

⑨ No. 638

The Sentinel: Balen 2007
photo Jef Van Eynde

In 2007, the bronze sculpture “*The Sentinel*” was installed in a fountain on the Market Square in Balen. The robust sculpture is conceived as analert, critical guardian of everything that is happening around us and in the world. Or as Geys himself wrote: “Think of that Sentinel as a question mark around everything that is happening around you...”

⑩ No. 29

Back of my classroom in Balen: big names Jef Van Dijck: Balen 1962-63 – Hasselt 2023 interpretation: names of students and colleagues of Jef Geys’ school in Balen

On the back wall of Geys’ classroom, a strip of the American flag had the name Jef Van Dijck on it. Van Dijck was a close friend of Jef Geys but to most people he was unknown. Geys often printed names on strips that he then posted in museums or in public spaces. The names on the large window of Z33 are an interpretation of this work. These are the names of the students and colleagues who were interviewed in the book “*The school of Jef Geys - essays & stories*” which

inspires and accompanies the exhibition in Z33.

⑪ “Jef Geys makes school”, a neon in Z33

At the entrance, the exhibition “*Jef Geys makes school*” is announced in eye-catching neon. The work is a distant reference to Geys’s blood-red, seductive neon “*Chez Micheline*” which is not on display in the exhibition. In 2004, Geys put that neon on the window of Micheline Szwajcer’s Antwerp art gallery.

Near the long wall, partly painted with black board paint, you can browse numerous documents on trestles. On the wall are photos, editions, illustrations, testimonials and unique gifts Jef Geys gave to his colleagues and (former) students for all kinds of favours and services rendered.

Caretaker: Luk Lambrecht

Special thanks to: Nina Geys & Kai Ohara, Koen Peeters, Bart Janssen & Jef Van Eynde

Thanks to: Kaat Obbels, Oriana Lemmens, Charlotte Friling & Dirk Snauwaert

Jef Geys makes school

01.10.23 – 18.02.24

EN

House for Contemporary
Art, Design & Architecture



Vleugel 19

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The exhibition “*Jef Geys makes school*” focuses on the work created by Belgian artist Jef Geys (1934-2018) from 1963 to 1989, when he was a teacher at the Rijksmiddelbareschool in Balen.

A highly individual teacher with unparalleled educational talent, Jef Geys shaped his aesthetics classes in his very own unique way. He started from his own positive worldview and opened a dialogue with his students about mainstream opinions and changing worldviews. By doing this, he demystified all sorts of insufferable myths about reality with them.

Geys’s most extraordinary works of art emerged from that direct classroom practice at school. *The World Map, the Women’s Questions, the ABC Ecole de Paris, the Colouring Book for Adults, the Feelings Play Box, ...* continue to be crucial works in his oeuvre with themes that are still relevant today.

The numbers on the titles refer to the chronological list that Jef Geys kept of all the works of art and projects he realised. “*No. 1 – Brothers of Charity, drawings and photos*” dates from 1947.

① No. 198

School playground in Balen - World Map: Balen 1968 - Bruges 2002 - Hasselt Interpretation 2023

It was an idea of fellow teacher Jef Sleeckx to draw a world map on the playground that would give students insights about the state of the world while playing. Jef Geys painted this world map together with his students. In 2002, Geys recreated the playground map in Bruges, with the line markings of sports fields over it. And here in Z33, *the World Map* - in consultation with Jef Sleeckx - was interpreted indoors. Just like in 1968 in Balen, there is a panel with

the world map. Every day, the current highlights from the newspaper are added to it.

The sculpture “*Patisson Gold*” made of polyester (with certificate) is positioned here exactly on the countries Mexico/ Guatemala where the courgette originally comes from.

② No. 195

Feelings Playbox: Balen 1966/67 – Eindhoven 2005 - Sint-Agatha-Berchem 2017

Jef Geys developed this box together with his fellow teacher Toon Schraepen. It was intended as a gift for Geys’

daughter Nina (1966). As of 2005, large boxes with colourful blocks and manoeuvrable shapes in different materials went into production as an open invitation to free creativity. One box is still used today at the Kasterlinden Institute (Sint-Agatha-Berchem). Inge Godelaine made a film about it right there on site.

③ No. 414

! Women’s questions? : Balen 1965 – 1980 edition

Geys sifted through newspapers and magazines at the local library to collect questions that seemed “typically female” to him. He hung the list of questions in his classroom and used them as a source for discussion with his students. From 1972, this list often became a part of his projects and exhibitions. The list has been translated into several languages and is a key work in Geys’ oeuvre.

④ No. 89

Colouring Book for Adults: Balen from 1964

To create order in his early artistic years and as an “opportunity for conversation”, Geys outlined seven themes for his artistic research. For him, these were the important themes: women, world, home, body, military, objects and cars. Based on these worldly topics, he designed a colouring book for adults. Later, the colouring book was actually used in his lessons and coloured in by children.

⑤ No. 10

ABC École de Paris Morphological drawings: late 1950s, early 1960s

This series is based on a popular French distance learning course. During his academy days, Geys took this course himself. After completing the 203 assignments, he was “allowed” to call

himself an artist. Geys turned these assignments into a work of art.

⑥ No. 595

All black and white photos until 1998

A book with all black and white photos until 1998, compiled from Geys’ archive. The photos were printed in a random order, illustrating how his family and professional life blended together with his activities as an artist in the art world. In this book, Geys disrupts the strict boundaries between art and life.

⑦ No. 414

! Women’s questions? Balen 1965 – Digital Loppem/Zedelgem 2003

This is the first digital work (2003) by Jef Geys and would become the starting point for his masterful film “*One Day, One Night, One Day ...*”, his contribution to Documenta 11 (2002) in Kassel.

The installation consists of one screen with various images from Geys’ photo archive and two monitors with texts by critic/curator Roland Patteeuw. From Geys’ numbered (art) work list, this work brings together projects that deal with gender, gender roles and beauty.

⑧ Kempens Information Sheet

From 1971, Geys provided a free newspaper to accompany his projects and exhibitions. In it, he mainly provided a lot of text and image information, allowing visitors or readers the opportunity to better assess and contextualise his art.

They were Geys’ democratic answer to the expensive catalogues. According to him, knowledge and information about art should not be reserved for a select audience.