

“Chambres d’amis” (1986)

Jan Hoet

November 15th 2010, 19 h

MACBA Auditorium

“Chambres d’amis”

Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, but hosted in 58 private houses in Ghent

21th June – 21th September, 1986

Curator: Jan Hoet

Artists: Carla Accardi, Christian Boltanski, Raf Buedts, Daniel Buren, Michael Buthe, Jacques Charlier, Nicola de Maria, Luciano Fabro, Günther Förg, Jef Geys, Dan Graham, Milan Grygar, François Hers, Kazuo Katase, Niek Kempers, Joseph Kosuth, Jannis Kounellis, Bertrand Lavier, Sol Lewitt, Danny Matthys, Gerhard Merz, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Helmut Middendorf, Juan Muñoz, Hidetoshi Nagasawa, Bruce Nauman, Maria Nordman, Oswald Oberhuber, Heike Pallanca, Panamarenko, Giulio Paolini, Royden Rabinowitch, Norbert Radermacher, Roger Raveel, Wolfgang Robbe, Claude Rutault, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Remo Salvadori, Rob Scholte, Ettore Spalletti, Paul Thek, Niele Toroni, Charles Vandenhove, Philip Van Isacker, Jan Vercruyssen, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Martin Walde, Lawrence Weiner, Robin Winters, Gilberto Zorio.

A few statements on “Chambres d’amis”

I.

“Intriguingly titled ‘Chambres d’Amis’ --‘guest rooms,’ or, literally, ‘friends’ rooms’-- the show places art in 58 houses belonging to everyday townspeople, carrying the work outside the separate universe, the total institution, of the museum, to bring it within the private zone of the private home, an asocial place insofar as it is removed from the public arena.

(...)

His [Hoet’s] project takes the exhibition structure off its hinges, goes beyond the limits of the frame and spills over, whole, into an interior. Art here no longer offers a mirror or a window, nor constitutes the privileged sign of a choice, but is an actual, provocative presence, confirming its difference both from the museum space, which has lost its sanctity, and from the contextual frame in which the object serves as a fetish.”

Pier Luigi Tazzi, “Albrecht Dürer would have come too”, *Artforum*, September 1986, pp. 124-128 (p. 124).

2.

“Approximately fifty inhabitants of Ghent have put their homes, entirely or partly, at the disposal of the same number of artists. The artists’ self-imposed task is to transform these spaces --within the limits imposed by the owners or occupiers-- into something which can be identified as ‘art’. (...)

Not only --as some sceptics might remark-- in the homes of extremely rich art collectors of people in the design trade nor in meeting-rooms of so-called ‘progressive’ associations, nor in empty studios of obscure artists, but in all sorts of homes.

(...)

The artist is frequently interrupted during the creation process: life, which he usually evokes, transforms or represents as an abstraction in the quiet loneliness of his studio, now actually keeps penetrating his works. (...) The artist is evidently a disturber of the peace. A work of art in a museum will always be an object of detached contemplation, whereas in *Chambres d’Amis* it is propagated deeply in the private life of a family.

(...)

Peculiar to *Chambres d’Amis* is the fact that it confronts the artist with an *already shaped space*: shaped by the taste of the occupiers, by the architectural style of the house, also by the street, the square, the patio or the garden round the house. Apart from that, the house also has its own history, which it partly shares with its present occupiers. It shows traces of life. In short, the spaces already possessed a personal character before the artist came in.

The artist is faced once more with a challenging situation. This seemingly banal consideration asks for reflection. Suddenly we see that a museum is a ‘clear and evident’ space, that the strictness of its code is comfortable, both for the artist and the visitor. (...)

The restful and reassuring atmosphere in a museum is partly explained by the explicit nature of its code. We know where to expect art and where not. Even before our first contact with a work of art, we are unconsciously influenced by the museum’s set of norms. There is, moreover, a dividing line between the events within and those outside the museum: on the inside the museum has detached itself as much as possible from all history, whereas on the outside, life and history are reigning. (...) The exhibition confronts, although only for one summer, the concrete, historical dynamic of an inhabited house with the timeless neutrality of a museum.

(...)

Another aspect of this exhibition is the totally different manner in which the works of art are presented to and received by the public. The fact that there is only one work in each house or space counters most of the levelling effect which is usually provoked by large-scale exhibitions

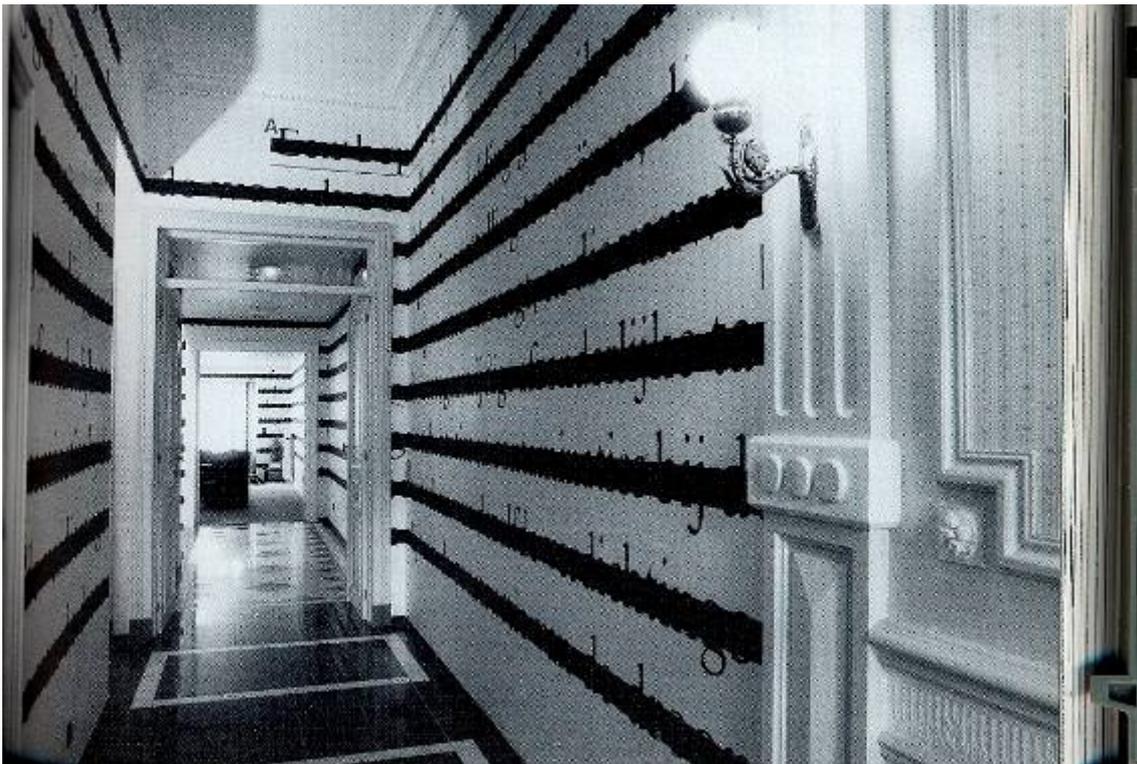
of art treasures. *Chambres d'Amis* evades the overwhelming nature of large, prestigious exhibitions by cutting the museum to pieces and scattering it all over town.”

Jan Hoet, “Chambres d'Amis: a museum ventures out”, in *Chambres d'Amis*, exhibition catalogue, Ghent: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, 1986, pp. 341, 342, 343 & 347.

3.

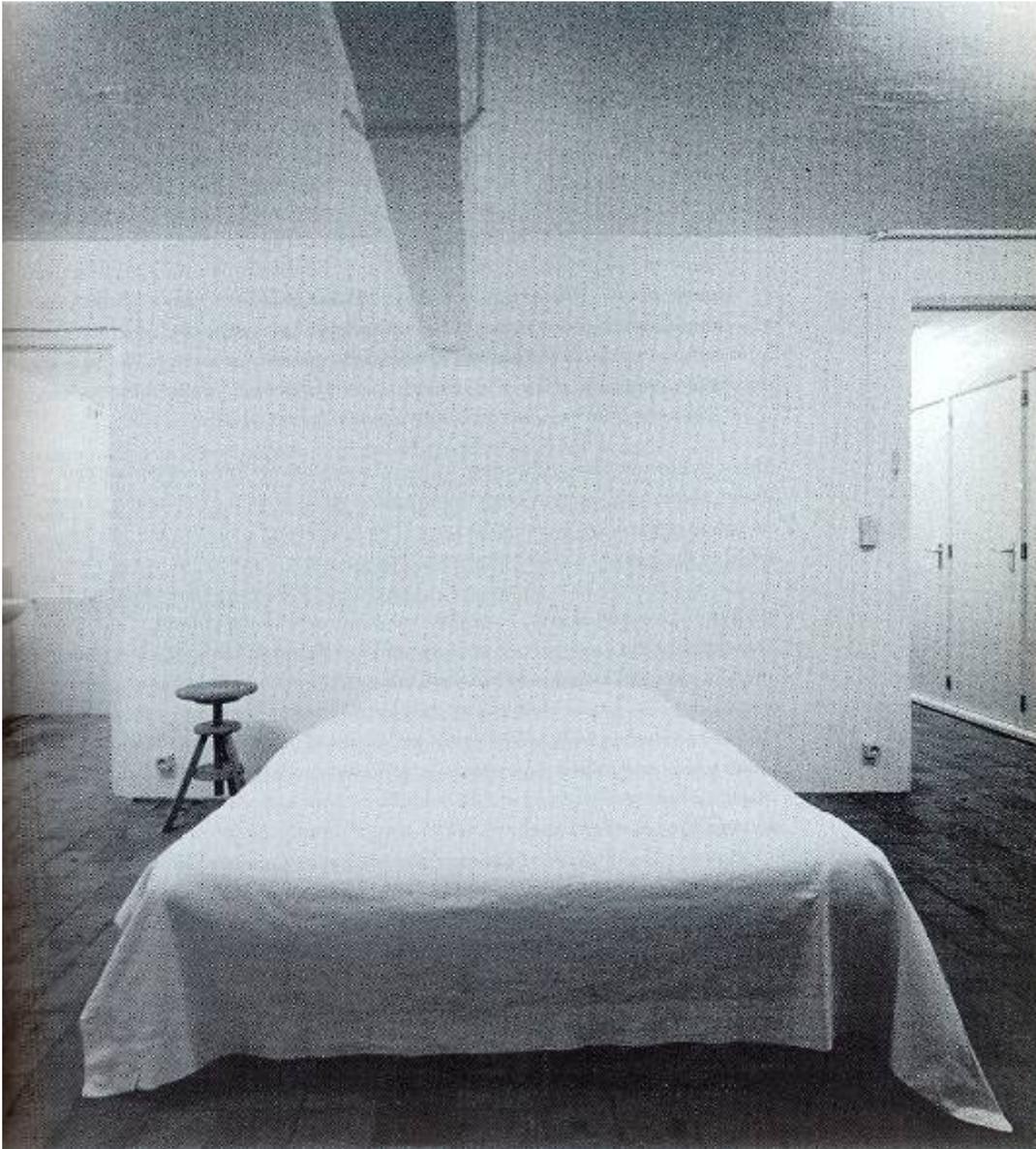
“When Jan Hoet situated his 1986 exhibition, *Chambres d'Amis*, in homes throughout Ghent, the tension between the public display of art and its private setting became the theme of the exhibition.“

Reesa Greenberg, “The Exhibition Redistributed. A case for reassessing space”, in: Greenberg, Reesa; Ferguson, Bruce W.; Nairne, Sandy (eds.): *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 349-367 (p. 351).



“Chambres d'Amis”, interior work by Joseph Kosuth, Ghent, 1986

Photo: Dirk Pauwels, courtesy of Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent
in Greenberg, Reesa; Ferguson, Bruce W.; Nairne, Sandy (eds.): *Thinking about Exhibitions*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 271.



“Chambres d'Amis”, installation by Daniel Buren, Ghent, 1986. / Photo: Attilio Maranzano
in: Greenberg, Reesa; Ferguson, Bruce W.; Nairne, Sandy (eds.): *Thinking about Exhibitions*,
New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 119.

Jan Hoet was born in 1936 in Leuven, Belgium. From 1975 to 2001 he was director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent, which in 1999 moved into a building of its own, the SMAK. From 2003 to 2008 he was artistic director of the MARTa Museum in Herford. He has curated exhibitions such as documenta 9 in Kassel (1992), *Over the Edges* in Ghent (2000) and Sonsbeek 9 in Arnhem (2001). Jan Hoet has received the East Flanders Culture Prize and the Goethe Medal. He is an honorary doctor at Ghent University, Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française and has been knighted by the Belgian monarch.

http://www.warp-artprojects.be/english/eng_news.html

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Other Sources

Jef Cornelis, *De langste dag / The longest day*, BRT, 1986 (6:15 hours)

Compiled by Karin Jaschke