



## Romy Achituv, Cataract Gorge Sasplein

On the occasion of the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015, the Israeli-American artist Romy Achituv creates a site-specific work for the Sasplein. A storm rages on the otherwise placid Bruges waters; a typical Gothic step-gable house drifts on the suddenly turbulent canal. The installation questions the wisdom of a city that insists on preserving its heritage intact for the sake of tourism, resulting in socio-cultural stagnation.

### Cataract Gorge

'Cataract' recalls rapids but also the cataracts that can cloud our eyes as we grow old. 'Gorge' also has two meanings: a narrow valley with steep, rocky sides through which a river flows, and to eat greedily or indulge oneself. Romy Achituv's installation embraces all these meanings.

The location he chose for this site-specific work is a lock in the north of the Bruges 'egg', the place where the city is linked to the sea.

*Cataract Gorge* simulates a storm in the city. The floating house and the churning waters refer to both the past and the future of Bruges. For Achituv, the canals are a living testimony to Bruges' glorious heyday, the arteries along which the goods and wealth of the city flowed in and out. Today, the canals are no more than silent witnesses to the period when trade made Bruges an economic powerhouse where the arts flourished. Although this centuries-old cultural heritage is frozen in time, it is still responsible for putting Bruges on the world map.

Achituv finds it paradoxical that the once glorious waterways of the city are now used solely to transport an endless stream of tourists. The millions of annual visitors often seem to be fixated on this timeless, preserved quality of Bruges. It is ironic that, as a result of their expectations, a once dynamic city should become a frozen image and that the city's natural development should thus be stunted along with its prospects for social and economic change.

In Bruges, contemporary life is played out against the backdrop of an immovable moment in the city's history. But what is the real price of preserving a well-loved and unique medieval townscape? This issue remains hidden to a large extent from the visiting masses, who are blinded by the city's picturesque façade, but also from the inhabitants who have grown accustomed to living with the strict regulations that dictate the conservation of this world heritage site.

By literally and symbolically stirring up the waters, Romy Achituv creates a metaphor for change. His installation, a riveting spectacle on the water, asks us to consider the forces that are at work behind the frozen facade of the city. How will the city handle the mobilising/immobilising future impact of a conservative preservation policy on its social and cultural evolution?



### **Bio Romy Achituv**

°1958, Rome (IT)

The artistic output of the Israeli-American artist Romy Achituv is not easy to categorise. With a background in sculpture, philosophy and new media, since 1995 he has espoused a unique visual language. His interest turned to new technologies early on, which he uses in an innovative manner to underscore his themes. Several of the technologies developed by Achituv have been patented.

His multidisciplinary practice comprises installation art, mixed-media performances and sculpture, with spectacle, memory, language and time as central components. In his understated performances, Achituv shares critical reflections on social issues and phenomena with the public, whom he regularly invites to participate.

Romy Achituv divides his time between New York and Israel, but has been living in Seoul, South Korea, where until recently he was WCU Professor of New Media at Hongik University. The rapidly changing Korean society and culture has influenced his recent work. Achituv interweaves memories and the passage of time into his work as a commentary on the changes wrought on a city that is transforming into a megapolis at breakneck speed. Achituv is a founding member of ARTEAM, an interdisciplinary art collective based in Israel. He is a recipient of the European Media Arts Festival Critics Choice Award, the ID Magazine Design Award and has received grants from Greenwall and the Harpo Foundation.

[www.gavaligai.com](http://www.gavaligai.com)

### **Visitor information**

20.05 - 18.10.2015

Sasplein

Accessible 24/7

#CATARACTGORGE

### **Further press information**

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### **Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015**

**20 May – 18 October 2015**

What if Bruges' five million annual visitors 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 is 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](http://www.triennalebrugge.be)

Facebook: Triennale Brugge 2015

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**20 MAY**

**18 OCT**

PRESS RELEASE TRIENNIAL BRUGES 2015 - pag.2

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