

# PERPETUAL SELF

a 3 weeks live artistic laboratory in the gallery space including a performance and a parallel event consisting of the associative creative response to the performance (multi-media and movement)

- to consider a performance as an open source for real-time creative work and not as the end of the creative experience
- to confront a performance with the aftermath of the associative and creative response to the themes it has initially addressed
- to ask an external artistic team, the artistic staff of the gallery to collaborate and respond to the themes of the performance through their creative output and associations



THE LEE ELLROY SHOW

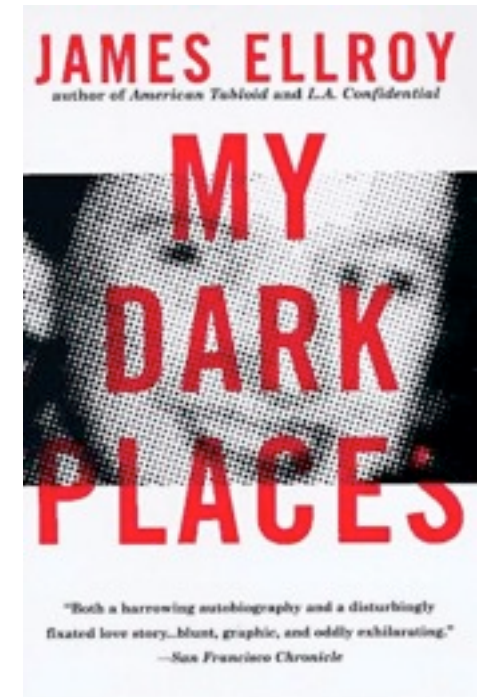
# THE PERFORMANCE / THE LEE ELLROY SHOW

'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 novel 'My Dark Places' of crime writer 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 of in the 50's, the time where America pictures itself as an innocent, happy wonderland; where social dilemmas and personal conflicts were swept underneath the carpet. An era that was not particularly kind for women; James Ellroy's mom for one, a nurse who married the wrong husband. Lost in a shallow existence with a glimpse of Hollywood around the corner. Divorced and lonely she moves to El Monte, shitsville USA (as Ellroy calls it), part of the endless sprawl of greater Los Angeles, the new suburbia, isolated and eerie. A sordid boiling hot place risen from the desert, a nowhere, where she was prone to meet other lost souls and eventually did. On a 'cheap' saturday night she met her killer, the 'swarthy man', a suspect who was never found. She had a night out on her own, a few drinks, a talk, a dance... Her body was discovered in the early morning hours in the bushes of a small dirt-road. An existence halted in the grass, a life that never blossomed. This sudden, traumatic disappearance condemns James Ellroy to a life-long search for the mom he never really fully learned to know, a loving mother. A young confused and alienated James saw his perception of his mother warped by his father who painted a picture of a loose women and a drunk. His obsession with this childish, morphed love leads James to a life-long hunt for the 'other woman', who ultimately represents his lost mom. He embarks on a disturbing journey; from a big mouthed child bully, to a shop lifting teenage voyeur and finally to a drugged and homeless young adolescent, nearly losing his mind. About to tip over the cliff, he devotes himself to writing. It will be his salvation and a sublimation of the trauma, a life-long battle with the omen living inside him. Ultimately, his obsession transforms into a eulogy of love.

'The Lee Ellroy Show' is a visceral and wild trip in this dark and fascinating universe. The performance focus on the underneath trauma and conflict. We bring individual characters back to life: James the child, the teenager, the writer, the man and on the other side the mother, the redhead, the female witness, the woman. The two performers are 'inhabiting' each of these lost souls, stuck in time, charged with the unsolved trauma. As 'shamanistic' impersonators they try to resuscitate this personae, temporarily, starting from the simple act of putting on a jacket, a dress or through a simple object thus slowly transforming in the haunted victim, the lonely being and the primal animal. The performers attempt to break the endless circle of imbalance, try to connect with the characters over time and to release the energy that is crystalized in those disrupted lives, those deranged and lonely souls. It is a fictional encounter and an attempt to heal the destroyed existence and reality. The piece is a puzzle, a mosaic of significant issues and topics in the story.

Our goal is to perform the piece in the gallery. The set-up is quite simple, the entire performance takes place in a plexiglass box, that functions as a changing canvas. It represents the surroundings, the highways, the living-room, the desert-inn, the witness-room, the outside bush, the scrublands in which coyotes are roaming. A vibrant animal presence who watches the quiet suburbs.



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# 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 an 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 a 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 proces, 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 portray 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. Its 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



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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.

our artistic proposal could be along the following lines:

- 3 weeks real-time, in-place work on the subthemes of 'My Dark Places'
- during week-days an installation is developed (by photo, video, drawing,...) aspects and themes can be explored, developed, and repeated in order to let them grow, proliferate and change
- in the weekends the performance takes place, as a continuous and condensed reality, it can bounce off on the previous research
- an interchanging series of live laboratories and performances could go like this: week 1 research weekend 1 performance week 2 research weekend 2 performance week 3 research weekend 3 performance+outcome research



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