

PORTFOLIO  
FILIP BERTE

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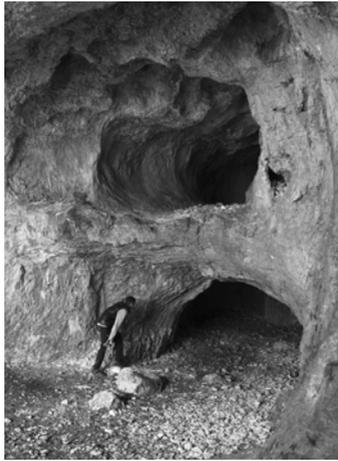
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*Precarious Ghosts Take Care* - Grande-Synthe (FR), (2019)



i.1



i.2



i.3



i.4

## Un-Home / Moving Stones (2015 - ongoing)

**Untitled** i.1  
(original postcard, 1900)

This postcard is part of the Filip Berte's archival collection *Beyond the Picturesque* (see also i.10, p.8)

**Reenactment (1900-2015)** i.2  
("Grotte aux Féés", Vallorbe, CH) (2015)  
(photograph)

*Reenactment (1900-2015)* is a one-day photographic intervention, Filip Berte did together with 4 residents of the Vallorbe *Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees (CEP)*. This intervention was based upon a picturesque postcard from 1900 (see i.1), whereby the 'strangers' from Vallorbe today replaced the figure of a 'tourist' from 1900. (see also i.9 & i.10, p.8)

In 2015 Filip started his new artistic research-project *Un-Home / Moving Stones* at *Arc artist residency*<sup>1</sup>, where he focused on the *Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in the Swiss-French border town of Vallorbe.

With this ongoing long-term project he aims at questioning and visualising the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, particularly regarding newcomers in Switzerland and the rest of Europe. The unprecedented refugee and migrant crisis unsettled the whole of Europe, sharpening controversy and awakening polarised political discourses everywhere.

With the project *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, Berte takes position in the backdrop of this polarised landscape, trying to offer an integer and poetic form of resistance, creating a momentum from an in-between position. He considers his role as an artist as the one of a mediator, tackling questions of hospitality, polarisation, (dis-)integration, observation, surveillance, control, distance, (human) proximity, the passage of time and social exposure.

1. *Arc artist residency* was an artist residency (closed in 2018) situated in the village of Romainmôtier, in the Jura mountain range in Switzerland. It was a place for reflection and dialogue that allowed exchange and collaboration in an informal atmosphere. Artists and experts from different backgrounds were invited to the place over time, becoming true accomplices, cultivating their ideas, taking their work forward, and develop a curiosity for new discoveries through shared activities.

In order to reveal a multi-layered reflection on these complex questions, over the past years, at different 'critical sites'<sup>2</sup> in Europe, Filip Berte has performed a *Momentum*: live artistic interventions by means of a camera obscura in the form of a stone or by the simple act of drawing - his main artistic tools. With experimental use of the archaic camera obscura, he brings to life Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* exactly on sites where people are forced to live "in limbo"

A natural cave in Vallorbe served as a catalyst for transcending from the concrete to a meta-level. The archetype of the cave - an in limbo-site 'par excellence' - is a transitional place between an internal and external reality, where mythology, philosophy, psychology, geology and ancient history come together.

2. By 'critical sites', Filip Berte means all camps and centers for reception, accommodation and registration for asylum-seekers and refugees, regardless whether they are (semi-) open or closed. These 'critical sites' Berte defines as 'the cracks and dark holes in societies', often placed outside of public view.

**i.3 Stone Camera Obscura**  
(2016)  
(Acryl, styrofoam, multiplex, aluminium pinholes)  
(55 cm x 65 cm x 50 cm)

For *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, Filip Berte transformed two stones, he had collected from the natural limestone cave in Vallorbe (CH), into enlarged replicas. Similar to real caves the replica stones are excavated, serving as a double camera obscura, in order to reveal the liminal condition of migrants, lingering in an unbalanced state between socially and politically approved belonging and the total absence of it, or between expectations and the reality ad hoc.

**i.4 Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled**  
(2018)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(59,4 cm x 42 cm)

Observational drawing of a limestone rock, which Filip Berte had found inside of the natural cave "La Grotte aux Féés" in Vallorbe (CH). This stone served as a model for Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura*.



i.5



i.6



i.7



i.8

*Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled*  
(2015)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegative made by Filip Berte's camera obscura in the form an architectural replica model of the Vallorbe Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees during *Momentum I*.

*Momentum I*  
(Vallorbe, CH)  
(2015)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation image of the performative, artistic intervention *Momentum I*, in front of the Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees in Vallorbe (CH)

i.5 ***Momentum I - Vallorbe (CH)***  
(2015)

In a first phase of the *Un-Home*-project, Filip Berte also made his first camera obscura. Not yet in the form of a stone, but in the one of an architectural replica model of the Vallorbe Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees (CEP).

After his request for an informal talk with the director of the center was rejected, Filip Berte decided to come back later - as an uninvited guest.

On May 4th, 2015, Berte took position in front of the center with his *Building Camera Obscura* focusing on the center, vis-à-vis to the surveillance camera's of the building: Filip Berte considered *Momentum I* as a poetic and low-tech form of resistance to the opaque and controlling nature of the CEP and the Swiss policy of Migration in general. With his camera obscura intervention, Filip Berte copied (reflected) the way how this building actually in practice functioned as a surveillance camera; continuously looking at and visually controlling its immediate surroundings.

*Momentum I* was a key work for the further direction, Filip Berte in the following years would take with his long-term project *Un-Home / Moving Stones*.

i.7 ***Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
("Grotte aux Fées", Vallorbe, CH)  
(2015)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Documenting image of Berte's camera obscura at work during an exposure timespan of 4 hours and 45 minutes inside of the natural limestone cave of Vallorbe.

i.8 ***Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
(Vallorbe, CH)  
(2015)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegative made by Filip Berte's camera obscura in the form an architectural replica model of the Vallorbe Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugee, inside of the natural limestone cave "la Grotte aux Fées" in Vallorbe (CH).

**Reenactment (1900-2015)**  
 ("Grotte aux Fées", Vallorbe, CH) (2015)  
 (photo)

*Reenactment (1900-2015)* is a one-day photographic intervention, Filip Berte did together with 4 residents of the Vallorbe *Registration and Procedure Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees (CEP)*. This intervention was based upon a picturesque postcard from 1900 (see *i.10* and also *i.1, p.4*), whereby the 'strangers' from Vallorbe today replaced the figure of a 'tourist' from 1900. (A 'tourist' in that time was still called a 'stranger'- 'étranger' in French) Besides sharing the same setting of the natural cave as a catalyst act, they actually also seem to (have) share(-d) the same building for temporary accommodation; namely the *CEP* of today, which used to be a Grand Hotel in 1900.

**Untitled**  
 (original postcard, 1900)

This postcard, dating back from 1900, is part of the *Un-Home / Moving Stone* collection *Beyond the Picturesque*; a collection of original postcards, dating back from the early 20th century. It forms an integral part of Berte's artistic research methodology, whereby he is looking for historical, topographical, geological or mythological references to the 'critical sites' he visits.

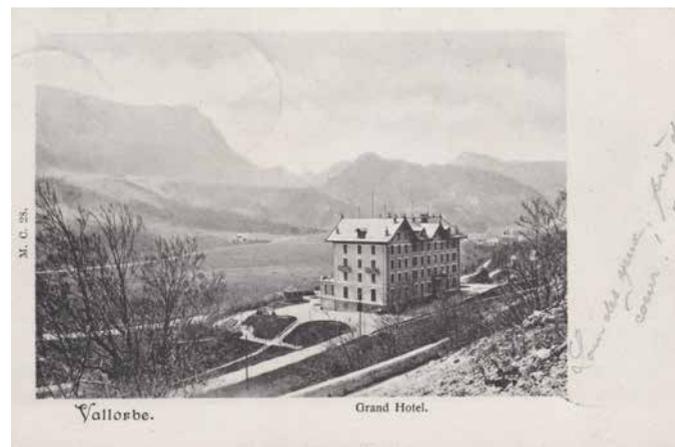
*i.9*



*i.9*



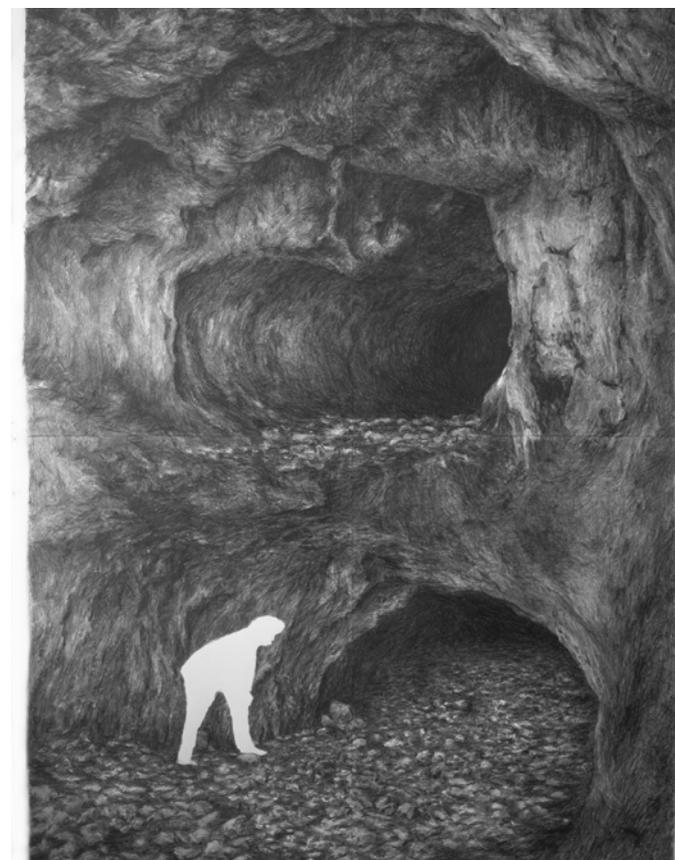
*i.10*



*i.11*

***i.11 Untitled***  
 (original postcard, 1915)

This postcard is part of the *Un-Home / Moving Stone* collection *Beyond the Picturesque*. The building that is depicted on the postcard shows the Grand Hotel in Vallorbe. In 1915 the Simplon-Orient-Express made of Vallorbe a cosmopolitan town with an international status attracting the first (rich) tourists in the Swiss-French region. Nowadays, the town of Vallorbe is witness to a transformed, less wanted and 'displaced kind of cosmopolitanism'. Since 2000 the former-Grand Hotel building has been transformed into the *Registration Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees (CEP)*.



*i.12*

***i.12 Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
 (Vallorbe, CH)  
 (2015)  
 (graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
 (84 cm x 120 cm)

Drawing, after a postcard, dating back from 1900 (see *i.1, p. 4*).



i.13



i.14

**Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled** (2016)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegatives made by Filip Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura* during *Momentum II* at the *Peeterskasteel*-emergency reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees in Scherpenheuvel (BE).



i.15

### **Momentum II - Scherpenheuvel (BE)**

(2016)

**Momentum II** Scherpenheuvel (BE) (2016)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation images of the five-days long photographic intervention *Momentum II*, in front of the *Peeterskasteel*-emergency reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees in Scherpenheuvel (BE).

In 2016, Filip Berte went to Scherpenheuvel (BE) for a new *Momentum* with his *Stone Camera Obscura*. Scherpenheuvel is a small Belgian town, mostly known as an age-old Christian pilgrimage site, welcoming people from all over the world to come and pray together. In 2015, when the local so-called *Peeterskasteel* - a former bourgeois home - was transformed into an emergency reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees, the local inhabitants of Scherpenheuvel were not really eager to welcome these newcomers as their new neighbours. *Momentum II* was made possible due to a close cooperation with Caritas International, running the center at that time.



i.16

### **Momentum III - Brussels (BE)**

(2017)

In 2017, *Workspacebrussels*<sup>1</sup> invited Filip Berte to take part with a lecture-expo during the international performance festival *Performatik* in Brussels. For this occasion, Filip Berte did a third *Momentum* at the *Klein Kasteeltje* ('small castle'), Belgium's largest *Fedasil* reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees, located in Brussels. *Momentum III* consisted of a one-week long *Stone Camera Obscura* photographic intervention together with the residents of the center, as well as of an un-announced intervention in front of the *Office for Foreigners (DVZ)*, where people have to apply for their asylum procedure.

<sup>1</sup> *Workspacebrussels* is a laboratory for artistic development in the performing arts, focussing on research, experimentation and creation.



i.17



i.18

**i.16 Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled** (2017)

**i.17 Stones - Untitled** (2017)  
**i.18** (B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegatives made by Filip Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura* during *Momentum III* at the *Klein Kasteeltje*, Belgium's largest reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees, run by *Fedasil* (Federal state Agency for Asylum and Migration) located in Brussels.



i.19

*Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled* (2017)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegative made by Filip Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura* in front of the building of the *Federal Office for Migration* in Brussels, as part of *Momentum III*.

*Momentum III* Brussels (BE) (2017)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation images of both locations for *Momentum III*:

One (i.20) positioned in front of the building of the *Federal Office for Migration (DVZ)*. The other (i.21), inside of the *Klein Kasteeltje*, the *Fedasil* reception center for asylum-seekers and refugees in Brussels.



i.20



i.21



i.22

## *Momentum IV - Venice - Conetta (IT)*

(2017)

In 2017, Filip Berte was invited to create a new work in Venice, within the framework of *Dark Matter Games*, a joint artistic and reflection exchange programme between *Workspacebrussels*<sup>1</sup> and *S.a.L.E. Docks*<sup>2</sup>, resulting in a group exhibition in the margin of the Venice Biennial 2017.

For this occasion, Berte developed *Momentum IV*, consisting of 'a doubled moment of reflection'; One in front of the *Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in Conetta di Cona and another one, inside of the Grand Canal, on the location where Pateh Sabally, a Gambian young man who previously had been refused asylum in Italy, tragically had drowned, while at the same time he was being watched, filmed and aggressively yelled at by on-lookers aside.

<sup>1</sup> *Workspacebrussels* is a laboratory for artistic development in the performing arts, focussing on research, experimentation and creation

<sup>2</sup> *S.a.L.E. Docks* is a space for reflection and political action within contemporary art.



i.23

### *i.22 Momentum IV*

Venice - Conetta (IT)  
(2017)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation image of a photo-technical test of Filip Berte's small *Stone Camera Obscura*, while floating on water. In preparation of the photographic intervention *Momentum IV*, which later took place inside of Venice's Grand Canal, right in front of the main railway-station.

### *i.23 Momentum IV*

Venice - Conetta (IT)  
(2017)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation image of the photographic intervention *Momentum IV*, in front of the *Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in Conetta di Cona, Venice (IT).



i.24

*Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled* (2018)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

Original photonegative made by Filip Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura* in front of the entrance to the closed *Center for Illegals* in Bruges, as part of *Momentum V / Evictio* building of the *Federal Office for Migration* in Brussels, as part of *Momentum III*.

*Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled* Bruges (BE) (2018)  
(photo)

Documentation image of a piece of concrete stone, found on-site of the *Center for Illegals* in Bruges. Of every location Filip Berte is working on with *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, he collects one stone.



i.25

## *Momentum V / Evictio - Bruges (BE)*

(2018)

With *Momentum V / Evictio*, Filip Berte installed his *Stone Camera Obscura* for the first time at a closed center: the so-called *Center for Illegals* in Bruges (BE). With this intervention he portrayed and critically questioned the impenetrable and architecturally classified building. In addition, Berte tried to give the temporary residents (prisoners) of the closed center in Bruges a voice and access to communication with the outside world. In order to realise this, Berte cooperated with the ngo *Getting the Voice Out*<sup>1</sup>. Visitors to the final presentation of *Momentum V / Evictio* were invited to buy *Lycamobile* mobile phone recharge credit, which was offered later onwards to the people in the closed center. Likewise, they were offered free phone credit to reach out and call their lawyers, relatives or friends outside of the closed center. The presentation<sup>2</sup> of *Momentum V / Evictio* was made in the form of a film screening inside of a mobile black box in public space, as well as in the form of a drawing and sound installation in a former communication bunker of WWI, part of the historical Raversyde Atlantic Wall (museum site) near Ostend.

1. *Getting the Voice Out* is a Belgian ngo/collective, fighting against expulsions of migrants and giving legal advice to people who are forcibly placed in closed Centers for Illegals in Belgium.

2. *Momentum V / Evictio* and *Momentum VI* were presented at the multi-disciplinary arts festival *Unsettled*, produced by art centre KAAP.



i.26



i.28

i.29

## *Momentum VI - Bruges (BE)*

(2018)

*Momentum VI* was conceived as counterbalance to *Momentum V / Evictio*. In close cooperation with the *Red Cross*, who are running Belgium's smallest open reception center for refugees, Filip Berte organised a 4-day long open house; because the reception center is located right in the historic heart of Bruges, opening up the center's doors was clearly meant as an open invitation towards the local neighbours; the main hallway of the centre functioned as a passage-place and meeting-point for 'strangers'. Moreover, Filip Berte had asked the residents of the center to take on the role of host, by addressing passers-by on the street and invite them inside for a drink, a conversation and eventually a double portrait made with the *Stone Camera Obscura*. Berte took on his typical artistic role of mediator



i.27

*i.26 Momentum VI*

*i.27 Bruges (BE)* (2018)  
(photographic intervention with camera obscura)

Documentation images of the four-day long photographic intervention *Momentum VI*, inside of the main hallway of the *Red Cross Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in Bruges (BE).

*i.28 Un-Home / Moving*

*i.29 Stones - Untitled* (2018)  
(B/W photonegative)  
(20,3 cm x 25,4 cm)

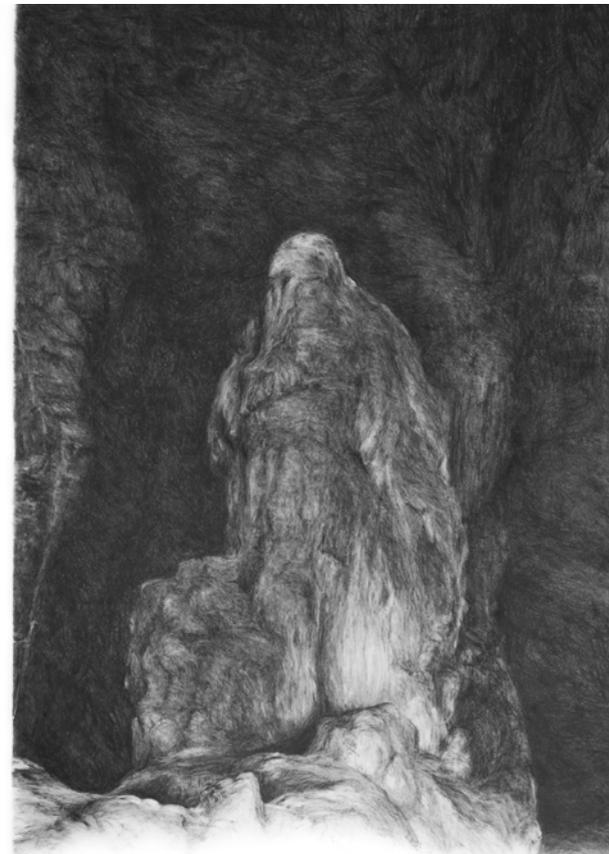
Original photonegatives made by Filip Berte's *Stone Camera Obscura* during *Momentum VI* at the *Red Cross Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in Bruges (BE).



i.30



i.31



i.32

**i.30 *Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
(2015)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(42 cm x 59,4 cm)

This drawing is focusing on two stones Filip Berte had found in the natural cave “La Grotte aux Fées” in Vallorbe (CH), where *Un-Home / Moving Stones* had started in 2015.

**i.31 *Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(84 cm x 59,4 cm)

**i.32 *Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled***  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(59,4 cm x 84 cm)

This drawing is based upon a picturesque postcard of a stalagmite formation in the cave of La Balme (FR), which also is part of *Un-Home*'s archival collection *Beyond the Picturesque*.



**Momentum VII** i.33  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)

Documentation image of a signpost outside the nature reserve

**Momentum VII** i.34  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation image of a stone, found on-site by one of the residents of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees.

**Momentum VII** i.35  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation image of a stone, found in front of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees. Of every location Filip Berte is working on with *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, he collects and brings back home one stone.



i.34



i.35

## *Momentum VII - Podkowa Lesna-Debak (PL)* (2019)

Within the context of the *Wrocław Drawing Triennial*<sup>1</sup> 2019 Filip Berte was invited to present his long-term project *Un-Home / Moving Stones* in Wrocław. Because of the lack of visibility and often negative or problematic imagebuilding of refugees and asylum-seekers in Polish society, Berte took this opportunity to bring to daylight one of Poland's main reception centers for asylum-seekers and refugees; After an official request to the official administration of the Polish *Ministry of Migration*, Filip Berte obtained the authorisation to organise a one-day artistic intervention at the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees. This center is put on an isolated location, deep inside of a large nature reserve, around 30 kilometers outside of Warsaw. Because of the fact that Berte only was granted the permission for a time-limited visit to the center, he had decided to use the medium of observational drawing as structural element for

<sup>1</sup> *Wrocław Drawing Triennial*, whose first edition took place in 1965, has the longest tradition of drawing contests and exhibitions in Poland. In January 2016, with his project *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, Filip Berte was laureate of the Open Call - Think Tank lab Triennale International Festival for Contemporary Drawing in Wrocław.



i.36



i.37



i.38

**i.36 Momentum VII**  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)

Documentation image of the installation at Artrakt Gallery in Wrocław

**i.37 Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled**  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(110 cm x 1200 cm)

This drawing is focusing on one stone, Filip Berte had found in front of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees.

**i.38 Momentum VII**  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation image of the residents of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees, working on the drawings of the stones they had collected on-site during *Momentum VII*

*Momentum VII*. Moreover, due to a lack of an official interpreter on-site, the medium of drawing would even be the main language for social connection and communication. During the limited timespan of one long afternoon, a group of children and youngsters was asked to gather stones they could personify with. In addition they could choose extra stones for each of their familymembers they wanted to represent on a 12 meter long collective drawing on paper. Each of the stones drawn was accompanied by the handwritten name of the person represented. The collective drawing work was finished by the addition of a big drawing of a stone found by Filip Berte in front of the center; The collective artwork was presented in the form of an installation, at the contemporary art gallery *Artrakt*, in Wrocław's historical centre. The exhibition raised awareness for the people who are living in limbo in the outskirts of Warsaw and thus gave rise to discussion among the visitors.



i.39



i.40



i.41



i.42



i.43

## Precarious Ghosts Take Care

**Momentum VII**  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation image of a stone, found on-site by one of the residents of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees. .

**Momentum VII**  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation image of a stone, found in front of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees. Of every location Filip Berte is working on with *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, he collects and brings back home one stone.

i.39 Almshouses of St.-Jozef-De Meulenaere, Bruges (BE) (2019)  
(Lecture-exhibition)

*Precarious Ghosts Take Care* is a lecture exhibition which Filip Berte had developed on the occasion of a one-day artistic and discursive event organised in the framework of the *Bruges Pre-triennial 2019*<sup>1</sup>, focused on the theme of “solidarity in the arts”.

i.40 Since a few years, Filip Berte has been working on the format of a ‘lecture exhibition’. On different occasions, when presenting his project *Un-Home / Moving Stones*, he has been experimenting with this format, in order to find an appropriate artistic way of creating an audio-visual fusion of his visual imagery with a broad range of discursive and narrative elements (etymological and historical research, politics, toponymy, philosophy, geology,..)

<sup>1</sup> *Bruges Pre-Triennial 2019* was the run-up to the *Bruges Triennial 2021*. Every three years the *Bruges Triennial* brings contemporary art and architecture to the historic city centre of Bruges: a unique setting and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For the project *Precarious Ghosts Take Care*, Berte wrote a formal script in which he makes a layered reflection on solidarity; In it he links narratives referring to the historical social sheltering function of the almshouses and the chapel of *St.-Jozef-De Meulenaere* in Bruges (where Berte’s work was presented) and the solidarity and sheltering so much needed for homeless refugees living in Calais and Dunkirk, a few tens of kilometers away from Bruges.

Filip Berte went to Calais and Dunkirk to meet and talk with the people, who are living in extremely precarious conditions in the greenery along motorways and in the wild nature (near the former, dismantled so-called “jungle” of Calais). While the lecture could be heard in the chapel in the form of a reclining prayer, visitors could see a floating projection of images of trees, ashes and traces of people whose self-fabricated emergency tents are being destroyed on a daily basis by the French border police, who are chasing them like wild animals.

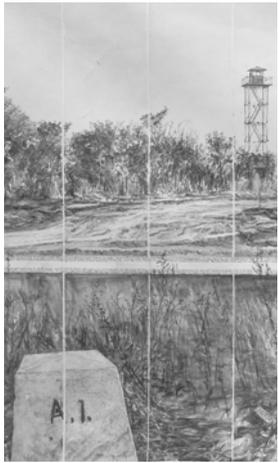
For the opening of this event, a drink and a grill were organised, to which Filip Berte invited the residents of the *Red Cross Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees* in Bruges (BE).

i.41 *Un-Home / Moving Stones - Untitled*  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on paper)  
(110 cm x 1200 cm)

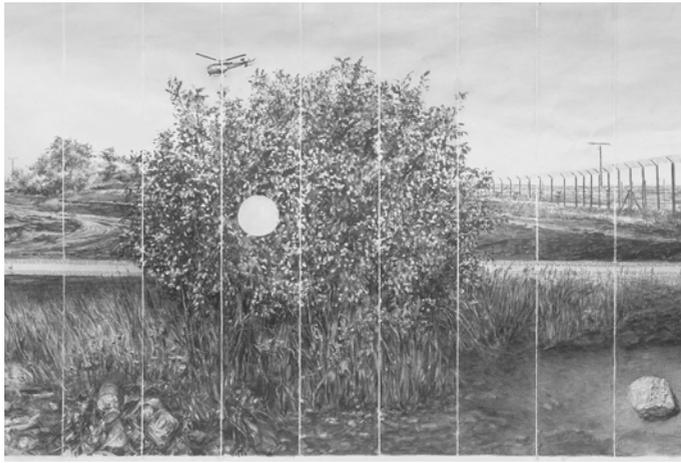
This drawing is focusing on one stone, Filip Berte had found in front of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees.

i.43 **Momentum VII**  
Podkowa Lesna-Debak  
(PL) (2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

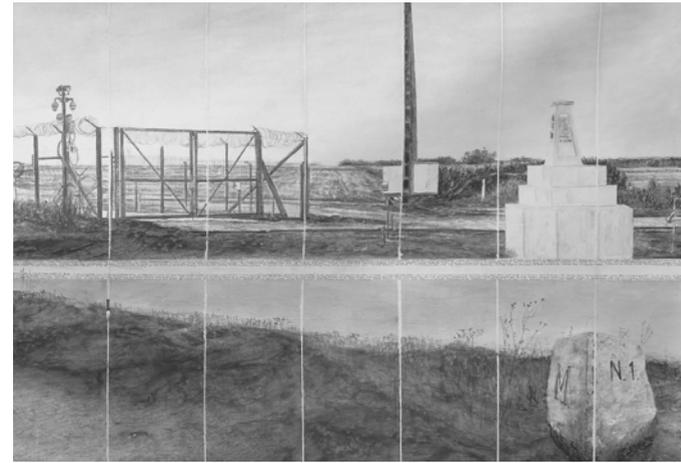
Documentation image of the residents of the Podkowa Lesna-Debak Reception Center for Asylum-seekers and Refugees, working on the drawings of the stones they had collected on-site during *Momentum VII*



i.44



i.45



i.46



i.47

## Tracing Lines of Demarcation

(2019)

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.44  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on canvas)  
(218 cm x 66 cm)

Details of the drawing focusing on Beba Veche, a village on the westernmost point of Romania, in the trilateral border area with Hungary and Serbia. It is one of the three drawings that are part of the whole installation of *Tracing Lines of Demarcation*.

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.47  
(2019)

Documentation image showing Filip Berte while making a frottage drawing on border stone A1 in Beba Veche.

While Romania is far more known as a country from which people emigrate, Filip Berte focuses on the lesser known phenomenon of (irregular) immigration into the country. In *Tracing Lines of Demarcation*, he explores three places in Romania that are typically marked by ‘liminality’: the *Regional Center for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers* in Bucharest (C.R.C.P.S.A.); the village of Beba Veche on the westernmost point of Romania, in the trilateral border area with Hungary and Serbia; the city of Calafat, on the river Danube, linked with Bulgaria by the New Europe Bridge.

What these three places have in common, is that they are all guarded and controlled by the Romanian Border Police, which is particularly distrustful of any stranger in the ‘border zone’ they are supposed to control.

One of the main causes for this increased vigilance at the border is probably linked to Hungary’s decision (in 2015) to seal its border with Serbia with an electrified fence. This prompted fear in Romania (stimulated by the media) that the ‘Western Balkan Route’ would shift to the east and that now the country would be overrun by migrants.



i.48

Anyone trespassing or infringing on the rules as laid down by the authority of this state institution (which comes under the *Ministry of Internal Affairs*) will be repelled or pushed back. Pushback policies are multiplying every day on all the external borders of Europe. Sometimes openly, like in Hungary, sometimes more hidden and concealed like in Romania. They are difficult to monitor by external observers, because they are implemented in the grey zones of green borderlands.

With *Tracing Lines of Demarcation* Berte seeks to question and pierce the solid opacity of these liminal places. Because he had obtained an official permission from the Romanian Border Police to visit Beba Veche and Calafat, Berte succeeded in gaining better insight in the activities of the Border Police and how they view their task of protecting the border. They were open and transparent, i.e. to a certain extent: as long as his questions remained within certain limits—limits that are set out more covertly by (higher officials of) the state institutions.

**i.48 Tracing Lines of Demarcation**  
(2019)  
(graphite pencil drawing on canvas)  
(218 cm x 66 cm)

Detail of the drawing focusing on the port city of Calafat, a city on the river Danube, bordering Bulgaria. It is one of the three drawings that are part of the whole installation of *Tracing Lines of Demarcation*.



i.49



i.50



i.51



i.52

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.49  
Bucharest (RO) i.50  
(2019) i.51  
(Drawing intervention)

Documentation images showing Filip Berte and one of the residents of the *Regional Center for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers* in Bucharest, during the one-week drawing intervention in public space. The frottage drawing of the base of the fence surrounding the center is also part of his final presentation (see i.55)

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.52  
Bucharest (RO)  
(2019)  
(Drawing intervention)

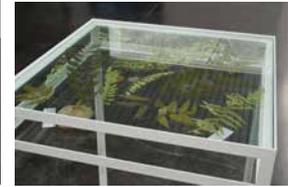
Documentation image of a frottage drawing on a wall at the back of the *Regional Center for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers* in Bucharest,

However, in Bucharest, the artist bumped into a wall that was clearly more solid than the wild nature of the Green Border in Beba Veche and around the Danube. Here in Bucharest, he went through the experience of being pushed back himself from a liminal site that obviously wanted no prying eyes around and preferred to remain solidly closed off from the outside world.

Observational drawing, considered by Berte as his main tool to open up to people, proved successful only the first few days. But the more time he spent with the residents, sitting, talking and drawing with them, the tenser the relation with the guards at the centre became. In order not to make the situation worse for the residents, after five days Berte decided to stop working at the site. He made one last graphite frottage of a crack in the wall at the back of the centre (see i.52).



i.53



i.54



i.55

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.53  
(2019)  
(drawing installation with plants and stones)  
(variable dimensions)  
images: © Dirk Pauwels

Installation view at the Cc Strombeek arts centre (Brussels, BE).

**Tracing Lines of Demarcation** i.54  
(2019)  
(drawing installation with plants and stones)  
(variable dimensions)  
image: © Dirk Pauwels

Documentation image of the plants and stones presented in a glass box at the centre of the idrawing installation. The plants and stones were found and collected at the three main 'liminal sites' Filip Berte had visited for his project *Tracing Lines of Demarcation*.

Credits: *Tracing Lines of Demarcation* was produced by Cc Strombeek<sup>1</sup> and Salonul de Proiecte<sup>2</sup>. The project has been presented at Cc Strombeek as part of the group show *Displacement and Togetherness*, in the framework of *Europalia Romania 2019*, and curated by Luk Lambrecht, Lieze Eneman and Magda Radu.

<sup>1</sup> Cc Strombeek is an multidisciplinary arts centre in Strombeek (BE)

<sup>2</sup> Salonul de proiecte is an art centre in Bucharest (RO), focussing on research and production, which promotes Romanian contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, presentations and debates, while positioning it in dialogue with the regional and international context.

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