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## William Forsythe's *I don't believe in outer space*: dramaturg's note

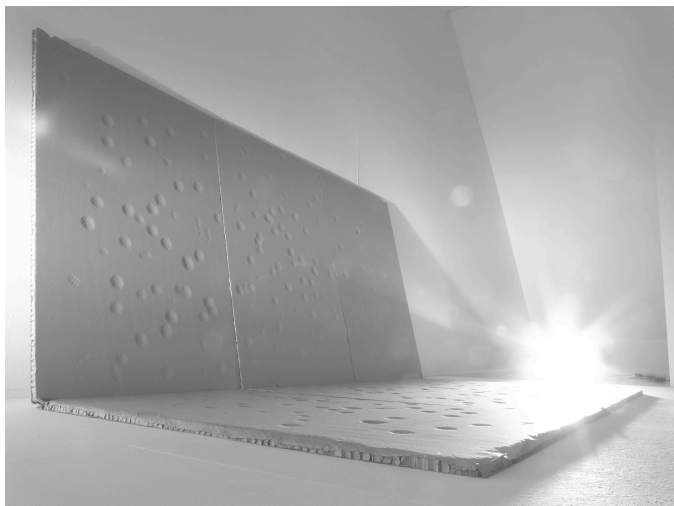
Dr. Freya Vass-Rhee

William Forsythe's *I don't believe in outer space* shares its title with an installation piece created a few months prior to the work's 2008 premiere. The installation's two thick cardboard panels, in which Bill had made dents by walking on his heels, resemble a slice of moonscape or a planet-filled sky. Lighting the panels from the side causes an illusion in which the dents flicker ambiguously, appearing either as craters or as raised bumps when viewed from a distance. The actual state of the cardboard surface only becomes clear at close range.

In early studio rehearsals, Bill drew a contrast between such proximal experience and our perception of outer space, which we see only at great distance or, in recent times, have imagined with the aid of telescopes, satellite images, and astronauts' accounts. As Bill pointed out, though outer space essentially remains a matter of speculation and second-hand account, we possess a direct, shared and intimate knowledge of "inner space," the subjective world of physical sensation, thought, and ideas that gives us our sense of individual and collective identity. Like outer space, this inner realm is anything but empty. Over individual or galactic lifetimes, detritus collects, collides, deteriorates, and will change profoundly in the distant event of death, perhaps ceasing to exist altogether.

Death – another unknown realm – is in many cultures linked to the sky. The firmament and its uncannily mobile objects have always evoked awe and fear, continuing to do so in our age of flight and ballistic weaponry. And beyond our view and beyond our reach, many choose to believe, lies our own final destination: the home of the force that made us and everything that we know.

*I don't believe in outer space* moves agilely between lived inner space and what lies beyond, between the certainty of our physical experience and its integral unknowns. It is a work that both celebrates existence and embraces its uncertainties – as we, too, should.



*I don't believe in outer space* (seen from the side), exhibited at the Ursula Blicke Stiftung, May 17, 2008. (Photo: Julian Richter)