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## Productions Recto-Verso

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## PRODUCTIONS RECTO-VERSO

Created by the will of a group of artists to rethink the way we conceived the theater event, Productions Recto-Verso encourages the meeting and the confrontation of artists coming from different disciplines. It also valorizes bonds facilitating the development of untold creative schemes. Productions Recto-Verso is a founding member of Méduse in Québec City. To produce, to diffuse and to support: three words that encompass today the main mandates of this organization dedicated to the creation and diffusion in the multidisciplinary arts.

### To Produce

Since its inception in 1984, artists of Productions Recto-Verso have produced a great number of monumental scenic works exploring the interweaving of various artistic languages, mostly around one central element: the scenographic space. If the nature of these works, scenic creations or scenographic installation varies, they all are punctuated by a dramatic content crossing, in time and spaces, the quest for resonance. While affirming the necessity to write and to see an echo of our time with codes and tools of the present day, the integration of new technologies is of the first importance in their aesthetic of complexity.

The works prevailing are nourished by the most adventurous practices in audio and video arts, scenography, sound poetry, electronic

art, visual arts and the theater. The creators were able to develop a kind of meta-language, which often provoke in the audience a sense of *never seen*. This is done not by a simple juxtaposition of these approaches but by their intertwining effects.

*Parcours scénographique* and *Un paysage/Ein Landschaft/A Landscape* illustrates very well the potential of this multi-interdisciplinary around which Recto-Verso's mission is elaborated.

### Scenographic Trajectories

"It is impossible to tell the story (of this production), to tell you "what it is about". We have to experience it. Because the collective of Productions Recto-Verso invites us, concretely, to live theatrical representation in a new way. It disturbs our habits and it is capable of destabilizing all our senses by claiming them by force. We literally plunge into this spectacle, and we surely are shaken when we come out of it".

Made out of images of spaces filmed in various forms (super 8, 16 mm and video) during a voyage from Québec to New York and showing a wandering in Montreal, *Parcours scénographique* is one of the most important creations in the history of Productions Recto-Verso. A road, some industrial relics, a ciné-parc, a vague home-movie with subtitles, a forest, a bridge, etc. All are orienting the research process and the creation of work in a big book of 57 pages. To this book you can add a sound mechanic with the objective to cut the space in three distinct levels: on the ground level, a graves floor on the ground, the actors voices in the middle and the high voices up on the roof. The book and the sound track constitute the limitations imposed by two creators in charge of the project elaboration. One takes care of the sound envelope (John Oswald) and the other, takes care of the text (Gilles Arteau). This is how a drama was born: the disappearance which destroys the characters, alienated by an impossibility to communicate, using sterile monologues, while, among them, a young woman tells her death, her endless collapse into emptiness. The division of the sound framework is done in three superposed independent frames imposing the disappearance of synchronism as such. It also suggests a blending of references, one of top of the other. The meeting of each of the level is done thanks to the life given to the text by actors, the transcriptions of the elements for the scene, the same ones constituting the final

assembling of this spectacle to create a minimalist theater that provokes strong destabilizing sensorial shocks for the audience.

*Parcours scénographique* was also presented at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1990), in Matane (1990), in readings at the occasion of the *20 jours du théâtre à risque* at the Espace Libre in Montréal (1990), in Québec City (1991), at the Théâtre La Chapelle in Montreal (1994). This work has been recorded on a cd published by Ohim Editions, and realized thanks to the contest put together by Obscure, Avatar and Radio-Canada radio. It was played on Radio-Canada radio station and CKIA.

### Un paysage/ Eine Landschaft/ A Landscape

*Un paysage/Eine Landschaft/A Landscape* was a free and audacious adaptation of the work of German dramatic author Heiner Müller, *Paysage sous surveillance*, which is the minuscule description of a screen with death as its main subject. To create an impression of constant mutation, the space is broken in three distinct zones. The first isolates the audiences in a hermetic box with a great window made of an electronic film of liquid crystals, which symbolically refers to the frame of Müller's painting. Sometimes the opacity of the film allows the projection of video images as much as the transparency stimulates scenic actions. The resonant spatialization is guaranteed by the acoustic isolation of space and by the presence of shifting panels modifying its resonance. The second zone, the area of play for actors, is formed of rotating metallic structures on which a circular screen projects videographic images. These images, recorded before the event in different locations, are superposed to images perceived in real time in the third zone of this space: the blue room. As an extension of the space to play, this room, entirely in blue, contains a camera, which makes 360degree rotations and creates an effect of surimpression of the actors' image to different landscapes. The captive looks of audiences are forced to redefine their perceptions, constantly. The result? It becomes a unique work, a metissage of forms, a poetic charge based on the play of oppositions and the refusal of what is univocal in a disturbing multi-sensorial environment.

This multidisciplinary exploration has been presented at the studio *In Vitro* at Méduse, in 1996 and 1997, at the theater La chapelle de Montréal in 1998, at the Studio d'essai in 2000, in the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the

*Carrefour International de théâtre de Québec* and at the Banff Center, in the context of the *High Performance Rodeo Festival*, also in 2000. *Un paysage/Eine Landschaft/A Landscape* was numerized on cdrom in February 1999 and was the topic of a videographic editing realized by videast Eric Gagnon, and presented in different festivals.

### To Diffuse

Productions Recto-Verso assumes a mandate of specialized diffusion. Annually, it presents the *Mois Multi*, a rare festival solely dedicated to the multidisciplinary creation and electronic arts. The *Mois Multi* offers a new vision about creation by exploring the crossroads of different discourses, methods and languages. It does it by this encounter with new forms of creation coming out of the artist's works, on national and international scenes. The *Mois Multi* has also a unique stature because it remains a structuring project for the artistic community. It brings new meanings and hopes in a city where research, interdisciplinary, electronic and media creations are in expansion.

The perfect translation for each year of the intense and varied program of the *Mois Multi* could be "We have to know to take risks". The *Mois Multi* is audacious. It speaks about the range of some of its artistic propositions, the originality of their contexts of presentation or the diffusion of the first works of importance. It is a unique occasion to discover works with a multiplicity of forms and languages that can change our rapport to the world.

Since its humble beginnings in 2000, the *Mois Multi* has become an essential and unavoidable venue for the multidisciplinary and electronic arts, not to mention that it is the principal event of its kind in Canada.

### MM6 2005 « Hybridation »

Productions Recto-Verso elaborates its program around a new theme, every year. It has put forward, in 2005, the contribution of multidisciplinary practices to the « hybridation » movement. A movement that we can observe at the core of a wide range of artistic disciplines. The great variety of works presented is coming out of the creation processes made out of this fertile blending of genres, which lead to a new approach in discourse as much as in method.

The MM6 began with the renowned collective of the independent artistic scene in Russia called AKHE Russian Engineering Theater. They had presented two plays, *White Cabin* and *Plug-n-Play*.

## AKHE Russian Engineering Theater

Founded in St-Petersburg in Russia in 1989 by Maksim Isaev and Pavel Semchenko, AKHE Russian Engineering Theater is a collective exploring not only the arts scene but also the cinema and the visual arts. This multidisciplinary finds its articulation in a singular aesthetic language serving an unrestrained visual imagination. At once surrealist, funny and nightmarish, AKHE's work appears as a dynamic ritual process, a scenic experience as *hypnotising* as it is playful.

### White Cabin

Can a spectator influence what's happening on a scene by its only presence in front of it? Can action on a scene influence the spectator's will, his or her intimate desires?

Is it possible to directly project action in the spectator's spirit? These questions and many others are important to the narrative of *White Cabin*, a play where the simplest and most naïve of acts are transposed into a definitely absurd metaphorical world. Seen as a theater of atmospheres, the AKHE Russian Engineering Theater proposes, with its legendary black humour and sharp vision of cabaret theater, in poetical iconoclastic readings without words.

### Plug-n-Play

*Plug-n-play* is a hilarious night in the world of "turntablists", of cabaret, of anarchy and black comedy. The participation of the audience – at an appropriate moment or not – can provoke an impromptu dance, etc. False terrorists acts can take place, but also sandwiches. In this incredible chaos, a DJ, a performer and a painter create a great tableau, which they will destroy with loads of rotten vegetables.

The "turntablist" mixes heavy jazz and electro-pop to finally end in a *hara-kiri* with a banana. *Plug-n-play* is a theater *hooligan* play especially dedicated to this rebellious child that lives inside all of us.

### MM8 2007

#### « Les attractions étranges »

The 2007 edition has surprised again with its creation and many Canadian and American events. Around fifty artists from Quebec, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and Ireland came to present their multidisciplinary creations, installations, audio and video performances, live, in the context of this festive event.

By using the proportional force of attraction to change, it had the

potential to generate works that were regulated by a constant form in order to respond to attention density, curiosity and the fascination it motivated. The fact that they were "strange" was the first quality of works meant to see, hear and live a new idea of the world. The "strange attraction" factor has shown as many propositions to nourish the different and necessary visions. Like the inevitable gravity of the planet, audiences have experienced an everlasting effect of attraction and bewilderment.

The performances by the English-Germanic group *Gob Squad*, by the star of electro acoustic, Kaffe Matthews, and by the Japanese Seko Mikami and Sota Ichikawa and their installations were the highlights of this last edition of MM.

### Gob Squad

Founded in 1994, the collective Gob Squad is based in Nottingham (United Kingdom) and in Berlin (Germany). Working with performances, video and new technologies, the group has presented a number of live performances, installations, films and events in urban environments and outside the traditional venues of diffusion, such as the office, shops, hotels and train stations.

At *Gob Squad*, humour goes hand in hand with conceptual rigor and an artistic endeavor that does not compromise on anything. Nourished by an outstanding mixture of cultural sources, the world of *Gob Squad* presents "real life" via the big format of the last Hollywood production. It looks with humour at the construction of contemporary identity and its cravings for fantasy and the spectacle.

### Super Night Shot

*Super Night Shot* proposes a particular attention to our urban environment and its possible encounters. The city becomes a filming plateau of this video event recorded one hour prior to the beginning of the viewing and presented like a cinema evening on multiple screens, without editing nor cuts. While the public waits for the beginning of the projection, the four performers arrive in the room and are welcomed as heroes.

The movie can then begin...

### Room Service

Imagine two women, two men, four bedrooms, one hotel. All they need is delivered to their door. One problem only: none of them can sleep. Instead, they kill time with cold baths or in the solace of the mini-bar. Free to do what they

want, each of them is under camera surveillance while he or she invents imaginary friends, repeats dance steps and invites the public to fulfill their dreams and to answer difficult questions. *Room Service* makes fun of the clichés of reality, from well-regulated banality to theatrical chaos. It is a live interactive film, during as long as a good of night of sleep.

### Kaffe Matthews

Since 1990, the English Kaffe Matthew has been one of the most active artists of the new scene in electro acoustic music. This scene is particularly recognized for its live sound productions and according to the space where it happens, with the help of a software especially conceived for it.

It is this practice of the sound material that it has put forward again, in the creation of the sound furniture of the *Sonic Bed\_London* in 2005 – which also helped him to win the Ars Electronica prize in 2006. His idea has given rise to the birth of a vast enterprise: Bed Projects around the world, a research project of music for bodies counting no less than versions worldwide. Matthews also founded his own music-editing house in 1997, Annette Works, which has since published 6 CD solos of his works.

### Sonic Bed\_Quebec

Have you ever felt music on your back, along your legs, or around your arms up to your toes? The Sonic Bed allows this kind of sensation. Stay close to this sound bed and you will hear the music. Sleep on it and you will feel it. With its audio pieces of variable intensity – from subtle to dynamic – the Sonic Bed plays music to feel before paying it to listen. At once a sound and a social experience that explores the perception of sound, Sonic Bed is a wood box in which visitors can appreciate the musical pieces thanks to a surprising audio massage. The Sonic\_Bed Quebec is a version created especially in Quebec City during a residence at Avatar.

### Seiko Mikami, Sota Ichikawa Seiko Mikami

Based in Tokyo but actually living in Berlin, Seiko Mikami creates, since 1984, installations centered on the theme of the information society and the human body. From 1995 onwards, his works incorporate human perception while becoming interactive and media driven. In 2003, Mikami started the project *Gravicells: Gravity and Resistance* with the collaboration of architect Sota Ichikawa. This installation has since traveled all around the world.

### Sota Ichikawa

Based in Tokyo, Sota Ichikawa is an architect. Since 1995, he works on a project called the Super-Eye. In 1997, he collaborated with the group of media artists Knowbotic Research for OI-DENCIES-Tokyo (in co-production with the Canon ArtLab) as an architect and urban researcher. In 1998, he put together the bases for the creation of the architectural group double Negatives. Since 2001, he gives workshops at the Tama Art University and at Zokei University.

### Gravicells: Gravity and Resistance

As a remarkable interactive installation by Seiko Mikami and Sota Ichikawa, *Gravicells: Gravity and Resistance* is a space in which the projection of a grid, in movement, envelops the visitor, raise his or her perception of gravity and resistance in space.

Spacialization in *Gravicells* is systematically given by a calculation of the movements, gravity coming from the visitors' presence, in real time. While walking freely in space, the latter starts a series of dispositive and special capturing elements in order to play the dynamics created by opposed forces of gravity and resistance. All movements done by visitors are transformed into movements of directional sound, electro luminescent emissions and geometric images.

At the same time, the situation of the exhibition space is determined by a GPS, a parameter used in installation and combining to other GPS markers coming from diverse satellites. By making our perception zone larger, this show pinpoints how the installation site is moving according to gravity... *Gravicells* invites us to feel this possibility of the dissolution of gravity. It is a striking experience.

### To Support

At last, Productions Recto-Verso has given itself tools enabling the center to support multidisciplinary practices of other artists in their development of new works. These tools take the form of a residence program and major equipments such as the room Multi and the Studio d'essai at Méduse. The objectives of residence are to support multidisciplinary creations by offering interesting conditions and permitting an effective improvement of the artistic practice. Indeed, artists in residence have easy access to the Studio and the cooperative Méduse as well as its equipment. They can also be helped by experienced technicians on site. Aside the material and technical resources, Productions

Recto-Verso also facilitates finding optimal housing conditions for artists, because the spaces for creation, to rest and to eat are all found under the same roof. Productions Recto-Verso welcomes each year artists presenting their works in the contexts of the *Mois Multi*. ■

#### Note

- 1 See Isabelle Mandalian (1994) « Parcours scénographique: électrochocs », in *Voir*, Montréal, vol 8, n° 141, September 8<sup>th</sup>, p. 40.

## L'ŒIL DE POISSON

Open to innovating artistic question L'Œil de Poisson is at once actor and witness to the renewal of aesthetics and problems in art actuel. Interested in photography in its beginning – L'Œil de Poisson/fish eye: objective super-grand-angle which creates an enormous distortion by producing insolite images –, the center has improve its activities to welcome the visual arts. It has thus created a performing infrastructure responding to the diversified interests of its members and the cultural community. Mostly preoccupied by multimedia and inter/multidisciplinary practices, it privileges a research in art encouraging to open practices, stimulating encounters and transfers between disciplines.

The main factor of its mandate remains its commitment to the immediate cultural community. Active in diffusion and in production, the center hopes to respond by the diverse interventions it proposes for the various galleries and workshops, to the multiple venues of today's artistic scenes. This is realized by the projects of exhibitions in progress, productions and diffusion of shows and excentric multidisciplinary activities, collaborations to project realized in ateliers, artists in residence, exchanges with the local, provincial, national and international artistic communities, or projects in editing. The center hopes, via these multiple interests to testify to the problems and practices within the art accomplished here and now.

Located since 1995 in the complex Méduse which has 10 organizations which diffuse and produce under its roof, L'Œil de Poisson offers a privilege space for exchanges generating an indispensable dynamic to creation, to artists and the public.

## Some Important Events

### 1990 Festival de la chanson crue

In 1988, L'Œil de Poisson proposed *Le festival de musique ennuyante*, an event that assembled about 30 artists: visual artists, musicians, writers, actors and performers. This festival was the first of a series dedicated to music by artists. In 1990, the center presented *Le festival de la chanson crue* and in 1992, *Le festival de la chanson d'amour*. The compilations assembling some of the prestations were completed in order to insure the memory of such iconoclastic music. In 2006 and 2007, the center proposed, always in a festive and creative context, the *Festival Musique Maison* in order to speak about the phenomenon of the hyper-democratisation of musical creation.

### 1991 Occupation espaces froids 2

A number of thematic events and/or to collectively participate have marked the history of L'Œil de Poisson. For instance, in the winter of 1991, the center celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary with *Occupation espaces froids 2*, an exhibition/trajectory which would use the rooms next to the gallery, empty and cold. Fifteen young artists from Quebec had used this space in the contexts of this event.

### 1999 Shagalai

Artists cabaret and multidisciplinary events were conceived by *La firme des quatre jeudis*, a collective of Quebec City. Shagalai revisited the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties. The event happened over a three weeks period and proposed concerts, cinema projections, radio programs, visual arts, design and conferences in the space of the gallery which was completely transformed by the event.

### 2000 La Manif d'art

In 1998, the center decided to create a major event in Quebec City, one that would gather newcomers and international artists. Indeed, in 2000 was the first year of the *Manif d'art*, with the theme Ornamentation, proposing many exhibitions and satellite activities and a conference. Many centers for artists and cultural organizations in the city will participate to this first edition of *Manif d'art*. They were all affirming the side rassembleur of this new biennale. ■

# Il y en a pour tous les goûts !

## Nouvelle programmation dès septembre 2008



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