

# KOEN VANMECHELEN BIOGRAPHY



The Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen (1965) is an internationally acclaimed conceptual artist. His groundbreaking work deals with biocultural diversity and identity. Central to his oeuvre is the chicken, which, through his projects, is revealed as both an artwork and a metaphor for society. By bringing together and exploring the interplay between art, science and philosophy in his work, Vanmechelen reflects upon our global heritage and examines the way that we choose to live and evolve. Multi-disciplinary scientific collaborations and community engagement are integral to Vanmechelen's approach.

Vanmechelen's work first gained worldwide recognition in the late nineties, with the launch of his Cosmopolitan Chicken Project (CCP), an artistic crossbreeding project with chickens. Since its inception nearly twenty years ago, the resulting art work has been shown in exhibitions all over the world. It has also attracted growing interest amongst scientists. Each successive generation of the CCP has proven to be more resilient, longer living, less susceptible to disease, and less aggressive than the previous one. In collaboration with the University of

Leuven, the Cosmopolitan Chicken Research Project (CC®P) now studies the genetic make-up of the various CCP crossings and its potential implications for science. Vanmechelen's scientific collaborations have earned him an honorary doctorate from the University of Hasselt (2010) and the Golden Nica Hybrid Art award (2013).

Vanmechelen's art work is as diverse and hybrid as the Cosmopolitan Chicken itself: a unique mix of paintings, drawings, photography, innovative 3D-techniques, video, installations and wooden sculptures.

All of it flows from Vanmechelen's belief that art belongs in society, engaging with people. The artist's major on-going projects have a consistent community focus: Cosmogolem, a global art-based children's rights project; the Walking Egg, a developing world fertility project; and Combat, a WWI remembrance project. In 2011, the foundations supporting these works were grouped into a new institute called the Open University of Diversity.

In 2016, Vanmechelen launched his Planetary Community Chicken (PCC) project. As the new cross-breed is being introduced to underserved communities worldwide, the MOUTH foundation leads on the sustainable development aspects of the initiative. MOUTH is a not-for-profit organization set up by a group of European doctors and scientists in partnership with Vanmechelen in 2016. It brings together art, science and people to explore the applications and impact of biocultural diversity.

Vanmechelen has presented his work on almost every continent, from the U.S. to China and Iceland to Senegal. In Belgium his work has been shown at numerous museums and locations: the Verbeke Foundation, Watou, Museum M and Z33. He has also participated in solo and group exhibitions in, amongst others, The National Gallery (London), Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Museum Kunst Palast (Düsseldorf), Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (Amsterdam), Macro (Rome), MAD Museum (NY), Belvedere (Vienna), ZKM (Karlsruhe) and Pushkin Museum (Moscow). Besides making regular appearances at the Venice Biennale, his work has been shown at the Biennials of Moscow, Havana, Dakar and Poznan, at the Triennial of Guangzhou, at the World Expo Shanghai 2010, at Manifesta 9, and at dOCUMENTA (13).

For more information  
[www.koenvanmechelen.com](http://www.koenvanmechelen.com)