

YASSER BALLEMANS

WOODWOSE

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A guided moment of catharsis, purification or criticism

In the course of history, for a long time art played a semi functional role. Artists made temples and stadiums, designed flags, clothes and attributes for rituals and made triumphal arches to celebrate a war victory. All these objects had a clear function within society. Nowadays art and the societal functional domain are separated. Art has become much more autonomous: people encounter it mostly when they are actively looking for it in galleries and museums. For our public space, everyday objects and celebrations, on the other hand, the practical perspective is dominating. Ballemans considers that a loss. Therefore he tries to connect the critical and imaginative aspects of art in a contemporary manner to the functional domain.

Within this area of tension he is particularly interested in celebrations and events. Contemporary celebrations are tending to become reduced to relaxing, fun and consuming, whereas traditionally celebrations often mark a transition or constitute a guided moment of catharsis, purification or criticism beyond the everyday order. They regularly contain elements that refer to the basic human passions, such as violence, sex, emotions and irrationality. Rituals and celebrations often are connected to local legends and traditions. **Yasser Ballemans** is trying to find meaningful variations of these rituals in our globalized, secularized and commercialized world.

JOEY RAMONE

Carnival's revolutionary potential

For Ballemans of all celebrations carnival has his special interest. Carnival is known for a combination of humor, irrationality and social criticism - a combination that has always been appealing to him and subsequently also looking for in his artwork. To him, carnival and art are therefore naturally aligned.

Traditionally, carnival is a Dionysian fertility celebration, a period of intoxication and disobedience in which differences in classes disappear and taboos are addressed in a humorous way. It's a celebration with a revolutionary potential, which is often hidden behind a veil of consumerism. Ballemans' ambition is to see how artists can present works that are profound and obstinate within this popular setting to revitalize the critical element of carnival. Ballemans has tried to integrate art and carnival in different ways. What is important is that the artwork contributes something to the carnival and the setting provides an extra meaning to the work. He has participated for instance in the Heerlen carnival in the Netherlands. In Willemstad, Curaçao he realized a carnival project with art students and psychiatric patients. The work visualizes the tension between dissolving in the crowd and individual identity.

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