SOMETHING SIMILAR

URSULA HEISE
The Beautiful Violent Futures of J.G. Ballard
An EMPAC-commissioned project reflecting on J.G. Ballard’s depictions of violence and their translation into Kris Verdonck’s 3D installation, BALLARD.
SEPTEMBER 11 6PM

A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT

NOCTURNES
William Basinski
Hypnotic, ambient, slowly evolving tape loop manipulations culled from 30-year-old decayed recordings.
OCTOBER 26 8PM
EMPAC 2012-2013 presentations, residencies, and commissions are made possible by continuous support from the Jaffe Fund for Experimental Media and Performing Arts. Additional project support by the National Endowment for the Arts; the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the New York State Council for the Arts; Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation with support from the National Endowment for the Arts; Arts Council Norway; Fond for Lyd og Bilde; and Fond for Utøvende Kunstner.

STAFF LIST

Johannes Goebel / Director
Geoff Abbas / Director for Stage Technologies
Eric Ameres / Senior Research Engineer
S. Argeo Ascani / Associate Curator, Music
David Bebb / Senior System Administrator
Peter Bellamy / Senior Systems Programmer
Michael Bello / Video Engineer
Victoria Brooks / Curator, Time-Based Visual Arts
Eric Brucker / Lead Video Engineer
Ash Bulayev / Curator, Dance + Theater
Michele Cassaro / Guest Services Coordinator
John Cook / Box Office Manager
David DeLaRosa / Production Technician
Zhenelle Falk / Artist Services Coordinator
William Fritz / Master Carpenter
Kimberly Gardner / Manager, Administrative Operations
Laura Gypson / Production Administrative Coordinator
Ian Hamelin / Project Manager
Ryan Jenkins / Event Technician
Shannon Johnson / Design Director
Pamela Keenan / Production Technician
CathyJo Kile / Business Manager
Carl Lewandowski / Production Technician
Eric Chi-Yeh Lin / Lead Stage Technician
Stephen McLaughlin / Event Technician
Candice Sherman / Business Coordinator
Avery Stempel / Front of House Manager
Jeffrey Svatek / Audio Engineer
Dan Swalec / Master Electrician
Stephanie Tribu-Cromme / Event Technician
Todd Vos / Lead Audio Engineer
Pete Wargo / Manager, Information Systems
Michael Wells / Production Technician
Emily Zimmerman / Assistant Curator
MY FEAR IS NOT THAT SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN; MY BIGGEST FEAR IS THAT NOTHING WILL HAPPEN.

J.G. BALLARD

DISCUSSION

ISOS
Kris Verdonck

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 7 2013 | 7PM

Kris Verdonck
Tawny Andersen, Hendrik De Smedt
Jan Van Gijsel
Niko Himschoot
Vincent Pinckaers
An Breugelmans
Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Kristof Van Baarle
Robert Degener, Sheri Duncan
Justin Candeloro, Joshua Fairfield
A Two Dogs Company

Concept and direction
Performers
Technical direction and production
Stereographer
Director of photography
Costume designer
Dramaturgy
Schutzhund dog trainers
Jujitsu fighters
Production
ISOS (ORIGINALLY BALLARD 3D)

ISOS is a 3D video installation by A Two Dogs Company / Kris Verdonck where writer JG Ballard is the central voice. The result of this project will be a not yet defined amount of exhibition pedestals / viewing boxes. Inside each box a “scene” can be viewed, and every scene is a detail of the same social-political situation. The whole could be read as a fragmented short film.

Theater maker and visual artist Kris Verdonck focuses on the confusion of man in an estranged world due to technological development and the tension between man and machine and living species and dead materials, which creates an atmosphere of “Unheimlichkeit,” or eeriness. The current state of the world, with its environmental problems, ecological disasters, wars, and economical ruins is a central theme in his work.

J.G. BALLARD

ISOS takes the world and characters from the apocalyptic science fiction novels of JG Ballard as a starting point. The English writer James Graham Ballard (1930-2009) was born in China and as a child was in a Japanese prison camp: this early confrontation with violence seeped through in all his books. Ballard wrote magical realistic stories and autobiographical works, but is mainly known for his intelligent, visionary descriptions of a future world that resembles the actual world. Crash is probably his most famous novel: David Cronenberg’s 1973 adaptation raised a scandal. In Millennium People (2003), Ballard describes the terrorist acts of upper-middle class residents of a London neighborhood.

When journalist Wouter Van Driessche of The Standaard looked for the root causes of the London riots in August 2011, he wrote: “The looters were not only the disadvantaged youth, people there were coming from all segments of our society. (...) This has nothing to do with social inequality or segregation. This is about something much more diffuse—a kind of nihilistic boredom and deep blurring of moral standards. To understand these riots, you do not have to read Karl Marx, you need JG Ballard.”

In ISOS, Tawny Andersen and Hendrik De Smedt portray two middle class characters. Anderson is a dancer and a model; she understands well the brutality of the advertising world. Verdonck worked with her for FRIEZE and PRESYNCOPE (K, a society). Hendrik De Smedt is an actor and the production/business leader of the company. He has created “the businessman in precarious state” in several of Verdonck’s video installations. The middle class couple will appear
in different apocalyptic/boring situations. Their relationship is defined by mutual abuse of power; they are not victims, but responsible for their own environment. They embody the apocalypse. Their twisted relationship and psyches reflect the "Unheimliche," a completely unlivable outside world.

Stereography / 3D

One could argue that 3D images imply a different cinema language. Hollywood already knows that the latest 3D bubble was hype. The BBC stopped its 3D broadcasts. Maybe stereography is such a different medium that it is not “working” in classical viewing environments like TV or cinema. In many current 3D movies the landscapes have depth, but the characters are like cardboard figures. These facts encourage us even more to use 3D technology in this project; stereography needs another approach. We can see a connection with the “poorly made” science fiction of George Méliès. Through far-reaching stereography, Kris Verdonck wants to make Ballard’s futuristic dream come true: a dystopia in 3D.

Living Sculptures / Final Installation

The boxes will have peepholes at the top: the public examines the strange little people at the bottom of the box as if they under a microscope. All scenes will be shot from an omniscient bird’s/God’s perspective. This suggests an “objective” view of reality. The situation is reminiscent of the Muybridge experiments: a scientific point of view where the drama is absent; there is only the register of a real situation. In Kris Verdonck’s video work, architecture often plays a major role. The frame of the film image and the “walls” (i.e., in the boxes), coincide. The characters are aware of their limitation and claustrophobia. The dioramas are transformed into moving sculptures. Through the process of pure registration—an unassembled interval—the subjects in the boxes become sculptures.

If you look at something long enough, it will automatically become revolutionary.

—Heiner Müller

Jan Van Gijsel (Belgium)
Jan Van Gijsel graduated from Sint-Lukas Brussels with a master’s degree in audiovisual arts in 2001. Since then he has worked as a freelance video artist and lighting designer. He has been involved in the development of several video works, including for Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski, Needcompany, Filmfabriek, Philippe Blanchart, Kosi Hidama, and Davis Freeman, among others, and has done lighting design for A Two Dogs Company/Kris Verdonck, ZOO, Mette Edvardsen, Lilia Mestre, Albert Quesada, Zefiro Torna, Stefan Dreher, Ayélen Parolin, and Manuela Rastaldi. Between 2005 and 2012, Van Gijsel also worked as a technical coordinator for ZOO/Thomas Hauert. Since 2013, he has been technical coordinator of A Two Dogs Company/Kris Verdonck.

Thanks to
Kc Nona, Mechelen (Belgium) www.nona.be for providing space and support; Kommer Kleijn for advising and testing the stereography; Erwin Van Der Stappen for assisting with the tests; Robert Degener, Sheri Duncan, Justin Candeloro, and Joshua Fairfield; Emily Zimmerman for casting her cat as a star in a video shoot; and all of EMPAC for support of this residency.
Isos means “equal” in Greek. The shipping container and its industrial standardization might be one of the most important inventions of the 20th century. In ISOS, the entire world is standardized. The contents are adapted to the measurements of the exhibition box—animals, machines, objects, human beings, stereography—all are brought to the same standard. Insects are as big as humans; a burning car seems just a toy; the revolution televised.

A Two Dogs Company (Brussels, Belgium)
A Two Dogs Company (ATDC) is the structure around the work of artist Kris Verdonck. ATDC is supported by the Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels, and is the artist-in-residence of the Kaaitheater in Brussels.

More information and videos of previous work at available at www.atwodogscompany.org.

Kris Verdonck (Belgium)
Kris Verdonck's visual arts, architecture, and theater training is reflected in the work he produces: his creations are situated between visual arts and theater, installation and performance, and dance and architecture. He has directed theater productions and produced numerous installations, including 5 (2003), Catching Whales is Easy (2004), Stills (2005), EXIT 2006, Theater of Variations I/II/III/IIII (2007), and END (2008). Verdonck often presents combinations of different installations/performances as Variations. Variation IV was shown during the 2008 Avignon Festival. In 2010, Verdonck finished Actor #1, and K, a Society, which premiered in Essen, Germany. In 2011, he presented two research projects: TALK and EXIT, and the first solo exhibition of his work, EXHIBITION #1 was shown with a new work, EXOTE. In 2012, he created M, a Reflection, a theater piece based on texts of Heiner Müller. In spring 2013, Verdonck presented H, an Incident, based on the work of Russian writer and dissident Daniil Kharms. H, an Incident premiered in May 2013 during the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels and is currently touring throughout Europe.

Tawny Andersen (Canada)
Tawny Andersen is a performer and performance theorist located in Brussels and Montréal. As a dancer and actress, she has worked with directors such as Jan Fabre, Meg Stuart, Chantal Akerman, and Kris Verdonck. She holds a master’s degree in performance studies from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and is currently working on a PhD in art history from McGill University. Her dissertation research seeks to theorize the concept of “performativity” at the intersection of the philosophy of language, post-structuralism, and gender studies in reference to live art practices. Anderson’s artistic research has been supported by grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Flemish Minister of Culture; her doctoral research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Hendrik De Smedt (Belgium)
With a photography background and a master’s degree in drama from the RITS in Brussels, Hendrik De Smedt developed his professional career in theater and performance. As a theater maker, actor, and production manager, he has worked at festivals such as the Festival d’Avignon, la Monnaie, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Théâtre de Champs Elysées, and Theater der Welt festival Kaaitheater, among others. He has collaborated with Dito-Dito, Bronstig Veulen, Alejandro Tantanian, David McVicar, Raven Ruell, Reynaldo Rampersad, Emre Koyuncuoglu, TG Nun, Kris Verdonck, John Malpede, and the RITS in Brussels. In 2010, he began A Two Dogs Company (ATDC) with artist Kris Verdonck. He is currently developing a plan for an international sea-ship residency.

Niko Himschoot (Belgium)
Niko Himschoot studied audiovisual arts and film directing at the RITS film school in Brussels, Belgium. His 2010 master’s project was entitled DINSDAG, Une Tranche d’Immeuble. This 3D installation won the price for stereoscopic innovation at the Dimension 3 Festival (Paris, France), and was screened at BEYOND 3D Festival (Karlsruhe, Germany), Ghent International Film Festival (Ghent, Belgium), and 3D KIFF (Seoul). He is currently working as a freelance director and stereographer.

Vincent Pinckaers (Belgium)
Vincent Pinckaers studied image studies at l’Insas in Brussels. He has served as director of photography for numerous projects and has been credited in several short and long films, documentaries, and installations. As a collaborator of Le Fresnoy art school in France, where new technologies are dedicated to contemporary arts, he is experienced in all filmmaking disciplines. Besides being a video creator for the performance scène, Pinckaers has created several solo film projects, including Lum, Face à ce qui se dérobe, and Isola. He is currently working on a new fiction movie.