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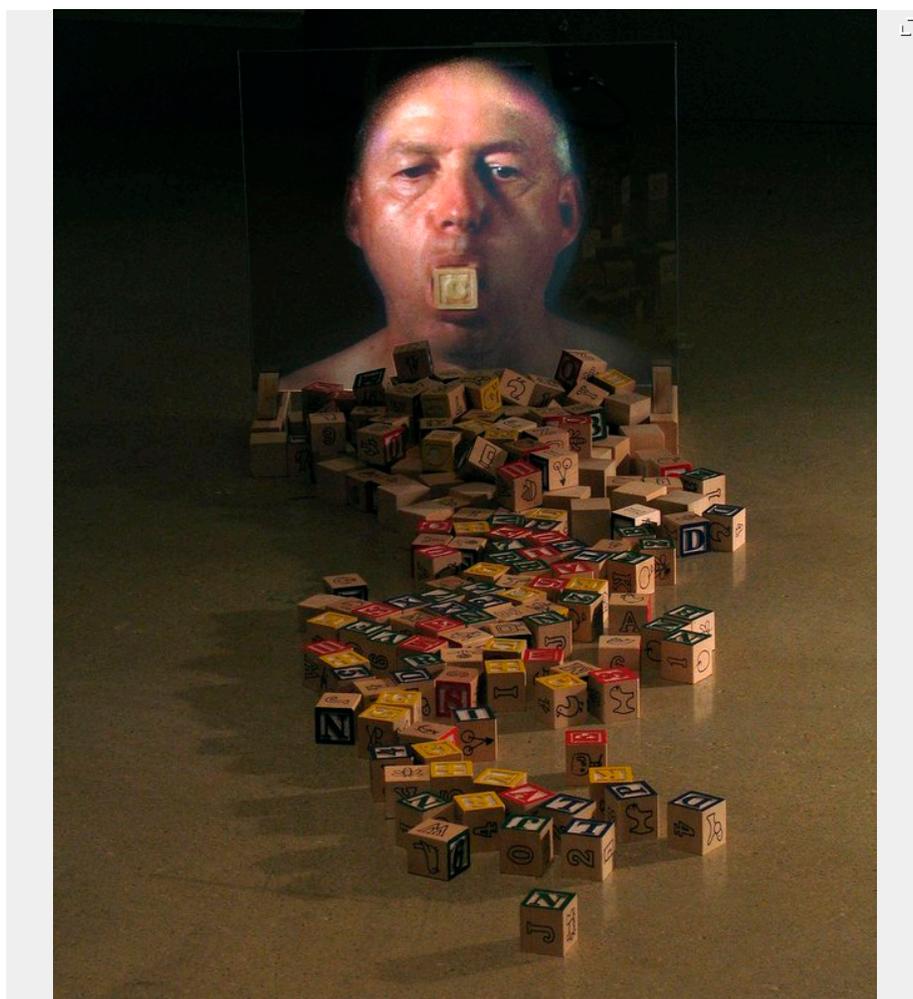
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by Portia Priegert

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Wyn Geleynse, "Just..." 2002, single-channel rear-projected video loop, ground, approx. 200 alphabet blocks, video projector, size variable (courtesy the artist and TrépanierBaer Gallery, Calgary)

Wyn Geleynse offers something often absent from contemporary art – humour. Take *Just ...*, a multi-media installation that's part of Geleynse's exhibition, *Slackwire and Other Situations*, at Calgary's TrépanierBaer Gallery from Jan. 31 to Feb. 24. A rear-projected video loop features a hapless middle-aged man, a character Geleynse often adopts, struggling to spit out children's wooden blocks.

"You can hear him gagging and choking, and then all of a sudden, there's a block," says Geleynse. "And he just goes through this over and over and over again. You can see he's perspiring. He's in a lot of discomfort. He tries to relax a little bit, but it just keeps

coming. It's like a bad case of hiccups."

In front of the video is a jumbled pile of real blocks that add to the effect. "It's not a seamless illusion," says Geleynse. "I think people fill in the gap between the video and the real thing." The lettered blocks spell no words but it's easy to read the piece as a reflection on the inability to communicate, a condition that reportedly afflicts some men.

Geleynse, who speaks quickly and fluidly about his work, has been active in multimedia art for more than three decades. He was born in the Netherlands, but moved to London, Ont., with his parents as a child in 1953, eventually becoming part of the city's lively art scene, where he was influenced by Murray Favro and the late Greg Curnoe.

Also, included in the show is work from Geleynse's series, *The Slack Wire (Funambulist)*, which shows Geleynse, dressed in tights, awkwardly performing simple circus tricks. It's clear that Geleynse, who exhibits internationally, is playing with ideas about banality, mid-life crisis and male identity.

While these works are older, it's interesting to reconsider their take on masculinity at a time when unprecedented numbers of high-profile middle-aged men in the arts, media and government are being ousted for using their power to cloak various forms of sexual misconduct.

The show also includes newer pieces. *The Critics Speak: Homage to Jasper Johns*, for instance, is a play on the American artist's sculpture of a set of eyeglasses with a mouth featured in each lens. It's a satirical commentary by Johns, who would joke, as a catalogue of the time notes, that "critics are blind and see with their mouths."



Wyn Geleynse, "The Critics Speak: An Homage to Jasper Johns," 2013, video, projector, wood, steel and eyeglasses, size variable (courtesy the artist and TrépanierBaer Gallery, Calgary)

"I thought it was such a brilliant piece," says Geleynse. He rigged up his own version with a set of dark-framed glasses, and projected video of two mouths, one his own and one of a friend. Both are talking in the highly theoretical cultural language sometimes called artspeak. "It just becomes this sort of art babble," says Geleynse. "It's really annoying."

The show also includes some pieces from his *Pairings* series, works that stack two images of unrelated objects, often found imagery or old photos from his files. The effect is to create an implied narrative that the viewer will try to reconstruct, however imperfectly, a process that fascinates Geleynse. One piece, *Pairing 05*, for instance shows an elegant brown fedora above a shiny black shoe. It's a sly reflection on a nameless friend. "He's a bit of a clotheshorse," says Geleynse. "He likes nice clothes."



Wyn Geleynse, "Pairings #3," 2014, digital images on archival paper, 4.5" x 6" each image, 20" x 16" matted (courtesy the artist and TrépanierBaer Gallery, Calgary)





Wyn Geleynse, "Pairings #12," 2014, digital images on archival paper, 4.5" x 6" each image, 20" x 16" matted (courtesy the artist and TrépanierBaer Gallery, Calgary)

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Wyn Geleynse, "Pairings #13," 2014, digital images on archival paper, 4.5" x 6" each image, 20" x 16" matted (courtesy the artist and TrépanierBaer Gallery, Calgary)



Geleynse describes his humour as that of immediacy and circumstance. "If I see something that will compare well with something else, that will sort of bring a smile to your face, I try to use it as a hook to bring people to that potential narrative ... So it's just me having fun with the images. Sometimes they are one-liners and sometimes they imply a little bit more." ■

■ ■ TrépanierBaer

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