



Flanders Today

30.04.2014

Circulation: 28000

837e0d

Page: 14

206



BERLIN: TALKING TO STRANGERS

Every new project of the Antwerp-based collective Berlin starts with Yves Degryse and Bart Bael's arrival in a city or a region. With curiosity, cameras, interviewing techniques and patience galore, they subsequently attempt to film a portrait of the place by allowing selected residents to speak for themselves.

The result is typically a colourful and original perspective, created with a critical eye, subtlety and finesse. *Perhaps All the Dragons [in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage]*, the third part of their *Horror Vacui* (fear of emptiness) series, premieres at KFDA.

"It's a great festival," says Degryse. "Being there before with our productions *Bonanza* and *Moscow* changed our company to some extent. It introduced us to new audiences and opened doors for international touring. But our work has always had an international dimension; we choose to work in cities across the globe."

Their interdisciplinary style places audiences in different configurations with multiple screens. "Spectators often tell us they spend a long time

reflecting on the experience afterwards," Degryse says. "They also ask if we use actors or real people. It's impossible to tell. We allow interviewees time to express themselves, starting with a list of 40 annoying questions from Max Frisch's diaries – things like 'Do you have a sense of humour when you're alone?' Then the real stories slowly start to emerge."

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Perhaps All the Dragons places the audience around a table, the screens situated directly opposite each chair. "The format for the audience is usually a reflection of the city, its story," Degryse says, adding that the art collective likes to blur the boundaries between fiction and



Antwerp-based collective Berlin present the remarkable true stories of strangers in *Perhaps All the Dragons* at KFDA

reality. "*Dragons* has 30 stories we went back and collected from people and situations that interested us. Some of them are re-enacted, but 29 of them are true. Which one is the lie?"

Degryse says that collaborations are critical in Berlin's work because the collective can spend as much as 18 months on a project and also have to find interviewees. "It's good to be back at the Kunstenfestival," he says. "They provide mental as well as financial support and are always interested in future projects. That's important."

