



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***FORM FIRST***

Can wood look like concrete? Do you only use a fan because you are warm? Did people play drinking games in the past? How do you use a spoon that is full of holes? And what is the use of a velvet umbrella? Welcome to our 19th-century drawing rooms, where you can discover forms and objects from the past and present.

#### **Showcasing forms and objects**

The exhibition 'Form First' takes place in [the former, magnificent reception rooms of the Vanderkelen-Mertens family](#). They received guests here, held parties, and showed off their affluence and their curiosities. This is the ideal place to discover the domestic culture of the bourgeoisie. By looking at the functions, materials, and techniques of these objects, you can compare life then and now. How do you use a windmill cup? What is a samovar? When did we start eating with forks? And what were the stories you could tell with a fan?

#### **Flaunting and perusing**

A magnificent antique 17th-century chest of drawers is the symbol of the entire exhibition. M invites you to peruse the intriguing objects in its collection. Just like the eminent guest of the past, who were allowed to look in these drawers filled with shells, minerals, and precious trinkets.

You will (re)discover all kinds of household objects. Teapots, cups, a samovar, asparagus tongs, or a 16th-century windmill cup from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, which was made in Leuven. You will see a selection of everyday objects and things that are much rarer, such as the beautiful dinnerware set of René Heyvaert (1929-1984) from the [Cera Collection](#). The misshapen spoons and forks remind us of their daily use, but after Heyvaert's adjustments, they appear to have made life more difficult rather than easier.





## **Secret messages**

An object is sometimes no more than what it seems, but sometimes they hold unexpected stories and surprises. For example, you will see a painting of one of the ladies in waiting of Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV. She looks severe and cold, but the fan and silver accessories in the display case reveal that things were often 'hotter' than they seem here. You could call them tools for communicating secret messages.

## **Give your senses free rein**

We are challenging you to trust your eyes and your senses. You can unravel the stories behind the objects in the room with the app, the videos, the audio guide, or the central information module. A variety of tactile objects allow you to touch and compare the materials. You will also find some special smells: what did the little silver scent boxes contain? Can you smell burning coals? Or grilled meat? In short, this exhibition gives your senses free rein.

Duration: 11.06.17 - 28.04.24

