

MUSEUM
BEELDEN

AAN ZEE

Press release

FIRST RYAN GANDER SOLO EXHIBITION IN THE NETHERLANDS. TO BE SEEN IN MUSEUM BEELDEN AAN ZEE



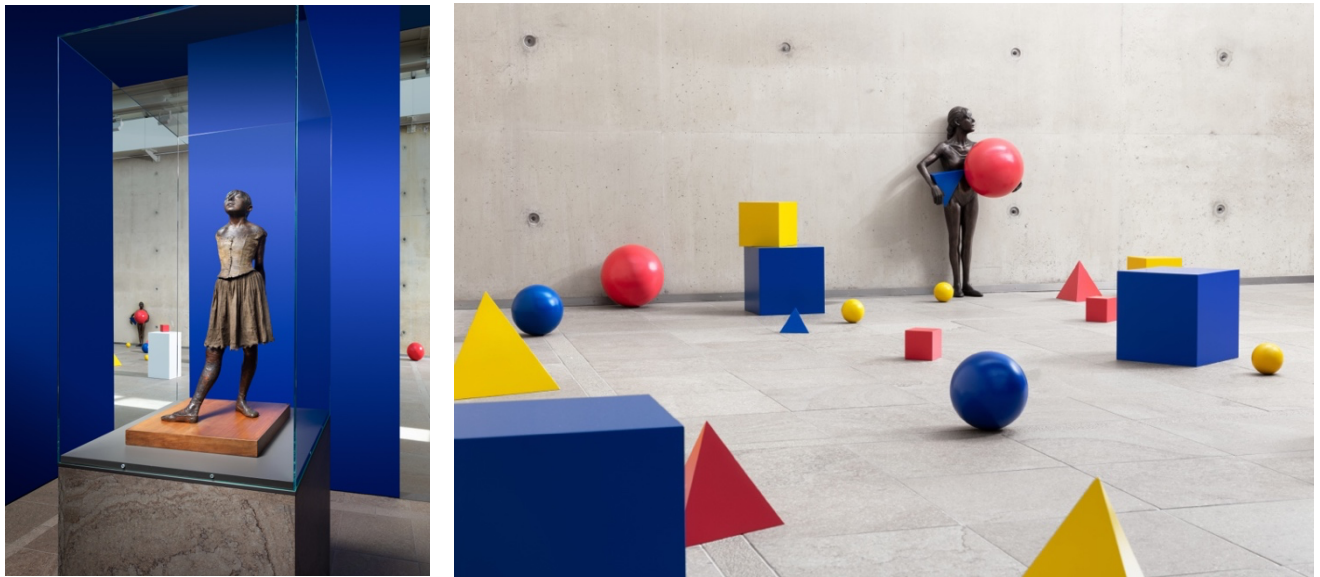
Overview exhibition *Ryan Gander x Edgar Degas – Pas de Deux*. © Ryan Gander c/o Pictoright
Amsterdam 2025. Photo: Studio Gerrit Schreurs

8 July 2025 – From 20 June 2025 to 4 January 2026 Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague will be staging *Ryan Gander x Edgar Degas – Pas de Deux*, the first solo exhibition of work by the British artist Ryan Gander in the Netherlands. This new exhibition creates a dialogue between Degas' *Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* and Gander's twenty-one contemporary reinterpretations of the famous ballerina. By placing her in ordinary, and sometimes absurd situations, Gander blurs the border between art and reality and he investigates the way in which we look at art. It is the first time that an overview is being shown of his ballerinas, which since 2008 have been collected worldwide. Information and tickets: www.beeldenaanze.nl

When the French artist Edgar Degas (1834 - 1917) showed his sculpture *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans* (1880 - 1881) publicly for the first time in Paris, it caused an uproar. Rather than being exalted or idealized, the young ballerina was depicted in a surprisingly realistic way: not cast in bronze, but modelled in wax, dressed in a cloth

tutu and wearing ballet slippers, and with a wig of real hair. More than a century later, since 2008, Ryan Gander (b. 1976) has been questioning the status of this vulnerable girl in a series of contemporary variations, with abstract, coloured cubes.

Ryan Gander (1976) is regarded as one of the most prominent artists from Great Britain. He studied photography and fine art at Manchester Metropolitan University (1999), followed by post-academic training at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht (2000) and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam (2002). His multi-faceted oeuvre covers a wide range of media, including sculpture, installation, animatronics, performance, design, and publications. His work is conceptual and sensual, often humorous, and always accessible.



Left: *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans*, Edgar Degas, 1880-1881 (1922). Collection Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Loan Stichting Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Right: *You walk into a space, any space, or, Poor little girl beaten by the game*, 2010, Ryan Gander. Zabłudowicz Collection. © Ryan Gander c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2025. Photo's: Studio Gerrit Schreurs

Gander has been exhibiting frequently and internationally since the early 2000s. *Ryan Gander X Edgar Degas – Pas de Deux* is his first solo exhibition in the Netherlands, with twenty-one loans from Europe and Japan. In Museum Beelden aan Zee his contemporary ballerinas are brought together for the first time and what is more in combination with Degas' historic masterpiece, a bronze sculpture from 1922 on loan from Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. In his series of reinterpretations Gander literally frees the fourteen year-old ballerina from her pedestal. "I turned the Degas sculpture into a spectator rather than a sculpture", he says.

The historic ballerina, usually a showpiece in an open museum gallery, becomes central in the exhibition inside a blue cube. The museum's director and curator Brigitte Bloksma explains: "What is normally regarded as an object of admiration in the museum, changes here into a moment of introspection and interaction. Gander gives the little dancer a will of her own. Leaning against a wall, playing or sitting on the floor, she sometimes just seems to be looking at you as a visitor. "Just like in Alice in Wonderland, in this exhibition you enter a world in which the usual rules no longer apply, and in which you yourself become part of a choreography".

For the artist the way in which we look at art in a museum – especially in Great Britain – is determined by taste, education and even class. The fact that the ballerina is still a child, on the threshold of adulthood, is therefore crucial for Ryan Gander: “In early adolescence people are their most creative. Young people approach art without stigma, and because of that they are able to react in a more interesting way. They interpret art straightforwardly – they say things that adults perhaps don’t dare to say because it seems too obvious.”



Left: *Merchant of light, or, Holding hands with academia to the point where we’re all kissing*, 2015. Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Right: *All things being equal, or, I’m with you*, 2018, Lisson Gallery. © Ryan Gander c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2025. Photo’s: Studio Gerrit Schreurs

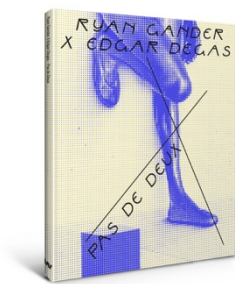
Gander’s light-hearted sculptures with their poetic titles change a static icon into a recognizable, human figure, full of uncertainties, doubts and desires. Visitors encounter the girl while she is dreaming, playing or smoking – sometimes introverted– or rebelling. *As old as time itself, slept alone* (2016) shows her lying down with her eyes closed, as if she’s asleep. The physical vulnerability of her young body is in contrast with the massive, bright-blue cube next to her. She seems to shut herself off from her surroundings while dreaming, as if she doesn’t want to be watched.

In this way, Gander reverses the historical power relations of Degas’ sculpture: from an object that is viewed to a figure of self-reflection. This perspective can also be seen in *I don’t blame you, or, When we made love you used to cry and I love you like the stars above and I’ll love you till I die* (2008), a sculpture of a seated girl with a

cigarette in her hand. Her pose is relaxed and almost meditative, as if she is consciously withdrawing from the spectacle that once determined her right to exist. *Waiting for timefall, or Living in a time where everything is possible, but nothing can happen* is the last in the series, made by Gander for Museum Beelden aan Zee.



I don't blame you, or, When we made love you used to cry and I love you like the stars above and I'll love you like the stars above and I'll love you 'til I die, Ryan Gander, 2008. Burger Collection Hong Kong. © Ryan Gander c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2025. Photo: Studio Gerrit Schreurs



A lavishly illustrated book is published, with an introduction by Brigitte Bloksma, an essay by Sandra Kisters, Director of Collections and Research at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, an interview with Ryan Gander by Lydia Figes, and quotes from the fourteen year-olds who viewed the sculptures earlier.

Like the fourteen-year-old dancer, all children up to and including fourteen get free access to the museum.

Museum Beelden aan Zee

Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague is the place in the Netherlands where sculpture, architecture and nature come together, with an exhibition and public programme in which tradition and innovation meet each other. The iconic museum building in the dunes offers space for around ten exhibitions every year.

Information and tickets: <https://www.beeldenaanzee.nl/en>

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