

LIVING
BODY/IES

LIVING BODY/IES IN CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS AND OUTDOOR ARTS



ARTCENA is the National Centre for Circus, Street and Theatre Arts, created by the French Ministry of Culture. It coordinates Circostrada and has a permanent seat on its Steering Committee. It works closely with sector professionals and offers them publications and multimedia resources through its digital platform. It develops mentoring, training, tools and services to help them in their daily practices. It provides support to contemporary creation through national programmes and encourages international development of these three sectors.



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This publication
was edited
by Circostrada

CIRCO
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EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR
CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS
AND OUTDOOR ARTS

Circostrada is the European Network for contemporary circus and outdoor arts. Created in 2003 with the core mission of furthering the development, empowerment and recognition of these fields at European and international levels, over the years the network has become an important anchoring point for its members – 140 organisations from over 40 countries – and a key interlocutor in the dialogue with cultural policy makers across Europe.

ABOUT CIRCOSTRADA AND ARTCENA

Circostrada

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In a few words, Circostrada is:

- A community of contemporary circus and outdoor arts professionals linked together by common values and aspirations, who advocate for greater recognition and more structured cultural policies.
- The voice and reference network of contemporary circus and outdoor arts in Europe.
- A group of passionate and committed individuals who meet several times a year at the network's events.
- A network dedicated to its members, engaged in facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and good practices at European and international levels.
- A digital resource platform that provides thematic publications, observation tools and news on contemporary circus and outdoor arts, available to all free of charge in English and French.

🌐 www.circostrada.org

ARTCENA

Artcena is the National Centre for Circus, Street Arts and Theatre.

Created by the French Ministry of Culture, Artcena is a national rallying point that aims to strengthen the foundation and growth of circus, street and theatre arts. Keeping an open attitude and lively outlook, it works closely with sector professionals while also addressing the needs of teachers, students and researchers.

It coordinates Circostrada and has a permanent seat on its Steering Committee. Artcena works towards its missions in three main areas: sharing of knowledge and resources through a digital platform; supporting professionals via mentoring and training; promoting and strengthening the circus, street arts and theatre fields by carrying out international development projects.

🌐 www.artcena.fr

FOREWORD

Living body/ies is the thematic focus of Circostrada's activities that took place between September 2021 and August 2022, which sought and contributed to "explore, promote, and adopt more environmentally sustainable frameworks and practices".

The authors of the following articles were either suggested by the Circostrada members who co-organised activities during the Living body/ies thematic (Articulture Wales, Festival Circolo, Teatronas in the frame of Cirkuliacija Festival, La Tohu in the frame of MICC), by the participants of the different activities, or by the members of the Living body/ies internal committee. In addition, a special attention was placed on artists and projects supported by circusnext, IN SITU, and Perform Europe (three initiatives co-funded by Creative Europe).

With this publication, we aimed to give space to a multiplicity of voices and share some food for thought, while also summing up a part of the discussions held during the Living body/ies activities.

Needless to say, we are aware that the "questions of ecology, eco-responsibility, eco-sustainability, carbon-footprint, and possibilities of better practices" are broad and extensive, which is why this publication does not pretend to be an exhaustive source of information (nor inspiration, or maybe just a bit) on the topics around the Living body/ies. Lastly, although we are mindful of the limitations set by this year's network activities geography – i.e. Wales-UK, The Netherlands, Lithuania, Canada – we believe it was coherent with our mission statement on bringing extra value to stories based in the countries where this year's co-organising members are based.

We hope you enjoy and continue the reflection around the Living body/ies thematics through this publication. For more information about the general red thread of CS BODY/IES – Circostrada's latest project – and yearly thematic focuses, we suggest you to check [this page](#) or to get in touch with us by email at infocircostrada@artcena.fr.

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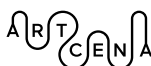


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FOOD FOR THOUGHTS: THE LIVING BODY/IES IN PERFORMING ARTS

ADAPTING TO THE ELASTICITY OF A LANDSCAPE

By artist collective de Onkruidenier



© Tim Hillege

Artist collective de Onkruidenier established in 2013 and the current team members are Jonmar van Vlijmen, Rosanne van Wijk and Ronald Boer. They like to call themselves “ecosystem futurists” using speculative tools to explore various forms of entanglement with our living environment. With their practice they reveal possible interpretations on the changing relationship between human and nature. Using various artistic and interactive methods, the collective creates playful and eco-hopeful work.

🌐 <http://onkruidenier.nl>

Would it be possible for a map of the coast to show the rhythm of the tides? When we use our hands, feet or other tools to draw lines in the surf, we sit comfortably with the thought that each one will be washed away soon. When you spend an entire day at the beach, the cadence of the tides completely redefines your surroundings every six or so hours. Open Google Maps and visit the location of your favourite coast: what do you see? A clear border between yellow and blue, land and water. This image does not show the elasticity of the coastal landscape, or how it perpetually breathes in and out together with the tides. Where can we find this elasticity in our daily surroundings, and how might we perform it along the coast? In June 2022, artist collective de Onkruidenier arranged a session of nine performative trainings on the coast of the island Terschelling, during the OEROL festival. Together with our audience, we explored elasticity as an embodied concept, we activated our vocal cords and taste buds while moving through the porous zone

between land and sea. This way, we performed the release and tension of this coastal ‘border’. In conversations and discussions with the audience, a number of experts in a wide range of fields and a stubborn local nature conservation group, all the different lessons learned at OEROL tangled together in one performative search for elasticity.

Since 2013, de Onkruidenier has been performing artistic research into the potentials of transforming ecologies. How do we, as humans, adapt to our surrounding landscape, instead of the other way around? Landscapes have the ability to shape our knowledge, cultures and languages. This is why parts of our landscapes can be found within ourselves: the memory of our bodies might still contain knowledge about our environment. Our dive into this collective memory has given shape to the research project SWEET – SWEAT. The Netherlands is a large delta where many areas have been transformed from wet to dry land, or from salt to sweet water bodies. These

transformations form a part of both our history and daily life – so, what could they look like as a part of our future? As a new chapter for SWEET – SWEAT, we developed a participatory training to be performed with 25 participants. Each day of the OEROL festival we entered a wadden-beach (Wadden Sea is an intertidal zone in the south eastern part of the North Sea) named the ‘Kleiplak’ (clay deposit) next to the dike. Here, during low tide, we would perform four exercises together. For de Onkruidenier, the intimacy of activating an audience in such a direct manner is central to our practice. The authority of the singular artist makes place for the artist collective, which opens itself up to participants during each performance. Exploring the relationship between body and landscape becomes a collective activity, where knowledge is embodied instead of transferred in a linear way.

The training worked as follows: first, the audience was introduced to the landscape by mapping their own loca-

tion. After the explicit instruction to leave behind 'economic clock time' and replace it with the circadian rhythm for an hour and a half, we trekked towards the beach together. Where have we landed? To answer this question, participants would have to go further than just observe the immediate environment. With our ears, we tapped into the different layers of the landscape. What do we hear below, or above us? And what does the sand tell us where it lays beneath our hands? Participants were given a chalk and a board, to draw a horizon and orient themselves and the sounds they heard around it. This first part became a collective listening exercise, where we attempted to break up the traditional signifiers of language that we use to guide us through landscapes. What body part does the wad sound like? And what shape do we imagine these different noises to take on? After listening and drawing together, the second part of the training led the group away from the dry sandy dune, further out on the wad, with most walking barefoot. This is where the exploration of elasticity truly started.

After an introduction on different Frysian words for defining a landscape (a language which is also spoken on Terschelling), participants received a piece of elastic the size of their own body length, that we tied in a loop to use as a 'tool.' Now that we had listened to the landscape together, the next step was to produce a collective sound inspired by the wad. In the Frysian language, the vowels *I*, *A* and *O* often occur in words that signify a specific type of landscape. Each of these sounds connect to a space in the landscape: From high *IIIIII*'s reaching to the sky, to wide *OOOO*'s opening our hands at the ocean and low *AAAAA*'s moving downwards connecting to the wad. Using the elastic as a tool to visualise and project our vocal cords, we started making sounds together. The group transformed into one polyphonic organism, while the elastics vibrated in the gusts of wind. Together, voices and elastic projected *IIIIII*'s, *AAAAA*'s and *OOOO*'s.



© De Onkruidenier, *Relearning Aquatic Evolution* at Oerol festival, Terschelling 2022.
Photography: Marleen Annema

Following this vocal exercise, we led the group further out onto the wad and connected everyone's elastics to a smaller elastic tool. This way, the audience was physically attached to one another, and had to react or anticipate each other's movements. By connecting the lung capacity of the group, we simultaneously breathed and walked together, casting shadows of jellyfish or octopus-like creatures onto the wet sand with our elastic 'tentacles'. Collectivity was the only way to complete the exercise: the groups performed an organism, entangled with each other and the landscape. Finally, arriving back on dryer land, we tasted a miniature perspective on the landscape together. What do you taste when you internalise your environment with locally foraged ingredients? We not only asked what the audience tasted, but also *where* in their mouth their taste buds were activated. With this training, the relationship between body and landscape became upended. The projection of our voices and our listening exercise amidst the salty air of the wad made us notice other things. How bubbles escape the clay as an escape of breath, for example. Instead of imitating the movements and sounds of the environment individually, it was important for the audience to truly perform the landscape

together. By allowing entanglements between the group to take place, the ways in which different 'actors' of the ecosystem surrounding the group tangled together became much clearer.

Instead of transferring knowledge, the main aim of the training was to collectively embody the intertidal zone. We made use of different tools in a spatial installation that referred to the tides of the water. In different colour schemes and heights, rows of wooden poles were installed in the wad, meandering through the landscape. The tone and length of the poles referred to the different time zones that the tide moves through between its highest and lowest point. This way, when passing through the installation on a 'wad-walk', one can relate their own body to the respiration of the sea. The colour scheme is a response to the stringent use of the baseline coastline, which uses purple, green, orange and pink to mark the separation between land and the saline water. Of course, translating these markings from the two-dimensional X and Y axis of the coastal policy into the actual landscape is futile. When walking past the installation during high water, only the coloured peaks of the poles could be seen poking out from the water's surface – any attempts

at solidifying borders between water and land only served to prove its impossibility. What is interesting about the zoning of the Kleiplak, is that it has been labelled with multiple functions depending on what institution you ask. The Kleiplak is not a designated Natura 2000 area, which are protected nature reserves. However, it does contain wildlife, which is mapped out by birding organisations. During OEROL, it is a designated festival area, only accessible with a wristband, even though during the rest of the year it remains an area of public space alongside a well-used bike lane. And lastly, the map for the harbour of West-Terschelling actually includes the Kleiplak. In other words, it is not entirely clear which 'use' this particular landscape fulfils in a detached institutional sense. Tensions between groups can arise: on a broader scale, there is an active lobby of Terschelling locals which strives to see OEROL downsized in scale. After two summers without any festival activities due to corona, for the first time since OEROL's start in the 1980's, these voices became louder in 2022. Also on this side against the festival are certain nature organisations. This lack of events has had a small but still noticeable impact on local ecosystems, and certain interest groups do not wish

to return to the situation before 2020 regarding audience activities. During our installation process, professional birdwatchers confronted us to claim that the Kleiplak could not host any 'humans' since two eider duck families had made it their home to breed. The discussion turned hostile because of our differing views on ecology: where our training focuses entirely on how humans can locate themselves within an ecosystem, the traditional conservation lobby holds the view that nature should remain untouched and protected from any human contact. The irony that the Kleiplak is not protected and in fact, might suffer from its proximity to the harbour with its fishing and ferry activity, was lost here. It was interesting to experience how different institutions actively claim or ignore the Kleiplak and its 'function', especially when it comes to the level of human involvement. Don't we completely underestimate and ignore the role of the ocean here as the director in the dance of relating?

Instead of letting a sense of place be determined on an institutional level, we would rather literally sense a place from multiple perspectives. With the training we wanted to explore how to move together with the tides and all organisms of the local ecosystem. The tides show

how there are many different temporalities moving simultaneously around us if we take a step back from regular 'clock time'. The training started at a seemingly arbitrary time every day: 12:15, 13:30, 14:45... The difference with the evening and matinee slots of the other theatre shows at the festival was of course noticeable. We were completely at mercy of the low tide, so this time schedule could not be changed – the group adhered to the rhythm of the sea, not that of the land. Because OEROL is a performing arts festival, audience members are used to being a spectator, not a participant. Of course, being a participant is never truly a passive role: the presence of the spectator activates the performance as a whole. But being asked questions, being rendered vulnerable in a group of strangers, and working together to produce simple things such as movements or noise was not in the realm of expectation for many audience members at the festival. The goal of the training was not to create friction, but to find common grounds in creating a new language with all our senses. This took the spectator outside of the traditional ways of communicating: what happens when we listen together? Taste, smell, sing, breathe and move together? Most people become quite nervous when told they are to start a 'training'. "Will I fail if I can't keep up?" "Is it going to be strenuous?" "I haven't practised or prepared anything!" This was a whole new way of practising accessibility. The audience needed to be welcomed to speculate, suggest and fantasise – something that not often happens in the presence of strangers. A question that came up a lot was whether this project was art, science, education, or all three. Aside from the assurance that de Onkruidenier is an artist collective, the question alone was a great result from the training. What if it were all three at the same time, what if all three were in fact the same for those one and a half hours?



© De Onkruidenier, *Relearning Aquatic Evolution* at Oerol festival, Terschelling 2022.
Photography: Marleen Annema

On Terschelling, we looked for and found the elasticity of cultural and linguistic separations between land and sea, audience and performer, or body and landscape. Instead of explaining

our idea of elasticity, we took nine sessions to train our audience in both their senses and their own cultural memory and language to explore this idea. Tangled together in elastics, we specu-

lated on what a future of living *with* our seas might look, sound, or even taste like. What do you sense when you embody a landscape?



© De Onkruidenier, *Relearning Aquatic Evolution* at Oerol festival, Terschelling 2022. Photography: Marleen Annema

FUTURE IS NOW: ARTIVISM'S URGENT CALL FOR ACTION! FROM THE MINING STATE OF MINAS GERAIS IN BRAZIL TO THE MOUNTAINS OF WALES

By Tiago Gambogi



© Lucas Brito

Tiago Gambogi is a *Brazilian Extraordinaire* – a dancer, actor, clown, pole dancer, director, activist and lecturer. Over 28 years, he co-directed f.a.b. – The Detonators and worked with numerous artists in the UK and internationally. His transdisciplinary work creates a powerful new artistic hybrid form dealing with the performative and non-performative in pursuit of new creative responses and a dialogue with companies involved in socio-environmental crises.

🌐 www.transamazonia.wordpress.com

As the planet reaches a red alert for its survival, how can dance, theatre and activism be a potent weapon to transform the destructive ways in which humans relate to nature and other living beings? How can we creatively disrupt reality's "business as usual" through humour and transgression to create a place of refuge that resists the atrocities imposed by governments and private capital?

In 2011, moved by a strong desire to connect with my roots, I worked with English filmmaker Richard Bleasdale in a series of short films shot in the Brazilian Amazon. I was in love with Brazil again: moved by its natural environment's beauty and abundance, its people's flair and warmth. I was also shocked and horrified by the destruction of the Amazon and the lack of respect shown towards indigenous tribes. How could I go back to the UK and not do anything to help my homeland? How could I make a difference with my contemporary practice to benefit the people and the natural environment in Brazil? How could I leave enclosed elitist theatre spaces and perform outdoors to demand accountability from governments and companies that were destroying the environment?

With this in mind, I submitted a project that was awarded a grant. Projeto Trans-Amazônia proposed travelling the 4,260 km of the Transamazônica Highway (BR-230) exactly 40 years after its inauguration during the Brazilian dictatorship regime. In an epic journey I travelled for 6 months cross-



© Performance during the *Trans-Amazônia* Project – Photo by Ederson Oliveira

ing 30 locations (cities, towns, villages and indigenous settlements), in seven Brazilian states. My intention was that "Trans-Amazônia" would pose the following questions: What is the relationship of contemporary (wo)man with nature and the natural resources of the Brazilian Amazon? How is contemporary Brazil 40 years after the opening of this large-scale infrastructure development? What physical body emerges

from engaging with this environment and how does it react in regions experiencing conflict? These questions led to meeting people and groups with whom I conducted interviews, facilitated workshops for and where I created site-specific performances with the local knowledge I gathered.

How I became an activist

In Altamira, Pará, I created a performance entitled *Bela Morte = Belo Monte* ("Beautiful Death = Belo Monte"), with the support of my partner Maggi Swallow, 100 local indigenous fishermen and the Xingu Vivo Para Sempre Movement. This took place outside the offices of Norte Energia - the consortium building the controversial 11,200-megawatt Belo

Monte Hydroelectric Dam - who had invited fisherman and indigenous groups to the meeting and then prevented them from entering. It would change my life forever.

Bela Morte included the following elements and actions:

- durational performance through the city dragging a heavy wooden canoe;

- blocking the street and part of the stairs leading up to the front doors with hazard-tape;
- instant composition using movement, text and objects - following a script of actions and interacting with the space and the audience;
- use of plants and plastic sheets;
- face painting using elements of clown make-up combined with indigenous facial designs;
- use of balloons filled with "blood" (water, red and blue food colouring);
- performative "deaths" on the street;
- direct contact and a successful attempt to enter the offices with local fishermen and indigenous people to disrupt the meeting.



© *Bela Morte = Belo Monte* - Performance part the Trans-Amazônia Project with regards to the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Dam in Altamira, Brazil - photo by Lunaê Parracho

By combining clowning and buffoonery, I am critical and ironic about the negative impact of the Hydroelectric Dams impact on the region. Charming and scary; fragile and powerful. I confront the public, expose data, human failures and myself. My clown does no harm to anyone. I create direct but non-violent actions, where the action always happens to me - the fake blood bombs that explode, the fish that beats, the mud that stains, the falls and false deaths.

How becoming an activist impacted and impacts my work

There was no going back after I became an activist. It was as if a switch had been turned on and it impacted all my work: artistic, production, finances, relationship with producers and venues, touring. Since making Trans-Amazônia my artistic focus has rested on environmental issues - mainly related to Brazil, but also to the whole planet.

From a funding point of view, it made me conscious of who would support my work and whether I would accept that funding or not. In Brazil and in the UK there are many companies supporting the arts that are clearly damaging the environment. How can I accept support from companies whose change of behaviour and accountability I'm protesting for? How

can a contemporary art form that is primarily an art of protest and contests the establishment, green wash the money that kills our forests and rivers?

In October 2019, I was arrested while performing in one of Extinction Rebellion's major protests in London. I was then charged and received a caution. This situation caused extreme stress to me and my close family, having financial and professional consequences and I now have a caution on my DBS (Disclosure Barring Service). In 2021, The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill new bill stated that those who cause annoyance could be jailed up to 10 years. How can we pursue activism in a society that increasingly suppresses so-

cial movements? In Brazil in 2022, British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira were shot while journeying through the Amazon. Brazil holds the record for the number of environmentalists who have been murdered. How can we carry out activist practices considering such dangerous situations?

Due to lockdown and the fear of being arrested again, I pursued performances that were not direct actions in the street, but had some form of shielding either online, video pieces or as part of outdoor theatre festivals. I still consider my direct action pieces one of my biggest strengths and look for ways in which I can further progress that aspect within the current context.

How it impacts my creativity

Being an activist makes me feel alive, brings me closer to my community and to the values that I care about. It pushes me to take risks creatively and

also makes those risks count directly towards the environmental causes. Many of my performances are solo pieces but it's also extremely important

to work with the communities affected by the eco-crimes and also work with other protesters.

Nosso Luto, Nossa Luta - a performance on the top of a mountain with an audience of a 1000 people

The crime-tragedy of Brumadinho in Brazil occurred on 25 January 2019 when a tailings dam (an earth-fill embankment dam used to store by-products of mining operations) suffered a catastrophic failure killing 270 people. The dam is owned by Vale S.A., the same company responsible for the 2015 Mariana dam crime-tragedy. This incident had a huge impact on me, as it occurred in my home state and not far from Belo Horizonte. I was extremely upset and saddened by this event.

Not long after I was invited by the NGO Abrace a Serra da Moeda to create a performance-protest on the 21st of April 2019 at the top of the Moeda mountain for Embrace the Serra da Moeda. This was a protest organised by the NGO who fight to protect the waters and mountains of Minas Gerais. *Nosso Luto Nossa Luta* was my performance inside this event. Unlike previous years, where the participants wore white clothes, on Easter Sunday the colour chosen was black, as a way of reinforcing mourning. I felt it was urgent to create something



© *Nosso Luto Nossa Luta* - performance at the top of the Moeda mountain with regards the Brumadinho eco-crime - Photo by Glenio Campregher.

powerful and important that could create visibility for the affected communities, create a vehicle for their dissatisfaction and create opportunities for demanding justice and integrity from the company Vale S.A. I directed the performance working with approximately 30 performers. At the end of the

presentation, all participants and the audience were invited to interact in the performance, forming the phrase 'our mourning, our struggle', the theme of the event that year and this was photographed from above by drone. The performance text was written by playwright Letícia Andrade.

Creative processes

The creative processes address the needs of what the work wants to achieve: generate awareness about the eco-crime with audiences, support the involved communities in meeting their needs with the companies involved, generate visual material for the press and social media platforms. Initially, I read and study the issues in question and then, if possible, visit the sites that have been affected. Other initial

research involves: diary, photos and videos, stream of consciousness writing. I then move into a second phase, in a dance/theatre space and also outdoors. I find it productive to work with a combination of spaces: indoor studio spaces and outdoor locations. Each piece has different needs. The performance-protest work in the streets is more immediate and here I work with a set of scores and improvisation. Other

pieces such as the solo stage piece for "Trans-Amazônia", took much longer - 6 months of rehearsals. *Nosso Luto Nossa Luta* was a collaboration with dramaturg Letícia Andrade and a group of 30 performers. I also created photo performances and video performances in site specific locations. In *BentO*, I worked with photographer Lucas Brito on the site where the eco-crime in Mariana took place.

Vale Kills – an example of a direct action performance protest piece

On 5th November 2015, the toxic holding dam for Samarco (BHP Billiton / Vale S.A.) at Mariana ruptured causing one of the biggest environmental crimes in Brazilian history. The toxic waste reached the sea 400 kilometres away. In response to that incident I created *Vale Kills*, which was performed outside the Mayfair hotel in London where mining company Vale was holding its year-end conference to celebrate its achievements with shareholders.

An organised group of protesters worked with me on this performance. I had a set score of actions that I'd adapt to the group's actions and the environment. The group worked as a form of Greek theatre chorus relating to me with call and response chants and movements, and vice versa. On that occasion, we had also to interact

with the security guards, hotel manager, staff and at the very end of the action, the MET Office Police. The hotel staff opposed our entrance to the event so our action took place outside. We blocked the road, chanted, used a megaphone to speak about the eco-crime and splashed mud on the entrance (at the end of the action we cleaned everything up as a symbolic gesture as to what we felt the companies responsible for the crime should do). As the group spoke, I'd interact with passers-by in the street, the traffic, engage with the security guards (try to "kiss" them after a striptease where I undressed to reveal a mini skirt and top with "Brasil" on it. A cheap asset for sale. I created various "false deaths" in the street. I'd whip myself with dead fish as a metaphor to all the fish that died from the toxic

waste that was poured on The River Doce and its tributaries.

As I perform, I am in a "clown state" (a state of curiosity, playful with – and open to – the environment, stretching this towards transgressive actions) – responding to people's reactions and what I see / feel / experience (my psycho-physical state and embodiment). I ask the audience questions, I deliver text and movement sequences, I engage with the elements of that specific site (lying on the road, leaning on doors, sitting on the curb). The work combines elements of street theatre, contemporary dance, physical theatre and performance art. There is no "fourth wall" and the audience is part of the performance as much as a witness and as a spectator (as Augusto Boal would say).

Wales

In 2021, my partner Maggi Swallow and I moved to the beautiful countryside in Wales. We were delighted to be awarded an outdoor commission by Articulture and the Wales Outdoor Arts Consortium. We created *Afanc*, an outdoor family friendly physical theatre piece that used the well-known Welsh myth of *Afanc* to draw on issues related to environmental eco-crisis, the amount of plastic and pollution in our rivers and seas and the catastrophic decline of wildlife and our natural world.

The piece toured to outdoor venues in Wales and was well received by the audiences who found it both entertaining and thought provoking. The piece was an artistic welcome to the Welsh arts scene and was also a way to be in action as activists through a safer way than the performance protests.

During lockdown, we delivered an Arts Council of Wales funded online project for performing arts freelancers, "Cylch Sir / Shire Circle". Meeting and listening to freelancers who shared concerns and ideas was a huge privilege. The project gave us the chance to meet key organisations such as Articulture, Theatrau Sir Gar, National Dance Company Wales, National Theatre Wales, Fusion Carmarthenshire, Arts Care, Groundwork Collective, Cultural Freelancers Wales, Wales Dance network, WAHWN, Organised Kaos and gave us a strong initial understanding of the Welsh Arts Sector.

In April 2022, I created short videos shot outdoors in one of the forests next to my home. Those video performances were devised to support the fight in Brazil for the protection of the underground waters from the pol-

lution of mining companies. This was organised by the NGO Abrace a Serra da Moeda, the same NGO that invited me to direct the performance in 2019. However, in 2022 that protest was not able to take place in person due to Covid restrictions. I created the following video performances: 1. a durational piece where I used a long piece of black cloth to hit the water; 2. a piece where I interact with various elements in the space: large tree trunks, forest paths and at the end, very cold water. The pieces served as a digital protest on social media, whatsapp transmission lists and press in Brazil.

The performing arts industry and the environmental crisis

I find it puzzling how the performing arts industry tackles the environmental crisis and climate change for the following reasons:

1. Creating amazing theatre / dance work that deals with the environmental crisis to be featured in outdoor festivals and local venues is excellent, but

we need more! The power of activism lies in its capacity to engage directly with the issues – in protests, in conversations with the companies involved. How can art move away from being just entertainment but make a real shift on those urgent issues?

2. On various occasions I have attempted to engage with fellow colleagues in the industry to create pieces for the street, but felt a great deal of resistance and fear. I know it's not for everyone, but we need to climb out from behind the safety of our art and let that same art be our activism to address the issues and create change. It's time to make work that goes beyond small theatre bubbles to reach all sectors of society.

3. How can artists accept funding and sponsorship from companies that are clearly damaging the environment? In Brazil, for example, mining company Vale S.A., responsible for major eco-crimes in history, supports various cultural projects in Brazil. How can activism create pieces to challenge the very same company that is giving them sponsorship? How far can this greenwashing go? Like many other companies, Vale S.A.'s marketing campaigns increasingly portray them as the beacon for new sustainable ways to protect the environment and "give back to the community" that they are regularly damaging.



© BentO - a siren for responsibility. Performance by Tiago Gambogi in Mariana, Brazil. Photo by Lucas Brito

Materials and pole dancing

Since travelling to the Amazon and seeing the amount of plastic in the rivers and forests, along with the ad-hoc nature of the houses and living arrangements, I started a practice of working with recyclable materials in very improvised ways, making costumes and props for my performances. They are usually tied up with rope, string or tape and their fragility is clearly visible. The audience can spot how it's made.

I transform a watering can into a hat, yellow tubes into a garment that oppresses the body, always with humour and the unexpected.

I was also impressed by the vertical aspect of the forest and the large number of electricity poles on the Transamazon highway. I came across pole dancing during my visit to a friend's studio in Manaus and thought that it would be

a unique element to use due to the use of vertical height, flow, acrobatic elements and the ability to de-territorialize pole dance and embed other meanings in its form. I trained in the technique and used it in the stage version of Trans-Amazônia and on street poles in various outdoor performances. It became part of my activist tool box.

Commitment to activism as a tool for my work

Just like an ant who has an open antennae and is curious, I'm continuously searching for the environmental issues that surround me and connecting with local groups. Creatively that has led me

to work collaboratively where I am often invited to establish a leadership role.

In 2019, I led the Extinction Rebellion group in Ramsgate and Margate, in

Kent, UK. The work consisted of weekly sessions, working with non-professional performers, creating performances for street protests.

Call for action!

In the face of deepening worldwide socio-environmental concerns and crisis, and a seeming alienation of humans from the realities of their basic survival needs: the Earth. To change this scenario, we can make a difference by raising

awareness about the climate crisis. I see my work as an activist as opening the conversation between current and future activists/activists and communities. It's essential to continue to pursue new activist strategies for meaningful

performances that embody our relationship to the real rather than the virtual world, towards challenging companies to accept accountability for their damaging actions to the environment.

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OBJECTS AND PERCEPTION

By circusnext artist Andrea Salustri (Italy/Germany)



© Eike
Walkenhorst

Andrea Salustri comes from Rome, where he learned contact juggling, fire manipulation, and has worked as a street artist. In 2013 he graduated *cum laude* in philosophy at La Sapienza University in Rome, then decided to move to Berlin to pursue an education in contemporary dance. He first completed the Dance Intensive program at Tanzfabrik Berlin, and successively studied dance and choreography at HZT Berlin University. Currently, he is creating multi-media circus installations, and touring his work MATERIA. Andrea is a laureate artist for circusnext 2018-2019.

🌐 andreasalustri.com

We experience change.
We embody change.
We radiate change.
Our hands move through a submerged labyrinth.
Neutrality vanishes among the refractions of an impossible stillness,
Whilst we float towards the surface
Under a spell of hesitant persistence.
A gentle and relentless drifting,
Carried by habits-blown sails and cultural tides.
Swaying
Between the shade of complicit ignorance,
And the burning sun of daily choices.
Possible choices and privileged choices.
Dancing closer to the fire,
Holding the hands
Of those who don't know how to see,
And those who don't know how to give,
Losing sight of our bodies amid the two and the many,
Amid the sparks of fire and the noise of the dance.

Living bodies,
Transforming,
Disseminating seeds of intentions
And fragments of gestures
Like traces of light
Glimmering behind our hands
As we move forward.

Simple actions
Crashing like waves against the cliffs of society,
Receding, reorganising, adapting.
A million hands grasping for the mainland of an elusive consistency
Inside the calm perseverance of breathing.
Solid rock and malleable beliefs,
Crossed by winds and time.
An entire ocean
Shrinking in the hollow of one hand.

The paradox of art and the paradox of living,
Watering and withering flowers of purpose.
Sustainable words
Of an unsustainable language.
Speaking to ask for silence.

Listening.
Our hands, again.

My practice as a circus creator started in the public space through the means of juggling and street art. Juggling has been for me an occasion to foster and share, in a direct way, that fascination, that capacity to wonder, that lies underneath the roots of circus as a genre. I deeply valued the dynamic of mutual offering, between performer and audience, upon which the work of a street artist appeared to be centred. I saw it as a *political* act of simple, immediate, and connecting nature. Soon, nonetheless, my path deviated away from circus. I found myself in a conflictual space while attempting to negotiate the focus between my work and my presence in it. I recognised and struggled with the *heroism* intrinsic in the presentation of my juggling performances, that was relying on tricks and moments of deliberate astonishment to please the public and celebrate the success of the performer. At that time, I didn't know nor imagined that circus could find expression in other forms of performativity, that wouldn't emphasise and calcify on the virtuosity of the artist; so I decided to explore outside of the genre.

I began studying contemporary dance and choreography, where I discovered an incredible openness and diversity in the ways performers were relating to the audience and to their works. This openness came as a series of questions that imposed themselves to me in connection to my previous circus experience. What was the nature of my practice? Where was my research developing? Was I presenting the same material that I was researching, or was there a gap? Finally and most importantly, what was the context surrounding my work and the environment in which it was located?

These questions highlighted a series of assumptions I was unawarely carrying throughout all of my practice, from training to composing. I was following narratives of risk and success, which were ultimately bringing the focus on myself and my skills, and away from the work itself. I was also taking for granted a pattern, which saw me approaching a circus discipline, buying the necessary props/apparatus, learning existing tricks and techniques whilst at most

creating variations or reformulation of a given repertoire, performing the results of my training with the mere intervention of dramaturgical framing and coherence. I saw this pattern repeating all around me, and decided to attempt altering it. I put down my equipment and looked at my environment. I started manipulating common objects, not yet codified as juggling props, and therefore free from the expectations and the historical context of circus. The core of the work shifted from the results of a movement research to the research itself, using improvisation and my non-familiarity in working with those objects as compositional strategies. Rather than applying existing juggling techniques on new objects, I was now trying to find and develop a specific technique depending on the uniqueness of each object that I encountered, attempting to understand its language to enter and engage in a dialogue with it. Suddenly, a shift appeared possible; I found myself a step away from the centrality of the circus performer and a step closer to the environment in which my practice was taking place.

Object-based environments and perception

Besieged by matter, we navigate through object-based environments shaped by functionality of use. Electrical appliances, furniture, vehicles, means

of transportation, currencies, media of communication, technological and mechanical devices, etc., our entire world is full of stuff. We understand these

things to different and relative degrees of complexity, in relation to our necessities and capacity of operating them: a threshold of minimum understanding,

that sets basic usability, is constantly being reduced by the design process, and as a result we find ourselves interacting with objects that we have little to no idea about how they function, that nonetheless we are able to use. We understand their purpose and how to activate them, and when we don't, they fade into the noisy background of things that populates our modern landscapes. This overabundance of objects is on a constant growth, it follows the search and fabrication of new needs, where at the same time the system has ways to outdate old objects, through planned obsolescence, software incompatibility, trends and other market strategies. As a juggler who turned to object manipulation, our relationship with our object-based environment has become part of my research, and where I see the urge of a conversation in regards to environmental sustainability.

Looking at this relationship, we can observe a few interesting points.

We endure a constant *training* in the usage of an incredibly high number of things, which we learn to confront and use to our advantage. We become, in fact, expert manipulators of coffee machines, shoelaces, smartphones, that we can operate with exact and essential manoeuvres. Some of us become masters in folding newspapers, changing duvet covers, driving cars, hand-rolling cigarettes; everyone with their specialities, but all of us with an extraordinary wide repertoire of *functional manipulation*¹. We notice another fact about our daily interaction with objects surrounding us: functionality dictates and restricts dramatically not just our manipulation, but also our perception. We learn the proper and effective way to use things, but at the same time we gradually lose the capacity to investigate them. We rarely pay attention to the gentle voices of coffee grinders, or pile up cups deliberately in the most precarious balances. We declare as broken or unusable

objects that have lost the capacity to serve their primary purpose, which we dispose easily. We replace objects for others that have improved characteristics, where economically suitable. In short: we *flatten objects to their designed functions*, and this, *together with their economical value*, defines the borders of our perception. Our perception is intrinsically connected to our interpretation and relation to the world. Perception is, in fact, already an act of interpretation, and the way we perceive the world is inseparable from the way we relate to it². What seems unsustainable, therefore, is not just the capitalistic model per se, but the way the model affects our perception of our object-based environment as merely functional and disposable. I see this perception as the core of an unsustainable relationship with our environment, and a severe ecological issue.

Strategies of coexistence, trying to shift our perception of objects

These considerations affected my practice by leading me to look for value and possibilities in objects, that would redefine my ways of perceiving and interacting with my own environment. I believe that performing arts, and specifically circus – with its inherent capacity to wonder as mentioned previously – represent a fertile ground to nurture alternative models to relate with our surroundings. I developed three strategies to alter my relationship with objects. The first one, borrowed from Russian formalism, is

*defamiliarization*³. A deliberate attempt to look at objects beyond their primary functions. Extremely familiar things often hide a universe of possibilities concealed underneath the habitual use in which we relate to them. By looking at our environments with the aim of investigating them whilst, as much as possible, getting rid of our cultural and functional biases, objects reveal themselves as new and surprising encounters. Through *defamiliarization*, object manipulation becomes a process of playful rediscovery, which

can cross multiple fields of analysis and different disciplines.

A second theoretical tool I developed is a pair of connected trichotomies, aimed to describe and research the way performers *relate* to objects on stage. The first one is *manipulator-manipulation-object*, and intends to identify where is the focus in the relation. The second one is *using-interacting-serving*, and intends to identify the kind of relation in place. The two trichotomies are connected. *Using* an object means

¹ From a juggling standing point, relativizing our practice as a specialisation on a particular set of objects among the many in world is an intriguing thought, that ultimately circles around the arguable *non-functionality* of juggling manipulation, and the well debated yet incisive claim that *art is defined by the context of art*. In reference to this, cf. A. Danto, N. Carroll, G. Dickie, among others. For a quick introduction cf. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/art-definition>

² Human perception, before and in order for the empirical concept of an object to be formed (that is a flower), organises the sensible data from that object by making a selection of its pertinent traits (it has petals, pistil, etc.), and thus offers to the intellect a scheme that enables it to classify it. My knowledge of the relevant traits of flowers, therefore, will already affect how I can organise my perception, besides affecting how, as a result, I can recognise them. In order to select as relevant traits petals, pistil, etc., we will first have to select as relevant those traits that enable us to recognise them as petals, pistil, etc.; but no matter how much we break down the process, it will turn out that perception always takes place in an already constituted and operating linguistic environment: we always perceive a flower, a pistil, a shape, a colour, etc. It is interesting to note in this regard, how the same object can be perceived differently, precisely in relation to the traits that are selected as relevant. For instance, in an emergency situation where I suspect the presence of a stranger in the house, I might perceive a frying pan as a "blunt object" instead of a "cooking utensil". In reference to this, cf. E. Garroni.

³ Cf. V. Shklovsky.

keeping the focus on the manipulator; this is the case where objects are just a medium to show the skills of the performer (i.e. in traditional juggling, where the audience applauds the ability of the juggler). *Interacting* with an object means having the focus on the manipulation, which is a shared contribution between both the manipulator and the object; the emphasis here is on the co-dependency between the two, the hierarchy is broken and what matters is the interplay (i.e. when the success of a trick is not the most interesting part of the trick). *Serving* an object means shifting the hierarchy completely, the focus is on the object and the performer becomes a facilitator who allows manipulation to happen without directly drawing attention to himself. This last shift of focus is an extremely delicate state and, as far as I was able to research, reaches its maximum when the performer is completely still or absent while the objects are active on stage.

The third and final strategy I adopted to shift my perception and engage diffe-



Andrea Salustri - Circus of Discarded Objects © ParkKim Hyungjoon

rently with my environment has to do with the objects I have been selecting for my practice. I started working not just with common objects, but with disposable ones, or that have been thrown away and discarded. This strategy drastically changed the value I was attributing to objects surrounding me,

it suddenly allowed me to see beauty everywhere, and changed my relationship with the very things I was interacting on a daily basis. Moreover, familiarising with the discarded has been a great inspiration to produce works.

Circus of Discarded Objects, the afterlife of things

What happens to objects after we get rid of them? Where do they land? What of their old attributes do they still possess? And what new possibilities do they offer? My practice with thrown-away materials developed into a project called *Circus of Discarded Objects*¹, in collaboration with the Korean contemporary circus company *The Chorokso*. It took place

in 2021, at SSACC (Seoul Street Art Creation Center) with the support of ARKO (Arts Council Korea). In the frame of a workshop in which I shared my method of object manipulation to the group, we roamed the streets of Seoul, looking for objects left behind, in order to activate them, to explore them, and to give them a new life in the public space. We also visited

scrapyards and recycling stations, where we collected a bunch of materials declared unusable and meant to be disposed. We cleaned them and integrated them into the workshop. The method flourished in the hands of the participants, culminating in a public performance.

MATERIA, attaching to the disposable

In my journey through object manipulation, I encountered and concentrated my work around a synthetic material, polystyrene. Specifically, I focused on expanded polystyrene (EPS), commonly used for building insulation, packaging, disposable containers. Foamed

polystyrene presents serious environmental issues as it is a non-biodegradable material and it is a cause of litter. At first, it may seem antithetical from a sustainability perspective, to develop a work with an unsustainable material. But what is really unsustainable

about polystyrene? We are surrounded by different kinds of plastic materials. Plastic components can be found in an incredibly high number of objects, and plastics dominate current packaging methods. Reducing and getting rid of plastics is a concrete, desirable,

¹ Cf. <https://vimeo.com/680459318>



Andrea Salustri - MATERIA © Susana Chicó

and achievable goal, yet not the most immediate solution to respond to this urgency. What is really unsustainable about plastics is the way we relate to it. How we acquire it lightly and dispose of it immediately, how we look at it, again: our perception. This perception, as discussed before, is connected to its *function*, which for polystyrene is exhausted very quickly (we open the container, we extract our goods, we throw the packaging away) and to its

economical value, which is incredibly low. Because of this, our relation to polystyrene is one of disregard. *MATERIA*¹ is an attempt to counter this relation and shift our perception of polystyrene as something alive, fragile, and full of surprising properties. The performance was supported by *circusnext*², and co-produced by *PERPLX*; it uses contemporary circus as a lens to investigate the material in a transdisciplinary research. The result

is a choreography for one human and several polystyrene shapes, where the human and the material engage in a non-verbal dialogue. Juggling tries not to impose direct control, but rather create controlled environments so that the material is free to perform and take initiative. The role of the performer shifts towards that of a facilitator and the focus is constantly negotiated between object, manipulator, and manipulation. The piece presents not only the aliveness of polystyrene, but also its destruction. I see this as a fundamental element in order to establish a sincere conversation with and about the material. At the same time, this choice posed to me urgent questions about the sustainability of the show and the disposal of the waste I was creating. I found two strategies to actively recycle and dispose of it.

The first strategy consists in recycling bigger pieces of polystyrene, which present imperfections and are therefore not suitable for the stage, into a series of sculptures. I titled this series *Toxic Landscapes*³, and it is an ongoing development of my touring. These sculptures display simultaneously a fascination for the material transformation and the traces of a fight – where the disrupted ground of the battlefield is the outcome of a conflictual relationship with this toxic substance. The controversial nature of polystyrene is deliberately presented. Each artwork is the result of a melting and corrosion process, through the use of a hot gun, black ink, and petrol-based fluids which break the chemical structure of polystyrene. A strong reference to the work of Alberto Burri, and his *Plastics series* – in which the artist, after the second world war, had transformed the canvas into plastic panels and the brush into a blowtorch – is presented and recontextualised into the current environmental discourse.

¹ Cf. <https://vimeo.com/323835979>

² Cf. <https://www.circusnext.eu/andrea-salustri/>

³ Cf. <http://andreasalustri.com/materia>, please scroll down



Andrea Salustri - MATERIA © Milan Szypura

A second method I have adopted is composting the residual waste of each show through the help of worms, ca-

pable of digesting polystyrene. These worms are commonly known as *superworms*, they are the larvae of *Zo-*

phobas morio, a species of beetle. They contain several gut enzymes that are capable of digesting polystyrene. Not only this, but they can live healthily on a diet based solely on polystyrene, in addition to which they only need hydration. This incredible finding has already been used, since a couple of years, by a few ecological companies dealing with polystyrene and composting their own waste. I started adopting this method in 2020, and since then I am collecting all the waste produced while performing the show on tour. I carry it back to my atelier in Berlin where I process it through a small colony of worms. This process of disposing polystyrene with *Zophobas morio* has been recently examined and proven by a study published in the journal *Microbial Genomics*¹.

Invisible, a reflection about change

While researching about our perception and relation to object-based environments, another topic naturally followed as a necessary and interconnected investigation: our perception and relation to *change*. Any shift in our perception must, in fact, first deal with our ability to embrace and endure change. Our relation to change is of the most complex and fascinating.

Just recently, over the course of the last two years, humankind has faced dramatic events that have produced a revolution of the global narrative, bringing radical changes on daily, social, and economic habits. The spread of a pandemic has imposed change within weeks. The recent unfolding of war in Europe has imposed change within days. At the same time, with their devastating impact, these events have brought an urgency for response. But where does this sense of urgency start? Where does it lay the line beyond which we decide to take action? How does witnessing trans-

form into engaging? These questions seem incredibly relevant in relation to the climate crisis, an emergency that is as impactful to world history but develops at a slower pace. We witness constant transformations on ourselves and on our surroundings, but

when and how do we notice change? *Noticing* requires a fundamental disposition of openness and listening. This disposition seems the first and fundamental element in overcoming the discrepancy between knowing and acting.



Andrea Salustri - Toxic Landscapes © Andrea Salustri

¹ Cf. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/10/science/worms-eating-styrofoam.html> ; <https://www.microbiologyresearch.org/content/journal/mgen/10.1099/mgen.0.000842>

In 2023, I will be starting a new project titled *Invisible*, in collaboration with the sound artist Federico Coderoni, in which we want to research about this disposition, and play with the audience's ability to notice change. For now, we envision a hybrid performance, taking place outside and inside the theatre, and later on a digital platform. We partnered with [PlanetWatch](#), a company that is creating and deploying sensors to monitor air pollution across the globe. We will transform the data collected by these sensors in a generative music composition, that will be presented, among other elements, in the frame of the performance. The main idea and purpose of our project is to embrace a process of reflection on the subtle and drastic changes that are currently reshaping individual and collective histories, as a starting point for a broader ontological investigation about identity, responsibility, and agency.



Zophobas Morio processing polystyrene © Andrea Salustri

I firmly believe in the value and the urgency for a conversation about the ways we perceive and relate to our environment. I also believe that contemporary circus, as an art form, and with

its particular way of weaving connections to the world, can play a central role in facilitating this conversation.

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THE INTERVIEW CORNER: A BROAD SPECTRUM OF ARTISTIC APPROACHES TO A GLOBAL ISSUE



INTERVIEW WITH MARIJA BARANAUSKAITĖ (LITHUANIA)



© Bartosz
Frątczak

Marija Baranauskaitė (b. 1990) is one of the first professional contemporary circus creators in Lithuania. She started her career on stage as a contemporary dance performer and later graduated from the Philippe Gaulier clown school in Paris. For 11 years she worked at RED NOSES Clown Doctors as an actress and lecturer and between 2018–2020 worked as its artistic director. She co-founded the Contemporary Circus Association in Lithuania, teaches at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and has created and collaborated on a dozen dance, theatre and circus performances and compositions.

How does the term “Living body/ies” resonate with you?

For the last four years, in my artistic research, I was way more interested in the notion of non-living bodies. I used to create shows that were not intended for human audiences, but for objects instead. Paradoxically, exploring non-living bodies, such as sofas, has allowed me and other humans to relate better to what a living body is. It is hard to understand your own vitality while just being alive and being busy with your daily routines. On the other hand, trying to get to know non-living beings, and comparing yourself to them makes it easier to grasp what it is that makes you alive.

In my work, I did experiments where I did not allow people to enter the performance space unless they pretended that they were not alive, that they were things. Afterwards, I saw many people shocked when they realised that it's impossible for them not to move, that they can't shut their brains or stop



© Black Duck Performance, Photo by Liam Dunning

breathing, that they sweat and they have an urge to use the bathroom at some point. Moreover, if living human bodies come to see the show, they have an urge to criticise, judge, and categorise, but also to experience joy, laughter and well-being.

This year I expanded my research to living bodies. However, whereas before I chose to perform myself for non-living beings, in this research I explore how

a different kind of living being can perform for humans. I chose ducks as my performers and at the moment I am searching for a way to facilitate an artistic vision of ducks in their natural habitat, which does not require adapting their living patterns to our own human and artistic needs.

In your site-specific work-in-progress *Black Duck Performance*, you are questioning the relationship between performers/humans and animals - moving away from the traditional circus pattern, in which animals are being trained to perform - to embrace an approach in which the animal is the performer, in its natural environment. What did you learn throughout your research process and what were you trying to achieve with this experience?



© *Black Duck Performance*, Photo by Liam Dunning

After making many shows for non-human audiences, a friend of mine suggested that maybe I should still consider making a show for humans. But I did not feel it would be in line with my artistic practice to eliminate the non-human aspects of my work. I did not want to perform for humans myself so I started to question if someone else, not me and not other humans could perform for humans. Then, I realised that animals have been performing for humans throughout the ages in circuses, zoos and now on social media. I had a long and strong connection to ducks so I thought: Should I ask ducks to perform?

There is a need to reinvent our relationship with animals on stage. During the last century, humans, rightfully, started to fight for animal rights so bringing them on stage became an illegal thing to do. This was a way to protect animals from being abused in training and performances and also not to force them to be where they naturally would not. So I started to question whether or not we could still enjoy seeing animals on stage but without disturbing them in a way that would be against their rights. With ducks this was not difficult to investigate, I could find them all around in many parks and began simply observing them. Just the way they were entirely themselves was fascinating to me and also somehow quite similar to our contemporary scene. More

and more shows are made based on what performers truly are, instead of pretending to be someone they are not, and creating characters; more and more site-specific works appear where natural environments take over the imaginary stage setting. After a while, I decided to look for a way to show ducks as performers to human audiences, but without intervening in their normal daily lives. I tried it and it worked, so I think that is my biggest lesson - you do not need to abuse or train anyone in order to see them performing. We already manage to do this with humans, so why not do it with other species too?

Why was it important for you to include and connect with other living beings in your circus creations?

In my experiments performing for objects, it became super interesting to observe how challenging it is for humans not to be at the centre of attention. Since *The Sofa Project* was a solo show, I did not need to rehearse with other humans, so there was only me and sofas, which brought a lot of creative freedom. With the *Black Duck Performance*, I wanted to explore how it would be to work with other living bodies that do not judge, criticise or have a need to be pleased. That was one of the reasons why I included ducks.

Even though ducks would never complain about the process, it is challenging to direct them, because I am not in control of what is happening. I might come to the performance space, and the ducks are not there. They might leave in the middle of the show. Sometimes, during the show, male ducks engage in sexually abusive behaviour towards their female partners. Other birds, such as geese or black swans, might invade the show. But I cannot do anything about it, so I have to trust the ducks and the process.

What I can do, is to make an atmosphere pleasant for humans that come to see the piece. People visiting the traditional circus were often getting popcorn and drinks for the show. So I decided to give them drinks and seeds that they can eat or share with the ducks and express their thankfulness. It is really important that my human audience does not feed the ducks during the show, as it shifts the focus of the performance away from the ducks as they are and towards their need for food. Getting the seeds from the humans for the ducks becomes more central than performing the life of a duck. The seeds are only meant for after the show.

According to me, circus is always about trying to do something impossible. Even though I do not use my own body to reach and overcome the limits

of what we can do, I try to reach the impossible conceptually by including other living bodies. It is really hard to imagine that ducks, who do not know that art, circus and theatre exist, would be circus performers themselves. To attempt that – is circus for me. Also ducks are simply funny. They surely have a funny bone.

How did the local audience react to this performance? Do you think by making more performances like these, people will be more caring towards the world that surrounds them?

Humans become happy when seeing ducks perform. Animals are super interesting to observe. They are different, they have a different point-of-view of life and this allows people to expand their own understanding of life. Also since there is no specific meaning that ducks manifest with their performance, there is a lot of space for the public to imagine new things. I do not know if people will become more caring, but at least they could become more observant and attentive, which is a wonderful starting point. To notice. This is what I would be happy to inspire you to do.



© Black Duck Performance, Photo by Liam Dunning

What would be your wish for the future of contemporary circus in Lithuania when it comes to embracing greener initiatives? What is more urgent in this area?

I think when we think of sustainability it is also important to think of it in terms of practices that can sustain one's living. The biggest urgency in the contemporary circus field in Lithuania is to have more artists creating works, as we are so few. You can still count all of us on your fingers. And when there will be a good enough support system,

when artists will not have to fight for covering their basic living needs and will be able to make their art freely, I think greener initiatives will appear.

🌐 performingforsofas.com

🌐 facebook.com/performingforsofas



INTERVIEW WITH NATHAN BIGGS-PENTON (CANADA)



© Agathe Bisserier

Nathan grew up in the woods between mountains in a house built and designed by his parents. In 2013 Nathan dove head first into the world of physical expression; acrobatics, manipulation, and dance. Circus Smirkus, the University of Dance and Circus of Stockholm, and the Quebec Circus School form the foundation from which he grows. Art in society is essential, and in current times society needs the influence of art to move towards a sustainable tomorrow. Nathan is a core member of Acting for Climate in Europe and is the co-founder and co-director of Acting for Climate Montréal.

How does the term “Living body/ies” resonate with you?

Living bodies is not a term I am familiar with but here are my first thoughts. Living bodies as opposed to lifeless bodies. Not as in death, but rather void of the emotions and sensations that make up life. Our bodies are the vehicle that transports us through life. The term living bodies inspires a reflection on what is it that compels us, intrigues us, and inspires us to seek an active participation in living.

You have initiated Acting for Climate Montréal in 2019 along with Agathe Bisserier and Adrien Malette-Chénier. How did it all start and what have you been focusing on for the past three years? And lastly, how do you work as a network of artists and what ties do you have with the European branch of Acting for Climate?

In 2019 I took a flight to Copenhagen from North America specifically to work on the production *Into the water* that I co-created and performed with Acting for Climate. In this moment I realized that my participation in the company needed to change drastically as my actions were in opposition with the morals of the company. By the end of 2019 we concluded that a sister company in North America was the solution. Agathe and Adrien came to Copenhagen to meet with the com-

pany to share and learn the methods and values of Acting for Climate. Together the three of us established the company Acting for Climate Montreal. Over the past three years we have held workshops to open the discussion on sustainability in circus and performing arts here in Montreal as well as develop and tour our first production *Branché*; a group acrobatic performance played in forest or parks that evokes with simplicity and optimism our relationship to the climate crisis by celebrating the strength of community.

What ties us together is our shared goal of “inspiring to act for a more sustainable future”. This is the fundamental mission of Acting for Climate and it

is present in the company's decisions, actions, and performances on both sides of the ocean.

On the website of Acting for Climate, it's written: "Acting for Climate is not just a group of performers, it is a mindset and a movement". Can you tell us more about this? What do you wish to achieve collectively in the future?

The methods and values of Acting for Climate are not entirely unique, other companies in the arts searching to combine art and environmentalism share many of the same roots. The network we support is one that propagates these values in hopes that more and



© Émilie Rivard-Boudreau

more companies will join the discussion and join in adapting their work towards a more sustainable practice.

You are a contemporary circus artist (a juggler), would you say that ecological concerns are shared by many artists around you or, generally, by the performing arts sector in Quebec? If yes, how does it translate concretely in their/your artistic practice?

I surround myself with people who seek to combine environmentalism with their art but also with their daily life. I would say, like in every sector, there is a fair amount of greenwashing. Actors of the performing arts sector who care enough to enact a minimum of change in order to stay “green” but who do not dig into the roots of what makes their actions un-sustainable. For those who do embrace the ecological concerns full on, I see a human and social concern arise. When we look into the source of waste and pollution we can see that it becomes nearly impossible for individuals to maintain a sustainable lifestyle or artistic practice when they are exhausted or simply have no time to spare. It is in these moments that convenience trumps all efforts to reduce our footprint. We need to eat and if we don’t have the time to cook much less garden, environmentally friendly choices become limited very quickly. I find it important to remember that the arts sector has a negligible carbon impact compared to other industries. However we have a microphone to inspire change in all sectors through poetry and emotion.

My work for the past few years has been to bring more space for calm reflection into the world. While this is less obviously about sustainability in the way we most often observe sustainable action. My work is about sustainability in a more subtle way, it emphasizes simplicity, observation, and calm reflection. In order to adapt our way of living to a more sustainable one



© Jacob's Pillow. Photography: by Cherylynn Tsushima

we need to have time to stop, observe, and create space for calm reflection and discussion in order to develop creative solutions.

According to you, what is the most burning issue when it comes to developing sustainable practices in contemporary circus in Quebec? What could make a real change?

90% of touring done by Quebec shows occurs internationally, yet Quebec, more specifically Montreal and Quebec City are recognized globally as hubs for circus. For me, supporting a local network of touring in the province of Quebec will nourish the contemporary scene and its sustainability. By allowing artists to tour locally, they are allowed to root themselves in a community rather than a suitcase and to reduce their footprint while developing social richness. For concrete actions to unfold, government support to subsidise local presenters is necessary as their audiences do not have the habit of seeing circus. This creates a stress on the presenters as they see programming circus as a risk rather than an opportunity.

Be it through your own personal solo creations (*Adrift: in woods*) or through the performances created with Acting for Climate, you use the natural environment to create unique site-specific shows (*Rappelle-moi* or *Adapting to the tide*, for instance) to invite viewers to (re)connect with nature. What sort of feedback do you receive from the audience?

We performed our show *Branché* for over 2,000 people in the summer of 2021 in forests and had numerous conversations with audience members that had been moved by our relationship to the nature around us. The feedback gravitates around the feelings of hope, inspiration, harmony and care but also of sadness of the reality we are faced with today. In my solo performances and in Acting's performances in urban settings the feedback I hear most is how people are transported out of the city during the performance. The feeling of nature is so present in the bodies of the performers that it transports the audience to a place of calm amidst the chaos of city life. A bubble in time for calm reflection and human connection.



INTERVIEW WITH IN SITU ARTIST EVA BUBLA (HUNGARY)



Eva Bubla (1985) is a Hungarian artist and activist. At the boundaries of art and science, her projects focus on ecological and social issues. She is keen on working together with local communities and other sectors; these forms of interactions define the sort of experiences she fabricates, or whether an object, an installation, a performance, or a workshop is born.

🌐 www.evabubla.art

How does the term “Living body/ies” resonate with you?

As I hear this term, an image pops up in my mind: bodies breathe. My body, the environment, the soil, the trees, waters, plants and animals, humans and non-humans. My attention is moving from my own body to other ones, and sensations appear where one is not separated from the other.

You are an IN SITU associate artist on the (UN)common Spaces project (2020-2024). What is your role in this context?

I would say I have multiple roles. In the framework of the (Un)common Spaces project there are 16 festival partners and their Associate Artists and Associate Citizens exploring the relation and potential of art, public space, and society. This happens partly in Artistic Laboratories where all of us meet and share ideas and approaches, which then can lead to collaborations with other artists, citizens, festivals. The nature of collaboration may vary and the local context is affecting it as well.

For instance, I was invited to the project by the Hungarian IN SITU partner, Artopolis Foundation in a double role: as an artist and curator. While I am developing my own artistic projects, I also contribute to curating a section of PLACCC Festival which focuses on environmental and ecological issues, engaging other artists, scientists, and



© Eva Bubla: *Aroma Mapping*. Workshop at HAPUfest / Teatri ODA, Pristina, 2022. Photo: Agon Mehmeti

experts as well. In the collaborations with other partners my role as an artist is more dominant. As my work is mostly based on previous research, a kind of interaction with the space and people, at this stage I am having research visits mostly to identify relevant issues and to design practices and formats based on my findings that we will realise in the coming years, but there are also residencies where I adapt already existing projects to the local context.

Your artistic work articulates current social and ecological concerns. What comes first in your creation process? Is your artistic approach predominant or do you build around the environmental message you want to convey?

I think the two are quite intertwined. I perceive the world and impulses with an artistic mindset, and main sources of inspiration are my daily experiences. A great number of my projects were inspired by the environmental challenges I personally had to face. Using artistic methodologies, I reflect on them with an attempt to make certain conditions and experiences visible, tangible, creating a space for contemplation, understanding, looking for new perspectives, other ways of doing, or as such, catalysing a kind of change in attitudes or even actions. Therefore, there is a strong element of consciousness but also a great deal of improvisation and flexibility.

To give some concrete examples, the first version of my project *Designated*

Breathing Zone was a reaction to the disappearance of green areas and the growing level of air pollution I experienced when I returned to Indonesia in 2019. I fell sick with my tonsils and imagined a future where we can only breathe through incubated plant modules; this is how the speculative object incubating the sansevieria plant, an effective air purifier was born. During the pandemic the project got a new meaning, and Public Breathing Practices were installed on a busy street of Budapest, while the adaptation done in collaboration with Sardegna Teatro was rather focusing on local scents and aromatic plants that facilitate breathing based on the interactions we had with the ladies of local association Rimettiamo Radici. Air pollution is quite an issue in Pristina as well due to the use of coal

in the winters, so as a research practice, I gave a workshop at HAPUfest called Aroma Mapping, a smellwalk in which together with the participants we were looking for the various scents and odours, and the human activities that are related to them to define the smell profile of the area. This format enables participants to experience and bond with their surroundings in a new way, but at the same time serves as research data for further development of *Designated Breathing Zone*. While our szabadonbalaton project with the diverse team of PAD is built around our members' scientific research data about the Balaton, our biggest lake and its area, where we use artistic formats such as a concept bar of ecological processes, which can be applied in different geographical contexts.

You wrote on your website: "The events of the past year have fundamentally changed our daily lives and our relation to the environment, urban spaces, and fellow human beings. Our sense of alienation – the distance between us – has been growing, while even regardless of the pandemic, the pressing social and ecological challenges of our times make the creation of a healthy relationship with our environment more urgent than ever before." Can you tell us more about the project Sensing the City that you carried out in 2021 in Budapest and what you wanted to achieve with it? How did the local population react to it?



© Eva Bubla: *Designated Breathing Zone*. Installation at Giornate del Respiro / Sardegna Teatro, Fluminimaggiore, 2021. Photo: Eva Bubla

Sensing the City is the curatorial project whose first edition took place in 2021 at PLACCC Festival in Budapest, and engaged various artists in creating public art installations and performances, as well as joining thematic talks together with experts from sectors related to the topics discussed in the artworks. The project intro above is having less relevance today than in the first year of the pandemic, there is no longer much of a distance among people in contrast with the first waves, but addressing planetary urgencies through local environmental and ecological challenges, and a sensory approach to perceiving, understanding, and creating a dialogue about them are still of primary focus.

The curatorial concept is the continuation of my own artistic methodology, an experimentation to facilitate the (re) connection of human and non-human beings and care for each other. An invitation to use our senses for exploration. A platform to raise awareness on issues that might be overlooked or ignored. The projects selected through our open call addressed quite diverse topics and were held in unusual, public spaces, which made it easier to reach larger and more diverse audiences. Art events in traditional venues normally



© Eva Bubla: *Designated Breathing Zone*. Installation at Giornate del Respiro / Sardegna Teatro, Fluminimaggiore, 2021. Photo: Laura Farneti

mobilise a certain circle of people, but by bringing these works and the discussions to the public space, random passersby can also come across them. The first reactions here in Hungary are normally surprise, a gaze from the distance, but there are always ones who will approach, ask questions, reflect, engage, learn and share.

The *Not Quite California Wonder* project of Fuzzy Earth in the market hall enabled people who were doing the shopping to explore a speculative scenario through film and artefacts in which the bell pepper shares memories about its altering role as a plant, food, industry, symbol of political power, and ecological catalyst. Passersby could sneak into the world of waste management and utilisation through the *Firework* installation of Katalin Kortmann-Járay – Bálint Kátona – András Kaprinyák, who used projections, sound, smoke and taste related to the incinerator of the municipality. The soundwalk of MOME students and researchers created an experience of the sonic environment around a previously abandoned plot, which has been turned into a community garden in close collaboration with the local municipality and Rév8. And the most extreme example, the *There*

is *No End* performance of SVUNG Research Group, invited participants to a twelve-hour vigil near an abandoned cemetery to reflect on the circle of life and death, and its relation to waste.

Would you say ecological issues and the connection to the natural environment is a topic addressed by many artists around you at the moment? If so, why do you think so?

Due to the focus of my work in recent years, I got surrounded by likeminded people, but I also feel that there is a growing number of artists approaching such issues, and in general, also a greater interest in the whole of the cultural (and civil) sector. There is a lot to explore of course so that these works and initiatives have real relevance and meaning. More and more people understand the urgency and the need to start a dialogue, let it be a kind of activist or a rather symbolic, poetic approach.

Do you believe it is the responsibility of artists to raise awareness on these issues? Do you believe art in the public space can make a long-term difference?

I believe it is a chosen responsibility, not a general one. Art itself and the role of an artist is quite diverse and we should position ourselves in roles that we resonate with, which feel authentic. To me, this choice came quite organically, as first I dealt with environmental issues as a civilian due to my personal needs, but it gradually appeared in my art as well and have been at the heart of it ever since.

I do believe that for any long-term impact there is a need for a consistent presence and engagement. It may mean an artist working with the same community on a long-term, popping up with the same theme in various locations of the chosen context, or a festival regularly showing works that address such issues to its audience. Change can be triggered on a small-scale, personal level, but individuals make up communities and societies. Of course there is an indispensable need for change from the top-down, on the legislative or corporate level, but - call me an idealist - I believe in the bottom-up approach and hopefully meet in the middle. At the same time, there are certain things we cannot change or bring back, but then we need to learn and change our attitude and ability to adapt. It is also worth noting that measuring change in an artistic context will always be problematic. I would say we need to keep working for what we believe in and what we care for.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: FOCUS ON THE BARK PROJECT (PERFORM EUROPE)



A JOINT INTERVIEW WITH EMMA LANGMOEN AND HEIDI MIIKKI (NORWAY/FINLAND)



© Karoline Hill

Emma Langmoen (she/her) is originally from Norway, she is a circus artist by education and an activist by heart. Since her graduation from SaSak in 2018, she has been creating and touring interdisciplinary works in Northern Europe, mainly with her collectives Acting for Climate and Oslo Nysirkus. Emma is interested in physical and verbal poetry, site-specific work, and the power of art to create new narratives.



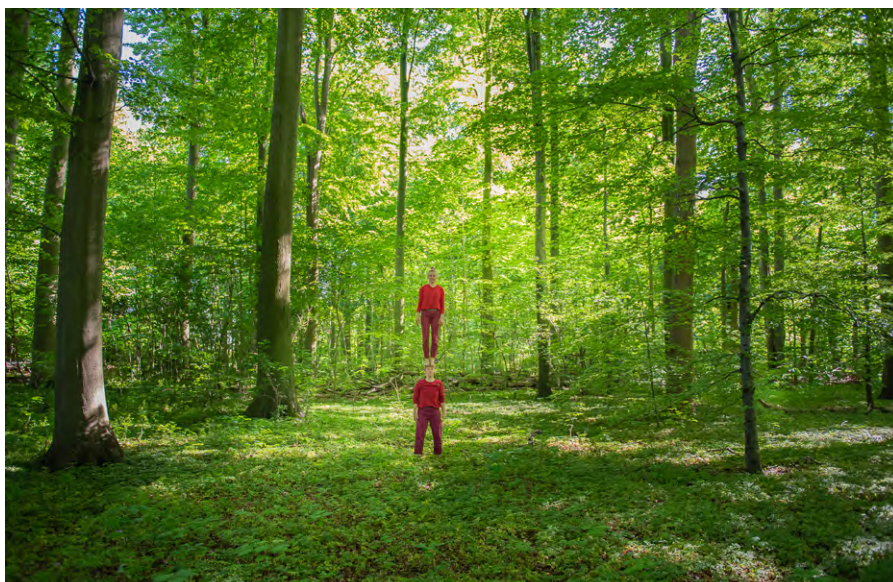
© Nina Miikki

Heidi Miikki (she/her) is a Helsinki-based dancer and circus artist educated in Denmark and Finland and with a BA degree at Turku Arts Academy. Heidi works in the core crew of Acting for Climate and as a freelancer with her own projects and in collaboration with other companies. She dances and jumps on the tightrope, on the ground, in a harness, and climbs the pole and trees. She is an environmentalist to whom empathy, caring and meeting are the core of being. Heidi is fascinated with movement and site-specific work, playfulness and nature.

Your project was selected by the Perform Europe Jury and has toured across Europe using bikes and trains, while at the same time being accessible for free to all audiences. How did you apprehend this innovative and sustainable (ecologically, financially, physically) tour and what are your key takeaways following this experience?

We are artists, and we run an artistic company. Yet first and foremost, we are human beings and part of a multitude of intricate systems - political systems, ecosystems, systems of values. Creating BARK and the Perform Europe tour was merely trying to align our personal values with our artistic practice.

Since the start of Acting for Climate in 2014, a lot of our practice has been



© Dynamo - BARK, Photo by Cosmin Cirstea

working outside in nature. The seed of BARK was planted after our *Into the Water* project, which toured by sail ship

in 2019. We wanted to do something on a smaller scale, that could reach local communities, where audiences could

sensorially explore nature in the same way we do in our artistic research; and we still wanted to see how far we could push the process of leaving a minimal ecological footprint - going from touring by sail, to touring by bike.

BARK premiered in 2021, co-produced by Dynamo (DK), and our first tour in 2021 was only by bike; fun, and also extremely demanding. Biking 100km with all our things, rigging equipment and instruments on our free day every week, raised a lot of questions on personal sustainability and what is physically sustainable. We would love to tour as sustainable as possible, and that also implies that we need structures and programmers that boldly support that, so that the cost (in time, money, physical pedalling-power) does not always fall on the performers.

Acting for Climate is built on the belief that our actions matter, and that we all have the power to influence and change society. For instance, we believe that art should be accessible for everyone, so we keep our shows free when we can. And that we all need to do what we can to stop the climate crisis, shaping both our art and our processes.

What once again became clear during this tour, is that there are so many good forces all over Europe wanting to support sustainable initiatives, also within the arts. Whether it's institutions or individuals - people are eager to help and support you.

***BARK* is about reconnecting with each other and with nature, it deals with climate change and the possibility of social change. Can you tell us more about the genesis of the project and how you came up with the idea of creating a forest performance? What is the message you wish to convey?**

When creating *BARK*, we collaborated with climate scientist Karen O'Brien, and her work with quantum social change, as



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collected in the book "[You Matter More Than You Think](#)". The key take is literally that our actions matter more than we think, and that we all have big leverage and potential to influence the world. Yet furthermore, O'Brien gave a lot of input for our artistic concepts, and the scenes of *BARK* are all in some way connected to her research.

If you are fond of something, you will take care of it. To take care of nature, you need to know it, and from there came a wish to invite the audience with us into the forest. We wanted to create a project of beauty that also gives space for what is more-than-human, and to invite audiences with us to smell, touch, and hear the curiosities of the forest.

We sometimes tend to forget that humans are nature. We are entangled with nature, with each other and with other species. With *BARK*, we want to share this connectedness.

When performing 20 metres up a tree, our mutual codependency with nature becomes clear.

In this site-specific circus performance, the forest, the soil and the trees are the main characters of the performance; they co-create the piece together with the performers,

climate scientists and outside eyes. How was it for you to create with other non-human livings?

Creating in the forest gives a lot of input and inspiration for a creative process. There is already so much and so many to interact with. Part of the process has been to acknowledge that a bug might be way more interesting to some audience members, than us humans, and that that is just the way it should be.

With *BARK*, we wanted to create a kind of circus that leaves space for other species, where the trees, the insects, or the air would hold equal importance as the human performers. Eventually, what became very important to us was to create and act from a value of care. A lot changes when your intention is to climb a tree with care, and not just get up as fast as possible, or to dance vertical dance with the tree crowns, and not on the trees.

With every new forest we work with, it feels like the forest is getting to know us as much as the other way around. We do a tree casting during our first meeting with a forest, looking for the trees that would fit our desired dramaturgy. Yet mostly, it is the human performers who have to adapt - if the good tree to climb is not placed where

we want *ki*¹ in our dramaturgy, we have to switch our dramaturgy around. Creating in nature is all about being flexible, and accepting that you as human will be the one that has to adapt.

How did the local audience welcome and react to your project? Did you notice differences depending on the country in which the performance was being toured?

In general, our audiences have shown us a lot of openness and trust, regardless of country. *BARK* is intimate, as the audience is literally touching and smelling leaves and soil, and we perform around, over and between them. A Catalan review named the performance as a “theatre of the senses” - so maybe that is our new circus discipline. People everywhere are really open to interact and play with nature. They lay down on the ground at one point during the performance, and when we in the end invite them to stay in the forest and climb trees with us, the majority actually stays.

BARK changes more depending on the forest and the weather, than the country. Different cultures have different ways of being in the forest, yet it

doesn't become apparent in the performance. We establish a space where touching soil and laying on the ground is a totally natural thing to do. In Munich, someone pointed out that it is amazing that we show people that it is possible to use the small paths of the forest, not just the big forest roads. We, however, did not even realise that this was not the norm there.

People often tell us that *BARK* is something they will never forget, something that everyone should see, and that the performance has deeply changed their relation with nature - that gives us a lot of hope and confidence in the power of art to change the world.

A major part of sustainable touring for *BARK* is the well-being of you, the artists. What would you like to say to artists who did not experience this slow travel, with tour planning conditions mindful of performers' well-being, who are exhausted physically and mentally?

It is important to say that we are continuously trying to find better ways. Our *BARK* tour this year was more physically and mentally sustainable than last year. Perform Europe made this

tour possible through their generous support. However, they also drastically cut in the artist salaries and living expenses. We need to change the whole funding structures for performing arts, if we are ever to have a sustainable arts field. Stress, whether that is manifested in flying, no free days, shared rooms due to lack of funding, or something else, needs to be moved from the performers to the bigger structures. Otherwise, we continue to leave the risk with the artists.

At the same time, we also have a lot of agency as artists. We would encourage you to look into what leverage you have where you are working, and how you can use that to drive for sustainable change whether it comes to ecological footprint or working conditions.

To create a truly sustainable and just field, we need to reassess the values we build the performing arts industry on. If we name success as flying from city to city and performing in big venues, we are actually just acknowledging fame and economy as success. We need to recreate a performing arts field on a new set of values for success.

Acting for Climate

Acting for Climate works in the intersection between arts and environmentalism. Since the start in 2014, our clear aim has been to use art to inspire people to act for a more sustainable future. We create and tour our own performances, with branches of the company in Europe and Montréal, and consist of a growing international network of people, artists and activists that nurture collaboration for sustainability. With a focus on contemporary circus through a multidisciplinary approach, we fuel our work with a wish to change the world.

🌐 www.actingforclimate.com



© Dynamo - *BARK*, Photo by Cosmin Cirstea

¹ Robin Wall Kimmerer introduced pronouns for living beings as *ki/kin* (singular/plural), that we also use in *BARK*.

LIVING BODY/IES CHARTER

CIRCOSTRADA CHARTER FOR ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

The Circostrada Charter for Ecological Sustainability is the result of a collaborative process between members of the Living body/ies internal committee, with support from the Circostrada coordination team, and in consultation with outside experts working at the intersection of arts and climate.

Developed over the course of 2022, the Charter sets the initial parameters for the network – as well as its affiliate members and any actor engaged in its activities – to take concrete, measurable actions that improve the sustainability and ecological impact of Circostrada's programming. In doing so, the Charter lays the foundation for an ongoing, open dialogue on the interdependencies that define the notion of ecology – with ramifications for the network's role as a promoter of cross-cultural exchange, as well as for our shared responsibility for environmental stewardship.

The suggestions and best practices presented in this Charter shall be recognized and approved by all members, artists, festival organisers, participants and other guests involved in Circostrada's programme of activities. As a European network, however, Circostrada appreciates the great diversity of political environments and cultural contexts that its members operate within. In recognition of the ongoing injustices and disparities inherited from colonial and geopolitical history, the network is vigilant to not reproduce harmful power relations in its international collaborations. This commitment also implies an understanding that its members have varying levels of access to information and necessary public infrastructure, and that meeting our defined ecological goals carries an unequal burden for some actors.

The network strongly stands in favour of shared-responsibility between all players from the field and will strive to foster solidarity, mutuality, and reciprocity within its international ecosystem. Rather than imposing an overly prescriptive approach to each actors' sustainability practices, the network will encourage solutions that arise democratically, recognizing that these will be necessarily tailored to the differing responsibilities and capabilities of each individual, collective and organisation.

The Circostrada Charter for Ecological Sustainability is a work in progress. The internal Living body/ies Committee will meet annually to assess the network's progress according to the stated objectives, and to enrich the content of the Charter.

Finally, Circostrada belongs to a consortium of European cultural networks organised around the SHIFT (Shared Initiatives for Training) initiative and will strive to meet the criteria of its eco-label.

1. Working outdoors

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Connection between culture and the natural environment; outdoor arts as an entry point to sensitise publics to undervalued aspects of the ecosystems we participate in
- Decentralisation as an ethic and strategy to promote local vibrancy and control in cultural programming, and to reduce the intractability of systemic inequalities and isolation

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Prioritise opportunities to engage local cultural professionals and artists (Y1)
- » Address access and accessibility conditions when organising events in rural areas (Y1)
- » Strive to decentralise Circostrada events and visibilise non-urban spaces (Y3)

2. Audience and community engagement

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Cultivation of diverse audiences through equitable outreach strategy and deep, long-term relationship building
- Audiences and publics as stakeholder, partners and co-creators, rather than only consumers
- Opportunities to benefit local economies and work directly with local artists, producers, cultural professionals and artistic communities
- Shift in internal culture, practices and awareness among our own working teams

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Deepen the network's internal understanding of structural barriers that limit how inclusive current programming and activities are for diverse communities. Identify opportunities and develop specific strategies to make these measurable more inclusive and inviting (Y1)
- » Create resources on these topics to be incorporated into programming contents (Y3)

3. Mobility

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Recognition of the innate advantages of in-person meetings and the necessity of travel for cultural actors
- Discernment of necessary and unnecessary travel, and commitment to weigh the ecological impacts of relevant modes of travel as a factor in planning decisions
- Consideration of the available green mobility options for artists, audiences and cultural workers in each setting - with an eye to the differences in infrastructure between urban and rural areas, as well as from one country to the next
- Amplification of the positive cultural and professional outcomes associated with slower travel practices (e.g. local networking opportunities; artistic work and research anchored more deeply in sense of place)
- Expanded awareness of green mobility grants (understanding and reducing financial and logistical burden of these grant applications)
- Understanding of the ecological impact of touring with large-scale sets, especially internationally; consideration of the impact of these choices during artistic creation

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Calculate its own carbon footprint and identify opportunities to measurably reduce it each year (Y1)
- » Share resources on existing green mobility grants
- » Develop new green mobility grants that aim to level access to mobility and international connection for transportation-disadvantaged applicants, taking into account the infrastructural inequalities within the EU (Y1)
- » Invest in measures that would ease barriers for artists to participate in longer residencies, with slower travel (e.g. family-friendly residences)
- » Create internal sustainable travel guidelines (Y3)
- » Encourage the use of public transportation and bikes wherever possible in association with the network's events (Y3)

4. Digital footprint

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Responsible participation in and stewardship of the digital space as a commons
- Advancement of organisational and individual digital sustainability, as measured by digital footprints

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Share resources and provide trainings on reducing digital impact (Y3)
- » Select greener, more ethical banks, sponsors, insurance providers (Y4)

5. Materials and waste

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Identification of preferred suppliers with understanding of true environmental impact and supply chain concerns
- Eco-friendly and reused materials for festivals and cultural events, and prioritising wherever possible new, sustainable innovations and local providers
- Recycling of apparatuses, circus tents, decoration, scenography
- Advocacy for greater accountability among actors in the sector
- Mindfulness of greenwashing in marketing and misleading environmental credentials

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Redefine its communication strategy in order to produce less waste, shift to sustainable communication materials and modalities, and shorter supply chains (Y1)
- » Create an environmental sustainability framework to be included as a term of partnership with event hosts (Y2)
- » Provide space for members to share information and resources on best suppliers and recyclers of specialty materials (Y4)

6. Water, soil, and food:

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Celebration and honouring of local biodiversity and ecologies through site-specific artistic work and responsible land and water management practices
- Restoration of symbiotic relationship between human cultural activities and the environment, with an eye to sustainable and just food systems

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Propose sustainable menus for catering, including vegan and vegetarian options and biodegradable utensils (Y1)
- » Ensure availability of on-site recycling options for catering (Y1)
- » Seek out local suppliers and partners wherever possible (Y2)
- » Provide space for members to share feedback and resources on best sustainability practices at festivals (Y3)

7. Energy

What to emphasise / What to focus on / What is important:

- Raise awareness about viable, energy-efficient alternatives for heating and air conditioning in circus tents (Y4)
- Test and share information about viable, energy-efficient alternatives for lighting and preferred suppliers (Y5)

What Circostrada network is doing/will do about it:

- » Petition owner of the network's office building to retrofit its energy systems (Y5)

8. Includes resources, guides and toolboxes

- [Circostrada Handbook to Navigate Ecological Transformation](#)
- [Green Art Lab Alliance](#)
- [On the Move](#)
- [SHIFT \(Shared Initiatives for Training\) – Sustainability Guidelines](#)
- [The Green Room](#)
- [THE SHIFT PROJECT \(The carbon transition think tank\) – Decarbonise the Economy](#)

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