



in situ installatie MIROIR NOIR  
Campus Coppens site Brasschaat (B) , 2017



In situ installatie GOLDEN HOUR  
Guldenstraat 17, Mechelen (B) ,2019-20

## Between Bitumen en Sunlight

A brief intro

in situ installations Miroir Noir and Golden Hour



## MIROIR NOIR

### In situ installatie Campus at Coppens site (B) , 2017

Brasschaat Campus Coppens is an old military site located 20 km from the port of Antwerp (1) and its petrochemical cluster. The derelict gas station, a silent witness to the military history of the site, reminds us of the functional modernist architecture and the post-war era that was characterised by ever-growing prosperity, driven by the oil industry. The special properties of bitumen (2) make the Miroir Noir (3) gasstation not a finished product but a constantly evolving work: the material applied remains sensitive to climatic conditions. Miroir Noir is intended as a dark metaphor for the (in)visible processes of constant change (4) that we experience in political, economic, climatic and ecological wave movements.

**1.Antwerp** has the second largest petrochemical raffinage complex in the world, situated near the port of Antwerp. The industry in Belgium is very "carbon intensive".

**2.Bitumen** popularly known as tar, is a viscous dark mixture of various hydrocarbons found in crude oil. Bitumen can also be formed in nature without human intervention. Physically it is a liquid, but depending on the ambient temperature it also has the properties of a solid. At higher temperatures the fluidity increases; at extremely cold temperatures the material can change from viscoelastic to hard brittle and easily brittle glass. The oldest written mention of bitumen, or kupru, occurs in the Sumerian Gilgamesh epic (ca.2100 BC). The hero Gilgamesh tells how God Ea ordered him to build an ark against the expected flood, of which the inner and outer wall had to be covered with kupru.

#### **3.Miroir Noir.**

-In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a portable round, convex mirror with a black underground was used by painters, tourists and poets as an aid for viewing the landscape. If you stood with your back to the landscape you wished to admire, you saw an image in the mirror that differed from reality. A broader field of vision with fewer details and colour effects that recall the palette of Claude Lorrain. One saw the world as one wanted to see it. An idealised world.

-The Aztecs venerated Tezcatlipoca: the god of war. His attribute was a black obsidian(4) mirror.

-Because of its distorting, misleading characteristics, the black convex mirror was temporarily associated in the West with the devil. Those found with one in their possession were accused of witchcraft.

-In some cultures, tar was heated in order to be used as a black mirror during certain divination rituals to read the present, past and future.

**4.Obsidian** is a naturally occurring volcanic glass and is formed when lava cools quickly. The formation of volcanic glass is highly dependent on the degree of viscosity of the liquid lava, which in turn is strongly determined by its silica content. The higher this content in the lava, the greater its viscosity, and the more polymerization occurs in the lava. The colour of obsidian changes quite strongly, depending on the impurities it contains. The colour is usually dark green to deep black. Obsidian was an important raw material for knives and weapons for the Aztecs because it forms razor-sharp cutting edges. But also for the mysterious "*black mirrors*" of which an original came to John Dee by Spanish conquests and can be seen today in the British Museum.

**5.The pitch drop experiment** started in 1927, this is the longest-running scientific experiment in the world

## GOLDEN HOUR

### In situ installation at Mechelen, Guldenstraat 17 (B), 2019 longterm project

Mechelen is 20 km from the port of Antwerp and its petrochemical cluster (1) in the middle of the Antwerp-Brussels industrial axis. This is where the first railway line between Brussels and Mechelen was opened in 1835 and where, for the first time in history, a train with steam locomotives ran on the European continent, the driving force behind Belgium's industrial success in the 19th century. During the Second World War, Jews and gipsies were deported from the Dossin Kazerne to Auschwitz-Birkenau by the German occupying forces via this European railway network. Mechelen was once the capital and cradle of art and culture of the Hapsburg Netherlands. Within walking distance of the statue of Margaret of Austria (2), stands a guildhall The Golden Salmon, originally built in the 16th century. The neoclassical facade from the 18th century has been converted on the ground floor into a shop building in the 1950s, a large display case with great attention to incident daylight, characteristic of modernist architecture. The Golden Hour (3) installation is located here. The properties of the sunlight turn the shop front into a Golden Hour. The orange vinyl material applied to the display case, with some perspective openings, filters the sunlight (4). Throughout time, markings are made where the sunlight has been. Does the present show that the future lies in the past? Golden Hour is intended as a poetic metaphor of a flowing process of constant becoming and decaying. By drawing attention to organic time and sharpening the senses for the presence and our dependence on natural phenomena. At the same time, the romantic Golden Hour in today's Capitalocene situation, with worldwide permanent orange skies as a result of air pollution (4), is a rather paradoxical desire.

**1.Total in the port of Antwerp**, on 19/02/2020, the sky in Antwerp turned fire-red due to a flacking. This caused a red glow in the sky of Antwerp for two days. Not only do you see that flame, but you also hear it, even with the windows closed. According to Total, is flacking very noisy but the flacking brings absolutely no danger. The flame is at a height of about two hundred metres and is therefore at a safe height. The flame is there 365 days a year, but it is only during flacking that the phenomenon is so clearly visible.

**2.Margaret of Austria** was governor of the Habsburg Netherlands from 1507 to 1530 and chose Mechelen as her place of residence. In 1521, under the leadership of H. Cortés, the Spaniards conquered Mexico from the Aztecs. On 20 August 1523 Emperor Charles V donated a large proportion of valuable and unique objects to his aunt, Margaret of Austria, who used them to decorate her well-equipped library at her court in Mechelen, thus creating the first Aztec museum in Europe. This collection also contained objects made of gold and obsidian. The Aztecs venerated Tezcatlipoca: the god of war and sun! His attribute was a black obsidian mirror. In the astronomy of Mesoamerica, the sun, moon and Venus were the three most important celestial bodies, and it was on their movements that the various indigenous calendar systems were based

**3.Golden Hour** refers to the most beautiful hour, also called 'magic hour', which indicates the short period after sunrise or before sunset in which there is more indirect sunlight (4), making the light redder and softer. Because the sun is on the horizon, the light travels a longer distance through the atmosphere. Red light waves are the longest, blue light waves are shorter and are scattered more, so the red light is more present.

**4.Sunlight** is the visible part of the total spectrum of electromagnetic radiation emitted by the sun. The sunlight reaching the earth is a very small part of the total amount, but essential to sustain life on earth. Fine dust is invisible to the naked eye. It only becomes visible because of the properties of sunlight and certain weather conditions.

**5.Primary particulate matter** is the result of burning, friction, or evaporation. Examples are the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas, coal, and wood.