

## The exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum

**For three months, the city of Eindhoven will play host to art and music from the heart of the USA. Visitors will be given an introduction to an unknown part of a very well known country. During the American presidential elections – when there is a great deal of US political coverage in the Netherlands – the Heartland experience offers a different perspective, concentrating on new, cultural insights into the region. The project grew out of a series of curatorial research trips and is a collaboration with the Muziekcentrum Frits Philips and the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago as its American partner. It also extends to other institutions in Eindhoven such as MU and Stroomhuis. In 2009, the exhibition will travel to the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, where it will appear in a modified form. At this time, a major book on the subject will be co-published.**

### **OPENING: 4/10/2008**

The exhibition in the Van Abbemuseum takes the visitor on a trip alongside the Mississippi river and its tributaries, through countryside and cities. It features both commissioned and existing works by contemporary American and European artists. In doing so it gives visitors a chance to find out more about the region, its residents and its real or imagined history and terrain. The artist list includes familiar and unfamiliar names such as Jeremiah Day, Kerry James Marshall, Marjetica Potrč, Julika Rudelius and Wilhelm Sasnal. Together they present a diverse series of experiences of the Heartland.

The curatorial team of this exhibition was drawn from the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and the Smart Museum of Art in Chicago to mix transatlantic perspectives. They selected work(s) by artists who live in the region or responded to its unique characteristics, as well as work by artists who live outside the region and have undertaken residencies in the Heartland in order to produce new work. The aim of the exhibition is to form a more subtle picture of the part of the United States that we define as the new Heartland. Geographically, the exhibition roughly follows the Mississippi River and its tributaries from the south to the north, taking in an area from New Orleans up to Minneapolis, including Omaha, Kansas City, Detroit and Chicago. Although not all the artists actually live in the Heartland, this region forms the basis of their work, in the sense that they engage with its rich history, cultural diversity and current themes.

### **Why Heartland?**

There are several reasons why the Van Abbemuseum decided to focus on the art and culture of the central and southern states of the USA, for us defined as Heartland. Firstly, the selected works form a valuable complement to the exhibition history of the Van Abbemuseum. Most of the work exhibited in the museum from the 1960s onwards came from the American East Coast, while from the 1990s onwards the attention shifted to Los Angeles and the West Coast. This background made the curators curious about the zone in between. Secondly, this exhibition exemplifies the direct relation between art and society, given the crucial role that the region plays in the upcoming US presidential elections. The Heartland exhibition also addresses the need to rethink old fashioned stereotypes about the Heartland and its people, and it is questioning traditional definitions of cultural centers and peripheries. The location of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, outside the Randstad (the region where most of the big cities in the Netherlands are located, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and The Hague), parallels in character and reputation the location of the Heartland between the dominant American East and West Coasts.

### **Artists in the exhibition**

Artists included in the exhibition are: Juan William Chávez, Cody Critchloe, Peter Friedl, Scott Hocking, Carol Jackson, Matthew Day Jackson, Seth Johnson, Kerry James Marshall, Greely Myatt, Dan Peterman, Marjetica Potrč, Ernesto Pujol, Michael Rakowitz, Wilhelm Sasnal, Artur Silva, Deb Sokolow, Alec Soth, Aaron Spangler, Design 99, Detroit Tree of Heaven Woodshop, Theaster Gates and the Black Monks of Mississippi, SIMPARCH, The New Kinomatographic Union, Jaimie Warren & Whoop Dee Doo Kansas City, as well as artists in residence Jeremiah Day and Julika Rudelius. Extensive information on the works in the exhibition as well as all the participating artists can be found in the exhibition booklet in the press kit.

### **Election Brunch – 5/11/2008**

#### **Wednesday 5 November 2008, 9:30**

On 5 November, the whole world will learn who has won the presidential election of the United States of America: will it be the Democratic candidate Barack Obama or the Republican John McCain? A guest speaker will discuss the elections results and the possible consequences, and besides enjoying a brunch, visitors can take special guided tours of the Heartland exhibition.

## **The Miss Rockaway Armada**

**07, 08, 09 November 2008**

### **MU, locatie: Stroomhuis**

The Miss Rockaway Armada is a group of performers and artists from all over the United States. Together they floated down the Mississippi river, from Minneapolis to New Orleans, during two summers on a selfmade flotilla of rafts. This autumn, the weekend right after the American elections (7-9th of November), the Armada anchors in Eindhoven invited by MU and Van Abbemuseum for a long weekend of performance, music, art and talks. In the basement of Stroomhuis they will build a temporary environment that echoes their river experiences, including the one they will have on the Hudson this August and September. For further information on Miss Rockaway Armada and their activities read the Heartland magazine.

### **Curators**

**Charles Esche**, Director Van Abbemuseum

**Kerstin Niemann**, Research Curator Van Abbemuseum

**Stephanie Smith**, Director of Collections and Exhibitions and Curator of Contemporary Art, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago

### **Weblog**

On [heartland.vanabbemuseum.nl](http://heartland.vanabbemuseum.nl), the curators and others involved in the project have reported on their research trips, studio visits and meetings with project partners and cultural activists. The interviews, photographs and essays reveal how they, other guest contributors and artists in the Heartland approach their research and arrive at choices. The blog will continue after the completion of the research trips, acting as a tool to remain in discussion and exchange knowledge, furthering the development of the exhibition project in autumn 2008 and 2009.

### **Magazine and publication**

Muziekcentrum Frits Philips and Van Abbemuseum have issued a Heartland magazine, containing the programme of activities in Eindhoven, a general introduction to the project, and texts by US experts in the Netherlands as well as various authors, artists and musicians about artistic practice and music in the Heartland. The opening of the exhibition at the Smart Museum of Art in Chicago in 2009 will be accompanied by the publication of a critical reader, with texts by academics, musicians, artists as well as music and art critics.

## **Exhibition on tour**

The Heartland exhibition will travel to the Smart Museum of Art, where it will be reconceived for presentation from October 2009 until January 2010.

### **Partners Heartland**

**muziekcentrum**  
FRITS PHILIPS EINDHOVEN

**vanabbemuseum**



### **Contributions**

Rhodes College Center for the Outreach in the Development for the Arts  
Memphis College of Art, Memphis  
MU, Eindhoven

### **Subsidizers:**



*gemeente Eindhoven*



Mondriaan Stichting  
(Mondriaan Foundation)

American Embassy The Hague

### **Note to editors**

For more information and visual material:

### **Van Abbemuseum**

Ralph Kits  
Postbus 235  
5600 AE Eindhoven  
t. +31 (0)40 238 10 16  
mobile +31 (0)6 11903854  
[r.kits@vanabbemuseum.nl](mailto:r.kits@vanabbemuseum.nl)  
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press)

Nicole de Boer  
t. +31 (0)40 238 10 19  
mobile +31 (0)6 12995794  
[n.de.boer@vanabbemuseum.nl](mailto:n.de.boer@vanabbemuseum.nl)  
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press)

### **Smart Museum of Art**

C.J. Lind  
tel +17737020176  
[cjlind@uchicago.edu](mailto:cjlind@uchicago.edu)  
[www.smartmuseum.uchicago.edu](http://www.smartmuseum.uchicago.edu)