

UNCANNY VALLEY

(res./crea._2010/11)

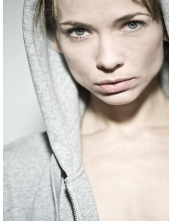
Creation & performance : Tawny Andersen & Alexandre Le Petit

Sound design & light design : Alexandre Le Petit & Tawny Andersen

Duration : 30'



Biographies



Tawny Andersen is a dancer and performer based in Brussels, Belgium. Since relocating to Europe from her native Canada in 2001, she has worked with a variety of different artists. Of importance was her involvement with Jan Fabre/Troubleyn between 2005-2008, when she took part in the productions “Je Suis Sang”, “Tannhauser” and “I am Mistake”, the latter a collaboration with filmmaker Chantal Akerman. Also inspirational was her work with Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods on the 2009 production “Mauser” in collaboration with Frank Castorf at Berlin’s Volksbühne theatre. In 2010 she collaborated with Alexandre Le Petit on the creation of her first solo work “Uncanny Valley” that premiered at Montréal’s Espace Tangeante. Tawny also works with artists from different disciplines, including film and video. Alongside her performing career Tawny is partaking in research into performance theory, with a specific interest in theatricality and performativity. Her research has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, and a 2010 trajectsubsidy grant from the Flemish Minister for Culture is supporting her experimentation with the creation of possible territories for the merging of theory and practice. Tawny is also currently working on her Masters degree in performance studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.



Alexandre Le Petit is a French artist based in Brussels (BE). He is the founder of the company VersoNatura, through which he produces and diffuses his work. A self-taught musician/drummer, Alexandre formed several improvisation collectives during the 1990s whose self-produced creations evolved between free jazz, industrial music and rock' N roll. During his studies within the department of performing arts of the University of Caen (FR) Alexandre initiated a series of theatrical experiments inspired by the writings of the Beat generation, involving dance, music and video. Upon his arrival in Belgium in 2004 Alexandre collaborated with philosopher Daniel Franco on a series of performances inspired by Ovid's Metamorphoses, presented at the Monty Theater in Antwerp and Nadine in Brussels. In 2005 and 2006, Alexandre and dancer Tawny Andersen collaborated on the choreographic research project Fall created in Belgium, Denmark and Italy. Between 2006 and 2007 Alexandre continued to develop his own aesthetic research in live performance through several residencies, experimenting possible ways to generate scenic extrapolations of Lucrece's De rerum natura (Little Boy) and Gunther Anders 's work The Outdatedness of Human Beings (I have done with the world). In 2010 he and Tawny Andersen created the performance Uncanny Valley that premiered at Montréal's Tangente theater (CA). In 2011, he has created, in collaboration with Tawny Andersen and architect/philosopher Pierre Joachim, the installation Ghost Notes, presented at Beursschouwburg in October 2011 and February 2012, questioning the capacity of agency of the living heritage of dead thinkers, mainly articulated around the figure of Jacques Derrida, and exploring the notion of immaterial presence and physical absence of the speaker in a performative context.

Alexandre is currently working on the first step of his new research project, Pharmakon, inspired by a subjective reading of the (living) French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, and he's starting a collaboration with Pierre Joachim on the creation of a series of installations inspired by Spinoza's Ethics.

Project Description and Theoretical Grounding

Uncanny Valley examines the relationship between theatricality and performativity as well as the mechanisms at work in the construction and reception of meaning. Inspired by recent theorization of the notion of the performativity in critical theory, and specifically by the questioning of the relationship between corporality, language and identity, the work attempts to generate a 'polysemic virtuality' in order to question the relationship between subject and object, performer and audience. Engaging the participation of the spectator in generating sense and reconsidering the meanings of the multiplicity of sounds, images and signs proposed, the work concerns the problematic of the subjectivity of language and the esthetic process of reconstructing a message.

Uncanny Valley relies on the understanding of identity as a fluid notion, as being performative as opposed to expressive. The solo begins with the rather impossible conception of a neutral or transparent body that can then be charged with innumerable characters, energies or qualities. In order to do this *Uncanny Valley* borrows elements from the cinematic universe, recalling identities from selected films from cinema history that constitute a kind of archive of our collective cultural memory. The body is thus performative in the sense that it has no ontological identity prior to this projection. The choreographic material is organized around the manipulation of these fragments of films, and similarly, the sound score is composed of the combination of such fragments of film sound tracks with other sounds generated by 'real' situations, (re)created in the context of the performance itself. As such the sound and movement are in a constant real-time dialogue, both being manipulated live in response to one another. The repetition and re-enactment of these citational, ritualized acts confronts us with the constructedness of identity and of reality, and the ultimate uncanniness of the performing situation.

The philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote about the ghost of Karl Marx haunting Europe, but also about the ghost of Hamlet haunting the stage. In the processes of citation and iteration that govern the performative process, what is the relationship between the 'original' and the copy, the 'real' and the 'fictional'? Or as Judith Butler went on to ask, what are the subversive qualities of citation and the refusal of representation? What is the 'political promise of the performative'?

Press excerpts

"Andersen's strange and compelling discourse-in-motion is living proof of the vitality of the new thinking in the sociology of the body. Her corporeal presence and choreographic collage slip easily between the "real" and the "theatricalized", as if a continuing chapter -- albeit in a new century -- of the Judson Dance Church revolution in the 1960s."

-Dena Davida, artistic director, Espace Tangente, Montreal

Dfdanse

Le magazine de la danse actuelle a Montréal

Play it again

Uncanny Valley - Tawny Andersen & Alexandre Le Petit

(...) Truffée d'archives sonores cinématographiques et d'allusions visuelles à des scènes dramatiques qui ont figé notre réalité un temps devant l'écran, cette pièce (...) travaille un arrêt-sur-image nostalgique, hautement esthétique. La chorégraphie revient constamment sur elle-même, hésitant à achever le mouvement ou recherchant sa perfection, sa vérité. Cela tient-il aux éclairages signés Paul Chambers, il émane de l'ensemble une impression de noir et blanc velouté qui réveille avec force et sensibilité les mythiques et marquants moments de cinéma collectionnés en mémoire. Le programme ne mentait pas là où il évoquait À bout de souffle ou Pierrot le fou de Godard, l'univers haletant d'Hitchcock ou l'atmosphère aussi hurlante qu'étouffante de Lars Von Trier dans Dogville. Quant à l'inégalée scène de non-retrouvailles en back-room d'un dancing de Paris-Texas (Wenders), trois courtes répliques suffisent à remémorer les frissons d'un dialogue inoubliable et impossible : « I knew these people... / What people ? / These two people »

-Marion Gerbier, magazine Dfdanse

Shifting Ground, Growing Concepts

Idea-Based Dances at Tangente

(...) The intimate blackened stage is then defined by a blazing square of light. For a time, Andersen stands stock still in a corner of this defined space, looking into the distance. Dressed in a white jersey and blue jeans, she begins to move her hands slightly. The soundscape created by Alexandre Le Petit of urban apartment and street ambience develops with a woman singing an aria, and ultimately incorporates fragments of film dialogue. As the volume increases, the light in the square amplifies. Andersen entwines a purely stripped-back quality with the barest of movement in a section where she aspires to work on inner states (closing her eyes, limited movement) and then veers precariously in the opposite direction, lip-synching to the score's film dialogue. In the final tableau, she breaks out in a terrific lyrical, virtuosic dance.

-Shifting Ground, Growing Concepts – Phyilip Szporer

Support : versonatura // Pianofabriek // Bains Connective // p.a.r.t.s. summer studio's

