



Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line*, 2004. Video documentation of an action. Image: Julien Devaux

Francis Alÿs
A Story of Deception
09.10.2010 – 30.01.2011

WIELS



Francis Alÿs

A Story of Deception

9 October 2010 – 30 January 2011

MÉXICO
2010
Bicentenario
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Revolución

Wiels presents a major survey exhibition of Francis Alÿs (b. 1959 Belgium), one of contemporary art's most influential figures. Through various poetical and allegorical approaches, Alÿs explores political subjects such as contentious borders and economic crises, as well as everyday situations. The exhibition will present pictorial works alongside a number of new pieces, which have never been shown in Belgium. No less than 18 films documenting the artist's actions are featured in the show, ranging from tragicomic failures to poetic observations and other works more directly addressing current events. Paintings, drawings, installations and material drawn from a dozen other works complete the retrospective, which will allow visitors to follow the successive stages in the development of Alÿs' oeuvre and which have led him to become one of the most important artists of his generation.

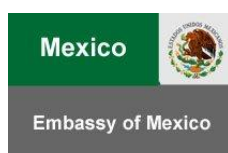
As the title of the exhibition hints, Alÿs questions our reason for being and the utility of things and actions, as well as the way we observe them and give form to them: for deception can be understood as artifice, hallucination, or disillusion. For Alÿs, there is only a fine line between relevance and inutility and he often plays with the illusions that prop up certain ideas, symbols or acts. His work often starts with a simple act, performed either by him or by others, which is documented in any wide number of media, without ever really necessarily coming to a concrete conclusion. Working in urban settings or in dramatic landscapes, he creates fable-like interventions, which frequently address a historical or political concern attached to a specific site.

Alÿs moved to Mexico City in the mid 1980s at a time of political unrest. He started taking photographs of sleeping stray dogs or street vendors, as metaphors for the ingenuity of daily life in a metropolis. In *Turista* (1994), he advertised himself with a cardboard sign reading "tourist", among unemployed workers offering their services.

In *Paradox of Praxis 1* (1997) Alÿs pushed a block of ice around Mexico City until it melted completely. The work stood as an allegory about failed modernisation strategies initiated by Mexico and other Latin American countries. More generally speaking, it is a dramatic metaphor, an illustration of the idea of applying maximum of effort for a minimum of results.

Alÿs has carried out actions across Latin America and in different symbolic places of our globalised world, addressing economic and political issues without a proselytising or moralising tone. *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) is described by Alÿs as 'land art for the landless'. The work involved organising a line of 500 Peruvian students walking in line over a sand dune in Lima, digging as they went, displacing the hill by a few centimetres. Even if the alteration of the environment was minimal, the performance showed the power and impact of communal action. *The Green Line* (2004) belongs to a series of wanderings, which Alÿs turns into an artistic practice. Over two days, the artist walked through Jerusalem and traced a line of green paint dripping from a can as he paced alongside the armistice border, known as 'the green line' – in reference to the colour used in maps – drawn between Israel and Jordan in 1948. Through this gesture, the artist questioned the relevance of a poetic act in a highly charged political situation.

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The more recent *Don't Cross the Bridge* (2008) expresses the return of Francis Alÿs towards poetry as a tool to undermine politics. It also shows a renewed interest for childlike imagination and the way it relates to contemporary history. On August 12th 2008, Alÿs orchestrated a situation where children holding a shoe in the shape of a boat in one hand, marched towards Morocco while other children left Morocco for Spain with the attaching shoe. The two groups met in the Strait of Gibraltar. The same year, along the Panama Canal, Alÿs repainted 60 old signs on the road, reanimating the border between North and South America.

Alongside video and film installations, the exhibition will include Francis Alÿs's dream-like paintings *Le Temps du Sommeil* (1996-present) in which visitors can discover the artist's repertoire of actions and principals. Additional paintings revealing the artist's recent evolution, as well as objects made in collaboration with various workers in Mexico, will also be featured. The exhibition will end with the powerful video *Tornado* (2000-10), presented for the first time.

Francis Alÿs was born in Belgium in 1959. His work has been included in numerous international biennials including São Paulo (1998, 2005), Istanbul (1999, 2001) and Venice (1999, 2001, 2007). He has had solo exhibitions at major international institutions including the Musée Picasso d'Antibes, Whitechapel in London, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, MACBA in Barcelona, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes and the UCLA Hammer.

Francis Alÿs: A Story of Deception is curated by Mark Godfrey, Curator, Tate Modern and Kerry Greenberg, Assistant Curator, Tate Modern. The exhibition has been organised in collaboration with WIELS where it will be curated by Dirk Snauwaert and The Museum of Modern Art, New York where it will be curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Cara Starke.

The french and dutch editions of the catalogue including texts by Mark Godfrey, Klaus Biesenbach, Cara Starke, Cuauhtémoc Medina, Eduardo Abaroa, Tom McDonough, Eyal Weizman, T.J. Demos, Miwon Kwon, Francesco Careri, Carla Faesler, Laymert Garcia dos Santos, Boris Groys and Lorna Scott Fox was published by Wiels in collaboration with Lannoo.

The exhibition is sponsored by



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Practical information

Opening

Friday October 8th, 18:30 – 21:00

Press conference

Thursday October 7th, 10:00

Complementary program

- ° Discussion between Cuauhtémoc Medina, Mark Godfrey and Dirk Snauwaert
- ° On the mezzanine: continuous screening of the documentaries by VRT-Goudvis and by Julien Devaux
- ° Look Who's Talking by Edith Dekyndt, Piet Vanrobaeys, Olivier Bastin, Sophie Whetnall, Honore d'O, Jef Lambrecht

Dates and info : www.wiels.org

Funday Mornings

Every Sunday morning between 11am and 1pm, an artist welcomes children from 5 to 11 yo for a **creative workshop** inspired by the exhibitions on view in our art centre. An opportunity for parents, to visit the exhibitions in peace or to enjoy a **tasty brunch**, in the unique setting of our brew hall.

Reservation only: 02 340 00 52 – nadia@wiels.org

NEW opening hours

Wednesday – Sunday : 11:00 – 18:00

Nocturne, every first and third Wednesday of the month : 11:00 – 21:00

Monday & Tuesday : closed

Next exhibitions

22.10.2010 – 16.01.2011 : Kasper Akhoj, Lorna Mcintyre, Evelyne Axell

2011 : The Other Tradition, David Claerbout, Sven Augustijnen, Nasreen

Mohamedi, Charlotte Beaudry, Alina Szapocznikow

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WIELS
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The renovation and refurbishment of the building is supported by
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