



Andy Warhol, Details of Renaissance Paintings (Leonardo da Vinci, the Annunciation, 1472) (F.S. II 321), 1984.

THE ANNUNCIATION

The Annunciation is the biblical scene where archangel Gabriel announces Mary's immaculate conception and chosen role as mother of God/Jesus. The scene is recounted with slight variations in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, the Qur'an, and the Proto-Gospel of James. Almost all great masters from the Middle Ages until today as well as innumerable unknown painters depicted an Annunciation.

In *The Annunciation*, I connect this cultural trope that, as a cornerstone of patriarchal thinking, has left a strong imprint on Western culture and politics, to an experience that took place in my body—and takes place in other bodies every day: a pregnancy and its termination. With a team of artists, I develop a contemporary Annunciation: a solo performance with slow choreography, rewritings of sacred texts, and sculptural light.

After graduate studies in literature at KULeuven, and in *Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy* at Utrecht University, I have been developing a practice as maker, dramaturge, and performer since 2018. Through my choreographic works (*Like God in Drag*, 2018, *Creatures at rest*, 2021, *Slow Visit*, 2024) and research projects (*Slow Experiments*, 2022, *It's Good to Talk with You Mother*, 2023), I developed a practice of slowness as poetic defiance to the pressures that fast-paced capitalism exerts on our bodies and attention, reclaiming presence and care from patriarchal habits of domination.

In this project, I harness the longing for intimacy and sensory sensitivity that has shaped my previous projects to serve a queer-feminist positioning. I approach Mary as a figure who becomes pregnant outside the framework of a heterosexual couple, without sperm, and I read her explicit "yes" in the Gospel of Luke ("I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word") as an invitation to reimagine the story as a parable of consent—and abortion. At the same time, I draw on iconography to depict Gabriel as a gender-fluid being who meets Mary in an intimate way, as a true ally.

Concept, text & performance Alice Van der Wielen-Honinckx

Choreographic advice Maria Ferreira Silva

Licht & space design Evelien Cammaert

Sound design Anne Lepère

Costume design Miguel Peñranda Olmeda

Dramaturgy Carolina Mendonça and Elke Van Campenhout

Residencies Kunstencentrum BUDA (Kortrijk, February & April 2026), STUK (Leuven, March-April 2026), Metarage (Brussels, June 2026).

Public work-in-progress presentation in the framework of Lundynamite (Brussels, June 2026).

Co-production Metarage.

Subsidies Vlaamse Gemeenschap (answer in January 2025)

Premiere Playground Festival, STUK/M Leuven, November 2026 (in conversation).

Link to documented research: <https://www.alicevanderwielenhoninckx.org/documentatie>

Textual lines of flight

With Elke Van Campenhout and Carolina Mendonça, we study a *corpus* of texts, songs, and images of the Annunciation, looking for lines of flight: remarkable details that allow us to write speculative variations to the story as we know it. We combine contrasting narrative styles to present the scene both in its broadest archetypal dimension and as a parable that can take place in our bodies today: dialogue, that is personal and conveys the immediacy of the present moment; and mythopoetic prose that, on the contrary, evokes wide timespans and transcendence. This way, we hope to connect the scene to embodied, concrete experience, and a wider imaginary than what religious dogma usually allows—without fully disenchanting it.

A moving counter-image

With Maria Ferreira Silva, we develop a choreography that takes the static body postures of Mary and Gabriel in iconography as a starting point to develop a moving counter-image. Though slowness, we look for a time-experience where historic-archetypal reference meets concreteness of an experience that take place in a body, now. We build on my research of slowness, developed during my masters at Utrecht University, my training in Perceptive Pedagogy: Fascia & Dance, and my choreographic pieces *Creatures at rest* and *Slow Visit*.

From two-dimensional iconography to three-dimensional light

With Evelien Cammaert, we develop a scenographic practice with light that translates the atmospheres and compositions of two-dimensional Annunciations to three-dimensional spaces. Light is almost a character in the Annunciation. That's why we use both as a scenographic and as a performative material, in dialogue with tekst, sound, and choreography. As in *Creatures at rest* (2021), and our collaboration in Evelien's performative installation *Glowachrome Garden* (2022), we look for an immersive form that heightens sensory receptivity through an atmosphere of rest—offering an oasis of resistance to contemporary productivism, and the hurry that comes with it.

Post-60ies Ave Maria

With Anne Lepère, we start from a study of Ave Maria compositions with a focus on the last 60 years—years in which divorce, contraception, and abortion have become legal in many countries: from jazz, to trance, pop, and Eastern European neoclassical music. We create a hybrid composition full of cultural reference, in which synthesizers evoke a longing for transcendence/the sublime, and voice recordings of text fragments bring the intimate expression of direct, sensory experience.

Queering

We use queering as a critical artistic practice that bends the form and content of this religious trope to question dominant structures of thought. We approach it from unconventional perspectives, looking for suppressed voices and subversive meanings. In doing so, we deconstruct the logics that prevail in contemporary as well as older theological/ethical frameworks, and propose an alternative imagination.

In its most common reading, the cultural trope of the Annunciation rubs against a contemporary climate where self-determination in terms of sexuality, procreation, and gender identity appears on the foreground of social change. The scene can easily be read as a parable of sexual restraint, devotional purity, and self-sacrificial service to a higher power, and thus offer a model of compliance that legitimizes patriarchal control over subaltern bodies and their sexuality until today—not just female bodies, but also trans, non-binary, black, brown, and poor bodies, or any other body that is excluded from structures of power.

In this project, we work with text and choreography to challenge conventional readings of this scene by approaching it as a surprising mirror of contemporary experience: Mary becomes pregnant outside the structure of a heterosexual couple, without sperm; her explicit “yes” implies she could also say “no” and opens the possibility to bend the story into a parable of consent and abortion; Gabriel is often presented as gender-fluid in iconography, sometimes approaching Mary intimately, as a true ally; and the miracle of Mary’s virgin conception is coupled up with Elizabeth’s late-age pregnancy—a miracle that biotechnology now makes possible for some. In this series of remarkable details, we see lines of flight: opportunities to queer this cultural motif from cornerstone of religious and political conservatism, into a story that supports today’s movements of emancipation—not despite, but *through* biblical imagery.

Instead of seeing Mary as an almost abstract receptacle of God’s word, we build on my experience with early pregnancy and its termination to bring her closer to the realities of embodied existence. We don’t focus on her virginal motherhood, but on her liminal position as *edgewalker* between life and non-life: guide in moments of loss, not-knowing, physical pain, and grief. Rather than the instrument of a transcendental power, we hope to make her appear as an ally in our longing for repair of a broken relationship between body and mind/spirit, human and more-than human.

Deconstructing this religious heritage is particularly urgent today, as right-wing political movements worldwide mobilize religious puritanism to legitimize social control over subaltern bodies through an ideology that is not only anti-abortion, but also racist, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-migration, and fundamentally anti-care. As contemporary pluralism causes Western religious traditions such as Catholicism to contract in reactionary ways, many turn elsewhere in a renewed search for meaning and spirituality. What if, however, what we seek elsewhere could also be found in archetypes already omnipresent here?

By finding alternatives to dominant interpretations *within* the Annunciation heritage and developing these into a subversive artistic form, we hope to contribute to centuries of Annunciations with a contemporary one that bridges this legacy with new practices that the Church largely dismisses. By emphasizing her immaculate conception, the Church strips our imagination of Mary of bodily and erotic dimensions, making her almost abstract. As a counter-movement to the centuries-long repression of body in favor of mind/spirit within Christian, and by extension Western, culture, we don’t make a contemporary Annunciation through its traditional text or painting, but by seeking an immersive form that center the somatic experience of a performing body and the sensory experience of visitors.

Alice Van der Wielen-Honinckx (Brussels, 1989) works as a maker, performer, and dramaturg. She obtained master's degrees in Western Literature and Literary Studies at KU Leuven, in Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy at Utrecht University, and graduated from BodyMind Academy in a somatic technique called Perceptive Pedagogy: Fascia & Dance.

Her artistic practice is situated at the intersection of performance, choreography, and artistic research. Since 2017, she has collaborated with other artists on performances and installations that challenge the everyday pressures of neoliberal patriarchy—its speed, its demands on our bodies, its erosion of presence and attention. By creating concrete moments of multisensory listening and shared time, her works often invite a felt awareness of both the present's tiniest details and broader timescales that link us to more-than-human worlds.

Following her thesis *Aesthetic Boredom: Investigating the Experience of Slow Dance in a Society of Haste* (2020), her study of slowness took form in the trio *Creatures at rest* (2021) and the solo *Slow Visit* (2024)—two choreographic works presented in contexts at the intersection of performing and visual arts. *Slow Visit* was shown on the occasion of the contemporary textile art exhibition Facing Fabrics at CC De Ververij, Ronse; and *Creatures at rest* at Dansand! Festival (Japanese Garden, Ostend, 2021), Playground Festival (Museum M, Leuven, 2021), The Museum as Performance Festival (Serralves Museum, Porto, 2022), and the Brussels Biennale of Women in Art: A Show of Resistance (Espace Vanderborght, Brussels, 2024).

At the invitation of the Amsterdam-based research and curatorial platform Slow Research Lab, Alice contributed to the publication *Slow Spatial Reader: Chronicles of Radical Affection* (Ed. Carolyn F. Strauss, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2021) with the chapter “*Space as Atmosphere: Floating in a Molecular Bath.*”

In 2022, she received a research grant from the Flemish Government for her project *Slow Experiments*, in which she explores slowness through writing and voice recording, in collaboration with Dutch artist Rita Hoofwijk, known for her context- and site-specific interventions, often through audio and text.

With a residency grant from the Flemish Government, a co-production of Darna vzw, funding from the Mondriaan Fund, and in collaboration with LE18 MARRAKECH, she realized *It's Good to Talk With You, Mother* (2023–2024), a participatory research project around slowness, textiles, and birth, in collaboration with textile artists Berenike Corcuera and Janneke Raaphost, researcher Malika Eloualy, art embroiderer Soumaya Simari, and the Gifted Mothers of Dar Bellarj. From this trajectory emerged the participatory audio installation *Hi, Mom*, presented at the Biennale for Women in Art: A Show of Resistance (Brussels, 2024).

Alongside her own practice, Alice is active as a dramaturg and has collaborated with performance maker Evelien Cammaert; choreographers Stav Yeini, Benjamin Vandewalle, Francesca Saraullo, Zoltan Vakulya & Chen-Wei Lee, Jeanne Colin, Hanna Erdman & Louise Dahl; and circus artists Fabian Krestel and Maria Madeira. As a (dance) performer, she has appeared in works by Evelien Cammaert, Benjamin Vandewalle, Stav Yeini, and Les gens d'Uterpan.

She occasionally teaches dramaturgy at the École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC) in Brussels.

www.alicevanderwielenhoninckx.org

Maria Ferreira Silva (choreographic advice) graduated from P.A.R.T.S in 2010 with *Light as a Feather, Green as an Apple*, a duet with Veli Lehtovaara that experiments with the biblical archetypes of Adam, Eve, Mary, and Joseph. In her solo *Wild Explosion of Radical, Softness*, which premiered at STUK in January 2025, she treats her own body as an inevitable archive of dance heritage and explores how the notion of plasticity can generate both specificity and expansion in choreographic and performative creation. Through her long-term collaboration with Trajal Harrell, as performer and rehearsal director, Maria is versed in an LGBTQ+ approach to choreography and performance, as well as in presenting choreographic work on stage, in museums, and in alternative spaces. Maria's choreographic precision, engaged reflection, and interest in plasticity as a way to allow cultural heritage to transform through the body of a performer, are precious contributions to this project. www.caravanproduction.be/artists/maria-ferreira-silva

Evelien Cammaert (light/scenography) is a visual and performance artist with degrees in Photography (BA, LUCA Brussels/Narafi, 2010) and Performance (BA & MA, Toneelacademie Maastricht, 2016 & 2021). She uses a phenomenological approach to images, often creating dark environments where light, color, and atmosphere invite concentration and emotional receptivity. Her performances and installations have been presented at M Leuven, De Brakke Grond, KANAL, Extra City, Z33, Workspacebrussels, C-Mine, and Beyond the Black Box Antwerp, and Playground Festival. Evelien and Alice have worked together on *Glowachrome Garden* (Evelien Cammaert, 2022) and developed a practice around light and sensitive composition that they will build on in *The Annunciation*. www.eveliencammaert.com

Elke Van Campenhout (dramaturgy and mentoring, online) has worked in performing arts as critic and writer, but also as dramaturg and artistic researcher for Kunstanfestivalsdersarts and workspace nadine in Brussels, among others. She initiated the artistic research platforms a.pt and a.pass, as well as The Monastery Live, an experimental, non-dogmatic, spiritual laboratory. Elke will accompany this project as a sparring partner for the writing of texts; dramaturgy, political, philosophical, and spiritual positioning; but also, as a mentor who accompanies me on the long term with addressing a personal subject artistically.

Carolina Mendonça (dramaturgy) studied Choreography and Performance at the University of Giessen and Performing Arts at the ECA-USP in Brazil. She is dramaturg and research partner of Carolina Bianchi in the trilogy *Cadela Força*, that won the Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2025. Both in collaboration with Carolina Bianchi, in her own work, and in her projects with other artists, she develops a dramaturgical practice centered on a feminist perspective on the female body, sexuality, violence, and heritage, as well as on experimenting with the presentation of text within the theatrical apparatus.

Anne Lepère (sound design) is a sound artist who composes for both radio and stage. Her hybrid practice combines field recordings, voice recordings, and composition. She regularly composes for the choreographic work of Tumbleweed (BE/CH) and Marion Sage (FR). <https://www.annelepere.net/en/a-propos>, <https://soundcloud.com/anne-lepere>

Miguel Peñaranda Olmeda (costume design) graduated with an MA in Visual Arts from the Royal Academy of Antwerp. Through costume design, textile installations, and performance, he explores social themes such as power, patriarchy, change, and psychological violence. He has collaborated with NTGent, Eastman, the National Theater The Hague, the Comédie Française, Paloma Muñoz, Carolina Mendonza, Reinaldo Ribeiro, and Francesca Chiodi Latini, among others. <https://www.instagram.com/olmedam/?hl=en>