

# Robot makes it possible to visit the museum

## The Van Abbemuseum made accessible for people who can't visit the museum

From now on, people who can't come to the museum because of a physical disability can still see the exhibitions in the Van Abbemuseum. A robot will make it possible for them to experience the museum and the art from their own home. They can control the robot and guide it through the museum themselves. There is always a guide accompanying the robot who can also talk to the "virtual" visitor. A tour with detailed information about the artworks is also possible.

Marleen Hartjes, the Van Abbemuseum's *Special Guests* coordinator, explains: "We've noticed that the robot attracts a lot of interaction, also with the other visitors to the museum. People quickly start talking to each other, and in this way you can also take people out of social isolation. It's also a way of giving them back a sense of independence."

The robot is part of the *Special Guests* programme which wants to make the museum accessible to everyone, irrespective of his or her disability. There is already a provision for the blind and visually impaired, the deaf and aurally impaired, and people with aphasia. The *Special Guests* programme is supported by the BankGiro Loterij participants.



Interaction between the visitor Theke Beeks and *Special Guests* coordinator Marleen Hartjes during the tour. Video still ©Mals Media

### Robot opens up the world

Theke Beeks, who logged on from the Kempenhof Care Centre in Valkenswaard (near Eindhoven), was one of our first guests to visit the museum from a distance. Theke, who is confined to her home as the result of a stroke, amongst other things, was very enthusiastic: "I love art, but I thought that I'd never again be able to visit a museum. It's really great that I can still look at all the art in the galleries with the robot." Her husband Frans added: "Physically she has really gone downhill quite a lot, but she brings the outside world into our home. That opens up your world, particularly when there are also explanations and the art is made comprehensible."

### First museum in Europe

The Van Abbemuseum is the first museum in Europe to make a visit to a museum possible in this way. This means that the museum becomes accessible to everyone, irrespective of his or her physical limitations. Inclusion is an important aim for the Van Abbemuseum.

### How does it work?

People can book the robot on the Van Abbemuseum website. When they've downloaded a programme they are allotted a time to visit the museum on the basis of mutual consultation. The robot is simple to control and this can be adapted to the visitor's needs. The guide can help with this and talk to the visitor about the works of art. The museum thinks that it's important to welcome its visitors in a very hospitable way.



Robot next to the artwork *Naked Machine (Volkswagen Modern)* by Surasi Kusolwong. Video still ©Mals Media

### The robot's other applications

Apart from making the museum accessible for people who are not physically able to visit it themselves, there are also other possible applications. For example, hospitals care homes and rehabilitation centres could be given a tailor-make subscription with which they could log in at a set time during the week. Classes in schools that can't come to the museum could also log on with a digital connection in the classroom and be given a tour through the museum. An artist or curator from abroad

could also log on and be given a tour through an exhibition.

According to Charles Esche, the director of the Van Abbemuseum, "The museum of the future is nearly with us. This project links art and technology in a way that perfectly suits Eindhoven and the Brainport region. Above all, it provides advantages for the visitor, who can get to know our artworks no matter where he is. This is the radical hospitality we are aiming for."



Robot in the project *Yellow Interior in 19.640 Parts* by Marie Lexmond. Video still ©Mals Media

#### Subsidiser

The *Special Guests* programme is made possible with the support of the BankGiro Loterij participants.

DANKZIJ DE DEELNEMERS VAN DE  
**BankGiroLoterij**



Interaction between the visitor Theke Beeks and *Special Guests* coordinator Marleen Hartjes during the tour. Video still ©Mals Media

#### For the editors:

For more information and photographs, please visit:  
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/press](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/press)

#### Or contact for more information or a test tour with the robot:

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#### Van Abbemuseum

The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the first public museums for contemporary art to be established in Europe. The museum's collection of around 2700 works of art includes key works and archives by Lissitzky, Picasso, Kokoschka, Chagall, Beuys, McCarthy, Daniëls and Körmeling. The museum has an experimental approach towards art's role in society. Openness, hospitality and knowledge exchange are important. We challenge ourselves and our visitors to think about art and its place in the world, covering a range of subjects, including the role of the collection as a cultural 'memory' and the museum as a public site. International collaboration and exchange have made the Van Abbemuseum a place for creative cross-fertilisation and a source of surprise, inspiration and imagination for its visitors and participants.

Van Abbemuseum  
Bilderdijklaan 10  
Eindhoven, The Netherlands  
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl)

#### Opening hours

Tuesday until Sunday 11.00–17.00. Thursday 11.00 - 21.00.

#### Admission

Adults: € 12,- / Groups of 10 or more: € 9,- / Young people from 13-18 years, students / Eindhoven city pass (stadspas) holders: € 6,- / Museumkaart, children under 13 years of age: free of charge. / Family pass (2 adults and max. 3 children until 18 years): €18,-. Every Tuesday afternoon between 15.00-17.00: free entrance.