

# DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

**Leon Vranken**

*The Garden with the Two Forked Paths*

January 23 – February 24, 2007

Opening Thursday, January 25, 6–9 pm

Artist in attendance

Diaz Contemporary presents the first Canadian exhibition of emerging Belgian artist Leon Vranken. Currently engaged in an ongoing project wherein he has recreated selected objects from the domestic interiors of a private home, Vranken shows sculptural and photographic works from this series.

*The Garden with the Two Forked Paths* is made up of a series of framed photographs, and wall-mounted sculptures. The images show the interiors in which Vranken has worked to carefully mimic select objects; seemingly random and banal household elements have been chosen, carefully and exactly replicated, then displayed neighbouring the originals in their domestic settings.

The photographs capturing these inserted replications escape the potential for near anthropological posturing or ironic distancing by themselves looping over into the realm of the sculptural through the artist's framing choice. Each image has been ensconced behind glass edged with diminutively decorative scroll-work frames noticeably stained reddish-brown. The homey, rural cousin of the cool, white, pale wood, or aluminum frames generally found supporting wallworks in galleries, these frames pull the images back into the realm of the bourgeois interiors in which they were originally taken, creating a sense of complicity or desire for direct dialogue.

Accompanying these images are the actual replicant objects and images the artist has made. A large tchotchke shelf hangs from the wall supporting a wide assortment of items. This is an exacting simulation of the original unit hanging in the participating family's home: Vranken has recreated the shelf, collected his verisimulations at flea markets and shops, or crafted them himself where none could be found. Ranging from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics to a container of ear swabs, the seemingly random range of things presented is of the sort that only actual lived experience can produce. The laden shelf calls to mind the oft invoked spectre of the Renaissance Wunderkammern wherein objects we now position as disparate and unrelated would be crowded together in amassings sourced from gentlemanly explorations and early scholarly acquisitions. These were the beginnings of our contemporary taxonomical framing of the world, and in essence formed microcosms of these speculations. Here Vranken has created

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a twinning of a banal cosmic structure, a sculptural allusion to a Borgesian existential examination.

Leon Vranken currently lives in Antwerp while he completes his graduate work at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts—Flanders (HISK). He has exhibited extensively in Belgium and the Netherlands.

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