

Xavier Hufkens

Xavier Hufkens to Open Expanded Gallery at Historic Flagship Location in Brussels, Marking the Gallery's 35th Anniversary in 2022

New addition to the 19th-century townhouse nearly triples the gallery's exhibition space
Designed by Belgian architecture firm Robbrecht & Daem

Inaugural show will be a major exhibition by
Christopher Wool, curated by Anne Pontégnie
Opening 2 June 2022



Rendering of the 6 rue St-Georges, which will complement Xavier Hufkens' locations at 107 rue St-Georges (Rivoli) and 44 rue Van Eyck (Van Eyck) in Brussels. Courtesy: Xavier Hufkens and Robbrecht & Daem architects.

24 March 2022, Brussels, Belgium—Marking its 35th anniversary, Xavier Hufkens announces the opening of its gallery at 6 rue St-Georges, its flagship location in Brussels, following a two-year transformation led by the Belgian architecture firm Robbrecht & Daem. The design transforms and extends the 19th-century townhouse opened by Hufkens in 1992, nearly tripling its exhibition space, and creating a range of light-filled spaces for the exhibition of contemporary art. One of three gallery spaces in Brussels, the renewed and expanded space at rue St-Georges affirms the gallery's commitment to its home city and offers artists and visitors a destination for the art of our time in the heart of the Belgian capital.

Opening 2 June 2022, the inaugural show will be a major exhibition of recent works in a wide range of media by American artist **Christopher Wool** (b. 1955), curated by **Anne Pontégnie**, independent curator and long-time collaborator of Wool.

‘Every aspect of our new gallery stems from the vision to create an exceptional platform for our community of artists, many of whom made their start with us here in Brussels,’ said **Xavier Hufkens**. ‘In the 35 years since we opened our first gallery in a warehouse in the city center, Brussels has flourished into a vibrant epicenter of contemporary art in Europe and internationally. This is a cultural heritage and creative community to which we are proud to belong and deeply committed. We hope that this new space will serve as a dynamic home for our gallery and our artists well into the future.’

Designed by Paul Robbrecht’s internationally acclaimed team at **Robbrecht & Daem** architects, the new St-Georges gallery marks an exceptional expansion in surface, capacity, and logistical possibility. Spanning six stories, the building will encompass over 800 square meters (almost 9,000 square feet) of exhibition galleries, nearly tripling Xavier Hufkens’ existing exhibition space at this location.

The pre-existing floors of the gallery’s historic 19th-century townhouse will extend into the newly designed adjacent building, a cascade-like, monolithic volume of elegantly stacked concrete forms. In a delicate interplay between the large-scale proportions of the contemporary building and the more intimate rooms of the original *maison de maître*, the integrated design creates an effortless circulation while offering visitors a range of spatial experiences: staircases guide visitors through four floors of exhibition space, each with unique dimensions and light incidence. The 2,200-square-meter (nearly 24,000-square-foot) building will retain its outdoor exhibition space in the garden, renewed by the esteemed landscape architect Martin Wirtz, and in addition feature upgraded staff offices, a research library, and art-storage facilities. The durability of the building — completely energy independent and nearly entirely carbon-neutral — is reflected in its materialization, concrete core activation, and effective use of geothermal and solar power.

Long-standing collaborators of the gallery, Robbrecht & Daem conceived the renovation of Xavier Hufkens’ original space at rue St-Georges, upon the gallery’s move into the historic townhouse in 1992. The space quickly gained a reputation for being one of Belgium’s most interesting places to see leading contemporary art, mounting exhibitions by emerging and established international artists. Xavier Hufkens would become the oldest gallery representative for several such artists, including Richard Artschwager, Thierry De Cordier, Jan Vercruyse, Louise Bourgeois, Roni Horn, and Thomas Houseago.

Paul Robbrecht of Robbrecht & Daem architects said: ‘For the new St-Georges building, we were given the rare opportunity to reinterpret and quite literally expand our own architecture. In the early 1990s, we repurposed the existing *maison de maître* into a lively art gallery. Now, thirty years later, we opted for an architecture that epitomizes the site’s history and extends into a new adjoining building, an impressive concrete structure with a cascade-like form. Variations on light and proportion give each floor a distinct character, which will compel both artists and visitors. Transcending the traditional white cube, the new St-Georges gallery aims to be a destination that unites the old with the new, the intimate with the monumental.’

On view from 2 June 2022, a comprehensive exhibition by Christopher Wool will inaugurate the new St-Georges building. Curated by Anne Pontégnie, independent curator and collaborator of the artist for over 30 years, the exhibition brings together five bodies of works that illustrate Wool’s recent investigation in sculpture, works on paper, photography, and books, in addition to new paintings, the first to come out of the artist’s studio in five years. Gathering more than fifty works created since 2018, the exhibition emphasizes the circularity and coherence across Wool’s oeuvre. Focusing on recent developments, this is the first exhibition in Europe to showcase the full range of Wool’s practice. The exhibition will employ the full scale and design of Xavier Hufkens’ new building to explore the artist’s work in all its dimensions.

Curator Anne Pontégnie said of the exhibition: 'Through more than fifty works, this exhibition explores how reproduction is at the heart of Christopher Wool's practice. It is a journey into Wool's process and modes of thinking. He has never ceased to create challenging forms and to question his own practice. It is also the result of a thirty-year dialogue with the artist and a thirty-year friendship with Xavier Hufkens — a question of mutual trust. The new gallery's scale and architecture offer the perfect setting to develop such a complex and dense project.'

The new St-Georges gallery will later this year host solo exhibitions by Joe Bradley and Nicolas Party, in autumn and winter respectively. Xavier Hufkens programs two exhibition spaces in Brussels in addition to its gallery at rue St-Georges: opened in 2013, the nearby space in the iconic Seventies-era Galerie Rivoli will host exhibitions by Cassi Namoda and on Frank Walter in spring and summer 2022, respectively. The third gallery on rue Van Eyck, opened in 2020, will mount important exhibitions by Thierry De Cordier in September and by McArthur Binion in November. Josh Smith's *Keyhole* is currently on view across the gallery's Van Eyck and Rivoli locations until 26 April 2022.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Xavier Hufkens

First opened in 1987, Xavier Hufkens has grown to become one of Europe's leading galleries for contemporary art. Xavier Hufkens is known for having introduced some of the most influential contemporary artists to Europe at a time when they were still relatively unknown. Today, the gallery maintains a diverse program with exhibitions by multiple generations of leading artists and estates, many of whom have worked with the gallery for decades.

Xavier Hufkens has maintained its commitment to Brussels, presenting its program across three neighboring gallery spaces: St-Georges, a 19th-century townhouse which the gallery opened in 1992 and which is now being vastly transformed and expanded, opening 2 June 2022; Rivoli, opened in 2013 in the iconic, Seventies-era building, the interior of which was designed by Swiss architect Harry Guggler; and Van Eyck, opened in 2020 and designed by promising talent Bernard Dubois. The renewed and expanded gallery at the St-Georges location, redesigned by its original architects, will open to the public on the occasion of Xavier Hufkens' 35-year anniversary in 2022 and inaugurates an ambitious new phase for the gallery and its artists.

About Robbrecht & Daem

Founded in 1975 by Paul Robbrecht (b. 1950) and Hilde Daem (b. 1950), architectural firm Robbrecht & Daem has developed a mature body of work that has gained international recognition. The wide-ranging portfolio comprises an impressive number of architecture and infrastructure projects, interiors, and landscapes. The work method is always the same: 'change a lot to change nothing at all.' With the firm's discreet yet daring work, Robbrecht & Daem often positioned itself within the world of visual art and music. The practice gradually became known for its architecture that offers the arts a home.

Notable commissions include BRUSK exhibition hall, Bruges (2019-ongoing); Market Hall & Central Squares, Ghent (2012); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2009); the extension of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2003); the Concertgebouw Brugge (2002); and the Aue Pavilions at Documenta IX, Kassel (1992).

The work of Robbrecht & Daem architects has been published widely and is the subject of monographic publications (*Works in Architecture*, 1998; *Pacing Through Architecture*, 2009; *2G n 5*, 2010; *An Architectural Anthology*, 2017). In 2010, Paul Robbrecht and Hilde Daem were made International Fellow of the Royal Academy of British Architecture (RIBA). In 2013, together with Marie-José Van Hee architecten, Robbrecht en Daem architecten received the

European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture / Mies van der Rohe Award for the emblematic project of the city pavilion in Ghent (2012).

About Christopher Wool

Christopher Wool (b. 1955) is widely regarded as one of contemporary art's most innovative and influential American painters. Born in Chicago, he moved to New York City in 1973 where he studied painting and immersed himself in the city's underground culture. Since the early 1980s, Wool has pushed abstract painting's limits through a rigorous practice that addresses contemporary experience through formal invention. Be it printing, layering, stamping, smearing, or erasing, the artist continuously seeks to confront painting's core qualities. Wool is known for his seminal text-based and graphic stenciled works as well as his large-scale abstracted canvases that combine silkscreen and painted gestures. His art practice also extends to sculpture, photography, and artist books.

Wool lives and works between New York City and Marfa, Texas. His work is included in the collections of major museums internationally. In 2013, a retrospective on his work was held at the Guggenheim Museum, traveling to the Art Institute of Chicago (2014). An important survey opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 1998 and subsequently travelled to the Carnegie Museum of Art and Kunsthalle Basel. Other important solo exhibitions include Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2012), Museum Ludwig (2009), and Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves (2008). International exhibitions include the Whitney Biennial (1989), Documenta (1992), the Lyon Biennial (2003), and the Venice Biennale (2011). Among many honors, Wool has been named a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome, served as a DAAD Berlin Artist-in-Residence, and received the Wolfgang Hahn Prize Cologne.

About Anne Pontégnie

Anne Pontégnie is a curator and art critic based in Brussels. She runs APOffice, contemporary art resources. She is curator of the Cranford Collection in London and was co-director of Le Consortium, Dijon from 2010 to 2018. Prior to that, Pontégnie was chief curator at WIELS Contemporary Art Center in Brussels. In 2011, she organized the Printemps de Septembre festival in Toulouse, France and in 2003, co-organized the Lyon Biennial. Pontégnie has curated numerous exhibitions and monographs with artists such as Mike Kelley, Daan Van Golden, Edith Dekyndt, and Christopher Wool. She writes regularly for magazines and catalogues.

Anne Pontégnie has been involved with public art commissions through the New Patrons program (Fondation de France and Fondation Roi Baudouin) and the renovation of art institutions (WIELS, Le Consortium, and Atelier Kanal for the Kanal Pompidou project).

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