

PRESS FILE

L'Aire d'un Souffle

Ann Veronica Janssens

Michel François

EXHIBITION IN HONOUR OF THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**The
Artists'
Parliament**

Contemporary Art in Public Space
Esplanade Solidarność, 1050 Brussels

Table of Contents

The Artists' Parliament project p.4

'L'Aire d'un Souffle' Exhibition p.5-6

Ann Veronica Janssens p.7-9

Michel François p.10-12

Programme p.13

Useful Information p.14

The Artists' Parliament

The Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations and the European Parliament have launched an exhibition project showcasing contemporary artists of the countries holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This project will start during the Belgian presidency in January 2024 and continue in July 2024 with the Hungarian presidency.

Following a call for tenders, independent curator Joël Benzakin was selected to curate the exhibition for the years 2024 and 2025. The curator's choice of artists is based on the quality of the proposed works and whether or not these can be installed in a public space, namely the Esplanade Solidarność in front of the European Parliament. What's more, the chosen artists must not only be well-known in their country but also, if possible, have an international reputation.

As both an open-air space which Parliament can use for communication purposes and an access route to the European district and its institutions, Parliament's Esplanade provides a physical link between the city, its inhabitants and the EU.

For a number of years, Parliament has been gradually developing the Brussels Visitors' Campus.

Parliament has expanded and improved the visitor facilities to meet the various needs and demands in order to make the site more attractive.

Setting aside part of the Esplanade for long-term art exhibitions is in line with this ambition.

This is why the Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations and the European Parliament wish to showcase the artists and rich cultural heritage of the countries holding the rotating Council presidency through a bi-annual exhibition on the Esplanade.

L'Aire d'un Souffle

This joint work is unique and takes the form of a long grid erected on a floor made up of concrete blocks. This floor and the grid, whose gaps match the size of the concrete blocks, are completely silver. There is a large hole in the top half of the grid, making it seem like a blast of air has opened up a passage in the mesh wiring.

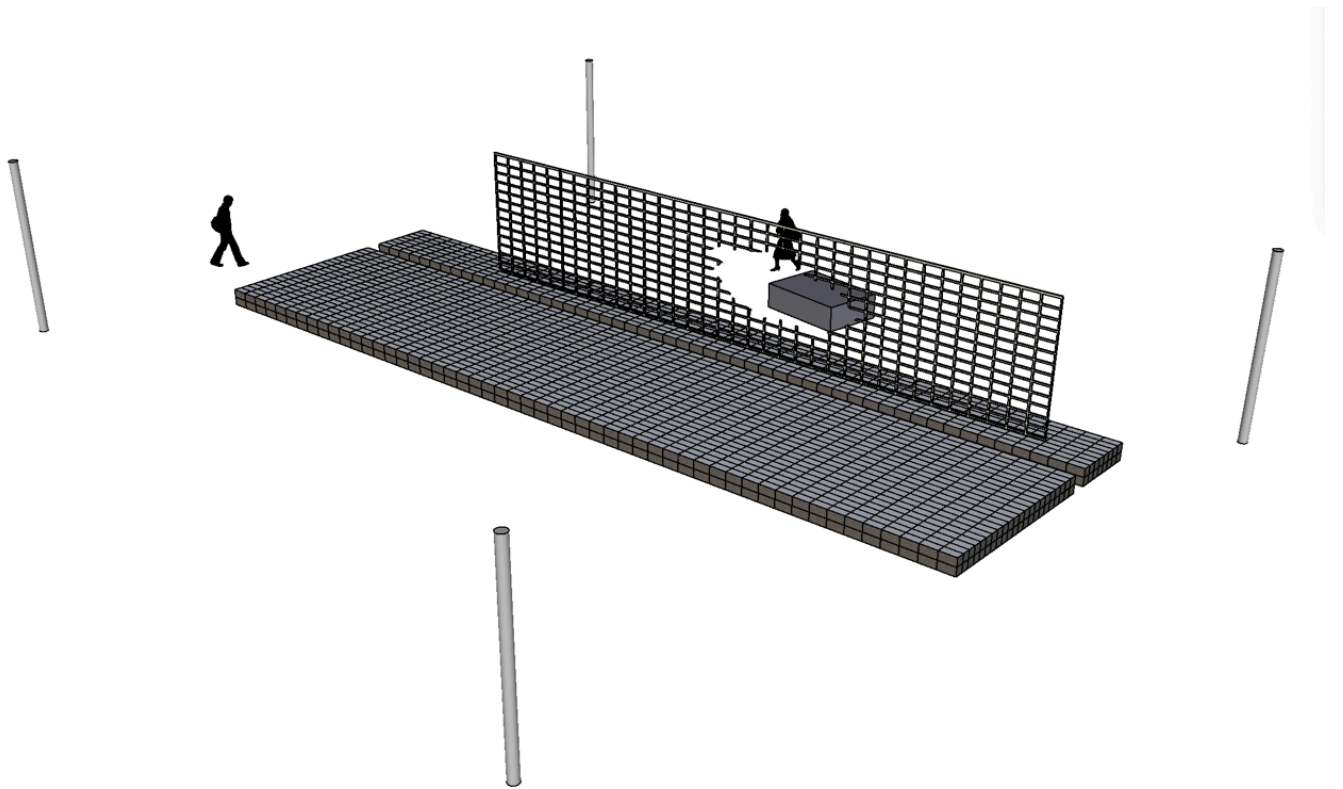
The sculpture *L'Aire d'un Souffle* ('The space of a breath') is the work of two artists. This piece of art takes the form of a completely openwork visual barrier, meaning that we are able to see through and beyond its porous boundary. This grid, through which we can observe the surrounding urban landscape, forms a kind of insurmountable obstacle, a border that can be interpreted in different ways. We can only cross it with our eyes, which are symbolically confronted with the sight of a blast, the origin of which is also open to interpretation.

This grid is perched on a territory of its own; a raised platform separate from the ground of the Esplanade, which invites the public to step up onto it and thus alter their perspective. Our attention is also drawn to this floor that supports and prolongs the grid, as its horizontal grid-like pattern is suddenly interrupted by a long narrow gap. This defined area becomes a space in itself, a field of action in which the public can move around, experiment and interact.

Since the Renaissance period, the grid has played a fundamental role in Western art as a model for organising space. But it was not until the twentieth century that the grid became an aesthetic form in its own right. Although it has been used in different ways in recent years (textile weave, graphic grid, computer matrix, narrative and documentary device), the grid has now emerged as a complex and ambiguous structure, which is evocative of the rational order of science and simultaneously unlocks hitherto untapped avenues for imagination, intuition and creativity.

What is being proposed here then is an additional space, an area that will become part of the public realm in the Esplanade Solidarność. In one gust of air, this installation highlights the vulnerability of issues that are important to Europe, all the while retaining its integrity as a piece of art that inherently eludes any overly literal interpretation and therefore has many different meanings.

L'Aire d'un Souffle



Simulation of L'Aire d'un Souffle, by Ann Veronica Janssens and Michel François, 2023.

Ann Veronica Janssens

Born in 1956 in Folkstone (United Kingdom), she lives and works in Brussels (Belgium).

Since the late 1970s, Ann Veronica Janssens has been developing experimental work that emphasizes in situ installations and the use of very simple or intangible materials, such as light, sound or artificial fog. The observer is confronted with the notion of the 'elusive' and an ephemeral experience in which they go beyond the threshold of clear, controlled vision. One experiences a loss of control, instability and fragility, be it visual, physical, temporal or psychological.

Ann Veronica Janssens' work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at internationally renowned institutions, including the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk (2020); the South London Gallery (2020); the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris (2019); the Baltimore Museum of Art, the De Pont Museum in Tilburg, the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki (2018); the Institute of Contemporary Art – Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes (2017); the Nasher Sculpture Centre in Dallas (2016); the Wellcome Collection in London (2015); the Kunsthalle Münster, the CRAC Alsace – Rhine Centre for Contemporary Art in Altkirch (2011); the WIELS in Brussels, the Contemporary Art Space of Castellón (2009); the Morsbroich Museum in Leverkusen (2007); the Kunsthalle Bern; the Musée d'Orsay in Paris; the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco (2003); the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin (2001).

The artist participated in major international exhibitions, including the Sharjah Biennale 14 (2019); the Manifest 10, Saint Petersburg (2014); the Sydney Biennale (1998 and 2012); the Lyon Biennale (2005); and São Paulo Biennale (1994) – as well as group exhibitions in institutions such as the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna; the SMAK in Ghent; the Grand Palais in Paris; the Punta della Dogana in Venice (2019); the Hayward Gallery in London (2018); the Mudam in Luxembourg, the Sprengel Museum in Hannover, the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Buenos Aires (2015); the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2014); the Juan Miró Foundation in Barcelona (2013).

In 1999, she represented Belgium with Michel François at the 48th Venice Biennale.

Ann Veronica Janssens



Ann Veronica Janssens, *Blue, Red and Yellow*, 2001



Ann Veronica Janssens, *Magic Mirrors Pink #2 and Blue*, 2013-2017

Ann Veronica Janssens



Ann Veronica Janssens, *Untitled*, 2019-2021



Ann Veronica Janssens, *ODRRE HAS NO IPMROTNCAE [odrze is umnirotnat]*, 2012

Michel François

Born in 1956 in Sint-Truiden (Belgium), he lives and works in Brussels (Belgium).

Through sculpture, photography, video and installations, Michel François seizes, challenges and questions a reality that he has long been accustomed to exploring as a nomad. From reality, Michel François extracts, reframes and repositions fragments, zooms in on situations, freezes moments which, when brought to light, convey the subjectivity of the individual, establish their singularity and demonstrate how they cannot be reduced to uniform patterns and models.

His work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions, including the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham; the CRAC in Sète; the CCC in Tours; the IAC in Villeurbanne, the SMAK in Ghent, the MACS in Grand Hornu, the De Pont Museum in Tilburg; the CCA in Kitakyushu; the Vox in Montreal; the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon; the Kunstverein in Münster; the Kunsthalle Bern; the Haus der Kunst in Munich; the Witte de With in Rotterdam; the Miró Foundation in Barcelona; the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

He has also participated in numerous important group exhibitions, namely at the Centre Pompidou-Metz; the Taipei Fine Arts Museum; the documenta IX; the Mamco in Geneva; the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels; the Casino and the Mudam in Luxembourg; as well as in different biennales, such as the ones in Istanbul, Seoul and Johannesburg.

In 1999, he represented Belgium with Ann Veronica Janssens at the 48th Venice Biennale.

Michel François

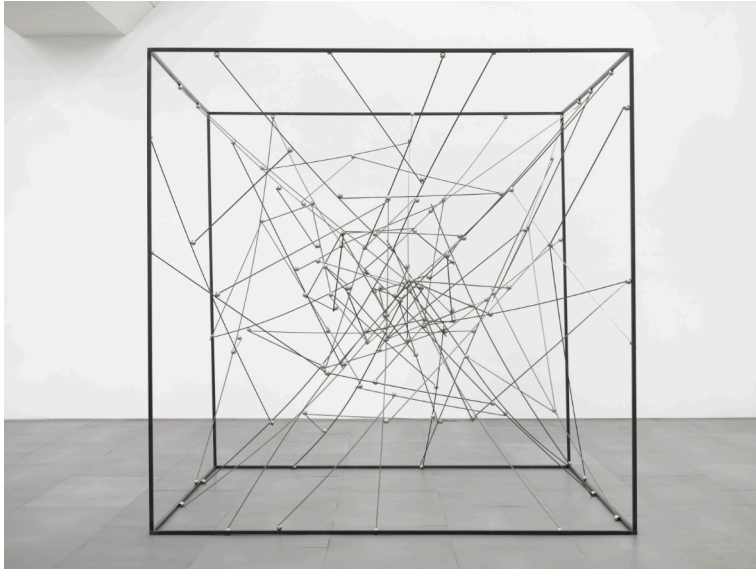


Michel François, *Interface Pavillon*, 2010

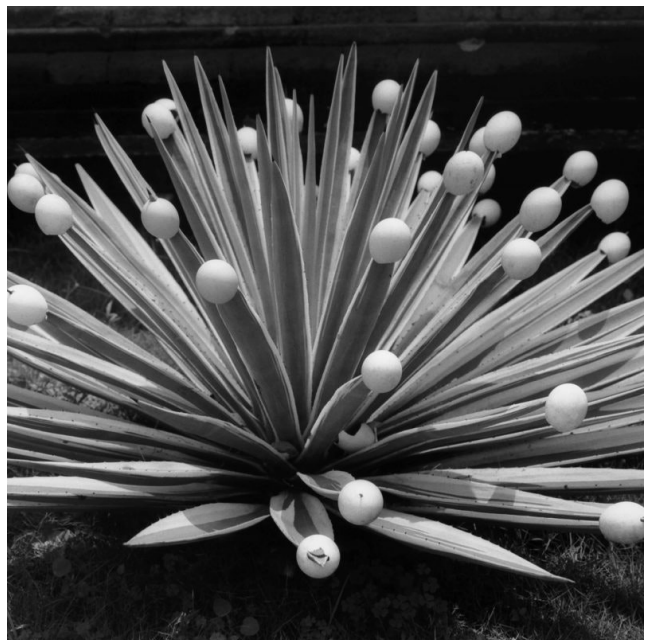


Michel François, *Expirations in glass (black)*, 2002

Michel François



Michel François, *Spare Parts*, 2010



Michel François, *Cactus eggs*, 1998

Programme

The Artists' Parliament X KANAL 16.02.2024

To mark the partnership between KANAL – Centre Pompidou and The Artists' Parliament, 'L'Aire d'un Souffle' will be exhibited at an event, which the artists will also attend, on 16 February 2024 in Kanal's K1 building. The programme for the event will be announced shortly.

Future Exhibitions

July > December 2024

Exhibition in honour of the Hungarian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

January > June 2025

Exhibition in honour of the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union.

July > December 2025

Exhibition in honour of the Danish presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Useful Information

L'Aire d'un Souffle

Public artwork by Ann Veronica Janssens and Michel François

From 10 January to 10 June 2024

Esplanade Solidarność
1050 Ixelles

Contacts

Curatorial Team

Joël Benzakin
Curator and Project Coordinator
joelbenzakin@hotmail.com
+32 483 46 29 94

Jeanne Mouffe
Assistant curator
jmouffe@hotmail.fr
+32 485 18 09 08

European Parliament Press Inquiries

Joana Hostein
joana.hostein@europarl.europa.eu
+32 497 26 57 39

Danai Deblaere
danai.deblaere@europarl.europa.eu
+32 473 68 70 41

The Artists' Parliament is an initiative of the Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations for the Brussels Capital Region in partnership with the European Parliament.



