

Excerpts from a conversation between Anneleen Keppens and Oonagh Duckworth about *The moon is the moon is the moon*

With your performance, you aim 'to make your dance more transparent'. What does that mean exactly and what motivated you to work on this?

The performance revolves around a basic, eight-minute-long dance trio. The experience we aimed to create is comparable to when, in a museum, you see sketches or studies hung next to the painting for which they were a preparation. I've always been very drawn to these sorts of studies: I often like them more than the actual masterpiece because they tell me something very intimate about the work. Through the sketches I connect to a certain form and when I see this form in the bigger picture, I have a different and more informed viewing experience. This is what I wanted to do with my dance. I wanted to break it open and lay bare its anatomy. In a way, I wanted to reveal the process as well as the product. The concept of transparency is essential to me and I feel it needs to be reinstated. We are constantly lured and sedated by entertainment and corrupted information; I wanted to counter the distractions around us and create a situation for people to experience dance together. As we were working, we quickly understood that this ephemeral medium of ours has a will of its own and can resist transparency. This has been very illuminating for me. It confirms my intuition that it is not necessary to add mystery to a dance performance, because dance itself has a mystical disposition.

Could you tell me something about the title "The moon is the moon is the moon"?

The moon is the moon is the moon is a chapter in a book by Thich Nhat Han, a Vietnamese monk, in which he describes how nothing decreases or increases. We see the moon waxing and waning, but we know it is always there. He writes that everything contains everything else, which implies that nothing can disappear. It is a metaphor intended to address our fear of death. I wanted to apply this metaphor to dance. Our dance gradually comes into being and then is slowly erased, but we can also imagine that it is in fact always present. The cyclical nature of the choreography suggests that we could go on and on, that the dance could disappear and re-appear over and over again.

I also chose this title as it refers to Gertrude Stein's *A rose is a rose is a rose*. By this she meant that the rose doesn't stand for anything else. The rose doesn't mean romance; the rose doesn't mean love. It is what it is: it is a flower with a particular smell and colour. Our dance, as well, is what it is. Movement doesn't necessarily have to be *about* something, because it *is* something. I feel very strongly about that. I find it important to create a space to look at and appreciate and experience movement. I could have made a stronger statement and name the piece *The dance is the dance is the dance*, but the work is not that straight-forward and I wanted a more poetic title.

The piece has a very lunar energy. Our aim was to make our dance more transparent, but lunar energy is very obscure, so an interesting tension arose between wanting to reveal something and the thing itself not wanting to be revealed. *The moon is the moon is the moon* turns out to be a more fitting title than *The dance is the dance is the dance*.

The lunar energy that you mention makes me want to ask you to talk about the energy and the qualities of the performance

The process started with making the basic trio and this trio just happened. Only afterwards I realised how fluid and soft it was. There's a lot of detail, nuance and subtlety; qualities that are very precious to me. The whole piece carries this same energy as it revolves around the basic trio. This means that there is no friction, no confrontation, no explosion. It has been hard not to give in to the temptation of adding a sort of fire-cracker to the piece. But we are already surrounded by a lot of loudness and violence, and audiences have almost come to expect that in performances. I wanted to seize the opportunity to expose people to more delicate qualities, to a more open and sensitive space. This is challenging, but I want to insist.

Do you want the audience to be in a particular state when they are watching the work?

I wanted to avoid the kind of experience where people go and see dance and they are impressed by what they see. Often the dance is beautiful and virtuosic and the general feeling in the room is "wow". This kind of experience is not a very nuanced one. The "wow" can create a wall, a distance between the viewer and the dancer. Dissolving this wall gives access to a whole pallet of experiences and sensations and feelings, which I believe makes people feel more involved. But what is required for this to work is that the audience accepts a

role in the process. In a sense, we ask people to participate, which doesn't mean they physically engage, it just means that they are invited to think along.

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