

CAN YOU MAKE A HURRICANE?
By Emmanuel Van Der Auwera



Concept and Direction: Emmanuel Van der Auwera

Assistant Dramaturg and Editing: Pedro Gossler

Creative consultant: Sophie Sherman

Production and administration: Entropie Production (Pierre-Laurent Boudet, Stephanie Bouteille and Lucille Belland)

Performance: Davis Freeman, Malak Atif

Make-up and Performance: Dominique Binder

Make-up studio: Bloody Marys (Florence Thonet & Anne Van Nyen)

Group of teenagers: to be announced

Light Designer: Gregory Rivoux

AV Operator: Morgan Souren

Livestream and camera operator: Julien Stroïnovsky

Coproductions: Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Les Halles de Schaerbeek, CIGO (Studio Van der Auwera)

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For several years, my work has explored the zones of friction between reality and representation. Whether through the media, social networks, surveillance, or artificial intelligence, I seek to examine the ways in which images and narratives shape our experience of the world.

Can You Make a Hurricane? originates from a long-term research project conducted in the United States around school shootings, active shooter drills, and the conspiracy communities that emerged in the aftermath of the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting, which claimed the lives of 26 people, including 20 young children. Through encounters with victims' families, school safety specialists, but also with denialists convinced that the tragedy had never taken place, I was confronted with a question that extends far beyond this particular event: what happens when a society gradually loses confidence in images, shared narratives, and even in the possibility of a shared truth?

To me, Sandy Hook represents less an isolated tragedy than one of the inaugural scenes of what has been called the post-truth era. It was one of the first moments when a major real-world event was immediately experienced, commented upon, and contested as though it were fiction. As if media culture had ultimately come to colonize reality itself.



Active shooter drills are simulation exercises designed to prepare civilians, teachers, and law enforcement officers to respond to a crisis. They generate their own roles, gestures, and dramaturgy. Paradoxically, their very existence contributed to doubts surrounding the authenticity of the Sandy Hook tragedy. For some, the sense of unreality produced by its media coverage reinforced the conviction that they were witnessing a simulation, a theatrical performance populated by crisis actors. This convergence of simulated events, conspiracy narratives, and the spectacle of mourning lies at the origin of my desire to adapt this research into a theatrical form.

Can You Make a Hurricane? takes as its point of departure the words of a conspiracy theorist I interviewed during my research. The title itself comes from a question posed by the conspiracy theorist during our conversation. Through this encounter, I sought to understand what could lead an ordinary person to regard a historical tragedy as a staged event. What interested me was not merely the belief itself, but the world that underpinned

it. The piece transforms this material into a form of forensic fiction: cameras, make-up, reenactments, and archival footage come together in a dispositif concerned less with producing narratives than with returning to their traces. As if the tools of video and theatre had become instruments for investigating our relationship to reality.



The audience witnesses a reenactment of this testimony. A live camera records the action. A make-up artist slowly creates a fictitious wound on the actress's forehead. Two events unfold simultaneously: the man delivers his monologue inside a car, an image inherited from our first telephone conversations, while the make-up artist recreates a bullet wound. Both actions are filmed and projected onto two large screens onstage.

During a location scout in Los Angeles, a young film technician told me: "Nothing gets shot in LA anymore." Productions are leaving the city. Studios are emptying. Narratives are migrating toward platforms, vertical formats, and algorithmic feeds. Her remark became an unexpected echo of my research on Sandy Hook and the broader crisis of shared reality it seemed to foreshadow. As if the American dream factory had been supplanted by a new kind of fiction. These words are later repeated by the young actress before she launches into a melancholic song about the feeling of exhaustion, almost post-mortem in nature, inspired by the bleakness of a Monday evening in the carefully calibrated life of a student. "Come Monday night, the day of work is done. Tuesday morning looms, the ordinariness." This adolescent lullaby, drawn from the teen drama *God Help the Girl*, precedes the shutdown during which the image of a school summoned onto the stage disappears into darkness, accompanied by the piercing sound of a bell, suspended in a dead time that seems never to end.

