

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

ARTFORUM

Artforum.com

Critics' Picks: *The Temptation of AA Bronson at Witte de With*

Maaïke Lauwaert

November 2013

While “The Temptation of AA Bronson” is the largest European exhibition of work by the artist (who was a member of the collective General Idea, as well as founder and director of the Institute for Art, Religion, and Social Justice), it’s not simply a retrospective or solo show. AA Bronson is here both artist and curator, subject and object. His curatorial vision has been grounded not in an objective third-party approach so much as a highly personal and generous one. As a result, the exhibition is intensely emotional, its upper floor even bordering on the thaumaturgical.

The show’s title derives from Gustave Flaubert’s seminal 1874 book *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, which detailed a religious life lived in continuous dialogue with temptation. And indeed, religion is one of the themes—along with sex, community, death, ritual, magic, and the body and spirit—uniting works on view by more than thirty artists (both dead and alive), most of whom have collaborated with AA Bronson, as well as a collection of over one hundred queer zines spanning decades from the punk era to today, and his personal archive of books, editions, and ephemera. The first floor of the exhibition is more or less traditional in terms of spatial organization, lighting, installation of the works; here visitors find, for example, crystal healing beds by Marina Abramović, and rose petals laid out in concentric circles—the vestiges of a baptismal performance by Chrysanthe Stathacos—and even a new commission by AA Bronson and Michael Bühler-Rose, *The City of Nine Gates*, 2013, consisting of two large cubes with peepholes containing the remains of a performance. One floor up, the white-cube conventions of the first floor give way to an immersive, phantasmagorical environment where individual works merge into a continuous flow of images, sounds, and the strong smell of white sage covering the floor. The show is broadened and deepened by a program of rituals, blessings, performances, and screenings, as well as by exquisite text panels that accompany each work—deriving from a novella that artist **Gareth Long** created from fragments of Flaubert’s hagiography.

TEL 212-352-9700 FAX 212-352-9704

www.katewerblegallery.com EMAIL info@katewerblegallery.com