

Dampfzentrale Kesselhaus
FR 8.5. | 20:00
SA 9.5. | 21:00
Stammtisch | FR 8.5. | 21:45

Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert & CAMPO (Gent)
TO BREAK – The Window of Opportunity

Von und mit: Robbert&Frank/ Frank&Robbert
Oeil extérieur, Mentor: Pol Heyvaert
Sound: Koenraad Vandersyppe
Technik: Piet Depoortere, Koenraad Van- dersyppe, Wout Janssens

Sprache: Englisch (wenig Text)
Dauer: 1h
Eintritt: 35.-/25.-

“There’s a race of men that don’t fit in, A race that can’t stay still; So they break the hearts of kith and kin, And they roam the world at will. They range the field and they rove the flood, And they climb the mountain’s crest; Theirs is the curse of the gypsy blood, And they don’t know how to rest.”
(Robert W. Service)

Eine karge Wüste, darin ein paar zusammengezimmerter Objekte. Eine Kuh aus Kisten, eine sprechende Büste, Holzlatten und ein Totempfahl. Ein Touch von wildem Westen. Darin basteln Robbert und Frank oder Frank und Robbert, zwei lonesome Kunst-Cowboys, ihre Welt. Nach und nach bringen sie Farbe und Leben in die Steppe und diese wird zu einem Sammelbecken für komische Gestalten, die sonst nirgends hingehören.

Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert arbeiten seit 2006 zusammen. TO BREAK ist ihre erste Produktion unter dem Dach von CAMPO. Die beiden teilen seit der Schulzeit eine Faszination für amerikanische Kultur, Rituale und politische Rhetorik. Neben Bühnenproduktionen erarbeiten sie auch Installationen, Skulpturen und Videokunst.

ANKÜNDIGUNG DER GRUPPE

Robust, honest materials lay scattered along a desolate plain. Wood, metal and some plastic here and there. Besides that: emptiness. In what wilderness have we found ourselves? Are we in Saudi-Arabia? Arizona? Is it an abandoned beach? Little by little, the landscape is filled with colour and the elements come to life ingeniously. From then on, we leave on a road trip across time and its Window of Opportunity.

Previously, the young makers Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert – alchemists of the visual arts, cowboys of slapstick – were the creative minds behind A JOURNEY INTO SPACE in CAMPO. Their second creation TO BREAK – The Window of Opportunity is a visual installation brought to life, with an inevitable ending.

BIOS

Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert met ten years ago, when they were both pupils at the Athenaeum of Courtrai. They became an artistic duo in 2006. Initially, Frank was the visual artist who painted, sculpted and made installations, while Robbert was the digital artist, working with editing and image processing. Frank was in front of the camera, Robbert was behind it.

Gradually, they both educated themselves in the area of expertise of the other, so that today, they are equally competent both creatively and technically. They easily combine different artistic techniques and modes of expression, thus building up an oeuvre that does not necessarily fit within one style or medium.

In 2008, the young artists won first price in the Kunstbende (category 'Performance'), with their show De Kast. Their short film What about American History (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zINw-U9dCbA>) was selected for the exhibition of the Canvas Collectie 2012 in Bozar.

In 2012, both artists graduated at KASK in Ghent, at the department of Multimedia Design. With A Journey into Space, the young makers won the yearly Horlait Dapsens price and were selected for the European Start Prize 2012. That same year, the performance was also selected for the section Jong Werk at TAZ#2012. TO BREAK is the second performance that Frank&Robbert/Robbert&Frank have created together. Apart from their performances, they also build site specific installations, such as Guns (Schouwburg Kortrijk, 2014) and A bit beyond PINGPONG (Netwerk Aalst, September 2014).

ÜBER CAMPO

CAMPO is a Ghent (Belgium) based arts centre with a diverse programme. Every year we create, present or support over 400 shows and events, from theatre and dance to performance and visual arts.

CAMPO creates

There are always artists at work in CAMPO. Currently at work: Pieter Ampe, Micha Goldberg & Sophia Rodriguez, Florentina Holzinger & Vincent Riebeek, Jan Martens, Kim Noble, Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert, Pieter Van den Bosch, Sarah Vanhee, Benjamin Verdonck and Miet Warlop.

CAMPO tours

Our productions tour all over the world. Last season CAMPO presented more than 200 shows, from Waregem (BE) to Helsinki (FIN), from Melbourne (AU) to Yamaguchi (JAP).

CAMPO presents

Besides our own productions we also present national and international work from other companies. With events, festivals and happenings such as Mayday Mayday, CAMPO passeert or Buurtkeuken we open our doors for unexpected encounters between the artists and the public.

CAMPO supports

Artists in search of a rehearsal studio, technical expertise or productional support are equally welcome. Sabine Molenaar, Hof van Eede, Dolores Bouckaert & Charlotte Vanden Eynde, Ontroerend Goed and Lazarus are but some of the artists we support.

CAMPO Ghent

CAMPO has 3 sites in Ghent to work and present: CAMPO nieuwpoort, CAMPO victoria and CAMPO boma.

www.campo.ne

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH ROBBERT&FRANK/FRANK&ROBBERT ABOUT TO BREAK – THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY: AN ACCEPTABLE UNIVERSE

January 2014

TO BREAK is your second performance, after A Journey into Space. Your debut was filled with visual effects and video, but this time you avoided modern technology altogether. Why?

Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert (the makers speak with one voice and finish each others sentences, ed.): After having worked for months in an editing room creating special effects, we felt the urge to use our hands again. A first tangible expression of that urge was a wooden installation we presented in Knokke, amongst other locations, even though that construction still referred to the multimedia world (a sort of tree house with google search command, ed.).

For TO BREAK, our approach is exclusively based on crafts: we sculpt, make moulds, paint, are carpenters, we even work with chocolate. The goal of all those actions is to create loops, to act out transformations. For instance, you could heat a chunk of chocolate until it melts, let it cool off in a different shape, shatter it into a thousand pieces and maybe melt that again. And so on.

How does that correspond to the subtitle, The window of opportunity?

The “window of opportunity” in the title refers to the moment in which the stars align to make something work. In TO BREAK, that moment crumbles down to a series of hopeless attempts to achieve something. The window of opportunity is missed by an inch each and every time, because of the transformation of an object or the failure of the individual. For us, the idea of the transformation corresponds to the concept of meritocracy. We live in a society that judges us by merit. Everybody is so busy trying to distinguish himself from others that the distinction disappears and meritocracy implodes. The concept of failure is intriguing. Have you ever noticed the way in which we laugh collectively when we see people fail? People find that funny. But why? Out of a sense of recognition, or a sense of contempt?

The origins of the word “slapstick” boils down to this: to hit somebody, without hurting him. Tricks are used to create comic effect, tricks we use fondly. We even show them, plain and simple.

The performance world is different from the film world: there is less possibility to hide things. How do you handle that?

The honesty and transparency that we strive for, does indeed have consequences for ourselves on the stage. We are not the makers on stage, the stage is not our workshop. But we are not actors either, we don't play a part, we are Frank&Robbert/Robbert&Frank, activators and alchemists at your service. With our help, magical effects are created. We also keep a firm hand on everything, from music to setting. The deus ex machine still exists, but we are no longer secretive about it. As always, we want to welcome the public in our world, but this time our world is a universe in which everything is showed openly. Eventually, TO BREAK will be a fragmentary performance with filmic elements in the editing, the framing, the music... The difference with what we usually do lies in the honesty: we openly show the editing process and technical interventions.

How is that crafts idea incorporated in the setting?

The back wall consists of a hand painted canvas of 22 meters long, that rotates through the use of manpower. On the canvas a desert scape is depicted, in which all sorts of things are hidden: not only does the spectator see about every existing mythological building from antiquity, from the Easter Islands to the Mayan temples, he can also discern cowboys and whales. We share a great fascination for monuments of that sort, especially after we saw a conspiracy theory video claiming that all of those buildings are situated on the inclination axis of the earth.

The desert scape on the back wall acts as a metaphor: the desert seems empty, but the confrontation with that multitude of emptiness creates innumerable possibilities. And just like that, the desert becomes a symbol of freedom. TO BREAK is an ode to nomads, explorers, those that keep on searching. Think about things like westerns, Clint Eastwood as the eternal lonesome cowboy struggling with himself. It's the men that don't belong anywhere, as poet Robert W. Smith once described them: "The men who don't fit in." Or as Pessoa wrote in *The Tobacco Shop*: "I'm nothing. I'll always be nothing. I can't want to be something. But I have in me all the dreams of the world." Another inspiration is *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* by Peter Greenaway, a movie in which each space is accredited with a specific colour and atmosphere. The bizarre atmosphere in Jodorowsky's film *The Holy Mountain* has also been influential.

All of those elements and influences lead up to what we describe as an "acceptable universe": a world that not only seems absurd and alienating, but is also credible, readable and aesthetic.

Both of you have a background in the visual arts. How would you call the installations that you put on the stage?

We show visual constructions that are monumental in shape, but also refer to history and become carriers of meaning in that way. In TO BREAK, we first destroy the monuments like true iconoclasts, and later on go to work with them like monument builders: in that way, the supporting base on which the demolished statue stood is given a different status, and a ladder and a circle suddenly carry the same load as an ancient totem pole. There and then, we are the alchemists that create a new and exciting world.

www.robbertenfrank.com

Pressematerial (Fotos in druckfähiger Auflösung und Pressedossiers zu den einzelnen Produktionen) stehen auf <http://www.auawirleben.ch/medien.html> für Sie zum Herunterladen bereit.

Für weitere Auskünfte, Unterlagen zu den Produktionen, Bild- und eventuell Videomaterial wenden Sie sich bitte an +41 (0) 31 318 62 16 resp. nicollette.kretz@auawirleben.ch. Wir stehen gerne zu Ihrer Verfügung. Spezielle Wünsche wie Interviews oder Porträts melden Sie bitte frühzeitig an.

PRESSE

De Morgen, 5. August 2014

Evelyne Coussens

In TO BREAK – The Window of Opportunity the young artistic duo Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert proves that everything that exists can always be something else. The world is a canvas that can be painted in accordance with one's own imagination. The world these two gents prefer is a blend of Karl May, David Lynch and Mary Poppins. 'Your mind is a box of chocolates – open it and taste the potential of your thoughts'. No, it's not Forrest Gump who came up with this idea, but the Austrian writer Robert Musil, though he formulated it in a slightly more intellectual way. In his trilogy *The Man Without Qualities* (1930) Musil developed the concept of the 'sense of possibility': the notion that in addition to the actual, real world, countless potential worlds also exist, or that everything could also be different from what it is. Frank Merckx and Robbert Goyvaerts – who look like 'the guys next door', one rather thin, the other with flushed round cheeks – take Musil's idea to its material consequences. Two years ago they appeared at TAZ with the absurd piece *A Journey into Space* amidst all the new work and are now returning with a full CAMPO premiere. Theater Aan Zee sometimes sets out some good pointers.

Funnily enough, it is Investopedia – the Wiki for investors – that supplies the first definition of 'a window of opportunity': 'a short time period during which an otherwise unattainable opportunity exists', or in investment terms, 'the moment to strike'. In this way, 'the window' assumes a materialist significance linked to capitalist ideology, while Robbert&Frank mostly use a more literal form of materialism: the study of materials, playing on the visible, tangible world as a set of bricks with colours, shapes, sounds and spaces. And if one is to acceptably turn this tangible material on its head, what is needed above all is its opposite: imagination.

They start on an empty stage, against the backdrop of a desert landscape they painted themselves. What follows is a succession of attempts, painstaking yet doomed to failure, to break through the apparent limits of the visible world. They gauge the space: height, depth, length, breadth. What if wooden slats were wings: would we then be able to fly with them? What if a tree becomes a xylophone, can we then play music on it? An abstract adventure story unfolds, with Robbert&Frank in the roles of Jommeke and Filiberke, cheerfully deconstructing their own strip cartoon world. Trees bleed, weapons turns out to be made of chocolate – in this theatre laboratory even the observable certainties are constantly transforming into something else.

The length of the show coincides exactly with 'the window of opportunity' – the performance is this opportunity, that one chance to radically shift our view – to break down our own set ways of seeing. And Robbert&Frank seize their chance. They solemnly climb the coloured, illuminated steps of a homemade showbiz staircase – remember Walter Capiou's 'Kinderacademie' – on the way to a new world of the imagination. Utterly crazy. Delightful.

Knack Focus, 10. August 2014

Theatre: Tik Tak for adults

Els Van Steenberghe

At some point this spring, Robbert&Frank/Frank&Robbert showed a try-out of their piece 'To Break - The Window of Opportunity'. This led to a rumour spreading like wildfire that it would be one of the must-see performances at TAZ#2014, the festival at which the production was to be premiered. And for once, the rumour proved to be correct.

At first sight, the stage looks bare, with the exception of the backdrop, on which a desolate desert scene has been painted. Frank Merkx and Robbert Goyvaerts come onto the stage, both carrying a plank several metres long with which they proceed to do all kinds of tricks. What follows is a feast for the imagination. The pair has dubbed their performance 'Tik Tak for adults'.

The title probably refers to the associative way in which one scene evolves from another. For example: having laid out a number of hand-sculpted trees on the stage, Goyvaerts goes to lie down in the woods, right beside a cardboard stream. In the meantime, the intro to David Lynch's Twin Peaks is playing, Merkx is having fun with a toy car, and before you realise it, they are re-enacting a crucial scene from Twin Peaks. At another point, a tree trunk is carried onto the stage from which surprising soundscapes suddenly 'whirl down', and so it continues. These performance artists use the stage as a sanctuary from which to create their own crazy world with materials and scenes from the 'real world'. Their world looks rather like a colourful playground for - or created by - two adults, where every object can transmogrify and suddenly start to speak, sing or cry.

In this 'playground' the pair mess around with the concentration, earnestness and joy of playful rascals who are one another's best friends. This makes the performance more than just a light-hearted frolic with colours, sounds and wood. The friendship between the two performers shines through in every scene. This makes To Break - The Window of Opportunity an ode to friendship (even if cheerfully crazy) as a buffer against the sober outside world.