

Art's Birthday
17.01.2026

Programme | EN



M HKA

Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp
www.muhka.be | [@mhkamuseum](https://www.instagram.com/mhkamuseum)

**EUROPALIA
ESPANA**

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Combining performance, sound, and symbolic gestures, Art's Birthday echoes ancient forms of celebration. The event is a contemporary ritual – a playful yet reflective gathering that treats the museum as a place where community is created through art. Its ritualistic dimension links the celebration to ancient cultural practices and invokes a shared creative spirit. It also recalls pagan and folk traditions in which birthdays signified renewal and communal transformation. At M HKA, the event becomes both a commemoration and invitation: a moment when art is continually reborn. What if art is recreated each time it is shared? What if celebration itself becomes creation? A group of Ushers – night guardians – will lead you through this night. Look for them in the museum!

This year's edition is a Spanish-Belgian exchange in the context of EUROPALIA ESPAÑA, curated by Joanna Zielińska, Javi Cruz and Katleen Van Langendonck. Artists from both countries will take over the entire museum in a playful deconstruction of the birthday party, engaging all five senses.

Art's Birthday was invented in 1963 by the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou, who playfully claimed that art was born one million years

ago when "someone dropped a dry sponge into a bucket of water." The celebration was never meant as historical fact but as a conceptual gesture reflecting Filliou's belief that art is a continuous, collective gift.

In true Fluxus spirit, the tradition quickly spread into a decentralised, international celebration. Artists, museums, radio stations, and collectives around the world began celebrating 17 January with performances, sound experiments, mail art, broadcasts, and gatherings both physical and virtual. Today, Art's Birthday remains an open, evolving network of creative exchange – an artwork renewed each year through shared imagination.



*You're cordially invited to
celebrate the 1.000.063rd
Birthday of Art!*



ARTISTS:

Juan Domínguez, Annea Lyvv Dreisz,
Raquel Gualtero, Fermín Jiménez Landa,
Laura Llanelli, Carlos Monleón,
María Pandiello, Alejandra Pombo Su,
Anna Reutinger, Stef Van Looveren

M HKA COLLECTION:

Robert Filliou, Dorothy Iannone

INBOX EXHIBITION:

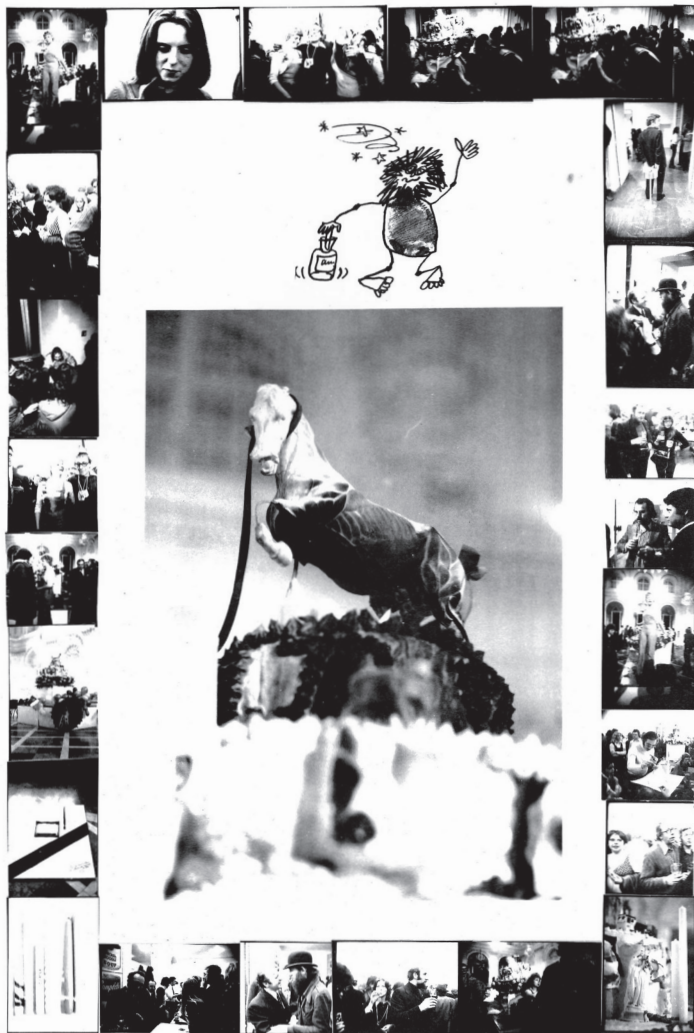
Laura Palau, Alex Reynolds
Margaret Salmon, Andrea Zavala Folache,
Adriano Wilfert Jensen

PROGRAMME

19:00 – 19:50	STEF VAN LOOVEREN <i>OPUS II</i> Ground floor, IN SITU space (start in the library)	PERFORMANCE
20:00 – 20:30	JUAN DOMÍNGUEZ <i>El brindis</i> Ground floor, library	TOAST
20:30 – 21:00	RAQUEL GUALTERO <i>360°</i> Ground floor, round space	PERFORMANCE
20:30 – 21:00	ALEJANDRA POMBO SU <i>Undercurrent Honey</i> 2 nd floor, exhibition Pauline Curnier Jardin	PERFORMANCE
21:00 – 22:00	ANNA REUTINGER <i>Hats for Communal Celebration</i> 2 nd floor, exhibition Pauline Curnier Jardin	PERFORMANCE
22:00 – 22:30	ALEJANDRA POMBO SU <i>Undercurrent Honey</i> 2 nd floor, exhibition Pauline Curnier Jardin	PERFORMANCE
22:00 – 22:30	RAQUEL GUALTERO <i>360°</i> Ground floor, round space	PERFORMANCE
22:30 – 23:30	ANNEA LYVV DREISZ 6 th floor	CAKE CEREMONY

CONTINUOUS

from 19:00	INBOX Exhibition <i>I You Me We Us</i> With: Laura Palau, Alex Reynolds, Margaret Salmon, Andrea Zavala Folache, Adriano Wilfert Jensen 5 th floor	EXHIBITION
from 19:00	Collection Dorothy Iannone (6 th floor) Robert Filliou (ground floor)	EXHIBITION
from 20:00	FERMÍN JIMÉNEZ LANDA <i>Hand the Present</i> Dispersed amid the guests and projected onto the M HKA façade	ARTWORK
from 20:30	CARLOS MONLEÓN <i>Many Suns</i> 3 rd floor, auditorium Limited capacity. Registration at the auditorium entrance.	ONE-NIGHT BAR
from 21:00	LAURA LLANELI <i>Happy b-day ASAP</i> (<i>As Slow As Possible</i>) Ground floor, library	PERFORMANCE
from 21:00	MARÍA PANDIELLO 4 th floor, M HKA FE	DJ SET



ABOUT THE PERFORMANCES

JUAN DOMÍNGUEZ

El brindis

A toast read during Art's Birthday is part of an episode of *Clean Room*, a serial work composed of performances and encounters inside and outside theatres, developed across several cities and adapted to each location, which Juan Domínguez created some years ago.

JUAN DOMÍNGUEZ is an artist, maker, and organiser within the fields of choreography and performing arts, based in Berlin and Mexico City. Since 1992, he has been producing his own work, exploring theatres as a medium and redefining the parameters of dance — body, time, space, and language. His recent foray into ceramics marks a new dialogue with the visual arts.

Over the last 24 years, he has engaged in projects that could be labelled as expanded choreographic practices or at the intersection between dance and live art. Over these years one major concern has been rethinking the political potential of theatre by constantly questioning theatrical conventions and Western expectations of spectatorship. The second constant concern has been time, both as a topic and raw matter to experiment with.

ANNEA LYVV DREISZ

Empire of Light / Imperio de la Luz

Inspired by a dreamlike vision, *Empire of Light* draws on René Magritte's painting, Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*, and Thomas Mann's reflections on philosophy and elevation. A Swiss meringue "mountain" becomes both cloud and sky, echoing the

tension between darkness and light. Topped with "eternal sunshiners," it recalls Philip Glass's *Hymn to the Sun* and the sun's symbolism of rebirth. Created in the spirit of Robert Filliou's "Permanent Celebration," the cake honours the collective nature of the artistic community, recognising each person as part of it. As visitors move through the evening's performances and reach the top floor of M HKA, they encounter this luminous mountain cake – a personal *Empire of Light*. Sharing it becomes a communal gesture.

ANNEA LYVV DREISZ makes paintings, videos, performances, sounds, and writes in between. All of these disciplines communicate with each other to the point that almost no work can exist without the other. In her performances Dreisz works with alter egos to explore the borders of identity and reality.

RAQUEL GUALTERO 360'

Choreographer and dancer Raquel Gualtero looks towards her Colombian roots in a dance solo pivoting on rotation. Sometimes from the simplicity of an initiatory children's game and sometimes from the virtuosity of traditional Colombian dances and even from the carnival's festivity, bustle, and exhibitionism. With a simple but forceful gesture, *360'* seeks to encompass everything: the playing girl, the dancing woman and the mother turning her head to look for the starting point, the trigger, the origin.

RAQUEL GUALTERO is a dancer and choreographer based in Barcelona, with an international career in contemporary dance. As a choreographer, she has created works such as *Blanco* (2005), *Persona* (Injuve Award 2011), *Brut*

(2018), *Nuà*, and *Panorama* (2021). Her latest creation, *360'*, awarded the APDC Best Costume Design Prize, premiered at Fira Tàrrrega and evolved into *Reactiva 360'*, a video-mapping version presented at the Casablanca International Video Art Festival. The full-length stage version, *Complete Revolution*, premiered at the Grec Festival 2025.

FERMÍN JIMÉNEZ LANDA *Hand the Present*

To celebrate the birthday of art, the artist proposes a gift that is both minimal and expansive. By transforming the symbol and myth of Antwerp, the hand, into a device for circulating affection, fragility, trust, and mistrust, Fermín Jiménez Landa takes advantage of an existing fetish to redefine it as a gesture of devotion. An edible souvenir is now a gesture that passes from hand to hand,

from pocket to pocket, silently infiltrating the choreography of the party. Momentary bonds are activated; the present as an object and the temporal present become entangled, and the boundary between art and life becomes tense. The aim is to celebrate and at the same time reflect upon the very act of giving: a circulation of objects that is a circulation of relationships. A movement that does not accumulate, but connects. Tangible substances that are intangible bonds and, though non-commercial, establish a kind of contract. Accepting gifts is like accepting cookies. The gesture raises two questions: How does a gift move when no one seems to have given it? And above all: Should I eat this?

FERMÍN JIMÉNEZ LANDA's work ranges from actions, videos, photographs, objects, and installations to public interventions. They often start from situations and narratives in which the boundary between empirical reality and the most bizarre anecdote is blurred.

LAURA LLANELLI
Happy b-day ASAP
(As Slow As Possible)

This action interprets *Happy Birthday* by modifying the temporal parameter. The duration of the piece is not determined by its familiar rhythm nor by the written values, but by the actual duration of the sound produced by each note. A new note is not played until the previous sound has completely vanished. The melody – usually brief, immediate, and universal – is stretched and transformed. Time becomes a variable dependent on the space, the

act of listening, and the specific characteristics of the piano, shifting the song into a territory of waiting, resonance, and suspension.

LAURA LLANELLI's work explores the relationship between sound production and experience, language, and contemporary visual arts practices. She emphasises the impact of variations on stable patterns and structures in certain cultural products, testing the resistance of language as a code or sound as a social icon.

CARLOS MONLEÓN
Many Suns

Many Suns brings a sequence of liquids into a one-night bar: a joint, performative tasting of grape broths and wines. The palate, a cave from which to emerge into crystalline lights. A rhythm of sips rehearsing the oneness of night and the plurality of

days. A game of sponges and gravity: to drink until we become vessels, fluent in tidal grammars.

CARLOS MONLEÓN works with a variety of processes and materials, living and non-living, that result in sculptural and participatory artworks. These span across different levels of bodily sensation and awareness; from the microbiological to the performative and social bodies. His main line of work traces evolutionary processes that stem from digestion and cognition and result in the distribution of biological processes across multi-species entanglements and cybernetic metabolisms.

MARÍA PANDIELLO
DJ set

MARÍA PANDIELLO is a Spanish DJ living in Antwerp known for her eclectic, high-energy sets that blend electronic

experimentation with club-driven rhythms. Emerging from Spain's vibrant underground scene, Pandiello has developed a distinctive sound rooted in techno, breakbeat, and left-field electronic influences. Her performances are marked by precision, bold transitions, and an intuitive sense of atmosphere, earning her a growing reputation across European venues and festivals. Beyond the booth, she is also involved in collaborative music and cultural projects that promote diversity and innovation within contemporary electronic music.

ALEJANDRA POMBO SU
Undercurrent Honey

Alejandra Pombo Su explores animal presence through modulations, vibrations, and intensities of the voice, as a body that detaches itself from its skin and connects to a non-corporeal, open, and

undefined place. Pombo's work deconstructs established relations between the voice and a person, expressing and being expressed, autofiction and becoming post-human or alien, creating a negative dynamic undermining the commensurability between being and appearance in favour of unsettling, often visceral experiences impossible to escape.

ALEJANDRA POMBO SU is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Her practice is essentially performative, resulting in unconventional approaches to stable media and investigating material and medium in terms of how rather than what. She holds a PhD in Fine Arts, with a thesis on the paradoxes and effects of introducing the notion of performance in contemporary art.

ANNA REUTINGER
Hats for Communal Celebration

As part of M HKA's annual Art's Birthday celebrations, Anna Reutinger presents the participatory performance *Hats for Communal Celebration*. In Europe prior to the 19th century, individual birthday celebrations were generally reserved for the elite, while festivities with a more communal focus were practised among the non-elite. Through a series of birthday hats, the artist invites the public to become the many guests of honour and to celebrate a vision of art created for and by the many.

ANNA REUTINGER draws on unruly nuns, textile workers' revolts, and plants outgrowing their gardeners to conjure acts of defiance. Using second-hand textiles, natural dyes, metal scraps, and social encounters, she embraces hands-on research,

revealing craft as a catalyst for connection, collective imagination, and shared resistance.

STEF VAN LOOVEREN
OPUS II

The performance *OPUS II* opens Stef Van Looveren's exhibition and forms the work's first chapter. Instead of a completed installation, visitors witness a space constructed in real time through a ritualised procession in which performers carry and activate objects establishing the spatial and symbolic framework that shapes the exhibition's later form. Central to this vocabulary is a triad of sound-producing forms – organ-like structures, bell shapes, and elemental vessels – that evoke cycles of transformation, renewal, and decay. Silvered surfaces, shifting light, and embodied movement blur figurative references, creating an alchemical

atmosphere where identities dissolve, recombine, and re-emerge through sound, gesture, and material change. The performance is presented within M HKA's programme, which features new site-specific installations developed for the museum.

STEF VAN LOOVEREN is a Belgian multidisciplinary artist working across performance, video, sculpture, and installation. Their practice explores gender identity, queerness, and the performative nature of the body, often using humour and prosthetic objects to question how identities are formed, constrained, and liberated.

M HKA COLLECTION

DOROTHY IANNONE

Extase, 1970

(by Dorothy Iannone,
illustrated with a song by
Robert Filliou)

Extase was published in 1970 as a collaboration between Dorothy Iannone and Robert Filliou, bringing together Iannone's original drawings and a song written by Filliou. That same year, Filliou invited Iannone to contribute an essay to *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, in which she wrote: "These days I am interested in ecstasy. That is, I think, I want it all the time. Never mind what they say about the nature of ecstasy, I've got a feeling one could limit oneself to such an extent that it would be possible half the time — and that's like all the time."

DOROTHY IANNONE was an American-born, Berlin-based artist celebrated for her vividly expressive, erotic, and autobiographical work. Through painting, drawing, sculpture, and artist's books, she explored themes of love, sexuality, female desire, and spiritual union. Her boldly personal style — both joyful and transgressive — challenged censorship throughout her career. Iannone's unwavering commitment to artistic freedom and personal truth has established her as a key figure in feminist and post-war avant-garde art.

ROBERT FILLIOU

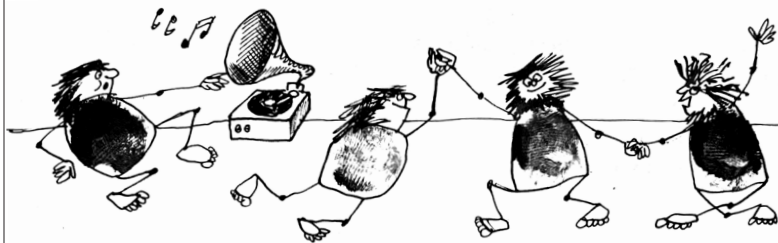
Research in Arts and Astrology, 1972

This series features the birth dates of personalities, friends, and important religious figures such as God or Buddha. The arrangement followed the zodiac signs. Connections are suggested between the

earthly world and the spiritual world. The work gains additional intensity through the inclusion of autobiographical notes.

ROBERT FILLIOU was a French artist associated with Fluxus whose work playfully challenged traditional ideas of art and authorship. Known for his concept of the "Eternal Network" and for inventing

Art's Birthday, Filliou embraced collaboration, chance, and everyday gestures as creative acts. His practice spanned performance, poetry, objects, and video, often infused with humour and philosophical reflection. Filliou's belief that "art is what makes life more interesting than art" remains central to his legacy.



INBOX EXHIBITION

INBOX: *I You Me We Us*
16.01 – 22.02.2026

This exhibition forms part of Art's Birthday 2026, which takes place on 17 January and is celebrated every year at M HKA as a homage to Robert Filliou. It establishes a dialogue among three Belgium-based Spanish artists – Alex Reynolds, Laura Palau, and Andrea Zavala (the last one in collaboration with Adriano Wilfert) – and an artwork from the M HKA collection by Margaret Salmon. The exhibition comprises three video works and one book that belong to a shared present and form a kind of family. The exhibition reflects themes of birth, inheritance, community, and fragility. Through images, gestures of care, and intergenerational knowledge, the project explores how

bodies, relationships, and shared practices carry histories forward – sometimes stretching, sometimes breaking, always transforming. Bringing together domestic rituals and collective experiences, the works offer a tender view on how we imagine the idea of rebirth through touch, memory, and the everyday acts that bind us to one another.

LAURA PALAU
Llevar les engines a través de tres generaciones,
5'32", 2022

The homesickness Palau feels when living far away, makes her see life as a kind of tension. Being both here and there, the artist views the rural context as a circularity between hardness and softness, keratin and cellulose, orality and flesh. One of the results of this looking from afar is *Tonsillitis Across Three Generations*, a video work in which her

grandmother, her mother, and herself form a circle to rub their wrists with homemade olive oil to relieve a sore throat – a practice passed down from generation to generation that speaks of the connections between the organs of the body and the women of the same family (excerpt from a text by Francisco Ramallo).

LAURA PALAU's practice, based on storytelling across multiple disciplines, responds to the climate and social emergency, transforming audiences and the communities she collaborates with into participatory laboratories. Drawing from feminist perspectives and the rural knowledge in which she was raised, her work intertwines rituals of care, seeking to reconcile dichotomies such as human vs nature, rural vs urban, and local vs global. Through this approach, she challenges binaries established by Western academia.

Courtesy of Luis
Adelantado Gallery

ALEX REYNOLDS
Peel, 1'30", 2022

Two hands belonging to different bodies negotiate their movements in the almost erotic act of peeling an orange. In a fixed shot that refers to the conventions of baroque still life, this eminently tactile footage captures the conversation between the fingers and the pulpy body they peel. Reynolds' artistic practice revolves around a constant exploration of our modes of relating and affection through multiple registers and formats, especially in the way these are manifested through the language of film.

ALEX REYNOLDS explores our modes of relation and affection as they appear embodied in cinematic language, questioning the medium's conventions to

explore the emancipatory potential of play. Blurring the limits of film language, her work transcends the strictly visual, finding expression in sound, text, photography, or sculpture.

Courtesy of Luis Adelantado Gallery

MARGARET SALMON
I You Me We Us, 16', 2018

I You Me We Us seeks to capture everyday human experience in meticulous detail, infused with a sense of poetry and vulnerability. Close-ups of gesturing, playing, touch-seeking, and writing hands are interspersed with images of plants and flowers under colored light. The work focuses on the intimacy of showing affection through touch. At the same time, it recalls the most essential aspect of love, tenderness, and care: human presence and interaction.

MARGARET SALMON draws inspiration from film movements such as Cinema Vérité, Italian Neorealism, and the European avant-garde. She develops an intimate, observational practice that places lived experience, subtle gestures, and the social realities of everyday life at its core.

Collection: City of Antwerp, on long-term loan to M HKA

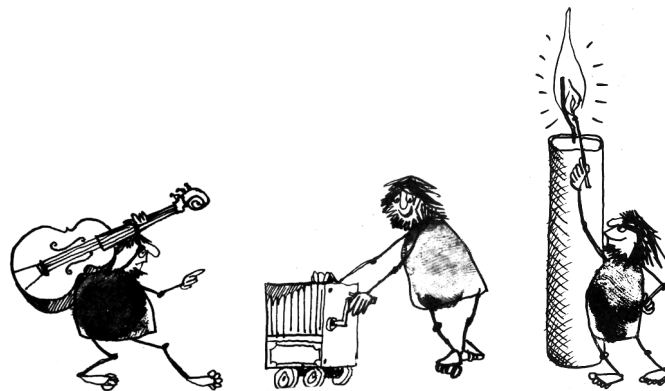
ANDREA ZAVALA FOLACHE & ADRIANO WILFERT JENSEN
Sex and Place vol. 1, Preliminaries, 2025

Andrea Zavala Folache and Adriano Wilfert Jensen present *Sex & Place vol. 1-4*, a research on semi-anonymous and score-based collective writing as a tool for articulating shared concerns in the realms of intimacy, childcare, and (a)sexuality. Their collaborative practice is framed by the

latent concept of *Domestic Anarchism*.

ANDREA ZAVALA FOLACHE and ADRIANO WILFERT JENSEN are choreographers and co-parents of the two-and-a-half-year-old Penélope Cleo. Together they research how to stretch networks of solidarity beyond the biological, chosen, and national families. They work through the medium

of dance as an expanded set of tools that can be used to sense and make sense. Together with their collaborators and the audience, they exercise an alternative plot of international artistic collaboration based on temporary cohabitation. They reimagine artistic modes of production vis-à-vis reproductive needs and vice versa.

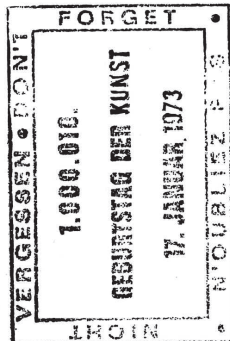


Geburstag der Kunst

Von MARIE HULLENKREMER

Mitteilungen der Neuen Galerie Aachen
schmückte seit kurzem ein großer rätselhafter
Stempel. „Nicht Vergessen — Don't forget —
„N'oubliez pas“ ist da zu lesen und in der
Mitte: „1 000 010, Geburtstag der Kunst —
17. Januar 1973.“ Was sich so geheimnisvoll
ansieht, ist eine Erfindung des stets erfin-
dungsreichen französischen Künstlers Robert
Filliou, der schon einmal in der Neuen Galle-
rie ausgestellt hat und dabei ein Konzept
zum Austausch von Kriegdenkmälern zwai-
schen der Bundesrepublik, Belgien und Hol-
land ausarbeitete.
Jetzt will er das am 17. Januar nächsten Jahres
— den Geburtstag der Kunst feiern, die
so Filliou — das Licht der Welt vor 1 000 010
Jahren erblickte. Zu den merkwürdigen zehn
Jahren hindran kam Filliou, weil er 1963
ein Buch veröffentlichte mit dem Titel „Ge-
illustrierte Kunstgeschichte“, dem zufolge eine
Million Jahre vorher die Kunst geboren wur-
de — mit dem ersten Menschen. Denn als
der erste Mensch die Erde bevölkerte, war
damit auch der Keim zur Kunst gelegt.
Das ungewöhnliche Ereignis wollen Dr. Wolf-
gang Becker und Robert Filliou gebührend
feiern: mit zwei Bands, mit einem Riesen-
kuchen, mit Bier, Tanz und allem Drum und
Dran. Am besten notieren Sie gleich: 17. Ja-
nuar, Geburtstag der Kunst!

ABS.: NEUE GALERIE DER
STADT AACHEN



AN
DIE KULTURRED.
DER
AACHENER NACHRICHTEN
Z.H. V.
FRAU MARIE HULLENKREMER
51
AACHEN
THEATERSTRASSE

COLOPHON

Artists:

Juan Domínguez
Anneke Lyvv Dreisz
Robert Filliou
Raquel Gualtero
Dorothy Iannone
Fermín Jiménez Landa
Laura Llanelli
Carlos Monleón
María Pandiello
Alejandra Pombo Su
Anna Reutinger
Stef Van Looveren

INBOX Exhibition:

Margaret Salmon
Alex Reynolds
Laura Palau
Andrea Zavala
Folache & Adriano
Wilfert Jensen

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Festival Danseu,
Government of
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Fabra i Coats -
Creation Factory,
Cardant Cultura,
Sismograf Festival

PERFORMANCE

STEF VAN LOOVEREN

Stef Van Looveren

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Gutierrez Ruiz
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Sam Hawkes
Sam Van Goethem
Stef Van Looveren
Tamara Sam García
Tuchila Jamees



Robert Filliou. Monsters are Inoffensive, postcard

 **EUROPALIA
ESPAÑA**

AC/E
ACCION CULTURAL
ESPANOLA

 **aecd**



MINISTERIO
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNION EUROPEA
Y COOPERACION



national lottery
MUCH MORE THAN JUST GAMES



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Federal Public Service
Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation

This edition of Art's Birthday at M HKA is organised
together with Europalia España.



Vlaanderen
verbreiding werlt



ALLEN & OVERY