

MOSS
ARTS
CENTER

24/
25



ontroerend goed
fight night

Tues., Sept. 17, and Wed., Sept. 18, 2024, 7:30 PM
Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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SEPT. 22 | 2:30PM

The Turn of the Screw

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OR OPERA ROANOKE
at MOSS ARTS CENTER
OPERAROANOKE.ORG

ontroerend goed

fight night

Directed by
Alexander Devriendt

Costumes by
Valerie Le Roy

Written by
Alexander Devriendt
and Angelo Tijssens

Production Manager:
Lynn Van den Bergh

Performed by
Angelo Tijssens, Aurélie Lannoy,
Jonas Vermeulen, Julia Ghysels,
Bastiaan Vandendriessche,
Michaël Pas, and Prince K. Appiah

Technical:
Tuur Decoene, Gerrit De Bremme,
Bent Dujardin, Diederick De Cock,
and Ine Van Bortel

Voting System by
Samir Veen and Nick Mattan

Software:
Florian Van Belleghem, Mixx

Design by
Nick Mattan

Production:
Ontroerend Goed

Co-Production:
Perpodium

In cooperation with NTGent

With the financial support of the Flemish Community
and the City of Ghent

This show was made possible with the support of the Tax Shelter
measure from the Belgian Federal Government and Casa Kafka.

Special thanks to University Musical Society, Charleston Gaillard Center,
and original co-creators the Border Project

program notes

a playful and immersive political exploration

Fight Night puts five actors into the position of “candidates” struggling to get the audience’s sympathy and, ultimately, their vote. Only one of them will survive the relentless series of eliminations, and they apply all possible tactics and strategies to assure their victory.

Set on a platform reminiscent of a boxing ring, the competition is fought not with fists but with words and looks. The audience, armed with a voting keypad, decides who stays and who goes, but gets entangled in an increasingly complex and puzzling system of rules and manipulations. As in mediatized political campaigns, polls and predictions, debates and charm offensives challenge the voters’ loyalty and common sense, in the end toppling their notion of free choice.

Fight Night is thoroughly political, but never explicitly so. The candidates don’t voice a particular ideology, nor do they comment on social issues or economic realities. By stripping their discourse of identifiable political messages, the show draws attention to the very reasons and motivations that compel voters to vote. What is at stake is the way the concept of “rule of the people” is put into practice in contemporary democratic societies. *Fight Night* illustrates how content and ideas are only relevant if they make a difference in statistics and increase the chance to gain power through numbers.

Fight Night has toured the world in the last few years, including in Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the U.K., the U.S., France, Australia, and Hong Kong, and there has been a remake in Istanbul (Turkey). In 2024 Ontroerend Goed updated the performance to correspond with the changing political climate.



guest essay

This essay is part of a series of writings by Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and community members that contextualize Moss Arts Center visiting artist performances.

"The right to vote is the crown jewel of American liberties, and we will not see its luster diminished."

— Ronald Reagan

American democracy currently faces threats from multiple fronts. Misinformation abounds on social media, among public figures, and even on select mainstream news outlets. Increasingly vocal groups sow distrust in and outright deny the results of elections. And, shockingly, there was an attack on the U.S. Capitol that sought to disrupt the peaceful transfer of presidential power.

These conditions make the right to vote, to ensure one's voice is heard, of the utmost importance. Free and fair elections are arguably the defining feature of American democracy. Many people are surprised to realize that the seemingly fundamental right to vote was not originally guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. Amendments to the Constitution

guest essay, cont.

and legislation subsequently increased voting protections, mitigating exclusionary conditions that denied some citizens the right to vote. However, as witnessed in recent times, the right to vote and all that it entails symbolically and politically — to have one's voice counted, the meaningfulness of that vote, to impact the selection of leaders of our country — are not as straightforward as many might hope.

As *Fight Night* incisively explores, the rules of the (election) game are consequential. How we count votes matters. In 2000, for instance, when George W. Bush won the Electoral College and Al Gore secured the popular vote, many Americans realized that numerous ways exist to count votes and that the method chosen can manifest different results. Even if voter preferences remain identical, changing how we count those votes can change the outcome — a different candidate may emerge victorious.

No voting system is inherently fairer or more superior than another; each possesses advantages and disadvantages and can be utilized in pursuit of different goals. There are advocates for single-member, plurality districts (which the U.S. uses to elect members of Congress), ranked-choice-voting, or proportional systems. Regardless of the system in place, players in the game — citizens, voters, candidates, parties, and elected officials — must know the rules in advance. Knowing the parameters of the process and how it will unfold allows all actors to behave in ways that are strategically prudent and make choices accordingly.

Choosing between candidates — especially when more than two are on the ballot — can be a challenging task for citizens. Many Americans do not follow politics closely, instead relying on heuristics, or shortcuts, to inform their choices. Rather than carefully considering the details and nuances of candidates' policy positions, voters opt for more simple strategies. They lean on their own social identities and the identities of the candidates, often voting for those who look like them or represent their group identity. Candidate characteristics, such as perceived honesty, trustworthiness, attractiveness, or intelligence, can influence citizen choices as well. Voters, too, regularly rely heavily on party identification, so once someone identifies as a Democrat or Republican, it becomes a routine matter of reflexively voting for the party's nominee. With how the

major parties are situated in the United States, there is often significant overlap between one's group identification and party affiliation. For example, due to the parties' policy positions, African Americans tend to support the Democratic Party and evangelical Christians are more likely to identify with the Republican Party. Finally, voters often look at the incumbent's performance, especially on the economy when considering the presidential ticket, rewarding or punishing the incumbent accordingly. Generally, these strategies are reasonable and effective shortcuts compared to delving deep into policy positions. But when the stakes of an election are acutely high and the candidates are drastically different, they may seem and ultimately prove to be, insufficient.

Tonight's performance will raise questions about what your vote is based on, whether your vote matters, and how easy or difficult it is for a candidate (or commentator) to shift your vote. You may also question: whether apathy and not voting contributes to a candidate's victory; who is ultimately responsible for the success and failure of certain candidates; and, whether the system is fair. With politics in the United States at the height of polarization — where the major parties seem worlds apart — and the 2024 election season approaching its peak, these questions are not just relevant to tonight's performance. These are issues that should be considered by all American citizens. Because the rules of the game matter, and in the game, your vote is your voice.

Caitlin E. Jewitt is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Virginia Tech. Jewitt's research focus includes presidential primaries and caucuses, political parties, electoral rules, and campaigns and elections. Her book, The Primary Rules: Parties, Voters, and Presidential Nominations, explores how the electoral rules, put in place by the states and parties, shape the presidential nomination process and affect the extent to which voters have a meaningful say in the outcome. Jewitt's public scholarship on the primary election process has been published in several national outlets, including MSNBC, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times.



biographies

ontroerend goed

The Belgian theatre performance group *Ontroerend Goed* (a punning name, roughly translated as “Feel Estate”) produces self-devised work grounded in the here and now, inviting their audiences to participate as well as observe. Whether they are performing backwards, turning spectators into voters who eliminate actors, guiding strangers through a labyrinth of mirrors and avatars to meet themselves, or placing the audience at the controls of the financial system, the company has made its trademark out of being unpredictable in content and form.

The group first emerged on the international scene in 2007 with *The Smile off Your Face*, a one-on-one show in which the audience is tied to a wheelchair and then blindfolded. The hit show *Once and for All...* was an uncompromising celebration of raw teenage energy on stage. Since then, the Belgian company has won numerous prizes across Europe and has hit New York, Berlin, Sydney, Singapore, and London to critical acclaim. *Ontroerend Goed* tours worldwide and creates remakes of its productions in other languages; there are versions in Russian, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Kazakh, among others.

Ontroerend Goed delivers intense experiences built in the reality of theatre. Convinced that life goes on during a performance, the group fabricates possible realities that question how we as individuals position ourselves in the world today. Led by Artistic Director Alexander Devriendt, the collective is convinced that every idea deserves its own brand of artistic expression, and the company cherishes a sense of ownership for every single contributor to its work, from actors to light designers, scenographers to conceptual thinkers.

prince k. appiah

Prince K. Appiah is an actor, music artist, and writer. Appiah graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp in 2021. His studies include a seven-month stint at the Royal Conservatory of Scotland from 2018 to 2019. He has performed in plays like *Vrede Liefde & Vrijheid* and *Kiss & Ride* from Het Nieuwstedelijk. He played the lead in the television miniseries *De Shaq* (2021). Following *Funeral*, *Fight Night* is Appiah's second Ontroerend Goed production.

alexander devriendt

Alexander Devriendt (b. 1977) is the artistic director and one of the founders of Ontroerend Goed. Devriendt's past work includes the creation of the personal theatre trilogy (*The Smile off Your Face*, *Internal*, and *A Game of You*) and the celebrated teenage play (*Once, and for all we're gonna tell you who we are so shut up and listen*). His most recent productions are *£¥€\$, Funeral*, and *Are we not drawn onward to new erA*. Devriendt's plays have won several awards and are performed all over the world, recently performing in Shanghai, the U.S., and Edinburgh.

aurélie lannoy

Aurélie Lannoy (b. 1982) trained in drama at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion in Louvain-la-Neuve (2000-2001) and in Lecoq techniques at



biographies, cont.

Kleine Academie in Brussels (2001-2004). Lannoy studied actor studio techniques at the Susan Batson studio in New York (2010). In 2004 she joined Ontroerend Goed. She collaborates with the group regularly as an actress, creator, and performer, and is a core member of the company. Alongside her work with Ontroerend Goed, Lannoy works with other groups, notably the musical showgroup Les Vedettes (2016) and the Parisian theatre company Les Divins Animaux for the projects *Flirt* (2015), *Les Perdants* (2019), and *Zoo* (2021). On screen, Lannoy has featured as a lead character in *Inacia* (2013) by Charlotte Dupont, *Lucha Libre* (2014) by Ann Sirot and Raphael Balboni, and in *Coupeur de route* by Christophe Granger (2022).

angelo tijssens

Angelo Tijssens (b. 1986) studied theatre in Antwerp. Tijssens has been part of Ontroerend Goed for a decade, both as a member of the artistic core and as a performer, with credits in *Fight Night*, *Are we not drawn onward to new erA*, *TM*, *A Game of You*, *Loopstation*, *Internal*, *£¥€\$*, *Every Word Was Once an Animal*, and *A History of Everything*. He co-wrote several short films, with selections at the Cannes Film Festival and

international awards. He was Lukas Dhont's co-writer for the Camera d'Or-winning feature film *Girl*. The film went on to be an international arthouse hit, winning awards all over the globe, such as the Queer Palm and a Golden Globe nomination. Together they also wrote Dhont's second feature, *Close* (2022), which was nominated for the Oscars. Meanwhile, he has become a member of The Academy, the body that sets the selection for the Oscars. At present, he is working on some new projects. His first novel, *De Randen*, was published in 2022. Tijssens teaches scenario at KASK/School of Arts in Ghent, and lives and works in Antwerp with his husband and their cats.

Julia Ghysels

Julia Ghysels (b. 1991) graduated in 2015 at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Antwerpen. During her studies, Ghysels performed in *De zaak van de dieren tegen de mensen* (2014) by HETPALEIS and *Alsemkomt* (2014) by de Roovers. After graduating, she was in productions such as *'Othello'* (2015) by Toneelhuis and *adult world* (2015) by echo maker MT and Cie Covar. Her collaborations with Ontroerend Goed include *Loopstation*, *£¥€\$, Fight Night*, and *TM*. For director Jetse Batelaan she performed in *Het eind van het begin van het einde* (2020-2021). Her television credits include *Gent-West* (2017) and *Fenix* (2018). Ghysels has been part of the ensemble of Het Zuidelijk Toneel since 2023.

Jonas Vermeulen

Jonas Vermeulen (b. 1990) graduated in 2013 at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp. Fans of electronic punk and rock may know Vermeulen from the band Psycho 44. He appeared in several TV shows such as *Red Light*, *Studio Tarara*, *Den 11e van den 11e*, and *In Flanders Fields*. In 2022 he made his debut on the big screen as main character Frank Verstraeten in Robin Pront's feature film, *Zillion*. Vermeulen works most of the time in theatre. He toured around the globe with his own concert-theatre performances *The Great Downhill Journey of Little Tommy* and *The Only Way Is Up*, which he created with partner in crime Boris Vanseveren.

biographies, cont.

Vermeulen can frequently be seen as an actor and musician in the work of companies such as Ontroerend Goed, FC Bergman, Olympique Dramatique, Compagnie Marius, Hetpaleis, and many others.

michaël pas

Michaël Pas has acted prolifically in film, television, and theatre since his graduation from drama school in Antwerp, Belgium. Pas is multilingual and performs in Dutch, English, French, and German. On stage he has worked with ITA director Ivo Van Hove, and for film he collaborated with Lars Von Trier (*Nymphomaniac II*) and Lee Tamahori (*Emperor* starring Adrien Brody). *Are we not drawn onward to new erA* was Pas' first collaboration with Ontroerend Goed.

bastiaan vandendriessche

Bastiaan Vandendriessche obtained a master's degree in international political sciences before studying drama at the Conservatory of Antwerp (2013-2017). With his controversial debut, *De Fuut*, he won the Best International Performance Award at Amsterdam Fringe (2017). Afterwards he toured with the English translation through England and Scotland (*Big in Belgium*, 2018). Later he created five more pieces (*A White Man's Burden*, *Mono*, *Mockingbird*, *Ode aan Buldegart*, and *Dorian*). *Ode aan Buldegart* was nominated for the "Playwright award 2020" and was translated to French in 2022. As an actor, Vandendriessche has been working with Ontroerend Goed since 2017, performing in *£¥€\$, Fight Night*, *Are we not drawn onward to new erA*, and *Every Word Was Once an Animal*. He also collaborated with 4hoog and KVS Brussels. In June 2024 he released his first auto-fictional novel, *Staat - Op korte en hopelijk erna lange liefde*.

This is Ontroerend Goed's first performance at the Moss Arts Center.

engagement events

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

**MEAL AND CONVERSATION AT THE
CREATIVITY + INNOVATION DISTRICT**

The living-learning communities Studio 72, Rhizome, and Innovate hosted Ontroerend Goed for dinner and discussion about the theatre company's diverse, boundary-pushing body of work.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, AND
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18
POST-PERFORMANCE Q&AS**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

UNIVERSITY CLASS VISIT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Students in a political science course engaged with Ontroerend Goed in a conversation about democratic theory and its manifestations around the world.

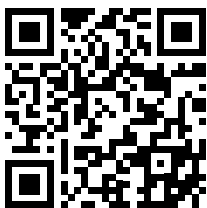
*Special thanks to Tim Baird, Olivia Coutre, Rachel Hosig,
Caitlin Jewitt, and Laura Zanotti*

go deeper

How does tonight's performance change (if at all) your understanding and/or feelings about democracy? What are some of the merits and liabilities of the governance system that *Fight Night* explores?



tell us what you think!



We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan on Wednesday, October 30, 2024.

bit.ly/fight-night-feedback

Please note, survey responses are anonymous. If you would like a response to your feedback, please email mossartscenter@vt.edu.

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artscenter.vt.edu



Your gift to the Moss Arts Center helps to support access to the arts, student engagement, and cultural diversity.

Through gifts like yours, we have been able to expand opportunities for PK-12 students in our region, deepen relationships with academic partners, continue to offer \$10 tickets to performances for Virginia Tech students, and provide experiential learning opportunities for students.

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PK-12 PROGRAMS AT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER

Each year, wildly enthusiastic students — from PK through 12th grade — fill our theatre for free matinee performances by artists from all over the world. They explore our visual arts galleries during school tours and create and learn during hands-on workshops with artists. For many students, visiting the Moss Arts Center is the first time they've ever been to a performing arts facility or gallery. Why do kids need access to the arts? Engaging in artistic activities offers a wide range of skills that they will use throughout their lives.

Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland, and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands in California and other areas in the West.

LABOR RECOGNITION

Virginia Tech acknowledges that its Blacksburg campus sits partly on land that was previously the site of the Smithfield and Solitude Plantations, owned by members of the Preston family. Between the 1770s and the 1860s, the Prestons and other local White families that owned parcels of what became Virginia Tech also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Enslaved Black people generated resources that financed Virginia Tech's predecessor institution, the Preston and Olin Institute, and they also worked on the construction of its building.



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MOSS ARTS CENTER

FALL 2024
EXHIBITION



Never Spoken Again: Rogue Stories of Science and Collections

Curated by David Ayala-Alfonso of the Independent Curators International

COMING SOON: Thurs., Sept. 26-Sat., Dec. 14, 2024

All galleries

Explore a traveling exhibition that reflects on the birth of modern collections, the art institutions that sustain them, and their contingent origin stories to reveal a universe of erasures, violence, and fortuity. Considering how institutional collections organize our lives, *Never Spoken Again* brings together artists whose works open up a critique of material culture, iconography, and political ecologies.

Free Related Events

Opening Reception

Thurs., Sept. 26, 4-6 PM

Curator's Remarks: 5 PM

Moss Arts Center Grand Lobby

Beyond The Frame

Gallery Tours

Thurs., Oct. 10, Nov. 14,

and Dec. 12, 12 PM

Moss Arts Center Grand Lobby

Curator's Panel

Fri., Sept. 27, 11 AM

Moss Arts Center Cube

Michael Rakowitz; *The invisible enemy should not exist – Seated Nude Male Figure, Wearing Belt Around Waist (IM77823) (Recovered, Missing, Stolen Series)*, 2018; Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue, and cardboard; 37.75 x 28.75 x 28.75 inches; courtesy of the artist and Barbara Wien Gallery

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fri., jan. 31, and
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**beowulf:
the epic in performance**
benjamin bagby,
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fri., feb. 14, 7:30 pm
lakecia benjamin

tues., feb. 18, 7:30 pm
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maxim lando, piano

thurs., feb. 27, 7:30 pm
kodo
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thurs., march 6, 7:30 pm
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brian thorsett, tenor

tues., march 18, 7:30 pm
broadway in blacksburg
the book of mormon

sat., march 22, 7:30 pm
a.i.m by kyle abraham

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circa
opus

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James Lawrence, Class of 1968.
Major: Civil Engineering- Environmental.
Jim was a volunteer for the YMCA Tutoring Program during his college years. He is now the Treasurer of our Board.
Since first volunteering with the Y 52 years ago Jim says "I have found that volunteering gives me a sense of purpose and enhances my own self confidence."

Magda Ruesch (formerly Rodenburg) Class of 1989.
Major: Family & Child Development. Magda was a YMCA Program Leader.
"Volunteerism started as an internship to fulfill requirements, it quickly became more of a passion. Volunteering at the Grandsharing Program lead was a very rewarding and fulfilling opportunity."



2024 YMCA VT Student Program Leader graduates:
L-R: Vivian Pergrino, Halle Barnwell, Ally Huber, Violet Zaleski.
Not pictured: Jackie Neyra, Aishba Malik, Jayne Staley, Nicole Acosta

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