



# MARGARET HARRISON

## DANCING ON THE MISSILES

PRESS FILE

EN

EXHIBITION

20.02 > 23.05.2021

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

**BP**  
**S** 22

MUSÉE D'ART  
DE LA PROVINCE  
DE HAINAUT



49 Nord Frac  
6 Est Lorraine



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

# CONTENT

---

## 04 MARGARET HARRISON

*DANCING ON THE MISSILES*

05 THE EXHIBITION

08 THE ARTIST

10 ARTWORKS - SELECTION

## 18 RUPTZ (1975-1977)

*DES FOUS QUI SERONT DES CLASSIQUES*

## 20 PETR DAVYDTCHENKO

*PERFTORAN*

## 24 MERCI FACTEUR ! MAIL ART #2

ERIC ADAM & BERNARD BOIGELOT

## 26 PRACTICAL INFO

# MARGARET HARRISON

## DANCING ON THE MISSILES

**PIERRE DUPONT****ROOM****GROUND FLOOR****+1****20.02 > 23.05.2021****Curator: Fanny GONELLA**

**An influential figure in the British feminist art movement, Margaret Harrison has reflected on the interlinked concepts of social class, gender and women's position in society for more than 50 years. Margaret Harrison's work makes its Belgian debut at BPS22 following her first major retrospective in 2019 at 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine, the Regional Contemporary Arts Fund in Metz. Curated by Fanny Gonella, the director at FRAC Lorraine, the exhibition *Dancing on the Missiles* highlights the diversity of this artist's work (installations, paintings, drawings and texts), committed to challenging the visual canons and codes that shape the representation of women in society and also women's perception of themselves.**

From US comic book superheroes to Manet's *Olympia*, Margaret Harrison (1940, Yorkshire, England) subverts the hierarchies between genres, making no distinction between art history and popular culture, bringing them together in her work. Echoing the strategies of the grotesque, such as exaggeration, parody and subversion, she uses humour to question the codes and stereotypes dividing the genders.

Drawing on social and political concerns, her work is also observational. Many of her installations are based on photographs, interviews and images produced by the mass media, dealing with the relationship between gender and class from a feminist perspective. Both alone and as part of a collective, she pursues a sociological analysis of women's working conditions following the 1970s industrial crisis in Great Britain, domestic violence and even nuclear weapons.

At the same time, she examines the icons of western culture, exposing their normative potential and the power relationships they transmit and reproduce. A well-kept secret for many years, her work is now gaining new recognition and renewed relevance, echoing current debates on gender and sexual identity, encouraging us to go beyond the binary approach of racial or sexual attributes.

→

Margaret Harrison  
*Marilyn is Dead*,  
 1994-98  
 Exhibition *Danser  
 sur les Missiles*.  
 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC  
 Lorraine, 2019  
 Photo: Fred Dott

→→

Next page  
 Margaret Harrison,  
*Greenham Common  
 (Common reflections)*,  
 1989-2013,  
 collection les Abattoirs  
 Musée – Frac Occitanie  
 (Toulouse).  
 Courtesy Azkuna Zentroa  
 art center, Bilbao.  
 Photo: Elssie Ansareo



## THE EXHIBITION

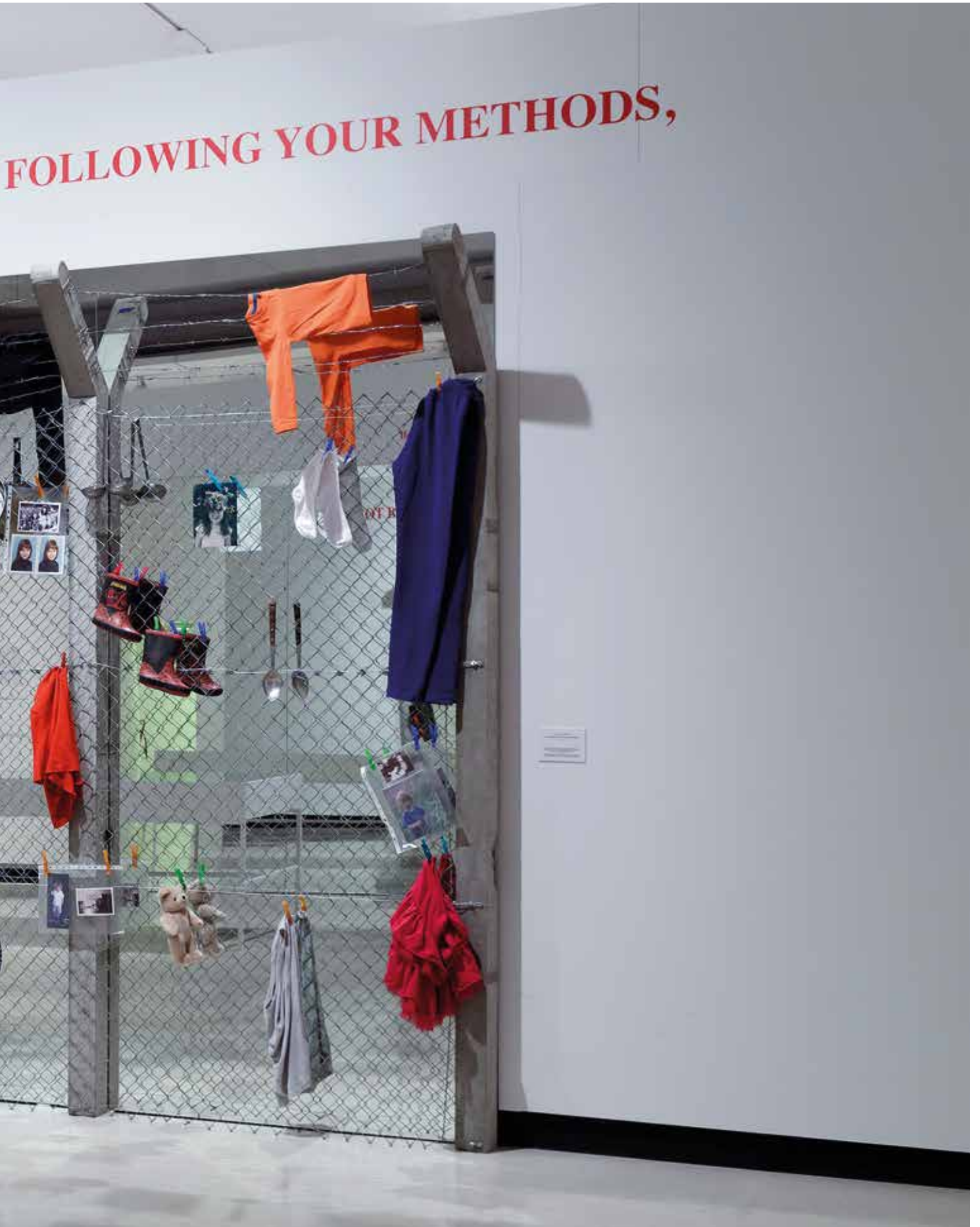
If the radical discourse of Margaret Harrison's work maintains the same intensity today, this is because of its pioneering nature when it first appeared. Margaret Harrison was ahead of her time, which is what gives her work its strength: her work anticipated the problematisation of class hierarchies 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 progression 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 US nuclear missiles being installed at the Greenham Common Royal Air Force base in southern England. In 1982, 30,000 women, including Margaret Harrison, assembled for a demonstration. They held hands, forming a human chain that embraced the 15-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 like 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, as 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...

An exhibition produced by 49 Nord 6 Est – FRAC Lorraine in collaboration with the BPS22 Museum of art of the Hainaut Province.





## 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.

*"Years later in Los Angeles, I said to an acquaintance of Hugh Hefner: please, tell him that I forgive him if he has the Bunny Boy, as long as he returns it to me! But it never happened..."*  
Margaret Harrison

© Fred Dott

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.

*"When I asked the gallery manager (at the time of my exhibition being closed down in 1971) what it was that people didn't like, she said: "It was the men". The images of women were OK, but they thought the male images were disgusting." M.H*





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.

*"For too long women have been excluded from History and forbidden to participate. I hope that my research charts the beginnings of feminist consciousness around these concepts of an active, progressive struggle to reinsert us into Historical writing." M.H*

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 Velazquez. 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.

*"It was American culture and you were breathing it in. And the Vietnam War was going on. One of my earlier pieces was of Captain America, who in the comic books was supposed to be doing good, but then you had this other flipside, actually they (the Americans) were not doing so much good. I thought: 'I'm going to challenge that', then 'I'm going to challenge this notion of masculinity'" M.H*

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.

## ARTWORKS - SELECTION

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

1978/1980

Pencil and ink on paper, black and white silver photographs mounted on card

Courtesy: The artist and ADN Galeria, Barcelona

After the compulsory closure of her exhibition in London, Margaret Harrison turned to activism and considered the relationship between gender and class from a feminist perspective. Both alone and as part of a collective with other artists such as Conrad Atkinson, Mary Kelly and Kay Hunt, she pursues a sociological analysis on the changes in women's working conditions following the 1970 Equal Pay Act.

She interviewed and photographed women in factories and, in this case, at home to reveal the problems they faced. Mrs Gilvrey [sic: McGilvrey] was one of them. She assembled boxes of income tax forms; work outsourced by the government and paid a paltry wage. As reflected by the excerpts of testimonies that trace the lines on the hands drawn in the centre of this work, these women found themselves in such an insecure position, they had no other choice but to accept the orders and didn't receive their wages if the work wasn't finished on time. They were even dismissed if they asked for a pay rise.

*"I had to go through what was almost an observational phase to try to understand how the world worked. We were all interested in politics and political art at that time." M.H*

↓  
Margaret Harrison  
*Homeworkers:  
Mrs. McGilvrey  
and the Hands of Law  
and Experience,*  
1978/1980  
Exhibition  
*Danser sur les Missiles.*  
49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC  
Lorraine, 2019  
Photo : Fred Dott

↘  
Margaret Harrison  
*Good Enough to Eat,*  
1971  
© Private collection



### **Good Enough to Eat**

1971

Pencil and watercolour on paper

Courtesy: The artist and ADN Galeria, Barcelona  
Private collection

### **Take One Lemon**

1971

Lithograph on paper

Courtesy: The artist and ADN Galeria, Barcelona

### **Banana Woman**

1971

Watercolour, coloured graphite and graphite on paper

Tate Collection, acquired 2008

For this series, Margaret Harrison adopted the pin-up style of the illustrator Alberto Vargas, known for his publications in *Playboy* magazine in the 1960s and 70s. This series of drawings came about as a reaction to a radio programme featuring broadcaster Jimmy Young, in which he presented a new recipe every morning and was quick to compare women to food items. The artist ironically ridiculed this comparison by drawing lascivious women replacing slices of meat in sandwiches or even embracing a juicy lemon. They are all Betty Page clones, a model who was famous for her pin-up photos.

It is interesting to note that exaggeratedly sexualised submissive women, "good enough to eat" did not shock the censors of her 1971 exhibition in London. They failed to see any compromising aspects, and much less irony, in them, in contrast to the drawings that parodied men.



## Craftwork (The Prostitution Piece)

1980

Audio, fabric, mixed techniques on paper

Courtesy: The artist and ADN Galeria, Barcelona

This piece constitutes a major work by the artist, created for the exemplary feminist exhibition curated by Lucy Lippard at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1980. Here Harrison draws a parallel between the loss of women's manual know-how with the rise of the factory. Causing changes in living and productive activities and a dependence on machines, these circumstances reduced the possibilities of collective, circular production in the home. Fragmented keepers of know-how, women employed in factories naturally found themselves in difficulties when they needed to retrain following the 1970s industrial crisis in the United Kingdom.

This was the backdrop against which many women turned to prostitution, faced with the loss of resources and growing insecurity, as witnessed by the sound recording included in the installation made by the English Collective of Prostitutes. To echo the words of artist and writer Chris Crickmay "Margaret Harrison's work reflected concerns that up to that point had been absent from art galleries."

"We witnessed the gradual deskilling of working class women because a large part of the work traditionally carried out collectively at home (...), is now done in a piecemeal way outside the home." M.H

↙  
Margaret Harrison  
Craftwork  
(The Prostitution Piece),  
1980  
Exhibition  
Danser sur les Missiles, 49  
Nord 6 Est -  
FRAC Lorraine, 2019  
Courtesy de l'artiste  
& ADN Galeria  
Photo: Fred Dott



↘  
 Margaret Harrison  
*Olympia Model Role*  
*(Obama-Monroe)*, 2010  
*Olympia Model Role*  
*(Lopez-Dietrich)*, 2010  
*Olympia Model Role*  
*(Hattie MacDaniel-Vivien*  
*Leight)*, 2010  
 Exhibition  
*Danser sur les Missiles.*  
 49 Nord 6 Est -  
 FRAC Lorraine, 2019  
 Photo: Fred Dott

### **Olympia Model Role (Obama-Monroe)**

2010

### **Olympia Model Role (Lopez-Dietrich)**

2010

### **Olympia Model Role (Hattie MacDaniel-Vivien Leight)**

2010

Enhanced watercolour  
 49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC Lorraine Collection

In this series of watercolours, Margaret Harrison exposes racism and sexual discrimination against women in the history of art. She revisits, and subverts, Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863), which shows a naked white woman with a provocative gaze in the foreground and in the background, a black woman looking at her. The representation of a nude in a domestic scene and the uncertainty surrounding the social origin of the model, possibly a courtesan, went on to cause an outrage.

These days a well-known work, the painting is regarded differently and its allusions to some of Titian's works are more visible. As for questions about morality, they have fallen into the category of historical faux-pas. Here Harrison directs us to another aspect of the painting, indicative of the capacity possessed by strong images from art history to reinforce social norms. Various celebrities, both living and dead, exchange racially defined roles: the white women (Vivien Leight [sic: Leigh], Marilyn Monroe and Marlene Dietrich) appear in the servant's role in the background, while the black women (Michelle Obama, Hattie McDaniel and Jennifer Lopez) appear in the foreground in the position of women who are exposed to the public's gaze. By doing this, the artist works a radical repositioning and draws our attention to issues of ethnic origin and class and their influence on decisions of composition, an approach neglected until recently in the history of art.



## The Last Gaze

2013

Oil, paper collage on canvas and rear-view mirrors  
Middlesbrough Collection at MIMA,  
Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

The 1894 pre-Raphaelite painting *The Lady of Shalott* by John William Waterhouse forms the starting point of this piece by Margaret Harrison. The original painting is based on the 1842 poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson which tells the story of a woman condemned to view the world through a mirror, under pain of a curse. In this new version, the figure appears side-by-side with her mirror image in black and white, wearing a dress embroidered with US comic book characters and icons of pop culture (Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, etc.).

By using embellishment, the artist slides the figure towards contemporary imagery. The painting is positioned next to a collection of rear-view mirrors which allude to the poem's story. The image's fragmentation in the mirrors gives the impression of observing and being observed in turn by the Lady of Shalott, asking us what we have the right to see or what we allow ourselves to see.

*"In the story, the Lady of Shalott turns away from the mirror and dares to gaze directly at Sir Lancelot "... The curse is come upon me", she cries. Many feminist historians have interpreted this as a metaphor for the way women were perceived in Victorian times. If they left their conventional framework (or what was supposed to be a conventional framework) they were really going to confront problems." M.H*



## He's only a Bunny Boy but He's Quite Nice Really

1971-2011

Print

49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine Collection

From the very start of her work, Margaret Harrison used characters from popular iconography to raise awareness around gender-related codes, humorously inverting traditional roles. These characteristics can be observed in her portrait of the founder of *Playboy* magazine, Hugh Hefner, in *Bunny Boy*. The drawing is rendered as though he were posing for his own magazine which, in the 1960s, embodied a popular new erotic utopia. Taking a supposedly seductive pose with one knee forward, nipples popping out of the Basque contrasting with the pipe clenched between his teeth, this portrayal of Hugh Hefner calls us to reflect on the status of women decked out in the rabbits' ears that he himself conceived.

On its first showing in 1971, this drawing and others alongside it showing men sporting feminine attributes led to the artist's first exhibition in London being shut down within 24 hours due to "indecenty". During the opening, this emblematic work was stolen, presumably by members of the Bunny Boy Club, and has never been found. The artist therefore reproduced the original in 2011.



←  
Margaret Harrison  
*Last Gaze*, 2013  
Exhibition  
*Danser sur les Missiles*.  
49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC  
Lorraine, 2019.  
Courtesy de  
Middlesbrough Collection  
at Middlesbrough Institute  
of Modern Art  
Photo: Fred Dott

→  
Margaret Harrison,  
*He's Only a Bunny Boy  
But He's Quite Nice  
Really*, 1971-2011,  
collection 49 Nord 6 Est -  
Frac Lorraine.  
Photo: Fred Dott

## Beautiful Ugly Violence

2003-2004

Oil on canvas

Courtesy: The artist and ADN Galeria, Barcelona

In this series of oil on canvas, Margaret Harrison highlights the practice of the media and cinema of magnifying violence by its staging. She takes up aestheticisation for its own account to better denounce it, presenting cold, balanced still lifes composed of objects that were used as weapons against women victims of domestic violence. The paintings are accompanied by transcripts of interviews conducted with prisoners for a reinsertion programme called *Manalive*. The men return to the circumstances in which they committed violent acts against their partners or families and what they felt. Watercolour drawings of apparently inoffensive household objects, such as a telephone, kettle, hammer or scissors, are superimposed over these transcripts.

*"We don't always find violence where we expect to find it. It hides behind great beauty, beautiful houses and beautiful objects. This is what I tried to represent with this series of revolvers, knives, etc. lying on precious fabrics, like a metaphor for invisible violence." M.H*





↙  
Margaret Harrison  
*Beautiful Ugly Hammer*,  
2004  
Exhibition  
*Danser sur les Missiles*.  
49 Nord 6 Est - FRAC  
Lorraine, 2019.  
Photo: Fred Dott

## Anonymous Was a Woman. From Rosa Luxemburg to Janis Joplin

1977-1991

Acrylic on canvas and photographs  
Hainaut Province Collection  
Dépôt BPS22, Charleroi

**Rosa Luxemburg** (1871-1919):

Polish communist activist

**Annie Beasant** (1847-1933):

English feminist free-thinker

**Eleanor Marx** (1855 -1898):

writer and English socialist activist

**Annie Oakley** (1860-1926):

Famous US markswoman

**Bessie Smith** (1894-1937):

Afro-American blues singer

**La fiancée de Frankenstein**:

imagined by Mary Shelley (1797-1851),

English novelist who created Frankenstein

**Marilyn Monroe** (1926-1962):

US singer and actress

**Janis Joplin** (1943-1970):

US singer

In the vein of *A Room of One's Own* by the English writer Virginia Woolf, Margaret Harrison examines the position of the female artist in society and pays homage in this piece to eight women who died before their time. It speaks to the continual violence present in the social invisibility imposed on women, in this case concurrent with the structural violence to which these historical female public figures were subjected. The artist invites us to examine the links between the violence of their disappearance and the external pressures they suffered as successful women in a world where men set the criteria for success.

This piece was created for the first exhibition dedicated to the contemporary work of women artists in Europe (Künstlerinnen International 1877-1977/Women Artists' International 1877-1977, Charlottenburg Castle, Berlin). It was aimed at English and German women, without distinction, discredited in the same way on both sides of the border, juxtaposing their destinies in a wider context in order to appreciate the universal nature of their exclusion.

↓  
Margaret Harrison  
*From Rosa Luxemburg to Janis Joplin «Anonymous Was a Woman»*,  
1977-1991  
Exhibition  
*Danser sur les Missiles*.  
49 Nord 6 Est -  
FRAC Lorraine, 2019  
Photo: Fred Dott



# RUPTZ (1975-1977)

## *DES FOUS QUI SERONT DES CLASSIQUES*

GRANDE HALLE  
GROUND FLOOR

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Curator: Pierre-Olivier ROLLIN

**The BPS22 presents the first exhibition dedicated to the Ruptz group, active in Namur between 1975 and 1977. In almost two years, Ruptz produced an innovative body of work which nowadays makes it the most radical group of Belgian artists from the 1970s. Not long after, it went on to publish the mythical magazine *Soldes Fins de Séries* (1978-1982) before moving on to other things, without a thought for posterity. This exhibition is bringing to light a rich and unique but forgotten story.**

Three young artists, Marc Borgers (1950), Anne Frère (1947), and Jean-Louis Sbille (1948) founded the Ruptz collective in Namur in 1975. Ruptz was the name used to sign off ten or so actions, from Body Art to the first video art installations, without forgetting occasional newspaper publications and new Sociological Art experiences, casting a critical eye on then emerging communication technologies. It was then that they created *L'Expérience du Présent*, a performance during which Sbille observed his own television image for several hours, a concept uncannily similar to *Performer/Audience/Mirror* by Dan Graham, dating from the same period. For the big artistic event *Jambes 1976*, they produced a conceptual video installation that questioned the passive function of the viewer, while creating an inclusive publication with the local population. Their last performance, *Inexistemps*, took place between Namur and Liège and tested the body to the extreme as it was subjected to spatial distance and temporal duration.

Retrospectively, what is most apparent 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 aiming to assert the rejection of the Platonic dichotomy between body (soma) and mind (psyche). Then there's the

video art that Ruptz was one of the first Belgian groups to use, not so much to record actions as to grasp it as a specific medium enabling a critical stance on communication technologies. It's hardly surprising then that Ruptz was also sensitive to certain theories of the Sociological Art Collective (created by French artists Fred Forest, Hervé Fischer, and Jean-Paul Thénot), like Communication aesthetics which dealt with the consequences of the appearance of new mass media. Questions that are still completely relevant today in our ultra-connected world.

"*The past no longer has to be shared*" is one of the key phrases of Ruptz's artistic "programme". True to this rule, the members kept only the barest traces of their actions: 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 traces of their various actions. These frames were found at the beginning of the 2000s and were given to the BPS22. Inserted in aluminium frames per the cold aesthetic of Conceptual Art, they place photos, documents, sketches of actions or installations, and fragments of theoretical texts on the same footing; they are, along with a few archives, the only traces of the activity of Ruptz still visible today. The group's history has been reconstituted and recounted in this exhibition thanks to these traces and archives. A catalogue is also being prepared and will come out at the end of the exhibition. It will provide an accurate timeline of the group's actions while situating them in their historic and artistic contexts.

↓  
Ruptz,  
*TRA et son ombre*,  
action publique,  
1976.  
Archives BPS22.

## 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.



# PETR DAVYDTCHENKO

## *PERFTORAN*

20.02 > 23.05.2021

Curator: Pierre-Olivier ROLLIN

GRANDE HALLE  
GROUND FLOOR

→  
Petr Davydtchenko,  
*PERFTORAN*,  
COVID-19 vaccine,  
Spazio Rivoluzione  
(Palermo), 2020.  
Photo: Adriano Lalicata

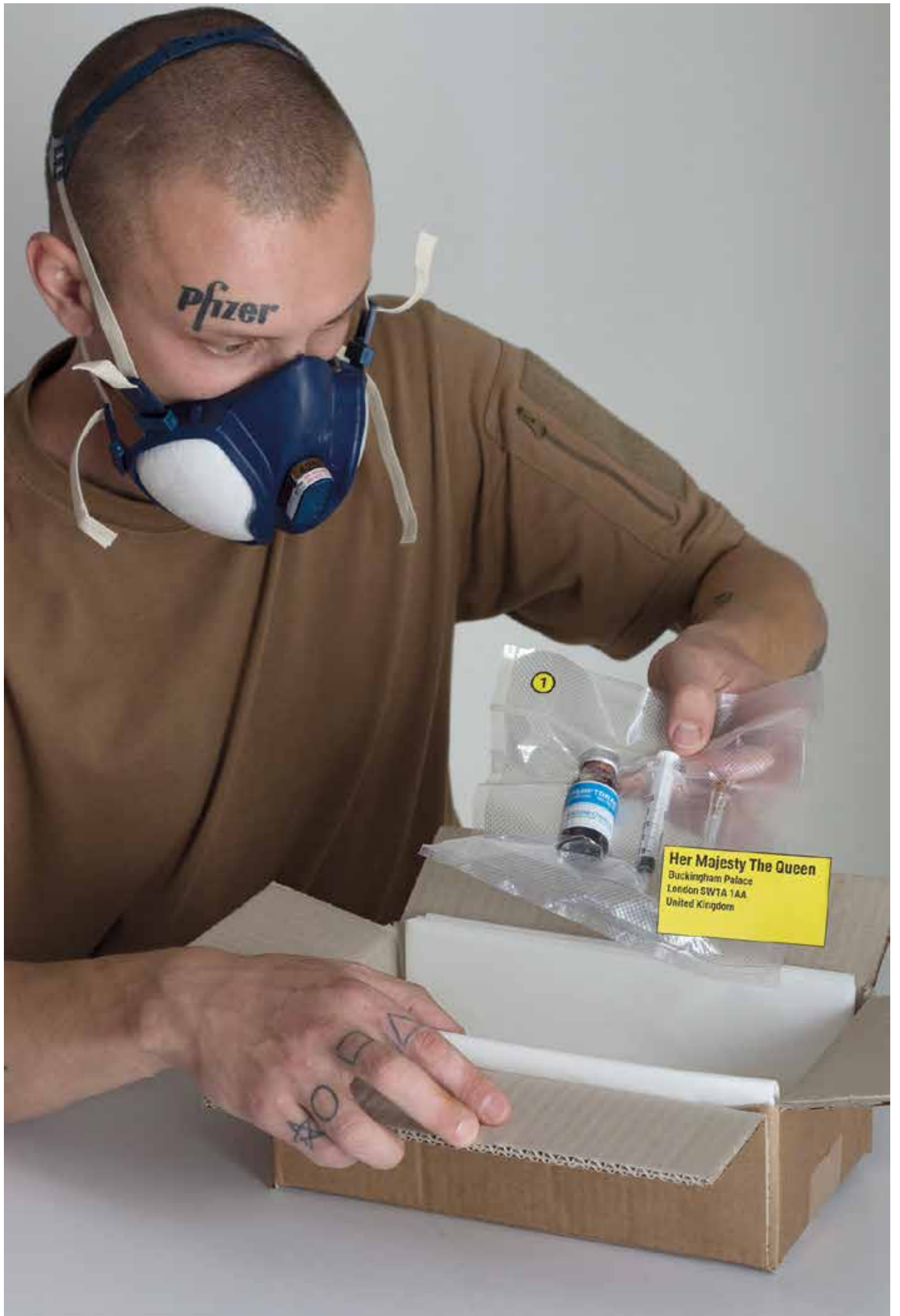
**After months of pandemic, the BPS22 is inviting Russian artist Petr Davydtchenko to set up his laboratory in the Great Hall of the Museum to present the research he's conducted to find a vaccine against COVID-19. An artist's creation to dream of a free vaccine accessible to everyone, something that's inextricably entwined in our everyday lives.**

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.



Pfizer

**Her Majesty The Queen**  
Buckingham Palace  
London SW1A 1AA  
United Kingdom

OK  
△

↓  
Petr Davydtchenko,  
*PERFTORAN*,  
*COVID-19 vaccine*,  
Spazio Rivoluzione  
(Palermo), 2020.  
Photo: Dušan Josip  
Smodej

→  
Petr Davydtchenko,  
*PERFTORAN*,  
*COVID-19 vaccine*,  
Spazio Rivoluzione  
(Palermo), 2020.  
Photo: Sonia D'Alto

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.



pronto soccorso    
  **BERGAMO**



# MERCI FACTEUR !

# MAIL ART #2 :

# ERIC ADAM & BERNARD BOIGELOT

GRANDE HALLE  
GROUND FLOOR

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.



↓  
© Bernard Boigelot,  
Eric Adam collection.  
Photo: Odessa Malchair



## PRACTICAL INFO



Bd Solvay, 22  
B-6000 Charleroi  
T. +32 71 27 29 71  
E. info@bps22.be

 [www.bps22.be](http://www.bps22.be)  
 [facebook.com/bps22.charleroi](https://facebook.com/bps22.charleroi)  
 [@BPS22Charleroi](https://twitter.com/BPS22Charleroi)  
 [@bps22\\_charleroi](https://instagram.com/bps22_charleroi)

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

### RATES:

€6 / seniors : €4 / Students and job seekers: €3 / under 12 years of age: free  
Groups of 10 persons minimum: €4 / Guides : 50€ or 60€ (week-end) per 15-persons groups  
Free entrance for school and associations (visits and workshop) upon booking

## PRESS CONTACT

Victoire MUYLE  
CaracasCOM  
T: +32 2 560 21 22 – M.:+32 495 22 07 92 - E: info@caracascom.com

## COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Laure HOUBEN  
T: +32 71 27 29 77 - M: +32 474 91 44 40 - E: laure.houben@bps22.be

---  
Graphic design : heureux studio

49 Nord  
6 Est  
Frac  
Lorraine



uhoda







---

MUSÉE D'ART  
DE LA PROVINCE  
DE HAINAUT

BOULEVARD SOLVAY, 22  
6000 CHARLEROI  
BELGIQUE

---

[WWW.BPS22.BE](http://WWW.BPS22.BE)