

# CIRCUS WITHOUT CIRCUS

Inspiration Guide for future cross-  
disciplinary artistic research projects



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Circus Without Circus offered me a wider view on what circus can be. I learned a lot from both my partners but also from the process of the full CWC project itself. CWC confirmed the value of cross-disciplinary work. It especially underlined the enormous potential of a diverse group of artists with different backgrounds.

WARD MORTIER

participant in Circus  
Without Circus

# CROSS-DISCIPLINARY BLIND DATES

## About the project

Circus Without Circus was a European project (2020-2023) organized by Circuscentrum (BE – project leader), Le Manège de Reims (FR), Room 100 – Positive Force (HR) and Metropolis – Københavns Internationale Teater (DK).

Associated partners were Nona Arts Centre (BE), Césaré (FR), Arts Academy Split (HR) and Dynamo Workspace (DK).

The project was co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.



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the European Union

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an interdisciplinary research project Circus Without Circus was driven by encounters between circus artists and artists from other (performing) arts fields. 18 emerging artists were selected and paired as duos, with each duo containing 1 circus artist and one artist from the performing arts. The selected artists were invited to step out of their comfort zone, to let go of habits, give up control, and open up their artistic process in the encounter with another artist.

The duos benefited from two complementary programmes: a residency programme and an accompanying support programme (with artistic mentorship, feedback sessions, meetings and networking). In this way, there was both a heavy focus on artistic exchange / cross-boundary research, and on enabling artists to pursue sustainable careers.

Circus Without Circus was an intensive cooperation between 8 cultural organisations in 4 countries: Belgium, Denmark, France and Croatia. Each partner has a unique profile, but they all share a love of performing arts, contemporary circus and the cross-disciplinary connections between them.

## Open call – selection – residencies

Circus Without Circus launched its open call in November 2020. After less than a month we received almost 500 (!) applications. The partners of Circus Without Circus dove into the application forms and finally selected 18 emerging artists.

Main selection criteria were: living or primarily working in one of the partner countries (Belgium, France, Croatia or Denmark), being an emerging artist (on the verge of an international career), being 18+ and not currently studying, being able to prove authorship as an artist, being open-minded, curious and eager to work and experiment in an interdisciplinary way. Only individual artists could apply, duos or companies were not eligible.

The residencies were the core of Circus Without Circus. After the first series of 9 residencies (all in 2021) new duos were formed with the same 18 artists and a second series of residencies took place in 2022 and 2023.

18

# ARTISTS

2 x 9 duos

8 nationalities





**Bambou Monnet** <sup>FR</sup>

Trapeze & clowning  
Works and lives  
in France  
\*1991



**Dora Komenda** <sup>HR</sup>

Vertical rope,  
aerial hoop  
Works as an  
architect in Croatia  
\*1990



**Elise Bjerkelund Reine** <sup>NO</sup>

Aerials, contortion  
Works and lives  
in Denmark  
\*1987



**Joren De Cooman** <sup>B</sup>

Acrobatics,  
participatory art  
Works and lives  
in Belgium  
\*1986



**Nicolas Fraiseau** <sup>FR</sup>

Chinese pole  
Works and lives  
in France  
\*1996



**Noémie Deumié** <sup>FR</sup>

Aerials  
Works and lives  
in France  
\*1993



**Petra Najman** <sup>HR</sup>

Aerials  
Works and lives  
in Croatia and Italy  
\*1999



**Villads Bugge Bang** <sup>DK</sup>

Physical comedy,  
juggling  
Works and lives  
in Denmark  
\*1994



**Ward Mortier** <sup>B</sup>

Chinese pole,  
acrobatics  
Works and lives  
in Belgium  
\*1993

**CIRCUS**

**NON-CIRCUS**

**Cristina Gallizioli** <sup>IT</sup>

Architecture,  
performing arts  
Works and lives  
in Denmark  
\*1991



**Elliot Minogue-Stone** <sup>UK</sup>

Contemporary  
dance  
Works and lives  
in Belgium  
\*1996



**Harvey Bewley** <sup>UK</sup>

Industrial design  
Works and lives  
in Denmark  
\*1988



**Ilon Lodewijks** <sup>NL</sup>

Participatory art  
Works and lives  
in Denmark  
\*1986



**Ivan Svagusa** <sup>HR</sup>

Visual arts  
Works and lives  
in Croatia  
\*1982



**Kwinten Mordijck** <sup>B</sup>

Music composition  
Works and lives  
in Belgium  
\*1988



**Natacha Kierbel** <sup>FR</sup>

Contemporary  
dance  
Works and lives  
in France  
\*1995



**Natko Stipanicev** <sup>HR</sup>

Animated film  
Works and lives  
in Croatia and  
Germany  
\*1986



**Thalia Pigier** <sup>FR</sup>

Contemporary  
dance & theatre  
Works and lives  
in France  
\*1993





# RESIDENCIES

5 – 18  
April 2021

Split (HR)

Contortion &  
contemporary  
dance

# ELISE BJERKELUND REIVE NATACHA KIERBEL

EXTRACT  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

On the first experiment we built two mountains of clay around our feet to get us stuck in the floor. Later we tried to join our feet together and built a single mountain around them. We realized that when we were back bending, our head was disappearing and it looked like a lady without head. We played with this image of ladies stuck in the floor and losing their heads.

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RESIDENCIES



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It was my first residency in my own name and Elise has much more experience, because she's been creating shows for many years. So she was really chill actually. I remember that as soon I would get stressed about things or a bit nervous or a bit stuck in some way she'd be like, OK, now we can relax, maybe take a little walk, and then come back to it. — **Natasha**



What interests me in circus is that when you move you do it as a necessity – you have to hang to something in order not to fall, or because you have a goal, or because you're reaching towards something. That dynamic creates a particular sensation in the audience as well: playing with risk plays with the empathy of the audience.” — **Natacha**



EXTRACT  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

This research is an interrogation around the action of building, fails, constant change, rebuilding; like an infinite cycle were the arrival point doesn't exist.

The cardboard itself came because the residency was happening during Covid, and for me it connected to themes of construction and reconstruction, of falling down and falling apart, and the idea that you can have a lot of things, many objects, but still they don't help you and can't stand up together. You can't rest on them because they are empty, only air, and they are fake in some way – a kind of façade. — **Natacha**

ELISE  
BJERKELU/VD  
REI/VE  
NATACHA  
KIERBEL



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read the  
interview with  
Natacha

Read the  
interview  
with Elise

# NICOLAS FRAISEAU CRISTINA GALLIZIOLI



I knew that a Chinese pole exists, but I didn't know it by name. So when I heard I was matched with Nicolas, I did some research on his discipline. It's interesting that circus is often about using tools, just like architecture. — **Cristina**

When we met in Split we bought some things to work with – candles, wax and sand. We tried to build a structure with melted wax – which was not easy – and then we started to work with fire in various ways. We looked at the architectural space created by a light (even the tiny ones created from a candle), and the ways fire transforms material – how wax melts very quickly, but then reverts from liquid to solid in just a few minutes, allowing us to make these really rapid moulds and designs.

— **Nicolas**



The collaboration really worked with Cristina because she has this architectural meaning of life. We were staying in this very unusual house, and she took me on a tour through it asking me to feel the space, the energy of different distances and points of view... I loved it. It opened me to a new perspective. — **Nicolas**

We had some very interesting talks, trying to wrap things up and bring things together. Questions, most of the time, about what we were doing... Of course in 12 days you can't answer everything, but it's nice to have new questions to keep for further investigation.

— **Cristina**

We couldn't perform any fire stuff in the end – they wouldn't let us. After a week we'd smoked the building out too much. We were melting all this wax, which was made from paraffin, in an enclosed space. I remember that we were a bit intoxicated during the whole residency, which happens a lot when you work with fire. So in the end we presented some bits on Chinese pole, showed some videos of the fire stuff, and just talked about what we did. — **Nicolas**



“

Actually, with Cristina I found a friend. Someone who has a different sensibility. I think this is the best thing. But I can't say everything that's come out of it yet, because our collaboration isn't finished. — **Nicolas**

I think there is a similar approach between contemporary circus and contemporary architecture: questioning the disciplines and the traditions, trying to go on, trying to unbuild what's already known. I really liked the fact that Nico was questioning the tools of circus and building new tools himself. Changing the existing tools can be considered as a zero point: what happens if you throw them away and make new ones? — **Cristina**

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RESIDENCIES

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Our topics are surprisingly similar, for example the topic of exposure and vulnerability. As an architect I like to work with soft materials and make subtle and intimate structures instead of huge concrete buildings, Nicolas is working a lot on the human side of circus instead of being a hero who can do everything. From the moment you go for vulnerability, you go in relation with other things. — **Cristina**



NICOLAS  
FRAISEAU  
CRISTINA  
GALLIZIOLI



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Nicolas

Read the  
interview with  
Cristina

15-28  
June 2021

Mechelen (BE)

Physical  
comedy &  
contemporary  
dance

# VILLADS BUGGE BANG THALIA PIGIER

“

We had different opinions, different mindsets to go into things. But that realization came a bit late in the process: if our challenge lies not in working methods or art forms, maybe it's to be found in our view on aesthetics, our taste, our different approaches to what stage art is or can be. — **Villads**

It's about making decisions, being clear. One has to say: 'today, we're going to do this.' Afterwards the other one can say: 'that was shit, we'll never to that again. Let's move on.' We were not clear enough. But of course that takes time. — **Thalia**

“At first we wanted to work site specific in the town, but Mechelen didn't really facilitate outdoor creation — at least not for us: the city is too nice and too clean, there are not so many raw places. — **Villads**

RESIDENCIES



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Every day Villads came up with more and more objects. After a while I felt I had not enough space on stage, I wanted to get rid of everything. But that was the day before the performance, so we decided to stick with it. It was also our common interest, the objects, something we had decided to dive into.

The pressure of a public showing helps to set things in a way that it's not: 'today we do this, tomorrow we try that and then we go home'. It made a bit clearer what we were working on. And for me, at the end, it made also clearer what I want to do in my own work.

— **Thalia**



“

I was wondering during the process: are we doing it too easy for ourselves, where is the challenge? But I think at that moment we did what we could. — **Villads**

I believe that those two weeks research, everything we did, the talks we had, ... did influence the way I went back to my own work afterwards. Which I find is a really nice outcome. I don't know if this was the purpose of the project...

I feel like meeting Villads confirmed what I thought about circus: an open art form with a wide range. When I asked Villads what he did, he was like 'I do some juggling, I guess, but not so much anymore...' — **Thalia**

#### If you could the residency again, what would you do different?

**VILLADS** "Maybe start with a really nice workshop where you really need to work together and really get to know each other."

**THALIA** "You mean a non-artistic workshop, like running around the city and digging a hole?"

**VILLADS** "Yeah, digging a hole. Or sailing. Some challenge. Having a fight with each other, yeah, that would have been great. Starting with a fight."

VILLADS  
BUGGE BA/VG  
THALIA  
PIGIER



Read the full  
interview  
with Villads &  
Thalia

15-28  
June 2021

Ghent (BE)

Trapeze &  
animated film

# BAMBOU MONNET NATKO STIPAVICEV

EXTRACT  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

As in real film recording we had a lot of preparation time to find the right place for taking pictures, to test the possibilities, the lights, the costume, ... This is how it worked: Natko put a camera at the top of the theater, perpendicular to the ground. The camera was connected to his Ipad, so from the floor he could take picture by picture. We also used a specialized application for stop-motion, so we could sometimes go back to see all photos and check if it works. By a transparency system we could see the picture taken just before to get into the right position.

“

Natko also created a 3D trapezist character because our goal was to make a little catalog called 'New impossible tricks on a trapeze'. Unfortunately we realized how much time this was going to take for us. This wasn't really collaboration or teamwork, because it's Natko who has to spend hours on the computer to animate the character, while I have nothing to do.

— **Bambou**

One of the great things about animation is that it helps us to do something that is not possible in real life. In fancy words: we pushed the boundaries of the trapeze. We searched for the limits of it. We tried to do impossible tricks and go beyond reality. We went into the absurd of the trapeze. — **Natko**



“

It's true that I was a little bit a marionette – which I was OK with because it was for a project and for something we'd decided to make. But of course when you apply for a residency in a European laboratory of different art forms, you don't expect to spend four days lying on the ground.

– **Bambou**



I really felt relieved to go abroad outside my comfort zone. To go somewhere completely unknown and work with other people. I was really sad when the residency ended.

As an art form circus is very similar to dance. But I'm a little bit sceptic too; I'm not so interested in circus as a narrative form. Like I'm not interested in dance as a narrative form. The power lies in the physicality and pushing the boundaries of the human body. If you really want to narrate something, you can use a more suitable art form like theatre or film. – **Natko**

“



For a 4-minute movie

Natko has taken 2800 pictures

Bambou has spent 12 hours lying on the floor

BAMBOU  
MOV/NET  
NATKO  
STIPAVICEV



Check their logbook

Read the interview with Bambou

Read the interview with Natko

10-23  
August 2021

Copenhagen  
(DK)

Aerial silk  
& music  
composition

# NOÉMIE DEUMIÉ KWINTEN MORDIJCK

“

When Noémie and I talked initially, and I asked myself what I wanted to explore, I found it more interesting to work with composition, rather than playing live. In theatre I've done both live music and recorded music. But the difference for me is that with recorded music I get to be in the audience and then I can really know what's going on.”

— Kwinten

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RESIDENCIES



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I think Kwinten was really shocked when I said that I don't count time. He wanted me to do lots of repetitive movements on the silks, but the height was limiting – I usually work with eight metres and we had only four. So we worked for two days on listening to the music, and Kwinten helped me to create these kind of dynamic pops with the music, without strictly keeping time. I never worked like that before and it was really interesting. But after that we were a bit stuck, so we decided to mix in some improvisation, where I would do something repetitive, and add layers to that repetition in a way that followed the music. We made progress, but we were also really held back by my physical limits, because I can't do eight hours a day on silks. I'm used to working when I'm really tired. It's my work, it's the essence of circus. But it was still very painful for me – for the hands, the stomach, everything, to do two weeks of full days.” — **Noémie**

Things we like:

- Unison**
  - ↳ Tornado → slow turning sound
  - ↳ Tuned with slow turning music
- Contra Point**
  - ↳ Slow tornado
  - ↳ Shaking of Noémie's silks
- ↳ Small surrounding sound with segmented unorganized climbing
- ↳ Differences of speeds
- Resonances**
  - ↳ Making the sound "appear":
  - ↳ Going in the direct: Climb to speaker
  - ↳ Catapult: Quick jump and when jets

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touch the floor when we grab up

- ↳ Making the "issue implied" sounds bigger.
  - ↳ Recorded breathing noise to make this small preparation run in the space
  - ↳ Recorded shaking silks:
    - ↳ If they come right when i do them → Intense stormy
    - ↳ If they come after i shook them it gives a nice resonance and could lead to dramatical effects (lead, or lead from me)

---

**Spacialized Specifics**

- ↳ Separat' of the saxophone layers from top or bottom
  - ↳ Lead/shiny sound above gives impetus to lift/group

What I've felt with movement, and this was especially the case with Noémie, is that you have more freedom to start by asking, What kind of music do I want to make? You make something and then you test if it creates a reaction in the movement or fits it visually. I really liked that Noémie's movement was super slow. There are a lot of music composers at the moment who're really interested in church organs and the droney sounds you can get from these extremely long notes. I really like that sound and it's one of the roots I wanted to explore.” — **Kwinten**

I remember back when we did the residency it was a bit hard for me, because in this situation you are working with someone you don't know, in another country, in a language that is not your mother tongue. I was maybe intimidated, or afraid of being like the 'casting error' – a bad match. So I felt I didn't trust myself as a researcher enough. When Kwinten disagreed with my ideas, I was like, Ah, OK, let's do yours. It felt a bit like I was compromising to avoid discussion or conflict.” — **Noémie**



NOÉMIE  
DIEUMIE  
KWINTEN/  
MORDIJK



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview with  
Noémie

Read the  
interview with  
Kwinten

10-23  
August 2021

Copenhagen  
(DK)

Acrobatics  
& visual arts

# JOREN DE COOMAN IVAN SVAGUSA

“

Joren and I did some Zoom meetings beforehand to brainstorm ideas, and then when we met in Copenhagen, and had this really nice space at Metropolis, I was like a hungry dog. It was like: I'll do everything. — **Ivan**

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RESIDENCIES



“

I think we didn't realise coming into the residency how different the creation processes are in visual arts and circus. Performance has this immediacy, but in visual arts it takes much longer to get to something concrete. After that first day we realised we had to re-evaluate everything. We decided to be more spontaneous, and for the rest of the residency I think the nicest things we found came from leaving our plans behind and starting to improvise. — **Joren**

We did some site-specific experiments, and some of them really worked. We managed to get people involved in this game we played in the park, this game of push and pull with ropes. They were really into it, but somehow it led us nowhere. It was like, We captured them, we got them in our game. But it's just a game, you know? We don't want to play a game. — **Ivan**

**-PAINTER'S LOG-**  
-NOT CAPTAIN'S LOG-  
-CWC-2021-  
KORSEKHAHN

ON MY WAY BACK, MY PLANE  
CRASHED IN THE MOUNTAINS  
WELL, FOR LATE I HEARD  
FROM THE DRAWINGS



KATHLEEN BROUGHT ME  
AND INTRODUCED ME TO  
THE IDEA OF THE SPACE  
AND ALSO TO THE CITY.  
THE ROOMS WERE NOT  
JUST DRAWINGS, BUT  
THE IDEAS AND OUR WORK  
SO THAT I COULD LATER  
CONSIDER THAT I THOUGHT  
IT WAS FOR SOMEONE WHO  
DOESN'T LIKE A LOT OF  
TALKING TO ME'S RIGHT, YES, YES.



I DRAFT INTERIORS AND OPEN OVER  
A GREAT ART SPACE FROM T. JOREN AND I AM  
EXPLORING LOCATIONS IN THE CITY FOR  
OUR RESIDENCY



THE DAY DURING OF THE DOCUMENTATION  
OF THE DRAWINGS, WE CONSIDER THE TWO  
WAYS GOING TO WORK AND IF THINGS  
AT ONCE WE PROBLEMS WITH PAPER  
AND INK, PEOPLE WERE USED TO THE  
THE MORE WITH THE MORE REACTS IN THE  
CENTER, WE HAVE DISCUSSED AND  
WORKING IN THE PLANNING IN YOUR CITY  
WITH THE CITY ARCHITECTS LASTING LONG,  
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.



WORKING WITH UP AGAIN, WE'RE FIRST  
DRAWING UP JOREN IN YOUR CITY, WE DO  
THE EVERYDAY, EVERYDAY, EVERYDAY, WE DO  
WE DRAW IN A LARGE FLIGHT ON THE  
SHOULD WE TRY OUR IDEAS IN VARIOUS  
LOCATIONS OF THE CITY, WE'RE  
IT'S PUSH-PULL, IT DOES MEAN THAT IT'S  
USELESS, BUT CAPTURING AN INTERESTING  
WE WANT TO GO TO WITH US TO GET  
WORK IN PROGRESS, YES.



WORKING EXERCISES AND WITH FAST DRAWING,  
IT RELEASES ME, DRAWINGS ARE BECOMING MORE  
ELEGANT, I DRAW LARGE PRINTS WHILE  
JOREN AND I WERE IN THE CITY, IN THE  
MIDST OF THE EVENING, I DRAW LARGE  
FORMS, CIRCLES, GOING ON, WE'RE  
TOP TO BOTTOM, AND SO WE CAN



LARGE DORMIT DRAWING ON THE CORNER  
WITH ARCHITECTS PULLING THE SPACE  
WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS, GOOD THINGS  
THE SOLUTION LETS GO TO THE SPACE  
SHOULD BE A LARGE ON THE CORNER,  
WE DRAWING, ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS  
IT'S WORKING, YES, PEOPLE ARE BEING  
WORKING, BUT THEY ARE ARCHITECTS  
ARCHITECTS.



ONE AMERICAN  
TECHNIQUE IS GREAT  
THROUGH HE PLAYS  
ALL THE DRAWINGS  
OF PAINTED, BECAUSE  
HE DOES THROUGH THE  
MIND, CIRCLE, YES!  
WE TRY TO USE  
THE WAY TO  
CARRY IN OUR DRAWINGS,  
AND WE TRY TO  
CATCH THEM, NO MORE  
THAT.



WORKING WITH UP AGAIN, WE'RE FIRST  
DRAWING UP JOREN IN YOUR CITY, WE DO  
THE EVERYDAY, EVERYDAY, EVERYDAY, WE DO  
WE DRAW IN A LARGE FLIGHT ON THE  
SHOULD WE TRY OUR IDEAS IN VARIOUS  
LOCATIONS OF THE CITY, WE'RE  
IT'S PUSH-PULL, IT DOES MEAN THAT IT'S  
USELESS, BUT CAPTURING AN INTERESTING  
WE WANT TO GO TO WITH US TO GET  
WORK IN PROGRESS, YES.



WE ARE DOING A NEW DRAWING OF THE  
CORNER, IT'S COMPLICATED IN COMPLICATED  
IT'S MORE ARCHITECTURE, YES, IN THE CORNER  
DAYS WE DO MORE AND MORE DRAWINGS,  
SO MORE IDEAS ARE COMING UP, I THINK  
IN LITTLE TIME, I NEED TO DRAW MORE,  
AND SO MORE REACTION WITH JOREN.



“

Slowly we experimented more and more with drawing and movement – taking the brush and using it to capture the traces of our movements. Doing the warmups started out without any ambition, but it led us to something. And I ended up with a really huge number of drawings. All through the two weeks I was constantly drawing, drawing, drawing – as fast as I could.” — Ivan

There's something I really liked about all that material – the way it added a layer of reflection on top of the improvisations or exercises, or gave us something to look back on. Everything we'd done was still there. We could start working again the next day and literally work on top of what we did before. It's something funny that doesn't exist in live performance, where everything is gone the moment after you've done it.” — Joren

When we did our final presentation it was in a gallery space and we were surrounded by our drawings, and by all the experiments we'd done together – all of them about capturing movement and drawing while being dependent on one another. We stuck to that as a kind of rule in the residency: that we would lean on each other, and depend on each other. — Ivan



Joren taught me to just do what I was comfortable with – and that there are no mistakes. He'd say, There are no mistakes. You're not a circus artist, but if you're going to do it, then do it with some kind of calmness and presence. So, what can you do? While he was teaching me about body movement I was teaching him drawing. We crossed over into each other's worlds a little. Of course, he is comfortable in his media. And I have mine. But it's a different thing when you go into another artist's universe. — Ivan

I think you learn a lot working with somebody from such a different art field. One thing that sticks with me was the hours we worked and how constant it was. There was drawing going on all the time, even when we were eating; or sometimes we'd be with the other duo, at two in the morning, drawing in the studio, making music for fun, having some beers, and continuing the conversation of the day. — Joren



JOREN DE  
COOMAN  
IVAN  
SVAGUSA



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Joren

Read the  
interview  
with Ivan

10-23  
August 2021

Copenhagen  
(DK)

Aerials &  
contemporary  
dance

# PETRA NAJMAN

## ELLIOT MIVOQUE- STONE

Thursday  
**August 12**

On the bridge. No trapeze. What am I doing? What is my art? Maybe music will help my block – listening to RnB throwback hit 'Leave the Door Open' by Bruno Mars and Anderson.Paak, it feels a little incongruous in this space and this location.

Petra is swimming. She says the water is dirty, it looks very clear from the bridge but I take her word for.

Stuck, therefore; shopping. We've made friends with the woman running the flea market beneath the bridge. Isn't that what art's about, engaging with the community.

Saturday  
**August 14**

Tough weather. Danish summer-style. Wind / rain. I'm dressed in blue and turquoise. Baggy things. It's amazing what clothes can bring.

The bridge is still there. I should name the bridge really, will discuss with Petra, if I am to abuse it the way I'm doing I should at least know its name.

The great rusty structure is waiting for us. I will miss it when I'm gone, I'm growing increasingly attached to its powerful triangles and excessive width.



FRAGMENTS  
FROM  
ELLIOT'S  
DIARY

Sunday  
**August 15**

Molchat Doma is our soundtrack today. Belarusian industrial techno. Feels nice and bleak.

Elliot. Lost, exploring, enjoying exploration, falling. Soft body in hard structure.

Must develop falling scores... Different ways to fall / falling from beams / bridge / trapeze.

Rolling along the bridge, down the stairs. Slowly, gradually, no time. 'Are you okay or is it art?' a passer by asks. The sentence of the day.

End of the day, exhaustion hits. A day of frustration.

Tuesday  
**August 17**

What is embodiment?

So intangible, yet so real. You really perceive it when it's not there. Like something is missing. Embodied practice is so central to what I look for in art. If it's embodied – I'm interested. And how do you / I find this?

Today was the most frustrated I've been Overwhelmed by frustration.

FRAGMENTS  
FROM  
PETRA'S  
INTERVIEW

It was one huge experience. With strong moments, for example standing on the highest point of the bridge, in the wind and rain, suffering, being lost in our research, not knowing what to do next, nothing works, but you feel the air and the rain that's falling on you and you're just present with your emotions

I think we got a really difficult job as we are two performative artists; we are both playing with our bodies and we want to be seen, but we have different visions and methods. It's difficult to find something 'new' from this.

We are young artists, we're a complete mess. Sometimes I was really hysterical because of the uncertainty of what we were doing and how we were going to present it finally.

PETRA  
NAJMAN  
ELLIOT  
MIVOQUE-  
STOVE



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read their  
interview



13-26  
September  
2021

Reims (FR)

Aerials &  
participatory  
art

# DORA KOMENDA ILON LODEWIJKS

“

We made the decision to take the performer out of the centre, and to work with passers-by as our potential audience – rather than with an informed audience that comes to a certain place to see a show – with the overall goal of interrupting public space. That meant that in all our experimentation the focus was on materials, because if you want to remove the performer then something has to replace them and pull in attention. What you do becomes very installation-like. — **Ilon**

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RESIDENCIES



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It seemed very interesting to go a different way. But then the result of this decision was that I was unable to actually give anything to the duo, because I come with circus skills, and if you remove those... what's left? I was lost. — **Dora**

“

We ended up at working at the park's fountain, and looking back on it maybe that was because it had an in-built element of performance. The fountain had its own rhythm, and that meant we could add something very small to it – in our case some balloons that rose and fell on the jets of water – and already it became a kind of performance.

We researched lots of ways to make interventions in the park. It was actually already a very playful space, but in a very set, ordered way – like this is the place where you do table tennis, this is the workout spot, this a bench. Looking back on it, I think we should have worked at the fountain from that start. But perhaps that's the difficulty with this project. Are you at the residency to make some material? Are you researching an idea? Are you meeting another artist and just seeing where it goes? It is so free and open, which is a real luxury, but it's also its own kind of constraint. — **Ilon**



It was a very valuable residency and a very valuable exchange for me. I learned a lot, and one of the things that I learned is that actually my circus skills and my circus expression are very important for me. Which should have been obvious, but then I had to go through the experience to relearn this fact!

— **Dora**

”

DORA  
KOMEVDA  
ILOV  
LODEWIJKS



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Ilon

Read the  
interview  
with Dora

13-26  
September  
2021

Reims (FR)

Acrobatics  
& industrial  
design

# WARD MORTIER HARVEY BEWLEY

“

“The way I usually describe myself is as an object designer, but my work is like a combination of storytelling, engineering, materials research, and puppetry. The challenge is finding a context for the work, and that’s why I’ve been kind of drawn to the world of performance.” — **Harvey**

“I was like, ‘industrial designer... what does that mean?’ Straight away I was expecting that Harvey would propose we design a circus prop or piece of apparatus that I would move in relation to. So I was really happy when that wasn’t our path and Harvey shared a little about his approach — he was talking about his work with soft robotics and performing objects, and the idea of having empathy for an object that isn’t alive.” — **Ward**

24

RESIDENCIES

“

What I’d seen and loved in circus was a bunch of people daring to do something absolutely ridiculous — but doing it with such intent and with such passion that it becomes meaningful. — **Harvey**





“

Harvey had this idea of working with air and the transportation of air within a system that he wanted to look into. I thought it was very cool, but I was also asking myself, How do we make this physical? How do we make this circus? So that was a very interesting starting point to depart from, because it was really not so obvious where we were going to go.

Once we actually got to the residency I have the feeling that our question was not so much how can we make it circus, and we never really felt the pressure to 'circusify' anything. Instead, we departed much more from an exploration of who we were, our respective approaches to our disciplines – and how we go beyond them or maybe work at the edges of them. That was interesting and I think we found our own way to approach circus and design. — **Ward**

In a more classic workshop scenario you'd gather everything together and have a very well curated workshop for maybe half a day, but with this project you have to sort of drag it out over two weeks – keep it going, keep building on what you've got, and sustain the momentum and flow as well as you can. — **Harvey**



“

We were looking at how we would connect people across the space, on opposite sides of the ring. So we started to add more tubing, realised we needed valves to direct air on one route or another and have it travel in space. Then we also started to want to scale it – make it bigger. We went to a carnival store and bought huge balloons, got bigger tubes, an air mattress, found a yoga ball so you can bounce up and down on it, to push the air. We got hand pumps the audience could use to blow air into the system. So in this way, it became physical. – **Ward**



”

It led to some unplanned audience participation that worked really well. Ward is amazing at that – he’s so comfortable improvising with an audience. At one moment we had this kid on a yoga ball that was connected to a balloon that another person was holding up in front of them – and bouncing on the ball would blow air into and inflate the balloon more. We knew that it was fine, but of course the person holding the balloon feels like it’s going to blow up in their face – and the audience expects that too – and the kid is just bouncing up and down on the yoga ball, oblivious. It was a really beautiful moment – and very circus-y in its way, as everybody has an understanding of what failure is, which is the balloon bursting.” – **Harvey**

WARD  
MORTIER  
HARVEY  
BEWLEY



Check  
out their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Ward

Read the  
interview  
with Harvey

19-30  
June 2022

Ghent (BE)

Aerials &  
contemporary  
dance

# PETRA NAJMAN NATACHA KIERBEL

“

We decided to work around the theme of housework and of these 19th century images of the *blanchisseuse* (laundress) in France. From there we went into all the aspects and objects of housework – brooms, flour, buckets, stuff like that. We set out to find new ways to use these things and ways to create an environment with them.

At the beginning we had one trapeze and then made a second with a broom, a kind of fake trapeze which would be much more fragile. Then very quickly we put away the real trapeze and worked only with the broom trapeze, which was too fragile to do crazy stuff on it. So what we did was more related to the floor. We also suspended a second broom, hanging from a rope from the ceiling, which we could pull on and make swing in the space. So I guess it was more about the objects than the circus. — **Natasha**

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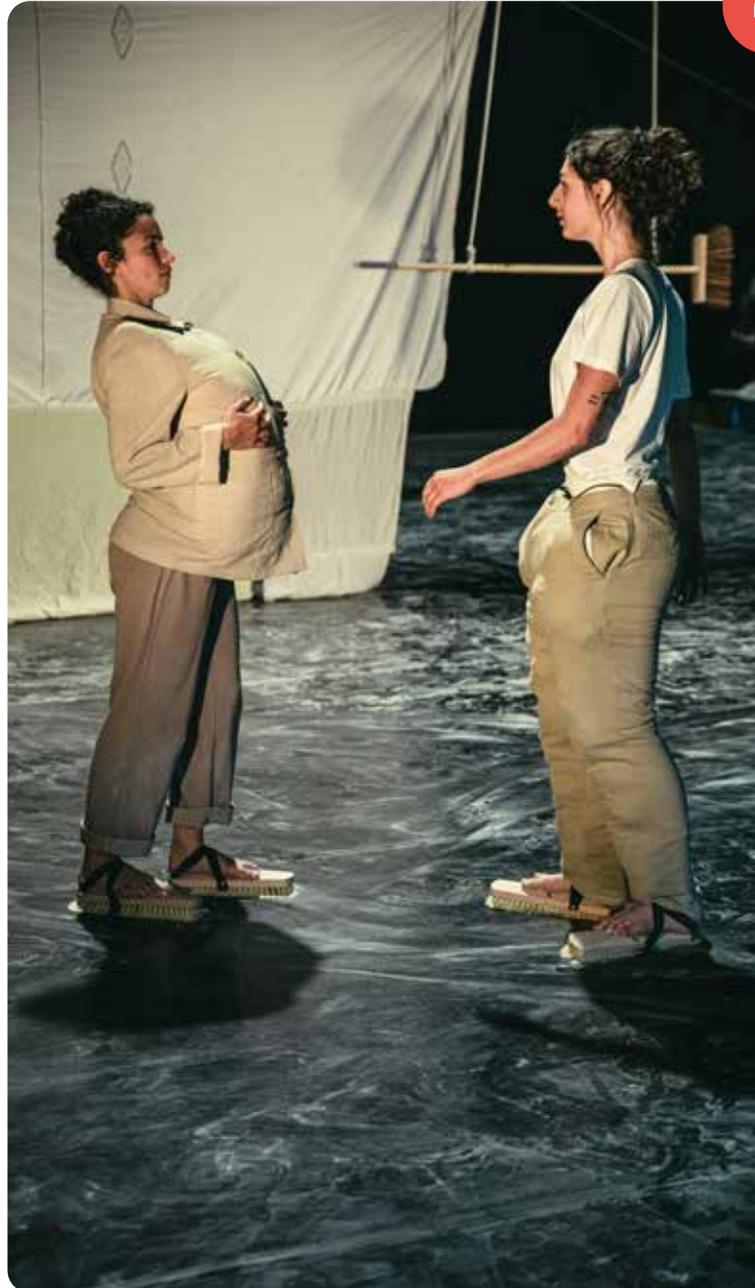
RESIDENCIES





“

I think the dancers are overwhelmed by the spectacular side of circus. But I have to say: don't be eaten by circus! Dance is also very spectacular, but in another way. Circus is about incredible tricks, but it lacks emotion. Don't be eaten by circus.” – **Petra**



“

When I'm doing circus there is always a risk. If I don't concentrate I can fall down and hurt myself. In my technique I have to be present because of the risk. When I'm dancing I'm present in another way. That's something I discovered during the residencies and I will definitely do it more in the future. – **Petra**

What interests me in circus is that when you move you do it as a necessity – you have to hang to something in order not to fall, or because you have a goal, or because you're reaching towards something. That dynamic creates a particular sensation in the audience as well: playing with risk plays with the empathy of the audience. – **Natacha**

PETRA  
VAJMAN  
NATACHA  
KIERBEL



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview with  
Petra

Read the  
interview with  
Natacha

# DORA KOMENDA CRISTINA GALLIZIOLI

“

We were happy about the match between the two of us: Dora has two parallel artistic directions, being an aerialist and an architect, and I integrate performance in my architectural artistic practice. — **Cristina**

We actually had different wishes when we talked in the very beginning. What I said, based on the first residency, was that it was very, very important for me to use circus, and that I definitely didn't want to work in public space. And Cristina said the

opposite. Like she really, really wanted to explore public space, and she wanted to perform, which meant we needed to find some kind of common ground for us both to perform in – like a frame that would fit both of us in it. — **Dora**

## EXTRACTS FROM THEIR LOGBOOK

### Questions after day 1

What is our relationship on stage?

We have two performers where one is using circus skills and the other one is not. Is circus technique inevitably taking over all the attention, especially aerial with such a strong vertical trajectory?

How can we perform together and make peace with this difference?

Do we each stay in our own medium or do we skip circus and do things that we can both do equally?

### Day 3

There is a misunderstanding with the work space, we are moving to another space with no rigging – so no aerials. Dora has no infrastructure to do her discipline, but it's quite important for her and to continue the work we started. It's quite demotivating but there will probably be no more aerial techniques used in this collaboration. Dora is asking herself – am I able to work if I don't have a circus discipline involved? What can I give to this collaboration if I don't have the possibility to work in my medium? It was supposed to be a collaboration between a circus artist and an architect, not between two architects.



EXTRACTS  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

**Day 6**

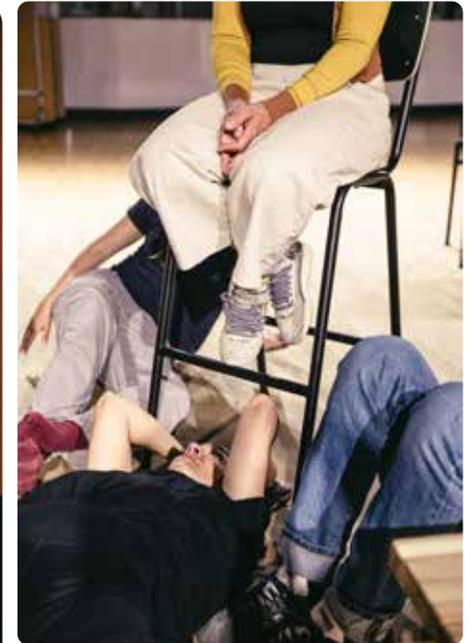
We come up with a simple exercise on an outdoor playground we can both do with slings and show him [Alexander Vantournhout] the concept. Understanding the need to remove the burden of dependence on circus equipment, Alex pushes our idea further and we use the same exercise but this time without any extra objects, just improvised movement in the existing playground, however we want to express. We both discover our own ways to move around it. In this moment, we bridge the skills/no skills gap between us and all three of us take turns, improvising for the other two with the first goal of the first day: playing with closeness and placing the spectator in unusual positions to observe, for example right below the performer or face to face, carefully testing the level of what is comfortable for a performer and observer equally.

**Day 12**

On the last day we have a final presentation for a small audience. Even though we both never worked with participation concepts, and Cristina never performed in a movement setting, it works. The audience responds to our propositions.

**We feel like we created a feeling of togetherness.**

The talk afterwards is rewarding and full of important reflections. We would like to develop this project further beyond the CWC project, and keep contact with our mentor Marieke De Muynck. We even give a name to this project – *Take a place*.



DORA  
KOMEVDA  
CRISTINA  
GALLIZIOLI



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Cristina

Read the  
interview  
with Dora

16-29  
August 2022

Odense (DK)

Acrobatics &  
contemporary  
dance

# JOREN DE COOMAN THALIA PIGIER

## EXTRACT FROM THEIR LOGBOOK

### First day

We meet our new best friend for the next week: the genie lift. Our coach Rune explains how it works and shows us around Dynamo Workspace. It's a treasure trove full with old scenography's, costumes, rigging points and so much more.

### Next few days

We go up and down, up and down, up and down, ... Hanging and rehangings takes a lot of time. Looking for nice things to hang is nice, but we get lost in all the unique things we find, not necessarily useful for our research.

Finally we have the feeling we have a nice setup, the objects just need to be heavier. We fill the helmets with sand, but Thalia's getting concerned. Joren is attracted to the risk and danger of the objects, Thalia is repelled by them.



EXTRACT  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

**Time for a break**

After a week of struggle and days spent on the genie, we need a break. Rune takes us to a little magic festival on a small and beautiful island.

**We find fun**

Back at Dynamo we decide we need a plant. Thalia's eyes sparkle when we get one. This is what she missed all the time.

We also find a way to climb in the ropes. With wooden beams we start to be able to move in a 3D space (50 cm from the ground; we keep it safe). We also make a little treehouse.

Rune gives us the great idea to buy some quick release systems so we can have all the helmets swinging around with just one pull of a string. We spend a whole day building the system just to see it fail and make a mess.

Oh, and we also break our friend the genie...



JOREN DE  
COOMAN  
THALIA  
PIGIER



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Joren

Read the  
interview  
with Thalia

19-30  
September  
2022

Reims (FR)

Aerial rope/  
contortionism  
& visual arts

ELISE  
BJERKELUND  
REIVE  
IVAN  
SVAGUSA

When we got to Reims we found that the circular space, which was also a pretty small one, wasn't available, and we had to move instead into this huge theatre space with raked audience seating going up super high. I was really nervous, and slightly angry. Like, What am I gonna do now?

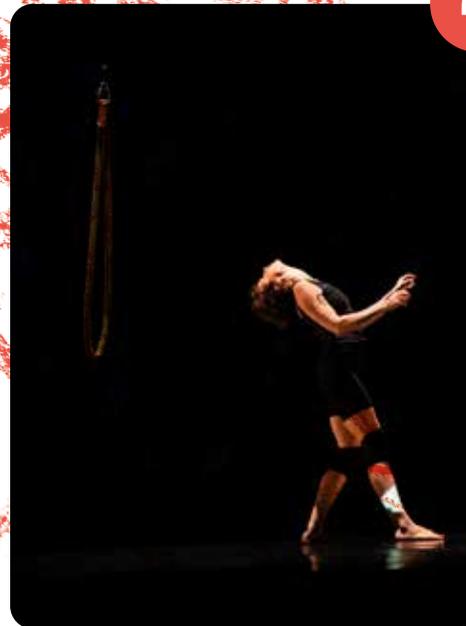


It's a completely different space. I haven't thought about it at all. Just the two of us on this big stage, and the audience towering over us. I had this feeling the space would eat us.

The height of the space was really great; we had these huge tall curtains behind us. I was looking at Elise on stage, this small figure, and these enormous black curtains behind her, and I realised it would be cool if I could draw onto those, and on top of Elise to capture her movement. So we started working with

a projector and digital drawing, and I began to feel a little bit more secure. I think it connected back to graffiti and street art. When I started making these big white drawings on the curtains and onto Elise it was like, Okay, now we're doing something. The space isn't going to eat us. — Ivan





In the end, our final presentation lasted 40 minutes. We did 20 minutes and then we switched places. Elise takes up the painting, and I do these movements with the rope, a kind of dance with it. Elise taught me how to do it and not be superficial with the movement, how to be more present. It showed me I could be comfortable performing on stage, in front of a big audience – even confident doing it. I really loved it.

Looking back on it, the problems we had switching spaces led us to different solutions. Again, I think it's all about doing the work. You can ask yourself what you're going to do, and think about that, but then do something at the same time – jump into it. — **Ivan**

“

We did this exercise where Ivan would draw a kind of map to set a path, and then I'd do improvised dance or some kind of movement based on these lines. I've used that technique again since – imagining the lines I make in the space with my movement. It's given me a wider focus on the whole shape of a movement. It's quite a direct way of getting inspiration – this very fluent way of being in the lines. — **Elise**

ELISE  
BJERKELU/VD  
REI/VE  
IVAN/  
SVAGUSA



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Elise

Read the  
interview  
with Ivan

19-30  
September  
2022

Reims (FR)

Physical  
comedy  
& music  
composition

# VILLADS BUGGE BANG KWINTEN/ MORDIJCK

WHATSAPP  
MESSAGES  
DURING THEIR  
RESIDENCY



16:24, 22-09-2022

**Kwinten**

Hey Villads, very happy you don't have corona. Now you just need to rest to make sure you get better. I've been a bit stuck all day. I find it difficult to find something we are both enthusiastic about. I feel that there's a big difference

in what we like about music. I've developed a specific taste both in music and in how the music (I make) should relate to / be used in performances or other media. And of course you have your own taste and I don't see an overlap (yet?). We've touched some interesting points, but when we dig deeper into an interesting point, I feel like it gets less interesting to me, because with your own creative world, ideas and energy (which are great!) you move it away from what I found interesting about it. For example catching sounds was something really subtle I liked, while you like it more when it's clear and obvious and synchronized. We also keep coming back to the same. For me it's not very interesting to research how different moods of music make a video something different. This is something I do all the time in my work. I didn't mind going with the flow and I especially don't want to stop your creative flow, you have crazy ideas, but I can't really relate to them. I would like to do something that I can be enthusiastic about. That we both can be enthusiastic about. I've been thinking all day what this could be, looking at our notes, all the video's we shared, but I'm a bit stuck.

I also feel like sometimes the communication (both in a foreign language) isn't going very well, so you can totally correct me if I've misunderstood things.

I thought maybe writing this down could help. Let's talk more later after you've rested some more.

16:25, 22-09-2022

**Kwinten**

Of course this is not like a big problem. Just something we have to think about

18:44, 22-09-2022

**Villads**

Hey Kwinten, thanks for writing this so clearly! I understand you.

I feel like I've already learned new things about how to work with music & live performance, by working with you. And I think our collaboration worked well, fx. when we worked on the tung dance sequence, where your idea was to stay with something, and repeat something "funny" that could transform into another feeling. I wouldn't at least have been going that direction myself, without your input. – But could it be that I went away from your first idea for this?

Let me know if so. I think we should definitely try the more subtle version of catching the sounds, which we also talked about. I have been thinking of what this project is about today, and was reading this on the Circus Without Circus website:

"The overall aim is to facilitate cross-boundary research and to develop and explore cross-disciplinary working

methods. The selected artists are invited to step out of their comfort zone, to let go of habits, give up control, and open up their artistic process in the encounter with another artist."

I think we could see this project as scientists, that work with new methods and explore why something works and why something doesn't. Of course it's great if we can be enthusiastic about it, but maybe we need to open up for each other's world & methods, and be lost for some time and be open for new & great things that we can't imagine, could appear in the meeting of our different mindset?

Fx. when you talk about your "specific taste both in music and in how the music (I make) should relate to / be used in performances or other media." – I'm not totally sure what that is – so it would be great if you could maybe introduce more of your thoughts / methods of that? And I would love to do that as well with my work & experienced background.

Not totally sure how to do it. Might need some preparation. Maybe we should just be better at trying each other's ideas one after each other? Or having a day each where we decide what to do?

18:45, 22-09-2022

**Villads**

and sorry for the late answer, had to rest. which was great. see you soon.



As the end of the residency and the final showing drew closer, it made us change our way of working. We'd been stuck in a research vibe and in (not) finding common ground, but the idea of working towards a performance helped us make things more concrete and made it easier to work. There was less talking and thinking, more doing and deciding, which helped a lot for us. We

ended up making a sort of coherent performance which included juggling and making music with microphones with audio-effects on them, testing Villads' physical limits by letting the music decide how long he should be doing a certain movement, visualising sound by 'catching' specific melodies/instruments, surprising audio-effects on objects, and a poetic ending with a metal plate. — **Kwinten**



VILLADS  
BUGGE BÅVG  
KWINTEN  
MORDIJCK



[Check their logbook](#)

[Read the interview with Kwinten](#)

[Read the interview with Villads](#)

31 October –  
13 November  
2022

Odense (DK)

Chinese pole &  
animation film

# NICOLAS FRAISEAU NATKO STIPANICEV

“

We spoke beforehand and tried to find the things we had in common, but even at the start it was difficult to connect. He's a filmmaker, working with computer software, and also making experimental music. So his idea for the residency was to work with cell phones, attaching them to my body, on the wrists, the legs, and connecting them via Bluetooth so that as I moved it would change the music he was making on the computer. We did try this for a few days but it didn't match for me. We found some ways to work together and made a film in the end. For that we spent two days filming movement clips and then after my movement was overlaid on other films and animation. We also created a silly dance choreography to 'Histoire d'1 soir' by bibi flash and dressed up like marines with fur to have some fun! We also did some impro piano with Chinese pole. — **Nicolas**

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RESIDENCIES



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The process of creating the film was intensive, but the outcome was a testament to the power of collaboration and the benefits of having a space and time dedicated to artistic expression. Our poetic animated film showcases the beauty of Odense and its natural surroundings, and it is a fitting tribute to the surroundings that inspired us. — **Natko**

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RESIDENCIES



“

What I think now is that you need to find some calm, some focus, and have a clear mind to meet whatever comes up – and that’s also about accepting that what you do can be really good, or it can be a failure. So I learned that you always need to get anchored, and that I should be less fixed on my ideas or ways of approaching a collaboration. — **Nicolas**



NICOLAS  
FRAISEAU  
NATKO  
STIPAMICEV



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Nicolas

Read the  
interview  
with Natko

5-18 April  
2023

Split (HR)

Trapeze &  
contemporary  
dance

# BAMBOU MONNET ELLIOT MIVOQUE- STONE

EXTRACTS  
FROM THEIR  
LOGBOOK

From the beginning we talked a lot about our disciplines, our relationship to the practice, to our bodies, to research, to the artistic, etc. But also about our relationship with the imposter syndrome, with our fear of not being good enough in our discipline, with our fear of not being up to the task. To the feeling of being unworthy. We had this in common, the feeling of not corresponding to the expectations of the collective imagination of our disciplines.

It's been like thirty years that dance and circus worked together, and it's a very common mix. When we met each other, the first thing we noticed is the fact that we are very similar. Our lives, our art, our practice, are very similar.

What can we do with these two disciplines, is innovation still possible? After these pessimistic thoughts and given this context, the right question could be: What can *we* (Eliott & Bambou) do? How does *our* circus and dance collaborate?



What is the legacy we carry behind us?

## DANCE

Beauty! You have to be beautiful. Ugly dancers don't exist! There's this pressure to make beautiful things – movement, music and of course people.

Grand theatrical frontal spaces. We're here to see a spectacle. The audience-performer relationship is clear and unchanging.

Technical prowess / virtuosity – showing off a practiced skill, something that most people cannot do. The nature of the skill can be less clear (unlike circus) but there's a sense of prowess nonetheless.

## CIRCUS

The risk (of dying): Initially that is what is in play: being high up, without protection & do the famous "salto mortale". The fact is I (Bambo) never knew how to do a salto, I'm very afraid of dying, and as a trapeze artist I have vertigo, which is really inconvenient...

The circular / ring architecture: Traditionally the circus takes place under a big top, which is in circular. For some circus purists, circus in a frontal space is not circus anymore.

Physical prowess / extraordinary capacities / physical particularities: In circus you can see the most flexible person in the world, the strongest person in the world. AND we come (basically) to the circus to see something extraordinary.



Alongside the talking we tried different physical things, like some choreography around jumping – Elliot jumping as a dancer and me jumping up to grasp the trapeze bar. But never with any connection to our conversations. It was a constant question for us: how to put these discussions into the body? How to translate something cerebral into the body? We never managed it. — **Bambou**



We're both physical performers but often the two realms (body and intellect) struggle to connect. These jumps, although not especially linked to our conversations, do provide a clear thread between our art forms. It also just looks interesting, maybe that's enough! — **Elliot**

This is the most important question in my life: what is circus for me. Because I want to defend a different circus, but when people ask me what is this 'different circus', I have to say I don't know. I can define the legacy of circus, and I love it, but I don't fit in the collective imagination of an audience. It is terrible because I don't know what kind of circus I am. — **Bambou**

BAMBOU  
MON/VET  
ELLIOT  
MIVOQUE-  
STOVE



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Bambou

Read the  
interview  
with Elliot

5-18 April  
2023

Split (HR)

Acrobatics/  
parkour &  
participatory  
art

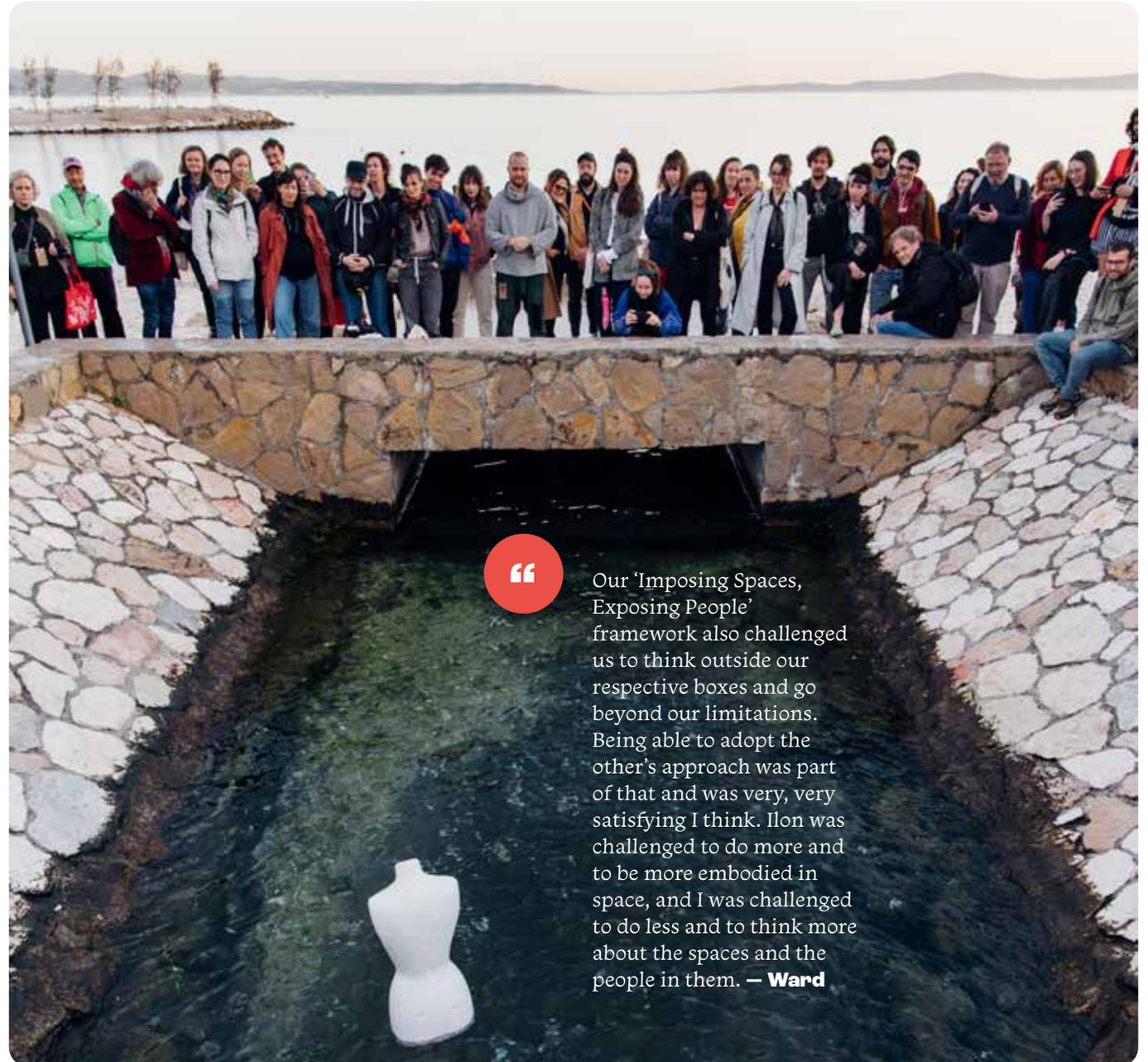
# WARD MORTIER ILON LODEWIJKS

“

Ward had seen the presentation Dora and I had done at the fountain in Reims. He was very drawn to the idea that a place can set a rhythm which a performer can work to. From that he came up with this phrase ‘Imposing Spaces, Exposing People’ – which means that a space imposes a certain rhythm on your work and then the work can expose certain details about the people in that space. He wanted to see how this played out with other kinds of spaces. — **Ilon**

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RESIDENCIES



“

Our ‘Imposing Spaces, Exposing People’ framework also challenged us to think outside our respective boxes and go beyond our limitations. Being able to adopt the other’s approach was part of that and was very, very satisfying I think. Ilon was challenged to do more and to be more embodied in space, and I was challenged to do less and to think more about the spaces and the people in them. — **Ward**

“

We went walking through the city scanning for good places. Immediately, it became very clear that Ward has such an embodied approach. He'll just start testing things straight away – putting his weight on a wall to see if it's steady enough to climb and jump on, tapping things, shaking things. I followed along and copied him with all the tapping and testing.

It was, super interesting. But of course at some point the question became: What can I do? Ward is very at home performing in public space and he has this circus vocabulary ready to use. So I felt a little bit like, Oof, what can I add here?

As the residency went on, we kind of agreed that I had to do more and Ward had to do less, in whatever space we found. We would set an alarm and start walking around and then wherever the alarm went off – that was our space to work with. — **Ilon**

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RESIDENCIES



“

It was really a nice feeling for me to realise you can also make interesting stuff without it being spectacular. Less is more sometimes – it's quite a good lesson for me. — **Ward**

WARD  
MORTIER  
ILON  
LODEWIJKS



Check their  
logbook

Read the  
interview  
with Ward

Read the  
interview  
with Ilon

5-18 April  
2023

Split (HR)

Aerial silk  
& industrial  
design

# NOÉMIE DEUMIE HARVEY BEWLEY

“

Our big, pure ideas died fairly early on, but from the ashes of those burned ideas came some new, Frankenstein ideas – ones that were more hacked together, more unpredictable, and more intriguing.  
– Harvey

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RESIDENCIES



“

For me the way to do Circus Without Circus is to have a lot of random experiments and then take the one thing that is relevant to both of you... So one thing we tried on the first day was using all these gymnastic rings that were hung up in the space. We ran through fishing line, attached to rope, attached to bigger rope, attached to sewn together curtains. For me, it was like, Wow, this is something that I could never have done by myself, or even thought of. It was the perfect combination between my apparatus, my discipline, and my wishes of having the apparatus travel within the space. It used my circus apparatus and Harvey's knowledge of fishing and his design precision – so it was a meeting of our two disciplines.— Noémie

We wanted to avoid this situation: me acting as more of a consultant, where we have an idea and then I can do it but I have to sit down for a week to do some proper engineering drawings, and then access the right facilities to actually make something. So instead we tried things out and then if they didn't work would just say, OK, but what did work with that? And then go further in that direction. So there was a lot of serendipity.— Harvey

I can't throw away an idea if I haven't tried it seven times first. Because in circus it never works the first time. It was a bit challenging for me to explain this – that even if it shouldn't work I still needed to experiment with it, that to find the potential in an idea we have to do it over and over, and that when you work like that often it will lead to something you never could have imagined beforehand. In the end, we did rehearse some things over and over, and we found tiny details that we hadn't imagined. — **Noémie**

A funny thing about this project is that there's no expectations for the residencies, but then when you have to show something to an audience at the end suddenly it really matters. It changes a lot. In Split it was in a circus tent with like 150 people piled in. We had this delicate thing with all this fishing line and it's not like if something went wrong we'd be able to just improvise. If something went wrong, we'd have to just switch the lights back on and that'd be it. Luckily it all went quite well. It was much more a show than the first residency, and a very nerve-wracking experience. — **Harvey**



“

For me, silks have to be updated in order to continue to reinvent circus. And artistically I think we arrived at something that could be really interesting to develop. I imagine the objects moving all around the surroundings of the tent, going out and coming back in again. So the movement that I searched for can also be made by the apparatus, not the public. — **Noémie**





Even if it's very convenient to come up with definitions and generalisations in trying to understand this world, actually the cool thing about circus is that you can't define it. If you try and put it in a box, it will always jump out. – **Harvey**



#### LIST OF THE MATERIALS THAT WE HAD AND USED

- 1 pistacchio silks, 28 meters
- 1 eggshell silks, 10 meters
- 2 devices to hang them in the space
- 9 carabiniers
- 1 roll of pink thread
- 1 roll of black fishing line
- 1 roll of transparent fishing line
- 1 bigroll of white paper
- 50 sheets of pink paper
- 1 drill
- 1 box of elastic bands
- 1 box of green phosphorescent balls to mark the fishing line
- 6 wooden gymnastic rings
- 5 slings
- 3 old black theater curtains
- 1 sewing machine
- 3 rolls of sewing thread: pink black and white
- Openable thin iron rings: 3 big ones, 3 little ones
- 1 roll of black scotch
- 5 Heat shrink sheaths
- 10 fishing swivels
- 1 bloc of post-its
- 2 DI 1 microphone
- 1 chair
- 1 laptop with a lot of music for inspiration

NOÉMIE  
DEUMIE  
HARVEY  
BEWLEY



Check their logbook

Read the interview with Noémie

Read the interview with Harvey



Our big, pure ideas died fairly early on, but from the ashes of those burned ideas came some new, Frankenstein ideas – ones that were more hacked together, more unpredictable, and more intriguing.

HARVEY BEWLEY

participant  
in Circus  
Without Circus

# UNEXPECTED RESULTS

Circus Without Circus was all about artistic development and community building for the participants – but also for the partner organisations. We all enjoyed our meetings, experienced great collaborations, and often had the feeling that we were witnessing magic unfold. But besides these intangible benefits, the project has also led to several more concrete outcomes.

**Circus Without Circus was one big social experiment**

**It was a challenging and enriching project that pushed the limits of the artists**

**We screwed things up but it was great**

Some of the reactions of the participants at the final evaluation meeting in Split, Croatia

## Take a place

Cristina Gallizioli & Dora Komenda are continuing the research they did as a duo for Circus Without Circus. Their interactive participatory performance is called *Take a place* and is co-produced by Cirkus Kolektiv and AIDEL architecture. As a third performing collaborator they engaged Natacha Kierbel, also a CWC participant.

## Cardboard

In their CWC residency Natacha Kierbel & Elise Bjerkelund Reine experimented with cardboard boxes. Natacha is continuing this research and making it into a full-length show. Due to agenda issues Elise isn't able to collaborate as an artist, but she will be working behind the scenes as an outside eye. The French circus artist/dancer Christine Daigle will step in to take her place. *Cardboard* is produced by Les Noctambules – Lieu de fabrique.

## Animafest

The short movie that Natko Stipanicev & Nicolas Fraiseau made during their CWC residency has been selected for Animafest, an important world festival of animated film in Zagreb (5-10 June 2023).

## Heavy Heads

Thalia Pigier continues the research she did in her residency with Joren De Cooman. It's called 'Heavy Heads' and she has applied for Circusnext 2024 with it.

## WEB

For the creation of his new participatory solo performance *WEB* (premiere: December 2023), Joren De Cooman is collaborating with Ilon Lodewijks. They met thanks to Circus Without Circus.

## Kitt Johnson

When the renowned Danish choreographer Kitt Johnson saw the video of the CWC residency of Villads Bugge Bang and Thalia Pigier, she instantly selected them for one of her dance projects.

## Fire project

Nicolas Fraiseau is creating a new show working with fire, and asked Cristina Gallizioli to be his outside eye. In their CWC residency they also worked with fire. "Our collaboration isn't finished. Cristina is sort of my exterior, architectural brain. She's really making me think differently about things."

## Crow without a nest

Ivan Svagusa & Petra Najman met thanks to Circus Without Circus. They got along very well and are now creating an interdisciplinary site-specific project called *Crow without a nest*. Beyond this, Ivan (a visual artist) has dived headlong into the circus: "right now I have at least three projects combining what I do with contemporary circus".

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## for future interdisciplinary research projects

“

Circus Without Circus was a unique process that led to a unique research result at the end, depending on the artistic universes, circus specialities, and the different layers of connection between the participants. It can bring out something unseen, something that has never been done before, and push the boundaries of circus and research. But getting there is really challenging.”

**Aerialist Noémie Deumié**  
participant in CWC

### Art forms

The overall aim of Circus Without Circus was to facilitate cross-boundary research and to develop and explore cross-disciplinary working methods. Quite early in the project it became clear that two art forms were perhaps too similar: dance and circus. Bambou Monnet puts it this way: “These days circus and dance are very, very close. When I was at school I had lots of dance classes, and when Elliot was at dance school he had circus and acrobatics classes.” 3 of the 9 non-circus artists in Circus Without Circus were contemporary dancers, so maybe that was a bit too much.

On the other hand, some art forms might be too far away from each other to have an ‘effective’ collaboration in only two weeks. This was especially true for those art forms that need lots of time to produce a result, like animated film. Animator and filmmaker Natko Stipanicev: “We got some very crazy experimental results – it opened huge possibilities to explore further. But we stopped because it wasn’t a real collaboration. Bambou had to do her tricks and the rest of the process was for me, quite dull work behind the computer, with Bambou sitting next to me and just watching what I did, so it wasn’t fun at all.”

### Mentorship: yes and no

For each duo we looked for an artistic mentor, someone who followed their process and could give advice when needed. We have to say that this worked better on paper than in real life. First of all, it wasn’t easy to find a matching mentor who was available at the right time. Secondly, it’s already a blind date between the two participants; adding another unknown person makes it even more intense. Thirdly, the artistic mentor – being more experienced – could (unconsciously) impose his or her artistic vision on the duo.

So we discovered that these duos don’t really need an artistic mentor. What they do need is someone who listens (e.g. a dramaturg), a ‘safe person’ when the collaboration isn’t working out, a knowledgeable guide to take them on an expedition through the city, a person to take them to a bar or theatre in the evenings.

After the first series of 9 residencies we began to search for mentors in our own CWC group. That worked really well: they already knew each other, they knew the project and its difficulties, and they knew from their own experience what a good mentor should or shouldn’t do.

### Start with a laboratory

Due to the pandemic we weren’t able to start the project with a big, live meeting to get to know each other, which was a great pity. But even without covid we would only have had a meeting, not a real laboratory. This is something that came out of the final evaluation: a desire to start the project with a lab experience. This would provide not only an opportunity to meet each other but also to dive deeper into key questions and activities:

- What is artistic research, what can it be? Methodology, tools, etc.
- What if your duo doesn't match; how can you make it work?
- How to present your work?
- Physical workshops.
- Etc.

In an ideal world the duos would be formed *after* this laboratory. Of course this all depends on the availability of the participants.

### Sharing moments: the more the better

"Sharing with the other artists of CWC was the most interesting part of the project," someone said at the final evaluation. So it's all about making sharing possible:

- The work format of a duo is perfect for artistic research, but for all the moments outside the research it's far too intense when it's just the two of you. So, residencies need to overlap in time and place: at least 2 duos should be present at the same time in the same city.
- Shared accommodation for all the duos in a residency.
- Organise talks after each presentation.
- Organise meetings and events to which all participants (including the organising partners) are invited. Have a meal together, go on a walk, take an anti-tourist city tour, etc.

### Public presentations: yes and no

Our project had two sorts of presentations: the classic end-of-residency presentations for a limited audience (e.g. people from the residency space and invited professionals) followed by a talk, and bigger public presentations at existing events like a festival. Although there was a lot of stress around the presentations, and even if having to show material inherently clashes with the idea of 'free experimental research', nobody questioned the usefulness of these sharing moments.

Important lessons learned:

- It's good to end a residency with an 'open studio' for a limited audience.
- It's not a good idea to end a residency with a 'big' public presentation. The preparation takes up too much of the research time and causes too much stress.
- The bigger public presentations are important – it's the perfect time for those interested (e.g. the other participants of CWC) to see the results – but they should be organised on separate occasions and the artists need enough preparation days. The question is if they should be open to outside audiences or not.
- After-presentation talks are always interesting. Provide enough time for them.

### Documentation & Dissemination of the results

In our project the documentation of the research depended mostly on the artists themselves: we asked them to keep a logbook of their residencies. Next to that the hosting organisation often engaged a photographer or filmmaker to come in and capture the research in images.

As it was a unique project, with hours of research behind closed doors, it would have been interesting to have a third person in the residencies as a fly on the wall, someone who could have documented the whole process (take notes, film stuff, take pictures). This third person could also have acted as a 'mirror' for the duo, a kind of passive dramaturg. This way the documentation could have been really rich and a great source for future (artistic) research.

For the dissemination of the results we think it could be interesting to have one specific organisation in the project whose only responsibility is to communicate and disseminate all the results.

### Fair pay

For the partners of Circus Without Circus, fair pay was an important issue. All artists were paid properly both for the residencies (170 euros per day) and – if on a different occasion – for the presentation (200 euros per day). They also received per diems for each working day. Accommodation and travel was – of course – paid by the organisers. We highly recommend this basic commitment for all future projects where artists are involved. A central finance person, or accountant, to help the artists with all financial issues could also be useful.

# THE PARTNERSHIP

## Main partners



### Circuscentrum (project leader)<sup>BE</sup>

Circuscentrum is the interface organisation and expertise centre for the Flemish circus sector. They invest in the professionalization and sustainable growth of the circus arts, both through active services for the sector and through the further development and disclosure of knowledge about and within the sector – all this in close collaboration with partners within and outside the circus field. Circuscentrum connects and inspires across all kinds of borders and puts the Flemish circus in all its diversity and uniqueness on the map.

🌐 [www.circuscentrum.be](http://www.circuscentrum.be)

### Metropolis - København Internationale Teater<sup>DK</sup>

Metropolis is an annual curated platform for international performance and art in urban space. Metropolis is organised by København Internationale Teater, which for more than 40 years has created change and development in the Danish performing arts scene through the introduction of new genres and formats. During the summer season, Metropolis presents a site-specific, outdoor programme of performances and installations. They also organise an international residency programme in public space as well as workshops and seminars in the intersection between art, culture and urbanism.

🌐 [www.metropolis.dk/en](http://www.metropolis.dk/en)

### Room100/Positive Force<sup>HR</sup>

ROOM 100 is a contemporary circus collective from Split founded by Antonia Kuzmanić and Jakov Labrović in 2010. With their first performance they were awarded as Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe laureates in 2011. Besides producing and distributing contemporary circus performances and other artistic works of the collective, ROOM 100 manages HALA 100 – a venue hosting residencies, performances and workshops for international contemporary circus as well as a programme of film screenings, Kino Cirkus, in several Croatian cities and implementing other projects for the development of the audience in the contemporary circus sector. Since 2020, they also organise a contemporary circus festival, Peculiar Families Festival.

🌐 [www.peculiarfamilies.org](http://www.peculiarfamilies.org)

### Le Manège de Reims<sup>FR</sup>

Le Manège, the Reims National Theatre, is a multidisciplinary venue dedicated to performing arts that are “100% movement”: dance, circus, puppetry and the transversal forms in-between these disciplines. Le Manège aims to support creativity and to propose a varied multidisciplinary programme with a focus on contemporary creation; to be an important actor in the regional cultural landscape; and to promote access to culture for all members of the population, whatever their socioeconomic background. Le Manège is an active player within the local community as well as at a broader international level. It hosts two resident companies for a period of three years and is currently supporting two artists through its mentorship programme.

🌐 [www.manege-reims.eu](http://www.manege-reims.eu)

# THE PARTNERSHIP

## Associated partners

### Nona Arts Centre <sup>BE</sup>

Nona arts centre emphatically underlines its role as a breeding ground for new artistic work. Artists are given plenty of opportunities to develop themselves and enter into dialogue with the public in Mechelen and far beyond. Nona also works with a number of regular partners in crime: the internationally renowned theatre company Abattoir Fermé, and Voetvolk, the Belgian contemporary dance and performance company.

🌐 [www.nona.be/en](http://www.nona.be/en)

### Dynamo Workspace <sup>DK</sup>

DYNAMO is a workspace for circus and performing arts located in the middle of Denmark at Odense city harbour. As a production house and cultural gathering place, DYNAMO wants to create sustainable conditions for performers and increase the quality of artistic production through mutual aid. DYNAMO opened in January 2017 in an old warehouse that now houses productions from national and international performers and a yearly festival.

🌐 [www.dynamoworkspace.dk/?lang=en](http://www.dynamoworkspace.dk/?lang=en)

### Arts Academy Split <sup>HR</sup>

The Arts Academy in Split was founded in 1997. It consists of three departments: fine arts, music and theatre arts. The activities include artistic creation through production and public presentations and various professional and artistic training programmes that are part of the concept of lifelong learning. The Film and Video Department offers an education in the field of film and new media. The BA students acquire theoretical and practical knowledge in video, film and digital media and the MA degree provides highly professional profiles for fully independent activity in motion picture media such as film art, animated film or media art.

🌐 [www.umas.unist.hr/en/](http://www.umas.unist.hr/en/)

### Césaré <sup>FR</sup>

Césaré is one of the 8 national centres of musical creation spread throughout France. Its mission is to foster the emergence of original works at the frontier of musical styles and artistic disciplines through a policy of residency, production and transmission. They are a privileged partner of the artistic and cultural sector of the Grand Est: producer of La Magnifique Avant-Garde, co-producer of FARaway, and today partner of Exhibitronic – Strasbourg. Césaré aims to be a meeting place for artists and the public, open to the world and sensitive to the slightest tremor of creation.

🌐 [www.cesare-cnccm.com](http://www.cesare-cnccm.com)



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