

Lucy McKenzie

29.09 → 23.02.25

Vleugel 19



SUPER PALACE

Super Palace is Lucy McKenzie's first major exhibition in Belgium. Her work questions the role of art outside the museum, exploring its presence in fashion, architecture and the public space.

McKenzie draws inspiration from subcultures, mass media, local traditions and artistic avant-gardes. She examines how art and culture respond to political and social changes, with a particular focus on the role and representation of women.

McKenzie created *Super Palace* to complement the distinct architectural style of Vleugel 19, the Z33 building hosting the exhibition. She sees the building as a reflection of the city: as a place where public and private spaces converge. On the ground floor, the installations are reminiscent of a shopping street, a train station and a fairground, while the artworks upstairs represent more domestic settings.

Lucy McKenzie has lived and worked in Brussels for the past eighteen years. She is known for her illusionist *trompe-l'oeil* paintings that breathe new life into a traditional artform. The interplay of historical techniques and contemporary themes is a recurring motif in her work. This visitor's guide sheds light on the references and ideas in her art. McKenzie emphasises that her work can also be appreciated without explanation, as *Super Palace* is, above all, about enjoyment and pleasure.

Sports Shop



Sports Shop depicts the window display of an imaginary boutique called Atelier E.B – the name of the fashion label created in 2011 by McKenzie and designer Beca Lipscombe.

The initials 'E.B' refer to the hometowns of Lipscombe and McKenzie: Edinburgh and Brussels. Every few years, they release a fashion collection created with the help of local manufacturers. The collections are often displayed in installations like these, which reference the history of retail and the art of window dressing. This particular display focuses on sports activities and showcases designs from earlier collections by Lipscombe & McKenzie.

By drawing attention to the transient nature of window displays, Atelier E.B reflects on the relationship between visual art and mass culture. For *Sports Shop*, the duo collaborated with artist and furniture maker Steff Norwood and window dressers Barbara Kelly and Howard Tong. McKenzie painted the illusionistic backdrop of the interior in oil and acrylic on canvas.



Atelier E.B (Beca Lipscombe & Lucy McKenzie), *Sports Shop*, 2024. Acrylic and oil on canvas, steel, wood, Perspex, aluminum and textiles, 700 x 100 x 230 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York. Photo: Mark Blower.

Monumental Street Lamp 1938 Duchamp Mannequin Sketches



For this work, McKenzie designed a streetlight painted to resemble marble and adorned with *trompe l'oeil* drawings. The person in the drawings is Beca Lipscombe, McKenzie's artistic partner in Atelier E.B. She is dressed as Rrose Sélavy, the famous mannequin and alter ego of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). McKenzie is interested in how male and female artists engage with mannequins. Duchamp challenged gender norms by dressing a female mannequin in his own clothes and putting a red light bulb in its chest pocket. McKenzie's work pays tribute to this radical gesture.



Lucy McKenzie, detail of *Monumental Streetlamp / 1938 Duchamp Mannequin Sketches*, 2017-2024. Oil on wood, metal, glass and light, 250 x 95 x 131 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London. Photo: Useful Art Services.

Faux Verdigris Statue (Zoya) I & II



For this work, McKenzie transformed two window mannequins into classical statues similar to those found in public spaces. She has long been interested in how mannequins reflect the evolving standards of female beauty, particularly in the context of a capitalist economy. Here, McKenzie replaced the anonymous heads of the mannequins with that of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, a Soviet resistance fighter who became a folk hero after her death. In doing so, McKenzie contrasts capitalist and communist representations of women. Kosmodemyanskaya's likeness has been immortalized in many monuments, which is notable given that most public statues commemorate men. To enhance the statuesque quality of the mannequins, McKenzie used faux verdigris to suggest a bronze patina.



Lucy McKenzie, *Faux Verdigris Statue (Zoya) I & II*, 2024. Fiberglass, acrylic and oil paint, wax, stand, 175 x 49 x 40 cm / 178 x 48 x 69 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London. Photo: Mark Blower.

Pleasure's Inaccuracies Billboards I & II



A recurring theme in McKenzie's work is the changing role of art over time. McKenzie designed these billboards for the metro station in Sudbury Town, a suburb of West London, as part of the art project 'Art on the Underground'. She was inspired by the modernist architecture of the station, which was built during the interwar period, before photography had supplanted illustration as the primary visual artform. Later, technological advancements increasingly relegated painting and drawing to the domain of museums and galleries.

McKenzie's billboard advertises a fictional book promoted as 'Everyone's Cognac', which targets people from different social strata of the interwar period. Up close, the billboards reveal themselves to be reproductions of McKenzie's drawings, complete with minor imperfections.

Lucy McKenzie, *Pleasure's Inaccuracies Billboard II*, 2020. Offset print on paper, 600 x 300 cm. Commissioned by Art on the Underground. Courtesy of the artist and Cabinet, London.



Moving Panorama (TransSiberian)



Miniature Moving Panorama (Hudson Valley)

This exhibition marks McKenzie's first foray into moving panoramas, with the subject of her illusionistic paintings shifting from static interiors to popular forms of entertainment.

Around 1800, the invention of the moving panorama fused visual art with the emerging mass culture. Moving panoramas were enabled by a turning spool mechanism which caused a painted landscape to scroll horizontally. This created the illusion of movement. They became the precursors to modern cinema and were later also used as film backdrops. McKenzie draws inspiration from old movie scenes in which train passengers watch the landscape slide past their windows like a painting.

The first panorama invites you to look inside a miniature train compartment. Through the window scrolls the landscape of the Hudson

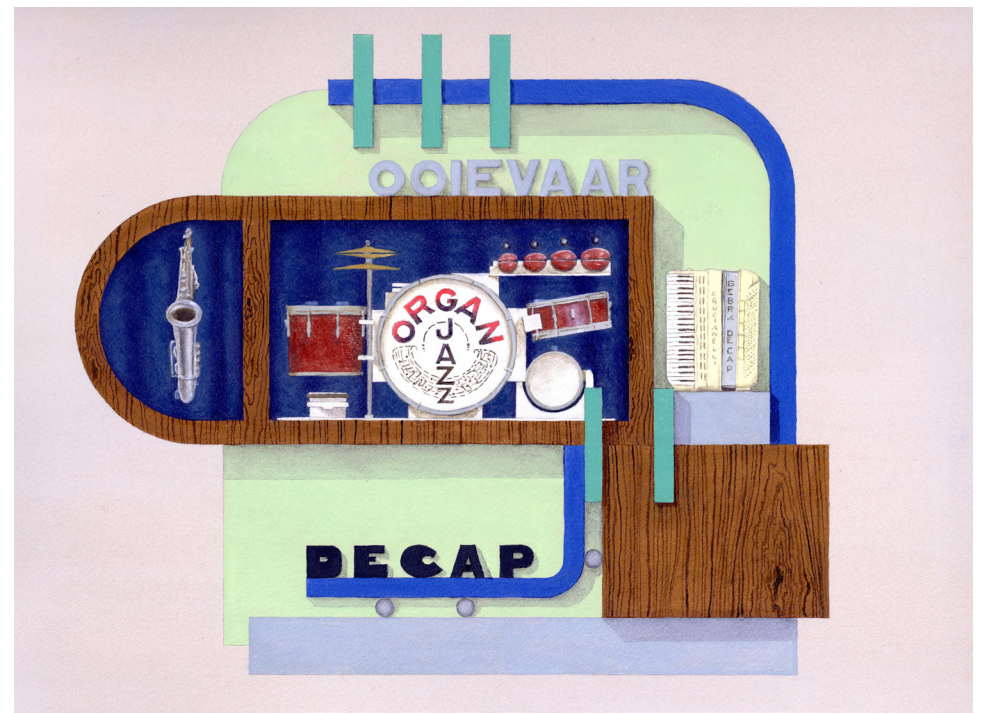
River Valley, New York. Much like film set painters, McKenzie only captures the essential details, as the eye is unable to focus on the moving image. Just like in a film, the train occasionally stops to reveal a dramatic scene in more detail.

For her second panorama, McKenzie was inspired by a panorama of the Trans-Siberian Railway exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 in Paris. Moving paintings of distant landscapes catered to the European bourgeoisie's desire to explore new horizons through travel stories, world fairs and train journeys. The original seats and window from an SNCB train add a distinctly Belgian touch to McKenzie's train compartment.

Take a seat in the train carriage. The design evokes the way trains and carnival rides are often depicted as secret meeting places in films.



Lucy McKenzie, *Re-enactors* (detail from Miniature Moving Panorama), 2024. Digital print on paper, 380 x 250 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London.



Decap Dance Organ for Villa Ooievaar



Just as the moving panorama was a precursor to modern cinema, this original dance organ was a precursor to contemporary electronic music. The mechanism works with cardboard cards with perforations that the organ translates into musical notes.

Automatic dance organs appeared at fairs, grounds, dance halls and trackside cafes from 1900 onwards. The unique craftsmanship of the Antwerp-based Gebroeders Decap organ elevated this popular mode of entertainment into an artform. For this part of the exhibition, McKenzie selected unique items from the Decap archives to showcase their rich history.

Lucy McKenzie, *Decap Dance Organ for Villa Ooievaar*, 2024. Oil and acrylic on paper, 44,5 x 40 cm (framed). Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London.

In the work *Decap Dance Organ for Villa Ooievaar*, the artist imagines her own version of the dance organ in the style of Flemish architect Jozef De Bruycker (1891-1942). In 2014, McKenzie bought De Bruycker's most famous architectural work: Villa Ooievaar in Ostend. The style of the villa reminds her of Decap's bold, post-modern aesthetic.

However, in the 1930s, De Bruycker became a member of the authoritarian Verdinaso movement and the Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond (Flemish National Union) – organisations that collaborated with the German occupiers. McKenzie explores whether De Bruycker's progressive style can be separated from his extreme-right political ideas. She aims to transform his villa, originally designed for a large family, into a multifunctional space where aesthetics and ideology intersect. With this in mind, she regularly designs new elements in the style of the house, such as the chairs in the Hudson panorama and this dance organ.

Lucy McKenzie, *Mural Proposal for Jeffrey Epstein's New York Townhouse (Filming of American Psycho)*, 2024. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 507 x 302 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London. Photo: Useful Art Services.



The second part of the exhibition focuses on private interiors. How do they reflect the lives and personalities of their inhabitants? And in what ways do they reveal gender roles and norms? By dividing the exhibition into a downstairs area (public space) and an upstairs area (private interiors), McKenzie highlights the intimate nature of the upstairs rooms in this wing.

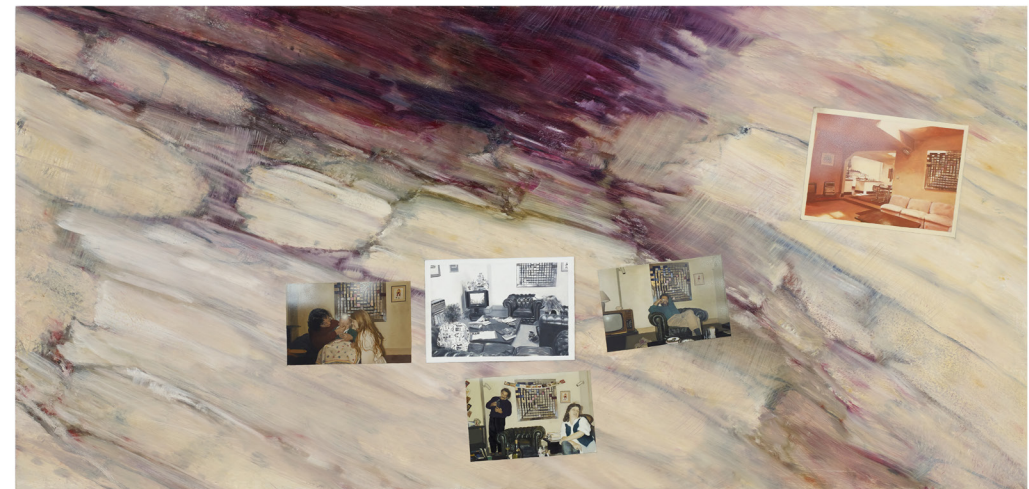
Náhrdelník (Necklace) II (Loos' dream)

Náhrdelník (Necklace) II (Loos' dream) is a new film based on a 1992 Czech television series of the same name. McKenzie edited the subtitles to create a new narrative with sinister undertones, set in the renowned Villa Müller designed by Austro-Czechoslovak architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933). The house becomes the stage for a paranoid dream, where Loos' three ex-wives interact, and his work and reputation are threatened.

Lucy McKenzie, *Metal (Alan Potter)*
& *Quodlibet LXX*, 2021/2020.
Oil on board, 122.5 x 122.5 x 3.5 cm /
60 x 122.5 x 3.5 cm. Private collection. Courtesy
of the artist and Galerie Buchholz,
Berlin/Cologne/New York.

Metal (Alan Potter) & Quodlibet LXX →

The upper panel of this diptych is a *trompe-l'oeil* painting of a wall sculpture by artist Alan Potter. The work was displayed in the living room of McKenzie's childhood home, as you can see in the painted family photos on the lower panel. McKenzie sees Potter's wall sculpture as a scale model for his subsequent public art projects. This diptych underscores how context can shape one's relationship to a work of art. While artworks in museums typically command distance and respect, the sculpture in the living room serves as the backdrop for daily life and is even adorned with Christmas cards. By presenting the lower panel as an explanatory sign to accompany the larger painting, McKenzie is playing with museum conventions – as if stressing that her work stems from her personal experiences and interests.



Leaning Mannequin → (Polychrome / l'Orage)

Leaning Mannequin (Roman Statue/ l'Orage)

Sitting Mannequin (Greek Pottery / Quatre Mouchoirs)

These female figures are hybrids of mannequins and sculptures. Their seated and leaning poses suggest they are waiting for something, highlighting the function of this hallway as a transitional space between two rooms.

The figures are wearing replicas of dresses designed by French couturier Madeleine Vionnet (1876-1975), who pioneered comfortable, flowy fashions for women in the 1920s. Their heads are once again based on the face of Soviet war heroine Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. The contrast between the heads and clothes of the figures highlights two competing ideals of femininity: a strong, androgynous face and traditionally feminine clothes.

The changing iconography of female beauty is also reflected in the skin tones, which represent three art historical styles: the terracotta of a classical Greek vase, the eggplant hue of a Roman marble statue and the pale cast of a medieval European sculpture.



Lucy McKenzie, *Leaning Mannequin (Roman Statue/ l'Orage)*, 2021. Fiberglass, acrylic and oil paint, silk dress with gold braid, gym shoes, 70 x 57 x 166 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York.

Re-enactors (detail from *Miniature Moving Panorama*)

This billboard image is taken from one of the passing scenes in the *Miniature Moving Panorama* downstairs, reproduced at life size. The man is dressed as a soldier at the battle of Waterloo, the woman as a WWII Soviet sniper. The title suggests that these figures are contemporary battle re-enactors, which could explain why they represent distinct historical events separated by more than a century. While battle re-enactments are typically a safe way to experience the horrors of war as entertainment, the people in this image appear truly hurt and in distress.

Throughout her career, McKenzie has been interested in how art is used for political purposes. In recent years, she has drawn inspiration from the murals of Mexican artist Diego Rivera (1886-1957). Like Rivera, McKenzie aims to depict popular subjects in an accessible way and navigates between commercial and public contexts, adapting her approach and subject matter to each domain. Her two large paintings appear playful: but like all satire, they contain a social critique. They address the unexplored motif of 'men at home' as a contrast to McKenzie's focus on the position of women in the public space.

Mural Proposal for Jeffrey Epstein's New York Townhouse (Filming of American Psycho)

This painting depicts a scene from the cult film *American Psycho* (2000), based on the book by Bret Easton Ellis. Actor Christian Bale, who plays the main character, Patrick Bateman, stands in the shower. He works on Wall Street and leads a secret life as a serial killer. His apartment, filled with designer furniture and art, is the scene of his murders and serves as an extension of his meticulously crafted identity. Because Bateman tortures women in horrifying ways, he has since become an icon for young, sexually frustrated men who glorify him in memes and TikTok videos.

In this painting, the roles are reversed. We see Bateman in a vulnerable position, as a group of female professionals watch him through the glass. McKenzie drew inspiration for this painting from an anecdote by director Mary Harron, who said that during filming all the women on set stopped working to watch Bale in the shower.

Mural for Cromwell Place (Francis Bacon's Studio) →

The idea for this painting about the secret gambling club of British painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992) came about when McKenzie exhibited across the street from Bacon's studio at 7 Cromwell Place in Mayfair, London. Bacon had a gambling addiction with a penchant for roulette. His love of high-risk games was reflected in his bold painting style. This technique was similar to the *buon fresco* tradition, which involves painting on wet plaster and finishing the piece within seven to nine hours before the plaster dries. McKenzie mimics the thin paint layers and soft colours of this technique in her large paintings. Much like Mexican painter Diego Rivera, she creates caricatures of the aristocrats and industrialists who not only gambled their own money away, but risked the entire economy along with it.

Lucy McKenzie, detail from *Mural for Cromwell Place (Francis Bacon's Studio)*, 2024. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 600 x 300 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York and Cabinet, London. Photo: Useful Art Services.



Anonymous Youth

Donatello John the Baptist 1.1

Donatello John the Baptist 1.2

Donatello John the Baptist 2

These figures are based on classical busts in the plaster collection of the Art & History Museum in Brussels. McKenzie has been using them in her mannequin works since 2017. The male faces challenge the femininity and proportions of most mannequins. Three of the heads were made by Donatello and represent John the Baptist as a child and young man. The other is an anonymous bust of a nineteenth-century person, presumably a man. They have been polychromed to resemble both painted mannequins and medieval religious sculptures.

Biography

Lucy McKenzie (Glasgow, UK, 1977) lives and works in Brussels. She studied at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in Dundee, Scotland from 1995 to 1999 and at Institut Supérieur de Peinture Van der Kelen-Logelain in Brussels from 2007 to 2008. There, she learned traditional decorative painting techniques such as wood and marble imitation, patina application and *trompe-l'oeil* painting. She combines a conceptual approach to art with traditional craftsmanship, blurring the boundaries between artistic genres.

McKenzie has had numerous solo exhibitions in renowned museums such as the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Museum Ludwig in Cologne and MoMA in New York. *Prime Suspect*, a mid-career retrospective of her work, was exhibited at Museum Brandhorst in Munich and Tate Liverpool in 2020 and 2021.

McKenzie has collaborated with Beca Lipscombe on the fashion label Atelier E.B since 2011. They have presented their collections and installations at art institutes around the world. From 2018 to 2020, their large-scale exhibition *Passer-By* was on tour at Serpentine Galleries in London, Lafayette Anticipations in Paris and Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow.

Artist

Lucy McKenzie

Artist's Collaborators

Atelier E.B, Quirin Baumler, Laurent Gielis, Charline Gilson, Ulrich Hakel, Barbara Kelly, Beca Lipscombe, Perri MacKenzie, Steff Norwood, Howard Tong, Alison Yip

Curator

Tim Roerig

Graphic Design

Bureau BoschBerg

Text

Tim Roerig

Editing

Marthy Locht
Perri MacKenzie
ZINNIG

Z33 would like to thank the galleries and lenders:

Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/
New York
Cabinet, London
CIVA Collections, Brussels
Gebroeders Decap Antwerpen
Hartwig Art Foundation
Lucy McKenzie
and those lenders who wish to remain anonymous.

Thanks to the entire team of Z33.

This is a publication of Z33. This publication was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Lucy McKenzie: Super Palace* (29.02.2024 to 23.02.2025) at Z33, Hasselt, Belgium.

HOUSE FOR
CONTEMPORARY ART
DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Z33

