

Le nœud double (The Double Knot) ⁽¹⁹⁸⁰⁾

is a series of four boxes. In the largest one, a mannequin is mounted on a base which has been carefully decorated with mouldings. A monomaniac attention is paid to the stitches of its knit. In the box next to it, a piece of cloth looks like a net. Is it Arachne's cloth or Penelope's tapestry? Pierre Courtois likes to tangle the connecting 'threads' to make us lose our way. In his work, Ariadne's thread often finds itself imprisoned in Pandora's Box. The box below is the strangest, with a mysterious thread around which writing comes alive. It is a way of telling us that the sewing thread also follows our stream of consciousness. The artist is not afraid of twists and turns, and he never hesitates to create a sense of elliptical vertigo. In this particular case, this strange box contains a snail shell as well as a detailed plan of a spiral staircase. In June 1980, Pierre Courtois installed a giant box at the centre of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. The box, with similar dimensions to those of a shipping container, was three meters tall and six meters wide. With its six meters of depth, it had the particular feature of being fully penetrable. This major kick in the teeth to the venerable picture-rails of the old museum was no less than an exact replica of the artist's own workshop. People found themselves invited inside by the artist, and could see his drawing table, his arm chairs, his wardrobes and his plants. Visitors could also rummage through his personal letters, sit on the little schoolroom bench or admire the doves in the bird cage. Woollen tangles hung from the ceiling, and a weaving loom also held pride of place in the room. This installation, named *Ensembles* (Ensembles) ⁽¹⁹⁸⁰⁾ shows that the box is above all a journey into intimacy, where the artist's memories and experiences become walls.

Olivier Duquenne, 2012

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