

STDSGLR
Stadsgalerij Heerlen

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Museum voor moderne en hedendaagse kunst

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ENCOUNTERS

24 August to 11 November 2007

Opening: Saturday 25 August, 16.00 hrs



Visitors to the opening on Saturday can take part in the 'Human Library'; a project that aims to take away prejudices by stimulating encounters between different cultural communities. In the 'Human Library' you can borrow people; the short and casual meetings lead to unexpected combinations, in which people unashamedly try to discover each other's ins and outs.

This autumn, the Stadsgalerij Heerlen will present the exhibition ENCOUNTERS.

ENCOUNTERS examines the tension between the dominant visual culture, often confirmed by the 'official' media, and possible alternative visions. ENCOUNTERS exhibits a variety of projects that are intended to break through the 'stereotype' images in order to tell a different personal story.

The exhibition can be interpreted as an open space in which visitors become conscious of their own 'preconceived' images and the choices underlying acceptance or rejection of (possibly uncomfortable) encounters. The participating artists each show how fertile it can be if one chooses to do so. The works function as an 'Archimedean point', as a starting point for people to ask questions about themes such as democratisation, emancipation, and globalisation.

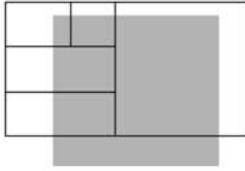
Surprising and uncomfortable encounters in - among others - Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, North Korea, China, Israel, the former GDR as well as the Worldwide web!

The exhibition includes works by Reza Abedini (IR) & Hans Wolbers (NL), Azra Akšamija (AT), Luis Berríos-Negrón (PR), Nele Decock (B), Erik Franssen (NL), Pieter Geenen (B), Mariam Ghani (AF/US), Maximilian Goldfarb (US), G.R.A.M. (AT), Eytan Heller (IL), Rob Hornstra (NL), Stani Michiels (B), Anoeck Steketeer (NL), Niels Stomps (NL), The Institute for Infinitely Small Things (US), Prospektor (NL) & Partizan Publik (NL)

The exhibition is organised in co-operation with the Glaspaleis and the multidisciplinary summer festival Cultura Nova. It can be seen at various locations in the Glaspaleis: in the Stadsgalerij Heerlen, the display case and the first floor (level +1).

In an independent and personal manner, the photographers Nele Decock, Rob Hornstra, Anoeck Steketeer and graphic designers Reza Abedini & Hans Wolbers share with us their experiences and encounters in countries with (former) totalitarian regimes, either from within or as a visitor. Through their approach to the regions highlighted – Uzbekistan, Russia and Iran – they provide insight into how these regions are portrayed in the media.

The projects by the artists' collective G.R.A.M, photographer Niels Stomps, architect/artist Luis Berríos-Negrón and visual artist Mariam Ghani express a vision of both the propaganda machinery and the public life in North Korea, China and Afghanistan, respectively.



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Projects such as *The New American Dictionary: Interactive Security/Fear Edition* by the Institute for Infinitely Small Things, the *Copacabana Cyber Café* by Stani Michiels and the installation by Maximilian Goldfarb show that totalitarian regimes, their ideologies and the accompanying adherent repressive behaviour may seem far away, but in reality are much closer than we think.

ENCOUNTERS II shows that sometimes powerful interests are involved in limiting these encounters. One tool used to do so is literally building walls: visual elements that deeply influence the experience and design of the public space. Photographer Erik Franssen shows a project on the former Berlin wall. In his films 'Love Sum Game' and 'Games without Frontiers' Eytan Heller also draws attention to the wall constructed between Israel and the autonomous Palestinian areas near Abu Dis, using the aspect of games.

Pieter Geenen's project "Nocturne" gives voice to the victims of the walls of 'Fort Europe'.

In the display case of the Glaspaleis, Azra Akšamija exhibits her wearable mosques and other items of clothing. Her work addresses the prejudices towards Muslims while at the same time posing critical questions about the modernity and beliefs of the Muslim community itself.

Erik Franssen, too, presents his work in the display case. He inspected Heerlen closely and discovered the large amount of roll-down shutters, defining the city's street scene. Visual elements again that may influence the experience of the public space and the encounter with the other person. Culturally defined or just habit? Let his observations surprise you.

The encounters on the +1 location of the Glaspaleis are interactive. Here stories are presented by the young journalistic production company Glaspaleis. With photos, films, articles and campaigns Glaspaleis collects tiny bits of history. They believe that a well-told story has the power to change people's view on the world.

The *Copacabana Cyber Café* of Stani Michiels is also located on this floor.

In cooperation with Partizan Publik, Glaspaleis developed the equipment "The West vs Islam, A Way Out Of the war, Act #1: setting a date. Pick up the phone and make a date. Apparatus 1 will connect you to the West – US State Department, whereas apparatus 2 will connect you to the Islam - Foreign Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In case official diplomacy fails, will civil diplomacy take over?"

Activities

The exhibition will be accompanied by various educational projects, a youth debate, workshops and lectures. For a current update go to: www.stadsgalerijheerlen.nl

Wednesday 29 August, 20.30 hrs: free film performance 'Divine Intervention' (Glaspaleis cinema).

Sunday 2 September, 15.00 hrs: free guided tour through the exhibition (max. 25 persons).

ENCOUNTERS II is developed by freelance curator Femke Lutgerink at the invitation of the Stadsgalerij Heerlen. ENCOUNTERS I was exhibited at the Mills Gallery in Boston (USA) at the beginning of 2007. This initial version primarily emphasized the 'design' of daily public life in countries with (former) totalitarian regimes. For ENCOUNTERS II, she has broadened and expanded on this theme.

Opening hours:

Monday: closed, Tuesday-Friday: 11-17, Thursday: 11-20, Saturday/Sunday/public holidays: 13-17. The +1 location of the Glaspaleis is open during the same hours.

During the Cultura Nova Festival (24 August to 2 September) and on Thursday evenings from 17-20, the exhibition is **free admission**.

Note to the editor: for more information and/or press photographs, please contact: Patricia van der Lugt or Patricia van den Ende, +31 (0)45 577 22 10, or stadsgalerij@heerlen.nl. Photo: Niels Stomps, from the series *Mist* (#41).