

DasArts

Paper

Autumn 2010
www.dasarts.nl



The End of Success As We Know It

Andy Warhols '15 minutes of fame' are long gone. In a 24/7 web-connected, individualized society, stars are born and discarded more rapidly every day. Time to stretch the definition of success. Does success in the arts nowadays mean large (YouTube) audiences? Peer recognition? Personal satisfaction? This autumn at DasArts, nine young international theatre makers will challenge the definition of success as we know it. Will you accept our invitation to do the same?

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Why seek success?

'They say it's sexy'

Dramaturge Igor Dobricic and theatre maker Siegmund Zacharias are hosting a provocative programme at DasArts: The Conditions of Success, with a selection of international guests and lecturers to address this universal theme. Why? 'Success is a device of evolution.'

★ page 3

What's in it for me?

The Festivals and Soirées

You can witness The Conditions of Success more closely and actively at DasArts and hetveem theater. Everybody is welcome!

★ page 5

Theatre makers define

'A gold-chained rapper in a kidney-shaped pool'

Meet a new generation of DasArts artists. How do they define success? 'Someone in the audience cried with delight during our performance.'

★ page 6/7

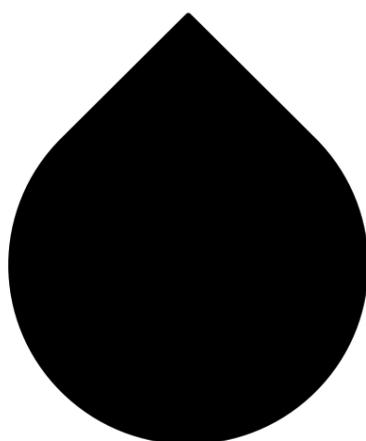
Audience first

The Fame Formula exists!

According to famous 'fame-maker' Mark Borkowski, artists should devote maybe half their time to finding and appealing to an audience. Doesn't that distract them from making art? 'No audience, no art.'

★ page 11

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ctable'



Xander de Boer, SXS Enterprise or as a guest at an International Festival (Tor Linstrand & Marten Spangberg).'

In general do you think that DasArts helps theatre makers on their path to success?

SIEGMAR: 'I hope that their experience at DasArts helps theatre makers to better understand what they are doing and why they might be doing it. And sometimes: less understanding but just a load of excitement!'

IGOR: 'It would be worrying if DasArts became a stepping stone towards any particular fantasy of success. That would diminish its potential enormously. DasArts should rather be the place where the notion of success is opened up and re-considered from the perspective of artistic practice.'

Why is it important for students to think about success?

IGOR: 'It is important to recognize success stories in which we are directly implicated. And to test our degree of freedom in relation to them. That's what we should be doing in this block.'

Looking towards your near artistic future, what would you like to achieve?

SIEGMAR: 'I'm working on a poor musical at the moment, on a second child and on a research and exchange platform for performance artists in Berlin.'

What is it like working as an artist in Europe?

IGOR: 'I would like to get back to Africa and stay there longer. I would like to move to Berlin. I would like to establish a festival under the title "THE VOICE" in Groznan, a small village in Istria, Croatia where my family has a house, so I can spend more time there and still pursue my career. I also have an invitation from between theatre in Amsterdam to produce a work of my own next year. For me this is an interesting and relevant challenge – how to consider and conceive "my work" after years of sharing it with others in the role of dramaturge.'

Where and how did you find the essay *The Conditions of Success – How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* by Alan Bowness [see insert]?

IGOR: 'I was 24, had just left art school where I studied dramaturgy, and quite uncertain what to do with my new artistic status. Absorbed by this particular mood of questioning my own future, I went into a Belgrade bookshop and in a small foreign book section, I got my hands on Bowness' essay, almost by accident. It was of course the authoritative tone of the title that made me take the book from the shelf and straight home. I would lie if I said that my motivation for buying it was anything less than a naive, youthful hope that in it I could find some concrete answers to my personal dilemmas. At the age of 24, I desired success and Mr. Bowness promised some insights into the mechanics of it. So...'

The Conditions of Success: The Mentors

And, what happened? Did it bring you the practical insights you hoped for?

IGOR: 'No, very quickly I had to confront the disappointment that the propositions in the book could hardly be considered a recipe for success. However, a certain resonance of its authoritative tone that goes beyond the logic of a "self help" manual, stayed with me for a long time. It is indicative that despite all the upheavals of the Balkan wars during the nineties that kept me on the move – I lived in Australia for 4 years and after another period in Belgrade, moved to Amsterdam – the book always traveled with me. What continued to fascinate me about it, is precisely its pretension of authority. Every time I showed the essay to a friend or colleague, their first reaction was not criticism, but rather a desire to look through it. Critical distance would come later, once the reader had confronted the obvious fact that the essay, despite the promise of its title, is not an instant manual for success. That was always what interested me, the strange tension and contrast between the sane, academic ambition of the text and a quite trivial, childish indulgence in a fantasy of success as something that could be solved by the simple act of reading the "right" instructions. By placing the book within the context of DasArts and translating the content of the essay to form the subject of a block, I hope to open up and share with other artists this field of tension between symbolism and the imaginary that has fascinated me for such a long time.'

'We never had artistic freedom, anyway'

The essay was written in 1989, and talks about painters at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This was a time before internet, social networks, YouTube, etc. Hasn't the 'the rise of fame' itinerary changed in the meanwhile?

SIEGMAR: 'Nowadays there are alternative models that have been spawned by technological developments. For instance, there is a phenomenon that we can observe taking place in the field of dance-based practice. Peers start writing about each other's work or do self-interviews. For example at PerformingArtsForum, a user-created, user-innovative informal institution. Peers publish The Swedish Dance History or The Paper (International Performance Exchange INPEX), they organise congresses, for example, the multinational artist initiative Sweet & Tender Collaborations. These are all artist initiatives or joint ventures between artists, theoreticians and producers. What is happening here is that the great authoritative divide has been vacated and replaced by a functional mode. If discourse is needed, discourse is produced; when a frame is necessary, it is created. It all comes from one and the same community of practice. And within this community of practice positions are not determined by a vertical hierarchy and an ultimate "rise to fame", but by horizontal structures where fame is made for each other.'

The essay & the block

'How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame'

In his essay *The Conditions of Success – How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (1989) former Tate Gallery director Alan Bowness, describes how world-renown painters like Cezanne or van Gogh travelled down the road to success. According to Bowness, there are four successive circles of recognition through which an exceptional (visual) artist passes en route to fame: Peer recognition, recognition from the artistic community Critical recognition, recognition by serious critics and art historians Patronage by dealers and collectors/ producers Public acclaim

Alan Bowness also devotes some thoughts to the importance of location (and dislocation) in the development of an artist, e.g. great painters congregating in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century and accelerating each other's development.

The DasArts block *The Conditions of Success*, conceived by Igor Dobricic, Bojana Mladenovic and Siegmar Zacharias takes Bowness' essay as departure point. Igor Dobricic and Siegmar Zacharias act as mentors.

IGOR: 'But nothing has really changed in the workings of our underlying desires. We are in a different era technologically, but it remains to be seen if this will produce a significant difference in our existential situation.'

Alan Bowness says: 'It takes about twenty-five years for the truly original artist to win public recognition. In the first ten years or so the work is too uncomfortable for it to be accepted, but slowly it wins through.' Do you agree?

SIEGMAR: 'No.'

IGOR: 'Well, my answer is yes, as long as we feel comfortable with the problematic notion of "a truly original artist". In my opinion this notion is yet another archetypal fantasy stemming straight from our collective unconscious. However, it being a fantasy does not make it less real. We mostly shape our lives according to fantasies, so a fantasy of success can induce a person to transform his/her life's career accordingly. And 25 years is a reasonable time span for "living a career."'

Siegmar's biggest success

Personal: 'Participants: Siegmar, Steve, Louis Zach, Bettina, Claudia // date: 25.7.2009 // show: The Birth // location: Birthing House Maja // duration 6hrs // language: Ger./Engl./*** // audience: 1 witness.'

Professional: In the future: the next piece of work I'll do, i.e. A Poor Musical. In the past: 'Participants: more than 400 people around the globe from Antarctica to Argentina, from Sydney to Stockholm, from Iowa to Osaka; 30 live performers in Berlin // date: 9th.1. 2009 – 10th. 4. 2010 // show: Super! Power! – the Rock Opera // location: YouTube & HAU 2 Berlin // duration: 1 hr // language: Engl./ Ger. / Gr. / Jap. / *** // audience: 11.574 virtual viewers, 1.000 live viewers.'

Igor's biggest success

Personal: 'Creating the circumstances to live my – rather than somebody else's – life.'

Professional: 'First, developing together with the choreographer Diego Gil, a particular artistic methodology and being able to test and practice it with a group of very dedicated makers. We will show some of the results in the form of a dance performance. THE HALF, was premiered in the Ufer Studios in Berlin on September 23.'

'And second: establishing a research platform under the name TableTalks, where, together with other people, I engage in making tables. I made another one with a group of artists in Berlin on September 26 and hopefully, yet another one with block participants on October 4.'

The Conditions of Success: Agenda

Public Events

Come to The Soirées!

You can witness The Conditions of Success more closely and actively during the Soirées on Success at DasArts and Het Veem. Distinguished guests give lectures on their art practice and exchange ideas about themes related to success.

Come and visit Het Veem and the DasArts premises at the Mauritskade 56 in Amsterdam. Everybody is welcome!

For more information:
www.dasarts.nl

13 October 20.00 hrs Nico Croes

Location: Werkgebouw Het Veem, Van Diemenstraat 410 Amsterdam Plaats voor Dans, studio 3.08

Nico Croes, strategic planner at VVL BBDO and Think BBDO, gives a lecture about guerilla marketing entitled *It's all about ideas. Creating impact.* Nico Croes is specialised in the creation of strategic and creative insights and campaigns for all kinds of organisations. VVL BBDO is in Belgium a pioneer in integrated communication (through divisions and spin offs) and one of the most important Belgian advertising agencies.

21 October, 18.00 hrs at DasArts Jan Ritsema

Jan Ritsema is theatre maker and initiator of PerformingArtsForum (PAF), a venue for professional and not yet professional artists who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work, not responding solely to opportunities offered by the institutional market. During the afternoon of the 21st of October, Jan Ritsema will engage in open, extended discussions with students. He will invite participants to think together with him about the relevant issues of how we as artists would like to organize our work. Between 18.00 and 20.00 you are welcome to participate /witness this *open process of reflection* and join us for a drink.

22 October, 20.00 hrs at DasArts Tor Lindstrand & Marten Spangberg

Tor Lindstrand (architect) and Marten Spangberg (choreographer) are the initiators of International Festival, which created a number of context specific projects both internationally and in Sweden. International Festival is an open frame or label, which stimulates and engages in very diverse projects, expressly to avoid establishing a recognizable practice. Tor and Marten give a lecture entitled: *The winner takes it all.*

5 November, 20.00 hrs at DasArts Bojana Bauer

Bojana Bauer is a dramaturge and dance theoretician based in Paris. Bojana will give a lecture on the complex *relation between language and embodied artistic practices.* She will examine which criteria apply to a successful/productive relation between the two.

9 November, 20.00 hrs at DasArts Jan Verwoert

Jan Verwoert lives in Berlin and is a contributing editor to Frieze. Other publications he writes for include Afterall and Metropolis M. He also teaches at the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam and at the Royal College of Art in London. Jan Verwoert will give a lecture entitled: *What Was Mine Is Yours Now: Theft and Empathy.* The success model of corruption versus a culture of compassion.

11 November, 20.00 hrs at DasArts Bettina Knaup

Bettina Knaup is a cultural producer with a background in political science, theatre, film, TV studies and gender studies. In her lecture, Bettina Knaup will consider the *relation between public visibility and the notion of artistic success* and will offer alternative examples of practices which question conventional notions of "fame".

Come to The Festivals!

15 and 16 October The Festival at between theater

The Festival is a two-day presentation where new works by nine young international artists will be viewed, discussed and appreciated – or not.

All artists are participants in the DasArts Block 2010 *The Conditions of Success.* During the three-month programme, they will investigate questions like: What is 'success' in the first place? Who sets the parameters of success? What is the 'margin of freedom' for an artist setting his own, socially unmediated parameters?

Applause is the main ritual

The participants are commissioned to (re)create a piece specially for *The Festival.* The artists offer one half of the equation and they need your presence – the reactions of the audience – to make up the other half. The main ritual of *The Festival* will be the Applause. This is where it all starts. This is when the participants depart on a quest.

We cordially invite you to join the quest that the artists are embarking on. Come to *The Festival.* Indulge in your role. Make your position clear. And let's make some noise together!

For more information www.hetveemtheater.nl

19 and 20 November The Festival at DasArts

By mid-November, the DasArts artists will have investigated various stages of 'success' and met with programmers, artists, marketeers, branding agents and other guests.

The second festival offers a chance to revisit their work, to adapt it, reject it, or defend the original version. This time, they will set the conditions for the festival. At the moment only two things are clear: date and place.

Check out our website for more info!
www.dasarts.nl

Participating artists in both festivals: Ntando Cele (South Africa), Jaco Bouwer (South Africa), Julian Hetzel (Germany), Maria Keirova (Bulgaria / Canada), Mala Kline (Slovenia), Maika Knoblich (Germany), Pedro Manuel (Portugal), Luca Andrea Stappers (The Netherlands), Manolis Tsipos (Greece)

Open Days

7 and 8 January 2011 Meet us and discover DasArts

DasArts organizes open days on 7 & 8 January 2011. The staff members and the students will give you an introduction to the study trajectory and premises at DasArts. If you would like to register for the open day send an e-mail to: dasarts@dasarts.nl or call +31 (0)20 5869636.

Success =



Ntando Cele

South Africa, 1980

‘Success is work that lives for decades’

Your greatest success till now...

‘It is difficult to say, my success mainly depends on goals I have not yet reached. But I can say my presence in Europe as an international artist is a mark of success.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘Someone said to me: “Living in the present does not mean keeping five different appointments. What counts is the time and efficiency you put into one task and giving it your full attention.”’

Success in art is...

‘Success in art for me would be: making artworks that prove themselves important by retaining their significance over decades, continuing to make new works till my last breath.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘It is half the motivation. I am motivated just as much by the challenge of failure.’



Manolis Tsiapos

Greece, 1979

‘Success is a master of disguise’

Your greatest success till now...

‘That I still want to make theatre. It’s a kind of a miracle!’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘A colleague recently said to me: “To be honest, I’ve tried but I really can’t understand your work

at all.’ I immediately thought: *Hey, at least she’s spent time reflecting on my work. That’s already something!*

Success in art is...

‘You can be an artist regardless of what you do in life, whether you’re a businessman, a politician, a cook or a housewife. But then no one will ever call you a ‘real artist’. I would probably feel quite successful if, without me reminding them, everybody called me a ‘real artist’ – oblivious of what they really think of me when I’m not around.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘Success is not evil. Thinking of success as ‘evil’ is already admitting defeat. I prefer to consider success as something worth looking for. At the same time, it’s something extremely difficult to find: success is a master of disguise.’



Pedro Manuel

Portugal, 1980

‘Success is part of the job’

Your greatest success till now...

‘Leaving behind my job and country to travel and develop my work. When it comes to my work, *Chez Kantor*, a performance based on Tadeusz Kantor’s imagery, has been important for me. It was awarded an Audience Prize at a festival, staged at the National Theatre and toured to different venues. However, from an artistic point of view, my greatest success is *Fin Departure*, a performance produced and created in the space of two weeks. It obviously had its flaws but was also very successful – and fun! It focused on experimenting with ideas, fast decision-making and improvisation.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘Recently, at the beginning of a new period in my life and work, I have been lucky to receive a lot of encouragement. There was also a very simple scene from a performance of mine that a friend interpreted as a “metamorphose of the metaphor”. I’m not quite sure what he meant, but it was inspiring.’

Success in art is...

‘A personal incentive and outside response. You can have one without the other, but it is better to have both! A network of colleagues, an audience and feedback definitely contribute to success in art.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘It is good to work in a competitive field and the promise of success serves to motivate you. I expect to succeed because I see it as a natural consequence of working continuously. It comes with your job, any job, as you try to expand your work, connect with more people, more places, diversify and improve. In that sense, success is a necessary part of growing.’



Mala Kline

Slovenia, 1977

‘Success is creating a shock’

Your greatest success till now...

‘I move to what I love, and it moves me.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘I receive the most inspiring feedback about my work from my uncompromising collaborators. And sometimes in letters from members of the public who saw my work.’

Success in art is...

‘Creating a shock that opens doors to experience and revelation. Be it in life, in gardening, in cooking, in art, in business or in politics. Without it, innovation is impossible!’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘Success opens up further possibilities.’



Maika Knoblich

Germany, 1986

‘Success is hide and seek behind a planted hedge’

Your greatest success till now...

‘The experience of creating a project which did not stop after it was finished. We had our doubts at the beginning of this performance. But we succeeded in creating a space which generated lots of questions, possibilities and appealed to the imagination. Not only to us as makers, but also to the audience. After we finished planting the hedge, which should have marked the official

‘Exceptional talents will always be recognized’

end of the performance, people stayed for hours talking, drinking, entering into discussions with us or playing hide and seek behind the planted hedge. Knowing that these conversations still echo in my head and those of other people, makes it a success.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘After seeing my light design for a show, a fellow student told me it was “touching”. This feedback served to inspire me. At first I saw it mainly as a compliment, but later on it made me question a lot of what I was doing. In that respect, it pushed me forward.’

Success in art is...

‘I believe a project can be considered a success when you, as an artist, are happy with the outcome. Success in art cannot be measured using the same categories as in business or politics. It can be collective as well as individual.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘The question seems to imply that success is primarily defined by making money or receiving recognition. Success alone could never be a motivation for work. If you have the urge to express a certain thought, you have already succeeded if you are capable of shaping your idea and presenting it to others. Perhaps it is mainly these “others” who constitute this “necessary evil”. Because it’s true that without an audience your work has no significance.’



Maria Kefirova

Bulgaria / Canada, 1975

‘Success is all those moments when I am happy’

Your greatest success till now...

‘Transforming an empty, cold space into solid, rich ground. To see things grow that I have planted. And I experience all the moments that I am happy as a great success.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘A colleague and friend said to me: “And it is all there... Listen! Give space.” And: “Less and less for more and more.”’

Success in art is...

‘From an utopian point of view, artistic success is the same thing as success in business and politics: making the world a better place, breaking new ground so we can evolve. Success to me is a golden mean, a balance between letting things appear by themselves and making them appear. Success implies you build things that are bigger than yourself, they remain after you’ve gone and “shelter” people.’

Necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘Insofar as success makes me subject to outside appreciation it is “evil” to me. When it gives me the opportunity to continue building, or proves my intentions are sound, success stimulates me.’



Luca Andrea Stappers

The Netherlands, 1971

‘Success is a rapper in a kidney-shaped pool’

Your greatest success till now...

‘A performance of mine sold out a thousand seats a night for ten consecutive days...’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘It is more my change of attitude towards feedback, than the feedback itself, that has had a rewarding effect lately.’

Success in art is...

‘An image I associate with success: A rapper in a kidney-shaped pool, Che Guevara on a t-shirt or the bent figure of mother Theresa amongst the children of Calcutta. Of course, success in art can be measured in many different ways. In terms of exposure or material rewards. In terms of positive reviews from an audience, critics or peers. But also in terms of results over time: does the artwork contribute, for example, to social change?’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘I would say neither. It is a response to the work.’



Julian Hetzel

Germany, 1981

‘Success is satisfaction’

Your greatest success till now...

‘The freedom to say I want to do something and not I must.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘I once saw someone in the audience crying with

delight during our performance. Afterwards she thanked me for making this happen.’

Success in art is...

‘I don’t use this term for my artistic work. If I create something that is intense, precise and somehow close to the subject I am dealing with, I’m *satisfied* – that’s the term I would use... Success in art is more about what it achieves regarding content and its impact, than about sales figures. The aim of business is to generate money, but what is the aim of art? I’d really like to ask this question to a politician and a businessman.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘I don’t consider success necessary; it’s just something that can happen to you. But it’s not up to you to engineer it. The motivation behind my work is more an urge to express myself, than the pursuit of success.’



Jaco Bouwer

South Africa, 1973

‘Success is to one, what failure is to others’

Your greatest success till now...

‘Illumination. I don’t measure success in financial terms or popularity. *Success* comes from the Latin verb *succedere*, which means ‘to come close after’. The closer you come to the work you want to produce, the more successful you are. It is also interesting that the opposite of success is failure. Failure for some might mean success to another.’

Inspiring feedback to your work...

‘What turned out to be very inspiring for me was criticism from an anonymous audience: an absolute negation and misunderstanding of my work, but somehow it spurred me on to dig deeper. At first, I perceived it as personal, but it became clearer to me as I dwelt on it, that I was only scratching the surface. It is sometimes difficult to see the truth and accept it.’

Success in art is...

‘I don’t believe in the idea that an artist should suffer to make art. You must realize that we live in a capitalist society, and decide what kind of life you want to lead, and not become a victim of your profession.’

A necessary evil or the motivation behind your work?

‘If you can bear the pain of being pure of heart, it could be a driving force. If not, it can become self destructive.’



‘Life took me here’

Bojana Mladenovic, ex-DasArts student, co-conceiver of the Block and new artistic director of hetveem theater

Must an artist be ‘in the right place at the right time? Yes, says Alan Bowness in his essay *The Conditions of Success*. In fact, ‘dislocation’ can be disastrous. Serbian ex-DasArts student Bojana Mladenovic, now the new artistic director of hetveem theater in Amsterdam doesn’t agree. ‘If I had moved to Kuala Lumpur 4 years ago, would I be more successful now?’

At some point in your life, you moved from Serbia to the Netherlands. Was this for artistic reasons?

‘There is no straight yes or no to that question. I moved here because life took me here. My favorite anecdote is that my partner – who lived here when we fell in love – often thought I came to Amsterdam to pursue my art career. But at DasArts people thought I moved to Amsterdam to be with my partner. My heartfelt emotion tells me both versions are true. Coming from a ‘third world country’ you indeed need an excuse to be here. It is unimaginable that we could find ourselves here spontaneously just because things happen in our lives.’

Did your move influence your artistic development?

‘Yes, pretty much so. I was in my early thirties, considerably successful and recognized as a maker and performer in Belgrade, yet almost swallowed-up by the *production machine*. That is the point in your career when you either take your artistic development seriously or are grinded down and disappear as an artist. In the Netherlands I encountered a new challenging artistic context and a new way of thinking. The powerful DasArts philosophy and ethics appealed strongly to me. I also arrived at that certain point in my artistic practice when it was, dramatically enough, about ‘all or nothing’.’

In his 1989 essay *The Conditions of Success* Alan Bowness speaks of the importance

of ‘location and dislocation’. He points for example at all the great painters gathering in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century, accelerating each others artistic development. In these times of internet, fast communication means and the enormous mobility of artists, do you think location still matters?

‘Indeed, in these times artists live in a permanent state of displacement: in time, in medium, in the crooked English the art community speaks. It is a kind of displacement that even loses its reference to the ‘original place’, if such a place ever existed. However, I see that times are changing, or to be precise: the desires of artists are changing.’

‘We all desire success and yet treat it with nonchalance’

Which change do you see in artists’ desires?

‘We are growing tired of running around aimlessly and placing or displacing ourselves into different instant contexts. I recognize both in myself and among my colleagues a need for some kind of “ground underfoot”. But that’s how it goes – the production modes and knowledge transfer sometimes coincide with the needs of the field itself. For instance, in the nineties, the most common

way of participating in the dance/performance world was through workshops and individual productions. The past decade was more about residencies and co-productions. It’s 2010 now, and I can’t say what the new trend will be, but there is a definite shift towards a ‘home’, ‘base’, ‘identity’ with your surroundings’ kind of mentality.’

You decided to stay. Do you consider Amsterdam ‘the right place at the right time’, as Alan Bowness puts it: an important location for theatre artists to gather and accelerate success?

‘I have a certain feeling about Amsterdam. To convey it as precisely as possible, I have to quote a friend and collaborator Snejanika Mihaylova: “Amsterdam is not a place of big revolutions but a place of poetic revelations.” Well, Amsterdam is definitely a place that personally brought me a lot of challenges, self-confrontation and profound shifts in my artistic practice and personal development. If you want to translate that into *the right place at the right time* – go ahead. But it is as hypothetical as stating: *If I had moved to Kuala Lumpur 4 years ago, I would be more successful now.*’

So you don’t think the location of an artist is important?

‘No, not so much. Of course each location brings its own “feel of the world”. But at some stages in life you are confronted with certain questions, regardless of where you are. Indeed the consequences will differ and may be ‘location specific’,

‘Most ess is eithered in indiffaction. This is

but an artists path to success is not a question of a specific location.’

And a ‘school’ like DasArts?

‘I am a very passionate advocate of DasArts! I loved it! It offered conditions for taking yourself seriously. Nobody tells you what to do. Nobody brainwashes you with right or wrong, with good or bad. DasArts is either about the pleasure of being lost and in search of something, or a nightmare of being lost and in search of something. It might sound pathetic, but I left DasArts with the feeling that I mattered. That I had been cared for and loved. School? No way!’

Talking about love. In contemporary performing arts, do you consider ‘the love’ of a large audience a sign of success?

‘We are sometimes spinning within incestuous circles: our peers and a passionate theoretician here and there. Which, for certain ways of making work and certain works, is not a problem.’

‘At DasArts nobody brainwashes you with right or wrong, with good or bad’

But don’t policymakers and funders demand wider audiences?

Indeed they do. And that’s fine. But at the same time I want to defend certain forms of contemporary performing arts. Not all work needs to be widely followed and recognized by an audience. Some works are a kind of ‘source’. That is more than a legitimate reason for their existence in this world.’

So work that is only recognized by peers?

Yes, good artists still gain recognition among each other. Peers have a funny game of inspiring each other, sometimes close to silently condoning ‘stealing from each other’. They often support each other too. Yet this does not pave a secure path towards recognition by critics and a wide audience.’

What do you think is more important for the success of an artist nowadays: critical acclaim or recognition by producers and programmers?

Since the mid-nineties there is significant, yet not so diverse critical discourse being developed, mainly in the field of dance and performance. Sometimes the theoreticians in collaboration with certain makers bring the work of those makers under the attention of producers, and subsequently an audience as well. But the biggest role today is definitely played by producers and programmers. If they recognize you, it means you are in the picture, you exist and make work that matters. And programmers most commonly get influenced by other producers and programmers, not by critical discourse.’

You, as the new production house director at *hetveem theater* in Amsterdam, will influence who will be making work. How do you want to contribute to the success of the artists?

‘The success of the artists is their own responsibility as much as the responsibility of a production house. We all desire success and yet treat it with nonchalance. I am not immune to it, and neither are the artists whose work is produced by our theatre. So it is good to talk about it together and come up with our own proposals, understandings and ideas about success.’

Will you take on a different role than your predecessors?

‘I don’t know. I just started in June this year and I am learning a lot at the moment. At this point, I prefer to work before I start talking about any possible differences. One thing is for sure: I feel inspired and challenged!’

Bojana’s biggest success

‘The moments I feel good about myself and don’t forget about the people around me. Or when I feel terrible and don’t project it on people around me. I often don’t succeed in either of them.’



Column In touch!

A review in de Volkskrant awarded *The Wall*, a production I did the dramaturgy for, four out of a possible five stars. I must confess I was overjoyed (... and my eyes were moist). Looking further down the page I discovered that Nick Cave’s new album also had four stars. My score equalled that of my hero: I could live with that! My surge of joy smoothly gave way to a much deeper feeling of considerable satisfaction and the prospect of a promising future: My eyes dried, allowing me look ahead not in distance, but in time. Considered soberly, four stars meant more public interest, more ticket sales and a nice recommendation to back up the next subsidy application. Stars say more than a thousand words...

By conducting long interviews, theatre magazines regularly explore a certain theatre-maker’s world, allowing artists to share what has been of seminal importance to them. Often the works they define as ‘crucial for themselves or their career’, did not enjoy great public success. In fact, the less acclaimed productions that preceded the major successes seem to be more ‘artistically’ important to them: Failure as condition of a later success, failure as artistic fetish.

What rarely features in newspapers or magazines is the reaction your work triggers in people who really matter to you. A performance or creation that made you fall in love or caused someone to fall in love with you. It’s a compliment to your personal mastery. Even your mother or father, sceptical of your art, one day finds a way of expressing his or her appreciation: ‘The audience was so quiet you could hear a pin drop!’ In my case, a greater compliment was unimaginable. When we speak about life’s successes parameters change.

Common to all those forms of success is an existential component. It is that moment of recognition that allows you to grow, that gives you courage and triggers fantasies for your next step. Those effects make you who you are. We are not simply what we do. We are what is returned to us as a consequence of our giving. (And for theatre as an art form with a live audience that reaction even belongs to the event itself: it is a form of self-realization).

The ‘wave of joy’ elicited by the stars, words and actions was really joy about myself. Someone or something important to me had actually paid attention to me for what I had shared with them earlier. One of the precious assets that you offered as a gift is returned – transformed and independent of all notions of fame and evaluation. What was yours comes back: it simply makes you exist. All these ‘circles’ indicate how much you were in touch with the world. That’s success.

Georg Weinand
DasArts Artistic Policy & Dramaturgy

Choreographer João Fiadeiro:

‘An artist that works in order to seek success... will not succeed’



Life change

‘Exactly 22 years ago I had the privilege to take some composition classes with Trisha Brown. She spent half of the workshop sharing her method of composition with us – an act of generosity that was extremely important to me: the idea of “giving it away” or “letting go”. During the other half of the workshop she told us to design our own method. What I proposed as a method back then wasn’t very imaginative or original, but I understood through what I’d experienced, that I could “make” my own conditions to exist and I was responsible for my actions. This notion of responsibility she

gave us, intimately connected to the notion of freedom, changed my life.’

Hardest task on earth

‘To me the defining factor that ‘measures’ success is the number of people your work influences, now or in the future. I think that an artist that works in order to seek success... will not succeed. An original piece of work or thought emerges out of intuition and persistence. These are not the type of qualities one develops by looking for something, but instead, by waiting for something. Intuition is impossible if we don’t trust ourselves and trust, especially in ourselves, is probably the hardest task on earth. Persistence is an equally hard quality to develop. You must work hard for it and possess a fundamental capacity: the ability to resist – the first idea, the need for change, the fear of being afraid. The problem is that “resisting” might be the second hardest task on earth.’

Ultrasonic sounds

‘Peer recognition means that your work is being understood by people who are “writing” contemporary history with you, by those that face similar historical, social and political conditions and are looking for answers to the unanswered or questions about the unquestioned. A peer functions as a mirror: he or she will reflect and send back an image of what you do, which will help to position yourself in relation to yourself and others. If you have no return from your work, how would you know what you are doing? A bit like a bat that transmits ultrasonic sounds in order to receive an echo so it can detect and classify its prey. I can speak for myself: I only know where I am, if the information I communicate comes back in any format. My “existence” is in the relation between things, not in the things themselves.’

Peer stealing

‘In regard to ‘peer stealing’, what I would call ‘the problem of authorship’, I try to think and work like a scientist. It would be absolutely impossible to make any type of discovery or breakthrough in the scientific community if people didn’t share. In a paradoxical way, it is exactly this sharing that prevents your work from being copied. But even if it is copied, open source systems are one of the most fascinating consequences of the world we live in. The idea of “holding on” to “my” discovery is completely counterproductive. Of course, I want to be recognized for what I do, but it’s not something I can or wish to control.’

Biggest success

Personal: Yet to come.
Professional: Real Time Composition.

3 most important conditions for success

- 1. Acknowledging that the material is always right.
- 2. Not taking yourself too seriously.
- 3. Not being afraid to fail.

Success in arts =

When the work you do has the same kind of impact on others as the work of others had on you. When the work you do adds something significant to the transfer of knowledge. When the work you do reveals something new about yourself, something you would have never discovered if you were not an artist.

João gives a one-week workshop focussing on the technique of Real Time Composition.

Arts producer and advisor Rose Fenton:

‘There is an innate conservatism in society’



Jump into the unknown

‘In 2002 the Observer newspaper wrote: “Over the past 20 years, LIFT has radically, and sometimes roguishly, redefined what we think of as theatre and much of the experimentation in this country can be traced to its influence.” We were very proud when they wrote that! When Lucy Neal and I started with the festival in 1980, we wanted to open up Britain to international influences, challenge the forms that theatre could take and who could be part of it. During the years, we were constantly evolving the idea of LIFT, taking risks and continuing to jump into the unknown, bringing artists and audiences with us.’

Role of festivals

‘Festivals in their original sense – and not the consumer orientated product that they can so often be today – are very important for artists. They bring a

community together and offer the chance to challenge and change the order of things and provide a holiday from the everyday. During festivals people are ready to try something different: new ideas and experiences, experimentation. And of course, festivals also have a media profile and attract producers from other festivals and theatre, eager to discover new work.’

Depth of experience

‘People seek success to find a place and have a say in the world, to be able to realise dreams and to make a difference. In my case, I want to give a platform to the voices, creative forces and ideas that I believe in, and connect them with society at large. And also to be part of a community and be able to work with the people I respect and enjoy being with. In ‘measuring success’, numbers are usually meaningless; revelation, depth of experience and intellectual and emotional impact are essential. In a recent essay about the role of the artist today, John Fox, founder of Welfare State International, wrote about the need for “re-generation of the soul and not of economics”.’

Innate conservatism

‘When Pina Bausch first appeared at the Avignon Festival in the 70’s, half the audience walked out protesting that this was not dance! Today she is regarded as one of the most influential choreographers of the late 20th century. There is an innate conservatism in society generally. As the philosopher John Locke declared some 300 years ago: “New opinions and ideas are always suspected and usually opposed without any other reason but because they are not already common.” I think the programmer and producer have an essential role – even duty – in this process: nurture, encourage and promote the new and the unfamiliar. They are a bridge between the artist and their public, creating the best conditions for the work to thrive in the public arena.’

New role

‘In a strange way I have found that not working as a producer and Festival Director anymore, has

liberated me in my relationship with artists. I feel I am able now to have profound conversations with them about their work, show great interest in their ideas and offer advice, without being fearful that I am giving the impression that I would like to produce them in the Festival. In my new role as advisor, I can share the experience of working with artists and audiences and producing a festival over 25 years, juggling a multitude of agendas. I can hopefully encourage a younger generation of artists, writers and producers, exploring with them the different forms artistic presentation can take as well as tactics for its realisation. And yes, I also see a role in encouraging decision- and policy makers to take risks, to trust and support the artistic process.’

Biggest success

Personal: ‘Staying true to my values over the years. Not being afraid of change. Keeping my heart open. Having a close group of family as well as friends all over the world with whom I have worked and still keep in touch.’
Professional: ‘Developing the LIFT Festival over 25 years’

3 most important points of advice to help artists deal successfully with ‘the system’

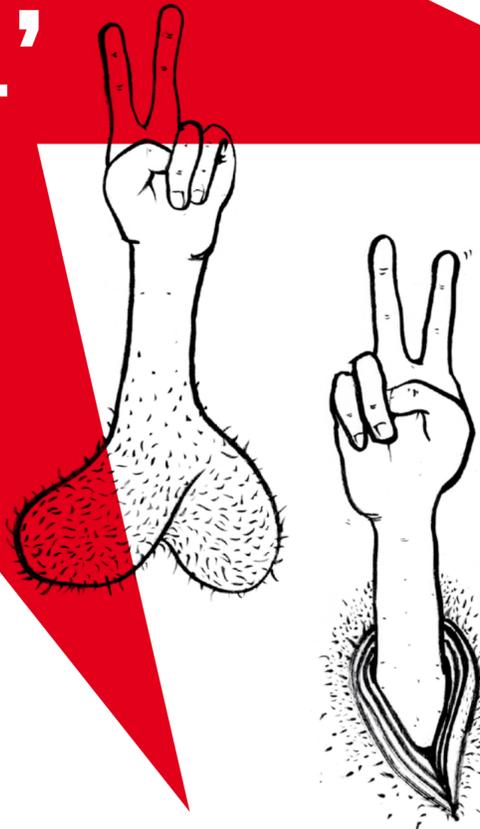
- 1. Believe in yourself and never give up.
- 2. Break the rules.
- 3. Find like-minded friends and colleagues to help you in this and give you courage.

Success in arts =

‘Barney Simon, founder of the Market Theatre Johannesburg during the apartheid era once said: “Through my work I do not so much change the world as hope to nurture a changing world.” Perhaps this possibility of nurturing a changing world is where success lies.’

Following the Festival, Rose engages in a conversation with the students about the possible relation between artists and producers.

‘Artcess freends doestic existdom’



‘PR guru’ Mark Borkowski

‘It’s all about creating word of mouth publicity’



Artists as brands

‘In 2001 I lectured at a conference in the Netherlands about the role of subsidies in the arts. I was preaching “my religion”, which was pretty radical at that time: I described artists as brands. In my view, an artist had to think as a brand. People said: “But the world commercial means compromise”. I definitely don’t agree. You have to be commercial, you have to find a marketplace and position yourself in it, whatever the art form you are involved with.’

Out of the cultural ghetto

‘In the sixties, seventies and eighties artists received enormous amounts of subsidy, a situation unprecedented in history. Nowadays, times have gotten tougher, subsidies are drying up. More than ever an artist must find a way out of the cul-

tural ghetto, must seek to escape that safe haven. The artists who can exist without subsidy will be the strongest, they will have control over their own art. I recently saw a 19-year old comedian who has 3.5 million fans online. He has been working to generate an audience that will support him. Self-sufficiency is about finding supporters to help you to be what you are.’
‘So you have to find a target group! It’s ridiculous to expect that people will find you. To gain popularity doesn’t mean you have to create a cheap tabloid version of your art. It’s much more important for you to understand the way the media works, how to find or create your own network, your circle of disciples. Taking control of this will help you to develop and accelerate your artistic growth.’

Symbiotic process

‘Once you choose to be an artist – like students at DasArts – it means you think your work is significant. You have decided that creating art is your life. If you can’t be what you want to be, this may lead to frustrations, unhappiness or even anger. Thus, the question is not *if*, but *how* to advertise your work. This is not an extra job on top of creating your art. In my view it is symbiotic; part of your job as an artist is to understand how you can manipulate the media. “To manipulate” means “handling”, taking things into your own hands. And no, the quest for success does not restrict artistic freedom. On the contrary, success will give you greater freedom! Success accelerates your growth as an artist. Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, The Arctic Monkeys, they all embarked on that journey, and embraced that symbiotic process.’

Magic stick

‘So how do you advertise your work? Public Relations is all about creating word of mouth publicity about what you do. Invent a captivating narrative people want to listen to. You have to stimulate the senses. This can be done in lots of ways, by shocking people, like *Archaos* did, running around with chainsaws, but also by creating something of ab-

solute beauty or desolateness. I think an artist is permitted to use any means necessary to enthrall an audience.’

‘I work for famous people and for big brands, but I still love working for people on the frontline of the arts, like DasArts. They are at the root of who I am and constitute a well of creativity. It depresses me that big commercial companies nowadays understand perfectly how to influence the media, but that a lot of artists – who may have far more interesting messages – don’t. I want to stimulate them, in that I am part therapist and part publicist. With the participating artists at DasArts I will be discussing and thinking about ways to create publicity stunts to spotlight their work. But it’s not like I wave my magic wand and they’ll all be famous.’

Biggest success

Personal: ‘That I have remained the same person, that I am still involved and turned on by things around me. I have met a lot of important people and seen too many individuals paying a high price for their success. I’m glad I managed to control my ego, haven’t lost my sanity and enjoy a happy private life.’

3 important points of advice for artists

- 1. You’ve got to find and captivate your audience – don’t expect them to find you.
- 2. You’ve got to understand how to create word of mouth publicity about your work.
- 3. Creating your work and thinking about how to find an audience is a symbiotic process.

Success in arts=

‘I can’t answer that question. Fame, success and happiness are interrelated in the mind of a person. People who find peace are the most successful.’

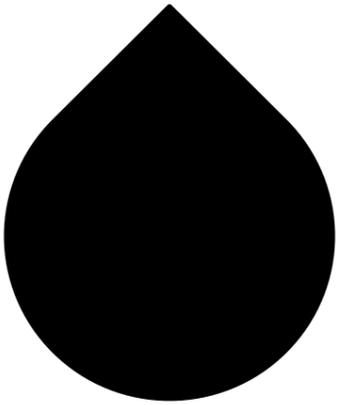
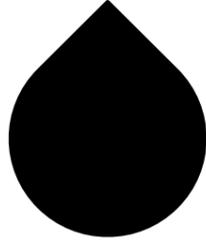
Mark gives a two-days workshop about narratives and publicity stunts.

Reminds me of success...

When we say ‘success’, which images pop up in our mind? And what do these images tell us about our collective (subconscious) definitions of success?

The drawings by DasArts participant **Julian Hetzel**: Sucksess (male) / Sucksess (female) might give us an indication about the ideas and plans of Joseph Ackermann, chief executive of the Deutsche Bank, during the Mannesmann/Vodafone takeover.





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Communication and production

Wouter van Loon

English copy editing

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Text corrections

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Publisher

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