

# bilderrahmen

theatercombinat

## Theater, das ins Gesicht springt

Zum 20-jährigen Jubiläum präsentiert das theatercombinat zwei neue Produktionen

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Es ist beinahe zehn Jahre her, dass die Süddeutsche Zeitung angesichts einer theatercombinat-Produktion fragte: Wo kämen wir denn da hin? Wohin nämlich, wenn „uns das Theater ständig derart zu Leibe rücken würde“? Man kommt weit damit. Gegründet 1997 von der aus Niedersachsen stammenden, in Berlin an der Hochschule Ernst Busch ausgebildeten Claudia Bosse und seit langem in Wien ansässig, ist das theatercombinat in den 20 Jahren seines Bestehens zu einem Begriff in der deutschsprachigen Theaterwelt geworden.

Das liegt vor allem daran, dass die Konfrontation der Zuschauer\*innen seit jeher Methode hat. Und dass einem das Theater dermaßen ins Gesicht springt, hat vor allem damit zu tun, dass einem eben auch der Gegenstand der theatralen Versuchsanordnungen (denn um solche handelt es sich) tagtäglich mit voller Wucht anspringt: Die Komplexität des Lebens in einer durchökonomisierten, -medialisierten und -rationalisierten Welt. Der Alltag, in dem sich die westlichen Durchschnittsbürger\*innen bewegen, scheint bis ins kleinste Detail festgeschrieben zu sein. Was Claudia Bosse mit ihren Arbeiten errichten möchte, nennt sie einen „Handlungsraum“. „Man hat darin die Chance, Dinge auseinanderzunehmen, die in der Alltagswahrnehmung unseres Lebens zu verhärteten Oberflächen zusammengewachsen sind. Im Theater

Foto: Claudia Bosse © EisoOkazaki







kann man mittels Ausschnitten und Begrenzungen so etwas wie Tiefbohrungen vornehmen.“ So wird Handlung wieder möglich: weil das scheinbar unhintergehbare Ganze als Summe sehr vieler komplex zusammenwirkender, in jedem Fall jedoch greifbarer einzelner Teile entlarvt wird.

Weil klassische Theaterräume dafür eher ungeeignet sind, sucht sich Claudia Bosse eigene Räume: ob das die ehemalige Ankerbrotfabrik in Wien oder die alte Postverladestelle in Düsseldorf, stillgelegte Schwimmstadion oder Stadtinstallationen im öffentlichen Raum sind – überall werden temporäre Orte definiert, an denen die Zuschauer\*innen sich frei bewegen können. Umgeben werden sie von einer schier unüberschaubaren Menge an Worten und Gedanken: Die Schauspieler\*innen, Performer\*innen und Tänzer\*innen rezitieren Theatertexte (Heiner Müller oder Elfriede Jelinek wurden vom theatercombinat genauso bearbeitet wie Aischylos und Shakespeare) und politische Theorie, dazu kommen Sound- und Videoinstallationen. Die Zuschauer\*innen müssen sich selbst ihren Weg bahnen, entscheiden, was sie sehen, wahrnehmen und wissen wollen.

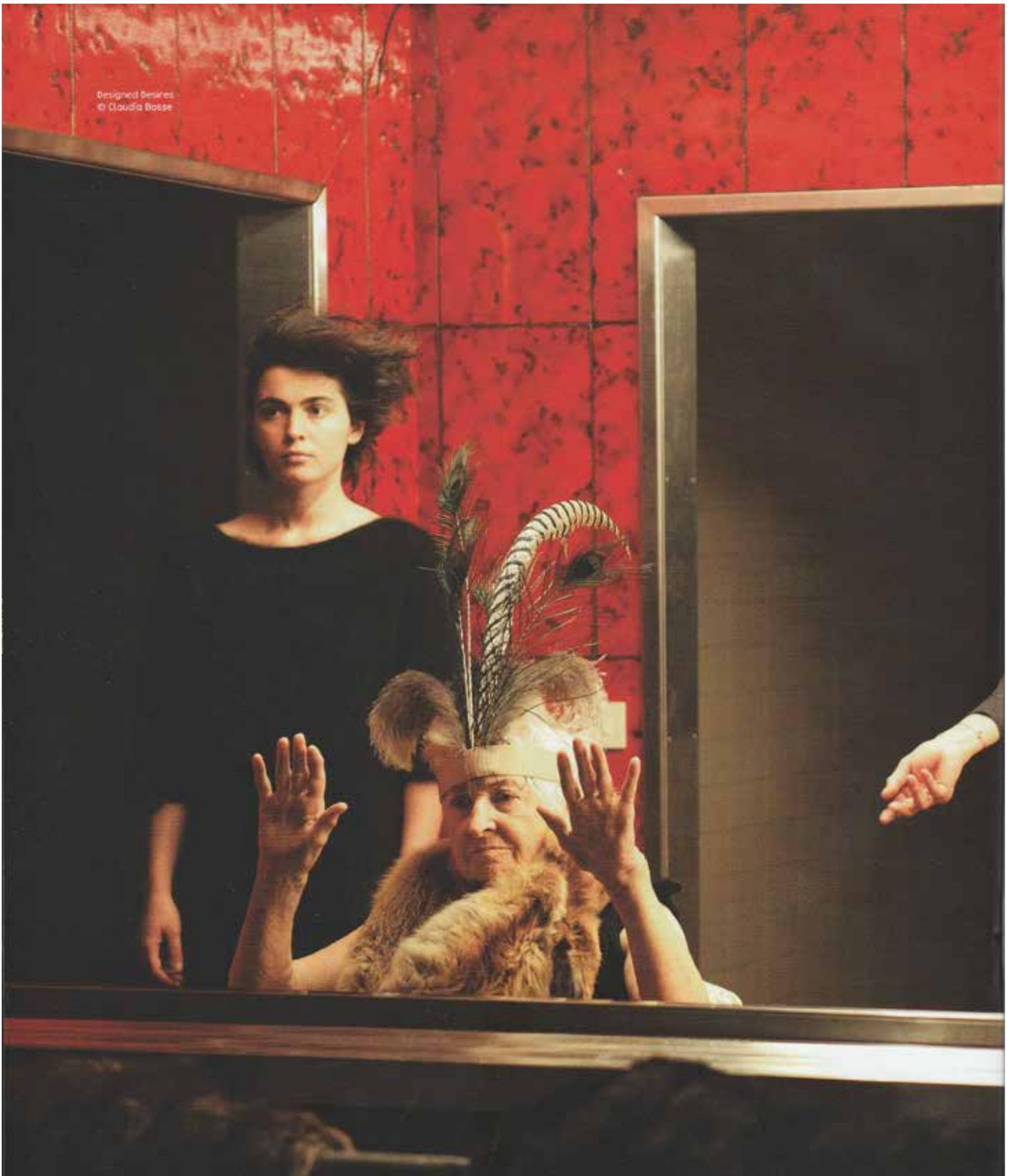
Zum Jubiläum präsentiert das theatercombinat nun seine erste Oper: Im Singspiel *POEMS of the DAILY MADNESS* untersuchen Claudia Bosse (Libretto/Regie) und Günther Auer (Komposition) die Auswirkungen der politischen und gesellschaftlichen Gegenwart (man könnte auch sagen: dessen, was man morgens in der Zeitung liest) auf das Alltagsleben. Im performativen Monument *EXPLOSION DER STILLE – a silent chorus* formieren sich 100 Menschen unterschiedlichster Herkunft, Nation, Sprache und Alter am Praterstern zu einem mehrkulturellen Manifest. Das Theater hört nicht auf, den Menschen zu Leibe zu rücken.

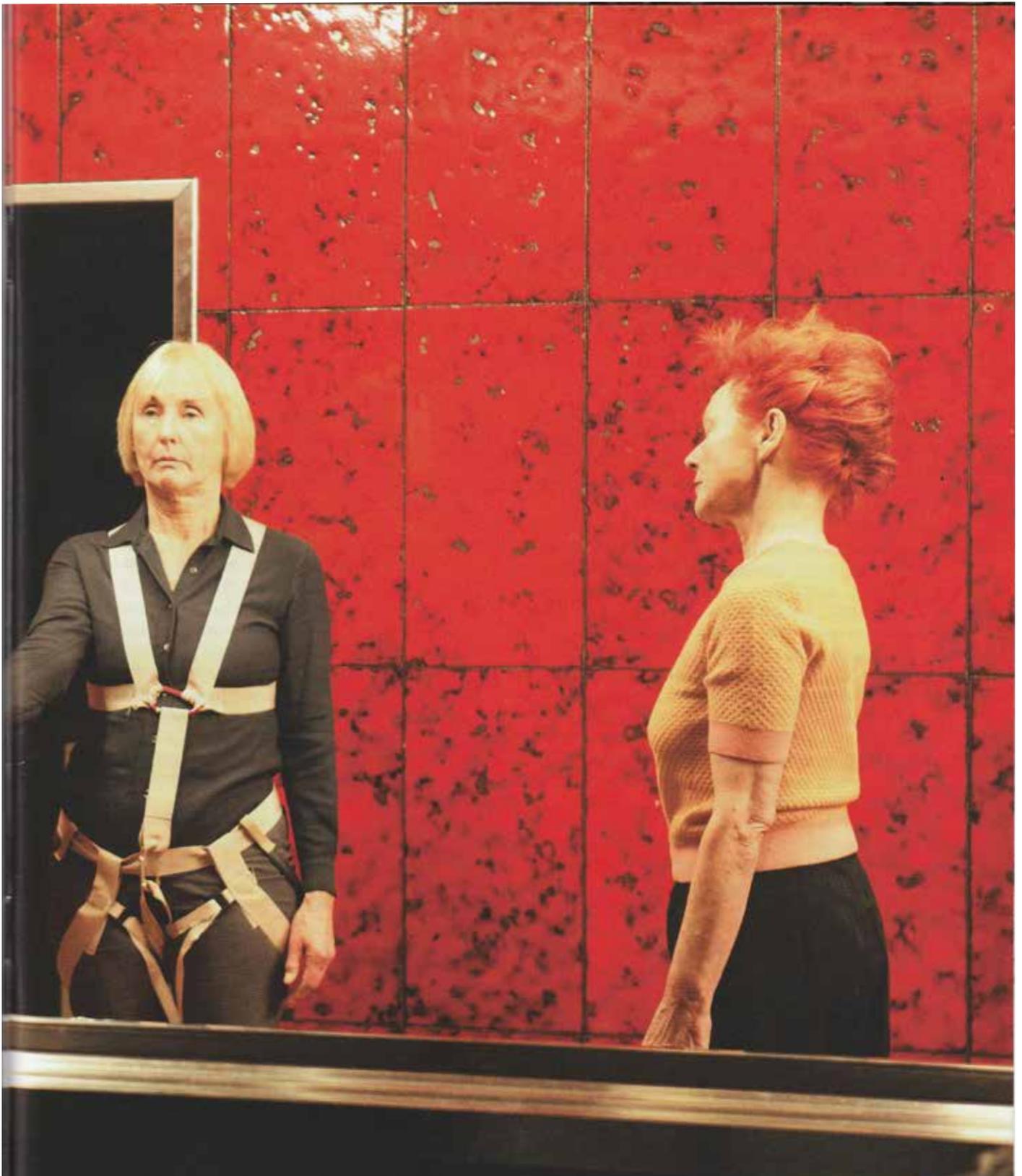


What about catastrophes  
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Poems of the daily madness





## Yosi Wanunu zu 20 Jahre theatercombinat

Let me start by saying, theatercombinat, the group Claudia is leading, and toxic dreams, the group I'm part of, are as far away from each other as the German experimental theatre is from the New York performance scene. But maybe the two came a bit closer in the last twenty years.

When I say far away I'm talking about our references, our sensibilities, our taste, our choice of material. If we were part of an imaginary theatre dating-site, we would never be a match.

And still, over the years, we got closer, we became friends, personally and professionally. What we share is a way of thinking about the role of a fringe artist, or a collective, a group, in a city like Vienna. What we agree on is the fact that fringe artists have to conduct their business in ways that are in opposition to the status quo. Our work is in direct opposition to the mythos of mainstream, business-oriented culture, despite the fact that we use different strategies to point things out. What we see eye to eye is the idea that our work needs time and its effect grows over time. This city sometimes feels as if it doesn't have a continuing tradition of avant-garde, it has only a tradition of „Hay! What's new?“ And we are trying desperately to resist the what's new.

The first time I saw theatercombinat I had mixed feelings. I just moved from New York and everything in Vienna felt small. I think it was seventeen years ago, it was late at night and I found myself in some abandoned industrial building. My initial reaction was dismissive. I couldn't believe theatre people are still doing this type of avant-garde.

But, I was impressed by the dedication, by the precision, by the craft, by the commitment. The group, someone I was with told me, just move to Vienna from Berlin, had the determination of a marathon runner. The power with which they

executed simple actions was mesmerising. They were writing Brecht lines in white chalk on the dark asphalt (at least that is what I remember ...). They were dancing under the stars.

The group looked like a bunch of workers, from a factory near by, that decided to stage a play, late at night, for no one in particular, just for the sake of it. Because they can, because they want, because this is their practice.

For someone like me, cynical by nature, it looked crazy. It was also cold outside and originally I come from a warm country. I hate snow. There is something about Claudia and cold that drives me mad. She seems to have something against central heating.

But, and with theatercombinat and Claudia there is always 'but.' There was something romantic about the affair, something I always loved about the practice of theatre. I know that Claudia will hate the word: romantic, but if I will write spiritual or religious, she will hate it too. So maybe I will call what I saw that night, an act of the Community of Dissent. Let me explain...

The failure of political radical performance drove experimental theatre increasingly away from political commitment towards more introspective concerns. We entered the era of depoliticised theatre. I was for a long period part of that trend. Claudia and theatercombinat resisted that trend. They practiced what they preached. So for a long time the city became their stage. It was a political act done with the highest form of execution. An alternative to the performance houses that were mushrooming around town.

Like it or not, it doesn't matter, Claudia and theatercombinat proposed a different practice and Vienna needed it. That was the unique place theatercombinat carved for itself in the Viennese scene, it became their niche.

Of course there is a lot of danger in this practice. Audience love to walk around, to watch performances in non-traditional spaces. Audience love to feel special, to feel as if they are avant-garde themselves by the simple fact that they are attending a show in an abandoned office building. They judge the book by its cover. Claudia is well aware of that phenomena. So she staged, and still staging, shows that are long, complex, difficult, demanding. She writes challenging 'books.' Audience that want to immerse themselves in the performance can't just read the cover, they have to get involved, to listen, to move, to participate, work hard to decipher the multitude of meaning proposed to them by the performers. The audience is assaulted intermittently, there is no safe zone.

When watching a performance by theatercombinat the viewer's question should not be: What does this text mean? The question should be: In response to which of the world's possibilities and tensions is this performance created? That is its meaning.

And Claudia, and that's the part I most appreciate about her work, loves to work with labyrinthine text. It is an important point. Text is a dirty word for many in the performance scene and I'm happy to share with her an affinity to the written word.

In the last few years Claudia's work has shifted. She opened new doors. Visual art, movement, sound installations and large public spectacles joined theatre as her interests expanded. sometimes working on her own, travelling the globe in search of other voices, she started to create a different type of theatrical text.

I remember visiting her installation at the Danube festival, couple of years ago, and being taken over by the richness of the event. The room, the sounds, the voices all worked, creating a complete experience that took the work somewhere else, behind theatre.

The need to expend behind theatre attest both to the frustration some of us feel towards the fringe scene, and to the way we keep stretching the definition of what it is to be a performance artist today. What has for centuries been theatre's unique source of strength, its ability to represent diverse experiences, as if from the inside out, isn't a weakness now, exactly, but maybe it's no longer that useful for opening up the audience's heart to real events, because the medical faith we were accustomed to placing in the playwright, the actor, the director, is gone. So we are looking to other avenues to spread the gospel.

I think that in her core Claudia is a theatre animal, something we share as a character default. Her artistic detours will find a way back to theatre, performance, live art, and it's not like she ever really left it. The so called social theatre, set in the present and meant to dramatize, with an edge of advocacy, a real life economic or racial or political crisis, may be ripe for a comeback. But if so, it will have to be on changed terms. We are hard at work on these changes.

theatercombinat is not everyone's cup of tea, and good so, you can't make everyone happy all the time. Me, myself, sometimes I'm in total disagreement with Claudia on 'everything theatre'. But for my part, Vienna, and the Viennese fringe scene, would have been a poorer place without Claudia and theatercombinat. Happy twenty my comrades.

#### Yosi Wanunu

*Regisseur; studierte Kunstgeschichte. Theater und Film in Israel, Europa und den USA. Vor seinem Umzug nach Wien im Jahr 1997 lebte und arbeitete er acht Jahre lang in NY. Er ist Mitbegründer und künstlerischer Leiter des Labels toxic dreams.*