

GLOBAL
CROSSING

GLOBAL CROSSING NYC & QUEBEC – INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TRIP



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EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR
CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS
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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 – 158 organisations from over 43 countries – and a key interlocutor in the dialogue with cultural policy makers across Europe.

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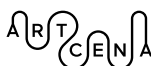


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FOREWORD

In July 2022, Circostrada embarked a dozen of its members to North-America for a two-week research trip to explore circus and outdoor arts and gain a better understanding of their ecosystem. This international field trip is the first of the series of Global Crossing in the framework of Circostrada's European project running from September 2021 to August 2024. This research trip took place from 5th to 15th July 2022, co-organised with TOHU in the frame of the MICC - International Market of Contemporary Circus – and the festival Montréal Complètement Cirque (July 7th-17th), which celebrated its 12th edition, this trip meant to connect with the Canadian contemporary circus and outdoor arts scenes through key visits and meetings, with an optional pre-trip to New York to see venues and meet programmers and artists. This publication aims to render the learnings from this international field trip, by sharing the knowledge, experience and resources acquired throughout this immersion in another culture, on the traces of North-American circus and outdoor arts.

Stéphane Segreto-Aguilar

Circostrada Network Coordinator / Head of International Development at ARTCENA

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CONTEXT AND FOCUS

CIRCUS IN NYC AND THE US: SERVING ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES IN A STRUGGLING ECOLOGY

By Madeline Hoak and Nick Zelle



Madeline is an artist and academic who creates with, through, and about circus. She writes for Circus-Talk, teaches Aerial Arts at Pace University, is the Editor and Curatorial Director of TELEPHONE, and contributes to Cirkus Syd's Circus Thinkers. Publications include "Teaching the Mind-Body: Integrating Knowledges through Circus Arts" (Alisan Funk, Dan Berkley), in *Art as an Agent for Social Change* (2020). Madeline often presents papers based on her MA research (Gallatin, NYU) about circus and spectatorship at international conferences.



Nick is a circus artist and writer based in Minneapolis and New York City. Having studied aerial rope at l'École de cirque de Québec, Nick has created and performed internationally and has taught circus disciplines in a variety of recreational studios and socially-engaged arts education projects. Most recently, Nick developed curriculum for Circus Performance at the University of Minnesota. A board member of Cirkus Syd, Nick collaborates with an international group of artists, academics and educators to create space for critical dialogues around contemporary circus. Nick holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Middlebury College and is a current M.A. candidate at NYU.

The New York City portion of Global Crossings offered a glimpse at circus in the local performing arts landscape. Guided by Monique Martin, an independent performance programmer with a keen interest in circus, the Circostrada group attended site visits to iconic venues such as The Shed, Lincoln Center, and The New Victory Theatre, as well as more unconventional spaces for art-making and circus programming.

Over five days, the group learned about broad trends affecting circus in the NYC arts environment and in the greater US context. Our conversations were dominated by questions such as, what are the responsibilities of arts institutions in a diverse city - both to the audiences they serve and to the

creative communities they nurture and sustain?

Circus does not benefit from the same level of institutional recognition and dedicated funding opportunities in the US that it enjoys in Europe. The question of how to maintain a creative practice while ensuring financial solvency

for institutions (and a steady income for artists) is a constant challenge for circus in the US. Despite this systematic challenge, circus has a foothold in the city, in no small part due to the efforts of key people we had the chance to meet.

Effects of the Pandemic on Dedicated Circus Spaces

Our journey began at The Muse Brooklyn, one of the city's few dedicated

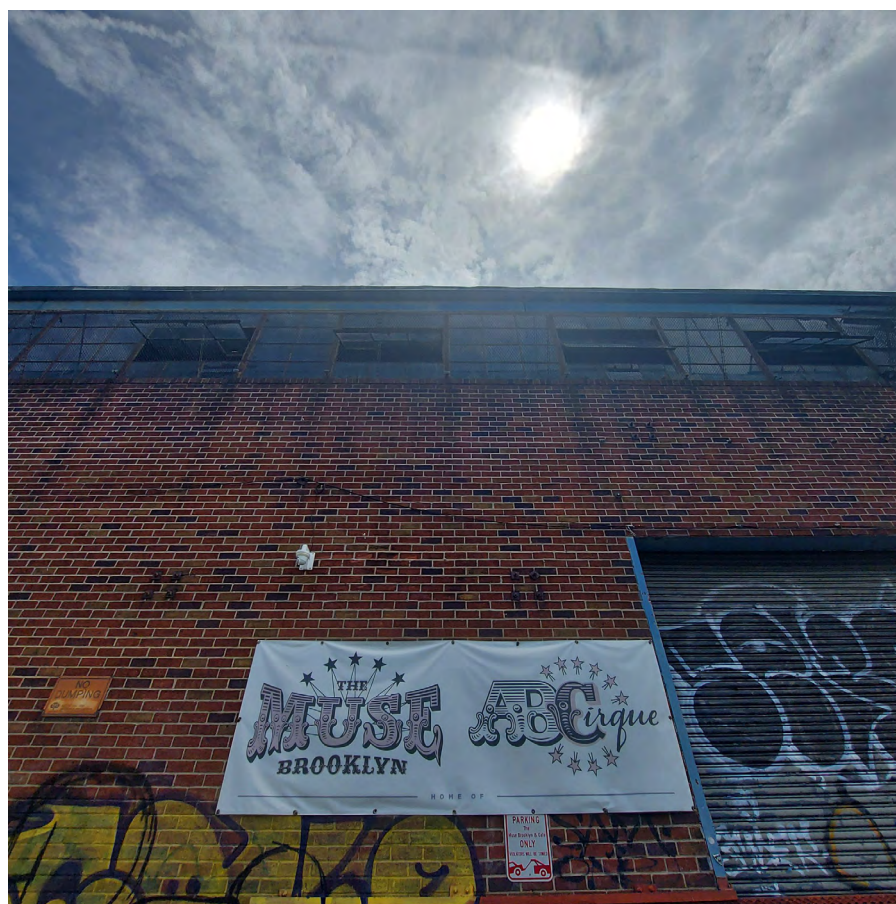
spaces for circus training and creation. We chatted with Founder and Director,

Angela Buccini Butch, in the spacious yard behind the warehouse.

Prior to the pandemic, The Muse was one of five staple locations for circus in NYC, alongside Circus Warehouse, STREB Lab for Action Mechanics (SLAM), Aerial Arts NYC, and Trapeze School NY (TSNY). In such an infamously competitive real estate environment, artists must overcome significant barriers to establishing and maintaining space for circus (as with any art form). The Muse's warehouse - with its large footprint and high ceilings - is an anomaly in NYC, which is known for cramped quarters. It is a prime space for circus arts, so much so that several members of the Circostrada network commented that it would be enviable almost anywhere in Europe.

The Muse's tenancy in the warehouse has been far from secure, however, and the company has had to weather considerable financial and legal challenges to hold onto its coveted location. In her own telling, Buccini Butch, founder and director, has fought tooth and nail to keep The Muse afloat despite operating within exploitative real estate circumstances.

Space for circus training and creation has always been hard to come by in NYC; now the scarcity is felt more acutely. As a result of the pandemic, both Circus Warehouse and The Muse's smaller, secondary location in



The Muse Brooklyn © Circostrada Network

a separate Brooklyn neighbourhood permanently closed, while Aerial Arts NYC was forced to relocate. The Muse shifted its educational programming to serve youth exclusively, a strategic choice to ensure both sustainable in-

come and to meet evolving needs in the community. As the city's economy continues to recover, spaces like these will play an essential role in providing recreational outlets and professional opportunities resources.

Equitable Audience Engagement

Our next stop was The New Victory Theatre, a standard-bearer of arts education for young audiences located in a historic theatre in Times Square. The New Vic is powered by the nonprofit, New 42, which the city commissioned in 1995 to redevelop a one-block stretch of 42nd street in Times Square that it expropriated from private ownership through eminent domain. New 42's mission is to renew the legacy and vitality of the street, which is home to seven historic theatres, by focusing on public engagement and expanding access to the performing arts for youth.

We spoke with Lindsey Buller Maliekel, Director of Education and Public Engagement, about how the theatre connects its international, circus-rich programming to diverse audiences. The New Vic targets their outreach to public school students in underserved neighbourhoods throughout the city, and goes to great lengths to make their programming accessible and inviting to young audiences who may not feel as welcome in other arts venues. Buller Maliekel spoke to the importance of bridging the performances to young people's first hand experiences

and perceptions. Through pre-show, artist-led workshops, audiences go into the show with a greater sense of confidence in their own experience of the work. This attentiveness to kids' experiences is at the heart of instilling a love for the performing arts, she said, and these efforts make them feel as if they belong in these often cost-prohibitive venues that historically cater to affluent residents.

Questioning Top-Down Investments

About ten blocks south of The New Vic is a newly-developed area along the west side of Manhattan called Hudson Yards. The neighbourhood's built environment counters that of midtown: Whereas The New Victory is tucked in among a throng of eateries and shops in chaotic 42nd street fashion, The Shed corners an expansive, open plaza bordered by sleek façades of high-end retail stores. Scuttlebutt amongst locals was that the city had failed them. Geared primarily toward tourists, the neighbourhood developments fell short of directing its benefits to support residents.

We met with Solana Chehtman, Director of Creative Practice and Social Impact, who toured us around The Shed's impressive complex. The Shed is a stunning architectural feat, designed to

accommodate multidisciplinary work in a wide range of spatial arrangements. Among the building's most notable features is the geometric retractable roof that, when extended, covers the adjacent plaza to create a highly adaptable event space.

Initially, The Shed was conceived to offer supplementary exhibition and performance space to well-established arts venues such as the Lincoln Center and Museum of Modern Art, and one might rightly assume that the programming was as elite as the nearby housing and retail. As Chetman described, however, The Shed shifted its mission during the early phase of the building's construction to focus on original programming. In recognition of the need for greater access to elite venues for local artists, this mission includes an

annual Open Call series, which aims to support and feature emerging artists and companies in NYC.

In contrast to the Muse and its peer circus spaces, The Shed is extremely well-resourced through city funding. The Open Call series is one avenue through which the institution can support the local arts ecology by lending its platform, resources and prestige to local artists. This illustrates the extreme juxtaposition in NYC between the extremely well-resourced and those who must fight for time, space, and money to survive and create. While there is good reason to be sceptical of the Hudson Yards developments, the Open Call series represents a model to bridge toward grassroots, community-driven projects that other elite institutions are beginning to adopt.

Power and Decision-Making in the Arts

Our excursion to PS21: Performance Spaces for the 21st Century, a presenting stage situated on a 100 acre parcel of land in the Berkshires (two hours north of the city by car), allowed us to engage with these same questions about funding systems, audience demographics, and access in a different setting.

PS21 is located in Chatham, New York, which is a largely affluent area, dominated by NYC residents and former residents who own second homes there. The organisation's Executive and Artistic Director, Elena V. Siyanko, invited us to join her for a conversation while taking in scenic views of the expansive property – a nineteenth-century apple orchard – from the vantage point of one of its highest hills. Although only five acres of the privately-donated property have been developed, the maintenance of the land, which remains open to the public, is among the organisation's most significant expenses. We overlooked the state-of-the-art, open-air pavilion



The Shed © Circostrada Network

with a proscenium stage. This main facility was completed in 2018 – again, as a privately-funded project by the organisation’s founding benefactor. Matthew Gold, the Community Engagement Coordinator, acknowledged the barriers to achieving equitable access for audiences in the area, including those that travel from NYC.

Private donations are more typical in the US context, and public funding

is scant. The disparity in funding was evident in Chehtman’s comments on how billionaire funders tend to beautify their neighbourhoods through targeted donations, including to arts venues. Amongst ourselves we spoke about other places that rely on these funding streams: the Arsenal, a historic building on the east edge of Central Park with a gallery and event space, the Daryl Roth Theatre in Union Square in NYC, priva-

tely owned and which has sat unused in recent years. And now, here at PS21 the theme continued. While private capital investments are effective in bringing large and worthwhile projects such as PS21’s campus to fruition, this model often lacks accountability to the needs of the region’s residents.

Grass-Roots Adaptability

Founded by Keith Nelson and Stephanie Monseu in 1995, the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus is a mainstay in NYC’s homegrown circus scene. We had the chance to catch a performance on a closed-off street on the Upper West Side in Manhattan. This production, *The Flatbed Follies*, is as it sounds: a show on a flatbed truck, making its mobility its greatest perk. Martin, our faithful guide through the city who

spent a decade as a programmer for Summer Stages (a series that hosts performing arts in NYC’s parks), explained the many permitting hurdles that exist to present in NYC’s parks. That paired with US insurance official’s unfamiliarity with the technical aspects of circus make it unduly challenging to showcase circus outdoors. In 2020, the Open Streets and Culture permits made it more viable to produce

art in the streets. The pileup of existing hurdles and new permitting compelled Bindlestiff’s decision to specifically move forward with street-bound *Flatbed Follies*.

The show was hosted by an emcee and moved quickly from one short act to the next. This structure is reminiscent of traditional circus, variety act shows, and vaudeville. Bindlestiff has a reputation for quality performances in and outside of NYC. The daytime, outdoor, family friendly atmosphere counters the gig work typically available for circus performers. As Buccini Butch noted, opportunities for the local circus artists to work are heavily geared toward nightlife. Venues like The Box, The Slipper Room, and The Rose Room in Manhattan feature racy, burlesque-style circus cabarets for adult audiences.



Bindlestiff Family Cirkus © Circostrada Network

Circus Nightlife

Another beloved venue for circus performance that is a staple in the NYC scene is Brooklyn's House of Yes (HOY). A queer-oriented club with a commitment to creating a liberated environment for experimentation and expression, the HOY sees itself as having a natural alliance with circus arts, drag, and sideshow acts. The epitome of DIY culture, House of Yes started from not much more than elbow grease, grit,

and lots of love. They hosted parties, classes, and shows with an assortment of live-work spaces, always with maximised savvy to the pulse of the city. Their first space fell to fire, the second to rising rent prices. Each time, community support and new partnerships revived HOY. Circus was always a part of HOY, and it lives on in their longest running variety show, *Dirty Circus*. We attended *Dirty Circus* on our last eve-

ning in NYC and it was like the pop of a champagne bottle to cheers the end of our tour. The show lives up to its name. It is sexy, funny, thrilling, up-close-and-personal, and definitely adult only. It attracts some of the best circus performers in and out of NYC, and it touts the mission of HOY to unabashedly be your best and boldest self.

Conclusion

Venues like HOY and The Muse and companies like the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus have the power to energetically unify communities and provide practical means for livelihood in the arts. The American Circus Alliance (ACA) is the latest attempt by a core group of long-time circus creators to unify the US circus community and work for

the necessary governmental changes that would ensure circus is recognised as a unique art form in the US. While we were unable to meet with the ACA on this trip, the organisation deserves mention, because it seeks systemic solutions to many of the issues we have discussed. Our time in NYC revealed that there is significant opportunity for

circus to make further inroads into the programming of respected arts venues in the city, and in the US in general. Nonetheless, the circus scene in the US must swim upstream against systematic barriers damming artists' way toward a more sustainable ecology.

THE QUEBEC CIRCUS ARTS: REINVENTED, REVIVED, AND REVITALISED

By Patrick Leroux



Louis Patrick Leroux is the Rector of Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. His research focuses on Quebec theatre, contemporary circus arts, and research-creation. He is a founding member of the Montreal Working Group on Circus Research, and has been teaching at the National Circus School in Montreal for 10 years. He has been a Visiting Professor at ENS Lyon, the University of Toulouse, Charles University in Prague, the University of Chile, and Duke University. He is the author of numerous publications on the circus such as *La culture québécoise au temps de la pandémie* (PUM, to be published in 2023), with Hervé Guay and Sandria Bouliane.

In the wake of the pandemic

When visiting the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival in the summer of 2022, the Circostrada delegation entered an allegorical arena that had been profoundly disrupted by the effects of the pandemic. The world of circus arts was just getting back on its feet, glad to be part of the community again and rediscover its habits, its festival, and its audience. The complete shut-down of all theatres in Quebec from 13 March to 3 July 2020, then from 1 October 2020 to 12 March 2021, and again from 20 December 2021 to 12 March 2022 has deeply destabilised the milieu, leaving artists without State support and entire organisations alone in the face of uncertainty and ever-changing conditions for two long years. The suspension of most tours, added to the closure of training venues and the prohibition on public gatherings, has imposed a regime of unpredictability and collective resilience on circuses in Quebec. A great number of circus artists and stage technicians have left the profession following months of financial and emotional hardship. Larger companies may have survived, though even the Cirque du Soleil – with no capital or box office income – was forced into bankrupt-



Project Lèche-vitrine during the pandemic © Patrick Leroux

cy and bought out by a Torontonians portfolio management firm, following a grand diplomatic ballet of proposals singularly focused on wealth. During this time, performers found themselves with no contracts, no venues, and no prospects for the future. Several orchestrated shows online and played with fanciful cyber creations. Small groups opened their social and support bubbles in order to bypass

restrictions and make the most of this unexpected “free time” to continue working together. Artists performed from their balconies for passers-by, or in the streets for those watching from their windows. Finally, the Quebec winter passed and both the sun and the artists of *Bonheur Mobile* brightened the streets of Montreal, re-fertilising the fairground roots of the circus arts, uprooting basic narrative plots

and overly spectacular feats, and instead cultivating a sense of catharsis and joy for a population stricken by this unexpected pandemic. Since

then, life has resumed its course, as have circus activities. And despite its insistent waves the pandemic has become background noise, serving as a

quiet reminder of the precariousness of our contemporary lives.

The Dialectics of Quebec Circus Arts

The Quebec circus arts can be viewed through a dialectic lens that is clouded with paradoxes. These arts can be both global and local, accessible and experimental, professional and social. Thanks to the success of their artistic and commercial model, they extend to all continents, so it is difficult to imagine the Quebec circus arts as confined only to Quebec. However, the pandemic subdued any and all hopes of proactive expansion. As early as 13 March 2020, the

performing arts, which were essentially driven by ticket sales and which benefited very little from State subsidies, believed that they would never recover from the upheaval of the effects of the pandemic. The fallout has been inconsistent, but has nevertheless revealed the extent to which this once financially autonomous ecosystem has been and remains poorly supported by the State, and is vulnerable to economic and social turmoil. Despite their eco-

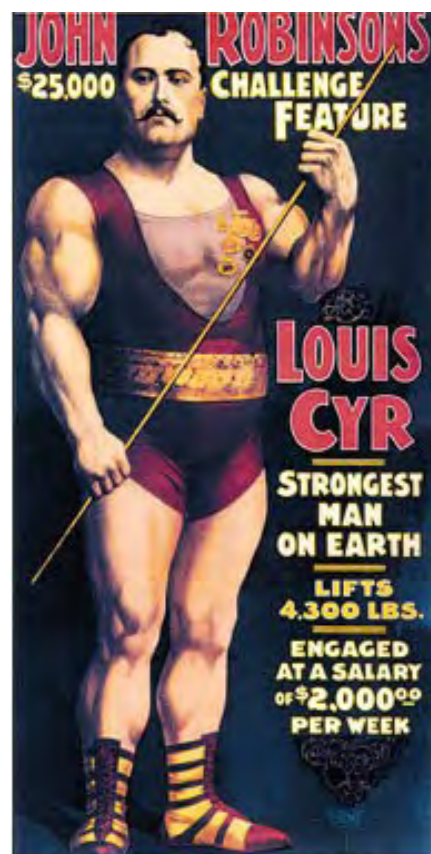
nomie weight, their power of attraction with regards to artists, and their impact on global circus practices, the Quebec circus arts are contained within a limited sphere of influence; a province with only 8 million inhabitants, two higher education institutions, and a few schools. Despite significant historical foundations, the tradition of the circus and its practice, its scope, and its place in French Canadian society are all still incipient.

Emergence of the Quebec Circus Arts

The history of the *Quebec circus arts* is very recent, but the history of the *circus in Quebec* dates back to 1797 with the arrival of the modern circus as introduced by John Bill Ricketts. Its presence in Montreal for more than a year, and in Quebec City for several months, provided an unexpected opportunity for the French Canadian and English communities who arrived just after the Conquest. Throughout the 19th century, gymnastics competitions and circus activities in Montreal's public gardens, including the Guilbault Garden (1830-1869) and Sohmer Park (1889-1919), ensured the constant development of circus disciplines. However, this was not enough to give rise to the creation of bona fide Quebec circuses. For a long time, Quebec exported its talents abroad while welcoming foreign companies, notably from its American neighbours. It was not until the 1980s that the relationship was reversed, with the unexpected creation of "reinvented" circus arts in Montreal.

The circumstances that led to the emergence of these new Quebec circus arts were based on several conditions. First

of all, the hosting of the 1976 Olympic Games, which brought numerous gymnasts and, above all, their trainers, to Montreal. Secondly, the role of the Centre Immaculée-Conception as a place where outdoor art artists, theatre troupes, gymnasts, and acrobats could come together. Additionally, the return of three French Canadian clowns trained at the Budapest Circus Arts School – this school inspired Guy Caron to recreate his experience in Montreal, thus laying the foundations for the Quebec Circus Arts School established in 1981. The end of an era was announced when the last large-scale traditional Quebec circus – Cirque Gattini – closed following the death of a trainer who was killed by her elephant during a performance in 1979. Shortly afterwards in Charlevoix, a group of acrobats and stilt-walkers working alongside Gilles Ste-Croix would come to meet the fire-eating eccentric entrepreneur, Guy Laliberté. Together, they dreamt up a large-scale project – a *grand tour* in 1984 to mark the 450th anniversary of the arrival of Jacques Cartier. This project would come to be called the Cirque du Soleil, and would offer circus shows



A poster of Louis Cyr, one of the greatest circus artist of the 19th century, also a star of the American stage © Collection Eric Murray

without animals, combining acrobats, contortionists, clowns, and musicians.

Thenceforth followed the many astonishing successes of Cirque du Soleil in Quebec, Canada, and the United States, particularly in Los Angeles with *We Reinvent the Circus* in 1987, and as of 1994 with *Mystère* in Las Vegas, where one permanent show gave way to another with up to eight separate shows presented simultaneously in as many rooms, thus transforming the Gambling Capital into the ideal destination for mainstream entertainment.

Other companies were born in the “shadow of the sun”, created by artists who had worked at Cirque du Soleil, notably the short-lived Cirque du Tonnerre (1990), Cirque Éloize (1993-) and, in the early 2000s, the 7 Doigts de la Main or “7 Fingers” (2002-) – a collective led by

circus artists who wished to highlight their singular individuality. Each company found a way to stand out from the crowd and devised its own signature. Cirque Éloize first developed its touring circuit in theatres across Quebec and New England. The 7 Fingers offered a wide variety of acts reflecting the individuality of its co-director artists, ranging from the *Loft* collective to *Psy*, *Traces*, *Patinoire*, and *Triptyque*.

In France, a country of artistic effervescence where the circus arts started off as “nouveau”, before becoming “contemporary”, and finally “modern”, the Ministry of Culture decreed that the 2001-2002 season would be the year of the circus arts, conferring State recognition of an art form deemed

risqué. This generated an increase in subsidies, a charter for hosting circuses country-wide, and the development of financial support measures.

Also in 2001, the Quebec government finally realised that contemporary circus arts were making an inevitable name for themselves on the cultural scene, and offered it official recognition in the same way as other art forms, allowing artists and companies to present projects to the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec. This legitimisation of the circus arts by the State paved the way for the *artistic audacity* that would follow, and helped make Quebec a North American hub for circus-related productions, training, and activities.

Circuses' Roles and Rights

Over the past two decades, the Quebec circus arts have shone and spread across almost every continent. Cirque du Soleil, Cirque Éloize, the 7 Fingers, Cirque Alphonse, FLIP Fabrique, and Machine de Cirque – to name but a few of the most well-known companies – maintain a constant supply of Quebec circus arts on all continents, each with its own audience. At the same time, an emerging local scene has offered an experimental and provocative alternative to mainstream circuses.

Born unto outdoor arts, French nouveau circus arts, athletic dance, and accomplished gymnastics, the Quebec circus arts are renowned for their extremely high level of acrobatic technique, the finesse of their forms, and their gift for coherence in their storytelling. Quebec circus arts are enviable for both their professionalism and their popular and commercial local and global fame, sometimes to the dismay of certain art purists who see this success as the triumph of an “overtly formatted” consumer product. This simply goes to show how little is known about the diversity of the artistic offering, es-

pecially considering the schism over the last decade of new forms and discourses that reflect a contemporary society that is ever-more heterogeneous and open to alterity.

The profoundest paradox of the Quebec circus arts stems from the fact that they experienced an unexpected success at the turn of the 1990s and that the subsequent measure of their fame did not match that of other forms

of performance art. The transnational gigantism of the Cirque du Soleil has made it difficult for small companies to emulate this achievement and stand out from their competition. In spite of its overflowing source of modest projects and diverse perspectives, it took a while for this discipline to truly establish itself, but a complex ecosystem emerged through these smaller companies, cabarets, studios, and cramped spaces, thanks in large part to



Mystère a performance of Cirque du Soleil © Tomasz Rossa

Montreal's ability to attract circus performers from all over the world. The alternative circus arts – from Productions Carmagnole's unconventional cabarets to the anfractuous representa-

tions of Andréane Leclerc, the ethereal arcs of Émile Pineau, or the explosive performances of Peter James – draws on burlesque and experimental forms of theatre and dance. It is inspired by

performance art and is practised in art studios and enshrouded rooms. Several artists bridge the gaps between the numerous scenes.

The Magnetic Might of Montreal

Artists from all over the world come to Montreal to train, practice, and create their projects either in conjunction with or, sometimes, in response to its three major companies. Thanks to the reputation of the Quebec circus arts, Montreal has become a real hub for modern global circus arts. Montreal's appeal lies in the number of shows produced by its companies, the number of tour contracts, and the favourable hiring conditions at the large-scale companies. This is also due to the National Circus School, the Verdun Circus School, the Quebec Circus Arts School, and the many other training and continuous education centres.

In 1999, the Cirque du Soleil, the National Circus School (secondary school and vocational college) and En Piste – the national circus arts alliance – decided to create the Cité des Arts du Cirque, which they would go on to open in the working-class neighbourhood of Saint-Michel. This project



Hamlet an adaptation of Patrick Leroux at Montréal Complètement Cirque Festival 2016
© Chantal Levesque

would include a large-scale circus hall, the TOHU, as well as an environmental complex that is on its way to becoming the second largest park in Montreal. The TOHU is a unique venue in North America, as it is the only “permanent”

theatre entirely dedicated to contemporary circus arts, offering season passes as well as an international summer festival, Montréal Complètement Cirque, founded in 2010.

Circus Sites and Sights to Behold

Cirque du Soleil's touring shows have long been presented under the company's distinctive big top, as have those of Cavalia and the small company Vague de Cirque, located in the Magdalen Islands. The Akya family circus has also toured with its own intimate marquee for a number of years. While the big top is long-established symbol of the circus's exciting yet temporary nature, it has been discarded by several companies in favour of theatres and multidisciplinary auditoriums. This gives rise to circus arts that master the codes of theatrical representation, borrowing the illuminations typically

associated with contemporary dance, relying on more nuanced acting and aesthetics, moving away from classic circus acts, and instead opting for thematic or narrative dramatic works while infusing the audience with a thrill of the spectacular.

Thus, in addition to the well-established programme at the TOHU, several theatres and institutions (Place des Arts, Théâtre du Nouveau-Monde) also offer circus shows, including performances by Cirque Éloize, Compagnia Finzi Pasca, and the 7 Fingers. New locations are also now opening up to

contemporary and even radical forms of the circus: La Chapelle Spectacle favours short and provocative forms, while the Centaur Theatre welcomes theatrical forms of circus arts that closer resembling the art of clowning. In Quebec, Robert Lepage's venue for creation and distribution, Le Diamant, is also home to contemporary circus arts and acts.

The circus arts are even present in places of worship: in the national capital, the Quebec Circus Arts School has taken up residence in a deconsecrated church. In Montreal, Cirque Hors Piste

is located in the Sainte-Brigide de Kildare Church. More recently, Saint-Jax Church in the city centre has been bringing together artists from Le Monastère cabaret and the multilingual Anglican community, to redefine the distinctions between the sacred and the profane.

The circus arts, initially seen as spectacular and playful, have become a symbol of creativity and innovation thanks to the development of artistic and technical know-how derived from the Cirque du Soleil laboratories and the

Centre for Circus Arts Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer (CRI-TAC) at the National Circus School.

A centre for scholarly research in circus arts was created at Concordia University and attracts international researchers. The circus arts have made their way from big tops and theatres to universities and lecture halls.

For the past 30-something years, there has been a gradual normalisation of the circus arts in French Canadian society. Without losing their exceptional potential, circuses are no longer nostal-

gic nor traditional, but rather modern. They are part of the urban fabric, both in contexts of precariousness (thanks to social circus arts) and abundance (through corporative shows). Some primary schools offer a “circus” module as part of their physical education classes; it is not uncommon to see children and teenagers wielding a diabolo or flower stick in parks. Theatre, dance, and multimedia shows all incorporate elements of the Quebec acrobatic circus arts. Over the decades, the circus arts have come to be less “reinvented”, and rather “refocused” and “reconsidered”.

Reinventing Connections with and within the Circus Arts

The idea of the “reinventing” the circus arts has never been more blatant than in the last three years. The pandemic has had a profound effect on the circus arts in Quebec. Artists affected by the situation realised that they had to form their own organisations, take control of their future, and become more independent.

En Piste – the national circus arts alliance – played a key role as a catalyst for the milieu, offering vital information, listening to artists’ concerns, making essential presentations to governments and convincing them to provide support to the Quebec circus arts community.

New figures have emerged and have appeared on social media, and cabarets are back in business. There are new innovative topics on the rise, including body diversity and trans identities. And most surprising of all, there are those who are beginning to question the use of feats of technical prowess as classically practised in circuses across Quebec.

Moreover, large companies have become more responsible and aware of the ecological and economic impact of their actions. Some artists even go so far as to make the ecological choice of no longer travelling by plane, which

poses a real challenge for a milieu whose economic model and geographical reality are based on the ability to tour internationally.

The Quebec circus arts have long triumphed against all expectations. They have often foiled common predictions, using their capacity for reinvention as a condition for survival and success. The pandemic has offered an opportunity for renewal, and in the coming years we shall see what works and what does not, and the innovations that will emerge.

OUTDOOR, STREET AND ALLEY ARTS IN CANADA: ROOTED IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS FROM COAST TO COAST

By Mariam 'Nakato' Tounkara



Mariam 'Nakato' Tounkara is an autistic playwright and poet, as well as a freelance cultural journalist of West African descent. She was born in France and has lived in Quebec (Eastern Townships) for over 25 years. Her poetics and artistic project are based on the relationship between forces, a concept she has forged from her Soninké heritage (a West African ethnic group), ancient and philosophy. She is deeply involved in arts appreciation through citizen projects and cultural mediation, as well as in the recognition of neurodiverse artists.

Be they circus, theatre or multidisciplinary performances, outdoor arts performances have become an incredibly popular art form in major urban areas and regional cities across Canada. Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and many other cities located around them offer a place for artists to express themselves on the streets and in alleyways during the summer season.

Whether they are independent creators of their own original works or productions with solid financial backing, public performances of circus, theatre and other art forms are reviving Canadian audiences' appreciation of the performing arts. Proximity to the inhabitants of a specific neighbourhood, the use of various (often communal) spaces and physical movement all constitute the foundations of this outdoor art.

Professional and amateur artists working in troupes or giving solo performances come together to present shows to passers-by. These spontaneous or organised performances can take place anywhere, from pavements to alleyways and everywhere between. The range of performances is very broad and includes acrobatics and musical shows. The one thing they



Performance *Le chant de l'arbre* (The tree song) from Toxique Trottoir © Regroupement des Arts de Rue du Québec

all share is an element of surprise and excitement, in addition to promoting

inclusivity and a sense of generosity because they are free to attend.

The history of outdoor arts in Canada and Quebec

Outdoor art has a long history in Quebec dating back to the late 19th century. At the time, artists often performed in public spaces such as parks, squares and on street corners. Outdoor art

theatre was seen as a way of bringing joy and entertainment to the general public, while drawing their attention to important social issues. In mid-19th-century Canada, outdoor art was primarily

used as a form of protest or political expression. In the early 20th century, circus and outdoor art began to take on a more artistic form, as performers wanted to create their own produc-

tions and adaptations of classical numbers and works. Serving as an alternative to stage shows and traditional circuses with animals, they have continued to become increasingly professional in stature and are now an essential

part of the cultural landscape. Outdoor art artists mainly use a variety of styles, such as acrobatics, juggling, clowning, puppetry, music, singing, games or theatrical improvisation and storytelling to entertain their audience.

Outdoor art is now an important outlet for independent artists who want to express their creativity and share their art with the general public.

Originality and aesthetics

Outdoor art offers Canadians from all provinces and territories unique opportunities to experience live art in their own communities. Winter is long and can be extremely cold, with spring and summer sometimes reduced to just four months (except in British Columbia). Since the notion of community encompasses both provincial and local identities, it is quite natural that shows reflect the neighbourhoods' indigenous, French- or English-speaking culture.

Buskers together with temporary collectives and companies make good use of the various spaces available in cities for their performances. In Montreal,

for example, the exit from Mont-Royal metro station and several alleyways in Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie are often occupied by shows that move from one space to the next. These performances for local inhabitants (which often take place on the fringes of summer festivals) are very popular because they encourage those who are not used to attending outdoor public entertainment shows to relax and enjoy themselves. However, outdoor arts are no longer limited to these places exclusively; performance arts held in public spaces (such as parks and forests) and which use outdoor art techniques are included in the discipline by extension. For example, the Alley Theatre Group

founded by Michael Rubinoff in Toronto in 2009 has produced original and innovative works, as well as adaptations of the classics. Its interpretation of *Othello* by William Shakespeare was adapted for the outdoor stage at Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto, with the company using the natural landscape to bring the classic tragedy to life, combining elements of modern theatre with traditional outdoor art performance techniques. This production was acclaimed by the general public and critics alike, and demonstrates the unique creativity and passion of outdoor art.

Productions and festivals

Many outdoor art artists depend on donations from the public to keep their shows viable, and none have the same financial resources as formal, established companies.

Festivals are a great way for them to draw attention to their art beyond the stage. Outdoor art performances not only bring joy to spectators, but they also contribute to the dynamism of cities mainly because they attract tourists. In Toronto, the Summerworks Festival presents more than 40 different theatrical productions each year in public spaces, such as parks and alleyways. The festival is known for showcasing new works by emerging playwrights, actors and directors. Other cities in Canada also have their own outdoor art festivals, including the SAW Gallery Festival of Alternative Theater in Ottawa and the Van-

couver International Fringe Festival, which is part of the Fringe circuit that stretches across Canada and sections of the US. These events provide a

unique opportunity for the public to experience different types of outdoor art. Whether it is a comedy routine, an improvisatory show or a cultural me-



Image from Odenang: I Belong Somewhere, a short film by Tashie Broadbent, Eddie Frappier, Jessica Frappier and Feather Sutherland with mentorship from Naomi Condo, Nava Waxman, and KJ Edwards, part of the Virtual Creative Native Project, 2021



Performance *Apothicaire* from Zoé Hockhousen © Zoé Hockhousen

diation workshop, there is always something that can transform a neighbourhood. Not only do these shows bring laughter and entertainment to communities, they also provide an outlet for talented artists, who use them as creative sounding boards before collaborating with major producers or embarking on overseas tours.

Quebec's outdoor art festivals all have their own distinct characters, featuring everything from tap dancing to clowning, acrobatics to mime, and opera to improvisation. The atmosphere is always cheerful and friendly, with shows often taking place in outdoor venues that encourage public participation. Complètement Cirque in Montreal and Quebec's Festival des Arts de la Rue or Embuscades figure among the most important each year. They bring together artists from all corners of the province (and from around the world) and celebrate very sophisticated forms of performance. According to Zoé Hockhousen, a multidisciplinary artist who does dance, circus, clowning and visual arts, the originality of outdoor arts stems from their "absolute power and unifying effect! It

feels like going to a playground where everyone from the neighbourhood and local area is invited without exception. Free of charge. In a space that we would not typically imagine as a stage." However, she adds that such freedom of expression does require practitioners to overcome certain hurdles, as "artists have to be flexible depending on how hot or cold it is and any bad weather. I find that stimulating personally, but it can also be exhausting."

Canada is home to some of the best outdoor art shows in the world. From Toronto to Quebec via St John's in Newfoundland and Calgary, a variety of 'flow art'¹ shows are available to enjoy. These impressive hybrid performances showcase technique and creativity, combining all kinds of performance and visual arts. Outdoor art shows have the unique ability to offer an unforgettable experience that cannot be reproduced in auditoriums. They give audiences the chance to connect with artists and soak up a poetic atmosphere imbued with spontaneity and wonder, which is not easy to find in other forms of entertainment. They are popular in Canadian

cities and offer a unique combination of acrobatics, puppetry, music and comedy in urban spaces.

Theatre and circus performances are often seen in parks, public areas or other, rather more forgotten open spaces, such as dumps. Artists often use highly elaborate tools such as masks, costumes, juggling clubs, stilts or unicycles. There are traditional clowns (increasingly played by women in comic style), modern forms of acrobatics, aerial numbers embedded into the urban landscape (such as lights for pedestrian crossings), or elements borrowed from travelling fairs, such as tomahawk-throwing². When combined with sound and visual effects and even illusions, the theatricality of the performances helps to create an immersive narrative that audiences love. It is these ingredients that have contributed to the worldwide success of Cirque du Soleil.

In small towns and villages, they bring art to communities that otherwise wouldn't have access to it. Away from the major productions, another highly promising avenue has opened up for artists who want to get to know populations in all their diversity, telling stories that combine local realities with joyous imaginary elements.

¹ A form of artistic movement based on rhythm (with urban dance and synchronised group routines) and the handling of objects. Flow artists are often jugglers, fire-eaters or magicians, or they perform using hoops.

² The first European settlers who came to the United States and Canada in the 17th century brought their weapons and tools (including axes) with them for protection and to eventually build their homes. European axes have gradually been replaced with Indigenous peoples' tomahawks, whose name is derived from the Algonquin word *oto:mahùk*, meaning 'to strike'. The settlers sought out entertainment at axe-throwing competitions organised at travelling fairs.

The importance of official recognition

Outdoor art artists won the public's affection long before they received recognition from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (the CALQ). As well as providing quality art projects, performers lead the way in social innovation (serving audiences who do not have access to the arts due to their remote geographic location or socio-economic situation), urban revitalisation and environmental concerns (using recyclable and sustainable materials during performances) and national reconciliation with First Nations peoples. Faced with an ever-pressing need for professionalisation, representative bodies have emerged such as the Regroupement des Arts de Rue (RAR), which supports artists' development in Quebec and helps to promote them on a wider scale. Working with producers, artists' collectives and Canadian Arts and Heritage Councils in some cases, these organisations maintain an ongoing dialogue with the local authorities charged with public safety and the development of tourism. It is this aptitude for creating trusting relationships that makes it possible to hold events in parks, wastelands and streets year after year. Impromptu shows manage to maintain their spontaneous character, when in reality they are carefully prepared, documented and secure. In Canada, outdoor art permits are generally granted to companies or performing arts groups who want to present their work in public spaces. These organisations must be authorised by provincial governments and municipalities before they can perform in such areas. In Quebec, in particular, outdoor art permits are granted by municipal au-



Festival Montréal Complètement Cirque 2021 © Chantal Levesque

thorities. The process differs from place to place, but it generally requires the artistic company or group to submit a request detailing the nature of the performance, including its time, location and duration. Depending on municipal policies, additional requirements may include insurance documents, proof of the event's location, and permission from any businesses or local residences that may be affected by the event.

Regardless of where they are held, outdoor art shows generally require good forward planning. Before each show, organisers must take into account the size and layout of the performance space, any potential safety issues and other logistical aspects, such as access to electricity or water. It is also important to consider how the sound will move through spaces and whether it could potentially disturb nearby businesses or homes. In addition, organi-

sers must be aware of any restrictions in place that could prevent them from using any particular props or valuable objects during the performance.

These shows offer family-friendly entertainment, which is a real positive and a powerful argument in local grant applications. They can also serve as fundraisers for charities or educational initiatives. This practice is widespread in English-speaking communities.

Outdoor arts have become an important part of Canadian culture. This type of urban art is something residents and tourists alike look forward to, and offers municipalities a unique canvas for self-expression. By showcasing local talent and connecting creators from all walks of life, outdoor art performances continue to nurture art in all its forms.

AN EXAMPLE OF ORGANISATION FOR CIRCUS ARTS IN THE UNITED STATES - PRESENTING THE REGINA A. QUICK CENTER FOR THE ART, A PLACE FOR INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

by Lori Jones



Lori N. Jones, (she/her) Director of Programming and Audience Development for the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield University (Connecticut), joined the Quick team in 2013. Previously, she worked with NC State Live as the Community Engagement Coordinator at North Carolina State University and as the Director of Performances & Community Development at the American Dance Festival. She currently serves as the co-facilitator for the U.S. Presenters Working Group for the International Market for Contemporary Circus.

The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts is located on the sprawling campus of Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut. Just an hour from New York City, the town of Fairfield is made up of culture-hungry residents and is nestled next to Bridgeport, Connecticut's largest and most diverse city. The dichotomy of these two places hugged against one another is part of what makes programming for the Quick so interesting. Our mission is to serve as a dynamic and inclusive centre for the whole community that inspires intellectual curiosity, broadens perspectives, and transforms the way we see the world and how we interact with one another. In service of our campus and larger community, our aim is to connect audiences and artists in meaningful dialogue through classical, jazz, and global music, dance, theatre, circus, and multi-disciplinary works that engage and ins-

pire audiences to learn about themselves and the world around them. We do this by presenting artists from around the world as well as featuring the work of artists in our own region and our commitment extends beyond presentation to include artist residencies, commissioning new work, and our Senior Fellow in the Arts program, which provides artists more in-depth university resources while also engaging our campus community with the artist's creative process and practice.

When talking about the Quick's circus programming, it's important to note that, in reality, the Quick started presenting circus a mere five years ago, however our passion and commitment to the art form has quickly made circus an important part of the fabric of what we offer. Our commitment is two-fold. Circus offers audiences a unique

experience and access point through extraordinary examples of teamwork, risk, and the potential of failure and how to push through that moment to experience success. In addition, the P.T. Barnum Museum is located in downtown Bridgeport, minutes from our front door. Though focused on Barnum's history, the museum also shares Barnum's legacy as innovator, making for a strong partnership in which the Quick can present artists that move the art form forward, while being able to acknowledge the historical connections of our past.

Over the last five years, the Quick has worked with circus companies from around the world and as part of our engagements, we plan educational programs for all ages. From workshops with young kids and adults that help teach movement and spatial awareness

to inviting our Fairfield University student athletes to train with these elite artists, the feedback is always the same “I had no idea it was going to be this challenging and also this fun!” This focus has expanded as the Quick added an Introduction to Circus Skills camp to our Summer Intensives which offers weekly camps to children ages 6-16 led by a local circus artist and educator.

What we know to be true is that integrating circus into the core of our programming has been incredibly rewarding, serving our community, our

patrons, and the artists. Regardless of size or scale, indoor or outdoor, circus continues to evolve with artists creating work that might be perfect for your venue. The Quick aims to lead by example, showing that even if you may never have presented circus prior, there is space within your community to offer rich and meaningful experiences with an art form that brings so much joy into our lives – something our communities crave now more than ever.



THE INTERVIEW CORNER: VOICES AND VIEWS OF CULTURAL LEADERS AND ARTISTS FROM CANADA AND NEW YORK CITY



INTERVIEW WITH STÉPHANE LAVOIE



Stéphane Lavoie is the Managing Director and Head of Programming at Montreal's TOHU, Cité des Arts du Cirque. Over the course of his career, he has played a key role in welcoming countless Canadian, European and other visiting companies to Quebec, and is regularly called on to sit on festival panels. In 2019, he was made a Knight of the French Republic's Order of Arts and Letters.

TOHU is North America's only contemporary circus platform. Why is this?

Circus arts are relatively new to Quebec. The National Circus School opened its doors in 1981, and the Cirque du Soleil was founded in 1984. The sector only began professionalising fairly recently, which explains why there are still very few specialist organisers. And while Canada is the second-largest country in the world, it is a relatively small market, being home to a population of just 38 million.

It was not until the early 2000s that the Cirque du Soleil, the National Circus School, and En Piste - Regroupement National des Arts du Cirque rallied around with the idea of developing the infrastructure needed to anchor Montreal's position as a global capital



Destination TOHU ©TOHU

in the circus arts. One of the missing ingredients to creating an all-encompassing circus scene was a venue, and so TOHU opened to the public in 2004.

Our 360-degree ring is in step with undiluted circus tradition: while we welcome a host of different art forms, the circus will always be our main area of

expertise. It is the beating heart of what we do. We have remained true to our mission and vision since opening, which may also go some way to explaining what makes us the exception, and how we became internationally renowned.

After two years of the Covid pandemic, how is the professional circus arts sector holding up in Canada, and in Quebec in particular?

The last two years were particularly challenging, it has to be said. But the local government was swift to offer up aid packages to venues like TOHU, which kept us afloat.

I feel it was toughest for the artists, performers, artisans, and technicians. Tours screeched to a halt, and training spaces were shut down. For many, it has become hard to maintain the physical and psychological condition needed to practise their craft and art.

Fortunately, the circus community's voices were heard loud and clear by the public authorities, and especially in Quebec, resulting in professional performers and artists being given permission to return to their training centres and creative hubs. TOHU reinvented itself into many things, including an

expansive training venue and artistic residence. Because we were no longer able to put on shows, we made our facilities and other studios available to artists and performers.

Thanks to these residences and a pool of incredible artists who could no longer travel, several new collectives have popped up. The new generation's sense of vibrancy and overwhelming creative energy is now palpable.

Over the past two years, a series of collaborations between Montreal's various companies and performers have been sparked, and there is a real drive to continue the momentum. Nobody wants to work in isolation anymore. That team spirit existed before, but it has intensified.

And now that the worst of the pandemic is hopefully behind us, we're seeing the sector get back into its groove. International tours have made a return, so many of our Quebec companies are on the road right now. The global economic crisis impacts us directly, however, and inflation and the current cost of transport are making it difficult to plan or extend tours to the extent we might like.

What aesthetic changes or trends have you spotted in contemporary circus shows over the last ten years?

Over the past decade, the circus has evolved to incorporate more influences from dance, music, and theatre, and we are seeing more hybrid fusions of different artistic fields. The circus is also increasingly tackling social issues such as diversity, inclusiveness, and the climate – it is evolving in step with wider society and continues to feel fresh and of its time.

After two years of pandemic, the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival was finally able to make its comeback. How did you feel in the lead-up to this? What made this 13th edition different?

We were confident that we would be able to put on a “normal” edition of Montréal Complètement Cirque. After two years of having everything on hold, the future looked bright and we wanted to think big for this 13th edition of the festival. The whole team was excited and could not wait to be reunited with the public again.

We carved out lots of different opportunities for members of the public to connect with the performers: local artists and companies, as well as the international troupes we were at long last able to host.

We created our *GIANTS* too, a brand-new feature that helped give downtown Montreal's tourism sector a boost. We built three human-shaped steel structures measuring over 15 metres high, with each giant having the space to host a circus company (Les 7 Doigts, Cirque Éloïze and Machine de Cirque), all of which put on a new show during the festival, free of charge. We are convinced that *THE GIANTS* will become an iconic feature on Montreal's landscape over the next few years. It's a mark of recognition for our discipline and our performers, a symbol that



Street “rue Saint-Denis”, where the festival Montréal Complètement Cirque takes place © JF Savaria

helps shape Montreal's identity as a global capital for the circus arts.

In other words, this edition felt like one big party, with thousands of festival goers streaming down the streets and pouring into the venues. It also marked the return of in-person proceedings for the MICC, the International Market of Contemporary Circus, which saw hundreds of professionals from around the world come together.

As a platform for sharing, creating, and experimenting, and a space in which culture, environment, and community all converge, what are your upcoming plans for developing the circus, the Cité des Arts, and the circus arts generally?

Concretely, we want the public to embrace TOHU year-round, not just in high season or for Montréal Complètement Cirque. Two years ago, we launched our Destination TOHU scheme, in which we put on shows in different tents dotted around the TOHU forecourt. We also added free activities and performances outside, creating spaces where people could meet and mingle, stop for a moment and enjoy a bite-sized slice of what it feels like to be immersed in a circus village.

TOHU also serves as the interpretation and reception pavilion for the gorgeous Frédéric-Back Park, one of the city's most ambitious rehabilitation projects to transform a former landfill site. We offer a free line-up of cultural, educational, and leisure activities here, and so it feels only natural that we would create a space where visitors to the park might dip into circus arts, and vice-versa.



Les Géants (The giants) © Joshua Mellin



INTERVIEW WITH ANNIE ROY



Alongside a career in “new dance”, Annie Roy co-founded ATSA – Quand l’Art Passe à l’Action in 1997 with her husband, Pierre Allard, who passed away in November 2018. Over the next 21 years, this duo created over sixty urban interventions (installations, events, participatory stagings) in the public space, highlighting the social and environmental aberrations that preoccupied them. ATSA's creations aim to restore the public space as a civic space open to discussion and debate. Annie continues to activate ATSA's action-works, including the Cuisine Ta Ville 19-21-23 biennial, the Cuisine ton Quartier online and in the parks, and La Montagnarde artists' residency.

How is the professional outdoor arts sector doing in Canada, and in Quebec in particular, two years after the COVID-19 pandemic?

I think Covid has made us all more withdrawn. While we are keen to get out and about and meet people, we are also slower off the mark and more willing to stay at home. It is as if we have been cut off from the world and it has made us more selective and less prone to FOMO! I am noticing that people's mental health is frailer and, although I cannot speak for every workplace, I think that the culture scene has been traumatised. Not in the same sense as the healthcare sector, which has been put under huge pressure, but in the sense that we are being told, “you are not useful, we do not need you so much”. It has triggered a lot of depression, with people changing directions and careers. Nowadays, I hear a lot of people complaining that they are struggling to find staff in the management and technical sectors, so those artists and teams who do persevere are susceptible to burnout.

Cuisine Ta Ville (CTV) took place on the Place des Festivals from 5 to 14 May 2023, and I booked more than 70 artists for it. The audience showed up, but we sometimes ran out of volunteers (although not to a catastrophic degree). As a society, we're still in shock. We need to regain trust in each other and in life in general because now we know that everything



Cuisine Ta Ville 2023 ©Martin Savoie

can change in the blink of an eye. The idea of going back to where we were before feels a bit nihilistic. As well as being in a post-pandemic frame of mind, we know there is a war going on in the background, and that seems particularly absurd in the 21st century. As a matter of fact, I have produced a piece about it for CTV '23. There is also inflation, which is a huge source of distress for working class people, and the failure of the authorities to deal with major issues like the climate change or poverty. All these factors really put people off. Even if I tell myself that we need to come together and have fun, I know deep down that the backdrop is pretty heavy and grim. That said, I have seen some improvements this year, with new theatre, dance and music performances emerging in venues

more frequently. Young people want to see each other again and live their lives together. This is so important for our future citizens, and I think we need to do what we do for them!

Audiences came back to the Quand l’Art Passe à l’Action festival after the pandemic. How did it affect the organisation of the festival? Have you seen a change in the audience's habits?

Budgets are not as big and, like everyone else, artists need better pay. I am disappointed with the governments' post-pandemic responses. During the pandemic, they did not leave us to collapse, but now they want everything to go back to the way it was before and that is not possible. Everything is

more expensive and we do not have the same means. There is also a labour shortage, which creates a lot of volatility within teams. Personally, I turn down any online shows. This year, I offered a free in-person event in a public place. Making everything virtual in order to survive is something I would never do again. This was my biggest event, and it took place over ten days rather than four to mark our 25th anniversary. It was a huge challenge, but also such a great gift! The general public were able to come back several times with their families and friends, and experience the event over a longer period of time. This created more links with audiences, because we could see them multiple times and they were able to take part in more than one day of activities. That is what I love, actually: creating all kinds of opportunities for people to open up to the Other with a very multidisciplinary schedule combined with audience-focused activities that showcase the value of anything and everything, from making food to talking about people's experiences of migration, learning French or making something from their own country. It communicates to people that they are important and can change things too. Having a varied artistic schedule on a single site gives audiences the chance to discover a wide range of disciplines.

I might come for the music, but discover visual artists, for example! When we bring everything together, we make our own little world that encourages people to open their minds to all kinds of new things and talk with others. In the end, although I realised that far fewer people come to the city centre on weekdays than they did before the pandemic, we had good weather and there was lots of goodwill and cheer! I noticed that we got much less media coverage than before, however, and that is a real pity because audiences in the Montreal area could have got more out of it. We need to rely on social media rather than the larger, more traditional media outlets that are heavily focused on celebrities. I have got over it now. It is not worth spending thousands of dollars on PR anymore.

What projects do you have in mind to further develop outdoor arts as a space for creation and experimentation, in order to draw the public's attention to the crucial issues of sustainable development?

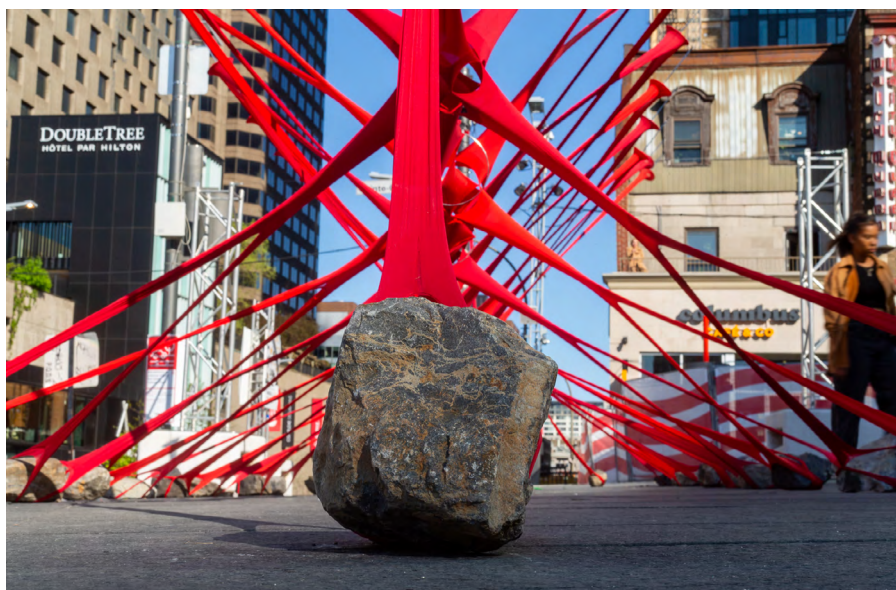
I have had something in mind for several years, but I was definitely hampered by the pandemic. It is a theatrical documentary installation about our relationship with data and all the paradigm shifts triggered by the virtual world

and artificial intelligence. I picture this experience as a circuit audiences will complete, ultimately making choices about their consumption and values. It will be a mix of theatre with in-person and virtual actors and a standalone audiovisual installation. I am planning to spend all of 2024 preparing it with my colleagues and I hope to premiere it in spring 2025. That aside, my other big long-term project is my residency for artists in the Laurentians called 'La Montagnarde'. Two artists were its first residents in autumn 2022 and I will continue to produce artists operating in the wilderness for the rest of my life!

To mark its 25th anniversary in 2022, ATSA (Quand l'Art Passe à l'Action) launched the 'La Montagnarde' residency programme. Why did you open up this new venue? How does it complement ATSA's other mission?

Oh wow, you have already heard about it! Since losing my partner in November 2018 after 21 years of shared experiences and creative output, I have had this undeniable yearning for nature. I was lucky enough to be able to buy the chalet next to mine on the edge of some public land, and I wanted to make sure that the artistic community could enjoy it because it is right in the middle of the forest!

Nature has helped me to make peace with the most painful thing that has happened to me and to come to terms with my partner's death. I see trees dying, so they can be reborn as mushrooms, the snow melting to make way for spring flowers... Death allows for rebirth and life goes on. Nature's balance has been formed over millions of years. Nature has this amazing ability to adapt. It is stronger than anything and, most of all, smarter than us humans, who are constantly destroying it. I have put all my money into buying land so I can protect it, and it will be the canvas for forest artworks, a setting for meditative walks, and so on.



Maria Ezcurra, *Tension* — Cuisine ta ville 2023 © Martin Savoie

The whole thing is open to the small community in my part of the country, who are used to doing sports in forested areas as well as hunting, snowmobiling and other noisy activities. But I am adding art to the mix, and for me, it is spiritual. I am just trying to show my love of the forest by giving it calm pieces of art that exist without us being there, and by giving people other options all of a sudden, like a walk to a meditation space that was once a hunting lodge, for instance. I will invite artists as and when, depending on who I meet, from all different disciplines, ages and career stages, so we can create a varied, but solid body of work built on values focused on respecting everything nature gives us, including silence.

What changes or trends have you noticed in the aesthetics of outdoor art shows over the last ten years?

We are finding inspiration in the key issues of our time more frequently, but the work we make out of them serves as a distraction. I find it annoying. Is it really art's job to ease our consciences? Maybe I am just being difficult, but I prefer to make spaces where people can really reflect and encounter new things, rather than just plonking a problem on an installation and imagining that will do the job. I am talking mostly about visual installations in public spaces. At the same time, if I look at it from another perspective, it is important to see beautiful things and feel that places are alive. But I do not like it when artists make half-hearted gestures to feel like revolutionaries, as if art were no different from marketing a bottle of vodka. I want to say to them, "you have the right to make beautiful things for the sake of it, you know!" We really



Cuisine ta ville 2023 © Martin Savoie

need beautiful things. When you open your heart to beauty, you immediately want to do better and contribute. We need to teach children to hanker after beauty. But obviously, when you live in grey buildings with no trees or benches in an area where shopping centres take pride of place, it is hard to teach them these things. There are so many opportunities to go and see free shows and exhibitions, but young people are glued to their screens, doing stuff that is often pretty meaningless.

On the other hand, in community centres and places for the vulnerable, art is recognised as a means of revitalising people and helping them reconnect with themselves in a positive way, and I find that comforting. Maybe this is a response to our post-pandemic torpor: reminding ourselves that we are creative beings who need colour, movement, the spoken word, songs and objects that speak to us about our surroundings if we are to live healthy lives. I want us to have art that helps

us to live better lives together, and this sometimes happens when art shows us the pain and suffering of others, and unlocks our ability to empathise and take action. I hope we see an anti-growth revolution that does not leave people behind; a green revolution that makes our planet healthy again. Also, I cannot wait to be a grandmother!



INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE BOUCHARD



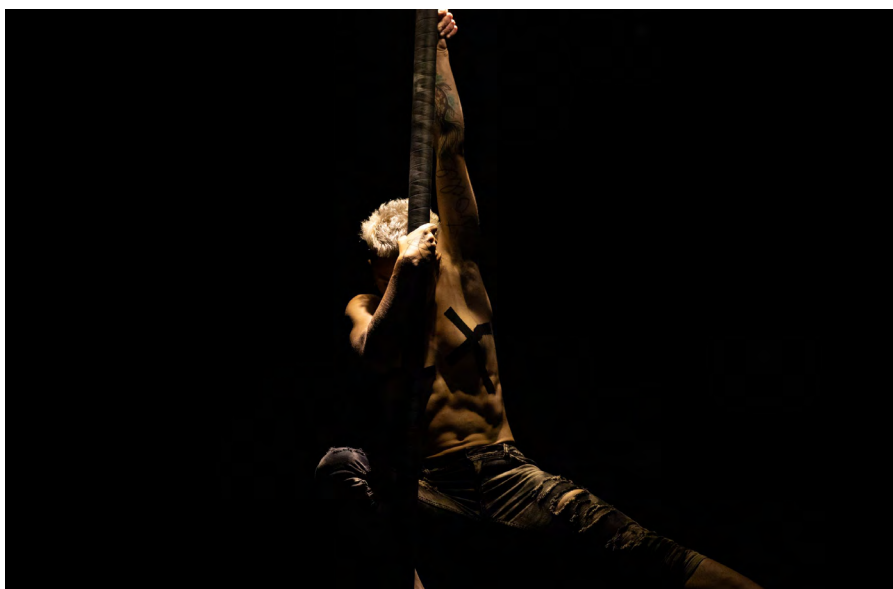
Christine Bouchard's career in the arts and culture spans over 35 years and has been instrumental in achieving progress for the organisations for which she has worked. Between 2014 and 2023, she has been the managing director¹ of En Piste, a circus arts alliance where she is actively working to support the sector on a national scale. Prior to this, she worked in a wide range of public and private sector organisations. Her experience has equipped her to take on responsibility for strategic planning, impact studies, project development, cultural policy drafting, and more. She chairs a number of representational groups and boards of directors. Buoyed by a passion for cultural development, she dedicates her time and energy to furthering the arts and culture, giving them the space they need to shine.

As a national circus arts alliance, what are your ambitions for the sector in the next few years?

To bounce back after the perfect storm! That is our main goal. When venues and borders closed, the impact on our sector was brutal; there was significant damage. Because our financial well-being is primarily based on exporting shows and corporate events, we went from prosperity to survival mode in the first flushes of the pandemic. It sent shockwaves rippling.

Thankfully the government took a series of measures that prevented us from dying out, and which in fact pushed through a number of causes En Piste had been working on for years. The Quebec government released \$21.5m in non-recurring aid specifically to support the circus sector in getting back on its feet. We also succeeded in securing some protection for artists and performers who fall ill during rehearsals and practice, and a financial aid package to reimburse any related expenses. Some companies also benefited from financial aid that allowed them to give performers and artists free access to their practice studios. Furthermore, in April 2021 our alliance launched a fund to help get shows touring Quebec.

Thanks to these various state support packages, we are seeing new material and digital practices bounce back,



Zed Cézard ©Mike Patten

while new collectives are emerging and the local market for performance is growing. We are gradually returning to the international scene, and audiences are right there with us. This vitality stems from artists' endless capacity to adapt and the great flexibility shown by organisations that have managed to adapt to an ever-shifting, uncertain and turbulent context, reinventing themselves, switching direction swiftly and building themselves back up.

Yet despite how proud we are, and despite the success stories and the international exposure we enjoy, the circus arts in Canada continue to receive less state support than any of the other performing arts. We need to strive to

strike a better balance in terms of funding and build up the means to ensure our sector remains in good shape for years to come. It is essential to represent, defend and promote our interests because there is still lots to be done and full recovery remains complex. This is a central priority for our alliance.

What do you feel are the priorities and core issues that need tackling to achieve development, recognition and promotion for the circus arts in Quebec?

It is a tricky question because there are so many challenges facing us simultaneously in Quebec. In 2017, an extensive sector-wide consultation led to us

¹ The interview was realised in July 2022. Nadia Drouin has taken over the role of General Director in September 2023.

drawing up our development plan, entitled *Extending Our Reach – For The National Development Of The Circus Arts*. This roadmap puts forward a ten-year blueprint and features an impressive list of challenges and priorities. In short, our dream was to develop a training pathway that would span early years to university. We also wanted to better support new productions in all their artistic diversity, build new circus venues, bolster promotion and communication for shows, support touring, establish networks and continuing training, foster new talent, roll out a nationwide promotional campaign and much more. Today, work on most of these priority areas is underway.

What is more, the context has undergone radical change since the pandemic. The live entertainment market has been disrupted by waves of cancellations and postponements. New productions are struggling to find an audience because of an abundance of options. Artists and companies face increasingly precarious situations. The way in which audiences consume culture is changing. People buy tickets at the last minute. Digital technology and artificial intelligence are sparking new concerns and transforming our approach to the business.

Plus, the pandemic is still lingering on, climate emergencies are intensifying, the sector and its development is under threat from a shortage and lack of professionals and social cohesiveness is crumbling. Socio-political conflicts and the threat of a recession are also factors to take into account, particularly in regard to exporting productions.

This means it is essential that we prompt the sector to get back to reflecting on its priorities, and breathe new life into our vision of developing the circus arts, incorporating sustainability, eco-responsibility, equal opportunities and social justice into our approach. We need to tap into more synergies, cooperation and re-



Andrea Ramírez Falcón, *Identité Brisée* © Marie-Andrée Lemire

source-sharing. We need to identify space in which we can draw up lists and reflect on ways of securing funding and cooperating.

Armed with a new blueprint, our alliance will be better equipped to represent the field, rallying the sector and supporting it through all these changes.

You represent and defend the interests of a broad church of members that represent all parties involved in the sector. How do you juggle all these many different needs?

Since we launched in 1997, we have tried to ensure our services hit the sweet spot between individuals' needs and those of the organisations responsible for training, production and promotion.

This is not always an easy balance to strike, because the context for the circus arts varies wildly across Canada. Quebec stands out from the other provinces in terms of the size of its circus community, its international profile and the fact that it has a training system. What is more, most of the funds available to us for our work come from the province of Quebec. We receive

very little finance from the federal government, which can sometimes make it challenging for us to serve the other provinces due to a lack of means.

Despite the fact that the circus arts are on the rise in Canada, no other alliance or association has emerged over the years. This reality is a challenge across the board and puts our organisation under huge strain.

It is clear that En Piste needs to do much more to cover all the sector's and members' needs. We always speak on behalf of the sector and government bodies hear us loud and clear. The representation we offer may not be perfect, but it has paved the way for major breakthroughs, because we speak on behalf of a community. In this sense, we are proud of the work we have done to advance the circus arts in our country.

What status do Quebec's circus artists and performers enjoy? How do they manage to live off their art?

In Quebec, most of the artists and performers are freelance and are forced to take on multiple contracts to make a living from their work. Some have day jobs. If they are salaried employees at a company, that makes them eligible for

employment insurance benefits when they reach the end of their contract. Otherwise, there is no social security safety net. Prior to the pandemic, performers and artists had lots of opportunities to work abroad and on corporate projects. But despite the stimulus packages, their living conditions have deteriorated compared to 2019, and many are considering a career change. The last survey we conducted last year on the impact of the pandemic revealed that half of all respondents were considering leaving the profession. As activities gradually get back to normal, job opportunities will stabilise.

Last spring, Quebec's government passed bill 35 that aims to upgrade the regulations relating to artists' and performers' professional status by having just one law apply. This would improve their socioeconomic status while respecting the balance, movement and changes that make up the cultural ecosystem. There is no trade union for circus artists, which means we will be

seeing the repercussions this law has on their living conditions in the next few years.

The federal government is also exploring the possibility of reforming the employment insurance system to provide artists and performers with a social security safety net.

If you had to give political decision-makers three good reasons to support the circus arts, what would they be?

The circus arts are a form of artistic expression, embodying incredible expertise that is a source of pride for Quebec and Canada thanks to the exceptional reputation we enjoy on the world stage.

The public love it, as audience numbers testify.

The circus has substantial social, individual and economic benefits and requires heightened support to protect its know-how, capacity to innovate, survival and prosperity.



ecH2osystem project: from river to stage from Geneviève Dupéré, Acrobat: Marilou Verschelden
© Geneviève Dupéré



INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS RIVARD



Nicolas Rivard is a visual artist and art historian. Since 2008, he has been interested in new forms of contemporary art and, more specifically, how they are exhibited in places other than those generally dedicated to art. He holds a master's degree in art history from The Université du Québec à Montréal, focusing on intervention art and infiltrating practices. He currently teaches art history at the Cégep de l'Outaouais and is a specialist in the policy of integrating the arts into architecture at the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. He was a member of the board of directors of the artist-run centre DARE-DARE from 2016 to 2021. In 2020, a monograph was published by SAGAMIE on his long-term project entitled *La Fatigue culturelle* (in English Cultural Fatigue). His works have been shown in Canada, France, Portugal and Morocco.

Your work is a blend of performance, intervention art and conceptual art in an urban setting. What is your creative process, and how do you approach the public space, particularly in Montreal?

Firstly, my work is not specific to Montreal. I lived in the city for close to two decades, but my creative process is primarily focused on ecosystems chosen for the issues they represent. More specifically, I am interested in the individuals who coexist within these ecosystems and set their boundaries.

To give you an example, I spent five years (2015-2020) working on a project called *Cultural Fatigue*, which involved giving self-managed artists' centres across Quebec ten minutes of volunteer time. The tasks I executed were explained to me on site once I arrived on the premises. I would speak to the staff, who would tell me about the lived experiences within the organisation, contextualising the setting and shedding light onto the work undertaken by struggling cultural professionals. The tasks I executed embodied all this invisible work tacked on to the end of a long list of jobs the staff have to handle to keep their organisations alive. The work I did was photographed and uploaded to social media along with a text banner at the bottom of each image, commemorating a difficult event experienced by the host body.



Cultural fatigue in the artist centres of Quebec (at DARE-DARE) © Marc-André Lefebvre

In other words, I see public space as being shaped first and foremost BY the public using it. That is why a large part of my creative process is about relationships. I connect with the individuals who make up an ecosystem and interview them about one or more issues I pinpoint ahead of time, in order to create what I call "by-products", as opposed to "artworks".

I was attending a creativity residence in Saint-Cirq-Lapopie (France) with the Maisons Daura, overseen by the Georges et Claude Pompidou art centre, when the term "by-products" first came to me. For a month and a half, I had been lucky enough to find myself living in a place awarded "one of France's most beautiful villages" status. What interested me most was the way in which the people who

spent every day living in this village perceived the notion of beauty. I met eleven villagers who shared their thoughts on the matter. I then drew up a mind map, linking each person's subjective ideas, all structured around the idea of beauty. The mind maps were printed out (by sublimation) on everyday items (tablecloths, blankets, cushions) to be rehomed by those who helped create them.

So it was not about creating "artworks" for art institutions entirely divorced from the reality of the people who contributed to bringing these items to life. Quite the contrary: my by-products are for the community that inspired them. This means that they need to be kept well away from traditional "artwork" experiences: no idolising them, no commercialising them, no



Cultural fatigue in the artist centres of Quebec (at Maison de l'architecture du Québec)
© Marc-André Lefebvre

speculation. My by-products are priced similarly to the same objects you would find in the shops, and they are free to those who helped make them.

This struck me as a natural way to proceed because it would be opportunistic of me to tap into their thoughts, their lived experiences, appropriating them and turning them into “artworks”, with all the consequences that could bring (such as fame for the artist or speculation and the increased value of the “artworks” on the art market). I operate differently, my by-products need to be useful, practical and accessible while triggering contemplations that can be understood by those they seek to touch.

Creating art outside an institutional setting is quite a statement.

Despite the constraints and norms underpinning the public space, would you say you are freer this way? What are the guiding values behind your creative process?

I would say this way of working goes hand in hand with both fun and dependency. Fun in the sense that I am not under any pressure to take my work or practice in a particular direction dictated by a venue’s parameters. However, it would be wrong not to mention that I am dependent on a certain form of institutionalisation: the Conseil des

Arts du Québec (CALQ) and the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA).

By altering the status of the objects I create (turning “artworks” into “by-products”) and by positioning them as being for personal use, I receive grants from these two arts councils. However, the subsidies that Canada provides are tailored to the realities of the sector, with a separation existing between ‘research/creation’ projects and ‘production/showcasing’ projects. My work does therefore unfold within the parameters of ‘research/creation’. This funding scheme also affords me a certain kind of freedom, as the expected results do not have to be locked down from the outset. It could be said, then, that I experience freedom in the sense that I am not bound by the requirements of showcasing “artworks” in institutional settings, yet remain dependent on state funding in order to pursue my ethical goals.

To answer your second and third questions, I work with the concepts of imitation and repurposing. My processes and by-products are intended to merge with existing ecosystems, shining a light on their economics and relationships. By “economics” here, I mean in the didactical sense of the word: how elements and parts of a system that I have chosen to infiltrate are organised.

That makes me a “service-providing” artist who contributes to a productivity chain shaped by neo-liberal values. This is what Michel de Certeau described as “tactical”: a strategy that allows the rules of a standardised, rigid and potentially even homogenous system to be repurposed and redirected.

You have worked (and maybe continue to work) to inject art into the cracks of everyday life. Which cracks speak to you most and why?

The cracks that most appeal to me are those created by individuals, which represent or contribute to a given ecosystem. They speak to me most because these individuals alone are in a position to infuse a standardised space with critical meaning. Subjective thought can only survive and thrive in these gaps and spaces.

I have also reflected on the issue of their multiplicity by drawing on a concept developed by French sociologist Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat and pushing it further: the concept of interstitial multiplicity. Representing spaces of subjectivation, these interstices or cracks multiply, making it impossible for a system that attempts to define their parameters to standardise them. Concretely speaking, it is in the multiplicity of interrelations in which these types of gaps can be found.

What is your relationship to audiences, and what do you expect from them? What are you seeking to (re)create or transform when you work in a given space, in any one context?

As you have no doubt guessed, the audience is the main driving force in my work. I expect nothing from members of the public, except perhaps that they expect nothing in return! I like meeting individuals in the places where they live. It allows them to welcome me into their own rituals and habits, it lets me get a sense of their personalities.



Comment politiser la beauté ? © Marie Deborne

There is no “audience” in my work, so to speak. There are individuals. I feel the word “audience” often goes hand in hand with the idea of spectators and performances. My work is clearly anti-performance and is not aimed at any audience (not even Jacques Rancière’s emancipated spectators!). My work is for individuals I meet in space and time, a kind of *safe space* in which the surrounding world is put on pause, where we take the time to reflect on the realities that matter to people. The idea is to flip the roles of “artist” on one side and “spectator” on the other, erasing the one-way funnel of information, and instead creating a place where we pool and collate sensitive data: a space in which we share mutual and divergent realities. On this subject, Jacques Rancière wrote that “each intellectual act is

a path traced between a form of ignorance and a form of knowledge, a path that constantly abolishes any fixity and hierarchy of positions¹”.

In this sense, I could not allow myself to contemplate a traditional spectator/performer or audience/artist relationship to meet my objectives.

Where do you fit into Quebec’s outdoor arts and public space scene? What is at stake within the community?

At the moment, I would say the most pressing issue is a glut of practices in the public space. Following on from this, I would like to take a closer look at the dictionary definition of the word “stake”: something to be gained or lost

in a competition or enterprise. This is precisely where the answer to your question is to be found: art is an enterprise within a competitive system where artists can win or lose.

Fluctuation could therefore be considered one of the biggest stakes in the art world across the board: fluctuations in processes, markets, tastes, audiences, institutions, collectors, fame and profile, fluctuation in funders’ guidelines. Anything that is external to art’s own language and logic is what is at stake with art.

Its stakes are rooted in the fact that, shaped as it is by a host of practices, areas of expertise and identities, its intrinsic value, outside of the economic (financial) sense of the term, is consistently challenged. And yet simultaneously, that is where its strength lies: art is ephemeral, constantly renewed and understood in ever-changing, multi-faceted and often diametrically opposed lights. Art has everything to lose, and everything to gain: that is its calling and vocation, and it is in the face of this adversity that it blooms.

¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, London/New York, Verso, 2009, p. 11.



INTERVIEW WITH GYPSY SNIDER



Gypsy Snider is the co-founder and Artistic Director of The 7 Fingers. Constantly branching out into new mediums, Gypsy has choreographed televised feature performances for America's Got Talent, Her Majesty's Royal Variety Performance, the illusionist Darcy Oake's *Edge of Reality*, and several large scale fashion shows for Bench in the Philippines. Gypsy began her circus career at the age of 4 when her parents founded The Pickle Family Circus. She grew up touring the West Coast with the company. Gypsy is also a guest teacher and director at the National Circus School of Montreal as well as consultant many international schools, associations, companies, and festivals.

What led you to become circus artists, and what kind of circus do you represent?

I was born and raised in the performing arts. My parents founded The Pickle Family Circus in the early 1970's in San Francisco. At the time, the Pickles were considered quite contemporary as we broke the mould of American circuses using our collective spirit, a five piece contemporary jazz band and intricately theatrical clowning. I started training and performing at a very young age. I was raised by a village of very forward-thinking creative people and the rigorous work ethic and sense of social responsibility instilled by my parents. While my life has always been in the circus, my passion is the theatre and telling stories. Connecting the human dilemma to physicality has always been my vision. And yet, the basic principles of circus are at the heart of all of my work.

What views do you have on contemporary circus in Quebec and its development? What challenges lie ahead in your opinion?

Contemporary circus in Canada has always been very exciting. I believe that Quebec is a wonderfully supportive community for the arts steeped in tolerance and humanity, humour and diversity. I do think the influences of a wider North American culture has added a slight tone of "commercialism" to contemporary circus in Quebec. This phenomenon was also inherited in part

from the success of Cirque du Soleil but also due to the fact that circus was only recognised in Quebec and Canada as an art form eligible for public funding since the early 2000's. Prior to that support, in order for companies or shows to succeed, they needed to be fun and pleasing. Now there is a better support system to encourage a broader range of expression through circus arts. The biggest challenge moving forward will be touring. Companies cannot exist if they only create and perform locally. The exportation of art is the main source of income and exposure for any company of any form, and post-pandemic conditions and priorities jeopardise the ability to tour.

You are part of the 7 Fingers, a well-renowned Canadian circus company that merges acrobatics and theatre, dance and multimedia, music and storytelling. How does circus connect with all these disciplines and how do they influence each other?

Circus has an inherent theatricality to it. The elements of risk, body bending, manipulation of objects and of course, defying gravity and even death are all themes we can find parallels to in life and therefore in theatre. I believe in telling stories through images. Circus has an amazing box of tools for creating images that evoke thoughts and emotions. I love connecting these physical images to each other which then often translates to dance. The fluid motion from one trick to another,

from one idea to another has become my own form of choreography. Motion creates musicality and vice versa. I have always been fascinated playing with the music of the body or the musicality and choreography of words, filling silence and even letting silence fill the moment. The extremity of circus can also help tie all of these disciplines together, but mostly, I have never believed that any one art form should solely stay in its own lane. I love the collision of all forms, including fashion, visual and digital/video/cinematic arts.

How do you see the future of touring with big tops?

I do hope that the future of the Big Top is able to flourish. Touring in general post pandemic is incredibly challenging. But the nomadic art of circus is a treasure that should be preserved and cherished. The 7 Fingers have performed in Big Tops in the past and we always feel so at home in them.

What connections do you have with US circus artists? Could you share a positive story from a cross-border collaboration between the US and Canada?

Being an American who immigrated to Canada over 20 years ago, I have always felt a need to contribute to the American circus community. The evolution of circus in the US has struggled due to lack of government and private support for the arts in general. The

support that does exist in the states is relegated to dance and theatre. Circus has always struggled to be considered an “art”. Many American performers who want to stretch into more contemporary forms of circus have had to go to countries that have integrated circus into their cultural programmes.

That said, there is an impressive and rich history of circus in America and I have always stayed connected to that world. Creating the circus for Pippin—the Broadway musical and touring our shows across the US has kept The 7 Fingers connected across the border. And in 2021 we opened a new company in San Francisco to have a home back in the city where the Fingers first united to envision what is now our company based in Montreal.

Working with artists from the states has always been a pleasure especially for Shana (also an American-born founder of the Fingers) . We share a common background when working with people from our “homeland”. We have

worked with many performers from San Francisco but now also from Las Vegas, New York, LA and especially, students from youth programs like Circus Harmony in Saint Louis or Circus Smirkus in Vermont.

However, I should say, it has always been a priority for the Fingers that we work with international artists from all communities. This diversity is what grounds the storytelling of our work in a global humanity.

What would be your wish for the future of contemporary circus in Quebec?

Quebec circus is alive, thriving and reaching new levels of creativity whether it be in the very small contemporary work, to the environmentally conscious, to community outreach as well as the larger touring companies.

We are very proud to have found our voice in this rich and supportive community. We are determined to conti-

nue to invest in accessibility to our studios and residency programmes as well as the outreach work our foundation does.

That said, live performance and touring are somewhat at risk since the pandemic. Inflation and new challenges to travel do not help. But the competition with the digital and streaming realms is real. Quebec is doing everything possible to get people off of their screens, out of their homes and connected to in person art and culture and we are strongly behind that effort.

