MK Gallery

Exhibition

Cadences

Historical and modern paintings, drawings, prints and films related to themes of falling and destruction

**Admission free
27 June -
7 September 2014**

This exhibition about the Greek myth of Icarus includes works by Marcel Broodthaers, Constant, Jean Dubuffet, M. C. Escher, Wassily Kandinsky, Bruce Nauman, Bridget Riley and Christopher Wool, alongside a contemporary film by British artist Catherine Yass.

Image: Hendrick Goltzius, *Icarus* (1588)

Exhibition produced with:

museum boijmans B van beuningen

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MK Gallery
900 Midsummer Blvd
Milton Keynes MK9 3QA
www.mkgallery.org

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The title of this exhibition comes from the Latin word, *cadere*, which means to fall. It also refers to a rhythmic beat and a drop in the pitch of the voice at the end of a sentence. In Western musical theory, a cadence is a harmonic configuration that creates a sense of closure, resolution and finality. This exhibition brings together a group of diverse paintings, drawings, prints, films and pottery, produced between 1480 and 2014 that relate playfully to these ideas.

Some works depict the literal act of falling, often in the guise of the Greek myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and fell to his death. The story was intended as a warning against the dangers of overweening pride, of Man's vain attempts to triumph over nature and the gods. The exhibition also includes numerous vessels, birds and towers, which hint at the utopian 'cities in the sky' beloved of Modernist architects. Natural forces and the elements such as gravity and the wind are presented both as agents of destruction and raw materials for making art. Chance is another recurring theme, as is repetition and rehearsal. Chromatic and musical scales appear alongside black and white patterns, often evoking the keys on a piano. In some cases, the images are stretched to their limit, creating a fluid, unstable vision on the cusp of disintegration. Some works convey sound through a visual language; the extreme states on display, such as falling, call on all our faculties at a moment of crisis.

These works are accompanied by the film, *Flight*, 2002, by British artist Catherine Yass. Filmed from a remote controlled helicopter, this disorienting and vertiginous footage spirals around the rooftops of London.

All works have been generously lent by the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, except for the film by Catherine Yass.

Catherine Yass (b. London 1963)
Flight, 2002
16mm film transferred to DVD, 3 mins 9 secs

British artist Catherine Yass is known for her films and highly coloured photographs on light boxes featuring Modernist architecture often captured with a sense of dizzying disorientation. Nominated for the Turner Prize in 2002, her acclaimed works include *Flight*, 2002, shot from a remote controlled helicopter and *High Line*, 2008, a film of a tightrope walker crossing between tower blocks in Glasgow.

Bas Jan Ader (1942 - 1975)
Fall/, Los Angeles, 1970
16mm film, 24 secs

In 1970, this Dutch performance artist, photographer and filmmaker made a series of films using gravity as a medium, focusing on falling and mortality. In 1975, he disappeared without trace while attempting a solo crossing of the Atlantic in a sailing boat, as part of a work called In Search of the Miraculous.

Anna (1935 -1980)
Design for 'Cloth Jumping, a monument for Muybridge 1979
Pen, ink and wash on paper

The little known but pioneering Dutch textile artist Anna Verweij started to experiment with materials and techniques in the late 1950s. In 1978, she fell seriously ill and her work subsequently revolved around the process of physical change. One work for example showed a figure pole-vaulting in clear reference to the transition between life and death. The work on display is produced after a photograph by Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), the first person who famously broke down motion into individual frames.

Anon, after Paul Bril (1553/4- 1626)
A bay with the fall of Icarus, 1605 - 1610
Oil on canvas

This Flemish artist was recognised for his sophisticated cabinet pieces and pontifical frescoes and had a major influence on later landscape painters. Allusions to Icarus appear in many works of art, including music, dance, painting and sculpture, as well as poetry and prose. Many depictions of this scene are derived from Ovid's account of the legend, whereby a ploughman, shepherd and angler are: '...astonished and think to see gods approaching them through the aether.'

Arman (1928- 2005)
Accumulation Renault no 10911, 1969
Renault handles on formica

In 1960, Arman co-founded New Realism, a movement that responded to industrial and consumer excess. In his *Accumulations* series, he piled up everyday objects; in the *Combustions*, he used fire as a basic material to provoke new aesthetic effects; while in other series, he destroyed musical instruments. Arman contacted Renault in 1967 as he wanted to work in their factory; he subsequently produced numerous works with vehicle body parts, culminating in a gigantic tower consisting of 60 cars embedded in concrete.

Marinus Boezem (b.1934)
Windtable, 1968
Ventilator, iron, wood, textile

From the mid-1960s Boezem was one of the leading figures in a new artistic practice in the Netherlands that abandoned classical materials and processes. He discovered that he could use elusive elements such as air, weather, wind and light as visual materials. In 1969 he created one of his most famous works of art, when he used an airplane's vapour trail to sign the sky with his name.

Marcel Broodthaers (1924 -1976)
Untitled, c.1958
Bromide print

Broodthaers was a Belgian poet, photographer, filmmaker and artist who was influenced by the Surrealists. Birds such as eagles or (real, live) parrots appear frequently in Broodthaers' work taking on various symbolic associations. In 1958, the date of this enigmatic image, Broodthaers started to publish poems and articles illustrated with his own photographs.

Adriaen Collaert (1560 -1618)
The Month January (Aquarius) and *The Month February (Pisces)*, c.1581
Engraving

Collaert was a Flemish designer and engraver who based these two prints, from a calendar of twelve, on drawings by Flemish painter Hans Bel (1534 -1593). The introduction of topographical elements within these images was a relatively new development in art. Set within a circular frame, the idyllic society in both scenes here revolves around a central tower to create a composition that aligns a geometrical and spiritual harmony.

Constant (1920- 2005)
Bird, 1949
Oil on canvas

Constant Nieuwenhuys was a Dutch painter, sculptor, graphic artist, author, musician and architect influenced by Cubism and German Expressionism. In 1946, he co-founded the CoBrA movement which rejected Western culture and aesthetics and was inspired by folk art and children's drawings. In 1949, Constant explored the 'source of creativity' by painting plants, animals and fantasy creatures.

Constant (1920- 2005)
Wounded pigeon, 1951
Oil on canvas

In 1950, Constant started to produce his 'war paintings', filled by the remains of a destroyed world. Like other CoBrA artists, he was searching for new creative expression in the aftermath of World War II. He was inspired by Marxism and envisaged a society of free expression in which everyone could be an artist. He abandoned painting in 1953 to develop ideas around *New Babylon*, his visionary architectural proposal for an ideal future society.

Cornelis Cort (1533 -1578)
Musica, 1565
Engraving
This artist was well known for making engravings that were copies of pre-existing artworks. In this case, *Musica* is after a work by Flemish Renaissance artist Frans Floris. It comes from a series called the *Seven Liberal Arts* (Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music, Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric), which were traditionally personified, since the 5th century, through various female figures.

Jean Dubuffet (1901 -1985)
Escalier funeraire pour Jacques Ulmann
(Escalier X), 1967
Vinyl paint on canvas

One of France's most inventive artists of the 20th century, Dubuffet had serious doubts about the value of art and culture and abandoned painting between 1924 and 1933 to join the wine trade. He re-started by producing masks, puppets and street scenes in a rough, naive style. In 1967, the same year as this painting, he produced a 24-meter high tower adorned with playful patterns made out of doodles scribbled absent-mindedly while speaking on the telephone.

Otto Egberts (b.1949)
Execution, 1990
Charcoal on paper

Egbert's slightly surreal drawings, paintings and installations give shape to continuous doubts about the human condition. Using an intense and 'rusty' colour palette, the people in his work are always isolated, introverted and melancholic. The shadowy object in this disturbing drawing hangs over the man's knee, ready to drop at any second, but also endlessly suspended in a kind of purgatory.

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898 -1972)
Day and Night, 1938
Woodcut on Japanese paper

This Dutch artist was a draftsman, book illustrator, tapestry designer, and muralist, but he is primarily known for his mathematically inspired woodcuts, lithographs, and mezzotints. These feature impossible constructions, explorations of infinity, architecture and tessellations. *Day and Night* is one of Escher's best-known prints; the subtle transition in the landscape and the flock of birds in the symmetrical design is a form of optical illusion typical of his work.

Lucio Fontana (1899 -1968)
Concetto spaziale, 1954
Oil on canvas

This Italian painter, sculptor and ceramicist founded the 'Spatialism' movement in 1947, which aimed to express the fourth dimension. This work is a late example of his trademark hole series, which was intended to make the viewer look beyond the physical, painted surface: 'Einstein's discovery of the cosmos is the infinite dimension, without end. And here we have the foreground, middleground, background, what do I have to do to go further? ...! make a hole, infinity passes through it, light passes through it, there is no need to paint. Everyone thought I wanted to destroy: but it is not true. I have constructed.'

Jacob Matham (1571 -1631)
Landscape with Daedalus and Icarus, c.1603
Engraving and etching

The critical fortunes of the Haarlem engraver, publisher and draughtsman Jacob Matham are mainly bound up with Hendrick Goltzius, whose adoptive son he became at the age of eight. He was trained by Goltzius and his work displays his strong technical influence. Icarus was a popular metaphor for an individualised utopia, freedom and liberation. With Man taking on the gods and the elements, this scene captures the tension of imminent catastrophe, our obsession with technology and provides a reminder of eternal human foolishness.

Vic Gentils (1919- 1997)
Mecanographie Musicale, 1963
Panel, wood, tissue and ivory

This Belgian sculptor studied in Antwerp before progressing through different artistic styles from Expressionism to Art Informal and Nee-Surrealism. He produced his first reliefs in 1960, made up of fragments of old frames and wooden laths blackened by burning. Shortly afterwards he began to make assemblages of mutated objects, investigating the possibilities of wood and extending his pictorial vocabulary by using parts of pianos, cupboards, balustrades and shoe trees.

Hendrick Goltzius {1558 -1617), after Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem {1562- 1638)
Icarus, 1588
Engraving

Goltzius, an engraver, print publisher, draftsman and painter, was one of the outstanding figures in Dutch art during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He was internationally acclaimed in his day and is one of the most important engravers and print publishers, most widely known today for his Mannerist engravings. This image is one of TheFour Disgracers, featuring the Greek mythical characters Tantalus, Icarus, Phaeton, and lxion, all of whom tried to enter the realm of the gods and were punished for their hubris.

Chris van der Hoef {1875 -1933)
Pot with cover and tea set, 1926
Pottery

Chris van der Hoef was a Dutch sculptor. This tea and breakfast service, highly unusual both in design and in decoration, was designed for Plateelbakkerij Zuid-Holland [Earthenware Factory] in Gouda. It was cast from white fired clay and austerely decorated with a black geometric line design. The black line with blocks that was applied to the handles is reminiscent of a protractor. The little stripes painted on the top of the cups and other items show a similarity with the measuring units on a ruler.

Frans Huys {1522 -1562)
Armed Three-master with Daedalus and Icarus in the air, c.1561 - 1562
Engraving

The Antwerp publisher Hieronymus Cock probably commissioned Pieter Brueghel the Elder to make a number of ship portraits to serve as models for the Belgian engraver Frans Huys. The full series consists of 11 prints, and is generally recognised as marking the start of the marine as a genre in its own right. This three-master is flying two identical flags from its two tallest masts, each with a two-headed imperial eagle, indicating that the ship served the Austro-Burgundian royal house of Spain.

Rince de Jong {b.1970)
Untitled, 1999
Colour photo on aluminium

In 1996, Rince de Jong began to photograph adults with dementia. At that time she had already worked part time for eight years in caring for the elderly. Initially she considered her work as a photographer and her job in the home for the elderly as two separate worlds but eventually produced a book, *Long Life*, with her photographs in 1999.

Vasily Vasilyevich Kandinsky (1866 -1944)
Launisch [capricious], 1930
Oil on cardboard

Russian-bam artist Kandinsky is widely credited with making the world's first truly abstract paintings, but he also wanted to create the painterly equivalent of a symphony that would stimulate not just the eyes but the ears as well. Kandinsky is believed to have had synaesthesia, a condition that allows a person to appreciate sounds, colours or words with two or more senses simultaneously. The title of this work means 'capricious'.

Wim van der Linden (1941-2001) /
Wim T. Schippers (b.1942)
Tulips, 1965
16mm film, 2 min

The scenario for this short film by Dutch director and photographer Wim van der Linden was written by Wim T. Schippers, a Dutch artist, comedian and television director. It is one of a series of four short satirical films titled *The Sad Movies* and shows the artists' affinity with the Fluxus movement. Thanks to the soundtrack, a motionless vase of tulips is given a very dramatic undertone and creates a tense anticipation as a petal threatens to drop off.

Dick Lion (b.1956)
Metropolis, 1986- 1987
Glazed porcelain

Dick Lion is a product designer who works for the ceramic industry. The title of this work makes a clear analogy with Modernist architecture but he is often inspired by nature, mathematics and geometry and is always looking for new combinations between old ceramic crafts, digital techniques and the industrial manufacturing process. He has worked with numerous artists including Richard Deacon, Thomas Schutte and Rosemary Trockel.

Willem van Mieris (1662- 1747)
The fall of Icarus, c.1689
Pen and brush

Willem van Mieris was the son of a famous genre painter Frans van Mieris who trained him. He was prolific between 1682 and the mid-1730s when he became partially blind. In Greek Mythology, Daedalus was a famous architect, inventor and master craftsman who made wings with wax and feathers when they needed to escape from the Island of Crete. Unfortunately his son, Icarus, flew too close to the sun, the wax melted away and Daedalus watches withhorror as he plunges into the choppy waters below.

Bruce Nauman (b.1941)
Violin Film #1 (Playing The Violin As Fast As I Can), 1967-1968
16mm film, 10 min

American artist Bruce Nauman's early work was an art of exploration: he used his own body to examine the parameters of art and the role of the artist. He also dismantled linguistic structures, creating puns and oxymorons, before stripping words and, later, actions of their conventional meanings. This is one of several 1967 - 68 films featuring his violin-playing, in which the production of sound is subjected to certain actions that contradict its status as music and performance.

Bruce Nauman (b.1941)
Pulling Mouth, 1969
16mm film, 9 min

Many of Nauman's films of the late 1960s depict him passing time in his studio and can be read as literal attempts to probe what it means to be an artist. He frequently used his own body as an art object, executing repetitive performance actions in his studio. *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* was the title of another film from this period. He also produced a series titled *Making Faces* in which he contorted and stretched his face into a series of exaggerated gestures.

Neri di Bicci (1419-1491)
The fall of the rebel angels with St Michael fighting the dragon,
c.1480
Tempera on panel

This prolific Italian Renaissance painter ran one of the most successful commercial workshops in Florence and maintained a diary which documents an astonishing number of commissions for altarpieces and frescoes as well as luxury goods such as candelabra, stucco madonnas and tapestry designs. The subject of this painting comes from the Book of Revelation and is typical of the small paintings found below the depiction of a saint in a polyptych. The altarpiece to which this panel belonged is no longer known.

Crispijn de Passe the Elder (1564 -1637)
Earth, c.1590 -1600
Engraving on paper

De Passe was a Dutch engraver, draughtsman and print publisher. He set up a print publishing house, producing portraits of the European nobility, as well as religious, mythological and allegorical prints and books. This engraving is from a suite of four illustrating the elements. In Earth, the tower in the background is like a monument to the young couple's love; a folly for their pleasure.

Paul Renouard (1845 -1924)
Visitors on the roof of the Paris Opera, 1881
Etching and aquatint

Renouard made his name with prints of actors, musicians and dancers, both at the Paris Opera and at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He was very influenced by the Impressionists, especially Degas and Manet but, in turn, influenced Vincent van Gogh. Renouard characterised his prints as 'snapshots, fixing rapid gestures and movements' and, around 1881, he published a luxury album containing 30 etchings entitled *Opera* which was first exhibited at the Salon in Paris in 1877.

Bridget Riley (b.1931)
Breathe, 1966
Emulsion paint on canvas

Riley is a British painter associated with the Op Art movement, which strove to create optical illusions of movement. She also attempts to elicit from the viewer 'something akin to a sense of recognition ...so that the spectator experiences at one and the same time something known and something unknown.' Physical states, ambiguous moods, or her response to the fleeting atmospheric effect in a landscape frequently inspire and breathe life into Riley's paintings.

Jan Schoonhoven (1914 -1994)
T 79-30, 1979
Indian ink, watercolour and brush

Schoonhoven is considered one of the most important Dutch artists of the latter half of the 20th century and was an important figure in the development of reductionist and concept-oriented art in the 1960s and 1970s. He often produced ink drawings based on a repeated pattern. Stacked horizontally these stick shapes form precarious towers which could tumble like a house of cards or child's game of pick up sticks.

Andries Jacobsz. Stock (c.1580 -1648)
Archer and Milkmaid, c.1610
Engraving

Apart from his output as a reproductive engraver and etcher, few facts are known about Stock's life. About 1641, he was apparently imprisoned for counterfeiting coins but was pardoned in 1642. The archer in this image is showing off to the milkmaid how well he can use his bow, as though to boast that he can conquer not just her but the world. But with all his skill he cannot predict exactly where the arrow will fall or how their lives will unfold.

Peter Struycken (b.1939)
Computer structure 5A 1970-71, 1971
Lacquer on Perspex

This pioneering Dutch artist first used computers to create works of art in the late 1960s, from sketches, paintings and videos to costumes, set designs and lighting as well as visuals for dance or music concerts. His work took root in the Zero movement when he rejected the expression of the CoBrA artists. He often uses digital techniques based on a methodical, logical and consistent investigation of colours and shapes. This painting is made from an image produced by a computer program written by the artist.

Janvan der Vaart (1931 - 2000)
Tulip tower, 1973
Stoneware, bronze glazing

Jan van der Vaart was an important Dutch ceramic artist, whose designs are often glazed in his favourite colours bronze, blue, grey and black. One of the key concepts in his work was the reintroduction of the tulip vase, a towering vase popular since the 16th century. There is a romance about a tower built to the tulip, a Dutch national symbol, and an interesting combination of scales, flipping from domestic object to social and architectural structure.

JCJ Vanderheyden (1928- 2012)
Untitled, 1988
Screen print

Vanderheyden worked as a painter, photographer, graphic artist, collage artist, sculptor and filmmaker. This screen print combines the artist's favourite chess board pattern with a coarse screen print raster that splits and distorts the image and in some places causes it to black out. The rules of chess are cut and dry, absolute, black and white. But the combinations and subtleties within them are endless. Here the black and white squares are composed of different proportions of black and white within each square.

Co Westerik (b.1924)
Piano player, 1965
Pen, brush, Indian ink on paper

It was chiefly through his paintings that Co Westerik made his name. His output is small, producing only three or four paintings each year. He bases his paintings on a preliminary 'idea sketch': small drawings in which he sets down flashes of inspiration and situations with the potential to become a painting. Playing the piano here seems to be a cerebral activity, with the player's huge head, and body being consumed into the piano, his hands and legs disappearing into the body of the piano.

Christopher Wool (b.1955)
Untitled, 1990
Enamel paint on aluminium

Wool has emerged as one of the most important abstract painters of his generation. He is best known for his paintings of large stenciled letters, which he uses to form words or phrases, often abbreviated or arranged in run-on configurations that disrupt ordinary patterns of perception and speech. Wool has also used a variety of means - spray, screens, stencils, rags, solvents, air guns, and other tools - to fully re-imagine the possibilities of gestural mark-making on a surface.

Piet Zwart (1885 -1977)
Scream (Dick Elfers), c.1930
Bromide print

A pioneer of modern typography, Piet Zwart was influenced by Constructivism and De Stijl. His attitude is summarised in this quote: 'Is there no dynamic man of action, the rebel who will help determine the aspect of the collective expression of tomorrow? Ponder this question and know that to make beautiful creations for the sake of their aesthetic value will have no social significance tomorrow, will be nonsensical self-gratification. Every era contains the conditions for providing a rebel.'