

Brussels, December 2004

Dear Friends,

Artists are concerned chiefly with form. Artists say what has already been said but in a different way. Artists are people who try to give a name to their own hysteria. This explains the tremendous naivety one repeatedly encounters in art. A naivety that has a pernicious effect on politics. Naive politics lead to murder and manslaughter. An artist who puts himself at the service of politics is thus more of a jester than an artist. At the present time it is very tempting for an artist to put on a fool's cap. Someone who did so with great verve was Theo Van Gogh. Theo was a true jester.

He made a short film about women in Islam and was murdered. He used art to change the world. And now he is dead and the world has not changed.

In the Middle Ages there was an unspoken agreement that the jester would never be punished for what he said. It is clear that we no longer live in the Middle Ages. Roll on 2005!

In *My Last Breath* Buñuel tells that while on his deathbed he wanted to play one last joke: he gathered all his libertine surrealist friends, including André Breton and Dali, around his deathbed. He then had a priest sent, was given the last sacraments and died. His friends were utterly dumbfounded: could it be that he, their free-thinking blood-brother, actually became a believer in the face of death? They would never know. Buñuel liked to put on the fool's cap too. Perhaps this is an interesting redefinition of the artist: a court jester without a king.

Dear friends, in the name of Needcompany I wish you all a fool's cap and hope that in 2005 we do not have to hear the names of God and Allah too much more, though I am afraid this is a vain hope.

All the best,

JL

P.S.: I am in New York and thinking of Theo Van Gogh and the fact that he called the USA the last beacon of hope for this planet. Whatever else may be the case, Christmas in New York, with Isabella's room in the marvellous BAM Harvey Theater, is tremendously exciting.

One of the countless Father Christmases one sees on Broadway looks suspiciously like Theo. Perhaps he found his America after all?

CHUNKING, a new creation by Grace Ellen Barkey & Needcompany

"Without exact borders, the song rose up, staked a claim on your attention, fears or desires and then turned into air." (Greil Marcus about Kill Yr. Idols, Sonic Youth)

One thing we are certainly looking forward to is the new creation by Grace Ellen Barkey and Needcompany, *Chunking*. It will open at PACT Zollverein in Essen on 12th May 2005 and will then tour to Amsterdam and the Festival de Marseille (for the French opening). In October 2005 it will be on at the Kaaithheater in Brussels.

Chunking is composed of scenes reconstructed from conscious and unconscious memories. Each of these constructive gestures is always followed by deconstruction. Something new arises out of the void left behind. Grace Ellen Barkey explains her love of theatre as an obsession with framing bodies. "In the end it's all a puppet-show." *Chunking* will include a 20-minute choreographic passage set to Kill Yr. Idols, Sonic Youth's 1983 Five Song Album.

ISABELLA'S ROOM – Jan Lauwers & Needcompany

Isabella's room opened at this summer's Festival d'Avignon. The reviews speak for themselves: *"This is a performance that continues to follow you long after it has ended, like a white shadow, which pursues you through the streets, through the night."* (Brigitte Salino, Le Monde, 13th July 2004). *"Isabella's room is an explosive piece, a story without moral, a serenade, a love song addressed to a woman who has seen a procession of the worst horrors - one after the other: the world wars, the camps, Hiroshima, the famine in Africa, the ultra-right wing Vlaams Blok party, ... Isabella certainly deserves this homage, as much as the interpreter of her role, the mad genius"*

Viviane De Muynck." (Marie-Christine Vernay, Libération, 12th July 2004). We round off 2004 with a tour of the USA and are already looking forward to the 2005 tour with stops in Bruges, Ghent, Mulhouse, Nice, Paris, Rotterdam, Turin, Brussels, Antwerp, Villeneuve d'Ascq and Evry.

NO COMMENT was performed at the Festival de Marseille and at ImPulsTanz Vienna this summer. *"The legendary Needcompany from Belgium reaches beyond itself, beyond theatre, beyond dance, beyond artiness, and beyond criticism of society"*. (Helmut Ploebst, Der Standard Spezial, July/August 2004). This show went to Glasgow, Dublin and Villeneuve d'Ascq. 2005 will see its first performance in the Netherlands, at Groningen. It will also be on at deSingel in Antwerp together with Isabella's room.

After an impressive list of international venues (Singapore, New York, Paris, Norway), (AND) was performed for the last time in Lausanne.

NEEDLAPB is the soul of Needcompany and has now reached venues abroad. Over the last year we have shown three Needlapbs in Paris and one each in Ghent, Hamburg and Toulouse. Theatres are becoming increasingly interested in sketching a broader picture of the artist. Over the last year we have also often combined a performance with a Needlapb. The next one is in Turin.

GOLDFISH GAME is gradually circumnavigating the world, from one obscure film festival to the next. It was for example shown at the Festival d'Avignon and was also selected for the 2004 Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival in the USA.

In 2003 Jan Lauwers made the short film **C-SONG 01**. Its premiere was at the Courtisane Film Festival in Ghent in April 2004. It was selected for the International Short Film Festival in Hamburg. It was also included in the SMAK-aan-zee, Grasduinen exhibition, alongside the work of Honoré d'O and others. Lauwers is currently engaged in work on **C-Song 02**.