

THE RAFT — ART IS (NOT) LONELY

A vehicle, a life-saving appliance, a place of isolation, reflection, doubt, insight and an encounter. A journey with a clear destination or an adventurous quest with no particular direction. The raft as a symbol is susceptible to wildly varying interpretations. *The Raft. Art is (not) lonely* studies the raft as a metaphor for the essence of art and the artist. The exhibition is spread across various museum locations in Ostend, and can also be found in places not normally used for this purpose, but which do feel the heartbeat of the city. In assembling the exhibition, artists from different generations and backgrounds were asked to present existing or new work, in which they delve into the question provoked by connecting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818) by Théodore Géricault and my raft *Art is (not) lonely* (1986).

From: 'The Raft. Art is (not) lonely', Jan Fabre, September 2017, catalogue *The Raft. Art is (not) lonely*.

Art is lonely, Art is not lonely. Art offers tranquillity, Art offers connection. It challenges and offers a platform for research and experience, to spontaneously, autonomously and empathetically navigate the awe-inspiring sea of 'being'. The raft is a metaphor for that kind of entrepreneurial mindset, for that devotion. A metaphor for a desire that migrates between destination and transfer. It is a notion of the ambiguous impulse of the artist to, on the one hand, create in quiet isolation, and on the other hand, to engage in a disarming and critical encounter.

To mark the exhibition *The Raft. Art is (not) lonely* Jan Fabre invited me to share the curatorship: a collaboration between an artist-curator and an art historian-curator. It is an almost fictitious echo of the raft drifting across the borders. We chose visual artists who are also at home in the world of film, theatre and performance. In mutual contemplation and public disclosure, they communicate their personal vision and their utopian universe. It's all about exchanging their doubts and recognizing each other through the vehicle of art. Each artist alone on his raft, various artistic rafts united in their search for a state of existential beauty.

From: essay 'Performance Art. The Raft of Renaissance', Joanna De Vos, September 2017, catalogue *The Raft. Art is (not) lonely*.

Around Mu.ZEE

01

Mu.Zee
Romestraat 11
p.10 — p.29

02

Sint-Jozefkerk
Antwerpenstraat 6
p.30 — p.33

03

L'étage
d'Euphrosine
Euphrosina
Beernaertstraat 148
p.34 — p.37

04

Leopoldpark (vijver)
Leopoldpark
p.38 — p.39

05

Gerechtsgebouw
Canadaplein 1A
p.40 — p.43

06

Mercator
Pensjagersstraat 8
p.44 — p.45



Stadhuis
Vindictivenlaan 1
p.46 — p.47







JAN FABRE

Kunst is (niet) eenzaam,
1986 (mixed media)

Art is (not) lonely, the title of an 80's paradigm, is a miniature world which conveys Jan Fabre's vision of artistry. The extensions he built to his raft were a gym, an athletic track and a football pitch: a problem shared is a problem halved. He denotes the enduring desire to resign ourselves to fate. Art and communication as the driving force to a promising destination.



JAN FABRE
Kunst is (niet)
eenzaam, 1986
(mixed media)

THÉODORE
GÉRICAUT
Étude pour
Le Radeau de la
Méduse,
1818-1819
(ink on paper)



THÉODORE
GÉRICAUT
Étude pour le
père et le fils dans
Le Radeau de la
Méduse,
1818-1819 (pencil
and ink on paper)



THÉODORE GÉRICAULT

Étude pour le fils mort dans Le Radeau de la Méduse,
1818-1819 (black pencil on paper)

Étude pour le père et le fils dans Le Radeau de la Méduse,
1818-1819 (pencil and ink on paper)

Étude pour la figure du père reprise de la tête pour Le Radeau de la Méduse,
1818-1819 (pencil and ink on paper)

Étude pour Le Radeau de la Méduse,
1818-1819 (ink on paper)

Étude de naufragé et de charretier,
1818-1819 (ink on paper)

Le Naufrage du radeau de la Méduse,
c. 1818-1820 (oil on canvas)

Feuille d'étude pour Le Radeau de la Méduse,
c.1818-1819 (ink on paper)

Moribond, étude pour Le Radeau de la Méduse,
c.1818-1819 (cast plaster with colour coating)

We don't know if Théodore Géricault (b. 1791, Rouen) was aware that *The Raft of the Medusa* was to be his absolute masterpiece. What we do know, is that he was obsessive in his fascination for the disaster. These detailed studies in pencil and ink demonstrate how fastidious he was in his preparations. He talked with survivors, had a huge replica of the raft built, and studied actual bodies and body parts in order to represent the incidents as accurately as possible.



PENNY ARCADE

Alone with the Sea, 2017 (video)

Longing Lasts Longer,

2017 (photo on cotton paper)

In the video *Alone with the Sea*, the American, avant-garde artist and actress, Penny Arcade (b. 1950, New Britain) uses the ship as a metaphor. Her portrayal shows that artists are not captains who are giving orders and taking decisive action from a closed-off cabin. All they do is assume a vulnerable position, in the hope of revealing a truth about our existence. Her photos highlight the importance of transformation, and the tenacity of human desire.

Live action / performance: You can see Penny Arcade at work in the Kleine Post in a sharp stand-upshow (see p. 103).



ELISABETTA BENASSI
Ships And Still More Ships,
 2015 (three flags)

'Ships And Still More Ships'. This was the ambitious slogan of the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, a shipping company that came into existence in 1919. It was an initiative by Marcus Garvey, who wanted Afro-Americans and African goods to play a bigger role in the world's economy. Elisabetta Benassi (b. 1966, Rome) highlights an exciting piece of forgotten history.

There is a video artwork by the same artist in Europacentrum, about a rudderless ship gradually running aground on the coastline.



JULIUS VON BISMARCK
Space Fish (Raumfisch), 2017 (video)

In *Space Fish (Raumfisch)*, Julius von Bismarck (b. 1983, Breisach) realized a site-specific performance by employing a tropical freshwater fish to swim through the cold waters of the Antarctic Sea, facilitated by a custom swimsuit. The work's thematic background revolves around human exploration. The swimsuit resembles a spacesuit, echoing man's drive to explore, and the romantic connotations innate in the discovery of new worlds. Referencing man's first Antarctic expeditions, the fish reimagines the subject of the adventurer.

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