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Charles Despiau Retrospective from 1 November at museum Beelden aan Zee

From Friday 1 November 2013 to Sunday 2 February 2014, museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague presents the exhibition *Charles Despiau (1874-1946), sculpteur mal-aimé*. It is the first retrospective of the famous and tragic French sculptor. Total E&P Nederland BV has undertaken to be main sponsor, while Maison Descartes in Amsterdam will pay special attention to this special exhibition.

The fantastic oeuvre of Charles Despiau can hold its own with that of the greatest sculptors from the Western history of art. In the 1930's, his portraits and figures were the response to the dreamy image language and voluptuous nudes of his older colleague Aristide Maillol. Despiau's work is more mysterious and more difficult to fathom, but of an inexpressible beauty. His models are suffused with the nervous complexity of the modern day and age. They invite endless observation. They are small architectonic works in space.

World-famous

Charles Despiau specialized in making portraits of his contemporaries. Auguste Rodin, for whom the young Despiau worked, recognized his talent immediately. At Despiau's first exhibition in New York in 1927, all the works were sold and an international circle of collectors formed. The assignments for portraits poured in, demanded by a society which now wanted to be immortalized only by Despiau. He became world-famous. At the 1939 *Rondom Rodin* exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the largest overview of modern French sculpture ever held outside France, Despiau was one of the leading trio, alongside Rodin and Maillol. The major Dutch museums of modern art purchased his work.

Scapegoat

But Despiau was also a tragic figure. Naïve and apolitical as he was, he did not keep enough distance during the German occupation of France. This proved to be disastrous for his legacy. He died in 1946, shortly after the end of the Second World War. He therefore could not defend himself like other artists and clear his name. And thus Despiau became a scapegoat. A retrospective of his work in the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris in 1974 was scarcely noticed.

Reintroduction

Museum Beelden aan Zee is proud to reintroduce to the Dutch public Despiau, the man with the sharpest sculptural eyes of the twentieth century. In collaboration with the Gerhard-Marcks-Haus in Bremen and French, German and Dutch experts, the museum is organizing

Despiau's first retrospective in the Netherlands. Attention will also be paid to his influence on Dutch sculpture, which was still young at the time. The Centre Pompidou has lent the largest part of this exhibition. Total E&P Nederland BV, a unit of the French oil and gas corporation, is the main sponsor. Maison Descartes in Amsterdam is paying special attention to the retrospective.

Museum Beelden aan Zee

Museum Beelden aan Zee concentrates exclusively on modern and contemporary international sculpture. The collection comprises around one thousand sculptures, most of which are from the second half of the twentieth century. Man is the leitmotiv for the sculptures by famous and unknown sculptors and produced from a wide variety of materials. Beelden aan Zee is housed in a special building designed by Wim Quist, in the dunes of Scheveningen.

MUSEUM

BEELDEN

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