



MNSKA

**GENERAL
PRESS FILE**

ROYAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ANTWERP

THE COLLECTION

PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

KAAN Architecten have created new white volumes in the heart of the historic museum. This provides visitors with two museums in one. We continue this division in the way we display our art works. Upon entering you are immediately faced with a choice. Do you want to see the old masters or do you prefer the modern iconoclasts? In the historic galleries you get to see art created before 1880, in the white halls you can enjoy art created after 1880. The link between the two is the Ensor wing, which houses the largest James Ensor collection in the world. Moreover, the KMSKA also owns the largest Rik Wouters collection. In total, the KMSKA displays over 600 works, carefully selected from a collection of 8,400 pieces.

LOANED WORKS

The KMSKA has inherited a fine collection of top items from, among others, the Guild of Saint Luke and the Antwerp Academy. Purchases, donations and bequests have supplemented this basis. It makes the collection unique, but obviously not complete. That is why the KMSKA is supplementing the collection with relevant pieces from other institutions and private collectors.

From Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen - which has closed for renovation - we received eight masterpieces on loan for a period of five years. These works of art by Salvador Dalí, Bill Viola, Oskar Kokoschka and others challenge visitors to look differently at the pieces in our own collection. This also applies to the contemporary art that we selectively integrate into the galleries, such as the work of Luc Tuymans, Marlene Dumas and Berlinde De Bruyckere.

Thanks to benevolent private collectors, the KMSKA is also able to further internationalise its collection. With their monumental works, Anish Kapoor and Anselm Kiefer impress visitors. Marlene Dumas provides a fine commentary on the female figures in the Madonna Gallery with the curious *Give the People what They Want*.

The Rubens House, which closed its doors for extensive renovation in January 2023, is also a guest at KMSKA. Besides Peter Paul Rubens, works by Jacob Jordaens and Anthony van Dyck also complete the collection. The KMSKA is particularly focused on Rubens and art from the 16th and 17th centuries and is known as one of the leading museums of Flemish Masters. It is therefore the perfect home for these amazing works of art.

The KMSKA also resolutely opts for more women in the collection. Two works by Artemisia Gentileschi, from a private collection, *David and Goliath* and *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, will be added. Artemisia Gentileschi was the absolute power woman of the Baroque era. She managed to render well-known stories in her own unique way, and always with a feminine touch.

THE RESTORATION STUDIO

The KMSKA is one of the few Flemish museums with its own restoration studio. It was founded in April 1999. When the museum closed in 2011, the restoration studio moved to a studio outside Antwerp. Here, the studio ran as never before. One hundred and thirty-three paintings and sculptures received conservation treatment. Extra attention was paid to works on paper, and to frames. Meanwhile, the restoration studio is back in the museum. You can follow some of the operations from behind a glass wall.

Rubens' most monumental masterpieces do not fit in the restoration studio. Of necessity, they are given a revamp in the Rubens Gallery. A special venue has been set up for this purpose: Studio Rubens. For two years, restorers have been working on immense scaffolds to make the gigantic altarpiece *Enthroned Madonna Adored by Saints* by Rubens sparkle like it used to. Visitors can follow the restoration from a distance.

VISIT & OFFER

RADIO BART

To look differently and see more, that's what you do with Radio Bart. Because Bart, Youssri, Ditmar and Lesley are curious about the works of art surrounding them. Being blind, they invite you to join them and look at art together. Step inside their mobile radio studio for a good chat with surprising perspectives. And, from now on, look at art differently *and* more actively.

THE TEN

'The Ten' is an adventurous journey of discovery through the museum for children and their families. Together with Opera House De Munt, artist Christophe Coppens created ten surprising installations throughout the museum. He got his inspiration from striking details in the paintings. The works invite you to look at art in a different way. Each installation is accompanied by creative assignments for children, collected in a free booklet.

KMSKA DRAWS!

The KMSKA challenges the visitor to liberate the inner artist. Pick up drawing materials at a KMSKA Draws! distribution point and interact artistically with the museum. There are three levels of experience: 'I can't draw', 'Creative Type' or 'Fancy a challenge'. During events, the museum organises free guided tours with an artist guide.

OPEN STUDIO

A place where anyone can be creative. In the Open Studio, visitors can choose from a range of workshops, each accompanied by enthusiastic studio guides. One time, you get to work with colour and shape through collages. Another time, you look at movements in art. The workshops are open to everyone: young and not so young, art lover or connoisseur..

MULTIMEDIA

In the KMSKA you don't just look at the arts, you experience them. Via the museum app and the in-depth screens, you dive into the masterpieces. Or walk in virtual reality through the imposing painting studio of the old masters. The immersive space takes you into projections of works of art and opens up a world full of eye-catching details.

MUSEUM APPLICATION

The KMSKA app facilitates your visit. Lost your way momentarily in the museum? The app is your gps. Looking for a specific work of art? The app guides you smoothly through the collection catalogue. The app also includes audio plays and audio tours that draw you into artful stories. Dutch is not your native language? All commentaries and audio tours (including the audio story of *Turning Heads*) are available in English, French, German as well as in Flemish sign language and international sign. The same applies to all hall texts and labels, which have also been translated into Spanish, Italian, Russian and Chinese.

SCHOOLS

Our interactive school offer is structured by age group. It stimulates all the senses and pays attention to the different talents of the student. For younger children, the programmes focus on creativity and expression. For young adults, they connect to current events. In this way, we encourage them to think critically, without losing sight of their everyday environment.

EXHIBITION

JEF VERHEYEN WINDOW ON INFINITY

23 MARCH - 18 AUGUST 2024

The KMSKA will devote the spring and summer of 2024 to the experimental Antwerp painter Jef Verheyen. An intriguing retrospective introduces you to this post-war artist as a creator of cosmic arts. From an early age, Verheyen probed the essence of art, prompting in him the desire to introduce a new way of looking. Verheyen was concerned more with a sense of spatiality than with the visible world, which led him to focus on light and colour, the twin essences of painting. His works are windows on infinity that not only established him on the neo-avant-garde map, but also placed his home town of Antwerp in the international spotlight.

EXHIBITION

IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS - ENSOR BEYOND IMPRESSIONISM

28 SEPTEMBER 2024 - 18 JANUARY 2025

Autumn 2024 sees James Ensor take over the museum with one of the largest exhibitions to be devoted to him in Belgium since 1999. Not only will you have the opportunity to delve into Ensor's wondrous realm of turbulent visions, masks and satire, we will also show him alongside the work of international artists who inspired him and with whom he set out to compete. Because if there was one thing Ensor wanted, it was always to be the best; even if those rivals had names like Claude Monet, Edvard Munch or even Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya.

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Rubens, Van Eyck, Fouquet, Ensor, Magritte, Memling, Rodin, ... What effect do they have on contemporary artists? Our Artists in Residence show and tell. Over a five-year period, a first batch of twenty-two artists, groups or collectives immersed themselves in the museum's collections and gave it a contemporary interpretation in words, music, images, performances, ... In the meantime, a new batch of artists in residence is already drawing inspiration from the old and modern masters. They share their artistic interpretations particularly during KMSKA LATE.

KMSKA LATE

Thursday nights at KMSKA are a new tradition. The museum is open every Thursday evening until 10pm for anyone with an entrance ticket. KMSKA LATE gives you chance to stroll around galleries at dusk to enjoy the collection. Chance to peep behind the scenes to learn about how the museum works. And to enjoy both a cool drink and contemporary interpretations of our art. KMSKA LATE is your special chance to dream. Week after week after week...

KMSKASHOP AND COFFEEBAR

Visitors can extend their museum experience with a visit to the KMSKAshop. The Finest Shop offers a high-quality range of merchandising in which the museum's own works of art play the leading role. As a creative hub, the shop also offers an exclusive range in collaboration with Christophe Coppens and Essentiel. All this beauty is complemented by books and catalogues. Visitors can also take a break during their museum visit in the shop's coffee bar. We will treat you to a delicate moment of happiness with products from renowned Antwerp houses such as Cross Roast, the Theefaktorie, brewery De Koninck and the Taartfabrik.

MADONNA GRAND CAFÉ

With its stylish interior, Madonna is without a doubt the new hotspot of the city. Antwerp citizens, day trippers or casual passers-by. Everyone is welcome, with or without a museum ticket. During the day you can go there for a lunch, something sweet or a drink. In the evening Madonna transforms into a fine dining restaurant and cocktail bar.

MUSEUM BUILDING

MASTER PLAN

To present seven centuries of top art in optimal conditions: that was the starting point of the renovation of the KMSKA. The phased master plan took into account both the past and the future. A sleek new museum volume was inserted into four courtyards so that the historic 'architectural shell' remained intact. KAAN Architecten's architectural concept takes the visitor on an adventurous journey through two worlds in one museum, two contrasting and conversing museums. A restoration that shows maximum respect for the centuries-old architecture and at the same time responds beautifully to the contemporary museum collection.

FAÇADE

Tormented by weather and time, the museum's façades had for years been left a dull grey. The mosaics, too, had to endure a lot. In 2016, PERSPECTIV architecten started prospecting for the building. Two years later, contractor Artes Woudenberg began renovating the southern façade. Each façade took six months to complete. After the meticulous restoration, the façades have regained their original hues of pink, yellow, orange, grey and blue.

MOSAIC

During the restoration of the KMSKA, the mosaic floors were also given a facelift. Unfortunately, the floor at the top of the stairs - just before the entrance to the museum - could not be saved. So we opted for an ambitious alternative: a wondrous welcome carpet in stone, which is also the largest art mosaic in the country..

GARDEN

The story of the KMSKA starts outside. Because the museum garden is also the first museum space. Here, you can stroll among impressive sculptures from the KMSKA collection. But above all, this green oasis is a place that brings people from the neighbourhood together. A wonderful haven of peace in the bustling Zuid.

RESEARCH INTO THE COLONIAL PAST OF THE KMSKA

During its closure, the KMSKA examined its colonial history in collaboration with various experts. In particular, we looked at the funding for the building, the collection and the human zoo that was set up during the 1894 World Exposition. The KMSKA was not built using colonial funds, but through funding from the city of Antwerp and the Belgian government. The building was completed in 1890. At that time, the Congo was not yet generating large profits for Leopold II. However, several of our patrons were active in colonial trade. Of the 1,742 works donated to the museum, 57 (3.3%) were possibly to probably financed with colonial money. The world exposition was organised by a specially established PLC, which had close ties with Antwerp business and city authorities. The human zoo was part of the Congo Pavilion. This was set up from within the Leopoldian administration of Congo Free State. Therefore, the KMSKA took no initiative here. Nevertheless, we deeply regret this dark episode. We also recognise that it is inextricably linked to the museum's history. We are working on a seminar in 2024, 130 years after the World Exposition, to give this story a place. Finally, we have also mapped the colonial storyline behind some pieces of the collection, such as an ivory sculpture by Josuë Dupon or a bust of Leopold II by Thomas Vinçotte, that is in the depot. We want to further develop such stories within our future public offerings.

This is a summary of our findings. You can read the full text at www.kmska.be/en/research-colonial-past-kmska

FUNDRAISING

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The KMSKA is a cultural entrepreneur. The museum actively sought collaboration with entrepreneurs. Our main partner Delen Private Bank came on board first and set the tone. DCA, Maison Vervloet 1905, Port of Antwerp-Bruges, BMW and many others followed. The more than 75 members of the museum's business club, the "Club Fouquet", meet within the museum's exceptional setting. Together with these partners, we continue to build the finest museum.

PATRONAGE

Without donations, the collection of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp would never have become as impressive as it is today. Works of art received through donations and bequests represent no less than 40% of the museum's collection. KMSKA keeps the tradition of donations alive and kicking and can continue to count on the important support of patrons.

SUPPORT FROM FUNDS AND NATIONAL LOTTERY PLAYERS

Not only companies and individuals, but also various funds contribute to the museum's image and appeal. Thanks to the generous support of the Baillet Latour Fund and National Lottery players, among others, important masterpieces from the collection could be conserved. This allows visitors to see these restored works in prime condition.