



**Exhibition from 05.09.2015 to 25.10.2015  
at Fri Art Kunsthalle Fribourg:**

PASCAL VONLANTHEN

*Preview: Friday, 4 September, 6.30pm*

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## FIRST FLOOR

### Pascal Vonlanthen

Fri Art is pleased to announce a public exhibition of the work of Pascal Vonlanthen. Born in 1957 in Rossens, the self-taught artist still lives in Fribourg, where he attends CREAHM, an art workshop for people with an intellectual disability.

Like all artists, Pascal Vonlanthen is an observer of the world around him. Like many artists, he selects, collects and appropriates elements from his environment, and rearranges them in his own particular way.

Fri Art presents a series of works created by the artist over the last year. Unable to read or write, Vonlanthen replicates pages from print newspapers and magazines, using felt-tip pens, lead pencils and coloured crayons. *20 Minutes*, *Le Matin*, *La Liberté* and *Les Pages Jaunes* have all been filtered through his unique perspective. From this rigid matrix with its precise arrangement of blocks of grammatically accurate text, Vonlanthen reconstructs a completely new, yet strangely familiar, image. In several of his drawings selected for this exhibition, he covers pages with script of his own invention. This repetitive language, which Vonlanthen himself refers to as “writing”, remains impenetrable to the viewer, just as our letters and words are incomprehensible to him. Through these images, we accompany the artist on his journey which takes him along the incredibly thin, and blurred, line that divides the intelligible from the unintelligible.

As a curator, Fri Art wants to shake off the shackles of inflexible categorisation and offer a polyphonic vision of contemporary art production. One of the aims of this exhibition is to free the artist and his work, not from disability or from the confines of a care home, but from excessively rigorist conceptual definitions. The approach that Vonlanthen adopts to his work is one of appropriation, reminiscent of the phenomenon of referencing mass media which has been a recurring theme in the history of art over the last 50 years. It prompts us to reassess all creative forms of expression from a wider angle, without falling into the categorisation trap.

The exhibition fundamentally questions how we see things. The history of art as we know it values artists who are fully aware of their creative actions and have the verbal and conceptual wherewithal to dissect their own work. Here, intentionality is key. If there is intentionality in the work of Vonlanthen, it is almost impossible to identify what his underlying motivation is. Although we do not wish to speak for him, out of respect for the artist and in the interests of scientific rigour, we cannot escape the fact that it is we, the viewers, who apprehend his work. Duchamp<sup>1</sup>, Saussure<sup>2</sup> and Vasarely<sup>3</sup> (among others) taught us that, through the act of looking, the viewer plays the largest part in creating a piece of art. It is precisely at this moment of perception - both visual and cognitive - when the work truly begins to exist. What do we actually see in the drawings of Pascal Vonlanthen? What do we project on to these signs? The authoritative meaning of an image is always the one which we tack on to it. It would be fascinating to analyse how our brains

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<sup>1</sup> “Ce sont les regardeurs qui font les tableaux. “ (It is the viewer who creates the picture.) *Marchand du Sel. Écrits de Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet, Paris, Le Terrain Vague, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> “...bien que l'objet précède le point de vue, on dirait que c'est le point de vue qui crée l'objet. “ (Far from the object preceding the point of view, one would say that it is the point of view which creates the object.) in: *Cours de linguistique générale*, Lausanne / Paris, Payot, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Vasarely expressed this on a visual level and, in doing so, emphasised that the brain constructs and interprets a large part of what we perceive/see.

construct a narrative around the work of Pascal Vonlanthen. Unfortunately, the space and time is lacking here for a serious investigation. Nonetheless, each of us can perform our own analysis by visiting the exhibition.

Joint exhibition with CREAHM, a workshop for individuals with an intellectual disability who display a keen interest in expression through the visual arts.

**Publication:**

***A book will be published to accompany the exhibition. As well as 25 colour photos, the publication features articles by Vincent Capt, a linguist at Lausanne University, and Katrin Luchsinger, an art historian and professor at ZDHK (Zurich University of the Arts), as well as an introduction by Balthazar Lovay, artistic director of Fri Art.***

***Pre-order: [info@fri-art.ch](mailto:info@fri-art.ch)***

Photos: <http://bit.ly/1P6zAos>