



Talking Walls

Karolien Soete

“**Talking Walls** is my ongoing development and production of a unique, multi-faceted, art form that integrates digital photography, stop motion animation, and my life long study of classical painting modes, to create thought provoking short films... that tells a collaborative story IN YOUR SPACE! It has been described as ‘Cave Painting for the New Millennium’.”

“Using monochromatic inks and acrylics, carefully crafted stop motion animation techniques, and luscious soundtracks, and written/spoken words when needed, I am able to awaken in cinematic form, larger than life-sized murals, that narrate/promote the history and significance of the products, spaces, elements you provide.”

Upon completion, the patron receives a broadcast-ready, short film with an original soundtrack, and usually chooses to leave one of my painted mural-images in place (if restrictions apply the space can always be easily returned to its original look).

"There is a real opportunity for organizations and businesses to jump in to this collaborative art form," says Miss Soete. "Talking Walls is designed to promote team building and the specific goals, products, services of the participants. We encourage on site creativity, openness, and input from employees and/or costumers. The films themselves go out into the community as an effective and lasting promotional resource."

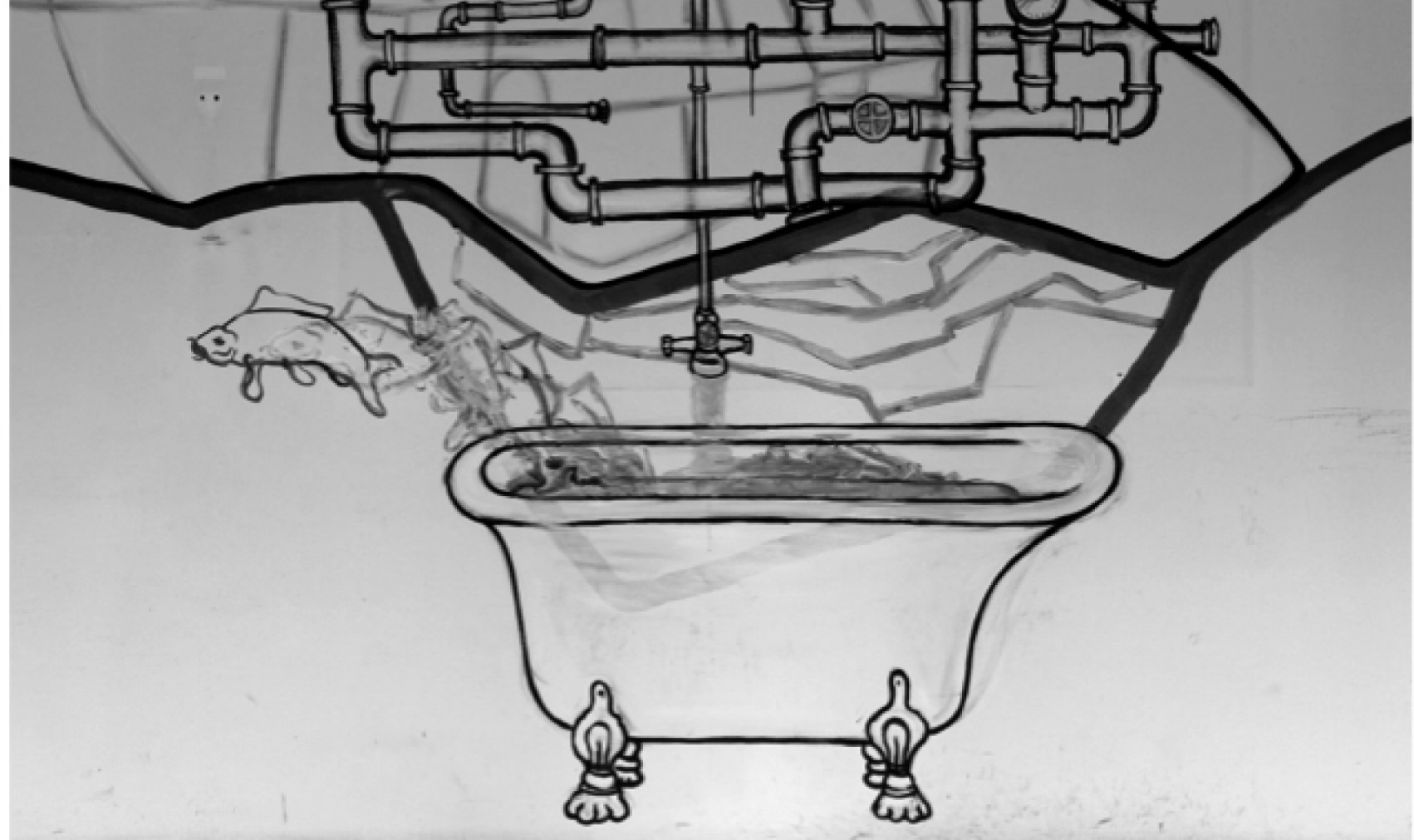


“TALKING WALLS - OVERLEIE IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW THESE PROJECTS CAN GO IN THE FUTURE.”

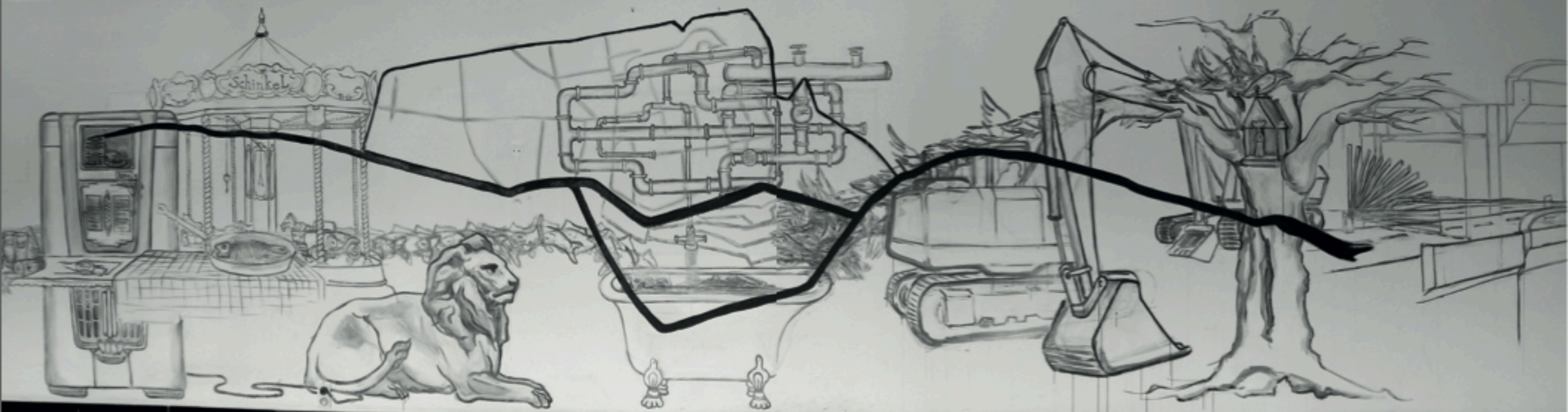
“With is a not for profit organization in Kortrijk, Belgium, that offers an artistic platform to persons with mental disabilities. Of course I was touched when they contacted me in the winter of 2014 and asked if I would bring my art form into their world. The charity is housed in an early 1900’s building with quite some history, having formerly been a rheumatic wellness clinic and later a police station. One of the unique features of the Talking Walls process is how the art is generated through an immersion in the subject. Not only did the Museum aan de Overkant building become the canvas on which I painted (over two thousand separate images), but my residency was specifically designed as an outreach... to raise awareness of the indispensable work the charity is doing in Overleie and tangibly involve the neighborhood folks, and document their stories.”

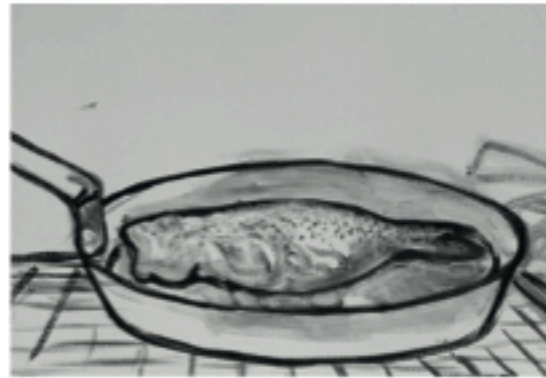
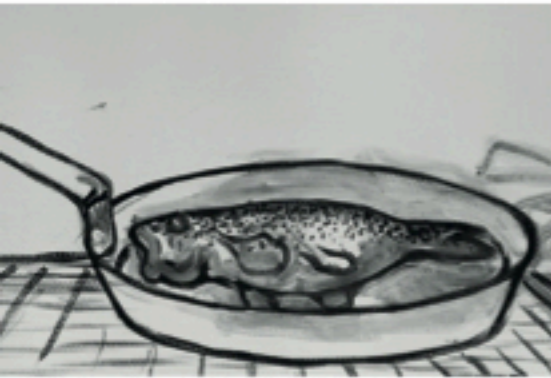
“I spent a number of weeks in Overleie painting, and interviewing the local characters about their history in the community, and what they thought made the neighborhood special. The intimate, historic, charming tales I heard became the visual motifs for the mural animation film. I recorded many of the conversations with the locals, and their voices became the basis for the film soundtrack as well.”

“In the end we were all benefitted by the experience” Soete says. “Not only does my mural remain permanently in the Museum, but the video and audio presentation have been officially archived by the City of Kortrijk... and more importantly I believe, the interactions we all shared, artist, community, and patron coming together... that is vital.”











TALKING WALLS - ROESELARE

"With an invitation from 'DeSpil' — a local cultural community center — I set up shop in Roeselare. The setting was intriguing, but didn't provide the larger wall-spaces I had become accustomed to. So I built my own cave!"

"I love the idea of making the creative process as transparent as possible. It gives people another idea of what art is. In my case, the finished films don't necessarily convey how much work goes into them, so bringing my atelier to the people seemed important. Now the process becomes less removed, more inviting, and the visitors were emboldened to share... which they did with stories about their lives and history in the Roeselare community."

"Not only did I interview, paint, and photograph on site but I set up an editing station as well. Conceived in continuity, I could assemble the film progressively. I had it on display so when people returned, each day it was a bit longer, closer to completion."

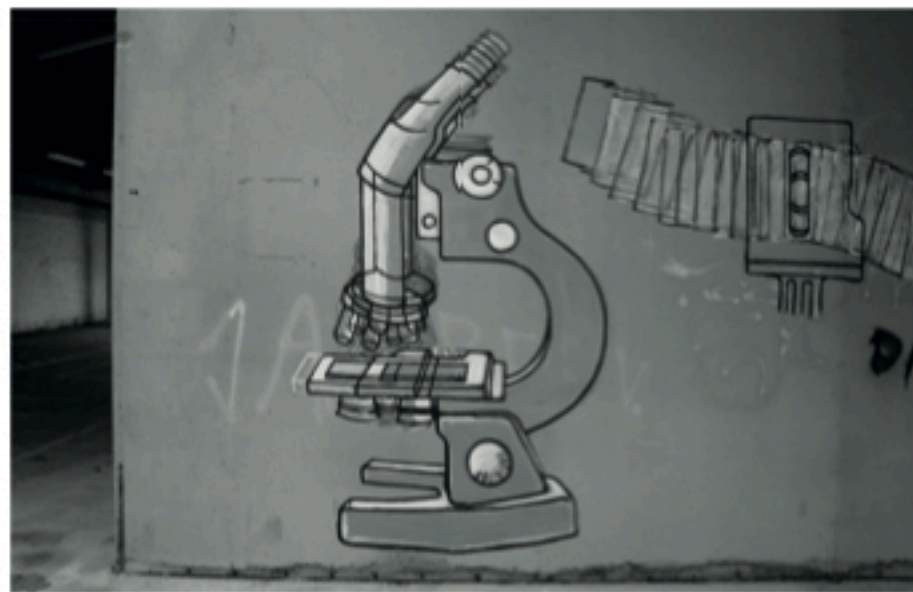
"The idea as always is to have all the work take on a life of it's own. The process of creation leaves an object, a product, a remembrance... Art is such a powerful vehicle to transmit an idea"

"The finished film will be permanently installed in the cultural center, and we received a number of favorable newspaper notices, and a quality broadcast piece was aired on Flemish television."









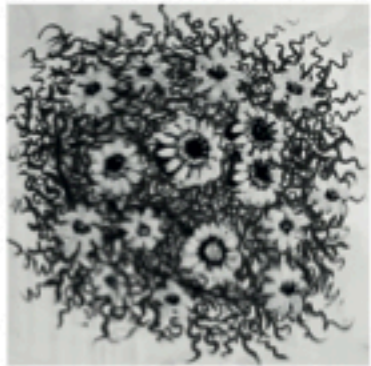
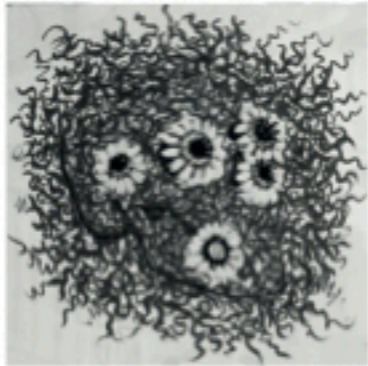
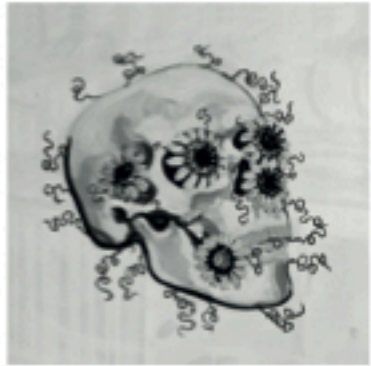
TALKING WALLS - TEMPUS FUGIT, GHENT

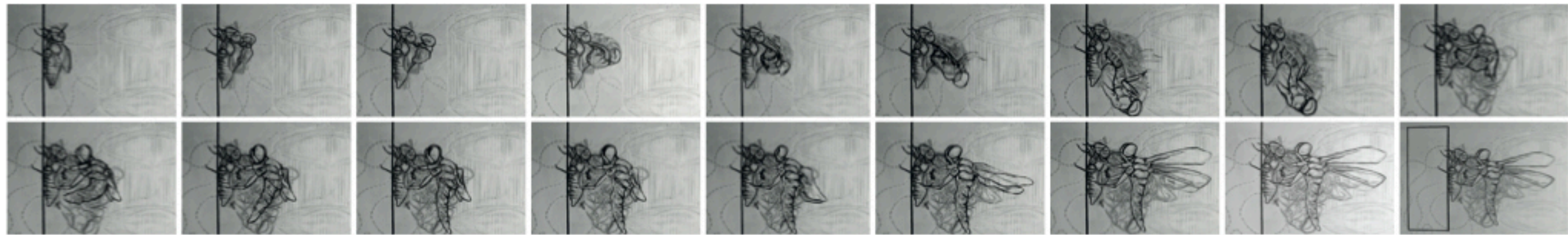
"With a haunting score from friend, award winning American composer, Alexander Berne and his Abandoned Orchestra, this film of nearly five thousand separate images was made exclusively in an empty (and soon to be demolished) furniture factory. My predominant meditation was on the passage of time. Life and Death. Creation and Dissolution. I tried to play with our perception of two and three dimensions."







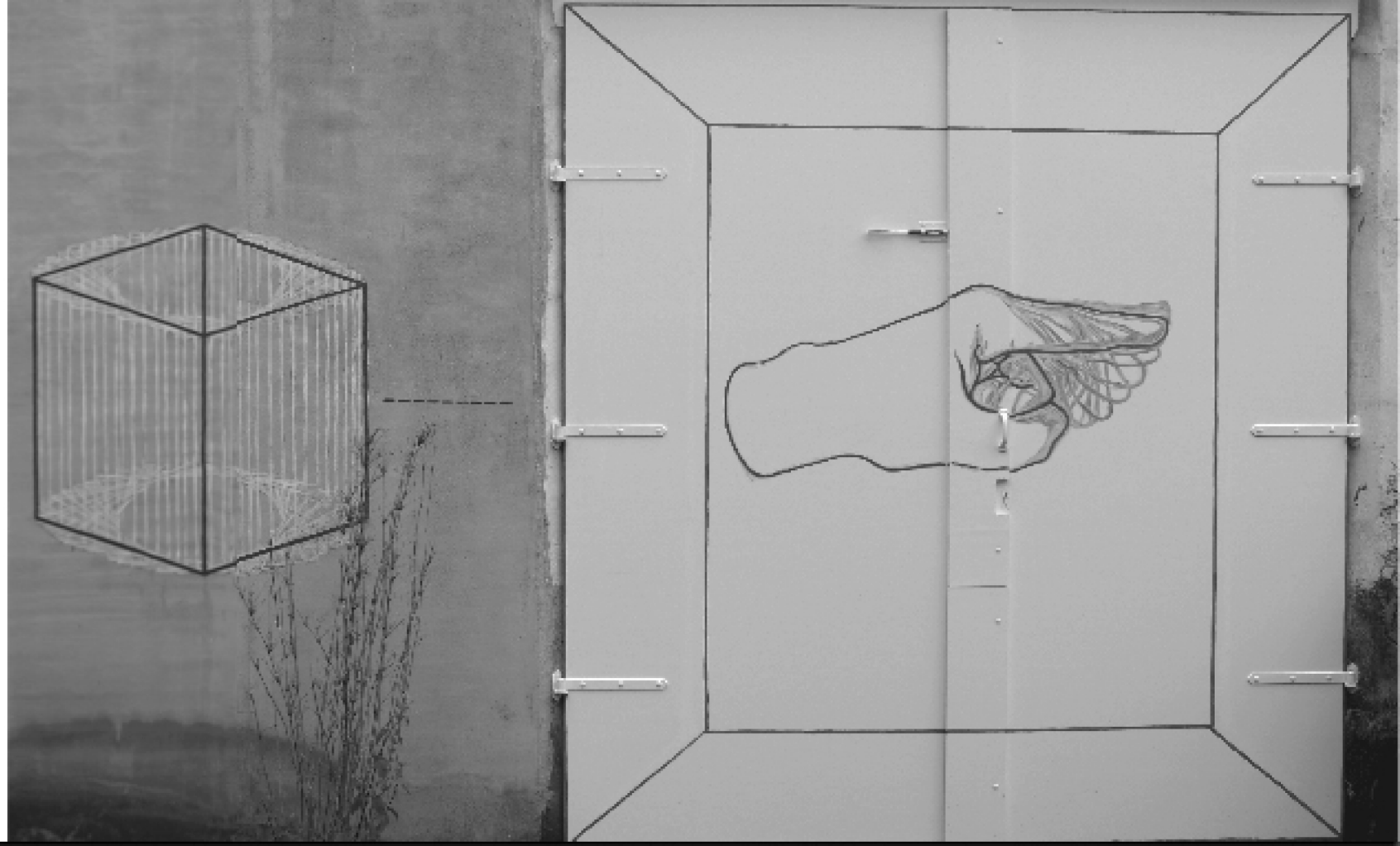


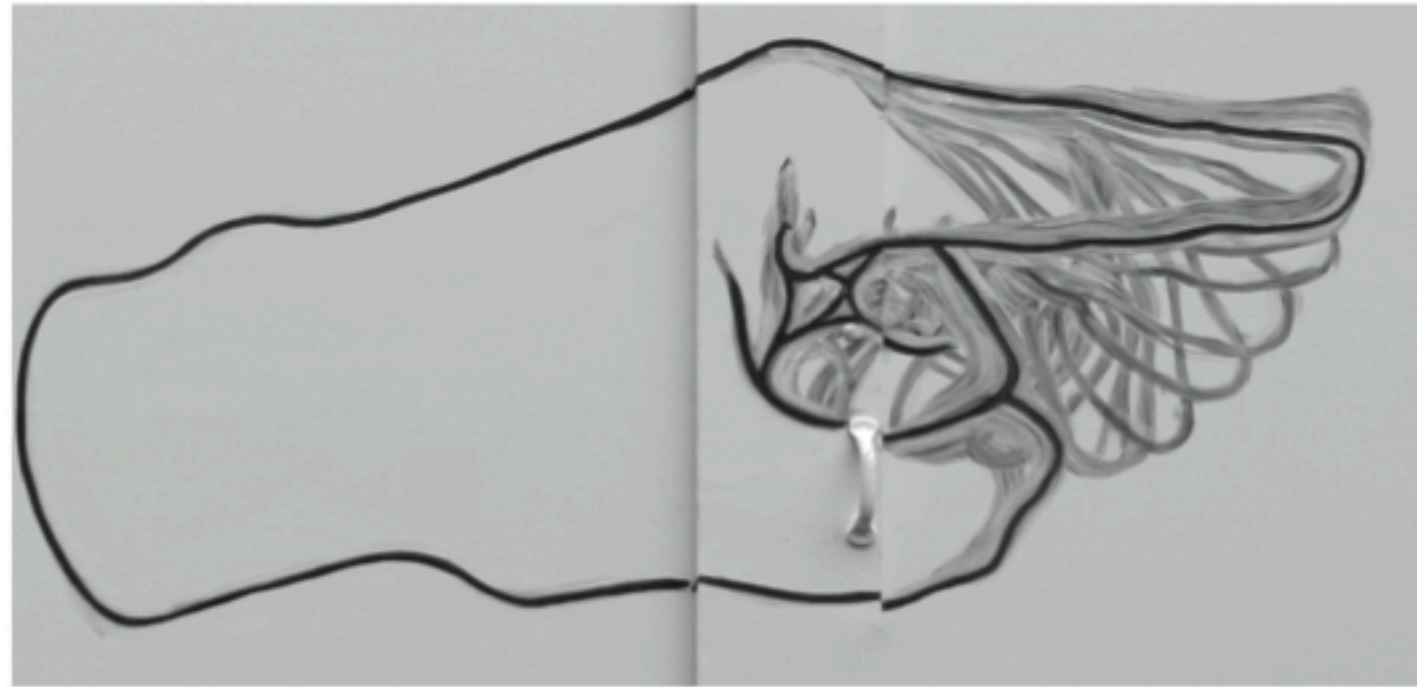


TALKING WALLS - WP ZIMMER, ANTWERP

"In an Antwerp inner-city setting, 'wpZimmer' commissioned an outdoor mural in their courtyard. The non profit group, with an international reach, was established to help provide much needed artist services and guidance."

"It was a quick one, I had two days to paint during their semi annual open house festival. The mural was varnished with a protective coating, and should remain for years to come."





THE EMPTY CHAIR DIALOGUES: A DREAM WITH OPEN EYES.

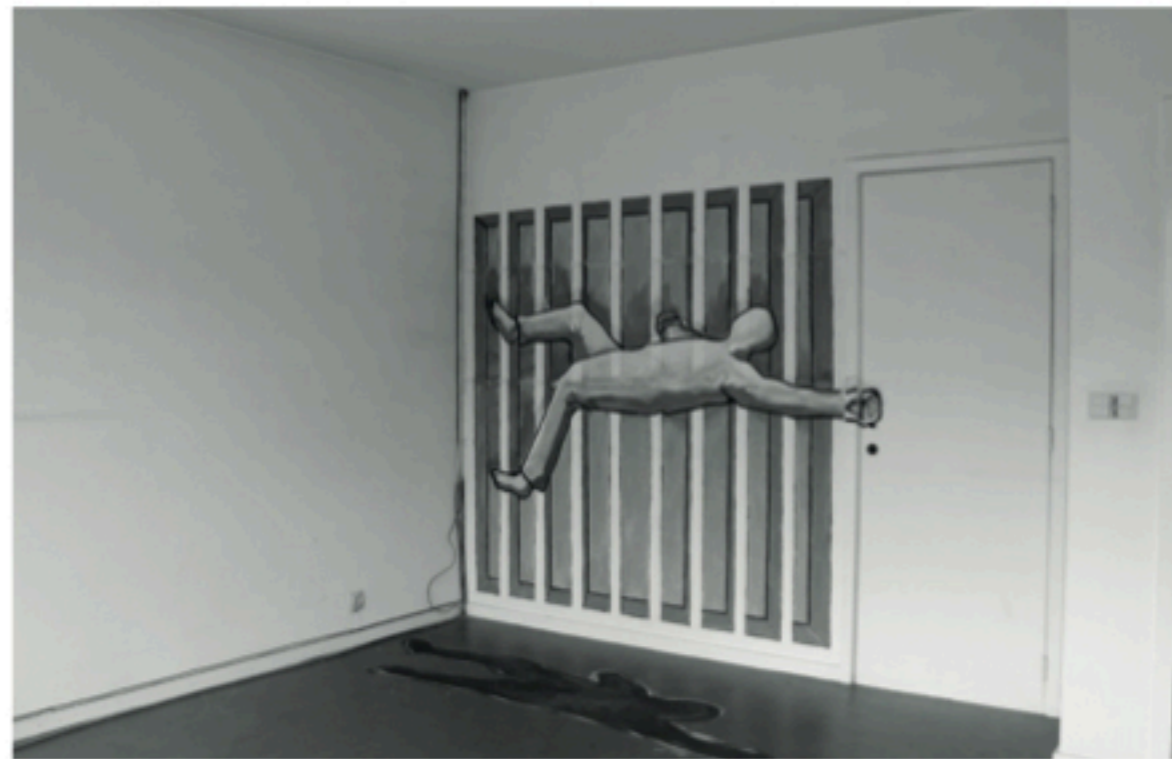
"Things can be fascinating or threatening...and so it all began as I was captured by the irony and tragedy of a contemporary television news item. A woman drowns herself by walking into the sea. Her reason? Wanting to escape from the hatred, greed, injustice, she saw portrayed continuously on the news."

"Of course in escaping from her pain in this manner, she became the protagonist in just the story she needed so desperately to leave behind."

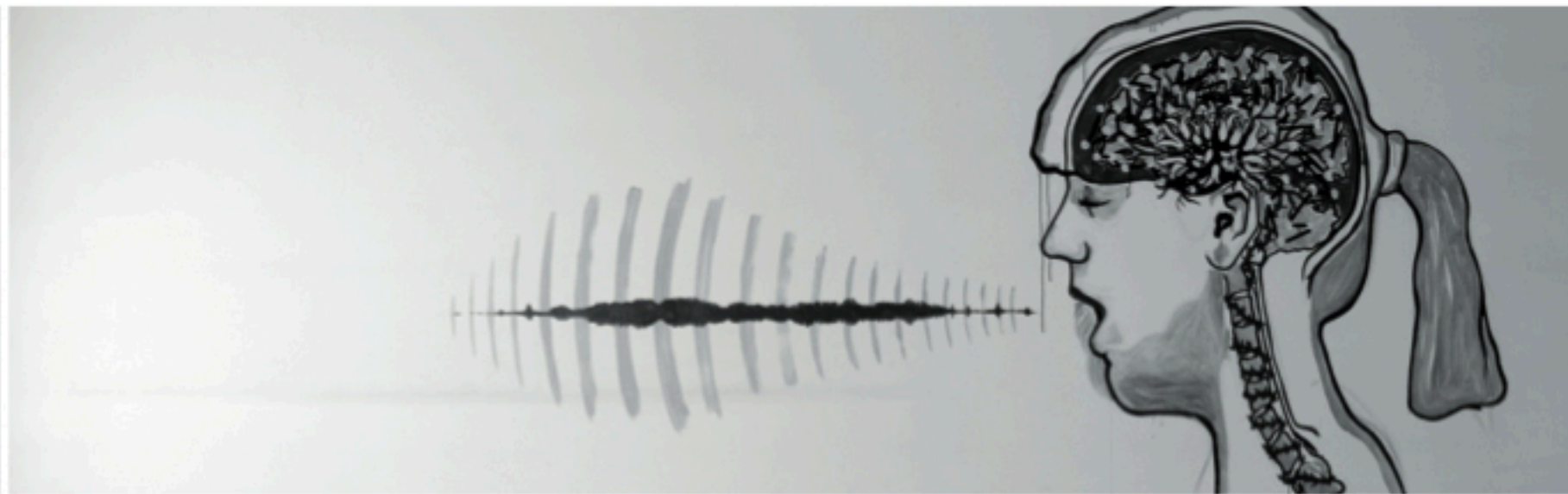
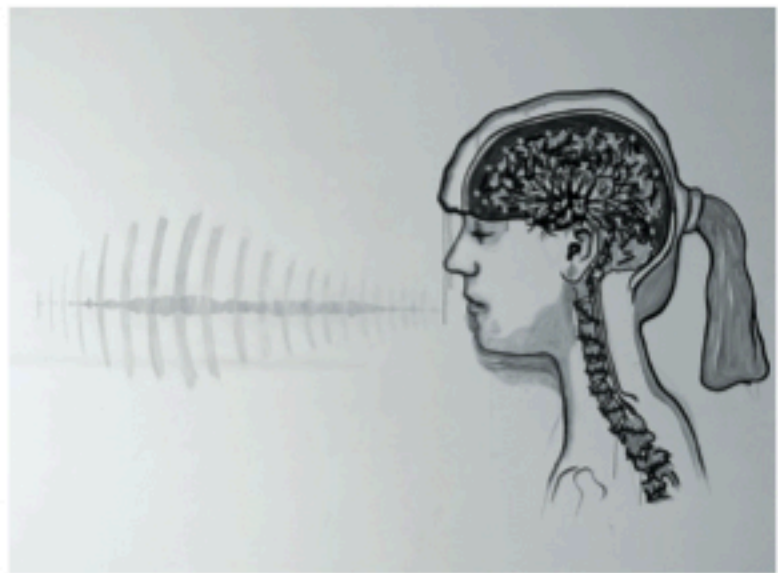
"Trying to puzzle this out, and inspired by the writings of CG Jung, I began my own experimentation; a series of dialogues with my other. An exploration in waking and dreaming states of my local consciousness and 'the soil where symbols grow,' the more collective unconscious realms."

"Dreams have a texture...the normal sense of time is lost..."











MOVING IMAGES

Karolien Soete (*1973) frequently expresses her outrage on Facebook when she encounters negative images of the Brugse Poort, a working-class neighbourhood in Ghent. The image the media creates of this area is very one-sided and exaggerated. She knows this as she resides in the Brugse Poort. Karolien lives in the Boerderijstraat (Farm Street) a street name that you don't tend to expect in an urban context. Although her house may be small, she has managed to decorate it with a personal touch and of course the cat helps to provide a pleasant homely feel. She seems much younger than she is; then again estimating ages is not a strong point of mine.

"From an early age, when still in grammar school, I knew that I wanted to be an artist," she says without pretence, "I'm now still working towards being one". She was born and bred in Roeselare where she spent most of her childhood. When she was just nine years old she and her three siblings (one twin sister and two older brothers) lost their father. At fifteen she went to the Sisters Maricolen art school (Institute of the Holy Family) in Bruges. She sang in several choirs and was allowed to sing in front of the choir at Mass. This gave her a rather 'grand' privilege. She was the only one allowed to ignore the blue and white school uniform and was permitted to wear a green hem in her blue sweater. A "victory" she remembers with pleasure.

After secondary school, she decided to take a degree in teaching art. Here she was instructed by artists such as Annie Vanhoutte - in the school known as Mrs. Floré - and Adelin De Craene. These are names that I have heard among young artists who studied in Bruges. They clearly had a strong and positive influence.

However, the internships she did in three schools as a future teacher demotivated Miss Soete. After her training as a teacher, she continued her education as an artist at Sint-Lucas in Ghent. She opted for Graphic Arts. Karolien deems the last years at art school very important because you are encouraged to follow your own path. This became a very personal quest for her, which she shaped along a well-wrought, introspective exploration. She sees a psychoanalyst and undergoes several sessions according to the Jungian analysis.

Her thesis was an exhibition built around the self-portrait. Almost every single day she had drawn a self portrait and also made a huge range of linocuts (also self-portraits).

At Group T of the International Hogeschool of Leuven Karolien Soete went on to study info graphics and computer graphics. At that time computers were not yet a complete taboo within the course of Free Graphics at Sint-Lucas, and Karolien wanted to explore the possibilities of the computer.

With all this baggage she began to teach a small group of students at a private school. She did this for three years. Her students joined her class in order to take an exam for the middle panel, a task she gladly fulfilled. When she was in New York, Karolien Soete made a series of portraits of fashion designers and exhibited these in the trendy Meat packing district where you can find plenty of fashion boutiques. By doing this, a number of designers got to see her portraits; it also meant a good start for her work.

Subsequently she made a series of double portraits in which she sought to confront and confuse people. Included in this series is a portrait of a "friendly looking" Adolf Hitler, as he was known to be at times, and a portrait of Mother Theresa who comes across as a tough bitch. People are not just good or bad, there are many facets to a person. Soete opts for nuance in our judgment of each other.

She has created a sequence entitled 'Mugshots' from profile pictures of delinquents. Photographs of criminals tend to be shamelessly shared on the internet. She noticed that there were a lot of beautiful and young people among these delinquents. These are portraits that strike you in a different way.



Miss Soete also took the initiative to browse the archive of the Dr. Guislain institute in Ghent. It contains some valuable photographs that Brother Ebergist De Beyne took of his patients. They constitute a treasure of details on the evolution of psychiatry and are a source of inspiration for several artists including Karolien Soete. She made a series of paintings based on these pictures using a lot of varnish prior and subsequent to painting on Japanese paper, and stretches the paintings in a copper frame. This technique makes the viewer conscience of the fragile object, just like the people in the portraits were fragile subjects too.

She made her portraits in oil paint on Japanese paper as she doesn't "like the texture of the canvas. I prefer to paint with brushes and want to keep the rubbing as minimal as possible. The Japanese paper was modified so that it became very smooth and I could paint on it without any resistance". This mode of operation does however require the use of strong varnish that needs to be applied while wearing a mask and in her little house the fumes of the varnish remained a constant presence. She became hypersensitive to these and got something generally known as the "painter's disease". This would give her career a serious turn.

In 2009 she made a series of shadow images on Plexiglas, inspired by the photographs made by Dr. Ebergist. These are the 'Reviving Souls'. She dubs them 'light graffiti', graffiti with light. At night she went into town with a strong flashlight and projected these portraits onto the buildings in the city. She wanted to bring a kind of homage to the people she painted, thus creating her very own modest light festival, noticed here and there by some wandering souls.

She has been given a residence in Les Ateliers Claus in Brussels, an initiative of the artist Frans Claus, in the context of the Cimatics Festival. During the concerts her portraits were projected on a wall that was covered with texts and poems.

It is at this festival that she got the idea for her first stop motion film, or at least the initial step towards it. She showed a sequence of pictures in and of spaces that evoke constriction. Her main goal was to provide viewers with an experience.



In 2010 she finally stopped using oil paint.

Chinese ink and white acrylic paint allow her to work without wearing a mask and her body only slightly reacts to it. She made her first real film at her home on a white wall. The painting process remains important. Each image is painted with the brush and is painted over to again create a new image. Of every picture she takes a photograph, thus creating an animated film. There where the traditional animation filmmakers sit hunched over a white sheet of paper of manageable size, Karolien Soete stands in the middle of the space and paints the wall. She masters the space and in addition to the walls sometimes also uses the floor. These are her 'Talking Walls'.

In 2011 she made her first film 'Prolegomena'. The film became the décor for a dance performance in New York. The premise is what happens to you, what is going on inside of you, when you are trapped in a completely dark room where you have no clues. From this notion a both haunting and poetic film poem arose that is appropriately accompanied by the music of Alexander Berne, someone with whom she maintains regular contact. Her film got noticed and is frequently shown at festivals. Her production was selected as the only Belgian film for the latest international short film festival of Leuven in the category of experimental short film. After Prolegomena more films followed, each time scoring well at short film festivals around the world.

Usually she makes her films in a space that is accessible for the public. She did this at the last exhibition of the Canvas Collection at Bozar, but also in Bruges at the Gallery Pinsart, a gallery that usually exhibits her work. In these cases she made a stop motion film about the relevant city or town.

Meanwhile she has found a studio in her neighbourhood where a former factory building is being transformed into a lively alternative cultural centre for the district. She wants to work on a new film, which already evokes my curiosity.

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