



PRESS RELEASE

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Beaufort announces exhibiting artists for 2018

The Belgian Province of West Flanders and Westtoer have announced the artists who will be taking part in Beaufort 2018. Curator Heidi Ballet selected 18 of them to set up 18 projects in nine communities at the Belgian Coast. "Beaufort is a strong brand that puts our coast on the map as a destination for culture and tourism at the same time," says provincial councillor and president of Westtoer Franky De Block. "We're not only focusing on art fanatics either, we're targeting a wide audience to enjoy the art against the unique backdrop that is the Belgian Coast. For free!" Beaufort 2018, the contemporary art triennial's 6th edition, will be taking place from 30 March to 30 September 2018.

After 15 years, it was high time to review the format. In the end it was decided to focus on emphasising the strong and unique qualities of Beaufort with a limited number of artists. This means the 6th edition will centre around the sea as a backdrop, the accessibility of the project, its locations along the Belgian coastline and the growing park of quality sculptures that is meant to create a long-term legacy in the participating communities.

Open mind

Curator Heidi explains: "The works coming to the Belgian Coast for Beaufort 2018 will delve into the region's bohemian character. It's a very particular atmosphere that's quite evident in the surrealism of James Ensor, for example, and one that attracted people like Marvin Gaye and Austrian author Stefan Zweig to the seaside. Coastal places are just very open and quite partial to a bit of anarchy, things we can feel even today."

"But the people living at the coast often look at things from a different perspective: the way they see the world is often affected by the fact that they're always trying to stay in contact with the world beyond the horizon. And things are no different at the Belgian seaside. Zeebrugge, for example, was already trading with the Baltics and Southern Europe in the Middle Ages! And Ostend was connected to India and China in the 18th century! So it's not surprising the world's Beau Monde and their dog flocked to the coast at the start of the 20th century. Literally coming from anywhere between New York and Persia. Yet, opposing this international frame of mind is the region's intrinsically local character, determined by the very valiant fishermen who braved the mighty waves of the North Sea every day. This year's Beaufort project takes on the very contradictions that have proven such a great source for adventurers, surrealists and anarchists, while questioning the importance of sculptures in public spaces anno 2018."

The selection on display will consist of a mix of works by Belgian and international artists. Kader Attia (FR), Nina Beier (DK) – Nieuwpoort, Guillaume Bijl (BE), Simon Dybbroe Møller (DK) – Middelkerke-Westende, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys (BE) – De Panne, Edith Dekyndt (BE), Stief DeSmet (BE) – Ostend, Jason Dodge (US), Anne Duk Hee Jordan (DE/KR), Jean-François Fourtou (FR) – Knokke-Heist, Ryan Gander (GB) – Koksijde, Iman Issa (EG), Basim Magdy (EG), Katja Novitskova (EST) – Bredene, Rotor (BE) – Zeebrugge, Frederik Van Simaey (BE), Leon Vranken (BE), Xu Zhen (CN) – De Haan-Wenduine

Unique experience

"This year's triennial stands out because of the way we worked together with the nine participating coastal communities. We wanted to do things transparently in order to create a kind of participation model that will generate a major dynamic and lots of enthusiasm in these communities," says provincial councillor and president of Westtoer Franky De Block, .

The Belgian Coast has turned itself into a top year-round tourist destination. Franky continues: "Westtoer stays committed to its strategic mission of promoting the Belgian Coast all year round. And Beaufort is a major initiative that supports and enhances our region's touristic image. So with the triennial, we want to put the Belgian Coast on the foreground as a cultural tourist destination for a bit longer than just a few months," he says. "After all Beaufort juxtaposes art and the sea and that makes it quite unique."

Growing the tradition

Provincial councillor Guido Decorte elaborates: "Beaufort provides lots of added value to the province and the coastal region as a whole. As the provinces' responsibilities were re-assessed, we decided to keep on working on this unique tradition. Beaufort is a strong brand, after all, that gives the Belgian Coast a very special appeal. Westtoer will be co-ordinating the project in terms of production and communication, while an external curator will develop the artistic concept."

Beaufort is definitely after a very wide target audience: not only culture enthusiasts will find what they are looking for, local residents, second-home owners as well as people out for the day and those staying overnight can also enjoy the artworks. Westtoer is already organising a campaign in Flanders, Wallonia and even in Belgium's neighbouring countries to promote Beaufort.

To learn more, please visit www.beaufort2018.be

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