

Circusstad Festival & Stichting Boost Producties & Academy of Theatre and Dance

Report

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In the spring of 2026, I took part in a professional study trip to the Netherlands, focusing primarily on the international practice, institutional background, and creative processes of contemporary circus. The core of the programme consisted of getting to know the work of **Stichting Boost Producties in Amsterdam**, exploring the educational structure of the **Academy of Theatre and Dance**, and studying the circus-theatre works of **Vincent De Roy**.

In Rotterdam, I attended events at the **Circusstad Festival**, where I followed performances and professional discussions. During the trip, I also had the opportunity to visit a range of cultural **venues and exhibitions** in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. It was exciting to experience the diversity and vibrancy of artistic and cultural life in these cities. On several occasions, I was also able to discuss the experiences and impressions gathered during the trip together with local artists and creators, which became one of the most engaging and insightful aspects of the journey.

First phase

Shortly after arriving, I was able to join the work of the *Stichting Boost Producties* team. The company's director, *Lennie Visser*, and scenographer *Jelle Engel* spoke very openly and directly about the company's operation, their current projects, and the challenges they encounter in their work. The conversations took place in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, which made collaboration feel natural from the very beginning. These meetings were not only professionally valuable, but also helped establish a strong working relationship with the team very quickly. During this time, we also discussed the detailed programme and locations for the upcoming days.

Second phase

The Rotterdam-based *Circusstad Festival* — organised this year for the thirteenth time — provided an exceptional insight into current directions in contemporary circus. With the help of my mentor, I also had the opportunity to meet several festival organisers and artists personally. The performances were highly diverse: alongside classical circus techniques such as juggling, trapeze, and acrobatics, experimental and interdisciplinary works, as well as street theatre forms, were also strongly represented. Among the performances I attended were *Vrij*, *Play Dead / People Watching*, *Tembo*, *Food*, *In Difference*, *The Mirror*, *Tridiculous*, and productions by *Tall Tales Company/Droplines*.

These experiences not only offered artistic motivation and new perspectives, but also gave a strong impression of current international tendencies within the field.





Third phase

Returning to Amsterdam, I continued to deepen my connection with the artists of Stichting Boost Producties. I had the opportunity to explore the company's studio, which combines multiple functions in a dynamic communal environment, ranging from rehearsal and performance spaces to workshops, offices, and guest accommodation.



During our collaborative work, my mentor introduced me in detail to the company's previous performances and workshops, while I also shared my own artistic practices and experiences. From the very first conversations, it quickly became clear that we shared many common interests and similar ways of thinking, which created a strong basis for collaboration. As a result, the artistic director involved me in the dramaturgical development of an upcoming production, and later in the full rehearsal process as well. Together, we began rethinking and further developing the previously presented *Waterqueen* project into a new site-specific performance built around a different thematic concept, under the title *Freule*. Throughout the process, I had the opportunity to work alongside a dramaturg, circus performers, a musician, and a singer. This collaboration proved to be a highly meaningful experience for me both personally and artistically.



Fourth phase

Guided by *Bart Kusters*, I had the opportunity to explore the building and organisational structure of the *Academy of Theatre and Dance* in detail. The tour provided not only physical insight into the institution's spaces, but also a broader understanding of its educational and creative processes. I became familiar with the project-based approach of the academy, in which students acquire professional foundations through active and practice-oriented participation. I found the diversity of the student community particularly interesting, as the institution's international character and openness presented a much broader perspective compared to common practices at home. Each department operates with a clearly defined artistic profile, while strong opportunities for collaboration and exchange exist between them, creating a vibrant and multifaceted creative environment. The Academy of Theatre and Dance is state-funded, while students also contribute through tuition fees. This dual funding model provides a stable institutional background while maintaining the high quality and international competitiveness of the programme.



Fifth phase

During the study trip, I also had the opportunity to become familiar with the earlier works of *Vincent De Roy* and gain insight into his current directorial work connected to the new production *Expired* by the internationally acclaimed German company *Titanic*. The performance, scheduled to premiere in August, promises to be especially exciting in the way it sensitively and creatively combines elements of circus, theatre, and visual arts. Learning about the rehearsal process and artistic concept was a defining experience for me both professionally and artistically. If possible, I would be very happy to follow the final rehearsal week in August and attend the premiere performance as well.



Exhibitions

Alongside the professional programme, it was also important for me to gain a deeper understanding of the local cultural environment. I visited several exhibitions and museums out of curiosity about the cultural heritage shaping these contexts, as well as the new directions and works appearing in contemporary visual art today. It was fascinating to see how historical heritage and contemporary art intersect, and how artists reflect on current social and cultural issues through a wide variety of forms. These experiences enriched me not only culturally, but also professionally by providing many new impressions and perspectives.

The exhibitions and museums I visited:

Mix & Match – Barbara Visser, Discover the Modern / From Monet to Bacon, Mondrian & De Stijl, Can Love Be a Photograph, Base Line, London Calling, Mauritshuis, Museum Beelden aan Zee, Ivna Esajas – Wayward Lines, Beyond the Manosphere – Masculinities Today, Stedelijk Museum, Rijksmuseum, Rembrandt House, and Eye Museum.

Closing thoughts

Throughout the trip, I encountered a wide range of artistic approaches, creative processes, and cultural environments that opened up new perspectives for me. It was particularly exciting to observe how contemporary art — especially contemporary circus — connects with traditions while also engaging with present-day cultural and social questions.

I feel that the experiences gained during this study trip will continue to influence my work in the long term, and I would be very glad to share them with the students and teachers of BCDC. I hope that these experiences may later lead to valuable professional discussions, collaborative thinking, and new creative ideas.