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PRESS RELEASE

Wim Delvoye *Cloaca* **Celebration 2000–2025**

(EXHIBITION) 16.01 – 09.03.2025
(GALLERY) LIVOURNE 35

On Thursday, January 16, 2025, the Brussels gallery rodolphe janssen will open the exhibition Wim Delvoye: *Cloaca*. Celebration 2000–2025. The exhibition celebrates the 25th anniversary of *Cloaca*, the groundbreaking work that brought Delvoye international fame.

Wim Delvoye and *Cloaca*

Wim Delvoye (b. 1965, Wervik, Belgium) is internationally known for his innovative, provocative, and technically refined artworks, in which he explores the boundaries between art, science, and consumer society. With *Cloaca*, a machine that mimics human digestion, Delvoye challenged the art world in 2000 by mechanizing and exhibiting an everyday biological process.

According to curator Harald Szeemann, *Cloaca* is “the pinnacle of Belgian surrealism.” By combining humor, technology, and social critique, Delvoye confronts the viewer with fundamental questions about art, value, and production.

The exhibition

For the first time, Wim Delvoye will present a series of over 40 original drawings related to *Cloaca*, illustrating his graphic and technical research and revealing his creative process. Additionally, sculptures of the feces produced by *Cloaca*, the *Cloaca* Travel Kit, Anal Kiss prints, *Cloaca* merchandise items, a tattooed pigskin, and an X-ray of *Cloaca* will make up a collection of around one hundred works. Together, they provide insight into the extraordinary complexity of Delvoye’s work over the past 25 years.

The *Cloaca* Original

Cloaca refers to a space where waste is collected and excreted. To mechanically mimic the digestive system, Delvoye conducted eight years of research with a team of scientists. The result was the *Cloaca* Original, first presented at the MuHKA in Antwerp, exactly 25 years ago when the artist was 35 years old.

This imposing installation, 12 meters long and almost 3 meters high, combines humor, technology, science, and social critique. The machine processes food and produces human feces, confronting the viewer with themes of consumption and production in a provocative manner.

Origins

With *Cloaca*, Delvoye strikes a universal tone: the work transcends gender, nationality, and ideology, as human waste is recognizable to all. At the same time, it sparks discussions on taboos, food waste, and the limits of art.

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Delvoye was partly inspired by Charlie Chaplin's "Feeding Machine" in Modern Times and by the cloned sheep Dolly. The artistic provocations of Piero Manzoni, who sold his Merda d'Artista in cans in 1961, and Marcel Duchamp, who elevated an everyday object to art with his 1917 readymade Fountain (an inverted porcelain urinal), also played a significant role in his thinking. Like them, Delvoye questions the role of art and everyday objects. With Cloaca, he continues this tradition, but adds contemporary critique: consumer society, the aesthetics of waste, and the commercialization of art. By literally selling "packaged shit," Delvoye sparks a dialogue about taboos and the boundaries of art.

10 Different versions

In addition to the Cloaca Original, the artist conceived nine other versions: Cloaca – New and Improved, Cloaca – Turbo, Cloaca Quattro, Cloaca N°5, Personal Cloaca, Mini Cloaca, Super Cloaca, Cloaca Travel Kit, Cloaca Professional... each accompanied by its own logo, as a pastiche of well-known brands such as Mr. Clean, Chanel, Harley-Davidson, etc. These installations have been traveling the world for 25 years and have been exhibited in over 20 prestigious institutions, including the Migros Museum (Zurich, CH), Power Plant (Toronto, CA), New Museum (New York, US), Capc Musée de Bordeaux (FR), Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon (FR), Kaohsiung Museum (Taiwan), and MONA in Tasmania (AU).

About the artist

(BORN) 1965 IN WERVIK, BELGIUM

(BASED) GHENT, BELGIUM AND BRIGHTON, UK

Wim Delvoye was able to establish himself as one of the most controversial artists of his time with a number of scatological works, including the infamous "Cloaca" (2000). The artist's model which he employed to do so, is that of the 'super'-artist: the businessman-entrepreneur that remains firmly in control. These artists are distinguished by their unique ability to react to contemporary political, economic, and cultural paradigms, particularly those that underpin the art world and the art market. At the same time, they rapidly refute stale claims about the creative process and the artwork in their multimedia work. Delvoye promotes himself as an autodidact, his art is often a combination of craftsmanship and the most sophisticated industrial manufacturing techniques.

Wim Delvoye had solo exhibitions at the Musée du Louvre, Paris, France; Musée Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland; Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran; MUDAM, Luxembourg, Luxembourg; The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia; Peggy Guggenheim collection, Venice, Italy; and many more.

Works by Wim Delvoye are included in numerous public collections, such as Guggenheim New York, NY, USA; SMAK, Ghent, Belgium; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia; Musée des beaux-arts, Montréal, Canada; Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy; and many more.

DOWNLOAD – [Biography](#)

Press Information

The press is invited to preview the exhibition in the presence of the artist on January 15 and 16, 2025. By appointment only via Gerrie Soetaert.

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