During the months of June and July, the galleries of the Amsterdam Jordaan district will join forces to organize Nieuw Amsterdams Peil (NAP).

For the second edition of Nieuw Amsterdams Peil, the association of galleries in the Jordaan district of Amsterdam was expanded from six to nine galleries. Under the title ‘Veracht den burgerman, doch ledig zijne kruiken’ (‘Despise the solid burgherman, but drink deep of his flagon’), Joost Declercq, director of Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens – in Sint Martens-Latem in Belgium – and curator Charlotte Crevits, co-curated an exhibition comprised of nine duo presentations. For this reason alone, NAP is unparalleled: the only project of its kind in the world in which galleries unite in a format to share the costs and reap the rewards. Presenting programmes with a strong emphasis on experiment and innovation, the nine galleries hold a unique position in the international artworld.

This year’s edition of NAP has been sponsored by:

Alain Biltreyest (BEL), Thomas Bogaert (BEL), Koen van den Broek (BEL), Matt Bryans (GBR), Gianni Caravaggio (ITA), Matthew Day Jackson (USA), Edith Dekyndt (BEL), Iris van Dongen (NED), Michel François (BEL), Klaas Kloosterboer (NED), Nicolás Lamas (PER), Thomas Lerooy (BEL), Renzo Martens (NED), Nástio Mosquito (AGO), Ana Navas (ECU), Nadia Naveau (BEL), Philippe Vandenberg (BEL), Bouke de Vries (NED), Marijke van Warmerdam (NED)

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Discourse and intuition are the prevailing concepts in a predetermined theme. The curator, in his role as a unique platform to foreground the artist and the gallery for the imminent Brexit – the general tenor of the presentation and curator Charlotte Crevits.

For the first edition of NAP2, 2016, the gallery format is facing challenges and needs to find new ways to share artists' work with audience. My selection of artists is subjective driven by a personal drive to deepen my understanding of certain artists and keeping a splash of vinegar to something overly sweet. My selection of artists is subjective driven by a personal drive to deepen my understanding of certain artists and keeping a splash of vinegar to something overly sweet. 

The interplay between gallery and curator helps to create a dialogue with the public, the curator, and the gallery owners. The gallery owner stands between the artist and the public, between the gallery and the artist, and to that of his or her translator. Hence the importance of listening not only to the voice of the artist but also to that of the translator.

The artistic quality of the Jordaan extends beyond the gallery walls. The interplay between gallery and community is a complex synthesis of factors at a time when the gallery owner and the artist are playing a game of cat and mouse. The artistic quality of the Jordaan extends far beyond its boundaries. Nurtured by the Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten, the Stedelijk Museum, De Ateliers, and De Appel, the galleries are at the European forefront of discovering and supporting young artists developing an international following.

Ideas that are not anticipated will be produced and curated by the artist. The interplay between gallery and community is a complex synthesis of factors at a time when the gallery owner and the artist are playing a game of cat and mouse. The artistic quality of the Jordaan extends far beyond its boundaries. Nurtured by the Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten, the Stedelijk Museum, De Ateliers, and De Appel, the galleries are at the European forefront of discovering and supporting young artists developing an international following.
Building on the Arte Povera movement of the 1960s and 1970s Gianni Caravaggio (1968, Rocca San Giovanni, Italy) represents younger generation of artists whose work introduces a new visual idiom. At the Accademia di Brera in Milan he studied under Luciano Fabro, one of the protagonists of Italian post-minimalism. At the heart of Caravaggio’s sculptural body of work is a sensual experience between the work of art, the viewer, and the space. The lyrical visual language characteristic of his work articulates philosophical ideas about man’s relationship to nature, metaphysics and cosmology. Suggestive titles often imply the link between form and idea. “The radical difference between human being and nature is the idea of nature as immeasurable, as mysterious and as unexpected.” (G.C.) The result is a fragile, aesthetic universe that seeks to rouse the viewer’s imagination.

Sostanza Incerta (Uncertain Substance). 20/5
Black marquina marble, inkjet print
50 × 60 × 60 cm
Michel François (1956, Saint-Trond, Belgium) is a conceptual artist who reflects on concepts such as time and space from an aesthetic steeped in lyricism. Like Gianni Caravaggio, François draws inspiration from Arte Povera, which is predicated upon a spatial, tactile experience. With the simplest of transformations, he is able to invest an array of materials and objects with nuanced yet complex layers of meaning. By pursuing a strategy that is often process-based, the artist introduces the element of time. This is clearly evident in Timelapse (2017) in which, through a natural process of crystallisation, the artwork undergoes a near-invisible metamorphosis. Among the more conceptual works in the exhibition are sculptural envelopes: their surreality displays a clear connection with the Belgian art tradition and alludes to work by artists such as Marcel Broodthaers.

Timelapse, 2017
Black marble, bottle, vinegar
42 x 40 x 40 cm
Ana Navas
tegenboschvanvreden – 02

In her practice, Ana Navas (1984, Quito, Ecuador) effortlessly explores the boundaries between different disciplines. Navas’ work clearly belongs to that of a new generation of artists who engage with themes relating to the impact of consumerism and globalisation. Her oeuvre engages with a world dominated by images, simulations and simulacra that threaten to dissolve the connection between the original object and its meaning. And with this, in her work nothing is what it seems. Navas’ art, which references kitsch, design, advertising and ethnography, boldly straddle ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. A sculpture made from mundane materials, for instance, rapidly transforms into a seemingly shamanistic object. Through her textile ‘snake sculpture’, Navas enters into a dialogue with the work of Nadia Naveau who, like Navas, creates a unique, cohesive corpus through the use of assemblage, recuperation and multiple references.

Column, 2017
Dyson fan, papier maché, ink, children’s chair, metal, artificial baguette and artificial flower
213 x 33 x 40 cm
Combining clay, ceramics, wood, plaster, plasticine and found objects, the sculptor Nadia Naveau (1975, Bruges, Belgium) creates objects that are poised between tradition and contemporary irreverence. Traces of this intermingling can be seen in how she kneads her materials, and in her assemblage of references steeped in art history and popular culture. Often taking figuration as their starting point, her forms become abstract, creating a space for humour and absurdity between Naveau’s hand and her eye. The result is a riotous abundance of languages, textures and contexts. Viewers with a rudimentary knowledge of art history will recognise Naveau’s archive of images – from Camille Claudel to Philip Guston, from Gian Lorenzo Bernini to Giorgio De Chirico. Another will notice the ears of Mickey Mouse or the eyes of the comedian Marty Feldman. Her intuitively collaged worlds invite the viewer to explore and understand, while at the same time inducing a kind of bewilderment. The glue that binds all these fragments is her distinctive visual language, her hand in the deftly manipulated materials.

- Céline Mathieu

Green Silver Screen, 2016
Epoxy
13.5 x 70 x 24 cm

Olympia & Figaro, 2016
Epoxy, iron powder
206 x 62 x 42 cm

Courtesy Base-Alpha Gallery, Antwerp. Photography We document Art
Nástio Mosquito (1981, Luanda, Angola) is a multidisciplinary artist whose work resists categorisation. In videos, installations, powerful performances and interdisciplinary projects, he ceaselessly challenges the boundaries of artistic practice. Taking a political stance, Mosquito investigates his position in a world moulded by globalisation, and simultaneously comments on an art world in the throes of extreme commercialisation. With subtle irony, wit and irreverence, Mosquito picks apart entrenched notions and views of South and West. The exhibition features the video work ‘3 Continents (Europe, America, Africa)’ of 2010. In three videos, Mosquito steps into the shoes of the kind of politician who declaims his faith in the continent. Provocation, sentiment and dark humour go hand in hand. The almost absurd juxtaposition of the three standpoints topples Western logic and challenges the existing hegemonies.

3 Continents (Europe, America, Africa), 2010
Video: 7’45” min
Courtesy Nástio Mosquito ©
Like the practice of Nástio Mosquito, the work of the Dutch artist Renzo Martens (1973, Terneuzen, The Netherlands) revolves around socio-political engagement. Martens is known for being a documentary filmmaker who isn’t afraid of controversy. His films are based on his prolonged stays in areas in a state of precarity. Since 2010, Renzo Martens has been head of the Institute for Human Activities (IHA) since 2010, which aims to cultivate a palm oil plantation in the Congolese rainforest. The film in this exhibition is a prologue to A Gentrification Program, his latest film which is currently under development. The film follows a seminar organised by the IHA, to which 3 white art theorists were invited to discuss their views of politically engaged art (read: institutional critique) and apply them to enhance the lives of those living in the Congo. The seminar gradually takes shape until, finally, you – the viewer – realise that you are witnessing Martens’ satirical argument.

Still from A Prologue. (Renzo Martens in conversation with Richard Florida on former Unilever plantation, Congo). 2018

Still from A Prologue. (Rene Ngongo and Renzo Martens in conversation with Richard Florida on former Unilever plantation, Congo). 2018

Video 40 min

Copyright IHA, 2018
The Belgian artist Alain Biltreyst (1965, Anderlecht, Belgium) takes a unique approach to the genre of abstract painting. Biltreyst’s paintings – typically painted on small, wooden panels – are firmly embedded in reality. The patterns, colours and compositions are present in the urban landscape that forms the basis of his work. Commercial graphic design such as posters and graphic images plastered on the sides of trucks, trailers and airplanes, as well as architectural constructions or transportation crates, are his sources. The result is abstract works that, by reason of their geometric shapes and primary colours, display a new affinity with modernism’s pictorial idiom. They call to mind the utopian works of De Stijl and American Minimalist painters like Frank Stella or Robert Mangold. For this exhibition, Biltreyst also made a wall painting ‘in situ’ that like his paintings, achieves a perfect equilibrium between impeccable harmonious compositions rich in connotations.

*Untilled (635-3)*, 2018
Acrylic on plywood
17.2 x 23 cm

*Untilled (656-3)*, 2018
Acrylic on plywood
17.2 x 23 cm
Klaas Kloosterboer
Ellen de Bruijne Projects – 04

In the exhibition Alain Biltereyst enters into dialogue with the Dutch artist Klaas Kloosterboer (1959, Schermer, The Netherlands) whose opus, which encompasses painting, sculpture, video and installation art, is also based around a similarly abstract visual idiom. Kloosterboer’s aesthetically radical works display close ties with the ideas of the Zero Movement and Fluxus. His oeuvre is distinguished by experiment, traceable actions and a rejection of conventions. The paintings are often the product of a process of ‘deconstruction’ which involves the artist slashing the canvas or hurling paint at it. In this way, both his paintings and installations possess a highly performative character, which gives his work an unexpected playfulness and levity. With a new series of works, Kloosterboer strikes up a dialogue with new work by Biltereyst, whereby both artists energetically respond to diverse dissonances/parallels in their language of form.

18120, 2018
Acrylic airbrush on cotton
240 x 300 cm

17183, 2017
Acrylic airbrush on 2 flo-pack bags with filling material (2x) 70 x 50 x 50 cm
Thomas Bogaert (1967, Dendermonde, Belgium) works across a broad spectrum of media including film, drawing and sculpture. Two years ago, his favourite film camera broke, prompting him to create the ‘Camera Series’: a body of work spanning several years, which features the artist’s Super 8 film camera as the protagonist. In Bogaert’s hands, the camera becomes not only an aesthetic object an sich, but is loaded with metaphorical significance. The film The Mountain (2017-2018) shows the camera perched upon a rock, with Mont Blanc in the background. The soundtrack, the cadence, the framing and pictorial qualities induce an extraordinary visual experience. By using linen paper from old atlases, the artist creates a similar poetic undertone in his drawings. But exactly who, or what, is the subject of this ‘Camera Series’: the camera – or us, the viewers, at whom the lens is pointed?

“Maybe it’s about neither of them but about the act of looking itself – a celebration of looking both at something and through something.” (T.B.)

The Mountain. 2017-18
Super 8 film (transferred to digital), 5’45” loop, sound
Marijke van Warmerdam
Annet Gelink Gallery – 05

‘La visione’ is the title of the new work by Marijke van Warmerdam (1959, Nieuwer-Amstel, The Netherlands). It is one of the film loops the artist made recently during an extended stay in Rome. One might describe the motif in this work as appearing and disappearing. The camera plays with the aura of bright sunlight behind the statue of an angel. About her work, the artist says: “It’s important to me that it moves in some way or other, literally or figuratively. I’m looking for clarity, too – for a simple image that intensifies, for example, through repetition.” Van Warmerdam is internationally acclaimed for her short film loops. Always questioning the world around her, the artist captures her observations in artworks that are sometimes referred to as laboratory set-ups of reality. In the exhibition, her film enters into conversation with Thomas Bogaert’s film The Mountain, which is similarly characterised by an exceptional poetic language.

La visione. 2/8.
Digital film. 1’36” loop

Many thanks to Mondriaan Fund, KNIR and KNAW for their generous support
The visual work of Nicolás Lamas (1980, Lima, Peru) creates an intriguing, often cryptic and eclectic universe. Lamas uses a variety of techniques and media to create multi-layered sculptures and installations. Through poetic juxtapositions and subtle transmutations of objects and materials, Lamas’ structures an extraordinary narrative pictorial language. Archaeology is a vital thread running throughout his work, an interest the artist says is driven by a wish to understand the ‘origin and history contained in every object’. In this way, he combines natural objects with humble items and industrial materials and melds ideas from a far-flung past with our contemporary world. Each of the elements or materials holds the seed of a larger social narrative and activates a multitude of new associations and meanings that encourage us to see the reality that surrounds us in a new light.
The British artist Matt Bryans (1977, Croydon, United Kingdom) gained international recognition for his collages, which he often incorporates into expansive installations. Working with images from old newspapers, Bryans erases certain details, objects and layers, which not only annihilates the original image but also its political association. The resulting artworks are pictorial collages with a subtle tonality that share a close relationship with painting. Many of Bryans’ work is process-orientated and, like the work of Nicolàs Lamas, is suffused with social and political subtexts that are translated into poetic narratives.
In his work, the Belgian artist Thomas Lerooy (1981, Roeselare, Belgium) repeatedly explores motifs and themes, shapes, materials and colours. A fervid imagination conjures marriages between seemingly incompatible elements – fragments of the here and now mingle with references to art history, folklore or science with an almost dreamlike energy. With its flawless technical execution, monumental presence and use of materials such as bronze and marble, his sculptural work makes reference to classical sculpture. References to the Belgian art tradition, such as the Surrealism of René Magritte and the Symbolism of artists like Léon Spilliaert, are never far away. Key themes in his oeuvre are mortality, the brevity of life and regeneration. Lerooy’s works are permeated by a sense of melancholy and perform an agile balancing act between poetry and irony.

Can’t fly. 2016
Bronze. patina
Diameter 25 cm
Edition de 5 + 2 AP
Iris van Dongen
Stigter Van Doesburg – 07

Iris van Dongen (1975, Tilburg, The Netherlands) is a Dutch artist who works in Berlin. Although van Dongen’s oeuvre is built around the classic genre of the portrait, her approach is entirely contemporary. Her subjects, on the whole, are women, whom she depicts in a melancholic, introspective or absent frame of mind. Created using gouache and pastel chalk on paper, the works are highly realistic and minutely detailed. In many instances, the figures are life size, which triggers a confrontational, almost uncomfortable, dialogue between the subject and the viewer. The exhibition features a new series of works alongside the work of Thomas Lerooy. Both artists share an interest in death, temporality and the darker facets of human existence, which each explores in an intensely personal visual language.

Uchikake, 2017
Pastel, gouache and pressed charcoal on paper
130 x 95 cm
Koen van den Broek
Galerie Ron Mandos – 08

The work of the painter Koen van den Broek (1973, Bree, Belgium) draws heavily on the imagery found in America’s urban landscapes. The artist photographs a slice of reality, which he then transforms into a painting. The process of painting renders the image more abstract: details are accentuated, superfluous elements ignored, light and shadow heightened. Perspectival lines and planes of colour break free of photographed reality to create a new pictorial tension. The abstraction of the image is particularly radical in two series: Flock and Bird. This strategy infuses his oeuvre with echoes of the American wasteland, as much as it references the work of painters like Henri Matisse, Clyfford Still and Franz Kline.

Untitled. 2018
Oil on canvas
150 x 100 cm
Bouke de Vries (1960, Utrecht, The Netherlands) is best known for his tactile, poetic sculptures in ceramics. He studied design and has a background in restoration. In the porcelain universe, seemingly antithetical concepts such as beauty, decay and transience find a startling reconciliation. A link to 19th century Romantic ideas are always close at hand. In the work of De Vries, construction and deconstruction are two sides of the same coin. Taking fractured ceramics from different cultures and traditions (such as Delft, Royal Worcester, Kangxi and Sèvres), he transforms them into new and unimaginable assemblages.

Cloud. 2018
19th - 21st porcelain and mixed media
Diameter 1 100 x 120 0 mm
Like the oeuvre of Bouke de Vries, the work of Edith Dekyndt (1960, Ypres, Belgium), is an unprecedented and lyrical contemplation of the idea of the ‘fine arts’. Her work is grounded in a thirst experimentation and research that she translates into a serene, Minimalist visual idiom. By making use of the specific, Dekyndt often manifests universal ideas and phenomena in her oeuvre. In her early work, this was achieved by taking geometric objects, space and light as starting points. In her tireless quest for a poetry that is wholly her own, she also turns to ephemeral processes, elements and materials present in our environment and in nature.

Videoprojection (1920 x 1080 HD) 34:17
(video still). loop. silent

courtesy the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
For Philippe Vandenberg (1952, Ghent – 2009, Brussels, Belgium) painting was born out of necessity. Determined to depict mankind and to reveal the prevailing structures of control, the artist never ceased to formulate new questions. To this end Vandenberg’s visual language needed to evolve: “Le danger est une régression totale, une répétition pas nouvelle, qui n’ajoute ou n’enlève rien.” [The danger is outright regression, repetition that is not new, that neither enhances nor subtrahes]. (1) The painting ‘Kill Them All I’ (2005-2008) is the key work in this exhibition, reflecting the artist’s radical way of working and world view. Produced during a time when written words assumed a prominent place in Vandenberg’s practice, it acts as a demonstration placard demanding that the past be left behind. But it’s a mantra, too – a prayer from a painter only too aware of the impossibility of freeing himself from old ideas and forms of expression. “Il me faut tout oublier” [I need to forget everything], Vandenberg would exclaim, warning himself against the perils of repetition that lurk around the corner. The diverse selection of works for this exhibition is meant to pay tribute to Vandenberg’s call for creative volatility and artistic sincerity. Made between 1989 and 2008, the exhibition sketches out Vandenberg’s audacious path, navigated from burlesque figuration in the late ’80s, to monochromatic painting in the mid ’90s, to finally works with words at the end of the ’2000s.

Matthew Day Jackson (1974, Panorama City, CA, United States) is an American multidisciplinary artist. At the crux of the artist’s corpus is a notion he refers to as ‘The Horriful’ – the belief that everything man does has the potential to bring both beauty and horror. Jackson’s work often features a combination of iconography familiar from popular culture and art history. In the work Dymaxion Map Monument (2009) for instance, the geometric structures of Buckminster Fuller are reconciled with a simulation of Constantin Brâncuși’s famous Bird in Space. The work Nude and Descended (2013) is a witty reference to Duchamp’s seminal painting, in which the collision between the objects and materials, as in many of his works, occurs within an emotionally fraught, frighteningly beautiful scene.

Nude and Descended, 2013
Lincoln Continental roof, rusted steel
30.5 x 170.2 x 89.8 cm | 12 x 67 x 35 1/4 inch
Courtesy of the artist and GRIMM Amsterdam | New York
VERACHT DEN BURGERMAN. DOCH LEDIG ZIJNE KRIJKEN.
DESPISE THE SOLID BURGHER. BUT DRINK DEEP OF HIS FLAGON.