

## Wim Delvoye

Museum Tinguely, Basel: 14 June 2017 – 1 January 2018



**Museum Tinguely is to host in 2017 Switzerland's first major retrospective of Belgian artist Wim Delvoye. Since the late 1980s, Delvoye has been known for works that rest on intelligently witty admixtures of the profane with the sublime, where tradition clashes with utopia, and craftsmanship with high-tech. Probably his best known works are his *Cloacas*, which mechanically reconstruct the physiological processes that take place inside the human body between ingestion and excretion and so visualise one of the basic constants of our existence. The artist's more recent replicas of construction machinery and trucks**

**using Gothic-style ornaments attest to his delight in aesthetic experimentation and monumental works based on professional constructions and built out of laser-cut steel plates. The exhibition in Basel, which was created in collaboration with MUDAM Luxembourg, will run from 14 June 2017 to 1 January 2018 and will showcase the whole gamut of Delvoye's work from his early days to the present.**

It all began with the drawings that Delvoye made as a child, which can indeed be read as laying the foundations of what was to follow. Here, we already find the openness, the curiosity, the penchant for monumentality and the thrill of all things new and strange that have consistently characterised both the man and his work. Delvoye's art is rooted in his own Flemish heritage with its love of tradition, craftsmanship, and engineering combined with an openness to the world, a lively imagination, and utopianism – as evidenced in the works of other Flemish artists like James Ensor, Paul Van Hoeydonck and Panamarenko. At the same time, Delvoye is one for whom national borders have no meaning, which is why he works with artisans in Indonesia, China or Iran. His *Ironing Boards* (1990) bear the coats of arms of his home country, while his *18 Dutch Gas-Cans* (1987 – 1988) are decorated with Delft porcelain painting. The solid steel tubes in *Chantier V* (1995) are supported by specially made porcelain feet, while some of the concrete mixers and barriers in *Chantier I* (1990 – 1992) are made of artfully carved wood. Media intermingle; materials are suspended in a creative tension. The banal is embellished to make it art; folk art becomes a museum piece.

Delvoye created his first *Cloaca* in 2001 and by 2010 there were nine more of them. These complex machines use enzymes and other substances to reconstruct the process of human digestion under laboratory conditions. The entire human digestive tract from mouth to anus is here rebuilt in isolation from the rest and so rendered visible. What counts is not the shape of the individual organs but solely their function. The first *Cloacas*, like the *Cloaca-New and Improved* (2001) shown in the Museum Tinguely, were designed as purely scientific laboratory machines. *Cloaca Quattro* (2004 – 2005), which tellingly was first exhibited in the show 'La Belgique visionnaire' in 2005, leaves behind the rather clinical laboratory image, however, and with its washing machines and exposed motors looks more like an assemblage of machines. In a break with the seriousness of the series, the *Cloaca Travel Kit* (2009 – 2010) is mounted on a suitcase to facilitate portability, allowing it to be deployed spontaneously, worldwide.

Ironic refraction is a method that Delvoye is especially fond of and uses extensively. After all, the consternation of his viewers is part of his artistic repertoire. Artistic considerations inevitably become enmeshed with moral ones when his exhibits include *Tim* (2006 – 2008), the Swiss man who sold his skin for tattoos first to the artist and later to a collector – as they will during the opening week of the show and at ART Basel. The questions are simply too pressing to be ignored and they cry out to be answered one way or another. Another highlight of the exhibition will be *Cement Truck* (2012 – 2016), which is set up in Solitude Park next to Museum Tinguely. This full-size vehicle is made of Corten steel plates which have been laser cut to reproduce neo-Gothic tracery and ornaments. The same aesthetic informs the drop-shaped *Suppo* (2010), a neo-Gothic cathedral model comprising only a single twisted and contorted spire with ornamentation.

The exhibition will treat visitors to a tour through the world of an artist who is constantly reinventing himself and whose love of novelty and surprise is almost palpable. The sculptures and drawings are at the same time a most beautiful inspiration to reflect on art, on life, and on the world.

Wim Delvoye was born in Wervik, Belgium in 1965.  
He lives and works in Ghent and Brighton.

### **Publication**

A lavishly illustrated catalogue in German and English containing contributions by Sofia Eliza Bouratsis, Michel Onfray and Tristan Trémeau as well as a preface by Roland Wetzels and Enrico Lunghi is to be published by Somogy éditions d'art, Paris. It will be available both at the Museum shop and online: 48 CHF, ISBN: 978-2-7572-1293-6.

The exhibition was realised in close cooperation with the MUDAM Luxembourg.

Curator of the exhibition: Andres Pardey

### **General information**

**Title:** Wim Delvoye

**Address:** Museum Tinguely | Paul Sacher-Anlage 1 | 4002 Basel

**Duration:** 14 June 2017 – 1 January 2018

**Opening:** Tuesday, 13 June 2017, 6:30 pm

**Press conference:** Tuesday, 13 June 2017, 9:30 am

**Opening hours:** Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm daily

Special opening hours during ART Basel (12 – 18 June 2017): Monday – Sunday. 9 am – 7 pm

#### **Websites:**

<https://www.tinguely.ch>

<https://wimdelvoye.be/>

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