



Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now – Exhibition opens September 5 at the Amsterdam Museum

The Golden Coach is joined by Spinoza, Erasmus, Freemasons, Aletta Jacobs, Provo, Squatters, and Black Lives Matter

Beginning Sunday, September 5, not only can visitors to the Amsterdam Museum deepen their knowledge about the Golden Coach and its history but also pay a visit to the new exhibition *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now*. This exhibition lays out the connections between contemporary happenings and historical advancements, while encouraging reflection and discussion. *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now* is an initiative by the Amsterdam Museum and the Humanistisch Verbond and runs until February 27, 2022. The Humanistisch Verbond is celebrating 75 years of its commitment to freethinking and a constitutional democracy in which people can live freely and equally. The opening on Sunday, September 5, will be preceded in the afternoon by discussions at Felix Meritis with Jörgen Tjon A Fong, Nanoah Struik, Mitchell Esajas, Hedy d'Ancona and others. Nadia Moussaid will act as moderator.

From innovators to agitators

What is a freethinker? Many answers are possible. The organizers of the exhibition *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now* see freethinkers as innovators, idealists, subversives, free spirits, and activists. A freethinker looks beyond the prevailing morals and conventions and creates space for new thought. But anyone who is a freethinker in one person's view can be seen as an agitator by another. The exhibition provides an overview of four centuries of free spirits, from Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) to the present. How tolerant are we, actually, of aberrant thinkers and doers? To what extent do we allow space for the convictions of another? Can you “cancel” people for their opinion, and does everyone deserve a stage? Such questions are highly topical. The exhibition challenges visitors to determine their own position in this regard.

Amsterdam, city of freethinkers

The exhibition *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now* begins in Amsterdam, a city that since the seventeenth century has been associated with freethinking. On display are the censure imposed on Spinoza by the Jewish community in 1656 for “abominable heresies,” Theo van Gogh's typewriter, T-shirts from the first Black Lives Matter demonstration, and the handbag belonging to artist Tinkebell, which she made from her cat. The Amsterdam Museum reveals and relates what these critical minds thought, what drove them, and how society responded. Many were faced with condemnation, intimidation, repression, and violence. Anyone who dares to question risks coming under fire.

Artists as freethinkers

Themes such as religion, freedom of expression, feminism, gender, ethnicity, and the human relationship with nature continue to evoke fierce emotions today. To reflect on these themes, the Amsterdam Museum highlights historical thinkers who were engaged with them, as well as selected contemporary artists. Circus Andersom (Martijn Engelbregt), Aam Solleveld, Ni Haifeng, and Dominique Himmelsbach present new, space-filling installations. Remy Jungerman, Jeroen Jongeleen, Sunny Bergman, Melanie Bonajo, Renzo Martens, Tinkebell, Jonas Staal, Patricia Kaersenhout, Ari Versluis and Ellie Uyttenbroek, Jan Hoek, Wafae Ahalouch and Leendert Vooijce, and others offer their views on historical issues around freethinking through existing work. Henk Schiffmacher, Tim Hofman, Ulysse Ellian, David van Reybrouck, Nanoah Struik, Jerry Afriyie, Lale Gül, Hedy d'Ancona, Femke Halsema, Imane Valk, Nienke van Ittersum, and Samya Hafsaoui also share their visions on the subject in a video series of the museum.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the Amsterdam Museum and the Humanistisch Verbond and is made possible in part by the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Creative Industries Fund NL.

Note to editors, not for publication:

Soon we will make available an extensive fact sheet and press kit, containing an abundance of information about the exhibition *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now*. If you would like to receive one, please let us know via pr@amsterdammuseum.nl with “Freethinkers press kit” in the subject. The Amsterdam Museum will hold a press conference directly prior the opening, so the exhibition *Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now* can be visited at an opportune moment. A press invitation will follow.

For more information:

Peter Rosendaal / Press officer, Vrijdenkers: van Spinoza tot nu/Freethinkers: from Spinoza to now for the Amsterdam Museum / pr@amsterdammuseum.nl / 06 19 598 805