Pavilion of Belgium
At the 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

BRAVOURE
Flanders goes to Venice with bravura

In late May, the Biennale Architettura 2016 – the international high mass for contemporary architecture – opens in Venice. The Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) has chosen the BRAVOURE team to create an exhibition in the Belgian pavilion on the theme of ‘craftsmanship’. Curator Jan De Vylder is enthusiastic: “It’s fantastic to have the opportunity to celebrate the idea of ‘crafting something’ in Venice. With the aptly named BRAVOURE team, we will be celebrating craftsmanship with bravura.”

Craftsmanship 2.0
The Flanders Architecture Institute is no stranger to organising the Belgian contribution to the International Architecture Exhibition. It has been coordinating the Belgian entry every four years since 2004, on a rotating basis with the French Community. The central theme this year is ‘craftsmanship’. “We are not using this term simply to refer to age-old crafts”, explains Christoph Grafe, Director of the Flanders Architecture Institute. “We are using it to explore opportunities for building and producing in partnership. How can designers and makers join forces to shape a city?”

“Together with BRAVOURE, we are exploring what craftsmanship can mean during a period of economic scarcity.”
Jan De Vylder, Curator BRAVOURE

Architecten de vylder vinck taillieu, doorzon interieurarchitecten and the architectural photographer/artist Filip Dujardin make up the BRAVOURE team, which has devised the exhibition concept for the Belgian pavilion. Architect Jan De Vylder points to the importance of the economic added value that craftsmanship brings to architecture: “We are exploring what craftsmanship can mean during a period of economic scarcity. Dealing with this scarcity demands a high level of precision.”

Thirteen projects from thirteen firms
In order to illustrate its vision of craftsmanship, BRAVOURE will be exhibiting fragments of thirteen representative projects from thirteen Flemish architects in the Belgian pavilion. Full-size replicas will be used to demonstrate how scarcity can lead to craftsmanship. De Vylder explains: “The fragment is exhibited as it really is. At the same time, it is cut out of its context, which ultimately gives it a new dimension.” Thirteen architectural firms have contributed to the exhibition: De Smet Vermeulen architecten, Philippe Vander Maren - Richard Venlet, Wim Goes Architectuur, architecten Els Claessens en Tania Vandenbussche, Eagles of Architecture, Jo Van Den Berghe - architect, BURO II & ARCHI+i, Robbrecht en Daem architecten i.s.m. Arch & Teco, OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Laura Muyldermans + Atelier Starzak Strebicki, Gijs Van Vaerenbergh, Stéphane Beel Architects and Architectenbureau Bart Dehaene – Sileghem & Partners in collaboration with Ante Timmermans.
“Fragments of existing buildings in Flanders are replicated at full size.”
Jan De Vylder, Curator BRAVOURE

Bravoure, contributions from Flanders
Today, architecture from Flanders and Brussels enjoys huge international renown. In order to further nurture this interest, the Flanders Architecture Institute will be presenting Bravoure, contributions from Flanders, a series of publications about architecture from Flanders and Brussels. In addition to BRAVOURE’s exhibition catalogue, a wide range of relevant books will be placed in the spotlight. The highlight is the Flanders Architectural Review n°12, a lavishly illustrated publication compiled by an editorial team made up of leading critics, architects and scientists from Flanders and other European countries. De Smet Vermeulen, 51N4E and architecten de vylder vinck taillieu are both launching survey publications of their respective oeuvres. In addition, the book Autonomous Architecture in Flanders: the early work of Marie-José Van Hee, Paul Robbrecht and Hilde Daem, Christian Kieckens and Marc Dubois takes a detailed look at the generation of Flemish architects who pioneered the international breakthrough of home-grown Belgian architecture.

The Flemish minister for Culture Sven Gatz about BRAVOURE
“Our presence at the Architecture Biennale in Venice indicates Flanders’ ambition to aim for a more prominent spot at the international culture scene. The Flemish architectural sector is one of the most vital in Europe and is international renowned for its strong artistic persuasion as well as the distinctive cultural profile of our architects. Choosing BRAVOURE shows the Flanders Architecture Institute mandated a promising team covering the very relevant subject of ‘craftsmanship’.”

The Flemish Minister President Geert Bourgeois about BRAVOURE
“I am pleased that the BRAVOURE-team choose ‘craftsmanship’ as theme for the Biennale Architettura 2016 in Venice. The expertise of our Flemish design firms, placed Flanders internationally on the map. Successful urban renewal projects have boosted the attractiveness and liveability of our cities. Our innovative, smart architecture is appreciated worldwide and is crucial for our growth, competitiveness, a sustainable future for Flanders and the fight against global warming. Architectural innovation creates jobs and interlinks different sectors. The challenge for the coming years is to address the spatial planning of Flanders by compacting our living environment and thus eliminate the excess traffic and related emissions. A task and a challenge for our Flemish architects.”

The Biennale Architettura in Venice and the BRAVOURE exhibition in the Belgian pavilion will run from 28 May to 27 November 2016. On Thursday 26 May, the pavilion will be opened by Flemish Minister for Culture Sven Gatz.

Practical
Biennale Architettura 2016
May 28 – November 27
Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm
Closed on Mondays (except May 30th, September 5th, October 31st and November 21st 2016)

Opening BRAVOURE
Belgian pavilion, Giardini, Venice (IT)
May 26 12pm

Walkthrough BRAVOURE, contributions from Flanders
Belgian pavilion, Giardini, Venice (IT)
May 27 2:30pm
BRAVURA

The execution of a piece of music that combines excellent technical control with unique vigour and personality is described as a BRAVURA performance. Architecture can also been implemented with BRAVURA.

Although SCARCITY would not immediately appear to be an idea that could be linked to bravura, the architecture of necessity follows the cadence of the economy. It is the imperative nature of SCARCITY that acts as the ultimate challenge to the execution of a BRAVURA performance.

If there are hardly any opportunities to create architecture any more, and if SCARCITY is all that remains, is it still possible to find a degree of BRAVURA? This observation is the subject that the BRAVOURE team will be bringing to the Belgian pavilion for the Flemish Community’s contribution to the fifteenth Biennale Architettura, the theme of which is REPORTING FROM THE FRONT.

Rather than exhibiting their own work, the BRAVOURE team will be illustrating the aforementioned observation from the perspective of thirteen projects from thirteen different architects. Full-size architectural fragments that conjure up BRAVURA out of SCARCITY will be exhibited in the pavilion.

The BRAVOURE team is made up of de architecten de vylder vinck taillieu, with Filip Dujardin acting as an increasingly inseparable contrast, and with doorzon interieurarchitecten completing the triangle.
BRAVOURE projects

In order to illustrate its vision of craftsmanship, BRAVOURE exhibits fragments of thirteen representative projects from thirteen architecture offices from Flanders and Brussels. The following projects will be discussed:

- **project: Scouting premises, Blankenberge, 2008**  
  **architect: architecten Els Claessens en Tania Vandenbussche**

  The design for the scouting premises in Blankenberge deals with the basics of building. Brickwork, wooden beams, corrugated sheets and a gutter. To connect the building with its context of scouting, a sense of roughness was achieved by smearing mortar on the brick façade in different ways. This results in an abstract drawing, lending the basic materiality of the façade a kind of depth.

- **project: State Archives, Ghent, 2014**  
  **architect: Robbrecht en Daem architecten in collaboration with Arch & Teco**

  The building for the State Archives in Ghent is carefully inserted into its urban context through a series of historical and spatial references. The windowsills that characterise the windowless façade connect the building with the fragmented streetscape by making perspectival suggestions. They remind one of the townhouse that once stood there. Its rounded corners reference Henry van de Velde’s architecture of the university building a few streets away, and its more or less abstract, white tower lends the place a new, desperately needed, identity.

- **project: Maarschalk Gerardstraat 5, Antwerp, 2014**  
  **architect: Eagles of Architecture**

  For the reconversion of a nineteenth-century house into separate units, a new kind of materiality was developed in contrast to the original architecture. The metal stud frames and standard coloured plasterboard panels only received a layer of polish, instead of being painted over as would be expected. The resulting materiality and its technical logic of colours – pink plasterboard is fire-resistant, green is waterproof and blue is for acoustics – seem to connect to the rich, rococo-like atmosphere of the house, while being completely different.
• **project: Atelier Michel François, Brussels, 2014**  
  **architect: Philippe Vander Maren - Richard Venlet**

The intervention of Philippe Vander Maren and Richard Venlet was a response to the need for more light in the studio space of Michel François. There was a constant consideration of where and to what extent could be intervened, to not disturb the space in which the client develops his own work. This resulted in an architecture reduced to its necessities, in order to retain the anonymity of the original building. Perhaps one of the most substantial changes is the introduction of six roof lights, of which only the framing border could be finished, so as to leave the black ceiling untouched.

• **project: Day-care centre De Strandloper, IGLO, Antwerp, 2013**  
  **architect: De Smet Vermeulen architects**

In day-care center De Strandloper in Antwerp, the ceiling assumes almost endless dimensions as a result of birds flying through the space. The simultaneous need for acoustic panels and light was answered by combining two panels and a fluorescent lighting tube in the figure of a bird. Suspended from the ceiling, they seem to inhabit the building, transforming the ceiling into an open sky.

• **project: Passive crèche, Nivelles, 2013**  
  **architects: BURO II & ARCHI+I**

The intention to emphasize the contrast between the passive construction method of the extension for a crèche in Nivelles and its existing, dated building, resulted in the decision to leave the installations and vents in the new building exposed. This seems to emphasize the passive construction of the building as a central part of its architecture. In order to run one of the vents through a glass wall, a full panel in wooden framing had to be introduced. However, the glass wall was eventually replaced with a gypsum wall, leaving behind a surreal framing of vents passing by.

• **project: Refuge II, Nevele, 2014**  
  **architect: Wim Goes Architectuur**

Refuge II is a house built for a friend diagnosed with ALS and a limited life expectancy. The house had to accommodate the different stages of the illness and will be disassembled afterwards. But, more importantly, the house was built by friends and relatives, who wanted to celebrate life and focus on constructiveness. The construction of the house was transformed into a communal process, uniting a group of over hundred people in a meaningful activity.
• project: WOSHO, Herzele, 1986-2013  
architect: Jo Van Den Berghe - architect

This simple project for a new letterbox started without much ambition, but nonetheless touches a fundamental notion of architecture. In front of a house stood two columns that were in need of repair. Using the same bricks combined with other bricks that were available, the columns were rebuild, with one of the two a bit bigger to fit a letter box inside. Despite the very simple construction, this play of proportions still indicates an intellectual gesture. By repeating the yellow, decorative bricks of the façade in the columns, they indicate a desire for civilisation. They express a certain human dignity.

• project: VILLA, Buggenhout, 2010  
architect: OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen

What is usually nothing more than just a fence, here becomes a defining element in the spatial configuration of a house. The fence, while delimiting the outdoor space, also functions as load-bearing structure for the upper floor of the house. The fence was moved a few metres away from the boundaries of the plot, to be allowed to make them three meters high. By making the fence an extension of the house, creating an equal garden on both sides of the house, and placing the front door on the side, the fence is able to completely subvert the conventional logic of a front and rear façade. Or how a fence can mean so much more than just a fence.

• Project: Kijkgat, Strombeek, 2013  
Architect: Laura Muyldermans + Atelier Starzak Strebicki

The Kijkgat project was a response to a perceived tension between the desire of the inhabitants of Strombeek to live in the country-side and the advancing urbanisation of the village. By drilling holes out of a wall that encloses a patch of unused green, the green becomes visible while remaining inaccessible. These holes explicitly address the desire for the country, provoking the inhabitants to act upon it.

• project: Bridge, Brussels, 2014  
architect: Gijs Van Vaerenbergh

In the context of Festival Kanal, an urban festival centred on the canal area in Brussels, Gijs Van Vaerenbergh proposed to build a temporary bridge as an art project, precisely at a place where the city plans on building a bridge for years. These plans have been stalled because of the complex regulations in Brussels, but because of the temporary character of the project, it was possible to take a shortcut through this administrative machinery, and by the time the authorities realised what had happened, the bridge was already gone. Because of its location between the Dansaert area and Molenbeek, together with its underlying story, the bridge becomes a symbol for how desperately Brussels needs to connect its communities with each other.
**project: Tacktower, Kortrijk, 1999 & deSingel International Arts Campus expansion, Antwerp, 2010**
*architect: Stéphane Beel Architects*

When Stéphane Beel needed to provide outdoor lighting for his Tacktower in Kortrijk, instead of selecting a design from a catalogue, he made his own. Simple, waterproof lights, a few posts and a cable, and together they form a clothes line of light. Not only do they answer to the technical requirements, they give the space a sense of direction and identity. Years later, for the expansion of deSingel International Arts Campus, the same question poses itself. Here a few posts, a cable and those same lights form a vestibule, define a place and indicate an entrance. As simple as that.

**project: Primary school De Brug, Erpe-Mere, 2011-current**
*architect: Architectenbureau Bart Dehaene – Sileghem & Partners in collaboration with Ante Timmermans*

In the context of a new school design for Scholen van Morgen [Schools of Tomorrow], architect Bart Dehaene invited artist Ante Timmermans for an artistic intervention. Instead of creating a wall drawing or sculpture as was expected, Timmermans proposed to save one of the fourteen pavilions of the old school, which were scheduled for demolition. By keeping it empty, the artist transformed the pavilion into an artwork. In the context of the economic scarcity of Scholen van Morgen, this artistic intervention meant a further reduction of demolition costs, and at the same time resulted in additional, unused space. The preservation of the pavilion and the on-going discussions of what to do with it, demonstrate how there are still opportunities to be found in that which has been discarded.
**Commissioner of BRAVOURE:**

- **Christoph Grafe**

Dr Christoph Grafe has been Director of the Flanders Architecture Institute in Antwerp (BE) since 2010. He is also Professor of Architectural History and Theory at the University of Wuppertal, Noordrijn-Westfalen (D). His book *People’s Palaces - Architecture, Culture and Democracy in Post-War Western Europe* appeared in 2014.

**BRAVOURE’s curatorial team:**

- **architecten devylder vinck taillieu**

In 2009 was made permanent what had already been foreseen. architecten de vylder vinck taillieu – a dvvt – is the new name under which Jan De Vylde, Inge Vinck and Jo Taillieu will further share their mutual appreciation, interest and previous realized work. Already long before each one of them, sometimes in collaboration with each other, steadily developed and realized a certain variety of projects. Since 2009 it is clear that the establishment of a dvvt has given wings to the united view on what architecture can possibly stand for.

Architecten de vylder vinck taillieu wants to be complete. To embrace not only design but also the making; that is the point of departure for a dvvt. Only through understanding how something is created, design is able to play out its critical attitude. Within the landscape of present-day expectations, a dvvt unexpectedly wants to give these expectations an appropriate turn through which not only what is expected is granted, but surprisingly more can be found. A critical attitude; not as just a gesture but as a living instrument to arrive further than ever expected.

The social responsibility that is based within architecture should not be underestimated. But only if the architect audits this responsibility critically, this social task has the possibility to surpass a mere filling-in of expectations and obtains the chance to its cultural dimension. Here, the architect has a crucial responsibility. a dvvt wants to recognize this. The skill of the architect – the craft; the knowledge and the critical attitude – is crucial with this. This skill ensures that present-day expectations like cultural sustainability have the possibility to stand for more than what they stand for today. The métier as the key to the future.
• doorzon interieurarchitecten

Doorzon is a partnership between Stefanie Everaert and Caroline Lateur, two interior architects. They mainly work in the private sector, with projects ranging from new-builds, to renovations, in addition to smaller interventions such as specific made-to-measure furniture.

The key characteristics of their work are: a quest for the optimum spatial experience, regardless of scale or budget; the resulting space must invite use; functionality as a central tenet; surprising colours displayed in a strikingly material way, an area in which they are unafraid of being experimental; and finally, a design that must attest to a certain sensitivity, both in terms of its dimensions and detail, but in such a way that the result retains a certain rawness or directness.

• Filip Dujardin

Dujardin has been working as an independent photographer since 2000. He won international acclaim in 2008 with Fictions, a series of digital montages. Dujardin ‘draws’ surreal, fictitious architecture by digitally manipulating photographs of real buildings. After the series was shown at BOZAR in Brussels, further exhibitions followed in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United States and South Korea. His photographs have been published in national and international books and magazines. In the meantime, the Metropolitan Museum, MoMA and SFMOMA have all acquired Dujardin’s work. Since 2012 Dujardin built his first 3d installations.
production Flanders Architecture Institute
commissioner Christoph Grafe on behalf of Flemish Minister for Culture Sven Gatz
curator BRAVOURE: architecten de vylder vinck taillieu - doorzon interieurarchitecten - filip dujardin
scenography BRAVOURE
with the support of the Flemish Government

General contact for the Belgian pavilion
Karen Van de Steene
Project Manager Biennale Architettura 2016
Flanders Architecture Institute
E karen.vandesteene@vai.be
M +32 (0) 495 701993

Contact for press inquiries
Egon Verleye
Communications & PR
Flanders Architecture Institute
E egon.verleye@vai.be
T +32 (0) 242 89 73
www.vai.be/en/pers

With the support of:
Triptych 1

project: Maarschalk Gerardstraat 5, Antwerp, 2014
architect: Eagles of Architecture

BRAVOURE, Filip Dujardin, 'memorial I'
Triptych 2

project: Day-care centre De Strandloper, IGLO, Antwerp, 2013
architect: De Smet Vermeulen architects

Filip Dujardin, untitled from series *Fictions*, 2007
Triptych 3

project: Scouting premises, Blankenberge, 2008
architect: architecten Els Claessens en Tania Vandenbussche

Filip Dujardin, untitled from series Fictions, 2007
PRESS IMAGES portraits

Christoph Grafe, commissioner BRAVOURE

Christoph Grafe © Phile Deprez
doorzon interieurarchitecten

Caroline Lateur and Stefanie Everaert © Bart Kiggen

Tuinwoning, Nieuwpoort, 2010 , doorzon interieurarchitecten © Fien Muller