

## **11 seconds**

In different quantitative studies, scientists have examined how much time visitors in museums spend. The average time spent with an artwork lies between 10 and 15 seconds.

In '11 seconds', Charlotte Bouckaert wants to study 1 photograph with her audience for 1 hour, the duration of the performance. That photograph shows the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. A generic exterior view of the museum on a clear day, photographed from the opposite side of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

On stage there's a worktable with clippings, paper, scissors, paint, etc. A video camera projects what's happening on the table on the back wall. An artisanal workshop, the studio of a handyman.

On the worktable, Charlotte Bouckaert reframes the photograph: she manipulates it (by zooming in and out, playing with lightning, etc.), thus altering the way we read the image. She is the 'narrator' of the printed image in this setting.

For example. Through a window cut-out in black paper, we look at the museum from a car. Blue light comes in, and it becomes a police car.

For example. By putting the camera out of focus, the photograph gets a 'pictorial' quality and the passers-by gain a Hopperian loneliness.

For example. Those same passers-by appear to have a philosophical discussion about art, thanks to audio fragments, just like the picture selected from the internet.

With jumps between inside and outside, between street and painting, between the 'true' human and his reproduction, between information signs inside the museum and slogans of protesters on the street. Gradually the photograph becomes an 'uncertain' image. We no longer see what we thought we understood.

## **THE PHOTOGRAPH AS FUNNEL**

In the contemporary visual culture, we are overloaded with images, photographs and videos. Through their photographic display on the Internet, artworks become 'congealed moments' instead of experiences. In the museum itself, our photo camera becomes the frame through which we look at art.

As an artist, Charlotte Bouckaert is fascinated with photography, she often works with the medium. The fact that a photograph congeals a moment in time, fascinates her to no end and also seems to systematically evoke rebellion. In her performances, she manipulates photographs often so that it is not the congealed moment that receives our full attention,

but the entire action which led to that precise moment. Or, like in *11 seconds*, the dead image is brought back to life in new and surprising stories.

The photograph of the performance: a bright white building on a calm day beneath a blue sky. The Guggenheim as it is portrayed here, seems peaceful and idyllic.

The central spiral makes the museum so iconic that one doesn't need to have seen the museum or visited it in order to recognise it as a museum in New York. At first, the forceful design by Frank Lloyd Wright from 1943 caused a lot of controversy. The museum (opened in 1959) meant a radical departure from the twentieth century modernist tradition of the white space, a neutral, self-effacing space which granted the work of art a central spot.

At the end of the twentieth century, the Guggenheim Foundation itself will, with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao by Frank Gehry, be the starting point of a 'museum chain'. The Foundation builds a series of spectacular museums, the architecture of which pushes the collection into the background. This successful marketing principle has garnered a following all around the world now. At this moment, the museums have become crucial to the appearance of a city. The museum as image in a city marketing brochure or a design magazine.

The canon of the Guggenheim appears to rely on a consensus about what modern art should be, but the politics of the institute rely on social and political agendas, which are often hidden. Museums literally determine what art is (and therefore what is not) by physically locking it in and placing it on a pedestal.

Silence in the temple of art, don't touch, keep at a respectful distance.

The Guggenheim New-York is the starting point for Charlotte Bouckaert to talk about art and the way we look at it, about art traditions and conventions, about the relationship between art and reality, about the museum as an institution, the commercialisation of the art world, woman in the arts, photography and transience, etc.

Finally, *11 seconds* is an ode to art itself, too artists and to the laborious attempts to say something meaningful about art.