

JEAN-PIERRE RANSONNET

↳ LIEUX ET LIENS (1972-1980)

JEAN-PIERRE POINT

IL Y A QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU
DANS LES OBJETS QUI NOUS ENTOURENT.

STAYIN' ALIVE

DISCOVER THE COLLECTIONS

MERCI FACTEUR !

MAIL ART #5

(GRAND) POSTE LIÉGEOISE
JACQUES CHARLIER, POL PIÉRART & JEAN SPIROUX

LE PETIT MUSÉE

L'ART MÉNAGER... !?

PROGRAM 18.02 > 23.04.2023



VISITOR'S GUIDE

CONTENTS

04

Salle Pierre Dupont
(ground floor)

JEAN-PIERRE RANSONNET
& LIEUX ET LIENS (1972-1980)

10

Salle Pierre Dupont (first floor)

JEAN-PIERRE POINT
IL Y A QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU
DANS LES OBJETS QUI NOUS ENTOURENT.

16

Grande Halle

STAYIN' ALIVE
DISCOVER THE COLLECTIONS

28

Annexe

MERCI FACTEUR! MAIL ART #5
(GRAND) POSTE LIÉGEOISE
JACQUES CHARLIER, POL PIÉRART
& JEAN SPIROUX

30

Petit Musée

L'ART MÉNAGER... !?
An educational offering from the BPS22
mediation team

JEAN-PIERRE RANSONNET

& LIEUX ET LIENS

(1972-1980)

Salle
Pierre Dupont
(ground floor)

Curator: Dorothée Duvivier

The exhibition starts with a photograph of the artist as a child. In a garden, a little boy with a page boy haircut is wearing a white dress. His face is alight with curiosity, apprehension and mischief. Painted in gouache, *"l'interrogation"* ('the question') enquires about the route taken by the artist at the beginning of the 1970s, when he started his work on Lierneux, the village where he was born, and the memories created there of the places and relationships in his childhood: *What is the point of recalling a place, memories, people? How does it help us, is it necessary, should we forgo it, is it a justified approach and, in artistic terms, how can it be realised? [...] Quite simply, I was looking for something [...] And so I always go back to my most intimate knowledge: the things I have experienced and felt. Time, presence, absence, affection, death... pure emotions. Essentially this is the very basis of painting, in my opinion... But I wanted to express it in another way than by painting.*¹

Since he started studying art at Saint-Luc (1965-1968) in Liège, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet absorbed the avant-garde culture of the 1960s and 70s. While the post-war period was marked by doubt and an attempt to define existence, the world now immersed itself in economic euphoria: mass media (radio, television, advertising, magazines, etc.) experienced a period of rapid growth, Pop Art became an international movement and photo-mechanical reproduction methods became widespread. As a reaction to the growing consumer society, Guy Debord battled the indoctrination and fetishism of the commodity²; Roland Barthes disassembled modern society's petit bourgeois ideological constructions³ and the boom in humanities gradually permeated artistic production. Furthermore, this new, post-1968 era shifted the focus to the individual. The personal retrospective chronicle became a literary genre in its own right; 'Narrative Art' went back to narration by combining photography and text; Harald Szeeman popularised the expression "Individual mythologies" by opening up the field of art to a profusion of aesthetic forms and a huge variety of artistic approaches.

In 1972, visiting the Documenta V art exhibition in Kassel, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet discovered the works of Christian Boltanski and Jean Le Gac. Influenced by the humanities, these two French artists embodied the trend towards an imaginary construct of identity, a quest for the personal at the edges of fiction in the era of mass media and artificial identities. Encouraged by his photographer friend Guy Jungblut, who had just opened the Yellow Now gallery

in Liège, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet rejected painting, replaced the 'é' in his name with 'a' and embarked on his first quest for the tracks of memory; *I changed my father's name, as Lacan would say. I left my parents, my friends and the village; I got married; in short, I left the places that I was going to work on, precisely because I left them.*⁴

With the few resources available to him, he started to compile a list of the people he knew in the village where he was born, Lierneux. Using his most personal knowledge, his everyday life and childhood as a starting point, the memory exercise then took him to the places: first his house, the paths and roads in Lierneux, then the school, the football pitch, the lake, the graveyard, the site of the Pierre de la Falhotte (Falhotte Stone) and later, the journey by train towards this "return to the country".

Like Roland Barthes, Michel Leiris or Henry Miller, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet investigated the fragmentation of thought and memory. He used the literary form of the fragment, which goes back to the partial, and thus the compartmentalisation of the being – to absurdity, and hence universality. From the surrealists and also the pataphysician André Blavier and the Oulipian Georges Perec, he got a taste for wordplay. Whatever he was writing, he couldn't help but be captured by sequences of words, letters and even sounds.

The way in which he tracks words is also important here. Manually, never with a machine, he makes an aesthetic choice against the mechanisation of things and the conceptual and administrative aesthetic of the time. *I never used to sell anything, no photographs, no paintings, I was never successful. And I couldn't care less! [...] I played with form so as not to get bored and to avoid falling into the aesthetic or theoretical pseudo-concepts springing up pretty much everywhere*⁵. In the same way, his black and white snaps are instinctive, amateur, taken with a regular camera. When Jean-Pierre Ransonnet photographed the people of his generation he met in Liège at openings, friends' houses, the Hallart bookshop or the André Renard Foundation where he worked, he wasn't a photographer but a painter. For him, photography was purely an aid in his graphic research; it was a way of contradicting – in relation to drawing, text and a certain irony – an era open to a mix of expressive forms.

In 1979, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet abandoned his photographic research and returned to painting, although reading *Roland Barthes par lui-même* (Roland Barthes by himself) and *L'Âge d'homme* ('The Age of Man') by Michel Leiris reinforced his idea of publishing his memoirs⁶. Often considered as a time for research, a requisite step or tentative beginning, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet's poetic memory studies between 1972 and 1980 now appear all the fresher and more relevant when compared to the return of materialism displayed by the new generation of plastic artists, and in opposition to the smooth, conformist images of the digital revolution at the start of the 21st century.

¹ Alain Delaunois, *Conversation avec Jean-Pierre Ransonnet* (Conversation with Jean-Pierre Ransonnet), Gerpennes, Éditions TANDEM, 2004, pp. 6-7.

² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967.

³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957.

⁴ Alain Delaunois, *Jean-Pierre Ransonnet, les lieux, les liens* (Jean-Pierre Ransonnet, the places, the links), Crisnée, Éditions Yellow Now, 2000, p.10.

⁵ Jean-Pierre Ransonnet's comments obtained by Georges Goose during the "Curiosité" radio interview broadcast on RCF Radio (Liège) on 25 January 2023. Available online

⁶ Two years later, he published *Couverture* (Coverage), with Éditions Yellow Now, a collection of anecdotes and remembered deeds in drawings and short sentences, recalling his childhood in the Belgian Ardennes.

LES LIEUX (THE PLACES)

Using anecdotes and memories, and without conceptualising or systematising, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet describes the physical and emotional relationships he wove with places, objects, circumstances, and sometimes even smells. These relationships were imbued with the superstition, curiosity, desire and bewilderment that makes childhood such a special time.

The earliest place of memories is the house. First there is the cellar where Jean-Pierre's father, a house painter, kept his paints and his tools. He mentions the reek of colours and varnishes, his first attempts at painting with old paintbrushes on wallpaper catalogues, but also several beer bottles emptied on the sly with his cousin José. At the other extreme, the attic was the gloomy place where secrets were buried. In winter, in the darkness, he recalls the whistling wind, the sound of rain on the small tiles and the smell of dust.

In the house, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet also remembers the funeral scent of chrysanthemums on All Saints Day. His mother, who had a shop in the village, pinned the name of the customer who had reserved each flower on the pot. In the parlour and the hall, death was strewn on the floor: "Little graveyard in the house".

From the bedroom window, the attic window, or the one that looked out over the station road, the artist lists the views, describes the sky, the weather and recollects the popular conversations. The weather forecast was often the first subject in any conversation, the most commonplace. As well as the date, time and place, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet adds folk references to the photographs. For example, when the sky is pink, "Saint Nicholas is making honey biscuits". Games with the clouds, colours, and language... René Magritte isn't very far away.

Further away, rue Doyard, the family poses for a photo in his maternal grandparents' garden. Jean-Pierre Ransonnet writes that he spent the best years of his childhood here. Four black and white photographs serve as a memory exercise on the passage of time and memories. The artist analyses the image, the person photographed, the view backwards, then only the clouds, the names, the weather, the disappearance of certain things from memory until the time when all that is left are the feelings.

Other places of life exist. Primary school, which Jean-Pierre Ransonnet didn't like much: classes, reading, but also playtime, scuffles, girls and mates. To forget his poor academic results, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet focussed on football, which made him highly popular in the village. In his work he recreates the atmosphere of the matches, the poor state of the pitch, the shouts and insults hurled from the stands.

Located in the heart of the Ardennes, Lierneux contains forests, pastures and a major river, the Lienne. The outdoor places were ideal for games, building dams, chasing dragonflies, meet-ups with mates and early lovemaking. The many walking trails invited wandering, recreation and reflections on time, the difficulty of being, and death. These trails led to the graveyard, the station, the old peoples' home, the Pierre de la Falhotte, until they took Jean-Pierre Ransonnet away from the centre of Lierneux. The artist also addresses travel and journeys by train and car during which he returns to take some hasty photographs of the scenery.

LES LIENS (THE RELATIONSHIPS)

Jean-Pierre Ransonnet fought forgetfulness by making a list of the names of the residents he knew in Lierneux. He listed significant encounters and the people who made the village what it was by contributing to village life. When he didn't feel like making lists, he obliterated the names of residents of Lierneux whom he didn't know from the pages of the phone book. In this way he erased them from his memory, so as to keep the relationships and memories only.

A corpus of 252 black and white photographs, *Les Liens* ("The Links"), leaves more room for play and chance. Jean-Pierre Ransonnet photographed people in ordinary poses whom he met at openings, on holiday, when visiting friends or even at his workplace. He then gave them the name of a resident of Lierneux. Only the members of his family retain their true identity.

LA PIERRE (THE ROCK)

At the centre of the exhibition, as if at the centre of Jean-Pierre Ransonnet's work, is the Pierre de la Falhotte, in the middle of the fields that dominate the village of Lierneux. Since ancient times, this enormous rocky outcrop has figured in local culture and legends. For the artist, it is a symbol of resistance to the tests of time. More importantly, it witnessed his first romantic tryst.

In these photographs of the rock, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet has scrawled notes about the weather and time across the sky. He used pastels to add a few graffitied phrases to them. Sometimes the rock has a human face. Games of language and chance often happen around the Pierre de la Falhotte. With no aesthetic concerns and lacking any logic, Jean-Pierre Ransonnet added words denoting emotional states - absence, expectation, friendship - to photographic images of the stone taken from different angles and distances.

In the series *Homme à la pierre* ('Man with a rock'), the artist is photographed standing next to the rock. Always in the same position, with his back turned, or in a dialogue between his body, the rock, the writing and the emotion of the moment. Alternately imitating presence, banality, pain, nostalgia, silence... he changes position in each image.

l'

The cursive "l'" can be found in all the inventories associated with the artist: lieux, liens, Lierneux, la pierre, l'étang, l'arbre, l'être, l'autre, l'ailleurs, l'œuvre, l'école, l'église, l'asile, l'aide-mémoire, l'amitié, le temps, la mort, l'oubli, l'éternité, l'absolu, l'instant, l'alphabet, l'A, l'absence, l'attente, l'angoisse, l'été, l'abri, l'intime, l'érotisme, l'amour, l'abandon, l'existence... ('places, relationships, Lierneux, the rock, the lake, the tree, being, the other, elsewhere, the artwork, the school, the church, the old peoples' home, aide-memoire, friendship, time, death, forgetfulness, eternity, the absolute, the instant, the alphabet, the 'A', absence, expectation, anguish, summer, shelter, intimacy, eroticism, love, abandon, existence...')

An enigmatic figure, conceptual rebus, enumeration, opening symbol, first lallations, oval shape of a face... The 'l' is always a lower-case letter. Tiny, like our lives. *In this way the work of art finds its meaning in the seemingly insignificant: it retains the forgotten nature of the places and relationships unlit by glory.*⁷

THE WAR

Jean-Pierre Ransonnet was born in his grandparents' cellar in 1944, during the bombings of the Second World War. If the artist prefers to remain silent about these painful times, allusions to death, loss, suffering, and the horrors of war frequently appear in his work.

One series with an ambiguous title, *L'aide-mémoire* ('aide-memoire/ugly memory') is dedicated to the war. The works swing from fascination to repulsion, from life to death, war to peace, past to present, with the anguish of passing time as a backdrop. The photographs of black and white television images show tanks, dead-eyed prisoners and piles of emaciated bodies. Above, coloured images of flowers and still lifes cut from art magazines echo the funerary insets and floral wreaths decorating the headstones of the graveyard where Jean-Pierre Ransonnet played as a child.

Reminiscent of a cartoon or cinema film, *Le Voyage en train* ('The train journey') shows vistas taken from the window of a moving train. Pornographic press cut-outs and film extracts are pasted to these photographed television images and several handwritten notes recall the tracks of the war and the anguish of passing time.

THE SECRET

Tinged with a sweet melancholy, *Le Secret* ('The Secret') closes the exhibition, reminding us that some memories remain vague, that some of our minds' recesses are always in shadow, that any subject is composed of fragments from which a piece is always missing.

⁷ Martine, Doutreleau, *Repères* ('Reference Points') in *Jean-Pierre Ransonnet. Une biographie* (Jean-Pierre Ransonnet. A biography), Crisnée, Éditions Yellow Now, 2016, pp. 63-65

JEAN-PIERRE POINT

Salle
Pierre Dupont
(first floor)

IL Y A QUELQUE CHOSE DE BEAU DANS LES OBJETS QUI NOUS ENTOURENT.

there is something beautiful
about the objects that surround us.

Curator: Pierre-Olivier Rollin

Jean-Pierre Point (Tournai, 1941 - Evre, 2023) is often described as a “child of May ’68”. After studying sculpture at La Cambre (Brussels), the young artist whose stonework was starting to attract attention – in particular a permanent artwork at the Sart-Tilman Museum in Liège – was pulled into the fervent questioning characteristic of those times. He was critical of the art world (based on commercialising unique objects), and the mass media universe, at the heart of which radio and especially television were playing a growing part (widespread distribution via advertising of new, particularly consumeristic models of social behaviour).

This was when he discovered screen-printing, an artistic printing technique that enabled him to reproduce series of photographs and multiply what he called *images of images* by subtly reworking them. Screen-printing meant he could abandon the uniqueness of the artwork and focus on the multiple by mixing up the original and copies, two fundamental values in the art economy.

In an interview he gave to art historian, Vincent Cartuyvels (published in Editions Tandem, in 2010), Jean-Pierre Point stated: “*My work with screen-prints is also part of my thinking on the status of originals and copies in our ‘cultural consumption’.* Some works are unique and impossible to reproduce; this includes practically every painting since Lascaux. But other disciplines are rich and authentic while being copies from the outset, such as cinema, music, and others. Nobody would say: “*I went to see a ‘real’ Fellini*” or after a concert “*I heard a ‘real’ Beethoven*”. Whether unique or a copy, the real problem is distinguishing between an authentic expression and a soulless product, and teaching people to examine this problem.”

Hence Jean-Pierre Point was part of a vast movement to democratise art which shook the western world. He played at being a travelling salesman in the street, with limited success, plastered with posters offering his screen-prints from home at knock-down prices, with even more limited success. Later he would talk about this time: *"I hoped to subvert the established art market. But the public prefers to buy posters of well-known artists, such as Matisse or Niki de Saint Phalle, rather than an original work from an unknown. First you must be a famous artist before the public wants to buy even mediocre reproductions of your work."*

FROM THE CMYK COLOUR MODEL TO POLYCHROMY

Another important issue: images that appear in newspapers, printed magazines, on television or in photographs, including today's digital photographs, are reproduced by juxtaposing different coloured points. It is the proximity of these points, whether they are visible to the naked eye, as they occasionally are in screen-printing, or invisible, like the pixels that make up today's digital images, which give colours their hue, according to the famous "law of simultaneous contrast of colours" formulated in 1839 by the French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul (1786-1889). According to his observations, when two colours are placed side-by-side, the brain synthesises them.

Screen-printing works in the same way but is potentially far richer than the media mentioned above. Indeed, those media only work with the CMYK model, in other words, all of the colours in the chromatic range are reproduced using black and three primary colours: red, green and blue for contemporary television, cyan, magenta and yellow for printing, which invariably reduces the potential shades of colour. On the other hand, screen-printing can use several colours, each one in many shades, thus offering a far wider chromatic spectrum and making it better equipped to reproduce the rich colours of the world that surrounds us.

In several documents that could be manifestos, Jean-Pierre Point also denounced the state of affairs which he considered as visual formatting, impoverishing the gaze due to ways of perceiving we unconsciously assimilate. Thus, his entire artistic screen-printing practice was an attempt to invite the gaze to 'discover' all the chromatic and poetic nuances of serigraphic reproduction; he was quick to exploit colours that are impossible to reproduce using the CMYK colour model. Consequently, he wrote in his instantly recognisable cursive script beneath one screen-print in the exhibition, which shows him in his studio with the walls covered in his work:

"This image is a screen-print in which the shades are obtained by combining three colours. It is the method used to produce and reproduce all the coloured images that surround us in photography, advertising and television. By applying this method, I discovered that every photograph could shatter into infinite versions. My work consists in creating these versions, which involves using three screens to print hundreds of different images."

Nevertheless, Point wasn't always satisfied with reproducing images by multiplying their coloured layers. He also played with offsets or slippages to emphasise the physicality and presence of his medium. His criticism of media reproduction was related to its uniform,

manufactured nature. By revealing how his images were produced, he equalised the relationship between the subject shown and the methods of representation.

BETWEEN TEXT AND IMAGE

Jean-Pierre Point's interest in multiplication was bound to lead to an interest in advertising posters and visual communication methods or, to be more precise, to the relationship between text and visual representation. Text often appears in his compositions in the form of titles or phrases. Consequently, Point emphasises his cursive script to create a new paradox that questions his medium: in contrast to standardised writing, cursive writing appears as a form of individual expression which, moreover, has long been the subject of psychological interpretation by the pseudo-science of graphology. After screen-printing, cursive script loses some of its uniqueness, but still differs from standardised script, such as the artist uses for his theoretical texts.

The issue of the relationship between text and image, equally characteristic of 1970s art, naturally led Jean-Pierre Point to the graphic arts. He consequently produced several posters for cultural events such as Plan K performances, the opening of the Sart-Tilman Museum, etc. He also produced several books of artists and collections of screen-prints, working with colour in such a way as to make them impossible to reproduce with the CMYK colour model.

BETWEEN PUBLICITY AND PRIVACY

On various occasions, Jean-Pierre Point had the opportunity to use advertising spaces. Hence in September 1974, he occupied 30 billboards in Brussels, which he filled with a screen-printed image showing a view taken from the road. *"It seemed obvious to me, he later explained, that advertising was the great public art of our commercial society. But an academic art that followed the codes of nineteenth century official art. As a consequence, I thought it was a choice location for a great screen-print showing the road or an urban environment with nothing commercial about it."*

A few years later, it was a sky full of threatening clouds in a baroque composition showing dark masses jostling with rare, bright openings. This appeared on the walls of Brussels and Bertrix. Its author called it *Belgique Chérie*, and back then considered this work to be "anti-Club Med". The well-known holiday club was advertising itself at the time (and still does today) with posters showing skies saturated in artificial blues, just like smartphone cameras do now. The artist counteracted with darkness, composed of different shades of black. A smaller version, marouflaged on canvas, is included in the exhibition.

However, it was from the domestic interior of his family home that Jean-Pierre Point most often drew his inspiration. His screen-prints show scenes from daily life, particularly with his children, capturing private moments, highlighting common details. He developed a special sensitivity to his surroundings, celebrating their simple beauty, too often ignored or over-

looked because of their familiarity. In a subtle play on the relationship between colours, using a sensuality specific to substances, he created screen-printed works that look like epiphanies to the mundane.

The great majority of his exhibited works come from the house where Jean-Pierre Point used to live. They punctuated the rhythm of family life at home. As a consequence, we understand the title of one of his screen-prints, which is also the title of his exhibition at the BPS22: *il y a quelque chose de beau dans les objets qui nous entourent*. (there is something beautiful about the objects that surround us.)

JEAN-PIERRE RANSONNET JEAN-PIERRE POINT CONTEMPORARY RESONANCES

Bringing together some fifty works spanning the 1970s to the 2000s, Jean-Pierre Point's exhibition resonates with that of Jean-Pierre Ransonnet. Both bear witness to what we could call a "defensive reflex" shared by two artists (although there were many more at the time) faced with the proliferation of uniform images made possible by the development of new means for reproducing images industrially. Both were part of a bigger movement that saw artists using forms of resistance (screen-printing, manual editing, coloured filters, etc.) against the uniform images distributed by the media.

These days, if we believe this phenomenon to be characteristic of the 1970s, it nonetheless has a contemporary resonance. Indeed, at a time when smartphones exponentially multiply photographic possibilities and social networks act as unprecedented distribution channels, many artists are developing strategies to distance these images. They favour other media and load them with new complexity, thereby removing their production from the immediate consumption characterising the incessant flow of images. Diversifying to restore complexity to the world, rather than standardising and simplifying, requires more sustained attention as opposed to quick consumption before discarding, and are perhaps the current recommendations these two artists continue to send us.

Pierre-Olivier Rollin, Director of the BPS22

STAYIN' ALIVE

DISCOVER THE COLLECTIONS

Curator: Pierre-Olivier Rollin

With almost a century separating them, what could possibly connect two dandies as antithetical as Paul Valéry (1871-1945) and Yves Adrien (1951)? Answer: A shared aversion to museums, which they viewed as necropolises! For the first, a scholar who could turn his hand to anything and an example of the "national intellectual hero" during the inter-war period, museums were reminiscent of the temple and the salon, the cemetery and the school... *Only a civilisation neither sensual nor reasonable could have built this house of incoherence. Who knows what nonsense results from gathering together all these dead visions. They envy each other and fight for the contemplation to which they owe their existence,*" he wrote in 1923 in *Le Problème des musées* (The Problem with Museums). For the second, a rock critic, writer, punk and post-punk theoretician, the issue is beyond any doubt: *"Is museum the deadest word in the language? Yes."* So, in a museum, art is nothing more than dismal (*NovöVision. Les Confessions d'un cobaye du siècle* (Confessions of a guinea pig of the century), 1980).

The exact opposite to these deathly ideas, *Stayin' Alive. Discover the Collections* invites you to discover the BPS22 collections and share their vitality and driving force. Conceived as a series of small formal narrative or semantic segments, the exhibition encourages relationships between the artworks; they respond to each other, enhancing their shared co-existence and unfurling their potentialities depending on the proposed groupings. Through some forty paintings, installations, photographs, drawings and videos drawn from the Hainaut Province and BPS22 collections and for the most part never before exhibited, *Stayin' Alive. Discover the Collections* envisages the museum as an essential place for bringing art alive and sharing it with as many people as possible.

The exhibition's title, *Stayin' Alive*, taken from the Bee Gees hit, refers to the disco where Saturday night fever only serves to put aside dismay and disenchantment for a while. Thus, behind their sometimes poetic, falsely festive or beguiling aspects, the artworks always address society's current issues: migration, new spiritualities, identity issues (particularly around gender), cross-fertilisation, economic neglect, environmental crisis, and so on.

CARLOS AIRES

TELEJOURNAL V

2019

Installation - china plates. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2021

In *Telejournal V*, Carlos Aires took images from Spanish television news programmes. The artist juxtaposes different portraits of soldiers and shows us various objects related to the world of violence and death: weapons, skulls, masked faces, soldiers standing guard, aiming or firing. These shocking images are bordered by edges that contrast with the gravity of the subjects shown. Condemning the excesses of war and the information spectacle in which the televised media are complicit, *Telejournal V* mixes art with politics and reveals uncomfortable truths. Aires takes a scathing look at the news, reducing information to a simple decorative medium: china plates that recall Delft Blue pottery.

JACQUES CHARLIER

COURAGE TO THE LAST

2003

Oil on canvas. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2019

Courage to the Last was produced at the time of the closure of Arcelor's blast-furnace near Liège. The closure was part of a restructuring plan announced in 2003. Its aim was the gradual closure of several blast-furnaces in Belgium, France and Germany to concentrate the multi-national's investments elsewhere. Hence the work deals with Europe's de-industrialisation, while playing on its ambiguity: the industry fed a fantasy vision that underpinned our regions' identity and which art history largely relayed, but it was extremely polluting and harmful, as expressed by the smoke billowing from the chimneys.

CHLOÉ CLÉMENT

BETULA (1, 2 ET 3)

2020

Photographs. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2022

These three photographs come from a series called *Betula* which takes its name from the Latin root of the word 'birch', a tree found on land impoverished by mining. It plays with light, colour and topography, and captures the chromatic hues of the slag heaps to create a parallel fictional universe, *Betula*, the home of beings who interact with the waste materials constantly produced by our industrial society. There is a certain form of concern and seriousness in these frames, a point of view always on the alert. By themselves, these photographs are a kind of warning about the threat that hangs over the environmental equilibrium.

ARNAUD COHEN

HUNTING SEASON

2016

Charred wood, neon. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2019

Arnaud Cohen's art relates to issues of memory and ecology. *Hunting Season* is a makeshift shed build from 18th century charred, indoor shutters that came from a Parisian mansion. A discreet bluish light shines through the gaps between the shutters: the word 'Nothing' in neon cursive script, a word that Louis XVI wrote in his hunting passbook on 14 July 1789. In an air of vainglory, this work denounces three things: the inward-looking attitude of the contemporary artistic medium, current social circumstances, and individual and collective selfishness in the era of the planet's destruction. This 'Nothing' points to the idea that today's elites apparently dismiss the world's problems, preferring to see 'Nothing'. *Hunting Season* therefore subtly illustrates the moment just before the hunter becomes aware that he is now the prey.

JACQUELINE DE JONG

NAUFRAGE EN MÉDITERRANÉE ('MEDITERRANEAN SHIPWRECK')

2021

Oil on canvas. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2022

The work of a former Situationist International member, Jacqueline de Jong, brings the observer face-to-face with the reality associated with current migratory events. In the composition's foreground, raised barbed wire imprisons the people shown, connecting the onlooker with their dramatic circumstances in an almost physical way. In an expressionist register she has favoured from a very young age, the artist uses bright colours to portray these bodies at death's door, deformed, dislocated and locked within the frame of the representation.

MARCIN DUDEK

BLACK STADIUM

2021

Mixed media on wood and aluminium. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2021

Marcin Dudek deals with disenchantment, the havoc of civil war and barbarity. *Black Stadium* is the name given to the main football stadium in Raqqa, Syria, in allusion to the dark-coloured stone of its construction. The stadium subsequently became the Islamic State's operational headquarters. It was then turned into a prison, becoming a most gruesome detention facility. Dudek uses time-lapse and aerial imagery methods to represent the changes in this unusual stadium. Linking the sporting world and the world of war, he creates a constellation of white squares reminiscent of Syrian houses. The different states of the arena overlap; the stadium witnesses the deadliest historical instability. The use of rough strips of medical tape evokes the process of healing, a metaphor for the region's struggles to reconstruct itself.

ÉRIC DUYNKAERTS

CORBEAU, RENARD, ...

2007

Installation. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2022

This installation on an aluminium circle physically and spatially reproduces the sequence of analogies 'A is to B as C is to D', and so on. When the sequence is complete, it starts again from the beginning. The loop of analogies links together things, shapes and different figures. All these items are placed on the frame like so many musical notes, composing to a kind of artistic score. We can see the raven and his cheese, a portrait of Andy Warhol and a tin of Campbell's soup, Milou and his bone, Bugs Bunny and his carrot, Proust and his madeleine, etc. So many miscellaneous items and associations compelling us to compose our own logic.

MOUNIR FATMI

WITHOUT HISTORY - OBSTACLES

2007

Installation - equestrian obstacles. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2016

Unlike directive offerings, Mounir Fatmi's projects always see the visitor as a partner, free to deconstruct and reconstruct his models themselves. The horse jumping fences placed in the centre of the exhibition, on which can be read extracts from *The Art of War* by the Chinese strategist Sun-Zi or Sun Tzu (544-496 BC), are a metaphor for life's obstacles. They are empowered as artistic materials and serve to express the individual's relationship to history, society, the State or the nation. The obstacle is defined little by little as a reality test and, as a consequence, as something that mobilises the individual's mind and body. By extension it becomes the element addressed by the artist, which he tries to use to challenge the world in order to understand and act in it: simultaneously a means to explore reality, and a scaffolding for theories, reflexions and sensations.

FRANCIS FEIDLER

ELASTIKKOMMUNIKATION MIT 20 HOLZBALKEN UND 4 FICHTENHEBEL

1992

Sculpture. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2021 Provenance: artist's studio

MORSCHHECK

1999

Oil on canvas. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2021 Provenance: artist's studio

In 1986, Francis Fiedler created the concept of *Elastikommunikation* which, in retrospect, runs through all his work: "My aim, he explains, is to create situations in which the dialogue between artwork and viewer acquires an elasticity; this dialogue must escape the pitfalls of stereotypical formula to appropriate all free spaces." It therefore suggests their precarious equilibrium in a state of permanent tension, which becomes a trait of all the artist's works.

Elastikommunikation mit 20 Holzbalken und 4 Fichtenhebel is one of his emblematic installations. It comprises sixteen wooden beams standing on end and held together by four other beams, themselves joined in pairs by steel wires. The wires are held taut by fir tree trunks acting as levers, using an ancient method for tensioning fence wires. The whole structure is unstable because the levers can give way or slip, the beams disengage and fall.

Morschheck is one of a series of canvases that show natural landscapes under lowering skies. The piece expresses a tension between the desire for romantic abandon in this expanse and a diffused fear of the elements being unleashed, ready to burst at any moment. Touching on the genre's clichés evident in its colour range and almost kitsch painting technique, the artist dominates his painting to infuse it with a certain instability.

BARBARA SALOMÉ FELGENHAUER

LE BOIS

2020

DEVENIR

2020

Marouflaged photographs on aluminium. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2022

Referencing the book *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* published in 1982 by the writer and militant eco-feminist Starhawk, the photographs of Barbara Salomé Felgenhauer from her project *J'ai rêvé l'obscur* ('I dreamed the dark') give form to cosmic and earthly manifestations. *Le Bois* ('The Wood') expresses a desire to produce an 'anthropofugic' image, where all traces of human life are absent. In contrast to an anthropocentric approach to physical phenomena, the artist captures the visual, formal and chromatic qualities of nature – a nature all in shades acting ceaselessly in accordance with its own laws. The artist appears to consider nature in terms of personal feelings and awareness, the landscape being defined firstly, and above all, as a recognised space with which we must create an osmosis.

Devenir ('Becoming'), a self-portrait of the artist, warns and condenses into a look all the seriousness of the world surrounding us. In this piece the artist portrays herself as a pagan witch. On the borders of feminism, paganism, ecology and fiction, the photographs of Barbara Salomé Felgenhauer remind us that we urgently need to re-establish the balance in the relationship between men, women and our vital natural surroundings.

FELTEN-MASSINGER

IPANEMA II

02/07/2004

Pinhole camera image pasted on aluminium. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2018

This photograph was taken by the 'Caravana Obscura' device created by the artistic duo Christine Felten and Véronique Massinger. It references the 'Camera Obscura', forerunner of the modern camera. As its name implies, it is a camper van transformed into a giant mobile camera obscura or dark room, inside which is positioned light-sensitive paper on which an image slowly prints itself. Several hours are needed depending on the intensity of the light. The Felten-Massinger panoramic images question the idea of territory, not to keep a trace or a memory, but in order to show the passage of time, loss, oblivion and erasure. An entire day's light is condensed into this view of the Ipanema region.

LIAM GILLICK

LAST DAY OF PRODUCTION

2007

Sculpture - painted aluminium and coloured plexiglass.
Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2009

Liam Gillick's works are generously inspired by Minimalism and Modernism (self-supporting, orthogonal geometric forms, industrially machined materials, self-sufficiency, etc.) but he infuses them with meaning by the use of narrative fantasies that question liberal democracies' system of art and industrial modes of production. *Last Day of Production* is presented as the result of the last day of production in a factory preparing for shutdown. The workers have therefore decided to appropriate their means of production to produce something other than what they have made for years: a non-functional, unmarketable object, but one that – for once – responds to their aspirations and desires. In this way the artist presupposes the possibility of a post-industrial utopia.

FILIP MARKIEWICZ

FAKE PROTEST SONGS KARAOKE

2015

Installation. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2016

EUROPA MACHT FREI

2015

Graphite on paper. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2016

Fake protest songs karaoke invites you to sing hits from the 1970s to the 1990s, with a disco ball, podium and microphone: Madonna, *La Isla Bonita*; Scorpions, *The Wind of Change*; John Lennon, *Working Class Hero*; USA for Africa, *We are the World*; Sinéad O'Connor, *Nothing Compares 2 U*; Radiohead, *Creep*; Bonnie Tyler, *Total Eclipse of the Heart*. The character on the TV screen is the artist's alter-ego: Raftside, a fake singer-songwriter and a fake rock star. The installation is positioned opposite the drawing *Europa macht frei* which deals with the difficulties and excesses of our democracies – starting with the European Union – when it comes to social and financial policies, and the welcome given to migrants. It evokes historical upheavals and the tragedy of migration, a 'vision' of our contemporary world that demands a time-out. The drawing acts as a real counterpoint to the Karaoke next to it. Ingeniously playing on anachronism and associative meanings, the lyrics of the songs performed by the 'fake singer' in this context take on a more pseudo-protest and political connotation.

ANITA MOLINERO

TINA

1998

Sculpture - found materials. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2019

Anita Molinero creates her works from the scrap materials she finds. She accepts all the rawness of the discarded object for what it is, without trying to sanctify or add a symbolic charge to it. Disturbing, often aggressive, her work corresponds to an urban industrial context, influenced by art history and science fiction films. *TINA* is made from a welded chain and shower curtain rings and seems to be wearing animal skin feminine clothing. It evokes Aunty Entity, the ruthless leader of a post-apocalyptic civilisation played by Tina Turner in *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*. But *TINA* is also an acronym for 'There Is No Alternative', used in the 1980s to impose economic liberalism across the planet.

JOHAN MUYLE

WE DON'T KNOW HIM FROM EDEN

1998

Installation. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2022. Provenance: artist's studio

This animated installation comprises several portraits made by *cine-banners*, former cinema poster painters in Madras, India. Created for the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1998, at its centre is a double portrait of the artist (man and woman) inspired by one of Domenichino's paintings, in which Adam is gesturing at Eve, trying to exonerate himself. Using word play and sound sequences, the work asks for a quiet reconsideration of authority's conventions.

AIMÉ NTAKIYICA

VERBA VOLANT, SCRIPTA MANENT

2000

Installation – suspended phone books. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2000

Verba volant, scripta manent takes its title from the Latin phrase meaning 'Spoken words fly away, written words remain', an ancient proverb advising prudence when consigning spoken words to writing. Nevertheless, the written words depicted by Aime Ntakiyica are nothing more than phone books, whose primary function is to promote spoken conversation! The work is part of the series *Arbres à palabres* ('Talking trees') produced at the end of the 1990s by the artist, who intended them as places for conversations and interpersonal exchanges. Metaphorically, the installation evokes a flight of birds, as an invitation to individual achievement.

CLAUDE RUTAULT

AMZ N°80

1987-1991

Oil on canvas. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 1991

Claude Rutault is the author of a body of work in which conceptual art meets radical painting. Loyal to the '*Do it Yourself*' principle so popular in the 1970s, he first and foremost seeks to thwart the idea of the work of art by depriving it of its value as an object and removing the mystique from the artistic act. The artist designs his offerings around what he calls 'definitions-methods', in other words a protocol for executing the artist's works oneself. In *AMZ n°80*, in addition to the seven canvases needing to be the same colour as the wall on which they hang, their format is determined by the distance that separates the artist's studio from the exhibition hall and by the number of owners of works in this series. This humorous approach demystifies painting by questioning the principles on which it is based: author, authenticity, invoice, etc.

CINDY SHERMAN

UNTITLED #120, 1983

(edition of 2022)

UNTITLED # 124, 1983

(edition of 2022)

Photographs. BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2022. Provenance: Vanhaerents Art Collection

Cindy Sherman is an artist known for inserting herself into the stereotypes typical of US cinema, painting and photography. Here she continues her study of feminine identity through her own disguised image. For her, photography is both an artistic and a critical device: she condemns head-on the success of paradigms formerly dictated by television and fashion (which put a lot of pressure on her at the start of the 1980s – a time when these two photographs were taken) and now dictated by social media. Without ever relying on models other than herself, she slips into the skin of a woman who seems to be suffering from psychiatric problems. The other photograph shows her portraying a woman dressed in a violet gown, a colour long associated with penitence and affliction.

DOMINIQUE THIRION

***MONTAGNES (11), LE CHAMP DE BATAILLE (7), LES FILLES (5),
LA PANTHÈRE AU CARRÉ BLANC (1), PLEINE LUNE (4), CIAO (14), COUPLE (8),
FANTÔMAS (2), 2 (12), L'UN (17)***

2014

Oil on canvas. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2015

***JEU DE BILLES 01. COMBINAISON ALÉATOIRE EN 7 POINTS (10),
JEU DE BILLES 02. COMBINAISON ALÉATOIRE EN 7 POINTS (13),
JEU DE BILLES. COMBINAISON ALÉATOIRE EN 6 POINTS (6),
JEU DE BILLES. COMBINAISON ALÉATOIRE EN 8 POINTS (16)***

1994

Dry pastel on glass fibre pasted on canvas Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2015

RICH BITCH (3), LA FLÈCHE BRISÉE (9), MAGIC OR MIRAGE ? (15)

2012

Oil on canvas. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2015

Dominique Thirion appreciates the freedom of movement that painting offers her. While the artist regularly relies on a collection of images for her paintings, she particularly focusses on the place where she paints. Here, this project is partially recorded in gestural abstraction. Geometric shapes burst out of coloured backgrounds. Another recurrent theme in her work is duality. The images or ideas behind her pieces act solely as a catalyst which the artist transforms in a pictorial quest both spontaneous and controlled.

VALFRET (CYPRIEN MATHIEU)

SAUVAGE

2019

Original illustrations from the book *Sauvage* - Edition FRMK 2021.

Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2020

Before it was a book published by FREMOK, *Sauvage* was a series of small paintings, like a multitude of moments or freeze frames which, placed end-to-end, show the long wake-up call of a CRS (riot policeman) torn between his contradictory urges. The CRS, identifiable by his anti-riot equipment, appeared in Valfret's drawings around 2014 at a time when unrest was beginning to spread to many parts of the world – indigenous movements, the Arab Spring, Greek riots, and so on – generating an increasingly massive presence of the security forces. He decides to counter this violence with more gentleness, nature and things that do him good, and tries to rethink our relationship with insurrection using poetry and humour.

ERIK VAN LIESHOUT

SANS TITRE

2004

Drawing – mixed media on paper. Hainaut Province Collection, acquired in 2015

Deeply affected by the political and social context of his country of birth, the Netherlands, Erik van Lieshout highlights the problems that gnaw at our contemporary world. With brutal honesty and a pinch of impetuosity, he addresses fundamental questions such as migration, exile, racism and even the class struggle. The artist draws his inspiration from mass media photographs of demonstrations. Produced in 2004, this work deals with populist and nationalist policies that fracture society. With lively, vigorous brushstrokes, his movement heightens the clamour of the crowd. Bright colours enhance the piece, galvanising the surface and amplifying the fury emanating from the picture. His straightforward brushstrokes give his drawings an impression of movement, recreating the protest atmosphere of the event depicted for the spectator. Here the artist has painted two people, sitting on the edge of a turbulent demonstration. A member of the Ku Klux Klan can be seen in the background, reminding us that we must wage the fight for freedom head on.

MARIE ZOLAMIAN

LES CRACS DES CHEVALIERS

2012

Installation - 1 artist's drawing, 5 children's drawings, sound recording in Arabic (31:44 minutes). BPS22 Collection, acquired in 2023

The project called *Les Cracs des chevaliers* (The Cracks of the Knights) was the result of a performance conducted at the opening of the Qalandiya International Biennial (Palestine, 2012). On this occasion, Marie Zolamian met six young teenagers and children at the castle in Abwein, a village located 37 km to the north of Ramallah in Palestine: Mou'az (12 years old), Mazin (10 years old), Nazir (10 and a half years old), Omar (10 and a half years old), Yassin (11 years old), Younis (12 years old) and Ahmad (castle worker). The six boys gave her a guided visit of the castle. The artist recorded their narrative and turned it into a film, without pictures, where only their voices can be heard while a translation appears on a dark screen. The boys alternate in delivering the stories which interweave historical facts with their own experiences, along with myths, superstitions, rites or anecdotes associated with the Israeli occupation. The film is accompanied by drawings that carry the historical charge of this place, its mysterious nooks and passages. They form many doors through which to enter this invisible castle.

MERCI FACTEUR !

MAIL ART #5

(GRAND) POSTE LIÉGEOISE

JACQUES CHARLIER,
POL PIÉRART & JEAN SPIROUX

Curator: Pierre-Olivier Rollin

A glance at an iconic building in the Ardent City, the fifth opus of the exhibition cycle dedicated to Mail Art in French-speaking Belgium focuses on the scene in Liège, undoubtedly one of the most active in the country. A chance to renew our acquaintance with some of the movement's central figures: Jacques Charlier, Pol Piérart and Jean Spiroux.

A great Belgian personality and embodying a type of authority at the heart of this selection despite himself, Jacques Charlier (1939) soon encountered the international avant-garde figures of his time. Although his correspondence lacks the systematic nature of Mail Art, it nevertheless follows its outlines and issues: generous exchanges between artists on the same wavelength and a need to be part of an aspirational community. Here we can see the prestigious signatures of Sol LeWitt, Gilbert & George, Ben, Niele Toroni, etc.

Ever since he started out, Pol Piérart (1955) has combined writing with painting or images, using it to liberate a type of everyday poetry imbued simultaneously with tenderness and a wry irony. So, he's a Mail Art natural, quick to subvert postcards or received images. Possibly less spontaneous and less random, his contribution often consisted in responding to invitations for a myriad of themed exhibitions.

Trained at the Liège Academy's painting workshop, Jean Spiroux (1938-2021) abandoned this medium during the 1980s to devote himself to Mail Art. The practice thus offered him a new freedom, an inventiveness that apparently resulted in him setting aside his paintbrushes. Working under the pseudonym of Société Anonyme (Public Limited Company, or more literally, Anonymous Society), he organised several important exhibitions of Mail Art in Belgium and abroad. Together with the Dutch speaker Guy Bleus, another well-known figure of Belgian Mail Art, he was selected to design the Mail Art stamp published by the Belgian Postal Service in 2003.

LE PETIT MUSÉE

L'ART MÉNAGER... !?

Domestic art...!?

18.02 > 23.04 AND 20.05 > 27.08.2023

The Little Museum is a space for learning where exhibits are displayed at a child's eye level. Here children can discover pieces from the Hainaut Province collection, selected according to current themes. This space invites a dialogue between children and the works, but also between generations.

This time the Little Museum leads us to reflect on the role of design in our everyday lives, using pieces gleaned from the industrial design collection curated by the Belgian designer Philippe Diricq and acquired by the BPS22. The exhibition discusses how design can contribute to progress and comfort, and also the questions it raises, such as:

- Has the development of the objects that surround us every day contributed to women's liberation, as was said in the 1960s, and what was the gendered, sexist part of the advertising that announced a revolution in household tasks?
- What influence can the shape and colour of objects have on our consumer use?
- Regarding the environmental concerns of which we are all aware, how have the materials forming these objects developed and what is programmed obsolescence?
- What story does each object tell us down through the generations?

The educational project thus reveals the major social transformations hiding behind the little story of domestic art.

Alongside the objects on display, copies of advertising posters and a TV set showing adverts illustrate the clichés common at the time, while the work of first-year Photography students from the ESA Saint-Luc Liège demonstrate the objects from the design collection in different situations.

Le Petit
Musée



Museum open Tuesday - Sunday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Closed on Mondays, 24, 25, and 31 December, 1 January, and while exhibitions are being installed.

PRICES:

€6 / senior citizens: €4 / students and jobseekers: €3 / under 12 years old: free.

Groups of 10 minimum: €4 per person.

Guides: €50 or €60 (weekends) per 15-person group maximum.

Free for schools and associations with prior booking (tour and workshop).

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