



THE ENSOR AND SPILLIAERT WING

Two Masters of Ostend

James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert find a new contemporary ‘home’ in their own city. Starting at the end of this month, the two Masters of Ostend will be given a permanent home in our new wing. As an art museum, Mu.ZEE creates a link between modern and contemporary art, and is honouring two masters of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Ostend and James Ensor are inextricably linked. Ensor loved Ostend: the city served as his muse and inexhaustible source of inspiration. He loved it for its crowds, the tempestuous North Sea, the carnival that painted the streets in festive colours each year. The name of the painter Léon Spilliaert, twenty years his junior, is also connected with this Queen of Seaside Resorts. His nocturnal rambles through the city and long walks along the beach spurred him to create his best works, dark and suffused with mystery. Although Ensor and Spilliaert were very different as artists, their names are often mentioned in the same breath.

In *Two Masters of Ostend*, Mu.ZEE’s chief aim is to allow the masterworks that are the highlights of the City of Ostend and the Province of West Flanders’ collections to speak for themselves. Behind every work of art or document in our archives you will find a myriad of anecdotes that will transport you to the Ostend of a bygone era, reflected in the city as it is today, and vice versa. Spilliaert and Ensor are contemporary artists: their perspective and commentary on society are more than topical today. Not only will the new wing feature the life and work of these two masters, its visitors will also meet numerous other well-known and lesser-known contemporaries including Eugène Demolder, Mariette Hannon-Rousseau, Willy Finch, Emile Verhaeren, Henri Vandeputte, Emma Lambotte, Edmond Deman, Paul-Gustave Van Hecke, Théodore Hannon, and Stefan Zweig. Together, they will provide a unique insight into the world of the two masters, because, after all, no artist is an island unto himself.

Besides putting the two masters of Ostend in the spotlight, the new wing will also indirectly pay homage to the Ostend film-maker Henri Storck and the photographer Maurice Antony. Four masters enthralled by one mistress: Ostend, which still stands out amongst seaside resorts today as the most idiosyncratic queen of art.

Mu.Zee's new wing contains over 100 works of art. The new 1,000m² space has been entirely redesigned to introduce visitors to the work of Ensor and Spilliaert and the era in which they lived. Mu.ZEE curates the largest Spilliaert collection in Europe. The artist's popularity among a broader audience increased substantially following the exhibitions of his work in Brussels and Ostend in the 1990s. The Spilliaert House, a private initiative to which the entire art world is looking forward, will soon be opening a mere stone's throw from Mu.ZEE. Ensor is amply represented at Mu.ZEE with a considerable collection of paintings and a comprehensive collection of graphic art. The museum's link to 'his' Ensor House, the painter's residence until his death in 1949 and located only a few hundred metres from the museum, is unique in the world today.

Owned by the City of Ostend, the Ensor House became a satellite museum of Mu.ZEE in 2008 together with the Permeke Museum in Jabbeke. Visitor numbers have been increasing constantly since this affiliation: the Ensor House received 13,368 Belgian and international visitors in 2009 and this number increased to 23,288 in 2015. Interest in the life and work of James Ensor is considerable: his name has been appearing regularly in various collective exhibitions since 2000 and he is the subject of a retrospective or major exhibition at least once a year. MoMA and Musée d'Orsay both dedicated an exhibition to him in response to the 60th anniversary of his death (2009-2010), and in 2010 Mu.ZEE organised *Visiting Ensor*. This autumn will see the opening at the Royal Academy of Arts in London of the exhibition *James Ensor by Luc Tuymans* (29 October 2016). Mu.ZEE will be loaning the exhibition its 'Self-Portrait with Flowered Hat', which will act as the museum's ambassador.

A museum guide, *Two Masters of Ostend*, will appear in four languages (€5). Mu.ZEE aims to introduce the two masters to young adults, schoolchildren, students and families, to which end it has published a family booklet, educational folders for teachers and pupils, and worksheets. An app and other digital applications will also be ready to use by 1 July.

Today, James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert represent the face of Ostend more than ever before, and they continue to be highly topical - even 100 years after their birth!

Practical

Mu.ZEE
Romestraat 11
B-8400 Oostende
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10am -6pm

Closed on Monday, 25/12 en 1/1

Tickets

€9 single ticket
€7,5 55+, groups > 15 personen
€1 13-26
Gratis < 12

Guided tours

€60 Guide– Nl, F, E, D, - max. 25
Reservations via T+ 32 (0)59 24 21 91 / info@muzee.be

Press

Via www.muzee.be
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With the support of:

Provincie West-Vlaanderen, Stad Oostende, Vlaamse Gemeenschap-Cultuur, H ART, Klara,
Comitee Mu.ZEE, mu-zee-um,