

# ART AT EP

# M



# WORKS OF ART FROM

# E

# B

Organised by the European Parliament  
and the Belgian FPS Foreign Affairs  
in the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the  
Council of the European Union



European  
Parliament

© European Union, 2024

This publication was produced in Luxembourg for information purposes on the occasion of the exhibition “Voices” with art works from several collections including the European Parliament’s Contemporary art collection, with the aim of providing an educational reference about the background and artistic legacy of the artists whose works are displayed, and of preserving and promoting their contribution to Europe’s cultural heritage.

This publication is intended strictly for non-commercial use within the premises of the European Parliament. Unauthorised use, reproduction or distribution of this publication’s contents is strictly forbidden. Further use of certain images beyond the purposes intended herein may be limited by the copyright of the artists or other third parties. The European Parliament disclaims all liability which may arise in relation to unauthorised use.

Any reproduction, adaptation, partial modification or broadcasting by television, cable or Internet of works owned by the Belgian Association of Authors, Composers and Publishers (SABAM) is prohibited, unless prior authorisation by SABAM has been granted.

SABAM, Rue des Deux Églises 41-43  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
02/286.82.80  
visual.arts@sabam.be  
<http://www.sabam.be>

Ann Veronica Janssens & Michel François, L’aire d’un souffle  
© Michel François: Sofam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Ann Veronica Janssens & Michel François

### **Copyrights & Photo credits**

Mady Andrien, Le débat © Sabam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Belgian Senate  
Guillaume Bijl, Composition trouvée © Sabam Belgium 2024  
Cathy Coëz, Negotiation Table, photo credit © Cathy Coëz  
Denmark, De vier seizoenen van Het Belgisch Staatsblad © Sabam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Denmark  
Gilbert Fastenaekens, Site, photo credit © Brussels Parliament  
Frans Minnaert, De Discussie © Sabam Belgium 2024  
Willy Peeters, Orkest © Sabam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Belgian Senate  
Willy Peeters, Vrijheid en wet © Sabam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Belfius Art Collection  
Benoît Platéus, André, Aurélie, Laurence © Sofam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Vincent Everarts  
Marie-Françoise Plissart, Parlementaires debout © Sofam Belgium 2024, photo credit © Marie-Françoise Plissart  
Didier Scheuren, Resilienz, photo credit © Fabian Erler  
Kato Six, Carpet Beater Carpets, photo credit © Lola Pertsowsky

**V O I C E S**

# P R E F A C E



**Roberta Metsola**

President of the European Parliament

I would like to warmly welcome you to the contemporary art exhibition organised to mark the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Initiatives that seek to shed light on our democratic freedoms, through art and culture, take on a special meaning in the present historical situation, when it is especially necessary to affirm and defend the principles and values that support our democratic systems.

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.

The contemporary art exhibition in the Parliament's Spinelli building continues the long series of exhibitions that began in 2011. The exhibition is designed together with Belgian authorities and artists. Belgium, the country that holds the Council Presidency in the first half of 2024, represents a lot for European democracy, as one of the founders of the European Union and the host of several EU institutions.

Belgium's artistic and cultural scene is particularly vivid and fertile. To pay tribute to it, for the very first time, the art exhibition is complemented by a work of public art located outside the European Parliament, on the Solidarność Esplanade. This art installation, titled *L'aire d'un souffle*, by two prestigious Belgian artists, Ann Veronica Janssens and Michel François, inaugurates a series of outdoor sculptures that will be presented by the following presidencies of the Council of the Union, an initiative of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations.

Through dedicated schemes and programmes, the European Union has launched important initiatives in favour of visual arts and artists. In this regard, it is essential to note the European Parliament's role and position regarding cultural and creative industries, expressed in a resolution on 13 December 2016, on a coherent EU policy about this subject. As regards the field of arts, the European Parliament seeks to contribute to the protection and conservation of the European Union's cultural heritage, champion the identity and diversity of European visual arts and foster intercultural dialogue.

I would like to thank the Belgian authorities for their efforts and cooperation in bringing this exhibition to life.

I wish you an inspiring and pleasant visit.

**Roberta Metsola**  
President of the European Parliament

# P R E F A C E



**Marcel Kolaja**

Chair of the Artistic Committee,  
Quaestor of the European Parliament

**W**elcome to the contemporary art exhibition that marks the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The exhibition features a remarkable selection of artworks by Belgian artists, brought on loan by the Belgian Presidency from the collections of several important public institutions, like the FPS Foreign Affairs and the different Parliaments in Belgium. Integrated in this ensemble, we can find some of the most interesting pieces by Belgian artists in the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection.

Being one of the countries that first entered the European Community, works of Belgian artists were among the first to be acquired for the European Parliament's Art Collection, back in the early eighties, from painters such as Gilbert Swimberghe, a renowned practitioner of geometric abstraction; Pol Mara, one of the most well-known Pop Artists in Belgium, or from Vic Gentils, who continued surrealism in the field of sculpture.

Following on from this generation we can mention other painters also featured in the Collection, such as Roger Greisch, Rik Slabbinck and Jan Beekman, all represented with works created in the eighties, and Charles Delporte with a triptych from 1975. The collection includes a tapestry by Anne Deglain ("Liberté", that we can see in this exhibition), a painting by Maurits Van Saene on one of his most frequent subjects: the sea, and another one by Jacques Lacomblez.

The European Parliament started its art collection in the early 1980s, at the initiative of then President Simone Veil, with the aim of supporting the European contemporary art scene and promoting cultural creativity and diversity within the European Community. Over the years, Parliament has continued to purchase and accept donations of contemporary artworks from the Member States. The collection now comprises over 500 items – including paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs, installations and prints – from all EU Member States.

For its part, the artistic committee of the European Parliament ensures that the contemporary art collection continues to be enriched with new pieces of art by young and promising European talents, whose works serve to illuminate some of the key aspects of our present, in tune with the political activity of the institution.

It is with great honour that I invite visitors to enjoy this exhibition.

**Marcel Kolaja**

Chair of the Artistic Committee,  
Quaestor of the European Parliament

# P R E F A C E



**Hadja Lahbib**

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



**T**he European Parliament is the heart of our European democracy. It is the ideal place for Belgium to set up an expo on "Voices" as part of its European presidency.

Our democracy is deeply rooted in a tapestry of diverse voices. This exhibition is an opportunity to contemplate on the intrinsic value of each individual voice, highlighting our interconnectedness. It reveals that the true strength of our democracy lies in our different perspectives and experiences. Each citizen, through their vote, symbolises a valuable piece in the intricate puzzle of our society, fostering a collective understanding. By reaching out to one another, embracing openness, and seeking mutual comprehension, we forge bridges that surmount our differences.

At this exhibition, artists express their unique voices, mirroring the way citizens participate in our democracy, where each cast vote contributes to shaping our society.

I warmly invite you to visit and explore the artworks for yourself, encouraging you to form your own perspective. My hope is that this visit offers a beautiful experience, sparks engaging exchanges, and perhaps, leads to new insights and introduce you to emerging talents.

I extend my gratitude to the curators of the FPS Foreign Affairs and of the European Parliament for their meticulous curation and assembly of these works of art. My thanks also goes to all the lenders, particularly the Belgian parliaments, in Brussels, Namur and Eupen. Congratulations to the scenographers for the successful arrangement. Lastly, special thanks to all the artists for their creativity and generosity.

**Hadja Lahbib**

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

# INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that we present the contemporary art exhibition that commemorates the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union in this first half of 2024.

This proposal has brought together remarkable artworks from institutional and private collections, to illustrate basic aspects of parliamentary democracy such as the separation of powers, respect for human rights and legal guarantees, citizen participation guaranteed by freedom of expression, the right to vote, the voice and discourse of the various political groups, debate, negotiation, the search for understanding and agreements.

Indeed, a relevant project at the current moment of politics and democracies on our continent, in tune with the exhibition "Art in Democracy", which the European Parliament presents this year in Brussels and Strasbourg. This exhibition contributes to reinforcing awareness of the need to stand up for democratic rights and participate in the upcoming European elections in June 2024, which are of particular significance in Belgium, as the voting age has been lowered to 16 for the first time.

Undoubtedly, the Belgian section of the European Parliament Art Collection features several notable works, dated between the seventies and nineties of the twentieth century by some of the most important Belgian artists of the last fifty years.

As regards this exhibition, the selection process has focused on artworks that properly help illuminate the different topics around democracy and elections, like the sculptural piece by Vic Gentils, the impactful tapestry by Anne Deglain, or Gilbert Swimberghe's white rhombus, whose title *A quattro voci* (1980) brings a musical and harmonic connotation to a work of dazzling formal beauty.

We thank the Belgian authorities and their presidency for their valuable collaboration in the realization of this joint exhibition.

Cultural Outreach Unit  
**DG COMM**  
**European Parliament**

# INTRODUCTION

**T**he exhibition 'Voices' (which means both 'voting' and 'voices') came about in an organic fashion, literally by listening to different voices and through engaging in dialogue with very diverse partners.

The initial impetus was a conversation back in 2022 about the impact of the European elections at all levels in Belgium as well as at European level, elections which fall during the Belgian Presidency in the first half of 2024. A further impetus was a meeting with a curator of the European Parliament, Oscar Muñoz. Against the backdrop of the French presidency's exhibition, the topic of voting was identified as an interesting starting point for the Belgian exhibition. As a result of various moments of reflection within the FPS, three themes were put forward: gender and inclusion, the rule of law and sustainability.

This was the starting point for selecting works of art from the collections of the European Parliament and the Belgian parliaments for the exhibition 'Voices'.

At the heart of the exhibition is the cycle of citizens casting their votes through to laws being adopted by parliamentarians. The artworks in this cycle are set in a scenography created for this exhibition. Works of art by contemporary Belgian artists form a concatenation of prophecies, citizens casting their votes in a voting booth, the holding of discussions and debates, the forming of agreements, governments at the negotiating table, laws and decrees being published in the Belgian or EU Official Journal. Citizens, in a democracy, who navigate between law and freedom and between rights and duties.

The exhibition looks at the elections from the angles of the players involved and the playing field on which they compete, covering topics ranging from sustainability, migration, gender and inclusion, politicians, parliamentarians, citizens, artists and the general public, to the parliamentary arena and contemporary society. It reflects on voice, multiple voices and polyphony, word and image, sound and music, expression and body language.

Efforts have been made to strengthen the fabric, the connection between the art world, the legislature, the executive and the target audience. One example is the engagement of the network of curators of corporate collections within "BECCCA", the Belgian corporate collections of contemporary art, to procure works of art on loan for the exhibition. A sincere thank you to them and to all the art lenders, artists and discussion partners.

Alongside fabric in the geographical sense, namely a fabric which unites, there is also fabric in the artistic sense, fabric as a medium, such as tapestries. Tapestries have a long history in our regions. A lot of contemporary artists are experimenting with fabrics again, which is brought to the fore here at the exhibition.

The exhibition is an invitation to discover works of art by many Belgian contemporary artists. Those who wish can read a word of explanation for each work of art in this publication. This includes attention to the work, the artist and the context of the work in the exhibition. Sometimes reference is also made to other works of art in the FPS Foreign Affairs collection.

Those with a taste for exhibitions on art and democracy can also visit the Parlementarium and Tour & Taxis for 'Art in Democracy' exhibition featuring works of art from the European Parliament's collection. At the Parlementarium, the exhibition will be succeeded by an exhibition on the history of the European elections, curated by the House of European History.

**Ilse Dauwe**

Curator

Art Collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Belgium



# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. ALTIERO SPINELLI BUILDING, BRUSSELS**

Mady Andrien

Guillaume Bijl

Cathy Coëz

Anne Deglain

Denmark

Pascal Duquenne

Gilbert Fastenaekens

Vic Gentils

Frans Minnaert

Willy Peeters

Benoit Platéus

Marie-Françoise Plissart

Armand Rassenfosse

Didier Scheuren

Kato Six

Gilbert Swimberghe

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. SOLIDARNOŚĆ ESPLANADE, BRUSSELS**

Ann Veronica Janssens & Michel François





**TEXTILES**

# Anne DEGLAIN (1929 – 2013)

## Liberté (*Freedom*), 1990



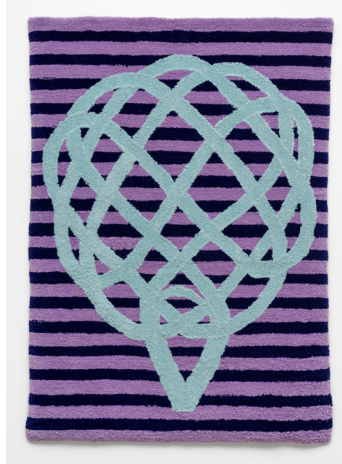
Tapestry  
270 x 138 cm (h x w)  
Coll. European Parliament

The composition of *Liberté* is abstract, graphic, balanced and composed of complementary colours. The ensemble breathes. It is animated. It conjures a sense of freedom. **Anne Deglain's** skill as a textile artist was developed through extensive training, both in Belgium, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Liège and Higher Institute of Fine Arts in Antwerp, and in France, as an apprentice to Jean Lurçat at the Chateau de Saint Céré and at the National School of Decorative Art in Aubusson. For the 'Voices' exhibition, *Liberté* is displayed in dialogue with tapestries created by Kato Six, exploring the democratic process, and canvas prints by Gilbert Fastenaekens, depicting nature reclaiming abandoned industrial sites.

The FPS Foreign Affairs also disposes of an extensive and valuable collection of textiles. Some prestigious sets of historical tapestries from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from Brussels and Antwerp are located in the Egmont Palace in Brussels. In preparation for the Belgian Presidency, some of them are conserved and restored and a number of modern tapestries is now displayed at the Egmont Palace's renovated conference centre.

# Kato SIX (1986)

## Carpet Beater Carpets, 2021



Hand-tufted wool carpets  
3 x 180 x 130 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Flemish Parliament

Kato Six designed the three hand-tufted rugs that make up *Carpet Beater Carpets* especially for the Flemish Parliament. The carpets were created using a labour-intensive process demanding the requisite dedication and expertise. This process functions as a metaphor for the democratic process in a parliament. The form of a carpet beater can be seen in the colourful lines and patterns of each of the three carpets. These laboriously woven carpet beaters symbolise invisible, complex work. This could be the work of forming a parliament and the slow processes of debate, discussion and coalition building, from which unity in majority grows,

eventually allowing decisions to be reached and laws to be passed. The carpet beater is also a sturdy and highly effective maintenance tool. A parliament is a powerful tool too: the institution acts as an effective social instrument. And if it is no longer effective, the dust needs to be beaten out of it, with a carpet beater for instance. A carpet beater is a household object. And a parliament also functions only through the work of its members. There are tasks to be carried out, and some of these – like maintenance – often go unrecognised. Yet this same invisible effort is a valuable resource, helping to ensure the good functioning of democracy.

**Kato Six** often works with textiles for specific locations, weaving together the components of design, domesticity and architecture. Six's work combines the abstract with the figurative, recognition with disruption of that recognition. The recognition comes from the inclusion of everyday materials like rope and wool, the connection between craftsmanship and art and the use of recognisable objects. The disruption of this recognition comes from the representation of these objects in a context in which their intended function does not apply.

# Gilbert FASTENAEKENS (1955)

Site, 1990-1996



Black and white photographs on canvas  
230 x 300 cm (h x w)  
Coll. Brussels Parliament

In the early 1980s, Fastenaekens produced the series *Nocturnes*, images of quiet urban locations at night. The series is a warm, poetic look at what normally escapes our attention. The nocturnal images of large, abandoned businesses and industrial sites in the *Datar* series are like vague memories of a dying industry and its significance for European culture. The images are highly evocative, capturing the ruins' quiet eloquence. In the *Site* series, the photographer turns his attention to Brussels once again, with black and white photographs exploring the evolution of the urban fabric. In a more recent series about Brussels, Fastenaekens 'rephotographed' a range of old postcards. Here, he almost literally embodies the photographer of the initial images. Comparison of the old and new images reveals not so much exactly what has changed and more the cultural shifts that have taken place over the past century in the way we look at the city.

Between the German school and French landscape school, Belgian photographer **Gilbert Fastenaekens** has long been a proponent of the 'documentary style', somewhere in the middle of reproduction of reality and artistic re-appropriation. Fastenaekens is interested in locations devoid of life. He chooses unusual places and photographs them from unexpected viewpoints. He sets rules for himself here: he makes a couple of decisions in advance that help him to focus on what he believes is essential. He photographs with a gaze that neither glorifies nor condemns, but simply marvels at the wonder of (photographic) vision. Fastenaekens's language is radical and ascetic. Like a painter, he transforms the subject into an emotion or photographic sensation, into a visual, even sensual, experience.

# Benoît PLATÉUS (1972)

André, Aurélie & Laurence, 2004



Mixed media  
3 x 109.5 x 72.6 cm (h x w)  
Coll. The ING Belgium Collection

**André, Aurélie & Laurence** uses the motif of plants and roots. Plants are combined with roots that do not belong to them. This allows the artist to explore the topic of immigration and how people from various cultures, countries and backgrounds can root themselves in different environments.

**Benoît Platéus's** oeuvre defies classification and is shaped by many different influences, impressions and ideas, including concepts from modern psychology and art-history texts. His process, which is evolving constantly, focuses on particular images that the artists sees as powerful, not only original images but also reproductions, photocopies, drawings and sketches, for example.

There are also several works by this artist in the FPS Foreign Affairs collection, including five painted panels in the Belgian delegation room in the Europe Building in Brussels and three photographs in the embassy in Tokyo.



**V O T E   C Y C L E**

# Guillaume BIJL (1946)

## Composition trouvée, 1980



Mixed media  
200 x 82 x 108 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Private Collector Vincent Vlasblom

The voting booth in *Composition trouvée* is an early precursor to the artwork *Stemhokkenmuseum (Voting Booth Museum)*. In *Stemhokkenmuseum*, Bijl asks what can or should be considered art. He also resists pressure from the art world to produce thematic exhibitions. He criticises the museum as an institution and the artificiality with which cultural objects are presented. The artist's ironic and questioning museological discourse invites every institution, museum or parliament, to continue to question itself and welcome critical voices, in order to keep evolving.

**Guillaume Bijl** is considered one of Belgium's most important sculptors and installation artists. Bijl's position as an artist has long been ambiguous. At the height of conceptual art in Belgium, Bijl focused his attention on pop art, developing large-scale, hyperrealistic installation environments. His work is now understood as the European answer to American Appropriation Art. This is an art movement that emerged in the early 1980s, in which existing images from daily life are reproduced almost literally, as in the case of this voting booth. Over the course of more than 30 years, Bijl built

up a consistent installation and sculptural oeuvre within five self-created categories: *Transformation Installations*, *Project Pleasures*, *Compositions Trouvées*, *the Sorry Installations* and *Cultural Tourism*. His works are 99% pure realism, almost exact copies of 'a piece of reality'. They are a form of social criticism in which he views reality as a falsification of itself.



# Vic GENTILS (1919– 1997)

## De profheet (*The Prophet*), 1988



Painted wood  
83 cm (h)  
Coll. European Parliament

The figure in *The Prophet* is abstract and assembled. A large mouth, lips, figurative arm and hand and a vertical totem can all be distinguished. For what purpose and in what way this composite profit functions is not entirely clear. In the context of the exhibition, we can think of prophetic forecasts being made by politicians, journalists and professors in relation to the upcoming elections. Prophetic qualities are sometimes attributed to politicians. On the basis of 'momentum', they can produce a sharp analysis that precisely reflects current trends, allowing them to ride the high wave and win the election by a landslide. The shelf life of a prophetic pioneer is by no means eternal. Many a celebrated politician has fallen from their pedestal, becoming a mere ghost of themselves or a voice in the wind. Artists can be seen as visionaries or pioneers too, tapping into vibrations to uncover invisible sensitivities. Artists are also faced with the challenge

of continuing to capitalise on their success and stay visible to exhibitions, networks of curators, collectors and patrons, the gallery and museum world, etc.

Vic Gentils studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the Higher Institute of Fine Arts in Antwerp. He immersed himself in the local avant-garde scene and played a crucial role in New Realism and the G58 group, along with co-founder Pol Mara. Gentils felt restricted by the spacial boundaries of painting and evolved from two-dimensional to three-dimensional work, first with simple reliefs and later with constructions made from found objects. His tribute to James Ensor is an example of such a construction. Like Ensor, Gentils has a sarcastic and cynical appreciation of humanity, which is also apparent in *The Prophet*.

# Didier SCHEUREN (1977)

## Resilienz (*Resilient*), 2021



Wood and metal  
80 x 20 x 20 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. German speaking Community of Belgium

The human figure stands on a block of wood, head held high. The sculpture is a metaphor for being **Resilient**. The block of wood symbolises the challenges life brings. The metal plate in the hollow of the knee represents a wound or a challenge to be overcome as well as an opportunity for growth. The sculpture inspires us to push through difficult times and come out stronger or in some way transformed. In the context of this exhibition, the viewer is free to make associations with voters in Belgium, Europe and around the world who may be vulnerable. It could refer to politicians, who have been through the wringer, faced public setbacks and still return to the

political arena. And artists need to demonstrate resilience too, in order to bravely seek out new discoveries and new paths to walk in their artistic oeuvre.

**Didier Scheuren** is an artist who works with what is already there. The things he sees inspire him to create something with them. He likes to be playful, and to repair and stage the things he finds. He casts everyday situations in a new light. He tries to break through narrow and fixed ideas about reality. The artist is active in many different areas and does not shy away from

experimentation. Through his vivid studio, the *Kuckuck* in Sankt Vith, which functions as both gallery and meeting place, he succeeds in putting the East Belgian art scene on the map.

# Willy PEETERS (1957 – 2023)

## Vrijheid & wet (*Freedom & Law*), 1987

Wood, bronze, marble  
72 x 112 x 80 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Belfius Art Collection



In *Freedom & Law*, artist Willy Peeters combines two extremes. He symbolises the law through the creation of a building, a Greek temple in Doric style. He depicts this with cool detachment. This is contrasted with freedom. Here, he takes the spontaneous exuberance of humankind as a symbol. Acrobatic human figures are placed in the foreground. He accentuates the vitality of the figures with the suggestion of movement, through the material choice, bronze, a very lively material. The symbol of the Greek temple has not been plucked out of thin air. Neoclassical architects built courthouses following the Greek example that are

still in use today. In modern times, the democratic political system and architecture of ancient Athens both continue to ensure that law and freedom are kept under control and on the right track. The law should function to bring order to the chaos. Or, in Spinoza's words, 'Finis republicae libertas est' – 'the purpose of the state is freedom'.

**Willy Peeters** is a sculptor with a great appreciation for the group, and what holds a group together. The art of the 20th and 21st centuries is very often dominated by solitary figures, while Peeters' work is teeming with crowds. Peeters succeeds

in giving form to the concept of group endeavour by creating groups who are striving to achieve a shared and ambitious goal. Conflict plays a role in his oeuvre too: sometimes the groups clash. Large-scale joint movements continue to feature in his later work as well, though he aims to give each figure individuality, and there is also increasing refinement in their depiction, a more suggestive than descriptive rendering of skin and muscle. Peeters succeeds in consistently intensifying his authentic voice, even in an environment in which conceptual art sets the tone.

# Mady ANDRIEN (1941)

## Le Débat (*The Debate*), 2006



Polyester  
160 x 91 x 105 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Federal Parliament – Senate

Mady Andrien was invited by then President of the Belgian Senate, Anne-Marie Lizin (1949-2015), to create a sculpture for the Senate. The artist was inspired by the president herself to create a sculpture of a woman taking the floor in *Le Débat*. Andrien sees using your own voice, entering into dialogue and debating as ways to show love for others. She sees value in standing up for something and listening to one another. She views the sculpture as an invitation to be brave and speak up. The invitation is directed primarily at young people, both women and men.

**Mady Andrien** studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Liège, where she was also a teacher and director of evening courses. Her sculptural work focuses on human figures, depicted in a figurative and expressionist style. Her work often features groups of people and child figures. Andrien produces large-scale work using bronze, ceramics and Corten Steel, often with a touch of humour. In addition to the federal parliament, Andrien's work can be found in various other national collections, including the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts and the Sart-Tilman Open Air Museum, both located in Liège.

# Cathy COËZ (1968)

## Negotiation Table, 2021



Oak, beech, pencils  
92 x 92 x 90.5 cm (h x w x d)  
Artist's collection

In *Negotiation Table*, four sharpened pencils are surrounded by four different table legs, extending above the corners of the tabletop. The table legs are all unique. Thanks to these details, the object appears freed from its household function, offering room for the imagination. The table legs can be seen a bit like rudders, keeping those seated at the table on course, particularly if things are happening under the table. The table legs can function as anchors if the discussion becomes too heated.

After discovering ceramics in 2007, artist **Cathy Coëz** began to explore new possibilities for representation besides her drawings. She continues to experiment enthusiastically with many different media at her studio in Sint-Joost-ten-Node. She forms, fires and creates in her ceramic kiln, to create sculptural furniture. Through her work, Coëz investigates the role and nature of art as an artefact. In *Negotiation Table* too, the question is: is this a piece of furniture, a sculpture or something in between?

# DENMARK (1950)

## De vier seizoenen van het Belgisch Staatsblad *(The Four Seasons of the Belgian Official Gazette)*, 1996



Twelve volumes of the Belgian Official Gazette  
Cut and pressed between four metal clamps  
4 x 147 x 24 x 16 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Province of Hainaut – Loaned from BPS22,  
Charleroi

In *De Vier Seizoenen van het Belgisch Staatsblad*, four seasons of the legal publication the Belgian Official Gazette, a full year, are compacted and compressed between the jaws of four metal clamps. The legislation is lost. The law is stifled. The screw is turned. The human work is compressed. The legal jargon becomes unreadable. The administrative authority becomes heavy, a dead weight. Intellectual comprehension is transformed into physical weight. The excess of words is reduced to form, weight and material. In this form, the official gazette becomes a sculpture.

Artist **Denmark** (pseudonym of Marc Robbroeckx) often works with books and paper. The term *book* comes from the Latin word *liber*. *Liber* is the soft membrane found under the bark of trees, which circulates the sap. The artist wants to take books back to their material origins. It is also a way of addressing the issue of paper waste and exploitation of forests. Both the Belgian Official Gazette and Official Journal of the European Union are now published only in digital form.

A work by Denmark also adorns the wall near the press room in the main FPS Foreign Affairs building in Brussels.







**DIALOGUE,  
DISCUSSION  
& DEBATE**

# Frans MINNAERT (1929 - 2011)

## De discussie (*The Discussion*), 1990



Acrylic paint on paper mounted on canvas  
145 x 140 cm (h x w)  
Coll. BNP Paribas Fortis

In *De Discussie*, the composition has been stripped of unnecessary details, so the viewer can concentrate on the conversation. The attention is consciously drawn to the faces of the three figures engaged in conversation. The scene is enhanced by the use of light and luminous colours for the faces and dark, earthy tones for the clothing. The diagonals add to the sense of drama.

Frans Minnaert trained at the academies of Aalst and Brussels. As well as a painter, illustrator and graphic artist, he was a co-founder of, driving force behind and long-time director of the Royal College of Fine Art in Anderlecht.

At a young age, Minnaert took a study trip to Rome and spent time in former Yugoslavia. These trips were key to the development of his style. While, in his early years, he painted sombre-coloured compositions influenced by Constant Permeke, he gradually evolved towards his characteristic style, bordering on non-figurative. People are the central theme throughout his entire oeuvre. The figures are not sharply defined and often have distinctive profiles with pointed noses.

# Marie-Françoise PLISSART (1954)

## Parlementaires debout (*Street Politicians*), 2004



Photography  
70 x 70 cm (h x w)  
Coll. FPS Foreign Affairs

In his book *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City*, anthropologist Filip De Boeck describes a phenomenon that is also illustrated in the photograph *Parlementaires debout* by Marie-Françoise Plissart. All kinds of activities are carried out under the trees lining the main roads and boulevards of Kinshasa. None of these activities take place inside a building. It is not about the building, but the concept. All you need is a rope strung between two trees on which to hang the day's papers and to create a platform for the 'politicians'. People gather beneath the trees to give commentary on current affairs and build their 'agora' or 'parliament'. Although the political arena is very different to the context of the self-appointed Congolese politicians, these forums can definitely give rise to interesting reflections.

Photographer and cinematographer **Marie-Françoise Plissart** creates films, books and exhibitions, often working with author and screenwriter Benoît Peeters. She is the director of various videos broadcast on the ARTE channel, including *L'Occupation des sols* and *Atomium in/out*. Her photography has been exhibited widely, including at Le Botanique in Brussels and the Antwerp Photography Museum. Her work on Kinshasa won her the Golden Lion at the 2004 Venice Architecture Biennale.

The FPS Foreign Affairs has other works by Plissart in its collection, at the headquarters in Brussels and at the embassy in Kinshasa.

# Armand RASSENFOSSE (1862 – 1934)

La hiercheuse (marteau) (*Female Mine Worker (hammer)*), 1917



Charcoal and pastel on paper  
27 x 20 cm (h x w)  
Coll. Walloon Parliament

Many artists have taken the female mine worker as a subject. *Le Terril* and *La Hiercheuse au repos* by Cécile Douard are two masterpieces in the collection of the French Community, housed at La Boverie in Liège. In the context of a European institution, *La hiercheuse (marteau)* by Rassenfosse calls to mind the predecessor of the European Union, the EEC. This economic union for coal and steel was founded to ensure there would never be another war between France and Germany. In the 21st century, this work raises questions about the mining of raw materials and energy. In the context of the exhibition, this battle-ready woman has a place, she stakes her claim, just like the woman with balled fist in the famous feminist poster.

**Armand Rassenfosse** met Félicien Rops in Paris in 1888. This was the beginning of a friendship and cooperation that resulted, among other things, in the development of 'Ropsenfosse', a kind of soft varnish. Rassenfosse mastered the techniques of engraving to perfection. He worked as an illustrator, including for *Les Fleurs du Mal* by Charles Baudelaire, published in Paris in 1899. The satin effect, created using a cardboard base covered with beeswax, accentuates the sensual character of his work, the vast majority of which takes the woman as subject (1910-1913). From 1916 onwards, his work evolved to become more expressionist. Rassenfosse left behind an extensive oeuvre made up of graphic art, posters and paintings.

# Pascal DUQUENNE (1970)

Sans titre (*Untitled*), 2016

Ink and pastel on paper  
100 x 100 cm (h x w)  
Coll. Parliament of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels



*Untitled* is a portrait of a man wearing glasses in the body of a female figure. The figure has a flat form, with no modelling or volume and no specific indication of space. With few contour lines and using black and white, the artist has created an oeuvre with a strong graphic character. Here he uses the monotype technique, a stamping process producing a single print. The artist's creations demonstrate a great eye for detail, and he succeeds in producing figures often shrouded in an air of sensuality.

**Pascal Duquenne** is known for his acting role in *Le Huitième Jour*. He is also a visual artist. He works slowly, with focus and in silence. His meditative creative process allows the artist to produce highly interior work. He takes his inspiration from magazines. Here, he finds models who inspire him to create elegant female portraits. Duquenne has been active at the Créahm fine art studio in Brussels since 2000. In addition to the Brussels location, Créahm also has a studio in Liège, which offers artistic workshops for vulnerable artists.

FPS Foreign Affairs acquires a collective work by three women artists from Créahm in Liege in 2023, on display since February 2024 at the Egmont Palace conference centre in Brussels.



**P O L Y P H O N Y**

# Gilbert SWIMBERGHE(1927 – 2015)

## A Quattro Voci (*Four Voices*), 1980



Painted wood  
200 x 200 cm (h x w)  
Coll. European Parliament

The geometric work *A Quattro Voci* is based around a triangular shape. The composition flirts with the boundaries of fine art, tipping into the realm of sculpture. Thanks in part to the white colour, the work appears to extend beyond the boundaries of the walls.

With its hybrid form, and its title, in the context of the exhibition this work can be viewed as a reference to multiplicity, colouring outside the lines and leaving the beaten track. The work encourages us to experiment and to keep our minds open, in order to break through a fixed form and conceptual frameworks. It is an invitation to consider something from different perspectives and angles.

**Gilbert Swimberghe** trained in Bruges and then in Brussels. Inspired by Constant Permeke, his early work has expressionist qualities and, influenced by the non-figurative art of Luc Peire and Victor Servranckx, he later moved towards geometric abstraction. Use of colour plays an important role in his work, which is often classified chromatically. This white work was acquired by the European Parliament in 1981 and was fully restored in 2022. Blue also plays an important role in Swimberghe's oeuvre. For him, blue represents divine universality. A number of his blue works can be found in the collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs, at the embassy in Bern.



# Willy PEETERS (1957-2023)

## Orkest (*Orchestra*), 1984



Bronze and six-minute musical piece  
80 x 50 x 15 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. Federal Parliament – Senate

The group figures in *Orkest* look almost like drawings or sketches. *Orkest* is an early work by Willy Peeters. It is one of his first pieces in bronze, and the first to be included in a public collection. As noted in the description for the artwork *Vrijheid & wet*, the sculptor often works with crowds and groups. Group endeavour, striving for a shared and ambitious goal, is reflected here in the form of an orchestra.

In addition to the sculptural element, there is also a musical component. Through a headset, the visitor can listen to a combination of classical music and debate. Led by conductor Adrean Leaper (Naxos) the Slovakian Radio Symphony Orchestra performs 'Pomp and Circumstance March No 1 in D Major, Opus 39' by Edward Elgar. This six-minute fragment is mixed with the voices of Belgian politicians during debates in the hemicycle of the Senate. The selection of this work in the context of the exhibition speaks for itself and needs no explanation.

**SOLIDARNOŚĆ  
ESPLANADE**

# Ann Veronica JANSSENS & Michel FRANÇOIS

## *L'Aire d'un Souffle (The space of a breath), 2023*



Aluminum, concrete  
350 x 220 x 600 cm (h x w x d)  
Coll. The Artists' Parliament

This joint work is unique and takes the form of a long grid erected on a floor made up of concrete blocks. This floor and the grid, whose gaps match the size of the concrete blocks, are completely silver. There is a large hole in the top half of the grid, making it seem like a blast of air has opened up a passage in the mesh wiring.

The sculpture *L'Aire d'un Souffle* ('The space of a breath') is the work of two artists. This piece of art takes the form of a completely openwork visual barrier, meaning that we are able to see through and beyond its porous boundary. This grid, through which we can observe the surrounding urban landscape, forms a kind of insurmountable obstacle, a border that can be interpreted in different ways. We can only cross it with our eyes, which are symbolically confronted with the sight of a blast, the origin of which is also open to interpretation.

**V O I C E S**

# Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Spinelli building, European Parliament, Brussels.

January-June 2024

On the initiative of the Cultural Outreach Unit of the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) of the European Parliament and in cooperation with the Art Collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs of Belgium, the 'Voices' exhibition is being presented in the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Cultural Outreach Unit of the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) of the European Parliament supports the exhibition with curatorial, logistical and creative cooperation and with graphic design, translation and printing of the publication. The Art Collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs supports the exhibition with the concept, the contact with the external partners (lenders, scenographers, art handling, copyrights) and the texts in the publication. Financial and logistic support is received from the FPS Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union.

The presented art works come from the lenders. The parliaments: the Federal, Brussels, German-speaking, Flemish, Walloon and Walloon-Brussels Parliaments, as well as the European Parliament. The public collections: the Province of Hainaut - BPS22, Charleroi, the German-speaking Community of Belgium and the FPS Foreign Affairs. The corporate collections: Belfius Art Collection, BNP Parisbas Fortis and ING Belgium Collection. Private collector: Vincent Vlasblom. Artist: Cathy Coëz.

Scenography: Pièce Montée

Art handling & transport: Mobull and Imming Logistics

Copyrights: Sabam and Sofam

The Cultural Outreach Unit of the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) of the European Parliament and the Art Collection of the FPS Foreign Affairs of Belgium thank all the partners who collaborate for the exhibition and the publication in the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.





<https://art-collection.europarl.europa.eu/>



<https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/>

**be**  
**EU**  
belgium24.eu



European Parliament

**USE  
YOUR  
VOTE.**

**EUROPEAN  
ELECTIONS  
6-9 JUNE  
2024**



**#USE  
YOUR  
VOTE**



[ELECTIONS.EUROPA.EU](https://elections.europa.eu)