

BENJAMIN RENOUX
Caryatids

January 21 – March 4, 2017

Baert Gallery presents *Caryatids*, a solo exhibition of new works by Benjamin Renoux. This will be the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States.

With a predominant focus on photography as a trace of reality, Benjamin Renoux's introspective work questions the relationships between identity and representations of the Real, expressed in a variety of mediums.

Renoux's sculptures, *Falling Caryatids*, suggest statues in relaxed but momentarily-held positions, as if they are tired of fulfilling their task as the foundations of a building. Inspired by 3D-modeling software, where non-physical objects can be merged with others almost thoughtlessly, Renoux creates physical objects in concrete, where the imperfections of the casting process are retained as part of the reality of representation, allowing the paradox between the roughness of the material and the fragility of the human body and identity to be explored. By merging ancient and classical traditions of statue-making with contemporary minimalist art trends, Renoux's sculptures bring together a variety of references such as antique high relief, masks, or even gothic architectural ogives. *Merging Studies*, a series of prints made from 3D-modeling portraits based on 3D scans of the artist, illustrate the genesis and process leading to the ultimate form of these sculptures.

After casting his model, Renoux asks him to dance and play with the cast of his own head to create a series of painted photographs entitled *Self-Portraits*. The model's body is blurred in order to emphasize the transience of time, while the facial features of the cast head remain in focus. Then, with his hands and body, Renoux adds abstractions in black oil paint on top of the photograph. In the artist's words, "The physical contact with the printed photograph creates a dialogue with the photographed double-representation of the model and goes through an act of appropriation, turning the image(s) of someone else into a self-portrait, questioning the notion of how identity can be represented."

In *The Gaze of Medusa*, Renoux considers the photographer's never-ending pursuit of perfect focus to reveal something of the photographic practice and the veracity of the photographic image. In this new series of moving images, Renoux purposefully takes photography's unique dilemma to its extreme conclusion, presenting us with a series of videos shot from photographic images, an act of image-making where the achievement of perfect focus becomes an impossible act. Alluding to his own previous explorations regarding the mythology of Medusa as an illustration of Lacan's mirror stage, the artist implicates the photographer and the viewer in her power, turning into stone anyone who would look her in the eyes. While the fleeting act of photography is itself stretched to infinity, the characters we observe appear to be brought to the present, to the time of the viewer, as well as frozen in time. This multiplication flattens the time of the work, of the reflection, and of the viewer, calling into question which representation is the most alive, the closest to reality.

In a world where constant evolutions shape the human perception of itself, Renoux's work continues a back and forth dialogue between traditional practices and new technologies, expressing a contemplative quest for identity of our time, with a strong awareness of where we come from.

Benjamin Renoux studied Cinema and History of Art in San Francisco and Paris before receiving a Master's in Fine Art with Distinction from Central Saint Martins. His work has been exhibited in the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Luxembourg and Belgium.

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