

EXPO - GHENT

Filip Berte / CAMPO

EUTOPIA CREATION

PROTECTED LANDSCAPE / COLLECTIVE MEMORY MASS GRAVE

30.04 - 23.05.2009

BRUXELLES / BRUSSEL / BRUSSELS

KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS

Conception & réalisation /
Concept & realisatie / Concept &
realization
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Production / Productie
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Coproduction / Coproductie
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Kunstenfestivaldesarts*

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*Yes or No
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Ameziane*

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Christiaens, Lydia Asbestaris*

**LA CENTRALE ELECTRIQUE /
DE ELEKTRICITEITSCENTRALE
23/04 > 24/05**

**Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
10:30 - 18:00**

*Meet the artist
Fri/Sat/Sun/Holidays
14:00 - 18:00*

*eutopia.be
eutopia.be/pixelpost_v1.7.1/*

FILIP BERTE ON EUTOPIA

Eutopia is a visual project I started in 2006 as part of Victoria's *De Bank'*, in which Europe is my principal area of work and study. My visual work is mainly based on the intuitive study of the geographic, political, historic and cultural European entity, rather than the academic view of these matters.

The ultimate aim of *Eutopia* is to build a house on the symbolically charged territory of the European District in Brussels; the *House of Eutopia*, or the construction of an architectural *Gesamtkunstwerk* spread over several years.

The starting point here is an empty Brussels/European plot, in the centre of which I draw the archetypal skeleton structure of a house with a cellar and three storeys. The rest of the land around the house will be the cemetery of *Eutopia*.

The various storeys of the house correspond to rooms, each of which represents its own story and, through its form and ultimate purpose, achieves a balance between architecture and expressive sculpture. The rooms are installations that are open to the public.

While we wait for a building site to become available for the total assemblage, the *House of Eutopia* is presented in the form of finished components or rooms. The principle that applies here is that of *pars pro toto*: each component already contains the essence of the whole.

Protected Landscape (2007) is the first room to be built in the *House of Utopia* and is located slightly above ground level. The visitor is invited to cross the threshold, to enter and follow a path through familiar, occasionally archetypal landscapes so that he can form his own view of the themes they symbolise: migration, the protection and control of Europe's internal and external borders, asylum policy and the process of European integration.

Both the personal stories from my interviews and the broader collective story, plus opinions and documents (including law texts) from various information sources, are all collected as a single multi-dimensional image in *Protected Landscape*.

So *Protected Landscape* is the first room of the house to have actually been built, and can be found at ground level on the future construction site in the European quarter in Brussels. The room is only

partly conceived of as an internal room in the house. This is because a section of it extends into the garden or cemetery of the *Eutopia*-site and is therefore in part a covered garden room (see overall location sketch).

Protected Landscape can be seen as a visual installation in the form of an enclosed space in which several “landscapes” are created on different scales. The scale of the landscapes varies from 1:1, which is a space built on a human scale (room, door, window, chair, table, bed, grave) to the scale of a model, ranging from 1:20 to 1:700,000. On this scale, flows of migration are shown alongside mass migration, geographical and political boundaries, and architectural incarnations of control, power, protectionism and defence. By taking a simple route that he is free to choose, the visitor to *Protected Landscape* can move forward in the various landscapes both visually and spatially, as well as mentally. As already mentioned, the landscapes arise out of a crossing of the various themes related to immigration, emigration, asylum (and asylum policy), the supervision of and protectionism regarding Europe’s external borders, security, European integration and transgression. The approaches are international, trans-national and European, and individual and existential.

Protected Landscape is intended to be more than just a depiction of - or an exact reproduction or mapping of - the various players and processes in the field of international migration. The different landscapes each shed light on another facet of the complex tangle of related themes. The differing approaches are made possible by bringing the landscapes together in one and the same enclosed space, depending on the perspective in which the visitor views it. Like *Eutopia* in general, *Protected Landscape* is not intended to impose a single view, but to make varied interpretations possible by letting the visitor hear several voices or see several views at the same time.

In other words, the aim of, and what I wish to achieve with, *Protected Landscape* is to drop the visitor like a walking eye and a reflective being into an abstract and complex three-dimensional map that involves him (emotionally), lets him participate in the discourse (in either real or virtual terms), perhaps leads him to choose one side or take up a position, or which encourages introspection, reflection or conversation.

Collective Memory Mass Grave is the second room and also the cellar of the *House of Eutopia*. This room is located under *Protected Landscape* and embodies the theme of “Europe’s collective memory”. As it is an underground foundation, it occupies a crucial position in *Eutopia*. Whereas *Protected Landscape*, with its focus on migration and mobility, visualises aspects of movement from, in and to the European continent, here we consider the location of Europe itself. As a metaphorical starting point I ascribe the concepts of the mass grave and the unconscious to the territory of Europe: the soil is excavated forensically and the unconscious and hidden collective memory psychoanalytically exposed. The ultimate aim of the installation is to draw a “psycho-geographic map” or *Memorial Territory* of Europe and to make the ephemeral nature of the collective memory physically tangible.

In concrete terms, this results in the creation of *Memorial Images*; the often repressed mental pictures which I dig up from the darkness of the European past and reproduce as a painting, drawing or diorama. Afterwards, I bury the mental images once again in the *Collective Memory Mass Grave* installation. The mass grave will ultimately be open to the public, who can wander through the underground passages and rummage around in the archives. Moreover, everyone can appropriate all of the memories they find there. Indeed, reproductions of all the *Memorial Images* (paintings, models) can be made in the form of a *Memorial Multiple*, and in this way they can once again circulate among a part of the European population. Consequently, the transfer of collective memories is not only limited to the installation itself. Scale models and other *Memorial Images* are available to order.

Collective Memory Gallery is an autonomous part of the project *Collective Memory Mass Grave*. *Memorial Images* are exhibited in a very compact gallery. I have repainted a number of crucial images from the dark European past. These replicas were then reproduced as *Memorial Multiples* (printed in a limited edition) which will be for sale. In this way, the memories will re-enter the public, collective and private domains.

YES OR NO CREATION
MONOLOGUE FOR THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

*Centre Administratif de la Ville de Bruxelles /
Administratief Centrum van de Stad Brussel
Boulevard Anspach 6 Anspachlaan - 1000 Bruxelles / Brussel*

7/05 > 08:30 - 12:30, 13:45 - 15:00, 16:00 - 18:00

8/05 > 08:30 - 12:30, 13:45 - 15:00

Free entrance

The EU constitution - currently called the "Treaty of Lisbon" - is still a catalyst for polemics on the future of Europe. Following the Dutch, French and, more recently, Irish "no" votes against the European constitution, which had a disastrous effect on it, Filip Berte is going to the Administrative Centre of the City of Brussels to hold a highly individual poll; an action midway between a lecture and a performance. From a small, archaic lectern-cum-polling station, the entire text of the Treaty of Lisbon will be read aloud and every passer-by can cast their vote. The result of this vote will be incorporated visually into the next stage of *Eutopia*.

BIO

Filip Berte (°1976) studied architecture at the Institut Sint-Lucas (WENK) in Ghent, and painting at the Ghent Royal Academy of Fine Arts. In 1999, he started out as a freelance architect, working for industrial designer Stijn Roodnat, set designer Bart Clement, architect Dirk Coopman, interior designer Maarten Van Severen and the architectural cooperative NERO. Next to his activities as an architect, he travelled to the Balkans, visiting Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, where he developed his ideas for his current project, the ambitious Eutopia. From January 2006 to late 2007, Filip Berte was in residence at De Bank. In 2006, he collaborated with artist Miet Warlop on the set design for *Mancha! I* and *Mancha! II*. In 2007, he created the set design for Ben Benaouisse's performance, *Katrina, the Residents*. He is currently working on *Collective Memory Mass Grave*, another room - the basement - in the *House of Eutopia*.