

Spirits of Internationalism

6 European Collections 1956–1986

Press Release

M HKA, Antwerp

19.01 > 06.05.2012

Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

21.01 > 29.04.2012

In January 2012 *Spirits of Internationalism* opens at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and M HKA in Antwerp. This exhibition takes place simultaneously in two venues and shows art from six European collections: four museums and two artists' archives. It presents art made between 1956 and 1986, a period marked by fast economic and technological development, but also by international political tension.

Spirits of Internationalism shows how the realities of the Cold War influenced art and changed the meaning of 'the international' and 'the regional'. The exhibition attempts to challenge the simplified image of the 'Three Worlds' by showing familiar and less familiar artworks in surprising constellations. It includes work by internationally well-known artists and artists who deserve to be recognised outside of their own region.

Spirits of Internationalism is the last part of a series of exhibitions developed within the framework of the European collaborative project *L'Internationale*. The partners in this project are M HKA in Antwerp, MACBA in Barcelona, Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, as well as the Július Koller Society in Bratislava and the KwieKulik Archive in Warsaw.

The opening takes place at M HKA in Antwerp on Thursday 19 January, and at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven on Saturday 21 January.



Culture Programme



Education and Culture DG

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Art for a World in Motion

The current crisis in Europe, the shift in geopolitical power from West to East and the Arab Spring compel us to take another look at the second half of the 20th century, when our present world was created. Technology gave us wings with the moon landing, Concorde, television and the computer. A political and economic world order developed with the Cold War, decolonisation, the unification of Europe and the amalgamation of the capital markets. It now appears to be on its last legs.

The works in this exhibition were created during this dynamic period. They show us where we are by showing us where we were. *Spirits of Internationalism* brings us back to the age of mutual nuclear destruction, the Hungarian uprising, the Cuban missile crisis, the construction of the Berlin Wall and America's war in Vietnam. Such events were accompanied by images spreading across the world like wildfire.

Art was by no means isolated from world developments. In Belgium, for instance, Panamarenko built fantastic flying machines (that did not fly), James Lee Byars created the figure of an 'extra-terrestrial' from black tulle which was only completely visible from the air, and Jef Cornelis experimented with television as a medium for new art forms.

International artists' communities developed as a result of exhibitions and festivals organised in Paris, Kassel, Amsterdam, Warsaw and Zagreb, to mention only some European examples. Art journals and artists' books were also important for the art world internationalism of the 1960s and '70s, which belies the monolithic image of the open West, the closed East and the 'developing' Rest. The black-and-white image of the Cold War world hides thousands of nuances of grey and many undiscovered pearls.

Eight Spirits

Spirits of Internationalism shows a cross-section of visual art from the period 1956–1986 that cannot be divided into central and peripheral positions. Each artist offers his or her own perspective on art and its place in the world.

In addition, the exhibition is divided into eight parts, each representing a ‘spirit’ of internationalism. These are: ‘the Concrete’, ‘the Essential’, ‘the Transcendental’, ‘the Subverted’, ‘the (Dis-)Located’, ‘the Universal’, ‘the Engaged’ and ‘the Positioned’. These eight spirits have been retrospectively created to express the tension between the regional and the international in the art of the Cold War period and the tension between the aesthetic or art-specific and the socio-political in the exhibited works.

Do artists feel connected to the universal, or do they actually look at concrete matter? Do they seek their salvation in transnational humanity or do they forge close links with their own environment? Do they play the system in an ironic way or do they industriously search for the essence? All these approaches can be found in art from the period 1956–1986. The eight spirits do not serve as a straightjacket for the exhibition, but invite visitors to seek for new connections between well-known and less well-known works.

A European Collection in the Making

L’Internationale is a collaborative venture between four museums and two artists’ archives in six European countries. It connects these collections in a series of exhibitions that demonstrate how the recent cultural heritage can be independent of national boundaries. The ultimate aim is to create a ‘European Collection’, or even a ‘Global Collection’.

The participating organisations will not amalgamate into an abstract unified entity, but instead gradually create a sense of interconnectedness between, in the first instance, Antwerp, Barcelona, Eindhoven and Ljubljana. *L’Internationale* will not become the next ‘conglomerate’ in the museum world, but a network that is both pragmatic and ideologically motivated.

The six current partners have in the past two years collaborated on the project *1956–1986. Art from the Decline of Modernism to the Rise of Globalisation.*, which consisted of four seminars, a conference and three exhibitions, of which *Spirits of Internationalism* is the last.

Artists Featured at M HKA

Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Alighiero e Boetti, Marinus Boezem, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Brouwn, Victor Burgin, James Lee Byars, André Cadere, Jef Cornelis, Herman de Vries, Luciano Fabro, Dan Flavin, Lucio Fontana, Gego (Gertrud Goldstein), Hans Haacke, René Heyvaert, Jenny Holzer, Jörg Immendorff, Robert Indiana, Donald Judd, On Kawara, Anselm Kiefer, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Guy Mees, Cildo Meireles, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Bruce Nauman, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Martha Rosler, Ed Ruscha, Jan Schoonhoven, Nancy Spero, Frank Stella, Paul Van Hoeydonck, Victor Vasarely, Andy Warhol, Lawrence Weiner

Artists Featured at Van Abbemuseum

Alain Arias-Misson, Stuart Brisley, James Lee Byars, Luc Deleu, Lili Dujourie, Esther Ferrer, Gego (Gertrud Goldstein), Jef Geys, Tomislav Gotovac, Grup de Treball, Paul de Vree, Tibor Hajas, Július Koller, KwieKulik, Fina Miralles, François Morellet, Antoni Muntadas, Pere Noguera, OHO, Panamarenko, Henk Peeters, Józef Robakowski, Tomáš Šalamun, Jan Schoonhoven, Mladen Stilinović, Toon Teras

Curators At M HKA

Bart de Baere, Jan De Vree, Anders Kreuger

Curators At Van Abbemuseum

Charles Esche, Steven ten Thije

For more information and photographs, please visit

> www.muhka.be/pers
> ensembles.mhka.be
> www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/press

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M HKA

M HKA is a dynamic place for contemporary art and visual culture, which focuses on local and international developments, on art history and new trends, on research and exhibitions. The museum is an open house where artists and visitors can meet – be it in exhibitions, interventions, lectures, conferences, book launches or other activities. M HKA presents a program of major exhibitions which sometimes focus on the vision of a single artist and in other cases cover a widely-varying range of topics. Works from our collection of international contemporary art are shown in displays that are regularly changed, so that a different voice or question is heard each time.

Address

Leuvenstraat 32
Antwerpen, Belgium
www.muhka.be

Opening hours

Tuesday to Wednesday
and Friday to Sunday
11:00 > 18:00

Thursday

11:00 > 21:00

Entrance

Adults: € 8

Reduction: € 4 (senior citizens, groups of 10 persons or more, job seekers, members of NICC, citizens of Antwerp, teachers card Klasse, Knack Club) / € 1 (-26 year) / free (-13 year, BIG-card, Friends of the M HKA, ICOM, VMV, escorts of disabled people)

Every Thursday from 18:00 > 21:00: € 1

Van Abbemuseum

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.

Address

Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven, The Netherlands
www.vanabbemuseum.nl

Opening Hours

Tuesday to Sunday 11:00 > 17:00

Every first Thursday of the month
the museum is open until 21:00

Entrance

Adults: € 9

Groups of 10 persons or more,
senior citizens: € 7

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

Every first Thursday of the month
17:00 > 21:00: free entrance