

FONDATION
VINCENT
VAN GOGH
ARLES

Mon cher...
Urs Fischer



1 October 2016 – 29 January 2017

35^{TER} RUE DU DOCTEUR-FANTON, 13200 ARLES
FONDATION-VINCENTVANGOGH-ARLES.ORG



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"MON CHER..."
URS FISCHER

EDITORIAL

This autumn the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, which has now been open to the public for over two years, is writing a new chapter in its history by giving Urs Fischer *carte blanche* to invest the totality of its spaces. A contemporary artist of international renown, Urs Fischer is a master of the art of remodelling and altering exhibition venues and of thereby rendering them surprising and strange.

The exhibition "*Mon cher...*" constitutes a spatial and temporal experience on several levels. It reveals sets of references to the art and writings of Vincent van Gogh. The title (in English "My dear...", as at the start of a letter) is a gentle salutation that reminds us of the regular correspondence between Vincent and his brother Theo.

The works of Urs Fischer take as their subject a world of visual and collective primary experiences. They envelop us and plunge us into a mental picture, a reverie. It is up to us to decide whether we wish to take a step back or, on the contrary, move in closer. Some of these works are visually saturated: colour affirms itself and offers itself to us. Through colour, the artist strives to create effects that in turn evoke the power of Van Gogh's art. With regard to the Dutch master, Urs Fischer also observes: "Van Gogh is one of those artists whose work we know even before we know their name".

The art of Urs Fischer has its own power to transport us. Whether in a few months' or a few years' time, when other exhibitions will long since have replaced this one, we are convinced that his works will remain etched in our minds and our memories.

It should be noted that the LUMA Foundation has already invited the artist to return to Arles, once the Parc des Ateliers is completed, to create a sequel to this exhibition.

Maja Hoffmann, president of the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles
Bice Curiger, artistic director of the Fondation and exhibition curator

"MON CHER..."
URS FISCHER

The major exhibition devoted to Urs Fischer, born in 1973 in Zurich, will be unveiled to the public on 1 October 2016. "*Mon cher...*" will run at the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles for four months and aims to offer a panorama of Fischer's artistic production since 2013: monumental as well as more intimate sculptures, paintings on aluminium panel and wallpapers. The whole is thereby inscribed within a dynamic circuit involving the movement of the visitor.

Above and beyond the power of Fischer's organisation of space, as demonstrated, for example, by the deluge of oversize multicolour raindrops in his 400 m² installation *Melodrama* (2013), the singularity of this show derives from the fact that the totality of the museum's spaces is devoted to a single artist. Generous, ironic and arousing our empathy, Fischer's works punctuate a route that traverses the most atypical spaces, including the front courtyard and the wood-panelled study.

Urs Fischer's oeuvre is marked by an extraordinary tension between, on the one hand, the notion of individuality and the collective, and on the other, the evocation of traditional sculptural formats and the production of works in two dimensions in the postdigital era. This oscillation between two poles sometimes results in their overlapping, so that the visual illusion normally associated with the medium of photography also becomes a property of sculpture.

In front of *last supper* (2014), a doubt emerges as to the material used. The sculpture, which is more than seven metres long, looks as if it has been modelled out of clay; it reveals the collective effort solicited in the making of the initial work, presented at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA in Los Angeles in 2013. In a process of ennoblement that has preserved the traces of the sculpture's genesis and the fingerprints of each participant, however, the clay has turned to bronze. The same shifts seem to operate for the eight bronze casts of reclining female nudes. Don't they make us think of a collective sculpture studio at a fine arts academy, whose models and students have departed? All that remains are pieces seemingly still in progress – the *non finito* of works anchored in the past and turned towards a future. Replying to the "collective subjectivity" that infuses these sculptures, with their sensual and archaic materiality, are images characterized by hyperreality and self-portraiture. These paintings on aluminium depict parts of the artist's body – the ear or, as in *Barium* (2016), the eye – encircled by silkscreened layers of coloured paint, giving the *trompe-l'œil* effect of impasto.

Weaving itself through the works on display is the reference to Van Gogh – whether in the title of the exhibition, the emotional charge carried by three-dimensional relief, the affirmation of highly studied colour or the ambivalence contained in the self-portrait.

URS FISCHER

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Urs Fischer is a contemporary Swiss artist born in 1973 in Zurich. Since 2004 he has lived and worked in New York.

He studied photography at the Zurich Schule für Gestaltung and subsequently participated in residency programs in Amsterdam and London, a training which forged his "taste for images and their intrinsic value"¹.

For the artist, images are admired for their associative power, their emotional charge and their skilful illusion, properties that likewise apply to his objects in three dimensions. Thinking resolutely as a sculptor, he alternates between photography, sculpture, painting and installation. He combines this raft of artistic options with editorial projects implemented with his publishing house Kiito-San.

The exhibition space also finds itself reshaped and is understood as a place of production invested with Fischer's expressive formal investigations, which oscillate between the playful and the dramatic. Far from operating in isolation, the artist sometimes organizes participatory situations, in which visitors are invited to contribute to the fashioning of sculptures from blocks of clay. Fischer's most recent collaborative outdoor project is also the largest to date: this summer the artist transformed the exterior spaces of Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art into a giant clay-modelling studio.

As well as using natural, easily biodegradable materials such as clay, Urs Fischer also invokes innovative techniques that testify equally to his thirst for experimentation. A prolific artist, he has successfully captivated the international scene. He exhibits in many countries and his work is represented in leading public and private collections around the world.

Previous exhibitions (selection)

- *Small Axe*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, 2016
- *False Friends*, Museum of Art and History, Geneva, 2016
- *Urs Fischer*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2013
- *Madame Fisscher*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 2012
- *Urs Fischer*, Festival d'Automne, École nationale des beaux-arts, Paris, 2012
- *Marguerite de Ponty*, New Museum, New York, 2009-2010
- *Fractured Figure: Works from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens, 2007-2008
- *Kir Royal*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, 2004
- *Not My House Not My Fire*, Espace 315, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, 2004

¹ Michele Robecchi in *Madame Fisscher* (exhibition catalogue), 2012.

A SELECTION OF IMAGES CAN BE DOWNLOADED
IN HD FROM OUR WEBSITE:

www.fondation-vincentvangogh-arles.org

Section: Professionals — Press / Password: presse

For all images: © Urs Fischer

SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW



Melodrama, 2013

Plaster, oil-based primer, stainless steel, nylon filament
Variable dimensions: 3,000 raindrops, each up to 16.5 x 5.7 x 6 cm
Collection Maja Hoffmann / LUMA Foundation
Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London
Photo credit: Mats Nordman



2, 2014

Cast bronze, oil paint, palladium leaf, clay bole, acrylic primer, chalk gesso, rabbit skin glue, 71.1 x 198.1 x 144.8 cm
AP of Edition of 2 & 1 AP
Private collection
Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London
Photo credit: Mats Nordman



Barium, 2016

Aluminium panel, aramid honeycomb, two-component polyurethane adhesive, two-component epoxy primer, galvanized steel rivet nuts, acrylic primer, gesso, acrylic ink, acrylic silkscreen medium, acrylic paint, oil medium, 203.2 x 152.4 x 2.2 cm
Private collection
Courtesy of the artist
Photo credit: Mats Nordman



mousecheesecircle, 2016

Aluminium, epoxy, steel, acrylic primer, gesso, acrylic ink, acrylic silkscreen medium, acrylic paint, 212.5 x 231.8 x 1 cm
AP of edition of 2 & 1 AP
Private collection

Mixing Palette #1, Mixing Palette #2, 2016

Inkjet wallpaper prints on nylon-reinforced paper, variable dimensions
Unlimited edition
Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery
Photo credit: Robert McKeever



Rat Playing Piano, 2016

Cast bronze, 7.9 x 22.2 x 13.3 cm
AP 2 of Edition of 2 & 2 AP
Private collection
Courtesy of the artist; Gagosian Gallery and Sadie Coles HQ, London
Photo credit: Mats Nordman

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Mon cher... Urs Fischer

Urs Fischer bewitches each of the exhibition spaces that he invests with his astonishing and amusing universe. The artist composes works that plunge us into a dream where sculptures are not what they seem and pictures are not just pictures... This catalogue, illustrated with photographs taken *in situ*, captures Fischer's art in the process of taking shape and reveals the ephemeral world that he has created inside the Fondation – a world of giant raindrops and of women posing in the antique style on sofas.

Author: Bice Curiger

Format: 24.5 x 31 cm, 96 pages, texts in French and English

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THE FONDATION VINCENT VAN GOGH ARLES: FULFILLING VINCENT'S WISH

The Fondation offers a unique approach to Vincent van Gogh, namely by exploring, through the medium of temporary exhibitions, the resonance of his art and thinking with international artistic production today. Thanks to partnerships established with public and private collections, the Fondation presents one or more original canvases by Vincent van Gogh all year round, in company with a changing selection of works by contemporary artists such as Yan Pei-Ming, Roni Horn, David Hockney and Urs Fischer, among others.

It was in Arles, where Vincent lived and worked from February 1888 to May 1889, that his art reached its pinnacle. As from 1983, with the centenary of this stay in mind, Yolande Clergue invited contemporary artists to present a work in homage to Van Gogh. Thanks to patron Luc Hoffmann, in 2010 the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles was created as a public utility foundation. The City of Arles placed at its disposal the Hôtel Léautaud de Donines, a prestigious residence dating back to the 15th century. Renovated and transformed by the architectural agency FLUOR, the building was inaugurated in 2014 and offers over 1000 m² of exhibition space. The Fondation's resolutely contemporary bias is underscored by the integration within the museum complex of two permanent artworks by Raphael Hefti and Bertrand Lavier.

The Fondation also offers a wide range of in-house and extramural cultural events and activities: artist talks and podium discussions, symposia, film screenings, creative workshops and courses, performances and concerts, as well as guided tours and educational activities tailored to different publics. Our art education programme focuses in particular upon children and young people, with special tours of the exhibitions as well as workshops held in schools in Arles and the surrounding area.

The shop is conceived as a colourful link between the Fondation's historical and contemporary architecture. It offers exhibition catalogues, art books, limited-edition prints, fine-art reproductions, handcrafted products and other items, and also includes a children's section.

The Fondation fulfils the wish, cherished by one of the world's most famous painters, to create in Arles a place of reflection, fertile production and stimulating dialogue between artists.

"Then, as you well know, I love Arles so much, [...]"

Letter from Vincent to Theo (18 February 1889).

VINCENT VAN GOGH

ANNUAL LOAN FROM THE VAN GOGH MUSEUM IN AMSTERDAM

The Fondation has benefited since its opening from an annual loan from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, initiated between April 2014 and March 2015 with the painting *Self-portrait with Pipe and Straw Hat* and renewed from April 2015 to March 2016 with *Piles of French Novels* (1887).

The painting *Undergrowth* (1889) – on loan from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 – was executed two months after Van Gogh's arrival at Saint-Paul-de-Mausole psychiatric hospital in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, where he chose to recuperate for a whole year following the collapse of his cherished ambition to establish a community of artists in Arles. The canvas testifies to the more muted use of colour characterizing his works of this epoch.



Vincent van Gogh, *Undergrowth*, July 1889
Oil on canvas, 49 x 64.3 cm
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Whereas Vincent's Arles period is hallmarked by his exploration of the glorious light and colour of the South, certain works from Saint-Rémy link back to the palette of his years in the North. With its close-up view of a section of forest floor bordering on abstraction, *Undergrowth* has inspired widely differing interpretations: for some, it is a claustrophobic vision reflecting Van Gogh's troubled state of mind, while for others it represents an introspective reverie with an underwater feel...

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Press preview: Friday 30 September 2016 at 1pm
Public opening: Saturday 1 October 2016 at 11am

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ADMISSION
Full rate: €9
Reduced rate: €7
Young people and students: €4
Free admission: children under 12, disabled
visitors, ICOM members, press card, tour
guides, curators, journalists

OPENING HOURS

Fondation and bookshop open Tuesday
through Sunday from 11am to 6pm.
Last admission 45 minutes before closing.

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