

A painting by Karel Appel has been donated to the Van Abbemuseum

Portrait of Rudi Fuchs

A portrait painted by Karel Appel of the former museum director Rudi Fuchs joins the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. Karel Appel (1921-2006) painted the *Portrait of Rudi Fuchs* in 2005, towards the end of his life, a period in which he experimented with the use of neon tubes. It was Karel Appel's last wish that the painting would, in consultation with Rudi Fuchs, go to an appropriate museum. It was decided that this would be the Van Abbemuseum, where Fuchs had been director from 1975 to 1987, and where a reconstruction of his 1983 collection display is on view at this moment. The current director Charles Esche said: "We are very happy that we are able to include one of Appel's latest paintings in the collection. The work clearly shows how important the relationship between the curator and the artist has become since the 1980s."

Charles Esche and Rudi Fuchs were present at the installation of the portrait of Fuchs in the exhibition *Strange and Close*, part of *Play Van Abbe*. The painting, which has not been exhibited before, can be seen there up to 21 March 2010.

Innovation

Up to the end of his life Appel was always innovative, and in this drive for innovation, he constantly looked for different materials to use in his works. The *Portrait of Rudi Fuchs* (200x150cm) is part of a series of works dating from 2005, when Appel used neon tubes in his paintings for the first time. In addition to the portrait this series consists of a sculpture and eight other canvases including a series of five erotically charged works entitled (*Love no. 1 - Love no. 5*). This *Love* series was shown in an exhibition in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 2005. Appel painted a number of portraits, particularly during the 1950s and 1980s, including portraits of Willem Sandberg, the former director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and jazz musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan. Appel and Fuchs collaborated widely from the 1980s. Fuchs wrote several texts about Appel's work and organised a number of important exhibitions, including *Karel Appel, Ik wou dat ik een Vogel was* (Karel Appel, I wish I were a bird), a large retrospective exhibition in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1990, and *Karel Appel, Onderweg. Reis van Rudi Fuchs langs de Kunst der Lage Landen* (Karel Appel on the road. Journey of Rudi Fuchs through the Art of the Low Countries) in the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels in 2004-2005. They maintained close contact until Appel's death.

The portrait in the Van Abbemuseum

Rudi Fuchs offered the work to the Van Abbemuseum, where he was director from 1975 tot 1987. At the moment a reconstruction of Fuchs' 1983 Summer Display can be seen as part of the 18 month *Play Van Abbe* programme. The portrait is added to the exhibition *Strange and Close*, organised by the current director Charles Esche. One of his rooms is devoted to portraits by various different artists. The portrait of Fuchs is given a place on the wall of portraits next to works by Sasnal,

Toorop and Otto-Knapp, amongst others. The work *Untitled (to a man, George McGovern)* by Dan Flavin is also exhibited in the same room. This "portrait", which consists entirely of round neon tubes, is dedicated to George McGovern, the American presidential candidate who lost the election to Nixon in 1972.



Installation of Karel Appel's *Portrait of Rudi Fuchs* (2005), Van Abbemuseum, 2010. Photo Bram Saeys

Karel Appel and the Van Abbemuseum

The Van Abbemuseum collected the works of the Cobra artists from the second half of the 1950s. The Cobra group, a group of young, revolutionary Surrealists, of which Karel Appel was one of the founders in 1948, were interested in creating an entirely new art, which would visually express the most vital and existential human drives in a way that was completely free of all the previous classical art movements and traditions. In 1961 the Van Abbemuseum organised solo exhibitions of the work of Appel and Corneille. The museum owns 15 other works by Karel Appel, including *The condemned. Hommage à Rosenberg* dating from 1953, *The Horseman* dating from 1957 and *Sculpture* dating from 1961.



Rudi Fuchs in front of his portrait, Van Abbemuseum, 2010. Photo Bram Soeys

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 Kórmeling. 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 € 9,00
Groups of 15 persons or more, senior citizens: € 6,50
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

For the editors:

For more information and photographs, please visit:
www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press

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