

GUILLAUME BIJL



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REFERENCE MONOGRAPH

Self-taught artist Guillaume Bijl (b. 1946, Antwerp), is mostly recognized for his alternative take on conceptual art, his desire to directly engage the viewer, and his "Transformation Installations" started in the late 1970s. In these works he realizes meticulous imitations of everyday realities in galleries and museums, mainly focusing on trade and exchange locations—whether in commodities, information, or skills. One of his most famous pieces is his groundbreaking "Lustrerie Media" installation shown in Art Basel in June 1984 for which he transformed the entire booth of his gallery into a light shop.

Bijl's practice is however much richer and more diverse and largely goes beyond this landmark series. This reference monograph thus reveals the scope of his thinking and art during the last four decades. Built around a comprehensive essay by John C. Welchman entitled "Jumps of the Cat: Guillaume Bijl's Simulation Therapy," the book spans the early "Treatments" (1975–1978) to the on-going "Transformation Installations," "Situation Installations," "Compositions Trouvées," and "Sorry" bodies of work. Grounded in and marked by a number of economic, social, and cultural conditions, Bijl's works are a stimulating reflection and synthesis of our current times. As John C. Welchman writes: "Bijl's work made important contributions to many of the issues addressed by the Western neo-avant-garde art world from the 1970s to now—questions about performativity and spectacle; elitism and "lowness"; simulation and "commodity art"; life-scaled corporeality and the uncanny; appropriation, archives and the postmodern readymade; negotiations with selfhood and artifice; and the tension between work situated in art institutional and public spaces."

Among other shows, Guillaume Bijl has participated in the Venice Biennial in 1988 and 2009, documenta IX (Kassel) in 1992, Münster Skulptur Projekte in 2007, the Istanbul Biennial in 2013, and Manifesta 11 in Zurich in 2016.

A specialist in the Californian art scene, on Paul McCarthy, and Mike Kelley (whose complete writings he edited), John C. Welchman is a modern and contemporary art historian, a critical theoretician, and a curator. He is Professor of Modern Art History in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego.

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