



Press release Watou Arts Festival 16 March 2021

'WATOU 2021' INVITES YOU

The city of Poperinge and the curators of the Watou Arts Festival, Benedicte Goesaert, Chantal Pattyn and Peter Verhelst already cast a first glance on 'Watou 2021'. The 40th edition represents movement, harmony, humanity and intensity, and follows a renewed and surprising route.

→

'WATOU 2021': THE POSITION OF MANKIND IN THE WORLD

The curators Benedicte Goesaert, Chantal Pattyn and Peter Verhelst have realized 'Watou 2021' as an outstretched hand to experience poetry and visual art with brains, senses and feelings, thus being filled with the multi-layered nature of art.

“When the world is changing under our eyes and we cannot yet name what we see. When everything we have been thinking and assuming to be true for decades is under pressure. When, deprived of our certainties, we feel unsafe. When the world has become complicated, then there is one place where all those insecurities, all that violence, all that unrest, all that complexity, and all that beauty and all that longing come together: art. It is there that we live intensely, when making art, experiencing art, and remembering art.”

'Watou 2021' starts from within mankind himself. The curators ask themselves the question: What is our role and position in this world? What is the impact of recent transformations on our humanity?

“Due to the accrual of technology and artificial intelligence, but also because of the worldwide crisis that we are experiencing, we lean not only on our rational, but also on our emotional, spiritual, intuitive and biological intelligence. The familiar has been replaced by the confrontational and the uncomfortable. It challenges us to keep our minds open and dynamic. With movement as a constant factor. To the other and the different.”

Art and poetry always impose multiple perspectives, according to the curators. “Many forms and substantive visions exist simultaneously and without a hierarchy. There is no absolutely right, there is no truth, there is only harmony, and that harmony is a richness.”

ART, POETRY, NATURE AND ONE ANOTHER

The curators invite the public to look, read, feel, reflect and connect. With art, poetry, nature and one another. The arts festival has more than 30 visual artists. The selection includes a.o. Arocha & Schraenen (B/VE), Edith Dekyndt (B), Bram De Munter (B), Tracey Emin (GB), Nadia Gerroui (F), Esther Kläs & Gustavo Gomes (D; see photo), Mark Manders (B/NL), Neo Matloga (SA), Vincent Meessen (B) and Johan Van Geluwe (B †).

The participating poets are established names from Flanders and the Netherlands, such as Anna Enquist. Or deceased poets, such as Gerrit Kouwenaar. The selection consists of at least 5 debutantes, 3 who have not even made their début as poets, half-forgotten

poets (Jos de Haes) and superstars (Marieke Lucas Rijneveld). Stefan Hertmans, who has turned 70, will be celebrated in the opening weekend.

A selection of 14 poems can also be rediscovered along the 'Watou Poems Trail 2021'. The alternative to the arts festival in the summer of 2020 is also on the program this year. Nature and poetry come together in a bicycle ride between Poperinge and Watou.

ART TRAIL IN MOTION

The artistic vision of the curators, in which the concept of movement is the focal point, translates into a renewed and extensive art trail for 'Watou 2021'. Visitors move between three corners of the trail: Watou, the artistic town itself, the centre of Poperinge and the new location, Kasteel De Lovie, in between.

Visitors will recognize well-known locations in Watou itself. A number of new locations will provide a surprising route through the town. Watou remains the base of the arts festival and will display the majority of the artists and poets.

In the centre of Poperinge, the curators paid much attention to the unique interior of the Gasthuiskapel. The chapel was originally a 'passers-by's guest house', but from the 18th century onwards, caring for the sick was the main focal point. The chapel mainly serves as an exhibition area today.

The 'De Lovie' Castle completes the picture of 'Watou 2021'. The castle is a witness to the living culture of the aristocracy in the 19th century and it has a unique history. The castle and park offer special opportunities for the presentation of art and poetry. The extensive domain also has many advantages for people with a disability who reside, work or attend school there. The park is one of the locations of De Lovie vzw (non-profit), a social organization that supports children, young people and adults in the spacious Westhoek.

Including these two remote locations in the arts trail was not only an artistic choice, but it also fits in with a broader vision of a safe organization of the arts festival. Deputy Mayor of Culture, Loes Vandromme: "The world will not be completely free of the corona virus this summer. We will adapt the practical operation of the festival in this regard. The addition of the Gasthuiskapel and the De Lovie Castle ensures a wider distribution of visitors and contributes to a safe and relaxed experience for everyone. Not only visual art and poetry, but also the new locations will be a discovery for the public."

The city of Poperinge works together with Westtoer and the province of West Flanders to guarantee a seamless connection between the three corners of the route. Visitors can take advantage of a free shuttle bus to move between the locations without any worries. “With stops at the train station and the centre of Poperinge, we would like to limit car traffic to Watou and thus extend the pursuit of sustainable mobility from the province of West Flanders to the Watou Arts Festival,” according to Deputy Sabien Lahaye-Battheu.

VISIT ‘WATOU 2021’

‘Watou 2021’ takes place from 3 July to 5 September. The arts festival can be visited from Wednesday to Monday, from 11H00 to 19H00. Closed on Tuesdays. A standard ticket costs 20 Euro. Reservations are made online in advance, according to time slots. A maximum number of visitors will be allowed per day and per time slot; again, with the view to a safe experience for everyone. Ticket sales start mid-May. The shuttle bus is included in the ticket, as well as the use of the new peripheral car park in Watou.

Deputy Mayor of Culture, Loes Vandromme: “The ticket will be valid for several days to give the public the opportunity to fully enjoy the arts festival, but also the surroundings, Poperinge and the Westhoek. ‘Watou 2021’ does not only offer art and poetry, but also nature, tranquillity and relaxation. “With the support of Westtoer, the organization would like to inspire the public to combine a visit to the Watou Arts Festival with a stay in Poperinge, or the Westhoek.

.....

ALL INFORMATION

www.kunstenfestivalwatou.be

CONTACT

Loes
Vandromme
Deputy Mayor of
Culture

loes.vandromme@
poperinge.be
0478 60 91 05

Matthias
Breyne
Project coordinator

matthias.breyne@
poperinge.be
057 34 66 86

Jessy
Clynckemaillie
Project co-worker
communication

jessy.clynckemaillie@
poperinge.be
057 34 66 86

Chantal Pattyn
Curator

chantal.pattyn@vrt.be