

SF: There is a lot of emphasis nowadays on audience development but you see your audience as much more than ticket buyers?

MC: Yes, we are all collaborators in this process of research around what theatre means in the wider sense. As part of this research, we organise events during the year that investigate and examine what this idea of Slow Theatre means and how it can have an impact on society. For instance, we organise this intensive five-day festival called Escena Germinal, which is an encounter between theatre arts practitioners and citizens. It is an encounter investigating different ways to make the theatre experience real and relevant and always thinking of the audience as active participants. With regard to the shows we think of our audience as people who come to live together with the actors for an hour or two. It is a real experience. We believe the audience has to practice the experience of theatre. We have a database and people can engage at different levels. For instance, every Monday morning we have a free training to join audiences to the creative moment. They join the process. People say to us theatre is dying but when they engage with our process they think maybe this is not the case. It is the institutions that have to change. For instance, gender equality is a big issue in the formal theatre scene.

NP: Our aim is to change people's lives, to change our lives, through this experience with Projecte Ingenu. To have time for deep experiences, which is hard to find these days.

SF: Now that you are somewhat established and certainly receiving a lot of positive critical recognition for your work, how do you think the future looks for the company?

NP: It is not easy to survive but we are becoming more and more mature and looking to ways to both be sustainable and spread our philosophy. We are exploring international possibilities and looking at the wider context for our work. How this will translate into living from our work, I don't know, but by naming our challenges, it allows us to engage with them. We would like to bring the 'slow' philosophy to everything we do, including the management and finances. To look at the long term.

MC: We now have arrived at a point where we feel that what we do is really important to us. We feel we have crossed a border and have created some possibilities for theatre to have more possibilities.

NP: The common problem is that everyone wants to create but to create the same thing. I saw this in Chile, where people are looking to the USA. Our message is to reconnect with what is important: with the self, with humanity. With your past. With what is part of you.

MC: But there is a danger. Tradition is often connected to fascism. The only possible answer to capitalism or fascism is humanism.

NP: Connecting people in an increasingly disconnected world is our mission.

NIEUWE HELDEN - NEW HEROES (Amsterdam)

We believe in the importance for people to be seen and heard

IN A WORLD WHERE THERE IS NO LONGER ONE TRUTH, ONE SHARED IDEOLOGY AND EVERYONE MUST DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES... NIEUWE HELDEN CREATES MOMENTS IN WHICH YOU CAN ENCOUNTER YOURSELF, THE OTHER AND THE WORLD... WE CREATE THE COMMON GROUND...PLACES OF CONNECTION, WONDER, AMAZEMENT, SURPRISE, CONFUSION AND IN THE END: ENCOUNTERS.

In 2008, three students (Lucas De Man, Bas van Rijnsoever and Wouter Goedheer) met at the Theatre Academy in Amsterdam and began to formulate an idea that would take art out of the traditional venues and contexts and move it to the public space. This resulted in the company Nieuwe Helden (New Heroes). Each project that the company produces starts from a subject or theme and aims to create a dialogue with the 'right' audience. The approach is one of commitment and projects run for several years and contain multiple outcomes. There is no fixed approach to the work and each project is different, depending on the situation. This might include performances, podcasts, documentaries, exhibitions etc. There can be up to 10 or 15 projects running at any one time.

As the work became known and attracted funding (in 2017 grants were received from the Performing Arts Fund NL, the Amsterdam Fund and Bank Giro Loterij Fund), Nieuwe Helden also took on international projects and in 2018 started to work in South East Asia and the USA. A feature of the company is that no one is employed and all, including the directors, are on freelance contracts. Everything is linked to project funding and the flexibility around this. Nieuwe Helden calls this a 'networked business model', working with over 200 makers, thinkers and creators who come together in different formations for each project. With few overheads, the company is incredibly flexible.

Regarding their working methodology, once a potential theme has been identified, they begin a process of research – interviewing people who have lived experiences and have different perspectives on that theme. This crucial research phase also helps to shape the purpose of the project, what difference they want it to make, and who it is for. This can result in very different venues and audiences for their projects: traditional arts venues or public spaces like farms, universities or banks. For instance, a project called 'The Elderly and Desire', an intimate theatre play about aging and passion, started with

a research process that engaged with psychologists, caretakers, activity supervisors and, primarily, with older people themselves. The resulting show had a strict door policy and was exclusively accessible to people over 65 or those who were accompanied by a person over 65.

While the research phase is crucial to the projects Nieuwe Helden undertakes, collaborating with a wide range of interests and expertise is also vital – social, educational, technological, scientific and ethnic diversity all engage with arts and culture to provide a rich pool of creativity, innovation and outcomes that make the initiative much more sustainable. On the money front, what Nieuwe Helden realized was that while they were attracting project funding, there was no core or development funding to secure its future. This led to a simple but important innovation whereby each project budget now has a built-in line to contribute income towards future overheads. This was augmented in 2017 when the company also secured funding for the first time from the Dutch government for core costs.

“A new hero doesn’t have superpowers, isn’t immortal but knows this and dares to embrace it and make it his strength. The power of not knowing. We tell stories. We are triggered by urban environments and problems, and always try to find the human side, the human scale of things. We believe in the importance for people to be seen and heard”

BUSINESS MODELS

Learning from an international study of Cultural Governance.

IAN KING

INTRODUCTION

On October 9th, 2018, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice President Federica Mogherini confirmed at the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair that the EU is a “cultural superpower”. Whilst this may seem to some readers plainly obvious, considering the richness and variety of culture that is spread across the whole of Europe – this was the first time such an admission was voiced formally by the EU. Yet, closer attention to this issue reveals there is an agenda. The EU, on behalf of its member states and through its funding of projects like Creative Lenses, is clearly stating that the future will not be one of continuing to pour more funds into expensive subsidies for this sector infinitum, but rather, this sector will be expected to construct for itself a future frame of resilience and financial stability. Additionally, due to the nature of this sector, equally, it will not be compromised with regards to artistic integrity, mission and values.

