

ARTS TALK Colour Supplement

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A rich and varied edition this month with reviews of some outstanding events. We saw two breath-taking performances, one by English cellist/singer Ayanna Witter-Johnson and the spectacular return of Scapino's *Oscar*. A major exhibition of the sculptures of Spanish Surrealist Joan Miró is running at Museum Beelden aan Zee in Scheveningen and a major retrospective of Dutch artist Ossip is in Rotterdam. The American Netherlander, Greg Shapiro, is back on tour with *Leaving Trumpland 2.0 - No Country for Old Men*. Plus reports on the dual exhibitions of a Dutch old master and more cellos in Amsterdam with the 2024 Cello Biennale.

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Cover

Opus by Dutch artist Ossip whose retrospective is at Brutus in Amstrdam

Photo by Michael HASTED



p.4

Maarten van Heemskerck in Haarlem and Alkmaar

Contents

Scapino Ballet's OSCAR returns to the stage





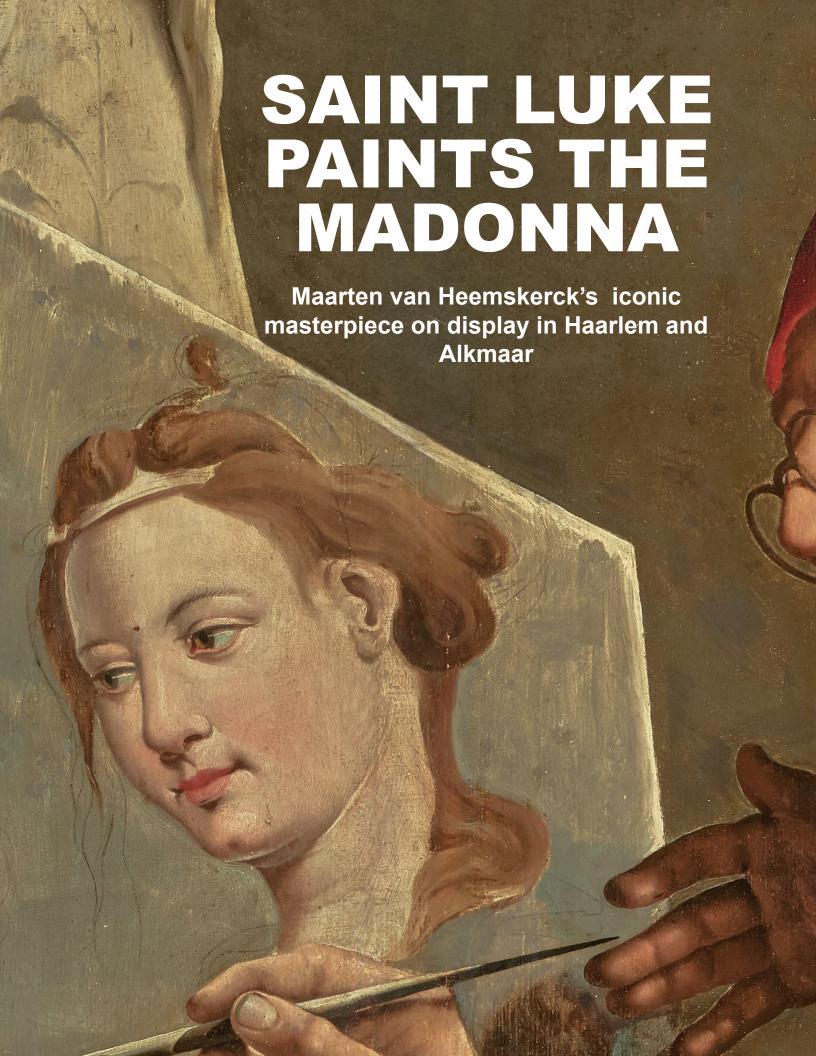
Ayanna Witter-Johnson at Korzo in The Hague

Ossip at Brutus in Rotterdam

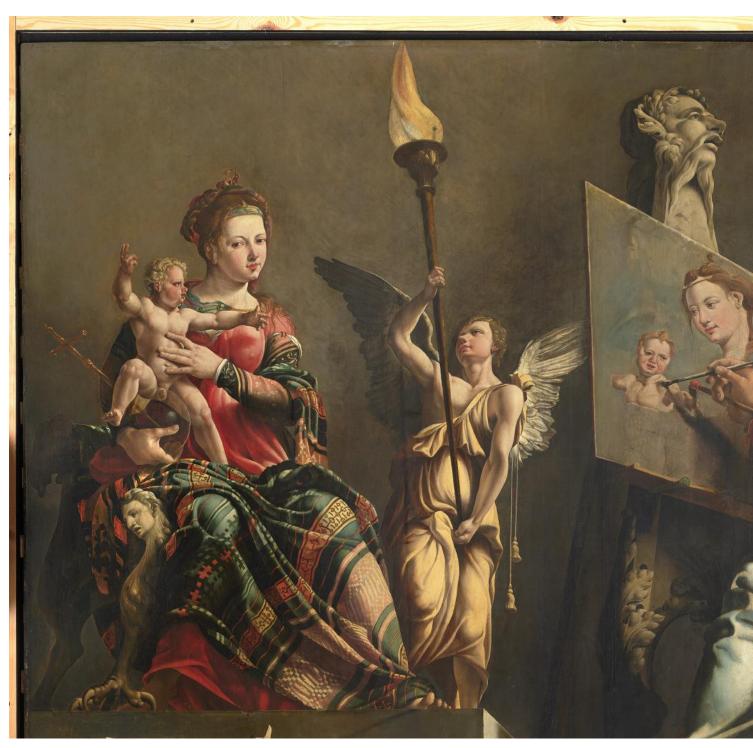




in Amsterdam







Maarten van Heemskerck's Saint Luke Paints the Madonna before restoration



or the first-ever retrospective of Maarten van Heemskerck (Heemskerk, 1498 – Haarlem, 1574), the iconic painting Saint Luke Paints the Madonna (1532) has been extensively researched and restored. During the research and restoration it became clear that the painting originally consisted of two parts. These parts were connected with an intermediate piece at the end of the 16th century, after the Beeldenstorm. The background of the painting also appeared to have been painted over in the 17th century. It is technically complicated to remove a 17th century over-paint from a 16th century layer of paint. After extensive research, this has been achieved and can be called ground-breaking. Now that the overpainting has been removed, the original colours can be seen again, which give the work much more depth and spaciousness and therefore make it even more exciting. The restoration also provides more insight into the artist's studio practice and how innovative he was for his time. The painting will be shown in two parts for the first time in four centuries in the Maarten van Heemskerck exhibition, together with 132 other works, including 49 paintings by this enterprising artist.

Lidewij de Koekkoek, director of the Frans Hals Museum explained, "These discoveries provide important new insights into Heemskerck's work and studio practice. He is rightly considered one of the most important 16th-century artists from the Northern Netherlands. Together with Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar and Teylers Museum, we are now showing the first ever overview of this artist. High time!"

The retrospective exhibition of Maarten van Heemskerck on display in the Frans Hals and Teylers Museums in Haarlem and the Stedelijk Museum in Alkmaar. Each museum shows - 450 years after his death - a distinctive period in the life of this influential and successful 16th-century artist. With important





During restoration of Heemskerck's *Saint Luke Paints the Madonna* over-painting was removed and it was discovered that the painting was origionally in two scetions





pieces from the museums' own collections and rarely loaned paintings, drawings and prints from, among others, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Madrid), The National Gallery (London), the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), the National Museum of Warsaw and the Kupferstichkabinett (Berlin). The exhibition makes it clear how innovative, expressive and theatrical the work of this Dutch Renaissance artist is.

The Frans Hals Museum focuses on Heemskerck's earliest known work, combined with that of contemporaries such as Jan van Scorel and Jan Gossart. Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar talks about Heemskerck's trip to Italy and shows how that experience resulted in daring and spectacular works for that time. With more than 60 high-quality prints by Heemskerck, Teylers Museum shows the artist's successful entrepreneurship: many hundreds of prints based on his designs were widely distributed in the Netherlands.

The exhibition was preceded by extensive research. In addition to *Saint Luke Painting the Madonna*, several other works have recently been restored. An extensive publication about the artist's life and work will also be published, written by Heemskerck specialist Ilja Veldman.

Thanks to recent research, it contains many new insights, such as changed attributions, identifications of portraits, but also new information about Heemskerck's network and his working methods $\ \square$

Saint Luke Painting the Madonna will be on display at the first retrospective of Maarten van Heemskerck in Haarlem and Alkmaar from 28th September until 19th January 2025.

Scapino Ballet's Treturns to the stage

Text by Michael Hasted Photos by Bart Gerritsen









pectacle is a rather over-used word, unless of course you are an optician, but Scapino Ballet's *Oscar* really is a spectacle – half dance, half circus and half rock concert, it overwhelms the senses and takes the breath away.

This is a reprise of the show first staged in 2022 at Theater Carré in Amsterdam. The choice of venue was significant because the Oscar in question is not Wilde, nor a Hollywood award but Oscar Carré the horse-training impresario who built the theatre in 1887 as a home base for his celebrated circus. Scapino's *Oscar* is a hommage, a tribute to the great man. But also, sadly, it marks the end of an era with the retirement of another great man, Scapino's long term artistic director Ed Wubbe. The company's two principal dancers, Mischa van Leeuven and Bonnie Doets, both of whom so dominated the original production of *Oscar*, have also hung up their tights and pointe shoes.

Out of the three elements of the show it is hard to say which dominates. Each was equally strong and each alone would have been enough to carry the evening. But the foundation, the rock on which the show is built is undoubtedly the music performed live on stage by Dutch singer-songwriter Blaudzun.

The Netherlands would no doubt forgive me for saying it does not constitute a significant player in the milieu of rock and roll but this was the first time I have seen or heard Blaudzun, nom de plume of Johannes Sigmond, and he struck me as a world-class act. As Ed Wubbe said, "My dream to create a concert, dance and circus performance as an ode to Oscar Carré became reality. Blaudzun's music was very inspiring and has become an inseparable part of the performance."

The songs, backed by keyboards, guitar, bass and drums with Mr Sigmond on vocals and acoustic guitar, ranged from hard rock to romantic. All the tracks were pre-existing and included the instrumental *Palomino*, very pertinent for *Oscar* in which horses feature so significantly. There are several amazing sequences in which saddled, though headless and tailless, horses on wheels spin around the stage.

The show started with a miniature striped circus tent centre stage from which the dancers slowly emerged. Oscar himself is represented as a long-black-coated, top-hatted figure who strides the stage, punctuating the stream of shortish dance sequences and numerous circus acts. Faultlessly performed by students or graduates from Codarts, Rotterdam's renowned performing arts university, the acts included juggling, trapeze, *corde lisse*, aerial straps and rolling globe (look 'em up). The *corde lisse* (acrobatics performed high above the stage on a hanging rope) was perhaps the most spectacular as it involved the dancers below manipulating a huge circular red and white cloth (similar to the flag of Japan) like an animated colourful safety net.

There was also a lot balancing and standing on shoulders performed by the ensemble. In fact, most of the dance sequences were performed by the large ensemble, always in black, often sequined and initially with horses' tails attached to their rears.

As I have said before on these pages, what I like about Scapino is the dramatic content of their pieces, the linear story lines and the theatrical effects. And although *Oscar* is not pure dance it must rank very highly in their list of best productions. Long may the success continue under the new regime \Box



... most of the dance sequences were performed by the large ensemble, always in black, often sequined and initially with horses' tails attached to their rears







As an intern with Scapino for the 2024-25 season, I found the scene both daunting and exhilarating. With the 2024 Rotterdam premiere of *Oscar* just a few weeks away, the cast and crew were deep in preparation. Originally created by Wubbe for the 135th anniversary of the Royal Theatre Carré in 2022, the wildly successful show pays tribute to the theater's namesake, Oscar Carré. *Oscar* also marks Wubbe's farewell production after serving as Scapino's Artistic Director for 30 years.

After moving from America to the Netherlands in July, I was warmly welcomed into the company and tasked with learning the show. With twelve interns, thrirteen Scapino dancers and eight circus artists, we had just over a month to restage the production. Fortunately, many of the dancers and circus performers helped create the original Oscar and had the choreography tucked safely inside their muscle memories.

The biggest change for this restaging was the casting of the production's two stars - Oscar and his wife. With the original performers, Mischa van Leeuwen and Bonnie Doets, having retired from the spotlight, new dancers were needed to fill these iconic roles.

Filip Wagrodzki understudied the character of Oscar in 2022 and is now stepping fully into the role. Starting his ninth season with Scapino, Wagrodzki was challenged to bring the required emotional depth to the character.

"It's very easy to hide behind steps. But here it is all about presentation and breaking the wall between the audience and stage," he said. "People need to believe that I am Oscar Carré. They need to like me, fear me and be interested in me for a full two-hour show." Although initially difficult, Wagrodzki feels he has truly personified the character, finding the human connection needed to captivate the audience. A significant part of that comes from his co-star, Ellen Landa, who plays Oscar's wife.

While the role of the wife helps to support and observe Oscar, Landa is uncovering more complexities. "It's also very important that I show the audience my own journey," she said. "I represent different women because Oscar had several wives, so there are a lot of different colors and emotions to dive into."

With each run of the show, both in the studio and onstage with live music from the band Blaudzun, I watched the performers gradually grow into their characters. Whether it was Wagrodzki transforming into Oscar or a dancer finding imaginative ways to embody this magical circus world, the production took on a life of its own.

As the final rehearsals gave way to opening night, the only thing missing was the indescribable energy of an audience. Being part of such a monumental production—one that honors a legend in both - Oscar Carré and Ed Wubbe - was the perfect introduction to Scapino and a powerful reminder of the impact of high-quality performance



Ashton Benn was born in Dallas, Texas in 2002 and graduated from the University of Southern California's Glorya Kaufman School of Dance in Los Angeles in May 2024. She gained a BFA in Dance and an MA in Specialized Journalism (Arts and Culture), both from USC. She was awarded the USC Presidential Merit Scholarship and now lives in Rotterdam where she is a participant in Scapino's Young Talent Programme.







her mother and both sets of grandparents on the large screen. I really liked the video of her father and Uncle Mikey talking about the Jamaican sound systems which were so important to the West Indian community in England in the 1970s and 80s. These mobile discos, each trying to out-do each other with volume and size of speakers, were vital in retaining the identity of young black men, enabling them to create their own thing in a societyfrom which they often felt excluded.

Ayanna makes her cello come alive in a way I have never heard the instrument played and I have never seen it used as an accompaniment, much as a guitar, by a solo singer. If you think a cello is played sitting down with a bow gliding across the strings, think again. Ms Witter-Johnson is no slave to convention - she plays her instrument standing up using any and all techniques available to get the sound she wants, including plucking, thereby turning her cello into a mini doublebass. She also has a bass drum pedal hitting a Meinl wood block with which she occasionally tapped out different rhythms. Often using a click track to augment her songs with percussion or more strings, she took us through a repertoire of largely self-penned numbers but included a couple of songs paying homage to Ella Fitzgerald as well as Erroll Garner's classic Misty. But for me, her best rendition and what has become her signature piece, was Sting's Roxanne sung and played as you have never heard it before.

Of her influences she cited Nina Simone whose career followed a similar trajectory from piano lessons at a very early age through conservatoire to the popular

stage. But don't think that any of the aforementioned will be apparent in what you hear. Witter-Johnson is one hundred per cent her own woman, one hundred per cent original and authentic.

This was a very slick and professional show with presentation and excellent lighting having been given a lot of careful thought. I feel pleased and privileged to have discovered Ayanna Witter-Johnson. She is a very rare and special artist but I did strike me as odd that the audience was made up middle-aged, middle-class whites with only a very small handful of black people in attendance.

The word incomparable is often misused but it describes Ayanna Witter-Johnson perfectly — there is nothing with which to compare her unique, enormous talent \square





reg Shapiro is a difficult man to dislike. His humour is not belly-laugh, rolling on the floor, tears in your eyes comedy but easy going, relaxed and friendly and, unlike many contemporary comedians, inoffensive — you will be relatively safe sitting in the front row. You feel at home in his company, ready to join him on any path he cares to travel. Yes he's funny, yes he makes you laugh but his funniness comes from describing familiar situations and our everyday lives from a different viewpoint. But don't be fooled, behind the avuncular demeanour is a man who does not suffer fools gladly and has a wit and steely eye that will penetrate even the stoutest façade. Truth is the keyword — although he never allows it to stand in the way of a good story.

After living in Amsterdam for the best part of thirty years, with a Dutch wife and family he has every right to call himself The American Netherlander. But the ties that bind never slacken with us ex-pats and we are constantly looking over our shoulders to see what's happening back home.

A character like Donald Trump with his absurd antics and claims is grist to any comedian's mill. If he was billed as a comedian he would pack 'em in and bring the house down every night. Sadly, as a presidential candidate, he still packs 'em in but it is the United States he threatens to bring down. But on the plus side Trump has a persona, voice and speech idiosyncrasies which are instantly recognisable and easily mimicked – and Mr Shapiro is a master of this. He has been doing him for the past seven or eight years including doing an ident for ArtsTalk Radio. There was a lull a couple of years back when the ex-president kept his head down and Shapiro used the respite to cultivate and promote the other bee in his bonnet – climate change.

His new comedy tour (Shapiro's, not Trump's. Trump's has been running for some time already) called *Leaving Trumpland 2.0 No Country for Old Men* – deftly directed by Michael Diederich – has just hit the road and will be visiting all corners of The Netherlands until the middle of November, promising to be a sell-out.

Tonight's performance at the Theater de Veste in Delft was one of the try-outs before the official premiere at De Kleine Komedie in Amsterdam on the 23rd September. Try-outs are considered an important part of the buffing-up and refining of a new act but I have to say that on the evidence of tonight's performance it was already quite shiny and didn't need much more polishing.

Mr Shapiro took to the stage before a full house in his customary suit and tie, accompanied by the ubiquitous glass of water on a stool. He explained that this wasn't quite a re-hash of the 2020 show *Leaving Trumpland 1.0* which was cruelly curtailed by the first Covid lockdown, but nevertheless, there were some familiar stories, notably the one about his mother and the famous *Holland Second* YouTube video. But of course, it was mainly new stuff, including a peek preview of his Kamala Harris impersonation — taking chances, while hedging your bets, is the name of the game when it comes to current affairs based comedy

Michael HASTED





All Others

a major retrospective of Dutch artist

OSSIP

at Brutus Art Space in Rotterdam with music/soundscapes by Dick Raaijmakers and art film by Anduo Lucia

Photos, except where stated, by Michael Hasted







Ossip in his studio. Photo by Eric de Vries

rom 4th October until 8th December Brutus Art Space in Rotterdam will present All Others, a retrospective exhibition of Ossip, winner of the Brutus Prize 2023. The exhibition is once again curated by art director and designer Maarten Spruyt, who last year curated the group exhibition Through Bone and Marrow at Brutus. Together with the music/soundscapes of Dick Raaijmakers and an art film by Anduo Lucia made especially for this exhibition, All Others forms an inescapable sensory experience.

Ossip was born in The Hague in 1952. He is self-taught and dislikes the word "art". In 1992 he said, "The greatest compliment people can pay me is to say that my work doesn't look like anything." His work, often with curious titles, embraces the strange, the imperfect and the non-normative; it is a unique combination of photo collage, installation and drawing. For example, he chooses a portrait or an image from a painting as the starting point for his three-dimensional work. He

blows them up and isolates them and then manipulates them in an ingenious way. Wires stick out, he creates depth with different levels or turns them into objects with everyday objects, such as a perfume bottle, a spring or a light bulb. Many works of art have a moving element. In Ossip's elusive universe, which defies time and place, everything is connected. Maarten Spruyt said, "In the times we live in, it is good to continually re-attune yourself; Ossip's work invites you to do this, to be able to see multiple sides of something."

Ossip's solo exhibition *All Others* at Brutus Space is the most complete overview of his oeuvre ever. In more than 500 works, this exhibition shows the development that the artist has undergone over the past fifty years. Anduo Lucia made an art film especially for this exhibition that zooms in on the movement of the objects shown. Previously, in 2019, Lucia portrayed Ossip in the *Close Up* documentary *From Father to Son* for AvroTros. Dick Raaijmakers, founder of electronic

music in the Netherlands, composed the soundscapes that can be heard in the various presentation rooms. Ossip's kinetic objects all move according to their own unique frequency; the rhythmic sounds of Raaijmaker's compositions manage to evoke this experience sensory.

With a continuous program, Brutus, with Brutus Space and Brutus Base, is the largest contemporary art institution in the Netherlands. It is the place where art that confronts, disrupts and stimulates can be seen. Brutus offers artists time, space and freedom to experiment on a large scale. Work by big names from the international art world alternates with emerging and yet to be discovered talent. All art disciplines are covered: from sculpture to performance; from new to traditional media. Brutus was founded in 2008 by Joep van Lieshout as AVL Mundo and has continued independently since 2023. In addition to various large and small industrial exhibition spaces, the former port complex houses the Brutus Lab with a residency and various work spaces, and the freely accessible sculpture garden Brutus Garden





Ossip Zaterdaag 23H 50M 2014







MUZIEKGEBOUW & BIMHUIS
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eleven days this Autumn Muziekgebouw and e Bimhuis will host the biggest cello festival in e world - the Cello Biennale Amsterdam. The compasses more than a hundred concerts, formances, master classes, the National Cello on plus an extensive fringe programme.

r marks the tenth anniversary of the Biennale vill be celebrated with, among other pieces, rld premieres. The event also revisits a number highlights from the first nine editions. Almost or orchestras in the Netherlands will be there for the first time in the history of the festival Concertgebouw Orchestra. With the soloists erstein and Nicolas Altstaedt, the orchestranew cello concertos by Matthias Pintscher and

The world's greatest cellists come to Amsterdam. One of the most famous soloists of this moment, Truls Mørk, was last at the Biennale in 2012 playing the popular first Shostakovich cello concerto. This year he will be a soloist with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. Rising star Ivan Karizna will perform the first cello concerto.

The Residentie Orchestra plays the *Hebrew Rhapsody* with Mischa Maisky Schelomo and, with Kian Soltani, the rarely performed second cello concerto by Kabalevski. Jean-Guihen Queyras solos with the Orchestra of the 18th Century in the Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. His performance of this work during the 2006 Biennale made such a deep impression that it will be repeated in this anniversary edition. "From the first note gave you goose bumps, it was great," says artistic director Maarten Mostert.

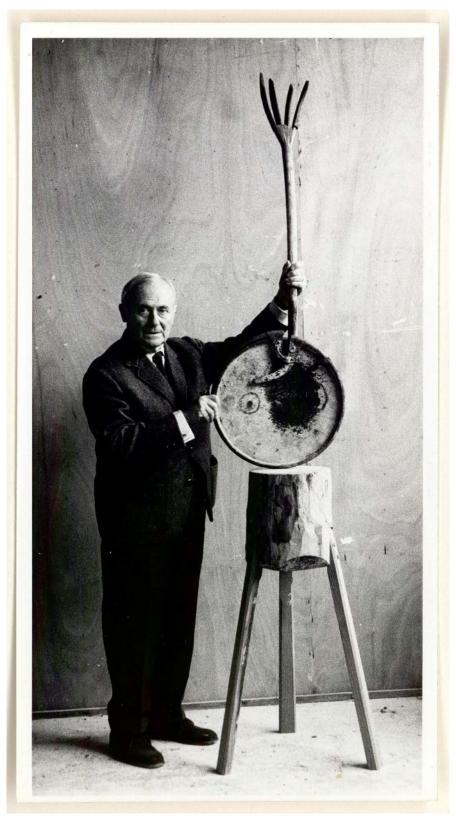
Cappella Amsterdam presents a world premiere of *Mathilde* with Johannes Moser Wantenaar and, with Pieter Wispelwey, they perform the spectacular *Canticle of the Sun* by Sofia Goebaidoelina. Their performance of this work at the first Biennale in 2006 was among the highlights of that year. The concert by Kian Soltani in which he plays the arrangements of the music of major Hollywood blockbusters live for the first time promises to be sensational. The new generation of cellists is represented by names such as Maya Fridman, Erica Piccotti, Laura van der Heijden, Ella van Poucke, Hayoung Choi, Stefano Bruno and Alexander Warenberg.

CELLOFEST, the sub-festival of the Biennale, held at the Bimhuis, focuses on the non-classical cello. Think of jazz, electro, rock, singer-songwriter, global and pop. Bartolomey Bittmann is one of the absolute crowd favorites. The Viennese duo consists of a cellist Matthias Bartolomey and violinist/mandola player Klemens Bittmann. The Canadian metal cellist Raphael Weinroth Browne is one of a kind, a big name worldwide he mainly performs in Canada and the United States. He will be in Europe especially for CELLOFEST

Cello Biennale Amsterdam runs from 31st October to 10th November at Muziekgebouw and Bimhuis in Amsterdam







Joan Miró with the assembled objects of *Personage*, 1967. Photo Claude Gaspari

"I am an established painter but a young sculptor"

urrealism was a very broadly based church centred on André Breton - although I doubt that he would have liked the word church. Defined by him as "pure psychic automatism" the movement encompassed writing (both fiction and poetry), film making, philosophy and, perhaps most widely known, the plastic arts.

Much of the latter was figurative to a greater or lesser degree – think Magritte, Dali, Delvaux - with recognisable elements which would have been too preconceived, too formal to assuage Breton's dogma. There were artists, like Ernst, Tanguy, Matta, Masson who had a much freer approach, incorporating abstract elements. And there was Spanish artist Joan Miró, the most abstract of them all.

Many of the Surrealist artists also produced sculptures and those of Miró are on display at this major exhibition at the excellent Museum Beelden aan Zee in Scheveningen, the seaside suburb of The Hague.

Joan Miró was born in Barcelona in 1893 and was one of the early members of the Surrealist group which he joined in1924 after moving to Paris. Although best known for his paintings he also, in the later stages of his life, produced many pieces of sculpture and in 1964 completed a series of sculptures and ceramics for the garden of the Maeght Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France. He even created tapestries, one of which of which was displayed at the World Trade Center in New York and was one of the most important works of art lost during the 9/11 attacks.

Museum Beelden aan Zee is a unique, purpose built gallery overlooking the beach in Scheveningen. While sculpture parks and gardens are not uncommon, there are very few museums dedicated to modern and contemporary sculpture and so this museum makes an ideal setting for such an important exhibition.





Miró contemplating a root, Mont-roig beach, 15 September 1946. Photo: Joaquim Gomis, Gomis i Serdaño. Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya

Despite having worked in ceramics before the war, Miró came to "real" sculpture fairly late in his career with most of the pieces created in the 1960s and 70s. Although already a famous artist with his pictures in the collections of major museums around the world, he felt insecure about working in three dimensions. He once said to Alexander Calder, "I am an established painter but a young sculptor".

Although some of his sculptures, mainly the larger ones, are painted in typical Miró colours of bright blues, yellows and reds, most of the works are relatively small and in patinated bronze. Like most Surrealist sculpture, and especially the work of Picasso, Miró's pieces often include or are built around *objets trouvé* – an old plastic bottle with a screw top, a model aeroplane, a couple of old stools or an upturned bentwood chair. Such is the nature of the pieces that it sometimes takes a while for one to recognise what one is looking at so you constantly hear, "Oh look, that's an old spoon" or "isn't that a cobbler's last?"

The fifty-five works on show in this beautiful and enlightening selection have arrived from around the world and this exhibition shows two plaster studies, one of which is seen in a museum for the very first time. I imagine there are few people unfamiliar with the paintings of Joan Miró but they may be less aware of his sculptures. You won't find a better place with which to acquaint yourself with these wonderful pieces than at this important exhibition in the splendid museum by the sea. In an adjoining gallery one finds the work of another Surrealist/ Dadaist sculptor, Hans Arp, whose smooth sensual stone pieces provide a stark contrast to the intricate, often rough or painted bronzes next door. Joan Miró Sculptures is organized in collaboration with the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona and continues at Museum Beelden aan Zee until 2nd March 2025. An accompanying catalogue discusses, among other things, Miró's working method and the symbolism of his sculpture.



Not Only, But Also

Here's a selection of events taking place this month in the Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague area and eveywhere nearby or in between



4th - 7th October

STET presents NO LIMITS FESTIVAL

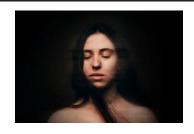
at Theater aan het Spui in The Hague



9th - 13th October

AFFORDABLE ART FAIR

at Kromhouthal in Amsterdam



12th October

TRUST by Kalpanarts

at Korzo Theater in The Hague



12th October

MUSEUM NIGHT

in every city in The Netherlands



11th October – 27th July 2025

THE WORKER'S PARADISE

Museum Het Schip in Amsterdam



30th October – 2nd November

CROSSING BORDER

in The Hague



Until 5th March 2025

JOAN MIRÓ - SCULPTURES

at Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague/Scheveningen



Until 16th November

GREG SHAPIRO *Leaving Trumpland 2*

on tour



Until 17th November

SUNDAY CONCERTS

at Theater de Veste in Delft



Until 19th January

MAARTEN VAN HEEMSKERCK

in Haarlem and Alkmaar

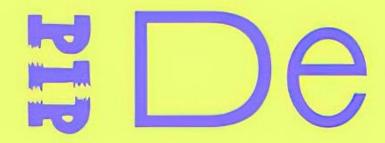


Until 16th March 2025

ANDY WARHOL

at Schunck Museum in Heerlen

Vrijdag 20 sep, 21:00-02:00 PIP Den Haag





Onthulling De Situatie

Situ

Een avond vol literatuur, muziek en ander talig genot

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