

**Gay Gassmann, 'On View: A Belgian Sculptor Takes Antwerp by Storm', New York Times, May 22.**

A storm is brewing at Middelheim Museum, a sculpture park outside of Antwerp, Belgium. "The Storm," to be exact. It's the Belgian sculptor Johan Creten's newest show, an outdoor installation of 25 monumental works cast in bronze, clay and resin. Creten's work speaks to the storm within us all, as individuals and as a society, and deals with his usual themes: nature, the female form, power, politics and spirituality. As a preview to what is, to date, his largest and most ambitious exhibition, which opens this Saturday under the moody Flemish sky, the Paris-based artist talks to T about the processes and inspiration behind some of the works on view.

"Johan Creten: The Storm" is on view from May 24 through Sept. 14 at Middelheim Museum, Middelheimlaan 61, 2020 Antwerp-Belgium, [middelheimmuseum.be](http://middelheimmuseum.be).



"Pliny's Sorrow," 2011-2013 | "Hard to believe this gigantic sculpture was first a small study in clay. Now four and a half meters high, the wings are like the sails of a boat, our complex relationship to power between the eagle and the cormorant, between power and fragility. Ecological disaster and political nightmare."



"Odore di Femmina - Basket," 2013 | "What makes a woman different from a man? How are we worlds apart? What is this strange thing called 'odore di femmina,' the mixture between seduction and blood, between mother and sea, between the mussel and the mold, the flower and the razor blade? This series was started in the late '80s and I have been making two or three pieces a year; each element is hand-formed and unique. I love the way my fingerprints are everywhere."



"Why does Strange Fruit always look so sweet?," 1998-2008 | "I was living in the north of Mexico in a small village in a primitive adobe house. After months of hard work, overcome by fatigue, sick and hallucinating about the over-ripe dates on a tree in my garden, dripping with honey, morphed with my own fragile nature, into a haunting memento mori. It then took me almost 10 years to turn a first series of ceramic versions of this work into this over-life-size bronze."





"La Communauté," 2010 | "First shown in the 12th-century Roman monastery of Le Thoronet, these anthropomorphic beehives are all about my vision of a constructive, positive society. The cerebral bees enter and leave by the eyes and the mouth. The positive nature of speech and the purity of one's gaze. Maurice Maeterlinck, the only Belgian to get the Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote 'The Life of the Bee.' This was one of my favorite reads as a child."



"Le Grand Vivisecteur," 2013 | "The first gift I gave my father was a small ashtray in painted plaster. It was the image of a bird. It must have been around the time I read the book by Patrick White about what it was to be an artist. It felt like it was my own story."



"Fortuna Grande," 2012 | "The wind turns, the sails billow or fold, the current changes, as fortune and destiny itself. Nothing is gained, nothing is fixed, our life and the world are in flux."