

Bitter

Chocolate Stories

Exhibition, book, media campaign





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2 screen video projections. Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam.



Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

1. Introduction

We associate chocolate with celebration, comfort, romance. But do we ever associate it with the farmers – and often children – who literally make the product possible? West Africa produces almost three quarters of the world's cocoa, 70% of which is consumed in Europe and North America. More than 2 million child labourers work on cocoa plantations in Ghana and the Ivory Coast alone. Who are these children and why do they do this work? BITTER Chocolate Stories sheds light on these questions. Combining portraits of 15 former child labourers and interviews with the children and other actors in the industry, the exhibition and book provide an insight into the complexities of a product many of us take for granted.

BITTER Chocolate Stories tells the stories of Bassirou, Valerie, Augustin, Sarata, Mohamed, Cedric, Ghislain, Issaka, Bèbè, Kassoum, Laeticia, Alexis, Cathérine, Josias and Edyon, who all worked as child labourers on cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast. Originally from Burkina Faso, these children now live in a shelter and training centre near the capital Ouagadougou, where Joana Choumali photographed them in an improvised studio. Journalist Marijn Heemskerk interviewed the children about their experiences on the plantations and their dreams for the future. She also spoke to other actors in the industry in order to present a nuanced understanding of the many factors that lead to child trafficking and child labour in West Africa.

BITTER Chocolate Stories was created in collaboration with Tony's Chocolonely (more about them on page 21). Paradox developed the exhibition and book to contribute to the mission of this Dutch social enterprise: raising awareness regarding child labour in the cocoa industry. All parties in the chocolate chain – cocoa farmers, chocolate companies, retailers, governments and consumers – have a responsibility to tackle child labour. Informing a wide audience about the issue – in this case via a festival or museum show - is among the first steps. By programming the exhibition, you can contribute as well!



Studio used by Joana Choumali, at Garbe FRB, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso © Lise Straatsma



Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam © Tiago Rosado

Lightbox content layout: <https://issuu.com/xparadox/docs/lightbox>

2. Background, concept and method

BITTER Chocolate Stories aims at contributing to public awareness regarding the issue of (forced) child labour in the cocoa industry by means of a documentary project consisting of a travelling exhibition and a photo book.

Chocolate consumers are confronted with the labour conditions in the industry which for more than a century has made use of child labour including the worst form: slavery. Consumers and (former) child labourers meet each other in the exhibition and the accompanying photo book. The personal approach is an effective way of raising awareness.

The book and the exhibition are built around (studio) portrait photography by the renowned Ivorian photographer Joana Choumali (Ivory Coast, 1974). The fact that the photographer is recruited from the region relates directly to Tony's mission: empowering the people that contribute to the final product. All portraits were taken in an improvised studio at a rehabilitation centre near Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) where kids that have escaped from slavery receive education. The formal portraits – one from the back, one from the front, one of their hands - treat these youth with respect, their pain can be felt only by reading the accompanying statement.

The portraits are complemented with contextual images from various sources: (drone based) landscape photography and videography as well as physical objects such as work tools, cocoa pods and beans that can be touched by the visitor. All these elements are brought together in an installation with open sound. Despite the fact that the often dramatic images, of e.g. children working under impossible circumstances, play no central role here, the exhibition has a strong emotional effect on the viewer.

The, often harsh, realism of mass media (and sometimes also NGOs) is referred to in contextual representations of news footage (moving and still). It confronts the critical viewer with how the issue generally is and has been dealt with in the media. With limited results that is, as not much has changed in our attitude. Whether that is (partly) due to the seductive strategies of chocolate advertising, media fatigue or moral laziness, remains an open question. It is subtly referred to in the exhibition by adding lightboxes displaying key words from chocolate commercials from the largest global players.

Journalist Marijn Heemskerk (The Netherlands, 1980) accompanied the photographer, conducted interviews with the children, some of their parents as well as officials and wrote essays providing a solid, historical and economic background.

How is the chocolate industry connected to child slave labour? How long has this been going on? Where do the children working on cocoa farms come from and how do they end up as slaves? Who are these kids and what do they have to say? What can we as consumers do about it? How has child labour changed over time - if at all? What has been done to procure the end of slavery in the cocoa industry? These and other questions need to be addressed to understand the complex mechanisms behind the global chocolate industry. Despite the efforts of NGOs, news media for transparency in the industry, forced labour practices still exist today. This story needs to be told.



I'm reading all these reports about
child slavery in the chocolate industry.

Still from "The Chocolate case" <https://vimeo.com/183675466>



Holland is obliged to criminally prosecute
Teun van der Keuken.

Still from "The Chocolate case" <https://vimeo.com/183675466>

"The Chocolate case" <https://vimeo.com/183675466>

"The story of an unusual chocolate bar" <https://vimeo.com/241719996>

3. About Tony's Chocolonely

Thirteen years ago, journalists from Keuringsdienst van Waarde, a Dutch TV consumer programme that uncovers the world behind the products in our shopping basket, launched an investigation into child labour and slavery in the chocolate industry. The investigation followed a short report in a Dutch newspaper about children being traded at markets in West Africa to work on cocoa plantations.

On 12 January 2004, Teun van de Keuken, one of the journalists on the programme, ate chocolate from several brands on sale in the Netherlands. A few days later he turned himself in to the police. His offence? Consuming chocolate in the knowledge that it had been produced using illegal child labour and slavery, making him complicit in the crime. He hired a lawyer and set about getting himself prosecuted. Without anyone to press charges, however, he could not be tried. So he went to Burkina Faso to find children who had worked as forced labour on cocoa plantations.

In the same shelter where the children featured in BITTER Chocolate Stories now live, he met three boys, who were willing to testify against him.

A long trial followed but Van de Keuken was never charged. The link between the three boys and the chocolate Van de Keuken had eaten – essential for Dutch law – could not be proven. He and the other journalists decided to take matters into their own hands and established their own chocolate brand. They called it Tony's Chocolonely, a reference to Teun van de Keuken's name and his lonely struggle for slave-free chocolate.

Today, Tony's Chocolonely has become the second largest chocolate brand in the Netherlands and has started rolling out its mission driven activities internationally. In the media the company is often referred to as a the ultimate example of a (successful) social enterprise.

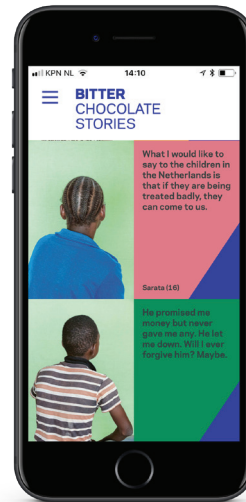
Tony's and Paradox collaborate

The mission of the exhibition and book, and Tony Chocolonely in general, is to change the chocolate industry and make consumers aware of the difficult circumstances children work in for their beloved chocolate.

Developing an independent documentary project that (as a show) can travel to multiple venues worldwide and (as a book) can reach an audience worldwide, gives a voice to the ones that managed to be freed from forced labour. The identification of the viewer with the young people portrayed contributes to reducing consumers' and manufacturers' indifference with regard to working conditions in the chocolate industry (and those for children in particular). The documentary approach of BITTER Chocolate Stories, combining artistic expression and journalistic rigour makes sure a large audience can be reached in an unexpected way and thus effective way.



Book *BITTER Chocolate Stories* (EN version)



BITTER Chocolate Stories landing page at bitter.tonyschocolonely.com



Opening of *BITTER Chocolate Stories* - live performance from Ernst Reijseger (cello) Harmen France (piano), Mola Sylla (vocals, percussion) in front of 2 screen video installation.



Billboard advertisement in Museumplein, Amsterdam.

Website bitter.tonyschocolonely.com
Book <https://goo.gl/EnwFnJ>

Platforms

BITTER Chocolate Stories has been developed for multiple platforms:

- A. Indoor exhibition for museums
- B. Exhibition for public spaces (indoor/outdoor)
- C. Book
- D. Website
- E. Campaign

A. Indoor museum exhibition

The portraits and stories of 15 children were displayed in the middle of the exhibition hall on 1.8 m tall double sided lightboxes. These are accompanied by words taken from slogans of major chocolate brands, providing a sharp contrast between the pleasure of chocolate consumption and the harsh reality of its production.

The space is filled with sound coming from a soundtrack created in collaboration with Ernst Reijseger (cello), Harmen Fraanje (piano) and Mola Sylla (vocals, percussion). The soundtrack is synchronised with a monumental panoramic projection of images of cocoa plantations and villages filmed from high above by a drone. The footage is from Tiago Rosado, the montage was done by Peter Claassen.

Background information is provided by texts, objects as well as a timeline and infographics placed on tables flanking the exhibition of the lightboxes. By exposing visitors to the world behind their chocolate bars, the exhibition aims to highlight how their consumption choices impact an industry and, in turn, the lives of countless children. The design of the exhibition is intended to reflect the complexities of the industry in the physical space: the children are literally 'stuck in the middle'.

Visitors are challenged to relate to the printed information provided on the tables. By combining physical cocoa beans (with smell!), tools (machetes e.g.) and moving images on small monitors the information is a multi-sensory experience. Yet, for those with less time or attention: the big lightboxes in combination with the drone projection and soundtrack already have substantial impact.

The exhibition was designed by Tiago Rosado (Paradox) in collaboration with Kummer & Herrman.

The (indoor museum) exhibition had its premiere at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam from 13 October to 23 November 2017.

Lightboxes

- 15 lightboxes (1.23 x 0.35 x 1.74m) for portraits and texts (excerpts interviews with the former child slaves)
- 3 lightboxes for words employed in chocolate advertisement.
- 1 lightbox (optional) for exhibition poster (Valerie portrait with exhibition title).
- 1 lightbox (optional) for portrait Kam Kohi Herman



Still from 12:26min video. Edit by Peter Claessen.



Still from 12:26min video. Edit by Peter Claessen.

<https://vimeo.com/240680455> / password: cocoa

Video Installation

- 2 translucent projection screens 2.80 x 2.10 m, to be installed side by side
- 2 video projectors XGA (or better), 2000-2500 ANSI
- 2 BrightSign 120 mediaplayers
- 2 ceiling mounts for videoprojectors
- 4 powered speakers (XLR)
- cabling

Tables

34 of 1.80 x 0.55m black MDF tables (that can be combined together in sequence) showing:

- A. 3x 21" LCD screens with Raspberry Pi media players showing TV reports
- B. Work tools: 3 machetes, 1 cocoa sampler
- C. Cocoa beans.
- D. Texts and infographics (bilingual: Dutch and English)

34 lamp fixtures with LED lamps and dimmers

Text projection

Containing contextual information, projected on a wall

- 1-2 video projectors XGA (or better), 2000-2500 ANSI
- 1-2 BrightSign 120 mediaplayers

Please note: Lightboxes can be shown in daylight (but have more impact in a dark space), the projection requires a dark space.

Museum exhibition

Lightboxes

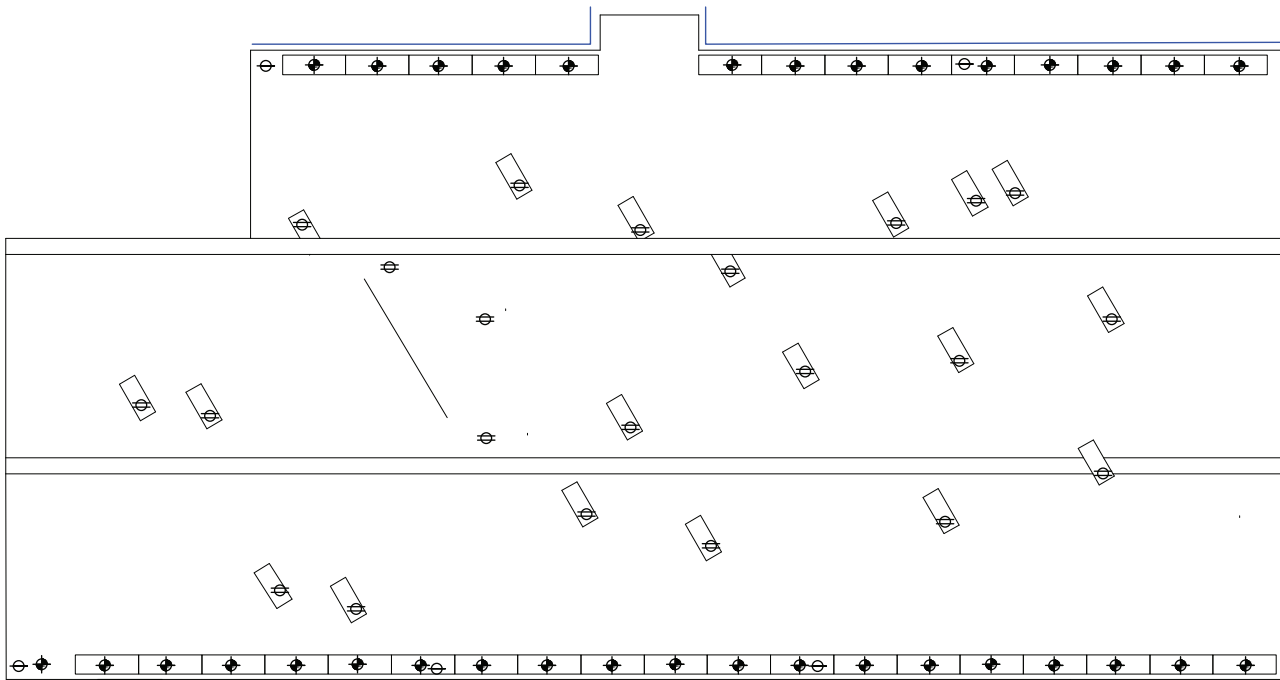
The light boxes are made in untreated plywood. Overall dimensions are 1.23x0.35x1.74m. Each light box has a set of 5 fluorescent tubes and can be powered by either the bottom or top plate and can receive 2 images fixed on the back of the frames. According to existing light conditions light boxes can receive diffusers for a uniform light distribution or ND filters to reduce light intensity.

Optionally if it proves to be more economic technical drawings can be supplied upon request to have the light boxes built on site.

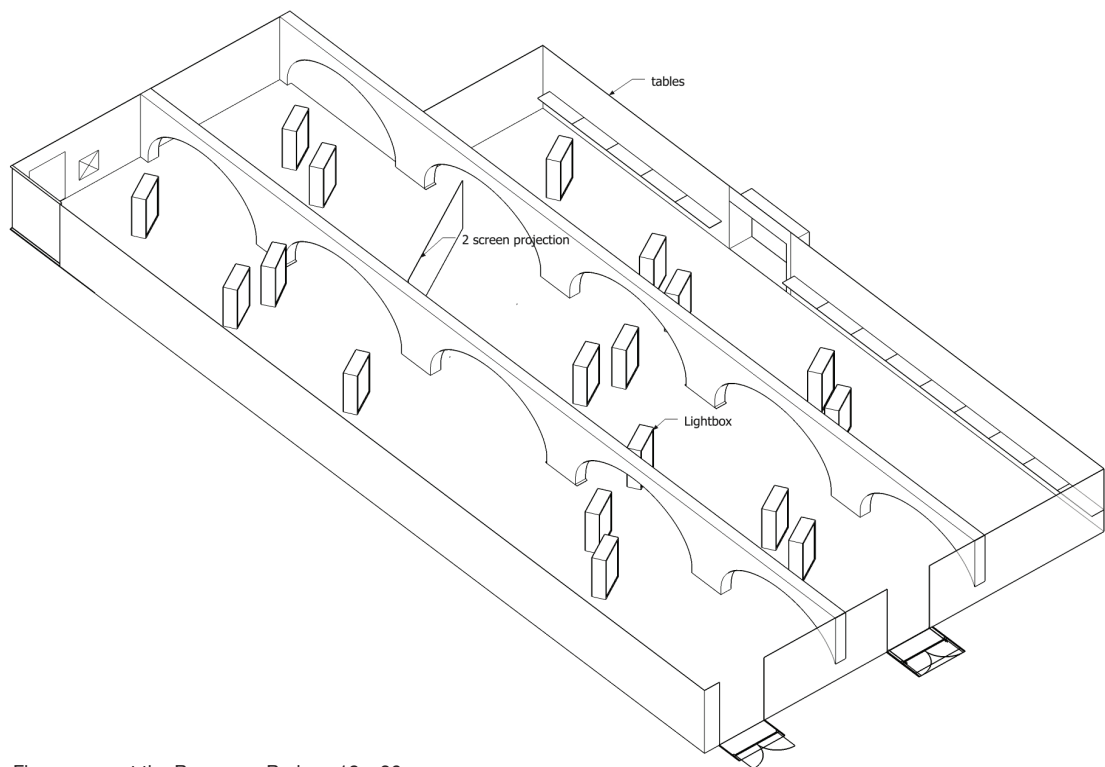
Content for light boxes in exhibition room (18).

- 15 prints of portraits, direct print on 3mm thick translucent acrylic (opal)
- 15 prints of text interviews, one per portrait, bilingual: Dutch and English, direct print on 3mm thick translucent acrylic (opal)
- 6 prints of words employed in advertisement campaigns (English), direct print on 3mm transparent acrylic

- black fabric panel
- ⬢ incandescent bulbs, dimmable
- ⊖ floor power outlet
- ⊖ ceiling power outlet



Exhibition layout with power requirements at Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam.



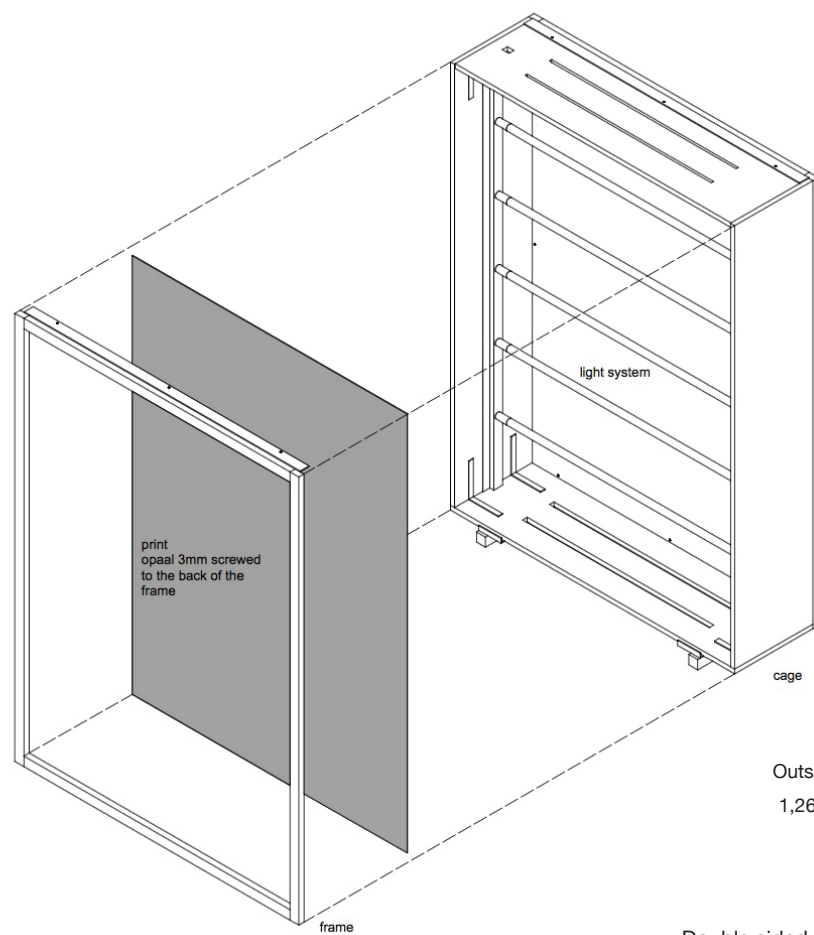
Floor space at the Beurs van Berlage 18 x 36m

Possible exhibition area for current setup: 300-500 m²

Exhibition layout at Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam.



Framing the prints at Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

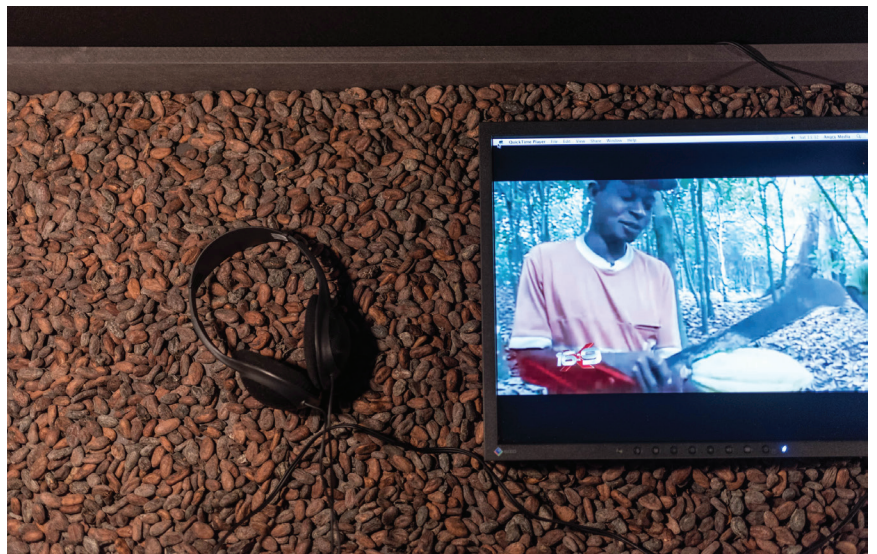


Outside dimensions:
1,26 x 0,35 x 1,80m

Double sided lightbox setup



Machete and hook on table.



LCD screen with video coverage.



Detail of tables with printed content and cocoa beans.

Table layout https://issuu.com/xparadox/docs/bitter_20tables

Tables

The tables are made in black MDF and can be flipped in order to receive either cocoa beans or prints. 2 special tables are prepared to receive exhibition objects (machetes, cocoa sampler).

Available (based on Beurs van Berlage exhibition):

- 16 tables for cocoa beans
- 16 tables for prints
- 2 special tables (half for exhibition objects, half for prints).
- 3 LCD monitors 21" placed horizontally on the tables, plus media players.
- 4 dimmers, plus power cabling for xx led lights supplied
- 2 pieces of 40kg bags with cocoa beans

Available content for tables:

- Infographics "Cocoa: Who, What, Where" depicting main cocoa production and consumption countries
- Infographic "The Cocoa Poverty Cycle" depicting the vicious relation between low yield, low income and child labour in West-Africa.
- Infographic "Child labour in Cocoa production" depicting work distribution on children between 5-17 years old.
- Infographic "Price breakdown of a bar of chocolate" depicting profit distribution between farmers, grinders, factories, transport and retail.
- Text: Cocoa (introduction with 434 words)
- Text: Cocoa poverty cycle (508 words)
- Text: Timeline with insight into events and facts around the production of cocoa and chocolate (3559 words).
- Text: History of Cocoa (391 words).
- Text: Child labour in cocoa production (485 words)
- Text: Initiatives to combat child labour (799 words).
- Text: The children in this exhibition (297 words).
- Text: History of Tony's Chocolonely (540 words).
- Drawings supported by small photo and quote from each of the portrayed kids (15 sets)

Installation

	days	people
Paradox / curation	5	1
Unpacking	1	4
Electricity	2	1
Lightboxes set lights	1	1
Cabling wiring	1	1
Carpentry/assembly	2	1
Carpentry/aid	2	1
Projection/screens	2	2
2d content/tables	1	1
Extra help/volunteers	4	2

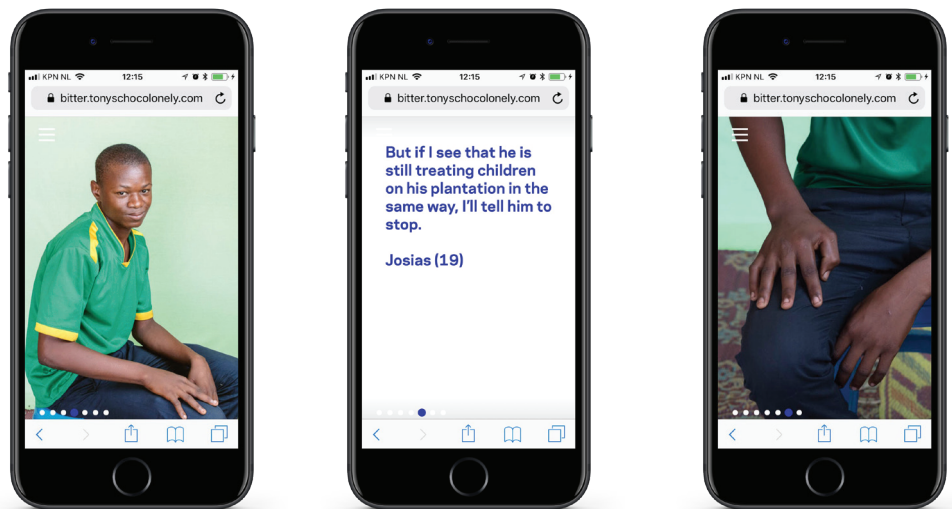
B. Exhibition for public spaces (indoor/outdoor)

Combinations of portraits and quotes can be created any size on canvas or other media for use in public spaces. Depending on the situation, multiple languages can be combined and longer interview texts added cf. the indoor museum version.

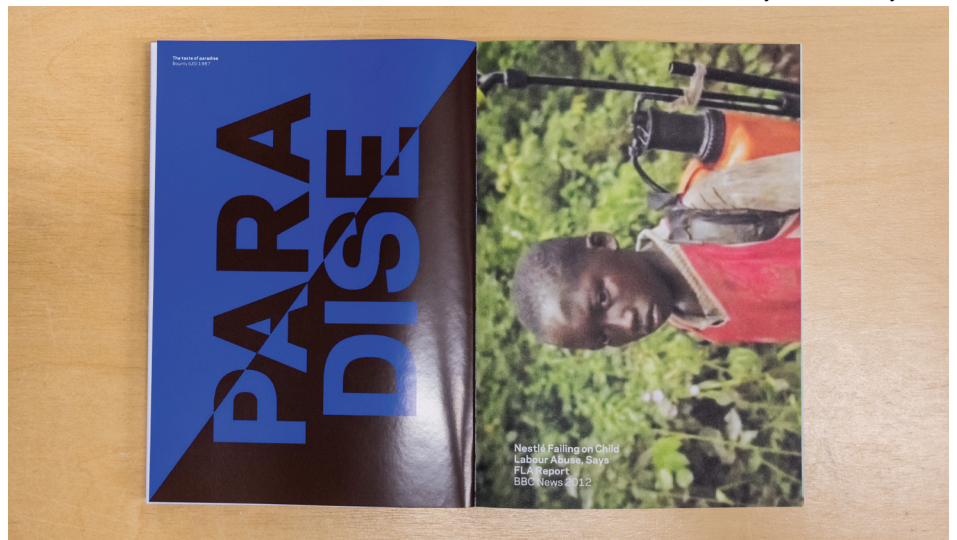
In Amsterdam billboard sized standard 'Trotters' formed a (small) exhibition in its own right on Museumplein (between Rijksmuseum and Stedelijk Museum) for four weeks in



Wrappers used in promotion campaign. © Marieke van der Velde



BITTER Chocolate Stories - bitter.tonyschocolonely.com



BITTER Chocolate Stories - Book

Book <https://goo.gl/EnwFnJ>

October/November 2017. All Trotter images carried a QR code linking to a short personal web based story of the child portrayed (see website).

C. Book

BITTER Chocolate Stories addresses the harsh realism of child labour in cocoa plantations in an unconventional manner. Children who have escaped from forced labour were portrayed in a pop-up studio by one of the most talented African photographers, Joana Choumali from Ivory Coast.

Dutch freelance journalist Marijn Heemskerk made interviews with former child slaves and wrote background texts. Together with info graphics, they provide insight into the history of the production of cocoa, the economic and social conditions for farmers in West Africa as well as the initiatives (not) taken to fight the worst of child labour practices in the industry.

The book also includes drone shots of the plantations as well as words taken from advertising for chocolate. Images taken from international media show that the issue has been in the news regularly. Yet, we proved not to be insensitive to the many calls that were made.

BITTER Chocolate Stories

The book was designed by the prizewinning studio Kummer & Herrman, 215 pages full colour, softcover with belly band, 170x240 mm, ISBN 9789081887694.

D. Website

Portraits of all 15 children in combination with short interview texts form the basis of a modest website. The site works for desktop PCs and smartphone, the user experience is the strongest on mobile devices.

QR codes used on chocolate wrappers, postcards as well as billboards (trotters) point directly to any of the 15 portraits. Each series ends with a banner pointing to the exhibition. Via a menu all other stories can be reached.

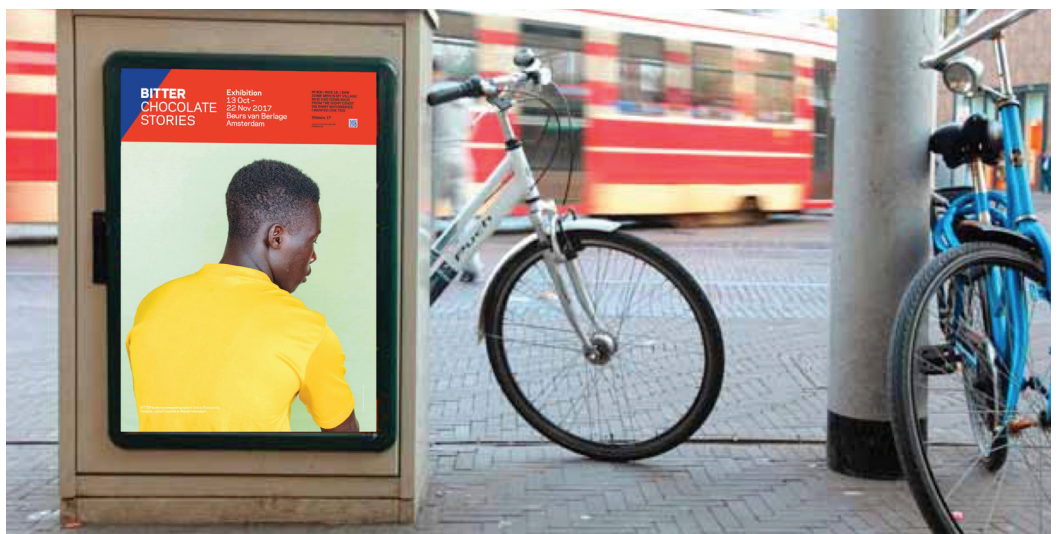
E. Campaign

In October-November 2017 some 500.000 chocolate bars with portraits with a quote from the interview on the inside of the wrapper were printed and sold. They not only served as promotion for the book as well as the exhibition but also as tools to create awareness for the issue of forced child labour as such, based on the work done for *BITTER Chocolate Stories*.

To a similar degree this double function also worked for the postcards with QR codes brought into circulation whereas the poster campaigns had more effect on the exhibition. For the travelling show both the wrapper as well as the postcard campaign could be put into action again.



Billboard advertisement in Amsterdam.



Poster mockup for advertisement in Amsterdam.



Tony's Chocolonely meeting farmer's cooperatives.

5. Collaborating partners

Authors

Joana Choumali (1974) is a visual artist/photographer based in Abidjan, the Ivory Coast. She studied graphic arts and worked as an art director in an advertising agency before embarking on her photography career. She works on conceptual portraits, mixed media and documentary photography. Much of her work focuses on Africa and what she, as an African, learns about the innumerable cultures around her.

In 2014 Choumali won the POPCAP 14 Award and the LensCulture Emerging Talent Award. In 2016 she received a grant from the Magnum Foundation Emergency Fund and the Fourthwall Books Photobook Award in South Africa. Her book HAABRE was published in Johannesburg in 2016.

Marijn Heemskerk (1980) is a lawyer turned award-winning freelance journalist. She began investigating human trafficking, or modern-day slavery, as a lawyer and continues to do so as a journalist. She prefers to address this complex topic through personal stories. In 2016 Marijn won the Sex and Media Prize from the Nederlandse Wetenschappelijke Vereniging voor Seksuologie.

Partner: Tony's Chocolonely

Tony's Chocolonely's mission is to end slavery in the chocolate industry. The Amsterdam-based social enterprise was founded in 2005 by Dutch journalists after they discovered that the world's largest chocolate companies were buying cocoa from plantations where child labour may be used.

Through its products, Tony's Chocolonely aims to encourage the chocolate industry, consumers and politicians to make 100% slave free chocolate the norm. To realise its mission, the company created a roadmap based on three pillars; create awareness, lead by example and inspire others to act.

Producer: Paradox

Paradox is based in Edam (20 kilometres north of Amsterdam). The not for profit organisation develops projects around contemporary issues with documentary authors: photographers, filmmakers, visual artists, writers and researchers. Paradox does not programme its own exhibition space but collaborates with venues in the Netherlands and abroad.

Since 1993 Paradox has developed more than 60 distinctive activities, travelling to some 150 venues worldwide. Paradox was founded in 1993 with the aim of stimulating the development in (documentary) photography. To reach this, Paradox produces travelling exhibitions, organises symposia and publishes audio-visual, digital and print based publications. Our projects focus on the recording of history as it is unfolding. The interaction between social, economic and technical changes in society are recurring aspects in both our thematic and monographic projects.

Paradox is supported by the Mondriaan Fund and others.





www.paradox.nl