

Van Abbemuseum concludes a successful year 2008: a year of growth and exceeded expectations

The Van Abbemuseum has rounded off a successful year in 2008. Director Charles Esche is enthusiastic: "This year has exceeded our expectations. We have produced exhibitions that were widely noted and well received by visitors, professionals and the press. The exhibitions and other activities prompted some penetrating and lively discussions on the function of a museum in our society and on the role of art today. We have been fortunate enough to cooperate with many leading institutions and individuals in 2008, and we have also expanded our educational programme and our network. The BankGiro Lottery has moreover made us a beneficiary, so besides the considerable support we receive from the Mondriaan Foundation and the Promoters and Friends of the Van Abbemuseum, we now receive significant financial aid in enlarging our collection and our portfolio of exhibitions. We look forward to 2009 as a year in which we can continue developing important projects and sharing them with others."

Exhibitions

A varied series of exhibitions was shown in the Old Building in the course of 2008. The *Trio Exhibition* consisted of solo exhibits of work by the well-known artists Minerva Cuevas, Aernout Mik and Mladen Stilinović. Together, they told a story of our interconnected world. Summer 2008 was marked by *Be(com)ing Dutch – The Exhibition*, in which the Dutch cultural identity (or identities) were viewed through the eyes of 35 artists from the Netherlands and abroad. The exhibition included many new works. The whole project will be documented in the book *Be(com)ing Dutch*, to be published in 2009.

October saw the opening of *Heartland*, a multidisciplinary collaboration with Muziekcentrum Frits Philips, Eindhoven, and the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago. The subject matter of *Heartland* is the contemporary art and music of the geographical Heartland of the United States. During the recent USA presidential elections, *Heartland* presented a new perspective on this region and yielded new cultural insights. The exhibition will appear in a modified form at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago in 2009.

The *Living Archive* is a continuing series of documentary exhibitions that utilize the archive of the museum as an active working memory. In *Mixed Messages*, the focus was on differing forms of communicative content that may be embedded in art. *Stars & Stripes Forever* shed new light on the Van Abbemuseum's longstanding links with America and American art. During Dutch Design Week 2008, the Van Abbemuseum held a retrospective exhibition on the many-sided oeuvre of Jan Slothouber, an architect and emeritus professor of Eindhoven University of Technology who died last year. Four exhibitions were organized in the museum's library, among them *YEP* by Ivo van Leeuwen and S. Lloyd Trumpstein, and *Wim Crouwel 80* which is on show in the library until early in 2009.

Collection

Plug In. Re-Imagining the Collection made further headway in 2008 with 12 new contributions. In total, 47 different exhibits have now been installed in 15 rooms, including presentations by guest curators Rudi Fuchs (former Director of the Van Abbemuseum), Dominic van den Boogerd (art critic and Director of De Ateliers, Amsterdam) and Shepherd Steiner (Canadian art historian and art theorist).

The museum has expanded its collection with many new acquisitions, both from the Netherlands and abroad, during 2008. They include such important works as *Ma Bell* (2008) by Rachel Harrison, *Recruiting Identities* (2008) by Abdellatif Benfaidoul, *Social Entomology* (2007) by Minerva Cuevas, *Civilian Defense* (2007) by Dan Peterman, *Top Secret* (1989-1990) by Nedko Solakov, a collection of works by Mladen Stilinović and *New Orleans: Shotgun House With Rainwater-Harvesting Tank* (2008) by Marjetica Potrč, which forms part of *Heartland – The Exhibition*. These purchases were made with the aid of the BankGiro Lottery, the Foundation of Promoters of the Van Abbemuseum and the Mondriaan Foundation. A full overview of the acquisitions is available on our website.

Learning and experience

The Van Abbemuseum places a high priority on contact and interaction with our public. Funding from Rabobank Eindhoven-Veldhoven has enabled us to extend our primary level educational programme to schools outside Eindhoven. The *Vanabbemuseumsschoolbus* is another new project that has enjoyed their support. Secondary schools have benefited from an intensive educational programme as part of the *Heartland* project, with over 1,500 pupils making enthusiastic use

of this facility. We have also taken a further step in our programming for the general public in the city of Eindhoven. In November, the Van Abbemuseum was one of twenty institutions participating in the first Eindhoven Cultural Night, and young people debated issues about living in Eindhoven and ways it could be different during *Creative Citizens* held in Dynamo.

Debate and discussion

The exchanging of ideas occupies an important place in the Van Abbemuseum's activities. Many discussion events, both large and small, took place in 2008. In the spring, for example there was a lively debate on the Van Abbemuseum's artistic policy, between the museum's artistic staff, art critic Rob Schoonen of *Eindhovens Dagblad* and the public. Later in 2008, we were surprised to find our inventory enlarged by a temporary exhibit: a visiting enthusiast had hung his own painting in the museum, hoping for some attention from the press. The Autumn 2008 programme included a discussion in the auditorium about the role of the folklore figure Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) in today's Dutch society; the panel included Prem Radhakishun (lawyer, columnist and television producer), Kevin DeRandamie (Blaxtar), Felix de Rooij (filmmaker and artist), John Helsloot (researcher, Meertens Institute), Annette Krauss & Petra Bauer (artists) and Jos Mangnus (Netherlands specialist and expert on Sinterklaas traditions). This debate was a sequel to the furore that had arisen in late August around the art project *Read The Masks. Tradition Is Not Given*, which was part of the *Be(com)ing Dutch* exhibition.

Collaborations

The ambitions of the Van Abbemuseum are not confined within our own walls but extend well beyond them. We have eagerly grasped the many opportunities that presented themselves outside the architecture of the museum in 2008. The Van Abbemuseum was a partner in the first Brussels Biennial, and greatly enjoyed cooperating with institutes and individuals from home and abroad, including Muziekcentrum Frits Philips (Eindhoven), Smart Museum of Art (University of Chicago), Rhodes College Center for Outreach in the Development of the Arts (USA), Memphis college of Art (USA), MU (Eindhoven), Stroomhuisje (Eindhoven), Het Ketelhuis (Eindhoven), BAK, basis voor actuele kunst (Utrecht), National Sculpture Factory (Cork), Witte De With, Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam), Gate Archive (Eindhoven), Kosmose (Eindhoven), Dynamo (Eindhoven), The New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York), Townhouse Gallery (Cairo), Insa Art Space (Seoul), Museum Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo (Mexico City), KKH (Stockholm), Public Preparation (Tallinn), Platform Garanti (Istanbul), Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art (Jerusalem), Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (Alexandria) and many others.

About us

Early in 2008, the Van Abbemuseum became a beneficiary of the BankGiro Lottery. This sponsorship is helping us realize several of our dreams and enables

us, both now and in the future, to expand on our experimental strategy with its emphasis on hospitality and knowledge exchange. YourSpace, think tank and platform for artists, initiatives and cultural activists, has moved to a location just outside the museum so as to offer greater freedom for creative developments. The Museum Café was refurbished in the autumn with design contributions by artists.

The launch of the renewed Van Abbemuseum website makes the museum's complete programme accessible to everyone in both Dutch and English. The site typifies a development that has been going on for some time: the Van Abbemuseum is not only a building in Eindhoven but also a virtual venue for interchanges in the field of art, which can take place through the website, project blogs, live video streaming and other channels.

Visitor numbers 2008

The Van Abbemuseum ended 2008 with a total of 80.000 visitors. "This is an excellent development. We have reached this number of visitors two years earlier than expected," says Ulrike Erbslöh, deputy director of the museum. "We ascribe it to a very successful programme of exhibitions, projects, lectures and debates. Our visitors know where to find us and they feel at home in our museum. We notice that because of this programming, we also attract more young visitors. This development is also due to the projects that have taken place outside the walls of the museum, such as in YourSpace and the project in collaboration with Het Ketelhuis (GGZe). The Van Abbemuseum is increasingly intertwined with the city of Eindhoven and the surrounding region. Existing collaborations, such as that with Muziekcentrum Frits Philips, are also generating new synergy." Besides visitors who come for the art in the museum, extensive use has been made of the facilities for gatherings, celebrations and (network) meetings, and the museum library has accepted and handled thousands of requests for information.

2009

The Van Abbemuseum will continue to present an ambitious programme of exhibitions and other activities in 2009. For instance, *The Unanimous Life*, a solo exhibition by Vincent Award winner Deimantas Narkevčius, is to open in February. A *Trio Exhibition* comprising three solo exhibits by the female artists Jo Baer, Lynda Benglis and Jutta Koether, is planned for the summer. This trio will present an essential selection of contemporary painting and sculpture; an inspired collation of visual and other pleasures. Together with the retrospective show of Sanja Iveković, these exhibitions amount to a coherent presentation of the most interesting women artists of this moment.

The collection and the ways of presenting it will again enjoy ample attention in 2009. The new (and provisionally the last) contributions to *Plug In* will open in the spring, and two major new shows from the collection are under development for the autumn: *El Lissitzky Revisited* and *The Museum in the 2nd Century*.

vanabbemuseum

El Lissitzky Revisited is the working title of a new presentation of work by El Lissitzky. To make this artist more accessible to a contemporary public, the Van Abbemuseum intends to portray Lissitzky as a "living" artist, a creative public figure who forms part of the community. The new exhibition series will be shown in the Van Abbemuseum for three years with a differing theme each year.

Both the Old Building and the New building of the Van Abbemuseum will be utilized from November 2009 to mid 2011 for *The Museum in the 21st Century* (working title), a continually changing exhibition project which examines the position and role of the museum for contemporary art in the 21st century, on the basis of the Van Abbemuseum's international collection. Works from the museum's own collection and from other collections will be scrutinized in a critical but informal way. The whole project will consist of a large, diverse programme of exhibitions, performances, projects, lectures, discussions and an international symposium.

Moreover, collaborations with existing and new partners will be intensified and extended.

Van Abbemuseum
Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven NL

Opening hours
Tuesday–Sunday, 11.00 - 17.00
Thursday, 11.00 - 21.00

Admission prices
adults: € 8,50
groups of 15 or more, 65+: € 6
students / CJP pass: € 4
Thursday evening from 17.00-21.00: free admission

See www.vanabbemuseum.nl for further information.

To editors:
For further information and images see:
www.vanabbemuseum.nl/press
or contact:
Nicole de Boer, Marketing & Communications
Phone: +31 (0)40 238 1019
Mobile: + 31 (0)6 1299 5794
n.de.boer@vanabbemuseum.nl

vanabbemuseum