

# Verdensteatrets' Symphony of the Senses

Essay: *You walk as far as the shoes of reason will take you – then you jump.*

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We travel in so many ways. We travel inwards. We travel outwards. We're dragged down into the mud, then upwards, towards the sky. It's a journey without borders. A journey that will take you wherever you want to go, make you follow unexpected paths. We die. We live. We sail on to the next image. To the next room. To the the next stop on our journey.

And *Verdensteatret* takes us there.

## A voyage through the material

During the last few years, the Oslo-based art ensemble Verdensteatret has been on the road for prolonged periods and presented exhibitions in different places around the globe. It has been invited to prestigious sound and stage festivals, prominent art biennales (the Shanghai Biennale, among many); art museums; multi-disciplinary art arrangements and other, less definable venues.

On its extended voyage, it has compiled and collected a kaleidoscope of material. The group is made up of very different people, each one discovering material individually –like intuitive flight recorders (tachographs). Some collect through technology, others organically, some are social beings, others sleep with people, some read, others gather people around them, some listen and others just sit there observing, some think they remember, others are afraid.

As they returned from a big project in Kolkata, India, in December 2011, they had been touring and doing research almost continuously for two years. The time was ripe to take a break, settle in a studio to dig deep down into the material they had gathered or that grown inside them during the tour.

## **Symphonic art-form**

The outcome of this process is being shown at the Henie Onstad Art Museum during the Ultima Festival in Oslo. *Bridge over Mud* consists of a multitude of elements. Hand-made or found. Mechanics and technology. Figures, driftwood and remains. Video and sound. Light and darkness. Fragments from all kinds of places. The level of detail is breathtaking. Also, each element is immersed into the action. Extremely massive noise and fragile, stirring silence. Rich, thick layers of expressions and inflections stretch their space in every direction.

*Bridge over Mud* is in its very nature a fragmented and abstract work. Its main substance rests in a poetic space that stimulate your senses through a symphonic multimedial expression. The form profits both from visual art and video art, sound art and performance. This generates a challenging complexity where opposing forces collide in “impossible paradoxes” on one hand and surprisingly harmonic cadences on the other. It's a symphony of elements that entice your senses. Listening to this work may take you to places you've never been before.

## **To Associate and Experience**

Fragmented and abstract works of art helps the spectator avoid the analytical decoding processes a narrative, meaningful subject matter would demand. *Bridge over Mud* quite simply stimulates other cerebral processes. A work of this kind may find a more direct route to the memory centers in your brain, thus opening for a wider opportunity to form your own lines of associations. As the space is so obviously abstract, there are very few pointers as to where this work will carry you – everything is delightfully open to interpretation. Said in other words. this structure leaves you free to imprint your very own significance into what you perceive.

But that's not the end of it. As we enter into a free associative experience, it's as if your thoughts and emotions start to stray from the path. If you're able to put yourself in the right state of mind, this sort of work is able to skip your memory processes entirely and plug directly into your feelings and instincts. This way, it may open a passage to things you cannot normally access. It may sound like magic and act as if it were, but it's quite simply Perceptual psychology. And if you dare to make the leap, you may find yourself beyond the road most traveled by rational thinking.

It's about giving in to the art experience. In this way, we can recall, think of, be led to and experience the most peculiar of places. New doors and rooms may open into ourselves and our world. It may be beautiful or ugly, filled with dread or love. It may be full of death. It may be full of life. What will happen is entirely up to you and the work, to the senses and thoughts, feelings and affections, the intellect and all that is contained in the room.

## **One Step Further**

The constant voyage Verdensteatret is on spans all its works and carries it further to new destinations, new experiences, new contexts. It's a constant forward motion, yet always anchored in its own artistic identity which cannot easily be placed within one particular definition. This last work may best be described as a room of many media that unfolds within a finely tuned audiovisual symphony. This spatial instrument is handled live by performers and artists from different artfields. The performers' presence in the room is deeply embedded as a central element of the expression itself.

*Bridge over Mud* takes *Verdensteatret's* artistic expression one step further. This work will pierce your soul in a more insistent and convincing way than any previous work. The interaction is more finely tuned than ever. And the participants are less visible. The group trusts that the symphonic space will be the messenger to our senses.