

An exhibition curated by  
Mathilde Sauzet  
with designer  
Julien Carretero

Wendy Boudewijns  
Andrea Branzi  
Vic Cautereels  
Chto Delat  
Pieter de Coster  
matali crasset  
Bob Daenen  
Siegfried De Buck  
Nora De Rudder  
Sonia Delaunay  
Joël Dely  
Martino d'Esposito  
Thierry d'Istria  
Nathalie Du Pasquier  
Jean Dupuy  
Nedda El-Asmar  
Myriam Garouche  
Stefano Giovannoni  
David Grosemans  
Alessandro Guerriero  
Zaha Hadid  
Patrick Hoet  
Henrik Holbaek  
Hans Hollein  
Armin Homolka  
Richard Hutten  
David Huycke  
Toyo Itō  
Claus Jensen  
Vincent Jousseume  
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Jean Lemmens

Anthony Maglica  
Gabriel Mattei  
Marc Melis  
Alessandro Mendini  
Annie Michaud  
Grégoire Motte  
Miriam Mirri  
Lüder Mosler  
Maurizio Nannucci  
Jérôme Olivet  
Guido Ooms  
Panamarenko  
Gaetano Pesce  
Adriano Stucchi  
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Sem Schanzer  
Allan Sekula  
Amie Siegel  
Erik Sijmons  
Bořek Šipek  
Vittoria Soddu  
Robert Stadler  
Philippe Starck  
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— Azusa Murakami  
et Alexander Groves  
Matteo Thun  
Antoine Van Loocke  
Roderick Vos  
Dirk Wynants  
Baptiste Ymonet  
Marco Zanuso

# SHIP OF OBJECTS AS PARTNERS IN TRANSPORT FOOLS

Erik Sijmons, Samsomite Europe, Handy Case.

This booklet is published on the occasion of the exhibition “Ship of Fools” presented at the Frac Grand Large — Hauts-de-France (Dunkerque) from April 2<sup>nd</sup> to December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022.

Maurizio Nannucci’s monumental work is on display in Tétéghem.

In co-production with the Design Museum Gent.

Exhibition labeled International Biennial of Design Saint-Étienne.





Bořek Šipek, *Clio*



Bob Daenen, Pieter de Coster, Tupperware, *Super Eidgenossen/Space Savers Super Ovals*

Frac Grand Large - Hauts-de-France (one of France's regional contemporary art collections) has been compiling a public collection of contemporary art and design since 1983, for circulation in the region and beyond. Located at a maritime crossroads in a building of the former Dunkerque shipyards, its programme also takes into account its geographical, cultural and social roots and questions the porosity of the borders between art and design.

The exhibition "Ship of Fools" is a co-production with the Design Museum Gent, whose rich collection of objects allows a unique approach to design through art. We invited Mathilde Sauzet, art critic, editor and curator, to cast her eye over our two collections. Through designer Julien Carretero's exhibition design, "Ship of Fools" endeavours to show everyday objects through the prism of a selection of video and audio works that immerse us in unusual and poetic stories. The object doesn't appear so much as a fixed subject of study as a vector of moving desires, a common horizon to ponder the present, onto which we can project our hopes and anger.

Special thanks to Mathilde Sauzet, the teams of the Design Museum Gent and Frac Grand Large, all the artists and designers, lenders, and the many supporters and sponsors without whom this project wouldn't have been possible.

Keren Detton  
Director of Frac Grand Large  
— Hauts-de-France



Erik Sijmons, Samsonite Europe, *Upright*



Philippe Starck, Hoesch Design, *Bathtub made of plastic and stainless steel* (designed by Philippe Starck and produced by Hoesch Design)  
Sonia Delaunay, *Rythmes*



In 2012 Design Museum Gent staged the highly successful *Destroy/Design* exhibition, which brought together a large number of items from the unique collection of Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France. Design and visual arts were already displayed side by side, at an equal level and in dialogue at the time. Today, 10 years on, *Ship of Fools : Objects as Partners in Transport*, is the impressive result of a new collaboration between the two institutes. This time involving a large number of surprising design objects from our collection, which are linked and displayed with contemporary works of art from the Frac collection. Our temporary closure, as a result of the DING (Design In Gent) museum expansion project, is in fact an ideal opportunity to 'travel' to other locations with our collection. Frac Grand Large is the first stop.

We are convinced that co-production and the exchange of expertise are both essential and lasting approaches within an artistic context. The museum has specifically focused on this in recent years, e.g. with its unique *Kleureyck* exhibition. *Van Eycks kleuren in design* (Van Eycks colours in design), which as the result of a co-production with lille3000 within the framework of Lille Métropole 2020 World Design Capital entitled *Colors, etc.* was also on display in Lille and a particularly successful event in both cities.

I would like to thank both the Flemish government for its support for our international cooperation and our colleagues at Frac Grand Large. I am convinced that in the long term this partnership in Northern France will only increase the interest shown in our institutions in both Ghent and Dunkirk.

Katrien Laporte  
Director of Design Museum Gent

# SHIP OF FOOLS : OBJECTS AS PARTNERS IN TRANSPORT

Mathilde Sauzet  
curator

In this fictional tale of a miraculous draught of fishes on the seventh continent, *Ship of Fools* brings together various odd objects from the Design Museum Gent collection, together with a selection of films and musical works by artists. The exhibition focuses on the transport craze – the steadily evolving mobility of objects, materials and people – from the 1950s up to the present day. A contemporary echo of Hieronymus Bosch's late-medieval *Ship of Fools*, the Frac Grand Large event depicts the possible end of our opulently materialistic societies. Sacrifice or rescue?



deSter, plastic shell



Dirk Wynants /Extremis, Dollypop  
Anthony Maglica, Mag Instrument Inc.



Jérôme Bosch, *Ship of Fools*, circa. 1500, oil on wood, 58,1 x 32,8 cm, Paris, musée du Louvre © C2RMF/ Thomas Clot



## TRANSPORT: LOSS OF MEANING AND VITAL QUEST

Let's consider an act of madness particular to humans: a yearning for transport. This frenzied desire for exoticism, weekends away, trips, export objects, and the frantic pace of our everyday lives, the sanctification of cars, aeroplanes, and rockets.

Originally the notion of "transport" was associated with strong emotion. The amorous transports of medieval literature called on the potent desires of courtly love, the magnetism of the muses and troubadours, the passionate feelings behind heroic sagas. Later, around 1650, "transports of the brain" described the hysteria and delirium caused by fever. Transport incarnates a disrupted state of being, far beyond displacement. Scarcity of fuel, mass migration, epidemics, border closures: what we are actually facing is a displacement crisis. Should our transport needs be called into question? The passengers of the *Ship of Fools* are eating, playing and singing; a feeling of unease emerges from their trance. Over the centuries, the story of this boat has continued to signal a loss of meaning and new vital quests.

## THE LATE MIDDLE AGES ACCORDING TO BOSCH AND BRANDT

The painting by Dutchman Hieronymus Bosch and the text by the German humanist and poet Sebastian Brandt that this exhibition refers to are both called *Ship of Fools*. Dating from around 1500, they conjure up a period of transition towards a new society: the passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, a period of crisis and of moral, social and aesthetic breakdown. In Bosch's picture the ship stands for a means of escape in the tradition of such parables of the Flood as Noah's Ark. In a makeshift boat, a handful of alienated men

and women set sail in the hope of a miracle or another reality. The story of the *Ship of Fools* represents both a way out and an imprisonment.

In the Middle Ages madness was an admissible subject for painting: Bosch, for example, devoted a number of pictures to human derangement. At a time when religion was losing its hegemony owing, among other things, to scientific advances, pagan and vernacular beliefs were multiplying and giving rise to fantastic imaginings and anguish with regard to the underworld. In Bosch's landscapes, angels rub shoulders with chimeras, sea monsters and spectres; in the midst of this disorder, humans must find the meaning of their passage on Earth. Now in the Louvre, Bosch's *Ship of Fools* has been reproduced on a flag at the Frac Grand Large; the ship's spirit will float through the exhibition like a ghost.

## THE DESIGN MUSEUM GENT COLLECTION

The objects making up the Design Museum Gent collection embody both concrete transport, moving from one point to another, and perspectives of transformation, transition and translation, passages from one state to another.

A Pinocchio funnel, a mirror screen, a chrome toaster, travel clocks and alarm clock, a silver centrepiece in the luxury liner silver tradition, a collection of food cans, spoons, ladles and knives, a bathtub, a radio, a TV set, two bedside lamps embellished with bird's wings, a silver condom holder, ties with virus and explosion patterns, an orthopaedic prosthesis, a baby's plastic drinking glass, a thermos flask covered with faux fur – and the list goes on.

The objects in the collection were each selected for their narrative and semiotic functions - objects as signs. And for their style. The group was compiled based on contrasts and heterogeneities. The objects show their uses and reveal

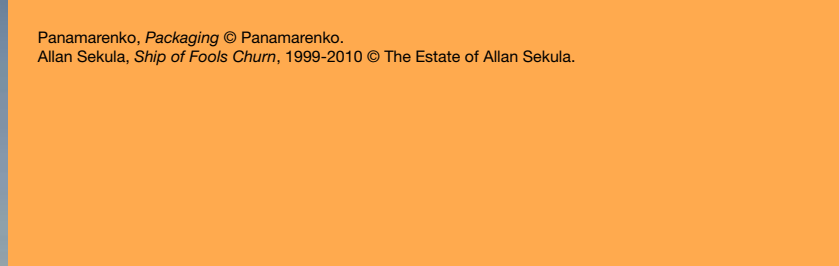
tensions and desires, humour, joy and creative freedom, and already the absurdity, obsolescence, kitschness and unawareness of the mores of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once brought into interaction, their eclectic aesthetics reflect the complexity of our relationships with materiality and its contingent consequences for human societies. Items that are rare and precious yet with no speculative value, little shown in museums, these objects each have their reasons for being what they are. Their beauty lies in what made them a necessity for their creators and users at a given point in time.

of humans and objects around the world. American artist Amie Siegel's *Provenance* focuses on an emblem of mid-century modernist design — the furniture designed by the Swiss architect Pierre Jeanneret for the buildings of Chandigarh, the controversial modernist city in India. Beginning with the furniture's present circumstances as decoration in wealthy homes, the work then traces the furniture's journey in reverse chronology through warehouses, on display at American and European auctions, at a furniture restorer's, on a cargo ship, and, finally, back to their origins in Chandigarh. In their original context, these prized pieces function as everyday office furniture. Their migration as the spoils of modern design discloses the gulf between disparate settings, mapping the undercurrents of larger movements of capital.

In quite a different way, Studio Swine's film *Sea Chair* presents the shaping and recycling of materials, in this case waste recovered at sea and transformed into museum objects. A design approach more narrative than formalist, this film traces the process of manually fabricating stools out of melted plastic — one-off pieces produced from detritus netted with fishing catches or harvested at sea or onshore.

*Salt in the Veins* by Italian woman director Vittoria Soddu documents a creative activity practised by members of a London-based choir: the performance of traditional sea shanties from different periods. Even removed from its real-life context of ship decks and harbours, this cultural heritage retains its great evocative power for its revivalists. The film unfolds with the songs and their staging, going from harmony to collective trance as the artist restores the age-old need to sing together against wind and tide.

*Blanche Endive* (White Endive) is the work of composer-conductor Gabriel Mattei, after a libretto by artist Grégoire Motte. Taking up



### FILMS AND IMAGES BY ARTISTS

A number of works by artists accompany and generate tension within the collection of objects.

*It didn't happen with us, yet. Safe Haven* is a film by Chto Delat, the Russian collective of artists and activists. It is set on a Norwegian island identified by a political network as a "haven of peace" for artists whose lives and freedom of expression are under threat. In a story based on fact a poet, a woman artist, a curator, a philosopher and an activist arrived on the small island of Sula for a creative residency. The inhabitants welcome them onto their island, while being fully aware of the difficulty of creating when the voyage has a touch of exile about it. They explain their thinking on the subject eye to eye with the camera, while the visitors describe the political situation, recount their ideas and perform abstract gestures against a background of a sea horizon. One foggy day, at the foot of a lighthouse, the issue of returning is raised: one after the other they intone, "stay far away" and "stay out there".

This video echoes three other films and an audio work, each of which uses aesthetic singularity to address the imaginings and speculations that arise from the movement



Chto Delat, *It didn't happen with us yet. Safe haven*  
Jean Dupuy, Arc International Inc., *L. de Vinci, concept of a perpetual movement with the collaboration of Jean Dupuy*



Hans Hollein, *Tea and Coffee Piazza*  
 Zaha Hadid, Woody Yao, Alessi, *Tea and Coffee Towers*  
 Antoine Van Loocke, *Rat knife*



themes central to Motte's imagination, the composition is based on four intertwined stories: the invention of chicory stockings in 1942, the troubadour Jaufré Rudel and the Distant Princess, the transformation of nylon stockings into parachutes and the failed casting of beauty queen Miss Valenciennois' leg. Performed by children from the Lille Centre Music School, this lyrical drama in four acts takes us on a journey to Antioch and finally back to a beach in Calais.

These objects from the Design Museum Gent collection are incorporated into the very narrative of the videos and musical works - concerning exile, exploration and exploitation - as strangers and friends.

#### THE FRAC COLLECTION, INSIDE THE MUSEUM AND OUTSIDE THE WALLS

The group of featured artworks also includes Allan Sekula's photograph *Ship of Fools Churn*, from the Frac Grand Large collection, as well as matali crasset's *Quand Jim monte à Paris* (When Jim Goes up to Paris) and Panamarenko's SPAR convenience store bag are also part of the ensemble.

Maurizio Nannucci's historic piece *Provisoire et définitif* (Temporary and Permanent), created in 1996 for the inauguration of the Frac building when it moved to Dunkirk, is also part of the exhibition off-site as it will be installed on the façade of a building in the centre of the Degroote district, in the municipality of Teteghem-Coudekerque-Village, which is undergoing urban renewal. These two terms, which the artist used to name one of his monographic exhibitions in Nice in 1992, bear witness to a duality present in every act of artistic creation: the work will disappear anyway and yet, because of its ephemeral material existence, it will endure through the impact it has on its environment. Does this reflection put forward by Nannucci apply to design objects and architecture?

A postcard of a view of the installation in Teteghem will conclude the exhibition in the Frac building and will open the visit outside the museum, towards the town of Dunkirk.

#### VISITING THE EXHIBITION

The presentation of the objects and the composition of the exhibition have been arranged according to three themes:

*Vanity cases* brings together a collection of objects designed for physical travel, from one place to another. A hip flask, egg boxes made from rigid plastic, a condom case: a heterogeneous collection of uses and aesthetics that tell us about the variety of values and mores of transport. Evolving over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these objects serve as witnesses. Trunks and then bags have been replaced by wheeled suitcases. For those who have ever taken a flight, meal trays will remind them of food served in aluminium trays rather than the taste of escape. The travel alarm clock marked an era when no-one used a phone to wake them up. There was no transport without the presence of the clock; you are shown the time on the entrance wall as soon as you arrive. As for the TV, it doesn't show the news anymore. Trips last a certain amount of time, and so do objects.

*Kitchen tour* brings us back home. This part of the exhibition deals with the companionship of objects in the domestic universe. Food processing and storage, tableware, children's education, etc.: the kitchen is no longer just a functional room or a place of work. It gives us an insight into advances in technology and fashion. After the war, introducing objects mentioned on the radio into one's personal environment became a way of participating in what was happening internationally: the popular advent of industrial design



Sanyo, *Model RM5010*  
 Nathalie Du Pasquier, Memphis, Copi, *Tie with pattern 'Burundi'*  
 Alessandro Guerriero, Adriano Stucchi, Studio Alchimia, *Tie with pattern 'Anti-Aids'*  
 RICMA S.N.C. Imola, *Jour de France*

matali crasset, *Quand Jim monte à Paris*, 1995-2002 © Adagp, Paris 2022.  
 Nedda El-Asmar, *Silver condom holder*  
 Stefano Giovannoni, Paul Van Iersel Harry, Alessi, *Ship Shape - SG13 GR*

offered all Western populations an *American way of life* in their own home. Memories of the farm mingle with dreams of holidays by the sea, family heirlooms come face to face with special offers in the supermarket; handcrafted objects, whether raw or luxurious, rub shoulders with the archetypes of kitsch, creating a unique place in the home for the individual.

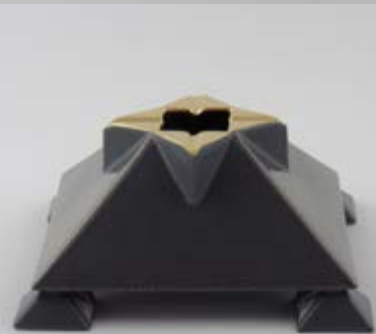
*Self transports* opens a reflection on the various ways to flee or to stand fast, to give in or to resist the urge to go somewhere else: the objects of this final selection represent aesthetic and metaphysical circumventions of our state of here and now. They modify the senses, fill in the gaps, bring pleasure, soothe fears, and allow neuroses and desires to appear... They give shape to the upheavals that enrage us, madden us. In Hieronymus Bosch's painting the *Ship of Fools*, the guests leave the coast taking with them a tree and the fruits of the earth, musical instruments and a full set of kitchen equipment. Feasting and singing lead them to dance and to go into a trance. Sink or swim?

Both, captain. At the end of your journey through this exhibition, you will wonder who your transport companions are, and where they are leading you.

HOTEL  
DE  
LA PLAGE

To continue the experience of the "Ship of Fools", the reflections on transport, value, mobility and the durability of material objects, we invite you to take a walk around Malo-les-Bains and to visit the Hotel de la Plage. Its owner, Stéphane Paganini, divides his time between his activity as a hotel owner and that of an antique dealer. In the entrance lounge and in the dining room, you can find numerous objects: art nouveau, 20<sup>th</sup> century craftwork and modern design. The exhibition drew inspiration from the atmosphere of this place and the many objects encountered at breakfast time, when research first began in 2019. Thank you to Mr Paganini for sharing the freedom with which he exercises his profession and the desire to make objects travel.

David Grosemans, Guido Ooms, *Porcelain and cork dildo*  
Anne Marie Laureys, *Dreaming of the animal spirit*  
Matteo Thun, Memphis, *Api*  
Nora De Rudder, *Vleugellamp*



Studio Alchimia, *Tavolo Mobile Infinito*  
Bořek Šípek, Driade, *Prosim Sedni*  
Stefano Giovannoni, Miriam Mirri, *Pino - SG12*  
Richard Hutten, Christophe Richard, *Atomes d'argent*  
Gaetano Pesce, Cassina, *Feltri*  
werkstatt.mosler, Otto Bock, *Half foot prosthesis* (made of carbon, kevlar, epoxy and metal designed by Design Team Lüder Mosler and produced by Corima)





Wendy Boudewijns, Royal VKB, *Puzzle Dinner Tray*



Jean Lemmens, *Silverware*



## Notes on the exhibition design By Julien Carretero

The “Ship of Fools” exhibition space has been designed as a transit zone, a sorting centre where objects and works meet for a moment in time, that of the exhibition, before being dispersed again. The plastic vocabulary is based on freight. And it also involves unpacking, the inventory of a collection placed in an order according to its narrative potential, as opposed to the norms of classification usually applied to objects.

The choice was made not to glorify the objects by transforming their status through museological artifices but instead to allow visitors to freely appreciate them, as they are.

In order not to produce more, ready-made devices supplied to or found in the Frac’s reserves have been used in the organisation of the space. Ateliers Delacroix’s traditional nets are the only elements that have been specially made for the event. Dotted around the exhibition, they are an extension of the marine imagery present in the works, and serve to organise the objects and keep the viewers and their gaze at a distance.

## Biographies

Mathilde Sauzet designs exhibitions, writes theory and fiction, publishes books and participates in the cultural policy of Cluny, where she lives and creates. She is a founding member of the collective *Les comm-issaires anonymes* and teaches art and design at the École Supérieure d’Art d’Annecy.

Julien Carretero is a designer. His multidisciplinary practice combines craftsmanship and industry and aims to question contemporary production methods. He also teaches at ENSAV La Cambre and regularly lectures at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon. His work features in the Frac collections and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

Frac Grand Large  
— Hauts-de-France, Dunkerque  
matali crasset  
Panamarenko  
Allan Sekula  
Robert Stadler  
Studio Swine  
— Azusa Murakami  
et Alexander Groves  
Maurizio Nannucci

## Design Museum Gent

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Roderick Vos  
Dirk Wynants  
Baptiste Ymonet  
Marco Zanuso

## Lends from artists

Chto Delat  
Gabriel Mattei  
Grégoire Motte  
Vittoria Soddu

## Tate Modern, London

Amie Siegel

## Musées de la ville de Saint-Omer

Three naturalized birds

## Colophon

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