

A close-up photograph of an elephant's head, showing its textured, wrinkled skin. A human eye is painted onto the elephant's face, looking directly at the viewer. The eye has a brown iris and a red, inflamed-looking sclera. The background is a plain, light-colored sky.

MACS

Musée des Arts Contemporains
Grand-Hornu

Johan Muyle

No Room for Regrets

20.12 2020 > 18.04 2021

PRESS PACK



Born in Charleroi in 1956, Johan Muyle lives and works in Liège and Brussels. His works are found in public and private collections in Europe and North America. He has also taken part in international contemporary art fairs and biennales (São Paulo in 1998 and Milan in 2001, Poznan in 2010 and Szczecin in 2012). His many travels influence his assemblage sculptural practice and result in collaborations (Chéri Samba and Bombay poster artists). The singular nature of Johan Muyle's oeuvre—combining carnivalesque vanities and humanism—make him an heir to the Belgian artistic tradition and one of its most representative actors on the international contemporary art scene, as witnessed notably by his presence in the *La Belgique visionnaire* exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 2005. Since 2007, Johan Muyle has been head of the sculpture department at the *École nationale supérieure des Arts visuels de la Cambre* in Brussels.

The Exhibition

The MACS is organising a retrospective exhibition of works by Johan Muyle, one of the major Belgian artists of his generation. From his modest assemblages made with the help of artisans working in the streets of Kinshasa to his customised motorbikes, not forgetting his monumental paintings entrusted to Mumbai poster artists, Johan Muyle's oeuvre is nurtured by his numerous encounters and collaborations throughout the world. The know-how, beliefs, rituals, imageries and popular stories that he discovers there have fuelled his interest in otherness and his faith in an albeit maltreated humanity. Through motorised assemblages, cryptic aphorisms and performances, Johan Muyle creates enigmatic allegories which cry out to us about the state of the world and its contradictions. Reacting to current events, he seizes upon and thereby diverts minor news items and historic events in order to denounce human vanity, the barbarity of governments, the hypocrisy of religions and the society of the spectacle, but also to point out, as Jean-Luc Godard said, that "civilisation is in peoples", by celebrating for example the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina or the "Moustache Brothers" in Myanmar, who in his eyes are heroes of revolution and resistance.

The artist devised the *No Room for Regrets* exhibition as an immersive, interactive journey through the principal periods of his oeuvre.

The imposing installation *Rien ne s'y oppose*, created in 2010 for Le Creux de l'enfer in Thiers and which is now being presented for the first time in Belgium opens *No Room for Regrets* by occupying the museum's entrance hall: here, three mannequins endowed with attributes relating to various adolescent sub-cultures move forwards on rails, symbolising conformism. Also considered by the artist as a reference to Pieter Brueghel's *Parable of the Blind*, *Rien ne s'y oppose* emphasises the relationship between the artist and Belgian art history.

Following on from this introduction, the first two rooms of the museum take us back in time, housing several emblematic pieces from Johan Muyle's oeuvre, including *Les Reines mortes* (1988), *L'Impossibilité de régner* (1991) and *Angel et Angelo* (1992).



Angel et Angelo, 1992.

The artist also makes the most of the specific nature of the site to establish an interaction with the contemporary architecture of the museum space, but also with the Grand-Hornu site's neoclassical architecture. *Ne rien dire, ne rien voir, ne rien entendre* (1999) or *No More Heroes* (2011), placed outside, particularly resonate with the industrial site, whilst the MACS bridge room (over 40 metres long) takes the form of a sculpture gallery, instilling a surprising dialogue between *Le Marteleur*, an emblematic work by Constantin Meunier, and the assemblage sculptures which Johan Muyle created using plaster moulds, such as *De Spinario - Le Tireur d'épine* (2017).

To round off the exhibition, Johan Muyle chose to enlarge the work *Singin' in the Rain* (2008) to the scale of the final museum room and to accentuate its spectacular aspect to make a monumental installation combining assemblage sculpture and cinematographic staging.

The artist will give two performances during the preview. The first is a tableau vivant which is perceptibly reminiscent of *L'Amie du magicien* (1989). The second incorporates an evocation of the current health crisis that has come about with the emergence of the Covid-19 virus.

They will be filmed and screened throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Lucy I Have a Dream, 2008.



Exhibition Catalogue

Johan Muyle. Oeuvres 1982-2020

Editors: MACS/Museum of Contemporary Arts at Grand-Hornu and the Fonds Mercator, Brussels

Author: Denis Gielen

Bilingual - French/English

276 pages

140 colour illustrations

30 x 24 cm

Price: €40

Accompagnant l'exposition rétrospective *No Room for Regrets* que le MACS de Grand-Hornu organise en collaboration avec le Fonds Mercator de Bruxelles, ce catalogue présente les œuvres de l'artiste belge de ses premiers assemblages d'objets à ses sculptures monumentales. Article en plusieurs chapitres retraçant le travail de l'artiste belge dans le contexte politique et artistique des trente dernières années. Afin de rendre compte du caractère polymorphe de l'œuvre, plusieurs aspects de la pensée plastique de cet artiste prolifique seront abordés : l'usage des codes des arts populaires en passant par l'esthétique exotique et syncrétique inspirée des nombreux voyages de l'artiste à travers le monde.

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Auteur / Author
DENIS GIELEN



JOHAN

**M
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CEUVRES
1982-2020
WORKS



MACS Musée des Arts Contemporains Grand-Hornu

Fonds Mercator

Fonds Mercator
MACS

‘When lexicon and syntax are oversimplified, as on social networks dominated by short, divisive messages, the language available for representing the world in its diversity is impoverished to the point of resembling the frightening ‘newspeak’ of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Against this poison that ‘doublethink’ and Manichean black-and-white discourse represent for the critical spirit and for dialectical thought, poetry with its metaphors, its personifications and its oxymorons remains the most effective antidote. In this context, the postmodern aesthetic, baroque in the same way as Cesare Ripa’s emblems, or more recently the decadent frontispieces of Félicien Rops, with their combination of devices, figures and dedications, has proven its capacity to fulfil this libertarian mission by transforming political and advertising newspeak into rebuses to decipher and riddles to meditate on. Turning their own rigged language against authoritarian powers, in the same way as the caustic Truisms that Jenny Holzer has been disseminating since 1977, but in the stead of dystopian slogans (‘WAR IS PEACE’, ‘FREEDOM IS SLAVERY’), Johan Muyle substitutes his ironic aphorisms (‘A WORLD WHERE TO HAVE IS TO BE’, ‘MORE OPIUM FOR THE PEOPLE’), but has added to them, ever since his first ‘public notary’ posters, his trademark vernacular accent. Like the fables and parables that conceal profound moral and satirical messages under their narrative surfaces, his allegorical assemblages question the true human condition: the vanities of existence, the tragedies of history, the machinery of power...’

Denis Gielen



Les Reines mortes, 1988.

The Works

Constantin Meunier, *Le Marteleur*, bronze sculpture, 200 x 95 x 70 cm, 1886. Province de Hainaut collection, BPS22 deposit, Charleroi

Johan Muyle, *Cherubini Gemelli*, stuffed dogs, landau, mirror, 95 x 85 x 60 cm, 1987. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Le Second Martyre de la Pietà*, stuffed goat, wheelchair, etc., 122 x 164.5 x 65.5 cm, 1987. Musée de La Boverie collection, City of Liège

Johan Muyle, *Les Reines mortes*, stuffed pig, zinc bath, goose eggs, women's hair, electric lighting, 270 x 73 x 190 cm, 1988. Éric Fabre collection

Johan Muyle, *Gloire et Honneur*, plaster sculpture, bicycle, refrigeration system, Belgian flag, bone, etc., 154 x 175 x 71 cm, 1991. Michel Rein collection, Paris

Johan Muyle, *L'Impossibilité de régner*, stuffed rhinoceros (epoxy), pigments, metal structure, wheels, motor, etc., 150 x 120 x 350 cm, 1991. Éric Fabre collection

Johan Muyle, *La Mèche rebelle*, polychrome plaster statue, bicycle wheel, miscellaneous objects, motorisation, electric cables, etc., 183 x 40 x 88 cm, 1991. Catherine et Jacques Verhaegen collection

Johan Muyle, *Oh la barbe !*, polychrome plaster statue, bicycle wheel, ivy, motor, lightbulbs, etc., 180 x 70 x 80 cm, 1991. Private collection

Johan Muyle, *Angel et Angelo*, polychrome plaster statue, polyester shells from the Berlin Wall, metal structure, motor, cables, etc., 320 x 144 x 72 cm, 1992. Wallonia-Brussels Federation collection

Johan Muyle, *B. au bord des lèvres*, biscuit tin with advertising, glass dish, pump, water, 40 x 25 x 10 cm, 1992. Nicolas Van Oost collection

Johan Muyle, *Quel monde merveilleux*, plaster statue ("false" bronze patina), rucksack, Côte d'Or chocolate box, rice, motor, etc., 109 x 41 x 59.5 cm, 1992. Collection Marc Remacle

Johan Muyle, *Heureusement que la pensée est muette*, "mermaid's tail" created in Kinshasa, polychrome plaster statuette, text on cellophane, motor, cables, etc., 61 x 37 x 32 cm, 1995. Lucien Bilinelli collection

Johan Muyle, *Ne rien dire, ne rien voir, ne rien entendre*, 3 stuffed monkeys (epoxy), motor, cables, variable dimensions, 1995. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Chacun son destin*, painting mounted on panel (created in Madras), painted text, sequins, metal cuve, fan, lighting, pump, pipe, cables, etc., 295 x 255 x 150 cm, 1997. Wallonia-Brussels Federation collection, MACS depository

Johan Muyle, *Little Hong Kong Girl*, miniature reproduction of *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* by Edgar Degas, mirror polished stainless steel structure, motor, cables, etc., 78 x 55 x 35 cm, 2005. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Is There Life Before Death?*, robotic sculptures made from didactic skeletons, clothes, moulded resin head, electronic system, lighting, antlers, light shade, lightbulbs, cables, 12V motors, etc., 220 x 116 x 105 cm, 2006. Province de Hainaut collection, BPS22 deposit, Charleroi

Johan Muyle, *The Show Must Go On*, LCD screen, electronic system, small embroidered curtains, motor, cables, etc., 159 x 35.35 x 35 cm, 2007. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Lucy I Have a Dream*, polyester copy of "Lucy", wooden model of a slave ship (made in Madagascar), LCD screen, motors, cables, 205 x 57 x 90 cm, 2008. Musée des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi collection

Johan Muyle, *AK*, demilitarised Kalashnikov, Mosquito, LCD screen, military rucksack, etc., 85 x 65 x 35 cm, 2009. Province de Liège collection

Johan Muyle, *Memento Mori*, customised bobber Harley Davidson, 99 x 214 x 76 cm, 2010. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Rien ne s'y oppose*, installation (mirror polished stainless steel rails, motorised sculptures using shop mannequins, neon lighting, car headlights, electronic control, etc.), variable dimensions, 2010. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *No More Heroes*, greenhouse, bust-mirror on a pivot stand, pierced by arrows, video, 202 x 193 x 193 cm, 2012. Commissioned by the Commission des Arts de Wallonie, owned by the Service public de Wallonie

Johan Muyle, *Past Glory, Present Pride*, drawing, 78.5 x 74 x 4 cm, 2013. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Satyameva Jayate*, figurine and ventilator, 105 x 80 x 77 cm, 2013. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *L'arbre du 21 juillet cache mal la forêt*, drawing, 78.5 x 74 x 4 cm, 2015. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Et in Arcadia ego*, miniature, stainless steel, small engraved text, 7.3 x 4.2 x 7.3 cm, artist's proof, 2015. Frédérique Van Leuven collection

Johan Muyle, *Pongal*, figurine and ventilator, 164 x 80,5 x 66 cm, 2015. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *L'Écorché*, plaster cast of *L'Écorché* by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, crystal glass, motor, cables, etc., 53 x 17 x 15 cm, 2017. Stéphan Uhoda collection

Johan Muyle, *Parabool der Blinden*, plaster cast of *L'Écorché* by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, neon lighting, wooden model boat (made in Madagascar), motor, cables, light shade, etc., 255 x 58.5 x 119 cm, 2017. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *De Spinario - Le Tireur d'épine*, plaster cast of a sculpture from the Hellenistic Period, bamboo structure, motor, gold leaf arrows, ambulance stretcher, etc., 191.5 x 193 x 70 cm, 2017. Artist's collection

Johan Muyle, *Singin' in the Rain*, installation (metal structure, detectors, electronic components, retroprojector screen, water tree, pump, cables, sounds, etc.), variable dimensions, 2020. Produced by the MACS for the exhibition *No Room for Regrets*.



AK, 2009.

Agenda of Activities*

Reservation obligatory

+32 (0)65 613 902 / reservations@grand-hornu.be

* Depending on the government measures currently applicable

>> CHILDREN AND FAMILIES <<

OPENING DAY

19th December

From 10am to 8pm

2pm: welcome / performance by the artist

4pm: 1st guided visit for children (max. 15 children)

4.30pm: 2nd guided visit for children (max. 15 children)

6pm: welcome / performance by the artist

CHRISTMAS AT GRAND-HORNU

From 23rd December to 3rd January

In collaboration with the CID - Centre for Innovation

and Design

In French

23rd December

2pm: *Stories, tales and fantasies !* Storytelling tour for aged 6 years and above (MACS)

4pm: guided visit of the exhibition *No Room for Regrets* for children (MACS)

26th December

From 2pm to 4pm:

Storytelling tour of the exhibition *Plant Fever* + activity (CID)

27th December

From 10am to 12.30pm:

Storytelling on the Spoil Tip n° 9 / Discussion on sylvotherapy (CID)

2pm: *Stories, tales and fantasies !* (MACS)

4pm: guided visit of the exhibition *No Room for Regrets* for children (MACS)

From 2pm to 4pm: workshop for children between 2 1/2 and 5 years (CID)

29th December

From 2pm to 4pm:

Storytelling tour of the exhibition *Plant Fever* + activity (CID)

30th December

2pm: *Stories, tales and fantasies !* Storytelling tour for aged 6 years and above (MACS)

4pm: guided visit of the exhibition *No Room for Regrets* for children (MACS)

2nd January

From 2pm to 4pm:

Storytelling tour of the exhibition *Plant Fever* + activity (CID)

3rd January

2pm: *Stories, tales and fantasies !* (MACS)

4pm: Guided visit of the exhibition *No Room for Regrets* for children (MACS)

BAZ'ART WORKSHOPS

Sundays 3rd January, 7th February,
7th March
2pm > 4.30pm

Discover the works of Johan Muyle during a practical workshop and a visit of the exhibition.

From 8 to 12
€5 / workshop

COURSES

Melting-potes
From 6th to 9th April

In the spirit of the artist's assemblage sculptures, mostly created from gleaned objects diverted from their original usages, young people can put their creativity and sense of humour to work whilst learning about a race of practices: enigmatic compositions, fanzines, slogans, blasons, melting pot, etc.

From 9 to 12 years
€60

› › ENCOUNTERS ‹ ‹

GUIDED VISIT BY ÉRIC FABRE

7th February - 2pm

CONFÉRENCE • DENIS GIELEN

28th March - 2pm

GUIDED VISIT BY JOHAN MUYLE

7th March - 2pm

GUIDED VISIT BY DENIS GIELEN

18th April - 2pm

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Practical Information

Grand-Hornu Site

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info.macs@grand-hornu.be

Opening hours:

Every day from 10am to 6pm, except Mondays, 24th, 25th and 31st December and 1st January.

Entry tickets:

- Combined Grand-Hornu site / MACS / CID : €10 - €6 (concession)
- Group tickets (minimum 15 people) : €6
- School group : €2
- Free for children under 6 years and adults accompanying school groups.

Guided visits:

- €50 for a group of 25 people max. during the week
- €60 for a group of 25 people max. during the weekend

Reservation service: reservations@grand-hornu.be / +32 (0)65 613 902