Press release

MANIERA 01 & 02
LIMITED EDITION FURNITURE BY
OFFICE KERSTEN GEERS DAVID VAN SEVEREN
STUDIO ANNE HOLTROP
IN COLLABORATION WITH
BAS PRINCEN

22 Apr – 1 Jun 2014
Opening on Tue 22 Apr
5 – 9 pm

Open on Fri & Sat : 12 am – 6 pm
Or by appointment : T +32 (0) 494 787 290

74, rue de la Caserne,
1000 Brussels
info@maniera.be
www.maniera.be
MANIERA 01
OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen
Prototypes
i.c.w. Arthur De Roover

MANIERA 02
Studio Anne Holtrop
Furniture series based on the stone collection of Roger Caillois
ABOUT MANIERA

MANIERA commissions architects and artists to develop both new and unique pieces of furniture. As architects often have a close relationship with the visual arts and artists are often inspired by the spatial environment, MANIERA wants to give them the challenge and opportunity of designing original furniture objects. The idea behind this is to see how they create something new in a limited edition in an original and creative way.

The name MANIERA has nothing to do with Mannerism, the Late Renaissance style which followed the High Renaissance, but with Mannerism as a movement that is defined by a subjectification of artistic rules and the emancipation of the artist with an independent oeuvre. An artist develops a personal ‘maniera’, an individual artistic language and method of working. He or she creates works that appear first of all as art objects and secondly as products of a particular artist.

The artists of the Cinquecento deliberately wanted to create something different. This ‘Maniera Moderna’ inspired Chris Dercon, Wilfried Kuehn and Armin Linke in their choice of title for their exhibition and catalogue on the life’s work of the architect, furniture designer and photographer Carlo Mollino. Haus der Kunst Munich, 2011 – 2012). "It is Mollino’s relentless pursuit of design, as exemplified in his manifold mental and physical exercises, that makes the artist so attractive to a wide audience today. He did not leave us just another modern manner or style, but a truly modern way of working: it is a very personal, even idiosyncratic and yet highly disciplined programme, one that is characterized by unparalleled technical know-how and an inexorable desire to make and show things.”*

These ideas inspired MANIERA, which hopes to function as a laboratory where architects and artists can transcend their own medium. The interface between the visual arts, architecture and design is of vital importance in this context.

Above all, MANIERA wants to bring a young, up-and-coming generation to the fore, but also to show established and renowned figures in a new way. The most important elements in this are a personal language and writing, a conceptual mode of thought, and an authentic and idiosyncratic way of working.

Rather than white-box presentations, MANIERA intends to present the furniture in various domestic surroundings, existing interiors, and different cities. But the prototypes are permanently on display in the apartment of the founders, Amaryllis Jacobs & Kwinten Lavigne, and can be viewed by appointment.

MANIERA’s first exhibition shows prototypes of limited edition furniture designed by the Brussels-based architecture duo OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen and by the Dutch, independent architect Anne Holtrop. By request of both architecture firms, artist and long-time collaborator Bas Princen acts as curator of the furniture series and of the accompanying exhibition.

Dutch photographer Bas Princen is an internationally recognized chronicler of our globalized civilization. With his sublime view of divergent urban spaces, he manages to enrich traditional urban photography in a unique way. Princen has been collaborating with both OFFICE and Anne Holtrop for a long time. He does not only photograph both practices’ finished buildings and installations, he also creates work collectively with each of them.

At the beginning of this furniture project, Princen asked OFFICE and Anne Holtrop to use their existing architectural thoughts and concepts as starting points for their small-scale designs. He invited them to design furniture in a typically architectural way, playing with the capacity of furniture to act as sculptural objects that define space. He also challenged them to focus on the use of materials and the material gestures we recognize in them.

OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen is one of the most interesting and uncompromising young architectural practices at work today. It is renowned for its idiosyncratic architecture, in which utopian and non-realized projects are also customary. It does not invent the architecture, but reflects and considers what architecture can signify and be today. To reduce architecture to its bareness and essence. The firm’s architectonic ideas start from geometrical corrections and rather rigid classifications, in order to measure the world as it presents itself to us and allow life to unfold in all its complexities.

For MANIERA, OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen conceived a table and a chair. In this way they focus on what is fundamental. The table was designed in collaboration with engineer Arthur de Roover. It is both a very simple design with a clear emphasis on tectonics and an effective piece of engineering. We present 3 prototypes of the table in different kinds of materials and differing dimensions. The chair is a ‘frozen’ version of the walking-stick chair “No.6822”, as designed by Thonet in about 1866, and long out of production. It is a deliberate ‘open’ interpretation of the original, much in the tradition of variations in the turn of the last
century (by Adolf Loos and others). Undone from its actual folding mechanism, it becomes a contemplation on surface and structure. Anne Holtrop’s starting point for his work is mostly existing materials or shapes that initially, and in itself, have nothing to do with architecture, to then develop these into something architectural. Both the handling and the (re)-interpretation of these forms and materials provide the architectural aspect. For example, the way in which someone sees a butterfly or a lake in a Rorschach ink blot. Important in his work is that it remains interpretable exactly the way it originated.

Holtrop created a series of furniture objects based on the stone collection amassed by the French philosopher and sociologist Roger Caillois as pictured in his book The Writing of Stones. Caillois shows a collection of the insides of agate, jasper, and onyx stones. The remarkable thing in these stones is that we tend to see images in them. Anne Holtrop carefully selected fragments of the stones and from them made his Mirror, Desk and Shelves. The objects are given the same painstaking treatment as a painting. They are hand-painted by Sylvie Van der Kelen of the Brussels decorative painting academy Institut Supérieur de Peinture Van der Kelen-Logelain (since 1882). Specialized in trompe l’œil techniques, she recreates the effect of Caillois’ ‘pierrès à images’.

Roger Caillois (1913 – 1978) was a friend of Surrealist André Breton, that is until they had a disagreement. Over a Mexican jumping bean no less! Caillois wanted to cut open the symbiotic legume and peer in at the worm inside while Breton preferred to remain ignorant of the mechanics behind what he saw as a magical thing. It is Caillois inclination for empiricism that separated him from Breton, and in turn inspired him to explore the grey area between the magical and a natural order of things.

Caillois collected a humongous collection of polished stones from around the world, seeing within them what he termed “secret cyphers of the Universe.” They become miniature pieces of art, with no artist behind their creation except for the Universe itself. Caillois not only questions the role humanity plays in art creation, but also the aesthetic values that only humans possess. These stones for Caillois show how without humanity there remains aesthetic. Further it is nature that dictates human aesthetics and imagination.

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All furniture objects are currently in production. Images and information will go online on the day the show opens (www.maniera.be)
Pictures of the models are available to the press
Bas Princen (1975 / NL) is an artist and photographer living and working in Rotterdam and recently in Singapore. He was educated as industrial designer at the Design Academy in Eindhoven and later studied architecture at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. Since then, through the use of photography, his work has focused on the urban landscape in transformation, researching the various forms, outcomes and imaginary visions of changing urban space.


Bas Princen’s work has been included in numerous group exhibitions. In 2014, new photographic work will be shown in the main exhibitions of both the Rotterdam


Bas Princen won the 2004 Charlotte Kohler Prize for promising young artists and architects in the Netherlands and at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale he was awarded the Silver Lion for his collaborative work with OFFICE Kersten Geers David van Severen.

Bas Princen has been a long-time collaborator with both OFFICE Kersten Geers David van Severen and Anne Holtrop. Princen not only documents both practices’ completed buildings and installations, he also creates work collectively with each of them. The most recent collaboration with OFFICE, *The Wall Pavilion*, was presented at the Shenzhen Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture. Anne Holtrop and Bas Princen are working together on the ongoing project *Batara*, which consists of models, photographs and a pavilion for an arboretum (Collection Wageningen University).
While every attempt to make architecture seems to drift off into the rhetoric of programmatic organization and ironic provocation, form and space as such have become a rare commodity. In our projects we try to counter this by making direct and precise spatial proposals, formal compositions without rhetoric. This literal architecture aims for a phenomenological experience, perhaps despite of its programme.

Kersten Geers & David Van Severen

With a track record stretching back twelve years, the studio of Kersten Geers (1975 / BE) and David Van Severen (1978 / BE) has tackled all kinds of projects from a radical point of view: quasi-utopian city proposals, frontier posts, single-family houses, government buildings, exhibition designs and pavilions. Their architecture has not only to do with the design solutions that emerge but depends on radical reformulations of the programme – such as emptying the Belgian Pavilion in the 2008 Venice Biennale of Architecture and filling it with confetti, rigid schemes in plan – like the square divided into nine of the Villa Buggenhout, the construction of spaces
based on concatenated rooms (or enfilades) – like the Weekend House, or the burying of the volume – as in their Urban Villa in Brussels or the design for the Kunstmuseum in St. Gallen.

OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen gained international attention in 2005 with two competition-winning projects: A Grammar for the City, for a new administrative capital city in South Korea, and Border Garden, a border-crossing between Mexico and the USA. In 2008 they represented Belgium at the 11th Architecture Biennale in Venice, followed by their first solo exhibition at deSingel arts centre (Antwerp) in 2009, including an exhibition catalogue recently re-published by Hatje Cantz.

Following an invitation by Herzog & De Meuron and Ai Weiwei, OFFICE contributed to the Ordos 100 project in China together with 99 other promising architectural firms. In 2009 they also finished their largest realization to date, the gallery and office building for Kortrijk XPO. That same year they received the Belgian Architecture Award for the bridge at the Handelsbeurs in Ghent. In 2010 several built projects were delivered, among them the Chamber of Commerce office building in Kortrijk, subsequently nominated for the Mies Van Der Rohe Award. In the same year, OFFICE was also invited by Kazuyo Sejima (Sanaa) to participate in the 12th Architecture Biennale in Venice. Their Garden Pavilion project, in collaboration with the Dutch photographer Bas Princen, was awarded with the Silver Lion for most promising young architects. In September 2012 a monograph on their work was published in 2G magazine (2G #63).

In 2013, OFFICE created a multi-site urban project for the 11th Sjarjah Biennial, called Oases 2013, consisting of three public gardens. Earlier this year, OFFICE received the 2013 Belgian Prize for Architecture for the Weekend House and the Computer Shop in Tielt. The growing architecture firm is currently working on master plans for Antwerp and Bordeaux, two cultural centres and The Pearl Route in Bahrain, the new Library for the Faculty of Architecture and Engineering in Ghent, the Solo House in Cretas in Spain and the Wijnpers Agriculture School in Leuven.

Geers and Van Severen have held several teaching positions at international architecture schools, and are currently teaching at the Versailles school of architecture and the EPFL in Lausanne. Both give lectures on their work, and Geers regularly publishes in the international press, and is co-founder and editor of San Rocco Magazine.

www.officekgdvs.com
I am interested in a possible architecture. In my work I start with form or material that often originates outside architecture. In the conviction that things can always be re-examined and reinterpreted, they can also be seen as architecture. In the same way as someone can see a butterfly or a lake in the ink blots of a Rorschach test. I want to look freely – more or less without a plan – at material gestures and found forms and let them perform as architecture. In this way, architecture emerges by imagining the next step that follows the steps already taken. I want the work to remain interpretable exactly the way it originated.

Anne Holtrop

Anne Holtrop (1977 / NL) is an independent architect based in Amsterdam. His work ranges from models to temporary spaces and buildings, on which he occasionally collaborates with the artists Krijn de Koning and Bas Princen. He is course director for the Master Studio of Immediate Spaces at the Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam, and is often invited as a guest tutor or lecturer. He was editor of OASE, an architectural journal on architecture, from 2005 till 2013. For his practice he has been awarded several grants by the Fonds BKVB, as well as receiving the Charlotte Kohler Prize for Architecture from the Prince Bernhard Cultural Foundation.
The Trail House, part of the Unknown Territory event at the Museum De Paviljoens in Almere (2009), is a short-lived, life-size model of a single-storey house. It follows a series of trails in the ground next to the museum that are created by the daily circulation of pedestrians. The house becomes the path and transforms the inside into a ‘walking home’.

The Temporary Museum (Lake), is a temporary gallery in a nature reserve north west of Amsterdam (Aug – Sep 2010). Its shape is inspired by the automatic drawings of Jean Arp. The drawings are made by chance. Not likeness or beauty is its key aspect, as in traditionalism; nor logic or ratio as in modernism; but rather ‘the possible’ in the sense of what is merely conceivable, the idea that all things can be perceived and conceived differently.

Batara, Arabic for ‘taking away material (or hewing)’, is an ongoing work that currently consists of models, photos and a pavilion. It is being made in close collaboration with Bas Princen. The walls are cast forms made by pouring pigmented plaster or concrete directly into a mould made of sand. The resulting forms are used as walls with occasional openings cut into them. The walls are unrestricted in their shape and have a double-faced appearance.

The Museum Fort Vechten, a new national museum on the Dutch use of flooded land as a line of defence, will be the first permanent building by Anne Holtrop to open in March 2015. Situated on the site of the Vechten fortress, the development proposes constructing an underground building which uses the shape of the existing topography as the mould for the architectural form.


www.anneholtrop.nl
Press contact

Amaryllis Jacobs
74, rue de la Caserne,
1000 Brussels
amaryllisjacobs@maniera.be
T +32 (0) 494 787 290