



Photo Pim Hawinkels

# Hibernation

Mid november 2020 Maarten Baas called it a day and wished everyone 'happy New Year!' When the pandemic reached another high, Baas concluded he had enough of adapting to changing rules. The boss simply re-scheduled deadlines and sent the team home to catch some well deserved shut-eye. This March the activity picked up again. Awake but still yawning, Maarten Baas announced; **New Times.** words Kate Maat photo's courtesy studio Maarten Baas

Naturally timid, but at the same time shouting out 'May I have your attention please' makes him an unusual and highly intriguing fellow. We wander off to his workshop in Den Bosch. Entering his place is like stepping back onto a playground. Imagine Charlie and the Chocolate factory: neon lights, talking dolls, containers filled with liquid plastic and bubbling clay. On top of this, imagine an overwhelming amount of noise, video games and rapid

movements. Enough to solely concentrate on the present moment. 'Thank God, nature never closes its doors. In the early morning I wander through the woods. Listening to the rustling of the trees and the leaves crunching beneath my feet. The people I pass mostly have a peaceful gaze; their moods and minds not yet taken over by Zoom calls, screens or to do lists. Nature is a force to be reckoned

with, changing every minute. It is where I feel most inspired. Afterwards I go home, to marinate and contemplate.' 'When inspiration peeks around the corner and fires up my brain there are no brakes; it just needs to get out. During these long walks my past work is a source of inspiration. Like the 'Where there is smoke' collection of deconstructed and burned Rietveld and Eames chairs.



Photo Matteo De Fina



*Homo Opinio by Maarten Baas (2021)*



*Urban Scarecrow by Maarten Baas (2020)*



*In this Grandfathers Clock, Baas acts as Father Time with a hat and a cigar*

**'It is totally counter-intuitive and incorrect to act as if all is well'**

I presented the remains of those design icons as new work. I feel it is still, maybe even more, valid today. Lets break the cycle and really transform.'

Maarten Baas graduated from the Design Academy Eindhoven in 2002. In the following twenty one years he evolved into a internationally influential designer, or (as he prefers himself) an artist. His work is a combination of design, art and rebellion. The concept of time is one of his primary themes.

#### Time heals

When we first met in September 2020, Maarten was already contemplating hibernation. The zeitgeist dictated withdrawal. 'It is totally counter-intuitive and incorrect to act as if all is well. My gut feeling dictates me to retreat in my den and just see what opens up in 6 months or so'.

Some work however was already in the making, inspired by the overwhelming amount of digital impressions and scattered opinions Baas created The Urban Scarecrow, a skeleton of LED signs dressed in a faded black suit spitting out a constant flow of; commercials, Covid contamination figures, unemployment rates and stock-exchange numbers. This Scarecrow will scare the living daylight out of all of us, not just the birds. Another work, The Homo Opinion - two men in business suits - literally debating from their megaphone heads, not hearts show us what Baas is thinking.



#### Second Act

In Venice as part of the Architecture biennale -Baas together with scenographer Theun Mosk, created a site specific installation covering the entire space of Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The show will close November 21st.

'It was, and still is, a time of uncertainty and fear. People don't know how to react, what to expect and what the new reality will be. I wanted to compare time to the suspense of a theatrical performance: when the curtain opens, what will we see?'

From the fourth floor, down to the courtyard, majestic red curtains create exactly that kind of suspense and theatrical atmosphere Baas was looking for. An open ending, just like the world we are living in. Screens display titles of theatrical plays and artwork that became cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic. In the pavilion on the fourth floor 'sweepers' clocks from the famous Real-Time clocks series - are sweeping away the dust and dirt of recent times. 'Dust is always present as a symbol of the passage of time. Whatever happens, there is nothing else to do; but move on'.

#### New Times

On June 10th, Baas's newest solo show, opened at Pinakothek der Moderne (until October 3rd) in Munich. Eleven grandfather clocks and a brand-new double-faced house clock are on display. It is a intriguing spectacle; digital video, color crayons, confetti, dust and a hint of human beings.

In 2009 the ever expanding, idiosyncratic series of clocks started in 2009 Baas named it Real Time. Maybe to emphasise that our time used to be ours, or so we thought. For the first solo exhibition of Baas in Germany the show was renamed to New Times, reflecting the times to come in our reset society.

Part of the show are the sweeping clock, the confetti clock and a digital clock without seconds. The spectator is invited to slow down and contemplate.

New is a little house with a two-faced Paddington clock on its facade. At the back, you are encouraged to climb up the ladder and meet a 3-piece, sharply tailored suited man setting the time. The same man meets you again at the front. When you look into his eyes, you will discover Maarten Baas himself.

Setting the pace of time again, just for you.

#### Only time will tell

The hours and minutes slowly tick away: 'don't rush please' seems to be the message. Coming fall '21, the Maarten Baas Paddington Clock will be installed at Paddington Station London where an odd 100.000 passengers a day can potentially stop, pause and reflect on the significance of time. By then we all hopefully have found our pace back. Maarten Baas took his time but found his. It looks like 2021 is going to be his year.