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Theater in Düsseldorf

Autofahrt als Performance

7. Oktober 2019 um 16:57 Uhr | Lesedauer: Eine Minute

Düsseldorf. Gespannt steigen drei Zuschauerinnen hinten ins Auto, vorne sitzen der Fahrer und Ayşe Draz. Im Rahmen des Projektes „Panorama Radio“ haben Draz und ihre Mitstreiterin Marlin de Haan für das FFT eine performative Autofahrt erdacht.

Von Clemens Henle

Die Idee: Während der Fahrt lernen die Teilnehmer einander kennen und kommen ins Gespräch. Erprobt haben die Künstlerinnen das bereits in Istanbul.

Los geht es entlang der Friedrichstraße Richtung Oberkasseler Brücke. Aus einem Lautsprecher kommt eine angenehme Stimme: „Was habt ihr heute gefrühstückt?“. Die Mitfahrer schauen einander an, bis eine schnell antwortet, dass am morgen leider zu wenig Zeit gewesen sei, daher hätte es nur für zwei Bananen gereicht. Nachdem man sich im Auto kurz über das Frühstück ausgetauscht hat, beginnt Musik. Und was gibt es Besseres zum Autofahren als Trios „Da Da Da“? Die Hinterbank summt fleißig „Ich lieb’ dich nicht, du liebst mich nicht“, der Fahrer trommelt den Takt auf dem Lenkrad mit, während Draz Zitronenlimo reicht. Über die Kniebrücke führt der Weg zum Aachener Platz und zur Uni. Immer wieder werden die Mitfahrer befragt und zu Spielen animiert – das ist fast wie auf großer Urlaubsreise mit den Geschwistern. So reicht Draz kleine Spiegel nach hinten, damit sich die Insassen aus jedem Winkel anschauen können. An einer Ampel ernten die Teilnehmer irritierte Blicke aus einem Nachbarauto. Zurück zum FFT: Aus dem Lautsprecher dröhnt anatolischer 70er-Jahre-Rock. Die Mitfahrer unterhalten sich angeregt. So hat „Panorama Radio“ seine Mission ganz nebenbei erfüllt.

Clemens Henle

Ayşe Draz and Marlin de Haan's *panorama radio*

By Mehmet Kerem Özel

Published on July 3, 2019 at <https://danzon2008.blogspot.com/2019/07/ayse-draz-ve-marlin-de-haandan-panorama.html>

(Translated by Aykut Şengözer)

Pina Pausch used to create her pieces using the answers to the questions she had asked her dancers. As for Ayşe Draz and Marlin de Haan, they do it with the questions they ask their audience.

I got to know Draz and de Haan as a duo last year with their performative installation *Once I Set Foot Outside* co-produced by A Corner in the World and staged at Bomontiada ALT (which is now closed). I knew Ayşe Draz as a dramaturg and a performer from the Istanbul theatre scene, but never heard the Dusseldorf-based artist Marlin de Haan. *Once I Set Foot Outside* was the duo's first collaborative project and they reunited to bring us their new piece *panorama radio* this season.

Before moving on to *panorama radio*, I would like to share my thoughts about *Once I Set Foot Outside*, which I could not last year. It was performed in a black-box-type stage which is quite familiar to us, however the performer-audience relationship was anything but familiar. The audience was placed two meters above the performance area and would watch the performers from above. It was as if the performers were in a public space, like a town square and we were watching them from our balconies.

Performed three times a day, the piece kept its structure intact, however changed each time based on improvisation and situation. I know that, because I watched three of the daily performances. I remember thinking that it would be so nice if the piece was performed in a museum hall throughout the day with a bigger cast (where performers of each session would change) allowing the audience to come in and out, instead of the black-box space. Defined by its creators as a performative installation, *Once I Set Foot Outside* reminded me of Tino Seghal's works, which, most probably, brought the museum hall idea to my mind. However, this piece was definitely not a copy, but proved to be at least at Seghal's works' quality.

One of the strengths of *Once I Set Foot Outside* was its performers. Dancer-choreographer Gizem Bilgen and Canan Yücel Pekişten, as well as actor-director Erkan Uyanıksoy are three of the most qualified and extraordinary artists of Istanbul's theatre scene as far as movement, facial expression and gestures are concerned and their well-measured performances really stood out.

Back to *panorama radio*... Two and a half months ago, I received an e-mail from Draz and de Haan with an attached questionnaire to fill in. It was not a surprise for me, because they had contacted me in a similar format for their previous work. The questions of this year's questionnaire revolved around the same themes: public concerns, public space, urban space. It was obvious that they were particularly interested in these concepts and wanted to dig deeper.

The questionnaire was not long; there were only four questions: What should the public take care of? What are public's responsibilities? Whose presence (a persona/public figure, dead or alive) would we miss these days in public discussions? Which personal belongings would we want to share with the public and why?

Intrigued by these interesting and tempting questions, I was left anticipating what Draz and de Haan would create based on the answers to these questions.

When the invitation for the first performance came in June, I was even more intrigued, because instead of choosing a theatre for their performance, they picked the most private space a person can be in public space: the car! The invitation said that we could participate either as a driver with our car or as a passenger in one.

panorama radio's first showings took place during a weekend between 28-30 June 2019. I was one of the three passengers on the back seat of a car.

Imagine a 40-minute ride on the streets of the city with three people you don't know. The driver is also one of the audience members, just like you. Only the person seated next to the driver is not a spectator, but more of a moderator, a provider. What does that person provide? The accessories required for what you will do in those forty minutes. Yes, you are also one of the performers in this piece. What you will perform is told to you from the car's radio. As for how you will perform, it is totally up to you.

panorama radio opens the window for you to see your surroundings, the times and the city you're living in, and the public from a different perspective... for you to look through the window, not behind... for you to hear the sounds, and to reach out and touch them... *panorama radio* is both a surreal and a real journey, towards the past and into the future... *panorama radio* speaks to and triggers your sense of touching as well as being visual and audible like all theatrical performances. In an age where social media tools dominate our ways of communication, it helps you to come together with other people, do something together, discuss a topic

“there and at that moment”, in short socialise in the real sense. *panorama radio* is an original, demanding and independent work...

You have probably missed *panorama radio*, but don't despair. After a ride in Düsseldorf in September, they are coming back to the city.

A Performance Without Performers? A Spectacle/Spectating Without Spectators? *panorama radio*

Evren Erbatur

Published on Jul 7 9, 2019 at https://www.yazi-yorum.net/haber/evren-erbatur-oyuncusuz-oyun-seyircisiz-seyir-panorama-radio_582.

(Translated by Aykut Şengözer)

Every performance is a proposal where its creator shares his/her look on life with his/her audience, whereas some performances emphasize and reveal this fact by offering unusual approaches. In doing so, they materialise the intent and the underlying idea of the performance in a different way. This materialisation becomes evident in the manner how tools/materials/elements such as accessories, space, and movement are used as well as in the attributes of the spectating space; and these all conceive the performance as an original, independent situation. Let me confess that I am a fan of performances that take the spectator beyond the context of criteria of taste—or of understanding or not understanding it—and invite him/her to look, see and feel from a different perspective, and I now would like to talk about *panorama radio*.

Marlin de Haan and Ayşe Draz whose diverse backgrounds include direction, dramaturgy, and acting met during a residency in the 2016/17 season and decided to start an artistic collaboration, the first product of which was *Once I Set Foot Outside* in June 2018. Performed by Gizem Bilgen, Canan Yücel Pektan and Erkan Uyanıksoy in a full team spirit and with striking embodiment/corporeal physicality, the piece was staged in Istanbul and Dusseldorf. *Once I Set Foot Outside* was interested in how people defined public space and its creators collected memories, information, feelings, associations and images about public space using a questionnaire they sent and based on the answers, staged their piece in a black-box stage incorporating fragments of texts spoken/shown in English, with a way of expression emphasizing and mainly utilising movement.

For me, one of the most alluring aspects of this performance which, de Haan and Draz define as performative installation, was how it related to the audience. The performance would last 30 minutes and a group of eight or ten people were allowed into the space to watch the performers from above. Even this first physical condition was a hint about the public space. The performance area would transform into a surface, the bodies would create moving images on this surface and the gaze would follow these images. This intriguing choreography was based on the relationship between the surface, the body and the gaze. The audience was a group of people lined side by side. It was as if they secretly watched or observed what was going on below. Making sure the audience remained within the set boundaries created an entertaining threshold to realise. This threshold was the iron railing where one could hold onto while standing thus making the audience a part of the installation. Just like in everyday life, people, words and things, interrelated or not, were extensions of each other.

Then some time later, I was walking on the pavement of a summer resort when a changing cubicle made of fabrics attached to an iron rod fixed to the wall by the pavement caught my attention. It was below, by the coast. Funny. I wondered what kind of a spectacle would a changing cubicle that has no ceiling present! Do they cover it with a towel? When I recalled *Once I Set Foot Outside*, I remembered the way/method/style of looking, which I often use in dramaturgy. What I look at changes with how I look at it. Is it the gaze that shapes and gives meaning to the relationship one has with the space or the area? If so, where does the relation that shapes the gaze come from? Can the gaze become flexible? Can it expand and change? Can it be renewed? Even if there is no complete answer to this... I go on thinking... Making sense of something that I look at is directly affected by the distance between us, how I position the other and myself, my memories, knowledge, and experience. Is it not also possible to consider/experience my definition of public space from this perspective?

After *Once I Set Foot Outside*, the artists created their second project *panorama radio*, which was staged between 28–30 June in Istanbul this year. Even though there were traces of the previous work, to my amusement, I could see something unique to this new work as well as new questions it posed. In this project, which de Haan and Draz define as “a theatrical situation about personal views on public concerns and the public”, there are neither actors, nor an audience, or everyone is all of them. Four or five of us, including the driver, go on a ride in a car. Similarly, the answers to the questionnaire the duo sent out were reorganized as a text that two or three people speak. It starts with a “welcome” when you get in the car and then goes on telling, asking, explaining, sharing, dictating. The songs placed in and in-between the texts with a certain arrangement, as well as the objects, accessories and many other interesting things that the “hostess” accompanying you offers all create a very special situation. The idea of “allowing the mind to drift”, which the duo told they were exploring in their first work, this time, fully comes into being in a car ride. Together with the

other passengers, we travel between the real and the fiction as long as the text we listen and the road we take lasts.

At this point, I can't keep myself from citing a few of the legendary cars I remember. A car has often become a symbol of free spirits and charismatic figures who get on the road on their own. Ian Fleming's Chitty Chitty Bang Bang which he wrote in the 70s, the Knight Rider of the 80s, Herbie the Volkswagen, Delorean that was designed as a time machine, Thelma and Louise, 007, Transformers... Do you remember any others? It is ironic that I have never driven or even considered to drive a car even though I have a license.

It is obvious that *panorama radio's* play/performance zone is an interesting space chosen for public concerns. The instrumentalism of the car is transformed into a theatrical material and reminds us of the threshold in relation to being inside and outside. As famous Turkish author Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar said, "Neither am I inside time, nor altogether without". A car is part of the public sphere as a vehicle which remains outdoors, it also moves unlike a building—of course we see buildings moved away these days but that is not the matter now. When you get in the car and stay there, you are inside, in a private space. In *panorama radio*, we see that this private space is particularly emphasized and a situation unique to that moment and those people is being devised. What do I know about this space/time in this short and temporary moment/space that I inhabit and about the journey I share with this small group which can never be repeated in the same way? Interesting, strange, nonsense, ridiculous, lonely, together, jammed, warm (and the cold of the air conditioner)... Where are we? Istanbul, what part of Istanbul, ruins, the gate of the old city walls, the new next to the old... Should I do something? Who is this? I couldn't hear. What do they want from me? Truly meditative, stop...

As a dramaturg, and sometimes a performer and director, I believe that ways of watching are relative. The more the creators handle this relativity seriously, the more impressive this moment of sharing becomes for the audience. Every member of the audience embodies the act of watching as different characters. I find this fascinating! This work encompasses your whole life experience. If the performance can offer you the chance to use or realise this experience and if you feel and willingly use it, then the effect becomes incredibly strong. For the sake of creating a reflection in your mind, in your body, not for the sake of verifying, approving... Only for the sake of relating to... For the sake of understanding, perceiving, evaluating and even though it is an opposition at times, to build your own discourse... Many things start to change when you/I ask "How can I move in this relativity?"

I see *panorama radio* as a project that transforms me into a passenger/spectator/participant/somewhat an actor, which invites me to move around among these definitions and which helps me build a transitional and fluid relationship between all of them by stretching out the codes of definitions. Thanks to the constructed situation emphasising the volatility of the performance watched, the fact that no viewing will ever be the same, the removal of the line between the spectator and the performer, this performance strips its audience from the state of being so. The audience realises that this performance cares about their character, attitude, understanding, and presence. In my opinion, Marlin de Haan and Ayşe Draz tend to incline towards place and position in their second project, whereas it was about the gaze in their first, in their search about the public space. This emphasis on our place/position in the public or private space helps us to see its uniqueness and temporality—because can we actually own something? It is up to us to own up to this special situation, to say our words, to go on understanding and interpreting with our definitions, which multiply as they transform. I know there is a lot more to say about this, but I'll leave it to another article. If you want to become a part of such a distinct theatrical situation, *panorama radio* will come back to Istanbul in October after Dusseldorf.

Panorama Radio

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Acknowledgements: Erkan Uyanıksoy, Peral Filiz. People who invited us into their cars. People who answered our questionnaire.

Funded by: Kunststiftung NRW, NRW Landesbüro Freie Darstellende Künste, Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Landes NRW

Co-producer: FFT Düsseldorf

Supporter: SALT Galata, Istanbul

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Once I Set Foot Outside Frau Babic