



About Abattoir Fermé

(...a sort of introduction)

Abattoir Fermé is a theatre collective based in **Mechelen (Belgium)** and founded in 1999.

1999 – 2001

The company's early work (25 plays in 3 years time) might best be described as bizarre, semi-underground guerilla theatre, combining influences ranging from dadaism to horror movies into a personal and humorous-yet-disturbing style. These early, more or less experimental plays were often situated in some nightmarish underbelly of society, featuring social outcasts and freaks.

2002 – 2005

After achieving local cult status, professional partners opened the doorways to a new and more professionalized approach from 2002 onwards – while retaining and cherishing an *indie* approach. The company's love for fantasy worlds, filmic narratives and often grotesque acting style were further explored and new themes presented themselves. Inspiration was now found in **science, the counterculture, outsider art, dissident politics, twisted sexuality** and various themes clouded by obscurity or neglected because of their taboo nature. The formal aspects and visual style of the performances also became more poignant, sampling and contextualizing influences from comic books, Hollywood, subcultures, underground cinema, paintings, etc.

The piece *Galapagos* (2004) proved to be a breakthrough. In its visual design, dark atmosphere and fragmented narrative, *Galapagos* marked a new step in the development of Abattoir's artistic discourse. The production received wide critical acclaim and earned the company a selection for the annual Flemish-Dutch Theatre Festival as an extraordinary and memorable production. With *Galapagos*, Abattoir Fermé first started performing outside of Belgium (The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Norway,...).

2006 – ...

From 2006, Abattoir Fermé started producing at a rate of about two new full plays per year – combined with various side-projects. In the film-inspired *Chaos Trilogy* (2005-2007) and especially in the critically acclaimed “wordless productions” like *Tourniquet* (2007), *Mythobarbital* (2008) and *Snuff* (2009), Abattoir Fermé further focussed on the development of new and highly visual narratives. Public and critics have characterized Abattoir Fermé's voice in terms of provocative, physical, sensorial, funny, disturbing, extremely visual and often with a dark sense of humour. Though always recognizable as the voice of the same company, each production can be quite different from the other. What binds them together, is a love of themes and forms like **cinema, private**

backrooms, the metropolis, horror, the human body, the grotesque and burlesque, rituals, the enigma, the underground, outsiders and all things deviant.

In recent years, the company has also engaged in unexpected and critically acclaimed **collaborations** with a myriad of artistic partners: most notably with home composer **Kreng** (www.myspace.com/krengmusic), but also including – for instance – a children’s puppet theatre (*Nevermore*, based on E.A. Poe’s work) and a pop group (*Hardboiled*, with cult combo Capsule). In 2008, a residency at the Brussels film school RITS resulted in *Cinérama*, a collection of 9 short films.

That same year, Abattoir Fermé received the annual Flemish Culture Prize - usually reserved for more “established” companies – for its “*penetrating and ominous theatre, about the stories that frighten society and about the theatre itself.*” Also in 2008, the company was nominated for the *European Theatre Prize for new theatrical realities*. Recent performances by Abattoir Fermé have been touring all over Europe, most visibly in artistically adventurous venues and festivals with a penchant for new dramaturgies and innovative styles.

Future Abattoir Fermé-plans include the **INDEX-trilogy** (a theatrical reflection on the company’s own ‘back catalogue’), a music-theatre team-up with a metal band and a collaboration with the prestigious Flemish Opera House. End of 2009 also sees the publication of **ANATOMY** (Lannoo Publishers, 320 pages), a book archiving the first 10 years of the company in interviews, essays and many photographs.

The company’s current artistic core members are artistic director Stef Lernous (°1973), actress Tine Van den Wyngaert (°1978), actor Chiel van Berkel (°1959), actress Kirsten Pieters (°1979), actor/composer Kreng (°1975) and dramaturge/manager Nick Kaldunski (°1980).

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