

From the Collection GIFTED

Roger Ballen

Acid Bath, 2019

mixed media - technique mixte

h. ca. 70 cm x b. ca. 180 cm x d. ca. 70.5 cm

2020 schenking - donation

Roger Ballen (b. 1950, New York) is a well-known American photographer who studied psychology before turning to documentary photography in the 1970s. He gradually evolved towards fiction, whereby he also integrated other media such as film, installation, theatre, sculpture and painting and drawing into his artistic practice. Ballen describes his often theatrical and macabre works, which are also humorous, as existential psychodramas that affect the marginal side of the unconscious. At the same time, they evoke the underbelly of the human condition in which feelings such

as madness, suppressed thoughts, chaos and disruption reign.

'Acid Bath' is a recent installation by the artist from 2019 and is typical of the 'Ballenesque' universe, a term that was soon used to label his work. It functions as a kind of catch-all for the artistic influences in his oeuvre, such as absurdist theatre, outsider art, the surreal and the grotesque. *'Acid Bath'* depicts a sinister bathroom scene in which a female body, dressed in tights, looks as if it is being dissolved in a grimy, frothing bathtub. The scene seems to have been plucked from a gruesome nightmare on the one hand, but on the other seems to betray a macabre and absurdist sense of humour. This ensures that the scene, which depicts the marginality of the human subconscious, remains palatable for the viewer. The work was donated to the S.M.A.K. collection in 2020 upon the occasion of his exhibition *'The Theatre of the Ballenesque'* at the Centrale for Contemporary Art in Brussels in 2019.

Massimo Bartolini

Dust Chaser, 2018

potlood en inkt op gemaroufleerd papier -
pencil and ink on marouflaged paper -
crayon et encre sur papier marouflé
h. 271.5 cm x b. 388 cm
2019 schenking - donation

The Italian artist Massimo Bartolini (b. 1962, Cecina) can chiefly be described as a sculptor, but his artistic practice also includes performances, videos, photos and large-scale architectural, experiential installations. He manipulates objects, negates their function and meanings, and both destabilises and intensifies how they are perceived and experienced. In so doing, he subtly plays with mostly ephemeral elements such as air, sound, water, dust, etc. The work of Massimo Bartolini is often sensual and meditative and offers room for illusion, fantasy, utopia and nostalgia in a poetic, sometimes playful manner.

'Dust Chaser' is a monumental drawing on paper, mounted on canvas, which the artist created in 2018. At first sight, there is virtually nothing to see on the work, but upon closer inspection the entire surface area of almost ten square metres appears to consist of hundreds of miniscule, ephemeral

marks that Bartolini has made in ink and pencil. The artist explained that he allowed the paper to gather dust in his studio, thus enabling it to subsequently function as a true 'tracker' or, in this case, 'dust chaser'. Each particle of dust was marked using a drawing medium. Although apparently highly ephemeral, '*Dust Chaser*' is therefore a very labour-intensive work, which is at odds with the meditative silence and subtle illusion emanating from this drawing. The work was donated by the artist to S.M.A.K. in 2019, when the museum celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

Marinus Boezem

Statement Het Jaar 2000, 1967

vlakdruk op papier - flat print on paper

h. 83.5 cm x b. 64.5 cm

2016 schenking - donation

Marinus Boezem (b. 1934, Leerdam) is one of the most important representatives of Dutch conceptual art. In the 1960s and 1970s, he also enjoyed international fame as part of this artistic movement. Typical of Boezem's

art is that he regularly works with highly ephemeral, atmospheric 'materials' such as light, air, sound and movement, which he combines with a formally refined, almost minimalistic visual language.

'Statement Het Jaar 2000' [Statement, The Year 2000], which Marinus Boezem wrote in 1967, is all that remains of his so-called *'Luchtplastieken'*, or *'Air sculptures'*, that he created for the exhibition *'Het Jaar 2000'* in that same year at the RAI in Amsterdam. In this text, the artist describes a utopian vision of the future in which air becomes the basic raw material for society and its (technological) development. When considered through the lens of the current climate crisis, this small conceptual artwork is imbued with an almost prophetic significance. Marinus Boezem donated *'Statement Van Het Jaar 2000'* to S.M.A.K. in 2016, to complement a number of other works that the museum purchased from the artist in the same year.

Sergey Bratkov

Red Horse, 1998, ed. 4/10
chromogene kleurenfoto - chromogenic

colour photo - photo couleur chromogène
h. 60.5 cm x b. 30.5 cm
2020 schenking - donation

Sergey Bratkov (b. 1960, Kharkov) has been fascinated by photography since the late 1970s. He was a member of the Fast Reaction Group from 1994 to 1997, an artist's collective that included figures such as Boris Mikhailov and Sergiy Solonsky. In addition to creating provocative performances, the artists were chiefly occupied with photography. Bratkov's work generally takes a documentary approach, with an often absurdist and bitter undertone. The work '*Red Horse*' from 2005 shows the artist's playfully humorous tendencies, and in this sense is a relative exception to the more documentary aspect of many of Bratkov's other photos. The solemnity of the equine sculpture is undermined by exaggeration, thanks to the application of what appear to be red tomatoes. In 2005, Sergey Bratkov was given an important retrospective exhibition of his work at the museum. '*Red Horse*' was presented to the museum by an anonymous donor.

Peter Downsbrough

MAAR/ TOT - AS, iF, 1983

mixed media - technique mixte

variabele afmetingen - dimensions

variables - variable dimensions

2021 schenking – donation

The work of the American artist and architect Peter Downsbrough (b. 1940, New Brunswick) is an in-depth reflection on architecture and urbanisation in society. From the very outset, the artist conducted research into sculpture and place and into their relationship to the surroundings and to language. This led to the personal mediation of notions such as ‘situation’ and ‘context’, which are as equally applicable to linguistic structures as they are to architectural space. Since the 1970s, the artist has used constantly changing configurations of austere visual elements, such as letters and lines, in his spatial works. These allow the physical space to be read or experienced in a new way.

Peter Downsbrough’s sculptural spatial installations often include grammatical conjunctions and articles such as AS, IF, MAAR, FROM, MAAR, OP, EN, ET,

OU, MAIS. This is also the case in this work, '*MAAR/ TOT - AS, iF*' (1983), which the artist created upon the occasion of his solo exhibition in that same year at the then well-known Galerie Gewad in Ghent. The installation consists of the monumental word MAAR (in the form of white letters that are placed at a 55° angle against the museum wall), the word TOT (vertical, split, black and also against the wall) and the word AS (executed in adhesive letters and stuck to the floor). These words have a dual function for Downsborough: on the one hand they function as iconographic characters that underline, reinterpret and uncover the specific architectural space, and on the other hand they give the viewer the opportunity to jump from one linguistic idea to another. Peter Downsborough donated '*MAAR/ TOT - AS, iF*' to S.M.A.K. in 2021 as part of the long-term mutual engagement between the artist and the museum. In 2006, S.M.A.K. organised a major exhibition featuring his work, after which a number of pieces were added to the collection. '*Two Pipes*', Downsborough's permanent installation from 1974 that can be seen on the museum façade, also became

part of the museum collection thanks to the generous donation by Raymond and Hélène Verbouwens in 2018. S.M.A.K. has recently purchased a number of other important photographic works by the artist. The donation of '*MAAR/ TOT - AS, iF*' should therefore also be seen as a welcome addition that complements the existing ensemble of works by Peter Downsbrough in the S.M.A.K. collection.

Marlene Dumas

*Poging 8 tot het verbeelden
van Jan Hoet, 1992*

inkt, potlood en waterverf op papier -
ink, pencil and watercolour on paper -
encre, crayon et aquarelle sur papier
h. 20.5 cm x b. 13.5 cm
2016 schenking – donation

Marlene Dumas

J.H., 1992

inkt, potlood en waterverf op papier -
ink, pencil and watercolour on paper -
encre, crayon et aquarelle sur papier
h. 20.5 cm x b. 14 cm
2016 schenking – donation

Marlene Dumas

Portret Jan Hoet, 1992

inkt op papier - ink on paper - encre sur papier, h. 20.5 cm x b. 14.7 cm
2016 schenking – donation

Marlene Dumas

Portret van J.H., 1992

potlood, inkt en waterverf op papier - pencil, ink and watercolour on paper - crayon, encre et aquarelle sur papier h. 20.5 cm x b. 15 cm
2016 schenking – donation

Marlene Dumas

Stripping Girls - Jan Hoet danst op de tafel, 2000-2009

collage, inkt, waterverf en acrylverf op papier - collage, ink, watercolour and acrylic paint on paper - collage, encre, aquarelle et peinture acrylique sur papier h. 29.7 cm x b. 21 cm
2021 schenking – donation

Marlene Dumas (b. 1953, Cape Town)

is one of the most important painters working today. Her oeuvre is characterised by a sensual and gestural technique, which can alternatively be described as thin and minimal. Dumas tackles a range of complex themes in her paintings, such as segregation, eroticism, politics and art history. Jan Hoet, S.M.A.K.'s first director and the curator of Documenta 9 in 1992, died on 27 February 2014. Marlene Dumas was one of the artists who participated in Documenta 9 in Kassel, and it was in the run-up to this exhibition that the artist made a series of portraits on paper of Jan Hoet. On one of the drawings we can read the inscription 'attempt to depict Jan Hoet'. The artist hereby signals her intention: how to make a portrait on paper of one of the most influential directors in the art world at that moment? She uses the drawing as an introspective medium for capturing his psychology, which lies somewhere between status and humanity, authority and vulnerability. Marlene Dumas' artistic language is clearly evident in the drawings. As a tribute to Jan Hoet and S.M.A.K., the artist donated the works to the museum shortly after the

death of the high priest of the art world. The drawings were first exhibited in *'Highlights for a Future'* (2019), the important collection presentation on the occasion of S.M.A.K.'s twentieth anniversary. Today, another drawing is being added to this group, a further donation by the artist. The drawing was made to mark S.M.A.K.'s tenth anniversary and is a direct reference to the exhibition *'Stripping Girls'* by Marlene Dumas and Anton Corbijn in the museum in 2000.

Jef Geys

Fruitlingerie, s.d.

inkjetdruk op inkjetpapier - inkjet printing
on inkjet paper - impression à jet d'encre
sur papier jet d'encre

h. 56.5 cm x b. 40 cm

2019 schenking - donation

Jef Geys (b. 1934, Leopoldsburg - d. 2018, Genk) was an artist who adopted a critical and reflective attitude towards society, politics and art. He did this so consistently and thoroughly that this attitude became an integral part of his work. Everything that Geys created or

did was a response to something else, and related to major and minor events in his/our direct living environment, but equally to those on a social or global level. Aesthetics were never Geys' primary concern, therefore, but what did interest him was the recording of situations and events on multiple different levels. Through this continual process of archiving, Jef Geys left an endless trail of daily life within his art, whilst as an artist he introduced art into those areas of life where it was often least expected.

In the mid-1960s, Jef Geys made a series of photos entitled '*Fruitlingerie*'. For this, he dressed different kinds of fruit and vegetables in suggestive lingerie. The artist is thus taking an ironic look at the idea of the woman as an object of desire in this humorous and pornographic series. At the same time, he also filled some underpants and bras with courgettes, carrots or parsnips, so the phallus also features in the '*Fruitlingerie*' story.

Jef Geys donated this enlarged photograph to the S.M.A.K collection via an extremely unusual set of circumstances. During the exhibition

'Chalet' in La Loge (the final exhibition that Jef Geys created entirely by himself) he exhibited a series of these photos in a display case in the building's basement. This was in late 2017, when *'#metoo'* was all over the media. From his critical standpoint towards institutions and the often accompanying abuse of power, Jef Geys then asked the three male directors of Belgium's contemporary art museums to choose one of the *'Fruitlingerie'* images in the display case, take a photo of it and send it to the artist. Geys subsequently enlarged and framed the chosen images, signed them on the back, and dedicated each photo to the museum in question. Provided that the directors were prepared to hang these photos in a highly visible position in their offices for an entire year, the work would thereafter automatically be donated to the collection of that museum. As a result, this photo, chosen by director Philippe Van Cauteren and having hung for a year in his office from February 2018, ended up in the S.M.A.K. collection.

Ann Veronica Janssens

HEM 600 – Fragment, 2015

gepolierd staal - polished steel - acier poli
h. 109.7 cm x b. 62.5 cm x d. 30.5 cm
2016 schenking – donation

Ann Veronica Janssens (b. 1956, Folkestone) is a Belgian artist who belongs to a generation of sculptors that is trying to radically rethink the medium in terms of a more sensual and physical experience of art. Her artistic visual language often circles around the immaterial, the fleeting and the ephemeral. Light and optical and sensual experiences are central tenets of her work.

In 2016, two much-debated artworks were installed on the Korenmarkt in Ghent. One of these was '*HD400*' by Ann Veronica Janssens, an enormous 20-metre-high column. The title refers to the world of construction; namely the type of support beam that underpins many modern structures. Here, the artist pays tribute to contemporary architecture, which she thereby causes to enter into dialogue with the thirteenth-century Saint Nicholas Church. As is always the case in Janssens' work,

the (interplay with) light also performs an important role here. The enormous sculpture shooting into the air is both solid and weightless. Thanks to the reflective surface, it not only takes up space in its surroundings but also mirrors them. A paradox is hereby created between materiality and immateriality. This work in polished steel, '*HEM600*', serves as a scale model for the final version of '*HD400*'. Janssens donated the works to the museum collection in 2016, the year of both her exhibition at S.M.A.K. and the installation of '*HD400*' in the heart of Ghent.

Mario Navarro

The Dreams of Stafford Beer, 2008
Video - vidéo, 6 min 47 sec
2020 schenking – donation

Mario Navarro

Logo, 2008
poederpigment op aluminium -
powder-coated aluminium -
pigment en poudre sur aluminium
h. 110 cm x b. 100 cm x d. 3.5 cm
2020 schenking – donation

Mario Navarro (b. 1970, Santiago) is a Chilean artist whose artistic practice encompasses diverse media including video, sculpture, assemblage, installation, performance and drawings. He often makes use of a fictional narrative to bring renewed visibility to recent, half-forgotten utopian projects from Latin America's political and social past, which he achieves in a subtle, sometimes poetic way.

A key figure of great importance to Navarro, and who regularly features in his work, is Stafford Beer (b. 1926 London – d. 2002, London). Beer was a British scientist and one of the founders of cybernetics. In 1971, at the request of the then-president of Chile, Salvador Allende, he developed a futuristic technological system designed to steer the Chilean economy in real time from a central 'operation room'. The idea was to achieve this by means of programmed algorithms, comparable to those now used by search engines such as Amazon and Google. *The Dreams of Stafford Beer* (2008) shows a fictional film in which Beer is depicted alone in a hotel room, carefully trying

to draw the nine-branched floorplan of the operation centre using amateurish drawing materials. Alongside the video film, Navarro exhibits a giant logo on the wall that depicts the same floorplan. 'The Dreams of Stafford Beer' shows the nostalgic flipside of these kinds of utopian Latin American projects in a poetic, existential manner. The work was donated to the S.M.A.K. collection in 2020 by Navarro. This was also the year in which he participated in the group exhibition 'The Cybernetics of the Poor' in the Kunsthalle Vienna.

Kurt Ryslavy

Coming Home to Sontag, 2018

geëmailleerd metaal -

enamelled metal - métal émaillé

h. 31.5 cm x b. 41.5 cm

2021 schenking - donation

Kurt Ryslavy

Urbanisme 8660/PU-45.18, 2018, ed. 16/20

inkjetdruk op digitaal printpapier -

inkjet printing on digital printing paper -

impression à jet d'encre sur papier

d'impression numérique

h. 41.9 cm x b. 29.7 cm

2020 schenking – donation

The work and thinking of Kurt Ryslavy (b. 1961, Graz), who is both an artist and a wine merchant, has for years played out on the border between art (the object) and the market where this art is traded and made the subject of capitalism. With great precision and pointed humour, Ryslavy knows how to challenge this theme time and time again. In this display case, two related editions are on display.

One of these is '*Coming Home to Sontag*', an enamel plaque bearing the inscription '*Sous peine d'amende défense d'épiloguer ou de rédiger des commentaires*' ('On pain of a fine, it is forbidden to argue or write comments'), commissioned by the artist and inspired by the early twentieth-century street signs forbidding urination and the dumping of rubbish. The inscription, adapted by Ryslavy, alludes to the literary and art critical classic '*Against Interpretation*' by Susan Sontag in which she reflects upon the viewing, understanding and interpretation of art. '*Coming Home to Sontag*' was donated by the artist in 2020 and should

preferably be installed outside and at a height of at least three metres. Following this (first) presentation inside S.M.A.K., the work will be given a place on one of the museum's exterior walls. The second edition in this display case is subsequently the reason why '*Coming Home to Sontag*' was donated to the museum by the artist. 'Urbanisme 8660/PU-45.18', an edition (twenty copies) in which a series of parking fines (*amende* = fine) are glued together, acts as 'permission' for '*Coming Home to Sontag*' to be installed. Philippe Van Cauteran, director of S.M.A.K., purchased the edition personally in 2020 and subsequently donated it to the museum collection. To repay this gesture, the artist in turn donated the enamel plaque '*Coming Home to Sontag*' to S.M.A.K. in 2021.

Ante Timmermans / Charl van Ark

Zwiefall [2001 / 2015], 2019
mixed media - technique mixte
variabele afmetingen - dimensions
variables - variable dimensions
2020 schenking - donation

Ante Timmermans (b. 1976, Ninove) is a Belgian draughtsman, painter and installation artist. In his graphic work, Timmermans constantly calls into question the position of the 'drawing' in the (art) world. What is a drawing these days, and what can a graphic work mean in the context of the global network of multimedia communication channels? As a sceptical artist, he attempts to revisit these questions with each new step in his oeuvre. The highly ephemeral work by the Dutch artist Charl van Ark (b. 1951, Den Helder) takes the codes of painting as its starting point, but also encompasses photos and installation. Van Ark creates paintings and art out of almost nothing. He always takes 'whatever there is to hand', no matter how trivial, and amplifies it until it becomes visible.

In late 2019, the joint exhibition '*Zwiefall*' was staged at Emergent in Veurne. The exhibition was based on a dialogue between Timmermans and Van Ark. The two artists have been in conversation with one another for many years. Discussion and mutual respect were therefore also the ingredients for

the exhibition in Veurne. Both artists were exceptionally pleased with the dialogue and the bringing together of two artworks, to the extent that once the exhibition ended, they regarded them as a single, inextricably linked entity. After the exhibition closed in Veurne, the two artists decided to donate the work to S.M.A.K. *'Zwiefall [2001 - 2015]'* can be read as an exploration of dimensions in time and space, as an investigation of drawing and painting, as the embrace of time and slowness, presence and absence. Both artists take a distance from their individual signature and allow it to be subsumed into a merged work, signed by the two artists.

Richard Tuttle

Story XX, 2020

sputverf op hout - spray paint on wood -
peinture en aérosol sur bois

h. 77 cm x b. 74.5 cm x d. 5 cm

2021 schenking - donation

Richard Tuttle (b. 1941, New Jersey) is a renowned American post-minimalist artist who is known for his small, informal, subtle and intimate works. His

art makes use of scale and line. From the 1980s onwards, his work became more playful and he began to make frequent use of 'poor' materials such as multiplex, cardboard, polystyrene and paper, thereby obliging the viewer to move away from and to question their classical evaluation of art in terms of craftsmanship and aesthetics.

The work '*Story XX*' was part of the exhibition '*Stories I-XX*' in the Brussels gallery Greta Meert, Tuttle's sixth exhibition at this venue. The exhibition comprised an unusual series of works made by the artist during the pandemic. Thanks to his exceptional links to Ghent and S.M.A.K. – Tuttle exhibited at the museum in 1978 along with Philippe Van Snick, David Rabinowitch, and Raoul de Keyser – the artist has decided to donate a work from this latest series to the museum. Tuttle seeks out beauty in the fragile and hand-made, far from the rigid precision of minimalism. '*Story XX*' is accompanied by a narrative in the form of a text written by the artist. This frames the pure pictorial improvisation and intuitive appearance of the work. Here, the artist is using form, colour and texture to create a fragile object that alludes to painting.

Koen van den Broek

Casting Start, 2019

olieverf op doek - oil on canvas -

huile sur toile, h. 209 cm x b. 157 cm

2021 schenking - donation

After training as an architect, Koen van den Broek (b. 1973, Bree) became a painter. An encounter with John Baldessari (which led to a great friendship) and a fascination for filmic landscapes have had a profound effect on his visual language. Always starting out from (his own) photos, which allow him to quickly capture his first impressions of reality, Van den Broek reinterprets or further elaborates them in paint on canvas.

'*Casting Start*' (2019) belongs to a more recent series of paintings entitled '*The Dog*', for which Van den Broek turned his attention to his immediate surroundings. Whilst walking (with the dog) through fields near his home, he took photographs of nature and the countryside with the same sharp eye as he had previously done in the raw landscapes of California, or in cities such as Los Angeles or New York. '*Casting*

Start features a withered leaf, which still appears to be hovering between life and death, between staying and going. Thanks to the enormous scaling-up and the striking use of colour, Van den Broek lifts the unsightly phenomenon of a dying leaf from its everyday banality. Just as in earlier work, such as the well-known *Cracks* and *Borders*, the artist focuses the attention on everyday items in our surroundings with his own highly unique painterly language. This one leaf, out of the billions of dying autumn leaves each year, is therefore elevated to the universal. Given its nullity in relation to the overwhelming scale of the natural world and the cosmos, it might even become the protagonist in the entire story. This work was donated by the artist in 2021. In 2010, Van den Broek's large-scale solo exhibition *Curbs & Cracks* was staged at S.M.A.K. At the time, his latest work was purchased for the museum collection and dated from 2008. The recent collaboration between the artist and S.M.A.K. for the off-site exhibition *No More Boring Art!* at PXL Mad School of Arts Hasselt (where Van den Broek teaches painting) fuelled a new debate about the representation of

his work in the collection, upon which the artist decided to donate this painting to S.M.A.K. to supplement the works already held by the museum.

Jan Vercruysse

Eventail (I), 1986

mixed media - technique mixte

variabele afmetingen - dimensions

variables - variable dimensions

1999 schenking - donation

Jan Vercruysse (b. 1948 Waregem – d. 2018, Bruges) is considered to be one of Belgium's most important conceptual artists. He also achieved international recognition. Vercruysse began his career as a poet, but switched to visual art in 1974, and worked predominately in series. In his early photographic pieces, he recreated typical art genres such as self-portraits, still lifes and mythological tableaux. He later evolved towards a pared-down sculptural language with frequent allusions to interiors, or references to painting and sculpture, such as empty frames and plinths. These sculptures have an air of almost religious, empty infinity, and are intended

by the artist to be a pure, autonomous art which only alludes to itself.

'*Eventail (I)*' is a good example of this, and is the result of a long thought process. The work consists of a monumental empty black frame that rises up ceremoniously behind three golden plinths. With this composition, Vercruysse presents the absence of art as a stand-alone artwork. He expresses the idea that art only alludes to itself and not to its function within and toward society. '*Eventail (I)*' was donated to the museum by the Society for the Museum of Contemporary Art (the present-day Friends of S.M.A.K.), to mark the opening of S.M.A.K. in 1999.

X

(ENG) In this final room of the exhibition, we find the donation of an entire exhibition: x, which was shown earlier this year at KIOSK, Ghent. All the donated artworks from x are anonymous and are also being recorded as such in S.M.A.K.'s collection. Is it possible to view artworks independently of name, fame or curriculum? X was a playful experiment that challenged both the

art organisation and the participating artists to adopt a different approach to the conventional ways of producing and exhibiting art.