

Wilde

PRESS RELEASE

PANAMARENKO

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WILDE | GENÈVE

Wilde is pleased to present *PANAMARENKO*, a monographic exhibition with historical works (sculptures and preparatory drawings) by Belgian artist and inventor Panamarenko (1940 - 2019). Fifteen years after the artist's last appearance in Geneva, the exhibition offers the opportunity to rediscover his work through a selection of major pieces.

As an artist, engineer, physicist, inventor and visionary, Panamarenko conducted bold research into concepts such as space, motion, flight, energy and gravitation. His work is a combination of artistic and technological experimentation, taking various forms: airplanes, submarines, cars, flying carpets and birds. Panamarenko succeeded in linking the technical-scientific register with the poetic; his artworks are not the mere creations of an engineer, although his poetic objects are indeed underpinned by extensive scientific knowledge. Through his unbridled imagination, Panamarenko dealt with the rules, laws, and usages of science, art and society in an innovative and entirely free manner, resulting in proposals of an almost mythical singularity.

Shown for the first time in Switzerland, we will present the iconic work, *Helicopter* (1973). Visitors can appreciate Panamarenko's ingenuity in this imposing sculpture with a wingspan of 9 meters. From the 1970s onwards, Panamarenko developed various types of human-powered machines in particular, although they remained close to the classic models of the plane or helicopter. The work, first exhibited in 1986 in the Kunstverein in Ulm, Germany, is also composed of a showcase containing several objects, such as wing profiles, bicycle chains and cycling gloves.

One of the artist's last works, *Batopillo* (2005) shows a man equipped with a minimalist flying device, frozen in its momentum. *Batopillo* expresses the artist's obstinacy in constantly trying to free himself from the laws of gravity, but also the artistic and dreamlike value of his creations. The sculpture is not a demonstration of the possibilities of the machine, but a work that serves the imagination. The man does not fly but could be about to take off. The work reveals the individual desire of contemporary man to fly and move freely, autonomously, in all possible circumstances.

Another significant installation in the exhibition is Panamarenko's first two-person vehicle; *Donnariet* (2003). The object floats like a boat, while its cockpit window and rear fin are reminiscent of a submarine and whale. By using the pedals in front of their seats the passengers mechanically produce the flipping movement of the tail-fin. The sweeping tail-fin is supposed to push the vessel forward. *Donnariet* is named after a cheap explosive. Panamarenko recalls from a war movie that during the Second World War German troops unsuccessfully used this explosive to destroy a steel bridge near the German city of Remagen. Panamarenko created the work together with the eponymous and exceptionally large drawing.

Beyond the playful pleasure of discovering these strange object-sculptures, the spectator cannot help but believe in the possibility that these surreal transport machines could really work. Indeed, the exhibition presented in parallel with sketches, drawings, and technical annotations plunge the visitors into doubt while triggering our imagination.

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About Panamarenko

Panamarenko was born in 1940 in Antwerp as Henri Van Herwegen. He invented his pseudonym as a play on Pan American Airlines and Ponomarenko, a former Soviet statesman. A testament to his enigmatic and innovative nature, his name and his fantastical creations became characteristic of the legendary artist. He died in 2019 in Brakel, Belgium.

Panamarenko first presented his work *Flugzeugin* in the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1968 by invitation of Joseph Beuys. In 1972, his work *Aeromodeller* was presented at *Dokumenta V* in Kassel. He also participated in subsequent editions of the event in 1977 and 1992. In 1981, his work *Aeromodeller* was also shown at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

The first Panamarenko retrospective was held in Munich in 1982, followed by a second in 1998 at the Fondation Cartier in Paris. Other major solo exhibitions include those at the Museum Tinguely (in 2000 in Basel, Switzerland), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid, Spain), Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (Brussels, Belgium), FRAC Nord – Pas de Calais (Dunkerque, France) and MHKA – Museum of Contemporary Art (Antwerp, Belgium).

His work is present in many public and private collections such as Middelheim Museum (Antwerp, Belgium), M HKA (Antwerp, Belgium), S.M.A.K. - Museum of Contemporary Art (Ghent, Belgium), Grand Hornu - Musée des Arts Contemporains (Hornu, Belgium), Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Strasbourg, France), MARTa Herford (Herford, Germany), Städtisches Museum Abteiberg (Mönchengladbach, Germany), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany), Kröller-Müller Museum (Otterlo, The Netherlands), Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (The Hague, The Netherlands), ASU Art Museum - Arizona State University Art Museum (Tempe, USA), and Carré d'Art - Musée d'Art Contemporain (Nîmes, France).

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