

ABOUT BORIS

Education. After completing the gymnasium at the Montessori Lyceum Rotterdam, Boris van Berkum studies at the Academy of Visual Arts in Prague. From 1992 to 1996 he lives in the "golden city", where he works as a political cartoonist for the English-language newspaper Prognosis.

Showroom MAMA. Back in the Netherlands, Boris sets up MAMA *showroom for media and moving art*, at the age of 27. He is director from 1997 to 2007. Under his leadership MAMA has grown into a dynamic and influential stage for contemporary visual culture. MAMA succeeds in reaching a young target group, which is partly why showroom MAMA is included in Rik van der Ploeg's (State-secretary of Culture) national arts plan. In 2002 he founds Mothership, an agency for visual artists, with co-director Jeroen Everaerts. Boris co-owns Mothership until 2005.

Neo & the Artoonisten. During his work for showroom MAMA, van Berkum develops as a visual artist. He comes into contact with Frans Haks, the former director of the Groninger Museum, who becomes his mentor. The exhibition 'Neo' by Haks in the Centraal Museum Utrecht therefore has a major influence on van Berkum's work. Boris starts a study into the phenomenon of Neo-styles in art and applies the methods typical of Neo in his art-practice. During his participation in artist in residencies he learns a number of traditional crafts and techniques. Casting bronze in Beeldenstorm Eindhoven; working in ceramics in the European Ceramic Work Centre. Under the pseudonym DJ Chantelle, Boris founds the Artoonisten artists' collective in 2000 with artists Hans van Bentem, Luuk Bode and Pepijn van den Nieuwendijk. "The world is a cartoon and everybody plays a character" with this motto the collective creates the public artwork "Ode to Marten Toonder" in 2002. The monument is a tribute by the city of Rotterdam to the Rotterdam-born craftsman and writer Marten Toonder. The striking monument made in bronze and granite stands prominently next to the city-centre's Markthal and is the most photographed work of art in Rotterdam's public space. In 2010, at the invitation of director Sjarel Ex, he exhibits the 'Mega Renaissance' installation in the Boijmans van Beuningen museum.

Winti.

Boris meets Winti priestess Marian Markelo in 2011. She commissions him to design new art objects for her winti rituals in the Netherlands. To do so Boris develops a new technique: On the basis of 3d scans of West African art from the national museum collections of the Africa Museum Berg en Dal, the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam he designs this new Winti art. The development of this project is supported by the Mondriaan Fund, the CBK (Centre of fine arts) Rotterdam and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Boris and Marian have labelled this collection of artworks as 'Neo Afro'. They see it as an African renaissance within the winti-culture. The most successful works are the Kabra ancestral dance-mask (2013) and the Mama Aisa sculpture (2020). The Kabra ancestor mask is a dance mask that symbolises the African ancestors, that were migrated involuntarily to Suriname. The Kabra mask was acquired by the Amsterdam Museum as "living heritage" in 2014. Since the mask is a museum-piece that performs annually at the national commemoration of slavery past and dances to the Kabra neti ancestor rituals. The Mama Aisa sculpture is a representation of the primeval mother goddess and mother earth. A version of the Mama Aisa sculpture (polyester with gold-leaf) will be inaugurated in 2021 during a Winti Bal Masque in the Rijksmuseum. In Rotterdam, the research has started whether a Mama Aisa sculpture (this time in bronze) can be added to the collection of art in public space.

The Porcelain Painting

Boris has been in China for periods since 2019. In Jingdezhen and Shanghai, he is working on an oeuvre of "porcelain paintings" in the coming years. The starting point for these paintings of porcelain and glaze always lies in one of the philosophies of the Far East, namely Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Because traveling to China is temporarily not possible due to the Corona pandemic, he shifts his work area to the Netherlands. Boris has started a collaboration with manufacturer of Delft Blue ware Heinen Delfsblauw. He will participate in the artist in residency program at the EKWC spring 2021.

The work of Boris van Berkum is acquired by the public collections of Museum Boijmans van Beuningen Rotterdam, the Groninger Museum, Amsterdam museum, Museum het Dolhuys Haarlem and the Suriname museum Paramaribo Suriname. In 2019 he received the Stipendium for Established Artists from the Mondriaan Fund. Boris van Berkum lives and works in Rotterdam.