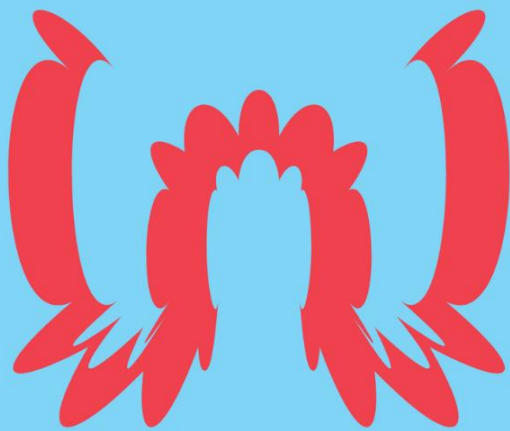


**PRESS RELEASE**



**Watou**

06.07  
-01.09

Landscape  
of the  
Imagination

**2024**

[kunstenfestivalwatou.be](http://kunstenfestivalwatou.be)

een organisatie van de stad Poperinge

## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

# Watou Arts Festival 2024 makes room for imagination

**March 11, 2024, Watou – The city of Poperinge, inspirator Koen Vanmechelen and curators James Putnam and Michaël Vandebril present the 2024 edition of Watou Arts Festival. 'Landscape of the Imagination' will take place from July 6 to September 1. Artists and poets will showcase the power of the imagination, in dialogue with each other and with several unique locations in and around the village and castle De Lovie.**

### **Imagination as an engine of change**

The new edition of the Watou Arts Festival focuses on the power of the imagination. After two successful editions, Koen Vanmechelen and Michaël Vandebril assume their role, for the third consecutive time, as respectively inspirer and curator of poetry. James Putnam, who has previously (in 2022) assumed the role of visual arts curator, completes the three-member curatorial team.

Many of the artists developed their works in dialogue with Watou's locality. In the spring of 2023, a record number of 200 artists registered for the open call 'Patchwork'. An international jury - chaired by Koen Vanmechelen and consisting of Dirk Draulans, Jo Coucke, Marjan Doom, James Putnam, Edith Doove, Michaël Vandebril, Sabiha Keyif and Loes Vandromme - selected the participants for the summer camp. Their ideas 'flow' from the landscape, which resulted in some twenty new realizations. As a result, the artworks are sometimes playful, but at the same time thought-provoking.

*"We are in need of new landscapes. Places of experimentation, refuges and spaces where a new humanity can be born." - Koen Vanmechelen, inspirator*



James Putnam, Koen Vanmechelen and Michaël Vandebril in Kasteel De Lovie, ©Goele Schoofs

*"The creative imagination blurs the boundary between dreaming and waking life and is often in tune with the collective consciousness and memory. Art can be the vehicle to open our imagination and we become aware of its power to transform and make a difference. It can be a vehicle for ideas and feelings explored by artists on a personal level that may also have a deeper, more universal significance.*  
– James Putnam, curator contemporary art

The interconnectedness between the village, the landscape, the poets and the artists is what makes this festival so unique. Curator Michaël Vandebril once again opts for new creations by twenty poets, who enter into conversation with the work of the visual artists and with the village.

*"Poetry creates inner landscapes in which to wander, just like in a village. New poems enter into dialogue with the works of art. They invite a journey in head and heart. Watou is the destination, but for everyone the journey is different. The landscape of art and poetry changes with every glance. The poems are integrated in many ways: typographic, auditory or through video. Jelle Jespers will be responsible for the design aspect."*  
- Michaël Vandebril, curator of poetry

During 'Landscape of the Imagination', artists and poets approach the concept of "imagination" as an inner psychological landscape that exists between people and the physical spaces around them. Through words and images, they aim to make us aware of the power imagination possesses to transform and make a difference. Their work will be on display in several locations in and around the village. Castle De Lovie in Poperinge once again plays an important role.

Artist Mikes Poppe, who impressed in 2022 with his durational performance is planning a new long-term performance. Where "And the farmer, he ploughed on" had a field as its canvas, he will venture onto water as the second part of his diptych for Watou.

*"The scope of the Watou Arts Festival Watou reaches beyond the village. It creates a creative landscape that embraces the entire region. In a world yearning for new perspectives, Watou is a gateway to a shared world of imagination where art has the power to enrich and transform."*  
- Loes Vandromme, Alderman for Culture

#### **A selection of participating artists\*:**

Pato Bosich (CL) – Cecile Broekaert (BE) – Monique Broekman (NL) – Linde Carriijn & Dijn Sanders (BE) – Mat Collishaw (GB) – Matthijs De Block (BE) – Lieze De Middel (BE) – Werner de Valk (NL) – Joost Elschot (NL) – Karolina Halatek (PL) – Mariko Hori (JP) – John Isaacs (GB) – Lafleur & Bogaert (HT & BE) – Ilya Kabakov (RU) – Carel Lanter & Lee Eun Young (NL & KR) – Mashid Mohadjerin & Jan De Vroede (IR & BE) – Daan Navarrete-van der Pluijm (NL) – Alice Obee (BE) – Mikes Poppe (BE) – Roundhouse Platform (US) – Marina Resende Santos (BR) – Anila Rubiku (AL) – Sanne van Balen (NL) – Lieke van der Meer (NL) – Lie van der Werff (NL) – Laura Vandewynckel (BE) – Koen Vanmechelen (BE)

\*more to be announced

**A selection of participating poets\*:**

Benno Barnard (NL) – Moya De Feyter (BE) – Dominique De Groen (BE) – Paul Demets (BE) – Al Galidi (NL) – Ingmar Heytze (NL) – Doina Ioanid (RO) – Frank Keizer (NL) – collectief Letterzetter (Imane Karroumi - Loeke Vanhoutteghem - Veronica Schmalz - Alice Boudry - Maite Vanthournout) (BE) – Jens Meijen (BE) – Carl Norac (BE) – Maria van Daalen (NL) – Marjolijn van Heemstra (NL) – Anke Verschueren (BE) – Billie Vos (BE) – Daniëlle Zawadi (NL) – Emma Zuiderveld (NL)  
\*more to be announced

**Cycling route with climate poetry and poetry podcast**

Watou Arts Festival is making an entente with the Climate Poets. The **new bike route**, "Swimming Lessons for Later," features thirteen climate poets.

*"At the end of last year, the Westhoek and also Watou were severely flooded. It is clear that the climate is changing. Do we watch idly by or do we do something about it? With their poetry, the climate poets want to alarm, mobilize and above all inspire courage to care for this world that is our home. We are also facilitating the project 'Let everything be grounded here' by the Climate Poets led by Sara Eelen and Poëziecentrum that wants to give a voice to the landscape threatened by humans."*

- Michaël Vandebril, curator of poetry

The bike route guides cyclists past climate poems by Saskia van Leendert, Anke Cuijpers, Lies Van Gasse, David Troch, Jana Arns, Seckou Ouologuem, Heidi Koren, Yousra Benfquih, Jee Kast, Alex Gentjens, Sylvie Marie, Pieter Van de Walle and Sara Eelen.

The **poetry podcast** "House of the Poet" returns for a second season. Literary journalist Jelle Van Riet and audio-maker Pauline Augustyn are creating a new series of six episodes from the writer's residence Huis van de Dichter in Watou, which will be presented on the podcast platform of De Standaard and during the Arts Festival.

*"In each episode, I talk to a guest poet about poetry & life based on one poem from their oeuvre. I also let readers have their say. My guests this year are Bart Moeyaert, Moya De Feyter, Benno Barnard, Daniëlle Zawadi, Ted Van Lieshout and Maria Barnas."*

- Jelle Van Riet

The poets are presented with questions such as "Why don't poets just say what they mean?", "Does poetry have to be beautiful?", or "Does poetry help with heartbreak?". Jelle Van Riet spends a day, a night and a morning with these poets. Their conversations are captioned, while walking in the fields, at the kitchen table, in a local café. Outdoor and home sounds are an integral part of the soundtrack. The poetry podcast is produced by writer's residence Huis van de Dichter in coproduction with Poëziecentrum, Kunstenfestival Watou and De Standaard, with the support of Literatuur Vlaanderen. During the festival visitors will be able to listen to all episodes in a designated podcast room.

## **Watou Live**

This summer the Arts Festival once again brings an exciting program of events. During 'Watou Live' you will discover numerous performances, concerts and fascinating encounters. The line-up consists of established names, but especially a lot of up-and-coming talent. All activities are included in the festival ticket.

### **Line-up \*:**

Roufaida - Ciggy Sunday – Oerherth - Floris Francis Arthur - Ivy Falls - Johannes is zijn naam - Arend Delabie - Rosa Butsi - 2Systems - Johan Bruyneel - Eve Beuvs - Dorian Dumont - Susato Trio - Hand Electric

\*more to be announced

## **Early bird promotion and accommodation package**

The Arts Festival is once again launching an early-booking campaign: from May 1, tickets will go on sale for 18 euros. The ticket is valid for several days, so a visit can be spread out for a more relaxed experience. Tourism Poperinge has developed an accommodation package with a number of hotels, guest rooms and vacation homes in Poperinge to fully enjoy the Arts Festival. Anyone who books an accommodation package receives a welcome package worth 80 euros, which includes a festival ticket, a visitors' guide, tickets for the Hop Museum, a booklet of coupons, a tasty local product and a specially brewed festival beer. The lodging packages can be reserved starting May 1 at [ww.toerismepoperinge.be](http://ww.toerismepoperinge.be).

## **Open call**

*“If grass smells like concrete, a village will lose the authenticity needed to survive.*

*The balance will shift.”*

*– Koen Vanmechelen, inspirator*

For the next edition of the art festival, we aim for a Watou shaped by collectives and collabs, celebrating the diversity and strength of collaborative creation. The theme of this year's open call, "The Smell of Grass is Changing", represents the adaptation, transformation and renewal we seek in the arts, inviting reflection on our changing world and its impact on our creative process and interactions. With this adage, internationally acclaimed artist Koen Vanmechelen, the inspirator behind Patchwwork, the experimental precursor to the Watou Art Festival, invites artists to engage in a new unique creative journey. Since 2021, Vanmechelen has initiated Patchwwork as a research project, organising an in situ 'artist' encampment as an immersive experiment and learning process, culminating in this new call. For the next edition, we seek collectives and collabs eager to contribute to Watou's evolution and transformation, engaging in a journey stimulating both senses and mind.

Registration is open from March 15 to May 31, 2024. Selected collectives and collabs will be invited to submit a proposal for a next edition of Watou Arts Festival.



### INFO

Watou Arts Festival - Landscape of the Imagination  
Saturday July 6 to Sunday September 1, 2024  
Early booking campaign from May 1: tickets on sale at 18 euro

[kunstenfestivalwatou.be](http://kunstenfestivalwatou.be)

### CONTACT INFO

Loes Vandromme  
*Alderman for Culture*  
[loes.vandromme@poperinge.be](mailto:loes.vandromme@poperinge.be)  
0478 60 91 05

Annemie Morisse  
*Project coordinator*  
[annemie.morisse@poperinge.be](mailto:annemie.morisse@poperinge.be)  
0474 24 39 24

Valérie Van Haute  
*Press and communication*  
[valerie@regelsvandekunst.be](mailto:valerie@regelsvandekunst.be)  
0472 21 74 50

Lize Chielens  
*Production*  
[lize.chielens@poperinge.be](mailto:lize.chielens@poperinge.be)  
0478 24 61 03

*The Watou Arts Festival is organised by the city of Poperinge..*

## **OUR PARTNERS**

**Bewonersplatform Watou**  
**BNP Paribas Fortis**  
**Café Mademoiselle**  
**CBK R'DAM**  
**CO7**  
**De Gele Deur**  
**De Lovie**  
**De Queeste Art**  
**De Standaard**  
**Extremis**  
**Focus & WTV**  
**Handelsraad Watou**  
**Hilde Vandaele Gallery**  
**Huis van de Dichter**  
**Kerkfabriek Sint-Bavo Watou**  
**Klassiek! Beleven in de Westhoek**  
**Koninklijke Heemkring Aan de Schreve**  
**Le grand Rêve**  
**Leroy Breweries**  
**Literatuur Vlaanderen**  
**Made in inox**  
**Museumhuis Lucien De Gheus**  
**Mondriaanfonds**  
**Nationale Loterij**  
**Piano's Maene**  
**Poëziecentrum**  
**Radio 1**  
**Slagerij Leuridan**  
**St. Bernardus Watou**  
**Toerisme Westhoek**  
**Transport Wybo**  
**Vanbreda Soenen verzekeringen**  
**Visit Flanders**  
**Westhoek verbeeldt.be**  
**Westtoer**

Curators **James Putnam**  
(beeldende kunst),  
**Michaël Vandebril**  
(poëzie) en inspirator  
**Koen Vanmechelen**

# Watou 2024

een organisatie van de stad Poperinge

## Kunstenfestival **Watou 2024**

---

### Landscape of the Imagination

Beleef deze zomer kunst en poëzie in Watou. Op ongewone plekken in het dorp en op kasteeldomein De Lovie. Ontdek de verbeeldingskracht van kunstenaars en dichters. En geef ruimte aan jouw verbeelding!

“We hebben nood aan nieuwe landschappen. Plekken van experiment, toevluchtsoorden en ruimtes waar een nieuwe mensheid kan geboren worden.”

— INSPIRATOR  
KOEN VANMECHELEN

“*Art can be the vehicle to open our imagination.* Deze editie focust op de kracht van de verbeelding. Kunstenaars inspireren de kijker om anders te denken en open te staan voor verbeelding.”

— CURATOR  
BEELDENDE KUNST  
JAMES PUTNAM

“Poëzie creëert innerlijke landschappen waarin je kan rondwalen, zoals in een dorp. Watou is de bestemming, maar voor iedereen is de reis anders.”

— CURATOR POËZIE  
MICHAËL VANDEBRIL

van 6 juli t.e.m.  
1 september 2024

Tickets en info:  
[kunstenfestivalwatou.be](https://www.kunstenfestivalwatou.be)