Europe’s Emerging Artists

NEU NOW

Amsterdam

2016

Photo: 許程崴製作舞團 (Hsu Chen Wei Production Dance Company)

禮祭 (The Sacrifice of Roaring)
The Festival’s Director, Carla Delfos, and Artistic Directors, Paula Crabtree and Anthony Dean, share their vision of NEU NOW.

Carla Delfos
Executive Director
ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts:

Since it was founded in Vilnius in 2009, NEU NOW has been a nomadic event, moving from Nantes, Porto, Tallinn, Amsterdam and Glasgow. However, in 2015 this all changed when NEU NOW decided to put down roots in one city and show the work of emerging European artists in the dynamic spaces of the Westergasfabriek. We are excited to have the opportunity to deepen our relationship with the cultured city of Amsterdam.

The selection process is a rigorous one, commencing at the level of the arts institutions nominating outstanding work from artists that are in their final year of study or recently graduated. An international jury of leading arts professionals – many of whom are producers, programmers or curators of distinguished international arts organisations, prestigious festivals or leading galleries – review the nominations and make recommendations for selection, at which point the Artistic Directors of NEU NOW, Paula Crabtree and Anthony Dean, continue the process.

Paula Crabtree & Anthony Dean
Artistic Directors
NEU NOW:

As Co-Artistic Directors of this Festival, we have both come to feel — over the past seven editions of NEU NOW — that there are three key stages in the process of mounting the festival each year that remind us just how fortunate we are to be its co-curators.

We take the time to view each individual artwork that has been submitted ourselves as we strive to find the best selection of work for each discipline that both challenges its boundaries and demonstrates its diversity.

Many months before the Festival is set to open, we have the exciting task of viewing the hundreds of artworks that have been nominated by arts institutions from across Europe and beyond. We review these, together with the comments made by the international jury panels and the supporting statements made by nominating institutions. Although the work undertaken by the international judges helps us to focus our final selections for both the online and live Festivals, we take the time to view each individual artwork that has been submitted ourselves as we strive to find the best selection of work for each discipline that both challenges its boundaries and demonstrates its diversity. Add to this our desire to present excellent work from the broadest geographical range that we can, and it becomes a monumental task to arrive at the final selection of works — but a task that is hugely rewarding for us.

The next critical moment in our process is the point at which we actually meet all the artists selected for the live Festival as they arrive at the venue to set up their works. It is fascinating to meet the people behind each artwork and to see them meeting each other, sharing their diverse and individual perspectives on both their work and career aspirations. Being a multi-disciplinary arts festival, NEU NOW offers these emerging artists the opportunity to engage with their peers from other arts disciplines for the first time in the public exhibition of their work. Needless to say, many new friendships and working partnerships are forged during the seven days that the group is together.

Finally, and most importantly, there comes the moment when the artists meet the public — as well as the professional arts promoters, curators and programmers who attend the Festival on the lookout for new talent — as they exhibit or perform their work or discuss their work through artist talks. The NEU NOW Festival gives the artists a space to engage with a knowledgeable and critical international audience, often for the first time.

We both really enjoy the journey that we undertake with these young artists and we hope that their experience of NEU NOW is the first step towards building their international careers. We are grateful to the Creative Europe Programme of the European Commission that supports NEU NOW, to the partner institutions involved, to the AKF and to all organisations and people that have made NEU NOW 2016 possible. We hope that you are both challenged and inspired by the NEU NOW 2016 Festival.

Paula Crabtree
Artistic Director NEU NOW
Vice Chancellor
Stockholm University of the Arts

Anthony Dean
Artistic Director NEU NOW
Professor of Performing Arts & Dean of Cultural Engagement
University of Winchester

Carla Delfos
Executive Director
ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts
Sections

- Design/Architecture
  - Adaptation of the Ruins of the Church of St. Nicholas in Glasgow for a Culture Centre [Emilia Strzempek-Plasun]
  - In Touch [Stine Aas]
  - It’s Now or Näver [Emma Dahlqvist]
  - Winter Blooming [Katalin Júlia Herter]

- Film/Animation
  - MNAU (MEOW) [Marek Jasaň]
  - My Silicone Love [Sophie Dros]
  - ONCE [Andrea Alessi]
  - Remote Arcadia [HXZ]
  - Until the Quiet Comes [Yaron Cohen]

- Music/Sound
  - Jo Goes Hunting [Jimmi Hueting]
  - La Sonambula [Teresa Doblinger]
  - Watergaskfabriek | site-specific improvised music [Topos Kolektiv]

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Design Architecture

Artwork
Adaptation of the Ruins of the Church of St. Nicholas in Głogów for a Culture Centre
In Touch
It's Now or Never
Winter Blooming

Artist
Emilia Strzałpek-Plasun
Stine Aas
Emma Dahlqvist
Katalin Júlia Herter
Adaptation of the Ruins of the Church of St. Nicholas in Głogów for a Culture Centre

Emilia Strzempek-Plasun

Universytet Artystyczny w Poznaniu
(University of Fine Arts in Poznań)
Poland
Design/Architecture

Adaptation of the Ruins of the Church of St. Nicholas in Głogów for a Culture Centre addresses the problem of sacred places that have lost their religious function, often falling into disrepair and disuse. The original church of St. Nicholas in Głogów, Poland was founded in the mid-thirteenth century. During World War II, the church suffered shell damage and later burned down. The current ruins of the church consist of the main shape of the Gothic structure, as well as various changes and additions made during the medieval and later periods. Through her work, Emilia Strzempek-Plasun endeavours to design a restored and adapted version of the building that will fulfil a new cultural and scientific function. Whilst aiming to preserve the original essence of the walls, columns and vaults, Strzempek-Plasun intentionally designed an interior that contrasts with the historic structure of the building. Through the incorporation of functional spaces, an open concert hall, a permanent exhibition room, library, seminar room and multimedia facilities, Strzempek-Plasun’s design transforms the ruins of a historic building into a fully functional, inviting and contemporary environment.

Throughout Europe many buildings that once held religious significance cease to do so. In Poland, churches and temples formerly belonging to religious communities can now be found under the ownership of the treasury, municipalities or private individuals. Secular ownership combined with the dilapidated state of these buildings has led to a rising need for answers regarding their fate: should sites with significant pasts be demolished, left to dilapidate further or should they be restored and given a second life?

When the new purpose of such buildings integrates the functional practices of cultural centres, bookshops or libraries, community doubts tend to be minimised. The transformation of a former place of worship is easier to accept if it presents possibilities of a renewed and similarly wholesome sense of community. But this begs the questions: to what extent is adaptation of a historical building acceptable? If the former context of a structure ceases to exist, why try to recreate or restore it at all?

During this project – one in which the manifold opinions of the community were of great importance – I considered at length whether the church should be reconstructed to resemble its original appearance. However, the fact remains that the church no longer fulfils a religious function and should adhere to its new purpose: a cultural centre. I believe that the revitalisation of the church building by giving it a new, secular character will not only save it, but also return it to its local community.
In her master’s project In Touch, Stine Aas explores the emotional connection between objects and their users. Consequently, Aas formulated a research question that tackles the potential in the human-to-product connection – namely, ‘How can I increase the emotional value of products for their users?’ This artistic enquiry resulted in the creation of three lamps, of which the light is steered by different kinds of touch. Whilst the two ‘Ella’ lamps – made of tinted porcelain – dim on and off by twisting the shades, the glass ‘Osu’ lamp is controlled by pushing down on the shade.

Though Aas’ initial interests focused on the use of sustainable materials, during her research her focus shifted to the emotional attachment humans have to products, driving the project in a new direction. In contemporary design practice there is a strong awareness of using environmentally friendly materials. However, if the user replaces the products regularly due to a lack of attachment, the sustainability of the product is reduced. In light of this, it is clear that Aas’ work has an environmental importance that resonates throughout her artistic practice.

“My grandparents had many old lamps with fringed shades that I used to love running my hands over. They also had a cord you pulled to switch the lamps on or off, and it made a pleasing clicking sound. The reason I liked these lamps so much as a child was precisely because they so strongly engaged my senses, specifically touch. In this project, I wanted to investigate how we create lasting relationships between user and product, thereby influencing the prevailing consumer culture we live in. For the purpose of this investigation – having been inspired by my grandparents – I chose to use lamps as a basis, due to their prevalence in everyday life. I noticed that the simple act of switching a light on or off creates opportunities for physical interaction between the user and the product. Through repeated physical contact, which in turn provides positive physiological stimuli, I believe that I can strengthen this bond between user and product. The lamps I have designed provide a playful, physical way of interacting with light that appeals to the user in a simple and straightforward way. The shapes of the lamps visually indicates to the user the precise touch and movement required to use them, whilst simultaneously telling a story about the products.”
The starting point of my work always lies in traditional craft. Though the act of making something using my own hands inspires me artistically, it also motivates me to think about the sustainability of products. Historically, crafting techniques were developed on a local level to fulfil the needs of a specific place – the same reason why I always try to think locally with my work: what type of materials are accessible to me where I live and in what way can I use them to fulfil the needs of our modern lives? The project It’s Now or Näver is an example of that way of thinking. By taking a local craft material – a waste by-product from the modern wood industries – and reusing it in a contemporary context, I aim to show how the use of unconventional methods of production can result in new types of local and functional textiles. Through the fusion of ancient crafting skills with new technologies, I intend to highlight unconventional or overlooked textile materials that can be made at the intersection of tradition and innovation.

Näver (Swedish for birch bark) has been used as a craft material for millennia. Due to its water resistant and insulating properties, birch bark was one of the most commonly used materials for everyday objects in the densely forested regions of Scandinavia. Today, however, synthetic and often unsustainable products have replaced näver as the preferred material for which it was previously used, such as containers for food or as backpacks. In her work, Emma Dahlqvist explores the brilliant properties of this organic substance, which, as one of the biggest waste materials from today’s wood industries, makes it an interesting material for future sustainable design. Using the technique of laser cutting, her work investigates different ways of applying textile design to birch bark, thereby redefining a traditional craft material and simultaneously widening the understanding of what can be considered a textile. This work positions itself at the intersection of historic craft and new technologies, finding approaches to dissect the traditional methods of production, in order to explore new characteristics of the material. Through processes of material manipulation, the stiff and rigid birch bark is transformed into a more conventional, tactile, soft and flexible material. The result is a range of products that uncover new qualities and expressions of the birch bark.
For me, crystallisation is an amazing process of nature, as it is slow and can only be perceived fully in its final stage. My designs are inspired by crystallisation and its seemingly random characteristics, such as its consistent irregularities in shape and structure. The most significant impact this process has had on my design is the unique colour palette and forms created over a long period of time within the minerals – elements that I wanted to incorporate in my plates, both in form and in vision. During the entire process my focus remained predominantly on the surface of the object. I experimented with crystal glazes, whose extreme sensitivity to temperature I let influence the final result of each individual piece. This work presents a design in which colours and patterns contribute to an interesting surface and composition.

Winter Blooming
Katalin Júlia Herter

Moholy-Nagy Művészeti Egyetem
(Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design)
Hungary
Design/Architecture

The tableware set Winter Blooming is part of a larger design project entitled Abstract Nature by Katalin Júlia Herter. The project was created in cooperation with students from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME) and leading chefs from the Hungarian fine dining scene, including Ákos Sárközi, the executive chef of Michelin-starred restaurant BORKONVFIA. The collaboration of chefs and designers set out to research current trends and consequently create new concepts of fine dining installations.

Inspired by the process of crystallisation, the tableware set Winter Blooming was created with the natural phenomenon in mind, utilising cone forms as the basis for the design. However, during the working process it soon became clear that these forms were taking their own shape, transforming into uniquely abstract geometrical structures. The tableware set is made of coloured porcelain of a distinctly pastel palette to create contrast between the colourful interior and the matte exterior of the material. The angled forms can be positioned on different sides, resulting in parts of the plate reflecting and shining idiosyncratically with every new place setting. Positioning them on top of salt hills or on polished basalt stones further emphasises the uniqueness of the glazes. When accompanied with food, the plates’ crystallised design creates a novel aesthetic and gastronomic experience.

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Film Animation

Artwork
- MNAU (MEOW)
- My Silicone Love
- ONCE
- Remote Arcadia
- Until the Quiet Comes

Artist
- Marek Jasaň
- Sophie Dros
- Andreas Alessi
- HXZ
- Yaron Cohen
MNAU (MEOW) is a short story about the all too familiar, yet inexplicable artistic block all artists encounter. It follows a young musician called Gejza who is struggling to create a composition he is happy with. Every time he thinks he almost has it, something unexpected disturbs him. A series of events cause Gejza to go outside and walk along the street, where the young musician finds his inspiration in ordinary, everyday objects and noises that surround him. Following this imaginary path of noises and music, he finally finds what he has been seeking—a new and complete composition.

I wanted to create this piece of work to explore the sudden feeling of hopelessness artists can experience when unable to create a satisfying piece of work. In times like these, one can be so focused on the process of creating, that other parts of one’s life can fall by the wayside. In this state, where is the border between being passionate and being oblivious? This is the question I would like to evoke in my animated short film. In visualising the music the protagonist is chasing, I wanted to show how he feels and how easily an artist can slip away to their imaginary world in the attempt to create. I also wanted the viewer to question their own artistic creation, and to consider the times they might have let other aspects of their lives slip in the pursuit of creation—something they might now want to revisit.
I make documentaries about shocking subjects and lifestyles; I find the unknown fascinating and intriguing. By diving into a subject and learning all I can about it, I start to understand it more – it is this journey of enlightenment I want to take my viewer on with me. I think that people are not that different from each other and that is what I want to emphasise in my films. As a documentary filmmaker, I believe that creating a trusting relationship with your subject is of the utmost importance; they must feel safe enough to share their innermost secrets and desires. This exchange of trust not only deepens the understanding between two individuals, but also the particular lifestyle that the subject leads becomes less absurd and at the same time more fascinating.

My interest in the subject of men who have relationships with dolls was born from a fascination with the potential of the adult imagination. I wanted to discover both the origins and consequences of this fantasy world, starting with the concept ‘reality versus fantasy’. As Everard switches fluidly between his fantasy world and his everyday reality, so too does the film – jumping between the two in order to parallel Everard’s own experience. Through looking into this topic countless questions arose, not only about him but also about myself. I hope that after witnessing Everard’s choices, the viewer is compelled to consider some of the choices they might make in their own lives, even if the subject matter is very different.
ONCE
Andrea Alessi

ONCE is a short film about two brothers and their powerful bond. During this seven-minute drama, the viewer witnesses one brother remembering his past through the interrogation of an invisible narrator. Through the use of minimal aesthetics and slow motion, the film forces the viewer to focus on the relationship between the protagonists and to cast a critical eye on the love they feel for one another as the story unfolds.

ONCE is built on questions and answers, whereby the questions are minimal and the answers are visually represented in the scenes. The result of this is a meditatively quiet film. In asking the audience to draw answers from their own understanding of the scene, they are forced to question whether what they perceive to be the case is in fact reality. Has the man answered honestly? Or has he answered with a lie? This doubt of perception, in relation to familiar life circumstances, plays on the viewers’ own understanding of relationships and the strength of brotherly love.
Remote Arcadia

HXZ

LUCA School of Arts
Belgium
Film/Animation

We, Casimir Desmet and Sam Timmerman, met during our studies at LUCA School of Arts in Ghent. We joined forces as an independent artist collective in 2012 and began HXZ, creating and exhibiting drawings, paintings, graphics and video works together. Though the narratives of our early graphic works were mostly driven by still images, we soon developed the desire to work within the medium of moving images, of film. The addition of the cinematic components of time and movement to our work has since resulted in the increased visual and sonic aspects of our narration, as well as the development of a more imperative relationship with our viewers.

The characters in Remote Arcadia struggle deeply with what it means to be human in a world pervaded by modern technology, a world in which the nature of everyday life, such as architecture and even the environment, replicates the visuals of these technological advancements. Society has become so accustomed to technology as an integral part of existence that individuality has disappeared and nostalgia for a world pre-technology has set in. Remote Arcadia captures a dark vision of humanity’s potential future under rigid standardisation driven by long-term exposure to television, Internet and media hysteria.
Since I was little, I have been fascinated by conflict areas. My father used to be a soldier and every time he returned from a war zone he would tell me all kinds of interesting stories. Listening to these stories, I started imagining what life would be like living in an area affected by war. A few weeks before my final year at HKU began, I learnt that Russia had annexed Crimea, in addition to its ongoing annexation of Abkhazia. It reminded me of the war between Abkhazia and Georgia that took place in the nineties, and I asked myself how the refugees of this conflict survived whilst still living in Georgia. I imagined that they would feel threatened in their precarious position. Aside from the political relevance, I felt the need to immerse myself within an unfamiliar world without any knowledge of the language, culture or people. Through my experience making the film and through this immersion in a foreign culture, I hoped to discover and understand the estrangement refugees must experience during times of conflict and flight. I tell stories from an observational point of view and assemble collated footage into a free narrative that allows the shots to tell their own story.

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During the war between Abkhazia and Georgia in the early nineties, 87-year-old Toro fled to Georgia with his cousin and his cousin’s wife. Since then, they have been living together in a remote mountain village. Despite Toro’s endless positivity, humour and resilience, the harshness of reality has inevitably started to manifest itself in his life. Until the Quiet Comes is a story about dependency and the strength to carry on in those moments when everything seems to be falling apart. Told through tragedy and humour, Yaron Cohen’s documentaries present intimate, observational stories about people, their personal struggles and resilience.
Sound

Music

Artwork
Jo Goes Hunting
La Sonnambula
Westergasfabriek | site-specific improvised music

Artist
Jimmi Hueting
Teresa Doblinger
Topos Kolektiv
Jo Goes Hunting

Jimmi Hueting

Jo Goes Hunting is a band started by multi-instrumentalist Jimmi Hueting. Besides being active as a jazz drummer, Heuting has been developing his own avant-garde pop music since 2005. With the use of drums, analogue synthesizers, guitars and drum machines, he creates his world of sound, often consisting of deep analogue bass synths, spacey soundscapes, polyrhythmic variations, floating vocal harmonies and tape experiments.

After graduating from his conservatory master studies in 2015, Heuting formed a band and now plays his music live with his band mates: Thierry Costel on synths, Sjoerd Krul on guitar, Daniel Eskens on bass and Hanne Peetermans on background vocals, with Heuting on lead vocals and drums. Valuing the live aspect, Heuting’s goal is to play the music of Jo Goes Hunting with the same mindset he would in a jazz setting: with the band focusing on dynamics and space within the written music. Jo Goes Hunting never sounds the same twice on stage.

“Being a child of the Internet generation, I have always been able to easily discover lots of different styles of music. This, and having a dad with a huge closet full of vinyl records and CDs, has defined my musical taste, and in turn my sound for Jo Goes Hunting. When I create music, I try not to limit myself with styles or direction, choosing to work with unique yet everyday sounds. In the process, I refine and add rhythm, and then begin writing the lyrics – inspired by the music created. I am heavily influenced by African music and a live timing, as well as drummers like Elvin Jones. A main element of my process is rooted in improvisation and an awareness of the present.”
La Sonnambula is a performance named after Roman Haubenstock-Ramati's graphic score of the same name, within which contemporary music and movement are combined. Music becomes space and the score becomes music. The graphic score La Sonnambula is pictured on the floor of the stage. All the music and movement is placed on the score and results in a full hour of interpretation of the piece. The somnambulist (sleepwalker) moves through and inside the score. The music is greatly supported by the visual impact of the graphic score, in addition to the score’s influence on the movements and the atmosphere of the performance. Each of the composed pieces are linked to a detail of the consequent drawing, where the audience may create their own connection between the visible score, the movement and the music played on top of it. Mirroring the nature of dreams, the somnambulist goes through uncontrolled and sudden changes of environments, images and experiences, replaying certain moments and creating others.

In my work I try to bring music and movement together without simply putting them next to each other. What I attempt to do is to create a necessity where one element cannot live without the other. I want to create a world for each performance where music and movement can partner with each other, struggle with each other or become one. All acoustic and visual elements require absolute dedication and technical ability, as well as intuition and sensibility to create. As an artist, I believe in being completely honest with oneself and the work when creating; it is evident to audiences when honesty is not at the core of the work. I started to combine music and movement in my work because I felt that presenting one without the other would hide a great part of myself that I wanted to share. That is my main aim as an artist: to be completely honest, even when it makes me vulnerable.
Topos Kolektiv brings together artists and musicians of different artistic traditions and approaches for site-specific performances. These works combine and juxtapose traditional and new approaches to music and performance. Topos Kolektiv makes use of a concert harp, a shakuhachi (Japanese flute), African and Indian percussion instruments, everyday objects and extended vocal techniques. The aim of the collective is not to create a permanent repertoire, but to engage each time anew with a particular place and space. Topos Kolektiv seeks inspiration from classical music, world music, free jazz and noise, as well as experimental art films and avant-garde theatre traditions. Nobody is elected as director of the work. Rather, each member brings his or her own personality, talent and expertise to the process, providing an innovative approach to site-specific creation. Topos Kolektiv is strongly influenced by contemporary visual and performative arts and creates immersive concert performances with strong visual as well as sonic motives. Whilst the focus of these performances remains strongly on the music, the visual and performative aspects of the pieces are not mere embellishments, but integral parts of the pieces.

As a collective, we are united not by a single musical practice but rather by the desire to explore and expand our varied practices. Each performance is a unique work of art created by the whole ensemble as an on-site audio-visual composition. The performance site is an important source of inspiration for us and contributes to the uniqueness of each production that follows a thorough exploration of the performance space, and takes into account its location, history, architecture and acoustic-semantic characteristics. We visit our sites over several weeks and spend as much time as we can in creating the performances within the actual space. Our ‘score’ is essentially a set of collectively prepared instructions for a musical and spatial performance. Everyone contributes equally, so every performance reflects the unique skills of each artist. At the same time the score serves as a guideline and gives the performance its functional momentum. The audio-visual components of improvisation are subsequently tailored to the given space. This approach allows us to create thrilling and unique site-specific projects and invites our audiences to participate in a truly unusual experience.
As artists we scrutinise the meaning of the term ‘idol’. What does ‘idol’ mean for us as ordinary people? Through our play, we seek to find both human and extraordinary aspects of these characters. With the audience’s interaction, we explore human chasms in the cult nature of celebrity life by incorporating reality with fiction and written history with personal biography.

During the process, we asked ourselves the following: in the case of Marilyn Monroe – known for being a naturally authentic actress who was turned into a product of art – what happens when she no longer wants to play the roles for which she is known and loved? For Amy Winehouse – a powerful singer with a crafted signature look and incredibly public private life – what was left of her true self in the end?

Follow Us is a play about Amy Winehouse and Marilyn Monroe that combines the myths of both pop idols and their personal biographies. Follow Us pays tribute to these timeless idols in an age where anybody can easily become a star on stage, TV, YouTube or other social media. The performance consists of self-generated lines, a lack of logical narration, open mic and other forms of modern media. Drawing inspiration from their role models, artists Christoph Schlingensief and Antonin Artaud, Destiny’s Children combine various artistic and cultural influences, ranging from performance art, conventional theatre and cinema to Indian dance styles, to create Follow Us.
The Zapia Company project began when Persèpolis was first performed by the students of the Institut del Teatre, in Barcelona, Spain. Based on our class work, we created a short physical-visual piece. This group came together and found a common use of expression, not just through practical work but also in the deeper poetical language that we share. This piece, originally inspired by Marjane Satrapi's Persèpolis, has become a whole new work, entirely autonomous from the graphic novel.

Persèpolis is a project that, through physical theatre, aims to explore the controversial topic of a population's diaspora during a time of war. This piece exists in the space between dance and visual theatre, treating the distance between the Middle East and the occidental culture gently.

With our presentation at NEU NOW, we have decided to follow the trails of the extensive research that is concerned with the latest geo-political events happening in Europe, particularly with the migratory waves coming from devastated countries.
Suitable began by researching identity and resulted in a collection of personal and autobiographical stories. Nína Hjálmarsdóttir’s method involved the translation of these stories into movements, scenes and interactions using video technology with layers of live-streaming and video clips. The goal was to raise questions regarding what it means to have an identity, to be of a specific gender, to be an Icelander and to be in love.

Suitable is a performance that raises questions about identity and intimacy: who are we and what groups do we belong to? It began with researching our own identity. The multiplied layers enable us to literally interact with each other and ourselves, blurring the line between the past and the present. The performance was created based on intuition and emotion, rather than with a specific purpose to deliver a particular message to the audience. Instead, the performance invites the audience to develop their own personal interpretation. The scenes performed in Suitable are the result of an improvisational process, with music created during rehearsals, that in turn influenced the final piece, straddling the borders of theatre, visual arts and performance arts.
Fires burn, ashes rise and flesh falls into the mud. Something wild is marching through the land, accompanied by the endless screaming of spirits. Inspired by Taiwanese rituals related to mortality and resurrection, the young firebrand choreographer Hsu Chen Wei and company reveal the human need to release all the pain in their lives to the gods. The result is dance that is at once mysterious yet vivid, unexpectedly seductive and vital. A curtain silently closes as the wind howls across an abandoned shrine, and life carries on...

Hsu Chen Wei Production Dance Company was formally established in the summer of 2015. Before creating my company, I worked as an independent artist, performing in national and international festivals. Through my extensive touring experience, I decided to create a new dance and body vocabulary. My choreographic themes are drawn not only from my movement-based practice, but also incorporate social issues, traditional ceremonies and all aspects of life. My work aims to show strong traditional elements of Taiwan as its creative essence, as well as sharing my unique artistic work with the international stage. I hope that Taiwan can continue to receive recognition within the international scene, and will receive more opportunities to reveal its dance culture. I want to work towards the greater involvement of international dance communities by sharing the ‘WallyHsu’ style – a style of dance inspired heavily by traditional Taiwanese ritual and celebration.
Two people sit at a table. They write. Always catching, always dropping. Always building, always breaking.

Live text, set text, written text, text yet to be written. How intrinsically tied are the notions of language, speech, thoughts, imagination and communication? Words constitute reality. Can fiction be offered in a live, concrete way similar to that of reality?

The duo in this work performs mental acrobatics, linguistic pirouettes and creates space to allow for endless virtuosic interpretations for the audience and performers to experience together.

Our practice is built around an avid interest and obsession with literature and the written word. It could be called a multi-disciplinary practice, however it feels to us more like a re-contextualisation of the written word. We work with the following questions: How can words be performative? How can words be kinetically available? What is performative about the process of writing, editing, translating or interpreting? A person’s relationship to literature is crafted from birth, and rarely questioned in a performative context. The influence of the text we read during our cognitive development inherently affects the way we relate to our environment, to other people and ultimately to our imagination. Literature attempts to be capable of creating every feeling, state of being and consequence. For this project it was necessary to dissect what we as a collective find to be essential within language, as a method of reconstituting the literary arts. Through the act of automatic writing, we question the performative capacities of linguistics by constructing and deconstructing a body of text alongside an audience.
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I believe that a painting lives when seen by someone. Rather than exploring traditional painting, my research investigates painting in relation to its perception as a sensuous surface, which may contrast with its framing or where it may be physically placed in a certain setting. I am interested in the exploration of the logic of painting by means of a systematic challenging of its own limits. The basic unit of my painting methodology is what I call the leaping step. The methodology goes as follows: an action that is disruptive enough to operate as a game-changer (the leap) can give relevance to some of the system’s pre-existing features (the step). My paintings should be encountered slowly and without looking for conceptual understanding, allowing the viewer to experience it in their own way.

**Another Painting**

Alberto Condotta

The installation Another Painting is composed of two elements: a digitally printed cotton canvas displaying a rich texture and a white wall, partially painted in grey, on which the first is hung. In addition to the visual noise featured on the printed canvas, the artwork is internally structured within a series of interferences: between the highlights and shadows on the canvas and the printed elements; between the shiny surface of the canvas and the matte grey on the wall; and between the frontal display of a 3D object (the canvas) and a 2D object (the wall with a negative space), which refers to perspective. All these interferences constitute the identity of Another Painting, which can be preserved in its potentially infinite translations. At each new site-specific space, the material element is adjusted in order to preserve the artwork’s general functionality to adapt to and stand out from the environment it is presented in.
Artificial Human

Alicja Symela

Artificial Human consists of three separate elements: a traditional wood carving of a figure of a young man to scale; a film documentation of the act of destroying it with a chainsaw; and a figure created from disembodied parts, not dissimilar to an anatomical dummy. Artificial Human is an experiment designed to investigate what emotions can be aroused by a physical interaction with a lifeless object resembling a human being. Can violent acts performed on the object be considered brutal? Or can it reveal the mechanisms governing representation and its effect on us? The work particularly focuses on the process of developing the sculpture and then destroying it, sacrificing it in order to gain a new quality. Alicja Symela’s resulting work is ambiguous, provocative, subversive and self-mocking.

When creating my artworks, I work with passion and bold ideas, aiming to provoke the viewers of my work. For me, Artificial Human was a challenge, a puzzle – the solving of which was an adventure that has lead to a surprising outcome. Loosely inspired by the recurring motifs of an artificial man, present throughout mainstream film, literature and popular culture, I carved the first figure of a human out of a tree trunk, as the organic material of wood has a similarity to that of flesh. This work is about transformation, re-sculpting and re-imagining the human figure in various ways. The precise moment the figure is destructed, as seen in the video, allows the form to take another shape and become something inhuman. We see the human form in the physical and virtual space; its form changing with each state it exists in. The figure is transformed; it gets another life. In my work, I experiment to create artificial life, which simulates human life in its visual and physical states. The line between an object that seems to be lifeless and one showing some visual symptoms of life is intriguing to me, and thus it is through my installation that I am able to enter into a dialogue with the traditional sculpture.
My work travels through the conceptual and logical realms of public art, which sees art as a social intersection – an aspect of human connection that can also suggest further possibilities of exchange and reflection. Each work I create is born from a theoretical process, to create new forms of collaboration. This is coupled with the intent to promote the urban space, which is lived through the creation of artistic events. Public spaces, and always have been since ancient times, places where words have been exchanged, developed and reinvented for the purpose of exchanging ideas. A good example of this is the Acropolis in Ancient Athens, and I seek to continue this tradition of the public space as a sacred space, bringing together thought, time and ideas. Social issues and the concept of interaction are the two key points of my artistic research and philosophy.
Amidst a world that is becoming increasingly shrill, impulsive and threatening, I turn to unspectacular things as points of focus. I am interested in the philosophical terms of time, time perception and the often overlooked, simple and natural beauty of this world. I want my audience to become part of the experience that I create, allowing for reflection upon the subject and oneself. I believe that my work is based on serendipity. By focusing on small things in my everyday life I try to find their real essence.

Dandelion – Where Did It Go? by Lea Schiess is about how we perceive time and space. The video work shows a projection of a dandelion that is isolated from its natural environment. Through situating the plant in front of an unnatural background, illuminated in its isolation, the dandelion appears almost monumental. Suddenly, the full blooming flower gets picked apart by a tweezer. Shot by shot the form of the object changes. The attention of the viewer gets captured through the slow, concentrated and repeating movement. Its shape is organic and man-made. The viewer may become aware that time is gone and that they exist in between the now and the future; the spectator’s consciousness becomes part of the work. Schiess offers us unexpected experiences that give us a surprising look at our own awareness of the world.

HKU Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht
[HKU University of the Arts Utrecht]
The Netherlands
Visual arts
Dievs Daba Darbs (God Nature Toil)

Viktorija Eksta

Latvijas Mākslas Akadēmija
[Art Academy of Latvia]
Latvia
Visual arts

Told in a deliberate manner, with documentary-style realism, Viktorija Eksta reenacts fragments of the possible life of a Latvian countrywoman who passed away some years ago. The result is an intimate, moving and very human exploration of everyday scenes of a traditional life. Eksta’s use of available materials, namely the deceased countrywoman’s house with all her belongings, makes for a remarkably genuine and tender artwork. In the absence of the countrywoman or any relations, neighbours or records, Eksta was forced to draw from her imagination in order to create the final photographs. Presenting a rich narrative, full of memories and dreams, the series is simultaneously a clever reinterpretation of the atmosphere of Eksta’s own childhood. Real world concerns in the Latvian countryside, such as migration, ageing of the population and emptiness, are made tangible in Eksta’s imaginative photography series.

Dievs Daba Darbs (God Nature Toil) is a trilogy written by Latvian author Anna Brigadere in the early 1900s, as a quiet sentimental examination of the life of Latvian peasants, narrated by the young daughter of rural servants. For centuries, Latvian families lived in individual farmsteads in the countryside and notions of nature, work and religion determined their life. I have reevaluated and reframed the image of this traditional lifestyle and its contemporary state of neglect. I have done this by reenacting the life of a countrywoman who passed away some years ago. Her children emigrated and her house, with all her belongings, turned into an archive of private memories that was found by accident. During the shoot, I considered this house as an archive of private memory and my own work as an exploration of this archive, using only the material available to me there, such as clothes, objects and natural light.
Jaeyong Choi’s work Mass employs cable ties as its main materials. Commonly used to connect two things in a bond unbreakable through natural means, such as price tags to objects, cable ties represent materialism in its simplest form. The product’s value does not change according to its real inherent value, but rather according to the price that is attached to it. The subject of this work is ‘Vermehrung’, or multiplication. Although multiplication begins with minor links, it gradually increases in size and affects not only individual change, but also has a major impact on society, culture, politics and other elements of contemporary life. Links can be found in all kinds of relationships and communications, and those links exist through repetitions and connections – the total number of which is comparable to the stars in the universe. Just like these, an invisible cord connects the world repeatedly.

Humans exist as individual beings, but could never survive in isolation. Human beings enjoy human connection, communicating and taking part in meaningful relationships. An important element of this installation is the notion that there is a price tag for everything in life. This installation demonstrates an aspect of human existence that cannot be abandoned: the importance of unity. Thus, the mass – the public – have to live together and not become beings abandoned by any authority or external decision-maker.
I reproduce and accelerate the natural process that causes the creation of minerals. Several thousands of miles beneath us, under our feet, molecules assemble, creating stable chemical structures. These structures then go through very high temperatures and pressure to create a mineral, which then has the potential to become a rock or gem. In my ceramics studio, I have dozens of different minerals in powder form that I begin my process with. I know the chemical structure of every single one, which allows me to create my own compositions. To begin, I arrange a combination of molecules very precisely in an attempt to reproduce a natural chemical structure. I fire the resulting mix in a ceramics kiln at the temperature of 1280°C for eight hours. Though chemically identical to natural gemstones, my fabricated minerals vary significantly from the original due to the difference in the time and pressure it takes to produce them.
If the relation of time and space is endlessly running, we live on this planet simply because of gravity. Time is the force of flow and although we attempt to stop our progress towards old age and nonexistence, we run towards our future, the passing of time inevitable and unstoppable. We were born within regulations and social norms and have always struggled for and chased something in our lives. The toy car and the hex nut are my comparisons to a man-made track; in the process, they would rub, wear out, become taut and become loose. With this work, I have tried to develop a mode of interaction between lives and the world, and hence extract an eternal state of regression.

Newton’s Second Law of Motion is a piece about time and space, and the way we exist in the world. Tsai Yi-Ting uses the abrasive belt as an analogy for infinite history to express how the world and life within it is executed, how this concentrates emotions and incidents into a constant state and thus transforms into an unchanged law and principle. Tsai launched the mechanical power series when she was a college student in the sculpture department, which has now developed into the foundations for her artistic expression. She tells stories from her cultural background with a poetic approach, viewing the absolute precision of mechanical movements as an abstract language. This abstract language may convey a living philosophy, even transcending the visual image of the work. She uses mechanical elements both as a creative medium and as a deeper exploration of the meaning of life. Artistic creation makes it possible for machines to be infused with living energy through the rhythm created from the combination of precise components and repetitive mechanical motions.
This work has been imagined as a static game, in which I used the raw materials of common reed and heavy oak beams. I set up a sculptural mark that evokes questions about the perception of ourselves in a community. I was interested in the use of natural material that speaks for itself, expressing the same sensibility and potential that humans possess. Common reed is a very well known material, used throughout history for building and is still used today in many of the same ways and for the same purposes. During the process, I also learnt that in the sphere of biodynamics it has a very powerful impact on keeping soil healthy. Reeds are a hyper-accumulator, which can absorb incredibly high levels of toxic material, such as hard metals released by humans in nature, without the toxins impacting its growth. Our link to this material is obvious in a functional sense, but has also brought up the exploration of natural sources for our own growth.
Searching for the European Roller

Hillside Projects:
Jonas Böttner & Emily Mennerdahl

Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design
Sweden
Visual arts

Searching for the European Roller is a lecture performance that weaves in and out of the history of a disappearing blue bird. Approximately 25 minutes in length, the lecture is produced and performed by the artist collective Hillside Projects. Taking place within a scene-like built installation, the lecture involves props and artefacts, as well as guest appearances from both real and fictitious ‘specialists’ on the subject matter. Applying and experimenting with characters and disparate uses of an ‘authoritative’ voice in telling the story of the bird, the lecture explores cultural and political narratives in a continuing discourse on nature. The lecture retraces the memories and emotions of the blue bird whilst questioning its need for departure and the strong national desire for its return. In doing so, concepts of migration are connected to a larger political understanding of belonging.

You are unmistakable
Your deepest desires remain unknown
Last observed nesting in Sweden in 1967
You were spotted on a barren hilltop
Soon to forsake this land altogether
You fly across economical and country borders
Yet the reason for your disappearance is uncertain
Is it the operation of biocide biotopic changes
Or is cultural boredom the reason you left intolerant Europe?

Is it the operation of biocide biotopic changes
Or is cultural boredom the reason you left intolerant Europe?

Hillside Projects is a research and production group consisting of graduate student Jonas Böttner and artist Emily Mennerdahl. Formed in 2011, we are currently based in Stockholm, Sweden. The work of Hillside Projects is interdisciplinary and mainly focuses on the development and changes in the natural world. We dismantle and reconsider the validity of accepted facts and knowledge. Through lecture performances, installations and video we experiment with ways of telling stories and retelling stories. Lines between fact and fiction, knowledge and assumption become blurred as different voices and roles are explored. We employ found material from archives and excursions as well as drawings, plants, photographs and text, playing with methods of layering, ordering and slightly altering information and knowledge. Hillside Projects is committed to working in dialogue with other thinkers and professionals from a variety of fields.

Who decides what is to be told?
Who decides how it is to be told?
I am a musician and audio-visual artist. In my work, I explore the relationship between loss, time and memories, tackling the social stigmas surrounding those suffering from mental health issues. My videos consist of portraits representing subjects who are always facing a certain kind of loneliness. In Shattered, I filmed my grandmother Colette, who was 78 at the time. This film in particular addresses my own fears of losing my mind. My work is personal as I often use my own family as subjects. Using close family members as inspiration for my work also allows me to reflect and draw inspiration from my childhood, as well as the various obsessions and anxieties I have about the world.

Eva Giolo’s video Shattered is an intimate and tender nine-minute long film exploring the fragmented mind of her Alzheimer-ridden grandmother. Bringing the viewer into her intimate and emotional world, the viewer is taken through a desolate house filled with fragments of an old woman’s life. The video progressively reveals the woman’s appearance and her ailment. Her lost words and behaviour, however confused and disturbing, reach out to the viewer. Whilst watching the film, the viewer is confronted with the very human fear of madness and loss. Shattered is a non-judgemental exploration of illness, human mortality, solitude and the meaning of life.
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