



## In Between Utopia and Failure

25/11/20 – 09/12/20

The exhibition *Omnia Communia Deserta* by Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor offers a reflection on architecture in relation to ideologies, politics, and public space. Following on from these problematics, the public programme ***In Between Utopia and Failure*** aims to resituate the issues present in the exhibition within the local context of Brussels. Throughout a **live-stream series of events**—including film screenings and talks—the online programme will address the Belgian capital's socio-political situation, ranging from its relationship to the past and its intensive post-war urban development, to its inherently political and international character.

The modernisation process that took place in Brussels in the 1960s—as well as the ideological agenda that powered it—bears similarities to the following decade, the 1970s, in Romania. Guided by a common conception of progress, Ceaușescu intensified his megalomaniac programme of systematization and other intensive urban planning projects. While the ideological origins of the modifications inflicted upon Brussels and Bucharest appear to be antinomic, the resulting upheaval in each city is similar. In Brussels, the implantation of “Manhattan” (an area comprising mainly high-rise buildings) as part of an urban regeneration plan now known as “Brusselization”, clearly illustrates western capitalism's prevalence and reach, whereas Bucharest's socialist programme was guided by nationalistic intentions, and therefore constituted an address to the romanian people themselves.

What do we inherit from the ruins of these utopias? How can we apprehend the chasm between the grandiloquence of their origins and their fall? How are we to behave within these spaces today? What progress is still possible? Over the course of four chapters, the programme will endeavor to rethink and discuss the concept of modernity in a decompartmentalized and global manner, using artistic, philosophical, and socio-political proposals as a framework.

*In Between Utopia and Failure* unfolds as four chapters exploring the similarities that exist between two distinct contexts and their consequences. The programme begins on **November 25**, during the final week of the exhibition, and will hone in on Bucharest's history, and the concepts of ruins and modernity through the prism of Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor's work. On **December 3**, the film *WTC A Love Story* will be projected, using fiction as a means to depict the failure of a modernist dream that took place in Brussels, focussing on the people in power as well as contemporary concerns inherited from a fallen utopia. On **December 8**, Ludovic Lamant, author of *Bruxelles chantiers*, will moderate the evening alongside projections of Jef Cornelis' *Alice In Wonderland* as well as a documentary about the developer, Charlie De Pauw. This encounter aims to offer a critical approach to certain political architectural planning schemes influenced by power structures at

the cost of quality of life in urban areas. The programme will come to a close on **December 9** with a screening of films by Herman Asselberghs, Emma van der Put, and Maria Tarantino (online): three works that confront modernity's shortcomings in a poetical manner. In response to the attempts to fill the gaps of an erased collective memory—as evoked in the work of Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor—this evening moderated by Gery Leloutre aims to open up a dialogue on the possible ways in which we can live in urban spaces, and touches upon the notion of “demodernizing” the public space.

This programme was conceived by La Loge in partnership with [ARGOS](#), **centre for audiovisual arts, Brussels** and with the support of the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC).

### **PROGRAMME**

#### **MY BELOVED BUCHAREST**

**25.11.2020**

**7pm**

*In Between Utopia and Failure* will start with ***My Beloved Bucharest***, an event dedicated to the notions of ruins and modernity in works by Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor. Film screening will be followed by a videoconference with Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor, and Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, moderated by Vlad Ionescu.

#### **Screening of *Gagarin's Tree*, a film by Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor, 2016, 22min50**

An interview with philosopher Ovidiu Țichindeleanu engages issues of space exploration, imagination and propaganda in the socialist utopia, the post-communist condition as liberal colonisation, linked —as Ovidiu Țichindeleanu proposes—to other sites of decolonisation through a new historical consciousness.

### **Biographies**

**Vlad Ionescu** (°1978) is associate professor in the theory of art and architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and Arts (Hasselt University)/ PXL MAD School of Arts. Currently he is working on the relationship between art and architecture, more precisely on a history of artists who have involved into architecture and architects that experimented with fine arts. He previously studied philosophy of art at the University of Leuven where he defended his thesis on modern art historiography. He explores the effects of contemporary landscape in modern art. Besides publishing on Deleuze's interpretation, he co-translated and co-edited the writings of Lyotard in a series of volumes published by Leuven University Press (2009-2013). His research has been published in various edited volumes and in the *Journal of Art Historiography*, *ARS*, *Art History Supplement*, *Deleuze Studies*, *Architectural Histories*, *A+* and *Cultural Politics*.

**Ovidiu Țichindeleanu** (°1976) is a philosopher and culture theorist living in Chișinău and Cluj, writing on critical social theory, decolonial thought, alternative epistemologies, and the cultural history of postcommunism. Țichindeleanu studied

philosophy in Cluj-Napoca (Babes-Bolyai University), Strasbourg (Marc Bloch University) and Binghamton (State University of New York) where he gained a PhD in philosophy with the thesis *The Graphic Sound: An Archeology of Sound, Technology and Knowledge at 1900* (2009). He co-founded the independent journal *Philosophy & Stuff* (1997-2001), the Romanian *Indymedia* platform in 2004, the Romanian left-wing site *CriticAtac* (2010), and the Eastern European left-wing political platform, *LeftEast* (2013). Țichindeleanu is a collection coordinator for the *IDEA* Publishing House in Cluj- Napoca and works for the Centre for the Study of Modernity and the Rural World in Telciu. He is a co-editor of *The Anticommunist Illusion* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2008), *Romanian Revolution Televised: Contributions to the Cultural History of Media* (with Konrad Petrovsky, IDEA, 2009/2011) and the author of *Contracultură: rudimente de filosofie critică [Counterculture. Thoughts on Critical Philosophy]* (IDEA, 2016). He translated into Romanian books by Silvia Federici, Sylvia Marcos, Walter Dignolo, Arturo Escobar, Lewis Gordon, Immanuel Wallerstein, Ivan Illich, Gilles Deleuze and Peter Sloterdijk. He was a member of the Governing Board of the El Taller International NGO. He participated in the 51st Venice Biennale (2005), Documenta 12 (2007), U-Turn (Copenhagen 2008).

**Mona Vătămanu** (°1968) & **Florin Tudor** (°1974) have been collaborating since 2001, producing mixed-media installations, actions, and videos through which they approach the traumatic legacy of communism in their native Romania and Eastern Europe, while confronting the on-going challenge of how to process history. While the Socialist past is the focus of most of their evocative installations and atmospheric films, Vătămanu and Tudor also find connections between the history they know intimately and struggles worldwide. Solo exhibitions include *Metalurgica* (collaboration with Martin Zet); *Magma* (2019); *Profile*, 64th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (2018); *stones, too, feel*, Neue Galerie, Innsbruck (2017); *What seems to be still alive is the power of that dream to bring people together and to create another history*, Future Museum /Czech Center, Bucharest (2016); *I do not know the real story which happens there*, Argos Centre for Arts and Media, Brussels (2014); *I dreamt the work of another artist*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2013); *Surplus Value*, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht (2009).

#### **WTC A LOVE STORY**

**03.12.2020**

**7pm**

Within the context of Brussels, using a concrete example of a modernist utopia and the attempts to rehabilitate it, the movie *WTC A Love Story* explores whose narratives are voiced when the process of political representation is accelerated. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers.

#### **Screening of *WTC A Love Story*, a film by Lietje Bauwens and Wouter De Raeve, 2020, 61min**

In the 1970s, the populous neighbourhood around Brussels-North Station was destroyed to make room for "Little Manhattan", a modernist dream with the two World Trade Centre towers as its crown jewels. The project failed, leaving the towers and

surrounding area largely abandoned. In 2017, the private owners and politicians joined forces to redynamise the area. But for whom? Who are the actors? And what is a public space? Fearing that history might repeat itself, Lietje Bauwens and Wouter De Raeve decided to enter the debate by making a film with the actors that claim a voice in the transition. Taking the WTC towers as its object, the film investigates contemporary urban redevelopment processes, and traces the influx of new ecological and participatory ideas and their actual impact

### **Biographies**

**Lietje Bauwens** (°1990) studied philosophy, writes for different cultural platforms, and was artist in residence at the Van Eyck academy 2018–19. **Wouter De Raeve** (°1982) studied landscape architecture and visual arts and produced several lecture series, publications and installations. They work together under the name 431. Besides WTC A Love Story, they have initiated other research projects such as Swamp and Permanent.

### **BRUSSELS, THE FALL OF IDEOLOGY**

**08.12.2020**

**7pm**

Alienation induced by the policies behind the projects that transformed Brussels will be the subject of a critical development and a discussion with Ludovic Lamant, alongside the screenings of two documentaries. In his book *Bruxelles chantiers, Une critique architecturale de l'Europe* (2018) Lamant analyses the architectural calamity of the European Quarter and reveals the failures which led a hopeful political project to become a bureaucratic machine. In light of the dispossession and alienation caused by modern architectural and urban planning projects, it is to be asked: what action can be taken now regarding these political programmes that have wiped out neighbourhoods and living spaces?

### **Screening of *Charlie De Pauw: promoteur, a documentary* by Charles Lebrun, 1983, 21min**

This documentary portrays Charlie De Pauw (1920–1984), a real estate developer, builder of the much-discredited World Trade Center in Brussels. "You mustn't kill the rich or the poor will die" stated the businessman. Charlie de Pauw is linked to the phenomenon of the Brusselization, and was the driving force behind the Manhattan plan, which transformed the North Quarter from a working-class neighbourhood into a high-rise area.

### **Screening of *Waarover men niet spreekt 2 : Alice in Wonderland, a film* by Jef Cornelis, 1986, 34min**

This documentary was part of the television series *Waarover men niet spreekt* (*What is left unspoken*) for the BRT (Belgian radio and television broadcast network), and belongs to Cornelis' early films on architecture. Based on a scenario by Geert Bekaert, the movie is an attack on the alienation induced by town planning. In the monotonous suburbs, life dies away and boredom rules. The city centres are depopulated and dead. The community spirit is not stressed and the individual does not find expression. Modern town planning has not yet been able to give an answer to the problem of our dying cities.

## **Biographies**

**Jef Cornelis'** (1941-2018) practice is primarily a dissection of television itself, the very medium in which he worked. In 1963, after studying set design and film direction at the Netherlands' Film Academy in Amsterdam, Jef Cornelis began his career as a director for the Arts Division of BRT Television in Flanders, which would later become VRT broadcasting. Cornelis' extensive body of work interweaves varying focal points, principles and techniques on the relationship between visual art and television, including films on modern art, architecture and the Flemish landscape. His documentaries look beyond the historical information and the nostalgic anecdote in order to present effective essentials.

**Ludovic Lamant** (°1983) is a French journalist who worked for Reuters and *Cahiers du Cinéma* before joining *Mediapart*, a french digital and independent media, where he specialises on international economic issues such as the subprime crisis, the European Union, and the development of countries in the Southern Hemisphere. He is the author of *Squatter le pouvoir, Les mairies rebelles d'Espagne* (Lux, 2016), and *Bruxelles chantiers, Une critique architecturale de l'Europe* (Lux, 2018).

### **INHABITING THE IMPASSE OF MODERNITY**

**9.12.2020**

**7pm**

The urban landscape of Brussels is a spectacle of contrasts and paradoxes: "a body convulsed by hysteria" as described by Gery Leloutre. How can we inhabit the chaos resulting from the transformations that occurred in the post-war period and that made a lasting imprint on collective consciousness? With the films *Mall of Europe* by the artist Emma van der Put—that revisits the 1958 Brussels World's Fair—and *Altogether* by Herman Asselberghs, this fourth and last chapter of the programme aims to give a contemporary outline of the heritage left by modernist utopias, and explores how the impasse of modernity can now be inhabited. The event will be complemented by the online screening of *Our City* by Maria Tarantino.

#### **Screening of *Altogether*, a film by Herman Asselberghs, 2008, 17min**

"The future is dark which is, on the whole, the best thing the future can be, I think." With this observation as a starting-point, *Altogether* fully acknowledges the ideological impasse of the post 68-era. The symbolic presence of flags and historical buildings, and of maintaining (national) capitals as such has become arguable; projected into the (near) future, they appear in a most uncertain light, and the cinematographic language underlines this: fragmented and associative, shot in black and white, the video shows sketchy images of urban scenery, some of them shot with a moving cell-phone camera on a car ride through Brussels. But what we actually see is a shadowy abstraction of a city which gives the impression of a negative space whose virtual character is no longer theorised using a voice-over, but can be found in the image itself. There is no speech, only sound. Approaching its climax, the film advances towards the



collapse of the visible, leaving the viewer "locked in" inside the current situation: fully aware of the (uncertain) future to come, wondering whether he or she will be capable of exerting any influence on it.

**Screening of *Mall of Europe*, a film by Emma van der Put, 2018, 26min**

*Mall of Europe* is a reflection on the current Brussels Expo area, where in the past two World Fairs were held. Built as a stage for representing the "state of the world", Expo '58 was displaying ideal ways of living and hopes for a prosperous future made possible by technology. Now echoes of these ideas can be found in the still inhabited modernist "Model Neighbourhood". Current plans for the modernization of the Brussels Expo area, which are ought to be completed in 2021, will add a new chapter to the thinking about an ideal society.

**ONLINE screening of *Our City*, a film by Maria Tarantino, 2014, 83min**

This is Brussels, the capital of Europe, a city of concrete cages wrapped in glass, planned by businessmen and politicians, set in motion by construction workers, and animated by office people. But there, in the narrow spaces just beyond the reach of bureaucracy, lies the Brussels that still breathes. You can hear its multicultural heart beating and see the traces of all the other cities, the ones each person carries within him/herself. All of us together add up to create the complex body and dissonant identity of *Our City*.

**Biographies**

**Herman Asselberghs** (°1962) is a Brussels-based visual artist, filmmaker and mediacritic whose work focuses on the questioning of complex relationship and border areas between sound and image, world and media, poetry and politics. He occasionally publishes on film and visual culture and teaches at the film department of Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel. In 2006, he founded the Brussels-based production and distribution platform Auguste Orts together with Sven Augustijnen, Manon de Boer and Anouk De Clercq.

**Gery Leloutre** (°1979) is an architect (Horta Institute for Architecture, Brussels, 2002), urban planner (KULeuven, 2006) in Brussels, and active in the design office Karbon' that he co-created in 2008. As a leading professor at the ULB Faculty of Architecture, he's combining an architectural practice with an in-depth theoretical reflexion about the city. He completed a doctoral thesis, jointly with the ULB and the IUAV in Venice, on the modus operandi of city building in Brussels in the middle of the 20th century. He continues to reflect on Brussels and urban planning, sharing his insights in an integrated way through a combination of teaching, conducting research and article writing, and practice.

**Maria Tarantino** (°1972) studied philosophy in Scotland and Italy before settling down in Belgium, where she gradually moves from philosophy to journalism. In Brussels she works for the press, radio and television for several years. It's her program for the VRT about young documentary-makers from all over the world (*The World of Tarantino*) that inspires her to quit journalism for

cinema. In 2009, Maria Tarantino sets up the production house WILDUNDOMESTICATED and begins the adventure of the feature-length documentary *Our City*, which has been completed five years later.

**Emma van der Put's** (°1988) videos create fleeting impressions of reality and frictions between movement and frozen moments. Without any apparent narrative structures, her recent work has focused on public spaces, and the confrontation between what was an optimistic, modernist conception of the future, and the contemporary reality of Brussels, where she has worked since 2014. She studied at AKV St. Joost, 's-Hertogenbosch (2006–2010) and was a participant at De Ateliers in Amsterdam (2010–2012). She was an artist in residence at Lokaal 01, Antwerp (2014) and at WIELS, Brussels (2014). Recent shows and screenings include: *Mu.ZEE*, Ostend (2020); *Atelierhaus Klingental*, Basel (2019); *A Tale of a Tub*, Rotterdam (2018) and Antwerp Art Weekend (2017).

### **Practical information**

**The events will be livestreamed.**

**The link will be forwarded before the event if you registered.**

**Please register here: [www.eventbrite.be/o/la-loge-30292559902](http://www.eventbrite.be/o/la-loge-30292559902)**

Language: English

Visit our website [www.la-loge.be](http://www.la-loge.be) for further information and our upcoming programme.

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La Loge is a privately initiated non-profit association founded by architect Philippe Rotthier. La Loge is supported by Philippe Rotthier Foundation, the Flemish Government, and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organisations.