

ARTSTALK

Colour Supplement

Number 12

October 2023



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This edition completes the first full year of the *Colour Supplement* with readership for the September issue showing a more than tenfold increase on November last year. This is our biggest edition yet. There are three big important events currently. There's the major Ai Weiwei retrospective in Rotterdam, British fashion at *Royals & Rebels* in The Hague and an interesting looking show at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam - we cover them all. We were also at the opening night of NDT's new season and Splendor's Cosmic Circus at Theater Carré. Yayoi Kusama was a controversial artist in the 1960s and 70s and Stedelijk Museum Schiedam has a retrospective of her work. We have some wonderful photographs of Moving Strings by Shana Brown and we visit a new gallery in The Hague that mixes fine art with typewriters.

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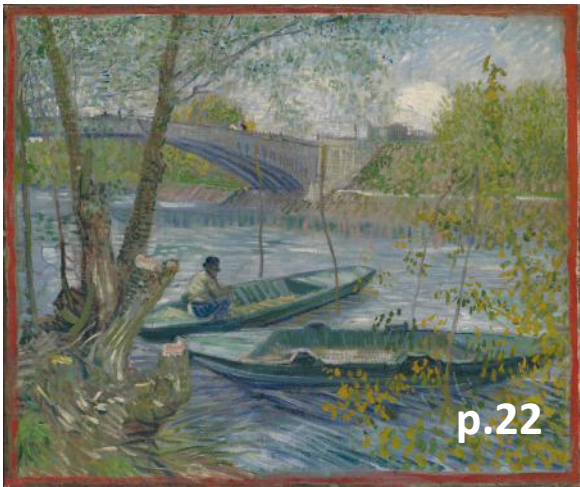
Portrait of Ai Weiwei (2012). Photo by Gao Yuan, courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio, © Ai Weiwei
On show at *AI WEIWEI In Search of Humanity* at Kunsthal, Rotterdam



Yayoi Kusama - The Dutch Years
1965-1970 at Stedelijk Museum
Schiedam



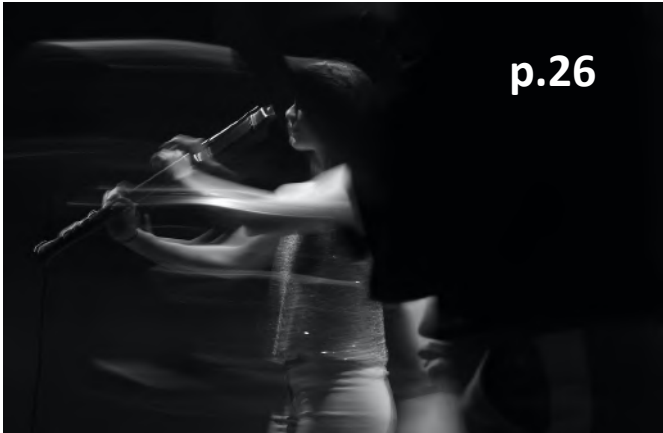
Royals & Rebels at Kunstmuseum in
The Hague



Van Gogh Along the
Seine at Van Gogh
Museum, Amsterdam



NDT In/With/In on tour



Moving Strings in Amsterdam



Ai Weiwei at Kunsthal, Rotterdam



Acme Studios in The Hague



Splendor Sonic Circus in Amsterdam



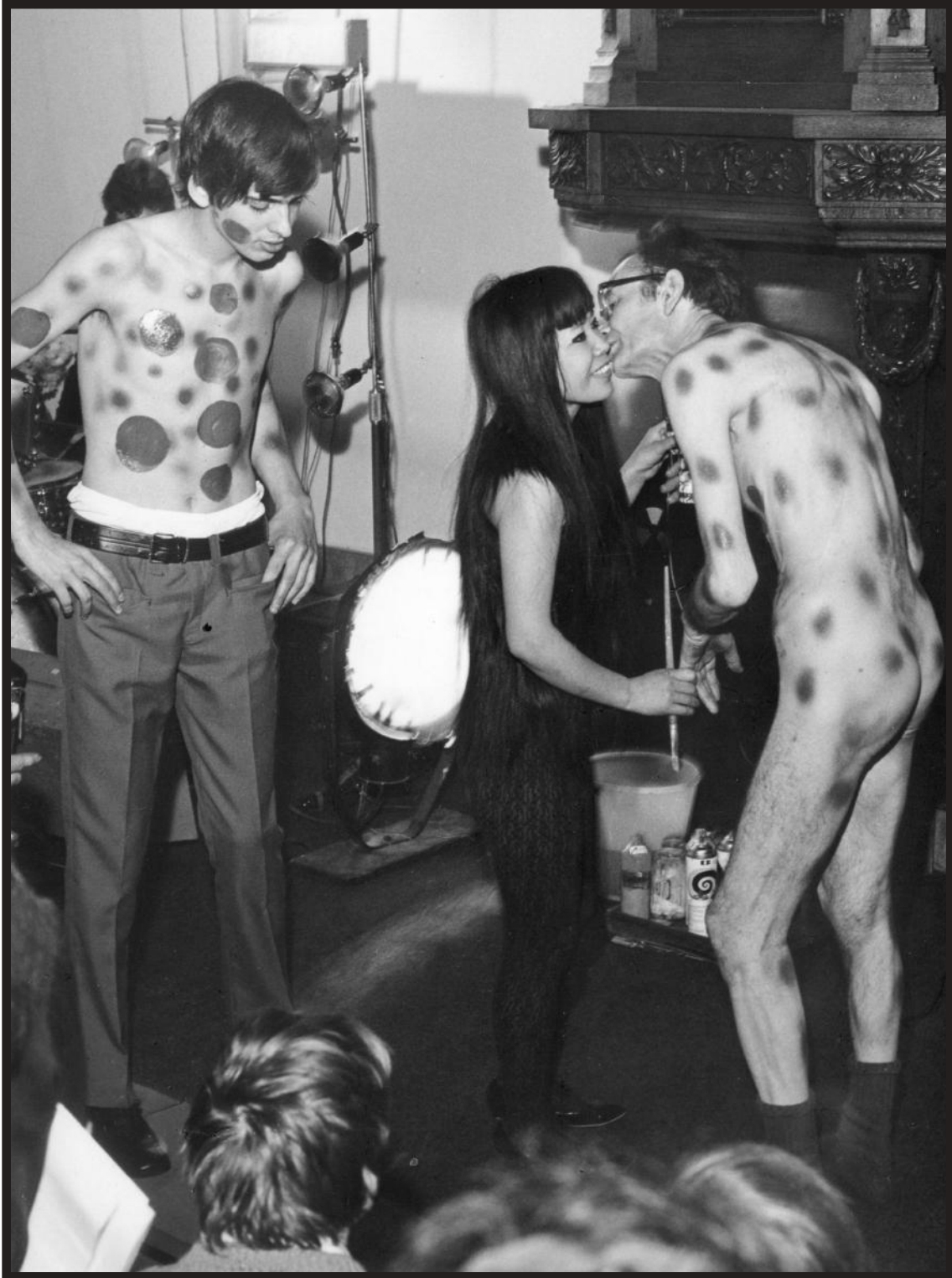
YAYOI KUSAMA

The Dutch Years 1965-1970

Until 25th February 2024, the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam presents the exhibition *Yayoi Kusama. The Dutch Years 1965-1970*. In that period she exhibited and often stayed in the Netherlands and was part of the vibrant art world. These are crucial years for the artist, in which she shakes up club life with her high-profile happenings.

Over the decades, Yayoi Kusama has become one of the art world's most famous and widely featured international stars. Her current, technologically advanced light and mirror installations are a hit on social media, where over a million posts with photos and videos of her work have been shared. The crowd loves her polka dot pumpkins and polka dot champagne bottles. But in Schiedam a different side of Kusama is shown: that of a pioneer, feminist advocate and cult heroine. *The Dutch period 1965-1970* is central to this. Kusama lived in the United States during those years, but resided and exhibited more often in the Netherlands than in America. Besides the Dutch art climate – Kusama is included in the circles around the Orez gallery in The Hague – the popular culture, the political climate and the sexual revolution form an important stimulus for Kusama.

The Netherlands in the 1960s was the time of Provo, happenings around the Amsterdam sculpture *Het Lieverdje* and the emergence of youth culture. It is also the time of experimental music, psychedelics and free sex. Kusama connects directly with her sexually liberating



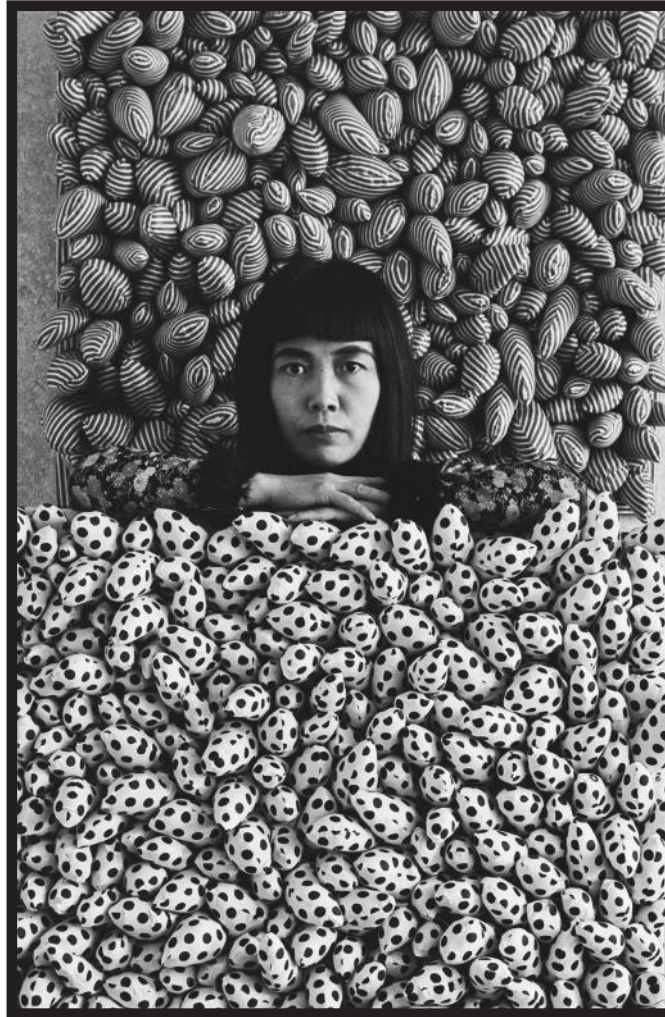
***What do you think is worse, war or
free sex?*** Yayoi Kusama, 1967

work. In New York she has held various happenings since 1967, which were often banned or only allowed to take place without nudity. happenings in various places In the Netherlands she spontaneously performs her *Naked Body Painting* , first in the Orez gallery and then also in museums, clubs and festivals. This is also the case in the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, where in 1967 Kusama's work could be seen at the Balans art fair . At the opening, a 'spontaneous' happening arose, in which Kusama, as yet unknown to the public in Schiedam, paints a naked Jan Schoonhoven from head to toe with dots. Photos show the audience watching in amazement. Happenings follow in the most diverse places: during the music festival *Flight to Lowlands Paradise* in Utrecht and in the erotic nightclub Birds Club in Amsterdam.

Happenings are becoming an increasingly important part of the (night)life of young people in the 1960s. They take place on the street, in theatres, in art spaces and sometimes on television. In many cases, the happenings stem from a strongly felt anarchism and anti-rationalism among young generations of artists, writers and other free spirits. By presenting absurdism and everyday actions as something sublime (fluxus), but also by destroying old culture and striving for a kind of anti-aesthetic. There is almost always a political charge: opposition to the establishment, Dutch prudishness, coercive patterns of power or the Vietnam War. This forms fertile ground for the liberating and engaged happenings of Yayoi Kusama.

On display in Schiedam are more than thirty works of art by Yayoi Kusama, all made in the Netherlands

in the period 1965 to 1970. *Yayoi Kusama. The Dutch years 1965-1970* shows how Kusama became part of the Dutch art world from during that period, but also gave an impulse to the counterculture of a younger generation. Eye-catchers include the *Infinity Polka Dot Room* (1967) and the installation *Narcissus Garden* (1966). Both are shown for the first time together with the authentic television broadcasts from those years. The exhibition also includes hundreds of photographs taken in the Netherlands by and with Kusama that have never been seen before. Many erotic works by artist friends such as Henk Peeters, Woody van Amen and Lotti van der Gaag have also been included □



Yayoi Kusama. The Dutch years 1965-1970 has been compiled by the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam in close collaboration with Tijs Visser of the O-INSTITUTE, who has been researching Kusama's Dutch years for many years.

Photos :-

Previous pages:- *Balans Kunst Beurs*, Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, 1967. Photo Harrie Verstappen. Courtesy O-INSTITUTE

Opposite:- *Naked Body Festival*, Schiedam November 1967, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. Photo Ton den Haan. Collectie O-INSTITUTE

This page:- *Facets of Contemporary Eroticism*, Internationale Galerij Orez 1965, Photo © Marianne Dommissie, Nederlands Fotomuseum Courtesy O-INSTITUTE



Mac & Maggie, Suit, ca. 1980-1989. Junya Watanabe for Comme des Garçons, Jacket, ca. 1990-1999. Comme des Garçons, Jacket, ca. 2000-2010. Frank Govers, Jacket, ca. 1990-1995. Kenneth Ize, Jacket and trousers, in aso oke weave technique, Nigeria, fall 2019, Kunstmuseum Den Haag



ROYALS & REBELS

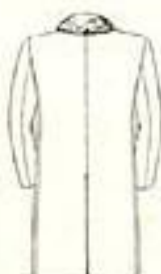
**A tribute to British fashion,
especially Vivienne Westwood, at
Kunstmuseum in The Hague**

Photos by Alice de GROO T Text by Wendy FOSSEN



2731

2732



The well dressed Gentleman

*Herbst en Winter 1932-33
„Centrale Modelgids“ Dordrecht*



Hedi Slimane for Dior, Coat and men's skirt, ca. 2003-2004.
Het Jagershuis, Three piece suit, ca 1955-1965, Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

Visitors to the fashion exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum in The Hague know that they are in for a treat with each new show. When you think it doesn't get any better, you are baffled again by the current offering, *Royals & Rebels*.

It has been a long time wish of the Kunstmuseum fashion department to organise a solo exhibition on Vivienne Westwood, the rebellious British fashion

designer whom the museum has been following since the 1980s. And indeed, talks were underway when Ms. Westwood passed away at the end of last year. It was then decided to dedicate the larger part of the already planned exhibition on British fashion to Westwood in homage to her legacy to the (fashion)world.

In each of the rooms you will find a design by Westwood, both from the museum's own collection



Sarah Burton for Alexander McQueen Evening dress, London 2013. Maison Worth (design)
Maison Kühne (execution), Evening dress, ParisThe Hague, 1952. Kunstmuseum Den Haag



Vivienne Westwood, Evening dress, ca. 1995.
Kunstmuseum Den Haag

as well as loans from abroad. One of them is an iconic piece of Westwood – the wedding dress worn by Sarah Jessica Parker in the movie *Sex in the City*. This became available (completely in line with Westwood's ideas) after it was reused for the series *And Just Like That*.

Other not to be missed items are the two outfits worn by Princess Diana: a black jacket by Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, which Diana wore attending a number of funerals and an exquisite cocktail dress by Catherine Walker.

Another showstopper is only related to Princess Di – the comfortable knitted sweater covered in white sheep and one black sheep. This is a remake, which is still in production, of the one she wore it to the polo matches of the then Prince Charles in 1983.

A second royal touch to the exhibition is the two hats worn by Queen Máxima, one while attending the races at Royal Ascot and the other, quite recently, to the coronation of King Charles.

Not only are the pieces on display of a high quality, but also the presentation of the exhibition is once again fantastic. It takes you on a trip through British fashion from daily life in the city while taking the underground followed by a day in the country side where people play croquet and wear tweeds. It is therefore no surprise that the museum also shows a Chanel piece since she was inspired by the possibilities of tweed when dating Boy Capel in the 1910s.

This underlines the influence British fashion has (had) on costume history which is the second red thread of this highly recommended exhibition at the Kunstmuseum in The Hague. □

Royals & Rebels continues at Kunstmuseum in The Hague until 7th January 2024



Vivienne Westwood, Suit (ca. 1991-1992) and suit (ca.1994-1996). B.M. Willemars, Three piece suit, Barneveld, 1940 Charles Creed, Suit, London, 1950. Kunstmuseum Den Haag

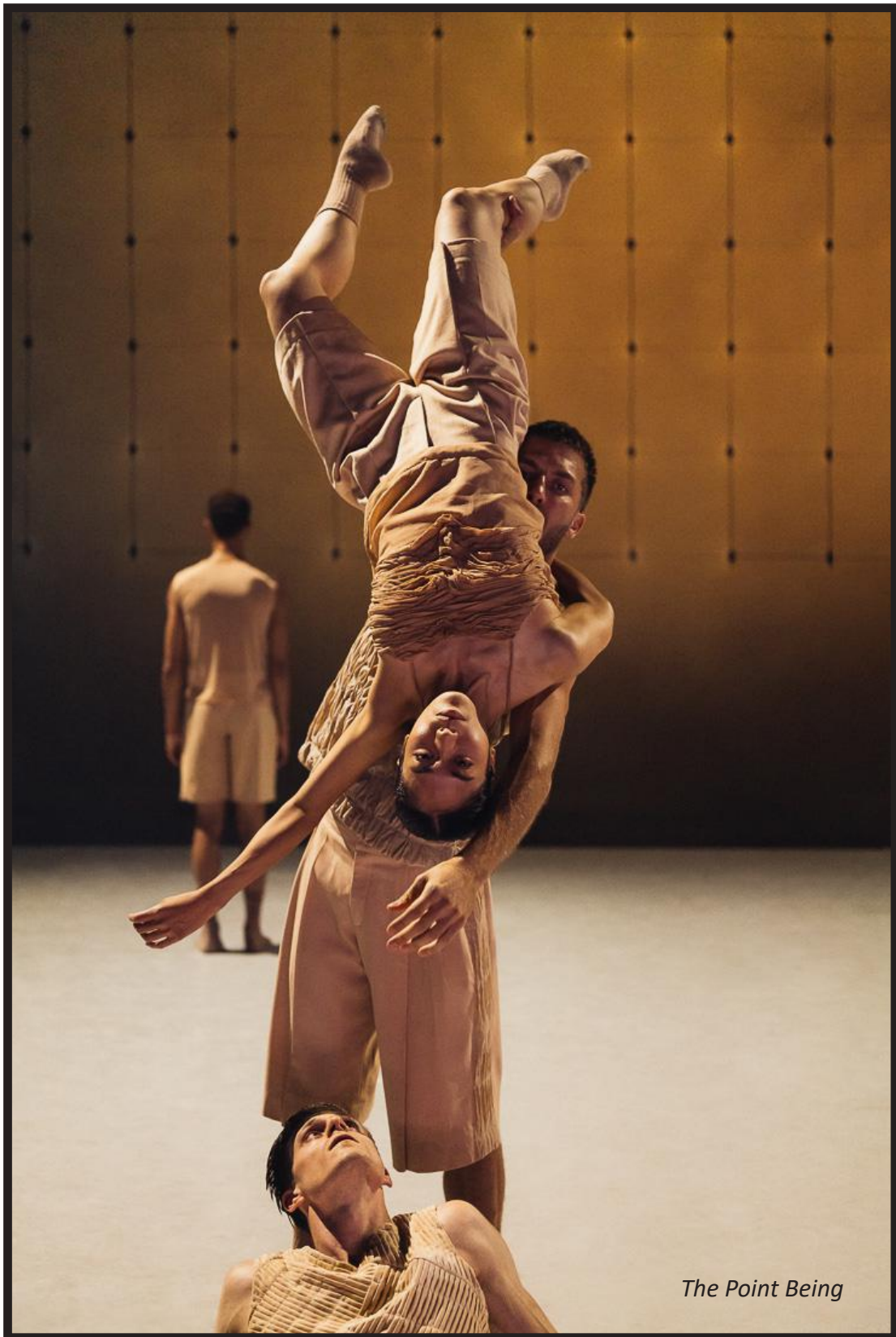


Nederlands Dans Theater

IN / WITH / IN

Photos by Rahi REZVANI Text by Michael HASTED





The Point Being

I have been a fan of Nederlands Dans Theater for more years than I care to remember. I had seen them in London long before I came to live in Holland. So, the announcement of a new season is always eagerly awaited and its opening night creates a frisson of excitement which is almost tangible. Last night at The Hague's Amare NDT opened their 2023/24 season with *In/With/In* - three pieces, two of which were world premières.

The performance got under way with a reprise of Marco Goecke's 2022 *I Love You, Ghosts*, a rather sombre, macabre even, event with lots of black and chiaroscuro. The opening music, Harry Belafonte singing the soothing *Try to Remember* from the largely forgotten 1960 musical *The Fantasticks*, augured perhaps a sentimental journey, but this turned out not to be.

Goecke's piece, as the title might suggest, turned into an almost Hitchcockian thriller with a suitable orchestral score that created tension and anticipation. There were moments when it was quite scary with the dancers screaming and uttering other vocal contortions. The appearance of an almost robotic mysterious character, added another menacing dimension. The piece was resolved when sentimentality returned to the haunting strains of *Danny Boy*.

For the first of the evening's two premières, *The Point Being*, the curtain slowly rose to reveal a smoke filled stage and what appeared to be an almost primitive religious ritual taking place. A lone girl moved in the shadows in what at first appeared to be a circle of rocks, but which turned out to be crouching dancers, while upstage stood a brightly lit, god-like figure. Imre and Marne van Opstal's new work was very much a multi-disciplinary piece, enhanced by outstanding décor by the Amsterdam design team Drift and, as usual, brilliant lighting by Tom Visser. The original music by Amos Ben-Tal was an important factor in what was, for me, by far the best piece of the evening. It was mainly solo or duet work but towards the end the ensemble marching backwards and forwards, up and down in formation was thrilling.

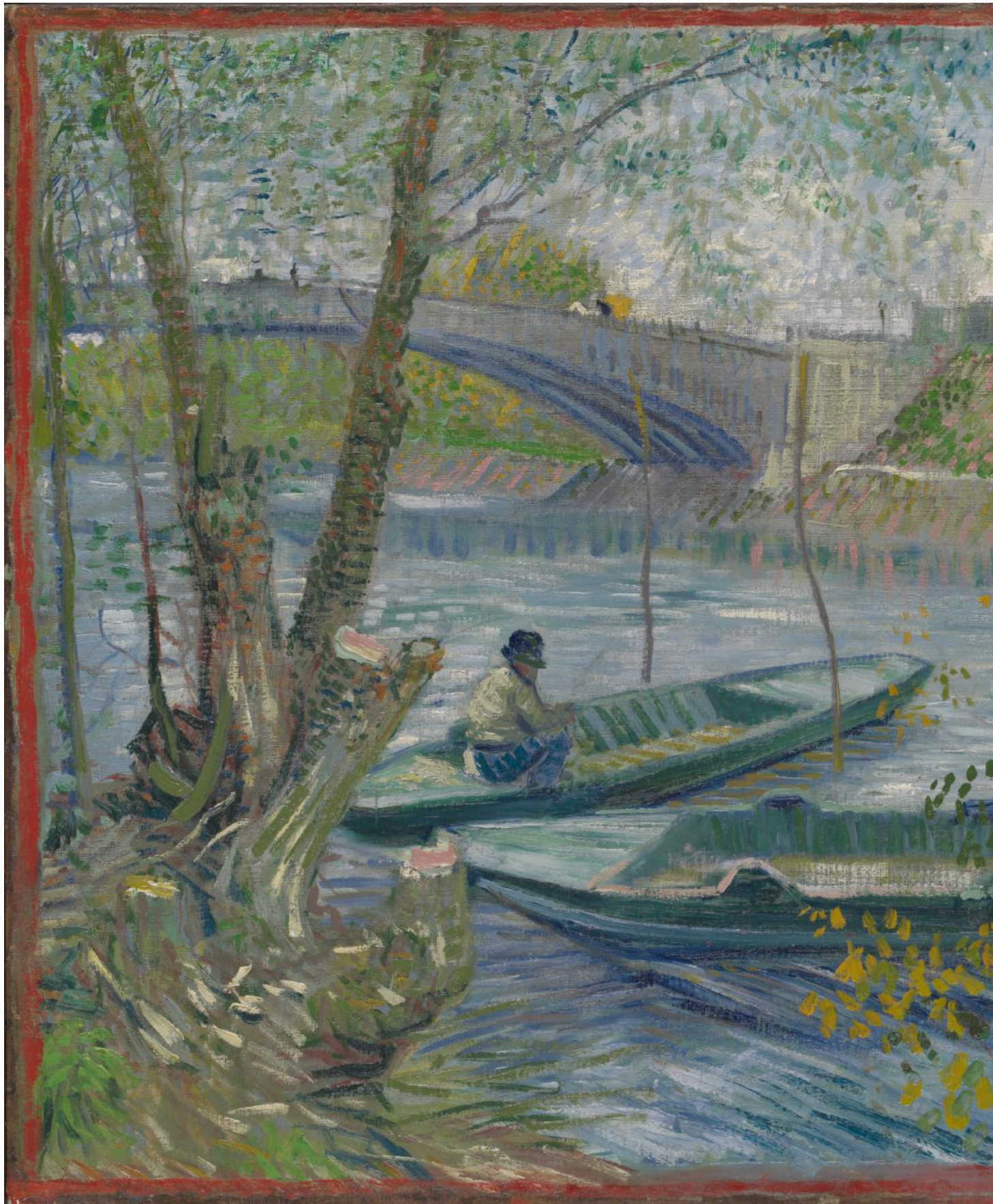


I Love You, Ghosts



Tao Ye's *15* was a total ensemble piece with the . . . err . . . fifteen dancers working flat out in unison for twenty-five minutes in what must have been one of the most demanding and difficult pieces they had ever undertaken. Dressed in just baggy black Japanese style trousers they, in an ever moving unrelenting triangle configuration, never paused. With a mesmerising soundtrack by Xiao He and atmospheric lighting by Ellen Ruge the concept and presentation was breath-taking and, on the face of it, brilliant. However, at times it was quite ragged with one dancer in particular way-off the beat for most of the time.

Nevertheless, this was, as we have rightly come to expect, an outstanding evening of contemporary dance by the world class NDT □



Vincent van Gogh, *Fishing in Spring, the Pont de Clichy (Asnières)*, 1887, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 60 cms. The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift

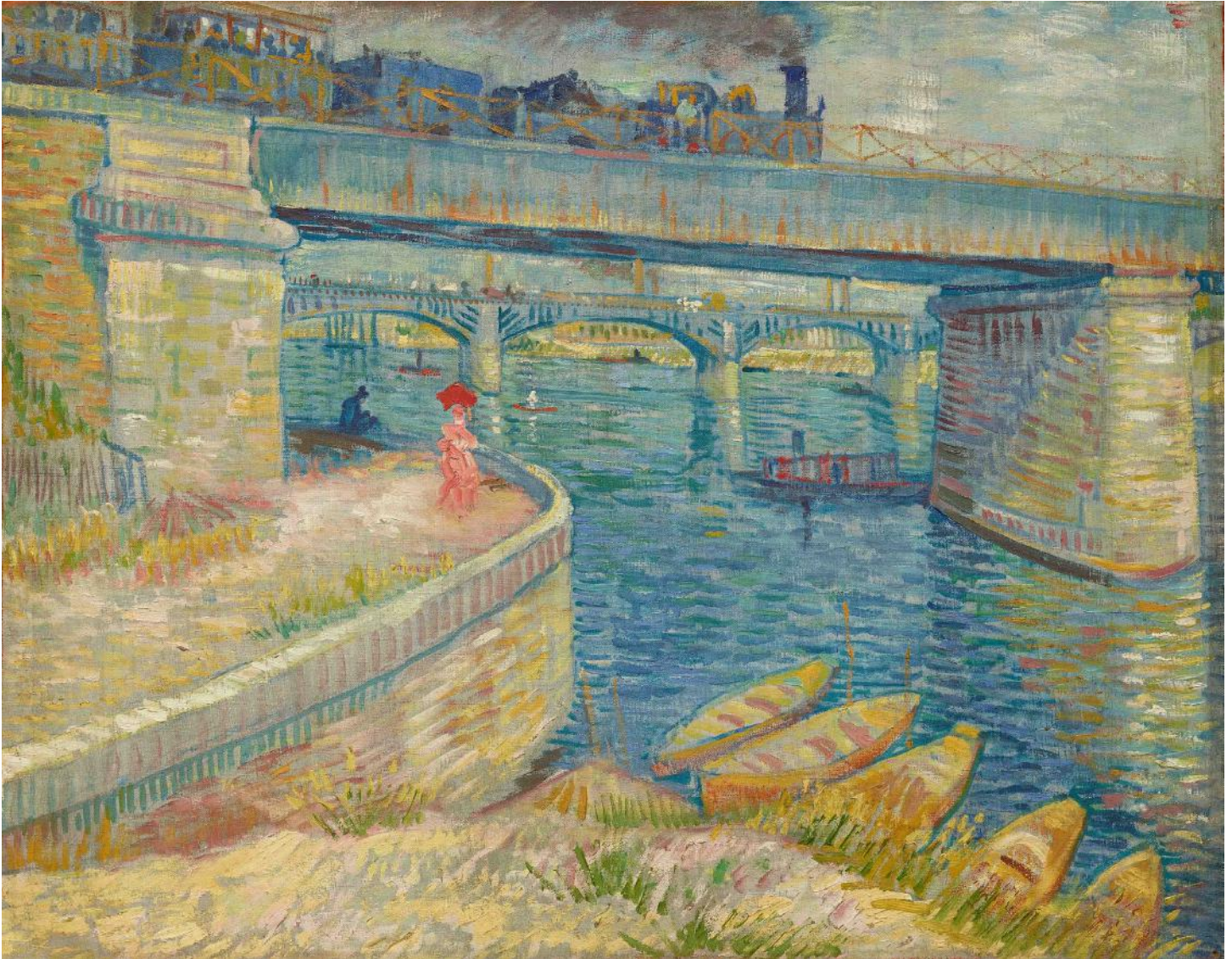


of Charles Deering McCormi

VAN GOGH ALONG THE SEINE

The Van Gogh Museum concludes its 50th anniversary year with *Van Gogh Along the Seine*. This pioneering exhibition explores how the area along the Seine near Asnières, to the northwest of Paris, was crucial to the artistic development of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries: Paul Signac, Georges Seurat, Emile Bernard and Charles Angrand. The exhibition is a collaboration with The Art Institute of Chicago.

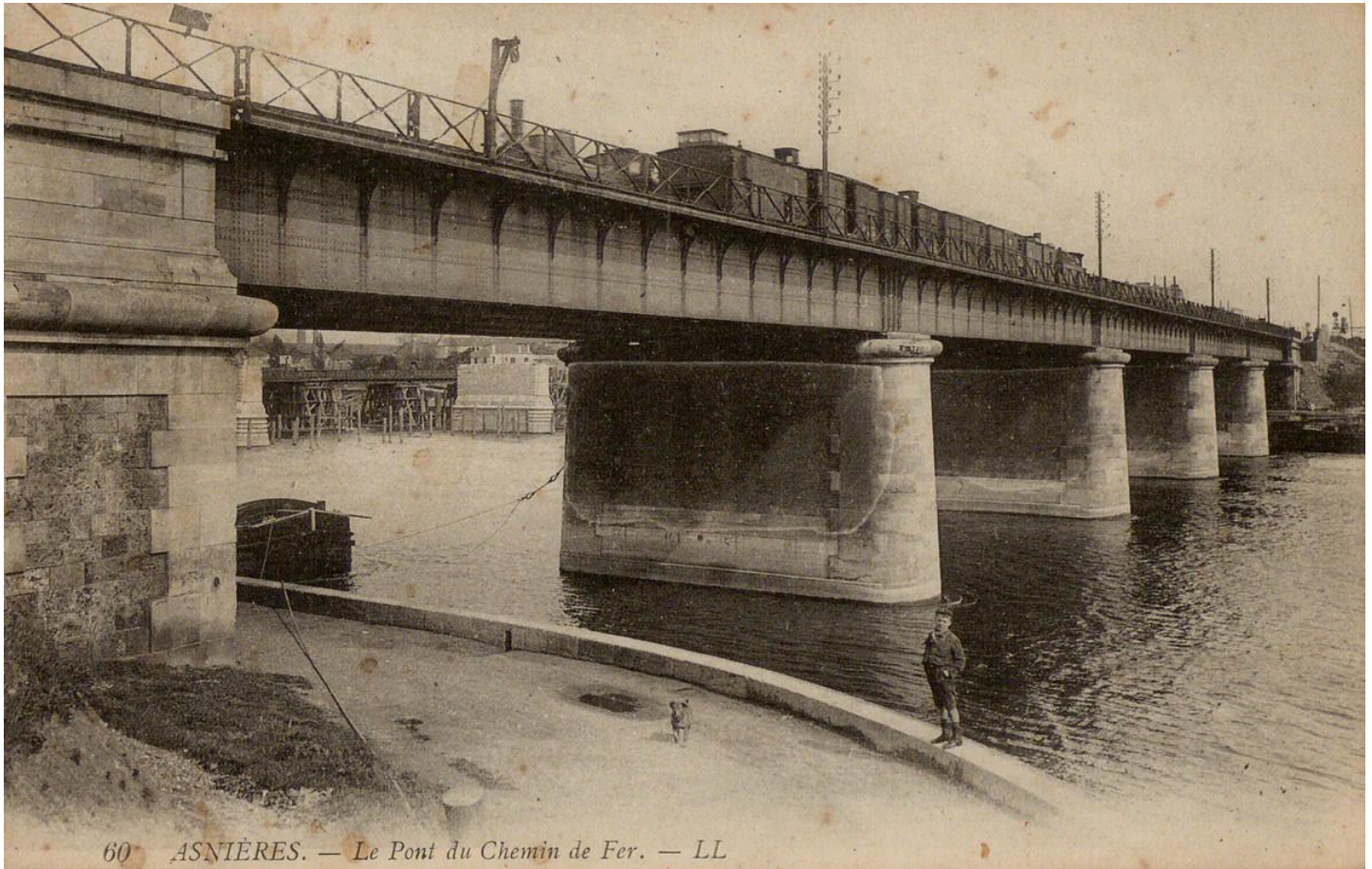
In the nineteenth century, Parisians were increasingly drawn to leisure activities along the Seine. New train stations and bridges made the suburbs of Paris more



Vincent van Gogh, *Bridges Across the Seine at Asnières* , 1887, Oil on canvas, 53.5×67 cms. Emil Bührle Collection, on long-term loan at the Kunsthau Zürich

accessible and as a consequence, more popular. And yet factories and their smoking chimneys were steadily gaining dominance on the horizon. Between 1881 and 1890 five ambitious artists – Van Gogh, Seurat, Signac, Bernard and Angrand – walked to the banks of the Seine to paint. With their easel positioned amongst the greenery they captured the radical contrasts that characterised the area, from day trippers enjoying various water sports to the burgeoning industry. They found new, modern motifs and developed their use of colour and painting techniques.

The works that Van Gogh made in the area around Asnières have been studied as a separate group for the first time, and compared with the work of four contemporaries who worked at the same locations. The exhibition unites seventy-five works, many of which have never before been on display at the Van Gogh Museum, or even in the Netherlands. Highlights are Van



Old postcard of Asnières - Railway Bridge, c. 1905

Gogh's *Fishing in Spring, Pont de Clichy (Asnières)* (1887), an oil sketch for *La Grande Jatte* (1883) by Georges Seurat and *Two Women on the Asnières Footbridge* (1887) by Emile Bernard.

In a letter to one of his sisters in late autumn 1887, Van Gogh made a revealing comment about his time painting outside of Paris. He said, "And when I painted landscape in Asnières this summer I saw more colour in it than before." Asnières inspired all five artists to refresh their use of colour and their painting technique. By leaving the city and heading into the suburbs they were able to add a new impulse to painting of their time □

Van Gogh Along the Seine runs at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam from 13th October until 14th January 2024





MOVING STRINGS

Ensemble

Photos by Shana BROWN

Imagine you are at an exhibition and suddenly the paintings and sculptures wake up and come to life. The colours, shapes and textures, the visual structures become three-dimensional through sound and movement, telling stories in the dimension of time and space. This is what a Moving Strings creation might resemble.

Moving Strings is a platform for the research of sound and movement, in creative as well as educational context, working together since 2018. They are a (non-hierarchical) creative performing ensemble, creating their own work and performing it in both conventional and non-conventional spaces. They collaborate with musicians, choreographers and artists and hold regular research sessions (*Play As We Are* and *Body and Sound*), workshops and creative laboratories and teach in both academic and non-academic institutes.





Gathering Fantasies HOMAGE TO OTHERNESS

It turns the exception into the rule and celebrates otherness; its acceptance, the challenges it poses, its failures and limitations.

A reality of differences through a performative sequence of four new works. Each piece is a manifestation of Amsterdam-based Moving Strings' extensive research into the (re)connection of sound and movement through the body. A combination of music and choreography where sound and movement influence each other, reflecting realities on the continuum between whole and its particles. From experimental sound practices to catchy tunes, lyrical songs and spiraling harmonies, folky melodies gone bad and repetitive rhythmic messages; we take on the mission to present a fluid way of being. With the act of listening as our premise, we meet the audience where our individual and collective othernesses might be a source of connection.

Body Groove by Alex Welch. This score explores the ways in which a musical pulse comes into being, how it is assimilated into the body and how it moves in space. A changing pattern creates a shared feeling, in both players and audience alike. There is propulsion and stillness, ebb and flow. Sounds moves and movement sounds as both players and audience are immersed in a constantly transforming texture.

A Wave Will Come by Irene Sorozábal frees the female voice from censorship and allows it to break out, with a scream, a sigh, a song and a whisper. Irene Sorozábal,

Painful truths and a history that cannot be escaped, alongside the freedom it holds
Spirals that subvert hierarchy
A groove that connects bodies
The uncensored female voice
Redefining, finding and fighting boundaries and borders

Gathering Fantasies HOMAGE TO OTHERNESS







a vocal soloist with a chorus of movement and string performers (as in Greek tragedy), invites the audience into a world which explores and challenges the physicality of emotional expression in European performance history

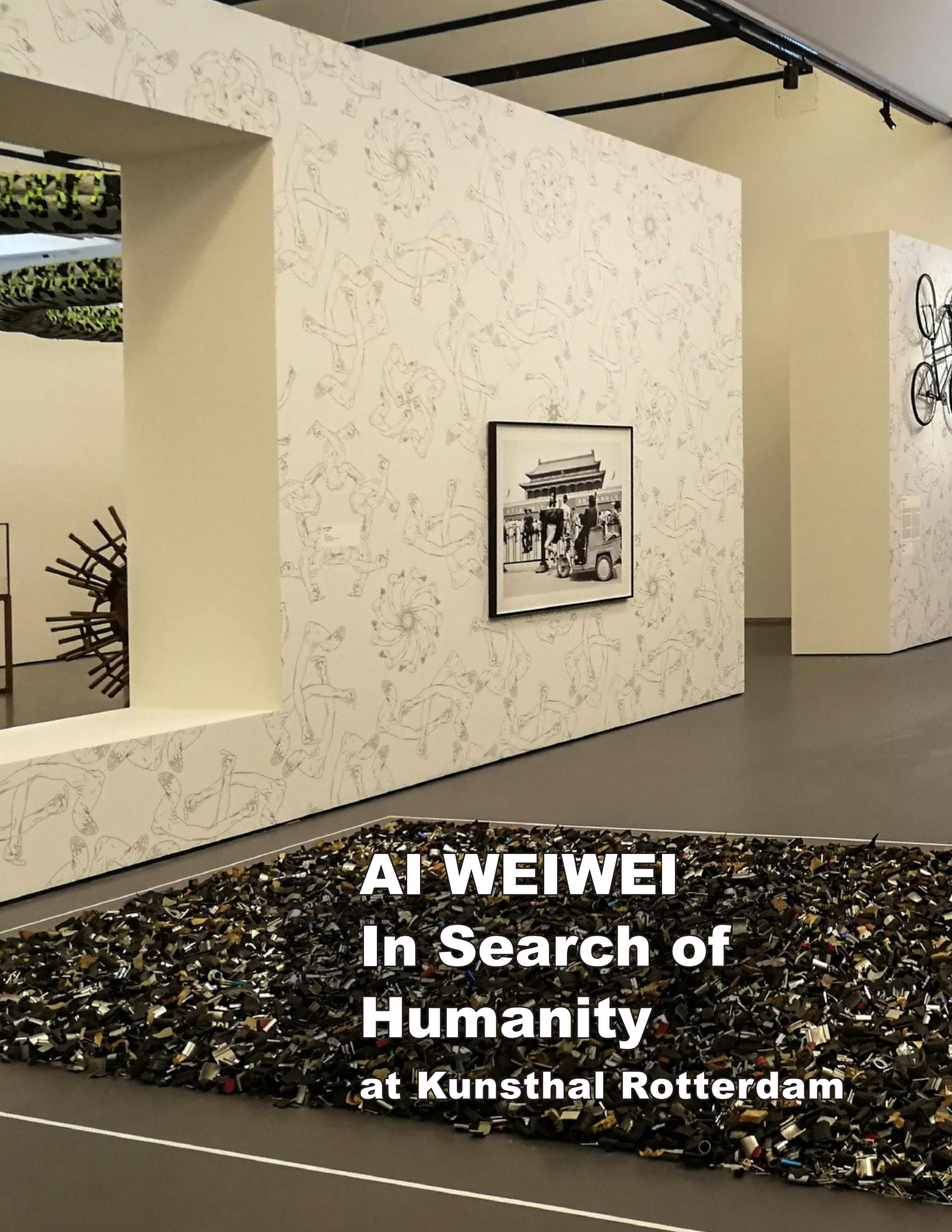
Maelstrom by choreographer Manuela Tessi, researches the concept of the spiral. With somatic choreography (from within the body), this work enters the depth of the spiral and explores the human body in relation to musical instruments. It's a layered research that subverts hierarchical structures and proposes another way of organizing our world.

And lastly, Maya Felixbrodt's *and Round*, contemplates the spiral and draws connections between the collective, personal and political.

Stagnant Water is about the spiral and about peace and love alongside loneliness while struggling.



at's trilogy, *Stagnant Water*, *Gathering Fantasies*, *Round*
the overarching theme of borders and boundaries. It
en the geographical and psychological, individual and
olitical, emotional and physical.
limited freedom, *Gathering Fantasies* is a naive dream
ken to protest and *Round and Round* refuses to put up
ggling with a sense of community, and vice versa □



AI WEIWEI
In Search of
Humanity
at Kunsthal Rotterdam



Text by Astrid BURCHARDT
Photos by Michael HASTED



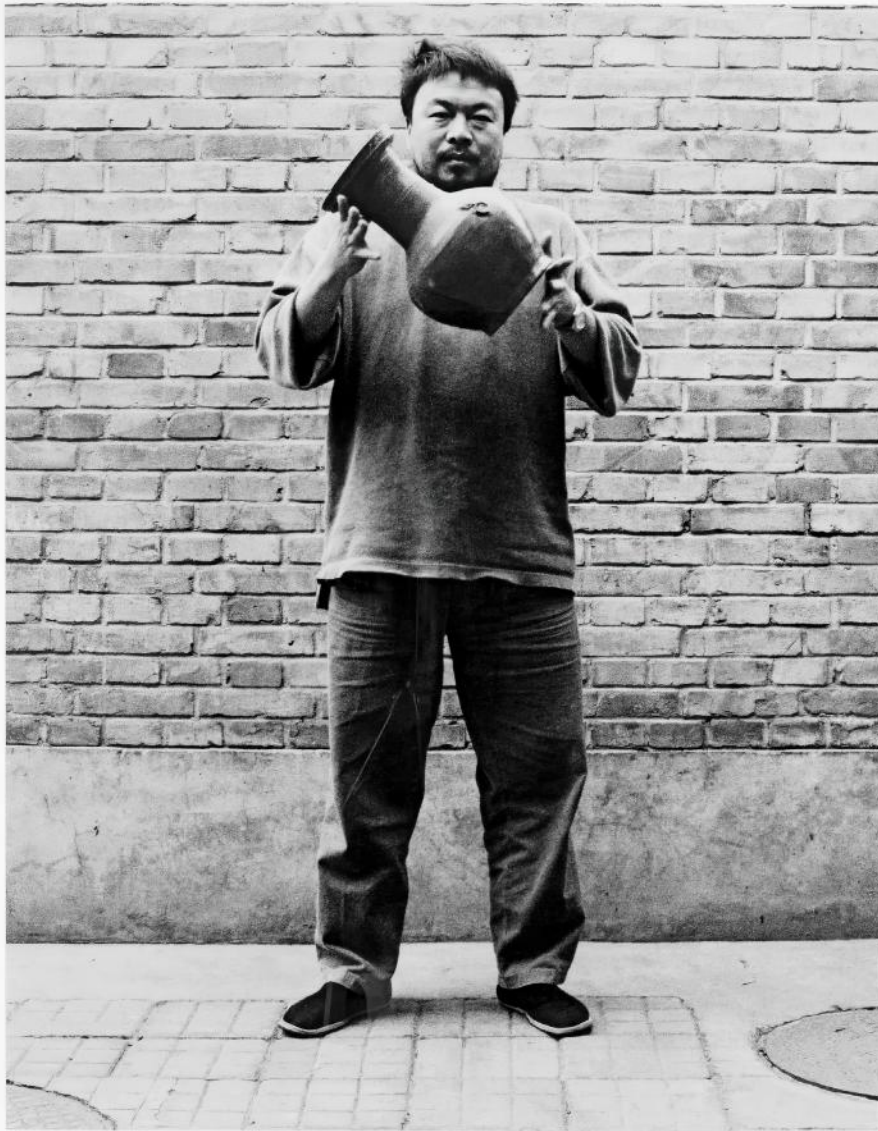
“He’s just an artist. What does he know?” a critic said of Ai Weiwei. “He’s all politics,” said the Tokyo critics. Both could be right but both are also wrong. Today he was in Rotterdam’s Kunsthall for the opening of *Ai Weiwei, in Search of Humanity*. He praised this new retrospective as one of the best ever mounted of his work. The exhibition is spectacular, not only in its enormity, but also in the thoughtful way it has been curated. He admitted that once he has sent a work into the world his relationship with it is over. Or it sits in a crate in his studio, now in Portugal, so the only times he will see it again is in a show such as this one at Kunsthall.

Ai Weiwei was his usual self on the podium – slightly self-deprecating, a little like one’s favourite Chinese uncle, but also forceful in his view of the world and humanity as a whole. At the beginning of the exhibition there are early works, unashamedly and heavily influenced by Dada and Marcel



Duchamp - everyday objects such as wooden stools lean onto each other assuming dynamic structures. A large sculpture made of the standard Chinese manufactured bicycle frames seemed at first to be a jolly rondo dance of bikes until one realises that the bikes themselves have neither saddle nor a handlebar – a bike will get you nowhere if you cannot steer it. The irony is obvious and refers to the state control in China. Some of the most striking works feature crushed bicycles, smashed to smithereens, presumably by tanks during the Tienanmen Square uprising.

And Ai Weiwei was the unfortunate recipient of state control more than once, at times brutally beaten and incarcerated. There are videos of his altercations with Chinese police. A series of huge black metal boxes with viewing slots recreate, in miniature, the nightmarish conditions in which he was held for close to three months. Physically and permanently intimidated in his cell by two guards

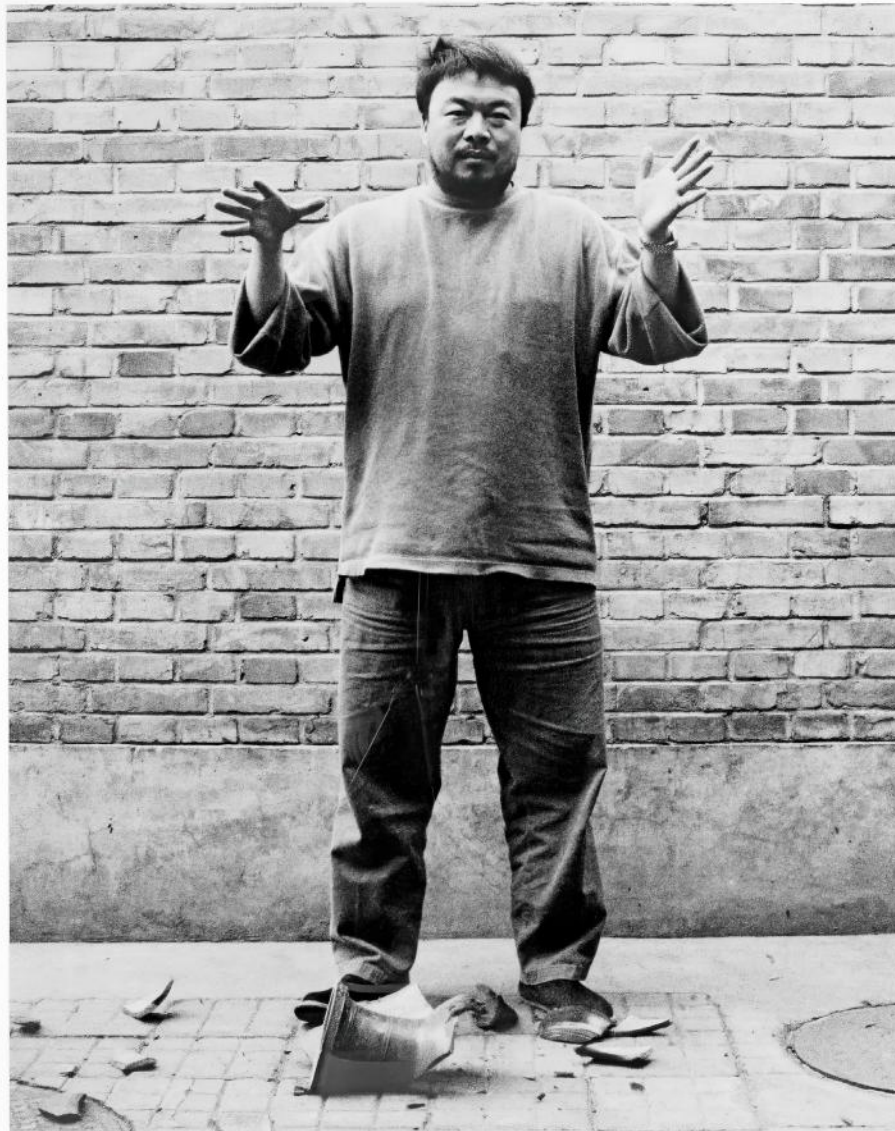


Ai Weiwei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1988

at all times he had to eat with them standing threateningly close; but not only that. They also stood within touching distance from him when he sat on the toilet. These scenarios are like something out of George Orwell's *1984*, only worse. There is also a life size reconstruction of the cell into which one can venture.

In one vast space a giant python floats under the ceiling, further on the remnants of palaces in the form of truncated feet of what must once have been small statues. In a space to themselves are the partially reimagined spectacular golden Zodiac animal heads that once graced the fountain of the Imperial Summer Palace. The animal heads are also shown as huge portraits made of Lego. Lego, in fear of Ai Weiwei's plan to use them for his political works, refused to deliver pieces to him as the company wanted to open a Lego Land in China. Ever the creative mind, he established Lego collection points and thousands were only too willing to contribute to his endeavour.

Ai Weiwei engages both with past and present of China, openly protesting against the destruction of the country's culture. He professes not to seek to make art for the sake of beauty, although everything he has created is in fact beautiful and executed to perfection. His is the visual language



1995, courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio © Ai Weiwei

of activism, of protest against injustice, the pernicious state control over information, denial of free speech to the Chinese population in particular and human rights abuses. In his book *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrow*, he movingly recounts, that as a result of the frenzy of the Cultural Revolution, his father was persecuted and banished, together with his young family, to 'Little Siberia' in North Eastern China, to live in an underground earth dug-out in inhumane conditions. This deprivation left an indelible mark on Ai Weiwei as he grew up. Today his long-suffering father is recognised as the national poet.

"I was a refugee in my own country", says Ai Weiwei. In recent years he has visited forty refugee camps. The the piece showing a pile of life jackets washed up on a beach reflects the plight of millions who flee their country in wartime.

There is much, much more to see and experience in this vast exhibition than one can possibly describe here – it simply must be seen. Absolutely not to be missed □

Ai Weiwei In Search of Humanity continues at the Kunsthal in Rotterdam until 3rd March 2024





FINE ART & TYPEWRITERS

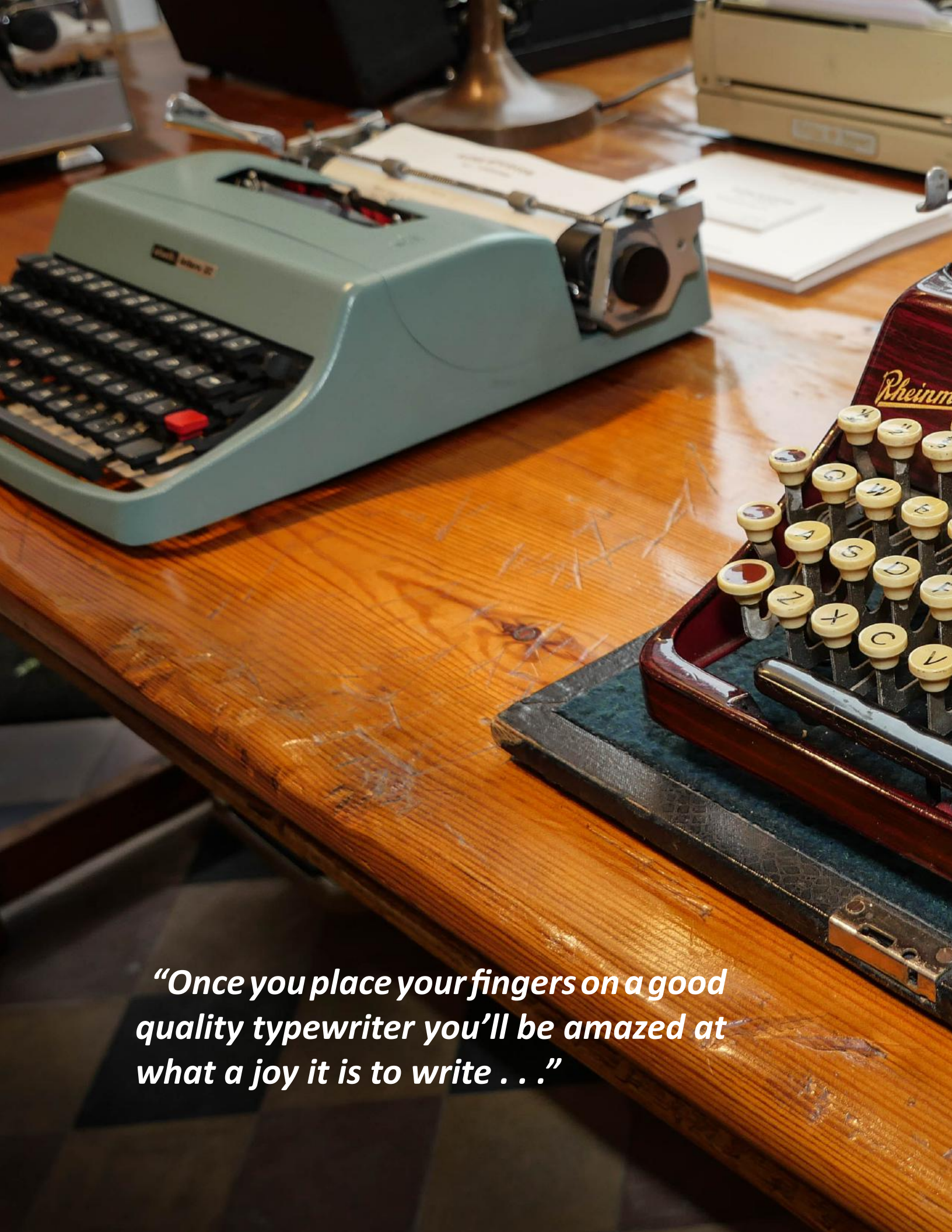
The ACME STUDIOS opens in The Hague

Text and photos by Michael HASTED

There is something attractive, almost magical about typewriters. It's the combination of a complex piece of mechanical engineering and the boundless opportunities it facilitates. The crisp new sheet of paper one has carefully inserted could easily be the first page of a literary masterpiece.

Although the computer is a much more efficient writing tool – easy editing, no more messy carbon paper or blotchy Tippex – a plastic keyboard will never give you the same tactile thrill as a clattering typewriter with a little bell at the end of each line.

I love typewriters and had my first one when I was about fifteen but I don't love them as much as Christopher Mullen who had his first machine when he was only seven. Somebody gave him an old folding Corona and he has been fascinated by them ever since.



“Once you place your fingers on a good quality typewriter you’ll be amazed at what a joy it is to write . . .”



Mullen recently opened the Acme Studios in The Hague, a gallery which combines fine visual art with an ever changing display of old Remingtons, Imperials, Olivettis, Royals, Underwoods, Adlers and . . . well the list goes. He has about three hundred of them with machines coming in and going out every day.

Mullen began his working career as a horseman and rodeo cowboy in Montana and then went on to work in the theatre and motion picture industry. Marrying a Dutch diplomat in 1997, they lived and raised a family in countries as varied as Pakistan, Burkina Faso and Cuba. While living in Ghana in 2014, Mullen founded the Zahara Gallery, exhibiting traditional and contemporary African art and worked as an advisor on West African art history to the Ghana National Museum.

A lifelong writer, editor and collector of typewriters, he began the Acme Type Machine Company in the Netherlands in 2016 to restore and sell vintage machines. Acme typewriters are now in the hands of more than a thousand writers and collectors around the world.

The display and variety of typewriters on show, mainly portables, is amazing and, according to Mullen, the best by far were made in Germany and Switzerland. He specializes in machines from the 1930s to the arrival of electric typewriters around 1970. "Those are the typewriters people want to use now," Mullen enthuses. "They are beautiful, they are utilitarian, but the thing about it is that they were designed so amazingly to facilitate your writing, to facilitate your production of words on the paper. Once you place your fingers on a good quality typewriter you'll be amazed at what a joy it is to write.





Christopher Mullen and Xantha Berger outside the Acme Studios in Frederikstraat in The Hague



Christopher Mullen at his desk, echoing the photograph facing him taken by Jan Banning in Boliva in 2005



“The thing about a typewriter that everyone responds to is that when you sit down in front of one and write something, when you take the paper out you are holding something tangible, with a computer at the end of a day’s work you have nothing, just a little icon on the screen.”

The picture side of the gallery will concentrate on non-western art with the emphasis on African and Cuban art in particular. Christopher loves the relationship between the beautiful mechanical objects on the table and beautiful visual contemporary art on the wall. The visual art exhibitions will be curated by Xantha Berger who is one of the foremost experts in The Netherlands on Cuban art. “We are probably going to do about four exhibitions a year and it’s going to be mainly paintings.”

The current exhibition *Bureaucratic Forms* is by well-known Dutch photographer Jan Banning who is showing a series of pictures of offices in third world countries, some of which, of course, feature a typewriter. But it also includes a series of “portraits” of an old office typewriter entitled *Typewriter Sentences*. Each typewriter has a piece of paper in it bearing a very strong statement about social injustice – for example, the document confirming the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. *Typewriter Sentences* disconnects the flesh-and-blood human beings on both sides of judicial decisions of life and death by interposing a mechanical typing machine and the black & white legal decree it produces. And, by this very act of disconnection, the emotional human stories are brought into profound focus.



The Acme Studios in The Hague is a quirky new gallery in the heart of one of the city's most fashionable districts. Christopher Mullen's enthusiasm and passion for old typewriters is infectious and the marriage between them and what promises to be a fascinating selection of fine art looks like a winning, albeit unusual, combination.

This show of Banning's photographs is not necessarily typical of what the gallery will exhibit in future but it makes a nice opening show because of the subject matter.

Jan Banning's *Bureaucratic Forms*, along with *Typewriter Sentences*, runs at the Acme Studios until 28th October 2023 □



Splendor Sonic Circus

**Splendor celebrated its tenth anniversary
at Theater Carré in Amsterdam. Anja HERRMANN
was there to join in the fun**

Photos by Foppe Schut



“Welcome to the Festival!” booms Mattijs van de Woerd, Splendor’s ringmaster.

At Amsterdam’s Theater Carré more than fifty performers invited us to fill every nook and cranny of the room amidst an ocean of electrifying sounds.

In celebration of Splendor’s 10th anniversary, musicians and dancers of the circus shook the stage (quite literally) as they took the audience on an adventurous journey through classical, jazz, Western, Eastern and even new experimental musical arrangements.

In one of the opening acts, Jonathan Alvarado singing *Luna Rossa* in Italian impressed us with his vocals. Further on, the chaotic *Circus Galop* played on piano by the three hands of Antoni Baryshevskyi, Daria van den Bercken and Gerard Bouwhuis was not only remarkable but also amusing as each player seemingly ‘fought’ for the spotlight. Meanwhile, the textural additions of the Vox Humana choir and the drumming of a tap dancer,

distinguishable among Splendor’s orchestra, left the audience in awe by all sounds woven within the music. Although not a stereotypical circus with clowns and lions, the versatility and energy of the performers successfully created the ambience of one.

Starting out with minor ‘laboratory’ experiments in a bathhouse on the de Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat of Amsterdam in 2013, Splendor has manifested itself into a riveting social hub for novel and unprecedented ideas.

Splendor furthermore proves to us that music heard in one performance does not need to be defined and anchored to one specific style or genre. From jazz, the world of pop, to the Arabic sounds of Jawa; from accordions to clarinets, musicians break the conventions of the music world and allow the audience to marvel at the unexpected.

Splendor also bases itself on the idea of independence from an appointed artistic director and the influence of any political institutions. It aims to thrive solely on the







As the show concluded, everyone came together to grab a drink and talk the night away . . .



on the creative ideas of each musician to determine the direction and atmosphere of the music, which no doubt was witnessed last night. The occasional implementation of experimental music combined with theatrical lighting, for instance, unexpectedly converted the eloquent royal theater into an underground techno nightclub. As performers also mingled among the audience during the show, the assumedly chic air of the Carré further felt delightfully informal and casual. Particularly when the ringmaster had no fear asking those seated in the front row, "what alcoholic drink have you [already] had this evening?"

In one evening Splendor not only constantly surprised us, but successfully breached the fourth wall between the untouchable performer on stage and the audience member as the silent and passive observer. As the show concluded, everyone came together to grab a drink and talk the night away.

Even if you may have certain assumptions before coming to the show, be prepared to be dazzled and encounter the unexpected. Splendor performs at least once a year and is highly recommended to everyone. They additionally organize workshops for all ages, so keep an eye open and don't miss out □



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