

Press Release

Marcel Broodthaers Un Jardin d'Hiver

Hauser & Wirth London, North Gallery

27 September – 18 November 2017

Opening reception: Tuesday 26 September, 6 – 8 pm



'In order to circulate in art, to function as an artist, there is a law: one has to be dressed in the fashion of one's time.'

– Marcel Broodthaers, 1974

Hauser & Wirth presents Marcel Broodthaers' 'Un Jardin d'Hiver' (A Winter Garden) (1974), a seminal installation belonging to the artist's *Décors* series created in the last years of his life. The gallery first staged 'Un Jardin d'Hiver' in Zurich in 1998 and this exhibition will once again pay tribute to this artist. A major contributor to the inception of conceptual art as a genre, Broodthaers holds a significant place in the historical narrative of contemporary art. His practice was largely concerned with two issues: the status of art as a commodity, and the impact of the museum on discourses surrounding artistic practice as well as on their reception. 'Un Jardin d'Hiver' is a subtle indictment of the authority of cultural institutions. In this work Broodthaers draws a link between Europe's imperial history and the cultural hierarchies dictated by museums and galleries, thereby framing art as a sphere susceptible to colonisation.

For the *Décors* series, Broodthaers inhabited the role of sceneographer, creating disquieting theatrical compositions using domestic objects. 'Un Jardin d'Hiver' parodies a traditional museum or gallery space modelled on the late 19th-century palm court, once popular in wealthy European homes. A descendent of the *Wunderkammer*, the palm court marked the transition of private collection to public museum. Broodthaers' assembly of potted palms, framed images of different categories of animals (elephants, camels, insects, exotic birds), and antique display cases clearly tie the installation to that period of colonial conquest, characterised by a passion for collecting and classifying unusual objects from around the world. Yet, the room also evokes

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a tired, modern museum space – in one corner a television monitor displays a closed circuit film recorded by a surveillance camera. Installed amongst the plants and a few rows of chairs, the monitor mimics the coupling of decorative decoy and surveillance that so often marks banal spaces that hover between public and private, such as waiting rooms, offices or lobbies. The potted palm, once an exotic symbol of power, by the mid-1970s had become the most commonly available type of decoration used everywhere from banks to cafes. In another corner, a neglected red carpet hints nostalgically at former glory and ceremony.



The museum pastiche that Broodthaers creates is rich in historical connotation, evoking the evolution of the art institute model and shifts in accepted modes of display. He reminds the viewer that the origin of the museum is inextricably linked to Europe's colonial past; taste, culture and value are inherently dictated by socio-economic forces. This line of thinking explains the artist's wider rejection of the creative trends at the time – for Broodthaers, the once-radical premise of Duchamp's readymade, for example, had ossified into a new institutionalism. In the period that Broodthaers was making the *Décors*, he was one of many artists experimenting with what is now constituted site-specific art. When 'Un Jardin D'Hiver' was unveiled in 1974, the adjoining rooms featured in-situ works by Carl Andre, Daniel Buren and Richard Long. Broodthaers' highly ornamental Winter Garden was at odds with the Minimalism and Conceptualism that dominated the show; their spare, clean, often industrial work represented the contemporary international standard of how art should look. The turn-of-the-century design follies of 'Un Jardin D'Hiver' find a curious echo in the 'site-specificity' of such art in the 1970s. Broodthaers was alluding to the idea that avant-garde conceptualism had, just like the exotic objet d'art and the readymade that came before, been colonised by a the museum.

About the artist

Marcel Broodthaers (1924 – 1976) spent the first 20 years of his adult life living as a poet in Belgium and dealer of antiquarian books. In 1963 he famously began producing works of art as an ironic gesture. On the occasion of his first exhibition, he declared: 'I, too, wondered if I could not sell something and succeed in life. I had for quite a while been good for nothing... Finally the idea of inventing something insincere came to me and I got to work immediately.'

The artist worked with paint, sculpture and installation but never forgot his linguistic inclinations; he continually used both language and image to explore structures of meaning, or in humorous wordplay. Broodthaers was also a prolific filmmaker, producing over 50 short films ranging from comedies and melodramas to documentaries.

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In addition to the Décors series of his late career, Broodthaers is perhaps best known for his witty assemblage-sculptures that utilise chosen materials. Empty mussels, eggshells, coal and bricks were his signature motifs, communicating simplicity and poverty in the face of big business, mass production and cultural homogeneity.

Major solo exhibitions include 'Marcel Broodthaers: A Retrospective', Museum of Modern Art, New York NY (2016) which travelled to Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2017) and K21, Dusseldorf, Germany (2017); 'Marcel Broodthaers', Friedericianum Kassel, Kassel, Germany (2015); 'Marcel Broodthaers', Monnaie de Paris, Paris, France (2015); 'Le Corbeau et le Renard, Revolt of Language with Marcel Broodthaers', Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland (2014); 'Marcel Broodthaers. L'espace de l'écriture', MAMbo, Bologna, Italy (2012); and 'Marcel Broodthaers', Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA (1989) (Travelling Exhibition).

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday to Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

Frieze gallery hours:
Open everyday from 27 September to
14 October, 10 am – 6 pm

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Marcel Broodthaers
Un Jardin d'Hiver
1974
Installation with 36 'Kentya' palms, 6 black-and-white photographs of 19th c. engravings, 16 folding chairs, 2 vitrines with 16 original 19th c. engravings and catalogues, 1 red sisal rug rolled, 1 monitor with camera on pedestal
Maximum room size: 900 x 1400 cm / 354 3/8 x 551 1/8 in

Marcel Broodthaers
Un Jardin d'Hiver (detail)
1974
Installation with 36 'Kentya' palms, 6 black-and-white photographs of 19th c. engravings, 16 folding chairs, 2 vitrines with 16 original 19th c. engravings and catalogues, 1 red sisal rug rolled, 1 monitor with camera on pedestal
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