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Jacques Bedel: Paradojas (Paradoxes)

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Aproximación al mal, 2013. Técnica mixta sobre PET-PVC. 100 x 100 cm

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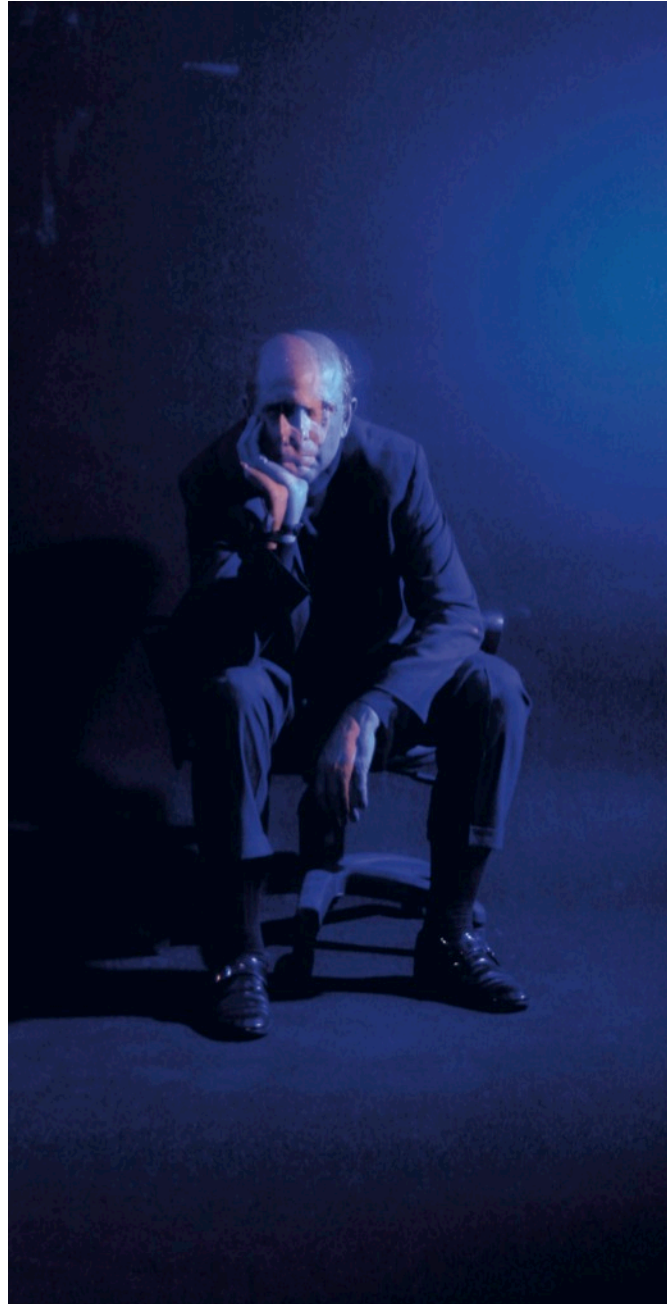
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A paradox is, by definition, an idea that is strange or opposed to common sense, an assertion including its own contradiction. For an artist and architect like Jacques Bedel, functionality should be a key element of creation. Paradoxically, however, Bedel challenges such functionality through works that question the logic both of physics and of contemporary art, and thereby make us reflect on the statute of truth in a world that is presented to us as clear and confusing at the same time.



Alter ego, 1968-2005. Acrílico y espejo azul. 150 x 75 cm

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The *Alter Ego* series, conceived between 1968 and 1969, deepens the optical and kinetic research that Bedel had carried out in his early works and deals with philosophical problems about thinking by using mirrors. In the homonymous piece included in this exhibition, a mirror doubles and splits the visitor's image, providing a monochromatic doppelgänger which alters the unified perception of the self and exposes us to the complexity of the psyche. Reality becomes not one but many, and space becomes a construction that comes to us only through the modified mirror image.



Objeto paradójal, 1971. Hierro perforado. 75 x 50 x 50 cm

In the *Objetos paradójales (Paradoxical Objects)* series, from the early 1970s, Bedel combines his trade as an architect with his conceptual research as an artist in order to make sculptures that challenge the traditional materiality of that medium. To that end, Bedel uses micro-perforated steel sheets with panels that form apparently unstable structures, creating objects that oscillate between heaviness and lightness, opacity and transparency. So it is not by chance that, throughout his career, Bedel has been interested in the shadow, an immaterial entity that takes the shape of its medium while distorting it at the same time. Also, according to our Western philosophy, the shadow is the metaphor for knowledge par excellence. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the intangible world is only offered to us by means of visual metaphors provided by shadows, immaterial structures that suggest and confuse what the world actually is.

In many ways, all these pieces are also part of Bedel's interest in the concept of dematerialization, which had been discussed in depth since the late 1960s in the Buenos Aires art world starting with Oscar Masotta's lectures and writings. Whereas Bedel's first works dealt with visual effects to challenge the artistic object, his sculptures would use the transparency of angular materials and structures that defy gravity. In its historical framework, Bedel's paradox is that instead of reducing the work materiality, his pieces are dematerialized precisely through the choice of components, which satirize the object solidity. This is how pieces suggest, at the same time, presence and absence, heaviness and lightness.



Aproximación al mal, 2006. Técnica mixta sobre PET. 8 piezas de 60 x 60 cm c/u

Finally, this exhibition shows the *Aproximaciones al mal* (*Approximations to Evil*) series that Bedel has produced since 2005 and which keep on with the artist's interest in innovative materials as well as the spectrum problem. Made with plastic materials such as PET and PVC, these works of different chromatic shades hide images of viruses, bacteria and microorganisms that are only revealed by the shadows the works project on the wall. As the title announces, the series is about the evil's ability to disguise and hide, just as the virus takes refuge in the body and becomes apparent only through its symptoms. In the artist's words, "evil hides its true essence until it expresses itself." Again, the shadow, despite its amorphous nature, plays a central role in showing the truth underlying appearance.

Western art history travels through the problem of appearance. Sculpture, a sister of architecture, adopts early its role of presence, but never gives up going beyond such role through perceptive deceit, as Bedel's *Paradoxical Objects* shows. Painting, in turn, takes refuge in the representation over centuries, but assumes its role of object in the last century in order to reveal the materiality of reproduction and shadow, even though that can only be achieved by *approximations*. Aware of this deceit, Bedel appropriates and challenges Western art tradition by questioning not only the boundaries and materiality of the medium but also the assertions of the paradoxical world surrounding us.

Aimé Iglesias Lukin

Jacques Bedel was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1947. In 1965 he took up studies of Architecture at the University of Buenos Aires; at the same time he began his self-taught work with plastic, without attending schools or workshops. In 1968 he won the Premio Braque bronze medal and got a scholarship to study in France. In 1974 he received a scholarship from the British Council to study sculpture in London, and in 1980 he gained the Fulbright Scholarship to carry out research at the Cornell University National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center in New York and the NASA in Washington, D.C.

In 1972 he joined the CAYC Group, founded by Jorge Glusberg, together with Luis Fernando Benedit, Victor Grippo, Leopoldo Maler, Vicente Marotta, Luis Pazos, Alfredo Portillos and Clorindo Testa, among others. He was invited to 14 international art biennials, including the Venice Biennale in 1986 and 1999, and participated in more than 450 exhibitions in Argentina and abroad; his solo exhibitions include “Ficciones” (“Fictions”), Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires, 2005, and “Aproximaciones” (“Approximations”), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2008-2009.

Bedel was awarded 45 national and international prizes, including the gold medal at the United Nations’ International Exhibition in 1975, the Grand Prix of the Bienal de São Paulo in 1977 together with the CAYC Group and the Gran Premio de Honor at the I Bienal Internacional de Montevideo in 1980. His works are part of private collections and museums both in Argentina and abroad. Jacques Bedel lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina.