

## EXHIBITION

from May 17th  
to July 6th 2024

**opening reception with the artist**  
on Thursday, May 16th  
starting at 6pm

**book signing session**  
on Friday, May 17th  
starting at 5pm

**Galerie Martel**  
17, rue Martel – 75010 Paris  
contact@galeriemartel.fr  
+33 1 42 46 35 09  
2:30 pm to 7pm  
from Tuesday to Saturday  
www.galeriemartel.com

## BIBLIO + PICTO

*Every Picture Tells a Story... This vintage title by Rod Stewart, Joost Swarte fully embraces it: over half a century of comics, illustration, graphic design, architecture, and design, his drawings have never ceased to tell stories. Biblio+Picto, a recently released book by Dargaud, illustrates his multifaceted love for printed paper. And starting May 17th, Galerie Martel will proudly showcase iconic works and new creations of this artist whose mix of humor, imagination, and graphic precision sharply captures the soul of the world.*

Jopo de Pojo. Swarte's totemic anti-hero. It is he who will greet visitors at Galerie Martel. A Jopo on his deck chair, surrounded by musical instruments, always sporting his old Felix the Cat or Disney insect face, his golf knickers stolen from Tintin, his black hair forming a quaver. Jopo was born in 1972. Swarte, a little earlier, on December 24, 1947, in the Netherlands. As a teenager, he was passionate about graphic design, but the idea of illustration as a profession never occurred to him.

Faced with his poor academic results, his parents realized that practice could pull him out of the rut. They enrolled him in the workshop of a local artist, Roelof Klein. From Wednesday to Wednesday, drawing still lifes, he learns to look and see. He then lets his parents push him towards technical drawing, takes classes, dabbles in printing, colors, design. Without ever forgetting Roelof Klein's lessons.

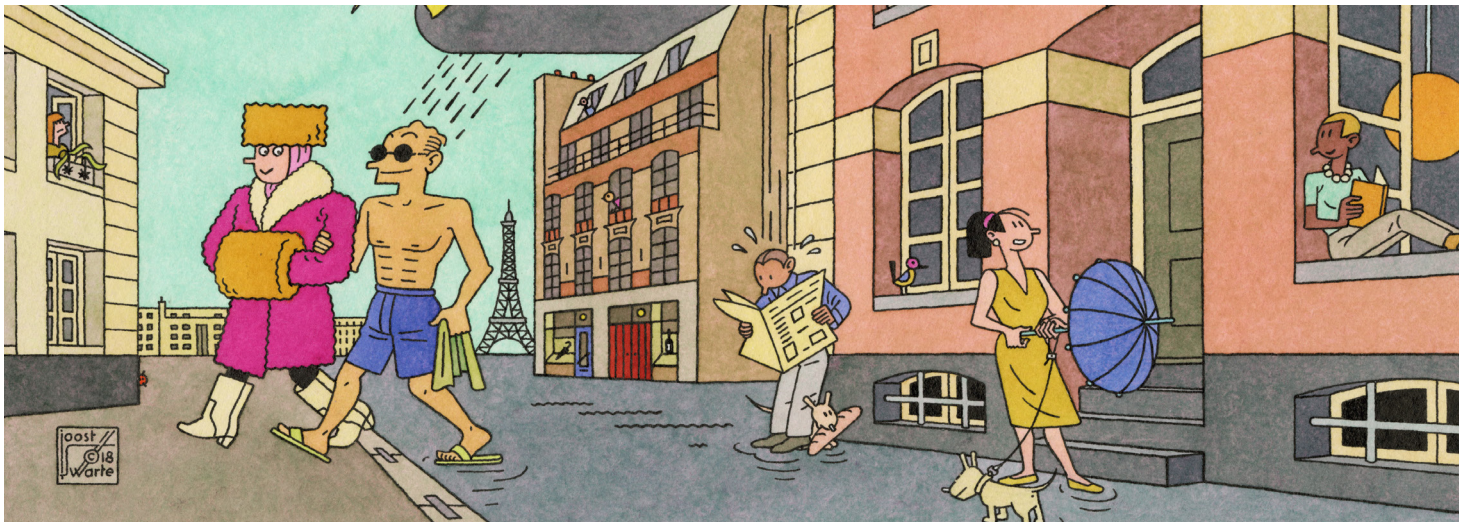
Then comes the underground scene. It shows Swarte that one can exist through drawing. He dives in, creates his title - *Modern Papier* -, participates in the legendary *Tante Leny Presenteert...* From the episode, he will always retain a keen sense of those details that give the drawing a second depth: a hand emerging from a sewer or an electrical bulb lying in ambush in a gutter. A fine example of this dense period - visible at Galerie Martel - is the cover of *Surprise*, the thunderous comic book magazine led by Willem: 'He had told me, take all the liberties,' Swarte recounts. 'I thought a somewhat 'X' treatment would be the least of things'.



## PRESS RELATIONS

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Indeed. In 1977, on the occasion of the exhibition dedicated to Hergé *Kuifje in Rotterdam*, Joost Swarte dedicated a booklet to the style of the Master and his barons. He titled it *De klare lijn* - the clear line, drawn with precision, an expression of a Flemish gardener aligning his tulips. Poorly translated in French as *Ligne claire*, the new label flourished. Swarte became the reference of the trend, which he defined as follows: «It seeks the simplicity of text and image through graphic means.» What else to say?

Since then, comic books represent only a fraction of Swarte's prodigious graphic production - but this latter, from posters to bookmarks, from portfolios to postage stamps, is always narrative-driven. Every picture... See, still at Galerie Martel, the original of his *Manicules*. These initially were old typographic signs - small hands with an extended index finger drawing attention to a point in the text. Swarte seizes them, distorts them, transforms them into dog heads or no-smoking signs.

A creator of pictograms often seeks objectivity. «I like to infuse them with meaning and humor,» he notes. Reproduced in *Biblio+Picto*, these *Manicules* coexist with other marvels - such as the studies of stained glass windows «The Birth of a Book,» illuminating the walls of the Sainte-Cécile convent in Grenoble. Publisher Jacques Glénat has set up his library there. Behind his laughter and smiles, Swarte - cartoonist, illustrator, graphic designer, satirist, author for youth, poster artist, creator of comics, ceramist, designer, in short, an artist in the fullest sense of the term - remains a champion of visual signs, from print to protest banners.

Death penalty, apartheid, Jewish raids in Amsterdam, terrorist attacks have nourished his libertarian gaze. True to his values, he also works extensively for the institutional, or rather the citizen - think of his drawings decorating the waiting room of a hospital for visually impaired children: simple and clear, they allow young patients to assess their deficiency on their own. Commissioned work? Personal creation? Does Swarte make a distinction? «Yes, but I like this distinction to be as small as possible.» Indeed, to the naked eye, his admirers will have a hard time distinguishing between the two categories.

François LANDON

