

Press Release
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VAN ABBE MUSEUM

Van Abbemuseum Expands Its Collection with New Acquisitions That Rethink How Museums Collect and Care for Art

The Van Abbemuseum announces a new series of acquisitions and donations that expands its collection into software, game engines, and works sustained through artists' instructions and activation protocols.

The acquisitions include works by **john gerrard, Carolyn Lazard, Haegue Yang, Sarkis, Paul Panhuysen, Miloš Trakilović, Ima-Abasi Okon, Nolan Oswald Dennis, Kiki & Joost, and Nabuurs&Van Doorn**, among others. Together, they reflect the museum's commitment to contemporary artistic practices and raise practical questions about how museums collect, document, present, and preserve works that change over time.

The works are currently presented across three exhibitions and public settings: *Collection as Cosmos*, on view until 2029; the Dommelplein, until 30 June 2027; and *Make Some Noise: Desire. Stage. Change. Positions #9*, until 20 September 2026.

Defne Ayas, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, says:

"A public collection should reflect the world we inhabit and the futures we are learning to shape together. In Eindhoven, a city shaped by design, engineering, and technological change, this means recognizing artists as thinkers who question the systems that organize contemporary life. Working across software, sound, architecture, and collective experience, the artists entering our collection engage with questions of access and care, climate precarity, memory, and political realities. These acquisitions connect local histories with wider planetary concerns and renew our understanding of the collection as a living public resource."

Collecting Software, Algorithmic Compositions, and Digital Systems

Works built with software, artificial intelligence, or game engines require ongoing technical care. Their preservation involves documenting software dependencies, maintaining equipment, monitoring compatibility, and working with artists to safeguard the conditions necessary for future presentation.

john gerrard (b.1974, Dublin) – *Ghost Feed* (2025/2026):

Presented on a monumental LED screen on the Dommelplein, *Ghost Feed* depicts a white-browed spider monkey absorbed in a smartphone as the surrounding landscape burns. At intervals, the animal looks up and makes eye contact with passers-by. The work runs in real time using the Unreal Engine. Its acquisition requires the museum to care for both its visual content and the software and hardware systems through which its simulated world operates.

On view on the Dommelplein.

Miloš Trakilović (b.1989, Tuzla) – *564 TRACKS (NOT A LOVE SONG IS USUALLY A LOVE SONG)* (2024):

Trakilović combines six-channel sound, four-channel video, and an architectural environment constructed from charred wood. Using an artificial intelligence model, he generated an evolving composition from relationships between archival recordings of the Bosnian War and popular Yugoslav music from 1989 to 1992. The installation connects technological systems with questions of historical memory, cultural loss, and the emotional afterlives of conflict.

On view in Positions #9.

Ayas, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, adds:

“Collecting contemporary art means understanding the conditions that allow a work to exist. Sometimes those conditions include software, technical knowledge, repeated actions, or collaboration with museum staff and visitors. Our responsibility is to document and support those conditions so that future audiences can continue to experience the work. For a public museum in Eindhoven, this is also an opportunity to connect artistic experimentation with the city’s knowledge of design, engineering, and emerging technologies.”

Collecting Instructions and Daily Actions

Some works enter the collection through a combination of physical elements, written instructions, and recurring actions. Their care depends on staff knowledge, careful documentation, and the continued performance of the work’s essential procedures.

Haegue Yang (b.1971, Seoul) – *Sonic Celestial Rope* (2026):

Every day at solar noon in Eindhoven, the bells of Haegue Yang’s 25-metre-high installation ring throughout the Meulenstein Tower. The work draws on a Korean folktale about two children who escape a tiger by climbing a rope lowered from the sky. Their ascent leads them toward the sun and the moon. Museum staff activate the installation daily according

to the artist's instructions, linking the work to the movement of the sun, the rhythm of the building, and the shared experience of museum visitors.

On view in Collection as Cosmos.

Sarkis (b.1938, Istanbul) – *L'Atelier d'aquarelle dans l'eau* (2002):

Donated by French-Armenian artist Sarkis, this work invites visitors to paint in water as part of a daily workshop. Using simple materials, participants create temporary compositions of colour within a bowl. Each action produces a distinct visual experience shaped by movement, concentration, and the behavior of pigment in water. The museum preserves the materials, instructions, and conditions needed to continue the workshop with future participants. Steven ten Thije, Head of Collections, says: "The workshop shows that art is not about great masters, but about the master in each of us."

On view in Collection as Cosmos.

Multisensory Commitment, Sound, Access, and Eindhoven's Experimental Heritage

The acquisitions also strengthen the museum's engagement with sound, shared space, and Eindhoven's history of artistic experimentation.

Carolyn Lazard (b.1987, Upland) – *A Conspiracy* (2017):

Lazard uses therapeutic white-noise machines to create an acoustic environment in which visitors can gather and speak together. Originally developed to protect confidential conversations, the machines produce a layer of sound that supports privacy within a public setting. Each installation requires the museum to recreate the acoustic conditions that make this shared space possible.

On view in Collection as Cosmos.

Paul Panhuysen (1934, Borgharen - 2015, Eindhoven):

The museum has received a significant donation of works by Paul Panhuysen, the Eindhoven-based artist and founder of the Apollohuis. Panhuysen worked across sound art, urban planning, design, music, and visual culture. His practice reflects a longstanding Eindhoven tradition of collaboration between artistic experimentation and technical inquiry. The donation includes a nine-part painting series from the 1970s that visitors can rearrange, alongside experimental play furniture that invites children to explore geometric forms.

On view in Collection as Cosmos.

Collecting Works In Dialogue with the Museum's Architecture and Place

Several newly acquired works respond directly to the museum's architecture. Their future care includes documenting how they relate to specific rooms, entrances, corners, and routes through the building.

Ima-Abasi Okon (b.1981, London) – *Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis* (2025):

Okon places large blue inflatable arches at gallery thresholds. Reminiscent of marathon finish lines, the arches alter how visitors move through the museum and draw attention to the physical and psychological experience of crossing institutional space.

Nolan Oswald Dennis (b.1988, Lusaka) – *Illuminations* (2026):

Dennis installs black metal wings around corners and doorways throughout the museum. Holding magnets and drawings, these sculptural structures introduce images and ideas of alternative worlds into the architecture of the building. Their acquisition requires the museum to consider how the work can be installed and renewed within future spatial arrangements.

These works are on view in Collection as Cosmos.

Nabuurs&Van Doorn (based in Eindhoven) – *Zwischenlandschaften 2_Freeland* (2022):

Eindhoven-based duo Nabuurs&Van Doorn examine the history of the former Picus factory and its involvement in a postwar proposal to resettle Jewish refugees in Suriname using prefabricated wooden housing. Combining archival material, sculpture, photography, film, and a vinyl wall installation, the work explores how Eindhoven's industrial history intersects with Jewish displacement, Dutch colonial rule, and contested visions of postwar reconstruction.

Public Support and Donations

The Van Abbemuseum's acquisitions are made possible through the support of public and private partners. As part of the Municipality of Eindhoven, the museum is supported first and foremost by the people of the city. Additional support comes from the Mondriaan Fund, the VriendenLoterij, and Stichting Promotors van het Van Abbemuseum. Their contributions have helped make possible acquisitions including works by John Gerrard and Haegue Yang.

Donations also play an essential role in the development of the public collection. Sarkis donated *L'Atelier d'aquarelle dans l'eau*, while the estate of Paul Panhuysen contributed a substantial group of works by the Eindhoven sound-art pioneer.

NOTE TO EDITORS (NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Images & Credits:

High-resolution press images (300 dpi) and the complete list of acquisitions can be downloaded directly from the online press kit: [\[Link to Press Kit\]](#).

Please note that all published images must include the full artwork and photographer credits.

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