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Celebrating 175: Wallace Berman, Assorted Material, circa 1960-2010

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City Life

Reviews

[[image]]

JEFF KOONS STEDELIIK MUSEUM

Like many entrepreneurs of the 1980s, former stockbroker Jeff Koons found a concept, marketed it to a commodity-hungry public, and made a packet. Ever the media manipulator, he makes a sophisticated case for his trussed-up trivia as dealing with common concerns such as religion and sexuality. But his humour has a definite, incisive edge.

This begs the question: at exactly whom is he pointing the finger in slogans like, 'Exploit the Masses, Banality as Saviour'? The art world has a seemingly masochistic desire to believe that the joke is on someone else, as it obediently elevates the king of kitsch to classic status.

Love him or hate him, you've got to admire his gall. He has the knack of making something as prosaic as a footbaal of an inflatable Easter bunny into a luxurious object d'art, monumentally dignified and at the same time repugnantly trivial. His early works glamourise off-the-shelf consumer durables, enshrining them in glass cases - a sardonic testimony to early '80s commodity fetishism.

As materialistic values mellowed out into the '90s, so Koons' creations and commissions (many of his ideas are executed by craftsmen) seeped sentimentality and saccharin sex. In his newest project, The Jeff Koons Handbook, he outstrips Madonna in Sex. Where she stops at stimulation, Koons goes the whole way with his porn queen/politician wife Ilona Staller, in a porn-meets-poodle parlour version of Adam and Eve so sickly sweet it turns raunch into retch.

Its aim? To transport the viewer to 'the sacred heart of Jesus'. As ever, Koons expresses himself with such a maddening mixture of naivete and sophistication that it's impossible to gauge his sincerity. But supporters and detractors alike eagerly await his next moves: res-erection or second coming? VVW
Jeff Koons exhibits at the Stedelijk Museum until 3 January. Pictured: 'Bourgeois Bust - Jeff & Ilona'

Paradijs ('Threatened Paradise') Paintings by self-taught artist whose abstract images combine futuristic geometrical shapes and natural images in a commentary on the contrast of man's heroic ideas and real chaos.

Art Works

Herengrache 220 231 (624 1980) Wed-Sat 14.00-17.00; free
TO MON 14/12: Marianne Aulman Lithos, etchings, drawings and paintings adapted from the styles of the classical architecture of Greece, Italy, Mexico and, especially, Egypt: Aulman's central fascinations are the effect of light on the stonework and the harmony of the constructions themselves.



FROM SAT 16/1: Marcel Schellekens Colour etchings, built up using only the primary colours, inspired by the interior and surroundings of the artist's workshop and the various types of light seen there. (Ends 14 February)

Beurs Van Berlage

Damrak 243 (627 0466) Times, prices vary

TO SUN 6/12: Babyboom Show featuring over 1500 baby pictures submitted by readers of the magazine Margriet. 12.00-18.00; f5/concs f3

Binnen

Keizergracht 82 (625 9603) Tue-Sat 12.00-18.00; free

TO THU 31/12: Alterego/Urushi-Arai/Ajeto Three parallel but distinct collections of glass objects by Borek Sipek, David Palterer, Richard Meitner, Niek Zwartjes and Jan Hladek.

Bloom

Bloemstraat 150 (638 8810) Phone for times: free

TO SAT 19/12: Protectors Exhibition of amulets, objects worn as a charm against evil. See Upfront.

Boekie Woekie

Berenstraat 16 (639 0507) Tue-Fri 12.00-18.00, Sat 12.00-17.00; free

TUE 1/12-THU 31/12: Jón Laxdal Typographical drawings, books and objects.

Braggiotti

Singel 424 (638 9654) Phone for times; free

TO SAT 5/12: Hanneke Fokkelman New contemporary glass gallery presents work by a Dutch artist combining glass with ceramics and working in the pâte de verre technique. Inspired by such objects as trees, branches, and even potatoes, the works are a colourful abstraction of nature.

TO SAT 5/12: Christophe Gallard First Dutch exhibition by Frenchman working in altuglass, to produce playful and colourful abstractions on human figures- avant-garde creations with a contemporary edge.

De Brakke Grond

Vlaams Cultureel Centrum, Nes 45 (622 9014)

Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00, Sun 13.00-17.00; free

TO SUN 6/12: Gaston De Mey Rationalist paintings on canvas and paper, somewhat reminiscent of Mondriaan, but incorporating lettering in the formalistic patterns.

TO SUN 6/12: Eddy De Vos Large paintings by Antwerp artist whose subjects encompass the monumental-Egyptian temples, ancient ruins, cathedrals and palaces- war scenes, the film world and even pornography. The common thread is the mythical, heroic qualities inherent in all these topics.

SAT 12/12-SUN 17/12: Bruisend Brussel ('Exciting Brussels') as part of a week-long celebration of the Belgian capital, and in particular its Flemish origins, three exhibitions are presented side by side.

Beschermde Brussel ('Protected Brussels') is a photo-exhibition of the city's protected monuments and landscapes; Brussel in Kaart ('Brussels In Maps') tells the story of the city over the past 450 years in detailed maps; and Institutioneel Luik ('Institutional Trapdoor') is an overview of its rôle as a political centre, from being Flemish regional capital to the heart of the new Europe.

SAT 12/12-SUN 10/1: Luc Hoenraet Brussels artist shows his paintings,

drawings and graphics, which are heavily influenced in style and content by the city. See also Langenberg.

Brinkman
Rozenstraat 59 (622 7493) Tue-Sat 12.00-18.00, and by appointment;
free
TO THU 10/12: Jan Rothuizen Paintings and drawings: new work by this
forerunner in the local art bratpack.

La Colombe
Lijnbaansgracht 192 (622 4128) Sat-Thu 11.00-17.00; free
Permanent Exhibiton: Graphics by Corneille, Appel and Miro.

Elf 15
Jodenbreestraat 11-15 (620 6902) Thu/Fri 14.00-20.00, Sat/Sun 12.00-
18.00; free
FROM FRI 11/12: Dadara CLA's resident cartoonist shows his
innovative drawings and paintings, a firm favourite on party fliers as well
as for readers of these pages. (End date tba)
Permanent Exhibition: Works by George Heidweiller, Vincent Abels,
Marcel Charlouis, plus sculptures from Zimbabwe and Australian
aboriginal art.

Elisabeth Den Bieman De Haas
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 44, (626 1012) Mon-Sat 10.30-17.30, Sun 13.00-
17.00; free
Permanent Exhibition: Works by the Cobra group of artists.

En Masse
Bloemgracht 121 (622 9764) Thu/Sat 13.00-17.00, and by appointment;
free
Permanent Exhibition: Electronically-generated 'multiples' by media
artists including Mark Madel, Peter Haartsen, Benten Van Schie, Raul
Marroquin, Anne Nigten and Stan Wijnans.

Felix Meritis
Keizersgracht 324 (623 1311) Phone for times and prices
WED 2/12-SAT 12/12: Ter Ere Van Will Spoor ('In Honour Of Will
Spoor') Exhibition celebrating one of the pioneers of mime in the
Netherlands, and comprising various props and backstage accessories,
plus video, film, slide, animated and other records of his work. The
exhibition forms the backdrop to the performance Würfel ('Cube')- see
Theatre.

Fons Welters
Bloemstraat 140 (622 7193) Tue-Sat 14.00-18.00; free
TO THU 24/12: Adam Kalkin + Aernout Mik: The Philosophy of Furniture
Yes, even the humble armchair has its own credo now. US architect
Kalkin and Dutch artist Mik communicated by fax to come up with this
joint project, which investigates the aggressive competition between the
person, animal and inanimate object enclosed in interior spaces. Three
bizarrely different scenarios are offered: the result promises to be
amusing as well as stimulating.

Françoise
Kerkstraat 176 (624 0145) Mon-Sat 09.30-18.00; free
TO SAT 2/1: JF Grenell Velp-based painter ex-

WALLACE BERMAN
ICAA

Of the leading lights of '50/'60s subculture, Wallace Berman is not a name that immediately springs to mind. But beat generation guru he was, an artist who - unlike Warhol - did not court publicity.

His ideas on free love, expanding the mind and new forms of art became seminal for the '60s; he appears on the cover of Sergeant Pepper and has a cameo role, as the hippy seed planter, in the classic road movie Easy Rider. Co-stars and Berman collectors Jack Nicholson and Dennis Hopper have both lent works for this exhibition.

Berman's emergence onto the art scene in 1957 had state censors working overtime. Never before had sex, drugs and mystic rituals - which were to become currency in later years - been so publicly paraded by any artist. His first exhibition was closed and Berman arrested on obscenity charges.

Copies of his underground magazine Semina were also confiscated. This publication, whose contributors included Bukowski and Burroughs, survives as an important catalogue of the art and ideas of key figures of the time, and is a rare insight into the seeds of psychedelia.

One of the California Assemblagists, Berman remodelled junk, trash and images from popular culture to highlight the stultifying mass media images he believed were numbing the world's mind. His 'Verifax' collages are among the most resonant art of the '60s. This show provides a thorough retrospective of the work of Berman, who dies in 1976 as the result of a car accident. VW
Wallace Berman's work can be seen at ICAA until 7 February. Pictured: untitled Verifax collage

[[image]]

Reviews by Vicky Woodhall

CLA16DECEMBER

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