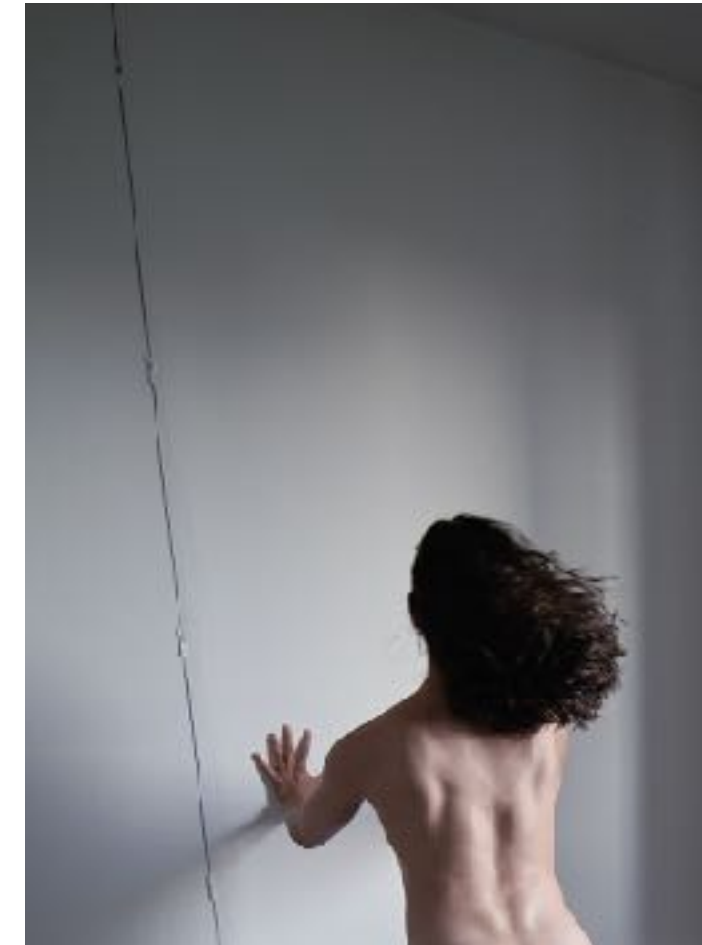


# *SPELL*

Spell is a performance that addresses the collective hypnotic spell that is put over the Western understanding and attention span about what is happening in the outside world. Like an overactive fairy tale directing our gaze away from the danger that is surrounding us all around, objects and conversations are frantically trying to keep our attention diverted from war, lostness, and the danger just around the corner.



Co-production: **KVS**

Creators:

choreography/performance .....Igor Shyshko, Albina Vakhitova

dramaturgy.....Elke Van Campenhout

light design.....Caroline Mathieu

video.....Dmitry Novikov

music.....Max Zippel

## *Igor Shyshko*

is a dancer, performer, researcher, and creator from Belarus. He came to Brussels for education at P.A.R.T.S. During that period, he worked as an assistant for the creation of 'Drumming' by Rosas. He was a permanent part of the Rosas company for 10 years, participating in numerous choreographies. He worked as a performer with Akram Kahn, Michele Noiret, Arco Renz, and Marc Vanrunxt, among others. In his quest for a personal dance language as a maker and choreographer, he created 'Darling' with Moya Michael, 'Precaryus' with Tale Dolven, and 'Malus'. These three performances have a stronger personal and research-oriented character. In these creations, he develops a reflection on the reality that surrounds him. A physically embedded investigation into the relationship between art, the artist, and the reality in which he lives. In his latest creation Malus (2022), Shyshko returned to a practice from daily life: his own daily yoga routine. By placing this body on stage, the contemplative attitude of the player suddenly takes on a completely different meaning. The dancer lets go of his identity, his need to be seen by an audience. Rudi Laermans wrote the following about this performance in Etcetera: 'With the deduction of religious connotations, the dance work in Malus is a series of exercises in controlled self-undermining: through the attentive repetition of simple movements, hollowing out the ego bit by bit until it disappears into the body – (...). This tradition revolves around creating a bodily border experience that de-subjectivizes, to the point where the self dissolves into an anonymous corporeality of the mere 'being-there'. Much, not all, contemporary dance is about identity affirmation, without (I) or with a political (we) premonition. The dance in Malus radically aims for identity loss, the border experience of emptying - of the body as pure potentiality: a body that can do everything but wants nothing.'

## *Elke Van Campenhout*

studied philosophy and cultural studies at the KUL (University of Leuven, Belgium), and also obtained her teaching degree at this institution. Currently she works and lives as a 'monk', spiritual teacher, workshop organizer and experimental performer. In a previous life Elke Van Campenhout was a dance and theatre critic for newspaper De Standaard and Radio Klara. She also was the head editor of the performance magazine Etcetera and worked as a dramaturg within different (international) institutes. Elke Van Campenhout worked for 10 years (2007-2016) as the director of a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies, [www.apass.be](http://www.apass.be)), where she took care of the creation, organisation and communication of the learning environment, and the facilitation of the long-term research department. She started up this program in 2008 as an alternative knowledge and practice centre for artists and theoreticians, based on self-organisation and collaboration, within an explicitly transdisciplinary setting. Within this framework she also developed her own research under the working title Bureau d'Espoir (Bureau of Hope). In 2016 she left the a.pass environment in order to be able to spend more time on the development of The Monastery and her own spiritual and academic work. Since 2017 The Monastery has developed a steady and growing practice base. During the current Corona crisis, we managed 4 free online meditations per day, a weekly Tantric practice group, a support platform and yoga classes online. But more than this, The Monastery has grown into an open house for a handful of permanent monks, researchers and a lot of incoming and passing guests, participating in workshops, classes, discussions, brainstorming, rituals, or just coming to share the communal life as short or longer-term residents. [themonasterybrussels.org](http://themonasterybrussels.org)

## *Albina Vakhitova*

is an artist, performer, choreographer, and movement director. Born in 1995 in Khabarovsk, Russia, she is currently based in Paris. Albina pursued her education in "History of Art" at the Moscow State Academic Art Institute V.I. Surikova. In September 2020, Albina founded her own dance company called "SAAD," which has since become a platform for her innovative and collaborative works. Albina's artistic endeavours have earned her recognition on various platforms, including participation in the 6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art and the 2nd Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art. She has received support from renowned institutions such as MMOMA, Garage Museum, GES-2, and Institut Français. Throughout her career, Albina has collaborated with an array of esteemed choreographers, directors, artists, and composers from around the world, including Claudia Castellucci, Tatiana Chizhikova, Philippe Almeida, and Igor Shyshko, among others. She has also worked with acclaimed artists such as Kirill Serebrennikov and Pussy Riots. Albina's artistic approach is characterized by a unique blend of choreography, intuitive improvisation, and live art. She explores themes of performative transformation and cultural bricolage, drawing inspiration from elements such as dynamic sculpture, psychological reflection, and childlike innocence. For Albina, humanity is akin to intricate mathematical theorems that offer insights into the world. She believes in drawing from her personal experiences to create meaningful connections with her audience, viewing her artistic pursuits as a pathway to self-discovery. The dance company "SAAD," founded by Albina, embodies her vision of integrating subjective experiences into performative pieces. The collective engages in regular collective practice, focusing on technical movement studies and defining physical qualities and intentions in live performances. Comprising artists from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience, "SAAD" has evolved into a large union of over 30 artists from around the world, reflecting Albina's commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation in the arts.



## *Caroline Mathieu*

is active as a designer for theatre creations. Her role takes various forms: scenographer, light designer, performer, and researcher. After a Master's study in Product Design and a Master after Master in Theatre Studies, design and theatre came together in a Scenography course at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. She recently started a research project on the influence of light on perception in the context of a Ph.D. in the arts via the Brussels Arts Platform (VUB/RITCS). Throughout her career, Caroline has collaborated with numerous artists, choreographers, and directors, including Igor Shyshko, Logan Lopez Gonzalez, and Mercedes Dassy, among others. Her collaborations extend across various mediums, from dance performances to video exhibitions, reflecting her versatility as an artist. Caroline's artistic endeavors are deeply rooted in research and exploration. She has undertaken research residencies and projects focusing on topics such as the perception of colored light and the integration of light into performance spaces. Her creations often blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, inviting audiences to engage with the sensory elements of her designs. With a passion for craftsmanship, Caroline also explores the realms of product design and woodcraft, adding a tactile dimension to her artistic repertoire.

## *Dmitriy Novikov*

currently based in Paris, is a cinematographer and film editor. He was born in St. Petersburg in 1994 and studied Sociology at the State Marine Technical University in Saint Petersburg from 2011 to 2015. Later, from 2019 to 2021, he pursued a course in Film Direction at the School of New Cinema in Saint Petersburg. Despite his background in sociology, Dmitriy developed a passion for cinema and transitioned into the field of filmmaking. He began his career as a film editor and colorist in the commercial sphere before enrolling in the directors' workshop at the School of New Cinema. His short film "Trap" competed in the Kinotavr 2020 festival, and "kljaksy" was selected for the short film competition at the Berlinale Shorts 2022.

## *Max Zippel*

a composer-musician-senior arranger, discovered his passion for music through visual arts. After studying and teaching graphic design, photography and video at Paris 8 University, Max launched the progressive electro / rock group 'Concorde', a project which led him to tour widely. During this chapter of his music career, Max continued working in visual arts designing graphics and video for the world of luxury fashion, for brands like Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Piaget, and others. Most recently, Max's main focus has been his young solo project 'Max Future', which has created opportunities for collaboration with both Netflix (YOU, Iron fist (Marvel)) and North Face (creating the soundtrack for their upcoming campaign 'Future Light'). One of Max Zippel's main strengths is his ability to adapt to different projects. Whether it is the creation of the full soundtrack for the short film "Calanques" (entirely recorded on guitar in Andalusian hues) - or the podcast project he is currently creating with the House of Dior, combining minimalist electronic music and neo-classical melodies - Max brings agile imagination to the creative process.

## Introduction:

Spell is a performance that is a response to the one year research grant Igor Shyshko received in 2023. In the research 'Deconstructivism', he looked into the role of propaganda: how do political and existential contexts get constructed in our daily lives, that make us look differently at the world and our lives within it. Concretely, propaganda for Igor is something that separates him from his family. It is something that makes dialogue impossible, because of the clash of worldviews that is created between him, living in Brussels and his family, still living in Belarus. For them the reality of things looks completely different. This play of propaganda and reality is something Igor recognises very clearly from his own upbringing, and the shock of his immigration to Belgium. In these times, propaganda is what made the war possible: years and years of preparation to make people believe there are nazi's running Ukraine, that the LGBTQ community is the greatest threat to family and social values, that these family values are what is keeping the nation together. Propaganda prepared all citizens little by little into accepting what came next. In the research, Igor started working with Albina Vakhitova on the deconstruction of these stories. They chose to work with Swan Lake, performed in a small 1m wooden cube. Swan Lake is probably one of the most famous 'romantic' export products of Russian culture. It gets played on all TV channels for days on end, every time a Soviet or Russian leader dies. This tradition started with the death of Brezhnev, and continues to this day. To play around with the Swan Lake score is therefore highly reminiscent of these deaths, and is also a 'spell' of resistance, calling for the demise of Putin. Later in the research, Igor locked himself up in the box for 12 hours, in public space, during the Theaterfestival, to protest the war, and to talk about the growing isolation propaganda is forcing us into, narrowing our view of the world to a small sliver of facts and possibilities. For the performance 'Spell', Shyshko wants to work further on the materials and ideas that came out of the research: the box, Swan Lake and repetitive, exhaustive movement.

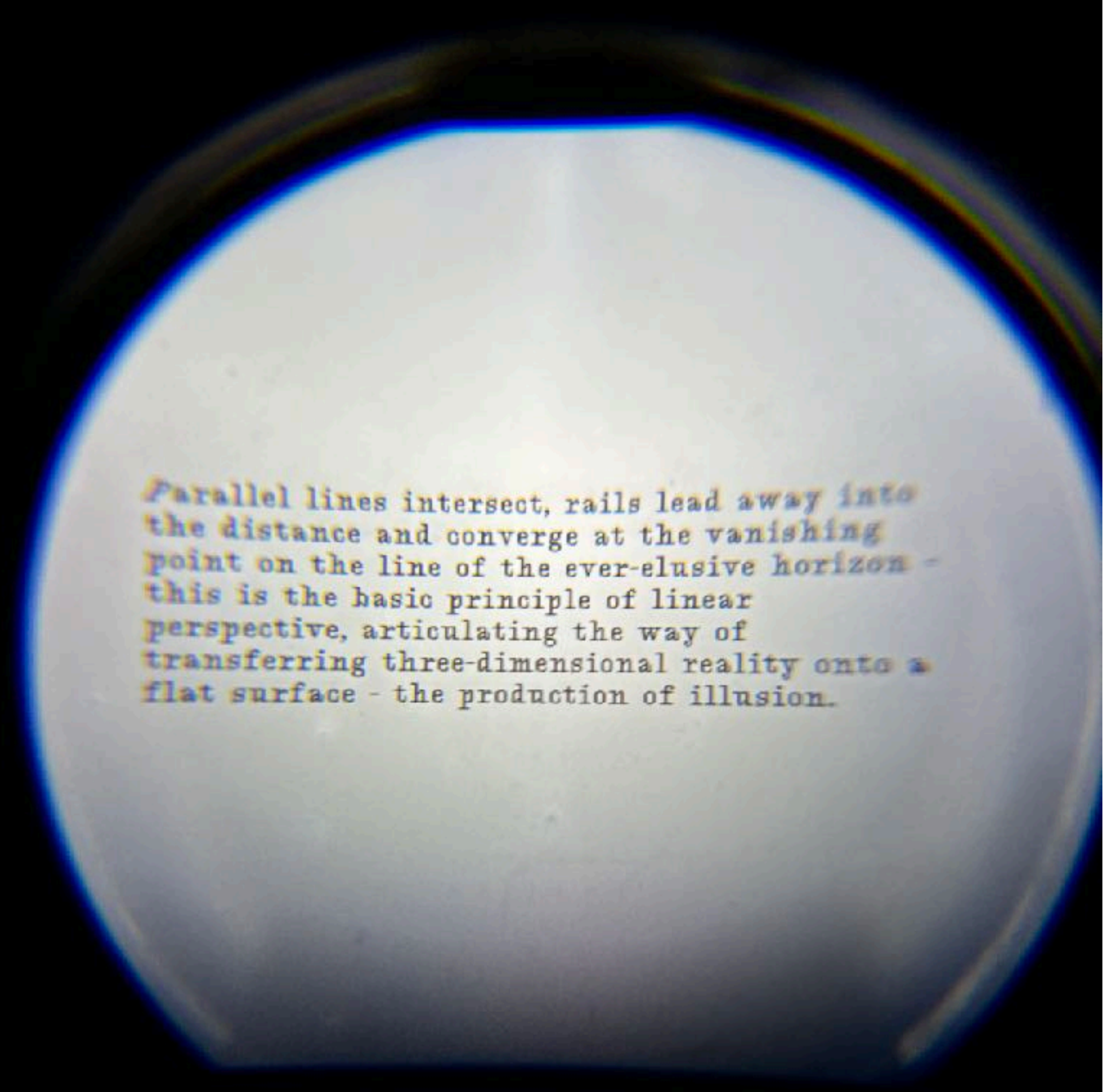
[blog](#)

[KVS/8th of May'23](#)

## physicality and endurance



Spell is a piece for two dancers, and the movement score will be largely built on endurance: entering into repetitive movements, into exhausting resistance, into ecstatic action. We use repetition to overcome fear. The movement sequences might be seen like a patient exorcism, trying to shake off the programming of the bodies, caught up in useless actions. We imagine the bodies, surrounded by 'objects of interest', trying to get to the 'goodies' and repetitively failing to do so. The movements are not illustrating anything though, they are mechanical and precise, repeated through both bodies, based on the skill of the dancer's bodies, the skills that formed their bodies and educated them into their identities as dancers and 'producers of art'. The smooth surface of the movements is broken by the close-up live recordings of the facial expressions of the dancers, diving deeper and deeper into their reserves. The exhaustion becomes more and more visible in their faces and emotions. Just like the close-up in a soap, or reality tv dramatic moment, enlarges the dramatic impact of the moment for the viewer to see and relate to.



Parallel lines intersect, rails lead away into  
the distance and converge at the vanishing  
point on the line of the ever-elusive horizon -  
this is the basic principle of linear  
perspective, articulating the way of  
transferring three-dimensional reality onto a  
flat surface - the production of illusion.

The first residency  
period took place from  
4th till 8th of March, 24  
in Paris at the Centre  
Wallonie-Bruxelles.

We are attaching a  
video sketch that  
Albina and Dmitriy  
worked on. [video](#)





Currently, the project is seeking support from financial partners, residency venues, and exhibition spaces.

Please feel free to [contact](#) us if the project resonates with you.

Thank you for your attention.