

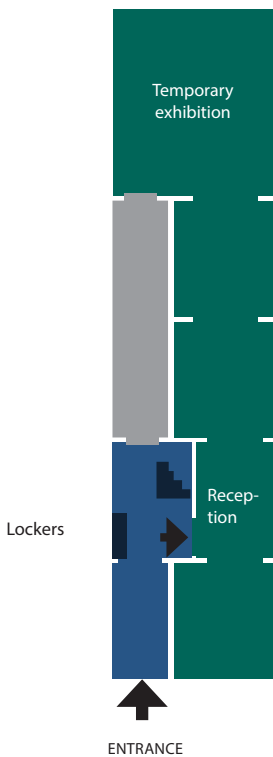
MUSEUM OF ABSTRACT ART

GUIDE - EN



PLAN OF THE MUSEUM OF ABSTRACT ART

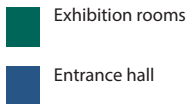
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

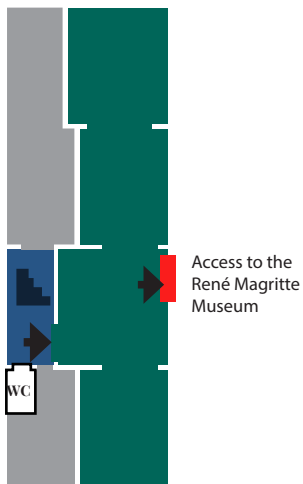
Not accessible





SECOND FLOOR

THIRD FLOOR



WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM OF ABSTRACT ART

... the fourth in the world and the first in Belgium!

The museum is housed in a terraced house with a distinct facade, which we may call a Swiss Chalet style, and dating from around 1900. In the beginning the house only had one floor. In 1929 an extra floor and a roof were added. After the adaptations into a museum the house has currently three floors. On the last floor the visitor has a view on one of the most known buildings of Brussels: the **Atomium** (1958), a building that symbolized the future and can be regarded as a highlight of Abstract art.

The newly designed compositions of colored floor tiles in the museum are strikingly unique and refer to the modernist ideology of the twenties. The imposing staircase with its mural after **Georges Vantongerloo** is also an eye-catcher.

Conservator **André Garitt** started the museum collection in 1982. Currently the collection holds more than **750 works**. The works from the first generation of abstract artists from the tens and twenties as well as the second generation from the fifties and a few highlights of later decades were chosen by the conservator on the basis of originality and mastery.

WHAT IS ABSTRACT ART?

The word 'abstract' is derived from the Latin verb 'abstrahere'. In Abstract art recognizable surroundings are hidden from view. It is an evolution in art that started with Impressionism and that gradually, through Cubism and other avant-garde movements such as Dada, would evolve into complete or 'pure' abstraction. The shifting interest in Western art from naturalism towards abstraction was directly influenced by the society of the 19th century, an era that is defined by considerable technological achievements, industrial organization and social change (for example the discovery of x-rays, the invention of photography and the automobile).

Within Abstract art there are **two distinct formal trends**: a geometric and lyrical abstraction.

- In **geometric abstraction** whole or partially geometric forms (rectangle, square and circle) constitute the work.
- In **lyrical abstraction** unpremeditated moves of the artist and chance determine the work.

As a result Abstract art can also be discussed in terms of **cold** (for geometric) and **warm** (for lyrical) abstraction.

THE PIONEERS OF THE TWENTIES (2nd floor)

Abstract artists such as Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian wrote, between 1911 and 1917, about their findings on abstraction. This avant-garde operation was not intended to be art for art's sake, but envisaged a much broader project to **change society**. For the first time artists researched and experimented with **color, form, composition** and **material** as an autonomous phenomenon and not anymore as a window on the world. Schools such as 'Der Bauhaus' and art movements such as 'De Stijl' would also concentrate on a different type of architecture and on applied arts in order to create a new and better world where form follows function.

Shortly after World War I two important centers of Abstract art were formed: one in Brussels and one in Antwerp. They used the term 'zuivere beelding' or 'plastique pure' (Pure Plasticism) to denote their work. The 'zuivere beelding' was a variation on the 'Nieuwe Beelding' (or Neoplasticism) as used by the Dutch group De Stijl and, consequently, derived from **Russian constructivism** whose art was based on mathematical and technical principles.

In Belgium, Abstract art was overshadowed by Expressionism. Many abstract artists were forced to stop or to concentrate on the more accessible, abstract applied arts. Others emigrated to Paris, where there was more interest for Abstract art.

THE NEW AVANT-GARDE: A MULTIFACETED ABSTRACTION (3rd floor)

During and especially after World War II many artists had lost faith in mankind. Abstraction provided a way out so artists did not have to portray or depict human beings, their surroundings or achievements. For example, **Abstract Expressionism** (Pollock) can be seen as an amalgam between the artist's inner expression and Surrealism. It is also the start of the **CoBrA movement**. In Belgium, abstract art was rediscovered by the art movement '**La Jeune Peinture Belge**', who organized exhibitions in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels. During this period certain tendencies can be detected. For instance, abstract art that is still loosely based on reality (Quinet, Bertrand), or that has no connections anymore with reality. Jo Delahaut and other members of '**Art Abstrait**' and '**Formes**' advocated geometric abstraction. The use of a complete or partial triangle and repetitive forms, which suggests dynamism, are recurrent elements (Plomptoux, Orix) similar to the design of the 'star' of **Expo 58** (De Roeck).

Near the end of the fifties we notice a tendency towards **minimalism** and during the sixties a focus on light. Other artists were attracted towards Art Brut, Kinetic art and were interested in Eastern philosophy. After 1945 Abstract art became more a style and less a tool to change the world.

THE ARTISTS IN THE COLLECTION

GROUND FLOOR

Alechinsky, Pierre
Bertrand, Gaston
Bogart, Bram
Bonnet, Anne
Burssens, Jan
Bury, Pol
Carrey, Georges
Decock, Gilbert
De Mey, Gaston
Delahaut, Jo
Dries, Jan
Dubois, Jean
Dudant, Roger
Gangolf, Serge
Guiette, René
Hoeboer, Wout
Hoenraet, Luc
Holley, Francine
Huin, René
Lacasse, Joseph
Lambelé, Antonia
Lewy, Kurt
Martens, Michel
Milo, Jean

Moeschal, Jacques
Noël, Victor
Ongenae, Joseph
Overberghe, Cel
Quinet, Mig
Peire, Luc
Ramon, Renaat
Raveel, Roger
Rets, Jean
Saverys, Jan
Seuphor, Michel
Singier, Gustave
Swimberghe, Gilbert
Van Anderlecht, Englebert
Van Breedam, Camiel
Van Hoeydonck, Paul
Van Lint, Louis
Vanden Borre, Guillaume
Vandenbranden, Guy
Verheyen, Jef
Vonck, Ferdinand
Wuidar, Léon
Wybaux, Fritz

SECOND FLOOR

Baugniet, Marcel-Louis

Closon, Henri-Jean

Cockx, Jan
De Boeck, Felix
Delhez, Victor
De Troyer, Prosper
Donas, Marthe
Eemans, Marc
Engel-Pak, Ernest
Flouquet, Pierre-Louis
Gailliard, Jean-Jacques
Hoste, Huib
Kessels, Willu
Kiemeneij, Jan

THIRD FLOOR

Alechinsky, Pierre
Anthoons, Willy
Arnould, Marcel
Bertrand, Gaston
Burssens, Jan
Bury, Pol
Claisse, Geneviève
Collignon, Georges
Demeester, Renée
Dorchy, Henri
Dotremont, Christian
Dries, Jan
Gentils, Vic
Gilles, Ray
Goderis, Jack
Guiette, René
Ibou, Paul
Jespers, Floris

Lacasse, Joseph
Lempereur-Haut, Marcel
Léonard, Jos
Maes, Karel
Peeters, Jozef
Schmalzigaug, Jules
Servranckx, Victor
Van Dooren, Edmond
Vantongerloo, Georges
Vandercammen, Edmond
Wolfs, Hubert

Lambelé, Antonia
Leblanc, Walter
Lewy Kurt
Mara, Pol
Marstboom, Antoon
Mendelson, Marc
Michaux, Henri
Noël, Victor
Plomteux, Léopold
Rets, Jean
Saverys, Jan
Singier, Gustave
Van Anderlecht, Englebert
Van Lint, Louis
Van Sumere, Hilde
Vandenbranden, Guy
Verstockt, Mark
Wyckaert, Maurice