

Wouter Krokaert / Composities in het wilde weg

Interview by Andreas Fleck

As your work is very interdisciplinary, your new piece contains many different artistic layers. How do the different disciplines in which you work relate to each other?

For me, everything started with drawing. On paper at first but then, little by little, I branched out into other media and disciplines. When I graduated and started dancing, the human body was a common subject within my pencil drawings. By using the body as a medium on the one hand and studying it from the outside on the other, these two activities became closely related. Nowadays I seldom draw human figures, but whatever I draw, I always try to place myself as the subject, to feel where the body pushes or pulls, to feel the tension. Drawing on paper is both a mental and a physical activity for me. And every medium that I use or every discipline I practice becomes an extension of this drawing, it is always another form of drawing.

Of course, there are also differences between these forms. For example, when I draw a plant with pencil on paper, gravity is only present within the form that it has taken, subject to that force. While within the work on stage the gravity is very physically present. Another difference is time. I find it important to take time. And within a performance I like to decide how much time is given to something, to be seen properly. That's why I make a performance in which you can't just walk in and out, like in an installation.

As your title suggests, composition is very important in your work. What are the similarities and differences between composing movement using a pencil on paper to a body in space?

One of my most important rules for compositions is that I don't want symmetry. When people start to organize things in space, they often make use of it. They also place elements at the same distance from each other, as if on a grid. It ensures that people do not feel lost. What you see is what you get, and no surprises. It makes me feel very uncomfortable and sad. When it comes to composition, I often look at how things relate to each other when they are brought together by coincidence instead of human intervention.

By framing these coincidences, I can discover a composition in them, a composition that contains tension, the possibility of something unexpected. I try to take that experience with me when I give things a place myself, on a sheet of paper, or on stage. When making compositions, the space between the elements is important. While drawing with my pencil on a sheet of paper, I shape the white space between the lines, which is just as important as the lines themselves. For my performance I made objects, coloured fabrics tightly stretched with ropes. If you compare these ropes to my line drawings, then you see the space in between assuming shape because of the cloth bulging out between them. Other elements I made for the performance are made out of nets, reshaped nets, knotted lines containing the empty space between them.

With these objects and nets, you are creating a landscape in which the performers move. What is your approach to landscape in this piece?

Another way in which I can be involved in drawing is by designing gardens, small-scale landscapes in which the unexpected is given a place. Places that evoke a piece of wild nature but are not. This is also the starting point of my compositions. The Dutch title of my performance, *Composities in het wilde weg*, refers to that image. The direct translation into English would be "Compositions at random", which is a contradiction, of course. What I do is absolutely not at random, everything in this performance is very well organized but with the idea of making something that still looks savage and has something alive in it. Composed, but still with an element of wildness inside.