

Maarten Vanden Eynde  
*Digging up the Future*  
4 September 2021 – 16 January 2022

Curators: Katerina Gregos and Ilse Roosens

---

Mu.ZEE Ostend is pleased to announce the first retrospective exhibition of the Belgian artist Maarten Vanden Eynde (b. 1977), *Digging up the Future*. The exhibition will present an overview of the artist's practice from 2000 until now, a period that is not just marked by vast technological progress but also by successive crises, social, economic as well as environmental. The industrial revolution, the consolidation of global capitalism and now the Internet and big tech have radically altered the ways in which we live, work and think. In the meantime, the world's population and, consequently, consumption and energy use, have steadily increased, confronting us with the finiteness of raw materials, extreme weather phenomena such as those seen in Europe this summer, an abundance of waste and the loss of the planet's biodiversity. From a distant and unknowable future, Vanden Eynde strives to look back at the future residue of man-made objects and material culture on the surface of the planet including constantly accumulating *technofossils* – a term coined to describe the congealed remains of our current technology – millions of years from now, as if an archaeologist from the future.

For almost two decades Vanden Eynde has been studying humanity's ecological impact on Earth, focusing on the current geological layer we will leave behind for future generations. He researches the materiality of objects that surround us, tracing the origin of the different materials and the socio-economic but also environmental contexts from which they are extracted, transported and transformed, up until their effects on their surroundings after they are rendered obsolete and discarded. In his work, which spans sculpture, installation, and photography, he unravels the process and consequence of production in terms of deep time.

The exhibition brings together over thirty works, including major installations and long term research projects like *Plastic Reef* (2008-12), an expansive sculptural installation of reef-like melted plastic debris from the world's oceans, and *Around the World* (2017), a huge bobbin in the shape of a rocket, with 40,015 kilometres of cotton thread spun around it (the average circumference of the Earth), suggesting the significant role that cotton played and still plays on a global scale. Vanden Eynde makes visible the power structures, material base, and extractive repercussions of our

culture of incessant productivity from the industrial revolution to the present time, whilst exercising a critique on the obsession with continuous economic growth, hyperproduction, and planned obsolescence that have led to the climate crisis and environmental degradation. Currently the artist is investigating the influence of transatlantic trade of key materials (like rubber, oil, ivory, copper, cobalt, cotton, lithium and uranium), on the evolution of humankind, the creation of nations and other global power structures.

Maarten Vanden Eynde has exhibited widely in several institutions and biennials including the Contour Biennial #9: Coltan as Cotton, Mechelen (2019); #6 Biennale de Lubumbashi (2019); the 1<sup>st</sup> Riga Biennial, MAMAC, Nice (2018), Zone2Source, Amsterdam, Bozar, Center for Fine Arts, Brussels (2017); Palazzo Reale, Milan (2016); #4 Biennale de Lubumbashi, Cultural Capital, Mons (2015); CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2014); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Museum M, Leuven (2013); Manifesta 9, M HKA, Antwerp (2012). From 2020 to 2023 he is pursuing his PhD on 'Ars Memoriae: The Art to Remember' at the University of Bergen, Norway.

A fully illustrated colour monograph, *Maarten Vanden Eynde / MMXX*, published by Mercatorfonds, accompanies the exhibition. The book is edited by Katerina Gregos and contains texts by Sven Beckert, Oulimata Gueye, Nav Haq, Jan Zalasiewicz and Katerina Gregos. The graphic design is by Raf Vancampenhoudt and Lennart Van den Bossche.

About the curators: Katerina Gregos is a curator and writer and currently artistic director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST), Athens; Ilse Roosens is a curator at Mu.ZEE, Ostend

The exhibition will travel to La Kunsthalle Mulhouse (FR) in 2022.

---

Press info

[www.muzee.be](http://www.muzee.be) – (Login : pers – password: romestraat) images and press release

Contact: [pers@muzee.be](mailto:pers@muzee.be) – Colette Castermans – 32 (0)473 53 38 15

Mu.ZEE

Romestraat 11

8400 Oostende

Follow us on [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [Twitter](#)