

EIGHT YEARS: WORK AND LIFE OF JOSEPH KOSUTH AND CORNELIA LAUF IN GHENT FROM 1990 TO 1998...

... AN EXHIBITION CONSISTING OF A CHRONOLOGY OF DOCUMENTS, PHOTOS, PRESS, PUBLICATIONS, LETTERS AND ARTWORKS FOCUSED ON THE PASSAGE OF AN AMERICAN ARTIST, WIFE AND FAMILY THROUGH AN EUROPEAN CITY, PRESENTED BY GERTJAN OSKAR, ANTON PEREIRA RODRIGUEZ AND WOUTER DAVIDTS.

In 1990, American artist **Joseph Kosuth**, a pioneer of conceptual art, settled in Belgium. After a number of artistic passages in the 70s and 80s, he moved both his studio and his household from the metropolis of New York to a house in the **Maagdestraat in Ghent**. He stayed there with his wife, art historian and curator **Cornelia Lauf**, and later also their two children, until 1998. There has been much speculation about his motives: his participation in the exhibition *Chambres D'Amis* (1986) and the contact with Jan Hoet are said to have been decisive. Numerous anecdotes circulated about the house in the Maagdestraat: many legendary dinners would have been attended by personalities from Kosuth's international network.

What preceded the choice of an internationally renowned artist like Kosuth in the early 1990s to live and work outside the centre of the then art world? And how did the artist's life and work relate to each other in this new city? What position did his wife Cornelia Lauf occupy in this art history? What mark did they both manage to leave on their new environment?

On the basis of extensive historical research, conducted by Gertjan Oskar in the context of his Master thesis in Art History, this exhibition attempts to **differentiate history and legend** of Joseph Kosuth's stay in Ghent. The exhibition will also focus on the essential (but generally underexposed) relationship between the artist's life and work in Ghent in the 1990s. This project attempts to show that an artistic practice does not develop in a vacuum, but is influenced or even made possible by cross-pollination from private life, for example through exchanges with a partner or a network of friends and colleagues. We will also attempt to question the strict division between artistic work and (private) life. All this will be done on the basis of a broad selection of historical documents, photos, press, publications, letters, etc. from both private and institutional archives. We will show primary source material that, given the geographical and language specificity, has not yet been studied within the existing, primarily American scholarship on Kosuth.

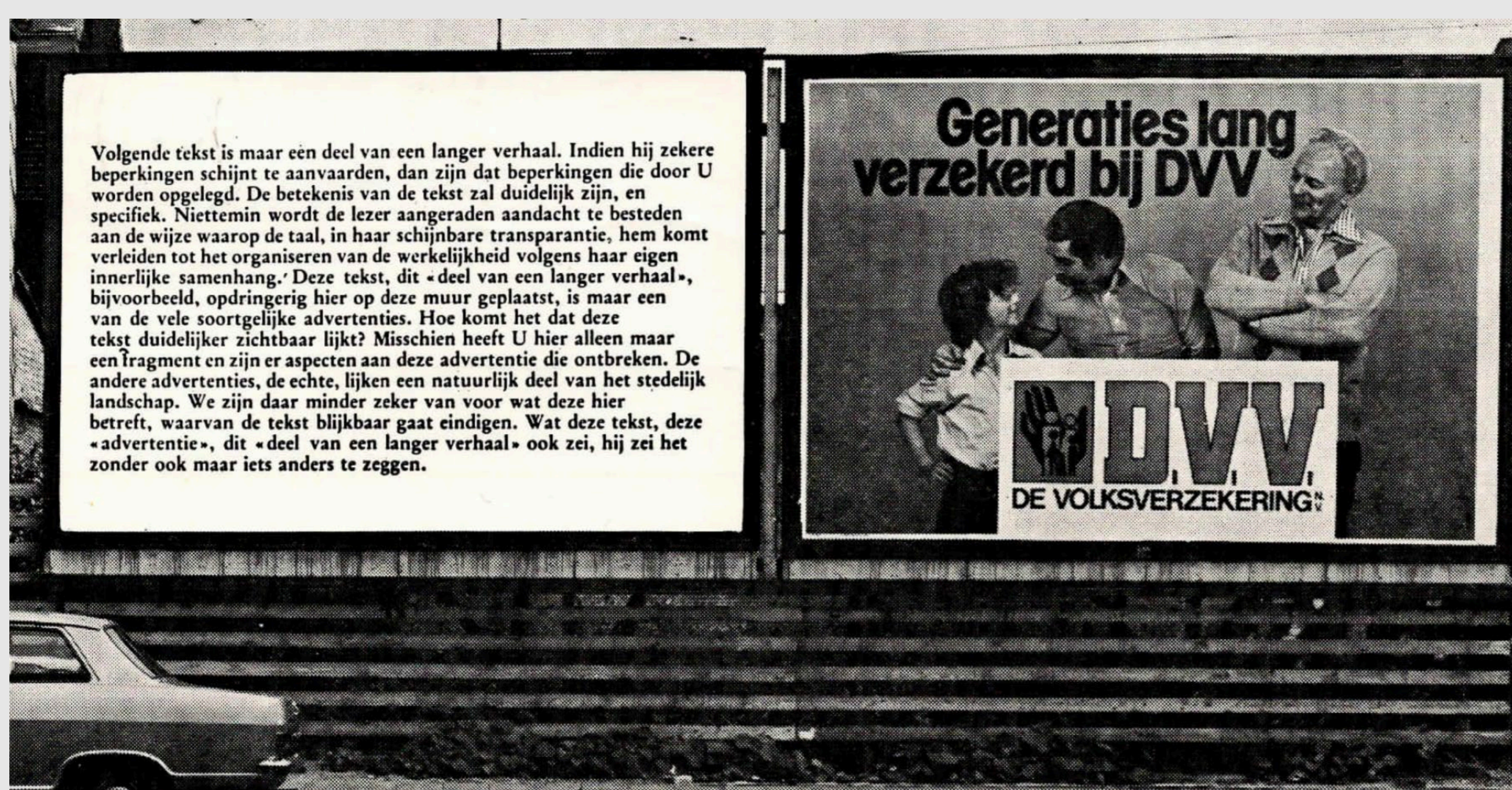


Portrait of Joseph Kosuth and Cornelia Lauf in their house in the Maagdestraat, Ghent. Published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 1992 (Private archive of Cornelia Lauf)

The exhibition will be accompanied by a **publication**, published by MER. Books (Borgerhoff & Lamberigts) and designed by Luc Derycke, who has worked with Kosuth and Lauf in the past. The publication will be the first in a series of publications co-published by KB45 and MER. books. It will contain an essay by the curators and will be lavishly illustrated with archival documents, and serve as a reference point for further geographically specific art historical research KB45 promotes.

During the exhibition, an **international symposium** will be organised, addressing the key stakes of the project by bringing together European and American scholars.

The exhibition will take place at VANDENHOVE Center for Architecture and Art during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.



Joseph Kosuth, *Text/Context*, Octrooiplein Ghent, 1978

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About KB45

KB45 (Kunst in België sinds 1945 / Art in Belgium since 1945) is a multidisciplinary research group established in 2019 at Ghent University within the Department of Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies on the one hand and the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning on the other. KB45 aims to map the situation of the living arts in Belgium since 1945 and to contextualize it within the larger artistic culture in the country's postwar era, from both a local and international perspective. Rather than writing a single history of art in Belgium since 1945, the ambition is to chart the multiple histories of postwar art in Belgium as driven by manifold actors in the past 7 decades, with a specific focus on the two-way traffic of the living arts in Belgium: while mapping out the trajectories and presence of Belgian actors in the international art world, the aim is also to retrace the presence and influence of international peers in the Belgian art world.