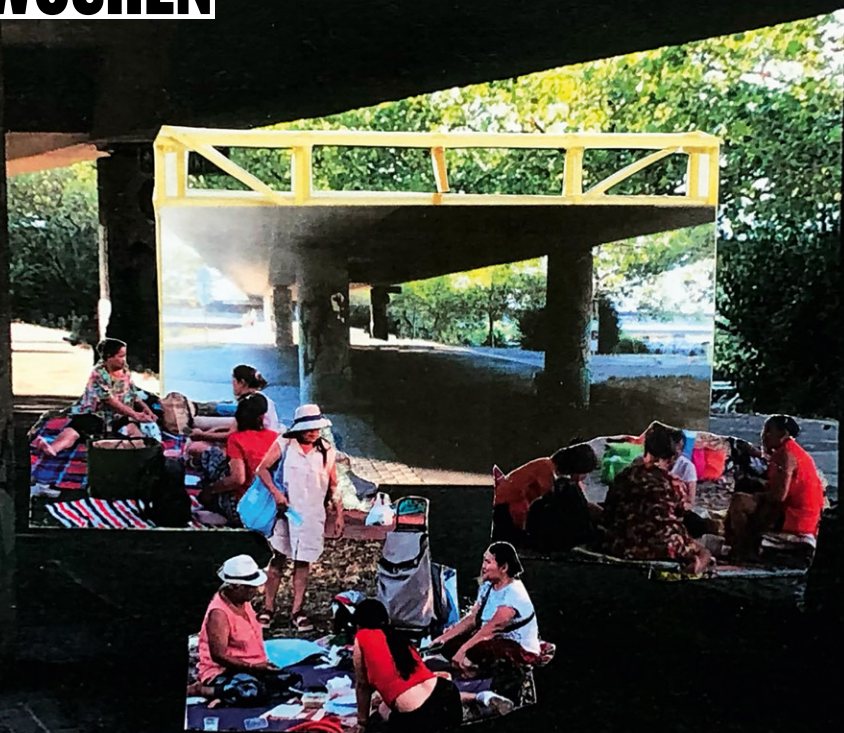


**FREIE
REPUBLIK
WIENER
FEST
WOCHEN**

7 / 8 June
Donauinsel

WORLD PREMIERE



Thomas Verstraeten

INSELLIEBE

Who would have expected that the Donauinsel island, which was built between 1972 and 1988 as a flood protection measure, would grow so dear to the Viennese population's hearts? It has become a symbol for freedom and a life without constraints. Global issues seem to play no role here. But is this freedom real, or is it just an illusion? Together with communities that feel at home on the island, Belgian artist Thomas Verstraeten has done some intensive research about life on the Donauinsel. At several theatre stations on the Donauinsel, *Island Love* celebrates the diversity of the island's visitors and subcultures and at the same time uncovers mechanisms that shape island life. The audience boards a small train, goes on short walks and embarks on a trip across the Donauinsel together. There are two starting points: Donaustadtbrücke and Reichsbrücke. Both tours cover the same stations and give a unique perspective on this much-loved island.

🗣 various languages
⌚ 90 mins.

Concept, Scenography, Direction Thomas Verstraeten **Sounddesign** Senjan Jansen **Painter backdrops** Bob Van Tricht **Direction assistance** Katrin Lohmann **Assistance scenography** Eloise Kent **Support community work** Claudio Chinchilla, Iva Marković **With musical interludes by** Dr. Elisabeth Kató, Marcelo Guzman, Michael Bettini, GiuliaAlice (*just another doubting song*), Quang Nguyen & Thi Bay Nguyen, Hung Le & Thi Nha Le (Karaoke)

Production Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

executed by the team of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

World premiere June 2025, Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

BY AND WITH

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MARCELO GUZMAN / NIKOLAUS ECKHARD /
DR. ELISABETH KATÓ



FISHING ISN'T ABOUT CATCHING FISH. IT'S ABOUT SPENDING TIME ON THE RIVER. ONCE THE NET IS RESTING ON THE GROUND YOU WAIT FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT – THEY SAY ABOUT TWO PAGES OF A NOVEL. – **BORAN**

BACK THEN, I WAS VERY UNHAPPY WITH MY LIFE IN VIENNA. AND THEN I HAD THIS REVELATION THAT THE THING THAT I AM REALLY LONGING FOR IS ACTUALLY HERE IN THE CITY: TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE SKY; TO FEEL THE SEASONS; SPENDING TIME ON THE RIVER. SO I LOOKED FOR HOW THAT WAS POSSIBLE. I JOINED THE ARBEITER-FISCHER-VEREIN, THE WORKER'S FISHING ASSOCIATION. – **NIKO**

'THIS IS MY SPOT. I AM AN EXPERT FISHERMAN. I CAN THROW AS FAR AS THE OTHER BANK – 130 METRES. MY BIGGEST FISH WAS A CARP, 22 KILOGRAMS. I REALLY LIKE THE WATER. BUT I SOMETIMES REALLY STRUGGLE WITH PEOPLE. (THE SWIMMERS.) AND ALSO BEAVERS – IT'S MADNESS...THEY EAT ENTIRE TREES. – **ZORAN**

DONAUIINSEL MIGHT BE VIENNA'S LIVING ROOM OR BACK GARDEN, BUT FOR ME IT'S MY BEDROOM. THIS IS A FICTIONAL PLACE. BECAUSE THE REAL PLACE MUST NOT BE KNOWN. BARBECUING IS ALLOWED HERE – BUT SLEEPING ISN'T... – **BIRGIT**

IT'S MORE FOR THE MIND AND NOT THE BODY. I ALWAYS DO THE SAME STUFF, PUSH & PULL. I'VE BEEN DOING THE SAME FOR YEARS: PULL-UPS, PUSH-UPS. FIVE TIMES A WEEK, PURE STRENGTH TRAINING. THE BETTER I FEEL, THE LESS I DO IT. BUT I ALSO LIKE LOOKING FIT. I DON'T LIKE GETTING COMPLIMENTS, IT EMBARRASSES ME. I LISTEN TO FALTER PODCAST. I THINK THERE'S A COMMUNITY, BUT I'M NOT PART OF IT. – **NIKOLAI**

I'VE BEEN COMING HERE FOR FIVE YEARS. IT'S MY HAPPY SPACE. I LIKE TREES. I LIKE MEETING NEW PEOPLE. SUPER INTERESTING. I WORK OUT TOPLESS. OBVIOUSLY YOU CAN SEE THAT I WORK OUT. IT'S TRUE THAT THE BASIS FOR GOOD FRIENDSHIP IS ALSO PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE. AT THE MOMENT I AM WORKING ON THE ONE ARM HANDSTAND. – **LUCA**

INDOORS, I DON'T LIKE SWEATING MEN, THE ATMOSPHERE IS TOO MASCULINE. HERE, IT'S THE SAME. MOST MEN ARE TOPLESS WHEN THEY WORK OUT. IT IS ALSO ABOUT BODY CONTROL. WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR BODY. I WOULD PREFER FOR NOBODY TO SEE ME. – **JANA**

I THINK IT'S COOL WHEN SOMEONE CAN DO A HANDSTAND ON THE RAIL. BUT IT DOESN'T INSPIRE ME TO DO THE SAME. I'M TOO LAZY. – **KRIS**

EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT THESE COMPLEX MARTIAL ARTS COMES FROM MEDIAEVAL BOOKS THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT FOR US BY FENCING MASTERS. CORRECT POSTURE, KNOWING THE STEPS AND THE SWORD, STRENGTH ARE ALL IMPORTANT – BUT MORE THAN THAT STILL ROUTINE AND DISCIPLINE. PAY ATTENTION TO THE RIGHT DISTANCE. DON'T GET TOO CLOSE, OR YOU'LL LOSE YOUR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. – **SREČKO**

THAT'S TOO MUCH DRAMA NOW. – **BARBORA**

BIOGRAPHY

Theatre maker, actor and visual artist **Thomas Verstraeten** was born in Belgium in 1986 and lives and works in Antwerp. He is a member of the FC Bergman theatre company, creating plays and operas that have won him national and international renown. The floundering, ever-striving human being takes centre stage in FC Bergman's work. Characteristically, the productions include large-scale montages of images and experiments with theatre in vast spaces that feature groups of extras and integrated video. Verstraeten also works independently for FC Bergman on an art practice that straddles performing arts and visual arts. In his visual practice, Verstraeten spins narratives out of the movements of the city and its inhabitants, out of their visible and hidden stories and lives. In his videos, installations and often participatory performances, the ordinary is theatralised into the extraordinary. Theatralisation is not about the creation of fiction, but the transformation and idealisation of time and space. These projects are presented in urban public spaces and in cultural institutions.

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