

FORESHADOW

(working title, creation 2023)



“Solo dancing does not exist: the dancer dances with the floor: add another dancer, you will have a quartet: each dancer with each other, and each with the floor”.

– Steve Paxton

With the production *Foreshadow* Alexander Vantournhout takes the next step in his research into gravity and its impact on movement. He also questions the traditional theatre setting by taking one of its elements (the back wall) forward and giving it a prominent role on stage.

In *Screws* (2019), *Through the Grapevine* (2020) and *Contre-jour* (2021) Alexander Vantournhout focussed on the floor of the theatre, and its relation to gravity and choreography. In *Foreshadow*, he confronts a group of 8 dancers with a significant task: how to deal with a wall of 6 meters high, spanning the entire width of the stage? A wall on a stage that is almost impossible to bridge naturally evokes many associations, including political ones, just think of the walls built on borders in Israel, Berlin, America, China,...

'Fore-shadowing' is a literary device used to give an indication or hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing is useful for creating suspense, a feeling of unease, a sense of curiosity, or a mark that things may not be as they seem. In the definition of foreshadowing, the word "hint" is key. Here the title refers to the attempt to bypass the wall. What if there's only failure? In that case, the action is reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus, who is punished with the impossible task of pushing a rock over a mountain, again and again, destined to fail again and again, until eternity.



from desert to wall

In November 2021, *Contre-jour*, Alexander Vantournhout's first larger group production premiered. Movements come and go, they disappear the moment they appear, leaving no material traces. There are only traces in the memory of the spectators. *Contre-jour* confronts this trace-less-ness through the deliberate production of prints, or index marks indicating that movement preceded them.

Foreshadow starts from a completely different premise: where in *Contre-jour* the object and apparatus is a (horizontal) floor of sand, in *Foreshadow* the struggle will be in verticality, in relation to the wall. The language of movement will be created by playing with both the limits and the possibilities of the affordances offered by this wall. (Affordance refers to the specific manoeuvrability that an object presupposes on the basis of its form and constitution. In physical experiments, you can follow the affordance and slowly tilt it, or on the contrary you can oppose it forcefully.) The usual affordance of the wall might be to lean with the back against it. Rarely the face is directed to the wall. An unusual affordance might be to use the wall as a surface where adhesion is augmented, or as a partner to form a bridge, ...

wall

“The garden of the house where I grew up in, was enclosed with concrete panels that formed walls. As a kid I was always interested in climbing over it, just to see what happened in the neighbour’s garden. This 'strive for privacy' is a peculiar thing. Everyone is living in a box. Because of the (COVID) confinements we probably became more aware of what private space means, and hopefully in the future we will manage to share life quite differently.” – Alexander Vantournhout

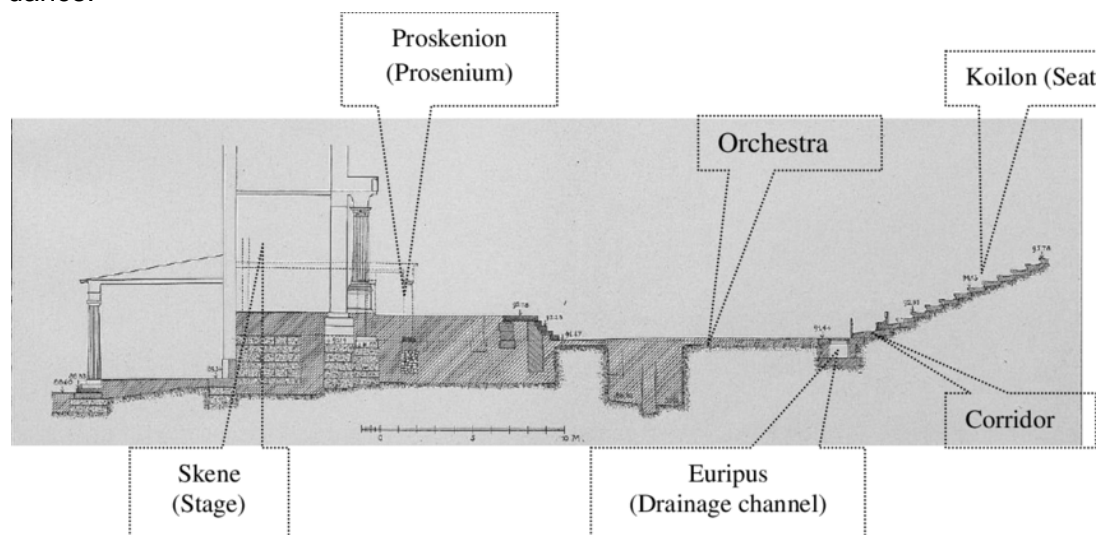
Walls are peculiar space-delineators, borders between the outside and the inside. Looking at a wall will definitely raise curiosity: what is behind this wall?

In a theatre space the walls have yet another function: to create a space that allows to re-create another world, a fiction.

Foreshadow will play with the classic viewing dispositive of a theatre where actors are on a stage, bordered by three walls and a stage frame through which the spectators look (the fourth wall). In *Foreshadow* the back wall is literally brought forward, and cuts the scene/the stage in two.

The performing space of the ancient theatre was known as the 'orchestra'. The word 'orchestra' means dancing place (orkheisthai: to dance, tra: place). So the dancing took place next to the singing in this orchestra. The modern word “scene” derives from “skene”. The “skene” in ancient Greek theatres however served not for the performance itself but to position machinery needed to raise corpses or lower gods from above. Later a “proskenion” was added to the front of the “skene” as a narrow platform for solo performers.

In *Foreshadow*, we aim to place the dance, to the analogy of the Greek theatre, on this “proskenion”-space, the front of the scene that actually does not offer enough space to dance.



Typical longitudinal cross-section of a Greek theatre (arranged by K. Kollyropoulos on a base drawing adapted from Döperfeld's plans, 1896)

moving with a wall – gravity

"Birth is not so much a beginning as it is an abrupt change in which suddenly there are different factors than those in the womb, and there is gravity. With gravity, a new negotiation begins, and these terms condition us for the rest of our lives."

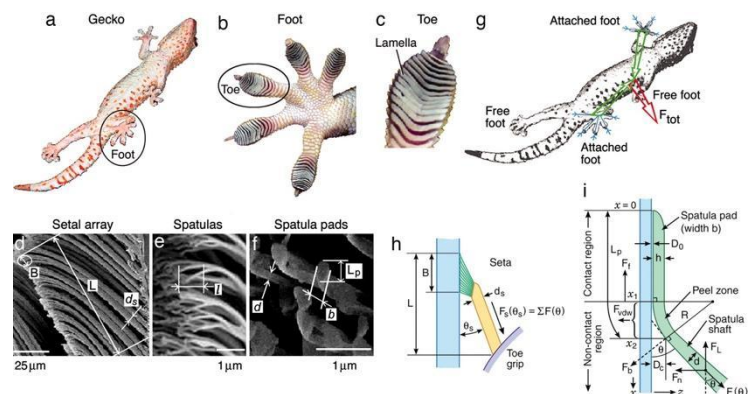
– Steve Paxton

A wall is present everywhere and is often used as a feedback mechanism for yoga, dance or martial arts class to make the practitioner aware of the vertical line or to take note of symmetry. With inverted postures (e.g. headstand), the wall is used to avoid falling, to exclude falling - at least in one direction -, or to 'hold on' or to slow down a fall.

Whereas earlier work of Alexander Vantournhout challenged gravity through the use of prostheses (e.g. *Screws*) in this creation the dancers' relationships to gravity will be completely challenged anew. The wall becomes a drawn out examination of this force of nature. How can a vertical fall be transposed, obliquely, diagonally or horizontally? How can it be slowed down by the sliding resistance of the wall?

As usual, Alexander Vantournhout finds inspiration in the animal world for his movement material, this time in the adhesive powers of reptiles like lizards. Geckos and lizards employ a dry adhesion system using a combination of microscopic hairs (setae) on their toe pads as well as other aspects of internal anatomy to climb on vertical walls and run on ceilings.

Lizards and geckos have no suction cups, hooks or glue on their feet but employ a mechanical principle called contact splitting: each of the microscopic hairs found on their feet split up into hundreds of flat tips. The ends temporarily rearrange electrons on the walking surface, creating an electrodynamic attraction.



music

Over the years and the previous seven creations Alexander Vantournhout and **not standing** created an alphabet of movement, often more focussing on the creation of body movement and less on the 'writing' with movements ('choreography'), and even less so in relation to a musical score. For *Through the Grapevine* (2020) **not standing** commissioned, for the first time, an original music score (Andrea Belfi).

For the future creations, there will be more time and space liberated to relate more to a musical score and for *Foreshadow* Alexander Vantournhout is thinking of commissioning an original track, or at least a musical research to what kind of music could represent a never ending series of attempts. For isn't it peculiar that of most of the Greek myths and stories, an opera has been made, except for the myth of Sisyphus. None of the big composers found a way to represent a recurring attempt, and to transcribe that musically...

team

Concept & choreography: Alexander Vantournhout

Created with & performed by (8 performers) Alexander Vantournhout, Axel Guérin, Emmi Väisänen, Nick Robaey & others
Dramaturgy: Rudi Laermans & Sébastien Henderickx

Production: not standing

Coproduction: Biennale de la Danse, Lyon (FR), Julidans, Amsterdam (NL), Arts Center Vooruit, Ghent (BE), Le Maillon, Strasbourg (FR), Le Sirque, Nexon (FR), Les 2 Pôles Nationaux des Arts du Cirque normands — La Brèche à Cherbourg et le Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf (FR)

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Alexander Vantournhout is artist-in-residence in Arts Center Vooruit in Ghent and associated artist of le CENTQUATRE Paris and Cirque-théâtre Elbeuf. He is cultural ambassador of the city of Roeselare and is also supported by Fondation BNP Paribas for the development of his projects.

video

After spending a few days in the studio we can offer you an insight into the very first research with [this video](#).

contact

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