



KAAI
THEATER

Radouan Mriziga 55

Kaaistudio's • 23/11 – 20:30 • dance

55 is the very first piece that the Moroccan choreographer Radouan Mriziga has created himself. The piece premiered in 2014 at Kaaistudios and was also performed during Kunstenfestivaldesarts in 2015. Since then, Mriziga has been touring with this solo all over the world. What makes *55* so unique is Mriziga's specific dance language: a confrontation between corporeality and strict concepts, and between the sensual and the rational. Using his own body as a measure, he creates an architectural form. For him, dance or movement is a way of achieving something different. Slowly and securely, he sets to work, subtly playing with your expectations. In this piece, his background and various different influences come together to create a fascinating hybrid.

After studying dance in Morocco, Tunisia and France, Radouan Mriziga graduated from PARTS. He now lives and works in Brussels. In 2016, he staged *3600* at Kaaistudios, which follows on from *55* as the second part of a trilogy. The final piece, *7*, was performed last season. He is artist-in-residence at the Kaaitheater.

Benjamin Vandewalle Walking the Line

Kaaistudio's • 25/11 – 13:00+16:00+18:00 • performance

In his latest performance, choreographer Benjamin Vandewalle is again accompanying you into the city. He takes the lead in a series of purposeful actions: some are banal, while others are completely unconventional. You leave as a group of individuals and gradually transform into one collective body. *Walking the Line* is a walking performance that will give you a new perspective on the city around you through a sequence of *tableaux vivants*.

Each of Benjamin Vandewalle's creations offers new perspectives and experiences, both within the theatre itself as in the city streets. For example, in *Birdwatching 4x4* (2012), he had little groups of people drive around Molenbeek, and in *One/Zero* (2011) and the one-on-one installation *Peri-Sphere* (performed during Performatik17), he offered audiences a new way to see things. Last season, he also made the sound performance *Hear* (2017).

Kris Verdonck/A Two Dogs Company ISOS

Kaaistudio's • 23/11 – 19:00>22:00 + 25/11 – 12:00>20:00 • installation

Kris Verdonck makes in *ISOS* reference to the world and characters depicted in the apocalyptic science-fiction novels by James Graham Ballard. Ballard portrays in his magic realistic stories and autobiographical works, intelligent and visionary descriptions of a future world, which increasingly resembles our contemporary neoliberal society. *ISOS* consists of 3D videos shown in nine viewing boxes where virtual sculptures perform in the strained socio-political situation that is called suburbia. The audio-visual installation acts as a short film edited in the viewer's imagination.

Verdonck explores in his work the boundaries between visual arts and theatre, installation and performance, dance and architecture. Verdonck's artistic practice deals with the confusion of human kind in an estranged world, due to technological development. Man and machine are set in a post-apocalyptic world where the tension between living species and dead matter creates an atmosphere of *Unheimlichkeit* or eeriness. One of the leitmotifs through Verdonck's oeuvre is the 'current state of the world' with its environmental problems, ecological disasters and wars.

'I'M INTERESTED IN BUILDINGS AND THE USE OF SPACE'

Radouan Mriziga in conversation with Esther Severi (Kaaithheater, 2016)

The choreographer and dancer Radouan Mriziga studied dance in Marrakesh and Tunisia and continued his career at PARTS in Brussels. Interested in the relation between the body and its surroundings, it is architecture that firms a red line through his work. 'The important thing for me is to have the freedom to be able to present in different contexts, and to be surprised as to how a context can add something to the work.'

How did you start with dance and why did it bring you from Morocco to Brussels?

My interest in dance came quite organically, although I grew up in a context where contemporary dance wasn't a given. I've always done a lot of bodily activities though: different sports and street-dance. At first, dance was more a general interest, but I quickly wanted to develop it as a daily practice. In Morocco however, there was no dance scene – no fundamental support or schools – so I had to find my own way to practice dance. At a certain moment, I met two artists who would become my first real mentors, Jacques Garros and Jean Masse. They gave a workshop in Merknass (Morocco) and inspired me to apply for a dance school in Tunisia. What they taught me was an emphasis on bodywork as well as scientific insight into anatomy. This had a lot of impact on my artistic education. After Tunisia I went to France, to study again with Jacques and Jean, but I felt I needed other insights. I heard about PARTS, applied and came to Brussels. What attracted me to PARTS was, apart from the technical dance training, the emphasis on choreography and performance, and a different way of dealing with theory than what I've encountered in previous schools. In PARTS, the idea of theory was very open and wide, it became a possible source for performance. The combination of different trainings worked well for me – I never liked the idea of being stuck in one vision. Every training pushed me to the next, in that I felt I had to react to something specific, to search further, to find a different mode of thinking.

Your development as a dancer brought you to a different continent. How do you give shape to the distance between your place of origin and your current living context?

I really enjoy working and living here in Brussels, but since I graduated at PARTS, I feel the need to perform my work not only in Central Europe. My cultural background is partly where my interests and inspirations come from, so I need to stay in a relation to it. Currently there are more possibilities to work with dance in Morocco: I am developing a good network and I work on different projects.

Which are these interests and inspirations you talk about? Are there key principles in your artistic work that resonate through every creation?

An important question for me is what I can do with dance and choreography as tools to go outside of dance and choreography as disciplines. I'm interested in exploring the knowledge of body and movement to produce new things and to relate to the surroundings differently. This question is present since the beginning of my artistic trajectory. And it brought other layers organically. For example, I started to be interested in building and constructing as actions, which took me to research into architecture and mathematics. In Arabic architecture, mathematics plays quite a symbolic role. From there I started developing ideas about the relationship between mind, body and spirit, which became an essential part of all my artistic work.

At Kaaitheater, you presented a solo, 55 (2014) and a quartet, 3600 (2015), which were the first and the second part of a trilogy. In May 2017, during Kunstenfestivaldesarts, you will present the final part, 7. What do you research in these works, and why in the format of a trilogy?

The trilogy format enables me to research a specific theme more deeply, and to underline the continuity in the work. The subject matter in general is the connection between the moving body and the construction and expression of architectural and sculptural forms, in relation to the idea of craftsmanship. I started with a solo, 55, in which I used my own (moving) body as a tool to create a structure, which became a drawing on the floor. Following this work, I wanted to collaborate with a group so that I could see the research resonate in the bodies of others and step out of the process and look at it from a distance. In 3600, along with three dancers, I started to build actual structures with bricks, to explore the movements and rhythms of construction as opposed to the movement that inhabits these structures. The title of the last part, 7, refers to the idea of the seven wonders of the ancient world. There will be six or seven performers on stage, so the scale will increase again. The work will concentrate on the idea of a wonder, a structure that is 'larger than life' or a fantasy, in relation to the human body that has stayed the same throughout history – an incredible and mysterious wonder in itself!

You mention craftsmanship – how does this idea appear in your performances thematically, and what is the relationship of this topic to your own practice as a dancer/choreographer?

The notion of craftsmanship was already there in 55 and 3600, but more as a hidden layer. In 7 it becomes very important and dominant. I realized that the connection between dance, construction and architecture lies precisely in this idea of crafting. I increasingly focus specifically on why it matters to do things with our hands and bodies and to make things exist in this way. I often speak of a dance, a choreography or a performance as an object, because I consider it to be something 'crafted', bodily. And craft, for me, is also related to time. In dance, or performance in general, the time it takes to actually make something is a specifically shared time between dancers and the audience. Maybe that is what remains of craftsmanship in our time, a direct and witnessed 'crafting', and in this way, a true understanding of effort and skill...

You present your work in different contexts – performing arts as well as visual arts for example. Do you have a specific desire to be active in the field of the visual arts and escape the black box of the theatre?

The black box is a very important space for me – a space I want to question by going out and in again. I'm interested in exploring the differences in performing inside and outside. The black box is a smart space, with a perspective and machinery that influences or directs the viewing. As soon as you step out, this changes completely. The tension between these different modes of viewing is something I take with me in the creation process. For example, I consciously made the solo 55 flexible. When I was creating this piece in the black box, I was already imagining other presentation contexts – locations outside of the black box, and not only in Europe. I made it flexible so it can travel and adapt to different situations easily.

Scenographer Jozef Wouters said something very interesting about my work: that the objects I make with dance are always centred and not related to the walls or the edges of the theatre space. I think I do this in order not to feel fixed in a space, to transport the idea of flexibility into the nature of the work. Now for the new creation, 7, this will become an important question – how to increase the scale but keep this dynamic of flexibility...

I don't look for specific fields to perform in. The important thing for me is to have the freedom to be able to present in different contexts, and to be surprised as to how a context can add something to the work. For example, we just presented 3600 in the Leopold museum in Vienna. The surroundings or architecture we performed in resonated strongly with the work, which for me keeps the work very much alive and dynamic.

BENJAMIN VANDEWALLE ON WALKING THE LINE

interview with Benjamin Vandewalle by Marnix Rummens, October 2017.

What is walking the line?

Walking the Line is a choreographed walk through the city. Each participant is given a black viewing box to wear on their head like a mask, framing what they see. Then, hand in hand and in small groups, we set off on a walk but, instead of looking straight ahead, we walk sideways, experiencing our surroundings as if seeing a live travel shot on TV. Various simple instructions mean that you create your own montage of the journey you go on. As often happens in my work for public spaces, *Walking the Line* is also an invitation to look at everyday reality through the eyes of the theatre, reducing everything to its essence. With *Birdwatching 4x4* we drove a theatre gallery through the streets. *Walking the Line* is a very pure, more tangibly embodied elaboration of the same idea. By means of a very simple intervention you create a mindset that regards the world as a work of art. Rather like Manzoni, who, with his *Socle du Monde*, turned a simple plinth upside down and declared that the whole world was a work of art.

How does this differ from our everyday way of looking at the world?

Art and theatre particularly fascinate me because of the state of concentration they are able to bring about. As the audience you enter into a sort of meditative state in which you activate different parts of your brain, create new associations, explore different approaches. In *Walking the Line* you take time to look differently at everyday life, you pay attention to things that otherwise pass you by almost unnoticed. I think that is something unusual today. In addition, we do it as a group. By holding hands we join together to form one large, collective body, into which part of our individuality is absorbed. You can look about you as if from a strange body. And because you allow yourself to be led you do not have to make many of the social and practical decisions you are normally required to do when walking along, which also produces a different experience. By being in a space in a physically different way reality becomes different too. Like with the spoon in *The Matrix*, "It's not the spoon that bends, it's only yourself."

Does that frame also create a certain distance?

It is a paradox. You are very present in the street scene and in the reality. Yet, at the same time, you experience it from a considerable distance as if watching a film in which you are appearing. By activating both perspectives simultaneously you can bring about something unique. We often find ourselves a bit stuck in everyday situations or in intense emotions or even in examining things too closely. During *Walking the Line* both aspects of your experience are laid bare. It's about the contrast. Including in those places that we visit. For each walk we search for a very varied series of locations, both indoors and out, ranging from a wall with graffiti, medieval buildings, a working class bar and an arcade with Thai manicures to a building site... If you walk past without the masks everything flows into everything else but the framing means you see the parts within the whole. You become aware of the incredible diversity, of the things that exist side by side in a micro-universe, how many kinds of life there are, how plural reality is. And it is this that generates profound reflection. As if you encounter something for the first time, an experience of life that falls outside predetermined habits, desires and concepts.

What is the importance of such experiences?

Now and then we should step outside our everyday habits to ensure we don't fall asleep, to ensure we are able to continue to grow. For practical reasons we reduce what we see to a vast system of pattern recognition. But we often forget that that considerably reduces the effective plurality of the reality. Which doesn't stand still and if we want to be able to continue to respond to it we cannot lose touch with it. Because in other situations we will need other possibilities. That is the paradox of *Walking the Line*. By imposing a restricting frame and becoming part of a human chain, people's

experience is broadened not narrowed. Many feel themselves becoming very calm during the performance and are surprised at the details they notice. Towards the end we detach people from each other, take back the masks and ask them to go for a walk by themselves, taking the impressions from the performance with them. For many people that is the highlight of the whole thing.

You achieve a new way of observing things

Yes, that is what is so wonderful. What we do is something so simple; you put on a viewing box and hold each other's hand. But the impact can be really profound. You change speed, change body. You become part of something bigger, both physically by becoming part of the group body and visually by broadening your perspective. *Walking the Line* is both a visual and a tactile experience. For onlookers too the performance raises questions. Sometimes people find it hard to understand what is going on. They think the boxes are VR glasses but quickly notice that they are empty. Then they think it is a student activity, a sect or some kind of protest. Very few people associate the walkers with a performance. When people stop to watch, an amusing side effect is created. Who is performing for whom? A kind of live interaction comes into being as onlookers look at walkers and walkers at onlookers. Everyone then plays a dual role, that of audience member and performer, actor and observer, you are both active and passive, involved and excluded.

Is that a leitmotif in your research as a city choreographer?

My research as a City Choreographer starts with the question, how can we see our communal public space in a different way? Actively looking plays a very important role in this, yes. Using very simple materials I construct a number of viewing boxes through which to view the urban reality, for example *Peri-sphere*, a mobile, monumental periscope, or *Inter-View*, a viewing box in which you look your fellow man straight in the eye. It is important that the creation process occurs in the street, discussion and feedback are then more immediate. In the street you are free from many of the codes and frames of reference of conventional theatre. You are exposed to very diverse reactions, ranging from high praise to hate or apathy. But that keeps your feet firmly on the ground. What interests me is creating new ways of looking. In the theatre we create new worlds but they are often unrelated to reality. Practically too, creation in a public space has many advantages. The space is always available so you are able to work more independently and more flexibly. And it makes touring much easier too.

Does each city set its own tone in walking the line?

I have been able to develop *Walking the Line* all over the world, from Brussels to Johannesburg, from Groningen to Buenos Aires. The performance does, of course, differ from city to city but what surprised me most were the similarities. In all big cities you encounter the same incredible diversity of people, buildings, surroundings, movements... But the audiences and their associations are very different from country to country. In South America religious connotations are much stronger, for example. And you also notice nuances in theatre codes. The traditional Western theatergoer finds the mask easier to deal with and is also used to keeping quiet during a performance. Which is why we rarely improvise. The more rigid it is and the clearer it is, the more the audience is on your side, the more you can carry them along with you. It is this paradox that I find so fascinating, the freedom in restriction, the solidarity in anonymity. No matter how much we believe that our own experience of reality is the reality, it is important to sometimes learn to lose yourself in a different perspective. To reconnect with the reality that transcends our everyday consciousness. Embodied, from the inside out.

ISOS: 9 DIORAMAS / 9 SCENES

I

J.G. Ballard chose the dignified, calm setting of upper-class suburbia as the most fertile ground for his work. However, the riots in the London suburb of Tottenham in 2011 showed that violence can erupt anywhere. In compliance with the British Second World War slogan 'Keep calm and carry on', this prosperous couple waits for food in a world where restaurant tables are now only laid for the sake of form. Just like the occupation of Shanghai in the Second World War, which Ballard experienced as a child, these people maintain their bourgeois position as if nothing had happened. But the violence is approaching and can already be heard.

"As the Mozart chimed delicately around him, he saw that the advance column of an enormous army was moving slowly over the horizon. At the first glance, the long ranks seemed to be progressing in orderly lines, but on closer inspection, it was apparent that, like the obscured detail of a Goya landscape, the army was composed of a vast throng of people, men and women, interspersed with a few soldiers in ragged uniforms, pressing forward in a disorganized tide." (From *The Garden of Time*, J.G. Ballard, 1962)

II

This man laughs because he can do no different. From the laughing sessions of business culture, to the television of ridicule that spills out into living rooms, to the psychosis of the endless laugh, behind the jollity lies a void. Floating in thin air, this man does not know why he is laughing, only that endorphins are being released in his brain and give him a pleasant feeling. The 'beach fatigue' with which Ballard infects his well-off characters keeps this man in a permanent delirium of cheerfulness and satisfaction. His psychosis screens him off from the reality outside, but he is just as much imprisoned within himself.

III

An apparently ordinary family scene all goes wrong when the man realizes he is living the last few minutes over and over again in a loop. In the meantime the television continues presenting the same news about conflicts in the world and his wife wants to enjoy the peace and quiet. But getting stuck in time probably means more like getting stuck inside yourself. The loneliness of the person in the loop contrasts with the relaxed attitude of those who are simply carried along with it. Rather in the system than out of it, rather unaware than aware. Against the background of violence in the media, the good white man is in a loop with himself, just as the West maintains its position without taking account of the rest of the world on which it has an effect.

"For some reason, I don't know why, we seem to be in a sort of circular time trap, just going round and round. You're not aware of it, and I can't find anyone else who is either." (From *Escapement*, J.G. Ballard, 1956)

IV

"ELEMENTS OF AN ORGASM (1) Her ungainly transit across the passenger seat through the nearside door; (2) the conjunction of aluminized gutter trim with the volumes of her thighs; (3) the crushing of her left breast by the door pillar, its self-extension as she swung her legs on to the sandy floor; (4) the overlay of her knees and the metal door flank; (5) the ellipsoid erasure of dust as her hip brushed the nearside fender; (6) the hard transept of the door mechanism within the absolute erosion of the landscape; (7) her movements

distorted in the protecting carapace of the radiator assembly; (8) the conjunction of her thighs with the arch of the motor bridge, the contrast of smooth epithelium and corrugated concrete; (9) her weak ankles in the soft ash; (10) the pressure of her right hand on the chromium trim of the inboard headlamp; (11) the sweat forming a damp canopy in the cleavage of her blouse - the entire landscape expired within this irrigated trench; (12) the jut and rake of her pubis as she moved into the driving seat; (13) the junction of her thighs and the steering assembly; (14) the movements of her fingers across the chromium-tipped instrument heads." (*The Atrocity Exhibition*, J.G. Ballard, 1970)

Just like the laughing man, this woman is in a psychotic state, an inner landscape. She sees herself in several poses, as if in an out-of-body experience. This hallucination condemns the woman to a description of herself that makes any intervention in her surroundings impossible. The detached analysis she makes of herself comes from *The Atrocity Exhibition* and touches on another of the pillars of Ballard's work. Eroticism and catastrophe overlap in this work, which reconciles pornography and science.

"Science is the ultimate pornography, an analytical activity whose main aim is to isolate objects or events from their contexts in time and space."

Eadweard Muybridge's work in the second half of the nineteenth century played on the same boundary. Naked men and women were able to be photographed and exhibited under the guise of science and experiment. Voyeurism became observation, action became demonstration, and context was swapped for isolation.

V

We are familiar with these sparklers from birthday cakes at innocent children's parties. At the same time, this 'sparklehead' is the wild fire that can devastate forests and cities. Depending on the context, fire represents danger and death or conviviality and a party. The eternal partying of the petty bourgeoisie sipping languidly from a glass of champagne contrasts sharply with the fires burning in the cities of the Middle East or even closer to home. The firework, burning to the ground, brings together the bonfire and curtain fire, toy shop and sweat shop.

"They were halfway across when a light machine gun began to fire loosely over their heads from an emplacement below the huts, its harsh ripple coming in short bursts of two or three seconds."
(from *The Burning World*, J.G. Ballard, 1964)

VI

Two businessmen fight to the death over an unknown issue. Perhaps they have no reason at all and they have simply degenerated into a cliché of competition. This competition is so cut-throat that businessmen are driven to despair and fight it out, even on Wall Street itself. The physicality of their struggle is countered by the geometrical environment in which they battle it out. However, they represent the violence and turbulence of the street, which brings together in chaos not only the lowest social class, but also the middle class and upper class.

VII

In terms of decomposition, plastic is probably one of the most inert or 'dead' materials we use every day. A mass of plastic weighing a hundred million tons, called 'the garbage patch', is floating in the Pacific Ocean. This enormous pollution of the ocean has far-reaching consequences for the survival of many species. The climate disaster we are heading for has been caused largely by the rising standard of living on certain continents

and in its turn it has unleashed food and water conflicts in those regions who share in the prosperity. The plastic bag, as a symbol of thoughtless consumption and the throwaway society, is here subjected to an anatomical examination.

VIII & IX

The waiting man has become a recurring motif in Kris Verdonck's work. But the perspective here is different. We are able to view a large figure from above. In one box a woman, in the other a couple – everyone finely dressed. Imprisoned in the view-box that is like a waiting room, mankind stands here in himself, while seeming to be waiting his turn for a medical examination. Ballard's medical training shows through here, in the doctor's enquiring look at his patient, verging on voyeurism. A view-box as an anatomical theatre for the dissection of 'waiting'.

credits

Radouan Mrizia 55

concept and performance Radouan Mriziga | **production** Moussef Nomadic Arts Centre | **co-production** C-mine (Genk), WP Zimmer (Antwerpen) | **in collaboration with** Cultuurcentrum Berchem, Pianofabriek (Brussel), O Espaço do Tempo (Portugal), STUK (Leuven)

Benjamin Vandewalle Walking the Line

concept, creation Benjamin Vandewalle | **creation** Nelle Hens, Evelien Cammaert, Gaël Santisteva, Cassiel Gaube | **performance** Evelien Cammaert, Gaël Santisteva, Cassiel Gaube, Benjamin Vandewalle | **dramaturgy** Jasper Delbecke (SoAP) | **executive production** Caravan Production (Brussels) in collaboration with SoAP (Maastricht) | **international distribution** Caravan Production & SoAP in collaboration with Sarah De Ganck (Art Happens) | **co-production** Kaaithheater (Brussels), CDC Toulouse / Midi-Pyrénées, SoAP (Maastricht), KAAP (Oostende/Brugge), C-Takt (Neerpelt/Genk) | **residencies** Oerol (Terschelling), Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (Oudtshoorn), Noorderzon (Groningen) | **thanks to** Ruth Mariën | **support** VGC

Kris Verdonck/A Two Dogs Company ISOS

concept & direction Kris Verdonck | **dramaturgy** Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Kristof Van Baarle | **performers** Tawny Andersen, Hendrik De Smedt | **technical coordinator** Jan Van Gijssel | **stereography** Niko Himschoot | **director of photography** Vincent Pinckaers | **sound design & electronic composition** Peter Van Hoesen | **sound effects** Céline Bernard | **production viewing boxes** Damien Gernay | **electronics** Vincent Malstaf, Felix Luque | **costumes** An Breugelmanns | **jujitsu fighters** Justin Candeloro, Joshua Fairfield | **production** A Two Dogs Company | **stills and renders** © A Two Dogs Company | **with the support of** EMPAC Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (US), KC Nona (BE), Kaaithheater (BE), Pianofabriek (BE), Het Zuidelijk Toneel (NL), the Flemish Authorities (BE) and the Flemish Community Commission (BE)