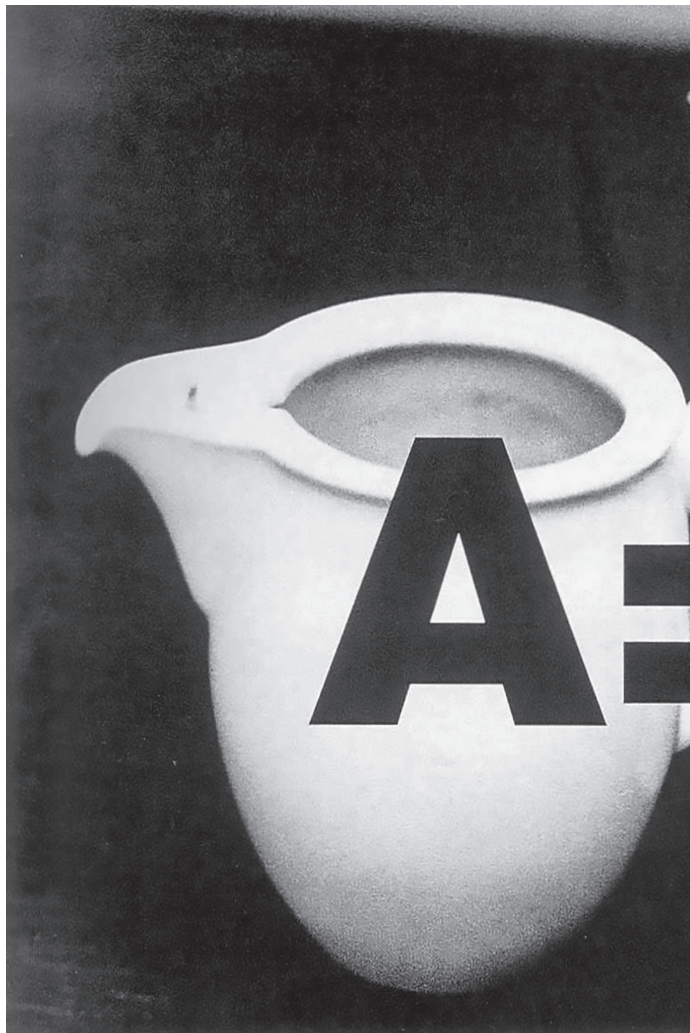


Together:		
Collaborative		
Art		
Practices		
From the Collection		

**From the Collection**



In the realm of visual arts, collaboration has often taken a back seat to the romanticized notion of the individual artistic genius. *Together: Collaborative Art Practices* aims to challenge the myth of the solitary artist and explore the unique dynamics of collective creativity and how it influences artistic production.

As far back as Leonardo Da Vinci and Peter Paul Rubens, artists had workshop practices where apprentices and assistants played pivotal roles in the creation of artworks, while remaining largely anonymous. Later in art history, artists began to explore new modes of collaboration, forming groups like De Stijl, the Surrealists, and Dada. While these movements embraced collective ideals, individual practices largely persisted. For instance De Stijl, with figures like Piet Mondriaan and Theo van Doesburg, sought a unified visual language but retained individual expressions. Today, artist collectives, such as Guerrilla Girls and Forensic Architecture, occupy an important place in the art world where they often address complex social, political, and cultural issues.

In contrast to the individual perspective of the solo artist they consciously embrace a collective ethos.

This exhibition showcases artworks from the S.M.A.K. collection that were produced between 1959 and 2021 by collectives, artist duos, one-time collaborators, as well as artworks intentionally designed to facilitate other artworks. It aims to illuminate the diverse landscape of collaborative art practices and challenge the prevailing narrative of the individual artist.

With works by

Marina Abramović & Jan Hoet,  
Allora & Calzadilla, Apparatus 22,  
Korakrit Arunanondchai  
(*feat. boychild*), Bernd & Hilla Becher,  
Guillaume Bijl, Anna & Bernhard Blume,  
Evelin Brosi & Elvis Bonier,  
Jacques Charlier met Claude Delfosse,  
Audrey Cottin, Jos de Gruyter &  
Harald Thys, Denicolai & Provoost,  
Ex-artists' collective  
(*Anikó Loránt, Kaszás Tamás*),  
Flexboj & L.A., Mekhitar Garabedian,  
Alexis Gautier & Fang Yaqi,  
General Idea, Gilbert & George,  
David Hammons & Bruna Esposito, HAP,  
IngridMwangiRobertHutter,  
Philip Metten, Jean Norad Land,  
Narcisse Tordoir & David Neirings,  
Englebert Van Anderlecht &  
Jean Dypréau, vedovamazzei  
Danh Vō, Franz West & Heimo Zobernig

# Marina Abramović & Jan Hoet

*The Urgent Dance*, 1996

Betacam SP transferred to digital file, 3 min 48 sec

S.M.A.K. archive

Serbian artist Marina Abramović (b. 1946, Belgrade) rose to prominence in the 1970s and is now one of the most famous and influential performance artists working today. Abramović is known for her groundbreaking and confrontational performances in which she uses her body as a primary means of expression. For these performances, the artist often collaborated with her then partner, German artist Ulay (1943-2020). Their collaboration resulted in a number of iconic works, such as *Imponderabilia* (1977), in which a naked Abramović and Ulay faced each other in a narrow doorway, forcing the audience to pass between them. These intense explorations of physical and emotional boundaries, actively involving the audience, are characteristic of their joint performative practice.

*The Urgent Dance* is an excerpt from the video recording of a performance that Abramović made in 1996, together with the museum's former director, Jan Hoet. The occasion was her solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, the forerunner of S.M.A.K.. To the sounds of traditional tango music, the artist and Hoet did not venture into a dance, but struck a series of somewhat dramatic poses – surrounded by a golden frame – in the manner of tableaux vivants. After this prelude, Abramović took to the floor with a professional dancer to perform a sultry tango, thereby revealing her full powers.

# Allora & Calzadilla

*Amphibious (Login-Logout)*, 2005

AP I/II, 2005

digital betacam transferred to DVD (colour, sound), 6 min 17 sec

S.M.A.K. collection

Jennifer Allora (b. 1974, Philadelphia) and Guillermo Calzadilla (b. 1971, Havana) live and work in San Juan, Costa Rica, and began their artistic collaboration in 1995. They are active across a wide range of media, including sculpture, photography, performance, and sound and video art. Allora & Calzadilla rose to prominence with their artistic and political work about the island of Vieques. This Puerto Rican territory was a NATO naval base from 1941 to 2003 and used as a bomb test site and munitions depot. The local population was displaced to a small section of the island. Vieques was eventually recognised as a nature reserve in 2004, thanks in no small part to the artist's activism. Their political and critical consciousness, and social engagement, is manifest in their work.

*Amphibious (Login-Logout)* (2005) was filmed in China's Pearl River Delta. The film shows a group of turtles floating on a piece of wood, interspersed with images of the nearby harbour. The turtles' characteristic lethargy and their slow journey on the driftwood are in stark contrast to the industrial and capitalist character of China's port area. The turtles are the anthropomorphic witnesses to the ecological destruction of the natural and human landscape around the Pearl River Delta. In this work, the artists denounce the gulf between 'natural' life and globalised industrial developments. The video is typical of their unwavering social commitment.

## Apparatus 22

- *Erratic Statistics (SMAK 1), 2015-2021*
- *Erratic Statistics (SMAK 2), 2015-2021*
- *Erratic Statistics (SMAK 3), 2015-2021*

wood, leather, 200 cm (x3)

S.M.A.K. collection

Apparatus 22, a group of three Romanian artists, is a self-proclaimed transdisciplinary collective of dreamers, researchers, poetic activists and (failed) futurologists. Erika Olea (b. 1982, Bucharest), Maria Farcas (b. 1977, Târgu Mureş), Dragos Olea (b. 1979, Bucharest) and Ioana Nemes (b. 1979, Bucharest- d. 2011, New York) founded the collective in Bucharest, Romania, in 2011. Their oeuvre includes installations, performances and interventions in the public space. The artists explore the links between economics, politics, gender studies, social movements, religion and fashion. In so doing, they strive to understand the underlying social structures of the world and to look at them with critical eyes.

The *Erratic Statistics (SMAK 1, 2 & 3)* are part of an unlimited series of artworks. The 2-metre-high wooden poles are wrapped with different coloured strips of leather, the order of which is always unique. The works are a reflection on colour and diversity and offer a critique of racism and colourism. Colourism implies structural discrimination based on gradations in skin colour. The work also alludes to white supremacy in the prevailing systems, as seen, for example, in the art and fashion worlds and in art schools.



**Q for S.M.A.K: If Raphael, (2019)**  
**videotape, textile, 300 x 750 cm**  
**Collection S.M.A.K.**

The work *Q for S.M.A.K: If Raphael* was created for *HAPPENING: 20 years of S.M.A.K*, a weekend of performances, concerts, workshops and interventions that was organised in May 2019. Through this artwork, the artists reflected on the future of the museum, using questions to stimulate a process of critical thinking. In their performance, Apparatus 22 proposed a form of museology that goes beyond the western/Eurocentric worldview.

# Korakrit Arunanondchai

*Letters to Chantri #1: The lady at the door/*

*The gift that keeps on giving (feat. boychild), 2014*

digital film, 17 min

Collection S.M.A.K.

Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986, Bangkok) is a young Thai artist whose work spans a broad spectrum of media and disciplines, including performance, music, video, painting and installation. While studying painting, he was deeply influenced by the renowned Thai artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, who was one of the pioneers of relational art in the 1990s, a movement that aimed to maximise the viewer's participation in the artwork. Tiravanija convinced Arunanondchai to combine his paintings more with performance, video and installation art. The large-scale performance and video projects that resulted catapulted Arunanondchai to fame. He typically collaborates with other artists. This work, for example, in which he mixes aspects of art history with social events in his homeland of Thailand, features the performance artist, boychild.

The video shown here belongs to the large-scale installation *Letters to Chantri #1: The lady at the door/The gift that keeps on giving (feat. boychild)* from the S.M.A.K. collection. Arunanondchai portrays himself as an artist-painter who is entangled with both his identity and his artistry. At one point, when he is confronted by a sectarian movement that offers him purification and redemption, the film tilts. What follows is a purification ritual for Arunanondchai, which gradually builds before culminating in an ecstatic gender-person change. The video not only serves as a critical reflection on art and artistry, but also on contemporary Thai consumer culture, in which religion often becomes a commodity that tricks people who genuinely seek ritual catharsis.

# Bernd & Hilla Becher

*Coal Bunkers*, 1972

gelatin silver print on photo paper, (9x) 24 x 18 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

Bernd (b. 1931, Siegen – d. 2007, Rostock) and Hilla Becher (b. 1934, Wobeser, Potsdam – d. 2015, Düsseldorf) were German conceptual and documentary photographers who were partners in both life and art. The couple mainly photographed disused industrial architecture, such as water towers, coal bunkers and factories. To photograph as objectively as possible, the Bechers adopted a specific method. They always used an 8x10-inch camera, employed a fixed camera angle, worked only in the spring and summer, in cloudy weather, and in the morning. With their systematic approach, the artists transformed everyday utilitarian structures into anonymous sculptures.

*Coal Bunkers* comprises nine black-and-white gelatin silver prints, arranged in a three-by-three grid. The series shows nine similar coal bunkers in Wales, northern France, the Ruhr and the Rhine regions. The couple took the photographs over several years but only later brought the images together in this arrangement.

# Guillaume Bijl

*Adriaen Brouwer anno 2018*, 2018

digital film, 12 min 53 sec

S.M.A.K. collection

Guillaume Bijl (b. 1946, Antwerp) is one of Belgium's most important sculptors and installation artists. He rose to prominence in the 1980s and remains influential to this day. His often monumental, almost hyper-realistic installation environments are quasi-literal copies of typical, Western consumer spaces such as travel agencies, mattress shops or supermarkets. Guillaume Bijl can thus be seen as a European adept of 'Appropriation Art'. This American art movement, which emerged in the early 1980s, was centred on literal reproductions of existing images from everyday life. The aim was to expose the 'authentic' codes of Western consumer society as visual clichés of themselves.

The work *Adriaen Brouwer anno 2018*, a rare film by Bijl, plays with the same unmasking strategy in terms of subject. In this almost burlesque video, the artist links the 17th-century Flemish painter Adriaen Brouwer – best known for his boisterous tavern scenes – with the huge Flemish cycling event 'The Tour of Flanders'. The work shows eight amateur cyclists – seven of whom are played by visual artists and one by a well-known cycling champion – enjoying a drink in a local café after an ascent. Slowly but surely, the scene degenerates – exactly as it would in an Adriaen Brouwer painting – into a bacchanalian drinking session. In *Adriaen Brouwer anno 2018*, Guillaume Bijl weaves together several of the key themes in his oeuvre: the subtle transformation of the typically Western consumer infrastructure, the fictionalisation of art history, and a sardonic view of consumer society as a cliché of itself.

# Anna & Bernhard Blume

**A = B, 1992**

**offset print on paper, 62 x 84 cm**

**S.M.A.K. collection**

German artist duo Anna Blume (b. 1936, Helming – d. 2020, Bork) and Bernhard Johannes Blume (b. 1937, Dortmund – d. 2011, Cologne) are primarily known for their large-scale, black-and-white photographs. They met at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf and married in 1966. The artists started working on what they called their 'life-long photo novel' in 1980. Their often humorous images subtly critiqued German middle class life and codes, while the visual effects they employed created a strange and irrational universe.

*A=B* is one of a series of works they made for the exhibition *I Am You – Artists against Violence* (1992). It was an initiative of Dietrich Sturm, then the director of the Goethe-Institut in Brussels. Twenty-three international artists designed posters for the project, including Anna and Bernhard Blume. Simultaneous exhibitions opened in Munich, Antwerp and Odessa, on the famous Potemkin Stairs, in 1993. The posters were eventually shown all over the world. The exhibition took a deeply socio-critical stance and denounced the emerging climate of racism, violence and intolerance. *I Am You* refers to the idea that everyone mirrors themselves in the other; hatred of the other thus implies a hatred of oneself. At the end of the day, we are always more alike than we are different, as epitomised by the powerful caption on Anna & Bernhard Blume's black-and-white photograph: *A = B*.

# Evelin Brosi & Elvis Bonier

*forse digitalisering n° 0001 000 000*, 2019

ed. 7/8, cotton, hardboard, metal, paper, ink

31 x 43 cm (frame), 39 x 43 cm (clipboard)

Collection Friends of S.M.A.K.

Evelin Brosi and Elvis Bonier are just two of Boris Van den Eynden's many alter egos. Van den Eynden (b. 1984, Schoten) is a Belgian artist, designer, author and musician with a pseudonym for every talent and discipline. Evelin Brosi is the 'word processor', for example, while Elvis Bonier is the visual and performance artist. Much of Van den Eynde's eclectic work sits on the threshold between different means of communication: from linguistic and textual – both analogue and digital – to the visual. It can be read as a critical, contrary-humorous response to traditional art and institutional criticism.

Van den Eynde published *forse digitalisering 0001 000 000*, a small work in an edition of ten, on the occasion of his Friends of S.M.A.K. exhibition in 2019. It is a typical example of how he combines (digi)linguistic semiotics and images. Inside the frame is a pair of gloves, one finger of which is coloured brown. The accompanying label describes the work in the following dry terms: 'The artist wears white cotton gloves and performs rectal touching, each time with a different finger'.

Of course, with the title *forse digitalisering 0001 000 000*, Van den Eynden absurdly refers to the origin of the word 'digital' – 'digit' – which means both 'digit' and 'finger'. The clipboard with numbers and text can be read as both a digital and analogue 'translation' of the performance, a kind of alternative gallery label that imparts abstract-ludic 'information' about the work.

# Jacques Charlier with Claude Delfosse

*Rocky Tiger*, 1971

16 mm film transferred to digital file (black-and-white, sound)

3 min 48 sec

S.M.A.K. collection

Jacques Charlier (b. 1939, Liège) is known for his critical and humorous practice, through which he endeavours to subvert art world conventions. His oeuvre is extremely diverse and includes paintings, collages, cartoons, installations, performances, songs, photographs and videos. From 1955 to 1977, Charlier combined his artistic work with his job as a technical draughtsman for the STP, the Province of Liège's technical office. Charlier made the film *Rocky Tiger* (1971) with his colleague, Claude Delfosse. As a youth, and prior to his career at the STP, Delfosse had played the guitar and sang in various bands. His pseudonym was 'Rocky Tiger'. At Charlier's invitation, and accompanied by musicians, Delfosse stepped back into his old alter-ego's shoes to perform a version of Carl Perkins' rock 'n' roll classic, 'Blue Suede Shoes'. A song that became world famous in 1956 when it was covered by Elvis Presley. The recording reveals how circumstances prevented the talented Delfosse from becoming a professional musician and fulfilling his dream. *Rocky Tiger* is a disarming testimony that highlights, with the lightest possible touch, the vulnerable status of the artist in society. For many, a professional art career remains an aspiration; in practice, it often involves combining creative work with another job.

# Audrey Cottin

***Seeds Arrangement #0001, 2018***

**oil paper, PH neutral paper, seeds, glue, 120 x 120 cm**

**S.M.A.K. collection**

Audrey Cottin (b. 1984, Saint-Mandé) is a French artist and researcher. Inspired by Robert Filliou's belief that 'everybody is perfect', she always seeks the ultimate form of collaboration and involves specialists from a wide range of disciplines in her artistic practice. Cottin's work lies at the intersection of performance and sculpture. She often lets her collaborators determine the meaning of the end results.

*Seeds Arrangement #0001* is part of a series of works, four of which belong to the S.M.A.K. collection. The works explore various gardening techniques, from square-foot gardening to permaculture. This work is made of crystal- and acid-free paper, seeds and glue. Most of the seeds are organic, and they are packed between two sheets of acid-free paper for optimal conservation. Their properties and growth potential determine the arrangement. The artist planted one of the other works in the collection, *Seeds Arrangement #0010*, in the Citadel Park behind the museum. Cottin worked in close collaboration with S.M.A.K.'s conservation department and the City of Ghent's Green Service. The *Seed Arrangement* series is the perfect symbiosis of collaborative performance and (ecological) sculpture.



# Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys

**S.T.**

**S.D.**

**colour print on Dibond, framed, 46 x 60,5 x 2,5 cm**

**Private collection, Belgium (long-term loan)**

Jos de Gruyter (b. 1965, Geel) and Harald Thys (b. 1966, Wilrijk) live and work in Brussels. They have been working as a duo since the late 1980s. De Gruyter and Thys are mainly known for their audio-visual productions, but are also active in the field of photography, sculpture and drawing. Their work is characterised by humour and simplicity, while also embodying critical and profound reflections. The duo exhibits nationally and internationally, and represented Belgium at the Venice Biennale in 2019, with their project *Mondo Cane*. For this latter work, the artists created a cloistered world with twenty-two puppets that together formed an installation. It could be seen as a kind of contemporary museum of folk art. Underneath this apparent ordinariness, however, lay a mysterious and subversive dimension that emphasised an atmosphere of inertia and apathy. *S.T.* is an edition made after an original work on paper that was part of the Venice Biennale project. The depiction of a simple wheelbarrow epitomises the artist duo's fascination with the mundane and banal. Although it is an edition, the work is a perfect illustration of the artists' simple, almost naive drawing style.

# Denicolai & Provoost

*Hello, Are We In The Show? (drawings animatic), 2012*

ink and colored pencil on paper, variable dimensions

S.M.A.K. collection

Artists Simona Denicolai (b. 1972, Milan) and Ivo Provoost (b. 1974, Diksmuide) have been collaborating for over twenty years. Their multidisciplinary practice seeks to disrupt our habitual thought processes and routine behaviour. Through protocols and scenarios, which they elaborate with meticulous attention to the specificity of a place, they involve people, objects and stories as 'collaborators' in the artistic process. The exchanges they create are embedded in a local reality, but also touch on universal themes such as citizenship, identity and solidarity.

*Hello, Are We In the Show? (drawings animatic)* consists of 172 original drawings from a series of 344. They form the storyboard for the animated film of the same name. The selection was edited into a long passage that appears in the film.

In *Hello, Are We In the Show?* Denicolai & Provoost sketch a picture of daily life in the Sonian Forest near Brussels. Animals, plants, trees, people and local industries are an indiscriminate part of the overall picture. The drawings show noisy passenger planes, cars and trucks alongside squirrels, gliding swans and other fauna. The duo confounds our expectations with this work: it does not have the sweet, innocent character of a traditional Hollywood animated film, but instead denounces the way we treat nature.

# Ex-artists' collective

(Anikó Loránt, Kaszás Tamás)

*Broadband Bulletin Board No. 2 - Forest School Notes, 2011*  
mixed media, variable dimensions

S.M.A.K. collection

Tamás Kaszás (b. 1976, Dunaújváros) and Anikó Loránt (b. 1977, Székesfehérvár – d. 2020, Budapest) studied Intermedia at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. They collaborated from 2002 until Anikó Loránt's death in 2020. The artists are known for their large-scale installations, reflecting on social issues and environmental sustainability, amongst other things.

The work *Broadband Bulletin Board No. 2 - Forest School Notes* consists of a long wooden noticeboard containing drawings, photos, objects and a digital screen. The 2D works and items are studies of patterns and shapes in nature. According to the artists, the work is about living a natural life, informed by a strong poetic, spiritual and ecological vision. The installation was made on the occasion of the exhibition *Joy and Disaster* (2011) at S.M.A.K., a dialogue between the work of eight contemporary Hungarian artists and the permanent collection.

# Flexboj & L.A.

*KUNSTENAAR/ARTIST/KUNSTLER/ARTISTE*, 2020

porcelain paint on porcelain plate, 25 cm (diameter)

Friends of S.M.A.K. collection

Flexboj & L.A. is the artist duo Nathan van de Vijver (b. 1995) and Lander Allaert (b. 1995). With their vibrant colours and often cartoonish visual elements, the duo appears to subscribe to the tradition of somewhat naive-looking figurative painting. Yet the final image is less important than their exploration of the diverse ways that paint can be applied to various mediums. The pair usually add the figurative elements only after creating an abstract background, typically involving multiple techniques. Although Van de Vijver and Allaert present themselves to the outside world as one artist, under the name Flexboj & L.A., this does not imply that they always collaborate on their canvases. The duo's partnership is more about an incessant exchange of ideas, each working separately on their own paintings, yet constantly communicating and inspiring each other to maintain a shared artistic vision.

The edition *KUNSTENAAR/ARTIST/KUNSTLER/ARTISTE* (2020) was published by the Friends of S.M.A.K. and includes six unique, painted porcelain plates. In this series, the duo playfully mocks the often romanticised and stereotypical societal perceptions of artistry. They portray the artist as a jester, a blind man, a drunkard, a clown, a beggar and even a donkey. The series frames their broader interest in the mechanisms of the art world but also highlights their satirical approach towards its elitism.

# Mekhitar Garabedian

*L'Étranger*, 2005

ed. 1/3, 2005, digital file (colour, sound) 4 min 5 sec

S.M.A.K. collection

Mekhitar Garabedian (b. 1977, Aleppo) is a Belgian-Syrian artist with Armenian roots. Garabedian works across different media, including drawing, video, photography and installations. In his work, he refers – from the perspective of the diaspora – to the language, culture and history of Armenia, the country his grandparents fled in 1915 to escape the genocide. Moreover, his work is permeated with references to literature, philosophy, music and art.

In the short video work *L'Étranger*, Garabedian reflects on the position of the individual and the evolution of their identity in a society shaped by migrations. The work's title refers to the prose poem of the same name by the French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, in which he describes the feelings of alienation and isolation that are inextricably linked to the modern urban environment. *L'Étranger* shows a man standing in a bleak city park, looking around at his surroundings. Off-screen, someone poses the questions from Baudelaire's poem. In this video, Garabedian reflects on how every migrant carries their memories, identity and history with them, torn between the desire to cling to the past and the lost homeland, and the need to build a new life in a new country. The man in the video is actor Jos Verbist, while the interviewer is played by the artist Ben Benaouisse. Garabedian's former partner, Céline Butaye, was the cinematographer for the work.

## Alexis Gautier & Fang Yaqi

- **MacGuffin Series, Alexis/Jinsheng/655, 2021**  
Porcelain, iron, rubber, 201 x 91 x 0,8 cm  
Long-term loan Flemish Community Collection
- **MacGuffin Series, Anupam/Shi Jian Workshop/GE554, 2021**  
Porcelain, iron, rubber, 201 x 86 x 0,8 cm  
Long-term loan Flemish Community Collection
- **MacGuffin Series, Shen/Peiyintang/#5109, 2021**  
Porcelain, iron, rubber, 196.5 x 68 x 0,6 cm  
Long-term loan Flemish Community Collection

Alexis Gautier (b. 1990, Amiens) lives and works in Brussels and Brittany. He does not subscribe to the traditional notion of the artist as an individual genius and bases his artistic practice, instead, on collaboration and shared authorship. Cultural transactions form the basis for new narratives, which are elaborated across a range of media, including sculptures, textiles, videos and drawings.

For the *MacGuffin Series*, Gautier asked several people to briefly describe a door that is meaningful to them. The artworks are named after the participants, whom Gautier regards as co-authors. He also collaborated with the Chinese ceramicist Fang Yaqi on this project. She interpreted the descriptions and translated them into a series of porcelain panels. Although they resemble doors, Gautier leaves their exact status open to question. He views the works as autonomous sculptures, elements that might serve as a backdrop or scenography, or even as supports for other artworks. The word 'MacGuffin' in the title is taken from the world of cinema. It means an object or device in a film which serves merely as a trigger for the plot, and largely drives it, but is otherwise ill-defined.

# General Idea

**AIDS, 1987**

**silkscreen on paper, 68,5 x 68,5cm**

**S.M.A.K. collection**

General Idea is the name of a Canadian artists' collective that was active between 1969 and 1994. It comprised Michael Tims (b. 1946, Vancouver), better known as AA Bronson, Ronald Gabe (b. 1945, Winnipeg – d. 1994), aka Felix Partz, and Slobodan Saia-Levy (b. 1944, Parma – d. 1994), nicknamed Jorge Zontal. General Idea were internationally acclaimed for their artistic practice that addressed, amongst other things, the myth of the artist, the role of the mass media and issues around gender and sexual repression. The collective took a conceptual approach and produced works in diverse media, ranging from photography, sculpture and painting to video, performance, happenings, installations and mail art. The name General Idea was coined by accident in 1970 when an exhibition organiser mistook the title of one of their artworks for the name of the group.

The AIDS screen-print shows a logo designed by the collective, inspired by Robert Indiana's iconic Pop Art painting, *Love* (1966). General Idea replaced the word 'love' with 'AIDS'. Amid the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, the collective wanted to break the taboo surrounding the disease and tackle the stigma that it only affected gay men. The artists strove to disseminate the logo as widely as possible to help raise awareness of the disease. Their design was displayed around the world, from trams in Amsterdam to a billboard in Times Square.

# Gilbert & George

*Door*, 2004

photomontage, 226,5 x 381 cm

Private collection Belgium (long-term loan)

Gilbert & George is an English-Italian artist duo comprising Gilbert Prousch (b. 1943, San Martin de Tor) and George Passmore (b. 1942, Plymouth). They met while studying sculpture at St Martin's School of Art in London. Gilbert & George work across a wide range of media including drawing, video, photography and performance but are perhaps best known for their photographic grids. The latter works, which are often monumental in scale, are made up of multiple images that, together, form a whole. Not infrequently, the artists appear as the protagonists in these works. The motto 'Art for All' reverberates throughout their oeuvre and reflects the duo's desire to escape the traditional art world and the elite, and to make art accessible to everyone.

*Door* is a typical example of Gilbert & George's many photomontages. It comprises eighteen framed photographs. The two artists are shown on the left and right, flanking the two central figures. Thick white numerals in the foreground read '2004', the date the work was made. The previous year, incidentally, marked a turning point in Gilbert & George's career. This was when they switched from conventional techniques (including analogue film, enlargers and manually applied dyes) to digital tools (including scanners, computers and digital printers). The work belongs to the series *Perverse Pictures* (2004), every image of which features the artists. The photo collage is characterised by the use of bright colours, patterns delineated in black, and a large format. With this series, the artists try to expose taboos, challenge social conventions and convey universal emotions and ideas.



# David Hammons & Bruna Esposito

*Materasso Addormentato*, 1991

mixed media, 62 x 140 x 62 cm

Private collection, Belgium (long-term loan)

David Hammons (b. 1943, Springfield) is one of the most important and influential American artists of recent decades. His work often includes utilitarian and found objects that he transforms into thoughtful sculptural assemblages with multiple meanings, related to themes such as identity, social issues and African-American culture. Hammons is also active in other media, such as painting, performance and video.

For *Materasso Addormentato*, Hammons collaborated with the Italian artist Bruna Esposito (b. 1960, Rome), who is best known for her poetic installations and use of unconventional materials. Hammons and Esposito were a couple for a while and lived together in Rome. The duo created this work for a gallery exhibition in Berlin, entitled *Heimat*. The rolled-up, old-fashioned mattress can be seen as a metaphor for homelessness. It also alludes to unhoused people's constant search for a temporary 'home' in the public space. The snoring that reverberates from the mattress echoes the challenges of sleeping rough, but also evokes the idea of sleeping off a drinking session. The necktie that binds the mattress forms a stark contrast to the latter's dirty appearance. The tie has a decorative aspect, alluding to a homeless person's desire to look good despite the difficult circumstances, and the pride and dignity inherent within this act.

# HAP

*Curver-bak*, 2003

ed. 2/20, cardboard, 25 x 43 x 35 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

Jens De Schutter (b. 1979), Piet Mertens (b. 1978) and Wim Waelput (b. 1979) founded the Belgian artists' collective HAP in 1999. Unlike many other collectives, which usually unite around a common artistic statement or substantive ideology, HAP adopts a kind of self-critical mentality – both exuberant and unruly – and puts the wildest ideas to the test.

The collective's objects, sculptures and installations often have a deceptively simple appearance. Furthermore, they are often made of poor and utilitarian materials such as cardboard, plastic, wood and other such things. HAP typically focuses on the labour-intensive preparatory phase of an idea, and the making process itself, rather than on the end result. The 2008 work *Curver-bak* is a typical example of this approach. The work is a 1:1 scale version of a typical household moving box (by the brand Curver), but made in cardboard instead of the usual plastic. Although the object looks ordinary, the preliminary design and execution phase was anything but. In this work, HAP subtly and humorously plays with the boundaries between (utilitarian) object and sculpture, process and result, and banality and art.

# IngridMwangiRobertHutter

*For Children*, 2006

DVD transferred to digital file (colour, silent), 10 min 36 sec

S.M.A.K. collection

Ingrid Mwangi (b. 1975, Nairobi) and Robert Hutter (b. 1964, Ludwigshafen/Rhein) live and work together as a collective. They operate under the name IngridMwangiRobertHutter, or Mwangi Hutter for short. The artists met in 1998 and have been collaborating in this form since 2005. In their practice, they emphasise that they are not so much a collective as a shared artistic personality. IngridMwangiRobertHutter's work includes performances and videos in which they reflect on the intersections between identity, culture and social boundaries.

In the video *For Children*, the bodies of the two artists serve as their canvases. An inkless tattoo machine is used to puncture words into the white skin of Robert Hutter, and into the dark skin of Ingrid Mwangi. Several of their videos address the issues of pain and violence. In this particular work, the fragmented text on the skin suggests that inter-human violence leads to isolation and loss for all.

# Philip Metten

*CINEMA*, 2017

aluminium, wood, plexiglass, fluorescent lamps,  
variable dimensions

**Long-term loan Flemish Community Collection**

Philip Metten's (b. 1977, Genk) interdisciplinary practice includes painting, sculpture, architectural installations and collages. His works are difficult to categorise, but are instantly recognisable through the limited visual vocabulary of geometric figures the artist employs and constantly reconfigures. The common thread running through Metten's diverse oeuvre is undoubtedly architecture. He creates both large-scale, site-specific installations that respond to real needs, such as a restaurant, and small-scale, sculptural collages with technical drawing paper that evoke the ground plans of big cities.

*CINEMA* is a mobile and modular structure specifically designed to present video works by other artists. Metten leaves the selection of films to the organising institution. Formally, the aluminium structure is reminiscent of historic still cameras with their distinctive retractable, accordion-like mechanism. On one side, the work's shipping crate functions as a projection wall. The other side is enclosed with a sculptural octagonal relief surrounded by four triangular lighting elements that diffusely illuminate the surrounding space. It almost seems as if the entire structure operates independently, as a projector. The viewer has the option of entering the cinema or walking around it; *CINEMA* is simultaneously sculpture and architecture. Unlike the standard black box of a cinema auditorium, Metten's work is a transparent structure that blends into the surrounding architectural space. The films can even be watched without the viewer taking a seat in the work.

# Jean Norad Land

*A Brief History of the Belgian Flag, 2018*

ed. 3/11, polyester microfibre, embroidered

Gift of the artist

Jean Norad Land is a pseudonym for an artistic duo that wishes to remain anonymous.

*A Brief History of The Belgian Flag* is a giant embroidered flag, with the Belgian colours intertwined like a patchwork, and the dates 1830 and 1831. The first date refers to the foundation of Belgium as an independent nation-state. In that year, it was ordained that the national flag would be composed of horizontal bands of red, yellow and black. This design was then enshrined in the Belgian constitution. However, a year later, in 1831, it was decided that the tricolour ought to be vertical, as the horizontal version was too close to the flag of the Netherlands, a country that had once ruled Belgium. Yet the constitution was not updated to reflect the change. To this day, the current Belgian flag is essentially unconstitutional. With *A Brief History of The Belgian Flag*, Jean Norad Land ironically seems to suggest that the country of Belgium is relative, and that any 'national' delimitation is at least open to debate, if not even a kind of fiction. The flag is shown on the roof of the museum.

# Narcisse Tordoïr & David Neirings

*Tears of the Skull*, 2001

mixed media, 250 x 390 x 100 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

Narcisse Tordoïr (b. 1954, Mechelen) is one of Belgium's most important artists. He has been exploring the boundaries of painting and investigating the possibilities of this medium in an extremely individual, multifaceted and interdisciplinary way since the 1980s. In so doing, he stretches the boundaries of painting to such an extent that his works often go beyond the classical canvas and take the form of installations, monumental or otherwise, which are frequently conceived and realised with the help of others.

*Tears of the Skull* is a typical example of his approach. This work – a collaboration between Narcisse Tordoïr and the painter, DJ and skater David Neirings (b. 1972, Gent) – consists of three panels, which are painted with an image that falls somewhere between the well-known game 'drawing by numbers' and a technical drawing of archaeological excavations. Various found objects, including skulls and bones – all of which are numbered – are strewn across the sculptural composition. Coloured aluminium shelves have been fixed horizontally across the painting. This suggests that the work might have a potential function, as a bookcase, a metaphor for memory or the archive, or as something akin to the workings of the brain in the skull, thus again linking it to the archaeological dig. The entire memory network is illuminated from above by lights that run the entire breadth of the work.

# Englebert Van Anderlecht & Jean Dyréau

*Multiplier les sens*, 1959

oil on canvas, 126,5 x 156,5 cm

Long-term loan Flemish Community Collection

Englebert Van Anderlecht's (b. 1918 – d. 1961, Schaarbeek) painterly practice evolved from a figurative style to an expressive and colourful cubism, before finally transitioning into an informal abstract-expressionist approach from 1955 onwards. This latter phase was characterised by imposing canvases on which spontaneous and expressive brushstrokes converge in intense colours. It reflects the artist's enduring search for a personal way of manifesting his emotions. In 1959, Van Anderlecht collaborated with the Brussels writer Jean Dyréau (b. 1917 – d. 1986, Brussels) on the '*peintures partagées*' [shared paintings] series, in which they collaborated on a series of oil paintings that fused words and images.

*Multiplier les sens* is a typical work from this series and epitomises the spontaneous and direct way that these paintings were created. Sometimes, Van Anderlecht painted the broad, dripping strokes of colour, after which Dyréau would write a few words between the swirling abstract hues. At other times, Van Anderlecht responded with energetic brushstrokes to the words that Dyréau had already placed on the canvas. The result is a symbiosis of language and image that transcends individual artistic expression and, as the title suggests, creates a multiplication of sensory experiences and meanings.

# vedovamazzei

*Trees*, 1993-2000

ink on paper, 30 x 21 x 6 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

Italian artist duo Stella Scala (b. 1964) and Simeone Crispino (b. 1962) have been collaborating under the professional name vedovamazzei since 1991. By a twist of fate, they discovered their pseudonym in Naples. The artists saw the word on a street sign, and it captured their imaginations.

The duo explores different media such as painting, sculpture, photography and installations. Balancing between seriousness and irony, their work offers a humorous reflection on contemporary society. Themes such as identity and feelings of insecurity play a central role. By combining image, object and text in confusing and deceptive ways, they confront viewers with their inability to interpret the artwork.

*Trees* is a ream of paper (an old trade size, comprising 500 sheets) made between 1993 and 2000. On the side of the ream, the individual sheets form a picture, which has been drawn in ink. The scene is the wooded landscape from the background of *The Annunciation* (1472) by Leonardo Da Vinci. Moreover, the work seems to allude to flipbooks and animation art, whereby successive images create the illusion of movement. Yet vedovamazzei's image is instantly readable, in contrast to the dynamic nature of a flipbook.



# Danh Vō

**2.2.1861, 2009-2018**

**ink on paper, 29,6 x 21 cm**

**S.M.A.K. collection**

Danh Vō (b. 1975, Bà Rịa) was a child when his family fled their war-ravaged homeland of Vietnam. A Danish freighter rescued their boat and took the group to Copenhagen. The experience profoundly shaped Vō's artistic practice, which focuses on the themes of identity, cultural assimilation and the ramifications of geopolitical events. His artworks often reflect on these subjects, exploring how the complex interplay of personal experience and collective history moulds our identities.

*2.2.1861* (2009-2018) is a transcription of Saint Théophane Vénard's final letter to his father, which he wrote just prior to his beheading in Vietnam in 1861. Vénard was a French Catholic missionary. The artwork is part of an unlimited edition. Every addition to the series is handwritten by the artist's father, Phung Vō, who was taught the art of calligraphy as a child.

Danh Vō exposes the intricate dynamic between originality and repetition in *2.2.1861*. He complicates our understanding of authorship by attributing the creation of the work to both himself and his father. Furthermore, the letter is essentially a perpetual copy of an original. The walnut frame adds yet another, deeper layer of meaning. The wood comes from trees in the Sierra Orchards, owned by Craig McNamara, the son of the US Secretary of State during the Vietnam War, Robert McNamara. The intertwining of the three father-son relationships is archetypal of Vō's work, in which he weaves personal experiences with global social issues, in this case religion, colonialism and war.

## Franz West

*Habsburger Stuhl*, 1989

wrought iron, 77 x 112 x 53 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

## Heimo Zobernig

*Untitled (pedestal for 'Habsburger Stuhl')*, 1989

emulsion paint on chipboard, 11 x 150 x 120 cm

S.M.A.K. collection

Franz West (b. 1947 – d. 2012, Vienna) began his artistic career as a painter, but soon switched to installation and sculpture. The convergence of different art forms is characteristic of his oeuvre. In the early days of his career, in the 1970s, West worked under the banner of Vienna Aktionism and concentrated on collages and sculptures. The latter were made of plaster, polyester, metal and papier-mâché and, in a later phase, aluminium. West experimented with making furniture in the late 1980s. His sculptures and installations are often invitations to physical interactions, whereby the visitor is actively involved in the work. He started making *Passstücke* in the early 1970s, for example. These are small sculptures that can be worn around the body in various ways.

The *Habsburger Stuhl* is an example of West's furniture from 1989. In this work, the artist explores the boundaries between furniture's practical function and the artistic quality of an artwork. The metal chair stands on a custom-made white plinth by Heimo Zobernig, a friend of the artist.

Heimo Zobernig (b. 1958, Mauthen) is an Austrian artist. He studied at the Akademie der bildende Künste and at the Universität für angewandte Kunst in Vienna, where he still lives and works. He has taught sculpture at the Akademie since 2000. His oeuvre is characterised by a diverse range of media: from sculpture and

painting to installation and performance. He regularly alludes to theatre, graphic design and architecture in his work. Since the 1980s, his practice has been characterised by a minimalist/abstract language of form, revealing visual similarities to artists such as Piet Mondriaan and Blinky Palermo.



From the collection *Together: Collaborative Art Practices*  
25 May/8 September, 2024  
S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst

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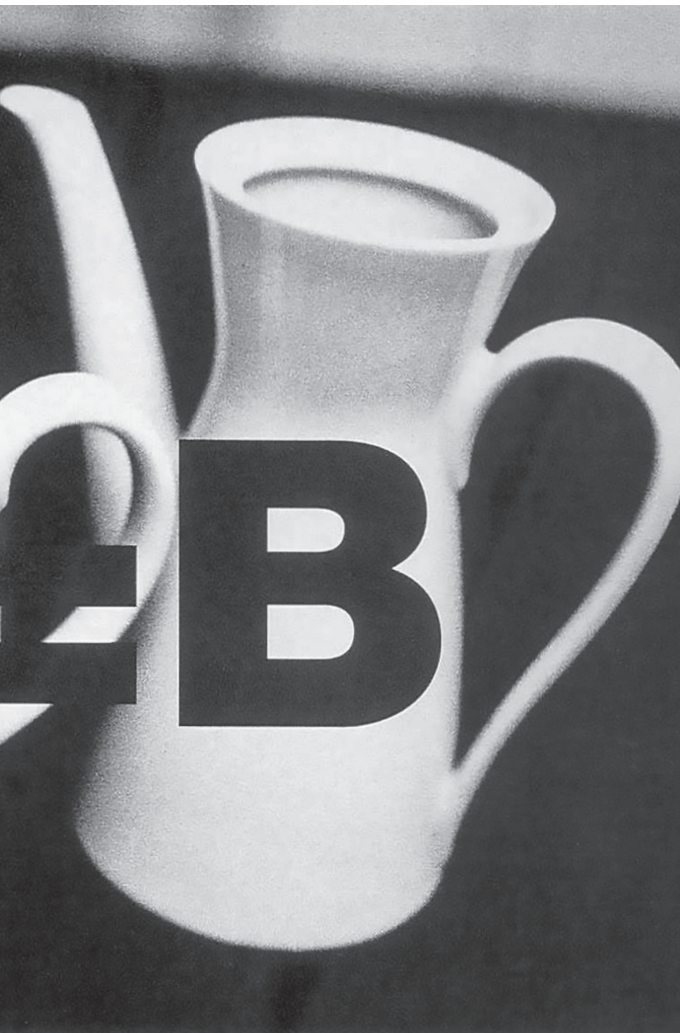
Booklet published on the occasion of the exhibition  
From the Collection: *Together - Collaborative Art Practices*

text: Nujan Brabants, Jeroen Staes, Lena Vanneste, Thibaut Verhoeven  
final editors: Justine Boutens, Jeroen Staes, Thibaut Verhoeven  
translation & editing: Marian Decroos, Helen Simpson & Catherine Warnant  
design: Jan en Randoald  
Published by S.M.A.K., May 2024

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