

BROODTHAERS: A Centennial Event

Apogee Graphics Exhibition Guide

All works by Marcel Broodthaers, unless otherwise noted.

VITRINE

***Le Ciel Bleu (The Blue Sky)*, 1945**



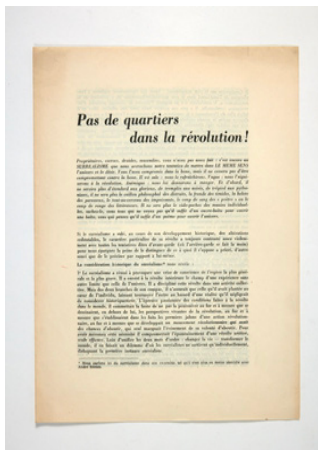
9 issues of a weekly newspaper published in Brussels from February 22nd, 1945 to April 19th, 1945.

The Blue Sky was the first surrealist weekly in Belgium. Edited by Paul Colinet, Christian Dotremont, and Marcel Mariën. Among the contributors were André Breton, Pablo Picasso, Pierre Mabilie, Marcel Mariën, Marcel Lecomte, Scutenaire, Magritte, Paul Nougé, Achille Chavée and Henri Parisot. Broodthaers' poem *L'île Sonnante* (April 7th, top left issue) was his first published work of poetry.

Nougé was a new but important friend of Broodthaers. Magritte and Broodthaers would meet later in 1945; Magritte (then 47) was to be a particularly influential figure for the 20 year old Broodthaers, and the two stayed in touch for the rest of their lives.

***Pas de quartiers dans la révolution! (No quarters in the revolution!)*, 1945**

4 Bi-sheets (28 × 22 cm), folded.



In this manifesto leaflet, the pointedly-named “Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire” group—an offshoot of CoBrA—assails André Breton’s cult of personality. Edited by Christian Dotremont and Jean Seeger, the chief complaint was an inherent incompatibility between Breton’s Surrealism and the revolutionary principles of the Communist Party, which in their view was the only valid revolutionary force.

Broodthaers was naturally among the signatories, as he was already known as a vocal critic of Breton’s 1930 *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*. Other signatories were Achille Chavée, Irène Hamoir, René Magritte, Marcel Mariën, Paul Nougé (who was a signatory of Breton’s 1930 manifesto) and Louis Scutenaire.

VITRINE



Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire N°1 (Revolutionary Surrealism No. 1), 1945

1 pamphlet of 4 pages (27 × 21.5 cm), 48 pages, stapled, tricolored cover, modern red cloth box.

This was the only published issue of what was to be a bimonthly magazine published by the International Bureau of Revolutionary Surrealism. Edited by Noël Arnaud, Christian Dotremont, Asger Jorn and Zdenek Lorenc, with additional contributions by Jean Laude, Tristan Tzara and Raymond Queneau. Broodthaers wrote two poems for the issue: *Projet pour un film* and *Trois poèmes de l'île déserte*.

To the left is a subscription insert, which features a manifesto text by Dotremont titled *The Most Living Magazine in the World*.

Le Corbeau et le Renard (The Fox and the Crow), 1972



Invitation card (13.5 × 20.4 cm) for the exhibition “Le Corbeau et le Renard” at Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp (June 1972), printed in red and black on both sides.

On the exterior of the card are drawings of the two covers of Broodthaers’ book also called *Le Corbeau et le Renard*. Though called a book by Broodthaers, it was more accurately a box made of up text mounted on cardboard, several photo-canvases, and two sticks wrapped in photo-canvas.

Also in the box was a reel of Broodthaers’ film (also named *Le Corbeau et le Renard*), which consisted primarily of footage of his everyday environment against a background of the texts. The exhibition was made up of the works inside the ‘book’, with the film projected onto a large canvas with printed text.

The card reads in both French & Dutch: “Map with two typographies on cardboard and three photographic canvases, all numbered and signed by the artist. Edition of 33 copies. 16mm color film accompanied by two photographic canvas projection screens. Unlimited edition.”

LEFT WALL

***Meilleurs Vœux 1965 (Best Wishes 1965)*, 1964**

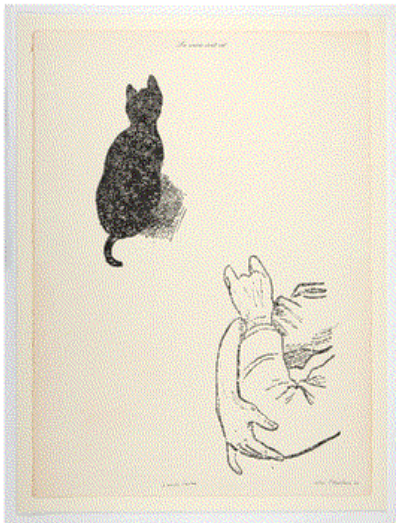


Stencil on newspaper clipping in-folio (61.8 × 43.9 cm).

Broodthaers used a page from the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, which gives the prices of the Brussels stock exchange on Monday September 9, 1963.

Broodthaers had already experimented with newspapers as a ground for his work, most notably in his 1964 work *Moi aussi, je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose et réussir dans la vie . . .* (I, too, wondered whether I could not sell something and succeed in life . . .) which announced his decision to become a visual artist.

***La Souris écrit rat (À compte d'auteur) (The Mouse Writes Rat [At the Author's Expense])*, 1974**



Silkscreen print on paper mounted on cardboard. (76.5 × 56.50 cm). Limited edition of 150 proofs.

This imagery comes from a shadow play manual; the cat at top left is meant to be read as a shadow of the arms at bottom right. In a 1974 letter to his daughter, Broodthaers explained that food shouldn't be left out for the animals she believed to be mice, because they were in fact rats, which would eat everything in her apartment. He concluded with a French play on words: “La souris écrit rat,” with rat being an abbreviation of “ratures,” meaning “deletions”.

COLUMN

Marcel and Marie-Puck Broodthaers.



La nouvelle fin du monde. Un remake. (The new end of the world. A remake.), Circa 1975

Drawing in blue ink on a page taken from a WWF brochure (20.7 × 15.1 cm).

Marcel Broodthaers drew this profile of a man's head, and a stele on which he wrote the titular text. Above, upside down, Marie-Puck practiced her signature. On the reverse is a printed image of what looks to be an Australian bustard. In the mid 1970's, Broodthaers produced several works that combined text and found imagery from postcards.

In 1974, having undergone a mostly futile surgery for his aggressive liver disease, Broodthaers recognized that he was likely to die soon—perhaps an inspiration for this text. Later in 1974 he made a handwritten will giving his wife Maria sole responsibility for his estate.

Marcel and Marie-Puck Broodthaers.



Restaurant, Circa 1969

Drawing in green ballpoint pen, double-sided (27.3 × 21.2 cm).

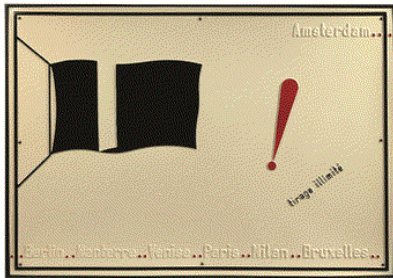
Marie-Puck and her father were known to draw on the same piece of paper, sometimes each using both hands.

On the front at left, a man says “I am the client,” a cup says “I am the coffee cup,” and the drawing to the right declares that it is “a cooked duck.”

On the reverse (from right to left) there are two more coffee cups; Broodthaers, drawn by Marie-Puck, says “I am also the client,” with “drinker” and “eater” both crossed out.

LARGE VINYL WALL

Le Drapeau noir (The Black Flag), 1968



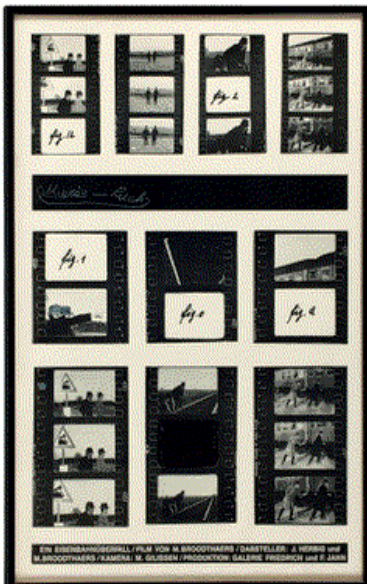
Stamped plastic plate painted in black and red acrylic (84 × 120 cm), black wooden frame. Unlimited edition, with only 30 known to us.

This is the first of three versions of the ‘Black Flag’ works (with each version having between 2-10 editions with variations). Each of the three versions of Black Flag features the names of different cities with student & worker protests in the late 60’s, with the order approximating the spread of this civil unrest through Europe.

Broodthaers hired a Brussels-based company that made street signs with the still relatively new technique of plastic thermoforming. This work, and the other 35 plastic plaques, were part of a body of work Broodthaers referred to as “Industrial Poems.”

Broodthaers was a participant in the 1968 “Assemblée Libre” that occupied the Palais des Beaux-Arts that May. Just a few weeks prior, students occupying the Université libre de Bruxelles used red and black flags to symbolize freedom and justice. The exclamation point was also a reference to Pop Art, in particular Warhol, whose work Broodthaers had only recently become interested in.

Ein Eisenbahnüberfall (A Train Robbery), 1974



Sheet printed in black offset on bright white paper (84 × 56 cm), under glass. Limited edition of 100 copies.

This work consists of enlarged negatives from a film depicting Marcel Broodthaers and Jost Herbig pretending to rob a train; the footage was captured by Broodthaers’ wife Maria Gilissen.

Broodthaers made autograph additions in black felt-tip pen which differ from one copy to another; here he erased a photographic vignette with a black marker. On this edition, the signature of his daughter Marie-Puck (then age 10) replaces that of the artist.

WHITE SIDE WALL

Julien Coulommier

Belgian, Forest, 1922--2014 Forest.



Marcel Broodthaers, reporter sur les chantiers de l'Exposition universelle de 1958 (Marcel Broodthaers, reporter on the construction sites of the 1958 Universal Exhibition), 1957

Silver print (23.9 × 17.7 cm).

Coulommier was a Belgian photographer, and taught Broodthaers how to use a camera. Though still years away from fully identifying as a visual artist, Broodthaers had purchased the camera with the hopes of finding work as a photojournalist.

When this photo was taken, Broodthaers was working as a laborer for the 1958 Universal Exhibition (Expo '58). It was the first World's Fair in Belgium in over 20 years, and the first in Europe since WWII. Broodthaers was specifically employed on the construction of the Atomium, a modernist building which served as the centerpiece of the Expo. He published an article about the building shortly before it opened to the public, and worked as a docent for the art exhibition inside the fair.

Trois photographies originales prises à l'exposition universelle de 1958 (Three original photographs taken at the 1958 Universal Exhibition), 1958



Silver prints (approximately 18 × 12.8 cm) on Gevaert photo paper.

These three photographs of bovines were taken at the “Pavillon de la Faune et de la Flore” of the Belgian Congo.

Though Broodthaers was known to carry his camera with him at almost all times during these years, few of his early photos are known to us today. He continued to photograph while traveling with the Expo '58 to other cities in Belgium, including taking aerial photographs from a hot air balloon. Broodthaers—who frequently used agricultural items as symbols of identity—would return to cows many years later in his *The Farm Animals* (1974).

GREY SIDE WALL

Page d'écriture (Writing page), Circa 1969



Four-handed manuscript in pen (29.5 × 20.9 cm).

Broodthaers' use of writing as visual motif was a conscious—and constant—reference to both his past identity as a poet and his turn to visual art, as well as his blurring of the boundaries between the two. The writing on this page resembles his 1965 *Le Langage des Fleurs*.

SIDE ROOM

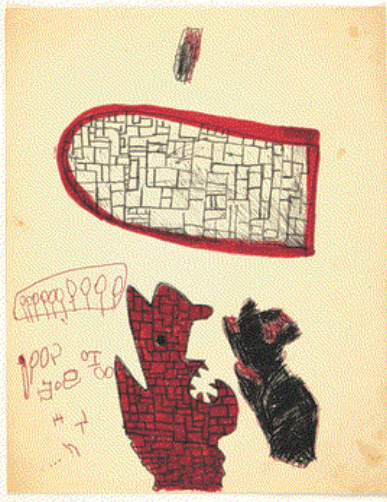
Interview d'un chat (Interview with a cat), 1970

Audio Recording (4:54 min.) and transcript in English.

This interview was recorded at Broodthaers' Musée d'art Moderne, Département des Aigles. It is one of his many works inspired by Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1929). During this same period, Broodthaers also made eight films based on Magritte's work.

SIDE ROOM

Marcel and Marie-Puck Broodthaers.



Le chien-monstre (The dog-monster), circa 1965

Original four-handed drawing. Circa 1965. Drawing with felt-tip pen and black and red ballpoint pen (27.3 × 21.2 cm).

This work, like two others in this exhibition (*Restaurant* and *The New End of The World*) were done with Broodthaers' daughter Marie-Puck. Broodthaers used animals as a motif frequently in the mid-sixties; dogs specifically were used for several different works.

Maria Gilissen

Flemish, Cadier en Keer, 1938



Marcel Broodthaers et sa fille Marie-Puck (Marcel Broodthaers and his daughter Marie-Puck) 1966

Silver print (14.5 × 23 cm).

Reprint from the 1980s of a photo showing Marcel Broodthaers behind his daughter, who is wearing Magritte's bowler hat and a large white coat. Maria met Marcel in March 1961; she spoke little French, and he spoke almost no Dutch. Nevertheless, they married later that year, and were partners & frequent collaborators—she developed most of his photo-canvases and film in their basement—until his death from liver disease in 1978.

COMPUTERS

***Le Corbeau et le Renard (The Fox and the Crow)*, 1967**

16mm film (color, silent, 7:17 min.)

This is the film featured in Broodthaers' exhibition also named "Le Corbeau et le Renard" at Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp (June 1967). It was also in the later, more concise exhibition (at the same gallery) in 1972, which the invitation card in the vitrine is from.

***Un Voyage En Mer Du Nord (Voyage To The North Sea)*, 1974**

16mm film (color, silent, 5:58 min.)

This film, much like *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, was also issued as a thirty-eight page book with seventy-eight illustrations. Both the book and film consist of black-and-white photos of a pleasure boat on the North Sea, as well as color reproductions from an amateur oil painting of fishing boats.

The film premiered at Petersburg Press (London) on 28 January 1974 (Broodthaers' birthday). The painting was also shown in the exhibition, and a numbered edition of 100 copies were sold in a simple bluish-grey box which contained both the book and the film.

***La pluie (Projet pour un texte) (The rain [Project for a text])*, 1969**

16mm film (black-and-white, silent, 2 mins.)

This was filmed in the garden of the rue de la Pépinière in Brussels, during the Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXe siècle period. The backdrop is a brick wall on which the words DEPARTEMENT DES AIGLES are written in whitewash.

This film, like many of Broodthaers' work, can be viewed as a metaphor for his transition from poet to visual artist. Here, Broodthaers documents (while also obscuring) the act of his own writing. The words are disrupted and erased by the rain, which was in fact a watering can just outside the frame.