



Press Release Watou Arts Festival 16.03.2022

WATOU 2022 – Sense of Place

The city of Poperinge, inspirator Koen Vanmechelen and the curators of the Watou Arts Festival, James Putnam and Michaël Vandebril, give us a first glimpse of Watou 2022. This edition focuses on interconnectedness, on interaction between the village and the artists, on the interplay between art and poetry.

→

KOEN VANMECHELEN ON PATCHWORK

Watou 2022 opts for avant-garde and resolutely draws the card of experimentation. An open call was launched at the beginning of 2021 under the name 'Patchwork'. "The result of this multi-day gathering can lead to a new concept for Watou, translated into several in situ artworks, which will be shown to the general public at Watou the following year. A patchwork of impressions, an unpredictable whole of different elements." says **Koen Vanmechelen**, inspirator of Patchwork.

After Patchwork, the participating artists submitted their proposals. An international jury selected twenty projects that are now being developed for Watou 2022. The result will be exhibited at Watou 2022: exclusively new work, 100% in situ.

JAMES PUTNAM ON "SENSE OF PLACE"

James Putnam is the curator for the visual arts. "An artwork installed in a public space needs to be site specific and therefore have a sense of place. The work doesn't have to merely beautify the place but needs to provoke or stimulate thought in an aesthetic way having some significance to its site.", says Putnam. "The art works that are chosen are intended to have 'a sense of place' in that they convey a very direct message about the artist's commitment to the site they have visited and their understanding and appreciation of the local culture and traditions."

The Patchwork jury selected a mix of individual artists and collectives, from Belgium and abroad, from different disciplines:

Angelika Fuchs – Anne ten Ham – Atelier Haute Cuisine – Barbara Callewaert and Jo Verhenne – Bart Eysink Smeets – Danielle Van Vree – De Reuringdienst – Helena Cnockaert – Hendrik Vermeulen – Ilke Cop – Mikes Poppe – Rob Voerman – Schellekens – Selvatico – Tina Wilke and Matías Brunacci – Tom Bogaert – Tomas Bachot and Roland Deketelaere

Bearing in mind the principle of 'sense of place', curator Putnam also selects a number of existing works that will be on view in Watou. He selected works by Koen Vanmechelen and Gavin Turk, among others.

ANOTHER OPEN CALL

This year, Arts Festival Watou launches another open call to professional artists and final-year art students from all disciplines. Koen Vanmechelen will once again take on the role of inspirator. "Watou, located on a linguistic and cultural border, serves as an inspiration for many artists. In the village, it is also necessary to connect the local wealth and global context in a fertilizing way, and in a way that will strengthen the balance rather than disturb it. The Watou nest, at the crossroads of poetry, landscape, and agriculture is an ideal place for responding to and involving the local community. Searching for a new way of farming, of building and connecting with boots on the ground and the view beyond the horizon.."

A jury selects the candidates based on motivation, CV and portfolio. After a three-day stay in Watou, they are asked to submit a proposal for a new art installation. The same jury will choose from these proposals the artworks that will be exhibited during Watou 2023.

Registration for the open call is possible until April 25, 2022 via the website.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN POETRY, VISUAL ART AND THE VILLAGE

To shape the poetry section, the organization sought and found a second curator. **Michaël Vandebril** selected twenty poets who were inspired by the Patchworkers' artworks: "The poets are given the creative task of writing a new poem or text for Watou 2022. These poems will be placed nearby the artworks: typographically, auditory, as a video projection or other. In this way, a direct link between the poems and the artworks is ensured."

Watou 2022 will feature new poetic work by more than 20 poets, including:

Maud Vanhauwaert – Anne Provoost – Peter Holvoet-Hanssen – Laurence Vielle – Amina Belorf – Astrid Haerens – Marie Darah – Giovanni Baudonck – Mark van Tongele – Antoine Boute – Els Moors – Alex Deforce – Stijn Vranken

VISIT WATOU 2022

Arts Festival Watou 2022 will take place from July 2 to September 4. The arts festival can be visited from Wednesday to Monday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. each time. Tuesday is the closing day. Tickets can be purchased from mid-May via the website for 20 euros (standard price).

In Watou itself, visitors will recognize familiar locations. A number of new locations will provide a surprising route through the village. Watou remains the base of the arts festival and showcases the bulk of the artists and poets. Just like last year, Kasteel De Lovie will again be part of the route this edition.

BIO INSPIRATOR EN CURATORS

Koen Vanmechelen (inspirator Patchwork)



Koen Vanmechelen (1965) is a conceptual artist. His work explores the importance of bio-cultural diversity, identity and community. Known for his Cosmopolitan Chicken Project (CCP) in which he crosses domesticated chickens from different countries as a statement on how diversity can shape the global cultural and genetic mix. Operating since 2017 from LABIOMISTA, his evolving 24-hectare artwork in Genk.

James Putnam (curator Watou 2022 – Visual Arts)



James Putnam is an independent curator and writer. He studied Art History at London University, was Visiting Scholar in Museum Studies at New York University, and Senior Lecturer in Curating at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London (2004-2011) and Senior Research Fellow: Exhibitions at University of the Arts, London (2010-2021). He founded and was curator of the British Museum's

Contemporary Arts and Cultures Programme from 1999 to 2003. His book 'Art and Artifact – The Museum as Medium' (Thames & Hudson, 2000/10) surveys the interaction between contemporary artists and the museum. Since 1994, he has organised a number of critically-acclaimed exhibitions for major museums, juxtaposing the work of contemporary artists with their collections. In the last decade, he has regularly curated projects for biennials, both in Asia and Venice.

Michaël Vandebril (curator Watou 2022 – Poetry)



Michaël Vandebril (1972) is a poet, curator and literary organizer. He has been working as coordinator of Antwerp Book City since 2003, of which the Antwerp City Poetry is one of the eye-catching projects. With initiator Peter De Roo he started the writing residency House of the Poet in Watou in 2018. In 2018, together with Jan Ducheyne and Laurence Vielle, he founded the Party for Poetry/Parti pour la Poésie.

Michaël Vandebril made his debut as a poet in 2012 with De Bezige Bij Antwerpen with the poetry collection 'Het vertrek van Maeterlinck', good for several printings, the Herman de Coninck Debuutprijs and a nomination for the C. Buddingh'-prijs. In 2016 his second collection 'New Romantics' was published by Polis publishers. In March 2021 his third collection 'Op de weg van Appia' appeared, in which he

summarizes the trail of the Roman Via Appia in 455 verses, with drawings by Bart Pluym. His poems have since been translated into eight languages.

Jury Patchwork 2021 – Curatorial team

James Putnam (independent curator and author), Koen Vanmechelen (artist), Jill Silverman of Coenegrachts (founder JSVC Projects), Hans Van Dyck (behavioral biologist), Loes Vandromme

(Deputy Mayor of Culture), Peter Verhelst (author), Sabiha Keyif (art historian and curator), Marjan Doom (director Ghent University Museum, curator)

Jury Patchwork 2022 – Curatorial team

Koen Vanmechelen, Loes Vandromme, Michaël Vandebril (poet and curator), Marjan Doom, Edith Doove (curator, writer and researcher), Dirk Draulans (biologist, journalist and writer), James Putnam, Jill Silverman Van Coenegrachts en Sabiha Keyif.

.....

ALL INFORMATION

www.kunstenfestivalwatou.be/en

CONTACT

Loes
Vandromme
Deputy Mayor of
Culture

loes.vandromme
@poperinge.be
0478 60 91 05

Annemie
Morisse
Project coordinator

annemie.morisse
@poperinge.be
0474 24 39 24

Kaat
Vander Roost
Communication and press

kaat.vanderroost
@poperinge.be
0473 36 82 38

Lize
Chielens
Production

lize.chielens
@poperinge.be
0478 24 61 03