

EXHIBITION

THE BEAUTY OF THE BEAST

Animal Art by Old and New Masters





Paul de Vos

Art history began with animals when over 30,000 years ago human beings painted them on the walls of caves. In the centuries that followed animal imagery was mainly symbolic in function and in the Middle Ages animals appeared in all sorts of pictures but since the 17th century they have taken on a really major rôle.

PARADISE

For 'The Beauty of the Beast' the **Royal Museum of Fine Arts** Antwerp has selected work by artists of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Three splendid paintings by **Roelant Savery**, showing a varied assembly of animals in an earthly paradise, are the oldest pieces in the exhibition. **Paul de Vos's** fine *Bird Concert* brings this cavalcade of animals to a close with its own distinctive note.

CATTLE AND FOWL

On other pictures we find animals that have lived in and around the castle for centuries. **Jacob Biltius** and **Frans Snijders's** fighting cocks contrast with the placid water-birds of **Melchior d'Hondecoeter**. Cattle are depicted in wartime in the work of **Nicolaes Berchem**, while the massive cows of **Louis Robbe**, **Alfred Verwee** and **Adrien Joseph Heymans** stand peacefully around in meadow or in cowshed. In the work of **Balthasar Paul Ommeganck** we also see sheep and goats grazing, until **André Plumot** comes along to send them trotting away over a little bridge.

PIGS AND HORSES

Jan Stobbaerts paints his sow rather Impressionistically. **Charles Verlat** presents greedy, lazy pigs as antitheses to a hard-working donkey. In another work by him dogs arrive just in time to rescue a little girl in a red striped dress from a wolf. There are horses of all descriptions: either working or resting in the stable in the work of **Charles Tschaggenny**, being ridden on the road in the work of **Philips Wouwerman** or performing a spectacular levade in a work by **Jacob Jordaens**.



Joseph Stevens



Charles Verlat



Charles Van den Eycken

ANIMALS IN THE HOUSE

The most strokable animals are without a doubt **Henriëtte Ronner-Knip** and **Charles Van den Eycken's** cats. **Joseph Stevens's** dog sits looking longingly at a hunk of meat that is just out of reach. So too **Jan Wildens's** huge hunting dogs are only granted a brief glance at the partridges they have brought in. Finally, to stand alongside all these pictures, KMSKA has chosen a bronze dog by **Camille Sturbelle**.

... AND IN THE PARK

'The Beauty of the Beast' combines and confronts these Old Masters with dozens of contemporary artists. **Stief Desmet's** *The Guard* awaits the visitor at the great entrance gate. There is no way around this gigantic German shepherd dog: everyone must walk right through it. Further on **Johan Creten's** gigantic *Le Grand Vivisecteur* has alighted. Barn owls used to nest in the towers of the castle, now visitors can lie down between the claws of one. Behind the mirror pond **William Sweetlove's** two brightly colored bulldogs in trainers flank the bridge leading into the park woods.

LIVE ART

For many years Koen Vanmechelen has been trying to create a cosmopolitan chicken by crossing national breeds. He displays a mantle and sceptre from this Cosmopolitan Chicken Project in the castle, while in the park wander live ... pigs. They form part of LUCY, a new chapter in Vanmechelen's tale of crossbreeding. A herd of sheep is grazing in another meadow. They form part of a collective art project, from sheep to shawl, in which visitors can participate.

NEW MASTERS

Some contemporary artists use the same techniques as the Old Masters. Although it looks like a traditional family portrait, **Thierry Poncelet's** stern military officer has the head of a hunting dog. Animals take the leading parts in **Mieke Teirlinck's** series on the theme of the Seven Works of Mercy. On old book covers **Gideon Kiefer** draws gay, multi-coloured birds that appear on closer inspection to be frightened prisoners. In the drawings of **Ruben Bellinkx** animals, everyday utensils and living spaces lose their usual functions with a peacock's tail becoming wallpaper and horses building a pyramid.



Johan Creten

Jockum Nordström uses a rather naïve drawing style to bring his personal universe to life.

ANIMAL SCULPTORS

19th century sculptors have also been reinterpreted. **Ronny Paesbrugge** sets his little terracotta horses galloping down the corridor. Two cats and a cock by **Erwin Peeters** take cover in a tiny cabinet. Under a glass dome **Peggy Wauters** captures dozens of little ceramic birds with gilded beaks and claws. **Jan Fabre** goes just a little bit further with an exhibit of two lambs in eighteen carat gold. The contrast with **Velasco Vitali** couldn't be greater: his lifesize dogs, lying sitting and jumping in the corridor, are made of forged and sheet iron.

Sarah Reynders lays bare the beauty of animals in a novel way and wants visitors to feel her plaster casts of a sheep's head, fleece and body. Meanwhile, **Johan Deschuymmer** makes painstaking replicas of cows' muzzles, hairs included. In doing so he upends the traditional way of working: the moulds are made of plaster and the casts silicone.

RINGNUMBER	MAG 12
SEX	♂
RACE	MANGALICA
BIRTHPLACE	HUNGARY
COLOUR	BEIGE
PARENTS	MANGALICA X MANGALICA



Koen Vanmechelen

RINGNUMBER	DU 12
SEX	♀
RACE	DUROC
BIRTHPLACE	GERWEN, HEYDE HOEVE, NL
COLOUR	BROWN & BLACK
PARENTS	JERSEY RED X DUROC



TAXIDERMY

Two Dutch artists' collectives stand out for their love of stuffed animals. **Atelier Les deux Garçons** crosses a teddy bear with a Dalmatian, a pair of geese with a little trolley and Siamese lambs with a hatstand. The creations of **Idiots** are no less surprising: a graceful peacock changes into an elegant woman and **Bobby** is a rabbit with a body like a pewter pot. **Jeroen Lemaitre** of *Animaux Spéciaux* also raises taxidermy to an art form. In the castle he has been given *carte blanche* in two cabinets either side of a splendid Old Master painting.

Other artists turn their attention to the inside of the body. **Mandy den Elzen** explores the digestive system of a cow and prepares its four stomachs as pieces of sculpture. A muzzled dog skeleton by **Pascal Bernier** looks expectantly at a bone that has been thrown to it.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Studio Darwin Sinke & van Tongeren operate on the border between taxidermy and photography. They show frozen images of two swans in carefully staged attitudes. **Stephan Vanfleteren** has made a beautiful series of still lives of dead animals and

Mothmeister poses strange fairytale characters alongside stuffed animals.

The pastel colours in the work of **Karin Borghouts** are deceiving: against a background of salmon pink or mint green she shows animal heads in various states of dissection. In the *Cow Passports* series **Jef Geys** combines the black and white photo of a cow with a passport that records the animal's 'personal details'.

Frieke Janssens strikes a lighter note. For her series *Animalcoholics* she has half a farmyard of apparently drunk animals hang around a Flemish pub. The models of **Henk Van Rensbergen** also exchange their normal habitat for abandoned places: a pig in a deserted church, a cow in a former shopping centre, chickens in the corridor of an uninhabited house. *Pornocratès 2.0* by **Bart Ramakers** references the celebrated work of Félicien Rops and reflects on the duality between body and spirit: will we be driven by our animal appetites or are we capable of overcoming them?



Atelier Les Deux Garçons

HALF ANIMAL, HALF HUMAN

In the library **Willy Verginer** reinterprets the Grimms' fairy tale 'The Magic Table, the Gold-Donkey, and the Club in the Sack' and in the Great Saloon *Headthinker VIII*, a donkey's head by **Laura Ford**, lies resting on the mantelpiece.

In another reception room a human figure with great horses' hooves twists over the parquet floor. **Alet Pilon** tries to soothe him and to defuse the beast that lurks in each of us with woollen blankets. He also wraps dead birds and poultry in blankets, plaster of Paris dressings or fabric, as if so he might give them a chance of returning to life. During a performance **Linda Molenaar** literally crawls into the neck of a swan. Birds and the skeleton are central to all her work.

INSTALLATIONS

Animals are also a source of inspiration for conceptual artists. On a small maquette by **Patrick Van Caekenbergh** a cat and a dog are making it up over a drinking dish. **Mark Manders** creates a whole room based on the word 'dog': he stylises the dogs as they might have been in an imaginary culture of 3,000 years ago. But even a true event of 2,000 years ago can inspire.



Jan Fabre



Idiots

Caroline Coolen's dogs reference the cast of a dog in Pompeii. In the 19th century, after the organic material had decayed, the hollow in the petrified layer of ash was filled with plaster and excavated.

Koen Wastijn collects brands which use an animal in their logo. They all present a surreal, comic or even absurd link between the image of the animal and the product that they sell. Then **Jean-Luc Cornec** uses an object which used to be ubiquitous and constructs a flock of sheep with it: who would have thought that a curly telephone cable looked so like wool or that an old telephone resembled a sheep's head? **Wim Delvoye's** carpeted pig was previously on show in the Louvre, but now it is coming home. Clad in a Persian rug it looks as if it has just crawled out of one of the newly restored cotton wall-hangings. ■



Jean-Luc Cornec



Studio Darwin, Sinke & van Tongeren



Linda Molenaar



Alet Pilon

EXHIBITION

From 25 May until 15 October 2017
Tickets 10 euro

INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

Individual visitors are welcome
on Sundays and Bank Holidays
from 1pm to 6pm.

GROUP VISITS

With afternoon tea provided, take
place by reservation only on week-
days between 10am and 6pm.

For more information, reservations
or a bespoke programme contact
the castle directly on
[info@kasteeldursel](mailto:info@kasteeldursel.be) or 03 820 60 10

www.kasteeldursel.be



Wim Delvoye