

RAISE | LOWER | INTER

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The title of the exhibition, RAISE | LOWER | INTER, originates from the first work of art I exhibited at gallery Phœbus Rotterdam in 2012, which was a flag that folded out from a small hand made box into the larger space of a drawer of the 'Ladekastproject', and then fully unfurled to hang upon the flag pole of the gallery building. Subsequently, the stages of the flag being raised, lowered and interred were reflected in the design and proportions of the flag which carried a simple 'X' symbol that repeated upon the flag in growing size in relation to the times unfolded.

Now, seven years later, another flag with the title *RAISE | LOWER | INTER No.2* hangs from the same flag pole of galerie Phœbus. It also may be folded in a specific way to a specific dimension but this time it forms a pyramid like triangle, and will be interred again into a handmade box¹. In this flag, it is not the multiplied imprint of a symbol mirroring the different stages of the work, but the composition of two white linens² sewn into three stripes, the two outer stripes being more opaque than the central stripe. It is hand embroidered³ in cotton thread with the words 'RAISE,' 'LOWER,' and 'INTER' from both sides of the flag. Each of the three words contain five letters of which the middle letter of each word is identical when mirrored. The title encompasses the movement of raising matter and lowering meaning into a union⁴, where one plus one is three; the underlying motor of this collaboration and exhibition.

It was exactly this image: three stripes - two, plus one in the middle - that was the seed of the collaboration for the exhibition. Sitting with our daughter at the family table, an image came to me for a table with two outer stripes in wood, and a middle stripe in stone. From this minute spark, the table became a source of fascination and research for both of us, not primarily as an object of design, but as platform. From humble to ornate, simple to complex, the table serves a multitude of functions, many overlapping: eating, meeting, discussing, debating, resolving, playing, channelling⁵, studying, surgery, worship, building, trading.

When we started to look for examples of a table with this composition of three stripes, we found only one that resembled ours; a modern industrial butchery table for many people to work around. The outer stripes for cutting the meat and the central stripe acting as a thoroughfare for unprocessed and processed meat to pass. From this, we drew a connection to the altar where the table is used for sacrifice, now symbolically, and functions as a tool constructing a spatial axis between the above and below⁶; a vectorised surface indicating direction.

From this outline, we had begun to sketch an idea for our own table. Intuitively oak was chosen as the wood of the table; old, strong, resilient, mythical. While in Normandy, France, visiting the monastic gardens

¹ The flag is reinforced with brass grommets connecting brass snap hooks which in turn connect to the final element of the flag; a hand made lime bast rope produced in Norway by one of the last remaining traditional rope makers. The length of the flag is determined by the distance between the balcony from which the flag is hung and the bottom of the windows of the gallery beneath. The widths of the stripes of the flag are reflected in the proportions between the two front-side gallery windows and the space between them. The embroidered text upon the flag is placed at a height that when the flag is correctly folded into a triangle the words remain visible along the bottom of the folded flag.

² Grown from the same flax in the region of Flanders and woven in Belgium it has been kindly provided by Belgian linen weaver Libeco, est. 1858.

³ This text was embroidered by hand by Arte/Grossée in Bruges, who have over two-hundred years of experience in the production and restoration of religious garments, tapestries and vessels.

⁴ Matthieu Pageau, *The Language of Creation: Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis: a Commentary* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018)

⁵ In December 2016 Cathérine visited The Bibliothèque nationale de France to consult two of the four original manuscripts of 'Le Livre des Tables' by Victor Hugo. In this two notebooks we find a collection of handwritings from Hugo, some of his relatives and close friends, wherein spiritist sessions held while being in exile in Jersey from 1853 to 1855 were registered. In this so called 'procès-verbaux' we find dialogues of the people present around the table with among others Jesus Christ, Galileo, Shakespeare or more abstract entities as 'The Shadow of the Sepulchre' or 'The Idea'. In an interpretation by Michael Prescott the dialogues are described as 'an externalisation of the unconscious of Hugo, where in a deep sense, Hugo was talking to himself', in which the other characters acted as 'duplications' of the person Victor Hugo.

⁶ Matthieu Pageau, *The Language of Creation: Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis: a Commentary* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018)

of the Saint-Riquier Abbey in the summer of 2018, our dog Ysolde led us towards a shaded section so dense the sun hardly touched us directly, yet was light enough to see unimpaired. The shade came from two parallel rows of lime trees within which a statue of the Madonna and Child were placed at the southern end, her left foot resting upon a snake. The space was formed from sixty-four lime trees espaliered into two green walls, called the 'Allée de la Méditation' within which we found a dead chick upon the ground. Birds had always played a considerable role either as sign, guideline or turning point in former collaborations. The use of auspices as a means to decipher the will of the gods is also connected to the aerial god Jupiter, who's importance would become clearer later in the work.

The memory of this alley of lime trees pointed us to research in more depth the significance of this tree. Here we discovered the emphasised ritual role of the tree, the use of lime wood because of its softness often used for carving figurines of saints⁷, marionettes and puppets, but most importantly, its role as a community tree. There has been a long tradition where local communities held their judicial meetings under the shade of the lime tree to serve justice and maintain peace. Sometimes four taut ropes were added to delineate the space, also called a 'Vierschaar'. The latin word 'subtilis'⁸ derived from the period when Roman philosophers gathered together under the lime tree to discuss fine, subtle differences. Further we found that the oak tree served the same purpose. It was believed that these trees would help 'unearth' the truth. These meetings were called a *Thing*, which originally meant 'assembly', a coming together of parts; also referring to a 'fixed time', 'specific time' or 'time span'. These two wood species form the fundament of the table which stands at the heart of this exhibition; It relies on the strength of the oak, serving as the skeletal frame - traditionally constructed with precise joinery⁹, and the pinning of some joints by the lime, binding the whole¹⁰.

The image that emerged from bringing these two elements together was the intertwining pair of trees we found in the myth 'Baucis and Philemon'¹¹ in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the story, the Roman poet, Ovidius tells of a union of oak and lime through their encounter with the gods Jupiter and Mercury who turn the couple, Baucis and Philemon, into the intertwined trees, in honour and at their request for their generous hospitality, despite the gods being disguised as vagrants and their hosts having very limited means. Jupiter and Mercury flood the rest of the neighbourhood for the other inhabitants wickedness, lack of compassion and hospitality but turn Baucis and Philemon's home into a temple upon the water. From reading this myth, and subsequently transforming the joined structure of the table into the main characters, the development of the myth was paralleled.

The table has two levels; the top, which is made from two solid oak panels separated by a central stone, creating three stripes, and a lower level of only stone, that is proportionally the same as the stone above, yet smaller and is pierced by two struts that connect the lower stone to the one above. The stones represent the flood in the myth. Each slab of this first series of four tables come out of one and the same section from the quarry, later cut with close attention to detail, incorporating fossils and other elements present. So too, all of the oak used to make this table has come from one and the same tree felled in Germany.

The choice of the two stones representing the water in the myth was ultimately an intuitive process. After choosing the material, we found that both stones are remnants of primal ocean floors: the green

⁷ From this linden earned its title 'lignum sacrum', or 'sacred wood'.

⁸ The etymological root of the word 'subtle', *sub* under + lime-tree *tilia* in Latin.

⁹ Traditionally constructed without glue or any metal fastenings. Many modern tables use metal brackets to tighten the leg assemblies to the table-top that may loosen (rack) over time. This table has a unique combination of through-tenons and finger joints that locks the side-aprons, end-aprons and legs into the same plane. It was partially inspired by the work bench design of André-Jacob Roubo and the many solutions offered by traditional Japanese joinery.

¹⁰ The table may be dismantled without any tools. It relies on locking joints for its rigidity with gravity holds them in place. The frame of the table can be dismantled by tapping the side aprons upward with a soft mallet, after which the rest of the assembly is also unlocked and may be disassembled.

¹¹ The story told by Ovid is his interpretation of the greek myth which is now lost to time, only surviving through his retelling. It is timeless and archetypal story, It exists in different forms, in both scripture and folklore. The universal story of making a stranger a guest and a guest a king has always been with us and is as pertinent today as it ever was.

dolomite being formed over ninety-million years ago and the Kilkenny limestone being formed over the past five-hundred million years; here layered one on top of the other. Going deeper into the narratives of the stone, we found two characters directly related to the materials: the Greek sea-god Glaucus¹² connecting to the green dolomite and the Irish Saint Cainnech of Aghaboe¹³ to the Kilkenny Limestone, Glaucus being the sea-god of the sailors and fishermen; Saint Cainnech the patron saint of the shipwrecked.

At either end of the table secreted in the leg assemblies and hidden from view are two minerals. At the northern end of the table is a piece of cassiterite and at the southern end a piece of cinnabar. These are the ores of tin and quicksilver respectively. In alchemy tin is referred to as Jupiter and quicksilver as Mercury.

Above the table hangs a vertical line of silver¹⁴ made from a combination of chain and small objects. The thread both reminds us of a pendulum and a rosary. Here both the objects and the chain intervals are equally important as a guide leading us through a sequence of nine phases present in the work.

From the ceiling the thread hangs down almost to the table's surface towards the table's centre. It begins its descent with a Venetian chain referring to the 'Vierschaar' mentioned before. The chain then divides into two gourmet chains, one thin, one thick, respectively referring to Philemon and Baucis, the male and the female. Upon the thin chain hangs fulgurite, a glass-like tube formed by a lightning strike onto sand, representing an aspect of how the god Jupiter mediates his messages to the world. Further upon the thick chain hangs an orange rooster hackle, representing the zoomorphic transformation of dawn, connected to the deity Mercury. Lower down upon the thin chain and the thick chain hang two saltwater pearls, one white and one black, after which the two chains intertwine rotating around each other nine times in reference to the nine stages of the vertical line's passage. The next stage of the vertical line is snake chain referring to Jung's adaptation of Philemon in his *Liber Novus*¹⁵, leading to a very thin Venetian chain that ends upon a convex triangle of broken glass, pointing to a thin slice of air between the table and the perpendicular thread, reflecting an above and below.

By the right side of the doorway hangs a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with on the left the original Latin text and on the right an English translation. Here I used the written text of Baucis and Philemon as the central web diagramming the connections that emerged during the development of the work. Some fragments are isolated from the text, others covered with the pigment corresponding to the character present¹⁶.

¹² Green Dolomite is a glauconite sedimentary rock. The mineral glauconite is named in 1828 by Christian Keferstein to the Greek sea-god 'Glaucos' (Γλαῦκος), 'blue-green', in allusion to its colour. Glauconite had long been used in Europe as a green pigment under the name green earth. A widespread use was for underpainting of human flesh in medieval painting, to neutralise the pink.

¹³ Kilkenny (Irish: Cill Chainnigh, meaning "church of Cainnech"). Saint Cainnech of Aghaboe as an Irish abbot, monastic founder, priest and missionary during the early medieval period. Cainnech is one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland and preached Christianity across Ireland and to the Picts in Scotland.

¹⁴ The material silver was chosen in reference to it being the primary element for light capture in traditional film-based photography, and the conversion it performs in the elementary process of image-making.

¹⁵ Between 1914 and 1930, Carl Gustav Jung developed his 'Liber Novus', an inscription of encounters based on the author's technique of active imagination, where he enters into various dialogues with the unconscious, embodied by characters from many and varied sources, including the Bible, gnostic texts, Greek myths etcetera. Here the character Philemon (Φιλήμων) serves as his guiding spirit through the underworld of what is now descriptively called 'The Red Book'. Jung's Philemon is based only in part on Ovid's tale, and will in the course of the 'Liber Novus' appear to him disguised in different personalities. Here he is the archetype of 'the one who let the Gods in'. Sonu Shamdasani, the editor of the Red Book, points out the strong influence of Nietzsche's 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' on *The Red Book*, but whereas Nietzsche concluded that "God is dead", Jung responds with the concept that God can be rediscovered and reborn in the psyche, i.e. as a psychological experience, as an archetype.

¹⁶ Baucis and Philemon: liquid Shellac, Mercury: Cinnabar pigment, Jupiter: Tin pigment, Glaucus: Verona Green Earth pigment, Saint Cainnech of Aghaboe: pulverised limestone, CG Jung: Lapis Lazuli pigment and Dragon's Blood pigment, the self: UV-sensitive varnish

Between the table and the front windows of the gallery projected on the wall opposite the entrance to the space, is the work titled 'Threadsuns', 'Fadensonnen' in German. The work takes its name from the short poem by Paul Celan, which reads as follows:

THREADSUNS

above the grayblack wastes.
A tree-
high thought
grasps the light-tone: there are
still songs to sing beyond
mankind.¹⁷

This work is in essence a return to that place under the tree where the different voices came together and spoke, and a search to what image would emerge when we consider the shadow to be the work. With my roots in photography where light studies are one of the primary elements to exercise, I walked around with a white panel through the forest to observe the projection of light where it otherwise would not have coalesced. When the sky was not overcast, from an acute angle of afternoon light I captured between the trees, within a small forest, upon her white surface an abstract image of disk-like shadows, shifting and merging, losing and gaining focus. What I witnessed was a phenomenon we all have witnessed, but perhaps not been aware of, not a projection of leaves, but a projection of sun - multiple suns. Because of the distance between the sun, the tree's foliage and the panel, a pinhole image occurs, creating multiple images of the sun itself, projected into the shadow. As such, the sun, being one of our primal illustrations of the centre - the source - the self¹⁸, appears in this image as a multiple. This moving image was then filmed and projected close to the window of the gallery, as if it was some incident light from a second sun.¹⁹

At the opposite end of the gallery, framed within the large window box overlooking the garden, rest two objects: a large plaster bust unrefined with casting marks still present and less visible from a distance; a brass necklace resting upon the black window-box sill.

The bust was cast in Brussels at the Atelier de Moulage²⁰, who are famous for their vast archive of more than four-thousand moulds crossing many borders of our cultural history.

The necklace laying to the left of the bust was hand made from forty-three precisely cut triangles and eighty-eight soldered links of chain between them. It has both a front and a back and the triangles are orientated both up and down on the chain for a specific purpose. The necklace is formed from the forty-three triangles of the Sri Yantra mandala, that is in part created by intersecting nine larger triangles. It is seventy-five centimetres in length and the triangles of the necklace are placed upon the chain in a sequence that indicates the correct order and orientation to reform the mandala. This does not mean that the mandala can be perfectly reconstructed, for the links of chain between the triangles prevent a perfect union, but you may

¹⁷ Paul Celan, *Breathturn into Timestead, The Collected later poetry: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014)

¹⁸ "The self appears in dreams, myths, and fairytales in the figure of the "supraordinate personality," such as a king, hero, prophet, saviour, etc., or in the form of a totality symbol, such as the circle, square, quadratura circuli, cross, etc. When it represents a complexio oppositorum, a union of opposites, it can also appear as a united duality, in the form, for instance, of tao as the interplay of yang and yin, or of the hostile brothers, or of the hero and his adversary (arch-enemy, dragon), Faust and Mephistopheles, etc. Empirically, therefore, the self appears as a play of light and shadow, although conceived as a totality and unity in which the opposites are united. [Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychological Types*, "Definitions," CW 6, par. 790.]

¹⁹ This video is the first of an ongoing series capturing the phenomenon filtered by different tree foliages and moments through the year.

²⁰ Atelier de Moulage KMSK, established in the nineteenth century during the reign of King Leopold II

try²¹. To do this the necklace must be flat with no chain links twisted, then depending on which side is facing up the necklace must be turned in a spiral with the equilateral triangle of one end of the necklace at the centre. The mandala from which the necklace has derived its form was thought to be used as a practical meditation, and though the user of the necklace does not draw the mandala as traditionally done, they may instead manipulate the necklace back into position to engage in a similar ritual.

While bringing the exhibition into being, all of the works were in simultaneous development and production. As I was focusing on the necklace, Cathérine began to find a suitable object for the necklace to rest: a bust-like object that would approximate the female form. Since Cathérine in 2011 had visited the plaster workshop, we started by searching their archive catalogues. Her first instinct was to find a bust of Lot's Wife or Eurydice, by means of bringing a backward glance into the exhibition, but without success. When we later visited the archive and looked at the moulds, we chose the bust of Psyche of Capua²². But with only a photo in the catalogue and the moulds, we made a small leap of faith and had the rough-cast poured. The bust of Psyche, it turned out, was too dominant a form to hold the necklace. More androgynous and bigger in reality than we had expected, but showing itself morphing between the pillar of an unknown space and a human body, beautiful and abstruse nonetheless. The bust is orientated with her back to the gallery looking down to the right side.

Gallerist Mirjam de Winter had visited with us in Brussels before the exhibition and was enamoured by the Kilkenny limestone she saw at our studios. Her new garden is conceived from twenty years of personal history in which each element added, symbolises a place or character of importance throughout her life. In her search to find the right stone for a path leading in and out of the garden, Mirjam de Winter asked to use the same distinct variety of Kilkenny limestone we had used for the table, to which we happily agreed, which she divided into ten one meter square surfaces. The day we arrived in Rotterdam with the table, Mirjam received the Kilkenny limestone for her own project, that was, by the time we arrived in the afternoon from Brussels, being laid in her garden.

Finally, the viewer will see the large photographic print framed upon the wall that is by the side of the door to exit the space. This is a print made from a photograph taken of the bust that formed the cast body of Psyche. Unlike the casting of Psyche that rests in the window box, the photo misses the head mould which is out of shot, hidden behind the visible casts on the wooden pallet. The mould pieces are secured together with muslin straps soaked in plaster holding the mould securely, until they are next parted, to prepare the next casting. These straps holding the parts together, appear as if holding two human torsos back to back, wherein the middle a third part not belonging to either one of the torsos yet inseparable from each, uniting both.

Entering the process of making this exhibition was in essence opening up a space of dialogue between what emerged from making the work, what we could decipher and synthesise from it, and what withdrew itself from completion or understanding. Central in this journey was both intuition and an openness to failure, where we looked for meaning as well as fortune when the result was not as expected.

Therefore the work can also be described as practising trust in a larger and possibly different cohesion which lies behind the borders of rationality, as well as the willingness to dive into a divergent logic. When you start to pay attention, synchronicities arise, acting as guidelines through this process, laying out the next stepping stone for the work. It is exactly through this process that the myth of Baucis and Philemon came to the surface as the main narrative, weaving together the whole, which is in essence, an invitation to open up a space for communication, not only outwards, but also inwards, by which texts both ancient and contemporary, religious, spiritual and philosophical are ultimately guides navigating an alternative passage through time, acting upon us as reflections. As such the total composition of the work can only be united in the mind of the beholder, where the framework expands into the mechanisms of imagination and memory.

²¹ The mandala as drawing is also an imperfect rendering of what we believe to be a precisely connecting composition. However the thickness of the pencil can obscure the fact that the lines do not meet perfectly.

²² Discovered in an amphitheatre in Capua is a roman copy from the greek original from the hellenistic period 300-100BCE. The name given to the sculpture is thought to be misattributed and is instead a bust of the greek god Aphrodite. Incidentally the roman equivalent of Aphrodite is Venus. This fact brought the object back to Baucis and Philemon because the romans also attributed gods to trees; oak to Jupiter and lime to Venus.