



Mouth Wash and Razor Blades
Dance-theatre performance, 2025

Duration: 20 minutes

Premiere at The Place, London

Choreographer: Casper Dillen

Composer: Gia Dreyer

Costume design: Dodam Gwon

Assistant director: Dann Xiao

Scenography and Text: Casper Dillen

Performers: Agelos Kotzias, Cameron Jarvie, Casper Dillen, Christy Taylor, Cizzoe Yi Wang, Dann Xiao, Edgar Ocampo Pazmino, Haedong Lee, Maieuran Sathananthan, Noah Henry, Romain Nagata, Jamie Myles, Tomio Shota, William James (JJ), Qibai Ting, Yujie Duan

Rehearsal image: Xinyue Tao



Good for End
Performance, 2023

Duration: 10 minutes

Premiered at Tictac Art Center, Brussels.

[Excerpt](#)

Still frame



Cycle

interactive sculpture, 2024

Dimensions: 2.14cm x 52cm x 61cm

Materials: Copper, Ply wood base, mp3 player, Dupont wires, Arduino board

Made in collaboration with Jiayu Zhang, Wengzhe Wang, Neo Gao

Exhibited at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre (Belgium), part of the group exhibition: PLAY.

Installation shot: Lila Rui Lan



Babies. they are our future right?

Sculpture, 2024

Dimensions: 2.14cm x 52cm x 61cm

Materials: Aluminium, MDF, Acrylic, Plastic, Copper, Caby car seat, Bike rack

A lethal game of rock, paper, scissors. the car crushes the baby, the vehicle's aesthetic reality is undermined by it's own shadow silhouette and the abstraction lacks knowledge of the possibility of a fetus. Nature, society and a womb from the future.

Installation shot: Stephanie Teng at Camden Art Centre



Frankenstein

Dance-theatre performance, 2024

Duration: 1 hour and 55 minutes (including one interval)

Collaboration with theatre company: Imitating the Dog

Choreography: Casper Dillen

Directed by Pete Brooks, Andrew Quick and Simon Wainwright

Set & Costume Designer - Hayley Grindle

Choreographer - Casper Dillen

Lighting Designer - Andrew Crofts

Co-Video Designer - Davi Callanan

Composer & Sound Designer - James Hamilton

Co-Sound Designer and Technical Manager & Audio Engineer on Tour - Rory Howson

Casting Director - Ellie Collyer-Bristow

Company Stage Manager - Anja Bryan-Smith

Singer - Beth Moxon

Radio Play Narrator - Olwen May

Video System Designer - Alan Cox

Production Video Designer - Steve Jackson

On Tour Lighting and Video Technician - Maddy Whitby

Production Assistant (Intern) - Ryan Charles Jacob

Tour Consultant - Henrietta Duckworth

Production Filming & Trailers - Sodium Film (Tom Box, Sarah Oglesby, Denmarc Creary)

Photograph: Ed Waring



All fish are dead fish

Performance, 2023

Duration: 15 minutes

[25 second extract](#)

Displacing the mythological motion of 'passing through' in the contemporary realm of 'doom scrolling'. Objects pile up and mimic a saturated and stimulating flow of commodities seen, heard and smelled. Collaboration with sound artist: Haedong Lee and visual artist Dann Xiao

Choreography: Casper Dillen

Sound design: Haedong Lee

Technical support: Roberts Jansons

Styling support: Anthony G. Karikari

Performers: Canaan Brown, Casper Dillen, Dann Xiao, Juan Pablo Guzmán Álvarez, Hannah Dowling, Qibaiting, Roberts Jansons, Wenzhe Wang, Yi Wang, Yujie Duan

Premiered at the group exhibition: All fish are dead fish. Curated by Casper Dillen

Photograph: Wanrong Zhu



Traveling Memories

Performance, 2024

Duration: 15 seconds

Performed by Casper Dillen and Minghao Sun

Photograph: Ziying Wang



The Agreement

Performance, 2024

Casper Dillen and Christy Taylor

The agreement can happen anywhere and at any time. The place and time is based on both performer's decision, desire, and ability to agree to perform.

They shake hands without talking for an unusually long amount of time. Around 5 minutes, 30 minutes or 1 hour at a time.

Performed by: Minghao Sun (right), Casper Dillen (left), Sara Christova, Dann Xiao, Elisavet Mandilara, Yi Wang, Yujie Duan, Ning An, Angelos Kotzias, Katiana Weems-Ado, Haedong Lee, Yidan Kim, Tom Fairlamb, Yibao Zhang, Mahxium Ogyen Chung, Bianco Li, Lil Soap, Chocolate, Harman Liu, Orion Catton, Wanrong Zhu, Lila Rui Lan, Oriana Catton, Sunni Mullen, Marco Goncalves, Wenghze Wang, Li Xin, Nikita, Lee Mia Zi, Edgar Ocampo Pazmino, H. Lan, Myunmin Lu, Neo Gao, Simona Racheva, Cameron Jarvie, Anthony Karikari, Isabel Merchante, Xuanze Wang, Timi Shogbola, Tom Gu

Photograph: Ziying Wang



Transparent tree
Performance, 2024

Duration: 12 minutes

Choreography: Casper Dillen, Dann Xiao
Performance: Yi Wang, Yujie Duan, Qibaiting, Dann Xiao, Casper Dillen

Curated by: Sunjoo Jung

Performed at Westbourne Grove Church

Photograph: Lila Rui Lan



Orfeo

Dance-theatre performance, 2022

Duration: 21 minutes

Choreographer and Director: Casper Dillen

Composer: Gia Dreyer

Lighting Design: Seth Rook Williams

Costume designer: Ziting Gao

Costume assistant: Qing Zhu

Singer: Meixuan Cheng

Dancers: Casper Dillen, Harman Liu Hongdao, Heejin Ban, Lewis Oliver Douglas, Romain Nagata, Tong Yin

Technical manager: Rachel Shipp

Performed at The Place, London

Photograph: Justin Atkins



Still frame, rehearsal with Heejin Ban, 2022



Adem

Dance-theatre performance, 2021

Duration: 20 minutes

Premiered June 4th 2021 at the Platform Theatre, London

Choreography: Casper Dillen

Cast: Casper Dillen, Dain Jeong, Fatima Rodriguez, Harman Liu, Lewis Douglas, Momo Sakai, Seba Morales

Technical support: Luke Cunningham, Federica Lipp, Frederico Nobre, Michael Breakey

Camera operators: Inigo Townsend, Gabriella Engdahl

Stage crew: Chelsea Formosa, Amelia Constanti

[Extract](#)

Photograph: Mark Duffield



Long Tennis

Performance, 2023

Duration: 50 minutes

Performed and choreographed by: Casper Dillen and Inge Cauwenbergh

Premiered at the [Center for Performance Research](#), Brooklyn, New York

Still frame



Long Tennis: an evening of dance

Performance, 2023

Duration: 41 minutes

Performed and choreographed by: Casper Dillen and Inge Cauwenbergh

Choreographer: Casper DillMusic: Gia Dreyer

Electronics: Arnau Brichs

Dancers: Inge Cauwenbergh, Chenchen, Casper Dillen, Slick Johnny, Summer

Performed at the Holy Trinity Church, Roehampton, London

Photograph: Siegfried Beyers



Still frame, rehearsal with Hongdao Liu and Lewis Oliver Douglas, 2021



Bad Dress

Digital livestream performance, 2018

Duration: 55 minutes

Directed and performed by Casper Dillen



CASPER DILLEN

Choreographer, sculptor, writer Casper Dillen (b. 1999, Belgium) makes performances and narrative objects that results from embodied affective site-specific collaboration and research: rehearsals. A place where utterances come in fragmented instructions and indications. "Can you do that again?" "Reach further" "That shape is good". Creating situations that straddle humour and indeterminacy.

Casper studied at Central Saint Martins where they received the Deans Award. They completed a post-graduate degree with distinction in philosophy at Birkbeck. They graduated in 2024 from Royal College of Art. Casper was shortlisted for New Contemporaries 2024.

Their first and only duo performance exhibition in the UK came in 2019 at The Bomb Factory Art Foundation (London) curated by Pallas Citroen. Casper was invited three times by David Zambrano and Matt Voorter, to perform at Tictac Art Centre (Brussels). Notable work includes: Orfeo (2022), a retelling of the Orpheus myth at The Place (London), Long Tennis (2021), a dance duet devised in a kitchen at the Center for Performance Research (New York), a performative intervention on war and visibility on the staircase of the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge), and Cycle (2023) a choreographic sound sculpture at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre (Brussels).

They have collaborated across various domains e.g. As a choreographer with theatre company 'imitating the dog', Brandon Prizzon for Vogue Italia, contemporary post-punk band HMLTD and Micheal Spencer at the 2019 Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Group exhibitions include e.g. Future Archeologies (2024) at Camden Art Centre (London), Xhibit (2019) at Koppel Projects Gallery (London).

Photograph by Arnaud Beelen

ArkTalks: The question I want to start with – what do you imagine when you hear the word ‘art’?

Casper: It is like a cake. There are the raw ingredients: the egg, the dough, the milk. And then there are preparations through the cooking process. The assemblage, severing, moulding, applying heat.

The raw materials can be seen as the qualities, complex notions that exist in the world, one is thrown into a world that contains certain intersubjective qualities such as beauty, boredom, speed, surprise, etc. And the preparation can be the coming into contact of those forces with contemporaneity. The arrangement and manifestation. So the raw material and the preparation can be the coming into contact of those forces with contemporary art. There is creation, but also arrangement for me.

AT: You already talked a bit about your vision of art, but I want to extend this question with reflection on the definition. Do you think that art should be defined? And if yes, who has the right to determine it?

Casper: I think in the whole debate around art and around the limitations of what art is, and what is not; what is allowed to be art, what is not allowed – these kinds of debates start to take on almost moral proportions. I believe art cannot be strictly defined. This is my reflection.

AT: If you were to speak about art in general, without the specification of any particular genre, what three elements would you say are most vital to call anything ‘art’?

Casper: It would be easier to speak about performance for me. But in these terms, the answer will depend on the specific kind of performance. If it is a blue performance, it cannot exist without blueness. If it is a fast performance, it needs speed. So, it depends on the type of performance or artwork being considered. The essential qualities of any art depend on their particular manifestations.

AT: Yes, yes, sure. I wonder, if we imagine ourselves in an art gallery now, looking at different works where some young artists are presented alongside the famous ones, and where abstract paintings are hung near the complicated figurative ones. We see amateur artists who are just at the beginning of their professional pathway, and next to them, well-known classic Medieval works. And here is my question – do you think we have any criteria to separate those artworks from each other, or there is no concern to just call all of them ‘art’?

Casper: Any work of art is very similar to getting to know a person and to becoming friends with the person, to spending time with them to establish contacts, to having a first meeting and a second meeting, to spending a lot of time with them. I'm going to learn about their contexts that are inherent to them, go on some kinds of dates with them, and

give them my attention. And in this establishment of a particular way of interacting with each other, becoming friends, going beyond archetypes, going beyond expectations, there is also an evolution. This is how I interact with artworks. And I think this also answers the question – this is how I judge people, and this is how I judge work. I don't think any person can be judged on any particular quality. I mean, if someone was running a marathon, you're talking about speed. So you can judge the person based on their speed. But if you're talking about judging a person, every particular person meets their particular way of approaching. That's why I say blue work must be judged by its blueness. What is no less important – images have the ability to bring their own criteria elements that become essential for this particular work.

AT: Could we say that you are trying to see the artist, the person behind their works?

Casper: No, no, I see the work itself. I approach it like a person. The way I approach an image is very similar to the way I approach a person. There are works in the National Gallery that have become my friends. I visit them regularly, the way that I catch up with friends.

AT: And what about the context of the work? Do you prefer to know more about the circumstances the art piece was created, about that time, the author's story etc. Do you need it to understand the work better?

Casper: I think it's very similar to the way you meet a new person. Although by spending time, I can be very good friends with someone without really knowing their history. But then, if I knew their history, I could understand them much better. And we can trust each other.

AT: And I also wanted to ask about descriptions of the works. Do you prefer first to read about the work or to look at the work?

Casper: I prefer to explore the work by myself first, and after that to read more about it. Because otherwise, I think it's a little bit like gossiping. It's similar to, you know, when you hear a lot about a person before meeting them – and only after getting to know them in person you understand who they are. Only after this, does it become interesting.

AT: Do you provide a detailed description to the audience – or do you prefer someone interpreting it in their own way?

Casper: The work sits within an oral tradition where memory, interpretation and anecdote become performative works in themselves. Telling a third party about a performance is a moment of storytelling that can be as powerful as the original performance. I believe in the ability of people to make strong performative gestures when engaging in speech acts. Thinking, interpreting and speaking.

AT: Then I have another question. Imagine I know nothing about art. How can you explain to me, what is performance?

Casper: Yeah, it's also a kind of definition. So, for me, theatre is a piece of socio-political technology. It is a place where people are allowed – and moreover they are invited – to look at other people. This is not always the case. Sometimes. It's inappropriate to continuously look at people, but in theatre, for that moment, people are allowed to look at

other people, and their performance. And this creates an environment and a place where questions can be generated in silence without necessarily talking to each other, in each other's heads, but together, there's a kind of being alone but also being together. And these questions are very ontological, and also political and societal. They are questions like: Who are we? Who can we be? Who do we want to become? And so, the theatre is a place where ontological debates can happen in silence. And it's a piece of socio-politics.

AT: Could you say a bit more about the non-professional performances you face in the art world nowadays? When you see some works and honestly can't understand why this low level of implementation is so popular and/or famous?

Casper: It's a good question, but I would like to pass on it if you don't mind.

AT: May I ask you to tell, in a few words, how you came to practising performance?

Casper: I started as a dancer actually.

AT: And how did you decide to become a performer?

Casper: Well, I decided it because I wanted to make images. If I had the skills to be a painter, I would have become a painter. You know, I was very passionate about image-making in general, but I was not a painter. I had the skills in dancing instead, and I wanted to make something much more specific to time and space, to make images that are moving, that have a narrative, that ask questions. Images that are a little bit like moving sculptures.

AT: I have a question about success. I know it's difficult to evaluate it. But anyway, when you are doing the performance, how do you understand whether it is successful or not? Does it depend on the reaction of the audience, or is it more related to your inner feeling – if you managed to reveal the initial idea, or if you managed to perform in the best way you could?

Casper: For example, we had been working for more than one year on the recent performance 'A mirror is not a mirror', with regular rehearsals.

AT: Over one year?

Casper: Yes. And it's very important for me that I had time and regular rehearsals during this period. It demands a lot of passion from a lot of people. And this itself moves me that the whole team has this desire to work on something regularly, for such a long time. I believe there is something fundamentally important about success in that context.

AT: I think it's difficult to keep people so passionate and interested in something for over one year. How do you choose people to work with? They should be your close friends, not just colleagues?

Casper: Yeah. They are very passionate about their work, and this is so important. Without this, the work could not be done. And I am so grateful to all of them. It's not easy to find people who are involved so deeply, that's why a part of the team tends to remain the same, however it is changed from performance to performance, with more or less the same artists for the project.

AT: And how did you come to this understanding? You said earlier that a kind of success for you is when the process moves you. Could you expand on this more?

Casper: it should move me, as I said before. I see every work as a person, I feel like the work has some identity, some newness or speed. And these have become the criteria. So the criteria for the success of the work are internal to the work itself. And what else makes me happy is when I feel the work is like a person. It has this quality. The reason why I say that the process itself is so important is that no work is ever fully finished, they just stop in interesting places. And the finish is only prompted by deadlines because I can keep working on them. I worked on the performance 'A Mirror is not a mirror' for more than a year, but I could have worked on it for another three years, but I had the deadline for the festival – and the piece had to come to a closure. So, yeah, this is not finished, and will never be finished, which is another interesting element to consider.

AT: I want to focus on the process of your work now. From the very first idea to the final performance: what do you start with, what kind of steps do you have, and how do you organise the work within the team?

Casper: Maybe I wouldn't explain all in detail. It might not be so interesting I believe. But I want to highlight that I don't have separate research and creation processes – for me these both processes run parallel. So, I'm always researching and working on performances at the same time. Because of practical reasons, those processes overlap. I often rehearse several projects at the same time and they're different performances.

AT: Speaking about 'A mirror is not a mirror' – what could you say about the preparation process of this performance?

Casper: It started with an idea of performance for the church, for the festival. And I see the church as the place where experimentations always happen, visual experimentations. So we started preparing specifically for this venue.

AT: So, one year ago you already knew that it would be in the church?

Casper: Yes, yes. We were told to prepare it for the church, one year in advance.

AT: Can it be performed in churches only?

Casper: No, it can take place in different places, but the meanings might change a bit depending on the venue. So, our original idea was to make a performance for the church, and then I started thinking about the relationship between churches and museums. Analysing that, I thought that the paintings that used to be in churches are now in museums. We used to see the museums as very quiet places, where you can't speak loudly and can't touch the works. Sometimes they look like a hospital. And the churches are very similar in this case. However, nowadays it is being changed.

AT: Why have you chosen such a title – 'A mirror is not a mirror'? I really love it.

Casper: The idea is similar to the quote by Bertolt Brecht: 'Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it'. The thing about titles is that their names are given by the author. That means they're just names given by others. There's no magic power attached to them. But the magic is in the absence, not in the presence, which adds

a layer of the oral tradition of *talking* about works. Their meanings change in ways you wouldn't have imagined in the collaborative moments between people inside and outside the work. I quite like the role of anecdotes within storytelling where a person watches a performance, goes home and tells their partner what they just saw. And that moment of telling a story to the partner is a performance in itself. What I mean is that within this moment of sharing anecdotes, new interpretations emerge, making this act of storytelling strong performative gestures.

AT: Such storytelling is also a kind of performance.

Casper: Yes, definitely.

AT: Thank you very much for this thoughtful conversation. It was such a pleasure to speak to you.

Casper: Thank you!