

Tribute to Ladislav Kijno

From Pebble to Stars

March 23 - August 4, 2024

The Urban Community of Béthune-Bruay, Artois Lys Romane, the city of Béthune, and the Bina Endowment Fund are pleased to announce for spring-summer 2024, the largest retrospective of Ladislav Kijno (1921-2012) since the painter's death. The "event unfolds across six exhibitions at six sites and includes a rich program of cultural activities offered to all audiences throughout the urban community".

This ambitious retrospective celebrates the return of this "*son of Flanders*" to his homeland. Its title, *From Pebble to Stars*, is inspired by one of the artist's famous aphorisms: "*The painter must become a diver to descend to the foundations of the world and an astronaut to ascend to the stars.*" and its purpose is to pay homage to a body of work that has ceaselessly proclaimed a fighting humanity.

At Labanque (Béthune), no less than one hundred and fifty works by the artist are displayed in the vast exhibition spaces of the art center. Here, it's the pebbles from the seabed that welcome the visitor. It's from this primary ovoid shape that the artist will develop his entire approach. The visitor's journey then testifies to the artist's attachment to the North. Finally, from room to room, the master's poetic galaxy unfolds, formally marked by the use of aerosol spray strokes on the canvas like so many stars. The painter-philosopher's "paths of humanism" are punctuated by tributes to Guillaume Apollinaire, Francis Ponge, Pablo Neruda, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Eric Satie... as well as to his friend, the activist and philosopher Angela Davis.

The cultural Saint Pry space (Béthune) hosts the *Stations of the Cross* created with Robert Combas, at Kijno's request from 2003. In total, there are 14 paintings for 14 stations of a large-format Stations of the Cross that will be the fruit of their crossed works which, while preserving the identity of their respective writing, deliver a synthesis of their "mental speleology". This was the beginning of a surprising artistic and spiritual adventure between these two artists of different generations and artistic planets, free figuration for Combas and abstraction for Kijno.

The Kijno Donation (Nœux-les-Mines) offers visitors keys to understanding both the messages delivered by this committed artist and the multiple techniques he invented to serve them: use of spray paint (Kijno is considered the father of French street art), drips, crumpled paper... The works presented here are part of the collection of about sixty pieces that the artist decided to donate to his childhood land, Nœux-les-Mines, at the height of his international fame. "It is not enough to give men a roof and bread, we must put Gauguin on the plates and Rimbaud in the glasses", declared Ladislav Kijno. Through this journey, the public encounters this explorer seeking to unravel the mystery of the world, a Kijno who recounts his travels, denounces the dark side of Man (war, racism, dictatorships, injustices...) and pays tribute to the "Great Men" who fight against these scourges (Louise Michel, Gandhi, Pablo Neruda, Nelson Mandela, Angela Davis).

Three satellite and complementary exhibitions are also offered at the Cité des Électriciens, the Comédie de Béthune, and the Maison de la Poésie.

The Cité des Électriciens (Bruay-La-Buissière) presents, from March 23 to June 30, 2024, an intimate exhibition highlighting the technique of crumpled papers on canvas in the artist's work and develops a cultural season with the theme of "Crumpled/Uncrumpled".

The Comédie de Béthune welcomes in its Hall the series "The Art of Love by Ovid" created by Kijno, paying tribute to the famous text of the 1st century Latin poet. There are many fascinating links between Kijno's painting and literature; to this effect, a monumental canvas by Kijno paying homage to Pablo Neruda is also on display here. Kijno has indeed dedicated several works to this great poet of love and struggle, including the famous "Neruda's Theatre", a labyrinth of gigantic canvases, which the artist presented in 1980 for the French Pavilion at

the Venice Biennale and which is now visible at Lille Grand Palais.

The Maison de la Poésie (Beuvry) will provide an opportunity to discover Kijno through illustrated works, deluxe editions, rare catalogs, manuscripts, as well as the book that philosopher Bernard Vasseur devoted to the artist's connections with poetry. Ladislav Kijno liked to say that he had spent his youth "stealing light from the poets' pockets" and he added: "It was perhaps for me, the son of an immigrant, the only way to survive in a world whose horror of violence I was already feeling in my deepest self. I was literally suffocating from this society of prohibition..." His entire production would pay homage to authors: Ovid, Ronsard, Hugo, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Valéry, Mayakovsky, Éluard, Tzara, Artaud, Saint-Exupéry, Aragon, Ponge, Neruda, Jean Grenier, Nikos Kazantzakis, Salah Stétié, etc.

And throughout the duration of the retrospective, an abundant program of cultural activities (no less than 150 events: workshops, residencies, urban walks, shows, concerts, conferences...) is offered to all audiences, amateurs and newcomers alike, both in the exhibition venues and off-site, throughout the territory of the Béthune-Bruay, Artois Lys Romane Urban Community.

"TRIBUTE TO KIJNO (1921-2012) April 22 – October 29, 2023

A man of questioning and stylistic breaks, refusing to remain prisoner of definitions and categories, he allows himself to navigate freely between abstraction and figuration, creating a personal world of signs and curves that draw a modern mythology. For LAD, as his friends nicknamed him, "painting is a profession that kills, in one way or another, you have to leave your skin in it". To discover: the "work of a major artist of informal painting of the 20th century, now present in many museums in France

and
abroad” as well as in many private collections.

March 18 to may 14, 2017
Saint Germain En Laye

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4 locations:

The Great Utopia of Kijno

Royal Riding Hall / from March 18 to May 14

Place Royale / Tel.: 01 30 87 21 70

Open Wednesday to Sunday: 2 PM - 7 PM / Free admission

Kijno and Poetry

Vera Space / from March 18 to April 16

2 Henri IV Street / Tel.: 01 30 87 21 70

Beacons for Kijno

La CLEF / from April 22 to May 14

46 Mareil Street / Tel. : 01 39 21 54 90

Kijno's Ideal Library

Media Library / from April 4 to 29

9 Henri IV Street / Tel.: 01 70 46 40 00

Conference

Chapel of the Maurice-Denis Departmental Museum

Saturday, March 25, 4 PM

“Kijno and His Prophets” by Renaud Faroux

2 bis Maurice-Denis Street / Tel. : 01 39 07 87 87