

SeaSession's REGARDE BIEN premieres at Bellevue Theater in Amsterdam prior to tour

With *Regarde Bien* - De dagen met de twee zonnen (The days with the two suns)
SeaSession looks carefully at beauty, denial, and the afterlife of nuclear violence.



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Photo by Ada Nieuwendijk

Created in collaboration with actor Hein van der Heijden and directed by Ola Mafaalani, *SeaSession* brings together live chamber music, spoken word, chanson, and visual theatre to expose a chapter of post-war history: the French nuclear tests carried out in French Polynesia during the 1960s and 1970s, and their lasting impact on land, bodies, and communities.

Using the late work of Jacques Brel as a poetic entry point, alongside newly composed music by Reza Namavar, *Regarde Bien* entangles personal reflection and political history. The performance juxtaposes Brel's chansons with testimonies from Greenpeace activists involved in the Rainbow Warrior protests and texts by Polynesian author and activist Chantal Spitz.

Regarde Bien begins by shaping the conditions of perception. The element of water opens the show as one more instrument. It is cut by light, then disturbed by the human hand, producing waves and the first sound. Spoken word is second in creating the ensemble, and is quickly surrounded by a symphony that resembles a live train of thought. Each instrument an idea or emotion, all communicating and contrasting one another. Outstanding the clash born from the anxiety and anger evoked by nuclear destruction.

Beginning with the deserved absurdity of painting a small man who wants big toys, atomic weapons are nevertheless addressed with warranted complexity. Their song finds its evocation through the dissection of colonial violence and aestheticised horror. Nuclear madness gains new light through which the pain of its history is harder to bear but easier to fight. The cardboard setting materialises this tension, becoming smoke from the nuclear cannons and foam from the ocean waves.

Like the shadow of a mushroom cloud cast over the stage, saturation appears drained from the image. The limited colour that remains comes from the instruments, a testament to the political limitation of seeing in black and white. Through their craft, the cast gestures toward rupture, toward spaces where colour hue can be reopened.

Yet this conceptual clarity is not always matched on the level of embodiment. However undeniable the performers' mastery over their respective instruments, their commitment to inhabiting each role occasionally proves uneven. The work asks its performers to fully enter the narrative they are carrying. When performers remain anchored in the assurance of knowing what comes next, the performance risks slipping back into concert mode. When that commitment aligns, however, the history unfolds with renewed force. It is in these moments that *Regarde Bien* most fully realises its ambition.

Set against the paradoxical beauty of the South Pacific, the performance asks the audience to "look carefully" at what is often rendered invisible beneath aestheticised narratives of paradise. *Regarde Bien* becomes a conduit through which the world can be seen and felt, in its painful history and beautiful possibility. **Jay Mansilla, 19th January 2026**
