

**KAAI**  
**THEATER**

**/// NEW  
RESIDENTS'  
MONTH ///**

Christophe Meierhans  
**Trial of money (work in progress)**

**10>11/01/17 – 20:30 – Kaaistudio's**  
performance • 60 min • in English

**EXTRA From 10/01 to 14/01** you can visit the **video installation** *You take the words right out of my mouth* by Christophe Meierhans, in the concert hall. Limited capacity, please make a reservation for your visit.

## **YOU TAKE THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH**

In the video installation *You take the words right out of my mouth* by Christophe Meierhans, four big screens show a busy street in Jerusalem's Old Town and the everyday situations that take place there. You hear a voice-over in which Western expats informally – and occasionally even brashly – talk about a culture that is foreign to them.

Make a reservation to visit the installation at the deks.

Video installation | 4 x 12 min. | in English

## **CREDITS**

### **concept & direction**

Christophe Meierhans

### **dramaturgy**

Bart Cappelle

### **creative help**

Ann De Keersmaecker

### **production**

Hiros

### **coproduction**

Kaaitheater

## TRIAL OF MONEY (WORK IN PROGRESS)

**nl/** Als het waar is dat geld de wereld regeert dan is het misschien tijd dat het daarvoor verantwoording aflegt? Christophe Meierhans brengt het geld naar de rechtbank, niet om een magistraat om te kopen, maar om het een eerlijk proces te geven. Is het geld 'an sich' de schuld van alle ellende in de wereld? Of is het slechts een neutraal middel in de handen van mensen met slechte bedoelingen? Als eerste stap in zijn nieuw project organiseert Meierhans een 'preliminaire hoorzitting' in de Kaaistudio's waarin zowel de aanklager als de verdediging een eerste keer hun argumentatie naar voor brengen.

- Christophe Meierhans is opgeleid als componist maar in zijn recente werk richt hij zich op het theater als plek voor participatie en politieke verantwoordelijkheid. We toonden eerder werk van hem zoals *Al Gore: Speech at the Constitution Hall* (2011), *Some use for your broken claypots* (2014) en *A hundred wars to world peace - Verein zur Aufhebung des Notwendigen* (2016).

**fr/** S'il est vrai que l'argent gouverne le monde, alors peut-être serait-il temps qu'il réponde de ses actes. Ce n'est ainsi pas dans le but d'acheter des magistrats que Christophe Meierhans se propose de le mener aux assises, mais bien afin de lui offrir un procès équitable: l'argent lui-même peut-il être rendu coupable de l'état catastrophique du monde actuel, ou n'a-t-il jamais été que le bras armé de gens malintentionnés? Comme première étape de ce nouveau projet, Meierhans met en scène l'audition préliminaire de ce procès où accusation et défense procéderont à une première évaluation de l'affaire.

- Christophe Meierhans est formé en tant que compositeur mais son travail plus récent se consacre au théâtre comme un espace de participation et de responsabilité politique. Il états à l'affiche du Kaaitheater avec *Al Gore: Speech at the Constitution Hall* (2011), *Some use for your broken claypots* (2014) et *A hundred wars to world peace - Verein zur Aufhebung des Notwendigen* (2016).

**en/** If it is true that money rules the world, then perhaps time has come for it to account for its acts. It is therefore not in an attempt to bribe a magistrate that Christophe Meierhans is bringing money to court, but on the contrary, in order to offer it a fair trial: Is money itself the culprit for having brought the world to the catastrophic state it is in now, or has it rather been employed to the design of ill-intentioned individuals? As a first step in this new project, Meierhans stages the preliminary hearing for this trial where prosecution and defense will undertake a first assessment of the case.

- Christophe Meierhans is trained as a composer but his more recent work devotes itself to the theatre as a possible space for participation and political responsibility. We have previously shown work of his such as *Al Gore: Speech at the Constitution Hall* (2011), *Some use for your broken claypots* (2014) and *A hundred wars to world peace - Verein zur Aufhebung des Notwendigen* (2016).

## **'I'M MORE TRYING TO CREATE SITUATIONS RATHER THAN PIECES'**

An interview with Christophe Meierhans by Guy Gypens and Eva Decaesstecker (Kaaaitheater, 2016).

**The Swiss Christophe Meierhans is musician, theatre maker, performer and even made films and exhibitions. One aspect coming back in his works however, is his investigation in the collective and the consequences it produces when you step into this collective. 'If you're discussing a real political issue in a play, why is it less real than when you would do it outside?' A conversation with Christophe Meierhans for his Kaaaitheater residency (2017-2021).**

**Today we know you as a theatre maker, but your artistic course actually started in music. How did it develop to the performances your making now?**

First, I was planning to become a jazz guitarist, but due to tendinitis in both of my arms, this became extremely difficult. So I made a turn towards composition and I went studying contemporary classical music in Amsterdam and Berlin. At that time, composition was still considered this modernistic project, embedded in old and dusty institutions, taught by the last generation of believers in the dying utopia of making the 'new' music. Much of that music seemed to be relevant only within these institutions and hardly had any exchange with the outside. This became very contrasting with the Berlin I was living in since 1999.

Berlin was by then calling out for new or other institutions. It was also the end of the real crazy period and there were still all these empty spaces. There was this enthusiasm and hope that the city could become something completely different. There was the overall feeling of building new things up together. Also the whole night and cultural life was still very participative. This all played in contradiction with the conservatory, its old teachers and dated ideas of what music theory and composition should be. It was clear for me that I wasn't going to dwell too long in there.

That is why I was very happy when a new seminar started at the University of the Arts, where I was studying, bringing architects and musicians together to investigate the relationships between sound and constructed environment. This brought me to do some first pieces in the public space. It was music, since I was working with musicians, but it wasn't really a concert. In the project at Alexander Platz for instance, twelve musicians were spread out. It was a kind of installation that lasted three years and in which musicians were playing composed parts which sounded like scales or musical exercises. On the square, you never saw more than two of them at the same time. You could either pass by and miss the work or if you were more attentive, discover the whole orchestration bit by bit.

I continued being a musician for quite a while with the two-people band TAPE THAT, in which we were composing and performing. We looked for a lot of different contexts: both contemporary music festivals and galleries, but also more punky venues. There was a very strong performative element in TAPE THAT. Next to the purely musical qualities of the work, the visual aspect was very important. In one of the projects, called 'Catalogue' we would perform around sixty very short pieces during a concert. The time in between the pieces was longer than the pieces themselves and their titles were almost as important as the actual sounding part.

It was in the same period, I started working in Brussels with Heike Langsdorf and Christoph Ragg, which later became C&H. In the beginning, I was mostly taking care of the musical and sound part in the collective, but soon we started co-conceiving and –directing every aspect of the performances.

**With C&H you especially worked in the public space. Your own work mostly takes place in the theatre. How did this transition happen?**

With C&H we actually started in the theatre with work such as *Bühnestuck*. After that we moved out and did things in the public space. The last years we were mostly doing the project called *Postcards from the future* of which we did several versions. Everything we did in C&H was about this threshold between being aware that something's happening or not and creating a context in which it is not clear where you are supposed to look and what is part of the show and what is not.

In the beginning, we all had other projects next to C&H, but we ended up with only doing that, as the work became more ambitious and required more and more time. After working together for ten years, we all felt like doing other things again, I guess.

Coming from music, my focus wasn't immediately on theatre. I also tried to make films, I also did some exhibitions. Those media however didn't really work for me. What I really like now with the theatre is that you get an audience who dedicate a set time of their life exclusively to the one experience that you are proposing.

**Already in your previous works, participation and a direct contact with the audience was present. Now you seem to use this mechanism to address the collective and a political awareness.**

You could say so maybe. However, it's not only about becoming aware of the collective moment as such. It's rather about what happens with this collective moment. The traffic jam in the last version of *Postcards from the Future* (2011) with C&H was also already dealing with this. Groups of people coming together and following a common plan. You collectively step into this fictional extreme during one hour. The suspension is immense: you suspend the entire city to go for that one thing. In that sense, it is really about what collective moments produce and what type of energies and perspectives this opens. What do you see when you take the step together?

In *Some use for your broken clay pots* (2014) something similar happens. You collectively decide to discuss a proposal for a new constitution, as if it would be a serious proposal and as if this theatre would be a parliament. The moment everybody steps into this, it becomes real, which is probably what theatre is about in some extent. We take a collective decision to give credit to things that don't get credited outside of the room such as, in this case, a political utopia.

By inviting the audience to become a collective, they gain a responsibility from which they can't just walk away. That's very much the case with *Verein zur Aufhebung des Notwendigen*. It is all about the responsibility you get as soon as you come in. During this piece the audience prepare a meal collectively, guided by subversive anonymous cookbook. If you leave the hall, the others will suffer from it, because a step will be missing in the recipe. Somehow, it is also about creating an artistic practice in which the consumption part is relativised. In *Verein*, there is a literally a consumption because you eat food, but you'll have worked for it. Of course, watching a play is always a kind of engagement, but with works as *Verein*, there is an exposure. The lights are on, because you become accountable for what you do.

Another project I am developing with Ant Hampton, which we so far call 'the automatic workshop', touches this same thing: it is all about putting people in a position to make a step. Once you made this step, there is a whole chain of consequences. For instance, when you raise

your voice in public space, you can't take your voice back. You have raised it, so people will turn around. It's a gesture that starts engagement. I'm trying to get to these kinds of quality in the theatre pieces as well.

**You put yourself as an artist in a very vulnerable position in relation to the audience. You don't really know how the piece will end and you try to convince your audience to enter the same speculative situation. Could we call this speculative aspect a philosophical artistic gesture? And how do you consider your role as an artist in this light?**

Probably. I'm more trying to create situations rather than pieces. I'm using theatre, dramaturgy and the whole existing practice to create situations which, rather than being fiction, belong to a different reality. That's where things become interesting for me: if you're discussing a real political issue in *clay pots*, why is it less real than when you would do it outside? Sometimes, people are offended because they realize that I was not 'serious' in the piece. But then what is serious?

Vulnerability is unavoidable when you create participation because you ask people to engage without knowing. To gain this confidence you have to make your position, or that of the piece, as vulnerable as the audience's. If there are risks, you have to take them together. You can't ask people to take risks and lean back yourself. In *Verein* you go on stage, do something and if you mess it up, nobody's going to help you if not another spectator. At the same time the piece itself can also go wrong at any moment. Someone could take the script and throw it into the water. Then it's finished: the script is gone and there is no back-up. If you don't take care of the piece, the piece stops.

In the project *Fondo Speculativo di Provvidenza*, which I do with Luigi Coppola, we put each audience member in the position of having to decide about what should be done with a sum of money that has been raised collectively. Here, one voice can change everything. That is what agency is about: the moment you can change something, you can also change it for the worse. What is offered is never only a plus. It's like Borges' short story *Lottery in Babylon* where nobody wants to take part in a lottery because you could only win. But the moment they introduce unlucky numbers in the draw, the playing becomes addictive. There is something unreal about only plus, it contradicts any intuition.

**How do you see your residency?**

I see it as a gift: I worry less about what exactly I will make, because for five years I won't have this stress of having to convince every step. I can be more relaxed making up the plans. I don't like planning too much in advance. In my ideal world, I would finish one project, show it, understand it and then think about the next one. It is the kind of dynamic which is present in *Fondo Speculativo*. It's only after one step that we can think of the next one.

I will follow the same content track, I suppose. The next piece coming up is *The Trial of Money*. It's about our relationship to money and to what extent money itself, as a system, could be made accountable for the terrible situation in which we find ourselves on this planet. It's a trial: it pulls towards having to make a decision about it. If you condemn money, you have to have an alternative of course. The challenge of the piece is to create a tribunal which is credible. I don't want to come to a verdict, I rather want people to go home and think about their own verdict.

**You start coming to visit Brussels since 2000. What's your relation with the city? And would you like to engage with Brussels in your future work?**

It's a very complex relation. Since I'm French speaking, coming to Brussels always felt a bit like coming home. On the other hand, I can't imagine living in Brussels forever. There is hardly nature in this place. Or at least not nature where you get overwhelmed and where you feel small again like in the mountains. I am Swiss, remember.

I hope the work I do does engage with the city even though it's in the theatre space. I don't crave for public space or crave for theatre, one just makes more sense for the ideas I have at the moment.

In my engagement with the city, there's an image I have at the moment which I find kind of inspiring for thinking ways in which reality inside of the artistic, or theatre bubble could relate with the reality outside of it: groups of citizens building speakers and hanging them everywhere in the city. The speakers are connected with a big fat yellow cable, that enters the door of the theatre, so you cannot close it anymore. Inside the theatre space, other citizens hold political speeches. The fictional framework enables them to write and say things they wouldn't perhaps dare to deliver on the square outside. Yet, through the cable reaching out of the theatre and through the speakers, the speeches can be heard in the entire city.

# more work by our new artists in residence

read interviews with all our new artists in resident on [kaaitheater.be](http://kaaitheater.be)

## Michiel Vandevelde

### *Our times*

Every day, we are inundated with images and fragments of text. In this storm of impressions, Michiel Vandevelde pauses to think about the state of thinking, with re-appropriated dance, fragments of text and bizarre music.

Kaaistudio's • 13>14/01 • dance

## Vera Tussing

### *Mazing*

What does being together mean in 2016? Vera Tussing investigates the issue in a cheerful but destabilizing performance that both questions and reinforces the concept of 'community'. Time for a reassessment of physical contact in this digital age!

Kaaistudio's • 20>21/01 • performance

## Radouan Mriziga

### *55*

Since its première at the Kaaistudios, *55* has caused a furore. His characteristic dance style provokes confrontations between physicality and strict concepts, between the sensual and the rational. Using his own body as a measure, he constructs an architectural form.

Kaaistudio's • 24/01 • dance

## Benjamin Vandewalle (with Yoann Durant)

### *Hear*

*Hear* immerses you in a soundscape that explores the physical power of sound. A visual composition of sounds stimulates your senses. Each show uses a local choir of performers, and consequently evolves into a unique sound performance.

Lavallée • 25>27/01 • performance

## Kate McIntosh

### *All Ears*

In her *All Ears*, Kate McIntosh transforms the stage into a laboratory and recording studio. In the silence between the sound recordings, she asks you questions: who are we when we are alone, and what are we missing in our urge for self-actualization?

Kaaistudio's • 28/01 • performance