – ways of joining architecture, human life and the planet in order to improve the balance between them, aiming at a more sustainable future. In 1980 their views were bundled in the *Urban Planning Manifesto* which, to this day, reflects T.O.P. office's core philosophy. *Urban Space*, the office's ongoing research on designing public space in a global context is becoming more and more relevant in a world which is increasingly confronted with its own limits.

Red and Blue Barricade was inspired by the painting *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) by Eugène Delacroix, an iconic painting which motivated Deleu to examine the representation of barricades in art. He found that even though conceiving and raising a barricade is a fast and straightforward process, it's a whole different thing to turn a barricade into a piece of art. The intention alone immediately prompts a whole bunch of ontological and formalist questions. What differentiates a barricade from a heap? Should it actually barricade something? What can it be made of? What connotations does it provoke? ...

Deleu started experimenting with simple barricades: piles of rubble, stacked books and furniture, and finally got inspired to use design furniture and more specifically Rietveld's Red and Blue armchair. This iconic piece of furniture became famous due to it being both extremely innovative in design and practical to produce and distribute. 'Design for the people' was what the designer originally envisioned – though it quickly turned into an expensive collector's item - but for Deleu it also became a shape which could both express order and chaos when piled on top of each other and in doing so he extended the chair's versatility and revived its initial democratic potential.

In 2016, Deleu was invited to realise a *Red and Blue Barricade* at 'De Conickplein' in Antwerp but never got to realize it due to authorisation problems, a bureaucratic barricade if you will... and the work ended up being installed at the Middelheim Museum, Antwerp in 2017.

Most of T.O.P. office's projects were never realized, but a few were: the reconversion of Panamarenko's parental house in Antwerp into patrimony and the installation of a work of art (heli-platform) on its roof (2008-2012); the remodelling of three houses in Blankenberge into a Belle Epoque exhibition centre (2004-2010); the *Orbino* installation and promenade walk for the Middelheim Museum (2004); designs, conversions and remodellings of private houses throughout Belgium, several temporary artistic interventions in the public space and (what Deleu considers his most poetic project) the remodelling of the *FURKA dépendance* (1986-1997) in the Swiss Alps, part of the legendary *Furkart* project.

December 2020, the book *Luc Deleu & T.O.P. office – Future Plans 1970 – 2020* was published, containing 44 contributions by artists, curators, writers, art critics ...

28 April, 2021 a new exhibition *Luc Deleu & T.O.P. office – Future Plans 1970 – 2020* will open at deSingel, Antwerp, a production by the Flemish Institute for Architecture and deSingel, curated by Peter Swinnen & Anne Judong.

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