

Call for Participation

**Design and production of a digital work for the Pass' future
Waouh Zone**

Permanent exhibition

In March 2017, the Pass will open the Waouh Zone – a new exhibition space located within its historic buildings.

This dedicated digital culture space will explore the boundaries between art, science and technology and will feature an exhibition of works of art based around a central theme – the relationship between man and machine.

The Pass has therefore joined forces with the Fabrique de Théâtre to issue this call for participation for digital artists from Belgium and elsewhere in Europe, whose artistic and thematic orientations are closely aligned with the project.

The Pass

The Pass is a major cultural centre whose goal is to make as many people as possible aware of the challenges of science and society. The Pass is located in Frameries (close to Mons) on the site of the former coal-mining site of Crachet-Picquery, which closed in 1960 after two centuries of activity.

This former industrial brownfield site was renovated by Jean Nouvel, an internationally renowned architect, who transformed it into an exceptional site blending old buildings with surprising contemporary architecture side by side.

Stemming from the desire of the Walloon Region and European Union to develop this region and country by creating great facilities that promote scientific culture, the goal of the Pass is to enable everyone, and young people in particular, to understand how the world is changing through the evolution of science and technology.

The Pass is a place that helps people understand the social, technical and economical developments that are changing the way we live. It is a place that gives young and old a taste for scientific progress, pleasure in surprises and a sense of inquisitiveness. We achieve this by implementing contemporary museography that aims to help every visitor understand the world as it evolves and adopt a responsible approach as a citizen.

We employ a multidisciplinary approach based on scientific mediation and experimentation to encourage encounters between contemporary figures in science and the public. We seek to involve the public and civil society in our projects, with a view to questioning all current technological and scientific trends.

Promotion and education around new technologies has been a major feature of the Pass' programme for many years.

For example, we have been organising robotics awards and trophies for 10 years now, the Robotix's festival for several years and the "Mr Machine" exhibition. We have also designed and led cyber-space workshops and TV studios, where visitors come every day for hands-on interaction with new technologies and image education. Moreover, we have organised a range of general public activities featuring a 3D printer. These examples demonstrate the Pass' wealth of expertise in the creation of activities that engage young people in technological innovation.

As demonstrated in Digital Wallonia – the region's digital plan – digital technologies can no longer be treated as a separate, standalone sector of the economy. Instead, these technologies represent a major, cross-cutting trend and are key drivers of differentiation, development and growth for the whole of society. For these reasons, and in recognition of the current digital revolution, the Pass now wishes to scale up its future technology education activities, giving all visitors an opportunity to see, experiment with and reflect upon the growth opportunities that digital technologies offer across all sectors of society, from medicine and manufacturing, through to culture and communication.

The Pass has therefore developed a multi-component framework programme (implemented from 2016 onwards), with a view to educating school pupils and the general public about **digital issues**.

This programme includes the design, coordination and regular updating of an **exhibition space dedicated to digital cultures** known as the **Waouh Zone**.

The purpose of this call for participation is to **establish the very first exhibition in this space**. The exhibition will run for 5 years, but will be dismantled and reinstalled twice a year to allow for temporary exhibitions.

The Waouh Zone: overview

The Waouh Zone is located on the ground floor of the former Engine Room at the Pass. It is a multi-sensory exhibition space featuring diverse, interdisciplinary projects. Its ambition is to make digital culture accessible to all, and particularly to young people.

How it works

The space will feature a permanent exhibition, which will be dismantled twice a year to make way for temporary thematic exhibitions.

Visitors will be free to explore the space without a guide or surveillance. It will be intended for all audiences and specific efforts will be made to encourage interaction between visitors, through immersive, unique, exciting and sensitive artistic experiences.

Next to the exhibition space stands a digital design laboratory, where the Pass' mediation team will offer educational activities to school pupils and members of the public. Visitors will have a chance to come and interact directly with new digital technologies.

The aim of the exhibition space will be to make digital culture accessible to all and to educate visitors about the possibilities of the Internet and new media.

The exhibition space will feature interventions from like-minded artists, key figures from the digital world and innovative businesses, offering visitors an opportunity to experience an immersive video game or to try out 3D glasses.

The works on display and themes addressed throughout each edition of the exhibition will be deliberately chosen to explore the boundaries between art, science and technology.

We also want to see this unique location, steeped in history, transformed by guest artists across different editions.

Why create an art/science space at the Pass?

At first glance, it is easy to see why science and art are often diametrically opposed. Yet there is one fundamental principle that binds them together: a keen eye for observation and a thirst for experimentation. This is why there are often striking parallels between major scientific discoveries and leading artistic movements. Both artists and scientists are driven by a singular desire to stimulate critical analysis and help people to expand and deepen their perception of the world.

Each work exhibited in this space will therefore complement the scientific exhibitions held elsewhere at the Pass, offering a unique perspective on digital technologies – a theme that covers both science and society.

Permanent exhibition guidelines – purpose of this call for participation

During this first, permanent exhibition, the space will feature artistic works that address the relationship between man and technology.

The exhibition will showcase works by guest artists that explore the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds, offering visitors an immersive experience, showing how the virtual world becomes real, and how the real world becomes virtual.

The relationship between man and machine is now a central, inter-disciplinary theme. Our relationship with technologies raises questions and gives rise to new technical and philosophical debates (artificial intelligence, addiction, transhumanism, *homo numericus*, etc.).

Creativity, by definition, has its origins in the hands of the artist. So how do artists avoid losing these precious skills and reinvent themselves?

The permanent exhibition will also look at the boundaries between the real and the virtual, offering a critical perspective on new technological trends, the expansion of virtual communities, and how real video games look.

Although the advent of new technologies has opened new avenues of creativity, it is in the virtual sphere that new realities are taking shape, as social networks, new media and online meeting sites blur the lines between the real and the virtual and create a disconcerting *mise en abyme*.

The Fabrique de Théâtre

The Fabrique de Théâtre reflects the principle that society lies at the heart of theatrical creativity, using economic and political contingencies from the cultural sector as the raw material for a wide-ranging debate around the “theatre factory”. The Service Provincial des Arts de la Scène (Provincial Theatre Arts Department) is an active, vibrant organisation that is committed to supporting theatre practitioners. It offers a clearly defined yet creative framework, like an incubator, in which artists are able to survive, live... and bring their creations to life.

The new residency policy has already borne fruit. Throughout the season, actors, puppet theatre practitioners, musicians, performers, plastic artists and youth drama groups enjoyed access to the Fabrique de Théâtre space, where they had the time and facilities to showcase or finalise their project.

We are more than a provincial facility with excellent equipment. We offer high-class technical and artistic expertise and administrative support to our residents, giving them an opportunity to meet with audiences and members of the public, as well as other resident artists.

We encourage children to learn about art from an early age, and are committed to supporting “youth” groups, providing them with the facilities they need to test their ideas and concepts at the Fabrique de Théâtre.

We help our student stage managers to connect what they have learned in the classroom with the realities of the profession.

The Fabrique de Théâtre continues to break down the barriers between practices, smash the established codes and bring art and audiences together in a space that encourages dialogue and interaction.

The partnership

The Fabrique de Théâtre and the Pass operate in complementary fields and enjoy close geographical ties. They have therefore decided to pool their expertise and join forces to organise a rich, diverse programme of artistic works, the majority of which will be exhibited to the public in the Waouh Zone, at the Pass, for a period of 5 years from **15 March 2017**. Some of the works (especially the theatre pieces) will be showcased at the Fabrique de Théâtre.

Spaces

- **The ground floor of the Engine Room**

The Engine Room is connected to the Belvedere by a glass walkway. This magnificent “concrete cathedral” once housed the mine’s key machinery. The location of the extraction machine can still be seen on the ground floor – the space is demarcated by the concrete bases to which it was once affixed. The room is akin to a concrete maze, offering a multitude of possibilities (projections, sound-scapes, etc.).

- **The outdoor space adjacent to the Engine Room**

Next to the future digital laboratory is an outdoor space that offers broad scope for performances, theatre and vast installations. Located at the heart of the site, it boasts stunning views across the landscape and the museum’s architecture.

- **The Palace of Images**

Like all major science museums, the Pass has its own vast show infrastructure. The Palace of Images is a truly unique facility, where a film can be projected on to 5 sides of a giant cube (with each screen measuring 100 m²). The Palace of Images perfectly complements the major scientific themes covered by the Pass, hosting shows that cover major questions and challenges that man will face in the 21st century. This truly versatile space offers a range of possibilities for immersive, artistic visitor experiences.

- **The Fabrique de Théâtre**

Some works may be presented at the Fabrique de Théâtre if required.

Purpose of the call for participation

In order to implement this programme, the Pass and the Fabrique de Théâtre have decided to issue a call for participation for digital artists from Belgium and elsewhere in Europe, whose artistic and thematic orientations are closely aligned with the Waouh Zone project (as described above).

What is a “digital work of art”?

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation defines “digital art” as any innovative creation that combines different media (data, animated or still images, audio, texts, videos, etc.) using computerised processes and digital technologies, with a view to offering an “interactive function”.

This means that proposals must involve digital technologies as a form of expression and must seek to develop “interactive” dialogue with the public. Priority will be given to immersive, unique, exciting and sensitive artistic experiences.

Form and content guidelines

- **Societal approach to digital issues**

The Pass welcomes proposals from artists whose work provides a relevant perspective on the major human and societal issues surrounding digital technologies (e.g. identity and growth of social networks, new mobile practices, freedom of expression, democracy and citizenship).

- **Visitor immersion and participation**

As its name suggests, the Waouh Zone (or “wow zone”) will feature artistic works that solicit active participation from visitors. Proposals will therefore need to focus on senses and emotions, with a particular emphasis on young people.

- **Accessibility**

Since the majority of the Pass’ visitors are school pupils and families, the proposals will need to be suited to different audience types and encourage dialogue between generations.

They must be accessible to all visitors, in terms of both their content (intention, theme) and their form (interactive, user-friendly, visible and spectacular effects).

Participation procedures

Who can participate?

Participation is open to artists who are European residents and over the age of legal majority. Proposals are welcome from active, professional artists who work in the plastic or performance arts and who use digital technologies in their work. French is the working language of the exhibition. All proposals must therefore be written in French.

The submission must include:

- a short biography of the project designer and, where applicable, any other artists involved in the project, explaining the artist's approach and a list of references
- a written statement of intent in A4 format (no more than 2 double-sided sheets)
- an outline sketch in A3 format (no more than 3 double-sided sheets)
- a methodological note explaining how the artist intends to make the project a success, focusing in particular on the relationship between the artist, and the Pass and the Fabrique de Théâtre (use of the residency premises, expected cooperation with other artists or collectives, knowledge pooling and sharing, public involvement in the creative process, etc.)
- a timetable (working backwards from 15 March 2017 – the exhibition opening date)
- a detailed budget (including the artist's fee, royalties and production costs)
- an compulsory visit certificate (issued by the Pass following the visit).

Given the unique features of the premises, a visit is compulsory.

We have selected three dates on which participants may register for the compulsory visit (registration by Doodle only, click here: <http://doodle.com/poll/g36z4m2cyvu25bkr>)

Submission deadline: 05/09/2016 at 2 pm Selection notification

date: 23/09/2016

Selection committee

The proposals will be analysed and selected by a specially created panel of experts, forming a selection committee.

The committee will assess each proposal based on the following criteria:

Work

- artistic quality of the project
- innovation and exploration of new forms of expression
- digital characteristics of the proposal
- public interaction and physical involvement
- accessibility – the works must be accessible to a young, diverse audience speaking French, English or Dutch

Curation

- relevance to the general theme of the exhibition
- realistic and harmonious integration into the exhibition space
- the selection committee also reserves the right to assess the relevance of the work against other proposals, with a view to establishing a coherent whole

Feasibility

- independent operation of the work (no surveillance or daily technical assistance once opened to the public)
- durability (the work will be handled by children and teenagers on a daily basis with no surveillance)
- technical feasibility (the permanent exhibition will be replaced by temporary exhibitions twice a year, so the proposed works must be easy for the Pass' technical staff to dismantle and reinstall without assistance)
- cost (design, production and maintenance)