

“WIJ” (WE) –Roos van Geffen

The Power of Watching

Preview by Reineke de Vries

How many faces do you see every day? And how many are you really looking at? That is what Roos van Geffen was asking herself while developing her new production “WIJ” (WE), an experiential performance about watching and being watched

“A performance that I had to develop”. That is how Roos van Geffen describes her new performance, that has its opening on May 23 (2008) at the Festival aan de Werf in Utrecht. Roos van Geffen is a theatre-maker in the wider sense of the term. As a free-lance theatre designer she has been designing scenery and costumes for a wide range of productions. Next to that she works regularly on her own projects, that she writes, directs and designs all by herself. From 2006 she is attached to the Festival aan de Werf in Utrecht.

The performances of van Geffen are personal, dealing with her own questions about life. “In my pieces of theatre I present what I want to tell, what I like to show my public”. The way that you relate to another person is a recurrent theme in her work. Same in “WIJ”, that is centred around “watching the other”. Van Geffen became fascinated by this theme after a meeting with a blind man. “As he did not see me, I could look at him in an unashamed way. The experience was fascinating for me, as I normally never would do this. If you look another person straight in the face for more than a few seconds, it feels awkward or it evokes unintended suggestions.”

This meeting made van Geffen realize that there are only a few moments that you really see another person. Only when you are in love, you feel forced to look at the other and similarly a newborn baby claims continuously your attentive look. Van Geffen: “It made me realize that each human being is longing to be really known. However close you are living together with others, in the end you are just alone. By the very process of watching, you can get closer to each-other.”

In “WIJ” the visitor is given time to watch another person. For this performance van Geffen designed a special space. The public takes a seat in their own box in a kind of circular “construction to watch others”, that focuses the spectators’s view directly and fully at the face of the performers. It is this confrontation that –according to van Geffen- contains a huge power. “One feels the breath of the other, ones sees every spot on the skin, every glance. It touches and moves you, it confronts you with yourself, it bring you in closer contact with the other.” It is this power and simplicity that makes “WIJ” quite special.

“WIJ” has its opening on May 23 (2008) during the Festival aan de Werf in Utrecht and can be seen there till May 31. Later on it can be seen at: Over het IJ Festival July 3-13, Festival Karavaan July 17-August 10, Festival BIES! September 14-20, 2008.

May 23 (2008) Theatercentraal.nl WIJ.tif