

*Panamarenko Universum* is the grand and one-time return of Panamarenko to his hometown of Antwerp. Almost ten years after the retrospective at the KMSK in Brussels, M HKA devotes a unique retrospective to the work of Panamarenko.

Panamarenko takes a central place in the approach to art of the M HKA, which takes as its point of departure the avant-garde of the 1960s, where local stood synonymous for open and international. For the M HKA, the central position of Panamarenko is expressed in the museum's most ambitious project of the past decade: the renovation and refurbishment of Panamarenko's studio on Biekorfstraat, in Antwerp's legendary Seefhoek district. Since then, the M HKA has also acquired the Panamarenko archive of Paul Morrens. The exhibition *Panamarenko Universum* is yet another step in the sustained commitment of an Antwerp museum devoted to a key artist of the city. Whereas the challenge of making the Biekorfstraat into a public monument lay in the complexity of the peripheral material that surrounds this oeuvre, with *Panamarenko Universum*, M HKA now focuses on the very core of the artist's work. As with so many Flemish artists, the art scene has devoted little energy to creating a meaningful context around Panamarenko's oeuvre. He was mainly seen as a 'strange fellow' with magical sculptures. The retrospective *Panamarenko Universum* does not aim to bring together as many works or material as possible – the M HKA possesses much more material than it can ever show – but wants to explore both the works and the interconnective context that could possibly constitute the foundation of Panamarenko's oeuvre. For the first time, the multitude of vehicles and devices Panamarenko has created between 1965 and 2005 is organised into a thematic and chronological overview. In this way, *Panamarenko Universum* aims to create both a clear and varied picture of Panamarenko's impressive oeuvre.

The M HKA presents this overview as a journey of discovery through a mental universe, with an intimate look at the artistic process. The focus lies on three key aspects: works, actions and thinking. In this way, *Panamarenko Universum* creates a detailed view on how and why Panamarenko, from the sixties onward, gradually became an icon of the post-war European avant-garde. In addition to masterpieces such as the submarine *Pahama*, the *Donderwolk* and the legendary *Prova Car*, the exhibition includes more than forty major key works, together with drawings, objects, models and editions. Highlighted as well are Panamarenko's happenings from the sixties, his scientific insights and artistic statements.

The museum presentation – on the entire ground floor of the M HKA – is set up around seven thematic clusters. The concept and scenography are developed in consultation with a steering group set up by M HKA staff member Hans Willemse, in consultation with Panamarenko. Through the arrangement of the work, vehicles and objects that are mentally related are brought together. Along

with the *Happenings*, attention is paid to Panamarenko's *Silent Objects* from the sixties, the *Fixed-Wings & Zeppelins* from the seventies, the motorized units under the heading *Revolutions per Minute*, the spacecrafts in the cluster *Lift the Machine*, the water vehicles in *Engineered to go to Sea*, and finally the robots and walking chickens, *Servo-Robotica*. Each cluster includes the most representative devices and drawings within the genre, creating a cohesive yet at the same time diverse whole.

With the exhibition *Panamarenko Universum*, M HKA honours Antwerp's most pivotal artist. From his first artistic interventions in the early sixties, Panamarenko has, as a figurehead of the avant-garde, put the city of Antwerp squarely on the artistic map. His work has been the catalyst for a remarkable process of artistic innovation, which has made Antwerp a reference for the avant-garde in Northern Europe. The M HKA is deeply rooted in this tradition which has been able to inspire and enthuse the city, its residents and its visitors to this very day.

The exhibition *Panamarenko Universum* is a coproduction with the city of Antwerp and is organized in the frame of *Antwerpen '14 -'18*, the memorial project on the First World War.

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