

**Mokhallad Rasem** (Bagdad, 1981) is an actor and director, born and educated in Bagdad. Since 2005 he lives and works in Belgium. He is connected to Toneelhuis and is a teacher in the programme Drama – acting at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp.

He makes his first productions Bagdad. But the war in Iraq changed his life and since 2005 he lives and works in Belgium. His theatrical work is flashy and physical, associative and fragmentary, clear and visual in his ideas.

In Belgium Mokhallad worked on his highly personal 'theatrical training'. The distance from his homeland enabled him to stand back and take a critical look at his own theatrical language: "If you're sitting in the circle, you can't look at yourself, but if you sit outside the circle, you can observe things very well. So I went and stood outside the circle of my own work." At that point he began studying the work of as many theatre directors and choreographers as possible, including Wim Vandekeybus, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Guy Cassiers, tg Stan and Romeo Castellucci. He was fascinated by the atmosphere and theatrical language that characterizes each of these artists, and tested them out against his own background and culture and against his way of making theatre. Hardly surprisingly, the war became a recurrent theme in his work, but the way he deals with it varies considerably. Rasem: "Not every production is about the war, but the power, the energy, the atmosphere, the images of war stay with you – they inhabit your body, your mind and your thoughts. How can I turn all that into art, how can I portray all those elements like a painting, like a dance? How can I portray those terrible things? That's how I started making theatre."

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