# XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ
# HENK VISCH

EN

## VISITOR'S GUIDE

**CENTRALE**
**FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**

Place Sainte-Catherine 44 - Brussels 1000

VILLE DE **BRUXELLES**
STAD **BRUSSEL**
CITY OF **BRUSSELS**

CENTRALE presents an original dialogue between two artists : Xavier Noiret-Thomé and Henk Visch. Brussels-based French artist Xavier Noiret-Thomé creates paintings and assemblages that feed on knowledge, experience and stated influences.
He has chosen to invite Dutch sculptor, draughtsman and painter Henk Visch. To him, the sculptures he creates, both monumental and miniature, are akin to human thought.

The two artists converge in their approaches, which combine a fascination for the history of painting and sculpture and a constant search for the mysteries of the creative process.

Xavier Noiret-Thomé's greatly-diversified work mixes art and life. His creations combine moments lived and images of his environment with formal, stylistic, or conceptual quotations. References to the history of art and to the tutelary figures of painting simultaneously unfold in figurative and abstract works, in a gesture which is as much iconophilic as its iconoclastic, as much scholarly as it is familiar.
In this endless quest and experimentation, techniques merge together - oil, acrylic, lacquer, spray paint, chromium, ink, the addition of objects - to create protean sculpture-objects. The resulting pieces are sometimes very simple or, to the contrary, very complex, escaping determinism and comfort alike.

This diversity also characterizes the work of Henk Visch, who practises sculpture representing human or animal figures on the one hand, and assembling heterogeneous objects/ forms in more abstract, surrealist works on the other hand.
The invitation extended by Xavier Noiret-Thomé to Henk Visch reveals the affinities between the two artists : the vital energy deployed in their creation and the metaphysical dimension of their work anchored in their own experience, questioning the place of mankind in society and the universe.

The exhibition is split into five chapters : *Le lieu de la pensée* (the place of thought), *Le miroir du monde* (the mirror of the world), *Le corridor des voyants* (the corridor of seers), *La vitrine du déjà-vu* (the showcase of déjà-vu) and *La fosse métaphysique* (the metaphysical pit). This voyage allows discovering the respective works of both artists while unfolding a narrative on the very essence of creation.

**CURATOR : CARINE FOL**

# LE LIEU DE LA PENSÉE

The Place of Thought

The voyage starts with *Le lieu de la pensée*, where creation begins. In this first space, Xavier Noiret-Thomé proposes a display as a mise en abyme of the painter's gesture and his thoughts. In these sometimes-monumental art pieces, Noiret-Thomé paints the gesture of the painter, his studio, his inspiration, his quest for inspiration as so many elements constituting the "meta-painting", a reflection on painting itself.

## *L'empereur des Cyclopes,* 2019

The Emperor of Cyclops

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

This "mashup" (collage) stems from the encounter between an enamelled metal paella dish and a convex mirror surmounted by an eagle evoking Marcel Broodthaers' *Miroir d'époque Regency* (1973), *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1924, Brussels, Belgium - 1976, Cologne, Germany). While the paella pan is reminiscent of Broodthaers' famous mussel casserole, the convex mirror refers to Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) where the painter represents himself in the centre in the reflection of the mirror, resulting in a questioning of the actual subject of the painting : the painter or the spouses?
The semi-spherical mirror also evokes the world in which the very spectator is represented, reflected by the mirror.

## *À l'atelier I,* 2019

In the Studio

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

In *À l'atelier I*, the artist depicts his outstretched arm holding brushes figuratively albeit non-realistically. This painting, which is the first of a series of five, is transformed, repainted, re-presented until it becomes an image. At the top left, the artist represents the painting within the painting. This mise en abyme in the corner of the painting leads to a repetition of the gesture. The painting gesture becomes the subject of the piece.
In this first room, the artist also presents a selection of postcards on which he draws or writes words in a state of mind similar to the surrealist thinking of René Magritte or Marcel Broodthaers. As a child, Xavier Noiret-Thomé collected postcards reproducing works of art that he received every week in packs of twenty. The explanations were printed on the back of the postcards that offered the artist one of the first gateways into the history of art, an immediate access to painting. His interest for postcards stems from there, and he assiduously continued collecting these objects over the years. Today, his collection encompasses several thousands of postcards. As early as 1995, he started painting on the postcards lying around in his studio. Although he originally painted them to keep busy or even to clean his paintbrushes, he ended up voluntarily operating a shift in the works reproduced. The history of art thus becomes amusingly, irreverently and lovingly manipulated and mishandled in a sincere homage to painting.

# LE MIROIR DU MONDE

The Mirror of the World

The meeting between Xavier Noiret-Thomé and Henk Visch triggered a fundamental discussion on the place of sculpture and painting in the exhibition space. In the chapter *Le miroir du monde* (the mirror of the world), two clusters of Henk Visch's sculptures - greatly varying in format, material and content - are surrounded by Xavier Noiret-Thomé's abstract and figurative paintings.

Henk Visch's sculptures draw their substance from psychoanalysis and the unconscious. They overcome the aesthetic and constraining conventions of the representation of reality and of the body. In this chapter with surrealist echoes, colours and painted shapes rub shoulders with voluminous figures, fragile constructions and three-dimensional collages. These artworks all work as many reminiscences of the body, the environment, the thought, in a constant echo with the experiences lived in reality and the act of painting or sculpting. Made up of various materials - bronze, canvas, rope, wood, metal, paper, coins - the works of the two artists clash and dialogue.

Henk Visch asserts his sensibility for the space in which his works are placed by steering the connections between them. In a dialogue with Xavier Noiret-Thomé's paintings, the experience of space becomes a cosmogony for body and mind. The body of the work and the body of the spectator bring a new impetus, that of imagination.

An assemblage of dozens of silver paint-coated pages of the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, a blue monochrome painting covered with coins in a reference to the European flag, and several paintings with very different themes reflect the world as it is ironically apprehended and scrutinized by Xavier Noiret-Thomé. As Henk Visch puts it : "A figurative sculpture does not have to be realistic, but it will bring together a series of information. For example, it will not talk about the person depicted, but about feelings. As far as I'm concerned, a figurative sculpture can thus be abstract".

## *Too late for the grave,* 2006

**HENK VISCH**

"It's strange, but I always want to be on time for an appointment, which proves quite difficult. There's only a small chance of being exactly on time. Usually you're either late or early. If you arrive too early, you have to wait and if you are late, you've missed something..., and it's annoying. There's only one appointment I'd like to be late for: death. If I'm too late... I'll live longer".

## *Le carrousel II,* 2008

The Carousel II

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

As part of an exhibition at Mechelen's Garage in 2008, Xavier Noiret-Thomé went through his collection of postcards and selected thirty or so images to make a large mural of several meters entitled *Le Grand Mur* (The Great Wall). The artist painted silver rectangles onto the wall itself, all the while respecting the dimensions of the original artworks he chose. He then added freehand-painted black frames. *Carousel II* proceeds in the same way, the reproductions of works are covered with silver paint. Images disappear, while the titles and references of the works remain on the back of the cards arranged on a display, forming a double ready-made.

## *Les joueurs (première partie),* 2020

The Players – First Game

**FILM VAN JOACHIM OLENDER**

For his exhibition at CENTRALE, Xavier Noiret-Thomé invited film director and video maker Joachim Olender to create a filmic object around his oeuvre. Drawing his inspiration from a game invented by Xavier Noiret-Thomé in the 1990s, *Les joueurs* (première partie) features a card game between friends. Four artists engage in a "postcard war", with reproductions of works of art, thus revisiting a tiny part of the history of painting.

# LA VITRINE DU DÉJÀ-VU

The Showcase of Déja-Vu

## *Autoportrait à la sorcière,* 2019

Self-Portrait of a Witch

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

In *Autoportrait à la sorcière*, Xavier Noiret-Thomé represents an image of his own reflection in the mirror of the artwork *L'empereur des Cyclopes*. Moving around the exhibition, the spectator finds himself in front of this representation of another piece of the artist that evokes the effect of déjà vu. In this self-quotation, the history of art is suggested as in a *mise en abyme*. The title of the work is inspired by the convex mirror called "witch's mirror" or "witch's eye". The title also evokes the divinatory ability of the witch to predict events. Visitors who have walked past the display case will already have seen the work even before visiting the exhibition. A loop is thus created in the exhibition itself as well as between the inside and the outside of the location.

## *Noch einmal,* 1990

**HENK VISCH**

Henk Visch's bronze leg is an unlimited edition; each time the artist sells the work, he immediately creates a new one. Thus the sculpture - called Noch Einmal (once again) in reference to its reproducibility - will follow the artist throughout his life. In the words of Henk Visch, the work symbolizes the continuity and humility of existence. When viewed from the side, the sculpture reveals the profile of the famous bust of Nefertiti (ca. 1351–1334 BC), thus offering a double reading and a new reference to art history.

# LE CORRIDOR DES VOYANTS

The Corridor of Seers

In the chapter *Le corridor des voyants*, Xavier Noiret-Thomé reproduces Vincent Van Gogh's *Self-portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889) by placing the work in front of a representation of an African mask. After having revisited this often referenced, represented and copied work of intense pictorial power, Xavier Noiret-Thomé wanted to pay homage to Van Gogh. This audacious gesture reveals the artist's freedom in the face of the diktats and trends of the artistic world. As such, he re-joins Henk Visch, since both artists fiercely assert their freedom.

## *Le voyant,* 2019

*The Seer*

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

This work is a representation of a Central African Pende mask kept at Tervuren's Africa Museum. The deformed face symbolises the effects of an epileptic seizure inflicted by sorcerers or spirits. The use of black and white - representing good and evil - increases the distorting effect of the face. The work is entitled *The Seer* in a reference to the epileptic who enters a trance in connection with the world of the invisible, accessing information unknown to others. Enhanced with fluorescent yellow paint, the gaze is hypnotic, almost electric.

## *The stolen painting,* 2010-2019

**HENK VISCH**

"The cat is a very observant animal that watches everything. It is a witness. *The stolen painting* refers to the theft of a painting, an event witnessed by a cat. But how can it tell me about what it's seen? By taking the shape of a painting itself, obviously!

Each year, I try to paint something.
I think it's fantastic to make a painting and look at it, but I'm never satisfied with the paintings I make... I really can't do it. It angers that I can't paint and I'd rather blame someone else: my painting was stolen! And the cat is my witness! But now, the cat has become an image that constantly reminds me that I can't paint.
I made a larger version of this work, which I called *De Getuige* (the witness), which sits next to the courts of law in The Hague, the seat of the International Court of Justice".

# LA FOSSE MÉTAPHYSIQUE

The Metaphysical Pit

The show ends on the platform overlooking CENTRALE's *salle des colonnes*. Opposite, the word OPERA is painted matt black on a silver background. As a statement, the word OPERA, a synonym for *learned culture* in the French language, meaning "work", "labor" but also "oeuvre", is in a dialogue at the bottom of the "metaphysical pit" with Henk Visch's *Nightlife*, a monumental sculpture of a hare whose head is crossed by lines drawing fluorescent eyes. The viewer is reflected in this giant triptych as if in a mirror, and thus confronted with the question of the work itself.

## *OPERA,* 2005

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

In 1996, Xavier Noiret-Thomé attended Amsterdam's Rijksakademie. At the time, his painting was influenced by the works of artist Eugène Leroy (1910, Tourcoing, France - 2000, Wasquehal, France), who was known for his expressive paintings with thick surfaces. This materialist painting strongly influences Xavier Noiret-Thomé. The artist then makes a series of four oil portraits on wood and renders them monochrome by applying a coat of chromium paint over the surface before they are completely dry. The artist thus distances himself from Eugène Leroy's painting.

The use of chromium (the colour) has become a recurring element in the work of Xavier Noiret-Thomé, one that always takes an iconoclastic dimension of partial destruction that simultaneously reveals other elements. More than a colour, chromium paint is a material that captures light and erases the painter's gesture, making it disappear. Smooth or in *relief*, the painting becomes almost photographic. As a student, Xavier Noiret-Thomé was a graffiti fan. Chromium, a colour commonly used by graffiti artists, also echoes Xavier Noiret-Thomé's past as a graffiti artist who constantly makes "low" and "high" culture coexist in his work.

# BIOGRAPHIES

**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

1971, Charleville-Mézières, France.
Lives and works in Brussels.

Xavier Noiret-Thomé is a visual artist. From 1990 to 1995, he studied at the École régionale des Beaux-Arts de Rennes before earning a residency at the Centre d'Art contemporain du domaine de Kerguéhennec. In 1996, he was laureate of the Villa Medici extra muros. From 1996 to 1997, he joined the residencies of Amsterdam's Rijksakademie. In 1999, he obtained a workshop at the Paul Gauguin Museum in Pont-Aven.
In 2001, he was awarded the Levis award on the occasion of the Young Belgian Art Prize at Brussels' Palais des Beaux-Arts. And in 2005, he was laureate of the Académie de France in Rome and obtained a residency at the Villa Medici.
Since the beginning of his career, he has had many solo and group exhibitions. His work is part of several public and private collections.
Since 2005, Xavier Noiret-Thomé is professor in the painting section at La Cambre art school in Brussels.

www.noiretthome.me

**HENK VISCH**

1950, Eindhoven, Holland. Lives and works in Eindhoven and Berlin.

Henk Visch is a sculptor, draughtsman and graphic artist who lives and works in Eindhoven. His artistic career began after his studies at the Royal Academy of Art and Design (department of graphic art) in Hertogenbosch (NL), which he completed between 1968 and 1972.
He enjoys an international career and has shown his work in such renowned exhibitions as the Dutch Pavilion at the 1988 Venice Biennale or Kassel's Dokumenta IX in 1992. His art pieces can be found in numerous private collections and international museums.
In parallel, he also developed an important academic career. From 1984 to 1987, Henk Visch was a lecturer at Amsterdam's Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten and from 1987 to 1991 at Maastricht's Jan van Eyck Academy. From 1995 to 2001, he was professor at Stuttgart's Staatliche Akademie der Bildende Künste and from 2005 to 2017, at Münster's Hochschule für Bildende Künste.
He has been awarded several prizes: that of the city of Darmstadt in 1991; that of the Noord-Brabant department of Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds in 2001 and also the Jeanne Oosting Prize in 2018. Visch also produces illustrations in the Volkskrant in collaboration with Kader Abdolah for many years.

www.henkvisch.nl

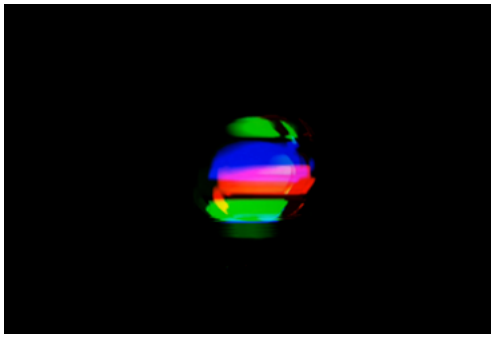
# C E N T R A L E . b o x

*Untitled photograph*, Ault (FR), 2019 ©
Max Kesteloot

03.09 > 08.11.2020 :
Laureate of the City of Brussels
Art Contest Prize 2019

## MAX KESTELOOT

GOOD LOST CORNERS
places that appeal to me



*Forests and skies*, 2020 ©
Emilien Simon

26.11.2020 > 17.01.2021 :
Laureate of the City of Brussels
Médiatine Prize 2019

## EMILIEN SIMON

Forests and skies

Place Sainte-Catherine 16 Sint-Katelijneplein — Bruxelles 1000 Brussel(s)
**Entrée libre** | Gratis toegang | Free entrance

# C E N T R A L E . l a b

*Interstices*, 2020 ©
Justine Bougerol

03.09 > 08.11.2020 :

## JUSTINE BOUGEROL

Strata

*One More Glance* (Painting)
Oil on canvas, 2019 ©
Akiko Ueda

26.11.2020 > 31.01.2021 :

## AKIKO UEDA

DÉJÀ-MAIS-VU

# AGENDA

## SEPTEMBER

**02.09.2020** — 18:00 > 20:30
Opening PANORAMA
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ** & **HENK VISCH**

**02.09.2020** — 18:00 > 20:30
Opening GOOD LOST CORNERS
places that appeal to me
MAX KESTELOOT
C E N T R A L E . **b o x**

**02.09.2020** — 18:00 > 20:30
Opening Interstices
JUSTINE BOUGEROL
C E N T R A L E . **l a b**

**06.09.2020** — 11:30
Sunday @CENTRALE
Free guided tour (FR or NL) included in the entrance ticket

**16.09.2020 & 30.09.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE With the artist
CAMILLE VAN HOOF

**23.09.2020** — 12:30
CENTRALE Cinema – Carte blanche
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**
(with Centre du Film sur l'Art)
*Anemic Cinéma* van Marcel Duchamp
*Jackson Pollock* by Hans Namuth
*Bram Van* de Velde by J-M Meurice
*Nielle Toroni* by Elsa Cayo

## OCTOBER

**04.10.2020** — 11:30
Sunday @CENTRALE
Free guided tour (FR or NL) included in the entrance ticket

**07.10.2020** — 13:00
Between classes
Free visit for teachers & associations

**11.10.2020** — 15:00
Presentation of the exhibition catalogue (La Lettre volée editions) and meeting with
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**, **HENK VISCH**, CARINE FOL & DENYS ZACHAROPOULOS

**1 4.10.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
CAMILLE VAN HOOF

**21.10 & 22.10.2020** — in the morning and in the afternoon Performance and workshops by
AYELEN PAROLIN & LEA PETRA
for young audiences

**21.10.2020** —19:00
Performance
AYELEN PAROLIN & LEA PETRA

**24.10.2020** — 11:00
Meet the artist
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

**24.10.2020** — 14:00
Screening of the film *Les joueurs* (première partie) by Joachim Olender, about the work of **XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**

**28.10.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
CAMILLE VAN HOOF

## NOVEMBER

**02.11 > 05.11.2020**
Workshop 8-12 ans with the artist
MARION FABIEN

**18.11.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
MARION FABIEN

**18.11.2020** — 19:00 > 22:00
Ars Musica

**25.11.2020** — 18:30 > 20:30
Opening Forests and skies
ÉMILIEN SIMON
C E N T R A L E . **b o x**

**25.11.2020** — 18:30 > 20:30
Opening DÉJÀ-MAIS-VU
AKIKO UEDA
C E N T R A L E . **l a b**

## DECEMBER

**02.12.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
MARION FABIEN

**05.12.2020**
Jazz Concert
STEVE HOUBEN & STEFAN KREMER TRIO

**06.12.2020** — 11:30
Sunday @CENTRALE
Free guided tour (FR or NL) included in the entrance ticket

**09.12.2020** — 12:30
CENTRALE Cinema – Carte blanche
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**
(with Centre du Film sur l'Art)
*Francis Picabia ou l'auberge espagnol* by Yves Fouacs
*L'horrible, bizarre et incroyable aventure de monsieur Tête* by Jan Lenica

**12.12.2020** — 11:00
Meet the artist **HENK VISCH**

**16.12.2020** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
MARION FABIEN

## JANUARI

**03.01.2021** — 11:30
Sunday @CENTRALE
Free guided tour (FR or NL) included in the entrance ticket

**06.01.2021** — 14:00 > 16:00
Workshops @CENTRALE with the artist
MARION FABIEN

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WITH THE KIND COLLABORATION OF:
**XAVIER NOIRET-THOMÉ**, **HENK VISCH**,
De Garage (Malines).
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