

DEPARTEMENT CULTUUR, JEUGD & MEDIA

ULTIMAS 2016
Flemish Culture Prizes
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ULTIMA 2016 VISUAL ARTS WIELS CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE

Since it opened in 2007, WIELS has held over 65 temporary exhibitions on national and international artists, with both up-and-coming talents and more established names represented, in the buildings of the former Wielemans brewery. In the context of its residency programme, WIELS has also hosted over 130 artists for residencies and the centre has also organised numerous educational and social activities, all without building up a permanent collection.

From the beginning, WIELS has been based on many pillars, both public and private, and is characterised by its multilingualism and openness to all communities. The centre has shown that it is possible to pursue new partnerships by going beyond formal and administrative language barriers. This is where WIELS derives its dimension and ambition and what allows it to develop in a sustainable and democratic way. The centre's programming is consistently transcultural and transnational. This is also reflected in research into visual language and how perception works, where the turbulence of globalisation is also analysed from non-western perspectives.

Over the past ten years, WIELS has involved disadvantaged and low-skilled individuals from the local area in the centre's daily activities, giving them communications tasks and education responsibilities. With these innovative partnerships and others, the centre has helped to redevelop the neighbourhood.

The most striking exhibitions have included those on Alina Szapocznikow and African feminism, as well as those on Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Francis Alys, Nasreen Mohamedi, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman, Yto Barrada, Wangechi Mutu and Akram Zaatari, from Luc Tuymans to Francis Alys, from Walter Swennen to Sammy Baloji... the list is long and impressive.

At the start of this year, the centre presented two retrospectives: one on the Belgian artist Sven 't Jolle, 'The Age of Entitlement, or Affordable Tooth Extraction', and the other by the Irish Scottish artist Duncan Campbell. A new large-scale thematic exhibition is currently on show: 'The Absent Museum', presenting the works of 47 artists including the German Jewish artist Felix Nussbaum. The curator of this exposition is the whole team consisting of Zoe Gray, Caroline Dumalin, Frederique Versaen, Devrim Bayar and Charlotte Friling with the director, Dirk Snauwaert.

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