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Contemporary art and architecture in Bruges

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Bruges, a city where heritage and innovation go hand in hand: Triennial Bruges 2021 'Trauma'

When you say Bruges, people usually conjure up images of lakes and swans, centuries-old UNESCO-recognised heritage, the Flemish primitives, romantic spots, squares and streets, lace, chocolate and beer. As such, the city of Bruges is brimming with culture with due regard for history and traditions. However, it equally boasts a surprising amount of contemporary architecture, cutting-edge designers and young artists. Moreover, Bruges' cultural establishments offer an extremely lively events calendar, ranging from exhibitions and theatre, right through to dance performances and film. Throughout the year, Bruges is bursting with cultural dynamism. Every three years, Triennial Bruges adds a special treat to the mix.

Every three years the Triennial Bruges brings contemporary art and architecture to the historic city centre of Bruges: a unique setting and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since 2015 it has built further on the series of historical triennials that were put together in 1968, 1971, and 1974 and brought visual arts into the public domain. In each edition, the artistic team invites national and international artists and architects to submit new temporary installations. Some dozen of these works of art and meeting places engage in an active dialogue with their surroundings: alongside waterways, in cobbled streets, in peaceful places of worship, or on vacant lots. For visitors, it will be a summer-long exploration, following a unique and inviting trail with a social aspect.

Theme of Triennial Bruges 2021 'Trauma'

From 8 May to 24 October 2021, Bruges once again becomes the host city for an exploration of contemporary art and architecture. During the third edition of Bruges Triennial, 13 artists and architects present new temporary installations in the historic centre of the World Heritage city. The theme of this third edition is TraumA—which sees The Triennial shifting focus from the public space to a number of hidden dimensions of the city and its inhabitants.

Bruges Triennial is a thematic exhibition featuring creations by artists and architects in the public space. Bruges Triennial 2021 opts for a polyphonic discourse, with space for imagination, beauty, darkness, and participation. This edition explores the line between the visible and the hidden. Between private and public.

The Triennial Bruges 2021: TraumA presents a multi-voiced discourse in which ambiguity, the imagination and the senses are stimulated, and the demarcation between public and private space is renegotiated. The route traces a course where Bruges in all its facets is discussed and there is room for experiment and discourse in a journey behind the scenes of the urban imagination. The starting point will once again be the Poortersloge (Burghers' Lodge), where an exhibition will also encourage reflection and imaginative responses on the theme.

The artists and architects are invited to question the hidden dimensions of society. Historical layers are uncovered, or forgotten, and hidden storylines discussed. There is a response to the imagination, to the beauty and splendour, but also to a sense of das Unheimliche, the 'uncanny' that is present underground.

Although Bruges may seem to be a dream destination, poverty, loneliness, pollution, and anxiety are constantly lurking in this seemingly picture-perfect world. Via artistic and architectural spatial interventions, the Triennial Bruges 2021: TraumA also brings out the less attractive aspects of our heritage city and makes them part of the cityscape. The Triennial Bruges 2021 goes beyond the visible and offers a glimpse beneath the bark of the fragile city.



Artists and installations

The curators selected 13 artists and architects who – each in their own way – interpret the theme of Trauma. Their sculptural, architectural and organic creations are set to tap into the city's complex, multi-faceted and dynamic nature. Going in search of narrow streets and back alleys, they will examine what goes on in the courtyards and on the construction sites of the seemingly perfect city of Bruges. Their temporary interventions and creations will enter into dialogue with the city, its residents and visitors alike.

Amanda Browder (US) *Happy Coincidences* | Verversdijk

Amanda Browder creates large textile installations by working in collaboration with local Bruges residents, whom she involves from the very start of the project: the conceptual element of searching for and collecting textiles is a community practice that will already be underway in Bruges from spring 2021. A second phase begins as soon as volunteers engage in helping to organize the textiles, the needles, or learning how to stitch and sew. At that point, the opportunity rises to meet with each other and with the artist and to become familiar with the different techniques. The overall goal is to involve individuals and groups in the special experience of creation, and above all to discover that coming together to create a work of art—independent of any prior knowledge—can trigger a positive experience. In the third phase, the assembled materials are brought to the Verversdijk and installed in the public space. With vibrant colours and playful patterns, the scale changes from what was first private (donating fabric as an individual, or assisting during the Sewing Days) to a public and accessible artwork. *Happy Coincidences* is an installation that can be surprisingly overwhelming, set amidst the bricks of the bridge, across the span of the canal, and between the windows of the houses.

BIO

Amanda Browder (b. 1976, Missoula, Montana, US; lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, US). Amanda Browder is known for her large-scale textile installations at public sites in urban environments. Each sculptural installation consists of collected and donated materials, which she organizes and sews together in collaboration with local communities. These large-scale sewing projects are site-specific and constructed based on impressions of the urban context, participants' stories, and fragments of history.

LOCATION

Verversdijk is a street from the 13th century that owes its name to the cloth dyers who had their homes and workshops here.

website Amanda Browder:

<http://www.amandabrowder.com/>



Amanda Browder - Happy Coincidences, Triennale Brugge 2021 © Stad Brugge– Matthias Desmet





Nadia Kaabi-Linke (TN/UA/DE) *Inner Circle* | Burg

Nadia Kaabi-Linke presents a circular installation of public benches that shine attractively, but are rendered inaccessible by the sharp pins in their surface. The visitor cannot sit on the benches, or experience an encounter with others. The sculpture *Inner Circle* shimmers and catches the eye, but ultimately leaves a defensive circle and void in its centre. Kaabi-Linke takes inspiration from the egg-shaped city ground plan and its former ramparts, from family structures and ties, work situations and employment contexts, and from the exclusive clubs and privileged communities that often use a circular shape in their logo. Globally, these organizations are set up to encourage exchange, and to shape and safeguard common interests. Often they involve wealthy, male members who endorse the added value of such membership. Things sometimes go wrong when there is no room for others in such structures. Or when abuses arise, such as domestic violence or financial constructs, that subsequently remain hidden through secrecy.

BIO

Nadia Kaabi-Linke (b. 1978, Tunis, Tunisia; lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Kiev, Ukraine). Nadia Kaabi-Linke feels connected with the entire world. Her oeuvre is related to places and their history. Her work explores themes such as perception, immigration and identity and is anchored in cultural, historical, social and political contexts. She makes use of a wide variety of media in her artworks.

LOCATION

The **Burg** (Burg Square) is the heart and soul of Bruges. For centuries, the square has been the city's centre of power, and the city council still holds office in the 14th-century Gothic city hall on that square. A tree-lined square has now been created on the spot where once stood the imposing Sint-Donaaskathedraal (St Donatian's Cathedral). In 2002, when Bruges was Cultural Capital of Europe, the Japanese architect Toyo Ito created a transparent pavilion here as a temporary architectural statement juxtaposed to the historical surroundings. It was decommissioned in 2013. The work of Nadia Kaabi-Linke will be installed in more or less the same spot.

website Nadi Kaabi-Linke:

<https://nadiakaabilinke.myportfolio.com/>



Nadia Kaabi-Linke - Inner Circle © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet





Jon Lott (US) *The Bruges Diptych* | Gouden-Handrei

The Bruges Diptych pavilion, close to the former home of the Flemish primitive Jan van Eyck, serves as the point of departure for the public programme of Triennial Bruges 2021. The architectural diptych arose from Lott's fascination with doppelgängers, both in people and in architecture. The building was created by duplicating an existing rear facade by adding a copy of the original facade. With this construction, the architect plays with the tension between interior and exterior, with what is visible to the naked eye and what takes place behind the city's facades.

BIO

Affiliated to various institutions, **Jon Lott** (°1976, San José, Californië, lives and works in New York and Cambridge) does not allow himself to be pigeonholed as an architect. He is currently working as an assistant professor at Harvard University, Graduate School of Design. Lott is also the founder of PARA Project, an architectural firm based in New York City and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Each project takes shape through the efforts of a diverse group of partners and is also driven by the curiosity and specific needs of its clients. PARA experiments with different media and participates in cultural, residential and institutional projects. Lott is also a co-founder of Collective-LOK, also known as CLOK, an interdisciplinary collaboration that reflects on architectural challenges and seeks to translate them into form. Jon Lott's designs regularly feature in leading newspapers and magazines, such as the New York Times, Architectural Record and Metropolis. In 2007, he was one of the laureates of The Architectural League Prize.

LOCATION

Gouden-Handrei forms part of Bruges' first city walls, dating back to the 12th century. This was once the home and studio of Jan van Eyck, right in the middle of the city's artists' quarter.

website Jon Lott:
<http://www.para-project.org/about>



Jon Lott - The Bruges Diptych - 2021 © Jon Lott



Jon Lott - Pioneertown House © PARA



Joanna Malinowska & C.T. Jasper (PL/US) *Who is afraid of Natasha* | Begijnhof (Beguinage)

Joanna Malinowska & C.T. Jasper bring attention to a forgotten monument with *Who is Afraid of Natasha?* *Natasha* is the nickname for a sculpture that stood for many years on a square in Gdynia, a city in Poland. After the end of the communist Soviet era, the statue was moved to a less visible spot in the city. The monument was originally erected as a personification of a regime that came to symbolize oppression: a beautiful woman in the countryside announcing a triumphant presence. For many residents of Gdynia, this statue was an eyesore and they sought to move it as soon as the Russian occupation was over. But for Joanna Malinowska & C.T. Jasper, *Natasha* is an image from their childhood, a remnant of a bygone era that evokes memories. The female figure may have been lifted from her pedestal, but for the artists she represented the opportunity to imagine a fictional biography around her. Both Malinowska and Jasper are from Gdynia and have already worked intensively together for their film installation in the Polish pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015. For Bruges Triennial they are writing a visual story for this anonymous woman, thus giving her a new life.

BIO

Joanna Malinowska (b. 1972, Gdynia, Poland; lives and works in New York, US). The work of Joanna Malinowska functions on the intersection of anthropology and art history in sculptures, installations and films. By highlighting similarities between different cultures, she attempts to create a bridge between them. She actively explores the idea of collective consciousness—when similar ideas emerge in different parts of the world without direct interaction or influence. The motif of cultural heritage with a touch of politics is often found in her practice.

LOCATION

The **Begijnhof (Beguinage)**, which has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1998, was founded in 1245. Beguines were pious women living in an all-female community given that most men were off on crusades. They did not take vows, but were deeply religious and lived very frugally. They engaged in charity work, such as caring for the sick and schooling poor children. They made way for the Nuns of the order of St Benedict in the early 20th century. Today only a handful of nuns live there and it is a green oasis, enclosed by white-washed houses.

website Joanna Malinowska:
<http://www.malinowskajoanna.com/>



Joanna Malinowska and C.T.Jasper - *Who is afraid of Natasha* - 2021 © Joanna Malinowska and C.T.Jasper



Joanna Malinowska & C.T. Jasper © Jasper van het Groenewoud



Nadia Naveau (BE) *Les Niches Parties* | Augustijnenrei

Nadia Naveau places her gleaming masks bedecked with decorative and folkloric patterns in several niches along the waterfront of the Augustijnenrei. She thereby brings attention to this hidden piece of city architecture, which does not feature on the route of the tourist boats and is often overgrown by plants from the gardens behind. In Bruges, the mirrored masks take on the function of imaginative signage, and perhaps also of a dreamy welcome. Nadia Naveau drew her inspiration for these masks from her travels. In Mexico, for example, she was surprised by the colourful textile garlands, an inviting source of happiness in the middle of the streetscape. It also reminded her of flags, which serve as a means of communication or identification through solid colours, straight lines, or figurative symbols. It likewise reminded her of the system of signal flags used in maritime navigation. She also links Bruges to Venice, giving prominence to the theme of the masquerade.

BIO

Nadia Naveau (b. 1975, Bruges; lives and works in Antwerp and Saint-Bonnet-Tronçais, France). In her figurative sculpture, Belgian artist Nadia Naveau combines the aesthetics of classical antiquity or European baroque with that of *The Simpsons*, and cultural expressions in Mexico with those of pop culture. The typically seductive and often surprising sculptures are the result of a play with colours, shapes and scale, and diverse materials such as plaster, ceramics and polyester.

LOCATION

The [Augustijnenrei](#), dug out in the 12th century and spanned by a bridge of the same name, alludes to the Convent of St Augustine that stood here until the end of the 18th century.



Nadia Naveau - *Les Niches Parties*, 2021, Base-Alpha Gallery, Antwerpen © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Nnenna Okore (US/NG/AU) *And the World Keeps Turning* | Poertoren (Gunpowder Tower)

Nnenna Okore stretches a fabric around the Gunpowder Tower in Bruges, inspired by the typical red-brick colour of the region and by the technique of lacemaking. With *And the World Keeps Turning*, she creates a beacon that reminds the city of its past and takes up the challenge with the future. The starting point for her project was the question of the identity of Bruges. From a distance she tried to understand what the urban landscape looks like. When looking at images online, she noticed how clearly the traces of the past are still present. In that virtual context, she became fascinated by the spatial appearance of the Gunpowder Tower, which rises 18 metres above the waterline, like a late-medieval relic, where gunpowder supplies were once stored. With the installation, all attention is drawn to the architectural form of the tower, and Okore envelops the architecture with a red-coloured collage. She composes the collage with material derived from tarpaulin, a solid and synthetic PVC structure. She cuts circular pieces of cloth from the red tarpaulins and binds them together into larger structures, reminiscent of cells or organisms. Using a traditionally 'female' patchwork technique, she applies a tactile layer to the seemingly 'male' stone structure. It is as if the tower is temporarily given an extra skin and new life flows through it with blood red veins, vessels and cells. This is the first time Okore has worked with man-made material where the plastic patchwork surrounding the brick tower will stand the test of time. After Bruges Triennial 2021, each piece will be consciously returned to the cycle of life, and reused for other purposes.

BIO

Nnenna Okore (b. 1975, Nsukka; lives and works in Australia, Nigeria and Chicago, US). Nnenna Okore works largely on abstract installations inspired by textures, colours and landscapes of local environments. She relies on the use of everyday objects that she repurposes through repetitive and labour-intensive techniques, such as weaving, spinning, sewing, painting, waxing, and rolling. She elaborates on concepts of recycling and upcycling, of transformation and regeneration of forms constructed with natural materials such as, for example, paper, fibre, cotton and jute. Themes of ageing, death and decay often recur in her oeuvre.

LOCATION

Right next to the romantic Lake of Love is the 18-meter high [Poertoren \(Gunpowder Tower\)](#), a defensive tower dating back to 1397. Its current name refers to the gunpowder that was stored in it for a long time. At the foot of the tower is the [Poertorenpark](#) (Gunpowder Tower Park), a quiet hideaway that can be reached via the metal steps next to the tower.

website Nnenna Okore:
<http://nnennaokore.com/>



Nnenna Okore - *And The World Keeps Turning* © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Henrique Oliveira (BR) *Banisteria Caapi (Desnatureza 4)* | Pottenmakersstraat / Augustijnenrei

Brazilian artist Henrique Oliveira bases his installation on the last historic remnant from the stone ramparts of Bruges, which is located at the Pottenmakersrei. The place forms the basis for an installation that starts from a specific element used in the construction sector of São Paulo. Plywood, consisting of glued layers of wood, is a cheap construction material and is often thrown away after use, in waste containers or onto the street. Oliveira collects these discarded plywood sheets to make organic installations. For his work *Banisteria Caapi (Desnatureza 4)*, Oliveira uses the found plywood to puzzle together organic forms resembling large branches, roots, or tree trunks on the remains of the ramparts. The installation is so true to life that the assembled branches seem to come from trees that are located behind the walled garden. They look just like real trees that have sprouted from the ground with their roots. It is also reminiscent of the natural vegetation that we often encounter on archaeological remains. Oliveira uses natural forms to create a reconstruction of nature. His work is an artistic interpretation of an ecological process. It makes the visitor reflect on how contemporary art shows itself in a historic city.

BIO

Henrique Oliveira (b. 1973, Ourinhos, Brazil; lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil and London). Henrique Oliveira is known for his large-scale, site-specific installations. He began his artistic career as a painter. While his first works were flat and two-dimensional, from 2005 he began to create sculptural installations that move in space. He increased the scale and moved three-dimensionally through architectural contexts.

LOCATION

Augustijnenrei that runs along [Pottenmakersstraat](#) shows you an important piece of history, namely a semi-circular fortification tower that turns out to be the last vestige of the first city wall from 1128.

website Henrique Oliveira:
<http://www.henriqueoliveira.com/defaultUS.asp>



Henrique Oliveira - Banisteria Caapi (Desnatureza 4), 2021, VALLOIS, Paris; Van de Weghe, New York
© Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Henrique Oliveira - Banisteria Caapi (Desnatureza 4), 2021, VALLOIS, Paris; Van de Weghe, New York
© Jasper van het Groenewoud



Hans Op de Beeck (BE) *Danse Macabre* | Sint-Maartensplein / Sint-Walburgakerk (St Walburgha's Church)

For Bruges Triennial 2021, Hans Op de Beeck is exhibiting *Danse Macabre*, a full-size (1:1) merry-go-round that operates in the environment of Bruges in a static, silent, and monumental way. The installation is monochromatically coloured in shades of grey, has a diameter of 12 metres and is about 4 metres high. The staged series of sculptures of horses and carriages appear to be fossilized. In his carousel, time freezes, and the mechanics have stopped as if the cheerfulness has been wiped out. The carnival ride appears as a monolithic presence, a phantom, a fossil that disturbs and tranquilizes the balance between dream and nightmare. The work interacts in a striking way with the varied and decorative baroque facade of the Sint-Walburgakerk (St. Walburga Church). Like the church, the carousel is in a frozen state and seems to have no reason to exist. The installation is at once tragic and comforting, alienating and melancholic.

BIO

Hans Op de Beeck (b. 1969, Turnhout, living and working in Brussels) is a master of all kinds of different artistic media. He makes sculptures, monumental installations, drawings, watercolours, photos, videos, cartoons, films, music and texts. His work is a reflection of today's complex society and alludes to universal human questions about meaning, purpose and mortality. He treats the human being as a creature that presents the world around it in a tragicomic manner. He also aims to invite the spectator to truly experience the image in a perception-oriented and sensory way. He creates a type of visual fiction that causes a moment of amazement and introspection.

LOCATION

[Sint-Walburgakerk \(St Walburgha's Church\)](#) was built in the early 17th century to a design by Bruges Jesuit friar and architect Pieter Huysens. The church is the most opulent and most Baroque building in Bruges, as evidenced by the imposing Baroque façade and the furnishings, including the high altar, the white marble communion bench and the pulpit.

website Hans Op de Beeck:
<https://hansopdebeeck.com/>



Danse Macabre © Hans Op de Beeck.



Hans Op de Beeck - Danse Macabre, carousel—work in progress © Studio Hans Op de Beeck



Gregor Schneider (DE) *Black Lightning* | kerk Grootseminarie

In the church of the Grootseminarie (Major Seminary), we find the installation BLACK LIGHTNING. Once you enter Schneider's architectural intervention, you walk through a dark corridor that has completely sealed itself off from the church interior. The passage is like a funnel that zigzags through the darkness and in which different senses are stimulated. You are left to your own devices, at best sharing the highly sensitive experience with a fellow visitor. Along the way, there is time for solitude and transformation until you reach the exit.

BIO

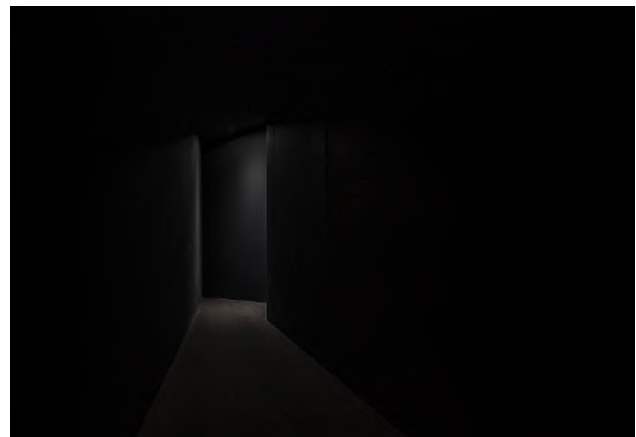
Gregor Schneider's minimalist imagery combines the architecture of buildings with the symbolic layered character of a city. The spectators move through his rooms, cellars, containers and corridors and are constantly struck by a special atmosphere. Fear and imagination go hand in hand and often you don't quite know whether you are a visitor, partner or intruder. When Schneider's parental home in Mönchengladbach-Rheydt was condemned as uninhabitable due to pollution from a nearby lead factory managed by his father, Schneider found his artistic calling. During the renovation of the house, his desire arose to create elements that completely surround us while remaining invisible. Schneider describes it as a form of 'Begreifen': gaining an understanding through possibilities and actions. Building, moving, copying, duplicating and repeating the constructions is done intuitively at first. Later, overview and control take over the process.

LOCATION

In the first half of the 17th century, a Cistercian abbey was built in the northeast of Bruges as a refuge for the monks of the Ter Duinen abbey in Koksijde. Between 1833 to 2018, the Grootseminarie (Major Seminary) was used as a centre for training for priests of the diocese of Bruges. Nowadays, the imposing building is still a centre for training and formation, and exhibitions are held there from time to time.

website Gregor Schneider:

<https://www.gregor-schneider.de/>



Gregor Schneider - BLACK LIGHTNING, Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf - Berlin © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Laura Splan (US) *Disentanglement* | Museum Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Potterie

Laura Splan displays her work amidst the permanent collection of Museum Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Potterie (the former 13th-century hospital ter Potterie). During the spring of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, Splan continued her practice related to care and disease. Molecular, cellular, or virus-like forms were enhanced during the lockdown by the imagery of the CORONA virus. Splan uses databases related to SARS, HIV, Influenza, Herpes, Hepadna, and now this new current disease to create lacework and computerized interpretations. The textile patterns, digital animations and woven structures appear in the Museum Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Potterie (Our Lady of the Potterie) as if they have always been there. At the same time they evoke a peculiar feeling. Narratives of science, fiction, and religion are interwoven with the rich terrain of caring, pain, healing, life and death.

BIO

Laura Splan (b. 1973, Memphis, Tennessee, US; lives and works in New York, US). In her work, Laura Splan explores the materiality of biotechnology to reveal poetic subjectivities. Using various traditional and new media techniques, she creates artefacts and sculptures with hand-spun wool that resemble cells, viruses, or membranes. Shapes and patterns appear as organic sensors, fabrics and fibres, in textiles or lace, on paper, or digitally.

LOCATION

Since the 13th century, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Potterie (Our Lady of the Potterie) Museum has been a hospital where pilgrims, travellers and the sick were cared for. The rooms have since been repurposed as a museum. The adjoining church has a beautiful Baroque interior and boasts a miracle statue.

website Laura Splan:
<https://www.laurasplan.com/>



Laura Splan - Disentanglement, 2021 © Triënnale Brugge,- Jasper van het Groenewoud



Laura Splan - Disentanglement, 2021 © Triënnale Brugge - Matthias Desmet

Laura



Gijs Van Vaerenbergh (BE) *Colonnade* | Baron Ruzettepark

In Bruges, the artist and architect duo of Gijs Van Vaerenbergh translate a site-specific concept into a timeless aesthetic experience: *Colonnade*. The pavilion housing their installation is composed of a series of intertwining columns to create a maze-like space in which visitors can become lost. The colonnade is located in the north of the city, in the green area of the Baron Ruzette park. *Colonnade* is not a traditional pavilion, but a spatial construction without an interior. There is no empty space inside, but a fully walkable sculptural entity, which the visitor can examine from different points of view. This pavilion is a radical choice at the interface between building and sculpture, both in the use of building elements, like simple tubes, as well as in its scale and volume. In a sense, it is also a graphic composition, with the columns intersecting each other in interesting proportions. Inspired by the theme of Trauma, Gijs Van Vaerenbergh proposes the idea of a labyrinth, as something that is turned into itself, a physical experience that is very personal to each visitor. It is a space where the visitor has multiple starting points, but where any form of orientation disappears. The visitor walks deep into a forest of columns, going from light to dark before emerging on the other side...

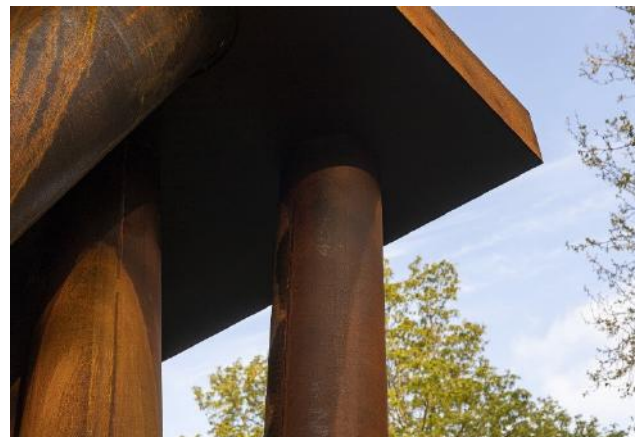
BIO

Gijs Van Vaerenbergh (b. 1983, Leuven; lives and works in Leuven) / **Arnout Van Vaerenbergh** (b. 1983, Leuven; lives and works in Leuven). Gijs Van Vaerenbergh is the art and architectural practice of Pieterjan Gijs and Arnout Van Vaerenbergh. They have worked as a collective since 2007 and their work transcends, shifts, and breaks the boundaries of their discipline in the form of architectural projects, artistic interventions, installations and sculptures.

LOCATION

The name of **Baron Ruzettepark** refers to Baron Ruzette, Minister for Agriculture and Public Works and later Provincial Governor at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a city park on the outskirts of Bruges with various walking and cycling tracks. As a nod to the former marshalling yard, large railway sleepers have been peppered across the park that serve as both benches and invite people to play games.

website Gijs van Vaerenbergh:
<http://www.gijsvanvaerenbergh.com/>



Gijs Van Vaerenbergh - Colonnade, Triennale Brugge 2021 © Stad Brugge - Mathias Desmet



Adrián Villar Rojas [AR] From the series *Brick Farm* | Poortersloge + various locations

Argentinian artist Adrián Villar Rojas is placing a number of unusual birds' nests in and around the Poortersloge (Burghers' Lodge). They form part of his work *From the Series Brick Farm*, an ongoing project that was previously shown at the Lahore Biennale. The title refers to the moment when Villar Rojas and his team found a large number of nests of the red ovenbird. They discovered these nests in an Argentinian brick factory. The red ovenbird gets its name from the nests it builds using mud, twigs, clay, saliva, and other materials it manages to find. The nests resemble the ancient mud ovens of Argentina's early agricultural population. Villar Rojas' team studied these nests, and then returned them to the plant. In doing so, they used the original materials. Quite remarkably, the birds returned and began to add additional layers to the nests. During Bruges Triennial 2021 the artist will spread similar nests throughout the city, linking all the artistic interventions together. The Burghers' Lodge is the central point throughout the triennial and, through Rojas' nests, it is also in symbolic contact with Zeebrugge, the place where Bruges Triennial 2021 and Beaufort collaborate. Dozens of nests have also been installed on the coast. When encountering a nest, it will never be clear whether one is looking at an authentic or an artificial nest. In this way the Argentinian artist makes us think about how closely natural and human artefacts are connected.

BIO

Adrián Villar Rojas (b. 1980, Rosario, Argentina; lives and works nomadically). Adrián Villar Rojas focuses on large-scale, site-specific installations where there is often an atmosphere that seems to announce the end of the world. With fragile sculptures and imposing structures, he depicts ideas of how human civilization could go down, or how a futuristic culture is emerging. His dreamy or nightmarish installations explore notions of finitude and temporality, linked to possible predictions and flashes of oblivion.

LOCATION

The Poortersloge (Burghers' Lodge) was built at the end of the 14th century by order of the then commercial elite, the Bruges Burghers, who would receive their trading partners here. Between 1720 and 1890, the building served as an art academy, and the State Archives were housed here from 1912 onwards. Today it is the new exhibition venue for contemporary art in Bruges.



Adrián Villar Rojas - From the series *Brick Farm*, 2021, kurimanazutto, Mexico; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Héctor Zamora (MX) *Strangler* | garden of Gezellehuis

In Bruges, Héctor Zamora is showing work in the walled garden of Gezellehuis, where he is showcasing an intervention around a large, solitary tree, an Austrian pine. During an initial visit to the site, his eye fell on that particular tree because it reminded him of the 'ceibo', a tropical species of tree in the Amazon jungle. This tree has sacred status and is surrounded by creepers. The plants, however, do not enclose the tree without engagement: step by step they take over the energy of the host and while the tree dies, they continue to live. Héctor Zamora conceived the plan to imitate this natural enclosure through a human intervention, namely through the use of scaffolding. The Bruges pine tree offers the opportunity to give shape to this concept, creating a movement in reverse: where the natural swaying plant strangles the tropical tree, as it were, the industrial scaffolding actually creates a beautiful connection between man and nature. Visitors can walk on the coloured scaffolding and climb to the top in circular movements. Through this intervention, the artist creates what at first glance appears to be an aggressive object, but in fact is also a poetic event. At the end, from the top of the tree, one gains a wide-angle view of Bruges's surroundings.

BIO

Héctor Zamora (b. 1974, Mexico City, Mexico; lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal and Mexico City). The work of Héctor Zamora repeatedly creates friction between the roles of the public and the private, the exterior and interior, the organic and geometric, the ferocious and methodical, the real and the imaginary. He creates situations that require the active participation of viewers and visitors, in performances, installations, or films. He often uses everyday materials and questions their more obvious functions.

LOCATION

The [garden of Gezellehuis](#) is a magnificent walled garden near the City Ramparts. It boasts a work of art by Jan Fabre, "The Man Who Gives Fire". Guido Gezelle, who once lived next door, was a Flemish Catholic priest, linguist and poet, known for his exquisite poems about nature.

website Héctor Zamora:

<https://lsd.com.mx/>



Héctor Zamora - Strangler, 2021, Labor, Mexico; Luciana Brito Galeria, Sao Paulo; Albarrán Bourdais, Madrid - TriennaleBrugge 2021 © Stad Brugge - Matthias Desmet



Exhibition Poortersloge: A Porous City

In addition to [13 interventions in the heart of the city](#), Triennial Bruges is also hosting group exhibition 'A Porous City'. The exhibition fleshes out [the Trauma theme](#), with a selection of 40 sculptures, photos, drawings, paintings and videos. The works of art link dissonant voices, story lines and wondrous worlds with the 'unnerving' nature of the rooms within the Burghers' Lodge. Here, the artists portray their view of the world, mankind and architecture. A perspective that may appear fragmented or distorted, but is also idyllic and heavenly at the same time.

The exhibition adds a further dimension to the light shed on the local area and residents by [Triennial Bruges 2021](#). By dividing the work of diverse artists into thematic groups across the different indoor spaces, Triennial Bruges extends the scope from the urban outdoors to the private nature of a former home. Within the experimental walls of the [Burghers' Lodge](#), art forms create a dialogue, while others clash or seek conflict. They confuse the visitors, from cellar to spire, with colourful ribbons, delicate flowers or strings of oil paint. Hard marble, wooden splinters and strange polyester shapes shun today's individual and social challenges.

Participating artists:

Bilal Bahir, Semâ Bekirović, Rakel Bergman Fröberg, Willem Boel, Dries Boutsen, Jana Cordenier, Thierry De Cordier, Sarah De Vos, Lisse Declercq, Danny Devos, Joëlle Dubois, Kendell Geers, Daan Gielis, Geert Goiris, John Isaacs, Athar Jaber, Thomas Lerooy, Emilio López-Menchero, Enrique Marty, Cécile Massart, Hermann Nitsch, Ronald Ophuis, Štefan Papčo, Jasper Rigole, Sarah&Charles, Gregor Schneider, Mircea Suci, Adrien Tirtiaux, Narcisse Tordoir, Ana Torfs, Gavin Turk, Ingel Vaikla, Caroline Van den Eynden, Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, Filip Vervaet, Julie Villard & Simon Brossard and Friederike von Rauch.

Location:

The [Poortersloge](#) (Burghers' Lodge) was built between 1395 and 1417 and was commissioned by the commercial elite of the day. Between 1720 and 1890, the Vrije Academie had its classrooms there and the building provided a place for architects and visual artists. After the French Revolution, the Academy also housed works of art from demolished churches in Bruges, including several panels by Flemish Primitives. At the end of the 19th century, the building took on its present appearance, as the early 19th-century annex disappeared, and the Porter's Lodge was restored together with some adjoining houses and from 1912 onwards, it was furnished as the General State Archive. One hundred years later, the State Archives moved to a new building and the Porter's Lodge was given its current use as a **venue for contemporary art in Bruges**.

Curatorial team

Till-Holger Borchert (1967, Hamburg): scientific director Musea Brugge. He studied art history, literature and musicology at the University of Bonn and at Indiana University Bloomington (USA) and taught art history at the universities of Aachen, Memphis (TN) and Middlebury College (VT). He has curated exhibitions on Van Eyck, Memling and other old masters in Bruges, as well as widely acclaimed exhibitions in Brussels (BOZAR), Madrid (Museo Thyssen Bornemisza), New York (The Frick Collection, The Morgan Library and Museum) and Rome (Scuderie di Quirinale). He has also participated in exhibitions in Beijing, Washington, Paris, Rome, Vienna, London, Cleveland and Dijon.

Michel Dewilde (1963, Ghent): deputy curator of contemporary art Musea Brugge/ CC Brugge. He studied art history and archaeology at Ghent University, gender studies at University of Antwerp and gender and postcolonial studies at Utrecht University. He was a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, at S.M.A.K. in Ghent and Gynaika in Antwerp. As freelance curator, he has curated exhibitions for the Poetry Summers Watou, Ename Actueel, Betoverd Bos (Aalter), Be-Part (Waregem), CAB (Brussels), Recyclart (Brussels), Annie Gentils Gallery (Antwerp), Warp (Sint-Niklaas), Azad Gallery and Mohsen Gallery (Teheran), De Witte Zaal (Ghent) and the Vrije Academie (The Hague), among others.

Els Wuyts (1976, Oudenaarde): exhibition maker and programmer of contemporary visual arts. She studied art sciences at the University of Ghent and was, among other things, involved with the Huis van Alijn and S.M.A.K. in Ghent, Beaufort Buiten de Grenzen in Ostend and Emergent gallery&association in Veurne, where she mainly helped establish the lines of communication and artistic projects related to audience mediation. As a freelance curator, she put together exhibitions for Ten Bogaerde in Koksijde, Villa Les Zéphyrus in Middelkerke and others. In her base camp in Ostend, she is one of the founders of the off- space Salon blanc and the BILDNIS_forum for art association.

Santiago De Waele (1966, Deinze): technical coordination. He is creative and technical production coordinator of several large projects, including Beaufort and Watou art festival. Over the years, he has worked for various artists, from design to execution, including Andries Botha, Bart De Zutter, Cheri Samba, Mimmo Paladino, Jan Van Imschoot, Ilya+Emilia Kabakov, Tom Claassen, David Cerny, Luc Zeebroek, Niek Kemps, Matt Mullican, Marijke Van Warmerdam, Valérie Mannaerts, Sven t'Jolle, Mathilde Rosier, Robert Kusmirowski, Luc Deleu, Peter Rogiers, Peter Verhelst, Sofie Muller, Lawrence Malstaf and Yves Obyn.



Background: genesis of the Triennials

Bruges, where past and present merge

Bruges is a city with a long and fascinating history. Thanks to its connection with the sea through the Zwin estuary and its favourable location, it grew into an international and active trading town and port from the 12th century onwards. Prosperous and rich merchants from all over Europe settled in the city and, thanks to Italian bankers, the world's first stock exchange was established in Bruges.

In the 15th century, the city was under the rule of the dukes of Burgundy. With their excellent taste and showmanship, they commissioned the most famous artists such as Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling. That is how Bruges became the cradle of the Flemish primitives. Rich merchants, bankers, clergymen and noble families were equally drawn to the city's cultural dynamism. Bruges enjoyed its Golden Age.

The early 1480s, however, heralded an economic and political crisis: the Zwin silted up and after the death of Queen Mary of Burgundy, her widower Maximilian of Austria moved away. Following in his footsteps, foreign merchants abandoned the area. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Bruges tried to restore its level of prosperity. It was in this period that lace was introduced. This Bruges artisan craft became an important source of revenue to fill the city coffers.

The Industrial Revolution bypassed the city and by the middle of the 19th century, Bruges was a poor and outdated city. Strangely enough, it was a novel that caused the tide to turn ... The novel in question, 'Bruges-la-Morte', written by Georges Rodenbach, was published in 1892. He described Bruges as a sleepy, yet particularly mysterious place. The photographs in the book fired the readers' imagination and sparked the city's revival. Bruges' heritage was being rediscovered, with its mysterious intimacy as its greatest asset. Besides the French, the British also came to Bruges in this period, tourists on their way to the battlefields of Waterloo. Nowadays, Bruges is popular with tourists from all over the world, not only because it is a **World Heritage City**, but also because it has a **thriving contemporary art and architecture scene** and is a city on a human scale, where romance goes hand in hand with green parks and street art.

Bruges: art and architecture and the first Triennials

Together with the revival of the city, Bruges also embarked on a difficult **balancing act** at the end of the 19th century between the preservation of its valuable **medieval heritage** and meeting the social needs of a **contemporary city**. A new and well thought-out urban strategy was called for. **Accessibility** was to become an important theme and would also provide for additional tourist potential: Bruges was to be connected to the young Belgian railway network and there would be a regular ferry connection between Ostend and England.

Groeningemuseum opened its doors in 1930. This museum housed an exceptional collection of Flemish and Dutch art, such as Gerard David's 'Judgement of Cambyses' and Jan van Eyck's 'Madonna with Canon van der Paele', one of the works of art made in Bruges

that has never left the city.

After WW II, an exciting period for visual arts began in Bruges. In **1968**, the city joined forces with the Province of West Flanders to organise a summer event that would present an overview of the contemporary Belgian art world every three years. That is when the **Triennial Bruges** was launched. At this first edition, new art forms, such as CoBrA, assemblage art, pop art and conceptual art were displayed in the Bruges City Halls with the aim of putting Bruges on the map as a contemporary arts city. There was another Triennial in **1971** involving 84 Belgian artists. The **1974** edition saw a change of course, in that contemporary art took to the streets in search of interaction with the public, which proved a recurring theme for future triennials.



Bruges: UNESCO World Heritage

How did Bruges become recognised by UNESCO as world heritage? Several factors played a role in this.

After the two world wars, the heart of the city was in a poor state of repair: there were empty buildings everywhere and many were being razed to the ground. In 1965, concerned locals sounded the alarm, which resulted in 1971 in Bruges being one of the first cities with a Department for the Preservation of Monuments and Sites. This department took the first steps towards a Bruges heritage policy.

The authentic, organically grown **medieval urban fabric** has been preserved and large parts of the historical heritage remain virtually

intact thanks to countless efforts. No wonder, therefore, that the city has been awarded a series of special **UNESCO recognitions**: in 1998 the **Begijnhof (Beguinage)** was recognised as World Heritage; the **Belfort (Belfry)** followed suit in 1999 and the **entire historic city centre** in 2000. Furthermore, in 2009 the **Procession of the Holy Blood** was recognised as Intangible Heritage, and in 2014 the **Belgian carillon culture** was recognised as a best practice in the field of safeguarding Intangible Heritage. Since 2016, the **Belgian beer culture** has also been on the list of Intangible Heritage, and with five breweries, a beer museum and many cafés, Bruges is well represented in this.

Bruges 2002 and Concertgebouw: a spectacular tandem

The idea of a new **Bruges Concert Hall** as a contemporary platform for music, dance and visual arts has been brewing since the early 1990s. The design competition was won by **Robbrecht & Daem**, the famous Belgian firm of architects. Shortly after, it was also announced that Bruges would be **Cultural Capital of Europe**. One of the objectives of winning this title was to integrate contemporary architecture into the cityscape. The Concert Hall was thus being built at breakneck speed for the start of the Cultural Year, and at the opening – at 20.02 hours on 20.02.2002 – the sounds of Haydn's festive opening concert 'Die Schöpfung' resounded through the hall.

The **Concert Hall**, one of the '1001 buildings you must see before you die', not only has top acoustics, is also a statement when it comes to contemporary architecture. The cultural temple is not a building that stands on its own, but enters into dialogue with the city and its surroundings: the 68,000 ox-blood red terracotta tiles allude to the typical red roofs of the houses in the inner city and the **Lantaartoren (Lantern Tower)** is a reference to the stubby church towers from Bruges' wood- and wetlands, such as those of Damme and Lissewege. The reclining structure of the Concert Hall contrasts with the **Belfort (Belfry)**, **Sint-Salvatoriekathedraal (St Saviour's Cathedral)** and the **Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (Church of Our Lady)**, which define the skyline vertically. The large windows offer a post-card view of the city from inside. The cultural temple also houses an interesting contemporary art collection, which is growing steadily.

Triennials of Bruges 2015–2018

Despite the desire to make contemporary art accessible to a broad public, the thread of the first triennials in the 1960s and 1970s was not picked up again for political and budgetary reasons. It would eventually take until 2015 before the Triennial rose from its ashes.

The beautification of the urban fabric in the neo-Gothic style during the second half of the 19th century, and the inclusion of the city on the UNESCO World Heritage List, gave tourism a huge boost. Gradually, however, the many day-trippers put enormous pressure on the city's life and perception of quality. In order to offer added-value seekers an additional cultural experience, it was decided in 2015 to breathe new life into Triennial Bruges. From then on, art and architecture by national and international artists, mainly displayed in the open air, has gone hand in hand. The temporary artistic and architectural interventions has offered the city's locals and visitors a new perspective on the city. The image of Bruges as a medieval outdoor museum was thus finally discarded.

Bruges now also plays a leading role in the triennials with a theme related to the city. In 2015, the theme was the then highly topical question '**What if the more than 5 million tourists who visit Bruges every year were to actually move here?**' Bruges would become a fast-growing, multicultural megacity, with opportunities and challenges, positives and negatives, ranging from housing and mobility to urban dynamics and cultural diversity. Starting from this premise, the artists and architects entered into dialogue with

Bruges' unique heritage and rich history. In a world of growing cities and endless dynamism lies Bruges' inner city: the egg-shaped centre with its unchanging, timeless, historic character. A liveable versus a lively city, it remains a difficult balancing act.

Following on from the 2015 theme, the **2018 Triennial** took a step further with '**Liquid City**', an investigation into what the future would bring for a city like Bruges and its society. How flexible, fluid or resilient can a historic city like Bruges be in a time when the world is changing rapidly and everything is fluid and fleeting? Almost all of the artworks and installations were located along or on the water, with Bruges as a literally liquid city, with water crossing the city and ensuring its economic boom, prosperity, growth, culture, habitation, etc.



World heritage city with future plans

Bruges may be a proud World Heritage city and cherish its remarkable history, the city is also firmly rooted in the present and is forging **daring plans for the future**. Bruges' World Heritage goes hand in hand with **pioneering architecture, well thought-out urban renewal and surprising artistic experiences**.

Concertgebouw and Concertgebouw Circuit

The **Concertgebouw** is not only a modern music temple, famous for its perfect acoustics. The **seasonal theme 'For Life!'** demonstrates the Concert Hall's **creative and committed** approach to contemporary issues. Drawing inspiration from biodiversity, the programme brings together current threats to all forms of life, with concomitant feelings of fear, commitment, solidarity and hope. Through the visitors, these perspectives are disseminated, because music is all about empathy, sympathy and living together.

The building also accommodates an interesting collection of contemporary art, for which the city worked closely with architect Paul Robbrecht. The **Concertgebouw Circuit** introduces you to the unique collection of [sound] art, visual arts and architecture. Works of art by Carl De Keyzer, Edgar Varèse, Peter Verhelst, Dirk Braeckman, Luc Tuymans and others are beautifully integrated into the building's modern architecture. The Concert Hall is an **open house** with many rooms, with initiatives on offer for both young and old.

Art galleries

There is no doubt that art lovers will be able to acquire a unique collector's item at one of Bruges' many **antique shops or auction houses**. From vintage jewellery and curiosities to antique furniture and design decoration, the range is almost endless. Lovers of contemporary art will be delighted by the renowned **art galleries and exhibition spaces** dotted around the city. Unique creations, contemporary photography, graphics and art on paper and canvas, sculpture gardens and figurative art ...These renowned art galleries present ground-breaking work by both established artists and emerging talent. Check out the places where you can find unique collectibles or art treasures [here](#).

Street Art: the city as a canvas

Meanwhile, **street art** has also acquired a place in the Bruges street scene, always with a nod to the city's rich history.

Project Legendz

Thanks to the **Legendz** project, in the area around 't Zand you'll find the huge 'Mary of Burgundy' mural by [Jeremiah Persyn](#) and 'The Dance of Fools' by [Stan Slabbinck](#). Internationally renowned artist [Strook](#) used recycled material from, among others, an old convent in Bruges for 'Portrait L IV 17', his wood sculpture of a mysterious woman looking out over 't Zand.

Street Art Festival 'The Bridges'

In the summer of 2021, Bruges' first street art festival, [The Bridges](#), will be bridging - not only figuratively speaking, but also literally - past and future, as well as the historic city centre and the other city districts. Together with 7 other Flemish artists, artist Wietse has painted trendy murals on nine façades within a stone's throw of the City Ramparts. You can discover the painted façades during a walking or cycling tour.

BRUSK, Bruges' future exhibition hall

Bruges has been a successful tourist attraction for decades. Despite the many museums in Bruges, there is a pressing need for a permanent location for temporary exhibitions. So far, part of the permanent collection had to make way for each temporary exhibition. That is why Bruges will be investing in an impressive **master plan** for the city centre in the coming years. The heart of the museum city is getting a complete makeover with the construction of the new BRUSK exhibition hall. The [Groeninge Museum](#) will also be substantially **renovated** and the new 'Musea Brugge Centre for Collection Research', a place for in-depth scientific research, will be given a valuable place there.

A new accessible **city park** will be created around the new museum site. With [BRUSK](#), the city wants to focus on an innovative and



sustainable contemporary art policy, a high-quality museum and art site as a new creative hub in the city, where different art forms can flourish.

Handmade in Brugge

When you say Bruges, you immediately think of craftsmanship and entrepreneurship. Bruges is often associated with exceptional craftsmanship, such as that produced by the Flemish primitives during the Middle Ages. Even today, the city remains a haven for creative entrepreneurs. For example, there is the [Handmade in Brugge](#) label that is awarded to those producing locally and by hand. A separate guide lists these producers and literally puts them on the map. This way you can easily find your way to the handmade ateliers of potters, jewellery designers, musical instrument makers, textile designers, specialty coffee roasters, interior designers, bakers, chocolatiers and even surfboard makers!

Mind the Artist

The pandemic has turned the entire cultural sector upside down, which is why Musea Brugge has decided to support the multi-faceted and creative talent that our country boasts for a whole year. The 'Mind the Artist' project connects artists such as photographers, authors, visual artists and musicians with the existing museum collections. Sometimes even a complete take-over is billed. Between 30 April and 3 October, [Sanam Khatibi](#) will be immersing the spectator in an alienating world with colourful flora and fauna with a number of his works that are on display in the Groeninge Museum. Between 29 October '21 and 6 March '22, the artist [Strook](#) will be presenting new installations and works of art with patinated materials in and around a number of heritage sites in Bruges.

The list of all participating artists can be found [here](#).

Into the city: different ways to experience Bruges in an innovative way

25/25 Hedendaagse kunst en architectuur in Brugge (Contemporary art and architecture in Bruges)

The city map '[25/25 Hedendaagse kunst en architectuur in Brugge](#)' brings together monuments and innovative architectural projects that are visible from the public roads like beacons in the urban fabric. The map invites you to explore, to look for unexpected places and to be surprised by the many fascinating permanent interventions Bruges has to offer. 25/25 is a palette of interventions, large or small, by known or less known names, to keep the debate alive about contemporary art and architecture in a World Heritage city.

Stap in de stad (Step into the city)

[Stap in de stad](#) sends families with a map and a kit bag on a tour of six contemporary projects. Playful questions and assignments challenge the children to explore the installations with all their senses. The tasks range from puzzling and drawing to imitating buildings using their arms and legs and reading the map.

Beeld van de stad (Image of a city)

Twenty years after the historic city centre of Bruges was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, Triennial Bruges and the Department for Heritage Conservation published the book '[Beeld van de Stad](#)'. It shows you the way along a selection of 70 contemporary gems, from Fabre to Permeke, from the Concertgebouw Brugge (Concert Hall Bruges) to the State Archives. Each building or work of art is accompanied by fascinating information and interesting facts. What's more, experts have written ten extra essays on modernism in Bruges.

Heritage repurposed

A quarter of the surface area of the historic centre of Bruges is directly linked to religious life. Churches, convents, places of worship, foundations, centres and services bear witness to this. Some churches have been repurposed, such as [Heilige Magdalenakerk](#) (St Magdalene's Church), where YOT experiments with Christian tradition in society. Public access to most convents today is restricted or non-existing, but the [Sacred Books|Secret Libraries](#) project is set to change that. By means of guided tours in smaller groups, the [Engels Klooster](#) (English Convent) and the [Klooster van de Ongeschoeide Karmelieten](#) (Convent of the Discalced Carmelites) are opened up in a professional and sustainable way: the spirituality and way of life of the sisters is covered, with the book as the common thread.



Staying overnight in Bruges

Bruges invites you to stay the night and enjoy the city for a good while. Moreover, the city is an ideal base for visiting the other West Flemish triennials. Indeed, Triennial Bruges joins Triennial Beaufort, Triennial Kortrijk and the Watou Art Festival in putting West Flanders firmly on the international map of contemporary art in 2021.

Practical Info

Website visitbruges.be

Website triennalebrugge.be

Podcasts [Triennial Bruges 2021](#)

Podcasts [Visit Bruges](#)

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Triennale de Bruges 2021 is an organisation of Brugge Pus, Musea Brugge, Kenniscentrum vzw and Cultuurcentrum Brugge, by order of Stad Brugge.