

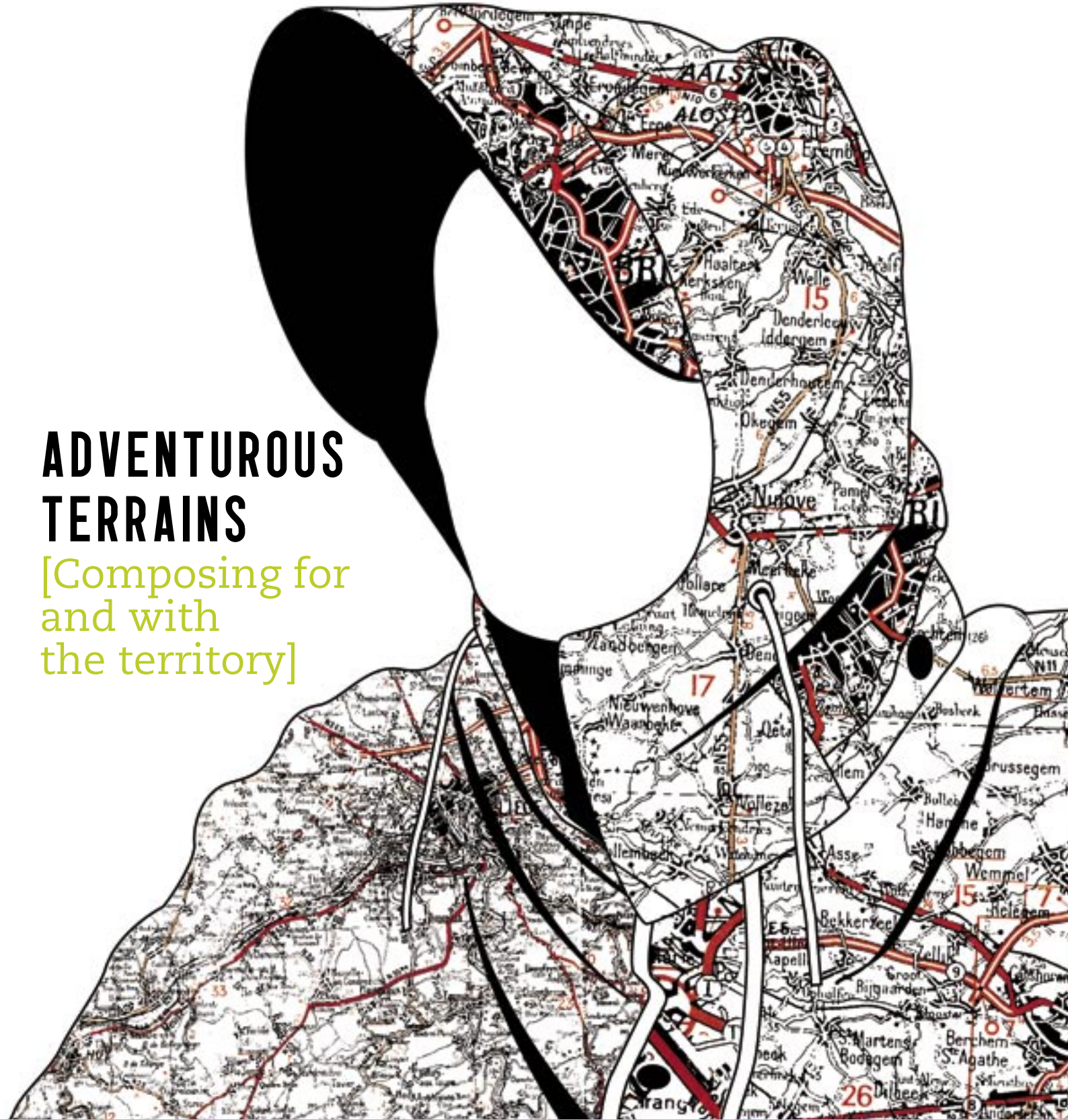
Dossier #3 - July 2009

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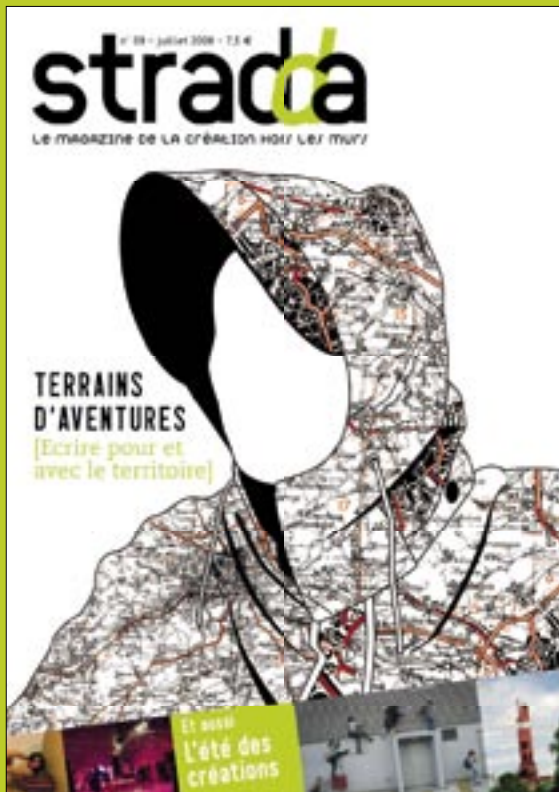
ADVENTUROUS TERRAINS

[Composing for
and with
the territory]



Circostrada Network

The magazine on the circus and outdoor creation



The dossier is an extract from
Stradda #9 - July 2008

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Adventurous terrains

[Composing for and with the territory]

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editorial

We are pleased to present you with *Stradda* magazine's third dossier "Adventurous terrains [Composing for and with the territory]". The European professionals of the circus and street arts have often expressed a wish to have access to publications and documentary resources that are easily accessible and translated into several languages.

These resources are useful on many levels: beyond the necessary exposure given to artistic projects, they also serve to inform policymakers, institutions and sponsors on these innovative aesthetics.

Stradda, a quarterly magazine published in French by HorsLesMurs –national resource centre for the street and circus arts– is the

only magazine that is entirely dedicated to creation in the public space and the contemporary circus. The correspondents of the Circostrada Network platform naturally turned to this particularly well-identified publication to, every other month, translate into English and publish online the thematic reports to appear with the magazine.

We hope that this new dossier will participate in creating an easier circulation of ideas and artistic projects. We also hope that it will add to the overall debate and bring to light the great vitality of the circus and street arts.

Jean Digne. Director of Publication

Stéphane Simonin. Chief Editor

Yohann Floch. Coordinator of Circostrada Network

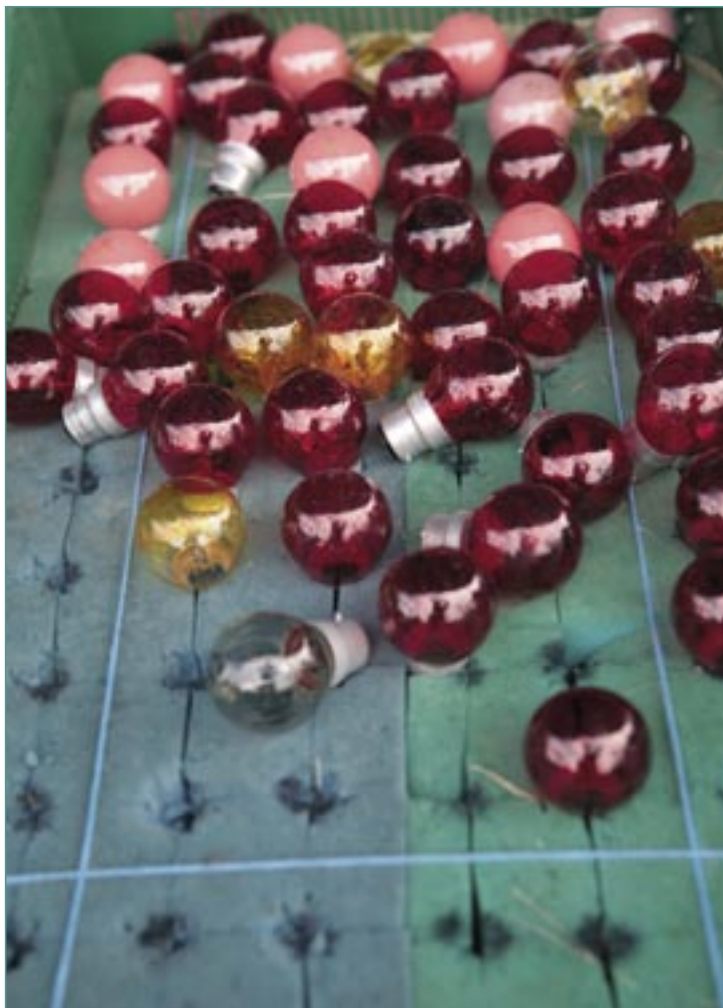


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HORS LES MURS

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CIRCOSTRADA NETWORK

Circostrada Network - street arts and circus arts
European platform for information, research and professional exchanges

Circostrada Network works towards the development and structuring of the circus arts and street arts on the European scale. Although these sectors represent a dynamic contribution to the European arts, they are in need of a common forum to allow for collaboration, discussion and professional representation at the European level. Founded in 2003 by HorsLesMurs and composed of over 30 correspondents, the network contributes to the sharing of information and resources within these artistic milieus by favouring encounters and co-operation between European professionals and by carrying out common actions to further the recognition of these artistic forms.

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adventurous terrains

[Composing for and with the territory]

Is it a new artistic trend? A need to confront oneself with reality? A return to the fundamentals of street arts? The act of a citizen? One thing is certain; an increasing number of artistic companies are leaving behind the old beaten paths of artistic distribution in search of new, adventurous terrains. What is their motivation? They wish to immerse themselves in the heart of **territories** to find material for their creations; to speak not only to an audience but also to **inhabitants** so as to create with them; to renew the relationship between **the period** of creation and distribution and to invent **new forms** that are rooted in **real life**. *Stradda* has certainly been struck by these new adventures, which today constitute a veritable artistic movement.

An overview
of a handful
of artistic
projects.

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Territory. Designates both a geographical space – city, municipality, country... – and those who inhabit it. The territory can be the setting in which the artistic project takes place or the fertile ground for creation, a substratum over which the artists take possession.

Did you say territory?

This has recently become a common buzzword in cultural circles. But what does it really mean, and precisely what is it that artists who work “with” territory do?

No one uses this word in real life. I live in a neighbourhood, a city or a town, but not a “territory”. Culture professionals have been using this word incessantly at least since the neighbourhood Culture Projects, put forth by the Ministry of Culture in 1995 at a time when the ‘territorializing’ of cultural politics had already been an overreaching phenomenon. The word became increasingly popular in 2001, when wastelands were named “new artistic territories”, and we have since seen the word appear in the title of countless conferences and research programmes. Google provides further proof of this semantic success story: 600,000 hits result from a Google search of “art and territory”.

This symptomatic term’s repeated use follows the statistical proof of the failure of democratizing culture. It is a common buzzword in the newspeak of cultural policy. It is never precisely defined and one always imagines that it implies a certain link to “reality” and that it manifests the desire to create in closer contact with “the public”. Territory therefore refers to both a geographical space – city, country, municipality... - and those who inhabit it. Other key words are often associated with this term: residency, cultural action, or sometimes “relational aesthetics” or “contextual art”¹.

Creation material. There are two ways of envisioning the joining of territory and creation. The territory can be the setting in which the artistic project takes place. A link exists with the place, but it is tenuous and secondary: theatre *in* the street and art *in* the local scenery. Another possible configuration is the territory as a fertile breeding ground for creation, or a substratum of

which the artists take possession. Theatre, dance and music that is *of* the street or art *of* the local scenery are a few examples of this view whereby words, sounds and scenery become the source of an artistic project.

The “word” of the “inhabitants” is particularly sought after and is at the centre of numerous artistic creations. It is taken down during artistic residencies and reproduced as is, interpreted and reworked by artists and contrasted with other testimonies. This was the case in *Les Veillées*, conceived by Guy Allouche of the HVDZ² company: “*The idea is for the circus, dance, theatre and video arts to do all that it can to encounter people, to gather their testimony and to invent art forms that people feel will include them (...). Les Veillées are made up of encounters, walks in the street and artistic interventions that allow local inhabitants to play along with the company’s employees at the time of our residencies.*” These private words made public, these socially inaudible words which are finally receiving due attention, will thus take on a political and aesthetic dimension and often resonate strongly within the inner city.

The sounds also nourish a great deal of *in situ* creations. We remember the MU³ collective, which provided a new way of hearing the community of Goutte d’Or in Paris for pedestrians equipped with headsets and walkmen. We may also think of the composer Nicolas Frize, who from the factories of Billancourt to the Post Offices of Marseille, probed the social corpus so as to “*once again give attention to the sounds that remind us of the existence of the other*”⁴.

The space of everyday, urban life or natural scenery, is also eligible to become a source of material for artists. The visual artist Stefan Shankland⁵, in residency for several years with the stage ZAC (*zone d’aménagement concerté*, or urban development zone) of Ivry-sur-Seine, turns this territory into a laboratory whose “*visual and cultural potential*” he explores by displacing a series of emblematic urban objects, creating atypical billboards... The collective of architects and artists called Pixel⁶ also works with the city and its metamorphoses and created the Bulb: a half sphere set up in a public



In 2006, aboard the *Cargo Sofia-Ljubljana*, the passenger spectators have embarked on the "road theatre" of Stefan Kaegi.

square where images are projected and sounds are recorded and remixed for a two-week period of immersion in a neighbourhood or town.

Another possible link between creation and the territory is the one offered by Le Phun last May at Martin-Pêcheur Island, along the Marne, in Champigny. In typical Land Art style, the Le Phun⁷ team settled on the site for a couple of weeks to make way for about one hundred *Pheuillus*, fragile characters covered with dead leaves, along with moving and subtle images of the human condition. Under a bridge, in the trees, or under water, these transitory travellers were thus able to engage in silent dialogue with the countryside as well as with the passers-by.

On the road. As far as Stefan Kaegi of the Rimini Protokoll collective is concerned, he is inventing a genre: "road theatre". His *Cargo Sofia-X* takes spectators from Avignon, Paris or Bordeaux into a trailer for two hours and takes them around their city. One of the inner walls is made of glass. The scenery rolls by, juxtaposed with filmed images, which the drivers comment upon. The journey actually lasts several days and passes through Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Germany, Switzerland... This captivating trip throughout the Europe of road transportation and rogue capitalism is part of an innovative form of the theatre of the real that is both of a documentary and fictional nature. Its political and poetic effectiveness is increased tenfold by the juxtaposition of the covered terrains: the one in which the two Bulgarians' tale takes place and the one in which the truck is actually driving. This immersive and lively realistic piece of fiction explores in a powerfully original way the troubling, unreal quality of the visible world.

If the territory can nourish creation, as these examples show, it is also partly an artist's invention. For the inhabitants of Champigny, the Martin-

Pêcheur island is no longer quite the same since the *Pheuillus* appeared. For many residents of Ivry, the stage ZAC has become more of a zone of cultural activity than a zone of urban development, thanks to the activity of Stefan Shankland. And the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods traversed by Guy Alloucherie and his troupe no longer have quite the same image of themselves and of their city. Through these transplants of the real, this porosity between art and life, these new poetic spaces in the hollow space of everyday life, through the displacement of mundane representations, these artistic projects anchored and composed within the territory contribute slightly and temporarily to taking one out of the territory. Confronted with the formatted tales of urban storytelling, glorifying the identity and centrality of cities, this provisional deemphasising of place and identity are eminently enjoyable. They also confirm the fact that an alternate kind of cultural policy is possible, aiming less at *creating for* – an audience or a performance season – than at *inventing with* – people or a territory – fusing both creation and distribution and bringing together cultural action and artistic creation. ● PASCAL LE BRUN-CORDIER

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, Les Presses du réel, 1998.
2. Paul Ardenne, *Un art contextuel*, Flammarion, 2004.
3. hvdz.org/blog
4. mu.asso.fr
5. Nicolas Frize can be read and heard at <http://artw-espacepublic.c.la>
6. trans305.org
7. <http://pixel.asso.free.fr>
8. lephun.net
9. rimini-protokoll.de

THE ART OF AWAKENING

Giving, receiving, recreating: *Les Veillées* by the HVDZ company is divided into three parts. Two weeks are set aside to settle into the city and to forge relationships with the inhabitants, simply being there to listen, talk, walk, dance, film the neighbourhood, its streets, its activities, drink and eat with the people. Then it is time to reconstruct, with a show and eventually a film in which the city and its inhabitants play the main roles. Guy Alloucherie, Artistic Director of HVDZ explains, "After that night, we hope that the anonymous faces (...) will no longer be anonymous, and that traces will remain. In taking this step, we have participated in our own way to forging relationships and bringing people together." ● T.V.

Ouïe/Dire in Quercy

What's the local cuisine?

Capturing a sound here and an image there, since December of 2007, Kristof Guez and Marc Pichelin have rubbed shoulders with the East of Quercy, its inhabitants and its local cod dish: the estafinado.

This *Gourmet Trilogy* is a photo/phonographic portrait of the Eastern Quercy region as well as an opportunity to talk about this territory by evoking an essential element: its cuisine. The photographer Kristof Guez, whose subjects tend to be reality and everyday life, and the composer Marc Pichelin, who enjoys being in a contextual relationship with a territory, invent original artistic forms, mixing performance, installation, video and publishing. Their work intentionally avoids the spectacular and has two goals. First, there is the exploration of the relationship between real life and contemporary artistic expression, with an analysis of the role of the artist in our world. Then, there is the sincere and open experimentation of the relationship between sound and image in general, and specifically between photography and phonography.

Before tasting. Since 2007, and for three years, (*"You need time if you want to approach people"*, as Kristof Guez remarks) they have painted a portrait of this corner of France as seen through a local dish: the estofinado, a dish that originated in the Lot Valley and consists of dried fish (cod) and potatoes. Throughout this residency, the artists have offered to approach or to (re)discover not only the finished product, but also the different steps of preparation that take place before the actual tasting. There were partnered with *Derrière le hublot* which, since 1996, has focused on increasing awareness among the widest possible audience through appropriate action, and they have addressed all the elements of country life, exploring new relationships with the inhabitants, other ways of sharing with the audience and integrating art and culture in the rural setting. An artistic act, of course, marked the end of



© KRISTOF GUEZ

the process (with a first episode presented at the 2008 *Derrière le hublot* festival). However, for our two observers of real life, the most important thing is not the publishing of the photo/phonographic postcard – even if it has universal value – but all of the intermediary steps carried out on different sites – domestic or industrial, public or private – and nourished by encounters with the inhabitants. *"The social demands and the openness of the work matter more than its realisation"*, as they both say in chorus, *"We are at the service of the territory"*.

● THIERRY VOISIN

Trilogie gastronome, Compagnie Ouïe/Dire
www.ouiedire.com - www.chemins-publics.com

Marie-Thérèse Sales, butcher in Capdenac-Gare

"It's good to talk about our region, its heritage and its cuisine. We're far from Paris but we exist too! And it changes us to see artists who are interested in our work and who live side-by-side with us."



Opéra Pagai's Observatory for human behaviour

An open window on inhabitants

With its *Safari Intime*, Opéra Pagai has proposed a composition on the human level, inviting itself into people's homes and blurring the boundaries between inhabitants and actors.

Opéra Pagai is the inventor of the Observatory of human behaviour, and as part of the national privacy holiday, will be organising an open-door and open-window event. Here we can observe, through a rigorously scientific approach, human specimens within their natural habitat. More prosaically, this *Safari Intime* will use the entire neighbourhood, mixing actors and inhabitants. A night visitor can, with complete impunity, allow his curiosity to run wild, observing how others live by looking into each window of their houses, discovering the secrets of a small corner of the town where the inhabitants themselves reconsider the ways in which they live together. ●

THIERRY VOISIN

www.operapagai.com

© JEAN-LUC PETIT



"Safari intime"
in Chalon dans la
rue, in 2007

Cyril Jaubert, Artistic Director of Opéra Pagai

"We consider the lifestyle of a territory and its population."

What might I say to these people that I would not be able to say elsewhere? This is the main, guiding question in the process of *Entreprises de détournement*. We consider the lifestyle of a territory and its population so as to observe the world. We do not aspire to understand everything, but we try to comprehend the specificities of the places in which we immerse ourselves. There are many encounters, discussions, readings, etc. When working from this material, art changes one's perspective. How do we shift things so as to better catch on to them, expose things that will move people, speak to them? We are looking for just the right

disorder. With the work approach of *Entreprises de Détournement*, we are trying to forge a relationship with the inhabitants, more like *La Vie en Atribus* by Ilotopie or *Impostures* by the Théâtre de l'Unité. With projects like *Safari Intime* or *Entreprise de Détournement*,

everything changes and anything is possible. The exploration is infinite. We are in a constant state of interrogation and we are always starting from zero. We do not want to sell our shows or to market them, but to collaborate with programmers who request our presence

"When we knock on people's doors, we must have a desire to like them!"

a tour would be impossible. It can't become a routine. When we knock on people's doors we must have a desire to like them! It takes a great deal of energy. With each new territory

because our project corresponds with theirs. With both the inhabitants and the cultural operators, these projects take place on the human level.

● COMMENTARY GATHERED BY A.G.

Inhabitant. A person who experiences and shapes the cultural and symbolic dimensions of the territory where she lives. Unlike spectators or an audience, inhabitants are not content simply receiving a performance. They are also the subjects, and sometimes the partners.

Inhabited composition

Since the year 2000, street companies have explored new artistic forms that are rooted in the specific terrain, calling upon the public and dealing with proximity and shifts in perspectives.

«We are witnessing a shift of the pendulum. The generation that is 35-45 years old is returning to a deeper reflection of an initial fundamental. It's no longer looking for a non-audience, as it did from the 70s to 1985, and it's not in search of spectators as it was from 1985-2000. It now wants to meet inhabitants.» Philippe Saunier-Borrell, the Director of *Promenade(s)* in Haute-Garonne is pleased with the emergence of a trend that he and others support. Strengthened by the experience of their elders, some artists insist on working outside of the distribution network established in the 80s and 90s by exploring territories anew.

Speaking to the inhabitants. KMK, KompleXXKapharnaüm, Opéra Pagai... These companies, along with others, include in their process a kind of unique relationship with the public. They approach the territory as a cultural and symbolic space, shaped by those who experience it day by day. Art is taking on a relational aspect and the encounter is becoming one of the principal motors of the artistic act, which sometimes plays the role of an organiser, as the goal is to create *with* the inhabitants. The public becomes a subject of creation, or even a partner. Such configurations overturn conventional distribution models. Cyril Jaubert, the Artistic Director of Opéra Pagai points out that “*In Entreprises de Détournement there is no audience. The inhabitants are confronted with what is offered. They're the ones we want to talk to.*” Céline Cuny, a visual artists and apprentice of FAI AR's first graduating class, takes this way of thinking a bit farther. With *Le Pas de la Porte*, she installs herself for several months in the centre of a neighbourhood. In her workshop/booth, she creates objects and invites the inhabitant to join

her in the activity. The objects serve as mediators while the artist tries to understand the complex and subjective nature of the link that is created between a person and the place where he or she lives. “*I offer a time and space for people to meet, share and express things... I try, above all, to listen.*”

Working with the real. One point in common exists between artists with very different aesthetics and modes of intervention: the search for direct contact with reality. They want to confront themselves with it and look at it straight on so as to be present in the world. They emphasise the unique, auscultate the intimate and question their encounter with the collective. They defend an artistic appropriation of the real, which often takes place through a shift of perspective or an act of fiction. This is confirmed by the inhabitants' testimonies put into images in *SquarE→télévision locale de rue*

“In Entreprises de détournement there is no audience. The inhabitants are confronted with what is offered.”

Cyril Jaubert, Opéra Pagai.

by KompleXXKapharnaüm (Villeurbanne), or the *mises en scène* by the inhabitants of Argenton-sur-Creuse, who were photographed and posted in actual size in the streets for *Noyade Interdite* by Ici Même (Paris). Given a pre-established partition, these “in situ and in vivo” artists, to use the expression by Ema Drouin, the Artistic Director of *Deuxième Groupe d'intervention*, put their work process to the test of context and the inhabitants. They look to compose an artistic object seeped in life. These kind of approaches result in an ephemeral



Le Roman fleuve
by KMK,
Saint-Martory
in 2003.

© FRANÇOIS SERVEAU

composition that is receptive to the world. This artistic path is that of doubt and analysis. In the neighbourhoods where she works, Céline Cuny hopes to be *“an inhabitant, an artist and someone on a mindful poetic quest.”*

Taking the time to meet. A *sine qua non* condition of these compositions: the commitment of time. Between location scouting, immersion and *in situ* creation, the artists allow the necessary time and means to create the conditions for an encounter that goes beyond the time of the performance. By bringing together the cultural action and creation, they demonstrate the possibility of reflecting together upon these two dynamics, which are too often separated in the milieu of art. In this

perspective, Pierre Sauvageot, the Director of *Lieux Publics*, advocates the logic of the public commission. *“Street companies are capable of great production quality within the custom-made context. They are able to tell stories to territories with great generosity.”*

Cyril Jaubert notes that *“The public, geographical and cultural space is finished. When you change cities, neighbourhoods, everything changes. Realities vary everywhere. There is so much to do, to say and to explore!”* By composing for and with an open territory, these companies perpetuate and renew one of the main artistic motivations of the street arts: to talk about the world that surrounds them to those that live within it.

● ANNE GONON

Time. Process of taming the territory, an immersion period. Can become an integral part of the creation.

Time at work

When the elaboration period becomes an integral part of the show, when the territory is both the place of performance and the place performed, a new aesthetic comes to light.

Just yesterday: artists, especially those that we still call “street artists”, stepped outside of conventional walls to temporarily take possession of the spaces handed down to everyday life. It was a deterritorialization of art and a reterritorialization of the public space, as Gilles Deleuze would have said. He also announced in his *ABC Primer*: “the creating of a territory is nearly the birth of art.” It is an impalpable territory in this case, with the hope that its configuration will persist in memory.

Revealers. This is still true. But the territory is not independent. It is fed by context, which it also feeds. It plays with its resonances. All the more so if the artists choose to answer what the place suggests, or even to make their creation a way of revealing the “real” in which it is working. This real is, as in the examples we have recently seen, a kind of architecture, a neighbourhood or an entire city and its inhabitants. Each place is both specific and indicative of society’s lifestyles. Each approach is unique. However, at the risk of over-simplifying, we can single out a few common elements and a few questions asked by this kind of creation.

There is, for example, the longer relationship. It takes time to immerse oneself into an environment, to take hold of it and to allow it to take hold of you. So do we consider this period of research to be another part of the process, as for a movie director, a novelist, or any integral part of a work? It all depends on what is publicly visible. Thus, *Passants* by Ex Nihilo includes the open improvisations carried out “in the raw” in the Marseille neighbourhood of Belsunce, the restoration gatherings at the grounds of La Compagnie, where the dancers were in residency, the spectacular theatrical translation of the experienced reality and *Calle Obrapia*, a street proposal resulting from an analogous immersion into a neighbourhood of Havana, Cuba.

Pierre? La Restitution, which fully blossomed in Rennes and will be presented in its Sotteville version during the VivaCité festival, is an even clearer case. The central idea goes back to the approach initiated by Hervé Lelardoux with *Ville Invisible 1*, ten years ago. The author writes that, “The project consists of,

on the one hand, apprehending the city in its global nature as a setting and subject for the show, and on the other hand, exploring the city that resides in the mind of the passers-by; their invisible city.” For *Pierre?*, it all starts with an ad placed in a free newspaper. Pierre has amnesia, and seems to have lived in... He does not remember the city, but perhaps the city will remember him. There is a call for testimonies, the convocation of real-fake witnesses, confrontations, crosschecks, itineraries, the rise of a rumour that is spread by the media... The “restoration” – with the re-enactment of an accident that seems to have stolen Pierre’s memory – is a moment within a chain of events that reflects life.

The inhabitant-present. Projects of this kind often overlap reality and fiction. The *Safari Intime* thought up by Opéra Pagai leads us, like the *Diable Boiteux* of Lesage, to an observation of human behaviour. The “zoological-critical” fable is indicated by cartels. The neighbourhood is real, as are the apartments made available by the inhabitants. Are they in their natural state or designed for the stage? Certain characters are also played by the inhabitants in understated, everyday situations. Are they playing a role or are they the role? I find that there is an analogy with the current taste for fictitious documentary that marked the most recent Cannes Festival.

KompleXXKapharnaüm take from real life, in the towers and apartment buildings, the image of their occupants. With an improbable or reconstructed dialogue placed in giant fanciful images upon facades, the portraits speak of the invisible lives that are concealed by anonymous urban planning. Here again, reality is represented by the “real” people, and what makes the work is the consensual fiction that brings to light this real life in a unique relationship with spectators.

In another project awaiting confirmation, Mark Etc and the Ici Même group are planning the progressive drawing, by harnessing everyday actions, of a territory-map that thumbs its nose at the surveillance cameras and makes itself visible to the birds... ● SYLVIE CLIDIÈRE



© AGATHE POUPENEY/PHOTOSCENE.FR



Là commence le ciel, Villeurbanne, 2006

“If I want to talk about a place (...) I also need to live there to understand its history and the current meaning of the place...”

Julie Desprairies,
compagnie
des Prairies.

The movement of places

Stairs, a saleswoman, the view one has at a window and the entire neighbourhood of skyscrapers; this is the dance material of Julie Desprairies in Villeurbanne.

For Julie Desprairies, dance is used to “make the movement of places visible”. She says that, “choreography relies on the physical, concrete characteristics of a space. Movement is linked to the daily use of the body in the simplest of things. If I want to talk about a place, I need movements within the place. Therefore, I must include people who make use of it. I also need to live there to understand its history and the current meaning of the place...” In accordance with these ideas, she created *Là Commence le Ciel* in 2006

for the Biennial of Lyon in the skyscraper neighbourhood of Villeurbanne, a nearly autonomous enclave within the city and a remnant of the collective utopias of the 1930s that associates the monumentality of the TNP, the city hall and the two entrance towers as well as the functional sobriety of the apartment buildings. Under the guidance of professionals, the team elaborating the “dance material” reflected upon the territory’s current diversity: inhabitants, business owners, city employees, students...

Seeping into the folds. The result is an approach that moves between axes and seeps into the folds. I recall: a dancing sales duo dressing up a mannequin, the sound of a group of 17

clarinetists filling the space between the two walls of an interior courtyard, a fast race highlighting the oblique side of stairs behind windows that were amply serrated in contrast with the modest interior hallways, the line of air traced between the TNP and the entrance towers by two parallel dancers, reminiscent of the *Roof* of Trisha Brown... Lastly, in a large room in city hall, to the music of Hanns Eisler, a group choreography commemorating the first paid vacation time, with a photographic exhibit in the hall, celebrating its sixtieth anniversary. “*My choreography*”, Julie Desprairies concludes, “*belongs to the skyscrapers. If a festival wants to programme it, they’ll just have to do so right here.*” Decidedly *In situ*. ● S.C.

La Fabrique de Liens by the Apprentie compagnie

Proserpine, free and public clown

To find out "what a territory has to say", Proserpine has gone before people from high schools and in markets, one day as a brother, the other as a shrink or dictator, and this is where she found the material for *"Tout Nous"*.

Because Caroline Obin wanted to leave the stage to "go over toward the politician", she imagined *La Fabrique des liens*, a residency programme in the public space. The goal? "To find out what a territory has to say," and to fulfil the commission put forth by the cultural structure that is offering the project (looking for new audiences, questioning inhabitants...). From 2005 to 2007, her character Prosperine therefore stayed in places as varied as a high school, a hospital or a Christmas market to make herself "available to people", following her conviction of being a "public clown".

The meanderings of humanity

The strength and the quality of this character's presence lent itself to direct contact with the audience. "In the public space I'm free: it's a pretext for expressing impulses and personal feelings. I become people's voice. I can be a shrink, a brother, a nun, a dictator, a scapegoat... It's a trip through the meanderings and paradoxes of humanity wherein everything is possible." The material gathered during these encounters was reworked by Caroline Obin and a fellow artist (a different one each time: video artist, visual artist, writer or choreographer) for a concluding presentation performed by Proserpine to conclude each residency. *La Fabrique des Liens* is now finished. It gave birth to an exhibit bringing together the works produced in the form of a final presentation, a collection of texts, songs and, of course, a performance by Proserpine called *Le Tout Nous*.

● NALY GÉRARD



© CHRISTOPHE RAYNAUD DE LAGE

Stéphanie Bourson, cultural action in Bagnolet

Taking care of caretakers

Bagnolet, in Seine-Saint-Denis, hosted Prosperine's *La Fabrique des Liens* in autumn of 2007 in partnership with Le Samovar. "Our first intention was to fill a non-cultural location and to meet the population that does not go to performances," Stéphanie Bourson, Head of development of cultural action explains. "We also wanted to introduce Prosperine who, a few months later, would present her show "Le Tout Nous" to the residents of Bagnolet after a creative residency." So one morning, the staff of the Medical Centre found a new "white shirt" among them: the clown Prosperine. For one week, she went alongside the nurses, doctors and

dentists, sometimes meeting with resistance. She examined the caretakers more than those who were cared for, as seen in her final presentation about "care". The feedback on behalf of those using the Medical Centre was positive, even more so on behalf of the staff. "Proserpine tried to restore relations within the team", Stéphanie Bourson explained, "She brought a bit of harmony, humour and fantasy to a place of suffering. On our end, this comforted us in the idea that we must constantly reinvent forms and step off the beaten path in order to go out and meet the public." ● N.G.

www.myspace.com/chezproserpine



© GÉRARD LECORNU

Le Deuxième Groupe d'intervention, three years in Harfleur

In the course of the conversation

Scattered residencies, but spread out over three years. *A conversation with Harfleur* takes the tone of a personal diary with several voices. It's that of the Deuxième Groupe and the inhabitants.

A three-year companionship, a distribution residency to immerse participants into a territory without melting into it: the experience of the *Deuxième Groupe d'intervention* in Harfleur is an original one. "In time, I met each actor within the city", declares Ema Drouin. With meetings with the municipal employees in discussion with the inhabitants, interventions within the primary school during gatherings in the library, "I am accompanying the city in its ambitious cultural project, all the while remaining on the outside. It's a fascinating position to be in." The company brought three proposals along with it (*Les Yeux bleus*, *Etats des lieux* and *Chevet de cathédrales*). "Their composition contains a certain porosity. We are looking for meaning with regards to Harfleur. Questions are asked together, actions are taken together and certain compositions are made together". The company is therefore working on its projects within each of the city's three neighbourhoods with the goal of converging them at

the cultural centre under construction at the intersection of the neighbourhoods. "These three years have given us the time to be in direct contact with the people. Each of the projects in Harfleur has its own unique colour: everything is taking on more interesting proportions. The inhabitants have taken possession of our work more quickly and that has enriched the work." *Conversation avec Harfleur* is both the title of the company's adventure in Haute-Normandie and the name of the creation that *Deuxième Groupe* will present in 2009 to conclude the experience. "It will cover my whole process in Harfleur. I picture it as a personal diary to be shown and read aloud. I would like to include the public of Harfleur in it so that they'll bring the images they have of us." The artists watch the city and the city watches the artists. It is a game of mirrors that "helps us move forward", says Ema Drouin. Halfway through the residency she feels as though the project has "anchored" her company. This is surely true, as on either side, liberty remains. ● NATHALIE MAURET

Michel Toulouzan, assistant to cultural affairs in Harfleur

"The artists enter the city"

The construction of new cultural facilities, the creation of contemporary glass-stained windows for the church" Deuxième Groupe d'intervention has integrated its work into Harfleur's plans. The city of 8,600 inhabitants has also

refinished its *Fête de la Scie*, a street festival with a decidedly medieval twist. "Harfleur and the street arts have a common history thanks to this festival. The work of Ema Drouin allows us to reach the audience by resonating on new levels,"

explains Michel Toulouzan, the assistant to cultural affairs. The company's original creations were enriched by their contact with the inhabitants and the city services. "Artists are coming back to the city", the elected official explained. ● N.M.

New forms. The work is carried out “where it wouldn’t usually be”, going through cross-roads, eluding industrial reproduction and blossoming in the context of a relationship forged with the community.

POINT OF VIEW

With neither taboos nor totems

Terrain, decentralization, proximity... These well-worn subjects are the topic of discussion in cultural conferences while segregation increases between national stars and the territorial workers in the trenches.

Talking about artistic action within a territory can perhaps be considered a kind of pleonasm... or an old, implied taboo of cultural policy. The creation of the Avignon Festival in 1947 and the Aurillac Festival in 1986 automatically constituted an artistic act within a territory. And could a groundless art even exist today, one that is disconnected from the place wherein it is carried out as well as from the locality’s inhabitants? Could there be then within our cities and countryside, communities that evade the label of local and are thought to be more apt than others to understand contemporary creation? To ask the question is to answer it...

A heavy conscience. During this time when we gladly oppose the nomadism of the global elite (so dear to Attali) and the relegation of a section of the population, a moment when sociologists have observed to what extent social inequality results in geographical ghettos, words are anything but innocent. We are well aware that this formidable semantic might betray us. Without daring to formulate it, it takes note of a reality that the cultural milieu has made do with quite well and this weighs heavily on the conscience of cultural policy. Just as the politics of the city may try to place a band-aid over the neighbourhoods where all urban aspects (architecture, meeting places, historical strata, the presence of a centre other than just a commercial one) have been neglected, cultural policy, which feels obligated to note that it is addressing the inhabitants of a territory, could very well mark the failure of policy and culture. In the end, the newspeak of cultural management merely strengthens the old familiar “art/socio-cultural” divide under a less belittling

cover. Between the artists that none would consider regional, whatever their place of existence may be, and the others. Between the neighbourhoods forsaken by the mesh of cultural institutions – and those simply forsaken all together, whether they are urban or rural – and those that one would never imagine as a potential mission ground (would Neuilly, Levallois or Puteaux, which are seeped in boredom, ever be subject to a “cultural development outline”? One wouldn’t think of it...). Is this the result of sixty years of cultural decentralization?

Empty chairs and festivals. It is indeed a luscious paradox between the flaunted decentralization and the centralism of what must be called artistic recognition. Look at the performance programmes of the national theatres, the CDN, the street festivals; with just a few exceptions – for example, the work of Francis Peduzzi at the head of Channel in Calais – , they all behave according to recognition through centrality. Ever respectful of the adage “no man is a prophet in his own country”, the CDN nominations carefully avoid regional artists whatever glory they may have achieved. The successive disengagements of the State speed up segregation between a fringe of big name, nationally renowned artists who are nearly interchangeable in their programming, and the artists in the trenches of the “territories” as part of regional or municipal policies. Instead of delegation we find prevarication. And the cultural action “in unexpected places” is paying the price. For the debate on territories quickly brings to light the contradiction of the politician, between the obsession with leaving a lasting trace and the anguish of the elected official in front of empty seats. In this context, the street



Noyade interdite,
by the compagny
lci Mème (Paris).



“How does one find a budgetary case for these oddballs, who claim to present something other but a show!”

arts have long been perceived as the reconciling totem between art and the population, between festivity and culture, the artistic alibi and the tourist attraction. The tool allows one to easily do without a long-term policy and longer artistic processes at the price of an entrenched festival mindset likely to attract the media and tourism. This takes place at the risk of having a performance programme just as interchangeable as the ones we find in theatres...

Groundless and “in situ”. Although it is the minority, an insurrection has managed to appear and find some support among recently elected officials and administrators who are convinced that true exchange takes place in the small paths as opposed to the large freeways of special events. This is where art forms are to be renewed: refusing to behave according to the commercial lines of summer tours, artists are inventing new *in situ* forms in live art. Differing from the groundlessness of the “international contemporary art” that is so sought after on the market, their work cannot be reduced to industrial reproduction and only blossoms through the relationship that has been forged with a space and a community.

Resistant. Here are a few examples... In Saint-Herblain (44) a certain sense of complicity is achieved between the *Agence Culturelle* and the *Le Sablier* company, which infiltrates the mysterious “Gaspard” neighbourhoods, inspired by the story by Kaspar Hauser. In the Etouvie neighbourhood in Amiens, Etienne Desjonquères is not afraid to take up the disgraced term of socio-cultural with the collaboration of the indefatigable Jacques Livchine, among others. The work has been long carried out by the companies of Ici Même (Paris), or Le Bruit du Frigo (Bordeaux), whose intrusions have fearlessly brought into question contemporary urban planning and housing policy. Denus Tricot, whose work as a woodworker/ sculptor/ architect of the ephemeral/ performer defies disciplinary classification and combines nomadism (from Turkey to Ukraine) and long-term work in a rural setting (in the Cantal region or in Charente-Maritime)... Many other resisters could be named here. In their diversity, their artistic gestures have the common point of not falling into the “distribution” category. How does one find a budgetary case for these oddballs, who claim to present something other than a show! Intrusion is not a part of today’s mindset... and bureaucracy and the obsession with security norms are happy to comply with the logic of marketability to sterilize these propositions¹. Let us not be mistaken: this is where art is born, energizes itself, circulates, and stays alive resistant to the “object” onto which we want to stick a number... ● VALÉRIE DE SAINT-DO

1. When one comes across the antics of a political censure that one thought belonged to another age, like the one experienced by the *Princesse Peluches* company in Cuers.

Real. To confront oneself with reality, to take possession of it like a palpable, material space, to develop an artistic point of view on it.

Entering the neighbourhoods

The politics of the city, which are handled by the state secretary Fadela Amara, address "urban zones in difficulty". A terrain that certain companies can empathise with. Interview with sociologist Philippe Chadoir.

Philippe Chadoir is a lecturer at the *Institut d'urbanisme* in Lyon and a scholar at the *Institute de Recherche Géographique*. In 2004 he co-wrote with Jacques de Maillard a book entitled *Culture et Politique de la Ville*, published by Editions de l'aube.

Stradda: How does the approach of street companies resonate particularly well with the cultural initiative of city policy?

Philippe Chadoir: With a certain number of companies, there is a form of empathy regarding territories. They have a strong attraction concerning the question of the city as an object, as a material and concrete performance space. They have a certain skill, a true ability to forge relationships within specific populations and to confront complex situations. The specificity of their proposals is found in their memorial themes, and their awareness of place, or their mastery of the palpable space itself. More than anything, it is with the entrance of artistry that street companies have a card to play. This approach allows them to, in a way, escape the socio-cultural stigma with which certain actions like amateur workshops are unfortunately associated.

Why are street companies rarely in direct contact with the means of city policy?

Operators run territorial projects. They are the ones who must negotiate the role of culture in the framework of city policy. They commission companies because they believe they are pertinent with regards to cultural and political issues. This situation seems fair to me:

artists should not have to serve as mediators. We call upon them for their ability to take hold of the reality of a certain territory and to develop an artistic point of view on it. The relationship between "city policy" and street companies is an old one. At the end of the 1990s, at the time

of the neighbourhood cultural projects, interesting operations had already been developed. However, I do not know of any street companies made up of city policy professionals and that's a good thing. City policy is not a door that companies knock on to diversify their artistic activity. While there are opportunities that arise, there is no opportunism on behalf of artists. Companies don't choose to work in the framework of city policy. They inhabit a territory and propose creations that have meaning for that particular place.

Is the mechanism increasingly impoverished?

The cultural section of city policy has been drastically reduced. The drain is much larger than the one the cultural field is currently undergoing. In Lyon, for example, the city's political funding for cultural purposes has decreased by 40%. Territorial collectives cannot absorb that kind of financial transfer, even when they support those who carry out projects. We are witnessing a complete hiatus between separate agendas and excessive media attention on one side, and a systematic scorched earth policy on the other. For companies, therefore, the situation is not favourable. For territories and their inhabitants, it is dire.

● TEXT GATHERED BY ANNE GONON





“The leitmotiv is to avoid colliding with the people of a neighbourhood whose story we are rounding up.”

Stéphane Bonnard
and Pierre Duforeau,
KompleXKapharnaüm

Interview

Stéphane Bonnard and Pierre Duforeau, Artistic Directors of KompleXKapharnaüm

“We are not always welcome.”

Square→ local street television, *KompleX Kapharnaüm*, Avignon 2004

Stradda: How do the city policies of a neighbourhood influence your creative process?

KompleXKapharnaüm: The story of a territory, and even its look, has its own influence regardless of whether or not it is a part of city policy. What animates our project is the desire to create porosity with everyday life and reality for an artistic proposal that is not locked up in some tower. That can lead us to forms that can be animating or socio-cultural. In Roubaix (in May 2008), the script of *PlayRec 1* started with the public condition. But we opened up to the life of a neighbourhood where there are a lot of factories, where most of the social spaces have disappeared. Afterwards, while writing, we needed to achieve an understanding of something other than what everyone already knows. There is an artistic composition and a highly nonlinear narration.

So does reproduction cause culture shock?

It's true that at first glance the form is not obvious. Our narration is rather fragmented. We have also added a very didactic introduction to the beginning of *PlayRec* to diffuse the impression that what is shown could be meant for others. We always want to remain in a form that is close to popular theatre. How are you received by the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods? The public is not necessarily used to our stories. The leitmotiv is to avoid colliding with the people of a

neighbourhood whose story we are rounding up. They are less accepting of the show, more critical. They have other preoccupations. You're not always welcome. You have to diffuse the power struggle and explain that what we do is not necessarily better than what exists, that it's just not the same culture. Starting from there, we can bring an entire building into the project. In the city centre, people and things are more signified. It's really a matter of social classes. In Aix-en-Provence we fell flat on our faces plenty of times in the street because the artistic proposal is not common there, or else our creative and compositional protocol is really meant for certain communities.

How are you received by those working in city policy?

It varies with a large tendency toward the shotgun... Most of them have been working there for a long time with very little to work with. They see artists come who will not stay long and whom they sometimes suspect of just being there for funding. Then the misunderstandings fade away. But we don't work much with the city's institutional policy makers so as to avoid being stuck in a network and also so that we might find testimonies that otherwise would not be sent to us.

● TEXT GATHERED BY OLIVIER BERTRAND

1. From a wasteland, *PlayRec* searches for traces, witnesses and then tells the story of a place.





Copenhagen

© TINA LOUISE HUNDERUP

Vera Maeder (director, dancer, actor) and **Jacob Langaa-Sennek** (scenographer, musician, composer) are former members of Udflugt and have collaborated together since 2000. Today, with Hello!earth, they are developing their concept of the *Invisible Reality Show*: walks during which the spectator-actor plays with the reality of his or her own perceptions.

Hello!earth, Hello the invisible!

Alternating between periods of festivals and reflection, the Metropolis biennial mobilises urban agitators. Profile of the work of the Danes of Hello!earth.

It is one of the most recent initiatives of the very energetic Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT): for ten years, the Metropolis biennial will offer the city to artists, architects or urban planners, to those who inhabit and reinvent it, mixing festivals on the odd years, and laboratories and project development workshops on even years. The guests of the inaugural year in 2007, the companies Art Zoyd, By Beijing, Groupes Dunes, KMK, Circo da Madragura... and for the Danish representatives, Vera Maeder and Jacob Langaa-Sennek of the Hello!earth company (ex-UDflugt) proposed a succession of experiments based on their concept of the *Invisible Reality Show*. This show was created in 2005 in collaboration with other Scandinavian artists and developed a series of *in situ* performances assembled like a voyage.

Guided iPods. Through the use of theatre, performance and visual and sound arts, the members of Hello!earth call upon the spectators to change their perception of the environment. Given an iPod, the spectator is guided by instructions and led to experiment with the city through encounters and experiments staged by the company, mixing reality and fiction. Vera Maeder and Jacob Langaa-Sennek's artistic approach is nourished by their view of their neighbourhood in Copenhagen (Nørrebro) as well as that of the territories that they come across. A street, a square, a mall, are all locations to be revealed... Behind the veil of banality there are hidden and forgotten treasures. Vera and Jacob immerse themselves in the place, choose elements to bring out and create situations that lead the spectator to look at

the territory, its daily trajectories and his or herself in a new way. *"we chose the lone experience so that each spectator remains aware of what he or she experiences without being affected by the experience of others."*

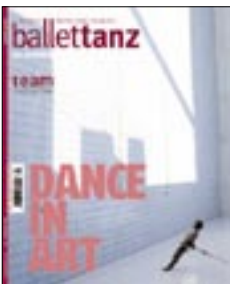
Outsourced. Beyond the experiments in Copenhagen, in 2007 Jacob and Vera brought their experiments to the Netherlands, Jordan and Brazil in collaboration with local artists so that *"100% of the project would have a local significance instead of simply being an exported product"*, Jacob points out. Finding a situation that allows the inhabitants to change their perspective is also a cultural issue. In Brazil, the simple act of sitting down on a bench and looking at one's neighbourhood can be an unexpected one. In Denmark it can be the act of having a beer with marginal individuals to whom one does not tend to pay much attention. For Hello!earth the idea is, above all, to change the course of everyday life and to accompany each spectator so that he or she may go beyond what is not usually considered permissible. The idea is that there is more experimentation to be done within our everyday lives than what our weary perspectives usually allow us to see. In July, during the Metropolis laboratory, Hello!earth will develop the *Invisible Reality Show* to allow for the intersection of several participants or to create links between the rest of the world by inviting, for example, a Brazilian artist to interact with the individuals. There is also the idea of having a manual that will allow each person to experiment with the territory in a new way. The result will be found at the next 2009 biennial. ●

ISABELLE DUVAİL
www.kit.dk www.helloearth.cc

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