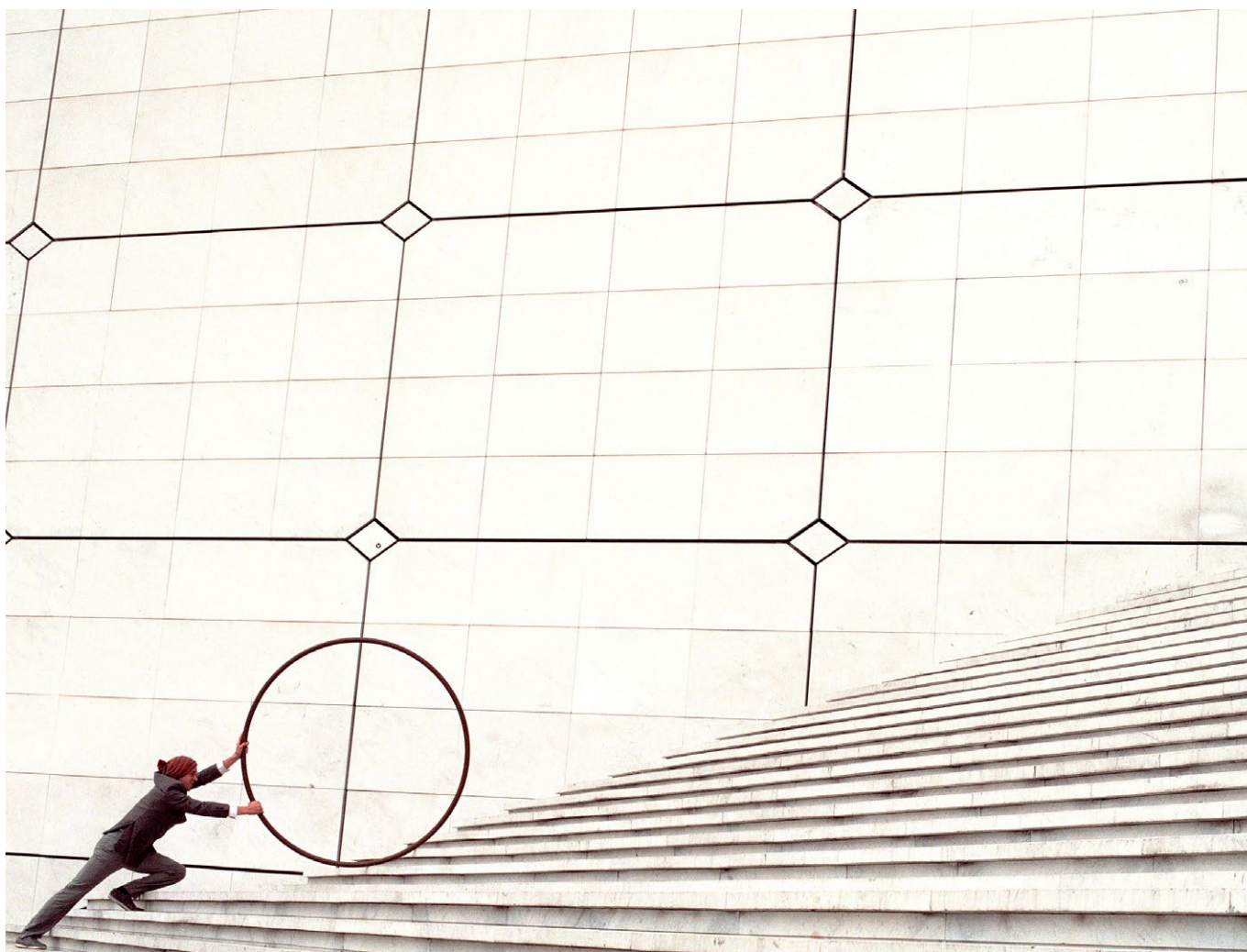


FRESH
SEMINARS

FRESH CIRCUS#4



ARTCENA is the French National Centre for Circus Arts, Street Arts and Theatre, funded by the French Ministry of Culture. It coordinates the Circostrada network and has a permanent seat on its Steering Committee. It works towards its missions in three main areas: the sharing of knowledge through a digital platform and activities of documentation, the support to professionals via mentoring and training, the development of these three artistic fields by providing funding to authors and carrying out international development.



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European Network
Circus and Street Arts

Since 2003, Circostrada Network has been working to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 100 members from over 30 countries, it helps building a sustainable future for these sectors by empowering cultural players through activities in observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

FOREWORD

Memory, identity and heritage: three notions that are intimately linked in a subtle system of relationships that intertwine and nourish one another. Heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is often seen as a means for passing on memories, and seems as such to be the perfect tool for building shared identities. But far from being something that is fixed, heritage is constantly being made, unmade and remade as differences arise and provoke dialogue. Heritage is on the move; it is a political, economic and social issue in our contemporary societies. Celebrating it therefore becomes a unique opportunity to pass on concepts and practices, produce objects of knowledge and memory, and reinforce the recognition of a whole sector on the European stage.

2018 marks the 250th anniversary of modern circus, the Year of Protest, in homage to the 50th anniversary of the events of May 1968, and the European Year of Cultural Heritage. In this context, FRESH CIRCUS set up shop for the first time in Brussels, at the Théâtre National. Each edition of this Circostrada flagship event is developed in close collaboration with one or more network members (in this case Espace Catastrophe & Wallonie Bruxelles Théâtre Danse) and relies on the support of a dedicated working group (25 network members from over 10 different countries, for this edition alone) which lays the foundation for the seminar and sets out the issues at stake for circus arts at the international level.

The initial question raised by this fourth edition seems simple, but the challenge was no less complex. How can we change our relationship to stereotypes, while prompting discussion on the challenges and outlook for today's creative circus arts? While this exercise might seem rather formal, the idea was to give meaning to our future individual and collective actions, and expand and increase the long-term impact that they will have on the circus arts as a whole. The 'More than Circus' tagline was the thread around which we worked as we debated, got to know each other more deeply, and re-examined ourselves and our practices. Now it forms the spine of this publication that aims to capture some of the conversations, stories and ideas that emerged during the event, and that can equip us perhaps to better face tomorrow's challenges.

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A WORD FROM THE COPILOTS & CO-ORGANISERS

So many exchanges and enriching encounters, so much enthusiasm... so many shared experiences!

Far from the stereotypes and clichés, FRESH CIRCUS#4 demonstrated, if it was ever in doubt, the strength, potential and vitality of today's circus across countries and continents. Even though circus arouses much enthusiasm and passion, its actors continue to question their practices and achievements, always reinventing themselves, always looking for new fields, new horizons to explore, and new challenges to take up.

Cultural operators, artists, programmers, pedagogues, researchers, journalists – all different and yet united around a rallying cry: "More than Circus!", for a journey that took them to the heart of the circus practice of today and tomorrow.

As co-pilots and co-organisers of FRESH CIRCUS#4, we are very pleased by the success of this edition, which took place for the first time in Brussels. Thank you to the teams and partners who contributed to the good implementation of the event: the FRESH CIRCUS workgroup, the contributors, curators, moderators and speakers, the institutional partners, the teams of Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles and Circostrada, and, above all, a big thanks to all participants who, by their presence and commitment, gave meaning to this collective mobilisation.

Catherine Magis & Benoît Litt
Espace Catastrophe / Festival UP!
Séverine Latour
WBT/D



FRESH CIRCUS#4 IN A NUTSHELL

400 PARTICIPANTS

35 COUNTRIES FROM 4 CONTINENTS

80 SPEAKERS

3 FULL DAYS OF SEMINARS

1 CITY

3 INTRODUCTORY THEMATIC PLENARY SESSIONS

9 ROUNDTABLES

9 THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

9 PARTICIPATIVE WORKSHOPS

A FULL ARTISTIC PROGRAMME IN THE FRAME OF FESTIVAL UP! -
INTERNATIONAL BIENNALE OF CIRCUS ARTS

PARTNERS



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Find all the publications by Circostrada as well as many other online resources and news from the network and its members on:
www.circostrada.org

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FROM FRESH CIRCUS#3 TO FRESH CIRCUS#4



The circus field has spent many years now engaged in the work of structuring itself – forming support instruments and advocacy bodies, founding centres and festivals, and, particularly, codifying circus training and education. And while in some countries this process is just beginning, in others it is reaching a kind of fruition. The benefits have been many: larger audiences, more companies and shows and styles of work, better facilities, and greater recognition. In fact, standing in the sumptuous foyer of the Théâtre National on the first day of FRESH CIRCUS, it was hard to shake the feeling that, here at least, circus had already arrived.

And yet attend any one of the sessions, or speak to any of the 300-some people gathered for the FRESH CIRCUS event, and it'd be clear that life for artists is not getting easier. Reductions in cultural funding, combined in the performing arts with the transience of creative work, leave many with the feeling that the bridge of their career is collapsing underneath them as they run along it. The reality of artistic labour is to travel incessantly, live project to project, and compete among a growing body of peers for a shrinking pool of opportunities. For

programmers, festival operators and other representatives of the 'professional' world, there are challenges as well: they in turn must cope with new budgets and cultural policies, changing habits of consumption, and shifting worldviews.

The purpose of a conference like FRESH CIRCUS, then, is to shine a light on both of these realities – to recognise the successes of the circus field and engage the obstacles it faces; to convene conversations and perhaps to find solutions. This publication attempts to capture some of the debates that took place across the three strands of the conference, with each major section introduced by the journalist that followed it – Lyn Gardner for Innovation, Laurent Ancion for Images and Audiences, and Filip Tielens for Artistic Paths and Creation Processes. Each has a different starting point, but their areas of concern overlap, and there are ideas and observations that recur throughout.

The taglines of the last two FRESH CIRCUS events – Moving Borders and More Than Circus – have both spoken to the desire to grow outwards, as well as to escape a kind of confinement. And for the field at large, this expansion is an interesting moment.

In the balance are the sense of circus as a community or a cohesive identity vs a wider view and greater relatedness; the opportunity to meet and influence larger social and economic systems vs the anxiety of being shaped by them; and the necessity of working internationally vs the impulse to render local service.

While we don't seek to resolve them, each of these tensions is a talking point and a source of new ideas and fresh perspectives. We hope you enjoy seeing them play out through the articles, session reports and interviews collected in this publication.

John Ellingsworth – Editor

INNOVATION

FEATURE

More than Innovation – by Lyn Gardner, The Stage (UK)



As state funding diminishes, talk of 'innovation' intensifies. But what changes might this new situation demand of us - not only in terms of models of production and financing, but also in terms of aspiration, identity and purpose? Gathering the threads of FRESH CIRCUS, Lyn Gardner finds a sector poised for change.

"I can't change policy, but I can change people's lives," said Eleférios Kechagioglou, speaking in the opening session of FRESH CIRCUS. When we talk about innovation in the arts we often think of new economic models, such as public and private partnerships, or the use of technology, or cutting-edge collaborations across disciplines. All those were indeed discussed over two days at the Théâtre National in Brussels, and they all fed into what is perhaps the most radical innovation of all: the potential of art and circus to transform people's everyday lives, their sense of self, and the places where they live.

The symposium's strapline – 'More than circus' – reflected a growing understanding on the part of the circus community that in a colder funding climate, and a world where traditional representative democracy is under siege, circus doesn't need to stop

entertaining or delighting with its skills and aesthetic, but it can and must do more. It must be more than what Ruth Mackenzie in her keynote address called "a marvellous escape".

It is well-placed to lead the way, and in the process build new relationships with funders, businesses, cities, architects and planners and communities themselves, while all the time cooperating with other sectors to ensure that people live longer, feel happier, love and celebrate where they live and work, and have the agency to tell their own stories. If circus, or indeed any of the performing arts, are going to thrive in a changing economic and cultural landscape, then they have to be as crucial to the local community as the baker and the doctor's surgery. So why not make links and partnerships with the baker and the doctor's surgery?

Changes to cultural policy, both at a national or local level, can be viewed as a looming crisis for circus, or they can be seen as an opportunity to redefine what the art form is for, how it is delivered, where it takes place, and what benefits it brings to all. The latter must always include not just those it currently serves, but also those who it is not yet serving.

The benefits accrued may well be economic, including the creation of jobs, and they can include transforming landscapes – sometimes on a temporary and sometimes on a longer-term basis – and adding value for both neighborhoods and other stakeholders. But most of all, as circus celebrates its 250th anniversary, it is a chance for the art form to think hard about the role it will play in people's lives over the next 50 years. FRESH CIRCUS was not about looking back in nostalgia but looking to the future and how circus might be reimagined. As

architect Patrick Bouchain suggested in the plenary session, what is required is not just ingenuity and innovation but imagination. Imagination is the currency of artists.

It's a mindset that requires that all involved, particularly the artists, stop thinking about self-interest and instead start operating from a point of mutual and aligned interests that bring the greatest benefit to all, particularly those who have least and need most. As was repeated several times during the two days, this doesn't turn circus artists into social workers, but it does put circus and circus artists at the front of a radical artistic movement where circus-makers have a crucial role to play as enablers and collaborators with communities.

Circus has a head-start when it comes to engaging with communities and citizens. Many people have experienced circus performance as a child and the sense of magic stays with them into adulthood. Circus cuts across socio-economic divides. It brings people together. Unlike many art forms that expect and demand that the audience come to it and a special purpose-built space, circus often goes to its audience and is a guest in the community that hosts it. It has both insider and outsider status, which can be useful in winning trust and creating enduring relationships.

There was some irony that FRESH CIRCUS took place at the Théâtre National, a space that confers prestige, but which also unwittingly puts up barriers to engagement. Those who regularly attend the performing arts see the door at a theatre's entrance as a welcoming way in, but for those who are

non-attenders that same door can be something that keeps them out, and which reminds them that art is not for people like them. Where a piece of art happens is just as important as its content, and new locations add new meaning as circus practitioners are discovering.

In a new social and cultural landscape, innovation is not about the market but about people, and how and where you meet them and engage with them, whether it is Vicki Amedume and her company Upswing working with elderly residents in a care home, or Johan Swartvagher of Collectif Protocole creating long-term projects with communities. Innovation is about what Rachel Clare of Crying Out Loud described as "showing people the possible". In the case of circus sometimes doing so via the apparently physically impossible. Swartvagher echoed Kechagioglou when he said: "you can't change the lives of 10,000 people with an art project, but you can change some things for some people. Maybe only little things." But we should never underestimate the importance of changing small things or the amount of change that a tiny group of people can have on the world. Particularly a world crying out for change. As Kechagioglou observed, when current economic models have failed so many so badly, isn't it time for artists to offer ways of doing things differently?

But of course, that means that artists have to think about doing things differently too. You can't just shift your show out of the theatre and into the community. Swartvagher put it bluntly when he argued that you can't simply switch the way you work by making the

show on the street. You have to make it with the street. "These people and this place will change your project," he said. It is a constant process of negotiation and one that recognizes that while circus makers may be experts at circus skills, it is citizens who are experts in their own lives and communities. Without this negotiation, there is always going to be a power imbalance between artists and participants, and it is not a real collaboration. The most ground-breaking, fulfilling and long-lasting collaborations are those that leave genuine legacy, after the artists have left.

That means no longer seeing audience development as a means of achieving greater ticket sales. That is a transaction, whereas truly inclusive practice is an exchange and an invitation to make with rather than making for communities. As one participant said in one of the Building Cities, Building Circus sessions: "If we build it they will come, but if they build it they will stay."

They will, and one of the cheering things about FRESH CIRCUS was that the sector's curiosity about exploring new ways of working came with the understanding that it is when looking to make new partnerships in unexpected places where the need is greatest that the most exciting opportunities occur, opportunities that will help to build a resilient and sustainable sector and allow circus to take its place at the very heart of civic society.

Lyn Gardner is a theatre critic and journalist who writes for The Guardian, The Stage, and many other publications.



Interview with Sebastian Kann Artist, Manor House, Researcher (Belgium)



The word innovation crops up a lot in policy and conferences like this one. Do artists in your peer group ever talk or think about 'innovation'?

Innovation has kind of a corporate tone. There's definitely talk of originality, and a fear that you're not being 'original'. So there's both a fetish for originality, and a feeling of lacking it. In the very particular corner of the circus world I'm in, there are also a lot of artists who feel outside the mainstream, or outside institutions, and so there's already this criticality with regards to what everyone else is doing and a feeling of 'I should be doing something different from what everyone else is doing'.

But often when you go into the studio with that attitude there's a kind of paralysis. I talk to friends who know very strongly what they don't want to do – what aesthetic they don't want to use, what sort of approaches to avoid. But when you try to flip it towards the affirmative they get very clogged.

Do you feel like there's something missing in the conversation around innovation?

I think what's missing is more scrutiny of what we mean by words like progress or innovation, and who gets to define them. If we proceed blindly to a 'better future' without discussing what it is and what it looks like, then the only way we can think of it is within an extremely normative framework because we didn't take the time and distance to redesign it.

I notice around me a whole underclass of circus artists whose work doesn't make it in the institutions, and maybe this has to do with the unexamined biases of the institutions with regards to what is interesting and what is not. These institutions take certain risks but really the risk gets funneled down almost entirely to the artists – the artist that writes five funding applications to have one accepted, or the artist that spent a year trying to put a project together that was never realised. The sector is so much running on this vast pool of unpaid labour, but it's like all artistic fields in that sense.

If you were using another word to have this conversation under what would you pick?

Multiplication, perhaps. Plurality... innovation has this sort of illusion of progress, and for me if we multiply the ways we work then we can multiply the things that we can think about as being progress. That's also a little bit this a question of sustainability, because the more diverse we are as an ecology the more sustainable we are. So it's an ethical and an artistic or aesthetic wish on my part, but it's also practical.

REPORTS & EXPERIENCES

Public-private partnerships: funding options for Circus arts?

CURATOR	Eleférios Kechagioglou, Director, Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (France)
MODERATOR	Mark Eysink Smeets, Director, Festival Circolo (The Netherlands)
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF	Ouafa Belgacem, CEO, Culture Funding Watch (Tunisia) Benoît Roland, Administrator, La Coop ASBL (Belgium)

"I have the feeling that we are a very interesting but quite arrogant sector," said Eleférios Kechagioglou, director of Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde and curator of the session on public-private partnerships. In Eleférios' view, actors in the circus field have a powerful commitment to their work, but their tendency to see themselves at the

margin as a talking point in the circus field. Yet a recurring point of the session was that private-public partnerships have more to offer than simply covering gaps in the budget.

Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde has explored a number of different approaches. Now 25 years old, PPCM has a broad spread of ac-

new business models, and with a focus on training participants to be their own project managers by supporting them to plan their creations, raise money, find partners, and so on. SNCF Foundation gives money to PPCM but also is part of the committee for the Incubator ('they are our best ambassador', says Eleférios). Working with the French multinational Air Liquide, PPCM discovered that the firm had its own internal incubator, and arranged an exchange on the subject of innovation, looking for what engineering practice could teach artistic practice and vice versa. For SAIEM Malakoff Habitat, PPCM brought employees to see presentations of Incubator projects and then led them through a practical workshop, with the goal of changing their sense of what a workplace can be.

Asked what had been difficult about the project, Marjorie Bonnaire, the Incubator's project manager, replied that in collaborations between artists and enterprises each side can have misconceptions about the other, and that companies often don't realise the real costs of artistic performances. For physical exchanges the "frontier of the body" is a big challenge to overcome, and employees themselves might not always want to take a day out of their schedules for 'teambuilding'. Finally, large companies are divided into departments that can make it complex to talk to the right person or get confirmation for activities.

Challenges of this kind are pervasive in close-knit collaborations, but not every pu-



argins of society, somehow apart, can be negative – especially at a time when the funding environment necessitates new forms of cooperation. "The world we used to live in is not there anymore."

This sense of a tidal shift, undercut by anxiety about the real or imagined consequences of new financing models, is a signi-

ficant talking point in the circus field. Yet a recurring point of the session was that private-public partnerships have more to offer than simply covering gaps in the budget. Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde has explored a number of different approaches. Now 25 years old, PPCM has a broad spread of ac-

ivities encompassing local and community work, pedagogy (amateur and pre-professional), and artistic creation, but tries as much as possible to cross these threads, linking social impact and social activities to artistic intervention and vice versa.

blic-private partnership is. Administrator Benoît Roland presented the non-profit La Coop ASBL, which specialises in accessing money donated by corporations under the Belgian government's tax shelter scheme.

The tax shelter system is a great way of accessing money, explained Benoît, but can be "quite heavy" in administrative terms. La Coop was created by a group of producers to navigate the paperwork and make the funding accessible to both large and small organisations. The money received has to be spent in Belgium and must create taxable income, but artist salaries can meet this regulation. The tax shelter is also accessible for co-productions between Belgian and international companies.

As Benoît admits, it's "not an exciting kind of partnership". La Coop works with banks,

who in turn work with their clients. They have the names of the companies who give through the tax shelter, but otherwise no real contact. Nonetheless it brings a lot of money into the performing arts. "La Coop was created in March 2017, and in its first nine months raised 3.5 million euros for around 50-60 productions."

La Coop's strategy of centralising a vital, but time-consuming, administrative process is one followed as well by Ouafa Belgacem, the CEO of Culture Funding Watch. Ouafa sees a trend in which artists are expected to be managers, leaders, fundraisers and producers. "And it's impossible, you can't excel at all of this." CFW therefore seeks to share costs across activities related to 'mobilising resources', which encompasses gathering data for evidence-based advocacy, tracking fun-

ding opportunities, creating funding strategies, managing donor relations, and so on.

CFW maintains a range of clients, from very large organisations to young artists, and scales its services accordingly. Their model allows them to work with emerging artists for free within the framework of a two-year contract, and with the objective of bringing them to financial sustainability. They also run an apprenticeship programme where they share the cost of an apprenticeship with a larger organisation, and after two years the partner organisation can take the apprentice on permanently. The goal is to centralise expertise, but also to spread it through the sector – and improve the resilience and intelligence of the cultural field.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Jumping in

- Join a local group for entrepreneurs in order to mix outside the arts sector.
- Don't always focus on the 'usual subjects', but go as well to younger and smaller companies – "find the new economy, not the old economy".
- Use corporate events as a way of testing out partnerships before going deeper.

Exchanging knowledge:

- Organise a European seminar or conference on the topic of public-private partnership.
- Build databases of funding opportunities, and map experts for companies to contact. Collect information on specific initiatives in fields like health care.
- Develop documentation of good practices and example projects.
- Create a position within Circostrada, or a six-month secondment, for an individual who works with Circostrada members on public-private partnerships.
- Organise a Circostrada Lab on themes emerging from the session.

Transdisciplinary projects & cross-cutting practices

CURATORS

Rachel Clare, Artistic Director, Crying Out Loud (UK)
Laura Olgiati, Production Manager, Festival Cirqu'Aarau (Switzerland)

MODERATOR

Kath Gorman, Head of Participation and Engagement, Cork Midsummer Festival (Ireland)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Victoria Amedume, Artistic Director, Upswing (UK)
Chloé Béron, Co-Founder/Artistic Director,
CIAM - Centre International des Arts en Mouvement (France)
Sean Gandini, Co-artistic Director, Gandini Juggling (UK)
Marisa König-Beatty, Cultural Entrepreneur/Producer, BEAM (Switzerland/USA)

In recent years the emphasis in 'transdisciplinary projects' has shifted away from collaborations between artistic genres, and towards exchanges that see artists working with business, science, technology, and the creative industries. Gathering together contributors from a diverse range of backgrounds, this session aimed to examine the nature of such initiatives and to highlight different examples of cross-cutting practices.

Marisa König-Beatty presented BEAM, a 'transdisciplinary dream tank' that produces projects involving partners from the arts, academia and start-up and business worlds, as well as third sector organisations. While ranging widely in its collaborations, the agency has a focus on work, organisation, civil society and business – a thematic identity that helps it in connecting with potential partners. Recent projects include The Future of Science, for which BEAM, in collaboration with the art and performance collective Neue Dringlichkeit, was invited to design an intervention for the We Scientists Shape Science conference organised by the Swiss Academy of Sciences. In a series of video interviews, conference participants were asked to imagine themselves in the year 2070 and to look back on the scientific, technological, social and societal achievements of the 21st century.

In a similar vein, CIAM – le Centre International des Arts en Mouvement, presented by co-founder and artistic director Chloé Béron, is a centre in Aix-en-Provence that

seeks to bring circus into new relationships with technology, the creative industries, business, and society at large. With their CIAMLabs series they've organised laboratories on circus and architecture (aimed at reimagining circus venues) and on circus and connected objects (in which design teams worked to imagine a device that

a strand of activities her company has been running with and for older people in the UK, explaining how the core concepts of circus – balance, risk, strength, etc. – can be adapted to different levels of physicality. In 2012-13, during the research and development phase of a performance called What Happens in the Winter, Upswing worked with the cha-



could revolutionise circus teaching and practice). In 2019, they plan another lab looking at circus as a social enterprise and tool for 'hacking' various societal problems. This begs a further question: if transdisciplinary projects are seeking new ways to connect with society, what does circus uniquely have to offer? Vicki Amedume, the artistic director of Upswing, presented

rity Entelechy Arts to give a series of circus workshops for older people. From there, they went on to initiate a weekly activities day for the over 60s, hosted at the Albany Theatre in London, and eventually worked with the charity Magic Me to undertake a ten-week residency at Silk Court care home in Bethnal Green, supported by the care home provider Anchor.

Such initiatives open exciting opportunities to transform circus and people's perceptions of it, but, as the session reflected, may require advocating for a 'boxless' approach to funding and policy, as well as fostering a greater awareness of the nature of artistic processes and the importance of research and development.

Discussion in the session also touched on how producers play an important role in

brokering connections, but have a responsibility to reflect on how the projects they design frame and shape the artistic work. Transdisciplinary collaborations launched as top-down initiatives to reach new audiences, to access specific funding programmes, or simply to align with current trends run the risk of predetermining artistic outputs. The session workshop linked this pressure to produce a specific result to an ambiguity concerning what 'success' means within a

project – is it reaching a certain audience, selling a good number of tickets, or finding the right voice/form for a particular creative idea? Discussing the idea of artistic 'freedom', participants linked it to notions including the "removal of personal expectations" and "long-term human support without judgement". Or, as another participant put it, "Freedom is a room and a key."

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

- Lobby policymakers to use their convening power to connect people across sectors, creating integrated funding opportunities and meaningful connections with educational institutions.
- Produce case studies of good practice for lobbying, training and education within the sector.
- Orient funding/support not only towards end products but also research and development.
- Give artists time and space without the pressure of producing an 'end product'.
- Think in a transdisciplinary way in the search for space for experimentation and approach festivals, universities and businesses.

Focus: Transdisciplinary work in practice



Interview with Sean Gandini Co-artistic director, Gandini Juggling (UK)



Is there anything specific to circus in transdisciplinary work?

When we made our show *4x4*, which combined ballet and juggling, a lot of people said what strange things they were to put together. And yet to me juggling and Washington trapeze are stranger bedfellows. In my mind juggling is closer to classical ballet than it would be to a person standing on their head on a swinging platform. So in a way the things that are traditionally associated with circus are already a curious conglomeration.

It makes me wonder if the radical thing would actually be to remove everything that surrounds a skill and just have it on its own – the bare bones.

In that case, what is there to gain from transdisciplinary projects?

The real transdisciplinary thing is to go out of your comfort zone, which hardly anybody likes doing. So for me the hardest collaborations have been the most fruitful. When we worked with Alexander Whitley on *Spring* he questioned me a lot: why do you have to put a funny scene in here? Do we need funniness? I think it has something to do with push and pull – and I guess if you trust someone then you let them have a say, and you learn to compromise. The compromise is a fascinating place because it's a place you wouldn't have visited otherwise.

It seems like you can also think about transdisciplinary projects in terms of artistic exchange but also in production terms – trying to cross over or combine audiences, access new resources, etc...

I feel like this is where it gets into dangerous territory, because circus is growing – at least in Europe – and alongside that the bureaucratic infrastructure has gotten bigger and more prescriptive. So I think producers have a difficult job: how can you be a catalyst but leave room for the artists? Because at the end of the day it is about the artists.

Right now I think there's a buzz around transdisciplinary work – especially video and high tech stuff. So there's some production pressure to perform to that. But often when you have a circus artist with a video projection the two don't interact, or in ballet it's very popular to have big digital installations but the dancing is intrinsically the same format – so the transdisciplinary element hasn't really changed anything, it's more like an illustrious frame.

Building Cities, Building Circus

CURATOR

Thomas Renaud, Director, Maison des Jonglages (France)

MODERATOR

Maaïke van Langen, Artistic Director, Rotterdam Circusstad Festival (The Netherlands)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Jérôme Page, Urban Planner, Plaine Commune (France)

Lauréline Saintemarie, Development Manager, FAI-AR (France)

Felicity Simpson, Director/Creative Producer, Circolombia (UK/Colombia)

Johan Swartvagher, Artist, Collectif Protocol (France)

A city, according to Lauréline Saintemarie, the development manager of the school FAI-AR, is “a huge system of signs”. Advertising, shop windows, traffic signals, street names – the artist who creates in public space has to build their performance within the weave of stories and meanings that already exist there. As they develop work, and choose a site for it, this artist is by turns urban designer, geographer and surveyor.

the neighbourhood”, make the inhabitants of a place more sensitive to its architecture and streets, and to the flow of people and cars, and ultimately must bring them to a new point of view on their environment.

In a similar vein, the urban planner Jérôme Page sees artistic projects as a good way of addressing the “symbolic dimension” of urban change. Representing Plaine Com-

Pointing out that a two-year reconstruction project is often thought of in terms of inconvenience – traffic problems, noise, commercial disruption, etc. – Jérôme said that one benefit of a cultural project is to de-emphasise these negative aspects in favour of bringing forward the character and social dynamics of a district. Alongside designing a new public space outside the market that could be used for performances and social activities, Plaine Commune commissioned a two-year programme of cultural activity that could take place during the redevelopment period.

This programme was developed and delivered by Protocol, a collective of five jugglers that specialises in improvisation in public space. Artist Johan Swartvagher talked about the formation of the group, describing how it was a long process for them – as jugglers used to working in training halls – to move into public space. It was a shift that necessitated combining juggling with other disciplines, as well as getting extremely comfortable with improvisation (“if you don’t improvise, you are dead; the project cannot exist”). After a few years they began to make *Monument*, a four-day show that begins on the morning of the first day and ends during the night of the fourth. The goal for the company is “not to find how to play the show in the street, but to make the show *with* the street.”

Located in Marseille, France, FAI-AR is a training centre dedicated to creation in public space. Every two years the programme takes fifteen artists, from different backgrounds, who want to lead a project in public space. Lauréline reinforces that creating an outdoor show is not simply about transposing an indoor performance to the street. Instead the artist must “embody the shape of

mune, a conglomeration of nine city councils north of Paris, he presented the example of a major redevelopment on the Îlot du Marché at Le Quartier des Quatre Routes in La Courneuve. The site houses Paris’ third largest market, making it an important social hub and economic centre for the area, and one that is deeply connected to local inhabitants’ lives and livelihoods.

For their two-year project with Plaine Commune, *Monument en Partage*, they collaborated with a video-maker and two architects, and eventually conceived an investigation of the local area that would take place in eight



acts, and that turned around the appearance of mysterious horse-headed men (a reference to the legend that La Courneuve was founded when Saint-Lucien's horse struck the earth with its hoof and uncovered a natural spring). Activities took place around the quarter – as well as, with the piece *Allo Jonglage*, in resident's homes. "We think art can help you understand where you live," says Johan.

Felicity Simpson, the director and creative producer of the company Circolombia, holds a similar view. Alongside Hector Fabio Cobo, Felicity started Circo Paro Todos in Santiago de Cali in 1995 as a school for

"determined children succeeding against the odds". It became Colombia's national circus school in 2006, but had more and more funding problems, and eventually the team made the radical decision to uproot and move from Cali to Bogota.

They were given an old train station (a large site that "no one else wanted") in the city centre and became part of a larger project to regenerate the area. In some respects, this has brought significant advantages. As part of the 'showcase' for Bogota's redevelopment, Circo Paro Todos and Circolombia frequently host and develop links with private partners. In 2017 they worked with

MIT, who sent 60 students to Bogota in order to work on finding 'new solutions for education' in the area.

But, explains Felicity, there is a balance to be struck. On the one hand they have been careful to establish themselves at the old train station, taking two years to create a formal plan to protect and manage the site as part of the city's heritage ("patrimony is our greatest friend"). On the other, they're prepared to uproot and move on if there's a radical change in the situation. As Felicity puts it: "It's really important to be permanently temporary."

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Getting started:

- Get out of your comfort zone by making a meeting with a city planner, going to public meetings. Ask: what can we contribute? Consider yourself as a worker/builder in your city and advocate for strong cultural policies.
- Think outside the box in terms of location and funding (look into budgets outside of culture). Consider small towns vs big cities; centres vs suburbs; backstreets vs central squares. Use temporary environments such as construction sites.

Locations and financing:

- Bring temporary artistic events into abandoned buildings to demonstrate their potential and contribute to the 'lifting-up' of a location/neighbourhood.
- Ask local shopkeepers to contribute to activities that generate business for them.
- Talk to property developers – advocate for cultural projects as adding value to developments.

Bringing together artists, planners and inhabitants:

- When putting up a big top in a city, ask the neighbourhood to participate. Invite the public to spend time in the 'circus space': in a caravan, or a camping ground at the circus event.
- Educate artists on the possibilities – and challenges – of art in public space, and do the same for urban planners/architects.
- Make the case that the arts have an economic role, and a role to play in terms of changing the image of a neighbourhood – and transforming the lives of its inhabitants.

ARTISTIC PATHS AND CREATION PROCESSES

Circus in the Golden Triangle – by Filip Tielens, De Standaard (Belgium)

Looked at from one angle, the evidence is everywhere: circus is booming. The number of festivals and companies is rising, new schools are educating the next generation of artists, and in many territories circus is improving its institutional standing. But rapid growth can bring its own challenges and problems. Filip Tielens asks the question: are our cultural policies and circus structures ready?

Let's start with the good news. At FRESH CIRCUS I heard artists from so many countries saying how much progress has been made in the last decade – or even the last five years.

In Flanders, where I live, we celebrate this year the tenth anniversary of the 'Circusdecreet', the law on circus. It's an understatement to say that this law has boosted the diversity and professionalisation of the circus field: there are many more circus companies, festivals, grants, and touring possibilities than a decade ago. Look to other territories and you find similar stories. Fabrizio Gavosto from Mirabilia Festi-

val told how in Italy, after years of fighting for recognition, the Ministry of Culture has come to consider circus as the 'fifth art form'. All over the country, residency spaces are being opened, and ten of fourteen national theatre circuits have chosen to dedicate a significant part of their programming to circus. In Portugal, as recounted by Cláudia Berkeley of Teatro da Didascália, circus is growing in the north of the country, with a permanent venue for circus opening in May 2018, and production support being provided for newly graduated artists of the local circus school.

In short, the circus field is experiencing rapid growth. But this is not to say there are no challenges ahead, and one of the biggest lies in finding ways to match limited resources to the growing number of artists now graduating from circus schools and entering the professional field. In the end it comes down to the 'golden triangle': to make circus, you need time, money and space. And in balancing this golden triangle, there is still a lot of work to do.

Time – creating on a treadmill

While a regular theatre production is created in six weeks to three months and a dance show in three to six months, creating a circus show easily demands a year or longer. It takes time to learn new circus techniques or search for new possibilities with objects. The companies

that are acclaimed internationally are usually the ones who had long creation processes that enabled them to take more artistic risks.

Take Claudio Stellato for example: this acclaimed artist has made only two shows in

ten years, and takes at least 18 months of solo preparation time before he starts to work with his performers. "I am fast in life and slow in creation," he joked during the session on artistic trajectories. "Everyone creates so fast. It takes years to develop something that is important to share with people." His words made me think of the legendary French artist Johann Le Guillerm, who never stops working on his always evolving circus universe.

Which is all very well, but time is a scarce commodity. Too often you see companies who had too little time and were forced to glue together different ideas with a random dramaturgy. They get stuck in mediocrity: not bad, but it could have been so much better. Sometimes I feel that the premiere of a show would be better labelled as an unfinished work-in-progress rather than a production ready to face the critical eye of programmers, journalists and audiences. But unfortunately, to be able to have enough time, you also need enough money.



Money – jumping from project to project

Always a difficult topic, this one. Because when are budgets ever big enough? How can they grow fast enough to support the booming circus field? In Flanders, the 2.5 million euros spent each year on circus are peanuts compared to the amounts spent on theatre, dance, music and visual arts. Two thirds of this budget goes to Circuscentrum (a support structure) and the three major circus festivals. They do great things, but leave little budget available for the artists. In the next version of the Circusdecreet being planned by the Flemish Ministry of Culture there will still be no room for structurally funded circus companies – even though there are many such companies in other art forms like theatre and dance.

It's important to look at where budgets go to and where they come from, as this influences the artistic work. Artist Sade Kampilla explained how subvention in Finland is focused on creation rather than touring. In order to make a living, she has had to jump from the one creation process to the other, with the quality of the shows – which were barely seen by audiences – suffering. Because contemporary circus, like dance, is an international art form, and as most projects have a lot of co-producers who each invest small amounts of money, circus artists are obliged as well to travel to many countries in order to create work. This is often expensive and inefficient. It also shapes the work that's made by forcing artists to

adapt to generalised conditions, or making it impractical to take risks like working with large-scale sets.

The overall amount of circus funding in Flanders has remained almost the same over the last decade, yet the number of artists has multiplied. This puts pressure on budgets, limits the organic growth of the circus field, and often binds artists to uncertain and precarious working lives. Funding comes in irregular spurts, and is separated by long periods where artists write project dossiers and wait for them to be answered rather than spending time doing what they're good at: creating circus.

Space – going back to the tent

A lot of those dossiers and applications aren't even for subvention – they're aimed instead at accessing residency spaces (and, sometimes, their attached budgets for co-production). But there are big waiting lines for the available places. For the moment there is not a single permanent residency space for circus in Flanders, although this is something the Ministry wants to change. More cultural venues are opening up their spaces for circus residencies, but here there are extra technical challenges: you need height, rigging points, flat ground if you're going to host tents, and so on.

It is interesting to notice that La Villette in Paris, one of the biggest venues in Europe, is programming more and more circus in the chapiteau. This brings logistical problems (renting the big top, securing the right size for the right shows, having a place to store the tent when it is not in use, etc.) and technical problems (the installation of the technical equipment, the recreation of the black box feeling, etc.), yet it is a deliberate choice for La Villette. In moving to the tent, they can programme longer runs than they would be able to in their highly demanded theatre halls. And, as a positive side effect, the chapiteau creates another atmosphere

and attracts a larger, more varied audience than the same shows would if programmed indoors.

With these examples in mind, wouldn't it be better to focus on (permanent) creation and performing spaces in big tops rather than new-build theatre halls? The vision is attractive, but, as a few artists at FRESH CIRCUS mentioned, this can only work if venues and festivals also accept the nomadic lifestyle that comes along with these big tops: caravans, families, dogs, and all the rest.

Survival of the fittest

Institutional support for circus is not yet in line with the growth of the circus sector, and so there is increasing competition for resources. If we don't want it to be survival of the fittest – a situation in which more and more artists are competing against each other for residency spaces and relatively low government budgets – then the overall amount of resources, in terms of both space and finances, needs to catch-up with the present reality of the circus field.

Besides the need for more resources, their allocation must also be carefully consid-

ered, and adapted to the way artists live and work. It makes no sense to have a widespread network of residency spaces without having enough money for the artists to pay themselves properly. And it makes no sense to only finance the creation of shows without supporting them to be performed.

For better cultural policy and a strong circus field, the golden triangle of time, money and space needs to be in balance. The vibrant evolutions of the circus field need also to be reflected in generous government support and in flexible circus organisations.

Together they can develop the right conditions for artists to push the boundaries of circus and create shows which we, the spectators, will remember for the rest of our lives.

Filip Tielens is a journalist and the performing arts coordinator for the Flemish newspaper De Standaard.



Interview with Sade Kamppila Artist, Circus I Love You (Finland)



With the Circus I Love You project you've formed a collective and bought your own tent. What led you to it?

It was more a life choice than an artistic choice: we wanted to start on the path that would finally lead us to self-sustainability.

To do that, we wanted to step more clearly into the position of being artists directing our own project, and to make a show with a long lifespan. Something we discussed a lot is how circus skills can't be renewed in the same way that an actor can just learn a new play, or a dancer a new choreography. In Finland, for example, there's a lot of money to make new projects, but if I'm creating one new show every year I can't create new or innovative material at that rate. So I think it's a lot more energy efficient, and also a lot more truthful, to produce something new every four years or so and then tour it to different audiences.

How does the tent fit into a plan of self-sufficiency?

Eventually we want to be capable of reaching our audiences and selling tickets directly. It's something that we can maybe do in 3-5 years, but right now we're using the network we already have to sell our show to venues and festivals.

The vision for our first tour is to come from the South of France to Sweden, and then next year start in the Nordic countries and travel back south. I hope that this show can tour for at least three years, and then the next step would be a combination of working with festivals and self-producing shows in the gaps along the way.

With the tent, you can't just get on a plane for a gig at short notice – you have to plan a lot more in advance. But it's also like a home in all the places we visit. With the caravans as well, we're always somehow at home – it doesn't feel so ruthless as this hotel-and-venue way of living.

Is it a model that other artist can follow?

I feel there's quite a big need for artists to find ways to be self-sustainable, and I think this system of having cultural institutions is failing. There are just so many artists without work, and so many people fighting for the same opportunities, that we need new ways for artists to reach audiences and create demand for art. Cultural institutions are doing their best, and it's great that they exist to organise activities and festivals, but at the same time there's a lot of power of action that's not in use if artists are just sitting there waiting for an opportunity.

I think we're just trying to merge the best of what the traditional circus has done with the contemporary circus' touring and education system – trying to make a good combination of that which can work within the context of Europe, and for people our age, today.

REPORTS & EXPERIENCES

New supports for creative processes

CURATOR

Fabrizio Gavosto, Artistic Director, Mirabilia Festival (Italy)

MODERATOR

Jean-Michel Guy, Author & Stage Director/Research Engineer, Ministry of Culture (France)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Jérôme Planche, Production Manager, ASIN member (France)

Stefan Sing, Artist (Germany)

Michiko Tanaka, Director, Setouchi Circus Factory (Japan)

Alexander Vantournhout, Artist (Belgium)

Creative processes are rarely simple or predictable, and more often than not throw up complex problems that cross the practical, artistic and interpersonal spheres. Support for creative work can therefore come in many forms – from financial aid, to logistical and production support, to artistic advice or coaching. For artists, it is not always easy to identify or admit what support is needed. For producers, there is perhaps a balance to be struck between engaging closely with a creative process and simply leaving artists to do their own thing.

Underlying all of this is the question of risk – a factor which the New Supports for Creative Processes session came to focus on. In circus we talk often of the physical risks embedded in the practice, but many artists are more comfortable managing these than they are the consequences that attend creative forms of risk-taking. In such cases, what's at stake is not only the 'success' of the production, but the artist's reputation, their employment, and the continued confidence of their supporters.

Anxiety about such consequences can be a guiding hand in the artistic process, ruling out certain choices or creative directions, and performances that go against the grain stand out. The panellist Alexander Vantournhout gave the example of his solo piece *Aneckxander*, made with Bauke Lievens, which from its opening minutes

is performed entirely naked. The artistic choice was made with the knowledge that nudity would make the work more challenging to sell – and in some instances disqualify it from consideration. Similar difficulties await productions that include spoken text or tackle a 'sensitive' topic, and even pieces that choose to work with a slower pace or more reflective tone can find themselves disregarded.

The question for artists, then, is perhaps when to be strategic, and to what degree? As one workshop participant pointed out, this question is more pointed for artists in territories with fewer resources than for those based in France or Belgium, who can benefit from intermittence. Working in Germany, the artist Stefan Sing felt that the scenography of his shows had been shaped by the available resources; in other words, there were certain creative risks that he never had the option to take.

Switching to this question of how to support artistic work in under-resourced territories, the session heard from Michiko Tanaka, the director of Setouchi Circus Factory. A non-profit organisation that aims to foster circus culture in Japan, SCF has five pillars of activity: a programme of residencies and creation; an annual festival; training courses for artists and technicians; circus classes for children and adults; and participation in pro-



fessional networks (including the launch of a new Japanese network for circus in 2018).

Cultural funding in Japan tends to be small and intermittent; Michiko explained that it is better in fact to think of subvention as an "occasional present". Ticket income is therefore very important, highlighting the fact that audiences also take risks. In Japan, Michiko says, it's always easier to sell uplifting performances with simple narratives, and yet "everything changes" if a link can be created to the local population and culture. Michiko believes this connection between

performance and place is the key to building a circus culture in Japan.

The residencies at SCF therefore aim to develop artists but also to shape and change the circus audience – an initiative that is slowly bearing fruit. SCF have now hosted artists such as Camille Boitel, CirkVOST,

and GdRA, while contemporary circus companies have appeared in the programmes of venues including the Tokyo Metropolitan Theater, Setagaya Public Theater, Za-Koenji, Owl Spot Theater, and Kochi Museum of Art.

Supporting creative processes, then, is holistic work, and the session closed with the

sense that more dialogue was needed on major topics including the importance of improving communication between artists and professionals, the need for a financial safety net that allows artistic risk, the question of how to treat failure within a creative process, and the challenges of bringing new artistic proposals to different territories.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Bridging the gap between artists and professionals:

- Create more opportunities for artists and professionals to meet one another – whether through informal bar meetings or structured activities like a ‘winter camp’.
- Take the model of artistic project pitches and turn it on its head: have venues and festivals pitch to artists so they can put a face to each organisation and understand its specificities.
- Develop a grant programme to support the presence of artists at Circostrada Network meetings.
- Have open days at venues, and also make the programming process more transparent – have venues invite artists to curate, collaborate on, or accompany a festival.
- Hold moderated discussions on ‘failure’ in artistic work, bringing together artists, professionals and audiences.

Supporting artistic risk/failure:

- Create cooperatives that spread risk through a co-production network – like the FONDOC network in Occitania.
- Consider specific financing for risky projects along the lines of the guarantee the French organisation ONDA offers to venues.
- Develop a European-level intermittence status that can stabilise artist income through difficult phases of creative work.
- Create a system of financial insurance, such as a cooperative fund, that can cover the losses of venues programming risk-taking work.

Artist trajectories: how does one become a Circus artist?

CURATORS

Cláudia Berkeley, Director/Programmer, Teatro da Didascália (Portugal)
Raffaella Benanti, Head of Circus Programmes, La Villette (France)

MODERATOR

Marik Wagner, Project Manager, Atelier Lefevre & André, Clowns Sans Frontières France - Clowns Without Borders International (France)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Claire Aldaya, Artist, Akoreacro (France)
Giorgia Elisa Giunta, Co-founder and General Manager, FEKAT (Ethiopia)
Danny Ronaldo, Artist, Circus Ronaldo (Belgium)
Alexandra Royer, Artist, Barcode Circus Company (Quebec)
Hisashi Watanabe, Artist/Performer, Atama to Kuchi Company (Japan)
Aurélien Bory, Author & Stage Director/Artistic Director, Compagnie 111 (France)
David Dimitri, Artist (Switzerland/USA)
Sade Kamppila, Artist, *Metsä - The Forest Project* (Finland)
Claudio Stellato, Artist (Italy/Belgium)

The circus field has spent much of the last 40 years structuring its methods for training, artistic education and production, and at least in some countries the main path into the sector is clear – running from youth circus, through foundation training, into higher education, and out into professional work. But is this the whole story? When we look closer we find circus artists emerging in countries without the benefit of infrastructure, as well as individuals who, for one reason or another, choose to step outside ‘the

system’. Even for those who do follow established paths, perhaps this generalisation doesn’t do justice to their private journeys of artistic development and discovery.

To tackle the topic from multiple angles, the Artist Trajectories session brought together a diverse collection of artists from around the world – and found among their contributions a strong desire for independence and self-determination directing their paths through life.

For Quebecois artist Alexandra Royer, this meant founding a company. Like many graduates of the École nationale de cirque in Montreal, she had early experiences working for big companies like Cirque du Soleil, Cirque Éloize and The 7 Fingers – but over time developed a desire to find her own methods for creation. Alongside three other ENC artists she founded Barcode Company. Rather than seek funding or support, they invested their own money so that they could take time to create on their own terms – eventually producing the outdoor show *Plus C’est Haut, Plus C’est Beau*.

This willingness to invest both in self-development and collective work was echoed by Claire Aldaya, who first started training at the Ecole de cirque de Châtelleraut as part of her school baccalaureate. The small group of friends, she trained and performed with, wanted to go forward together, but found they were unable to attend a school in France. Instead, their path took them to Russia and the Moscow Circus School. A decade later, they remain collaborators under their company Akoreacro – a group with an enduring commitment to collective creation.



While artists like Alexandra and Claire came to circus from a young age, others emphasised the value of a career switch. Aurélien Bory started out with a qualification in physics, working in acoustic architecture until an overbearing boss drove him to quit and head for the south of France. In Toulouse, he joined the school Le Lido, training as a juggler before working with the theatre director Mladen Materic in his Théâtre Tattoo. Now, Aurélien calls on his scientific education as he develops a “théâtre physique”, or as he works on the abstract, geometric scenographies of shows like *Les sept planches de la ruse*.

Belgian/Italian artist Claudio Stellato also studied at Le Lido, but not before making a start as a jazz musician at the Scuola Civica Jazz in Milan. Speaking of his experiences travelling for training and knowledge, he described a career path that saw him work as a dancer – with companies and choreographers including Cie Kdanse, Roberto Olivan, and Karine Pontiès – for almost a decade. Returning to circus in 2011, he created his solo production *L’Autre* – a pie-

ce that toured the word and launched a new phase of his career.

The necessity of mobility is a major characteristic in the lives of most artists – and not only during education. Sade Kamppila described “becoming homeless” as the most important step of her artistic career. Her recent decision, alongside a collective of eight artists, to buy a tent and begin the project *Circus I Love You* is only the latest in a series of attempts to escape the limitations of standard touring. Previous projects include *Metsä -The Forest Project*, made for woodlands, and the show *DuoJag*, targeted to older people and their grandchildren, and suitable for care homes, schools and daycare centres.

For artists born into circus families, one could imagine that the path to becoming an artist would be clear-cut – but for Danny Ronaldo and David Dimitri this was not quite the case. Danny went to a regular school before eventually stepping out to tour with the family circus, and when he did return it was with the realisation that Circus Ronaldo needed to transform itself. Working with his

brother, he shaped it into what it is today – a circus neither traditional nor contemporary, but somewhere in between. David Dimitri’s path took him first to the State Academy for Circus Arts in Budapest, but then to the Juilliard School in New York for studies in dance – a mix of influences he put to use when he created his 2001 solo, *One-Man Circus*.

Looking further afield, final contributions for the session came from Japanese artist Hisashi Watanabe (see interview), and Giorgia Elisa Giunta, co-founder and general manager of Fekat Circus in Ethiopia. Describing Fekat’s two core pillars of social and artistic work, Giorgia touched on the ways the two overlap and the ways in which artistic origins define identities. Fekat’s first show *Queen Makeda* told the history of a legendary Abyssinian queen and was accompanied by traditional Ethiopian music. With a later production, they tried to create a more universal aesthetic in order to tour internationally, but received comments from audiences and professionals that they preferred the first performance – a problem they continue to grapple with.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Raising awareness of circus as a vocation:

- Collaborate with primary schools to get students involved with circus at a young age.
- Deepen awareness among circus audiences by using wraparound activities – workshops, aftershow discussions, etc. – and by producing documentary materials in the form of videos, podcasts, and so on.

Training and working:

- Extend/enhance the mobility of teachers between schools with the help of Erasmus+.
- Create mentoring schemes where the artist has a role model to accompany, guide and direct them. This could be another figure from the circus world or an expert from another field (administrative, legal, marketing, etc.).
- Develop shadowing opportunities and opportunities for knowledge transfer (like the French model of the *compagnonnage*) to support emerging artists.

Focus: Breaking out in Japan



Interview with Hisashi Watanabe Artist/Performer, Atama to Kuchi Company (Japan)



What's been your path into circus?

I started juggling when I was twenty – kind of late for a juggler – and afterwards became a contemporary dancer and then a circus artist. I didn't expect any of it. I was a student in textile design at an arts university, and then after two years I realised that I needed dance for my physicality and I started dancing. I started off doing breakdancing and ballet, but soon realised that I had difficulty doing both: ballet makes you taller, moves you towards the sky, and the breakdance is more on the floor. It's difficult to find a middle ground.

Juggling also has both aspects: it towers up when you throw the ball, but when you drop the ball, you're on the floor, at the same level as your body. I realised that I like picking the ball up off the floor more than throwing it to the sky. So I quit ballet and decided to mix breakdance and juggling.

I was invited to work for a contemporary dance company, Monochrome, and performed with them for three years. After I made my own solo piece, *Inverted Tree*, which was well received in the contemporary dance field but also became popular in the circus world. I actually never called myself a circus artist but I happened to be invited to many circus festivals.

For people who practice circus what are the possibilities in Japan?

In Japan, because it's isolated and separated from the other countries, it's like a Galapagos island. It's as though there are some unique animals living there; unique people come from nowhere. We don't have a circus school, and so those unique people train themselves. It would be nice if there was a platform to accept them, but the reality is that right now it's very hard for them to become professional artists. I'm very lucky.

Working in Europe what's been your view of the field here and the work that's made?

I have seen many pieces in Europe where I could feel that there was something like a stereotype or common aesthetic. It's almost like a mindset that if you put this and this together then it becomes something like an artwork. I have seen many pieces with more of a theatre style, where people talk or act more, and pieces where the artists were trying to get small laughs from the audience – kind of a dry atmosphere which I feel isn't for me.

Then lots of pieces with chairs and tables, and works where the artists wear suits and jackets but I couldn't see the reason why they wore them. I'm from a different culture, so what I don't understand in Europe is how they're able to use so many objects.

Circus spaces

CURATOR

Raffaella Benanti, Head of Circus Programmes, La Villette (France)

MODERATOR

Koen Allary, Director, Circuscentrum (Belgium)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Aurélien Bory, Author-Stage Director/Artistic Director of Compagnie 111 (France)

David Dimitri, Artist (Switzerland/USA)

Elodie Doñaque, Artist (Belgium)

Sade Kamppila, Artist, *Metsä - The Forest Project* (Finland)

Danny Ronaldo, Artist, Circus Ronaldo (Belgium)

Claudio Stellato, Artist (Italy/Belgium)

Space is always in demand. Few artists own their own facilities, instead creating work across multiple residency sites which vary in their dimensions, staging, local context, technical affordances and mood. Does this diversity enrich projects by bringing new ideas and influences, or does it layer successive restrictions on them – forcing a generic ‘black box’ format that will fit more easily into a broad touring circuit?

For the Italian/Belgian artist Claudio Stellato, the impact of diverse spaces has been positive. In his contribution to the session, he described how the characteristics of different creation spaces contribute to the artistic work: the wooden floor of one space becomes a surface that is carried forward in the staging; a visit to a square space sets the dimensions of the work. In this way the project accumulates characteristics from its various environments, and the theatrical space of the final performance captures and remembers the spaces of its creation.

For the Brussels-based artist Elodie Doñaque, space is not only the contributor of discrete elements of a creation; rather, the space “makes the work”. Her current project *Balade[s]* is a film series that presents portraits of urban landscapes through site-specific circus performance. The first piece, made in Brussels, sees Elodie on trapeze amid cranes and towers, framed against the sky, or reflected in the water of the Port de Bruxelles. The circus technique responds to the visual composition and timbre of the environment, while in turn the

circus practice opens a new way of reading the landscape.

In situ work of this kind seeks to unite the sites of creation and performance – a convergence which, in another way, the circus tent achieves. In recent years the chapiteau has seen renewed interest among young artists who are interested both in its

This emphasis on finding spaces for free creation was echoed by the Finnish artist Sade Kamppila, who, along with Viivi Roiha, took an unusual route for *Metsä - The Forest Project*. Made in ‘forest residencies’ in Finland and France, and first performed in 2016 at Lapland’s Silence Festival, the piece takes inspiration from folktales and cultural legends, and adapts itself to different forests.



aesthetic possibilities (playing in the round, large-format shows, complex rigging), and by the opportunity it seems to present to sidestep the limitations of the normal processes of production. Danny Ronaldo and David Dimitri both spoke of the tent as a space of artistic freedom; a place where the artist can do what they want.

Apart from artistic curiosity, the project was driven partly by the desire to find possibilities for presentation outside the regular production circuit.

While such alternate routes can lead to rich creative possibilities, the afternoon session attested to the difficulties that can also

emerge. The reality is that it takes a lot of time, and therefore resources, to adapt performances to a particular space and make them truly responsive to the site. From the perspective of producers/programmers, as well, such projects can be labour-intensive and difficult to pull off. There are practical obstacles around gaining permission for

the use of non-traditional sites, or attracting audiences to them, and the producer also takes a risk by programming a 'process' more than a finished performance.

Circus tents likewise bring logistical challenges. A big top needs a longer run to be cost effective, bringing substantial risks that can

fall both on artists and hosts. Yet the rewards are concomitantly greater: venues are waking up to the potential of the tent to reach new audiences, and particularly those who would not typically enter a theatre.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

- Develop touring models for big tops that can share out the financial risks of longer runs.
- Increase artists capacity to work in different spaces by raising their technical knowledge (for example, through a year of practical work experience at the end of circus education).
- Conduct knowledge exchanges between companies experienced at working with big tops and hosting organisations.
- Improve communication with audiences to change their expectations, perceptions and experiences of big top/street shows.

Focus: Challenges for emerging artists



Interview with Cécile Provôt Director, Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe/CircusNext (France)



What are some of the main challenges you see facing early career circus artists?

The biggest challenge for all of them is to have the means to start to create. Even before the production stage they don't have the funds to get started, or they're not aware of which venues might support them.

I think generally speaking another challenge is that they don't have an overview of what's happening in Europe. I work a lot with emerging artists, and often they don't have a sense of the wider artistic culture or the history of that culture. I suppose that hinders them as creators – if you want to find the financial and other means of production you need to be able to talk about your artistic work, and about yourself as a creator and a citizen in society...

But balancing that out there's a DIY ethic in the circus field – especially in the countries that don't have cultural policies or venues for circus. Because you have to do things yourself you're the creator but also the project leader in the sense of being an entrepreneur. So I think there's that feeling of being autonomous: I want to do it, I need to do it, I am going to do it.

It feels like the focus is on entrepreneurship because the number of artists is growing quickly. How do you feel about the possibilities for them to find and make work?

Yes, we have more and more graduations out of more and more good schools, and so there's that question of professional integration – are there too many artists? Or is there not enough demand for the supply? And in fact there's no answer for that. Really. Because demand can also be affected by policy.

But in general cultural policies don't have enough funds to offer, venues don't have enough residency spaces to work with. During the last FRESH CIRCUS the keynote speaker Lucho Smit, from Galapiat Cirque, ended by saying that France has been kind of a sponge for all this growth, but that France can no longer answer the requests of all the artists who want to tour there. In the past France has been the place where there's the most production and touring venues, the most schools, but I think the balance should shift – and is shifting.

At the same time the French policymakers are less aware of the contemporary circus, less involved in it. We had our Year of Circus in 2001-2002, and now we can feel that we need a new one. So it's interesting at a European level to see that France will be less of an example and people will develop their own models. But as a French person myself I'm a little bit scared. France is facing what everyone has been facing: that there's less money for culture. The golden years are gone. We're in a transition that not everyone is ready to face.

IMAGES AND AUDIENCES

Crossing barriers, building bridges by Laurent Ancion, CIRQ' EN CAPITALE (Belgium)

The struggle to make a radical break from tradition has been a rite of passage among modern arts, but is there another way of refreshing artistic images and language? Laurent Ancion sets out to build the bridge between past and present.

While most art forms (painting, theatre, dance) advance through aesthetic revolutions that upend and replace the previous movement, circus is a cumulative art form. Although evolving through the interplay of

of imagining performance - when it seems that the time has come for a circus of human proportions? Is the word 'circus' even still appropriate? Certainly, if to use it works not as a barrier, but as a bridge. By definition,

the art of doing the most useless thing in the world." And everyone knows, in the depths of their being, that useless things are often the most precious.

The circus of today, plural, is excised to explore the tension between inventing new images and integrating images from tradition. Maintaining that balance is not to submit to the past, but to understand it and defy it. We are for the better in asking new questions, like the one that seeks to know the meaning of circus - fundamentally, what is it good for, if not nothing? "For the circus entrepreneur Phineas Taylor Barnum, in the 19th century, circus needed to bring the marvellous into our everyday, in a vision of the world that was both protestant and capitalist. All efforts were made to show that anything is possible," says Corine Pencenat, art critic and professor at the University of Strasbourg. "Today, circus has its place in society for exactly the opposite reason. In a technological world, where machines act on our behalf, the body of the circus performer reestablishes vulnerability, the living and the human."



social and artistic metamorphoses (the demolition of the Circus Maximus in 476, the transformation towards theatre of the *nouveau cirque* in 1984), circus arts are a practice that never totally erases its erstwhile forms, but rather contains them. The central place of the body is fundamental to this unbroken line. The deep love in recalling and ironising (even parodying) past forms plays an important role in circus writing, including in the most contemporary iterations that cannot deny the history preceding them.

How are we to manage the 'retinal' heritage of Barnum & Bailey - this larger than life way

circus has always been a pioneer in all things mixing and remixing. In France, the most recent performance by Maroussia Diaz Verbèke, the aptly named "Circus Remix" (2017), is a very explicit example of that. The soloist amuses herself - and us - with silent words, plastered across cardboard or on screens, that she defines in practice and illustrates with radio extracts. The body, the challenge, the urge, the word, the beginning, the end, the animal - all chapters that outline the uselessness of the contemporary as fundamentals of circus. What then could the vast array of the portmanteau signify? "Circus," the artist responds with malice, "is

We can then speak of a veritable reversal of the stereotype. The "future images" of circus can certainly be placed on a tabula rasa, but they can also copy, paste, use and recycle, just like any postmodern art form has done or will do. This audacity that consists of reconnecting rather than opposing, counts as well in attracting new audiences. Like in any creative field, it is essential to take risks, to think outside the box - or the stage, including the adoption of techniques taken from fields completely different from circus. Have other forms of modern art not gone through the same dilemma that force them to liberate

themselves from old stereotypes in order to attract a new audience? During the early 2000s, street art had to battle against the stigma of 'graffiti', just as circus seeks today to be freed from the "clowns and lions" image.

As much has been shown in a study done by the TOHU, in Montreal, that one in four people think that circus is, well, still the same. In Canada, the image of circus is completely tainted by Cirque du Soleil. "For more people, circus is fun, extravagant, costly and constituted of two hours of tension!", explains Annie Leclerc-Casavant, communications director for the TOHU. In Western Europe, the clichés are more linked to wild animals, although more and more countries have banned their use. In order to expand the circle of spectators, it is first necessary to expand their perspective. At the same time, the stereotype isn't entirely a negative one. It is important to note that most people *think* at least something about circus when asked out of the blue. Not every form of modern art can lay claim to such a reputation. The same survey carried out on modern dance or fine arts, for example, did not have comparable results.

Even if incomplete or obsolete, this imagery is the fertile soil in which new ideas grow. Through its non-verbal (or less verbal) aspect, circus is able to touch an audience that wouldn't otherwise go to a live performance. Once in the theater or under the tent, these spectators are in need of no explanation. New images are forged in skin. "Our goal is to allow the diversity of forms

in circus arts to be discovered in the place where people only see but a few colors of the spectrum," Annie Leclerc-Casavant adds, who describes her continuous strategy as a blog for the audience, at least four 'behind the scenes' videos per show, that are filmed in places that have nothing to do with circus, such as in surprising buildings or in the countryside. "You have to think of the circus beyond the stage," says Annie. And think outside of the box.

Diversify the audience? Evolve the circus' public perception? For Patrick De Groote, artistic director of the festival Zomer van Antwerpen (Belgium), the strategy to follow is quite clear. "If you want to diversify your audience, in age as in origin, start by diversifying your teams! At Zomer, we work with employees and volunteers of all backgrounds. They are the best ambassadors. If not, then you can't complain that you're stuck in a closed circle. If opening up to new audiences is important to you, you have to put that in the budget. These are things that many either forget or put off for another day."

To diversify their audiences, wouldn't it also make sense for these spaces and festivals to start by diversifying their programming? This is one of the challenges that the world of social circus raises today, confronted by the stereotype of being 'humanitarian' (which is true) and not artistic (which is false). "Like any other circus troupe, we need time and trust, space and patience," says Badr Haoutar, from the troupe Colokolo (Rabat, Morocco), "How do we evolve if no one is

willing to take the risk with us? Are we going to allow for European circuses to create another barrier for us, demanding that we have a diploma from one of their schools? But who cares if we've been to the Cnac, the Esac, the Splac or the Clac [laughs]. We're all just doing circus work, sharing something that is spread with words."

Postmodern? The term itself may seem stereotyped. Let's keep but the basic premise, meaning this ability of art to interrogate itself, including in the writing of its forms. Cinema (with Sergei Eisenstein for example) and theatre (with Ariane Mnouchkine) have borrowed heavily from circus, which has itself borrowed from cinema, theatre and dance. At present, circus can take from its own history, from its own experiences as circus. A new maturity that connects more than it opposes. In Belgium, we can think of the work of Alexander Vantournhout who, in 2014, explored with 'capriciousness' the fundamentals of circus – object and risk. In the immense space within the Halles de Schaerbeek in Brussels, suspended by a strap around his neck, he illustrated the most ancient image of peril and the most contemporary image of minimalism. No doubt, for circus to continue its metamorphosis, it must continue tirelessly to put its neck out.

Laurent Ancion is editor-in-chief of the magazine C!RQ en CAPITALE, dedicated to contemporary circus and published by Espace Catastrophe.



Interview with Maroussia Diaz Verbèke Artistic Director, Le Troisième Cirque (France)



What is the third circus?

The name of the company, Le Troisième Cirque (the Third Circus), was chosen to reference a question at the very heart of its work: what might the third circus look like? To my mind, the first circus describes classical circus, and the second circus refers to contemporary circus, to which I belong because of the training (Enacr and Cnac - French national circus training centres) I have had. These two worlds seem very far apart to me, and even seem to oppose each other. I understand the significance that this opposition might have had in the past but, now, I am interested in what could exist beyond this divide. This means understanding the importance and the strengths of the first, an aspect often neglected when you're involved with the second. The number three also represents an opening beyond the reaction of the second to the first.

When you create work what's your relation to the classical circus – its images and associations?

I have an increasing appetite for and curiosity about the classical circus, not only its images, but also its structures and how performances are composed, its codes, rhythms and recurring motifs. From my experience, these are all very interesting means of expression that are the very essence of the original and alternative art form we call the circus. At the same time, I think there are also a lot of people in the younger generation who don't have this heritage of watching circus shows to the same extent. At my latest show, *Circus Remix*, a young spectator told me this was the first circus performance (of any kind) that she had seen, but that she could recognise it as circus because it was "different from theatre" – which is in fact the historic definition of the circus: in the 1800s, a circus show could be anything as long as it was not theatre.

What sort of research or preparation did you do for *Circus Remix*?

I made a huge shift towards circus history, something that I was not at all familiar with. I met researchers and leading circus figures, I read and researched French archives to try to understand my own "circus reflexes", which, I discovered, have much more in common with circus history than I had realised. What I had thought were personal feelings were often echoes of this history of which I had no conscious knowledge, but that I was probably repeating unconsciously (for example, the unique relationship between the circus and the spoken word, forbidden in circuses in 1806 and 1807; the importance of the play on costumes and clothes, my love of lists!). In addition, I've noticed that the more I look into the essence of the circus and what is unique to it and makes it so special, the more I take a similar interest in other arts and the more I appreciate the specificities of each language.

Do you think there's a generation split in the circus field when it comes to attitudes towards the past?

Personally, ever since my training in the French national circus schools, I have seen the classical circus despised, or at least, a lack of interest in it. I've experienced that myself. At one time, I rejected it, too. Now I find this attitude expressed in a number of ways: a rejection of the "circus" label; or when people say things like "it's more than a circus show", "it's not just circus", "it's beyond circus". It's as if we are hung up on not having enough tools or elements to flourish in our own art. Obviously, there's great desirable richness in blending arts together, but it can also hide shame of or a desire to escape our own language...

REPORT & EXPERIENCES

What image(s) for circus today?

CURATORS/MODERATORS

Adolfo Rossomando, Director, Ass. Giocolieri e Dintorni/Juggling Magazine (Italy)
Maarten Verhelst, Chief Editor of CircusMagazine/Head of Communications, Circuscentrum (Belgium)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Annie Leclerc-Casavant, Communications and Marketing Manager, TOHU (Canada)
Raffaele de Ritis, Historian/Author (Italy)
Maroussia Diaz Verbèke, Artistic Director, Le Troisième Cirque (France)
Corine Pencenat, Art Critic/Lecturer, University of Strasbourg (France)
And members of the INCAM Network - International Network of Circus Arts Magazines

The work of updating circus' image can sometimes seem endless – not least because the visual ideas and concepts of the traditional circus still have a strong hold on our cultural consciousness. For those working in marketing and media there are hard choices to be made about when to lean on the universal reach of these images from the past, when to attempt to reconcile them with the present, and when to start entirely from scratch. Phrases like 'new circus' and 'contemporary circus' have the advantage of capturing a sense of shift or evolution, but can themselves be restrictive in generalising a wealth of different disciplines and approaches. And as the historian and author Raffaele de Ritis pointed out in this session,

any image of circus is rooted in its specific local context and culture: there are many different flavours of 'traditional' and many different types of 'contemporary'.

Opening a view on one such specific context, Annie Leclerc-Casavant, the communications and marketing manager at TOHU in Montreal, spoke about the results of a research study the venue undertook in order to reach a better understanding of its audiences. In Quebec, she explained, there are two main images of circus: the 'ancien cirque'/traditional circus (evoking big tops, animals and clowns; often associated with lower quality work), and then the image that Cirque du Soleil has shaped over the years

(intensely acrobatic, with elaborate costumes, large-scale scenography, and expensive tickets). All told, circus represents 1.5-2.5% of cultural entertainment in Quebec.

Analysing the situation, the team at TOHU identified a number of obstacles to growing the audience for circus. One is that in circus, fame is rare – there are few well-known companies, let alone artists, but in a crowded cultural field the reputation of an artist or company is an important factor in pulling in audiences. At TOHU the solution to this issue has been to try and create their own 'star system', working particularly with companies like Cirque Alfonse and The 7 Fingers that generate their own media content. When they host a company they also make sure to highlight any prizes or awards it might have received, as well as to talk up its international standing.

A further obstacle TOHU identified is the substantial language gap that exists between the circus community and the general audience. Audiences can have trouble distinguishing between different techniques and styles in circus, and might not know that large variations exist in circus' physical and stage languages. This has a significant impact on attendance. In their study TOHU found that 25% of respondents thought that circus is always the same – and that there was therefore no reason to see more than one show a year.



In some respects this 'gap' is a media challenge, as journalists and other content producers play a crucial role in providing the information that frames a performance, but venues can also be active in educating their audiences. Responding to the findings of their study TOHU has begun to favour editorial content above promotional media, creating a blog with original content and investing in social media with the goal of creating their own "media ecosystem". Along-

side this they have started: codifying circus by introducing a consistent vocabulary and categorisation; prioritising video; focusing on digital communications (they are now 80% digital); targeting influencers on social media; segmenting audience data in order to personalise communications; and refining messaging through A/B testing.

Reflecting on the need to bridge the 'knowledge gap', the session also identified

this as something that currently separates professional circus networks from youth circus initiatives: education on art and aesthetics tends to only come much later if students choose to professionalise and pursue higher education. If they built their understanding at an earlier phase they could perhaps be significant ambassadors for the field – and play a major role in helping to reshape the image of circus.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

- Connect audiences with the creative process behind a performance to increase their appreciation of its subtleties and unique characteristics.
- Focus on inventing new ways to communicate in circus: break norms in promotion and images; use video; reach for something beyond the 'ordinary'.
- Connect with journalists as mediators that help people to understand and appreciate circus.
- Be honest in communication and promotion, and take the focus off marketing and sales.

Focus: Presentation, voice and design



Interview with Maarten Verhelst Head of Communications, Circuscentrum/Editor in Chief, CircusMagazine (Belgium)



In part the image of circus arises from its visual identity in press and marketing. How do you think about this topic while running a magazine?

Right from the start one of the main objectives of CircusMagazine, and also of Circuscentrum as an organisation, was to break from the traditional image of circus – to break from it radically, actually. So we wanted to make a modern arts magazine that was about circus. From the beginning, we had to be firm with our graphic designer: no ‘circus typography’, no layouts using stars as a visual element, no red and yellow colour scheme. When it comes to photos we try to assign photographers to create original portraits – and often it’s a close-up of the artist in a natural setting. When you depend on a company’s press photos what you tend to get is their show in a black box. It can be nice, but when you look at something like a film magazine, that’s not how they work.

If the goal is to change the image of circus... how’s that going?

Very slowly, but we feel things are improving. We used to spend a lot of time reaching out to the press and persuading them to come to festivals. But now we really don’t have to work that much to get the press to come to something like Smells Like Circus in Ghent [the yearly festival organised by Circuscentrum]; they are coming to us now. But the most important factor in that isn’t Circuscentrum’s work. It’s really that the artists themselves are breaking boundaries. Some of the new generation are really very open and making good artistic work that gets them picked up by theatre and performance festivals. They’re working both in and outside of the circus field.

As those boundaries are crossed how do you feel about the word ‘circus’ as a label or category?

Right now there’s basically two types of circus: classical/traditional circus and contemporary/new circus. That’s too restrictive. A big circus company with a bunch of gymnasts who do the craziest technical tricks, and a solo artist who does nothing but throw one ball in the air naked, are both called contemporary circus. It’s like putting the same label on Lady Gaga and a free jazz quartet: it’s not good for either of them. The strength of music is that you have this one all-encompassing label (music), but instantly there are dozens of subdivisions (like pop, rock, jazz, folk) and hundreds of sub-subdivisions and styles. It makes things quite clear: both for the musicians and the audience. And most important of all: no single soul in the world says he or she hates ‘music’. Why? Because there are so many sorts of music. Yes, you can dislike jazz, but that doesn’t mean you don’t like music. Same with the instrument: no one hates the piano by itself; it depends on who plays it and in which style.

It would be great if we could achieve a similar way of thinking when talking about circus – making it this umbrella with hundreds of divisions, subdivisions, styles and instruments. Then the most experimental avant-garde circus artist could proudly say: ‘Yes, I’m doing circus. Namely post-contemporary minimal circus.’ And the seventh generation circus clown who performs the same act for decades could say: ‘Yes, I’m doing circus. Namely traditional 19th century circus.’ It would be much more interesting and respectful to this large diversity.

Where to find new circus audiences today?

CURATOR

Mara Pavula, Director, Riga Circus School (Latvia)

MODERATOR

Linda Beijer, Chair/President, Manegen (Sweden)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Patrick de Groote, Artistic Director, Zomer van Antwerpen (Belgium)

Jacqueline Friend, Marketing and Audience Development Manager, Crying Out Loud (UK)

Alexandra Henn, Project Manager/Assistant to the Managing Director, Chamäleon Theater (France/Germany)

Duncan Wall, Author, *The Ordinary Acrobat*/Co-Founder, Circus Now (USA)

Jackie Friend, the marketing and audience development manager for UK producing house Crying Out Loud, opened the session by describing audience development as “organisation-wide, evidence-based, and ongoing”. When COL launched their

approaches (print publicity, Facebook advertising, outreach programmes, and so on), but having detailed data on demographics and attendance allows these activities to be directed to specific cold spots. At times, analysis of the data opens up new ideas. When



project Circus Evolution, a five-year initiative to develop a regional touring circuit for contemporary circus in England, they took a data-led approach.

Working with the eleven venues in the Circus Evolution network, COL profiled their audiences to understand gaps in the market and attitudes to circus. Since 2014, the project has delivered ten tours. The accompanying marketing work has been broad-based and encompassed many traditional

they found that people who have a moderate engagement with culture wouldn't share arts content on social media, but did share local content, COL created a series of regional trailers that combined the two. A short film for Ipswich that featured parkour sequences in recognisable locations brought 120 new bookers to the venue.

The Belgian festival Zomer van Antwerpen is another organisation that focuses on gathering information about its audiences.

Each year ZvA do a survey to compare their festival-goers to regional demographics and find which groups are under-represented. Patrick de Groote, ZvA's artistic director, told how ten years ago the under 26 audience was 4-5%, pushing the team to create Zomerfabriek, a new space for young diverse audiences, of all social backgrounds, hosted on the grounds of a former factory. The key to the new site's success was making it a participative project: ZvA took on a lot of young guest curators, with and without experience, and “made a programme that for our Ministry of Culture is not culture; but for the people that come it is their culture”.

The space is open seven days a week, all day and all night, and funds itself by throwing three big parties a week. ZvA's under 26 audience is now 30-35%, and an emphasis on participation has come to underlie all the festival's work. When ZvA wrote its last big funding application it asked for the help of its audience by putting up caravans everywhere and inviting them to come and do the writing. “The more people who think of this festival as their festival, the more likely they are to bring in other people,” says Patrick.

Installed at sites throughout the city, the festival also puts a lot of effort into designing environments around shows – special sets and locales that always include a bar. These make a significant contribution to ZvA's budget, but also play an important role in drawing new audiences in. “Most people know exactly what to do when they

see a bar,” says Patrick – and once they’ve sat down for a drink the next step of getting them to a performance is much easier.

For Alexandra Henn, project manager and assistant to the managing director at Berlin’s Chamäleon Theater, the focus has been not only on finding new audiences but also retaining old ones as the venue changes identity. Formerly a variety theatre, the Chamäleon now focuses on programming contemporary circus – a core change that was made in 2004 when the name changed from Chamäleon Variete to Chamäleon Theater. They banned the word ‘variety’ from all their communications, but it still took “eight years” for people to stop calling them by the old name. For the last two years they’ve been using the strapline: ‘New circus, simply different.’

The Theater still retains a cabaret feeling, however: the audience are seated around small tables, food is served before performances, and a discrete bar service runs throughout. The Theater receives no funding, though Alexandra stresses that the artistic vision comes first and sales/marketing

follow. Programming two big productions a year for six-month runs, and then smaller shows on shorter runs five times a year, the venue hosts seven shows a week, or 350 in a year. Tickets are 37-59 euros each. The venue’s audience breaks down as being 50% from Berlin and the surrounding region and 50% tourists. 10% are from abroad. Many are visitors who would not go to a typical classical theatre or cultural programme. Alexandra’s philosophy of audience care boils down to believing in the product, creating a strong identity/concept, and “never promising anything that isn’t true”.

Offering a final perspective, Duncan Wall presented Circus Now – a community organisation that was founded in 2013 to “change the reputation of circus in America”, and create internal connections within the emerging field.

Duncan explained that the focus at CN was on tapping into existing grassroots energy: following the example of union organising, they thought in terms of building a community rather than a product, working on volunteer mobilisation, on “elevating the

conversation” around circus, and on promoting the idea of circus as an identity or lifestyle choice. At the same time CN worked on creating an online community, building a Facebook page with 20,000 followers.

To initiate institutional partnerships, CN went to performing arts theatres and festivals and offered to be a resource for knowledge and connections – an approach which led to a circus programme – also called Circus Now – at the Skirball Centre in New York.

CN achieved a lot, but found it hard to stabilise and is now largely dormant. Among the factors that led to the organisation going dark, Duncan counts the fact that it never found a successful financial model (in its best year, the peak budget was \$20,000); not knowing how to deal with the tension created between volunteers and professionals; and suffering an inability to make long-term plans in an environment that forced them to be opportunistic.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Building audiences:

- Invest in digital work – and see digital not only as a means of building audience relationships but as a new space where performances can be uploaded or performed live.
- Mobilise the audience – create a programme to train cultural workers in the soft skills required for managing volunteers/ambassadors/influencers.
- Enter new contexts – create performances in restaurants, or in civic and social spaces, and give these new audiences a taste of circus.

Building skills:

- Increase awareness by disseminating the research findings of the EU-funded audience development research programme Engage Audiences (engageaudiences.eu).
- Develop case studies on different facets of audience development: building audiences through special collaborations, bringing performance to new spaces, working with influencers/ambassadors, etc.

The influence of socio-political contexts on creation/distribution processes

CURATOR

Ophélie Mercier, Development Manager, Caravan International Youth and Social Circus Network (France)

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Jessika Devlieghere, Co-founder/Head Palestinian Circus School (Belgium/Palestine)
Jose do Rego, Advisor/Zip Zap Ambassador, Zip Zap Circus (South Africa)
Xavier Gobin, Producer, Phare (France/Cambodia)
Noha Khattab, Artist, Outa Hamra Street Clown Collective (Egypt)
Clara Norman, Deputy Manager Pedagogy and Training, Cirkus Cirkör (Sweden)

This session on socio-political contexts turned on a difficult challenge: when artistic activities are linked to social circus projects, how to talk about the background of the work in a way that is true to its origins but not contained by them? And how, then, to interest a field of European production and creation that has previously dismissed the artistic value of such projects?

Such questions are common among projects labelled 'social circus' once they reach a certain size and age: it's natural that the participants of these projects, as they gain experience, will want to build careers and step into artistic work. Presenting her work with the Palestinian Circus School, of which she is co-founder and head, Jessika Devlieghere told the group how the first students that entered the school ten years ago are now expressing a desire to become professional circus artists. To begin to move in this direction they have started to take international volunteers and to run artistic exchange projects with European circus companies in order to train their artists. Their last production, *Coffee in Town*, was based on stories of refugees that the artists collected. They began the creation process internally, and then invited Paul Evans from NoFit State to come and support the direction of their show. It will tour in Europe through 2018.

José do Rego, an advisor and ambassador for Cape Town's Zip Zap Circus, told a similar story. Founded in Cape Town in 1992, just after the end of the apartheid regime, Zip Zap is today focused on developing a

professional performance arm to accompany its pedagogic activities. Their Dare to Dream programme is a vocational training scheme that prepares students for professional work by putting them through a structured course that sees them create their own performances and work during the

Clara Norman presented one possible model in the form of Sweden's Cirkus Cirkör, explaining that Cirkör is technically a circus school that owns a professional circus company. The proceeds from the artistic shows go directly to the circus school. Their last two productions, *Limits* and *Borders*, worked



corporate season. From a larger perspective, it aims to tackle youth unemployment while also giving Zip Zap a stronger base of instructors and trained staff that it can draw on for all its activities.

When organisations such as Zip Zap and the Palestinian Circus School reach a point where they are investing strongly into developing their artistic branch they usually find that this means expanding from a donor-based funding system, and even reimagining their projects as social enterprises.

with the experience of refugees, and some who took part in social circus projects integrated into the professional company.

Producer Xavier Gobin gave another model in the form of the Cambodian company Phare. Phare has its origins in the school Phare Ponleu Selpak, an NGO that gives art and circus classes to children in Battambang, and that was founded in 1994 to support displaced children following the Cambodian genocide. Over time the project grew, and in 2013, looking to find alternative

sources of income, they opened a new site at Siem Reap, near the Angkor temples, and created Phare – an artistic company and social enterprise. They now offer nightly professional shows under a 330 person big top, and have become the second biggest tourist attraction in Cambodia after the temples. They also manage the Phare Boutique, which sells original paintings, drawings and

music CDs from Phare Ponleu Selpak, as well as local products made by Cambodian NGOs. Almost 75% of all profits go back to the school in Battambang.

While social enterprises with strong local roots are important models, many in the session expressed a desire to break into the European market – as well as uncertainty

about how to do this. There seemed to be a catch 22: in order to be programmed, European producers needed to see their work; but in order for them to see it, the work needed to be programmed at an international festival or showcase. At last, the conclusion seemed to be that it is important for programmers to take a risk, and step outside the circle of their usual network.

Time to Act

Ideas from the final session

Exchanging views:

- Create a network which facilitates social circus and artistic training through international exchanges.
- Forge partnerships with professional circus schools/companies in order to facilitate training, raise awareness of the European market, and create performances suitable for audiences there.
- Pair local directors with visiting international directors, or create opportunities for local directors to shadow/assist directors abroad.

Improving distribution:

- Change the term 'social circus' so that it encompasses activities directed towards promoting cohesion, cooperation, fair trade, grassroots participation, and all forms of social transformation.
- Co-produce projects with European venues and residency centres to boost distribution.
- Implement a quota of social circus companies to be met in the programmes of Circostrada members.
- Create a festival of companies outside of Europe, or create such a showcase within existing festivals.

Focus: The meaning of social circus



Interview with Jessika Devlieghere Co-founder and Co-director, Palestinian Circus School (Belgium)



What do you think about the designation 'social circus'?

It has a good and a bad side. It's useful for the development and recognition of the work we do, and for social circus practice worldwide. In Palestine it has also brought a better understanding of the real aims and impact of our work at the level of the personal development of children and young people. I would prefer not to talk about social circus as only for people 'at risk', though, and the term 'social' is often limiting or devaluing. Expectations are that the quality of 'social circus' will not be that good, because it's created with more vulnerable groups in society and the aim is 'social'. That's a very narrow way of looking at it – as if our practice stops when we feel our kids' personalities are a bit more 'balanced'.

I believe it is important to have the idea of a social circus pedagogy or practice, but when we move into performance I think it's time to move away from the labeling. Of course the quality has to be good enough: if we want to be seen as good trainers and artists, and not as 'poor, sweet Palestinians', then it's also up to us to prove we can produce the work.

How are you developing artistic and technical skill at the School?

International cooperation with professional circus schools and artists, directors and producers has been very important for technical and artistic guidance. An initiative we started recently is a biennial international circus festival; the first in 2016 was such an enormous success that we feel very encouraged to go further down that path.

We've also played with the idea of developing a professional circus education programme, but at the moment it's impossible: too expensive, too few students, and there's no 'market' where artists can live from their work. The only market would be the international one, and even there we've some comparative disadvantages as Palestinians – visa horror, serious travel restrictions, very expensive international travel, etc. The only way for them to really be part of a market would be to become European and move to Europe – and that's a whole other story.

Still, the dream of eventually creating a professional education stays alive.

The School has toured some performances overseas. What have been your experiences finding a market there?

In the beginning we only performed within the broader 'solidarity' context. With time, our students evolved into trainers and artists. They improved technically, their general and artistic reflection became much more mature, and they no longer wanted to be seen and recognised for their 'social' background, but as good artists with a strong story. Our last show *Sarab* was able to move many audiences, and people told us it was very close to a full professional show. We know we can convince audiences, but we have a much harder time convincing the programmers, who are still swayed by the technical standards of the Western circus schools.

LET'S MEET THE FRESH CIRCUS#4 CO-ORGANISERS

FRESH CIRCUS#4 was co-organised by Circostrada, ARTCENA, together with:

ESPACE CATASTROPHE / FESTIVAL UP



Espace Catastrophe – International centre for circus arts is the biggest organisation dedicated to circus arts in the French-speaking part of Belgium. For almost 25 years, the team has been developing a huge range of programmes and actions to support circus development: creation, production, distribution, training, information, publication. FESTIVAL UP! – International circus biennial is the association's flagship event, with 30 shows programmed for the 15th edition, including eight that have been specially produced for "UP!", and ten shows performed for the first time in Belgium, presented in thirteen cultural institutions in Brussels.

WALLONIE BRUXELLES THÉÂTRE/DANSE



WBT/D is the international promotion agency for the performing arts in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation – an export development complex. The agency works to encourage the marketing of French-speaking Belgian artists via three main axes: Expertise and Professional training, Networking markets, Promotional support. WBT/D is co-managed by Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI) and the Ministry of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB), supported by the Walloon Agency for Export and foreign investments (Awex) and Brussels Export & Invest.

TOWARDS FRESH CIRCUS#5...

The next FRESH CIRCUS seminar will take place in Auch (France) from 22 to 24 October 2019, co-organised by Circostrada, ARTCENA and CIRCa – National Pole for Circus, in the course of the 32nd edition of CIRCA – contemporary circus festival. FRESH CIRCUS#5 will adapt the traditional conference model to the festival specificities and to the seminar topic that is, the relation between circus and territories, with an emphasis on rural areas.

Let's meet again in Auch in October 2019!



ANNEXE

**CLAIRE ALDAYA (FRANCE)**

is a circus performer. Trained in Châtellerauld circus school, she perfected her principle discipline in Moscow state circus school with Romain Vigier, and was later joined by Basile and Maxime. Together, they established the company Akoreacro. For eleven years, the company has been touring around the world in various configurations: street, theatre and tent.

**KOEN ALLARY (BELGIUM)**

is director of Circuscentrum, the research centre for the development of circus in Flanders and Dutch-speaking Brussels. Its mission is to create the optimal conditions to increase the quality of Flemish circus in all its forms. Located in Ghent, Circuscentrum is recognised as the link between circus and the cultural policy of the Flemish government. Koen Allary is also vice-president of the European platform CircusNext, member of the Strategic Advice Council for Culture in Flanders, board member of the circus organisation Latitude 50 (BE) and the circus company Compagnie XY (FR) and artistic coordinator of Festival PERPLX (BE).

**VICTORIA AMEDUME (UK)**

was initially trained as a research scientist before she started working in the circus arts field. She founded Upswing in 2006 after a career as an aerialist. Victoria's directorial experience ranges across theatre, circus and outdoor arts and includes work with her own company Upswing, The National Theatre, The National Theatre of Scotland, The Royal Exchange, and Cameron Mackintosh Productions. She was awarded a place to take part in the Clore Fellowship programme in 2016/17.

**LINDA BEIJER (SWEDEN)**

is an arts consultant who develops ideas, projects, activities and strategies mainly for performing arts companies, independent artists, municipalities and NGOs. She is a facilitator of talks and seminars, specialised in performing arts, international cooperation, art and society, pedagogy, and new development in the culture sector. Linda Beijer is elected Chair/President of Manegen, a national association for professionals in circus, variety and street performance.

**OUAFA BELGACEM (TUNISIA)**

is the founder of Culture Funding Watch. She is an expert in fundraising and project management for cultural projects, and a researcher interested in topics related to arts, culture funding and cultural policies in the Arab region. She has work experience in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Prior to founding Culture Funding Watch, she worked with Oxfam GB as programme funding coordinator in Myanmar and as regional programme funding coordinator for West Africa. She is one of the six international experts to assist in the evaluation of proposals submitted for funding to UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity.

**RAFFAELLA BENANTI (FRANCE)**

has been in charge of dance, theatre and circus programmes for various Italian festivals and venues and has worked as a project manager with several organisations and institutions. Since 2012, she has been performing arts adviser and project manager for Theatre Paris-Villette (FR).

**CLÁUDIA BERKELEY (PORTUGAL)**

is a graduate in theatre from the Balletteatro Contemporâneo do Porto. She works as an actress in several productions and presents her work worldwide. Among other things, Cláudia likes to use the body and voice as an experimental tool. In 2013, she started a collaboration with Teatro da Didascália in which she produces and programmes, along with Bruno Martins, the Vaudeville Rendez-Vous International Festival, which is exclusively dedicated to circus.

**CHLOÉ BÉRON (FRANCE)**

is co-founder and director of CIAM - International Center for Arts in Motion, a place dedicated to circus and committed to innovation. CIAM opened in 2013 in Aix-en-Provence (FR) and reached more than 20,000 people in 2017. Coming from the engineering sector, Chloé Béron aims to build bridges between disciplines in order to foster new viewpoints on circus.

**AURÉLIEN BORY (FRANCE)**

is stage director and founder of Compagnie 111, founded in 2000 in Toulouse. He develops a crossbreed of different converging fields in the performing arts (theatre, circus, dance, visual art, music, and more). His interest in science influences his aesthetic; his works are driven by questions of space and rely strongly on their scenography.

**RACHEL CLARE (UK)**

works for Crying Out Loud, which develops, produces and tours emerging and established cross art form performance. Based in London, the company creates opportunities for UK and international artists through networks and partnerships and develops one-off special events. As a founding member of Circostrada and Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe, Rachel Clare has been part of four European collaborative projects and has worked in Ethiopia and Cuba.

**PATRICK DE GROOTE (BELGIUM)**

directs large-scale music and arts festivals in Belgium and assist with cultural events worldwide. He is the artistic director of Zomer van Antwerpen, a multidisciplinary arts and circus festival, that runs for 75 days at 30 site-specific locations, reaching an audience of 300,000 people and introducing lots of new and unknown works. His audience is extremely diversified thanks to continuous networking and collaboration with dozens of partners.

**RAFFAELE DE RITIS (ITALY)**

was one of the very first directors who was renewing classic circus during the late 80s. He has directed shows for the world's leading companies: Il Florilegio, Ringling bros., Big Apple Circus, Cirque du Soleil, Franco Dragone. Besides his creative work, he has directed major performing arts festivals and consulted for hundreds of TV specials. As a recognised historian in the performing arts, he has authored seminal books and papers in seven languages and taught and lectured worldwide. He has a seat on the Performing Arts Council of Italy's Ministry of Culture.

**JESSIKA DEVLIEGHERE (BELGIUM/PALESTINE)**

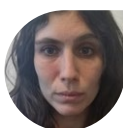
is co-founder and director of the Palestinian Circus School, created in 2006 with the artist Shadi Zmorrod. Its aim is to recreate hope for the youth through art and to help support them in a violent context. After working as a social worker in Belgium, she was a representative of Solidarite Socialiste association in the Occupied Palestinian Territories between 2005 and 2008.

**MAROUSSIA DIAZ VERBÈKE (FRANCE)**

is an artist, circographer and rope acrobat. She co-founded the Ivan Mosjoukine collective, created the show *De nos jours* [notes on the Circus], and co-wrote the show *Le vide* with F. Gehlker and A. Auffray. She has imagined a third circus and created the notion of circography – a neologism which designates circus-specific writing. In autumn 2017, she created her one-woman-show *Circus Remix*.

**DAVID DIMITRI (SWITZERLAND/USA)**

is a famous wire-walking artist. He studied at the State Academy for Circus Arts in Budapest and followed dance lessons at the famous Juilliard School of New York. He is well known for his creation in 2001 *L'Homme Cirque*, a one-man circus show of a new kind. He has been invited to many festivals throughout the world such as Spoleto Festival USA, Lincoln Center Festival (NY), Juste pour rire festival, Circo Circolo (Holland), Avignon festival (FR). He was recently produced in Broadway, New York, at the New Victory Theatre.

**ELODIE DOÑAQUE (BELGIUM)**

is a circus artist, dancer and choreographer. She was educated at Le Lido and at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. As a trapeze artist she worked with le Cirque Bidon, Les Oiseaux Fous, la Rital Brocante. She created together with Anna Buhr, Le Cardage Cirque Chorégraphique. At the moment she is developing her own work based on the relationship between circus, dance and video.

**JOSE DO REGO (SOUTH AFRICA)**

was one of the first members of the internationally renowned Zip Zap Circus School. It was there that he discovered a love for the stage as well as his passion for comedy. Apart from his professional performing career, he also played a major role in building Zip Zap.

**JACQUELINE FRIEND (UK)**

has worked with touring theatre, contemporary dance and circus companies, and festivals including the London International Festival of Theatre, Talawa Theatre Company, Dance Umbrella and, more recently, with Crying Out Loud on Circus Evolution – an Arts Council England strategic touring fund initiative aimed at bringing more contemporary circus to more people.

**SEAN GANDINI (UK)**

is one of the pioneers of contemporary juggling. Working as a performer, choreographer and director, he has pushed the boundaries of juggling as a discipline and as an art form for over 25 years. Throughout his career he has collaborated with many other acclaimed artists, including pioneering American musician Tom Johnson and the influential British choreographer Gill Clarke. More recently Sean has collaborated with choreographer Ludovic Ondiviela to create the ground-breaking juggling ballet *4x4 Ephemeral Architectures*, set to original music by Nimrod Borenstein. In 2016 Sean worked as juggling choreographer on English National Opera's acclaimed production of Philip Glass' opera *Akhmaten*. Sean also regularly teaches in many of the world's leading circus schools.

**FABRIZIO GAVOSTO (ITALY)**

is the manager of Mirabilia Festival (IT) and the Ministerial residency for circus arts Terre di Circo. He collaborates actively in the artistic creation support field with European centres, festivals and networks. He has been a strong partner and motivating force over many European projects. He is actively committed to tutoring and mentoring Italian circus companies.

**GIORGIA ELISA GIUNTA (ETHIOPIA)**

is the co-founder and general manager of Fekat Circus in Ethiopia. She also co-founded the first African Circus Arts Festival. Graduated from the Social Sciences University of Milan, she has always worked in development projects aimed at promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of marginalised children and youth (Cambodia, Ethiopia).

**XAVIER GOBIN (FRANCE/CAMBODIA)**

is currently a performing arts producer. After being a ballet dancer in his twenties, he joined the Cambodian NGO Phare Ponleu Selpak in 2007 to work simultaneously on art empowerment and social development. He spent eight years there with the major achievement of creating a sustainable social enterprise which can now finance the NGO and provide professional careers for the graduated artists.

**KATH GORMAN (IRELAND)**

is a creative producer, programmer and independent consultant. She is head of participation and engagement for Cork Midsummer Festival. Past clients include the Arts Council Ireland, BBC, Crying Out Loud, ISACS, the National Circus Festival of Ireland and NESTA. She was director of Jacksons Lane Arts Centre and a past board member of Total Theatre and Little Angel Theatre.

**JEAN-MICHEL GUY (FRANCE)**

is a research director at the French Ministry of Culture. Author of numerous books on circus, he teaches critical analysis at the Ecole nationale des arts du cirque de Rosny-sous-Bois and at the Centre national des Arts du cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne. He has conducted sociological studies on performing arts audiences. He is currently touring *Circonférences*, a series of shows devoted to circus arts.

**ALEXANDRA HENN (FRANCE/GERMANY)**

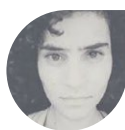
is a French-German cultural manager. She has worked for both the independent scene (spoken word, puppet theatre performing arts) and in cultural institutions (International Theatre Institute, Institut français). Since 2017, she has dedicated herself to her love of contemporary circus at Chamäleon Productions, in Berlin.

**SADE KAMPPILA (FINLAND)**

is a Finnish multidisciplinary acrobat-musician. She is a founding member of Sirkus Aikamoinen. She currently tours with *Metsä - The Forest Project* (a site-specific creation for forests with Viivi Roiha), *DuoJag* (a street show for the elderly and the young with Oskar Rask) and is creating *Circus I Love You* for summer 2018 (an international collaboration of acrobat-musicians touring with a circus tent).

**ELEFTÉRIOS KECHAGIOGLOU (FRANCE)**

is director of Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (FR) and secretary of CARAVAN, an international non-profit association and network of social circus. He has developed international projects with partners from more than twenty countries and works as an artistic incubator linking artistic research and social entrepreneurship.

**NOHA KHATTAB (EGYPT)**

is currently a student at the Formation pédagogique in Brussels Circus school. She is pursuing her career between social activism, community engagement and circus art. She is part of the Red Tomato (Outa Hamra) clown collective based in Egypt. Through this experience and her anthropological social research work, she has developed a particular profile as a socially engaged circus and theatre artist/researcher.

**MARISA KÖNIG-BEATTY (SWITZERLAND/USA)**

is cultural officer and founder of a multidisciplinary theatre for emerging artists in Brooklyn. After fifteen years in NYC, she moved to Brussels then Zürich. She works as a cultural connector through her company, König Beatty projects, a collaborative platform for artistic, educational and integration-based initiatives, and BEAM, a transdisciplinary 'dream tank' devising in(ter)ventions that inspire its participants to publicly engage.

**ANNIE LECLERC-CASAVANT (CANADA)**

has been responsible for the marketing communication strategies of TOHU and Montréal Complètement Cirque since 2014. Among her many mandates, she led the digital shift of the Festival's advertising campaign. Passionate about cinema and the performing arts, she has always been involved in the cultural sector and has worked for international performing arts events such as CINARS (Quebec) and BIS (France) as well as a touring show in the United States and Canada.

**OPHÉLIE MERCIER (FRANCE)**

is the development manager of Caravan International Youth and Social Circus network. She encountered social circus in Egypt where she worked for two years with the collective Outa Hamra (literally Red Tomato). It is a street clowning and social theatre group that facilitates workshops and does performances in public spaces with a focus on marginalised groups such as refugees, street children and low-income communities. After this experience, she settled back in Europe and started working with Caravan. Now she coordinates international actions that aim to promote circus practices in youth education through youth exchanges and training programmes.

**CLARA NORMAN (SWEDEN)**

has worked for twenty years as a professional actress in educational shows for children. Four years ago, she started working at Cirkus Cirkör as operations manager and project manager for pedagogy and training programmes. She collaborates with Botkyrka municipality, a disadvantaged area, to help develop activities for children.

**LAURA OLGATI (SWITZERLAND)**

has worked as event manager at Impact Hub Zurich since 2017, and is co-founder and producer of the Festival cirqu'Aarau in Switzerland. She was also a project manager for Crying Out Loud (UK) and producer at Kaserne Basel (CH) and wildwuchs Festival (CH). She has a background in international relations and cultural management.

**JÉRÔME PAGE (FRANCE)**

is the co-founder of ASIN, a structure that aims to support cultural projects and artists. In 2005 he trained at the University of Nanterre 'Administrateur des structures du spectacle vivant'. For five years he managed the production and diffusion of shows for the street theatre company Cie Azimuts, who have had a national and European influence. Then he went on to various missions in administration, including production of *TERRIER* by Nedjma Benchaïb in 2012.

**MARA PAVULA (LATVIA)**

is the head of education and audience development in Riga Circus, a producer for festival Re Rīgal, and curates circus and residency programmes in the multidisciplinary festival Sansus in Latvia. Passionate about contemporary circus she is the founder of a contemporary circus platform in the Baltic states called Next Door Circus and has worked as a circus researcher and journalist.

**CORINE PENCENAT (FRANCE)**

is an art critic, trapeze artist, writer and lecturer. She has taught at CNAC (1986-1989) and in many Beaux-Arts and living arts schools. She has a PhD from EHESS about the painter Fernand Léger and the place of circus in his canvas. Responsible for Arts Decoratifs publications and the Master Critique-Essai at the University of Strasbourg, she has also published in numerous specialised reviews. In 2012 she published two essays which question the aesthetic of arts in action.

**THOMAS RENAUD (FRANCE)**

has been director and programmer of Maison des Jonglages since 2014. He worked previously as coordinator of the European project CircusNext and was responsible for the artistic direction of the festival Rencontre des Jonglages in 2015. He is now developing local and international projects in La Courneuve and in the Paris area, mixing several open visions of juggling and object manipulation, and bringing together artists and inhabitants to build innovative projects.

**BENOÎT ROLAND (BELGIUM)**

has been working in the film industry for more than ten years as a producer. He is the co-founder of two independent production companies. Since 2004, he is also the co-founder and manager of Atelier 210, a venue programming performing arts from emerging artists, and since 2017 has been co-founder and manager of La Coop asbl, providing tax relief financing for the performing arts.

**DANNY RONALDO (BELGIUM)**

is a circus artist from the famous circus family Ronaldo. In 1994, he created a successful blend of circus and theatre, presented all around the world. His current show *Fidelis Fortibus* is a highly unusual solo about old loyalty and absurd solidarity toward the deceased. With this performance, he was nominated in 2016 at the theatre festival in Antwerp and won an award for best circus performance in 2017 in Barcelona.

**ADOLFO ROSSOMANDO (ITALY)**

is founder and project manager of the association Giocolieri e Dintorni, an Italian umbrella organisation and media project engaged since 1998 in the development of contemporary circus in Italy (Juggling Magazine), social circus (AltroCirco), youth circus (CircoSfera), and audience engagement (progetto Quinta Parete), with more than twenty collaborators taking an active role in the process. He is also an editor of circus arts books.

**ALEXANDRA ROYER (QUEBEC)**

has been working in many types of circus and events since her graduation from ENC in 2011. She is very curious about different ways of doing circus and live performance in general. She is now working with Barcode Circus Company, creating a first long piece in which the company members hold the position of co-director and artist-interpreter, and where they address the question of writing and memory.

**LAURÉLINE SAITEMARIE (FRANCE)**

is development manager at FAI-AR. She began her career in Mexico, where she worked as a coordinator of cultural activities at Alliances Françaises, as well as being responsible for the media center and Espace Campus France. Back in France, she joined the Cultural Administration Master of Aix-Marseille-University. Then she worked on educational and development actions for different festivals and in 2012 joined the FAI-AR team.

**FELICITY SIMPSON (UK/COLOMBIA)**

is director, creative producer and founder of Circolombia. She began her career as a circus performer in England and Europe before moving to Brazil, where she founded Intrepida Trupe during the 80s, bringing circus to totally new platforms - musicals, opera and open-air. She spent the next twenty years using circus to pioneer new innovations in business and education. She also co-founded Circo Para Todos, the first professional circus school in the world specifically dedicated to underprivileged children, which became in 2005 Colombia's National Circus School, a key institution in South America for world circus training.

**STEFAN SING (GERMANY)**

has been a juggler and artist for 30 years. His aim is to use juggling in a metaphorical way - so that everything which is expressible can be expressed by his juggling. Alongside his performance career, he has worked worldwide as a teacher in circus schools. He is currently the director of the Katakomben center for performing arts in Berlin - a place to connect the circus with the dance world.

**MARK EYSINK SMEETS (THE NETHERLANDS)**

has been involved in the organisation of Festival Circolo since its creation in 2007. First as head of marketing and later on of communication and strategy. In 2013 he became director of the festival. In addition to his work for Circolo, he works for various cultural events in the Netherlands. He was closely involved in the Jheronimus Bosch 500 years in 2016 and in national events around Liberation Day.

**CLAUDIO STELLATO (ITALY/BELGIUM)**

is a multidisciplinary artist born in Milan. After his studies at Scuola Civica Jazz di Milano, in 2001 he joined the Lido, Circus Arts Centre of Toulouse. He experimented by performing street theatre with different groups and travelled in several countries. Between 2004 and 2014, he was a dancer for different companies such as Cie Kdanse, Olivier Py, Roberto Olivan, Cie Arcat, Fré Werbruck, Karine Pontès, the Cridacompany, and L.O.D, among others. Since January 2014, he has been an associate artist at the Halles de Schaerbeek in Brussels. He also holds a position on the jury of CircusNext.

**JOHAN SWARTVAGHER (FRANCE)**

is a juggler, performer, stage director and the founder of Collectif Protocole, created in 2011. Between 2006 and 2008 he participated in the F.A.A.C. (an alternative, self-directed formation for circus arts) where he organised many work-in-progress presentations and roaming residencies. In 2007 he created the performance *Mars 07* at the Collectif Martine à la Plage, in 2010 *NO TITLE* his first long solo piece, and in 2013 the performance *This is not a Urinal*. Between 2012 and 2015 he directed *Flaque* - Cie Defracto and *All The Fun* - EaEo Company. He won the SADC Author of the juggling creation prize in 2017 for the first creation of Collectif Protocole, *Monument*. He is now an associate artist at the Maison Des Jonglages.

**MICHIKO TANAKA (JAPAN)**

is a producer, founder and director of Setouchi Circus Factory. Its objective is to develop the contemporary circus culture in Japan through activities such as the creation and coordination of artistic residences, educational programmes and networking. She has also published a book in 2009 *Circus ni Aitai - Une invitation au Cirque - comment le cirque est devenu un art en France*.

**MAAIKE VAN LANGEN (THE NETHERLANDS)**

is a freelance programmer, advisor and moderator in the cultural sector with a large expertise on contemporary circus. She is also the artistic director of Circusstad Festival in Rotterdam and was director of the Circus City Festival. Her professional experiences vary from working for international theatre and film festivals, to advising the Dutch Performing Arts Fund. She is also the artistic director of many shows and has lead the De Theatercompagnie since 2005.

**ALEXANDER VANTOURNHOUT (BELGIUM)**

is an acrobat, dancer and choreographer. He has studied at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC) in Brussels, where he specialised in single wheel. He created *Caprices*, a choreographed circus solo, dedicated to the music of Salvatore Sciarrino, then *Don't run away, John*, a performance with Niko Halfkenschied, and has improvised with Harald Austbo. He was selected as a laureate of CircusNext 2014 and won the 2015 KBC Young Theatre and Public prize at Theater aan zee (TAZ), Oostende (BE).

**MAARTEN VERHELST (BELGIUM)**

is communication manager of Circuscentrum (Ghent, Belgium) and chief editor of CircusMagazine, a quarterly publication about circus arts in Flanders and Europe. He defends the circus as a rich artistic form, open, accessible to all, that deserves media attention.

**MARIK WAGNER (FRANCE)**

is project manager of Atelier Lefevre & André. She has been involved in and has managed different street theatre and circus companies. Her principal work is to identify and promote live artistic initiatives and support companies throughout their work. She has been an active board member of Clowns sans Frontières France since 1999.

**DUNCAN WALL (USA)**

is author of *The Ordinary Acrobat: a Journey Into the Wondrous World of Circus, Past and Present* in 2013, an investigation into the state of the circus today based on his experience as a scholar at France's Ecole Nationale des Arts du Cirque of Rosny-sous-Bois. He is a regularly featured speaker on the contemporary circus and circus history, and taught during two years at the National Circus School of Montreal. He also co-founded Circus Now, a community-based circus development organisation servicing the United States.

**HISASHI WATANABE (JAPAN)**

is a juggler and artist. He taught himself to juggle at the age of twenty. Since 2013 he has performed both in Japan and abroad as a member of the dance company Monochrome. With the idea that juggling is the fundamental relationship between 'body' and 'objects' (or environment), he has developed his own unique style. In 2015 he presented his solo juggling piece *Inverted Tree*, and started the company Atama to Kushi. He is currently working worldwide and is acclaimed in dance, juggling and circus fields.