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# Festival Connect - Mystery Magnet offers a stunning and provocative spectacle

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Mystery Magnet by Miet Warlop  
*Campo*

## Mystery Magnet by Miet Warlop,

Rating: ★★★★★

A figure dressed in black, with their back to the audience, is sporting a giant pink wig, reminiscent of Animal from The Muppets on a bad hair day. The figure is looking at an overly large man sitting next to what appear to be five tall, rectangular canvases. The figure disappears and the man makes balloon animals. Presently the figure reappears, this time with a twin wearing an oversized blue wig. Together they carry a young woman with her head bowed whom they gently plant into a pair of stilettos obviously too large for her feet. In *Mystery Magnet*, the brainchild of Belgian artist Miet Warlop, Kansas is left firmly behind and Oz, resplendent with magic and colour, explodes forth quite literally. Through paint, coloured smoke, balloons and darts, *Mystery Magnet* takes you down a rainbow bricked road, with flying sharks and explosions, to some hilarious, some touching and some disturbingly dark landscapes.

A picture paints a thousand words and *Mystery Magnet* paints a thousand pictures. Warlop's stage paintings show a strong surrealist leaning as well as a healthy dose of the Max Sennett silent comedy. These stage paintings, as much stage sculptures at times, open themselves up to endless possibilities and suggestions. With no text, character or narrative, performance functions to create and be part of the image. The stage is quite literally the canvas where the body paints, explodes, bleeds and vomits colour in a surreally funny and violent spectacle. Cute cruelty Warlop calls it. A way of challenging the accepted appearances of things, of challenging the expectation that things function in certain ways only.

While always visually arresting, it wasn't always clear where *Mystery Magnet* was trying to go. The representation of a cartoonlike universe full of casual and escalating cartoon violence overshadowed Warlop's notion of the mystery magnet - an attractive force that pulls disparate things together. By the end, a sense of play and of playing with danger and violence dominated through images that were striking and powerful at times. Their fluid creation before the audience showed Warlop to be an artist of unique vision and tremendous talent.

The debate will rage as to whether *Mystery Magnet* is theatre, visual art or performance art. Or perhaps something of a hybrid, or an entirely new thing altogether. Whatever your position, *Mystery Magnet* is an astonishingly brave, fresh and original work by an extraordinary artist that defies expectations as well as easy categorization.

*Mystery Magnet* runs at The Samuel Beckett Theatre, until October 10th. Doors open at 7.30 p.m. Tickets are €25.00



**Chris O'Rourke**  
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