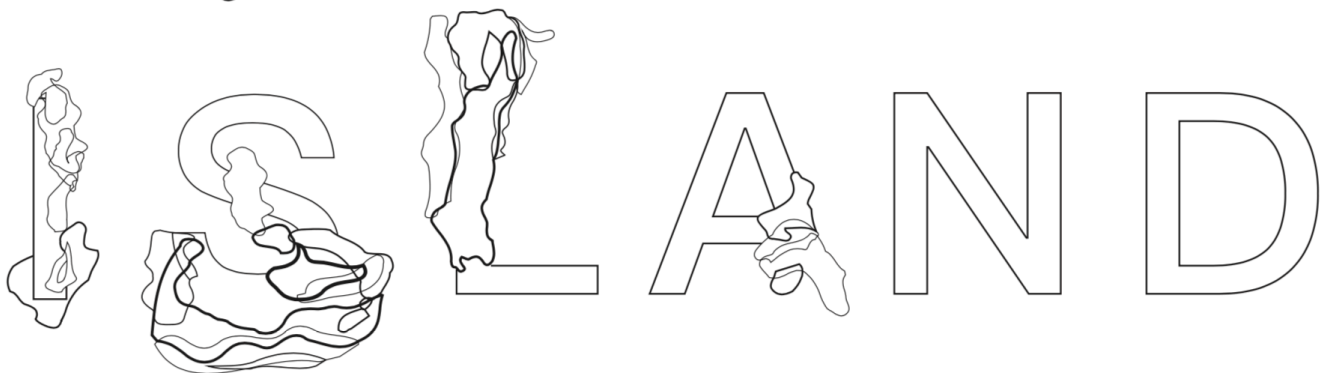
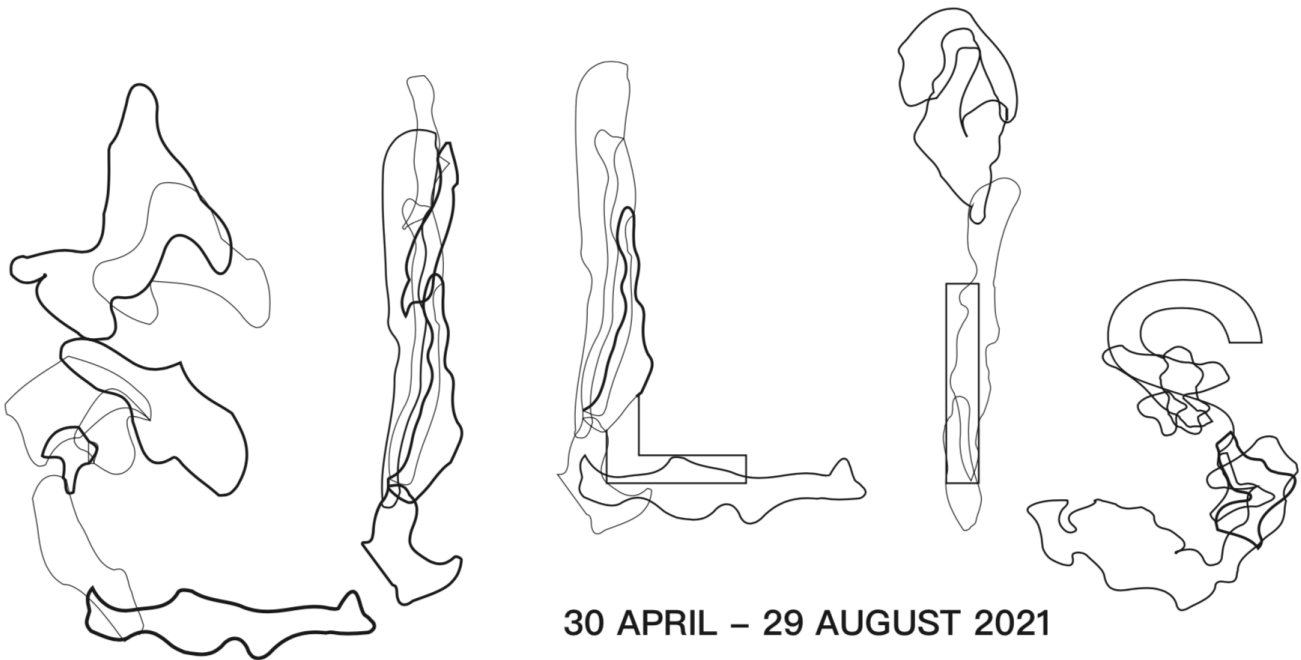




PRESS
RELEASE

The Jewish Museum of Belgium



Armando Andrade Tudela
Miriam Cahn
Alina Szapocznikow

Marianne Berenhaut
Latifa Echakhch
Naama Tsabar

Heidi Bucher
Sigalit Landau
Lawrence Weiner

Jewish Museum of Belgium

INTRODUCTION

A group show including Armando Andrade Tudela, Marianne Berenhaut, Heidi Bucher, Miriam Cahn, Latifa Echakhch, Sigalit Landau, Alina Szapocznikow, Naama Tsabar and Lawrence Weiner

In the run-up to the major retrospective of French photographer **Mathieu Pernot**, the **Jewish Museum of Belgium** is opening the exhibition '**Ellis Island**' in the museum's new **Project Space** on 30 April.

The exhibition, curated by Eloi Boucher in collaboration with the Jewish Museum of Belgium, brings together **9 contemporary artists** who deal with themes such as **exile and migration**, reflecting their views on the world as a place of dispersion, confinement and wandering.

The title of the exhibition refers to the island facing Manhattan in New York. This was the main point of entry for many communities arriving on American soil between 1892 and 1924. Nearly **sixteen million emigrants** – mostly from Europe, but also from Middle Eastern countries – passed through it in transit and were required to undergo a series of medical and psychological examinations, and were required to change their identity.

Georges Perec, a writer of Polish Jewish origin, offers us a detailed description of this 'non-place' in his text called *Ellis Island* written in 1979: a utopian place where one forgets oneself, where one's body and identity are transformed, a place where one also leaves room for dreams and the hope of a better world.

Ellis Island is not a theme, nor is it the illustration of a rhetoric. It is not a formal adaptation of a novel, but rather a motif, a formula, a syntactic unit that has the capacity to reveal a memory and trigger the imagination through the works of twentieth and twenty-first-century artists.

The works themselves are extremely diverse. The soft 'garbage dolls' made by the Belgian artist **Marianne Berenhaut** with discarded stockings in the 70s, stand in stark contrast to the destroyed electric guitar by **Naama Tsabar**, which invites the viewer to participate directly in the exhibition by playing on the broken guitar to create new scores. The provocative works on paper by Polish artist **Alina Szapocznikow** are at once sexualized, visceral, humorous and political, while **Lawrence Weiner's** words painted on the wall of the museum's yard formulate statements in a neutral language. And the 'Hanging Clouds' series by **Latifa Echakhch** allows the visitor to discover fragments of history in objects that are almost derisory, but also represent the artist's childhood reminiscences drawn from the depths of memory.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

ELLIS ISLAND

With: Armando Andrade Tudela, Marianne Berenhaut, Heidi Bucher, Miriam Cahn, Latifa Echakhch, Sigalit Landau, Alina Szapocznikow, Naama Tsabar, Lawrence Weiner

A project by Eloi Boucher in collaboration with the Jewish Museum of Belgium

30.04 – 29.08.2021

Jewish Museum of Belgium - Project Space

Rue des Minimes 21, 1000 Brussels

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THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF BELGIUM, a museum of art and history

Located in a dynamic and multidisciplinary cultural location in the centre of Brussels (Sablon district), the Jewish Museum of Belgium (JMB) takes a fresh look at Jewish history and culture through exhibitions and activities focusing on sharing, discovery and accessibility for a wide audience.

The plan for the Museum originated in the early 1980s with the collection of objects and documents about the history of Jewish communities in Belgium. Today, the JMB operates at the intersection of art and culture, and is a space for tradition, openness and debate. The Museum is working on a vision of the future with respect for the past, and with values of openness, courage and modernity while gradually constructing the public face of the new Museum that will open its doors in 2025.

PROJECT SPACE

The exhibition Ellis Island takes place in the project space of the Jewish Museum, a place within the museum that makes room for new and experimental projects. It is an intimate exhibition space (70 m²), which opens a window to contemporary artistic practices while maintaining a critical view on structural themes with which the museum is working.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

*“What I, Georges Perec, have come here to examine
is dispersion, wandering, diaspora.
to me Ellis Island is the ultimate place of exile, that is,
the place where place is absent, the non-place,
the nowhere...
it is in light of this that these pictures concern
and fascinate and involve me,
as if the search for my own identity
depended on my incorporating this dumping-ground
where frazzled bureaucrats baptized
americans in droves.
what I find present here
are in no way landmarks or roots or
relics
but their opposite: something shapeless, on the outer edge of
what is sayable,
something that might be called closure, or cleavage,
or severance,
and that is my mind is linked
in a most intimate and confused way
with the very fact of being a Jew”*

— **Georges Perec**

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Armando Andrade Tudela (Lima, Peru; 1975)

Armando Andrade Tudela's early work confronted the geography and economy of his native country while deploying photographic techniques associated with the conceptual art of the 1960s. Part of Armando Andrade Tudela's work focuses on places of transition between the social world and the dissociated world, between collective experiences and uprootedness, and allows him to analyse the recent history of dislocations, revolutions and institutions in a reflection on radicality, formation and the avant-garde. The series of denim canvases burned with chlorine or bleach open up large holes in the space. Floor, walls, ceiling - the space, sometimes sculptural, sometimes archaeological, sometimes marked, sometimes perforated, evokes the traumas of an extraction policy inherited from coloniality.

Marianne Berenhaut (Brussels, Belgium; 1934)

Marianne Berenhaut's installations are based on salvaged or found everyday objects. They are born from the coming together of the artist's memory, the aura of the objects she chooses to associate, the sensitivity of the viewer and our collective unconscious. Between subversive humour, enigmatic fantasy and pure poetry, the work of this Belgian artist constitutes an important testimony to the history of art and of women. Her work evokes absence, the notion of no return and vain expectation, as well as memories of a childhood marked by the Holocaust and twinship. The series of works called 'Poupées-Poubelles' (Dolls-Bins) (1971-1980) are soft dolls made from waste piled into stockings. "Fascination of the body-waste, of the body that does not fit together, of the body that is a catch-all, of the body that is folded, beaten, torn, twisted, filled with anything and anyone, fascination of the body that triumphs over everything and that is there, body-belly, headless body, head within the body. (...) I am going out through all my pores. I am crossed, invaded, dispossessed. And yet in this thin skin I gather myself, I am alive."

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Heidi Bucher (Winterthour, Switzerland; 1926-1993)

The Swiss avant-garde artist Heidi Bucher considers spaces as skins. The work presented in the exhibition is part of the "Skinings" series, a study of the relationship and boundaries between architectural structures and the human body, which highlights the memory of places linked to the stages of the artist's life. This process of covering and skinning was put in place in 1973 to bear witness to a genealogical and/or political thickness of the places that Bucher invested, such as the Bellevue psychiatric hospital on the border between Switzerland and Germany, whose imprint we have in this exhibition. Her work deals mainly with the symbolic uses of space and private property, 19th century architectural fragments, feminism, domestication and individual or collective memory.

Miriam Cahn (Basel, Switzerland; 1949)

Miriam Cahn addresses political and social themes through painting, drawing, text, film and installation. Strong colour is characteristic of her work, forming a striking contrast with the recurring motifs of violence, tenderness, war, destruction and physical infirmity. The faces are symbolised by a few lines, the bodies are without relief, the lonely characters carry the gravity of their fate. Miriam Cahn's incompleteness and pictorial act affirm painting and drawing as a gesture, a performance. The artist's political awareness is at the origin of numerous works, sometimes presented in an oblique or nuanced way, which tackle subjects such as war, the refugee crisis in Europe, racism and sectarianism, or sexually motivated violence, explicitly against women.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Latifa Echakhch (El Khnansa, Morocco; 1974)

Latifa Echakhch addresses contemporary globalised culture through elegant gestures and formal restraint that contemplate the immigrant experience and concepts of nationality. Through a relatively simple and delicate gesture, the artist manages to encapsulate the vocabularies of abstract painting, minimalist sculpture, the readymade and the site-specific installation, without ever fully adhering to any of these categories. The Hanging Clouds series of works allows the visitor to discover fragments of history, almost derisory objects, but also the artist's childhood memories drawn from the depths of a memory and dipped in black ink. Black refers both to the idea of a past and frozen time of action, as well as to a set of gestures to come.

Sigalit Landau (Jerusalem, Israel; 1969)

Sigalit Landau's work relates to personal and collective memory, archaic and utopian myths and current issues of the human condition. Using a diverse range of materials while interacting with the human body, the artist weaves the social with the intimate, the historical with the private. For over fifteen years, the Dead Sea has been a source of inspiration and a laboratory for Sigalit Landau. Almost as a ritual, she and her team immerse objects in the salt water of this unique lake. Some of the submerged objects are handmade from specific and symbolic materials (fishing nets or barbed wire), others are personal objects and represent a world that has disappeared. Through submersion in water, these sculptures are covered with salt crystals, becoming fragile creations imbued with a terrifying beauty, reminiscent of archaeological discoveries that tell of the ceaseless transformation of all things and of the darkest chapters of 20th century history.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Alina Szapocznikow (Kalisz, Poland; 1926-1973)

A Holocaust survivor, Alina Szapocznikow began her career in the post-war period in a classical, figurative style. She quickly evolved into a more experimental and iconoclastic practice, leaving behind provocative works on paper and objects that are at once sexualised, visceral, humorous and political, made from experimental materials in an attempt to invite a new relationship to the body and to temporality. She is now considered a major female artist of the 20th century whose works reflect her life experience in order to sublimate both personal and collective suffering. For Szapocznikow, drawing was a primary means of expression, enabling her to record instantly the ideas that crossed her mind. Drawings in felt-tip pen, ball-point pen, ink, watercolour and monotypes establish a dialogue with the three-dimensional works and reveal the artist's imagination and her reflection on the human body. In Szapocznikow's universe, beauty rubs shoulders with horror, horror disturbs beauty, the power of life and creation, of composition, is threatened by destruction, by a muted and threatening decomposition.

Naama Tsabar (Tel Aviv, Israel; 1982)

Naama Tsabar uses performance, sculpture and photography to subvert gender roles historically associated with music. By appropriating and reversing the aggressive gestures of rock and roll and their associations with masculinity and power, the artist disrupts the implicit gender roles and coded behaviour of music and nightlife. In the series of performances and sculptures entitled 'Melody of Certain Damage', Naama Tsabar focuses on the moment following the iconic destruction of an electric guitar by mapping the parts as they fall apart and reinserting the parts into a new working order. The artist invites the viewer to participate directly in the exhibition by playing on the broken guitars to create new scores and expand the scope of a work.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Lawrence Weiner (New York, USA; 1942)

Lawrence Weiner is one of the major figures of conceptual art. All his proposals are based on the artist's statement of intent published in 1969: "*1. The artist may construct the piece. 2. The piece may be fabricated (by somebody else). 3. The piece need not be built. Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership*". The three possibilities of realising the work are thus declared equivalent by the artist, who affirms that the construction of the work depends intrinsically on its reception, and therefore on its context. From the 1970s onwards, his work consisted essentially of wall installations: words painted on the walls (of the exhibition space or of the city) that describe potential sculptures. Lawrence Weiner's Statements formulate statements in a neutral language that would become a remarkable stylistic feature of his work. The artist would later name his projects 'Works' to affirm their status as sculptures.

Jewish Museum of Belgium

MATHIEU PERNOT

The exhibition *Mathieu Pernot. Something is happening* starts from a space-time that is as precise as it is emblematic: the island of Lesbos in the year 2020. Located in the Aegean Sea, a few kilometres from the Turkish coast, this island has undergone a succession of crises in 2020 that have made it a crossroads of our history and consciousness.

Mathieu Pernot's photographs of that island and their refugees not only question the themes that reflect the long history of Jewish communities such as exile, violence and solidarity, but also question his own practice by developing a multi-voiced narrative that includes images made by the migrants themselves.

Mathieu Pernot: Something is happening

19.05 - 19.09.2021

Jewish Museum of Belgium

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