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A NEW ART GALLERY IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

On Friday 8 May 2026, BRUSK will celebrate its official opening. The new art gallery of Musea Brugge, located in the historic heart of the city, is a brand-new cultural landmark for exhibitions and activities of the highest level—where art surprises, moves and stimulates thought.

With BRUSK, Flanders and the City of Bruges are investing in a shared conviction that high-quality exhibitions of old and contemporary art, combined with an accessible cultural experience, deserve a full-fledged place in the heart of Bruges. The new art gallery is an absolute enrichment of the museum landscape in the city of art Bruges and the cultural region of Flanders.



In short: what is BRUSK?

BRUSK is more than a museum. It is an art gallery for surprising exhibitions and activities for all ages. The building, designed by Robbrecht and Daem architects and Olivier Salens architects, is a place buzzing with creativity, where new encounters and experiences are never far away.

Experiencing art at BRUSK is not limited to the exhibition galleries. The Scala, the Forum, the Aula and other spaces within BRUSK, the hospitality venue Bar Brusk, the adjoining research centre BRON, and the future museum park all form part of the overall experience. BRUSK is a place where you can view, experience and discuss art.

At the same time, BRUSK offers space to store and research the rich art collection of Musea Brugge in state-of-the-art depots and research facilities in BRUSK and BRON.

Looking outward, rooted in Bruges

BRUSK is an international beacon for art, firmly embedded in Bruges. In the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage city, the exhibition programme often departs from the collection of Musea Brugge itself, complemented by masterpieces, renowned names and loans from internationally acclaimed institutions and museums.

BRUSK connects art and heritage from different eras and continents with contemporary themes. The programme offers new perspectives, stimulates critical thinking, and invites a broad audience to dialogue and wonder.

Surprising and atypical connections

A contemporary building in a medieval city centre. Old and contemporary art under one roof. A mix of masterpieces and lesser-known collection items. Loans from international leading institutions alongside new work by contemporary artists. A crossover between visual art and other disciplines such as dance, theatre and music. BRUSK starts from atypical and surprising connections. In this way, new stories emerge that challenge visitors to broaden their perspective.



© Femke den Hollander



© Studio Woester



© Studio Woester



© Femke den Hollander

A place for everyone

There is always something to experience at the art gallery. For young and old, for curious visitors, art lovers or casual passers-by. BRUSK is a shared place for everyone, where dynamic encounters arise and grow into new stories.

On the first floor of BRUSK, two monumental exhibition galleries are located, ensuring that there is always one or two exhibitions on view. Each BRUSK exhibition is supported by a strong public programme—from introductory tours, workshops and concerts to performances, lectures and children's activities. BRUSK is for everyone.

Bar Brusk

Bar Brusk is located on the south side of BRUSK and is operated by De Republiek, a strong local partner known for the Grand Café in Sint-Jakobsstraat and as an urban changemaker behind numerous socio-cultural initiatives. With Bar Brusk, BRUSK has a lively hospitality venue where everyone—locals and visitors alike—feels at home and is happy to return.

There are no stiff restaurant rules at Bar Brusk. You queue up, help yourself to what you like and sit wherever you want. Think: buffet, but genuinely good—food that makes you happy. Seasonal, locally sourced and fairly priced. From coffee and breakfast to lunch, aperitif and dinner. By collaborating with the social enterprise ODAS, Bar Brusk also creates opportunities for people who are distanced from the labour market.

Bar Brusk is not only open to those who come to see art, but also to anyone who simply wants to celebrate the day—even outside the opening hours of BRUSK. Every month, good food is paired with enjoyable events. Bar Brusk is a public living room with a view of the world.

OPENING EXHIBITIONS

BRUSK is designed as a house for art and for people: accessible, welcoming and ready to surprise time and again. At the same time, BRUSK is a quality label. At BRUSK, Musea Brugge connects its renowned art collection with international loans and new contemporary work to create striking and relevant exhibitions of the highest international standard. The two opening exhibitions at BRUSK reflect this ambition from the very start.

'Latent City' is the first solo exhibition on Belgian soil by **Refik Anadol**, the internationally celebrated pioneer of AI-driven digital art. And with '**Bigger Picture**', Musea Brugge brings a prestigious cultural-historical exhibition to BRUSK, returning Bruges to the origins of its international identity as a world city avant la lettre.



Catalan atlas, middeleeuwse wereldkaart uit 1375, Cresques Abraham
(Digitale reproductie)



'Solomon and Bilqis Enthroned', The David Collection, 83b/2006 & 83a/2006,
©Pernille Klemp



Refik Anadol. Latent City, Simulation in BRUSK, 2026, Refik Anadol Studio

BIGGER PICTURE CONNECTED WORLDS OF BRUGES 900-1550

08.05.26 → 06.09.26

Throughout the Middle Ages, Bruges developed into a world city, a hub within global networks of trade, culture and politics. At its height, Bruges seemed like the epicentre of the world. But the city never stood alone. Bruges was constantly in contact with other regions and cultures through trade, travel, faith and ideas.

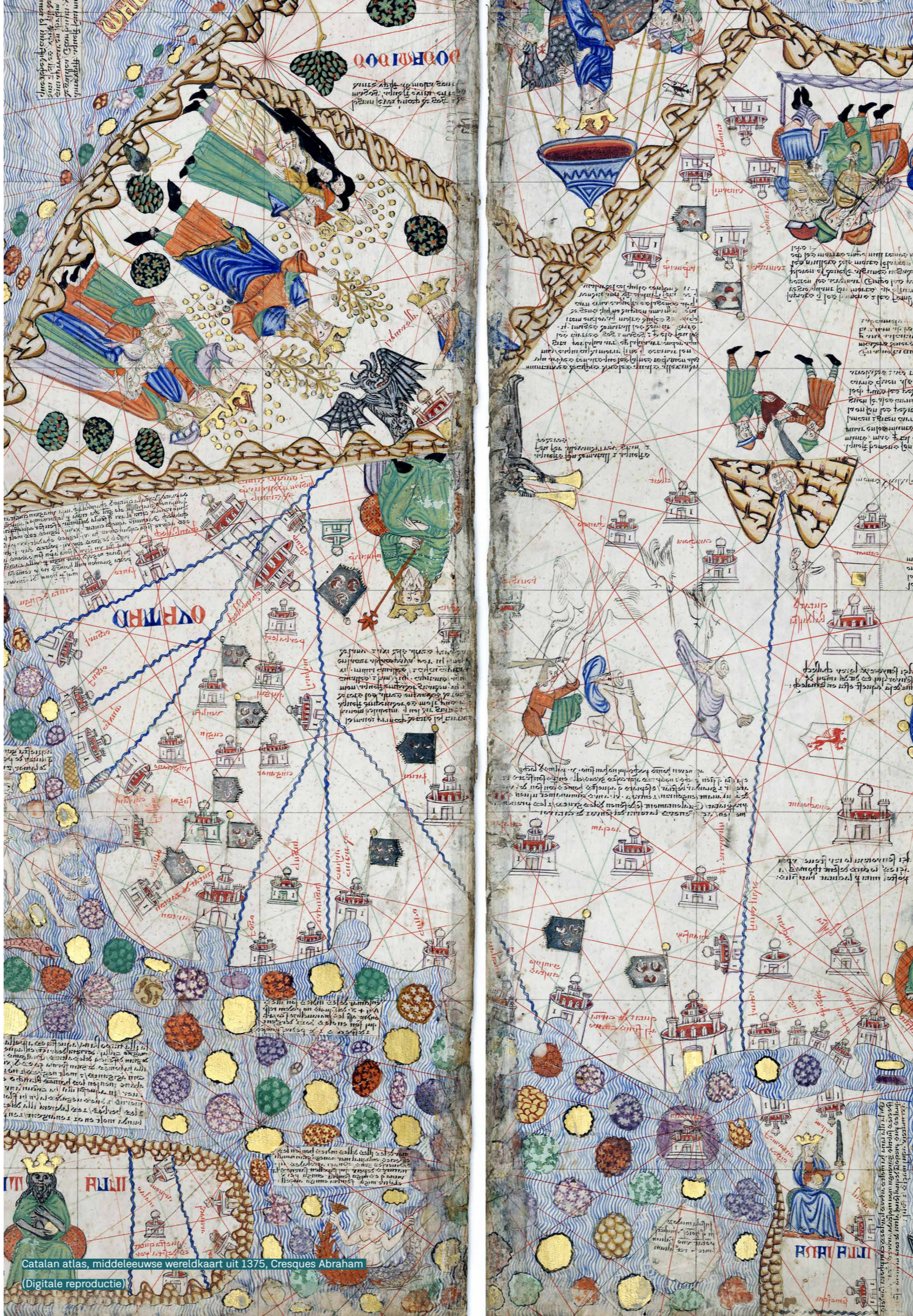
International interconnectedness

'Bigger Picture' focuses on this international interconnectedness. The exhibition explores how merchants from Scandinavia, crusaders from Jerusalem, diplomats from the Ottoman Empire and scholars from the Islamic world left their mark on Bruges, and how Bruges in turn influenced their world.

'Bigger Picture' is not a chronological exhibition, but a thematic journey of discovery through five worlds, each of which played a crucial role in the development of medieval Bruges. From the North Sea, the Christian world and the Mediterranean, to court culture and the so-called 'new' world. Each chapter brings together unique works of art and heritage objects and stories that reveal how intense and multifaceted the interactions between Bruges and the rest of the world truly were. Developed in collaboration with the renowned British historian and author Prof. Dr Peter Frankopan and experts Prof. Dr Wim De Clercq, Prof. Dr Jan Dumolyn, Dr Axel Langer and Prof. Dr Jo Van Steenberghe, the exhibition sheds new light on crucial yet often forgotten stories from our history.

Art and objects from leading museums

'Bigger Picture' brings together more than 250 works of art and heritage objects. Alongside masterpieces from its own collection, Musea



Catalan atlas, middeleeuwse wereldkaart uit 1375, Cresques Abraham
(Digitale reproductie)

Brugge has also secured exceptional loans from leading museums around the world for the exhibition.

Unique artworks such as Hans Memling's 'Passion of Christ' from Musei Reali Torino – Galleria Sabauda (Turin), the anonymous 'Portrait of Suleyman' from the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna) and Bellini's iconic 'Portrait of Mehmet II' from The National Gallery (London) are travelling especially to BRUSK for this exhibition.

The exhibition also presents exceptional manuscripts, such as the rarely loaned 'Portrait of Alexios I Komnenos' from the Vatican Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the famous 'Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq' – also known as the 'Tabula Rogeriana' – from the Bodleian Libraries (Oxford). Several unique archaeological finds and impressive tapestries further bring the cultural richness of the Middle Ages vividly to life.

A new view of the Middle Ages

The first major cultural-historical exhibition at BRUSK invites visitors to see the Middle Ages as they truly were: not an isolated, dark period, but an era of exchange, curiosity and global connections. Bruges was not a miracle that arose out of nowhere, but a city that could flourish thanks to its interconnectedness with the world. By bringing together different perspectives, 'Bigger Picture' makes clear just how strongly our history has been shaped by encounters with others. Much more than we sometimes realise.

A broader outlook

'Bigger Picture' is an invitation to look at globalisation and history with an open mind. The exhibition shows how medieval people experienced the world, and how their ideas, travels and contacts helped shape Bruges. In doing so, visitors are encouraged to broaden their own perspective. Because those who understand how interconnected the world already was back then, look differently at the world today.

Bigger Picture in five worlds

The North Sea world

Although Bruges is not located on the coast, it developed early on into a maritime metropolis. The city benefited from strong ties with England and Scandinavia. Thanks to trade, pilgrimage routes and cultural exchange, Bruges continuously expanded its networks. Archaeological finds illustrate these far-reaching connections.

Rudder of Bruges

At the end of the 19th century, archaeologists uncovered traces of a Roman harbour during the expansion of the port of Bruges. Excavations revealed the remains of two boats dating from the period 100–300: the oldest seaworthy vessels ever found in Belgium. This rudder was used to steer the boat. The find proves that Bruges already had a connection with the sea at a very early stage.

Rudder of a Roman seagoing vessel, ca. 100–300, oak, 305 x 50 x 23 cm, Bruges, Raakvlak

Merovingian hairpin from Roksem

This small hairpin is a local everyday object from the period 470–530. It was found near an old Roman military camp close to Bruges. At the top of the pin is a small red stone: a garnet or almandine that probably originated from India or Sri Lanka. The hairpin is a striking example of how different regions were already intertwined along global trade routes in the early Middle Ages.

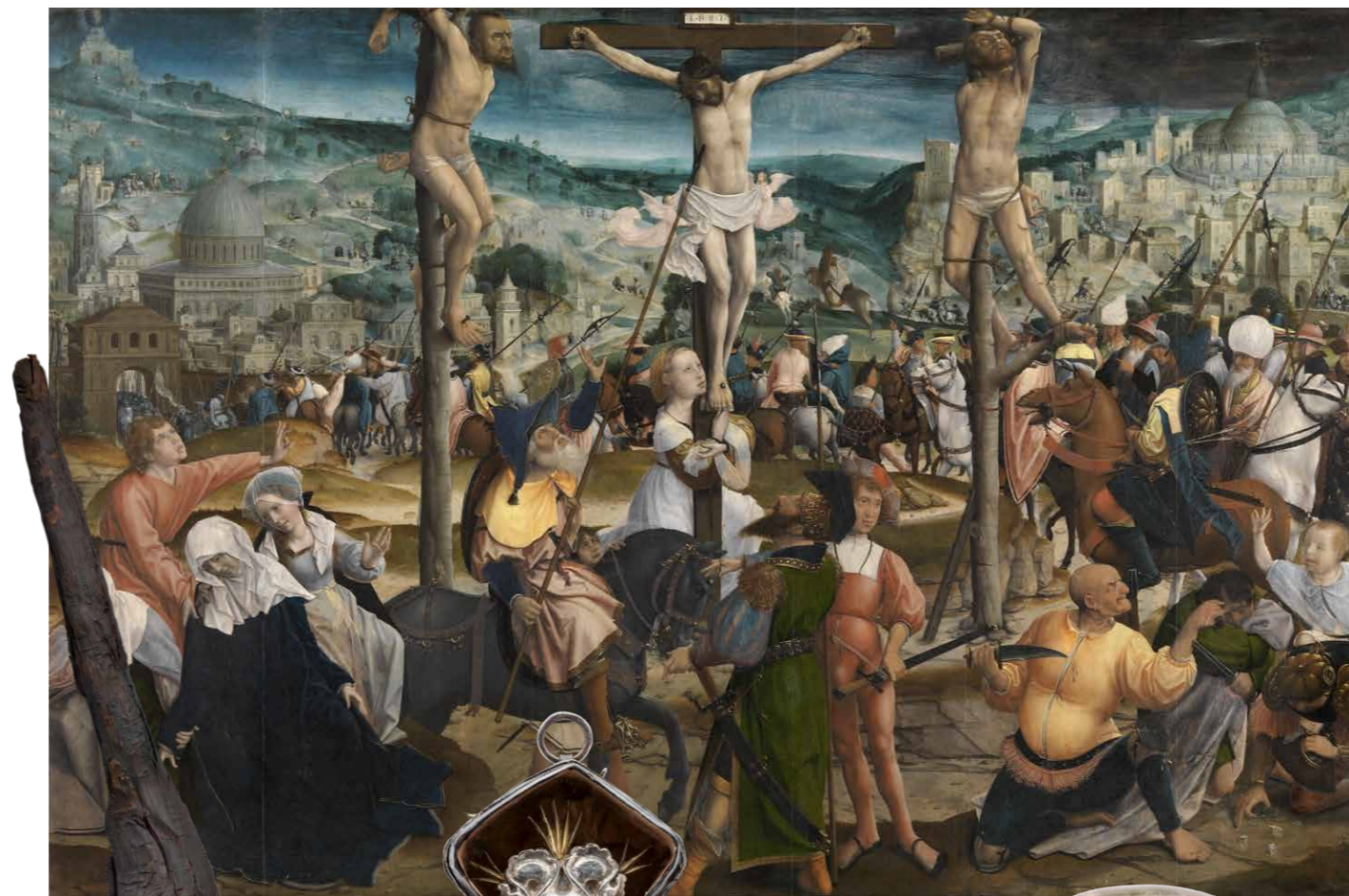
Hairpin with bird-head motif, found in Roksem, 470–530, copper alloy and almandine or garnet, 17.3 x 1.65 x 0.2 cm, Bruges, Raakvlak

The world of Christianity

From the 12th century onwards, ties between Bruges and the south and east intensified. The spiritual and political epicentres of Jerusalem and Constantinople developed strong connections with Flanders through the Crusades and trade. Bruges benefited from the influx of valuable artworks, relics and ideas from the East.

Cross of Adornes

An increasing number of pilgrims travelled to holy destinations such as Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople and brought souvenirs back with them. The wealthy Bruges merchant and pilgrim Anselm Adornes and his son Jan brought this Byzantine cross to Bruges after a visit to the Holy Land, probably in the 15th century. The carving



depicts scenes from the lives of Jesus and Mary. The mount with radiant silver clouds, the emblem of the Adornes family, was added in the 16th century.

Late Byzantine cross, second half of the 15th century, palm wood, silver and leather case, cross 42 x 27.5 cm; case 44.5 cm (91 cm open) x 31 cm, Bruges, Adornes Estate

Jan Provoost

In the background of 'The Crucifixion', Jan Provoost depicts Jerusalem, with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as a visual anchor. It is very likely that Provoost visited the city as a pilgrim and based the cityscape in this painting on his own observations. Due to the deeply rooted tradition of pilgrimage, Jerusalem acquired an almost mythical status during this period as the ideal city. Artists depicted Jerusalem in paintings, manuscripts and maps. This allowed people in Flanders who never undertook a pilgrimage to nevertheless enjoy this 'model city'.

Jan Provoost, Crucifixion, ca. 1501–ca. 1505, oil on panel, 116.6 x 171.1 cm, Bruges, Musea Brugge, photo: Hugo Maertens

The Mediterranean world

In the late Middle Ages, Bruges formed a crucial link in the trade networks around the Mediterranean. Alongside materials such as textiles, ivory and pigments, knowledge from the Islamic world also reached the city. Lavishly illustrated manuscripts on astronomy, algebra and medicine, as well as alchemy, were translated and circulated among European scholars – including in Bruges.

Reliquary casket

This splendid metal and rock crystal casket from Egypt is a so-called Siculo-Arab box, a luxury object that originally had no religious function. Through trade routes, the casket found its way to the Christian world, where it was further embellished with gemstones in France and assumed a new role as a religious reliquary. A striking example of the fusion of the Christian and Arab worlds.

Reliquary from Moûtier-en-Tarentaise, ca. 1175–1225, gilded silver, filigree, rock crystal, gemstones, 11.3 x 14.8 x 9.7 cm, Paris, Musée national du Moyen Âge – thermes et hôtel de Cluny

Jan van Eyck

The mastery of Jan van Eyck is a fine illustration of how knowledge from the East generated new developments in the West. His innovative use of pigments resulted from scientific insights and



technological innovations from the Islamic world. Mutual influence between the Islamic and Christian worlds thus extended beyond trade alone and brought together artistic and scientific insights from East and West.

Jan van Eyck, Portrait of Margaret van Eyck, 1439, oil on oak panel, 32.6 x 25.8 cm, Bruges, Musea Brugge, photo: Hugo Maertens

The world of the court

In the Afro-Eurasian world of the 14th to 16th centuries, objects, ideas and people circulated abundantly between dynastic courts across borders, leaving an indelible mark—also in Bruges. The Bruges elite was unmistakably part of this network of intensive contacts, in which powerful dynasties such as the Burgundians and the Ottomans played a central role.

Portrait of Philip the Good, after Rogier van der Weyden & Portrait of Mehmet II, Gentile Bellini

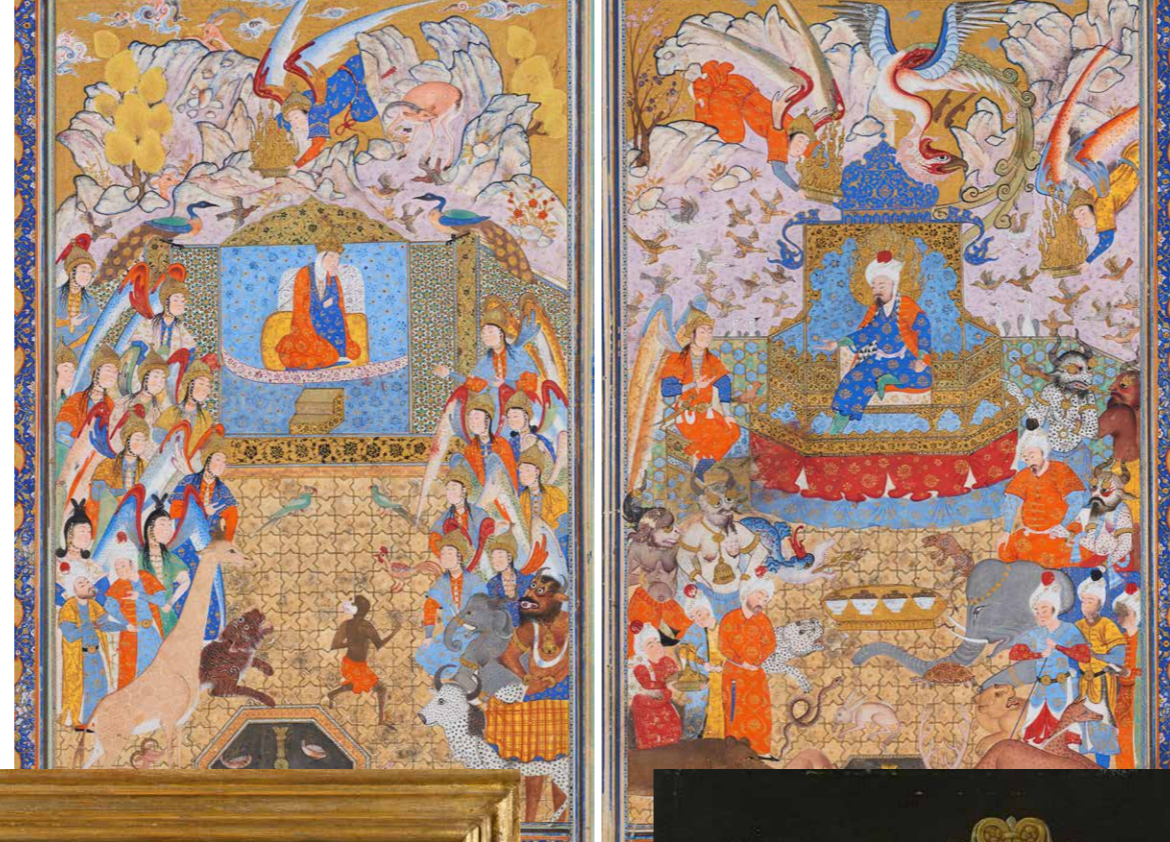
In the late Middle Ages, rulers increasingly legitimised their power through splendid portraits. The Ottoman sultan Mehmet II (1432–1481) attracted artists from across Europe, such as the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini. Bellini painted a portrait of the sultan while simultaneously introducing Western influences into Ottoman art. Philip the Good (1396–1467), Duke of Burgundy, likewise made strategic use of artists to display his authority. Both portraits employ the same visual language. Political ambitions are literally painted into the image: Philip the Good wears the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which he himself founded, while Mehmet II is depicted with the three crowns to which he laid claim. The works also demonstrate how the world was becoming increasingly interconnected. Flemings, Venetians, Ottomans: they became ever less foreign to one another.

Anonymous copy after Rogier van der Weyden, Portrait of Philip the Good, circa 1451–circa 1500, oil on oak panel, 32.6 x 22.4 cm, Bruges, Musea Brugge

Gentile Bellini, Sultan Mehmet II, 1480, oil originally on panel, transferred to canvas, 69.9 x 52.1 cm, London, The National Gallery

'Solomon and Bilqis on the throne': double frontispiece from a copy of Firdawsi's 'Shahnama'

Another way in which rulers legitimised their authority was by aligning themselves with powerful rulers from the Bible or classical antiquity. This is the double frontispiece of a copy of the 'Book of Kings' ('Shahnama'), produced in the mid-16th century in the Iranian city of Shiraz. It recounts the



national epic of Iran, written by the poet Firdawsi. On the right, King Solomon (Sulayman) is depicted, builder of the First Temple in Jerusalem and praised for his wise judgement. On the left stands Bilqis, the wise Queen of Sheba. At the time, they were regarded as the ideal royal couple. Their meeting is described in both the Bible and the Quran.

Solomon and Bilqis on the throne, double frontispiece from a copy of the Shahnama, ca. 1540–1550, paper, 37.2 x 23.2 cm per folio, Copenhagen, The David Collection, photo: Pernille Klemp

Other worlds

Thanks to technological innovations, Europe in the 15th century turned its gaze towards regions previously unknown to Europeans. The Portuguese took the lead, with expeditions to the Azores and West Africa. Bruges benefited from this expansion and grew into an important distribution centre for sugar.

Sundial of ivory and silver

Pocket-sized sundials were extremely useful at sea. This late-16th-century example combines timekeeping, astronomy, geography and navigation. Technological innovations such as the sundial led to 'voyages of discovery' and to the flourishing of global trade.

Sundial with compass, 1570, ivory and silver, 7.5 x 5 x 2 cm, Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation © The Phoebus Foundation

Portolan chart of the Azores

Seafarers used portolan charts to plot their course and measure the distance travelled. This chart of the Azores, an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, was produced in the Low Countries. The Azores were 'discovered' by the Portuguese but were also colonised by Flemings. At the time, they were even known as the 'Vlaemse Eylanden', as also indicated in this chart.

Jan Luyken, Nieuwe Pascaert van alle de Vlaemse Eylanden, 1681, etching hand-coloured, 51.1 x 58.8 cm, © Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum





Curators

Head curator

Prof. dr. Peter Frankopan (Oxford University) is a British historian and Professor of World History at the University of Oxford. He is the author of, among others, the bestseller 'The Silk Roads: A New History of the World'.

Guest curators

Prof. dr. Wim De Clercq (UGent) is Professor of Archaeology of the Historical Periods at Ghent University.

Prof. dr. Jan Dumolyn (UGent) is Professor of Medieval History and Chair of the Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies at Ghent University.

Dr. Axel Langer is Curator of Islamic Art of the Near and Middle East at Museum Rietberg (Zurich, Switzerland).

Prof. dr. Jo Van Steenbergen (UGent) is Full Professor in the Division of Near Eastern and Islamic Worlds in the Department of Languages and Cultures at Ghent University.

Musea Brugge

Lieven De Visch is Head of Exhibitions.

Sibylla Goegebeur is Curator of Old Art, Culture and History.

Anne van Oosterwijk is Head of Research.

Harry Stroobant is Exhibition Coordinator for Public Mediation.



Publication

Published in conjunction with the exhibition, the book 'Connected worlds of Bruges' will be released by Hannibal Books. A visually stunning exploration of Bruges as a global crossroads: where art, trade and culture shaped a world city.

Through a carefully curated selection of extraordinary objects—each a tangible testament to historical encounters between continents—the book tells a richly layered story of interconnectedness.

Edited and compiled by Jan Dumolyn and Peter Frankopan. With contributions by Marc Boone, Andrew Brown, Wim De Clercq, Thérèse de Hemptinne, Jan Dumolyn, Peter Frankopan, Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, Brigitte Meijns, Synnøve Midtbø Myking, Rory Naismith, Jacques Paviot, Elisabeth van Houts, Jo Van Steenbergen and Alexis Wilkin.

29,2 x 24,5 cm / 304 pages / Hardcover / Full colour / Available in Dutch, English and French / ISBN 978 94 9341 661 1 / € 59,00

Available in the museum shop at BRUSK or at bruskbrugge.be/shop

Public programme

Friday 15 May – Sunday 6 September

Walk-in guided tours: Dwars door Breedbeeld (NL)

Tuesday 7 July – Tuesday 1 September

Visites guidées introductives: À travers Vision Large (FR)

Thursday 9 July – Thursday 3 September

Walk-in tours: Cut through Bigger Picture (EN)

Sunday 31 May

BRUSK Family Day: Bigger Picture (ages 6 to 12)

Saturday 6 June

BRUSK Guest Curator: Peter Frankopan

Sunday 26 July

BRUSK Family Day: Bigger Picture (ages 6 to 12)

Sunday 6 September

BRUSK Guest Curator: Bigger Picture curators (Sibylla Goegebeur, Wim De Clercq, Jan Dumolyn and Jo Van Steenbergen)

Ongoing

Audio tour for children in collaboration with Het Geluidshuis (all ages)

Children's trail: Travel with the monsters (ages 6 to 12)

Guided tour: Cut through Bigger Picture (for groups)

BRUSK Late: open until 9.30 pm on the first Friday of every month

Art project #POV by the young people of Briklyoung

Briklyoung, the youth arts programme of Musea Brugge (ages 16–26), worked for six weeks with the collection pieces from the exhibition 'Bigger Picture', exploring how these objects relate to their own lives and their view of the world.

Together with film artist Kenneth Michiels and De Batterie, the group of twelve young people created a film installation consisting of eight short films that forms an integral part of the exhibition. 'Bigger Picture' shows, from multiple perspectives, how Bruges was connected to the rest of the world in the Middle Ages. The Briklyoung art project #POV, by contrast, departs from the perspective ('point of view') of the young people themselves. The film installation takes visitors into the lived world of today's youth and offers a unique perspective on the relationship between art and heritage from the past and young people of today.

REFIK ANADOL

Latent City

08.05.26 → 08.11.26

The internationally renowned new media artist Refik Anadol brings a groundbreaking exhibition to BRUSK. The Turkish-American pioneer of digital art is known worldwide for his large-scale art installations created in collaboration with artificial intelligence. For the first time, Refik Anadol presents his visionary work in Belgium, as the spectacular opening exhibition at BRUSK.

A pioneer in AI art

Refik Anadol (1985, Istanbul) is regarded as a pioneer of data aesthetics. As one of the first—and still one of the few—artists, he brought artificial intelligence (AI) out of a niche domain and into the international art world. His fascination with the relationship between humans and machines emerged at a young age: at just eight years old, he taught himself to code. Ever since, he has been captivated by the question of how machines can visualise the memory of people and of other machines.

In 2014, Anadol founded the award-winning Refik Anadol Studio in Los Angeles. Much like the classical workshops of old masters, he works with an international and interdisciplinary team of artists, architects, data experts and researchers to produce immersive digital art projects. These projects always start from data streams that continuously surround us. By collaborating with 'neural networks', a machine learning model inspired by the human brain, he uses data as digital pigments in radical visualisations. The result is a series of 'dreaming' digital paintings, data sculptures and impressive installations that are constantly evolving. His site-specific artworks encourage viewers to reconsider our relationship with time and space in the physical world, and to reflect on the creative potential of machines.

With 'Refik Anadol. Latent City', Musea Brugge presents a Belgian premiere. Refik Anadol's work has previously been shown in more than sixty cities across six continents, including the National Museum of China in Beijing (2019), König Galerie in Berlin (2021–2023), MoMA in New York (2022–2023) and the Guggenheim in Bilbao (2025). This year, Refik Anadol Studio will open



'Dataland' in Los Angeles, a museum entirely dedicated to AI art.

Latent City

Over the past ten years, Refik Anadol Studio has trained proprietary machine learning models using more than five million images of cities worldwide, developing unique algorithms that reimagine the metropolis as a living, breathing entity. The exhibition 'Refik Anadol. Latent City' marks the beginning of a new series in which Anadol's long-standing engagement with urban imagination is presented in a museum context for the first time.

Driven by data from Bruges

Created especially for BRUSK, Refik Anadol has developed an immersive total installation driven by historical and real-time data from Bruges: from the city's medieval networks and architectural structures to its rich art collections, as well as the hidden rhythms of everyday urban life. The live-generated installation is a spectacular focal point: a ten-metre-high, hallucinatory sculptural form with an infinity effect that continuously transforms.

Urban dialogue

The BRUSK installation is surrounded by a constellation of digital paintings: existing and new works featuring other cities such as Stockholm, Seoul, Berlin, New York and Portland from Anadol's Latent City series. Together, they form an urban dialogue in which the museum functions as a kind of translation device, transforming the material city into invisible data, and data into a new, poetic dreamscape. Central to the exhibition is the question of how technology can represent the city—not only its visible layer, but also its invisible, latent dynamics. A sensory and immersive experience at the intersection of art, technology and ethics.

Art, technology and social reflection

With Refik Anadol, Musea Brugge deliberately chooses an artist whose work is not only innovative but also engages with urgent societal issues. His practice raises questions about the role of artificial intelligence, the relationship between humans and machines, authorship and digital creation, as well as climate change, energy consumption and sustainability. Anadol is acutely aware of the ecological impact of AI technologies and integrates this reflection into his work. In doing so, his practice aligns seamlessly with Musea Brugge's ambition to make BRUSK an art gallery that stimulates debate and uses art to render societal challenges tangible. With 'Refik Anadol. Latent City', BRUSK positions itself from day one as a place where innovation, critical reflection and international top-level art converge.



Refik Anadol. Latent City, Simulation in BRUSK, 2026, Refik Anadol Studio



Refik Anadol (foto © Efsun Erkilic)

Refik Anadol Studio

Headcurator

Refik Anadol

Refik Anadol Studio: Founded in 2014 by Refik Anadol in Los Angeles (USA), Refik Anadol Studio is a technology-driven art and design studio operating at the intersection of media art and architecture, in combination with machine intelligence.

Musea Brugge

Lieven De Visch is Head of Exhibitions

Michel Dewilde is Curator of Contemporary Art, Culture and History

Publication

On the occasion of the exhibition, the book **Refik Anadol** will be published by Hannibal Books.

Refik Anadol is one of the most influential digital artists of our time. He is the painter of post-digital life. At Refik Anadol Studio in Los Angeles, he creates new art forms at the intersection of artificial intelligence and human imagination. His hypnotic data sculptures, AI-generated images and immersive installations make the invisible visible: the rhythms of a city, the flows of information and the poetry of a world in motion.

For Anadol, artificial intelligence is not merely a tool, but a creative partner. Working with large datasets and live data, he creates dynamic works that are in constant transformation. In the tension between digital and physical space, his art invites us to experience data as image, memory and imagination.

21,5 x 29 cm / 178 pages / Full colour / Available in Dutch & English
Hardcover: ISBN 978 94 9341 659 8 / € 45
Softcover: ISBN 978 94 9353 110 9 / € 29,95

Book launch: Saturday 30 May

Available from 30 May in the museum shop at BRUSK or at bruskbrugge.be/shop

Public programme

Friday 29 May

BRUSK Artist Talk: Refik Anadol (in collaboration with Concertgebouw)

Saturday 30 May

Book launch Refik Anadol

Sunday 28 June

BRUSK Family Day: Refik Anadol

Sunday 30 August

BRUSK Family Day: Refik Anadol

Thursday 15 October

Student evening

Ongoing

BRUSK Late: open until 9.30 pm on the first Friday of every month



BRUSK FEST: FESTIVE OPENING WEEKEND 8-10 may

To celebrate the opening of BRUSK, the Bruges Museum Quarter will be transformed into a large festival zone for three days. From Friday 8 to Sunday 10 May, BRUSK will celebrate its official opening with a dynamic opening festival packed with free performances, workshops, theatre, live acts and music for all ages. From day one, BRUSK aims to present itself as a place where culture is accessible—where visitors can delve into art, but also simply enjoy the atmosphere.

What can visitors expect?

At **BRUSK**: free concerts, children's theatre and workshops, art installations, and extended opening hours for the two opening exhibitions.

On and around the **Dijver**: creative demos and workshops, a skate park, a participatory graffiti wall, freerunners, various acts, food trucks and a SUP nocturne on the water.

In the **Arentshof**: a 360° stage with an open-air concert programme for young and old, featuring a strong line-up curated by Cactus Music Centre.

At **Bar Brusk**: queue up, help yourself to what you like and settle in wherever you want at De Republiek's newest location, inside BRUSK.

Live broadcasts by VRT Radio 1, Radio 2 and Studio Brussel, and HALLO KROKET!, an exciting Ketnet scavenger hunt for the youngest festival visitors.

Flanders has designated BRUSK FEST and the opening of BRUSK as one of the cultural highlights of 2026. As a recognised Flemish Major Event, BRUSK FEST receives support from EventFlanders to firmly and innovatively put BRUSK on the map. The festival's strong focus on audience outreach, sustainability, and a programme that can operate on an international level while remaining deeply rooted in Bruges were decisive factors in this recognition.

BRUSK FEST is organised by the City of Bruges, implemented by Musea Brugge, in collaboration with Brugge Plus and Cactus Music Centre. With the support of Belfius Private, VRT, De Standaard and EventFlanders.

Full programme: www.bruskbrugge.be/fest



DRIE DAGEN GRATIS FEEST IN HET BRUGSE MUSEUMKWARTIER

•• concerten •• workshops •• animaties •• theater •• rondleidingen ••
•• BRUSK-expo's met extra lange openingsuren •• kunstinstallaties •• voor alle leeftijden ••

BRUSK: AN OPEN ART GALLERY THAT EMBRACES THE CITY

BRUSK is designed as a place for encounter, connection and creativity. The architecture studios Robbrecht en Daem architecten (Ghent) and Olivier Salens architecten (Bruges), together with project developer CIT Blaton, created a building that is at once monumental and understated, and that naturally embeds itself within the historic fabric of Bruges. A building that does not dominate, but enters into dialogue. That does not close itself off, but opens up. That not only displays art, but also makes room for working, meeting and connecting.



©Filip Dujardin

The ground floor as an urban square

From the outset, Robbrecht en Daem and Olivier Salens agreed that BRUSK should not become a traditional museum building with a single entrance and a series of closed galleries. The ground floor of BRUSK is radically open, with façade elevations on all sides and no fewer than two entrances. The entire ground level is freely accessible, offering 2,500 m² of public space returned to the city.

A building that lets the city pass through

The entrances on the north and south sides of BRUSK face each other directly. Between them, the Scala forms a new public passage, where Laure Prouvost's fresco lends a monumental character to the central stair hall. Here, the city quite literally runs through the building: from the 'urban city', with its dense network of small streets and squares on the Belfry side, towards the 'green city' on the side of the future museum park. On the south-west side, BRUSK connects to the Groeningemuseum. From each entrance, a unique view of the Bruges skyline unfolds: a historic tower, a roofline, a fragment of the city that immediately helps orient the visitor.

A freely accessible urban square

The ground floor is entirely transparent, with large windows that dissolve the boundary between inside and outside. This level remains freely accessible, even outside the opening hours of the art gallery. Visitors can walk through without an exhibition ticket, meet up, admire the fresco, eat and drink at Bar BrusK, visit the museum shop or attend an event in the Aula or the Forum. Thanks to this open character, the ground floor of BRUSK functions as a covered urban square.

Monumental exhibition halls inspired by artists' studios

Via the staircases in the Scala, visitors reach the two large exhibition halls on the first floor. One hall, with a surface area of 800 m² (20 x 40 m), has the same dimensions as Bruges' Huidenvettersplein. The other hall is twice as large again: 1,600 m² (40 x 40 m). Together, they form two new urban spaces offering generous possibilities.



©Filip Dujardin

The halls are completely column-free and can function independently or be connected via a central bridge to form one vast exhibition space. Their flexibility is further enhanced by the height of the sloping roofs (13.5 m at the highest point—an architectural nod to historic churches and cathedrals) and floors capable of bearing loads of up to 2.5 tonnes per m², allowing for a wide range of exhibition formats.

For the exhibition halls, the architects drew inspiration from classical artists' studios, such as Claude Monet's atelier in Giverny: a space with a large north-facing window, where the light is constant and shadowless. This principle has been applied at BRUSK on a monumental scale. Each hall features a high, north-facing window that can be darkened or diffused as required. Additional openings have been integrated into the gently sloping roof, allowing southern light to enter, but—thanks to a carefully designed bend—never allowing direct sunlight. The result is a subtle blend of cool northern light and warm southern light: a rare lighting quality in museum architecture.

A building that blends into the skyline

BRUSK is not a building that announces itself from afar. It appears only as you approach it, as if it has naturally settled into the urban fabric. The architects deliberately sought a dialogue with the historic city by using recognisable colours: Bruges red for the brick façades of the logistics wing and green tones for the roof and the galleries of the exhibition section. Colours that recur in Bruges' roofs, parks, waterways and even in historic paintings.

The orientation of the building also engages in a dialogue with its surroundings—not to create contrast, but to connect BRUSK with the city's monumental elements. The Scala is perfectly aligned with the Belfry, while the orientation of the building refers to the tower of the Church of Our Lady, visible from the large exhibition hall.

Galleries and roof

North and south galleries

On both sides of the first floor, BRUSK features a gallery. On the north side, the enclosed glass gallery is used for transporting artworks from the storage facilities to the exhibition halls and,



via a new connection, to the Groeningemuseum. Through the glass wall, visitors can observe these logistical movements. In this way, BRUSK makes its operations visible rather than hiding them. The southern gallery is an outdoor gallery oriented towards nature and the future museum park, and can be used for performances, installations or public activities.

The galleries play not only an aesthetic and functional role, but also a structural one: they absorb the lateral forces of the large roof span, comparable to the flying buttresses of historic cathedrals.

Energy-generating roof

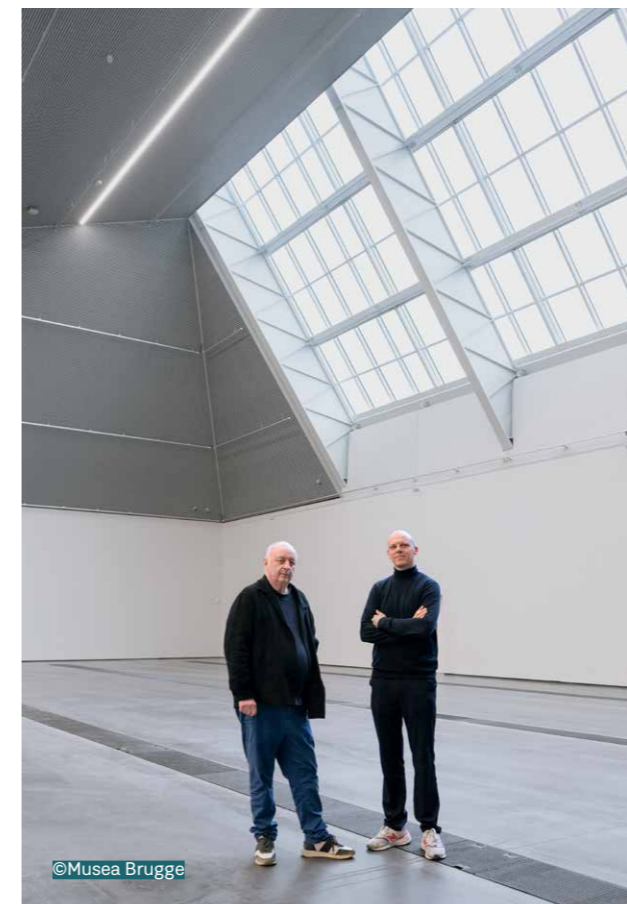
The south-facing roofs of BRUSK are gently sloping and fitted with glass roof panels containing integrated electricity-generating photovoltaic cells. This 1,300 m² solar roof provides the building with sustainable energy. The roof section above the Scala consists entirely of large windows that flood the stair hall with daylight.

A logistical backbone and scientific research centre

On the east side of the building, inaccessible to the public, the logistics wing is integrated. Restoration studios, storage facilities, research spaces and technical workshops—where the Musea Brugge collection is preserved and studied at the highest level—together comprise 1,200 m² of optimised collection care.

Immediately adjacent to the art gallery, and connected to the logistics wing of BRUSK via a footbridge, stands BRON. This former school building dating from 1931 was renovated alongside the construction of BRUSK. BRON opened in November 2025 as the scientific research centre of Musea Brugge, housing the museum library, the Print Room, brainstorming hubs and office spaces, providing an ideal setting for researchers and interested visitors.

Thanks to the thoughtful positioning of the logistics wing and the north gallery, the entire site is car-free and fully dedicated to pedestrians.



Sustainability at the core

Ecological sustainability plays a key role at BRUSK. In addition to the electricity-generating glass roof tiles, a geothermal energy field (BEO) beneath BRUSK provides natural heating in winter and cooling in summer for all buildings on the site: BRUSK, BRON and the Groeningemuseum. BRUSK is more than twice as energy-efficient as the current BEN standard and meets circular construction principles wherever possible.

The museum park: a green meeting place from 2031

The architecture of BRUSK is designed with connection in mind: between city and building, between art and public, between past and future. This vision will be further strengthened once the new museum park on the south side is completed. The design reopens a historic watercourse, and beneath centuries-old trees, outdoor art and a wide range of activities will take centre stage. Construction will begin in 2028. From 2031 onwards, the museum park will become a new green meeting place surrounding BRUSK, BRON and the renovated Groeningemuseum (2031).



THE WHISPERING WALLS RÊVE: FRESCO BY LAURE PROUVOST

With the opening of BRUSK on 8 May, Bruges gains not only a new art hall but also a permanent artwork. French artist Laure Prouvost (1978) has created a monumental, four-part fresco for the Scala, the central staircase in BRUSK, tailor-made and spanning a total of 350 m². The fresco takes visitors on a captivating journey through her playful artistic universe. The work, betitled 'The Whispering Walls Rêve', is a new eye-catcher for the city and an impressive addition to the Musea Brugge collection, with an international flair.



The Scala: a place for everyone

The Scala is the central staircase and the beating heart of BRUSK: a public space where visitors will be able to walk in freely from the moment BRUSK opens. The Scala forms an important part of the BRUSK experience, which aims not only to be a new venue for exhibitions but also a vibrant meeting place where visitors can experience culture in the broadest sense.

The City of Bruges and the BRUSK architects, Robbrecht en Daem architects en Olivier Salens architects, had from the outset a vision of the Scala as an ideal location for a high-level artistic intervention. An artwork that would not only enhance the architectural character of the building but also fit within the high-quality art collection of Musea Brugge. For these monumental murals, the City of Bruges invited Laure Prouvost at the beginning of 2025. During the preparations, she held many conversations with architect Paul Robbrecht. Their shared love of frescoes quickly led to the decision to create a contemporary version.

International top

Prouvost has long been among the leading figures in contemporary art. She won the Turner Prize (2013), represented France at the Venice Biennale (2019), and will soon unveil a permanent installation at JFK Airport in New York (2026). Prouvost has presented solo exhibitions in major cities such as London, New York, Istanbul, Los Angeles, Frankfurt, Copenhagen and Melbourne. This year, she will open a major solo exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris.

In Belgium, her work can currently be seen in Kessenich ('Moeder! Oui dream till the end'), near Brussels-South station ('In your own time, tingalong, tingalong, Who's been here since I've been gone?') and on the beach of De Panne ('Touching To Sea You Through Our Extremities'), a permanent work created for Beaufort21. Born in Lille, Prouvost lived for a time in London, now works from Molenbeek, and describes herself culturally as Flemish. She draws richly from her love of Belgian surrealism, British humour and language. Her fresco 'The Whispering Walls Rêve' for BRUSK is the first fresco in her oeuvre – and immediately one of her most monumental projects to date.

Intensive preparations

For the design of 'The Whispering Walls Rêve', Laure Prouvost drew inspiration from a trajectory of city visits and conversations. She explored centuries-old buildings, museums and historical murals in Bruges. She also spoke in Bruges with people from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise: a city guide, a specialist in beguinages and women's history, a hydrologist, a tree expert, archaeologists, young people, local residents... Thanks to these many site visits and conversations, her artwork carries a strong Bruges identity.

Fresco and strappo technique

Painting 'al fresco' is a demanding historical technique in which one paints on a wet lime surface. Few people still master this technique today. After several months of searching, Laure Prouvost found a team of Brussels-based fresco artists led by Camille Meslay, as well as a family from Brescia, Italy, who specialise in the strappo technique. In this method, the fresco is first applied to the lime surface and then peeled off the wall using another support.

After Laure Prouvost's design was transferred onto the wall using the historical method of pounced cartoons and traced paper, her composition was painted following those literal chalk lines, using traditional fresco, secco and strappo techniques.

Windows onto Bruges

Inspired by the building, which is embedded in the urban fabric and offers beautiful views of the city, 'The Whispering Walls Rêve' forms a kind of windows onto Bruges, filled with details and references to the city's history, art collections, inhabitants and characteristic architecture. Combined with Prouvost's unique, organic visual language full of artistic and literary references, the fresco becomes an endless journey of discovery.

The north side of the Scala, overlooking the Belfry, connects to the dense network of narrow streets that so strongly defines Bruges. The south side opens onto the green park and the future museum park. The fresco reflects this link between city and nature. On the north side, the murals are compact, with many elements and details. Moving toward the park, nature gradually takes over and the composition becomes lighter.



Alice in Wonderland

Prouvost draws inspiration from themes such as emancipation, globalisation and ecology. She approaches these themes in a conceptual and poetic way, combining personal memories, artistic and literary references, and elements of fiction. Through language, she sparks the imagination, using humour to disrupt linear narratives and expected associations between words, images and meaning. Her artistic universe resonates with Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' and the visual language of Dadaism.

In BRUSK, she invites visitors to step into the shoes of an inquisitive Alice and to look behind the mirrors of the city's imagination and the building's architecture. This fabulous world is inhabited by images and linguistic forms, with human protagonists (such as architect Paul Robbrecht filming the building with his smartphone) and anthropomorphic beings from the present, the past and fiction. Prouvost acts as a contemporary archaeologist and storyteller, inviting visitors to explore the city's imagination and reflect it against her layered universe — and their own imagination — in ways that are both playful and profound.

Perspective and interaction

The fresco is not only full of references; it also plays with perspective. Prouvost creates the illusion of a ceiling where none exists through a realistic mural. At the same time, other elements are not illusions at all: real mirrors, bas-relief, glass birds... Visitors are challenged to constantly reassess their perception. The movement of people through the building and their interaction with the work is also essential to Prouvost. A female figure extends a hand toward visitors who have just climbed the stairs. In her hand lies a bronze clementine. In Prouvost's visual language, the clementine is a sign of love. Visitors are invited to touch the bronze element, which will gradually change colour over time.

Highlighted details: see press kit 'The Whispering Walls Rêve' on brusk.prezly.be

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Further development of the site

In the coming years, the City of Bruges and the Government of Flanders will continue to invest in an ambitious museum master plan. BRUSK, the newest location of Musea Brugge, forms the heart of a new two-hectare art site in the city centre, together with the research centre BRON (2025), the renovated Groeningemuseum (2031) and a green museum park (2031). This new art site will mark the completion of the Bruges Museum Quarter.



BRON

BRON opened in November 2025 as the first building on the site. BRON is the scientific research centre of Musea Brugge, housing the museum library, the Print Room, brainstorming hubs and office spaces. It offers an ideal setting for national and international researchers, guides, students and interested visitors to carry out in-depth research on Bruges' art and heritage collections. The knowledge generated at BRON forms an important foundation for the exhibitions at BRUSK.

Groeningemuseum

In 2027, the Groeningemuseum will close for a necessary renovation. More recent extensions will be demolished, separating the museum building from the Xaverius Chapel (the museum's former entrance). During the closure, masterpieces from the Groeningemuseum will be presented at BRUSK. The Groeningemuseum will reopen in 2031.



Museum park

The museum park will become a new green urban lung surrounding BRUSK, BRON and the Groeningemuseum. Construction of the museum park will start in 2028 and will be completed in 2031.



MUSEA BRUGGE, CULTURE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Musea Brugge comprises 13 leading city museums and monuments in Bruges, world-class collections and a vibrant, contemporary organisation driven by ambition, passion and expertise. As a Flemish cultural heritage institution, Musea Brugge ranks among the international top tier of the heritage sector.

With BRUSK, Musea Brugge opens a brand-new art gallery in the heart of the Bruges Museum Quarter. Within walking distance of one another, this area brings together nine iconic Musea Brugge locations: Belfort, Groeningemuseum, Gruuthusemuseum, O.L.V.-kerk Museum, Museum Sint-Janshospitaal, Stadhuis, Brugse Vrije, the research centre BRON and the art gallery BRUSK.

A little further on lies the Quiet Quarter, home to four additional museums: Volkskundemuseum, Sint-Janshuismolen, Gezellehuis and O.L.V. ter Potterie.

Each year, Musea Brugge welcomes nearly one million visitors, 80% of whom come from abroad. Visitors travel from far and wide for the outstanding collections and monuments, as well as for high-quality exhibitions that combine the city's rich history with contemporary artistic expression. Musea Brugge are dynamic places that invite reflection and dialogue—with one another, with the collections and museums, and with national and international partners.



BRUGES, A CITY OF CULTURE AND IMAGINATION

Bruges is a city that seems to bridge time. As a UNESCO World Heritage city, it takes visitors on a journey through history, along its authentic medieval streets, picturesque canals and impressive monuments. Each year, an average of 8.3 million visitors are captivated by its beauty and rich past.

Yet Bruges is much more than a city rooted in bygone eras. In Bruges, past and present go hand in hand. Heritage, culture and the creative industries come together here in a distinctive way. Both residents and the millions of visitors from all corners of the world are eager for new cultural experiences and forms of engagement.

Bruges is a dynamic cultural destination where old and contemporary art, fashion and design meet and reinforce one another. Local cultural venues and organisations with international standing—such as Concertgebouw Brugge, an international stage for music and performance art; Triennale Brugge, the leading open-air event for contemporary art and architecture; and Musea Brugge—elevate cultural experience to an international level.

Together with the new art gallery BRUSK, the city provides fertile ground for journalistic perspectives on heritage, innovation, urban culture and the role of art today. The free Visit Bruges Route App offers additional in-depth information on hidden places, stories and perspectives.



FLANDERS, WHERE HERITAGE AND CRAFTSMANSHIP COME TOGETHER

Flanders is a compact region in the heart of Europe with an exceptionally rich cultural tradition. For centuries, it has been a place of makers—people who, through knowledge, skill and distinctive craftsmanship, helped shape art, heritage and culture. This legacy remains tangible today and lies at the heart of what visitors discover and experience in Flanders.

That pioneering craftsmanship can be felt in the historic art cities from Bruges to Ghent, Antwerp, Mechelen, Leuven and Brussels—but also beyond them, in green regions and along the coast. Cultural highlights, nature, gastronomy and a rich way of life follow one another in a natural rhythm, always within easy reach.

Flanders' cultural landscape is deeply rooted in the legacy of the Flemish Masters. Artists such as Jan van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens helped shape the course of art history

and inspired generations of creatives after them. Their work and influence can be experienced today in leading museums, monuments and historic city centres, as well as in contemporary art and new cultural initiatives that continue that same spirit of curiosity and innovation.

Alongside art and heritage, Belgian beer culture and culinary traditions, the landscape and a strong cycling culture are also part of this rich experience. Flanders invites visitors to slow down: cycling along canals and fields, tasting local flavours, or immersing themselves in art and architecture where past and present continually meet.

This ongoing dialogue between past and present defines Flanders as a cultural travel destination. Heritage forms a living backdrop against which new stories continue to emerge.



BELFIUS PRIVATE

As the main sponsor of BRUSK, Belfius Private aims to support art and bring it to life. The Belgian private bank is committed to making the new Bruges art center even more ambitious—an engagement driven by a shared passion for art and culture, and by the conviction that art brings people together.

This partnership goes far beyond mere financial support. Belfius Private also contributes in terms of content, opens doors to the exchange of knowledge, networks and public engagement practices, and even provides works on loan from the Belfius Art Collection. Belfius Private firmly believes in Belgian talent and in ambitions the bank is fully committed to helping realize.

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Colophon: Bigger Picture

Connected worlds of Bruges 900–1550

08.05.2026 - 06.09.2026

Director Musea Brugge

Kristl Strubbe

Project team

Lieven De Visch, Sibylla Goegebuer, Harry Stroobandt, Anne van Oosterwijk

Guest curators

Peter Frankopan (University of Oxford), Jan Dumolyn (Universiteit Gent), Jo Van Steenberghe (Universiteit Gent), Wim De Clercq (Universiteit Gent – archeologie), Axel Langer (Museum Rietberg, Zürich)

Lenders

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Sint-Eligiuskerk Eine, Sint-Salvatoriekathedraal Brugge, Sint-Walburgakerk Veurne, Stadsarchief Brugge, STAM Gent, Stedelijk museum Zutphen, Stedelijke Musea Kortrijk, The David collection, Trésor Cathédrale Saint-Aubin Namur, Trésor de la Cathédrale Liège, Uilenspiegelmuseum, Universiteitsbibliotheek Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht , V&A London, War Heritage Institute, Zeeuws Archeologisch depot, Zeeuws Museum, Zwarte Zusters Brugge

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List of objects

brusk.prezly.com

Colophon: Refik Anadol

08.05.2026 - 08.11.2026

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Blackboxx

Colophon: BRUSK

BRUSK is part of the Flemish cultural heritage organisation Musea Brugge

Practical information

BRUSK

Dijver 12

8000 Bruges

Open:

Tuesday - Sunday

1 apr - 2 nov: 10.00-18.00

3 nov - 31 ma: 9.30-17.00

Closed on Monday

BRUSK FEST

08.05.2026 - 10.05.2026

Bigger Picture

08.05.2026 - 06.09.2026

Refik Anadol

08.05.2026 - 08.11.2026

Tickets

> 25y: € 20

18-25y: € 15

13-17y: € 10

Info & tickets: bruskbrugge.be

Download all press images at brusk.prezly.com & press.visitbruges.be/brusk

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