

Museum
Leuven

N DOKA

15.12.23
→ 05.01.25



Passion de l'été pour l'hiver (video still), Lili Dujourie, 1981, Cera collection at M Leuven
© the artist & Argos Centre for Audiovisual Arts

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M LEUVEN PRESENS GROUP EXHIBITION 'DOKA'

With contemporary artworks by René Heyvaert, Ann Veronica Janssens, Gerard Herman, Leyla Aydoslu and Lili Dujourie, amongst others

15.12-05.01.2024

The art objects of M are safely stored in the dark depot, where a constant temperature is maintained. Only for an exhibition are they brought out, placed on display and illuminated. Photographer and guest curator Geert Goiris saw a parallel with the darkroom or 'doka', the magical place where analogue photos come to life. In this presentation, he aims to let carefully selected works from M's contemporary art collection emerge from the darkness.

DOKA

The common thread throughout the exhibition is a quote from poet Mary Oliver: 'Attention is the beginning of devotion'. Our era is characterised by high pace, distraction, and looking without truly seeing. The spaces where we spend a significant portion of our time are often shaped by entrenched habits and routines. The artworks in the exhibition disrupt our assumptions and expectations – sometimes subtly, sometimes explicitly. They invite us to take an unprejudiced look at the familiar and focus on the pleasure but also the necessity of attentive observation. DOKA brings together 27 artists in five rooms.

'DOKA' encompasses diverse media and techniques. A number of video works by Lili Dujourie form the backbone of the exhibition. They play out in real-time: the viewing time equals the duration of the recording. The videos invite stillness. Those who stay the course will experience the passage of time in a palpable way. Sculptures, installations, graphic and photographic artworks are also included. The artists play a game with everyday objects and figures. By reshaping, reworking and copying them, they acquire new meanings. Our gaze is challenged to reread what we are confronted with and to make our own associations.

The development of an analogue black-and-white print – whereby only red light is allowed – takes roughly seven minutes. After that, the white light can be turned on to view the print. One by one, the exhibition halls are bathed in red light, evoking the experience of the darkroom. Each room in the exhibition is lit solely by red lamps for seven minutes. The monochromatic lighting alters our experience of the works: colours fade away, and contrast seems to increase. Shadows become deeper, details merge into the overall picture. During the red phase, we perceive the artworks in an unexpected way. At the same time, this intervention suggests that each image carries another.

M Leuven, growing hub voor contemporary art

This collection exhibition of contemporary artworks fits within M's broader policy, whereby the collection continues to grow through new acquisitions. As of this year, the museum has placed an even greater focus on the acquisition, management and presentation of contemporary art. This aspect of the collection has recently seen an influx of works from three key sources. During the corona pandemic, M organised the support action [The Constant Glitch](#), which resulted in some 20 acquisitions. A further [60 artworks entered the](#)

[collection](#) as long-term loans through the Flemish Community's relance funds for contemporary artists in 2022. M also foresees further growth in this area through the City of Leuven, which will be integrated into the plans around the Heritage Decree.

Furthermore, at the end of this year, the structural cooperation with Cera will be extended. M will continue to manage and open up the Cera collection on a long-term basis. The DOKA exhibition is part of these plans and enhances M's reputation as a home for contemporary art and heritage, especially at the collection level.

The focus of M's contemporary collection is Belgian art. There are three sub-segments. The most important of these is Cera, with some 700 works. In addition, as a leading Flemish museum, M receives several works from the Flemish Community on long-term loan every year. The City of Leuven also invests in contemporary pieces for M, and will continue to do so in the coming years.

Double opening

In parallel with DOKA, M is also presenting the work of [M-resident Anna van der Ploeg](#). Anna van der Ploeg was M's artist-in-residence at Cas-co from March to August 2023. For five months she immersed herself in her artistic practice and developed new work. Combining elements of sculpture with painting and printmaking, she creates her own method of carving, painting and bending plywood. Her work is driven by the observation of moments of inter-relation and the role language plays in these exchanges.

Van der Ploeg has been collecting handmade posters for years. She perceives them as a material residue of a desire to be heard, a thought or message that is sent into the world. Inspired by a particular poster that touched her deeply, and a scroll in M's collection, Van der Ploeg created a series of new sculptures. The presentation in M unlocks Van der Ploeg's new work and latest experiments. It runs until 3 March 2024.

Opening celebration and concert

The exhibition opens at M on Thursday, 14.12.23 with a concert, a concert, composed for the exhibition and performed live by Frederik Meulyzer (drums/electronics) and Prisca-Agnes Nishimwe (voice). Admission is free and there is no need to register in advance.

Start: 20:00

Concert: 20:30-21:00

ARTISTS

The group exhibition 'DOKA' includes works by **Leyla Aydoslu** (°1987), **Younes Baba-Ali** (°1986), **Dirk Braeckman** (°1958), **Raphaël Buedts** (1946–2009), **Paul Casaer** (°1967), **Honoré d'O** (°1961), **Lili Dujourie** (°1941), **Jef Geys** (1934-2018), **Gerard Herman** (°1989), **René Heyvaert** (1929-1984), **Ann Veronica Janssens** (°1956), **Jan Kempnaers** (°1968), **Valérie Mannaerts** (°1974), **Hana Miletić** (°1982), **Peter Morrens** (°1965), **Hilde Overbergh** (°1964), **Ria Pacquée** (°1954), **Benoît Platéus** (°1972), **Kato Six** (°1986), **Gintautė Skvernyté** (°1993), **Walter Swennen** (°1946), **Joëlle Tuerlinckx** (°1958), **Michael Van den Abeele** (°1974), **Philippe Van Snick** (1946-2019), **Richard Venlet** (°1964), **Jan Vercruyse** (1948-2018) and **Marthe Wéry** (1930-2005).

All the artworks on display come from the collections of Cera, the Flemish Community and the city of Leuven, managed by M Leuven.

GEERT GOIRIS

Geert Goiris lives and works in Antwerp. He travels the world in search of unusual places to interpret into enigmatic images. Inspired by the ambiguous concept of 'high fidelity' (technology that makes itself invisible or inaudible, so to speak, to get closer to the 'original'), he uses large-format analogue cameras and scientific films that are more sensitive than the human eye. Despite the abundant detail, the feeling that something is missing often prevails in his work. This lack of information stimulates the viewer's imagination. The absence of clear temporal markers creates the feeling that we are viewing the past and future simultaneously.

Goiris' work is held in the following collections, amongst others: Seattle Art Museum (US), Hamburger Kunsthalle (Germany), FOMU (Belgium), Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos (Spain) and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (France).

'DOKA' marks the return of Geert Goiris to the museum after his solo exhibition in 2013.



'Passion de l'été pour l'hiver' (still), Lili Dujourie, 1981, Cera Collection at M Leuven
© the artist & Argos Centre for Audiovisual Arts

This silent and monochrome video, filmed in Ostend, was the starting point for the collection presentation. The image is greyish and somewhat blurred. But the simplicity of this artwork belies its radicality. It was shot in one long, uninterrupted take. It is an austere film: Dujourie does not indulge in virtuoso camera angles or movements. The work's power stems from the calculated position of the video camera and, above all, how Dujourie handles the device as artist/model/spectator. The work conveys her fascination with imminence. Character development is almost non-existent. Time slips by while nothing essential changes. I am captivated by the video's elegance and how the artist evokes such a rich range of emotions using just her body, a room and a static video camera. Her appearance is unaffected: we witness a self-aware body in a calm and balanced state. This is a non-performative body, one that is not pressurized to produce or consume. It is an idle body, perhaps a bored one, but it is inherently active and unruly, fresh, sensual and above all autonomous. 'Passion de l'été pour l'hiver' hints at a longing for the unattainable. We are drawn to the latter: there are no insurmountable obstacles in love stories. The body might seem passive, but the title suggests passionate desire. Outward appearances betray no hint of the inner storm.



'Sonnet' (still), Lili Dujourie, 1974, Cera Collectie at M Leuven © the artist & Argos Centre for Audiovisual Arts

In this film, as in 'Passion de l'été pour l'hiver', we see a young woman in a room with a large window. It does not overlook a seascape with a clear horizon this time, but the edge of a luxuriant forest. The gaze cannot penetrate the bank of tall trees and dense bushes. This only augments the intimacy. The artist wears a light, fitted dress and strides through the room while smoking a cigarette, an action as ephemeral as the video itself. When her slender figure briefly disappears from the frame, she remains visually present through her reflection in the window pane. It is like she is trapped in a display case: the window creates space but also resembles a boundary. Once again, we become absorbed by the character's boredom. An introverted, concentrated atmosphere prevails, melancholic but fascinating because the woman exudes an air of unattainability. She seems as detached as she is present, like in a dream.



'LXXXVIII', Leyla Aydoslu, 2019, Collection Flemisch Community at M Leuven
© the artist, photo: Art In Flanders & Meemoo, Cedric Verhelst

This semi-abstract and fragile sculpture exudes an air of the provisional. An object that hovers in the narrow gap between artefact and waste. Is it something to keep? Or should it be discarded? Through an assemblage of humble materials such as wood, plaster, rebar and a lick of paint, the artist succeeds in capturing the intermediate nature of a construction process. It takes imagination to see the end result in an incomplete work. But perhaps it is easier to already identify the decay to which everything ultimately succumbs? Is it a work in progress? A skeleton still waiting for additions? Or is it a fragment, a remnant? A ruin? The sculpture's frailty is touching; the fragile-looking structure bravely remains upright. It embodies precariousness. Leaning, not quite able to straighten its back, the work has an endearing presence. A sculpture you want to care about.



'Caution', Walter Swennen, 2011, Cera Collection at M Leuven © the artist, photo: Philippe Debeerst



No title, René Heyvaert, 1979, Cera Collection at M Leuven
© the artist, photo: Art In Flanders & Meemoo, Dominique Provost

This modest little work (in terms of size, not impact) sits on a table around which the visitor can move. There is no prescribed orientation; this object has no pre-determined top or bottom. The other artworks on the table do have a clear reading direction, however, and the viewer is invited to circle the piece of furniture. The artist is as daring as he is reserved. What can you do to transform such an everyday object into something else? By tying it to a stick, we associate it with a prosthesis, a bandage, a splinted leg. How can a fork suddenly seem so helpless? Or does that allude to the person who must raise it to their mouth? What a brilliant transformation from a banal, functional device to an object with feelings and shortcomings. We have a genuine sense of empathy with this fork. Moreover, we are viewing the object in a museum, which adds a new function to its inappropriateness: this is an artwork. But even when placed in this category of object, its adaptation is so discrete that it remains defiant. This timid object's power stems from the fact that it defies classification and refuses to submit.



'La Pichennette', Ann Veronica Janssens, 1996, Cera Collectie at M Leuven
© the artist, photo: Art In Flanders & Meemoo, Cedric Verhelst



'Corolla', Gintautė Skvernytė, 2019, Cera Collection at M Leuven © the artist

Fascinated by different modes of interaction, Gintautė Skvernytė began working with paraffin wax, a pliable material that can be endlessly modified through pressure or incisions. The artist's experience with malleable substances led her to celluloid film, which is also a sensitive membrane that carries ephemeral images. 'Corolla' is her first 16mm film. This silent work consists of seven close-ups of flower petals on human eyelids. The petals are animated by the involuntary movement of the eyes. 'Corolla' is screened as a 16mm projection so that the physical medium is integral to the viewing experience. The film has sculptural qualities: tactility, materiality and dynamism. The soft, almost imperceptible touch of petals on the eyelids adds yet another layer to the succession of membranes: skin on skin on skin. We never get to see the full faces, there is little to recognise or identify. Central to this work is the touch of the vegetal on the human and the subtle interweaving at the interface between the two worlds.

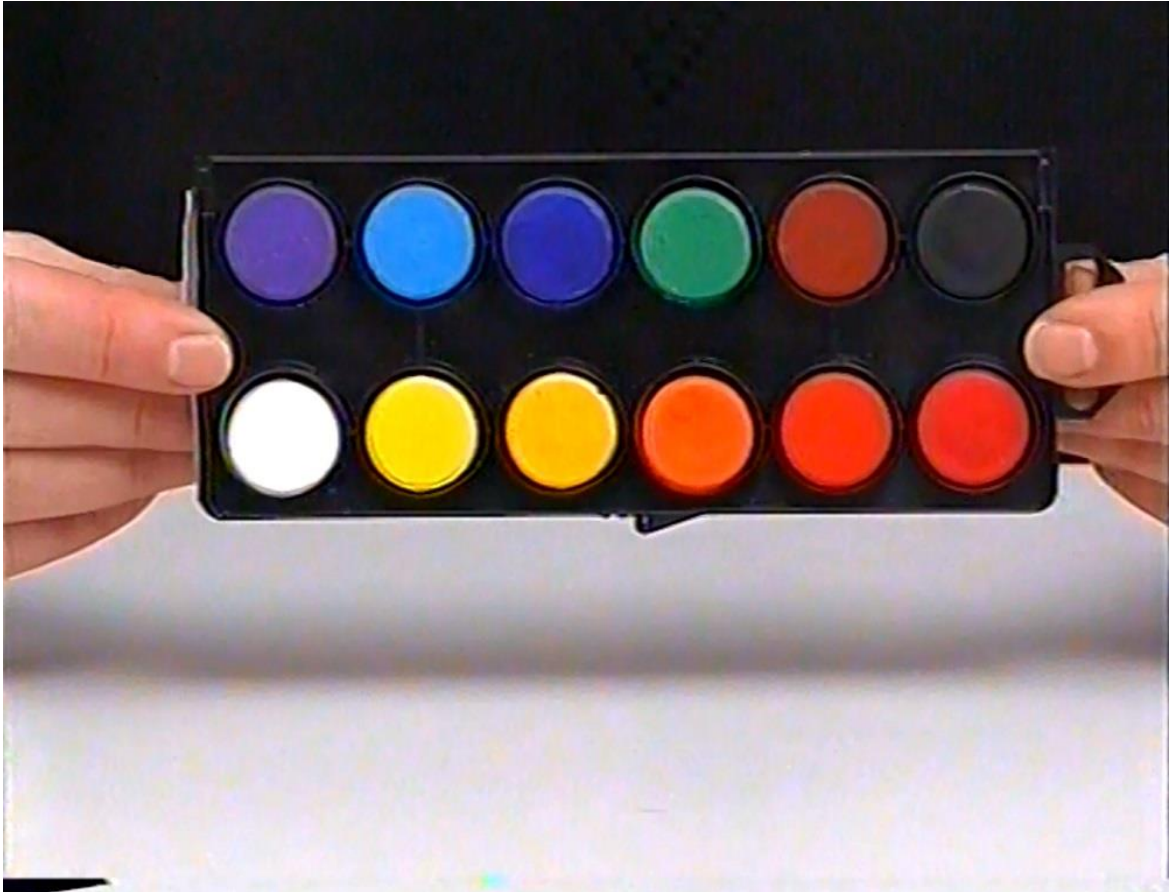


'Tropical Archive', Paul Casaer, 2020, Collection Flemische Community at M Leuven © the artist

The magazine rack's disproportionate scale and the stylised tropical leaves feel both familiar and alien. As if the furniture rises above itself to become a compelling monument to other worlds. Post-war domesticity – in which houseplants and the illustrated press symbolise a comfortable and connected lifestyle, the first fledgling steps towards a globalised existence – is subtly undercut by the uncanny scale and title. The tropics have acquired an array of unsavoury connotations in our part of the world. Tristes tropiques, Belgium's unpalatable colonial history, malnutrition and disfiguring diseases simultaneously enter our living rooms through magazines.



'Cash Cow', Gerard Herman, 2022, Cera Collection at M Leuven, photo: the artist, courtesy Waldburger Wouters



'Next time firewire or Another Planet' (still), Honoré δ'O, 2000, Cera Collection at M Leuven, photo: the artist & Argos

PRACTICAL

M LEUVEN
Vanderkelenstraat 28
3000 Leuven
+32 (16) 27 29 29
info@mleuven.be
www.mleuven.be

Plan your route to the museum

By bike

Cyclists are welcome! Parking is easy. Just use the secure underground bicycle parking at Rector de Somerplein. From there, it's just a two-minute walk to the museum.

Via public transport

The museum is a ten-minute walk from Leuven Station. Rector de Somerplein is the closest stop if you're coming by bus. Use Google Maps to plan your route.

By car

Leuven's new circulation plan leads you into the city and car parks via a series of rings. Would you prefer to avoid the city's traffic? Just park your car at one of the car parks on Leuven's outskirts and catch a free bus to the centre. Prefer to park nearby? The Ladeuze car park is only a two-minute walk from the museum. There are also 18 spaces for disabled passengers (higher clearance: 1.90 m). Click [here](#) for more information on the circulation plan and parking options (Dutch only).

CONTACT

Hanne Grégoire

Head of Press & Communications

hanne.gregoire@mleuven.be

+32 (0)472 95 52 26

Samantha Fadahunsi

Press & Communications Officer

samantha.fadahunsi@mleuven.be

+32 (0) 491 35 02 95

Celine De Geest

Press & Communications Officer

celine.degeest@mleuven.be

+32 (0) 479 67 65 31

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