

**Press Release**  
22.09 2011

***Studio Toscane***  
Karel Appel – Roberto Barni  
1 October 2011 to 15 January 2012

The Cobra Museum presents *Studio Toscane* with sculptures, a ceramic installation and a number of paintings by Karel Appel created in Tuscany in the period 1989-1999. At the same time new and existing work will be shown by the Tuscan painter and sculptor Roberto Barni.

In Tuscany, man, animal, nature, past and present are inextricably linked. By means of Karel Appel's (1921-2006) and Roberto Barni's (1939) work, it is explained how artists, inspired by rich Tuscan cultural history, create work that is both contemporary and traditional: the best of both worlds. Both Appel's and Barni's work is characterised by a tension between traditional and contemporary, between culture and nature.

Works by Karel Appel in the exhibition include sculptures from two series and an exceptional ceramic installation. The majority of the works are owned by the Italian collector and viticulturist Giulio Baruffaldi. Appel produced ten large and medium-sized sculptures for specific locations on Baruffaldi's estate. Eight bronze sculptures were taken from their permanent location in Tuscany for the first time for this exhibition. The second series was created on Appel's estate, Villa Licia. In addition, a number of sculptures, which served as models for the bronze versions, will be on show, borrowed from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam collection, resulting in both original and bronze versions of the sculptures being seen together.

One original sculpture originates from the Cobra Museum collection. A total of 20 of Karel Appel's objects are included and a small number of landscape paintings. The works have never been publicly displayed in this composition.

Works from the 1990s by Roberto Barni are included, although he will primarily supply new works especially created for the exhibition: sculptures, drawings and paintings. Despite the fact that Appel and Barni are two completely independent artists, a connection can be made between their works. In the 1990s, Barni, just like Appel, used objects from daily life to express the relationship between man and culture. In addition he shares with Appel the approach to the continuation of history and tradition in the present, in contemporary art. Past and present, nature and culture are powerfully displayed throughout Roberto Barni's work. Barni has been living and working in Tuscany for many years.

The accompanying catalogue provides further insight into the aspects of Tuscany that had special meaning to Appel and Barni, and into the meaning of Tuscany for other modern and contemporary artists who had or still have a studio in Tuscany. A number of them are represented at the exhibition with a single work: Marino Marini (1901-1980), Jan Dibbets (1941) and the Irish artist Janet Mullarney (1952).

*Studio Toscane* is a concept by guest curator Werner van den Belt, also the author of the catalogue.

After *Studio Toscane*, the bronze sculptures by Karel Appel will be on display during the exhibition *Hof van Appel* in the *Cobra buiten* ('Cobra in the Open') sculpture garden, which will open in March 2012 in Kasteel Keukenhof. *Cobra in the Open* is a collaboration

between the Cobra Museum and Kasteel Keukenhof in Lisse, supported by the BankGiro Loterij. *Hof van Appel* will be the first of three annual exhibitions.

**Media Partner AVRO will devote three episodes of the television programme *Kunstuur to Studio Toscane* and the exhibition *Hof van Appel*. The first programme will be broadcast on 19 November.**

## Studio Toscane

Tuscany is rich in cultural history. As the centre of the Renaissance this region produced famous artists. Tuscany was also the cradle of humanism and a major international scientific hub. Currently Tuscany is primarily known for its excellent conservation of the past, in terms of nature and culture. What is less well-known is that from the mid-1970s Tuscany was the breeding ground for famous contemporary artists, including Daniel Spoerri, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Fernando Botero, Jan Dibbets, Karel Appel and Gerhard Richter. Local artists also contribute to artistic developments with their work. The most famous ones include Marino Marini, Roberto Barni and Sandro Chia (1946). In Tuscany artists not only experience nature and culture, they draw a lot of inspiration from the old landscape and the rich cultural history, which are so clearly noticeable in many locations.

## Karel Appel in Tuscany

In 1989 Appel settled in Tuscany and worked there in the summer months from 1989 to 1999. The diversity of the works he produced there is great, to this day there is no complete overview of the work from Tuscany. Between 1991 and 1995 Appel regularly worked on the estate of his neighbour, the viticulturist Giulio Baruffaldi. Here ten large and medium-sized sculptures were created based on a concept used previously by Appel, i.e., the application of found objects. On Baruffaldi's estate he found materials from viticulture: ploughs, stakes used to support bunches of grapes, bellows, old wooden barrels and cartwheels. He changed the meaning of the materials by arranging them in a specific way and by adding self-made plaster components, which can be identified as human and animal heads. Appel would later make bronze versions of the statues; eight bronze statues from this series can still be found on the estate, in the locations chosen for them by Appel. He kept the original statues made from the found materials and a number of them ended up in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam collection. The bronze sculptures from the Buffaldi collection will leave the estate for the first time.

On his own estate a second series of sculptures was created, with excess household goods. In Villa Licia, Appel found doors, window frames, wheels, ladders, as well as lids of discarded wine barrels. During assembly a colour accent was sometimes added, but on the whole these sculptures also maintained their simple original condition. After a visit to a carnival depot in Viareggio human limbs were processed in the constructions, such as arms or fists, as well as donkey's or bird's heads. From that time Appel referred to them as 'stake sculptures'. The *Fountain* statue from 1992, which was set up in 2001 as a bronze fountain on the square in front of the Cobra Museum, also belongs to this series. Appel donated the original to the museum in 2004.

Appel created the first paintings which clearly are based on Tuscany in 1990: landscapes with rolling hills, trees as well as human figures and animals. Four years later *Nobody's Puppets* (1994) would follow, in which the landscape is abstracted into a jumble of coloured lines. The series appears to be the beginning of a much larger one from 1995. After 50 years Appel returned to painting reality. In approximately 60 works he painted the view from his Tuscan studio, all with the same hill and the same cypresses. An important aspect is also that he allows the achievements of Cézanne and Van Gogh into these paintings.

In 1995 Appel developed an unusual installation made up of ceramic objects selected in a local business: dining room tables, classical sculptures, fire baskets. He had the objects sprayed white and covered them with blue painting: human and animal figures and abstract shapes. Later he would design chairs to go with them. Appel created the installation, christened *Le Muse*, for a large space on Baruffaldi's estate. The installation illustrates Appel's sense of ceremony. His affinity for 'rituals and celebrations' had a sequel two years later when on the night of 21 June, a mythical date for natural religions, he staged a performance whereby the last leftover household goods were stacked up high and set on fire. During the burning ceremony, six of Appel's poems translated into Italian, were recited. The large ceramic installation is included in the exhibition. The performance was filmed and will be shown.

## **Roberto Barni**

Roberto Barni's (1939) work is stylistically diverse. For the most part, his work follows artistic trends: pop art in the 1950s and 1960s, conceptual art in the 1970s and figurative art in the 1980s and 1990s. However, to him art-historical developments represent a means and not an end. The main theme in his work is his humanistic vision. Doubts, the tragic and the quest for balance with nature also play a part. From the mid-1980s his research into humanity was symbolised by the walking man, who develops into his alter ego. Barni's work shows similarities with art from antiquity (Greeks and Etruscans) as well as with modern art (Alberto Giacometti). Barni does not view the past as completed but sees it continuing into the present, a process of which he also forms part.

## **Catalogue**

Ludion will publish the catalogue *Studio Toscane/Karel Appel – Roberto Barni*. Execution: 152 pages, trilingual (NL/IT/UK). Text: Werner van den Belt. Photography by Aurelio Amendola, among others. Design: Brigitte Slangen. ISBN 978-94-6130-030-0.

## **Public events**

As part of the exhibition, lectures and tours will be organised and a creative arrangement will be offered in collaboration with the Karel Appelhuis BG. In addition a hunt will be organised for children and workshops will be held during school holidays. For further information please go to [www.cobra-museum.nl](http://www.cobra-museum.nl)  
See also [www.kabg.nl](http://www.kabg.nl)

## **MuseumApp**

In the MuseumApp launched on 8 September, a Karel Appel route is included in Amsterdam, created by the Cobra Museum. The MuseumApp is an iPhone application.

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## **Information for the press**

Information, digital image material and if needed, a review copy of the catalogue is available through Lieke Fijen, phone: +31 (0)20 5475038 and e-mail [l.fijen@cobra-museum.nl](mailto:l.fijen@cobra-museum.nl).

**Hof van Appel** On 5 October at 3 p.m. a presentation meeting will take place at the Cobra Museum about the new sculpture garden *Cobra in the Open*. For information and your request to attend, please contact Boudewijn Koopmans by telephone on +31 (0)20 5475039 or via e-mail to [b.koopmans@cobra-museum.nl](mailto:b.koopmans@cobra-museum.nl)