

Exhibition

# **Gast Michels (1954-2013)**

Movement in colour, form and symbols

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Press kit

# Gast Michels (1954-2013)

Movement in colour, form and symbols

07/10/2022  
— 22/01/2023  
11 am - 7 pm

Cercle Cité / MNHA  
Luxembourg

Free entrance

The Luxembourgish artist **Gast Michels (1954-2013)** was a remarkably keen observer of his environment. He meticulously analysed and decoded his surroundings, translating them into his own formal universe. Michels' oeuvre has a unique formal language and features recurring symbols like wheels or arrows and a luminous colour palette, often dominated by the complementary colours blue and yellow. While the early work of the Echternach-born artist predominantly deals with seemingly mythical depictions of human figures in woodland settings, his later works have a more graphic pictorial language featuring highly stylised objects and signs. As a painter, sculptor and graphic artist, Michels worked in various mediums but always remained true to his expressive, symbolic and at times humorous and ironic visual language.

This autumn, the Cercle Cité and the National museum of history and art present the artist's first comprehensive retrospective, covering 30 years of his work. The show consists of two parts and is on display at both exhibition venues. The first part at the Cercle Cité focuses on Michels' works on paper, illustrating his semiotic approach to developing a unique language of forms and symbols. The second part at the MNHA concentrates on the artist's monumental works. It provides an overview of Michels' different creative phases and the development of his distinctive style with works ranging from the early 1980s to the 2010s, including paintings, sculptures and a tapestry.

**Temporary exhibition at the Cercle Cité from 7 October 2022 to 22 January 2023  
and at the MNHA from 7 October 2022 to 26 March 2023.**

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Production Cercle Cité

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Curator Paul Bertemes

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## At Cercle Cité: Works on paper

A tracker equipped with a voluminous sketch pad

Gast Michels, the painter, visual artist, sculptor and graphic designer is a prodigiously attentive observer who analyses everything that appears around him with near-surgical precision, breaks it down and translates it into his own formal world.

A tracker equipped with a voluminous sketch pad, he refashions his environment with sharp pencil strokes while elaborating with incisive determination messages addressed to us in the manner of an enlightened poet.

In spite of his spontaneous approach, nothing in Gast Michels' work is left to chance. The pictorial elements with their accentuated contours prove to be the expressive components of a sophisticated pictorial structure that creates a space that is simultaneously filled with suspense and tension.

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Gast Michels draws his poetics from the singularities of everyday life: a formal language reminiscent of the stylised simplicity of the signs and symbols that accompany and regulate our daily lives. While such a language is usually universally comprehensible, the clear meaning as condensed in Gast Michels' art takes on a complex character.

Connotations and values, how we relate to signs and symbols, are constantly questioned, often with a subtle irony.

In developing his pictorial and artistic vocabulary the artist is not content to analyse symbols, signs, logos and words. He is alert to their perceptions. He «decorticates» them, in the true sense of the word, questioning them, lyrically subverting so-called truths, half-truths, slogans and formulaic expressions.

The works on paper particularly invite us to discover this world of signs, shapes and symbols. Works that must be read slowly, as one reads the pages of a poetry collection. The serigraphs, then the sketches, the outlines and the drawings – taken from sketchbooks – and finally the impressive collection of beer coasters on which the artist jotted down his ideas, thoughts and observations. This is the reason we chose the more intimate setting of the *Ratskeller* at the Cercle Cité to present this overview of the *Œuvre* of Gast Michels.

But let's not get upset: the elements in this Work that may initially seem amusing and funny are in fact the artistic adrenaline, the intellectual lucidity that gives this painter and visual artist the force to create.

### The artist's biography

1954: Gaston François Michels is born on 11 January 1954 in Echternach, Luxembourg. The Mullerthal would become a key source of inspiration for his work.

1960 – 1972: Attends primary school in Consdorf, Luxembourg and secondary school at the Lycée Classique d'Echternach, Luxembourg.

1974 – 1980: Studies at the "École Supérieure des Arts Saint-Luc" in Liège, Belgium.

1980: Moves to Walferdange, Luxembourg and marries Marie-Josée Meyers.

1980 – 1988: Art teacher at the "Lycée Technique Nic-Biever" in Dudelange, Luxembourg and the "Lycée Technique des Arts et Métiers" in Luxembourg City.

1982: His first son, David Michels, is born.

1983: Wins the "Prix de la Peinture" at the *XIe Biennale de la Peinture et de la Sculpture des Jeunes* in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg and a six-week artist residency at "Cité des Arts" in Paris, France.

1983 – 1984: First solo exhibitions at "Galerie Tetra" in Wavre and "Librairie Gutenberg" in Brussels, Belgium.

1984: His second son, Frank Michels, is born.

1985: First solo exhibition in Luxembourg at "Galerie d'Art Municipale" in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.

1987: Wins the "Prix de Raville" for the work *Arc/Flèche* at the annual "Salon du Cercle

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Artistique de Luxembourg". This marks the beginning of the artist's characteristic use of stylised symbols such as arrows, arcs and wheels.

1988: Michels gives up teaching and begins to work as an independent painter, sculptor and draughtsman. He has the first of numerous solo exhibitions at the "Galerie de Luxembourg", whose owner Jean Aulner is a close friend of his.

1994: Michels discovers a new creative tool for his work: the computer.

1996: Michels' wife, Marie-Josée Michels-Meyers (1946 – 1996), dies. Michels designs temporary flags for the station tower on the occasion of the CFL's 50th anniversary.

1998: Creates his first series of metal sculptures, *Steel drawings*, after almost 8 years of dedicating himself exclusively to painting.

2000: Retrospective exhibition at "Théâtre Galerie d'Esch": *1980-2000 vingt ans d'aventure picturale*.

2002 – 2011: Regular solo exhibitions at "Espace Mett Goedert" in Consdorf, Luxembourg.

2006: Creates a 258-metres long mural, *Atmosphère urbaine*, for the "Administration communale de la Ville de Luxembourg" (Rocade 3).

2009: Moves to Vaison-la-Romaine in Provence, France, with his partner Yvette Tosseng.

2011: Begins blood cancer treatment in Marseille, France.

2013: Dies on 5 February 2013 in Marseille, France.

## Framework programme

Discover the joint framework programme between MNHA and Cercle Cité in the attached leaflet, or on our website: [cerclecite.lu](http://cerclecite.lu).

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## Practical information and press contact

Exhibition	« Gast Michels (1954-2013): Movement in colour, form and symbols »
Dates	From October 7 <sup>th</sup> 2022 until January 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2023
Opening hours	Free entrance, every day from 11 am to 7 pm
Venue	Ratskeller exhibition space, entrance: rue du Curé
Free guided tour	<b>Every Saturday at 3 p.m.</b>  08.10.2022 (FR) 15.10.2022 (EN) 22.10.2022 (LU/DE) 29.10.2022 (FR) 05.11.2022 (EN) 12.11.2022 (LU/DE) 19.11.2022 (FR) 26.11.2022 (EN) 03.12.2022 (LU/DE) 10.12.2022 (FR) 17.12.2022 (EN) 07.01.2023 (LU/DE) 14.01.2023 (FR) 21.01.2023 (EN)  <b>Free guided tours by curator Paul Bertemes</b>  14.10.2022 at 12:30 a.m. (LU/FR) 20.01.2023 at 5:30 p.m. (LU/FR)  <i>Without registration, subject to availability.</i>
Accessibility	Exhibition accessible to people with motor disabilities and reduced mobility
Press visuals	<a href="http://cerclecite.lu/fr/press">cerclecite.lu/fr/press</a>
More information	<a href="http://cerclecite.lu">cerclecite.lu</a>
Press contact	Iyoshi Kreutz, communications manager T : +352 46 49 46-25 <a href="mailto:iyoshi.kreutz@cerclecite.lu">iyoshi.kreutz@cerclecite.lu</a>



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The City of Luxembourg  
has entrusted the  
management of Cercle

Cité to the "Agence  
luxembourgeoise  
d'action culturelle"

