

Exhibition, Antwerp, KBC Tower, Scaldiszaal

***Ensor a guest in Antwerp***  
***Antwerp, brown marchioness and blonde virgin (Ensor, 1936)***

**8 October through 3 December 2010**

In 2010, Antwerp also celebrates the 150th anniversary of the birth of James Ensor (1860-1949). Although Ensor is mainly linked to his birthplace Ostend and to Brussels which also had a special place in his heart, Antwerp nevertheless played a not insignificant role in his life. One of his most important patrons was the Antwerp industrialist François Franck. Franck was also co-founder of 'l'Art Contemporain', an association for visual artists and patrons of the arts which numbered Ensor among its members and exhibitors.

KBC has acquired the almost complete collection of Ensor's etchings, which were a special feature of his work, from the estate of François Franck. Ensor considered it a challenge to 'see' and value graphic art as an independent art form in its own right, and not to cast it in a subordinate role. He saw graphic art as competing with the art of painting. Ensor was extremely successful in translating the pictorial strength of the painter's palette into etching and dry needle techniques. His graphic production also showed his exceptional talent for drawing.

For this exhibition we have assembled a stunning spectrum of Ensor's work, supplemented with some oil paintings from the KBC collection. And as a little 'extra', Antwerp's Museum Plantin-Moretus and Prentenkabinet (the Municipal Print Room) are lending us 13 original drawings and mixed media works including several splendid still-lives.

Ensor's iconographic work is rarely the result of mere observation, but often a beautiful depiction of the tension between the horizontal and vertical lines of facades and buildings. The water and North Sea air offered Ensor the freedom to experiment with light, which meant he often balanced on the border between realism and impressionism. And his still-lives are rarely devoid of a touch of humour. The Bible inspired Ensor to mount the barricades of society to express his opinions.

In this small exhibition of etchings and paintings, we display the many talents of Ensor, the pioneer of modern art in Belgium.

For this exhibition we have designed a beautiful box displaying quotes from Ensor's letters and speeches about the city of Antwerp. It's surprising the special place that Antwerp held in Ensor's heart.

**Information:**

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**Opening hours:**

Monday - Wednesday: 9 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.  
Thursday: 9 a.m. – 7.30 p.m.  
Friday: 9 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.  
Closed at the weekend and on 1 and 11 November 2010  
Free entry