BER-AMS-BXL: AN INVESTIGATIVE CONFERENCE ON THE CONDITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FLOURISHING ARTISTIC BIOTOPES IN THE CITY

THURSDAY 5, FRIDAY 6 AND SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2013 IN AMSTERDAM AT HET VEEM THEATER AND DE BRAKKE GROND

Reflecting on the development of performing arts in Amsterdam, we can trace a history back to the impact that this city has had on international, groundbreaking innovations: from the radical Actie Tomaat (Tomato Campaign) in the 1960s to the avant-garde theatre produced by the Mickery theatre in the 70s and 80s; and in the fruitful cooperation between European players that gave rise to new networks, artistic alliances and experimental educational programmes such as Amsterdam's Mime school, SNDO, Masters of Choreography and DasArts.

And every year again, the Amsterdam theatre and dance schools continue to attract young artists from all over the world. Amsterdam scores high on all rankings of 'smart' and 'liveable' cities. Based on social, political, economic and cultural criteria, the city has a distinctive image and still seems to function as a destination for many.
However, in recent years we have witnessed changes, with more and more professionals moving away from Amsterdam soon after graduation to continue their career in cities such as Brussels or Berlin, often remaining nomadic and responsive to opportunities and projects. Is this exclusively a local problem, or is it also a symptom of the precarious conditions for artists in other European capitals?

Out of curiosity about the various urban infrastructures and artistic environments in Amsterdam, Brussels and Berlin we will gather to think together and learn from each other about current structures, urgent concerns and effective strategies to understand, problematize and influence the environment for healthy, inspiring and buzzing artistic biotopes in the city – particularly in relation to the small-scale investigative contemporary performing arts scene.

The structure of the conference will parallel the four domains proposed by Dr Pascal Gielen in his paper 'Artistic Praxis and the Neoliberalization of the Educational Space'. Gielen's categorisations of four distinct environments – the domestic space, the community/peer space, the market and the civic space – will frame our focus on various

aspects of the topics we are tackling. His work will figure as a dramaturgical thread running through the conference programme.
We will use his fascinating propositions as a springboard for further investigation. They will be the inspiration for our exchange, and it gives us great pleasure to announce that Dr Gielen will be one of the keynote speakers.

The packed three-day conference programme for BER-AMS-BXL was developed by a curatorial team made up of Marijke Hoogenboom, Bojana Mladenović, Piet Menu and Tom Rummens, representing de Theaterschool's Theatre and Dance research group, Het Veem Theater, the international production house for performance and Flemish Arts Centre De Brakke Grond.
The invitees for the conference include artists, politicians, school directors, activists, and philosophers. The conference's performance programme features artists and musicians from the three cities.

PROGRAMME

September 5 (Het Veem Theater)
10:00 – 17:00 Domestic Space: At Home in the City?
The domestic domain is where artists design their own environment and are in charge of their interests and discourses. The participating students are invited to consider this day their 'home' and take responsibility for the way they want us to spend time together, for the way they want us to meet, and the issues they would like to address. Curated and hosted by third-year students at the SNDO (School for New Dance Development) at de Theaterschool, Amsterdam.
19:00 – 21:00 Performances by students from the Inter-University Center for Dance Berlin (HZT).
20:30 Sonic Soirée (at de Brakke Grond)

September 6 (Het Veem Theater)
10:00 – 13:30 Artistic Biotope
In the keynote lecture Dr Pascal Gielen will introduce his thoughts on the four domains that influence artistic practice. Followed by responses that contribute to our core concern: How do these domains interact? What are the requirements for a productive biotope for artists in the city? What are the current challenges? We will 'unpack' Amsterdam, Brussels and Berlin and present specific positions – with concrete practices and visions – while also speaking from a place of responsibility for engagement with the local situation.
14:30 – 17:30 Peer Space: The Collective Unknown
The community space is a reflexive and discursive environment for interaction among peers. This session will be curated in collaboration with a diverse group of artists and artist's initiatives. The focus will be on voicing artistic and other concerns, and exchanging strategies for overcoming eroded conditions for creating work and reaching audiences. This is the space for curiosity, tips, agreements and disagreements, and dialogue across disciplines and environments.
20:30 Concert performance by John the Houseband

September 7 (de Brakke Grond)
10:00 – 13:00 Market Space: Rich Discourse on a Tight Budget
The market space investigates the relationship between producing and presenting art, on the one hand, and the underlying and necessary economies, on the other. Female leaders who direct networks, centres and programmes across Europe will engage in conversation with each other and examine the forces that influence artist's careers,

formalized infrastructures and the growing demand for creative entrepreneurship. What choices have to be made?

14:00 – 16:30 Civic Space: Impossible Conditions; Possible Public

Civic space has become increasingly threatened under the reign of neo-liberal capitalism. Public institutions and independent media take a more and more marginalized position, and economic standards and strict policies limit their critical power. Rather than embarking on yet another justification of the importance of arts and education, we will engage with what we do as cultural workers. We will exercise our awareness of the present situation and search for alternatives – offline and online. Is the paradigm shift caused by the rise of the Internet and social media playing a crucial role in addressing new possible publics?

16:30 – 17:00 Pascal Gielen: conclusions, reactions and further thoughts

20:30 Performance Regarding Yesterday by Adva Zakai

CRITICAL PRACTICE

Het Veem Theater will host four international emerging critics, theoreticians and cultural analysts as part of the conference. These events are supported by the Life Long Burning (LLB) network and the Culture Programme of the European Union and fall under the Critical Practice training programme. The participants have been invited to engage with, reflect on and write about this three-day conference. The theoretician Konstantina Georgelou will guide them, and their contributions will be published online and offline.

On Wednesday 4 September, the day before the conference starts, students from HZT Berlin will present their graduation pieces in Het Veem Theater as part of the exchange programme with SNDO Amsterdam.

PRACTICALITIES

For tickets, updated programme and information about all the participants, go to www.hetveemtheater.nl or www.brakkegrond.nl

1-day ticket, all-in: €15
1-day ticket, conference only: €10
1-day ticket, performance programme only: €10
3-day ticket, all-in: €35
3-day ticket, conference only: €25
3-day ticket, performance programme only: €25

CATERING

Between the sessions there is a possibility to have lunch (€10) and dinner (€17,50). Reservations are obligatory. Please register beforehand by sending an email to productie@hetveemtheater.nl.

CREDITS

BER-AMS-BXL is a collaboration and co-production between three Amsterdam-based organizations: Het Veem Theater, Flemish Arts Centre De Brakke Grond and the Theatre and Dance research group at de Theaterschool, Amsterdam. Supported by Goethe Institut, HZT Berlin, Amsterdam's School for New Dance Development (SNDO) and Amsterdam Master of Choreography (AMCh). BER-AMS-BXL events - The Performance Situation Room and Critical Practice - at Het Veem Theater are part of the Life Long Burning (LLB) project, supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union. The conference is promoted by the Nederlands Theater Festival 2013.

Conceived and curated by Marijke Hoogenboom, Bojana Mladenović, Piet Menu and Tom Rummens. Grateful thanks to Gabriël Smeets, Jeroen Fabius, Barbara van Lindt and Loes van der Pligt. Special thanks to Ania Harre.