ENG

Theo Jansen | Ulf Puder

vita activa

AKINCI

6 March - 11 April, 2026

Ulf Puder, Rue Saint-Honore am Nachmittag bei Regen, 2024, oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm

AKINCI is proud to announce the upcoming duo exhibition *vita activa* by Theo Jansen (1948) and Ulf Puder (1958). The exhibition will be an exploration of 'vita activa', expressing artistic craftsmanship as an active way of life. Ulf Puder presents new paintings while Theo Jansen focuses on the deconstructed remains of his *Strandbeesten*, as well as a new mutant evolving from an earlier species, the Mimicrae (2019).

Theo Jansen's famous *Strandbeesten* (Beach Animals) embody an evolution, as they become extinct and transform over time. The upcoming exhibition will show a paleontological display of their different body parts. Among them are noses, tails and wings, to name a few. Each of these represents a period of the Beach Animal evolution, bringing them together in the exhibition as *Partes Corporis.* The *Strandbeest* Mimicrae is part of this evolution, as it developed from the previous 'Uminami' which featured a caterpillar mechanism. By moving with a unique wave-like motion from tail to head, the Mimicrae resembles a seal on land.

Ulf Puder writes about his work in the upcoming exhibition as a romantic sense of transience: "*My scenes take place at the border between nature and civilization, where urban life and nature alternate*". In his paintings it is unclear whether the visualized objects are still in use, or if they have been repurposed. Both artists bring a mixture of real and magical elements, creating a space for imagination and reflection.

In the exhibition *vita activa*, the artists respond to a constantly changing environment. They explore society's and nature's force and evolution. Their works are in conversation with the alienated relationship with the world around us. Central to Puder's works are the subtle dystopian architectural depictions of landscapes and uninhabited houses, sometimes on the verge of sinking. Jansen's *Strandbeesten* first developed as a way to solve the danger of rising sea levels, by giving them life and purpose in moving sand grains from the bottom of the beach to the top. Now, they respond to nature's forces themselves, as they reply to movement independently.

Biographies

Theo Jansen

Throughout his oeuvre, Theo Jansen (1948, The Netherlands) developed a deep understanding of the principles of life and the evolution of species. Slowly his beach animals came to life. It started with the Animaris vulgaris (1991), the common (vulgaris) animal of the sea (maris). Later generations of beach animals moved on the energy of wind, moved grains of sand, developed ingenious walking patterns and eventually could run independently on air pressure in PET bottles (stored wind). The movements of his beings usually cause a fascination with the viewer, due to the idiosyncratic nature of their complex movement patterns, which appear organic and are reminiscent of living beings.
Jansen strives for the self-reliance of his beach animals; he sees the ability to move and respond to environmental conditions as the basic characteristics of artificial life and intelligence which he continues to develop.

Theo Jansen works and lives in The Hague, he studied physics at the Delft University of Technology from 1968 to 1975. Jansen exhibited in many leading art institutions around the world, including the Kabeldistrict, Delft, NL (2025); Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art, JP (2023-24); Kunstmuseum Den Haag, NL (2022); Dubai World Expo, UAE (2021); Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, JP (2021), Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art, JP (2021); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, DE (2019); National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci, Milan, IT (2019); Fundación Mar Adentro, Santiago, CL (2018); San Fransisco Exploratorium, USA (2016); Tamagawa Ennichi, Tokyo, JP (2015); Palais de Tokyo, FR (2015); Elektriciteitsfabriek, The Hague, NL (2014); Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, NL (2011); Kunsthal Rotterdam, NL (2003); Centraal Museum, Utrecht, NL (1999); Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, NL (1994). He holds public demonstrations on the beach at Scheveningen. In 2016, Theo Jansen received the Barnett & Annalee Newman Foundation Award, granted by artist Frank Stella.

Ulf Puder

The paintings of Ulf Puder (1958, Germany) depict an imagined future, sometimes dystopian, with architectural landscapes void of any human presence. Consisting purely of shape and colour, his paintings hold a middle ground between abstraction and realism, or the calm and disquiet. These collapsing structures reveal a prefab casing, transforming the buildings into geometrical shapes halfway their construction. Bungalows divide the canvas into vibrant colour planes, forming a contrast to the sky at dusk, which transforms the scene into a romantic place. At times, the buildings seem completely shuffled by a windswept force, leaving them scattered, piled or partly dismantled in an ambiguous calmness. Between becoming and passing away, there is a constant change or shift.
Puder graduated from the Leipziger Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in 1989, 'Meisterschüler' of Prof. Bernhard Heisig, as one of the leading painters of his generation. Puder belongs to the first generation of the Leipziger Schule, characterized by a strong narrative and often containing imaginative elements that draw in the viewer into his paintings.

Ulf Puder works and lives in Leipzig. Puder's work is part of major public and private collections worldwide. He has exhibited at prestigious institutions around the world, including Drents Museum, Assen, NL (2026 and 2024); Kunstgewerbemuseum, Dresden, DE (2024); Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, DE (2018); Museum Ulm, DE (2018); Stadtmuseum Oldenburg, DE (2013); Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, AU (2013); Neuberger Museum of Art, New York, USA (2008); Camden Art Centre, London, UK (2006); Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, DE (2005); Museum de Paviljoens, Almere, NL (2005); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, DE (2000); Museum Ludwig, Budapest, HU (2000); Moderna Museet, Stockholm, SE (1999), and numerous galleries in both Europe and the United States.