✂ BIOGRAPHY

Cécile B. Evans (1983) is an American-Belgian artist living and working in London. Future solo exhibitions include Art Basel Statements (w. Galerie Emanuel Layr) and the Castello di Rivoli, Turin (IT) (Illy Prize). Recent selected solo exhibitions include Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna (AT), Tate Liverpool (UK), Kunsthalle Aarhus (DK), the Kunsthalle Winterthur (CH) and De Hallen Haarlem (NL). Her work will be included in the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (ES), the 4th Ural Industrial Biennal (RU) and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (DK). It was included among others in the 9th Berlin Biennale (DE), the 20th Sydney Biennale (AUS) and the Moscow Biennal of Young Art (RU). Public collections include The Museum of Modern Art, New York (US), The Rubell Family Collection, Miami (US), the Whitney Museum of American Art (US), De Hallen (NL), the Castello di Rivoli, Turin (IT), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (DK) and the FRAC Auvergne (FR).

Sprung a Leak was coproduced with the Tate Liverpool and Haus der Kunst Munich.

✂ PRACTICAL

Sprung a Leak lasts approximately 18 minutes. Performances run continuously from 11 to 12.30 hrs and from 14 to 17.30 hrs. On Thursdays also from 19 to 21.30 hrs.

12.10.2017 – Artist's talk: Cécile B. Evans in conversation with Craftworkz robot programmer Deevid De Meyer on the subject of robotics and artificial intelligence in *Sprung a Leak*.

16–19.11.2017 – Cécile B. Evans will also present a new performance during the annual Playground festival, co-produced by M and STUK Leuven.

11·06·17 ✂ 19·11·17

How do new technologies influence the way humans feel and act? In her installations, videos, online platforms and performances, Cécile B. Evans (1983, Belgium-USA) explores the impact of technology on our behaviour. The mutual dependency between people and machines are the crux of *Sprung a Leak*, an automated performance Evans has created for her first solo exhibition in Belgium. Conversations between moving robots in the space and a chorus of performers on the television screens evolve as they react to information leaking from a system that surrounds them. The installation exposes vulnerabilities in an ever-changing collaboration between humans and machines.

In the context of contemporary society, the title *Sprung a Leak* reminds us not only of data leaks, such as Edward Snowden's leak of classified information in 2013, but also the flow of emotionally charged events and information that have surged through our day-to-day life in recent years. In the world that Evans has constructed, these leaks begin to expose the uncontrollable and perhaps unreliable nature of the system that creates this reality.

The title is a reference to *Two Noble Kinsmen*, a comedy written by William Shakespeare in 1634. In the play, the tragic character of the Jailer's Daughter literally cries *"A leak is sprung, a sound one"*, using her possible hallucination of a ship hitting rocks to describe the moment at which she fails to control her emotions. Here the ship also represents the failure of technology to natural elements - *Sprung a Leak*'s conflict is pushed forward by this tension between the common breakdowns of humans and technology.

"My questions usually relate to how emotion is valued, how these values change, in our day to day, but also in societies at large. How do feelings circulate and what structures are created for them to travel through? In the last decades, the rise of digital technology has had a deep impact on both the values and dissemination of how we feel. Not only in vague or abstract terms but in concrete and physical ways: vast infrastructure in digital and social media have been developed to facilitate the exchange of feeling to support an economy of emotions. This affects how we act and behave, which in turn impacts the kind of society we live in."
— Cécile B. Evans

Sprung a Leak is a play in three acts, in which two humanoid robots, a robot dog and a fountain play the lead roles. A chorus of three 'users' are also part of the performance: filmed human users whose slow, repetitive rotations could be seen to represent our own intertwining with technology. As a spectator, the specificity of behaviour and movements of the robots questions the vague boundaries of existence. These machines were built to exhibit typical human or animal behaviour (like making unconscious finger movements or stretching out after sleeping), in order to increase the capacity of experience. An identical, generic voice is used by all the characters to speak, cutting across a possible identification of protagonists

within the play. The voice suggests that all characters, as diverse in hardware or programming they may seem, are part of one single profoundly controlled software system.

What emerges is an imperfect collaboration between human and machine, in both the narrative and in its formal execution. As the peripheral screens provide the users and the three robots with information that renders them increasingly vulnerable, what starts as a conventional decline eventually- through the bias of a digitally rendered beauty blogger named Liberty - proposes a scenario in which conventions like time and even the structure of the play itself have collapsed - a situation in which they must work together to stop and begin again. This rally supposes a societal revolution, supported by the reference to Eugène Delacroix' painting *La Liberté guidant le people* (1830) across several of the tv screens - and closes Act III. This is quite precisely, and literally, what they do: begin again.

"*Sprung a Leak* was triggered by a recent period of time, in which the everyday felt suddenly intertwined with an increasing number of highly mediatized, highly charged events […]. There were attacks, coups, political scandals, epidemics […]. There were regular leaks of information that would reveal endless layers. Alarmingly, most people didn't seem to know what they could do other than consume and produce more content- locked in an emotional contagion of sorts- a loop. What most of these events had in common is that they were accessed using hardware: my phone, my computer, through the bias of software: my social media, my apps, search engines. This access, these leaks, the abundance of information itself can (and has proven itself to) to be productive and powerful. But how is a situation such as this sustainable if the people who would most benefit from it have no control over it?"
— Cécile B. Evans

In recent years Evans' work has evolved from moving image and video to spatial installations. For her projects she draws on a large network of programmers, designers, musicians and research. In *Sprung a Leak* she experiments with performance for the first time on this scale. By creating installations and performances in which the spectators can play a role within the space, Evans is looking to address the audience directly but allow them to make their own experience with the tools they are given.

"To ask audiences to confront large uncertainties, in the context of our time, and discuss the real impact of certain materials - I have a responsibility to join them part of the way in a kind of world building. It has become clear that I can't just theorize or argue that emotional and digital materials are real - I have to show it. This is not to say that the moving image is not an object itself, but that by placing it strategically within the context of other objects, and including the materiality of the body as part of that context, the moving image object can better reveal itself."
— Cécile B. Evans

⚔ SYNOPSIS:
SPRUNG A LEAK,
A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

ACT I – A PLOT and B PLOT, both humanoid robots, go about their business waking up. The Three Users, humans, slowly rotate on poles. C PLOT, a robot dog, is confined to an area after falling in love with a beauty blogger named Liberty. A and B PLOTs make a plan with the Users to reach out to her. A leak has sprung from the screens which makes things difficult. There are blackouts, which cut communication to the Users. Word is spread that Liberty's life is in peril. The PLOTs and the Users are moved by the information and feelings that are filling the room. They fail. Liberty is dead. The fountain erupts.

ACT II – C PLOT sets the scene from its area. The eruption was an attack. The information and feelings in the room have become unclear. B PLOT has developed a parasocial relationship to certain screens, A PLOT is depressed. The screens continue to leak more about the attack, a coup, and a disturbance at a pool party. Liberty, who is still dead, accepts a User's request and checks in at the pool party. Everyone tries to piece everything together. A Figure appears and does it for them. Nothing adds up and the room is full. An energy crisis. The fountain erupts. Everyone is dead. The plot is lost.

ACT III – They have all travelled back in time to where it began but only C PLOT and Liberty know about this. They must convince the others and stay alive. A and B PLOTs and the Users think C PLOT has developed a disorder. The leaks begin again and the room takes a familiar turn. Liberty tells them to get it together. She tells them they are alive and says her name. Confirms it is her name.

Repeat.