

English translation of article in *Vrij Nederland*, the main Weekly in Holland (August 27, 2011):



The theater creator and the finance “YOU HAVE TO RESPECT MONEY”

Interview: Cuts in the arts funding pushed Dette Glashouwer to inquire into her relationship with money. Result: a new performance that, at the same time, is a crash course in economy.

The woman in the white wedding dress looks with languorous eyes into the hall. Romantic music underlines the declaration of love that muttering escapes her lips. A bridegroom is nowhere to be found. The object of her love is so small; Dette Glashouwer can clasp it to her heart, a little pile of banknotes. Here the love is being sealed between a woman and her pennies.

‘Do you know how much a cat costs?’ Glashouwer asks cheerful when, upon her arrival the day after her performance, she sees three cats. The knowledge she shares (just learned from a television program) overlooks the food cans the interviewer tries to count quickly. ‘Think about the processing of disposed litter gravel that, added together, would make a sidewalk the size of half of Holland.’ Glashouwer curls her red painted lips into a conspiratorial smile. Interesting, isn’t it?

With two legs in poverty

In the more than thirty years of theater, Glashouwer has always shared her newest understandings with her audience. Her own group *Suver Nuver*, a three-way collective with Frysian roots was specialized in inquiry-theatre. With ornate scenery and personal confessions the trio tried to find a position between the choking clarity of their rigid protestant upbringing and the confusing freedom of the life of metropolitan artists. The closing of *Suver Nuver* brought to an end to this collective quest.

The artists subsidizing system in The Netherlands, called them after 21 years outdated, but ironically enough, the murderous cuts that are yet to come have made Glashouwer again a person ahead of her times. She sees this in questions asked by colleagues who doubt if they will be able to continue their work. Dette Glashouwer already stands with two feet in the poverty; others are expected to follow. The creativity, with which she cuts her coat according to the available cloth, makes her an example, once again. Networking with sponsors, selling stock for her new project, performing at peoples homes, and gathering a performance together with help of friends and gifts of generous givers – Glashouwer has become experienced in the theater of the future.

Throughout this she has not betrayed her personal approach. In the tradition of *Suver Nuver* she takes her own existence as a starting point for a light-footed analysis of the physical, social and psychological barriers a modern human being runs into while pursuing happiness. And for a performer who, after being in a successful subsidized collective for decades, has to do it alone, lack of

resources is the main barrier.

Apple pies and massages

'I am not even interested in money' she exclaims at the beginning of her new show, performed at the Parade for the last two weeks. Money and Enough (directed by Dirk Groeneveld) is the result of her decision to dive into this subject despite her resistance to the subject. It is the first step on a journey that will bring her all over the world, visiting communities where 'Complementary Money' is in use. This money system escapes the official national currency and is closer to the barter people used in earlier ages.

In her show Glashouwer presents this alternative currency as the solution for the economy crisis. A bit of theatrical exaggeration, but fact is that in several places the introduction of complementary money has helped the local economy.

'In London's Brixton pubs and bicycle stores participate for example. You can pay with pounds, but when you pay with brixton pounds it is cheaper. This money is being used to invest in the local economy: small companies or the local brewery. The movement is against globalisation and corporate chains which pull the money out of our neighbourhoods.

She admits that alternative money systems have their downside. 'But the big difference is that this complementary money system is based on what is, and our official economy is based on guilt, on what is not.

In her show she also raises the question what is 'enough'. The official economy is based on growth. But does there exist an economy based on 'just enough'?

After Money and Enough audience can buy a stock. It is to support her most personally research to the way this alternative money works. She plans to perform her play where this money is being used, from Switzerland to South Africa and from South America to Australia. 'I will be paid in their local money and see how I can survive with that. Will I only get apple pies and massages? Can I pay my shelter? It would be really efficient if you can also pay the dentist or the hospital with it, but we are not there yet.'

Nothing at all

Her new show is a crash course economy. Glashouwer devoured piles of books on this subject. She talked with economists and bankers, met with the Economy Transformers, a think tank of business-people and scientists who are convinced our economy should change.

A former ABN Amro banker got so interested in Glashouwer's project that she presented herself to sell her tickets at De Parade. 'A real banker selling my stocks,' Glashouwer laughs.

Money and Enough is also a report of a personal crisis. Endearingly honest Glashouwer talks in her monologue about the disorientation that overtook her when, with the loss of her theater company, all financial, organizational, and social structure disappeared. Her love relationship with a group member finished.... There came a moment Glashouwer concluded: 'Now I have nothing at all. My parents died, I have no father and no mother, I have no children, no husband nor in-laws, I have no company, no job, no money and the worst thing is: I have no idea.'

Children in Biafra

The centre of her work has always been curiosity and the drive to unravel. When she started to analyze her own lack of money and the shame around that, the woman who was never interested in money found her new theme. She even gives 'money workshops' in which the participants not only get knowledge about the financial world but also about their own relationship with the filthy lucre.

And the term 'relationship' should be taken literally. She herself always thought that her resistance was a question of character. 'I considered myself being cool. When I read a book about women and money, I saw there is more behind that mask. All clichés about how women treat money were true for me.'

The good news is that it helps women to see their life with money as a relationship. Cause women are good in relationships, in taking their responsibility in a relationship. 'You have to respect money. You have to see it. When you spend it and where you spend it on, but you also should see it when it comes to you.'

In her workshops she shows how much emotion is behind our 'relationship' with money. 'During a workshop for theater students, where I had invited an economist, we all were amazed that, what started as a talk about a tough and difficult subject, ended with everybody in tears'.

Money is connected with many emotions: distrust or feelings of deficiency, for example. The way you spend depends on how you grew up, and the way your parents spent. 'I was raised with a continuous reference to the children in Biafra, who would be happy with my leftovers on my plate. As a child I started to count how many African children could live if I died and I tried to imagine how this trade could happen. Later I reacted against this upbringing and never finished my plate, I thought: I am not a trashcan! It was said my mother knew how to handle money well, but that was because she knew how to not spend it. My father enjoyed spending, he bought a luxury car. My resistance to being precise with money had to do with not wanting to become my mother. She was also stingy in affection and I did not want to end up like her.'

Her renewed relationship with money has not made Dette Glashouwer rich, quite the contrary. The rained out summer festival, De Parade, minimized her audience. But she got a clear view of the possibility of, through her own actions, changing the economy of growth into an economy of enough. This has brought her closer to happiness. 'I can see now all I get from people around me. I have performed many times before on De Parade, but never felt so loved'. It would be nice if the banknotes she declared her love to in her performance, would do some steps in her direction. She yearns for buying a nice present for a friend's birthday. 'And to go out for dinner' she sighs. 'Expanded dining again, that would be delightful'.

Information about Money and Enough: www.detteglashouwer.com