

DEPARTEMENT CULTUUR, JEUGD & MEDIA

ULTIMAS 2016
Flemish Culture Prizes
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ULTIMA 2016 Visual Arts

Wiels

Over a short period of time, WIELS Contemporary Art Centre has made a name for itself as one of the leading institutions in the field of contemporary visual arts in Belgium and abroad, thanks to its diverse, bold and critical programme. Without building a permanent collection, WIELS has developed a whole range of temporary activities, in a dynamic and open context: 1) WIELS's exhibition programme closely follows developments in contemporary art. Exhibitions alternate between monographic, thematic and group exhibitions on national and international artists, and exhibitions put together from the perspective of a guest curator. The focus lies on information, analysis and sharing, in order to participate in the dissemination and comprehension of contemporary art.

2) An international residency programme with a focus on innovation, research, creation and development stimulates collaboration between local and international actors.

3) Ever since it was founded, WIELS has carried out mediation, awareness-raising and training work, through didactic workshops, educational projects and training seminars for young people, senior citizens, schools and the neighbourhood.

In only 10 short years, WIELS has established itself as an essential institution. Its programme is consistently surprising and captivating. As an organisation, WIELS shows healthy resilience and unruliness. WIELS is open to other organisations and (artistic) practices, has a vast international network and broad support, has a diversified financing model, is interested in female artists' work, and has great respect for artists. WIELS also occupies a special place in Brussels: the centre sees opportunities to involve people, makes a great contribution to local integration and goes beyond community divisions. There is a strong commitment to the neighbourhood, as demonstrated by the composition of the team of employees.

The jury chose WIELS for its entire team, for its high-quality programme, for its international perspective combined with a national and local anchoring, and for the way it gives young people opportunities. A special mention goes to the artistic director Dirk Snauwaert, a very approachable and committed individual. Snauwaert is a director who gives his team confidence, is involved in the operation of the centre, and knows how to give a well-considered opinion when he feels it is required.

For all these reasons and many others, WIELS deserves the Ultima for Visual Arts 2016: for its remarkable path, its specific qualities and its exemplary role.

It is unusual to award the Ultima for Visual Arts to an organisation, but independently of WIELS's exceptional qualities (or precisely because of them), the jury is convinced that this prize will also benefit the individual artists.