

# Paradise

**Triennial for  
contemporary art**

**June 26 -  
October 24, 2021**

**Organised by the City of Kortrijk, Belgium and Be-Part  
Curators: Hilde Teerlinck and Patrick Ronse**

The Triennial of Kortrijk will take place from June 19, 2021 to October 24, 2021 in the city of Kortrijk. 'Paradise' is an international art project which opens up a myriad of interpretations of the utopian dream of paradise. The project is drawn on the spirit of our time. It is born out of an urgency to respond to the current atmosphere that is seemingly miles away from a hopeful, positive and utopian one.

We all dream or have dreamed about paradise. This is the idea of living in peace and harmony, without sorrow or pain, the feeling of freely swimming around in an ocean of pure pleasure, not worrying about what will happen tomorrow.

There are many different paths to paradise, all **highly personal**. For some, this can mean reaching the gates of heaven, entering the Garden of Eden or walking in the Elysian Fields. For others, it can mean any place or state of ultimate happiness. Prosperity, fulfilment and exceptional satisfaction are recurring elements in every religion and myth. The word paradise primarily poses the general question of how we can make a better society for each and every person.

Since the publication of **Thomas More's** Utopia in 1516 (Leuven), the word utopia has become synonymous with paradise and its allusions: the ideal, the unrealistic and the unattainable. The title of the publication is a pun of the Greek words eu-topia meaning 'good place' and ou-topos meaning 'no place'.

Many academics have researched the philosophical concept of utopia: the search for an **imaginary, perfect society**. Well-known writers and sharp-minded thinkers have dedicated texts to analyzing this theme: Thomas More, Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin amongst others. They all agree on one single fact: we can only achieve a certain 'dream state' by earning it.



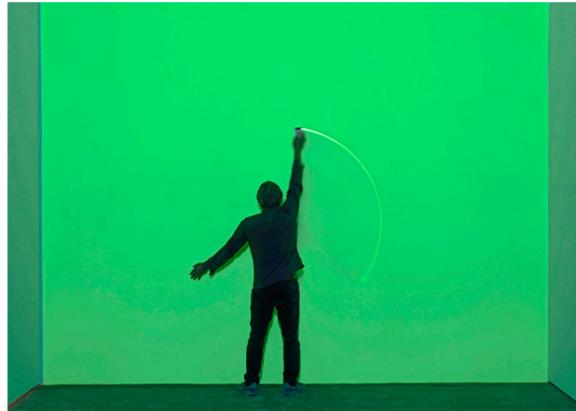
In order to cultivate ideals and desires, utopians strongly believe a great deal of our time should be withdrawn from the service of the body and devoted to the utter **freedom of the mind**. For centuries, they have been analyzing and constructing new social and political models providing scope for reaching paradise.

From North to South, from East to West, from all corners of the world, from philosophers to poets, from architects to artists, people from all of history have been haunted by **the human need to imagine**, to trace and define an ideal world.

Nonetheless, our society currently seems to be driven by a combination of fear and anxiety. We have been brutally **awakened by the imminent changes** in our climate, projecting a catastrophic, dystopian future. The idea of a possible extinction of the human species becomes – for the first time – a tangible vision of the future. Negativity appears to be occupying our dreams

and taking over the role of belief and hope. This overwhelming tsunami is a hot topic, present worldwide

More than ever, **we need creative, utopian thinkers**. For time, artists have developed and analyzed countless ways of constructing paradise, offering artistic alternatives. They have raised questions about rural and social development, the high rate



of nature loss and the impact of technological advancement on our lives and current environment.

Many of us are urban people. For us, the city has become our new natural habitat, a place conceived and designed by architects and urban planners whose reflections are based on the basic concepts of utopia. For time, people have been creating an **ideal urban context** responding to the current needs of society, guaranteeing a better life. This is very time-related and can swiftly change with migration and the enormous growth of population (for an example, people who are forced to move from places predominated by war, conflicts or climate change).

The **climate crisis** emphasizes the fundamental differences between nature and nurture. The rapidly collapsing ecological systems are at the top of political agendas. Are we too late, or do we still have time? In our current environment, we have to deal with rules relating to ecology and

world economy. It is only through respect, sustainable solutions and responsible behavior that our universe might become a perfect home. Climate change is an urgent matter that requires global collaboration and action.

**Social justice and mutual respect** are the foundations of a harmonious world, where people live together in a social structure, where the well-being, freedom and independence of people are taken into consideration. How do we find the hidden community of peace and harmony that Chinese poet Tao Yuanming so poetically describes in The Peach Blossom Spring?

The near future holds the **promise of a new narrative**, a reality where science and other high-tech solutions will solve critical, global, social and individual problems. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, utopia has naturally relied on science and new developments. The close intertwining of scientific progress and the 'ideal' has emerged as a quintessential ideology of modernity. Scientific development and technology have, and will always have, a deep impact on contemporary life.

This project, however, strongly believes in a tangible paradise which exists in the present. The creation of a **utopian attitude** can lead to a better world, holding onto the feeling of paradise. We are convinced that it is important to emphasize the **value of the artist**, their role in our community, their artistic ideas, their own vision and the result of their thinking that has an impact on people and society.

In Paradise, we give the artists the **freedom to express a personal and critical view** about how they see and interpret paradise. Artists have the power to engage us on a personal level and mirror our situation or condition, so that we can set our mind in motion and act differently.

The triennial of Kortrijk invites **contemporary artists** to participate and reflect on modern questions. What are meaningful values today and how can we construct a better society? By installing artworks in the **heart of the dynamic city**, the significance of the artists' vision becomes present in public. The participative element is crucial in the project: through an active experience, **interaction is activated** by the visitor. Through this experience, the visitor is offered



the opportunity to modify their way of thinking, both about themselves and about our current society.

Paradise Kortrijk 2021 aims to reach a **large public**: locals and non-locals, families, art lovers and people of all ages and backgrounds who wish to experience contemporary art on a personal, and different level. The exhibition will consist of an ambitious list of national and international artists. PARADISE Kortrijk 2021 will be a **dynamic and free city exhibition**.