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Brussels Minister of the Environment, Céline Fremault:

"On the occasion of the Brussels Water Days that I have been organizing for three years, I realized the incredible enthusiasm of the people of Brussels for the presence of water in their city.

Many people regret the vaulting of the Senne at the end of the 19th century for reasons of hygiene. With my administration I am studying all the possibilities to restore our emblematic river to the open air. Concrete projects will thus be launched both in the South of Brussels (park along the Senne river at boulevard Paepsem,...) and in the North (new water friendly SME space at RoRo). I also have big projects for the centre, with an open-air shed at the Maximilian Park or transparent logs that will allow us to see the river flowing under our feet.

But Brussels is not just the Senne. We have a multitude of small rivers (Molenbeek, Woluwe, Neerpedebeek to name a few). There is a real demand from citizens to reclaim them. As I often repeat, Water is Life. In view of this observation, I wanted to dedicate this 2018 Landscape Biennale to the theme of Water in the City. My wish, through this approach, is first of all to make this blue Brussels heritage known to a wide public: Brussels residents and foreign visitors."
Introduction

Climate change is causing a significant rise in sea levels, posing a serious threat to coastal regions and small islands all over the world. Even in urban areas that are further from these coastal regions, higher rainfall and breakneck urbanisation also present real problems as entire towns are being submerged under water with increasing frequency.

The second edition of the Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial (BULB) will explore the looming question of flooding in urban areas. How can we manage the complex drainage of rainfall in an integrated way? Does rural architecture hold the key to this challenge, and if so, how? What are the limitations of our current solutions?

For two months BULB will raise the public’s awareness of the importance of water and water cycles in our cities and towns through workshops, project-based research activities, an exhibition, a symposium, garden tours and Curated Walks. BULB does not take the position that water is a threat, but rather views it as an essential element that actively constructs the landscape.

This is an opportunity to explore and showcase urban Brussels landscapes in order to inspire industry stakeholders, and most importantly, local inhabitants. The initiative aims to promote landscape design in Brussels to the general public, acknowledge Brussels’ heritage and bring our parks and gardens to life. It also seeks to build links with other European cities or innovative commercial platforms linked to the economy and new landscape construction.

The event will focus on aspects of science as well as inherent contemporary and future issues through an exhibition at the Centre for Fine Arts (BOZAR) from the 21st of September to the 11th of November 2018.

Architect Joachim Declerck curated the exhibition in collaboration with Architecture Workroom Brussels, BOZAR, Bureau Bas Smets, Latitude, JNC International and Taktyk, with support from European artists such as Christian Barani (FR), Andrea Caretto & Raffaella Spagna (IT), Gauthier Oushoorn (BE) and Superflex (DK).

Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial (BULB) is a Brussels Ministry for the Environment and Quality of Life initiative. It is organised by Bruxelles Environnement (BE) in collaboration with the Fédération Bruxelloise de l’Urbanisme - Brusselse Federatie voor Stedenbouw (FBU-BFS) and Brussels cultural institutions BOZAR and CIVA.
Exhibition: RISING WATERS - Shaping Our Gardens, Streets And Urban Valleys
21.09—11.11.2018

Curator Joachim De Clerck

Joachim Declerck (b.1979) is an architect-engineer, and founder and partner at Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB), a European do-and-think-tank for architectural, urban and regional innovation. Since 2014 he has been a visiting professor at the University of Ghent (BE).

The overarching themes of his work are project implementation and spatial development as catalysts for major social transitions. Declerck studied at the University of Ghent in Belgium. He then completed an international post doctorate at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam from 2005 to 2010. Since 2008 he has led the research programme and professional development at the Institute. Through it, he became the co-curator of the 3rd IABR, Power - Producing the Contemporary City (2007), and the exhibition A Vision for Brussels – Imagining the Capital of Europe (2007).

Since it was founded in 2010, Architecture Workroom Brussels has acted as an initiator, mediator and platform, creating the space and conditions to encourage innovative architecture and research projects. AWB is formed of a team of ten architect-researchers led by three partners: Roeland Dudal, Els Veryloesem and Joachim Declerck. The AWB’s long-term strategic priorities are to construct visionary housing, fruitful landscapes, supportive neighbourhoods and productive cities. As a platform for research and knowledge sharing, AWB contributes to social debate more broadly, as well as the practice and development of professional understanding, policy innovation and urban development.

In 2010, Declerck curated the Construire pour Bruxelles – Architecture et transformation urbaine en Europe (2010) exhibition. He was part of the curatorial team for the 5th IABR, Making City (2012) and the Belgian pavilion, The Ambition of the Territory (2012), at the 13th Venice Architecture Biennial. He is also a workshop supervisor at the IABR.
Research and work by Brusselse landscape Design offices

1. Bas Smets: Augmented landscapes – Looking for Biospheric urbanism

The natural hydrographic system in the Brussels area has gradually been transformed into a technical network. Another way of living in the area needs to be developed, one that is capable of reducing water-related risks, while making the most of this resource. In Augmented Landscapes, urban planning is redefined as an intelligent interface between climatic effects and geology. The study of the Molenbeek drainage area illustrates this "Biospheric Urbanism" where the sky meets the land.

2. JNC International: New Ukkelbeek Valley

JNC International - Petitzon suggests creating a new urban landscape in a valley whose river disappeared under the streets a long time ago. The aims of this project are threefold: reintegrating the water cycle in the city by assimilating it at block-level, maximising the ecological potential of public space with a green and blue mesh, and restoring access to water in public spaces by making clean water spring up at the bottom of the valley.
3. Latitude Platform: *Every space counts*

“Every space counts” just like every water droplet matters. For the *Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial*, Latitude Platform looks at every inch of the region in terms of water (rain) collection and treatment. This perspective makes you imagine objects raining down on Brussels and taking over the urban landscape like parasites. New unions or complex socio-ecological organisations made from wet parts of the city float to the surface in a collective movement for water.

4. TAKTYK: Water Catchers

The aim of the *Water Catchers* project is to test the ability of open spaces in the Forest neighbourhood to evolve towards managing surface rainwater and encouraging life and new spatial practices. The project-based research identifies different landscape typologies and formulates strategies that prioritise action on “latent” landscapes such as railway network infrastructures and industrial zones. It also calls for the necessary modification of “fixed” landscapes such as parks, which have been identified by the Forest area as future prototypes for innovative open spaces.
Contributions by 4 European artists and artists groups

1. Christian Barani (FR)

The sequences were filmed by Christian Barani and produced in collaboration with the landscape architect Bas Smets for the Agora exhibition 2017, *Les paysages augmentés (Augmented Landscapes)*. They immerse visitors in the Molenbeek valley and seek out resilient landscapes. The film shows the town’s potential to transform. It is a projection of the landscape that is simultaneously precise but difficult to capture in its entirety. The image of a metropolitan city is depicted through the linear structure of the valley, formed of its parks, forests, marshes and agricultural land.

*BRUXELLES 50°N – 4°E, 2017*
Film, 10 min 55 sec

2. Andrea Caretto & Raffaella Spagna (IT)

Italian artists Andrea Caretto and Raffaella Spagna present two of their works, which were created in 2011 in response to the Rhône Valley in France.

*Être galet*
Found objects
2011

*Être galet* is a work made up of a collection of objects found by the artists on the banks of the Rhône. There are fragments of artificial materials (such as polyurethane foam, aerated concrete, polystyrene and lightweight concrete) that, after being transported and reshaped by the river, are mixed among real stones. The “taming” of the river (particularly as a result of the barge and lock systems) has limited its power, slowed the water and made it less likely that the river will form new pebbles. Like fossils, the real stones testify to a now-disappeared river landscape. The artificial pebbles are therefore paradoxically the “real” stones made by the contemporary Rhône.
The Rhône Valley landscape is largely dependent on something hidden underground and rarely seen. Beneath the surface is a tube made from rammed earth, a traditional construction technique that is normally used for building local houses. This tube is the visible part of the enormous, invisible pipeline system managed by the SPMR (Société du Pipeline Méditerranée Rhône), which transports crude oil from Marseille to Lyon under the Rhône Valley.

3. Gauthier Oushoorn (BE)

Grid (Plan chest A1)
Metal and water
2018

Oushoorn created an installation for the Thorntonbank wind farm (19km off the Belgian coast) in order to try and depict an unstable landscape by introducing rigid geometry. This long-term project has its origins in a singular moment that the artist experienced while cleaning a wheelbarrow. The artist was fascinated by the way the water lapped at the bottom of the barrow, so to capture and represent this body of water, he installed a metal grill and filmed the movement of the liquid. He pursued his exploration of the subject by placing a metal grill in a group of drawers in a chest, with a different woven frame in each drawer. The unpredictability of water is contrasted with the rigidity that the human spirit demands in order to impose stability on something inherently unstable.
4. Superflex (DK)

_Flooded McDonald’s_
Video, 20 min.
2009

‘Superflex’ is a trio of Danish artists: Rasmus Nielsen, Jakob Fenger and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen. They critique the rising tide of consumerism submerging people’s everyday lives. Lacking any human presence, their 20-minute video combines humour with an unsettling atmosphere. First shown at South London Gallery (UK), this work depicts a location as it gradually drowns.

**Practical information**

**Dates**: Friday 21 September – Sunday 11 November ‘18  
**Place**: Circuit BN, Centre for Fine Arts  
**Price**: free entrance  
**Coproduction**: JNC International, Taktyk, Latitude, Bureau Bas Smets  
**Sponsor**: BULB, Leefmilieu Brussel - Bruxelles environnement, FBU- Fédération bruxelloise de l’urbanisme
1. Superstitions, a lecture by Georges Descombes (SW)

The Georges Descombes conference is the lynchpin of the second edition of the Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial (BULB). It is an opportunity to highlight a unique culture and an exceptional, active local and regional landscape methodology. There will be a particular focus on the question of the morphological memory of a piece of land, the meaning of a place, and water use as an allusion to a former time.

In many of his projects, Georges Descombes reinvents the meaning of a place by showing what is and is no longer present. The "topographic responsiveness" of his landscape projects seeks to translate the feeling of loss and disappearance as powerfully as possible. The surface of the land, inscribed with the history of its transformation, acts as both map and archives.

Breaking with the classic theatre metaphor applied to the landscape, he started pursuing a newer and livelier means of representing our surroundings.

Practical information

Date: Thursday 20.09 / 20:00-21:00
Place: Hall M -Centre for Fine Arts
Price: 5-8€
Registration via [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)
2. Symposium with local and European stakeholders

To celebrate the *Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial (BULB)*, BOZAR and the Fédération Bruxelloise de l’Urbanisme - Brusselse Federatie voor Stedenbouw (FBU-BFS) invite you to a symposium. Conferences from a number of European stakeholders will explore landscape architecture, discussing and drawing examples from different projects, practices and research from outside Brussels. Members of the Belgian university research community will then re-examine these ideas in a Brussels context through workshops and debates, bringing together moderators and speakers.

The speakers in the morning are Eva Pfannes, Sybrand Tjallingii and Giambattista Zaccariotto. The afternoon will give you the opportunity to take part in workshops and round tables moderated by the curator of the biennial exhibition, Joachim Declerck (AWB), and local researchers such as Catalina Dobre (ULB).

This is an opportunity to meet different urban stakeholders and thinkers.

**Practical information**

**Date**: Friday 21.09 / 8:30—17:00  
**Place**: Horta Hall — Centre for Fine Arts  
**Price**: 20-40€  
Registration via [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)
3. Curated Walks in Brussels landscapes

The Brussels Urban Landscape Biennial (BULB) and BOZAR invite several local people to choose a series of key places in the Brussels-Capital region that represent the biennial’s water theme. Connecting these places forms an itinerary across the region. Discover this trail as part of a day of guided tours, each led by one of our invited speakers.

These liquid narratives across town are led by Kristiaan Borret, Antoine Espinasseau, Serge Kempeneers, Jacques Mercier and others TBA.

9:30 – King Baudoinpark, Jette - Serge Kempeneers (NL/FR)

Serge Kempeneers was born in Berchem-Sainte-Agathe and is, as he puts it, “a child on the other side of the canal”. He is a Doctor of Science and has studied urban ecology with Professor Paul Duvigneaud. He joined the Brussels Institute for Environmental Management (now Brussels Environment) in 1995, where he is the Director of Green Spaces Division. His team developed the concept of green and blue mesh for Brussels and implemented it, as well as ecological management, vegetable plots, participatory approaches, etc. He will take nature lovers on a morning walk through the King Baudouin Park in Jette at 9:30.

11:00 – Porte de Ninove/Ninoofsepoort - Kristiaan Borret (NL/FR/ENG)

Kristiaan Borret is the Bouwmeester/Maître architecte of the Brussels-Capital Region since 2015. With a background as a civil engineer-architect as a background, he also holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and in political science and public affairs, as well as a master in urban planning.

Kristiaan Borret's career is particularly marked by theoretical and conceptual research on the contemporary transformations of the city, urbanity and public space. In 2013, he received the Biennial Architecture Prize awarded by the Flemish Community. He will take you on a journey along the canal by walking north from the Porte de Ninove/Ninoofsepoort at 11:00.

14:00 – Wiels, Jacques & Christophe Mercier (FR)

Jacques Mercier is a writer and host of Belgian radio and television. Known as "Monsieur Dictionnaire", he is the author of more than fifty books, novels, short stories, essays on the language, heritage, etc. Christophe Mercier is an architect. For public space projects as for urban planning studies, its architecture office 'Sweden 36' systematically implements citizen consultation processes. Christophe has long been campaigning for the implementation of new creative processes, competitions and project developments that guarantee more architectural quality. They'll meet you in front of the Wiels on September 22, 2018 at 14:00.

18:30 – Thurn & Taxis, Antoine Espinasseau (FR, ENG)

Antoine Espinasseau (1986) is a visual artist. He graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles. His singular practice mixes architecture, photography, sculpture and drawing. His works have been exhibited at the Ricard Foundation in Paris, the Consortium in Dijon and the Regional Center for Contemporary Art of Languedoc Roussillon in Sète. He is currently working between Paris and Brussels. He will perform a new reading of his compositions Pilars.

Practical information

Date: Saturday 22.09 / 9:00—19:00
Place: Different places in the Brussels Capital Region
Price: 3-5€
Registration via www.bozar.be
! Attention: maximum 20 people per Curated Walk
4. Garden Tales
Extraordinary parks and Garden tours

_Garden Tales_ (formerly ‘Jardins en Fête’) has been running since 2008. It is organised by CIVA and supported by Bruxelles Environnement. You are invited to discover eighteen unusual gardens in the Brussels region.

“This city garden has been totally transformed into an artificial pond. It is an aquatic space inspired by both the Antwerp Zoo and Japanese gardens. This unique space is accessed through a cave. Once inside you can listen to the waterfall and enjoy this special garden’s other surprises.” — _Une folie aquatique_ (An aquatic folly)

“The Ixelles reservoir pavilion was designed by Joseph Poelaert in 1855, marking the start of drinking water provision in Brussels. The pavilion’s exceptional opening to the public will give you the chance to understand how water has flowed to our taps since the Belle Epoque. — _D’où vient l’eau que vous buvez ?_ (Where does the water you drink come from?)

“This relatively new garden, hidden behind a block of flats, is the surprising work of Nathalie Devallée. There is paving, symmetrical flowerbeds and beautiful trees in the background, giving the space an almost bucolic atmosphere.” — _Un secret bien gardé_ (A well-kept secret)

Practical information

_Date_: Saturday 22.09 & Sunday 23.09, 10:00—18:00
_Price_: Free

Registration via [www.civa.brussels](http://www.civa.brussels)
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CITIZEN LANDSCAPES in BRUSSELS

50 places where nature and man have reclaimed their rights

CHRISTOPHE & JACQUES MERCIER

Did you know that Brussels has more than 300 urban vegetable gardens, that every neighbourhood has a compost collective, that urban wastelands are transformed into orchards, places of culture, places to explore, that more and more cafés are opening in the city's parks...

This guide by Christophe and Jacques Mercier highlights the boundless energy of the people of Brussels as they take over green spaces in the city. The authors take us on a tour of 50 green citizen projects across all the municipalities of Brussels. While some of these projects are more geared to “nature” and others have a more social purpose, they all want to facilitate encounters between the people of Brussels.

This is increasingly becoming a trend in more and more cities around the world but in Brussels, the number and quality of these green citizen landscapes is definitely unique.

Brussels is clearly ahead of the curve and this trend is not about to go away any time soon!

Christophe Mercier is an architect. His architecture firm Suède 36 systematically organises citizen consultations for every public space project or urban planning study it develops. Christophe has been campaigning for several years in favour of the implementation of new creative processes and for competitions and processes that guarantee more architectural quality. He is also a guitarist, plays the trombone and a singer.

Jacques Mercier is an author and TV and radio presenter. Better known as “Monsieur Dictionnaire”, Mercier has published over fifty books, novels, essays on language, heritage and so on. This includes Les 500 plus belles expressions de Monsieur Dictionnaire and Les nouvelles expressions de Monsieur Dictionnaire with Racine.

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