ALMINE RECH

Hans Op de Beeck
The Wunderkammer Residence

Permanent Installation | Museum Dhondt Dhaenens, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium

The museum Dhondt-Dhaenens (MDD) is since recently joined by The Wunderkammer Residence, a project by artist Hans Op de Beeck, realized in collaboration with architect Mo Vandenberghe (studio MOTO). Op de Beeck transformed the former Villa Meander, a villa built at the beginning of the 1930's, into a unique 'gesamtkunstwerk..' The building is conceived as a contemporary 'wunderkammer' and houses the personal library collection of Jan Hoet (1936 - 2014) while also doubling as a residence for artists, curators, researchers and writers with an (inter)national, non-European focus. Set between the museum building from 1968, the historic Lys River and the former residence of Jules and Irma Dhondt-Dhaenens, the founders of the museum, The Wunderkammer aims to create a space for dialogue, reflection and research within the typical rural context of the museum.

Through Op de Beeck's intervention, the original 'cottage' villa has become a true work of art. The black envelope abstracts the original, almost kitschy 'cottage' villa into a plastic, monumental sculpture in the idyllic Lys landscape. In turn, the monochrome gray interior that has been staged as a fictional 'wunderkammer' invites amazement and introspection. In the library, which covers the four walls from floor to ceiling, various rarities in the form of sculptures form a theatrical, almost cinematic setting for the 'real' collection of books Jan Hoet. In this Wunderkammer the experience of the viewer is central. The artwork resolutely aims at an immersive experience in which both the exterior and the interior enter into a dialogue with the surrounding environment, the coincidental passer-by and the visitor/resident.

In addition to reflection on the museum, its collections and the landscape, the space is open to critical reflections on the resident's individual practice, the art world and broader social structures. With The Wunderkammer Residence, a second remarkable location for residences is created. A few years back, the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens already started a first residency program in the Lys region. The Van Wassenhove residence, a striking Brutalist building from 1974 by architect Juliaan Lampens, located in Sint-Martens-Latem, has served as a lively residence and meeting place in the area since 2015.