

**GEERT GOIRIS
TERRAFORMING FANTASIES**



curated by
Simone Menegoi and Barbara Meneghel

Salone Banca di Bologna - Palazzo De' Toschi
Piazza Minghetti 4/D, Bologna

January 29 | February 24, 2019
opening January 29, 2019, 6:30 pm

press release

For the fourth year in a row, Banca di Bologna will continue its exploration of contemporary art by presenting an exhibition of international scope in conjunction with Arte Fiera. In 2019, the Banca di Bologna Hall at Palazzo De' Toschi will be housing the first solo exhibition in Italy by Belgian photographer and videomaker Geert Goiris (born 1971 in Bornem, Belgium, based in Antwerp), whose works have been shown by prestigious museums around Europe.

The show will open on Tuesday, January 29 at 6:30 pm as part of ART CITY Bologna—a program of high-profile exhibition projects selected by the City of Bologna and by BolognaFiere to accompany Arte Fiera.

This will also mark a continuation of the partnership with Bologna's Accademia di Belle Arti: students from the academy's Art Education and Cultural Facilitation course will be on hand as guides for the duration of the show.

The exhibition—which will include a selection of photographic prints in different formats, an analogue slide show, and a multichannel video installation—will feature an ambitious, innovative design conceived for the occasion by architect Kris Kimpe, the artist's long-time collaborator. The large space will be filled with hexagonal display units, some of them closed, others open and accessible, each housing photographs or moving images on its walls. The irregularly arranged modules offer a full-immersion experience, yet allow visitors to choose their own path through the show.

This exhibition in Bologna is closely linked to Goiris's solo show at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, scheduled for November and December 2018. The artist developed them parallel to each other, creating two mirror-image projects in which many of the works are the same—yet appear completely different in each space, underscoring its unique qualities.

The title, *Terraforming Fantasies*, is borrowed from the video installation in the show. "Terraforming" is a recent coinage mostly used in speculations about the future of our species, and describes the possibility of chemically altering the atmosphere of other planets to make them resemble Earth and support human life. It is an idea that for the moment seems like science fiction, but its tacit assumption can be easily guessed: the ambition to colonize other planets reveals a deep unease about the health of our own, given the threat of ecological disaster. As Goiris explains, "It is misleading to think about terraforming at this stage. In itself it's an interesting concept, but we absolutely lack the technology and resources to actually do it (let alone the morality). However, dreaming about it is very human: ambitious and at the same time tragically remote." The exhibit design is also connected to this theme: "The display concept brings a constellation of extraneous objects into the space. It is, to some degree, out of place, a form of colonization. My intention (and hope) is for it to also say something about human characteristics such as wonder, curiosity, perplexity, and so on. By carefully selecting the images and presenting them in a carefully chosen setting, I'm trying to plunge viewers into a parallel world, one that may resemble our own, but does not completely match up with it."

Though it sometimes includes interiors and the human figure, Geert Goiris's work in photography and video is focused above all on the landscape. Whether his locations are far-flung (ranging from the Antarctic to the Danakil Desert in Ethiopia) or closer to home, Goiris makes them look uncannily suspended, as if they came from another planet. This is achieved through specific technical and stylistic choices: the artist primarily uses a large-format camera with special types of film (orthochromatic, aerial, infrared). He shoots most of his pictures at dusk, when the light is beginning to fade and become unreliable. His working method is a blend of preparation and chance: Goiris uses the camera with the precision of a weathered professional, but during the long exhibition times that he favors, anything can happen, and there is no way to predict exactly how the film will transform the subject into an image. The camera is never a mere conduit through which we can visually connect with the outside world, but a tool for exploring the gap between our "experience" of it and the act of seeing it for what it is. Like the French philosopher and photographer Jean Baudrillard, Goiris seems to understand that the camera is on the side of the world, offering us a glimpse of what it looks like stripped of every human projection or interference. In this artist's images, the ambiguous, disquieting feeling that the Romantics dubbed the "Sublime" arises not from the terrifying grandeur of the site, or the threat that seems to loom over the landscape. It stems from the distinct feeling that we are cut off from any genuine connection with the world.

Geert Goiris was born in 1971 in Bornem, Belgium. The art institutions that have presented his solo shows include: FOAM, Amsterdam; FRAC Normandie, Rouen; Museum M., Leuven; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; CAB, Burgos; Kunstforum, Basel; Le Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine.

His work has also been presented at Manifesta 5, San Sebastian, and by museums around the world such as Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; Wiels Contemporary Art Center, Brussels; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monte Carlo; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Metz; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago de Chile; FRAC Bourgogne; Casino Luxembourg; Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

He also teaches at the Royal Academy of Arts in Antwerp, and has been a visiting lecturer at the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie in Arles, the Fachhochschule in Bielefeld, the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art in Plzeň, the CEPV in Vevey, and the ERG in Brussels.

Exhibition partner **Banca di Bologna** is a bank with close local ties to both the city and the surrounding area. Its many initiatives have included refurbishing Piazza Galvani, restoring the Oratorio dei Fiorentini and Bologna's city gates, recovering and upgrading Piazza Minghetti, and renovating Palazzo de' Toschi. It has also contributed to the restoration of the Basilica of San Petronio and its Chapel of the Archangel Michael, with the famous fresco by Calvaert.

Palazzo De' Toschi, a historic building in the center of Bologna designed by Emilio Saffi and built at the beginning of the twentieth century, was originally Palazzo delle Poste, the main post office. Its construction features, and especially its use of reinforced concrete, drew the interest of Le Corbusier, who saw it on his trip to Italy in 1907 and mentioned it in his letters. The Palazzo was acquired by Banca di Bologna in 2007 and reopened to the public in 2013 as a place for cultural and educational initiatives and exhibitions. Notable examples include a series of lectures by eminent critics and scholars on the theme of art and food through the centuries, organized by Banca di Bologna for Expo 2015; the photography show *L'industria bolognese, un DNA riconosciuto*, organized in collaboration with Collezioni Alinari and presenting many pictures on view for the first time; the exhibition *LA CAMERA: Sulla materialità della fotografia* (2016), and solo exhibitions by Peter Buggenhout (2017) and Erin Shirreff (2018).

AT A GLANCE

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Opening hours during ART CITY Bologna:

Wednesday 30 and Thursday 31 January, 10 AM – 1 PM / 3 PM – 5 PM

Friday, February 1, 10 AM - 8 PM

Saturday, February 2, 10 AM – 12 AM

Sunday, February 3, 10 AM - 8 PM

Standard opening hours:

Thursday and Friday, 3 PM – 7 PM

Saturday and Sunday, 11 AM – 6 PM

closed Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays

Free admission

Project partner



Supported by



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