

MIMA

Press release

January 2018

New exhibition at the MIMA: Wonderland or the Art of Rebellion

A playful attempt to combat the routine, Wonderland or the Art of Rebellion is the work of two Swedish artists who have emerged from the graffiti world and go by their pseudonyms of Akay & Olabo. The exhibition takes us headlong into their urban adventures, which consist of forbidden explorations of abandoned locations. To reach the end, visitors to Wonderland must solve puzzles all the way through. From January 26 to April 22 2018



2018: the year of civil disobedience

Civil disobedience was a theme of the MIMA's three previous exhibitions. For the likes of Swoon or Boris Tellegen, aka DELTA, it was a theme linked to their illegal street paintings. For others, social media buffs such as Brecht Vandenbroucke and Joan Cornella, it was expressed directly through their drawings, which shattered the image of our model society.

The MIMA's theme for 2018 is civil disobedience. First up is Wonderland, an exhibition that uses play and art to introduce us to the theme, followed by Get Up Stand Up, a display of protest posters from the May 1968 Paris uprising.

The past teaches us that democracy is the history of civil disobedience. The suffragettes, De Gaulle, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Edward Snowden all remind us that civil disobedience is a collective and ongoing duty. Wonderland uses humour to provide us with an example of artistic activism, **rallying us to the artists' cause through play.**

A playful process

Like their cousins from the Caribbean or the computer world, urban pirates Akay & Olabo live on the fringes of society and embody a 21st-century protest ideology. Wonderland is an introduction to poetic civil disobedience.



Through their urban interventions, Akay & Olabo imbue the streets, metro stations and derelict buildings of Stockholm with a new magic. Inspired by these abandoned places, they make a sport of recycling and a way of life of the art of intrusion.

Part introduction, part exploration, the exhibition seeks to share the experience relating to their expression of a type of indoor street art, which involves giving the rooms of ruined buildings an artistic makeover. A visit to Wonderland is dotted with obstacles that must be overcome if the works are to be viewed. Negotiating padlocked doors and a car wreck demands more in the way of mental sharpness than physical dexterity.

A sign of the times, recycling is a saving grace for western countries. The exhibition presents it as a raw aesthetic. The artworks have been entirely created using waste building materials and material recovered from abandoned industrial buildings and municipal landfill sites.

Rimbaud or Thoreau?

The two artists base their philosophy on the thinking of the American naturalist philosopher and poet Henri David Thoreau. Disciples of voluntary simplicity (an environmentally friendly way of life that seeks to have as little impact as possible on the world around us), they advocate peaceful civil disobedience, as did Gandhi, and espouse art as a driver of social change. Their reworkings of advertising posters aim, for example, to highlight the contrast between the slogans featured on them and the contextual urban reality.

While some of the artists who featured in the Art is Comic exhibition were social media stars, Akay & Olabo maintain an intentionally low profile online. That distance reveals a mistrust of BIG DATA and a disconnect with the search for digital fame. They have, however, published a number of books and zines that are very highly regarded in the underground network of international artists who have emerged from the graffiti scene and for whom anonymity is synonymous with freedom.

Living is their occupation, being awestruck their *raison d'être*, and art their way of laughing or rebelling.

A few words on the artists

Swedish artist Akay is well-known on the international urban art scene, a fact reflected in several works of reference: *The Art of Rebellion 2 World of Urban Art Activism* (2007), *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti* (2013), and *Graffiti and Street Art: Reading, Writing and Representing the City* (2017).

Civil disobedience, environmentalism and the collective mind form the bedrock of his art and his way of life. He is a leading figure on a Scandinavian art scene that finds in asceticism a way of countering the consumer society. The two artists find their release in the insatiable need to explore the flipside of the urban milieu. It is an approach that recalls that of Rimbaud and the pleasure he took in going off the beaten track and making an artwork of his life.

Alice and Raphaël met AKAY through Angelo Milano, the founder of the legendary FAME Festival in Italy. AKAY then introduced Olabo to them. The two curators have joined with the artists in venturing into the dark side of our culture 2.0. Unlike artists who have previously exhibited at the MIMA (Swoon, Delta and Cornellà to name but a few), they criticise society from its fringes, though they are close enough to make themselves heard. Here, civil disobedience is elevated to the status of art, lending their political message a poetic dimension.



A few words on the MIMA

Unique in Europe, the MIMA, (Millennium Iconoclast Museum of Arts) is a museum of modern art that invites its audience on a journey through the history of culture 2.0, which went global the turn of the millennium. The creative works it showcases draw freely from an eclectic mix of cultures: music (punk rock, electro, hip-hop, folk), graphics (graphic design, illustration, design), sport (skateboarding, surfing, extreme sports), arts (cinema, visual arts, performance, comics, tattooing, fashion design) and the urban world (graffiti, street art). The MIMA provides a collective account of our multi-faceted and empathetic culture through exhibitions envisioned around the concept of the “gamification” of knowledge; much like video games, the works are initially easy to access and understand, with more complex ideas then being presented.

The MIMA was founded by Michel and Florence de Launoit, Alice van den Abeele and Raphaël Cruyt. In 2005, Van den Abeele and Cruyt began running the ALICE gallery, from where they

project a political and contextual vision of art. They collaborate with international artists who share an aesthetic that fuses the codes of contemporary art with those of subcultures.

Modern art lovers Michel and Florence de Launoit devote their working lives to producing art in a variety of forms (shorts, films, documentaries, theatre and music) through the companies Tourne Sol Production and Akamusic SA. Their contribution to the creation of MIMA is in keeping with their commitment to a culture that breaks down barriers and connects with the public, reflecting today's world and creating a link with the world of tomorrow.

Opened in April 2016, the MIMA has already welcomed more than 85,000 visitors.

The MIMA occupies an iconic location in the centre of Brussels, in the former Belle-Vue brewery, on the banks of the Brussels-Charleroi Canal in Molenbeek. Three floors are devoted to the permanent collection and to temporary exhibitions. The museum's collection will eventually comprise more than 60 works loaned by a patrons association. It is the narrative thread of a story portraying a period that began in 2000 and which continues today. The collection features works by Swoon, Escif, Katsu, Faile, Barry McGee, Ari Marcopoulos, Parra, Brecht Vandembroucke, Horfee, Eddy Martinez, Daniel Johnston, Sixe Paredes, Maya Hayuk, Boris Tellegen, Fuzi UV TPK and HuskMitNavn, among others. Works by Bonom, Mark Gonzalez, Elzo Durt, 2Shy, Raphaël Zarka and Jean Jullien have recently been added to it.

The MIMA is funded in equal part by:

- Revenue generated by the museum itself (ticketing, shop, evening events, privatisations)
- The private sector (main sponsor : BNP Paribas Fortis), friends of the museum and partner suppliers (Nelson Canal, Circles Group, Promo-Signs, Boomerang, Artoos/Hayez, Red Bull, La Loterie Nationale, Stella Artois, VAG Security, Vitra, OpenTours)
- Grants

Useful information

Exhibition: Wonderland or the Art of Rebellion will run from 26 January to 22 April.

Address: 39-41 Quai du Hainaut, 1080 Brussels, Belgium

Museum opening hours: Wednesdays to Sundays from 10AM to 6PM

Closed Mondays, Tuesdays and the whole of January

Evening opening: the first Thursday of the month until 10 PM

Adults: €9.50. Concessions: €7.50. School groups: €5. Free for under-12s

Restaurant opening hours: Wednesdays to Sundays from 10AM to 6.30PM

Evening opening: the first Thursday of the month until 10PM

Closed Mondays and Tuesdays; Month of January

Tickets valid for temporary exhibition AND the permanent collection

Guided tours: info@arkadia.be; 02 319 45 60

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