

Press release  
October 2008

# LIVING ARCHIVE

STARS & STRIPES FOREVER  
04/10/08 – 09/03/09

*Stars & Stripes Forever*, a new episode of Living Archive, opens on October 4 in the Van Abbemuseum. Living Archive is a series of documentary exhibitions in which the museum's archives are used as an active working memory. *Stars & Stripes Forever* portrays the role of American art at the museum through archival items and information on past exhibitions and acquisitions. How present have American artists been in the Van Abbemuseum? *Stars & Stripes Forever* provides insight by exploring the exhibition and acquisition policy of the museum's directors Edy de Wilde, Jean Leering, Rudi Fuchs, Jan Debbaut and Charles Esche, and provides an insightful addition to the exhibition *Heartland*, which is concurrently on in the Van Abbemuseum.

Edy de Wilde (Van Abbemuseum Director 1946-1963) started taking an interest in American art during the latter years of his tenure, but it was not until 1962 that he travelled to New York to investigate the scene. American art had first been shown in the Van Abbemuseum two years earlier, in a 1960 exhibition of the private collection of the Brussels connoisseur Philippe Dotremont.

De Wilde's successor Jean Leering (Van Abbemuseum Director 1964-1973) concentrated on American art in his exhibition and acquisition strategy. He put on shows of Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Andy Warhol, Ad Reinhardt, Bruce Nauman and others, and laid a basis for the collection of Minimalist art in the Netherlands.

Rudi Fuchs (Van Abbemuseum Director 1975-1987) shared Leering's passion for Minimalism and held a succession of exhibitions with American Conceptual artists. He took it upon himself to look beyond the dominant 'international style' and to devote some attention to the less familiar sources he encountered in Central and Southern Europe. The Van Abbemuseum became an arena where contradictory artistic movements clashed.



Conversation between Bruce Nauman and Jean Leering 1969.  
Photo van den Bichelaeer, Geldrop.

Following Fuchs, Jan Debbaut (Van Abbemuseum Director 1988-2003) also turned initially to European art, partly because of the declining quality of the available American work. By the 1990s, interest had moved on to artists who were making predominantly process-oriented and audiovisual work, resulting in exhibitions and acquisitions of West Coast artists such as Ann Hamilton, Mike Kelley, Jason Rhoades and Paul McCarthy. Debbaut was less reluctant than Fuchs to make retrospective acquisitions and purchased work by among others Bruce Nauman and John Baldessari.

The Directorship of Charles Esche (Van Abbemuseum Director since 2004) has brought a change of focus towards the museum as a platform for a wide spectrum of artistic activities, from all quarters of the world, with political, economic and social connotations. This has made it possible to reassess similar traits in the older American art. The former hierarchic division between global and local developments has, in his outlook, lost its validity; in the *Heartland* project, art from the heart of the United States has now become one of the museum's areas of research.

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Opening Kompas IV. Westkust U.S.A. Photo Martien Coppens, Eindhoven..

### Living Archive

Living Archive is the title of a series of documentary exhibitions in which the Van Abbemuseum archives are used as an active working memory, with the relatively static archive being linked to dynamic and contemporary subjects. As the museum's memory, the archives provide the opportunity to display more than contemporary exhibitions. By responding to discussions, opinions and achievements that come to the fore in the development of the museum, it provides a historical basis to this development. The series is on display in seven small rooms in the museum's new building.

**Van Abbemuseum**  
Bilderdijklaan 10  
Eindhoven

**Opening hours**  
tuesday - sunday, 11.00 - 17.00  
thursday, 11.00 - 21.00

**Admission**  
adults: € 8,50  
groups of 15 or more, visitors 65 and over: € 6  
students and CJP card holders: € 4  
thursday night: free admission (until 31/12/2008)

For more details visit [www.vanabbemuseum.nl](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl)

#### Note for editors

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