

Rose, Rose, Rose à mes yeux – James Ensor en het stilleven in België 1830 – 1930 ***(Rose, Rose, Rose à mes yeux – James Ensor and still life in Belgium 1830 – 1930)***

From 16.12.2023 until 14.04.2024, Mu.ZEE is staging the exhibition *Rose, Rose, Rose à mes yeux – James Ensor en het stilleven in België 1830 – 1930*. This exhibition, curated by Prof. Bart Verschaffel and Sabine Taevernier, focuses entirely on James Ensor's still life works for the first time. Some thirty works from Ensor's significant production in this area - from the first bourgeois examples to the 'haunted' still life works of the 1990s to the ethereal, dreamy examples of the late period – serve as the backbone and calibration for an overview of still life in Belgium between 1830 and 1930. In this period, various talented painters are looking for ways to recharge the genre, which has become an ostentatious, decorative genre without artistic commitment, both in pictorial and iconographic terms. Here, Ensor illustrates the general trend and his own exceptional quality at the same time.

The exhibition first provides an overview of the 19th century, academic, decorative tradition from Antoine Wiertz to Frans Mortelmans, with many forgotten but highly skilled and in their time highly successful painters such as Jean Robie and Hubert Bellis. Particular attention is paid to totally forgotten female painters such as Alice Ronner and Georgette Meunier, as well as the isolated figure of Henri De Braekeleer. This is followed by a selection of painters who, already within the accepted tradition of modernism, focus on still life, but themselves continue to adhere to the customs of the genre such as Louis Thevenet and Léon De Smet. In addition, a number of painters are included who, like Ensor, create highly personal, powerful images by means of their pictorial approach and image composition such as Leon Spilliaert, Gustave Van de Woestyne, Frits Van den Berghe and the much less well-known Marthe Donas and Walter Vaes. The exhibition concludes with artists who blow up the fixed image space of the 'theatre of things': Jean Brusselmans and René Magritte.

The exhibition has already been promised the cooperation of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Antwerp and Brussels, the Museum of Fine Arts of Ghent, various Belgian city museums, and numerous private collectors, many of whom often have very few works in public collections. In addition, loans from Dutch, German and American museums and private collections are expected. The exhibition is also accompanied by a publication with, in addition to the catalogue of exhibited works, contributions on the meaning of still life in the oeuvre of James Ensor and the history of still life in Belgium.



James Ensor



Antoine Wiertz



Jean Robie



James Ensor



Henri de Braekeleer



James Ensor



Walter Vaes



Hubert Bellis



James Ensor



Gustave Van de Woestyne



Rik Wouters

About the curators

Bart Verschaffel is a philosopher and art critic, as well as emeritus professor at Ghent University. Since 2017, he has been responsible for the exhibition programme of the VANDENHOVE Centre for Architecture and the Arts at UGent, and was a curator of, among others, *Piranesi. The Print Collection of Ghent University* (Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, 2008) and *Bob van Reeth, architect* (BOZAR, 2013). He has published extensively on art, art philosophy and aesthetics, with studies of still life and genres in painting, and studies of artists, such as Giambattista Piranesi, Antoine Wiertz, James Ensor, Giorgio De Chirico, René Magritte, Balthus, and many contemporary Belgian and international artists.

He was the screenwriter of television films by Jef Cornelis about modern art and contemporary art. He is currently director of the class of the arts of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België (Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts). Most important monographic publications on art and artists: *À propos de Balthus. Le Roi des Chats, Le regard sondeur* (A&S/books Ghent, 2005); *Nature morte, portrait, paysage. Essais sur les genres en peinture* (La Lettre Volée, Brussels, 2007); *De zaak van de kunst. Over kennis, kritiek, en schoonheid* (A&S/books Ghent, 2011); *What is real? What is true? Picturing Figures and Faces* (VANDENHOVE - A&S/books Ghent, 2021); *What Artistry Can Do. Essays on Art and Beauty* (Edinburgh UP, 2022).

E: Bart.Verschaffel@UGent.be

Sabine Taevernier has a master's degree in art history. She is an art expert, adviser to public and private collections and, since 1983, an independent curator specialising in art of the late 19th century and 20th century. She has organised exhibitions on Symbolism, Expressionism and James Ensor in collaboration with the museums of Ghent, Antwerp, Milan, Rotterdam and Frankfurt. She worked as an expert for the Impressionists and Moderns and Contemporary Art department at Christie's from 1988 until 1998. She is the founder of the Ensor Advisory Committee (2002). Since 2019, she has been vice-president of the *Raad voor het behoud van het roerend cultureel erfgoed Vlaanderen* (Council for the preservation of movable cultural heritage in Flanders) (Topstukkenraad) and in January 2022 she became director of the *King Baudouin Foundation*.

Together with Robert Hoozee, she wrote a monograph on the drawings and prints of James Ensor (Antwerp, Mercatorfonds 1987) and has also been involved in most of the Ensor exhibitions, including Paris, Musée du Petit Palais, *James Ensor*, 1990; Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts de Belgique, *James Ensor*, 1999; New York, The Drawing Center, *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor*, 2001; New York, Museum of Modern Art, *James Ensor*, 2009; Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Ensor*, 2009/2010; Chicago, *James Ensor : The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 2014/2015; New York, Gladstone Gallery, *James Ensor. An intimate portrait*, 2021/2022.

E: sabine@sabinetaevernier.be

Project manager:

Stefan Huygebaert is associated as a curator with Mu.ZEE, Ostend, where he focuses on exhibition and research projects on art around 1900, in particular Léon Spilliaert and the exhibitions *Anna Boch: Een impressionistische reis* (2023) and *Rose, rose, rose à mes yeux. James Ensor en het stilleven in België 1830–1930* (2023–2024). Prior to this, he was a pre and postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University for ten years. He researches, teaches and publishes on various aspects of the art of the late 18th - early 20th century (1789–1914), including right-wing iconography, symbolism, the picturesque and the picture postcard.

E: stefan.huygebaert@muzee.be