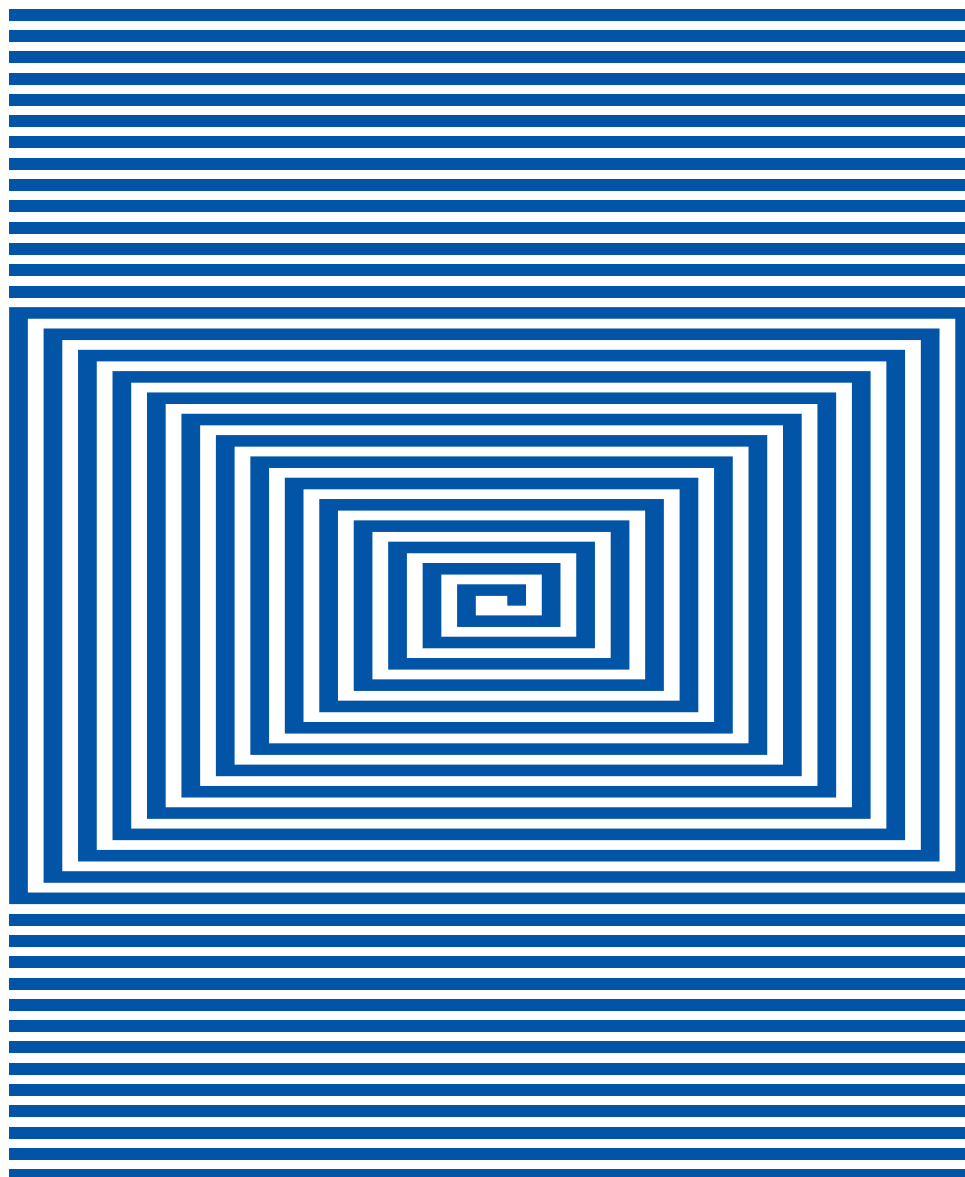


PRESS KIT |

CONTOUR 7 BIENNALE VOOR BEWEGEND BEELD
A MOVING IMAGE BIENNALE



in MECHELEN 29.08–08.11.2015

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#CONTOUR7

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ABOUT CONTOUR |



Film, video, installations and performances in special venues in Mechelen.

Visiting CONTOUR is an equally relaxing and exciting way of discovering contemporary international visual art. The Biennale presents film, video, installation-art and performances at special locations in the city of Mechelen.

Every edition of CONTOUR invites a different curator to provide the biennale with a new framework, vision and dynamic. CONTOUR 7, the seventh edition of the Moving Image Biennale, bears the mark of the Brussels based Italian curator Nicola Setari and is dedicated to Thomas More, author of the book *Utopia*.

CONTOUR presents visually engaging and intellectually stimulating art, aiming to reach a wide as well as specialist public. CONTOUR is unique in Europe as it offers the opportunity for the viewer to experience top-rate international contemporary art in one of the continent's historic cities.

ABOUT CONTOUR 7 |

CONTOUR 7, a **Moving Image Biennale**, is dedicated to humanist and statesman **Thomas More**. Regarded by many as a martyr and by some as a monster, perhaps even as a philosopher or artist. Certainly he was a brilliant fool, ahead of his time. It was while visiting Flanders – he stopped through Mechelen – in the summer of 1515 that he wrote the bulk of his book on the ideal commonwealth, the island of Utopia.

CONTOUR 7 presents work by over twenty **international artists**, spread across several venues in the City of **Mechelen**. All the works on show, many of them new productions, have in common the fact that they are inspired by utopias, monsters and martyrs, past and present.

Saturday August 29th to Sunday November 8th 2015

Thursdays and Fridays 10:00 to 17:00

Saturdays and Sundays 10:00 to 18:00

Wednesdays on demand for groups and schools

Official opening August 28th

Artists

AaBbPp / A Dog Republic and RAM Radioartemobile / Sander Breure and Witte van Hulzen / Andrea Büttner / Jan Fabre / Michael Fliri / Chiara Fumai / Johan Grimonprez / Fabrice Hyber / Rabih Mroué / Ana Prvacki / Michael Rakowitz / Gilad Ratman / Albert Serra / Slavs and Tatars / Nedko Solakov / Javier Téllez / Grazia Toderi / An van. Dienderen / Angel Vergara / Gilberto Zorio

Advisors

Chus Martínez / W. J. T. Mitchell / Hilde Van Gelder

Curator

Nicola Setari

INTRODUCTION TO CONTOUR 7 |

Fooling Utopia

Introduction by the curator

CONTOUR 7 is dedicated to the humanist, statesman and martyr Thomas More. Fooling Utopia, the Biennale's motto, is inspired by *Utopia* (1516), More's most famous book, and by *In Praise of Folly* (1511), which Desiderius Erasmus dedicated to his friend, Thomas More. The motto seems to capture the original spirit with which these two friends dealt with the reality of their time, and it is a reflection of the artistic practices and strategies on display throughout CONTOUR 7.

More imagined *Utopia* as a fundamental alternative to the Europe of his age. The current state of affairs in Europe requires that the predominant cynical and overly critical outlooks in the air be met with playfully serious ones, like More's. Such an approach does not downplay the gravity of the situation, instead it encourages and promotes possible alternatives, in a mode of openness, especially towards the radically other. 500 years ago, in the summer of 1515, More's intellectual life and political career were at a crossroads – one that brought him to Mechelen and Antwerp. At some point during this period he found the inspiration and time to write his narrative on an ideal society, set on a fictional island in the New World.

The City of Mechelen, at the time a central capital of the world map, and today an example of a multi-cultural urban environment and *modus vivendi*, provides a provocative backdrop for the Biennale. Its legends of monstrous bogeymen and martyred saints overlap with the tragedies of its history during World War II and with the farces of media spectacles that spin the figure of the monster and the martyr in spirals. CONTOUR 7 begins at these crossroads where existence, history and fiction collide, with the necessary intensity to allow a breakthrough in reality to occur.

The visit starts at Mechelen Cultural Centre, where the poetic character of utopia is expanded upon, together with non-literal explorations of the relationship between monsters, martyrs and media. The exhibition then goes underground at De Vlietenkelder to explore the emotional impact of war and the transformative power of masks. It resurfaces at Hof van Busleyden, where More found hospitality and probably wrote part of *Utopia*. The first and third edition of the book, published in 1516 and 1518 respectively, are presented here, in the Biennale's most densely populated venue in terms of artworks, and perhaps the most politically and ironically charged. The next stop is Kazerne Dossin, where Europe's recent past and present are put into question. The Biennale finishes at De Noker, a former monastery of the Alexian order, where the city's mentally ill were once taken care of. It is there that the otherworldly finds its place in CONTOUR 7.

My sincere gratitude goes to the artists, the advisors and the CONTOUR 7 team, who have worked so patiently and assiduously to make the exhibition possible, as well as to my family and to the many friends and supporters of the Biennale, including you. Let's fool utopia together.

Nicola Setari

CONTOUR 7, DEDICATED TO THOMAS MORE |

CONTOUR 7 presents work by over twenty artists who have been invited to focus on two themes: *Fooling Utopia* and *Monsters, Martyrs & Media*. Both are inspired by the human as well as the intellectual trajectory that led Thomas More to Mechelen exactly five hundred years ago. The campaign image of CONTOUR 7, a deep blue vortex, depicts the movements in play between the two themes of the Biennale.



Monsters, Martyrs & Media

On the bind between monsters and martyrs in past and present media

Why do we need monsters? Is it because they allow us to express our deepest fears and anxieties? Or do they serve as warnings against the dystopian futures of which we risk becoming victims? Martyrs, on the other hand, make the headlines of newspapers and other media on a daily basis. They remind us that some people are prepared to embrace their beliefs in such a radical way, that they are willing to sacrifice their life.

The distinction between martyrs and monsters blurs, as they get sucked into the information maelstroms and vortexes produced by contemporary mass media. Several of the artworks on display within CONTOUR 7 address the theme *Monsters, Martyrs & Media* both literally and figuratively, using the City of Mechelen as a backdrop.

History teaches us that Mechelen has been home to both fictive and real monsters and martyrs. According to ancient city legends, the monstrous bogeyman 'Oude Rode Ogen' plagued the city at the end of the seventeenth century. Known in Mechelen under the name of 'De Nekker', this fictive monster abducted innocent children and adults at night in the swamps surrounding the city. Three centuries later, Mechelen became the location of real, monstrous atrocities when Kazerne Dossin was used by Nazi-Germany as a transit camp for the deportation of Jewish and Roma people to Auschwitz.

Fooling Utopia

On the sense and nonsense of utopia in society

The fact that court fools, clowns and harlequins can afford the sharpest criticism, is a cliché that has been around for centuries. That this particular cliché makes sense, was also the opinion of the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus when he wrote his most famous book *In Praise of Folly*. Thomas More and Erasmus exchanged numerous letters, reflecting on the follies of their age. This must have left its mark when More wrote *Utopia*, which served as a sharp and ironic critique of Europe.

That this five hundred-year old critique is still relevant today, is proven by the

potential grexit and grim euro-crises that trouble contemporary Europe. However, this critique is instantly alleviated and nuanced by the ironic and comical tone of the book. More probably sought to undermine his own utopian ideals before anybody else could, because he knew that his utopia would never be possible to realize entirely.

The word 'utopia' (a word we owe to More) contains a certain impossibility. A utopia is a wish that continuously waits for fulfillment. Within the context of this Biennale, *Fooling Utopia* elaborates on the sense and nonsense of utopian thinking.

LOCATIONS & ARTWORKS CONTOUR 7 |

1. Starting point | *Mechelen Academy* *Minderbroedersgang 5*



© Stijn Swinnen

2. Mechelen Cultural Centre Minderbroedersgang 5

The site occupied by Mechelen Cultural Centre today is steeped in history. It was once home to a large monastery complex with inner courtyard, guest rooms and infirmary founded by Wouter II Berthout in 1231 and rebuilt in 1342 after a fire. Following destruction and plundering, in 1606 building work started on a new church. With the help of the city and its citizens, the church was embellished with (among other things) Margaret of York's mausoleum, sculptures by sculptor Frans Langhemans and paintings by the Flemish baroque painter Antoon Van Dyck. In 1796 the Order of the Friar Minors was banished and large parts of the monastery were demolished. Today the Cultural Centre houses the remains of the seventeenth-century church reminding the people of Mechelen of the Order.



© Stijn Swinnen

GRAZIA TODERI

Moon Extinguishers, 2015
video installation, sound, 10' 00"
Commissioned and
produced by CONTOUR 7

Grazia Toderi takes as her starting point the view at night from the tower of the Sint-Rombouts Cathedral in Mechelen. For her, this place is an imaginary vantage point from which Thomas More observed, studied and drew the Island of Utopia. She also makes reference to the legend of the drunkard who saw the reflection of the moon on the glass of the tower and thought the tower was burning. In her video, projected onto the ceiling of the rotunda of the Cultural Centre, the contours of Mechelen blur into a suspended luminous

island, a rotating horizon, making Belgium appear as one large city. A recurring formal element in her videos, the rotation also suggests the movement of celestial spheres, transfiguring the physical lights of the city into a spiritual and existential dimension.

BIO Italian artist Grazia Toderi (°1963) first gained critical attention as a result of her participation in Aperto '93 at the 45th Venice Biennale. Her work shows a particular fascination for everyday life. Where in early work she often isolated objects and actions from their everyday environment using video images, her later work has focused on everyday images that speak to the sentiments of an entire generation, such as images of a television screen. Toderi has made several videos that use aerial images to recreate night time views of cities such as Rome, Florence and London. These works conceive the cities, thinking of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, as a mirror between the sky and the earth. With her images she transforms known places into magical and mysterious territories.

ANDREA BÜTTNER

Piano Destrutions, 2014

five channel video installation, sound

The 1960s counter-culture often resorted to music as a way of expressing social contestation. Music was seen not only as an elevated and harmonious aesthetic experience, but was used to voice anger and discontent. The quintessence of that tendency was the destruction of an instrument. It's not only guitars that have fallen victim to this creative-destructive drive, but, surprisingly, pianos too. Andrea Büttner invites new consideration of this tendency in her bold piece entitled *Piano Destrutions*. On the video shown next to historical footage of artistic performances focusing on the destruction of pianos, female musicians perform several piano pieces. While both piano performance and piano destruction are typically seen as male activities, these female pianists are intently oblivious of that charged history. Counterbalancing the weight of that legacy, they invite us to enjoy music in its pure beauty.

BIO The work of German artist Andrea Büttner (°1972) includes woodcuttings, screen prints, reverse glass paintings, sculptures, videos and performances. She attempts to create connections between art history and social issues, with a particular interest in notions of poverty, shame, sexuality, vulnerability and dignity, and the belief systems that underpin them. Büttner's work often references religious communities, drawing attention to the relationship between religion and art. Her previous public exhibitions have featured in the Museum for Modern Art in Frankfurt, Tate Britain in London and Museum Ludwig in Cologne. She has participated in dOCUMENTA 13, the Sao Paulo Biennale and won the Max Mara Prize in 2010.

GILBERTO ZORIO

È Utopia, La Realtà,

È Rivelazione, 1971

phosphorescent varnish,
fluorescent letters, iron, timer,

halogen, lamp, Wood's lamp

Gilberto Zorio proposes a singular perspective on the question of utopia. The installation, consisting of partly fluorescent letters on a metal bar lit by two different types of lights, is reminiscent of the visual minimalist characteristic of Arte Povera. While the three terms 'utopia', 'reality' and 'revelation' are continuously lit by spot lights, halogen lights are turned on and off at regular intervals, revealing a fluorescent inscription: 'it's utopia, reality is revelation'. It is the reality, taken in its richness and simplicity, which may reveal itself as the source of epiphany, or even the utopia. Here, we find the most affirmative voice in the whole exhibition. It suggests that sometimes the answers should be sought in the ordinary and the mundane, because ultimately that is where everything begins and ends.

BIO Italian artist Gilberto Zorio (°1944) is associated with the Arte Povera movement in Italy at the end of the sixties: a radical artistic stance of a group of artists towards the established values and institutions of the time, including government, industry and popular culture. In his work Zorio combines language and alchemy. His interest in the concept of 'energy' led him to explore transformative natural phenomena, such as evaporation or oxidation. His sculptures, paintings and performances are often regarded as metaphors for revolutionary human activity and creativity.

AN VAN. DIENDEREN

Lili, 2015

film, sound, 11' 15"

Commissioned and

coproduced by CONTOUR 7

In a TV studio a girl named Lili (played by Belgian actress Maaïke Neuville) is asked to serve as a so-called *China Girl*. China Girls, used in cinema history since the 1920s, are women with Caucasian skin who are filmed alongside a colour-chart in order to adjust the colours of the film. They have no dialogue to memorize or character to impersonate. Their only role is to have an impeccable white complexion. Their skin – white as porcelain – is used as a reference for the colour grading of camera and printing, ultimately excluding people of colour who do not conform to this implicit norm. *Lili* tells the story of a China Girl through archival material, found footage and documentary recordings. It questions the tradition of China Girls, contextualised in a society which, according to anthropologist Michael Taussig, exemplifies chromophobic uneasiness with colour.

BIO Belgian filmmaker An van. Dienderen (°1971) has made several internationally acclaimed documentaries, and writes on visual anthropology, cultural diversity and urbanization. Her work focuses on the relationship between artistic processes and society. She investigates the opposition of fact and fiction, imagination and observation, and representation and experience, using the importance of the image in our multicultural society as the point of departure. The work of An van. Dienderen shows the absurd, poetic and often touching stories that these oppositions can hold in everyday life.

GILAD RATMAN

Swarm, 2015

multi-channel video installation,
sound, 4' 00"

Coproduced by CONTOUR 7

Gilad Ratman's multiscreen installation *Swarm* transports us into a strangely unreal world populated by small drones (remotely operated electronic devices) flying haphazardly around Styrofoam constructions. Drones not only resemble insects, but are modeled on their mechanics and behaviour. They sometimes appear to behave as a swarm. Without any central decision making, members of a swarm act in a similar way, thus creating a self-organizing system. Even when there is no visible hierarchy, they communicate and connect, which allows them to act together. The installation evokes an ambiguous human world, where cooperation fluidly transforms into competition.

BIO Israeli artist Gilad Ratman (°1975) lives and works in New York and Tel Aviv. His videos and installations search for ways to deal with untenable aspects of human behaviour by exploring the appearance of 'pain', 'struggle' and 'the wild' within the friction of the real and the imaginary. Pushing narrative to its borders and allowing for a fractured chain of events to take place, Ratman investigates the possibilities of the cinematic apparatus. Cause and effect are abandoned in favor of a non-narrative space where the poetic and the pathetic can coexist.

JAVIER TÉLLEZ

Bourbaki Panorama, 2014

35 mm film-installation, mute, 13' 47"

Javier Téllez revisits an old, nineteenth century medium called 'panorama' to address one of today's main political issues, namely migration. A panorama is a monumental, circular painting that once held the promise of transporting the spectator into the middle of historically or geographically distant events. The Bourbaki Panorama in Luzern, the location of Téllez's film, depicts an episode from the end of the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, in which the defeated army of general Bourbaki surrendered to the neighbouring Switzerland. In Téllez's 35 mm film, the painting is made even more real through the addition of actors impersonating some of its scenes. All participants are refugees currently living in Switzerland. Instead of telling their particular stories, the film invites us to revisit the principles of humanitarianism. At the same time, it recuperates the concept of realism by featuring real people in need of help.

BIO Growing up as the son of psychiatrists, Venezuelan artist Javier Téllez (°1969) developed a close affinity with patients who suffer from mental illnesses. We can see this continuously reflected in his art. Through installation, film and video, he addresses the general understanding and perceptions of such marginalized populations. Téllez investigates how and where we draw the often rigid line between normal and abnormal, healthy and sick. His work combines pathology with art, and in doing so diffuses the often rigid difference between creativity and anomaly.

3. De Vlietenkelder Ijzerenleen

Walking along the Ijzerenleen it is easy to forget that one of the most impressive relics of Mechelen's history lies concealed beneath the paving stones. Only the decorative elements hint at the underground corridor complex. On descending the steps from the busy shopping street, one is struck by the peace and serenity of the place. The existence of the former city canal or inlet ('vliet') reminds us that Mechelen originated partly because of its favorable location at the confluence of several waterways. The city canal on the Ijzerenleen was filled in and vaulted over in the sixteenth century. It was restored during the summer of 2012. Mechelen has had a turbulent history and the Vlietenkelder has played a crucial role in difficult times. During the Second World War, for instance, it served as an air-raid shelter protecting its citizens against attacks from above.



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MICHAEL FLIRI

I Pray I'm A False Prophet, 2015

video, sound, 2' 00"

Commissioned and

coproduced by CONTOUR 7

Fliri is a performing-video artist that takes us into the realm of the surreal by carrying out actions that border on the absurd in his videos. They appear to be visual transfigurations of yet-to-be-pronounced parables. What is characteristic of Fliri's practice is that it remains suspended in a space that allows us to draw connections from both the past and the future. In other words, it has an extra-temporal character. For CONTOUR 7, he pushes this

experimentation to a critical juncture by bringing together his fascination for masks with a paradoxical quote by Thomas More, who at the end of his life was martyred by being tortured and beheaded: 'I pray to God I'm a false prophet'. In his video, Fliri appears to stage a contemporary form of martyrdom, where the beheading is replaced by the seemingly forced impression of his face onto a composite soft material, hence producing an effigy reminiscent of the kind used to memorialise the faces of saints and kings.

BIO Italian artist Michael Fliri (°1978) was born in the German-speaking region of the Italian alps, in South Tyrol. Travelling up and down the mountains, but also travelling North and South to study abroad in Germany and Norway, influenced his artistic practice. His work is often in between two poles, two ideas. Fliri uses different media, such as performance, video, photography and sculpture. He researches the notions of metamorphosis and masquerade: the protagonists in his work – often Fliri himself – undergo a certain change or transformation. This transition can be seen as an encounter of two opposite worlds.

RABIH MROUÉ

The Crocodile Who Ate The Sun, 2015

12 x diasec photos in frame, text, pamphlet

Old House, 2006

video, sound, text, 1' 15"

Noiseless, 2006–2008

video, mute, text, 4' 40"

Two Hours Without War, 2014

video, sound, text, 2' 12"

*In collaboration with
Arts Centre NONA*

At first sight, the issues that animate Rabih Mroué's work have little in common with the forward-looking nature of utopian thinking. Driven by the need to confront his country's tragic history, he often unavoidably reveals the monstrosity of human actions. The space where his works are presented during CONTOUR 7 is significant for its link to the more sombre chapters of the local history: the Vlietenkelder was used as a bomb shelter during the Second World War, when Mechelen underwent heavy bombardments. Equally, the memory of the city as transit platform from which Jewish and Roma people were sent to Auschwitz, resonates throughout the bleak histories told by the Lebanese artist. The four works exhibited here deal, each in different ways, with daunting and often traumatic memories from Lebanon's past.

BIO Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué (°1967) is a theatre director, visual artist and playwright. Mroué played an important avant-garde role in Lebanese theatre, which he took to new and unknown territories, away from the conventional institutions and European influences. His visual art sprouted from

his theatre practice, which often contains video and installation art. In the videos of Mroué, time and montage play a crucial role. Characteristic of his installations are the use of text and photography.

4. Hof van Busleyden

Frederik de Merodestraat 65

The Hof van Busleyden was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century for Hieronymus van Busleyden, ecclesiastical jurist and member of the Great Council, the supreme court of the Low Countries. A Maecenas and humanist, he was also a good friend of Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More. Between 1619 and the First World War the building housed an organization known as the Berg van Barmhartigheid – or Mountain of Charity –, which loaned money to the poor on an interest-free basis. All but the walls of the building were destroyed during the First World War. Later on it was rebuilt and became the city museum. It is possible that Thomas More strolled in the garden in 1515 contemplating his book Utopia. He even wrote a poem about the beauty of the Hof van Busleyden. So it is no coincidence that exactly five hundred years later it was chosen as one of the locations to host the Biennial dedicated to More.



© Stijn Swinnen

FOOLING UTOPIA LIBRARY

CONTOUR 7, a Moving Image Biennale, is dedicated to the humanist Thomas More. While in Flanders in the summer of 1515, during which time he also visited Mechelen and stayed at the Hof van Busleyden, More wrote most of his book about the ideal state, the Island of Utopia. In the Hof van Busleyden visitors to CONTOUR 7 will be able to quench their thirst for every possible form of utopian literature and utopian ideals, ranging from relaxing children's books and light-hearted comics to learned philosophical toms and illuminating essays.

The library includes a selection of sound bites on Utopia and Europe from the archive of the internationally acclaimed online art-radio RAM



Radioartemobile. The first and third editions of Thomas More's book *Utopia*, printed in Leuven (1516) and Basel (1518) respectively, will be on show in the underground gallery at the Hof van Busleyden specially for the Biennale. Furthermore, every aspect of the Fooling Utopia theme will be analysed in a series of guest lectures.

A DOG REPUBLIC & RAM RADIOARTEMOBILE

A DOG REPUBLIC

Let's Talk Peace!, 2015

16 mm film, multi-channel sound installation

Commissioned and produced by CONTOUR 7

CARL MICHAEL VON HAUSSWOLFF & LEIF ELGGREN

*Utopia / The Kingdoms of
Elgaland-Vargaland*, 2003

handmade paper, photo, book

JANNIS KOUNELLIS

*Il Monumento al Borghese
Coraggioso*, 1971

glass, metal, fabric, wood base

Through a variety of artistic media, A Dog Republic presents 'demonstrations' that explore the idea of establishing an alternative modality of working in a new republic of dogs and dog sympathizers. The participative installation presented by A Dog Republic in collaboration with RAM Radioartemobile at CONTOUR 7 invites its visitors to record their own barking discussions through an online application. The call to overcome the gap between humans and animals, although clearly playful and provocative, can nevertheless be seen as a critical gesture. This critical dimension is also explored in the two works selected by A Dog Republic for this exhibition, thus inviting some dog friends to their republic. *Il Monumento al Borghese Coraggioso* (1971) by Jannis Kounellis and *Utopia / The Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland* (2003) by Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Leif Elggren both ironically reflect on the possibility of social change and new imaginary countries.

BIO A Dog Republic was initiated by artists Jean- Baptiste Decavèle (°1961), Nico Dockx (°1974), Helena Sidiropoulos (°1979), architect Yona Friedman (°1923) and musician Krist Torfs (°1980) in 2011. After many conversations in Paris and Antwerp on the subject of constituting their very own republic, they teamed up with some other dogs for a series of 'demonstrations' at a.o. Ludlow38 in New York, Esther Donatz Gallery in Munich and the 55th Venice Biennale. Together with graphic designer Thomas Mayfried, they are working on a series of artist books.

Founded by Mario Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier in 2003, RAM Radioartemobile is a platform for contemporary art in Rome and is dedicated to sound research and exhibitive activity aimed at the creation of an international network. RAM sets up exhibitions and projects in collaboration with both public and private spaces all over the world, juxtaposing visual and sound art.

AABBPP

Three Official Hats, 2015

monk hood, leaf hood,
ripped hood

*Commissioned and
produced by CONTOUR 7*

TOMAS POZEMIS

Acid Round About, 2015

vhs, tv screen, sound, 98' 32"

*Commissioned and
produced by CONTOUR 7*

AaBbPp is a collaborative project concentrating on headwear as the point of departure. AaBbPp presents their hats as hybrids between ready to wear and prototype, similarly, their online presence and shop acts as both a voice and commercial enterprise. For CONTOUR 7, AaBbPp has produced three Official Hats inspired by imperial China and team wear, and a one-and-a-half-hour video mix tape which reshapes footage from the British stop motion animation series Magic Roundabout (1963) into an *Acid Round About*.

BIO AaBbPp is the Vilnius based collective founded by Lithuanian artists Gintaras Didžiapetris (°1985) and Elena Narbutaitė (°1984) in 2015. AaBbPp pursues a collaborative approach to art-making, alternative to the current neo-liberal economic structures. The collective spans a wide range of media, such as video, print, photography and sculpture. They investigate questions of art and perception, history and the accessibility of the past, and the relationship between fact and fiction.

SLAVS AND TATARS

Lektor (Speculum Linguarum), 2014–present

six channel sound-installation, plexiglass, speakers, 36' 29"

Hung and Tart (Full Acacia), 2014

handblown glass

Qum Rabat, 2015

video, loop, 22"

In their knowledgeable appropriation of different cultural traditions from the broadly understood area of Eurasia, Slavs and Tatars excavate lesser-known ideas for a better common life. *Hung and Tart (Full Acacia)*, a lavishly

executed glass model of a tongue, is an example of their multifaceted and often humorous practice. Together with the installation *Lektor (Speculum Linguarum)*, this work is part of a larger project *Mirrors for Princes*, dealing with medieval guidebooks for rulers. The instructions, heard in different languages, on how to use one's tongue with moderation are meant as guidance towards happiness and fulfillment. The title *Lektor* refers to a widespread method of voice-over translation of foreign films in Eastern European countries.

BIO Slavs and Tatars is an art collective devoted to an area beginning East of the former Berlin Wall and ending West of the Great Wall of China. The combination of European, Slavic and Asian identities is a main focus in their work, in which they consistently explore different media and neglect fixed disciplines and style conventions. Originally organised as a reading group in 2006, the collective lives and travels in a region that has been realigning itself since the collapse of Soviet Communism and which experiences escalating tensions between Eastern and Western identities. Populations, allegiances and languages are all in transition. In exploring the area's expansive historical narratives and transnational relationships, Slavs and Tatars create something associative, intimate and playful.

ALBERT SERRA

The Lord Worked Wonders in Me, 2015

two-channel video installation,

sound, 69' 00"

Commissioned and

produced by CONTOUR 7

For **CONTOUR 7**, Serra presents a new two-channel installation based on *The Lord Worked Wonders in Me* (2011), a slow-paced film focusing on conversations and encounters. It features the crew of his earlier film about Don Quixote entitled *Honour of Knights* (2006) as they travel through La Mancha in central Spain. The amateur actors are shown eating and talking together, or simply killing time while waiting for the beginning of a new film production. The actors talk about politics, drugs and love, but also engage with the story of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. It does not even matter that the film they are preparing for will never actually be realized. The really significant events happen during the unimportant, dull and seemingly lost moments of a waiting crew, pretending to live the utopia of art, this is, to live inside a film.

BIO Albert Serra (°1975) is a Spanish film director and producer. His work has emerged as a highly original voice in contemporary cinema. Similar to several unconventional filmmakers before him, he also engages in projects for contemporary art venues. He was selected to be the icon of new avant-garde cinema at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009 and was awarded a Golden Leopard for best film at the Locarno Film Festival last year. With a radical yet wonderfully accessible form of pure cinema, Serra's films rediscover the space and time of motion pictures, marvelously reanimating mythical heroes with the clumsy weight of existence and transforming landscapes into meditative dramas of light and shadow.

FABRICE HYBER

Tv More , 2015

multi-channel video installation, drawings

Commissioned and

coproduced by CONTOUR 7

Through an open call Hyber has invited people from Mechelen and the rest of Belgium to share their personal utopias, informing them that they will be transformed into drawings by the artist. These drawings cover the walls of a special room designed by the artist and inspired by the Hypocaustum, the dining room with frescoes in Hieronymus van Busleyden's home, where Thomas More and other guests of Busleyden would share their utopias. The installation includes a number of TV monitors, where the consequences of the personal utopias, according to the artist, will be displayed.

BIO French artist Fabrice Hyber (°1961) is an artistic jack-of-all-trades who likes to look at his own oeuvre as a gigantic rhizomatic structure that continuously moves forward, bouncing on its own echoes and drawing from the 'giant reservoir of the possible'. Hyber, who once set up a real television station in the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, creates POF's (*Prototypes d'Objects en Fonctionnement* – Prototypes of Functioning Objects) and continuously attempts to rethink the world through a stream of images and words. Central to his work, in which he tries to catch thoughts as they are born, is the deconstruction and reconstruction of language and communication.

NEDKO SOLAKOV

Encyclopaedia Utopia, 1990

mixed media

Encyclopaedia Utopia, 2015

three-channel video installation,

headphones, 31' 40", 26' 46",

25' 56"

Commissioned and

produced by CONTOUR 7

In this new video installation commissioned by CONTOUR 7, Nedko Solakov browses through the pages of his own *Encyclopaedia Utopia*, which he made in 1990 shortly after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In the three videos, corresponding to the three volumes of the original encyclopaedia, the artist reflects on his own work twenty-five years after completing it. Solakov lists and reads all entries aloud while holding a camera in his hands, providing commentary on his own work and the ideas that inspired him at the time. The three books, comprising variously sized drawings, texts and photographs, are exhibited in front of the corresponding videos. In the books, Thomas More's ideal island merges with the equally utopian experiment of communism in Bulgaria. Oscillating between a bitter ironic, funny, vulgar or naively pedagogical tone, the encyclopaedia becomes an occasion to irreverently mock both the literary and the actual version of the consummate society. Between the numerous drawings of imaginary creatures

and eerie monsters, Solakov included rules and guidelines for a 'happy and harmonious' collective life.

BIO Bulgarian artist Nedko Solakov (°1957) is one of the main protagonists of contemporary European art. His work combines a 'classical' artistic education with conceptual elements and a strong sense for the absurd. His funny and often touching visual art is the result of great fantasy and humour, which has kept him safe from the communist regime in his country of origin. Solakov's work includes paintings, drawings, installations, videos, texts and performances, in which he likes to play with diverse references to the history of art.

JOHAN GRIMONPREZ

WeTube-O-Theque, 2015
video-library, various lengths

Every Day Words Disappear, 2015
video, 15' 11"
*Commissioned and
coproduced by CONTOUR 7*

In his new installation *Every Day Words Disappear*, Johan Grimonprez enters into a dialogue with thinkers and scientists in the search for new ideas of the common. The questions asked in the conversations and, as always in the work of the artist, in a montage of images, pertain to the dominant role of negative factors in social organisation such as fear, competition and self-interest. The second project, entitled *WeTube-O-Theque*, is a vlog or video blog. In it, the artist collects clips taken from the Internet and various archives on a range of issues in ecology and sustainability. What unites these multifarious fragments is the idea of radical ecology as a reflection on new and responsible ways of common life. The idea of tender gardening draws from Voltaire's famous advice given at the end of *Candide, ou l'optimisme*: 'il faut cultiver notre jardin'.

BIO The work of Belgian artist Johan Grimonprez (°1962) dances on the borders of art and cinema, documentary and fiction, and practice and theory, causing the viewer to double-take. Informed by an archaeology of present-day media, his work seeks out the tension between the intimate and the bigger picture of globalisation. It questions our contemporary sublime, one framed by a fear industry that has infected political and social dialogue. By suggesting new narratives through which to tell a story, his work emphasises a multiplicity of histories and realities. The films of Grimonprez search for those moments where representation and reality seem to coexist. They 'speak to the need to see history at a distance, but at the same time to speak from inside of it'. He gained international acclaim in the visual arts, and has collected numerous prizes and selections, including at the Berlinale and the Sundance Film Festival.

JAN FABRE

*Searching for Utopia (Jantje op zoek
naar Utopia of een orakelsteen), 2002*
polyester, papier-mâché.

Searching for Utopia (met kunstenaar-ruiter rechttop staand), 2002
polyester, plaster, sand, resin,
gold foil, textile, wood

Searching for Utopia II (op hol geslagen), 2005
polyester, leather belt,
wood, soil

Hommage Aan Thomas More, 1977
video, 8 mm-film

Re-enactment Hommage Aan Thomas More, 2015
video, 8 mm-film transferred to
digital video, 2' 24"
Commissioned and produced by CONTOUR 7

Utopia and Thomas More have occupied the mind of Jan Fabre since at least 1977, when he did a performance in which he placed exotic flowers in front of the house where More stayed in Antwerp 500 years ago. At CONTOUR 7, some of the artistic traces of this long-time relationship find a special venue in the room adjacent to the Hypocaustum, Hieronymus van Busleyden's dining room where More dined with his humanist friends in Mechelen. In this room, he found inspiration for his famous book in the wall paintings that still decorate the room today. Fabre presents a re-enactment of his 1977 performance recorded on 8 mm film, along with models from his *Searching for Utopia* sculptures. In 1990, Fabre made a legendary piece in Mechelen, covering the Tivoli Castle entirely with Bic pen ink, a clear expression of his utopian spirit.

BIO For over 35 years, Belgian artist Jan Fabre (°1958) has held a crucial spot as an innovative visual artist, theatre director and author. All of Fabre's works represent a strong belief in the vulnerable human body, the defence of that body and wondering how the human being will survive in the future. Metamorphosis is a key concept in Fabre's artistic oeuvre, in which animal and human existence continuously interact. His artistry is a poetic resistance dedicated to beauty, an exercise in ways of disappearing. Throughout the years, he has created his own universe that abides by its own rules and laws, and contains its own characters, symbols and motives.

ANA PRVAČKI

The Family Fig Tree (for the Utopians it's important to see their future spouse naked before marrying them), 2015
video, sound, fig tree, 2' 34"
Commissioned and produced by CONTOUR 7

Fig leaves have played a significant role in the history of art, covering male and female sexual organs to neutralise the erotic charge of images. Prvački's art explores ways of re-charging the erotic dimension in art, while addressing forms of social intercourse and protocol. In her piece for CONTOUR 7, she ironically plays with a social rule on the island of Utopia and subverts it, while paying respect to the artistic tradition of using fig leaves by placing a fig tree in front of her video. The work finds its point of synthesis in its audio component, which invites the listener into a subliminal trip back in time, covering one generation after another on a family tree and perhaps inviting us to contemplate a primordial scene in the Garden of Eden.

BIO Serbian artist Ana Prvački (°1976) lives and works in Los Angeles. In her work, which includes visual art and performances, she uses a gently pedagogical and comedic approach in an attempt to reconcile 'etiquette' and 'erotics'. Her interventions are meant to transform the viewer's perception and experience of daily life and routine, providing solutions to our everyday problems, worries, and fears. Her work explores the social anxiety and comedic potential of the so-called *faux pas*: the breaking of social rules and etiquette, often by an outsider. In doing so, Prvački investigates the socio-political significance of welcoming the 'other'.

MICHAEL RAKOWITZ

I'm Good At Love, I'm Good At Hate, It's In Between I Freeze, 2015

mixed media, script-fragments,
olive green Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter

For CONTOUR 7, Michael Rakowitz presents a project in development that focuses on the figure of Leonard Cohen and the ethical dilemmas of the post-Holocaust Jew in relation to Israel and Palestine. The final work will include a film shot at the Chelsea Hotel, where Cohen was staying during the period in which he also travelled to Israel to perform for the Israeli troops. In Mechelen, Rakowitz presents props and fragments of a preliminary script for his film, derived from many of Cohen's poems and diaries. All of these materials have been realized in a strictly analogue mode, using the exact same olive green Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter that Cohen used during this time period. *I'm Good At Love, I'm Good At Hate, It's In Between I Freeze* – a quote from Cohen's poem *Recitation* – will culminate in a concert performed by Rakowitz with local musicians at the Ramallah Cultural Palace in Palestine. There, Cohen was scheduled to perform in September 2009, days after his performance in Tel Aviv. The concert was cancelled as a result of the Cultural Boycott of Israel.

BIO Michael Rakowitz's (°1973) multidisciplinary practice engages the senses as a means of sparking discourse around pressing political, social and historical issues. His conceptual art is deeply political and often focuses on the Middle East, the region from where his family fled. An American artist of Iraqi- Jewish origin, Rakowitz is known for establishing unexpected connections between Iraqi history and Western culture. In doing so, he creates entirely new and composite narratives that involve the audience in a vibrant revival of the past.

5. Kazerne Dossin Goswin de Stassartstraat 135

Empress Maria Theresa of Austria had the Belgian army barracks built in 1756. In 1936 the barracks were named after the commander of the seventh line regiment during the First World War: Lieutenant General Emile de Dossin de Saint Georges, who was from Liège. He was honoured as a war hero because of the decisive role he had played in the Battle of the Yser. A sinister new use was found for the building during the Second World War. The Nazis used it as a Sammellager, a strategic assembly camp from where Jews and Gypsies were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and several smaller camps. On May 30th 1948 a plaque was affixed to the façade of the barracks to commemorate those horrors and every year a ceremony is organised in memory of the victims. In 2012 a museum of the same name opened alongside the former Kazerne Dossin. The new building was designed by the Belgian architect bOb Van Reeth. During the Biennial of the Moving Image monsters and martyrs from the black pages of history wander here.



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SANDER BREURE & WITTE VAN HULZEN

*The Shores Of An Island
I Only Skirted, 2012*

video-installation, sound, 14' 00"

Sander Breure and Witte van Hulzen's double projection suggests that we are seeing an image and its reverse, the counter-image. The first screen displays images from a small and seemingly uninhabited island. One might think that this discreet and undisturbed piece of land could offer a paradisiac existence. Only when we learn that this in fact is Utøya, the place of the politically

motivated massacre committed by Anders Breivik in 2011, do the images acquire a menacing tone. The reverse side of the screen offers a counter-image, showing a montage of diverse found footage fragments on migration. The reverse movement shows what some people imagine as utopia, is in fact its opposite.

BIO The Dutch artistic duo Sander Breure (°1958) and Witte van Hulzen (°1948) uses diverse media such as video, performance, photography, drawings and installation. Families, migration, insignificant behaviour, the art world and its unwritten laws, the attack on Utøya: the various subjects are always translated into images, with specific attention to the *condition humaine*. Their work is rooted in a romantic tradition. Due to the way in which they attempt, through the continual reuse of images, to investigate the essence of art and its relationship to our world, that tradition takes on new connotations. Central to their oeuvre is the issue of where images originate, what they portray and what they mean to us.

6. De Noker

Nokerstraat 6

CONTOUR 7 culminates at the carefully restored chapel and classic inner courtyard of de Noker. The fourteenth-century House of God of the Holy Trinity was known for the hospitality it extended to the sick and marginalized. The Alexian Brothers took over the building at the beginning of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century built the chapel and ambulatory as we know them today. The scale and variation of the stuccowork on the late-baroque ceiling makes it unique in the Low Countries. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Franciscan nuns moved into the building. They did community work, providing children with an education and adults with training. As the headquarters of the non-profit welfare organization Emmaüs, the site is still associated with care today. During the Biennial the inner courtyard and chapel where the sick, plague-stricken and mentally ill once came to pray provides the setting for a high mass of contemporary video art.



© Stijn Swinnen

CHIARA FUMAI

The Book Of Evil Spirits, 2015

ink and collage on paper,
mixed media, video, 26' 24"

*Commissioned and
coproduced by CONTOUR 7*

The characters appearing in Chiara Fumai's installation are all remarkable historical figures. Beside the fact they all are women, they appear to have little else in common. Among them are feminist activists, writers, terrorists, freaks and occult mediums. The key figure in this eccentric company is Eusapia

Palladino. This early twentieth century Italian peasant woman became well known as a spiritualist medium possessed by mysterious powers. Many of the greatest authorities in science, from psychologists to physicists, attempted to verify her claims to mystic faculties. Was she truly remarkable, or simply an imposter? The ambiguity of this mysterious figure is the central attraction for Chiara Fumai.

BIO The performative practice of Italian artist Chiara Fumai (°1978) belongs to the tradition of female psychics, who are 'spoken by' different controversial entities, which the artist freely (mis)interprets and combines into new stories, questioning their symbolic meaning and representation in the mind of the viewer. Fumai lives and works in Milan. Dealing with radical feminism, media culture, language and repression, her light-esoteric and symbolic performances and visual art have garnered international acclaim.

ANGEL VERGARA

De Nekker Tree, 2015

hdv video installation, multi-channel sound, 13' 11"

Commissioned and

produced by CONTOUR 7

Angel Vergara chose the garden of the former monastery De Noker as both the backdrop and the subject of his installation. Vergara was inspired to muse on the theme of the enclosed garden, and links this to the idea of an artificial paradise. There is only one tree here, while the rest of the garden is organised in highly decorative geometric forms. It is secluded, inaccessible for outsiders as a utopian island. The presence of the singular tree calls to mind the biblical Garden of Eden, with its centrally located Tree of Knowledge. Knowledge appears to deliver an ambiguous advantage, bringing enlightenment but also a burden. It brings to light the monstrous element in human nature. Similar ambiguity can be found in the idea of the secluded garden. One can ask whether it is to protect or to imprison the people frequenting it. These places can be seen as sources of both delight and torture. Perhaps it is even so that monsters and saints are two aspects of the same, multifaceted human nature. The best example of this is Thomas More himself: sentenced and executed as a dangerous enemy of the Anglican Church, he became a catholic saint several centuries later.

BIO The work of Spanish artist Angel Vergara (°1958) is concerned with continued research into the power of the image. Through performances, videos, installations and paintings he tests the limits of art and reality. He questions the way the contemporary image shapes our own reality. Every work is an attempt to break through the image and to make its impact come to the surface, on an aesthetic as well as a socio-cultural and political level. Decontextualised images of reality are mediated by the artist and transformed into art. Vergara's work is the result of a constant dialogue between the artist, the ever transforming reality and its image. He creates a kind of reality 'in-between'. In this process, the viewer is encouraged to question their way of perceiving the everyday, and the way it is presented to them in an avalanche of images.

CURATOR CONTOUR 7 |



Curator Nicola Setari during a nightly visit to the Sint-Rombouts tower in Mechelen © Chloé Op de Beeck

Nicola Setari, born in Brussels (1978), is a researcher, a curator and writer. He is curating CONTOUR 7, a biennale of moving image in Mechelen in 2015. Since 2013 he has been working as responsible of the editorial team of the 'New Narrative for Europe', the pilot project launched by the European Commission and Parliament to help the EU reconnect with its citizens.

He worked as one of the agents of dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel. *The Logbook*, vol. 2/3 of the catalog of dOCUMENTA (13) was co-edited by him and he served as dean of the dOCUMENTA (13) Park Schönfeld Academy, the summer program for students coming from different art academies and universities from across Europe to work on several artistic projects in the exhibition.

Between 2006 and 2009, he was editor in chief and publisher of the cross-disciplinary art magazine *Janus*, based in Brussels. In 2010 and 2011 he was Project director and co-curator of the Visionary Africa platform for the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels (BOZAR) and co-editor of *GEO-graphics: A Map of Art Practices in Africa, Past and Present* (BOZAR Books, Silvana Editoriale, 2010). Visionary Africa included a traveling exhibition on the African continent.

His fields of research and practice are visual culture and contemporary art with a focus on iconoclasm. He holds a PhD in the History of Architecture and Art Sciences (IUAV University Venice) and is professor of Visual Anthropology at the New Academy for Fine Arts in Milan. Since 2002, he is Secretary General of the Dena Foundation for Contemporary Art in Paris.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION |

CONTOUR 7

Saturday August 29th to Sunday November 8th 2015

Thursdays and Fridays 10:00 to 17:00

Saturdays and Sundays 10:00 to 18:00

Wednesdays on demand for groups and schools

TICKETS

€10 standard price

€7 Mechelen residents, -25, +60, unemployed, people with disabilities, groups of 10 or more people

€2 BILL- and UiTpas, ICOM- and IKT-members, teacher card, pupil and student card up to the age of 26

Free for children up to the age of 12

SALES OUTLETS

Starting point CONTOUR 7

Mechelen Academy

Minderbroedersgang 5

2800 Mechelen

Tourism Mechelen

Hallestraat 2-4-6

2800 Mechelen

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GUIDED TOUR

Two-hour tour of the CONTOUR 7 highlights

Languages NL / FR / EN

Group size 10 to 20 people per guide

Price €60 (excluding entrance tickets)

Duration 1,5h to 2 hours

ATTENDANTS

Attendants are constantly on hand in the Cultural Centre of Mechelen and Hof van Busleyden to explain the artworks and answer any questions you may have.

NOCTURNAL VISITS

Special nocturnal visits for organisations and businesses are possible upon request.

Reservations via info@contourmechelen.be or +32(0)15 33 08 01

CONTOUR PLUS

CONTOUR PLUS offers discounts on Mechelen tourist attractions for visitors of CONTOUR 7. Simply show your ticket to the Moving Image Biennale to receive the discount.

CONTOUR + boat trip on the Dyle: €1 discount on presentation of your CONTOUR 7-ticket – www.v-zit.be/malinska

CONTOUR + visit to the Sint-Rombouts Tower: €2 discount on presentation of your CONTOUR 7-ticket – www.visitmechelen.be

CONTOUR + visit to Kazerne Dossin: €2 discount on presentation of your CONTOUR 7-ticket – www.kazernedossin.eu

CONTOUR + accommodation Martin's Patershof: accommodation at discount rate in Martin's Patershof, a magnificent four-star hotel in a former Franciscan church. Discounted price: €139/night for 2 people (package: CONTOUR 7 + accommodation + charming breakfast-buffet). Reservations via mph@martinshotels.com, www.martins-hotels.com or +32(0)15 46 46 46.

More information via info@contourmechelen.be or +32(0)15 33 08 01

CONTOURBAR

Enjoy a drink at the Contourbar at Mechelen Academy, the starting point of CONTOUR 7. A new interior design has been added exclusively for the Moving Image Biennale by Interieurkabinet. When the weather is fine, you can enjoy a drink on our pop-up terrace. In case of bad weather, the Contourbar offers plenty of enjoyable alternatives. The *One Minute Film awards* allows young people up to the age of 22 to become part of the Biennale by submitting a one minute film.

CONTOUR 7 APP

While getting lost in the City of Mechelen can actually be a rather pleasant experience, visitors to CONTOUR 7 have no reason to worry. Together with the Interactive Media Design department of the Thomas More College, a smartphone app has been developed to guide you smoothly along the Biennale route. Download it directly at the CONTOUR 7 starting point, where there is free wifi-connection.

Download it at app.contour7.be

TOTAL VIEWING TIME

It takes around four hours to see all of CONTOUR 7, including walking time, leaving you half the day to discover even more of Mechelen.

MEER INFO AT WWW.CONTOUR7.BE

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