

THE EVIDENCE TO THE NEAREST MILLIMETRE

In the courtyard of his workshop in Ghent (Belgium), Maarten Van Severen installed a piece by the sculptor Philippe Van Isacker : a grey, perfect parallelepiped, almost levitating above the ground, held by four steel jacks : For the Right to Doubt. Indeed, Maarten Van Severen (1956-2005), the Belgian designer was prone to doubt himself. It happens even to the most brilliant. Never to his pieces. They are, on the contrary, sure, precise, precious. He worked on the essential, both in terms of shape and material. Evidence of which are the two posthumous pieces shown here : a wall-mounted book shelf and a desk.

Exhibition:
from October 21st October
Until November 25th 2006
.

Opening reception :
21st October 2006
from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Open Tuesday to Saturday
from 11a.m. to 7p.m.
.

The first piece, an oblong book shelf, is made from aluminium with a facade made up of moveable panels covered in a phosphorescent lacquer. When they slide, they hide a fragment of the interior while revealing another. The piece rarely looks the same. It is, above all, unusually long. Not 3.58 metres. Nor is it even 3.60 metres: « rounding off » was not part of Van Severen's philosophy, especially when it was a question of « angles ». The bookshelf measures exactly 3.577 metres. Or, more to the point, 3377 millimetres, the only tolerable unit of measure according to Van Severen. The man himself made his pieces with his own hands, using a die. The evidence can be seen to the nearest millimetre.

The second of the two pieces presented, a black Bakelite desk, was thought through in the same manner. Ultimate starkness : four legs, a plateau, the same thickness of material throughout, the same colour. It is almost an archetype, an idea. The object is both initial and definitive. Its proportions are equally breathtaking, in particular the size that eulogises the horizontal. 2 700 millimetres, exactly. The desk has no « style » as such. It says nothing, about its feasibility, its genesis. It is merely itself, with proof. An incontestable presence. It is simply there. And simply everything. The last paragon of a precise, ascetic and silent body of work.

We were aware of Maarten Van Severen's desire for perfection. With time we discover that he explored existence in its most infinitesimal dimensions.

