

EN ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/LANGSWITCH/SWITCHLANGUAGE/ENGLISH](http://www.happening.media/langswitch/switchlanguage/english))

HOME ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/](http://www.happening.media/)) / MAGAZINE / ARTICLES ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/MAGAZINE/ARTICLES](http://www.happening.media/magazine/articles)) / BRUSSELS ART WEEK, A TALE OF TWO CITIES / FR ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/LANGSWITCH/SWITCHLANGUAGE/FRENCH](http://www.happening.media/langswitch/switchlanguage/french))

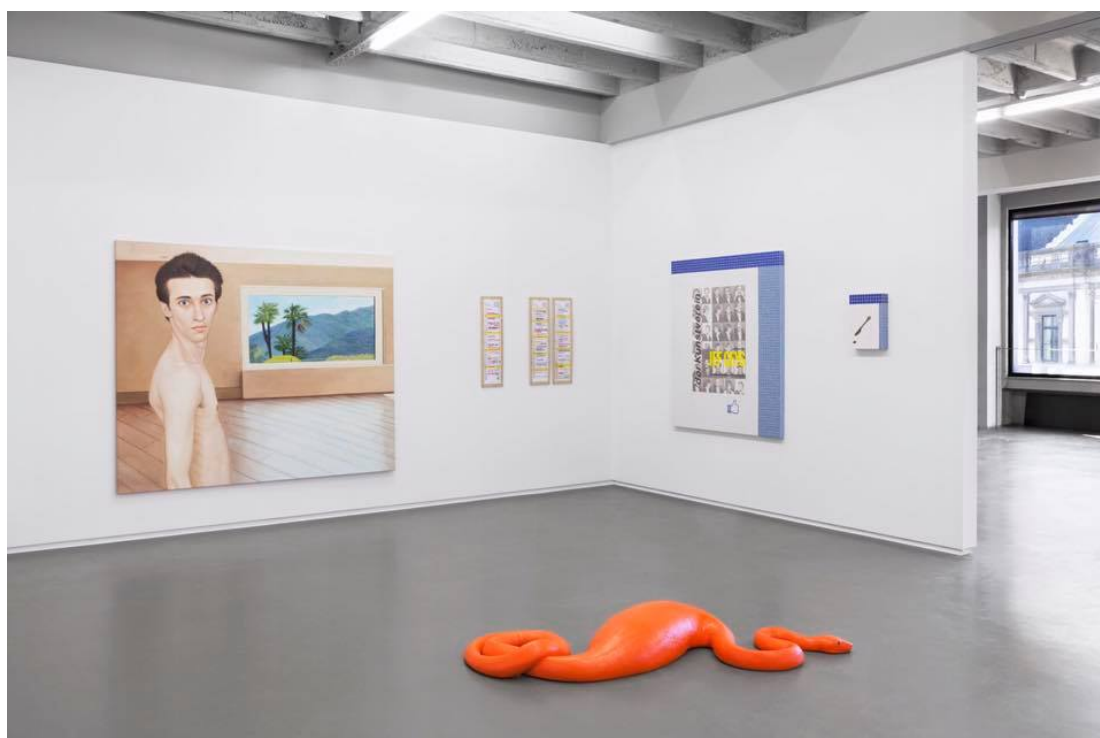


INSTITUTIONS FAIRS  21-04-2017  VirnaGvero

## Brussels art week, a tale of two cities

As the art world convenes in the Belgian, and de facto European, capital for the most important week of the Brusselian art calendar, we see the persistence of Art Brussels' white cube formula with big names, big collectors and most likely big sales, with a handful of booths standing out — Selma Feriani, The Hole NYC and Nathalie Obadia, (with two booths one which features work by Laure Prouvost in the SOLO section) — and very little surprises.

Over at Independent, the type and scope of works presented make the fair increasingly similar to its main competitor and the majority of mainstream art fairs, having attracted two of the art world's giants: David Zwirner and Sprüth Magers — the latter making its first appearance this year. In many ways, Independent has lost its place as the hippest fair of the circuit, and despite notable exceptions such as Air de Paris, Ellen de Bruijne projects, Annet Gelink or Christophe Gaillard, the vast majority of booths yield to the more commercial and easily marketable pieces. During the preview day, it became very clear that the fair has made an effort to attract a great variety of collectors, with dealers making solid sales and generally praising this second edition of the event, certainly faring better than its last, organized in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Brussels last year. If the fair managed to "disrupt" the status quo last year, 365 days later it seems to have adjusted to it very well.



# HAPPENING (<http://www.happening.media/>)

If the two rival fairs make Brussels the capital of European collectors for the week, elsewhere the city's centrality within the continent and its historical and political significance for the development of the European Union are taken as the starting point on a wider reflection of the role of art in a politically charged time.

At WIELS, the show "The Absent Museum", running until August 4<sup>th</sup>, and coinciding with the institution's 10 year anniversary, asks important questions as to what the role of a museum should be in our post-truth era, and in doing so, asks questions about the larger geopolitical block wherein WIELS and Brussels situate themselves, that is to say, Europe.

FR ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/LANGSWITCH/SWITCHLANGUAGE/FRENCH](http://www.happening.media/langswitch/switchlanguage/french))

Subtitled "Blueprint for a museum of contemporary art for the capital of Europe" this impressive show, which occupies the entirety of the WIELS' four floors plus its terrace, takes the geographic and political entity of Europe as its point of departure, making "absence" and notably the absence of certain aesthetic and artistic discourses within the walls of our continent's museums, strikingly clear. From Lili Reynaud-Dewar's *Small Tragic Opera of Images and Bodies in the Museum* to Thomas Hirschhorn's *Pixel Collages* and Ellen Gallagher's works, these artworks by 45 artists challenge the very notion of institution, be it artistic or political.



Ellen Gallagher, *Abu Simbel*, 2015 © Ellen Gallagher. Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Gagosian Gallery.

Renowned for its bold curatorial choices, WIELS does not hesitate to challenge visitors. The exhibition starts off with gigantic collages by Thomas Hirschhorn, showing an uncensored dismembered body next to pixelated images from fashion magazines. A long essay on the legitimacy of the artist's discourse accompanies these graphic images, prompting visitors to actively engage with their content instead of passively glossing over its presence. When looking at these pictures, it's impossible not to think of the refugee crisis or the Syrian war, practically live streamed on Facebook and Twitter, and Europe's controversial policies on these issues.

The archives of the Universal Embassy, for example, an initiative that took place in Brussels between 2000 and 2005, supporting immigrants undergoing the regularisation process, are also shown at WIELS alongside an explicative video and serve as testament of the creativity and vital cultural exchanges prompted by the idea of free movement. Something that is painstakingly both threatening and under threat nowadays.

(Very finely) curated by Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk, Poppositions, taking place in the city's museum neighborhood at the Ing Art Center, remains the most critically engaging fair of all, and manages — unlike its counterparts claiming to do so — to truly rethink the format of the art fair, something that Independent, born in the same spirit, seems to have renounced.

Poppositions decidedly opposes the logics of the art market, and brings the artists back to center stage. In its sixth edition, the fair looks to "respond to the political turmoil we are currently experiencing on a geopolitical scale" explain the organizers. In this spirit we are presented Seecum Cheung's *Interview with Lennart*, (Lennart Schwarzbach is a candidate for Germany's far-right NPD party, and also an adamant white supremacist.) The video, projected in the half-light of the fair's underground floor, has the power of a psychological thriller. Elsewhere, at Sun and Star's space, Floris Schönfeld's *NATURA \**, a dystopic video installation exploring the eponymous character, depicts an artificial super-intelligence that has become one with the natural world, making a poignant commentary on the relentless evolution of technology and its ever-lasting impact on our lives.



Floris Schönfeld, *NATURA* \*. Courtesy the artist.

Thanks to events such as “The Absent Museum” or Poppositions, Brussels is among one of the European cities — including Athens with Documenta and Mechelen with Contour8 — that is both attractive to collectors, but also provides vital meeting points for a true discourse on contemporary art. Ahead of the major presidential elections in France and Germany, the capital of Europe continues to oppose the populist manipulation of images and narratives.

♥ 0 💬 0 👁 469

Like Share

You might also like



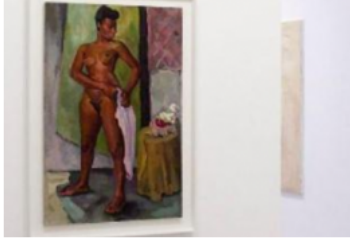
INSTITUTIONS

Arts Council England awards £415,000 grant to four Northern cultural organizations



ARTISTS

Beyond feminism: the Guerrilla Girls take over Europe



FAIRS

Women and the art market: where are we at?



HAPPENING (<http://www.happening.media/>)  
EN ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/LANGSWITCH/SWITCHLANGUAGE/ENGLISH](http://www.happening.media/switchlanguage/english))

FR ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/LANGSWITCH/SWITCHLANGUAGE/FRENCH](http://www.happening.media/switchlanguage/french))  
ARTISTS

Artist Modupeola Fadugba | The highs and lows of working solo



Comment

Log in to add a comment (<http://www.happening.media/login>)



COPYRIGHT © 2017 HAPPENING  
MADE WITH ♥ BY UPPERLIFE (<http://upperlife.fr/>)

f (<https://www.facebook.com/happeningarts>)

t (<http://www.twitter.com/Happeningarts>)

CONTACT THE HAPPENERS ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/CONTACT-THE-HAPPENERS](http://www.happening.media/contact-the-happeners))

WHAT'S HAPPENING ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/WHATS-HAPPENING](http://www.happening.media/whats-happening))

PRIVACY NOTICE ([HTTP://WWW.HAPPENING.MEDIA/PRIVACY-NOTICE](http://www.happening.media/privacy-notice))

in (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/happening-media?trk=biz-companies-cym>)

ig (<https://instagram.com/happeningarts>)