

How It Spins

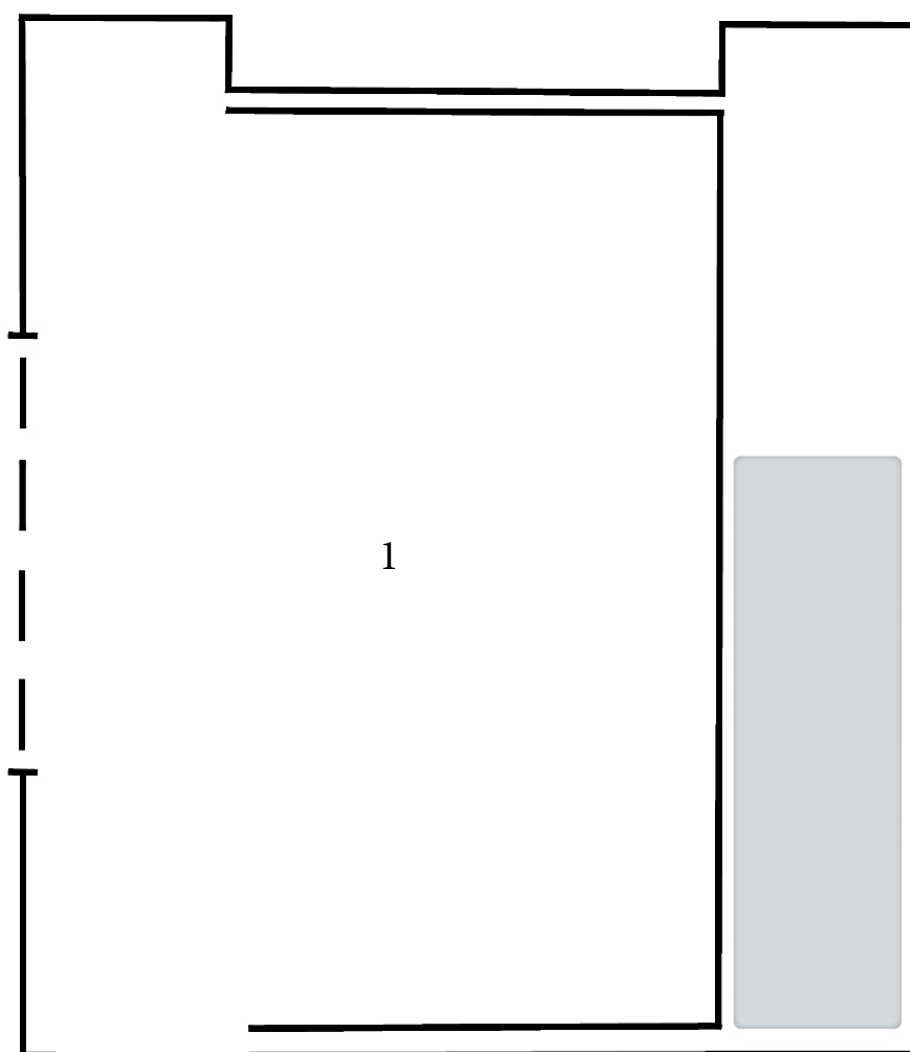
Manon van den Eeden

Opening Tuesday 7th November 2023

6-10pm

8th Nov – 26th Nov 2023

Open by appointment



1. *How It Spins*
sand blasted stainless steel, motor
2023

How it Spins

"First it was trees for food, then Gothic cathedrals to direct souls up to heaven, later skyscrapers to remind us that the more money we have, the closer to the penthouse we live. This was a primary reason why throughout evolution humans could bend their necks backwards. Now, we look at things from a drone-like perspective and soon, we will definitely lose the ability to look up at the sky. In fact, humans only first noticed the nothingness hanging above their heads because they were looking for berries in the trees. Over time, human gaze has shifted downwards, to micro-reality, renouncing macro and infinity. This was certainly not an intellectual decision, but rather an intuitive gesture. The search for microscopic truth came with the chin closer to the chest, encapsulating us in the warmth of our own body.

But my life, my life only happens outside of our planet. I spend most of my time inside a spaceship lost in a vast, too vast universe, where any kind of prejudice is doomed to fail. Time, distance, gravity, philosophy, economics, none of that prevails in outer space. My currency is luck, out here my coins are worth no more than being little mirrors that reflect the stars shining in the velvety black fabric that covers the sky. That's the closest you can get to dragons. Observing our own planet from space is the closest one can get to fiction, a fiction that shares the same everyday world with the things we pretend to grasp through social and economic structures..."

"Cut! Light's out again" - Jeremy shouts as he stormed out of the set followed by the whole technical crew - "For fuck's sake! I can't believe we can't shoot a 5 minute clip without fucking it up."

When my eyes recovered from the sudden contrast, I could recognise my colleague's silhouette in front of Jupiter - which in the dark seemed to be printed cardboard. I was getting desperate with the succession of failed attempts to film my take. I had already lost count of the hours my colleague and I had been on set. For one reason or another, the recordings were constantly interrupted and therefore, had to be restarted from scratch. It was taking too long. Neither of us were used to facing the full apparatus of the cameras, or to strangers fiddling with our clothes and retouching our make-up, as if our bodies were now their property. The only thing we had done with a camera before was recording fun videos with our own phones, showing how we'd brush our teeth without gravity or what kind of snacks we'd eat on longer missions. But this time, the company demanded we take part in a clip that would end up everywhere on the Internet.

The make-up and suit were killing me. I tried to distract my mind with something else. I stared at my colleague's face, he was the only person in the room, and I was looking for a hint of comfort. But I felt viscerally disgusted by him. As the blackout persisted, I got caught up in a ping-pong between fainting from the heat caused by the suit and make-up which didn't allow my skin to breathe, or a renewed desire to become violent towards my colleague. I tried to free off this dilemma by pulling the collar of my suit as far away from my neck as possible, in the hope that this would let in some fresh air. Yet my mind continued to rage until with both hands I stopped the vomit that still managed to find its way between my fingers, onto the floor and in every crevice of my suit. I felt relieved after throwing up, at least I had got rid of some stress. Despite feeling weak, I was conscious enough to realise that the fans behind the set's fake windows were still working. Finally there was a cool breeze to which the curtains danced wildly in a complete lack of rhythm.

"Is it back on?" - Jeremy seemed to shout from another galaxy. Ours was still pitch-black.

"You can only survive up there, can you?" - My colleague was a little farther out, orbiting around Saturn's ringlets. "You can't deal with having both feet on the ground. As if, from the moment you stand in front of something, when you can grasp it, it becomes useless. Look at you, in the dark, crawling around like a big baby looking for a breeze. Of all things on Earth, you only care about the ones you don't see. You've always despised me for wanting to be part of progress, for

wanting to prove theories and for wishing to share what the worlds beyond our traveling possibilities look like. You've always been up there just for the feeling. For you, the idea of realising something means the death of a fantasy. I saw you all the hours staring out of the spacecraft's monocle at nothing, jubilating for the alien life you'll never get to see up close. So I apologize if you find my joy a little harsh, but you can't deny the irony of the situation. The person who can't stand Earth is clinging to the ground tooth and nail, while the head revolves around an inner world that is collapsing." I had started to feel nauseous again.

"Are they back now, the lights?" - Jeremy insisted. Nothing. "And now?!"

At this very moment the smoke detectors went off, causing a screeching noise that went through my brain. My colleague grabbed a broom in order to smash them and stop the noise. Even on the ground, they were still ringing. The high-pitched sound coming from the alarms had now been replaced by a lower one, a single low chord that reverberated throughout my body. I tried to distance myself from the whole situation, wherein I reminded myself that tomorrow is a new day, where my body's lack of control will pass. But when I tried to imagine the next day, a black hole opened up in the middle of the room. Suddenly, 24 hours felt like 24 million years and I was sure I wouldn't live that long. The set was shrinking to a point where I felt like I was swallowing the walls. I couldn't breathe, nor tell my body to stop. My body was thirsty and hungry, convinced that whatever was going into my mouth was going to save it.

The lights exploded. One after the other, the solar system lit up again. Pluto was on the back, although nobody knows whether it should still be included or not. Then came Neptune and Uranus, frozen by the cold air of the fans. Saturn, as always, showed off its ocre rings and Jupiter took up a lot of space in the set. Mars, Venus and Mercury recomposed the landscape that was most dear to me. Finally Earth, the pain in my chest disappeared the moment the spotlights shone on it. My body lifted off the ground and the Sun dazzled my vision. My colleague was right, I prefer to see our planet as a single entity. When I see it from space I can talk to it as if it were a face. The Earth is my therapist and the spaceship my confessionary. Through the monocle I see the brilliant blue of the seas.

"Here we go, let's do this right and fast so we don't get interrupted by the bloody Big Bang this time." - It was Jeremy's voice fading in the room followed by the rest of the technical crew.