A CONVERSATION BETWEEN

GERMAINE KRUIP AND KASIA REDZISZ

EDP

Thank you for joining us this afternoon for a conversation between Germaine Kruip and Kasia Redzisz. You know we love the format of the conversation, because it allows us to dive deeper into the work of an artist whom we admire. Germaine, we met in 2017 – eight years ago already – thanks to our friend Vincent Matthu,at your beautiful atelier nearby. I thought your work was so powerful that I went back home with three pieces, and later we acquirer two more, which means we now have five of your works in the collection, three of which are permanently displayed here in the house.Off the top of my head, three things strikes me as particularly interesting and moving in your work. First, the way your works combine a performative and theatrical dimension with a very rigorous abstract language. Second, how you invite us to notice works that are very minimal yet deeply engaging, and to pay attention to the mental images they evoke in our minds. And finally, the way you always invite us to take our time, something we feel we no longer have. With you, there is always this open invitation to pause, to sit, and I feel we are never disappointed, never left unchanged by your works. Since I've known you, you've always had a very busy schedule, with numerous exhibitions, performances, and residencies. Last year, you had a very successful show at The Approach Gallery in London. In July, you presented a three-day performance titled *The Possibility* at the Manchester International Festival, which is part of your ongoing project *A Possibility for an Abstraction*, begun in 2011. And now, in Brussels, you are showing at Minerve, Maud Salembier's space. Kasia, you are the Artistic Director of the Kanal–Centre Pompidou. You started your career in Poland, and later worked with Tate Modern and Tate Liverpool. Last year, you very generously welcomed us the Kanal construction site – 42,000 square meters in total, including 12,000 square meters of exhibition space – and you openly shared with us the challenges you are facing, always in a positive and inspiring way. The institution is set to open a year from now, with a goal of welcoming 550,000 visitors per year. We are very eager to discover your program, and of course, we already wish you the best of luck.

KR

Thank you so much, Emilie. That's one of the kindest introductions that I've ever received. I'm very grateful for this opportunity to meet all of you, and also to speak with you, Germaine, here today – because, in fact, I knew of your work before moving to Belgium, but I had never seen it in person. The first time I did was actually in this house. I hardly ever get the chance to talk about art these days – which is rather paradoxical, given that I work in a museum. So I truly cherish these moments of speaking with artists. It allows me to think about your work, and to think *with* you, through your work.Germaine, you're an artist who transforms

spaces into experiences. You make objects, but it somehow feels that it's never really the object itself that's at stake. We're starting with this image: a work that, apparently, has never been shown before, made many years ago. I like it as a starting point because it's a kind of self-portrait: an artist quite literally reflecting on space. Can you tell us more about it?

G K

This was taken in my first studio, in the Lloyd's Hotel in Amsterdam. Ironically, the view you see in the mirror no longer exists. It's now completely built up. So this must have been before the year 2000, maybe around 1995 or 1998 -a long time ago. But the studio is still there.At that time, I was really experimenting with gesture. In the beginning, I used my own body - let's say, as an actor - but I would never show my face. It was always about my hands. I recently found this piece again and thought it was a quite interesting because I had completely forgotten I made it. What I did was film the sunset, from light to dark, reflected in the mirror. So I'm standing in my studio, but you're actually looking out into the world. There's also a sense of duration. It goes from day to night. And when I look at it now, I realize that, quite intuitively, I did something that reappears in much of my later work: the gaze directed outward, toward the world. Art as a lens through which we try to understand the world, and maybe even how we hold or shape that reality, that view.It also feels like the way we started this conversation, almost like a studio visit, so this seemed like the right starting point.The next work we're showing gives a sense of the practice: how I work with sculpture, stage sets, and bodies. The space itself is very empty, so let's explain that one before moving on to something more structured. What you don't see in these pictures is that -well, you'll see it later in the video- but this was a project for the Stedelijk Museum. They had a temporary exhibition space next to the station while the main building was under renovation. During my site visit, I noticed that the venue had no windows. Since my work often begins *in situ*, I decided to introduce a window into the space. It was actually the first show in that temporary location, and the window remained there until the very end. That happens sometimes. I make an intervention that ends up feeling as though it has always been part of the architecture. I don't necessarily want people to think, *oh, she added that window.* It also connects nicely with the previous video, because here again there's a rotating mirror reflecting the outside in. All the galleries of the Stedelijk were sealed off from daylight at the time, lit only by halogen lamps with this yellowish temperature. So when you entered my space, you were suddenly overwhelmed by daylight. Visitors would walk toward the window and see the outside reflected inside, and from the outside, you could also see the inside reflected out. As you can see in this last image, when people enter the space it becomes a kind of stage: the viewer becomes the actor, or the subject observed by other viewers. When people looked into the mirrors, or the rotating mirror, they saw the outside, then the inside, and for a brief instant, themselves. That fluctuation between inside and outside, and you as the filter between those two moments,that's really what my work is about.

K R

It's very present here: the use of light, the sense of theatricality, the staging of silhouettes. And hence my great surprise and fascination when I ask you about

your influences, and really where are the beginnings, seeing all of that, I thought performance, I thought about op art, I thought about kinetic art, and then I said, De Stijl. It's Van Doesburg, it's also Kandinsky, it's really deeply rooted on this history of geometric avant-garde. Very precisely, there were very precise quotes, and I think something that showed me, led me to understand the totality of your project, really is this notion of , the total work of art, which I think we have exemplified here

G K

You were referring to Kandinsky, and the work you see on the screen now also refers to Malevich's *Black Square*. If you were to flatten these two shapes, you'd see that they are actually two black squares rotating around one another, in opposite directions. They rotate like this, and like this. I then folded them, transforming them into three-dimensional forms, so they almost seem to communicate with each other. This particular one is my favorite, partly because it's black and matte. When you see it from a distance, it appears flat again. A kind of morphing figure that constantly reshapes itself. It draws you in. These kinetic works have a visualizing effect: through repetition, they simultaneously construct and deconstruct form. They don't reflect light; they absorb it I also made versions using mirrors, where the form begins to reflect its surroundings. But this one is very much about becoming three-dimensional, and then almost turning back into a shadow of itself. It connects to an earlier image we saw, from my first exhibition rehearsal, which introduced the gallery as a kind of stage. There was a large wall illuminated like a theatrical backdrop, and everyone entering that space appeared as a shadow. So there was a kind of narrative created by the viewers themselves. Those stark contrasts of shadow and light, presence and absence, keep reappearing in my work. This also relates to Van Doesburg. When you asked about my references earlier, I mentioned that one of my earliest and most enduring influences was De Stijl. I actually made a book about De Stijl when I was around fifteen or sixteen. Looking at it again, I realized how much of a blueprint it became for my thinking about art. I was particularly drawn to Van Doesburg because he was a truly multidisciplinary artist, working across design, architecture, painting, sculpture, and performance. He maintained a very close dialogue with Mondrian, constantly discussing questions of aesthetics. What began as a shared visual code later evolved into a kind of language, a way to change the world through art. There was a sense of postwar idealism behind it, a belief that art could resonate beyond galleries, shaping daily life itself. In the Netherlands, for example, you can still see social housing built in that spirit. An attempt to let people live within a new kind of environment, one that could elevate everyday existence. I've always thought of art in that transcendental way: that art, without words but through experience, has the power to transform us, even without full understanding. When I rediscovered that old book, I realized how deeply that idea had stayed with me. It really was a blueprint for my way of thinking. There's a famous anecdote about the argument between Mondrian and Van Doesburg, when Van Doesburg tilted the square into a diamond and introduced the diagonal. Mondrian was furious. I found that story fascinating, and I think my kinetic works comment on that tension, that dialogue between the two of them. The way form breaks apart, reconfigures, and ritualizes its own composition. So in a sense, these works go quite deep. You can literally see the composition falling

apart and coming together again. Some are made with mirrors and installed next to windows, once more reflecting the outside inside, continuing that dialogue between space, light and perception.

K R

This is one example of a *total work of art*, one that is obviously meant to be used by people. It appears very empty and beautiful here, but in fact it's a stage set for bodies moving through the space. We'll come back to this notion of scenography, because you also trained as a scenographer. Your first creative act, in terms of design, was actually a stage; and I wanted to talk about how you moved from these kinetic forms toward something more experiential, more expansive, even immersive, in a way. There's often a reference in the context of your work to Kandinsky, and to his famous quote that "every movement in space is a movement of experience". There's an entire theory around how artworks should affect the body. And while looking through some notes, I also came across something Rosalind Krauss wrote about modernism. That modernism was, above all, an investigation into the condition of perception. I find that very true of your work.

G K

Yes, exactly. Here you can actually see one of the works with light directed onto it, so the light bounces back into the space. It shows how an artwork can quite literally reflect and transform the space around it. How the object is never just an object in itself. In my exhibitions, there is always a lot of space. Space in which the work can literally resonate. The emptiness, the architecture, the air around it are just as important as the work itself. I often think of my pieces as lenses that redirect our gaze outward: toward the surrounding space, the reflections on the wall, the light in motion. You end up looking not only at the work, but through it, and sometimes even away from it. In that sense, the work always points outward.

K R

There are more examples of this approach, including your work for Frieze, which we're also going to show. We'll move now to *The Gates on the Inside*. You've spoken about the outside, and perhaps we can touch on this relationship to landscape, and on who has influenced you in that regard. This was an important work. I found quite a few archival reviews of it. It was realized in 2005, a rather heroic moment in the history of Frieze London. It was an very ambitious and, in some ways, incredibly audacious work. Could you talk a bit more about it, and about how this very enclosed space connects to the surrounding landscape ?

G K

This was was actually the first work I made in London, and it eventually led to my representation with The Approach. I've been working with them since around 2005 or 2006, so it's been a long relationship. When I was invited to create a work for Frieze, I began by looking closely at the context of the fair itself. I knew I wanted to work with light, to somehow integrate myself into the fair, or even

infiltrate it. But of course, the organizers told me, "No, all the lights must remain stable, you can't change anything. It has to look exactly as planned." Then I realized that within a fair, nothing ever changed: there were no windows, no sense of time or daylight. It reminded me of a casino. That same feeling of disorientation, where you lose all connection to the outside world. I'd hear people from galleries saying, "Oh, I didn't know it was raining," or "What time is it already?" I wanted to bring an element of the outside in, and I had this vision of a dark cloud moving slowly over trees.Sometimes I just have an image, and I follow it. My works might look very subtle, even innocent, but they're not. At the time, the fair's architecture was designed by David Adjaye. It was already the third year of Frieze, and each year he assigned a color to the public spaces: one year red, then yellow, then green. The entrance that year was meant to be this long, green hallway. When I saw the plans, I said, "This has to be white." Often in my work, as with the window installation I mentioned earlier, I make interventions that no one knows I made. It's a long, quiet process of infiltration. David said, "No, it needs to be green." But I insisted, because what I wanted was for that hallway to already function as an exhibition space. All the exhibition booths were white, so I wanted the experience of art to begin the moment visitors entered the fair. The act of entering itself would become a movement, a gesture. That was my first conceptual step. I wanted to create the effect of a moving shadow or a passing cloud. I made many maquettes to explore it. Remember, this was 2005, we didn't yet have the kind of rendering tools or digital simulations we have now. So I built the hallway by hand in a model, using translucent paper lit from above by sunlight coming through my studio window. I moved my hand slowly over it to simulate a shadow and filmed it with a small Canon camera. That was my first test.
When I showed the video, people thought it was some kind of computer rendering, but it was completely low-tech. That small, simple gesture -my hand moving over light- became the foundation for the entire project. In the final installation, I actually created a double ceiling in the hallway, inserting 300 computer-controlled lights into a hidden technical space between the two layers. By gradually dimming these lights, I could simulate the passage of a shadow; not by adding light, but by removing it. The illusion of a cloud moving overhead was created through the absence of light. That inversion -using absence to create presence- became a key idea in my later work. Of course, the viewer interprets it as a shadow or something moving above, but what they're really seeing is light disappearing.

K R

You've also referred to the sky in this piece. Could you tell us more about that on space. Can you tell us more about that idea ?

G K

Sorry, I should say a bit more about the Frieze installation, because it was an important work for me. The title was *The Wave Brings Skies*. As with all my titles, it's very plain. I prefer to keep things open, rather than giving the viewer a key that might limit their own interpretation. This fair took place just after the bombing at King's Cross. It was in October, and the attacks had happened that summer. So the atmosphere in London was still very charged. I was thinking

about what Laura Grisi once said: "My work is not political, but you can feel politics in the air." She made works with fog and with wind, phenomena that carry invisible tension. You don't have to point to it directly; it's simply there, in the atmosphere. With *The Wave Brings Skies*, I felt something similar. A kind of wavering, an unease, an instability that I wanted to capture. That's why the title includes that slightly unsettling note: something moving, shifting, never fixed. The installation itself consisted of an 18-meter-long hallway. The title appeared at the entrance, but most visitors didn't realize there was an artwork at all. They simply became part of the installation without noticing. Some people paused, reading or studying it; others just walked through. A few heard about it later and came back to look again, observing how people moved within that space. It was not an easy context for subtle work. An art fair rewards the loud and the spectacular, but I was interested in the opposite: in quiet transformation, in atmosphere.

K R

You mentioned Laura Grisi, and she's indeed very important to me, also in relation to the two photographs we're about to see. Grisi was an Italian artist who, starting in the 1960s, made highly experimental work. I knew that sound and movement were part of her practice, but I didn't realize at first how deeply she worked with kinetic principles. At some point she moved away from sculpture, following her husband, a photographer, around the world as his career took off — a story that many women artists of her generation share.

G K

I was introduced to her work by Emma Robertson, the director of The Approach. When I discovered it, I immediately felt a strong connection. Her subjects, her use of natural phenomena, reflected many of the concerns I've explored in my own work. I'm still getting to know her practice, and I only recently learned that she, too, trained as a scenographer, just like me. I hadn't realized that before, but it makes complete sense. Grisi worked through phenomena, through experience itself: the wind, the sound of raindrops, the flow of water. She used the world directly as her material. Traveling with her husband, she filmed and photographed the wind in every country they visited. There's a beautiful video, which Panoptès is also showing upstairs, where Grisi recorded the wind in different landscapes and cultures. What's fascinating is that she brings all those moments together, suggesting a kind of universal language. One that transcends geography and time. There's something deeply moving about that: the idea that experience itself can be a medium, and that the act of observing the world through its most intangible elements can be a form of sculpture. Grisi always found a way to continue making art, wherever she was. That persistence, that need to create, is something I find profoundly inspiring.

K R

But there are also works she made after returning to Italy, when she began exhibiting again, where she used her earlier experiences to create more sensorial environments. For example, some of her films were accompanied by four ventilators blowing air into the viewer's face, and we're talking about the 1970s,

when the very notion of "environment" in art was barely fifteen years old, if that. Is that also something that interested you in her practice, this idea of creating an environment, or was it more her relationship with nature that drew you in?

G K

Coming from scenography, I was trained early on to work with light and sound, to approach things from a technical point of view, and to be able to realize them myself. Laura Grisi was also incredibly inventive technically. Not in the sense of showing the technique as a subject in itself, but using it to transform something into another experience. When I work with light, as you saw in *The Wave Brings Skies*, I always try to hide the mechanism. I want the viewer to forget how it happens. I think Grisi was very similar in that way: she used technology not to display it, but to make something invisible come alive.

K R

Yes, that's very true. And that also connects to some of the figures we were discussing earlier in relation to your work, like Lygia Clark and Katarzyna Kobro. When I first encountered your work, it was through photographs, so the sensorial aspect wasn't immediately apparent to me. The images gave your work a certain flatness, and that shaped how I initially understood it. For me, the references to sculpture, to Clark, to Kobro, and to geometric abstraction more broadly, came to mind very quickly. Actually, that's also the reason I first came to this house: at KANAL, during the inauguration, we'll be presenting a sculpture by Katarzyna Kobro. She was a Russian-Polish constructivist, a prewar heroine of modernism. She had a huge influence in Belgium, especially on Jozef Peeters and Vantongerloo, who even wrote a book about her. Kobro left only nine surviving sculptures after the war. She destroyed many of them, even burned some to heat the apartment where she lived with her young daughter. A few forgeries exist, but just those nine authentic works remain. She was trained among the Russian Constructivists, very close to Malevich. Later, in Poland, she co-founded the Museum Sztuki, the second modern art museum in Europe after the Van Abbemuseum. She wrote manifestos and conceived her sculptures almost as poems -open, rhythmic structures that express pure relationships in space. There's no Katarzyna Kobro here today, but you'll be able to see one of her sculptures at the opening of KANAL - so please do come, that's going to be fantastic. Just behind you, though, you'll see a work by another artist, one who began her practice in Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s. Her work was deeply rooted in the Constructivist mode: geometric abstraction, precise and beautifully balanced compositions. And then, at some point in the 1960s, she quite literally took her work into space. Actually, my very first professional experience was with the Brazilian curator Paulo Herkenhoff, who came to Poland to explore the connections between Kobro and Lygia Clark. They never met, they weren't contemporaries, but he was fascinated by the conceptual relationship between them. Kobro had developed the idea that sculpture only truly lives when people are present around it. Clark expanded that further. She believed that sculpture only comes alive when it can be physically manipulated. But in her work, the forms themselves gain life the moment they are handled, folded, transformed. There's a sense of movement around the sculpture. And that's something I

wanted to discuss with you: how the body relates to the object in your own work. Because, as you know, Clark later took this even further into therapeutic and participatory forms. People wearing her structures, moving together, physically engaging with one another. Your works, by contrast, may appear quite restrained or minimal at first, yet they also depend on people — they come alive through interaction.

G K

Yes, absolutely. Clark also transformed her studio into a kind of healing space. People would come, dance, move, and she created a setting where the object became an actor, something that could be activated. There's a freedom in that gesture, a natural relationship between the work, the viewer, and the experience itself. That experience is always at the center of her work, and it's something I relate to very strongly. She once wrote beautifully about the square. About how abstraction became, for her, a "language of freedom". In Brazil, abstraction offered a way to express oneself without direct political speech, at a time when freedom of expression was limited. I think that idea of the artist placing experience at the center is something that resonates deeply with me, and that I continue to work with. The next work I wanted to show relates to that. It's a piece from 2003, titled *Rehearsal*. I often revisit earlier works, and I sometimes reuse titles, especially *Rehearsal*, because the word itself describes an ongoing process. For me, *Rehearsal* is closely linked to my experience in theater. I've always loved the idea of rehearsing. That moment of experimentation, where many things are happening but nothing is fixed yet. Everything is still in flux, still open to change. You look at something and ask: What am I seeing? How can this evolve? It's a bit like the *Bichos* of Lygia Clark. They are never complete, never permanent. They are always being rehearsed, always in transformation. *Rehearsal* is that moment before presentation: the space of imperfection, of possibility.

K R

That's very interesting, because your works are incredibly precise, yet so much of what you describe involves chance. Letting go of control, leaving space for imperfection, for an open-ended result. How do you feel about people "messing up" your work?

G K

I love it. Because chance immediately implies presence. It exists only in the moment, and you have to embrace it. If my work can truly exist in the present, then it's through that acceptance of chance. Repetition also plays into that: when I reuse a title or revisit an earlier work, I'm bringing it back into the present moment. Each iteration is new, even if it's built on something old. That's what I'm always looking for. How to be fully in the present with the work. When I repeat a work, it's never exactly the same. It always changes, because you have to read where you are, what time you're in, and what the work means now. I've presented works that literally change, but that carry the same title. *Rehearsal* is very much about that; about being present, about inhabiting a moment of questioning and awareness. This particular work was made for Friedrich Ludwig

Jahn Museum, which at the time was actually a science museum. You can't see it clearly in the image, but the floor was full of small holes for electrical sockets and devices. I decided to use those: each socket was fitted with a compact microphone. When you entered the gallery, you could hear the sound of the space itself, but I had altered it. I "tuned" the sound of the concrete floor to resemble wood, so when you stepped inside, it felt and sounded as if you were walking on a stage. Anyone who has ever stepped onto a theater stage knows that specific sound, that subtle resonance. I wanted to translate that acoustical experience, to make the space itself perform. I also lowered the institutional lights so that they immediately made contact with the visitor, and programmed them to breathe. To dim and brighten rhythmically, giving a sense of passing time. In an earlier version of *Rehearsal*, I had used light in a more narrative way, but it began to feel too much like a scenario, as if suggesting a story. And I realized there was no story. Or rather, I didn't want there to be one. By erasing any explicit narrative, the space became a kind of mirror. When you enter, it reflects you back to yourself. You become aware of your own presence, of your own expectations. You ask yourself: why am I here? what was I hoping to see?
That kind of internal dialogue is something I find very powerful. Visiting a museum is often an act of introspection. There's already a quiet longing in that gesture, a search for something undefined. I like to tap into that longing, to create conditions where you start listening to that inner voice. Oh, and one last thing about this work. The interior lighting was connected to the exterior lighting of the museum. So, day and night, the piece continued to function, visible from both inside and outside. It wasn't governed by institutional time; it had its own rhythm, its own continuity.

K R

That's fascinating, and actually, quite subversive. You're someone who plays with our senses, often in very subtle ways, but the effect isn't always comfortable. As you said, the works may look innocent, but the experience often pushes us slightly out of our comfort zone, like a drop of water that keeps falling, steady and insistent. You mentioned earlier that you studied scenography, and that really surprised me. There's something about your work that makes people hyper-attentive to context: to space, to atmosphere, to their own position within it. You once referred to your experience working with a theater group very early on, and we spoke about the Wooster Group. In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s they developed this idea of heightened attentiveness to context. Their audiences never quite knew when they were inside the performance or outside of it, and that uncertainty kept everyone alert. I feel there's a legacy of that in your practice. Could you tell us a bit about that early period, before your first exhibitions, when you were still working in performance? I think understanding that part of your background really helps us grasp how you construct space and experience today.

G K

That piece at the Friedrich Ludwig Jan Museum was ongoing. It wasn't framed by the museum's opening hours. It continued beyond institutional time.
And then came *Rehearsal*. Here you can see another version of it, first at the Rijksmuseum, during the renovation period, so it could only be shown indoors.

And then later, in a former post office in Rotterdam.For that version, I worked again with a double ceiling, just as I had in *The Wave Brings Skies*. I installed moving head lights, which were quite new at the time, to simulate the movement of the eye. In one brief moment, the entire space would turn red. That moment was inspired by the instant when you look into a light source and blink. It's not black that you see, but red. I wanted to capture that fraction of a second.
Now, to go back to your question, before I started working as an artist, I worked in theater, with a Dutch performance group called Mug met de Gouden Tand, which literally means "The Mosquito with the Golden Tooth." It's a wonderfully absurd name. They were a bit like the Wooster Group: very collaborative, like a family. I was still studying scenography at the time, and I started working with them. So I joined as an intern and ended up doing a bit of everything (video, costumes, makeup, even cooking). I rehearsed with them constantly, for months. I knew every part by heart, and when we began touring, if an actor was sick, I would step in and perform. It was truly a total work of art, everyone involved in everything. That experience shaped me profoundly. It felt like my real school. They became my mentors, my friends, my extended family. They've supported me ever since. The first play I worked on with them marked a turning point for the group. They had lost their funding; there was only enough money left for one final production. So they decided to risk everything: to throw it all on stage. They thought: we can't fail because we have nothing to lose. Instead of playing characters, they began presenting themselves. Not as someone else, but as themselves. One actor would say, "I'm Marcel Musters," another would introduce herself by name. They sat on a couch, spoke to the audience, and essentially turned the performance into a kind of public therapy session. From their personal stories, the play began to take shape. There was structure, yes, but also improvisation. Each night was different. Every performance was in the present, completely alive. And that energy caught people. The play was a success, leading them to television and new productions. People came back again and again because every night was unique. We were throwing ourselves on stage with complete vulnerability: nothing to lose. But what I also began to feel about theater in general was that it always seemed to represent something as if it were real life, as if it were happening now. And I wanted to work with the actual present. I realized that when I looked outside, at everyday life itself, it already felt like a fiction. That realization that life could be the stage, that the present moment itself could be the work was what ultimately led me toward visual art. I think this is a good transition to the next slide. Yes, that's it: *The World as a Stage.* From the very beginning, I was interested in this idea that while we are looking at the world around us, we are also creating it at the same time. When we read a book, we are, in a way, writing it as well. That reciprocity, that exchange between perception and creation, was something I felt was missing in theatre at the time. With Mug met de Gouden Tand, we had already realised that the process of making often happens in the viewer. The moment of engagement, of reception, is also a moment of creation.
So when I was at the Rijksakademie, I was invited to take part in my first group exhibition. My very first institutional project. It was held in the Stedelijk Museum's temporary location, and curated by Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, who is now the director of De Pont in Tilburg. The exhibition was titled *For Real*, and it explored the notion of reality and fiction. A subject that, of course, interested me deeply. When I first visited the site, I noticed that all the windows were covered with gauze; you couldn't see outside. The world beyond was completely blocked. And I thought, if the show is about reality, then just look outside: it's right there.

So my intervention was very simple: I opened a window to the world.
I also wanted people to be able to stand there fully, to experience the work with their whole body. That's why I decided to build a staircase, but I didn't want the stairs to look like an artwork or an object. I wanted them to feel like part of the museum's architecture. So I interviewed the Stedelijk Museum's technical team several times, asking: "If you had to build a staircase for an exhibition, how would you make it?" I took notes on their methods, and I followed their process exactly. The idea was that the staircase should belong to the Stedelijk, not to me. I wasn't interested in inserting my presence as an artist. I just wanted to create an action, an experience. I didn't want visitors to look at the gesture as an object, but to simply inhabit it.Above the stairs -you can't see it well in the picture- there was a parabolic speaker. It took me months to find one, because this was the year 2000, and the technology was still new, developed at MIT. I wanted to direct sound precisely toward the window, and at the time that was quite an undertaking. Today you see parabolic speakers everywhere, but back then it was a real challenge. And then, under the stairs, I drilled a small hole through the wall of the Stedelijk and placed a microphone outside. The sound from outside came into the space with a two-second delay. So as you stood there, you could see people passing by the window, and you would hear their footsteps, but slightly after they had already gone. That created a subtle disturbance, a kind of dissonance between what you saw and what you heard, a tiny crack in perception. It's that slightly off-sync sensation, like when you're watching a newsreader on television and the sound doesn't quite match their lips. Suddenly you notice them differently. Their face changes, your perception shifts. I was very interested in that moment of friction between sensory inputs, that tiny temporal gap. The title of the piece, *Two Seconds*, came about in a funny, slightly accidental way. I both love and dislike how it happened. I was in the museum canteen one day with Rudi Fuchs and he asked what I was working on. I explained the piece, and he said, "So what's the title?" I told him I didn't have one yet, but mentioned that the sound came in with a two-second delay. He immediately said, "Then call it Two Seconds." So I did. It was a bit like following the advice of the technical team on how to build the stairs. I just accepted it. Maybe it was my "outer authoritarian child" moment, because normally I wouldn't let anyone else name my work. But somehow it felt right; it fit the piece perfectly. I also saw the making of the work itself as performative. That process of collaboration and surrendering control. From the very beginning, I never considered myself an object-maker. I didn't want to create things. The spaces I worked with were often empty. You entered and found nothing but yourself. My aim was always to redirect the gaze back onto the viewer. I didn't want people to walk into my work and wonder how it was made. I wanted them to forget about the technique entirely and to focus purely on their own experience of being there. I remember at the Rijksakademie, around 2000 or 2001, I had a studio visit from Aernout Mik, who, even then, was quite a star. He looked around and said to me, "Everyone could make your work." And I replied, "That's good — that's exactly what I want." He didn't understand what I meant. But for me, that was the point: that the work should feel effortless, as if it simply existed. As if it had just happened. Of course, in reality, some of my pieces are incredibly difficult to make, technically very precise. But I want them to appear light, natural, almost self-evident. It's like when you see an elliptical mirror on the floor that reflects a perfect circle of light. It looks so simple, so immediate, but it's actually the result of intense calibration. The effort disappears into the experience. That erasure of labour is deliberate. I want the viewer to feel that the

work simply is. That it doesn't belong to me, but to the moment they're standing in.

K R

Mindful of time, I'd like to move to the final work, the last performance, because it's one I really don't want to miss. It has nothing to do with withdrawing from control or authorship. What I find phenomenal about your practice is that you can work with very small spaces and subtle gestures, yet you can also occupy vast, industrial ones. In this case, we're talking about *A Possibility of an Abstraction*, a project that has taken many forms since 2014. I had the chance to see it last summer at the Manchester International Festival, staged in a theatre, a major setting, at an important event. I have to say, I found the experience incredibly complex, even confusing, almost baroque. I didn't quite know what was happening. It was such an overload and yet achieved with the most minimal means. What you could perceive, essentially, was a line, a square, and a diamond: light, darkness, and sound. It brought together everything we've discussed today, but it's almost impossible to capture in photographs. These images are good, but what I remember most was a feeling of complete disconnection, of being suspended, unable to "crack" what I was seeing. I didn't understand it, even though, in the simplest sense, it was just light and darkness alternating.
Can we talk a bit about that? About such an extremely controlled experience? It was precise beyond imagination.

G K

Yes, it's true, it's an incredibly controlled work. Technically, it's all based in a theatre setting. Normally, when you tour a performance, you arrive, set up the décor, and spend a few hours focusing the lights. But for this piece, I had to focus the light for three days. The positioning is so precise: the light exists and doesn't exist at once. It's like trying to catch a ghost. It's done with very little equipment; the technique itself isn't complex. But it's all about that fine calibrationk about the moment when something becomes visible or disappears, when you start to perceive an afterimage. The work deals with duration and with the mechanics of seeing. Over time, the viewer begins to imagine, to project things that aren't there. That's why I can't film it. On film, it looks completely flat, like nothing at all. When I first developed the piece in 2014, it was already about perception and imagination, but over time it has evolved in meaning. It directly addresses you, the viewer. How you see, when something appears or vanishes, when the mind begins to fill in the gaps. In a theatre setting, that's particularly interesting, because you're seated in a context that normally guides you through a narrative. Here, instead, you start to create your own. You begin narrating what you see, or think you see.

K R

Yes, exactly, and what's so important, I think, is that the work keeps changing. You started it twelve years ago, and it continues to transform.

G K

Yes, it's been evolving since then. The version we're seeing now was presented in a cinema, which of course adds another layer: the connection to film. We didn't speak about this earlier, but that link to cinema is often present in my work. You could think of *A Possibility of an Abstraction* as a kind of para-cinematic work. Something that behaves like a film, though there's no film at all. It's light, time, and space composing an image that exists only in the mind.
What's very important for me in this work is that it's a collective experience. Over the past twelve years, that aspect has become increasingly essential. This shared moment of gathering in a theatre, a place that is framed in time. I call it a dedicated time: you decide, now I'm going to the theatre; I'm going to dedicate myself for one and a half hours to this experience. It's a different way of entering a work -together, with others- rather than alone on your phone, scrolling through fleeting images.
So much of what we see today is fast, individual, and disembodied. We move through visual experiences without duration, without knowing what we're actually looking at. What's real, what's simulated, whether there's meaning or manipulation behind it.
For me, this work is about returning to the body, to the physical act of seeing, to the mechanics of perception. It's about slowing down, re-inhabiting time. And with that slowness comes resistance, moments when it's long, when it's demanding. You have to move through it to reach another stage of awareness. That's why I found it interesting that you described it as baroque. Because in the context of theatre, my work is usually seen as radical and minimal. But seen through the lens of visual art, it can feel dense, even overwelming.

K R

Yes, exactly. It was the sensory overload achieved through such minimal means that confused me. The power of the work came from the utter disorientation it created throughout those two hours.

G K

One and a half! Every performance is different. That's what fascinates me. The work depends on the audience. You can really feel the energy of 500 people collectively gazing into abstraction for an hour and a half. At one performance, the entire audience's breathing seemed to synchronize. 500 people breathing together, inhabiting the same mental space. It was incredibly powerful. And that shared energy changes what you see. It's maybe a slightly corny comparison, but it reminds me of yoga. You can do yoga alone, or you can do it collectively, and everyone practices together without instruction. Somehow, together, you go further. There's a collective force that carries you. That's how I see this work: the collective experience propels you deeper. The audience becomes part of the performance itself.

K R

And of course, this last image we see here, that's the final scene?

G K

Yes. This is from *Empire*, the second act of *A Possibility of an Abstraction*. In the first act, there's only light, pure light, but in the final scene, the theatre begins to reflect upon itself. The stage becomes self-aware. The large daylight HMI spots, mounted on rails, slowly move upward and turn toward the theatre's mechanics: tracks, pulleys, and rigging, all those hidden structures usually kept out of sight. Their beams begin to illuminate the backstage architecture, so that the theatre's own body becomes visible. As the lights rise, the curtain's shadow begins to fall. The scene changes with every venue. We performed it in different theatres, including the *Festival of Desire* in Thailand in 2016, each time adapting it to the space. The work mirrors itself; it speaks to the architecture that holds it.
In this final sequence, the light turns almost *Hitchcockian* (sharp, cinematic, suspenseful). Then it transitions into the main light, this blinding clarity.
After an hour of looking into near-emptiness, of being drawn into that heightened, hyper-aware state, the first percussionist enters. She begins to play one of the resonance beams suspended overhead like part of the theatre's structure. At first, you think it's simply another piece of equipment. She doesn't stand on stage but faces the empty space. Then she starts to play, and the sound begins to move through the entire theatre, enveloping it.
It's an astonishing moment, because you can barely see the beam, and yet it produces a sound so powerful that it takes over your whole perception. After an hour in darkness, your senses are completely sharpened. It's a moment of wonder, disbelief, even. There is a third part, but I want to tour this second one first. Still, yes, I already have a third act in mind. I was speaking with my dramaturge and with Daniel at the East Point Festival of Design, and I said, "Part three — I'll make it in ten years." And then he said, "Don't say things like that! You can't make a new work only every ten years — you'll disappear!" I laughed, but I think it's realistic. These works take time. The duration matters. I need to live with them to understand them. The second act is a response to the first one. The first is called *A Possibility of an Abstraction*, but in truth, it points to the impossibility of abstraction. Because the moment you look at something abstract, it stops being abstract. You begin to interpret, to project meaning onto it.
The second act introduces language through percussion. Rhythm and sound are the first language humanity ever used. Percussion was a form of announcement, of calling, of gathering. And it's deeply rooted in ritual. Rituals are a recurring theme in my work.In the performance, the first percussionist plays into the space. The space "answers" through a second percussionist. This scene, which I call *Hearing and Seeing,* plays on that duality: when you hear, you see nothing; when you see, you hear nothing. Slowly, the two begin to communicate, to call and respond. It becomes a conversation, a kind of sonic choreography.
Later, this connects to the works downstairs. What I call my "sonic paintings." In this piece, the entire stage becomes one vast sonic painting. The resonance beams are activated and begin to move vertically, amplifying sound that reverberates throughout the theatre. You start to look at the theatre itself as a painting, an image composed of light, vibration, and sound.
Here, you can see the four percussionists as a group. This is the final scene. I won't give away everything, because I hope you'll experience it one day for yourselves.