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**Playing the villain, playing the judge:**

**The carnivalesque in *Die Elf Scharfrichter* and *dunst*'s performed protests.**

Since the rise to popularity of Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal work *Rabelais and His World*, the moniker 'carnavalesque' has been liberally granted to a variety of artists whose work attempts cultural subversion through the employment of humour. Championed by many art theorists - most notably Julia Kristeva - the term is often applied to works that are in fact ironic, satirical, or simply fun, rather than truly based in Carnival dynamics. This text aims to gain ground towards a more precise definition of the carnivalesque in performance art practice by comparing two groups, separated from each other by one hundred years, and analysing their practices in terms of the dynamics of the Carnival. The first of these groups is regularly referred to as being carnivalesque (Appignanesi, 2004; Ham, 2000; Jelavich, 2000), perhaps because it found its origins quite literally in the Carnival itself. The second has never previously received an academic reading in English, but offers rich ground to define contemporary incarnations of the carnivalesque in performance art.

Beginning with an overview of the historical Carnival, and some definitions of the carnivalesque offered by contemporary art theorists, this text will first sketch out the parameters inside which most art currently labelled 'carnavalesque' falls. Since the carnivalesque can best be understood when viewed as a counterpoint to the norms of the dominant or ruling class, an analysis of the two performance groups in question must also acknowledge the socio-political context of their inception. An analysis of the residual dynamics of the historical Carnival in the groups' practices can then be made, from which a clearer description of carnivalesque practice emerges.

### **The traditional Carnival, and the birth of carnivalesque**

The communal phenomenon of the European Carnival - the ritual celebration before the forty days penitence of Lent - was occasion for the 'world to be turned on its head', and license to be given for the taboo to take centre stage. The Carnival revolved around recurring images of inverted social norms: peasants were elected as kings of misrule; donkeys were ordained as priests; cross-dressed identities were paraded; and old women were fed into gigantic 'mincers' from which they would emerge young, nubile and imminently woo-able (Connelly, 2003; Hymann & Malbert, 2000). It was a day for otherwise obedient citizens to 'go mad', to briefly trespass outside the margins of the permissible, and to give rise to the ordinarily

repressed. When the Carnival's transgressive revelry was finally quashed by Puritan movements, it resulted in a reflexive, Pandora's Box effect: the denial of the Carnival itself gave birth to the potential for carnivalesque in daily life<sup>1</sup> (Jenks, 2003).

While retaining close ties to its aesthetic parent; the grotesque, the carnivalesque is primarily differentiated as a sub-genre for its sense of play and mockery in questioning hegemonic systems (Connelly, 2003). For Chris Jenks, 'carnavalesque' has come to describe a process which injects "resistance, disorder and methodological irresponsibility" into contemporary cultural studies (2003, p.161). In the visual arts, the carnivalesque invades and challenges the authority of the aesthetic status quo, breaking in "rather as laughter breaks in upon the body" (Hymann & Malbert, 2000, p.72).

It is important to this discussion to note the importance of the bodily aspect of the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque's semantic inseparability from the public phenomenon of the Carnival itself means that the 'folk' are never far from its revelry – an aspect that generally places carnivalesque works outside the exclusive arena of gallery art. In its purest form, it aims to engage in direct dialogue with the populace, encouraging communal interaction between practitioner, audience, and the event itself. Bakhtin asserts that the grotesque body of the Carnival is representative of all people. Carnavalesque exaggeration of the body's natural processes invokes the common experience of being a bodily creature (Bakhtin, 1984). Jonathan Benthall

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<sup>1</sup>The observations of Georges Bataille (1987) imply that those behaviours and desires that we repress in order to maintain control of daily life are a crucial and permanent current of the human experience. Bataille illustrates the symbiotic relationship between that which is internally repressed and the order of the outside world; man's inner chaos must be repressed in order to facilitate control, yet it is the desire to have control that creates the need for repression. He further suggests that that which is repressed is, ultimately, irrepressible. Though the existence of the Carnival is first documented in the Middle Ages, anthropologists have traced its origins back to pre-Christian ritual, and even further to Saturnalia – the Roman festival where inversion of rank was central. Add to this the Carnival's similarities to the Jewish celebration of Purim and the Indian Holi, and a picture begins to emerge of a need for celebration of the repressed that is deeply ingrained within the human psyche (Hymann & Malbert, 2000).

agrees with Bakhtin when he adds “the body is perhaps the foremost of all metaphors for a society’s perception of itself” (cited in Jones & Warr, 2000, p.235).

Post-modernist thinkers have eagerly embraced the carnivalesque’s relevance to deconstructions of the norm, loaded as it is with the incisive quality of unrestrained mockery. Indeed, the application of the carnivalesque to contemporary art has even been referred to as “the perfect post-modern device” (Jenks, 2003, p.164).

To watch this post-modern wonder in action we begin, ironically, with a firmly modernist group from early twentieth century Munich.

### ***Die Elf Scharfrichter* – Modern morals get the chop**

*Die Elf Scharfrichter* (The Eleven Executioners), arguably Germany’s first true *Kabarett*, was founded during the 1900 *Faschings* carnival in Munich. The eleven artists who would later make up the group burst onto the Carnival carrying placards announcing themselves as ‘*Die Verbrecher*’ - The Criminals (Greul, 1962)<sup>2</sup>. As the procession wound through the streets of Munich, these self-condemned outlaws threatened in song to commit every crime known to man, except the ultimate crime of exposing their bodies – “...*aber nacket, nacket, nacket geh’n wir nicht!*” (Greul, 1962, p.10). What could have driven them to such naughty excess?

For some years, the *Lex Heinze*; one of a band of morality laws aimed at bringing a formal system of governmental control to modernist society in Germany, had been poised to pass into law. The *Lex Heinze* proposed to place all artistic censorship directly in the hands of the Wilhelmenian authorities, giving them the power to shut down any theatre or gallery showing what they considered objectionable material (Jelavich, 1981).

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<sup>2</sup> Tellingly, the noun ‘*Verbrecher*’ is derived from the verb *brechen*: to break.

It was against this proposed law that *Die Verbrecher* were making their spontaneous protest<sup>3</sup>. Their tantalisingly threatening song was written at eleven o'clock that morning, and by midday the group were parading through town. They received an unexpected surge of support from the populace to the extent that, according to one of the protestors, "...by evening 'The Criminals' could toast a new circle of friends from all over the city" (Falckenberg, 1901, cited in Greul, 1962; translation R.M.). The success of the event inspired future *Scharfrichter* Leo Greiner so, that he rushed home and penned the song that would become synonymous with The Eleven Executioners, the *Scharfrichter Marsch* (Ham, 2000);

<i>“Erbauet ragt der schwarze Block</i>	The black block looms, erected
<i>Wir richten scharf und herzlich</i>	We judge sharply and heartily
<i>Blutrotes Herz, blutroter rock</i>	Blood-red heart, blood-red robe
<i>All unsere Lust ist schmerzlich.</i>	All our fun is hurtful.
<i>Wer mit dem Tag verfeindet ist,</i>	Whoever is hostile on this day,
<i>Wird blutig exequiert</i>	Will be bloodily executed
<i>Wer mit dem Tod befreundet ist,</i>	Whoever has befriended death,
<i>Mit Sang und Kranz geziert.”</i>	Lavished with songs and laurels.

(Greiner, 1900, cited in Greul, 1962, p.12; translation R.M.)

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<sup>3</sup> The choice of name for the group can itself be read as a second level of carnivalesque protest. Between 1885 and 1905, Munich's population had more than doubled from slightly over 200,000 to over 410,000. Local body police, local government and even the Kaiser himself were scratching their heads over how to respond to massive overcrowding, spreading disease and high unemployment in the southern capital. The solution was close at hand in the form of sweeping social reforms to control the spread of modern chaos, of which the *Lex Heinze* was only one. *Sperrbezirke* (cordoned areas) were set up, and the bohemian, criminal, insane and otherwise infectious aspects of Munich society were pushed into housing in areas of town where they would not run the risk of coming into contact with morally upright members of society (Ham, 2000). The self-damning '*Verbrecher*' label pokes fun at state perceptions that these marginalised groups were interchangeable.

## **Something stinks in here...**

2005, 1am, New Year's Day, Berlin. In a smoky, bunker-like bar hidden deep underground, a radical performance troupe were about to confirm that the Carnival was not yet dead in Europe (*dunst*, Homophobia - Silvester Total, Kinzo Klub).

A gender/species-crossing character in grotesque made-up, calling itself 'Miss Fish' crooned platitudes to the audience; "I'm so beautiful, you're so beautiful". A sleekly muscular man, Johnny Warehouse, ignored the audience outright while he monotonously confessed to his bottle of Absolut Vodka that "money makes me so happy". A traditionally made-up drag queen extracted herself suddenly from her neon-green evening dress to reveal the strip of gaffer tape running between her legs, holding everything in place. The line between audience and performer was constantly crossed, and the atmosphere was one of revelry and celebration. These people were freaks, but they were *our* freaks.

At one point a classically proportioned (and for the first time in the performance decidedly female) woman took to the stage. She wore a plain, pearl-coloured bra and panties set, and seemed at first surprisingly ordinary after the acts which had preceded her. An assistant brought her a silver tray, on which lay a scalpel. She took the scalpel and ran it gently across her left breast. At first there was nothing, and then slowly a hair-thin line opened up in the fabric. Something was showing through from underneath. On the next gentle pass of the scalpel a dark line of brown sliced through the pristine material. The woman began poking her fingers inside the sharp opening she had created, hooking out a cancerous-looking black-brown goop, which she rolled into balls with her fingers and placed gingerly onto the silver tray. It was chocolate cake. After performing this action a few times, she cut open her other breast in similar fashion, and finally sliced a vertical line through the fabric of her panties to form a dark, chocolatey yoni which she offered to the audience to dine on.

The performer was Lene Leth Lebbe, and the group was Danish queer performance collective *dunst*.

*Dunst* (which translates roughly to ‘stench’) formed in 2001, a century after *Die Elf Scharfrichter* opened their doors, in direct response to escalating political and social conservatism in their homeland<sup>4</sup>.

A growing national trend towards political conservatism saw the November 2001 election result in a coalition, mixed liberal and right-wing government, an outcome political theorists has been anticipating for some time (Bang, Box, Hansen & Neufeld, 2000). *Dunst*’s inception followed directly after, *dunst* member Nikolaj attributing the swiftness of the group’s formation to a feeling that “we more than ever needed a free space where we could be ourselves and express ourselves to whoever might gain from what we want to express” (personal communication, 19 May, 2005)<sup>5</sup>.

### **The executions begin**

It took over a year for *Die Elf Scharfrichter* to finally make good on their promise to sharply and heartily judge the hegemony of their day. The first *Kabarett* in Munich opened its doors on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, April 1901 (Greul, 1962)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> A constitutional monarchy, the Danish political community has existed in some form or another for over a thousand years. Although a cultural tendency towards the active questioning of authority exists, “peaceful transitions – rather than revolutions – are one of the defining characteristics of Danish history” (Bang, Box, Hansen & Neufeld, 2000, p. 378). Within its first year, the new Danish government had instigated budget cuts in the welfare sector, sharply reduced national arts funding, and moved towards a more rigorous anti-foreign policy, as predicted by political theorists in 2000 (Bang et al., 2000; see also Pold, 2004). *Dunst* cite the “Normalization of Christiania” - an island in Copenhagen set up in the 1970s as a creative commune (see also Steve, 2004); and imminent “Closure of the Ungdomshuset” - the last remaining squat in Copenhagen, and home to many of *dunst*’s performances (see also Squat.net) as evidence of the current government’s continuing attempts to marginalise and control alternative and minority groups.

<sup>5</sup> In the absence of any academic writing on *dunst* in English prior to this piece, much of the writing in this essay has been based on primary research in the form of interviews and personal communications with members of the *dunst* collective. If no reference has been directly cited, the source is a personal communication with one of the *dunst* practitioners. Emails of these may be viewed unedited in the appendix to this essay.

<sup>6</sup> The original Eleven comprised four writers, three painters and graphic artists, a sculptor, an architect, a composer, and a lawyer - who could evidently also sing (Greul, 1962).

Ernst Stern (one of the *Henkersknechte*, Hangman's assistants, who assisted with production) explained that the name *Die Elf Scharfrichter* "was intended to suggest that judgement was harsh and execution summary in the battle against reaction and obscurantism" (Jelavich, 1985, p.170). One of the Eleven, Wilhelm Hüsgen, comments on the group's desire to rebel against the frivolous aesthetics of the popular vaudeville shows of the day when he jibes that "the *Tingel-Tangel* amusements of the small-town philistines were becoming ripe for the slaughter" (Jelavich, 1985, p.161).

The performances were advertised throughout Munich as 'private affairs', to which one must be invited in order to attend. This tactic meant that, for a time, The Eleven Executioners were able to legally avoid the implications of having to register as a theatre group (Clay-Large, 1997). At the same time, however, the posters and programmes for the *Kabarets* quite clearly outlined how one could apply for an invitation to attend the *Hingerichten*, or executions (Ham, 2000).

Figure a. – *Die Elf Scharfrichter Death Masks* by Wilhelm Hüsgen, 1901



For the purposes of the show, each of The Eleven took on comically bloodthirsty pseudonyms – surnames such as Tod (Death), Rost (Rust), Blut (Blood) and Grab (Grave) (Greul, 1962)<sup>7</sup>. The walls of the venue, adorned with illustrations from the radical magazine *Simplicissimus* in which many of the performers had had work published, and other *Jugendstil* works, were also used to display death masks of the eleven performers (fig a.), sculpted by *Scharfrichter* Till Blut - Wilhelm Hüsgen to his friends (Jelavich, 2000)<sup>8</sup>. During the opening *Scharfrichter Marsch*, the group would file in swathed in red executioners' robes, masked so as to hide their true identities. Singing, they would encircle the pillory block that was central to the stage design. Displayed on the block was a human skull, sporting both a deeply embedded axe and a long plaited wig<sup>9</sup>. Tacked to the pillory itself was a scroll outlining the charges this 'criminal' had been found guilty of;

The latest political insanity, the newest imperial howler, the last word in reactionary legislation, the *demier cri* of snobbery, anything that stupid advertisements praised without reason, whatever insulted good taste or good sense (Henry, 1901, cited in Jelavich, 1985, p.170).

Native Parisian Marya Delvard, immortalised on the famous poster of the group by Thomas Theodore Heine, joined the troupe as a kind of Burtonesque chanteuse – deathly pale in appearance and moaning songs of infanticide and sexual innocence lost (Greul, 1962). Not long after the group began performing, convicted criminal and morally provocative playwright Frank Wedekind took over the role of maitre'd for the evening. Having already served time in prison for his socially objectionable writing, he had little need of a gory pseudonym to secure his image as an *enfant terrible* (Ham, 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> This linked them once again to the real-life executioners of the day, who had to keep their true identities secret in order to avoid the locations of executions becoming known to the general public (Ham, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Such death masks of executed criminals were in common usage at the time as early criminology sought to establish physical indications of a predilection to crime, a 'science' which Social Darwinists hoped heralded the possibility of identifying criminals for eradication from the gene pool (Ham, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> A play on the word *Zopf* (braid) which was in common parlance as a slang term for the outdated (Jelavich, 1981)

The acts performed during the shows themselves were predominantly political and religious satire (Clay-Large, 1997; Greul, 1962). The artists aimed to provide a mix of *variété* and serious art, infusing intellect and an aspiration to higher literature into vaudeville traditions and incorporating dance, pantomime, puppet shows, satirical songs and short theatrical sketches (Luft, Starr & Tod, 1902, cited in Greul, 1962).

### ***dunst* – the smell gets stronger**

As the conservative government's first term in office progressed, the number of artists and activists involved in *dunst* grew (and continues to grow) exponentially, as did the forms their expression took. Since their first endeavours providing queer social spaces and hosting electro-punk parties, they have released albums, presented radio shows, spoken on academic panels, presented fashion shows, campaigned internationally for queer rights, performed their all over Europe, made short films, and appeared on mainstream Danish television (Dunst, n.d.). This list is far from exhaustive.

The grotesque body, and regular crossing of the limen of the body are recurring themes through much of *dunst*'s work: Tina Träsch carries a grotesque baby in her acts; Hairwerk wears a mask which is peeled off like skin; Liebling Siebling drinks white vomit from a naked, black-painted man. Scatological elements are also common, the most famous example being a performance by Liebling Siebling, dressed as a pink poodle, and Puta. Puta - who frequently uses human faeces in performance - fisted the 'poodle' and used his arm to roll it around the stage<sup>10</sup>. Miss Fish identifies the barriers crossed by its performances in terms of delineating dichotomies between identity and non-identity, and the permitted transgression of corporeal and sexual borders. In this way, it says, it is also interweaving the grotesque and the sublime (personal communication, 20 May, 2005).

The shows that *dunst* present are always unique; responding to the environment they take place in, the performers present, the music, and the live audience. Something that remains constant though is the audience's direct and interactive exposure to the

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<sup>10</sup> Extensive documentation of *dunst*'s various performances and projects can be seen on the *dunst* website (Dunst, n.d.), as well as in the appendix to this essay, as mentioned.

dystopia which *dunst* creates in performance. As Lene Leth Lebbe puts it, “it is a temporary world, but it gives you a glimpse and shows people an alternative to the normal world” (personal communication, 20 May, 2005).

### **The fall of the axe**

*Die Elf Scharfrichter* quickly reached a level of popularity which none could have predicted. At their height, the troupe was performing six days a week, sometimes two ‘executions’ a day. The monetary success of the show meant that for the first time for many of the artists, financial security was not a concern. They were also the discreet producers of their work, unlike artists working on the vaudeville stages, which meant that all proceeds from the *Kabarett* could go directly to the artists (Ham, 2000).

This arrangement was foiled though when the Munich authorities began regularly attending the performances. The Bavarian interior minister, after viewing performances of Otto Falckenberg’s *Das Geständnis* (The Confession), informed the Munich police that the priest in the piece “performed his sensual gesticulations in a most immoral manner” (Clay-Large, 1997, p.19) and ordered that severe action be taken. The full weight of the law came down on the necks of the Eleven, and the group was forced to register as a theatre group, pay the associated taxes, and routinely submit their work for censorship (Jelavich, 1985).

For a time they managed to continue the presentation of erotically charged pieces by performing flirtatious 18<sup>th</sup> century German works, but their own artistic expression had been stemmed (Jelavich, 1985). Though largely a result of invasive censorship, this artistic deadlock was also being exacerbated by the expectations of their largely male, predominantly bourgeoisie audiences (Ham, 2000). As time went on the audiences grew to be mainly tourists and students, drawn by the group’s reputation for the risqué, and demanding sexual titillation over more artistic forms of stimulation (Jelavich, 1985).

In defining the group’s motivations, Delvard commented years later in her memoirs “above all we wanted to combat the exaggerated, tasteless sentimentality of popular

entertainment.” (cited in Jelavich, 1985, p.161). As early as August of 1901, though, Wedekind was complaining that he was “fed up to the teeth with ballad singing,” something which he considered “playing the fool and grovelling in the dirt” (cited in Jelavich, 1985, p.182).

Increasingly limited in their possibilities for intelligent or provocative expression, the group eventually turned to self-parody. Jelavich (1985) astutely observes that this artistic introspection was also a reflection of their frustration that they were not achieving what they set out to do – their work was not being seen outside of their small, liberal audiences, they were preaching to the converted. They were not changing the world; they had simply become an amusing novelty. In 1903, thirty months after their inception, and suffering from a combination of artistic ennui and crippling censorship, the axe finally came down on *Die Elf* themselves, and the group disbanded.

Despite the short existence of the group, they were in fact successful in changing the face of performance in Germany, impacting most notably on a young man by name of Bertold Brecht, whose *Moritäten* and *Verfremdungstheorie* would be directly inspired by Wedekind’s songs and characters from the *Kabarets* (Chick, 1984). They had redefined the possibilities of the *Tingel-Tangel* format to create a new forum for social discussion and provocation, and paved the way for Dadaist avant-garde performance. Max Halbe applauded their lasting influence on German culture in his memoirs, where he notes that after the reign of *Die Elf*, audiences “...longed for colour, disorder, and the unleashing of the arts of the theatre.” (cited in Jelavich, 1985, p.185)

### ***Die Elf Scharfrichter as carnivalesque performance***

On a casual reading, we can clearly identify elements of the Eleven Executioners’ practice which could be read as carnivalesque. After the success of their first appearance in the Carnival itself, the group consciously set out use mockery and humour, mixed with a gruesome but playful sense of penny-dreadful horror, as

counter-balance to the dominant culture<sup>11</sup>. Perhaps the prime example of their mining of Carnival inversion was their decision to place the spectacle of the execution as the central theme of their *Kabarett*.

By marketing their artistic *Hingerichten* (executions) as private affairs, to which one must be invited in order to attend, *Die Elf* were not only circumventing the ever-present threat of censorship, they had also performed a Carnival back-flip on the recent history of public execution.

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<sup>11</sup> So far it has been necessary to describe in some detail the socio-political contexts that *Die Elf Scharfrichter* and *dunst* were set up in reaction to, and the working practices that they developed in response to those contexts. This research, however, is not focussed on the social reception of their work, or the hegemony's relationship to their existence. To examine these issues would require another reading, one that is outside of the undertaking of this piece to examine in-depth. It is worth noting, however, that Foucault's framework for discussing the body as an object of control or coercion would have much to offer to such an investigation.

That the traditional Carnival was allowed the eruption of the carnivalesque, albeit for a limited period, shows some understanding of the idea that in order to reach the moral goodness aspired to in Lent, people would first need to 'let off steam', to 'get it out of their systems'. Seen from the point of view of social order, the controlled chaos of the Carnival is perhaps then best paralleled with George Orwell's 'two minutes hate' – the emergency valve which ensures docility for the rest of the day (Orwell, 1950). Commenting on the 1997 touring exhibition *Carnivalesque*, organised by the Haywood Gallery, London, curator Thomas Hymann notes that subversion achieved in the visual arts by *inversion*: that is, taking a concept that belongs to one environment and placing it in its opposite, does not actually alter the status quo. The component aspects have not been changed, merely the context in which we find them (Hymann & Malbert, 2000). In the same way that the sensible man plays the fool, but does not become the fool, the 'transgression' of the traditional Carnival was permissible only because it was temporary and, ultimately, ineffectual. Indeed, carnivalesque woodcuts of the middle ages offering images of the 'world on its head' for educational purposes, to demonstrate to children how the world should be by presenting inversions – carts driven by horses and drawn by men, women hunting while men stay at home spinning wool, the pigs slaughtering the farmer (Howell, 2000).

Perhaps, from a hegemonic viewpoint, we can best describe this dialectic by arguing that the Carnival was allowed *because* of Lent; its role and codes being defined by being everything that Lent *wasn't*. Carnival's inversions thereby index one extreme end of behaviour and social coding, and reflexively serve to remind us of the original rule by presenting its negative. In his essay 'Frames of Comic Freedom', Umberto Eco argues that the Carnival is "a paramount example of law enforcement" (cited in Hymann & Malbert, 2000, pg. 75) - it does not provide grounds or direction for the true transgression of revolution.

That public executions had been outlawed in Bavaria in 1856 had done little to quell the populace's interest in the hangings and beheadings still occurring behind closed doors<sup>12</sup>. Pushing executions out of public view, and restricting audience sizes had only served to rarify interest in the events for those who were unable to attend (Ham, 2000). That *Die Elf Scharfrichter* offered the possibility for anyone who wished to come and witness their artistic 'executions' then becomes a carnivalesque inversion. The private had become public again, even while this new 'public' played at being exclusive.

By hanging their own 'death masks' in the performance space, The Eleven also underscore and further satirise the state's views at the time that avant-garde artists and criminals were cut from the same cloth. That The Eleven are represented by their masks before they physically enter the performance space implies a story already completed – these eleven artists have already committed a crime, been convicted and summarily executed. When the performers then enter dressed in their *blutroten Röcke* and carrying swords and axes, the carnivalesque metaphor becomes double edged. Masked, so as to hide their true identities, it is possible they could be the same executioners who dealt death to the artists represented by the plaster busts. The fact that all members of the group (with the exceptions of Wedekind and Delvard) had stage names goes further to support the implication that the death masks represent the real artists, while the executioners who arrive to begin the show are solely characters. As in the carnival, the mask has provided the anonymity needed to transgress into the world of inversion.

There is also a semantic nuance which cannot be caught by the common translation of the word *Scharfrichter* as 'executioner', one which helps to define another purely carnivalesque aspect of the characters themselves. A literal translation of *Scharfrichter* would be 'sharp-judge', invoking a direct link between the role of the executioner and that of the judge and, by proxy, the act of judging. In the *Scharfrichter Marsch* they outline the criteria for judgement in this topsy-turvy world

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<sup>12</sup> Concurrent with modernisation and increasing crime, the number of closed executions had in fact been on the rise in the 1880s, and had increased sharply during the 1890s

– those who are friends of death will be rewarded, those who are resistant or small-minded will be bloodily killed. The judged become judges: the condemned, executioners. However, in the ‘world on its head’ of the *Kabarett* they no longer judge the criminal/degenerate bohemian - their violent gaze is directed back onto those who condemn and judge in the real world. This nightly ritual of the entrance to the space advocates the most strongly The Eleven Executioner’s right to the title ‘carnavalesque’. Walking through the audience, offering them passage into their world, there is no delineation between the performers and onlooker. As Bakhtin himself says; “the carnival knows no footlights” (1984, p.7).

Ultimately though, their intentions in creating the work hold them back from becoming truly carnivalesque. Wedekind’s resistance to feeling like a fool while singing popular songs is telling, as is the later desire of the rest of the group to produce serious work. That the group set out to produce what they considered superior work to the presentations of the popular vaudeville venues, and that they aspired to produce intellectual, satirical work are also important considerations in this appraisal. Ultimately, these factors indicate a different impulse at work than the unbridled, base forces that typify the carnivalesque.

I suggest that, while some factors of the group’s practice were based in the carnivalesque, their ambitions for the venture meant that this basis was used solely as a starting point. The fuel from the typically carnivalesque desire for expression in the face of repression was invested into creation of grotesque satire, parody and wit. While this artistic decision was in itself an important one in terms of the development of modernist German theatre and performance art, once the group began consciously placing popular culture beneath them, and artistic excellence as a goal in front of them, all that was carnivalesque about *Die Elf Scharfrichter* was ultimately lost.

### ***Dunst’s claim to the Carnival throne***

One of the cornerstones of Bakhtin’s work was his definition of the Carnival body as a borderless creature; one which spills outside of its own limits. Emphasis is placed on the liminal areas of the body – the skin, the genitals, the anus, the mouth. The body presented at the Carnival “...is pregnant, delivers, defecates, is sick, dying, and

dismembered” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.179). As such it becomes a universally *human* body, permitted all of the functions of our own bodies that we must hide away from one another in everyday life. For Bakhtin this body stood in contrast to the idealised, hermetically sealed body of the Renaissance. As Jervis succinctly states, the body remains central to the Carnival by virtue of it being symbolic of ‘people’, and it thereby representative of the social body (cited in Jenks, 2003).

That *dunst* do not seem to make any endeavours to present aesthetically beautiful characters - save Ramona Macho, who quickly breaks her ‘beautiful camouflage’ when she strips it all off to reveal her breasts to be her own gaffer-taped fat - gives the audience permission to simply be natural, as opposed to ‘normal’. It entices us to view our identities and our society as they are; constructions, in a state of simultaneous decay and creation.

The incorporation of faeces in *dunst*’s performances also notably transgresses social taboo, reminding us again of our own bodily nature. Bakhtin draws attention to the positive role of excrement as intermediary between the body and the earth – fertilising and regenerating, putting back what has been removed. Bataille also reminds us of our collective and intrinsic relationship to the lower stratum of the body when he quotes Saint Augustine, “Inter faeces et urinum nascimur” : “we are born between faeces and urine” (1984, p.57). Contemporary views of the body draw attention away from our base areas and to the expressive parts of the body – the head, the face, the eyes, lips and the muscular body. Defecating and eating have become private things, with very narrow definitions, removed from their relationship to society and being human (Bakhtin, 1984).

Lene Leth Lebbe’s use of food to cross the limen of her body and be cannibalized by the audience resonates on this level. The artist herself sees her work as a celebration of the female body as a site for nourishment and joy, and the utilisation of the grotesque as counterpoint to desirability (Lene Leth Lebbe, in personal communication, May 20, 2005). On a carnivalesque level, when she picks up her scalpel she also begins operating on the closed body of society to produce sustenance for the audience. Taking into account Didier Anzieu’s revelations on skin’s function as “...the barrier which protects against penetration by the aggression and greed

emanating from others” (cited in O’Dell, 1998, p.20), Lene Leth Lebbe’s breaking of ‘skin’, and willingness to satiate the audience’s hunger can be read as an act of anarchic trust. The audience can be fed without it destroying her – there is plenty to go around.

Bataille sees excrement as also symbolising that which is pushed out of and washed away from the social world (Jenks, 2003). If we view the goop that Lene offers in this way, the chocolate cake *is dunst*; “the low-life that noone wants to deal with”<sup>13</sup> (Dunst, n.d.), and it tastes good.

Curator of the touring exhibition ‘Carnavalesque’<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hymann points out the common mistake made by those attempting to embrace the post-modern nature of the carnivalesque when he observes that it is “...nearly always as a willed strategy of ‘transgression’ and ‘the abject’”. He goes on to remind us that “...Bakhtin’s vision was of a victory of laughter over fear” (Hymann & Malbert, 2000, p.72). As with *Die Elf Scharfrichter*, this issue of intention is an important one. Within *dunst*, degree of interest in politics differs from member to member, as do individual creative agendas, but “the political is more like a check you run on the whole thing afterwards, without analysing too much” (Nikolaj, in personal communication, 19 May, 2005). For *dunst*, the emphasis is on doing. This rejection of theorising in favour of production also constitutes a political decision, but as Nikolaj effortlessly points out, it is one that we impose from the outside in. He goes on to explain “I don't think it's possible for (*or the purpose of*) an underground movement like *dunst* to change mainstream opinions in a democracy” (italics author’s own).

The *dunst* manifesto holds the key to confirming the group’s carnivalesque intentions. Describing the values the small community seeks to uphold, point nine of this manifesto reads: “*dunst er for dem der synes, at de selv og andre kulturelt skal tæppebombes*” – “*dunst* is for those who think everyone, including themselves, should be under constant cultural attack” (Dunst, n.d). *Dunst*’s focus on celebration of the self, coupled with this point of the manifesto, would no doubt be applauded by

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<sup>13</sup> From the *dunst* manifesto, point 6: *dunst* is the low-life no one else wants to deal with.

<sup>14</sup> Organised by the Haywood Gallery, London, 1997

Bakhtin, given his assertion that Carnival laughter is universal in its mockery – it must be directed at everyone (1984).

*Dunst*, in contrast to *Die Elf Scharfrichter*, are not directly concerned with combating the status quo. More important is the celebration of their own difference, a celebration that allows like-minded individuals to be drawn into their revelry. If the carnivalesque changes the world in permanent ways, it does so accidentally; it is not its primary intention. The essential impulse of the Carnival is, after all, an affirmative and regenerative one (Hymann & Malbert, 2000). To define one's practice in terms of negation is to move away from the positive and expansive potential of the carnivalesque.

If we take 'carnavalesque' to be the continued, living embodiment of the Carnival outside of the defunct event itself, then Chris Jenks (2003) makes an important observation when he says that in our present world the Carnival exists not in time, but in space: the bars we go to in the evenings to let our hair down; the parties where we drink too much and say all the wrong things and are still accepted. I argue that the Carnival is also still an event which can be experienced, and it is one that erupts at any time: present between the band, the music, our neighbours and ourselves when forget who we are for a minute in the mosh pit; breaking out as wolf-whistles, directed at the office worker, dressed up and on his way to watch *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*; and when the citizens of a small capital city, upside-down near Antarctica, run into freezing water *en masse* in mid-winter swims, the Carnival laughter is not far behind them. Viewed in this way *dunst*, a constantly morphing community spread throughout the entire city of conservative, conservative Copenhagen like a bad smell, *are* the Carnival - three hundred and sixty five days of the year.

## **Conclusion**

The presence of the unselfconscious, playful revelry of the Carnival must be present for the carnivalesque to truly take place in performance art. The lack of footlights and the absence of a 'smart' agenda are also helpful prerequisites. It may well be that the carnivalesque shares more with relational aesthetics than it does with post-

modernism, but these are again considerations which our clever minds try to impose. That which is truly carnivalesque may well never be described in an academic essay.

*Die Elf Scharfrichter*, while utilising many aspects of the Carnival, are ultimately barred from becoming truly carnivalesque by engaging in a hierarchy of artistic worth. In terms of their capacity to be carnivalesque, *dunst* shits all over them.

Certainly, there is an element of being swept up and drawn along by something uncontrollable that must be present for the carnivalesque to truly take place. It is precisely when we create without thinking about it, when we make art simply because it demands to be made, when we create from our true nature and without agenda, that performance art has the potential to burst into the carnivalesque.

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## Appendix

**Subject:**

Answer from a dunst member

**To:**

[theprincess@kunstangriff.de](mailto:theprincess@kunstangriff.de)

**Date:**

Thu, 19 May 2005 10:32:31 +0200

Dear princess

Sorry it took some time, but here are my personal answers to the questions you sent us. Hope you get replies from others as well. And good luck with your paper :-)

Best wishes

Nikolaj / dunst

1. What is the current political situation in Copenhagen/Denmark - who is in power, what kind of actions are they taking? Has this changed since dunst was formed? How have current political agendas affected the kind of society you live in?

The Government in Denmark is seated in the right wing of the parliament, and they are basically doing the same trick as the American: They make people believe that we are in some sort of crisis and then make them feel that they, the government are the only ones, who can take us safely through it. This government came just before dunst was started. I don't think it's possible for (or the purpose of) an underground movement like dust to change to mainstream opinions in a democracy. But maybe our current black government was extra fuel to the fire that started dunst. In the sense that we more than ever needed a free space where we could be ourselves and express ourselves to who ever might gain from what we want to express.

2. How would you describe what you personally do (literally and conceptually, and any other ways you want to mention) in dunst performances?

It has a lot to do with self expression. And then it is political too. But the political is more like a tjeck you

run on the whole thing afterwards, without analysing too much.

If we just sit thinking and arguing, we are pretty much pasified by those in power. So instead our performance is about simply doing instead of just thinking. And by doing that we show people that anything is possible. You can do whatever you want with your gender and express whatever you want as long as you don't hurt others. Besides that different performers of course have more specific agendas, but to me this would be the over all agenda.

3. On the dunst website you talk about members of dunst having 'marginalised sexuality'. How do the people and organisations who have marginalised you help to define dunst? What effect does being marginalised have on your group motivation? What effect does it have on your personal motivation? Does it influence you in the creation of your own work, and if so then how?

I think it is important here to state that dunst is NOT an identity politics-thing! And the marginalised sexuality does not have much to do with preferring sex with people of your own gender. The struggle for mainstream homosexuals in Denmark to be accepted as part of the norm or being attached as sort of a side wagon to the norm, is very successful. But this causes a further marginalisation of those who still don't fit in.

Most of us probably also could fit into the norm, if we really wanted. But this would drain our lives of all joy and happiness. Even if we all had sex with people of the other gender, we would still not fit into the norm.

I guess in the end the marginalisation simply means that we are all people who have rejected fitting our gender into any kind of fixed norm, whether that be the heterosexual, the homosexual, the male, the female, the transsexual, etc (most transsexuals don't like us as their struggle is usually the opposite of ours, namely to fit into a norm)

4. What other artistic work do you do/have you done outside of dunst?

I write as a journalist and also do some fictional work on a desk drawer level. Before I joined dunst I also formed a punk band with three friends. We mostly just wrote lyrics and made plans for album titles, cover art, etc. In the end we brought two guitars, a mic and a tape recorder to a holiday house by the beach and recorded seven songs that

sounded horrible to everyone else. After that the others moved away.

5. Which artists have inspired you?

I guess my main inspiration is music. Even though I now do electronic music, my main inspirations would be punkish stuff like The Moldy Peaches, The Libertines, (early) White Stripes, The Strokes, etc...

Also Gregg Arakis movies are impossible not to be inspired by. The way that he builds entire worlds that with no compromise blend reality and utopic visions of a world with no limit or boundaries and where everything is hyper expressive. Also it seems like everything springs from intuition, lust and pleasure.

6. What kind of people do you find in a dunst audience? What kind of reactions do you get from them?

Mainly homosexuals. But not only and all kinds of them. We have a lot in the audience whose minds are close to ours, but they just haven't made the step yet. The boundaries here are fluid, as a lot of dunst members don't perform either, so who's dunst and who's not can only be defined by if people feel that they are in dunst or not.

Then we have a lot of those people who think that dunst is really outrageous and weird and fucked up, but they like the parties and like to be surprised and provoked.

Sometimes they also think that this or that went too far... Besides that we have many other smaller groups. Like for instance the punk kids of Copenhagen's last remaining squat, Ungdomshuset.

A lot of them come and enjoy the free atmosphere and a lot of them come and hate it.

7. In dunst's self-description (the English version of "what is dunst?" on the website), dunst has the principal job of eradicating the framework of the normalcy dictatorship. How do you see your own work contributing to this aim? How successful has dunst been in achieving this aim to date?

I think I have already been discussing this. But simply by showing that you can do and live however you like. The mainstream and the norms are still there. But I think we have created a growing space that allow people to be as

they like. Which is needed as the strategy of the norm is to capture marginalised groups into it, and thereby making the norm stronger and the marginalised further marginalised. So our aim is to gain terrain in the other direction.

8. What are the benefits of using live performance as a vehicle for expressing political ideas?

The first benefit is that we are first of all people. And it is obvious that our performances are not just acts but spring from us as people. Therefore we really show that the personal IS political. And that you can take a stand and act without sitting arguing, demonstrating, being theoretical or all those things that are usually conceived as political.

9. What do you think are the benefits of using your body as one of the media in your performance? What can be done with the human body that cannot be done with other media?

I think the answer would be the same as above.

10. Can you describe any key performance where breaking the "barrier of the body" was used? I.e. real or faked shitting, bleeding, eating, vomiting, fucking etc.

Well just a bare penis is enough for some audiences to feel this is happening. But I guess the most famous example was when Liebling Siebling was lying in a rolling table dressed as a sheep and Puta put his arm up his ass and used that to roll him around on the stage.

11. Can you describe any key performance where violence or death was used as a device or theme?

I can't really think of any.

12. Do you use grotesque or shock elements in creating your character/s? Why?

I don't know if they shock, but that is definitely not my

intention. I think of making an impression and if that is shocking or not, is not the point.

13. How would you describe the world dunst creates on stage? How would you describe an ideal 'real' world? If there is a difference in these two, how do you see the first as helping to create the second?

The Stage is a space of expression. With no rules or boundaries. And of course it would be amazing if the entire world was like that. But by showing on stage, and just as important in our everyday lives, that you can do so much more than you think, and that a lot of the rules are just in people's minds and very fun to break, hopefully we can inspire people to free themselves from the rules of the norms.

Mvh.

Absender: [mail@leneleth.dk](mailto:mail@leneleth.dk)  
Erhalten: 20.05.2005 13:13  
Betreff: **dunst performer - answers**

Inhalt:  
Hi Princess

I have asked some Q's

They are down there..:

/Lene Leth Lebbe - u can c photoes of me on [dunst.dk](http://dunst.dk)

Princess has er ved at skrive et essay om queer kunstnere til Universitetet på New Zealand

Hvem vil svare ??

---

Hello everyone,

Thank you very much for agreeing to answer some questions for my essay.

To give you a little bit of background, I am basically

investigating similarities and differences between dunst and another performance group who formed in response to an increasingly conservative social climate. The other group are called "die elf Scharfrichter", and they were the first political German kabaret, from 1901 to 1903.

I am especially interested in how your social status might inform artistic choices that both groups make.

If you have any other information you would like to provide, maybe weblinks or resumes, pictures etc, please feel free. The more I can learn about you the better!

I have looked around most of the dunst site, so I think I have found everything on you all in there. If you have any favourite quotes (by you or by others) on the site that are not also in English, maybe you could translate these for me and tell me where to find them on the site? My Danish online translator is not so hot, and German is only getting me so far in understanding what is happening.

If the questions lead you to want to say more, or spin off into other territory, then that would be very interesting and helpful for me too.

If you could answer in whole sentences, rather than short answers, it would also give me a lot more to work with (I could quote you directly, for example).

My email addresses are;

[theprincess@kunstangriff.de](mailto:theprincess@kunstangriff.de)

and

[buttyrama@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:buttyrama@yahoo.co.uk)

Thank you all, again, for you time and help.

Love,  
The Princess Hans

#### QUESTIONS FOR EVERYONE:

1. What is the current political situation in Copenhagen/Denmark - who is in power, what kind of actions are they taking? Has this changed since dunst was formed? How have current political agendas affected the kind of society you live in?

In Denmark the right wing has grown, and the government in the last 5 years has been cutting down on culture money.

2. How would you describe what you personally do (literally and conceptually, and any other ways you want to mention) in dunst performances?

Litterally I do performances, where I use food as an extension of my body. The food looks as parts of my body, or sometimes as clothes. I serve the food for the audience.

Conceptually I work with the limits of the body by using food. I play with the woman body as an object for joy, by making costumes and performances that are between the discusting and the sexy. By letting the audience eat the food/my body I make them a part of the performance, and I make my body a part of theirs.

3. On the dunst website you talk about members of dunst having 'marginalised sexuality'. How do the people and organisations who have marginalised you help to define dunst? What effect does being marginalised have on your group motivation? What effect does it have on your personal motivation? Does it influence you in the creation of your own work, and if so then how?

In my performances I somehow work with strategies to get loose of the organisations and society, that marginalises me. I investigate new ways to show my body, and that way try to break free of being a traditional female sex object. By using food I try to make the audience see me in a new way.

4. What other artistic work do you do/have you done outside of dunst?

I have been studying fine art and design for 5 years, see a few of my works on [www.leneleth.dk](http://www.leneleth.dk), but I think actually it is in danish. I have used the strategy of mixing areas before, fx the art show and the shop. (Same strategy as making food and body).

5. Which artists have inspired you?

Cindy Sherman  
Felix Gonzalez Torres  
Hans Hücke

6. What kind of people do you find in a dunst audience? What kind of reactions do you get from them?

Dunst audience are mostly queer people. It is a party crowd. People tend to be very willing to interact with me - they allways want to eat the food I serve them.

7. In dunst,s self-description (the English version of "what is dunst?" on the website), dunst „has the principal job of eradicating the framework of the normalcy dictatorship%. How do you see your own work contributing to this aim? How successful has dunst been in achieving this aim to date?

8. What are the benefits of using live performance as a vehicle for expressing political ideas?  
In the life performance you invest your self and your body - that is very powerfull

9. What do you think are the benefits of using your body as one of the media in your performance? What can be done with the human body that cannot be done with other media?  
Same as above

10. Can you describe any key dunst performances where breaking the "barrier of the body" was used? I.e. real or faked shitting, bleeding, eating, vomiting, fucking etc.

11. Can you describe any key dunst performances where violence or death used was used as a device or theme?

12. Do you use grotesque or shock elements in creating your character/s? Why?  
I use grotesque elements in my characters, because it make people look at me in a new way.

13. How would you describe the world dunst creates on stage? How would you describe an ideal 'real' world? If there is a difference in these two, how do you see the first as helping to create the second?  
Dunst definately create a new world, that is what I find the best about Dunst. Ofcourse it is a temporary world, but it gives you a glimps and shows people an alternative to the normal world.

Like I say, the sooner you can get back to me the better, but please take as much time as you need to be happy with your replies.

If you want to break the questions up (ie answer a couple now, and the rest later) and send them as they are ready, that would also be helpful. I don't necessarily need them all at once to be able to start working with them.

I hope you are all doing well, and look forward to hearing from you!

If you have any questions for me, feel free to ask.

With love,  
HRH The Princess Hans

**Date:**

Fri, 20 May 2005 23:23:59 +0200

**Subject:**

finally

**From:**

">:::(\*)" <[missfish@skydebanen.net](mailto:missfish@skydebanen.net)> Add to Address Book

**To:**

"Ryan McFadyen" <[buttyrama@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:buttyrama@yahoo.co.uk)>

> QUESTIONS FOR EVERYONE:

>

- > 1. What is the current political situation in
- > Copenhagen/Denmark - who is in power, what kind of
- > actions are they taking? Has this changed since dunst
- > was formed? How have current political agendas
- > affected the kind of society you live in?

hope its is not too late.

This is the answer from Tina Trasch, Minimal Martin and Miss Fish

New Liberal government inspired by Tony Blair. Nationalist foreign policy.

Denmark started this trend in Europe.

Cuts in social benefits, and restrictions in artistic experiments and development. Alternative lifestyles and outsiders get marginalized and controlled for example "Normalization of Christiania" and "Closure of the Ungdomshuset". Mainstreaming and

Less consensus, individualization, rascism, cultural "one way street".

- >
- > 2. How would you describe what you personally do
- > (literally and conceptually, and any other ways you
- > want to mention) in dunst performances?

Tina Trash:

Spoken word, political statements, and twisted freak gadget weirdness. Crossdressing and drag is a way to express ideas - it is a frame that can be questioned in a queer statement.

Miss Fish:

I am inspired by animation film, butoh dance and indie rock music. Miss Fish is an imagined impossible gender (man-woman-fish), taking on different forms on stage: - from humorous pop songs "miss fish is a dish" to political electro punk songs "the beauty regime" to performance art/spoken word and dance performances.

I use the energy from glam, disco and punk to get an emotional emotional statement across.

Minimal Martin:

I have nothing to say about dunst. I hate drags. They are silly and stupid and brain dead. And they are mostly wannabees or has-beens. I am a queer graffiti artist and a DJ. I hate dunst. I am only in it for the money and the fame.

- > 3. On the dunst website you talk about members of
- > dunst having 'marginalised sexuality'. How do the
- > people and organisations who have marginalised you
- > help to define dunst? What effect does being
- > marginalised have on your group motivation? What
- > effect does it have on your personal motivation? Does
- > it influence you in the creation of your own work, and

> if so then how?

Main Stream gay culture: materialistic and superficial. It is reflecting a "new clear family" lifestyle, which is taken for given and not questioned.

It is "taken on" to get understood and accepted.

This pressure to become "normal" and accepted gives a drive to seek alternatives personally and as a group. It finds its way in our political actions and artistic styles.

We both subvert known conventions from mainstream pop culture and develop our own unique things from this.

>

> 4. What other artistic work do you do/have you done

> outside of dust?

Martin:

Graffiti art, figurative and abstract painting. DJ'ing

Tina Träsch:

Painting

Miss Fish:

New Media Installation, Animation, Performance Art

>

> 5. Which artists have inspired you?

Tina Träsch:

Plasmatics, Leigh Bowery, Tina Turner

Martin:

Francis Bacon, Jeff Mills, Michael Kvium (danish painter), myself

Miss Fish:

Kitt Johnson (danish butoh dancer), Jan Swankmajer, Joy Division(New Order),  
Siouxsie and the Banshees, Sex Pistols.

>

- > 6. What kind of people do you find in a dunst
- > audience? What kind of reactions do you get from them?

They love or hate us. They go for it completely or they come to get offended/outraged. They sometimes see us as a freak show, but when they look closer at the show they find out they are freaks themselves. That's why they react.

- > 7. In dunst's self-description (the English version of
- > "what is dunst?" on the website), dunst "has the
- > principal job of eradicating the framework of the
- > normalcy dictatorship". How do you see your own work
- > contributing to this aim? How successful has dunst
- > been in achieving this aim to date?

Miss Fish:

My character and music has come across in various shows and is showing a new approach to queer glam punk performance art. Writing essays, do interviews and have TV appearances.

Tina Träsch:

Political spoken word performance - mixing a queer agenda with the status of the Danish political situation and a brain dead individualistic consumer society.

Martin:

I don't know - and don't care, but I painted a 25 meter long silver graffiti dick. It was a queer graffiti art statement (but I also got paid for it! the cover of the book "a pain in the arse").

>

- > 8. What are the benefits of using live performance as
- > a vehicle for expressing political ideas?

It is a direct way to express your ideas - it has multiple ways to

express a  
statement (emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, subconscious etc.)

It reflects life experience and sex experience. Not just academic or political talk.

- >
- > 9. What do you think are the benefits of using your
- > body as one of the media in your performance? What can
- > be done with the human body that cannot be done with
- > other media?

The physical presence and the personal involvement makes it possible to make an authentic "non constructed" experience. It is for real and not for real at the same time. It a personal statement - which becomes political (style, aesthetics and conceptual ...)

- >
- > 10. Can you describe any key performance where
- > breaking the "barrier of the body" was used? I.e. real
- > or faked shitting, bleeding, eating, vomiting, fucking
- > etc.

Well you named it: Rainer did a show drinking vomit as a drag - from a naked man painted black. the vomit was white (yoghurt).

Rainer was fisted by puta dressed as trash drag - rainer was dressed as a pink poodle.

Johnny warehouse was pissing on puta in the show "suck my cock".

Miss Fish was pissing on a painting of puta, dressed as puta, in a spoken word performance about puta (while pissing - he also shit his pants (a blue bathing suit).

Lene Leth Lebbe was cutting her fake tits and with a scalpel "new year show" kinzo berlin. The tits and pussy was full of chocolate shit - which was fed to the audience.

Lene Leth Lebbe was dressed up as a 100 tits cow - pressing chocolate milk

and other fluids on the ass of trash petruska.

>

> 11. Can you describe any key dunst performances where  
> violence or death used was used as a device or theme?

Tina Trash is a serial killer in her songs and spoken word- and a  
sadistic  
alcoholic - she cant remeber any of her killings and is never cought,  
because there is absolute no pattern or meaning in her acts.

>

> 12. Do you use grotesque or shock elements in creating  
> your  
> character/s? Why?

Miss Fish:

I am using a body language and a voice, which is contorting and  
alienating  
the body/identity - within an aesthetic framework of the grotesque and  
the  
sublime.

Hairwerk:

Using a mask - as a second skin - it is peeled off.

Tina Träsch:

Is using a grotesque baby in her acts - and shows the evil of human  
existence: Racism, Religious madness, incestuous relations, drug abuse,  
prostitution etc.

Minimal Martin:

Is painting penises and tanks and flowers.

>

> 13. How would you describe the world dunst creates on  
> stage? How would you describe an ideal 'real' world?  
> If there is a difference in these two, how do you see  
> the first as helping to create the second?

>

It is fluent. It has no set format - each performance is unique -  
influenced  
by the particular combination of performers and music.

But there is a line - exploring identity/non identity- the borders of  
the  
body/sexuality - and a universe of kitch, abstraction and diversity.

>  
>  
> Like I say, the sooner you can get back to me the  
> better, but please take as much time as you need to be  
> happy with your replies.  
>  
> If you want to break the questions up (ie answer a  
> couple now, and the rest later) and send them as they  
> are ready, that would also be helpful. I don't  
> necessarily need them all at once to be able to start  
> working with them.  
>  
> I hope you are all doing well, and look forward to  
> hearing from you!  
>  
> If you have any questions for me, feel free to ask.  
>  
> With love,  
> HRH The Princess Hans