

# ARTS TALK

## *Colour Supplement*

Number 25

November 2024



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A lot of dance this month. We review Kalpanarts *Trust* and ICK's *Alphabets of Flesh* and we preview the reprise of Scapino Ballet's *Cathedral*. A couple of completely different exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Den Haag - Dior and *Grand Dessert*. We also have pieces on two events which look a bit eccentric - at The Depot in Rotterdam artist Alicia Framis will be marrying her hologram fiancé who was created by AI, and we are at Mauritshuis in The Hague to see exhibits from the museum's former Royal Cabinet of Rarities.

Michael HASTED  
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Scapino Ballet's *Cathedral*.  
Photo by Hans GERRITSEN



# Contents

Trust by  
Kalpanarts  
on tour



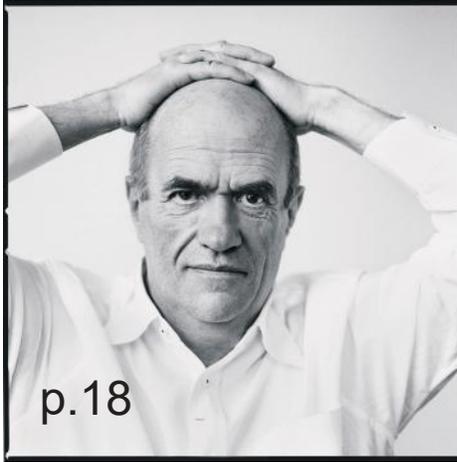
p.4

DIOR A New Look at  
Kunstmuseum Den  
Haag



p.8

Colm Tóibín at  
Border Kitchen in The  
Hague



p.18



p.22

The Lost Museum at  
Mauritshuis in  
The Hague

Scapino Ballet's  
Cathedral.



p.30

p.16



The Hybrid Couple at The Depot at  
Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Grand Dessert at  
Kunstmuseum Den Haag

p.34



p.40

Alphabets  
of Flesh by  
ICK

# TRUST

The new piece by KALPANARTS will be touring until the middle of January. ArtsTalk's Eva LAKEMAN was at the premiere at Korzo Theater in The Hague

Photos by Bowie VERSCHUUREN

A strong smell of incense fills the room. The lights dim and the piece begins. Six visibly distressed performers walk out of the shadows to the rhythmic beat of Simone Giacomini's musical composition. They wander around cautiously, taking small, uncertain steps as they explore this strange, new environment. Despite their different backgrounds, they appear unusually uniform in their neutral grey clothing. Though their brief, awkward glances at each other suggest they are unacquainted.

"Do we dare to trust in a world of mistrust?" That was the question on Kalpana Raghuraman's mind when she created *Trust*. Raghuraman has been the artistic director and choreographer of The Hague-based contemporary dance company Kalpanarts since 2015. With the company, she merges Indian traditional dance styles with urban influences to address contemporary social issues. The result? An intricately choreographed wake-up call about the dynamics of our ever-diversifying society.



The cast of *Trust* consists of five dancers who are guided by the entrancing voice of Spanish singer Paloma Lazaro Arteaga. The whole production reminded me of a form of ceremonial dance with Arteaga's chanting adding to the ritualistic atmosphere. The dancers performed sacred gestures (mudras), facial expressions (bhava), and rhythmic footwork in a highly stylised dance that often imitated the movement of animals and elements of nature. Throughout the piece, the dancers performed a series of duets illustrating how trust can be established, broken and rebuilt, reflecting how we form relationships in the modern world.

A particular moment that stood out to me was when the six performers sat together facing the audience and began to distort their faces into extremely unsettling expressions of fear, sorrow, anger, horror and ambivalence. These powerful emotions are typically related to the experience of moving to a new place and adapting to its traditions and customs.

*Trust* embodies the essence of Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky's assertion that "each of us is responsible for everything and to every human being." Through artistic expression, *Trust* invites us to reflect on our shared humanity in order to culturally coexist in our increasingly multicultural society □

*Trust* continues on tour until 18th January 2025



# DIOR

## *A New Look*







**We previewed *Dior – A New Look* at Kunstmuseum in The Hague in our September edition. The exhibition is now running and Astrid BURCHARDT went to see it accompanied by Michael HASTED who took the photographs.**

**D**ior, Chanel, maybe Versace – you can't turn the corner of a street without seeing a cheap T-shirt with one or the other name emblazoned on it. Last week I even heard a rapper say his name was Dior.

What do these 'fashion lovers' actually know of the perseverance, vision, self-belief and sheer hard work it took to propel the name Dior, in this case, to such fame. Without any of the above talent is not much use. The ten-year-old Christian Dior was passionate about drawing and art so he started to sell his 'fashion drawings' in the street outside his father's house. His parents probably hoped this was just the child's passing phase. Even when I was in school in rural France the bourgeoisie exerted huge pressure, mainly on their sons, to become *avocats* (lawyers) or magistrates or – even better, diplomats.

Young Christian persevered with his dream and before he was twenty he was spotted by the influential and charismatic Robert Piguet who took him, as well as Hubert de Givenchy, under his wing. And the rest is history. 'Robert Piguet' Dior said, 'taught me the virtues of simplicity through which true elegance must come.'

The Kunstmuseum Den Haag has mounted this superlative exhibitions of not only the original creations of Christian Dior himself, the go-to designer for Royalty and superstars, but also of those whose careers were launched into the fashion big time who followed him as creative directors after his death – Yves Saint Laurent, Marc Bohan, Gianfranco Ferré, John Galliano, and more recently the first female director, Maria Grazia Chiuri. Each of





*... none has surpassed Dior's original 'New Look', the tightly tailored and thinly belted cream jacket atop either a black full mid-calf or the slimmest of black pencil skirt – the perfect elegance through simplicity.*



Roberta di moda  
modello "The Queen"  
Roberta di moda  
modello "The Queen"



Roberta di moda  
modello "The Queen"  
Roberta di moda  
modello "The Queen"



these had significant impact but none has surpassed Dior's original 'New Look', the tightly tailored and thinly belted cream jacket atop either a black full mid-calf or the slimmest of black pencil skirt – the perfect elegance through simplicity. Such was Dior's 'New Look' influence that my refugee mother, without a cent to her name after the war, brought home a French uniform jacket from the Red Cross and tailored herself such a jacket. She wore it with a black pencil skirt – and looked fabulous.

During the war years dress material had been in short supply, giving women a boxy look and knee-length skirts. Now Dior now had the luxury of an ample supply of cloth. His talent for extravagantly draped rich materials is unequalled. He designed a skirt in panels called 'the windmill' skirt. A large supersize black coat was based on the huge, rough woollen winter cape-like coats mountain shepherds wore. He was inspired by all and everything. The simplicity of some of his most beautiful creations borders on genius.

Each of Dior's followers gradually lost some of this effortless elegance until John Galliano used his Dior platform for his personal fantasies. His section, all tinsel and glitter was, for me, the weakest. It seemed to have retained nothing of the purity of Dior. But now things are looking up with the arrival of Maria Grazia Chiuri whose mission is to design clothes in which the body feels good.

An Indian friend once told me that when her mother's neighbour was pregnant she pointed to her bulging frontage saying, "There is a doctor in there". We must be grateful that Dior did not succumb to his father's wishes to become a lawyer, judge, diplomat – or even Président de la République. Instead he inspired women with his exquisite creations.

All the designs are wonderfully staged with some of the fascinating work processes shown. There are early drawings, photos of how and where Dior worked, some fascinating early film of his models and a superbly displayed collection of jewellery, handbags and other bits and pieces □

*Dior – A New Look* continues at Kunstmuseum in The Hague until 26th January.

# The HYBRID COUPLE are getting married

**Alicia Framis and Ailex will tie the knot at The Depot at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, and we are all invited . . .**

**O**n Saturday, 9th November artist Alicia Framis will marry Ailex, an interactive hologram powered by Artificial Intelligence. Never before – neither in The Netherlands nor the rest of the world – has a woman married an intelligent hologram. The marriage raises many questions about the future of our relationship with technology.

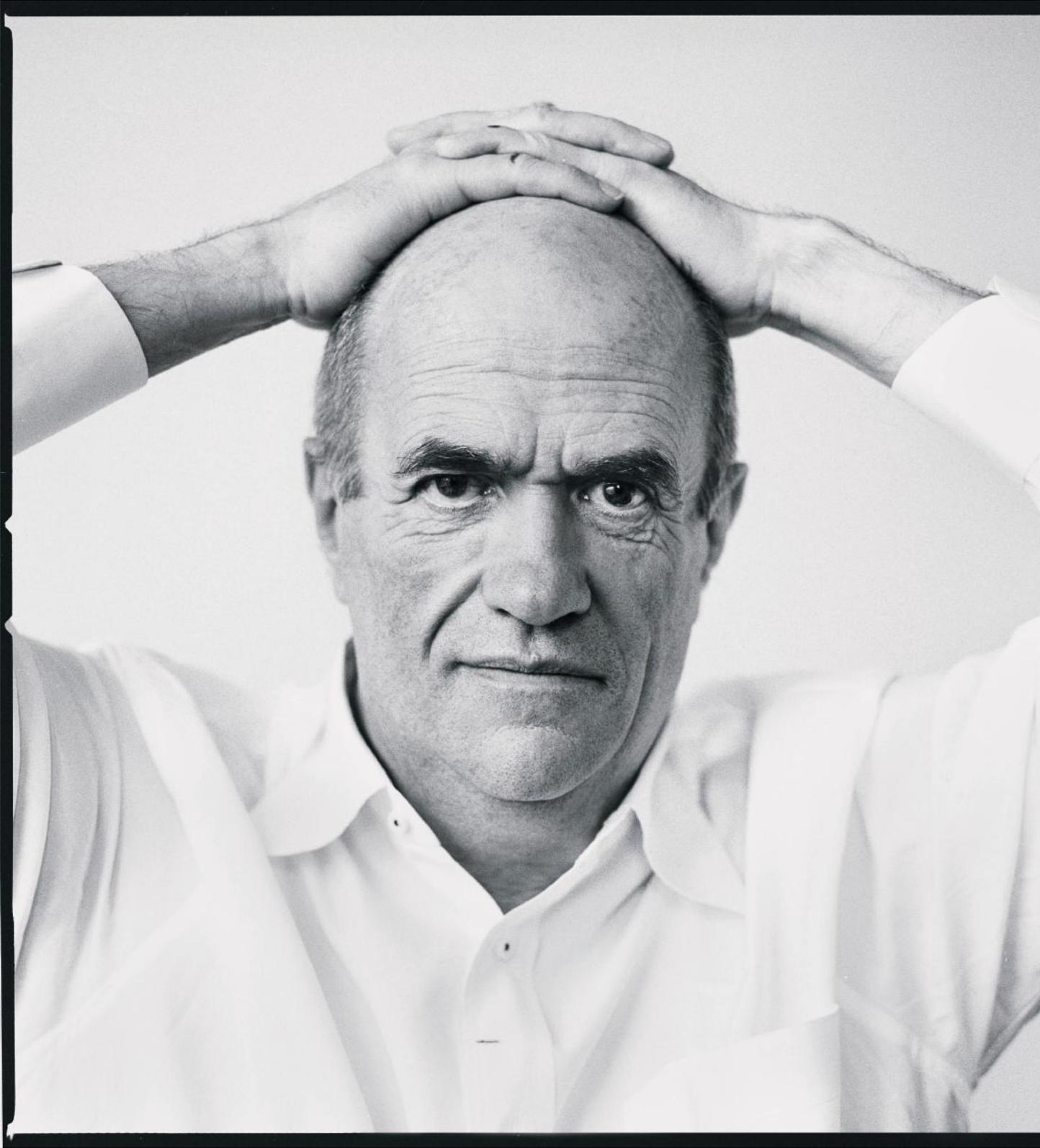
It will be a wedding ceremony with all the bells and whistles you'd expect, including a wedding dress with wow factor designed and worn by Alicia, made for the occasion by Jan Taminiau, one of the most successful couturiers in The Netherlands.

Alicia Framis and Ailex have been 'The Hybrid Couple' for quite some time now – an experimental partnership that explores the boundaries and relationships between humans and technology. Ailex is an AI creation that combines characteristics of three of Framis' ex-partners. This extraordinary pairing shares the same joys and sorrows of any 'normal' couple: from daily chores and housework to the forging of a unique emotional bond. It's the romantic relationship that forms the core of this very personal artistic project.

This marriage is not only an artistic performance, but also an exploration of some crucial questions for our modern times. What role can AI play in a person's emotional life? Is technology the key to happiness? Can AI meet the emotional conditions necessary for a good marriage? What are the power dynamics between humans and technology within this relationship? It is not clear if the couple are planning to have a family □

Image by Studio Framis







# COLM TÓIBÍN

The distinguished Irish writer was a guest at Border Kitchen in The Hague. ArtsTalk's Eva LAKEMAN was there

Photo by and © Brigitte Lacombe

At the Centrale Bibliotheek in The Hague, Border Kitchen hosted a talk with the esteemed Irish novelist, essayist, and literary critic Colm Tóibín. I had the pleasure of attending this intimate gathering, where Tóibín took time to discuss his latest book, *Long Island*, the sequel to his award-winning novel, *Brooklyn*.

Tóibín opened the door to his latest work with a moment of sharp clarity. The protagonist, Eilis Fiorelli, answers a knock at the door that disrupts her quiet life - a man stands there with news that her husband has impregnated his wife and that he plans to leave the child on her doorstep. The weight of this revelation hangs in the

Bestselling author of *Brooklyn*

Colm  
Tóibín  
Long  
Island



air, thick and suffocating. It felt like a deliberate choice, a catalyst that sends Eilis spiralling, a young woman now confronting a reality far removed from her earlier, more timid existence.

The evening's event felt intimate, despite the full audience. Tóibín has a knack for rendering complex ideas about writing and identity into something tangible, something we can hold. He talked about how he often starts his novels with a question - "What if?" - a question that opens up infinite possibilities. This inquiry is not merely a tool but a doorway, an invitation to explore the nuances of his characters and the emotional landscapes they inhabit. It is an invitation to the reader as well, to engage with their own what-ifs, the personal conjectures that linger beneath the surface of our lives.

In his reflections, Tóibín offered more than just insights into his own work; he held up a mirror to literature itself, revealing its power to transform the personal into the universal. He spoke of the necessity of stories, how they bind us, how they carry the weight of our collective experiences.

His words lingered long after the event, leaving me with a renewed sense of purpose: to delve deeper into the narratives that shape our lives and to contemplate the essential questions that propel us forward.

In that room, with Tóibín's Irish accent cutting through the air, I was reminded of the significance of literature - not just as an escape but as a means to confront our realities, to interrogate the stories we tell ourselves, and to recognize the threads that connect us all □



China (Canton), Ball containing eight smaller balls with openwork geometrical patterns, c.1770-1780. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

# **THE LOST MUSEUM at Mauritshuis in The Hague**

*Het Verdvenen Museum (The Lost Museum)* is an exhibition featuring more than one hundred and twenty objects from the Royal Cabinet of Rarities which was on display in the Mauritshuis between 1822 and 1875





Japan, Flagpole from the model of Deshima with the Dutch flag, c.1817-1818. Wereldmuseum, Leiden.

**I**t was a museum with thousands of objects from around the world. The rooms were stuffed full of exhibits . . .

Visitors to the current exhibition will discover all kinds of items that were once displayed there, including jewellery, dolls, vases, scent bottles, suits of armour, weapons, a pagoda and even plaits of hair. *The Lost Museum* will also take a critical look at the rich but often complex history of the collection and its influence on the present. How and why did people collect objects? What stories were told about them, and were they true?

What did the Royal Cabinet of Rarities look like? Display cases full of objects related to subjects like Dutch history, China, Japan, origins and ethnology will give an impression of what was on display. Besides the objects from other countries and cultures, Dutch history also featured prominently. Dutch culture and its past was extolled, particularly in comparison with other cultures. Stories were exaggerated and deployed as disinformation to evoke national pride.

Visitors will, for example, be able to see plaits of hair from Prince William IV (1711-1751) and Jacoba of Bavaria, Countess of Holland (1401-1436). William IV's hair is genuine. It was taken by his son, *stadtholder* William V when he was forced to The Netherlands as the French revolutionary army invaded in 1795. Jacoba's locks are said to have been found during excavations in the Binnenhof in 1770, though there is no evidence that her grave was there. Nevertheless, this plait became an ingredient of myth-making and national pride. The hair of both these individuals was a tangible reminder of the

Holland's famous past and the power of the House of Orange at a time when the country was a new kingdom, and had only its 'glorious' past to look to for examples of success.

This monstrous creature is a ningyo - literally 'human-fish' or mermaid. It is made up of a salmon's tail, monkey skin and a dog's jaw, among other things. Mermaids have featured in Japanese culture for centuries and were attributed special powers, such as bringing good luck or immortality. In both Japan and Europe, they were eagerly collected and displayed as special features. Over the centuries, Europeans paid huge sums of money for supposedly 'real' mermaids.

An impressive, six-metre-long model of the artificial island of Deshima stood in the Japanese room. For centuries, The Netherlands was the only European country to trade with Japan, from this island. This model of the island, comprising almost 200 parts, including homes, warehouses, gardens and a flagpole, gave a detailed impression of Deshima in the 19th century. The country's trading relations with Japan were greatly exaggerated at the Cabinet of Rarities in order to prompt a sense of pride among visitors. The Dutch presence in Japan was presented as much greater than it actually was. Though Deshima appeared to be an entire continent as presented in the Cabinet, in reality the island measured only 214 by sixty-four metres.

Back then, visitors could marvel at ivory Chinese 'puzzle balls', which showcased the sophistication of Chinese craftsmanship. This one, dated around



Hair van  
Prins William IV

The Netherlands, *Eight Locks of Hair of Prince William IV*, c.1700-in or before 1751. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

***This monstrous creature is a ningyo - literally a 'human-fish' or mermaid. It is made up of a salmon's tail, monkey skin and a dog's jaw, among other things . . .***





Japan, *Mermaid*, c.1800-1830. Wereldmuseum, Leiden



1770-1780, has nine layers and fourteen peepholes. The balls inside can be rotated relative to one another using a pin, to reveal the secrets of this ivory 'collector's item'. Such puzzle balls were intended mainly to astound the public. They could barely imagine that such a thing could be made, so they were often dubbed the 'devil's work'.

It is not known how the rooms occupied by the Cabinet of Rarities were arranged. There is only one image, showing visitors on a guided tour led by caretaker Hendrick Hentzepeter (1781-1845). The 1843 print shows a Chinese pagoda, a doll in traditional dress and a porcelain vase. Thanks to the 1824 guide we do know how the collection was divided among the different rooms in the Cabinet of Rarities. The first two were full of Chinese objects, including porcelain vases, ivory objects and everyday items. The third and largest room was dedicated to Japan, with the large model of the island of Deshima as the eye-catching centrepiece. The fourth room contained objects from all over the world. Objects from different cultures were placed in juxtaposition, in order to compare cultures. The first director of the museum, Reinier Pieter van de Kastelee, hoped in this way to reveal the development of 'civilisation'. He ranked cultures on a ladder, with European culture as the 'highest-ranking'. The final room stoked national pride even further with objects that referred to the history of the 'fatherland', the royal family and stadtholders of the past. The goal was to ensure that visitors left the Cabinet of Rarities with the inspiring stories of their 'great ancestors' fresh in their minds, and a sense of renewed national self-worth.

The Royal Cabinet of Rarities closed its doors for the last time in 1883, having existed for 60 years. It closed following criticism of the 'chaotic presentation' and 'lack of focus on the story of The Netherlands'. Although the objects left the Mauritshuis, the 19th-century world view, influenced by colonialism and nationalism, persisted.

In this exhibition, the Mauritshuis reflects on this past from a present day perspective - is the lost museum really gone? □

*Het Verdvenen Museum - The Lost Museum* continues at Mauritshuis in The Hague until 5th January 2025

# Cathedral

Rotterdam's Scapino Ballet is reviving Marcos Morau's amazing creation to the music of the celebrated Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.

First performed in 2019, *Cathedral* is a wondrous journey into the world of tomorrow and a search for what makes us human.

Photos by Hans GERRITSEN







Scapino Ballet presents a revival of the highly successful production by the Spanish choreographer and theatre maker Marcos Morau, set to the meditative music of Arvo Pärt.

Using a combination of artistic disciplines, special design and an inventive movement language, Morau is one of the most prominent dance artists in the European theatre world.

*Cathedral* shows a world in which life is dominated by digital techniques and in which we are increasingly losing each other. Using the mystical music of Arvo Pärt as a heartbeat, Morau and the dancers go in search of what makes us human and what our relationship is with nature.

Arvo Pärt was born in Estonia on 11th September 1935. He is regarded as one of the most important contemporary composers of sacred music. Estonia was part of the Soviet Union from 1944 until 1991 and his work brought him into conflict with the anti-religious Soviet regime. Pärt left his home country in 1980, living first in Vienna and later, Berlin. In 2011, he was appointed Pontifical Council for Culture by Pope Benedict XVI.

Morau and his team of Spanish artists design a retro-futuristic stage design with life-size video projections. In this alienating world, the music of Arvo Pärt offers an oasis of peace. An important part of the design is the theatrical and contemporary fashion-inspired costumes. The encounter with a metre-high meteor on stage is the enigmatic beginning of this special dance performance □

Scapino Ballet's *Cathedral* premieres in Rotterdam on 28th November and tours until the end of February 2025.



*It must  
don't*

It be Jelly 'cause jam  
It shake like that . . .

The Hague's Kunstmuseum is mounting an exhibition to celebrate all things sweet and wobbly. *Grand Dessert - The History of the Dessert* explores puddings and exotic after dinner indulgencies throughout the ages . . .





*“A dessert is more than just the ultimate ending to a meal, it reflects changes in culture, society and tastes down the centuries. You can tell a lot of stories using desserts . . . “*



Pudding buffet, with 18th century porcelain decorated in The Hague and 19th century glassware (Collection of Kunstmuseum den Haag. Photos by Alice de Groot)

*“ . . . stories about wealth and poverty, about temptation and deception, dominance and oppression, but first and foremost about love of all things sweet.”*



From the traditional Dutch 'vlaflip' to a royal dessert buffet, from baklava to a Charlotte Russe, from custard and ice cream to delicious gateaux: this winter the history and enjoyment of desserts in Europe will be the focus of a new exhibition at Kunstmuseum Den Haag. With exhibits including recipe books, baking tins, dinner services, paintings and much much more, visitors will be able to dive into the delicious world of desserts. A fun combination of art-historical objects and creative contributions from contemporary makers will make for a show full of surprises. Author and TV personality Janny van der Heijden is the guest curator of *Grand Dessert – The History of the Dessert*.

"A dessert is more than just the ultimate ending to a meal", says Van der Heijden. "It reflects changes in culture, society and tastes down the centuries. You can tell a lot of stories using desserts. Stories about wealth and poverty, about temptation and deception, dominance and oppression, but first and foremost about love of all things sweet." Along with Suzanne Lambooy, curator at Kunstmuseum Den Haag, she has been working on *Grand Dessert – The History of the Dessert*, an exhibition that will make your mouth water. "It will be a must-see for fans of art, culture and history, and for everyone with a sweet tooth. So for everyone, in fact, because who doesn't love a dessert?"

For centuries, milk puddings and custards, ice cream and cakes have been a popular way to end a meal on a sweet note. The word dessert comes from the French verb 'desservir', meaning 'to clear the table'. Dessert was served after the dinner table had been cleared.

The exhibition focuses on the enjoyment of desserts in Europe from 1600 to the present day, exploring a number of dishes including ice cream, custards, cake, fruit, desserts today, royal desserts, French and British

desserts. The colonial origins of ingredients like sugar, vanilla and cocoa, the variety of flavours and the stories behind famous desserts will also feature in the exhibition. The many stories associated with these subjects will be narrated in short videos by Janny van der Heijden and others. There will also be a gallery specially designed for children.

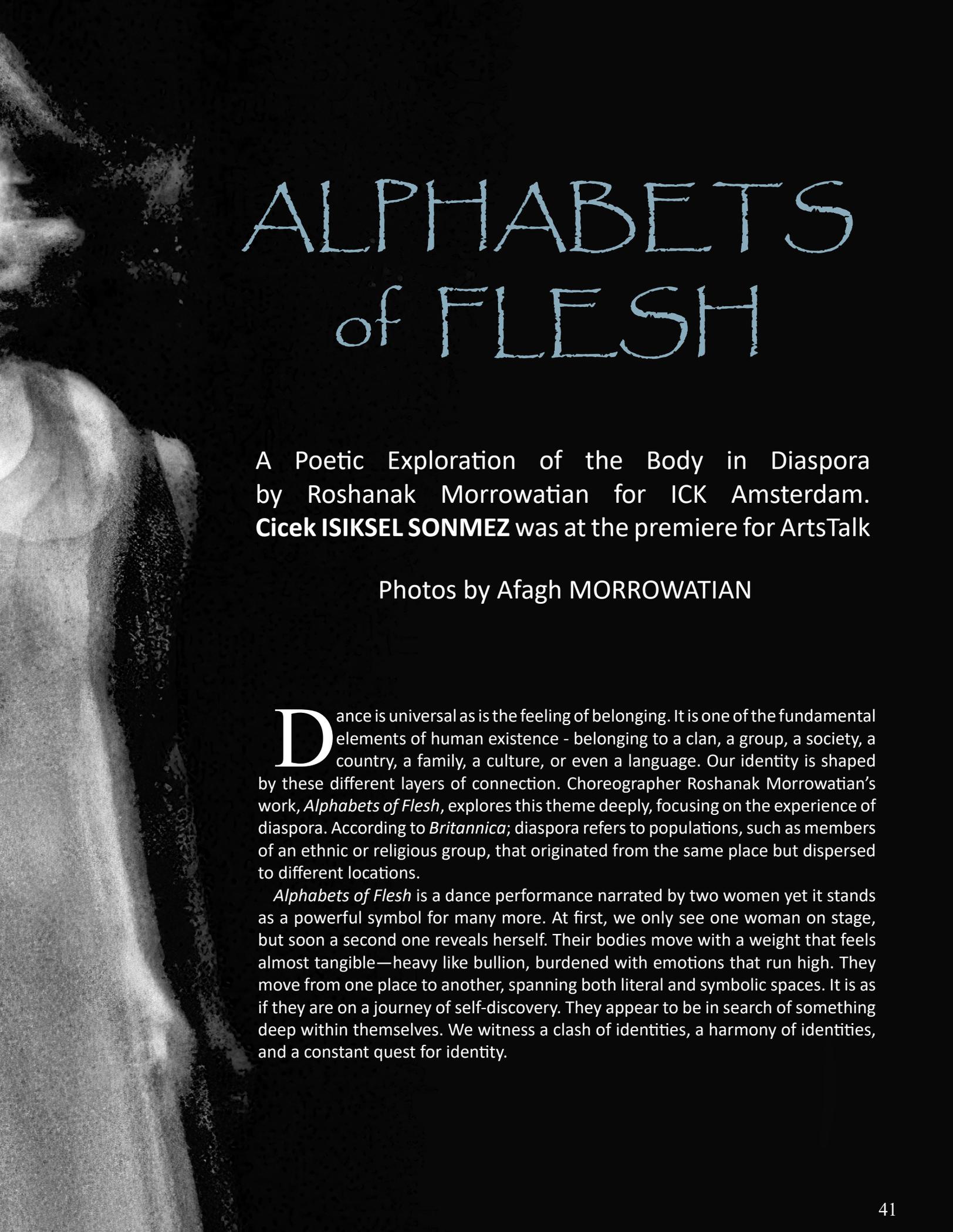
The exhibition will comprise hundreds of objects, both from Kunstmuseum Den Haag's own collection and on loan from various Dutch museums, castles and country estates and from a number of private individuals. They will range from baking tins to recipe books, from dinner services to cutlery, from ice cream moulds to menus and much much more. The exhibition is part of a series of shows at the museum on the subject of food culture. *Grand Dessert* follows on from *Dutch Dining – Four Centuries of Table Settings* in 2015/2016 which focused mainly on the serving of meals, whereas this latest edition highlighting desserts will look at both the making and serving of food and will include some surprising and unknown stories. Who knew, for example, that confectionery was a forerunner of porcelain?

Apart from viewing the beautifully presented exhibits, some of which will be displayed in the attractive Period Rooms, visitors will also be able to enjoy appropriate refreshments and a programme of activities including lectures, baking competitions, a demonstration by a leading chef and events linked to festivities like Christmas, Chinese New Year and Eid al-Fitr.

There will also be plenty to do for children with a special kids' gallery, workshops as well as other activities for all the whole family □

*Grand Dessert - The History of the Dessert* runs from 23rd November until 13th April 2025





# ALPHABETS of FLESH

A Poetic Exploration of the Body in Diaspora  
by Roshanak Morrowatian for ICK Amsterdam.  
**Cicek ISIKSEL SONMEZ** was at the premiere for ArtsTalk

Photos by Afagh MORROWATIAN

**D**ance is universal as is the feeling of belonging. It is one of the fundamental elements of human existence - belonging to a clan, a group, a society, a country, a family, a culture, or even a language. Our identity is shaped by these different layers of connection. Choreographer Roshanak Morrowatian's work, *Alphabets of Flesh*, explores this theme deeply, focusing on the experience of diaspora. According to *Britannica*; diaspora refers to populations, such as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations.

*Alphabets of Flesh* is a dance performance narrated by two women yet it stands as a powerful symbol for many more. At first, we only see one woman on stage, but soon a second one reveals herself. Their bodies move with a weight that feels almost tangible—heavy like bullion, burdened with emotions that run high. They move from one place to another, spanning both literal and symbolic spaces. It is as if they are on a journey of self-discovery. They appear to be in search of something deep within themselves. We witness a clash of identities, a harmony of identities, and a constant quest for identity.





To the music of Persia, the search for a motherland is ever present in every gesture. It is not just the physical land they are seeking, but all the memories, feelings, and attachments that define a sense of belonging. When we are displaced, where do we truly belong? Does the ache of homesickness ever disappear? At what point, if ever, do we become part of a new identity? What happens to our identity? Can it be lost, or is it merely transformed? Or, as human beings, do we simply adapt to wherever life takes us?

These are the questions that busied my mind as I watched *Alphabets of Flesh*. These are 'hard to answer' questions. It may be possible that I wouldn't have these questions if I hadn't read the booklet, but as I mentioned at the beginning, dance is a universal form of art, open to interpretation. This is how I translated the dancers' movements: a reflection of heavy, unnamed emotions.

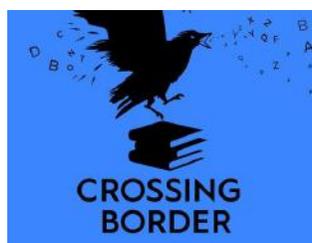
I felt the weight of loneliness, despair, the need to belong, the search for self, the fleeting images of childhood, and the bittersweet memories of the past.

Two dancers expressed these complex emotions beautifully and harshly through their bodies. Their bodies, their gazes, their breath conveyed everything. I sensed that their identities remained suspended in a state of limbo, yet at the same time, there was a sense of acceptance. By the end of the performance, she pays tribute to her ancestors while also embracing her evolving identity, acknowledging the weight of her past, but ready to build on it.

Finally, a word about the music. The score was diverse, spanning a wide range of genres, and it perfectly complemented the intensity of emotions on stage. It helped to deepen the sense of searching, of feeling and of belonging □

# Not Only, But Also

Here's a selection of events taking place this month in the Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague area including places nearby or in between



Until 2nd November

**CROSSING BORDER** Literary Festival

in The Hague



2nd November

**THIS IS JUST A SIMPLE DANCE**

at Korzo Theater in The Hague

**gregory shapiro**



Until 16th November

**GREG SHAPIRO** *Leaving Trumpland 2*

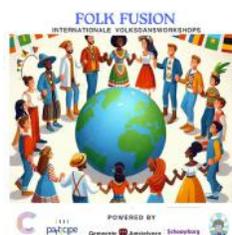
on tour



Until 17th November

**SUNDAY CONCERTS**

at Theater de Veste in Delft



16th, 23rd & 30th November

**FOLK FUSION** International Folk Dance Workshops

in Amstelveen



28th November – 19th January 2025

**AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL**

on the city's canals



28th November – 1st December

Strike Me Pink presents **MY NIGHTS WITH NOAH**

at Het Amsterdams Theaterhuis



Until 19th January

**MAARTEN VAN HEEMSKERCK**

in Haarlem and Alkmaar

**JOAN MIRÓ**  
SCULPTURES



Until 5th March 2025

**JOAN MIRÓ - SCULPTURES**

at Museum Beelden aan Zee  
in The Hague/Scheveningen



Until 16th March 2025

**ANDY WARHOL**

at Schunck Museum in Heerlen



Until 27th July 2025

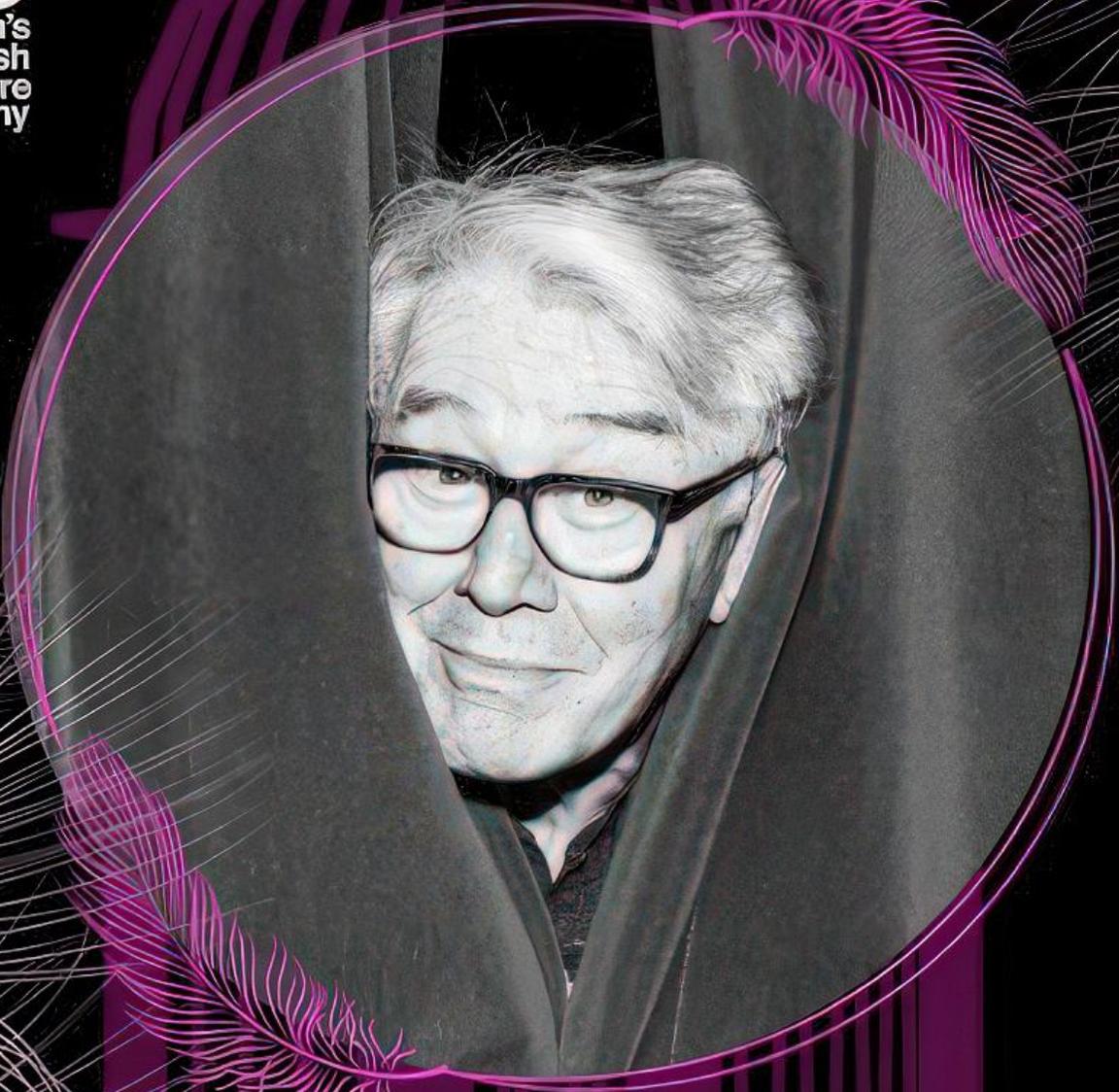
**THE WORKER'S PARADISE**

Museum Het Schip in Amsterdam

# LA CAGE

*aux Folles*

**Qetc**  
Queen's  
English  
Theatre  
Company



**GUEST STARRING BARRIE STEVENS**

*as Edouard Dindon*

at CC Amstel Theater Amsterdam 21st November - 15th December