

Belgium, one might say, has no single art scene. Or it may be, perhaps, more accurate to say that Belgium, built as it is on divergent historic, linguistic, and cultural foundations and given its essentially irreverent attitude towards anything that would package it into a clear and tangible unity, has managed to resist having a “scene” at all. In this context, the exhibition *Un-Scene II* concentrates on what some might, in shorthand, call the emerging Belgian art scene. But with its play on words, which stresses both what appears and does not appear to constitute a coherent “scene,” this exhibition is instead an attempt to sketch out an inevitably subjective portrait of a particular place, time, and set of singular artistic concerns—as these are played out in the work of young artists, some Belgian by birth, and some who have chosen Belgium as the specific context in which to develop their work.

*Un-Scene II* is the second edition of what is now a triennial tradition at WIELS, an integral part of its ongoing research into the practices and questions that animate the artistic life in and around the institution. While featuring twelve invited artists (plus two more proposed by one of the invited artists) working in sculpture, installation, performance, photography, painting, and video, the exhibition brings together a suite of idiosyncratic practices that seemed, with their specific idioms, to draw on and put into perspective the larger questions driving art making in Belgium today.

Over the course of research and studio visits with artists, we understood the complexity of such a project and the difficulty of creating anything like an “objective” selection among the large number of promising artists that make up the Belgian artistic landscape. Partly for exactly that reason, we imagined *Un-Scene II* from the start as an exhibition that would attempt to be coherent in its form, something more than a mere collection of artists, and certainly more than a compendium of every artist who might rightfully feel he or she could or should claim a place in such an exhibition. This was a curatorial decision founded in the desire of not falling into the trap of exhibitions that bring together a seemingly endless number of artists and claim to represent *everyone*, only in fact to end up representing nothing and no one well. Moreover, we hoped that, in its particular choices, *Un-Scene II* would suggest that each edition could attempt to be its own subjective portrait of this complex territory called “Belgium,” since each edition can be different in its protocol, form, and way of making choices.

Rather than an exhibition of *things*, *Un-Scene II* attempts to be an exhibition of *practices*. Thus, instead of featuring many artists, each with one “representative” work, we have deliberately tried to have *Un-Scene II* provide a complex image of the processes, reflections, and working methods – in sum, the practice – of the artists taking part in it. To that end, we have chosen to include fewer artists in this edition, and thus to provide each with the possibility of showing a larger range work. This allowed us to feature two or more projects, and even projects that might seem to reveal internal tensions or wildly different ways of working within their own production.

In its construction, the show reveals correspondences and relationships among the artists; it brings to the fore, sometimes quite by chance, shared sets of questions and concerns lurking in what seem at times to be opposed aesthetics and approaches. Without wanting to impose a thematic unity in the whole exhibition or limiting our

selection according to pre-conceived ideas, *Un-Scene II* underscores something that seems to us to deeply animate and traverse art making in Belgium today: above and beyond their production of autonomous artworks, all these artists have been active in generating a larger conversation around what the role of the artist is or could be. With their involvement in radio programs, in curating exhibitions, in the construction of alternative art academies, journals, publishing houses, or in a host of other collaborative projects, they vindicate the possibility that being an artist today can include many activities not purely or conventionally seen as “artistic.” Beyond that, we found that many of the artists in the show had a voluntary and decided intransigence about to their practices, a way of returning again and again to certain themes, questions, or concerns that reveals how deep-seated and resolute their artistic languages and preoccupations are. As a whole, we opted for a group of relatively young artists who, while already demonstrating incredible maturity in their practice, have yet to benefit from wide international exposure, and most of whom have not yet had the chance to develop projects in the context of larger public platforms, whether nationally or internationally.

In order to represent the diversity of mediums and approaches we found among the selected artists, we decided to open up the platform of the exhibition and to multiply its potential forms. *Un-scene II* thus presents contributions by each of the participating artists spread across several different spaces: the exhibition galleries at WIELS, a vinyl LP, a publication, as well as a program of lectures, screenings, and performance events. These various formats were envisioned in order to accommodate the diversity of mediums the artists use in their practice. The exhibition spaces will feature multiple projects by each artist; this includes new productions as well as older works or revisitations of previous projects. The vinyl LP gathers sound pieces specially conceived by each artist and rooted in the languages particular to their practices. The publication, rather than a documentation of the projects in the show or of previous works, presents each artist’s selection of an image that functions as a “source” for their thinking about their project for *Un-Scene II*, or even for their wider practice. Finally, a number of the artists plan to complement their projects and extend the purview of the exhibition by curating a series of lectures, film screenings, performances, and other events, making the exhibition gallery itself just one site for their reflection about what *Un-Scene II* could be.

—Elena Filipovic and Anne-Claire Schmitz