



HeHe: Undercurrent Oud Sint-Jan Site

On the occasion of the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015, eighteen artists created works that imagine a confrontation between a small, preserved medieval city and a 21st century megapolis. The German-British artist duo HeHe makes this confrontation visible and audible. They placed a wrecked high-voltage pylon in the canal at the Oud Sint-Jan site, a place that exudes medieval atmosphere. The crackling and flashing installation draws attention to the modern infrastructure that lies behind the idyllic, timeless image of Bruges.

Undercurrent

A large-scale sculpture of modern technology in a setting of canals, stepped gables and horse-drawn carriages: HeHe disrupts the idyll of medieval Bruges. *Undercurrent* triggers a visual and auditory shock wave in an environment where there are no signs of an industrial or technological revolution ever having occurred.

The size of the steel structure contrasts with the small scale of the buildings and canals around it. The pylon emits electrical hums, hisses, ticks and crackles. Cables float on the water. At night, there are flashes of light. The seemingly archaic construction disturbs the image of the preserved old town. It tarnishes and it demands attention, just as the omnipresence of pylons in other environments disturbs the landscapes and lives around them.

The floating pylon also prompts reflection on urban issues, such as energy supply and massive energy consumption, light and noise pollution, changing energy needs and the demand for cities to be sustainable. The high-voltage pylon is a symbol of progress and collective energy. Does the fallen pylon refer to the end of utopian aspirations or to wasting energy? Or will it rise again from the waters? At the same time, this installation underlines the inevitability of signs of technology floating to the surface - even in a city that is operated as a shiny, historical oasis.

HeHe takes a lighthearted approach to examining aspects of transformation and energy transfer. They frequently cause symbols and metaphors to converge with daily reality and they confront and expose the implications and hidden dimensions of ecological threats. Important to their work is the interplay between the microscopically small and the gigantically large: an example is electrical energy, itself invisible and yet generated by huge machines and distributed through highly visible networks. We then use this same energy to hide the gargantuan machinery. This paradox is alive and well in Bruges, an apparently medieval city where any reference to its electrical network is hidden or denied, while the city could not function without a daily power supply. By making this symbol of the invisible abruptly present on a stage where it cannot be ignored, HeHe creates an ironic commentary: a mass-produced object becomes a curiosity in a city that counts on its preserved past to make it unique.



Bio HeHe

The British artist Helen Evans (°1972, Welwyn Garden City, UK) and the German artist Heiko Hansen (°1970, Pinneberg, DE) formed their multimedia art partnership in 1999 and live and work in Paris. Their installations and interventions form a gentle admonishment to society. Having trained at the Royal Academy of Art in London just before the millennium, they were drawn to practice a critical design approach that favours digital media. Hansen originally studied engineering but gradually moved to industrial and computer-related design. Evans has a background in theatre design, computer-related design and interactive multimedia. Along with an overview of past projects and publications, their website features a non-copyrighted page that makes electronic programming accessible to all creative people who wish to use it. HeHe wants to integrate art into daily life. By magnifying and manipulating ordinary life in all its manifestations, they provoke reactions and reflections from viewers. Humour and technology go hand in hand in HeHe's work, with the aim of capturing the public's attention and stimulating critical thought. The core of their artistic practice is experimentation with new materials and the development of prototypes that help to further their research. Their playful designs use repurposed objects in often surprising ways. In one such project, they designed an alternative Paris metro: an individual means of transport that uses the metro train tracks.

www.hehe.org

Visitor information

20.05 - 18.10.2015
Site Oud Sint-Jan, Mariastraat 38, 8000 Bruges

Further press information

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Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015 20 May – 18 October 2015

What if the five million tourists who visit Bruges annually were to stay? What if a small, preserved, historic city should suddenly become a megapolis? This is the premise for the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015. Eighteen international artists create new works that form an art trail through the city centre. Three indoor exhibitions provide the opportunity to further explore and contextualise the topics. Bruges will be transformed into URB EGG: the Triennial cracks the egg of Bruges in order to reinvent the city from the inside out.

Information and programme: www.triennalebrugge.be
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