

## **Villa Les Zéphyr**

Villa Les Zephyrs in Westende is an authentically restored holiday villa dating from 1922 and hosts exhibitions of contemporary visual art.

The villa has an original interior by top designer Henry van de Velde. The basement kitchen for the staff, the maid's bedroom, and the bathroom with sunken bathtub provide a beautiful picture of the culture of living by the sea in the 1920s-1940s.

## **Echoes of a Lost Garden**

The garden of Villa Les Zéphyr, once the largest in Westende, was a lush place with roses, flowers, and plants, a pergola, colonnade, and pond. In the 1960s, the garden was sold and had to make way for an apartment block. The villa itself was spared, but today stands in stark contrast to its surroundings.

With the exhibition Echoes of a Lost Garden, curator Han Decorte brings various aspects of the vanished garden back to life. The participating artists each relate to nature and landscape in their own way, based on research, fascination, or passion. Their diverse approaches offer a polyphonic view of what was lost. The selected works do not restore a lost paradise, but form an imaginary garden: a space born of memory that continues to echo incessantly.

The works balance between matter and memory, between space and landscape. They evoke images of growth, decay and renewal. The exhibition does not stem from nostalgia or melancholy, but from a conscious activation of memory. It is a way of allowing the presence of the past to take root in the present once again.

### **Artists:**

Caroline Coolen, Marc De Blieck, Theo De Meyer, Indrikis Gelzis, Annelotte Lammertse, Anthony Leenders, Svelte Thys, Filip Vervaet, Lisa Vlaemminck, Dirk Zoete

Curator: Han De Corte

## **Caroline Coolen**

Caroline Coolen's (b. 1975) practice spans sculpture, assemblage, woodcut printing and installation. In her work, she acts as a contemporary hunter-gatherer: she collects impressions and fragments from her environment – forests, vast landscapes, asphalt and wasteland – and rearranges them into images that are both visually and tactilely rich.

Her attention is focused on liminal zones, transitional areas: forgotten or avoided places where pioneer vegetation serves as a metaphor for resistance, resilience and an alternative form of beauty. The choice of the thistle is therefore significant. This pioneer species thrives on poor soil, under the harshest conditions, and prepares the soil for new life. Even in the cracks in the asphalt, the thistle is the first to appear.

At a time when both ecological and cultural values are under pressure and threaten to disappear, her work serves as an act of attention, restoration and revaluation.

### **Lisa Vlaemminck**

Lisa Vlaemminck's (b. 1992) practice is rooted in painting and stems from an exploration of landscape and still life as a form in which objects carry cultural and visual meaning. By isolating objects and stripping them of their original function, she questions their visual legibility and fetishistic status within an aesthetic of consumption and oversaturation.

The zone where attraction and repulsion converge, not as opposites but as a generative tension, acts as a driving force in her work. With a visual language that absorbs elements from pop and advertising culture, she explores how images seduce, manipulate and destabilise.

Image, material, texture and form mutate into compositional playgrounds, from which Lisa creates a new universe.

### **Annelotte Lammertse**

The work of Annelotte Lammertse (born 1993) is based on the way we relate to our immediate and often natural environment. She explores our relationship with places, plants and people, using flora and other non-human organisms as a guide. Lammertse seeks ways to respond to our tendency to control or capture the environment. Important guides in her work are concepts such as restoration, care, process, imagination, storytelling and the fragmented, precarious landscapes around us.

For the work *Shadow Letters*, Lammertse investigates De Verdrongen Weide, a low-lying valley area outside Ypres. Using pigments extracted from local plants, she explores the traces of the vanished medieval cloth industry, in which weavers and dyers helped shape the landscape. The colours and fabrics connect the past and present, people and vegetation.

Inspired by the embroidered flour sacks from the First World War, Lammertse developed a co-creation project with residents of Ypres. Together, they colour and embroider new sack shapes with pigments from the area. These are symbols of gathering, remembering and connectedness.

In this slow, artisanal process, Lammertse explores how textiles, plants and people are interwoven, and how lost histories can become tangible again.

### **Marc De Blieck**

In his work, Marc De Blieck (born 1958) explores the way we look at, record and give meaning to images. His photographic practice lies at the intersection of observation and construction: what we see often seems self-evident, but on closer inspection turns out to have been carefully constructed.

De Blieck usually starts from existing places or situations, which he dissects through photographic manipulation, digital editing and spatial installation. He reveals how each image is determined by perspective, framing and technology, and how these factors guide our perception. His work is not a documentary record, but a search for the image itself: for the relationship between reality, representation and the viewer's gaze.

His work poses subtle but penetrating questions about truth, interpretation and the role of the viewer. What does it mean to “capture” and “hold on to” something? And how do the technical and cultural filters of our time influence what we consider to be reality?

### **Indriķis Ģelzis**

The works of Indriķis Ģelzis (born 1988) can be seen as landscapes of algorithmic realism. They usually manifest themselves as architectural paintings and implosive sculptures, which map the increasingly complex relationships between humans, nature and technology.

Central to this is the tension between the linear and the spatial, the system and the fragment, information and experience. These dualities, united contradictions and conflicting similarities form both the thematic core of Ģelzis' work and the nuances of its form.

His artistic language attempts to capture the world around us as a truth separate from human perception. He imitates technological mechanisms as self-sufficient entities and explores the parallels between biological and mechanical bodies, emphasising their similarities.

Ģelzis himself says about this:

‘I had these cut-out forms left over from earlier sculptures, scattered across the studio floor. I kept stepping over them and sometimes accidentally kicked them. They reminded me of autumn leaves, as they die in colour, not in absence. Sometimes something takes shape, not because it has meaning, but because it wants a body.’

## **Dirk Zoete**

The oeuvre of Dirk Zoete (born 1969) encompasses a wide range of media: drawings, sculptures, installations, printing techniques, (stop-motion) films and paintings. Yet drawing forms the core of his practice, a daily fundamental activity in which observation, imagination and memory converge.

In Zoete's work, "classical" motifs such as (self) portraits, landscapes and archetypal human figures recur, constructed from geometric shapes that return cyclically and constantly transform.

In 2018, he began drawing cacti and other plant-like forms, as if an imaginary botanist were compiling a catalogue of his improvised plant world. Using pigment, chalk, pencil, oil pastel and frottage, he creates textures that evoke the relief of plants. What began as a study of nature grew into an imaginative, abstracted flora that reflects the artist's freedom and joy of drawing.

The apparent simplicity and playful naivety of these works emphasise the poetry of imperfection, making his imaginary garden even more playful and sensual.

## **Svelte Thys**

For years, Svelte Thys (born in 1998) wandered through the landscapes of her youth. Now that she has settled back in the region, her gaze has shifted from the vast openness of the countryside to a more intimate scale: the private world of her garden.

The garden is an enclosed space that, paradoxically, offers her freedom. In that seclusion, her work finds new layers, where human presence and nature meet in a tender embrace. Where her practice once began with detached observation, she now comes closer to a deeply human feeling that touches us all: longing.

Svelte reflects on the beauty of longing itself. She allows it time to unfold organically, to take shape at its own pace. Her work is imbued with a deliberate slowness: ideas are allowed to simmer for months before finding their way onto the canvas.

In an era dominated by immediacy, she consciously chooses a slower rhythm, a tempo that continues to resonate in the finished work and invites the viewer to discover and quietly contemplate. The image belongs to everyone, but its interpretation remains deeply personal. Each work forms a world unto itself, a universe that arises between perception and representation.

## **Theo De Meyer**

Theo De Meyer (born 1990) moves between architecture, design and art, often reconciling the different disciplines in his projects. He plays with context and scale, interprets and transforms, creating new worlds through the act of building.

Garden of Delight is a series of installations that explores how space is defined and what effects this has. Just as objects in the landscape unintentionally form a structure, carefully placed interventions here create new relationships with space and activate the environment, generating new meanings.

Garden of Delight #2 reinterprets the traditional garden fence using industrial materials.

### **Filip Vervaet**

In the often monumental sculptural work of Filip Vervaet (born 1977), the malleability of nature is a recurring theme, as is the visibility of his hand in the creative process. His oeuvre explores the relationship between humans, artificiality and nature.

Vervaet works with classical sculptural materials, such as bronze, which he combines with contemporary materials such as car paint. This reveals his mastery in bending nature to his will. In his idiosyncratic visual language, he effortlessly interweaves diverse materials and techniques, constantly pushing the boundaries of sculpture.

His works are created with meticulous precision, balancing between ideas, chaos and carefully constructed artistic order. With his sculptures, he aims to expose the “black holes” of our perception and take a look at another reality – the subconscious, the supernatural.

The constant interaction between humans, artificiality and nature forms the core of his artistic research. References to art history and the fusion of futuristic and pre-modernist visual language create an alienating, hypnotising viewing experience. The result is a psychedelic dream world that is as fascinating as it is elusive.

### **Anthony Leenders**

Anthony Leenders (born 1995) creates objects based on spiritual and physical desires. His work focuses on creating a tangible living environment, rooted in nature and formed from raw or defined matter, in which reconciliation is sought with the turbulent landscape in which we move as humans and as a society.

Through his multidisciplinary practice, he depicts a philosophy of life that relates to visual art, design, architecture and science. His work forms a platform for entities that, through matter, form and symbolism, bridge the gap between the material and spiritual worlds.

The object plays an accompanying role in this: it invites us to a gentler existence, one that finds more harmony in the waves of time. His objects function as catalysts for transition and embody values related to humanity, nature, time and cosmic consciousness.

Leenders' work moves between a light-hearted poetic game and critical reflection on our position within a society in which the spiritual relationship between humans and nature

is often lacking. It forms a continuous search for balance in the duality between the temporality of existence and our responsibility towards what will survive us.

### **Han Decorte**

Han Decorte (born 1986) is a curator and scenographer. She works in the fields of contemporary art, design and heritage. In addition to curating, she also designs scenographies for exhibitions, reinforcing the concept and atmosphere of the exhibition.

Among other things, she curated the exhibition History of the Future, inspired by the heritage collection of the Sint-Janshospitaal in Damme. In 2024, in addition to being a jury member, she was also curator and scenographer of the exhibition Draad in Texture at the museum in Kortrijk, where she and a jury selected thirty artists from six hundred submissions.

She recently did the project Vrouwen van Papier (Women of Paper) in the Heritage Library of Bruges, in which she unveiled the letters of two hundred women to Guido Gezelle in an exhibition. In addition to this heritage, she also showed work by contemporary artists, poets and writers who were inspired by the letters. For two years in a row, she was co-curator of the Belgian Art & Design Affair at the Arsenaalsite in Ghent.

Decorte is also team coordinator of Graphic Arts at LUCA School of Arts Ghent and teaches textile design in Ghent and product design at LUCA Genk. In her teaching, she encourages students to think abstractly and conceptually, to approach their work critically and to examine their position within society.