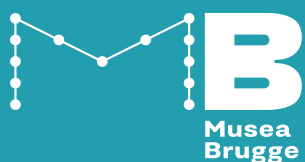


BRUGGE

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PRESS EN
28.10.26



HIGH TIDE

Of Humanity and the Sea,
Through Fashion and Art
30.10.26 — 14.03.27



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MUSEUM
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Image: BOTTER Spring - Summer 2022 "Global Warning" Photographer: Viviane Sassan

HIGH TIDE

Of Humanity and the Sea, Through Fashion and Art

30.10.26 → 14.03.27

Water, sea, oceans. For centuries, they have been a major source of inspiration for artists and designers worldwide. The many faces of water and its impact on contemporary fashion and art lie at the heart of 'High Tide'. For its latest exhibition, Musea Brugge brings together fashion and contemporary art on this scale for the first time in Bruges, conceived by fashion curator Karen Van Godtsenhoven, in a fluid and surprising dialogue.

A sensory journey that inspires wonder

High Tide shows how fashion and art can help us look at the sea with fresh eyes. They invite us to feel, reflect on, and marvel at our relationship with water at a time when this vital connection is under greater pressure than ever before. The exhibition is a sensory journey through fashion and contemporary art, enriched by video, sound, and heritage. A journey that inspires wonder, moves us emotionally, and encourages reflection, dialogue, and a sense of connection. Not only with the beauty and power of the sea, but also with our own place within it.

Rediscovering the sea

High Tide invites visitors to rediscover the sea. Not as a distant horizon, but as a living world of which we ourselves are a part. The exhibition unfolds as a contemporary odyssey through the oceanic imagination. The journey begins at the water's edge, where land and sea meet. From there, the route leads through twelve thematic islands that together form an archipelago of stories. Just as the tides shape the rhythm of the ocean, ebb and flow also give structure to the exhibition: from the calm of low tide, through the mysteries of the deep sea, to the pressing urgency of high tide.



The many faces of water

Along the way, visitors encounter the many faces of water: as a source of life and creative power; as a mythical realm inhabited by goddesses and sea monsters; as a mirror of our emotions, desires, and dreams; but also as a space of trade, migration, extraction, power, and conflict. The North Sea occupies a special place within this story. For centuries, it has shaped the rhythm of Bruges and its surroundings. It transformed the city into an international trading metropolis, inspired generations of artists, and remains today a powerful symbol of the bond between our low-lying country and the sea.

Iconic fashion creations and leading contemporary art

The exhibition features iconic creations by designers including Dries Van Noten, Chanel, Gianni Versace, Iris van Herpen, Alexander McQueen, Jean Paul Gaultier, Olivier Theyskens, BOTTER, and Marine Serre. Major contemporary artworks are presented by artists such as Pierre et Gilles, Bill Viola, Rinus Van de Velde, Wangechi Mutu, Harmonia Rosales, Martin Parr, Dominique White, Abdul Rahman Katanani, and Otobong Nkanga. New works by Shayli Harrison (Mutani), Di Petsa, Yves Beaumont, Eyes as Big as Plates, and Gabriella Ciancimino complete this unmissable exhibition.

Guest curator

Karen Van Godtsenhoven is a curator and doctoral researcher at Ghent University (UGent), specialising in fashion. She has worked for internationally renowned institutions such as The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the ModeMuseum Antwerpen (MoMu). She is currently affiliated with the Barbican Centre in London. In 2022, she received the 'Stella d'Italia' distinction from the Italian government.

Curator

Michel Dewilde is curator of contemporary art, culture and history at Musea Brugge. He recently curated the exhibitions 'Underneath the Shade We Lay Grounded' by Otobong Nkanga, 'Rebel Garden' and 'Latent City' by Refik Anadol there.

Iris van Herpen

THE THEMES

A Journey Across Modern Water Tales

For ‘High Tide’, curators Karen Van Godtsenhoven and Michel Dewilde drew inspiration from poet Kamau Brathwaite’s notion of ‘tidalectics’: a vision that reflects on the cyclical movements of the ocean, moving to the rhythm of ebb and flow through ripple and return. Unfolding contemporary water narratives, the exhibition takes visitors on a journey starting at low tide, plunging into the depths, and ending with the urgency of high tide.

The Beach as a Sanctuary

Unspoken rules and hierarchies govern the beach, yet it is simultaneously a haven of freedom, a space where social conventions and dress codes can be loosened. That interplay between glamour and everyday life is brought to life through a selection of eye-catching beachwear by the likes of Gianni Versace, Chanel, and Dries Van Noten. This creates a dialogue with the subtly satirical beach photography of British photographer Martin Parr, bringing the colourful conventions and idiosyncrasies of beach culture into sharp focus. The beach also makes room for bodies and identities that exist outside conventional norms. The American label Chromat embraces this vision, offering swimwear that enables trans individuals to express their evolving bodies and sexuality in full freedom and pride. Rinus Van de Velde expands upon the beach theme through a new work.

The Sailor

Embodying masculine strength, lust and sensuality, the iconic figure of the sailor in his Breton stripes has long served as a symbol of desire. From the 1940s onwards, the figure further emerged as an iconic emblem of homosexuality and sexual non-conformity. That visual legacy endures in Jean Paul Gaultier’s iterations of the striped sailor suit, in the photographs of French duo Pierre et Gilles, and in the Palestinian sailor, or ‘bahhar’, by Trashy Clothing.

Mythos, The Sea as Origin

Across numerous mythological creation stories, the ocean emerges as a primordial current, a soulful and divine power, a womb in which life comes into being. Intrigued by how the Western world repeatedly reimagines Greek culture and myth, designer Dimitra Petsa delves into narratives of rebirth, metamorphosis and female archetypes.



With ‘Water Woman’, artist Wangechi Mutu brings to life a mythical ‘Nguva’, Swahili for mermaid. Harmonia Rosales portrays the emergence of the Yoruba deity Oshun in The Birth of Oshun, embodying fresh water, love and fertility.

Water, a Maternal Force

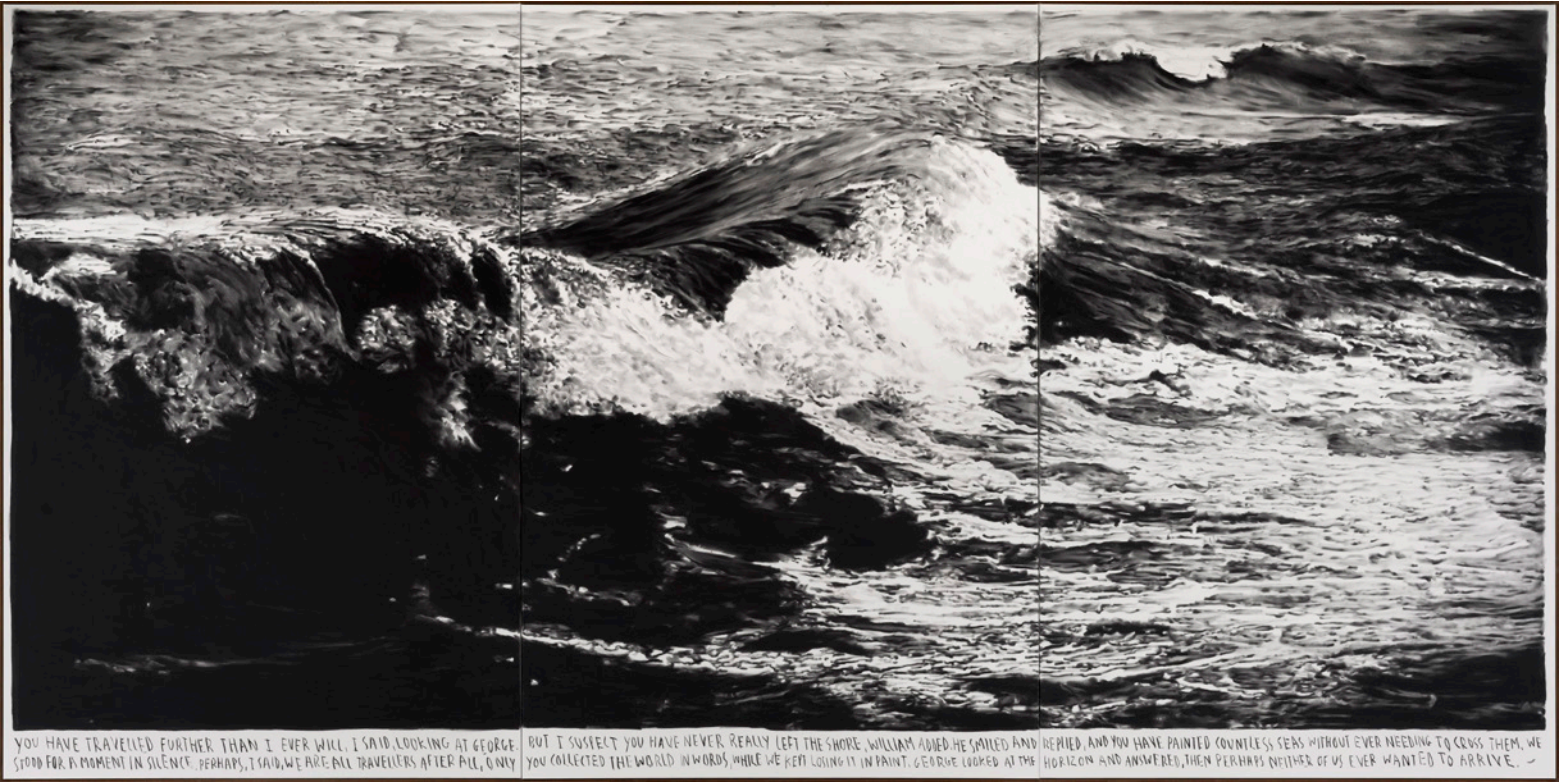
For centuries, the ocean has been entwined with concepts of fertility and the emergence of life. In L’eau et ses rêves (1942), philosopher Gaston Bachelard described water as ‘l’eau maternelle’, a maternal force that nourishes and enfolds life. The hydrofeminist practices of Michèle Matyn, Laure Prouvost and Iris van Herpen draw upon this concept of ‘l’eau maternelle’.

The North Sea as a Source of Inspiration

Midway through the exhibition, you arrive at the serene waters of the North Sea, an endless source of inspiration for poets, writers, artists and designers. It serves as a site of commerce, migration and connection, yet also one of peril and transformation. The North Sea serves as a vital source of inspiration for Belgian fashion designer Olivier Theyskens. The silhouettes from his Spring/Summer 2001 collection drew directly on the attire of the shrimp fishermen in Oostduinkerke. Painter Yves Beaumont presents Das Lied der Tiefe – Seascapes: nine North Sea seascapes, including two new works inspired by the Musea Brugge collection. His paintings do not merely show you the waves; they allow you almost to feel them.

The Menacing Sea

The tranquil mood of the North Sea gives way to wild, foreboding waters. Or, in the words of Gaston Bachelard, ‘l’eau violente’. This violent sea surfaces in artistic representations of shipwrecks, seen in the dramatic canvases of marine painter Claude Joseph Vernet from the Musea Brugge collection. In the eighteenth century, shipping was nevertheless essential to European trade and colonisation. A shipwreck can thus serve as a symbol for both the risks and the human cost of a system that has yielded immense wealth for Europe. From this layered significance, artist Dominique White and designer Thebe Magugu question the colonial repercussions implicit in the motif of the shipwreck, whereas Elena Velez and Dries Van Noten highlight the shipwreck as a potent creative motif. Themes of colonial occupation, memory, disappearance and loss intertwine within Dominique White’s sculpture.



–R– Eyes as Big as
Plates, Jean Paul Gaultier,
Rinus Van de Velde
Gallery view:
Martin Parr (background)
Jean-Paul Lespagnard
(background)
Versace (foreground)

An Ocean Under Strain

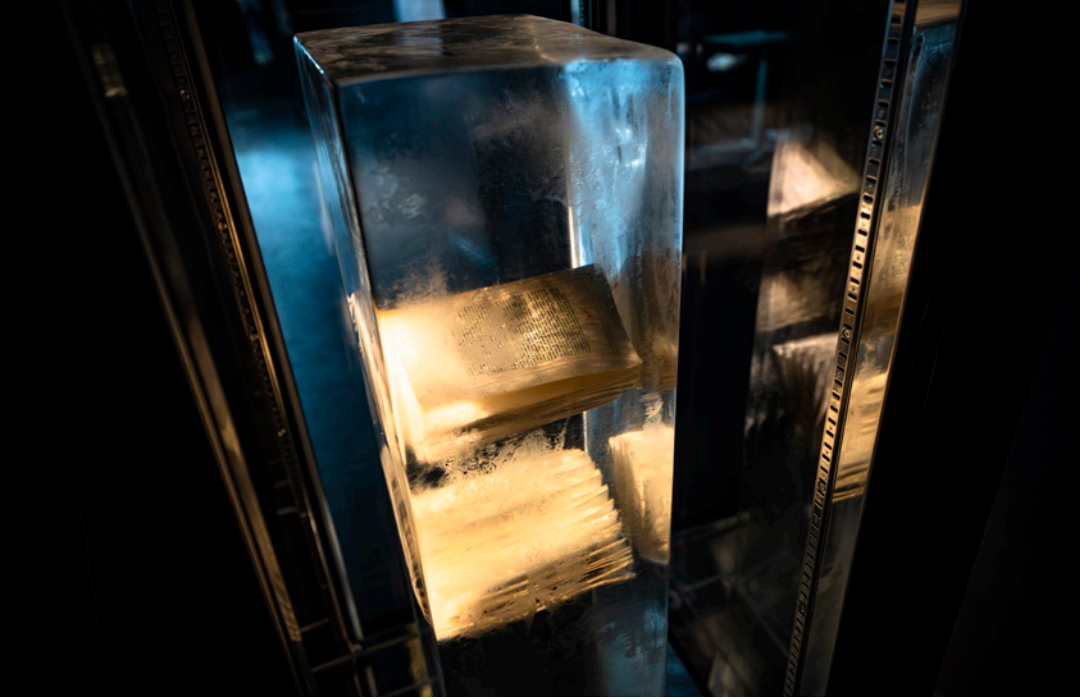
The ocean is the origin of all life, yet great violence is inflicted upon it. Think of pollution from waste, ship engines and oil leaks, coupled with acidification, warming waters, overfishing, deep-sea trawling and the extraction of raw materials. Plastic serves as the literal raw material in the work of BOTTER and Maarten Vanden Eynde. An ominous black oil spill swells through the work of Marine Serre, Christoph Draeger and Cindy Wright. Otobong Nkanga weaves a submerged landscape in which resource extraction, pollution and regeneration converge.

Turbulent Waters

Far from an empty expanse between departure and arrival, the sea is a living web of stories, memories and shared futures. For refugees and migrants, the sea acts as both a pathway and a barrier, where currents and changing weather can shape the outcome of every journey. While the ocean promises a new beginning, it turns equally into a site of loss, disappearance and remembrance. Migration across the sea, however, vastly predates humankind. For hundreds of years, animals, plants and micro-organisms have traversed the world by way of the ocean. Within that age-old choreography of marine migrations, humankind is but a late arrival. Maryam Najd's work focuses on the imagery surrounding refugees arriving by boat, alongside the stories that coalesce around their journey. Gabriella Ciani-cimino's creation examines the manifold ties to migratory flora and fauna that disperse and travel across the ocean.

High Tide: Transformation

As the earth warms, ice sheets melt and sea levels rise, the age-old rhythm of ebb and flow is thrown into disarray. High Tide signals a critical tipping point. The artists and designers featured in this section imagine prospective futures within an evolving world. With 'Marée Noire', Marine Serre examines human adaptability following ecological catastrophe. BOTTER sees the ocean as a realm of resilience, whereas Gabriella Ciani-cimino depicts the movement of flora and organisms across the Belgian coastline. Through 'Holding On', Angela Tiatia reveals the profound bond between body and sea, alongside the fragility of island communities facing the threat of rising waters.



L-R: Alexander McQueen, Subin Son, Gallery view: Marine Serre (background) - Botter (foreground), Olivier Theyskens, Angela Tiatia, Yuima Nakazato



Participating Artists

Angela Tiatia, Gabriella Ciani-cimino, Bill Viola, Cindy Wright, Christoph Draeger, Dominique White, Eyes as Big as Plates, Harmonia Rosales, Abdul Rahman Katanani, Laure Prouvost, Otobong Nkanga, Martin Parr, Maryam Najd, Joseph Vernet, Michèle Matyn, Pierre et Gilles, Rinus Van de Velde, Subin Son, Henri Victor Wolvens, Wangechi Mutu, Constant Van de Velde, Corneille Leegenhoek, Yves Beaumont

Participating Designers / Fashion Houses

Alexander McQueen, Botter, Chanel, Chromat, Di Petsa, Dries Van Noten, Elena Velez, Helen Storey, Iris van Herpen, Jean Paul Lespagnard, Jean Paul Gaultier, Marine Serre, Olivier Theyskens, Robert Wun, Shayli Harrison, Thebe Magugu, Trashy Clothing, Versace, Yuima Nakazato

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Family Quest: Design a Fashion Collection for BRUSK'O

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

Children and their family explore the exhibition together, finishing with their own design at the drawing table.

HIGH TIDE museum programme: years 4–6 of primary education

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

During an inspiring guided tour, primary school pupils from years 4 to 6 are encouraged to relate the themes to their own world.

HIGH TIDE Secondary School Tour: first four years of secondary education

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

An active guided tour encouraging students in the first four years of secondary education to consider their place within a changing world.

Guided tours for adults

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

This guided tour offers greater illumination of the narratives behind the works, the curatorial vision, and the broader social themes echoing through the exhibition.

QR Explorer Tour

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

With your smartphone as your personal guide, access background information and audio features on selected highlights and themes. Including audio description for visitors with visual impairments.

Collaborative Zine Project

Ongoing from 30.10.2026 to 14.03.2027

For the entire run of the exhibition, visitors are invited to collaborate on a collective zine, creating a singular publication that evolves with every contribution.

WOEKER Community Quilt

01.11.2026 - 14:00 to 17:00

Throughout this hands-on session, visitors are invited to weave their voice into a living textile piece, uniting stories, memories, and shared connections.

BRUSK Late

08.11.2026, 04.12.2026, 08.01.2027, 05.02.2027 - 18:00 to 21:30

With extra gallery guides and surprising interventions, 'BRUSK Late' offers a singular opportunity to experience the exhibition.



De Tank Drawing Workshop

15.11.2026 - 14:00 to 17:00

This drawing session explores the human body as a living canvas for identity, creativity, and self-expression. Under the guidance of an artist-in-residence from De Tank, participants are encouraged to observe, sketch, and experiment in response to the movement of three life models.

Docfest x High Tide

21.11.2026 - 14:00

Presented as part of Docfest, an initiative from De Republiek and Cinema Lumière, BRUSK hosts a screening of 'The Six'. The screening will be followed by a guided tour of 'High Tide', led by fashion curator Karen van Godtsenhoven.

Youth Late / BLVRD Launch

26.11.2026 - 18:00 to 22:00

This exclusive late-opening event blends a visit to 'High Tide' with hands-on creative workshops, DJ sets in Bar Brusk, and engaging gallery guides. An evening crafted specifically for a younger audience.

BRUSK Curator in Residence: 'High Tide' Curators

05.12.2026 - 14:30 to 16:00

Broadcaster Nicky Aerts (Klara) is joined in conversation by curators Michel Dewilde and Karen van Godtsenhoven to explore how contemporary artists and fashion designers reimagine our relationship with water, the sea, and the ocean through their installations and designs.

Closet Sale & Repair Café

12.12.2026 - 13:00 to 17:00

At the closet sale, visitors are invited to shop second-hand items or transform their own wardrobe: mend them with Studio Stik, screen-print them with Théo Collie, or try hand-embroidery alongside Mauritz Verlinden.

Family Sundays

31.01.2027 - 28.02.2027 - 10:30 to 12:30

Family Sundays at BRUSK invite families to explore and discover together.

Film Screening: Querelle

28.01.2027 - 20:00 to 22:30

Against the backdrop of an enigmatic harbour town, 'Querelle' delves into themes of desire, identity, power, and human connection.

CATALOGUE

Published by Hannibal Books to mark the exhibition ‘High Tide’, a companion catalogue will be available in separate Dutch and English versions.

Featuring ten conversations with artists and designers, such as Rinus Van de Velde, Dominique White, Harmonia Rosales, Di Petsa, Marine Serre, and Rushemy Botter & Lisi Herrebrugh (BOTTER), this volume invites readers to immerse themselves in that eternal tide of artistic inspiration: the sea.

In ‘High Tide’, fashion and contemporary art fuse to create a sensory odyssey. From Iris van Herpen’s undulating gowns and Bill Viola’s mesmerising video works to Pierre et Gilles’ sailors and Elena Velez’s alluring water creatures, these pieces join works by Dries Van Noten, Chanel, Versace, Alexander McQueen, Jean Paul Gaultier, and many more to create a vast ocean of imagery, storytelling, and creative vision.

Available to purchase in the museum shop at BRUSK or online at bruskbrugge.be/en/shop

Details:
33,6 x 24 cm
224 pages
Paperback with French flaps



HIGH TIDE IN BRUGES HIGH STREETS

Beyond the exhibition space, the city itself lives and breathes fashion: from its steeped textile history to today’s cutting-edge boutiques. Ten ambassadors showcase High Tide through exclusive window displays. Discover below the unique spaces where fashion, passion, and craftsmanship intersect, and find inspiration in their curated collections.

With thanks to our **fashion ambassadors:**

Boetiek Ruth
Deleye
Duka Moodstore
Jofré
Katastrof
L’heroïne
Lilola
Quicke
The Milky Way
Virgul



COLOPHON

A huge thank you to the full team at Musea Brugge. High Tide is presented by Musea Brugge in collaboration with a wide range of partners.

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Filip Strobbe

Artistic Coordinator, BRUSK
Alan Quireyns

Head of Exhibitions, BRUSK
Lieven De Visch

Guest Curator
Karen Van Godtsenhoven

Curator of Contemporary Art, Musea Brugge
Michel Dewilde

Art Transport Hizkia

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Production Chloroform

Mannequins Bonaveri

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Lighting Chris Pype, Licht

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ABOUT BRUSK

At the heart of the museum quarter in Bruges stands Art gallery BRUSK, a vibrant new cultural destination with global renown that opened its doors this spring. BRUSK offers a space for exceptional exhibitions and activities, where art startles, moves, and provokes thought.

More Than a Museum

BRUSK is an art gallery featuring captivating exhibitions and dynamic events for visitors of all ages. The building, designed by Robbrecht & Daem architecten and Olivier Salens architecten, is a place where creativity, new encounters, and rich experiences constantly intersect. Art is experienced not merely within the exhibition galleries, but also in Bar Brusk, the adjoining BRON research centre, and the museum park. BRUSK is a place where you can view, experience and discuss art. Simultaneously, BRUSK offers dedicated facilities to conserve and research the rich art collection of Musea Brugge in state-of-the-art depots and research spaces.

Looking Outward, Rooted in Bruges

BRUSK stands as an international artistic landmark, deeply rooted in Bruges. Located at the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage City, the exhibition programming frequently draws upon Musea Brugge's rich collection, enriched by key masterpieces, leading figures, and major loans from globally prestigious museums and institutions. BRUSK bridges art and heritage from diverse epochs and continents, interweaving them with contemporary issues. The exhibition programming brings new perspectives to light, encourages critical thought, and invites diverse audiences to engage in dialogue and wonder. Historic and Contemporary Art Under One Roof From loans provided by leading international institutions to new commissions by contemporary artists. An interdisciplinary fusion of visual art and other art forms, including dance, theatre, and music.

BRUSK Is for Everyone

New spaces forge new connections. The art gallery is always alive with activity. Welcoming the young and young-at-heart, inquisitive visitors, art enthusiasts, and casual passers-by. BRUSK is a communal place for all, where vibrant connections take root and evolve into new narratives.



ABOUT MUSEA BRUGGE

A Cultural Experience of the Highest Calibre

As a Flemish cultural heritage organisation, Musea Brugge stands at the forefront of the global heritage sector. Situated within Bruges' Museum Quarter are nine iconic Musea Brugge sites: the Belfort, the Groeningemuseum, the Gruuthusemuseum, the O.L.V.-kerk Museum, the Museum Sint-Janshospitaal, the Stadhuis, the Brugse Vrije, the BRON research centre, and Art Gallery BRUSK. A little further on is the Silent Quarter, with another four museums: the Volkskundemuseum, Sint-Janshuismolen, Gezellehuis and O.L.V. ter Potterie.

Every year, Musea Brugge receives nearly one million visitors, 80% of whom come from abroad. Visitors come from far and wide for its impressive collections and monuments and its outstanding exhibitions that combine the city's rich history with contemporary artistic expression. Musea Brugge are dynamic places that prompt reflection and dialogue – with each other, with the collection and museums, and with national and international partners.



LOOK AHEAD

'High Tide' may be this autumn's flagship exhibition, but BRUSK is also establishing itself as a key venue for the Bruges Triennial 2027, the international architecture and arts festival, and as a temporary home for masterworks from the Groeninge collection.

THE GROENINGE COLLECTION

The Art of Looking

12.03.2027 - 30.06.2031

While the Groeningemuseum undergoes renovation, key masterworks from the collection are moving to the neighbouring BRUSK. Over the next four years, the exhibition gallery will serve as a sanctuary for the absolute highlights of the Groeninge collection. Within Art Gallery BRUSK, these masterworks break out of their classic museum setting to unfold in a wealth of new meanings. Not merely on account of their art-historical significance, but because they continue to stir profound reactions today: wonder, tension, doubt, recognition, and disquiet. At BRUSK, Musea Brugge focuses not merely on the traditional canon accompanied by definitive art-historical commentary from experts, but on the living encounter between artwork and viewer.

BRUGES TRIENNIAL 2027

After Birth: Structures of Togetherness

24.04.2027 - 05.09.2027

With the theme 'After Birth: Structures of Togetherness', TRIBRU27 explores what connects us as living beings. The theme unfolds through a series of chapters that highlight different facets of life, each departing from structures that have connected people for centuries. The Bruges Triennial 2027 seeks to foster encounters, togetherness and exchange. During the international architecture and visual arts festival, the second chapter of the exhibition will take place at BRUSK: Registration.

Our art gallery will become the festival hub of TRIBRU27, featuring three interventions in and around BRUSK. Visual artist Theaster Gates (b. 1973, Chicago, US) will present a new art installation in the large exhibition hall, which will exceptionally be open to the public free of charge every day. In addition, new work by Sammy Baloji (b. 1978, Lubumbashi, CD) will be presented on the site, while BRUSK will serve as the base for a new participatory artwork by Sandi Hilal / DAAR (b. 1973, Beit Sahour, PS).

BRUSK

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