

Pikant! Five Centuries of Cultural History Stripped Down

Organized by the Phoebus Foundation

Martine Bruggeman, Belgium

The *PiKANT!* exhibition takes place in beautiful surroundings, the gardens and the orangery of a fairytale water-castle in Flanders (Belgium). More than an exhibition, it is rather an experience with also beautiful art pieces in the nearby church and in the heritage chapel. The *PiKANT!* exhibition guides the visitor through five centuries of Flemish lace and history, and is based on three major themes.

"*Lace as a life thread*" presents top art pieces of great masters such as Van Dijck, Rubens, Jordaens and many others. Lace breathes status and wealth, but is also a carrier of emotions and memories. From birth to death, lace was a companion to ritual high points, from baptism trough to marriage and to death. Witness are the delicate christening robes and caps, the wedding dresses and the mourning veils and handkerchiefs. The other side of the lace is also



Left: Portrait of a boy, Christiaan Coevershoff, 1633, private collection

Below: Louis van Engelen, Lacemakers in front of a farm, around 1900, Phoebus Foundation



Anonymous Antwerp master, portrait of a young woman, detail, 1613, Phoebus Foundation



Spring-summer 2017, Andres Sarda (Van de Velde)

covered extensively in the exhibition: anonymous and often exploited women transform the yarn into beautiful textiles. Lace is the link between both worlds.

"*Spicy underwear or lingerie*" shows how lace changed from undergarments to outerwear and back, and the pioneering role played by the Van de Velde family business in this movement. Lace conceals and reveals, shows and hides at the same time. The exhibition makers delved into the archive of the Van de Velde family and presented this sophisticated lingerie in dialogue with top vintage cars, a collection from the lord of the castle. The history of lingerie in the 20th and 21st centuries is shown in a spectacular staging!

"*Lace as Art*" presents contemporary lace in the lane of the castle, in the heritage chapel Sint-Goedele and in the Sint-Martinus church of Moorsel. Poetic lace art is also

sporadically and beautifully integrated into the historic part. Flemish and international artists rediscover this special transparent fabric and use the techniques for subtle creations or monumental and original sculptures. Artists see the analysis of techniques as a challenge to create artistic objects such as metal wire sculptures, combining traditional lace techniques with fascinating experiments. Lace artworks in a new design, in trendy materials and colors, look fresh and contemporary. Lace, our heritage, is preserved and loses its unfairly old-fashioned image. It is important to understand that history of lace doesn't have an end yet. This is also the objective of *Living Lace*, which



Pages from my diary, Véronique Cardinael

raised the bell with the *World Congress* in Bruges in 2018 to respect and support lace artists.

By integrating contemporary lace in the superb *PiKANT!* exhibition, the Phoebus Foundation shows that lace artists have built bridges between the past and the future. Lace is full of life and is facing an exciting future!

PiKANT! is an experience for all culture and lace lovers. Congratulations Phoebus Foundation: the story, the versatility, the quality and the staging of *PiKANT!* radiate class, worthy of Flanders and its lace tradition.

Note: The Pikant! exhibition will be extended until 3 November 2019.



The Urchin, Jin Choi & Thomas Shine

Lace: From Artistic Craft to Lace Art

Greet Rome-Verbeylen, Belgium

During the almost 5 centuries of lace-history it appears that the functionality of the lace always was primordial. But above all, this prestigious costume-adornment, made by poor, anonymous, and exploited lacemakers, clearly was a sign of wealth and power.

Society changed during the last century drastically and lace lost its huge economical value. However, the tradition was kept and passed on, sometimes made very artistically, but mostly repeating traditional patterns without a story, just doing what previous generations did for centuries.

Many cultural departments of our governments were not aware any more of the value of even the most exceptional pieces so that they got banished into the catacombs of our museums all over the world.

But, for the moment we have a revival of lace and lacemaking in Belgium and there still exist culture lovers such as Mr and Mrs Huts from Katoennatie who appreciate the importance of this historical heritage and who want to

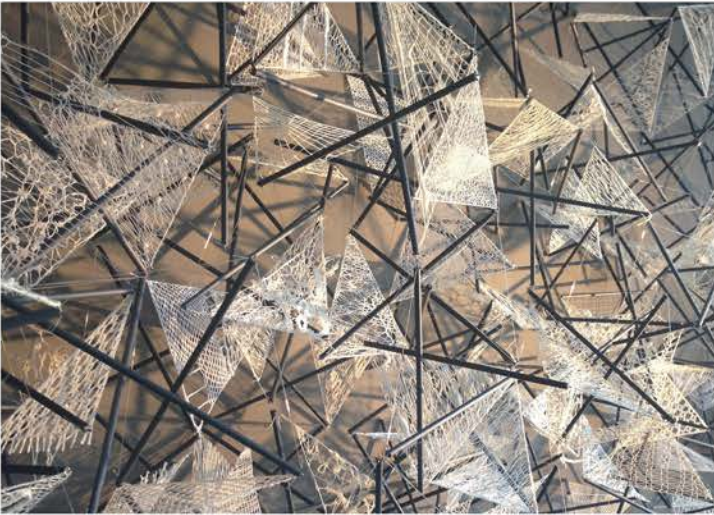
encourage our contemporary lace artists.

Using their knowledge of traditional lacemaking these lace artists create sublime works of art that can easily compete with paintings or sculptures. They are no longer anonymous like the lacemakers of the old days but they are now known by name.

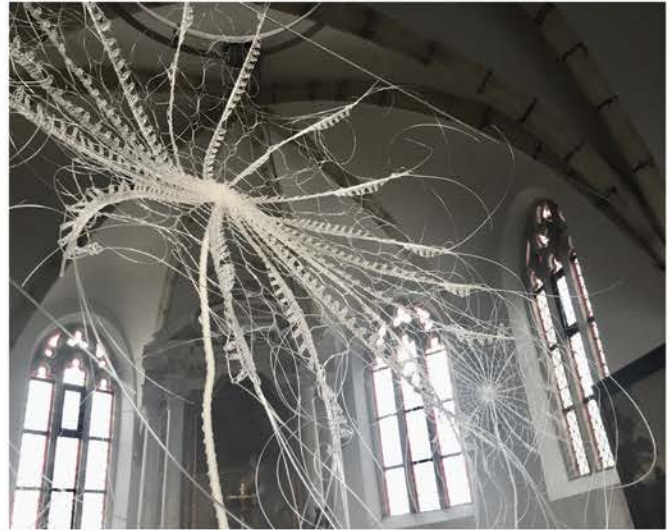
Their creations keep the traditional qualities of transparency and elegance, the particularity of each type of lace, but above all they reflect their own special story, that brings every work to a higher level.

Unusual subjects get a chance, like destruction and death, dementia, transgenders, ecology, natural disasters and other social concerns.

Lace is made nowadays in porcelain, or in gold and silver threads to make jewellery. Raffia, cord, copper wire, every type of thread can be used to express what the artist wants to tell us. Big objects like *"The Urchins"* or *"The Ruff"* or *"Kantate"* are embellishing the surrounding landscapes.



Trinidad, Hageland Academy, led by Lieve Smets



Between heaven and earth, Marjolaine Salvador

New inspiration is found in nature and the result is playfully blown up seed fluffies whirling in the air or medusas turning around us. Church tiles are covered with black lace and confessionals with profound scenes. Masks from Venice alternate with dashing hats, bobbin lace lingerie with paintings, scenes from WW1 with books complete in lace, abstracts creations with figurative subjects.

Every application invites us to interact, to enter into discussions with the artists, and to admire their realisations.

In a word: CONTEMPORARY HANDMADE LACE deserves our greatest appreciation and can be designated without any doubt as LACE ART.

With "renovation, renewing, and cooperation" as their target, a group of passionate ladies of the asbl "LIVING LACE" organised with great success the *World Lace Congres Brugge 2018* with the intention to give a boost to lacemaking, to support lacemakers and lace lovers and to give center stage to Contemporary Lace that it deserves. Beautiful exhibitions at the Belfry in Bruges and in 10 other cities in Belgium attracted thousands of visitors and got the best comments from all over the lace world.

The social contacts between the little lace groups were encouraged and the bigger groups, working on a higher level, invented beautiful creations for the visitors to admire.

This event gave rise to new contacts in foreign countries, especially with the most important museums in the USA, (Metropolitan, Smithsonian, Sunnysvale and Stanford University) who have themselves the greatest collections of war lace in their possession. Research days were organised and knowledge exchanged. This led us to meet artists from foreign countries, who participated in the exhibition "Lace not Lace" in Clinton New Jersey.

The newest discovery in the lace world comes from Veronika Irvine (CA) who, as a mathematician with fervent



Jewelry by Luran Sundin, USA

love for lacemaking, discovered 5 million new fillings just by exploring algorithms on her computer. This brings all new dimensions into the lace world.

Recently we got the news that the Lexus Design Award 2019 was given to Lisa Marks, who also used algorithms to make Lace BRA's for ladies with breast cancer.

We hope that lace artists all over the world with a lot of new stories and a lot of new emotions will be able to use all these new possibilities.

In the ongoing prestigious exhibition PiKANT! in Aalst in Belgium (open until November 3, 2019) a few contemporary lace artists have the chance to show their work.

At present we are brainstorming about our next exhibition in 2021...

Exciting!

Greet Rome-Verbeylen is President and Martine Bruggeman a Board member of Living Lace vzw. in Flanders, Belgium.