

# We Humans are Free: From the Collection of S.M.A.K., Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent

April 29, 2006 – August 31, 2006



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S.M.A.K., Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent/ City of Ghent  
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Hours: 10:00-18:00 (Fris & Sats: 10:00-20:00), Closed on Mons (May 1 and July 17 excluded)  
Admission: Adult ¥1,000, university students ¥800, elementary school to high school students  
¥400, visitors over 65 years ¥800

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between the cities of Kanazawa and Ghent, we introduce about 70 works by 11 artists selected from the collection of S.M.A.K., Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, who makes careful observations on human life and art, and believe that humans can be free through art.

Up to the present day from the beginning of the 20th century, the theme “art and life” has always been important in art. It will be safe to say that since the foundation in 1975, S.M.A.K. has been one of the museums playing an active part in pursuing this theme most earnestly. Three artists, Beuys, Broodthaers, and Panamarenko, who the Museum itself calls “Big Triangle”, approved all human potentialities, criticized the “art” system with narrow views, and tried to broaden the concept of “art” to the extent of “life.” In this age, there is no longer a cold war, and trends toward the globalization are rapidly proceeding. On the other hand, while “Neo-Liberalism” spread, control is being strengthened in such a way that we have never known. In the present situation, it is increasingly important for us to retrace the steps of Beuys and others to contemplate on what “freedom” means. This attitude has been passed on through the artists’ activities and works which characterize today’s S.M.A.K.—Barrio, Weinberger, and others. Additionally, the Museum is proceeding with its unique activities, linking the system of “museum” and the society. This idea is symbolized, for instance, in the legendary exhibition of “*Chambres d’amis*,” (1986) in which artworks are displayed in local residents’ houses in Ghent.

The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa aims to be a museum involving citizens and open to the public. Sharing the attitude and actions of S.M.A.K., which aim to connect human life and art, we at this museum in Kanazawa are pleased to introduce their activities in this exhibition.

### **Artists Featured in This Exhibition:**

Artur Barrio, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers, Katharina Fritsch, Fabrice Hybert, Annika Larsson, Mark Manders, Bruce Nauman, Panamarenko, Luc Tuymans, Lois and Franziska Weinberger

#### Artur Barrio

Born in Portugal in 1945, and currently lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

At the age of ten, he moved to Rio de Janeiro. Under the military dictatorial government at the time, arrests, torture, and murders by the military police were frequent. In his artworks at the time, blood, nails, hair, saliva, urine, and feces were wrapped in white cloth bags and tied with strings to be left on the road and seaside, and he photographed or filmed how onlookers reacted to them. He refused using paints and materials designed for artworks, making a remark that they were for the elite. What he actually used were wastes, raw meat, and toilet paper. *Interminável* (interminable) is an installation made of familiar, easily-spoiled materials such as ground coffee, bread, mineral water, and wine. He does not intend to render some kind of meaning with the materials he uses, but emphasizes direct involvement of people experiencing the space with the materials including their smell. On the wall are words such as “Distante (far),” “Perto (close),” “Certo (certain),” “Incerto (uncertain),” and the date of production written by the artist, and a part of the work is violently broken off by a hammer.

#### Joseph Beuys

Born in Krefeld, Germany in 1921, and died in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1986.

He joined the air force in World War II and went through a plane crash, but had a narrow escape from death. To cure him, Tatar people put butter all over his body and wrapped him up in felt cloth, both of which became important materials for his creation later. *Wirtschaftswerte* (Economic Values) was made for the exhibition organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent. In this work are arranged food packages from East Germany on a metal shelf brought in a display room for the 19th century painting in the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent. Each package has his autograph. In front of the shelf is a rectangular solid plaster block. This block that symbolizes “sculpture” and, by the same token, “art,” has its broken part filled in with butter. It is understood from the smudge on the plaster that butter, a symbol for energy, is absorbed into “art.” A cable extends from a radio placed on the shelf to the plaster. This cable acts as the go-between of food and “art.” When the work is exhibited somewhere else, the paintings locally made in the days of Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) are arranged on the surrounding walls.

#### Marcel Broodthaers

Born in Brussels, Belgium in 1924, and died in Cologne, Germany in 1976.

After working as a poet, he began to make artworks at the age of forty. Puns and word games are important elements in his works. *Grande casserole de moules*, for instance, shows his idea of using the double meaning of “moule,” that is, “mussel” and “mold.” The artist overlaps the void moule shell onto “language” that conveys meanings, also artists’ brand power to make things exist as “art,” or the “museum” system. His attention when making works is directed more to media than the content itself—e.g. toys to help children learn words, names of famous painters, his autographs as an artist, books’ layouts, and screens to project films. In his “Musée d’Art Moderne, Department des Aigles,” which imitates the activities of “museums,” only crates to store artworks were on display, exhibition posters and invitation cards were made, and an opening reception was held. He questioned the system by turning his attention to media, and through humorous ways of word games, he tried to free humans from various kinds of “mold” restricting them.

### Katharina Fritsch

Born in Essen, Germany in 1956, and currently lives in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Fritsch expresses images, which are taken from her memories and dreams, in sculpture with simple, lucid forms and colors—a monstrous-sized standing mouse, yellow-painted Madonna, a vase with a kitsch painting on, etc. The sculpture that she makes gives such a realistic description that whoever sees it can recognize what it is. On the other hand, however, the ambiguity in meaning, lack of context, colors and scale that arouse uneasy or out-of-place feelings, and her way of arranging them, stimulate viewers' thinking and emotions. In this exhibition are shown her four works that look mysterious and humorous so as to confuse the boundary between mass-produced everyday goods and artworks. Those works are multiples made with a single model. While tracing the descent of classical representational sculpture, this artist has taken in the concept of "manufacturing" and "distribution," the basic components of a consumer society. The form and meaning of "manufactured products" are added to the mysterious images.

### Fabrice Hybert

Born in Lucon, France in 1961, and currently lives in Paris, France.

He makes different kinds of objects such as a cubic soccer ball and a swing with protuberances. Those objects that he calls "POF: Prototypes d'objets en fonctionnement (prototypes of working objects)" look like everyday goods, but as they are not useful like tools, they defamiliarize the familiar space. He gives performances using them, and makes humorous films imitating promotion videos of commodities. *Ted Hybert* parodying his name is one of them (POF#51), and it is composed of a vinyl teddy bear costume and a video. Also he has set up a company named "UR (Unlimited Responsibility)," and simulates the business of developing and selling prototypes, responding to the demands from "customers." Moreover, transforming the exhibition venue into a TV studio, he both produces and broadcasts programs. All of them are his attempts to defamiliarize the existing media such as "broadcast" and "museum," and throw them into confusion.

### Annika Larsson

Born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972, and currently lives in New York, USA.

Since her first film production in 1997, Larsson has been consistent in attempting to grasp the depth psychology, unique tense atmosphere and comicalness shown in the simple attitudes of people, men in particular, in different daily situations. The characters in her works are shown in photos or CG, and they are always silently devoting themselves to their tasks. In *Bend II*, a man dressed in a suit is clicking a mouse in front of a computer, to transform gradually a CG-drawn man displayed on a monitor. The viewers begin to feel as if the operating man overlapped the man in virtual reality in the course of time, with his own body being transformed. Uneasiness and psychological tension become greater. In *Dog* are shown expressionless faces of two men walking their dogs, their stylish attire and belongings such as chains and leather gloves, in successive close-ups and in slow motion. Distortions and delusions concealed in everyday life surface through the extremely minimal image-language.

### Mark Manders

Born in Volkel, The Netherlands in 1968, and currently lives in Arnhem, The Netherlands.

Since 1986, Manders has worked to produce so-called "Self Portrait as a Building" composed of different sizes and kinds of sculpture. Based on an imaginary architectural sketch that visualizes the artist's thinking process, he creates many pieces of furniture and equipment to construct a space lingering between reality and imagination. In this exhibition are displayed his two works that compose of a part of "Self Portrait as a Building." They are *Momentenmachine* (Moment Machine), a group of sculptured pieces connected with

tubes, and *Fox/mouse/belt*, in which a mouse is tied to the belly of a fox. While the former is “a closed circuit organized as an organism,” the latter shows that the artist places a mouse, which is supposed to be inside the fox’s stomach, on the outside of it. Those works do not symbolize something fixed in the world he constructs. His sketch of a building is revised in the course of time. It is one of the visions that he continues to weave, going across reality and parting from it at times.

### Bruce Nauman

Born in Fort Wayne, USA in 1941, and currently lives in New Mexico, USA.

The works of Nauman, who began a career as an artist late in the 1960s, are made in extremely varied styles—sculpture, video and performance. For a theme, he has often dealt with the power or influence of language, and the relationship between body/act and emotions. In this *Good Boy / Bad Boy*, a man and a woman are shown on two monitors respectively, and each one repeats the same line beginning with “I was a good boy. You were a good boy. We were good boys. That was good.” Both of them gradually get irritated and emotional in tone so as to affect viewers psychologically. We notice that our reactions become subtly different due to not only the difference in the tone of their voices or expressions but also their racial and sexual differences. Nauman offers truly insightful and sharp observations on the issues concerning communication, and on top of that, human nature rather than language itself.

### Panamarenko

Born in Antwerp, Belgium in 1940, and currently lives there.

The name “Panamarenko” comes from “Pan American Airways.” While making representational sculpture of figures and everyday goods with familiar materials such as felt and tinfoil in his early career in the second half of the 1960s, he performed “happenings” on the street in Antwerp. In 1966, he made *Magnetic Shoes* that had electromagnets fitted into and walked on the wall and ceiling. Later, he conducted research and development on machines to fly, and presented them as his works. He tried different ways to fly—propellers, motors, balloons, or magnets. In 1969, he began to work on the experimentation and manufacturing of airship *Aeromodeller*, and tried to travel from Antwerp to the exhibition venue to participate in the Sonsbeek International Sculpture Exhibition on board his airship, but it was unsuccessful. The idea of *Ferro Lusto* was to fly by using a magnetic field, and it has four adjustably revolving magnets under its UFO-shaped part. He tries to realize a variety of nonsensical ideas for flying, while wedded to low-tech amateurish handiwork.

### Luc Tuymans

Born in Mortsel, Belgium in 1958, and currently lives in Antwerp, Belgium.

While using representational motifs such as figures, his way of description is not to depict the object in front of him so carefully as to copy it. His painting is based on the flashbacks imprinted on his memory such as scenes from TV news and childhood memories. *Mwana Kikoto* is based on his memory of a film of Belgium King Baudouin I getting off the plane at the airport in colonial Congo. His motifs are often taken from colonial rule, Holocaust, church, medical picture, and those which show the dark side of society—death, violence, and ruling. His pictures in which human faces are not clearly depicted and dismemberment is suggested reflect fear and anxiety that can happen unexpectedly in our everyday life. While he dislikes unifying the picture sizes and putting them in frames, he values ambiguity and uncertainty. Also the multi-layer quality is the characteristic of his paintings. *Untitled* is a picture oil-painted on the wallpaper, and its pattern is left to show through. As seen in *The Arena*, his style of a picture-in-a-picture is often noticeable as the complex quality in his work.

### Lois and Franziska Weinberger

Lois was born in Stams, Austria in 1947, and Franziska in Innsbruck, Austria in 1953. They currently live in Vienna, Austria. They began their co-production in 1999.

They deal with plants in their works. When Lois was a little child, he helped his parents weed their field, and sensed that useful plants were distinguished from harmful plants according to the criteria fixed by people. As they say, "the best gardeners are those who abandon the gardens," they observe the mutually intertwined boundary between nature under people's control (naming, classifying, cultivating, and thinning out) and "weeds" straying from such control and growing naturally. *Garten* (Garden) is their work in which a bundle of newspaper is put on the ground of their garden for months and plants' seeds are left to grow on it. Afterwards, the newspaper is dug out again and placed on a plastic tray. Newspaper as a circulating medium is put in contrast to unidentifiable plants growing there. By cutting off those natural growing "weeds" from the ground and making them mobile, they question the relationship between nature and people. They also made drawings to indicate that the names of plants contain different meanings such as animals' names. As the work makes the act of classification ineffective, different meanings develop.

### **Catalogue:**

Catalogue with texts and approximately 100 illustrations are on sale. Price: ¥1,500

**Related Events:**Symposium "Art and Society" (provisional title)

Date: April 29, 14:00-16:30

Panelists: Philippe Van Cauteren (Director, S.M.A.K., Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent), Yoshitaka Mori (Associate Professor, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music)

Venue: Theater 21, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Charge: Free (Need the ticket for this exhibition)

Language: Japanese and English translation

Artist Talk by Artur Barrio

Date: April 30, 14:00-15:00

Venue: Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Charge: Free (Need the ticket for this exhibition)

Language: Japanese and Portuguese interpretation

Children's Day Special — Gallery Tour for Parents and Children "Go Go! S.M.A.K."

Dates: May 5 & 6, 10:30-12:00 / 14:00-15:30

Meeting Point: Kids Studio, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Charge: Free (Need the ticket for this exhibition)

Applicants: 15 pairs of parents and children for each tour (Children over elementary school students)

Workshop for Children "Let's Fly with Panamarenko" (provisional title)

Date: August 6, 14:00-16:00

Venue: Kids Studio, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Charge: Free

Applicants: 20 children from 4th grade of elementary school to junior high school. Please apply in either ways:

1. E-mail to [smak@kanazawa21.jp](mailto:smak@kanazawa21.jp) (effective: July 1 - 24) with address, name, age, and phone number.
2. Send a reply paid and self-addressed postcard with the same information: "Panamarenko" c/o 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, 1-2-1 Hirosaka, Kanazawa, Ishikawa, 920-8509

Gallery Talks by Curator

Dates: May 13, 27, June 10, 24, July 8, 22, August 5, 19, Talks start at 14:00

Meeting Point: Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Charge: Free (Need the ticket for this exhibition)

\*There might be changes in the related events.

**For Press Information:**

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