MARGARET HARRISON

DANCING ON THE MISSILES

VISITOR'S GUIDE

EN

EXHIBITION

20.02 > 23.05.2021

+ RUPTZ
+ PETR DAVYDTCHENKO
+ MERCI FACTEUR ! MAIL ART #2

BPS22 MUSÉE D'ART DE LA PROVINCE DE HAINAUT

Province de HAINAUT

49 Nord 6 Est Frac Lorraine

↖

© Margaret HARRISON,
Captain America II,
1997,
Courtesy Nicolas Krupp,
Basel
Photo : Serge Hasenböhler

CONTENT

GREAT HALL

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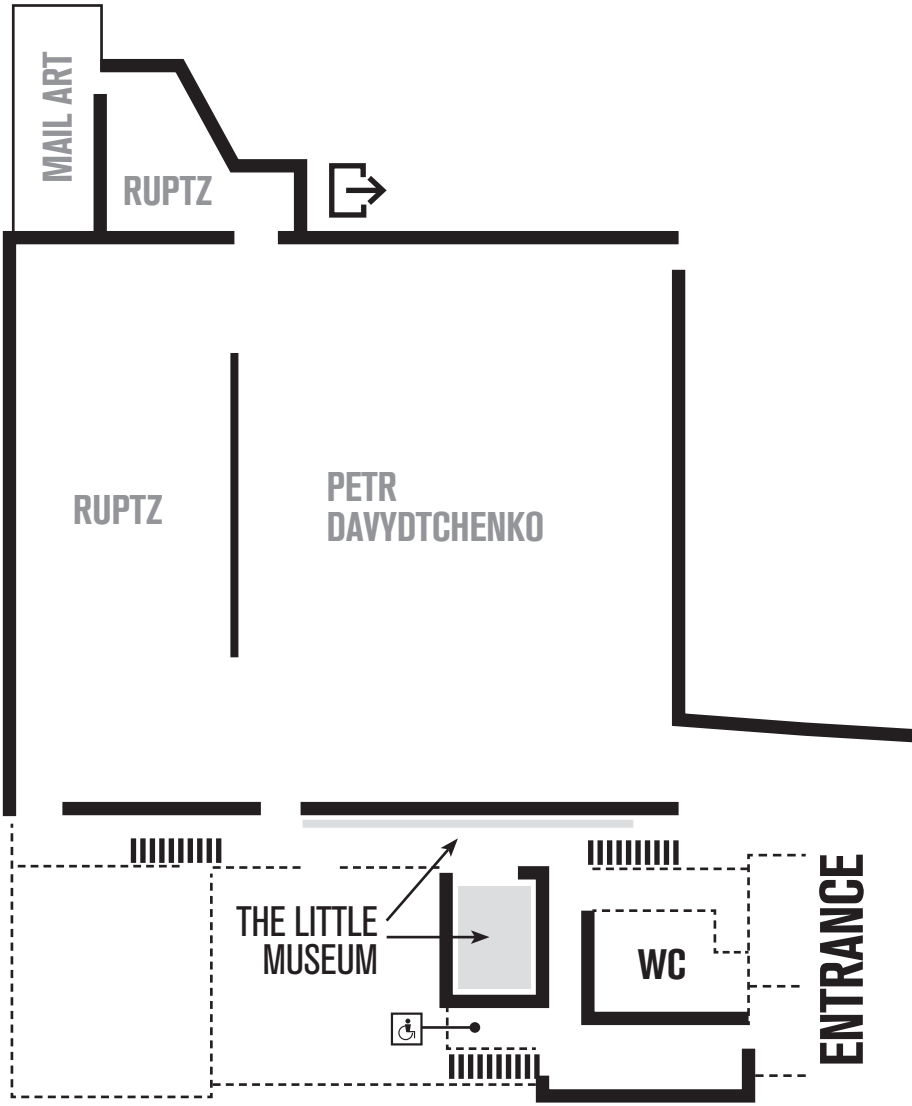
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THE LITTLE
MUSEUM
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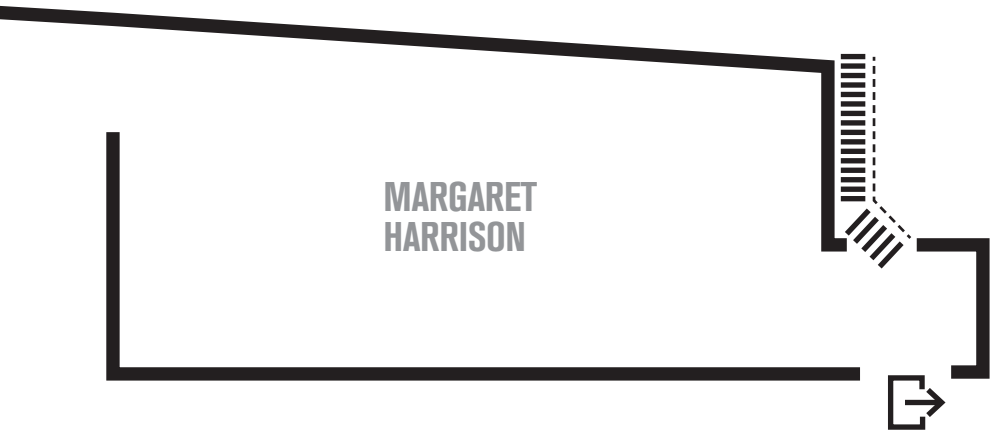
ENTRANCE

PIERRE DUPONT ROOM

AND +1



MARGARET HARRISON

DANSER SUR LES MISSILES

PIERRE DUPONT
ROOM
GROUND FLOOR
+1

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Commissaire : Fanny GONELLA

THE EXHIBITION

The retrospective exhibition *Dancing on the Missiles* by Margaret Harrison (1940, Great Britain) is moving to the BPS22 after its stay at 49 Nord 6 Est – FRAC Lorraine, Metz, in 2019. Curated by Fanny Gonella, the director at FRAC Lorraine, the exhibition invites you to discover a central figure of British feminist art for the first time in Belgium, through a body of work covering her entire career from the early 1970s to the present day.

For more than 50 years, Margaret Harrison has been committed to highlighting forms of domination and violence present in professional and domestic spheres, as well as in the history of art and popular culture. Practising art and activism equally, she vigorously defies the gender and class gap by feminising men's bodies and humorously inverting the power structures transmitted by society and the media. She employs the strategies of the grotesque, such as exaggeration, parody and subversion. In this, Margaret Harrison is ahead of her time. If her radical discourse retains the same intensity today, it is because of its pioneering nature when it first appeared: her work anticipated the problematisation of class hierarchies that drive today's feminism. Raised in an England that saw the birth of the trade union movement, the forging of workers' rights and the suffragettes, who invented civil disobedience as a weapon to fight for women's' rights, Margaret Harrison stepped naturally into the ongoing progress of these struggles, putting her art at the service of feminism.

So it is, then, that the title of her exhibition, *Dancing on the Missiles*, is a reference to the 'Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp' (1981 – 2000), an encampment of women who peacefully protested against the installation of US nuclear missiles at the Greenham Common Royal Air Force base in southern England. In 1982, 30,000 women, including Margaret Harrison, assembled for a demonstration. They formed a human chain that embraced the fifteen-kilometre perimeter fence surrounding the military base, before cutting through it and dancing on the silos that covered the missiles' warheads.

Just like the *Greenham Camp* series of works narrating this historic event shown at the BPS22, the fifty or so pieces comprising this exhibition highlight the diversity of Margaret Harrison's work: installations, paintings, drawings and texts. The exhibition does not follow a chronological layout but acts as a mirror, establishing a dialogue between the works. A well-kept secret for many years, Margaret Harrison's work is finally getting the exposure it deserves. At 81, an essential figure of British feminist art, she continues to assert that "*art must be political, or it isn't anything!*" One way of still dancing on the missiles…

THE ARTIST

Born in 1940 in Wakefield, in the county of Yorkshire, England, Margaret Harrison studied at the Carlisle College of Art (1957-61), the Royal Academy Schools in London (1961-64) and graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia, Italy (1965). She was a Research Professor at the Social Environmental Art Research Centre at the Manchester Metropolitan University, continually and even-handedly pursuing research work within the context of her own artistic practice.

The radical art she creates at the service of feminism was first expressed when she co-founded the London Women's Liberation Art Group in 1970. Its first action in 1971 [TN: this event occurred in 1970] was to sabotage the Miss World pageant at the Albert Hall, where tomatoes and flour were thrown at the evening's compere, Bob Hope. In 1971, her first solo exhibition at the Motif Edition [sic: Editions] Gallery in London was closed down by the authorities after just one day for being "indecent". One of the offending objects was a drawing called *He's Only a Bunny Boy but He's Quite Nice Really*. It shows Hugh Hefner, famous owner of the US *Playboy* magazine, in a very short costume identical to that worn by the army of "Bunny Girls", who were the young women playmates symbolic of the magazine. During the opening, this emblematic piece went missing and has never been found.

By choosing the title "Bunny", a word normally reserved for women whose beauty is supposed to go hand-in-hand with an empty head, the artist deliberately overturns gender norms. Applied to a man, who is moreover a powerful man, who built an empire by creating a magazine that owes its success largely to the exploitation of erotic images of naked young women seemingly at the service of male readers, this title suddenly becomes unacceptable. In the most explicit way it reveals the asymmetry in how men and women are represented, which seemed normal until then. This process of subversion would become one of Margaret Harrison's most effective political-artistic weapons, deconstructing a supposedly natural masculinity in which women are allocated certain restrictive roles.

After the compulsory closure of her first exhibition in 1971, she gradually moved away from her satirical drawings. Margaret Harrison then embarked on a career-long reflection examining the labour conditions of the working class in rural England and the United States. Mindful of the economic and social changes that took place between the end of the 19th century and the industrial crisis of the 1970s, Margaret Harrison created several collections of work based on sociological research.

Every one of her exhibitions combined performance and activism. Between 1973 and 1975, she conducted a study of women's work in a metal box factory with artists Kay Hunt and Mary Kelly. This led to *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry 1973-1975*.

In 1980, Lucy Lippard invited Margaret Harrison to exhibit at The Institute of Contemporary Art [sic: Arts] in London in *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists*. This collective exhibition was iconic because it highlighted feminist artistic practice informed by social concerns. In it, the artist denounced the loss of women's manual know-how with the emergence of the factory. Dispossession by machines drove women to great insecurity, which led many of them into prostitution.

In the 1990s, the artist returned to some of her satirical drawings, abandoned after the 1971 controversy, and redesigned the famous comic book characters next to icons of art history. She continued to examine gender attributes, this time confronting them with art history icons, as in *Two Princesses, Two Hands* where Batman, in an evening dress, faces the painting of the Infanta Margarita of Spain by Velaquez. These works counteract the habitual image of the passive woman in classic portraiture by juxtaposing it with that of a woman who influences the course of history and refuses to lower her gaze.

Margaret Harrison currently works between the United States (San Francisco) and England (Carlisle, Cumbria), where she has had solo exhibitions, notably at New York's New Museum and the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. In 2017 the Azkuna Zentroa centre for art in Bilbao also dedicated a solo exhibition to her work. She has taken part in several collective exhibitions at international institutions: the Tate Modern, Tate Britain and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the MOCA in Los Angeles and the Museu do Chiado in Portugal, among others.

In 2013, she was awarded the Northern Art Prize and her works form part of public collections, such as those of the Tate, the Arts Council of Great Britain, Manchester Metropolitan University, the Kunsthaus in Zurich and recently that of the BPS22, the Museum of Art of the Hainaut Province in Charleroi.

THE ARTWORKS

GROUND FLOOR

Two Princesses, Two Hands (Infanta Margarita / David Walliams & Batman)

2009
Pencil and watercolor
–
Private collection

Some of Margaret Harrison's drawings belong to the satirical tradition, in the vein of the British cartoonist James Gillray or the American underground cartoonist Eric Stanton, featuring sexually liberated characters. As she did in Bunny Boy, in her watercolors of hyper-sexualized superheroes Harrison uses the same codes of representation as those applied to women in pop culture and advertising.

By drawing Captain *America I* with fake breasts, high heels, and garter belts, the artist not only challenges the machismo implicit in representations of women, but also, during the sexual revolution, the norms of sexual identity and heterosexuality. Her appropriation of the superhero Captain America, the emblematic defender of the free world and a standard-bearer of democratic values, also echoed, in its first version, the demonstrations against the US-led war in Vietnam.

In the 1990s, Harrison returned to this body of work, abandoned after the 1971 controversy, and began redrawing famous comic-book characters alongside icons from art history, opening a new category for feminist visual criticism while continuing to challenge gender roles.

In *What's That Long Red…* we find the comic-book character Lady Deathstrike sizing up Willem de Kooning's *Woman and Bicycle* (1952–53), while Captain America crouches at her feet; in another piece, Batman poses before Diego Velazquez's *Infanta Margarita* (1656). These works counter the traditional image of passive womanhood which continues to influence the course of history and inform our gaze.

"*We were immersed in American culture. This was during the Vietnam War. One of my first pieces was Captain America, who in the comic book was supposed to be a good guy, but looking at it from another angle, we thought they [the Americans] weren't all that good. I thought, 'I'm going to challenge that'; followed by, 'I'm going to challenge that notion of masculinity'* " Margaret Harrison

The Sky above Greenham

1989
Acrylic on canvas, sweat shirt, photos, watercolour on paper, shoe, lettering stencils
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Greenham Camp

1989-2013
Pictures on metal, mirrors
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Greenham Common (Common Reflections). Diary of Events

2012
24 Watercolour on paper, mix medi, metal
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Greenham Common (Common Reflections)

1989-2013
Concrete, wire mesh, mirrors, fabric, pram, photographs and plastic bags
–
Les Abattoirs, Musée collection – FRAC Occitanie Toulouse

Margaret Harrison has often used traditional media to manifest political engagement. In *Common Land / Greenham*, she addresses a political question in its apparently most banal aspects (a fence, images of household objects, a shoe, a blouse). The works are part of an installation presented in 1989 at the New Museum in New York, in which the artist described various aspects of the women's peace camp at Greenham Common Air Force Base in southern England, which has since become a symbol of civil disobedience and the peace movement.

The movement began in 1981 with a protest march against the British Government's decision to keep American cruise missiles on land that had been communal property since 1845. United by a chain-letter, 30,000 women arrived in Greenham on December 12, 1982 and encircled the 15 kilometers of the perimeter fence of the military camp by holding each other's hands. On December 30, 1982, some even used ladders to get over the barbed wire fence and climb on top of the missile silos, where they danced for hours.

Drawing the attention of the media, women from all generations and walks of life joined the anti-American cruise-missile campaign, which ran continuously from 1981 to 1989. They created the *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp*, which remained active until 2000. The solidarity movement in Greenham has become an international model and a source of inspiration for political activists around the world.

Produced during a month-long residency in New York, the series of works tells the story of both the confrontation between the American airbase and the strategic creativity and tenacity of the women protesters, and of the effects produced by the change in ownership and relationship to the land.

Homeworkers: Mrs. McGilvrey and the Hands of Law and Experience

1978/1980
Pencil and ink on paper, black and white silver gelatin prints mounted on cardboard
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

After the forced closure of her exhibition in London, Margaret Harrison turned to activism and examined the relationship between gender and class from a feminist perspective. Alone or in groups (with other artists such as Conrad Atkinson, Mary Kelley, and Kay Hunt), she carried out a sociological reflection on the changes in women's working conditions in the wake of the Equal Pay Act of 1970. She interviewed and photographed women in factories, or, as in this work, in their homes, seeking to understand the difficulties they faced.

Mrs. McGilvrey was one of the workers interviewed: she assembled tax forms at home, a task outsourced by the central government and sorely underpaid. As evidenced by the excerpts from testimonies, inscribed along the palm lines on the hands outlined in the middle of the image, the situation of these women was so precarious that they had no choice but to accept these jobs, forfeited their salary if the work was late, and could be dismissed if they asked for a raise.

> "*I had to go through something like a documentary learning process in order to understand how the world functioned. We were all interested in politics and political art at that time*" M. H.

Good Enough to Eat (2)
1971
Pencil and Watercolour on paper
–
Private collection

Good Enough to Eat
1971-2011
Pencil and Watercolour on paper
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Good Enough to Eat (4)
1971
Pencil and Watercolour on paper
–
Private collection

In this series Margaret Harrison appropriates the pin-up style of the illustrator Alberto Vargas, known for his work for Playboy magazine in the 1960s and 1970s. Harrison's series of drawings was made in response to a broadcast by the radio commentator Jimmy Young who featured a new recipe every morning, often comparing women to edible, juicy ingredients. Harrison ironically mocked this formula by drawing lascivious women as slices of meat in sandwiches, or squeezing a juicy lemon. The women are clones of Betty Page, a model made famous by pin-up photographs.

It is very telling that images of overly sexualized, submissive, and "good enough to eat" women did not shock the censors of Harrison's exhibition in London in 1971. They perceived nothing disturbing about the images, and certainly nothing ironic, in contrast to their response to the drawings which parodied men.

> "*When I asked the gallery owner (as my exhibition was being shut down in 1971) what people didn't like about it, she replied: 'The images of men. They thought the images of the women were OK, but that the images of the men were disgusting*" M. H.

Mrs. Softie (I)

Graphite on cardboard
1971
–
Courtesy: The British Council Collection

Mrs. Softie (I) is one of the controversial pieces that Margaret Harrison produced in 1971. “It [this work] doesn’t seem very different from what pop artists were doing at the time, but I had other thoughts, I heard them talking all the time about women and food, talking about women as recipes.” So the artist takes the expression literally: are women often described as food? She puts them, literally, into food.

The title of the work ‘Softie’ means a kind, sweet person, who isn’t forceful, who looks for the bright side of life and can be easily persuaded to do what you want. It is an accurate reflection of the masculine gaze which objectifies women and assigns them not only sweetness (the ice-cream cone) but consequently a certain role: a consumerist and sexy femininity, completely insignificant.

Take One Lemon

2010
Sérigraphie sur papier
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

See the notice page 14

THE ARTWORKS

+1

Craftwork (The Prostitution Piece)

1980
Audio, fabrics and mixed media on paper
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

This major work was created by Harrison as a part of the emblematic feminist exhibition curated by Lucy Lippard at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1980. Harrison draws a relationship between the loss of women's manual skills and the development of factories. This situation caused a shift in activities and created a dependence on machines, both in terms of livelihood and production, and curtailed collective, homespun production. As holders of fragmentary skills, women employed in factories naturally suffered when they had to retrain following the industrial crisis of the 1970s in the United Kingdom. It was in this context that women resorted to prostitution as they confronted the loss of resources and impoverishment, as is evidenced by the sound recording featured in the installation, made with the help of the *English Collective of Prostitutes*. In the words of the artist and writer Chris Crickmay, "*Margaret Harrison's work reflects concerns that formerly had no place in art galleries*".

"*There has been a gradual de-skilling of working-class women since much of the work traditionally done at home in a group setting, (...) is now performed in a fragmented way outside the home*" M. H.

If These Lips Could Only Speak (I)

1971-2010
Watercolour and graphite on paper
–
Collection Hubertus, Berlin

Margaret Harrison's depictions of men (Hugh Hefner, Captain America, etc. with swelling breasts, dressed in stockings, bustiers and heels) posed a moral problem for the British authorities. In spite of these works perpetuating the bawdy tradition of satirical cartoon drawings, they were considered obscene.

If These Lips Could Only Speak refers to a ballad in which a man weeps for the loss of his young wife, whose image is perfectly captured in a painting. In the artist's drawing, a woman sprawls provocatively, wearing suspenders, a brassiere showing her nipples and stilettoes, her legs boldly open. She looks furious, however. Perhaps she is complaining about the way women's sexuality is perceived? As an acquiescent and accommodating sexuality. Here the sex object, replaced by big red fleshy lips, threatens to answer back.

Allen Jones and the PTA

2010
Watercolour and graphite
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

In 1969, the British pop artist Allen Jones created 'Table', an erotic sculpture representing a woman transformed into a piece of furniture. Wearing a blond wig, naked apart from a bustier, gloves and leather boots, the woman is on all fours, a sheet of glass resting on her back. Exhibited for the first time in 1970, the work incited angry protests, particularly from feminists who considered that it objectified women.

Margaret Harrison created several works based on images of women produced by male artists. In her parody of 'Table', the woman is shown on a bearskin staring at her reflection in a mirror placed on the ground, echoing the obsession with appearances. Next to her the famous US country singer, Dolly Parton, indicates her with a disdainful gesture, both denouncing and drawing our attention to the mechanisms that produce female alienation in the cult of beauty.

The singer Dolly Parton is known for her pin-up look; she has carefully cultivated her platinum blond, big-hairstyle, cleavage and bimbo outfits. This has led to her photographic presence long being valued in the cabs of all truck drivers criss-crossing the highways of the United States to the sound of country music. She is, nevertheless, a talented songwriter and composer, feminist passionaria and philanthropist, who has been able to unite WASPs, queers, women and proles. The title of the work refers to one of her songs in which a woman is criticised by the PTA of the school where her daughter studies, for the way she dresses and her lifestyle, considered to be inappropriate.

> "*Well the note says mrs. johnson, you're wearing your dresses way too high*
> *It's been reported you've been drinkin' and a runnin' round with men and goin' wild*
> *Now we don't believe you ought to be a bringin' up your little girl this way*
> *And it was signed by the secretary, harper valley pta*"
>
> Dolly Parton

I Caught Him in Park Lane, Woman on Hugh Hefner Skin Rug

1971

Water colour and pencil on paper

–

BPS22 Collection

A dominatrix lounges on a rug made from Hugh Hefner's skin, nailing it with the heel of her crocodile skin boot. Twisting the sexist trope of a woman as prey to be hunted and captured like a trophy, the work plays with the opposing stereotype of the sexually dangerous femme fatale. The title of the piece refers to a famous London street bordering Hyde Park, where The Animals in War Memorial stands, erected in 2004 to commemorate the animals that served and died in wars and campaigns throughout time.

Ever since antiquity, the male spirit has been full of false values of competitiveness, glory and masculine power. In *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf deduces that the only way to defuse the war drive is to educate men and women out of a patriarchal system that, like fascism, is based on privileges (of a gender, of a class, of a race). Here Margaret Harrison pokes fun at nationalistic masculinity and transgresses the binary nature of the sexes.

Olympia Model Role (Hattie MacDaniel - Vivien Leight)
2010
Watercolour and graphite on paper
–
Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine

Olympia Model Role (Lopez - Dietrich)
2010
Watercolour and graphite on paper
–
Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine

Olympia Model Role (Obama - Monroe)
2010
Watercolour and graphite on paper
–
Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine

In this series of watercolors, Margaret Harrison denounces racism and discrimination against women in the history of art. She revisits, by subverting it, Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863), which represents a naked white woman gazing provocatively in the foreground and a racialized companion observing her from the background. The representation of a nude in a domestic space, along with the uncertainty about the social origin of the model (she might be demi-monde), created a scandal.

Today, the painting is recognized as a work of art; it is regarded in a new light, and its links with Titian's work have come to the fore, while the moral issues have slipped into the category of history's faux pas. Harrison points to another aspect of the painting, namely the ability of powerful historical images to reinforce social norms. She has several celebrities, living and dead, exchange racially defined roles: white women (Vivien Leigh, Marilyn Monroe, and Marlene Dietrich) appear in the background as the servant, while women of color (Michelle Obama, Hattie McDaniel, and Jennifer Lopez) figure in the foreground, exposed to the public. As a result, the artist operates a radical shift and draws our attention to issues of ethnicity and class and their influence on compositional decisions, developing an approach that, until recently, had been ignored in art history.

Perfumed Politics and Cosmetic Bodies (from the Scent of Identity Series)

1994

Watercolour on paper

–

Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Museum

Scent of Identity. Magnin Store San Francisco (II et III)

1993

Watercolour on paper

–

Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Scent of Identity. Magnin Store, San Francisco (I)

1993

Watercolour on paper

–

Iván Igual Palero Collection

These three works are part of a series of fourteen watercolors inspired by Edouard Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* (1881–82). Margaret Harrison explores the seductive world of department stores, filled with lights and reflections. Just like the waitress at the Folies-Bergères in the impressionist painting, the female clerks attract consumers from behind their counters. They remain anonymous, but are quite real since the images are based on photographs the artist took at Bloomingdale's and Macy's in New York.

Social and political questions lurk beneath the elegance of these retail spaces which are in perfect harmony with the products on display promising consumable happiness. Women are depicted in a peaceful and alluring atmosphere, which contrasts with the reality of their condition. The artist foregrounds the marketing mechanisms that exploit women's beauty, which is equated with the consumer goods they must sell.

Dorothy Wordsworth (The White Foxgloves)
1982
Watercolour on paper
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Dorothy Wordsworth (Ferns)
1982
Watercolour on paper
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1855) was the sister of the poet William Wordsworth. Her writings describing the daily life and the natural world in the Lake District were highly appreciated during her lifetime. Dorothy, however, refused to consider herself as a writer, and it was only fifty years after her death that her journals were published, followed by her poems, correspondence, and topographic descriptions. At the time, the Lake District was crisscrossed by people migrating to the newly industrialized cities of Manchester and Liverpool. In her writings, Dorothy bears witness to the hardships experienced by the inhabitants. Avoiding grand narratives, she tells the story of a changing society through the lives of individuals. The impressions recorded in Dorothy's journals are a poignant record of ordinary people's day-to-day struggles, and they found their way into many of her brother William's poems.

Harrison pays tribute to Dorothy Wordsworth's imagination and precision by combining two passages from her journals with watercolors of Lake District plants. As it happens, Dorothy tended the Wordsworths' home garden; she viewed nature as a place of refuge and her work as a form of discreet care.

> "*Dorothy talked to the people crossing Cumbria on their way to new industrial cities, because the communal land they had been able to freely enjoy was shrinking and they could no longer afford to feed their families. She recorded their testimonies in her journals"* M.H

Singing Roses (Roses and Fists)

2012

Pencil on paper

–

Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

In this work, we find themes Margaret Harrison tackled in *Anonymous Was a Woman*, namely feminism and socialism. The drawing uses the socialist symbols of the rose and the hand. It is a tribute to Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish communist theorist and activist and assassination victim. The drawing is framed by lines of text arranged in four axes that schematically represent the major lines of the artist's methodology: radical artistic practice / activism / socialism / theory.

The Healthier Choice

2017

Pencil and Watercolour on paper

–

Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

Captain America I

1971-1997

Pencil and Watercolour on paper

–

Aude Lacroix collection

Now I Have Moved to the Suburbs I Understand my Sexuality

2018

Pencil, Watercolour and collage on paper

–

Namur Provine collection

What's That Long Red Limp Wrinkly Thing You're Pulling On?

2009

Pencil and Watercolour on paper

–

Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

Captain America II

1997

Pencil and Watercolour on paper

–

Private Collection, Switzerland. Courtesy Nicolas Krupp, Basel

See the notice page 11

He's Only a Bunny Boy but He's Quite Nice Really

1971-2011

Archival print on paper

–

Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine

From the beginning of her practice, Margaret Harrison has used popular icons to stimulate reflection on gender codes and humorously subvert traditional roles. These traits can be found in her portrait of the *Playboy* magazine founder Hugh Hefner as *Bunny Boy*. He is made to look as if he were posing for his own magazine, which in the 1960s embodied a new popular erotic utopia. Assuming a so-called seductive pose, his foot thrust forward, his nipples peeking over his bodice, which contrasts with the pipe clenched between his teeth, he raises questions about the status of women wearing bunny ears, which he himself had envisioned.

Within twenty-fours of the opening of Harrison's first London show in 1971, this drawing, and others featuring men adorned with female attributes, led to the police shutting the exhibition down on charges of "obscenity." On the same night, this emblematic piece was stolen (probably by members of the *Bunny Boy Club*) and was never found, which led the artist to reproduce it in 2011.

> "*I told an acquaintance of Hugh Hefner's in Los Angeles years later: 'Please tell him I forgive him if he has the Bunny Boy, but let him give it back to me!' But it never happened…"* M.H

High Speed Gas

1971

Water colour and pencil on paper

–

BPS22 Collection

The piece *High Speed Gas*, showing a woman standing in front of a petrol pump dressed in sexy undergarments, is another example of the objectification of women. Here, the discordance between her provocative outfit and her surroundings shows the pressures to which women are subjected in order to fill multiple and apparently divergent roles: sex object, wife and mother. The statement scrawled across her body underlines the struggle to assert concepts of femininity other than those portrayed by the media.

Marilyn (Young, by the Beach)
1994
Watercolor on paper
–
Private Collection, Basel

Marilyn (Young, Portrait)
1994
Aquarelle sur papier

Marilyn (Young, Dark Haired)
1994
Aquarelle sur papier

Marilyn (iconic)
1998
Huile sur toile

Marilyn is Dead
1998
Huile sur toile
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

While Marilyn Monroe's youthful portraits evoke innocence, her last image reveals the dull violence suffered by this pop culture icon who had become a fantasy of the silver screen. This work extends Harrison's reflection on the mechanisms of desire, the criteria for seduction, and women's exploitation. In 1953, the inaugural issue of *Playboy* featured a color photograph of Marilyn Monroe as the centerfold, generating a lot of buzz.
Margaret Harrison's touching images are quite varied: three are "banal" and look like snapshots taken for fun, evoking a form of innocence; the fourth is a sophisticated Hollywood close-up of Marilyn; and the last one is the only published photograph of the deceased actress. Taken in the morgue, it shows the number assigned to the body when it arrived.

While the watercolors capture Marilyn's nonchalant grace as a young woman, the acrylics on canvas evoke the "ideal" woman present in the collective imagination, then finally the death of a dream. Her premature departure, which is the subject of speculation to this day, raises questions of the relationship between narrative, representation, and reality.

> "*I loved reading about her life and wondered how it could be possible that one of the supposedly most beautiful women in the world could have stayed in the morgue for seven days before someone came to claim her body?"* M.H

The Last Gaze

2013
Oil paint, paper collage on canvas & 14 vintage rear-view mirrors
–
Middlesbrough Collection at MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

This work by Margaret Harrison takes as its starting point an 1894 pre-Raphaelite painting. Entitled *The Lady of Shalott*, by the painter John William Waterhouse, it visualizes a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson written in 1842 about a woman condemned to look at the world through a mirror, lest she be struck by a curse. In Margaret Harrison's new version, the character confronts her black-and-white double and wears a garment embroidered with American comic-book figures and pop-culture icons (Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, etc.). The artist uses the ornamental motif to usher the character into contemporary imagery. The painting is accompanied by a set of rear-view mirrors that evoke the narrative of the poem. The fragmentation of the image in the mirrors creates the impression of looking at, and being watched by, the Lady of Shalott. She seems to be raising questions as to what we have the right to see and what we permit ourselves to look at.

"*n the story, the Lady of Shalott turns away from the mirrors and dares to look directly at Sir Lancelot. '... The curse is come upon me,' she cries. Many feminist historians have interpreted this as a metaphor for how women were perceived in Victorian times. If they stepped outside the traditional framework (or what was supposed to be a traditional framework) they were really asking for trouble."* M.H

Anonymous Was a Woman. From Rosa Luxemburg to Janis Joplin

1977-1991
Acrylic on canvas and photographs
–
Hainaut Province Collection – BPS22, Charleroi (B)

Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) : Polish militant communist
Annie Beasant (1847-1933) : English feminist freethinker
Eleanor Marx (1855 -1898): English writer and social activist
Annie Oakley (1860-1926): famous American sharpshooter
Bessie Smith (1894-1937): African-American blues singer
The bride of Frankenstein: a fictional figure created by Mary Shelley (1797–1851)
Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962): American singer and actress
Janis Joplin (1943-1970): American singer

Like Virginia Woolf in her essay *A Room of One's Own*, Margaret Harrison examines the position of the female artist in society and pays tribute to eight women who died prematurely. She talks about the violence inherent in the social invisibility imposed on women, which goes hand in hand with the structural violence faced by these historic female public figures.

The artist invites us to question the connections between the violence of their disappearance from society and the external pressures they faced as successful women in a world where the criteria for success were set by men.

Anonymous Was a Woman was produced for an exhibition devoted to the work of contemporary European women artists (Künstlerinnen International 1877–1977 / Female Artists International 1877–1977, Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin). It was addressed to English and German women alike, who suffered equally in both countries, and examines their individual destinies in a broader context in order to reflect on the universal nature of their exclusion.

> " *Women have been excluded from history and barred from participating in it for far too long. I hope my research will trace the beginnings of feminist awareness of the concepts of active, progressive struggle aimed to write us back into the historical narrative".* M.H

Beautiful Ugly Violence
2003-2004
24 watercolors on paper
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

Beautiful Ugly Knives
Beautiful Ugly Kettle
Beautiful Ugly Scissors
Beautiful Ugly Hand gun
Beautiful Ugly Hammer
Beautiful Ugly Stones
Beautiful Ugly Telephone
2003 - 2004
Oil on canvas
–
Courtesy of the artist and AND Galeria, Barcelona

In this series of oil paintings on canvas, Margaret Harrison highlights the common representation of violence in the media and in film. She appropriates this aestheticization of violence only to better denounce it, presenting cool, balanced still-life compositions that include objects used as weapons against female victims of domestic abuse. The paintings are accompanied by transcriptions of interviews with prisoners as part of a reintegration program called *ManAlive*. The prisoners look back at the circumstances in which they committed acts of aggression against their partners or families, and what that made them feel. The transcripts are combined with watercolor drawings of domestic objects (telephone, water kettle), which appear harmless.

This piece was created for the artist's solo exhibition at Intersection for the Arts (San Francisco, 2010), while some drawings were presented during the group exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles–Washington–New York, 2007).

> "*Violence is not always where you think it is. It often hides beneath beauty, beautiful houses and beautiful objects. This is what I have tried to show in this series of revolvers, knives, etc., placed on precious fabrics as a metaphor for invisible violence.*" M.H

RUPTZ (1975-1977)
DES FOUS QUI SERONT DES CLASSIQUES

GREAT HALL
GROUND FLOOR

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Curator : Pierre-Olivier ROLLIN

This exhibition dedicated to the Ruptz group is the first in Belgium. Nothing surprising there: created by Marc Borgers (1950), Anne Frère (1947), and Jean-Louis Sbille (1948), this group had a very ephemeral existence and its members were never concerned with posterity. They nevertheless signed the group's name to ten or so intense actions, making it the most radical group of Belgian artists from the 1970s. But there remains only a few traces of these actions, most performed at the galerie Détour in Jambes: a few mentions in general works on Belgian art, two or three articles in the local press, video cassettes that are unreadable today, and ten or so frames assembling remnants of their various actions.

These frames were found in the early 2000s and given to the BPS22. Set in aluminium frames per the cold aesthetic of Conceptual Art, they include photos, documents, sketches of actions or installations, and fragments of texts; they are, along with some archives, the only remnants of the activity of Ruptz still visible today. The group's history has been reconstituted and presented in this exhibition thanks to these documents.

What is striking is that Ruptz was clearly grounded in the aesthetic and conceptual concerns of its time: Performance, specifically Body Art, whose main characteristic was to test the human body in a series of actions to assert the indivisible unity of the body and the mind. Then came Video art – to record actions or as a specific medium – that Ruptz was one of the first Belgian groups to use. Lastly, there were the quiet trends of contemporary art, like Communication aesthetics, dealing with the consequences of the appearance of new mass media which, today in our ultra-connected world, raises questions that are still relevant.

This first exhibition devoted to Ruptz brings a forgotten but rich and still current story to light.

Au Puits Connette

In the early 1970s, some of the youth in Namur met in a hastily restored old building called the "*Puits Connette*". The expression, shared by several towns in Wallonia, means an area where there were once brothels. Begun by Michel Renard (1948), the *Puits Connette* met the aspirations of a youth eager for new discoveries and other cultural experiences. It was here that Marc Borgers, Anne Frère, and Jean-Louis Sbille met each other. A strong friendship slowly grew between the three of them to the point where they wanted to work together.

Miroir and Le Multiple mutilé

Their collaboration came to fruition in June 1975 at the galerie Détour in Jambes, then directed by Claude Lorent, with the display of an enigmatic poster captioned with a text by Sbille. Called *Miroir*, the print shows a woman, wearing a white dress and a large necklace, emerging like a ghostly apparition from a very intense black background, her gaze fixed on the viewer. The skin tones are achieved with a subtle black screentone ensuring a delicate transition between the black background and the brilliant white of the dress, to which the sharpened white of the eyes responds.

Offset printing was at this time considered an industrial process not suitable for artistic use. This image was sold both in poster shops and at the gallery where the sale price was ten times higher. But the posters there were numbered (100 copies), signed, and framed. Only a few copies were sold in the gallery. During a performance called *Le Multiple mutilé*, the trio cut 50 or so unsold posters into fragments before placing them in numbered and signed plastic containers. Some of these containers surround one of the posters in the exhibition. This framed collection was found in the early 2000s.

The four posters featured in the exhibition, each in a different condition, raise the question of the status of a work of art. Specifically, how does an object become a work of art? Is it solely the intention of an artist? Or is it an artist's signature? Is it a limited number of copies? Or is it rather the place where it's displayed (gallery, museum, etc.)? Answering this question means defining art in cultural, legal, economic, or sociological terms, respectively.

If *Miroir* was not a creation formally signed by Ruptz, it would later be integrated into the group's body of work. Indeed it was a little later, at the insistence of Claude Lorent, that the trio decided to continue working together under the name "Ruptz", an enigmatic term both sonorous and sudden, suggested by Sbille, that could mean anything at all. Ruptz defined itself as a "shifting group" which other artists could occasionally join but whose core was the original three members.

L'Expérience du Présent

The first action collectively signed by Ruptz took place on the 23 (16:00 to 00:00) and 24 (10:00 to 13:00 and 20:00 to 00:00) August 1975, at the galerie Détour, under the name *L'Expérience du Présent.* Sitting between two large mirrors, Sbille faced a closed-circuit video: a camera filmed him and displayed the images on a television monitor that the artist watched. The closed-circuit images were also broadcast in the gallery through a second monitor. The artist watched himself in the mirrors while watching his own image onscreen. A unidirectional microphone was placed on his person and a multidirectional one in front of him. The sounds emitted by the microphones were synthesised and sent back to the gallery and outside as time-shifted broadcasts by musician Alain Pierre.

Before beginning the performance, Sbille sent himself a telegram noting the exact time (16:00) that he received 55 minutes later. At the end of the first day of performance, at midnight, he used a telephone (then a fixed line) to record a segment that would be broadcast the following day on RTB's radio show *Idem*. It's the text that starts with: "My dears..." It's included in full in the frame with the telegram.

In the wake of Body Art, the performance was intended to be very trying for the artist, whose body reacted to the time-shifted broadcasting of the sounds. So when Alain Pierre artificially sped up the broadcast heartbeats, Sbille's body reacted and – seized by anxiety – began to sweat and quiver. The artist's physical experience followed the artificial stimulations. Moreover, the reception of the telegram announcing the time 55 minutes late and the radio broadcast the following day – of the segment recorded the day before – confronted the physical perception of space-time with that, now fragmented and time-shifted (or simultaneous), enabled by what were then called "new communication technologies", whose growing pervasiveness sparked controversy and worry that still exist today. Among them: Do communication technologies replace our bodily perceptions?

Le Panorama d'Eggishorn

In September 1975 at the Maison de la Culture in Namur, Marc Borgers exhibited four sets (mauve, turquoise, green, and gold) of six screen prints taken from an engraving of an old tourist guide showing the 360° panoramic view at the summit of the Eggishorn, in the Swiss Alps. The artist chose this image for its ability to represent a "stereotypical beauty" in which the visitor could immerse themselves. To complement the stereotypical character of this representation, Borgers emphasised the intensity of the colours and added silver glitter, flirting with kitsch. Only seven screen prints remain today. They nevertheless allow us to bring together a complete set, presented here.

If the screen prints were a personal project by Borgers, presenting them was a collective project carried out by the group, who went to the Eggishorn in Switzerland. The installation included: a so-called "realistic and synthetic" soundtrack recorded on site by Sbille and remixed by Alain Pierre; a 26-minute super 8 mm film; a few cm3 of air captured on the spot in containers; glitter like the one applied to the screen prints, gathered in sterilised jars.

Recently found again, the 8 mm film was shot on the Eggishorn mountain. Edited in cuts without between sequences, it shows tourists contemplating the countryside before giving way to Borgers carrying out a series of actions, including capturing air in the jars. The clips occasionally linger on the reflection of light on materials, echoing the brightness of the screen prints. The film closes on a colourful immersion, the artists having poured the screen print ink directly onto the spool, a common practice in the experimental cinema of the 1960s.

Pourquoi

As part of the First Triennial of Namur Artists held in March 1976 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi, Ruptz showcased a conceptual video installation called *Pourquoi*. Among the 25 artists, they were the only ones to use this new artistic medium. The word "*pourquoi*" was written on the ground in white sand from the Rhine, while a camera captured and rebroadcast the image of the word on a television screen. The word was slowly erased during the exhibition by the visitors' footsteps, who saw the video screen without looking where they were putting their feet. Absorbed by the image and its hypnotic strength, they forgot their bodies until the moment they understood that they were destroying what they were looking at.

Nature morte

Ruptz presented a video installation called *Nature morte* at the University of Brussels in March 1976. It assembles the classic components of the genre (bread, knife, bottle and glass of wine, carafe, dead rabbit) placed on a table covered with an embroidered red and white chequered tablecloth. Parallel with the table, a wire mesh crosses the field of view of a video camera. The autofocus thus focuses alternately on the mesh and on the background elements, causing a permanent instability in the definition of the image.

Yet again Ruptz made the best use of the technical potential available to it: Still life, when it is painted in trompe-l'œil, requires perceptual mechanisms similar to those of the reality it represents. Likewise, the video collection system gives the moving image a capacity for illusion which, combined with the ability to capture and immediately broadcast a moving life scene, turns out to be a powerful impression of truth. Even more so than photography, television, widely available in Belgian households from the 1970s, was to become the very location of "truth". By sometimes focusing on the mesh and sometimes on the still life elements, Ruptz exposes the hegemonic discourse of television media. An exposure that still resonates today with ever-increasing social media and fake news.

ART-TRA

Helped by some municipal workers, Ruptz put up a transparent plastic banner with the letters TRA in black on the roof of the galerie Détour on 18 May 1976. The shadows of the three letters projected the word ART onto the boulevard Materne in Jambes. Thus formed, the word mingled with vehicles and passersby, moving with the sinking sun. This ephemeral action lasted a few hours.

Through this action the trio operated in public space, that of everyday life, for the first time. Ruptz thus embodied one if its driving principles from the 1960s avant-garde: merging art and life. The group thus lived its art, rather than making a living from it by selling objects.

Agfamatic 50, Triptyque et le Journal de la Fête

The *Fêtes 76 Jambes* artistic event took place in September 1976 with the help of the French Culture Ministry, the Municipality of Jambes, and the galerie Détour. Some 80 artists and groups participated, spread all over the town, including Ruptz, who presented a new video installation called *Triptyque*, a relational experience with residents, *Agfamatic 50*, and an inclusive magazine, the *Journal de la Fête*.

Triptyque was a video installation made up of three monitors set up in a triangle and without sound. The first clip (screen A), continuously broadcast, was a recording of an RTB show in which several well-known figures from Namur took part. The viewer was thus confronted with their representatives. The second image (screen B) was the viewer watching themselves on a closed circuit. The last screen (C) showed Borgers applying makeup to and transforming himself to the point of being unrecognisable.

For *Agfamatic 50*, Ruptz intended to offer the public three different approaches to the same subject, in this instance, Sbille. The first was that of passersby, chosen at random in the street, the artist asking them to photograph him with a Agfamatic 50, a common analog camera that was easy to use. The choice of perspective, framing, and angle were left to the passersby, projecting onto the artist the quick and subjective perception that they had of him, all while assuming the mantle of the photo's "author". The collection of 24 photographs is assembled in a frame, each one captioned with a brief description of its author. A paradox thus arises from the description of the invisible author and the repeatedly photographed subject.

The second approach was to be that of a psychologist who'd carried out a personality test on the artist. The last one was from the police: the artist wanted to use an anthropometric report that the police use during arrests. These two approaches seem to have been abandoned as they don't feature in the frame. The documents were nevertheless found and are presented in the display cases. The collection intended to illustrate the plurality that makes up each individual.

Separate from Ruptz, Marc Borgers and Michel Renard edited the *Journal de la Fête*, a tabloid newspaper meant to recount the festival. The event was viewed from the inside – from the perspective of what was then called "self-media" – an idea that would give birth to local television in our country. "*A town belongs to its residents; this newspaper is yours*", announced the newspaper. The texts are mainly questions and answers for the public with the exception of some articles taken from the exhibition catalogue. The authors' willingness notwithstanding, there was no article spontaneously pitched by the population.

Inexistemps

Ruptz carried out its last performance, *Inexistemps*, on 4 November 1976. At the end of the day, Sbille left his workplace and went to 13 rue En Roture in Liège, the address of the galerie Premier Etage. He had to travel the 64 kilometres between the two places on foot. At the same time, Marc Borgers sat at a table in the galerie Premier Etage and every 30 seconds noted on a roll of white paper the time that passed between Sbille's departure and his arrival.

Covering 64 km after a workday and without any training is very difficult. Is it possible that Sbille covered part of the journey by hitch-hiking, as was common at the time? The concept of the performance was no less relevant: to physically feel a distance while he walked, while Borgers, seated, physically felt the flow of time. The only remnant of this performance is a photo by Marc Borgers, published in a Cirque Divers catalogue, in Liège, which is reproduced here.

Our current situation echoes this last performance by Ruptz: the long months of lockdown that we've endured – interspersed with video conferences and other digital content downloads – have reminded us with abrupt clarity that, despite technological advances, we are not just virtual beings. On the contrary; we are still, above all else, beings of flesh and blood who live and feel through our bodies.

Faustine-Surface

The first object-work created by Ruptz is the book *Faustine-Surface*, published in November 1976 by Yellow Now, Liège. Oblong in shape, the pink cover has a golden image featuring a slice of pie with the words "Ruptz Faustine-Surface Yellow Now" in black letters. The text by Sbille, a kind of hallucinated road trip, is interspersed with black and white photos taken by Borgers during the trip to Switzerland, and a continuation of his work on brightness and brilliance. A peculiar relationship grows between the images, ostensibly banal and cold with sometimes isolated fragments, and the text printed in gold lettering.

L'Image du Voyageur européen

The activities of Ruptz slowed down from 1977 even though the group took part in the inaugural exhibition at the Musée du Sart Tilman in Liège, with its old video works. The collage that gave its name to the exhibition also dates from this period. The trio got to work on preparing the project *L'Image du Voyageur européen*. Ruptz planned to travel by plane to nine European towns and ask a series of five questions to 500 residents about the purpose of living and what they thought of everyday life. Their answers were to constitute a sociological file of each town.

This project, which never got off the ground, came directly from Communication aesthetics, formulated by the Sociological Art Collective (Fred Forest, Hervé Fischer, and Jean-Paul Thénot), whose purpose was to offer an artistic and critical point of view on new means of communication. *L'Image du Voyageur* sought to highlight that the more developed communication technologies become, the less communication there is between individuals, submerged as they are in the uninterrupted flood of information. A finding that, like many others articulated by Ruptz, is still relevant at a time when everyone is always online.

Soldes. Fins de Séries

From 1978, the three members of Ruptz feel the need to move on to something else. Helped by Michel Renard (1948), they then dedicated themselves to publishing *Soldes Fins de séries*, a tabloid format post-punk inspired magazine that was part of the wave of alternative publications at the time tackling society's issues (e.g. independent radio stations) and featuring comics, fashion, music, cinema, quirky topics, etc. The tone is informal, often close to gonzo journalism, while the graphic design is innovative, sometimes sharp, but always at the cutting edge of new aesthetics. Throughout the issues there are contributions by celebrities such as Jean-François Octave, Michel Frère, Filip Denis, Jean-Pierre Verheggen, etc.

Its informal tone and graphical boldness made *Soldes* a cult magazine, today considered the Belgian equivalent of the creations of the French collective Bazooka. The quartet produced ten issues conveying a "*Soldes* spirit" before once again setting their minds to something else, though not before giving the magazine a sendoff with parties in Brussels, Paris, and New York. Because, as Anne Frère recognises today: "*Ruptz and Soldes were remarkable because they didn't seek to last at any cost. We stopped every time we needed to*."

Having edited the new review *Soldes Fins de Séries Almanach* for a few years now, Marc Borgers revived the spirit of the initial magazine while also adapting it to the realities of the modern world. For this exhibition, he is providing a video installation that will immerse the viewer in this famous "*Soldes* spirit". A new edition of the review will also be produced for this exhibition.

A catalogue is being prepared and will be released at the end of the exhibition.

GREAT
HALL
GROUND FLOOR

PETR DAVYDTCHENKO

PERFTORAN

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Curator : Pierre-Olivier ROLLIN

Perftoran is a synthetic blood substitute developed at the end of the 1970s in the USSR, prohibited by the Soviet authorities, and eventually widely marketed by a private US company since the 2000s. This is both the title – and the symptomatic narrative to which it refers – chosen by Russian artist Petr Davydtchenko (1986) for his latest project. Petr Davydtchenko was born in Arzamas-16, a closed military city in Russia, and made his Belgian debut as part of the *Us or Chaos* exhibition. He presented a video installation there documenting his way of living outside the system where, refusing to kill anything to survive, he ate only fallen fruit, discarded vegetables, and dead animals found on the roadside.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was unleashed, Davydtchenko asked himself what was the role of the artist when faced with such a catastrophe. His response was consequently to devote all his energy and creativity to searching for a vaccine that would be free of charge and patent-free, the opposite of those created by pharmaceutical multinationals. In this sense, the ideal vaccine for him would be one acting "*not only against the coronavirus, but also against the greed of the shareholders governing the big pharmaceutical companies*."

The artist reflects further: "*The global crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the inequalities in liberal capitalist society. The poorest populations and minorities are more exposed to the contagion and are disproportionately affected by the disease, while the richest are getting richer. Governments all over the world have committed hundreds of millions in taxpayer money to find a remedy for COVID-19. But despite these state interventions, multinationals like Pfizer and GSK have refused to take part in a proposal by the World Health Organisation guaranteeing that drugs for COVID-19 would not be patented and would be distributed fairly to those who need them. Chairman and CEO of Pfizer, Albert Bourla, called this initiative "nonsense". The British and American governments have also rejected WHO attempts to create a "global pool of patents" which, according to the Director-General of the WHO, could have provided fair access to lifesaving technologies all over the world.*"

He sought to shape his utopian project by working with scientists, combing through the World Health Organisation's medical reports, and meeting people suffering from the disease, including some close friends and family. He was willing to cross swords with multinational vaccine manufacturers, risking censure on social media and all kinds of harassment, as well as legal proceedings for illegal practice of medicine. He tested his vaccines himself as a strong symbolic act in a performance widely distributed on social media, where he ate a whole bat – now considered to be the indirect origin of the pandemic – in order to "*ingest its natural antibodies*" and thus expose the monopolies held by the pharmaceutical industry on the production of patented vaccines, even though all of humanity needs them.

With scientists who occasionally helped him, particularly with his exhibitions in Trevi, Palermo, and Ljubljana, the artist then produced a personal vaccine based mainly on propolis. Propolis is a resinous material made by bees whose anti-infectious properties are already harnessed by the pharmaceutical industry. He then offered his vaccine to people who wanted it, notably to Bergamo, one of the Italian towns worst affected by the pandemic. He also sent it to political leaders all over the world. These performances were all the subject of a specific documentation which is the only trace of these various actions undertaken during lockdown.

For this exhibition, Petr Davydtchenko is taking up a large part of the BPS22 Great Hall, where he has set up the elements of his "laboratory" and the remnants of his previous interventions: tables, sterilised material, documents, anti-septic combinations, videos of performances, etc. They are all assembled in a minimalist stage design that recalls the sterility of clinics or medical laboratories. The room is punctuated by two large mural paintings showing the European Parliament logo surrounded by proactive slogans like "Driving Innovation across the Nation", "Science for a Better Life", "More Control, less Risk", and "A Promise for Life".
These slogans remind us that, behind the physical and mental health emergency affecting us all individually, the issues of our democratic societies are also playing out: To what extent will we sacrifice our rights to ensure our protection? What protection do we really need? How are powers balanced between elected governments and technical experts? Is the sovereignty of a state or a group of states compatible with reliance on industry for essential goods? Can we speculate on these essential goods at the risk of death to thousands of individuals? And if so, to what extent and with what benchmarks? These questions remain unanswered but months of pandemic have made it all the more important to ask them acutely.

GREAT
HALL
GROUND FLOOR

MERCI FACTEUR ! MAIL ART #2 : ERIC ADAM & BERNARD BOIGELOT

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Curator : Pierre-Olivier ROLLIN

The second stage of the cycle dedicated to Mail Art in French-speaking Belgium, this new exhibition focuses on the correspondence between two singular artists who were very close to one another: Eric Adam and Bernard Boigelot. A friendship between two *Mail Artists* that generated bountiful poetic correspondence widely imbued with humour.

If the modern artists of the early 20th century regularly edited and used picture postcards, the father of what we call Mail Art is traditionally held to be American artist Ray Johnson (1927-1995), who created the New York Correspondence School in 1962. It involves artists using postal correspondence to send each other illustrated letters, redacted envelopes, drawings, collages, photos, objects, etc. Any and all techniques are permitted to personalise what is sent – particularly subverting the official attributes of the post: stamps, seals, and envelopes, which become veritable means of expression – and to make them unique creations shared freely and without any commercial concerns. Belgium was no exception, with abundant production from the 1970s which, like everywhere else, became scarce towards the end of the 1990s with the standardisation of postal items and the appearance of the internet.

The work of Éric Adam (1963, Rocourt) evolved around engraving, poetic micro-publishing, and Mail Art. In this area, he above all favoured exchanges whose poetic quality emerged as much from the content as from a large variety of packaging. A micro-publisher, he also established relationships with other authors, proliferating literary exchanges and thereby creating a significant collection of small editions, which make up a kind of "parallel library" to the world of standardised publishing. A great sensitivity emerges from his other exchanges that manifests itself in delicate and funny creations, often meticulous in their materials.
There was a strong friendship between Adam and the other artist featured, Bernard Boigelot (1953, Namur), which explains the importance that each has in the other's collection. Their exchanges highlight another characteristic of Mail Art: generosity. A selfless act, Mail Art often involves considerable work to design an item to send with no other purpose than giving it to a sometimes unknown correspondent. Some creations attest to this, like a swimmer gliding through a pool of blue pearls or a series of envelopes nested one inside the other, inviting themselves to be opened nimbly.

Bernard Boigelot developed a personal practice of Mail Art, far from big collections. Favouring strong relationships with his correspondents, he created a collection revealing a deep sense of humour. This can be seen in a series of envelopes on which the recipient's address is disrupted because the letters are backwards or coded, or even replaced by a map, etc. He is also the author of this ribbon-letter, inside a hot-water bottle, which he sent to Eric Adam, challenging the Postal Service to live up to its new year's advertising slogan: "*Si la Poste le Vœux, la Poste le peut !*" (If the Post wants to, the Post can!) The real miracle is that all of the sent items featured arrived to their recipients safe and sound!

At the same time as these exchanges, Boigelot developed a practice that he called "Postal Art", where he deconstructed old Belgian stamps. They were cut up, rolled, and re-glued, sometimes reconstructed or enlarged with screen printing to reconstitute a blown-up colour image of the young king Baudouin. Far from the rigour of philatelists, this is a singular work that is not exempt from childhood reminiscences.

LE PETIT MUSEE

INDOORS AND OUTDOORS...!?

The Little Museum is a space for learning within the BPS22, where works are displayed at a child's eye-level. Here children can discover pieces from the Hainaut Province collection, selected according to specific themes. The Petit Musée invites children to enter into a dialogue with the works and also to converse with other generations as they walk through the exhibition together.

The theme for this exhibition is the relationship between indoors and outdoors, referring to the weeks of lockdown.

Shelter, whether it is solid, light, mobile, precarious or permanent, is a basic concern all over the world. While there are several ways of understanding habitat, inhabiting possesses an existential dimension.

Artists: Priscilla BECCARI, Alain BORNAIN, Anne BOURGUIGNON, Isabelle CAMBIER, Magali CHAPITRE, Mehdi CLEMEUR, Gaston COMPÈRE, Nathalie D'ELIA, Arsène DETRY, Fernand GOMMAERTS, André LEFEBVRE, Ania LEMIN, Peter MARTENSEN, Claude PETIT, Giancarlo ROMEO.

01 Alain BORNAIN, *Exi t/ Exist*, 2010
02 Claude PETIT, *Façade*, 1991
03 Arsène DETRY, *Lessive*, 1952
04 Gaston COMPERE, *Untitled,* undated
05 Fernand GOMMAERTS, *Untitled,* undated
06 Priscilla BECCARI, *Enfant avec cage sur la tête*, undated
07 Isabelle CAMBIER, *Untitled (Maurage 94)*, 1994
08 André LEFEBVRE, *Au pays des merveilles "Anderlues"*, 2003
09 Giancarlo ROMEO, *Travaux au BPS22 de mai à septembre*, 2000
10 Nathalie D'ELIA, *Untitled,* undated
11 André LEFEBVRE, *Au pays des merveilles "Jurbise"*, 2003
12 Laurent MOLET, *C'est presque l'amour*, 2019
13 Mehdi CLEMEUR, *L'arbre aux fruits étranges*, 2000
14 Magali CHAPITRE, *Souvenirs envolés*, 1999
15 Magali CHAPITRE, *Rencontre Léa 1*, 1999
16 Anne BOURGUIGNON, *Portrait de famille 1*, 1995
17 Louis KALFF, *Lampe de table décorative sur pied*, 1970, Philips. Philippe Diricq Collection – BPS22
18 Peter MARTENSEN, *Untitled*, 1988
19 Ania LEMIN, *The bird inside*, 2019
20 Ania LEMIN, *Les kits maison*, 2015
21 Ania LEMIN, *Textes et illustrations du livre "Même(s), M'aime(s), Différent(s) x Abri(s)"*, 2018
22 Ania LEMIN, *Sans*, 2018
23 Ania LEMIN, *Abris, Ne pas oublier l'R*, 2017

The soundtracks were produced by Flavien GILLIÉ.

MUSÉE D'ART DE LA PROVINCE DE HAINAUT

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Museum accessible from Tuesdays to Sundays, 10:00 > 18:00
Closed on Mondays, on 24.12, 25.12, 31.12, and 01.01

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