

THE RAVESTIJN GALLERY

PRESENTS

SCHELTENS & ABBENES



The Rug, Whiff #3, 2021 (MacGuffin magazine)
Print size 147 x 193,5 cm
Plexiglass box frame 150 x 190 x 12 cm
Edition of 8 plus 1 AP

PRESS RELEASE

SCHELTENS & ABBENES **'LITERALLY'**

Opening: Saturday 15 January, 2022
Exhibition: 15 January - 5 March, 2022
Opening hours: Monday - Saturday from 12:00 till 17:00

A Stain in a Rug was MacGuffin magazine's commission, but Scheltens & Abbenes decided to approach the theme from another angle. From a local thrift shop the artists borrowed worn-out carpets and with large sweeping gestures they tried to remove the hideous stains they carried. The soap splashes not merely freshened up some colour patches, but also caused surprising new patterns. The fleeting moments were caught by the camera's eye and the photos featured in MacGuffin's N° 9 issue. While being happy with the series of revived rugs, Maurice Scheltens and Liesbeth Abbenes felt the photos deserved yet another context. For their upcoming show at The Ravestijn Gallery, which opens on January 15th 2022, the photos gain a next life, this time by returning to the rugs' three-dimensionality. The original photos, the size of which had been limited by the dimensions of the magazine, are now blown up to a considerable magnitude and encased in somewhat smaller Plexiglas boxes. As a result, the heavy prints lean against the back and slightly curl up at the bottom. A three-dimensional reality, a doubling of the illusion - *Soap* (MacGuffin magazine), 2021 has become *Whiff*.

Scheltens & Abbenes are known for their detailed, highly aesthetic photos, in which familiarity and illusion play a mysterious game. However, the duo never aims at creating mystery for the sake of mystery. Instead, the artists try to reach the innate wisdom, or essence, that secretly resides in mundane things. The still-life sets, which they meticulously build up in front of the camera's eye, are discarded once the images have frozen the moment. And thus, only within the context of the photo, the soap splashes are part of the carpet's decoration.

The artists cannot be pinned down to one discipline. In their previous work, as well as in their latest work, they fuse photography, set design, painting, sculpture and installation art. For their sets they use familiar things 'literally', as they say, before creating unusual arrangements and zooming in on details, such as the rim of a fabric, the stripes in a pattern, the foamy trace of soap. Depending on their interests and depending on a commissioner's request, the props are taken from the duo's personal context or from a commissioner's archive. For the *Literally* exhibition at The Ravestijn Gallery, existing photos from their own archive have become the building blocks for new works.

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A recycling of previous photos, was also the starting point for the four textile works in the show. The image on the enlarged scarf *To Handle* shows a range of existing scarfs in a sorting bin (the image first featured in magazine *Vrij Nederland* in 2013). The other three wall textiles, titled *Silk Colour Library*, show collages of the colour swatches that usually serve for choosing the exact colours of silk scarfs. The images recently featured in magazine *Le Monde d'Hermès* and now find their way into another context, the exhibition space. As scarfs are usually characterized by some transparency and lightness, the various recordings of both photoshoots were placed on top of each other in the original photos, creating an illusion of movement, as if the images show the gestures by Scheltens and Abbenes while mixing colours and patterns. In their new guise, this idea of movement is regained in another way. The photosensitive paper is replaced by that which the images depict, the precious and fragile silk cloths, which subtly move when spectators pass by.

There's yet another unusual feature in the exhibition at The Ravestijn Gallery, which consists of a reproduction of *Stacked, Sixteen Coats* (Fantastic Man), 2018. The original image depicts an aestheticization of a life in control, revealing the human urge to obsessively arrange things and clothes and store them neatly stacked in cabinets. In their recycled new mode, copies of the original photo are piled up into a large block, which is positioned on a pile of discarded and recycled materials. The stack of clothes is mirrored by the stack of posters, which in turn is mirrored by the layers of the podium. While the heap on the image consists of individual clothing items, and while the original photo was reproduced in a limited edition, thus preserving the sensation of uniqueness and exclusivity, the pile of posters consists of relatively cheap replicas of the original photo, which is consistent with the medium and reputation of photography as a reproductive medium.

Literally is a way of coming full circle for Scheltens & Abbenes. The recycling of their own works, and returning to that which is depicted in the original photos, emphasizes the essence of their work: inviting people to look again and look more intensely at that which they have probably seen a thousand times before.

Scheltens & Abbenes, who live and work in Amsterdam, have presented their work at prestigious international institutes, including Foam Amsterdam, Huis Marseille Amsterdam, Galliera Musée de la Mode Paris, The Art Institute of Chicago, Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie in Mannheim. Their commissioners include MacGuffin Magazine, Fantastic Man, The Plant, The Gentlewoman, *Vrij Nederland*, as well as Hermès, Chanel, COS, Balenciaga, Paco Rabanne, Maison Martin Margiela, Gucci Osteria, HumanRace by Pharrell Williams, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Dutch Royal House.

For more information or to receive images please contact the gallery at jasper@theravestijngallery.com. Or visit our website [here!](http://www.theravestijngallery.com)

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