THIS IS M.Y. SECRET BOOK
1989. MYSTERY!! ☺

" ORIGINALS "

MY. ART IDEAS.

WITH FASHION.
¡MIX.



FOREWORD

CHRIS DERCON

When writing about fashion, I often ask myself (and the reader): 'Is fashion not art? Or is it sometimes?' In the case of Marina Yee, the answer to this question differs from that for Martin Margiela or the other members of the Antwerp Six, with whom Yee studied fashion at the Antwerp Academy in the late 1970s. While her fellow students set their hearts on a career in fashion early on, Yee was interested in other art forms too. She excelled at drawing and eagerly explored the new experimental art scene that emerged in Antwerp in the mid-1960s, influenced by the Fluxus and Provo movements.

Yee launched her own fashion label, Marie, in the 1980s, but soon distanced herself from the fashion industry; she struggled to find her place in the system. The dilemma of whether to pursue a life as a designer or as an artist was a recurring theme throughout her life. She was a polymath who explored and practiced various disciplines, from interior design and theatre costumes to drawing, making up bold collages and surprising assemblages, in which clothing and the codes of fashion played a major role.

Yee's approach to fashion: the freedom for women to wear a garment in any way they want (including second-hand, reworked or traditionally male clothing) was often reflected in her art, in a variety of ways. Beyond her magnificent drafts and other sketches, which immediately evoke great fashion illustrators such as the Spanish artist Antonio Lopez, she also produced virtuoso experimental graphic works and, above all, dark photographic collages that convey much more – and, crucially, leave room for the imagination – than the superficial mood boards we encounter in every fashion studio today.

Thinking of her work, I am instantly reminded of the early, sombre works of Marlene Dumas, as well as the raw visual archive on the walls of Yee's studio when we were preparing to present 'models' – the 'Magdalena Paintings' – for the Venice Biennale in 1995. Much like Dumas, Yee often 'painted' a form of sadness. I once wrote 'La mode est si belle car elle ne déplace pas la mort' ('Fashion is so beautiful because it does not displace death'). Marina Yee and her oeuvre do not exist in isolation; her work fits into a Belgian lineage of female Pop artists, ranging from Evelyne Axell and Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven to Liliane Vertessen. It reflects the same feminine gaze, of women giving form to their own desires.

As Marina Yee said: *'If we can dream it, we can do it.'*

MARINA YEE

INSIDE OUT, BACK TO FRONT, UPSIDE DOWN

KAAT DEBO

In October 2025, Sofie Van de Velde interviewed Marina Yee in the run-up to Yee's first solo exhibition, which would open posthumously at Van de Velde's gallery in Antwerp in the spring of 2026. This was the first time Marina Yee had spoken at length about her art, searching for the words to describe her creative process. She was reluctant to label or categorise things and referred to the visual language of the Surrealists and the collages, assemblages and readymades of Marcel Duchamp, from which she promptly distanced herself, describing her own work as *"readykapot"*.[1]

Her art is impermanent – it is literally held together with tape – just as fashion is ephemeral. After all, her aim was not to create art that would last an eternity; she considered this rather pretentious. Her art is art that is meant to fall apart: *"If you want to preserve it, you have to take a photo of it,"* she said. She embraced a playful approach and wanted to retain that playfulness in her work; she disliked the seriousness of the art world. Playfulness implies experimentation and intuition. The latter served as the guiding principle in her process, as she explained:

"I work purely intuitively, with no strategy. But I do want to create; otherwise, otherwise it doesn't exist... I'm laid-back, always late, and I'm unpredictable. I believe in mystical things. It's hard to define intuition and transience... just like a scent. Conveying this is the artist's social responsibility, expressing something that is invisible but does exist. Whether or not you choose to listen, don't feel it or can't hear it, it will still move you; it will engulf everything like a current, or a scent, or seawater washing over you."

During that process, she searched for things that aren't possible, for renewal, because she wanted to avoid any repetition. She described her motto as: *"inside out, back to front, upside down"*. This forced her to constantly look at things from a different perspective, to see something different every time. And she did that for years in the privacy of the studio where she lived in Antwerp: a safe haven, a cocoon, within which she meticulously crafted her own world. She lived and worked there in seclusion: *"I live and work like a loner or a hermit, leading a simple life... I live in an environment that is perfectly tailored to me."*

It took several decades before she found the confidence to share that work with the world. After all, the world had come to know her in the 1980s as a fashion designer, one of the iconic Antwerp Six, and she felt as though that label still applied to her: *"I'd been labelled a fashion designer because of the Six. I can design, so I should not aspire to become a painter or an artist, I shouldn't be too greedy. But there was always that underlying feeling that fashion simply wasn't enough."*

On the same day as Marina Yee's solo exhibition at Sofie Van de Velde, a retrospective exhibition on the Antwerp Six opened at MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp.[2] The latter presented the shared story of their studies at the fashion department at Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, their

[1] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations by Marina Yee in this essay are taken from the interview conducted by Sofie Van de Velde and videoed by Steve Brouwers on 23 October 2025. The interview, which featured footage of Yee's studio flat in Antwerp, was for the exhibition *Marina Yee* at Gallery Sofie Van de Velde, 28 March–10 May 2026.

[2] *The Antwerp Six*, MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp, 28 March 2026–17 January 2027.

first steps and success as designers at the Gouden Spoel (Golden Spindle) competitions, as well as the artistic, social and economic contexts that acted as a catalyst for their international breakthrough at the British Designer Show in London in 1986. The exhibition also explored their individual journeys and distinctive styles through six different installations. The Six may well have embarked on their journey together while they were students, but as fashion designers each of them went on to develop independently, both artistically and commercially. The installations, which curator Geert Bruloot developed in collaboration with each of the designers, also reflect the very different ways that their fashion houses and creative worlds ultimately evolved.

> "I LIVE AND WORK LIKE A LONER OR A HERMIT, LEADING A SIMPLE LIFE... I LIVE IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS PERFECTLY TAILORED TO ME."

The path Marina Yee's career took is arguably the most atypical of all. Her first career in fashion was relatively short-lived. After spending several years designing alongside Dirk Bikkembergs for the Belgian manufacturer Bassetti and the leather goods producer Gruno & Chardin, she launched her own label, Marie, in 1986, with her business partner Miyoshi Hobo. But she withdrew from it after just a few seasons. She was ill-suited to the fast-paced world of fashion. She continued to design on a commission basis for a number of brands, but gradually distanced herself more and more from the industry. In the early 2000s, she decided to pursue a career in fashion education, first in Tournai and later at the art academies in Ghent and The Hague. However, she continued to create and design within the four walls of her studio.

The installation that she created for *The Antwerp Six* exhibition was not an anthology of her oeuvre, but took her creative process – which followed a remarkably similar course in both her fashion and her art – as its starting point. Very early on in their research for the exhibition, Yee and Bruloot decided to create a reproduction of her studio. The installation offers an intimate insight into her world and way of thinking, revealing much more than just a workshop. It can just as easily be read as a poetic interpretation of her doubts, of her reluctance to share her work with the outside world from the safe cocoon of her studio, and of her urge to create without having to label her work as fashion or art.

The first step involved photographing the interior of Yee's studio in minute detail. The photographs were then reproduced on the walls of a scaled-down model in the exhibition hall, complete with two windows through which visitors can look inside. In front of this photographic backdrop, the furniture and objects – a multitude of fabric remnants, books, twigs, packaging materials, drawings and small finds – from her studio were arranged in exactly the same composition, described by MoMu curator Romy Cockx as "a carefully composed landscape of memories, finds and possibilities". However, if you look closely, you will notice that the objects do not correspond exactly to the space photographed. A shift of around twenty centimetres creates a surreal trompe l'oeil effect. It is precisely in that slight shift that a subtle tension arises, a minor short circuit, an "off-kilter" quality, as Marina herself would describe it.

Among the multitude of objects, written texts also catch the eye – hastily added to collages, drawings, boxes and photographs, or scribbled on colourful Post-it notes that are dotted here and there. The presence of written documents is a recurring theme in Yee's oeuvre. Snippets of text seem to take the form of rhythmic mantras that constantly encourage and motivate her: 'One day at a time', 'You're a fine one... go on', 'You have to talk about what you want; you have to think about what you want. You have to tell and bring

MY MARKING

I HAVE SOME KEYWORDS

ITS SUSTAINABILITY

RE CREATION

OUT THE BOX

GEOMETRIK

TIMELESSNES

AUTHENTHICITY

TO BE FREE

PLAY

UP CYCLING

INTEGRI

BEAUTY

AWARNESS

SHADOW + LIGHT

SLOW

AN SILENT

JOYFULL

INSOLENT

CHAOS

OPTICAL ILLUSION

2D 3D

OWN

MAM

CRAFTMANSHIP

Something-else

yee

YOU NEW

PRESENT NOW # FOURE

NOW

FOR SURE

IF WE CAN DREAM IT
WE CAN DO IT



#31 (3)



DROCE

(GOOD)S

GN

ALL
INFINITIVE

GRAFFIX

SLOWFLY

UP

changes



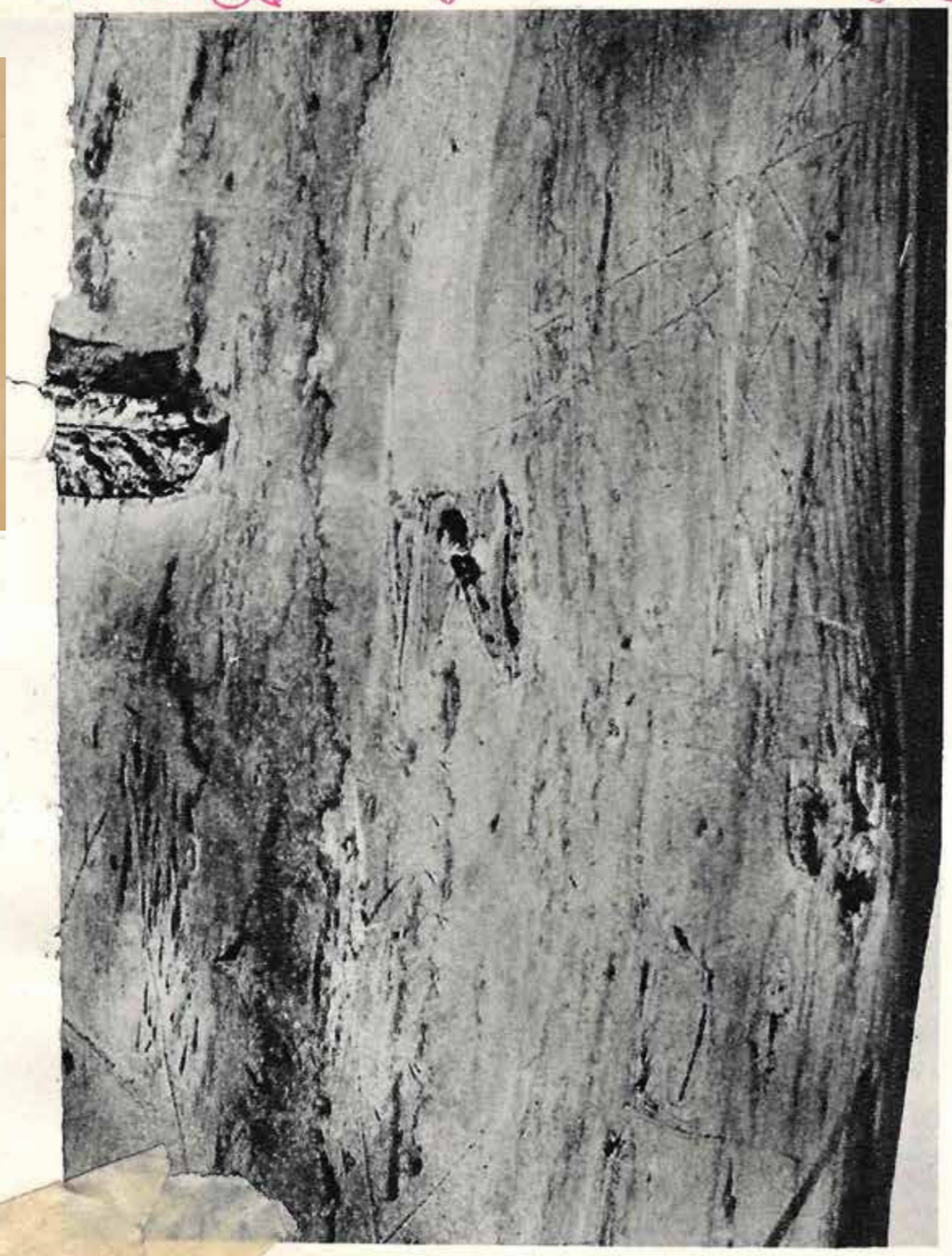



en nu ...
PASSIONEEL CREËREN !
met teuzelen
of zuigmelen !

vergeet" vergeet me ..." vergeet dat maar he!

Nee, JA, ik blijf je trouw
Hoor me goed. Ik houw van jou weet je
Hoor je me?
Ja toch. Dus ; JA! JA. JAH - GOD IT?
luister ng eens.
JA. OK? geen "nee": neen. Ja sorri

153



Lin x fun
to do
So!







MARIAH KEEN
AS INDIGO SHADOW







8/11/21.

EN IK KOOP EEN PRACHTIG "HUIS/STEK/APPARTEMENT" IN PARIS !! HEERLIJK !!!

ONDERANDERE!

WANT..
IK BEN EUROMILJONAIR !!!
DANKU !♡





"I AM NOT IN A HURRY"



ON MY KNEES

DEI TROUS

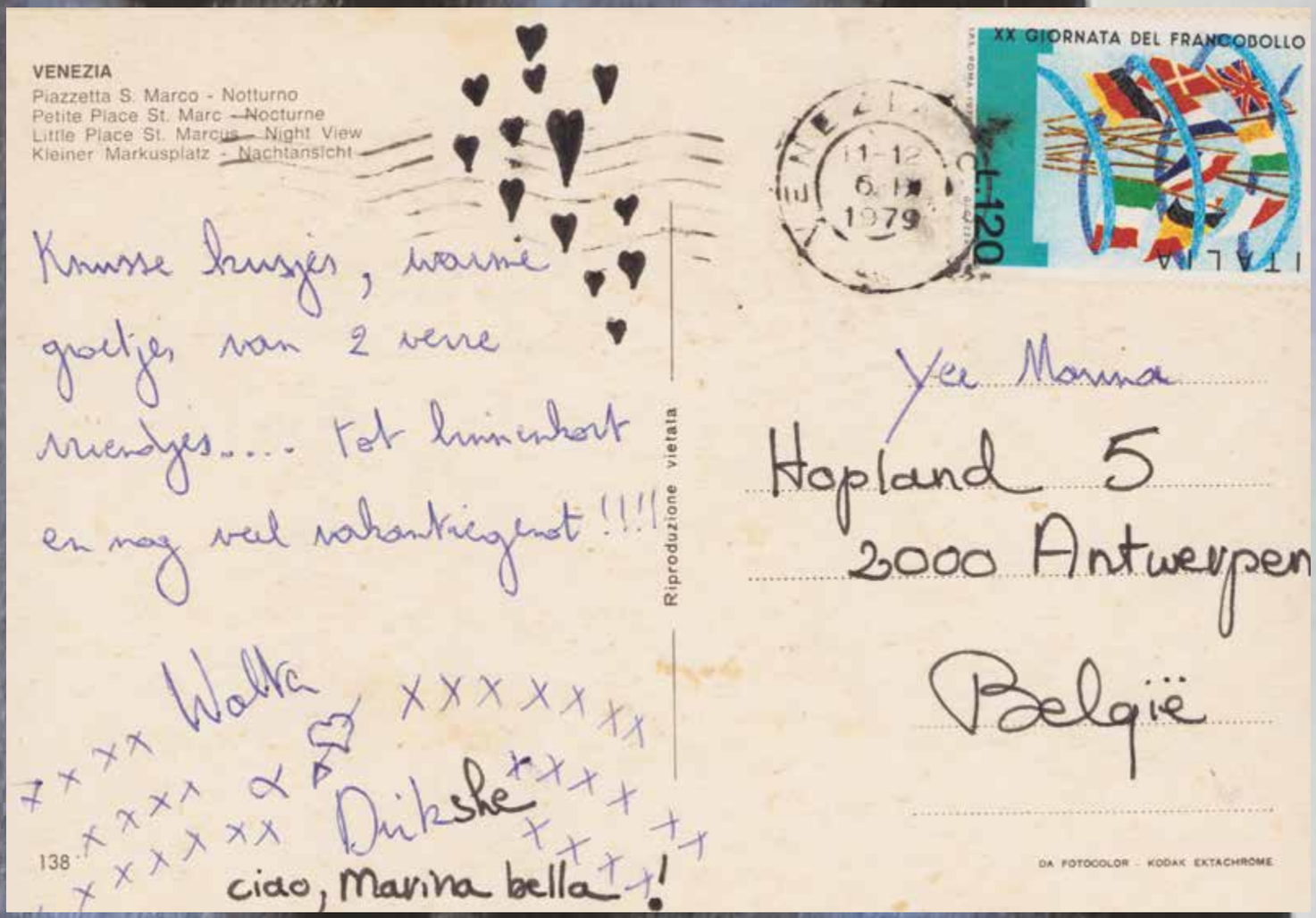
ANIMAL GIVE IN

OPPOSITION

Je dépasse des années lumières







VENEZIA
Piazzetta S. Marco - Notturno
Petite Place St. Marc - Nocturne
Little Place St. Marcus - Night View
Kleiner Markusplatz - Nachtansicht

Kusse kusjes, warme
groetjes van 2 verre
vriendjes.... tot binnenkort
en nog veel vakantiegenot !!!!

Walter
Dikske
ciao, Marina bella !

Riproduzione vietata

138

XX GIORNATA DEL FRANCOBOLLO
L. 120
ITALIA

11-12
6.
1979

Yes Marina
Hopland 5
2000 Antwerpen
België

DA FOTOCOLOR - KODAK EKTACHROME

MARINA YEE

★

MARIE

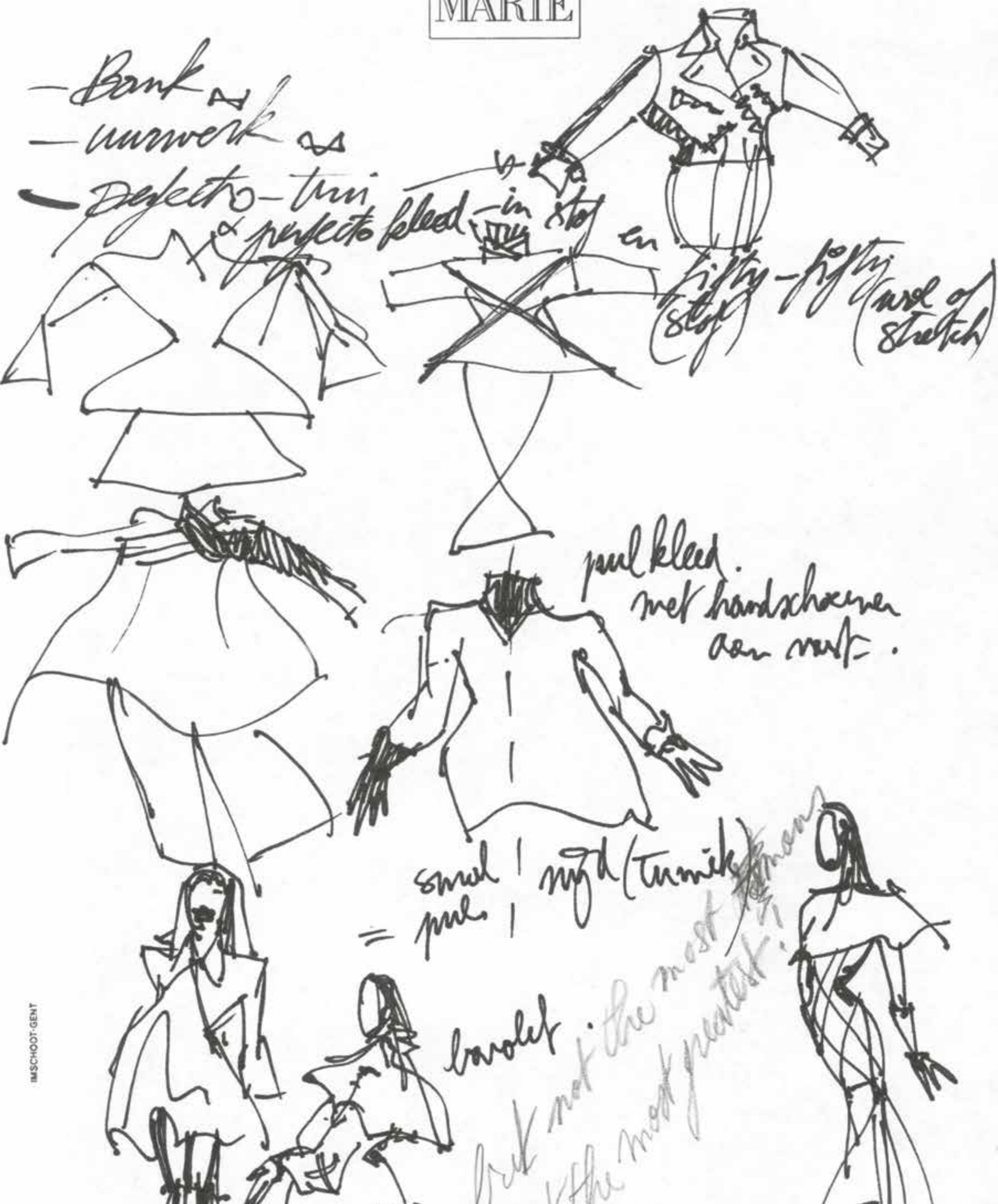


IMSCHOOT-GENT

MARINA YEE

★

MARIE



IM SCHOOT-GENT
















Musée de l'Homme
3/89
PARIS
EXPOSITION
VALLAURIS
1955


SIMON
MADELEINE




aan de accessoire
schoenen en tass
erg goed en daa
mogelijkheden o
den alhoewel we
grote collectie will
KIJK GOEDEN,
IK WENS / PRIJS
WIL EEN MAN
ZOALS JEFF BRIDGES!
ZO'N PRACHTIGE
SEXY AANTREKKELIJKE
MATURE MAN! KUNST-
ZINNIG, TEDER WILD, INTELLIGENT
AL WAT OUDER MET ZILVER PRACHTIG
HAAR, SPONTAAN, ENTHOUSIAST, ZELFBEWUST
EN ACTIEF, AVONTUURLIJK, INTEGER, WIJS EN
NO NONSENS, BIJ MET ZICHZELF, WAARDIG EN WAAR-
HUMOR! BOHEMIAN, GEMIEL ACHTIG, LIEFDEVOL!!
"DÉ JEFF!"
WEDERZIJDS!
DIE MIJ ZIELSGRAAG
ZIET, BEUNT EN LIEFHEEFT
DANK
GOD=
FIX!
II



MARINA YEE

*1987



Barbican MAC Birmingham

PARIS; SPRING SUMM

125

28/9 → 1/10 '24





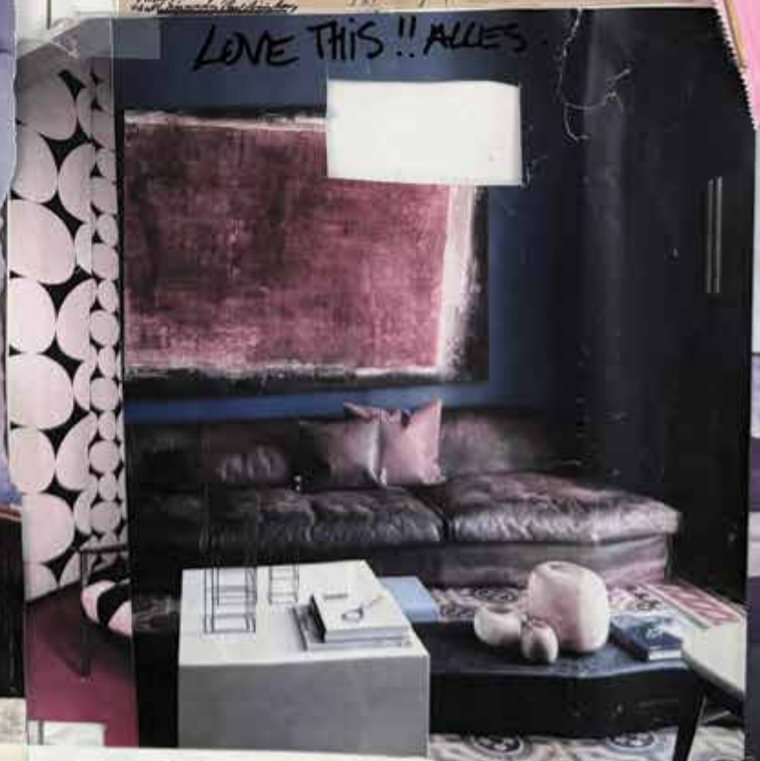


PARIS, 24-27/1/2026













MAISON MARGIELA

FW 26-27

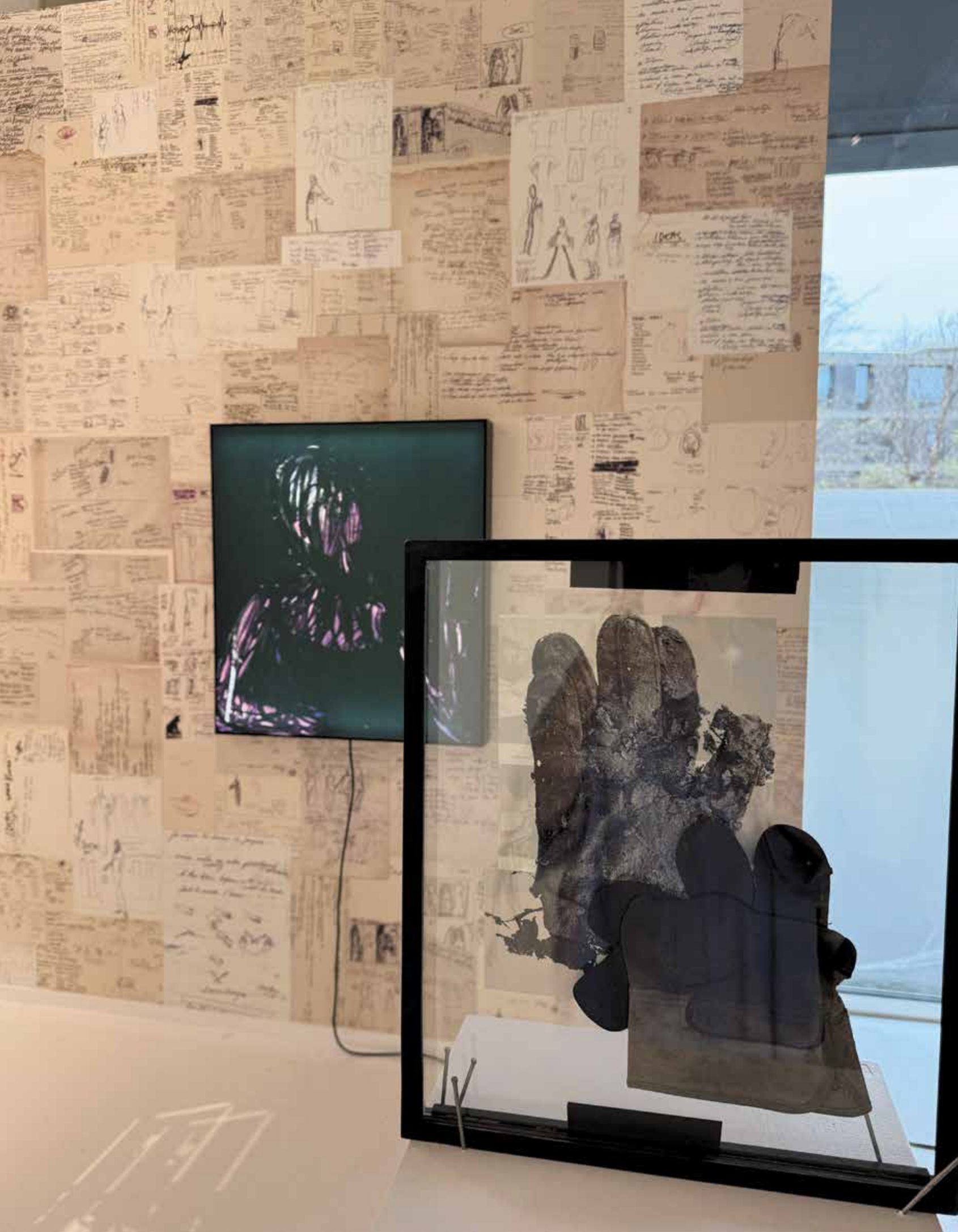









E
C B
D L N
P T E R
F Z B D E
O F L C T C






ZWART WIT
SCHADUWEN
LICHTVLEKKEN
BLOK/STREEP/
OVAAL/CIRKELS
GEOMETRISCHE FIGUREN
STOF PRINT CANVAS etc.
VOOR GEOMETRISCHE KLEDING-
ONTWERPEN
"CIRKEL" OBJECTEN
=Riemen
+ armband
KARTON-PAPIER DOZEN
'LADE' OBJECT VERZAMELING
ALS "BOX"
= een DOOS
met verschillend
elementen
et volgende;
CORRESPONDANCE
20 sept 08 - 02
mobiel in 3D
die ook
PLAY
strip"
Horizontaal
VERTICAAL
2e
BIRD PHENIX
NOT zitten ego-
alleen-verzaagen
gi'soleerd - boos
MONDAY
LUNDI
MONTAG
LUNES
TUESDAY
MARDI
DIENSTAG
MARTES
WEDNESDAY
9
10




Hey mama
Ik spreek nog tegen je
Maar sinds je bent weggevlogen
Kan ik je niet meer horen





MADE WITH YOU, M.,
AT THE HEART OF EVERY PAGE,
LIVING ON IN THE HEARTS
OF ALL THOSE YOU TOUCHED,
ESPECIALLY MINE.

Rafael ♡





This book is a glimpse into the mindset of Marina.
It is not about order;
it is not about the date of origin;
it is all in one.
It is about finding beauty in the chaos.
It is about a unique artistic spirit.

COLOPHON

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Rafael Adriaensens

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