



PRESS RELEASE

Exhibition: FLORIS JESPERS – Congo-Knokke
SAT 4 APRIL - SUN 26 APRIL
FREE ENTRY
CC Scharpoord

The artist, Floris Jaspers, totally lost his heart to Knokke-Heist and the Congo. Both locations play an unmistakable part in the life and work of this brilliant, versatile artist. Today the Knokke-Heist cultural centre is hosting the Floris Jaspers – Congo-Knokke exhibition, entry to which is free of charge. Visitors are given an exceptional insight into Jaspers' African period with 40 splendid paintings, photographs and sculptures. This carefully selected collection, more than half of which consists of monumental outstanding oeuvres measuring in excess of two to six metres wide and including the never before exhibited Expo 58 artwork, takes the public to Jaspers' Africa and conveys his bond with Knokke.

Knokke and the Congo are both deeply rooted in Floris Jaspers' life and work. To understand the structure of the exhibition, one must have an insight into the artist's life.

Floris Jaspers, who was born in Antwerp in 1889, would eventually become one of the most versatile Belgian artists of the twentieth century, known for his stunning technique, vision and imagination. He gained international fame with his powerful compositions in extremely large formats and, together with his brother Oscar, Paul van Ostaijen and Paul Joostens, set the tone for the innovation of art in Belgium. Pablo Picasso once said: "*Je connais les frères Jaspers par leur oeuvre. Ce sont des grands artistes.*" (I know the Jaspers brothers through their work. They are amazing artists.)

Knokke, natural source of inspiration

Having spent several summers in Knokke, Floris Jaspers, who was born in Antwerp, decided to establish his second studio in Knokke. In 1935, he commissioned the construction of the 'Vijfringenhuis' on Graaf Jansdijk. The deserted polder landscape was a source of inspiration for his paintings and drawings, which reflect an all-encompassing affinity with nature. In addition to a whole array of other oeuvres, Jaspers created monumental landscapes depicting animals living in peaceful harmony with their surroundings.

During the war, the Germans forced Jaspers to leave Knokke. Expressionism appeared to be extinguished and many artists sought new avenues. In 1951, the presence of his son Mark in the Congo introduced Jaspers to the country, which had a truly revolutionary impact on him.

Congo period and Expo 58

Jaspers visited the Congo three times between 1951 and 1957. The artist was enthralled by Africa, its culture and civilisation. And this time, it was not just the unspoilt natural environment that touched him to the core. In Jaspers' view, women were the root of African civilisation and consequently feature often in his African oeuvre.

Impressions from his first trip resulted in brilliant work, leading to a hugely successful exhibition in 1954. Following the second Congo trip, the artist also revealed his skills as a contemporary sculptor. Jaspers' final trip to Congo was made on behalf of the Ministry for Colonial Affairs to create a monumental wall painting measuring 10 by 30 metres for the Expo exhibition in 1958. This artwork was one of the most important Belgian creations at the world exhibition. The wall painting was lost over time, but the 2 by 6 metre original, which Jaspers used as a basis to enlarge, was recently rediscovered in a private collection. Because of its historic significance, format and quality, this painting is without doubt the most important work of Floris Jaspers' African period. This more than unique oeuvre will be shown to the public for the first time.

Information:

Floris Jespers – Congo-Knokke Exhibition

From 04/04/2015 to 26/04/2015

Scharpoord Cultural Centre

Meerlaan 32, 8300 Knokke-Heist

Free entry

- * African woman with Red Scarf
- * Three African women on the way to market
- * Detail from The Synthesis of Congo.
- * African Landscape with Crocodiles
- * African Market
- * The Man with the Jumper (bronze statue)
- * African Women at Nightfall
- * The Glad Tidings

Copyright photographer "Flori Esser" except for 'The Man with the Jumper', photographer unknown.

© Sabam Belgium 2015