



VILLA MÉDICIS
ACADÉMIE DE FRANCE
À ROME

EXHIBITION

I PECCATI – JOHAN CRETEN

French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici
from 15 October 2020 to 31 January 2021



Exhibition organized by the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici
curated by Noëlle Tissier
with the support of the Almine Rech and Perrotin galleries.

Initially scheduled for spring 2020, **Johan Creten's exhibition "I Peccati"**, will be presented from **15 October 2020 to 31 January 2021** at the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, curated by **Noëlle Tissier**.

Forerunner, unclassifiable and against the current, Johan Creten (born in 1963) is an artist that has distinguished himself as a **strong, enigmatic and intriguing figure** in the artistic landscape of recent decades, occupying a **singular place on the international scene of contemporary creation**.

Johan Creten made his mark in the 1980s with his **innovative use of ceramics**. Today he is considered a leading figure in his renewal in the field of contemporary art.

Another side of his work, he uses bronze with virtuosity for the **realization of monumental sculptures**, including a major example: "De Vleermuis - The Bat", that will be presented in the gardens of the Villa Medici.

The exhibition "I Peccati" brings together, for the first time and with such breadth in Italy, a collection of **fifty-five works** by the artist, in bronze, ceramic and resin. They will be reunited and juxtaposed to some historical works by Lucas Van Leyden (1494-1533), Hans Baldung (1484-1545), Jacques Callot (1592-1635), Barthel Beham (1502-1540) and Paul van Vianen (1570-1614), milestones underlying Johan Creten's thinking.

The first room opens onto a series of creations and re-creations of conceptual works from 1986. Placed alongside "The Garden" (produced in 1996-97 during the artist's residence at the Villa Medici) and of more seminal works like "Orange Display" (1989-2017) and "Plantstok" (1989-2012), this room questions our **relationship to introspection and self-awareness, invoking the notion of lost paradise and temptation.**

In the second room, a new monumental resin work "Muses and Medusa", started in 2005 and completed in 2019, dialogues with pieces from the famous metonymic series "Odore di Femmina" (started in 1998) on **seduction, the ambiguity of human feelings and relationships.**

A third section brings together highly political works including the bronze "The Price of Freedom" (2015), "Couch Potatoes" (1997) and a new series of ceramics "Wargames" (2019).

In the climb of the stairs, a set of enigmatic bronzes overhangs and poses the **question of moral conscience in a society caught in a continuous movement, in deep mutation.** The monumental sculpture "The Herring" towers 5 meters high in the last section. **A unique sculpture** produced in collaboration with the **historic workshops of the Porzellanmanufaktur Augarten** is revisiting a porcelain from *Dozza* and will be unveiled for the first time to the public.

Disseminated in space, a new series "Bolders" in glazed stoneware, invites the public to sit down, **take the time, observe the works to discover their hidden connections** and dive into breathtaking details. Shimmering glass surfaces, textured patinas, metaphors and hidden meanings taking from urban culture's "secret handshakes".

Johan Creten mentions **"Slow art"** and the need for a **return to introspection.** A movement, ranging from miniature to monumental figures, which allows you to take time and immerse yourself in an **exploration of the world with its individual and societal torments, for a journey filled with surprises and emotions.**

The sculptures of Johan Creten made especially for the exhibition between 2019 and 2020 added to the pieces that punctuate his journey from the 80s to the present day, are associated here with **16th and 17th century prints, tapestries and bas-reliefs from his personal collection.** These historical works summoned by the artist are a real reference in his creative process. They reveal his concerns, be they artistic, historical, political or philosophical. The intersection of these works in the exhibition upsets our perception through multiple reading points of view which, from the past, question the future of our humanity.



With Johan Creten, the sins are not seven in number. Seven, this implacable number, the same as the Bible's sacraments and Rome's hills. Here, the sins are infinite and unlimited, inexhaustible. They are not numerable, but just designatable.

Sins are not all capital, they can be imperial, imperious, peripheral, insidious, insignificant, invisible. They are always below calculation and language.

The seven capital sins are little when compared with silliness, barbarity, boredom, mutilation, regret, melancholy and terror, in short, with life. Thus, Johan Creten's sculptures have nothing to do with moral or sanction, guillotine or censorship. They speak of sins, of life that merges desire and pain, hope and misery, luxury and anger, love and death, Eros and Thanatos.

They speak of amphibian life, between the Styx and Paradise. They speak of instinctive life, when hearts beat, when sneaks coil, when wings deploy, when vulvas gape, when the curtain moves and the naked truth emerges from it, at last, that hypnotic Medusa. May sin not be, after all, the tired form of purity? Does it not point to our condition of extremely fallible men? Is sin not, to quote Victor Hugo, a beautiful "gravitation"?

— Colin Lemoine



The exhibition will be accompanied by a new publication with texts by Colin Lemoine and Nicolas Bourriaud, and photographs by Gerrit Schreurs.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



Johan Creten © Clair Dorn, 2018

Johan Creten

Born in 1963 in Belgium, Johan Creten is a Flemish sculptor based in Paris. He works all around the world from The Hague to New York, from Miami to Mexico City. He has notably exhibited in the Renaissance rooms of the Louvre in dialogue with Bernard Palissy and at the Eugène Delacroix Museum in Paris, the Bass Museum of Art in Miami, the Istanbul Biennale, the MAMCO in Geneva and the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp.

In 1986, he performed for the first time in the Paris metro in connection with the sculpture "La Langue" (The Tongue), which explores the semantic ambiguity between the organ and the means of expression.

In 1991, he exhibited in Sète (France) following his residency at the Villa Saint-Clair. In 1994, a large group of monumental "political" ceramics was presented by Christian Bernard at the Villa Arson in Nice (France). Two years later, he is a resident of the French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici. Two years later, he presents his first exhibition at the Robert Miller Gallery in New York with his emblematic series "Odore di Femmina".

In 2000, he lives in Mexico and Arizona.

In 2003, he had his first solo exhibition at the Bass Museum of Art in Miami.

Between 2004 and 2007, he was the first artist to complete a residency at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres (France).

In 2005, he exhibited a series of works in porcelain and Sèvres stoneware in the Renaissance rooms of the Louvre in dialogue with Bernard Palissy.

In 2008, he began his collaboration with the Perrotin Gallery in Miami, with the exhibition "Strange Fruit".

In 2011, he joins Almine Rech Brussels and Transit gallery (Mechelen, Belgium) with whom he has been working since 1990.

In 2009 he was nominated for the Flemish Culture Prize.

In 2013, he is invited and holds the "chair" at the Alfred University in New York State.

In 2014, a major solo exhibition "The Storm" is dedicated to him at the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp.

In 2014, he starts designing the monumental work "De Vleermuis" initiated on the occasion of Leeuwarden-Friesland European Cultural Capital 2018, for the city of Bolsward in the Netherlands.

In 2015, an entire room is dedicated to his work in the exhibition "CERAMIX" at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht and then at the Maison Rouge in Paris in 2016.

In 2016, he invests the Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain in Sète with a major retrospective "La Traversée" bringing together some sixty historical and original sculptures in ceramic and bronze.

In 2017, he presents a new series of sculptures "8 Gods" at the Almine Rech gallery in Brussels, which is showcased at the Petit Palais for FIAC (on Site). He also shows his work in Istanbul with "Between Day and Dream" at the Pilevneli Gallery.

In 2018, "Sunrise/Sunset" is presented at the Perrotin Gallery in Paris, opening on a monumental 4.80 metre bronze "De Gier" presented in the courtyard.

At the same time, he inaugurates a large-scale solo exhibition at the Beelden aan Zee Museum in The Hague, "Naked Roots / Naakte Wortels", which is as sensual as it is engaging.

In 2019, he presents a selection of several monumental bronze sculptures for the Sculpture Park I Pilane in Sweden, among which "De Vleermuis" is exhibited on the forecourt of the Petit Palais for the FIAC in October.

For 2020, in parallel with "I Peccati", at the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, Johan Creten will present a solo exhibition at the Perrotin Gallery in Paris from 17th October until 20th December, titled "Entracte".

Johan Creten's work is represented by the Perrotin Gallery in Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai; by the Almine Rech Gallery in Brussels and the Transit Gallery in Mechelen.

« Johan Creten's work speaks to the inner torments that are in each of us, as individuals but also as a society, dealing with subjects such as nature, femininity, power, politics and spirituality. » Gay Gassmann, T Magazine - The New York Times.

« His sculptures inhabit a space between two worlds, a surrealist and expressionist interception, an erotic dream and brutal physicality. »

Claudia Barbieri, The New York Times.



Noëlle Tissier © Marc Damage

Noëlle Tissier

Born in 1949 in Ourouer-les-Bourdelins (France), Noëlle Tissier is graduated from the National School of Decorative Arts in Limoges and the National School of Art, Villa Arson in Nice. As a sculptor, she exhibited her works in France and abroad from 1973 to 1990 in various public and private institutions, museums, contemporary art places and galleries.

From 1978 to 1987, she taught sculpture and ceramics at the School of Fine Arts in Toulon, then she became the director of the Municipal School of Fine Arts in Sète from 1987 to 1997. She founded the Villa Saint-Clair artists' residence in Sète in 1987, which she directed until 1997, as well as the Villa Saint-Clair Edition devoted to artists' books. Curator since 1988, Noëlle Tissier founded and directed a residency program for French artists in Asaka City, Japan from 1993 to 1997, and carried out exchanges between France and Japan with various institutions.

From 2006 to 2009, she chaired the French Association of Art Centres (d.c.a). From 1997 to 2018, she founded and directed the Regional Centre for Contemporary Art Occitanie (CRAC) in Sète.

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