

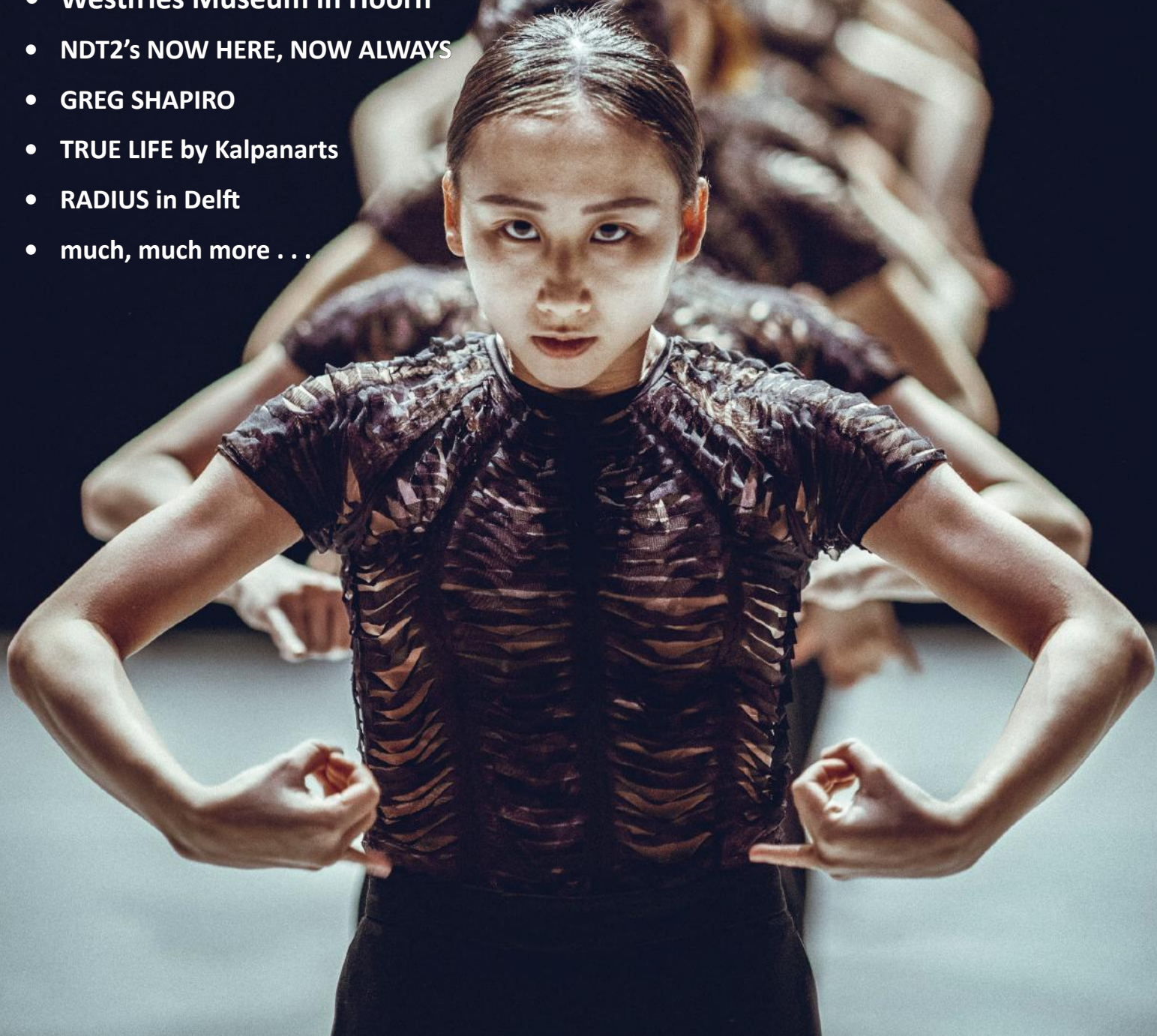
ARTSTALK

Colour Supplement

Number 1

November 2022

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- Westfries Museum in Hoorn
- NDT2's NOW HERE, NOW ALWAYS
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ARTS TALK

Colour Supplement

Welcome to the first edition of the new and exciting ArtsTalk Colour Supplement. We aim to open up the content of ArtsTalk Magazine to include more . . . err . . . colour with bigger and more photographs. Essentially it will be a summing up of the previous month plus some additional items. We will also be broadening our remit a little to include reviews and features from outside of our normal Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague area including other towns and cities in The Netherlands and also further afield. We plan to include features on Brussels and even Munster in Germany, in fact anywhere that is within reasonable travelling distance.

This month we are at the wonderful Westfries Museum in Hoorn and we have reviews from The Amare and Korzo Theater in The Hague, The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and an exciting new project in Delft. We also have a feature on American comedian Greg Shapiro whose book *The American Netherlander – Twenty-Five Years of Ex-pat Tales* was published recently.

Michael Hasted
Publisher and Editor

This month's contributors:-

Astrid BURCHARDT

Sonja VAN KERKOFF

Silvia ZANNI



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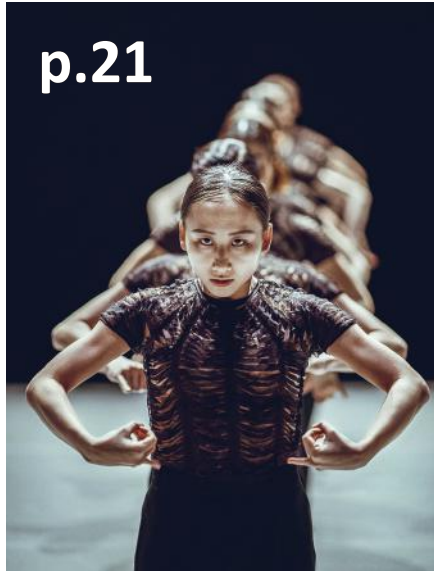


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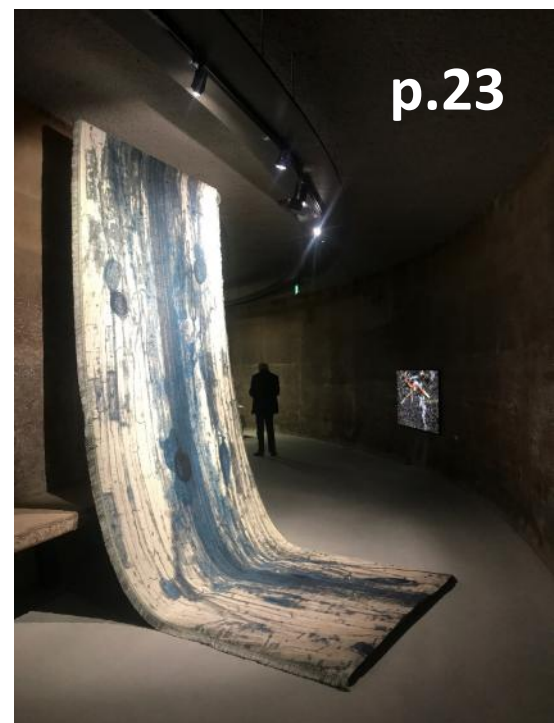


NOW HERE, NOW ALWAYS by
NDT2



GREG SHAPIRO The American
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ENTANGLED LIFE at
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OhGirl! by Antonin Rioche

Passion and longing on tour with Scapino Ballet

After eighteen sold-out performances of *Oscar* in Amsterdam's Theater Carré, Scapino Ballet Rotterdam is off on tour with *Casablanca* until 24th February next year. After a successful start to the original tour in 2021, it was abruptly cut short due to the second (or was it third?) Corona lockdown.

The film *Casablanca*, starring Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart, is considered one of the best Hollywood classics ever. Choreographer Ed Wubbe uses the love story of two people on the run from war as the basis for a visual performance about passion, freedom and longing for a better world. The translation from film to theater results in an exciting new whole with dance in different styles, acrobatic elements, music and a revolving stage as the centre-piece.

The story is set in a dangerous place, where a group of displaced people wait for a better life and the threat of war is never far away. Behind the romantic story is a twilight world in which the boundaries between good and evil are blurred. The musical starting point is the film's soundtrack, including the legendary *As Time Goes By*.

With some enchanting group scenes set to Moroccan Berber music Wubbe reveals a new dimension to the story that refers to the current affairs of immigrants and refugees.

Casablanca



anca



DISPEREERT NIET

VAN BRUNSEL 1645

1552-1629

Markt

16



The Westfries Museum in Hoorn

ASTRID BURCHARDT

The Netherlands is known for its windmills, clogs and tulips – some even know a little about the country's history thanks to film like *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*. For a true picture of what the current country was built on you have to go to the Westfries Museum in Hoorn, one of the most picturesque towns in the country, with its old customs house and splendid harbour full of old sailing ships and fishermen bringing in their crab catch. One can almost smell the past, with the unloading of cloves, pepper, coffee, tobacco and nutmeg, for a pound of which a man had to pay with seven cows or three of his best horses.

In the Westfries Museum you can feel the concentrated power of the 17th century Dutch, a time of abundance of riches. At the time, though situated in a protected bay, ships had direct access from Hoorn harbour to the sea via the IJsselmeer.

The sheer accumulation of wealth in the museum is staggering. Each room is filled to the ceilings, literally, with untold treasure and exotic items, vegetable, mineral and animal, brought back from the trade missions. The most impressive items on show are the paintings by Jan Albertsz Rotius, called the Rembrandt

of Hoorn. As a portrait painter he often depicted families and the children of the wealthy. But filling a large room of the museum and dating from around the middle of the 17th century, there are his stunning, floor-to-ceiling paintings of the prestigious Civic Guards.

On 10th January 2005, during the celebrations of the museum's 125th anniversary, seventy pieces of art and silver from the 17th and 18th century, worth millions of Euros and including 24 paintings, were stolen. Four of the paintings were retrieved during a secret operation by the Ukrainian Security Service, one of the most important, in the home of a collector who had bought it in good faith, with a certificate of authenticity. Not wishing to go down in history as the man who harboured stolen art, he nobly decided to return the painting to the museum in 2016.

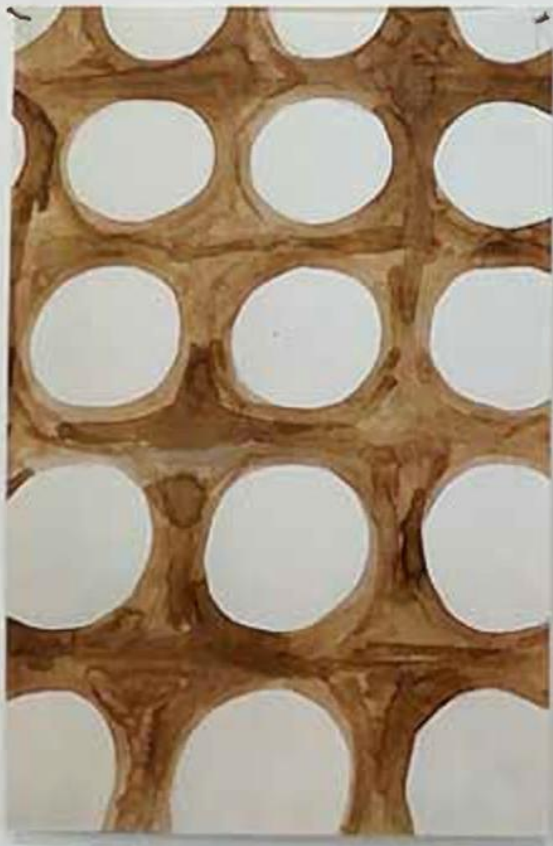
From a country which a few centuries earlier was half under water, the Dutch created one of the wealthiest nations in Europe through trading with the world and

Rotius's paintings illustrate this. Today some protest that the wealth and power was built on exploitation of colonies and slavery, but the same criticism can be levelled at England and other colonising nations. Though the clothes have changed (today flaunting wealth is not done) and the religious zealots have largely disappeared, the spirit of adventure and enterprise has survived. Like their 17th century ancestors, the Dutch are ingenious engineers – problem solving is their second nature. Walking around the harbour of Hoorn, five minutes from the Museum, I was amazed that they seem undaunted by the threat of rising sea levels. 50% of the country is just one meter above sea level, 26% lies below it and over 21% of the population lives below sea level - so now they build whole neighbourhoods as floating houses.

Hoorn's splendid Westfries Museum charts the amazing history of a people who, in order to become a nation, clawed a country from the sea.







RUW! - The Hague and Berlin artists' works on paper

SONJA VAN KERKHOFF

Gallery exhibitions are a primary medium for visual artists, but the artists' initiative RUW works differently. RUW is primarily a book in A3 format of original artworks. Each edition of 50 is produced several times a year in either Berlin or The Hague. And often each copy of RUW is also an original because most artists create original works. An example in a 2021 edition of RUW is a translucent page stained in subtle shades of khaki with a text about "khaki" being the Persian word for mud-coloured by Hague artist, Pieter van Splunter. Because of her medium, each of the 50 books containing her contribution is unique.

RUW is an initiative of Hague-based artist, Hans Konings and Berlin artists, while he was based in Berlin. In September 2022, RUW! had a showing in the Hilbertraum art space in Berlin's hip neighbourhood of Neukölln. Half of the 32 artists are based in Berlin and the other half in the Netherlands. They showed works on paper that extended beyond the limits of the a3 page. Pietertje van Splunter's work both maintained and squared the a3 format, by extending her work

onto four pages. The work of another Hague-based artist, Emjan, filled half a wall with dense texts and drawings reminiscent of a graphic novel. Her subject matter? The Heard / Depp trial. Spread over the wall was an overload of pencilled text and imagery akin to the media hype of the whole fiasco, presenting us with a sense of 'that's just too much.' Adjacent to this, the subdued Madonna and child by Carola Rombouts worked well in way of contrast. Rombouts had incised and scratched the paper itself, pulling the image out of the paper.

The artists in RUW! were: Hans Könings, Angeline Dekker, Carola Rombouts, emjan, Coos Dieters, Kees Koomen, Lucius Pax, Lula Valletta, Pietertje van Splunter, Pim Piët, Thom Vink, Dana LaMonda, André Smits/Monika Dahlberg, Jessy Rahman, Katharina Arndt, Hannah Becher, Linn Fischer, Thomas Hillig, Jakob Kirchheim, Petra Lottje, Paula Muhr, Kathrin Rank, Susanne Roewer, Eva Schwab, Poul R. Weile, Marian Wijnvoord, April Gertler, Mathias Deutsch, Hannah Goldstein/ Claudia Balsters, and Anja Schrey.

TRUE LIFE by Kalpanarts at Korzo in The Hague

MICHAEL HASTED

Death is an important and inevitable part of life. How we deal with it depends on who and where we are. Of course, the element of personal loss does not vary but the way different societies do is another matter. From the Mexican Day of the Dead, to New Orleans jazz funerals and the holy cremations on the River Ganges each culture or religion has its own way of dealing with death – part mourning, part celebration, part preparing for entry into the next life – but always, despite its commonplace, a big occasion.

Kalpanarts is a contemporary, multi-ethnic dance company created by choreographer Kalpana Raghuraman and Gysèle ter Berg. In True Life, which premièred last night to a full house at the Korzo, they examine the relationship between life and its end, and the reverse. Perhaps one of the most complex and layered reactions to, and dealings with, death is practiced by the Hindu religion and it is this which seems to have most guided the piece and although the Indian influence was clear, it was fairly subtle with not a sitar or sari in sight. India was very much where it was coming from, not where it was going.

As the lights came up, the seven dancers – five girls and two boys – stood motionless amid the swirling mist below a ceiling of draped muslin which gave the effect of being in some exotic tent. Dressed identically in beige coloured skirts and loose tops they gradually started to move to the hypnotic soundtrack by Simone Giacomini. The first half of the piece was a fairly laid back, slow moving affair with the ensemble working as a whole and rather putting me in mind of those old Isadora Duncan clips and photos.

For me True Life really came alive, if that's the right word, in the second part where the dancers worked individually or in pairs. The sequence with the tall male dancer Sooraj Subramanian, moving to the beautiful and powerful live singing of Shishani Vranckx, was possibly, for me, the highlight of the evening. I also very much liked it when Ms Vranckx was carried on the shoulders of the other six as if to her funeral – though rather incongruously, I thought, playing a guitar.

The final sequence was a totally joyous and celebratory affair with each dancer allowed to express themselves individually with lots of hand clapping, foot stomping and smiles all round.

Death is simple and inevitable; it is life that is complicated and unpredictable. Eternal life in some form of heaven is promised by most religions, as is some sort of resurrection, like in the Mexican Dia de los Muertos. Whether we fall for that now, and whether an eternal life is still such an attractive proposition these days is another matter.

Before the show started we were invited to a discussion, moderated by Vincent Wijlhuizen, with theater producer and politician Narsingh Balwantsingh who highlighted the importance of rituals and the value of continued traditions. Balwantsingh was instrumental in the creation of the first official location in Rotterdam for Hindus to scatter cremation ashes, giving them a dignified way to fulfill their funeral rites and send the ashes of their loved ones into the river.

Photography campaign image Bowie Verschuuren



CRAWLY CREATURES AND CLARA at Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

From eerie to fascinating animals - a shift in our attitude over the centuries

SILVIA ZANNI

Can art help us to rethink our relations with animals? Rijksmuseum's current exhibition asks this question. A literal invasion of creatures has taken over the museum's public areas. Hundreds of giant ants by Colombian artist Rafael Gomezbarro swarm over the walls, while myriad insects have proliferated unimpeded since the museum decided not to swallow them up for the duration of the show. The second part of the exhibition deals with the representations of the "colossal" rhino Clara, instead.

Pieter Paul Rubens' *Medusa* is left with terror, her eyes swollen with her recent painful death. Protruding from her severed head, soiled creatures merge with blood and organic matter filaments. A shift in the way the artist sets up the composition and tells the Greek episode has recently occurred: the Gorgon is no longer the one-and-only protagonist of the scene, her hair is a twine of snakes filling at least half of the painting, while an elegant lifelike salamander, in the left corner, symbolises a newfound, "modern", curiosity towards tiny creatures.

The Rijksmuseum's exhibition explores the role that crawly creatures have played in our societies. Associated with death and the devil in pre-modern cultures, butterflies, spiders, and toads were believed to originate from dead materials such as rotting plant waste via spontaneous generation. Occupying the lowest rung on God's pyramid, they were not even part of his creation. In copyists' illuminated manuscripts they were mere decorations: exiled at the edge of the page, they had the same value as ornamental flowers and leaves.

Albrecht Dürer's three-parted stag beetle (1505) shows a shift in the attitude towards these creatures. A stag beetle hovers alone above the page in a state of impeccable artistic finishing: the shadows defining its silhouette and the accuracy in reproducing its body make it undoubtedly a distinct piece of artwork and not a preparatory study.

From XVIth century, men and women collectors began including naturalia and artificialia in their Cabinets of curiosities, the forerunners of museums as we now





know them. In the following century, an increasing scientific interest prompted many to scrutinize and study nature and its creatures with a rigorous approach. The rational century, 1700, saw the advent of scientific tools like the solar microscope and the first illustrated encyclopedia of natural history, in which species were reproduced enlarged as if they were under the lens.

Although invertebrates are 95% of all animals on earth, we have kept them out of our sight, denying them any authorship and agency for centuries. Tomás Saraceno's *Webs of Attent(s)ion*, a sculpture woven by four spiders' pieces, invites us to reconsider our relations with them. It marks «an attempt to draw focus and authorship (back) onto the life-forms and life-forming processes spiders have been practicing for millennia» in the artist's words. An *Open Letter for Invertebrate Rights* accompanies the artwork, where imaginatively, web/spiders ask humans for a "certificate of coexistence".

Along the exhibition's path, we come across another type of extravagant animal, this time very large. The section dedicated to Clara recounts the Dumbo-like adventure of the first rhino to come to the Netherlands. Clara was only one month old when her mother was killed in her native land, present-day India, by poachers. Acquired by VOC (Dutch East India Company) Captain Douwe Mout at the age of three, she left for Europe in 1740.

In the subsequent seventeen years, Clara has traveled all over Europe, enhancing her fame through advertising campaigns, bringing a new renaissance to the study of creatures previously unknown. By broadcasting a new, realistic image of rhinos, which replaced the unrealistic sketch by Albrecht Dürer that had circulated in Europe for over two centuries, it contributed to influencing people's imagery and raising their fascination with the animal.

When visitors learn her story today, they understand her unhappiness as a captive animal. If she could speak, as someone has imagined, she would say the following words: "Were it possible in the future to liberate myself from slavery (...), in revenge I would exhibit men to my brethren. I am sure that the genus of rhinoceroses will look upon the wonder beast that man seems to be with more favour than human being view a rhinoceros."

Crawly Creatures and Clara continues at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam until 15th January 2023



GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING attacked in The Hague

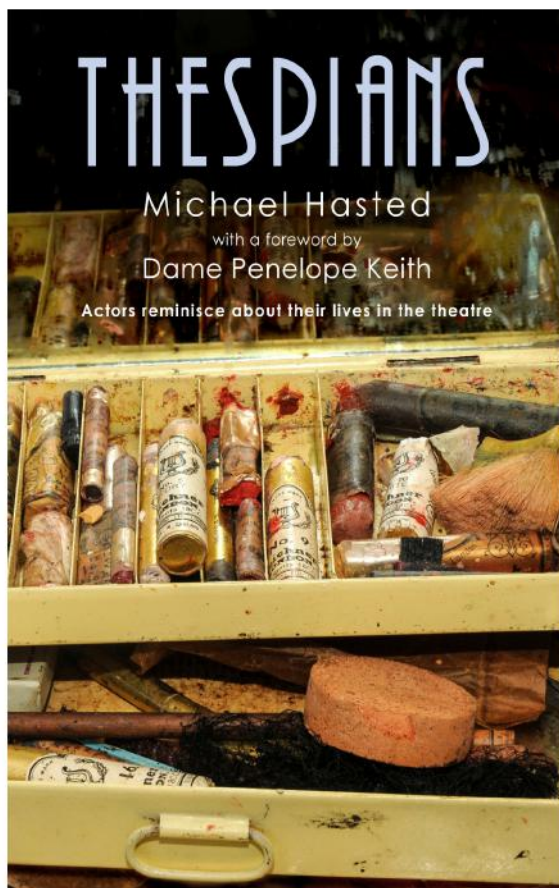


Around two o'clock on 27th October two people glued themselves to Johannes Vermeer's iconic 1665 *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, the jewel in the crown of the Mauritshuis collection in The Hague. One person glued his head to glazing which protects the painting, and the other glued his hand to the green wall next to the painting. A liquid was thrown.

The police were called in and three Belgian men were arrested. Fortunately, being under glass, the masterpiece was not damaged but the frame and the back plate sustained some damage but these can easily be repaired or replaced. The picture was back on display the following day.

Museum director Martine Gosselink said, "We are incredibly grateful that *The Girl* remained undamaged and is back in her familiar place so quickly".

Actors reminisce about their lives in the theatre



THE SPIANS
Michael Hasted

with a foreword by

Penelope Keith

with contributions from

Steven Berkoff, Stephanie Cole, Tom Conti, Felicity Kendal, Penelope Keith, Robert Powell, Zoë Wanamaker *et al*

ISBN 978-1785103988

Also available on KINDLE



GREG SHAPIRO

The American Netherlander

MICHAEL HASTED

Amsterdam-based comedian Greg Shapiro's third book, *The American Netherlander*, *Twenty-Five Years of Ex-Pat Tales*, brings together his two previous books, adds a lot of new material and presents us with a memoir of his life in his adopted home, along with a comprehensive guide to living in it. The book is full of apposite observations, canny advice, witty asides and some nice cartoony illustrations. It could well have been titled *The Netherlands - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* because, like the Dutch, it does not pull its punches and is proud to tell it like it is, warts and all.

We start off with the back story about how the author first came to The Netherlands twenty-five years ago to work in and help establish the Boom Chicago comedy venue in Amsterdam. He nicely describes the culture shock and disavows numerous stereotypes and preconceptions. He discovers that what he had grown up in the States believing to be Dutch



Apple Pie was in fact nothing like the real thing and that the chunky real thing made his American usurper mere apple pulp fiction. After a while, as he marries and settles down, he loses track of his identity and begins to suffer from MND – Multiple Nationality Disorder.

Greg takes us, chapter by chapter through the different aspects of Dutch life and how to cope, sorry, appreciate them. We learn, of course, about sex and drugs and the ubiquitous Coffee Shops. We find out more about bike etiquette and how the Dutch fail to reconcile their desire for personal freedom with the necessity of conforming and keeping a low profile.

But there is a more serious side too with the vexed issue *Zwarte Piet* being covered in some detail along with the problems of immigration.

If you are an expat in The Netherlands, *Zwarte Piet* will already have raised your eyebrows by an inch or two. If you are elsewhere in the world you will find the phenomenon of *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete) hard to believe in this day and age when black live really do matter.

The Dutch have Santa Claus with the best of 'em, or *Sinterklaas* as they call him, but that's of no matter. The difference is that while most Santas are content to have a horde of helpful elves and reindeer as acolytes, old *Sinterklaas* rides a white horse and has a swarm of black helpers dressed up in gold and red velvet. *Piet* is a sort of black Robin to *Sinter's* bearded Batman. These a kids unashamedly blacked- up à la Al Jolson and parade around with their sack dispensing candy to the children but politically correct they certainly are not. Greg examines the question in some detail and is able to see the Dutch point of view. This year the big parades of 5th December were cancelled and it seems the Dutch might surreptitiously use that as an opportunity to phase out Black Pete. Some have started calling him Sooty Pete instead . . .

Serious though it is, the subject is treated in an easy going, unpreachy, unjudgemental manner by Greg and he gives us an insight as to how the phenomenon was

considered normal and acceptable and how it might continue and/or change.

The last section of the book re-utilises Greg's previous book *How To Be Dutch: The Quiz*. This is both funny and informative. Questions are posed and you have to select one out of three possible answers. The correct answer is given and an explanation of why it is. Again, this is broken down into sections like bikes, health care, politics and . . . err . . . *Zwarte Piet*.

There is even a Oh, I never knew that section which lists, in rhyming couplets, things we never knew were

Dutch, like half the place names in New York City, LED lights, multinationals Philips and Shell, the microscope, the discoverers and namers of New Zealand etc etc.

To round it all off there are pages of photos of shop signs taken by Greg over the years, showing how Dutch can produce names and words that we English speakers find

amusing, For example a hairdresser called *Down Under Hair* or the *Bad Hotel* or the Dutch senator called *Tiny Kox*. You've got love 'em.

The American Netherlander provides us with lots of information about the Dutch persona and way of life and is the result of not only Greg's personal experiences and insights but a lot of thorough research as well – oh, and the laughs, don't forget the laughs.

This book works on the level of allowing other expats to smugly sit back with a knowing smile on their faces but also as a guide book exploring the mores of a tiny nation that has contributed more to our civilisation and to its fund of knowledge over the past five centuries than most people are aware of or care to acknowledge



THE AMERICAN NETHERLANDER by Greg Shapiro
Paperback Price: €19.95
ISBN: 978 94 6319 226

NOW HERE, NOW ALWAYS

by NDT2 on tour

MICHAEL HASTED



NDT2 is nominally secondary to, and the feeder for, NDT1. They may be secondary in name but in every other way they are the equal of the main company with their own repertoire and touring programme. This was confirmed, as if it needed confirming to the full house at the Amare, by their new production *Now Here, Now Always*.

Marcus Goecke's *The Big Crying* was premiered in March 2021 as a live-stream from the old Zuiderstrandtheater during the Covid lock-down, so it was good to see it in the flesh, as it were.

The curtain rose to reveal smoke swirling in the darkness and a large flame flickering against the back wall while a rather industrial soundscape completed



the sombre scene. Created by Goecke soon after the death of his father it is, to begin with, a solemn affair with the nineteen dancers exploring grief and loss. After a few minutes the soundscape gave way the songs of Tori Amos and the whole atmosphere became more positive and life affirming, though not losing any of the raw emotion.

Brocken Spectre, Andrew Skeels' wonderful debut piece for NDT was also about loss. I was thinking in the first interval that it was a pity so many dance pieces are played on a plain open stage enclosed in black and depending on lighting to create an environment. Granted *Brocken Spectre* was all in black but a huge black curtain lit from above hung on the stage like a soft cathedral or threatening, dangerous landscape. Based on and inspired by Goethe's *A Winter Journey in The Harz* and Brahms' *Rhapsody for Alto, Chorus and Orchestra Op. 53*, it had a very Wagnerian feel to it. In fact, I was unfamiliar with this Brahms piece and all the way through I was wondering, is it or isn't it Wagner? The Brahms was augmented by original music by Julien Tarride played live in the pit by musicians from Het Ballet Orkest.

The Brocken in question is the highest peak in the Harz mountains and famous for its tales of witchcraft and eerie goings on. Skeels' creation took us to some sort of post-apocalyptic world where grey and dusty refugees struggled and strained like a latter-day

Sisyphus pulling figures on lengths of cloth across the stage. Sometime standing, sometimes wrapped and lying, the zombie-like people were being dragged to some unknown fate. Brilliant.

Cacti, a revival of Alexander Ekman's exciting and often hilarious 2010 creation, was a much lighter affair to counterpoint the drama of the first two pieces. Each with their own meter-square rostrum, the sixteen dancers performed to music by Schubert, Haydn and Beethoven, often played by a live on-stage ambulant string quartet made up of musicians, again from Het Ballet Orkest. The piece opened with the dancers kneeling on their plinths performing almost martial arts routines. The twenty/thirty centimetre high platforms were an integral part of the action and were used to perform on, and behind when they were raised vertically. The arrival of a cactus for each of the dancers provided a surreal element to the piece which had the audience smiling and laughing quietly to themselves. For the final sequence the platforms were arranged in a pile and formed the background for, what for me, was the best bit of the piece as boy and girl danced a duet while talking to each other.

Another very satisfying evening of contemporary dance from this world class Nederlands Dans Theater.

Now Here, Now Always continues on tour until 20th December.

ENTANGLED LIFE

at Radius in Delft

Radius, Centre for Contemporary Art and Ecology in Delft is an exciting and brave new venture located in a pump house with a water basin adjacent to the famous water tower in the north of the city. To enter the underground exhibition space(s) one has to venture down some concrete steps behind the pump house and entering the former giant water tank is initially a bit scary. However you soon get used to it and are able to take in the amazing space. Almost like a maze or a military bunker there are three circular areas each a little smaller than the previous one like a nest of Russian dolls. The artists have their own space and the soundscape and lighting create, along with the imposing stained concrete walls, a truly immersive experience.

Entangled Life is the third exhibition of the Underland year program, exploring the multi-species entanglements that occur in forest ecosystems through the work of nine artists.

Antonin Rioche's *OhGirl!*

MICHAEL HASTED

Solitude is a strange thing. There are those who revel in it, happy with their own thoughts and company. Others dread it. They crave company and solitude equals loneliness. Does the loner have the problem because he/she is an outsider, unable or unwilling to socialize, or is the latter inadequate because they are unhappy in their own skin and lack the imagination or capability to fulfill themselves alone? Are we the same person when alone as we are with others? Do we show the world a different face from the one we see in the mirror?

Antonin Rioche has worked extensively at the Korzo and the precursor to this piece, *OhBoy!* achieved great success when it toured throughout Europe five years ago and played the Korzo last year. In his new piece, *OhGirl!* he uses the stage as an empty canvas on which to paint a picture exploring the anxiety of a girl after the curtain falls – the spotlight goes out, the camera stops and the apartment door closes behind her. She goes on a lonely journey but is short of fuel after the adrenalin runs dry. Her own devices are all she is left with.

The girl in question is America dancer Arika Yamada. She plays the protagonist in Rioche's piece with grace and sensitivity and is totally convincing, portraying someone negotiating the trials and tribulations of daily life as well as the fear and anxiety of someone who

feels they sometimes carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Her moods swing from highs to lows and she says, in the voice over, "when I am happy I think it will be for ever". But it is no to be.

This is a tour de force performance by Ms Yamada, both physically and emotionally. Aided by only an old metal frame chair and a pair of high-heeled shoes she takes the audience on her lonely journey. However it is not all doom and gloom, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. The finale is a celebration, a declaration, a fist in the air to the strains of Nina Simone's life affirming *Ain't Got No, I Got Life*, a song which could have inspired the whole piece.

Visually *OhGirl!* was very satisfying with Loes Schakenbos taking much of the credit with her lighting. The décor consisted of dozens of light bulbs hanging two meters above the stage and a row of spotlights on the ground, either side of the performance area. There was one sequence that worked superbly when, to a solo piano passage, a different bulb flashed on and off, echoing each note. Apart from the Nina Simone song, the sound was made up of a sound-scape by Lisa Harres and monologues giving us an insight to the performer's thoughts and feelings.

OhGirl! is on tour until 20th December



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