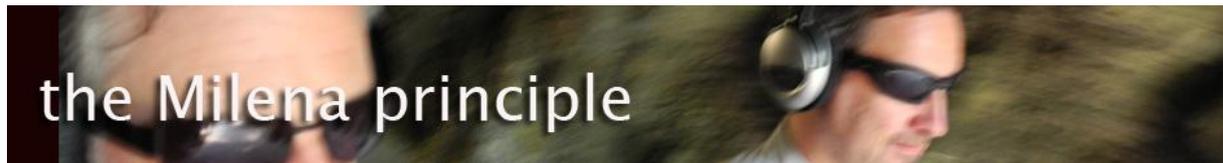


Interview with Geert Vermeire

about (no)Tour Ghent Belgium 2011



– Which project have you developed in Ghent?

We created (no)Tour Gent. It is a pilot project for S.M.A.K., the City Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent, Belgium and is created by the Milena principle/WIT and Escoitar.org [Stefaan van Biesen, Geert Vermeire and Enrique Tomas]. The project involves creative contributions of teenagers with workshops about locative media, sounds and artistic interventions in the urban environment.

– Can you describe noTours?

(no)Tours is an application for Android smartphones with a web based software platform that allows you to attribute sounds to locations by using GPS technology. The application and contents with sounds and gps references are downloaded on your personal device. Sound recordings are activated when you approach the locations. Once you switch on the device you only need to walk. You are surrounded by soundscapes which come and go according to your movement through the city or the landscape.



– Can you describe the work a little more?

This project is a pilot of a new way of working with (no)Tours, including as well creative writing. Workshops with young people lead to soundwalks realized in cooperation with writers, visual artists and sound artists.

The walk made for S.M.A.K. is a sound experience based on geolocated poetry. This approach transcends working with layers of [imaginary] narratives. It uses the urban landscape as a surface on which site specific poetry is written. All of this in the atmosphere of the *dérive*, spontaneous walking and exploration of the environment through augmented reality.



The inauguration of the sound walk in Ghent was as well combined with performances by visual artists [WIT-urban team : Stefaan van Biesen, Margot Dieleman and Eric Windey] about writing and sound. These performances were actions in complete silence by the artists walking without a predefined route through the park. It was a visual counterbalance to listening to poetry and to soundscapes. Voices, sounds and in situ created images interacted together and spread their poetic layers on the surrounding environment.



– *After your experience, what do you expect for the future?*

Our intention is to offer more workshops and more soundwalks in the near future, in which the relation between poetry, image and sound, will be developed and elaborated, using noTours as a creative tool.

Various scenarios can lead to a poetic exploration of a city or the environment. The presence of poetry becomes a physical experience with the voices of poets you can almost touch wherever you are. Letters about or stories related with the presence of historical or actual poets on certain places, next to their poems, letters or other literary texts written at or about certain locations can be heard at the exact spot. During listening you can fully enjoy and observe the environment. The device activates the sounds and texts connected with the location, just by approaching. A cooperation with sound artists or composers leads to a multidimensional hearing experience which transforms the walk as well to an artistic event.



– *Why did you work in Ghent?*

Ghent was one of the first European cities bringing poetry in the urban environment. The city created a poetry route with 20 poems as early as in 2000, a joint initiative by the Flemish Poetry Center and S.M.A.K. The visualization of the poetry in the streets was conceived by artists. Approach was to relate design and presentation of the poems in an interaction with the environment. I joined the project team at an early stage, and created an artistic walk within this project. In cooperation with Graffiti, a major national association for youth and culture, S.M.A.K. and the Flemish Poetry Center I designed various artistic and interactive walks inspired by the *dérive* and by listening experiences throughout the city, adding 15 more site specific poems to the route, all written by teenagers. The experience was about walking, spontaneous interaction with the city, exploring an interior world and the urban environment by using the senses and by listening, with poetry as a living medium and in a dynamic dialogue with sound and image. These walks were inaugurated in 2001 and are still going on.

The project (no)Tour Gent in 2011 explores new approaches to and broadens the horizon of this older format, continuing the tradition and the innovative attitude of S.M.A.K. Interdisciplinary projects connecting ‘word and image’ and their pioneering in art projects in the public space made the museum famous throughout Europe.



http://www.themilena.com/no_tour.html



<http://www.notours.org>