

FIELD NOTES

JUNE 2015

WORKING TITLE SITUATION #01

ENDLESS NEW WORLD

18-20 JUNE 2015 AT KAAISTUDIOS & LES BRIGITTINES

STEFAN ANNEREL, CHRISTIAN BAKALOV, MASSIMO BARTOLINI,
HEDVIG BIONG, CHARLOTTE BOUCKAERT, RUTA BUTKUTE, BRYAN CAMPBELL,
PABLO CASTILLA, CECILIA ELICECHE, NIKO HAFKENSCHIED,
ETRANGE MIROIR, DONGYOUNG LEE, ANTIGONE MICHALAKOPOULOU,
NATURE THEATRE OF OKLAHOMA, JEROEN PEETERS, FABRICE PICHAT,
DIANE RABREAU, SALVA SANCHIS, RODRIGO SOBARZO, NICK STEUR,
MYRIAM TIJSKENS, YURIE UMAMOTO, BENJAMIN VANDEWALLE,
EGON VAN HERREWEGHE, GOSIE VERVLOESSEM, ANNA VOGEL, JOZEF WOUTERS

AN EVENT BY WORKSPACEBRUSSELS
IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH KAAITHEATER, LES BRIGITTINES,
ROSAS & ULTIMA VEZ

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WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

EXPLORE ENDLESS EMPTINESS

DAVID VAN GEERT

Look around.

So (t)here you are. In all your formidable non-existence. Do not be surprised by what you've just read. Take it as it is presented. For now. As a small present. Let's say it again, as it is, in a more rigorous way. You. Do. Not. Exist. And just because of that, you are here. At this very moment. For ever. Isn't that great? Time for some venturing.

Lets back off a bit and start from the very beginning by asking a simple question; where do you begin? Give yourself a minute to think about it. Maybe two. A lifetime if it's necessary. And come back again. At least blink. Maybe seemingly obvious answers like; 'At birth', 'At conception', or if you really try; 'When my parents thought about having me', will seep into your conscious knowing. 'Is that it? Am I right?' You may be asking yourself now. I'm sorry to say No. No. No. And no.

Lets try a second time from a somewhat different angle. Again; where do you begin? Is it within your bodily limits, your thoughts, beliefs,...? Or when you reach the point where you uphold an idea of 'this is what I stand for'? Sit down for a while and now think about you without the other. You without air, without water, without soil. Nobody will argue there is no you without 'them'. You only have the opportunity of experiencing you as 'you' thanks to the constantly changing interaction with everything else. So the beginning of you should at least contain that everything else...

We can even go a little bit further. From yet another angle. For this exercise you have to turn around and look back. At one of the 'beginnings': see how a

nearly fully formed cooled down earth rotates around a 4 billion years younger sun. And now notice how an unnervingly similar sister planet slams into it. An impact of an unimaginable violence. Pure chaos. True beauty. For this encounter, this interaction creates the space that is entangled with our existence. We as inherent parts of that encounter looking up at the moon, the first born from the fusion of two molten planets. So even there you 'begin'. Many beginnings so it seems. Endless anew.

Time to go to the here and now with our question: where do I exist? Look around at what is presented. At Roel Heremans' work 'Room D' for example. We won't be offered a clear cut answer though. Instead, we'll be offered that very same question, decorated with a little twist. As a labyrinth between virtual and physical spaces, his work dares to ask you where reality begins. Or explore the challenge Diane Rabreau creates. Her playful interaction with Google Maps underlines an existence that is increasingly rooted both here and there. Think about it when you're hovering a couple of meters above the Mongolian desert. And mere seconds later above the Alaskan forest or some shady corner of a concrete slum. All while hovering around a screen. Again the same question: Where are you? In an envelope? You could be, if you contributed a pebble, as a piece of your land, to Antigone Michalakopoulou's project Geographia.

David Bohm (1917-1992), a physicist, once said: "In principle, any individual element could reveal detailed information about every other element in the universe." The one is unfolded in the whole and the whole in the one. The works of Roel, Diane, Antigone and many others have at least one thing in common; they succeed in materialising questions concerning the fundamentals inherent to our existence. And even importantly, they dare not to answer. Be honest, if they

should provide one, what would you do afterwards? What happens to a game when it doesn't present the player with an opportunity for exploration?

Breath

So, what has this little detour delivered? Well, at least an important observation: at the heart of every creation there is a question. At the heart of every experience lies something that can't possibly be sensed. Something that escapes. Let me ask you something totally different and yet again similar: You long for something, right? Probably something or someone that will fulfill, sooth, annihilate, comfort, ... do whatever it takes to experience what you imagine as your perfect existence. To undo that eerie void that from time to time seems to overtake you. Ever thought of thanking that void? For what would you be without it? There would be the everlasting soothing, the everlasting annihilation, the everlasting comfort,... In conclusion, there would be an everlasting experience lacking everything. A static being. So yes, thank this void as it is not the absence of existence, but the cradle wherein it comes to being.

To experience this 'void' in another way, think about a word or words that can capture you without leaving anything unspoken. Seriously. Take this moment and the next to think about it.

...

At this point you probably have something in mind. But is that really all that you are? Isn't there something more? There must be. So think again.

...

And now? Have a better description? But, then, is this it? Are you really convinced you are just that? Beware of the fact that if two things are totally alike, one can be replaced by the other. So now, can you be replaced by just those few lines on a piece of paper?

You get it by now, even this little exercise makes clear the vital core of experience and therefore of every concept - even your 'self' - is emptiness, that which escapes.

And that we are masters - yes, Gods if you will - in upholding the illusion of an everlasting controlled paradise where the 'real you' has its domicile is something we all can acknowledge. We even try to recreate this paradise in our carefully designed topical holiday destinations. This is literally the starting point for Syden, the multimedia installation of Niko Hafkenschied, Pablo Castilla & Hedvig Biong that investigates our urge for a better life in illusions of predictability. Many of us do exactly the same thing - momentarily or long lasting - without even buying an estate somewhere in Spain. Even our very own cradle has to endure our maniacal redecorating with conceptions of 'all good' and 'all nice'. Natural events such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, change, are converted to natural 'disasters'. Outwordly events that interrupt what should be continuously under our control. Luckily for us illusion dwellers, there are artists such as Gosie Vervloessem who try to pierce through this balloon with patience and thoroughness as it were a homeopathic cure.

And

So far we have given up the notion of a 'beginning' (and within the same breath an end) and even more difficult the notion of something defining you as

you. A new world is approaching it seems, over and over again. But what will you be doing (t)here? Or better formulated; what is it already doing to you? There is no point anymore in leaving something behind or making something better when continuous change and endlessness are key.

It seems there is only one thing left to do: Move. Dance.

Gentle.

Majestic.

And unimaginably wild.

WORKS

CHRISTIAN BAKALOV

You may know Christian Bakalov as a performer in the works of Ivo Dimchev, Jan Fabre, Miet Warlop or Vincent Riebeek & Florentina Holzinger. With Bright he is currently developing a parcours in which you play the leading role. Immersed into a vast dark space full of phosphorescent signs, the most banal and daily objects become enchanted and estranged. Blurring the boundaries between performative action and installation, Bright aims to stimulate all of our senses, evoking a direct experience of a multiple space, where every sign also signifies something else. During Working Title Situation #01 Christian will explore the unlimited potential of the heights of the chapel in Les Brigittines.

Concept, development & sound: Christian Bakalov

By & with: Christian Bakalov, Tatyana Petrova, Krassen Krastev, L.C. da Costa, Paul McGee

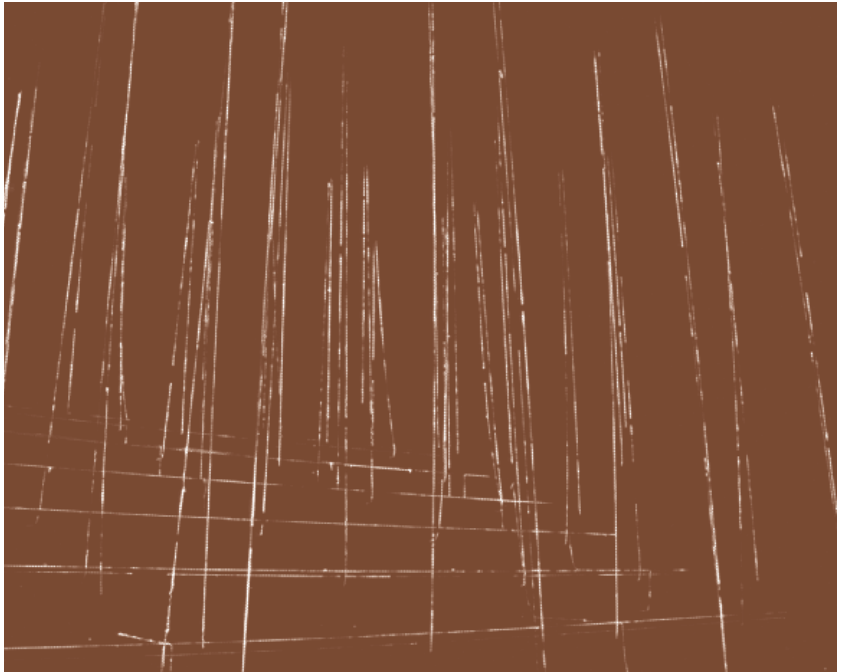
Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels), Kaaithheater (Brussels), Vooruit Arts Centre (Ghent), wpZimmer (Antwerp), ArtEast Foundation (Norfolk)

Supported by: Fabrika 126 (Sofia), Troubleyn/Jan Fabre (Antwerp)

Many thanks to: Tatyana Patrova, Sophie and Fabien Dell, Tony Delcampe, Sabina Christova,

Boris Deltchev, the team of Les Brigittines (Brussels)

BRIGHT (HEIGHT)



HEDVIG BIONG, PABLO CASTILLA & NIKO HAFKENSCHIED

Breaking traditional notions of territory, Syden (meaning 'South' in all scandinavian languages) is an artificially created holiday-land, a mental and physical space where conditions exist or are created to project a series of desires and new bonds. It applies unlimitedly for warm, sunny, southern countries. Syden is a utopian land that functions as a parallel universe, ruled by own rules, routines and rhythms, displaying its own identity and aesthetics. Visual artists Hedvig Biong and Pablo Castilla develop a multimedia installation with musician and sound designer Niko Hafkenschied on the theme of tourism and authenticity. Syden is a work on the boundaries of documentary photography, sound and sociology. The project investigates the ideas of the artificial versus the authentic, as a case study for how humans relate to the idea of a utopia that constantly shifts in space and time.

Concept and development: Pablo Castilla, Hedvig Biong, Niko Hafkenschied

Photo directors: Hedvig Biong and Pablo Castilla

Music and sound design: Niko Hafkenschied

Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

SYDEN



RUTA BUTKUTE

Ruta Butkute is a Lithuanian visual artist, based in Amsterdam. She studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and is a resident at the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam. She develops complex sculptural installations, inspired by other media such as video and movement research. Recently she started to collaborate with acrobats and improvisation dancers, who would increasingly determine both the shape as well as the spacing of her installations, and which stimulated her work to expand into the direction of performative installation work. During Working Title Situation #01, Ruta will develop this experiment together with choreographer Yurie Umamoto in the live installation Polyhedral Crystals.

Concept & development: Ruta Butkute

Development & performance: Yurie Umamoto

Coproduction: workspaceburssels (Brussels)

Special thanks to: Rijksacademie Amsterdam, Mondriaan Fonds Amsterdam,

Terry Vreeburg, Daniel de Roo

POLYHEDRAL CRYSTALS



BRYAN CAMPBELL

Bryan Campbell is an American artist and performer currently based in Paris. He studied Dance at the Tisch School of the Arts (New York) and participated in *ex.e.r.ce* (Montpellier). *Marvelous* is both a performance and a magazine. In the performance, Bryan Campbell, editor-in-chief of *Marvelous*, gives a live reading of the magazine. As the performed composition corresponds to the pages of the magazine projected onto a screen in sequence, the structure of the print object influences the rhythm and dramaturgy of the performance. Through a construction of text, voice, and body states, the editor explores how one positions him or herself with regard to the printed material, dealing in questions of expertise, economic access, and psychologies of persuasion and seduction.

Conception and Performance / “Editor in Chief”: Bryan Campbell

Artistic Assistance / “Managing Editor”: Jacob Peter Kovner

Graphic Design and Projections / “Design Editor”: Matthieu Delahausse

Outside Eye / “Senior Editor”: Stéphane Bouquet

Exhibition Consulting / “Event Planner”: Fred Morin

Coproduction: PACT Zollverein (Essen), Honolulu (Nantes), Au Bout du Plongeur (Rennes)

In collaboration with: Workshop Foundation (Budapest), Rethink Dance (Oslo), Micadanses (Paris),

Edificio (Lisbon), DEPARTS, workspacebrussels (Brussels)

CECILIA LISA ELICECHE

Cecilia Eliceche graduated from P.A.R.T.S. in 2008 and has since developed a career both as performer and choreographer. In her own work she displays a great sensitivity towards social or political thematics. With her series of Dance Concerts, Cecilia Eliceche created a framework within which she can conduct short experiments leading up to a dynamic public sharing. Inspired by her recent trip to Jamaica, following her fascination with femininity, sexuality and empowerment from an afro Caribbean and South American perspective, the improvised movements will mainly focus on the power of the hips and the swinging of the voice.

Concept & performance: Cecilia Eliceche

With the support of: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

DANCE CONCERT N°5: AMERICA MENEA



ETRANGE MIROIR

Etrange Miroir is an artistic laboratorium based in Nantes (FR), made up of musicians, graphic designers, developers, videographers and documentary makers. They experiment with artistic forms that interact with human sciences and sociology, leading to a variety of interactive installations for large audiences that question our society. With the cinematic concert Mother Border, the collective follows a young Tunisian refugee, evoking a road movie across both sides of the Mediterranean.

By and with: Etrange Miroir

Lectures: Marie Arlais

Musicians: Erwan Fauchard, Matthieu Goulard, Raphaël Rialland, Noé Rialland

Audio and visuals: Marie Arlais, Raphaël Rialland

Outside eye: Lise Marais

MOTHER BORDER



ROEL HEREMANS

Roel Heremans studied Radio at the RITS in Brussels and Art Science in Den Haag. In his work he seeks for hybrid artistic forms between performance, sound art, conceptual art, imagination, radio and literature. In Room D, an audio choreography for 8 participants, the imagination of the audience is guided by a narrators voice on a personal trip through a series of spaces, both actual and fictional, individual and collective. During Working Title Situation #01, a first try-out of this creation will be shared with and feedbacked by the audience.

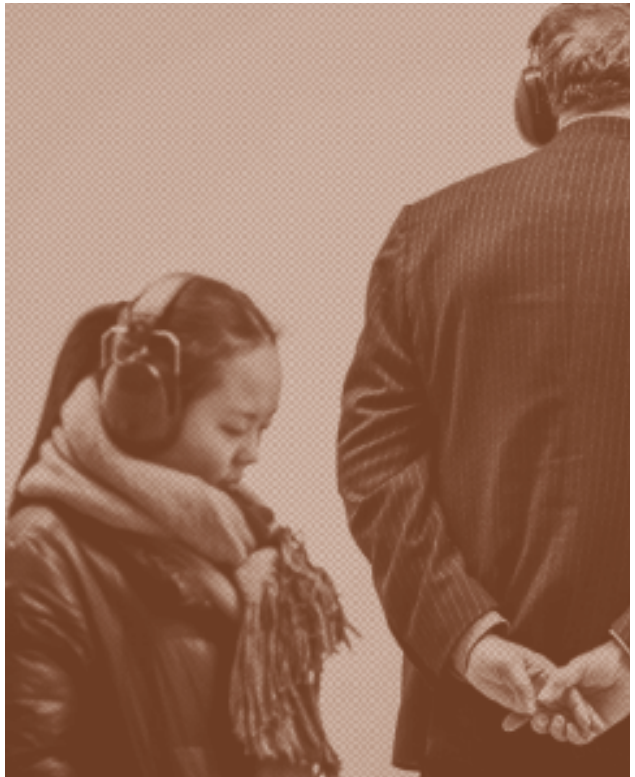
Concept & Development: Roel Heremans

Voice: Emi Kodama

Production: Kunstenwerkplaats Pianofabriek (Brussels)

In collaboration with: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

ROOM D (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)



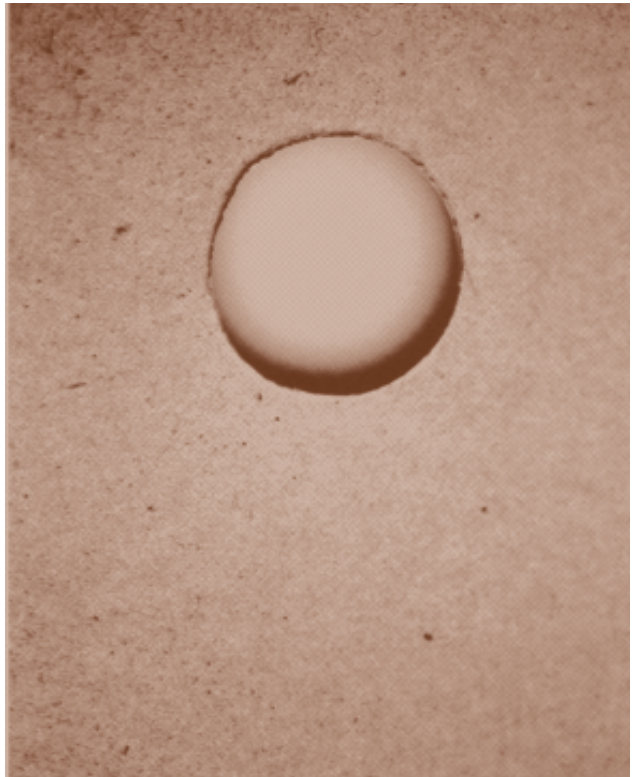
DONGYOUNG LEE

Dongyoung Lee is a graphic designer in residency at the Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. In her work she develops forms of layout and graphics that are as good as they are autonomous and philosophically charged. Invested with visual paradoxes the aim of the work is to generate a mental movement in the perception of the audience. During Working Title Situation #01, Dongyoung Lee will present her latest work in a graphical installation.

Concept & development: Dongyoung Lee

In collaboration with: workspacebrussels (Brussels), Jan Van Eyck Academy (Maastricht)

ONLY A SPIRAL WOULD MEET THE FACTS



ANTIGONE MICHALAKOPOULOU

Antigone Michalakopoulou was trained as an architect before committing to fine arts in Athens (ASFA), London (St-Martins) and Ghent (KASK). In her work she combines very different media such as video, performance, drawing, photography and installation art, investigating how our perception constitutes our identity. Her latest project Geographia aims to rediscover the boundaries between our mental space, personal space and the social space that surrounds it, in interaction with the audience. Starting from a round table format, philosophical and poetic questions about identity, memory, place, time, boundaries and landscape compose an imaginary voyage that gradually evolves in a series of one-on-one interviews and a walk. In this way, Geographia unfolds as a poetical network of encounters that generates consciousness of the many relations between our self and the environment.

Concept & development: Antigone Michalakopoulou

Dramaturgical advice: Nassia Fourtouni

Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

In collaboration with: Recyclart (Brussels), L'Escaut Architecture Coöperative (Brussels),

Mestizo Arts Festival (Antwerp)

GEOGRAPHIA



NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA

Nature Theater of Oklahoma is an OBIE-Award winning New York performance group under the direction of Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper. Since *Poetics: a ballet brut*, their first dance piece created as an ensemble, Nature Theater of Oklahoma has been devoted to affect in their work a shift in the perception of everyday reality that extends beyond the site of performance and into the world in which we live. While they were in residence at SPAC (Shizuoka Performing Arts Center) in Japan, they took the time to rehearse with Rob Johanson outdoors in the beautiful natural surroundings of Shizuoka. *Screen Test No. 7* is a 30 minute condensed version of an entire day's rehearsal on one page of text from *Life and Times*. It gives a good idea of Nature Theatre's process and way of working on text.

Featuring: Robert M. Johanson

Directed and filmed by: Pavol Liska in Shizuoka, Japan

Edited by: Kelly Copper

Music by: Beethoven, *Symphony No. 7 in A Major*

SCREEN TEST No.7 (SHIZUOKA)



FABRICE PICHAT

Fabrice Pichat is a Brussels based visual artist. A graduate of the Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht, he has been developing a variety of video, in situ interventions and installation work focused on human perception. No matter how diverse his works may be, Pichat's oeuvre speaks essentially of "matter in movement" and considers forms as vibrating constellations, rather than fixed givens. During Working Title Situation #01 he will compose a movement score for performer Florencia Guerberof, based on the architectural plans of the Kaaistudios. In combination with a new sound- and video work, the duo will evoke the experience of the whole building in one of the smallest and most secluded rooms of the theatre.

Concept and development: Fabrice Pichat

Development & performance: Florencia Guerberof

With the support of: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

OBSERVATOIRE



DIANE RABREAU

Diane Rabreau recently graduated from KASK in Ghent (BE), and since then travels throughout Europe and abroad to answer questions based on at first sight insignificant irregularities on Google Maps. Which sea is the strongest: the North Sea or the Baltic Sea? Is the green fluid in front of the coast of Gollwitz, Germany a danger for the environment? To answer a question, Diane travels to the place where she thoroughly researches it. This results in poetic, surprising and sometimes hilarious blog posts at www.destinationeurope.info, combinations of video, diary fragments, interviews and drawings. During Working Title Situation #01 Diane makes one of her most exotic destinations accessible: through an exhibition and a smell tour, she evokes her recent adventures in Japan for an audience in Brussels.

Concept & development: Diane Rabreau

Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

Thanks to: Les Brigittines (Brussels)

DESTINATION JAPAN - THE SMELL TOUR



SALVA SANCHIS

Salva Sanchis is a Brussels based choreographer. After graduating among the first generation of students of P.A.R.T.S. he developed a career both as performer and as choreographer. His series Islands consists of a collection of small dance pieces that will be presented both individually and in different combinations. There are solos, duets and trios ranging from 1 to 12 minutes long each. Each piece results from a different research topic and has its own separate identity. Individually they allow the choreographer to develop interesting material outside the demanding framework of an evening performance. Together they form a diverse but specific choreographic landscape. The audience will have the opportunity to witness dances that don't unfold into a bigger story and that don't relate to a hidden master structure. Instead, each Island exists in its own right, and because of this each Island doesn't refer to anything but itself.

Concept & development: Salva Sanchis

Performance: Jason Respilieux & Inga Hakonardottir

Video installation: Salva Sanchis & Pablo Castilla

Production: kunst/werk (Antwerp)

ISLANDS



RODRIGO SOBARZO

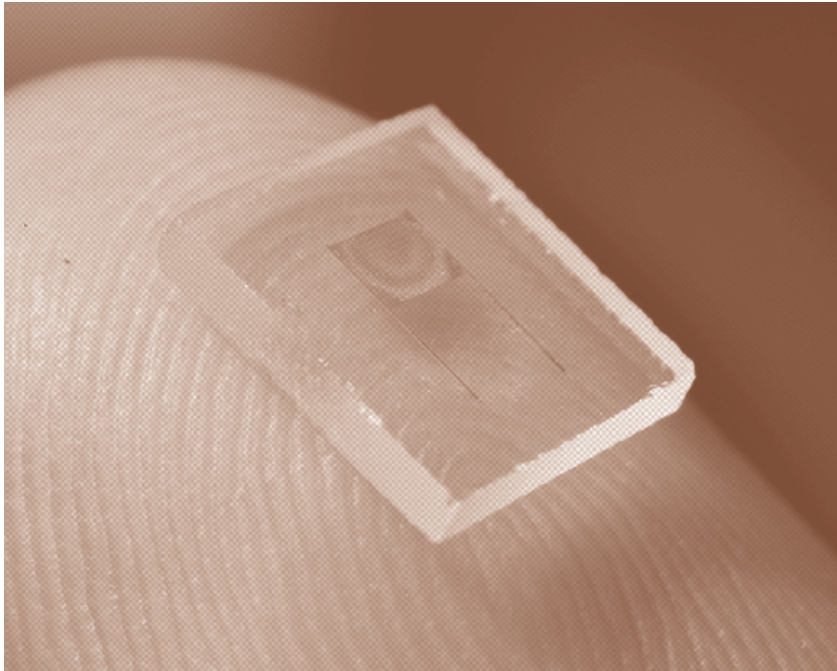
Rodrigo Sobarzo studied choreography at SNDO in Amsterdam, theatre at Universidad de Chile in Santiago and was a resident at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. In his work he develops a unique language between physical performance and visual arts. His current research project Prince of Ne†works takes as its departure point the demise of our classical notions of physical ecosystems, and the homelessness this new digital-arena we are living in brings. Prince of Ne†works is an experiential capsule where we gather to visually reflect upon different states of matter and its natural cycles. During this particular experiment, Rodrigo will focus on the cultivation of flies. Out of their decomposition a newborn insect/technology is conceived, which then dies again. Prince of Ne†works is a visual manifesto probing new ecologies that blend the digital and the analogue as one.

Concept, development & sound: Rodrigo Sobarzo

Performance: Diego Olea

In collaboration with: workspacebrussels (Brussels), Het Veemtheater (Amsterdam)

PRINCE OF NETWORKS



NICK STEUR

Nick Steur graduated from the Theatre Academy in Maastricht (NL) in 2011 and became known for his performative in-situ installations with very basic materials such as stone, sand or water. In his new performance *A Piece of 2 - Balancing Human Sized Rocks*, he zooms in on his earlier work *Freeze*. The original small stones that are meticulously balanced by hand will be replaced by two monumental rocks, balanced with the use of a crane manipulated by several performers. With this shift in scale, not only the magic of the balancing rocks becomes revealed, but also the relation between simple physical actions and the collective use of tools is being investigated. During *Working Title Situation #01*, Nick Steur will present a performative scale model of his upcoming creation.

Concept & performance: Nick Steur

With the support of: stichting SoAP (Maastricht), workspacebrussels (Brussels),

Jan Van Eyck Academie (Maastricht)

A PIECE OF 2 - BALANCING HUMAN SIZED ROCKS



MYRIAM TIJSKENS

Myriam Tijskens studied interior architecture at KASK (Ghent) and graduated as graphic designer at the MAD faculty (Hasselt) in 2014. She develops work on the edge between both disciplines and researches the architectural figure of the abyss, as a place or space where gravity has no power over us, where the system of coordinates is of no use, where we can not distinguish left from right, nor the upper level from the lowest. When does a place, a space transform into this abyss? With the great masters of space on her side, she is searching for an answer to this question. Her latest project 'Spatial Study #01' is conceived as a book that can take the shape of many different spaces according to the manipulation of the reader. During Working Title Situation #01 the audience will be able to materialise the spaces of their own imagination with the many elements that 'Spatial Study #01' provide.

Concept & development: Myriam Tijskens

In collaboration with: MAD Faculty (Hasselt)

Thanks to: Kaaitheater (Brussels)

SPATIAL STUDY # 01



BENJAMIN VANDEWALLE

Benjamin Vandewalle graduated from P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels in 2006, and since then developed a diverse series of installation performances like Birdwatching and Point of View that question our perception. Peri-Sphere is Benjamin Vandewalle's latest investigation in the realm of the visual, taking the form of a performative installation. Participants are invited to take place in a mobile automaton, manufactured against a historical and theoretical backdrop supplied by collaborating researchers Dieter Brusselaers and Helena Lambrechts. An analog periscope system elicits a profoundly immersive and disorienting experience. Mirrors work to undo the spectator's fixed point of view, and disconnect it from his or her physical position. Peri-Sphere is an invitation to rethink the spatiality of seeing, a choreography of the gaze.

Concept & development: Benjamin Vandewalle

Scientific collaborators: Dieter Brusselaers & Helena Lambrechts

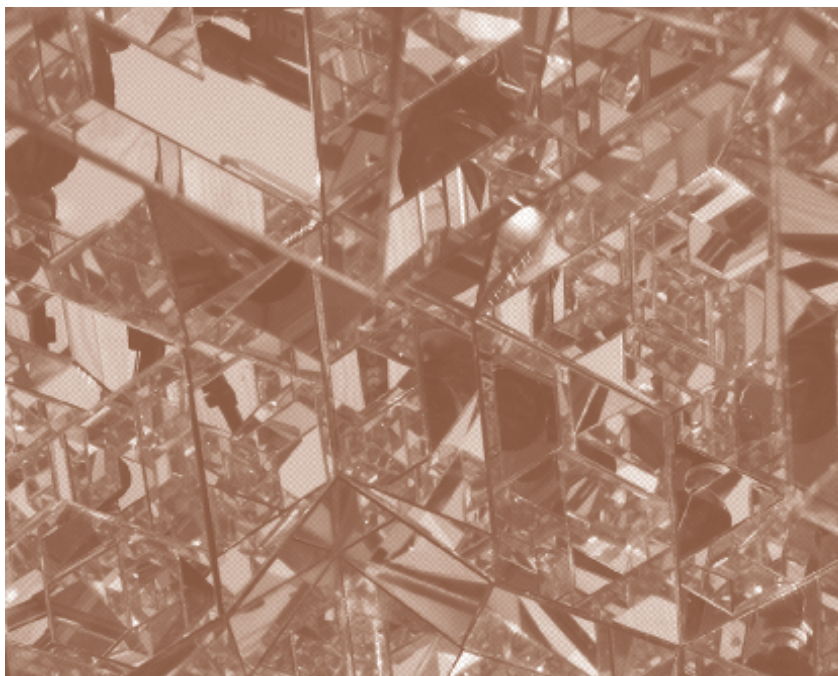
Dramaturgical advice: Marnix Rummens

Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

With the support of: De Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC)

Special thanks to: Aernout Vandewalle

PERI-SPHERE



GOSIE VERVLOESSEM

Gosie Vervloessem has a master degree in Experimental Film, but she currently studies Geology and Chemistry online with MIT University. With her 'Domestic Science Club', she experiments with the laws of physics for domestic use. Recipes for Disaster - The Magazine & Tupperware Party cooks up some crucial questions about classification and control: How do we cope with chaos in our daily lives? How to free ourselves from the quarantine of our own bathroom? How to argue for a messy and less sterile life in times of Ebola? Recipes for Disaster uses the format of the Tupperware Party - women getting together around the kitchen table to attend demonstrations of shiny plastic boxes - to disrupt the idea that everything can be nicely stored and hygienically put away. For Working Title Situation #01, Gosie will share some of her kitchen secrets during an explosive picnic.

RECIPES FOR DISASTER - THE MAGAZINE & TUPPERWARE PARTY

Creation and development: Gosie Vervloessem

Production: wpZimmer (Antwerp)

Coproduction: workspacebrussels (Brussels), Beursschouwburg (Brussels), Apass (Brussels)

With the support of: the Commission of the Flemish Community (VGC), Recyclart (Brussels)

Coach for the design of the magazine: Tine Van Aerschot

Dramaturgy: Einat Tuchman

Thanks to: Naomi Kerkhove and Wendy Van Wynsberghe





JOZEF WOUTERS & JEROEN PEETERS

“The debate on climate change is highly complex and goes far beyond our imagination, even though we continually invent new words, images, figures and graphs to grasp its complexity. But how do these images and metaphors work? And what imagery lingers?”

In December 2014 artist Joseph Wouters visited the UN climate summit in Lima for two weeks. He collected 80 metaphors during these talks, that were translated into a picture book that was distributed at the end of the conference in cooperation with local printers. During his stay in Lima Wouters kept up a correspondence with essayist Jeroen Peeters. During Working Title Situation #01 Wouters and Peeters will share their imagery and correspondence and direct their gaze at the upcoming climate conference in Paris. Because the question remains: how can we imagine a problem that is not imaginable?

By and with: Jozef Wouters and Jeroen Peeters

Thanks to: Martin Gielen, Mark Pezinger Verlag, La Junta Lima

In collaboration with: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

THE METAPHORS



STEFAN ANNEREL, MASSIMO BARTOLINI, CHARLOTTE BOUCKAERT,
ANTIGONE MICHALAKOPOULOU, EGON VAN HERREWEGHE,
GOSIE VERVLOESSEM & ANNA VOGEL

The exhibition Hermes' Peaks assembles artworks in which a unique take on the everyday, material reality reveals previously hidden structures and connections. Every work formulates an idiosyncratic answer to the question how we can solemnize this travel between the physical and the metaphysical world. Looking for a common ground between separate heuristic perspectives such as religion, magic, science and art, they propose a different approach towards our surroundings. As if we can only unveil the secrets and poetry of our reality by putting it to the test again and again.

Concept & development: Marnix Rummens

Works by: Stefan Annerel, Massimo Bartolini, Charlotte Bouckaert, Antigone Michalakopoulou,
Egon Van Herreweghe, Gosie Vervloessem & Anna Vogel

Production: workspacebrussels (Brussels)

Thanks: Kaaitheater (Brussels), Gallery Massimo De Carlo (Milano), Gallery Conrads (Düsseldorf)

HERMES' PEAKS



THE ART OF KNOWING YOUR HEART

**SOME REFLECTIONS ON HOW TO LET ART
SURVIVE IN A TROUBLED ECONOMY**

INTERVIEW WITH NELE BUYS OF CONSOLING SOUNDS

Who are you and what do you do?

I am Nele Buys, one of the founding members of Consouling Sounds, a Belgian record label, store and agency located in Ghent. We started up the label at the beginning of 2008, and opened the store on April 5, 2014. We release music on vinyl and CDs, which we promote and distribute. We specialise in doom, drone, sludge and ambient music, but it would be better to say we specialise in bands that will never fit a certain established category. It's when they start breaking through traditional boundaries that we get interested. So you could say we look for avant-garde. You can compare it to contemporary art, just in a musical form.

Doesn't that mean you have difficulty getting noticed? You are probably working for a very small audience?

Well, yes and no. Of course we don't release music for the masses. This means it's not always easy getting media attention. If you think of it, all the large media concerns don't differ that much from each other anymore. They are all looking for large audiences in order to be able to survive. Who can blame them? We are living in a money-driven society, more than we are in a value-driven one. The fact that funds for the arts are diminishing is a result of this. I can weep over this and believe me, sometimes I do! But it is what it is. I do believe that these things come and go in waves, and that there will be a growing counter movement.

However, to come back on the question, our audience might be small on a local scale but since 2012 we distribute all over the globe. We have individual clients ordering records and CDs online from all over Europe, as well as from the US, Canada, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Brazil, Japan, Australia, South Africa...

Focussing on a niche is what made this possible. Once people find us, they stay connected. Our clients appreciate our bold choice not to take the easy road. We often feel they are more like friends. Some of them almost feel like family. Maybe you think this sounds too romantic, but it's not. It really feels this way.

So you decided on niche marketing and this makes you survive? Or do you receive funds to keep yourself in business?

We don't get any funds. Not structurally and not for projects. At first we didn't try, afterwards it felt like we wanted to roll without it. If tomorrow we would get funding, it would be very welcome. The products we make do not generate money easily. So I don't feel one should be opposed to some extra support, only, one shouldn't take it for granted. In our case, we started out with a small investment of 6 main sponsors. This was our starting capital and we took it from there. We grew because we hit the market with a specialised product. It was not so much a marketing decision to go this way. I guess we feel uneasy thinking of ourselves as a corporation that needs to talk about stuff like 'marketing.' What we do comes naturally to us. Artistic choices prevail. It's not difficult to promote products if you believe in what you do 100%. We discovered people appreciated this, so this is the course we kept steering. It has been difficult at times. Sometimes we had to invest from our own pockets. But we never did it foolishly, and it always helped us to grow. Today revenue comes from the web shop, from distribution and since last year, from our brick-and-mortar store annex coffee bar in Ghent. So although we are in some way a 'real business' we feel we are only partly partaking in traditional economic strategies. We have to survive, so we have to 'buy and sell'... but releasing the music is still what comes first. You know, this store came into existence simply because otherwise the label

would have to shrink. It had gotten so big that we couldn't combine it with our daytime jobs anymore. But it didn't generate enough money to pay wages. So opening the store was more of a necessity to keep the artistic activity alive.

Do you think artistic expression needs to be able to survive, economically speaking, on its own? Maybe funds should go to other domains of society?

Hmm. That's a question I cannot simply answer with a yes or no. To think about what it means to survive economically, leads us to the question: 'What kind of economy are we talking about?' I'm not going to dig too deep into this; I don't want this to be a heavy philosophical discussion. Suffice it to say that there is a traditional economy that seems to reach a point of exhaustion. Hence you see all the interest in different ways of living and working together that are now arising. Creativity often plays an important part in this. In this I see proof that we need art in our lives as a realm that stimulates the dynamics that we need to develop as a society. The freedom to think, to create and to make things without constantly worrying about the revenue it generates is something we have to cherish. As a society we should invest in it. But if the government decides that there are other priorities, it's their right to make those calls.

Are you saying anything goes when it comes to survival? Even commercial strategies? Doesn't this erode the very essence of artistic expression?

I'm not saying anything goes. But neither am I saying that earning money or having a business plan is a bad thing. To think of the artist as a person that shouldn't earn money for his or her work is just silly. The question is: what do you want to create? Some creations are easily sold on a large scale, like a CD,

but others are not, like a painting, a performance or an art installation. All artists however try to sell something. They need to create a revenue in some way or other in order to sustain their practice. Sometimes it's an object; sometimes it's a thought. Often it's a bit of both. Artists have always tried to find ways of earning money to buy the freedom to create. Governmental funding for artists is a very recent phenomenon, if you think of it. Before, artists looked for benefactors. A lot of art was produced on commission. When artists today shudder at the thought of money, or the idea of developing a business plan, I think they are unfair to themselves. They invest energy, why shouldn't they earn money for it? Only, they have to accept that they won't earn the same money as a supermarket does. On the other hand, it would be a very good thing if the general public would accept that investing in art through public funding is an enriching choice we can make. Since this is not self-evident in our society today, artists can sometimes feel the need to apply more commercial strategies. I think it is brave of them. They constantly challenge themselves: can we do this? Do we stay true to what we want to say? Am I selling out? What's in my heart, really? In fact, I know of no artist who wants to make art purely for the money. It always starts with a passionate desire. Then comes reality. And so they have to balance, constantly. And they do. They can be very creative in this respect and truly integrate form, context, meaning and revenue. There lies a big domain in which we can be creative as well.

Do you have any examples of commercial strategies of artists, which you think are uncompromising and clever in this way?

There are so many examples! In our market, it is customary to make all kind of products surrounding the release of an album: t-shirts, patches, stickers, post-

ers, ... people buy them as a way to support the artist. These things sometimes become collectibles in their own right. And why not: the quality can be superb. Also people in the graphic design industry apply these strategies easily. More traditional conceptual artists do not often do this. Seems like they feel it would not be appropriate. I do agree they shouldn't feel obliged to make 'museum shop souvenirs' but if it feels right, then why not? I would love to buy a t-shirt with a print of my favourite artwork and wouldn't feel bad about it at all. It would fit in perfectly with the dynamic atmosphere in which I live and work. It's even more clever when artists apply traditional economic strategies in their oeuvre. Like Gosie Vervloessem, who translates her work into a magazine that is distributed via some sort of house party. It's the Tupperware system applied to art! It doesn't break down her artistic practice at all. It's a funny thing: she reaches a wider audience with her very own authentic message. I love these things. Or what about the work of Pablo Castilla, Hedvig Biong & Niko Hafkenscheid? Their installation can fit in a number of contexts: installation art, documentary, film, photography, ... It can be 'sold' to a variety of 'investors', from musea, to film festival organizers or individual clients. Isn't the main goal that they get their message across? And they do, and it gives them more possibilities to create, without changing the nature of what they create.

What for you is the key to finding the right balance? How can an artist apply strategies that buy this necessary freedom without compromising?

I wouldn't theorize too much about that. It's simple: stay true to your heart. Be open to different funding sources but don't worry if you don't get them. Involve people. Share thoughts. And be able to integrate creative and pragmatism in a way that it stimulates the core of the work. But above all, try to see that

as an artist, you can play an economic role. You can really shape the economy, you can be part of it in your very own artistic way, putting the emphasis back on the value-driven economy, by adapting strategies from the money-driven one.

There are so many ways of doing that. The Internet alone has given us numerous possibilities. You are an artist. You create. It doesn't matter what other people say about the way you get your message across. This is the freedom you want for yourself, to make exactly those calls.

So make them! Stay true to your heart, and stay free!

Consouling Sounds is an independent record label situated in the heart of Ghent.

They release the music of bands like Amenra, Thisquietarmy, Aidan Baker, Snailking, Nordmann,

Kiss The Anus of A Black Cat, Wiegedood, Alkerdeel and many others.

They offer advice to young bands and other independent labels and co-create,

in a network, with artists, producers, managers, designers, and festivals.

The Consouling Store can be found near the Vrijdagmarkt and is easily reached by public transport

or by car. You can shop music, discover art, drink coffee and eat cake.

Their website has an online webshop.

Consouling Store

Baudelostraat 13, 9000 Gent

www.consouling.be

www.facebook.com/consoulingounds

SITUATIONS AND ARTS

DOMINIQUE LEBLANC-BOLDUC
IN CONVERSATION WITH
MARNIX RUMMENS

As a temporary collaborator in workspacebrussels I was able to follow the development of this Working Title Situation #1 from close up. Its conception triggered many questions for me and highlighted the use of the term situation in art-related contexts. I came to wonder what would happen if we considered artworks as real situations, as opposed to an object or the final result of an artistic process. What if we look at artworks as momentary states of awareness, experienced by spectators in relationship with their environment, instead of as an immortalised expression presented in order to touch a public?

In daily life we use the term 'situation' for a context or condition that clearly differs from the daily or common course of events. There is always a factor of the uncommon or unknown in play, and exactly this challenges our perception and generates a heightened awareness. In gathering readings and notes that define 'situation' on a more theoretical level, we find interpretations such as: a temporary and thus dynamic set of interactions, framed in space and time, that connect human beings to their context. A situation can be understood as a composition of physical, social, historical, psychological, emotional, political and cultural conditions that we both shape and are being shaped by. The specificity of a certain situation renders (some of) them conscious, makes tangible how these relations are structured, and opens them up for evaluation and evolution, which will lead to a new situation. A situation is thus characterised as more than the final result of circumstances, but as a fundamentally ongoing process, a condition of transition in which every changing detail feeds back into it and moves it forward.

Perceiving artworks as situations allows us to highlight some of their most important properties. In doing so, the artwork appears to be fundamentally linked

to its environment. Indeed, not only would it act with its singular properties, but because it shares a context with the audience it is also in concert with its surroundings. An artwork becomes essentially understood as a dynamic context - a composition of aesthetic, conceptual, physical and sensory parameters - that triggers an audience and invites to interact, to develop and to produce an experience that feeds back into itself. By observing a painting as a situation, the institution, gallery and thematic context in which it is presented becomes a part of it, as well as the reference frame and personal associations of the perceiver. More specifically, the spectator converses with the artwork by reexamining the piece and his experience of it, bringing different references and ways of looking into play, hence charging the artwork and in doing so, becoming aware of the creative impact of their own gaze. The artwork becomes an artistic event, where the 'product' is in continuous process, meaning the environment of the artwork is changing and thus the artwork, together with its context, is changing. In stead of putting the original meaning of the piece at the forefront, an artwork as situation only takes place when an audience member actively engages with the artefact, producing -hopefully- a shift in perspective that in turn starts to behave as a situation in its own right, influencing its surroundings including the (perception of the) artefact, but also personal opinions, habits or beliefs. It is in virtue of this characteristic that the artwork can be understood as in perpetual flux and as an element that contributes to the creation of a future state, a new conception of the world even, through its dialogue with the audience.

In this conception of art, the artefact offers a well considered set of affective components, proposing a potential for many experiences to be transcended and transmuted by the public. I am drawn to it because this point of view raises relevant questions. Can we still consider artworks as products with a single

authorship? How does the context of presentation shape the experience proposed by the artwork? What is the relationship between the engagement of the audience and the significance of the situation/artwork? What role does the artist play toward the artwork after its creation? For me the situational perspective feels relevant because it emphasises both the experiential, evolutionary and reciprocal part of art making. Being in touch with the arts is being in touch with your own context, in a way we would probably not have been otherwise in everyday life. Through art, the spectator gets confronted with different questions, perspectives, and experiences, brought out both by the artist and the context as well as by his own engagement. Not as something only to read and overlook, but as an ongoing situation to participate in, to get lost in, to be confronted and informed by. I believe this is an important turn to make in our conception of art today: that as spectators we need to reactivate our sensory experience of the art. We should engage our body to tackle works of art and release our sensitivity by listening carefully to reactions and questions that arise when we face an art situation. Our understanding of a work of art at an intellectual and rational level certainly remains meaningful, but we need to balance it with the operative quality of the work of art.

When we consider art as a situation, the artwork becomes the ongoing feedback or interchange between both artefact or format, presentation context and audience. If we consider the experience a work of art evokes as part and even the core of the art-work, it is only active or complete during presentation, and its outcome is always unpredictable and temporary. In that regard, we can consider Working Title Situation as a context in which artists, fellow professionals, the public and friends get to meet, experience artistic situations and share their input. As a three day festive event WTS aims to offer both its artists in residency

and its visitors a place to challenge their convictions and stimulate their creative processes in order to push them forward. In a two way street. And with its special attention towards new forms of contemporary live arts, the programme in turn features not only the many issues and thematics proposed by the individual creations and experiments, or the concerns brought in by the audience, but also these more general questions about contemporary performing arts. How all these elements can relate is a continuous work in progress in which we all play our role.

Welcome to Working Title Situation #01!

Readings:

John Dewey, *Art as experience*, 1934

Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event, Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, 2009

Sarah Troche, *Structure et méthode dans la musique de John Cage: une discipline d'attention*, 2012

“THE PERIPHERY IS A TERRITORY THAT ESCAPES DEFINITION.
EVEN IF WE ALL WANT TO BELONG TO THE CENTRE,
OUR REAL WAY OF BEING EXPRESSES ITSELF THROUGH
THE STRANGENESS AND PRECARIETY OF WHAT EXISTS AROUND IT.”

ELVIRA NAVARRO

WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

Workspacebrussels is a workspace for live arts and installation art in their most hybrid forms. It collaborates with young and emerging artists through an intensive residency program, co-productions and coaching of creations and research projects.

Intriguing artistic developments and promising results of the residency program are presented twice a year, in June and December at the Working Title Situations. These gatherings aim to confront research projects, presentations of work in progress, finished performances and installations with a passionate audience, in order to brisk up an inspirational dialogue.

For the realization of the residency program and its festival, workspacebrussels can rely on an engaged partnership with five major players in Brussels: Kaaithheater, Rosas, the Brigittines, Ultima Vez & Beursschouwburg.

COLOPHON

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