



Exhibition *Camouflage & Abstraction*

FeliXart Museum / Drogenbos-Brussels (Belgium)

22/09/2019 > 27/01/2020

Call for papers “exploratory workshops”

*Camouflage & Abstraction*

March 21<sup>st</sup>- 23<sup>d</sup>, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - Brussels

Submission deadline: February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

An extensive field of research on the **relationships between art and camouflage** has been developed recently, following the example of the studies conducted by **Professor Roy R. Behrens** at the University of Northern Iowa since the 1980'S, or, more recently, by **Professor Ann Elias** at the University of Sydney.

We can quote for example the notorious *DPM – Disruptive Pattern Material* catalogue published by Hardy Blechman and Alex Newman in 2004; the exhibition *Camouflage* organized at the Imperial War Museum in London in 2007, complemented by a publication by Tim Newark; the **conference “Camouflage takes center stage”** organized by Ilse Bogaerts and Werner Palinckx at the War Heritage Museum in Brussels from October 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010; as well as numerous exhibitions organized this last years in the context of the First World War Centenary.

The **FeliXart Museum in Drogenbos**, in the suburbs of Brussels, takes turn in organizing an exhibition around the subject, with **three new insights**:

- 1- By focusing more specifically on the theme **“Camouflage and Abstraction”**. Abstract Art is understood here in its minimal sense of **non-figurative expressive representation, geometric or lyrical**.
- 2- By extending it to wider areas of research: from **Natural Sciences** to **Human Sciences**, including **philosophy, anthropology, psychology, ecology, history** and **art history**.
- 3- By developing a **dialogue between Belgian artists and camouflage history** (Belgian Sections of Camouflage during First and Second World Wars, Belgian artists working on the theme of camouflage – Victor Servranckx, Jos Leonard, Joseph Lacasse, Fred Bervoets for example), **and key works from the international historical and artistic context** (Auguste Herbin, Paul Nash, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, Alain Jacquet, Alighiero Boetti, Alessandro Mendini, Liu Bolin for example).

The exhibition is organized in **collaboration with the War Heritage Museum and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences**, both located in Brussels. It will then exhibit natural specimens, *militaria* and artworks, with the **idea of questioning the permeability of the objects’ shapes and functions**.

The starting point of the exhibition will be the publication of the book *Concealing-Coloration in the Animal Kingdom: An Exposition of the Laws of Disguise Through Color and Pattern* (and the accompanying

watercolors) by the painter and naturalist **Abbott H. Thayer** in **1909**. From there we will explore the ensuing debates, and, above all, the role of the theories of camouflage and ambiguous images, in the emergence of lyrical and geometric abstraction in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We will then explore the key moments of the **First and Second World Wars** from an international perspective but with a special focus on Belgium where this subject has not yet been exhibited.

Our thinking will then pursue on the **conceptual and formal debates related to camouflage in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century**: the limit between the visible and the invisible, the ethics of deception, the social and aesthetic function of camouflage in natural sciences, gestaltism and experimental psychology, the physical perceptions of vision, and, of course, the interests or links of artists with camouflage, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

Our interest will also focus on the **plastic evolution of the patterns** and the **different aesthetic strategies** used in camouflage, mainly the concepts of Crypsis and cryptic behavior, resemblance to surroundings, disruptive coloration, eliminating shadow or counter-shadow, self-decoration, motion camouflage, changeable coloration, counter-illumination, transparency, silvering, mimesis and motion dazzling.

In this context, the FeliXart Museum organizes **exploratory workshops** on **March 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>d</sup> and 23<sup>d</sup>, 2019**, to welcome any researcher or artist, Belgian or international, who would like to present his work related to these issues. If needed, a supplementary session could be organized on **April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019**.

**We would like to address the following points:**

- 1- Review of research and latest advances on issues of camouflage, particularly in terms of strategy, in the field of natural sciences;
- 2- Aesthetic sense of nature and life, especially in camouflage strategies;
- 3- History of camouflage and camouflage sections, military and non-military, before, during and after the mentioned dates, particularly in Belgium (for example, we are actively looking for documentation on the British camouflage school in Wimereux during WWI);
- 4- Links between art and camouflage: camouflage artists and artists working on the theme of camouflage. This category covers all the artistic disciplines: visual arts, certainly, but also literature, architecture, design, theater, cinema, dance, music, etc.;
- 5- Artistic theories of pattern evolution towards abstraction, for example by Riegl, Worringer or gestaltism, Arnheim, etc.;
- 6- Unpublished approaches or general presentation of the concept of camouflage in philosophy, anthropology and psychology;
- 7- Finally, presentation of works of contemporary artists who would recognize themselves in these issues.

**The presentations may be informal** (we are aware that we are proposing very short deadlines) and in a propositional form. They will be short: 20 minutes maximum. **The idea really is to gather all the ideas that can arise and to explore intuitions.**

For those who wish to do so, papers will be published in a **scientific publication**, in a printed volume or in a peer-reviewed university digital journal. In that case, complete text submission must be made by May 12<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

Some texts or parts of texts may also be **selected for the exhibition catalog**. They will then be translated in the three languages of the catalogue (Dutch, French and English) and remunerated under normal conditions of publication in an exhibition catalog.

A scientific committee made up of Belgian French- and Dutch-speaking researchers from the museum and university world is currently being set up to evaluate the proposals. These should be sent to us in the language of your choice (English, Dutch or French) **no later than Sunday February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019**. Responses will be given by February 20<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

The workshops will take place on March 21st, 22nd and 23rd in Brussels and **the Museum is able to defray the traveling and/or accommodation of participants up to 150 euros per person**. Lunches will be provided as part of the workshops.

**If you cannot get free on these dates but want to participate in this project in one way or another, do not hesitate to contact us. We will see how to set up a possible collaboration.**

For those who do not know it yet, the **FeliXart Museum** in Drogenbos has already hosted international exhibitions, such as the exhibition **Grenoble 1927**, organized in 2012, which brought together works from different Belgian and French private and public collections, or the monographic exhibition about **Michel Seuphor**, organized the following year, whose catalog has become today the reference publication on this artist. More recently, from February 28<sup>th</sup> to May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the FeliXart Museum co-organized the exhibition **Constructivistische verbanden, Noord-Zuid** with the Belvedere Museum of Heerenveen in the Netherlands.

Besides, the opening of the exhibition *Camouflage et abstraction* will mark a new stage in the evolution of the Museum as it will be an opportunity to start a **new competence dedicated to both ecology and the links between art and nature**. The FeliXart Museum has indeed the chance to comprise an institutional museum as well as the farm-workshop – in the process of being restored – of the artist Felix De Boeck and the vast grounds and orchards that surround it.

#### **Submission procedure:**

- 1- For people who would like to present a communication:  
Please send us a dozen lines proposal and a brief CV in the language of your choice (French, Dutch or English) by the 17<sup>th</sup> of February at the following address: [CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com](mailto:CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com)
  
- 2- For people who would like to attend and participate informally:  
Please send us a brief CV in the language of your choice (French, Dutch or English) by the 17<sup>th</sup> of February at the following address: [CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com](mailto:CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com)

#### **Timeline recap:**

Submission deadline: February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Answer from our team: no later than February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Workshops: March 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>d</sup>, 2019 + if needed April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Definitive paper submission (if selected): May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Exhibition opening: September 22<sup>d</sup>, 2019

The workshops will of course be open to the public for free. If you would like to be kept informed about the program, as well as about the specific times and places of the workshops, you can also write to us at the following address: [CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com](mailto:CamouflageFelix2019@gmail.com)

Given the tight deadlines, we are committed to responding to you as soon as possible, no later than February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Looking forward to seeing you all,  
Best regards,

Céline De Potter  
Exhibition curator

Sergio Servellón  
FeliXart Museum director

Valérie Glansdorff  
Workshops coorganisator

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