

Press Release

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Inflatable Refugee arrives in Copenhagen

Belgian visual artists collective Schellekens & Peleman will sail with their art work 'Inflatable Refugee' from Helsingør to Copenhagen on the 23th of May 2016. The giant artwork will be presented on the two-master Hawila in Copenhagen port between 15h00 and 18h00 and will stay the night on May 23rd at height of Amaliekaaj.

On May 24th 'Inflatable Refugee' will sail out a second time in the Copenhagen Ny Havn from 10h00 AM and leave the port into direction of Kastrup in the early afternoon.

If you wish to be updated on the latest timings, please do not hesitate to contact us.

"The current migration crisis in Europe is one of the most difficult questions currently, that all cities in Europe are dealing with. I believe that art has the possibility to provoke and make us consider the dilemmas, we are currently facing, in a different perspective".

- Frank Jensen, Lord Mayor of Copenhagen in response to the presence of 'Inflatable Refugee' in Copenhagen -



1/ Inflatable Refugee

Synopsis:

Schellekens & Peleman developed a 6 meter high 'Inflatable Refugee' as a symbol of the dehumanization of the refugee and the current refugee crisis happening in the world. The 'Inflatable Refugee' will sail on May 23 and 24 in the port of Copenhagen.



© Schellekens & Peleman, Inflatable Refugee in Venice (Italy), photo: Dirk Kinot

Project:

Coinciding with the current migration crisis from East to West, Schellekens & Peleman have started work on 'The Inflatable Refugee'.

'Inflatable Refugee' is a large inflatable adult male figure of 6m height that represents a seated refugee and currently travels the world.

The 'Inflatable Refugee' gazes blankly into the distance. Has he arrived at a safe haven or will he be refused and be sent from whence he came? His sheer size allows him to look over and beyond us and keep watch on the horizon, not limited by borders or documents. It makes him inescapable, undeniably present.

Schellekens & Peleman proportionally enlarged the 'Inflatable Refugee' to match the reactions his arrival in the Western world evoked. His size represents how we perceive him. Do we see him as a human or as a problem? Is his presence an opportunity or a threat, devoid of human characteristics? Questions of uncertainty galore.. The surrealism of this iconic figure eliminates fear as being the leitmotiv of many discussions and debates.

Schellekens & Peleman have chosen to create this inflatable figure from the same material as the boats, used by human traffickers to cross the Mediterranean Sea, are made from. It's too fragile to withstand the waves of the sea, making the passengers on these boats extremely vulnerable.

Schellekens & Peleman created the 'Inflatable Refugee' to be able to travel on water. Seated on a boat he floats and passes the skylines of big world cities and the lives of the people that inhabit them. Schellekens & Peleman will float the 'Inflatable Refugee' on the Copenhagen waters on the beautiful Hawila boat. The 'Inflatable Refugee' will slowly float along the Copenhagen quays and will end its journey on May 24th in the home base of two-master Hawila, near Kastrup.

Inflatable Refugee brings a message. His presence is undeniable. By introducing the surreal figure of Inflatable Refugee in a city, citizens are aware that something is different, something is brought into their urban life that they did not see before. Inflatable Refugee will be the citizen's fellow citizen for a certain amount of time.

More info: URL: <https://vimeo.com/153244438>

Inflatable Refugee is a nomadic art project travelling to different world cities. Take a look at our touring schedule on our website: www.dirkschellekens.com

2/ Moving Stories

Schellekens & Peleman set up the 'Moving Stories' project because they detected a (growing) gap between newcomers and natives in any place in the world.

The goal is to establish mutual respect, understanding and empathy between newcomers and natives.

To reach this goal Schellekens & Peleman have set up a correspondence project to create a neutral zone for a nuanced debate.

'Moving Stories' is the correspondence project where Schellekens & Peleman invite newcomers (recent refugees/migrants) to write a letter to an anonymous fellow (native) citizen.

Schellekens & Peleman do not give directions concerning the content of these letters. The white pages serve as a neutral zone in which the letter writer can slowly form his/her thoughts and pass on the message he/she finds important to share.

The letters will be printed on an edition of as many copies as there are different nationalities in that city.

Together with the writers, Schellekens & Peleman will post the letters in mailboxes of random addresses.

With the letter comes a stamped post card, which the receiver of the letter can use to return an answer to the author of the letter.

Schellekens & Peleman wish to establish a continuous growing correspondence chain that stresses the importance of writing letters/corresponding in a refugee's life.

Moving Stories travels together with Inflatable Refugee, where the latter functions as a point of reference wherever the joined projects go. Inflatable Refugee literally brings a message to the cities both projects arrive. He does not only bring his own message, but also introduces 'Moving Stories' to locals and newcomers.

Important note:

Schellekens & Peleman collaborate for this project with the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (The Netherlands). The Institute values the scientific importance of the Moving Stories correspondence chain and will not only archive the entire chain but will also do scientific research on the letters and will present them in relevant exhibitions world wide.

Website IISG: <https://socialhistory.org/en>

Click [here](#) to watch the reportage shown on Belgian national television (VRT) on Moving Stories, subtitled in English.

URL: <https://vimeo.com/155428005>

Inflatable Refugee was made possible with the support of:

- Hawila Project
- Janson Bridging
- X-treme Creations

Date of Presentation:

Monday 23th and Tuesday 24th of May, weather permitting

