



## *Fotografie*

*Zaza Bertrand / Filip Claus*

*Bieke Depoorter / Harry Gruyaert*

### **PRESS RELEASE** *Cairopolis exhibition* 22 February to 20 May 2013

The Egyptian Revolution broke out on January 25 2011. Reporters from all over the world gathered on Tahrir Square in Cairo to record the cry of the people first-hand. In this period four Belgian photographers set out to discover the social undercurrents that played a pivotal role on Tahrir. They focused on the individual stories of people and places.

Despite the fact that the square clearly formed the symbolic heart of the revolution, Tahrir was the starting point rather than the end goal: the social upheaval that had taken place over the preceding two years could not simply be reduced to a history of Tahrir. Around the square was a metropolis in which life simply continued, despite the sometimes hundreds of thousands of demonstrators on Tahrir. That which lived in this city fuelled the square.

With a documentary outsiders view the photographers took us down the streets that veined the city and drew us into its social fabric. Rather than focusing on the daily flow of news, they concentrated on the individual stories of people and places which in their own specificity revealed other rifts to us.

The work of **Harry Gruyaert** and **Filip Claus** focuses mainly on the public domain. For Harry this consists of the satellite cities of Cairo where people seem to sink into nothingness compared to the megalomaniac construction projects. Filip goes into the streets of the city hoping to discover what it is that binds people.

**Zaza Bertrand** and **Bieke Depoorter** seek out the more private sphere. In fact, Bieke often spends the night with people she has met by chance and in this way briefly shares in the intimacy of the family. She tries to understand the intervening time by way of the interaction between people and their home environment. Zaza focuses on young people from all walks of life and, in a way that is almost anthropological, records intimate and recognisable moments in their environment.

Despite the different approaches, in the photos we see a number of recurring themes that provide us with an alternative perspective of traditional narratives about the revolution.

Other tensions are exposed: between formality and informality, between what is planned and what grows naturally; between the dream of social feasibility and the inertia which throughout all the changes, makes Cairo remain Cairo; between dominant structures and the actions of individuals; between poverty and wealth, between the elite and the inarticulate masses; between the private and public sphere, what happens indoors and outdoors.

The search does not produce the images you see on television or in the newspaper. *Cairopolis* tells the story of a metropolis with 20 million inhabitants, in which the rifts, that are also present in our society, are amplified and made palpable. Personal stories dominate. All exhibited photos date from November-December 2011 and February-March 2012. At this point in time Tahri Square was littered with dozens of dead and wounded.

The exhibition will be held in the refectory of St. Peter's Abbey and was created on the initiative of Jan Beke. He already initiated the 'Line 3' project in which 6 photographers (Filip Claus, Jimmy Kets, Tim Dirven, Jonas Lampens, Bob Van Mol and Yann Bertrand) spent a year taking pictures in the Brugse Poort district in Ghent.

## Biographies

**Jan Beke** (b. 1980) organises social and artistic projects in which the starting point is an inclusive vision of society. The projects have a hybrid character and often result in a multidisciplinary collaboration. Based on his experiences as a street worker, in 2010 he coordinated 'Lijn 3', a project with 6 photographers about the Brugse Poort district in Ghent. Jan read Arabic Studies at Ghent University and lived for over a year in the Middle East before this project started.

**Filip Claus** (b.1957) was house photographer for De Morgen from 1983-2009 where he was also responsible for the photographic quality of the newspaper. An experienced photo journalist, he travelled the world and made in-depth reports on the revolution in Romania in the 80s, the aids epidemic in South Africa, child soldiers in the Congo and young people in Teheran. In Belgium too Filip has created unforgettable portraits. Indeed, he was one of the driving forces behind 'Lijn 3' and recently published a book about his hometown Aalst. In 2008 he received the Dexia Press Award.

**Bieke Depoorter** (b. 1986) obtained a Master in Photography at the KASK in Ghent in 2009. In her autonomous work she sets out to find the intimacy within families whose life she shares for one night. In 2008/2009 she journeyed through Russia for her project *Ou Menya*, for which she also received the Magnum Expression Award. In 2011 she published her first book on the project. Currently she is working on a similar project in America. In 2012 Bieke exhibited her work from the series *I'm about to call it a Day* and *Ou Menya* in St. Peter's Abbey. Bieke is now a nominated member of the renowned photo agency Magnum.

**Harry Gruyaert** (b. 1941) is one of the four Magnum Photographers our small country boasts of. For over thirty years he has travelled from Morocco to Egypt and on to India where, far away from stereotypical exoticism, he captures the colours and light of the Orient. With "Made in Belgium" (2000, in collaboration with Hugo Claus) and "Roots" (2012, with lyrics by Dimitri Verhulst) he presented a compelling portrait of his homeland. The pictures he took in the context of *Cairopolis* complete Harry's Egyptian collection that he has collected since his first visit to the country 25 years ago.

**Zaza Bertrand** (b.1986) completed her studies at KASK in 2011. Today she works for the Volkskrant in the Netherlands. In essence she is a real photo-essayist. During this project she has focused on the story of young people in Cairo who make up more than 60% of the population.

The book '**Cairopolis**' (uitgeverij Snoeck) will also be published simultaneously with the exhibition.

Format : 24x25 cm

128 pages

Hardcover with linen

Dutch/Arabic

Price : € 28

ISBN: 978-94-6161-082-9

## **PRACTICAL INFO**

The photography exhibition *Cairopolis* will be held from Friday 22 February to Monday 20 May (Whit Monday) 2013 at St. Peter's Abbey, Sint-Pietersplein 9, 9000 Ghent.  
(09 243 97 30 / sint-pietersabdij@gent.be)

Reservations for guided tours for schools and adults can be made at BOEKjeBEZOEK.  
(09 267 14 66 - boekjebezoek@gent.be)

## **OPENING HOURS**

Closed on Mondays, except on Whit Monday (20 May 2013)  
open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm

## **ADMISSION**

Individual visitor: € 6

reduced rate: € 4.50

young people under 26 years old: € 1

free admission for 18 years old and younger

## **EXTRA**

double ticket for the exhibition, *Unknown images, powerful stories. Belgians at war.*  
individual visitor € 12 / reduced rate € 9.50

## **CONTACT**

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