

Circus and Its Others II

A major academic international conference focusing on questions of difference in contemporary circus, will take place in Prague in August 2018

Over fifty participants from around the world will present their work at Circus and Its Others II, an international conference scheduled to take place in Prague's DISK Theatre from 27 to 29 August during the Letní Letná festival. The conference, organized by CIRQUEON – Center for Contemporary Circus, is primarily dedicated to exploring the many forms and transformations of contemporary circus practices. Keynote speakers include National Circus School alumnus and former Circus Cirkör member Marie-Andrée Robitaille (Sweden) and director and pedagogue Camilla Damkjaer (Denmark).

3 days and over 50 participants from around the world

“Circus and Its Others II is the largest academic international circus event held in the Czech Republic in 2018. As the main organizer, CIRQUEON – Center for Contemporary Circus is honored to be involved in creating a platform for circus experts from around the world and for facilitating what will assuredly be a diverse and multi-faceted discussion,” says Veronika Štefanová, head of research and documentation at the CIRQUEON – Center for Contemporary Circus. The conference is dedicated to exploring the many transformations of (contemporary) circus practices, with a focus on questions of difference in all its forms – gender, sexuality, embodiment, dis/ability, ethnicity, class, and species.

“Since we launched the Circus and its Others project in 2014, it has gained momentum as a research inquiry in ways we could not have anticipated,” say project co-founders Charles R. Batson and Karen Fricker. *“This second international conference involves twice as many participants as the first, held in Montréal in 2016. We are looking forward to more pioneering research and discussion in the context of Letní Letná in Prague.”*

Within the space of three days, over fifty circus researchers and practitioners from Australia to Canada will gather in Prague. Keynote speakers at the Circus and Its Others II conference will include **Marie-Andrée Robitaille** and **Camilla Damkjaer**. Marie-Andrée Robitaille is a graduate of the National Circus School in Montreal and a former member of Circus Cirkör. In 2011, she founded the Gynoïdes project at the Stockholm University of Arts, an undertaking dedicated to exploring the role of women in circus, a topic she will present in Prague. Camilla Damkjaer is an artistic researcher and pedagogue at the University of Southern Denmark in Copenhagen. Her talk on “Circus and Yoga as Each Other's Other” will focus on representations of circus in another form of movement, namely in Ashtanga Yoga.

The setting of this conference in the context of the Letní Letná circus festival and CIRQUEON – Centre for Contemporary Circus and Charles University will create a highly conducive environment for exploration and will likely open up new directions for this inquiry. As in Montréal, where the 2016 conference took place in the context of that city's Completément Cirque festival, holding the conference during Letní Letná will bring researchers into the heart of circus practices in the Czech Republic and Europe, and allow for an exciting and constant movement between viewing productions and critically engaging with circus practice. Visitors will see shows from Czech performers such as Losers Cirque Company, Cie Pieds Perchés, Circo Frico, Feel the Universe, Bratři v tricku, Vít Neznal & kol. Conference is for free, registration only needed, more information www.circusanditsothers.com

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Circus and its Others is an international research project that explores how the mainstreaming of contemporary circus may be affecting the genre's historic status as a site for the celebration and exploitation of differences, from stagings of exceptional performing bodies to the display of “freakery.” As researchers and practitioners, we ask in what ways contemporary circus artists and companies are embracing and exploiting (or not) difference in their practice. How do we discuss, stage, theorize, and practice such differences including questions of gender, sexuality, embodiment, ability/disability, ethnicity, class, and species? Launched in 2014 by Charles R. Batson (Union College, New York) and Karen Fricker (Brock University, Ontario, Canada) under the aegis of the Montréal Working Group on Circus Research, the project hosted an international conference in 2016 in Montréal that resulted in a dedicated issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Performance Matters* (4.1), appearing in June 2018. Strong interest in the Montréal conference and the journal issue made clear to the project's

founders that this question of circus and difference could benefit from further exploration, and thus planning for this second conference was launched.