



Press release

Cobra Museum of Modern Art celebrates 75 years of Cobra with a grand exhibition programme

In 2023 it will be 75 years since the revolutionary Cobra movement was founded in Paris. The Cobra Museum of Modern Art in Amstelveen is celebrating this anniversary year with a smashing exhibition programme.

Celebration 75 years of Cobra

The jubilee year will start in January with a triptych of Danish modern art. The exhibition *We Kiss the Earth* brings an overview of about 100 works by more than 25 artists, which is shown outside of Denmark for the first time. Special attention is paid to the work of artist couple Ernest Mancoba and Sonja Ferlov. The triptych concludes with the exceptional oeuvre of the Danish artist Ouartaci. The exhibition *Freedom without Borders* opens in June with a comprehensive overview of 120 art works by Appel, Constant, Corneille, Jorn, Picasso, Beckmann, Basquiat, Klee, Miró and Munch, together with contemporary artists such as Jonathan Meese and Cecily Brown. The public is invited to compare the work of Cobra artists and to make connections with related artists who worked before, simultaneously or after. This exhibition is complemented by a presentation of drawings, ceramics and etchings by Pablo Picasso, compiled from private collections. The Cobra Museum publishes a publication for all the exhibitions.

Cobra (1948-1951)

Cobra was an international movement of young, progressive artists. In the years after the Second World War, they caused a revolution: a breakthrough in modern art that continues to affect ideas and expressions of art to this day. The movement was officially founded on November 8, 1948 in Paris. The name Cobra is a combination of Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. The capitals where the founders of this group of artists came from. Jorn from Denmark, Dotremont and Noiret from Belgium, Appel, Corneille and Constant from the Netherlands. Later, more artists joined and together they completely changed course.

Cobra art

It was the beginning of a new era of 'everything goes and everything is possible' art. The joy of total spiritual and artistic freedom and spontaneity of Cobra art was supposed to counterbalance the nightmare of war. Cobra caused a lot of commotion in the Netherlands. Newspapers spoke of tampering, scribbling and swindling. Cobra is colourful, expressive-spontaneous painting that is reminiscent of children's drawings. "My 6-year-old nephew can do that too!" is still a frequently heard statement about the artworks of the Cobra artists. It fits the Cobra philosophy: freedom, guts, experiment and inclusive, because everyone is an artist. The Cobra artists made art for a thousand days, after which they went their separate ways again. A thousand days that still have a lot of influence to this day. Cobra, which was so revolutionary at the time, is now anchored in European art history.

Cobra Museum of Modern Art Amstelveen

Based in its own collection, the Cobra Museum from Amstelveen, The Netherlands, tells the boundless and free story of the Cobra movement and brings it to life with current social themes. To captivate, give meaning, inspire and comfort people. And to experience that boundless freedom together. This is done in changing collection presentations and temporary exhibitions and through a wide range of events, activities and workshops.

In addition to the Cobra Museum, Cobra art is included in important museum collections of, among others, Tate Modern in London, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the Rijksmuseum and Kunstmuseum The Hague.

Thanks to

The anniversary program is made possible in part by our partners and generous supporters. We especially thank the municipality of Amstelveen, VriendenLoterij, Trebbe, BPD, Rabobank Amstel & Vecht, Hizkia, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, KEIM and the Cobra Business Club.

Exhibitions 2023

Celebration Cobra 75

We kiss the earth

Danish Modern Art 1934 – 1948

January 27 – May 14, 2023



The jubilee year of Cobra 75 starts with a triptych of Danish modern art. The Danish artists who started Cobra in 1948 had a lot of influence on the much younger Dutch and Belgian Cobra members. The focus is on developments in Danish modern art from the 1930s and 1940s, with important themes such as sexual freedom, politics, provocation, experimentation and spontaneity, which would later have such a great influence on Cobra. For the first time outside Denmark, this exhibition presents a major overview of masterpieces of some 100 works by more than 25 artists.

Je est un autre

Ernest Mancoba & Sonja Ferlov

27 January – 14 May 2023

This will be followed by a presentation about the artist couple Sonja Ferlov (Denmark) and Ernest Mancoba (South Africa). Both were involved in the creation of the Cobra movement in Denmark, albeit on the sidelines. Their interracial relationship was unique at the time and their close relationship meant that while they indisputably maintained individual artistic practices, the work of one influenced the work of the other. In 2019 Center Pompidou presented two retrospectives of their oeuvre, a selection can be seen in Amstelveen.



Becoming Overtaci

27 January – 14 May 2023



Overtaci's intriguing work forms the final part of the Danish triptych. Overtaci – born Louis Marcussen – spent most of her life in a psychiatric hospital. Overtaci was the discovery of the Venice Biennale 2022. Transformation is the central theme in her life and work. The exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures is an ode to the imagination and inspiration of this Danish artist who died in 1985 at the age of 91.

Freedom without Borders

From Appel to Picasso

2 June - 8 October 2023

In 2023, the 75th anniversary of the international Cobra movement will be the reason for the Cobra Museum to exhibit masterpieces by Appel, Constant, Corneille, Jorn, Picasso, Beckmann, Basquiat, Klee, Miro and Munch, along with contemporary artists such as Meese and Brown. It shows the close relationship and the universal character of Cobra with the ideas and expressions of artists over the years. In a comprehensive overview of 120 paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs and ceramics, the public is invited to compare the work of a large number of Cobra artists and to make connections with related artists who worked before, simultaneously or thereafter.



The other Picasso

Back to the Origin



June 2 – September 17, 2023

The year 2023 also marks the 50th anniversary of the death of one of the most famous artists of the 20th century and this is celebrated in France and Spain. The Cobra Museum also pays attention to this with a presentation. In his career, Picasso repeatedly goes back to his childhood and his cultural background, in which dance and theatre play a major role. He was also a source of inspiration for many Cobra artists. "Every child is an artist" is one of his most famous sayings. This careful selection shows the master's hand in which experimentation is not shunned in drawings, ceramics and etchings.

Image captions

** When publishing in 2023, adjust the year at the Pictoright entry*

1. Henry Heerup, krig og Fred, 1945, Private Collection, courtesy of Carl Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelts Museum. Photo: Ralf T. Søndergaard
2. Sonja Ferlov, Composition, 1938, oil on canvas, 34.6 x 27.6 cm, collection, Cobra Museum of Modern Art c/o Pictoright 2022*
3. Ovariaci, Den kinesiske formal
4. Karel Appel, The Fall, 1981, Collection Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photographer: Studio Tromp, c/o Pictoright 2022*
5. Pablo Picasso, Visage de femme, 1971, Collection Serra, Mallorca, c/o Pictoright 2022*