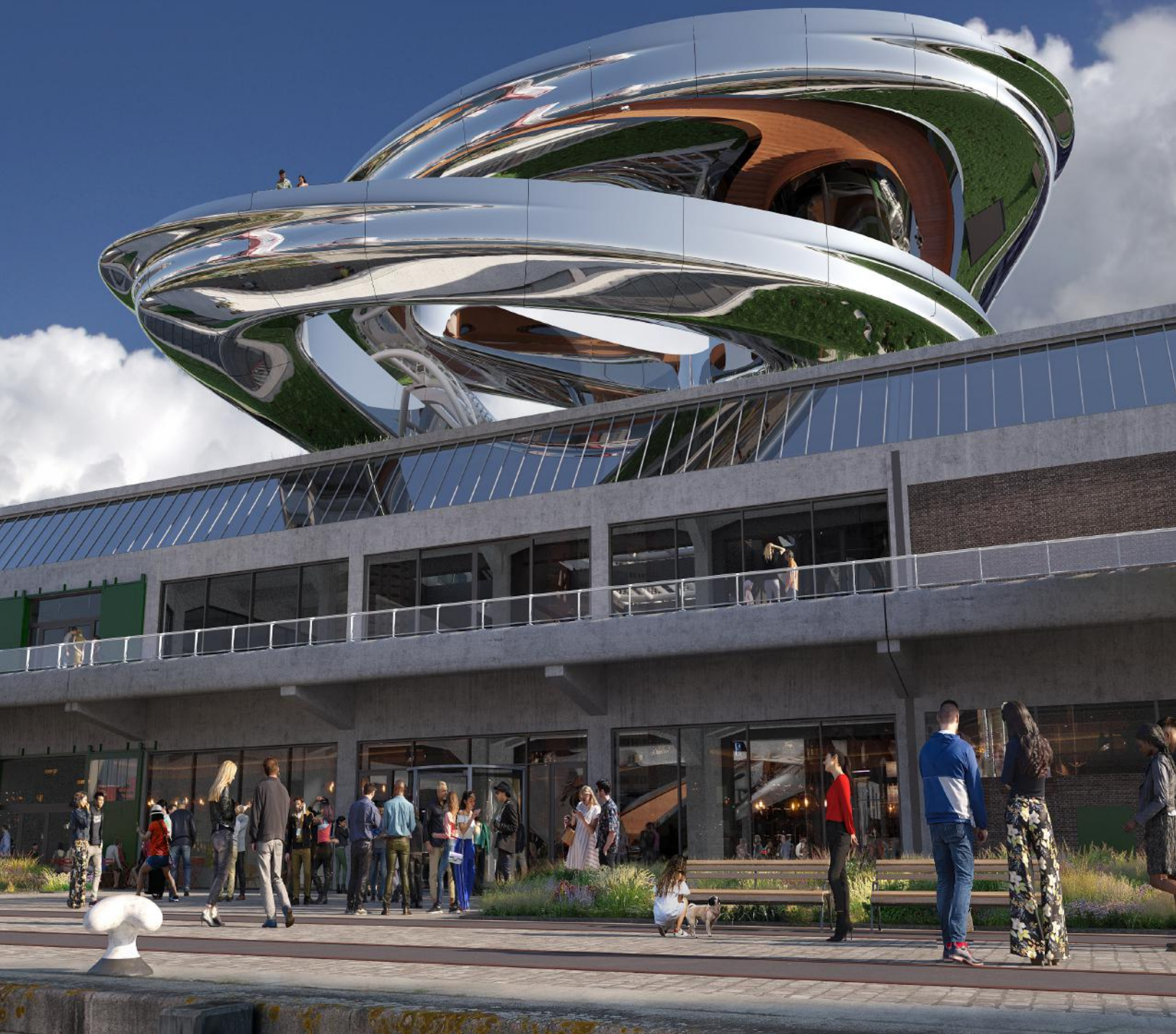


ARTS TALK

Colour Supplement

Number 16

February 2024



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A rich and varied collection of stories this month including dance, African art, religious art in the form of priest's garb as well as a healthy dose of hi-tech. The emphasis is on dance with pieces on two spectacular productions, one from Scapino Ballet Rotterdam and the other from Nicole Beutler Projects who brought us the second part of its *Rituals of Transformation* trilogy. But perhaps the most exciting is the return of celebrated British director Simon McBurney whose second joint venture with Nederlands Dans Theater will be presented in the Holland Dance Festival.

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with *Tornado* by Ma Yansong of MAD
Architects

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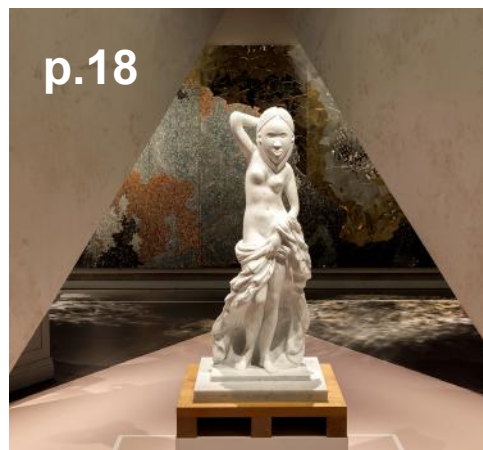
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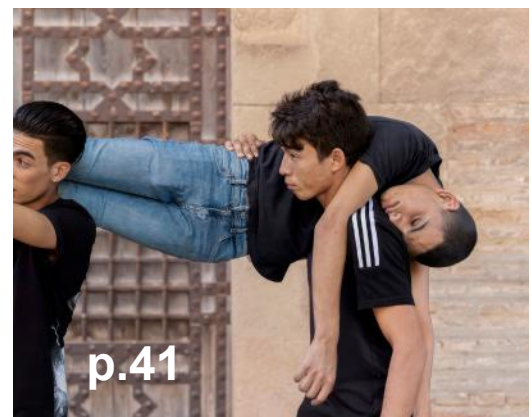
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Scapino Ballet's

PINOCCHIO EFFECT

Michael HASTED

Photos by Bart GRIETEN







What I miss most since leaving the UK for Holland seven years ago is the theatre – plays, both comedy and drama, and at this time of year I crave for the annual Christmas ritual of going to a pantomime. I have been involved in several in my time, not least being the back end of a pantomime horse in *Humpty Dumpty* – but I digress.

What I like about Scapino, and I have said this before, is that their productions are dramatic, dramatic in the sense that they are almost like danced plays, they have plots, linear story lines, and scenery rather than a vast black box stage. So it is entirely fitting that their offering over this festive season is almost like a pantomime, and as we know, all children's stories must ultimately have a moral.

The moral to *Pinocchio Effect* is that lying is bad and that no good will come of it. The title comes from the story of Pinocchio, a wooden puppet who comes to life and whose nose grows every time he tells a fib. And in modern criminal profiling touching the nose is a certain sign that someone is lying - which seems a bit unfair on people who have a cold or a persistent itch.

Apart from lying being morally wrong it is also bloody complicated, trying to remember the details of events that have never happened. As Sir Walter Scott famously said in his 1808 novel *Marmion*, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave . . . when first we practice to deceive" and this is well demonstrated by the chaotic family life in the middle and main section of *Pinocchio Effect*.

But lies are all around us. Good theatre of any kind, dance or drama, is about truth. Like any great art it gives us an insight into the human condition. The irony is that theatre itself is a lie. It deals in illusion – the characters are not real people but actors pretending to be them. The room in which they speak is not a real room but flimsy scenery held together by nails and bits of rope. It's not real sunshine but a strategically placed spotlight. Nothing we see on stage is real, it's all deception. And don't get me started on politics.

But back to *Pinocchio Effect*. What is perhaps surprising is the amount of spoken word and how much the production is dependent on it. The first scene sees the performers as men in suits addressing the audience from behind a table on the subject of rules. It is left to the audience to spot the real, the fake or the simply ridiculous. This pastiche is all spoken word, in Dutch, with only a limited amount of dance or movement.

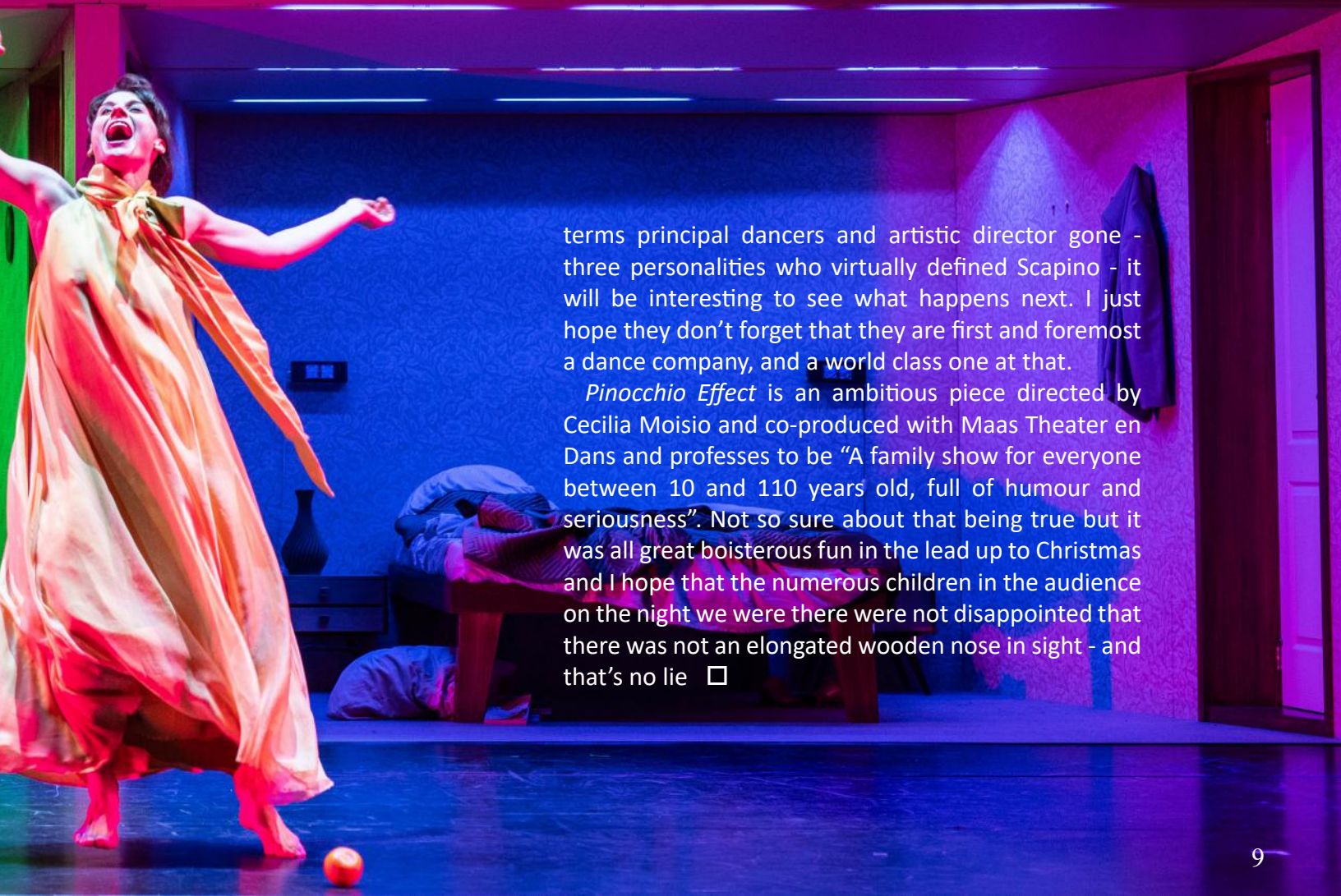
The main body of the piece takes place in a rather dreary family home – a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom and an entrance hall. The rooms are lined up across the stage with a large projection screen above which occasionally rises to reveal another playing area. The dancers all live together as one family each with their own secret compartments. They try to manipulate each other or escape reality by lying to each other. Slowly their lies and truths come to light revealing their true nature, all the time observed by a mysterious caped figure, all in black, who hovers menacingly in the background.

This middle sequence had a very 1950s feel to it, especially the mother's fantasy/dream sequence. This entailed five girl dancers with bouffant hair styles in high heels and tight skirts wearing dark-glasses and chiffon headscarves. They were like characters from an old American television advert for domestic cleaning products or a breakfast cereal. It was very much like a specialty act in a pantomime, as was the appearance of the Ugly Sisters, but without their costumes. The two dancers wearing fat naked men suits, complete with generous soft dangly bits perhaps represented the most memorable moment of the show.

The final scene sees Scapino reverting to what they do best – dance. A long dining table is set for dinner which served as the setting for the final dénouement of this extraordinary piece of theatre.

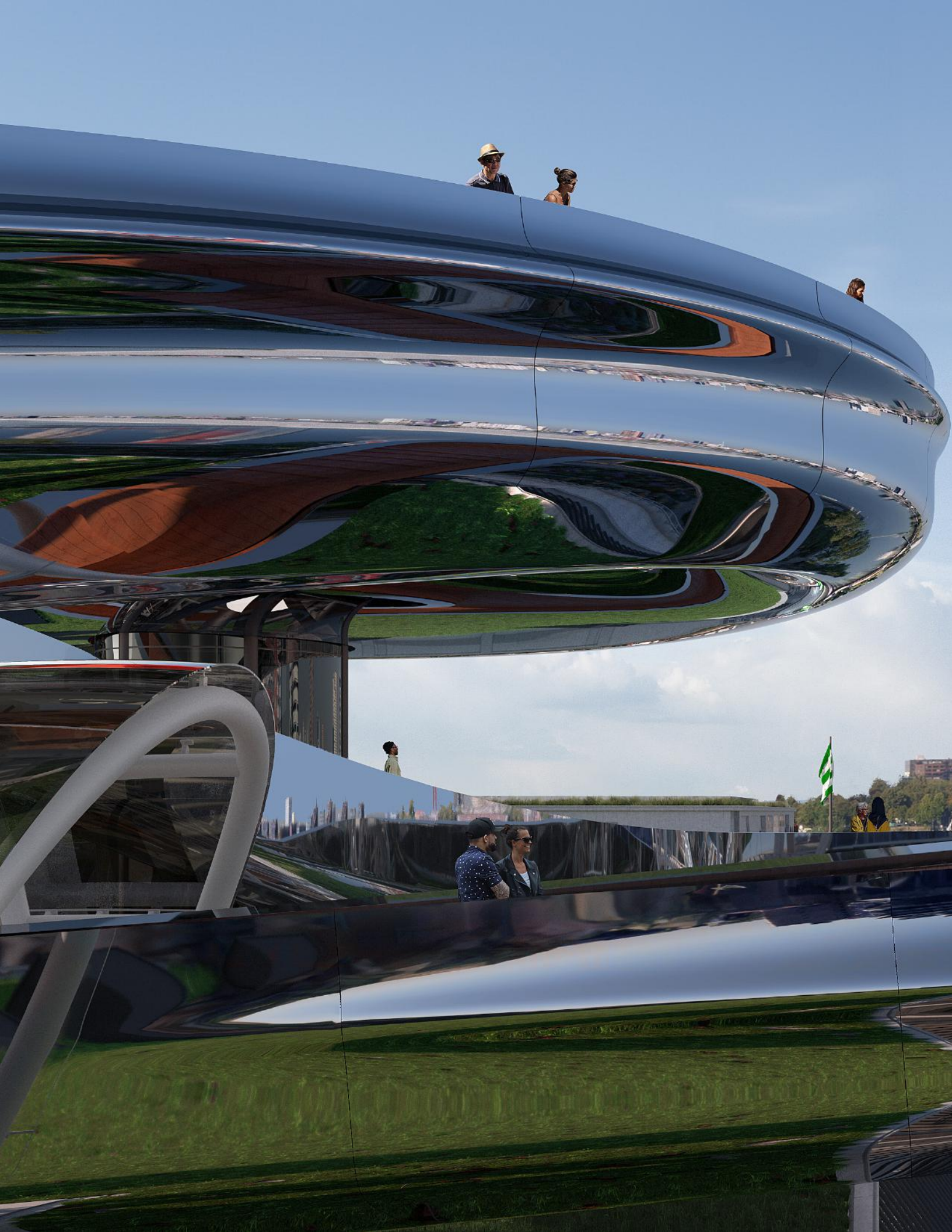
With *Pinocchio Effect*, and their previous production which involved opera, Scapino seems to be venturing into new, collaborative territory. With their two long-





terms principal dancers and artistic director gone - three personalities who virtually defined Scapino - it will be interesting to see what happens next. I just hope they don't forget that they are first and foremost a dance company, and a world class one at that.

Pinocchio Effect is an ambitious piece directed by Cecilia Moisia and co-produced with Maas Theater en Dans and professes to be "A family show for everyone between 10 and 110 years old, full of humour and seriousness". Not so sure about that being true but it was all great boisterous fun in the lead up to Christmas and I hope that the numerous children in the audience on the night we were there were not disappointed that there was not an elongated wooden nose in sight - and that's no lie □



NEW MUSEUM FOR ROTTERDAM

**FENIX - The first museum in the world
on the theme of migration through art**

FENIX will open in Rotterdam in the first half of 2025. A new museum that is the first in the world to present, groundbreaking, migration through contemporary art. With a museum surface of 16,000 square meters, FENIX offers two monumental installations in addition to the changing international art collection: a suitcase maze and the photo exhibition *Family of Migrants*. Plein, a covered, lively city square for everyone, will be located





The eye-catcher and largest work of art is the Tornado, an architectural masterpiece by Ma Yansong of MAD Architects that swirls up from the building . . .

on the ground floor. The eye-catcher and largest work of art is the *Tornado*, an architectural masterpiece by Ma Yansong of MAD Architects that swirls up from the building.

Director Anne Kremers: "Migration is about people and has always existed. FENIX is at home in the super-diverse city of Rotterdam, which is made up of more than 170 nationalities. Migration is a subject that affects everyone. The stories we tell about departure, arrival, hope, love and farewell make people curious about the world around them and how it has been shaped by migration."

FENIX is located at the place of departure and arrival, on the Maas. Visitors will soon look out from the museum through the monumental windows over the former headquarters of the Holland-America Line and the river. From the end of the nineteenth century, more than three million people left these quays for destinations in the United States and Canada. FENIX is located in the original San Francisco warehouse from 1923, designed by architect CN van Goor and was the largest warehouse in the world at the time. The warehouse is located in Katendrecht, the Rotterdam district where countless new Rotterdammers arrived from China, Greece, Cape Verde and many other destinations.

The warehouse is carefully restored and transformed into a spectacular museum building. The *Tornado* forms the heart of FENIX: the futuristic, double-twisted staircase construction connects the different floors with the 24-meter-high platform. The theme of migration is also reflected here: on the way to the viewpoint, visitors can change stairs halfway and thus determine their way up, just as people are faced with choices during a journey. An experience where visitors are treated to new perspectives and a breathtaking panorama of the river and the city, the Maas and Rotterdam.

FENIX is the first museum worldwide that focuses on the theme of migration through the eyes of artists with a continuously growing collection. More than two hundred works of art have now been purchased by

artists from all over the world, including Francis Alÿs, Rineke Dijkstra, Bill Viola, Grayson Perry, Shilpa Gupta and Kimsooja. FENIX also commissioned seven artists to create new work for the museum. Beya Gille Gacha, Efrat Zehavi, Cha Eun Rhee, Raquel van Haver and Hugo McCloud, among others, are currently working on exclusive assignments, each with their own perspective on migration. The collection also consists of a selection of historical objects that provide interpretation and context to the history of migration. Rotterdam is the starting point. The permanent art collection will soon be on display on a robust, uninterrupted daylight floor measuring 172 meters in length.

On the ground floor, the permanent photo exhibition *Family of Migrants* will take visitors on a journey past hundreds of iconic photos. Themes such as family, departure and arrival, homesickness, or saying goodbye as captured by international photographers, past and present. *Family of Migrants* is inspired by Edward Steichen's famous *Family of Man* - the largest photo exhibition of all time. *Family of Migrants* currently consists of approximately three hundred photos by more than two hundred photographers from more than sixty countries.

Iconic images and rarely published material from archives and museums from around the world come together in this presentation. Stories from suitcase owners can be discovered in the monumental suitcase maze. FENIX received two thousand suitcases from all over the world during collection days organized throughout the Netherlands over the past two years.

Plein also opens in FENIX; a new concept for museums in the Netherlands. Plein will be a publicly accessible space of over 2,000 square meters that functions as a covered city square for everyone. Program makers from the neighborhood and the world organize constantly changing activities. This makes Plein different every day: from a location for events to a stage and kitchen for the city and the neighborhood. Plein moves with the continuously changing city, nourished by its many cultures and people □

SIMON McBURNEY RETURNS TO NDT

to create a piece for *From Here Now Far* with Crystal Pite

Michael HASTED

When it was announced that British actor, director and founder of the British theatre company Complicité, Simon McBurney, was to work with Nederlands Dans Theater on three productions over the next four years I thought wow, now there's a match made in heaven. As a result of the deal, it was announced that NDT stalwart Crystal Pite was extending her tenure with the company to work with McBurney as choreographer. The second of their joint ventures, included in *From Here Now Far*, performed by NDT1 opens at the Amare in The Hague on 8th February and following the short run there will tour until 9th March. The new work will be performed with reprises of two other pieces, *Jakie* and *La Ruta*.

This new work is a searing examination of our need for connection in a separated world. We are living in an age of extinction. Can we ever hope to give a name to what we are losing? What does it mean to bear witness to a violence in which we are both perpetrators and victims? Across continents, Pite and McBurney have exchanged ideas reflecting on their fears and cautious hopes for the age we are living in, and how artists can meaningfully create in the face of mass destruction.

Photo of Simon McBurney by Jorri KRISTJANSON



CARVAL

Together with NDT and Complicité, Ms Pite and Mr McBurney will nurture a new method of exchange, embracing uncertainty and looking for sparks in the darkness. Their first collaborative work, *Figures in Extinction [1.0]* premiered in The Hague in 2022 and was awarded Zwaan (Swan) for the most impressive dance production at the 2022 Nederlandse Dansdagen.

Gabriela Carrizo's *La Ruta (The Road)* truly is the stuff of which dreams are made – nightmares more like. We find ourselves on a lonely stretch of road on a dark misty night, a bus shelter our only refuge and source of light – although other lights come from myriad vehicles hurtling by. An orange-overalled, hard-hatted workman constantly fiddling with a roadside electricity junction box provides occasional extra illumination.

What is unusual about this is that there is very little dance in the conventional sense – not that you expect convention from the NDT – it is like one of those episodic horror films but with a fair amount of writhing, although there is a very nice pas de deux at one point. The whole thing is all a bit scary, especially the sequence where a distraught young woman gets out of car, hurling insults at the invisible occupant and doing significant damage with her handbag. There is an even more frightening bit when one of the protagonists attacks the others with a very large rock, complete with squelching sound effects as the object strikes home. Oh, and a flock of white geese flies by and provide some of the soundscape. Although *La Ruta* is credited to Gabriela Carrizo, it is the eight dancers who worked with her to create this amazing piece of theatre.

Eyal and Behar's *Jakie* is very much an ensemble piece. The action also takes place in a large, impersonal and formidable space. The dimly lit stage is like a vast underground cavern with the dancers huddled together, moving in a haphazard unison. Effectively naked in their flesh-coloured leotards they seem a vulnerable group with individuals seldom daring to venture far from the pack. Alon Cohen's lighting, although static, does much to create the atmosphere and the music includes some bone-shaking bass, inexorably and physically drawing the audience into the performance □



IN BRILLIANT LIGHT



The contemporary works of 32 artists show the richness and diversity of art from Africa and its diaspora at the Wereldmuseum in Leiden

Photos by Aad HOOGENDOORN



Guest curator Azu Nwagbogu has combined masterpieces from the museum's art collection with recent work by contemporary artists outside the museum collection to create *In Schitterend Licht (In Beautiful Light)*. The exhibition shows how thirty-two artists from Africa and its diaspora, averse to colonial ideas, critically view the world around them and how they find inspiration in the promise of new worlds and shared dreams for a new society.

African and diaspora artists are increasingly represented in exhibitions, fairs and biennials worldwide. But that wasn't always the case. Although African art, exhibited in ethnographic museums, was a source of inspiration for European modern artists in the early 20th century, in the eyes of many it was considered primitive art - false division between the continents, based on the structures and ideas of the colonial system.

Artistic imagination is essential when addressing topics that the Wereldmuseum Leiden addresses with this exhibition. With boundless creativity, the artists tackle topics such as globalization, emancipation and migration. They depict new worlds and draw inspiration from history, heritage, folklore and spiritual traditions. For example, Yinka Shonibare and Sanford Biggers refer to colonial ideas in their work by mixing European and African art traditions. They turn the tables and point out the Eurocentric ideas to which opinions on art from Africa are still subject.





In doing so, they question themes such as cultural exchange, appropriation, hybridity and authenticity. And the work of the South African WonderBuhle emphasizes the meaning of spirituality in the work of many African artists and testifies to a deep connection with his community.

Through their work, other artists provide, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, various perspectives on the influence of colonialism and how this relates to current social themes that play a role all over the world. Ibrahim Mahama, Sammy Baloji and Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaises (CATPC) expose the devastating impact of colonial exploitation through their work. And artists Kiluanji Kia Henda and Hélène Amouzou use their work to delve deeper into the growing tension surrounding African migrants in Europe at the moment. The work makes you think about the global challenges we face as humans today.



The artists know how to depict their personal experiences with technical virtuosity. For example, Cuban artist Belkis Áyon challenges the patriarchy in Cuba in the 20th century through her now world-famous graphic work. These masterpieces from the museum collection are combined with work by Marie-claire Messouma Manlanbien, who depicts alternative forms of womanhood in our contemporary world.

The exhibition also addresses the important role artists play as agents of change who reshape histories. Diaspora artists in Europe and America explore their culture, traditions and heritage in this globalized world where cultural boundaries continue to change and blur. For example, James Barnor's colourful photos, taken in Accra, show proud Ghanaians on the eve of independence. And his photos, taken in London,



provide a unique insight into the lives of people from the diaspora in London. In doing so, he has beautifully captured cultural connections between Ghana and Great Britain. With his futuristic models, Bodys Isek Kingelez created representations of utopian cities that reflect his vision of his country after independence.

With these and many other artists, In Schitterend Licht shows the power, diversity and creativity of

contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora. All artists in the exhibition relate to their cultural history in their own unique way and create new perspectives on the future and the past. Through their own visual language and on the basis of various themes, they claim the visibility of Africa and its diaspora - for the people and culture as well as for their place within the global art system □

Nicole Beutler Projects

ATMEN

Evolution is Silently Unfolding

Rituals of Transformation Part II

Michael HASTED

Photos by Anja BEUTLER

It can sometime be difficult to accept that the Earth is warming while we are in the middle of the current cold snap with snow on the roofs and ice on the canals. But global warming is, we are lead to believe, and unless we do something about it, leading the planet to destruction. The end is nigh – but then it always has been.

The Nicole Beutler Projects' *raison d'être* is the problem of climate change. With *Atmen*, *Evolution is Silently Unfolding* Ms Beutler has reached the middle of her trilogy *Rituals of Transformation*, the first part of which, *Ginkgo*, dealt with the dying planet. Set, post-apocalypse, amid the detritus of a broken world, it foretold of our demise and even threatened the majestic ginkgo tree which has survived on earth for 290 million years.

But it's not all doom and gloom. *Atmen* imagines the aftermath of climate change, that Earth will eventually breathe again and that humankind will emerge from a world engulfed in greenery, the same primeval soup that first nurtured life.

For the performance the theatre itself becomes this environment with the orchestra pit filled with trees and plants and foliage encroaching half-way into the auditorium. The stage itself is dominated by a huge grey mound (earth/rock/lava?) and from beneath it the stirrings of life can be detected as six characters gradually emerge from the dark undergrowth. A discarded oil drum, a reminder of *les temps perdus*, can be seen half-hidden at the back and a rather incongruous metal stepladder plays a prominent part in the proceedings. In *Ginkgo* the animal kingdom was







represented by a polar bear, in *Atmen* it is a white wolf that makes an appearance.

The movement of the performers was often like some long forgotten tribal ritual that worshipped the Earth as a god. At other times the choreography was primitive, depicting a struggle for survival in an environment that although green, was still hostile. There was respite at the end when things settled down, marked by some fine choral singing from the ensemble.

Visually and theatrically, *Atmen* was spectacular. In addition to the abundance of real plants in the theatre there were some enormous projections designed by Heleen Blanken, which augmented the amount of vegetation around us. The most spectacular of the projections was beyond doubt a huge waterfall, the full height of the stage. The sound design by Ruben Kieftenbelt, including electronic music by Gary Shepherd, added an extra dimension to the show as

did the often breath-taking lighting effects. *Atmen*, as indeed was *Gingko*, is total theatre, immersive and engulfing and is beyond doubt a *tour de force* to be reckoned with.

However, most plants benefit from a little pruning and consequently grow bigger and stronger as a result. The same could be said of *Atmen* where there were passages during which not much seemed to be happening or the movement was repetitious or too drawn out. Nevertheless, Nicole Beutler's *Rituals of Transformation* trilogy undoubtedly has its heart in the right place and I shall certainly be looking forward to the final part, *Now We Are On Earth*, next year □

Nicole Beutler Projects' *Atmen* will be on tour throughout The Netherlands and Germany until 15th June

HIGHLIGHT DELFT

A Festival of Innovative Art and Technology

Highlight Delft was created in 2017 and since 2018 the Festival has been showing new ideas from artists, designers, researchers, students and companies to a wide audience at unique locations, some of which open their doors just for Highlight Delft.

This year the Festival consists of various presentations/events which revolve around the theme *Do You See What I See?*

The Dutch premiere of *SHADOW* offers a unique experience in which an Artificial Intelligence interacts live with an actress and the audience. Programmed to become more human by collecting data and emotions, the AI aims to become the ultimate human machine. It can be seen in the foyer of Theater de Veste, which will be transformed into an AI discovery space during Highlight Delft.

Jeroen Alexander Meijer also presents his multi-sensory installation *Ouroboros* in which you will find a dream-like world that completely immerses you, an interactive experience and a modern temple that wants to make you aware of the mystery and the movement of your attention.



KITE is a project designed to involve hundreds of young people in Delft hoping to reach beyond the regular visitors of the festival and immerse the visitors in the world of art and technology.

Sometimes it seems as if the outside world is becoming more and more complex. Technologies, such as virtual reality or augmented reality, open up almost unlimited possibilities: virtual and physical reality are merging. What is 'reality' nowadays? And to think that two-thirds of life on earth is invisible. Without micro-organisms such as fungi, bacteria, viruses and micro animals, life would not be possible.

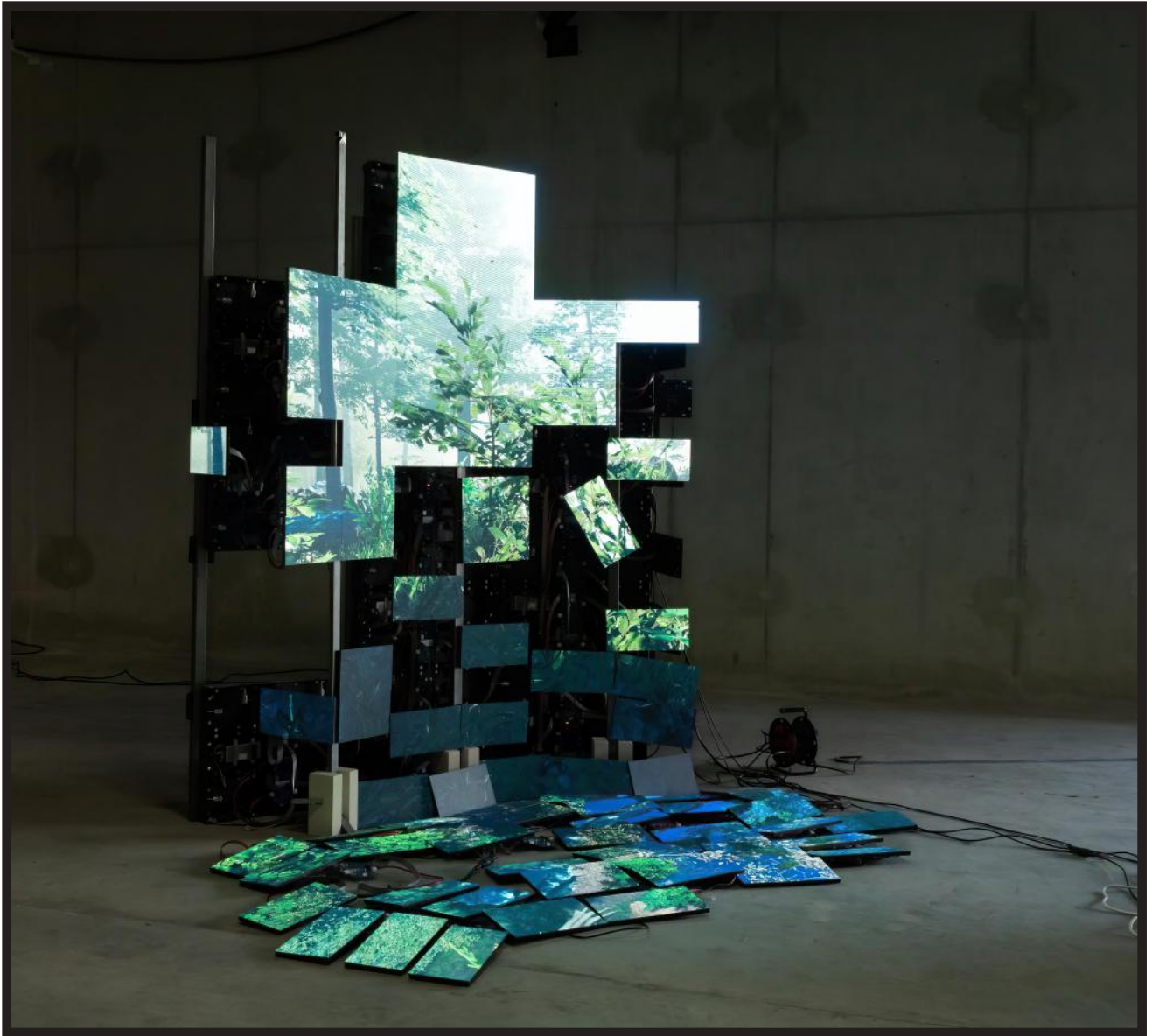
What is our perception of the world around us? Our senses perceive the world, but it is our brains that give it meaning. How do we influence this ourselves? In the educational program, young people work with art and technology in a special way and develop a new world through projection. In various physical and digital experiments they design with an eye to the future, using today's resources.

The program started at the beginning of November in which Highlight Delft went into schools. The unique

*SH4DOW offers a unique experience
in which an AI interacts live with an
actress and the audience . . .*







Scorched Earth by Philip Groubnov

educational program takes into account the needs of the schools.

This unique way of working ensures that the content, working methods and technology are better retained. What all parties agree on is a contribution to a community artwork at Highlight Delft 2024. An interactive work of art that you as a visitor can go in and around, and can even add images to!

The KITE Education Foundation provides technology lessons to children and young people. But, these are no ordinary technology lessons! KITE lets children and young people experiment with new technologies and fantasize about social developments.

At KITE youngsters can learn to think in terms of applications, so that technical components become part of a creation process, just like paint, paper and scissors. With these projects the horizons of young people are broadened with regard to art and culture and contribute to 21st century skills.

Approaching Zero by Katarina Petrovic is a research project that asks the fundamental question of what we can observe as we approach 'zero' in a physical setup. Katarina Petrovic investigates the properties of sound and modes of (particle) vibrations under extreme conditions approaching zero gas (vacuum) and zero orientation through performative, optoacoustic experiments.

Katarina Petrović (NL/RS) is an artist and researcher at the intersection of art, science and humanities. Her work focuses on generative and creative processes, from meaning, poiesis and organizational systems to the physics of sound, light and vacuum. She creates systems, procedural works presented as modular installations in an online and offline space, using media such as generative text, poetry, sound, software and performance.

This project is part of Katarina's on-going research into creative processes and the concept of *Origin*, and

is the continuation of the first prototype that explored the properties of sound in a vacuum, developed in Ljubljana in 2017.

The starting point of *Scorched Earth* by Philip Groubnov is the so-called Zone Rouge in France which is a collection of areas where some of the toughest battles of the First World War were fought. These battles were fought over a century ago, but have had a lasting impact on both the physical and mental landscape.

After the war, certain areas had to be closed to the public because, for example, there were tons of unexploded shells and toxic substances from the weapons used. Today, Zone Rouge is filled with a seemingly wild forest, but the poisonous memory of the long-ago events is still alive in the landscape, now embedded visibly and invisibly in the form of chemicals and craters from explosions.

This project attempts to trace the embodied memory of that area through physical interactions and sensory experiences.

Filipp Groubnov is an interdisciplinary artist. He was born in Belarus in 1995, where he lived until moving to the Netherlands in 2015 to pursue a career as an artist. Philipp's work is inspired by his background in science (he studied at the physics faculty of the Belarusian State University), his fascination with biological systems and their relationship to human symbolism. He now works in The Hague. His recent projects are about inaccessible places, with a particular focus on the soil. Using "traces" in the soil (using sensors or data, among other things), he recreates a virtual world as a representation of places that have been 'lost' □

The Highlight Delft Festival runs from the 15th to 17th February offering a special view of art and technology, at locations throughout the city centre. All are open each day from 17:30 to 23:00.



Photo by Rianne Tegelaar



FASHION *for* GOD

at Catharijne Convent in Utrecht

Wendy FOSSEN


You would not expect to find frivolous ball gowns in a former convent, but the Catharijne Convent Museum in Utrecht managed to combine the austerity of the building with a wonderful show on religious vestments.

The exhibition takes us through the tough years for Catholics in the 17th century to the almost exhibitionist years of the late 18th century. As a result of the transition of the Dutch Republic to Protestantism, Catholics were forbidden to practice their faith in public. This meant that they went underground held their services in hidden churches. Behind these closed doors the Catholic clergy wore their beautifully decorated caps and chasubles with which they honoured god.

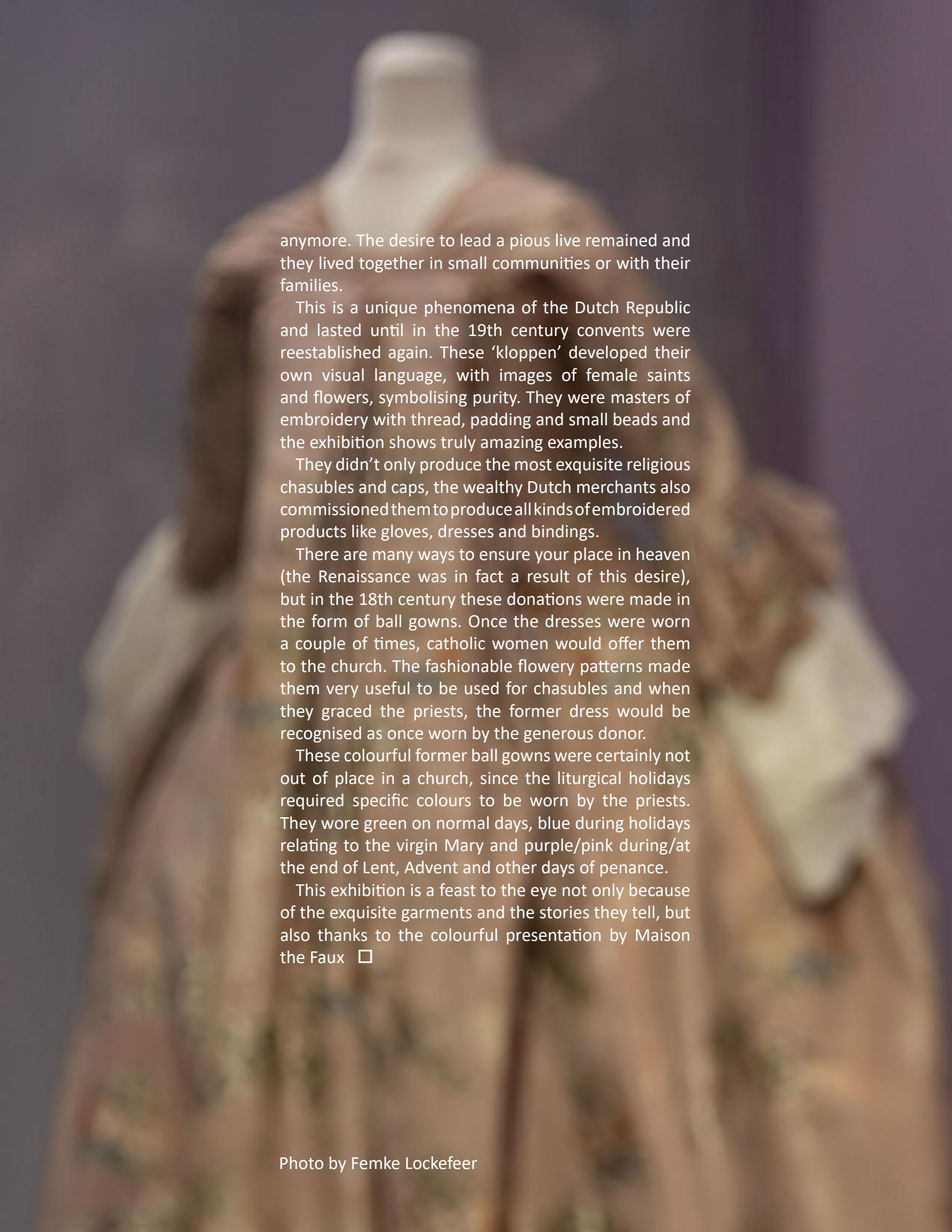
Patterns like the cross and flowers were created by mostly female embroiderers. These were called 'kloppen' (pious virgins) and were women who, with the closing of the convents, could not become nuns



Photo by Cindy Bakker



Behind these closed doors the Catholic clergy wore their beautifully decorated caps and chasubles, with which they honoured god . . .



anymore. The desire to lead a pious live remained and they lived together in small communities or with their families.

This is a unique phenomena of the Dutch Republic and lasted until in the 19th century convents were reestablished again. These 'kloppen' developed their own visual language, with images of female saints and flowers, symbolising purity. They were masters of embroidery with thread, padding and small beads and the exhibition shows truly amazing examples.

They didn't only produce the most exquisite religious chasubles and caps, the wealthy Dutch merchants also commissioned them to produce all kinds of embroidered products like gloves, dresses and bindings.

There are many ways to ensure your place in heaven (the Renaissance was in fact a result of this desire), but in the 18th century these donations were made in the form of ball gowns. Once the dresses were worn a couple of times, catholic women would offer them to the church. The fashionable flowery patterns made them very useful to be used for chasubles and when they graced the priests, the former dress would be recognised as once worn by the generous donor.

These colourful former ball gowns were certainly not out of place in a church, since the liturgical holidays required specific colours to be worn by the priests. They wore green on normal days, blue during holidays relating to the virgin Mary and purple/pink during/at the end of Lent, Advent and other days of penance.

This exhibition is a feast to the eye not only because of the exquisite garments and the stories they tell, but also thanks to the colourful presentation by Maison the Faux ☐







DIALECT

Photographs by Felipe Romero Beltrán at FOAM in Amsterdam. Anja HERRMANN went along to take a look

Dialect, “a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group.” FOAM Museum, Amsterdam invites you to view Felipe Romero Beltrán’s exhibition, *Dialect*, where we visualize the heavy legislative language and legal paperwork immigrants must decipher, deconstruct and translate in order to achieve legal status.

Winner of the FOAM Paul Huf Award, *Dialect* uniquely documents the story of young immigrants settling in Spain after crossing the threatening maritime border between Africa and Spain, the Strait of Gibraltar. The multi-media exhibition conveys the young men’s experience after leaving their home country, Morocco; the unfamiliarity, alienation, separation and the hardships of gaining legal status from the Spanish state.

Three years in development, Beltrán first met with the young immigrants in Seville where he later asked them to “reenact their experiences and memories” in a choreographic and compositional style. Within these series



of photographs Beltrán uses the subject's bodies as a kind of metaphor to portray the stark sentiments of discomfort and uncertainty when adjusting to a new place. As viewers, we catch a glimpse into their (reenacted) 'daily' lives which are riddled with a sense of uneasiness expressed in the position of their body language and in their gaze. The seemingly cinematic images induce an interesting conflict between intimacy and inaccessibility. While there is a desire to initiate a conversation, to meet and make acquaintance with the subjects, there is an inherent difficulty in apprehending the person and the space within the image. It intuitively and profoundly gives voice to the sentiments immigrants experience when seeking refuge in another country unknown to them.

Upon walking into the exhibition, visitors are confronted by a towering paper sculpture situated in the centre of the room, which is in fact the literal 23,793 pages of Spanish immigration law young illegal immigrants are subjugated to. An additional complimentary video installation, titled "Instruction", shows dancers "physically taken along [by the young immigrants]" to act out "the ordeals the men lived through while crossing the narrow strip of water that separates two continents."

In a world of intense political debate and where illegal immigrants are painted 'the Other' or spoken of as 'inundating' numbers, Beltrán reminds us that these are also merely people by bringing a human element into the foreground in his photographs. By including performance and artistic composition, Beltrán not only allows viewers an interpretation of the social concerns but also offers viewers the chance to inquire into the anecdotal perspective of the subjects.

Although there are artistic elements involved in the exhibition, Beltrán explains that he views his photographs and the totality of his exhibition as a documentary as opposed to an expression of art. "It's factual." Beltrán clarifies. "Even the stage photography and the visual, it is just re-enactment of past memories [which the young men experienced] therefore in a way, it's documentary. I am approaching reality with different tools so in that sense I am a traditional photographer, but I am also someone who still just takes pictures [in other words, a person who documents]."

With the increase of oppressive bureaucracy and the demand to close borders, particularly in Europe, *Dialect* reminds us of the consequences and the experiences of those who must endure the alluring and heated immigration debate. The exhibition sheds light on this and is highly recommended □

Dialect can be seen at FOAM in Amsterdam until 1st May.



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