

ARTS TALK

International

Number 1

April 2024



ARTSTALK

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Strange though it may seem, nearly half the readership of ArtsTalk Magazine and the *Colour Supplement* is outside of The Netherlands. Consequently we are sent lots of information and invitations to events around the world. So, rather than waste all this good stuff we have decided to launch *ArtsTalk International* in which to use lots of the articles and pictures outside of our normal Dutch remit.

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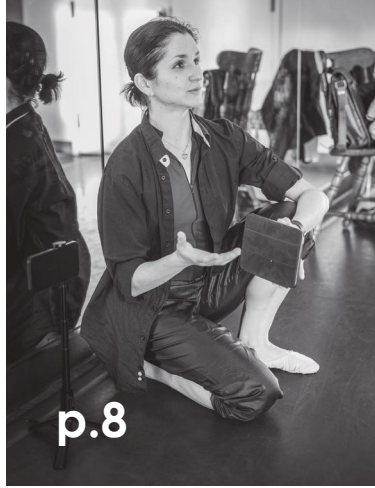
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Parsifal at Bayerische
Staatsoper München.
Photo by Wilfried Hösl



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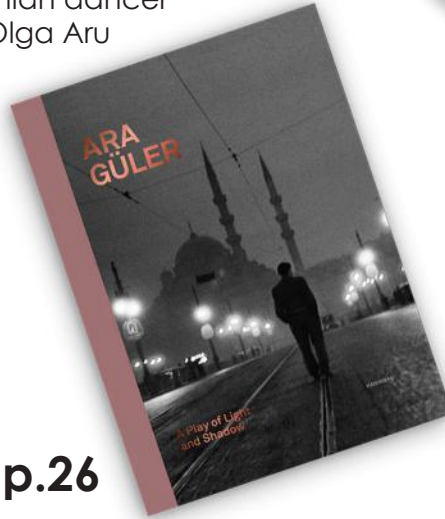
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Cecilia Sterner *Blast from the Past*
installation detail videowork. Exhibiting
with Flat Octopus Stockholm Sweden at
SUPERMARKET 2024

Supermarket

Stockholm Independent Art Fair gathers contemporary art from all over the world in Skärholmen Centrum

SUPERMARKET 2024 – Stockholm Independent Art Fair will take place on 25th –28th April in SKHLM Skärholmen Centrum. This unique 2000 square meter venue was previously a children's indoor playground, and hosted Supermarket in 2022. The premises present a playful source of inspiration which pairs well with the variety of 66 exhibiting galleries, and a vibrant programme of contemporary art, networking for art professionals and much more.


RUM два (Copenhagen, Denmark) is an artist-run initiative which tries to create a more direct connection between the Nordic and the Balkans art scene. Flat Octopus (Stockholm, Sweden) will present a solo exhibition *Blast From the Past* by the Swedish artist Cecilia Sterner. Her cave-like installation will lure you into a playful world where the ugly, raw, dark, sophisticated, and ludicrous meet – because the world is full of contradictions.

BABEL visningsrom for kunst (Trondheim, Norway) will present *Camp Temporary*, an exhibition that explores nomadic structures, occupation, and the vital context of the artist-in-residence in contemporary art. Gallery Rostrum (Malmö, Sweden) will showcase the exhibition *Dream Scene* as an opposition to the fast food entertainment society. Featuring collective efforts and elements of performance, the exhibition explores the seven deadly sins in contrast to the seven capital virtues.



Jonas Kjelgaard Sørensen (DK)
performing Våbensliberen
The Weapon Grinder at
Supermarket 2023

Photo José Figueroa



Visual Arts Forum (Ramallah, Palestine) is a non-profit Palestinian institution dedicated to fostering cultural awareness, identity, and the transformative power of art. For SUPERMARKET 2024 they present *ART in Palestine*, a curated collection of artworks produced by our students across various age groups. Schmick Contemporary (Sydney, Australia) will present works from artists who consider embodied knowledge through a feminist revisionist and queer lens. TUR_telpa (Riga, Latvia) invites the visitors to a subconscious journey to the land of images reflecting historical and exotic places that have given their name to pigments.

ps. K_o_t_ (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) is interested in the socio-economic position of the artist. During Supermarket 2024 ps.kot will live screenprints and present a renewed and updatedroduce version of Seth Siegelaubs legendary Artist Contract. The contract will be freely available for visitors of the fair. Motif Art Studio (Smara refugee camp, Tindouf, Algeria) was built as a response to an environmental disaster in 2015 when huge floods hit the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria and destroyed the hand-built mud homes and the tents. Over the course of the following year, of all the things one might think are needed to live in a refugee camp, an art studio was built □





A Day in the Life
OLGA ARU

**Dancer, choreographer, dreamer and Artistic
Director of Aru Dell'Arte Dance Company**

Photo by Eric in Focus

It's already spring outside, so I open my balcony window and inhale a deep gasp of fresh air. I have a stretching routine for the morning and I head to my mini-gym to get warmed up for the day ahead . . .







My alarm goes off. I wake up and start my day with some oatmeal and a cup of espresso. It's already spring outside, so I open my balcony window and inhale a deep gasp of fresh air. I have a stretching routine for the morning and I head to my mini-gym to get warmed up for the day ahead.

Then I turn on my laptop and prepare for the scenes that I am going to rehearse in the studio today. I open my paper notebook and write down the rehearsal plan and notes for the cast.

And here I am driving to the rehearsal, wishing we could dance outdoors in the morning sunshine today. My dance company's rehearsals are held in Washington DC not far from the historic downtown area. We are in preparation for our new show. I am taking my dance company on our first tour to New York.

The show is going to premiere on 17th May at El Barrio's ArtSpace P109 in Manhattan. We are going to bring the modern ballet *Requiem Today* and also the brand new futuristic ballet *P.O.L.A.R.I.S.* which is what I am staging right now.

There are some wearable tech devices that will be connected to the sound system with multiple portable lights that will be immersed into this show. I am very excited about the process. It's a constant search of shapes, accents, tones, and structures of this work. I've been also learning a lot about the technical aspects of the intricate tools I am using in this show, their mapping, and general tech live show capacity. As an Artistic Director, you have to be open to constant learning.

It is important to improve as a leader, thinker and human. I love moving forward and bringing my company dancers to new heights, otherwise, you just keep swimming in the same place, making circles. My team is great and all of the cast members are great artists and amazing people

that inspire me in my creations. In-studio we start with the warm-up. We alternate classical ballet and modern dance in our full classes. Yes, we all need those pointed feet finely tuned! Rehearsals have been very exciting but intense. I feel like I leave all my energy on the dance floor, so going home happy and satisfied, but usually very tired.

One of my best relaxation techniques is cooking. I have marinated salmon and broccoli for dinner today. So once I lay down my keys in the loft, I start the oven and place my dinner to cook. Then I dim the lights and light up candles, turn on relaxing music and take a bath with scented oils.

In the evening, when the world is quiet I usually write ideas for my new creations and listen to various pieces of music that might inspire me to move and choreograph. I will also work on my new podcast, Art with Aru. That's when I focus the most.

Before going to bed I like to watch TV with some tea and dessert, or read a book to unwind □

Olga Aru was born in Eastern Ukraine and grew up in Kyiv. She is an alumna of the renowned Kyiv State Ballet Academy. After graduating she worked internationally performing as a first soloist and a principal dancer for, among others, the Silesian State Theater, Cairo National Opera and Aleph Dance Company in Rome.

Her research work *Dance on the Edge of Century* was represented at the 37th CID-UNESCO Dance Congress in Athens in 2013. Her short dance film *Isolated In Motion* was created during the early lockdown in 2020 and found recognition in several international film festivals including Montreal Independent Film Festival.

In 2012 Olga Aru created Aru Dell'Arte in Washington DC of which she is Artistic Director.





Photo by Rai Gatewood

Strasbourg

**MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE
ET CONTEMPORAIN DE
STRASBOURG**

Text and photos by Michael HASTED







The restaurant-café offers a magnificent view over the River Ill and La Petite France, all the way to the cathedral . . .



There is one thing that Strasbourg is not short of – museums. There are ten in all, ranging from the parochial half-timbered Musée Alsacien to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs housed in the sophisticated splendour of the Château Rohan in the shadow of the awe inspiring Cathedral. Splendid though all those museums are, it is the Musée D'Art Moderne et Contemporain overlooking *La Petite France*, standing proudly

on the banks of the River Ill, that is the jewel in the city's cultural crown.

Although created in 1973 the Musée and its substantial collection of late 19th century, modern and contemporary art had no real home. Exhibitions were held in the Ancienne Douane, but that was not really suitable so plans were soon laid for a permanent, prestigious new museum.




Georg Baselitz Adler 1980 Oil on canvas



Parisian architect Adrien Fainsilber, who had already been responsible for the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in the French capital, was given the job of designing it. Building started in 1995 adjacent to a site previously occupied by the covered market and across the road from the Brigade Motorisée division of the Gendarmerie Nationale.

Overlooking the Barrage Vauban and the Commanderie Saint-Jean de Strasbourg, the former women's prison now the Institut National Du Service Public, the Musée opened its doors in November 1998 instantly becoming one of the largest museums of its kind in France.

The collection provides a comprehensive overview of the great art movements going back to 1860. There are important paintings representing Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Art 1900, Fauvism, Expressionism, Surrealism etc. as well as important contemporary works by such artists as Georg Baselitz and Italian artist Mimmo Paladino whose four-meters-high horse sculpture, *Hortus conclusus* stands on the museum's roof, one of the



18,400 works in the collection. The museum regularly mounts temporary exhibitions and displays new acquisitions which reflect current trends in the world of art.

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg is one of those public buildings that is worth visiting for the architecture alone. Its main central body is like a cathedral. With an interior length of 104 meters and with a height of 22 meters, its soaring glass walls encourage light to play on the polished marble walls. On the first floor of the museum the restaurant-café offers a magnificent view over the River Ill and *La Petite France*. And although in the heart of a vibrant and busy city, the huge terrace, overlooking trees and the river has a tranquil, almost rural feel to it □





BASIC INCOME€

**Should it be a fundamental right for artists?
Souwie BUIS asks the question**

The idea of a basic income is not new. In the 16th century, British philosopher and statesman Sir Thomas More mentioned the idea in his book, Utopia. Martin Luther King Jr. proposed a guaranteed income for Americans. At its core is the idea that adult citizens receive a monthly payment from the government. The aim is not only to alleviate poverty but also to provide more freedom for individuals to pursue genuine interests without having to worry about making next month's rent payment.

As life after Corona made the following two years seem like a bad but fast-fading nightmare, it is easy to forget that many, including artists, are facing a long, hard road to recovery. Before the pandemic, Europe's cultural and creative sectors accounted for more than 4% of Europe's GDP. In 2019, more than 3.7% of Europe's workforce was employed in this sector. The pandemic caused the cultural and creative sectors to lose 80% of their turnover, according to estimates by the European Commission. A report for the European Visual Artists group estimates that one in eight museums in the EU may never re-open.

Calls by the European Parliament to allocate 2% of the EU recovery package to the creative and cultural sectors was rejected by the Council. Here in the Netherlands financial support for larger cultural institutions deemed to be "of vital importance" and rent suspension for state museums, has not directly addressed the struggles of smaller organisations and individual artists. Although relief has been offered to entrepreneurs more broadly, the hybrid practices of many artists often makes it difficult for them to meet the funding criteria, reports the Broekman Foundation. The stereotype of the struggling artist living in poverty in a garret gains renewed significance in this post-pandemic landscape.

So last month's announcement by the Irish government of the launch of a basic income for artists initiative is a beacon of hope for many in the industry. Artists in Ireland are being invited to apply for a basic income of €325 per week. This scheme will be available for up to 2000 artists over a period of three years. Applicants who meet the criteria will be selected randomly, those not selected will be invited to be part of a control group for the project. In launching the project, Irish prime minister, Micheál Martin, recognised the importance of the arts and culture as "the wellspring of our identity".

The strong link between the arts and our sense of cultural identity must not be forgotten as the world emerges from pandemic life. The arts have arguably helped many through the pandemic and will provide us with pathways toward future recovery.

President of the UN General Assembly, Volkan Bozic recognised this in a recent comment, "Far too often society is blind to the socio-economic contributions of those in the creative and cultural spheres. This is a mistake." He pointed out too that the creative sectors are the largest employment sectors for young people.

Ireland's basic income for artists programme recognises this. Another promising idea is the European Status of the Artist concept. Proposed in a report adopted by the European Parliament toward the end of last year, such status would include freedom of expression, mobility, collective bargaining for self-employed professionals and access to social security, to name a few.

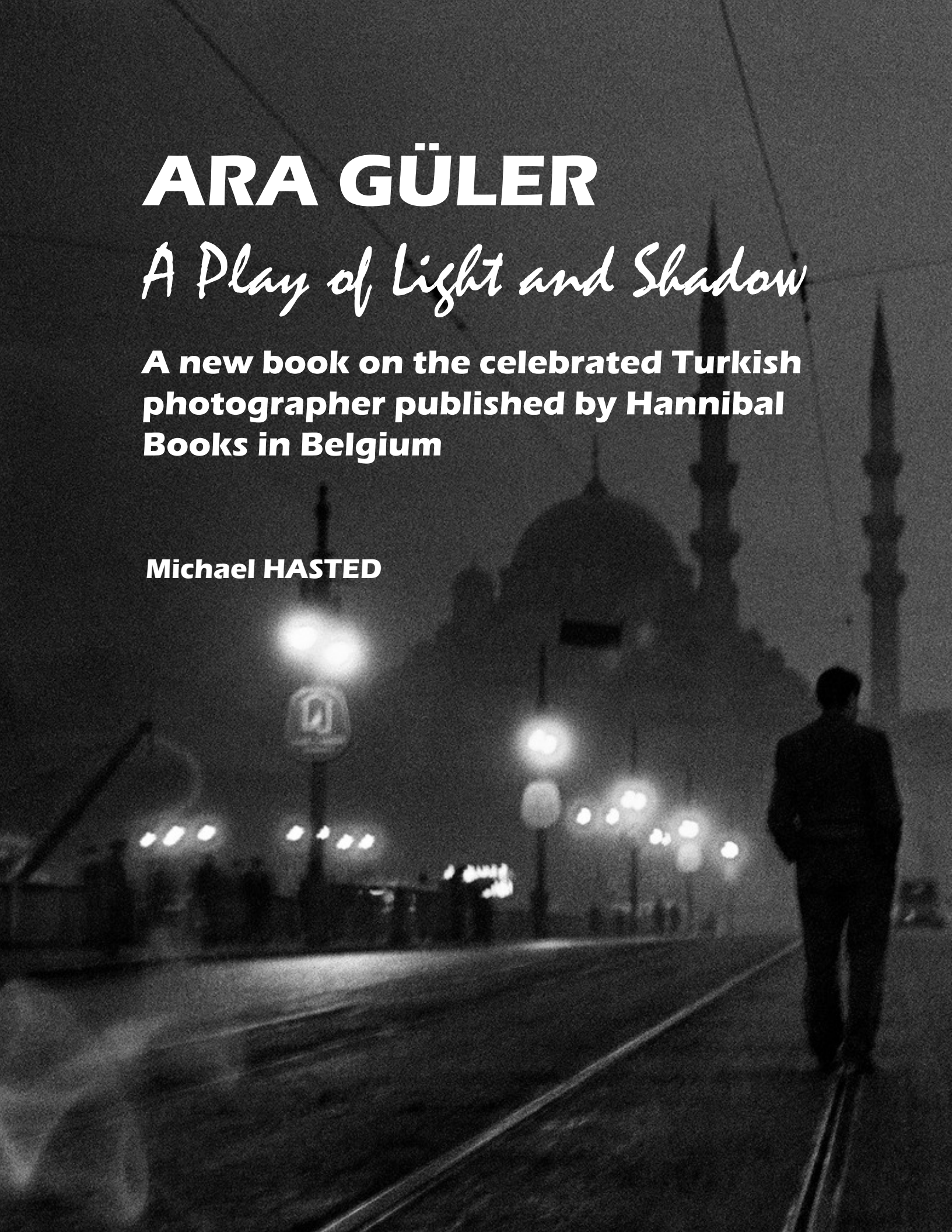
The pandemic doubtless caused untold suffering and material loss for artists globally but perhaps it will also prove to be a catalyst for the kinds of changes for which the cultural and creative industries have long been fighting □

ARA GÜLER

A Play of Light and Shadow

**A new book on the celebrated Turkish
photographer published by Hannibal
Books in Belgium**

Michael HASTED

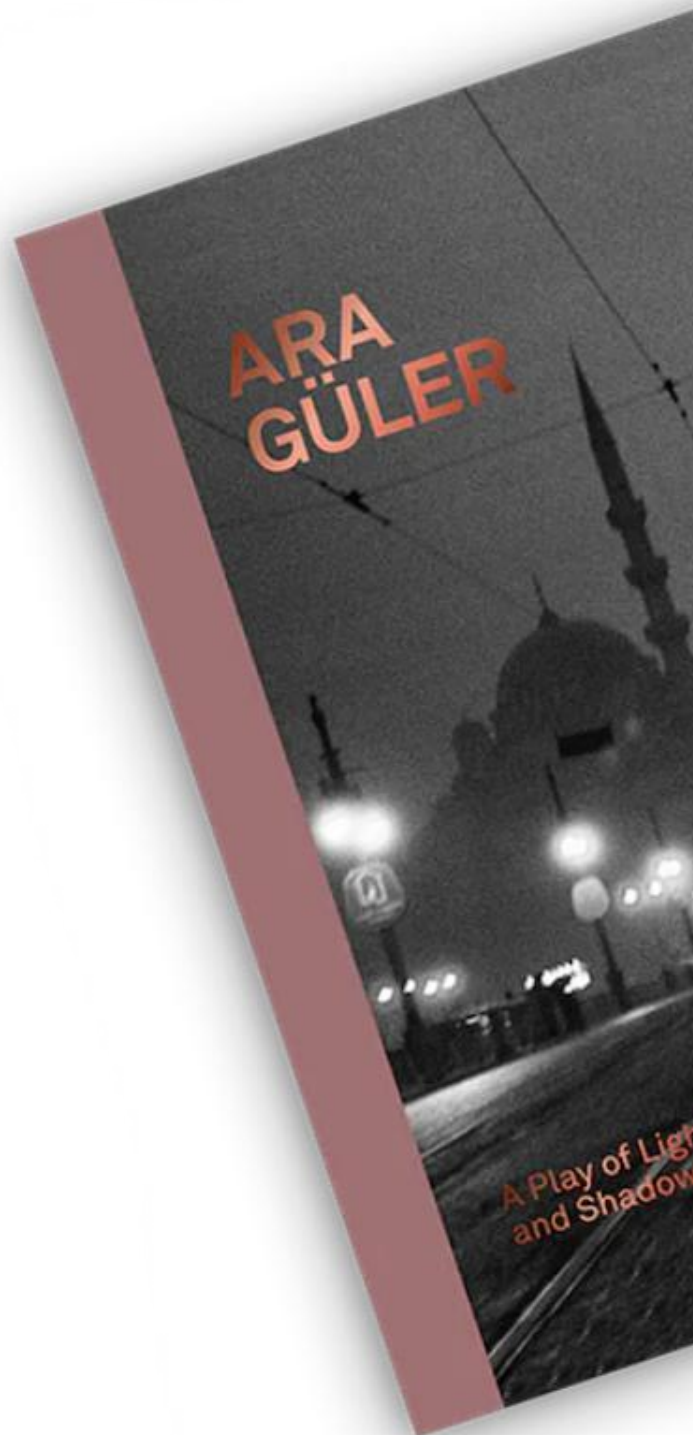




Known as *The Eye of Istanbul*, Ara Güler is best known for, and the aspect on which the exhibition concentrates, his street photography, his photo journalism in Turkey, especially Istanbul. But there was much more to him than that, as the book reveals. He travelled the world taking photos, both as a straightforward travel photographer and as a war reporter, visiting conflict zones in Eritrea, Sudan, Afghanistan and Palestine. He also was a celebrity portrait photographer, taking pictures of Brigitte Bardot, Salvador Dalí, Sophia Loren and Alfred Hitchcock, to name but a few. And, surprisingly, he also had time to create art photos, producing colour collages and pictures of moving light. All these wonderful pictures are in this excellent two hundred and eight page book with text in English.

But it is for the grainy black and white candid photos of everyday life in Turkey in the 1950s and 60s that Güler is best known. Concentrating on the grimy under belly of life on the streets, the first pictures date from when he was in his mid-twenties. The later ones, the art photography, were produced well into the 1980s and beyond. He left a legacy of hundreds of thousands of negatives, all of which have been carefully archived and preserved.

When in 1958 *Time-Life* opened its Turkish bureau, Ara Güler became its first correspondent. Commissions from other international publications such as *Stern*, *Paris Match* and *The Sunday Times* soon followed, as did his recruitment by the legendary Magnum Photos agency in the early sixties. While not achieving the household name status of, say, Henri Cartier-Bresson or Bill Brandt, Güler stands alongside them as a chronicler of times gone by that only photographers can





achieve. The world that Cartier-Bresson and Brandt photographed was much more recognisable, more romantic with images recalling places like Paris in its hey-day or post-war England with which we are all familiar. Güler's work eschewed the misplaced romanticism of the working classes and pulled no punches. Don't forget that until it emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War and the Republic was established in 1980, Turkey was, effectively, a third world country much more attune with North Africa and the Middle East than the Western Europe that it now embraces and aspires to join. Culturally and geographically neither East nor West, the differences were difficult to reconcile from either direction. This book opens our eyes to a country that was largely ignored and consequently unknown until relatively recently.

A beautifully curated and produced book that is a must-have for anyone interested in photo journalism or, in fact, any type of photography. With notes, commentary and conversations from art historian Kim Knoppers; curator and head of photography department at Istanbul Modern, Demet Yildiz Dinçer; photographer and filmmaker Ahmet Polat and Claartje van Dijk, curator and head of exhibitions at Foam in Amsterdam, we learn everything we need to know about this amazing and truly important photographer. Expensive, but worth every penny – or should that be cent?

ARA GÜLER A Play of Light and Shadow


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THE
SCHOOL
FOR
SCANDAL
BY RICHARD B. SHERIDAN

Tilted Wig and Malvern Theatres in association with Theatre by the Lake present a brand new production of School for Scandal which will tour England until June

Production photos by Robling Photography



Stage, film and TV star Joseph Marcell heads the cast of Seán Aydon's new production of *The School for Scandal* which tours the UK this Spring.

Deliciously naughty and outrageously silly, this fresh take on Richard B. Sheridan's classic comedy of manners is a master-class in social satire and the art of gossip.

At the height of eighteenth century London, the truth is a rare commodity. Rumour, gossip and backbiting abound in Richard Sheridan's classic, *The School for Scandal*. In the elegant salons of the upper classes, a tight-knit web of glamorous socialites, led by the incorrigible Lady Sneerwell, enjoy everything from a quiet game of Piquet to an outrageously fabricated character assassination. When the wealthy Sir Oliver returns to select which of his wayward nephews is to become his heir, he is unwittingly plunged into this dissolute world, where morality takes second place to double-crossing, intrigue and downright skulduggery. With a gabble of busy-bodies interfering in his task - the vivacious Lady Teazle, the lovable Sir Peter and the amorous Backbite - will Sir Oliver discover which of his nephews is worthy to be his heir, or will he be deceived by cleverly constructed appearances?

The School for Scandal is one of the greatest comedies ever written, featuring an unforgettable cast of larger-than-life characters, each armed with a lacerating wit.

Joseph Marcell, who is probably best-known for his role as Geoffrey the Butler in the six seasons of the NBC sitcom *The Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air*, plays Sir Peter Teazle. He was most recently seen in Chiwetel Ejiofor's debut feature film, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. TV credits include *Mammoth* and *I Hate You*, both for the BBC. His prolific stage credits include *Hamlet* at the Young Vic with Cush Jumbo, Kathy Burke's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, extensive work with Shakespeare's Globe

including the titular role in Bill Buckhurst's *King Lear* and Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, as well as seasons at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The School for Scandal is directed by Seán Aydon who recently adapted and directed the national tours of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Frankenstein*. He was also assistant director on the world premiere of Tom Fletcher's *The Christmasaurus* at the Hammersmith Apollo. The production is designed by Linbury Prize winner Sarah Beaton and the sound design/composition from Ed Lewis. Lighting design is by Peter Small and movement direction by Stephen Moynihan.

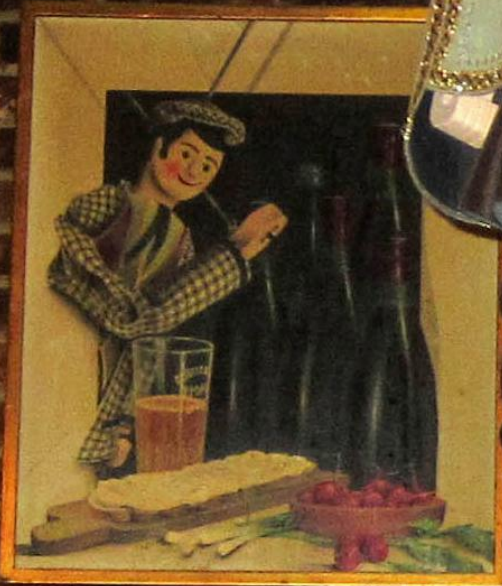
Seán Aydon is a director, writer and dramaturge who has worked at theatres across the UK. He is also a regular collaborator with Tilted Wig. The focus of his work began to move more towards directing and in 2017 he was nominated as Best Director in the first The Stage Debut Awards for his production of *Richard III*. Since then, he has directed plays at venues including Theatre by the Lake in Keswick, Ipswich New Wolsey and Northampton's Royal and Derngate as well as assisting Derek Bond on the world premiere of Tom Fletcher's *The Christmasaurus*. New writing and dramaturgy have always been a key part Seán's work - alongside being a script reader for London's Finborough Theatre for several years, he has worked on new writing events at the Young Vic, the Old Vic, the Arts Theatre in Leicester Square, Seven Dials Playhouse and Theatre 503. Earlier this year he was part of a workshop for a new play under development with Tilted Wig in partnership with MAST Theatre in Southampton.

Sarah Beaton is an award-winning performance designer and visual dramaturge. She studied Design for Stage at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, graduating in 2011 with First Class Honours. Later that year she was awarded The Linbury Prize for Stage Design.



Tilted Wig has been producing and touring plays throughout the UK for over seventeen years. The company now stages at least two tours a year. Recent productions include national tours of a brand new production of *Frankenstein* plus *Around the World in 80 Days*, co-produced with York Theatre Royal and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* co-produced with Malvern Theatres plus *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Murder Margaret and Me*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Great Expectations* which were all co-productions with Malvern Theatres and Churchill Theatre, Bromley □





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TARIEF

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MAREDSOUS	4.5	SPR PETILLANT	2.5	ICE TEA /	3
JUPIER ALCOHOLVRIJ	2.5	CECEMEL	2.5	RODE WIJN	3
RODENBACH	3.5	COCA COLA	2.5	ROZE	3
BARBAR	4.5	TONIC	2.5	WITTE	3
DUVEL	4.5	COCA COLA LICHT	2	BOUTEILLE	10
CAROLUS	4.5	MARTINI ROUGE	4.5		
GRAND CRU	4.5	PORTO	4.5		
ROCHEFORT 10	6	CAMPARI	5		
ORVAL	5	SHERRY	5		
TRAPPISTE CHIMAY	5				
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Brussels

THÉÂTRE ROYAL DE TOONE

Text and Photos by Michael HASTED

Puppets have come a long way since Sooty, Muffin the Mule and Thunderbirds and can now be considered a legitimate and exciting theatrical genre. We have been quick to praise the innovation and originality of many of the companies but, as with any art form, we ignore the traditional forms at our peril.

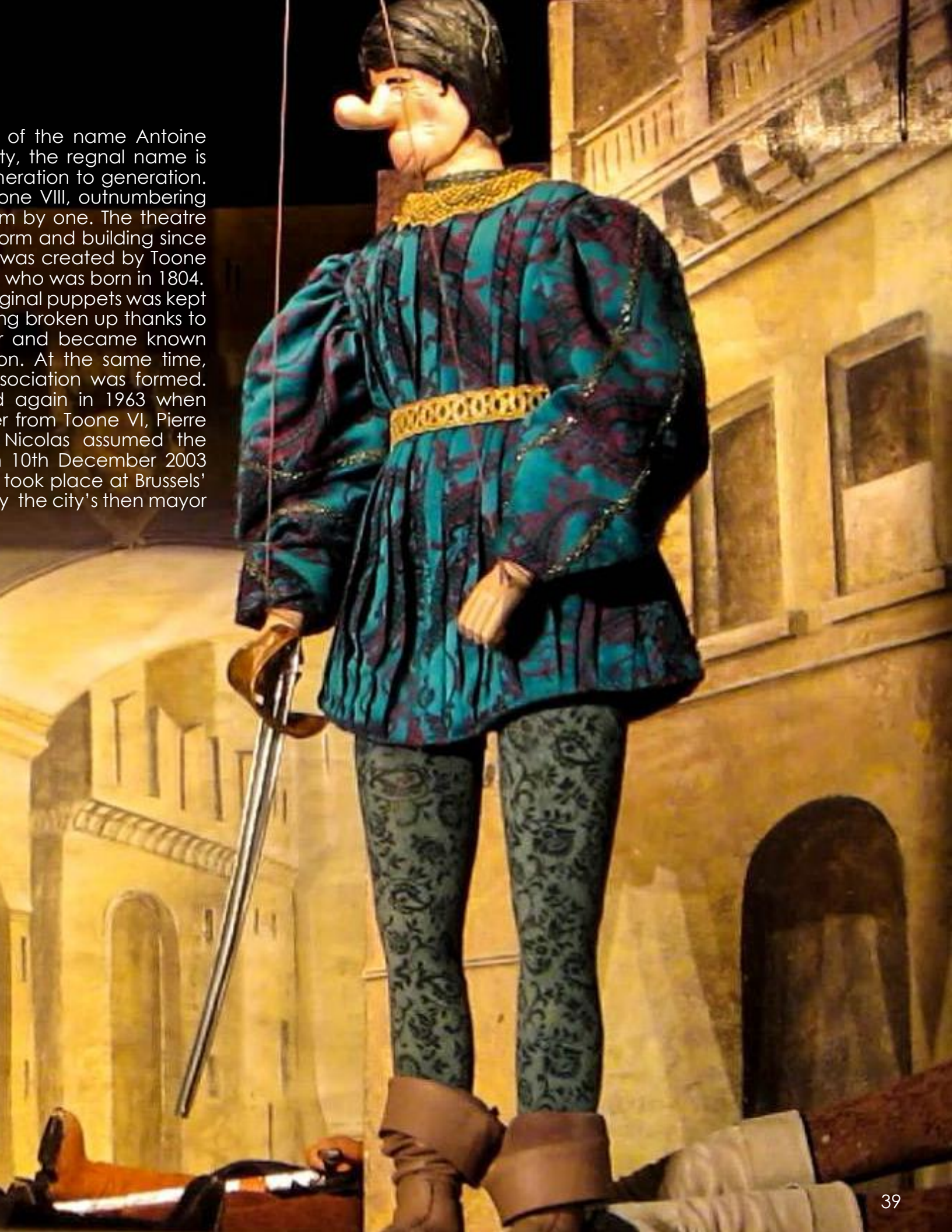
On a recent visit to Brussels I spent an exceptionally entertaining and pleasant evening at the Théâtre Royal de Toone. Hidden down a dark and dingy alley off one of the city's main shopping streets, and only 100m from the Grande Place, the café cum theatre is a step back in time. The ground-floor café/bar is festooned with old puppets, props, posters and other ephemera which all build the curiosity and expectations to what will be revealed when we climb the rickety, winding stairs to the theatre itself, a dusty attic nestling under the eaves.



Toone is a diminutive and, like a royal dynasty, handed down from generation to generation. We are currently on Toone VIII, the monarchs of Belgium. The puppet has been in its current form since 1963 but the company was founded in 1880 by the 1st - Antoine Genty.

In 1931 the stock of original puppets was intact and avoided being sold as a generous benefactor, as the Wolfers Collection. The Puppets Friends Association. The theatre was saved by the José Géral took over from Welleman. José's son was crowned as Toone VIII on 1st June at his coronation which took place in the Town Hall, conducted by...

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Nicolas assumed the
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The half-dozen or so puppet
seen much of the time above
remind us that the actors are n



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Hidden down a dark and dingy alley only 200m from the Grande Place, the theatre café is a step back in time . . .

Freddy Thielemans. Nicolas is responsible for the day to day running of the theatre as well the production and presentation of the shows.

The puppets are a sort of hybrid between string and rod puppets and despite some very exotic costumes their appeal lies in their lack of sophistication, crudeness even. They are quite large, about one meter tall and, with a rigid rod attached to their heads and just a string for each arm, their movements are limited. Nevertheless, what they lack in finesse they make up for in charm and very good, hilarious

scripts. The half-dozen or so puppeteers can be seen much of the time above the set to remind us that the actors are not human.

We saw a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, with other shows in the repertoire ranging from *Le Docteur Jekyll et Mister Hyde* to *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and from *Dracula* to *Christmas, La Nativité et le Massacre des Innocents*. All shows have original scripts by either Nicolas or his father, José Géral. The sets and lighting are magnificent.

One touch I particularly liked was that the leading man is always played by the same

puppet – Woltje (named after the 1931 benefactor) who seems to be the alter-ego of José (who was born in 1931), sharing with him the check cloth cap which they both always wear. What makes Woltje so endearing, apart from the cloth cap, is that he is a good head shorter than all the other puppets. His boyish charm extended to the bedroom scene in Romeo and Juliet for which he was sporting some racy patterned boxer shorts – full-frontal puppet nudity remains, for the moment, the domain of Avenue Q.

We had a quick chat with Nicolas during the interval and asked him if all the puppets were made on the premises.

“Absolutely.” he confirmed. “A carpenter sculpts the hands and feet, a dressmaker creates the costumes and I assemble the whole body. We create new figures and costumes for each play, in total we have over 1300 puppets.” They are beautiful things and I wondered if any of them were for sale. “No, not really,” replied Nicolas, “although we maybe will sell one or two a year for about €600.”

The plays are performed in French, but in a Brussels dialect which will leave some gaps in your understanding even if your French is excellent. A lot of the jokes and references, even if you understand all the words are also local, so will tend to go above your head. However, despite the performance being full-length, with an interval during which one can buy a beer in the wonderful first-floor museum, I was never less than enthralled by the whole thing. Apparently

the shows can be performed in English, if you can get enough people together.

If you like puppets, things old-fashioned, thick layers of patina, dusty attics and unashamed eccentricity then Théâtre Royal de Toone in Brussels is just the sort of place for which you will want to make a beeline if you are ever in the Belgian capital. Not to be missed □

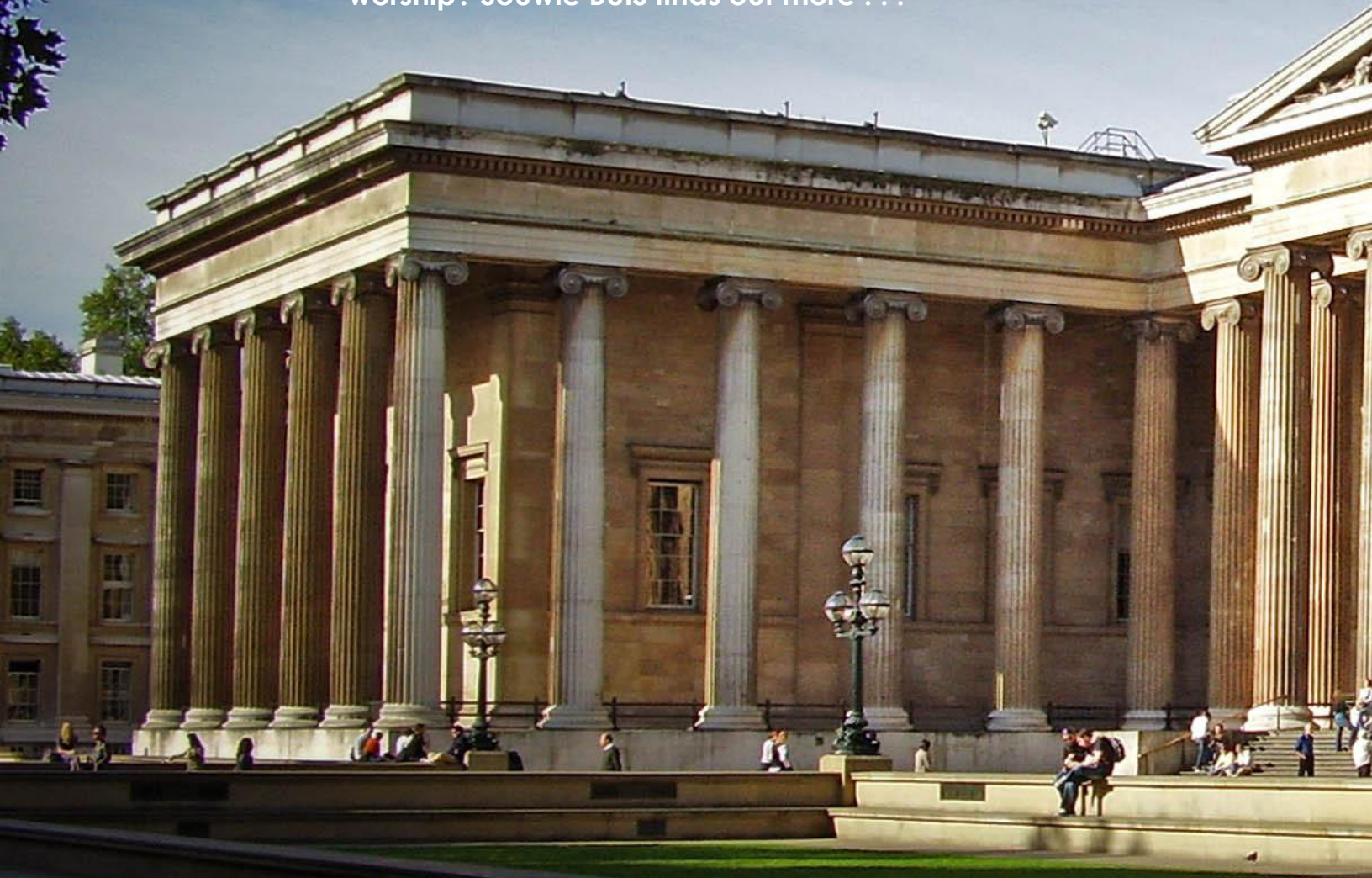


José Géal, Toone VII, holding the theatre's leading man, Woltje

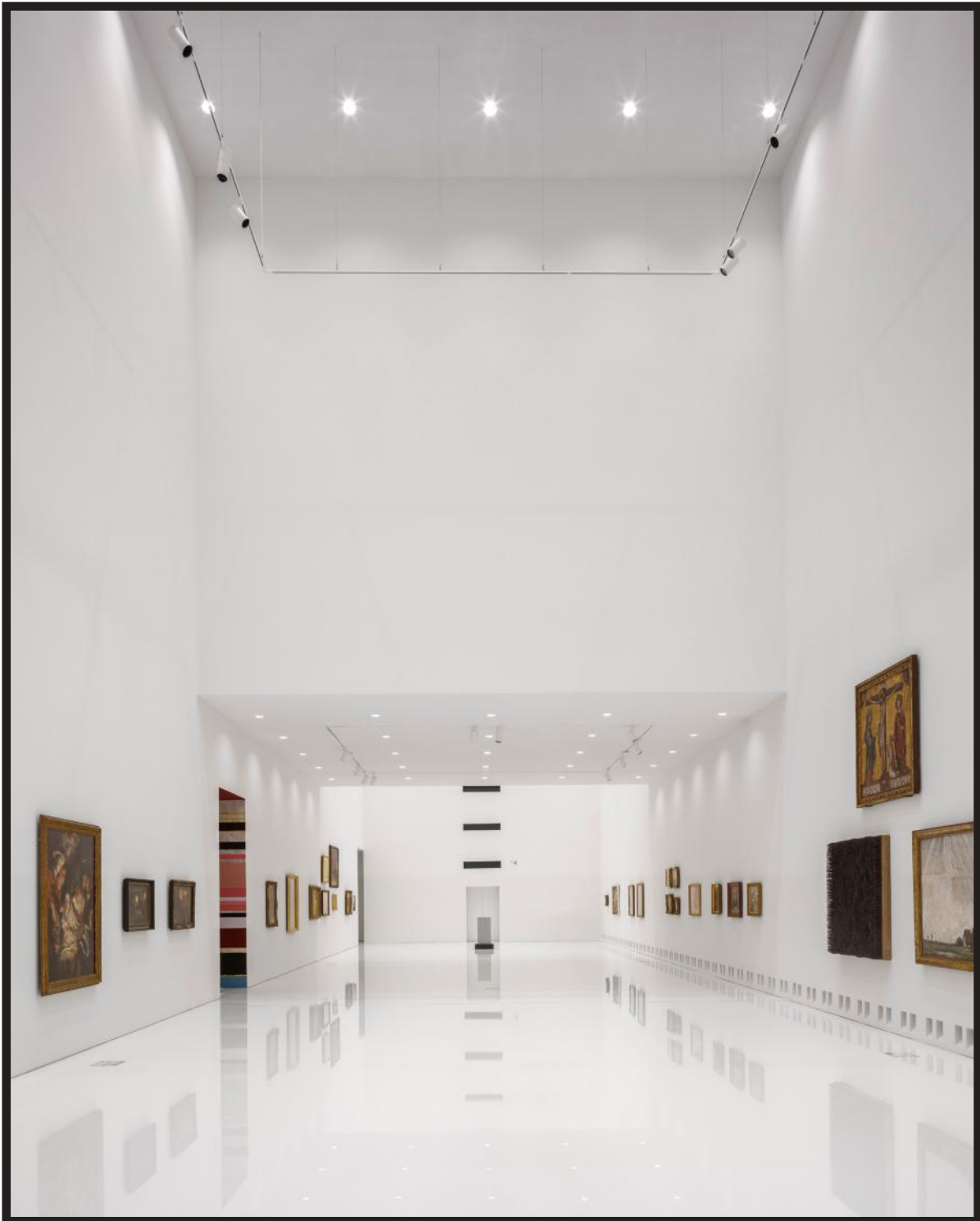
Museums

Modern Day Mausoleums to Centuries of Fine Art?

Fine art is more and more considered a commodity to be traded, its value to be calculated in dollars, not artistic merit. In November 2022 the largest art sale in history took place as dozens of art works belonging to the late Microsoft co-founder, Paul Allen, were auctioned for a record \$1.5 billion at Christie's in New York. How did art work acquire such value and what role do museums play in facilitating this modern form of secular worship? Souwie BUIS finds out more . . .







Interior of the recently renovated Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp.
Photo by Karin BORGHOOTS

The original meaning of 'museum' was a study or library. The British Museum, for instance, was established with an antiquarian collection, bequeathed by Sir John Soane in 1753, and was the first national museum open to the public. While the Louvre in France was opened in 1793 after the Revolution, displaying paintings confiscated from the Church and royal property. The 18th century saw the nationalisation of many royal art collections throughout Europe. While in America, several large art museums were financed by donations from its many millionaires. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was set up by the New York State Legislature in 1870 as a city museum and library of art.

Each year, millions visit these hallowed spaces, a pilgrimage to culture and national pride. Yet, research shows that the average museum-goer spends under half a minute looking at a great work of art. If we're honest, there is something overwhelming about gallery upon gallery of art works that all require our rapt attention, all within the space of a few hours. Are the great works of art, really designed to be appreciated in this manner?

One of the most significant recent events in the landscape of European museums was the reopening in September 2022 of The Royal Museum of Fine Arts (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen - KMSKA) in Antwerp after an eleven year closure for renovation. The museum originally opened in 1890 and was

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The Drawing Office at the
Sir John Soane Museum in London



modelled on an ancient Greek temple. The large neoclassical building houses two and a half kilometres of galleries and currently has more than six hundred works on display. In ancient times, art work was largely there for the glorification of kings and rulers. It also adorned religious temples and places of worship. There was something organic in this sense, about the context in which great works of art were viewed and admired. But with the rise of science and the secular nation state, along with the spoils of colonialism, the idea of the museum was born. In a recent interview for *The Guardian*, Director of KMSKA, Carmen Willems admits that for many, visiting the museum is “a challenge”.

A focus on interaction and what Willems describes as slowing “the tempo of looking at art” are now increasingly common in large museums around the world. There is also the question of value. Works by the world’s most renowned artists now fetch eye-watering prices on the private art market. Cezanne’s *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* recently sold for a record \$137.8m while Van Gogh’s *Verger avec cyprès* fetched a staggering \$117.3m – the highest ever for a Van Gogh painting. High value art is now seen as a hedge against inflation and more secure than the stock market or crypto currencies. Many of these works however, have been bought for private display, or perhaps simply safe-keeping in a state-of-the-art security facility.

What of the joy and wonder of a work of art designed to reflect, celebrate or question some aspect of human endeavour? Can one really appreciate the Elgin Marbles, carefully displayed in a sterilized corner of the British Museum, when they were clearly designed to celebrate the power and glory of an ancient King on the dusty heights of the Acropolis? Should we be re-thinking the way we view art works altogether – not as priceless treasures, kept under lock and key, but rather as creations that gain significance from the contexts in which they were first imagined? Works of wonder that should be copied and shared, not stored and sanitized for the box-tickers □



Luxembourg artist

ERIC MANGEN

Astrid BURCHARDT

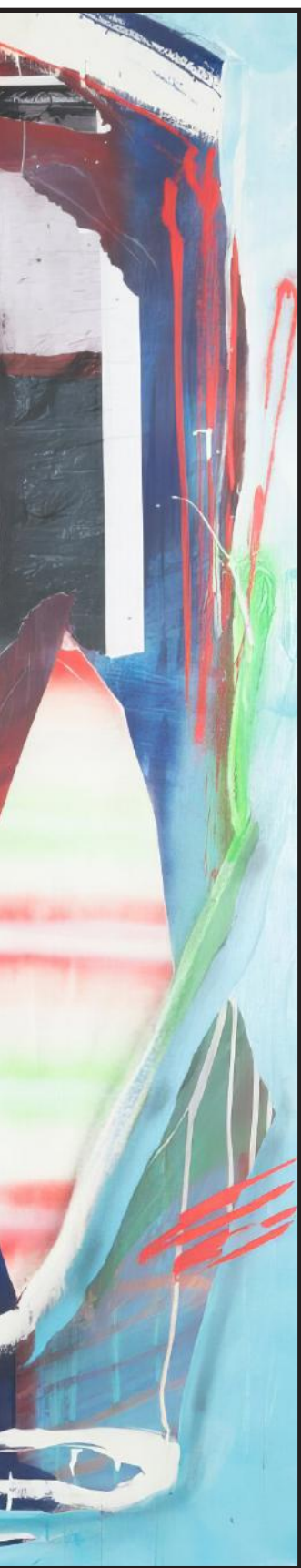
For some time now I have become rather disillusioned, to put it mildly, when ambling through enormous art fairs only to be confronted with work which ranges from gimmicky to bland and insipid – the ubiquitous deathly faint- coloured square canvases posing as ‘art of our time’ or canvases covered in no more than parallel coloured lines. My reaction to these is “So what? You can draw straight lines, now what?”

In the recent Art Rotterdam however there was a refreshing and encouraging reappearance of real painting. The outstanding example of this was the work of forty-one year-old Eric Mangen from Luxembourg. His work is explosive energetic and most definitely alive. His gestural, bold abstract work is not far removed from Willem de Kooning, one of the greatest painters of the 20th century.





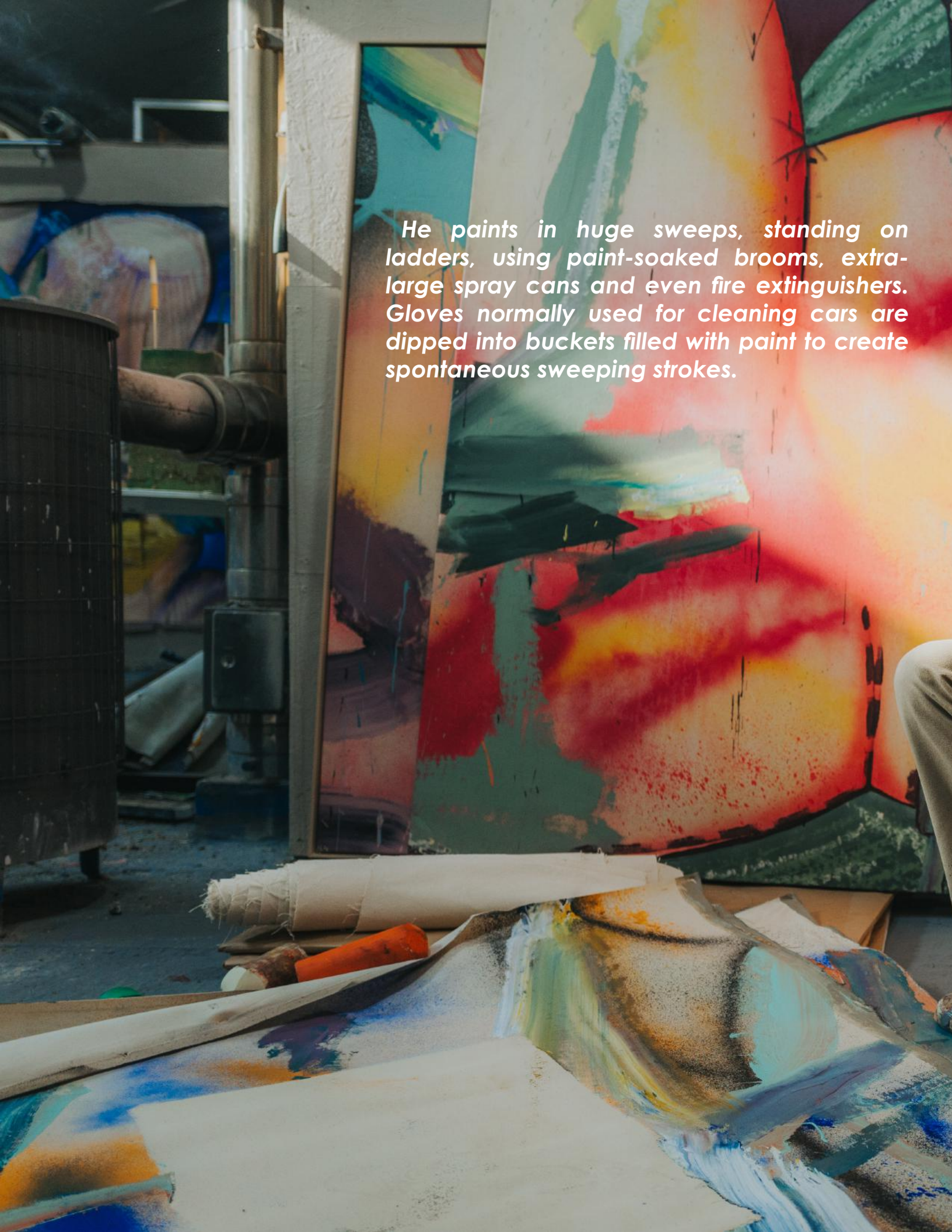
Eric MANGÉN. *Everybody Had a Role, Mine Was to Leave* Mixed media on canvas 155x163 cms. 2020, New York



Mangen's work – often large format, explode in bold colours and shapes, all of which seem totally spontaneous. I wasn't surprised to learn that he started out as a graffiti artist - it is obvious that as a result he is neither afraid to work at speed and most definitely not afraid of large surfaces. He paints in huge sweeps, standing on ladders, using paint-soaked brooms, extra-large spray cans and even fire extinguishers. Gloves normally used for cleaning cars are dipped into buckets filled with paint to create spontaneous sweeping strokes. Some of his works seem to be the result of a muscular dance.

Eric Mangen is fortunate in that he was able to build a fairly enormous studio on his parents' farm in Luxembourg where he also offers residencies to other artists. In recent years he has worked in Australia, New York among others, exhibited worldwide and created giant murals in Barcelona, Berlin, Paris and even Bosnia □

American Paintings - In summer 2018, for twenty-three days, day in day out, Eric Mangen painted during his stay in the United States. The *American Paintings* series reflect this frenetic period, highlighted by bold colours and fast movements. In Greensboro he was hired to paint a wall with a fire truck filled with 400 litres of paint. There, he set up a temporary studio for 10 days. Later in New York, having no access to a studio, Eric decided to paint his canvases straight on the street. Some of these paintings have been stolen, written on or ripped overnight. The last works that mark the end from this intense experience are two monochrome paintings.



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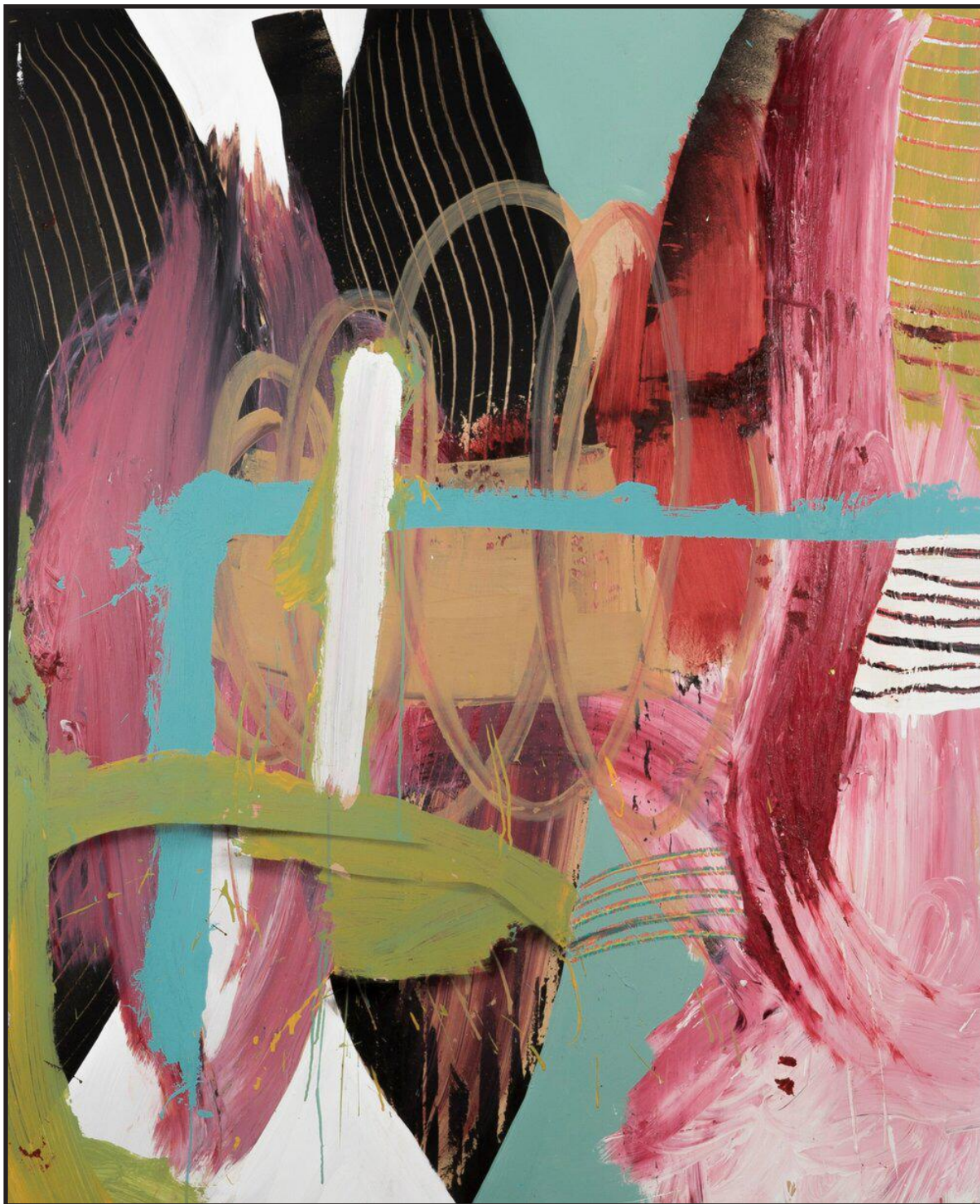


Eric Mangel in his Luxembourg studio, March 2024.
Photo by and © Tom Jungbluth





Eric MANGEN *Sacred Monsters 1*. Acrylic, oilstick, spray paint on unstretched canvas
(detail - part of an installation) 2023
Shown by Valerius Gallery, Luxembourg at Art Rotterdam 2024. Photo Michael Hasted



Eric MANGEN *Blockbuster Boy* Mixed media on canvas 170x140 cms. 2020 Luxembourg

Tetrapack Series - In the continuation of researching new painting supports, Eric Mangen develops a series he entitles Tetrapack, the name of the chosen material. The brown colour of the background introduces a more natural component combined with acrylic and oil sticks. Black is a predominant element in the series. An unusual tool, the rake, was used to create a structure within the surface.



Eric MANGEN *Human Interest* Mixed media on canvas 170 x 140 cms. 2020 Luxembourg

Eric Mangen's paintings can be seen at the Valerius Gallery in Luxemboug

BEYOND SPACE & TIME

**Yannik EISENÄEGER takes a closer look
at Richard Wagner's PARSIFAL**



The 2022 production of *Parsifal* at
Bayerische Staatsoper Munich.
Photo by Wilfried Hösl







Parsifal at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Photo by Jovanovich-Groissboeck

Many performances promise transcending experiences in their advertising. Reviewers throw the term around when they rapturously praise a performance, exalting the efforts of those involved into the dimension that we – as goes the term – cannot perceive in our own bland material world of space and time.

The genre of opera, with its blockbuster combination of orchestral sound, solo and choral singing and the enticing visuals of the stage, seems predestined to give us an experience that gets us close to that elusive state of transcendence.

There is an opera that goes further and gives us more a transcendent experience than most others. It is specifically designed to get us to a state of transcendence in a different way than such grand and popular operas as *Tosca*, *La Boheme* or *Carmen*.

Wagner's *Parsifal* is that elusive, sophisticated piece that can take you on a journey that no other piece of music theatre can. Often performed at Easter (and having just completed prominent runs at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Bayerische Staatsoper München), *Parsifal* fans are now looking forward to coming performances at the holy shrine of Wagnerian opera, the Bayreuth Festival, where *Parsifal* was premiered in 1882.

Wagner designed this experience when he already sought to change how opera reached our eyes. He wanted *Parsifal* to be played under the closed lid of the Bayreuth orchestra pit, with the orchestra well out of sight. The listener wasn't to be distracted by such mundane sights as a conductor giving a downbeat or the bows of the string section racing up and down. Wagner wanted the singular focus on the events on stage, the production of music was made invisible. Without knowing it, Wagner had invented the immersive experience of the cinema.

Parsifal does not function like say, Puccini's *Tosca*, a straight-forward thriller. While *Parsifal* does feature a linear plot with chronological events, it moves differently. *Tosca*'s events follow one another at speed with straightforward characters and simple journeys. The character's journeys in *Parsifal* require a different musical approach. This is most clearly visible in the character of Kundry – the female lead –, who goes through a redemptive arch from being cursed to wander the earth after laughing at Jesus



carrying the cross to realising that compassion and forgiveness to oneself and others lead to salvation.

The music reflects the magnitude and weight of those changes. Veteran Wagner conductor Christian Thielemann connects *Parsifal's* music to the romantic sensibility that Wagner had already explored in his prelude to *Lohengrin* – strings that create opaque textures, comforting woodwinds and a strong brass and percussion to accentuate the climaxes. *Parsifal* adds bells for the entry into the temple of the mystical grail-society, as well as layering the choirs into different levels in the hall: the men on stage, the women as literal voices from above.

From the long-breathed opening theme in the Prelude to the transformation music and long choral passages in the Act 1 ritual, the piece is filled with long moments of emotional, musical contemplation that – when production, singers and orchestra find a common ground – move together to create that transcendent experience that lets five hours go by a lot quicker than you would think. It simply takes some knowledge and readiness for what is about to hit you □

Yannik Eisenaecher studied Liberal Arts and Sciences at Leiden University College The Hague. After majoring in World Politics and Journalism he moved to Berlin where he interned at the Berlin State Opera and assisted Thomas Guggeis at the Pierre Boulez Saal. In 2021, Yannik started a Master's degree in Opera and Performance at the University of Bayreuth and regularly writes about opera performances in Berlin, Dresden, Munich, etc.



The 2022 production of *Parsifal* at Bayerische Staatsoper Munich.
Photo by Wilfried Hösl





Bluey's Big Play

**The stage version of the
phenomenally successful
kid's TV show is currently
on tour in the UK**



Since launching in Australia in 2018, *Bluey* has gained millions of fans around the world, ranks as the number 1 show on CBeebies in the UK and has been streamed over 450 million times since it launched on BBC iPlayer. It's also had an incredible 5.7 billion lifetime views across its official *Bluey* YouTube channel portfolio. Now, fresh from tours of Australia and the U.S., the worldwide *Bluey* phenomenon is coming to theatres around the UK.

As the first-ever stage adaptation of the hugely successful animated Australian children's TV show, *Bluey's Big Play* expands the seven-minute episode format into a fully-fledged theatrical production with a script by *Bluey* creator Joe Brumm, new music by Joff Bush (who also scores the TV version) and pre-recorded voices by original cast members, including Dave McCormack as Bandit and Melanie Zanetti as Chilli.

Moveable sets and actor-controlled puppets bring the story and characters to life, with director Rose Myers explaining: "We very much wanted to represent the world of *Bluey* because when people come to this show they want to see *Bluey* on stage and to be in the room with her and her family."

Since it first began airing in 2018, the series has centred around the idea of imaginative play with brilliantly-observed moments of modern family life. *Bluey's Big Play* reflects those themes with a story about *Bluey's* mum Chilli and her relationship with her sister, which is weaved into the relationship between sisters *Bluey* and *Bingo*, as well as a plot line about dad *Bandit* spending too much time on his phone when he should be playing with his kids.

With the live show, which toured Australia in 2021 and America the following year, the decision was made to use larger-than-life puppets. "The show is playing in large spaces,"

Rose elaborates, "and you want the kids at the back to have a great experience, so the puppets are quite large."

The creators have weaved in some fan-favourite moments from the small screen. "And there are a lot of the games that the kids know from TV," Myers adds, "as well as audience participation to keep them really engaged. It's got something for the kids and it's also got something for the adults. There's a lot of artistry to the TV show and we translate that into a beautiful piece of theatre."

As one of the first shows to open after the pandemic, *Bluey's Big Play* was rapturously received by audiences coming out of the world's longest lockdown. It was also a sold-out sensation in the States and Myers was blown away by the reaction to it when it played at London's Royal Festival Hall over Christmas, ahead of the tour moving on to several other venues across the UK and Ireland: "When we got to London we thought 'Will the audience be a bit more refined and conservative?' but that wasn't the case at all. The UK and Ireland has that panto culture, so they were really vocal in their responses."

As for what she hopes people will take away from seeing the play as it now makes its way around the country, she smiles: "This is an example of a pretty happy family and they're a great source of joy for audiences. You see parents with their kids, all of them engaged and enjoying the show, and the cast walk out on stage like they're rock stars because there's so much love for *Bluey* and her family. It's about the love between family members and about taking those special moments to be together and enjoy them." □

Bluey's Big Play is touring throughout the UK until August

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