PRESS KIT

JAN FABRE,CURATOR OF THE ATHENS AND EPIDAURUS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2016-2019

Press conference on the 29th of March 2016

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Greek Ministry of Culture has asked the artist Jan Fabre to be the curator of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival (formerly known as the Hellenic Festival, Greek Festival or Athens & Epidaurus Festival) for the following four years (2016-2019). He will be responsible for the artistic choices, and thus the selection of the artists and the exposition of themes and artistic lines. He starts by renaming the festival, articulating the birthplaces of this renowned festival.

CONSILIENCE

Since Fabre is active as visual artist, theatre maker, performing artist, choreographer and author, these disciplines will be mirrored in the program of the Festival. Next to performing arts, an outspoken part of the program will comprise of visual arts, literature, music, and film.

The notion of consilience stands central: in science and history, consilience refers to the principle that evidence from independent, unrelated sources can "converge" to strong conclusions. When multiple sources of evidence are in agreement the conclusion can be very strong.

Under his supervision, the curatorship will be divided among his team as follows:

- Programming Literature & Ideas: Sigrid Bousset
- Programming Young Theatre and Dance Artists: Edith Cassiers
- Programming Visual Arts: Bart De Baere and Katerina Koskina
- Programming Performance Art: Joanna De Vos
- Programming Film: Miet Martens

For more information on his collaborators, see the entry on Jan Fabre's Artistic Team.

ANNUAL THEMES

Annually, the selection will be made from a different pool and on the basis of a different theme.

2016

The first year will consist of a tribute to Belgium, Fabre's own country and home to many internationally acclaimed artists.

2017

The following two years will be more internationally oriented. 2017 will be under the theme of 'Consilience' and focus on visual artists, performing artists and authors who have worked or still work together with Jan Fabre. Furthermore, at least one third of the artists presented will be Greek. This last selection will be made on the basis of applications and prospection.

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In the third year, the Author and Actor, as well as their intriguing bound, will be central focus. Fabre will present a new performance with Isabelle Huppert. Again, at least one third of the artists presented will be Greek.

2019

Jan Fabre's curatorship will culminate in the last year, which will have the 'Greek Matrix' as theme. Fabre himself will create an original performance for the Festival with a Classic Greek theme as basis. Moreover, Greek artists stand central as Jan Fabre passes the torch to new curators and a new generation of Greek artists.

CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION

During his four years of curatorship, Fabre aims to craft a creative balance between continuity and innovation, and between Greek and international artists. His aim to focus on artistic innovation as well as on Greek artists will grow throughout his four years of curatorship. Fabre wants a pivotal part of the programming to be Greek – both established and upcoming.

The first year, established Greek artists continue to have the stage. Since Fabre has been engaged only very late within the Festival process this year, it was not possible to include many (new) Greek artists for the Festival of 2016.

The following year(s) Fabre and his team will make themselves more familiar with the Greek artistic field, as well as engage different Greek assistant-curators, to ensure an interesting selection of Greek artists. This will result in different application and prospection structures.

Fabre and his team aim to ensure innovation within the Festival, by, among others, generating more opportunities for young artists. Already in the first year of this curatorship, efforts will be made to create a meeting and learning platform for Greek young artists in the form of the Academy for Young Artists, existing out of different workshops, masterclasses and internships, as well as scholarships for around 50 young Greek artists (see the entry on 'AYA').

II. PERSONAL STATEMENT

Belgium, as many other countries, is characterized by a multicultural and hyper-diverse population. A forth of its population is of non-Belgian origin, and the small country has three official languages and linguistic areas. Antwerp, where I was born, live and work, counts more nationalities than New York. The national football-team, 'De Rode Duivels' or The Red Devils, represents this multiculturality. Football players with different ethnical backgrounds, of different colours and religions, speaking different languages, form one team. When these Red Devils were selected for the World Championship Football, their supporters came together as well. Regardless of background, heritage and language, these supporters stood behind their team — as one nation and nationality. For the duration of the World Championship, the country coloured black, yellow and red. We were together through our differences, celebrated each other's multi-layered and complex identities, embraced both similarities and dissimilarities.

In times where the boundaries we know are changing, questions of identity emerge: what does it mean to be Belgian, to be European, to be a part of this world?

In my first year as curator, I want to create a tribute to Belgium. Belgium, because this small country is my home and haven. Born and bred in Belgium, I have developed my artistic practice here, as a portal to the rest of the world. Belgium, because many internationally acclaimed artists were nurtured here. In the 1980s, Belgium gave birth to the 'Flemish Wave', a group of interdisciplinary artists who overthrew artistic conventions and influenced the arts scene to what it is today. Belgium, because of its hyper-diversity and multi-culturality – both on the football field, on the streets and in the art houses.

By developing this theme, I hope to turn the Festival into a meeting place of different nationalities, cultures, languages and backgrounds. May we all share the stage – not only in a dialogue of differences, but in search of what connects us, in a quest for a common identity on the fertile soil that art proves to be time and time again.

This adjourning of boundaries runs throughout my selection of artists. The program will consist of different disciplines. Theatre, dance, performance art, visual arts, literature, music and film are confronted and intertwined. Within all these artworks the search for limits often stands central. My own performers - or as I call them: 'warriors of beauty' – aim to bridge boundaries as well. They strive for the incredible, the unattainable, during the magical moments of an artwork. In every artwork, I search for these *loci* of liminality, times of trespassing. Immortality is achieved by the mortality of the body. Though I shall not be guided by naivety, I do hope art can pick up where politics left. The stage stimulates solidarity, art scrutinizes utopia. May fear always be transgressed by freedom, and crisis always lead to creation.

During my four years as curator of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival, I hope to build bridges and devise dialogue. I hope to make the Festival representative for the multicultural society it stands in. A Festival that forms a mirror of the world as well as a self-contained parallel universe, where diversity does not prove to be a problem, but a promise – for better art, a better future and a better world.

Enjoy!

Jan Fabre Belgium, 29th of March 2016

III. PROGRAM

The program for the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival 2016 will focus on 'the Belgian spirit' and is characterized by a highly multidisciplinary selection of artworks.

At the start of the festival the audience will be introduced to the artistic universe of its curator Jan Fabre, through several of his artistic projects.

The prelude will be spread over a few days in which the audience will get a taste of what the festival will be in the following weeks:

With the opening of the exhibition *STIGMATA* at the Benaki Museum on the 15th of June, the festival will know a pre-opening that prepares the audience for the Fabrian universe of different artforms and body-based poetics.

On the 28th of June, the audience will be introduced to Jan Fabre as a writer – his writings being the basis of his artistic expression. Prominent Greek actors will read from his night diaries and theatrical and poetical texts, to be published by Nissos Publications.

On the 29th of June will open an exhibition on Belgian art at the National Museum of Contemporary Art.

On the 30st of June Jan Fabre's highly praised performance *Preparatio Mortis* performed by Annabelle Chambon, will be presented.

III.I PERFORMING ARTS

The performing arts program of the Festival consists of an intersection of the Belgian performing arts - the Best of Belgium, as you wish. Many established and internationally well-known Belgian artists will perform as, amongst others, Anne-Teresa De Keersmaker/Rosas, Jan Lauwers/Needcompany, Jacques Delcuvellerie/Groupov and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui/Eastman.

Furthermore, Jan Fabre's now already legendary *Mount Olympus. To glorify the cult of tragedy. A 24h performance* will take place in the weekend of 9 and 10 July.

Artists from the Belgian middle generation will be present as well, as for example Fabrice Murgia/Cie Artara and Lisbeth Gruwez/Voetvolk, in combination with very recently emerging young Belgian artists to be discovered.

III.II VISUAL ARTS

This summer, two main exhibitions will take place:

At the Benaki Museum - STIGMATA

Opening on Wednesday 15th of June 2016 (in presence of Jan Fabre)

See the entry on 'Stigmata' for more information on this exhibition.

At the National Museum of Contemporary Art - **BELGIAN ARTS**

In collaboration with MUHKA and Bart De Baere Opening on Wednesday 29th of June (in presence of Jan Fabre)

EMST and M HKA were already planning a collection presentation of M HKA. They decided to speed it up for it to become part of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival. Bart De Baere, director of M HKA, and EMST director Katerina Koskina will not only cocurate this exhibition, but also – on the invitation of Jan Fabre - an exhibition of Belgian artists.

See the entry on 'Athens, Antwerp – Two faces of Europe' for a personal statement of Bart De Baere.

III.III LITERATURE & IDEAS: the transformative power of words

Including literature and debate in a multidisciplinary arts festival starts from the conviction of the transformative power of words.

In the first year we will focus on the presentation of literature and thinkers from Belgium, in dialogue with their Greek collegues. A.o. the writers Stefan Hertmans and Tom Lanoye from Belgium will join.

The literature programmation will consist of the following elements:

- Literature nights: The Belgian spirit

Belgium has a vivid literary scene: writers actively make use of the public literary space in order to present their literature live to audiences in a dynamic and innovative way. During several literature nights we will present Belgian writers (writing in Dutch, French, Arabic...) who reveal the Belgian spirit of subversion, surrealism, experiment and ongoing search for identity. They turn simple readings of their work into wonderful experiences. The literature

nights will be accompanied by music, and translations of texts will be projected. Greek writers will be asked to join.

- Conversations: urgent issues

The conversations will bring together writers, thinkers, artists and scientists from Belgium and Greece to discuss urgent issues in literature, science, art, society, briefly: in the world today.

By bringing them together we want to empower vital discussion, stimulate new ideas, find common grounds, (re)think Europe and the world, and the place of art and literature in those shifting times of transformation.

- Readings of theatre texts from Belgium

In this first edition, we want to introduce some relevant theatre texts from Belgian writers. They will be presented to the audience through readings by Greek actors.

III.IV MUSIC, FILM, AND OTHER

The Festival Centre will be organised as a meeting platform. In the evenings there will be **music**, both by Greek and Belgian pop and jazz music bands.

Moreover, parallel with the Performing Arts Program there will be a **Film** programmation.

A **benefit** evening for charity will be organized in July.

III.V ACADEMY FOR YOUNG ARTISTS – AYA

For Jan Fabre and his team, education and innovation stand central. Throughout the Festival Jan Fabre wants to ensure the possibility of life-long learning by organizing **masterclasses** and workshops, by some of the invited artists and in different disciplines. Currently, the following artists have agreed to give a masterclass, workshop and/or teaching:

- Jan Fabre Teaching Group
- Viviane De Muynck
- Jacques Delcuvellerie
- Stef Lernous (Abattoir Fermé)
- Lisbeth Gruwez (Voetvolk)
- Theater Stap (Dance workshop for people with Down syndrome)
- Jan Lauwers (Needcompany)
- Anne-Teresa De Keersmaker (Rosas)

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These masterclasses and workshops will be embedded in a new structure, established for the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival, namely the **Academy for Young Artists** (AYA). The aim of this academy is to create opportunities for (young) artists to learn more, to engage in dialogue and reflect on their own and other's (artistic) practices.

'AYA' has different meanings in different countries. It means at the same time 'design, beautiful' (Japanese); 'miracle, verse, algebra' (Arabic), 'to fly swiftly, bird' (Hebrew); 'sword' (German); 'good, creative soul' (Turkish); 'goodness, music and melody' (Mongolian); etc. In this way the term reflects the hybrid, multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural object of this academy, as well as the multi-layered process of making and reflecting on art.

Next to the masterclasses and workshops, other activities are organized. Amongst others:

• Aftertalks with the performing artists

Artists will participate in a Q&A after one of the performances, open to the public.

• Young Critic Platform

Accompanied by a mentor, young aspiring writers, journalists and critics are invited to write reviews on the performances of the Festival. Similarly to a journalistic internship, they learn to edit, have meetings, publish their articles or videos.

• Young jury

Kids and young teens are invited to go see some of the performances, and ventilate their opinion in a pedagogical context.

Besides organising these educational events, the Academy for Young Artists wants to explicitly give young Greek artists (in the performing arts, visual arts, literature, music, film, etc.) the chance to take part in these activities by supporting them financially and structurally.

Two trajectories are developed:

a. Workshop and performance program

On the basis of an application, 50 young artists (from different disciplines) will be selected. They will receive free theatre tickets and entries for all the workshops of their choice.

b. Summer school program

On the basis of their application, 7 young artists will be selected to spend 7 days together. In an intense week, guided by a mentor, they will see performances, talk to fellow-artists, follow courses and discuss art. Through the reflection on other artists' practices, they will learn more about their own artistic practices.

IV. ARTISTIC TEAM

IV.I JAN FABRE

Jan Fabre (Antwerp, 1958) is considered one of the most innovative and versatile artists of his days. Over the past 30 years, he has produced works as a visual artist, theatre maker and author.

In the late 1970s, the young Jan Fabre caused a sensation as a performance artist. In 1982, the work *This is theatre like it was to be expected and foreseen* and two years later *The power of theatrical madness* challenged the foundations of the European theatre establishment.

Chaos and discipline, repetition and madness, metamorphosis and the anonymous are indispensable ingredients in Fabre's theatre. The body in all its forms has always been a central object of his research.

Productions such as Je suis sang, Angel of Death, Quando l'uomo principale è una donna, Orgy of Tolerance, Preparatio Mortis and Prometheus-Landscape II have earned Fabre international acclaim.

In 2005, Jan Fabre was artiste associé of the Festival d'Avignon. He then created *Histoire des Larmes* for the cour d'honneur, where he had already performed *Je suis sang* in 2001 and a retake of *Je suis sang* in 2005. In 2007, Jan Fabre created *Requiem für eine Metamorphose* for the Felsenreitschule of Salzburg.

Jan Fabre has created a selection of solos for his favourite performers, mostly based on texts written specially for them.

In 2015 Jan Fabre created *Mount Olympus*. *To glorify the cult of tragedy (a 24 hour performance)*, based on the Greek tragedies, with 27 performers on stage. It was received worldwide as a master piece and a new shift in theatre today.

As an author, he has written a impressive corpus of texts for theatre, including monologues and texts for several voices. For *Mount Olympus* he wrote poetical texts about sleep and dreams: *Remnants*. Jan Fabre writes diaries at night: his so called *Night diaries*, of which two volumes have already been published, give a unique insight in his life as an artist, his dreams, fears, and his artistic drive.

Jan Fabre has also built up an exceptional oeuvre as a visual artist. He has become known to a wide audience with the *Tivoli* castle (1990), *Heaven of Delight* (2002), in which the ceiling of the Mirror Room at the Royal Palace in Brussels is drawn with jewel beetle wing-shields, and his open-air sculptures, including *The man who measures the clouds* (1998), *Searching for Utopia* (2003) and *Totem* (2000-2004).

Jan Fabre was the first living artist to present his work at the Louvre in Paris (2008). He also has presented large scale exhibitions in a.o. Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (2011), at the Venice Biennale of 2009 and 2011, and in Kröller-Müller Museum Otterlo (2011). His *Stigmata. Actions and Performances* 1976 – 2013 was presented in MAXXI, Rome, 2013 and M HKA, Antwerp, 2015, and will be presented in MACC Lyon in september 2016 after having visited the Benaki Museum of Athens during summer 2016.

In May 2016 Jan Fabre will present *Spiritual Guards*, a journey through the city of Florence, passing the Forte Belvedere, Piazza della Signoria and Palazzo Vecchio. He is invited by the State Hermitage Museum in St-Petersburg to create a large scale exhibition in 2016, that will have its opening on October 21st.

IV.II CO-CURATORS AND COLLABORATORS

Sigrid Bousset studied Dutch and English literature. She has been working as a dramaturge in Kaaitheater (Brussels), with Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers and Anne-Teresa De Keersmaeker. She has been the co-founder, driving force and general director of the Brussels international house of literature Passa Porta, where she set up a international writers in residence programme and curated the bi-annual Passa Porta Festival of Literature. She has been involved in international networks of literature like HALMA and Literature Across Frontiers, acted as a bruidge builder in the field of literature exchange and is board member of PEN. Sigrid Bousset served as co-chair of the Flemish Council for Culture which advises the Minister of Culture on Cultural Policy.

She now acts as an independent curator for severals festivals of literature and works closely with Jan Fabre, accompanying his texts and publications.

During Jan Fabre's curatorship of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival, she will act as the curator of literature and ideas.

Edith Cassiers obtained a Bachelor in Dutch Theatre, Film and Literature Studies and a Masters degree in Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Antwerp.

In 2010, she was assistant-dramaturge for Jan Fabres production *Prometheus Landscape II*. Since 2011 she has worked as a researcher for Troubleyn/Laboratorium, which studies artistic methodologies of 'the performer of the 21st century', including the acting method of Jan Fabre.

Currently she is preparing a PhD within the project "The Didascalic Imagination" about contemporary theatrical notebooks (University of Antwerp and Vrije Universiteit Brussel). During Jan Fabre's curatorship of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival, she will

act as the curator for the young performing artists as well as the Academy for Young Artists.

Bart De Baere studied archeology and history of art. He became director of M HKA in 2002. Since its merger with the Centre for Visual Culture in 2003, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp is not focussing exclusively on art, but embeds it within visual culture at large. M HKA is co-publisher of Afterall Journal and member of the museum confederation L'Internationale.

Bart De Baere served as chairman of the Flemish Council for Culture, which advises the government on cultural policy. From 1999 till 2001 he was advisor for cultural heritage and contemporary art to the Flemish Minister of Culture. Before that time, he was chairman of the Flemish Council for Museums.

From 1986 till 2001 Bart De Baere was curator in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent (now S.M.A.K.) where he organized various exhibitions such as 'This is the show and the

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show is many things'. As a curator he has been active internationally, from Documenta IX in Kassel in 1992 up to the last Moscow Biennial in 2015.

As consultant for the City of Johannesburg he was involved in establishing a biennial in South Africa. He was a member of the International Advisory Council for the network of Soros Centres for contemporary art in Eastern Europe.

Bart De Baere's writing, theoretical texts and interviews have been featured in a variety of publications.

Joanna De Vos studied art history at Ghent University where she wrote her MA thesis on the male nude photographed by women (2006). She has worked for Flanders International Film Festival Ghent and on the contemporary art collection of the Nation Bank of Belgium. Since 2008 she has been part of Angelos, the organisation around the visual work of Jan Fabre. In this capacity she has been involved in various artistic projects and publications, including Hortus / Corpus in the Kröller - Müller Museum (Otterlo, 2011), The Years of the Hour Blue (1977 - 1992) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna (2011) and the Musée d'art moderne de Saint - Etienne (2012), and Stigmata. Actions & Performances 1976 - 2013 in the MAXXI (Rome, 2013) and M HKA (Antwerp, 2015). In 2015 she curated the major exhibition Facing time. Rops / Fabre in the city of Namur. For May 2016 she is preparing Spiritual Guards, a large scale solo exhibition of Jan Fabre in Florence, running through Forte Belvedere, Piazza della Signoria and Palazzo Vecchio.

During Jan Fabre's curatorship of the Festival, she will curate the Performance Art section.

Mark Geurden studied Roman philology and linguistics at the University of Antwerp. He subsequently specialized in so-called 'pragma-semiotics' (performance analysis) during a post-academic program titled 'Theatre Studies' at the University of Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels. He worked as program manager (theatre, dance) of Hasselt's arts centre from 1996 until 1999. Until today he has worked at Troubleyn/Jan Fabre as a staff member, responsible for, among other things, the internal efficiency of the theatre company's infrastructure and the general (international) policy. In 2010 he and Jan Fabre founded the research group 'Laboratorium' (transdisciplinary scientific research in performing arts), of which he is still in charge.

During the next four years he will be both Jan Fabre's and Liana Theodoratou's assistant.

Miet Martens studied film at the HRITCS in Brussels. For her thesis she focused on theatre and assisted the Belgian theatre maker Arne Sierens. In 1984, she was approached for the organization of an international tour of Jan Fabre's The Power of theatrical madness.

Ever since Troubleyn/Jan Fabre was founded in 1986, she has been Fabre's closest artistic collaborator in every possible function (directing assistant, dramaturgy, translations, publication of texts, artistic policy).

As artistic coordinator of the theatre company, she assisted Fabre in his function as curator for the Festival d'Avignon and now in his function as curator of the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival.

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She composes a Belgian film program for the Athens and Epidaurus International Festival.

Sophie Vanden Broeck was formed as a language teacher. She worked in Education & Development cooperation before starting with Troubleyn/ Jan Fabre in 2004. For several years she has worked as a production manager, the last years she works for the company as tour planning manager.

During the curatorship of Jan Fabre, she will function as an assistant to Jan Fabre and as the coordinator of the theatre works of Jan Fabre showed at the festival.

Liana Theodoratou is Professor of Ancient and Modern Greek Literature and Director of New York University's Program in Hellenic Studies. For more than two decades, she has been promoting Greek art and culture in New York and abroad.

She is presently Vice-President of the Athens Festival Executive Board and the Festival's Coordinator.

V. ATHENS, ANTWERP – TWO FACES OF EUROPE

Two projects meeting up, a museum project and a festival.

The meeting of two Museums of Contemporary Art, Athens and Antwerp, inaugurates a series of events that will lead to the long awaited opening of the *National Museum of Contemporary Art* (EMST) of Greece. It is the first of the forthcoming synergies with international museums and institutions that share the same interests and perspectives with EMST. This project will try to explore through dialogue and analysis critical and crucial issues of our society.

EMST and M HKA decided to rearticulate and reschedule their project in order to meet with the *Athens and Epidaurus Festival* that will be lead from 2016 by the Antwerp Theatre and Dance director, performer and visual artist Jan Fabre.

EMST is now housed in its permanent building, the renovated former FIX Brewery, a landmark building of more than 18.000 m². The building was first scheduled to open for the Olympic Games in 2004 and then in 2014, on the occasion of the Greek Presidency of the European Union. It will finally open within 2016, after the building gets its museological infrastructure, thanks to a generous donation of the Niarchos Foundation.

EMST has a considerable collection, with important works by international artists such as Jannis Kounellis, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Lucas Samaras, Bill Viola, Kimsooja, Vlassis Kaniaris, Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshrat, Francis Alys, amongst others.

The guest presentation of M HKA in EMST will be the first of a series through which Katerina Koskina, its director aims to activate the international horizon that such a museum represents, while at the same time the question how the global horizon and localisation can be related, a quest close to that of M HKA, is revealed.

'Athens, Antwerp – Two faces of Europe', 'Athens, Antwerp and the world' will present works of the M HKA collection in dialogue with those of the EMST collection. The key question will be the relevance of artistic mind-sets to the urgencies of today. At the core will be the notion of a dialogue between the work of local artists from both sides, two countries who are challenged by the world. Therefore the basic set up starting with 'guest' works from Antwerp, and a quest for an extension of this set up into a continuing dialogue, will be complemented by art from all over the world.

Jan Fabre, recently appointed Director of the *Athens and Epidaurus Festival* invited the two directors to additionally curate an exhibition of artists from Belgium. De Baere and Koskina will focus in this project on artists that are not canonical like Fabre's generation, yet have an oeuvre that may be relevant with today's urgencies. **'Here and everywhere'** will invite to Athens artists that live in Belgium, a hyperdiverse country in a hyperdiverse world. The

project will strive for a dialogue to be developed between those artists and artists living in Greece.

The exhibitions open on June 30st. The exhibitions will search a resonance with the performance section of the festival curated by Joanna De Vos.

VI. STIGMATA

'Jan Fabre. Stigmata. Actions & Performances 1976-2013' is a voyage into the memory of this Flemish artist through drawings, photographs, study models — which Fabre refers to as "thinking models" — and filmic documentations of his performances, from the second half of the 1970s to the present.

Visitors are greeted by a labyrinth of tables introducing the artist's philosophies. This tool serves to understand his ideas, his memories, his art, profoundly inspired by the traditions of Flemish painting and focused on the study and use of the body.

https://app.box.com/stigmata.

VII. PREPARATIO MORTIS

Images and the press kit of *Preparatio Mortis*, can be found here: https://app.box.com/shared/dcbg9rzlqn.

VIII. MOUNT OLYMPUS

Images and the press kit of *Mount Olympus*, can be found here: https://app.box.com/mountolympus.

Portrait photos of Jan Fabre can be found here:

https://app.box.com/JanFabre.