

NoorderZomerProgram: first solid conversations (and they take their time), then a journey in your head, far from everything

By Eric Nederkoorn, published on 14 August 2020



The Swiss Mats Staub surprised earlier at Noorderzon with *21*. He is back with video conversations. Belgian Johannes Bellinkx let us walk backwards last year. Now we are spinning in a strange universe.

Just like Eurosonic at the beginning of this year, when everything was still allowed to be, was colored Swiss, the NoorderZomerProgram of Noorderzon - now that little is possible - also has two contributions from the Alpine country. Logical choices, because corona proof.

A month ago Simon Senn came to the very start of these alternative Noorderzon edition, with the online performance *Arielle F*. Fellow Swissman Mats Staub will be a guest in Vrijdag Theater until next weekend, well, not himself, his video installations. Four years ago, in his performance *21*, he asked Europeans about their memories of when they were 21. Now he has two people, carefully selected and previously no acquaintances, tell each other about their experiences with birth and death.

Long-winded conversations

As a visitor, you only see two of the conversations. So you have to be a bit lucky. The two British nurses Donna and Cathy have a lot to tell each other, and emotions are unleashed, yet it may be a bit too much 'just life' to remain fascinating.

It is nice that the discussion partners are projected as large as the visitors themselves, against a dark background and ditto room. That comes close. But 50 minutes for one conversation is very long. The conversation after the break between a special South African and a woman with Native American roots is much more interesting, because of the anthropological insight and the philosophical dialogue

about life and death, with gripping stories. Very worthwhile, but another fifty minutes. Could have been half an hour less.

From the Forum suddenly to a completely different world

You shouldn't want to say too much about *Continuum* by Johannes Bellinkx. Covered by an all-black poncho, you look through a rectangular frame at an elongated decor. Or no, you keep passing that decor yourself. The fantasy helps you to different universes thanks to the constantly changing shapes, distances and sound effects. Are you underwater? Inside the earth? Is that a glacier wall right in front of you? Dennis van Tilburgs soundscapes help to make a special journey through the head. Only at the end do you see how that came about.

Photo: Knelis