

Bram Braam | *Words Can't Tell*

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A search for the raw traces to be found in our urban environment – a landscape dominated by architecture – are the points of departure for the work of Dutch artist Bram Braam. This search manifests itself in a sculptural and poetic representation of materiality and decay. Architectural landscapes are by their very nature subject to change, they are built for the purpose of humankind to live, work and play and, at the same time, it is this use that causes transformation alongside the influences of nature, destruction and decay. The sculptural works of Bram Braam are a reference to this eternal cycle and the transformation process of this materiality from its creation to its death.

In his work, the artist plays with the tension that can be found in the blurring line between reality and abstraction, which unfolds in a balanced spectacle of our everyday built environment - from ruins to new modern architectural buildings. His wall reliefs and sculptures contain industrial materials such as concrete, bricks, wood, steel, plexiglass, glass, and spray paint, and show a confrontation of the different qualities of the materials. His influence as an artist is not to be ignored here, Bram Braam takes the materials for his works directly from streets he encounters and transforms them into minimalist compositions in which a contrast can be found between the coincidence and the control - sometimes including the real traces left by people, and sometimes with traces made by the artist himself.

Bram Braam has a strong interest and background in alternative ways of using and appropriating our public space – from counterculture, do-it-yourself movements to graffiti art. The mixing of low culture with high culture, outside and inside, rough and smooth, unauthorized taking the city itself as a background and transforming it, are recognizable working methods of the artist. It is therefore not surprising that Bram Braam has a strong interest in the wall as an artistic medium; he seeks the limits of what painting can be in the context of our built environment. This working method is clearly visible in all of his works, in which he is able to take everyday objects out of their context and give them a new form. Here he plays with the boundary between ready-made and perfectly constructed sculptures that are being presented as fused fragments and eventually transformed into a new reality.

The artist draws inspiration from 20th century utopian thinking, modernism in architecture, brutalism and its failures – but also visible are references to minimalism, the De Stijl movement or artist Gordon Matta Clark. As an artist, Bram Braam plays with these references while simultaneously revealing his interest in the development of our urban environment in which different times collide. His work depicts the influences of the era of postmodernism, internet and globalization we live in. He reflects on these fragmented realities of our daily lives – the online world, our landscapes and architecture - which contain a constant mix of fake and real, adaptations and transformations, and where different authors and time periods intermingle. Bram Braam's work is about the way we look at this reality, what is staged, fake, constructed or natural, and when the self becomes a new entity. What his sculptural works reveal is an ongoing process of this evolution in which a mixture of copy, transformation, adaptation and decay come to the fore.

Text: Sarie Nijboer