

Facing Vooruit

Performance by Monali Meher

16th May 2014, 10 am

Universiteitsforum (Ufo), Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 33, Gent, Belgium.

Organized by SUSTAINABILITY 2014.

FACING VOORUIT will be manifested at the opening of the fair

'SUSTAINABILITY 2014' <http://www.sustainability2014.be/nl>

In the performance, '*Facing Vooruit*', I walk backwards, carrying incense sticks in my hands. I begin at UFO and continue on the street all the way up to Sint Pietersplein where the fair is located. I conclude the performance by turning around at the middle of the square where the temporary bamboo structure is built.

Walking backwards in such a way that I can face and meet the eyes of my 'audience/ witnesses/ followers'. I observe and follow my way by looking into their eyes, judging my steps slowly and steadily. It is a kind of exercise as well as challenge.

Incense has been used in various cultures as part of rituals, ceremonies etc.

Temporarily leaving the trace of smell is an idea; experienced at that moment of time by people who participate in the walk and the pedestrians of the city itself.

The smell/ smoke has its movement; it merges into the atmosphere and disappears, the metaphor so close to life and live art. The use of the incense as a gentle, ephemeral tracing of spaces, a short-lived remnant, an unexpected sense as well as a moment of reassuring familiarity in other place.

At the occasion of the fair 'Sustainability 2014', the act of walking backwards is a metaphor for '*going back to basics*'. At the same time very significantly, throughout the way, I gaze at the monumental building of 'Vooruit', acknowledging this historical complex was originally art center of Ghent-based labour movement.

Vooruit (Forward) became a symbol of the socialist movement in the interwar period and protected workers against the instability of capitalism.

The action, '**Facing Vooruit**' (*Facing Forward*), traces the route '*backward*' to the sustainability fair while '*gazing forward*' at the historical and politically important monument, 'Vooruit'.

**I intend to continue with this action of 'walking backwards' in different cities.*

It was manifested in 2 cities, 'Visiting Marmara', Istanbul, 2013 (from Istanbul modern museum to sea Marmara) and 'Visiting Pearl', Guangzhou, China in 2011. (through Xiazhou village towards river Pearl).

Monali Meher

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