

Circostrada Network



José Rubio
Gentiane Guillot

Organising an artistic event
in the public space
Practical guide

HORS LES MURS

Organising an artistic event in the public space

Practical guide

Contents

Editorial.....	p. 3
<i>José Rubio</i>	
Presentation.....	p. 4
<i>Gentiane Guillot, Stéphane Simonin</i>	
Introduction	p. 5
Street arts	p. 5
Art and public spaces: occupation, intervention, transformation	p. 6
The goal of this Practical Guide: to facilitate and enable.....	p. 6
Safety: a civic concern	p. 7
A methodology under the strains of the economic reality... and political will.....	p. 7
Occupying the public space: overall approach.....	p. 8
Intervention in the urban environment.....	p. 8
The relationship with the occupants	p. 8
Wishes and paradoxes.....	p. 9
The different representatives of the public space	p. 9
Setting up the artistic intervention in the public space: methodology	p. 12
Forms and characteristics of artistic interventions.....	p. 12
Local life.....	p. 12
The choice of site.....	p. 13
Installation and performance conditions.....	p. 13
Sets, structures, platforms, bleachers.....	p. 14
Hosting an audience	p. 15
Authorisations	p. 16
Insurance	p. 17
Safety.....	p. 17
Ethical and environmental concerns	p. 18
Specific practices.....	p. 18
Calendar: administrative steps and representatives.....	p. 19

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Editorial

Throughout the years, the street arts have constructed much and have done so with force. If there is not any pediment to materialize the place held by these artistic forms, like those decorating our houses of performance and exhibitions (theatres, operas, concert halls, museums, galleries...), it is because the setting, even the setting of the stage itself, is everywhere in the urban territory where an opportunity has presented itself for the coming together of a work and its audience. We remember, we marvel, we recount years after the image of a show, which lives on in memory and re-emerges, traversing the space of our cities.

The urban fabric must allow for the expression of these artistic proposals by encouraging their reception in public space. This space is not meant to be transformed into a catalogue of private elements of all kinds, utilitarian, commercial, sonorous, functional and, in the end, sterilising. The city must host what can become a festival of the senses, of emotion, of the mind, and of community. It therefore must seek out these collective projects instead of giving open rage to an excess of individual interests. The ephemeral transformation of non-developed locations into performance sites is only possible by preserving the mobility and reversibility of perennial installations that can, at times, be too invasive.

Of course, presenting these artistic forms in the public space does not allow one to surpass the discriminative nature of perspectives on an artistic work. It does, however, constitute a frequently successful attempt

to modify the social structure of the audience. Street theatre is not only popular because of the diversity of the audience that it is able to captivate and call out to, but also because of the means by which it is implemented. It is the act of including the contributions of all actors within the public space that reinforces its popularity and allows it to speak to everyone. This group effort accumulates the strengths of everyone involved: the artists, municipal services, technicians and all public services working to help make these artistic proposals a reality. Mediation with the territory involves this very pragmatic participation from numerous actors.

Filling the public space with an artistic act is often experienced as the exercising of an inalienable right. However, our society has developed the need to feel safe in any circumstance. Cultural events that take place in the urban territory are, like any other activity, subject to certain rules. Taking into account all safety parameters at the heart of creations instead of making it a separate, extra objective or constraint allows one to take more liberties.

When the occupation of public space has taken place along with a performance, the next day the street seems like a shore whose waves have pulled away. From this somewhat oppressive void there emerges the expectation that the festivities will start up again, that the gathering will be renewed in other streets, other squares, with other crowds.

José Rubio
Production and technical manager for shows
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Presentation

The "Practical guide – Organising an artistic event in the public space" was designed during Le Temps des Arts de la rue 2005–2007, three years during which professionals, artists, local authorities, the ministry of culture and all partners concerned by the stakes of street arts in France, shared reflexions and shaped actions to support the sector.

The objective of the working group lead by José Rubio "Occupation of public space, technical environment, security" was to enable and favour the occupation of public space on French territory, which has:

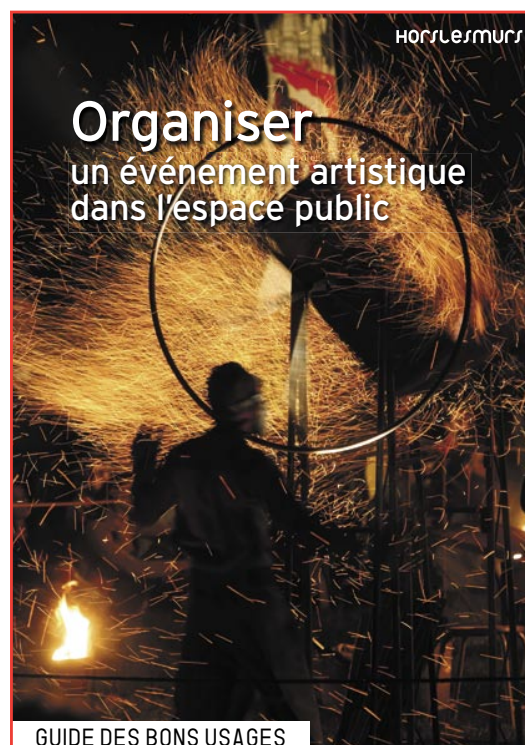
- a firmly structured streets arts professional sector
- a very specific regulatory environment

The need for a comprehensive, practical and easy to use document had been identified for a long time: a book recapitulating all elements to be taken into account when implementing an event in the public space.

This practical Guide gathers a considerable amount of experience, and suggests a methodology that serves the artistic project while respecting regulations: it promotes dialog and collaboration with all professionals involved, ranging from organizers to elected officials, from companies to towns services, from artists to technicians...

Following up on the Fresh Circus seminar of September 2008 and on the recommendations of the workshop called "Circulation of Big Tops in Europe and Regulations", Circostrada Network and HorsLesMurs decided to publish an English version of the Guide. We do hope that this document (which is a translation of the original Guide, less some specific French regulations) will make it easier for anyone to develop their projects, and may even be an incentive to imagine new ones. May the public space, more than ever, be considered as a legitimate space for artistic expression.

Gentiane Guillot
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Credits

The original French "Practical guide – Organising an event in the public space" was outlined by the working group "Occupation of public space, technical environment, security"

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Introduction

At a time when works created for and in the public space are multiplying and exploring that space through a growing diversity of forms and modes; when an increasing number of towns are opening themselves up to the street arts, even installing festivals, it seemed helpful to identify the organisational stakes raised by such artistic processes.

This practical guide addresses concrete issues specific to the street arts in the public space by offering general guidelines, most notably:

- perspective: what is at stake when the street arts take over a public space
- tools: methodology
- regulatory guidelines

This Guide is meant for organisers as well as elected officials, artistic companies, town services, artists and technical directors.

Part of the regulatory guidelines, as well as the 3rd section of the Guide, offering technical and regulatory support, were not translated in this document, since they are very specific to the French environment. They may be found in French, in the original publication. However, some examples relating to the French context have been included: they are presented in the grey boxes.

Street arts

"Street arts" is what we commonly call artistic shows or events presented in spaces that are unlike theatres, concert halls or museums in that they were not conceived to host performances or cultural events. We are speaking therefore of streets, city squares, the banks of a river, a train station, or a port, as well as an industrial wasteland, a building under construction or even the backstage of a theatre. From solitary feats to monumental stagings, from open wanderings to temporary layouts, from confrontational parody to marvelous, events, the forms and issues are varied and the artistic disciplines are mixed and melded. The act of inserting oneself into the urban context (today the countryside is also urban) has a fundamental impact on the artistic proposal itself. The city is a free, constrained space. From a physical standpoint, it allows one to choose one's territory and to play with the environment. One must also confront the noise, the congestion and the possibility of inclement weather. From a social standpoint, the performance speaks to both the willing spectator and the spontaneous passer-by, to both the informed and "fresh" public. It is therefore important to speak to communal emotions and the shared culture. From an institutional standpoint, public authorities have their tolerance limits and performance programming involves the authority of elected officials. [...]

During the 1980s, companies that are today well established [...] structured themselves and affirmed their artistic options, with a certain preference among some for spectacular wanderings and monumental stagings. During this same time, elected officials of certain cities called upon these companies to (re)create a sense of conviviality and reach unfamiliar audiences through their elitist art form. [...]

New generations have appeared [...] that pursue, question and enrich the established knowledge base. Among the recent trends, one notices a relationship with the private, the role of the everyday speech of a neighbourhood's inhabitants, a critical outlook on urban development and the deliberate use of contemporary technologies. The days of wild protest and light entertainment are over, as are the days of the simplistic opposition between "indoor" and "street" theatre. It is now a question of artistic choice.

Sylvie Clidière, extract from the 2005/2006 Goliath: "Street Arts, a bit of history..." , Ed. HorsLesMurs.

STREET ARTISTS IN THE URBAN SPACE

Since the 1960s, the integration of street arts as an element of urban development has gone hand in hand with the growth in the role of culture in the cities' economic development. Today, there is a real correspondence between the artistic approach of street artists and the cities' new concerns: insertion of cultural programming into a strategy of attracting tourism, institutional communication of social action in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the redynamising of the local economy. Major events that are capable of developing street arts attract impressive crowds. They also contribute to the success of the European Capitals of Culture. Street shows have thus drawn over 100,000 people in Brussels, Porto, Graz and Copenhagen, while Lille recorded more than 600,000 participants, altering the conception that cities might have on the circulation of the public and the use of its spaces. Concentrated mainly in the city centres, but also in outlying areas and rural zones, street arts performances have a strong calling in social and spatial integration. Street artists often establish their work place in abandoned districts or those experiencing problems (former factories, disadvantaged areas, etc.) and participate in linking territories, making possible the development of projects with populations that have very little access to cultural products.

(...)The strong growth in street arts, through this sector's economic activity, and notably the festivals that symbolise them, attests to their place in the live performance economy. Their close relations with the cities bear witness to their role in the cultural and tourism-related vitality of Europe's regions. This sector moreover contributes to the development of innovation and creativity throughout Europe. Street arts offer a gamut of artistic expressions likely to renew the writings of popular shows. They favour inventiveness in the blending of disciplines and the renewal of conventional forms, all directly connected to the public space. This diversity brought to creation spaces takes part in the development, in European societies, of an intercultural and creative capacity that is essential to a knowledge society and an innovative society.

A sector characterised by the specific nature of its action field (the urban and rural public space) and its public (de facto broader than the traditional cultural public), street arts participate in the implementation, on a Europe-wide scale, of a new solidarity (professional, social and regional) and the construction of a cohesion space. Their involvement in the heart of the cities, in the countryside or intermediate areas makes them non-negligible partners in the economic and social renewal and development of countries, regions and localities. Through their engagement with the populations, they are also genuine tools in the development of a European citizen and in the construction of a common identity in Europe.

Collective, extract from "Street Artists in Europe", study coordinated by HorsLesMurs (Yohann Floch), Policy department Structural and Cohesion policies, European Parliament, Brussels, 2007

Art and public spaces: occupation, intervention, transformation

Is the public space a space of freedom; a freedom that is sought after, desired and claimed... the artist who chooses the public space as a means of expression and place of freedom will paradoxically need to know and overcome its constraints. There are, of course, technical and budgetary constraints involved in the act of creating a unique performance space and temporarily equipping it to host an artistic project. One must put into place temporary mechanisms to house the performance's necessary installations – suspended lighting, access to power currents, creation of a performance space and public access to the area.

There are also constraints to be dealt with in the layout of the urban network, which must stay in place despite this incredible intrusion. Then there is the layout of the social structure, which must be allowed to participate in the celebration. When street arts inhabit the public space, it is rarely a simple occupation. The location and its layout are modified – temporarily – to their very social interactions, which lose their daily routine and are encouraged to find a new, temporary and unique social equilibrium.

The goal of this Practical Guide: to facilitate and enable

A public space that is accessible to artistic events means a space that is accessible to its inhabitants, i.e. to all of its citizenry...

Without formatting the hosting of street arts in the public space, the goal here is to facilitate and enable this hosting through a specific methodology. It is also to broaden the field of possibilities explored by the arts in the public space, to bring flexibility to the management of material constraints by suggesting certain approaches and limiting the number of insurmountable obstacles. The goal is to make the public space more welcoming to street arts regardless of its manner and form of intervention.

In no way is the goal of this guide to "reinforce" regulation of the public space or to invent a new ensemble of restrictive rules: the recommendations laid out here are to be accepted on a voluntary basis and adapted to the specificities of each case. This guide points out certain issues and questions that could call for various solutions depending on the context and in compliance with local regulation.

Through the Practical Guide, we also wish to create a convergence point between the practice of actors within the public space (artists, companies, event organisers) and public authorities (mayors, or the police prefect of Paris) or the teams responsible for the hosting of such events (local town services).

THE ARTISTIC SIDE

The presence and forms of expression of art in the public space are protean, changing, surprising and sometimes even disturbing. This freedom must be preserved.

The departure point: the vision. Taking on a proposal in the public space is, first of all, putting oneself at the service of artistic creation. It is to imagine how an artistic proposal still in its conceptual phase can take shape and assert itself in the public space. How can the space be seen as a performance space? This all requires the invention of material and technical solutions.

In this context, the technical director's work amounts to that of a mediator and interpreter of artistic needs, finding solutions in the material elements of the project's installation. The goal is to create conditions under which the project becomes feasible, taking into account, of course, all regulatory aspects. The street arts sector in France has developed specific methods, skills and expertise that we wish to share here.

METHODOLOGY

The preparation of an artistic project takes place in successive iterations, that is, the examination of each of its dimensions:

- artistic
- technical
- time management
- financial
- administrative
- regulatory

This approach allows for an extra level of precision and allows us to assess, at each step of the way, the feasibility of the artistic proposal in its entirety. It can result in the progressive creation of a public relations file presenting both the technical and artistic aspects of the project. This file can be added to throughout the conception and completion of the project.

This kind of approach may seem restrictive and costly in both time and energy; however the investment is a useful one since it is by convincing one's many diverse interlocutors that one advances – and completes – the project under the right conditions.

Safety: a civic concern

At times there is an overall impression that regulatory restrictions have become more rigid. Regulations regarding the performing arts have, indeed, become more specific. They have been put into place little by little as a reaction to certain accidents closely or distantly related to the performance world, which underlined the need for new precautions. In France for example, in 1992, the collapse of the Furiani Stadium platform forced progress in matters of safety (in this case, with regulations for scaffolding, platforms and bleachers) and led to the clarification of each individual's responsibility.

However, we all need safety: it is a civic concern. Compliance with related regulations is an expectation at the individual level of anyone as well as for the entire social structure. So it is not so much new regulatory elements that represent the changes that have taken place over the last 30 years, but rather a new social pressure.

Technical safety and work conditions are elements that the different street art actors must integrate into their first creative phases, enforcing them until the project's completion, while still considering issues involved with team organisation, budgets and schedules.

But the organisational and safety restrictions are not an obstacle to creation in the public space, which often feeds off of material obstacles in the urban environment in order to better divert its use, signs and meaning.

A methodology under the strains of the economic reality... and political will

The following point must be emphasised: compliance with the totality of good practices and regulations laid out in this guide has its cost. Calling upon partners in research departments for the calculation and the control of structures, respecting security norms and work conditions, organising consultations, coordinating with collaborators...

At first, companies or artists with weaker funding will find it difficult to put into place all of the recommendations put forth in this guide.

This is why the efforts of directors and organisers of artistic projects in working with regulatory constraints and safety must be met with the efforts of institutional partners and local governments. They must take measure of the total price of an intervention: not just the artistic and technical performance, but also the investment of all funds needed for equipment in compliance with standards studied and approved structures and appropriate work hours.

Furthermore, on the scale of a performance, the effort put forth by the community when a performance takes place in the public space should be equivalent to the effort (investment cost and fees) put forth to host an indoor show. The costs involved in converting the public space and supporting the technical needs of a company, which are necessary when hosting an artistic project, should not mislead one as to the cost of the artistic project itself.

Street arts must defend their legitimacy to work in the same conditions as other, more conventional sectors of the performing arts.

All approaches that increase awareness among towns and elected officials and take into account the issues and specificities involved in the street arts should be encouraged. This can happen through:

- the identification, within public authorities and among those working in cultural affairs, of a referent in matters of street arts
- the designation within town services of a special and sole handler of matters involving artistic companies and organisers
- further thought on hosting infrastructures: for example, the possibility of creating improved access to electricity, water, etc
- further discussion on the division and privatisation of the public space: why not set aside within the many concessions on the public space, a few days a year during which the space is handed over to artists?

Occupying the public space: overall approach

Many questions are brought up about occupying public space. First, there are the artistic questions like what is the relationship between the artistic proposal and the environment (whether it is urban or natural)? Which square, presence or staging should be chosen? What interplay should there be with the buildings and architecture – whose aesthetic, purpose or symbolism may resonate with and support the artistic project's message...?

Then there are the practical concerns. The idea is not to create a "fully functional theatre" according to a preset formula, but rather to prepare the public space to host an artistic intervention and an audience.

Once constructed, the indoor performance space has already answered most of the preliminary questions regarding the action to take place there: the physical place of the work and of the artistic proposal, the artists' place (stage and backstage), the audience's place (the seats, entrances, exits)... The technical conditions essential to the performance are in place: access to electricity, grids for the scenery and lighting, etc. In construction, the architect has already accounted for the needs of circulation and safety, including comfort issues such as toilets and dining areas.

In an unconventional space, in the public space, all of these issues must be addressed and resolved by, on one hand, compensating for the absence of permanent infrastructure and, on the other hand, adapting to the location's layout: street furniture, circulation... And this must be done on a temporary basis: the performance space must be created from scratch for a limited number of performances and then must be taken down, returning the space to its usual use and tranquillity.

Intervention in the urban environment

MANY SPACES, A CODIFIED ENVIRONMENT

At the first level of its encounter with the urban space, the artistic proposal is confronted with a setting made up of many mixed and more or less restrictive elements that should be identified and whose role needs to be defined. Are they obstacles to overcome or to get around? Are they intermediaries of expression, an aid to meaning or simple, passive witnesses?

This is true of street furniture, an ensemble of objects that are welcoming (seats...), limiting (barriers...), or more neutral (tree shading...); with street signs, information bulletins and roadway pieces (bollards, posts...), without forgetting billboards, whose constant presence doubles as an abrasive form of expression.

These objects can be concealed, moved, used by the show... or ignored. This choice will be essential for the project's completion in the urban environment and will, in part, influence its preparation, or even its very composition.

REINVENTING THE CITY, REORGANISING LOCAL LIFE

The second level of interpretation has to do with the location's layout: the types of activities that are developed, the pace of activity according to the neighbourhood, the days and the times; the place of businesses, inhabitants and offices; the traffic density, the traffic zones, public transportation; security, surveillance, which may also be found only in certain neighbourhoods and public buildings.

This ensemble of elements will be temporarily modified by the artistic proposal, from the preparation to the set-up and the performance. The layout in place could be disturbed or interrupted (even blocking traffic), but also readapted, laid out differently (temporary traffic and signage rules, new routes and times for public transportation, etc.), reinvented.

Finally, included in the two preceding levels of interpretation is an overall view. The direct environment of the artistic proposal (street, neighbourhood, town) takes its place within a wider and larger environment (neighbourhood, town, agglomeration), a network marked by symbolic representations, virtual outlines (information, images, ideas) that are distinct of concrete elements of which it is made, but greatly meaningful for the inhabitants and occupants. When an artistic intervention occupies and transforms the terrain it also shatters these representations by drawing new images that are to be made readable: by means of a new bus map or traffic route, by means of a new interpretation of the city and its history.

The relationship with the occupants

AN OCCUPIED, LIVING SPACE

Before the artists' arrival, the public space already lives thanks to its temporary and permanent occupants: from residents to local businesses, from passers-by to public service providers. Many events take place within the space, either regularly or from time to time that are recognised and accepted parts of local life: markets and fares, gatherings, religious life, etc. What is the relationship between these elements and the temporary intervention?

SPECIAL USE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LINKS AND THE CREATION OF MEANING

Whether it takes over by surprise or calls for and then hosts the public; whether it inhabits a space or opts to roam... for the inhabitants and their daily lives, an artistic proposal in the public space amounts to an event bringing relationships and new forms of interaction as part of a process that automatically transforms links between occupants and the public space, or even between the occupants themselves.

A new interpretation is therefore brought to life, not only of the place, but also of human and social relationships. For in the simple act of choosing the communal space as a ground for expression, the street arts are setting a "political" processes into motion. For the street arts, collectively analysing the use of the public space, breaking habits, reconstructing the public space by offering it to everyone for a time of "performance", is often a part of creation itself and a desire to "live the city together and in a new way".

Wishes and paradoxes

The street arts have invented and continue to explore a thousand ways of introducing itself into the public space. For example, it may discreetly, or even invisibly creep into the everyday life of places and of their inhabitants to better take root there and to become one of the natural elements of a shared moment.

An artistic proposal may also be a conquering and protesting act, wishing both to:

- take over the public space as a space of creation whose limits and controlling material boundaries must always be pushed through a wilful expression of the freedom to act.
- revolt against, oppose and make use of the public space and its layout as a means of political expression

Therein lies the paradox. Each marker and every step forward in the hijacking of the public space is both an accomplishment in terms of an affirmed act of freedom, and a door that has been opened that could, in the end, limit the reach of antiestablishment expression. Where is there any hijacking at all if its material conditions are already thought out and planned? Where is the affirmation of freedom if this freedom is limited and organised like the circulation of cars?

The risk would be to define rules and a mechanism for artistic expression in the public space that would fade into the sediment of regulations already at work. The risk would be to force artists into a strict framework, thus limiting how much they can question the established rules and limiting the reach of their expression. This is why this Practical Guide wishes to serve as a tool and a methodological, optional answer to the questions asked by all out-of-the-ordinary street actors. It is a sort of springboard that, once the elements are assessed, allows us to consider all modes of intervention, whatever they may be.

In the end, the difficulties encountered in the public space are an important part of the artistic proposal. For everyone can then experience for his or herself and with others,

how the problems to be fixed are only secondary ones with regards to the result – that which is offered and shared, and given to all within a communal space.

The different representatives of the public space

This much cannot be denied: the public space, which we consider free, open and accessible to all, is being divided up and parcelled out at an alarming rate, becoming a juxtaposition of private spaces. Café terraces are spreading into squares – or at least those that haven't already been turned into parking lots – shop displays are encroaching onto the sidewalk, billboards are fast multiplying and publicity is taking over the visible space. The room for artistic expression thus becomes that much more limited...

Paradoxically, when an artistic proposal takes place in the street, it takes the street away from its first intended use, which is that of circulation. Is it a re-taking of the collective space or a kind of private use?

From there, how do we address and consider the sum of constraints and individual interests that overlap in the public space? How do we obtain the essential space needed for artistic expression?

A NECESSARY COLLABORATION

The thing is, at the end of the day, all representatives are legitimate in the public space: from passers-by to town services, from local businesses to inhabitants, each one is potentially affected by a special intervention in the public space. In a situation where the residents' daily set-up is disturbed by the set-up of the artistic proposal, it is important to allow each of them to understand the project and to cohere with it.

This is only possible through an informative effort: explaining as many times as necessary the form the event will take, as well as the content and meaning of the intervention. Frequent communication and exchange will thus create trust and a momentum that will help in the realisation of the project; in an approach that is both pedagogical – to encourage proximity, cohesion and support – and cooperative, so as to create discussion of the conditions under which the work will be created.

For the idea is to measure, understand and take into account the concerns of these inhabitants in order to collectively resolve material obstacles together. This communal work will allow the puzzle to take shape and is all the more important given the complex and special nature of the project.

While it is up to the artistic team and the technical director to decide the best way to circulate information, the work does not go solely to them. Within the artistic or organisational team, each member can make his or herself the spokesperson for the project, holding open discussion with inhabitants all throughout the event's preparation.

Finally, if the artistic proposal itself transforms social ties, the project's entire preparation period becomes a unique opportunity to call upon town services to participate in a unique event and work to forge relationships with each of the terrain's inhabitants.

The efforts put forth depend, of course, on the project's size, its complexity and its impact on the urban and social environment... A quick overview.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

In France for example, the mayor's voice is a decisive one. He or she is the one who grants permission to take over the public space. As the first magistrate of the town, the mayor is responsible for safety and maintenance of public order. The mayor is responsible as head of the police force and decides, as such, if the event is approved or not (in Paris, however, police authority is held by the prefect).

To put a project into place, it is therefore necessary to establish a relationship of trust with the mayor, as with the other municipal safety representatives. One must do more than to follow administrative procedures. One must establish direct contact with the public authorities, with means of exchange that are as personalised as possible and with suitable tools of communication.

From the initial proceedings (permission requests...), it would be a good idea to present the project's artistic content as well as its technical aspects. An elected official's decision to host an event will also be dictated by its importance and artistic quality so as to decide whether it merits the budgetary effort that might be needed, including availability of technical and human labour and availability of security systems. Of course, other communities may be affected, according to the territories inhabited by the project.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Most of the public services are involved and could be solicited in the organisation of an event in the public space, from ambulances and first aid, to public transportation, to fire fighters and police.

These partners may be involved beforehand, if needed, to the extent that their mission includes prevention: it is essential, when the scope of the project requires it, to rely on their field experience – their knowledge of the city and of its inhabitants.

Open communication must be established so as to convincingly prove that although the material devices are out of the ordinary, they remain feasible and that all precautions – of feasibility and security – are taken to prepare the project's realisation.

THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND TECHNICAL SERVICES OF THE TOWN

Town services will be especially involved in the event, which, for these teams, could amount to extra work and new logistical problems to solve in an unusual context. Everyone must understand the impor-

tance of the role he or she is asked to play and must be made aware of the event's overall proceedings.

It is therefore essential to maintain a good relationship with the town services in order to carry through with the project. Ideally, a sole representative will be assigned specifically to the project by town hall so as to ensure the coordination of necessary services, just as a technical director would aid the artist and the company throughout the process, starting as early as the show's conception.

FIRST-AID WORKERS

Emergency workers and prevention organisations can all be involved. Consultations carried out during the event's preparation allow the artists to explain the kind of risks involved in the show so as to ask for advice... This also includes informing doctors on call.

RESIDENTS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONAL OCCUPANTS, ASSOCIATIONS...

At the very least, local businesses and residents can be consulted for practical information regarding private activity that might affect the event as it takes place or make it difficult for audience members to walk by: weddings, sporting events, etc.

While it is difficult to obtain unanimous support, this is useful for easing doubts, addressing possible fears and informing the largest number of occupants of the public space who the artistic intervention is bound to affect. Open communication can create links and elicit interest in the coming event.

Furthermore, involvement in the show can become a possibility: granting use of a spot that would allow artists to pass through a balcony, a yard, voluntary extras in the show, the creation of set elements... These are all contributions that turn the project into a collective experience that can have an effect on the neighbourhood's history.

Moreover, this approach can be taken as early as the project's conception and become an integral part of the show's organisational method as well as being part of the main issues and messages addressed by the show.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

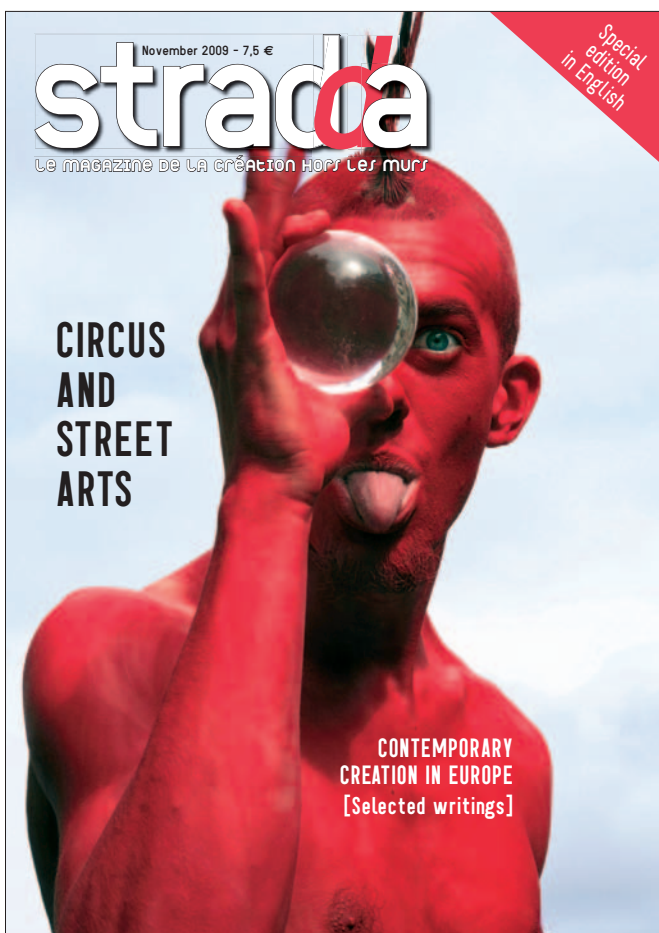
Collaboration in the project includes all service providers involved: gas and electric companies, telephone companies or the water distribution company, who will have to be called upon in particular to set up a special connection to water pipes. And we must not forget those providing technical material, food services as well as service providers such as the public authorities and security if need be.

In the end, the setting up of a proposal, whether it is extravagant or modest, directly relies on the quality of communication and collaboration established with its different partners. At the completion of an event in which everyone has taken part, the feeling of undergoing restraints and inconveniences gives way to the satisfaction of having participated.

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Setting up the artistic intervention in the public space: methodology

What common points are there between a smaller form meant for a few spectators and mobile, crane-installed monuments?

While all street arts share the double approach of inhabiting unconventional spaces and developing new relationships with the audience, their technical requirements are infinitely varied. Before setting up a project, it is therefore appropriate to precisely define all of its material aspects and to assess its impact on the urban fabric. These elements then enable one to establish:

- the representative to contact and the discussions to have
- the overall organisational outline: schedule, distribution of tasks...
- the creation of a timeline, from conception to realisation
- the studies, inspections and checks to put into place
- the authorisations that must be obtained, the nature and content of the files to prepare
- the regulations to abide by

This document does not include the chapters which are most specific to the French regulatory environment: they are available in French, in the original publication.

- mobility: the audience could be encouraged to change its place or point of view within a confined space, but can also be led to roam or to move from one performance space to another (by public transportation, for example)
- the audience capacity: from an intimate performance for one person to events for tens of thousands of people, from a limited audience capacity (by the performance space or the nature of the project) to one that is presumably limitless (as in the case of roaming projects)
- the length of the performance: from a few minutes to several hours, including installations that last for many days
- the use of a set, structures, platforms or bleachers and their size
- the use of big tops, tents or structures
- the use of pyrotechnics
- the number of artists and technicians involved in the performance
- the possible inclusion of volunteers
- day time or night time performances
- material and technical needs linked to sound, lighting, etc.

This chapter covers all of these characteristics and lays out the practical questions to be addressed.

Forms and characteristics of artistic interventions

The stage space of a street show – or, more broadly, of an artistic proposal in the public space – often does not involve any physical (or geographical) limits. It can even move with the show and include the audience's space...

At the end of the day, the representation and occupation of the space can take on many forms and the typology that is usually established,

- set or itinerant moving shows
- outdoor or big top shows
- visible or "invisible" (as fiction within reality) shows
- progressive installations
- stage space that is frontal, two-sided, in-the-round, overhead, etc.

conceals a more complex and varied reality.

Thus, many criteria will influence the project's scheduling and organisation.

- the playing space: from work spaces for a single artist to city-wide urban installations

Local life

In the public space the entire environment is subject to becoming raw material for an artistic intervention: a source of inspiration, a basis for diverting the space, a set piece or an element of the show. Just as with the residents, inhabitants, professionals or passers-by, "public" or not, they could become material for improvisation, participants in the show or they could remain spectators...

For those working on the project, this implies putting into place conditions that allow coexistence with the other occupants of the public space. This is a major issue, which we have addressed in the first part of this publication. It is the interactions, the exchanges that allow us to integrate each individual in the artistic proposal's overall approach, whether this amounts to collusion in diverting the space or simple participation as an audience.

The project is likely to cause a fair amount of inconveniences for residents, from traffic diversions to temporary parking arrangements, from the nuisance of hearing the technical teams working at night to the movement of the crowd at the time of the performance. It is important to limit these inconveniences as much as possible or

to announce them appropriately. One might, for example, set up informal, on-site discussions or, for larger-scale events, establish communication through the town hall or organiser, who can then work with the local press. If they are adequately informed, the residents should be able to adjust their own plans and schedule.

The local context must be explored in its entirety during the project's preparation:

- the everyday life of the place, the way in which the spaces are already occupied
- local business and professional activity
- public service activity: transportation, emergency services, etc.
- other events (public or private) taking place within the public space: fares, markets, flea markets, gatherings, weddings

This leads to other questions. Let's consider the case of a wedding taking place near the performance. What space will be available for the bride and groom, for guest parking or for taking pictures? And what relationship will the artistic proposal choose to uphold with this event? Will it be that of a simple collaboration, use or staging? It is usually the relationship, the confrontation with reality or the reinterpretation proposed from this kind of situation that forms the very flavour of a street show.

The choice of site

Certain proposals in the public space are conceived for and according to a specific site: its architecture, its layout, its population, its symbolism... or according to all of the site's characteristics. In a different space, it would be a different show. Other artistic interventions, with less technical demands, travel more easily without any major transformation. Adaptations are necessary all the same in relation to the capacity of the occupied space and its acoustics, for example, as well as in relation to the space's population – the location can be busy, quiet, lively...

The choice of a certain site or area is therefore at the heart of the project's preparation phase wherein artistic concerns meet more immediate, technical ones: accessibility, performance conditions on-site, etc. It is wise to consider such matters at the initial stages of the project and to only make formal commitments after consultation between the artistic team and the organiser. The ability to install oneself on a site can be assessed through the use of maps and photos, or better yet, through an on-site evaluation. It is only after such an assessment that the technical file can be properly drawn up or adapted. Ideally, the cost of the on-site assessment (travel, lodging) would be paid for by or split with the organiser.

THE SITE'S ACCESSIBILITY

The question of accessibility comes up in the preparation and installation phases as well as during the performance and disassembly period.

Trucks transporting material must be able to enter and exit the site and therefore must be given sufficient manoeuvring room. Let us

also not forget the necessary parking areas and space for the installation and disassembly. If need be, the traffic layout of the area can be temporarily modified with the town's approval.

Since overhead obstacles may prevent the installation and, in some cases, the mobility of the show, it is advisable to check for electrical lines.

THE GROUND

It is important to know the nature and resistance level of the ground on-site. This information is, of course, to be considered relative to the material's level of weight – of vehicles, installations, structures and sets. Asphalt, concrete or cobblestones offer greater resistance than dirt or grass. One must also take into account any possible subterranean structures (cables, pipes) or equipment (electrical facilities, transformers or any other underground installation) that would call for special measures to be taken. For example, avoid placing excessive weight on a slab that covers an underground parking lot.

This information can be obtained through the town's technical services. In the public space, installation network maps denoting depth and the amount of distance to maintain can be provided by the proprietor or concessionaire of each network: gas, electricity, telephone, water distribution etc. On private ground, this must be discussed with the location's owner.

The ground may be slippery or uneven... In the case of a structure that needs stabilising pins (like big tops), it is important to ensure ahead of time that pins can be driven deep enough into the ground. The ground must be stable and solid enough to hold the pin, but also compact enough to keep it from pulling out.

Inspections of the ground's characteristics can be relegated to an inspection agency. In the case of heavy structures, these tests will also allow companies to determine the appropriate weight distribution, ballasting, wedges, and possible points of staking and guying.

Installation and performance conditions

An intervention in the public space begins with the definition, the materialisation of the performance space and the playing area: according to the nature of the proposal and the size of the expected audience, etc. A chalk mark on the ground, a line drawn upon a patch of grass can suffice in clearly demarcating the artists' space as well as that of the spectators. It is even, at times, impossible or useless to designate these spaces when the artists mix with the audience and move about with them.

Inversely, setting up in a space and occupying many streets implies taking the urban space, its facilities, and especially its furniture into account:

- benches and seats
- streetlights
- baskets and planters

- curbs and edges, tree protection and the trees themselves
- road posts, bollards, and posts
- other roadway elements: edges, sidewalks and curbs
- roadway information: signs, traffic lights, signalling lights
- informative signage
- outdoor advertising: billboards, posters, etc.

Depending on the case, these elements can be moved, concealed or used in the staging. They must also be taken into account in safety concerns. For example, street furniture is often climbed on by the audience and it might be appropriate to plan a system of barriers, security or even dismantling. If need be, the barriers can also serve as protection for material needed for the show.

How does one deal with automobile traffic? It is better to choose a performance terrain that avoids any encounter between spectators and traffic for matters of comfort and safety. But it is also possible to ask the mayor to temporarily block out or divert traffic.

Finally, it is preferable for artists and technicians working on the project to have access to set-aside or converted break areas, with spaces for eating and for work...

NETWORK ACCESS (ELECTRICITY, WATER, TELEPHONE)

The urban space is an inextricable mesh of all kinds of networks, be they symbolic or tangible. Among these, some are indispensable to the project, such as

- electricity
- water: for provisions, but also the environment-friendly and responsible evacuation of used water
- telephone: for coordination between the teams on site and the town's technical support teams, to be able to follow security measures and to call for help if needed, to access the Internet

The electricity available must be sufficient to provide for all activities linked to the event; the performance, lighting for traffic control, any possible eating areas, as well as security.

Connection to the electrical network can be set up with the help of town services and the electric company. It is recommended to have two distinct connections with separate networks and to keep a light or safety current on one of the connections.

For any work with an electrical installation, a qualified and authorised electrician must be called.

SOUND IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Squares, streets and buildings send back sound in a thousand different ways, affecting both its quality and tone. The presence of an audience can also change the acoustics of a place... All of this must be taken into account when the artistic proposal includes work with sound.

Also, if amplified music is used, attention must be paid to:

- the risk, for the artists, technicians and audience, of harmfully loud volume levels
- the level of auditory nuisance generated by the event

In France, the fight against high neighbourhood noise levels led to reinforced regulations in this domain in 2006. It is useful to obtain information on local usage: in cities and towns that are not used to street festivities, there could be a higher risk of residents demanding that an event be put to a stop when the noise level is above that which is permitted by law.

WEATHER

Working in the public space also means dealing with varying weather conditions: one must be able to undergo a rainstorm without too much damage, especially since spectators are often willing to sit through shows in the rain. It is useful to have tarps to protect fragile material and a tent to cover the control board. Alternative solutions, such as retreating to a covered space, can also be considered.

In the short term (the same day, up until 3 hours ahead of time) weather predictions can be consulted for free online. Detailed weather reports and predictions that are more long-term and more precise (local conditions, precise times) can be obtained through paid services. Direct consultation with a meteorologist can be more expensive, but is sometimes advisable.

Knowledge of wind directions can be very useful in deciding whether to install covered performance areas, pyrotechnics, large overhead structures, etc. In addition, wind speed can be immediately measured by installing an anemometer on the exposed structures.

Finally, if it is nice outside, anticipating the position of the sun can help to decide which way the audience should face.

Sets, structures, platforms, bleachers

The street arts have seen the appearance and development of some imposing structures, with the gigantic scale of interventions seeking to make themselves visible, new forms of urban staging...

Whether it is part of the set or another structure, platforms or bleachers, these installations must be established as solid and stable, resorting, when possible and when required by regulations, to a drawing office (which will make the necessary resistance calculations, draw blueprints) and an inspection agency (which will control the level of conformity with safety regulations).

Hosting an audience

DETERMINING THE CAPACITY AND FACILITATING CIRCULATION OF AN AUDIENCE

How does one determine the audience capacity of a show in the public space? How does one determine a maximum audience size and then limit the audience if one is in the street, a space that is supposed to be open to all? Did the artist think of this at the time of writing his or her show?

The nature of the artistic proposal will itself induce the ideal audience capacity. For example, a smaller form is ideally to be seen by a limited audience. This in part helps determine the choice of location. A small street will likely be better suited for this kind of performance than a large square. Inversely, choosing to perform in a monumental space will imply hosting a larger audience and will, in turn, influence the show's form, since it will have to be received in good conditions or within larger distances. In respecting security norms in any space, even open ones, a maximum capacity must be considered.

In the end, the determination of audience capacity is a central part of the project and is based on three main things; it should suit both the artistic proposal and the place, and conform with security rules. It is according to this capacity that one can determine what is needed in terms of clearings and corridors for audience circulation and this number thus allows one to choose an adequate location. It is also depending on the place that one can determine the proper audience capacity that will comply with safety criteria... The goal is therefore to find a balance, allowing the performance to find its proper place in relation to both the location and the audience.

Regarding security, it is important to ensure proper safety exits and a sufficient amount of space, providing access for first-aid workers and their material in case of an emergency. For open, un-guarded spaces, thinking about these questions in collaboration with town services allows one to correctly assess the potential audience based on the artistic project and the potential size of the audience. Let us remember that audience capacity somehow has an impact on the audience's behaviour... If there is a possibility of overflow in relation to the location, a plan must be made for spreading out the audience or to limit attendance (in this case, why not have a free ticket booth). This would avoid panic situations or having to simply cancel the performance.

It is therefore recommended to watch over the width, number and dispersion of streets leading into the event's space. Ideally, the chosen location will be served by streets or exits on both sides, allowing for a smooth evacuation, if need be. Of course, it will be necessary to keep lines, vehicles, or any other kind of obstacle from blocking the exit areas.

TRANSPORTATION, ORIENTATION, BARRIERS, PARKING...

In the public space, it is not rare for the artistic proposal to which the audience has been invited to take place far from parking areas. This could be intended to make the audience explore the surrounding area (open space, industrial area, etc.) or simply to keep the traffic out of the city centre.

Depending on the event's size, its audience capacity and its location and depending on whether or not the audience is an invited one, it could become necessary to provide

- signage on the site
- arrows indicating how to get to the site
- special, temporary parking areas

This must be done in collaboration with town services, as public signage is regulated.

It is important not to forget the possibility of temporarily re-routing public transportation, either to divert it away from an event, or to provide special access to the event.

On site, barriers can be set up to prevent the audience from entering closed-off areas. A security perimeter can be set up. This would be mandatory, for example, for a show using pyrotechnics.

Representatives or mediators able to greet and inform the audience would allow information to circulate around more than just one person. Lastly, access must be arranged for those with limited mobility.

LIGHTING

For some, taking over the urban space also means taking over the night: neutralising the public (and imposed) lighting to tame and sculpt the darkness.

The temporary suspension of public lighting can be arranged with the town services and/or the concessionaire of city lighting. In these cases, as in the case of spaces without public lighting, the event must arrange for its own lighting installations for its evening performances.

Let us distinguish three types of lighting chosen to meet a given performance's artistic demands:

- stage lighting
- audience lighting (the space where the audience will be during the show)
- lighting the site in its entirety, taking into account the safety of everyone

Lighting installations on site must allow for easy circulation and evacuation as well as any possible safety manoeuvres:

- the main lighting design can be made up of the public lighting: it must be attached to light fittings installed to a securely set or hung fixture that does not block circulation, with a minimum height of 2.25 meters above the areas accessible to the audience

- a second lighting network, hooked up to a separate electricity source, can be arranged in case the main lighting goes out: this would avoid any panic situations by maintaining ambient lighting to allow the audience to leave the site.

TICKETING

Free access to shows and the desire to reach, host and include – potentially – everyone within proximity of the site are at the heart of many street theatre companies' work. For these companies, each spectator or inhabitant must have unconditional and immediate access to the artistic proposal.

The decision to put a box office in place could be a way to address budgetary concerns: in other cases, and when it is necessary for reasons of safety, a box office (even a free one) allows one to limit the number of spectators and to know the exact attendance numbers should an incident occur.

WATERING HOLES AND TOILETS

"Hosting" an audience within the public space also involves matters of comfort and hygiene. If it is a large event, watering holes and portable toilets must be provided. For these, it is practical to call on specialised rental companies that install, clean and take away the toilets at the end of the event. It is also important to arrange access for those with limited mobility.

Toilets hooked up to the local plumbing are preferable to chemical toilets, especially in the summer (smell, evacuation).

Be aware that any drinking water must be transported through appropriate pipes: a watering hose, for example, will not do.

SALE OF DRINKS

The sale of beverages in France requires some administrative formalities and authorisations. A few service precautions: be aware of hygiene (refrigeration, cleanliness) and avoid glass bottles, for safety reasons.

ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

Access for the disabled is part of a recent and particularly restrictive piece of legislation in France, and in many countries. However, in the field of street arts the matter is not often addressed, compared to other artistic sectors. If it is addressed, it is generally regarding those of limited mobility (and other disabilities are seldom treated if at all).

Generally speaking, adaptive measures would be quite welcome. It would be good to provide, for those with limited mobility, preferably level areas set aside for wheelchairs, offering good visibility and with a minimum of movement needed during the show if need be. If necessary, access ramps can be constructed by the organiser. Passageways must also be arranged that are wide enough for a wheelchair to go through.

These considerations can be taken into account as early as the project's conception, or at the time of its installation and should be granted the same importance as the need to provide access to audience members without disabilities. If this is not done, there is a risk of later having to modify the set and to absorb the costs of such a modification...

Authorisations

In France intervening in the public space or in atypical spaces involves asking for certain authorisations (or carrying out declarations);

- with different representatives, according to the location type: a public authority when it is a public space, or a private owner
- of varying kinds, depending on the situation and corresponding regulation, depending for instance on the audience capacity of the event, the presence of a big top or tent...
- in different forms: from the simple letter requesting authorisation to the creation of a security file

THE SECURITY FILE

In France, a security file must be prepared and submitted in the following cases:

- a request to open an "establishment authorised to host an audience" (including big tops, tents and structures)
- use of structures, platforms or bleachers, stages, covered stages
- a show using pyrotechnics
- a "large gathering"
- or, in other cases, when a security commission is involved

In France, the "departmental consultative security commission" is the relevant organisation that issues official advice to the city authority (i.e. the mayor or the police prefect of Paris), notably in the following areas :

- security / safety regarding risks of fire and panic in "establishments authorised to host an audience"
- access for the disabled

The security file must contain most notably, and on a case-by-case basis:

- a presentation of the project (show, event...) and its context (festival, one-time event ...)
- the date and time of the performance
- the audience capacity, the expected attendance, and the layout of exits
- maps and blueprints of the event, structures, platforms and bleachers
- reports by certified inspection agencies attesting to the project's compliance with regulatory demands involving electrical installations, platforms and bleachers, structures, stages
- the French norms (NF) certificates or documentation attesting to the fire resistance of materials used (fabric, set...)

- the administrative documents of rented material: certification of fire resistance, installation instructions, inspection reports, certification of proper installation... (these will be provided by the rental company)
- a copy of the security register for big tops, tents and structures

In the case of shows using pyrotechnics, the file must include very specific documentation.

AUTHORISATION TO ORGANISE AN EVENT IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

In France, whenever the public space is involved, a request for authorisation (separate from the security file) must be submitted to the town hall with sufficient notice, given the scale of the event: 4 to 5 months ahead of time to 6 weeks ahead of time for smaller-scale proposals.

The request will include documents that summarize the artistic content and the technical aspects of the event, explaining:

- the date and place
- the estimated number of spectators
- installations, infrastructures, etc,
- layouts and blueprints

If necessary, town hall can be approached for decrees forbidding traffic or parking in certain areas of the city during the installation and performance of the project.

It is advisable to ensure that the space is not run by other public authorities whose permission could also be necessary: governmental low-income housing, school establishments, various local governments...

AUTHORISATION TO OPEN AN AUDIENCE-HOSTING ESTABLISHMENT

In France, when the event constitutes the creation of an audience-hosting establishment an official authorisation is needed before opening to the public.

OTHER CASES, IN FRANCE

Private spaces

When the show takes place on private property (a garden or courtyard...) there may not be any formal authorisations to pursue and a simple verbal agreement may suffice (be sure, however, that the audience capacity is appropriate to the amount of space). If there is a risk of damage to certain material, it is advisable to sign a space occupation agreement as well as an inventory of the premises so as to avoid any difficulties.

Large Gatherings

An event likely to include more than 1,500 people must be declared with the mayor

Pyrotechnics

Shows using pyrotechnics must obtain specific authorisation from the mayor. The request must include a security file. The security commission can then carry out a special inspection of the installations.

Beverage sales

A temporary request for authorisation to sell beverages can be submitted to the mayor, as can a request for authorisation to close beverage sales late.

Publicity

Public postings, amplified announcements and the distribution of fliers are all regulated, as need be, by decrees from the town or prefecture. For example, special authorisation can be requested to hang banners or billboards in public.

Insurance

Insurance is essential to any event involving an audience, especially when the event takes place in the public space; a hazardous, uncontrolled environment with a life of its own.

It is the organiser's responsibility to take out an insurance policy. "Public liability" insurance covers the insured from the monetary consequences of damage (bodily, material or immaterial) brought upon a third party at his or her own fault, or in the event of any accidental incident. This would cover, for example, pyrotechnics causing a fire in a neighbouring house. Associations can cover their members, volunteers and interns.

It is a good idea to be very familiar with the clauses and limits of some insurance contracts. Open communication with the insurer, who must be informed of the nature of the activities carried out, allows one to be sure that the event's specific characteristics (number of spectators, use of platforms or bleachers, space used, etc.) will be taken into account in the insurance plan. Warranty extensions can also be arranged on a temporary basis.

It may prove to be useful, depending on the situation, to consider an "individual accident insurance" place or an "all material risk insurance" plan. It is also possible to take out extra coverage for "operating loss" or "cancellation".

Lastly, it is important to remember that ignorance of or non-compliance with a safety regulation can result in the loss of coverage should an incident occur.

Safety

Compliance with safety regulations is not an insurmountable task. Familiarity with the texts (and their context) allows one to correctly assess the potential risks involved...

FIRE SAFETY

The most common cause of fire during street performances is still, when used, effects using fire and pyrotechnics. It is important to use suitable material for the structure and set as much as for the surrounding area. Refer to regulation laying out categories of resistance to fire and minimal security guidelines on a case-by-case basis.

In the public space, fire extinguishers must be placed near the riskier areas such as the control boards, the electrical installations or sets if they are flammable. Be sure to:

- use the proper extinguisher for each kind of fire
- have staff on hand who are trained in the use of fire extinguishers

In certain cases, a fire safety team may be required by regulation or by the security commission.

SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

Security personnel

Security personnel are different from fire-fighting personnel. Security personnel are those responsible for overlooking access to the site, any agitation, crowd control, guards and dog patrol. Security staff (or crowd control) can also provide surveillance of the site and material should the organiser or company be absent, or at night in the case of an installation that lasts several days.

Crowd control and security are provided by private companies (certified businesses and individuals). The costs are covered by the organiser or company, depending on what has been laid out in the contract.

As early as the project's conception, it is up to artists in the public space to create a close relationship and open and direct dialogue with the public. In most cases crowd control will not be necessary. It is important to consider it and imagine the concrete means by which it could be provided if necessary. As much as possible, the presence of crowd control must be prevented from becoming an imposing one that stands between the spectator and the performance.

Emergency personnel

Fire fighters as well as emergency rescue workers can be solicited as early as an event's conception for advice in matters of safety or first-aid.

WORK SAFETY

The sector's economic situation does not always allow its actors (companies, but also organisers) to follow proper work conditions to the letter regarding, for example, the number of work hours or safety conditions.

It is perhaps within these street companies more than elsewhere that we find practices and uses that increase accident risks. Companies often construct the sets at the heart of their creation themselves. This results in:

- a high level of versatility among artists, who are often both artists and technicians on the same show
- an overload of work and a high number of work hours at the time of the performance

Intervention in the public space involves an environment that is constantly renewed and new locations to discover, with new technical constraints to overcome.

In this context, it is recommended to pay particularly close attention to the work safety of temporary workers (interns, volunteers) whose limited professional experience and knowledge of basic security rules can represent an additional risk.

The employer must in all cases comply with work conditions and regulations.

Work schedules

The establishment of a work schedule arranging work shifts if necessary and rotations for technicians helps prevent accidents linked to worker fatigue (the cause of most accidents) and complies with regulations regarding work hours.

The employer must, when necessary or when made compulsory by regulations, implement the use of safety equipment. Safety must be ensured through collective safety devices (service scaffolding, railings...) and, where this is impossible from a technical standpoint, through individual safety devices (harnesses, helmets, etc.). All collaborators should be trained in the use of these safety devices.

Alcohol, drugs

The conviviality of working in a team at a show or festival must not allow us to forget that the consumption of alcohol and drugs is forbidden in the work place. It is important to be strict on this point in the case of technical operations that represent a professional risk (manual labour, working from high places, structure installation) but also during festivities, since the employer is responsible for his or her employees' well being up until their return back home.

Ethical and environmental concerns

Intervention in the public space does not finish with the last performance, or even with the dismantling of the set... It is essential to leave only artistic traces behind after a company's appearance.

First of all, the public space must be returned to its original layout and perspective, even if they have been enhanced, rethought and analysed by the artistic intervention. The inhabitants, the users, and the public services must be able to return to their daily functions. For companies and organisers, it is important to restore the location, putting all of its elements back in their original place. This is important for users of the public space as well as for the local partners with whom it is essential to maintain a relationship of trust. This is all the more true if one wishes to develop new projects and diversions...

As early as the project's conception, it is advisable to consider waste management and the restoration of the location into its original condition (cleaning, etc). Recycling and pick-up are a large part of the street arts aesthetic and ethical convictions, allowing them to develop a particular staging vocabulary around material objects taken out of their habitual use and context. These materials are not always easy on the environment. What becomes of tires, barrels and iron after the last performance? Pyrotechnics also produce waste that is sometimes projected over considerable distances... Integrating respect for the environment along each step of the way allows one to partner up with an approach that is widely shared by different actors within the street arts.

Specific practices

PYROTECHNICS

Shows using pyrotechnics are the most prone to lead to serious accidents. These worksites require enormous prudence. For this reason, it is recommended that a qualified individual – the fire foreman – centralises and coordinates all activities on the work site, from the initial to last phases of installation.

In France, whoever uses "K4" group articles must possess the certificate of the same name.

There are administrative steps to be taken: the creation of a security file, a request for authorisation to be submitted to the town mayor, as well as the Public liability insurance suitable for this kind of activity.

Location and layout of the site

The installation layout, which includes the firing zone and its environment, must be formally demarcated. The firing zone, set apart from all risk-bearing areas (housing, cars, public transportation routes...), must be cleared of all material or vegetation that might catch fire. Overhead networks must also be checked (electrical or other), to ensure that they are not in the path of any projectiles.

The safety perimeter is created taking into account the nature and calibre of the device, whose product description and instructions will specify the minimal safety distance necessary – generally for vertical projectiles – between the devices and people or objects. An efficient barrier system and security staff can serve to isolate the pyrotechnic zone. The safety perimeter must be maintained until the foreman authorises its removal.

Extra precautions

One must, at the very least, be equipped with suitable extinguishing devices, such as water or powder extinguishers. However, the extinguisher is far from being the sole, suitable solution for all pyrotechnics. The most effective means of extinguishing fire is still water when it is available in high quantity.

Particular attention must be paid to weather conditions. In case of possible rainstorms, it is prudent to evacuate the firing area. Wind direction and wind speed must also be carefully watched in the firing areas.

BIG TOPS, TENTS AND STRUCTURES

In 2001–2002, the Year of the circus arts in France led to the publication of "Establishment for the circus – Charter for the hosting of circuses in towns": the document defines a hosting procedure and the collaborative terms between professionals and town services needed to comply with existing regulation. It is, of course, recommended to comply with its content. Based on this work, a European Charter is currently being written (project managed by Circostrada Network and HorsLesMurs).

Here are a few practical elements to keep in mind: when one wishes to install a big top, a tent or a structure, special permission is necessary. Proper authorisation must be requested with the local authorities.

It is advisable to carefully choose the installation area:

- the ground must be stable and suitable for driving in stabilising pins
- the area must be far enough away from "dangerous surroundings"

Weather conditions must also be watched carefully.

Calendar: administrative steps and representatives in the French environment

This "reminder" calendar offers an overview of the various steps involved in putting on an artistic project in a public space, from the point of view of the company or of the organiser, for either a new creation or a new location for an already existing show. It refers to the steps that need to be taken within the French environment.

From conception to performance to clean up, the steps and order described here are likely to vary case-by-case and according to the scale of the project. Therefore, certain steps only apply for large-scale projects.

Lastly, it would be a welcome idea to arrange a maturation period at some point in the operations' unfolding...

This calendar refers to the steps that need to be taken within the French environment.

First steps

LOCATION SCOUTING

- Choice of performance location(s), on-site visit
- Assessment of material and technical conditions
- Assessment of safety conditions

SET AND STRUCTURES

- Blueprints and calculations
- Inspection of calculations and construction

CIRCUS TENTS

- If this is the first installation of a tent, start putting together the safety registry

OTHER

- Create a technical specifications sheet for the show

Projet implementation

AUTHORISATIONS

- Create a security file
- Request for permission to hold an event in the public space
- Request for permission to inhabit the spaces under the authority of public institutions, or private proprietors
- Request for permission to open an "establishment hosting audiences", submission of a security file
- Request for permission to use projectiles using pyrotechnics, submission of a security file

DECLARATIONS

- Declaration of a "large gathering"

CIRCUS TENTS

- If it is the first installation of a tent, or for a foreign tent being installed for the first time in France, an inspection by the security commission (for the purpose of obtaining an attestation of compliance and an identification number for the tent)

AUTHORISATIONS

- Request for permission for the special, one-time use of an "establishment hosting audiences" but not intended to host events
- Request for permission to open a temporary sales point for beverages, or to temporarily transfer a permanent beverage sales point
- Request for permission to install signage elements

Representatives

- Organiser, mayor, town services
- Mayor, town services
- Emergency and fire workers (fire prevention)

- Drawing offices (Bureaux d'étude)
- Certified inspection agencies (Organismes de contrôle agréés)

- Certified inspection office for big tops, tents and structures (Bureaux de vérification des chapiteaux, tentes et structures)

6 to 2 months ahead of time

2 months ahead of time

1 month ahead of time

- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)
- Administrator of public domain and of private property
- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)
- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)
- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)

- Security commission (Commission de sécurité)
- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)
- Mayor
- Mayor (or police prefect in Paris)

Project implementation (cont.)

INSURANCE POLICIES

- Be sure to understand exactly what the insurer will cover.
Take out extra coverage if necessary

OTHER

- Request to divert traffic routes or to stop traffic on certain roads
- Dialogue with residents

D - 1 month

Representatives

- Insurer
- Mayor, town services
- Inhabitants, local businesses, residents...

DECLARATIONS

- Declare with the mayor the temporary holding place for pyrotechnic material

INSTALLATION

- If necessary, test the makeup and resistance of the ground

OTHER

- Information on weather predictions météorologiques

D - 15 days

- Mayor
- Certified inspection agencies
- Weather information services

Execution

INSTALLATION

- Assembly of the show's installations
- Connecting networks (water, electricity, telephone)
- All necessary installation inspections (electrical, heating...)
- Signage, barriers, temporary parking
- Watering places, portable toilets
- Handicap accessibility
- Spaces for break areas and dining for various teams

AUTHORISATIONS

- Possible inspection by a security commission

OTHER

- Information on weather predictions

D - 5 to D - 1

- Electricity provider, water distribution and telephone companies, town services
- Certified inspection agencies
- Town services
- Service providers
- Security commission
- Weather information services

Performance

HOSTING THE AUDIENCE PERFORMANCES

D

After the performances

- Location assessment (in the case of pyrotechnics, reduce the risk of fire and check the elements that have not exploded)
- Disassembly
- Clean up, waste and residue management
- Summary report of pyrotechnic projectiles

D & D+1



Culture Programme



Education and Culture DG

CIRCOSTRADA NETWORK

Hors les murs



Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication

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