

Brussels, february 2004

Dear Friends,

Art is as difficult as national defence.

The art industry is as important as the car industry. People commonly say, 'my car is my freedom', but I think the word freedom is more suited to art than to a car.

'Art is freedom'. Freedom is a tremendous feeling.

But freedom without responsibility is anti-freedom.

Michelangelo Pistoletto says that the higher the position you have in society and the more freedom, the more responsibility one has to bear. So if an artist aspires to the highest form of freedom, he must also bear its responsibility.

So, that's the way it is. Conclusion: art is damned difficult.

And here and there this causes upset. Such as at the Octobre en Normandie festival in France: the extremely honourable director Philippe Danel was sacked for having the audacity to put *No Comment* on the bill. It is not even a form of censorship, simply an expression of stupidity by several members of the festival's board of directors, who had not even seen the performance. All things of value are defenceless. There is a remedy for everything but stupidity. But the man has in the meantime been humiliated and has lost his job.

The only thing we can do is to make the new production, *Isabella's room* – which opens at the Avignon Festival on 9th July 2004 – sharper, better and more interesting. We wish Philippe Danel an intensive and creative 2004 and hope that all those producers, curators, artistic directors and so on who stick their necks out for this 'difficult' art have plenty of inspiration and energy so they can go even further in their views on art and its function. Apart from this, and better late than never, we wish all the others and above all you, the reader of this newsletter, a marvellous time and don't let yourself be browbeaten by any sort of dictator. And don't forget:

We create art and enjoyment for you and you alone.

JL

Isabella's room: a new creation for the 2004 Avignon Festival in July

Jan Lauwers' father died at the start of the twenty-first century and left his wife and children a collection of several thousand ethnological and archaeological objects.

This was the spark that led Jan Lauwers to tell the story of Isabella Morandi, a woman born at the start of the twentieth century. Isabella is blind and lives a withdrawn existence in a room in Paris. She is a participant in a scientific experiment whereby a camera projects images directly into her brain. The collection of objects is now Isabella's obsession. A story of passion and love, set against the twenty-first century, known to be the most fast-moving and turbulent.

Isabella's room opens in the Cloître des Carmes at the Avignon Festival on **9th July 2004**. More performances on 10, 11, 12, 13 & 15 July.

A foretaste of what this play has in store can be seen at the *Needlapbs* in Ghent on 10 and 11 February. The next *Needlapbs* are in Paris from 6 to 8 April, preceded by 10 performances of *(AND)* and in Toulouse, where *(AND)* can also be seen.

(AND): French opening on 24th March

After a successful tour of Norway, Grace Ellen Barkey and Needcompany are working on the French version of *(AND)*, which opens at the Théâtre de la Bastille on 24 March, in association with