



FRANCIS
DUSÉPULCHRE

LE LANGAGE DES
OMBRES
(retrospective)

OPENING
04.03.21, 11AM - 8PM

EXHIBITION
05.03.21 - 08.05.21

THE LANGUAGE OF SHADOWS

Faithful to its focus on Belgian art, the Patinoire Royale / Galerie Valérie Bach is proud to present, in the form of a first solo exhibition, the fine and subtle work of Francis Dusépulchre (1934-2013). Displayed in the main space ('la Grande Nef') of the gallery.

This unclassifiable artist, whose extremely personal production makes him particularly recognizable, had already been the subject of a strong and remarkable presence at the Sculpting Belgium exhibition in 2017, which showcased various clusters of works created by this artist.

Since then, the gallery has been promoting Dusépulchre at fairs in Belgium and abroad, and is now presenting this solo exhibition, which was much needed as expected. The exposition shows work from the artist's studio that is rarely or never been seen by the public before.

Francis Dusépulchre's work is not without recalling, through its minimalism, certain aspects of Fontana's work, and yet it departs from it by its purpose: Dusépulchre does not deny the surface by lacerating it. He does not cut the support to create a rift made of black and colors. He realizes, in the sense of becoming real, the pictorial surface of his curved panels. He questions the absent volume of his plexi boxes, filled only with the edges of disappeared planes. He slightly hides the planes by incising them, by pricking them with a point of light, by warping them and by endowing them with ribs to better question their nature, using the monochrome on exclusively orthogonal shapes, at least it is believed, as in fact right angles and parallels are rare. The artist is playing with our perception to better bring us into a visual trap, not devoid of humor moreover!

With these reliefs, Dusépulchre pursued the spatial exploration which his elders had instigated. In Belgium, Jo Delahaut started working on monochrome reliefs from 1950. He explored the relationship of the painting with the wall surface and its environment. Three years later, the artist Pol Bury exhibited his first Plans mobiles at the Apollo Gallery in Brussels. Where he added the sign «Veuillez touchez» (Please Touch), encouraging the viewer to set in action the geometrical shapes of these sculptures.

To clarify their views, in 1954 Delahaut and Bury – along with art critics Jean Séaux and Karel L. Elnó - published the manifesto of Spatiolisme, which called on artists to incorporate the concepts of time and movement into their work. «The shapes need to break free», they said, «galvanise and manifest themselves in all kinds of materials » to give the artwork « a new energy». The spatial explorations of the abstract geometrical artists prefigured the birth of optical and kinetic art, which reached international recognition with the exhibition *Le Mouvement* in 1955 at the Denise René Gallery.

During the 1960s, groups and exhibitions emerged all around Europe that investigate the role of space, movement and light in art. In this context,

art loses its static nature and took on an evolving dimension, where the movement and position of the spectator directly influences the creative result. The artists' desire to step outside of the traditional framework of easel painting to inscribe the work in space goes hand in hand with their eagerness to abolish the obsolete borders between painting and sculpture.

In this respect, the relief is one of their preferred techniques to explore spatial themes. In the same manner as Paul Van Hoeydonck, Guy Vandendriessche, Gilbert Swimberghe, Francis Olin, Marthe Wéry and Pál Horváth, Francis Dusépulchre is part of this generation of Belgian artists seeking to broaden the field of abstract art which emerged at the start of the century and whose scope for further expansion was getting thin on the ground.

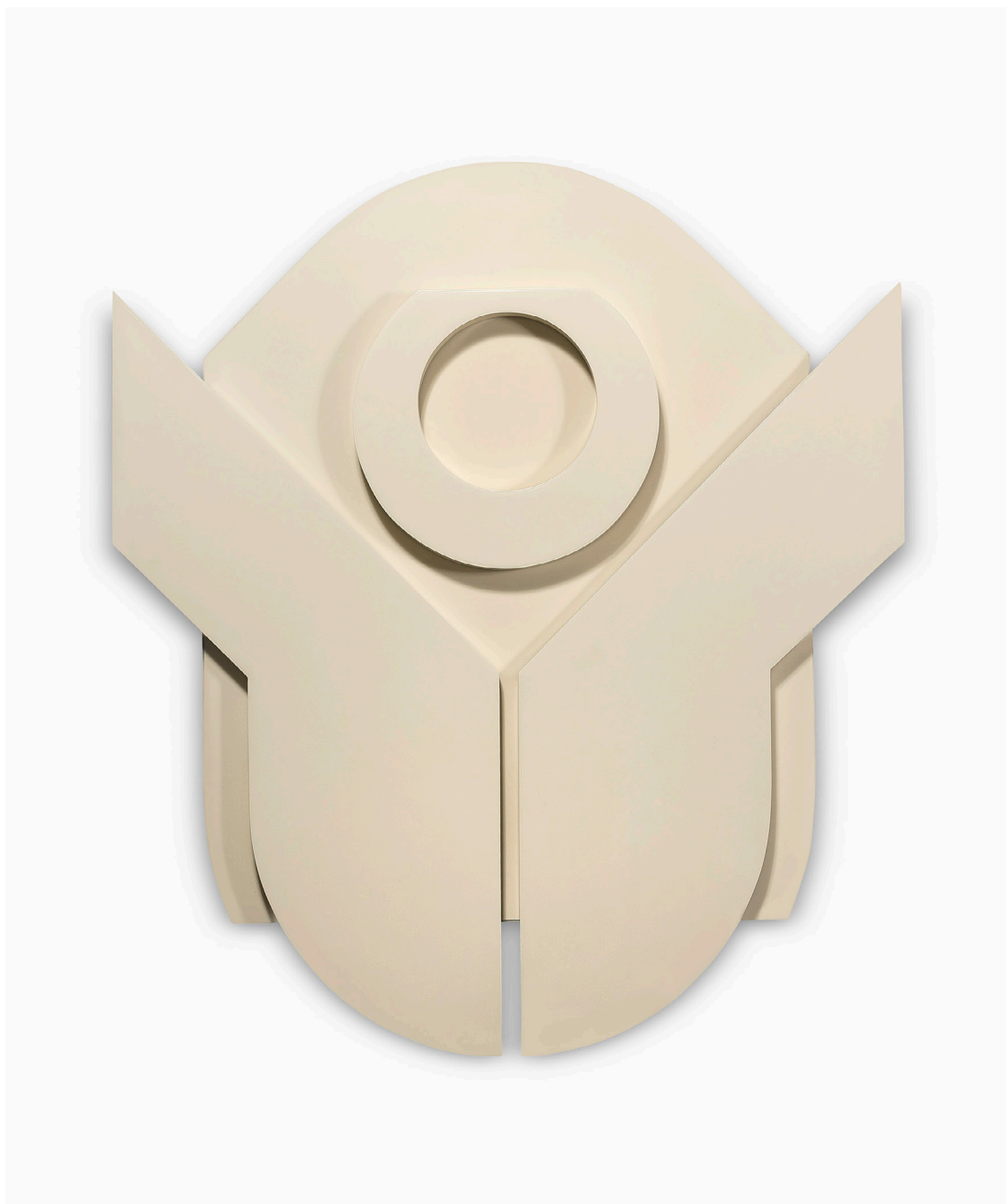
To do so, they started bringing innovations not only in the area of shapes but also in terms of techniques and materials they adopted, whilst embracing the technological developments of their time. Dusépulchre's interest in space dictates a guiding theme for his work. Hence his devotion to public art at the heart of society, with the artist making the integration of art with architecture one of his main goals. This desire, shared by many abstract artists as early as the 1950s, is in line with avant-garde ideologies.

Acquiring a jigsaw which enabled him to make bolder incisions, from 1976 onwards, Dusépulchre started curving and contouring his boards, whilst making sure he caught as much of the variations of light as he could through the hampered movement of concave and convex surfaces. The reliefs are therefore called '*Ondulations spatiales*' and acquire a more sensual character at the same time. «The line helps me to close a space, to recreate the intimacy in the space» he added.

As time goes by, Dusépulchre rid his work of the superfluous, in order to keep only what he considers essential to invite the spectator to a mental journey, an intimate and sensorial experience. «Everything I want to say, I make it pass through the nature of the form» he explained. While the incised reliefs already reveal an original style, '*Les Ombres dessinées*', which came out in 1979, stood out even more in the Belgian art scene. Mostly achromatic, the cut reliefs were now encased in plexiglass boxes which equally participated in the interplay of shadows and transparencies they captured, elicited both by the gouges in the materials as by the nylon wires, glass or carbon fibres, suspended inside the space of the box.

The infinite variety of the artist's proposals responding to his preoccupations with space, plan, light and colour reveals his talent as much as his sensitivity. This exhibition is a demonstration of this, may it show the invisible, in a silent language of shadows.

RELIEFS



Spatial, 1972,
Synthetic body lacquer on masonite
144,5 x 126 x 8,5 cm

RELIEFS



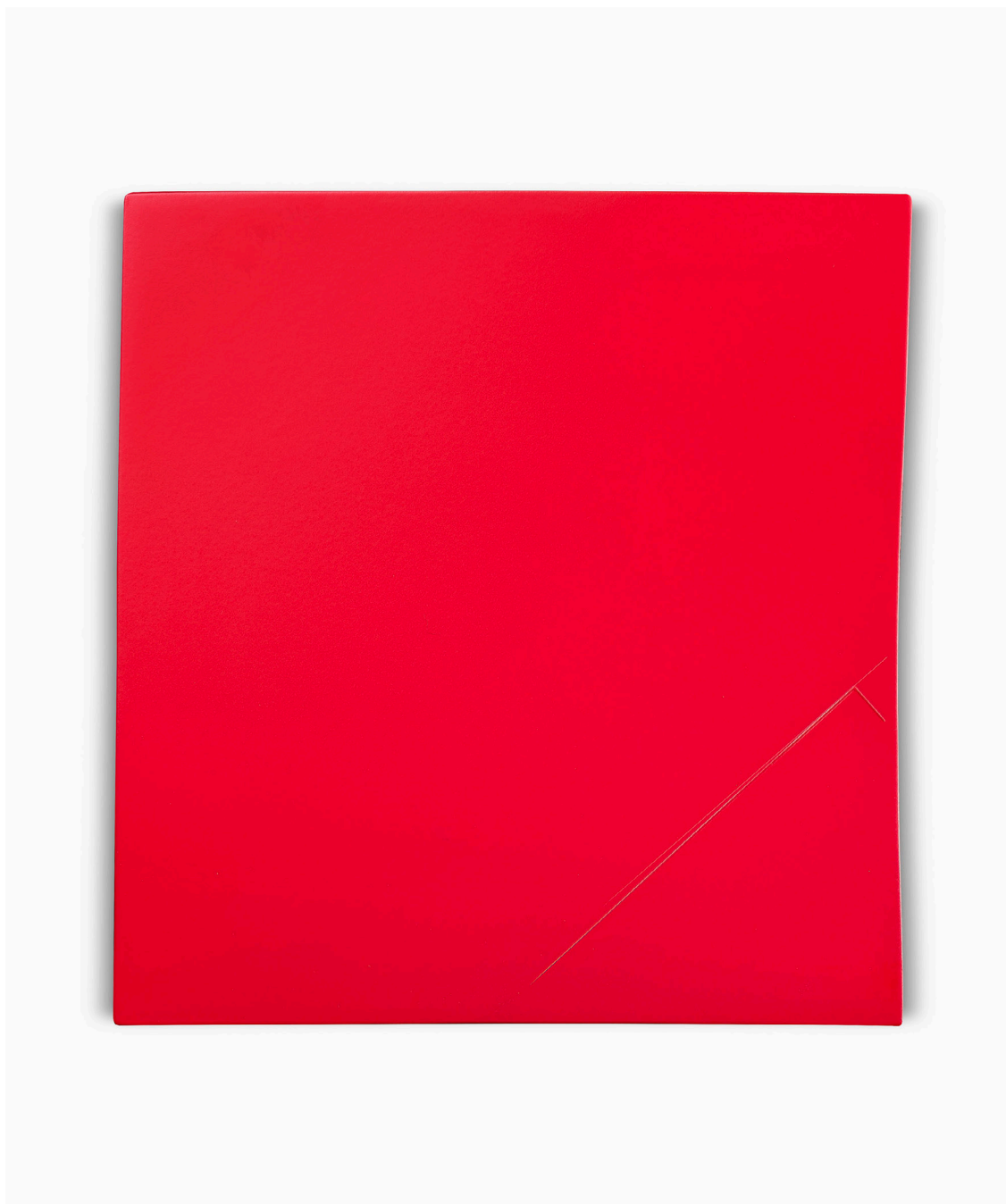
Ondulations Spatiales, 1976,
Synthetic body lacquer on masonite
77 x 61 x 9,5 cm

RELIEFS



Tensions Sereines, 1990,
Acrylic body lacquer on masonite
59 x 51,7 x 5cm

RELIEFS



Tensions Sereines, 2000,
Acrylic body lacquer on masonite
36 x 34 x 5 cm

RELIEFS



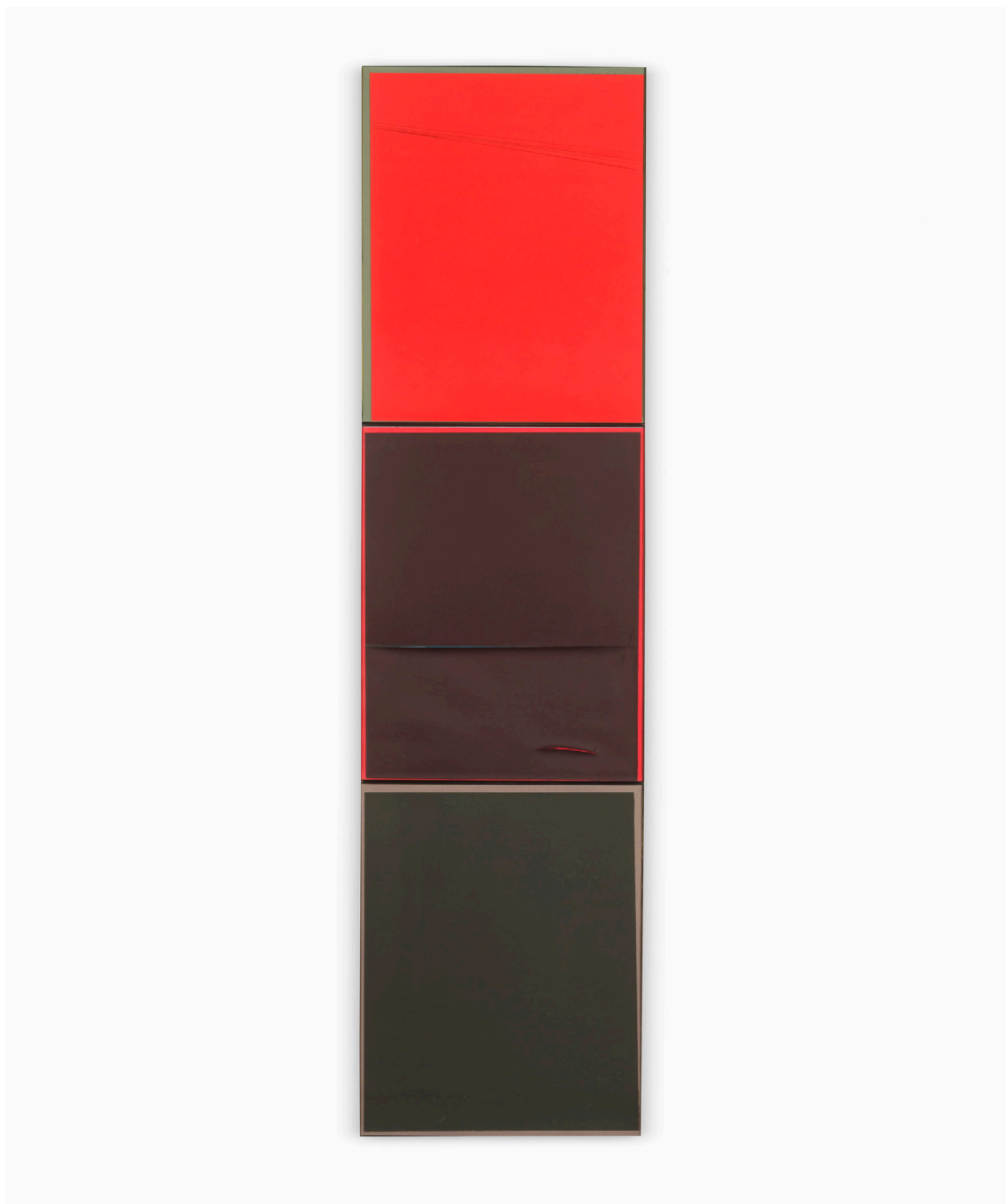
Tensions Sereines, 2000,
Metal powder fixed on masonite
31,1 x 15 x 3cm

POLYMONOCHROMS



Polymonochrome, 2002,
Paper drawings, framed lacquer, threads
201 x 40 x 4 cm (each)

POLYMONOCHROMS



Polymonochrome, 2002,
Paper drawings, framed lacquer, threads
151 x 40 x 4 cm

WALL PLEXI



Ombres dessinées - Luminance, 1984,
Cellulosic body lacquer on masonite, inside striped plexi box, fiber
optics, mini halogen spotlight
91 x 81 x 13,5 cm

WALL PLEXI



Ombres dessinées - Luminance (detail of the previous work)

PLEXIGLAS BOXES



Transparences Monumentales, 2000's,
Sculpture, cellulosic lacquer base on masonite, under striped plexi
box, painted carbon fibers
34,7 x 26,5 x 26,5 cm

THREADS



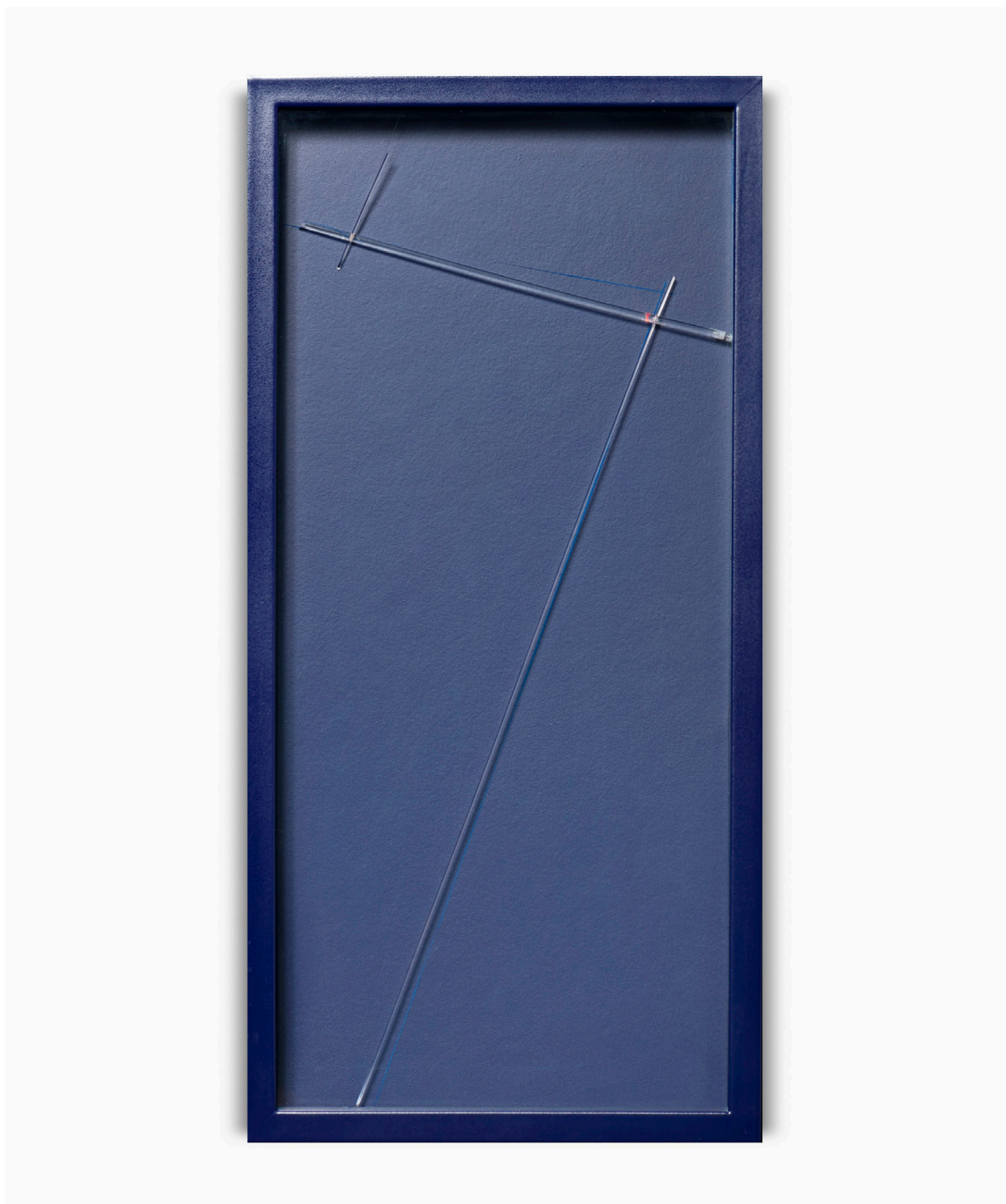
Ombres Dessinées, 2000's,
Acrylic body lacquer on masonite, plexi rod, steel threads
52,5 x 25,5 x 3,5 cm

THREADS



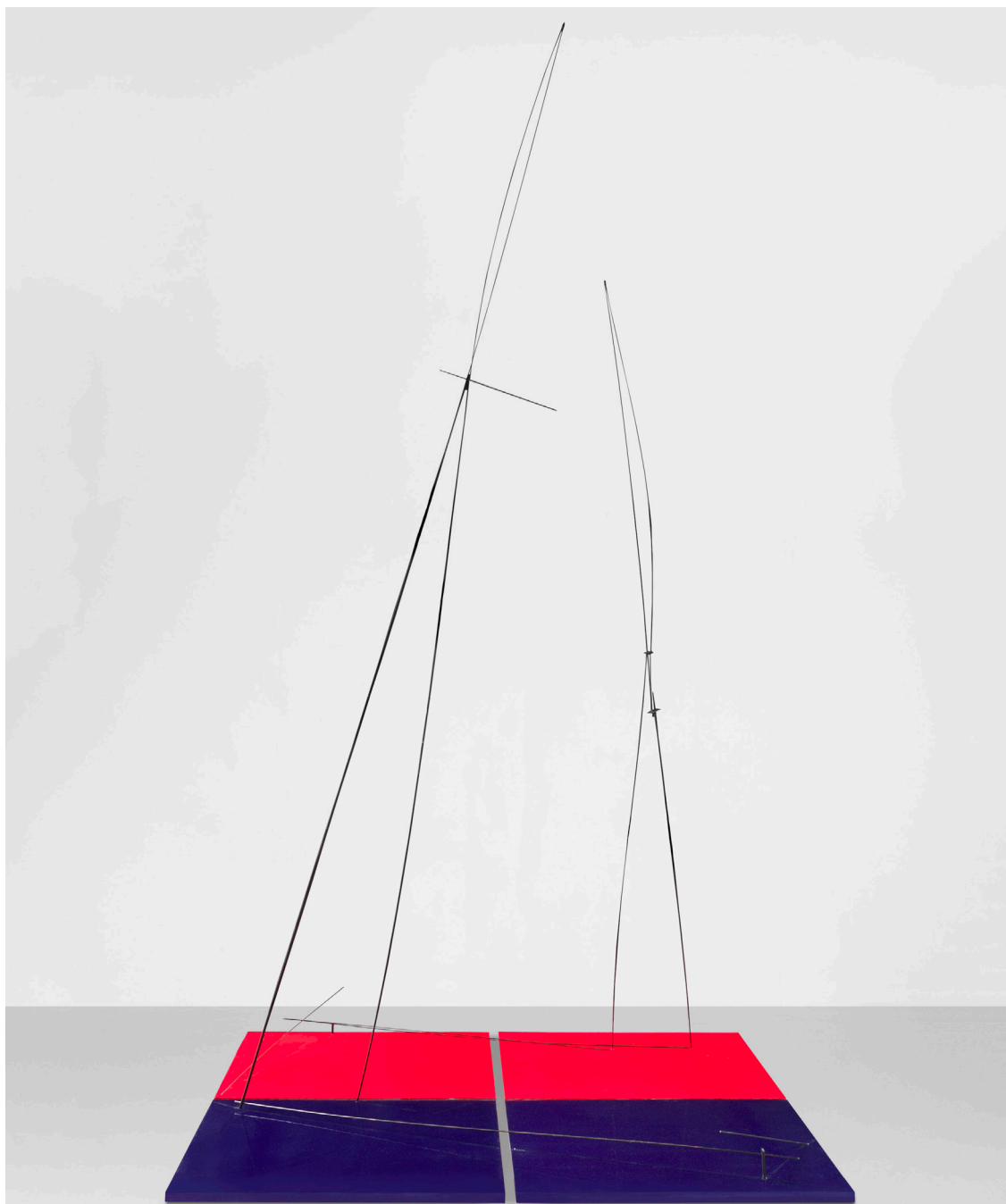
Ombres Dessinées (detail of the previous work)

THREADS



Ombres Dessinées, 2000's,
Acrylic body lacquer on masonite, plexi rods, nylon wire
52,5 x 25,5 x 3,5 cm

SCULPTURE



Vibrations, 2007,
Acrylic body lacquer on bakelized carbon slat
228,5 x 122 x 122 cm

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

FRANCIS DUSÉPULCHRE, born in 1934 in Seneffe and passed away in 2013 in La Louvière;

1960-1968 - Practices painting as a autodidact. Realizes still lifes and figurative landscapes that he exhibits in the family flower store;

1963 - Graduate of Lower Secondary Education at the Ecole Normale de Mons;

1965 - Graduate of Higher Secondary Education at the Central Jury;

1963-1995 - Professor of Fine Arts at the Institut Provincial Supérieur de Marcinelle (Charleroi);

1964-1983 - Professor at the Provincial Horticultural Technical School - Mariemont, Landscape Architecture Section;

1969 - Moves towards geometric abstraction and makes his first reliefs on canvas and Masonite;

1972 - Personal exhibition at Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi.

Distinguished at the Mrs Bollinger Prize in Brussels (Château Malou);

1971-1973-1978 - Bronze medal at the European Prize of Painting at the Casino of Ostend. Starts the series of *Signals* (as well as *Environnements habitables*);

1972-1973-1974 - Distinguished at the Prize de La Jeune Peinture Belge (Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels);

1973 - Co-founded with Jean Dubois the group Art Concret in Hainaut with whom he exhibited until 1979 throughout Belgium;

- Acquires a jigsaw allowing him a freedom of forms in the cutting of his reliefs;

1976 - Begins to produce the first concave and/or convex reliefs;

1979 - Won the 1st Prize for Sculpture at the 1st Brest *Biennial of Contemporary Art* at the Palais des Arts et de la Culture. Produces his first *Ombres dessinées* in which he encloses his reliefs in Plexiglas boxes;

1980 - 1st winner of the Idea Competition for the integration of a monumental work in the foyer of the Maison de la Culture in Nivelles. First solo exhibition in Brussels, at the Armorial Gallery;

1984 - Start working with fiber optics with series of *Luminances*;

1987 - Professor at the Institut Supérieur Alexandre André - Saint-Ghislain, section Graphic Arts;

- 1st laureate of the public competition *A Tower for Europe* for the covering of the Tower of the Cité administrative de l'État in Brussels, public presentation at the Botanique (project never completed);

1988 - Second solo exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi;

1990 - Selected for the Public Art Prize - *Public Places (Lieux publics)* in Brussels, Wavre and Liège, for a project for the gable of the Cultural Center of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve

1994 - 1st laureate of the Ideas Competition for the integration of a monumental work in the administrative buildings of the Wallonia Region in Jambes;

1999 - 1st winner of the European architectural competition for the construction of a monumental swimming pool in La Louvière with the Gamma group of architects;

2001 - Represents Belgium with Reinhoud at the European Triennial of Small Sculpture of Murska Sgota in Slovenia;

2006 - Personal-retrospective exhibition at the Ianchelevici Museum in La Louvière

