

Press release  
December 2009

# 2009: A good year for the Van Abbemuseum

The Van Abbemuseum has rounded off a successful year in 2009. Director Charles Esche is satisfied: "2009 was a very good year for the museum. I was pleased with the reactions to our major solo exhibitions especially Sanja Iveković and Deimantas Narkevičius which showed our commitment to bringing the best international work to Eindhoven from the current artistic generation. We toured these exhibitions elsewhere in Europe and also took our 2008 group show *Heartland* back to the United States where it opened to great acclaim in Chicago. Our exhibitions were widely noted and we received a few best of 2009 awards in the international art press for Iveković and Lynda Benglis, as well as high expectations for *Play Van Abbe* in 2010. Our work with the collection has prompted some penetrating and lively discussions on the function of a museum in our society and on the role of art today, and I was especially happy to welcome Frans Timmermans, the Minister for European Affairs to open our major *Play Van Abbe* programme in November. We have been fortunate to cooperate with many leading institutions and individuals in 2008, and we have also expanded our educational programme thanks to important sponsorships. We signed what will be an important agreement with MACBa, Barcelona and Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana and archives from Bratislava and Warsaw to work together on collection building and long term production across Europe. The support of the BankGiro Lottery, Mondriaan Foundation and the Promoters the Van Abbemuseum, now means we receive more basic support than ever to enlarge our collection. We look forward to 2010 as a year in which *Play Van Abbe* will make its mark on the world and confirm Van Abbemuseum as the most radical and hospitable museum in this region of Europe".

## Exhibitions

A varied series of exhibitions was shown in the Oudbouw (Old Building). The group exhibition *Heartland*, a multidisciplinary project on contemporary art and music of the geographical Heartland of the United States that started in 2008 was extended due to success until February 2009. The exhibition is currently on show in a modified form at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago until 17 January 2010.

In February the Van Abbemuseum presented the solo exhibition *The Unanimous Life* by the artist Deimantas Narkevičius (Lithuania, 1964) who won the prestigious Vincent Award in 2008. Narkevičius explored the links between record, memory and testimony in a selection of video and film works as well as sculptures and photography. This exhibition also reached a broad group of film lovers.

From June to October the Trio exhibition *Jo Baer - Lynda Benglis - Jutta Koether* was on display with solo presentations of three generations of artists: Jo Baer (1929), Lynda Benglis (1941) and Jutta Koether (1958). These artists use, each in their own way, a range of mediums their evaluation of the phenomenon of painting in terms of art criticism. The presentation of Lynda Benglis, her first solo exhibition in a museum in Europe, was chosen one of the most significant solo shows of 2009 in the magazine *Frieze*.

BAK, basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht, and the Van Abbemuseum together organised *Urgent Matters*, a

two-part solo exhibition by Sanja Iveković, connecting her feminist voice to the social, political, and historical developments in general, and specifically to such realities in Croatia, her country of residence.

It was the first time that the Van Abbemuseum participated in the Dutch Design Week 2009 in October with a large scale project. During *Take on me (take me on)* the Old Building was transformed to an alternative production factory and the visitors played an active part in the development of the four different projects and the associated public discussions and debates. *Take on me (take me on)* was a great success and was well acclaimed by the visitors who came especially for the Dutch Design Week 2009 as well as by the regular museum visitors.

The *Living Archive* is a continuing series of documentary exhibitions that utilize the archive of the museum as an active working memory. In 2009 the exhibition *Stars & Stripes Forever* continued, which shed new light on the Van Abbemuseum's longstanding links with America and American art. *Civilian virtue, artistic sense and community spirit* was focused on cigar manufacturer H.J. van Abbe, who gave the city of Eindhoven this museum in 1936, and on the works from his private collection that are the foundation of the museums' collection.

Still on show in the museum is *Lissitzky in context* as accompaniment of the *Lissitzky+* exhibition.

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Five exhibitions were organized in the museum's library; Burgi Kühnemann, Paul Heimbach, *Photography with Cézanne* by Jean Leering and Jan van Toorn, Toine Horvers and J.C.J. Vanderheyden, on view till February 2010.

Het Oog (The Eye) is a new area in the Van Abbemuseum that offers a stage to artists to create new work during a working period of six months. The first edition of this series in The Eye started in February with the artist Praneet Soi (Calcutta, 1971). He worked for six months in The Eye on a series of mural paintings and a new installation.

## Collection

In 2009 the successful series *Plug In. Re-Imagining the Collection* was closed. This year six new episodes have been made, including presentations by guest curators Chto Delat (a collective of artists, critics, philosophers and writers from St Petersburg and Moscow), Wim and Caya van Nuenen (a long-time volunteer of the museum and his grand daughter) and Lily van der Stokker and her guest Jim Isermann. Since the beginning of the *Plug In* series in 2006 a total of 53 exhibits in 15 rooms have been realised in which a new, surprising light was shed on the museum's collection.

In September 2009 the Van Abbemuseum launched its large-scale, three-year *Lissitzky+* project, with a triptych of exhibitions, each exploring a particular theme. The museum holds the largest collection of Lissitzky's work outside Russia. The first part, *Lissitzky+, Victory over the Sun*, is on view until September 2010 and takes the futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun*, as its starting point. For this show, the Van Abbemuseum is the first institution ever to have rendered important designs by Lissitzky as large-scale, three-dimensional figures, wholly in keeping with Lissitzky's ideological legacy.

2009 also was the start of the 18-month programme *Play Van Abbe* that will cover the majority of the exhibition space. *Play Van Abbe* is a multifaceted programme working with and around the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. It is a large-scale collective experiment that will consist of exhibitions, projects, performances, interactions, lectures and discussions. With *Play Van Abbe* the museum raises urgent questions about the identity and purpose of a museum for contemporary art in the 21st century. *Play Van Abbe* is subdivided into four parts over 18 months.

In November 2009 Part 1, *The Game and the Players*, was opened by Frans Timmermans, the Minister for European Affairs, who gave his view on the role of art and museums in our current society. In this first part, which will run until March 2010, the museum focuses on the stories of artists and exhibition makers. Who are these 'players' within a museum and which stories do they tell? Part 1 consists of three exhibitions. *Repetition. Summer Display 1983* is a reconstruction of an exhibition of the collection from 1983 installed by former director Rudi Fuchs with his curators after his return from

documenta 7. *Strange and Close*, selected by current director Charles Esche, presents recent and older acquisitions together with past moments from the museum's recent history. *Rien ne va plus* exhibits a number of installations and projects from the collection of the museum by artists who tackle social issues in an explicit dialogue with the museum context. De Volkskrant called the 'battle' between Fuchs and Esche "exciting" and believed that the Van Abbemuseum as no other museum in the world is able to show that every period in art (and its related director) seeks to create its own accents.

## Collection acquisitions

The museum has expanded its collection with many new acquisitions during 2009. They include important works as *New Orleans: Shotgun House with Rainwater-Harvesting Tank* (2008) by Marjetica Potrč, *Raum der Gegenwart*, (1930) 2009 by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *The Role of a Lifetime* (2003) by Deimantas Narkevičius, *Respite* (2007) by Harun Farocki, *Untitled (0101) (32 orange)* (2001) by Jim Isermann, *Freedom of Expression* (2008) by Lidwien van de Ven and *Song of the attendants for the inhabitants of Eindhoven* (2009) by Chto Delat. The *Activist Club* (2009) by Chto Delat from Plug In #51 is also acquired together with the films *Angry Sandwichpeople or In a Praise of Dialectics* (2006) and *Perestroika-Songspiel. The Victory over the Coup* (2008). The *Activist Club* is on display in *Play Van Abbe* part 1 and 2. These purchases were made with the aid of the BankGiro Lottery, the Foundation of Promoters of the Van Abbemuseum and the Mondriaan Foundation. Next to this, the Van Abbemuseum has commissioned several reconstructions of works including the *Workers' Club* by Alexandr Rodchenko and the *Wolkenbügel* by El Lissitzky.

## Publications

The Van Abbemuseum realised several publications in 2009.

*The Unanimous Life*, a catalogue belonging to the solo exhibition of Deimantas Narkevičius, shows video stills and film stills and contains essays by Christa Blümlingern, Boris Buden, Chus Martínez, Gerald Raunig and Dieter Roelstraete

Together with *Plug In #47* with work by Ian Wilson the Van Abbemuseum published *The Discussions*, a catalogue raisonné of work from Ian Wilson from the period 1968-2008.

The Van Abbemuseum has contributed to the monograph *Lynda Benglis*, published because of her international exhibition series which started in the Van Abbemuseum. The book gives an overview of the work of the American artist Lynda Benglis shows her extremely creative production from the early totem-like reliefs in wax, via the 'fallen paintings', videos and her 'knots' from the 1970s, up to the gilded, folded figures from the 1980s and her recent works in polyurethane and aluminium.

*Design: Lissitzky* by John Milner was released on occasion of the exhibition *Lissitzky+*. The archive from

the Van Abbemuseum was a vital source of information to Milner during his study of El Lissitzky's creative practice.

In October 2009 the publication *Heartland* was realised, with contributions from different writers, a visual overview of all artists involved and an appendix with the lively state of independent and artist-run cultural initiatives from New Orleans to Detroit. The book *Plug In to Play* shows the experimental journey that has led the museum from *Plug In* and *Living Archive* to the new 18-month project *Play Van Abbe*. This publication contains an overview of the different presentations with images, short informative texts, discussions with the makers and a look into the future. Following the edited texts of Jerzy Ludwinski, the second book in the Public Research series of the Van Abbemuseum was published: *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society*. It contains a selection of texts and essays by the writer Brian Holmes that engage with the possibilities and problematics of geopolitics and geopoetics. Holmes is a crucial contemporary writer and thinker whose insight into current social and political developments and how they relate to artistic processes opens up a new field of "geocritique".

### Learning and experience

Given our policy of hospitality, the Van Abbemuseum places a high priority on contact and interaction with our public.

With its educational tools in *Play van Abbe* the museum seeks to examine the relation between the museum, its public and the art. What is public mediation in the 21st century? The museum tries to find a balance between intuitive discovery, casual exchange and knowledge transfer. The cicerones and the hosts remain important for personal information and inspiration. Next to this, *Play Van Abbe* also sees several new tools, like the informative guide in a special design, the alternative title cards with optional keywords, the wooden panels with trigger quotes and questions spread throughout the museum, and the archive cabinets with background information.

For the secondary schools there are tailor-made museum lessons. Over thousand extra students have already joined these lessons in 2009. During the *Lissitzky+* project an extended educational programme is developed and pilots have started for lessons which focus more on the interactive introduction to art.

In November 2008 the Rabobank Eindhoven-Veldhoven and the Van Abbemuseum together realised the Vanabbemuseumschoolbus. This enabled us to extend our primary level educational programme to schools outside Eindhoven. Since then, over thousand extra kids have used this bus to come to the museum for a museum lesson.

In 2009 the Van Abbemuseum further developed the activities for the 'public programming' in the city of Eindhoven. For the trade and industry a workshop has

been developed that uses art as a creative stimulant for cooperation and change. In a group people work on their own exhibition, with actual size imitations of top works from the museum's collection.

Since the end of 2008, a group of young people, named *Gothzooi*, meets every two weeks in the museum. They develop a youth programme by themselves. In June they organised a Gothzooi summer manifestation with an exposition, music and dance. The name *Gothzooi* has been changed in 2009 in to *AltHeart* to increase the accessibility of the project to a larger group of youngsters than just the 'goths'.

Together with youth centre Dynamo and the national organisation Dropstuff.nl, the Van Abbemuseum placed a large LED screen in the city on which video artworks were shown. Video workshops were organised for the youth.

In 2009 the Van Abbemuseum again was one of the locations for *Het Vierkante Ei*, a competition for non-professional artists. The regional winner, Bob van Brunschot, also was the national winner and his work was on display during the Museum Night in October. This Museum Night was very well visited, also due to the collaboration with PSV around the artwork *Zidane, A 21st Century Portrait* and the Hyves project by the Eindhoven artist Stijn Peeters.

### Network and discussion

Next to the exhibition, education, and collection policy, there are many opportunities that presented themselves outside the architecture of the museum and we have grasped these to work with affined institutions, initiatives or individuals. The Van Abbemuseum sincerely values these exchanges.

*Museum as Hub* is a collaborative project, involving five international art institutions, based on a new model for curatorial practice and institutional collaborations. Next Besides the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and the New Museum in New York, the partners in this project are Museum Tamayo (Mexico City, Mexico), Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art (Cairo, Egypt) and Insa Art Space (Seoul, South Korea). The Van Abbemuseum presented the exhibition *Be(com)ing Dutch at a Distance* from 15 January until 29 March 2009 in het New Museum in New York.

At the Venice Biennale in June 2009, we were delighted to launch *L'Internationale*, as a new trans-European museum co-operation agreement with art museums in Barcelona and Ljubljana, as well as artist's archives in Warsaw and Bratislava. Since then, the MKHA in Antwerp has joined L'Internationale. The principle agreement is that each institution will offer the other access to their collection and open knowledge exchange, ultimately integrating our systems and providing our various publics with experience of a much wider body of work and archives than one single institution could offer.

2009 was the first complete year for the *MADe* (music art design experiences) network, which was founded by the Muziekcentrum Frits Philips and the Van Abbemuseum, two large cultural institutions in Eindhoven who join forces. In a setting of art, music and design talented professionals working at key positions in dynamic, innovative companies and organisations in the Eindhoven region have met each other six times during this year.

In May BAK and the Van Abbemuseum organised the symposium *When is Feminism in Art? The Case of Sanja Iveković*. The symposium aimed to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the history of art in the Central and Eastern European region through a concrete case of the evolution of a feminist position in a particular cultural and political topography.

Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum, was one of the jury members of the Turner Prize 2009, the most important art award in Great Britain and one of the most illustrious art prizes in the World. The prize is awarded each year to 'a British artist under fifty for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the twelve months preceding

In October the *Riwaq Biennale* took place in and around fifty villages in Palestine. Charles Esche and Reem Fadda were the curators of this biennale which actually is no biennale is, in a state that actually isn't a state. The commitment of the museum to work with young Palestinian organisations such as Riwaq will continue in 2010 when it will become visible in Eindhoven within the *Play Van Abbe* programme.

In December *Connection Day* took place in the Van Abbemuseum, an innovation convention organised by Philips Research in close collaboration with the Van Abbemuseum. By combining artistic and industrial creativity in new networks, innovation power is gained. This innovation power is crucial for both Philips and the Van Abbemuseum to shape their position in the 21st century.

Next to this the museum has made use of many other possibilities to cooperate with a choice of regional, national and international institutions, amongst them : Axes Jazzpower (Eindhoven), Jongerencentrum Dynamo (Eindhoven), Philips Research (Eindhoven), Muziekcentrum Frits Philips (Eindhoven), MU (Eindhoven), Onomatopée (Eindhoven), flux-s (Eindhoven), BAK, basis voor actuele kunst (Utrecht), Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam), Instituut Collectie Nederland (ICN - Amsterdam), Premsela (Amsterdam), Blend Magazine (Amsterdam), Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago (US), Reina Sofia (Madrid, Spanje), Kunsthalle Bern (Zwitserland), Hessel Museum of Art (US), Bard College New York (US), National Gallery of Art, Vilnius (Litouwen), Universiteit Hildesheim, (Duitsland), Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) (Dublin, Ierland), Le Consortium (Dijon, Frankrijk), Museum of Art van de

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD, Providence, VS) and many others.

## About us

In April 2009 the Van Abbemuseum presented the development concept for the Glazen Depot (Glass Depot). The Glazen Depot will be an open house, a laboratory, an inspiring meeting place and a cultural experiment in one. This new institute around the collection of the museum would have a threefold function: Experiments & presentations, Research & knowledge development and Knowledge exchange communication. The concept is planned to be ready in 2015 on the Strijp-S terrain in Eindhoven, the hot-spot for technology, culture and knowledge transfer.

Since the opening of *Play van Abbe* in November the library, the art collection and the exhibition archive are opened up via the website. In the first phase the museum starts with the basic data of the available art works. The collection online will be further developed during the course of *Play Van Abbe*.

The newly developed website has seen an increase in visitor numbers up to 150.000 unique visitors in 2009. It's a virtual venue for interchanges in the field of art, which can take place through the website, project blogs, live video streaming and other channels.

## Visitor development 2009

The Van Abbemuseum closes the year 2009 with around 80.000 visitors inside and outside of the walls of the museum. "We are satisfied with the current visitor development." According to Ulrike Erbslöh, deputy director of the museum. "In 2009 we have paid attention on attracting a more diverse public to the Van Abbemuseum and reach visitors with projects outside the walls of the museum. We have succeeded very well. A first evaluation shows that local and regional visitors remain our most important visitor group with a share of over 50%, but in 2009 we have reached an increase of 7% with our foreign visitors and we foresee to close with about a 13% share of foreign visitors. We have also had more visitors from the west of the Netherlands, which can of course be linked to the rebuilding of several museums in Amsterdam. The Van Abbemuseum has a larger number of repetitive visitors than average and every year visitors stay longer in the museum. For us, this is a clear sign that visitors appreciate our programme and that they are willing to be caught up into it.

With the very successful introduction of the Vanabbemuseumschoolbus, in cooperation with the Rabobank, we have been able to bring around 1500 extra pupils to the Van Abbemuseum. We're facing a luxury problem; we currently do not have any extra space to welcome more students for a museum lesson. In 2010 we will create new education facilities. The public in general is a little younger than before, specifically the groups between 19 and 26 years and

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between 27 and 45 years have grown with 5% in total. We are very satisfied with this development, as these young target groups are a challenge for all art museums. We notice that with our programming and with co-operations with partners like the Muziekcentrum, Dynamo, GGzE, flux-s, the Dutch Design Week, Axes Jazzpower, and the MADE-project we more often reach, next to our core public, a younger and more diverse audience that develops a renewed interest in contemporary art."

Besides visitors who come for the art in the museum, extensive use has been made of the facilities for gatherings, celebrations and (network) meetings, and the museum library has accepted and handled thousands of requests for information.

## 2010

The Van Abbemuseum will continue to present an ambitious programme of exhibitions and other activities in 2010. Many look forward to the continuation of *Play Van Abbe*, in which a great deal of attention goes to the own collection, and to the ongoing discussion on the role of an art museum in the present time.

The first part of *Play van Abbe* with the exhibitions *Repetition: Summer Display 1983*, *Strange and Close* and *Rien ne van Plus* continues until March 2010. It's ended with the interruption *Edition III - Masquerade* by If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part of Your Revolution. It will culminate in a performance event during from 19 to 20 March 2010. During this event, If I Can't Dance... receives the keys to the museum and will temporarily take control of the museum.

On 10 April 2010 the second part of *Play Van Abbe* begins. This part, called *Time machines*, concentrates on reflecting. Utopian museum models from the past, radical historical prototypes, are weighed on their possibilities for future use. Part 2 consists of several projects and exhibitions, amongst them *Museum models*, a contemplative exhibition on the arise of the current museum of modern art and *Wróblewski* a solo exhibition of this post-war, Polish painter who held an idiosyncratic position in the art world and still plays a special role in the dynamic forming of the Polish identity.

In September part 3 of *Play Van Abbe* opens, *The Politics of Collecting/ The Collecting of Politics*. What does it mean to collect and keep works of art? What kind of world is perceived when viewing a collection? Who decides and why? Part 3 also consists of several exhibitions and projects.

With the project *Double Infinity* the Van Abbemuseum develops a parallel program in May 2010 in the Dutch Cultural Centre in Shanghai during the World Expo 2010. The Dutch pavilion *Happy Street* is designed by John Körmeling, artist and architect from Eindhoven. The Van Abbemuseum and Arthub Shanghai, an art initiative from Shanghai, develop this project together and present it during the opening of John Körmeling's

project *Happy Street*. A selection of works from the collection of the Van Abbemuseum and work by Chinese artists is brought together. The works and background are shared with Chinese artists who in turn produce new work for the exhibition, from films to large-scale installation.

Following the successful participation of the Van Abbemuseum with the programme *Take on me (take me on)* during the Dutch Design Week in 2009, the museum will again develop an active program in 2010. The Van Abbemuseum wants to use the excellent platform of the DDW to complement and provoke design in this city and question its relationship to art and to social needs.

Next to these and other exhibitions and activities, collaborations with existing and new partners will be intensified and extended.

## Subsidisers and sponsors

The Van Abbemuseum is supported by contributions by the BankGiro Loterij, Provincie Noord-Brabant, Stichting Promotors Van Abbemuseum, Friends of the Van Abbemuseum, Rabobank Eindhoven-Veldhoven (Vanabbemuseumschoolbus), Brainport Development and Woonbedrijf (MADe)

The individual exhibitions are also supported by contributions:

*Play Van Abbe* is supported by contributions by the Mondriaan Stichting, BankGiro Loterij, Provincie Noord-Brabant, VSBfonds and SNSReaal.

The models of the figures from *Victory over the Sun* have been realised with support of Rotary Club Eindhoven Soeterbeek. The *Gravediggers* statue has been realised with support of MCB Nederland.

The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the first public museums for contemporary art to be established in Europe. The museum's collection of around 2700 works of art includes key works and archives by Lissitzky, Picasso, Kokoschka, Chagall, Beuys, McCarthy, Daniëls and Körmeling. The museum has an experimental approach towards art's role in society. Openness, hospitality and knowledge exchange are important. We challenge ourselves and our visitors to think about art and its place in the world, covering a range of subjects, including the role of the collection as a cultural 'memory' and the museum as a public site. International collaboration and exchange have made the Van Abbemuseum a place for creative cross-fertilisation and a source of surprise, inspiration and imagination for its visitors and participants.

### Van Abbemuseum

Bilderdijklaan 10  
Eindhoven, The Netherlands

### Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 11:00 – 17:00  
Thursday 11:00 - 21:00

On Thursdays, entrance to the museum is free from 17:00

### Entrance

Adults: € 8,50, from 1/1/2010 € 9,00

Groups of 15 persons or more, senior citizens: € 6

Students; holders of the Dutch young people's cultural pass (CJP): € 4

Thursdays from 17:00 - 21:00: free entrance (until 31/12/2010)

For more information, please visit [www.vanabbemuseum.nl](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl)

### For the editors:

For more information and photographs, please visit:  
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press)

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