



PRESS RELEASE

ALIAS, SARAH SMOLDERS AND LOLA DAELS EXHIBITIONS

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ALIAS, PSEUDONYM, ASSUMED NAME: FICTIONAL ARTISTS AT M

M Leuven presents the major research exhibition 'Alias', a new installation by Sarah Smolders and recent work by Lola Daels

M Leuven opens 'Alias' on 15 March: a group exhibition exploring the theme of fictional artistry. By adopting a different identity, artists liberate themselves from gender or cultural issues, from art world rules and a capitalist system that turns names into brands. The exhibition assembles some 80 works from national and international public and private collections to highlight this recent phenomenon in art history for the first time. Piece by piece, the works illustrate the strategies that contemporary artists use to merge fiction and reality.

Strategies in fiction

The works in 'Alias' are displayed across five exhibition spaces. Each explores one of the different strategies that contemporary artists use to blend fiction and reality. Behind every fictional artist lies a well-defined context: it helps us determine how they deploy their fictitious creations and why. What are these strategies? Are they an inherent part of the artist's individuality? Are they related to the art world? Or are they a response to society?

"In the age of artificial intelligence, fake news and deepfake videos, we are now confronted – at all levels of society – with an unprecedented need to make critical distinctions between fact and fiction. But instead of drawing a strict line between the two, fictional artists allow illusion and reality to coexist. They present their intricately spun fabrications as facts. These practices differ to more mainstream ones because the artists in question don't leave it up to others to describe and interpret their artistic lives: they do it themselves," says Valerie Verhack, curator of the exhibition.

M and Walther Koenig Verlag are publishing a book to coincide with the exhibition, with the support of the Fondation Fernand Willame. It will be launched at M on 02 May.

'Alias' is curated by Valerie Verhack. The scenography is by [Deborah Bowmann](#).





Artists

The group exhibition 'Alias' includes work by the following artists:

Alfred Johansen, Aston Ernest, Bernadette Corporation, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Charles Rosenthal, Claire Fontaine, Darko Maver, Eleanora Antinova, Emily Feather, Ernest T., Florence Hasard, Hennessy Youngman, Henry Codax, Herman Smit, Hubert Van Es, Jakup Auce, Janez Janša Janez Janša Janez Janša, Jim Jilborn, John Doe co., John Dogg, Justine Frank, Leo Josefstein, Lucie Fontaine, Martin Tupper, NV Panneel, Oksana Pasaiko, Patrick Ireland, Philippe Thomas, Puppies Puppies, Reena Spaulings, Roberta Breitmore, Santo Sterne, Storm van Helsing, Suha Traboulsi, Various Artists, Vern Blosum.

Press preview

The press preview is on Thursday 14 March 2024 from 09:45 at M Leuven, in the presence of curator Valerie Verhack, scenographer Deborah Bowmann and a number of artists. Please confirm your attendance. Interviews can be requested via persm@mleuven.be.

Double opening

In parallel with 'Alias', M is also opening a new exhibition by Sarah Smolders entitled 'A Space Begins, With Speaking'. The artist creates her work in dialogue with a specific space and its architectural features. Smolders observes these characteristics and annotates them through painterly interventions and other elements. Shifts and additions that are barely perceptible at first glance invite the viewer to slow down and to see and experience the space in new and unexpected ways. Smolders uses both the memory of the place and her own oeuvre within this process. After passing through her studio, the 'residues' of previous site-specific interventions are incorporated into new exhibitions. They form a unique spatial alphabet.

Sarah Smolders (b. 1988, lives and works in Brussels) brings together different residues in a new spatial intervention for M Leuven.

Smolders will be giving an Artist Talk at M as part of Let's Talk Leuven on 16.05.

www.mleuven.be/programma/sarah-smolders





Also in M: Lola Daels

M is also launching an exhibition of new work by M-resident Lola Daels on 14 March. Lola Daels spent five months last year as our artist in residence at Cas-co, where she was given the space to delve into her artistic research. Lola Daels creates sculptures and installations in which she questions the notion of authenticity within the current ecological and socio-political context. During her M-residency, she immersed herself in two obsolete Italian techniques: *scagliola* (faux marble) and *pietra dura* (inlaid stone).

Daels' practice is characterised by extensive material research and labour-intensive experimentation. Central to her oeuvre is the relationship between humans and nature. Her visually seductive works are laced with references to ecological disasters, climate change and the irreversible impact of humans on the planet. M presents the results of her residency from 15 March to 1 September 2024 at the museum.

www.mleuven.be/programma/toonmoment-m-resident-lola-daels

