

Evaluatie PLETA - Diederik Kreike

As Maastricht in the PLETA Project Odyssey, we got the assignment to make our version of the underworld. The world of dead people, darkness, answers or no answers and where sacrifices are made. Relating that to the world's refugee situation is something we did not focus on. We could see the similarities, and eventually the performance generated its own content, but I think it would have been unfortunate to focus only on the similarity with refugees. We focused on the technology part. I think nowadays we at least will have heard, and we might know concepts like Odyssey, Underworld, Refugees. But what are they actually? How do we imagine them to be?

I think theater makers have a highly developed imagination and easily can put those concepts into visualization. We, most of the time, want to make a nice image. We even sometimes want to make our own versions of those concepts. I think that's what we did. We started with reading the part of the Odyssey, then put the somewhat 'holy' book of Homer away, and started to make small performances. With the read story in the back of our minds. At the Toneelacademie we are quite used to using technologies such as beamers, soundscapes, etc. when creating performances. So you come to visualization of your ideas. Quickly said: You can use a beamer for the visual part and making soundscape for the auditive part. It's easily said but hard to do. You want to be mesmerized, or surprised, blown away or deeply agitated. We asked ourselves questions such as: What does work? When does it come alive? When does the imagination of the audience get activated? And after those quick brainstorm about the performances we came back to relating things to the Odyssey. It works you both ways. Content regenerates form of things and form regenerates content.

Since technology is becoming a bigger part of today's society, it influences theater as well. We really focused on the contrast of reality and virtual reality. What's real, and what's technology? We build up an underwater filming set at the Filmfabriek, home to Peter Misotten. There we filmed all the parts which were later to be the dead bodies. We used at this set also green screen and 3D-scanning. Those are such difficult tools, we used the files as much to our ability. We also had a little research in the program Blender. How could we make a version of our underworld through those media?

Using those media (for instance, we brought 9 beamers to Amsterdam) was really an other way of working then that I was used to do. Since you are handling filming materials and controlling beamers, there's more time into editing than into rehearsing or improvising a scene as an average actor should do. You need to edit the filming scene, look what it does, and then adjust it, look at it again, and on and on. You strive for perfection because one mistake will shatter the magic of such technological performance. But when it all comes together, like it did in the Tolhuistuin, you feel like the room takes control of you and comes alive. It was really nice working on such a highly-technological performance because I can transfer the things I learned about technology in a performance to using it in my own work.

There wasn't much contact with the other students during the Odyssey. We were working independently on our performances and didn't have much time meeting each other or for example get to know each others theater esthetics. We did a run through the day before the premiere and I was really surprised of the things the other schools made. I maybe expected to have it a little more overlay because now the contrast was pretty high. It made people like the piece of school X and hated the performance of school Y. It would be nice to mix quality and really create on piece together. But there wasn't enough time for that maybe...