

**PRESS RELEASE****Wolvecamp 100 X Sam Samiee: A Contemporary Look at the Cobra Legacy**

March 22 – June 25, 2025, Museum Cobra, Amstelveen

Museum Cobra celebrates the 100-year anniversary of Theo Wolvecamp's birth with an exhibition that connects the work of this influential yet modest Cobra artist with that of the artist and guest curator, Sam Samiee.

**The independent force within Cobra**

Theo Wolvecamp (Hengelo 1925 - Amsterdam 1992) is often described as an artist who deliberately stayed out of the public eye. Unlike his Cobra colleagues, he worked away from the spotlight, following his own path and avoiding the distractions of public life. Yet, he was a driving force within the movement. Wolvecamp dedicated his life to one of Cobra's core principles: free, spontaneous painting, where improvisation and experimentation take centre stage. His work was always sincere, stripped of pretence and found its strength in the intuition and spontaneity with which it was created.

What makes Wolvecamp unique is his blend of myth and material. He saw paint not merely as a medium but as a living material, one through which he brought his own world to life. He admired artists like Asger Jorn, who, in his view, perfectly captured the balance between content and form. Miró and Alechinsky also served as major sources of inspiration, but Wolvecamp's work unmistakably carries his own voice: raw, spontaneous and sensitive.

**A Contemporary Interpretation**

Sam Samiee, winner of the Wolvecamp Prize in 2018, regards Wolvecamp as a significant source of inspiration. Like his predecessor, Samiee approaches painting as a free, experimental process, while also introducing new perspectives. His work merges European painting traditions with Persian cultural references, and he explores the boundaries of the medium by expanding painting into installations and spatial interventions. Like Wolvecamp, he aims to find a balance between spontaneous creation and deeper, more meaningful layers. In this exhibition, Samiee not only links the legacy of Cobra to contemporary art, he also connects it to broader cultural contexts, such as the influence of Iranian artists on Western art history and the narrative richness of *One Thousand and One Nights*.

The *Wolvecamp 100 X Sam Samiee* exhibition offers a fresh perspective on the Cobra legacy, inviting visitors to not only view the paintings, but also reflect on how art gains meaning through time, context and interpretation.

**About Theo Wolvecamp**

After the Second World War, Wolvecamp began his artistic journey. In 1947, feeling restricted by the academic rules at the art academy in Arnhem, he left and moved to Amsterdam. In a simple studio that he could only use in the evenings and at night, he discarded everything he had learned up until then. He painted instinctively, uninhibited and experimental – a working method that could be considered Cobra avant la lettre. His talent didn't go unnoticed for long. In the spring of 1948, Corneille saw his work and was immediately impressed: 'There was no false pretence about that man. And his work was real. It had strength and originality, even though it was as closed off as he

was.’ Corneille introduced him to Karel Appel and Constant, both of whom were immediately convinced of his unique style. Appel exclaimed at the time: ‘That lad from Twente belongs with us!’ Thus, Theo Wolvecamp found his place within Cobra, a movement that not only reshaped art history but also reinforced his own vision on painting. He stood apart from most of his colleagues—while others moved in new directions after Cobra, Wolvecamp stayed true to its core principles: free, spontaneous creation. He didn’t confine himself to figuration or abstraction; for him, emotion mattered more than what was depicted. Painting was like hunting to him: a quest for a hidden emotion or idea that only revealed itself during the painting process. He summed it up aptly himself: ‘I strike with a stick, and it (the game) emerges. Something similar happens when painting. It comes from within, yet it plays out beyond your control.’

### **About Sam Samiee**

Sam Samiee (Tehran, 1988) is an Iranian-Dutch multidisciplinary artist, painter, essayist and researcher. His work merges painting, installation and curatorship, drawing on both European painting traditions and Persian culture. He explores psychoanalysis and cultural history, investigating the intersections between Western and non-Western art. His immersive, conceptually rich compositions invite the viewer to engage actively.

Sam Samiee studied at the University of Art in Tehran, AKI ArtEZ Academy of Art & Design in the Netherlands and the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. His work reflects technical mastery, with a focus on drawing as a structural foundation. He is known for his dynamic brushwork, vibrant colours and layered textures, which come together to create immersive, conceptually rich compositions.

Samiee has exhibited his work at the 10th Berlin Biennale, Kunstmuseum The Hague, Manchester Art Gallery and Parasol Unit, as well as at Art Basel Hong Kong and Liste Art Fair Basel. His works are included in several collections, including the Taylors Museum, Centraal Museum Utrecht, and Kadist Art Foundation. He received the Royal Dutch Painting Prize and the Wolvecamp Prize, and has since acted as a juror for both.

### **Practical Information**

The exhibition *Wolvecamp 100 x Sam Samiee* will be on display from March 22 to June 15, 2025, at Museum Cobra, Amstelveen.

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Note to Editors

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