

Watching others and being watched is the main theme of the play 'WE' while it explores the interface of theatre and visual arts.

'WE' can be seen as a series of living portraits and a special construction to look at reality. The play recognizes the duality between the facts that every human being can be totally free in his own mind but in essence the human being will always be alone. Roos van Geffen uses the looking at others as a vehicle to make the spectators leave the performance with the realization that they will always be lonely, but also with the comforting feeling that everyone else will be lonely too.

Background

Roos van Geffen: "The idea for 'WE' came into being when I met a blind man a while ago. During our conversation his eyes fascinated me. I could barely tell he was blind. Although he did not really look at me during our conversation, at times it did seem like he could see me. I felt the urge to look at him constantly. Knowing that he was not able to see me, made it possible for me to boldly observe him..

That same week I was working with a girl who had one green eye and one brown eye. When we were talking I couldn't help noticing that my mind kept wondering off. I could not stop focusing at her eyes. Yet again I felt the need to quietly study her fascinating face.

Most people only take the time to look at someone else's face under special circumstances: when you are in love and you want to look at someone over and over again, when you see a newborn, or when you have to say goodbye to a loved one and you never want to forget what they look like. Those are the few moments you really take the time to study someone's looks.

Really looking at others and really being looked at concentrates on wanting to be known, or wanting to know the other person. However, no one will be able to get to know the real you. Realizing this makes us feel lonely.

'WE' enables the audience to really take their time to look at a number of faces. Watching a face for a long period gives the spectators the opportunity to study every stain on the skin, every breath, and every glance; the opportunity to really get to know the person behind the portrait. Really watching another person can also be a confronting experience. You have to see yourself from the other person's perspective. How does he see you, and how do you see him, you are confronted with your own pre-assumptions and that can make you very self-conscious. You can ask yourself questions like; how do I see you? Who are you? But especially: who am I?

Especially since we are living in an era in which individualism seems to be our highest goal, it is important to see how we relate to others. More and more people isolate themselves on their own little islands. When we are listening to our Ipod's there is no need to communicate with other people, and our mobile phones make it possible to talk merely to the people we already know. This process of individualisation, only taking care of your own people, and the rejection of the threatening other, will eventually lead to polarisation. Simply looking at other people can cause acceptance and understanding, not only of the other but also of ourselves."