

Licked

by

the

Nieuwe baders
in de kunst

*New bathers
in art*

waves

W BOOKS



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Nieuwe baders
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*New bathers
in art*

waves

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Preface

Maite van Dijk

Water, swimming and bathing: contact with water, the feeling of weightlessness, of being at one with nature, the associations with summer... these have all been the subject of countless poems and songs. And more importantly for this project: the subject has also frequently been painted and drawn. It is for good reason that that title of this publication and the eponymous exhibition is *Licked by the Waves*, a line from a poem by the famous American poet Walt Whitman. In *Song of Myself* (1855), he wrote:

'It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them. It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves.'

Whitman used the waves to express his pain. In this exhibition, the focus is on the energy of water and the pleasure of bathing, although it does also include several references to water's unfathomable depth and the fear it can evoke.

The idea to curate an exhibition about bathers came about years ago, when I explored the origins of the genre in nineteenth-century French art. In the mid-19th century, the classical pretext for painting bathers gradually disappeared. Up until then, it was only The Three Graces, Venus and Diana from Greek and Roman mythology, together with the Biblical Eve and Susanna, who could be painted nude by the water. For centuries, they were the most important nude bathing women in painting: their nakedness was innocent because they were depicted as timeless bathers in harmony with nature, or as part of a historical story. But from circa 1850 onwards, the path was cleared

for the new bather: the bather, tout court. Paintings of seemingly everyday women, and sometimes men, recreating in and around the water flooded exhibitions in Paris. The emergence of this new bather coincided with *en plein air* painting, which boomed in the nineteenth century. It was also stimulated by a new social phenomenon: the upper middle class had more spare time, and the water was one of their favoured destinations. While the painters often positioned their bathers outside, surrounded by nature, the depictions are anything but natural. The genre of bathers is an artificial construction that raises questions about the depiction and representation of the body, the model, about beauty, sexuality, appropriation and the – in the nineteenth century predominately – male gaze.

In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists freely experimented with new forms and depictions of the nude, as Simon Kelly comprehensively details in his essay in this publication. Now, more than 100 years later, artists still return to these examples. Modern and contemporary painters reflect on the bathers tradition for inspiration, but also to bring it up for discussion and to offer a new perspective. They seek innovation through the lens of queer, feminist and culturally determined perspectives. Irony, parody and fascinating, idiosyncratic references to art, advertising and visual culture go hand in hand.

Nudes – and primarily female nudes – are traditionally shrouded in a veil of vulnerability and shame. The relationship between viewer and bather, between artist and muse can – even today – give rise to an uneasy feeling

of voyeurism. What lies behind our gaze? Do we see a paradise abound with innocence, or do we see eroticism and lust? Rosemarie Buikema and Maaïke Meijer keenly address these concerns in their essay on today's bather.

Licked by the Waves shows how modern-day artists allow people to play in the surf, to calmly float or to laze at the edge of a swimming pool. Under a blazing sun or in the dark, at night. The pleasure of a sensory experience can leap from the canvas. A surrender to water can be depicted serenely. The bather can almost even become one with the fluid elements. Bathers in the visual arts are not solely (nude) figures, with legs and buttocks, in the water. The surroundings, nature and the water landscape all play at least an equally important role. An Arcadian world in clear blue and green can surround the bather, but beach, sea and the horizon can also envelop the figure in a sultry, orange-red aquatic theatre. Immersion can cleanse and liberate, but also threaten. We see seduction, pleasure and humour, but also confrontation and discomfort.

This book and exhibition feature a wide range of international artists who breathe new life into the theme of bathers. Together with the Dutch artist Tanja Ritterbex, we chose more than 65 different artists, resulting in a surprising and refreshing blend. Established international names are joined by young, pioneering painters, all of whom embrace the bather as an important motif in their work. Many of these artists spontaneously offered to make new work for the exhibition.

Tanja Ritterbex' enthusiasm, and her admiration and love of the art, all sparkled like a rough diamond, which made working with her a delight. We often intuitively chose the same artworks, and the concept and selection came about naturally. I have learned a lot from Tanja about making and experiencing art, and am deeply grateful to her. Tanja's contribution to the publication and the exhibition has been crucial, not only as a guest curator, but also as an artist and author.

with boundless pleasure and energy. Jaron and Daan were responsible for the singular design of both the book and the exhibition. We collaborated to devise the textual elements that appear in this book and in the museum galleries, in order to honour the numerous songs and poems. This was our first time working together, and it was hence a dive into the deep unknown, with outstanding results. In this regard, I am also grateful to Johan de Bruijn from publisher Wbooks, who had great faith in this project and gave us the freedom to experiment and set our own course. Betty Klaasse and Dave Nice provided the excellent translations.

Also on behalf of Tanja Ritterbex, I would like to thank all artists and their galleries for their infectious enthusiasm and generosity in coming on board with this project and loaning their artworks, creating new work, or even making murals in the museum galleries. We are also deeply grateful to all institutional and private lenders for their willingness to participate in this exhibition.

And finally, I would like to thank everyone at Museum MORE. The entire team continues to perform under pressure, with great dedication and wide smiles. A special word of thanks for Marieke Ensing, Ellen van Slagmaat and Marleen van Veenen for their professionalism, creativity, support and faith, which allowed everything to flow.

Maite van Dijk

Artistic Director, Museum MORE

We have worked on this project with Jaron Korvinus and Daan Mens from Studio Spass

Radicale

Een nieuwe kijk op de baderstraditie
in de moderne tijd

Door Simon Kelly

Lichamen:

Binnen het westerse modernisme is vanaf de jaren 1860 tot halverwege de 20^{ste} eeuw volop met het thema baders geëxperimenteerd. Van Edouard Manet, Paul Cézanne via Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso en Suzanne Valadon tot Ernst Ludwig Kirchner en Marsden Hartley: een internationaal spectrum aan avant-gardekunstenaars verkende gedurende deze periode de verbeelding van het mannelijke en vrouwelijke naakt in de natuur. Dit essay belicht de verschillende vernieuwende benaderingen van deze kunstenaars aan de hand van enkele formele en iconografische thema's waarin de kern van hun vernieuwing tot uiting komt. Ik onderscheid vier benaderingen van de westerse Europese baders-traditie die in deze periode zijn ontwikkeld: ten eerste de 'primitieve' bader, waarbij het lichaam werd geschilderd of gemodelleerd

onder invloed van sculpturen uit Afrika en Oceanië die destijds nieuw waren voor West-Europese kunstenaars; ten tweede de mannelijke bader, waarbij nieuwe benaderingen in de seksualisering van het mannelijk lichaam centraal staan; ten derde de zwarte bader, die veranderende opvattingen over afkomst en huidskleur in het moderne tijdperk weerspiegelt, en tot slot de 'groteske' bader, ontstaan binnen het surrealisme van de jaren 1920 en 1930, met een focus op de onnatuurlijke vervorming en fragmentatie van het lichaam. Deze vier benaderingen bieden waardevolle historische context voor de hedendaagse voorstellingen van de badende mens die het onderwerp van de huidige tentoonstelling zijn. Tot slot zal dit essay dan ook ingaan op een aantal hedendaagse kunstenaars en hun dialoog met de badertradities.

¹ Voor andere Venus-schilderijen op deze Salon, zie *The Pearl and the Wave* (Museo del Prado, Madrid) door Paul Baudry en *Birth of Venus* (Palais des Beaux Arts, Lille) door Eugène Amaury-Duval.

² Voor een uitvoerige bespreking, zie Mary Louise Krumrine, ed. *Paul Cézanne: The Bathers* (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1989). Zie ook Aruna d'Souza, *Cézanne's Bathers: Biography and the Erotics of Paint*. University Park, PA, 2008.

³ Zie Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, 'Cézanne nostalgique: Nostalgia, Memory, Illusion', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 22, nr. 2 (Herfst 2023), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2023.22.2.3>.

⁴ Zie Martha Lucy, *The Barnes Foundation: Masterworks* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2012), 66-7, en de entry (nr. 60) in *Cézanne in the Barnes Foundation*, ed. André Dombrowski, Nancy Ireson en Sylvie Patry (Philadelphia: The Barnes Foundation, 2021).

⁵ 'In 1906, Cézanne's influence...was everywhere pervasive.' Picasso, geciteerd in John Elderfield, 'Picasso's Extreme Cézanne,' in Joseph Rishel, ed. *Cézanne and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), 213.

⁶ Matisse, 'Interview with Jacques Guenne, 1925' in Jack Flam, ed. *Matisse on Art*, (University of California Press, 2015), 80.

Prelude: 19^{de}-eeuwse baders

Hoewel het badersthema verwant is met de Drie Gratiën uit de klassieke oudheid, kreeg het zijn specifieke vorm tijdens de Italiaanse renaissance. Traditioneel werden geïdealiseerde vrouwelijke naakten in harmonie met de natuur weergegeven, zoals in het werk van kunstenaars als Giorgione en Titiaan. Deze baadsters werden vaak afgebeeld aan zee of in een bosrijke omgeving. Dergelijke voorstellingen waren veelal ingebed in mythologische verhalen, zoals dat van de godin Diana die door de jager Aktaion bespied werd terwijl ze met haar nimfen in het bos aan het baden was, of dat van Venus op een schelp, die volgroeid uit het schuim van de zee werd geboren. In de 19^{de} eeuw was het onderwerp van baders inmiddels prominent aanwezig op officiële kunsttentoonstellingen. De Parijse Salon van 1863 stond zelfs bekend als de 'Salon van de Venussen' vanwege de overvloed aan voorstellingen van Venus die te zien waren, met misschien wel als meest in het oog springende de *Geboorte van Venus* van Alexandre Cabanel (fig. 1).¹ Het onderwerp diende voor Cabanel als voorwendsel om een academische, zeer gedetailleerde en bijna fotografische voorstelling van het geïdealiseerde vrouwenlichaam te schilderen. Het werk toont de traditionele representatie van de badende vrouw als object van de mannelijke blik, vooral omdat Venus haar blik zelf verlegen afwendt in plaats van zich rechtstreeks tot de toeschouwer te richten. In hetzelfde jaar schilderde Edouard Manet zijn anti-academische *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Musée d'Orsay, Parijs), dat oorspronkelijk door de kunstenaar zelf *Het bad* werd getiteld. In dit werk zit een naakte baadster op de grond te midden van modieus geklede mannen in een bosachtige omgeving, waarvan men over het algemeen aanneemt dat



Fig. 1 Alexandre Cabanel, *Venus* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)



Fig. 2 Paul Cézanne, *De grote baadsters* (Barnes Foundation)

het het Bois de Boulogne in Parijs voorstelt, een plek die destijds met prostitutie werd geassocieerd. Door de badende vrouw in deze zeer moderne context weer te geven haalde Manet de traditie van het tijdloze, mythologische naakt naar het moderne Parijs van dat moment. In dit werk kijkt de baadster direct naar de toeschouwer, in plaats van haar blik af te wenden.

In de laatste decennia van de 19^{de} eeuw bleven avant-gardekunstenaars aan de academische baderstraditie tornen. Zo maakte Paul Cézanne zo'n honderd schilderijen van baders en vele daaraan verwante tekeningen, aquarellen en litho's.² Anders dan Manet, wiens interesse bij de setting van het moderne Parijs lag, vernieuwde Cézanne vooral met zijn formele experiment. Zijn baders lijken zich meestal in een tijdloze wereld te bevinden, al zijn er verwijzingen te vinden naar zijn jeugd in de Provence en zijn nostalgische herinneringen aan het zwemmen in de rivier de Arc, aan de voet van de Mont Saint-Victoire.³ Het hoogtepunt van Cézannes badersvoorstellingen bestaat uit drie grote schilderijen waaraan hij tot zijn dood bleef werken. De meest curieuze is misschien wel *De grote baadsters* (fig. 2). In dit werk schildert Cézanne vervormde en geabstraheerde lichamen in dikke, ongelijkmatige verflagen. Het gezicht van de figuur links lijkt een soort vormeloze vlezige bol. Op een foto van het schilderij uit 1904, toen Cézanne er nog aan werkte, heeft het gezicht nog gelaatstrekken. Zijn besluit om het gezicht over te schilderen was dus een bewuste stap richting abstractie.⁴

De 'primitieve' bader

Cézannes experimenten met baders waren van grote invloed op een jongere generatie

³⁰ See Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), and *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty. The Visceral Eye* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2006).

³¹ For an overview, see Picasso. *Baigneuses et Baigneurs*, ed. Sylvie Ramond (Musée des Beaux Arts de Lyon and Gand: Éditions Snoek, 2020).

³² For a recent feminist critique, see the exhibition "It's Pablo-matic: Picasso according to Hannah Gadsby," Brooklyn Museum, 2023.

³³ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

³⁴ Picasso was seen as being at Surrealism's center by the movement's high priest, André Breton. His *Three Bathers* (Zervos IV 169), was, for example, reproduced in *La Révolution surréaliste* on March 1, 1926, page 23. See Anne Baldassari, ed. *The Surrealist Picasso* (Flammarion: Fondation Beyeler 2005), 237.

³⁵ See Christian Zervos. "Picasso à Dinard, été, 1928." *Cahiers d'Art 1* (1929), 5,6,8. Referenced in Baldassari, ed. *The Surrealist Picasso* 38.

³⁶ See Georges Bataille, "Soleil pourri," *Documents 3*, "Hommage à Picasso" (April, 1930): 173-74.



Fig. 8 Pablo Picasso, *Bathers with a Beach Ball* (Musée Picasso)

The Grotesque Bather

One more modernist approach to the representation of bathers, and one crucial to avant-garde tradition, was the distortion and fragmentation of bodily form. This of course deeply contradicted the polished, quasi-photographic bodies of the academic tradition. The feminist scholar, Linda Nochlin, has argued that modernist artists sought to fragment the body in response to the wider trauma of societal change, "that sense of social, psychological, even metaphysical fragmentation that so seems to mark the modern experience..."²⁹ The twentieth-century artist who was perhaps most formally inventive in his deconstructions of the body was Pablo Picasso. *Bathers*, indeed, served as a focus for experiment for Picasso over several decades and in different stylistic phases from cubist to neo-classical to surrealist.³⁰ Like so many artists, Picasso's interest in bathing was informed by his love of swimming, in his case generally in resorts on the French Riviera. For all his invention, Picasso assertively and repeatedly reasserted the primacy of the male gaze, deconstructing and abstracting the female nude body in a kind of extended male fantasy.³¹ In his most extreme examples, Picasso produced bodies that appeared as "grotesque," a term used by the Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, as a way of describing excessively distorted and quasi-caricatural forms.³²

Picasso's early years show his cubist experiment with bather forms. Look at the 1909 *Bather* (Museum of Modern Art, New York) in which he represents a female body from different angles simultaneously. Perhaps most notably, he shows

the bather's face both frontally and in profile. He would retain this interest in conflated viewpoints until his death. Arguably, his most radical renderings of bathers came in the late 1920s at a time when he was closely associated with the surrealist movement.³³ In 1928, he produced a series of grotesque renderings in works painted at the resort town of Dinard in Brittany. Here, he summered with his wife Olga and his young mistress, Marie-Therese Walter, whom he sought to keep hidden from his wife. In *Bathers with a Beach Ball* (fig. 8), he rearranged the female body into angular and unnaturally extended forms. A head is represented like a pin or button with three dots for eyes and nose and no mouth. A line represents the vagina and a hole the anus. Breasts are conelike and limbs extended tubes or sticks. Such works provoked shock among critics as a result of their strangeness. Picasso's friend, the writer Christian Zervos, wrote in 1929 that it was as if the artist was "carried off by a supernatural agitation."³⁴ For the Surrealist writer, Georges Bataille, who was fascinated by entropy, Picasso's subversive renderings signified the most extreme "decomposition" of bodily form in the work of any modern artist.³⁵

Picasso's experimentation with the grotesque metamorphosis of female bather forms continued in the *Seated Bather* (Museum of Modern Art, New York) from 1930. Here, the bather is presented as a kind of enormous insect with mandibles instead of a mouth. These jaws evoke the threat of the vagina dentata: their sharp fearsomeness was apparently inspired by the tensions in his relationship with his wife, Olga. This picture has often been compared with the curvilinear sensuousness of the inflated bather of *Bather with Beach Ball* (1932; Museum of Modern Art, New York), ostensibly based on the body of Marie-Thérèse. Although it is of course overly simplistic to reduce such works to the "influence" of Olga and Marie-Thérèse, one can certainly see Picasso's bather imagery as a painterly autobiography of his passions. In his most grotesque works, Picasso was pushing into territories where the radical in art opened not only onto the beautiful but also onto the horrific, onto unsettling and misogynistic forms of the

³⁷ This mural ultimately became *The Parakeet and The Mermaid* (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam). See Kelly, ed. *Matisse and the Sea*, 124–127.

distorted female body. Picasso's great rival, Matisse, for his part, would never fixate on such grotesque bodies. Instead, his bather images culminated in the sensual *Blue Nude* paper cut-outs, which he himself originally entitled *Bathers*. Here, serpentine limbs wind and curve elegantly through space. Matisse envisaged such bathers within an enormous mural, surrounded by seaweed and coral cut-outs, which evoked an oceanic paradise.³⁶ Picasso for his part continued to produce surreal, disturbing bathers into the 1950s and beyond.

Conclusion: Contemporary Bathers and the Dialogue with Tradition

This essay has explored some of the ways in which modernist artists sought to reimagine and reinvigorate the centuries-long tradition of representing bathers. The artists discussed so far subverted established tradition in some manner and, in so doing, created possibilities that looked forward to the future. Their approaches to the bathing body have developed in the output of a wide range of contemporary artists who remain very conscious of earlier historical example. The weight of artistic tradition remains evident indeed in much of the work in the current exhibition. Eva Räder's luminous painting is, for example, a direct homage to a late Cézanne scene of bathers within a sylvan setting (1899–1904; Art Institute of Chicago). Other images include explicit references to earlier art through the inclusion of pictures within pictures. The German Matthias Weischer includes a color reproduction of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's *Valpinçon Bather* (1808; Musée du Louvre, Paris) in his bathroom scene; the Ukrainian-born Polina Barskaya places herself next to the unfinished Mediterranean view, *The Beach at Saint Tropez* (Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida), by the late Impressionist, Pierre Bonnard.

Other contemporaries offer a reimagining of art historical motifs, often connected to the French modernist tradition that has been the subject

of much of this essay. Claire Tabouret's Impressionist-inflected images of bathers, in painting and sculpture, dialogue with Degas's repertory of bather forms. Indeed, the work of the Impressionists remains resonant for many contemporaries. Jenna Gribbon's picture of a bather on the beach, for example, quotes from *On the Beach*, by Edouard Manet (1873; Musée d'Orsay, Paris): specifically, the towel wrapped around her bather's head riffs off the white hat worn by Manet's wife, Suzanne. At the same time, other Western European traditions continue to inspire. Friedrich Kunath's image of a lonely bather on the beach, looking at the sunset, resonates with memories of the German Romantic tradition, and particularly Caspar David Friedrich's *Rückenfigur*. The London-based American artist Lydia Pettit's floating nude suggests a reference to the pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais' famous *Ophelia* (Tate Britain, London).

In their dialogue with the past, contemporaries have reimaged the historical tradition of the bather through the lens of queer, feminist and race-based approaches. Gribbon's imagery offers a queer re-interpretation through the picturing of the artist's female partner. The queering of modernism is evident too in the paintings of showering men by Patrick Angus and Rainer Fetting. Feminist critique of historical tradition, and particularly the tradition of the grotesque bather, has also deeply informed contemporary production. Look, for example, at recent imagery by Farah Atassi that critiques the work of Picasso. Atassi continues to represent distorted forms but with a new agency and sensitivity in the depiction of her female protagonists. African Diasporic artists now dominate imaging of the Black bather. Perhaps of particular note are the paintings of Black joy and leisure by the Ghanaian, Amoako Boafo. The modernist bathing tradition—in all its problematic radicalism—continues to provide fertile ground from which new and more diverse invention springs forth.

Put the blue of the sea against the blue of the heavens, wipe
some white of a sail in it and the wind starts to blow

The extent to which the colour blue appealed (and still appeals) to artists' imaginations is evident in the introduction to *En blauw zal alles zijn* (And Everything Will Be Blue), an anthology of poems about the colour or word blue, compiled by Elisabeth Lockhorn. The poems are often inspired by the visual arts. Lockhorn unravels the lengthy cultural history of blue. In ancient times, the colour was not yet held in high regard: it was seen as being barbaric, because it was the preferred colour of the Celts and the Teutonic peoples (who painted their hair and bodies blue with woad before going into battle). The standing of blue changed circa 1100, due to the prominent position of the Virgin Mary in Catholic visual culture. The church attempted to convert the pagans, and mother Mary was their main attraction. 'Around the time, advances were made in the technique used to obtain blue from lapis lazuli, and hence Mary's cloak dazzled in increasingly brighter blue'. Nobility and royal houses subsequently joined in, with blue cloaks and coats of arms: blue became a noble, prestigious colour. Indigo is obtained from woad, a crop that is commonly cultivated: it was imported from India, and later from the Caribbean. The ultramarine pigment is made from lapis lazuli, from mines in Afghanistan. This 'blue gold' was transported on donkeys and camels to the Syrian ports, and shipped to Venice, where Italian artists paid a fortune to acquire it, and then used it to excite a furor. Giotto, Titiaan, Bellini, Raphael, and – further north – Johannes Vermeer, were renowned for their works in blue. The blue flower became a significant literary

symbol for the Romantic movement. Blue became the colour of the French Revolution, with the uniforms of sailors, soldiers and police officers subsequently being made from blue material. Furthering industrialisation facilitated the development of new synthetic pigments: Prussian blue and later cobalt, which became the favourite colour of the Impressionists Monet and Renoir, of the Pre-Raphaelites, and later of Matisse and Van Gogh. 'Cobalt – is a divine colour', wrote Vincent to his brother Theo, 'and there's nothing so fine as that for putting space around things'. Lockhorn continues her history of the colour blue with Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, who together established *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), a collective of expressionistic artists. The group's name and logo is derived from a work by Kandinsky, who believed that blue was the divine and most spiritual colour. And blue is indeed undeniably existential, as the colour of the two elements that without which, life would be impossible: water and air. Yves Klein became obsessed with the colour blue. He travelled the world in search of the absolute blue pigment, which he ultimately found in Giotto's frescoes in Padua. Klein subsequently collaborated with a paint maker to develop his own blue: International Klein Blue (IKB).

The countless paintings of and with blue are matched by the many poems praising the colour. The magical power of blue is perfectly captured in this touching short poem by poet and painter Willem Hussem.

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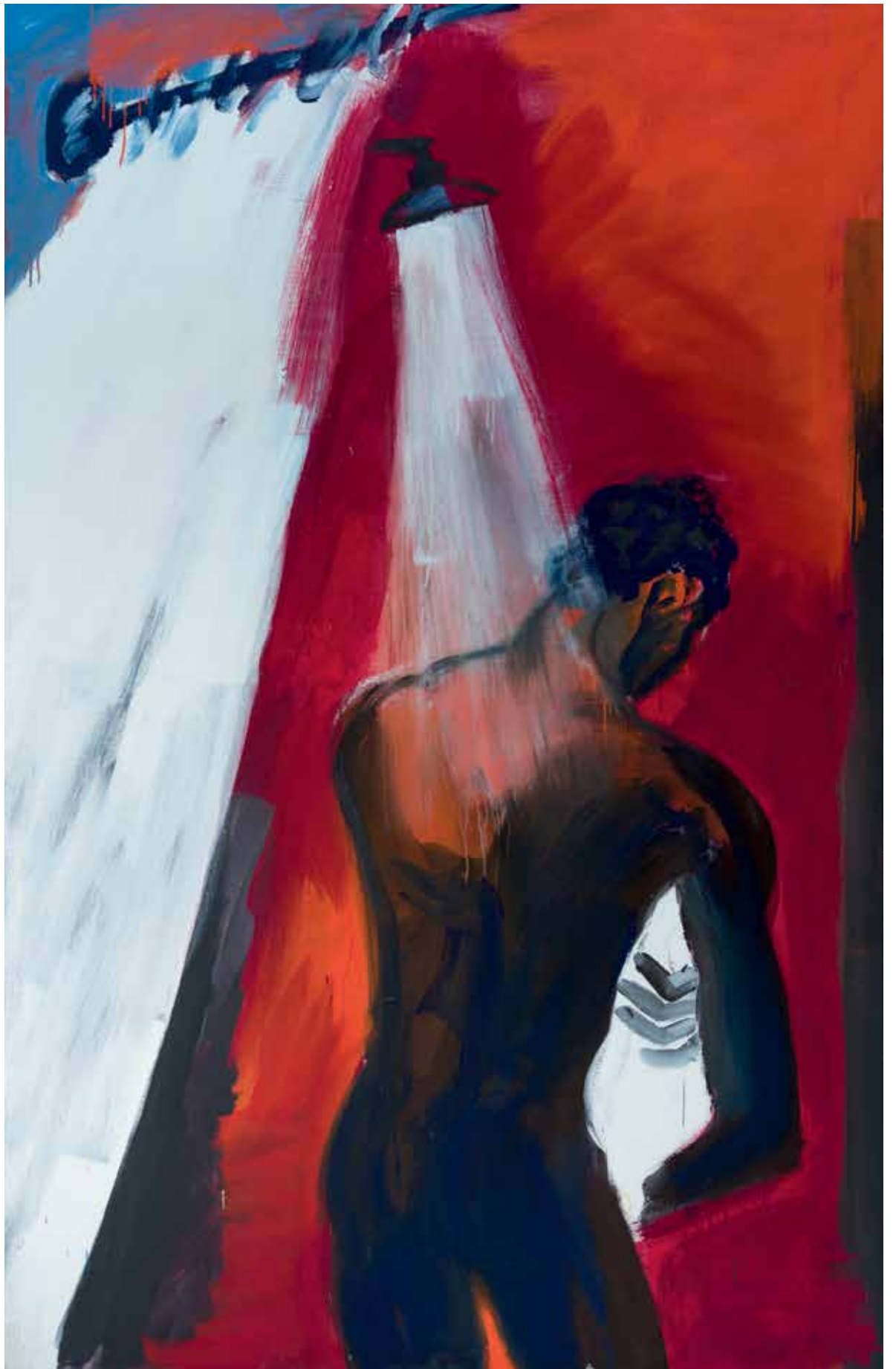


Amoako Boafo



Patrick Angus





Colofon/Colophon

Licked by the Waves verschijnt bij de gelijknamige tentoonstelling in Museum MORE in Gorssel, van 6 juli t/m 6 oktober 2024.

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Licked by the waves

Nieuwe baders in de kunst

Eeuwenlang waren mythologische en Bijbelse verhalen een prachtig, artistiek excuus voor de verbeelding van naakte baadsters in de beeldende kunst. Maar baanbrekende moderne en hedendaagse kunstenaars hebben de bader, vrouwen én mannen, een totaal nieuwe rol gegeven in hun werk. Hun fascinatie voor dit klassieke thema wordt zichtbaar en voelbaar in spetterend plezier, weemoed en soms ook verfrissende ironie. Dit rijk geïllustreerde boek met verdiepende essays toont tientallen grensverleggende schilderijen en sculpturen van maar liefst 65 internationale topkunstenaars. In hun voorstellingen verkennen ze op boeiende wijze schoonheid, seksualiteit, toe-eigening en de mannelijke – of juist vrouwelijke – blik. Ontdek de nieuwe baders in de kunst van Marlene Dumas tot Niki de Saint Phalle en van Camille Bombois tot Amoako Boafo.

New bathers in art

For centuries, mythological and Biblical stories provided an exquisite, artistic pretext for depicting nude bathing women in art. But pioneering modern and contemporary artists have given bathers – both female and male – a completely new role in their work. Their fascination for this classical subject is expressed in splendid pleasure, nostalgia, and sometimes refreshing irony. This lavishly illustrated catalogue with in-depth essays presents dozens of groundbreaking paintings and sculptures by no less than 65 leading international artists. Their portrayals offer a captivating exploration of beauty, sexuality, appropriation, and the male – or female – gaze. Discover the new bathers in the work of artists ranging from Marlene Dumas to Niki de Saint Phalle and from Camille Bombois to Amoako Boafo.

