



BEYOND THE BLACK BOX

Sîpan Sezgin Tekin THE CUD
at De Brakke Grond in Amsterdam



I had the pleasure of attending one of the four days of the arts festival *Beyond the Black Box*, held at De Brakke Grond. The festival description promises a full-body experience of discovery bubbling in every corner of the venue, challenging the conventional limitations of the “black-box” theatre and “white-cube” museum. My visit on 31st January was brief yet fulfilling, satisfying my hunger for the unexpected in themes both contemporary and well-trodden within the creative space.

The highlight of my visit was *The Cud*, performed by Sîpan Sezgin Tekin. The festival runs until Sunday, 2nd February, though certain elements will remain on display beyond this official end. Keep an eye out if you appreciate encountering art in unconventional ways, across disciplines within and blending visual arts and theatre genres.

Sîpan Sezgin Tekin – *The Cud*

Having recently watched another dance-theatre piece featuring a topless male figure with an animal headdress, I believed I had an idea of what to anticipate while simultaneously keeping an open mind. However, this interactive, intimate, and bold performance was a truly unexpected delight.

Using the wild mountain goat as the central motif unifying the piece, the performer weaves together visual, movement-based, textual, and theatrical storytelling, drawing on the anatomy and geopolitical significance of the animal. As I chewed on a piece of dried root passed among the audience (which I immediately recognised from the Chinese medicinal soups my mum used to brew for me), the performer captivated the spectators with a heartfelt anecdote about family and heritage.

With a humorous shift to the collective embodiment of goats, the audience was gradually immersed in the identity of the animal through a biologically driven presentation narrated by a British female voice. While we sat in silence, absorbing facts about the goat’s vital organs, the performer slowly, both physically and behaviourally, transformed into one. Though this description might seem comedic or unsettling in writing, the performance provided enough context to evoke a sense of solemnity alongside its absurdity.

Following a series of uneasy interactions with the audience, involving mirrored speech and shifting power dynamics, the performer embarked on a solo sequence portraying the goat’s struggle against chains and unnatural borders. I was deeply moved by the imposition of human-made concepts of nationality and division upon a creature that is, at its core, simply a wild mountain goat — an animal that neither understands borders as passport controls nor recognises discrimination in terms of race, gender, or nationality. Confused, it resists constraints that are entirely foreign to its nature.

We are all wild mountain goats.

Rosina Lui 1st February 2025