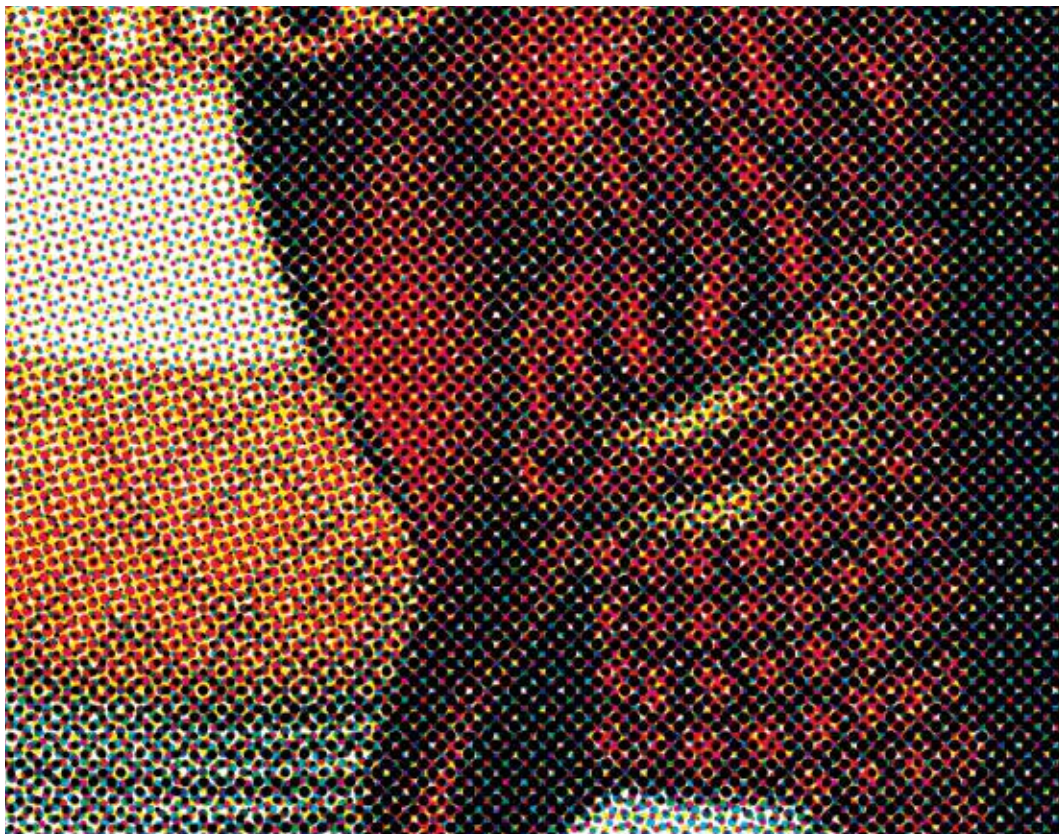
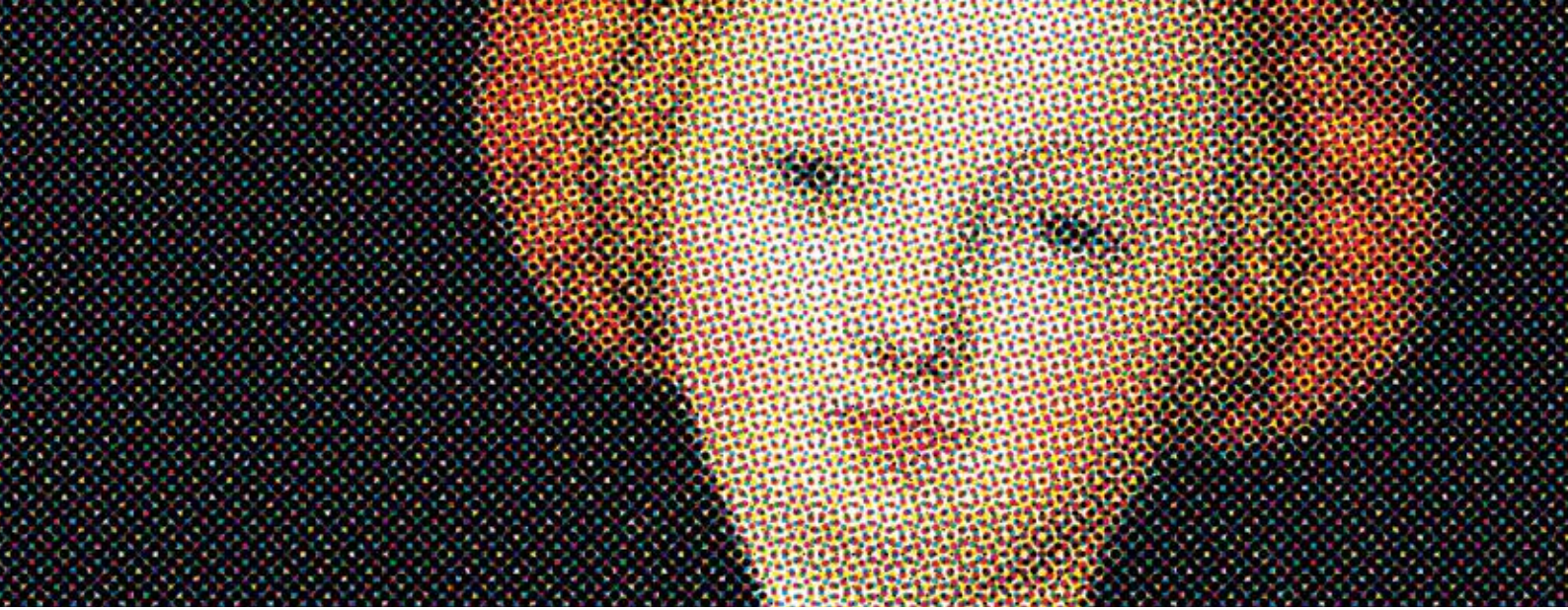




**THE LATEST HALLUCINATIONS
OF LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER**





THE ORIGINS

During our first tour in London in 1988, a little princess painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder, who did many court portraits, stopped us in our tracks at the National Gallery. The painting shows someone ambiguous, of uncertain age, a young woman who is already old and not really out of childhood. The way she looks, the way the painter has captured and charged her, suggests an angel as much as a criminal, with a discrepancy between the subject and its representation, as if this person were not really present, as if she wasn't concerned by the painting of which she is the central subject. This created a theatricality of the strange that we threw ourselves into... The confusion undoubtedly also came from the tension between the very precise and meticulous rendering of the painting and a figure with an intriguing gaze, blurred by innuendo... We have absolutely no idea what she's thinking.

This sparked our interest in Mannerist painting and Renaissance motifs.

We wanted to delve deeper into this area of confusion, to invent extensions or stage transpositions of Cranach's universe, fantasise about the Renaissance and imagine what the character had done before and after coming to rest on the canvas...

Created in January 1990 at Theater De Synagoge in Tilburg (the Netherlands) under the title *De ultieme gevoelens van Lucas Cranach de Oude* with four performers, a fifth performer joined the production from 1991 on. Performed more than 150 times across Europe, it is emblematic of the work on movement and image undertaken by the Company from the very beginning.



TODAY

The challenge is to rediscover this piece from our repertoire, but by transforming it completely, now that our relationship to images and to the world has changed a lot.

And perhaps it's not a bad idea to return to the turmoil of sensation, the indefinable nature of attraction and the unforeseen associations of desire and mistrust, and the eroticism that insinuates itself between humour and venom... All these emotions perhaps question us today more than ever, with intimacy slowly disappearing and social networks flattening out the smallest details of our thoughts and actions.

In concrete terms, we're going to keep the set-up and follow the original dramaturgy, while adding sequences and changing some of the others.

Thomas Turine will draw inspiration from the music that Christian Genet composed at the time and, following in his footsteps, to seek out the sounds of today that immerse us into the timelessness of the image.

But the challenge is above all to confront a new generation of dancers with Cranach's atmospheres and the embodiment of his figures. We are not seeking to prolong the personalities of these dancers by looking for dancers who resemble them, but on the contrary to reinvest them by inventing movements that current generations can fill with their own sensitivity and energy.

How can we reappropriate the work of a painter from five centuries ago? How can we rediscover his language in our own? What fascination does it hold on us - and how can we convey its power and strangeness?



PRESENTATION

Inspired by the world of the German Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach the Elder, the show explores the troubled attitudes of characters haunted by convulsive memories of a previous existence. Figures appear behind a *trompe l'oeil* wall pierced with windows, creating *tableaux vivants* in an atmosphere dominated by humour, eroticism and the mystery of presence.

CONCEPT Patrick Bonté

DIRECTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY Patrick Bonté in collaboration with Nicole Mossoux

PERFORMERS Dorian Chavez, Colline Libon, Lenka Luptáková, Frauke Mariën and Eléonore Valère-Lachky

MUSIC Thomas Turine after the original soundtrack by Christian Genet

SCENOGRAPHY Jean-Claude de Bemels

COSTUMES Colette Huchard

COSTUMES FABRICATION Patty Eggerickx

MAKE-UP Rebecca Flores-Martinez

LIGHT Patrick Bonté

SOUND TECHNICIAN Fred Miclet

TECHNICAL DIRECTION AND LIGHT TECHNICIAN Jean-Jacques Deneumoustier

ASSISTANT Luna Luz Sanchez

WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF Lilian Bruinsma, Yildou De Boer, Isabelle Dumont, Claire Haenni, Jean-Pierre Finotto, Isabelle Lamouline, Carine Peeters, Emilie Sterkenburgh, Pierre Stoffyn and Ives Thuwis

PRODUCTION

Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, in coproduction* with Charleroi danse – Centre chorégraphique de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Théâtre Les Tanneurs – Brussels, Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes de Charleville-Mézières, La Coop asbl and Shelter Prod. With support from Taxshelter.be, ING, the Federal Belgium Government Tax-Shelter, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, dance department and from Wallonie-Bruxelles International.

* We are on the lookout for new partners.



PREMIÈRE

12-15 & 17-18 December 2024 | Théâtre les Tanneurs | Brussels, Belgium

VIDEO

(1991 VERSION)

<https://vimeo.com/52333440>

<https://vimeo.com/855758577/7b29f546e2>

DESCRIPTION OF A SCENE

THE HEAD'S DREAM

Holofernes' head lies on a platter. All around it are exquisite foods, poultry, fruit, goblets of wine...

Behind the table, Judith, bare chested, holds a knife in her right hand. Her face is tilted, caught in an ineffable smile.

At one point, Holofernes' head begins to move. Fully recovered from its beheading, it glances at the dishes around it, stares at a piece of fruit and makes every effort to approach it.

Judith's knife, too, desires independence: it turns against her belly, caresses it, threatens it; Judith is going to kill herself, she is looking for the ideal place to plant the dagger.

In the foreground, an angel plays the lute, whispering a nasal melody.
A ridiculous peace surrounds the whole scene.

Source :

Patrick Bonté,

*Les dernières hallucinations
de Lucas Cranach l'Ancien,*

L'Ether Vague Editions, 1991.



INTERVIEW WITH ANNE LONGUET MARX, NICOLE MOSSOUX AND PATRICK BONTE ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

ANNE LONGUET MARX: Works of art have an energy or dynamic of their own that is already at work. It would be interesting to know why you chose Cranach. Was it a material, a dynamic, a purpose or a relationship to the world that triggered the desire in you to develop another universe from there...

NICOLE MOSSOUX: in Cranach's paintings, there is something like a call for air. We can use the work of visual artists for the spark they provoke in us, for the rebound, we can draw inspiration from it, be inhabited by it when we develop a new production, but rarely to the point of coming as close to it as we did with Cranach's work. I think it's because he preserves emptiness, that his characters are neither really present nor absent. Of course, this is only our contemporary and subjective point of view, but there is a kind of questioning in the gaze of these women, a suspension in their attitudes that allows us to intervene, to curl up in the hollows. One can easily imagine a before, an after, or what is going on in the head of the portrayed character. With Breughel or Hieronymus Bosch, everything that's on the painting has its own existence, its own theatricality... what could we add to it? Any painting can spark off new creations, nourish them, but you can't slip into them so easily. There's a glove-like quality to Cranach. Interpreting his characters is also made much easier by the constraints of the costume and the definition of the setting. You can rely on the historical references that his paintings give us and, each evening, tell yourself a completely different story, take on new intentions:



the precision of all these elements means that you can find a lot of freedom, that there is room for re-readings. Sometimes it's a very concrete element, such as the scenography, that leads us to find the coherence of a project. In this case, it was Patrick's idea of placing the situations in windows...

Framing the scenes could seem obvious, given that the starting point was a painting, but the framing could only impose itself as a necessity specific to the show and not because we were referring to canvasses. It was only after we had seen the characters evolve in space that we felt we needed to tighten things up, through the rigour and highlighting that the frame brings.

And then it was the relationship between the frames that determined the structure, the rhythmical logic of the production.

ANNE LONGUET MARX: It was the work on details that was the trigger...

NICOLE MOSSOUX: Yes, and the work on the frame led us to consider the detail as nodal. We started zooming in on the curve of a wrist, the direction of a neck. Every part of the body became a sign, a bearer of meaning. And I think that the spectator does the same work of approaching and dismantling. In fact, is the director or choreographer doing anything other than preparing the ground, opening up paths that are both precise and in the making? We prepare paths for the spectators to wander along in their own way, inviting them to look at one thing or another, without anticipating their emotions.

ANNE LONGUET MARX: The first thing that strikes you when you see Cranach is that there is a particular framing, which destructures the whole, several pictures within a picture. As a viewer, we are led from one intensity to another; in each frame, very specific things happen that require our attention, that we look at, first as paintings, because obviously we are still thinking about the painter, and very quickly, because the figures start to move, like a dance. I'd like to know whether the set design for this piece was immediately obvious or whether it came from the improvisation work on each scene?



PATRICK BONTÉ : It came to us after a week or two of rehearsals, and met a need, felt very early on, to focus on the gesture, to show this and not that, it was like a spotlight shining on the action, on the actors. Because initially, obviously, taking inspiration from the work of a painter, it would have been completely redundant to start putting people in frames. It's of no interest. The twelve sequences that had been written, from which we drew inspiration for the improvisations, were written with no regard for the frame, with no regard for the fact that it was even the work of a painter from which we drew our inspiration. Instead, the starting material was made up of suggested states, situations and actions. As the material came in, it turned out to be very heterogeneous, even if it was linked to Cranach and certain situations in Mannerist painting. There had to be a common thread, an axis to follow. And we found the frames at that moment, without any premeditation.

Working after Cranach didn't trigger a desire to explore painting *per se*; it made us aware of the fact that our link to the image was central and that what we wanted to say originated from it. In the end, everything that has to do with theatrical intention or working with movement has just one objective: to create a scenic image that conveys meaning, that doesn't claim to hold any truth, but in which there is a tension linked to the contradictions that nourish it. We need this anchoring in meaning. Actors and dancers, too, have this need for intentions and situations that allow them to develop a life of their own, inhabited: they are not just bodies, they have their rhythm, their thoughts, their impulses; they create the image but do not belong to it. Even if they are the main subject, they are not posing in any way. Nor is the image at their service, or that of the gesture or text. The image is an object that exists in itself, that touches on the inexpressible and that cannot be described without distorting it. The image is an object of thought, dream and criticism. It is a free and autonomous object – it's alive.

Source :
excerpt from
L'actuel et le singulier,
Lansman Editions,
2005



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES: LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER

Born in 1472 in Kronach, Franconia, that he adopted as his surname, Lucas Cranach trained in his father's studio before travelling to Bavaria and Vienna, where he produced his first work.

Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, appointed him official painter of the court of Wittenberg in 1505. There, he met Martin Luther and the Reformers, of whom he made numerous portraits. A firm believer in the ideas of the Reformation, Cranach contributed to the development of a Protestant iconography, while never hesitating to tackle secular and mythological subjects. The Court of Saxony also welcomed the Renaissance, which celebrated humanist, erudite and precious painting. For his nudes, Cranach adopted a graceful, delicate style with allusive eroticism.

With his two sons, Hans and Lucas the Younger, Cranach ran a large workshop in order to satisfy his many commissions. For fifty years, he held offices and honours in Wittenberg, where he was elected mayor three times. Cranach died in 1553, leaving behind a considerable body of work. He had become one of the most famous painters and engravers of the German Renaissance.

Source:

Une vie, une œuvre
by Luc Ponette and Viviane Noël, broadcasted by France Culture in January 2005
(speakers: Elisabeth Foucart, Walter, Laurence Madeline, Patrick Bonté, Marc Deroo and Gilles Castelnau).

COMPAGNIE MOSSOUX-BONTÉ

Obsessions and bewilderment in the surprising and sinuous crevices between the disciplines. The materials that Nicole Mossoux and Patrick Bonté manipulate, diffract and meddle with, all have an uncanny and worryingly strange quality about them. Since 1985, the tandem has been creating universes that defy borders. She is a dancer and choreographer, he is a director and playwright. The projects they lead alternately are nourished by the plastic arts, music and silences, as much as psychoanalysis. They embrace the unexplored, the sensibility and the unconscious, all the while stirring our imagination.

- MARIE BAUDET -



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