

‘Mikado Remix’: greetings from the Lost Land

Louis Vanhaverbeke presents a many-layered mental exercise on inside and outside

De Morgen, 11-05-18, Evelyne Coussens

On the pressure to remain hidden, and the need to come out into the open. To deal with this topic, Louis Vanhaverbeke has created the rather untidy but disarming *Mikado Remix*, in an utterly unprecedented combination of rap concert, object theatre and DIY demonstration.

It takes some time before we really get to see anything of Vanhaverbeke – and even then... This Ghent dancer keeps on putting objects in between himself and the audience, like a shy technician who prefers to stay as far away from the limelight as possible. The material barriers are video screens and the Heras site fencing that he has used since he performed at the Bâtard Festival in 2011. Language also forms a screen, just like the unwritten codes of behaviour of a cultural class or even of music, which is Vanhaverbeke’s great love. All these things are interfaces that set a reassuring frame between himself and a reality that is in essence formless and chaotic.

The angry, frightened self which in the first three numbers of *Mikado Remix* hides in a white cube of video screens is very well aware of this. The loop station that supplies him with beats is hung on his body, but it also sends his dark thoughts round in loops: ‘I see what you do not; sorrow flows through the silence’.

Extension of the body

A fascinating combination of electronic high tech and craftsmanlike construction, an odd mixture of childlike poetry and political philosophy.

At the moment when Vanhaverbeke breaks out of his physical and inner cage, he appears all at once to be movingly touchable by the audience. However, the world ‘outside’ turns out to be equally conditioned by a fear of contact. Using a stack of plastic boxes, site fencing and a waffle-iron, he knocks together an installation that enables him to bake a waffle without touching a single ingredient.

You see how technology has become an extension of the human body, how man endeavours to experience as little true physical contact as possible between this body and the world, between the self and everything outside it. What it makes you think of is exactly identical little families in their houses like clean plastic boxes, baking waffles in an exactly identical way.

This idea drives Vanhaverbeke on one level further on: in the number ‘Anything is possible’ he extends it from the individual to society: can a community that closes itself off in isolation ever develop and identify? Doesn’t uniqueness actually have something to do with exchanges between inside and outside? Isn’t infection simply a precondition? It looks as if the exercise consists of going out into the big world in spite of everything and at the same time liberating

oneself from the standardisation that exists there. With a cheerful cry of ‘Greetings from Lostland!’, Vanhaverbeke cycles out of the theatre on his delivery bike into the real Brussels, where the nightlife of Dansaertstraat beckons.

‘Something special’

Not all the images created in *Mikado Remix* are equally well-chosen and Vanhaverbeke’s performance falls apart at the seams, but the mental exercise is on several levels and you do become enthralled by the fascinating combination of electronic high tech and craftsmanlike construction, or by the strange mixture of childlike poetry and political philosophy. It’s something special after all, this piece by Vanhaverbeke.