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Angelica Mesiti: Mother Tongue - a human dialogue

Angelica Mesiti creates her newest commission, *Mother Tongue*, in the European Capital of Culture, Aarhus, Denmark. *Mother Tongue* is both a celebration of and investigation into language, song and the beats and movements it engenders and maintains. All are entwined and enshrined examples of a cultural belonging that commences from the cradle and continues to the grave..

Mother Tongue creates a new musical and singing ensemble and community. One comprised of ancient and newer rhythms, traditional and different songs, demonstrating personal feats of balance, poise, individualism and collectivism. *Mother Tongue* is commissioned by European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017.

“Mother Tongue is an investigation of the role of language and song in the cultural belonging that commences from the cradle and continues to the grave, The work rethinks burning local issues. It connects us across cultures and countries in meaningful ways.” Says Rebecca Matthews CEO in European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017.

“Mother Tongue is full of the humanity Mesiti’s special observations find in her subjects of social flux. Each player hopes and maintains a delicate balance that is at times syncopated between old and new, past and future. All need to come together so they can exist, to form a new culture of refreshed energy and futures together. With its nocturnal tinge of the blues Mother Tongue is ultimately an optimistic and gentle creation. All strive to live in the same beautiful place where the moon hovers in a bright blue night sky.” Says Juliana Engberg - Programme Director European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017

Mother Tongue is filmed in a number of locations and communities in Aarhus, including the iconic Town Hall designed by Arne Jacobsen and Eric Møller, the award winning DOKK1 library and in the so called ghetto Gellerupparken, As the title suggests Mesiti imbues all her scenarios with a gentle light, and a slowed tempo that blends the sometimes disjunctive anthologies of music and movement she examines and orchestrates. Her palette is nocturnal or dawn lit. Her filming is sensitive to the particular qualities of a Nordic light that establishes the rituals and rhythms of a society.

The slowness of Mesiti’s film pace acknowledges the durational evolution of integration into another society by a people who enter a place already enclosed and ritualised by a shared history, songs, stories and culture. The juxtapositioning of one scenario with another, highlights, yet blends, in a fragile way, the different qualities of togetherness that make up the contemporary, newly mixed Aarhus community. Mesiti’s project can be applied to everywhere that experiences the influx of strangers. As with any diasporic encounter there is both a new, risky vitality and a sweet melancholy in the observations of those who seek to belong and not to forget their original place and culture, while attempting to perform in concert with their new home.

Mother Tongue by Angelica Mesiti is shown at ‘O’ Space, Mindet 6, Aarhus from 11 November to 17 December 2017. Entrance free. Supported by Købmand Herman Sallings Fond, The Obel Family Foundation, 15. Juni Fonden, Kvadrat, ege, Byggeselskab Olav de Linde and Panasonic Nordic – Danmark

Photo by Bonnie Elliott. Angelica Mesiti is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne and Galerie Allen, Paris.

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Mesiti presents the certainty and brightness of the Danes whose history binds and reinforces them, conjoined with the communities of newly arrived peoples seeking a way to belong while retaining their own songs, language and rituals.

“Mesiti skildrer mennesker midt i en social omstillingsproces. Alle medvirkende opretholder deres egen balance mellem gammelt og nyt, fortid og fremtid. Kulturerne skal mødes på en måde, så mennesker kan eksistere side om side og skabe en ny fælles fremtid. MotherTongue et afdæmpet og optimistisk værk, fyldt med medmenneskelighed og et fælles mål, nemlig at leve på det samme smukke sted, hvor månen svæver på en blå nattehimmel,” fortsætter Juliana Engberg, programdirektør hos Europæisk Kulturhovedstad Aarhus 2017.