

Bozar

MICHEL FRANÇOIS

16 March > 21 July 2023



Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels
www.bozar.be

INTRODUCTION



Autoportrait contre nature, vidéo still, (2002)



Psycho jardin, bronze, marble powder, glass bottles, frozen black ink, wood (2002)



Horror Vacui, with Ann Veronica Janssens, Installation view Belgian Pavillion of the Venice Biennial (1999)

Cover: **Panoptique**, installation view Halle Verrière de Meisenthal (2021)

In Spring 2023, the Centre for Fine Arts is delighted to present an overview of 40 years of work by the Belgian artist Michel François, including new works conceived especially for the exhibition.

A fundamental practice in his work, sculpture covers photography, video, installation as well as performance to address issues of space, volume and balance that determine representation, whatever the medium used.

Recurrent preoccupations emerge from the heart of this proliferating, surging work: living material in all its forms (insertion of plant life, representation of mineral features, human gestures, etc.), the ordering of forces (gravity, balance, resistance...) and the metaphor of imprisonment and everything that it induces (breakage, holes, escape ...).

François uses an economy of means to transform seemingly uncomplicated objects and materials, or traces of past events, into deeply resonant carriers of meaning. His work can be seen as exploration of cause and effect, and the ways in which simple gestures can change the status of an object or have important consequences. A number of recent sculptural works, without immediately revealing their origins or the way they were made, invite the viewer to consider the degree to which the hand of the artist, or chance, played a role in their formation.

His exhibitions are always considered as “total” works, forming a coherent whole, made up of a myriad of autonomous elements. The specificity of the work of François lies in the extreme diversity of its materials, its forms and its scales, while simultaneously constituting a great stylistic coherence over the past 40 years.

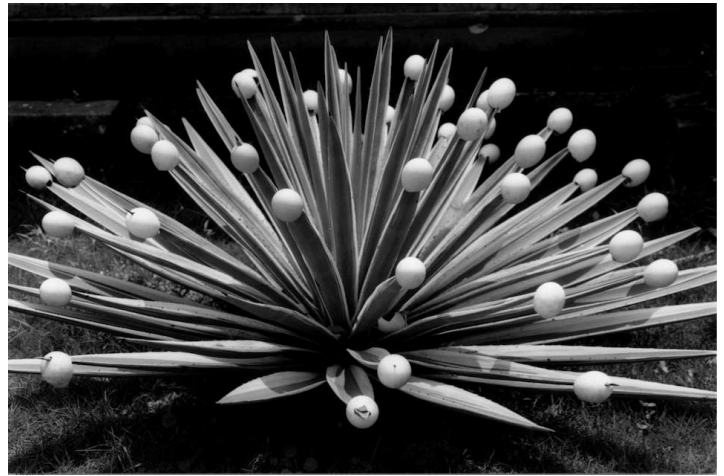


Mud volcano, video still, production YARAT Azerbaijan (2021)

“This coherence is mainly due to Michel François’s view of the phenomenal world: an attention to the energies of the natural world as much as to human gestures, without hierarchy or category. The artist exercises his curiosity for everything related to the dynamics of the elements, in all its forms: expansion and compression, growth and decrease, piling up and scattering, petrification and liquefaction, etc. These different forces constitute what finally connects human gestures to the “natural world”. (François Piron)



Enroulement, plaster, rubber, (2010)



Cactus, silver photography (1997)



Sans-titre, Agave, polystyrène, La plante en nous, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2000



Spring Steel Drawing (Framed Lamellos), Metal, Magnet (2020)



Studio pictures of dandelions for uminium, 2018



Lost peanuts, aluminium, 2018



Mass of Saint Gregory, Robert Campin/Master of Flemalle, Oil on panel, last quarter of the 15th c, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Bssruels

Michel François is passionate about past and present resurgences both in our cultural history as shown by *The Mass of Saint Gregory* by Robert Campin and *Yawning Man* by Peter Bruegel the Elder (?), both in the collection of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, but also by long continuity processes.

The Mass of Saint Gregor will be presented in the exhibition in dialogue with the installation *Table of Contents* by Michel François (1989–2021) consisting of a large number of sculptures, artifacts, bas-reliefs hung on the wall and indirectly inspired by this painting.



Michel François sees in this painting an arrangement model. He often describes his work as a set of "exhibits", that is to say, in a way, proofs, traces, results of actions he has produced or observed and recorded, and which bear witness to a social factory of objects.



Table Contents, Het Latijnse Noorden in Vier Scenes, Provincial Museum Hasselt, curator Laurent Jacob, 24.11.89–>25.02.1990, (collection FNAC, Musée de Strasbourg)

Human gestures in Michel François's work are not immanent, but situated, observed in the most varied geographical contexts and social fields: gestures of work but also produced by idleness, gestures of survival in the circumstances of the current world – traffic, recycling, handiwork – the forms of which he never ceases to capture and transfigure in his sculptures, his photographs and his films. (François Piron)



Yawning Man, Pieter Bruegel (after), oil on panel, 12 x 9cm, end 16th c., Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

Since the 1990s, the painting *Yawning Man* has influenced Michel François and his reflection on the yawn. The figure of "contagion" par excellence. Brueghel's painting will be presented in a specific installation within Bozar.



Yawning Stone, collaboration Douglas Eynon and Michel François for Lustwarande (The Netherlands)



680 000 Baileys, édition Vereniging voor Kunst, Gent (1991), collection FRAC Provence Côte d'Azur



Instant Graffiti, bronze



Savon femme, silver photograph (1991)



Souffles dans le verre, glass, (2021)

BIOGRAPHY



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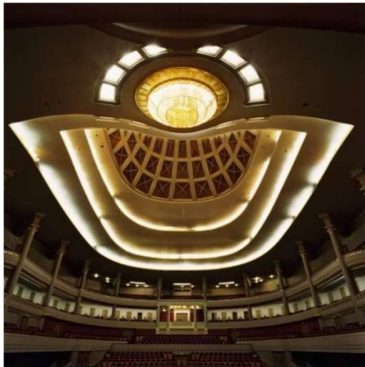
Michel François, born 1956, Saint-Trond (BE), lives and works in Brussels. He represented Belgium at the Venice Biennale with Ann Veronica Janssens in 1999 and his work was included in Documenta 9 (1992). Among his recent exhibitions are *Nineteen thousand posters. 1994–2016*, Mac's Grand Hornu (2011) and *Frac île– de–France* (2016); *Pièce à conviction*, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (2016); *Pieces of Evidence*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2013); *Plans d'évasion*, SMAK, Ghent and Iac Vileurbanne (2009–10); *Salon Intermédiaire*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2002); *La Plante en nous*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2000); Kunsthalle Bern (2000).

His work is part of national collections as the SMAK, MRBAB, and in numerous international collections.

CENTRE FOR FINE ARTS BRUSSELS



Centre for Fine Arts Brussels



Henry Le Boeuf Hall



Horta Hall

The Centre for Fine Arts boasts unparalleled facilities accommodating a rich programme encompassing multiple artistic domains. The building itself constitutes an extraordinary component of Belgium's architectural heritage. Imagined by the architect Victor Horta in the 1920s, the edifice's daring modernity – welcoming all artistic disciplines beneath a single roof – still surprises visitors.

Since 2002, the institution has presented a vast and varied programme beneath the BOZAR banner, comprising BOZAR EXPO (pre-modern, modern and contemporary art), BOZAR MUSIC (classical music, jazz, world music, electronic music, etc.), BOZAR CINEMA, BOZAR THEATRE and BOZAR LITERATURE. The philosophy powering Horta's project was and remains unique in Europe. As a fertile centre of European culture and public discourse, BOZAR was honoured to welcome President Barack Obama in 2014.

With over 4,000 m² of exhibition space, a magnificent concert hall seating 2,100, a chamber music room seating 480, two small theatres, three new spaces dedicated to multimedia projects, and the world-renowned Royal Cinema Archives, BOZAR has grown into an exceptionally dynamic art centre welcoming nearly 1 million visitors yearly.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Location and Dates

Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels
16 March > 21 July 2023

Contacts

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Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue (publisher: BozarBooks in collaboration with MER – Borgerhoff & Lamberigts).