

DUTCH ARTIST'S INTERVENTION 'SOFTENS' IMPOSING SOVIET LANDMARK

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Conceptual artist Marinus Boezem revisits the monumental architecture of Moscow's Gorky Park through site-specific artworks and installations.



1 / 4 *Untitled, 2018*

by Noemie Baumann

Last week, Gorky Park Museum opened the first Russian solo exhibition of artist Marinus Boezem (NL, 1934), one of the founding fathers of Dutch conceptual art and Arte Povera from the late 60s.

Dell'Uomo – Italian for 'about man' – deals with a universal question: how do humans relate to their surroundings?

"Each scientific breakthrough leads to thousands of new questions. It is important to realize and accept that this puts human beings in a new perspective amongst all other things surrounding us," explains Robbie Schweiger, curator of the exhibition. "The more we know, the more we realize how little we know."

Marinus Boezem presents six pieces installed throughout the Museum, which is located inside the grand gate marking the entrance to Gorky Park. Installations can be found in the 48 meter-long gallery, inside rooms, on the facade, and on the roof.

Before entering the museum, the viewer is greeted by bouquets of pillows wrapped around the six capitals of the pillars facing the park. The artist's intervention questions the monumentality of this Stalinist-era landmark, inviting us to re-contextualize it.



1 / 3 *Vanishing of the Artist, 2015*

"Boezem created a new capital order (next to ionic, doric, and corinthian) which adds some softness, and makes the upper part of the building seem less solid and strong," explains Schweiger.

Boezem's multidisciplinary work reaches far beyond the boundaries of the gallery. He uses 'poor' materials and natural elements to reflect on human nature, its specificities, and limitations. The exhibition playfully questions systems, such as categorizing, labeling, mapping, which humans create in order to comprehend and master the world around them.

"Anthropocentrism, which believes that human reason can fix anything, should be replaced by a model of nonhierarchical interconnectedness with all other entities in this world. Of course this is really scary and I think this fear could be one of the reasons for spreading political populism. However, the trick is not to despair but to try to find ways to embrace this and find new ways of coexisting," says the curator.

"Boezem likes to work with ceremonial buildings and architecture, and the supposed opposites 'nature and culture' are omnipresent in his work," Schweiger tells Strelka Mag, explaining why the artist chose to exhibit his work at the Gorky Park Museum. The museum offers monumental architecture and acts as a physical gateway from 'nature' to 'culture.'

Vanishing of the artist (2015) is a piece on the roof's observation deck, in which bird seeds are arranged on the floor, forming the artist's autograph "Boezem." According to the artist, a signature marks one's presence, claims authorship, and tries to counter oblivion. This witty and poetic piece contrasts the bold gesture with the lightness of the medium used. The signature will gradually disappear throughout the exhibition, the seeds slowly eaten and taken by birds who will fly off into the Moscow skyline.

Next to the signature, right above the image of Lenin on the facade of the building, flies a flag. It depicts the weather conditions in the Northern Hemisphere, on a June day. Boezem is fascinated by weather because it exemplifies the human desire to categorize something that is hard to predict and fully comprehend. The flag – a symbol of ownership and identity – becomes a visual and material representation of the weather conditions.

The idea behind *Dell'Uomo* "is that it puts a mirror in front of the visitor but it is not the goal to scare them with the reflection," says Schweiger.

Dell'Uomo will run until August 5th.

Photos: Noemie Baumann