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Getting out of Balance

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CARD 2

LIVING/FALLING

RISK

BALANCE

SENSATION

PARODY

ONTOLOGIES

FREAK

QUEER

DIVERSITY

KINAESTHETIC FANTASY

BORDERS

TRANSLATION

METAPHOR

RECONSIDERATION

RISK AESTHETICS

DISABILITY

DISOBEDIENCE

PUBLIC

RESEARCH BASE

RESISTANCE

IMPOSSIBLE

ANGUISH

DEVIATION

CONVERSATION

DISEQUILIBRIUM

ANXIETY

EUPHORIA

INTERCONNECTIVITY

PHENOMENOLOGY

FORMLESSNESS/ABJECTION ACTION/ACT/PRANK

ACTIVISM

MULTIPLICITY

EPISTEMOLOGY

DANCE STUDIOS

POLITICAL

NARRATIVE

MULTIPLICITY

ASSOCIATIVITY

PROMISCUOUS

VISCERA

FEMININITY

VITALITY

DISPLACEMENT

NOTION

TRICK QUESTION

FREEDOM

TRANSGRESSION

PRACTICE/TEMPLATE/LANGUAGE/MATERIAL

DANGER

IMAGE

PERCEPTION

INVERTED/SUBJECT

BLACK SKY THINKING

CIRCUS HALL

SONIC

INOPERATIVITY

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Welcome!

Stockholm University of the Arts is delighted to welcome you to participate in CARD2 – Circus on the Edge, which is to be held on 9th until 11th December 2015.

CARD2 is an innovative international conference which is of strategic importance to Stockholm University of the Arts. The strong emphasis on artistic research is at the very core of Uniarts' development - we welcome you to an enriching dynamic discussion which we anticipate will push the boundaries of what research in circus arts can be.

The continuing development of Circus Arts is significant for us at Uniarts - we are one of the very few higher arts education institutions offering degree courses in Circus Arts globally. We intend to remain at the forefront of education, in dialogue and interaction with artists, colleagues and peers from around the world.

The CARD2 conference brings together key international artists and researchers, providing a forum for dialogue and offering an opportunity to share ideas, practices, and cultural perspectives in ways that are positively challenging.

Your participation in this event will provide you with a unique opportunity to meet, share ideas and discuss with colleagues from around the globe. We welcome you to Stockholm, and more specifically to Stockholm University of the Arts.

Paula Crabtree

Vice Chancellor

Stockholm University of the Arts

We need to talk about Circus

Circus is made of many languages, diverse sets of practices, unified by, not only tradition, but a cluster of signifiers i.e. risk, fantasy, excitement, complexity. For all its multi-disciplinarity, virtuosity seems to go unchallenged as a central organising term.

There are many circuses, many aesthetics, as much influenced by their cultural context as the social history they form a part of and which they in turn influence. Some are whimsically lyrical, some brutal, some tell stories while others delight in their lack of content to emphasis the real of their endeavours.

Since the inception of new circus, other monikers have risen to stake a claim on the new "new" - neo circus, queer circus, contemporary circus as well as the sub-genres of object manipulation, aerial dance or hand-to-hand. Soon no doubt we'll see post-circus, eco-circus, conceptual circus, the circus-without-bodies etc...

The idea of research and the discursive potential within circus consequently has just as many perspectives, some of which are represented at this conference. A hope would be that these different viewpoints from a wide range of disciplines find the edges where they border each other and overlap.

This hope notwithstanding, there is a general resistance to discursivity to be found amongst students and artists - why speak of something that attempts to stage the ineffable? Current talk of "theory fatigue", returns to the body and its practices suggest that it is not just the circus that suffers from having to speak. CARD2 is a space bringing together discursivity, performativity and all the translations, transgressions and sensations in between.

Passionate subjective intuitions and drives will meet attempts at cooler, detached reflection. Hot, risky, volatile theoretical materials will encounter the hard matter of muscle persisting within practice. Let us hope that mental fitness can meet physical agility in a conference of keynote lectures, performative expositions, panel discussions, workshops and space in between for reflections, conversations and new propositions.

John-Paul Zaccarini
Conference Curator

CARD 2

LIVING/FALLING

ONTOLOGIES

TRANSLATION

METAPHOR

DISOBEDIENCE

RESEARCH BASE

DISEQUILIBRIUM

FORMLESSNESS/ABJECTION ACTION/ACT/PRANK

NARRATIVE

DANCE STUDIOS

ASSOCIATIVITY

DISPLACEMENT

NOTION

TRICK QUESTION

FREEDOM

PRACTICE/TEMPLATE/LANGUAGE/MATERIAL
NOMADISM/ECO-SYSTEM

IMAGE

BLACK SKY THINKING

INOPERATIVITY

CIRCUS HALL

8 am–9 am Circus Hallway (Brinellvägen 34)

MORNING COFFE AND REGISTRATION

9 am–9.30 am Circus Hall

INTRODUCTION

John-Paul Zaccarini (Conference Curator), Walter Ferrero (Head of Circus Department) and Paula Crabtree (Vice Chancellor Stockholm University of the Arts)

9.45 am–11.15 am Circus Hall

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The following circus is false, the preceding circus is true

Jonathan Priest. Moderator John-Paul Zaccarini

11.30 am–12.30 pm Circus Hall (Brinellvägen 34)

LUNCH

12.30 pm–1.30 pm Circus Hall

LECTURE/WORKSHOP

Graphic Juggling Notation

Rauli Katajavouri

12.30 pm–2 pm Studio 16 (Brinellvägen 58)

PANEL

Disruptive translations

Jonathan Priest, Ante Ursic, Franziska Trapp. Moderator Daniel Peltz

12.30 pm–2 pm Studio 10 (Brinellvägen 58)

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

An exchange on physical metaphors in modern circus

GLiMT Moderator Pernilla Glaser

2 pm–2.30 pm

BREAK

2.30 pm–4 pm Circus Hall

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The Art of the Experiment

Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes. Moderator John-Paul Zaccarini

4 pm–4.30 pm

BREAK

4.30 pm–6 pm Circus Hall

PERFORMANCE

3rd year Students of the Bachelor Programme in Circus

CARD2

RISK

PARODY

RECONSIDERATION

PUBLIC

RESISTANCE

DEVIATION

ANXIETY

ACTIVISM

DANCE STUDIOS

POLITICAL

PROMISCUOUS

TRANSGRESSION

DANGER

CIRCUS HALL SONIC

FREAK

QUEER

DIVERSITY

KINAESTHETIC FANTASY

BORDERS

RISK AESTHETICS

RESEARCH BASE

DISABILITY

INTERCONNECTIVITY

PHENOMENOLOGY

MULTIPLICITY

EPISTEMOLOGY

FEMININITY

MUSCULARITY

JOUISSANCE

8 am–9.00 am Entrance Hall (Linnégatan 87)

MORNING COFFE AND REGISTRATION

9 am–9.30 am the stairs (Linnégatan 87)

INTRODUCTION

John-Paul Zaccarini

9.45 am–11.15 am Studio 402 (Linnégatan 87)

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Borders

Cirkus Cirkör, Sepideh Karami, Olga Sorzano. Moderator Camilla Damkjaer

9.45 am–11.15 am Grey Box (Linnégatan 87)

PANEL DISCUSSION

Learning, disability and risk

Nick McCaffrey, Stine Degerbøl. Moderator Shane Holohan

9.45 am–11.15 am Studio 502 (Linnégatan 87)

PANEL DISCUSSION

Queer Circus and Gender

Charles Batson, Kate Holmes. Moderator John-Paul Zaccarini

10.00 am–12.00 am Circus Hall (Brinellvägen 34)

WORKSHOP

A workshop on the co-development of strategies for artistic research in contemporary circus creation

Bauke Lievens and Alexander Vantournhout

11.15 am–11.30 am (Linnégatan 87)

SITE SPECIFIC RESEARCH PRESENTATION

1st Year Students of the Bachelor Programme in Circus

11.30am–1.30 pm

Travel to Circus Hall and LUNCH

1.30 pm–3 pm Circus Hall

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Identity in Circus and Dangerous Risk.

Peta Tait. Moderator John-Paul Zaccarini

3.15 pm–4.15 pm Studio 10 (Brinellvägen 58)

PERFORMANCE LECTURE

Practice-as-Research: aerial work as socially critical performance.

Laura Murphy. Moderator: John-Paul Zaccarini

3.15 pm–4.15 pm Studio 11 (Brinellvägen 58)

PERFORMANCE LECTURE

CiNS Collective: CIRCUS.FREIHEIT.GLEICHSCHALTUNG.

Roxana Küwen. Moderator: Lena Hammergren

3.15 pm–4.15 pm Studio 16 (Brinellvägen 58)

PERFORMANCE

Twisting the Balance.

Leire Mesa. Moderator: Annette Arlander

4.15 pm–5 pm

BREAK

5 pm–6.30 pm (Studio 16)

KEYNOTE/PERFORMANCE

Mode of Sonic Interaction in Circus

Gynöide Project. Moderator: Camilla Damkjaer

CARD2

BALANCE SENSATION

IMPOSSIBLE ANGUISH
CONVERSATION
EUPHORIA
RESEARCH BASE

DANCE STUDIOS
VITALITY

VISCERA

PERCEPTION
CIRCUS HALL
INVERTED / SUBJECT

8 am–9 am Circus Hallway (Brinellvägen 34)

MORNING COFFEE AND REGISTRATION

9 am–9.15 am Studio 16 (Brinellvägen 58)

INTRODUCTION
John-Paul Zaccarini

9.15 am–10.45 am Studio 16

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Practicing the subject, invertedly - hand-balancing as a return to the subject?
Camilla Damkjaer. Moderator: John-Paul Zaccarini.

9.30 am–11.30 am Circus Hall

WORKSHOP
A workshop on the co-development of strategies for artistic research in contemporary circus creation
Bauke Lievens and Alexander Vantournhout

11.30 am–1 pm Circus Hall

LUNCH

1 pm–3 pm Studio 10 (Brinellvägen 58)

PERFORMANCE
Skin
Aedin Walsh. Moderator: Peta Tait

1 pm–3 pm Studio 11 (Brinellvägen 58)

PERFORMANCE
Hamish Tjoeng
Moderator: Cecilia Roos

1 pm–3 pm Studio 16

LECTURE CONVERSATION
First Open Letter to the Circus "The need to redefine"
Bauke Lievens

1 pm–3 pm Circus Studio 21 (Brinellvägen 58)

WORKSHOP
Sensing Hand-balancing - open sensation studio.
Camilla Damkjaer and Thierry Maussier

3 pm–4 pm Circus Hall

BREAK

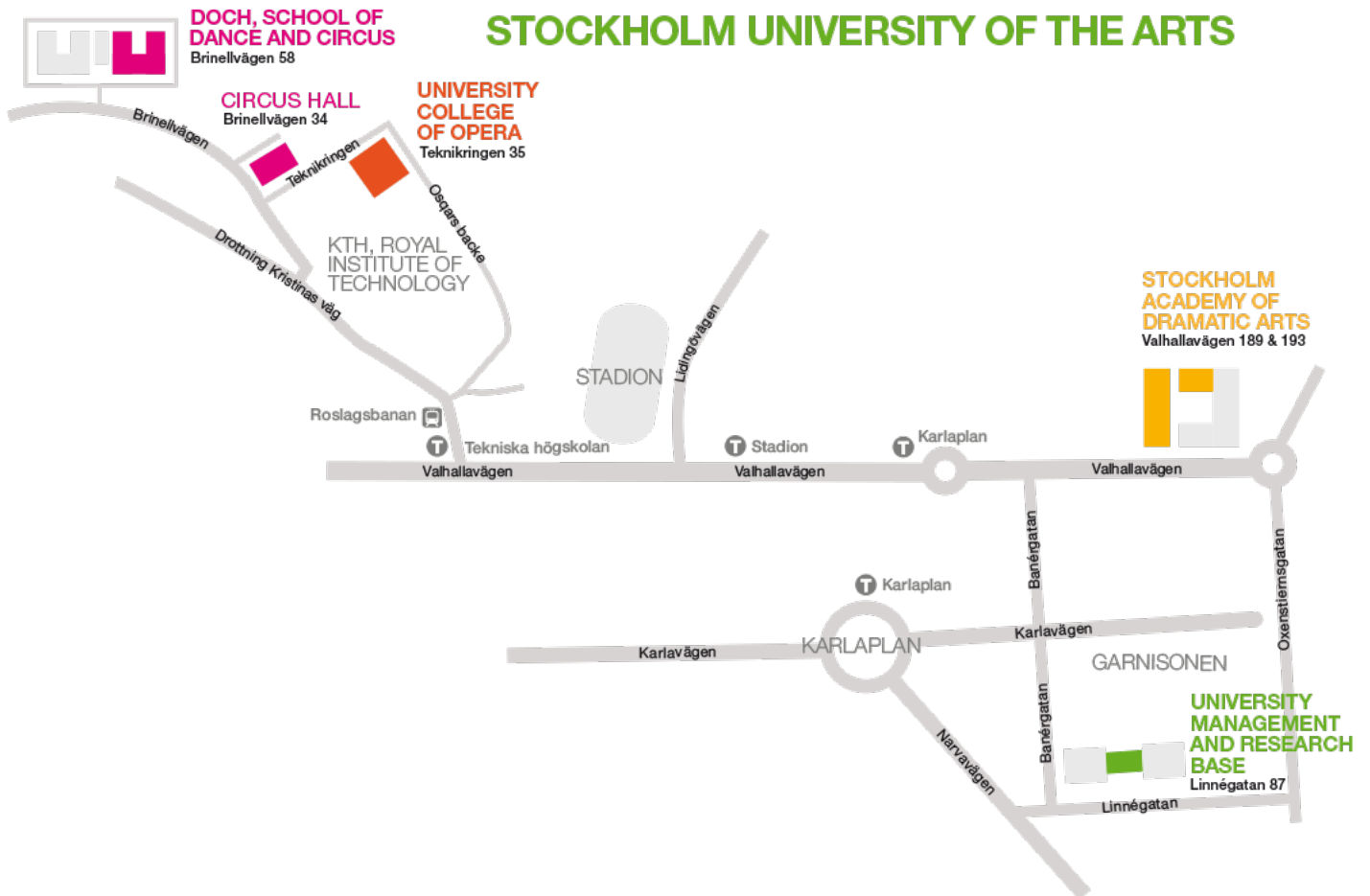
4 pm–5 pm Circus Hall

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS
3rd Year Students of the Bachelor Programme in Circus

5 pm–6.30 pm Circus Hall

Summary and Conference End: John-Paul Zaccarini

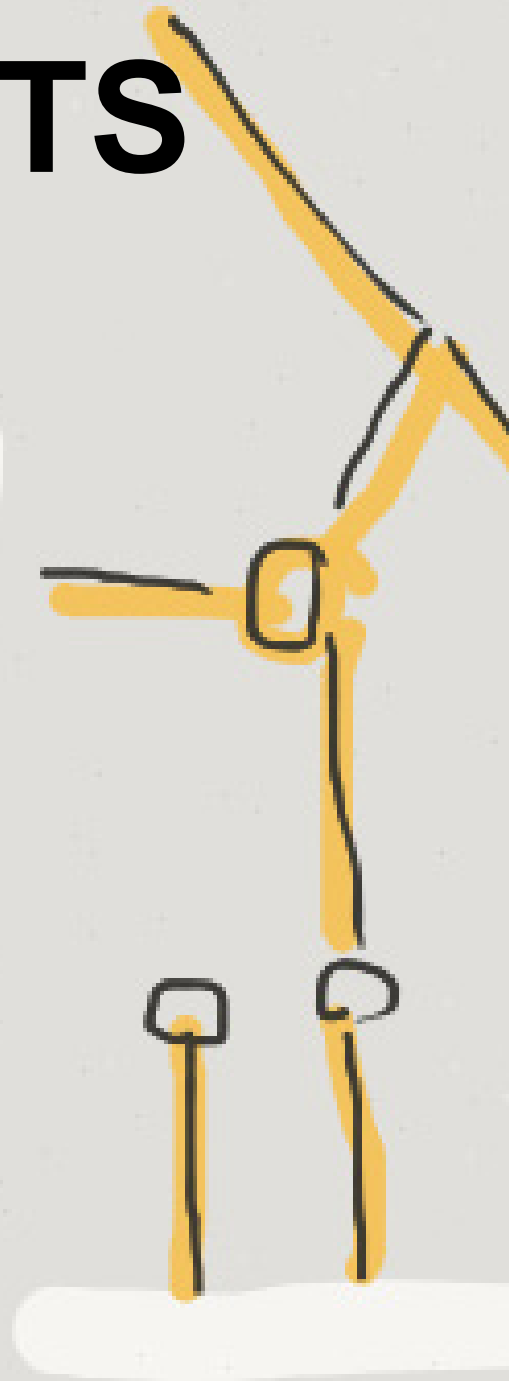
Map



6 meters

ABSTRACTS

Studio



TRANSLATION



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*The following Circus is False,
The preceding Circus is True.*

Jonathan Priest
PhD Candidate Stockholm
University of the Arts

Tongue:

I am a circus artist and teacher; I work with rope, and my original research goal took the form of a question:

Is it possible to speak circus?

This then caused me to look at my practice as a template for language. What was occurring for me within my practice that could be transformed into a way of speaking? What was 'in' my expression of circus that could operate 'in' language?

Quite early on the idea of transgression emerged as a template. Through any physical system there was an impetus to develop something that whilst it moved through the available parameters of that system it did so to produce images of autonomy from that system; moments of lift that enabled a mobility not seemingly available at first glance. Moving through something to imply its refutation.

Rope:

In looking at how language could become a piece of material in a circus artist's hands I found that to set up loops and knots in apparently fixed meanings that refuted language's ability to 'mean' anything seemed to be a match for how I handled my equipment, as something that folded back on itself.

In looking for methods to generate speech, I fell into the journey, into following the line. The possibility for circus to travel from place to place as something that could produce observations or narratives that were also 'unhooked' from fixed meanings.

Road:

These ramblings, both verbal and spatial, would be investigated as a series of pointless road trips for a circus artist making tricks with words. Forging connective rigging, knotting temporary structures of meaning along an unfixed trajectory, as a way for circus to travel by speaking.

I am aware that flexibility, mobility and temporary autonomy have become watchwords of corporate enterprise and I wanted to find a kind of puncture in this idea of the journey and its narratives as a neat commodity; perhaps to make a useless, unsalable journey.

Trick Questions:

Was there a way for circus to still move, to still be slippery and mobile outside of forces that seek to commodify it? What is wrong with circus being a commodity?

This was for me a call to find tricks to imply that I was free of any identifiable 'gravity'. To produce the trick as an image of freedom, but in any area, any system.

I was looking at the idea of circus practice as mobile but simultaneously at the idea of circus practice as 'not moving'. If my body was reduced or crushed or immobilised by an insurmountable gravity how could I still operate a circus practice? I will present a film organised around these questions:

How is it possible to travel as a circus artist without moving?

Across what other landscapes can circus travel?

What kind of circus can you perform without moving? What tricks could be done here?

Is there an inoperable circus? Something 'useless' that still has potentiality.

All these questions whilst deflecting the practice into new specific areas, they also create possibilities for answering another general question.

What theoretical position do I occupy in my practice? And for me it was important to look at my practice as ultimately 'transgressive', even to itself, and to ask what kind of thinking constituted an expression of this transgressive-ness?

What mechanism from the physicality could be translated over to be applied to any other system, even perhaps the system of translation itself. Thus I present my own work as a kind of cage from which I am looking for escape.

I am not saying the trick creates freedom, but only an image of freedom. But in a time when so much of the world is shaped by the circulation of images I am perhaps asking also what can an image do in the world?

An image is an arbitrarily named pin in the map, but can a pin change the actual landscape?

Link to vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/141542282>

password: godsrope15

LECTURE/WORKSHOP

Graphic Juggling Notation

Rauli Katajavouri

This lecture will introduce Rauli Katajavouri's visual 'Graphic Juggling Notation'. Rauli will explain how the 'graphic juggling notation' works and how it differs from other juggling notations. He will also tell the history and the need why he created this notation. In a nutshell, the 'Graphic Juggling Notation' combines siteswap –notation, Denis Paumier's body throw theory, modern staff notation and Benesh movement notation all together in visual way that it is really intuitive to use. One could think this notation as a change from MS-DOS to Windows system. It has everything it had before and more but presented in an easily accessible form. Rauli will also demonstrate how this notation can be used as pedagogical tool and how he uses it as tool for teaching children to juggle. Rauli will also share the current state of the work where this notation will be used as an interface for online juggling simulator / composing software for juggling.

Introduction to Graphic Juggling Notation

I got an idea for graphic juggling notation that explains siteswaps and bodythrows easily and this all goes back to 1996 when I started to think musical notation and musical notes. How long this system has been in use and how easy 'language' it is. And how good it is even on prima vista play as it is images instead of words and numbers and how even our brain is wired for images. This is when I

decided to try to make juggling notation that could give lot of information easily and that maybe musical notes could be a good key to make this work. First question was could I use the same system or similar system for juggling? I also thought that at least for me juggling and music have really much similarities. Important things are tempo, pitch and time. If I could use musical notes as foundation for my graphic juggling notation there even might be a change that music and juggling would relate and communicate even more.

I was also teaching juggling a lot at that time. and I taught juggling by siteswaps already at that time so that students could also learn the system hidden in juggling while learning the physical skill. I encouraged my students to say aloud what siteswaps they were doing that it's not just a mess for them, or ready made tricks, but that they could understand each throw individually. During the lessons I noticed that mainly girls and younger students used some different sounds instead siteswap numbers. So I thought what if I change these numbers to be part of music like do, re, mi fa, so ,la, ti. In a way kids learn music in a music kinder gardens. And then I got back to this graphic juggling notation idea I had with musical notes. This is how it started.

TO say it simply Graphic Juggling Notation combines musical notes, siteswaps, Denis Paumier's bodythrow theory and Benesh Movement Notation in easily adaptive and understandable way.

You must remember ms-dos computers. Black screens and C:\ on screen? Compare it to windows... you basically can do all the same things but windows is much more fun to use. Even though now and then I really need to use DOS anyway because some of the things you just can't do in windows as easily and fast.

Rauli Katajavouri

PANEL

Disruptive translations

Ante Ursić

On Clown Politics

It is not an easy task to fully circumscribe the clown as a circus and performance figure. Though the predominant associations with clowns are of a simpleminded, foolish, silly, incompetent, childlike, naive and even sometimes vulgarly base driven character, the clown figure is actually a rather complex phenomenon with a rich history, many influences, meanings and functions depending on the historical, social, and cultural context in which it is performed. Thus, in an effort to avoid the oversimplification and generalization that would be necessary to study the entire arc of clown figures, I will focus here on the most common clown figure of Western cultures: the red nosed clown figure, also known as “August.” I find that Bataille’s notion of formlessness and Kristeva’s concept of abjection intriguingly relate to and describe aspects of the August clown figure. Further, drawing on Rancière’s ideas about politics, I will disclose how the qualities of formlessness and abjection exemplified by the August clown can be employed by activists to express discontent with political and cultural authorities through the act of pieing.

The August clown figure transgresses fixed rules, systems and orders; he establishes new rules for himself, creating his own world with its own

inner logic. August’s counterpart, the white clown character can be understood in juxtaposition as representative of form, for the order of things. The white clown’s role is therefore dependent upon August maintaining his position of formlessness. Fortunately for the white clown, August’s character isn’t focused toward transgressing his formlessness. He doesn’t make sense, is not articulate, is predictably disorderly and often gets squashed by the sensibility of the white clown. Accordingly, from the perspective of the white clown and the social authority he upholds, August is not much more than an earthworm and a spider. “I tried all I could to teach him some manners. By hitting him in the head, stepping on his feet, slapping the back of his head” laments the white clown in Fellini’s film *Clowns*. Social order does not tolerate or see value in deviance.

It is thereupon salient to note, that the August character typically does not speak; he expresses himself through a physical vocabulary. However, there are also August clowns who employ language, albeit inarticulately. For example, such an August clown might stutter, scream more than talk, talk backwards, or mix up signifier (the image sound) with the signified object, i.e. calling a fish a dog, etc. However, even when an August clown does speak, his use of language is accompanied with a pronounced physicality. Here again, the August clown stands in contrast to the white clown who both knows how to speak and uses language eloquently. The August clown’s poor apprehension of language further designates him to an abject realm, as well as a mode of formlessness, as he is unable to participate in explicit meaning making.

In addition to the August clown’s exclusion from utility of language, he is also excluded from the use of props that would allow him to participate in any regular order of things. The August only has the license to play with things that are inappropriate and allude to dirt or defilement. As he is understood as social “dirt” he is only allowed to be in contact with dirt or “matter out of place” (Douglas 44). In the moment a clown transgresses the order of things, there is an impending and exciting

danger of defilement. This mechanism of transgression affords a political power to the clown that has a particular quality. Typically defilement only goes in one direction: from the central toward the marginal. However, as the abject can violently, at least momentarily, destabilize normative order or boundaries, through transgression, the August clown can temporarily turn a victim of any social status into a clown.

Pieing is an example of an act in which a clown transgresses social propriety at the expense of an audience member. In the circus ring, anybody who gets pied by the August clown— whether s/he be the statured white clown, an acrobat, or audience member—is violently albeit temporarily deprived of both her/his status and the symbolic order of things. The witnesses of the act of pieing derive pleasure from this social interruption. Furthermore, the higher the status of the one who is pied, the funnier and more enjoyable it is for those witnesses. Now, in departure from the circus ring and August clown, I will explore how this quintessential intervention of clowning, pieing, is expressed in other realms, highlighting how formlessness and abjection can be contagious.

In the *Battle of the Century* (Bruckmann), starring Laurel and Hardy, the protagonists start a pie fight which escalates and escalates. The pie fight begins quite banally when a pie vendor slips on a banana peel in the street. Rightly accusing Hardy of purposefully having rigged the banana peel, the pie vendor gets revenge by pieing Hardy in the face. Hardy then attempts to pie Laurel, and accidentally lands the pie on a bystander, who then seeks pie revenge through pieing yet another person; this pattern is repeated domino style every time somebody gets pied. This scene suggests that it is difficult to resist one's appetite for sweet revenge. Social propriety seems to vaporize immediately, and anybody struck by a pie is folded into the indistinguishable mass of pied faces. One's individual features vanish in pie, as do social class distinctions. It is a mode of pure affect, in which people seem to dissolve into one and another, the pies serving as a binding material, unifying the

bodies into one. The separation, between social codes and classes disappear, blurs the line between self and other. As each pied person looks the same, one can therefore also be "the other." Hierarchies have dissolved, and in the end, though unfortunately the footage has been lost, the police officer is even pied as well. No one is spared from the equalizing effect of being pied. Thus, each one becomes formless.

Bill Gates was famously pied by the artist and activist, Noël Godin, the entarteur, when he visited the European Union officials in Belgium in 1998. Other targets of Noël Godin's pie-ing were French politician Nicolas Sarkozy, French philosopher Bernard Henri Levy, and director Jean Luc Godard. Even though Godin is usually referenced as the pieer, he typically doesn't act alone and has accomplices working closely with him. I am interested in a political question that arises from the act of pieing, which I draw from my reading of Jaque's Rancière's notion of politics.

I propose that the activist who throws pies is an heir of the August clown, while the pied is an heir of the white clown figure. The former dwells in a space of abjection, while the latter represents symbolic order, law, and power. Witnesses are crucial for the success of the action of pieing, the goal being to ridicule and humiliate the target. Significantly, the activists are not making any directly political claim, they don't want to change their own status, but rather seek to trivialize the target with the hope of changing the official public perception of the person. Rancière's ideas on politics elucidate the significance of this type of activism.

He writes:

"At the heart of the politics lies a double wrong, a fundamental conflict, never conducted as such, over the capacity of the speaking being who is without qualification and political capacities." (Disagreement 22)

What he seems to suggest here, is that there is always a disagreement or dissensus at the core of politics. Those who are in power, who shape the rules of social order, overlook and further diminish

the voice of populations of societies who are not privileged, who are impoverished and excluded access to fundamental rights and resources. On the other hand, these populations of “wronged,” excluded people are viewed by those in power as doing wrong to the order of things, established society, and the distribution of the sensible, by claiming their right to partake in what they are excluded from. For Rancière, politics take place when those without count, when those who are excluded from the visible realm, who are not allowed to speak, make themselves recognized and therefore have to be recognized as speaking beings. This temporal rupture of policed order, when those in power are forced to recognize that they are face to face with a being of equal capacity and faculties is called politics.

For Rancière the political being is intrinsically intertwined with the speaking being. Though humans are capable of speaking a priori, not everybody is assigned to positions of speech. Police regulate the order of the distribution of assigned positions and occupations, of who is allowed to do what, of who is excluded from occupations even though they share, as all humans do, the same capacity to think, feel, see and speak. Therefore, in Rancière’s understanding, “the police force” has less to do with disciplining, but rather is about “the law, generally implicit, that defines a party’s share or lack of it” (Disagreement 29). The police force is pressing on every single individual being in a society.

Rancière proposes that there must be a claim by the part without a part, the excluded, to take part by being recognized as a speaking being. Here, he is drawing from the categorization of Aristotle, declaring that only humans are in possession of the logos, the capacity to speak and demonstrate just and unjust, while animals are only in possession of phôné, only able to demonstrate feelings of pleasure and displeasure (Dissensus 37). Those who are assigned speakable positions, don’t want to recognize the other, the excluded, as an also speakable being, with logos, because that would require admitting that a fundamental injustice

has been done. The solution for those in speakable positions, is to only hear phôné, to police the other into a position outside of logos. As Rancière writes:

“If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as a bearer of signs of policy, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse” (38)

Rancière’s notion of politics recalls Kristeva’s notion of abjection. The self abjects parts of itself to become a homogenous self, but the alter ego is still there, pressing on the boundary of the self. I stipulate that the abjection process also occurs when any society is formed. In society, those who “have” abject those who “have not,” to form a solid identity in a social order. The “they are not us” have to be violently excluded, to keep “us” stable. For example, one can easily see this phenomenon in the border politics of both the United States and the European Union. Certain immigrants are not allowed to cross the border because they threaten what is highly valued as a proper citizen-self. Also within a nation, parts of the population are swept to the margins because they do not fit within the normative concept of what constitutes an acceptable citizen and therefore can’t (or aren’t allowed to) be easily assimilated into the confines of the status quo. Nonetheless, these abject people continue to cross both visible and invisible borders, constituting an indelible threat to a society’s established distribution of who has a share and what evaluable qualities constitute who has a share. For Kristeva, the abject never ceases, can’t be gotten rid of, is ever present and threatens the illusion of the homogenous self. The self needs the abject as a “safeguard,” as “the primers of the culture” (2). I argue that politics, in Rancièrean terms, refers to the moment when the “primers of culture” are redefined. The political moment is when the abject attacks the borders of the self that has abjected it so violently that the illusory homogenous self can no longer repel it and has to negotiate with the abject. The self “consciously” realizes the abject as alter ego. Such an encounter might lead to the formation of another, more inclusive, modified self,

but doesn't always. Politics for Rancière do not require a change as the outcome. Though change might occur, each configuration of self, each order, excludes certain parts of the whole, some are granted visibility and some are not. I am aware that it bears certain risks to translate one concept through another, as they were conceived independently from each other. However, I find that these notions of abjection and politics resonate with one another, making way for a fruitful dialogue between them.

Furthermore, I find that Bataille's concept of formlessness also resonates with Rancière's ideas. In the short paragraph he wrote on formlessness, Bataille proposes that "academic men" and "philosophy" shape the world, meaning that they order it, categorize it in a particular way, police it. Such "academic men" celebrate their humanly bestowed logos. Who and what exists outside of form is relegated formless, without logos. Bataille points out that there are modes of being that are violently excluded, have to be excluded from ordered form. The frock coat can only fit the academic woman, so to speak; the universe takes shape via the interpretive translation of logos. Formlessness is reserved for earthworms, dirt, mud, and spiders, the lower order of things, the lower social classes, the impoverished, the excluded, the uncounted, to that which only possess *phôné*.

What makes the August clown complex is that he doesn't make a claim (through logos); he is a "refusal of any ideal," as he does not seek to change his/her abject position. He remains outside of understandable speech. When he opens his mouth only sound is heard. He does not possess logos; he only possesses *phôné*. So then, one asks, how can the August clown take part in politics if his nature requires him/her to remain formless, abject, and ill inclined to pursue assertion of logos? How can August execute "a set of practices driven by assumptions of equality and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality" (Rancière, *Disagreement* 30). I propose that clown-politics somehow twists Rancière's notion of politics and will give two short examples of how.

Bernard Henri Levy is a well known, controversial

French philosopher. He calls for more patriotism in Europe, criticizes multi-culturalism, and pokes reactionary politicians with the fear of an Islamization of Europe. He also had his own enterprise in which he allegedly evaded paying taxes. This accusation was aborted after Sarkozy, during the time, the minister of finance in France intervened. Levy was also a fierce supporter of the French intervention that brought down the Gaddafi regime in 2011. Over the past three decades he has been pied several times by Godin and others. In a video, which can be found on you tube, Levy is accompanied by cameras and reporters. Suddenly Godin appears in the frame pushing a pie into Levy's face. What happens next is significant, Godin lies on the floor and Levy threatens him with following words: "Lève-toi vite, ou je t'écrase la gueule à coups de talon!" (Get up fast, or I will mash your face with a heel punch!) (*Entartage*). This aggressive reaction was triggered by a simple pie in the face; Levy was not otherwise hurt or physically harmed. Having been pied in the face, Levy revealed another side of himself that until then, had been excluded from public appearance. Godin does not display logos, does not aim to be recognized as a speaking being. In this temporal rupture, Levy becomes a clown, a fool, dirt, an earthworm. Levy transforms from a well mannered philosopher into a raging person, he falls down from logos right into *phône*. Everything that he had abjected from himself, the "no that's not me," violently pressed back in on him; his alter ego was exposed.

A similar understanding can be applied to the pieing of Bill Gates. Here too, the activist protagonists, did not appear to have any particular political claim. They didn't attempt to be recognized as a speaking being. Rather, they chose to expose Gates to ridicule and humiliation. As a symbol of the free market and neoliberalism he was attacked by a face of creamed pie matter. His facial features were obscured, Gates was no longer recognizable, he lost his capacity to speak. If the Symbolic constitutes the "law of the father," and if Bill Gates can be seen as a symbol of power, money, wealth and profit, that violently excludes "others" of their

share, then it was this symbolism that was attacked by Godin and his fellow activists. To ridicule Gates meant to ridicule capitalism. It made a clown of something that does not want to be seen as a clown. Pieing wrongs the subject, who has wronged the other through subjugation. The pie activist seems to cry out: "I refuse to speak in an order that has never allowed me to speak. Instead I will turn you into what you see me as: a clown, powerless, dirt, an earthworm, formless."

In both of the above cases, the pie activist clowns have twisted Rancière's notion of politics rather than choosing to enter into a hegemonic discourse, departing from the nature and position of abjection, the position of the excluded; s/he chose to bring the target into the realm of formlessness and abject. Though these were merely momentary ruptures, no strata were disarmed or collapsed, and no widespread social change took place, from a Rancièrian perspective, politics do not necessarily need to evoke change, as I stated above. Still, I argue that if one consents that politics are a "set of practices driven by assumptions of equality," I propose that the activist postulated equality in his/her exploit. A pie to the face seems to bring people down, to humble philosophers, politicians, billionaires; they are momentarily dethroned. They are reminded of their vulnerability, that they can be touched, attacked, reduced, they can be laughed at, they can be seen as dirt. In a pie-fight everybody becomes equal.

I suggest that the August character does not just dwell in a circus pit, to amuse children and adults alike. Rather, he/she lingers in an abject place and executes formlessness as his/her task. S/he is an ambiguous figure, and his/her deviant behavior can be exploited by the hegemonic normative narrative by showing how one should not behave and what is not appropriate for a good citizen. Still, the August exploits a certain mode of politics, as he can turn anybody into a clown and anything into "matter out of place," by engaging with it. Furthermore, his deviance seems to be contagious. He does not leave his abject position, rather he violently destabilizes hegemonic orders, even if only momentarily, by exerting formlessness upon the

other. I propose to call this clown politics. Clown Politics do not seek to be recognized by the other as a speaking being and change his abject place by executing logos, but rather aim to bring the other into a realm *phôné*.

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PANEL

Disruptive translations

Franziska Trapp

Narrative Structures as Disruptive Innovation in Contemporary Circus?

– A structuralistic analysis of the performance ACROBATES

– *Une histoire d'art et d'amitié*

Keywords: Narration, Structuralism, Acrobatics, Aesthetic of the risk

“Dans l’acrobatie on est perdu. C’est à dire qu’on sait plus où est le haut où est le bas. Si on est en train de monter ou de tomber“. With these words, ACROBATES – une histoire d’art et d’amitié¹, a circensic performance written by Stéphane Ricordel and Oliver Meyrou² begins by posing the initial question of the ontology of acrobatics. “What does it mean to be an acrobat? What is the essence of the acrobatic gesture? How can acrobatics transform a specific relation to reality?” ACROBATES gives an answer through its internal structure – through the “message for its own sake”³. In opposition to Bouissac’s thesis, “an acrobat’s survival demonstrates biological superiority”⁴ the vulnerability and humanity of the artist, the mortality of the acrobat is paid attention to. While creating a new definition of „the acrobat“ the principle of “internal recording”⁵ is used.

ACROBATES is based on a true story. The protagonist, Fabrice Champion, trapeze artist of the company Les Arts Sauts, deceased in 2011, was paralyzed after a collision with another trapeze artist during a rehearsal. As a result of this accident the artist lost his mobility but not his love for acrobatics. He took over teaching activities in circus schools and developed in collaboration with

his students Alexandre Fournier and Mathias Pilet, former students of the Ecole Nationale des Arts du Cirque de Rosny and the Académie Fratellini, a new form of acrobatics. The so-called “Tetra-danse” combines the skills of his wounded body with those of the healthy artists. As Fabrice died before the premiere the resulting act has never been performed in its original version. In June 2008, he went to see a shaman in South America in order to recover his ability to walk. The potion given to him caused his death.

During the time between his accident and death, Fabrice was accompanied by the documentary filmmaker Oliver Meyrou who captured the artist’s turning back to “normal” life and circus work. The resulting material was used to create two different pieces of art: The documentary film Parade, which has been presented at the Berlinale in 2013 and the performance ACROBATES – une histoire d’art et d’amitié, which is currently touring.

ACROBATES contains three main themes: the collaboration between the three artists, the announcement of Fabrice’s death and the reaction of the two dependent artists in relation to their acrobatic work. Documentary film sequences and acrobatic scenes are alternated.

What has been taken linguistically at the end of ACROBATES’ key act ‘J’peux plus’ which is located within the performance after the announcement of Fabrice’s death – “On n’est pas acrobate parce qu’on sait sauter, qu’on sait bouger, qu’on sait faire des mouvements. Ce n’est pas que ça. C’est surtout l’esprit qui est enfermé dans le mouvement acrobatique, qui fait qu’on est acrobate.“ “ is demonstrated in the level of movement. Not only the breaking with conventional course of motions, but also the production of the impression of instability leads to the fact, that not even the basic feature of acrobatics is implemented: the restoration of balance⁶. Goudard states: „L’artiste de cirque rompt l’état stable statique ou dynamique en se plaçant volontairement dans une situation de déséquilibre qu’il résout par une figure ou une posture pour revenir ensuite à l’état stable.“⁷ By interrupting the acrobatic movements

at their peak level, which causes the artists to fall on the ground, and by focussing on the neck, hips and legs as dominant body parts, the risk of failure is continuously present. Furthermore the acoustic signs, the audible respiratory sounds of the artist combined with his groaning, underscore his vulnerability and stand in opposition to the prevalent artistic “code of conduct”. Sounds as consequences of activity are not avoided, but made apparent by their multiple repetition and volume. Thus the artist is given an animalistic trait that is according to Bouissac usually attributed to clowns, the opponents of the acrobats. ”He acts in and of unrefined animal like manner”⁸. By repeating the linguistic equivalences, which belong to the paradigm nature „[...] avoir des orgasmes, promener dans les prés, nager dans les rivières dans les lacs“ this impression is reinforced. The representation of the acrobat in the prevailing performance is therefore opposite to the criterion of ”biological superiority”. By means of a large appearance of equivalences on the axis of combination⁹ created by a specific way of movement, sound and space, ACROBATES builds a paradigm, which is designed in opposition to the paradigm normed by culture¹⁰. The performance breaks with the traditional idea of acrobatics as an “act of survival”¹¹.

Using the structuralist methods of Jurij Lotmann in order to describe the features and principles of (contemporary) circus, seen as a system that generates meaning, it can be stated that the new definition of acrobats is confirmed and ideologically consolidated by the narrative structure of the performance. Within the diesgesis the semantic space¹² of acrobatics is situated between the space of mobility and immobility. According to this understanding, the acrobatic space oscillates between the two extremes. The death of paraplegic artist Fabrice can be seen as the “event”, the “shifting of a persona across the borders of a semantic field”¹³, which dissolves the existing order and questions the new definition of the acrobat but is at the end restored with slight changes. With this “restitutive structure”¹⁴ ACROBATES – une histoire d’art et d’amitié propagates a new contemporary definition of the acrobat, which is contrary

to a culture of attraction focussing on the inherent aesthetic of the risk.

The immediate presence of the happening¹⁵ and the use of a proscenium stage leads to the fact that the audience is directly confronted with it’s own receptive behaviour and the specific characteristic of circus shows – the aesthetic of the risk. The spectators are in reality faced with the possibility of failure of the artistes even during the currently ongoing performance.

In what way is the “displacement of established aesthetics”¹⁶, generalizable for Contemporary Circus performances? What significance has the replacement of the babylonian structure, which staggers the elements on their level of difficulty, by a narrative structure that motivates the reading of circensic performances as texts? It is certain that there are a lot of acrobatic performances in new and contemporary circus that no longer focus on the supernaturalism of the artists work. Notable are two different tendencies: either the ideological idea of the acrobat is the (questionable) topic of the performance, or the acrobat occurs in theatrical representations, “hiding” behind the illustrated figure (“A represents X while S is looking”¹⁷). The famous act of the Company Chris and Iris¹⁸ is an example of explicitly breaking with the idea of the superpower of the acrobat. Movements of effort are negated by everyday movements like tying a ponytail after a successful trick. In the act performed by Sébastien and Mimi¹⁹ of 7 Doigts de la Main, the focus is no longer on the artist and their tricks, but on the narrated story. Whether this is sufficient to declare narrative structures as Disruptive Innovation in New and Contemporary Circus has to be discussed.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NECDWCNZs40>
2. Musique: François-Eudes Chanfrault; Scénographie & Construction: Arteoh & Side-up concept; création lumières, vidéo & consultants: Joris Mathieu, Loic Bontems et Nicolas Boudier; Monteuse: Armarita David;

- régie générale: Simon André; régie lumière: Amandine Galodé; regie son et vidéo: Alycia Karsenty.
3. Jakobson, Roman: Linguistics and Poetics. p.6. URL: http://akira.ruc.dk/~new/Ret_og_Rigtigt/Jakobson_Eks_15_F12.pdf
 4. Bouissac: Circus and Culture. A Semiotic Approach. Indiana 1976. p. 45.
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 8. Bouissac: Circus and Culture. . A Semiotic Approach. Indiana 1976. p. 49.
 9. Cf. Jakobson, Roman: Linguistics and Poetics. p.6. URL: http://akira.ruc.dk/~new/Ret_og_Rigtigt/Jakobson_Eks_15_F12.pdf
 10. This analysis is based on the thesis that circensic performances can be seen as texts in the circensic language, which is based on a twofold characterthe combination and selection of terms, taken from various semantic systems of signs. Their combination takes place simultaneously and chronologically at the same time. The poetic function, i.e. the projection of “the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” determines its structure. This means: “Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence.” CF. Jakobson, Roman: Linguistics and Poetics. URL: http://akira.ruc.dk/~new/Ret_og_Rigtigt/Jakobson_Eks_15_F12.pdf
 11. Bouissac, Paul: Circus and Culture. A semiotic approach. Indiana 1976. p. 45.
 12. Space is „the sum total of homogeneous objects (phenomena, states, funtions, figures, variable meanings, and so on), between which relations exist which are similar to normal spartial relations (continuity, distance and so on).“ Lotman, Jurij: The structure of the artistic text. Translated from the Russian by Ronald Vroon. University of Michigan 1977. p. 217.
 13. Lotman, Jurij: The structure of the artistic text. Translated from the Russian by Ronald Vroon. University of Michigan 1977. p. 233.
 14. Martinez, Matias und Michael Scheffel. Einführung in die Erzähltheorie. München 2012. p. 158.
 15. Cf. Paule: Interaktionstheorie, Theatersemiotik, Ästhetik des Performativen. In: Gabriela Paule: Kultur des Zuschauens. Theaterdidaktik zwischen Textlektüre und Aufführungsrezeption. München 2009. p. 195.
 16. Cf. Original meaning of Disruptive Innovation: „Disruptive innovation, a term of art coined by Clayton Christensen, describes a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors.“ - See more at: <http://www.claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts/#sthash.mDBMEhbD.dpuf>
 17. Cf. Fischer-Lichte: Semiotik des Theaters. Eine Einführung. Das System der theatralischen Zeichen. I. Tübingen 1983. p. 25.
 18. Hand to hand acrobatic by Chistoper Schlunk und Iris Pelz. 33e Festival mondial du cirque de demain 2012. <http://vimeo.com/54734891>.
 19. Hand to hand circus act by Sébastien Soldevila et Mimi Bonnavaud.(The 7 Fingers). Mise en scène: Shana Carroll. Festival Mondial de cirque de demain <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISFmWpexS5g>.

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

*An exchange on physical
metaphors in modern circus*

GLiMT

Abstract/or description:

When acrobats work with scenography or objects that the audience recognize from their own life, we open up associative processes that creates physical metaphors.

What possibilities does this offer us?

How can we explore and exploit this further?

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The Art of the Experiment

Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes

Circus arts research is a space of radical transformation. An ecology of dreams, desires and the un-filled potential of a radical love, it glides through a liquid environment without footprints, or historical precedents.

It is a theatre of becoming - a mysterious place that cannot be fully observed or understood, which is full of magic and enchantment.

Circus arts research space is a complex world the physical laws of which cannot be taken for granted – simultaneously a cradle, a home, an archive, a city, a world and, at times, a place of loss.

Rich with active growth and many acts of differentiation, its researchers can be likened to cells that divide, clump, roll and fold into diffuse communicating networks, pushing at the limits of their own existence without the command of a centralized authority like the brain, or genetic code. Restlessly they explore the question how are we becoming? – for, until they are completely still, their journey remains incomplete.

This leaves us with deep questions, as we are most familiar with approaches that aim to know, master and optimize. Circus arts research subverts the tools of assessment applied to other research and demands new approaches.

Some of these investigations are solo enterprises, while others engage groups and whole populations of participants. Lone pioneers, migrating bodies and proliferating throngs slither and swarm between unfolding membranes, spandrels and manifold spaces. Entangled fabrics act as connectors, like roots, hairs, vessels and tubes that pulse and pump the outside medium inside, until there is no longer any apparent distinction between performer and observer.

Yet circus arts research also generates environments that feed back on this choreography of events in which its audiences are entangled. How do performers know what is meaningful when they inhabit a realm in which body and environment are so deeply entangled? How do they navigate surroundings that are so diverse and changeable as to be inseparable?

The scientific gaze has observed, measured, sampled and probed the conundrums of complex environments, yet has neglected the transformative space of circus arts research where there are no guarantees, only the exploration of limits. Traditional spaces such as tent, big top or street are now joined by other spaces that nurture different kinds of encounters, expressions, bodies, and new forms of existence.

Once such performance space is starship Persephone. It takes the form of an experimental environment in which the nature of life itself is being choreographed into existence through the interactions of its bodies, spaces and the many potential relationships between them. Persephone's laboratory is a living body produced by countless prototypes and relationships between human and nonhuman agents. It seeks new questions rather than particular affirmations or definitive answers. It is an instrument of radical reinvention of a world we thought we knew. These experimental terrains encapsulate the bold explorations and inventions of circus arts research whose myriad tumbling relationships shape the character of this world and its capacity for radical love.



TRANS- GRESSION

PANEL DISCUSSION

Borders

Cirkus Cirkör

This is not an abstract.

This is fragments of different research done over the past twenty years. Cirkus Cirkör is at its core working with crossing boundaries between art and society. The research done during the last few years has become more political in a sense since we deal with issues of borders and limits both within ourselves and as a part of the current refugee crisis. We will give you some short examples of texts from earlier research and our current challenges. The discussion will be around the connection between the different productions and research done and how it correlates with our current research and work.

Cirkus Cirkör - Borders

This year Cirkus Cirkör celebrates 20 years of crossing boundaries between Art and Society. During Tilde Björfors artistic leadership Cirkus Cirkör has consistently explored boundaries and boundary crossing in the performances and in research as well as in the circus interaction with society, audiences and participants. In the light of Europe's increasingly higher borders to the outside world, and the impact that closed borders entails, Cirkus Cirkör's voice as an advocate of transboundary collaborations has grown stronger. With the recent production, *Borders*, reviewer Richard Loman at Dagens Nyheter appointed Cirkus Cirkör as the creator of a new genre; "Circus activism". The

fact that this reviewer has not met circus activism before is quite an interesting observation.

Background

Cirkus Cirkör has a long experience of different border crossing collaborations as a part of our mission to establish contemporary circus as an art form, and as tools to affect and influence society. What follows below are a few examples of this. *its emergence is through opening the circus to the open world.*

Between 2004 and 2010 we started "Cirkör on tour" as a reaction to the fact that Cirkör was both running pedagogical work and artistic activities in one municipality at once without the different departments realizing that this was going on. Through "Cirkör on tour" we could with joint forces create a lot of symbiosis in the municipality. By creating a three year long cooperation with each involved municipality where they had to agree on different actions. To take stock of the different young, local circus and theatre groups, to work with circus in the schools, with different organizations and by giving public presentations and performances.

This project led to the creation of the Winter Acrobatics High School in Åre, and to residencies for circus artists in Landskrona. These residencies later led to a few performances in the area and some of the artists in residence were also working with local teachers and schools.

Cirkus Cirkör also conducted cross-artistic research in collaboration with researchers and students from, amongst others, Handelshögskolan (Stockholm School of Economics), the University of Dance and Circus (DOCH), Musikhögskolan, (the Royal College of Music), Karolinska Institutet, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, the University

of Stockholm and Konsthögskolan (the Royal Institute of Art) as well as Tilde Björfors' research project "Circus – Transcending boundaries in art and society".

Tangible results: Circus Transfer

As part of the interdisciplinary work of the project we have transposed the disciplines and dimensions, education and methods of the circus arts onto other fields of knowledge such as leadership, entrepreneurship, directing, brain research, drama studies, teaching and learning. It has resulted in:

- University courses (Stockholm Business School, Circus colleges in Sweden and internationally)
- Teaching programs (schools and after school care facilities)
- Leadership courses (industry, public sector and education sector)
- Lectures, seminars and workshops for primary and secondary schools, senior high schools, universities, industry, councils and public sector in Sweden and internationally
- Teacher training (schools in Sweden and internationally)
- Increased understanding of the “eco system” of collaboration between different circus, commercial and arts organizations, public, private and not-for-profit sectors and its diverse functions
- Contribution to Holone (an information hub for brain research): Discussions on Holone TV, member of Holone’s interdisciplinary advisory board.

Masters of Management

By bringing together freelance circus artists and Masters of management students at the Stockholm Business School in joint courses, we have gained a greater understanding of what these two groups can learn from each other. For example, it is apparent that the circus artists can teach the management students to think more like entrepreneurs and the management students in turn can offer circus artists more structure and other tools.

In the meeting of the two groups, the difference between an artistic and a financial viewpoint has become apparent. The former is largely directed from the inside, while the latter is directed from the outside. When they meet each other, many existential questions are brought up, which can be

seen as the source of all creativity and innovation.

We can learn a lot about organizations and leadership from contemporary circus. The disciplines themselves and the many dimensions bring up new ways of looking at organizations. Additionally, the connection between art and the organizations have made us question some of the classic organizational and leadership theories.

Drama studies

There are several results that have come out of the collaboration with drama studies. Firstly, this project has been able to show the importance of circus as an area of research in Scandinavia. Additionally, the project has contributed analyses of the work in circus and the specific conditions for circus as an art form. For example, the analysis of *Inside Out* and *Wear it like a crown* have pointed out the necessity of increasingly including the study of artistic process in drama work to understand those perspectives of the performing arts that may remain hidden, as they are not apparent in the performance, but are still crucial to the production of the performance.

Teaching and learning

Our goal for the pedagogical activities of the project have been to develop knowledge through the artistic processes of contemporary circus. We have done this in different ways; teacher training, reference groups, university courses, risk and opportunity research with fifth-graders and by working with the seven dimensions. We have seen that contemporary circus as an art form, with its artistic qualities, can enhance the learning of different school subjects. By introducing contemporary circus in subjects such as Math, Swedish and Nordic Mythology, another form of learning has been developed, which utilizes both hemispheres of the brain. Several teachers confirm in interviews how their students’ learning has contributed to the development of their students’ thinking about school subjects. For example, by bringing in the circus dimensions of collaboration, trust and presence, the capacity of the students to learn has increased. They learn through working

with their own bodies, and together with those of their classmates, which adds a new understanding of the subject.

Additionally, the students get a deeper understanding of the different circus disciplines and the art forms of circus and contemporary circus.

Brain research

Through bringing together contemporary circus and brain research, the project has deepened its trans-boundary perspective. The project has been discussed on Holone TV, an information source for brain research. Tilde is a member of the Holone advisory council, meeting regularly to discuss the latest brain research in an interdisciplinary perspective. Based on interviews with the artists at work, Tilde has collected information that correlates with the brain research that shows that the brain is malleable. Studying contemporary circus from a brain perspective has also resulted in a connected research project with the Culture and Brain Health Initiative at the University of Göteborg.

- In collaboration with brain researchers, Tilde has explored and used the different characteristics of the hemispheres in the creation of performances. This has led to an increased understanding of how creativity works in the brain and how we handle risks and opportunities.

Cirkör have also been a large part of the development of collaborations between circus and institutional theatres in Sweden. There we can see that the early collaborations was conducted by theatre directors that had little or no experience of circus. Today these collaborations look very different since contemporary circus is starting to be regarded as an art form. It's not unusual that a circus director now gets the opportunity to create new performances for the theatre and its ensemble, circus artists, etc.

As a matter of fact we just started a three year collaboration with Västmanlands Theatre in which we will work pedagogically, create performances, integrate local reference groups, etc.

During the last years Cirkus Cirkör has been working a lot with activism outside of the performances. One example of this is how we linked several activities to our production Knitting Peace. We created the project Call for knitting where we asked people to send their white knitted pieces to Cirkus Cirkör and to take a moment to answer three questions. "Why do you knit? What are you striving for? Is knitting our way to peace possible?" The contribution has later been displayed in connection with our performances and as a part of one of our many knitted installations and exhibitions. With the call for knitting we've reached out to the large community of knitters as well as schools, people new to knitting and the yarn bombing / craftivism community. In the winter 2015 we will create a large Knitting Peace exhibition at the Army Museum in Stockholm.

Where we are today

"What Times are these, when to talk about trees is almost a crime Because it implies silence about so many horrors" Bertolt Brecht

With the inspiration from a Brecht quote Cirkus Cirkör takes on a new artistic challenge on the theme of borders and boundaries in the arts and in society.

In the West we are busy challenging each other in breaking out of our comfort zones. At the same time, we protect our European borders more vigilantly. The hustle and bustle of everyday life plays out against the background noise of reports about refugees in overcrowded boats, in pursuit of freedom and security.

Contemporary circus is an art form that moves without boundaries. It also works seamlessly between different genres, art forms and means of expression, without conventions. Crossing boundaries is hard to do without giving rise to elements of chaos and disorder ... but something makes us want to do so anyway.

Borders will be the overall theme for many of the activities in and around Cirkör for the coming

years. We also aim to create models for working pedagogically and physically. Border crossing, within and between organizations, schools, the local community, with asylum-seeking children and families, teenagers and the elderly. The aim is to create, develop and share models for audience inclusion and activism on the topic of Borders.

Limits

With the new production Limits the work and issues continues:

Is limitation a reality or imaginary? Is a limit an end or a motivation to want to find new ways?

We have drawn the lines and divided the world in various limited parts. We build fences around our gardens. We build walls, fences and have armed forces around our countries.

But man has never wanted to stay in one place...

In conjunction with the show, we will start a local project where we want to create commitment on border crossing issues locally in the places we will visit on the tour. Cirkör will challenge the audience, informing them about migration and highlight inspiring examples of local charitable projects. Cirkör audience will not only be spectators of a performance, they will be changing the world.

Through challenge notes each visitor is invited to challenge themselves and move beyond their comfort zone. Local charity projects will be highlighted to show what is being done locally and at the same time, we will challenge the audience and the venue together to be a part of the projects by supporting them in their work. The audience can support the projects by giving money, things or to give part of their time. For the inquisitive visitors Cirkör will suggest books, films, radio programs and magazines that have been used in research work on the show. Migration and the fact that people in general, and circus people in particular has always been in motion, will be highlighted to show that the migration of today is not a new phenomenon.

To wrap things up

The challenge we face today is how we can work with the outside world on the theme Borders. This means that we're aiming to reach beyond the purely cross-art scientific border crossings and also start working specifically with the world at large and in particular for Europe's management of people, who are desperately seeking help and tranquility in one of the richest continents.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Borders

Sepideh Karami

Getting Out of Balance

*An Encounter Between
Architecture and Circus*

What else could a riot and street battle be called except an unchoreographed dance? In this dance, city elements let go of their assigned functions in favor of people’s wishes. However, they are not trustworthy, as they are controlled by dominant power. Streets are risky stages that motivate risky dances. In this unchoreographed dance, how can a performer trust the elements of the stage? How can she trust her performing partners on this stage? How does human and non-human symbiosis take shape spontaneously in a chance encounter? Many compare revolutions to falling in love. That you expose yourself to what you are not certain about; to a risk; to the risk of getting out of balance; a dedication that fills you with courage to fail, to fall, to let your balance go.

In this text I have invited architecture and circus art to an encounter, with an endeavor to construct imaginary grounds of acting, performing and living. Starting from street politics, in this text, city has become the stage of circus art, and as a result, circus art has turned into an art of living. Focusing on overcoming gravity as a mutual wish between the two, I have tried to challenge both by removing the architectural support of ascending

and descending or by rendering it disobedient. The result is *The City of Falling*; an imaginary city where falling should turn into the art of falling .
The Encounter

The line is architecture’s representative medium; it creates diagrams of power that use architecture’s intrinsic violence on the bodies to organize them in space. (...) *The Funambulist*, also known as a tight ropewalker, is the character who, somehow, subverts this power by walking on the line. She is the frail figure moving along the lines between the two towers in 1974. She is the person doing the ‘V’ with her fingers while standing on the edge of the Wall in November, 1989. And, if she happens to fall, she will find a tall Nietzschean character to say that she can die peacefully because she would die from the danger she dedicated her life to.

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other objects in a circus are trustworthy elements to the circus artist. They show directions, desires, difficulties and support; the necessity to perform. They are infrastructure of encouragement. The circus artist and these elements have built up a relationship, a language, over days of rehearsal; days of inhabiting a place, a relation, a situation. She expects them to be supportive. But she also looks at them as the objects of impossibility to overcome.

Gravity is the dominancy that architectural

elements of the circus and the circus artist fight against; the latter by means of movement and the former by means of stillness. The circus artist is the center of gravity; it chases her, catches her and drags her back to the ground. Gravity appears in pauses, in striking the ground, in bumping to the horizontal elements. It is embodied in deforming the elastic objects: a rope bending down under the feet of a tightrope walker, in the sound of acrobat's feet meeting the ground, in the trembling muscles of a pair of acrobats and in the twist of the bodies of catchers and fliers. The circus artist is the one giving life to inanimate objects, to the architecture of circus, and to gravity itself.

There is a plea to ascend; as if by ascending she defeats the gravity; it is a gesture of power. Similar is architecture: high-rise as a form of showing power, detaching from the ground; getting closer to the sky. The aspiration for ascending in both has resulted in different architectural elements, material and building technologies, different techniques and aesthetics of movements. In this encounter between architecture and circus art, what happens when what we always stand on disappears?

Falling With Love

In the middle of this city, there is a square called Revolution Square . This square is mysterious as it always unfolds a story. One ordinary story is that every single morning, on a bridge arching over the southern part of the square, where Worker Street crosses it, a man ties a rope from one side of the fence to the other and stands on the rope until noon. At noon, he unties the rope, descends the nonexistent stairs on the west side and strolls down the Liberty Street that starts just on the west side of the square.

He is called the man with the rope. The man with the rope's wish is to cross Revolution Square over his rope. You might wonder what this story has to do with falling? But the man with the rope thinks in the unfolding of this paper he might experiment with the act of falling.

* * *

And just now,

a motorcycle whizzes by, unties the tightrope in a blink of an eye. He falls, but flies down to my palms, ready to clasp his hands. The city of falling gives him a birth, and gravity makes us meet. Showered in blood and water, my arms tremble under his weight. His tears drop on my face, rolling into my lips. Salt.

In silence I murmur:

– Salt makes you weightless. It lightens you. You float in a salty lake.

He croaks:

– People fear falling. So do I. That's why there are tricks of balancing, of not falling; and ladders, stairs, ramps, elevators, escalators; infrastructure of descending/ascending. Falling is a cut. You stumble and fall. But infrastructure of descending eliminates that cut, that discontinuity. It eliminates the risk of failure; the risk of fatality.

I say:

– But in The City of Falling things work differently. Everything is destined to fall and everything is built to encourage falling. There are jumps, falls, stumbles, tripping, dropping. In The City of Falling gravity rules and materials fragile to gravity are celebrated; because you should fall as often as possible. Welcome to The City of Falling!

There is a contract between us. We have become one long creature; head to head, feet away. I bear, he loads; he bears, I load. We are both trapped in a continuous falling. There is a city above my head, but underneath his feet. And there is an axis in the clasp of our hands, the center of gravity. I look at him, upside down and at the city, ditto. The city is under constant construction and destruction; folding in and out. Bodies climb the scaffolds, walk on top of them, stand, jump from one beam to another. But everything just falls.

City Of Falling

On February 14th 2011, during the Green Movement, continuous Iranian post-election civil unrest, a young man ascended a crane in Tehran,

while holding up a green flag and the photos of his lost comrades. His ascending accelerated another important demonstration on the day that connected the Green Movement to the new uprisings at the time in Egypt and Libya. Using falling as a threatening strategy, he had attached himself to the crane with a rope, ready to jump and hang himself, if police wanted to stop him from his political performance. The falling never happened.

* * *

Spotlights went off and this short story glimmered off the screen.

In the dark...

...there is a city,

sweltering in dirt and crime, in cruelty and mercy. Cars rush through the highways. Wind tosses the laundry letting rooftop love-making slip out. Cats rip the trash bags up. Stray dogs cool down in narrow canals. Cranes rotate over the city; their uncoiled joints send squeaks to the surrounding mountains. It is called the city of falling. In The City of Falling you dismantle, break, pull down, destruct, grow horizontally. You embrace the gravity; you fool it. It is not an upside down city but a city like any other city. The only difference is that things keep on falling: An unfortunate immigrant worker falls down the scaffolds while stretching to grab a window frame from the crane. Passersby stumble down staircase-alleys. A worker drops a spanner from a scaffold on a ten-storey building. The political conflicts revolve around bringing the rival down; photos are pulled down from the city walls, statues are pulled down from their plinths. People jump down from the high-rises. A man drops a coin when searching his pockets for an important piece of paper. The dead bird falls from a plane tree. The plane trees shed leaves in every season. From planes people fall into The City of Falling. I fall.

Staircase

Stairs narrate weight, heaviness, impossibility of

flight. But what does their absence narrate? The impossibility of ascending? Longing for flying, jumping, and lightness?

Imagine that moment, that all of a sudden, all stairs disappear from the city. Those on upper floors find it impossible to get down. And those who are returning to home find it perplexing to get back to their flats. Those who are about to cross the street over the pedestrian bridge get stuck over the city. And those who are already on the stairs anywhere in the city fall down. One day, this happened. And since then the city has been called The City of Falling.

In this city there are no stairs as such. The connections between the two levels though either don't exist or exist differently. These gaps, cuts or voids, promote jumping, falling, stumbling and other similar moves that are usually avoided by means of architectural elements. As a result, the sound of the city of falling is also different; instead of regular footsteps you hear, crashing, banging, clashing, whamming, whumping, thumping, bumping, tapping, knocking, rapping, smacking, smashing, popping, flapping, rustling, clacking, clunking, clanking, rattling, clattering.

A Sub-City: The City of Stairs

Stairs are folded floor that by being raised facilitate ascending and descending. The City of Stairs is the recycling site of The City of Falling. At the time of stairs' declination, trucks loaded with stairs headed toward a vast empty area neighboring The City of Falling. Every day thousands of stairs in different forms were being disembarked and stacked in the area. It had become a landscape of horizontal stairs where ascending and descending had lost their antithetical relation.

Stairs behave strangely here. If you step on one of them, they fold back. They respond differently to the weight. They resist ascending; they disobey. One should be really fast in ascending such disobedient stairs to succeed getting to the top; the foot rarely touches the steps. Yet what would happen when one gets to the first landing? - It all falls.

Art of Living, Art of Falling

There is a dedication to the artistry of tightrope dancers and other acrobats that impresses me. The fact that they risk their lives is significant but hardly the point. No I do believe it has to do with dedication, with total focus on being in the midst of it.

In street politics and micropolitics of everyday life, there are inevitable moments similar to the act of a circus artist, jumping and walking on a “tightrope”, trying to catch the hand of the other, overcoming impossible missions. In this space of conflict, however, there is no rehearsal; missions are too complicated; risks are higher and trust can only be built spontaneously over the real performance. Could the unchoreographed dance of street politics, dance of revolution and love, be compared to the circus art as the art of living? If falling becomes an art of living, what would support the art of falling? What would be the aesthetics of architecture as art of falling?

1. Borrowed from 'The Fall', a short story by V. S. Pritchett.
2. Léopold Lambert (2013). 'WALKING ON A TIGHT ROPE'. In THE FUNAMBULIST PAPERS: VOLUME 01. P. 06
3. Revolution Square is one of the main squares in central Tehran. Three streets of Revolution Street, Liberty Street and Worker Street cross this square. This square and the crossing streets have always been the locus of demonstrations, riots and revolution. This account is an imaginary account of this square.
4. The character is borrowed from the short story 'First Sorrow' by Franz Kafka. In this story, "A trapeze artist had so arranged his life that, as long as he kept working in the same building, he never came down from his trapeze by night or day, at first only from a desire to perfect his skill, but later because custom was too strong for him. All his needs, very modest needs at that, were supplied by relays of attendants who watched from below and sent up and hauled down again in specially constructed containers whatever he required. This way of living caused

no particular inconvenience to the theatrical people, except that, when other turns were on the stage, his being still up aloft, which could not be dissembled, proved somewhat distracting, as also the fact that, although at such times he mostly kept very still, he drew a stray glance here and there from the public."

5. Per Nilsson (2015). Non Serviam: Philosophical Essays on Arts of Living. Sweden, Umeå: h:ström – Text & Kultur. P. 134

PANEL DISCUSSION

Borders

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City University London*

The Value of Circus in the Transformation of Global Society

Introduction

Just as there has historically been discussion over the definition of the term 'circus', there has also been, and continues to be, conflict between the different types of circus and their practitioners. Although tensions respond to complex socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances, some general narratives can be found highlighting intrinsic differences between circus movements and styles over the external factors provoking conflictive relationships.

The aim of this analysis is to contribute with clarifying understandings of circus in the light of modernity and distinctive elements of the practice. While circus has been seen as an alternative to modern life, circus history, notions and conflicts replicate the rigid canons of modernity. It is however the distinctive character of circus that, challenging modernity, makes this art a valuable form in the transformation of a global society of multiple interconnections.

This analysis is part of a PhD thesis on cultural value and circus arts that joins cultural studies and cultural policy disciplines to deconstruct econo-

mic valuations of the arts. The research examines circus movements in Colombia and in the UK as cases of study. It is centred on perceptions, notions and values of circus and culture that artists, policy makers, managers and other practitioners provided in personal interviews or informal conversations, complemented with literature on circus and other relevant disciplines.

The Value of Circus in Global Society

One of the values or positive aspects that practitioners and non-practitioners recognise in circus is what can be called the circus epistemology. This characteristic is usually described as a way of life in contraposition to modern life. However, the acquisition of circus knowledge and its enactment transcends a specific life style to signify more an epistemology or the way in which people learn their practice and understand their world. Circus learning potentiates the skills each particular individual has. Skills are acquired through a process of trial and error, self-reflection, challenge, risk, cooperation and communication. This circus method differs from traditional education systems grounded on universalisation, normalisation and individualism; some of the pillars upon which modern societies and modern systems of knowledge have been built.

Another value commonly attached to circus is the interaction and closeness with other artistic disciplines. Artists, policy-makers and arts managers mention this element as the main reasons to work or to invest in this artistic form. In comparison to other forms, circus allows a straightforward combination of disciplines and audiences. The practice is seen as a diverse and open form that housed artists not accepted in classical theatre or other artistic forms. It is also recognised for the incorporation of 'freaks' and outsiders challenging official and accepted social canons.

The value of circus rests precisely in its continued capacity to say something meaningful in the face of the social and political disorders of today. Transcending critical theory approaches or what Eve Chiapello calls the 'artist critique', the circus

epistemology - grounded on multiplicity, diversity and interconnection of spheres - can illuminate the restructuring of the global society beyond modern and post-modern discourses. However, current circus movements and circus notions have not escaped the rigid canons of modernity while disregarding the history and the distinctive values of the practice.

Circus Movements and Tensions Between Different Understandings

The image of circus is usually associated to the 'old-style' show of clowns, exotic animals and physical skills under the Big Top. It is attached to the spectacle created by Phillip Astley in 18th century England, regarded as the father of modern circus. Although disputes are found around Astley's novelty, he is recognised as a successful business entrepreneur who invented the circus in the form we know it today. Circus history commonly describes a vacuum between Phillip Astley's invention and the ancient traditions of the Greek hippodromes and the Roman circuses. Medieval artists and traditions worldwide are regarded more as the origins of circus or as vestiges of the form.

Different circus categories exist today labelled as "traditional", "new" and "contemporary". Other forms, such as "social" and "street" circus, which may take the form of any of the three categories, have further fractured the definition of precisely what circus is. Conflicts between those movements are observed while practitioners are divided within them.

Traditional circus considers the Big Top as the only place to teach and to perform circus skills. However, the circle and the Big Top have not always been the distinctive elements of the practice as evidenced by circus historians. Astley's circus, for instance, was born in an open building and oval space. Contemporary movements consider traditional circus as a massive entertainment business with an established format of physical acts. New circus is in between; mainly linked to the traditional version without animals while in-

cluding a narrative or a specific theme connecting the acts.

Contemporary circus is considered an emerging phenomenon that brings more closely elements of theatre and other artistic disciplines into circus. It propends towards the expression of emotions, meanings, story telling and artistic freedom. It is characterised by solo acts or small group of artists, telling a personal or a collective but meaningful story. It is attached to the French tradition that propends for artistic freedom, encouraging audiences to reflect on life and transcendental issues beyond mere entertainment and laughter. Artists choose the mode and topic of expression sometimes not that easily accepted by diverse audiences.

But this is not the only form that emphasises these aspects. Bringing elements of theatre into circus is neither new nor exclusive of contemporary movements. The expression of emotions, meanings and life issues are elements found across times and circus styles. Different ways to express emotions and to deal with life issues exist beyond introducing specific drama elements or narratives to circus acts. It is not the only way to make a performance meaningful or reflective on life issues. The classical clown and the incorporation of freaks challenged official canons besides mere entertainment and laughter.

Descriptions of contemporary circus seem to reinforce more a modern aesthetic discourse grounded on beauty, morality, and the intellect, than exalting distinctive characters of this movement. That aesthetic notion, as Terry Eagleton explains in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, is a bourgeois concept in the most literal historical sense hatched and nurtured in the Enlightenment; it is a result of the middle class's struggle to reaffirm their concept of 'beauty' and the 'sensible', distanced from the functioning of the body. As Julieta Infantino notes in her study of circus in Argentina, the practice became an inferior art in comparison with the hegemonic classic idea of art. Circus's emphasis on the physical body and the unsophisticated made it to be considered a non-artistic form.

A similar struggle could be found today with contemporary circus looking for recognition within the official arts. Tomi Purovaara suggests in 'An Introduction to Contemporary Circus' that circus will soon be recognised by high art specialists and will contribute as a productive and innovative part of culture and society. In reality, circus has always been a productive, innovative and influential part in culture and society as the author demonstrates in the mentioned work. It has inspired the works of influential writers, filmmakers, painters and artistic movements across times and nations. It has contributed to developments in advertisement, film and other industries. The ridiculous, the comical, the ambivalent character that identify the form, as well as the essential role of laughter, has been fundamental in the emancipation of societies, as sustained by Mikhail Bakhtin in his study on medieval carnivals.

A second tension is perceived between professional/contemporary and social circus. Social circus is commonly understood as the use of circus as a tool to intervene with marginalised groups, such as youth at risk. It is mainly associated with a movement initiated in the early 1990's where the primary goal is not to learn the circus arts, but rather to assist with participants' personal and social development. Some practitioners see this approach as marking a strong border between social and professional circus, using circus training as a palliative instead of a life option. Further tensions arise around social initiatives being blamed for using the social label just as a fundraising tool.

A third tension is perceived within artists. Some groups manifest to be just performers instead of circus artists as they do not fit within the circus image. Others manifest to be confused in front of their own style, recognition and employability. Performing at circus productions and cultural venues is commonly seen as the final goal or the place where artistic freedom can be explored. Corporate events and street circus have been associated with the word 'prostitution' and a way to make money instead of an artistic expression. On

the contrary, some artists find in those events the freedom to explore their own acts and style instead of following a creative director telling them how to move, what to dress or how to perform. It gives them the opportunity to choose when and where to work instead of being attached to touring dates and the uncertainties of a production.

The street and market places, on the other hand, are the home or the natural environments where circus has always developed. They are like the Silk Road that connected jugglers, mimes, acrobats and musicians found in rituals and other private and public gatherings in the Ancient world. It housed 'circulatores' and 'histriones' - some of the names used by historians to call circus artists before Phillip Astley - and it is still the place where current movements emerged beyond circus families and circus schools. Recognising 'histriones' and 'circulatores' as valid forms of circus could help to clarify notions and reduce conflicts concerning what constitutes "real" circus.

The location of the performance, in a theatre, at a corporate event, in the street, or under the Big Top does not determine the quality of an artist's performance. It is not about the kind of event but about the freedom and possibilities that artists find in being authentic, expressing themselves and connecting with audiences. It is not the venue, a specific epoch, or the exchange of money that determines what circus is, but the distinctive elements recognised such as physical skills, amusement, diversity, laughter, play, challenge and entertainment. Elements that can be found in traditional, contemporary, new, street, corporate, social or any other form of circus.

Instead of reinforcing a narrative on the organization of Circus into distinct movements, through which it might be seen as a pyramid of linear and hierarchical structures, the challenge then is to highlight the distinctive elements that make this art a unique form. The challenge is to understand circus as one of the places that welcomes diversity and multiplicity, which functions as a circle of interconnected spheres, where everyone has a

Art of living,
being
dedicated to
something.

place; everybody can enjoy while official cannons are challenged.

Conclusion

Certain narratives prevail around circus movements that disregard the history and the distinctive elements of the practice while splitting circus values into separate boxes: "Traditional circus", which encompasses laughter and entertainment while targeting diverse audiences; "contemporary circus", associated with the crossover of artistic disciplines and transgression; and "social circus", which puts forward the power of circus more as a tool of social mobility than as an art form. Within these same boxes, artists and practitioners limit their own freedom and creative potential while cancelling the diversity that identifies the artistic form.

More than an alternative to modern life, or an outsider operating in the margins, circus is one of the forms that challenge modern society while recognising the role of tradition in today's context. Instead of reinforcing traditional notions of modernity and the individual, the art of circus brings a notion of diversity, interconnectivity and community. A notion demanded in the understanding and re-organisation of the interconnected global society.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Learning, disability and risk

Dr Nick McCaffery

*From Freak show to therapy:
Managing risk as a central theme
in social circus in Northern Ireland
Extended Abstract Sep 2015*

Abstract:

Drawing upon ethnographic data collected during five consecutive years of the annual Streetwise Summer School (2010 – 2014) The author considers the concept of risk from different perspectives: Primarily the risk (for staff and audiences) of unknown outcomes on stage when dealing with non-professional performers who are often unpredictable and anarchic. Secondly, the risk for staff and performers who are unable to control how a performance will be interpreted by an audience – most notably the risk of a learning disabled cast being viewed as ‘more disabled’ when placed on a stage. This throws up concepts of risk for audiences of coming to see a show framed in terms of disability rather than quality of performance; this frame of reference of disabled performers can be positive (celebrating the skills of the cast) or negative (accusations of freak shows) but is always present.

This paper relies upon the perspective of many of the facilitators involved in this project over 5 years- directors and circus tutors – as well as feedback from audiences at shows, which include parents, carers and friends of the performers. This paper will not directly incorporate the perspectives of the performers, as this is a separate work currently in development.

What is Streetwise Community Circus and who do we work with:

Streetwise Community Circus CIC is a cooperative of Street Performers that has been based in Belfast since 1995. The group was instigated by local street performer and ex member of Belfast Community Circus Jim Webster. The central reason for the existence of the group was to develop a series of circus workshops throughout Northern Ireland in order to provide paid work for street performers and circus artists at times of the year when performance work in the country was in short demand. Thus the central concept was then, and continues to be now, a model to ensure that being a circus artist in Northern Ireland could be a more sustainable occupation for those who choose to stay in Northern Ireland throughout the year. From the outset, Streetwise Community Circus worked with a variety of participants in workshops, although we focussed on youth. We developed short term and long term projects with youth in areas of economic and social deprivation, with young offenders, but also at fun days and local family events. In 2002 one of our members proposed a project working with adults with learning disabilities, and due to the immediate success of this work, it is this population with which we have focussed our attention since then.

Streetwise and the concept of disability circus:

The model of work that Streetwise Community Circus conducts throughout the year can be best described as a pyramid. At our base we work on an outreach basis across the country; developing projects in day centres, or other community locations introducing the concept of circus to adults with disabilities (learning and/or physical). These projects often last up to 20 weeks, and end with a showcase, although due to funding restrictions, it is unlikely that they are repeated in the same location twice. Where practical, individuals who have taken part in one of these outreach projects are invited to attend our own ‘Evergreen’ circus group, which meets weekly in Belfast each Thursday evening. Here, participants can develop skills that they were introduced to on outreach projects,

and develop new skills. From this pool of participants, as well as identifying members from other outreach projects, we invite applicants to participate in our annual Summer School. More recently we have added another layer to this pyramid, that of our 'Evergreen Touring Group'. This is a small core of seasoned performers who have developed circus and performance skills via participation in Summer Schools. This group develops a small show that is then toured around day centres in Belfast, and they have also been called upon to participate in such local events as culture night and the festival of fools.

Streetwise Summer School:

In 2009 Streetwise Community Circus sought funding to produce a public showcase that would demonstrate the skills and abilities of some of the participants with whom we had been working over the previous years. The idea was to bring participants from various projects together to develop a short piece of circus theatre within a very tight schedule. The summer school takes place over 2 weeks in August, and participants are expected to attend each working day, Monday to Friday for both weeks. Recognising the need for theatre directing skills outside of the expertise of our own group, Streetwise eventually found and hired the services of Fittings Multimedia Arts. The relationship between Fittings and Streetwise continues to this day, and has proven particularly effective in developing the quality and popularity of the Summer School show each year.

The format for the project has not changed over 7 years. We invite up to 20 performers from a pool of participants who have taken part in circus projects with Streetwise in the past. We provide a team of 4 or 5 circus tutors with experience of working with this population, and who can demonstrate abilities in addition to a level of competence in the circus skills we use (e.g. juggling, stilts, unicycle etc.) such as developing group and solo routines, musical ability, organisational

and logistic skills, publicity and administrative abilities, and diplomacy. Overseeing the tutors and performers are a team of directors and facilitators from Fittings Multimedia Arts.

In preparation for the summer school Streetwise and Fittings liaise to produce a theme or concept for the show. Often this is very loose, and can be interpreted in any number of ways, for example the 2011 show was developed according to the concept of 'wonders of the world', and in 2015 the show was built around a wedding theme. This theme is then communicated to those performers who meet via the regular Evergreen weekly sessions¹ who are in principle then able to adapt their skills to fit into this concept.

Essentially though, what happens is that a group of up to 20 performers from the worlds of learning disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders, and mental health arrive in a theatre in Belfast to meet up with each other (sometimes for the first time), meet up with tutors, facilitators and directors (again, often for the first time) and demonstrate the circus skills that they have been learning in the months leading up to this event. By the following Friday, this anarchic collection of performers and facilitators, have created, rehearsed and performed a unique piece of circus theatre to up to three separate audiences. Not to mention the work of the theatre technical staff who build sets, create lighting, soundscapes and other media, and who costume our performers at very short notice.

The entire process is a testament to the professionalism of our non-professional performers, many of whom have been involved in several productions. It is also, clearly, a process which relies upon trust, anarchy, fun, hard work, an openness to deal with a constant sense of the unexpected, unplanned and unachievable, and an overall sense of risk. It is this ever-present and effervescent sense of risk that I explore here.

¹ Although there are many participants on the summer school who do not attend these regular sessions.

Risk:

As a tutor on the Streetwise Summer School from 2010 to 2014, I have worked on 5 productions, and have experienced each year, a sense that somehow, and against most odds, the process works. But there are several risks that arise from such a project, and it is worthwhile examining how tutors, facilitators and directors identify and either manage or embrace these risks.

At this tentative stage I have identified two key areas of risk associated with the Streetwise Summer School that deserve investigation:

1. The risk of dealing with non-professional performers who are often unpredictable and anarchic.
2. The risk of being unable to control how a performance will be interpreted by an audience – in terms of disability (positively OR negatively) rather than in terms of entertainment.

I should reiterate that this particular paper is based on the perspective of those around the disabled performers, and not the performers themselves; as such the risks perceived by our performers are not raised here.

Risk 1: The risk of dealing with non-professional performers who are often unpredictable and anarchic.

For all the pressure, mayhem and anarchy of the Streetwise Summer School, it is in essence a very positive experience. Our own staff compete to take part each year via interviews, our performers usually express the wish to return year after year, and often begin asking about the summer school months in advance, and our partner staff at Fittings Multimedia continue to express the way in which the process affects their own work:

“For many of the participants, staff and indeed me, it is a highlight of the years, and the atmosphere and ensemble created by all is pretty special and unusual. The intensity of bringing together everyone for a fortnight enables focus, sustained development and a creative bubble to make good work. The personalities and skills of staff and partici-

pants are complementary and feed off one another, and having worked together over the past 3 or 4 years, we have the familiarity and shorthands to get things done quickly and effectively, and every year, our ambitions can, and do increase.” (Jamie Beddard, Fittings, summer school director 2012 – 2015, correspondence with author)

“It’s the whole environment and the 2 weeks in Belfast nourishes my brain heart breath and blood. There is depth and drive in the process, the unpredictable, out of the unknown terrain a beauty, courage, awareness, complexity and truth of performance happens from incremental play” (David Stickman Higgins, Fittings, assistant director 2010 – 2015, correspondence with author)

However, words like intensity, unpredictable, and unknown reflect a reality that is often difficult to manage – even when these terms are presented as a positive force.

This section will explore the acts and performers who have acted in an anarchic and unpredictable way over several productions, and explores the way in which our performers have surprised us on stage – generally positively, and how the staff and facilitators have come to embrace this anarchy in order to include our performers’ wishes to use their own actions, words and ways; and thus enabled them to become more at ease in expressing themselves in front of a diverse audience. This freedom of expression – even in the smallest detail – reminds us that we are always striving toward a participant led production.

Risk 2: The risk of being unable to control how a performance will be interpreted by an audience – in terms of disability (positively OR negatively) rather than in terms of entertainment.

Of course, every performance grapples with this risk – how will the audience react to my work? It is not a novel question to raise. But, if a company is producing a work that is intentionally addressing the perception of disabled performers in a public realm, then this question has perhaps more

salience throughout the process.

This question is at the heart of project showcases across the realm of Streetwise's work. In order to best present the achievements of our performers, we are responsible for managing the audiences for our projects. Ideally, this is done in consultation with our performers and partner staff, but in reality it is often a decision made by project leaders. For example, I once led a project which involved a young participant who was a wheelchair user, was non-verbal and had little physical movement. She had enjoyed participation in a project and through playing with juggling balls we had discovered a wry and wicked sense of humour, which led to a game of throwing juggling balls into a hat (and often at the backside of the nearest male tutor). In the context of the circus workshop, everyone in that room understood the game, and saw the fun that was happening between this woman and the circus tutors.

As a part of the funding for this project, Streetwise had been instructed to include a public performance of the skills developed throughout the project. In this particular group we had a range of skills, from stilt walkers to hat jugglers, and a group diabolo routine. Over 12 weeks we had worked hard to produce a showcase that demonstrated the potential of all of our participants for learning, and having fun. Everyone was keen to show off what they had learned.

Around this time, we had also been working with our regular performers, (those who would later become our 'Evergreen' troupe of performers) and each year we had performed circus skills at a local shopping complex. This was always viewed in a positive light amongst staff and performers, and the feedback we received each year from locals was always positive – it seemed that we were indeed challenging some of the preconceptions regarding the people with whom we worked. We had a group of performers labelled as disabled who were more able and more skilled than the 'normal' audience members who were watching them. Stiltwalkers, jugglers, unicyclists, and clowns all

getting together and having fun in public.

We were so proud of the accomplishments of our groups that we readily posted videos of the events online. A few days after one of these videos went up, we noticed the following comments:

This is morally-degrading and extremely insulting to anyone on the Autistic Spectrum! I wouldn't be surprised if these people were being forced against their will!

That is fucking sick. Why in god's name degrade somebody with special needs in front of a large audience? And then call it the Community Circus... That is the most disgusting thing I have ever seen. I hope whoever is behind this gets an almighty slap across the face.

It was not the response we were looking for. We soon learned to manage who was allowed to comment on our video posts.

But this was not a new reaction to our work. Even when we initiated communication with one of the largest learning disability charities in the UK, we were met with quite an aggressive attitude from high levels of management who were convinced that we were attempting to put together a new freak show using their clients. Indeed, when I first heard of the idea of working with learning disabled performers I was personally uncertain as to why I should be involved in such a process.

Perhaps it was these comments that ran through my mind when I looked at the potential for members of the public misinterpreting a non-verbal, wheelchair user with complex physical needs throwing balls out of her chair in the name of entertainment. I knew that Jenny wanted to show off, but I also had the responsibility for not making her look more disabled by putting this act in the wrong context.

It was a decision that I had to make as project leader, and one that I resolved by hosting the public showcase in the day centre itself; a venue that

was willing to accommodate us, had an audience who knew all of the performers anyway, and who were genuinely impressed by the abilities of their friends and colleagues. This managing of contexts was crucial for the work of our participants to be seen in the best light, but one in which I continue to be uncomfortable – why do I have to ‘manage’ the representations of my co-performers? Why did I feel the need to protect them from the risks of an unpredictable and often unprepared public?

The rest of this section explores the processes of the Summer School itself, how and why we develop acts and actors to reflect the highest quality of performance for a public audience. This is not necessarily based on who has the best circus skills, but always aims to reflect the best qualities of our performers.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, the author argues that work in this context without embracing these risks, is not worth undertaking. Risk as a concept is central to the world of social circus groups – indeed in circus generally, and for Streetwise to produce work that is safe, normalised and predictable is to pay a disservice to staff, participants and audiences alike.

By embracing a series of risks in this context, the serious concepts of identity and ability manage to intertwine with comedy and spectacle.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Learning, disability and risk

Stine Degerbøl

Embodied sensations - while doing contemporary circus training

The presentation is based on my PhD on arts-based educational research on young contemporary circus performer students' embodied learning. The case is the students, aged 18-26 doing fulltime professional contemporary circus training. The empirical work was carried out at the Circus Performer Department at the Academy for Untamed Creativity in Copenhagen. The presentation focuses on embodied sensations while doing contemporary circus training, as experienced by the circus performer students. The presentation takes a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1990) and analyses narratives of the participants' lived experiences. The following questions will be answered: What is embodied learning and what is it worth? (- a theoretical definition). How is embodied learning experienced? (- from the empirical findings) How can embodied learning be communicated? How can embodied learning be nurtured? (- if desirable?).

To add to qualitative circus research dealing with the art form, the performance or the acts (e.g. Tait; Bouissac; St. Leon; Carmeli), the background of the presentation is to focus on the process of getting there. Tait points to aerial performances having a bodily impact to the spectator (Tait 2005)

whereas this presentation takes into consideration the embodied sensations as experienced by the circus performer students. A point of departure for the presentation is captured in the following poem:

Off again. –Oh, what a sight! Few could jump so great a height.
Still more strange, I do declare, he's turning over in the air!
There he goes, - head over heels!
Don't you wonder how he feels?

(Dean & Son 1862 In.: Lartique 2009, s. 85)

The presentation follows up on the question: "Don't you wonder how he feels?" Therefore 6 circus performer students are asked how it feels to be a circus performer student. The empirical work was in two week periods, three times during 2010–2011 (240 hours). At the end of each of the three periods, phenomenologically inspired semi-structured qualitative research interviews with each of the students were conducted with open-ended questions aiming at getting descriptions of the experiences in question (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; van Manen, 1990). The interviews lasted between 37-72 minutes. Further, during the three periods, 21 hours of audiovisuals were gathered through videographic participation (Svendler Nielsen 2012; Degerbøl & Svendler Nielsen 2015). Videographic participation as a method adds a multisensory approach to ethnographic filmmaking. The approach highlights the methodology of doing ethnography with a video camera and accounts for the importance of the researcher's multisensoriality while recording and analysing.

As a former aerialist in swinging trapeze I know what it feels like to turn over in the air, head over heels which certainly initiated the research and which has certainly informed the research. I do research on circus from the outside but with an insider's knowledge. For the moment being I do not do circus artistic research development but I hope to develop ways of researching circus without making the artist an object.

An arts-based educational research approach (Barone & Eisner 2006) is applied to achieve answers to the question of how it feels to do contemporary circus training and a part of the data creates insight into the young circus performer students' embodied learning. Arts-based educational research as a postmodernist scientific approach suggest that by using inquiry-based approaches that are artistic in character it becomes accessible to explore learning in arts, such as for example embodied learning while doing contemporary circus training. Arts-based educational research (ABER) is characterised by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research "text" (Barone & Eisner, 2006, pp. 95-98). The purpose of applying ABER to the study was to embrace the participants and their voices and secondly to broaden the audience of the research.

Surprisingly, not much research has been done on professional circus education. A great variety of manuals on certain skills are available (e.g. FEDEC) and social circus or circus as pedagogical tool are frequently researched (e.g. Bolton 2004; Arrighi 2014; Rivard et al. 2010, Danaher 2000a, 2000b; Li 2010; Niederstadt 2009; Price 2012). It is worth here to differ between arts in education and arts education, where the latter is in stake here. It seems like time is up for educational research in circus. It is time to consider what the learning outputs of a professional circus education are besides the mastery of movements and its artistic framing. This is the reason for researching embodied learning in contemporary circus education. The circus performer students do physical training all day, and they learn how to do for example summersaults, pirouettes, and all kinds of circus techniques. It is no problem to measure how high they can jump or count how many rotations they can do in a row. It is much more complex to determine the inner workings of the learning processes: What is going on on the way to mastering the summersaults, the turns, and the rolls? What might happen when moving, and what added value might occur?

For the purpose of researching embodied learning, the following might serve as a theoretical definition. A presupposition for the definition of embodied learning is that movement "can support young students' self-understanding and personal growth as artists and human beings" (Antilla, 2007, p. 96). Embodied learning assumes a holistic perspective on learning that exceeds cognitive processes and physical achievements. Embodied learning has to do with the ability to pay attention to and be sincere to our bodily presence and embodied sensations. Embodied learning processes might happen in and through movement when the practice allows a multi-sensorial awareness. The multi-sensorial awareness might further mature into the person's abilities in general.

In Western contemporary societies the term learning often refer to what goes on in a classroom setting and has to do with cognitive processes predominantly 'transmitted' from teacher to learner through the spoken and written language. Embodied learning provides an alternative to the Western epistemology and traditional ways of regarding cognition that dominate education. Embodied learning is thought of as distinct though intertwined with cognitive learning emphasising prelinguistic, preconceptual, and sensory processes as the core of human learning (Antilla, 2008; Barbour, 2011; Fraleigh, 2000; Green, 2007; Rouhiainen, 2008; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2004; Svendler Nielsen, 2015). A non-dualistic view on learning (inspired by Merleau-Ponty 2003) is prominent, and further, movement is regarded as a means for understanding oneself and from that point being in a favourable position for interacting with others.

At the core is a differentiation between mastery and the potentially added value of moving. It therefore becomes a pedagogical ideal to make the students understand the teaching "more as a site of embodied knowing, rather than solely as a means of demonstrating mastery, regulation and control" (Barbour, 2011, p. 119). Contemporary circus education strives to teach the circus performer students a movement vocabulary in order for them to be able to do a choreography in their chosen dis-

cipline. To develop a movement vocabulary to be able to do a choreography is also the case in dance education, but modern dance pedagogy emphasises the students' "ability to be co-creators of their world" (Shapiro, 1998, p. 18) because it might be possible through a broad movement repertoire to stimulate our ability to 'listen' to our body. This might in turn be beneficial because the ability to interact appropriately with others is heightened when one is grounded and in touch with oneself.

The presentation focuses on embodied learning in an arts education for young people. Learning implies an element of change. But how can change be identified? Who knows that change has happened and when? How do we find out about the significance that the activities which the students are involved in have to them? The outcomes show what it means to the students to be involved in contemporary circus training and can lead to more grounded arguments for the impact of taking into account the embodied sensations of the student which might influence the way the curriculum is formulated. The study thus adds to current research in arts education where embodied sensations of doing arts are often overseen (NACCCE report 1999; Schonmann (Ed.) 2015; www.worldsummit2013.bkj.de).

It is a reoccurring concern that contemporary circus might lose its poetics, its free spirit and anarchistic anchoring by being institutionalised because of students coming from formal educations with set curricula etc. which worst case do not leave room for individual circus artistic research development. Whether the art form is disturbed by institutions, the presentation does not discuss. The presentation points to what might be an added value to a circus education: Embodied learning. The students' ability to listen to his/her embodied sensations might strengthen the person professionally and personally. The student might be better in mastering the demanded movement sequences because listening to the embodied sensations might improve the understanding of it. Ones an experiences and acknowledged circus teacher told a student: "Don't ask me what to do to improve

your summersault! Listen to your body. You are the one knowing what is going on (in there)." And the student did better than before. This is not to say that verbal instructions are no good, it is more to point to an awareness that others means can be included. The example counts for the professional aspect. An example counting for the personal aspect could be, that the student learns to be aware of his/her embodied sensations when facing a difficult move or another challenge. Dealing with the embodied sensations in the particular situation might have a transfer to how he/she is able to handle a difficult situation in general. Years ago, I took part in a circus workshop in the southern France. One day, for warm-up we were told to define a space determined by invisible walls drawn by our hands and feet. Actually, I can't remember if da Vinci's Vitruvian man was the source of inspiration or if I just felt like such. Anyway, this embodied sensations from this particular experience taught me something about boundaries. It became an imaginary bobble in which I felt save, and even today I can bring it into play. Embodied sensations might become embodied learning. Embodied sensations might become embodied learning when it exceeds 'just do it' by reflecting.

Most often circus is about performing sensational sensations and the claim will be that it is enhanced by the student/performer being aware of his/her embodied sensations. To teach with an awareness of embodied sensations might be common practice and to turn it into embodied learning can be formulated pedagogically as part of educating the student to act independently. Accordingly, including embodied learning as an aspect of circus education, might support the student's independency, specifically and in the long term, which has a profound pedagogical tradition in the Nordic countries (e.g. Illeris). Knowing about embodied learning might make the students proactively research it and make the teachers include it intentionally into the curriculum.

The benefits of taking into account the embodied sensations while doing contemporary circus training are outlined in the theoretical notion of

embodied learning and nuanced with the empirical findings disseminated as various written, co-created and audiovisual narratives. Thus the presentation can be followed by a discussion about: What are the pedagogical task(s) and challenges?

The presentation points to ways of developing qualitative circus research by applying an arts-based approach to be able to capture and communicate embodied sensations. The presentation aims at illuminating prominent characteristics of embodied learning through spoken, written and audiovisual narratives and thereby to be a disruptive innovation of how scientific circus research can be done and communicated.

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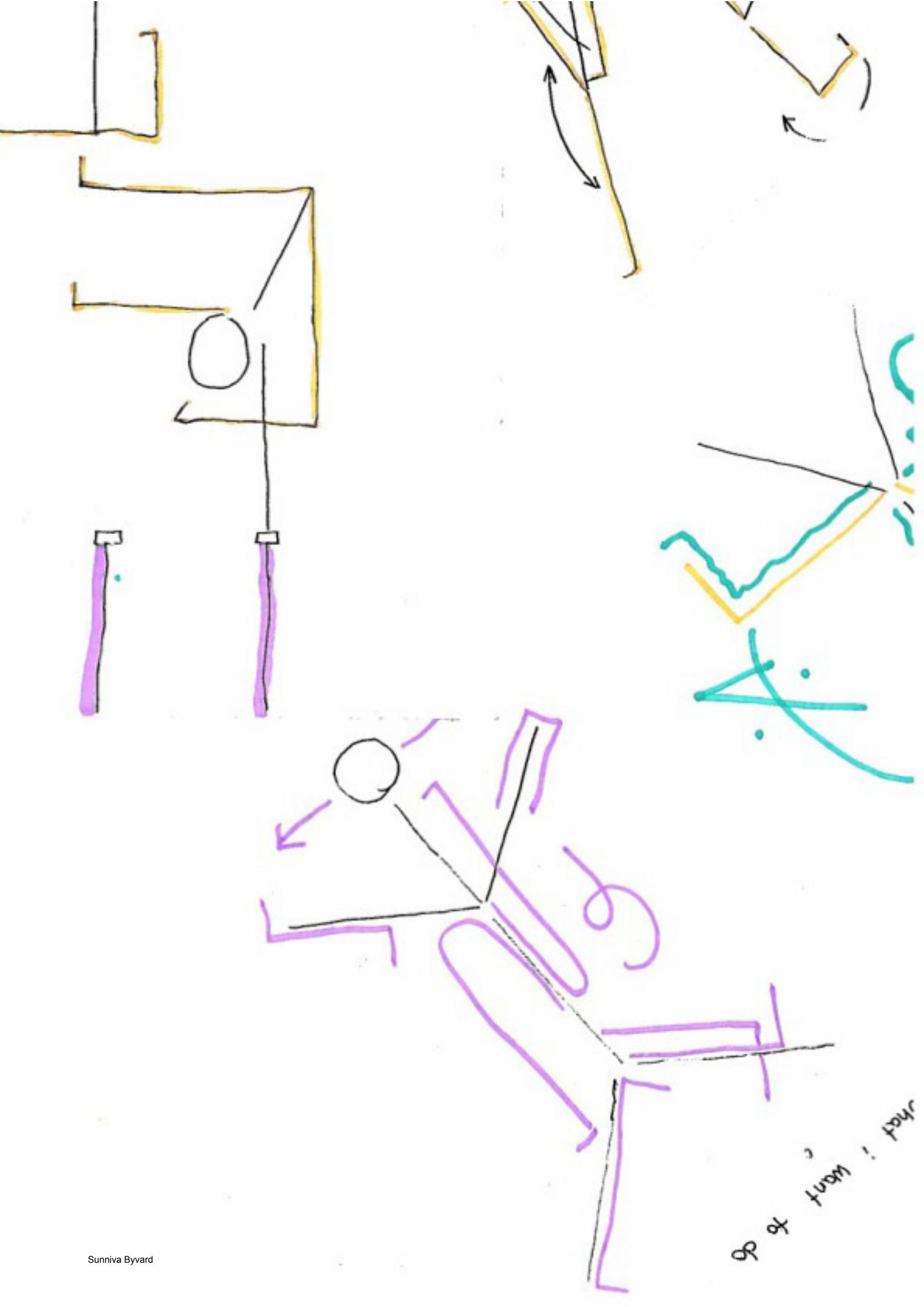
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PANEL DISCUSSION

Queer Circus and Gender

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**Montréal and Queer Circus:
“Les Précieuses des nuits
de Montréal”
[“The Precious Creatures of
Montreal’s Nights”]**

Note to participants and readers: This is a preliminary exploration of these themes, and I welcome any information and feedback that will help make these pages deeper and richer. I welcome in particular any specific information on queer circus performances not only in North America but throughout the globe. As this is a preliminary exploration, please do not cite or distribute this paper widely without contacting me for permission.

This paper began life as an initial exploration for a first meeting of the Montreal-based research group called “Circus and Its Others,” led by my colleague Karen Fricker, at Brock University in Ontario, Canada, and myself. That group began – as do many good, interesting, and fruitful things – with a conversation. After some particularly innovative and provocative shows at the international circus festival Montréal Complètement Cirque in 2013, Karen, I, and a few other scholars connected with the Working Group on Circus Research, ably led by Louis Patrick Leroux of Concordia University, found ourselves looking at each other and saying, “wow, that was nice. But something, or, rather,

some people -- and their expressions -- seem to be missing here. Where are the people of color? Where are the women who are doing something not traditionally gender coded? Where are the queers?”

We knew, of course, that we would not be the first to ask these questions concerning the circus arts and their artists, producers, creators, trainers, and cultural backgrounds and milieux. We wished to discover what kinds of questions had indeed been asked before us, and we wished to read the answers others had proposed. We also wished to anchor our own questions and potential answers in an awareness that circus practices have long offered a celebration and an exploitation of differences, from stagings of exceptional performing bodies to the display of “freakery.” While modern and contemporary circus has put considerable distance between itself and the display of bodies whose exceptionalism is born rather than acquired, Erin Hurley has influentially argued that “all circus bodies carry in them the residual mark of the freaks of the fairgrounds” (2008, 151). Such an observation has led us to ask to what extent and in what ways is circus always-already different, and about difference? How does the mainstreaming of contemporary circus affect its status as a haven for the different, the outsider? In what ways are contemporary circus artists and companies embracing and exploiting (or not) difference in their practice? And so now, this paper, and a glance towards a queer circus.

In our research, we have indeed learned much, and have discovered that some provocative explorations on these themes have occurred in venues outside of North America – such as the current one here in Stockholm. There was, quite notably, the New Circus Festival in Zagreb, with its attendant creation of scholarship and practice that led to the important 2011 publication of *Women & Circus*. However, I, for one, remain curious in front of the relative paucity of scholarship devoted to the queer in circus and/or devoted to queer circus. As we know, queer theory, musings, and explorations have come to inform much scholarship in many of the performing arts, from dance through music to theatre. And yet in the burgeo-

ning field of circus studies we are all exploring here together, very little has been written examining queerness, even as one might argue that the queer – always already the exceptional, the odd, the outsider, the outcast – lies at the heart of circus practices and meaning. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this rule of the silent and absent queer. Peta Tait, for example, has consistently offered important work on circus bodies that importantly includes the queer. A very recent (March 2015) Study Day in Toulouse, France, focused on “Queer Circuses and Esthetics,” which featured work by PhD students, pointing thus to a potential future of this research. And Mark Sussman penned as early as 1998 a study on New York’s Circus Amok called “Queer Circus.”

The mere fact that these pieces that focus on the queer are rare, with scholarship that engages explicitly with queer theory yet even rarer, calls out for more work, I would argue. I thus propose these pages as one exploration of an explicit engagement with both queer theory and a self-consciously queer performance that draws on specificities in the Montreal cultural and performance contexts. Indeed, as it is one initial potential exploration, I note this is definitely, as they say, a “work in progress,” a preliminary presentation, and I welcome any feedback that will help deepen this work.

Indeed, before I look at that explicitly queer themed production in Montreal in October of 2014, I must note that there is a somewhat vibrant space for some things called queer circus in parts of North America. There is, for example:

-- The Topsy Turvy Queer Circus in San Francisco, which has intimate relations with the famed kink-fest Folsom Street Fair and the city’s Queer Cultural Center.

-- Sir Cupcake’s Queer Circus in Portland, OR, a May 2015 event, with resonances, it would appear, to previous events in Portland called “Pervert the Cirque,” touted as bringing “kink to the big top.”

-- A Queer Youth Circus project in North Carolina that just got funding from something called “The Pollination Project”

-- A queer circus collective called Tangle Movement Arts in Philadelphia

-- New York’s famed Circus Amok (which, alas, hasn’t performed since 2008, it would appear)

-- the boylesque star The Luminous Pariah in Seattle, who has performed in queer circuses like Iceland’s Sirkus Islands.

Not to mention various circus themed queer productions, including:

-- Univ Calif Santa Cruz’s queer fashion show that in 2015 had a circus theme.

I must of course mention that North America does not have a monopoly, as it were, on queer productions. Australia, to take a notable example, has the Briefsboys, I’ve been told (billed on Facebook as “all-male sharp shootin’ cabaret of burlesque with balls, high-flying circus bandits & savage gender offenders”) and the Lamplight Circus, a “Circus & Sideshow Burlesque.” And it also has the company Circa, with its female base Rowan Heydon-White. While my own pages do not explore a non-explicitly queer-themed performance, I would certainly note that having a traditional male role played by a female does, indeed, point to at least some flavor of queer somewhere But while I’m pointing in this direction of non-traditional gender performance, I should also mention Stockholm’s very own Gynoides Project, with its director Marie-Andrée Robitaille hailing from the province of Québec, in this interesting circle of influences and settings. It would appear indeed that the time is ripe to explore the queer more fully.

Besides, back in North America, here in the two-thousand-teens, the “freak” has returned to take a sometimes literal front stage position. The musical Sideshow, featuring in particular so-called Siamese twins, was revived on Broadway for the 2014-2015 holiday season; the television series American Horror Story had “Freak Show” as its theme for the 2014-2015 season; and that festival of all things alternative, Burning Man, had as its theme this year Carnival of Mirrors, with the festival-goers making frequent performance and artistic reference to the freak over the course of the week. Indeed, in his review of the Broadway revival of the musical Sideshow the New York Times’ Charles Isherwood explicitly links contemporary movements that include “geek chic” to

circus culture by saying, “Being a freak is virtually the new normal.”

You will have noticed, no doubt, a slippage from my earlier stated desire to examine the explicit themes of queer in performance and theory to this reference to the very-much-still-present freak. Where the freak has become foregrounded from the stage to television, becoming, virtually, that “new normal,” can we say that the freak is still freakish, that the queer is still queer?

It is here that I’d like to turn back several decades (just about 90 years, actually), to explore, if briefly, that signal and seminal examination of a freakish queer artist of the early twentieth century in France: Jean Cocteau’s “Le numéro Barbette.” Importantly, the very title of the essay, “The Act Barbette,” points to the performance effected by the artist as the site of the “Leçon de théâtre,” that “de” of the French underscoring the ambiguity literally at and in play. Does Barbette, in the act, offer a lesson of and about theatre – or is it a lesson that comes from theatre? The distinction lies, perhaps, in the directionality of our gaze of what and how we learn. Cocteau’s noted penchant for the celebration of crossing boundaries, most famously visually rendered in all of those mirrors that are also, at the same time, windows, in, say, *Blood of a Poet*, would have us see ambiguity as volitional. What is it that we learn, in this lesson of and from the theatre, then? Firstly and importantly, in this bi-directional gaze, that we, the spectator, are engaged and not “mere” gazers.

In 1992, some 6 years prior to Sussman’s essay on the queer Circus Amok, Mark Franko offers an arguably unheralded contribution to the then-burgeoning field of queer studies with his essay “Where He Danced: Cocteau’s Barbette and Ohno’s Water Lilies.” He argues there that “a common strategy of [then] recent scholarship has been to reinscribe homosexuality in the suppressed subtext of the dominant discourse, thereby naturalizing what discourse labels unnatural” (594). He then warns, “Despite its aggressive sophistication, this strategy has its dangers. It could stamp gay identity as a historical by-product of male hegemony” (594). He proposes, “Could the most radical objective for gay discourse now

be to reconceptualize maleness in terms of neither the feminine nor the ideologically masculine? By moving onto the terrain of an amplified maleness, gay theory could disqualify, rather than merely subvert, the basis of phobia” (595). As he then explores this “amplified” nature of gender presentation and representation that would subvert the very terms of such (re)presentation, it is instructive to note that it is to a boundary-crossing circus artist that he turns, and that it is writings about such an artist that the boundary-crossing Cocteau pens. Thus, Judith Butler’s presentations of drag as not mere imitation of gender (re)presentation but also its disruption in her hugely important 1990 *Gender Trouble*, find themselves enhanced, with Marko and Cocteau, in the locus of the circus with its own enhanced and amplified crossings. For, you see, not only does the Act Barbette leave us in the ambiguity of gender – which it does: Barbette, according to Cocteau, even at the end of the number when the male artist takes off his wig to “reveal” he is a man, ends up, in his gestures, showing us even there he is performing the role of a man, “interprète le rôle d’homme” (38). But this ambiguity is importantly sketched out over the course of a trapeze act, an act of what Cocteau calls “équilibre” – a word frequently translated as balance but which we should remember derives origins from the notion of “equal weight,” firmly placed in an in-between-ness. We are not, say, in the realms of liminalities, of margins, of “neitherness” but, rather, in a space created in and formed of a what happens on and across point(s) of balance. And it is there we see the radical lesson from and of this theatre. Interestingly, Franko refers to the resultant space, through Cocteau and Barbette, as a “no man’s land” (596), “outside the tight sexual polarity from which it emerged” (596). I would argue that it is the trapeze and its own complex demands on space and balance that reminds us that this “outside the polarity” is, rather, a situatedness of being between, enhanced by, taking movement and meaning and momentum from, the poles.

Although he is less specific about its connection with the circus act itself, Franko does suggest that the gender performance that has made Barbette’s androgyny is one that makes a “death-defying leap

across ... boundaries” (598): these acts are risky. A polarity/binary-driven system does not allow for easy purchase of its in-between spaces. And, again, and as Peta Tait’s signal work on the aerialist intimates, the risk of the trapeze calls for even more intense engagement with the risk already at play in the fantasmatic flesh of the artist; this risk, with the trapeze, is more than fantasy, more than metaphor, more than metonymy. It is palpable, corporal.

Here, I wish to move back into the two-thousand-teens, with a brief look at the French queer circus artist Phia Ménard, and her video declaration “Manifestly Phia.” This transgender performer speaks in particular of transformations – and of her choice of working with, say, the theme of ice: water, frozen, yet not in stasis as she conceives of it and works with it. H₂O always moving from state to state. And dangerous. Indeed, as she says, there is not only a *mise en scène*; there is a “*mise en danger*,” where the staged scene is one of danger. Ice falls, breaks, and the artist is in it, on it. Indeed, for Phia, “the circus artist knows death,” and necessarily “makes the spectator think of the danger of life, of the danger of death.” But the artist must also know how to “*créer l’imaginaire*,” create the shared meaning-filled image; she must “*savoir mettre en valeur l’élément pour que ça devienne de l’imaginaire*,” bring forth, make present, that dangerous element that is carried, through images, to the viewer, the gazer, the participant-spectator.

Perhaps this is where I have been going throughout these pages: even as the queer – the artist, the art – may take literal front stage, the queer – the artist, the art – offers danger, brings a threat, a danger and threat that is not only metaphorically present in the queer circus arts, in which we are reminded, to borrow a phrase from Judith Butler, that bodies matter. They bear and, in these lessons of and from the theatre, transmit risk. In her *In a Queer Time and Place*, Judith Halberstam offers yet another vocabulary that may prove germane to our examinations of the risks of the queer circus arts. For her, the queer participates in structures outside of “reproductive and familial time” (10), living “outside the logic of capital accumulation”

(10). Such queers are not only LGBT individuals; for her, they can be “ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed” (10), occupying “time and space ... limned by risks they are willing to take ... as they destabilize the normative values that make everyone else feel safe and secure ... [or live] outside of organizations of time and space that have been established for the purposes of protecting the rich few from everyone else” (10). These “queer subjects” à la Halberstam are not about being productive in terms of reproduction, of safety, of norms. Even as she does not use the word, we can see in our discussion today that they are, in fact, dangerous; carriers, transmitters of danger. In their non-productivity, they present and represent death, death to, of, and in a system structured for accumulation and production of progeny and capital.

And so now I turn to that explicitly queer themed cabaret circus show, mounted in October 2014 in Montréal’s famed Caf Conç, a theatre in a hotel opened in 1967 with the initial purpose to house the many visitors to the World’s Fair in a city riding the waves of that Tranquil Revolution that offered, at least in principle, a greater openness of the city, its province, and its peoples to the world – while, it is important to remember, closing, in a program to clean up the city for its international visitors, the previously semi-tolerated queer brothels and bars and sending its queers literally into the streets and its parks, including Dominion Square, just steps from the hotel. Louis Guillemette, co-founder of ground-breaking dance troupe Lalala Human Steps and current conseiller artistique at Montreal’s National Circus School, conceived and directed this show, emceed by noted drag king Nat King Pole, with a starring role offered to drag persona Billy l’Amour, who also danced with Lalala some 20 years after Guillemette, and with performances by National Circus School students as well as dancers from other companies such as the Ballets Jazz de Montréal. This was not Guillemette’s first queer circus scene: I will always remember a notable moment in 2008 at the soirée Kuir at Montreal’s Bain Mathieu, with, again, National Circus School students and others doing

hand-balancing and trapeze work with evident eroticism in the same-sex pairings (and triplings), and he also crafted the work for a bar-sponsored float in the 2008 Montreal Gay Pride parade which had taken the theme “Place au Cirque!” This 35 minute production stands, however, as perhaps the most fully developed queer circus show in Montreal, a city whose history of queer performances in theater has, it is probably not an exaggeration to say, helped give expression to the province’s very understanding of itself since the 1960s, and whose queer dance performances have offered new physical vocabularies since at least the 1980s. It is thus not only queer circus scholarship that is rare; even in that Montreal where queers have for some time marked and made its streets and stages, an explicitly queer circus performance had to wait until 2014 for something longer than one-off scenes.

As Nat King Pole offered invitation to “Mesdames, Mesdemoiselles Messieurs, Kings, Queens and Queers of the Night,” and as Billy, from his very entrance on stage, linked his use of the French language with his – and our – facility with French kissing, this queer show presented one of its dangers: the blurred boundaries, blurred identities, effected from across the footlights. This audience was to be as queer(ed) as its performers. As Billy proclaimed “quand on a l’amour on a la joie; quand on a l’amour on est gay; et vous mes amours vous avez l’amour et vous êtes gay! Oui?” prompting a rousing “oui!” from throughout the hall, even as many audience members would not, outside of that hall, self-identify as queer. From this danger of a queer communion rose another. The first solo circus act, a contorsion number performed by Roscoe de l’Amour, was introduced by Billy who named Roscoe his child – and fathered by none other than myself (in a shock, as the spotlight turned to me in the audience). Queer filiations indeed, with a Halberstam-like emphasis on a family that is other, one formed beyond productive reproduction. Billy and I have made a child, a cortorting, scantily clad, boylesque-star child, and we have all been made queer, in a gesture that recalls Fintan Walsh’s 2009 study of Irish drag performer “Panti” Bliss in terms that sees relationships formed not by legal and familial ties

but by shared experience and feeling.

But the queer work is not yet finished in this show. Prior to his singing “C’est beau un homme,” Nat King Pole offers a short biographical sketch recalling the power of becoming the performer he always wanted to be, once he put on his mustache. With Pole, we may find ourselves distanced from Butler’s analyses of melancholic gender drag, with pasted on identities of that which can never truly be had: in his drag, Pole explicitly becomes a performer, a singer, with the signs of maleness becoming vehicles towards the art, not (only) the gender. Also with Pole, we are granted a look back at Marko’s read of Cocteau’s *Barbette*, with an amplification, the purchase of a liminality, an art made possible precisely in the in-between-ness and because it partakes of that in-between-ness.

And then, in a closing number, we discover this queer world is one destined for *une belle mort*. As Billy sings Dalida’s “Je veux mourir sur scène,” one of the Circus School performers we’ve previously seen, as the base of a hand-to-hand number bedecked in a tutu, returns as an thong-clad angel of death, touching his fellow performers and guiding them, as they collapse upon his touch, to the floor. Lee Edelman’s 2005 *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* stakes a claim for the very centrality and importance of death – death of production, of reproduction, of the explicitly legible – that the queer represents. Indeed, his queer is one that refuses to embrace established political and social order, one that abandons accommodation, and one that accedes to a state of *jouissance*. And I must say that it is a very *jouissif* Billy who, arms raised, sings, full bodied, not lip-synching, of a death brought *fusillée de laser* -- as her queer stage family collapses, showing itself explicitly desirous not to go on -- finds, as the music ends, her spotlight extinguished. In this *mort* that seems not so *petite*, she is only backlit from the brightest light on the stage, creating Billy-contoured shadows cast upon the audience. In this lesson in and of this theater in Montreal, we’ve all been cast in this show, with something dangerous reflected upon us. An awareness of that very danger, a participation in it.

So yes. Even on front stage, as our freaks have

contorted, hand-balanced, and hula-hooped us towards a queer circus, it is strikingly important to see that the queer in circus is still queer, offering the risk of an social order, a community, a performance, a practice that finds amplification in its in-between-nesses while it necessarily points to the real possibility of its own end, its own elimination. We do well to remember, with Phia, that, for the queer circus performer, ice – medium, message, agrès – is never in stasis. It drops and breaks. But, wow, quelle jouissance.

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PANEL DISCUSSION

Queer Circus and Gender

Kate Holmes

The Female Aerialist and Female Exercise in the 1920s: the disruptiveness of female aerialists' performances of strength

For some reason we have forgotten how large circus was as an industry during the 1920s and early 1930s. But, circus was the largest mass live entertainment of the period, with the biggest circuses entertaining audiences of 10-14,000 twice daily in the largest American circuses, and approximately 6,000 twice daily in European venues such as London Olympia. In just one year this meant the highest profile circus performers appeared in front of millions of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Europeans. As a result of forgetting the importance of the circus industry, we have also forgotten the popularity of the female aerialist. Aerialists were at the top of the circus hierarchy and were internationally mobile performers who also appeared in American vaudeville and European variety venues.

Aerial performers exist at an intersection: they perform as entertainers but their performances of bodily virtuosity are also athletic feats. In performing on aerial equipment, aerialists pull and balance their bodyweight – a practice that requires considerable muscular control and strength. This practice sculpts the body, creating a more muscular upper body for female performers – in my case,

as an amateur, I have witnessed this as particularly visible in my developed latitudinal muscles. My background as an amateur leads me to use a research informed by practice methodology in reading primary and secondary materials, and to consider female aerialists as athletes, or: athlete-performer-entertainers.

Peta Tait considers this developed upper body musculature to have marked female performers of the 1920s and early 30s as ‘socially different’ outside their act (2005, p.77), whereas during their act they were able to “defy the gravity of social categories” (1996, p.33). Why were some of the most popular performers so successful demonstrating endurance acts, or tricks that no other man or woman could perform, if they were so socially different? Thinking about aerialists as athlete-performer-entertainers provides another way of thinking about the acceptability of the female aerialists’ body. It provides the opportunity to consider if female aerialists were popular partly because their bodies tapped into an interwar interest related to female exercise.

The 1920s were a significant period for the development of physical exercise where exercise became another commodity in mass culture – the exercise classes, clothing, spectator sports and the stars it created, all consumed as part of a growing leisure culture. Women in particular, began to undertake exercise in increased numbers at the same time that young women first had free time and an expendable income. Globally and across class boundaries women began to embrace commodity culture to define themselves as “modern girls”, breaking with earlier more passive expressions of femininity (Søland 2000, pp.13 & 17; Barlow et al. 2005; Kingsley Kent 2009, pp.39–40). Sport participation and physical activity became an essential part of women’s participation in modernity and the ideal of a vibrant modern girl (Søland 2000, p.48; Skillen 2012, p.752). That is not to say that all women were performing the same activities at the same levels. For most exercise occurred prior to marriage and motherhood, was suggested by class, and might purely involve going dancing

(Cahn 2015, p.44).

The problematic nature of competition and female exercise in the 1920s was particularly apparent in discourse surrounding upper and middle-class women who attended universities and colleges. The association with the “mannish athlete” and immodest display led American physical educators to oppose women’s involvement in the Olympics and to their establishment of non-competitive “Play Days” and recreational clubs (Guttmann 1991, pp.135–153; Cahn 2015, pp.55–82). Whereas in the British press the perceived masculinising effects of exercise led to concerns about the “sexless gymnast” (Fletcher 1984, pp.75 & 76).

Female aerialists, such as preeminent aerial celebrity Lillian Leitzel and rising-star Luisita Leers, were performing acts that required considerable muscular control and were well outside the limits of moderate exercise. Leers’ act on solo static trapeze relied on strength, flexibility and grace; and involved moving between static positions such as shoulder and back balances, single-arm planches and a neck-hang with side-splits (Atwell 1931a; Atwell 1931d; Atwell 1931b; Atwell 1931c; Atwell 1931e; Scala n.d.; Anon n.d.; Atwell n.d.). Even the endurance part of her act, what I describe as an elbow roll but Leers called a muscle grind, was controlled. With her hands on a trapeze bar that was braced against her back, she used gravity to create the momentum to revolve her body around the trapeze bar. Her body speeding as she tipped forward in a slight v-shape over the bar, and slowing as it came under, where she curved her body up and over to complete each revolution. Leers’ body whirling around the bar throughout the 100 revolutions she performed (Anon 1929; Anon 1953, p.13), would have retained a controlled appearance.

The first portion of Leitzel’s act was similarly controlled as she moved between static positions on her roman rings. The emphasis was on transitions as Leitzel used strength and momentum to push her body into positions on different rings – varying the pace for maximum effect. For instance, rolling

her body quickly or controlling it slowly from a single arm planche on the right, where the arm is held behind the chest with the body curving over straight, to a single arm planche on the left. She would use these transitions to create the movement with which to spin her body underneath in static balletic positions, using swivels rigged into her roman rings (DeBaugh n.d.).

The activities described require a level of physical exertion and spatial understanding well beyond the non-competitive exercise of University students or any other class of women. Aerialists were working women and may have been seen as working class and therefore permitted to exercise more competitively (Cahn 2015, p.81). However, this is too simplistic an analysis when one considers that aerialists such as Leers and Leitzel were depicted in aristocratic terms: as part of a biological lineage of performers in the press (Anon 1920; Paulinetti 1923, p.37), whilst wearing the cloaks of aristocracy within the ring (Bradna & Spence 1953, p.149; Beal n.d.; Beal, p.5). However, there is a question of exactly how much of the considerable exertion aerialists’ performed was visible to audience members – Leitzel is frequently described as having made it “look easy” (Bradna & Spence 1953, p.150). This is the paradox of virtuosity: the more skilled and controlled the aerialist, the easier it looks. Is it then possible, audience members watching might not have seen performances as physically demanding as they truly were, even if they were aware they couldn’t perform those movements themselves?

Aerial performance invites a kinaesthetic fantasy from audience members. When watching flying or swinging trapeze you may have felt yourself rocking in sympathy, imagining your body weightlessly lifting at the top of the swing. Tait considers that although we on the ground experience this communally, that we use our individual lived experience of physical movement when engaging in this imaginative experience (2005, pp.141–152). We do not imagine the true effort that requires strength, but instead a fantasy that reconfigures the aerial body as weightless. This kinaesthetic

fantasy of weightlessness reduces the visibility of the muscular effort involved in performing those difficult moves.

However, not all of Leitzel's performance was controlled. Leitzel's body appeared whirling both in her roman rings act where she used her shoulders as pivots, and more famously in the endurance feat that concluded her act: the planche turn. Hanging from a planche rope by her wrist, she would kick her heels back and forth to swing her body over in between 60 and 100 revolutions (DeBaugh n.d.; Bradna & Spence 1953, p.150). Leitzel's endurance act is described by memoir writers less as controlled, and more as frenetic or violent. This frenetic activity, may have tapped into ideas connected to exercise. Interwar femininity required an energetic body freed of the constraints of the passive femininity of the earlier generation. Leitzel's body was performing freedom in its demonstration of dynamic wild abandon. Those close enough to see her body clearly would have seen her breathing heavily or might have noticed her skin flushed. The same effects that exercise had on audience member's bodies would have been visible in Leitzel's.

I argue the endurance acts performed by Leitzel and Leers would not have been as popular had female exercise and exercise participation not been becoming so popular. Endurance acts are repetitive and exercise itself is by its very nature repetitive. When performing an exercise discipline, you perform repetitive activities whether it is to win a tennis match or to move through water when swimming. Female soloists' performances tapped into this notion of repetition in exercise – the apparent easiness providing a fantasy of exercise as freedom.

Yet, at the same time as individual's perceived aerial performance as less physically demanding than it truly was, they would have found it harder to avoid the bodies it created. In the vast American circus tent, it might have been easy to miss the muscular bodies created from practice, but publicity images of Leers highlight her extraordinary

musculature. In particular, muscle has frequently been related to masculinity and the 1920s were no different. There was a concern that women's bodies would become a "facsimile of the male body... [with] softness [replaced] by hardened muscle" (Søland 2000, p.50). Leers was the "Wonder Girl ... [who] astounded" (Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 1929b; Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 1929a; Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 1933) and it is tempting to situate Leers alongside the freak show exhibited nearby the circus ring. Yet the circus ring itself was the space for glorification and laughter rather than derision. It is true that Leers' muscularity did occasionally inspire derision (Tait 2005, pp.80–81 & 87), but this was not the norm.

The issue of competition and how it was addressed by popular promoters in the 1920s may provide the answer as to why these women were glorified displaying muscular bodies that performed endurance acts. Cahn argues that while University physical educators were developing non-competitive exercise to create the "wholesome, modest athlete," popular promoters were creating the "athlete as beauty queen" (2015, pp.57 & 78). Cahn considers this model to permit muscle tone to become absorbed into this model of femininity (Cahn 2015, p.82). Although the muscle tone of Leers and Leitzel would have been excessive, both were glorified and represented as beautiful. Representing feminine muscle as beautiful was certainly not new: the first female aerialists of the late nineteenth century such as Leona Dare represented themselves as beauties to be gazed upon in *carte de visite* (Anon n.d.).

Considering the female aerialist as athlete-performer-entertainer makes it possible to see how these soloists related to wider culture in the 1920s. Leers and Leitzel can be seen amongst other female athletes, to expose concerns regarding blurred gender boundaries and to highlight a number of characteristics of mannishness: visible female exertion, competition and muscularity. Female aerialists fitted into the model of the "athlete as beauty queen" that was used by popular sports

promoters in the 1920s but had been pioneered by circuses in the late nineteenth-century. But, this did not prevent female aerialists from being open to some criticisms about their muscularity in the same way as the female athlete. The very nature of the activity and reception of aerial performance masked the true exertion involved – making the transformative fantasy of flight seem easy also made it seem less mannish. This fantasy involved imagining movements with the individual audience member’s kinaesthetic imagination, which helped aerialists tap into wider ideas of exercise: the repetition implicit in Leers’ and Leitzel’s endurance acts echoed the repetitiveness of exercise and the freedom that could be felt by exercising; whilst the violent effect of Leitzel’s planche turns echoed the effects of exercise on the female body.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*Identity in Circus and
Dangerous Risk*

Peta Tait

circus through clowning misadventure and disasters created by socially nonconformist characters who resist even the rules of the circus act itself.

Crucially then, contemporary circus highlights the underlying social identity risk of the traditional circus performance presenting strong muscular women and graceful light men. Part of the appeal of Circus Oz, however, over decades can be found in its capacity to parody ideas of danger, risk and the inherent radicalism of identity politics in all circus.

Circus is the art form that exemplifies risk-taking. While circus performance heightens an impression of danger, paradoxically, the theatrical performance of risk is not the same as performers taking risks. The ways in which danger is performed in circus evokes the corresponding audience perception of risk even though the actual physical risks are usually not apparent.

In a complex sociological exploration of what he terms 'the global risk society', Ulrich Beck analyses the tendency in developed countries to risk minimization by the early 1990s and in the subsequent unfolding of identity extremism in the 2000s (Beck 1989; 1999; 2006). This coincides with the expansion of contemporary (or new) circus so that the context for a renewed public interest in circus can be found in the rise of socially ambivalent ideas towards riskiness. Beck explains that late twentieth-century capitalism involves 'the social production of risk' alongside the production of wealth (1989: 86). In the logic of late twentieth-century capitalism with its devolved risk management, individual liability and redistribution global risks, contemporary circus performance would seem to be the ideal art form for our era. While Cirque du Soleil continues the circus tradition of exciting and beautiful acts that uphold the paradox of theatrical risk, Circus Oz expressly draws attention to inherent ideas of danger in

PERFORMANCE LECTURE

*Practice-as-Research:
aerial work as socially
critical performance*

Laura Murphy

The audience walk into the dimly lit space - what was once the stock room of the old Woolworth's shop building - where a single rope hangs from the ceiling. The two walls and floor of the L-shaped performance space are painted black and are covered in chalked drawings and writing. A few pieces of broken chalk litter the floor. A woman wearing black trousers and a black and white striped t-shirt, enters from round the corner and walks into the middle of the performance space. Her appearance is followed by the words of a soothing voice, the sound of which is projected from the speakers in the corners of the room. 'Listen to my voice...My voice will take you on a journey. My voice will make the world around you disappear.' The woman makes eye contact with individual members of the audience, holding the stare for an uncomfortably long time or until the audience member looks away. She takes deep breaths in accordance with the instructions of the hypnotherapist's guided relaxation. '...In through your nose...and hold it for a moment...before letting all of the air out through your mouth...and again breathing in through your nose...and out through your mouth.' Slowly, the woman turns so that her back is to the audience and begins to climb the rope.

In October 2014, I devised and performed a solo work entitled *My Brain is a Radio*, for Theatre Delicatessen's artist development program 'Horror

Souk', which culminated in a performance event in the old Woolworth's shop building at The Moor, Sheffield, 31st October – 22nd November 2014. *My Brain is a Radio* is a site-sympathetic, part-autobiographical exploration of anxiety disorder that, by means of performance, attempts to realise some of the symptoms of the condition that I have personally experienced. It is intended as means with which to share personal experiences of anxiety disorder and also to position the subject of mental illness within the public realm. The work employs aerial rope (*corde lisse*) and ground-based improvisation whereby I document, through chalked drawings and writing: my immediate responses to the subject of anxiety disorder, previous memories and the current audience. In an endeavour to cultivate a first-hand understanding of the situations I have encountered through anxiety disorder, I have assimilated a selection of my own experiences into a guided hypnotherapy script, which has been recorded using my own voice. The script provides the narrative structure of *My Brain is a Radio*: taking the audience through the initial induction stages of hypnosis (whereby relaxation is achieved and the attention of the audience/patient is focused) and then, by utilizing guided visualization and imagery, through a series of increasingly anxious events.

My Brain is a Radio evidences the outcome of a practice-as-research project which has explored the following subjects through practical experimentation: the relationships between aerial performance, live art and immersive theatre; methods for representing and exploring the symptoms of anxiety disorder; aerial rope choreography in the context of Deleuze and Guattari's 'transverse pathways'; and the relationship between live performance, immersive theatre and neoliberal values (Nelson, 2006; Bogue, 2007, 3). Since its debut at 'Horror Souk', I have begun developing *My Brain is a Radio* for other venues, so to not include the chalked writing and drawings, which require for the walls and floor of the performance space to be covered with blackboard paint. Since altering a performance space in this manner is not always possible, I am instead, replacing all of the

drawing action with movement-based responses to the themes and feelings inherent to the work. I am undertaking further investigations into how anxiety disorder may be explored by researching ideas surrounding repetition, and the relationship between the floor and the rope. My wider research looks to identify what aerial work, in particular, offers performance that attempts social and political engagement: I include my own practice-based inquiry into anxiety disorder in this category. The questions underpinning my research stem from the contradictions and synergies between my practices and experiences as an aerialist, live artist and activist. Performance practices are a way to find different means and mediums with which to explore and understand the world. Aerial performance is, a means of engaging with vertical space, my own body and its relationship to that space. It is this relationship that I am using to apply to wider social issues and debates.

Within the current neoliberal era, the self-interest is typically prized over social interest, and we, by the same means endure a process of alienation from ourselves, others, and the natural world. In attempts to counter problems associated with neoliberal capitalism, I have previously engaged in forms of activism and direct action, such as occupying rooftops and blockading the fronts of buildings. These efforts have primarily been part of an attempt to damage or interrupt the process of what I deem to be corrupt activity enacted by corporations. In addition to more specific forms of action, I have attended public demonstrations and occupations in various cities. Direct action usually aims to create an immediate impact, which in many instances can be measured as highly successful, but can also fail, and regardless of the outcome leaves many activists facing criminal convictions and feeling stressed, anxious and burnt-out for long periods. Performance can provide a different form of activism, or what I refer to as “in-direct action” which works towards the same goals as direct action, but via a longer, more circuitous pathway. Hence, performance does not often function by intending to create instantaneous social change, but works instead by planting seeds

of thought that will thus germinate and maybe bloom in times to come.

There are numerous examples of performance-as-activism, and of socially and politically engaged performance work across numerous disciplines. Live art, in particular, provides a useful strategy for socially and politically engaged performance, in terms of framing the liveness of issues, process, relationships and ideas. It provides access to different perspectives of topics, often by drawing attention to the relationships that can happen between various elements within a work and thus allowing the multifaceted nature of concepts to be perceived more clearly. Live art is not bound to a specific medium, process or venue, and can be fluid, often cross-disciplinary and performed in any way or in any place. When I first started making work as a performance artist, live art provided new means for me to bring subjects that I wanted to discuss and expose (such as banking investment in the arms trade) into the public sphere. It facilitated the representation and physicalization of, what I had previously considered, intangible and abstruse concepts. Furthermore, I discovered what seemed a very natural dialogue between my performance practice and academic discourse. Alongside my live art practice, I also continued to pursue training both aerial rope and silks. There exists within the live and visual art community, and I am sure elsewhere, an opinion which regards circus, including aerial work, as an uncritical art form. Aerial work undoubtedly provokes immediate associations with both traditional and contemporary circuses, despite becoming increasingly popular across an eclectic range of performance disciplines. It requires physical training and revels, traditionally, in displays of athleticism and daring. Aerial work, traditionally, demonstrates a spectacle of physical risk, human strength and an apparent defiance of gravity, standing in contrast to live art, which is as concerned with ‘process, presence and experience as much as the production of objects’ and final product (LADA, n.d.). LADA (Live Art Development Agency) claim that ‘live Art practices have proved to be especially equipped to meet the complexity and sophistica-

tion of contemporary audiences' and that 'live art asks us what it means to be here, now' (LADA, n.d.) A particular assumption regarding aerial performance that I have encountered is that as a practice founded on aesthetics and entertainment, it is ill equipped to be socially or politically critical. However, through continuing to practise and learn new ways of using the equipment with my body, I have begun to regard the sense of physical engagement and personal responsibility I have attained as having increasing importance.

Although feelings of physical achievement and bodily engagement are clearly not exclusive to those who partake in aerial work, they are still a defining factor of the practice. Aerialists are not superhumans, rather they are individuals who have trained and pushed the physicality of their human bodies beyond the range of everyday action. However, no matter how strong, the human body is vulnerable and aerial performance places that vulnerability at the centre of its spectacle, thus reconnecting us with our inherently fallibility and undermining linear narratives of human progress. Aerial work has previously been employed to represent images of Imperialism, Capitalism and human progress, but also conversely, to embody and to undermine social norms that relate to topics including gender, race, sexuality, politics and human relations.

I argue that particularly within contemporary capitalist society, aerial performance proposes a means with which to both test and demonstrate a wider spectrum of human physical capabilities, which otherwise may be sedated or limited within the context of the everyday. Furthermore, whilst man-made vertical interventions, such as architecture or aviation devices, provide spaces that are defined by the walls and borders of the state, the actions of the aerialist in motion are no longer mediated by the 'anonymous laws' of the everyday (De Certeau, 1988, 92).

My current practice is preoccupied with the point where aerial work and live art meet, and the synergies, correlations and contradictions that arise from this meeting. In particular, I am interested in how concepts inherent within a work can be

enriched and communicated when pushed beyond the horizontal plane. Throughout my practical research, I am aware that my body often plays a central focal role with regard to how concepts and aesthetics are communicated. Hence, the many details of both my physical appearance and bodily movements, become facets to be considered and arrange within a performance work. What is more, my body can be used as a point of reference, or as something that can be employed in order to measure other beings, objects and entities. For example, the scale of a skyscraper can be better understood in comparison to the size of a human body. These considerations play a crucial role in how ideas are formulated within both my practical experimentation and performance work. What both live art and aerial work share, is that within a work, the 'physical body...is not necessarily "performing"; certainly not in the theatrical sense of "pretending to be someone else"' (Sofaer, 2002). Both practices are about the relationships that are formed between the physical body and the other objects (including equipment in the case of aerial performance) and concepts included within a work. In this manner, the aerialist is a live presence who, by connecting multiple co-ordinates, reinvents space and the relationships between objects. Thus, I argue that it is through this transversal communication that new models for existence and connections between spheres may be mapped (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). Furthermore, given aerial work's relationship to spectacle, my practice looks to explore aerial work within the context of what Baz Kershaw denotes 'spectacles of deconstruction', those that undermine the reality of the world around us (Kershaw, 2003, 595). 'Spectacles of Deconstruction' encourage a form of reflexive spectatorship, which are able to 'work paradoxically to open up new domains for radical revisions of the way things are' (2003, 599). According to Kershaw, it is spectacles such as these 'which may best carry the charge of activism in the contemporary world' (2003, 596). Thus, my intentions are at present, to both utilize and be critical of, the spectacle of aerial work throughout my practical investigations. It is this spectacle that may enable aerial performance as a

tool with which to carve new models and patterns of thinking.

My practice adopts a methodology that is critically reflective, responsive and is concerned with research as something that is subject to continuous metamorphosis. Too often, academic discourse claims that it is not possible, within contemporary capitalism, to create art that is critical of social and political issues. My research seeks to challenge these assertions and to create innovative methods with which to examine the world around us. I argue that creative practices provide strategies with which we can examine current conditions and predicaments. Whilst undertaking my explorations I acknowledge my position as a white, queer, western woman, but also as an individual living in the world at present. In researching aerial performance in particular, I set out to explore it as a potentially critical practice, which is able to transcend borders; demonstrate a “liveness” in being human; and open up space for deviation, resistance and reconsideration.

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PERFORMANCE LECTURE

CiNS Collective:
CIRCUS.FREIHEIT
GLEICHSCHALTUNG

Roxana Küwen

The CiNS Collective is a heterogeneous project group from Germany that deals in a multidisciplinary approach with circus history and the potential of (circus) arts to create awareness for political topics amongst diverse audiences. We come from different backgrounds and currently work as circus pedagogues, professional circus artists, political activists, film makers, scientific researchers, former travelers in traditional circus and others. Our work started from a focus on the history of circus in Germany during National Socialism and World War II. As the specific theme of circus under fascism is very much neglected in the discussions and the discourses of the so called coming to terms with the past ["Aufarbeitung"] in Germany especially compared to other art forms like theater or dance our basic motivation to research that topic was to find out about it and make it public in order to contribute to a commemoration of the victims amongst circus artists.

In Nazi cultural policy, radio, press, film and literature were considered the main media of propaganda whereas circus played a minor role. The fascination it generated for a broader public, however, appealed to the Nazis. The establishment of new public institutions and laws which aimed at forcing all cultural life into one political line affected each individual circus and its staff and the existing circus organizations, such as the

circus trade union Internationale Artistenloge [IAL International Artists' Lodge] that was transformed into a Nazi organization. For anybody working in the artistic or cultural sector the membership in the Reichskulturkammer [RKK Chamber of Culture of the German Reich] was mandatory. The Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, was president of the RKK that acted as the topmost watch authority and ensured that artistic and cultural productions were ideologically streamlined and exclusively realized by people of "Aryan descent".

The subordination of the circus under the Nazi regime was certainly made easier by the cosmopolitan tradition among many circus artists, a tradition of several generations, characterized by political neutrality. Several principals of major circus companies, however, made advances to the Nazis from early on, be it for personal or commercial reasons. All of these companies, such as Circus Krone, Circus Sarrasani or Circus Hagenbeck leave their role during the Nazi era out of their chronicles until today. The Jewish Circus Straßburger was forced to sell the circus for a price far below the real value which actually meant a dispossession. Many members of circus families with a Jewish background such as the Blumenfelds were hauled off to the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Theresienstadt and murdered. The fates of many individual circus artists have remained obscure until today. Until today there have hardly been any so called "compensation payments" to artists or circuses in question. This is partly due to the fact that circus in Germany has never been acknowledged as a cultural asset and the circus companies thus have never been entitled to subsidies or scientific research has been supported.

In the course of time of our projects we started to see the significance of our involvement on various levels:

We still aim to make the history of circus during fascism public: Tell the stories of persecuted circus artists, name and memorize murdered circus artists and workers, show in which way circus was used as a medium of propaganda or name collaborating circus companies. Beyond that we research and

explore the potential our work provides for critical and present-aware remembrance policies and practices. We deal with circuses marginalisation today and aim to create awareness for the need to stand up against racism, nationalism, sexism, homophobia and any other form of discrimination nowadays.

The base of our work is the exposition CIRCUS. FREIHEIT.GLEICHSCHALTUNG. [Circus Freedom Enforced Alignment] that we created in 2011. It is a traveling exposition which allows to reach as many different people as possible. We presented in amongst others at circus festivals, circus pedagogics conferences, in established theaters, alternative arts festivals, political antiracist festivals, libraries or schools. small documentary here Accompanying the exposition is our performance with the same title that we mainly perform for the opening of the exposition. It is a play reading that includes elements of lecture, reading, acting, circus arts and live music. It consist of fragments of the life experience of Irene Bento, a persecuted circus artist who could save herself and parts of her family from the Nazis by hiding in Circus Adolf Althoff.

We also organise information sessions and film viewings with optional focus on either the future of remembrance policies, the story of Irene Bento or other related topics.

Additionally, we do pedagogical project weeks in schools in which we encourage students to chose relevant aspects from history and make their own circus theater play around the themes of discrimination and exclusion.

We continuously keep researching by visiting different archives, connecting to other researchers and getting in touch with the few witnesses of the time that are still alive today. In that context our encounter with the family of Irene Bento was very important and touching. We interviewed her children Mary and Jano Bento in March 2014. Their acknowledgment of our work was of great personal relevance for all of us.

We consider an exchange of circus researches of any back ground and topic very important. Seeing circus through the lens of sociopolitical practice we interpret our work as a tool to communicate relevant emancipatory values to a wide ranged audience.

Against the back ground of the big gap between "traditional" and "contemporary" circus, we think that an awareness of history on one hand and the potential of dealing with political topics on the other hand are important for a progressive view on today's circus arts. We would highly appreciate to share our experiences even though history is not a specific subject of the conference.

We would greatly value to provide the context to discuss several aspects of our work: circus arts as a tool to awake political awareness by touching the audience on visual, audio and emotional level the necessity for circus to critically deal with its history, which can be an example to deal with topics as colonialism, racism, sexism and others, in artistic as well as in scientific research and production.

If one wishes more detailed information on historical aspects and details we are happy to send the digital version of the expositions' brochure, don't hesitate to contact us.

6 meters

6 meters

Studio



PERFORMANCE

Twisting the Balance

Leire Mesa

Twisting the Balance is a performative experience that document, from the spectacular view of the circus, the encounter in Stockholm of a trapezist and a collective of women from diverse origins, skills, genders and realities.

Together they reflect about the concepts of power and resistance in relation with the bodies produced by society.

The trapeze is redefine in Twisting the Balance as a public, political and promiscuous space where anyone can exercise their voice.

In this circus element the word takes flight, with the same risk and danger that the circus bodies are exposed.

In the process we have understood that the trapeze makes us be present, taking risks, but also hear and feel, facilitate the dialogue, build relationships and create community.

The trapeze as the art of not having the feet on the ground, make us to think and roar.

KEYNOTE/PERFORMANCE

*Mode of Sonic Interaction
in Circus*

Gynoïdes project

Gynoïdes Project is an evolving participatory initiative that uses dialogues, art projects and artistic led research to analyze the question of women in circus art, how it can be understood and transformed.

In a current collaboration with the University of Dance and Circus, Stockholm University of the Arts and the Sound and Music Computing team at the Royal Institute of Technology, the research project Mode of Sonic Interaction in Circus intervenes in the structure of circus practice by developing new methods for enhancing bodily expression.

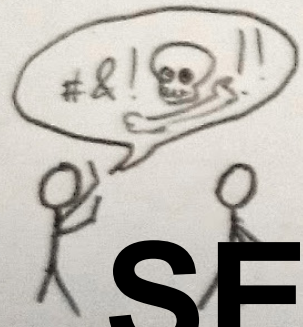
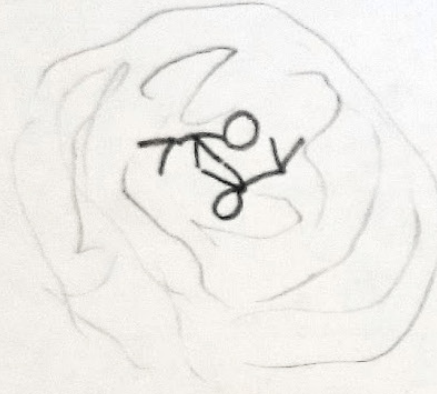
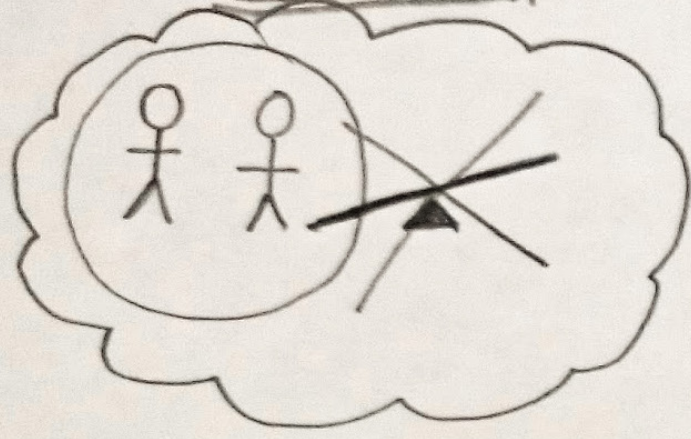
The objective is to explore new forms of artistic expression in the circus art through the use of motion capture technology, enabling performers to interactively control computer-generated sounds by means of their own body.

The research seeks to explore sonification as a possible solution to overcome the restrictions imposed by the standardized set of rules in composition, production and distribution of circus art.

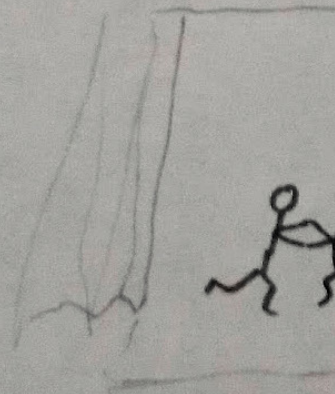
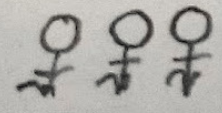
The Mode of Sonic Interaction is an academic inquiry is part Gynoïdes Project. Gynoïdes Project raises and examines the question of women agency in circus art through artistic practices.

Gynoïdes Project interacts with educational and research institutions, with organizations and members of the circus community, and with contributors from scientific and artistic fields.

|| Start ||



SENSATION



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Practicing the subject, invertedly – hand-balancing as a return to the subject?

Camilla Damkjaer

In certain phenomenological traditions and within cognitive sciences, the upright posture of human is considered to be the basis of many of our cognitive functions (Zahavi & Gallagher, 2008, p.132) and thus a part of the construction of the subject. But what if the materiality of the human body suddenly has to hold in an inversed position, balancing on its hands. How does it hold, can it stand on its own, and which idea of the subject does this result in?

In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari propose to see subjectivation as one of the three great strata that bind and restrict us; "You will be a subject, nailed down as one (...) - otherwise you are just a tramp." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, 159). However, in a text from 1988, Deleuze writes concerning the concept of the subject, that it "it is never interesting to criticize a concept; one should rather construct new functions and discover fields that render them useless or inadequate" (Deleuze, 2003, p.326, my translation). Which new functions can we discover for the idea of the subject today, and how can the practice of hand-balancing possibly elucidate that?

In this lecture performance, I would like to propose that hand-balancing is or can be a "technique of the self" (Foucault, 2001), that is: a way of practicing the individual's relation to itself and its surroundings. Starting from an exploration of

the ways in which hand-balancing activates the relation between pre-subjective processes and reflective consciousness, and the relation between perception and sensation, I would like to explore the possible constructions of subjectivity that can emerge from reversing the upright position classically used to describe the autonomy of the subject.

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LECTURE CONVERSATION

First Open Letter to the Circus “The need to redefine”

Bauke Lievens

I.

Dear circus artists,

This is an attempt. Or rather, the first in a series of attempts to describe what I see as an urgent need of the contemporary circus landscape in which we work. That is the need to redefine what we do. To talk about how we do it. To search for multiple answers on the question why we do it. And last but not least, to develop various and manifold tools for doing it. The need to undertake these attempts has arisen from the lack of surprising, multi-layered and artistically innovative performances that I experience as a spectator. Secondly, it has arisen from the lack of footholds and common language that I experience both in myself and others when we work on a performance.

*The French word for attempt is *essai*. In her book *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*, the Jewish-Cuban anthropologist Ruth Behar writes that “the essay has been described as an act of personal witness. (It) is at once an inscription of a self and the description of an object.”¹ The same can be said of this attempt. In writing it, I am in no way trying to provide an objective overview of the field of contemporary circus practice. I am fully aware*

that in my attempt to describe the circus and its creative processes, I will only be able to shed light on an extremely small part of it - the part that I am engaged with in my role as a dramaturge and a spectator. I am aware that in describing the current state of the landscape, I am also inscribing myself and my own work into the text. This text, therefore, is subjective and the changing nature of both the object of the research and of my own view could tomorrow render this text either partially or entirely void.

II.

Dear circus artists,

This is a letter. Or rather, the first in a series of letters. All of them are invitations to contradict and discuss. For the key thing missing from our landscape is exactly that: a polyphonous dialogue about our diverse practice in all its conflicting forms of expression. We rarely engage in that kind of dialogue and when we do so, despite our obvious affection for the circus in which we work, we endure long silences and a sense that our shared language for speaking about our practice is inadequate and flawed. I hope that these letters can be a first step in opening up such a rich, multiple and polyphonous dialogue.

III.

*Traditionally, the circus has been occupied almost entirely with skill and technique, and thus with form. This does not mean that it was void of content. In traditional circus the mastering of physically demanding, dangerous techniques and the taming of wild animals can be seen as expressions of the belief in the supremacy of humankind over nature (e.g. gravity). Traditional circus' focus on skill expressed and even propagated a contemporary image of Man, inspired by the belief in 'big stories' like *Progression*, characteristic to that era of 19th and beginnings of the 20th century called *Modernity*. Moreover, the birth of modern circus is embedded in the context of the Industrial Revolu-*

¹ Promotor of the project: Jan Steen (KASK School of Arts), copromotor of the project: Camilla Damkjaer (DOCH/ Uniarts).

tion, rapid urbanization and the sudden boom of an entertainment industry that sought to please a quickly growing working class audience. In this context, circus performers were “first and foremost skilled workers and professionals who sold their physical abilities to the circus director, agent or promoter.”² Also the forms of that circus were not innocent or meaningless. They functioned as a frame and expressed a contemporary way to see and experience the world.

Fast forward: 1970s, France. A group of young theatre directors is looking for more accessible and popular forms of making theatre, faithful as they are to their May 68-beliefs that art should be brought to the people. In their quest, they bump into the circus with its immediate accessibility, physical, non-elitist communication and use of space (e.g. the street and the tent). Initially, they insert strategies from the circus into their theatre performances. But their discovery also influences the circus. In 1985 their experiments lead to the circus education, which traditionally passed on from father/mother to son/daughter, being taken out of the family context and institutionalised in the first government funded circus high school, the Centre National des Arts du Cirque (CNAC) in Châlons-en-Champagne (FR). In this prestigious school, circus techniques are combined with the narratives of (mainly) French theatre and dance from that time. Nouveau cirque is born and the vision of Man expressed by traditional circus is seemingly exchanged for the dramatic personae and the linear story. Thus at the root of nouveau cirque lies the weird idea that form and content are two separate entities, which can somehow be divided without loss on both sides: traditional circus skills (form) are isolated in order to combine them with the narratives of the theatre from the eighties (content).

Common to all art forms, however, is the interweaving of form (how?), content (what?) and context (why?). The three are intimately linked

and inseparable. In other words: the choice of the form and/or medium always expresses a certain vision or content, the latter being linked to the context and to the question of why an artist makes work. Similarly, certain content –arising from the context- will always be expressed in a specific form. Dramaturgy is exactly that consciousness. Or as Flemish dramaturge Marianne Van Kerkhoven, who recently passed away, put it: “Have we now worked out that form and content are inseparable, and that every revision or reworking of whatever kind also touches on both, and influences both?”³

Moreover, the real physical danger and the high level of reality of the physical actions in the circus are not a good match for ‘dramatic’ theatre. It is the kind of theatre that tries to make the spectator believe in a fictitious world on stage. It respects the famous fourth wall, instrumental in the attempt of shaping an illusion. Circus, with its love of physical skill and the circular arrangement of the audience, does not attempt to create an illusion. Instead, it focuses on the real gathering of bodies. There is no fourth wall. Whatever happens, it does so in real time, in the here and now of the big top. There is no story, but a succession of acts. Except for the clown, there are no dramatic personae. Thus, nouveau cirque tries to combine real presence with make-believe. This is why, in the nouveau cirque, circus acts always interrupt the narrative. It is simply not possible to combine the two in one smooth whole. At the moment of physical danger (presence), the story (re-presentation) simply stops. Watch Ningen (1993) by Cirque Baroque, and you’ll get the idea.

Unfortunately, this way of proceeding hasn’t been limited to some obscure performances from the eighties. Almost 80% of circus performances that we make today still function like this. Or rather: don’t function at all. Luckily we are gradually becoming aware that this isn’t working out. As a result, many of us have put a renewed focus on

² PUROVAARA, T. (2012). An introduction to contemporary circus. Stockholm: STUTS, 77.

³ VAN KERKHOVEN, M. (2002). Werkverslag. Hoofdstuk 1: Nuanceren. Over het innemen van standpunten. Etcetera, 20 (83), 15.

technical skill. Much of the work we make today is based on formal (that is: technical) research, with the turn to mono-disciplinary performances as a result of this tendency. However, what often lacks is the consciousness that the mastering of technical skill (the form) expresses a certain vision of Man, and of the world in general (thus, a certain content). What we present on stage are heroes and heroines, often without any critique or irony. This seems anachronistic and implausible in the context of the post-, meta-modern or even post-human experience(s) of the world surrounding us. Our contemporary Western world is not bound together by one big story, nor by the belief that one coherent narrative can give meaning to our experience(s) of that same world. Yet, the circus somehow keeps going back to those big stories, with the skilled, heroic superhuman as carrier and propagator of the modern belief in the Makeability of Man and the Supremacy of Mankind over Nature. Admittedly, as a result of the actual disruption and fragility of the eco-, financial and geopolitical systems around us, it feels today as if we are gradually moving away from the dead end of the postmodern adversion against binding narratives. It is as if we hesitantly start to articulate a growing desire for sincerity, community and change. This hunger possibly stems from a renewed need to articulate and believe in stories that can keep and bind us together again, yet always in the full awareness that the ground on which we stand is drenched with irony. The Dutch scholars Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker (2010) have called this emergent structure of feeling 'metmodernism'. They coin it as an oscillation and negotiation "between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity."⁴ Maybe the actual popularity of the circus is even related to that metmodern oscillation?

However, the relative absence of different, subversive body images in our work worries me. The characters, heroes and body images on our stages (in our rings) rarely feel contemporary, even if we call what we do 'contemporary circus'. I think it is important that we become more aware of the fact that the skillfull forms we use are expressions of a very particular way of seeing and experiencing the world. As long as we don't manage to connect our craft to the questions what we're doing, why we're doing it and how we do it, we will keep on communicating exactly that: craft. That is why, I think, circus risks being (ever more) reduced to a popular, child-friendly and accessible variant of theatre or dance. I believe, however, that the circus possesses unique tools and strengths that the other performing arts can only dream of. And I think you do too.

IV.

Dear circus artists,

It is true that we cannot start to express and create a potentially new content to that of the traditional circus if we do not master the technical skills to do so. Circus is way too dangerous for that. However, it is not in the sole repetition of technical skill and existing 'repertoire' that we will create artistically renewing work. Repetition is a huge topic in circus, but more about that later. For now, let us talk about skill. Many of us consider technical skill as the alleged core of our practice. In turn, much of our work shows that the step to reducing circus to that same technical skill is easily made. I believe that if we keep on separating form, context and content, we will continue to make craft (and not art). We will continue to be crafts(wo)men, despite our efforts to become independent authors. If we believe that circus can potentially be more than craft, we should attempt to define the medium in which we work by other criteria than technical skill. Allow me to make a few suggestions for that re-definition:

⁴ Promotor of the project: Jan Steen (KASK School of Arts), copromotor of the project: Camilla Damkjaer (DOCH/ Uniarts).

Before performance

The solo or duo character of training.
The result-oriented nature of training.
The pressure of (technical and physical) perfection.
The vain attempt at defying the laws of nature.
A strong codification of figures.
The disciplined body.
A taboo on failure.
Repetition.
Pain.

During performance

High level of reality of the physical actions.
The body as the central sign.
The vain attempt at defying the laws of nature.
The heroism of the personae of the circus.
The spectacular understood as the staging of the impossible (as opposed to theatre's tradition of staging the possible.)
A specific physical relationship to the object. (The circle.)
(The 360° visibility of the tent.)
The circus act as a dramatic structure.
A close relationship between (nomadic) daily life and artistic practice.
Autobiography.
Physical danger.
Ritual.

Between ring/stage and audience

Immediate communication and high accessibility.
Experience between amazement (distance) and identification (no distance).
A (circular) sense of community and shared experience.
A blurring of the strict separation between audience and ring/stage.
The inability to communicate anything but physical danger on the peak of the circus act.

VI.

I would like to suggest an understanding of circus as a form in which the virtuoso body is central. However, I would also like to redefine virtuosity. What the circus body does on stage/in the ring is not random. Its actions are always tied to overcoming a physical limit. It constantly pushes the limits of the possible and incessantly displaces the goals of its physical actions, thereby never attaining these goals and limits. Therefore, what is expressed through the forms of the circus is an understanding of human action as fundamentally tragic. Virtuosity is in fact nothing more than the vainly attempting human being 'at work'. What appears in the ring is a battle with an invisible adversary (i.e. the different forces of nature), in which the goal is not to win but to resist and not to lose. Circus then, is both the promise of tragedy and the attempt to escape from tragedy. This makes the circus performer into a tragic hero.

Circus = tragic

All physical action in circus takes place in relationship to an object that is external to the body, be it the trapeze, the cloudswing, the juggling ball, or the body of the flyer. Let us take a closer look at this relationship between the object and the body.

In a 2009 essay the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben proposes a distinction of beings into two large groups: "on the one hand, living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are incessantly captured."⁵ In this understanding, Agamben draws upon on the Foucauldian notion of the apparatus or dispositif as "a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient –in a way that purports to be useful- the behaviours, gestures, and thoughts of human beings."⁶ Agamben goes even further in his definition of the apparatus as "literally anything

⁵ AGAMBEN, G. (2009). What is an apparatus?. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁶ Ibid, 12.

that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings”, from language itself, to cell phones, cigarettes, the pen and computers.⁷ A subject then, to Agamben, is the third category that results from the relationship, or “the relentless fight”, between living beings and apparatuses.⁸

In the essay *9 variations on things and performance*, the Portuguese theatre and dance scholar André Lepecki (2011) applies this Agambian understanding of the division between living beings and apparatuses to have a closer look at the current presence and proliferation of objects and stuff on many contemporary dance and performance stages. Lepecki argues that choreography can be “understood precisely as an apparatus of capture of gestures, mobility, dispositions, body types, bodily intentions and inclinations for the sake of a spectacular display of a body’s presence.”⁹ Yet also the circus seems to be the battleground par excellence on which Agamben’s “relentless fight” between human beings and apparatuses takes place. As I mentioned before, I think that traditional circus stages the human being in a relationship of supremacy and dominance over the objects in the ring (other bodies, animals, the objects of the circus). The subjectivity arising from this relationship is fundamentally a Modern and heroic one. However, circus technique also functions as an apparatus that disciplines the body into a specific standard of perfection. What appears is a subjectivity without subject: the traditional circus performer appears as a mere body, without the body functioning as the vessel for subjectivity. Therefore, if the circus wants to put on stage contemporary subjectivities and identities, it is crucial that we start experimenting with different relationships to our apparatuses, techniques and/or objects. That same relationship between the body and the object has changed dramatically over the last twenty years. It went from physical dominance over the trajec-

ries of the object in traditional circus and *nouveau cirque*, to the object dominating the trajectories of the body in contemporary circus. This is a very important shift, and one that possibly reflects or engages with our contemporary experience of the world. The same goes for the understanding of human action as fundamentally tragic. I wonder how this tragic understanding of human action in relationship to an object can relate to, reflect and question our contemporary and multiple experiences of the world? I guess our performances are there to find out...

Object - body

VII.

Dear circus artists,

It is time for the circus to re-define its raisons d’être and for us to re-define our raisons de faire. If we want circus to become more innovative, surprising, weird (unique) and disturbing, we need to understand the intimate bond between the forms of the circus and the contents that we can express within those forms. We need to find out what specifics define circus as circus, and this beyond technical skill. The attempt at defining what we do goes together with marking out the possible field for artistic research within circus. The two overlap. They are two poles on the same continuum. Without research no ‘new’ definition of the medium and without a ‘new’ definition of the medium, there can be no possible pathways for artistic research beyond technical skill. In this continuum, then, we will be able to trace new or other contents that we can express through circus.

Since circus has historically maintained a somewhat marginal and peripheral role in the field of the performing arts (as it did in society in general) we need to understand the dynamics of our changing position. Maybe it is time to go beyond

⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ LEPECKI, A. (2011). *9 Variations on Things and Performance*.

In *Thingly Variations in Space*. Ed. Elke van Kampenhout. Brus sels: MOKUM.

circus. Let us search for possible, changing and multiple answers to the questions of why we want to do circus, how we want to do circus and what we (can possibly) express by doing circus. Let us do that together. Let us discuss and contradict each other.

I'm very much looking forward to hear your thoughts. Over the course of the following two years, I will be organizing several encounters to talk and discuss together about the different topics that these letters try to raise. Meanwhile, your letters, emails and comments are most welcome on bauke.lievens@hogent.be. You can also upload your audio comments, pictures or leave your written messages on <http://sideshow-circusmagazine.com> on <http://www.circuscentrum.be> or the Facebook page of Circuscentrum.

*Speak soon,
Bauke Lievens*

This is the first letter of a cycle of **Open Letters to the Circus** written in the framework of the four year research project 'Between Being and Imagining: towards a methodology for artistic research in contemporary circus' – funded by the research fund of KASK School of Arts (Ghent).

PERFORMANCE

Skin

Aedín Walsh

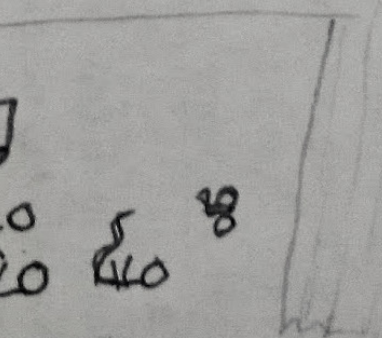
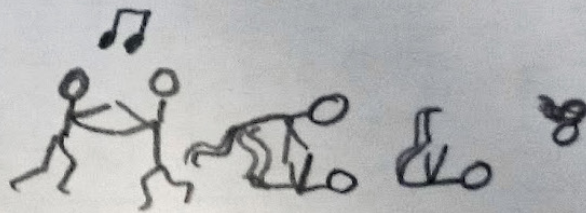
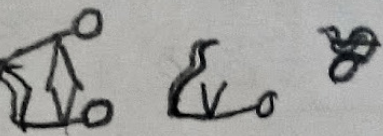
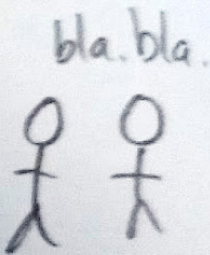
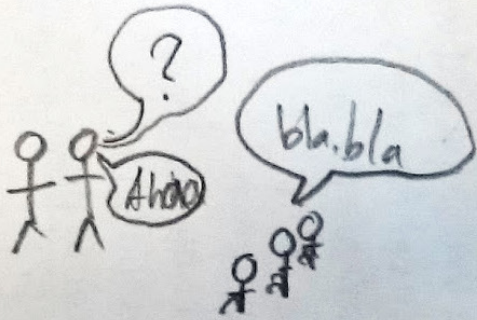
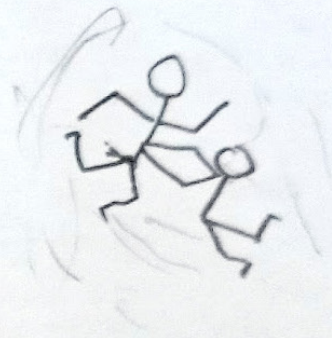
Aedín+Rope=Circus

*...the audience usually sees a rope hanging...
and me.'*

A serious injury in Autumn 2013 denied me my usual practice on rope. I focussed on my painting practice, sketching, designing. From this process I constructed a new piece of equipment for Circus (Skin), which, I propose, enhances not only my intentions/feelings in performance, but also has a vibrancy of its own, a breathing quality, sculptural shadows, a cloud of stars.

Here at CARD2 I present Skin, as spectacle (Kershaw), focusing on a revived relationship between human and equipment.

Enlivening the spectator's visceral experience and thereby awakening a vitality in the body's experience of the world and objects around it as an effort to engage concretely in a more empathetic, caring interaction between people through an active awareness of their shared environment's vibrancy.



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PERFORMANCE

Hamish Tjoeng

If we where to go on a journey together I would remind you not to forget your toothbrush. However if you did, you could use mine, after all we have shared everything else.

WORKSHOP

Sensing Hand-balancing

Camilla Damkjaer and Thierry
Maussier

What do you sense when you balance on your hands? Which methods can one use to work with sensation within one's practice? How can we share our different approaches to sensation in hand-balancing?

This workshop provides exchange among circus artists interested in the sensation of balance in hand-balancing. The work builds on dialogue, exchange of experiences and physical experimentation. The purpose is to highlight and share different approaches to sensation in hand-balancing.

The workshop is part of Thierry Maussier and Camilla Damkjaer's research project "Teaching Sensation - Challenges in Hand-balancing Pedagogy". The purpose of the project is to experiment with and develop new hand-balancing pedagogies, focusing particularly on how to teach the sensation of balance.

WORKSHOP

A workshop on the co-development of strategies for artistic research in contemporary circus creation

Bauke Lievens
& Alexander Vantournhout,
John Ellingsworth
- documentation

“Between being and imaging: towards a methodology for artistic research in contemporary circus”

This proposal is part of a four-year research project financed by KASK School of Arts (Ghent, Belgium). The project is called *Between being and imaging: towards a methodology for artistic research in contemporary circus*, a quest for ways of working in the creation of contemporary circus performances.¹ The first research perspective is my practice as a dramaturge (and sometimes as a co-creator) working with different circus companies. (Collectif Malunés, Circus Ronaldo, Alexander Vantournhout, Cie un loup pour l’homme, Babafish/Anna Nilsson, Cie Oktobre, cirQ, ...). Parallel to this artistic practice, the project also consists of a series of interviews with Johann Le Guillerm (and others) about his (their) specific ways of organizing and structuring his (their) on going creative research practice. The output of the research project consists of written material, of the performances on which I will have collaborated and of the organization of Master classes/workshops on artistic research. In these Master classes/workshops, the search for and experimenting with different ways and methods for ‘producing knowledge together’ is an important line of thought and practice.

¹ Promotor of the project: Jan Steen (KASK School of Arts), copromotor of the project: Camilla Damkjaer (DOCH/ Uniarts).

The knowledge produced

Written material

- A quarterly open letter to the circus
- Articles/essays in Etcetera (magazine for performing arts, Brussels), *Documenta* (magazine of the Research Group for Performance Studies, University of Ghent) and *CircusMagazine* (Circuscentrum, Ghent)
- Traces of the interviews conducted with Johann Le Guillerm (and others)
- Collaboration with John Ellingsworth (director of the online *Sideshow Magazine*): participation in the *Deconstructing Circus-series*, development of an appealing format in which the texts can be shared (including audio material of interviews and of author readings of the open letters)
- End of 2017: final publication

Performances

- Premieres of the performances on which I have collaborated as a dramaturge
- Premiere of the performance that I am currently co-creating (Aneckxander, together with Alexander Vantournhout, premiere on the 26th of June 2015)

Master classes/workshops

- August 2015: intervention in the lab/seminar/workshop on directing in circus organized by Circus Village (Oslo), together with Sverre Waage and Daniel Gulko
- October-November 2015: organization of a three-day encounter with a group of international circus artists to think about artistic research in contemporary circus creation and thus, inevitably, about what ‘contemporary circus’ could be and what ‘artistic research’ could be. In collaboration with Circuscentrum (Ghent). Guests to be confirmed. (Alexandre Fray, Johann Le Guillerm, Alexander Vantournhout, John Ellingsworth, Claudio Stellato, Olle Strandberg, Phia Ménard, Quintijn Ketels, Iris Carta, ...).
- A possible second, third and fourth edition of the above-mentioned ‘thinking together-encounter’

in the period 2015–2017.

- 2016–2017: organisation of several practical Master Classes for Flemish circus artists in collaboration with CircusCentrum (Ghent). + The possibility to organize these collective working sessions in other contexts.

A workshop for the co-development of strategies for artistic research in contemporary circus creation

The current proposal for CARD springs from the last research line described above: the organization of Master Classes. It will be preceded by the encounter in October–November in Ghent. During this encounter, no doubt a lot of material to think about will be generated. However, I would like to put into *practice* what comes out of this encounter, in combination with the findings of my dramaturgical practice in the first year and a half of the research project (since September 2013).

Who & When (see bios attached)

Alexander Vantournhout and Bauke Lievens would be guiding the Master class. Together with John Ellingsworth we are currently reflecting on how to document this event. John would be present in order to actually document what will be happening. The length of the workshop is not fixed and can be adapted to the program of CARD and to the necessities of the participants. Ideally, we would work over the course of two or three days, four to five hours a day.

Why

See the draft of the first (unfinished) open letter attached.

What & How

Attempts to put into practice an approach to circus creation that does not start from the centrality of technique/skill as such. The starting points are reflections on what kind of contents can be expressed by the forms (techniques/skills) of the circus. The workshop would be both practical and theoretical, as I believe that bridging the gap between ‘doing’ and ‘thinking’ is crucial in the development of an artistic research practice. We would like to

propose a workshop on the subject-object relationship in circus (technique), as this is a central line of research that we are currently working on in the co-creation of *Aneckxander*.

→ The subject-object relationship

In a 2009 essay the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben proposes a distinction of beings into two large groups: “*on the one hand, living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living being are incessantly captured.*” (Agamben, 2009) In this understanding, Agamben draws upon on the Foucauldian notion of the apparatus or *dispositif* as “*a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient –in a way that purports to be useful- the behaviours, gestures, and thoughts of human beings.*” (12) Agamben goes even further in his definition of the apparatus as “*literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings*”, from language itself, to cell phones, cigarettes, the pen and computers. (14) A subject then, to Agamben, is the third category that results from the relationship, or “*the relentless fight*”, between living beings and apparatuses. (14)

In the essay *9 variations on things and performance*, André Lepecki applies this Agambian understanding of the division between living beings and apparatuses to have a closer look at the current presence and proliferation of objects and stuff on many contemporary dance and performance stages. Lepecki argues that choreography can be “*understood precisely as an apparatus of capture of gestures, mobility, dispositions, body types, bodily intentions and inclinations for the sake of a spectacular display of a body’s presence.*” (Lepecki, 2010). Yet also the circus seems to be the battleground *par excellence* on which Agamben’s “*relentless fight*” between human beings and apparatuses takes place.

I would like to argue that the apparatus of traditional circus technique stages the human being in a

relationship of supremacy and dominance over the objects in the ring (other bodies, animals, the objects of the circus). The subjectivity arising from this relationship is fundamentally a Modern one, in the sense that the subjects appearing are heroes. They are carriers of the belief in the big stories of the 19th century: progression, the supremacy of humankind over nature, the 'makeability' of Man, etc. Thus the 'apparatuses' of the circus, being the specific circus techniques that discipline the body into their specific standard of perfection, give rise to a subject that does not resemble at all the post- or meta-modern subjects that we are today. If the circus wants to put on stage contemporary subjectivities and identities, it is crucial that we start experimenting with a different relationship to our apparatuses, techniques and/or objects.

In this workshop we would like to experiment different relationships to the object (the body of the flyer, the trapeze, silks, ...) in which it is not the body that dominates the object. Possible paths of enquiry are: a relationship in which the body is dominated by the object, or, like Lepecki suggests in the previously mentioned essay, the "along-sidedness" of living beings and things on stage. (5) For this line of research, we think it could be very revealing and refreshing to work on and with objects that interfere with the physicality of the participants, but that are not necessarily 'circus objects' like trapezes, straps, the Chinese pole, ... In the creation process of *Aneckxander* we use objects for example as prostheses: objects that are there to compensate 'wrong' proportions or vulnerabilities of the body, to end up revealing and accentuating the fragility they should be compensating. In this spirit, we would like to ask the participants of the workshop to think about a different kind of object (with a few given guidelines/rules for the choice of an object), that they then can bring for the workshop.

→ Contemporary heroism

Related to this 'different' approach of skill and circus technique, is the question of which subjectivities we want to put on stage. To my feeling, there is very little awareness of what I feel is a fundamental question in the performing arts. It is a question that is directed at the intimate and inseparable bond between form and content, from which a certain subject and a certain image of (Wo)Man arise. Since a lot of circus education is obsessed with perfection and physical standards and since the main carrier of meaning in the circus is the body, we currently find ourselves in a very problematic situation, which is that of the absence of different, subversive body images in our work. This is why it is crucial to start interrogating ourselves about the kind of bodies (and thus, the kind of subjects) we want to put on stage.

In the workshop, we would like to experiment with a specific format of 'thinking together' about this specific matter: **the relay interview**. Secondly, we would like to propose some 'food' that can nurture our thinking, in the form of the reading of one or two specific texts, for example the above mentioned essay of Giorgio Agamben on the relationship between living beings and apparatuses/objects² and a text by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker on Metamodernism.³

→ Other lines of enquiry

As mentioned above, we will be organizing an encounter in October in Ghent during which we will be thinking together about what artistic research in circus could be. We would like to keep this proposition open to the contents that will spring from this encounter, and that need yet to be defined.

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LEPECKI, A. (2011). 9 variations on things and performance. In *Thingly Variations in Space*. VAN KAMPENHOUT, E. (Ed.) Brussels: MOKUM.

² AGAMBEN, G. (2009). *What is an apparatus?*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

³ VERMEULEN, T. & VAN DEN AKKER R. (2010) Notes on Metamodernism. *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, Volume 2.

Things to do in Stockholm when you are dead

Or: Practical information about a conference

Welcome to CARD2!

The following two pages are meant as practical information regarding the conference itself as well as information about how to get around from venue to venue.

But first, once again, welcome to Stockholm and to CARD2. We are really pleased to have you here. Is this your first time in Stockholm? Have you encountered the swedes before?

If not, there might be a few things you should know before we continue to the more practical information. The first thing you might notice when arriving here in Stockholm is that the swedes take their queuing seriously. The swedes have been observed making lines just to be able to wait for the opportunity to stand in other lines, and the looks if you barge ahead can be rather withering. But, and this is also very important, they will never reprimand you on your line jumping in public. The reason is of course that they often are polite to a fault and when you combine that with an almost pathological sense of fairness and justice you get a quiet law abiding people that are great at pointing you in the right direction but will kill you a thousand times with their looks if you dear crossing the road when the light is red.

But why are we telling you this. Well, the conference will give you ample opportunities to interact with the swedes in their natural and preferred habitat, and knowing the rules might be vital for you in many a way.

This of course brings us the first important bit of information, namely:

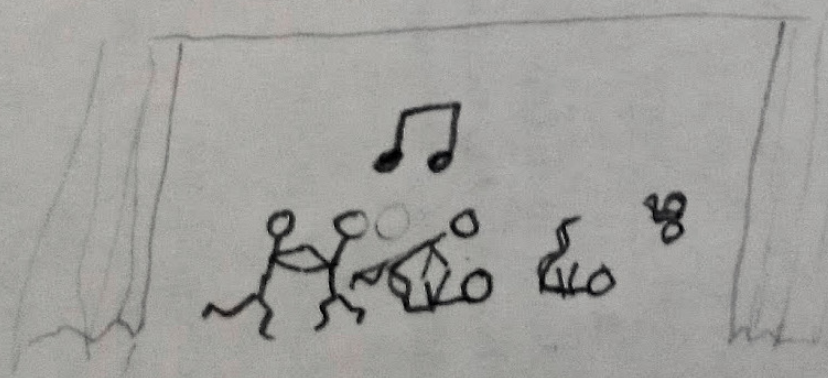
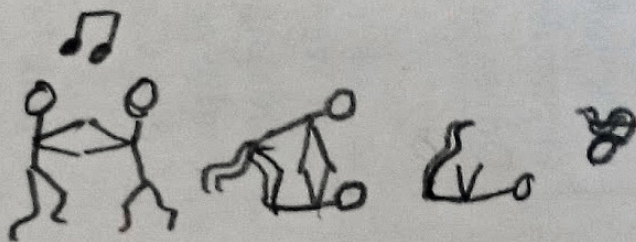
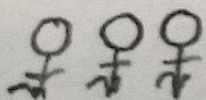
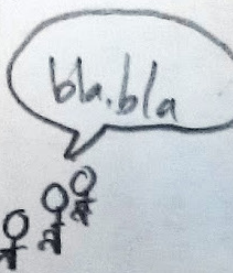
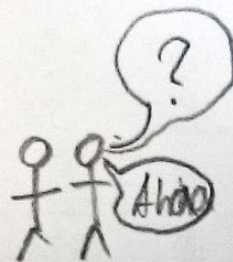
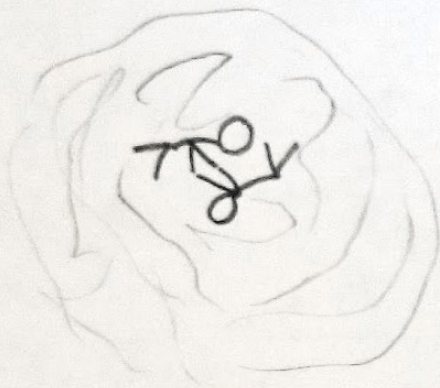
Public transportation:

CARD2 takes place at DOCH, School of Dance and Circus (Brinellvägen 34 and 58) and at Stockholm University of the Arts' Research Base (Linnégatan 87). Getting there and between the locations is a matter of using the excellent public transportation that Stockholm offers. DOCH is close to the metro, more specifically the Red Line and the closest stop Tekniska Högskolan. From there it's a 10 min walk to our venue. You can also catch the main Bus line number 4 and get off at Östra Station.

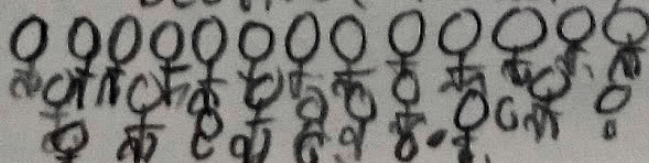
Travel between Linneagatan and DOCH is easiest done with Bus line number 4.

The stop closest to Linneagatan is Garnisonen.

Now, all public transport in Stockholm requires a prepaid ticket. These can be bought at the numerus Pressbyrån or 7-Eleven or at SL travel centers that you'll find at all the major hubs. Check out www.sl.se for more information about Stockholm fabulous public transportation systems.



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beutiful Amazing



Eating out:

CARD2 will provide you all with coffee in the morning and a nice vegan/vegetarian lunch each day. But suddenly evening arrives, and after a hard day's work you feel a little peckish. The first thing you should know is that Stockholm is a big city. Actually it's a lot bigger than you might think. And being a big city it comes with all the food perks that that might entail. Stockholm has a big and thriving vegetarian scene when you compare it to its sister capitals in Scandinavia, but it is also possible to get any kind of food that your heart might desire.

The trendiest places are usually found at Söder. But it should be noted that the scene changes fast, and this is one of those times when google, or one of our friendly hosts will be helpful in giving you tips and suggestions on where and when to eat.

The same goes for the myriads of bars found in Stockholm. There is one for every taste and every mood and we will be more than happy to give you tips and hints on where to have that late night cap or the perfect place to have that after hour's discussion about the flexibility of the human mind versus the body.

Shopping:

You think you have time to shop? Oh my. This is a fast paced, action filled conference that should keep you entertained from eight in the morning until seven in the evening.

Entertainment:

So you have had a long day at the conference. Your mind is full, and after that nice little trip to the restaurant so is your body. All you want to do now is to relax, perhaps catch a show or a movie and prepare yourself for the next day.

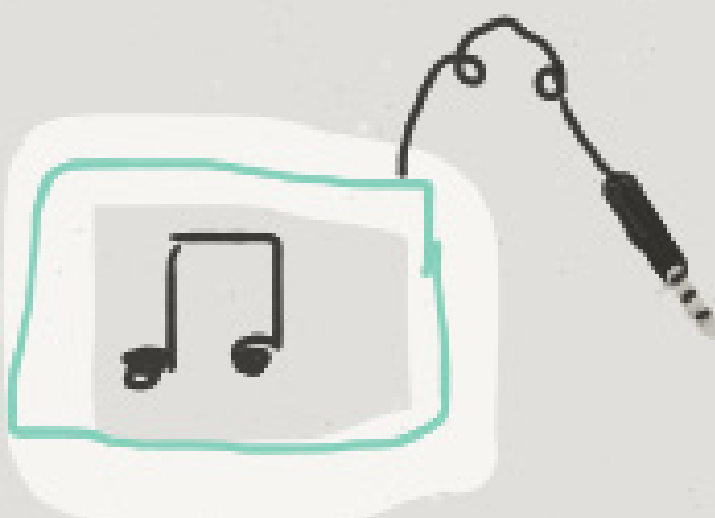
There are a lot of nice things happening in Stockholm, from musical to live concerts, from dance to poetry. I would, if you are so inclined, recommend checking out <http://dansenshus.se/> and <http://mdtsthlm.se/artists/> for nice progressive dance. But perhaps all you want to do after a long day of intellectual challenges is to watch big explosions and even bigger acting. Lucky for you, movies in Sweden are not dubbed, so check out <http://www.sf.se/> for the latest Hollywood block busters.

6 meters

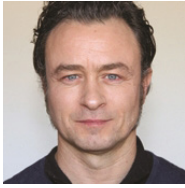
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BIOGRAPHIES

STUDIO



Jonathan Priest



Keynote

Jonathan Priest has been a performer for the last 30 years and a circus artist for the last 18. He has performed all over the world and in all manner of styles and situations; in traditional theatre, in stand-up, in cabaret and street theatre as well as the many permutations of the circus form. He has his own circus company Fanatticks, based here in Stockholm with co-artist Anja Duchko-Zuber. He is has been teaching for the last 12 years and is currently teaching part-time here at DOCH in Stockholm and in the UK.

Ante Ursic

Panel

The German-Croat Ante Ursić received his Artists-training at the circus schools in Berlin, Moscow and Brussels. There he specialized in the art of tightrope walking and devilstick juggling.

Contemporary dance and drama have an immense influence on his performances, which were awarded to internationally renowned circus and variety festival.

Rolf Hughes



Keynote

Rolf Hughes is the first Professor of Artistic Research & Director of Research at the Stockholm University of the Arts (inaugurated January 2014). Before this appointment, he was (2013) Scientific Advisor/Research Officer for Artistic Research Committee at the Swedish National Research Council; Guest Professor in Design Theory and Practice-Based Research and co-founder of the Experience Design MFA programme at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (2006-2014); Senior Professor in Research Design at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture (KU-Leuven, Belgium), where he helped create an international, practice-led artistic Ph.D programme on which he has taught and supervised since 2006.

Hughes is a published prose poet, whose short stories have been broadcast on BBC Radio and Swedish Radio, a dramaturge (author of *This is Not a Story*, a published play on Diderot's contribution to practical knowledge), and co-editor of four volumes of interdisciplinary essays: *The Book of Models*, *Hybrid Thought*, *Architecture and Authorship*, and *Second Nature: Origins and Originality in Art, Science and New Media*. He has given readings and lectures across Europe and the USA.

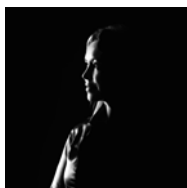
Franziska Trapp



Panel

Franziska Trapp, PhD candidate in Cultural Poetics at the University of Münster and the University of Montpellier, is working on the Narrativity of Circus. She is at the forefront of circus studies in Germany and organized the International Conference on Circus Arts Zirkus | Wissenschaft – Semiotics of the Circus (2015). During the last years, Trapp has worked for various circus productions, such as the Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain in France and Cirque Bouffon in Germany.

Rachel Armstrong

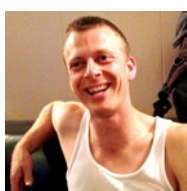


Keynote

Rachel Armstrong, professor of Experimental Architecture at Newcastle University, designs lifelike environments for the built environment using technologies that manipulate the building blocks of life such as synthetic biology and smart chemistry. Rachel Armstrong is TWOTY Futurist of the year 2015 and a 2010 Senior TED Fellow. Her new book, *Vibrant Architecture (Matter as CoDesigner of Living Structures)*, explores prospects for transformations of matter into habitable structures, which prompts a re-evaluation of how we think about sustainability in our homes and cities.

[The book can be downloaded as a PDF for free from the DeGruyter Open website *Vibrant Architecture*]

Lars Lindegaard Gregersen / GLiMT



Lecture performance

Lars Lindegaard Gregersen is co-artistic director of the company GLiMT and a nerd of physical movement. During the past twenty years he has been working with contemporary circus, dance, theatre and music. In his work he delves into a chosen theme and tries to combine physical skills with a clear narrative.

Daniel Peltz

Moderator

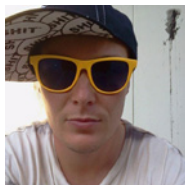
Daniel Peltz is an artist, researcher and educator. Through his site-responsive projects and media installations, Peltz explores social systems, attempting to provoke ruptures in the socio/cultural fabric through which new ways of being may emerge and be considered. To accomplish these goals, he uses a range of intervention, ethnographic and performance strategies. His projects often take the form of existing social systems [instant messaging protocols, karaoke bars, political campaigns, parking regulations, etc.] to directly engage non-art audiences in the language of critical art practice. His recent works have been supported by a practice-based research grant from the Fulbright Association and residencies at Yaddo [USA], the Helsinki International Artist Program [Finland], the International Artists Studio Program in Sweden, Artspace [Australia] and the Cemeti Art House [Indonesia]. Peltz has also worked on a number of international research projects, including RISD.tv [2005-2008] exploring the potentials of networked media environments to develop dialogic video practices. This project engaged groups of individuals and institutions in over a dozen countries. Peltz is the co-director of the artist-run initiative Rejmyre Art LAB, Professor of Film/Animation/Video in the Fine Art Division of the Rhode Island School of Design and currently a Visiting Professor of Artistic Research at Stockholm University of the Arts.

Pernilla Glaser

Moderator

Pernilla is a writer, method-developer and teacher. She is working with creativity, participation and learning as her main fields of exploration. She lives in the Stockholm archipelago with a lot of kids and some over-fed goldfish.

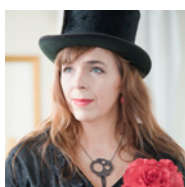
Rauli Katajavuori



Lecture Workshop

Rauli Katajavuori is one of the driving forces of circus arts in Finland. He has been active in the development of the Finnish contemporary circus scene and has participated in founding central structures such as Finnish Circus Information Centre, Finnish Yo-Yo association and Finnish diabolo association. He brought the European juggling convention to Finland 2010 and has organized many different circus-related festivals. At the moment he is working as the only and the first representative of the circus art at Arts Promotion Centre Finland. Rauli Katajavuori wrote his Master of Arts thesis about Graphic Juggling Notation at Theatre Academy Helsinki. His main goal is to continue his work with graphic juggling notation and other circus discipline notations as part of his future PhD studies.

Tilde Björfors

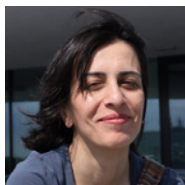


Panel

Tilde Björfors is the founder and Artistic Director of the Swedish Contemporary Circus Company Cirkus Cirkör. Tilde has 20 years of experience creating cross border stage performances, artistic projects, films and exhibitions and has been the driving force in establishing contemporary circus as an art form in Sweden.

In 2005 Tilde became Sweden's first professor in contemporary circus at the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm. Her artistic research, combined with Cirkör's visionary, educational, entrepreneurial and philosophical aims and work with democracy and cultural policy have had an impact beyond the realm of circus, including the development of the Circus University, a national secondary education and a national circus center placed in Botkyrka, Sweden. Tilde has directed a majority of Circus Cirkör's large scale productions, including Borders, Knitting Peace and Wear It Like a Crown, which have toured all over the world. As well as drama at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and several site specific works, such as the Nobel Prize Banquet 2012.

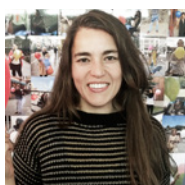
Sepideh Karami



Panel

Sepideh Karami is an architect and researcher undertaking PhD research at Umeå School of Architecture on interrupting devices and dissident architecture. She graduated from Iran University of Science and Technology with an M.A. in Architecture in 2001. Since graduating, she has been committed to teaching, research and practice. In 2010 she achieved her second masters in "Design for Sustainable Development" at Chalmers University, Sweden and in mid-2010 she started to work as a guest researcher at Umeå School of Architecture.

Olga Lucia Sorzano



Panel

Olga Lucia Sorzano is a PhD Student in Cultural Policy and Management at the City University London. Her research focuses on exploring contemporary notions and values of culture and its relationship with cultural policies through the analysis of the circus arts in Colombia. This research will investigate further the notion of 'culture as resource' developed by George Yúdice and the idea of 'art as imminence' proposed by Nestor García-Candolini to understand the functioning of culture and its values in the global era.

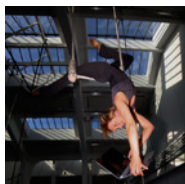
Nick McCaffrey

Panel

Nick McCaffery received his PhD in 2005, and spent some time teaching on several undergraduate and postgraduate modules. Nick's PhD research focussed on the transnational flows of representation regarding New Age appropriations of Native America, in particular the Hopi of Arizona. He has also worked as a research fellow on projects within the school of history and anthropology at QUB and at the Institute for Conflict Research, where he investigated attitudes to history amongst young people in Northern Ireland. Nick's recent research is focussed on the world of social circus – the teaching of circus as a social intervention for a range of vulnerable or at-risk populations. Drawing on over 2 decades as a circus teacher and performer in Northern Ireland, Nick is now investigating the utility of anthropological thought in helping to understand the impacts of social circus around the world.

Stine Degerbøl

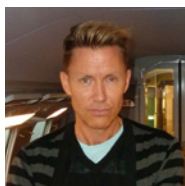
Panel



Stine Degerbøl (born 1977), is a former swinging trapeze artist. She currently handed in her PhD dissertation: "Arts-based research on young contemporary circus performer students' embodied learning" at the Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Charles Batson

Panel



Charles R. Batson, Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Union College in Schenectady, NY, holds a PhD from the University of Illinois-Champaign-Urbana. He teaches courses in performance studies, theater, dance, Québec studies, and contemporary French and Francophone literatures and cultures. He has won the College's Stillman Award for Excellence in Teaching and collaborates regularly with the Theatre and Dance Department in its courses and performances. Batson's interest in circus grows from his earlier work on the multi-disciplinary performances in Paris in the 1910s and 1920s. That work has been published in several venues, including his book *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theater* (Ashgate, 2005), and it includes traces Jean Cocteau's celebration of the category-shifting aesthetics of the Parisian arts, including the circus. Batson is currently exploring the multi-arts scene of contemporary Montreal as a site where theater, dance, and circus have come to inform and influence each other. His specific interests lie in the boundary-crossing foundational moments of the 1980s and also in what might be called the second generation of Québécois circus, particularly the 7 Doigts de la main.

Kate Holmes



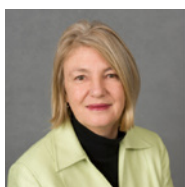
Panel

As an amateur aerialist I combine my interest in history and archives with understanding gained undertaking aerial practice in a project that looks at the history of female aerialists.

In 2000 I graduated from the University of Exeter's Drama Department with an interest in performance praxis. This led to a desire to combine performance theory with practice. It was natural that when beginning to learn the practice of static trapeze I would wish to read theory around it.

Sadly little academic writing exists on aerial performance and as a result I returned to academia in 2010, undertaking the University of Bristol's MA in Performance Research (awarded with distinction). This also led to my returning to the University of Exeter as an AHRC funded PhD student researching female aerial performances of the 1920s and 1930s in the UK and US.

Peta Tait



Keynote & Moderator

Peta Tait is Professor of Theatre and Drama in the School of Humanities at La Trobe University in Australia. She has achieved international recognition for her work in performance scholarship within a socio-historical context and in relation to film and other texts in cultural studies and its theory more broadly, and her analyses of dramatic literature and theatre. She is at the forefront of the field of performance studies in Australia and internationally, and her scholarship engages interdisciplinary approaches to performance studies and body-based art forms, and the analysis of theatrical languages of emotion. Tait is also a playwright, having written seven produced plays and three contemporary performances. Her publications include *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* (2012); *Circus Bodies: Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance* (2005); *Performing Emotions: Gender, Bodies, Spaces in Chekhov's Drama and Stanislavski's Theatre* (2002); *Converging Realities: Feminism in Australian Theatre* (1994); and *Original Women's Theatre* (1993).

Laura Murphy

Performance Lecture

Laura Murphy is an WRoCAH/AHRC funded- research-practitioner whose interests lie in the overlap between circus, live art and activism. She has performed nationally and internationally, most recently with Broken Dream Co. and with Theatre Delicatessen. She has also presented work for, performed and collaborated with Sundog Media, Bassline Circus, The University of Plymouth, Lucky Pierre/The Live Art Development Agency, Zap Art & Generik Vapeur, Thomas John Bacon, and Creative Carnival.

Laura's current research investigates how aerial performance can serve to deconstruct spectacle by occupying vertical space, creating transverse pathways across multiple co-ordinates and by positioning human performers (and their inherent capacity for failure) at the centre of aerial spectacles. In addition to this, her research interests include; performance lectures, "holistic" social activism and immersive theatre.

The CiNS Collective
The CiNS Collectives
members are: Roxana
Küwen, Waldo Bleeker,
Michael Richter, Fabian
Becker, Jaro Birkigt,
Ines Rosemann



Performance
Lecture

The CiNS Collective is a heterogeneous project group from Germany that deals in a multidisciplinary approach with circus history and the potential of (circus) arts to create awareness for political topics amongst diverse audiences. We come from different backgrounds and currently work as circus pedagogues, professional circus artists, political activists, film makers, scientific researchers, former travelers in traditional circus and others.

Our work started from a focus on the history of circus in Germany during National Socialism and World War II. As the specific theme of circus under fascism is very much neglected in the discussions and the discourses of the so called coming to terms with the past ["Aufarbeitung"] in Germany especially compared to other art forms like theater or dance our basic motivation to research that topic was to find out about it and make it public in order to contribute to a commemoration of the victims amongst circus artists.

Lena Hammagren



Moderator

Lena Hammer Branch is a Professor in the Theatre and Dance Science at Stockholm University. She earned her PhD in 1991 with the thesis Form and meaning in dance, an analysis of Birgit Akesson's and Mary Wigman's solo dances. She was president 1991-1993 in the newly established Nordic Forum for Dance Research (NOFOD), appeared in the anthology Corporealities in 1996, was a member and later chairman of The Gertrude Lippincott Award Commit, the Society of Dance History Scholars, USA 2000-2002 and lectured in the Summer School Dance on the Baltic Shores, University of Helsinki and the Theatre Academy of Finland 2002-2004.

Along with Erna Grönlund, Cecilia Olsson and Anne Wigertsson she started CHORA publications for dance research. She has published further research both in Sweden and internationally about the Swedish dance history and dance in a broader cultural theory perspective. Besides teaching, she currently works with dance research under Dance in Nordic Spaces that are part of a multidisciplinary research program, which started in 2007. It is funded by, among others Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, The Finnish Cultural Foundation and The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies.

Lena has a practical dance and theater background with studies in classical ballet, modern dance, jazz, Indian dance and acrobatics and is a trained drama teacher. During the 1970s, she worked for example as mimes in the Pantomime Theatre's The Nightingale, who mimes and acrobats in Götz Friedrich's production of Wagner Mästarsångaren, Royal Opera as well as dancers in Lilavati Hägers directing and choreography of church opera strong as death.

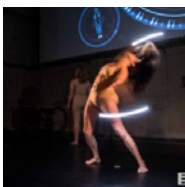
At DOCH Lena Hammer Branch Chairman of the NKU (Board for Artistic Research and Education) and Professor of Dance Studies

Leire Mesa**Performance**

Leire Mesa presented in May 2015 her thesis *Twisting the Balance* as itinerary work, research and methodology, inside the Master NPP, *New Performative Practice*, in *Doch* the University of Stockholm.

Twisting the Balance covers and gives name to a larger project. It proposed to travel to various social, political, artistic and cultural contexts to build from the site specific, performing-circus experiences that help to build community.

For the staging in the Orienteatern of Stockholm, *Twisting de Balance*, the first piece that also have the same name of the project, and for *No tenemos título* supported by Fira Tárrega, Leire Mesa invited to collaborate to the dramaturgist and director Rolando San Martín. Since then they are partners in the development, ideology and vision of the project *Twisting the Balance*. Actually they are now involved in a new experience, a solo of Leire Mesa, *FUTURO ANIMAL*; supported by the Antic Theatre and the Central del Circ.

Gynoïdes**Keynote Performance**

In a current collaboration with the University of Dance and Circus, Stockholm University of the Arts and the Sound and Music Computing team at the Royal Institute of Technology, the research project *Mode of Sonic Interaction in Circus* intervenes in the structure of circus practice by developing new methods for enhancing bodily expression.

The objective is to explore new forms of artistic expression in the circus art through the use of motion capture technology, enabling performers to interactively control computer-generated sounds by means of their own body. The research seeks to explore sonification as a possible solution to overcome the restrictions imposed by the standardized set of rules in composition, production and distribution of circus art.

The *Mode of Sonic Interaction* is an academic inquiry is part *Gynoïdes Project*. *Gynoïdes Project* raises and examines the question of women agency in circus art through artistic practices. *Gynoïdes Project* interacts with educational and research institutions, with organizations and members of the circus community, and with contributors from scientific and artistic fields.

Gynoïdes Project is an evolving participatory initiative that uses dialogues, art projects and artistic led research to analyze the question of women in circus art, how it can be understood and transformed.

Camilla Damkjaer



**Keynote, moderator
& Workshop**

Camilla Damkjaer is a researcher in the field of dance and circus. At DOCH she teaches, among other things, dance theory, dance history, aesthetic theory, philosophies of the body and methodologies of academic and artistic research. In her work she is crossing theory and practice, physicality and philosophy in order to challenge the assumptions of what dance and circus is and the kinds of knowledge they can produce.

In her Ph.D. thesis *The Aesthetics of Movement – Variations on Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham* (2005) she addressed the meeting point between dance and philosophy with an interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy and the choreography of Merce Cunningham. As a part of this work she addressed choreography and movement as an art that traverses many formats, and studied particular choreographic figures in the philosophy and writing of Deleuze and their importance in his thinking. She even experimented with the possibilities of transferring methods from Cunningham's choreography into the process of writing.

In the project "Homemade Academic Circus" she is confronting academic and artistic research, through her own experience of passing from theory into circus practices. In "Homemade Academic Circus" she is addressing the production of knowledge in circus techniques, and how artistic and practice-based research can enhance the theoretical understanding of circus in particular, and the performing arts in general. In this project she has been using the format of the lecture-performance in order to explore the relation between physicality and philosophy, and what their dialogue may produce in a specific embodied process.

Research interests: bodily practices and their articulation, contemporary dance and circus, Deleuzian studies, phenomenology, methodology within artistic research, paradigms of knowledge and how they affect the arts.

Bauke Lievens

**Lecture Conversation
and Workshops day
two and three**

Bauke Lievens works as a dramaturge, journalist and manager for circus and theatre. As a dramaturge, she has worked with Théâtre d'un Jour and Cie Un loup pour l'homme and she is currently involved in the new creation of the Flemish theatre collective Tibaldus en andere hoeren. She has published various articles on the topic of contemporary circus. She took care of the international promotion and accompaniment of several circus companies who have found a home under the wings of the Ghent-based Frans Brood Productions (Circ'ombelico, Cantina and Le G.Bistaki). Bauke also teaches practical dramaturgy at KASK, School of Arts (Ghent, Belgium).

Aedin Walsh



Performance

Aedín Walsh, an Irish-born, but travelled artist now based in Stockholm. Artistic history and practice encompasses Circus, Dance Theatre, Architecture, painting, sculpture, and music. Graduated 2015 from MA NPP (Circus) at DOCH

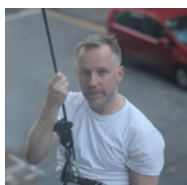
Hamish Tjoeng



Performance

Hamish was born in Brisbane, Australia. He was introduced to Circus at Aerialize (Trapeze, Silks, Chinese Pole & Contortion), Sydney, Australia, in 2008. While at Aerialize, Hamish also started Catching on the Flying Trapeze 2009 with Rodrigo Tapia at ARCAA. Meeting such amazing driven circus professionals ignited a passion that sent him all the way to Bristol, UK to study at Circomedia; England's premier school for Contemporary Circus and Physical Theatre, where his majors were Rope and Physical Theatre. Hamish has also trained in Harness and Counterweight with Gravity & Levity as well as Fidget Feet, he has trained Rope in France, Spain, Scotland and England, as well as Straps at the Hanger in London. He has spent many many hours in Bristol, exploring the body in space, discovering and developing new vocabulary for the Rope. Hamish has taught Silks at the Carriage Works in Sydney, as well as Straps and Rope at the Firkin Crane in Ireland. A highlight in his career has been performing at Glastonbury Festival, as well as extensively over England, Wales and Scotland. Recently Graduated from the 2yr Degree Program at Circomedia, Hamish now looks forward to creating and making work that reflects the innate beauty and extremes that lays within us all.

Shane Holohan



Moderator

Shane Holohan is currently researcher-in-residence at DOCH as part of his PhD in Arts Practice, and is in receipt of an IRC Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Award. Shane's research incorporates his background in three areas: he is an experienced teacher of English and art, he trained and worked as an integrative psychotherapist and he coaches and choreographs floor and aerial acrobatics and dance.

Shane's research considers how we can facilitate and document embodied creativity in high-level students of circus arts. The current phase of the project involves undertaking three ethnographic case studies of international circus schools – one each in Montreal, Stockholm and Melbourne. From this he will develop a model of practice, which will be applied through two creativity residencies. The first will involve working with professional artists for two weeks and will result in a public showing. The second will involve working with 14 people (2 students from each of the international schools and 6 Irish artists), and will result in a public showing of work and the production of a documentary film.

Cecilia Roos



Moderator

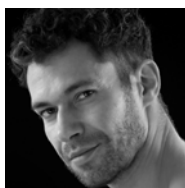
Cecilia Roos was appointed professor at Danshögskolan 1 January 2008. She teaches repertoire and interpretation and artistic methods.

Cecilia received her training at the Academy of Ballet and Dance School. She then studied further in Paris, New York, London and Rome. She has worked as a dancer and rehearsal, among others Per Jonsson, Mats Ek, Margaretha Åsberg, Vindhäxor, Cristina Caprioli, Kenneth Kvarnström, Björn Elison, Susanne Jaresand, Reich / Szyber, Birgitta Egerbladh, Ina Christel Johannesen, Tim Rushton, Twyla Tharp, Royal Opera House, Carte Blanche and Folk Opera. She has also made children's films and has worked as a choreographer, dancer and actor at the City Theatre and the Royal Dramatic Theatre.

She has received several scholarships and awards, including the Arts, the Swedish Academy, Stockholm city, Carina Ari, Rolf de Maré and Sandrew Foundation. In 2006, she was the guest of honor at the Dance Biennial in Gothenburg and was later awarded that year the Swedish Theatre Critics dancing price. In 2010 she received the Theatre Association's Gold Medal for outstanding artistic achievement. In 2005 she wrote the master's thesis on the topic dance interpretation, "dancer's gaze-the inner and the outer," at Stockholm University, Theatre Department. She has published numerous articles on the subject. Cecilia has published two books available on DOCH: Word in thought and movement. The dancer and the creative process and the materials of Movement and Thought: Reflections on the Dancer's Practice and corporeality.

Cecilia has held various positions in, among other things, the Arts Council, the Arts and Culture of the Future. 2010-2012 she was Chair of the Committee for Artistic Research and development Research Council.

John-Paul Zaccarini



Moderator and curator

John-Paul Zaccarini, is a performance artist, director, choreographer and artistic researcher within the fields of circus, theatre and performance. He is Head of the new Masters in Contemporary Circus and supervises on the PhD programme at Uniarts. Since 1992 he has produced, directed, taught, mentored, choreographed and performed multi-disciplinary work internationally, been artistic director of two performance companies, Angels of Disorder and Arts Council Funded Company F.Z, garnering both awards and critical acclaim. He toured internationally with his solo show Throat for 9 years. He was a visual and performance art curator for Studio 29, London. His PhD developed a psychoanalytic intervention in circus practice: Circoanalysis. His practice now deals with ethics and research ecologies in circus.

Annette Arlander



Moderator

Annette Arlander is an artist, researcher and a pedagogue, one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer of artistic research.

She is educated as a theatre director, Master of Arts (philosophy) and Doctor of Art (theatre and drama) in 1999. She was Professor of Performance Art and Theory at the Theatre Academy 2001-2013 and is currently Professor of Artistic Research at the University of the Arts in Helsinki.

Arlander's research interests relate to artistic research, performance studies and the environment. Her artwork is focused on performing landscape by means of video or recorded voice, moving between the traditions of performance art, video art, and environmental art.

Thierry Maussier



Workshop

Thierry has long experience as a circus artist, athlete and pedagogue. He has worked for several companies in France, and Sweden as an acrobat and handstand artist. He is also an experience teacher and has for the last five years worked as a senior lecturer at DOCH in Stockholm. His research focus the last few years has been on handstand pedagogics in the circus field.

Thanks to

We would like to thank Jacob Wallenbergs stiftelse, all our participants, Stockholm University of the Arts and all the students and staff from Uniarts. We would also like to thank all our collaborators from home and abroad, all our keynotes, performers, panel members and moderators. And last but not least we would like to thank you for being here. Together we are making a powerful conference that will create encounters for years to come.

JACOB WALLENBERGS
STIFTELSE
SÄRSKILDA FONDEN