

middelheim
museum



Camille Henrot

Wet Job

11.06 — 16.10.22





Welcome

“The Middelheim Museum’s invitation to Camille Henrot to create a solo exhibition is in keeping with a long tradition of collaborations with international artists. It also makes sense for the artist to show her work in the art park. Henrot believes that art should be fertile. She literally plants her works in the art park and invites viewers to let meaning grow wild, just like the 8000m² wild flower meadow that was sown especially for this project.”

— Sara Weyns, Director Middelheim Museum



Photo: Ans Brys

Welcome

Wet Job is the first solo exhibition by world renowned artist Camille Henrot (°1978) in Belgium.

The exhibition is spread over the artpark in 2 zones, you can start your tour where you want.

The exhibition is the first of its kind to focus on the artist's practice in sculpture and brings together close to 40 works produced over the last decade in an expansive outdoor context. With more than one publicly accessible entrance, the grounds of Middelheim Museum offer multiple entry points and trajectories throughout Henrot's oeuvre, including works from the series *Overlapping Figures* (2011), *Desktop* (2013-2014), *Monday* (2016), *System of Attachment* (2018-2021) and *Wet Job* (2021-2022).

Camille Henrot

3,2,1..., bronze, flowstone, polyurethane, aluminum, brass, plaster, steel, wax, wood, various waste materials, 2021 Exhibition view, "Wet Job", Middelheim Museum, 2022
p.4, p.6



Photo: Ans Brys

Wet Job

In the context of this exhibition, 'Wet Job' has multiple and evolving meanings: it refers to the labor of breastfeeding and breast pumping (think 'wet nurse') at the same time as it evokes the end of life ('wet work' – slang for murder), the fluidity of identity, and the sometimes messy nature of human relations.



Camille Henrot
Undelivered Message
(detail), bronze, 2016
Exhibition view of
"Days are Dogs"
Carte Blanche
to Camille Henrot
Palais de Tokyo, 2017

Photo: Zachary Tyler Newton.

Around Braem Pavilion Monday Series (2016)

Map

Monday (2016)

- 1 *Derelitta*, bronze, aluminum, iron, 2016
- 2 *No Message*, bronze, aluminium, laser disk, 2016
- 3 *Undelivered Message*, bronze, wood, 2016

At the south entrance of Middelheim Museum, a cast of characters from *Monday* (2016) are on display. Slightly larger than human scale, *Derelitta*, *No Message* and *Undelivered Message* are figures suspended in a state of simultaneous satiation and expectation. They are isolated in perpetual conflict with the technological devices and routines they depend on. One could liken them to a group of moody teenagers, or a family gathered around a dinner table – hungry, indifferent, obeying the expectations imposed on them, but eager to get back to their vices.

Inside Braem Pavilion

Wet Job Series (2021)



Camille Henrot
End of Me (detail),
bronze, plastic
tubing, jeans, 2021

Photo: Annik Wetter

Map

- 9 *Iron Deficiency*, bronze (arm, iron), wood board, steel (stand), reinforced acryl (blanket), 2021
- 7 *End of Me*, bronze, plastic tubing, jeans, 2021
- 8 *A Free Quote*, bronze (hanger), plastic, PU drops, 2021

Inside the Braem Pavillion, three works from Henrot's *Wet Job* (2021) series explore the limits and borderlines of the postpartum body. With *Iron Deficiency*, *End of Me* and *A Free Quote*, Henrot looks at the transactional mechanics of exchange - between mother and child as well as mother and machine - serving, suckling and secreting on schedule. As the body is transformed from solid to liquid, from liquid to vapour and from contained to leaking, Henrot considers the value of breast milk in an underrecognized, undercompensated field of labor.

“I’m interested in thinking about breastfeeding in relation to debt. We are ultimately indebted to our mothers. In industrial terms, breast milk is an extractable resource that one human takes from another. In psychoanalytic terms, I started to think that the debt that we all inherently owe our mothers might be responsible for society’s prejudice against women. That the feeling of being indebted results in a certain type of contempt.”

— Camille Henrot



Camille Henrot
Iron Deficiency (detail), bronze (arm, iron),
wood board, steel (stand), reinforced
acryl (blanket), 2021

At the heart of Henrot's sculptural practice is an impulse to attribute shapes to the liminal experiences of bodies and slippages beyond the self. Henrot's hybrid figures - neither human nor animal nor plant-like in form - exist in a state of perpetual becoming. Always suggesting the capacity to (d)evolve, they seem to ease into their own metaphysical contradiction.

Walking to zone Hortiflora System of Attachment Series (2019)

System of Attachment, Henrot's largest series of sculptures to date, run wild throughout the exhibition. Inspired by the way we attempt to understand the world before we have words—through taste and touch—the series is a prolongation of the artist's interests in the sensual basis of knowledge. Two large sculptures by Henrot link the north and south end of Middelheim Museum. With *OCPD* (2019), a large nebulous form appears almost weightless, held up by fabric floating in the wind, and reaching upward to hold it with two gentle pokes. *Every Goodbye* (2019), a sequence of three large question marks with a hanging teether toy, uses a linguistic sign to explore pre-linguistic experience.

Map

12 *Every Goodbye*,
bronze, 2019

11 *OCPD*, bronze, 2019



Photo: archives kamei mennour

Camille Henrot
OCPD, bronze, 2019

Camille Henrot

A portrait of Camille Henrot, a woman with reddish-brown hair, smiling and looking towards the camera. She is positioned between two large, textured, light blue-green cylindrical objects that resemble rolled-up fabric or paper. She is wearing a dark t-shirt with a brown and green pattern, a gold necklace with a circular pendant, and a silver ring on her left hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Camille Henrot, portrait, 2019 - Photo: Maria Fonti

Camille Henrot (b. 1978 in Paris, lives and works in Berlin and New York) is recognized as one of the most influential voices in contemporary art today. Inspired by a playful research process, Henrot works in a multiplicity of media, including film, drawing, painting, sculpture and installation. Inspired by literature, second-hand marketplaces, cartoons, social media, self help and the banality of everyday life, Henrot's work captures the complexity of living as both private individuals and global citizens in an increasingly connected and over-stimulated world.

In 2013, Henrot received widespread critical acclaim for *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), for which she was awarded the Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennale.

In 2016, she was given the Carte Blanche at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, where she presented the major exhibition 'Days Are Dogs'. Henrot has had numerous exhibitions worldwide, including at the New Museum, New York; Fondazione Memmo, Rome; Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Japan and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and many others.

Other upcoming solo exhibitions in 2022 include Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria, and the Munch Museum in Oslo.

In and around the water

Laundry (2022)

Contrology (2016)

Installed in the existing basin of the Hortiflora, the new work *Laundry* (2022) is Henrot's first fountain work, premiering at Middelheim Museum. A stretched out shirt, hanging to dry, is encircled by intravenous tubes. The sculpture leaks droplets of water slowly, signaling the ever-flowing passage of time, aging, and the fragility of the body envelope. Inspired by a stay at a friend's home, a former 'laverie' where people would wash clothes by hand in outdoor rivers, Henrot states, "Washing your own clothes by hand means that you yourself witness the dirt float away. Maybe within that act, there is some comfort in knowing that we can only go forward in time - like Heraclitus said, 'You can never step into the same

Map

14 *Laundry*, bronze, intravenous tubes, 2022

13 *Contrology*, bronze, 2016

Inside Het Huis

Overlapping Figures (2011)

Photo: Alexandra Serrano



Camille Henrot
Overlapping figures,
bronze, plaster and
wood, 2011

Map

17 19 21 22

Overlapping Figures

16 *3,2,1...*, bronze,
flowstone, polyurethane,
aluminum, brass,
plaster, steel, wax,
wood, various waste
materials, 2021

In *Het Huis*, *Overlapping Figures* (2011) and *3,2,1...* (2021), involve similar processes of sculpture-making, though produced ten years apart. Both feature the remnants of their own manufacture: hammers, bricks, wooden boards, pieces of plaster, boxes, brushes and detritus of other destroyed works. The bronze worm-like forms of *Overlapping Figures* seem to simultaneously escape and recoil, while the larger-than-life crow mother of *3,2,1...* sheds a tear at the disordered nest it has built for itself.

Camille Henrot
3,2,1..., bronze, flowstone,
polyurethane, aluminum, brass,
plaster, steel, wax, wood, various
waste materials, 2021
Exhibition view, "Wet Job"
Middelheim Museum, 2022

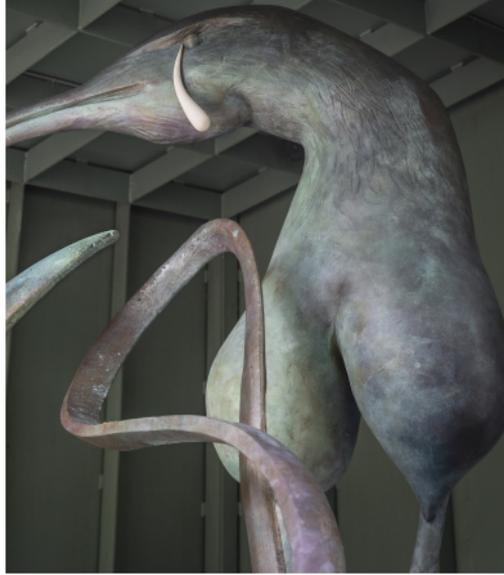


Photo: Ans Brys

Henrot acknowledges that the process of creation automatically implies the generation of waste. The title of the work *3,2,1...* points to the psychological state of regression that accompanies motherhood as well as to the emergency of the climate crisis. Though marked by individual shame and guilt, Henrot positions climate grief and postpartum depression rather as crises of collective and political responsibility – a concern that takes on added urgency in the green environment of Middelheim Museum.

“The large bird figure is a crow mother, and the collected detritus at her feet conveys the weight of responsibility that she feels. But the waste is also her nest. The process of production is, in some ways, the subject of the piece— it seems we are always consuming and being consumed by our own production. The guilt of creating new life amidst a climate crisis is combined with the guilt of being an artist. The sculpture represents the ambivalence between destruction and transformation. Each transformation involves the generation of waste and the birth of something new, and it can be regenerative and painful at the same time.”

— Camille Henrot

“Rather than representing the ‘identity’ of motherhood, I want to work with the field of motherhood, with the land it occupies - and its ramifications. I want to try to dismantle the expectation of the “good mother” and think about motherhood as a state of being, of attachment and separation, in which contradictions, ambivalence, and inner conflict could arise and be acceptable.”

— Camille Henrot



Photo: Maria Fonti

Inside Hortiflora Labyrinths Mon Corps de Femme (2019)

Mon Corps de Femme (2019), on view in the Hortiflora labyrinth, is a body caught between two opposing forces of gravity - the rising flames reminiscent of flamboyant Gothic architecture, with the melting, heaviness of the sagging belly. Henrot states, "I recall a friend calling out to me, 'Don't open the bathroom door, everything is falling' (or 'Tout tombe', in French). The phrase haunted me and I thought it would be an interesting idea to explore in sculpture. There is a beauty to sagging flesh. The figure seems to be disintegrating, but it also stands confidently like a kind of soldier, or weapon. The emptied breasts are sharp like knives. I started to think of vulnerability as a kind of weapon, too."

Camille Henrot

Mon Corps de Femme, bronze, 2019

Map

25 *Mon Corps de Femme*, bronze, 2019



Photo: Aurelien Mole

Hortiflora Field

A Remarkable Ascent (2017)

At the north entrance to Middelheim Museum, *A Remarkable Ascent* (2017) faces the Hortiflora. Contrary to some of the more jagged, textural volumes in Henrot's bronze works, this sculpture's smooth surface seems as if it was shaped by liquid erosion. This figure grapples with its own interiority and seems to pull at its own thoughts - inspired by Henrot's literal understanding of the English phrase 'brain melting', or being 'swamped' with work. Rather than seeking to expand and grow, *A Remarkable Ascent* instead bears the weight of overwhelm, dissolving into a drop of itself.

Camille Henrot

A Remarkable Ascent, bronze, 2017

Exhibition view of "Days are Dogs"

Carte Blanche to Camille Henrot

Palais de Tokyo, 2017

Map

30 *A Remarkable Ascent*, bronze, 2017



Camille Henrot
L'Enfant Plus, bronze, 2019

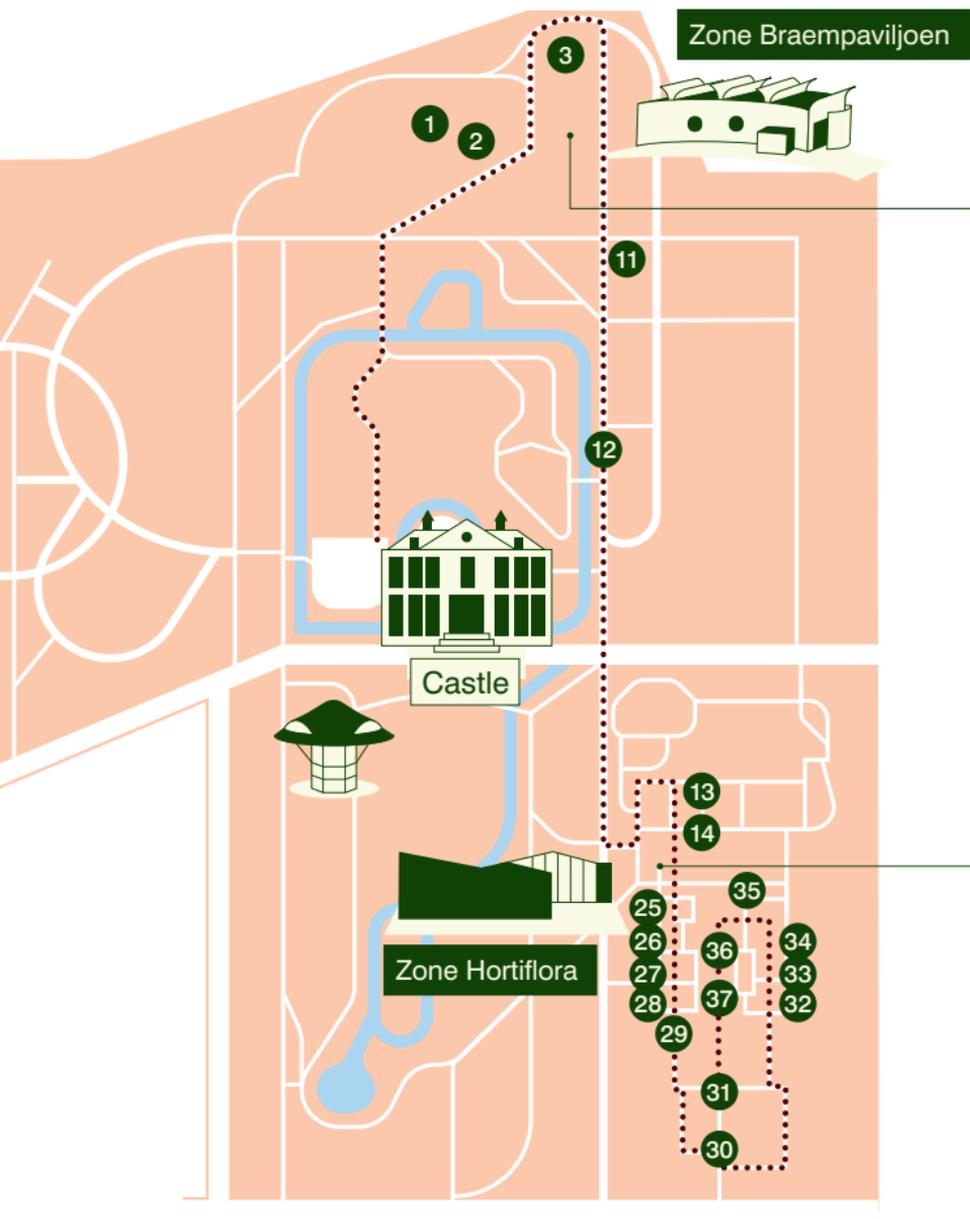
Presented in both indoor and outdoor spaces of Middelheim Museum, Henrot's works engage directly with their environment. She states, "I didn't want the sculptures to overpower the landscape, and thought instead that my work could occupy space in the way that natural bodies would – that they could exist alongside a rabbit, a cow, a mushroom, a stone." Working together with the museum team and city gardeners, Henrot selected wild flowers that would be left to grow freely over the course of the five-month long exhibition. While the wild meadow obliquely recalls Henrot's past works involving flowers, the present intervention underscores the porous nature (and the porosity to nature) of the exhibition as a whole.

Zone Braempaviljoen

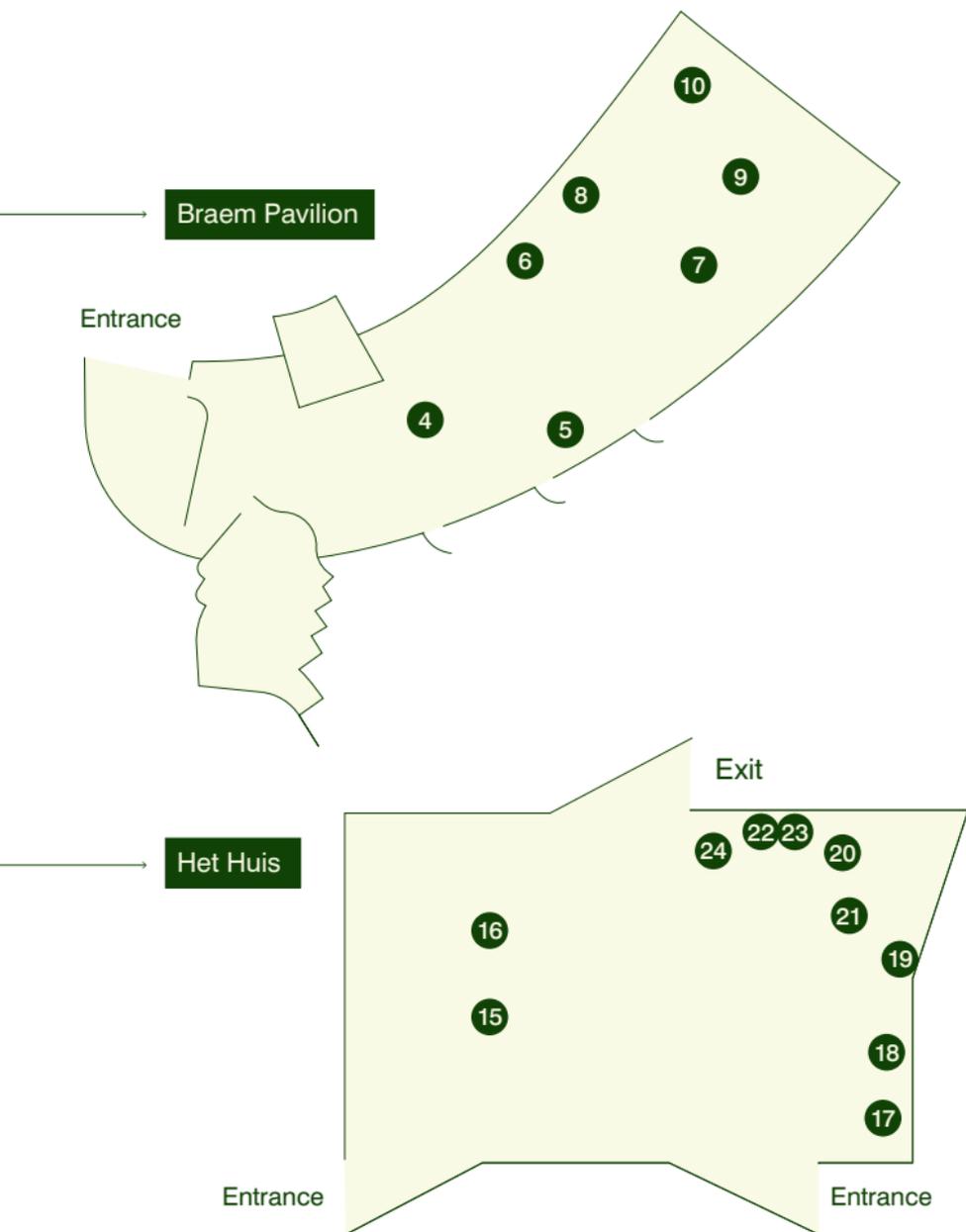
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- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | <i>Derelitta</i> , bronze, aluminum, iron, 2016 |
| 2 | <i>No Message</i> , bronze, aluminium, laser disk, 2016 |
| 3 | <i>Undelivered Message</i> , bronze, wood, 2016 |
| 4 | <i>Penny Pinching</i> , bronze, 2014 |
| 5 | <i>Learning to Loose</i> , bronze, 2019 |
| 6 | <i>Shemale</i> , bronze, 2013 |
| 7 | <i>End of Me</i> , bronze, plastic tubing, jeans, 2021 |
| 8 | <i>A Free Quote</i> , bronze (hanger), plastic, PU drops, 2021 |
| 9 | <i>Iron Deficiency</i> , bronze (arm, iron), wood board, steel (stand), reinforced acryal (blanket), 2021 |
| 10 | <i>Second Semester</i> , bronze, 2019 |
| 11 | <i>OCPD</i> , bronze, 2019 |
| 12 | <i>Every Goodbye</i> , bronze, 2019 |

Zone Hortiflora

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- | | |
|----|--|
| 13 | <i>Contrology</i> , bronze, 2016 |
| 14 | <i>Laundry</i> , bronze, intravenous tubes, 2022 |
| 15 | <i>La Pause</i> , bronze, 2017 |
| 16 | <i>3,2,1...</i> , bronze, flowstone, polyurethane, aluminum, brass, plaster, steel, wax, wood, various waste materials, 2021 |
| 17 | <i>Overlapping Figures</i> , bronze, brick and hammer, 2011 |
| 18 | <i>Sharp Drops</i> , bronze, wood, 2014 |
| 19 | <i>Overlapping Figures</i> , bronze, brick, 2011 |
| 20 | <i>Overlapping Figures</i> , bronze and plaster, 2011 |
| 21 | <i>Overlapping Figures</i> , bronze and wood, 2011 |
| 22 | <i>The Formation of Teeth</i> , bronze, 2013 |
| 23 | <i>The Formation of Nails</i> , bronze, 2013 |
| 24 | <i>Self Organizing</i> , bronze, 2014 |
| 25 | <i>Mon Corps de Femme</i> , bronze, electric cables, 2019 |
| 26 | <i>Licorne</i> , bronze, 2022 |
| 27 | <i>Two on Call</i> , bronze, 2021 |
| 28 | <i>You Are So Minute</i> , bronze, 2022 |
| 29 | <i>L' Enfant Plus</i> , bronze, 2019 |
| 30 | <i>A Remarkable Ascent</i> , bronze, 2017 |
| 31 | <i>Too early</i> , bronze, 2020 |
| 32 | <i>Gargoyles</i> , bronze, 2022 |
| 33 | <i>Personal Development 2</i> , bronze, 2014 |
| 34 | <i>Personal Development</i> , bronze, 2014 |
| 35 | <i>Story of Substitute</i> , bronze, 2021 |
| 36 | <i>Distant Childhood</i> , bronze, 2019 |
| 37 | <i>Dropping the Ball</i> , bronze, iron, copper, 2016 |



••• Route exhibiton Camille Henrot



Wet Job Flower mix

A special mix of flowers is selected by Ars Horti and for sale in the museumshop.

List of one- and two-year-old exotics

Anethum graveolens
Borago officinalis
Calendula officinalis
Centaurea cyanus, Syn. Cyanus segetum
Coriandrum sativum
Cosmos bipinnatus
Fagopyrum esculentum
Helianthus annuus
Nigella damascena
Ornithopus sativus
Phacelia tanacetifolia
Raphanus sativus subsp. oleiferus
Sinapis alba
Trifolium incarnatum

List of native perennials

Matricaria chamomilla
Silene flos-cuculi
Anthoxanthum odoratum
Hieracium aurantium
Cardamine pratensis
Daucus carota
Achillea millefolium
Hypochaeris radicata
Malva sylvestris
Scorzoneroides autumnalis
Leucanthemum vulgare
Lotus corniculatus
Plantago lanceolata
Prunella vulgaris
Ranunculus acris
Trifolium arvense
Trifolium repens
Trifolium pratense

Colophon

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Scenography: Theo De Meyer

Graphic Design: Mirror Mirror

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Ian Coomans, Raf Lauwers, Eric Servais & team,
Rafaëlle Lelièvre, Erik Rombaut, Grietje D'hollander,
Floor Wyns, Ann De Block, Louise Govaerts,
Marianna Liosi, Léa Trudel, Gabrielle Chardigny,
Koen Mertens & team, Cleo Cafmeyer, Derek Biron,
Wies Mathieu & team, Theo De Meyer,
Margot De Caster, Robby Detobel,
Dave Evison, Sophie Nurse, Francisca Frère,
Anne-Marie Poels, Jan Bleys, Quinn Latimer,
Charles Milomes, Tanya Bourgeois, Veerle Meul,
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