

15.10.17–4.03.18 Mon → Sun, 10:00 → 17:00 museumdd.be

# Thomas Lerooy PLAYGROUND

In his work, Thomas Lerooy constantly plays with motifs and themes, with shapes, materials and colours. His work is created by an almost magical imagination in which he brings together the present with historical artistic, folkloric or scientific references that are apparently incompatible except in his intuitive 'imagination'. Both the idea of playing and re-using known or existing images to create something new, are explicitly presented in *Playground*. Therefore, Thomas Lerooy interpreted the exhibition space as his play pen, in which he built 'play blocks' tailored to the size of the museum and placed them in such a way to form a labyrinth.

The magnum opus in the total installation is the monumental fountain on which putti with death heads sit or lie, performing all kinds of scabious actions. The sculpture reminds of the monumental sculptures that were prevalent in the nineteenth century, with the work of Auguste Rodin as the main example. The putti seem to originate from a grotesque parallel world that recalls the unreal and often provocative works of Belgian symbolist artists such as Félicien Rops and James Ensor. The fountain also recalls one of the first bronze sculptures by Thomas Lerooy, *Le petit Jean*, a similar putto that in the spring of 2006 was installed on the roof of the museum peeing in the direction of the visitors.

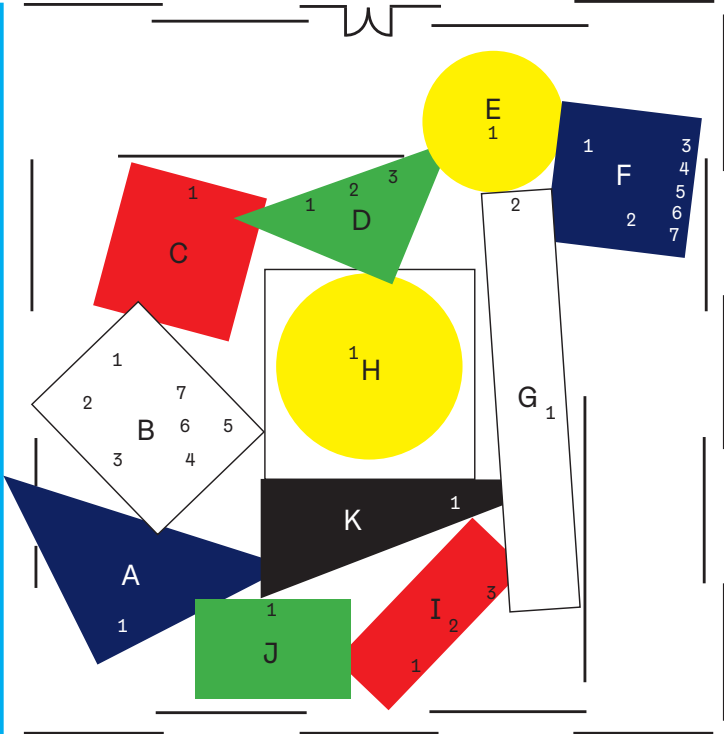
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Together, the different 'play blocks' not only represent an exhibition trail, but also form a sculpture on their own to be experienced from within, without the possibility to see the sculpture from above as an entity. The geometric shapes and primary colours of the 'play blocks' refer simultaneously to the abstract modernism of the 1910s and 1920s, such as the art movement *De Stijl* of Piet Mondriaan and Theo Van Doesburg. With this, Thomas Lerooy introduces an odd and unexpected meaning into his work as up till now his work has been associated with an often dark and ominous imagery. Equally unexpected is the stack of posters in the first room, a work that seems to serve as an introduction to *Playground*. The cut-out forms in the posters represent in an orderly way the twelve spaces Thomas Lerooy plays with in the *Playground* project. However, in contrast to the order in the poster, a certain chaos in the museum prevails resulting from the way the spaces were pushed together.

The different rooms each contain a single work or a series of thematically related drawings or sculptures. *Playground*, however, is in no way a retrospective exhibition, but rather a combination of thematic leaps where new and slightly older works are put together. An important thread through Thomas Lerooy's work is the tension between formal beauty and unavoidable decay, the abject and the ugly. Everything falls into decay, but nothing is lost, just as a dead body breaks down into billions of atoms to be subsequently reintroduced into the chain of life. Of a delicate beauty are the sleeping or dead birds who found their last nest in a broken football, or the pieces of stone that are still hopelessly held together with adhesive tape in the work *Beauty in the shadow of the stars*.

In the work of Thomas Lerooy, different realities, each with their own rules, appear to exist in different layers. You tumble from one language into another in such a way that death and eternity meet, but also beauty and ugliness, order and chaos, theatricality and intimacy, drama and humour... Together they form a complex oeuvre that at the same time moves and agitates, shocks and stifles!

Tanguy Eeckhout



- A**

1 *Playground-poster*  
paper, 120 x 90 cm
- B**

1 *Let us inside*, 2016  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 25 cm  
2 *Goal*  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 34 cm  
3 *Can't fly*, 2016  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 25 cm  
4 *Play with me*, 2017  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 20 cm  
5 *Fairplay*, 2017  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 25 cm  
6 *Fall for gravity*, 2016  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 20 cm  
7 *Closer*, 2016  
Bronze, patina + silver, Ø 19 cm
- C**

1 *Do birds fly?*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 196 x 140 cm  
framed: 225 x 170 cm
- D**

1 *I am*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm  
2 *Rock Bottom*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm  
3 *No one*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm
- E**

1 *Beauty in the shadow of the stars*, 2015  
Bronze, patina, 100 x 400 x 300 cm
- F**

1 *You were on my mind*, 2014  
Bronze, patina + silver, glass, 64 x 22 cm  
2 *Destroy everything you touch*, 2014  
Bronze, patina + silver, 50 x 19 cm  
3 *Showtime*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm  
4 *Bricks don't roll*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm  
5 *Facetime*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm  
6 *One more light*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 49 x 35 cm  
framed: 115 x 87 cm
- G**

1 *Phoenix*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 37 x 46 cm  
2 *With in*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 196 x 140 cm  
framed: 225 x 170 cm
- H**

1 *Playground*, 2017  
Bronze, concrete, 3900 x (h) 2428 cm
- I**

1 *Fountain*, 2017  
Bronze, marble, 36 x 43 cm  
2 *Mountain*, 2017  
Bronze, marble, 44 x 46 cm  
3 *Remain*, 2017  
Bronze, marble, 51 x 42 x 41 cm
- J**

1 *Playing with fire*, 2017  
Mixed Media, 196 x 140 cm  
framed: 225 x 170 cm
- K**

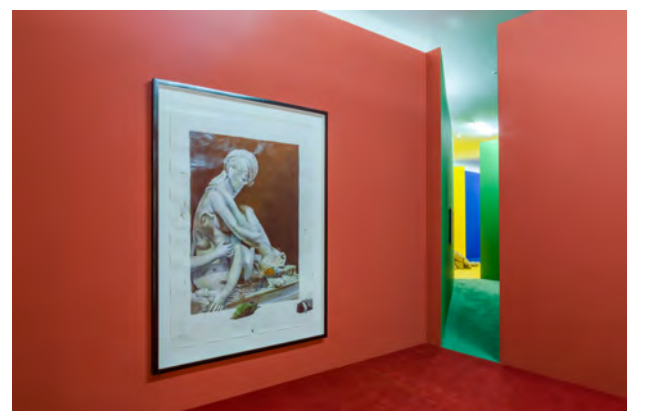
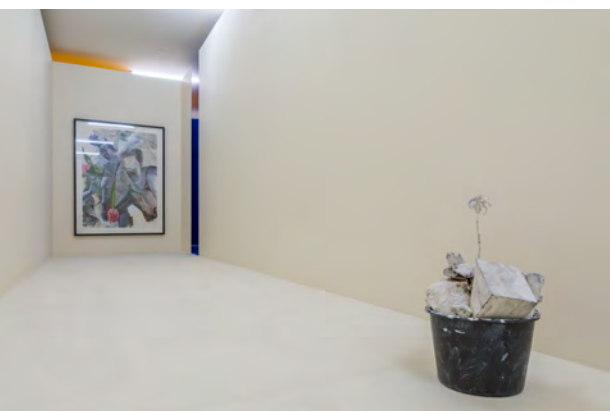
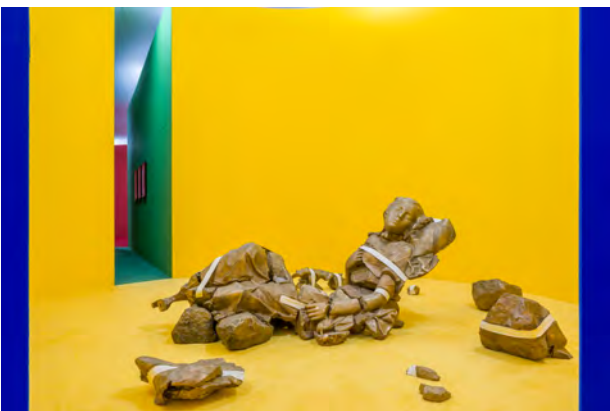
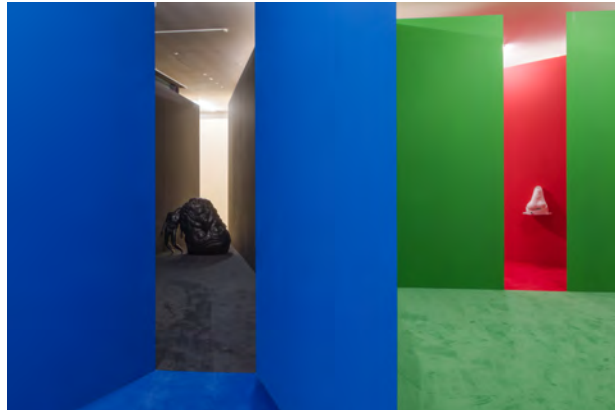
1 *Not enough brains to survive*, 2009  
Bronze, 138 x 120 x 120 cm
- Courtesy of the artist, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels
- F<sub>1</sub>**

private collection
- Exhibition realized with the support of rodolphe janssen and Nathalie Obadia gallery.

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# Thomas Lerooy *PLAYGROUND*

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**Courtesy of the artist, rodolphe janssen (Brussels) and Galerie Nathalie Obadia (Paris,Brussels) / photo's: Rik Vannevel**