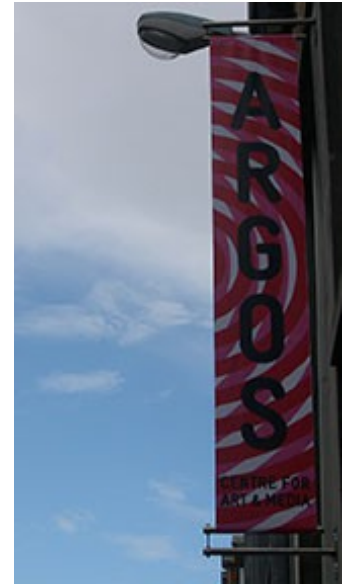


A VIDEO PROGRAM BY ARGOS – CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA

Since 1989 Argos is the Belgian leading institute for art film and video. Argos combines the function of an art centre with a fully-fledged collection program—which is absolutely unique. Today, Argos collection comprises circa 5,000 works. Argos covers the entire chain of development: production, archiving, preservation (analogue, digitised and digital-born), making accessible to the public, reflection and distribution. An extensive and varied activity program includes exhibitions, lectures and screenings, and guarantees a unique experience and a voyage of discovery with every visit.



The screening program highlights a selection of Belgian film and video productions created between 1969 and 2015. It presents the rich and original approaches of some of the most interesting Belgian artists and, at the same time, it gives an insight of the Argos collection.

With more than 200 television programs produced for Belgian television between 1964 and 1998, Jef Cornelis (1941) is the most prolific filmmaker in the Argos collection. Although he made films about modern art, architecture and the Flemish landscape, Cornelis's work is primarily a dissection of television itself and it shows the controversial relation between television and the visual arts.

Among the pioneers of Belgian video art, Jacques-Louis Nyst (1942-1996) produced a very consistent body of reflective, capricious, fantastic, poetic or purely theoretical video work. The concern of how art “functions” is always central and Nyst referred to his work as “rational art”: a confrontation between objects and their representations.

Violin Fase (1986) perfectly represents the beginning of Argos when the organization was founded to distribute the film and video works created at the intersection between film, performance and audiovisual art. *Violin Fase* is a solo in two movements: dance and camera. Eric Pauwels (1953)

twirls the camera around the body of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker (1960). He creates a new relationship between the camera and the dancer, but also between body and dance, dance and cinema.

From the older work, *James Ensor in Oostende ca. 1920* (2000) is a fake “found footage montage” and investigates the truthfulness of the image. By taking everyday and common elements, namely a “found film reel”, and placing it in an unusual context, Guillaume Bijl (1946) forces the spectator to rethink his relation to reality and documents.

The most recent works in the program introduce other aspects. Works like *Papillon d'amour* (2003),



Off the Record (2008) or *Waiting for the Secret* (2014) make use of different stylistic approaches such as the manipulation of found footage, the use of animation technique and the relation between the moving and photographic images. In other cases, for instance *The Corridor* (2010) and *LILI* (2015) or again *Waiting for the Secret* (2014), the artists build new narratives and propose new ways to undermine the boundaries between genres. Subtly political, these works investigate contemporary issues and they challenge our (audiovisual) heritage and recent history.

From early video and TV works through dance and found-footage films to video-essays, the program shows the hectic and richness of Belgian productions and the Argos collection.



Jef Cornelis - Marcel Broodthaers: Musée d'art du XVIIe siècle

1969, 4'58", b&w, Dutch & French spoken, English subtitles.

Views of the 17th century "Eagles Department" in Antwerp: façade, wooden crates, postcards of 17th-century works on the walls and a small garden. Marcel Broodthaers is whitewashing the inscription "Département des Aigles" written on the fence in the garden. Part of the BRT (Belgian radio and television broadcast network) television series "Zoeklicht" ('Searchlight').



Jacques-Louis Nyst - L'objet

1974, 10'43", b&w, French spoken, English subtitles.

The discovery of a child's toy: a small blue metallic coffee pot, presents a complete enigma to an archaeologist of the future. The scientist no longer has any information at his disposal on Twentieth Century civilization. Patiently he attempts to unveil the significance of the object. His imagination, which distances itself from historic truth, progressively enters into a dream state, in which tenderness and fragility are the only reality.



Eric Pauwels – Violin Fase

1986, 11'44", colour, sound.

A solo in two movements; dance and camera. Eric Pauwels twirls the camera around the body of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. What we see is not the geometrical and minimalist choreographic structure, but a possessed woman, bathing in sweat, exploring the boundaries of physical exhaustion. A solo in two movements: the dance and the camera. Four uninterrupted takes. Pauwels is constantly looking for the essence, the soul of cinema. In its explicit presence the camera is also driven to its

extreme, perspiration, hardship. Pauwels is not concerned with beautiful shots, but with the investigation.



Guillaume Bijl - James Ensor in Oostende ca 1920

2000, 2'20", b&w, silent.

The highly individual and visionary work of James Ensor (1860-1949), familiar for its masquerades, carnival scenes and grotesque caricatures, is not easily categorized under any modern genre. Ensor had close ties with Ostend, where he was born and continued to live, and it was the source of inspiration for many of his works. In 2000, which was "Ensor Year", the installation artist Guillaume Bijl made a short fictitious found-footage film entitled *James Ensor in Oostende ca. 1920*, which shows the painter at this resort

with his friends. We see them having a drink, strolling in the arcades of the Thermae Palace and sitting on the beach. Bijl's meticulous choice of locations, belle époque dress (including bathing costumes) and his cinematographically perfect imitation of the rather jerky black & white images, as well as the patina and the perfectly imitated scratches on the film emulsion, all resulted in a perfect replica: an apparently forgotten roll of film from the days of silent film. Bijl himself classifies this faultless slice of life, one of his rare excursions into film and video, under 'cultural tourism', one of the elements of his work in which he popularizes cultural history subjects and reduces them to clichés for the general public.



Nicolas Provost - Papillon d'amour

2003, 3'30", colour, sound.

Papillon d'amour is based on key scenes from Akira Kurosawa's classic *Rashômon* [1950], which are modified by a simple intervention: the insertion of a vertical axis of reflection through the image center. This central axis defines the focus of agency and, at the same time, the sphere of maximum turbulence on the image plane. It becomes an interstice perpetually engulfing and rebirthing images, producing figures in ongoing metamorphosis. Be it the step-by-step disembodiment of the female figure in *Papillon d'amour*, or the repeated submergence and

reemergence of the two antagonists in *Bataille*—the fold simultaneously promises protection and destruction, making the figures more and less than whole.

Wendy Morris - Off the Record

2008, 4'56", colour, sound.



Off the Record explores the different experiences and treatment of black and white South African soldiers in Europe during World War I. Two documents form the basis of the film, a war diary kept by the artist's great-uncle Walter Giddy, and a 1917 account by Sol Plaatje of the frustrated attempts of many black South Africans to play their part in the war effort – the title refers to the lack of official recognition for their contribution. Points of convergence between these disparate histories are created through the process of animation.

Sarah Vanagt – The Corridor

2010, 6'45", colour, English spoken.



For 5 days Sarah Vanagt and cinematographer Annemarie Lean-Vercoe followed a donkey during its weekly visits to old people in nursing homes in South-England. From home to home, from room to room. Each time the donkey was welcomed warmly, with greetings, songs, strokes, childhood stories, poems, and laughter. Until the donkey entered the room of Norbert, a man who lost his ability to

speak, yet not his ability to touch. Even though Vanagt initially followed the donkey's steps in search of reminiscences brought about by the animal's mute presence, she came home with an altogether different film. While editing, the film became shorter and shorter, as if the words that had accompanied the donkey's visits got in the way. What is left is perhaps a bas-relief disguised as a painting, disguised as a film.

Meggy Rustamova – Waiting for the Secret

2014, 6', colour, Esperanto spoken, English subtitles.



Waiting for a Secret takes its starting point from a picture, revealing its secrets by zooming into the various details. Gradually, the picture becomes alive, raising issues such as isolation, linguistic confusion, pixelisation and the suggestion of movement within a still image.

An van. Dienderen – LILI

2015, 12', colour, English spoken.



In a TV studio a girl named *Lili* (played by Belgian actress Maaïke Neuville) is asked to serve as a so-called China Girl. China Girls, used in cinema history since the 1920's, are women with Caucasian skin who are filmed alongside a colour-chart in order to adjust the colours of the film. They have no dialogues to memorize or characters to impersonate. All they have to do, is have an impeccable white complexion. Their skin – white as porcelain – is used as a reference for the colour grading of camera and printing, ultimately excluding people of colour who do not conform to this implicit norm. *Lili* tells the story of one of

these China Girls through archival material, found footage and documentary recordings, and questions the tradition of China Girls contextualized in a society, which, according to anthropologist Michael Taussig exemplifies chromophobic uneasiness with color.