Celebrating James Ensor's Modernity. New Perspectives (Antwerp, 9-11 Dec 24)

University of Antwerp, Hof van Liere, Antwerp (Belgium), Dec 9–11, 2024
Deadline: Sep 15, 2024

Cathérine Verleysen

Celebrating James Ensor's Modernity. New Perspectives.
Dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the death of the Belgian artist James Ensor (1860-1949).

Contact person: Herwig Todts

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA), in association with the University of Antwerp (ARCHES – Antwerp Cultural Heritage Sciences) & ARIA – Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts)), is organizing an international symposium on James Ensor to be held on Monday 9, Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 December 2024. The symposium ties in with the exhibition In Your Wildest Dreams. Ensor Beyond Impressionism, which the KMSKA is mounting in the autumn of 2024 as the final chord of the Ensor jubilee year.

The symposium will bring together national and international researchers, who in recent years have shed new light on James Ensor, the painter, graphic artist, draughtsman and writer. At the same time, it aspires to build a bridge to the future so as to keep alive the interest in, research into and inspiration of (the cultural-historical context of) Ensor's diverse practices.

James Ensor is increasingly recognized as a crucial figure in the development of modern art. With his uncompromising visual language, the artist distanced himself from the classical European beauty ideal and the impressionism that had fascinated him initially. In his bold satire and masquerades with experimental forms and contrasting colours, Ensor presaged forerunners of expressionism like Edvard Munch and Vincent Van Gogh, as well as the surrealists. Around 1900, avant-gardists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Emil Nolde and Erich Heckel recognized him as an innovative artist who broke with classic Western European artistic values and traditions.

Furthermore, Ensor's subjects and standpoints are still highly topical on today's national and international art scene. His motifs, style and artistic personality resonate strongly with the practice of numerous contemporary artists. Indeed, themes like the mask and the grotesque, social criticism, ecology, identification with Christ, the crowd, satire and death have lost none of their relevance.

We welcome papers exploring the rich and versatile career of James Ensor with a fresh contextualization in the broader artistic, cultural and historical fabric of the fin de siècle and first decades of the 20th century. We also invite reflections on Ensor's legacy on contemporary art practices and artistic research. Topics should draw on Ensor's oeuvre and career and may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- artistic/intellectual friendships and their impact on creativity
- styles and motifs
- specific works or clusters of works
- materials and technique (paintings, graphics, drawings)
- private collectors and public collections
- theoretical reflections on Ensor's modernity
- interrelationships between the arts and popular (visual) culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
- Ensor's bearing on today's artistic practices and artistic research

Organizing committee: Jan Dirk Baetens (Radboud University Nijmegen), Bart G. Moens (University of Antwerp), Herwig Todts (Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp), Geert Van der Snickt (University of Antwerp), Cathérine Verleysen (Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp), Nele Wynants (University of Antwerp)

Please send an abstract of 250 words for a 20-minute paper and a short biography to: herwig.todts@kmska.be and catherine.verleysen@kmska.be.

On this occasion, we are able to offer travel bursaries to speakers.

Partners Ensor 2024:
James Ensor House – Event Flanders – KMSKA, Antwerp – FOMU, Antwerp – MoMu, Antwerp – Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp – Mu.ZEE, Ostend – City of Antwerp – City of Ostend – Visit Flanders

Reference:
CFP: Celebrating James Ensor's Modernity. New Perspectives (Antwerp, 9-11 Dec 24). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 12, 2024 (accessed Nov 16, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/42323>.