



SITE, LANDSCAPE, THEATRE

a two-day meeting on art practices in the public space

Friday 27 and Saturday 28 April 2012 at DasArts, Amsterdam

Site-specific theatre and landscape theatre have built up a unique tradition in the Netherlands, where there is an extraordinary amount of knowledge and expertise on art in the public realm. Increasingly, theatre makers and artists across the generations make an emphatic choice to operate outside established venues for arts and culture, instead placing their work directly into the urban environment, the landscape or the community.

It is notable that the social contract of theatre – involving gatherings of people in public – is particularly fertile in this area and is being applied in a range of contemporary contexts: everyone from Jeanne van Heeswijk to Jonas Staal, and from G1000 to Occupy.

Increasingly, we are assuming that people can contribute to each other's ideas about society, that they want to be involved and to meet one another.

Over the two days of SITE, LANDSCAPE, THEATRE, de Theaterschool will examine this recent development. Is this form of 'theatre without frontiers' particularly suitable for bringing people together to bring democratic principles out into the open, to connect with other public domains and to reach new audiences? In what ways does theatre that employs these methods interact with its direct environment? What types of relationship does this create with the often hidden social, political and cultural conflicts in public space?

Our aim is to explore various concepts of SITE, LANDSCAPE and THEATRE together with a range guests and participants, and to exchange thoughts and views emanating from the diverse perspectives. Our approach to organising this meeting has been guided by our desire to apply an international viewpoint. We have created a framework that allows space for the huge diversity of interventions in alternative locations that are being made by contemporary artists, producers and programmers.

The two days each have their own overarching theme: on the first day, we will explore a number of strategies relating to **Making Places**; on the second day we will examine more closely a variety of approaches to the landscape in **Reading Landscapes**.

SITE, LANDSCAPE, THEATRE is curated by Marijke Hoogenboom and Judith Wendel. It forms part of de Theaterschool's research on contemporary artistic practices and creative producing in education, particularly Masters courses. This event is a collaboration with Atelier Oerol, DasArts, the Art Practice and Development research group, the Production and Stage Management course, Gwenoële Trapman and Rachel Feuchwang.



Friday 27 April

MAKING PLACES

'The contemporary public domain is the place where we meet each other. The way in which the encounter is staged is more important than the issue of whether it is democratic or whether it is purely commercially motivated. How does this staging of the public domain take place in [the artist's] work? What happens when an indeterminate 'space' is transformed into a 'place'. Art plays a crucial role in this process of transformation.'
(Jeroen Boomgaard in Wild Park, Governed by the Unexpected)

The notion of a having a permanent venue and a connection with a local audience is a deeply rooted tradition in the performing arts. Nonetheless, the public function of institutions and the way in which they relate to their immediate surroundings have been brought into question. On the other hand, contemporary art practice is almost boundless. Particularly artist-led platforms are organising themselves in increasingly flexible ways and, as a form of research, consciously directing their temporary artistic interventions at specific contexts. The first section of MAKING PLACES will be devoted to three cultural organisations, based in New York (USA), Wales (UK) and Brussels (Belgium). They are taking up the challenge to radically redefine their role and their organisational approach in the community. In the second section we will find out about two large-scale site-specific projects organised by artists: the Infecting the City theatre festival in Cape Town, South Africa, and the visual arts expo B1/A40 The Beauty of the Grand Road held in the Ruhr area of Germany.

9.30 Doors open

10.00-10.30 Welcoming speech and introduction

10.30-12.30 Perspectives

Brian Roger and Sheila Lewandowski, Chocolate Factory, New York City (USA)

Matt Ball, National Theatre of Wales (UK)

Jan Goossens, KVS, Brussels (Belgium)

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-16.30 Artists' practices

Brett Bailey, Third World Bunfight / Infecting the City, Cape Town (SA)

Markus Ambach, B1/A40 The Beauty of the Grand Road, MAP, Düsseldorf (DE)

16.30-18.00 Refreshments



Saturday 28 April

READING LANDSCAPES

'Landscape is at once an integration of natural and human phenomena over a certain area, and artistic representations of the visible world.'

(Mike Pearson, *In Comes I, Performance, Memory and Landscape*)

As Simon Schama demonstrates in his book *Landscape and Memory*, the word 'landscape' is derived from the Dutch *Landschap* and is inextricably bound up with the Dutch Masters' century. What we call landscape is not an order in and of itself. Rather, it is always culturally determined and at least partially created through human intervention. Artists have always actively participated in the characterisation of the landscape. But just what is it that they see? And what can we observe beyond the superficial level and beyond the definition of landscape that seeks to pin down nature in notions of 'empty' areas or scenic backdrops.

Saturday's READING LANDSCAPES will be devoted in the morning to three interpretations of the landscape – specifically the Dutch landscape. We'll examine it through the prism of historical painting, contemporary photography and landscape architecture. The afternoon session will contrast this with the theatre practices of Lotte van den Berg, Gerardo Naumann and *Ciudades Paralelas*, which will confront us with a more personal and selective view and with site-specific events that need to be experienced in real time. In this context, the landscape serves primarily as a conceptual figure for describing new theatre. This theatrical form and its shift from the visual to the tangible marks a fundamental shift in our relationship with 'place'; we are transformed from distant observer to 'insider' witness.

10.00 Doors open

10.30-10.45 Introduction

10.45-13.00 Perspectives

Edwin Becker, head of exhibitions, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Hans van der Meer, photographer, Amsterdam

Daniel Jauslin, landscape architect, TU Delft

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-17.00 Artists' practices

Lotte van den Berg, OMSK, Utrecht

Gerardo Naumann, Ciudades Paralelas, Buenos Aires (ARG)

The afternoon programme also features an introduction/screening on *Ciudades Paralelas*, the mobile festival organised by Lola Arias and Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll) in which Gerardo and Lotte are involved. An edition of *Ciudades Paralelas* will take place as part of the Festival a/d Werf, which will run from 17 to 26 May 2012 in Utrecht.



Guest artists and speakers (in order of appearance)

Brian Rogers is the artistic director and Sheila Lewandowski the executive director of The Chocolate Factory, a leading incubator for new developments in experimental performance. The work of The Chocolate Factory's founding artists emphasises multi-disciplinary collaboration combining movement, music, video and text to devise a means of storytelling that is immediate, collage-like, highly visual, and dependent on new technologies. The work is not easily categorised as theatre, dance, new music or video art and is rather a thorough intermingling of these disciplines. By extension, the Factory's curatorial values lead to work that exists across or between disciplines and that requires new methods, more time and a new kind of audience. The Chocolate Factory is located in a renovated industrial building in Long Island City, Queens, New York. www.chocolatefactorytheater.org

Matt Ball is Creative Associate of the National Theatre Wales (NTW), which operates the daring concept of an unstable 'stage'. It creates bold, invigorating theatre in the English language, rooted in the fragmented infrastructure of Wales and with an international reach. They engage and involve the audience in surprising ways and unexpected places and build strong relationships with theatre makers, creative talents, participants and audiences in and beyond Wales. NTW opens up the possibilities in theatre, identifying topical issues and expressing them in surprising and imaginative ways. They work with a wide variety of artists and they find new ways for audiences to be part of their work. NTW brings directors and companies from across the world to work with Welsh artists, actors and participants, creating new languages of theatre. In 2011, NTW collaborated with Rimini Protokoll on the project OUTDOORS, a theatrical journey that made the ordinary extraordinary. <http://nationaltheatrewales.org>

Jan Goossens is the artistic director the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS). For more than ten years, the KVS has considered itself to be an artistic project, a modern infrastructure in the heart of Brussels. It opts for contemporary stories and voices that are heard all too infrequently in society and in the theatre. Brussels merely the setting for the theatre; the city imposes itself as content and touchstone, not only in its multi-coloured, multilingual and cheerful potential, but also in all of its communal, social and economic discord. Underlying every aspect of the programme (production and hosting, multimedia) is a collective dialogue in a multi-functional company in which the individual artists relate to a shared whole in a productive and creative manner. In this divided city, the KVS is aiming to create a place with which everyone can identify. The residents of Brussels do not have a common past, but they can build a common future. The KVS wants to be one of the places where that future is represented. www.kvs.be

Brett Bailey is a playwright, designer, director, festival curator and the artistic director of Third World Bunfight (TWB) in Cape Town, South Africa. TWB produces theatre, installations, opera, house music shows and site-specific performances. Brett's idiosyncratic, iconoclastic works focus a probing lens on the world we live in – in particular on the post-colonial landscape of Africa, and the relations between Africa and the West, and between history and the present. Brett has worked throughout Africa as well as in Haiti, the UK and Europe. In 2008 he became the curator of Infecting the City, South Africa's only public arts festival, held in Cape Town. In 2011, the festival celebrated the rich variety of 'treasures' that are found in the Cape. It placed a long-overdue spotlight on the people, music and performance styles from the many cultures that have made Cape Town their home. Currently, Brett is setting up his provocative site-specific show *Exhibit B* for the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels. The project will be presented at the 2013 Holland Festival. Brett is also an alumnus of DasArts. www.infectingthecity.com, www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za



Markus Ambach is an artist and curator from Düsseldorf. He operates the independent, artist-generated platform MAP that covers an extensive range of interests. MAP's main emphasis is on the discourses, productions and debates concerning art and public urban space. These activities manifest themselves in temporary projects and in collaborations with museums, art galleries and cities. MAP also focuses specifically on projects that deal with the representation of nature in urban contexts, including the development of green spaces such as gardens, parks and wastelands. MAP's strategy blends theoretical approaches and practical working methods, in a direct dialogue between artists, architects, scientists and local citizens. MAP's large-scale, award-winning project *B1/A40 The Beauty of the Grand Road*, which was part of the Ruhr.2010 European Capital of Culture programme. It addressed an unconventional urban zone, the central traffic route through the Ruhr area. Instead of emphasising a problematic environment, artists including Jeanne van Heeswijk and Joep van Lieshout transformed the area into the new boulevard for the metropolis. www.markusambachprojekte.de

Edwin Becker is the Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. Edwin Becker studied History of Art at the Catholic University of Nijmegen and wrote a dissertation on the Viennese Secessionist painter Wilhelm List. In 1992, he took up a position as exhibitions curator at the Van Gogh Museum, specialising in fin-de-siècle fine and applied arts. In 2006, Becker became Head of Exhibitions at the Van Gogh Museum. Recently, he was appointed Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the same museum, meaning that he is now responsible for exhibition programming as a whole. The Van Gogh Museum's most recent exhibition *Dreams of Nature. Symbolism from Van Gogh to Kandinsky* is dedicated to the symbolist landscape in Europe and this pioneering 19th-century painting movement, which was so closely associated with philosophy, poetry and music. www.vangoghmuseum.nl

Hans van der Meer is a renowned Dutch photographer. His latest book *The Netherlands - off the shelf* is a document on the 'typically Dutch'. In his characteristic drily humorous style, Van der Meer shows us the backdrop against which the lives of many people are played out. If you look closer, you can see the, sometimes remarkable complexity of that backdrop. In 1995, he started his long-term project to observe and photograph lower division amateur-football matches in the Netherlands. About the context of this project he says: 'Football is a part of our culture and football fields form part of our landscape. Even in the smallest municipality you will find at least one club. When I was taking photographs for my album *Hollandse Velden* I was looking for situations where I could make a combination of a field with players and an interesting landscape in the background. I needed the world outside the field to show, literally, that football is part of our culture.' www.hansvandermeer.nl

Daniel Jauslin is a Swiss architect and landscape architect living in Rotterdam and The Hague. He is a researcher and the Chair of Landscape Architecture at the Department of Urbanism at TU Delft's Faculty of Architecture. His PhD focuses on Architecture with Landscape Methods and the overlap and mutual influences of the two disciplines of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Jauslin was a project leader at West 8 Urban Design & Landscape Architecture from 1997 and went on to become a founding principal of DGJ Drexler Guinand Jauslin Architects in Rotterdam, Frankfurt and Zurich with Hans Drexler and Marc Guinand. Since 1999 he has authored or co-authored more than 170 projects and has taught in five countries. He is currently part of DGJ Architects & Landscapes in Rotterdam and Hong Kong. Jauslin is also the tutor to a group of master students at TU Delft. They will produce work for the Passport project at the 2012 Oerol festival, as they did in 2011.



Lotte van den Berg is a Dutch director who has become one of the most important protagonists of her generation, making theatre that is radically entrenched in its social setting. Her productions include *Het Blauwe uur*, *Gerucht*, *Braakland* and *Les Specateurs*. Many of them are about looking, about real-life experiences and, often, about the difficulty of understanding. She turns reality on its head so that we start to see things differently, or to start look differently. She gave up her position as a director at Toneelhuis Antwerp in Belgium to start OMSK, her own company in the small city of Dordrecht in the Netherlands, where she began by involving her immediate surroundings and at the same time, working for several months in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo. Now, Lotte is about to reinvent herself again in Utrecht as one of the resident artists at Huis aan de Werf. Her most recent work *Pleinvrees* will be created in the open: '*Pleinvrees* [agrophobia] will be performed on a big square in the centre of town and it will look nothing like anything you've ever seen in a performance before. There's no set, no lighting design, no amplified sound and no seating. *Pleinvrees* is a happening, a remarkable encounter between people.' www.omsk.nl

Gerardo Naumann is an artist, writer and theatre maker from Buenos Aires. His work needs neither literary text as a driving force of fiction, nor the theatre building as a place of representation. He prefers to find his texts and spaces in the real world. In *Emily*, the actors repeat fragments fragments of text from a language instruction book – in a furniture shop. The text In *Una obra útil* is based on a maid's diary that was found in a rubbish tip. His plays have been performed in Argentina, Portugal and Ireland. Naumann also makes films and teaches at Buenos Aires University, the Akademi for Scenekunst (Norway) and HFG-Karlsruhe (Germany). His work for *Ciudades Paralelas* is dedicated to 'the factory'. 'Factories are places of encounter between the social classes, from cleaning staff and assembly line workers to quality managers and sales directors, up to the factory owner. Each one has an individual relationship to their work and to the factory. They are bound together by rules and contracts. The rules define who does what, people's movements and the course of the working day.'

Ciudades Paralelas / Parallel Cities is a portable festival curated by Lola Arias and Stefan Kaegi, both members of Rimini Protokoll. The curaters have invited artists including Ant Hampton, Tim Etchells, Christian Garcia, Mariano Pensotti, Gerardo Nauman, Ligna, Dominic Huber and Lotte van den Berg to devise interventions for spaces that exist in every city in the world: hotel rooms, shopping centres, factories – these are functional places, not usually thought of as interesting to the outside eye. But without them life in the city would be unliveable. Their ubiquitous, parallel existences make them instantly recognisable, yet each is modelled on similar rules while also displaying a local face. Since 2010, eight distinct projects have been realised with a variety of performers in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Warsaw, Singapore and Zurich. Now, *Ciudades Paralelas* is asking, 'How can we export ideas without their losing impact, and can a festival ask global questions but get local answers?' www.ciudadesparalelas.com