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Review of HANNAH at Ultima Festival 2017 (translated from Norwegian)  
<https://morgenbladet.no/kultur/2017/09/reise-i-ubehag>

### **Journey into discomfort** - Ilene Sørbøe

In Verdensteatret humans are subordinate to the technology they themselves have created.

The floor is covered with aluminum foil. Around in the room there are various mechanical installations, metal bars leaning against each other, small loudspeakers covered with yellow fabric and five big white canvases. I've stepped into an alien landscape.

A small yellow loudspeaker mutters like the low drone of a motor from one spot, thereafter another one from another position. Quietly, it could have been a car that was speeding past outside. I'm immediately becoming aware of my own presence in the space. At the same time the small loudspeaker is surprisingly alive. It doesn't only communicate, it is shivering enthusiastically when it does it.

"There has never been so much past as there is right now", write Verdensteatret about HANNAH. This is a sentence that can always be repeated. The now is a volatile reference point; we are constantly moving forward in time and with it our past is growing. Repetition has also formed the background of the performance, whereby the artist collective wanted to examine if repetition is at all possible. The title HANNAH can be read both forward and backward and can thus been interpreted as a linguistic repetitive pendulum.

The insatiable sun. A little bullet is slowly milling itself across the big elongated white wall from left to right. It leaves an earth - colored cavern behind it. The action repeats itself and gradually all of the white canvas is covered by a pulsating orange and black sun. While the circular darkness erodes itself a path, the room is being filled with a constantly more insistent buzz. We saw it coming: From the little bullet to the heavy insatiable sun. The white canvas never had a chance.

This expression is experienced as repetitive but the repetitions are in development. Like a spiral that grows with each circle. The aluminium foil is reflecting an intense white light and the sound from different percussion instruments reaches a crescendo, while the scene's many metal constructions are falling apart.

The Mekong Delta. HANNAH is based upon a research trip Verdensteatret had to the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. The delta is called a biological treasure chest because of its multitude of animal species but is at the same time, extremely vulnerable because of rising sea levels, a result of climate change. The animal-like loudspeaker that fell silent and the white canvas that became dark can be interpreted as gloomy future prospects for the delta.

Maybe I'm reading too much of the organic into the synthetic but Verdensteatret have been known for creating open associative rooms since they started in 1986. As spectator one can sense what they want to convey but never know for sure. The works are complex multimedia orchestral creations where the artists themselves are perceived as subordinates to these works.

The performers enter the stage at regular intervals to move these mechanical installations about. The pace is precise, the facial expressions are focused. They are just technicians subordinate to the technology they have created themselves. The real artists are the mechanical installations that produce the audio visual whole.

Early on in the performance a man enters the stage with a chair, sits down and holds his breath. How long will he hold out? One minute? Weak human beings, so dependent on oxygen... Later in the piece a woman is standing in the center of the room and talks in a loud voice. It is impossible to interpret the words because an intense, massive bass is hammering in my chest and in my ears. It is uncomfortable but not necessarily physically. The discomfort lies in the atmosphere and what the stage is showing: The mechanical sounds drown out the vocals.

The performance's many impressions stimulate me intellectually but also manage to touch me emotionally. The continuous mechanical expression is perceived as a journey into a post human future. On the canvas a gigantic pink apartment block is portrayed, floor after floor. The building is dilapidated and the thought of having to live behind one of those windows could make anyone feel claustrophobic. The block is being swallowed by the sea, one floor at a time. The sound stops, the lights go out and the space appears as a ruined, aluminum covered landscape with no survivors.