

# ARTSTALK

## *Colour Supplement*

Number 27

January 2025





# ARTS TALK

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We report on some excellent dance events - we review the Dutch National Ballet for the first time plus Poernima Gobardhan's *STRĪ*, *Heartcore Kantoor* by MAN || CO and an outstanding *Here We Live and Now* at Korzo in The Hague. Museum Prinsenhof in Delft is to close for two years for renovation/remodelling and we review the final show there. Also in Delft we visit the tiny Tobacco Museum. Before Christmas we took a trip along the canals of Amsterdam to see the *Festival of Light* and were in Rotterdam to see some Italian old master drawings. All this and more in the first *Colour Supplement* of 2025. Happy New Year!

Michael HASTED  
Publisher & Editor

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*Les Voyageurs* by Cédric le  
Borgne at Amsterdam Light  
Festival. Photo by and © Janus  
van den Eijnden



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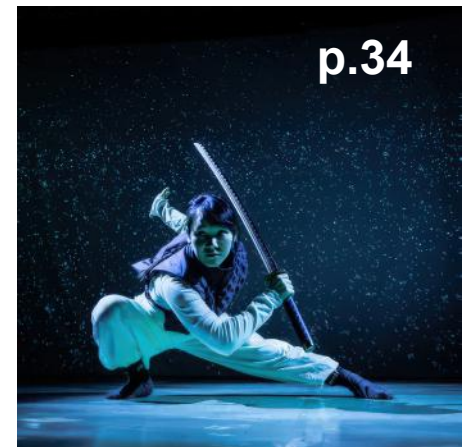
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# ernima Gobardhan ~ STREJ

Ī (trans. *woman*), The Hague-based choreographer  
ma Gobardhan shares an indescribable woman.  
only way to represent this woman is to name what the  
is not. It is soundless, numb, formless, odourless,  
ss and above all infinite . . .”







# STRĪ

**Photos by Camilla Greenwell**

**Text by Michael Hasted**

**B**ringing together different cultural art forms is often a very satisfying and enlightening business. If one is lucky or, more importantly, skilful, the result totals more than the sum of the parts. To mix contemporary dance, which is barely one hundred years old, with a style that is over two thousand years old, one would have thought, presents a challenge.

As a starting point Poernima Gobardhan uses Bharata Natyam, a dance form which originated in Tamil Nadu and expresses South Indian religious themes, spiritual ideas of Hinduism and Jainism. Originally known as Sadiraattam, and being renamed as late as 1932, it is the oldest classical dance form of the sub-continent.

STRĪ was in three very distinct parts, each presenting different aspects of the story. In the first part we could have been forgiven for not recognising the Indian connection. On a dimly lit, bare stage with swirling mist and an aggressive, unrelenting soundscape, there was not a sitar or tabla in evidence nor were there, to the untrained eye, many of the familiar Indian dance moves. However, it did forcefully set the scene and established a context for what was to come. In the dim light we rarely caught sight of the dancers' faces, giving the impression women were being represented as a whole rather than individuals. The dramatic climax had the three dancers lying on top of each other under a single spotlight conjuring up images of a funeral pyre.

For the second part we were in more familiar territory with the soundscape, created by Jorg Schellekens and Vidwan SV Giridhar, now dominated by mridangam and the presence of recognisable foot-stamping and finger gestures reminded us that this was very much an Indian piece. Throughout the performance a lot of back-lighting was used to produce very dramatic silhouette effects. In fact, the lighting by Albert Tulling contributed a great deal to the production, setting mood and ambiance.

Even with the mridangam/percussion-based soundscape the middle section was still very assertive, but with the start of the final chapter we realised we would be sailing much calmer waters. In the darkness the dancers had let their hair down and during the silence that ensued they began gently humming and in the resolution to the piece, with them quietly sitting together, a sort of serenity had been achieved □





MUSEUM  
PRINSENHOF  
DELFT

ST AGATHA PL



# ALL CHANGE AT PRINSENHOF IN DELFT

**This month sees the start of a two year major renovation and redevelopment programme at this important historic building**

**M**useum Prinsenhof Delft is arguably the most important building in The Netherlands. It was here on 10th July 1584 that Prince William of Orange was assassinated, an event which led directly to the formation of the Dutch state.

On Sunday, 5th January the doors will close for two years while the building undergoes a major renovation and renewal in order to preserve the monumental monastery building and the collection for future generations. It will re-open to the public in 2027 when the building will be a more open, accessible, sustainable and hospitable museum where everyone is welcome.

In the last month before Prinsenhof closes the museum has been organising a special programme. During the final weekend, the 4th and 5th of January, there will be flash tours all day long. On the Saturday visitors can take a tour of the 'old museum' for the very last time with an explanation of the renovation and the following day the museum will present a selection of the public's favourites. Also on the Saturday the musical duo Friendly Stepfathers will perform, paying tribute to William of Orange and his daughter Emilia. The successful workshop *Painting Delft Blue* can also be followed in the studio.

At 10.30 on Monday, 6th January, Museum Prinsenhof Delft and the city's mayor, Marja van Bijsterveldt will close the doors of the museum and hand the keys over to the builders.





Statue of Saint Geertruyt van Oosten (Gertrude of Delft) by Arie Teeuwisse which stands outside the entrance to Prinsenhof, next to the Oude Kerk in Delft.





Photo by Michael Hasted









The Prinsenhof is typical of many older museums in the Netherlands in that the building itself is worth seeing in its own right not least because it has the distinction of being the court of William of Orange but also where he was assassinated. Not only is there a plaque to mark the spot but the bullet holes are still in the wall.

The building re-opened after a major refurbishment in 2014 and is a very fine museum, housing mainly Dutch paintings alongside some rare pieces of blue and white Delft pottery and lots more beside. The myriad rooms and halls, linked by narrow passages and twisting stone staircases, house dozens of portraits, both single and groups of Dutch royalty, which has strong links to the city as well as many past eminent burghers of Delft. There are also scenes depicting everyday life with many showing the fateful gunpowder explosion, known as the Thunderclap, which severely damaged the city on 12th October 1654. It is a pity the museum doesn't have a painting by Vermeer, Delft's most famous son.

Next to the museum is a beautiful tranquil garden which can be seen from many of the building's many leaded windows. It also provides a place to sit in the sun and rest weary feet. There are plans to restructure this garden along with Prinsenhof itself □





*Les Voyageurs* by Cédric le Borgne





# Rituals

## AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL

Photos by  
**Janus VAN DEN EIJDEN**





*Mermaid's Song* by Flo Arnold





Amsterdam Light Festival is a tradition that annually lights up the capital during the darkest months of the year. The thirteenth edition of this leading international light art festival runs until 19th January. The theme is *Rituals* with twenty-seven works of art in beautiful, photogenic locations, connecting and enriching residents and visitors in the anniversary year of *Amsterdam750*.





*Solstice* by Studio Vertigo



*Light adds something mystical  
and sacred to a ritual like no other  
element can. And rituals connect,  
bring people together . . .*







*Spoonful* by Kumquat Lab



The thirteenth edition of the Amsterdam Light Festival is special because it coincides with the 750th anniversary of Amsterdam. For a whole year, residents, districts, companies, (cultural) institutions and institutes celebrate and commemorate the unique character of the city. And what better way to add sparkle to this festival than with a ritual? With light, with art, with each other. That is why the theme of this festival edition is *Rituals*. Rituals are connected to transformations: from past to future, to the transition of seasons, to the step from youth to adulthood. Light often plays an important role in this. Fireworks herald the New Year, burning candles illuminate religious rituals, mid-summer fires welcome the solstice. Light adds something mystical and sacred to a ritual like no other element can. And rituals connect, bring people together.

Dutch and international artists have been inspired by the festival theme. A small selection: the Brit Julian Opie highlights walking as a ritual to clear the head with his playful artwork *Walking in Amsterdam*; the Spaniard Javier Riera evokes a meditative, concentrated state with a slow-motion light projection; the South Korean Soyoun Kim pays tribute to the Dutch seasonal ritual of skating on frozen waters with his *Ice Master House*; *Mermaid's Song* by the French Flo Arnold reminds us how close the city and port are to the ocean; Studio OSSO depicts the daily busy cycling ritual in the city with *Rush Hour*; and Wilhelmusvlug pays tribute to all flower rituals in the world with the light artwork *In Bloom*.

By boat or on foot you can admire the new light artworks, specially made for the festival along the almost seven kilometre long route. With the special festival app you get access to information about the route, an audio tour, background information about the artworks and much more. Various light artworks have been set up especially for the walkers. And don't forget to make a stopover during the walk in the festival heart Light Garden in the Hoftuin. New this year is the culinary walk Foodwalk, where visitors can pick up snacks and drinks from participating catering establishments during the walk.

A unique way to experience the light art is from the water, sailing along the canals. This can be done with a tour boat, an open boat, with a private tour arranged according to your wishes or in your own boat with the Festival app. A tour passing all the works of art takes about 75 minutes.






***Geometries to inhabit time*** by Javier Riera



The festival organizes two special projects. In the educational project, more than 1,100 students from all over Amsterdam, together with artist Jeroen Alexander Meijer, create the light artwork *Mind Bridges*, which calls on people to pay more attention to each other and the world around us. In this project, the students learn more about art and technology, light and citizenship. At the end of the workshops, the students visit the festival with their parents/guardians to admire their artwork. With the Golden Light Tour, children from the educational project provide hundreds of elderly people with a special, unforgettable evening □







# THE NUTCRACKER & THE MOUSE KING

Dutch National Ballet's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* returned at Christmas. Astrid van LEEUWEN spoke to choreographer Ted BRANDSEN

Production photos by Hans Gerritsen

SHOWCASING the whole spectrum of dance with plenty of scope for female choreographers, the Dutch National Ballet shows the world how 29 nationalities succeed in connecting people through the language of dance. For director Ted Brandsen, these are the key points in the 2024 – 2025 season. “When a dancer jumps high, you jump along with them, as it were. Dance is all about feeling – and that feeling is what connects us.”







*"We're further pushing the boundaries of what ballet can be" Ted Brandson*





Existing works versus new ones, large versus small-scale, cater for the general public or the adventurous - in our programming we're always searching for a good balance between all these genres and tastes", says Ted Brandsen. "This season, for example, we're reviving two of our biggest audience favourites – *Don Quichote* and *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* – but we're also presenting a lot of premieres. Masterpieces by leading choreographers like Hans van Manen, David Dawson and Alexei Ratmanský, and George Balanchine's dazzling jewel triptych *Jewels*, stand alongside brand new, exciting creations by young, promising makers. And this season, we're showing once again that we're pushing the boundaries of what ballet can be."

An important focus will therefore lie on the female choreographer this season, with a number of new names making their debut with the company in The Netherlands. "Like the American choreographer Rena Butler, a sparkling, extraordinarily energetic young maker who's already developed her own distinctive voice. And Helen Pickett, another American, who's made a deep impression on me with her work, as she's one of the most interesting storytellers in dance at the moment. Just like me, she's fascinated by strong women, and in her new, full-length production for our company, she delves into the mind of one of Shakespeare's most mysterious creations: the power-hungry Lady Macbeth."

In their work, both women – Butler and Pickett – show a clear response to developments in society today. The same applies to the German choreographer Sasha Waltz, who is returning to Amsterdam this season with *In C*. The production will not only be danced by Dutch National Ballet, but also – as part of Amsterdam's 750th anniversary celebrations – by residents of all seven districts of the capital city. Brandsen says, "Through this work, which is now being performed by people all over the world, Waltz shows how we can share the world with one another, and how we can all feel connected through dance."

At this time, when tensions in our country are high and intolerance is on the rise, Brandsen wants to emphasise the importance of that connectedness. "Dutch National Opera & Ballet is a multicultural, international microcosm, numbering over six hundred staff and nearly thirty nationalities among the dancers alone. We have dancers from Ukraine who've fled the war, we have dancers from Russia who felt forced to leave their home due to the political course their country was taking, and we have dancers who've grown up in the poorest circumstances and have made a future



for themselves through ballet. And all those dancers work every day with the same goal and with enormous dedication on productions that allow us – and our audience – to rise above ourselves.”

Whether it’s a famous ballet classic like *Don Quichote* or a colourful family spectacle like *How Anansi Freed the Stories of the World*, Ted Brandsen says that dance has the power to bring together people from all backgrounds – both on and off the stage. “No words are necessary for dance; it speaks the language of the body. Precisely at a time when everyone seems to be retreating to their own ‘island’, it’s even more important to celebrate the connecting power of dance – as a language we all understand, and as something that can touch us all.” □











Fra Bartolommeo (Bartolomeo-Domenico di Paolo del Fattorino, Baccio della Porta). *Two studies for angels, related to the one in the central panel of the 'Billi altarpiece'* (Florence, Galleria Palatina). circa 1514-1516. Collection Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. On loan from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Foundation (former Koenigs collection).



# SECRETS *of* ITALIAN DRAWINGS of the Renaissance

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen's Depot in Rotterdam is showcasing *Secrets of Italian Drawings* this winter. This interactive exhibition features a wealth of drawings from the Italian Renaissance. Almost half of these drawings will be on display for the very first time in Boijmans' history. Imagine seeing works in chalk or ink up close by Fra Bartolommeo, Palma Giovane, Tintoretto and many more Italian masters. What's even more special: the visitor can get in on the action themselves - investigate and become a true connoisseur!



The Renaissance drawings are a prominent part of the collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Now they're being showcased to the public again after a period of research. In the spirit of a true workspace – which the Depot is *par excellence* – you can view the various drawings in great detail. How to know if an artist is left-handed or right-handed? Or discover when something is a forgery?

This exhibition shows that during the time of the Renaissance, the Italy we know today didn't yet exist. Inside that big boot was a patchwork of different regions, each with its own administration and identity. This is evident in the drawings on display in the Depot. So how do you distinguish between the cities and regions? What different working methods did artists use? How do you recognise that Tintoretto more or less stands synonymous with Venice, and that Fra Bartolommeo is forever ingrained with Florence?

The Renaissance – which took place roughly between 1400 and 1600 AD – was a period in which mankind turned to look again at classical antiquity. Its influence on art was simply earth-shattering: the Renaissance turned the development of art completely upside down. It's a historical period that continues to fascinate. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen owns a rich collection of drawings from this period, derived from all the prominent Italian regions of that time.

Parallel to *Secrets of Italian Drawings* is an exhibition held at the Fondation Custodia in Paris until 12th January. This exhibition also features a large number of Italian drawings from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen collection. Furthermore, a unique catalogue has been published that delves deeper into the details of Italian drawings. This catalogue is exclusively for sale at The Depot shop □

*Secrets of Italian Drawings* runs until 23rd March at The Depot of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.





Palma Giovane (Jacopo Negretti). *Study for a kneeling man*. circa 1576-1581. Collection Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. On loan from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Foundation (former Koenigs collection)





Charlie Skuy



# HERE WE LIVE & NOW

**The festival takes place each December at Korzo Theater in The Hague showcasing the work of aspiring young choreographers. Here are the three that participated in 2024 . . .**

**C**harlie Skuy is a Canadian choreographer and artist living in the Netherlands. In 2018, he joined Nederlands Dans Theater and while dancing full-time he created numerous works for the company's choreographic platform. His work has won several awards, including the Copenhagen International Choreography Competition. For his duet *Kevin*, he won the Conny Janssen Danst Partner Award at the RIDCC 2023.

Charlie has also directed and produced a large number of dance films. Some of them have recently been awarded and screened at *CINEDANS '23* and the *Dutch Dance Days*.

In 2023 he created a full-length work for 3 dancers at Origen Festival (Switzerland), and in 2024 he created a new work for Conny Janssen Danst.

Charlie's passion for films, dance theatre, visual arts and dream logic (David Lynch) opens up different worlds and images in which he explores his relationship with fear, dissonance and age.





ANTIBODIES by Constantin Trommlitz





Constantin Trommlitz (1996) is a German dancer, choreographer and filmmaker. His background in breakdance continues to have a significant influence on his work as a choreographer and filmmaker. In the Netherlands he danced with companies such as Danstheater AYA and ISH Collective. His friendship with Zino Schat – founder of Fractal Collective – led to a lot of joint work, both in dance performances and in film work. Since 2022, Constantin has been the in-house maker at Korzo.

During his career, Constantin has discovered that he does not have to separate his dance and film knowledge, but that they can be combined perfectly. In his work, he tries to merge dance and film in unconventional ways, in order to tell personal stories.





RONIN 0 by Yukiko Masui





**Y**ukiko Masui has received a choreography award from DanceXchange and an Akram Khan mentoring Award from Sky Arts and is a Work Place Artist at The Place. Masui is originally from Tokyo, Japan. She began her education in Hip Hop, ballroom and Latin where she developed her passion for dance and movement. She moved to London to train in Contemporary Dance, where she completed her MA as part of Transitions Dance Company.

Masui has worked as a choreographer and motion director in theatre, including *Miss Julie* at Southwark Playhouse, RTE's *Toy Show the Musical* at Dublin Convention Centre, *A Little Night Music* in Story House, *Say Yes to Tess*, Leeds Playhouse, *Guy, a New Musical* in The Bunker, *Taming of the Shrew* for Two Gents and *Urine Town* at the London College of Music.

Masui is a co-founder of SAY, who are associate artists with DanceEast and have toured internationally with their own show, *The Album*. Most recently, they were part of the creative team as motion directors for *Romeo and Juliet*, starring Tom Holland at the Duke of York's Theatre and *The Effect*, directed by Jamie Lloyd, at the National Theatre in London and The Shed in New York □





*Snuff Bottles*

# TOBACCO HISTORY MUSEUM, DELFT

Louis Bracco Gartner and his wife have turned their old tobacconist shop into a shrine to the deadly weed . . .

Photos and text by Michael HASTED



# *Snuiftabak*











Hidden away in a small back street away from the city's old town is one of Delft's hidden gems. To glorify the use and promotion of tobacco in this day and age may seem very unPC but tobacco is like beer – there was a time when everybody used it and it therefore presents a very edifying reflection of society.

The tiny Tabakshistorisch Museum is privately owned and run by Louis Bracco Gartner and his wife in what was formerly the family's tobacconist shop which was first established in 1941.

Now in its twentieth year, the small museum is jam-packed with pipes, tobacco tins, ashtrays, point-of-sale material of all sorts, snuff boxes and much more besides, dating back to the seventeenth century. There are fascinating items like a model of a small dog pieced together from cut-up Players cigarette packets made by shot-down British airmen in hiding during the war. There are exquisite, intricately carved ivory and meerschaum pipes and hundreds of throw-away clay pipes. If you were rich or important enough you could even have your clay pipes personalised with your portrait sculpted onto the bowl. One of the proprietors is always on hand to explain things or to reveal exhibits which are normally in drawers, out of sight.

The only problem is that the museum is not normally open but Mr Gartner or his wife will always be happy to open up for you if you contact them in advance. Whether you are, or were, a smoker or not, this is a fascinating and beautiful collection of items from around the world and is as much a reflection of the human condition as any museum you will see anywhere. Highly recommended and well worth a phone call or email and a short detour from the normal well-trodden tourist routes. Entrance is free but contributions to its upkeep are always welcome □







MAN || CO presents

# HEARTCORE KANTOOR



A theatrical dance performance about the absurd laws of a macho office culture and the playful search for more freedom of movement

Text by Rosina LUI

Photos by Bart Grietens









What do lifeless plants, fluorescent water dispensers, and sterile long tables have in common? They can all be found in an office. This is the set design in which the four members of MAN || CO present *Heartcore Kantoor*, (*Heartcore Office*) a physical theatre piece that takes a humorous jab at corporate culture. The performance examines underlying social relations and peculiar office phenomena through meticulous choreography, dynamic sound design, and visual symbolism, inviting us to question: have we normalised the inhuman?







Power, fame, success” – the words chanted repeatedly during a scene where a performer attempts to claim power over the collective – are motivators that exist within every individual in a capitalistic society, though few would openly admit it. From this perspective, the performance illustrates the social structure within the organism of an office: how do individuals behave within the panopticon? How is the pretence of power maintained through machismo? What happens when collective obedience is disrupted?

These seemingly weighty questions are conveyed through a playful comedic quality. This was cohesively shaped by the sharp coordination between the performers, minimal but essential monologues, and costume design that not only supported distinctive characterisation but was also brilliantly utilised as props.

The solos of each performer were particularly effective in highlighting different aspects of office culture and served to zoom in on the individual mentality within the robotically managed workplace. Simultaneously, these personalised moments were reflective of the culture they inhabit and stood as a social commentary in their own right.

While the solos of each performer were spectacular, I would have appreciated more elaboration on the transitions within the arcs of character development. The burst of individuality in each character is already strong, but strengthening the delivery of how such moments emerge would heighten the build-up of tension even further.

Ultimately, *Heartcore Kantoor* breaks the confines of the office through play. Beyond the well-crafted synthesis between performers, the use of symbolism through colours and shapes ties everything together. The cold blues, flashing lights, and angular set at the beginning are replaced by warm oranges, dim smoke, and rolling balls at the end. Gliding forward atop yoga balls, the women of MAN || CO demonstrate a joyful resistance against uniformity □

*Heartcore Kantoor* is on tour throughout The Netherlands until 28th March



# Not Only, But Also

A random selection of events taking place this month in the Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague area and places nearby or in between



3rd January - 28th March

**HEARTCORE KANTOOR by MAN || CO**

on tour



4th & 5th January

**Pre-closure events at  
MUSEUM PRINSENHOF**

in Delft



Until 5th January

**THE LOST MUSEUM**

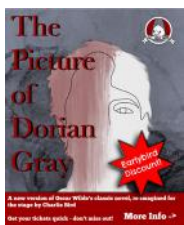
at Mauritshuis in The Hague



10th & 11th January

**LISZT UTRECHT Semi-Finals**

at TivoliVredenburg



10th – 26th January

**THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY**

in Leiden, Amsterdam & The Hague





15th January - 28th February

### **MIRRORS**

in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Utrecht  
and more



Until 19th January

### **AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL**

on the city's canals



Until 19th January

### **MAARTEN VAN HEEMSKERCK**

in Haarlem and Alkmaar



Until 26th January

### **VIVE L'IMPRESSIONNISME!**

Masterpieces from Dutch Collections

at Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam



30th January - 9th February

### **INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM**

Various locations

**JOAN  
MIRO**  
SCULPTURES



Until 5th March

### **JOAN MIRÓ - SCULPTURES**

at Museum Beelden aan Zee  
in The Hague/Scheveningen



# ARTS TALK

## Radio

THE ARTS IN HOLLAND

NEWS, REVIEWS, PREVIEWS & INTERVIEWS

