



*The “language gene”, here is the other name given to four letters and one figure: FOX P2.*

*For his first exhibition at Martine Aboucaya’s gallery, it clearly appears that Eric Duyckaerts is taking on this peculiar topic. Indeed, if “langage is not used to communicate” but rather “to live”, as pointed out by Emile Benveniste, what about a work of art for which the artist specifically made of shifts, reuses and interleavings of speech and words a vital issue for him?*

*Each event requires its description, its presentation, its press release. Eric Duyckaerts has taken on personally this writing task - absolute prerequisite for any exhibition – by shifting, as usual, the challenges and clichés to deliver a surprising, funny and personal piece of text. Here is a presentation which is no longer a conventional and plain one, but which remains a genuine illuminated and enlightening object.*

Pastel, gouache, watercolour on models of proteins

Coils, twists, rods and bright or pastel colours – all of them may be found in “3D” modelling of proteins and all kinds of living molecules. According to authors who specialize in “3D” modelling, the calculations needed to model molecules in this fashion are not very complicated, yet there are so many of them that only a computer makes them possible. Many specialized softwares do the job efficiently – PyMol is one of the most used.

In front of this feat, the layman is puzzled: what is the status of these pictures? The overwhelming impression is that of an educational aim: “Look, it’s like this, FOX P2 protein. Within this nice picture, will you be able to identify DNA segments captured by messenger RNA? Your turn, now!”

Of course not. As those pictures are the result of a long research process, it is easier to imagine they are intended to already experienced researchers. In front of an audience approving those pictures.

**ma**



**martine  
aboucaya**

Besides, it is difficult to see them as representations in the figurative or photographic sense of the term. They are intellectual and agreed synthesis among researchers, with a purpose of convenience. A bit like chemical bonds diagrams: convenient and conventional.

But here is the thing: chemical bonds diagrams do not look nice. In addition, they seem to me less readable in “3D” (billiards balls all stuck to one another).

With our proteins, we think of carnival, of multicolour tagliatelles from tourist shops, of Jules Chéret’s posters and paintings, of cheap toys from fairs, of plastic binding materials proposed in printing shops, of traditional signs of barber shops, or whatever else. Looking at proteins coils, we understand there are reflections from neon, cast shadows of twisted filaments, and these hollows are shaded. In fact, there might not be so much light and so many colours where proteins lie. I think that for FOX P2, for instance, it is completely black...

In short, this raises once more the question: is this Art? Traditionally, the avant-gardes were requested to answer this. A whole set of scientific pictures stands in front of this interrogation today. Authors of these images generally say yes. Specialized magazines confirm their point (an illustration captioned “Artistic rendering” is quite common). In the last part of my video FOX P2, I mention Jean-François Colonna, an unrivalled creator of mathematical pictures and/or resulting from mathematics. His reflexion on this subject is of utmost interest. It is unfortunate that authors who put art at the top of their agenda do not take that much interest into considerations about art of the “hardcore” scientists.

For my part I come from a background where it is believed that the divorce between Art and Science has been consummated for a while. What bothers me about “hardcore” scientists, though, is that when a model does not have the same accuracy as their instruments, they call it artistic. Reverse definition of the artistic. It seems to me that, for the mathematicians, the matter is settled by Jean-François Colonna. But biologists, cosmologists, specialists of earth science, and many others support the reverse definition of the artistic.

And so do I.

But probably not in the same way. I acknowledge the reverse definition of the artistic in moves that cannot be classified according to agreed and/or existing standards. In that regard, I do not feel alone – this meaning is commonplace, in fact. I only would like to recall it in order to highlight the contrast between the reverse definition of the artistic from scientists, and the reverse definition of the artistic from the intellectual background where I belong.

For this exhibition, I started off from “3D” models of proteins, sometimes modified with Photoshop. Regarding the operations that I made, there is a real issue of vocabulary: to colour, to colour in, to colorize, to colour enhance? The gesture is anachronistic and archaic: we have all seen old books where black and white plates were in colours applied by hand, and sometimes quite in a rush. It is a pleasure to bring together the art of modelling biologic objects via a computer, and the art of applying colours by hand!

At times, criticism writes that I “work on language”. But it is not because I speak in many of my videos and performances that I “work on language”. Or else, anybody who speaks “works on language”. In my video FOX P2, I wanted to bring this nonsense to life, in my way. Humour aside, recent findings about language are exciting and I truly enjoyed fitting them into my personal music. Jucundur!

Eric Duyckaerts, August 2013

List of Works presented in the exhibition

Fox P2  
2013  
video 16:9, color, sound  
24'  
edition of 3

Protein Series

Untitled #1 – 9 (Protein Series)  
2013  
watercolor, gouache and pastel on paper  
21 x 29,7 cm  
unique work

Untitled #10 – 18 (Protein Series)  
2013  
watercolor, gouache and pastel on paper  
30 x 42 cm  
unique work

Untitled #19– 23  
2013  
watercolor, gouache and pastel on paper  
unique work

« Q » (d'après une enluminure du quatorzième siècle) with Chloé Mathiez  
2013  
Wall drawing  
dimensions variable  
unique work

Euristique (Eurêka, Descartes, Pappus, Expérience, Serendipity)  
2011  
video 16:9, color, sound  
26' 21''  
edition of 5

Le cartographe (Terra incognita, Lions, Couloirs, La Porte)  
2011  
video 16:9, color, sound  
15' 14''  
unique work