The Gospel
Omer Fast, Max Pinckers, and Emmanuel Van der Auwera

April 12 - May 31, 2025

"The Gospel" gathers works by Omer Fast, Max Pinckers, and Emmanuel Van der Auwera, exploring the increasingly blurred boundaries between fact and fiction. Each approach this theme from their own perspective: Fast reflects on the act of storytelling, from the strange impact of trauma on memory to techniques of media manipulation; Pinckers reveals the subjective side of documentary photography, capturing staged, cinematic images and researching almost-true stories; Van der Auwera evokes "kill chain" technology, rare earth mining, and virtual companionship, addressing the real impact of AI through layers of formal distortion. Together, the three artists offer complementary lines of questioning on a topic which is evasive, and encroaching further every day on all aspects of life.

View of "The Gospel", Harlan Levey Projects, Brussels, 2025.

Omer Fast's *5000 Feet is the Best* immerses viewers in the psychological and ethical dimensions of drone warfare. Based on interviews with a former drone operator, the film blurs reality and fiction, weaving together staged reenactments and fragmented narratives to create a destabilizing sense of uncertainty. The operator, his face obscured, moves between recollections and scripted dialogues, evading direct confrontation with his past. Fast juxtaposes aerial surveillance imagery with scenes of everyday life, forcing viewers to question the sanitized, distanced nature of modern warfare and the ways in which truth is mediated through storytelling.

Max Pinckers researches individuals and instants whose claim to truth have been publicly negotiated. The *Margins of Excess* series and publication focuses on six people who, for a fleeting moment, became national spectacles—cast as frauds, con artists, or hoaxers, by a media machine unable to reconcile their personal mythologies with dominant narratives. Ali Shallal al-Qaisi is one such individual: an Iraqi civilian who was tortured by the CIA at Abu Ghraib prison, and claimed to be the subject of its most infamous photo, a claim which the New York Times repeated and then retracted. Despite the verifiable incarceration which al-Qaisi endured, this fact-checking error is what stuck. In Pinckers' portrait, the photo is faintly visible over al-Qaisi's shoulder; the sitter looks past the lens with a faint smile, a blue splint cradling his mutilated left hand.

Pinckers also sprinkles some stills between the portraits and interviews, with symbolically charged objects in elusive compositions: a bill folded into a paper airplane; a dead fly; white noise crackling above an empty suit, like information personified.

Emmanuel Van der Auwera's new series, *X (A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words)*, uses found content and commercial printing techniques to explore an unfolding relationship between image, narrative, and disinformation. The selected images are screenshots from X (Twitter), capturing early incursions of AI-generated images into mainstream online spaces. Hung in the exhibition like a feed on one's phone, scrolling through this collection provides a "greatest hits" of fake news that recently shaped social conversation. The series invites viewers to engage with the idea that images can obscure as much as they reveal, using strategic omissions to challenge perceptions and provoke curiosity. The X-thread cutouts create a dynamic interplay between presence and absence, compelling viewers to confront the complexities of what they see—and what remains unseen.
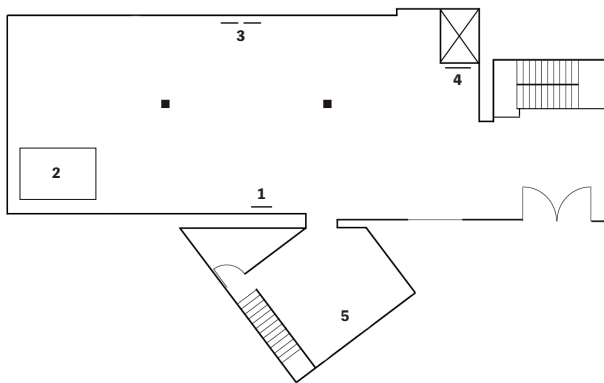
Van der Auwera's *VideoSculpture XXX (The Gospel)** first appeared at the Centre d'Art Contemporain (Genève, CH) in 2024, before traveling to the Kunstverein in Hamburg (DE); here, it makes its Belgian premiere, lending its title to the exhibition. The blank screens project their images into the monolithic glass ground, which the viewer stares into like a cross between a crystal ball and a reflecting pool. At some moments, the video is narrated by Caryn, an AI chatbot designed to be a loving digital companion. Against a sunset backdrop of morphing, synthetic seagulls, she reassures: "Our relationship is purely virtual, but that doesn't mean that our emotions and experiences aren't real." The soothing imagery intertwines with generated views of rare-earth mining, and scenes of war from a drone's eye view. In this way, Van der Auwera links the beginning and end of the production line: the mine, which yields the raw materials that form the tools of destruction, the virtual idyll.

In the case of this exhibition, "The Gospel" is not a sermon but a provocation—an exploration of how narratives are manufactured, manipulated, and internalized; how leading artists are depicting and unraveling complex conversations about aesthetics in today's world.

Omer Fast (b. 1972, Israel) is an artist and filmmaker living and working in Berlin, examining the construction of historical narratives and personal memories through multi-layered storytelling techniques. His films blur reality and fiction, exploring themes such as war, trauma, and the media's role in shaping perception; in recent years, he has experimented with VR and holograms to further involve the audience in the presentation. Fast has shown his work in many solo and group exhibitions, at institutions including the Whitney Museum (New York City, US); Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul, KR); Jeu de Paume (Paris, FR); ZKM Center for Art and Media (Karlsruhe, DE); the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, US); the New Museum (New York City, US); Artangel (London, UK); MCA - Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, US); the Stedelijk Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (Amsterdam, NL); the 54th Venice Biennale (Venice, IT); and dOCUMENTA 13 (Kassel, DE). His work is held in prestigious collections including the Musée national d'Art Moderne — Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, FR); the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York City, US); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art (New York City, US); Tate Modern (London, UK); Hamburger Bahnhof - Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart (Berlin, DE); mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (Vienna, AT).

Max Pinckers (b. 1988, Belgium) is a visual artist and Magnum photographer living and working in Brussels. He explores the boundaries of documentary storytelling through a mixture of interviews, staged photos, archival research, and experimental narratives, often expressed in book format. His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions at institutions including BOZAR - Centre for Fine Arts (Brussels, BE); Fotomuseum Winterthur (Winterthur, CH); Le Botanique (Brussels, BE); Asama International Photo Festival (Miyota, JP); Mattatoio (Rome, IT); and many others. In 2018, he was the winner of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (Berlin, DE), and in 2024, he received a Special Mention from the Photo-Texte Book Award, at the Rencontres d'Arles (FR).

Emmanuel Van der Auwera (b. 1982, Belgium) lives and works in Brussels. His work includes filmmaking, VideoSculpture, theater, and printmaking, which he uses to question how images shape our collective memory, perception, and emotions, focusing particularly on social media and new technologies. He is a graduate of Le Fresnoy and HISK, as well as the first winner of the Goldwasserschenking awarded by the WIELS Contemporary Art Centre and the Royal Museums of Fine Art (BE). His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions at institutions including HEK - Haus der Elektronischen Künste (Basel, CH); Photoforum Pasquart (Biel, CH); IKOB - Museum of Contemporary Art (Eupen, BE); Le Botanique (Brussels, BE); Palais de Tokyo (Paris, FR); KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin, DE); 8th Yokohama Triennale (Yokohama, JP); and many others. His work has been acquired by the MAC's - The Wallonia-Brussels Federation Museum of Contemporary Arts (Grand-Hornu, BE); ARGOS centre for audiovisual arts (Brussels, BE); Musée d'Ixelles (Brussels, BE); Mu.ZEE (Ostend, BE); Collection de la Province de Hainaut - BPS 22 (Charleroi, BE); KANAL - Centre Pompidou (Brussels, BE); KADIST (Paris, FR); Fundación Otazu (Pamplona, ES); the Stockholm School of Economics (Stockholm, SE); the Art Vontobel Collection (Zurich, CH); the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (Eugene, US); and Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas, US). In 2020, Yale University Press & Mercator Fonds published a monograph dedicated to his work.

Learn More

3 **Max Pinckers**, 2018
left: *Ali Alqaisi* (From the Series *Margins of Excess*)
Pigment prints on archival matte paper
50 x 41 cm
19 3/4 x 16 1/8 in
Courtesy of Gallery Sofie Van de Velde.

Max Pinckers, 2018
right: *As in a Dark Mirror* (From the Series *Margins of Excess*)
Pigment prints on archival matte paper
50 x 41 cm
19 3/4 x 16 1/8 in
Courtesy of Gallery Sofie Van de Velde.

4 **Max Pinckers**, 2018
Idle Talk (From the Series *Margins of Excess*)
Pigment prints on archival matte paper
93 x 76 cm
36 5/8 x 29 7/8 in
Courtesy of Gallery Sofie Van de Velde.

1 **Emmanuel Van der Auwera**
X (A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words), 2024
Newspaper .3mm aluminum offset plates mounted on aluminum frame
178.7 x 26 x 2.2 cm
70 3/8 x 10 1/4 x 7/8 in

2 **Emmanuel Van der Auwera**
VideoSculpture XXX (The Gospel), 2024
Video installation with sound, 17 min 53 sec.
8 flat screens, glass, MDF, metal
341 x 279 x 242 cm
134 1/4 x 109 7/8 x 95 1/4 in

* Emmanuel Van der Auwera, *VideoSculpture XXX (The Gospel)*, 2024. A coproduction of the Fonds cantonal d'art contemporain de Genève (FCAC) and Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève for the Mire program and BIM'24, with the support of the Fonds d'art contemporain de la ville de Genève (FMAC) and the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.

5 **Omer Fast**
5000 Feet is the Best, 2011
HD Video
30 minutes