

# the Year of the bush

In the ever currant Year of the Bush Baktruppen take the opportunity to celebrate nature, understood as ourselves, including the audience and the present circumstances.

Due to common practice by the Norwegian Arts Council, each applicant has to describe its future in rather detailed ways, in order to get any funding. As Baktruppen are not able to decide what to do more than a few hours ahead of action, we have to make up fake projects. One of them was called NATURE. «In order to surprise ourselves and the audience, we will stay out in the woods for some weeks and build a performance out there», we said. But when it came to realization three years later, Norwegian woods seemed cold and hostile, and we thought we didn't need to go «out there» to find nature, nature could be found anywhere, so we decided to go for the nature within, and stayed at home.

Home is the most important place to Norwegians, and now that we are rich, we spend fortunes on refurbishing - more than  $\approx$  3.000,- per capita (2005) which is double as much as other Europeans.

To Baktruppen home is a tiny space in Oslo that used to be a shop, with a large window facing the dead end street of Dælenenggata. In 2003 Baktruppen rebuilt the space and made a wooden wall to wall stand for the audience to sit and watch Baktruppen perform outside in the street.

After some short discussions on nature, a firm consensus about staying at home and refurbish the space was established. It felt natural, we thought - much more natural than going out in that old cliché «wood». Since our time together is rather short, we try to avoid arguing, and this may lead to the oddest agreements, for the sake of domestic peace.

So we spent about five weeks on raising the headroom, building balconies, scraping, painting, papering, polishing, sewing and so forth. For some reason, though, the old nature «out there» kept haunting us during our indoors work. While choosing colours, for instance, we couldn't help ourselves, it had to be green. And when it came to patterns, we all embraced leaves.

It took us much longer than expected to redecorate the space, probably because we worked so slowly. A week or so before showtime we started to think about what to do when the audience would come. But as the process of beautification never really ends, we just couldn't stop. Nature is perfect, and that's how we wanted our tiny theatre to be.

After some brief talks in between the painting and polishing, we came to the conclusion that we could not merely show the audience our perfect space, we would have to entertain them in more explicit ways. Since we hadn't had the time to develop a performance, we took up The Four Seasons by Vivaldi, well suited as it was for the Year of the Bush.

When the audience finally came, we were taken by surprise. It was as if they took the interior for granted, as if it was nothing to make a song and dance about. In order to make them pay attention, we had to tell them a thing or two. For instance that the stand they were sitting in was made of pure pine and plywood, and that plywood was used already six thousand years ago by the Egyptians, so it wasn't just something Baktruppen had cooked up for the occasion. We even had to make them notice the beautifully painted ceiling. No, it wasn't white, it was Magnolian, named after the plant Magnolia (named after the botanist Pierre Magnol), and no, it isn't a tree, it's a shrub.

And if life as a shrub seems somewhat remote, it's simply because nature likes to hide. Perfectly camouflated for any occasion we can be really hard to spot.

So when confronted with nature, or Baktruppen for that matter, one may easily feel unnatural, but as it is unnatural to distinguish between what's natural and what's not, it's for the best to swallow Baktruppen as a bush. After all, when you take a good look at nature, you will not see anything but yourself, only green.

Before we had grasped these matters, we sat and stared into the wall for quite some time. Palmtree, we thought, and pined for a far away place. Palmtrees are like that, one wants to be where they are. But the longer we sat there staring, the clearer we could see nature, that is ourselves, coming up through the surface of the wallpaper, this time dressed as a bush. And from there the rest of the show sprang up:

Spring - performed on Stanley saws, Bosch drills, AEG circular saw and Apple computer from under the stand.

Summer - a re-mix based on recordings made during the redecorating, transmitted through two Impact Turbosound loudspeakers (made of 50% recycled plastic) in front, two B&W loudspeakers placed under the stand, and one Meyer sub, passing on the lowest frequencies of the sound. There was also an attempt to illustrate the history of the bush, from big bang and up to now. And topiary, too.

Autumn - performed as a dance in the street interpreting Vivaldi's own descriptions of the course of events in his composition, partly hidden behind black screens made of pine wood and stage molton.

Winter - played on agave harps attached to a birch on the pavement.

The bush works are planned to spread in various shapes and sizes throughout 2007, which also happens to be the Year of the Bush.

Duration: 1 h

First performed: 08.09.06 in Dælenenggata, Oslo

Support: Norwegian Arts Council



## In the Year of the bush.

A bush is not a metaphor of seven human beings. A bush may be a bush, but in the sense of Baktruppen it means unqualified growth, as the group will bring their experience and their curiosity through different sites and possibilities of making performance, art or whatever this year, to be continued the next. Why? Baktruppen is not content and has no family tree, through which to soil and slave new lies into reality. A childish face with a dense bush of hair. Bush babies. No. Baktruppen will do what Baktruppen does better than many: Make different shows in different places, aware of the now and then bushpushing times.

[Photo Gallery](#). Photos by Nick Scando.