

# REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

## ARTWORKS FROM BELGIUM

Artistic contributions in the Justus Lipsius and Europa buildings in the context of the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 January to 30 June 2024.



**be**  
**EU**  
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**REFLECTIONS**

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# FOREWORD

There is a tradition in the Justus Lipsius building, which is named after the 16th-century Brabant-born humanist, whereby, during its presidency, every country can display art installations in the common areas, which reflect the vision of the country, or the world.

If you live here, you know or at least you think you know Belgium, the country that is home to the two European institutions. And we know that Belgium is full of surprises. The presidency is no exception, having also been a revelation for us. The various art installations have generated a lot of interest among delegates, staff and visitors alike.

The main theme of this selection of Belgian artworks is *Reflections*. These works are invitations to reflect on society, as mirrors to discover reality in a different way. And what better time to reflect on this than at the end of the European legislature?

The Council is home to the 27 member states. Representatives at every level meet every day, here in the Justus Lipsius and Europa buildings. From experts and attachés to ambassadors, ministers and heads of state and government, who talk to each other, listen to each other, work together and find common ground to shape the future. The exhibited work in the atrium reflects these meetings: a ballet of differences that fluctuate and complement each other in harmony.

Some of the artworks on display were inspired by Magritte. Living in Brussels sometimes also feels like a real-life experience of a painting by the Belgian surrealist: the clear sky at sunrise contrasting with a shadow of the typical Brussels double-fronted houses and the glint from an illuminated window.

Belgium has led its presidency with commitment and dynamism. The General Secretariat of the Council has given its unconditional support to the presidency during this challenging period.

**Thérèse BLANCHET**

Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

During the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union, every instrument plays its part in a "valse à mille temps", as Jacques Brel liked to hear them, a waltz beating a drum: finalising as many legislative dossiers as possible and preparing the long-term future of the European Union.

Belgium has had the honour of assuming the presidency the Council for the 13th time. This presidency is also a huge responsibility with regard to the citizens of Belgium and Europe. The challenges facing Europe in 2024 are profound. We have to face these challenges. This requires action, as well as retrospection, a sense of perspective and the space to look ahead. And that is exactly the main theme of this selection of artworks: *Reflections*.

The artworks invite us to think about the world of today and tomorrow. They are like mirrors to discover and rediscover the world around us in a different way. A good example is the art installation in the atrium, *The Mirror of Waves*, which takes inspiration from natural elements. The dynamics constantly change from together in harmony, disruption by an element and evolution to a new equilibrium.

Art makes the world more beautiful. Art is a source of hope, humour, curiosity and imagination. These adjectives typify an artistic expression which is dear to Belgium: surrealism. While *Landscape of surrealism* is a new creation with fragments by Belgian surrealist artists, the original artworks can be viewed at Bozar and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels.

The animated film for March really touched me. Marguerite De Riemaeker-Legot, the first female minister in Belgium, was elected before women had the right to vote in Belgium. As 2024 is a year of elections, it is useful to reflect for a moment on the right to vote, which has not yet existed for 100 years for women in Belgium. The film invites you to vote wisely, to help guide the course Europe will take.

All the artworks on display show that Belgians can be bold and have boundless creativity, qualities that help transform Europe. I am convinced that the long tradition of displaying art installations around the buildings of the Council adds a touch of mellowness and empathy to the atmosphere at all these meetings. A lot of people have enjoyed the artworks as they passed through the buildings, and can look back on pleasant memories in this publication.

I would like to thank all the artists, the lending institutions, the curator and everyone who contributed to this wonderful project. These artworks offer inspiration. And we need inspiration, because writing the history of the European continent is an incredible symphony. Belgium has put its heart and soul into playing the role of conductor, with grace and verve. As a final note, I would like to highlight the EU's motto of unity in diversity as an underlying element, by quoting the Belgian musician Arno, who was rather impartial to surrealism himself: "(...) C'est vachement bien. Nous sommes quand même tous des Européens".

**Hadja LAHBIB**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, Foreign Trade and of the Federal Cultural Institutions, Belgium

# INTRODUCTION

The main theme of Belgium's artistic contributions in the context of the presidency of the Council of the European Union is *Reflections*. Artworks are thought-provoking, and prompt reflection. Some of the specific thematic areas prompting reflection are gender and inclusion, sustainability and democracy and the rule of law.

The topics of the Belgian presidency together with the architecture and the use of the public spaces where the art works are presented were the starting point in the selection of the art works and art installations.

The art in the public spaces of the buildings of the Council, namely the atrium, the lobby, the corridor (JL50+), VIP salons (JL50+), the forum and the presidency salon (EB7+) was selected in an organic way, in multiple exchange within the FPS and the Council, with the lending partners, artists and interlocutors.

The works of art are mainly existing art works on loan from different partners and some art installations are new art creations, such as the installation in the atrium and the two LED walls, one with a textile of 16 m in the forum of the Europa building and one with six monthly created animated films in the lobby of the Justus Lipsius building.

This publication provides a framework to describe all the artworks on display and compiles eight chapters: *Le miroir des vagues*, *Birth of the Belgian presidency*, *L'histoire de ne pas rire*, *Belgian Pioneering women*, *The Skin of the Earth*, *Mapping the world*, *Voices and Bird of the Belgian Presidency*. One chapter is devoted to the art installation in the atrium and another to world maps and perceptions of the world. The six other chapters are based on the different themes of the six monthly animated films.

Each new film brings dynamism to the art presentations and keeps the communication vibrant. With the announcement of the new film, specific artworks are highlighted in internal and external communication and in the guided tours in the Council's buildings.

The dynamic approach of the exhibition and the specific works of art lead to ideas and cross-pollinations that continue to blossom in the future.

The creativity, visionary approach and reflections of the artists allow the visitor of the exhibition and the reader of this publication to make their own reflections.

In this way, we contribute to the important role that art and culture can play on the secular stage, to create space for openness, playfulness, inspiration and reflection.

## **Ilse DAUWE**

Curator

Art Collection FPS Foreign Affairs, Belgium

**JUSTUS LIPSIUS BUILDING, BRUSSELS**

Rachel BAES

Nelleke CLOOSTERMAN

Jocelyne COSTER

Lieven DE BOECK

Nina DOEVENDANS

Jane GRAVEROL

Karin HANSEN

Tanja MOSBLECH

Romain TARDY

Thierry TILLIER

Adrien TIRTIAUX

Ana TORFS

Suzanne VAN DAMME

Maxime VAN DE WOESTIJNE

**EUROPA BUILDING, BRUSSELS**

Kasper BOSMANS

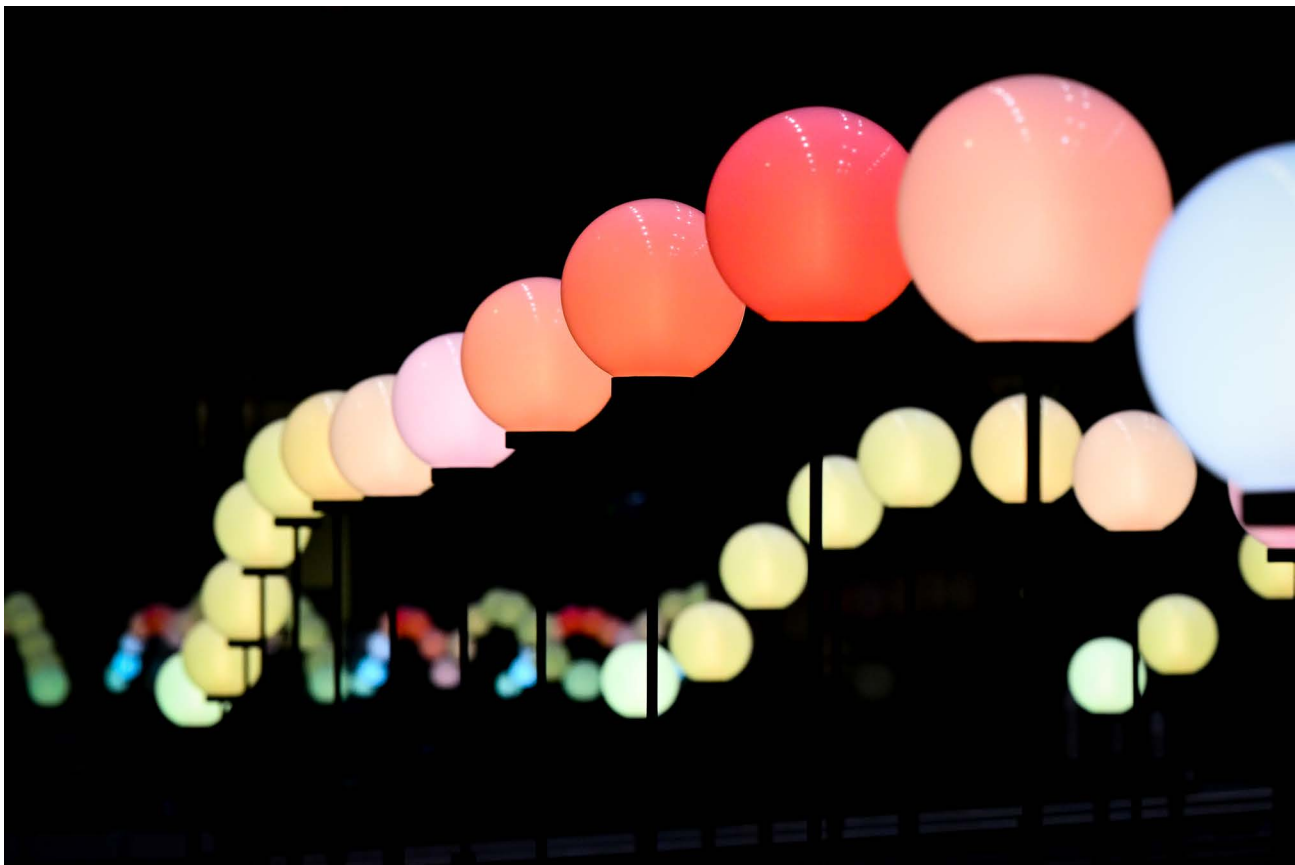
Nina DOEVENDANS

Vincent DELBROUCK

Joëlle DUBOIS

Geert GOIRIS

Theo WIESEN



**ROMAIN TARDY (1984)**

*Le miroir des vagues, 2023*

Light and kinetic installation

150 modules with a motorised telescopic mast

topped by a luminous sphere

programmed motion and lighting effects

H 200 x W 750 x D 250 cm

Production: Under my Network

Delegated production: LDA Productions, Autonom

Created for the Belgian presidency of the Council  
of the European Union



Inspired by the waves of the sea, the rustling of trees, the blowing of corn on a field and a flock of birds in flight, the art installation ***Le Miroir des vagues (The mirror of waves)*** brings nature into the atrium of the Justus Lipsius building by means of technology. Technology becomes poetic and metaphorical. It shows society as a ballet of differences. Thanks to the movement created by a fluctuating algorithm, the 150 motorised masts with their spheres in changing colours represent the complementarity and harmony of the group. This harmony is occasionally disrupted by the abrupt movement of individual elements. And then a new equilibrium is created.

Visitors experience a different rhythm and colour palette every time they walk through or around the artwork. In the first months, the shades of the colour palette are inspired by a warm sunset. In the last few months, blue and yellow are the dominant shades, and form a billowing, undulating plane of colour with blue tones and yellow accents, in reference to the European flag.

The work is designed by visual artist **Romain Tardy** (b. 1984) and the creative company Under My Network for the atrium of the Justus Lipsius building, in the context of the Belgian presidency, following a public tender launched by the FPS Foreign Affairs. This art installation was selected based on its artistic and innovative quality and sustainable nature. Installing the artwork in this spot also literally prompts reflection: the installation is reflected on the marble floor as well as on the surrounding windows.

This art installation enjoyed a lot of visibility thanks to its prominent location. The installation has been built and dismantled four times during the presidency, due to both planned and additional European summits, as well as for Open Doors on 4 May. The work is temporarily stored in the artist's studio in Brussels. The work is sustainable, as it does not use much electricity, about as much as a household appliance like a fridge, and the various components can be reused after the presidency. They will resurface in a different guise in Tardy's poetic and sensory creations, at experimental music events in which Under My Network will participate.

In the first animated film, *The Birth of the Belgian presidency*, a globe spins around its axis in a cage, inspired by the painting by Jane Graverol, *Expérience (Experience)*. The cage disappears and then the world shrinks to an egg. The egg appears in a nest, along with two other eggs, while a dove of peace comes fluttering in and disappears again, as a nod to the painting by René Magritte *Le Retour (The Return)*. The eggs change shape and multiply and take up space on the canvas while the Belgian flag appears in the background, this time a reference to *Untitled (Triptych)* by Marcel Broodthaers. The Belgian flag flaps and disappears, as do all the eggs, except for 1 which the camera zooms in on. This egg breaks and the logo of the Belgian presidency hatches from it. The logo takes centre stage on a blue background. Around the logo, the 27 yellow stars of the European flag appear in a circle, rotate around the logo and then spread out in the space. The blue colour in the background darkens and yellow stars twinkle in the firmament as the logo disappears. The globe in the cage appears. The cage disappears with the dawn of the pale blue sky and the stars that have given way to clouds. The animated film starts again.

On the occasion of the 28 January 2024, 100 years since the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers was born, communications about the animated film were spread on the social media, including the winks towards his work *Untitled (Triptych)*. On 22 April 2024, the International Day of Creativity and Innovation, guided tours through the exhibition were organised for the personnel of the Council and the FPS Foreign Affairs. These tours were focused on art works with eggs and inspiration sources of creativity and innovation.

## **NINA DOEVENDANS**

*The Birth of the Belgian presidency, 2024*

Animated film 1 - January 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

Images: Bozar, FPS Foreign Affairs, Vertigo Creative Studio

### **Inspired by 3 artworks:**

Jane GRAVEROL, *Expérience*

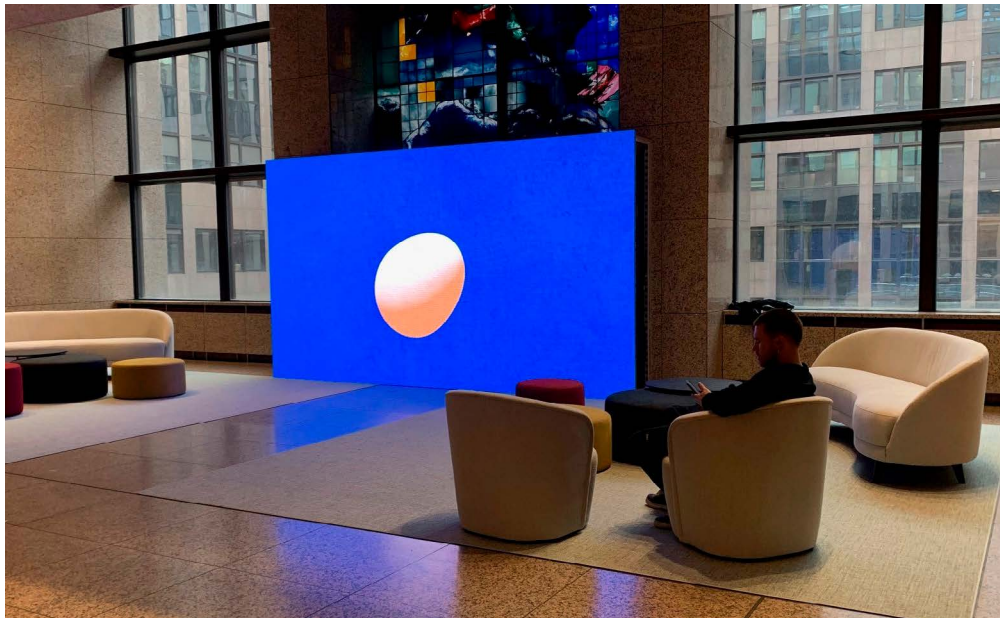
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René MAGRITTE, *Le Retour*

©Succession René Magritte Sabam Belgium 2024

Marcel BROODTHAERS, *Untitled (Triptych)*

©Succession Marcel Broodthaers c/o Sabam Belgium 2024



The Europa building, designed by Belgian architect Philip Samyn and inaugurated in 2017, is illuminated at night and the shape of the lantern appears, but for some people it also has the form of egg. Either way, the illuminated form has something surreal about it. The meeting rooms conceived as incubators, as spaces where ideas are incubated and where people gather together to come up with creative solutions. Various surrealist artists used the theme of the egg in their works, as did quite a few other artists throughout the history of art, from Renaissance to contemporary art. The publisher Taschen devoted a complete publication to this in 2022. Both the animated film and a selection of artworks featuring eggs are a nod to the building, as well as a spur to creativity.

**Joëlle Dubois'** oeuvre explores identity. In her earlier work, this identity is primarily constructed and experienced in and through social media, with evocative, figurative and expressive imagery. In the context of the exhibition *Forget me Not*, Dubois creates 35 different variations of an egg in the **Egg series**. In this series the artist explores how identity is acquired through family ties. She delves into the bond with the mother and the mothers before her, and trans-generational transmission. She starts from a personal story in this regard: her own mother suffers from Alzheimer's. This prompts her to ask questions about memory, recollection, forgetting and being forgotten. What remains of us when memory fades? What are we and what were we? Her personal story becomes abstract and universal. For Dubois, the egg represents femininity, creativity and transformation.

Shrewd observer **Kasper Bosmans** takes an intuitive anthropological approach to looking at local traditions and mythological iconography in everyday life. He sees images walking the fine line between nature and fiction, art and craft. He creates beauty by skillfully associating functional and decorative forms. Symbols and heraldic motifs frequently appear in the artist's oeuvre, including the symbolism of the egg, like in **Legend: Poetry Yards and Metres**. One of Bosmans' sources of inspiration is the Renaissance painting *Brera- Madonna* by Piero della Francesca (1472-74) in the collection of the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. The specific dimensions of the egg in the architecture of the apse above the head of the Madonna and Child mean that specific calculations can be made and a unique interpretation of volume, shape, scale, iconography and colorite.



**JOËLLE DUBOIS (1990)**

*Eggs series, 2022*

Acrylic paint and pencil on Japanese paper

6 x H 21 x W 15 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs



**KASPER BOSMANS (1990)**

*Legend: Poultry Yards and Metres, 2021*

Enamelled steel

H 110 x W 80 cm

Coll. Artist



The second animated film *L'histoire de ne pas rire (A question of not laughing)* features artworks by Rachel Baes, Pol Bury, Marcel G. Lefrancq, Marcel Marien, Frits Van den Berghe, Louis Van de Spiegele, Maxime Van De Woestijne and Max Servais in an imaginary moving landscape of sand and wind, brushstrokes and craquelures. Elements like a jumping tree, a cloud of rain that suddenly appears and disappears, a moving man in the clouds, a girl walking back and forth on a boulder while reading a book on philosophy, provide a poetic and subtle touch of humour.

The animated movie dialogues with the textile on the LED wall of 16 m large in the forum of the Europe Building. In the poetic *Landscape of Surrealism* references to 11 art works of famous and lesser known Belgian surrealists such as René Magritte, Jane Graverol, Rachel Baes, Louis Van de Spiegele, Fritz Van den Berghe and Max Servais are included. The LED wall behind the textile was created for the French presidency by the Belgian company Delta Productions. After the use by Spain and Belgium also Hungary will create an art work on this LED wall.

For Belgium Nina Doevendans from Vertigo Creative Studio created this imaginary landscape in a visual language with some pictorial elements that recur in the animated films. Examples are the background in craquelures, the globe, the rain cloud and the collage technique, which was also highly popular in surrealism.

## **NINA DOEVENDANS**

*L'histoire de ne pas rire, 2024*

Animated film 2 - February 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

Images: Bozar, FPS Foreign Affairs, Vertigo Creative Studio

### **Inspired by 8 art works:**

Rachel BAES, *La leçon de philosophie*

Poï BURY, *Vieillesse du cuivre* © Sabam Belgium 2024

Marcel G. LEFRANCOQ, *Puberté*

Marcel MARIEN, *Le Tao* © Sabam Belgium 2024

Max SERVAIS, *C'est un peu de rêve*

Frits VAN DEN BERGHE, *L'homme des nuages*

Louis VAN DE SPIEGELE, *Le regard du silence*

Maxime VAN DE WOESTIJNE, *Landschap (het andere continent)*

2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924). An ideal occasion for Bozar and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB) to create exhibitions around surrealism during the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union. At Bozar, the exhibition *L'histoire de ne pas rire: surrealism in Belgium* runs from 21 February to 16 June 2024, while *Imagine!*, with a focus on the international context, runs at the RMFAB from 21 February to 21 July 2024. The latter exhibition travels after Brussels to the Centre Pompidou in Paris and continues its European and international tour at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Fundación Mapfre in Madrid and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In the EU buildings is, besides the LED walls, some surrealism to discover during the Belgian presidency. The VIP rooms in the Justus Lipsius building feature paintings by several surrealist artists, including Maxime Van De Woestijne and the three prominent Belgian female surrealist artists Suzanne Van Damme, Rachel Baes and Jane Graverol. During the presidency the art works can be fully admired in these prominent spots, thanks to the restoration and reframing of the art works by the lending institutions. After the presidency, some of the surrealist artworks will be incorporated into the Belgian ambassador's residence in Paris. This is a wonderful opportunity given that the *Imagine!* exhibition of the RMFAB will travel on to Paris, the vibrant surrealist focal point back in the day.

Let's have a closer look to the artists. In her early years, **Jane Graverol** painted in the symbolist style, primarily still lifes and landscapes. In the late 1930s, her painting style took on a surrealist character. Her works often have something dreamlike about them. Graverol herself described her paintings as waking, conscious dreams. Her works feature many women who are often slightly distorted or only implicitly present. In 1949, she sought contact with René Magritte and took part in Saturday gatherings at his home. In 1952, she co-founded the literary avant-garde magazine *Temps mêlés* in Verviers, followed by the literary journal *Les Lèvres nues* in 1954. In the 1960s, she met artists such as André Breton and Marcel Duchamp who influenced her work. She moved to Paris in 1967 and stayed in touch with the Brussels surrealists. As a female artist, she was confronted with the conventions of the day. As such, she signed her first works under the French man's name Jean. Certain symbols, such as a cage, in her work *Expérience*, are presumably also a reference to the more limited freedom of a female artist compared to a male artist.

In ***Vases communicants***, Graverol uses a typical surrealist technique by playing with scale: cauliflowers are the same size as a rose. Inconsistent with reality, this technique gives the still life a surrealistic accent and a touch of humour. In the exhibitions in Bozar and in RMFAB some of her iconic art works can be admired. Some of her works are permanently exhibited in the hidden gem, the former house and current museum of René Magritte in Jette. *Vases communicants* will be part of the exhibition *Le sur-réalisme : bouleverser le réel* in BAM, the Museum of Fine Arts, in Mons. This exhibition runs from 19 October 2024 until 16 February 2025.





**JANE GRAVEROL (1905-1984)**

*Vases communicants, 1972*

Painting, oil on canvas

H 78 x W 116 cm

Coll. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (16628)

**Maxime Van De Woestijne** came from an illustrious family of artists: his father was one of the Flemish expressionist painters, Gustave Van de Woestijne (1881-1947) and his uncle was the writer Karel Van de Woestijne (1878-1929). He lived in Leuven, and in London and Brussels during the war, and then in Mechelen, where his father became director of the academy. This is where the surrealist artist started his artistic training, with his father, before moving to the advertising studio Beran in Innsbruck (1936). He painted in an illusionistic surrealist style with magical-realist elements, with a touch of naïveté and timelessness. In the 1950s, his surrealist style leaned toward that of Yves Tanguy. Certain motifs that appear in his work were likely inspired by the surrealist masters, such as Chirico's plaster sculptures, Dali's flowing candles and Magritte's spheres. Over time, his compositions became purer. His work was exhibited at the Kröller-Muller Museum in Otterlo in 1957 and at Tate Modern in London in 1958, among other places. His work can be found in numerous public and private collections, including the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels and Mu.zee in Ostend. His works from the 1960s, including **Landschap (het andere continent)** (*Landscape (the other continent)*) are often largely taken up by the sky. The sky serves as a backdrop for the recurring motif of the tree. Here the tree stands out against an expansive sky in light blue and dark tones. In the animated films, *L'histoire de ne pas rire* and *Bird of the Belgian presidency*, the tree is animated and literally jumps into a vacuum.

#### MAXIME VAN DE WOESTIJNE (1911-2000)

*Landschap (het andere continent)*, 1963

Painting, oil on canvas

H 93 x W 112 cm

Coll. Flemish Community





**SUZANNE VAN DAMME (1901-1986)**

*Les dompteurs du silence*, 1948

Painting, oil on unalut

H 178 x W 146 x D 2 cm

Coll. Flemish Community

**Suzanne Van Damme** was trained at the Royal Academies of Fine Arts of Ghent and Brussels and at the free studio *L'Effort* in Brussels. In the 1920s she was active in Ostend, where she was in close contact with James Ensor, who influenced her work. The painter and watercolorist primarily created landscapes, portraits, still lifes and seascapes. Her art evolved from post-impressionism to surrealism to abstract art. Van Damme travelled extensively and lived in various places, including Paris in France, Florence and Fiesole in Italy, and she frequently stayed in Belgium, during WWII and for good after 1970. Van Damme already enjoyed success at a young age. During her stay in Belgium during WWII, she came in contact with Belgian and French surrealist writers and started working in the surrealist style. She creates silhouettes of women and monsters in a refined style. Her drawings and paintings depict female figures in a dreamlike setting, as is the case here in ***Les dompteurs du silence*** (*The tamers of silence*). Paul Colinet came up with a lot of titles for Van Damme's surrealist work, as he did for Magritte.

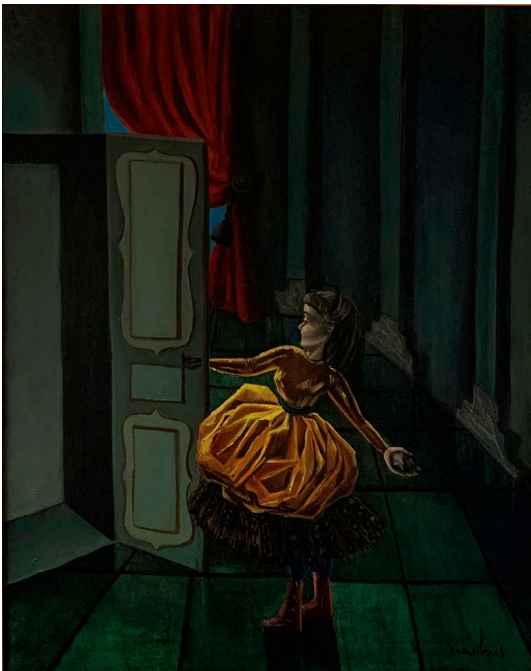
Van Damme took part in various exhibitions on surrealism in Paris, the Venice and São Paulo Biennales and the World's Fair in Brussels (1958). In the 1960s, she was often asked to exhibit in the United States. Her work has also been exhibited after her death, at her Brussels gallery Group 2 in the 1990s, at the exhibition *Elck zijn waerom*, on female artists in Belgium and the Netherlands 1500-1950 at the Royal Museums in Antwerp and the Museum in Arnhem, at the 2015 exhibition *Cherchez la Femme* at Sotheby's New York in the company of other female Surrealists including Frida Kahlo, Leonor Fini, Meret Oppenheim, Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning, and in 2023 at the exhibition *Surréalisme au féminin ?* at the Montmartre Museum in Paris. The exhibition *Imagine!* at the RMFAB in Brussels features her work *Un couple d'oiseaux anthropomorphes* (*An anthropomorphic bird couple*), 1944, Oil on panel. In autumn 2024 her work will be part of the exhibition *Si le cœur vous en dit* in the Museum of Fine Arts in Charleroi. This exhibition will highlight the work of female Belgian artists of the twentieth century.

**Rachel Baes** learned to paint thanks to her father, the history painter Emile Baes. She was introduced to surrealism in Paris and completely immersed herself in surrealist literature and painting. Over the years, her work became more symbolist, with a large dose of satire. She moved in both Parisian and Brussels surrealist circles. This is evidenced, among other things, by the striking portrait *Scheherazade* that René Magritte painted of her in 1947. She was active on the national and international art scene, with exhibitions in Paris (1945), Buenos Aires (1947), New York (1949), the Venice Biennale (1954), and the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels (1956). In 1961, she settled in Bruges. Solo exhibitions have been dedicated to her after her death, including by *Rachel Baes. L'accent grave du rêve* at Galerie Quadri in Brussels (1992) and group exhibitions such as *Gekooid verlangen: Jane Graverol, Rachel Baes and surrealism* at the RMFA in Antwerp (2002). The exhibition *L'histoire de ne pas*

*rire: surrealism in Belgium*, at Bozar, showcases her oeuvre in detail. Her work can be found in various public and private collections, including the RMFA in Antwerp and RMFAB in Brussels. Her archives are held at the *Archives et Musée de la littérature* in Brussels.

Rachel Baes' work is not so accessible, given the atmosphere in which it is set. The ambiguity in the pictorial representation of one or more young girls in a somewhat precarious situation gives an uneasy feeling and instils fear. The fear and tension are evoked by the use of colour and a possible danger that lurks somewhere. This characteristic atmosphere can also be seen here in ***La trajectoire inconnue***. A young girl with something in her left hand, a cadaver of some animal or something indeterminate, perhaps ready to throw it, and holding the door handle of an opened parlour door in her right hand. At the threshold of a stylish French drawing room with panelling and lavish curtains, the girl looks with a tense expression at something or someone in the adjoining room. A few wisps of hair are in front of her face, a sign of movement? Is a wind picking up because a door or window is open? Is it a snapshot just after the girl has hurriedly made her way into the room, still out-of-breath from running, with flapping locks of hair? Hence the title of the work, the trajectory is unknown.

Rachel Baes' work *Leçon de philosophie* is shown in the animated film as well as on the LED in the forum. In the animated film, a young girl, engrossed in a book, paces swiftly back and forth on this boulder. The original work was featured in the exhibition at Bozar.



**RACHEL BAES (1912-1983)**

*La trajectoire inconnue, undated*

Painting, oil on canvas

H 80.5 x W 65 cm

Coll. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (7690)



### NINA DOEVENDANS

*Belgian Pioneering women, 2024*

Animated film 3 - March 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

Inspired by 7 Women:

Chantal AKERMAN

Marguerite DE RIEMAECKER-LEGOT

Jacqueline FONTYN

Micheline LANNON

Marie POPELIN

Isala VAN DIEST

Marguerite YOURCENAR

As International Women's Day falls in the month of March, the theme of the animated film for March is gender and inclusion. The theme for 8 March 2024 is **#InspireInclusion**. To promote inclusion, seven historic Belgian female pioneers have been selected. Each woman is a pioneer in her field of work, including politics, medicine, film, literature, music and sports, and they have also played a crucial role in women's rights. As such, these women deserve not to fall through the net of history, they ought to be given their rightful place in it. By paying tribute to these trailblazing ladies, they can also serve as sources of inspiration and role models for future generations. Each pioneer is portrayed in an animated collage through a portrait photo combined with a number of symbols referring to her accomplishments and discipline.

On a relevant date, such as a date of birth, a day that pays tribute to a specific discipline a social media post communicated about one of the pioneering women. These published texts are included, in modified form, in this publication. In the future, this theme can be further developed and this film can be shown in other settings. The theme of gender and inclusion is addressed in the animated films as well as in the artworks and selection of artists.



## Marguerite De RIEMAEKER-LEGOT

first female Belgian minister

Marguerite De Riemaeker-Legot (1913, Oudenaarde - 1977, Brussel) was born on 9 March 1913. She started her career as a doctor of law. A lawyer and professor, teaching civil and constitutional law, she cleared several iconic hurdles for women in Belgium: she became the first female member of parliament in the Chamber of Representatives in 1953, the first Belgian woman in the European Parliament in 1958, the first female Belgian Minister in 1965 and the first Belgian female Minister of State in 1974. Remarkably, De Riemaeker-Legot was elected in 1946 even though women did not have the right to vote in Belgium at the time. De Riemaeker-Legot was active in a variety of organisations representing women's and family interests, as either president or vice president.

In 2015 the photo book *Marguerite De Riemaeker - Legot: onze eerste vrouwelijke minister* (our first female minister) was published. The book illustrates prominent moments in Belgium's political history. In 2023, the website [ideasoneurop.eu](http://ideasoneurop.eu) published an article on the important role De Riemaeker-Legot played in the area of women's rights and rights for Italian migrants coming to work in Belgium, a contribution that is part of the *CAROLINE* research project, also known as *Creating A netwoRK On femaLe ploNEers of European integration*.

## CHANTAL AKERMAN

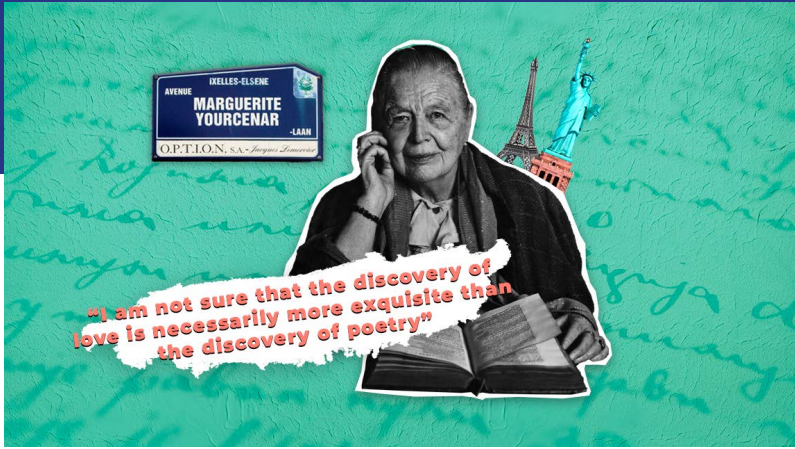
first female film director of the Best movie of all time

Belgian film director, screenwriter, artist and film professor at the City College of New York, Chantal Akerman (1950, Brussels - 2015, Paris) had a substantial influence on feminist and avant-garde cinema, according to various critics and film scholars. Some scholars have referred to her as one of the most important directors of our time. As of 2024, she is a major inspiration for younger generations of aspiring directors. Feminist and queer film scholar B. Ruby Rich believes that Akerman's first fiction film *Je Tu Il Elle* from 1974 can be seen as a cinematic milestone for female sexuality. The depiction of women's sexuality is a prominent theme in several of her films.

Akerman's most acclaimed film, *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, was released in 1975. The film presents a largely real-time study of the routine domestic chores and occasional prostitution of a middle-aged widow. When the film was released, French newspaper *Le Monde* called *Jeanne Dielman* the first female masterpiece in the history of cinema. In December 2022, *Jeanne Dielman* was awarded first place in the *Top 100 Greatest Films of All Time*. This list is published every 10 years by the *British Film Institute Sight & Sound* magazine based on the votes of 846 film critics. *Jeanne Dielman* is only the fourth film, and it is the first film directed by a woman.

The retrospective exhibition *Travelling at Bozar* features unique and never-before-seen images and documents from Chantal Akerman's archive. Cinephiles are in for a treat at CINEMATEC: Chantal Akerman's complete cinematic work and the films that were most important to her will be showing from 15 March to 21 July 2024.





## MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

first female writer at the Académie française

The Belgian writer and poet Marguerite Yourcenar (1903, Brussels -1987, Maine, USA) lived in various places in Belgium, France and the USA. Street names and alleyways and parks are named after her in these cities, including the Passage Marguerite Yourcenar near Egmont Park in Brussels, where visitors walk on and past her poems. A day after *La journée de la Francophonie*, on 20 March, and on the World Poetry Day, on 21 March, a social media post on the instagram account Belgianartdiplomacy was dedicated to Yourcenar as the first female writer to be inducted into the prestigious Académie française, in 1980. Yourcenar's induction was not without controversy. There was strong opposition from Claude-Lévi Strauss in particular, who argued that the rules should not be changed. This was mainly due to the fact that Yourcenar was a woman, not her nationality.

According to the book *Women Who Write Are Dangerous*, Yourcenar's most famous work is *Mémoires d'Hadrien*. Thomas Mann only had praise for it. Even in the 21st century, the writer's oeuvre still generates interest throughout the world. A seminar will take place in Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, on 30 and 31 October 2024, highlighting and exploring the links to religions and philosophies in the writer's oeuvre. Closer to home, the Belgian diplomat Bart Pennewaert currently working in the Belgian Permanent Representation within the EU co-authored the booklet *Er is altijd de zee* (*There is always the sea*). Yourcenar and her search of the depths of human existence served as inspiration for the book. In short, Marguerite Yourcenar continues to intrigue and inspire.



## ISALA VAN DIEST

first Belgian female doctor

Isala Van Diest (1842, Leuven - 1916, Knokke) moved to Bern in 1874 to study natural sciences, as women were not yet admitted to universities in Belgium at the time. Having obtained her degree, she moved to England and started her medical practice. She returned to Belgium in 1882, where she took additional exams in obstetrics and surgery, earning her Belgian diploma to gain access to the job market. That turned out to be no easy feat because, as a woman, she could earn a degree, but she couldn't practice her profession. In 1884, an exception was made for Van Diest, by Royal Decree, much to the annoyance of male doctors. Van Diest started her own medical practice in 1886, with a patient base consisting primarily of women and children, and British and American expats. Definitive access for women to the profession only came in 1890.

During her stay in England, Isala Van Diest came into contact with several English feminists. Taking inspiration from them, she pushed for women's rights in Belgium. Before starting her own medical practice, she worked in a shelter for former prostitutes in Brussels. She was closely involved in the organisation tackling trafficking in women and regulating prostitution, and in 1890 she set up a women's rights association together with Marie Popelin and Louis Franck.

On 14 March, tribute was paid to the first female doctor and her role in the area of women's rights and the female body. Her pioneering role still inspires today: a research group at the University of Antwerp conducting pioneering work on a vaginal microbiome named its research 'Isala' in 2020, after Isala Van Diest. On 14 March 2016, Belgium ratified the Istanbul Convention. This is a convention against gender and domestic violence. On 1 June 2023, the European Council also decided to ratify this convention. This was a historic and hard-won step in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in the EU. It was the first instrument to provide a comprehensive legal framework in the fight against violence against women.



**MARIE POPELIN**

first female doctor of law

After training with Isabelle Gatti de Gamond, a woman who played a key role in education for girls, Marie Popelin (1846-1913, Brussels) ran girls' schools in Mons. Returning to Brussels in 1881, she was appointed headmistress of a school in Laeken. However, Popelin chose to go back to school herself, and in 1883 she entered law school at the ULB in Brussels. In 1880, the ULB had been the first university in Belgium to admit women, followed by Liège and Ghent. Popelin was one of the first female students there, and she obtained her law degree with distinction. Nevertheless, Popelin was unable to practise her profession as a lawyer all her life, owing to the fact that she was a woman. This situation was widespread in Europe, with women denied access to the legal profession. Women were only allowed at the bar in the United States. In 2011, the Popelin affair was re-examined, and she was posthumously awarded a Doctor of Law degree.

Popelin didn't just give up. Supported by other enlightened thinkers including the pacifist lawyer Lafontaine and his sister, the lawyer Louis Franck and Isala Van Diest, Marie Popelin set up various important organisations starting in 1892, including the Belgian League for the Rights of Women and the Women's Council, and she organised the first Feminist Congress at the Palais des Académies in Brussels, which had a huge impact in other countries. Thanks in part to Marie Popelin and Emilie Claeys, Belgian women were given the vote. In 1919, they were still not allowed to vote, but could stand for election at the municipal level, with restrictions. As of 27 March 1948, all women in Belgium were allowed to vote. Tribute was paid to this remarkable woman on 27 March 2024 in a social media post on Belgianartdiplomacy.

Popelin played a pioneering role in securing rights for women in Belgium, including educational, economic and legal rights. It is worth mentioning in this regard that trainee Belgian diplomats, named after Marie Popelin, were promoted in 2019 to highlight gender equality, in the hope of obtaining gender equality in the diplomatic world. Even the diplomatic world, where many diplomats also have legal backgrounds, is still a predominantly male environment. Nevertheless, significant efforts have been made in recent years to break this glass ceiling and get more women into the profession, including in the higher cadres.

With elections in 2024, it is clear that compulsory voting in Belgium is not merely an obligation but first and foremost a right. That right has existed for women in Belgium for less than a hundred years. Women from previous generations made great efforts to obtain these rights. It is worth taking a moment to reflect on that. And the impact of each vote cannot be underestimated: citizens do actually determine the course a country and the European Union will take.



## JACQUELINE FONTYN

first female finalist of the Queen Elizabeth competition for composition

Belgian composer, pianist, conductor and music teacher Jacqueline Fontyn (b. 1930, Antwerp), with her versatile style, techniques and focus on form, is one of the pioneers of contemporary tonal sound in Belgium. In 1964, she became the very first woman to win the Queen Elisabeth Competition for composition. Jacqueline Fontyn has had a long and hugely successful career, and is highly regarded internationally. How did she make it this far?

At the age of five, her parents arranged piano lessons for her with a Russian teacher. Fontyn was encouraged to develop her love of improvisation during these daily lessons. By the age of 15, she knew that she wanted to be a composer. In 1956, she studied to be a conductor at the *Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst* in Vienna. From 1963 to 1970, she was Professor of music theory at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp. From 1970 to 1990, she taught Composition at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. She has been a regular guest at universities and conservatories in Europe (Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland), the United States, Israel, Egypt, Asia (China, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan) and New Zealand. She has received many awards, and has composed a concerto for competitions and commissions in Belgium and abroad. Jacqueline Fontyn is a member of the Royal Academy of Belgium, and she received the title of baroness from the King of Belgium in 1993 in recognition of her artistic achievements. Since 2006, most of her manuscripts have been kept in the music department of the Library of Congress in Washington. In 2014, the Royal Library of Belgium acquired most of the manuscripts that were still in the country.

On 24 March, National Music Day, Jacqueline Fontyn is paid tribute for her pioneering role. As of 2024, the world of composition is and remains a largely male bastion. It is important to highlight female role models and especially those who have received national and international recognition.

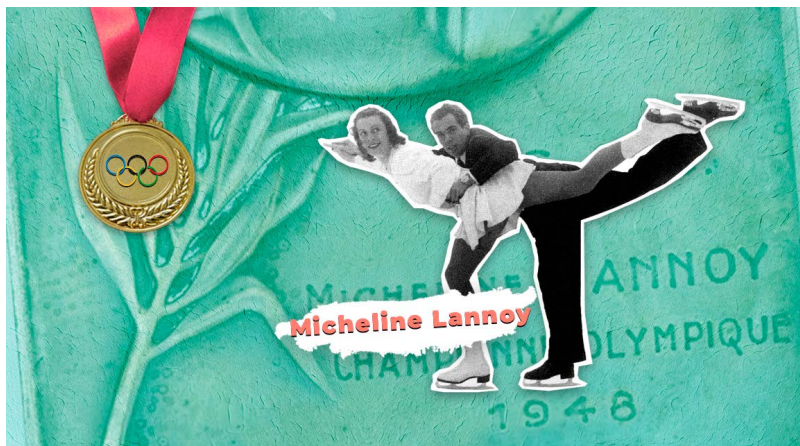
**MICHELINE LANNOY**

first Belgian athlete to win an Olympic gold medal

On 26 March, just four months before the start of the Olympic games in Paris, various female athletes are busily preparing. The Summer Olympics in particular have long been a men's affair. Do you know who the first Belgian athlete was to win an Olympic medal?

It was the now 99-year-old Micheline Lannoy (b. 1925, Brussels). Together with skating partner Pierre Baugniet, she won the first Belgian gold medal at the Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland, on 7 February 1948. The duo had previously won the national trophy for athletic achievement in 1947. They were Belgian champions in 1944, 1945, 1946 and 1947. They were European champions in 1947 and world champions in 1947 and 1948. The crowning achievement followed in 1948 with gold at the Olympics.

This sportswoman is featured on the website *Pionnières*, which lists female Belgian pioneers in elite-level sport. 74 years after Belgium's first gold medal at the Winter Olympics, speed skater Bart Swings won Belgium's second gold medal, having been the fastest on the mass start at the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing.





### NINA DOEVENDANS

*The Skin of the Earth, 2024*

Animated film 4 - April 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

#### Inspired by 3 artworks:

Karin HANSSEN, *Scene 9 (Venus)*

Adrien TIRTIAUX, *Europe Béton*

Theo WIESEN, *Untitled*

The theme of April's animated film, *The Skin of the Earth*, is sustainability. Through various landscapes, the viewer follows a firefly. The firefly flies up from a budding flower at dawn and moves through a landscape consisting of a concrete road and chopped down trees, a work of art by Theo Wiesen, and at the horizon it ends up at the sea, reflected in a pond. The firefly perches on a rock, at the foot of a woman stepping on a rock, an artwork by Karin Hanssen. The camera zooms in on the rock and the earth's crust that changes from rock to churned-up earth to a concrete surface that appears to be Europe, a work of art by Adrien Tirtiaux. The camera again zooms in on the firefly. Night falls and the stars appear in the sky, the 27 stars of the European Union. The sun rises again and the flower buds again, in nature.

By playing with the micro and macro level, from a frog's and bird's eye perspective, different perspectives are shown as we approach the earth, Mother Nature and the earth's crust. You can see the perspective of the farmer, industry, energy, mobility and Europe. April was the month in which an additional summit was convened in response to ongoing protests and concerns from farmers. This animated film poetically highlights and plays on the topical theme of sustainability, a spearhead within the presidency. Nature's elements water, fire, light and earth play the main roles in the film, which is cyclical with the repeating day and night structure. The animated film is an invitation to listen to the rhythm of nature, think cyclically rather than linearly, and have consideration for the earth. The skin of the earth, as Jocelyne Coster indicates in her work *Pied*, is similar to human skin, only on a different scale. As people age, their skin starts to wrinkle. The earth is also ageing and has a lot of folds and diversity in its surface. The film is a call to treat the earth with care and consideration. It is the shared responsibility of all.

In the context of this theme, tours of the Council were organised during the month of April for both staff of the Council and the FPS. An explanation was provided on the tours of both the artworks in the animation film and the exhibited artworks connected to the theme of sustainability. The relevant dates were communicated on social media, including 22 April, Earth Day, and 24 April, International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. A brief description of the artworks which are relevant in this context will follow in this publication.

The theme is reflected in the artworks and also in the design of the exhibition. The LED installations consume limited energy and are also controlled by a timer, and only function during office hours. Most of the artworks are on loan, mainly from Belgian collections and mostly from around Brussels, which also keeps transport distances to a minimum. The carbon footprint is reduced through sustainable packaging, grouped transport and limited distances. A number of artworks is acquired on the occasion of the presidency and will be given a new purpose within the collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs.



**THEO WIESEN (1906-1999)**

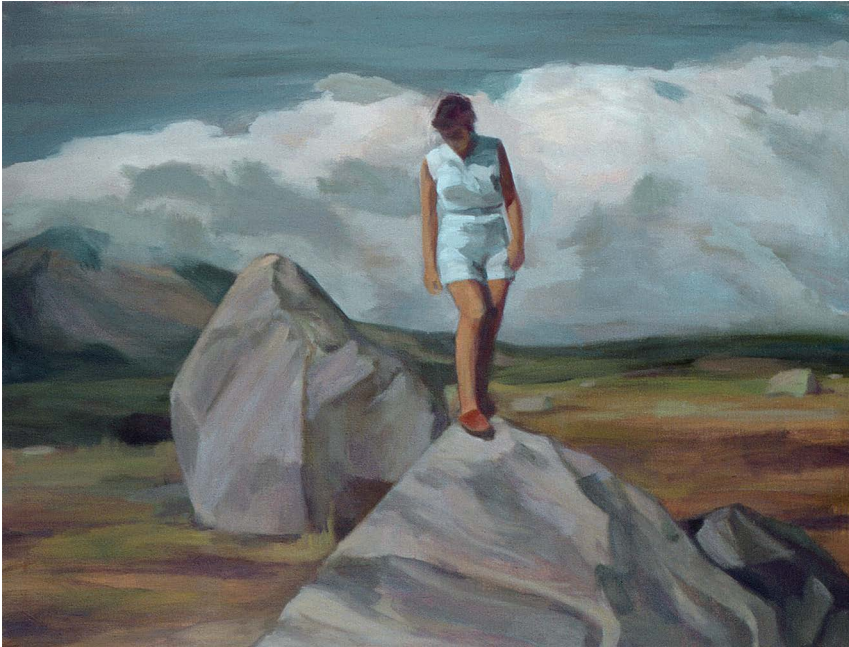
*Untitled, 1988*

Painting, oil on canvas

H 65 x W 124 cm

Coll. German-speaking community

Art brut artist **Theo Wiesen** was orphaned at a young age. He was taken in by a foster family in the German-speaking Belgian Ardennes, where he became a woodcutter. He later ran his own sawmill in Gröfflingen. This is where he found inspiration for his artistic practice. In the 1960s, he started carving totem poles from pieces of wood and tree trunks. He twisted the trees so that the branches acted as arms and legs, and, in his own words, he cut out the demons that haunted his childhood. He set them up at the edge of his estate. Some were so tall that they blended into the surrounding trees. His totem poles depict half-men, half-women and half-animals. Theo Wiesen's less monumental works were collected by Claire Teller from L'Aracine in 1988. After his death, much of his work was transferred to the LaM, a museum in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, in northern France. The work on display here, *Untitled*, comes from the collection of the German-speaking Community of Belgium and depicts a landscape with Wiesen's signature tree trunks with human features and faces.



**KARIN HANSSEN (1960)**

*Scene 9 (Venus), 2001*

Painting, oil on canvas

H 90 x W 120 cm

Coll. Proximus Art Collection

**Karin Hanssen** started her practice in the 1990s. For the past thirty years, she has worked primarily in series: *I Have a Dream* (1994-1995), *Unveiled* (1995), *The Thrill of it All* (1995-98), *Modern Living* (1995-2001), *Scenes* (1998-2001), *Time Structures, As You Like It* (2004-2007), *ABC,123* (2005-2008), *Now=The Time* (2009-10), *The Borrowed Gaze* (2010-11), *A Room of One's Own* (2011-14), *Returning the Gaze* (2015-19), *Everything Now* (2019-21) and *Secret Escape* (2021-2023). Hanssen is regarded as a longterm member of the new Flemish painting movement. She exhibits nationally and internationally and her work has been featured in numerous publications and acquired by various public collections. She has been a member of the Class of Arts of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Sciences and Arts since 2016. The painting ***Scene 9 (Venus)*** is part of the *Scenes* series. In this series, the artist introduces the freeze-frame and the close-up as methods of merging past and present in a critical examination of modernity. Like most of the artist's paintings and drawings, this painting is full of carefully constructed layers of philosophical and pictorial meaning. Someone taking a long, detailed look will be rewarded by working out these references. One of the themes she works on is gender constructions. Her portraits are often painted in hazy colours and incorporated in deterministic settings, ranging from domestic interiors to holiday landscapes. She likes to draw inspiration in this regard from the photography of magazines from the 1960s and 1970s. In *Scene 9(Venus)*, the artist sees the rock on which the woman is standing as a kind of strange pedestal on which the woman is raised up, which amplifies the alienating effect.





**GEERT GOIRIS (1971)**  
*Solitary Tree, 2006*  
 Lambdaprint on aluminium  
 H 103 x W 128 x D 3 cm  
 Coll. ING Belgium

Photographer **Geert Goiris** describes his oeuvre as *Traumatic Realism*. He realises his unique visual language through his images collected during his specific trips, and through his photographic technique. He documents strange locations and unusual encounters in landscapes such as empty fields, mountains and abandoned urban environments that exude a nostalgic, lonely or dramatic atmosphere. The prolonged exposure gives his photographs an unnatural, surreal quality. The photographs seem to be cut away from what appears to be happening before the snapshot and after. In this moment at the boundary of time and space, where the world holds its breath for a fraction of a second, the alienating effect is created, as is mystery and wonder. A time other than linear time is created, an encounter with being somewhere else. In this sense, his photography is not a mere registration but an encounter, of the viewer being somewhere else. In the photograph ***Solitary tree***, a tree stands in a desolate, barren landscape. It is not an ordinary tree, but a concrete tree, photographed by Goiris in China. Indeed, the atmosphere here is also alienating, mysterious and the viewer may wonder what they are actually seeing. Is it reality or fiction? It is different, somewhere else, ambiguous because it is recognisable and alienating at the same time. The work is part of a series of 4 photographs from the ING collection. The exhibition at the Council only features one photograph, which is displayed in the perfect setting of the Presidency salon.



**VINCENT DELBROUCK (1975)**

*Eggs Plant, 2014*

C-print

Edition of 5 + 2AP

H 80 x W 60 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs

**Vincent Delbrouck** (a.k.a V.D.) is a self-taught artist who experiments with a range of different media. He produces lasting impressions of places where he feels at home, such as Cuba and Nepal. His work reflects life as a natural process of changing energies and obsessions, moving in all directions. His work is exhibited in Belgium and abroad, including at the Museum of Photography in Charleroi and the FoMu in Antwerp. ***Eggsplant*** is an ode to the beautiful nature of Cuba. The riot of colours almost bursts out of the photograph. Although not addressed in the photograph, the artist is resolutely committed in helping the local population in their difficult plight.



### ANA TORFS (1963)

*Legend, 2009*

Photographic series,

9 Lambda prints

mounted on dibond in black

wooden frames, each containing

5 embedded aluminum tags with

laser-engraved text

9 x H 75.15 x W 104.15 cm

Coll. National Bank of Belgium

In her work, **Ana Torfs** explores the interaction of what the viewer sees and what they know, think, feel, believe when confronted with a place or a story. This also includes the act of looking and observing itself. For her photographic series **Legend**, Torfs travelled to La Gomera, the second smallest of the Canary Islands. Assigned to each of nine framed photographs are five engraved metal tags containing a variety of information about this archipelago. The photographs suggest a view through a telescope, and the tags list historical, political, and economic facts; they also tell “legends” in the sense of mythical reports. In Greek mythology, the Canaries were

considered to be identical with Elysium, the island located at the western edge of the world, where the favourites of the Gods forgot their earthly sufferings forever. Columbus set sail from La Gomera when he sought a sea passage to India. Yet the history of the Canary Islands is also one of the suppression of its indigenous people, of waves of emigration, and of the terror of Franco’s dictatorship. With each “legend”, a different “(hi)story” is inscribed in this landscape, changing the way we see it. The web of associations creates a multi-layered picture that, despite or in fact because of the variety of information, cannot be brought into focus.



**NELLEKE CLOOSTERMAN (1996)**

*Home-making, 2022*

Painting, oil on canvas

H 230 x W 190 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs

**Nelleke Cloosterman** uses subtle distortions to distort reality into abstract surrealist dream landscapes. Cloosterman uses classical art historical motifs, such as bubbles, that she interweaves with natural elements like plants and animals. The bubble is a motif of the classical vanitas still life genre, it symbolizes fragility, impermanence and the finiteness of human life. In her work these bubbles have something playful as they change shape, color and contour. All these elements function as subtle disruptions by which Cloosterman distorts reality in a manner that the spectator would still accept through willing expansion of believe.

In *Home-making*, various species of birds sit on the branches of the same tree. The bird species come from all around the world. The nationalities of the birds correspond to the nationalities of her former fellow students at the Higher Institute of Fine Arts (HISK) in Ghent. In reality, these species of birds could never sit together on one tree, but they therefore symbolise a form of migration, especially of her fellow students who, together with her, followed an intensive two-year journey in which they reinforced each other and their artistry became more mature. The birds make it their nest, their home. The Belgian capital Brussels is one of the world's most international cities. Every inhabitant builds their own nest and home there. The European Union is a relevant example in this regard, with expats and diplomats settling in a city for a period of time. The diplomatic and consular work in the diplomatic representations, in Brussels and worldwide, also largely involves cases of compatriots creating a home elsewhere.

**Tanja Mosblech** studied painting at the Saint-Lukas Institute in Liège and textile design in Brussels, and she lives and works in Eupen. She has worked as a private teacher of painting since 2003. She has realised various artistic projects and art residencies. Her work is part of the art collection of Ikob, the centre for contemporary art in Eupen, of the collection of the German-speaking community in Belgium and of the regional government of Wallonia. The double exhibition *Hyperbild* ran until March 2024, with both her work and that of Andrea Radermacher-Mennicken being exhibited at Ikob in Eupen. The two artists are undertaking a two-year project together in which they get to know each other and each other's oeuvre, and for which the exhibition at Ikob forms the centrepiece. This project came about after they won a prize. Both artists see the collaboration as enriching, working together and asking new questions about their own artistic practice and methods.

***Lunge Baum*** is an artwork that intertwines human lungs with an upside-down tree. The work was produced on a wooden panel with a certain amount of depth. The natural materials and simple presentation fit the theme of the work. Similar works with lung trees are also featured in the exhibition at Ikob, where they are presented even more in connection with the earth, specifically on the ground.

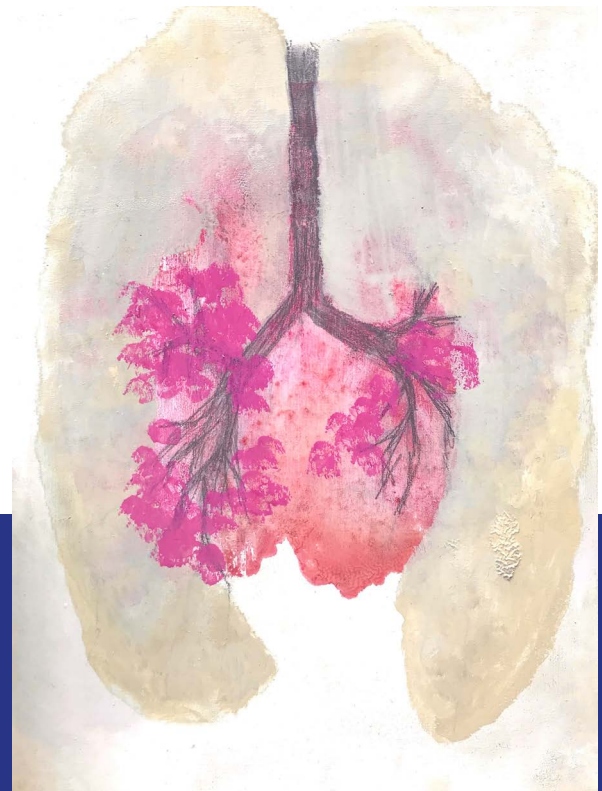
**TANJA MOSBLECH (1970)**

*Lunge Baum, 2020*

Painting, oil on panel

H 45 x W 39 x D 5 cm

Coll. German-speaking community





**ADRIEN TIRTIAUX (1980)**

*Europe Béton, 2023*

White and grey reinforced  
concrete

H 150 x W 200 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs

**Adrien Tirtiaux** studied architecture before studying art at the *Akademie der bildenden Künste* in Vienna, Austria, where he studied sculpture and performance with Monica Bonvicini. Since then, his main area of research has been space: public space or exhibition space. His installations, sculptures, drawings and performances react to careful analyses of the places they occupy. They transform these places and create new scenarios for space, falsely pragmatic constructions that function as small-scale utopias. In recent years, the artist has experimented more with concrete as a material for creating his artworks, including several voluminous works in reinforced concrete in public spaces and a series of plants in which the artist alludes to the CO2 footprint of the cement industry. In the Belgian Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels, there is a blue map on the wall of his hand, *Europe without borders*, 2019. A similar edition is now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (M HKA).

***Europe Béton*** and ***Concrete abstraction/abstract concretion*** are two concrete casts of a relief map of Europe. The maps allude to the geopolitical aspect of concrete construction. Like modernity, concrete is a universal product that is everywhere and used in all cultures. While cement is a standardised global product, the other ingredients of concrete vary from place to place. Sand and gravel, as well as labour, constitute the distinctive regional qualities. While *Europe Béton* suggests a territory uniformly covered by a single industrial product, *Concrete Abstraction / Abstract Concretion* explores the idea of a Europe that builds locally. In this work, Europe is composed of these locally different aggregates, pigments and additives. It is comparable to local clothing and food. After the exhibition, *Concrete abstraction/abstract concretion* will return to Space collection in Liège. *Europe Béton* has been acquired by the FPS Foreign Affairs.

A reference to the architecture and use of materials in the façade of the Europa Building is appropriate here. This façade is composed of oak window frames collected from various construction sites in Europe. Oak is considered a sustainable and universal tree and wood species. The diversity of the window frames emphasizes the European Union's principle of "unity in diversity".

**Humanism, the cradle of contemporary Western political philosophy**

One of the buildings of the Council of the European Union is named the Justus Lipsius building. Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) was a well-known Brabant humanist, philosopher and historian who lived and taught in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. The bronze statue of Justus Lipsius in the Council is a replica of the statue in Overijse, where he was born. Lipsius' study and manuscripts and a copy of the portrait *The Four Philosophers* by his contemporary Peter-Paul Rubens can be found at the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp. The cradle of contemporary Western political philosophy goes back to humanism and its values such as equality, responsibility, tolerance, solidarity, fairness and justice.

**Mapping the world**

The German humanist, lawyer, diplomat, politician and economist Konrad Peutinger (1485-1547) is credited with digging up a copy dating back to a Roman travel map from the 4th century. This map is therefore called the *Tabula Peutingeriana* or *Peutinger map*. It depicts the road network in the Roman Empire. The map covers the world from Great Britain, Spain and North Africa in the west to the Ganges River in the east. Some cities in gallia belgica are marked on it. The oldest copy of the map dates from the 13th century and is kept in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. After Peutinger's death, 250 copies were printed by Jan Palfijn in Antwerp. A replica of the map has been reconstructed on the floor of the Justus Lipsius building, and is more than 30 m long. This lithograph from 2006 is donated by Austria.

**Multilateralism and diplomacy for peace**

Since 2018, 24 April has been designated International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace by the United Nations. Multilateralism refers to cooperation with at least three states, on the basis of consultation, inclusion and solidarity. The Belgian presidency took the date of 24 April 2024 to communicate about the impact of the mapping of the world and the impact of national borders, the fact that this is not arbitrary but also an instrument of power and also closely related to war and peace. Reference is made in this regard to the artwork *Le triomphe de la Paix (Triumph of Peace)* by Laurent Joubert. This splash of colors, a donation of France to the Council, is, according to the catalogue of the collection of the Council, a representation of man's immeasurable palette of potential.

**Art on the secular stage**

Starting from the background of humanism and several artworks from the art collection of the Council of the European Union, artworks by contemporary Belgian artists are exhibited in the corridor of the 50+ floor. The contemporary artists take a fresh look at the world and invite visitors to reflect. They foster awareness of blind spots, new perspectives, curiosity and openness so that multilateralism and peace can be made possible. The contemporary artworks occupy a place on the secular stage. Artists are often highly engaged, requesting that their work not only be exhibited in museum contexts, where it is, in a sense, a no-obligation playground. Precisely because of this secular, in this case European context, their work takes on an extra layer of meaning and also reaches a different and large audience (5000 visitors daily). This also creates different discourse than in an artistic context. They prompt reflection, debate, awareness and change among policymakers and authority figures.





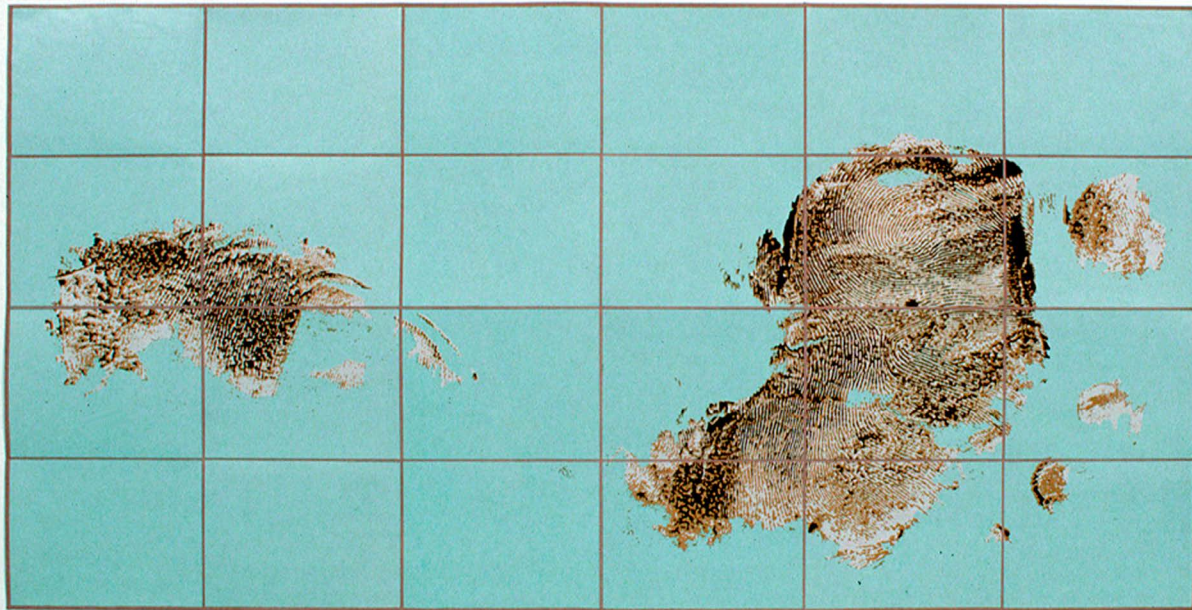
**LIEVEN DE BOECK (1971)**

*The World Unmade, 2012-2014*

Rubber, paint Diameter 22 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs

A common thread throughout the oeuvre of **Lieven De Boecks** is a fundamental calling into question. This can sometimes be subtly, sometimes playfully, sometimes highly radically. His work can be seen as a poetry of concealment. The artist uses techniques including cutting, pasting and covering. The element of play, the *homo ludens*, is also very much present in his work. The game as the mirror of the real world. The artwork ***The World Unmade*** is part of a series of works that reflect on forms of representation and classification, as in issues of identity, both personal and national. The artist starts from an existing basketball on which he applies a map of the world using with Tipp-ex. The lines of the basketball act as meridians. Through this playful depiction, the artist questions the representation of the world through countries and their borders. Acquired on the occasion of the Belgian presidency, the artwork will complement the sub-collection on contemporary of the FPS.



**Jocelyne Coster** studies screen printing at La Cambre in Brussels and teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Namur, Ixelles and Charleroi. Her artistic approach can be described as a combination of vigilance and poetry, and weaving a relationship toward the Other. In her oeuvre, the artist explores the boundary between the human body and the world, and *Pied* is no exception in this regard. The artist notes that the geography of the skin and that of the earth are drawn in a similar way. The similar relationship of organisation between the infinitely small and the infinitely large is reflected in every stage of life. Calculations of the age of certain layers of the earth are made on the basis of earth's geological and topographic curvatures. In humans, these are visible by wrinkles and folds of the skin. The work has been acquired in the context by the FPS.

**JOCELYNE COSTER (1955)**

*Pied, 2001*

Screen print on paper

H 73 x W 143 cm

Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs



**THIERRY TILLIER (1957)**  
*Atlas / Botanica 14, 2001*  
 Collage on paper  
 18 x H 34.8 x W 49 cm  
 18 x H 42 x W 52 cm (framed)  
 Coll. Province of Hainaut -  
 On loan from BPS22, Charleroi

**Thierry Tillier** describes himself as an art maker. He navigates between visual art and literature. The artist creates collages of texts and objects in the format of sheets of paper that he transfers to canvas. Tillier plays with the media of journals and painting and uses the same techniques and materials for both. The *Atlas/Botanica* series includes didactic botanical elements such as currant, pear tree and fly agaric in combination with yellowed atlas plates. These 18 maps together give the impression of a bygone era. That was the intention of the artist, to highlight the changes caused by globalisation, an important topic around the millennium.



**NINA DOEVENDANS**

*Voices, 2024*

Animated film 5 - May 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

Inspired by 2 artworks:

Guillaume BIJL, *Composition trouvée*

Willy PEETERS, *Vrijheid en wet*

The animated film for the month of May is on the theme of democracy and the rule of law. This is one of the spearheads of the Belgian presidency and is also a reference to the European elections in 2024. The title of the animated film *Voices* is a nod to the exhibition of the same name at the European Parliament and includes two of the exhibited art works. The Greek temple in the sculpture *Vrijheid en Wet (Freedom and Law)* by Willy Peeters symbolises official bodies, such as the European Parliament or the Council of the European Union. This is where elected representatives fiercely debate bills and where they reach and sign agreements. The institutions and the world are currently in flux. The voting booth in the artwork *Composition trouvée* by Guillaume Bijl symbolises the large-scale democratic process of the European elections. Citizens will cast their vote and thus influence the direction the EU will take. The movement of the booth and the temple signify the changed world and the search for a new equilibrium.

In the publication of the exhibition *Voices*, the foreword by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, aptly states, "From 6 to 9 June 2024, 400 million EU citizens will take part in the biggest democratic, transnational exercise in the world: the European Elections. Democracy is not something that the European Parliament or the citizens it represents can take for granted. It is up to all of us to keep it alive. Art and culture have a crucial role to play in this regard, raising awareness about issues that concern us and our future, questioning our societies and nurturing intercultural dialogue".

Besides the monthly tradition to show the film on the large LED screen in the lobby of the Justus Lipsius building, the film was also on screens at the *Voices* exhibition in the Spinelli Building of the European Parliament and at the entrance of the main building of the FPS Foreign Affairs in Brussels. A guided tour was organised for the *Voices* exhibition at the European Parliament for FPS staff on 28 May.

The film *The Bird of the Belgian presidency* starts with the egg from which the logo springs, and around which the 27 stars are scattered around the dark firmament. This image merges into a globe on which a Greek temple tilts from left to right and presents a voting booth. There, through the symbols and signals in speech bubbles, everything is in motion until the world finds a new equilibrium. Clouds pass by and fill the screen. This then becomes a surreal landscape. A new scene depicts a rock, textured earth with a firefly fluttering about, a subtle link to the topic of sustainability and the topicality of the additional European summit on agriculture. Next appears the animated collage of Marguerite De Riemaeker-Legot, Belgium's first female minister. The red theatre curtains close and a dove flutters away. They symbolise the end of the presidency, the looming summer vacation and an invitation to the new teams starting, of the new presidency and after the elections. As the curtain opens, an egg appears, ready to open and let a presidency be (re)born.

#### **NINA DOEVENDANS**

*Bird of the Belgian presidency, 2024*

Animated film 6 - June 2024

1-minute film on a loop

LED wall H 250 x W 450 cm

Scenario: FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

Animated film: Vertigo Creative Studio

LED wall: Vidisquare

Images: Bozar, FPS Foreign Affairs & Vertigo Creative Studio

#### **Inspired by the 5 former animated films:**

*Birth of the Belgian presidency*

*Voices*, with works by Guillaume Bijl and Willy Peeters

*L'histoire de ne pas rire*, with works by Rachel Baes, Luis Van de Spiegele, Maxime Van De

Woestijne and Frits Van den Berghe

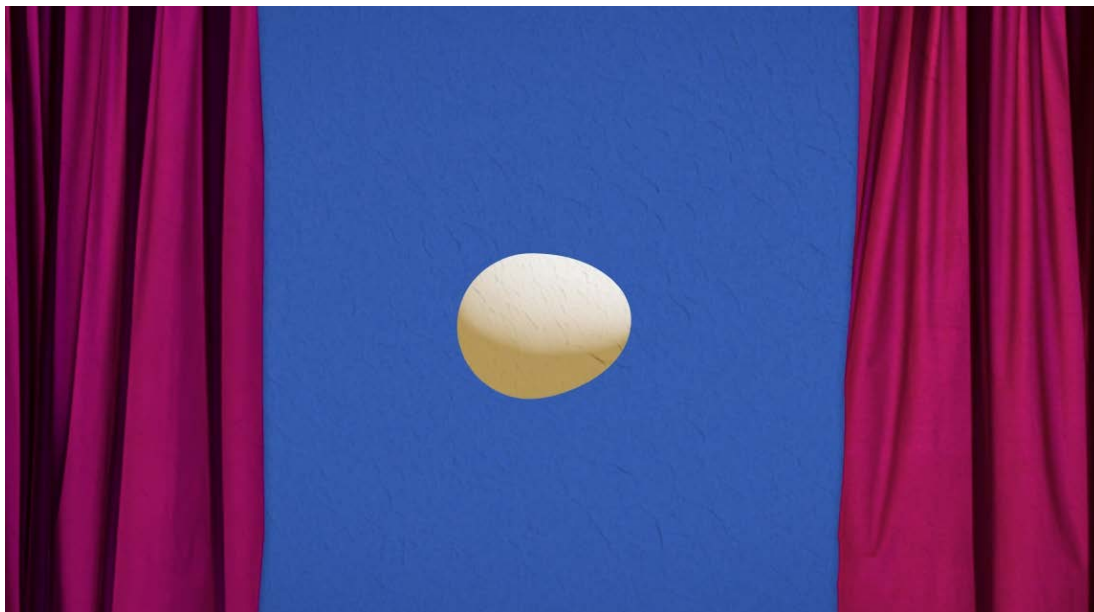
*The Skin of the Earth*

*Belgian Pioneering women*, with the collage of Marguerite De Riemaeker-Legot

In January, the Belgian presidency was launched with the animated film *Birth* of the Belgian presidency and in June ends with *Bird of the Belgian presidency*. June is a month of change. After birth, the newcomer grows, becomes strong, expands, reaches cruising speed, can flap its wings and can then fly the nest. The Belgian presidency has reached maturity and cruising speed, and will now pass the baton. Hungary now has to take care of the European nest. The outcome of the elections in June will bring a new team to the table and therefore new changes.

The season changes, from spring to summer, on the eve of summer vacation. Countless people switch from work mode to leisure, free time and travelling. The creative compilation of the 5 previous films, made up of fragments interwoven in a non-chronological manner, is review, an overview and a preview. It fits within the overall theme of the exhibition on reflections. It is a question of handing over and letting go. The moment of change can be a moment of reverie and of recording successes and learning moments.

During this last month of the presidency final guided tours for the personnel of the FPS Foreign Affairs, the Council, the National Bank of Belgium and artistic and feminist circles were organised.





**ROMAIN TARDY (1984)**

*Le miroir des vagues, 2023*

Light and kinetic installation

150 modules with a motorised telescopic mast

topped by a luminous sphere

programmed motion and lighting effects

H 200 x W 750 x D 250 cm

Production: Under my Network

Delegated production: LDA Productions, Autonom

Created for the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union



**Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union  
Justus Lipsius building and Europa building, Brussels  
January-June 2024**

**On the initiative of the Council of the European Union**, each presiding country of the Council of the European Union proposes the artistic contributions. For Belgium, FPS Foreign Affairs has put together the *Reflections* exhibition, in close cooperation and support at the protocol, logistics and security teams of the Council of the European Union.

**The opening ceremony** of the artistic contributions took place on 22 January 2024, in the atrium of the Justus Lipsius building, with a preface by the Secretary General of the Consilium and the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, Foreign Trade and of the Federal Cultural Institutions and in the presence of the artists and the lending institutions. This ceremony was organised by the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the Council of the European Union, in close cooperation with the Council of the European Union and FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

**Concept & coordination of exhibition and publication:** FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Art Collection, curator Ilse Dauwe.

**Lenders:** Kasper Bosmans, BPS22 Charleroi, German-speaking Community of Belgium, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, FPS Foreign Affairs, ING Belgium, Proximus Art Collection, Space Collection, Flemish Community.

**Artists:** Kasper Bosmans, Nelleke Cloosterman, Jocelyne Coster, Lieven De Boeck, Vincent Delbrouck, Joëlle Dubois, Nina Doevendans, Geert Goiris, Karin Hanssen, Tanja Mosblech, Romain Tardy, Thierry Tillier, Adrien Tirtiaux, Ana Torfs.

**Art handling, transportation & production:** the Council of the European Union, Delta Productions, FPS Foreign Affairs, Meessen De Clercq Gallery, Keteleer Gallery, Mobull, Otty Park Gallery, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Romain Tardy & Under My Network, Vertigo Creative Studio and Vidisquare.

**Communication (social media, websites, intranet, guided tours):** services within Council of the European Union and FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

**On behalf of the FPS Foreign Affairs of Belgium we thank** all the partners with whom we collaborated for the exhibition and the publication in the framework of the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union.



