

art/ “Le Bathtub”



John Richardson

# Forget London's Tate Modern, Bilbao's Guggenheim and Paris's Pompidou Centre, we've got...



## ...Le Bathtub



Grab your towels, an urn of Cleopatra-white milk and let's soak up some modern art. After an eight-year renovation full of drama, including a three-year delay, a bankrupt construction company, a budget exceeding millions of euros, the Stedelijk Museum has now been finally opened by Queen Beatrix on Sept 23, 2012.

Le Bathtub, I'm told, is made from a bullet-proof composite of carbon and twaron tiber normally used in the boat or aerospace industry—a Dutch invention five times stronger than steel. With its sloping sides and white legs, the extension's seamless 3,000 square metre (32,000 square foot) surface is the largest composite building in the world.

Once in I quickly found the escalator. Now this really is a work of art. A tunnel of white light descending into the soul of the Stedelijk.

The first exhibition out of the tap is 'Beyond Imagination' featuring young artists from as far away as Japan and Lithuania and have at some point studied or been part of residency programmes in the Netherlands.

Modern art allows us all to agree to disagree. What we don't want is to allow multi-cultural art to be shown in galleries, but no tolerance to be shown on our streets.

The Stedelijk is proud of the controversy it has caused over the years. I like the way the "Beyond Imagination" exhibition is a subtle dig at the rising anti-immigrant politics in the Netherlands, and throughout the world. If nothing else, great modern art mirrors the beauty of diversity. Which is controversial by its very nature.

*Would it, should it, have made any difference if Rembrandt was Turkish, Van Gogh was Indonesian, Vermeer was Moroccan, Escher was Surinamese...?*

*The Stedelijk modern art museum runs its first controversial bath*