



# MMSWA

ROYAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ANTWERP

Vlaanderen  
verbeelding werkt



## 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.

### WORKS ON LOAN

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.

### 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. The restoration studio will return to the museum when it reopens and will be publicly accessible. This will offer a unique insight into the work of our restorers.

## TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

### THE MAKING OF

THE KMSKA FROM CONCEPT TO REALIZATION - WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY KARIN BORGHOUTS

Stripped to the bone, fully restored and with a brand-new museum section to boot. The KMSKA has recently been through the most spectacular renovation in its history. KAAAN Architecten drew up the master plan for this impressive makeover. Photographer Karin Borghouts followed the renovation closely. Her photos of ten years of demolishing, building and restoring form the common thread that runs through all the phases. In this temporary exhibition you will relive the finest moments.

### COSMORAMA

IVES MAES

Visual artist Ives Maes photographs the heritage of world exhibitions worldwide. In his images, he records the architectural remnants of these short events and their locations. This results in an ironic contrast between utopian expectations of the future and present-day urban reality. With Cosmorama, Ives Maes takes us on a fascinating journey from 19th-century London to contemporary Shanghai.

## **THE POETRY OF THE ABSTRACT**

MICHEL SEUPHOR

The KMSKA has been presented with a splendid donation: fifty-seven lacunary drawings with horizontal lines by the Antwerp artist Michel Seuphor. This provides the KMSKA with the largest museum collection of Seuphor in the world. As a token of our gratitude, we are pleased to display them in the Print Room. There, the drawings stand out beautifully against the steel blue walls.

## **VISIT & OFFER**

### **RADIO BART**

To look differently and see more, that's what you do with Radio Bart. Because Bart is curious about the works of art around him. As he is blind, he invites you to join him and look at art together. Step inside his 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. Audio plays and audio tours draw you into artistic stories. 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. Non-native speaker? You can get all guidance in English, French and German.

## **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.

## **THE FINEST HUNDRED**

The Finest Hundred: that's the name for the focus group with whom we are fully fine-tuning the new museum experience. Their hard work and critical eye provide fascinating insights. Since their appointment, our testers have scrutinised the museum's wayfinding, the new multimedia, gallery texts and labels, the new website, a special audio tour and a new exhibition concept.

## **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. For five years, twenty-two artists, groups or collectives will immerse themselves in the collection. They are inspired by the old and modern masters or by the museum building, and interpret them in a contemporary way. In words, music, images, performances, and so on.

## **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 Theefactorie, 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](http://www.kmska.be/en/research-colonial-past-kmska)*

## **KARIN BORGHOUTS**

Even before the first demolition hammer arrived at the museum, Karin Borghouts set up her tripod to photograph wrapped-up altarpieces and abandoned offices. Thanks to her images, fans - and staff - could follow how walls made way for elegant columns, or how the steel structure of the new museum grew. Dedicated to her craft, and to the museum, she climbed into the highest crane on the site for us, even on turbulent days. Karin's photos can be recognised by their special lighting and the way she manages to find beauty in all the hustle and bustle of the site. A selection of her photos adorn the walls in the temporary exhibition *The Making Of* and are included in the new museum publication *The Finest Museum* published by Hannibal Books.

## **BUILDING PRINCIPAL AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

To renovate a museum is no mean feat. It all starts with a plan. In 2003, the Flemish Government's Department of Culture, Youth and Media issued an open call for tenders for the museum's master plan. The department coordinates all tenders and awards during the entire renovation.

The involvement of the Flemish Government does not end with a plan. The Building Projects Division of the Facility Management Department actively monitors the museum's building project. The team of project leaders and site inspectors coordinates the project from project definition, over design to delivery of the works and transfer to operation.

## **NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH**

Running a museum costs money. Loads of money. The Flemish government is by far our most important financier. Is this project really as expensive as it appears? A hundred million euro is a considerable sum. However, for that amount the KMSKA built a new museum and renovated and restored a 19th-century monument. A substantial part of the budget went towards necessary interventions such as asbestos removal, a new roof and new technical installations to preserve the collection in the best possible climate conditions. In the international context, 100 million euro is a very modest budget. The renovation of the Rijksmuseum cost 375 million euro, the expansion of the Kunsthaus Zurich is estimated at 230 million euro.

Fortunately, there are also our entrepreneurs and ARTbassadors who support the KMSKA with a warm heart for culture. We are aware that enterprising Antwerp and Flanders are putting their backs into our project, so that we can achieve our high ambitions. And thus the KMSKA becomes much more than just a showcase for art.

## **FUNDRAISING**

### **BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS**

The KMSKA is a cultural entrepreneur. The museum actively sought collaboration with entrepreneurs. Our main partner Delen Private Banking came on board first and set the tone. DCA, Maison Vervloet 1905, Port of Antwerp-Bruges, BMW and many others followed. The more than 60 members of the museum's brand-new 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.

## QUOTES

*"In my view, the reopening of the KMSKA is without a doubt the cultural highlight of this legislature. It symbolically reflects the importance the Government attaches to our Flemish heritage. At last, Flanders and the world can once again become acquainted with this exceptional collection that reflects our craftsmanship, past and present. The appeal, scale and collection of the museum make the KMSKA a top European player."*

– **Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders**

*"We have all been very much looking forward to the moment when the KMSKA - Flanders' finest museum - reopens its doors to the general public after more than ten long years. Thanks to the renovation, the museum was brought into the 21st century in one fell swoop. Seven centuries of art are displayed here in optimal conditions. In recent years, we have made Flanders known at home and abroad as the home of the Flemish Masters. And nowhere is this more the case than at the KMSKA. More than ever, this will be the place par excellence to fully discover our Flemish Masters. The slogan "Home of the Flemish Masters" sums this up perfectly. With Toerisme Vlaanderen, we are therefore sparing no expense to use this absolute asset as a showcase to attract art lovers from all corners of the world to Flanders."*

– **Zuhal Demir, Flemish Minister for Tourism**

*"Museums are places of imagination and reflection. The KMSKA will undoubtedly help many visitors, young and old, to discover their place in life. At last, our children and grandchildren can once again enjoy the extraordinary and brilliant art we have created in Flanders over the centuries."*

– **Luc Delrue, Secretary-general department of Culture, Youth and Media**

*"Seven centuries of art, from Flemish primitives to expressionists, presented in the most optimal conditions imaginable. The most extensive collection of Flemish Masters in the world. A place that embraces its history and that, after 11 years, can finally be shared with the world. If at one time the KMSKA was a hidden gem, it now shines like never before."*

– **Peter De Wilde, CEO VisitFlanders**



*"Finally, the KMSKA can recover its rightful place as the cultural heart of Antwerp. I am therefore particularly pleased and proud that we can once again welcome a great many visitors to this magical place in our city."*

**– Bart De Wever, Mayor of the city of Antwerp**

*"The reopening of the KMSKA is obviously also important for tourism in our city. The museum puts us even more clearly on the map as a destination for lovers of art and culture. In recent years, the city of Antwerp has been investing substantially to beautify Het Zuid so that we can welcome visitors to the KMSKA in the very best conditions. And for the hotel and catering entrepreneurs at Het Zuid too, this is undoubtedly a memorable day."*

**– Koen Kennis, alderman for Tourism of the city of Antwerp**

*"Flanders' largest collection is coming home to the city again. I wish all visitors to the KMSKA - Antwerp citizens and tourists alike - that they may be amazed by our Flemish Masters, that they may be warmed by seven centuries of art. I wish them an encounter with the beauty that is immortal in art. Today we celebrate, Antwerp has been waiting a long time for this!"*

**– Nabilla Ait Daoud, alderman for Culture of the city of Antwerp**

*"Great that we were able to help write this new chapter in the long history of the KMSKA. It is an impressive building project of which the entire team of Het Facilitair Bedrijf is particularly proud."*

**– Nathalie Vandebrouck, project manager Bouwprojecten**

*"Renovating and extending a monument is quite a responsibility. It requires understanding the new use, it requires knowledge of and respect for the past and a vision for the future. The overall result is a building that both balances and challenges. The rebuilding was a unique experience, which did not follow the ordinary paths of an architectural project in any way. A great many people contributed, with their hands and/or heads, to the result that we can now celebrate and for which I owe everyone many thanks."*

**– Dikkie Scipio, KAAN Architecten**