

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 17 Nov 2016 – 10.00

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, YOUTH, SPORT AND MEDIA

CINEMAXIMILIAAN  
WINS THE  
FLEMISH CULTURE PRIZE FOR SOCIOCULTURAL WORK WITH ADULTS 2015

Today the Flemish Minister of Culture Sven Gatz awarded the Flemish Culture Prize for Sociocultural Work with Adults 2015 to Cinemaximiliaan. The prize consists of a sum of €10,000 and a bronze work of art. The prize was awarded during [Socius](#)' annual meeting day.

[Cinemaximiliaan](#) is a pop-up cinema organised for and by refugees. The project was set up at the initiative of Gwendolyn Lootens and Gawan Fagard in response to the refugee crisis in 2015. The name refers to [Maximiliaan park](#) in the Northern Quarter (Noordwijk/Quartier Nord) of Brussels which at the time served as a refugee camp for over a thousand people waiting to be registered with the Belgian Immigration Department and the Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers.

Since then Cinemaximiliaan has grown into a volunteer organisation that organises film screenings, debates, shows and trips at reception centres for refugees, cultural institutions and in people's homes. In short, Cinemaximiliaan creates meeting places, or as the founders describe it: 'a **'living room'** that's never too small, where there is always time for new people, ideas and initiatives.'

*'Starting out as an answer to an acute societal problem, Cinemaximiliaan has gone beyond this local context of the city to embark upon a bigger adventure driven by pioneers, culture, diversity and the creation of a community. Thanks to the efforts of committed coordinators and volunteers, Cinemaximiliaan has become a wide-reaching, sustainable and reliable organisation. Cinemaximiliaan has become a symbol for the many hundreds of very different bottom-up initiatives that take part in society autonomously, far from the established and subsidised structures',* states the jury report.

*'The dedication and efforts of Cinemaximiliaan are commendable. Born as a heart-warming idea, the organisation strengthens and inspires the whole of society with its enthusiasm.'* explains the Flemish Minister of Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Sven Gatz.

The jury would like to call for collaborations involving all actors in the sociocultural field: organisations, sociocultural workers, volunteers, professionals, policy-makers and governments, etc.

The project initiators were very grateful to receive this prize and shared it with all newcomers. The Flemish Culture Prize is a symbolic message which indicates that a cultural aspect is also required in order to give newcomers a place in society. 'For us the prize is a recognition of the fact that integration is not just a matter of fulfilling basic needs. Cinemaximiliaan has allowed us to see on the ground how fundamental the need is **to still feel emotions**, to have warm, in-depth exchanges, particularly for people who find themselves in a precarious situation. In this sense, films and art are catalysts to come into contact with one another, to exchange cultures and launch a debate, to form an open network without borders or restrictions. It

starts by creating a climate of trust which is built up and maintained in a sustainable and individual way. In this climate, positive motivation can be turned into concrete action, where each and every personality is key. Many newcomers thus get surprising perspectives on pursuing their studies or career aspirations, on rebuilding their dignity and social interaction, and prospects for their life in a new country open up to them.'

The Flemish Culture Prize for Sociocultural Work with Adults 2015 was presented during the annual meeting day (Trefdag) which [Socius](#), the support centre for sociocultural work with adults, organises to provide inspiration and a forum for actors in the sector to meet. Actor and writer Dimitri Leue moderated the event.

### Flanders Culture Prizes 2015

On the recommendation of a jury of experts, the Flemish Minister of Culture honours a person or organisation that has made a significant contribution to the cultural landscape in Flanders during the previous season. Flanders Culture Prizes announce the winner at an important event in the sector, putting both the sector and the winner in the spotlight and recognising the achievements of both. The prize money consists of a sum of €10,000. For the Flemish Community Prize for General Cultural Merit, the Flemish government sets aside a sum of €20,000. Each winner also receives the small bronze sculpture 'La ultima isla' by [Philip Aguirre](#).

[www.cultuurprijzen.be](http://www.cultuurprijzen.be)

#cultureprizes @deptCYSM

#### Cinemaximiliaan coordinators:

**Gawan Fagard** (born in 1985), art historian, film programmer and critic. He is currently doing a PhD at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München and Vrije Universiteit in Brussels.

**Gwendolyn Lootens** (born in 1981), visual artist and documentary maker. She studied at Sint-Lucas in Ghent, Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam and RITS in Brussels and took part in the WIELS residency programme.

#### Cinemaximiliaan volunteers:

Terry, accountant (BE), Quinten, filmmaker (BE), Dirk, communications manager (BE), Ayham, aid worker and international relations student (SY), Louay, aid worker and film student (SY), Lubnan, shoemaker and actor (IQ), Ayman, nurse and dancer (PS), Shamsia, social worker (AFG), Ali, journalist (AFG), Reza, graphic designer (AFG/IRN), Batul, teacher (AFG/IRN), Anne-Marie, visual artist (BE), Abdullah, cook (IQ), Bassel, sound designer (SY), Daphne, filmmaker (NL), Anna, language teacher (BE), Frederike, social worker (BE), Sheri, labourer (AFG), Lotte, filmmaker (BE), Agata, curator (PL), Aukje, artist (NL), Elke, journalist (BE), Karar, truck driver (IQ), Abbas, barber (IQ), Gailan, air-conditioning technician (IQ), Yusur, geometry student (IQ), Javid, photographer (AFG), Deyaa, graphic designer (IQ), Mohammed, dancer (PS), June, sociology student (SGP), Hala, social geography student (LBN), Adrian, human rights activist (MX), Mohammed, visual artist (IQ), Emma, artist (NL), Marie-Laurence, social worker (BE), Mahmood, student (AFG), Ghulam, student (AFG), Sandra, filmmaker (NL), Ruchira, translator (IN), Ben, computer scientist (BE), Korneel, photographer (BE), Saif, musician (IQ), Fanny, social worker (BE), Katrijn, social worker and filmmaker (BE), Ali, painter (IQ), Ella, architecture student (BE), Azmi, engineer (SY), Constance, law student (BE), Tareq and Ahmed, air-conditioning technicians (IQ), Maria, international affairs officer (SY/SE), Katrien, curator (NL), Flo, filmmaker (BE), Cathérine, artist (BE), Annemie, tour manager and teacher (BE), Lisa, visual artist (BE), Kym, artist (UK), Mehdi, journalist (MAR/BE), Haider, musical instrument maker (IQ), Shadan and Nagham, teachers and social workers (SY), Shalan, musician and composer (SY), Nedjma, playwright (AL/BE), Joëlle, landscape architect and social worker (BE), Hanana, social worker (MAR/BE), Ophélie, social worker (BE), Ahmed, vet (IQ), Firas, technician (IQ).

## **Background information**

[www.cinemaximiliaan.com](http://www.cinemaximiliaan.com)

Video about Cinemaximiliaan: <https://vimeo.com/187973757>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cinemaximiliaan](http://www.facebook.com/cinemaximiliaan)

[You Tube clip](#) (online after embargo is lifted) and [press server](#)

---

## **Press information**

Eva Vanhengel

Spokeswoman for the Flemish Minister of Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Sven Gatz

+32 476 51 21 07                      [eva.vanhengel@vlaanderen.be](mailto:eva.vanhengel@vlaanderen.be)

Jill Everaerd

Press Attaché Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media

+32 492 34 85 56                      [jill.everaerd@cjsm.vlaanderen.be](mailto:jill.everaerd@cjsm.vlaanderen.be)

Cinemaximiliaan

Gawan Fagard & Gwendolyn Lootens

+32 484 81 78 33                      [cinemaximiliaan@gmail.com](mailto:cinemaximiliaan@gmail.com)

---

**From 13-16 November 2016**, just before this prize is presented, **Cinemaximiliaan** is organising a 4-day tour with the film **'Sonita'** by the Iranian documentary maker **Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami**. The film will be shown at various refugee reception centres in Belgium, where volunteers from Cinemaximiliaan and the film-maker will hold debates, meetings and workshops with newcomers about the film.

Trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B47MbpPuz7A>

Sonita's 'Brides for Sale' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n65w1DU8cGU>

**more information:** <http://www.wmm.com/sonita/>

## **SYNOPSIS:**

Sonita, an 18-year-old Afghan refugee in Teheran without a resident's permit dreams of a career as a rapper. But women aren't allowed to sing in Iran, and as a bride she's worth 9,000 dollars. A thrilling account of a journey filled with setbacks and success, in which Sonita fights for her freedom with her art as her only weapon.

## **SONITA TOUR**

13-16 November 2016:

-13/11 - 11am: 'Sonita' + Workshop at Lubbeek reception centre

-13/11 - 4pm: Workshop at Houthalen-Helchteren reception centre

-13/11 - 7pm: 'Sonita' + Q&A with Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami at Houthalen-Helchteren reception centre

-14/11 - 6pm: 'Sonita' + Q&A with Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami at Cinéma Galeries, Brussels

- 15/11 - 9:30am - 2pm: Study day with Farzaneh Davoodi and Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami at Centre Exil and Réseau Mariage et Migration, Brussels

- 15/11 - 6pm: 'Sonita' + Q&A with Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami at Poelkapelle reception centre

-15/11 - 8pm: 'Sonita' + Workshop at Poelkapelle reception centre

-16/11 - 2pm: Workshop at Reno reception centre in Ghent

-16/11 - 5pm: 'Sonita' + Q&A with Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami at 'Reno' reception centre in Ghent

-16/11 - 7pm: 'The Land of the Enlightened' by Pieter-Jan de Pue + debate with Pieter-Jan de Pue, Farzaneh Davoodi, Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami, Ali and Shamsia Ahmadi Nejat and Obaidullah Karimy at CC Belgica, Dendermonde, in collaboration with Dendermonde reception centre.

**Please contact** [Cinemaximiliaan](http://www.cinemaximiliaan.com) directly if you would like to take part in one of these events.