



## PRESS RELEASE: OPENING OF COBRA DEPOT, ANTWERP, 2 May 2023



HeadquARTers is the beating heart of logistics service provider Katoen Natie. HeadquARTers also hosts several exhibitions.

- The permanent exhibition "3500 Years of Textile Art", one of the world's finest exhibitions of ancient fabrics, is housed in its own museum.
- In addition, the exhibition "Deugnieten & Rebellen" graces the corridors of the headquarters, featuring Belgian and international contemporary art.
- The Cobra depot will also open in May 2023.

*"We decided at some point that we were going to gather our Cobra collection in a depot, but there is nothing as sad as art that no one can admire. So we opted for a 'depot' that we open to the public." (Karine Huts)*

The visit to the Cobra depot is not just limited to an introduction, it is an experience. We see works by the founding fathers from the early days, but also works by those who have continued to paint in the spirit of Cobra. Or just barely. Each artist has his own character. L'artiste libre...

It is precisely this versatility of the movement that leads to the richness of this collection. Meanwhile, the very diverse collection includes not only 270 paintings, but also many graphic works, sculptures and applied arts, such as carpets and ceramics. There are also the famous Cobra magazines, bibliophile editions in which poetry meets visual art, personal correspondence and an unpublished manuscript by Hugo Claus about Karel Appel. To this day, the collection is expanding, built on the expertise of enthusiastic stakeholders.

The Cobra depot joins Katoen Natie's HeadquARTers. It is an exploration of the very diverse collection: paintings, graphic work, sculptures and applied art, bibliophile editions and other publications as the foundation of the movement.

Versatility is the strong suit of this collection. The big names of Cobra are present: Dotremont, Alechinsky, Appel, Corneille, Constant and Jorn, among many others. Be surprised by this highly idiosyncratic presentation. The scenography is by Lien Wauters, coordinated by Danaë Emilia Vermeulen and Kristel Dotremont.

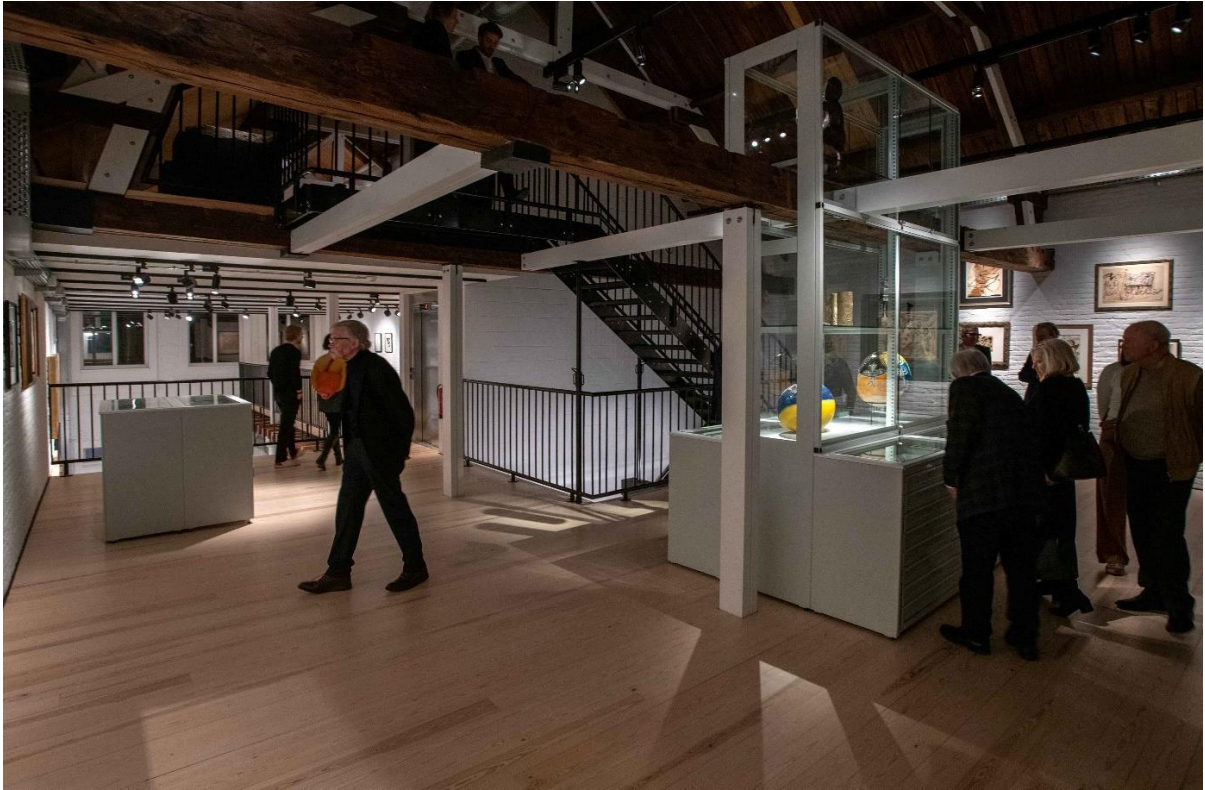
The depot can be visited, with a guide and by appointment

As from 2 May 2023, at HeadquARTers, Van Aerdtstraat 33, 2060 Antwerp, Belgium

More info via [www.headquarters-katoennatie.com/en](http://www.headquarters-katoennatie.com/en) | Mail: [info@headquarters-katoennatie.com](mailto:info@headquarters-katoennatie.com)



## THE DEPOT-BUILDING



A disruptive museum was chosen to house the collection, in the form of an art depot.

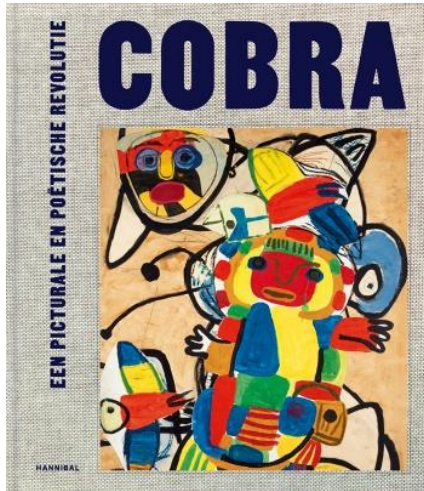
To be clear: not a depot adjoining a museum, but a depot in its purest form. This is in line with The Phoebus Foundation's ambition to conserve, preserve and display art in the best possible conditions.

The availability of two premises with an intermediate warehouse in Duboisstraat and De Waghemaekerestraat, adjacent to the HeadquARTers of the Katoen Natie, provided a special opportunity to shape the project. The talents of Jan De Vylder, Inge Vinck and Jo Taillieu made their mark at the Venice Biennale. They were the architectural firm of choice for this project.

The somewhat rough industrial building style was preserved as much as possible. The atmosphere of an art depot was accentuated by the visible channelling of the air conditioning, the fireproof staircase, the industrial lift and the sliding racks in which the artworks are hung.



## THE BOOK



The book *Cobra - a pictorial and poetic revolution*, published by Hannibal Books, is a magnificent introduction to the Cobra art movement.

With French as its working language, Cobra was pretty much the last truly European movement within Modernism. The group's anarchic story is not just an important strand in art history — it remains as lively as ever and has inspired all sorts of artists who were never directly involved with Cobra. The work bequeathed to us by Karel Appel, Pierre Alechinsky, Constant, Corneille and other kindred spirits is as fascinating as ever, both raw and confronting, poetic and moving. It is with the same spirit of artistic joyfulness and freedom that this book showcases the masterpieces of Cobra art belonging to The Phoebus Foundation.

With text contributions by Paul Huvenne, Johan Pas, Hilde de Bruijn, Laura Stamps, Piet Thomas, Piet Boyens and Naomi Meulemans. The preface was written by Karine Huts-Van den Heuvel.

### [Cobra, a pictorial and poetic revolution](#)

The book, published by Hannibal Books, is available in HeadquARTers and online (click link).

Finish: linen hardcover with tip-in

Number of pages: 368

Size: 29 x 25 cm

Retail price: € 60

English-Dutch bilingual edition

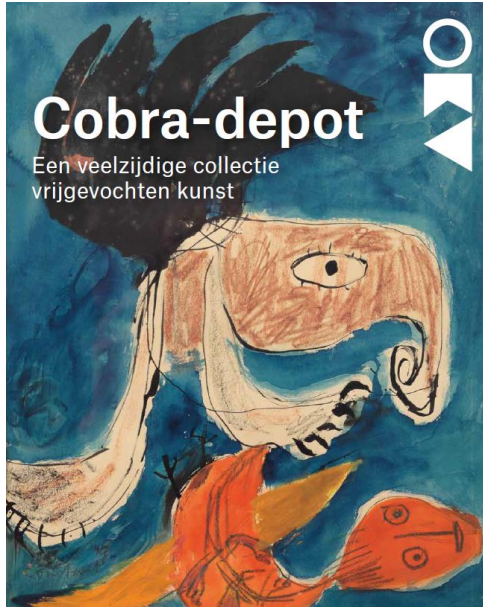
ISBN 978 94 6388 791 5





## OKV

The Cobra-depot in the art and cultural heritage publication OKV  
(Openbaar Kunstbezit in Vlaanderen | Public Art Heritage in Flanders)

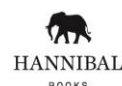


This theme issue takes you on a voyage of discovery through The Phoebus Foundation's Cobra collection.

Karine Huts enthusiastically recounts her first encounters with Cobra art, how she learned to look, look... only to reluctantly start collecting. It is a story full of passion for Cobra and the artists she cherishes as her "rascals and rebels".

Rebellious they were, the free-spirited artists who signed their manifesto in Paris on 8 November 1948. No art theory was still credible in their young eyes, they rejected surrealism and abstract art. Spontaneity was their only watchword: action takes precedence over reflection, art is above all about doing.

The issue answers the question: what is Cobra? The movement's Danes, Belgians and Dutch are highlighted, from the strongmen Asger Jorn, Christian Dotremont, Pierre Alechinsky and Constant Nieuwenhuijs to many other, also lesser-known, artists. We take a look at their magazines, visit their exhibitions that were not met with applause and step inside the Brussels art gallery Taptoe, which gave a stage to artists of this movement between 1955 and 1957, the immediate post-Cobra years.



## THE COBRA-MOVEMENT



Cobra is an avant-garde movement that grouped artists from Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands between 1948 and 1951. It was founded in Paris on 8 November 1948.

They did not have a manifesto, but the credo was that they were fed up with manifestos. They were European-oriented and in the aftermath of the World War II conflagration they saw an opportunity for a new society. You can read how they saw it in their magazine Cobra, which appeared sporadically.

True to the existentialist zeitgeist of the artistic milieu, their thinking was Marxist. Traditional values of 'high' and 'low' culture had to give way to the belief in the natural talent of every human being.

As a result, spontaneity became their watchword; no art theory was credible any more. The individual, these artists reasoned, could express himself through the image as well as through the word, music, film, etc... express himself, and through a physical experience. Above all, art should be done. There was already too much talk about art, people wanted to get started.

They formed a movement under the acronym CoBrA: Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam. They oppose established values. They set themselves against beauty. They drew their inspiration from Art Brut, children's drawings and folk art. They painted wildly and impulsively. They shocked with their wild enthusiasm.

The emphasis was on fully consciously experiencing life in the here and now. The result was a lived-in, matter-based, physically driven art, where the rhythm of action dictated the creative moment.

Thus Cobra became Europe's last authentic contribution to modernity. It summarised just about all previous artistic manifestos under the umbrella of the Surrealists, in order to go totally its own way.

The Cobra movement grew rapidly, recklessly. "It is a lot, an express train it is, a chaos..." wrote Christian Dotremont in a letter to his friend Noiret. "Une brève rencontre de choc,...which lasted exactly 1,000 days and a thousand nights,...c'est pur une catastrophe de chemin de fer, énorme."

The group broke up in 1951. But as Dotremont put it, the movement continued to exist.