



POETICS AND CRIME

PLACE, THE SELF AND CRIME - zoomed in & out

PROPOSAL / An artistic multi media laboratory and performance designed for the gallery space, which looks into the world of James Ellroy's non-fictional book 'My Dark Places'. A 2 to 3 week collaboration between SOIT team and the Box Gallery Artistic team on an installation, alternated with performances of 'The Lee Ellroy Show'. The show is performed on weekends (ex: Friday and Sat.), the open laboratory/installation takes place during the weekdays. The period can be resumed with an open hosted discussion, integrating the public.

To not just look at a finished performance such as the Lee Ellroy Show as the end result of a creative process, but instead utilizing the finished performance as an instigator to look further into the topic. We wish to collaborate and expand on the theme with The Box crew, to create a multi media installation. The Lee Ellroy Show is one concentrated visceral aspect of the exhibition.

Key Words - interactive associative field - linked with the 'Poetics and Crime' theme:

The Place, The Time, The Post War Effect, The 1950'S Gender Effect, The Peeping, The Existential Self, The Crime, The Loss, The 'Unsolved' Effect, The Los Angeles Suburban Sprawl Effect, The Ritual, The Trauma, The Evil, The Addiction, The Obsession, The Salvation, The Determination, The Fantasy, The Life Force, The Love *(not exhaustive)*



The artistic proposal could be along the following/possible schedule

A 2 - week exhibition with the Box Crew working around the theme 'My Dark Places' alternated with the live performance 'The Lee Ellroy show' - prepared before in 1 - 2 weeks with the Box Crew - eventually resumed with a public talk

Week 1 & 2 Preparation

Week 3 Exhibition/installation

Weekend I Performance

Week 4 Exhibition/installation

Weekend II Performance (+public talk?)

Exhibition/Installation is developed (with photos, video, drawing/sketches, text, audio...) Aspects and themes are explored, developed and repeated in order to let them grow, proliferate and change

Performance: on the weekends the 'The Lee Ellroy Show' takes place, as a continuous and condensed reality, it can bounce off of the previous research



THE PERFORMANCE

'The Lee Ellroy Show' is a performance made by the Brussels based company SOIT, duration is 1 hour 15min. It's a physical duet directed by Hans Van den Broeck; performed by and co-created with Anuschka Von Oppen and Jake Ingram-Dodd. It is based on the autobiographical crime novel 'My Dark Places', by James Ellroy. In this novel Ellroy shows us the impact of the brutal murder of his mother at an early age and questions the troubling and unsolved circumstances as well as the broader context of the times in which she was murdered.

The real story sets in the 50's, a time where America pictures itself as an innocent, happy wonderland; where social dilemmas and personal conflicts are swept underneath the carpet, an era not particularly kind to women. James Ellroy's mom, a divorced nurse who married the wrong husband, moves to desolate suburban El Monte, 'shitsville' USA (as Ellroy calls it), part of the endless sprawl of greater Los Angeles. In the new suburbia, she leads a mysterious isolated, existence with a glimpse of Hollywood around the corner.



'A cheap Saturday night took you down. You died stupidly and harshly and without the means to hold your own life dear. Your run to safety was a brief reprieve. You brought me into hiding as your good-luck charm. I failed you as a talisman - so I stand now as your witness' J.E

She met her killer on a Saturday night, the 'swarthy man', a suspect who was never found. She had a few drinks, a talk, a dance... Her body was discovered in the early morning hours in the bushes of a small dirt-road. Her dreams were cut short, a life which never fully blossomed.

This sudden trauma of her disappearance at age 9, condemns Ellroy to a life-long search for the mom he never learned to know, a loving mother. A young confused, alienated James grows up

seeing his mother through the warped perception of his conflicted father. James leads an obsessive life of a destructive nature of drugs, crime, women, peeping and inner torment, until he finds writing. He embarks on a disturbing journey; from a big mouthed child bully, to a shop lifting teenage voyeur and finally to a young druggy homeless adolescent, on the verge of losing his mind. About to tip over the deep end, he devotes himself to writing. It will be his salvation, a sublimation of the trauma. Ultimately, his obsession to hunt for the woman/the mother he never knew, transforms into a eulogy of love.

'The Lee Elroy Show' is a visceral, wild trip inspired by Ellroy's fascinating controversial universe. The performance is an abstracted physicalized dissection of his inner conflicts and trauma. We bring individual characters back to life: James the child, the teenager, the writer, the swarthy man, the detective, the woman, the mother, the waitress, the Black Dahlia, the witness.

Charged with the unsolved trauma, the two performers go back in time, transform and 'inhabit' these lost souls. As 'shamanistic' impersonators, they temporarily resuscitate these people in the attempt to break the endless circle of imbalance. It is a fictionalized development of 'My Dark Places', a puzzle, a mosaic of significant issues and topics in the story that deal with the human animal.



[TRAILER](#)



Our goal is to perform the piece in the gallery, the set-up is quite simple and the entire performance takes place in a **plexiglass box**. Just as the characters transform, the Plexiglass represents a fictional canvass of highways, the living-room, the desert-inn, the witness-room, the apartment of fantasy, the outside bush, and 1950's wasteland LA, where coyotes roam.

LABORATORY



We would like to use the performance as an open source, a way of starting a parallel investigation that results in a graphic/audio-visual and also physical experiment - from a drawing of a hidden aspect, a video-analysis of a sub-theme/meaning or perception - a photo or still-impression of certain connotations, a physical zoom-in of movement aspects for ex the notion of childhood trauma.

Our specific goal is to invite the crew and artistic members of the Gallery to associate and work on some of the ideas that we explored and condensed in the performance; broadening the possible interpretations of the themes. The meandering of each mind and the personal response on issues raised in the book and in

the performance, give an opportunity for an eclectic vision, and feels to us like an interesting common challenge.

One of our motivations is that we would like to see our performance as an onset, an invitation for another, parallel process, an open resource for further, deeper, individual exploration.

Our goal is to analyze, dissect and take apart the piece in the same way we did with the book, which is a rich, intriguing multi-layered portrayal of the human condition in severe, confronting circumstances. The book dissects and examines also the world of crime, a parallel universe existing underneath the metropolis of Los Angeles; a universe of victims & criminals, inspectors, investigators, witnesses,...fatally connected by violent circumstances, colored by the anonymity of urban sprawl, colliding in an endless landscape, driven by individual dilemma, desire, perversion, obsession and conflict. Some protagonists are consciously and deliberately drawn to this microcosmos of human excess, others are unconsciously forced towards those extremes. Their existence verges towards a violent end, bound to crash, dumped for ever in close distance to the unrelenting fever of the highways.

We feel that a lot of sub-themes emerge out of this dense literary work. James Ellroy's novel shows his personal vision, his individual obsessions but at the same time becomes a universally shared attempt to understand our deeper, ulterior motives. Motives that not only belong to the individual but are an intrinsic part of our collective way of being and relating. It tackles a complex and paradoxical force in human behavior.



The underneath list of themes is not exhaustive but shows how rich and encompassing the universe of Ellroy's novel is. It's the plethora of themes and subjects that we vaguely now call PLACE, THE SELF AND CRIME.

- crime scenes - the brutality, horror versus the poetry - life stopped in an instant and thus eternally present - the paradox of death: the absence of life makes us more aware of life in itself
- crime investigation - profiles of the deviant person, theories on the dynamics of crime and underlying traumas, unresolved disharmony - the characteristic of violence - the obsessed state of mind - the eye of the evil - the poetry of the cruel
- the poetry of the ritual - life as a force versus death - the need for catharsis - the need for an alternative excess (behavioural excess, drugs, fantasy, hallucinations, psychosis) in order to cope with interior psychological turmoil
- the presence of the animal in our human condition - representation of the power of the coyote - the trickster - the symbolic bridge between life and death - vulgar and sacred at the same time - the healer - the recognition of our animal soul - the need for mythical thinking
- the origin of the trauma - the ever lasting impact and the endless loop of coping with the trauma - an indirect victim, James Ellroy is condemned to a lifelong search for his mother, dealing with his way of relating towards women, towards sexuality- obsession, projection - escape of the darkness - to release the unresolved energy
- the impact of a dysfunctional family
- the influence of cultural patterns in the 50-ies in specific the narrow, confined role of women
- the never-ending loop - to resurrect the death to life - 'I want to bring my mother back'
- the subliminal transcendence of the damaged soul into a writer or collectively via our creative output
- the child in us will never disappear - an endless circle of revolving initial perception

In the contemporary setting of an art gallery, with the possibility and flexibility to break down classic approaches; a performance can be an open energy-source. It can let other creative forms boil up, melt down the crystalized set-up, undo the idea of a 'finished reality'. It makes a performance relevant, vibrant, alive.

The confrontation of those different approaches consists of making real-time research, associative, elaborate work in the gallery, experimenting with subthemes in a graphic, visual way, through video, photo, painting, drawing, light and physical explorations of mini facets.

It's a unique chance to stand still, to zoom in, to scrutinise the grain, the texture of underlying meaning, make the hidden become visible.

To make the artistic process mount to the surface, to make it visible with a crew of interesting, professional artists would be a unique contemporary challenge we would love to undertake.



Hans Van den Broeck
Anuschka Von Oppen
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COMPANY SOIT