

# INTO TIME

The work of Leentje Vandenbussche  
By Wouter Hillaert

What is modern art? Art philosopher Boris Groys has a surprisingly simple answer in his essay ‘Comrades of time’: modern is the art that is able to grasp our contemporary sense of ‘the present’. We look at that present in the year 2010 in a very different way than, say, the modernists did: for them ‘now’ was nothing but a passage towards a bright future. Futurists or communists wanted time to move forward, with direct pursuing action. Today though Groys chiefly sees doubt, hesitation, uncertainty. ‘We constantly want to postpone our decisions and actions, in order to have more time for analysis, reflection, contemplation. Exactly that is ‘the contemporary’: a prolonged, possibly even infinite period of postponement.’ According to Groys we wallow in a perpetual ‘now’, and prefer to let later be later. Artists or politicians do not think utopistically anymore either. In Belgium, the continuing government formation says it all. The futureless present is our all and our nothing. The earliest expression of that modern sense of permanent present must certainly be the theatre works of Samuel Beckett. It was no accident that the Irishman wrote *Waiting for Godot* already in 1948: only recently World War Two had, in a disastrous manner, revealed the collapse of the entire modernist belief in progress. Beckett’s characters do not strive forwards any longer, they keep on about their situation as it stands. Their engine is not action, it is contemplation without a direct purpose. And also the release from that impasse is continuously postponed. It is precisely what makes *Waiting for Godot*

*The futureless present is our all and our nothing.*

contemporary, a feel that was confirmed by the readers of the Dutch theatre magazine TM in 2009, when they elected this classic ‘best play of all times’

Estragon and Vladimir are rooted in an eternally repeated present.

## IN SPACE

Leentje Vandenbussche too has been much inspired by Beckett’s work. *Nothing*, the first part of her diptych *All and Nothing*, was explicitly based upon *Waiting for Godot*, and was launched April 13<sup>th</sup> 2006, exactly 100 years after Beckett’s birthday in Dublin. The concept of this public performance was as simple as it was estranging: on the Korenmarkt in Ghent, some twenty ‘waiters’ were plumped down, immobile and unmoved men in a seemingly coincidental, but tightly conceived rank. The direct impact on the shoppers moving towards the Veldstraat was surprisingly strong. Some passers-by were scared out of their wits and hurried to skirt round this living waxworks museum, while others stopped and studied it for a while. Apparently, there is something unsettling about collectively standing still. Sociologist Rudi Laermans once pointed this out in an essay about loitering teens in the street: it is not so much their group identity that creates a feeling of unsafety, as the fact that they do not move. ‘As a rule, sidewalks, squares or other public spaces are designed for mobility, movement, non-stand still. (...) It is culturally forbidden to permanently or temporarily acclaim a piece of sidewalk as residence.’

Public space is important in the young work of Vandenbussche. Not only as a lap for ‘real life’, but also as a spatial subject as such. Waiting, standing still, ‘nothinging’ is not only a postponement in time, but also a ‘residing’: a relation to valid space. While modernism was dominated by the idea of a continuous line (with the highway as one of its most remarkable manifestations), *Nothing* puts a bold dot on that line. Literally: Vandenbussche carries out an obstruction of the through current, much like a (mental) dam in a river. This became even clearer when she performed *Nothing*

again that summer on Theater Aan Zee, on the median strip of the broad avenue in Ostend that joins onto the Kursaal. A strip of no man’s land, spewed out by the fast idea of progress of king car, was occupied again by absolute standing still. It reminded one of the sharp focus of a picture in which a long shutter time had reduced all through movement to vague lines. To drivers, it must have looked like a *flash*. For once it was not the standing still that was exceptional, it was all the movement.

*Simple as it looks,  
under the skin it is so much deeper  
than ‘topical’ art that reflects on political-social issues.  
Nothing and All question our ‘time’ itself.*

These spatial opposites very beautifully came together in *All*, performed for the first time in Courtrai in 2010. Was it a coincidence that precisely cars were at the center of the performance? In groups of four, spectators were crammed into thé twentieth century icon of modernity, to circle around in it just outside urban Courtrai ten-fifteen times in a rural loop of about one kilometer. Farm, hedge, grove, bunch of houses, field. Like a big roundabout. Farm, hedge, grove, bunch of houses, field. The continuous line, thé geometry of the modernist city, became a vicious circle, thé geometry of the countryside with its eternal return of seasons, of sowing and reaping. Vandenbussche could have organized a hike, or put everyone on a bike. But only in a car, her intention became clear: to show that our love of freedom for fast, ‘on-going’ movement means a restriction of choice in the permanent present. At the same time, this restriction, when the shuffling troop of cars came to a full stand still twice, and the car windows opened onto the totally silent fields, became an exploratory expedition for a completely different experience of space:

how much ‘everything’ can there be in ‘the same’. Beckett, in other words.

## INTO TIME

Above all, Leentje Vandenbussche’s work remains of course an investigation into our pure perception of time. ‘We live too fast, there is too much stress,’ seemed to be her own view on the world at the time of *Nothing*. It was an obvious point, almost moralistically so. But the actual performance approached that banality about our time in a very open

manner. It happened to Beckett’s art: grazing and crystallizing, and precisely by this direct simplicity, creating space for additional interpretations. What were the waiters waiting for? In *Nothing*, Beckett is a proposition, not an impasse. ‘Duration’ as profit, ‘standing still’ as enrichment, ‘nothinging’ as a possible gate to it All. It sounds like Buddhism. But in fact, *Nothing*, in its search for the ultimate waiting, simply thinks through the permanent present, up to where it suddenly starts unsettling everything. This fierce slowing down is a strategy that for various artists nowadays is their social resistance: Lotte van den Berg, Kris Verdonck, Olivier Provily, Peter Verhelst... By ‘stopping time’ (even though only the action is slowed down), they force their spectators to see *more* instead of less. Only, Vandenbussche offers this slow food to her passers-by as a *choice*.

Perception of time, consumption and freedom of choice: all this comes together in the iPod that is given to the public in *All*. Since, what can one buy with an iPod? The permission to zap everywhere, to be able at all times to

add luster to reality with the atmosphere of your choice. This device fills up, together with the mobile phone, the hole of boredom that people in a consumer society experience when they are forced into doing nothing such as in the train or at the bus stop. This ‘urge to fill’ is the core of the permanent present: we have to make good use of every moment. The iPod eases our sense of loss of time, while at the same time it reduces any overkill of external stimuli to a safe universe. Leentje Vandenbussche does the opposite in *All*: she stuffs the playlist of her iPod with sound-recordings, read in passages from books, testimonies, endless enumerations... Every spectator during the ride can choose from tens of tracks, some of which take as long as the whole performance. The pressure of this multitude is great. You are forced to choose as if from a copious buffet: do you take one excerpt in its tardy length, or do you zap through all of the tracks in a tearing rush? It is a question about your way of life itself. Whoever chooses excess on the iPod, gets to listen to a few significant extracts. While outside the countryside landscape, always the same, passes by in circles, different tracks reflect on precisely this excess: a list of results for the

*It is immediately clear, and thanks to its interactive set-up, it has a physical impact that should not be underestimated. Everybody is in, art lover or not.*

search term ‘everything’ in Google, a contemplation called ‘there is a jungle in my head’, the story of a man that tells online about all his banal doings and dealings... The iPod-composition tries to grasp the whole world – like all ambitious art – but with all its facts and

figures. Serendipity and enumeration are not only principles of certain tracks, but stipulate the organizational form of the iPod as well. It is the organization of our virtual, postmodern time in its entirety: chaotic, permanent simultaneity rather than modernist straightforwardness. We think wide, no longer long, let alone ahead. *All* makes a very sensory analysis of this, averse to all moralism. But Vandenbussche consciously confronts the present-day perception of time with the old, premodern view of time: the eternal return. Not only in the circles described by the cars, but also on tracks like ‘The circle of life’, or a sound-recording of a merry-go-round on a fair. Even an interview with the steers man of a ferry suggests an alternative: to dedicate your whole life to the same, to give up everything for seemingly nothing.

## FOR TODAY’S PEOPLE

No, Boris Groys would not have problems calling Leentje Vandenbussche’s work modern art. Simple as it looks, under the skin it is so much deeper than ‘topical’ art that reflects on political-social issues. *Nothing* and *All* question our ‘time’ itself. They do so by a mutual dialogue that not many diptychs carry on in such a consistent manner. Both productions are to each other as empty is to full (or full to empty), rich to poor (or poor to rich), simple to complicated (or complicated to simple). As yin is to yang, in short. They make the circle that shows on their poster: complete and hollow at a time. You could endlessly theorize about this, but thé strength of this diptych is its easy accessibility. It is immediately clear, and thanks to its interactive set-up, it has a physical impact that should not be underestimated. Everybody is in, art lover or not. To understand *All & Nothing*, you only have to be a human being, with a *nothingy* ‘a bit of everything’-life in the year 2010.

*All and Nothing* approaches two very ordinary words,  
in a familiar public setting.

Yet the performances do not leave us unmoved.  
Recognizable situations unnoticedly become compelling.

A personal experience/confrontation  
with the existential meaning of all and nothing.

Three complementary performances with character.

A crossover of media.

A crossover with public.



**Leentje Vandenbussche** (Bruges, 1984) makes performances based upon graphic experience studies. During her education in three-dimensional design at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Ghent she further investigated and felt out this medium. Central themes in her work are public space, voyeurism and the search for an accessible concept. She ended her education in simplicity and beauty with her performance *Beckett in his place* (2006), the starting shot for *All and Nothing*. After her education in theatre studies at the University of Antwerp, she went deeply into *All*, the sequel and closing section of *All and Nothing*. Five years after the first fascination and study of these subjects, **○** premiered in 2010. This turned out, despite the multiplicity of the subject, a sober all-embracing production. Together with the second section the additional exposition of *All and Nothing* with the graphic studies was finalized as well.

For a complete survey of her work (cooperations, side projects & single performances) we would like to refer you to the website.

[www.allesenniets.be](http://www.allesenniets.be)



## BECKETT IN HIS PLACE

*Eye-catcher  
in public space.  
(Nothing)*



*The theatre as haven.  
(All)*

*Beckett in his place* and **○** follow the performance format principle. We offer a (tested & approved) framework/format that is filled up by the surroundings' individuality.

- **Nothing with nothing. All with all.** The subject is broached by the subject itself.
- **Nothing in all. All in nothing.** Both take place in a “contrasting” – with their subject – space.
- **Reality estranged.** Simple artistic interventions estrange the familiar and make room for reflection.
- **Public/performer?** The performances are practically reduced to the experience of the spectator as such.
- **Individual/collective?** The productions are in the first place aimed at the individual, but there is always collective contact, which is also necessary for the experience.
- **In essence the same.** The base ingredients are the same: there is no speaking and time (watches/mobile phone) is put away. Both performances deal with everything. One does so by forcedly and literally standing still, the other is based upon movement, being busy, doing a bit of everything.

## EXPO

*In dialogue with the fascination.  
(All and Nothing)*

Graphic preliminary investigations of both performances. Sheer drudgery in which Leentje Vandenbussche entered into a confrontation with the *All* and the *Nothing*. These are exhibited only in the presence of the maker herself, who gives the visitors the necessary explanation.

# ALL AND NOTHING

a production by

Leentje Vandenbussche  
&  
Mokum



# PRACTICAL

## THE WAITERS

Anyone can wait. It is just not easy to find waiters that want to get away for almost a whole day. Yet we do not want to abandon the idea of working with volunteers. People have to join out of interest. The voluntary effort and personal motivation give the project strength, for the public as well as for the waiters themselves. People have their own motives and their own story of how they have been acquainted with the project. In a group of waiters that don’t know each other, this is thé topic of conversation, this breaks the ice.

### *The choice of the target group*

First in consultation with the inviting organization there has to be decided at which target group the search for volunteers will be aimed.

- **Everybody waits**  
When the target group cannot be specified so that anyone can participate. One can choose to position this varied group as a whole or rather to group the waiters on the spot. For example on a site a group of older and younger people that contrast with each other or spreading waiters on different sites and on one square a group of women and on a site nearby a group of men...
- **A specific target group**  
The specification is limited to age and sex. Social or racial distinctions cannot count as criteria.  
The possibility of a certain target group has to be given to the search team so they can estimate the number of people that they think they can bring together.

### *The search for waiters*

- In accordance with the composition of the group this is done by an adapted search team. We presume that the search team will be complemented by people from the inviting organization, given that they have access to a better network in the city or the environment of the performance.
- The search starts one to two weeks before the day of the performance. We consciously give short notice in order to limit the time lapse between the first personal contact and the actual performance.
- A briefing is sent in advance to the waiters with all the necessary practical information. There is one central contact person that can answer all the questions and concerns of the waiters.

## THE SITE

Leentje Vandenbussche chooses in consultation with the organization the site of the performance.  
There are diverse options as well.

- **On one site**  
If the waiting is done on one site an aesthetic public space is chosen. The guideline is that we try to assemble a large group of waiters and that the performance takes place on the spot and at the height of public passage.
- **On different sites**  
If the waiting is done on different sites it will be looked upon from diverse perspectives. We try to transform the city or part of the city into a waiting platform by waiting on different sites and alternating times.

This demands a more intensive approach in the search for waiters. The target group will also be larger because the performance can take place at different times and even on different days. Through this the waiters can map out a personalized waiting route.

## THE WAITING

The waiters are received at the central operating base offered by the organizer. They are welcomed with snacks and drinks. Leentje Vandenbussche gives an introduction on the project and on Beckett and then the rules of play, guidelines and co-workers on the performance are presented.

- **Leaving the group**  
What happens when a performer is tired of the waiting? If the geometrical pattern is disturbed the waiters will shove through in order to retain the structure.  
Some performers notify in advance that they will have to leave at a certain time. The time is not communicated to the other waiters, the performer is notified discretely and can leave the group. If someone has to go to the bathroom they inform one of the co-workers that guides them to the nearest toilet. Afterwards the performer can join again.
- **Physical discomforts**  
Remain standing in one place is a physical challenge for young and old. In most cases the waiters find a way to deal with this after a while. During the preceding briefing they also get some practical advice and we point out to them the importance of adapted clothing and protection from the sun.  
In the forms that the participants have to fill in, there are also some questions concerning physical discomforts. These are taken into account. Should people become unwell, the necessary measures will immediately be taken.  
Folding chairs are provided for on the spot as well as water and sun cream.
- **The end of the performance**  
There is no notification in advance as to when the waiting ends. The performance is closed by an organist that plays a piece based upon the *Hapax Legomenon of Waiting for Godot*.  
The performers are guided to the operating base. While receiving a drink interviews are done and the waiters get the opportunity to exchange experiences.

## THE TEAM

- Leentje Vandenbussche: artistic direction
- Helga Baert: productional direction
- Marianne Hommersom: photographer
- Clara Hermans: camera
- Herman De Roover: organist

The team will each time be completed by one or more co-workers from the organization that cooperates on the search for the waiters, on the contact with the city and the government services and on the reception of the waiters.

# Beckett in his place

*An experience the richer. Waiting, the silence, and then seeing all this movement, it’s amazing. This will stick in my mind for a long time. The city moving but standing still there and waiting, yes... terrific! I’ve learned from this that we should maybe do this more often in our life. Stand still once in a while.*

*Luc Vermeulen, waiter for ‘Beckett in his place’, Korenmarkt, Ghent, 2006*



# CONCEPT

## *Sources of inspiration*

A long-term hate-love relationship with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* has initiated this performance. A boredom that arose time and time again when reading this book and at the same time a persistent fascination to continue reading. In order to find the experience of waiting to her cost, Leentje Vandenbussche set out for Santiago De Compostella. 800 km of walking, eating and sleeping in the desolate landscape of northern Spain. "You feel like you're doing nothing. You don't discover anything about yourself, you're not reorganizing your life, you're just walking. When I returned to Belgium to a normal routine, this 'doing nothing' seemed to mean everything to me. An undescribable, valuable experience." She tried to represent this experience by means of further study and experiments with and about waiting.

This resulted in the graphic work the *Hapax legomenon of Waiting for Godot*, and a knitted tree bark-motive as a cover for a bus shelter. But in the sphere of performance, with which she has the most affinity, she had to keep waiting for the concept that would convey the experience of waiting in a positive manner. In the end all great plans were each time abstracted to the essence.



## *Beckett in his place*

People are no waiters. We are impatient, we are losing valuable time, we could have done this or that, in short, we do not like to wait. Life is short, too short to let everything pass by just like that. Apart from that the social pressure in our society has only increased. Waiting is not done. It implies doing nothing, being of no use. In an environment where everything has to be better, faster, more efficiently, waiting is inappropriate. We are stimulated to lose the knack of waiting and as a result waiting quickly brings along a sense of guilt or shame.

*Beckett in his place* tries to convey in a simple manner, without technical means, a positive view on waiting. It is an accessible performance in public space during which a random public can witness the waiting, and at the same time *Beckett in his place* makes an appeal to local volunteers to carry out the performance.

The performance not only brings theatre to a broad audience by the specific public site. Also by the choice of the performers there is cultural participation in a remarkable (unforced) way. First of all in the search for waiters we try to rouse the interest of people from different social classes, culturally committed or not. This mix of individuals experiences the performance in a group, and despite the non-communication the hours of waiting seem to give rise to a close bond. Besides we reach a mass of unprejudiced spectators. They are not confronted with grotesque theatricality but with a simple, daily line-up of non-actors – people like them, in short, is what they look like. The barrier that culture often puts up around itself, is completely erased. And the spectators are not either overwhelmed by philosophical talk or explanations of the concept. The image speaks for itself.

*Beckett in his place* is a group event, so a minimum of three waiters is needed in order to guarantee the chances of success of the performance. In the first place for the performance to be noticed, but also for the waiters that experience the waiting together as a secret bond, despite the non-communication.

To stand still in a world where everything moves does not only incite introspection in the waiters, it also alerts them to the relationship with the spectator. The passer-by is forced as well by the remarkable image to ask questions. The image is simple but despite its simplicity, it is obviously staged. The theatrical frame corrupts the reality. In this manner a varied, verbal and non-verbal communication is produced between passers-by and performers and between passers-by among themselves.

The border between waiters and passers-by literally fades. The choice of working with non-actors causes this border to be almost non-existent. A passer-by that stands waiting until something happens or a spectator that dares to join. At the same time the performance gives the waiters time to reflect on the event itself. The recorded experiences and reflections differ strongly from the initial motives for participation.

## *Registering*

The format principle causes every performance to have a different character, so all the more important is the registering. On the one hand this is done by taking time in advance to portray the desolate army of waiters on the site. (At the same time the positioning of the waiters is done in all peace and quiet, so that after the meal and the briefing the performers can line up right away.) The result is a panoramic image of the performance in the specific city and this is also given to the participants as a thank-you.

On the other hand we register the performance itself like a commentary. Therefore we work with a proper film team because they have experience with the precise registering of the performance. (A noticeable picture or film set-up creates the impression to the passers-by that it is done for television or a picture commentary, so they will ignore the performance or take to their heels as fast as possible.) Besides the registering of the performance we also do a short interview with the waiters. The result is a personal varied image that reveals what has been going on in their minds during the many hours of waiting.

The performance presents the waiters as well as the public with an extraordinary experience. An event that will stick to their memory and that they will look back upon with a sense of honour, "I was there". The waiting edition unites both the panorama's and the interviews. An overview of the different cities, different countries that have waited along.



Wait for the tram,  
wait for the espresso machine,  
wait for a letter,  
wait for a lover.  
In a thousand and one shapes we  
are daily confronted with waiting.  
It is a part of life  
or maybe it is life itself.

This action is the theme of the performance,  
not to say it is the performance itself.  
Voluntary participants are asked  
to wait for a certain time  
on a certain place in public space.  
In a geometric pattern,  
they are passed on to the hands of time,  
while keeping silent.  
This permeable army formation provides  
a sharp contrast with the speed of life at  
which hundreds of passers-by cross them.

The limits of theatre are  
overstepped in an exciting way.

"Are they physical installations that Leentje  
Vandenbussche makes in public space?  
Are the extra's she invites  
performers or rather actors?  
Does the coincidental passer-by  
belong to the performance or to the public?  
And so on.  
Fascinating questions that prove  
that the substantive themes of the classic  
*Waiting for Godot* have not lost  
their relevance in the year 2006  
– providing that they are formulated  
in a contemporary fashion.  
And Vandenbussche does so:  
All and nothing raises waiting as an action  
to the level of discussion."

Quote: Steven Heene  
program director Theater Aan Zee

A performance developed by Leentje  
Vandenbussche. First performed in Ghent on  
Samuel Beckett's one hundredth birthday,  
April 13th 2006.

# PRACTICAL

## THE EXPOSITION IN RELATION TO THE PERFORMANCES

The exposition is a fully fledged presentation (of equal value as the performances). A combination of the exposition and the performances is possible but because Vandenbussche takes part in the performances as well as in the exposition, they cannot be organized at the same time. Other combinations are possible: for example *Everything on canvas* can be hung in the meeting point of **O** or *Beckett in his place* as a trigger.

Given that ‘time’ plays an important part in *All and Nothing*, the same goes for the planning of the project. In consultation with the organization we draw up a suitable and adapted scheme.

## CONSTRUCTION/LOCATION/SETTING UP

The exposition is alive, verges on the performative, is open and intimate. *Trivial Pursuit of Everything* and the *Hapax Legomenon* are appliances. The spectator must be able to feel them, thumb through them and read them to his heart’s content.

The setting up of the exposition is simple.

- A few tables and chairs, in an open pleasant space are important requirements.
- A plasma screen and (simple) audio installation for playing the DVD.
- A CD-player with amplifier and remote control for playing the *Hapax Legomenon*.
- The canvases are easy to hang (at reading level), the accompanying beamers need some directing. The projections need to be adjusted to the form of the canvases. We have to be able to put the beamers on and off and supply them with a shutter.

At the exposition Leentje Vandenbussche is always present. She gives the visitors the necessary explanation and works the technical material. No text or further explanation needs to be brought in, Vandenbussche personally elucidates all the works.

Maximum number of visitors in the room: 15.  
The explanation can be done in English, French or Dutch.

Duration of construction +/- 2 hours.

## THE TEAM

- Leentje Vandenbussche: artistic responsible
- Helga Baert: production direction

The team is always completed by one or more co-workers/technicians of the organization.

# All and Nothing EXPO

*Fantastic. Here it all falls into place.*

*A driver of **O**, during his visit to the expo FRESHfestival Buda, May 2010.*



# OVERVIEW

## *NOTHING*

### The Hapax Legomenon of Wachten op Godot.

- Book + legend (A5)
- Score – staff on 3,11 cm (A4)
- Organ score – staff on 11 cm (A4)
- Organ book – on 13,5 cm
- Audio - 02:57

Hapax Legomenon is an old Greek term for ‘what is said’. Each word occurs only once. When it appears in the text a second time (in this version) it gets a white color, so that the type page is preserved. As the pages of the book get emptier, the alphabetical index at the back of the book fills up. A joining of all the words that Beckett used in the Dutch translation of his master piece *En attendant Godot*.

Beckett was very fussy about his vocabulary. Not a word could be too much. Therefore he chose (from 1947 onwards) to write in French instead of in his mother tongue English. Which words are necessary to give shape to the infinite emptiness and fullness in his work? ‘Strong’, the word that appears last for the first time. Or the word with which the alphabetical list of words ends: to be silent.\*

Leentje Vandenbussche added a color code to this old exercise. A legend of 9 words or sentences that she found important in his text and in her journey to Santiago de Compostella. Pause, hat, tree, ‘I am going away’, help, shoe, ‘Let’s go’, ‘I don’t know’ and ‘We are waiting for Godot’. The words also disappear after the first time but the colored beams hold out on the transparent pages.

The remaining structure appeals to the imagination. Vandenbussche made an almost schematic overview of *Wachten op Godot* in the form of a score, three pages of classic staffs. Furthermore she created a musical version of the *Hapax Legomenon* for organ. Each single word is a sound. A 3 minute short graphic composition of *Waichten op Godot* in two acts. From everything (in sound) to nothing.

In preparation:

- **The Hapax Legomenon of Waiting For Godot.**  
Based upon the original translation of Samuel Beckett.  
(Book, score, organ score and execution)
- **L’Hapax Legomenon d’En Attendant Godot.**  
Based upon the original text of Samuel Beckett.  
(Book, score, organ score and execution)
- **LP production of both recordings.**

## *From Nothing to All*

### M<sup>2</sup>, a conversation with Leentje Vandenbussche.

Interviewer: Lucas Van der Vorst

DVD (+/- 50 min)

In preparation: subtitles in English.

\*In the Dutch translation.

## *ALL*

### Trivial Pursuit van Alles - 6 worldmaps

- Ruimten rondom, Georges Perec
  - Tractatus logicus philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein
  - Het groot nederlandstalig hedendaags woordenboek , de letter ‘A’, Van Dale
  - Dinsdag 24 februari 2009, De Standaard
  - Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe
  - Godverdomse dagen op een godverdomse bol, Dimitri Verhulst
- (Folded into A4, maximum size 94,6 x 110-180 cm.)

In this first research phase Vandenbussche studied only the word itself. How often do we use the word ‘everything’? In what context? How does the use in literary works differ from that in a newspaper, in comparison with writers that consciously work with the word or the language?

All the pages were meticulously listed and turned into a circle graph. Every page is part of Everything and is represented in the diagram. If the word ‘everything’ was present, the page got an extra point. In this manner you get a graphic overview of the present everything of each consulted work.

Striking was for example the parallel multiple use of ‘everything’ in the existential meaning with D. Defoe and D. Verhulst. When there is nothing (left) or everything has been accomplished.

In preparation:

- **Trivial Pursuit of Everything- 6 worldmaps. (English version)**  
Presumably based on G. Perec, L. Wittgenstein, The Dictionary, The Times (newspaper), D.Defoe and J.Franzen.

### Everything on canvas - 2 world maps

- The World
- My world

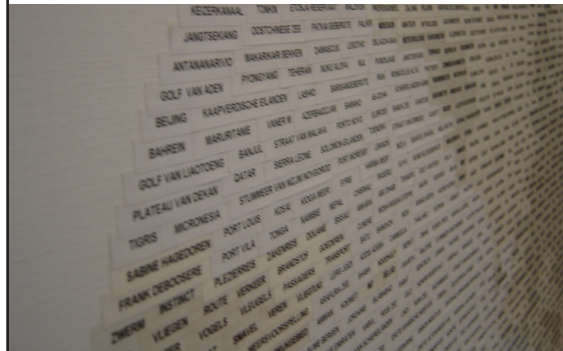
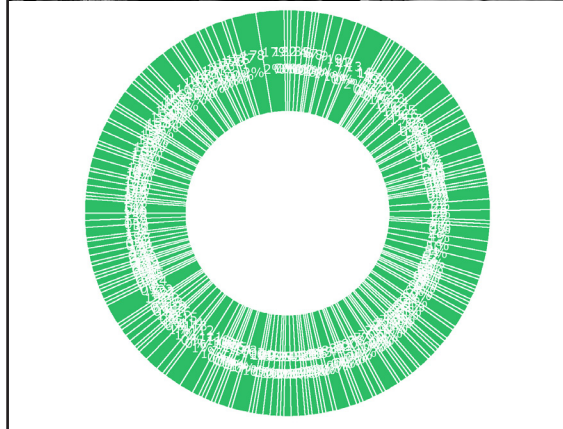
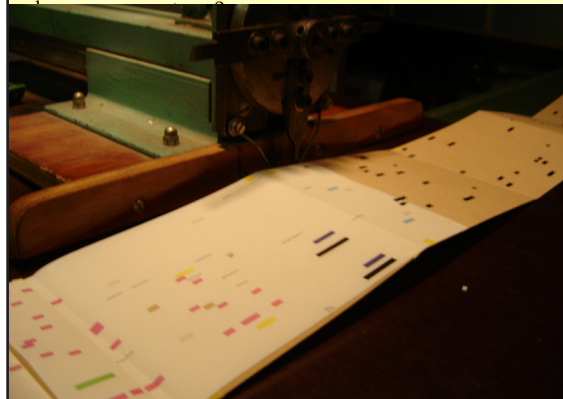
(Prepared linen on wooden stretcher 180 x 180 cm.)

A satellite picture of planet earth is projected onto a white canvas. With the Dymo (sticker-print device) at the ready the nominating starts. Everything that is visible (transparent stickers): green, cloud, water... Everything that is invisible, but of which you know that it is there (paper white stickers): a village, a street, McDonalds... Associations with what is there (stickers in mother-of-pearl): Columbus, slipper, extinct animals, Einstein... Every word can only be used once.

More than 10 000 words fill up the projection of the globe. More than 10 000 words fill up the contours of Leentje Vandenbussche on the second canvas. For two months Vandenbussche has been labeling intensely in order to put everything on the world and everything in her world into words and relief. “It is like a puzzle. Every word is important and is on that spot for a reason. But once the puzzle is finished, the white space filled up, there remains a deep disappointment. As if you only see the landscape/the words outside the puzzle instead of the finally completed shape.”

The words are all in the regular direction of reading but they are not in a straight line like a sentence. That causes every spectator to make his own lines, clusters, associations. To communicate and thus to map out everything better than the (at first sight) shortcoming mass of words does.

Landweg met een boom. Avond. Estragon zit op de grond en probeert zijn schoen uit te trekken. Woedend hij eraan twee handen slaakt kreten van inspanning. Uitgeput houdt rust hijgend. Begint dan weer opnieuw. Zelfde spel. Vladimir komt ig). veel mens. (Pauze. (heftig) ) Het heeft geen zin. (goed dichterbij, kleine stijve pasjes, wijdsbeens). Dat ik ook geloven. (blijft onbeweeglijk staan.) me lang geleden tegen deze gedachte verzet zei, help, wees verstandig, je nog niet alles tege; skantig; strijd ( Eit denkt over gespro.na. Toen er ) Zo,





# PRACTICAL

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When reserving for **O**, the spectator gets (by e-mail or mail) a questionnaire. In the questionnaire there are a few short questions about birthday, length, favorite meal... On the basis of this information we look for common divisors that link up spectators. (In this manner we avoid that people are in the car only with people they know.)

## THE MEETING POINT

**O** is an individual as well as a collective experience. We start in a small group with only the **O**-audience, in the meeting point with the bar. This location is, just like the city and the open space, a valuable part of the performance.

The spectators come to the meeting point. When their tickets are checked they are asked whether they have already filled out the questionnaire, and if not, they are given a form. Then they are referred to the MP3-desk, where time (watch and mobile phone) is exchanged for an MP3-player. When all the spectators have gone through all these steps, the introduction begins. Leentje Vandenbussche gives them a hearty welcome, gives a short explanation of **O**, explains the use of the MP3-player and assigns (on the basis of a common quality from the questionnaire) three spectators to a driver. The driver further accompanies the spectators.

## AUDIO

For the performance we provide 60 MP3-players with 100 audio-tracks. The language of communication is mainly Dutch, but in accordance with the different locations the choice of language will be expanded.

- **New audio-tracks, typical of the city of the location**  
We plan to make minimum five new audio-tracks for every location. We go along with the language but also with the environment. So we are working on translations of already used texts, as well as variations on existing tracks.
- **MP3-player**  
The MP3-players of **O** are convenient to use. Nevertheless it is not evident for everyone to work with an MP3-player. In the meeting point the use of the device is explained step by step. Furthermore all the drivers are familiarized with the MP3-player and prepared for possible questions. Every car is provided with an extra device.

## THE TRACK

- **The site**  
Requirements for the site
    - Clear view (rural surroundings)
    - Girth of the track between 1 and 2 km
    - Maximum 20 km from the meeting point
    - Firm roadbed (no sand track)
- 
- Measures for the performance & rehearsal on the site
    - The track is travelled clockwise
    - The average speed is 10-15km/h
    - There are 2 choreographic interventions where all the cars stop.

. Arrangements must be made with the police and the local residents.  
. Preferably, through traffic is diverted during rehearsals & performances. If this is not possible, the drivers will travel the track along, clockwise at adapted speed in order to reach their destination.  
. There need to be enough co-workers and traffic signs at the access roads to the track.

. Pedestrians, cyclists and small motorcycles do not form a hindrance during rehearsals and performances and can continue to tread the track.

- **Cars and drivers (volunteers)**  
Requirements for the volunteers
  - In possession of a valid driving license and with driving experience (minimum 2 years)
  - A car at their disposal with 5 seats and electric windows (minimum in front)
  - Available for the briefing, rehearsal, try-out and the performances.
  - Preferably living in the surroundings of the location.

- To be provided for by the organization
  - Volunteer allowance for rehearsal, try-out and the performances.
  - Drinks and snacks during and/or after the rehearsals

- Search for volunteers  
**O** is not a taxi-service but a performance in which the driver takes an important part in the accompaniment of the spectators. The volunteers are briefed in advance and we foresee two rehearsals before the first try-out with an audience.  
The databases or volunteers of the location are consulted first. Furthermore we like to make an appeal to retired professional drivers, social life, community centers etcetera of the city in question.

## CAPACITY: FLEXIBLE

**O** is flexible. The number of cars and drivers is crucial. In addition we need enough MP3-players of course. (1/person + 1 extra/car => 3 spectators = 4 MP3-players per car). For the moment we have enough MP3's at our disposal for 45 spectators/performance.  
The intimate nature of this experience is important. Not only in the car, but also when exchanging afterwards. The spectators experience the performance with three strangers after all (two other spectators – on the basis of a common quality, see questionnaire – and the driver).

## DURATION: SUM SUBJECT TO LOCATION

The performance takes place in public space and goes into the matter ‘time’. It is important that the cars drive clockwise (as opposed to the legislation concerning roundabouts) and that the performance takes place from light to dawn to dark.  
The cars arrive when it is light and drive away when it is dark, after sunset. The starting hour of the performance is thus stipulated by the sunset. The track itself takes up about one hour.

The introduction and reception on the meeting point take 30 minutes. Together with the ride (there and back) from the meeting point to the site, **O** takes up about 2 hours.

Therefore the performance can take place only once a day.

## THE TEAM

- Leentje Vandenbussche: artistic responsible
- Helga Baert: production direction
- Joris Van Damme: audio technician
- Marianne Hommersom: photographer

The team is always completed by one or two co-workers of the organization, that work on the search for the drivers/site, the contact with the city or other government services and the communication with the local residents and drivers.



*One of the spectators asked me after the performance to explain the intention of the project. He insisted, so I did my best to outline it briefly. “Something like that,” I concluded and waited scared. His face started to shine and after a short silence he said: “That is exactly what I have experienced, thank you for putting it into words.” And he thanked me again for the performance and left me perplexed for my part.*

*O, FRESHfestival Buda, May 28th, 2010*

Welcome to [o], [oh] or circle, as you wish.  
We offer you a buffet of Everything.  
Do you choose to selectively fill your plate  
or do you take a full load immediately?  
All is possible. All is good.

Nothing seems impossible  
while Everything seems to exist naturally.  
We are in everything, we do a bit of everything.  
It is enough for us to know  
that the bigger whole exists,  
next to our small everything  
that contains everything that is important to us.  
We draw a rather fictive line between these two  
because *our* everything is already complicated.  
But to draw open the sight is enriching, even pleasant.  
Therefore **○** puts into action all means  
in order to enter into conversation between  
our small everything and the big EVERYTHING.

## COURSE

The spectator receives a short questionnaire when reserving. The evening itself everybody assembles in the meeting point. Mobile phones and watches are put away and in return you get an MP3-player. Leentje Vandenbussche gives a short introduction and explains the use of the MP3-player. In groups of three (put together on the basis of age, sex, birthday, length... in short a classification on the basis of the questionnaire) you are picked up by a driver and brought to a car that awaits you outside.

On the MP3-player there are about 100 tracks. All the recordings offer a different approach to Everything. You hold the liberty to compose your own performance auditively.

While zapping or listening loyally, we drive via different routes outside of town towards a far-away ground. In the peace of free space – with a grand view – all the cars of **○** come together again. They circle around an empty, unnamed centre. You see your partner, your friend/girlfriend in another car, but only a glimpse because the circling does not stop.

The contrast between the options of the MP3 and your forced presence in the slowly circling car has an estranging effect. A few choreographic interventions enhance this feeling, the cars stop for example, the windows are dropped and closed again, the cars continue their way. A different view on the space all-around, a moment of standing still before the carousel starts turning again.

When night has fallen, the cars leave the far-away ground and drive back to the meeting point. There they get a drink and can exchange the experience of **○** with their fellow passenger(s), the partner(s) they arrived with or the fellow passenger(s) of their partner(s).

In spoken language Everything is nothing unusual. (Do we not daily say that everything is okay?) But in a wider perspective, it makes no sense. **○** is located in this rift. On the one hand the spectator has the liberty to compose his or her own performance auditively. On the other hand they do not take a seat in the safe theatre house but are ‘trapped’ in a carousel in the peace of the country side until the sun quits the scene. A dialogue between the choices that we constantly make in our small everything and the compelling ungraspable Everything.

Therefore **○** – as the title suggests – is not one approach to everything, but a format that offers a multiplicity. An individual track with artistic interventions that create a dialogue at daggers dawn. That stir up the questions. That make one stand still with the All that we are all in after all.

**○** is the second and closing performance of *All and Nothing*. Just like *Beckett in his place* (the first part – nothing) this all-embracing performance is an individual transcending experience. Because of the multiplicity of the personal experience there is no truth or moral. Whether you choose to listen to track after track, to zap or to let the impressions from outside sink in, lost in thought, every ride is valid. The individual experiences and interpretations of the spectator complete the work.

Duration: +/- 120 minuten ° Capacity: 60 spectators/performance

# CONCEPT

The preceding graphic studies in combination with a multitude of literature, film and conversations, made clear the central ideas of **○**. First of all the discrepancy between the spoken language ‘everything’ (the daily everything) and the existential Everything (the ungraspable Everything). Besides the meaningfulness – despite the impossibility – of standing still with Everything. The becoming aware that Everything causes us to be who we are. (Not only time, public and social circumstances but also elements that seem trivial at first sight such as television programs or daily routines.) And finally the shape, the circle, that came to occupy centre stage subconsciously in the graphic work and later consciously in the studies.

**○** is an approach to Everything (today) on two levels. On the one hand our everything triggered by the 100 audio tracks on the MP3-player. On the other hand the big Everything is made felt by the circular motion that the cars describe in the open landscape. The dialogue between these two arises from the repetition and the time that each gets to himself in all intimacy.

### *Everything, deal with multiplicity, the MP3-player*

Everything is constantly in motion. “Nothing is, everything becomes,” said Nietzsche. For example in history people are born, people die, states come into being, animal species become extinct, people invent new things that make the old ones obsolete... Also in the universe the earth circles the sun, comets collide, stars are burned up in the atmosphere... In a human life we are confronted with the coming and going of people, places, jobs, houses, pets, knowledge, love...

Everything never stands still. Everything is always Everything, but different each moment. Besides Vandenbussche argues that the content of Everything also increases. History enlarges every day and these developments are crucial to the way Everything looks today.

But in our personal life too Everything never stands still. Not only do we have to think about work, family, friends and ourselves. We are also expected to have a neat and modern interior, to be informed about the problems of the world and the gossip papers as well. And as the ultimate host/hostess it is appropriate to be experienced in Jamie Oliver’s food. You should have practiced that in between picking up your kids, doing the groceries, maintaining your house and your work that is often on the menu at night.

This seems a caricature but with some adjustments it applies to many without

a doubt. We put this pressure on ourselves more and more. Moreover we do not only receive a lot of impulses and expectations in our own environment, the impact of media and publicity among others is a too obvious example of how ‘our everything’ has become a more and more full bucket these last decades.

What really matters is at the imaginary bottom of our list of ‘to do’s’. But before you could delete everything, you have more dishes to do, friends coming over for dinner, they call you from work to tell you something has come up and if you could... The busyness causes us to miss a lot of things in our own environment, but also in a wider context we often skim over the silent (not necessarily motionless) inarticulate everything. Important layers of Everything get lost because of this. Which is a shame, because they have a strong impact on us though.

On the MP3-player there are 100 tracks that each touch on a fraction of Everything. In sound recordings, texts or interviews the everyday is evoked (for example brushing your teeth, cooking together, two jokers in a bar... ), the bigger things in life (for example a toddler’s first words, death, dealing with joys and sorrows) and the (in)visible (for example a detailed description of a street, the sound of the sea entitled ‘the Pacific’, fighting cockroaches...). Topical matters (previously and now), a cassette recording of an old man that quoted Alice Nahon 20 years ago, the comic strip Buddha, a choreographer that contextualizes the body, Coldplay playing ‘Viva la Vida’ on a festival field with 80 000 people singing along, word games (concerning the difference between spoken language and standard language), all books with the word ‘Everything’ in their title, a hold-up in the Nieuwstraat in Brussels, Steve Jobs delivering a speech on the presentation of the diploma’s at Stanford University. This is only one fifth of the total package.

In total the audio tracks are worth 30 hours of listening fun. It seems a bit exaggerated for a ride of about one and a half hour. But we made a conscious choice for one hundred possibilities precisely to emphasize that multiplicity. It is a sampling of the daily multiplicity that is not unfamiliar to us but that is sometimes too much for us (sub)consciously.

We chose MP3-players so that every spectator can hold the small everything in his own hands. Nobody listens with you, nobody asks whether this can be on a while longer or that can be turned off. You choose yourself what you do with the multiplicity, what seems important to you at the time or what is. All is possible. All is good. Whether you zap or listen or just want to enjoy the landscape, you miss a bit of everything anyhow. The question is thus, in this artificial context, is that always so bad?

The MP3-player underlines the responsibility of every choice you make, as well as its relativity. While in the car this is an individual process, in the end it becomes collective again. The participants exchange and get to hear from one another what they have seen (that pheasant?) or heard.

### *Everything, a never-ending movement.*

Everything that is, is passing: it originates and disappears in a cyclic and inescapable process of reproduction. Furthermore Everything is a new, unique combination of factors, so that even the things that come back are never the same. As a result Everything is a cyclic, but never identical movement. So Everything is not, but becomes, comes and goes.

A circle is a line, and so a border with that which is outside the circle, but at the same time a circle is unlimited, because it has no starting or finishing point, so it is endless.

In a circular motion Everything matters, because Everything is connected with and has an impact on Everything. So the endlessly

revolving movement determines not only the absurd, the inescapable of existence, but also the importance of every link in this existence, every moment, Everything that becomes.

This logical but abstract gigantic mechanism all round contrasts sharply with the choices that are in our own hands within our everything. In **○** this is no different. No matter how free the spectator is in his use of the MP3-player, the structure of the performance is just as compelling to him/her. Only the time of the ending is announced. The fact of the cars, and the circling around in the *carousel* come as a surprise and offer little options.

We choose a route and a destination and determine the timing of the performance. But every performance is different because we are all subordinate to the big ungraspable Everything. Is there a detour and are a few cars stopped? Will there be sun or rain by surprise? Does a flight of wild geese land – then and there precisely? Etcetera.

### *Everything, the car-rousel*

Nowadays we are more mobile than ever. Thé symbol of that personal mobility is probably the car. Together with the success of the car, a network of roads, road markings, signs, and a legislation came about, ‘Safely ahead!’ serving as a motto. It is an individual and collective action with this end in view: ‘coming back’ fast and efficiently. Whether we are gone for a short or a long while, mostly we always return to the point that we initially departed from.

The car is not only overwhelmingly present in the landscape, we also seem to need it compulsively. Systematically the car has become more than just a means of transport, it has become a mobile habitat.

Everything is in it. Not only the things you need or needed, but also your knowledge, memories, desires, worries, plans... Children and ideas are born in the car. Problems are put into words, solutions are found. And all that while you drive from destination A to B. While you wait in a traffic jam, while you take a detour, while you go from family to work, from one role to another. In this movement from one environment to another the car is a buffer, a waiting zone that is at the same time functional and matches with our individual view of progress.

With **○** we do not want to promote the use of the car – we drive too annoyingly slow for that. But we want to point out the space that the car (and mobility in general) occupies. In this respect it is just like the “waiting” of *Beckett in his place* an everyday theme that we want to make felt in all its nakedness back again. You always move ahead. You look around you. You are existentially alone. You are not alone. You get – without being too lost in thought behind the wheel – time to yourself.

In order to preserve that personality we have resolutely chosen to work with volunteers and their own mobile habitat. The interior of the car and the possible accompanying bits and pieces, the driver and the model of the car itself, are part of the scene of **○**. They offer a hospitality that is very different from a taxi for example.

The driving under normal circumstances (from the meeting point to the track) contrasts sharply with the estrangement that arises on arrival at the carousel. “What are we doing here? There is nothing here. Is that it?” But the emptiness of this disappointing attraction for adults is almost seamlessly and naturally filled up by an immeasurable fullness. Therefore the moment (dawn), the site (the clear distant view), the speed (10-15km/h), the choreographic interventions and the stimuli on the MP3-player are so important. Because the monotonous repetition makes big what is small. Present what is absent.