

Feel the heartbeat of history



**PRESS FILE
REBEL ECHOES**

800 YEARS OF STORIES, 100 YEARS OF MUSEUM



Kasteel
van Gaasbeek



« Quelle belle journée,
le parc était magnifique,
je quitte toujours Gaesbeek avec regret. »

[What a beautiful day, the park was magnificent,
I always leave Gaasbeek with regret.]

–Marie Arconati Visconti

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Rebel echoes

800 years of stories,
100 years of museum



'The present disappoint me and the future frightens me.' - Maria Antonia Visconti (1810 - 1823)

From 31 March to 3 November 2024
www.kasteelvangasbeek.be

One hundred years ago, the castle welcomed its first museum visitors. Marie Arconati Visconti, the castle's last marquise, had the express wish that her life's work be opened to the public. After a thorough restoration, her carefully decorated dream castle once again shines in all its glory. The collection is back home, ready to be admired in a new setting. In true Gaasbeek tradition, we invite nationally and internationally recognised artists to enter into dialogue with this multi-layered location with new creations or existing work.

Rebel Echoes

800 years of stories,
100 years of museum

31.03 - 03.11.2024

Slightly rebellious

With a rich history of some 800 years, the castle is littered with stories. The former residents, each with their own - somewhat rebellious - character, are once again demanding their place in the new scenography. The voices of the past echo through the walls here, resonating in the hallways and whispering softly. Their echoes are reflected in letter fragments that lead you through the castle rooms. You will be touched and intrigued as you immerse yourself in Marie's passion for her castle, feel Costanza's grief over the death of her son or experience Giammartino's wonder during his adventurous journey in the Middle East. Perhaps their dreams, musings and worries are not so different from ours after all?

Timeless

At Gaasbeek Castle, you'll wander through centuries that flow effortlessly into one another, let time fool you and realise that history is never "finished". The extraordinary castle collection - from paintings to tapestries, from coins to curios - enters into a surprising confrontation with various, carefully curated, contemporary works. Some works were created specifically for this site. The special encounter between old and new sparks the imagination and makes both the artist and visitor dream, reflect and fantasise. The past and the present share an intimate embrace, adding a palpable heartbeat to what has been and gone.

In addition to contemporary artworks that are part of our permanent collection, this year's exhibition features contemporary reflections from Philip Aguirre y Otegui | Rosa Barba | Kendell Geers | Kati Heck | Gülsün Karamustafa | Maurizio Nannucci | Nadia Naveau | Sophie Whettnall

Advisor contemporary art
Ann Geeraerts

Author letter fragments Leen Huet

Campaign image
Jim Van Raemdonck, Soon

Film Curator Wouter Hessels

Light Chris Pype

Music Curator Jeroen D'hoer

Realisation scenography
Potteau & Etoile mecanique

Scenographer Niek Kortekaas, Origin

With thanks to
Merten Houfek, 24Frame Kinoprojection & Rijksmuseum Amsterdam



Contemporary reflections

Contemporary works of art

Gaasbeek Castle is a place of beauty, imagination and connection. The sculpture *Je vous offre une maison* by Philip Aguirre y Otegui welcomes every visitor to the Inner Garden with open arms. It represents both the hospitality of the present and of the past, when exiles such as Giuseppe Arconati Visconti and his wife Costanza Trotti sought refuge in this castle in 1821. Alfred Dreyfus also found a tranquil abode here following his exile.

This season at Gaasbeek Castle, we have invited 8 artists to incorporate their work in and around the castle, as an extension of the permanent collection. Creation, dialogue with the environment, modesty and materiality are the main focal points in this regard. Each work touches on some of the core values of Gaasbeek Castle's mission: present and past, reality and imagination, culture and nature, action and tranquillity and last but not least, the feminine perspective.



Philip Aguirre y Otegui, *Je vous offre une maison* (2018), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Philip Aguirre y Otegui

Je vous offre une maison (2018) & *The Small Cabinet* (2024) / Inner Garden & Archive room

Philip Aguirre y Otegui (Schoten, 1961) is best known for his sculptures, installations and monumental works in public spaces. His work always has a distinct socially-engaged dimension, with a specific focus on the position of the individual within migration

and refugee phenomena. In addition to the sculpture in the Inner Garden, this theme is reprised in his creations in the Archive Room, where he uses drawings and small sculptures to create his own personal universe that refers to travelling, sensuality and architecture. Through experiments with form and texture, he creates a style of his own which is classical as well as contemporary and becomes part of a timeless archive.

// Philip Aguirre studied sculpture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, where he now still lives and works.

www.philipaguirre.be



Philip Aguirre y Otegui, *The Small Cabinet* (2024), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Rosa Barba

The Hidden Conference (2010 - 2015) / Emperor Charles Hall

Kendell Geers (Johannesburg, 1968) is a multifaceted artist whose objects, video art, installations and performances consequentially call into question the major narratives of power, art and faith in a confrontational and raw way. At the same time, he wants to warn us about the lethargy that can overcome us if we are confronted with disturbing images and situations too often. He calls us to question our value judgements. His new work *Wonderland 8683* prompts us to reflect on ourselves and ponder the meaning of truth and lies. A highly appropriate question in this self-created dream castle of marquise Marie Arconati Visconti...

// Rosa Barba studied at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne followed by a fellowship at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; and has completed her PhD with the title

“On the Anarchic Organisation of Cinematic Spaces: Evoking Spaces beyond Cinema” at the Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund University in 2018.

She has been a visiting professor at MIT, ACT (Program in Art, Culture and Technology), in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Barba is Professor of Art in Space and Time in the Department of Architecture at ETH Zürich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich), Switzerland (ongoing) and has been a member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Fine Arts Section.

Her work is exhibited worldwide. Most recent exhibitions of her work have included Tate Modern, London, 2023; Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2023; Gangneung International Art Festival, Korea, 2023; PICA, Australia, 2023; Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, Tours, 2022; Villa Medici, Rome, 2022; Luhring Augustine, New

York, 2022; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2021 and Cukrarna, Ljubljana, 2021, 2022. Her work is part of several museum collections in the world, including: the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; MAXXI, Rome; Lenbachhaus, Munich; Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Philadelphia Museum of Art, US and SFMOMA, San Francisco.

www.rosabarba.com/

With thanks to Ben Borthwick, Franck Bordese, Joachim Jäger, Andrea Lissoni, Cloe Piccoli, Alethea Rockwell, the late Achim Borchardt-Hume and Merten Houfek, 24Frame Kinoprojection.



Rosa Barba, *The Hidden Conference* (2010 - 2015), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Kendell Geers

Wonderland 8683 (2024) /
Marquise's Apartement

Kendell Geers (Johannesburg, 1968) is a multifaceted artist whose objects, video art, installations and performances consequentially call into question the major narratives of power, art and faith in a confrontational and raw way. At the same time, he wants to warn us about the lethargy that can overcome us if we are confronted with disturbing images and situations too often. He calls us to question our value judgements. His new work *Wonderland 8683* prompts us to reflect on ourselves and ponder the meaning of truth and lies. A highly

appropriate question in this self-created dream castle of marquise Marie Arconati Visconti...

// Kendell Geers lives and works in Brussels. Raised in Johannesburg in a dysfunctional family, he joined the anti-apartheid movement at the age of 15. This social commitment greatly influenced his vision as an artist: for Geers, ethics and aesthetics are inseparable. Therefore, his work often embodies the seemingly impossible combination of contradictions, such as violence and eroticism, poetry and misery, the personal and the

political... contradictions that are also inherent to his own identity as an artist. Geers is propelled and driven by the belief that art can change the world - 'one perception at a time'.

Courtesy the artist.



Kendell Geers, *Wonderland 8683* (2024), Château de Gaasbeek, photo Jo Exelmans



Kati Heck

Ins Büro (2015) &
BDC-Mentor mit Bierchen
(2012) / Egmond Staircase

In her works, Kati Heck (Düsseldorf, 1979) combines a broad range of styles that fuse together to form 'collage-like' canvases in which she also incorporates non-traditional, everyday objects. The focus of her (self) portraits is primarily on their imaginary power. 'BDC' refers to 'Babydetectiveclub'; a discussion group Heck set up to counterbalance her career as a solitary artist. In the context of Gaasbeek, we can see this club as an almost absurd version of a salon of like-minded people, a place where the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred.

// Kati Heck, originally from Germany, lives and works in Pulle, Antwerp. She first came to Belgium to enroll in the Antwerp Fashion Academy, but eventually switched to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where she studied painting. Heck draws her inspiration mostly from her own life, from a deep interest in the everyday and the seemingly banal. Her work is generally humorous, alienating and peppered with references to pornography and popular culture such as comics and films.

www.timvanlaeregallery.com/kati-heck-works

Courtesy Tim Van Laere Gallery,
Antwerp-Rome.



Kati Heck, *Ins Büro* (2015) & *BDC-Mentor mit Bierchen* (2012), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Gülsün Karamustafa

*Double Action Series
for Oriental Fantasies*
(1999-2000) / Studiolo
Giammartino

Gülsün Karamustafa (Ankara, 1946) is a visual artist and film maker. Since the 1970s, she has been mixing personal and historical narratives in her work, which explores themes of sexuality, gender, migration and ethnicity in a distinctive way. In this work, she examines the image of Oriental women as objects of the Western patriarchal gaze, from a contemporary perspective. A critical note in this room devoted to Giammartino Arconati Visconti, who as a wealthy young man in the 19th century - a historical period of global colonisation - made several journeys to faraway lands.

// Gülsün Karamustafa lives and works in Istanbul. She is recognized as one of Turkey's most outspoken, celebrated and influential contemporary artists. Her work has been a decisive influence on younger generations of Turkish artists, especially since the 1990s. Karamustafa's oeuvre stretches from the mid-1970s to the present day and encompasses various media, including painting, installation, performance art, and video. Internationally her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions.

Arter Collection, Istanbul, courtesy Gülsün Karamustafa and BüroSarigedik, © Gülsün Karamustafa.



Gülsün Karamustafa, *Double Action Series for Oriental Fantasies* (1999-2000), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Maurizio Nannucci

Everything might be different (1988 - 2024) / Emperor Charles Staircase

Maurizio Nannucci (Florence, 1939) is an established figure in the international art world. He plays with the literal form of words and how this form influences communication. He explores the complex relationship between word and image, language and colour, light and space. His first neon works date as far back as 1967. They appeal to the audience to actively add layers of meaning to the artwork within the context in which it is exhibited. A version of the artwork was created in green neon especially for Gaasbeek Castle. Installed in the Emperor Charles Staircase, the oldest preserved part of this castle, it makes us reflect on its history and reminds us that this place is one of continuous transformation.

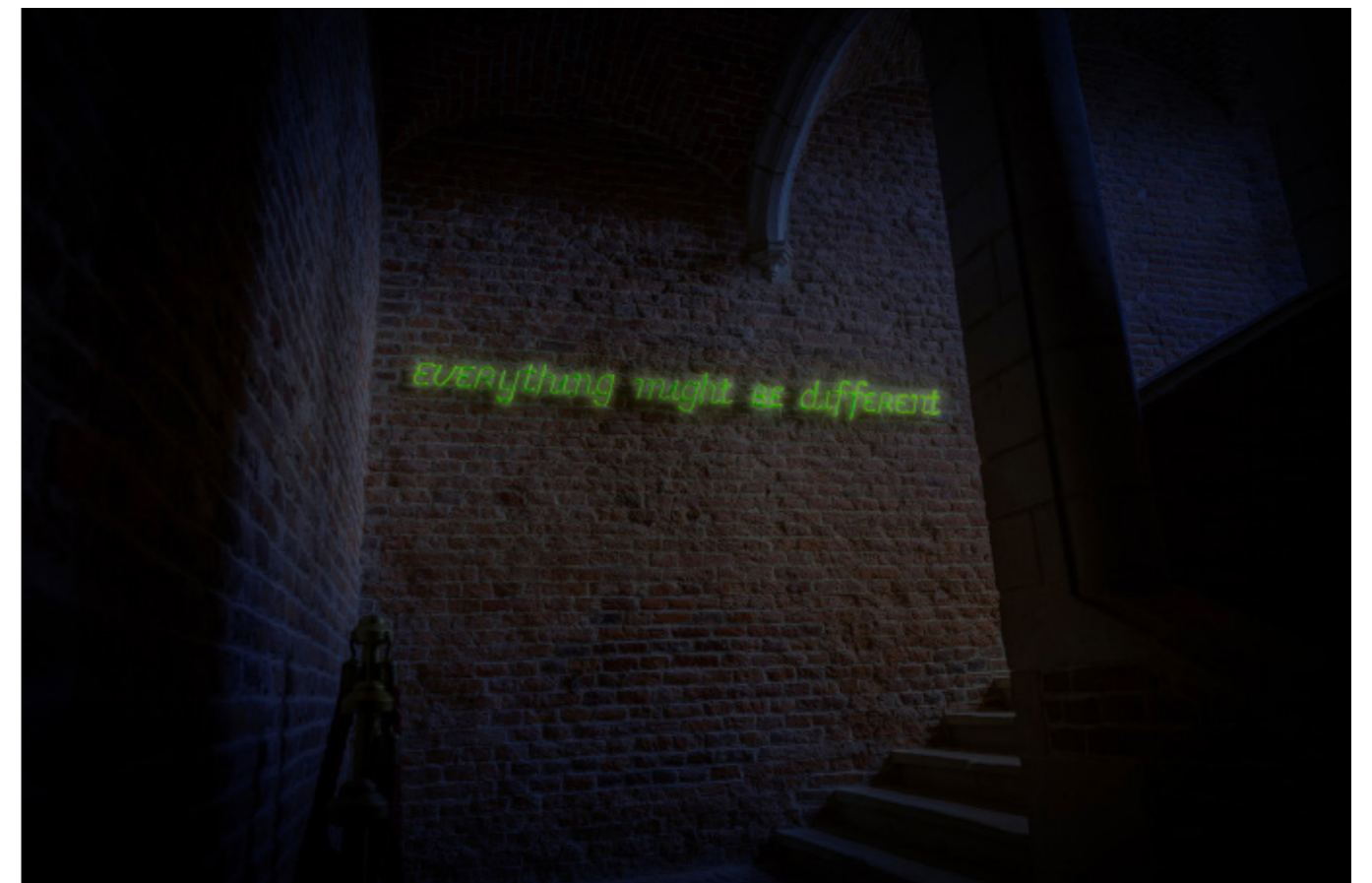
// Maurizio Nannucci lives and works between his hometown and South Baden, Germany. He is the founder of the self-managed spaces Zona (Florence, 1974-1985) and Base/Progetti per l'arte (Florence, since 1998), as well as author and collector of records, books and artist editions. In the early 1990s he began collaborating with internationally renowned architects such as Fritz Auer, Renzo Piano, Massimiliano Fuksas, Mario Botta, Nicolas Grimshaw and Stephan Braunfels. He created many installations for public institutions and places.

His works have been exhibited in more than 300 museums and galleries and are part of collections such as: Fondazione Peggy Guggenheim, Venice; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, München; Staatliche Museen, Berlin; Kunstsammlung

des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Parkview Museum, Singapore; Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris& Metz; MAXXI, Rome. Over the years Maurizio Nannucci has been invited to take part in: Venice Biennale, 2011, 2000, 1995, 1990, 1978, 1969; Valencia Biennial, 2003; Istanbul Biennial, 1995; Biennial of Sydney, 1990, 1982; Documenta, Kassel, 1987, 1977 and Bienal de São Paulo, 1981.

In 2023 Maurizio Nannucci and Galleria Fumagalli took part in the city-wide exhibition "Panorama l'aquila", presenting the work "Let's Talk About Art", a new conceptual work consisting of a text which stimulated a collective dialogue on the meaning and the role of art.

www.maurizionannucci.it



Maurizio Nannucci, *Everything might be different* (1988-2024), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Nadia Naveau

Pillar (2019) & *Knickerbocker Glory* (2019) / Cast Collection & Louis XIV Room

Nadia Naveau (Bruges, 1975,) is a sculptor. She primarily works with clay, and supplements it with a range of different materials. In her 'three-dimensional collages', iconography from the past flows seamlessly with contemporary formal language. She regularly works with plaster; inspired by the temporally character of this materials as is was used in the 'Salons des sculptures' in 19th century Paris. Her *Pillar* stands out among the architectural fragments in the Cast Collection, as if it were also a frivolous preliminary study for this castle.

// Nadia Naveau lives and works in Antwerp and Saint-Bonnet-Tronçais. She has been teaching sculpture at the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts since 2006. Recent (solo) exhibitions included 'Bringer Together', De Warande, Turnhout, 2021; 'De Eerste Parade', Knokke-Heist, 2021; 'In Situ 2020', Abbaye de Lagrasse, Lagrasse, 2020; 'Let's Play it by Ear', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, 2019; 'Sanguine, Blood Red', Luc Tuymans ON Baroque, M HKA, Antwerp and Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2018.

We Document Art



Nadia Naveau, *Knickerbocker Glory* (2019), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Sophie Whettnall

Midnight Sun (2022) & *Ghost Trees* (on 5, 6 and 7 July) / Carletto's Room & lawn in front of the castle

Sophie Whettnall (Brussels, 1973) explores the relationship between the body and the environment through performance, installations, video and drawing. She finds her inspiration in landscape painting in particular. The video *Midnight Sun* literally brings the landscape indoors. Replicating and mirroring themselves, the images intertwine with the patterns of the murals in this 'cursed' room, where Carlo Arconati Visconti died in 1839. At the beginning of July, Whettnall will perform *Ghost Trees* on the lawn in front of the castle. She will paint shadows of trees on the grass. Trees that perhaps once stood in this square and now leave a slowly fading echo from that imaginary past.

// Sophie Whettnall studied at Saint-Luc, the Académie des Beaux-Arts and La Cambre - all in Brussels. She is a multidisciplinary artist. In 1999, she received the Young Belgian Painters Prize. Since the late 1990s, her work has been regularly exhibited internationally. She had solo exhibitions at the Fondazione Palazzo Magnani in Reggio Emilia, Italy, 2021; Bozar, Brussels, 2021; the Aloisio Magalhaes Museum of Modern Art, Recife, Brazil, 2014; Vera Cortês Art Agency, Lisbon, 2014; the Fondació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2010; the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, 2010. Whettnall has participated in numerous group exhibitions at home and abroad,

including the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, Paris, 2022; the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, 2021; TANK, Shanghai, 2019; Mauro Mauroner Contemporary Art, Vienna, 2019; 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007. Her videos have been shown at several film festivals in Brussels (2003, 2011), Barcelona (2003), Rotterdam (2001) and Amsterdam (2000).

<https://sophiewhettall.com/>



Sophie Whettnall, *Midnight Sun* (2022), Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Contemporary reflections

In the Gaasbeek Castle Collection

Cindy Wright / *Scarlet Fever* (2020) / Art Cabinet

Erwin Olaf / *Serie Exquisite Corpses* (2012) / Egmond room, Egmond Staircase, Blue room

François de Coninck / *Le fil prodigue* (2018) / Marie Arconati Visconti Room

Jan De Vlieghe / *Hofburg 1 and 3* (2011) / Salon Giuseppe and Costanza



Cindy Wright, *Scarlet Fever* (2020), collection Gaasbeek Castle

Letter Fragments

The former castle residents wrote many letters and all had a great fondness for poetry and literature. We continue this tradition. Author and art historian Leen Huet listened carefully to the echoes of the former

residents and wrote them down in letter fragments. They guide the visitor through the rooms of the castle.

Music

Music curator and composer Jeroen D'hoë drew inspiration for the sound scenography from the interior of the castle and the diversity of its spaces, each of which highlights a unique aspect of the multifaceted personality of marquise Marie Arconati Visconti.

Fascinated by her search for personal happiness in Gaasbeek, far from the crowds of Paris, he chose musical styles that resonate today and enter into dialogue with the many works of art, tapestries, and historical documents from the castle's archives.

The musical route not only serves as an aural backdrop, but unfolds into a character in its own right, depicting the emotions and rebellious nature of the marquise.

Film Clips

Marie Peyrat was born and raised in Paris. Two short documentaries from 1900 and 1912 present to the visitor the Paris as Marie must have known it. As a politically engaged salonnière, she witnessed the breakthrough of cinematography, which was especially popular in France. In 1899, French film maker Georges Méliès produced the drama *L'Affaire Dreyfus*. Like Peyrat, Méliès took up the defence of the wrongly convicted Jewish captain Albert Dreyfus in the film.

Il Gattopardo (1963) by Luchino Visconti is a flamboyant fresco about the risorgimento, the downfall of the nobility and the rise of the bourgeoisie. The film clips have been carefully selected by Wouter Hessels, novelist, film historian (RITCS & INSAS) and film curator of Gaasbeek Castle.

L'Affaire Dreyfus (1899) / Georges Méliès / Marie Arconati Visconti Room

Vues de Paris (1900) / Étienne-Jules Marey / Marie Arconati Visconti Room

Paris à vol d'oiseau (1912) / Collection Lobster Films, Paris / Marie Arconati Visconti Room

Il Gattopardo (1963) / Luchino Visconti / Pathé Films, Paris / Salon Giuseppe and Costanza

The collection is back ...

Gaasbeek Castle's diverse collection was created over the course of several centuries. Its historical core originated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and includes late Gothic furniture and paintings. Valuable 16th-century tapestries from Tournai and Brussels tell the Old Testament story of Tobias and Sarah, among others. A top exhibit that found its place in the castle around that time was the last will and testament of the painter Pieter Paul Rubens. Around 1800, the collecting frenzy of the Orientalist Paul Arconati also added some remarkable and exotic pieces, such as the Chinese pagoda in ivory. They symbolise in a tangible way his fascination with the Near and Far East.

The Marquise Arconati Visconti, in

turn, commissioned the architect Charle-Albert to transform the castle into a neo-Renaissance dream castle, not only externally, but internally as well. As a result of this collaboration, she also firmly made her mark on the castle's interiors. Her focus lay upon art and utensils from the Flemish and Italian Renaissance. These pieces were intended to complete the concept of the castle as a Gesamtkunstwerk, that is, an all-encompassing work of art. When the architect died in 1890 and the contents of his lavish neo-Renaissance Flemish house (in Watermael-Boitsfort) was auctioned off, the Marquise bought a significant part of that collection. Together with her partner Raoul Duseigneur, an art dealer, she also acquired

bargains at places such as the "sale of the century," the Spitzer auction in Paris (in 1893). So Marie herself can therefore certainly also be called an avid collector. An important part of the Marquise's collection went to prestigious museums and institutions in France, such as the Louvre and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. But even in Gaasbeek, we are still reaping the fruits of her love of art and history today.

We share the Marquise's love for art and celebrate it by giving the collection the attention it deserves through registration, presentation, care and research. We continue to study the soul of our collection and delve into the stories of the intriguing castle inhabitants.

Starting point

The last owner of the castle, Marquise Marie Arconati Visconti, was childless. She donated the castle to the Belgian state. The process of the donation was a long-winded one. After several rejections, Belgium accepted the castle and opened it as a museum exactly 100 years ago. The marquise had the express wish that her life's work be opened to the public as a museum dedicated to art and science. The aim of the recent restoration was therefore to restore the legacy of this extraordinary marquise.

... in a new scenography

"The bequest of the last Marquise Arconati Visconti for me as director of Gaasbeek Castle, is a collection of guidelines. With her bequest, she wanted to contribute to the arts and sciences. And on this domain, she regarded culture and nature as one. Those are still our core values today. In that sense, the castle feels as if Marie is still amongst us. The world of her imagination is still present in all its facets. The same goes for Costanza. She was well-read and had a great interest in culture. She invited poets and held salons here. Yet Costanza also lost her son here. Gaasbeek Castle really unites all of life's facets. And the vigour of these women is important to me as a person. Marie was a seeker who put the bar ever higher. I recognise that restlessness."

– Isabel Lowyck, director Gaasbeek Castle



**Hermitage
Gloriette
(2019)**



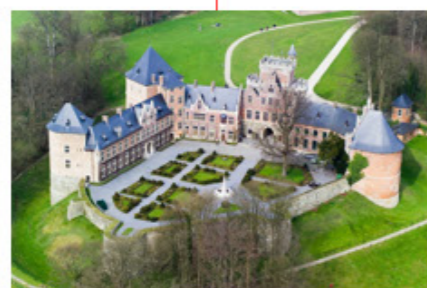
**Triumphal
Arch (2020)**



**Saint Gertrude's
Chapel (2021)**



**Entrance
Building
(2022)**



**Inner Garden
(2025)**



Brasserie (2025)



**The castle
(2023)**

Masterplan

For the history of the master plan, we must go back to 2012. Gaasbeek Castle had long been a site of European importance with a unique place in the Flemish museum landscape, but suffered from several problems. The building and the park with its architectural elements were not always treated with respect during the twentieth century. The interior of the castle was in need of restoration and the whole place no longer met contemporary museum standards and needs. The preservation and management of the collection, universal accessibility

and the various audience-building functions were also in need of a thorough upgrade. The extremely valuable historic buildings in the park were in a severely outdated and dilapidated state.

800 years of stories

Those who know the castle know that it's an inexhaustible source of 800 years of stories. For the first traces, we travel back in time to the early 13th century, when the lords of Leuven built a castle for protection against the counties of Flanders and Hainaut. Later in the 16th century, the castle came into the possession of none other than Lamoraal, Count of Egmond. At the end of the 18th century, the Milanese Arconati Visconti family makes its appearance. Paul was the first to live here; he was a great admirer of Napoleon, travelled far and had a triumphal

arch built in the park. He left the castle to his nephew Giuseppe, who was sentenced to death as a freedom fighter in Italy and found a safe haven here in Gaasbeek. He was married to Costanza, an intelligent woman who loved literature and science. Their first son Carlo died here. Overcome with grief, they returned to Italy. Their youngest son Giammartino was born a few months later. He was an archaeologist and travelled to distant and remote lands. In fact, he wrote a diary about this. Against his parents' wishes, he married the middle-class girl Marie

Peyrat. Giammartino's early death made her the early owner of beautiful palazzos in Italy, a house in Paris (near Musée Rodin), as well as her favourite place, Gaasbeek Castle.

Vision of the scenographer

Niek Kortekaas, Origin

After its restoration, Gaasbeek Castle presents itself unashamedly as an ensemble of grounds, buildings, castle and interiors. Visitors will find this in the new scenography, which essentially is an extension to the 'castle as theatrical scenery' idea described by Niek Kortekaas as "maybe not a stage with a curtain and spotlights, but definitely a theatrical castle". Together, the building and collection showcase themselves as a carefully constructed Gesamtkunstwerk whose individual parts come together as if they were the wheels in a clock. One room seamlessly flows into the next which then provides an introduction to what is still to come. From the kitchen we walk into the dining room with its monumental portrait of Charles V, after a painting by Titian, then to the gallery where some entertainment awaits us under the watchful eye of Isabella I of Castile, nicknamed 'the Catholic'. This way, Gaasbeek Castle comes to life, as a place where people can imagine themselves eating, sleeping and dreaming in the 19th century; where it seems as if Her Ladyship is always

one room ahead; where it is as if we never see her, but consistently 'hear' her footsteps echo through the building.

Not everything at Gaasbeek Castle is about the past: visitors are invited to participate in the 'Great Game' between present and past. Between the portraits by the Egmond Staircase and next to the old collection pieces in the Egmond Room, for instance, there is also contemporary work by Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf (1959-2023, Hilversum), while Belgian painter Cindy Wright's (1972, Antwerp) *Scarlet Fever* gives the Arts Cabinet a modern touch. It is the Petit Blois wing, where the rooms for the marquise's guests are located, which makes the idea of the castle as a theatre stage the most tangible. Actual stages dedicated to one single style were constructed in these three rooms to conjure up the three different owners of the castle. Niek Kortekaas explains: "They aren't complete reconstructions in the end. The rooms suggest something; they raise the atmosphere of a particular Zeitgeist."

Every room is different: Marquis Paul Arconati's studio evokes his crammed world, while the salon of Giuseppe and Costanza harks back to the refined literary salons. Giammartino Arconati Visconti, Marie's husband, in his studiolo presents himself as a daring traveller.

The last marquise's three-room apartment, however, has been reconstructed as faithfully as possible. Though the rooms destabilise the visitor experience somewhat, because what world are we leaving behind as we cross the threshold and which one are we entering? Will we stumble upon the 'real' Marie? What have we just seen? What historical perspective are we, as visitors as well as people, looking from? In the words of Niek Kortekaas,

'The castle offers tranquillity, in order to enable us to reread the society of our past.'



Marie Arconati Visconti Room and Gothic Room, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Some eyecatchers

Cast Collection



Cast Collection, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

The former reception area in the castle now houses the free-to-visit Cast Collection. An exceptional collection by Georges Houtstont, among others.

Treasure Attic



Treasure Attic, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

'It's primarily her collection we will once again be putting in the spotlight at Gaasbeek Castle. Our stories as a museum are embedded in it. But this is only the beginning for us. We're learning new things every day. Think of our collection of coins, which we've only recently discovered the value of. It covers the full 800 years of our history! That's the beauty of history: every time you shine the light on something, new perspectives on the past reveal themselves.'

- Isabel Lowyck, director Gaasbeek Castle

Some eyecatchers

A setting within a setting

The rooms of the Petit Blois wing on the second floor, which immediately precede the last marquise's private apartment on the visitors' route, have been given their own scenographic installation. Built in these three boxes, literal stages that allow 3 generations of castle-owners to have a tangible presence. The intention here is to evoke the world and timeframe of these characters with numerous objects, art and furniture from the collection, in a setting that subtly evokes their 'era', as small capsules with a certain theatrical content, without therefore opting for meticulous period rooms (which never existed or about which we know nothing or little). In this sense, we are in line with the philosophy of Viollet-le-Duc, to which Charle-Albert also adhered: 'When we reconstruct the past, we do so not as a re-enactment of what once was, but of what could have been...'

That assumption creates a margin of freedom that we are eager to exploit.

» Studio Paul Arconati:

evocation of the life and thought of Paul Arconati (1754-1821), first marquis of Gaasbeek and a figure of European status. Mayor of Brussels under Napoleon, Catholic Freemason, exuberant and eccentric, globetrotter, philosopher and mystic, loner, Austrian citizen and admirer of Empress Maria Theresa, avid writer and entertainer. Chaotic atmosphere, man cave, but within the bright colour palette of empire and neoclassicism.

» Salon Giuseppe and Costanza:

evocation of the 'salotto' by Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati-Visconti, c. 1830-1835. This couple turned Gaasbeek into a 'literary salon, at which numerous great names of the period were guests. Atmosphere: quite crowded, comfortable, full, un beau désordre étudié. Northern Italian with strong Austrian and Central European influences.

» Studiolo Giammartino:

evocation of the period of the last marquis, Arconati Visconti, Giammartino (husband of Marie Peyrat). Mysterious character about whom we know little; many documents were deliberately destroyed. A small oasis bathed in a mysterious, oriental atmosphere. Evoked here is the atmosphere of a somewhat uprooted spirit; someone who sought happiness in a place other than where it was located – a melancholy traveller.



Salon Giuseppe & Costanza, Studiolo Giammartino, Studio Paul Arconati, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans



Albaster Cabinet, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans



Library, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans



Charles-Albert Room, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans



Carletto's Room, Gaasbeek Castle, photo Jo Exelmans

Gaasbeek Castle

Gaasbeek Castle sits enthroned amidst the rolling hills of Pajottenland just outside Brussels. The medieval castle has had an eventful history, evolving from a strategic stronghold to a spacious country house. The Count of Egmond, was one of its best-known owners. The present building was given its romantic restyling at the end of the nineteenth century by the enigmatic French Marchioness Arconati Visconti. She was the daughter-in-law of aristocrats Giuseppe and Costanza Arconati Visconti, who, between 1821 and 1839, turned the castle into a unique meeting place for intellectual exchanges between exiled Italian politicians, European writers and

scientists. Marie Arconati Visconti was also interested in the great intellectual debates of her time, as her correspondence with and support for Alfred Dreyfus testify. She set up the castle as a museum for her considerable art collection and treated it like a historical theatre set. The dream castle created then is still something of a time machine with its historic interiors, tapestries, paintings, furniture, sculptures and other valuable objects.

The castle park, with its centuries-old trees, ponds, lanes, winding paths and occasional historic buildings, is the ideal place for winding down. The estate also includes a unique museum garden where old varieties of fruit and vegetables are cultivated.



© Koen Broos

Gaasbeek Castle

Our mission

Gaasbeek Castle is a unique historic house with a rich history and a diverse collection. It is located in the middle of an oasis of greenery, under the lee of Brussels. We are the custodians who take care of this extraordinary ensemble, which includes the various historic buildings inside the castle's park. At this soothing intersection of nature and culture, you can feel the heartbeat of passers-by from different centuries, all of whom were unconventional individuals striving for freedom and with an eye for innovation.

We convey stories in a way that appeals to your empathy and imagination. We also invite a diverse palette of artists, scientists, entrepreneurs – as well as every visitor – to interact with this place and engage in a dialogue with it. Together, this leads us to view society more openly and gives rise to an exciting confrontation with who we are. Here, the present and the past come together in an intimate embrace, each creating new meanings and connections with us, with each other, with other people and with the world.

We form part of a greater whole and our existence connects us to the world around us and manifests itself in valuable collaborations with a wide range of local, national and international partners.

The Castle Team, 2023 © Illias Teirlinck



Colofon

With contemporary reflections from

Philip Aguirre y Otegui | Rosa Barba | Kendell Geers | Kati Heck | Gülsün Karamustafa |
Maurizio Nannucci | Nadia Naveau | Sophie Whettnall

Advisor contemporary art

Ann Geeraerts

Author letters

Leen Huet

Campaign image

Jim Van Raemdonck, Soon

Film Curator

Wouter Hessels

Light

Chris Pype

Music Curator

Jeroen D'hoë

Realisation scenography

Potteau & Etoile mecanique

Scenographer

Niek Kortekaas, Origin

With thanks to

24Frame Kinoprojection
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

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Verleyzen, Marieke Vitse

Our partners, guides and volunteers

Questions?

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Programme

Take a look at our rich programme at kasteelvangaasbeek.be.

Slow Mornings

Every Friday between 10 am and 1 pm, the castle is an oasis of tranquillity and slowing down. A gentle awakening for anyone looking to escape the hustle.

Late Nights

Have you ever wandered the corridors of a castle while it was getting dark outside? Every first Friday of the month, Gaasbeek Castle and Caffè Carletto are open until 10 pm. Night owls are welcome.

Family Days

Looking for something to do on a Wednesday afternoon? Visit the castle as children and (grand)parents are especially welcome! Stroll around with Arnoldus the Mouse and take a break at the Knights' Hall. A wonderful family experience awaits in this unique historic setting.

With the support of



Images

High resolution images are available on:

kasteelvangaasbeek.prezly.com/media

Please make sure to mention the credit when publishing.

Opening hours

31.03 - 03.11.2024

Tuesday - Sunday: open from 10 am - 6 pm

From October onwards, the castle closes at 5 pm

Also open on public holidays

www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be

kasteelvangaasbeek@vlaanderen.be

Gaasbeek Castle

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Gaasbeek
Castle

