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Say it with flowers...

Guest of Honour Arne Quinze brings nature, colour and joy to BRAFA 2022

BRAFA (Brussels Art Fair) will make a colourful comeback to an on-site version of the fair from January 23rd-30th 2022, with 134 art dealers from 14 countries offering the best in ancient, modern and contemporary art! The Guest of Honour will be the Belgian artist Arne Quinze, who draws his inspiration from the beauties of nature. Each of his creations is preceded by a meticulous and admiring observation of the large wildflower garden that surrounds his studio, located in the small village of Sint-Martens-Latem, which was formerly the centre of Flemish Expressionism.



Arne Quinze – Picture: Dave Bruel

Brafa has a tradition of welcoming a different Guest of Honour at each of its fairs. After Julio Le Parc (2017), Christo (2018), Gilbert & George (2019), the honour had never fallen to a Belgian artist before. This will be rectified during the 2022 fair with Arne Quinze, echoing a certain need for a 'local refocusing' that emerged during the health crisis. But more broadly, the colourful and expressive palette of Arne Quinze's art, deeply inspired by the beauties of nature and flora in particular, will aim to instill a joyful and positive atmosphere at the event.

Short biography

Born in 1971, Arne Quinze is a Belgian contemporary artist, painter and sculptor. His work ranges from small drawings and paintings and medium-sized sculptures to massive

installations. He began his career in the 1980s as a graffiti artist. He has always questioned the role of our cities and began a quest for cities to become open air museums. His work quickly evolved from Street Art to Public Art with recurring themes of social interaction, urbanisation and diversity.

I was shocked to learn that since I was born in 1971, we, as humans, have managed to destroy one-third of the flora and fauna existing at that time.

Arne Quinze

Arne Quinze's art

The gigantic wooden construction entitled *Uchronia*, which Arne Quinze and his team built in the Nevada desert (USA) in 2006, emphasised his aim for culture and nature to coexist. This was followed by numerous sculptures and exhibitions that included both large installations and small paintings and sculptures. At the present time, many of his installations are considered to be landmarks that present a different dynamic for urban development: in Paris, Shanghai, Beirut, Washington DC, Brussels, Mumbai, São Paulo, Dubai... Quinze has been working in cities now for over 25 years, and many projects are still lined up to be finalised.

What drives Quinze is the belief in the possible achievement of an idealistic society where each individual would communicate and interact, aiming to bring people together and push them into a vigorous dialogue. His unconventional public installations have challenged perceptions in the city centers of Belgium (*Cityscape, The Sequence, Rock Strangers, The Passenger*), Germany (*The Traveller*), France (*Camille, Rock Strangers, Le Beau Rêveur*), Lebanon (*The Visitor*), China (*Red Beacon*), Brazil (*Matarazzo*), and the USA (*Timegate, Whispers, Scarlet*), amongst others.

'Cities as open-air museums – it sounds like an idealistic dream, but I am striving to achieve this dream. Confronting a public surrounded by art every day. Art has a positive influence on people and their personal development: it broadens their horizons and makes them more tolerant towards differences in society.'

Arne Quinze

The beauty of nature

Arne Quinze's sculptures come into being after numerous personal encounters with the unbridled beauty of nature. They symbolise his reflection on today's growing differences between the diversity of nature and the ongoing expansion of monotonous cities.

Whilst continuously unravelling the physical processes of complex demographics, they react to all impulses in order to keep an equilibrium, resulting in a play of attraction and rejection that shapes the organic forms and bright, electric colours. At first glance they seem to be vulnerable, but they persist in a vigorous dialogue, just like nature.

In every culture Quinze comes across, he is fueled by overwhelming optimism. Every new creative breed captures his research and study on interaction and urban movement,

expressing the continuous evolution of human beings and their environment. Besides building architectural sculptures, he creates complex art pieces and video installations inscribing his vision of how people see themselves and society. Works such as *Bidonvilles*, *Stilt Houses*, *Chaos*, *My Home My House My Stilt House*, *My Safe Garden*, *Natural Chaos* and *Natural Chaos Satellites* have been shown in several exhibitions.

Diversity

In each of Arne Quinze's recent works, we encounter a seemingly chaotic confrontation between individual elements that nevertheless correlate and form an integral part of a biotope that is meticulously created and organically multiplied. The range of colours and shapes is as broad as the viewer's imagination. The artist depicts a society as a coherent and intact ecosystem, a sampling of nature, which is his chief inspiration. In this way, the sculptures and installations call for a retention of diversity and pluralism, for experimentation and cross-fertilisation. This is a clear indictment of the present trend towards monocultures and soured relationships.

Bringing people back together again: according to Quinze, this should be the ultimate goal of public art. After an initial surprising impression, a sculpture is able to refine the threshold of acceptance for the passer-by, by flying in the face of the norm – since norms lead only to monotonous grey cities. As in the artworks, and as in nature, cities should aim for a symbiosis of numerous organisms, which in their turn fuel conversation and consequently the conservation of their future.

In fact, the artist quite literally challenges monocultures. With his garden as a scale model, an explosion of life with the rampant splendour of flowers, the pursuit of variation and diversity is both a statement and a leitmotiv that runs through his work.

At Brafa 2022

At Brafa 2022, he will be exhibiting large-format paintings including a quadriptych inspired by the "four seasons", a series of works on paper, a monumental sculpture, and spatial, sound and video installations, not to mention the design for this edition's carpet. His colourful creations will undoubtedly bring a joyous atmosphere to the event, perfectly adapted for this relaunch of the fair!

Laurent Mercier (Co-Director MARUANI MERCIER) on Arne Quinze

The MARUANI MERCIER gallery – which was the first to exhibit contemporary art at Brafa - has represented Arne Quinze since 2018.

Arne was the most controversial artist we decided to represent.

Not only because he is the first Belgian artist in our programme, and is what we call in our good Flemish slang "nen BV" (a publicly known figure in Flanders)...

Not only because of his looks - he must be the toughest-looking man on the planet painting flowers - or his colourful personal life...

But because Arne has always done what he wanted to do and not what the market expected him to do. The art market loves to be able to put an artist 'in a box' so that his practice is explainable, recognisable, predictable, and therefore understandable. Yet as soon as Arne feels he is being put in a box, he will change completely his artistic practice. He makes me think of Francis Picabia, of whom it is said had 180 cars and 400 women in his life and also completely changed his style of painting each time the market started to pick up on it. And that is what makes Arne a true creative, his refusal to do the same thing over and over again; he progresses until he has found what he was looking for, and then moves on to the next idea.

Arne has been taking risks for over 30 years, from secretly painting graffiti on trains to making the largest outdoor sculptures in the world. There is simply no other artist on this planet that has made as many colossal sculptures, seemingly impossible feats of engineering that find their inspiration in nature.

Arne is also a dear friend. We don't need to see each other often, but when we do, we just look into each other's eyes and connect immediately. His generosity, his ambition, his love of life, his drive are contagious.

More on Arne Quinze : www.arnequinze.com

BRAFA - Brussels Art Fair – from January 23rd-30th, 2022

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www.brafa.art

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