

Jef Geys: L'art est la banalité, 1982, Catalogue Centre for Fine Arts 1990.

RADAR

JEF GEYS: AN ODE TO BANALITY

Jef Geys (1934-2018) was an artist who famously said he did not create art. Twenty-seven years after the last Geys exhibition at BOZAR, he returns to the Centre for Fine Arts with an exhibition about the 1969 Tour de France.

That year, Eddy Merckx took the famous yellow jersey for the first time. In Belgian history, this is an event with legendary aspirations. When seen through Jef Geys's lens, however, it becomes a tribute to the everyday character of the cycling world and its spectators. A portrait of this unique artist.



© Baert Marc, Jef Geys's photos, The 1969 Tour de France of Eddy Merckx (HLNI).

Blowing up the museum

In 1970, Geys had the insane plan to blow up the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. A statement that essentially was an indictment of 'the museum' as such. Art had to be returned to the people, away from the high threshold and the elitist doors of the museum. That is why Geys always created an edition of the 'Kempens Informatieblad' for each one of his exhibitions. This is the popular equivalent of the catalogue, which looks like a free, local newspaper.



Jef Geys, Landscape jumper, 1967. Catalogue Centre for Fine Arts 1992.

In between life and work

Geys's views on the museum are echoed in his art. He constantly strikes a balance between the everyday and the artistic, using his own life as a creative guideline. As a teacher of 'positive aesthetics' in Balen, he encouraged his pupils to copy a Lichtenstein, a Warhol or a Fontana. He challenged every art practice, including painting. From 1963 to 1989, he painted a sachet of seeds every year, which in a sense became an allegory of the pigments used in painting, in the ironic shape of a flower or vegetable.

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JEF GEYS
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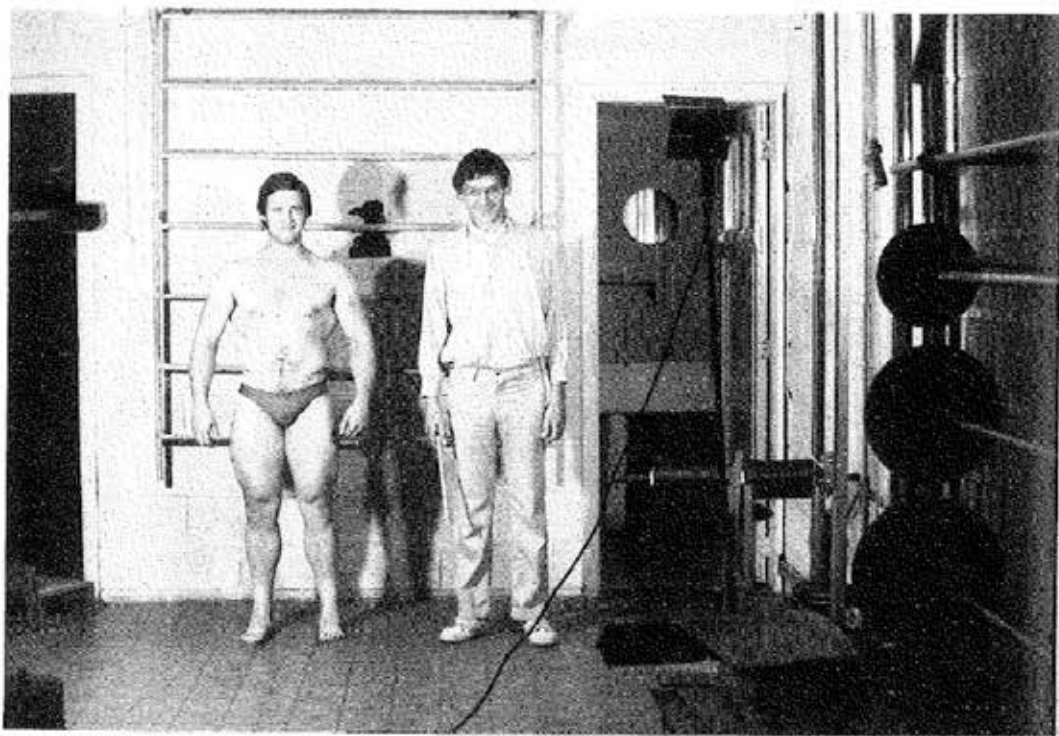
Sonderausgabe Kunstverein München



Jef Geys Weblog, Kempens Informatieblad, October 2001.

No openings, nor interviews

Jef Geys never attended his own openings and never gave interviews. His art tackles social and societal themes, offering a subtle yet razor-sharp critique. It is up to the public, however, to uncover them. Jef Geys never speaks himself, he lends his voice to art and lets art speak for itself.



Jef Geys, *The Bodybuilder*, 1978. Catalogue Centre for Fine Arts 1992.

40,000 photos over a 40-year period

From 1958 until 1998, Jef Geys took a whopping 40,000 photos, of anything and everything, including horses, bodybuilders, 'artistic nudes' and election posters. In anticipation of the *Grand Départ* in Brussels, BOZAR has chosen to exhibit his take on the Tour de France of 1969. Do not expect a documentary or a sensationalist photo report. Instead Geys has captured the atmosphere of the Tour, with pictures of the supporters, the riders and the support vehicles.