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STRANDBEESTS, THE NEW GENERATION

AN EXHIBITION BY THEO JANSSEN
VISITOR'S GUIDE

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THEO JANSEN

STRANDBEESTS, THE NEW GENERATION

FROM SAT. 1 OCT. TO SUN. 1 JAN.
CITY HALL GARDEN - BORDEAUX

EVERY DAY
8AM - 6PM

FROM WED. TO MON.
11AM - 6PM
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS - BORDEAUX

Theo Jansen was born in 1948 in Scheveningen near The Hague. After completing his scientific studies, he decided to devote himself exclusively to artistic creation. It was while observing nature, particularly the phenomenon of the tides, that he imagined the creation of movable dikes. From this desire to combat beach erosion emerged his first creatures, half animal and half machine. From the outset, he conceived them as evolving and autonomous creatures suitable for the immensity of sandy beaches.

Simultaneously an artist, engineer, and inventor, Theo Jansen brings together art and science. He employs artificial life simulation software in the design of these gigantic kinetic sculptures. His works have been widely exhibited internationally, both in contemporary art museums and at festivals and fairs. A cross between plastic creation and engineering, Theo Jansen blurs the boundaries enabling everyone to rediscover a taste for invention and surely a sense of their own childhood.



A NEW FORM OF LIFE!

Every summer since 1991, on the vast beaches of Scheveningen in the Netherlands, awesome creatures appear and unfold whenever the wind picks up. These are the "Strandbeesten", Beasts of the Beach by Theo Jansen.

These strange animals move around with extreme lightness and grace, reappearing over the years with increasing strength and agility. Several generations of animals have thus succeeded one another on the sand. From the first rudimentary beast that could not move to the latest, certainly the most complex, Theo Jansen never stopped believing in their abilities and strength.

These creatures are his very own. He conceived them, built them, and brought them to completion according to his dreams. Despite their precariousness and the fragility of their construction, he perseveres in bringing them into existence in a world where nature reasserts its rights. He is committed to creating these sculptural forms, whose existence he brings to life in a grandiose landscape.

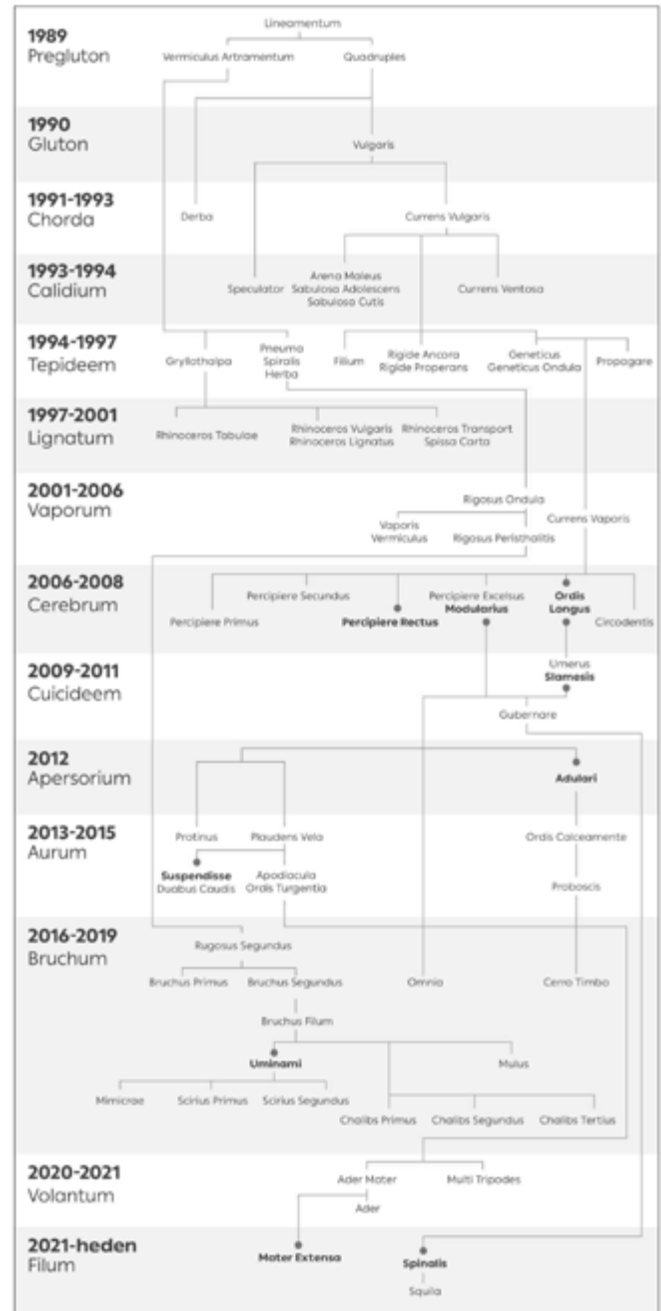
The match between these skeletal structures made of tubes, plastic bottles, and other recycled material, and the wind energy driving them, enables Theo Jansen to compose a poetic macrocosm populated by a fantastical bestiary.

This original exhibition, spread out in the Town Hall Gardens and inside the Museum of Fine Arts, enables us to discover his immense creatures along with his working universe thanks to his drawings and the photographs of Léna Herzog and Stéphanie Riquois.

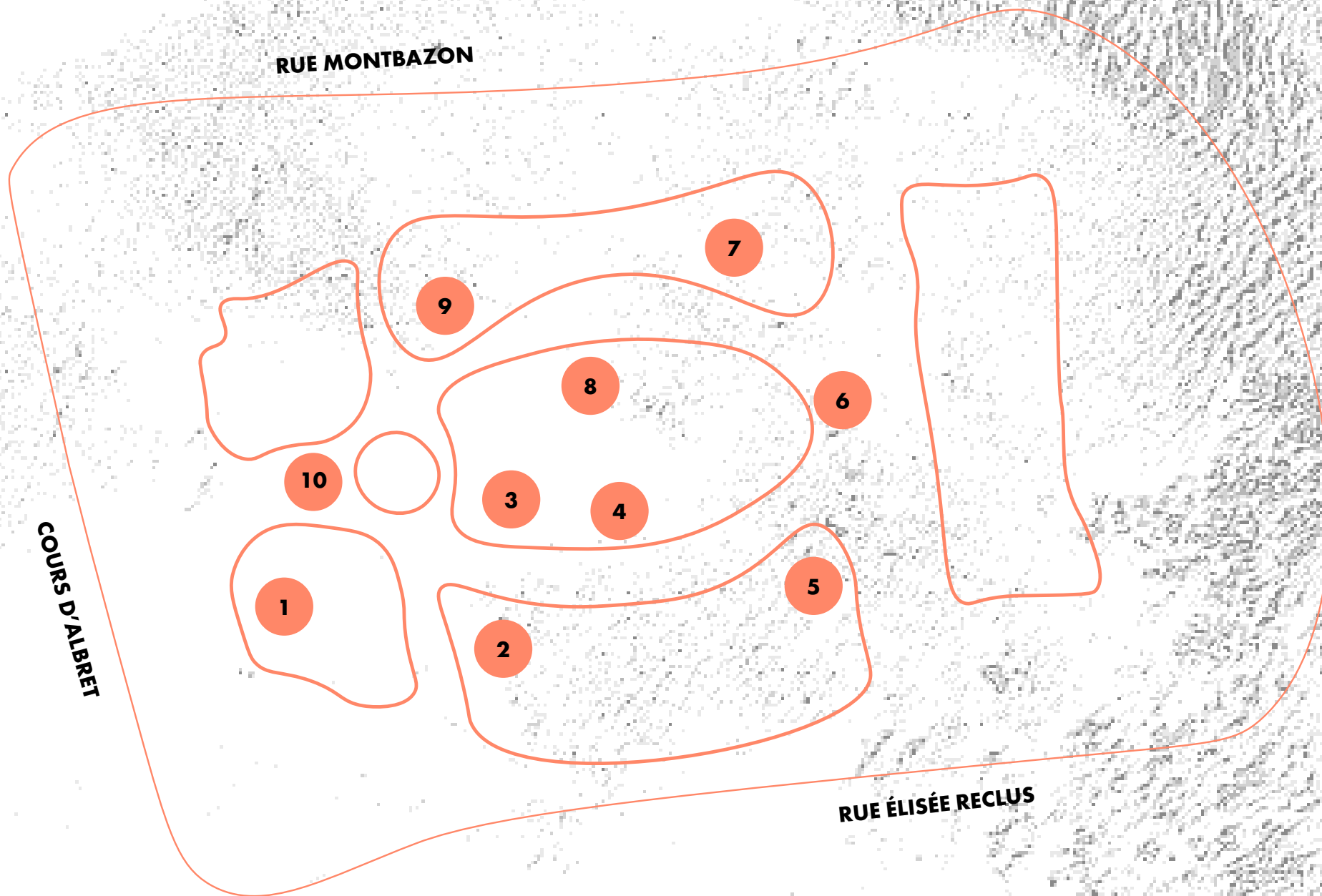
Over thirty years, Theo Jansen created a dozen periods determined by various technical properties. The various "Strandbeests" develop according to the principles of evolution and genetic transformation. They challenge the commonly accepted division between the natural and the artificial, the organic and the mechanical, thus drawing a rich and complex family tree.

Some of the most significant periods of this lineage are presented in the exhibition: The Brains Period (2006-2008), The Weak-Winds Period (2013-2015), The Caterpillar Period (2016-2019), The Flying Period (2020), and The Cord Period (2021).

Evolution



VISIT MAP



OUTDOOR WORKS

1 – RECTUS

Cerebrum, 2006 – 2008

Era of brain

PVC pipe, wire, rope, and fishing line

"For Rectus the ropes used were leaders for shark fishing. With the new fishing restrictions, they were no longer available on the market. I had to invent a new system to assemble the beasts. The new method turned out to be much more effective than the old one. Working with constraints is really important, the problem turns into the solution, and the animals adapt."

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2 – MODULARIUS

Cerebrum, 2006 – 2008

Era of brain

PVC pipe, wire, rope, plastic bottles, and sails

"Modularius is modular.

In this case, the air and wind are compressed into bottles. Similar to pumps, the bottles propel the animal, which can travel through dry sand."

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3 – LONGUS

Cerebrum, 2006 – 2008

Era of brain

PVC pipe, wire, rope, and sails

"Most of the time these ideas don't work, it's very frustrating. There are a lot of very unproductive moments. I have no control, the tubes are determining the way I work. I came to the conclusion that my ideas can be compared to mutations. Most of the time the mutations don't work out, yet sometimes something happens in my hands and I see like a message from the tube that says "you should do this or do that". It's not really a creative process. I'm just following the advice of the tubes to which I am a slave."

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4 – SIAMESIS

Suicideem, 2008 – 2011

Era of Self-Destruction

PVC pipe, wire, rope, plastic bottles, and sails

"Siamesis has a new pump system, making it walk step by step from the shoulders down to the legs. When I started taking them out on the beach, they would kill themselves by breaking their backs because the ground was not perfectly flat. I called this phase the suicidal phase. Siamesis can only survive in museums. That's also why it's yellow, unlike the white ones that have become lighter when exposed to the sun."

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5 – ADULARI

Aspersorium, 2012

Era of Tail Wagging

PVC pipe, wire, rope, and plastic collars

"The tail wagging era, when I discovered this movement I really liked this very animal way of moving about. However, I didn't understand how animals could survive better by wagging their tails. I then realised that many people who watched the videos were charmed especially by the movement of the tail and the nose. I became aware that seduction in evolution was an important criterion for survival, like the peacock spreading its feathers, it's a means of seduction and it's a criterion for survival."

The Strandbeest can be thought of as specimens that seduce people into caring for them. They appear to be seducing each other, but in fact they are seducing humanity. This is also how cats and dogs survive. They are so cute that we feed them and that's how they can multiply. Therefore tail wagging is a survival criterion, not so much on the beach, but on the internet animals survive much better when they wag their tails."

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6 – SUSPENDISSE

Aurum, 2013 – 2015

Era of the Weak Winds

PVC pipe, wire, and rope

"Sometimes I remove the legs and use them for the next generation, the legs don't change much. They are at the end of their evolution and that's why this one doesn't have legs anymore. The only thing that changes is the shoes."

"If a storm blows in from the front, Suspendisse pushes its nose to the ground thus preventing it from flying away. This way it is protected if a storm hits."

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7 – UMINAMI

Bruchum, 2018 – 2019

Era of the Caterpillars

431cm PVC pipe, wire, and rope

"Several years ago, by chance, I was invited to California to join a working session with a group of real scientists who were preparing a mission to Venus. On Venus the temperatures are very low and you can't harness solar power. They had to find a way to get around without resorting to the energy we are familiar with.

I advised them to try using caterpillars, and they took me seriously. These critters are kind of from another planet, there is also wind on Venus, the caterpillar doesn't need much to move so it could be a solution."

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8 – ORDIS

Cerebrum, 2006 – 2008

Era of the Brain

264cm

PVC pipe, wire, rope, and sails

"What changes most in the beasts are their wings. I hope that at the end of my life these animals will be able to survive on their own."

THEO JANSEN

9 – SPINALIS

Filum 2021- today

Era of the Cord

629cm

PVC pipe, wire, rope, and plastic collars

"I wanted to make a very lightweight animal. That's why the tubes here are thinner. Then I realised that there was no need to make it lighter, so I reverted to using the old tubes."

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10 – EXTENSA

Filum 2021- today

Era of the Cord

855cm

PVC pipe, PVC, wire, rope, plastic collars

"These animals are migratory. These walk in tune with the wind. They move along with the wind parallel to the beach, then settle down and wait for the wind to change. They migrate like birds from one place to another."

THEO JANSEN

INTERIOR WORKS

Hall of the North Wing of the Museum
of Fine Arts

"PROPELLER"

"Helix"

1997

120 * 120 * 70cm

PVC, wire, fishing line, sail, screws

"LEGMODEL"

1991

100 * 100cm

PVC, screws, wood, pencil, and paper

FOSSILS:

Cranks

1991

30 * 19 * 5cm

PVC, screws

Stick

1991

125 * 15 * 15cm

PVC, rope, wire

STRANDBEESTS:

Ordis

2004

225 * 220 * 200cm

PVC, rope, sails, and wire

Uminami

2019

200 * 200 * 200cm

PVC, rope, sails, and wire

The "strandbeests" displayed in the indoor exhibition can be handled
very carefully.

Photo credits for the pictures presented in the indoor exhibition:

LH - Léna Herzog / SR - Stéphanie Riquois

DR - Theo Jansen

ON THE TRAIL OF THE STRANDBEESTS...

Children's activities

DISCOVER THE STRANDBEEST EVOLUTION TREE

To view the evolution, please go back to page 5

Like all species, the Strandbeests also have their own evolutionary tree illustrating the relationships between each species and they too have Latin names!

This phylogenetic tree - another word for evolutionary tree, not to be confused with a family tree that groups together the family of an individual - shows you schematically all the relationships and kinship between each of the beasts. Thus, you can search for the ancestors of each Strandbeest thanks to the lines that connect them.

With each generation the Strandbeests evolve becoming more and more intelligent and autonomous. For the moment they still depend on Theo Jansen, although perhaps one day they will survive on the beaches without the help of humans!

GAME: FIND THE ANCESTORS OF THESE STRANDBEESTS!

1. Who are the two ancestors of Derba (Gluton era 1990)?
2. Who are the three ancestors of Squila (Filum era 2021 - today) ?
3. What era do rhinos come from ?
4. Who does Ordis Calceamente descend from ?

ANSWERS:
1. (Quadruples and Lineamentum)
2. Gubernare, Umerus, Currens
3. Lignatum Era 1997-2001
4. Adulari

BUILD YOUR OWN MINIATURE STRANDBEEST!

MATERIAL:

Skeleton: Use fairly thin, elongated material such as paper straws, toothpicks, or a skewer, or you can simply roll a sheet of paper into a tube and tape it down so that it holds the shape of a straw.

Fasteners: You can use rubber bands, tape, a small clamp (serflex) or if you have, wire or nylon.

Wings: Use a handkerchief, soft paper, a sheet, thin white or transparent plastic, and anything that resembles the wings you saw on the Strandbeests in the exhibition.

TOOLS:

Get a pair of scissors, glue, a ruler, and a pencil. You may also need pliers, a hole punch and if you have them, safety glasses!

IT'S UP TO YOU NOW:

Before Theo Jansen succeeded in creating his Strandbeests, he started by experimenting with a variety of shapes and materials. Like him, create your own beast using the materials you already have at home!

Send us photos of your creations to the address:

contact@festivalbordeaux.com





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