

## **Karl Philips: *Off Season***

*Off Season* is a time of the year when activity and demand are lower than usual. In the best case, the off season offers a space to step back, take inventory, and make necessary adjustments and repairs. Karl Philips' *Off Season* invites us to do exactly that as his exhibition consistently prompts reflection on the intersection of art with broader societal themes. The video installation *Keelhauling* exhibits a boat placed upon a dry dock used for maintenance or storage reasons. Along the long sides of the boat there are 15 screens on each side displaying various water scenes hand-filmed directly on site. The boat hammocks intensify the state of being without solid ground beneath one's feet, as they sway from left to right while the recordings swing from top to bottom. Philips composes an experiential space of constant blurry interweaving touristic and migration-based reasons for being *on*, *in*, or *under* water. The video work fosters a sense of individual destiny within diverse and frequently polarized societies.

A knocked over umbrella relates to the beach brawl in Blankenberge in August of 2020. Made solely out of construction metal and aimed at entering visitors, Philips transforms the beach umbrella into a weapon and a protection shield at the same time. The installation prompts dialogue regarding politically pressing issues relating to touristic climate change - yet significantly resisting societal divisiveness. Instead, Philips exhibits the ambiguity embedded in everyday life. Diving goggles (*Scuba* 2024), boats (*Keelhauling* 2019 + 2025), sandals (*Teva* 2025), illegal street vendors (*Liquidity* 2021), and international money transactions (*Mastercard/ Bankcontact/ Maestro* 2025) explore the multiple and self-conflicted narratives of everyday artifacts. They cautiously entangle visitors within the complexities of migration and demand thoughtful and creative responses to the ongoing struggle and truly urgent issue of the globalized era.

Engaging with voices often marginalized or erased in dominant systems, the mixed media installation *Drive Light/ Drive Night* (2024) examines what it means to economically and ecologically constantly be on the move. It provides a forum for critical cultural and political conversations regarding globally interdependent and exploitative trading structures. Following a similar line of thought, *Trickle Down* (2025) and *Go Pro* (2024) vividly illuminate the complex reciprocity and utmost fragility of human-nature relations. They offer a powerful means to promote empathy. As part of the globalized era's ongoing individual and collective struggle, the artworks inspire to make hands-on societal adjustments and repairs.

Text by: Lucia Rainer

## **Karl Philips: In Fuga Salus**

*In Fuga Salus* is inspired by »being on the run«. Philips exhibits ordinary cityscapes and motorways as much more than just a backdrop of everyday life. He presents them as layered compositions that do not only tell inconspicuous stories of concrete and asphalt. Instead, Philips assembles a collection of transport trucking companies passing through Belgium. He documents his field study on an aquarelle poster drawing *Les Routiers sont Sympa* (2025) presenting a selection of famous Belgian artists. Amidst apparently irrelevant highway babble, the poster humorously redirects the visitors' attention asking: „What if ...“ Philips invites the us to think along, take our foot off the accelerator (*Pump Car* 2014), and have a look at what's going on from different perspectives (*In Fuga Salus maquette*) to hopefully do arrive safely at last.

Text by: Lucia Rainer