

TRIENNALE
BRUGGE 2015

20 MAY

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Song Dong, Wu Wei Er Wei (Doing Nothing Doing) St Salvator Cathedral

The Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015 brings the theme of the metropolis to the small, preserved medieval core of Bruges. The Chinese artist Song Dong narrows in on the tension between the unstoppable growth of megapolises and the antithetical needs of heritage and nature. An unbridled building boom is underway in his own country, resulting in the demolition of historic buildings and entire neighbourhoods. For Bruges, Song Dong installed a rock garden with a miniature landscape made of old, salvaged Chinese windows. Above the sculpture, neon letters spell out 'Doing Nothing'.

Wu Wei Er Wei

Song Dong installed a Chinese rock garden in front of St Salvator Cathedral, with a miniature mountain landscape in the style of a bonsai sculpture. The work is constructed from scrap material: windows from historic buildings that fell victim to the wrecking ball to make way for the uncontainable sprawl of yet another megapolis.

The installation neatly sums up the contradictions inherent in contemporary urbanism. On the one hand, the garden references traditional Chinese Penjing gardens, which feature trees, rocks, plants and landscapes in miniature form. On the other hand, the material used points to the ruthless advance of urbanisation in China, where heritage is destroyed with hardly a murmur of protest. Historic palaces, temples and entire neighbourhoods are being demolished to make way for skyscrapers and shopping centres. The location of the artwork, beside the centuries-old cathedral, raises questions about this attitude to heritage.

The tension between transience and the desire to preserve is a recurring theme in Song Dong's work. His piece for Bruges smuggles in the subject of nature conservation. This is a reflection of the artist's interest in Chinese philosophy and Taoism. One of its key concepts is that of wu wei: symbiosis with the forces of nature. Wu wei means 'non action', a passive, meditative form of being one with nature. The words Doing Nothing that appear above the sculpture in large neon letters are a reference to this concept. But they are also ambiguous: is Song Dong's installation an impotent meditation on cherishing one's heritage? Or an indictment of the disrespectful, aggressive development of new cities?

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Bio Song Dong

Song Dong (°1966, Beijing, CN) grew up in a prosperous, traditional family that was plunged into poverty by economic and social developments in China. During the Cultural Revolution, his father was placed in a re-education camp. Dong trained as a painter at the Capital Normal University's faculty of arts in Beijing. Following the events that occurred in Tiananmen Square in 1989, he cut short his training and started experimenting with performance and video, often in collaboration with his wife, the artist Yin Xiuzhen.

Dong's work reflects on the instability of existence and the transience of human endeavour. His personal family history, the politico-cultural history of China and the profound changes that urban Beijing is undergoing are all recurring themes in his work. Beijing has become a megapolis that is swallowing up its own past but the couple salvage fragments of it to process in their art installations.

Artworks by Song Dong were recently on show in Europe during documenta (13) in 2012 and during the Venice Biennial in 2011.

www.pacegallery.com/artists/446/song-dong

Visitor information

20.05 - 18.10.2015

In front of Sint-Salvator Cathedral

24/7 te bekijken

#WUWEIERWEI

Further press information

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Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015 20 May – 18 October 2015

What if the five million tourists who visit Bruges annually were to stay? What if a small, preserved, historic city should suddenly become a megapolis? This is the premise for the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015. Eighteen international artists create new works that form an art trail through the city centre. Three indoor exhibitions provide the opportunity to further explore and contextualise the topics. Bruges will be transformed into Egg Urb: the Triennial cracks the Bruges 'egg' in order to reinvent the city from the inside out.

Information and programme: www.triennalebrugge.be

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