

★★★★☆ Visual Theatre

20 June 2018 - Oerol, Noordsvaarder, Terschelling

New Perspectives on Daily Routines

by [Sander Janssens](#), published on 24 June 2018



When you participate in the audio route *Reverse* by Johannes Bellinkx, you are forced to look at the world around you in a different way. The concept appears to be simple: Bellinkx has laid out a route of roughly an hour long that everybody walks on their own, with the big difference being that you don't walk forwards but backwards – and you're not allowed to look over your shoulder.

Four years ago, also at Oerol, I saw Bellinkx's presentation [Natureluren](#), a prelude to his production shown at the festival a year later, [Framing](#). By means of a special construction (a 'viewing machine'), whereby the spectators had to stick their heads in a hood and could only look through a small slot, Bellinkx gained complete control over his audience's field of view. Now again, the focus of his project is the viewing perspective of his spectators/participants, both in terms of form and content.

Each spectator walks backwards over a white line that leads you from the shore of the Wadden Sea across the dune and through the village of West-Terschelling. The soundscape (designed by Dennis van Tilburg) on your headphone amplifies the ambient sounds of where you are at a particular moment – more subtly at some times than at other times. The show begins with a wonderful panorama of the wide sea and the relatively peaceful shore. By walking backwards, you literally zoom out on what you are seeing. Wide vistas occupy the greater part of your attention, while your immediate surroundings become less important.

All of this affects your pace. Not only because walking backwards can sometimes be quite a challenge – and every now and then is more shuffling than walking – but also because you are not focused on what is happening directly around you. You literally are only looking

back: no longer do you have any reason to momentarily walk faster, for you are not walking towards something. Instead, where you are constantly takes you by surprise.

What's more, *Reverse* has a clever dramatic composition, which gradually becomes more demanding as the walk progresses. The views from the shore and the dune are beautiful, but that almost goes without saying. Little by little, however, *Reverse* turns out to be more than simply a pleasant experience: in the centre of the village, which is crowded during Oerol, having to continually walk and look backwards is a lot less inviting – but it does offer a fresh look at the streetscape and the crowds of people, precisely because you are not a part of it.

Besides perspective, *Reverse* is also largely about trusting. Here is where Bellinkx, with his distinctive filmic signature, shows his engagement. Trusting in new patterns, daring to detach yourself from the whole, to surrender yourself to the unknown. On the last leg of the journey, Bellinkx carries this to the extreme: the initially rather noncommittal expedition ends in a mental quest in which the spectators are challenged to drop all of their patterns and initial impulses and have blind faith in the unknown.

That's a feeling to hold onto.

Photo: Leeuwarder Courant