



Ann Van den Broek - WArD/waRD, *The Red Piece*, 2013
© M. Vanden Abeele

In 2008 Van den Broek also staged an auto-biographical work. In *I Solo Ment* a mentally isolated man is set opposite a woman who wants to get through to him. This piece is dedicated to her brother Thomas, whom she has in vain tried to help during his psychoses.

There is no question that Van den Broek is a dedicated choreographer. Having no longer danced in her pieces for ten years, she once again appeared on stage in *Ohm* (2010) and *The Red Piece* (2013). She does not want to lose the feel for dance itself. In *Ohm* she pumps up the rhythm by stamping on a sheet of metal. And in *The Red Piece* it is her heels that drive the tempo. *The Red Piece* follows the pulsing rhythm of a heart: impassioned, controlled and structured. In *The Black Piece* (2014) it is the rhythm itself that sets the tone. The performance is varied with highs, lows and interruptions.

In 2015 it was fifteen years since Van den Broek had set up her dance company. Her latest piece, *Pushing the Wheel* (2015), in which a retrospective section is linked to a look ahead to the future, was made on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of WArD/waRD. By means of flash-forwards, this performance gives the spectator an idea of the undoubtedly powerful future work of this talented choreographer.

LIZA NOTERIS

Translated by Gregory Ball

www.wardward.be

Marcelle Schots, *Protect / Perform, On the work of / over het werk van Ann Van den Broek - WArD/waRD, WArD/waRD, Antwerp*, 2015.

Visual Arts

An Echoless Organ Grinder

The Life Story of Felix Nussbaum

I am easily tempted. At the end of the millennium a couple of sentences in a biography of Stefan Zweig were enough to inspire me to write a book. Biographer Serge Niémetz quoted the young German author Irmgard Keun, elegantly describing a meeting between several important literary figures at a café in Ostend. The scene took place in the summer of 1936 and, besides Stefan Zweig, those present were a good-humoured Egon Erwin Kisch and an inebriated Joseph Roth.

It turns out that a large number of German writers stayed in Ostend in the summer of '36, most of them people of Jewish background. I wrote up this small but well-documented chapter of exile history in Ostend: Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, and the Summer Before the Dark (OT: *Oostende, de zomer van 1936*).¹ The cover showed the well-known photo of Roth and Zweig on the Belgian coast.

Shortly after the book was published in 2001 I saw a painting I would have preferred to have had on the cover, because it so perfectly captured the atmosphere of Ostend harbour during the interbellum as I had experienced it in much of the writing of 'my' exiles. The canvas presented Ostend Fish Market in 1936, its painter Felix Nussbaum. I was previously unaware that this Jewish artist had come to Ostend fleeing Nazism and I immediately wanted to know everything there was to know about Nussbaum. As I mentioned, I am easily tempted into a new book. Certainly in this case, as Nussbaum's life story, the way he completely disappeared under the radar after his death at Auschwitz and resurfaced decades later, seemed amazingly exciting, and the work he left behind intriguingly clever.

Although Felix Nussbaum lived with his wife Felka Platek in Belgium from 1935 to 1944, it soon became clear to me that he barely enjoyed any fame there. In Germany it was different. In 1970 more than 100 of his paintings, which had been rotting in a cellar in Brussels until then, turned up in the city of his birth, Osnabrück, where he grew up in a



Felix Nussbaum, *Orgelmann (Organ Grinder)*, 1943
 © Felix-Nussbaum-Haus, Osnabrück

it comes to areas such as the history of the Jews, exile, and local details of Ostend and Brussels, the internet is an infinite archive.

Felix Nussbaum liked to portray himself as an organ grinder. His tragedy was that he lived in a period which deprived him of any echo. In the end I spent more time looking for a way to tell this story than searching for traces of Nussbaum's existence in the first place: how could I best reinforce the echo his work had achieved by its own strength?

MARK SCHAEVERS

Translated by Anna Asbury

Mark Schaevers, *Orgelman. Felix Nussbaum, een schildersleven (Organ Grinder. Felix Nussbaum, the Life of an Artist)*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 2014.

The German translation, *Orgelmann*, is to be published at the end of 2016 by Galiani Verlag Berlin.

1 Published by Uitgeverij Atlas, Amsterdam.

'The Way of All Flesh'

The Graffiti Artist ROA

Zoom in - come on, even closer - and you will see an undercoat of white latex paint applied with a roller, decorated with short black marks from a spray can. A double monochrome on a crumbling brick wall, dead wood or bleak concrete.

Zoom right out and you find yourself face to face with an animal. It remains sitting there motionlessly, but if you look at it long enough you could swear that little shudders passed through its huge body, or that in an unguarded moment it took a quick breath. You imagine that as soon as you turn your back it gives a sigh of relief and relaxes, as if it had been holding this immobile pose just for you.

These amazingly anatomically correct depictions of massively outsized animals in stylish black & white are the trade mark of the anonymous graffiti artist ROA, the only Belgian street artist to be included in *Art in the Streets*, the prestigious 2011 survey exhibition by the curator Jeffrey Deitch at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. This provided him with gilt-edged artistic credentials, since his work hung alongside that of such pioneers as Keith Haring, Shepard Fairey and Banksy. No other Belgian artist has worked abroad as much as ROA in recent years; usually out in the streets, but occasionally in the sheltered cocoon of galleries in London, Brussels and New York. The street is his natural biotope, it is here that he does drawings on walls several metres high, often from a hydraulic platform, armed with a paint roller and spray can.

ROA learned his craft on the street too, as a young graffitist working at night in Ghent in the late 1980s. There are hardly any traces left of his earliest work, which the man in the street and municipal officials invariably classified as 'vandalism'. Graffiti exists exclusively in the here and now, and what is created today may tomorrow already be removed by a cleaning team or overpainted by an unscrupulous rival. Later, a half-ruined overgrown factory in the Ghent area served as his studio. While he luxu-