

JEAN GLIBERT PEINTRE EN BÂTIMENT

BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels

27.10.2017 – 07.01.2018

Jean Glibert (Brussels, 1938) studied at the Ecole nationale supérieure des Arts visuels – La Cambre. Starting at the end of the 1960s, he devoted most of his activity to the role of colour and light in architecture. The program of the Atelier d’Espaces urbains et ruraux that he created and directed at La Cambre, from 1975 to 1996 explains the intentions of his approach:

«To study the possibilities of working on the distribution of light, colour, and space within the relationships between construction, design, and the environment».

From the beginning, Glibert made every effort to conduct studies motivated by a means of working on real sites. For this reason, his works are a part of the movements, which, now a half-century later, have disrupted the art world through a profound questioning of its very purpose. In Belgium, this was a time when more conceptual, more sociological, and in any case, more contextual approaches were being developed. There were discussions on breaking down barriers between disciplines, liberating techniques, and questioning the work of visual artists. Glibert, like others, was directly interested in possibilities of expression outside institutions specifically dedicated to exhibiting art.

***Jean Glibert. Peintre en bâtiment* is partly the result of an inventory and archiving operation conducted with the support of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. One of the primary objectives is to give visibility to an œuvre that is not very well known even though it is displayed in a great many public spaces in Belgium. It is also intended to provide simple, accessible tools for understanding. Within these ideas, the exhibit is focused on the creative world of Jean Glibert and the meaning of his studies. It makes no attempt at exhaustiveness, and offers no historical perspectives. The intention of the curators is to encompass the projects integrated into architecture or urban planning, methodological data, stand-alone experimental models, and works in the Centre for Fine Arts in a single vision, taking a holistic approach in phase with the nature of Jean Glibert’s œuvre.**

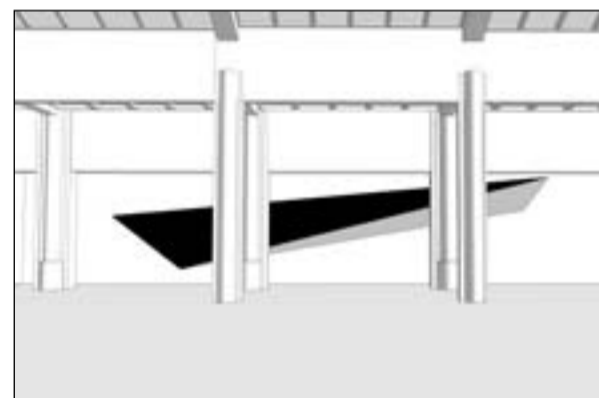
FOUR INTERVENTIONS IN SITU

For *Jean Glibert. Peintre en bâtiment*, four works have been created *in situ*. They offer an interpretive framework for the Centre for Fine Arts, designed by Victor Horta. Glibert focused them on the residual or interstitial spaces, on articulations, passages, and structural elements, placing the architecture of the building in tension.

These propositions are intended to let one directly understand the multiple meanings of the work. The first point to consider is rooted in the exploitation of the relationships between a site and its users. Jean Glibert’s creations affect behavioural complexes... a characteristic that gives them the sense of an act of perceptive modification of space. They alter the relationship between the user and the site, even though - and especially - if they are not “experienced” as works of art. And, as such, they offer those who experience them the ability to experience their own selves through the qualities, volumes, scale, colours, materials, light, etc. and to measure their presence there, thus realising what philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty poses as a fundamental principle of his *Phenomenology of Perception*: “I experience myself by experiencing the world”.

These four pieces also help clarify Jean Glibert’s acceptance of harmony: this should be understood not as a formula to be applied to create “an object that is pleasing to the senses and to the imagination” but as the intention to align the parts of a whole to contribute to the same end. Glibert does not seek to let his works dissolve “peacefully” into their environment. He can disrupt the architecture. He seeks to exploit the relationships, as well as formal and especially chromatic contrasts, even more so than colours, which in the end are not selected for themselves but for the qualities of the relationships they will maintain with their environment. His determination to work outside of traditional harmony further explains his interest for means of expression that go beyond good taste and that take risks in terms of composition. One might think of the use of fluorescent paints selected for the strength with which they radiate and spread light.

Subordinated to the discernible order of spatial organisation, Glibert’s creations are literal: they leave no place for political, moral, memory, literary, or other symbolism. They are anti-monuments that only owe their existence to the accuracy of the organisation of formal conventions intended to act upon the users of a place. His work is also a rare example of a contemporary artistic approach likely to be understood by an individual without prior knowledge but disposed to feel its physical presence. The social significance of his creations determined by a desire for collective access to the work of art matters as much as their sensory impact. Glibert’s interest in interventions in workplaces shows this well. Users can express themselves, react, dispute, and re-frame themselves even beyond his work.



1 - ARCHITECTURE

To properly understand Jean Glibert’s work, it is important to consider his intention to make himself available to the sites for which he designs his integrated works.

This resolution has direct impacts. The most immediate impact is that it places his work in a production perspective specific to architects. From the method of refining and presenting projects based on plans and models until their execution by construction workers, his craft assumes the major characteristics. Thus, he calls upon the assistance of a team. And the success of a piece is conditioned both by the knowledge that Glibert has of the know-how of the various participants (engineer, landscape architect, urban planner, designer, etc.) and by his ability to make them properly understand his intentions.

Similarly, it is important to reveal the legibility of the dialectic between the designs and the conditions of their implementation. It even constitutes a key moment in the creative process. The shape of the existing or future site, the imperatives of the construction site, and the budgetary context are essential as sources of critical information. Additionally, the sites are never envisioned outside their functional existence. The studies are in response to questions and expectations, whether formulated or not.

The parallel goes beyond methodology: it extends to the meaning of the works. Glibert intervenes on the constructive image of the environment. His works stage strains, momentum, pressures, etc. Colour is not seen as only a coating; light is not conceived of as only illumination: both always have architectural values and/or a role in organising space.

2 - COLLECTION

Jean Glibert's methods include the collection of objects. For Francis Mary, this constant meandering as a forager, sometimes attentive to the point of obsession, aims to contain the flood of fragments in the world. In the proliferation of dense, vast, and heterogeneous materials, Glibert works to define orders, relationships, and key elements. Ensembles establish themselves and constitute an infinite reservoir from which to draw references. This classification activity also has a creative value: that of recycling the real and giving it a new, primarily visual meaning.

For Francis Mary, the method can be explained by two implementation principles.

The first principle has its place in the collection of organised series. It involves a practice of classifying the "same" in its many available versions. One can understand it as a directory of means of access to "l'ordre trouvé". This appropriation confirms the pre-organised composition of ensembles of objects with economic, industrial, or artisanal functionality. The primary purpose of these bodies that are homogeneous in appearance is their placement into circulation for use; it is not aesthetic. With this misappropriation of their function and the shift to the unusable, Jean Glibert makes a visual meaning arise out of them that is contained within them as if "by default". We should notice that tracing, painting, drawing, and drilling tools hold a special place here.

The second is related to the collection of objects made using random methods (crushed beverage cans) or from unpredictable intentions (tests of pencils on the stationery aisle, drawings on beer coasters). These series decode the order of "revealed reflexes", of involuntary or mechanical interventions. Jean Glibert's contextualisation reassigns a visual value to the ensemble.



3 - PAINTING

Jean Glibert's methodologies are not based only on studying the contexts for integrating his works. The objective analysis of environmental data is doubled by an approach free of all exterior constraints to purely visual problems and is similar to pure research.

Glibert works with an entire arsenal of experimental models developed in absolute terms. Thus, his paintings attest to a fundamental reflection on the quality of colours, their combinations, and the techniques for applying, including, or removing them. It especially leads to a "matterist" perspective in which colours are defined by their intrinsic qualities: black/asphalt, black/charcoal, black/China ink, orange/anti-rust, etc. There are intentions in the choice of smooth, industrial media without expressive material so that the relationships, between the shapes on the one hand and the pigments, tools, and movements of the performer on the other hand, prevail.

The relationships between this work and in situ creations are not direct. They do not involve reproducing a "life-size" experience but transpose its results: study prototypes are never intended to be enlarged in architecture. It is their effects and the best way of obtaining them that interest Glibert. Despite formal similarities, volumetric models are not urban planning models to be built, any more than sculptures are. Their definition lies in the chromatic and formal relationships they show and that help understand space. In the same spirit, Glibert conducts studies of opacity and transparency of media, openings, materials sensitive to variations in light and heat, and colour reflection, position or orientation.

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JAP (Jeunesse et Arts Plastiques) offers visits of the exhibition followed by art workshops for children from 7 to 12 years old.
Price: 11 euro per child
Minimum 20 children
Info and reservations: www.jap.be

Group visits available upon reservation at Bozar: +32 2 507 83 36 - groups@bozar.be

Mediators for children are available on Wednesday afternoons, Fridays, and Saturdays.

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