

ARTSTALK

Colour Supplement

Number 22

August 2024



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Not much happening in the performing arts in the summer but plenty of excellent exhibitions around to keep you occupied. Two small but beautiful museums have must see shows - the Paper Biennial in Rijswijk and two mixed/group exhibitions in Schiedam. The always exciting Museum Voorlinden is showing the amazing, though often disturbing work of Australian Ron Mueck. We also have a report on the restoration of the Panorama Mesdag in The Hague and a new initiative by NDSM Lusthof in Amsterdam.

Michael HASTED
Publisher & Editor

Contributors

Astrid BURCHARDT

Photographers

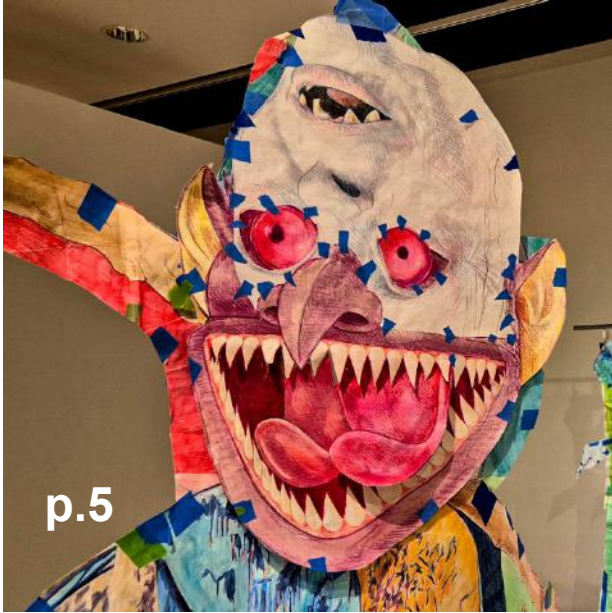
Antoine van KAAM



Cover

Ron Mueck, *Woman with Sticks*, 2009 currently on show at Museum Voorlinden in The Hague/Wassenaar. Photo by Antoine van Kaam

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Sam Keogh *The Unicorn is Killed and Brought to the Castle Cartoon* 2023 (detail)



RIJSWIJK PAPER BIENNIAL

Artists from around the world show their paper-based works at this beautiful small museum situated between Delft and The Hague

Text by Astrid BURCHARDT
Photos by Michael HASTED





Maria Sosa Ruiz
America's Allegories as Exploitation Tools (2019)

To give an exhibition a general theme is a brilliant idea. In the Rijswijk Museum this works beautifully as it knits even wildly diverging styles of international artists together. In the works shown, Orwell's short novel *Animal Farm* provides the baseline for political, environmental and human rights, equality and our relationship with animals and plants, among others. Published in 1945, Orwell's moral fable was a reaction to how fascist ambitious, self-seeking individuals, (Hitler or Stalin?), in the book depicted as pigs, who, as soon as they seize power, quickly pivot from being the oppressed to being abusive oppressors.

Inevitably, among the twenty artists exhibiting, some pieces caught my attention more than others.

Iraki-Dutch Sadik Kwaish Alfraji's self-portrait with Orwell's donkey from the book *Animal Farm* makes reference to the statement in the book: 'All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.' But in contrast Alfraji states: 'The donkey is me.'

English artist Daisy Madden-Wells presents a papier maché dog in the ancient pose of a Pharaoh's dogs. Its pearl teeth bite on (or through?) a fragile paper chain. The blue and white dog at first glance looks as docile as a lap dog, but at second glance its expression is ambiguous, if not malignant – rather like the Minogame turtles in Japanese art. Will it be led by its master by the gentle paper chain or will its pearl teeth break the chain between the centuries-long bond of man and dog? By the look in its eye it certainly looks capable of the latter.

Semâ Bekirović lets us observe how ants, given a pile of cut out letters busy themselves by carrying them into their underground home, all without further interference by the artist. Gutenberg invented printing letter by letter – perhaps in centuries to come archaeologist will discover the book the ants have will have written on lazy Sunday afternoons?

Kevin van Braak, in his dark and moving installation *Too Many Shadows*, uses Indonesian wayang puppets to speak about the horrendous abuse his grandfather suffered as a prisoner of the Japanese who forced him to work on the Burma railway.

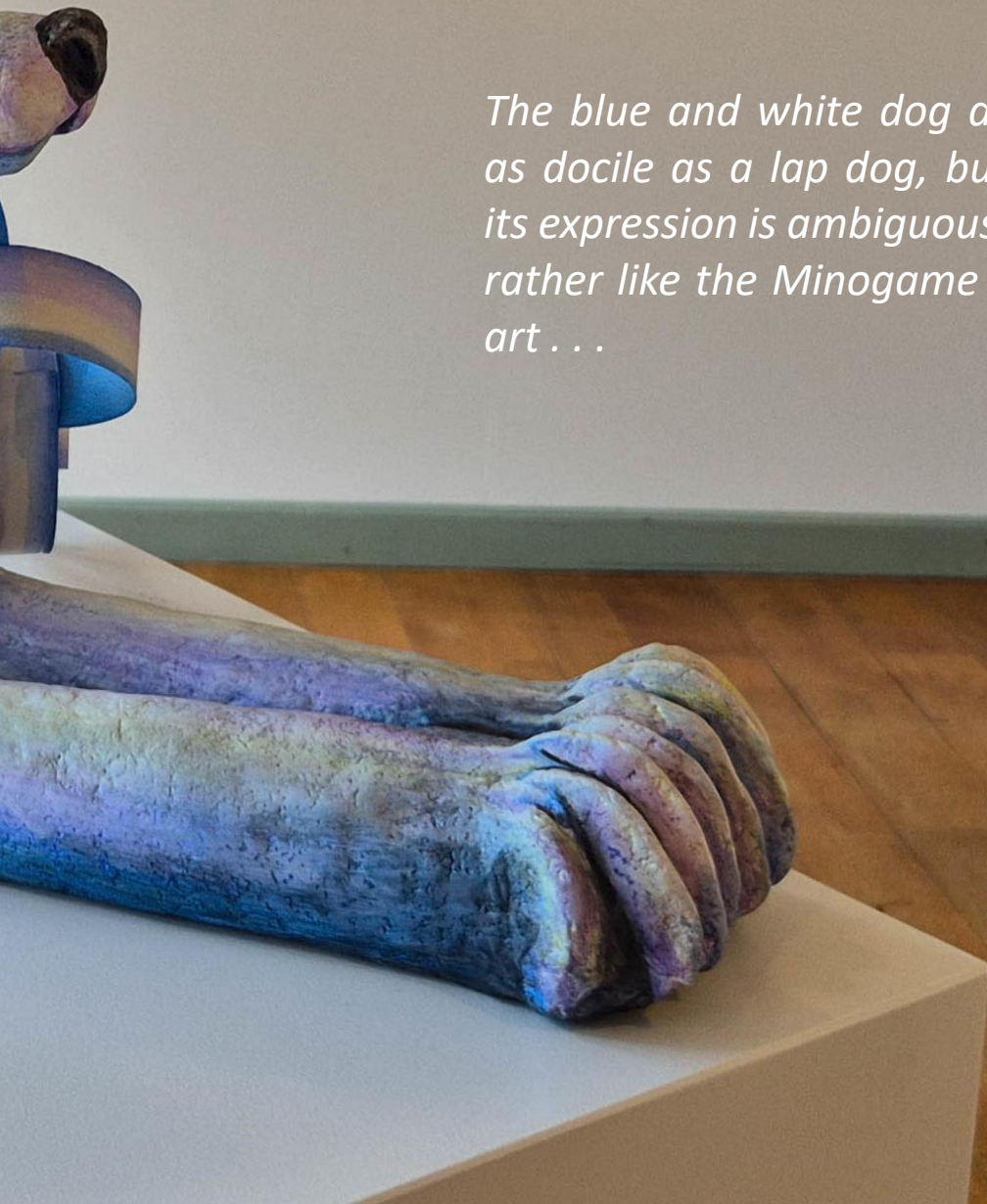
What seems to be a rather amusing video by Puck Verkade of a grey pigeon (in a handmade mask) in perplexed conversation with its black offspring turns out to pose serious questions about society's expectations – must it build a nest? And what about the biological female clock ticking, the social pressure to reproduce? A giant egg lands in 'her lap' prompting her to question: Is an egg already a living being and who owns that life?



Daisy Madden-Wells *F is for Fido* (2024)



The blue and white dog at first glance looks as docile as a lap dog, but at second glance its expression is ambiguous, if not malignant – rather like the Minogame turtles in Japanese art . . .





Caren van Herwaarde

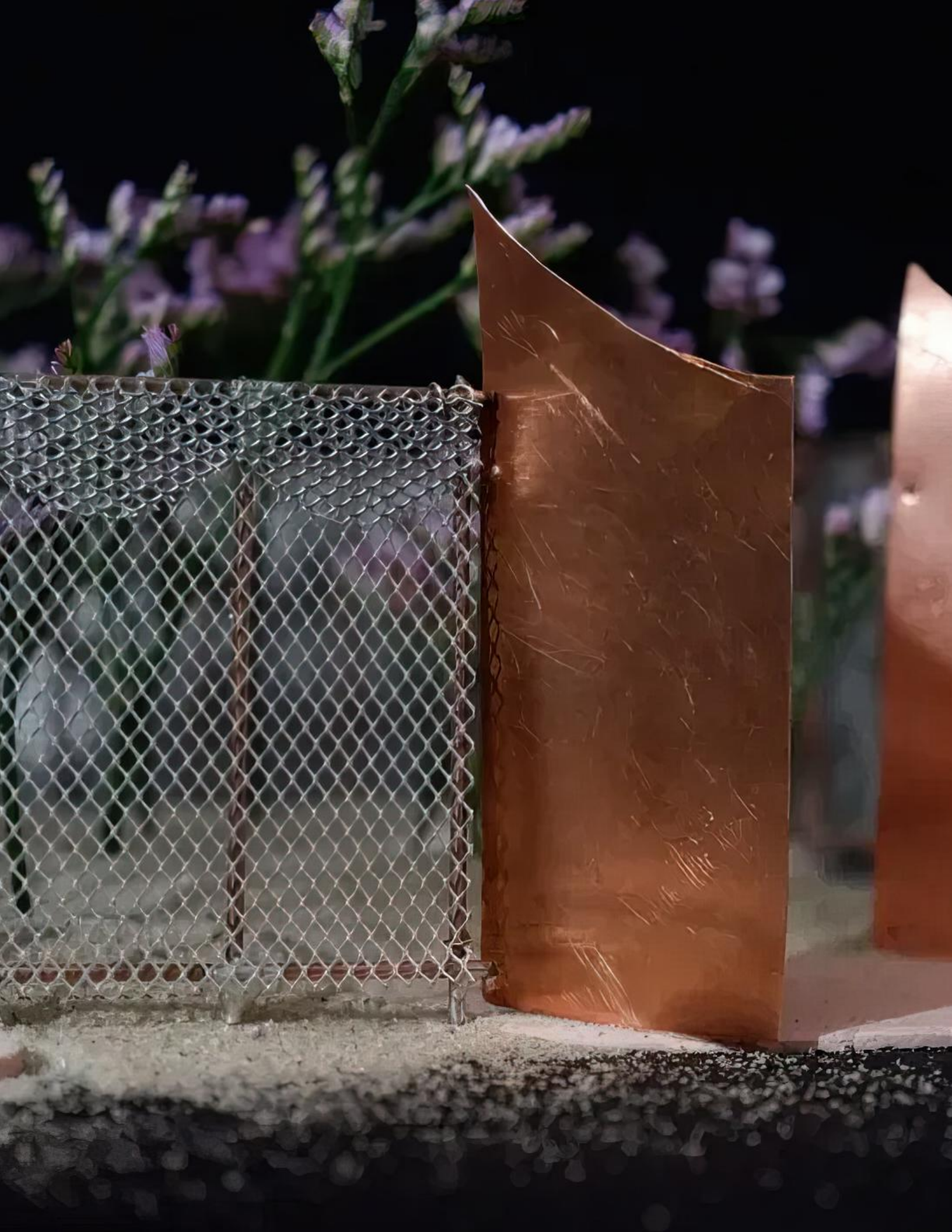


Caren van Herwaarden's horses, made of card, leather and string, illustrate how humans use stallions for breeding programs. Some of her figures are shown in the act of copulation. In the powerful drawings some horses lie on the ground, possibly exhausted or even dead due to exploitation, other horses mournfully standing over the inert horse seem to show that horses, just like us, experience real grief.

The undoubted centre piece of the exhibition is Irish artist Sam Keogh's gigantic exuberantly coloured cartoon-collage *The Unicorn is Killed and Brought to the Castle*. Think Gollum, Ubu Roi, Frankenstein's monster or Grimm's most nightmarish fairy tales coming to haunt your dreams – all this echoing the famous images of the Flemish 16th century tapestries *The Hunt for the Unicorn*. There are textures of rich royal costumes and luscious plant borders. The ferocious characters in turn hold giant scissors (possibly participating in creating the collage?) and sharp weapons etc. while caressing their favourite hounds as Henry VIII did. It is a truly astonishing work.

An exhibition not to be missed at this excellent museum □

RIJSWIJK PAPIER BIËNNALE 2024 continues until 17th November 2024



A Garden

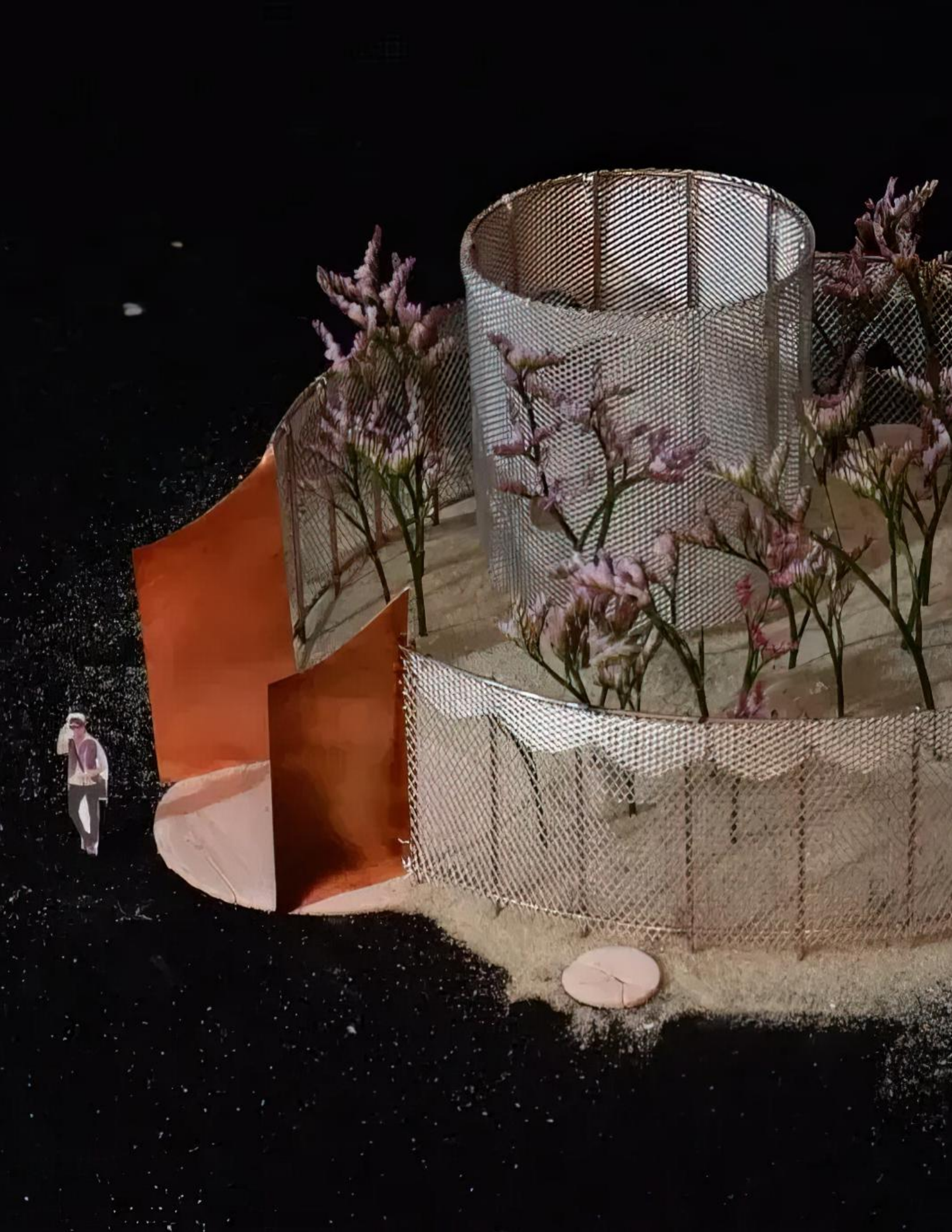
NDSM Lusthof by Studio Ossidiana at NDSM in Amsterdam

Does green make public space meaningful? With *NDSM Lusthof*, Studio Ossidiana wonders what a green garden at NDSM means, when is a 'public' garden accessible and under what conditions? This summer, the NDSM Wharf Foundation will unveil *NDSM Lusthof* at the location where Sexyland used to be found. The NDSM Lusthof can be admired at NDSM for at least two years.

Pleasure grounds have a rich history as places meant to stimulate the senses. At the same time, they increasingly became an exclusive place for the wealthy owners to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. An example of this is the private Lusthoven on the Vecht, where in the past only the rich Amsterdammers went. With this contemporary NDSM pleasure garden, Studio Ossidiana draws a parallel between the pleasure gardens of the past and the courtyards of today's apartment complexes that are often only accessible to owners or tenants. Ossidiana asks questions about private and public, and who has the right and access to greenery and exclusive nature in today's city.

This garden is enclosed just like the former Lusthoven, but now by a playfully designed and colored fence with viewing holes. It is an architectural garden designed for people, plants and animals. For example, Studio Ossidiana designs a special feeding area for







birds. The fence arouses curiosity and encloses to allow the plants to grow as best as possible. You can laze around the edges and partly inside on colored round molded platforms.

To see the garden up close, you can become a gardener for the project, attend a tour or tea session, or come and take a look at fixed times when work is being done in the garden. The planting is inspired by the Turkish Ottomangardens in which medicinal herbs, trees or flowers bloom. Just like the human migration flows, this garden features a colorful collection of local native and exotic plants (at NDSM they sail and blow). It is an agricultural garden in the broadest sense of the word in which plants have a 'function', from pollinators for bees and butterflies to tea herbs. Studio Ossidiana likes to call it: a living library, where they invite you to sow seeds of herbs or plants (perhaps from distant places) of which you have special memories. As Studio Ossidiana writes, 'Within the former shipyard, we imagined it as a port made for soil, plants, and minerals, a circular world-observatory to stay, to look into, and from which to observe the world around it: a sequence or opening frame the cardinal points, as well as directing the gaze towards the axis of dawn and dusk during the summer and winter solstices, marking the passing of the seasons.'

Studio Ossidiana (2015, Rotterdam) is led by the Italian architects Alessandra Covini (1988, Milan) and Giovanni Bellotti (1987, Pavia). Ossidiana works at the intersection of art and architecture. With their projects they try to generate new encounters between people and animals and thus re-anchor our relationship with nature in our built environment □

PANORAMA MESDAG in The Hague gets a make-over

Preparations for a major cleaning of the world-famous Panorama of Mesdag have been underway since May. Two restorers first removed dirt from the huge 1,680m² canvas and carried out local maintenance and restoration work. No less than three months have been allocated to the job – and all this to be done under the gaze of visitors to the Panorama.

The process consists of three steps: the layer of dust is removed with a special vacuum cleaner. Greasy soot particles are then removed with a suitable sponge. This sponge rolls up the dirt, like an eraser. Then a soft brush sweeps away these particles. In this way, the colors of the cloth are returned to their original, bright state. Thanks to this treatment, the canvas and paint are better protected against future dirt. The colour layer of the painting





Restorer Jorinde Koenen at work on the Panorama





is carefully monitored and updated where the top layer has discoloured. Any gaps visible from the dune are filled and integrated with retouches. This year the focus of the work is mainly on conservation, including careful control and documentation of the current condition of the canvas.

The Panorama is cleaned, checked and treated where necessary every five to seven years. This is necessary to preserve the Panorama so that future generations are assured of a visit to Mesdag's Panorama.

Jorinde Koenen, chief restorer of Museum Panorama Mesdag explained, "For retouching we use, among other things, special pencils with a high concentration of pigment and therefore a lot of colour strength and a very high lightfastness. When unscrambling areas where the paint has become discoloured due to old leaks, dry materials are preferred, because the specific properties of the Panorama cloth which is matte, no varnish, very porous and absorbent, but also because of the enormous surface area".

Museum director Minke Schat added, "It is an honourable task to keep the heritage of the artist couple Mesdag accessible to the largest possible audience for as long as possible. Proper conservation of the 143-year-old Panorama canvas is therefore of the utmost importance. We are pleased and grateful that this project has been made possible by the support of the Friends of Mesdag, the Zadelhoff Cultural Fund and BAM Infra Nederland".

The cleaning of the Panorama cloth can be seen live. While the visitor imagines himself on the Seinpostduin with a view over Scheveningen in 1881, one can simultaneously switch to the restorers who, close to the canvas, suddenly look like giants by breaking the optical illusion. A special experience that can only be seen once every five to seven years. The restoration work will take place in the months of June, July and August. Museum Panorama Mesdag will remain open to the public during the maintenance.

The Panorama's last maintenance was in the summer of 2017. The entire canvas was cleaned and removed of dust and soot particles. However, this was not the first large-scale maintenance. In the late 1980s, the world-famous Panorama



Also known as a cyclorama the Panorama is more than fourteen meters high and about forty meters in diameter with a circumference of 120 meters.







of Scheveningen was in poor condition. The canvas showed considerable wear and action had to be taken quickly. A major restoration followed in the early 1990s. A large team of restorers, art historians and technical experts joined forces to ensure that this artistic highlight of Mesdag is not lost.

The Panorama was painted by Hendrik Willem Mesdag, a marine painter of The Hague School. The 360° panorama is a cylindrical painting housed in a purpose-built museum in The Hague, Also known as a cyclorama the Panorama is more than fourteen meters high and about forty meters in diameter with a circumference of 120 meters.

From an observation gallery, resembling an old bandstand, in the centre of the room the cylindrical perspective creates the illusion that the viewer is on a high sand dune overlooking the sea, beaches and village of Scheveningen in the late 19th century. A foreground of fake terrain around the viewing gallery hides the base of the painting and makes the illusion more convincing.

In 1880 Mesdag was engaged by a Belgian company to paint the panorama, which with the assistance of his wife Sientje Mesdag-van Houten and some student painters (including George Hendrik Breitner), was completed by 1881. However, the vogue for panoramas was coming to an end, and the company went bankrupt in 1886. Mesdag purchased the panorama and met its losses from his own pocket. The panorama is now the oldest surviving panorama in its original location □



Susanna Inglada, *Y Ahora Que*, 2020. Charcoal, ink, acrylic paint and pastels on paper. 160 x 300cm. Collection Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. Gift of NOG Collection/Stichting Beheer SNS REAAL



EXHIBITIONS

at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam

Housed in a splendid former 1787 hospital, the museum features contemporary Dutch art exhibits of outstanding quality and for a small museum punches well above its weight with a programme of exciting and innovative exhibitions, two of which are currently running . . .

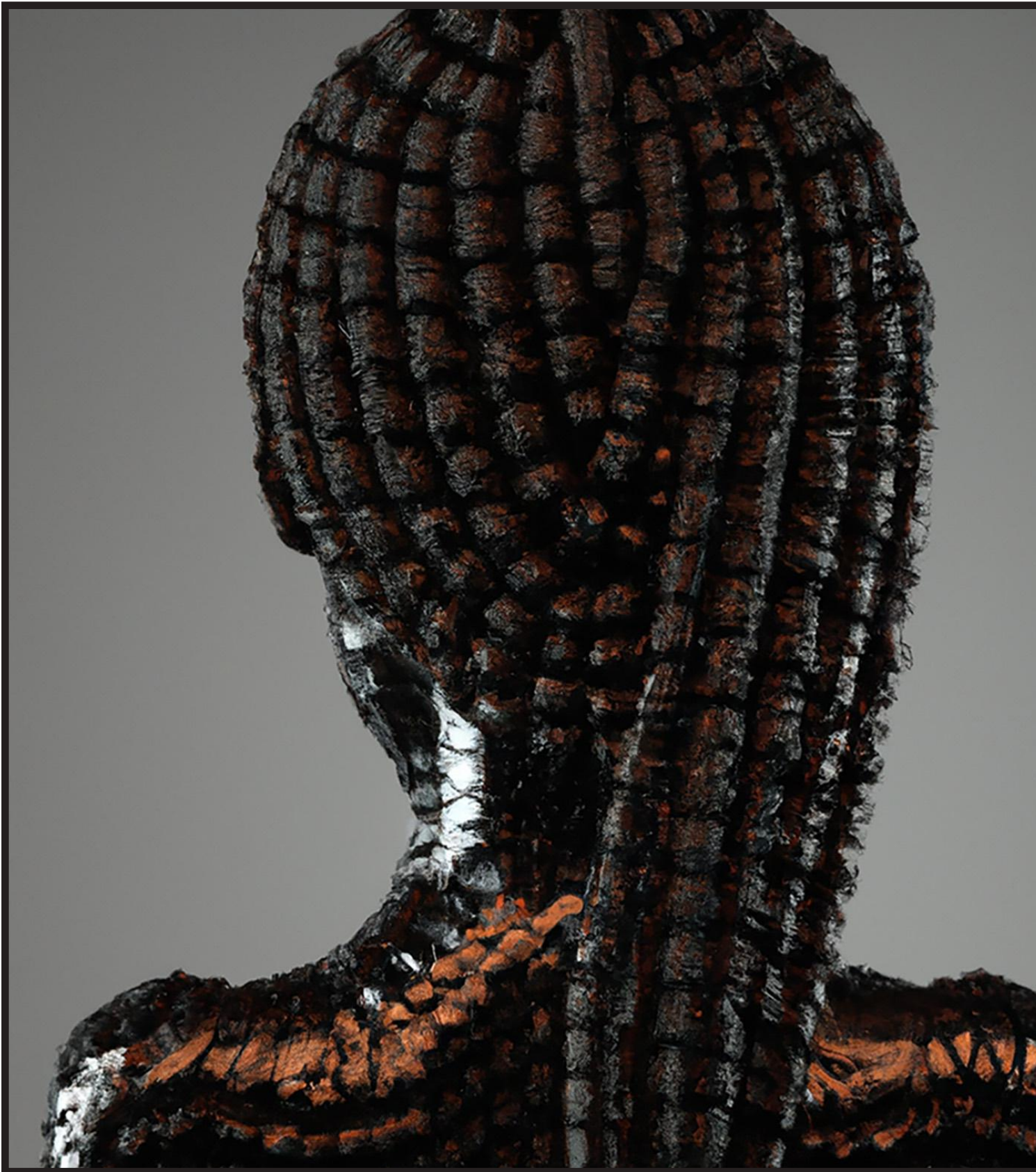


Nour-Eddine Jarram, *Danse Macabre*, 2016, Water colour on paper, 50 x 65cm. Gift of Stichting Beheer SNS REAAL



For *Love for Drawing* Stedelijk Museum Schiedam invited three artists, Fatima Barzngé, Koen Taselaar and Susanna Inglada, to look at its collection from an artist's perspective. For each of them, drawing is important for their artistic practice. Their love for drawing is very personal. Where Fatima Barzngé works abstractly and thinks in drawn patterns and symbolism, Susanna Inglada's drawings are very narrative and direct. For Koen Taselaar, drawing is close to (day)dreaming: the hand puts on paper, unfiltered, what is going on in the artist's head. Through the drawing they reflect on the world around us and at the same time offer an insight into their individual inner world. Especially in times of AI, algorithms and fake news, the simplicity and directness of the medium of drawing has great power. Their love for drawing is the starting point of this exhibition, which remarkably features paintings, collages, sculptures and multimedia installations in addition to drawings. The artists show a surprising selection of works that are related to their own practice in terms of theme, execution or technique.

Fatima Barzngé (Aghjalar, 1968) makes series of abstract drawings, installations and wall paintings, which reflect influences from both Islamic art traditions and European modern art. Koen Taselaar (Rotterdam, 1986) makes drawings, ceramics, tapestries and screen prints. His drawings are created by freely associating with letters, images and symbols. Susanna Inglada (Banyeres del Penedès, 1983) creates spatial installations composed of drawings in which the human body takes centre stage. Her main themes are power relations and gender inequality.



Marga Weimans



Along with the art platform DAR the Museum has mounted the international group exhibition *New Wave*. On display are six new room-filling installations by The Nest (Nairobi, Kenya), Nifemi Marcus Bello (Lagos, Nigeria) and Rotterdam-based artists Marga Weimans, Ameneh Solati, Yuro Moniz and Elejandro Martinez. These artists represent a new – international – movement in art. Each of them is part of different networks, from their own family, a collective of makers and groups of friends to strong locally rooted communities. Their connection with these networks determines the perspective with which they address global themes such as climate, power, digitalization and commerce in their work. The exhibition, curated by Zineb Seghrouchni of DAR Cultural Agency, is inspired by an international development in which attention shifts from artists who work autonomously and individually to artists who work strongly context-driven or from a collective or community.

In art, music, fashion or politics, 'a new wave' always stands for a movement that deliberately deviates from standardized ideas, techniques or values. In this exhibition, *New Wave* represents a movement that makes room for new perspectives and stories that break open the one-sided Western perspective that has long been leading in the art world. Important global themes are highlighted from different angles in the work of these artists, guided by non-Western ideas and the experience of living between different cultures. The six installations represent this *New Wave* and invite the visitor to experience and delve into it □

Love for Drawing runs at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam until 15th September and *New Wave* until 10th November.

RON MUECK

at Museum Voorlinden in The Hague/Wassenaar

Text by Michael HASTED Photos by Antoine VAN KAAM except where stated





The invention of photography in the mid-19th century released painters from just being recorders of people, places and events and gave them the freedom to express themselves, to use paint for its own sake. They went from being skilled craftsmen to artists and the break-out, the first true manifestation of this new-found freedom was Impressionism in the 1870s. As the years went by painting became freer and freer, going through the various forms of expressionism and abstract art until, in the 1960s, it took a strange turn. Pop Art reverted to clean lines, hard edges and to a greater or lesser degree, realism. Photorealists like Richard Estes and Chuck Close amazed people by recreating photographs with paint, Estes with street scenes and shop fronts, Close with giant faces showing every pore and whisker. But, apart from the technical wizardry and patience involved, what was the point? Did Estes' view through a shop window say more than, say, Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* just because it was like a photo? Of course it didn't. Photorealism was a bit of a party trick, impressive but in the end, so what? In principle, with enough patience, anyone could copy a photo, so why bother?

There are those that would say that Pop Art, Photorealism and even Surrealism made people look at everyday objects in a different light, to focus on something that was so commonplace as to be almost invisible. And therein lay its value. Monet made you look at a lily pond differently; Andy Warhol did the same for the Coca Cola bottle. But how do you make people look at themselves differently without just being clever?

Size is the answer or, at least, one of them and Australian Ron Mueck uses this expedient to create pieces which certainly make you look at things, mainly people, in a whole new light. Looking at one of his, literally, larger than life human figures is what it must be like for a cat or a dog gazing up at its owner – in fact there is a group of three giant black dogs so you can really find out what that feels like.

But they are not only giants; there are several pieces where the people are about half-size, like the naked man sitting forlornly in an old wooden rowing boat or the lonely refugee-like woman with a baby held under her coat.

The figures are totally lifelike with every pimple and nasal hair in place. One feels like a guilty viewer in a freak or peep show – intrusive and even perhaps a little embarrassed. But the giant figures exist in their own private Lilliput, gazed at by people only a tenth of their size, and they don't care. Whether they are the gargantuan elderly *Couple Under an Umbrella* or the young lady



In Bed, lying on a six meter mattress, they are oblivious to the spectator's prying gaze. However, the four-meter-tall *Wild Man* does seem a little self-conscious and vulnerable as he sits, bearded and naked on a wooden stool, his penis pointing accusingly straight in the eye of anyone who stands too close. And disturbing too, like the room full of giant human skulls or the three meter newly dispatched chicken, plucked and hanging from a hook with its throat cut.

Ron Mueck's work certainly makes you look at things differently, proving conclusively that size does matter. The human race has created a whole world to its own scale so everything fits neatly into a framework of somewhere under two meters, a world in which these giant figures would not be able to function. They could not go through doorways or sit on a bus. They would be outcasts, strangers in a strange land - and that says a lot about the human condition.







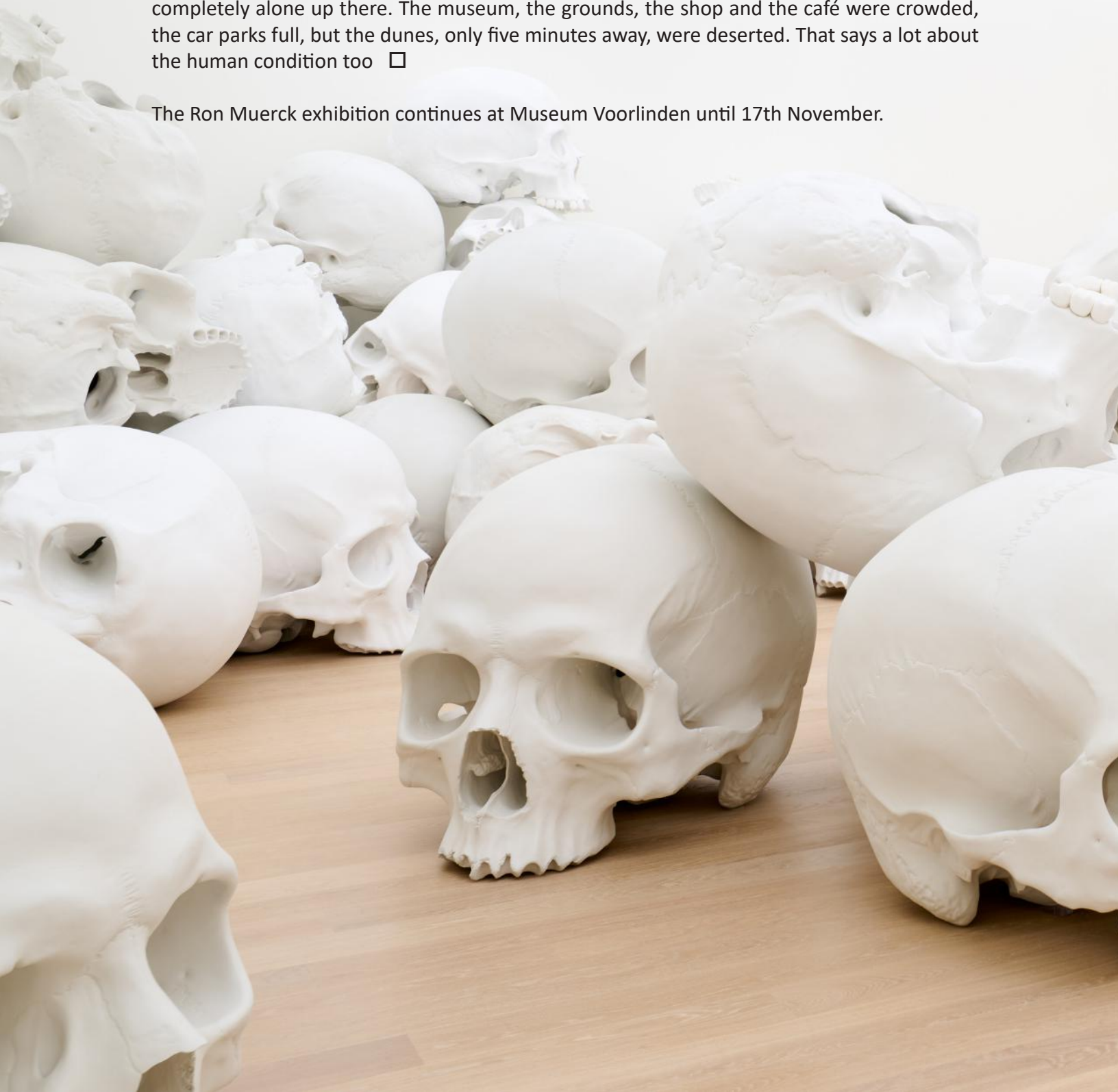


But they are not only giants; there are several pieces where the people are about half-size, like the naked man sitting forlornly in an old wooden rowing boat . . .

Oh, and there's a bonus. A visit to Voorlinden is always a great pleasure, not only the world class museum, but there is a lake and beautiful grounds in which to wander and, of course, a splendid café. But hidden away up a winding path up through the trees behind the house one is surprised to find oneself in the dunes with the high-rise blocks and big-wheel of Scheveningen in the hazy distance. And, sitting proudly at the highest sandy point, strangely out of place, is the museum's newly acquired *Jericho*, two of Anselm Kiefer concrete towers.

You may think them incongruous and a blot on the tranquil windswept landscape until you realise that only a few meters away, half-covered in ferns is an old German bunker from the Second World War. Kiefer is nothing if not apposite. And the amazing thing is, we were completely alone up there. The museum, the grounds, the shop and the café were crowded, the car parks full, but the dunes, only five minutes away, were deserted. That says a lot about the human condition too ☐

The Ron Muerck exhibition continues at Museum Voorlinden until 17th November.





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