**Peter Buggenhout**

***The Blind Leading the Blind***



Curated by

Simone Menegoi

Banca di Bologna Hall, Palazzo De’ Toschi

Piazza Minghetti 4/D Bologna

January 28 – February 19, 2017

Opening: January 27, 2017, 6:00 PM

press release

Banca di Bologna is pleased to present ***The Blind Leading the Blind***, the first solo show in Italy by Belgian artist **Peter Buggenhout** (b. 1963, based in Ghent), one of the foremost European sculptors of his generation.

The exhibition, which will be on view in the **Banca di Bologna Hall** of **Palazzo De’ Toschi** (Piazza Minghetti 4/D, Bologna) from **January 28** to **February 19, 2017**, is curated by Simone Menegoi, and will open to the public on **January 27** at **6 PM**. It is scheduled in conjunction with the 5th **ART CITY Bologna,** an initiative sponsored by the **City of Bologna** and by **BolognaFiere** and aimed at creating a program of high-profile cultural events in exhibition spaces around the city during the weekend of **Arte Fiera**. The event will also renew the partnership between Banca di Bologna and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna which began in January 2016 with the group show *LA CAMERA: Sulla materialità della fotografia*. For the entire length of the exhibition, students from the art academy will greet visitors and be on hand to provide information about the works by Peter Buggenhout.

The exhibition is made up of two pieces, both from the series ***The Blind Leading the Blind***. The first (*The Blind Leading the Blind #65*, 2014) is a spectacularly striking assemblage—some 10 meters long and 6 meters high—incorporating materials such as iron pipes, plywood panels, carpeting, industrial scraps, and bits of mortar: a piece of architecture ambiguously suspended between construction and destruction, growth and collapse. The second (*The Blind Leading the Blind #25*, 2007) is an enigmatic object with a craggy, irregular shape, presented in a showcase as if it were an archeological find. **Both works are being shown for the first time in Italy.**

For twenty years now, Peter Buggenhout has been presenting viewers with a challenging paradox: his pieces are elaborate artistic creations which at first glance seem like the product of chance and time. The sculptures from his series *The Blind Leading the Blind* look like wreckage, ruins, rubble: works springing from a rational design, but shattered and mutilated by some unknown event. In other cases, we feel like we are looking at organisms whose haphazard proliferation has been suddenly cut short. All the works in the series are partially or wholly covered in a layer of dust, as if they were happened upon after decades of abandonment: critics have called them “archeological finds of the future.”

This use of dust as a sculptural material is one of the most fascinating aspects of Buggenhout’s oeuvre. Associated with the passage of time, with decay and dissolution, it suggests that the Belgian artist’s works could be seen as melancholy *vanitas*, still lifes meant to remind the viewer that everything is transient. The sculptor warns us, however, against interpreting his work in a purely negative sense, as a sort of monument to entropy: “The opposite may be true. I let the viewer to decide. Destruction leads ultimately to reconstruction, in the same way that dead leaves nurture trees. We are confronted with a constant back and forth. The situation is in flux,” he says.

Buggenhout belongs to a long line of artists—not only in the visual realm; for instance, the sculptor lists the work of author Georges Perec among his influences—who have tried to depict the world in all its inexhaustible, chaotic complexity, putting aside the hierarchies of value and yardsticks of meaning that guide us in everyday life. Completely “abstract,” (in the artist’s description), his sculptures nevertheless stand as an analogy of reality itself, both in their form, which combines planning and chaos, growth and decay, and in their range of materials, which includes almost everything imaginable. (For the sculptures in his *Gorgo* series, Buggenhout even uses animal entrails, hair, and blood.)

The aesthetic and intellectual principle underlying the Belgian artist’s work is that any attempt to impose a rational order on reality will always be partial, limited, and doomed in the long run to failure. It is no coincidence that Buggenhout has titled his main series of works *The Blind Leading the Blind*. This is a reference to one of the sculptor’s favorite paintings, the homonymous work by Pieter Brueghel the Elder at the Museo di Capodimonte, but also to the passage from the Gospel of Matthew that this painting illustrates, a proverbial reference to the fallacy of human knowledge: “They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

The exhibition will be documented in a forthcoming monograph on the most recent exhibitions of Peter Buggenhout, soon to be published by Banca di Bologna in collaboration with its institutional partners.

**Peter Buggenhout** was born in Dendermonde, Belgium in 1963. He lives and works in Ghent.

His recent solo exhibitions include: Museum Zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen (2016); Museum M, Leuven (2015); Centre Internationale d’Art et du Paysage de l’Île de Vassivière (2014); *Caterpillar Logic II*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York (2014); *The Blind Leading The Blind*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); *Ni chair, ni poisson*, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris (2013); *De-Titled*, Galerie Konrad Fisher, Düsseldorf (2012); Ludwig Forum, Aachen (2012); *Contes Invertébrés*, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris (2011); *Ongewerveld*, De Pont, Tilburg (2011); *Caterpillar Logic*, Kunstraum Dornbirn (2010); *“It's a strange, strange world, Sally”,* La Maison Rouge, Paris (2010); *The Broccoli Cycle 1*, Konrad Fischer Galerie, Berlin (2010); Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf (2009); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (2009); Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Jerusalem (2008); Gallery Maskara at Warehouse on 3rd Pasta, Mumbai (2008).

Image:

Peter Buggenhout, *The Blind Leading the Blind #25*, 2008

plastic, aluminum, plasterboard, acrylic glass, polyurethane, styrofoam, iron, wood, various materials, dust

110 (h) x 200 x 185 cm

Exhibition partner **Banca di Bologna** is a bank with close local ties to both the city and the surrounding area. Its many initiatives have included refurbishing Piazza Galvani, restoring the Oratorio dei Fiorentini and Bologna’s city gates, recovering and upgrading Piazza Minghetti, and renovating Palazzo de’ Toschi. It has also been involved in the restoration of the Basilica of San Petronio and its Chapel of the Archangel Michael, with the famous fresco by Calvaert.

Palazzo De’ Toschi, a historic building in the center of Bologna designed by Emilio Saffi and built at the beginning of the twentieth century, was originally Palazzo delle Poste, the main post office. Its construction features, and especially its use of reinforced concrete, drew the interest of Le Corbusier, who saw it during a trip to Italy in 1907 and described it in his letters. The Palazzo was acquired by Banca di Bologna in 2007 and reopened to the public in 2013. Over these last few years, the building and its main hall have been used to house important cultural and educational initiatives and exhibitions. The conference hall, at the top of the grand staircase, is a space measuring over 600 m², fully equipped with the latest technology. Its windows give onto a 250 m² terrace. Overall, it is a prestigious, well-structured location for conferences, shows, and other events. Notable examples include a series of lectures by eminent critics and scholars on the theme of art and food through the centuries, organized by Banca di Bologna for Expo 2015. Banca di Bologna’s cultural program for Palazzo De’ Toschi continued with the photography show *L’industria bolognese, un DNA riconosciuto*, organized in collaboration with Collezioni Alinari and presenting many pictures on view for the first time, and the exhibition *LA CAMERA: Sulla materialità della fotografia*, an exhibition exploring the relationship between photography and sculpture, curated by Simone Menegoi in conjunction with Arte Fiera 2016.

AT A GLANCE

**Peter Buggenhout**

***The Blind Leading the Blind***

*Location*

Banca di Bologna Hall, Palazzo De’ Toschi

Piazza Minghetti 4/D, Bologna

*Opening*

**January 27, 6 PM**

*Press preview*

**January 27, 12 noon**

*Dates*

**January 28 – February 19, 2017**

*Opening hours*

During the weekend of ART CITY Bologna:

January 27, 6 PM-10 PM; January 28, noon-midnight; January 29, noon-8 PM

From January 31 to February 19, 2017:

Tuesday to Friday, 1:30 PM-6:30 PM; Saturday, 11:30 AM-6:30 PM; Sunday, 1:30 PM-6:30 PM

Closed Mondays

**Free admission**

*Exhibition curated by*

Simone Menegoi

*Assistant Curator*

Barbara Meneghel

*Project partner*





*In collaboration with*

**Comune di Bologna**, **BolognaFiere**, **ART CITY Bologna 2017**

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