



PRESS RELEASE

Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture
Curated by Gloria Moure

MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
26 January – 6 May 2012

Wednesday 25 January 2012

11am > conference and press preview

12am – 6pm > opening day, free of charge to the public

7pm – 10pm > vernissage

*Marcel Broodthaers' career path must be seen in terms of borders and margins,
in the sense that his action, inquiring and poetic at the same time, continually probes
the possible limits of configuration that tend to demarcate it at all times.*

Gloria Moure

*Whether it is called installation art or institutional criticism,
the international diffusion of the multimedia installation has become common.*

*Triumphantly declaring that we live in a post-media age,
the post-media condition of this art form traces its own lineage, of course,
not so much starting from Joseph Kosuth but from Marcel Broodthaers.*

Rosalind Krauss

*With the precise clairvoyance of the materialist,
from the mid-sixties, Broodthaers anticipated the complete transformation of artistic
production into a sector of the cultural industry,
a phenomenon that we recognise only now.*

Benjamin Buchloh

From 26 January to 6 May 2012 the MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna is delighted to present *Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture*, the first complete retrospective in Italy devoted to the Belgian artist, curated by Gloria Moure.

Marcel Broodthaers is one of the most revolutionary and influential figures in the art of the 20th century, and is still indispensable today if we are to understand the development of the artistic and theoretical research of recent decades. His constructive and ironic criticism of the art system as a specific ideological system and the political role of the artist in society has posed questions that are increasingly central in the international critical debate, revealing the forceful topicality of his experimentations intended to explore and redefine the meaning of artistic creation.

Since 1976, the year of his death, exhibitions of his works have followed in rapid succession at some of the most important international museum institutions, such as the Tate Gallery in London, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid and the Jeu de Paume in Paris, while the importance of his work has recently been confirmed by the opening of a room specifically devoted to him at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In its complexity and scope, the exhibition with which the MAMbo renders homage to the genius of Marcel Broodthaers highlights an artistic path developed over the course of an extraordinary career that lasted just 12 years, from 1964 to 1976. *Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture* introduces for the first time to the Italian public a wide selection of approximately **fifty works** coming from prestigious international institutions, including the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin, the SMAK in Gent, the MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona and the Caldic Collectie in Rotterdam, which document the main themes of the artist's poetics: the relationship between art and language, the status of the artwork and criticism of the museum as device and idea.

The curatorial project of the exhibition is intended to verify how the **relationship between image, object and word** constitutes the central and constant theme of Marcel Broodthaers' research and has strongly conditioned his entire creative process. His original ideas on how the work of art is identified with reflection on itself and on how the social and economic system of art acts as a context of creation and legitimisation, influencing the public's perception, cannot be understood in all their depth if not in relation to his twenty years of activity as a poet and his subsequent decision to extend his literary vocation in undertaking a new course with a career as an artist in 1964.

The works on display - objects, photographic prints, engravings, slides, editions, books and films - created between 1968 and 1975, sketch out an exhibition concept that is consistent with this key of interpretation and are displayed in relation to each of the different moments into which the exhibition itinerary is structured: *The spatialisation of poetry, The object and its image, Le Musée d'Art Moderne, "Décor": the exhibition*. Also presented are two of the rooms made by Broodthaers for the exhibition *L'Eloge du Sujet*, held in 1974, the famous *Un Jardin d'Hiver II* and *La Salle Blanche*, presented at his last exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1975.

In Marcel Broodthaers' apparent shift from the discipline of poetry to that of art, the interest in the functioning of language, oral and visual, that he inherited from the masters who were his source of inspiration, Stéphane

Mallarmé and René Magritte, proved essential and decisive for the subsequent directions of his work.

It was precisely the latter who in 1946 gave a copy of Mallarmé's last work, *Un Coup de Dés* to the young poet Broodthaers; this is a visually and conceptually revolutionary text, consisting of a single long piece of writing without punctuation in which the words are distributed apparently randomly on the pages, composed of different characters and fonts and surrounded by different white margins.

The cancelling out of the traditional concept of space that Mallarmé performed with this work acted like a thunderbolt on Marcel Broodthaers' artistic path, leading him to sublimate his declared debt of inspiration with the publication in 1969 of a book with the same title and identical typography on the cover, but himself as the author and a different subtitle. Whereas Mallarmé writes "Poème" after the long title, Broodthaers writes "Image". In Broodthaers' transfiguration, instead of words, it is lines and black typographical blocks that translate the word into visual structure, highlighting the figurative possibilities of their spatiality on the page.

The exhibition begins with Broodthaers' first explicit actions as an artist, performed in the second half of the 1960s, to continue with the analysis of his subsequent research in which he progressively broadens the investigation into the relationship between sign and content, between signifier and signified, between truth and deception, creating complex systems of signs that eschew a univocal interpretation, as in his "Musée d'Art Moderne" and in the subsequent "Décors", full-blown movie sets based on the combination of differing and similar objects in the same space, capable of creating a poem with variable tonalities.

Through a process of exorbitance from the sign of the writing that the specific poetics performs to become space, Marcel Broodthaers delivers the very symbolic power of the image to the language. His work can be seen as an atlas of words, a unique visual alphabet in which combinations of texts and images dissolve the conventional meaning of languages to examine the conditions of the enactment of works of art.

To mark the exhibition, an **Instant Book** has been printed for Edizioni MAMbo containing an extensive text by Gloria Moure and prefaces by Gianfranco Maraniello and Maria Gilissen Broodthaers, accompanied by an extensive iconographic apparatus.

During the entire period that the exhibition is open, the **MAMbo Educational Department** proposes guided visits every Sunday at 5 pm. Entry € 4 per person plus entry to the exhibition (€ 6 full price, € 4 concessions), minimum 6 maximum 30 people. Information and bookings: ph. +39 051 6496652 (Monday



to Friday, 10am - 1pm); ph. +39 051 6496611 (Saturdays and Sundays 10am - 5pm).

With the exhibition devoted to Marcel Broodthaers, considered one of the founding fathers of *Institutional Critique*, the thread of research entitled *Criticism* that the MAMbo has been carrying forward since 2006 reaches its conclusion, namely a process of reflection and investigation into artistic practices and into the function of the contemporary museum, which has involved artists such as Ryan Gander, Paolo Chiasera, Markus Schinwald, Giovanni Anselmo, Christopher Williams, Bojan Sarcevic, Adam Chodzko, Eva Marisaldi, Diego Perrone, Ding Yi, DeRijke\De Rooij, Guyton\Walker, Natasha Sadr Haghighian, Trisha Donnelly, Sarah Morris and Seth Price.

The press conference of the exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture* takes place on Wednesday 25 January at **11am** at the Conference Room of the MAMbo.

On the same day of Wednesday 25 January, the exhibition is visitable by the public, **opening day free of charge**, from 12 noon to 6pm.

The **vernissage** takes place from 7pm to 10pm, with entry free of charge.

For further information:
www.mambo-bologna.org

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LIST OF WORKS

Échelle de briques, 1969
wood, bricks, rope, glue, paint
230 x 55 x 40 cm
Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar

Casserole de Moules Noire, 1968
casserole, mussels, glue, paint
25 x 25 x 18,5 cm
Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar

Sculpture, 1974
suitcase, bricks, acrylic
19 x 70 x 47,6 cm
Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar

La Caméra qui regarde, 1966
glass, paper, wood, paint, tripod
14 x 35 x 106 cm
Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar

Véritablement, 1967
photographic impression on canvas
178 x 122 cm
Collezione / Collection Lounia et Maôti

Le Corbeau et le Renard, 1967
12 works
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Le Corbeau et le Renard, 1967
photografic impression on canvas, black and red felt-tip
136 x 118 x 2 cm
Private collection, Brussels

Le Corbeau et le Renard, 1967
schermo speciale / special screen
161 x 218 cm
exhibition copy
Private collection

Magritte, 1967

photographic impression on canvas, screen, wood, rope
150 x 130 cm
Private collection, Antwerp

Monument an X, 1967

bricks, mortar, trowl
75 x 19 x 35 cm
Private collection, Brussels

La Salle Blanche, 1975-2003

wood, photographs, bulb, painted inscriptions, rope
390 x 336 x 658 cm
exhibition copy from Estate Marcel Broodthaers stored at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie
original copy at Centre Pompidou, Paris

L'Eloge du Sujet, 1974

mixed media
variable dimensions
MACBA Collection. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona Consortium. Long-term loan of Herbig

La Salle Blanche, 1975-2003

wood, photographs, bulb, painted inscriptions, rope
390 x 336 x 658 cm
exhibition copy from Estate Marcel Broodthaers stored at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Tractatus Logico-catalogicus, 1972

offset print on paper
72 x 154 cm
ed. 73/100
Private collection, Bassano del Grappa

Museum-Museum, 1972

silkscreen on cardboard
85 x 60 cm each
ed. 13/100
Private collection, Bassano del Grappa

Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard. Image, 1969

libro / book
32,5 x 25 cm
Collection S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent

Grande casserole de moules, 1966
painted casserole, mussels, glue
61 x 71,5 x 71,5 cm
Collection S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent

Le catalogue et la signature, 1968
photographic impression on canvas, projection screen mounted on wood
125 x 125 cm
Collection Charles Szwajcer

Dites partout que je líai dit, 1974
stuffed parrot, audio-tape, recorder, two framed works, fig. 5 (cardboard box)
variable dimensions
Galerie Michael Werner, Märkisch Wilmersdorf, Cologne & New York

Peintures littéraires, 1972
silkscreen on canvas
9 pieces
79,7 x 99,6 cm each
Private collection

Un coup de dés jamais níabolira le hasard. Image, 1969
anodized aluminium plates
32 x 50 cm each (edition of 12)
Private collection

Projection sur caisse, 1968
packing crate, slides, postcards, inscriptions
Private collection

Un film de Charles Baudelaire, 1970
English version, 16 mm., colour, sound, 6' 30"
The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers

Objet, 1967
film 16 mm, B/W, 10'
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

La pluie, 1969
film 16 mm, B/W, muto / mute, 2'
The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers

Ceci ne serait pas une pipe, 1969-1971
film 16 mm, B/W, muto / mute, 2' 20"
The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers

Un Jardin d'Hiver II, 1974

30 palms, 6 photos of XIX century etchings, 16 painted garden chairs

Un Jardin d'Hiver (ABC), 1974

colour, sound, 5'40''

Private collection

Deux Caisses, 1975

packing crates, wall paper

h 284 x 75 x 84 cm - h 83 x 86 x 16 cm

Private collection

Le dé, 1968-69

painted inscriptions on black painted wood

51 x 51 x 51 cm

Private collection

Carte du monde utopique, 1968

paper on canvas

120 x 182,5 cm

Private collection

ABC-ABC Image, 1974

double projection

80 diapositives each

The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers

Que vous me semblez beau! A ces mots le corbeau ne sent plus de joie, 1968

black inscriptions on white painted wooden doors

Private collection

Poème industrielle, 1966-71

plastic plates

Private collection

Musée-Museum, 1972

postcards, offset print on paper

Private collection

Le Corbeau et le Renard, 1967

12 works

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Section Cinéma, 1970/71

plate in embossed painted plastic
white background, black and red relief
41,5 x 102 cm
Private collection

Quatre pipes alphabet, 1969

plate in embossed painted plastic
white background
84 x 119,5 cm each
Private collection

Musée d'Art Moderne, Les Aigles, Section XIXe siècle, 1969

double door, 2 plates in embossed painted plastic
Edition of 7
180 x 220 cm
Private collection

BIOGRAPHY

Marcel Broodthaers was born in Brussels on 28 January 1924. At the age of 18 he studied chemistry for one year, but then his love for poetry gained the upper hand. He was attracted in particular by René Magritte and by his paintings, as well as by the works of Kurt Schwitters, De Chirico, etc. Magritte gave him a copy of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés*. (Magritte's paintings in which words are contrasted with objects were to have a fundamental influence on his work). Between 1957 and 1964 he published four collections of poems: *Mon livre d'Ogre* (1957), *Minuit* (1960), *La Bête Noire* (1962) and *Pense-Bête* (1964). His first work in the field of the plastic arts dates back to 1964, when he planted a package of unsold copies of his latest collection of poems in plaster, transforming them into a sculpture. In this period he exhibited objects from everyday life, letters, drawings, etc., often accompanied by oral-visual word games; he also created books, catalogues and prints on any medium, from canvases attached to the wall to plastic reliefs. In 1957 he made his first film, *La Clef de l'Horloge (un poème Cinématographique en l'Honneur de Kurt Schwitters)* and from 1967 onwards he created a series of short films (*Objet*, 1967; *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, 1967; *Une Discussion Inaugurale*, 1968; *Le Musée et la Discussion*, 1969; *Un Voyage à Waterloo*, 1969; *La Pluie. Projet pour un texte*, 1969; *Ceci ne serait pas une pipe*, 1969-1971, etc.). In parallel to his artistic activities, in his younger years, in order to earn a living, he worked as a bookseller (in 1950 he organised a book auction) and a journalist (he contributed to various magazines, such as "Le patriote illustré", "Germinal", and "Le journal du Palais des Beaux-Arts", among others). In 1962-63 he worked in Paris with a press agency. In this period he also worked as a guide at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. In the following nine years Broodthaers created a rich and prestigious *corpus* of works, in which the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* stands out in particular. The museum was inaugurated in 1968 at his house in Rue de la Pépinière in Brussels. In the four subsequent years the Museum became the linchpin of his work, until its definitive closure in 1972 at the time of Documenta 5. Broodthaers has emerged as an authoritative figure in the world of contemporary art. *Un Jardin d'Hiver*, exhibited at the Palais de Beaux-Arts in 1974, marked the beginning of a series of exhibitions in which the concept of *Décor*, implicitly present already from 1968, predominated. In 1974 and in 1975, at the Georges Pompidou National Centre of Art and Culture in Paris, he staged two important exhibitions that defined and consolidated this concept, which was explained by Broodthaers in the catalogue *L'Angélu de Daumier* from 1975. In the period of time between these two major reviews, he organised various other exhibitions that contributed to the development of his *oeuvre*, among which the following must be mentioned: *Catalogue*, Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels; *L'Eloge du Sujet*, Kunstmuseum, Basel; *Invitation pour une exposition bourgeoise*, Nationalgalerie, Berlin; *Le Privilège de l'Art*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford; *Décor - A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers*,



Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. He lived in Düsseldorf, London and Berlin, which contributed to increasing the interest in his work in Europe and also in other countries. He died in Cologne in 1976, on the day of his 52nd birthday.



MAMbo is supported by:



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We wish to thank the lenders of the works in the exhibition:

The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers
S.M.A.K. Collection, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent
MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie
Caldic Collectie, Wassenaar
Charles Sz wajcer Collection
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together with all the other lenders who have preferred to remain anonymous.

We also wish to thank:

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Bernard Debluts



TECHNICAL SHEET

Title:	<i>Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture</i>
Curator:	Gloria Moure
Assistant to the curator:	Direlia Lazo
Montage:	Marie-Puck Broodthaers
Exhibition Venue:	MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna Via Don Minzoni 14 – Bologna
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Vernissage:	Wednesday 25 January, 7pm – 10pm
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Extraordinary opening hours:	from Thursday 26 to Sunday 29 January, 10am – 12pm
Entrance Fee:	full € 6; reductions € 4
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Guided Visits Educational Department:	for groups and schools booking is obligatory ph. +39 051 6496652 / 611 mamboedu@comune.bologna.it groups (maximum 30 people) € 80 visits in other languages € 100 schools € 80
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