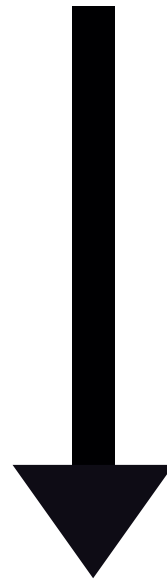
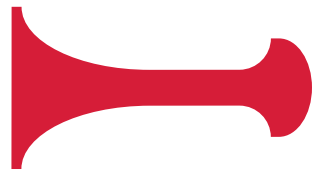
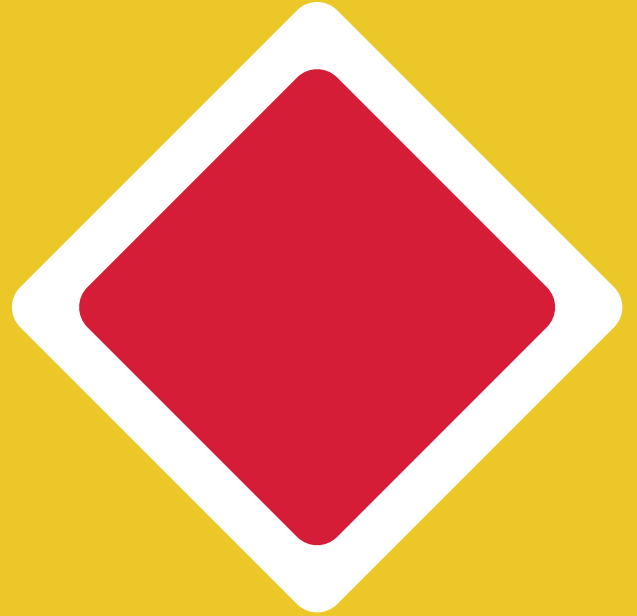
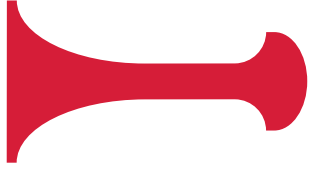


# KLAXON 5



**CIFAS**



**(when art lives in town)**

URBAN EXPRESSWAY

## Towards a Fairer City

Antoine Pickels & Benoit Vreux

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## URBAN EXPRESSWAY

## Towards a Fairer City

### Antoine Pickels and Benoit Vreux

The concept for this issue of *Klaxon* was spawned at SIGNAL 2015, the annual Cifas get-together, focusing on the performance arts and the city, and combining time for reflection and artistic programming throughout urban space. We questioned ourselves as to the place of the *corps exclus* in city neighbourhoods, those alienated bodies rejected by cultural or social practices due to their perceived strangeness and difference. It was vital to show how not only artists, but also cultural or social agents, work with the wide diversity of living arts in public spaces, galvanising instead for social justice, and also to explain their endeavours to bring back to the core of city neighbourhoods those urban identities and entities that are all-too-frequently banished to its peripheries.

The exchange of views and contributions, nourished by the painful climate of the current migrant crisis, were intensely productive. The participants' respective struggles and challenges were a source of mutual enrichment. A profusion of potential exchanges and opportunities for expressing solidarity unravelled amidst the sharing of life-experiences by foreigners or nomads (rejected simply because they come from elsewhere), or by women, queers, overweight persons or addicts (condemned on so-called "moral" grounds), and not overlooking the plight of the elderly, the young or those with disabilities (excluded due to the fact that they are deemed non-productive elements).

This issue of *Klaxon* opens with the incisive ideas of the Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen, whose tone here is outstandingly committed, and from a somewhat different angle to the analytical rigor that readers of her essays are familiar with. She invites us to grasp for ourselves a potential political autonomy in today's "global" city. In this contemporary city, according to the author, the conception of urban space even enables those excluded to find their niche, to appropriate the city to their own ends, to invent new forms of social justice there. And here, just as in the past, the struggles for the newcomers' rights will engender a betterment of everybody's rights.

This urban space, as defined by Sassen, has already been appropriated by some artistic happenings. If we observe the practices of "Live Art" in various urban and social spaces throughout the U.K., where Lois Keidan is the specialist, we discover that an autonomous and empowering place has been secured for those who have been ostracized. The projects reveal that space has been reclaimed without that this social solicitude entails any condescension or sentimentality. We mustn't, however, as the author duly reminds us, underestimate the risk of exploitation or of cultural self-righteousness with this type of socially engaged art.

It is highly unlikely then that the Catalan artist Nuria Güell, about whom the curator Edi Muka offers us an illuminating text, would incur such risks. Whenever Güell "shines the spotlight" on a contradiction inherent in society or in ourselves, discomfort is likely and controversy a certainty. The devices she sets in motion renders those persons whom she offers an artistic contract as actors in their own destiny, persons who otherwise, as "victims", are generally prohibited from having any say. This contract enables them to participate in a work critical of their condition within the framework of wider society and the art-world, to regain their dignity and even their citizenship.

The question of a "fair" place for the other also lies at the core of *Walking: Holding* that the British performance artist Rosana Cade performs throughout the world. Even if what really is at stake here is the relationship to otherness of the spectator cum actor who is invited to walk hand-in-hand through urban space with the "marginalised". By means of what is felt and perceived through this gesture of holding hands with an outright stranger, an awareness of the status of those excluded awakens, without the



need for any mediation.

But can we really put ourselves in the other's shoes? The Belgian artist Anne Thuot, here sketched by the author Diane Fourdrignier, embarked in the guise of *Lydia Richardson* upon a trip into the netherworld of urban experience, focusing on the theme of inheritance. She publically ditched her "projection" of herself as a chic bourgeois, by reaching out those less well off than herself, and jointly producing artistic work. In its diverse variations, her work simultaneously emphasizes dignity amidst the misery of some, and the obscenity of the wealth of the other, set against a persistent background of colonial disputes.

It seemed logical to devote the final section to a work developed outside Europe. What Jay Pather creates in South Africa, as a curator of Live Art festivals, nourishes itself on the notion of periphery. Down there, too, cities have their peripheral populations – sometimes a direct legacy of the former apartheid regime, which even left its mark on urban planning. Artists can therefore seize public space as a place for the whimsical where the unheard-of and the never-seen manifest their rage against padlocked systems and persistent poverty.

By scrutinising the relationship our social or intimate bodies have with public space, art projects a new imaginary sphere onto the city—should it not *de facto* remove any inequalities it suffers, and reinstate it in a vibrant dialogue of personal and collective construction. Social justice is not an ideal nor even a yearning; rather, it is an on-going programme, concrete, anchored in the everyday, which we should activate once we assign art an interpersonal mission: to contribute to a fairer and more equitable society for all.

In the forthcoming issue of *Klaxon*, we will persist in scrutinising artistic practices that are engaged on the side of social justice, as aesthetic and ethical models.

[Cifas.be/en](https://cifas.be/en)

MAIN STREET

## Cities Help Us Hack Formal Power Systems

### Saskia Sassen

Cities are complex systems. But they are incomplete systems. These features take on urbanized formats that vary enormously across time and place. In this mix of complexity and incompleteness lies the capacity of cities to outlive far more powerful but formal and closed systems: many a city has outlived governments, kings, the leading corporations of an epoch. Herein also lies the possibility of *making* – making the urban, the political, the civic, a history. Thus much of today's dense built-up terrain, such as a vast stretch of high-rise housing, or of office buildings, is not a city. It is simply dense built-up terrain. On the other hand, a working slum can have many of the features of a city, and indeed, some are a type of city – poor but deeply urban.

It is also in this mix of incompleteness and complexity that lies the possibility for those who lack power to hack the city. They are thereby able to make a history, a politics, even if they do not get empowered. Thus, current conditions in global cities are creating not only new structurations of power but also operational and rhetorical openings for new types of actors and their projects. That powerlessness that can become complex in the city is, in itself, a transversal type of hacking. One way of conceiving of some of this is as instances of urban capabilities.<sup>01</sup>

**01.** I develop this argument in “Does the city have speech?”, *Public Culture*, volume 25, number 2, Durham, Duke University Press, April 2013; see also *Expulsions*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014.

[bit.ly/28KzkMN](https://bit.ly/28KzkMN)

In this essay I am particularly interested in two features. One is that the global city is a strategic frontier zone that enables those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities – even though it decimates the modest middle classes. The disadvantaged and excluded can gain *presence* in such cities in a way they cannot in neat homogenous provincial cities. In the global city they become present to power and to each other, which may include learning to negotiating their multiple differences. They can hack power and they can hack their differences of origin, religion, phenotype. The second feature is the strategic importance of the city today for shaping new orders – or, if you will, hacking old orders. As a complex space, the city can bring together multiple very diverse struggles and engender a larger, more encompassing push for a new normative order. It enables people with different passions and obsessions to work together – more precisely, to hack power together.

## Global cities are today's frontier zones

The large complex city, especially if global, is a new frontier zone. Actors from different worlds meet there, but there are no clear rules of engagement. Where the historic frontier was in the far stretches of colonial empires, today's frontier zone is in our large messy global cities.

These cities are strategic for global corporate capital. Much of the work of forcing deregulation, privatization, and new fiscal and monetary policies on governments actually took place in the corporate sector of global cities rather than in legislatures and parliaments. Also the corporates hacked the city: that making of new instruments was a way

of constructing the equivalent of the old military “fort” of the historic frontier. And corporate actors have been doing this in city after city worldwide to ensure a global operational space of the sort they need. The global city is then also a frontier zone because it is where strategic spaces of power can be hacked.

But they are also strategic for those without power. This signals the possibility of a new type of politics, centred in new types of political actors. That is one instance of what I seek to capture with the concept of urban capabilities. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power: it goes well beyond routinized voting and having to accept corporate utility logics, or the dominance of narratives that strengthen powerful actors. These are new hybrid bases from which to act. One outcome we are seeing in city after city is the making of new kinds of informal politics. For instance, there is a kind of public-making work that can produce disruptive narratives, and make legible the local and the silenced. Work gets done this way: the work of making a new kind of contesting public that uses urban space as a medium, a tool to hack power.

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One outcome we are seeing in city after city is the making of new kinds of informal politics.

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It also signals the possibility of making a new type of subject, one abundant in cities across time and place, but always somewhat rare: the urban subject that results from hacking the ethnic, religious, racialized, subject. Old Baghdad and Jerusalem, industrializing Chicago and New York, were such cities. This is not to deny or hide the histories and geographies entailed by such specific, often inherited markers. The urban subject is at home with all, whether in Old Baghdad or industrializing New York. A city’s sociality can bring out and underline the urbanity of subject and setting, and dilute more essentialist markers. It is often the need for new solidarities (for instance, when cities confront major challenges) that can bring about this shift. Urban space can hack our essentialisms as it forces us into joint responses, and from there can move us onto the appreciation of an urban subject, rather than more specific individual or group identity. The big, messy, slightly anarchic city enables such shifts. The corporatized city or the office park, does not.

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Urban space can hack our essentialisms as it forces us into joint responses.

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There is yet another type of hacking of long-time orders that is taking place today. It is the hacking of well-established larger units, notably nation states, that are beginning to lose the grip on domains where they once had considerable control. This is an important even if partial and not always desirable change. In my larger project I identified a vast proliferation of such partial disassemblings and re-assemblings that arise from the remix of bits of territory, authority, and rights, once all ensconced in *national* institutional frames. In the case of Europe these novel assemblages include those resulting from the formation and on-going development of the EU, but also those resulting of a variety of cross-city alliances around protecting the environment, fighting racism, and other important causes. And they result from sub-national struggles and the desire to make new regulations for self-governance at the level of the neighbourhood and the city.

Against the background of a partial disassembling of empires and nation-states, the city emerges as a strategic site for making elements of new partial orders.<sup>02</sup> Where in the past national law might have been *the* law, today subsidiarity and the new strategic role of cities, makes it possible for us to imagine a return to urban law. We see a resurgence of urban law-making, a subject I discuss in depth elsewhere.<sup>03</sup> For instance, in the US, a growing number of cities have passed local laws (ordinances) that make their cities

**02.** One synthesizing image we might use to capture these dynamics is the movement from centripetal nation state articulation to a centrifugal multiplication of specialized assemblages, where one of many examples might be the trans-border networks of specific types of struggles, enactments, art, and so on.

sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants; other cities have passed environmental laws that only hold for the particular cities, or developed currencies for local transactions.

But today cities confront major conflicts that can reduce their complexity to mere built-up terrain or cement jungle. The urban way of confronting extreme racisms, governmental wars on terror, the future crises of climate change, is to make these challenges occasions to further expand diverse urban capabilities and to expand the meaning of membership. But much government policy and the “needs” of powerful actors go against this mode.

**03.** See *Territory, Authority, Rights*, chaps 2 & 6. The emergent landscape I am describing promotes a multiplication of diverse spatiotemporal framings and diverse normative mini-orders, where once the dominant logic was toward producing grand unitary national spatial, temporal, and normative framings. See Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008, chaps. 8 & 9.

## Cities and political subjectivity: when powerlessness becomes complex

Cities are one of the key sites where new norms and new identities are *made*. This role can become strategic in particular times and places, as is the case today in global cities. Current conditions in these cities are enabling operational and rhetorical openings for new types of political actors which may long have been invisible or without voice. A key element of the argument here is that the localization of strategic components of globalization in these cities means that the disadvantaged can engage globalized corporate power.

Critical in this process is to recover some of the differences between being powerless and being invisible or impotent. The disadvantaged in global cities can gain “presence” in their engagement with power but also vis-à-vis each other. This is different from the 1950s to the 1970s in the U.S., for instance, when white flight and the significant departure of major corporate headquarters left cities hollowed out and the disadvantaged in a condition of abandonment. Today, the localization of the most powerful global actors in these cities creates a set of objective conditions of engagement. Examples are the struggles against gentrification which encroaches on minority and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which led to growing numbers of homeless and struggles for their rights; or demonstrations against police brutalizing minority people.

Elsewhere I have developed the case that while these struggles are highly localized, they actually represent a form of global engagement; their globality is a horizontal, multi-sited recurrence of similar struggles in hundreds of cities worldwide.<sup>04</sup> These struggles are different from the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s, which were short, intense eruptions confined to the ghettos and causing most of the damage in the neighbourhoods of the disadvantaged themselves. In these ghetto uprisings there was no engagement with power, but rather more protest against power. In contrast, current conditions in major global cities are creating operational and rhetorical openings for new types of political actors, including the disadvantaged and those who were once invisible or without voice.

**04.** See Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, op. cit : chapters 6 and 8.

The conditions that today make some cities strategic sites are basically two, and both capture major transformations that are destabilizing older systems organizing territory and politics. One of these is the re-scaling of what are the strategic territories that articulate the new politico-economic system and hence at least some features of power. The other is the partial unbundling or at least weakening of the national as container of social process due to the variety of dynamics encompassed by globalization and digitization. The consequences for cities of these two conditions are many: What matters here is that cities emerge as strategic sites for major economic processes and for new types of political actors. In this sense, this urban shift is a form of hacking the national state and interstate arrangements of the past century and more.

What is being engendered today in terms of political practices in the global city is quite different from what it might have been in the medieval city of Weber.<sup>05</sup> In the medieval city we see a set of practices that allowed the burghers to set up systems for owning and protecting property against more powerful actors, such as the king and the church, and to implement various immunities against despots of all sorts. Today's political practices, I would argue, have to do with the production of "presence" by those without power and with a politics that claims rights to the city rather than protection of property. What the two situations share is the notion that through these practices new forms of political subjectivity, i.e. citizenship, are being constituted and that the city is a key site for this type of political work. The city is, in turn, partly constituted through these dynamics. Far more so than a peaceful and harmonious suburb, the contested city is where the civic is getting built.

05. Max Weber, *The City*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1986 (1921).

The contested city is where the civic is getting built.

But what happens to these urban capabilities when war goes asymmetric, and when racisms fester in cities where growing numbers become poor and have to struggle for survival? Here follows a brief discussion of two cases that illustrate how cities can enable powerlessness to become complex. In this complexity lies the possibility of making the political, making history. If the city is to survive as a space of complexity and diversity – and not become merely a built-up terrain or cement jungle – it needs capabilities to transform conflict.

This implies the possibility of making new subjectivities and identities. For instance, often it is the urbanity of the subject and of the setting that mark a city, rather than ethnicity, religion, or phenotype. But that marking urbanity do not simply fall from the sky. It often comes out of hard work and painful trajectories. One question is whether it can also come out of the need for new solidarities in cities confronted by major challenges.

The acute and overwhelming character of the major challenges cities confront today can serve to create conditions where the challenges are bigger and more threatening than a city's internal conflicts and hatreds. This might force us into joint responses and from there onto the emphasis of an urban, rather than individual or group, subject and identity – such as an ethnic or religious subject and identity.

One important instance in the making of norms concerns immigration. What must be emphasized here is the hard work of making open cities and repositioning the immigrant and the citizen as urban subjects that inevitably, mostly, transcend this difference. In the daily routines of a city the key factors that rule are work, family, school, public transport, and so on, and this holds for both immigrants and citizens. It is when the law and the police enter the picture that the differences of immigrant status versus citizen status become key factors. But most of daily life in the city is not ruled by this differentiation. Here I address this issue from the perspective of the capacity of urban space to make norms and make subjects that can escape the constraints of dominant power systems – such as the nation-state, the War on Terror, the growing weight of racism. The particular case of immigrant integration in Europe over the centuries, the making of the European Open City, is one window into this complex and historically variable question.

Responding to the claims by the excluded has had the effect of expanding the rights of citizenship.

In my reading, both European and Western hemisphere history shows that the challenges of incorporating the "outsider" often became the instruments for developing the civic and, at times, for expanding the rights of the already included. Responding to the claims

by the excluded has had the effect of expanding the rights of citizenship. And very often restricting the rights of immigrants has been part of a loss of rights by citizens. This was clearly the case with the Immigration reform act passed by the Clinton Administration in the US, which showed that a Democratic Party legislative victory for an “immigration law” had the effect of taking away rights from immigrants *and* from citizens.<sup>06</sup>

Anti-immigrant sentiment has long been a critical dynamic in Europe’s history, one until recently mostly overlooked in standard European histories.<sup>07</sup> Anti-immigrant sentiment and attacks occurred in each of the major immigration phases in all major European countries. No labor-receiving country has a clean record—not Switzerland, with its long admirable history of international neutrality, and not even France, the most open to immigration, refugees, and exiles.<sup>08</sup>

**06.** See *Sassen, Territory, Authority, Rights*, chap. 6; see also chaps. 4 & 5 for a diversity of other domains besides immigration where this holds.

**07.** This section is based on research in two previous works: Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens: Europe’s Immigrants, Refugees and Colonists*. New York: New Press, 1999; Saskia Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization*. New York, W. W. Norton, 2007; chap. 5.

**08.** For instance, French workers killed Italian workers in the 1800s, having accused them of being the wrong types of Catholics.

It took active making to transform the hatreds towards foreigners into the urban civic.

Critical is the fact that there were always, as is the case today, individuals, groups, organizations, and politicians who believed in making our societies more inclusive of immigrants. History suggests that those fighting for incorporation succeeded in the long run, even if only partially. Just to focus on the recent past, one quarter of the French have a foreign-born ancestor three generations up, and 34 percent of Viennese are either born abroad or have foreign parents. It took active making to transform the hatreds towards foreigners into the urban civic. But it is also the result of constraints in a large city; for instance, to have a sound public transport system means it is not feasible to check on the status of all users and also have a reasonably fast system. A basic and thin rule needs to be met: Pay your ticket and you are on. That is the making of the civic as a material condition: All those who meet the thin rule can use the public bus or train, regardless of whether they are citizens or tourists, good people or not-so-good people, local residents or visitors from another city.

Europe has a barely recognized history of several centuries of internal labour migrations. This is a history that hovers in the penumbra of official European history, dominated by the image of Europe as a continent of emigration, never of immigration. Yet, in the 1700s, when Amsterdam built its polders and cleared its bogs, it brought in workers from northern Germany; when the French developed their vineyards they brought in Spaniards; workers from the Alps were brought in to help develop Milan and Turin; as were the Irish when London needed help building water and sewage infrastructure. In the 1800s, when Haussmann rebuilt Paris, he brought in Germans and Belgians; when Sweden decided to become a monarchy and needed some good-looking palaces, they brought in Italian stoneworkers; when Switzerland built the Gothard Tunnel, it brought in Italians; and when Germany built its railroads and steel mills, it brought in Italians and Poles.

At any given time there were multiple significant flows of intra-European migration. All the workers involved were seen as outsiders, as undesirables, as threats to the community, as people that could never belong. The immigrants were mostly from the same broad cultural group, religious group, and phenotype. Yet they were seen as impossible to assimilate. The French hated the Belgian immigrant workers saying they were the wrong type of Catholics, and the Dutch saw the German protestant immigrant workers as the wrong types of Protestants. This is a telling fact. It suggests that it is simply not correct to argue, as is so often done, that today it is more difficult to integrate immigrants because of their different religion, culture and phenotype. When these were similar, anti-immigrant sentiment was as strong as today. Yet all along, significant numbers of immigrants did become part of the community. They often maintained their distinctiveness, yet were still members of the complex, highly heterogeneous social order of any developed city.

In the decades before the current phase of refugee inflows, the argument against immigration might have been focused on questions of race, religion, and culture, and this focus might seem rational – that cultural and religious distance is the reason for the difficulty of incorporation. But in sifting through the historical and current evidence we find only new contents for an old passion: the racializing of the outsider as Other. Today the Other is stereotyped by differences of race, religion, and culture. These are equivalent arguments to those made in the past when migrants were broadly of the same religious, racial, and cultural group. Migration hinges on a move between two worlds, even if within a single region or country, such as East Germans moving to West Germany after 1989, where they were often viewed as a different ethnic group with undesirable traits.

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Sifting through the historical and current evidence we find only new contents for an old passion: the racializing of the outsider as Other.

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What is today's equivalent challenge, one that can force us to go beyond our differences and make what it is that corresponds to that older traditional making of the European civic?

## Conclusion: where we stand now

Here I explored what we might think of as urban capabilities – mixes of space and people in urban settings. It matters to the argument that these capabilities have often been crafted out of struggles that take participants beyond the conflicts and racisms that mark an epoch. It is out of this type of dialectic that came the open urbanity that made European cities historically spaces for the making of expanded citizenship.

One factor feeding these positives was that cities became strategic spaces also for the powerful and their needs for self-representation and projection onto a larger stage. The modest middle classes and the powerful both found in the city a space for their diverse "life projects."

Here I focused on some of the acute challenges facing cities as a way of exploring how urban capabilities can alter what originates as hatred and as war. Among these challenges are two that are very different, yet capture this capacity of urban space to hack more powerful systems. One is the spread of asymmetric war and the urbanizing of war it entails. The other is the hard work of making open cities and the repositioning of the immigrant and the citizen as above all urban subjects, rather than essentially different subjects as much of the anti-immigrant and racist commentary does. It is this making of urban subjects that is one of the major capabilities of cities.

[bit.ly/28IS13o](https://bit.ly/28IS13o)



BIOGRAPHY  
Saskia Sassen



Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and chairs at the Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University. She has recently published *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Harvard University Press, 2014). Other recent books are *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press, 2008), *A Sociology of Globalization* (W.W. Norton, 2007) and *The Global City* (Princeton University Press, 1991/2001). Her books have been translated in over 20 languages. She is the recipient of diverse awards and mentions, ranging from multiple *doctor honoris causa* to being selected as a top global thinker for various lists. Most recently she was awarded the *Principe de Asturias Prize* in the Social Sciences, made a member of the Royal Academy of the Sciences of the Netherlands, and made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French government.

[bit.ly/28IS13o](https://bit.ly/28IS13o)

Photo : © RR.



## REMARKABLE EVENT

## Whose Citizen Space is it Anyway?

Lois Keidan

In its defiance of cultural orthodoxies, Live Art is an inherently politicized area of practice. But by employing the body as both its object and subject, and by using embodied actions and experiential practices as strategies to occupy all kinds of charged and contested social, cultural and political territories, Live Art is also a generative and influential space for discourses around identity politics and social justice.

For the socially underrepresented and culturally marginalized – those who are not, as the UK artist Grayson Perry puts it, Default Man – Live Art is a potent space where the disenfranchised, disempowered and disembodied can become visible and vocal. Many queer, black, disabled and women artists work within Live Art precisely because it offers an alternative and uncompromising context to embody the lived experiences of “otherness”, to confront and contest the politics of difference, and to subvert and defy cultural expectations.

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For the culturally marginalized Live Art is a potent space.

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Live Art breaks the rules about who is making art, how they are making it, where they are making it, who they are making it for, and what they are making it about. The following examples illustrate some of the ways that Live Art works as a space to place the dispossessed at the centre of art.

### 1. The Elderly

#### Lois Weaver's *What Tammy Needs to Know About Getting Old and Having Sex*

Lois Weaver is one of the pioneers in feminist and lesbian performance through her collaborative work as well as her solo projects, performance interventions, her work as a facilitator, teacher, and as Tammy WhyNot, her alter ego, a 65 year-old trailer trash blonde who became a famous country and western singer, then gave it all up to pursue a career as a contemporary performance artist. In *What Tammy Needs to Know...*, Tammy brought her methods of inquiry to the taboo subjects of age and sex. In 2013 she was commissioned by Kontejner in Zagreb to undertake a residency for their *Extravagant*

*Bodies: Extravagant Age* festival. [bit.ly/29rDdLO](https://bit.ly/29rDdLO) She was literally in residence in local senior homes and care centres in Zagreb – mostly sitting, talking and trying to get insights on her core questions: What is it like to get old? What is it like to have sex? What is it like to get old and have sex?

## Duckie's The Posh Club

Duckie are a bunch of benders, trenders and gender offenders from London. They are purveyors of progressive working class entertainment who mix Live Art and light entertainment. They launched The Posh Club in 2012, and describe it as “an elegant event for older folks in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, swanky senior citizens, elegant elders & glamorous golden girls. It features classic high tea and fabulous entertainment and the strict dress code is very posh.”

I took my 90 year old mother to a Posh Club event in Hackney, London, a few years ago and it was fabulous – a joyous mix of elders in their best clothes, enjoying each other's company and Duckie's finest acts, all served up with champagne and posh cakes.

## 2. The Young

As a cultural strategy Live Art offers rich possibilities in work for, with and about children, because of its experiential and exploratory nature – in its approaches to, and negotiation of, ideas, experiences, and things. Live Art can construct accessible and carefully considered frameworks for kids, whilst remaining elusive as an approach and open to all kinds of possibilities, no matter how difficult or challenging. In this way Live Art is different from, and arguably more risky and rewarding than, more traditional approaches to designing art for and about kids.

The Live Art Development Agency (LADA) has worked with Sibylle Peters of Theatre of Research in Hamburg and Tate Family programmes on PLAYING UP, a project about art

that kids *do*, and what art can *do* for kids. [bit.ly/1Uor8BS](https://bit.ly/1Uor8BS) Exploring the potential of Live Art to bridge generations and drawing on key Live Art themes and seminal works, PLAYING UP takes the form of a game played by adults and kids. Playing the game enables adults and kids to explore Live Art together, allows them to spend time together that matters to them, while training their perception of themselves, each other and the world.

## Mammalian Diving Reflex

One can't talk about Live Art and young people without referencing Mammalian Diving Reflex. Founded in Toronto in 1993, they developed the idea of “social acupuncture”: playful, provocative, site and social-specific participatory performances with non-actors of all ages and demographics. Since their huge hit in 2006, *Haircuts by Children* – a performance about trust, children's rights, generosity and vanity, where ten-year-olds offer free haircuts to the public – Mammalian began to work with a wide array of new collaborators, all over the world.

One of their key projects is the Children's Choice Awards, an intervention into the structure and institution of an arts festival, where a group of ten-year-olds from local schools are appointed the official festival Jury, chauffeured to and from festival shows to see the

art, take notes, and size it all up. [bit.ly/1rcPOp7](https://bit.ly/1rcPOp7) The judges collectively determine up to 50 award categories and vote on the winners. The project culminates in an Awards Ceremony where the kids present hand-made trophies to the winners, all decided by them, and described in their own words.

## 3. The Disabled

### The Vacuum Cleaner

The artist-activist The Vacuum Cleaner was known for years for his work around issues of social and environmental justice, but *Madlove. A Designer Asylum* is a project based on his personal experience of mental health hospitals, and his desire to find a positive space to experience mental distress... and enlightenment.

*Madlove* brings together people with and without mental health experiences, mental health professionals and academics, artists and designers to create a unique space where mutual care blossoms, stigma and discrimination are actively challenged, divisions understood, and madness can be experienced in a less painful way.

“The aim is to build the most crazy, bonkers, mental asylum we dare dream of: a desirable and playful space to ‘go mad’, countering the popular myth that mental illness is dangerous and scary.”

Through *Madlove* [bit.ly/24z008y](https://bit.ly/24z008y), The Vacuum Cleaner hopes to better understand the power relations between patient and staff, lived expert and academic expert, artist and audience, neuro-diverse and neuro-typical... and start making positive change.

### The Disabled Avant-Garde

The Disabled Avant-Garde (aka DAG) is a satirical organisation formed by the artists Katherine Araniello and Aaron Williamson. They create video and performance art to cause confusion and provoke debate by subverting society’s perceptions and expectations of disabled people. The DAG follow the social model of disability and their work fits the category of ‘crip humour’, being both pitch-black and self-knowing.

DAG not only resist but also denounce a culture that celebrates disabled people as ‘brave’, ‘survivors’ – the perpetuating victim status of the disabled. Stage Invasion is a work in which they infiltrated the annual Liberty Festival of disability at London’s Southbank Centre – dressed as grim reapers and holding a sign saying “Disability Art is Dead.”<sup>09</sup>

<sup>09</sup>. DAG also satirise ideas of art therapy in this brilliant short film *Amazing Art*.

[bit.ly/1UEs8nS](https://bit.ly/1UEs8nS)

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The most interesting artists, in my humble opinion, are exploring the representation, recognition, and even ‘acceptance’ of, different ways of being and seeing in the world, but they are not seeking to be assimilated into, or wishing to be appropriated by, the mainstream of the citizen space.

As the artist Marcia Farquhar eloquently put it, “Live Art is a place for people who don’t ‘know their place’” (to co-opt an English saying about class). It’s a refuge for those who don’t, and don’t want to, belong – who are more interested in influencing the world, or creating what the writer Mary Paterson describes as ‘alternate worlds’, from the edges and the underground rather than from the centre.

The dangers within all this are the instrumentalisation of the ostracized, the dispossessed and the silenced in the economic case for cultural value, and the ethical issues raised by participatory practices.

## Instrumentalisation and ethics

In many projects which involve socially marginalised constituencies, artists and organisations often apply for resources through welfare, rather than arts, funding. The case they have to make is that the projects benefit participants' well being, and they are therefore less of a 'drain' on social services. In this sense participants are not represented as valued citizens who are part of a vibrant cultural mix, but as cases for special support that will reap rich savings for society. In the process participants are instrumentalised, transformed from being themselves to being "the other". In the hands of great artists and organizations such as Duckie – who, as outcasts themselves do see the dispossessed as being as worthy of great art as anyone else and understand how to play the game, and 'talk the talk' to get money by any means necessary – we can see some wonderful and genuinely transformative projects such as The Posh Club. But in the hands of not so good artists and organizations, the ostracized, the dispossessed and the silenced are often in danger of being used as a form of bait in the hunting grounds of UK arts funding, and a form of currency in the economies of culture.

When participants are invited not just to witness a work of art, but to 'be' the work, questions of power, responsibility, expectation, authorship and ethics also come into play. What are artists' invitations to their participants – what do participants expect their role to be, and what kinds of permission and agency do they have? Are participants artists' collaborators or simply their material? Whose work – whose voice – is it?

At their best, socially-engaged projects can empower the disempowered and include the excluded. But they must not be seen as quick and easy solutions to long-term social problems by funding bodies, institutional powerhouses or civic bodies, nor as hit and run trophy projects for artists.

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Socially-engaged projects must not be seen as quick and easy solutions to long-term social problems.

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In a cultural climate where much public funding prioritizes social inclusion, we must ensure that the drive for inclusion does not perpetuate other forms of exclusion and be alert as to whether institutions' engagement with such work reflects a genuine commitment to 'reach out' or just a genuine commitment to ticking the right boxes.

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This text is a shortened version of the paper I presented at SIGNAL Summer University, on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The brief I was given for the event was to talk about artists who were "putting peripheral, unproductive bodies that have been ostracised because they don't contribute to the production of capital, back at the centre of the citizen space". Its almost a year later and I'm still trying to picture this citizen space that has nobody interesting in it – no queers, no one with a disability, no one who's lived a long life or is just starting out, no one from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, no one who's poor, no one with a fluid sense of gender identity, and no one who gets high. This space still looks like hell to me.

[bit.ly/1NqOmDV](https://bit.ly/1NqOmDV)



*Extravagant Bodies, Extravagant Age*  
Lois Weaver,  
aka Tammy WhyNot

Kontejner, Zagreb, Croatia, 2013

© Christa Holka



*The Posh Club*  
Duckie

Hackney, London, 2016

© Caroline Furneaux





*The Posh Club*  
Duckie

Hackney, London, 2016

© Caroline Furneaux



*The Posh Club  
Duckie*

Hackney, London, 2016

© Caroline Furneaux





*The Posh Club*  
Duckie

Hackney, London, 2016

© Caroline Furneaux



*DAG (The Disabled Avant Garde)*  
Leigh Bowery

Video still  
London, 2006

© DAG



*Playing Up*  
Sybille Peeters

Live Art Development Agency  
Tate Modern, London, 2016

© Seraphina Neville



*The Posh Club*  
Duckie

Hackney, London, 2016

© Tim Brunsten



Watch the video on: [bit.ly/28UDpjf](https://bit.ly/28UDpjf)

BIOGRAPHY  
Lois Keidan



Lois Keidan is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Live Art Development Agency, London. From 1992 to 1997 she was Director of Live Arts at the ICA, London. Prior to that she was responsible for Performance Art at Arts Council of England, and previously worked at the Midland Group, Nottingham and Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh. She contributes articles and presentations on Live Art to a range of UK and international journals, publications and events. She has been awarded Honorary Fellowships by Queen Mary, University of London and Dartington College of Arts, and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Gothenburg in 2015.

[bit.ly/1oeRnyS](https://bit.ly/1oeRnyS)

Photo : © RR.

## ITINERARY

## Shining a Spotlight

### Núria Güell in practice and related projects

Edi Muka

How would it feel should a woman approach you in the street and ask if you want to play hide-and-seek with her? Who, as a child, hasn't played that game, or who hasn't hid from someone either out of a sense of mischief, or out of fear or even to exact a measure of revenge towards parental reprehension? Yet, as we grow older, it feels awkward to be approached by a stranger with such a request. It's as though someone shines a spotlight on you, setting you on stage, and that's uncomfortable. At the same time it feels awkward to simply answer "no, thanks" to the offer. One feels obliged to say something more and try to be receptive to anything else that the person might suggest, as though one doesn't want to upset the innocent make-believe, all the while still feeling uncomfortable. And before long you find yourself engaged in conversation with that woman, sharing her life-story, the story of an illegal immigrant, who day-in day out has to play hide-and-seek for real, as she finds her way about the city...

Imagine the surprise that you, as a regular museum-goer, would receive in Medellin, Colombia, when visiting the Botero room to stumble upon on a guided tour led by a couple of very young girls. Initially, puzzled by their age and appearance you stop to hear with some curiosity what they're saying about the great master's paintings, renowned for depicting daily life on the streets and the society in which he lived. Slowly you're drawn into their account, following them through the works they have chosen to talk about. And again, before long you realize: the girls are neither specialists in art history, nor are they Botero experts. What you are hearing are their personal accounts, stories of two young, very young sex slaves, woven through the imagery of Botero's paintings and sculptures, laid bare in front of you. They are talking about one of the darkest aspects of Colombian reality – the sexual slavery of minors – and doing so by speaking from first-hand experience, and odd as it may sound, you can see that story unfold within Botero's paintings. They speak with passion and commitment; there's no feeling of shame for what they've gone through. They bravely denounce what everybody knows, but many refuse to see. What you're hearing is harsh, leaving you exposed to a difficult, yet simple choice: either leave the room and continue keeping your eyes and ears shut, or succumb to the experience by sharing fully in the pain and life stories unfolding right in front of you, although somehow they make you feel complicit...

This feeling of being under the spotlight pervades many of Núria Güell's projects. Her artistic practice is distinguished by an attempt to rethink the ethics of those large institutions that govern our society and organize our lives, suggesting alternative methodologies. Whether she employs an illegal immigrant to play hide-and-seek with visitors at an art biennale, or Romani beggars in the streets of Stockholm to fundraise for Swedish culture, or marries a Cuban guy to provide him with Spanish citizenship, Güell is constantly taking aim at hegemonic power relationships and their related abuse, trying to subvert entrenched positions and destabilize set conventions.

Güell's projects are not what one would label as "participatory" or "relational". Rather than being interested in certain topical issues and involving people in the "creative process", Güell shows a keen concern and a direct engagement with the issues she's working with. To help me speak about Güell's role as an artist, I'd like to quote from Marina Garces'

text, "Honesty with the Real" [bit.ly/1O8knHG](https://bit.ly/1O8knHG). When introducing the question of honesty, Garces remarks that there's a twofold kind of violence – towards one self and towards the real. Towards oneself, because one needs to "let oneself be affected", and towards the real, because "one has to enter on to the scene". To be affected, Garces notes,

is to “learn how to listen to the innumerable senses of the outcry of reality and to the impossible-to-codify richness of its voices”; and “to enter on to the scene” is to “expose oneself and be involved”.

## One-to-one encounters

At the core of those methods Güell puts into practice is a direct, one-to-one encounter between subjects. For Güell, eliminating that distance between the public and the “artwork” is crucial. She goes into minute detail to set the stage for these encounters, dismantling or subverting institutional mechanisms created to uphold the necessary distance for our gaze to function. Yet, it is exactly this unprotected space of the encounter and the assumed positions within it that is the most controversial aspect in her works. Güell projects often involve collaborations; she has cultural institutions hire people to perform or to act out agreed scripts. Sensitive issues regarding the role of institutions then arise, as well as the role and place of the artist and people-as-subjects within the framework of an art project. A heated debate and reaction ensues, encompassing everyone that comes across the work, be they politicians, institutions, curators, art critics, cultural personalities and even the general public. For Güell, this polemical division is not merely the intended result of her work; it is the place where she locates her work, aiming to provoke engagement by all actors concerned, including the artist herself.

Eliminating that distance between the public and the “artwork” is crucial.

It is from this perspective that I would like to analyze how Güell operates. Although she has a set of references of how to work on her projects, her starting point is to listen and expose herself to the reality of the issues at hand, realities such as suffering and struggle, both of which deeply affect the artist. So, the process invariably goes through multiple and sharp dilemmas and a lot of questioning. More often than not after lengthy discussions, Güell invites people, who themselves are subjected to the abuse of power, to collaborate with her in addressing these issues. Regular working contracts are drafted and people are temporarily employed within the framework of the project. In theory, they can be employed to do anything, but in reality they are not. The collaborators are asked to perform specific tasks that in some way refer to, or temporarily expose or even suspend, the power dynamic under which they normally find themselves. And, this is what usually provokes the outrage towards her projects – the fact that people in exposed and vulnerable social positions – in other words, victims – partake in an art project. This has often been challenged as an ethically problematic proposition – even though in essence it’s a moral issue – that reinforces the status quo of the power relationships that it aims to challenge, namely, the (western) artist using “the others, the exposed, the victims” for her project”. Since I have argued above that this is exactly the locus where Güell situates her work, I would like to focus on this debate and analyze it.

It is important to focus on the notions of *people-as-subject* and *victim* – which constitute the process of the representation of *otherness*. In the debates accompanying Güell’s projects, these notions are often connected to the element of “exploitation” or “use” in the context of the artwork – an ethically (or morally) problematic stance. This claim presupposes two things: that those employed within the framework of the art project are *subjects in an exposed social position* – in other words, *victims* – vulnerable to dominating power relationships; and, that they as such are being *used* – meaning the power structure is being reinforced.

## Use and position

The mere act of employing people to partake in the project cannot in itself be used to legitimize it. This is because, aside from the formal relationship established with them on a symbolical level, there is an element of *use*. Güell is aware of her position and of perpetuating these power relationships. Yet, she is making use of the *position* of the exposed subjects, or in other words, the *position of people-as-victims*. Before engaging in the ethical implications of such an act, we should consider this *position* as a relational one, a discursively constructed position, and not something these people are born into. The fact that it is a relational position means that it has been discursively assigned to them. It is this particular construct – of someone who is already assigned the position of victim – that Güell makes use of. She doesn't pretend "to give voice" to the "silenced", or to invest these people with "agency", or to permanently change their lives – despite the fact that in some cases life-changing events have taken place and a strong voice has clearly articulated issues. Güell's art projects make use of the above-mentioned *position* of people-as-victims so as to expose it as a fake posture. Güell first needs to re-enact the power relationships in order to subvert them, or to put it in her words, "to create an analytical replica" of the set of relationships that stand at the root of the problem. By collaborating with those very persons embodying people-as-victims, the project momentarily eliminates that distance between "us" and "them", thereby opening up a space for an encounter with the individual. In the larger scheme of things, the power relationships are still present, because it is the artist who is commissioning them to do a job or perform a script. Such performances only become possible through a leap of faith, through trust and collaboration between both parties, and the act of employment serves as a guarantee of this new relationship. Only in this way can the minimal space needed for meeting with the person be created and maintained, while the distance needed for the mechanics of the gaze be briefly suspended. By engaging directly and specifically with each given context in which the projects are created, Güell's operations avoid a generalizing or an essentialist approach of the aforementioned position of *people-as-victim*. Her projects do not always succeed; some times they fall apart and at other times the process itself has been abused. Güell's intention is neither to create universal formulas of approach, nor to provide ready-made, feel-good solutions for deeply rooted social problems.

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Re-enact the power relationships in order to subvert them.

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Güell doesn't shy away from difficult ethical issues dealing with the "exposure" or "use" of vulnerable social positions. Her projects are developed on the condition that the artist "enters onto the scene", and on a basis of trust and close collaboration with the person(s) involved. In her own words, "I'm not sure what the adequate term would be but I understand my projects as something akin to exercising a symbolic counter-violence on the public, as life stories, as the adopting of a script, not a role, and living it for a period of time. Almost all the projects modify my real life and have an impact upon it." As such, her artistic operations eliminate the symbolic distance by "shining a spotlight" and by implicating both the visitor and herself as part of the problem. Good morality as protector of the status quo – in other words, she's aiming to destabilize the established set of rules. Her work remains ethically complex and unresolved, but that's because the reality of the issues she's dealing with are equally complex and unresolved.

This is an edited version of the article originally published in the *Nuria Güell* catalogue for adngaleria, May 2016, Barcelona.



*Too Much Melanin*  
Núria Güell

Maria is a political refugee from Kosovo who had been an illegal resident in Sweden for nine years. On behalf of the artist, she was hired by the Biennial to play hide and seek with the audience. Through this employment contract, she was able to get a permit to stay legally in Sweden.

Art Crime (curated by Joanna Warsza),  
Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art,  
Sweden, 2013

© Núria Güell



Watch the video on: [bit.ly/28ZWHFM](https://bit.ly/28ZWHFM)



*The Flowers Fair*  
Nùria Güell

A series of guided tours through the works of Fernando Botero, at the permanent collection of the Museum of Antioquia in Medellin, carried out by minors exploited by the growing business of sex tourism.

Festival MDE 15,  
Medellin, Colombia  
2015-2016

© RR



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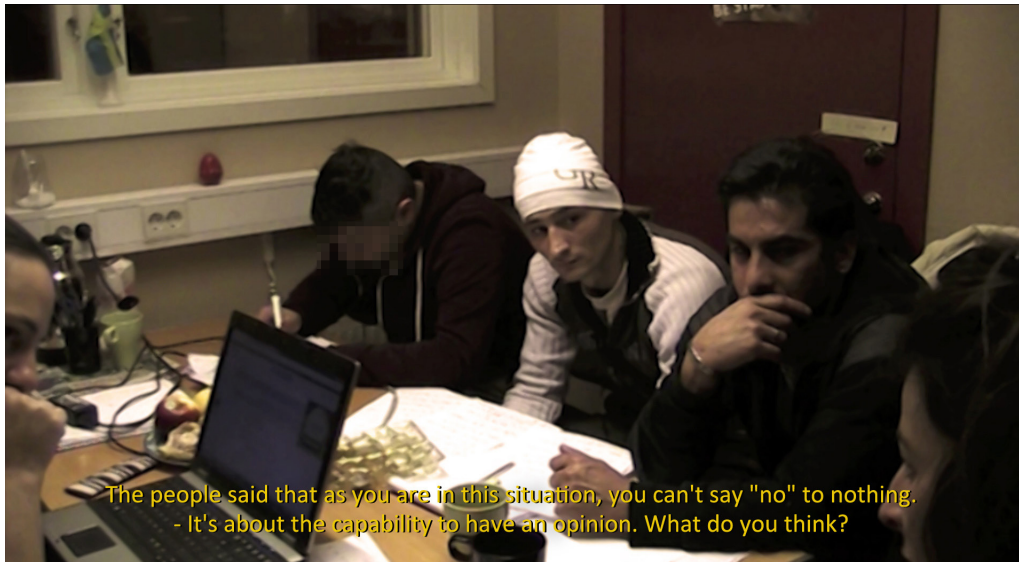


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2015-2016

© RR



*Support Swedish Culture*  
Núria Güell

The project aimed to employ four Romanian gypsies whose income came from begging on the streets, to raise funds professionally in the public space, to finance the Swedish culture. The art centre that commissioned the project eventually decided to cancel it. Pictures from a meeting with Roma employees, to know what they thought when they learned that their contracts and wages were null and void.

Statens Konstråd (Public Art Agency),  
Sweden, 2014

© RR



*Support Swedish Culture*

Núria Güell

The project aimed to employ four Romanian gypsies whose income came from begging on the streets, to raise funds professionally in the public space, to finance the Swedish culture. The art centre that commissioned the project eventually decided to cancel it.

Pictures from a meeting with Roma employees, to know what they thought when they learned that their contracts and wages were null and void.

Statens Konstråd (Public Art Agency),  
Sweden, 2014

© RR



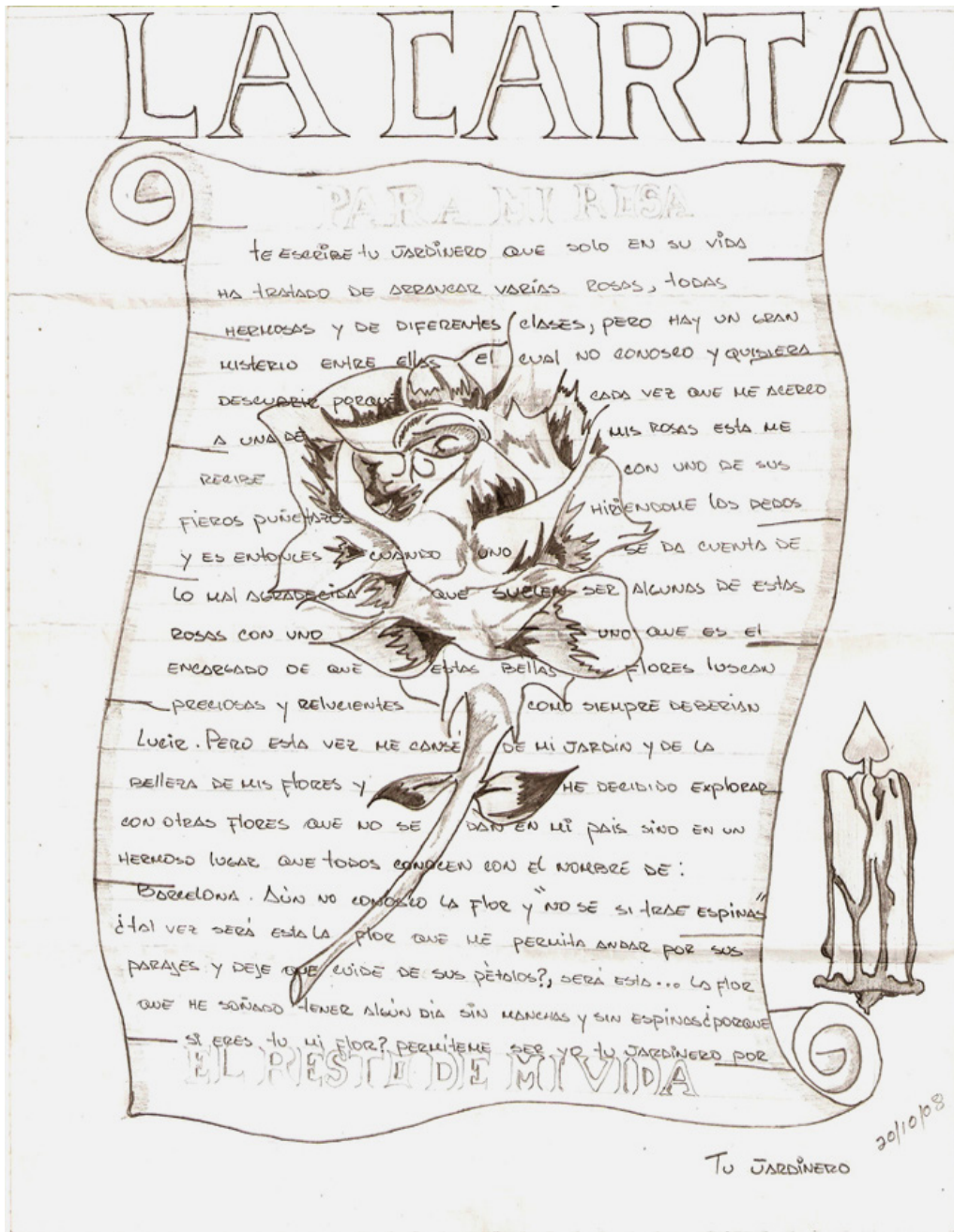
*Support Swedish Culture*  
Núria Güell

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Statens Konstråd (Public Art Agency),  
Sweden, 2014

© RR





Humanitarian Aid  
 Núria Güell

While living in Cuba, the artist offered herself as a wife to the Cuban that would write "the world's most beautiful love letter", paying the wedding expenses, the ticket to Spain and all the legal formalities to obtain the Spanish nationality. Here the winner love letter.

Cuba-Spain 2008-2013

© Núria Güell





*Humanitarian Aid*  
Núria Güell

While living in Cuba, the artist offered herself as a wife to the Cuban that would write “the world’s most beautiful love letter”, paying the wedding expenses, the ticket to Spain and all the legal formalities to obtain the Spanish nationality. Here the civil wedding.(Cuba, 2009)

Cuba-Spain 2008-2013

© Yunió Aguilar



*Humanitarian Aid*  
Núria Güell

While living in Cuba, the artist offered herself as a wife to the Cuban that would write “the world’s most beautiful love letter”, paying the wedding expenses, the ticket to Spain and all the legal formalities to obtain the Spanish nationality. Here are shown the Spanish documents of the husband.

Cuba-Spain 2008-2013

© Levi Horta

BIOGRAPHY  
Edi Muka



Since March 2014 Edi Muka holds the position of curator of temporary projects at the Public Art Agency, Sweden. Previously, from 2009-2014 he was the curator of Roda Sten Konsthall in Göteborg, and together with Stina Edblom, shared the position of artistic director of Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2013. He is one of the founders and directors of the Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial, as well as director and curator of TICA – Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art, an independent platform for research and production of contemporary art. In 2015 he co-curated *Local Stories – Global Practices*, third edition of the International Art Encounters of Medellin, Colombia. In 2007, he curated the fourth edition of the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, titled *Rethinking Dissent*, together with Joa Ljungberg. In 1999, Muka curated the group show *Albania Today – The Time of Ironic Optimism*, the first Albanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial, and in 2005 he was the commissioner for the pavilion. His curatorial work is of international scope and based on close collaboration with artists.

Photo : © Jutta Benzenberg

STROLL

## Walking: Holding

Rosana Cade

*Walking: Holding* is a subtle experiential performance that involves one audience member at a time walking through a town or city along a carefully designed route holding hands with a series of local participants along the way. The participants are all different to each other – different ages, races, genders, sexualities, social backgrounds, etc. The performance is an opportunity to experience public space from someone else’s perspective, and also an experiment in what can happen when two strangers share physical intimacy in public. It has been presented in over twenty locations across the UK, as well as several other European cities and Hong Kong.

“The test of queer theory activism, the test of trans theory activism is surely to make it easier to breathe, easier to walk down the street without harassment, easier to find a liveable life, a life you can affirm with pleasure and joy, where our sense of a liveable future is stronger than our sense of suffering.” (Judith Butler)

Depending on where you are and who you are with, something as simple and ‘harmless’ as holding hands and walking – something taken for granted by so many people, quickly becomes a transgressive act that threatens dominant ideologies and exposes the prejudices controlling our behaviour in social space. Many people across the world choose to, or feel forced into hiding their true identities in public for fear of violence and harassment. Visibility, fear, risk and safety weave a tangled web for many people who have non-normative identities. I see *Walking: Holding* as a positive act of queer defiance and visibility, a practice that aims to open up possibilities of how we can be in public and who is permitted to take up space.

However, in many places the issues around queer visibility are not as potent. The performance can become less about how we are viewed, the relationship between us and the public we encounter on the street, and much more about the intimacy of touch and the relationship between the two people holding hands. This act in itself creates a lot of anxiety for many, who fear the exposure that comes from such a deep level of intimacy with someone they have just met. Human contact is another area heavily policed by social expectation, and as we grow out of early childhood we learn what is permissible and where depending on our gender and age. Yet to abandon these social conventions and hold another human being, to feel their skin between your fingers and their sweat on your palm, breaks down so many barriers so immediately and can be an incredibly nourishing, uplifting and humbling experience.

Importantly, these two relationships are always at play, and the interweaving of these two confrontations in public space asks us to open ourselves up to new ways of viewing and interacting with others. In a world where we are told to mistrust strangers, not to touch people in case we get sued or accused of assault, to fear the youth on the street corner, or the foreign looking person with the rucksack, to lock our doors and keep our personal belongings with us at all time, turn our heads away from beggars, keep our children inside, the act of *Walking: Holding* asks you to abandon all fear and trust the hands of a group of complete strangers in a city. The lurking figure in the hoodie in the alley soon becomes your close companion. Whilst the awareness of being in a performance allows for this abandonment, you also aware that you are inside ‘real life’, you are in public, and yet you are viewing everyone as a potential hand holder. I am interested in turning the stranger into a human – turning the other into a human through openness and touch, with a very strong and real desire for greater empathy and understanding.



Listen to Rosana Cade – A talk to listen to with headphones while in the public space.

[bit.ly/28TvqkL](https://bit.ly/28TvqkL)



*Walking:Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence





*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence



*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence



*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence





*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence



*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence





*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence



*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence



*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence





*Walking: Holding*  
Rosana Cade

Wrought Festival, Sheffield, Great Britain, 2014

© Gwilym Lawrence

BIOGRAPHY  
Rosana Cade



Rosana Cade is a queer artist based in Glasgow, Scotland. Live art and activism root the form of her performances, which take place in various contexts including theatres, public spaces, as well as club and cabaret settings. She was part of the Spill National Showcase in 2013, a National Theatre of Scotland 'Auteur' in 2014 and an Artsadmin artist bursary recipient 2014/15. Her work has been shown extensively across the UK with over twenty organisations including the National Theatre in London, the Summerhall as part of the Made in Scotland Showcase at the Edinburgh Fringe 2014, Contact Theatre – Manchester, the Arches in Glasgow, Forest Fringe, Battersea Arts Centre, and international venues including Teatro Maria Matos in Lisbon, Frascati in Amsterdam and Kwai Fong Theatre in Hong Kong.

She is also part of a live art riot girl boi band, Double Pussy Clit Fu\*k.

[bit.ly/1t7XcEh](https://bit.ly/1t7XcEh)

Photo : © Eilidh MacAskill.



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Lydia Richardson, aka Anne Thuot  
Vagrancy of a Social Metamorphosis  
Diane Fourdrignier

If you came across her, you might not even notice her straightaway.

She might even go unnoticed amid the filth and the urban jungle. Yet, she could well loll about on the sidewalk, amid the exhaust pipes and between two urine puddles. Once you notice her, because ultimately she sparkles a bit more than the others, you will ask yourself: who is this woman? How come she's ended up hanging out under a bridge and yet wearing a *Chanel* suit and pumps? She is out of place... You'll notice that unlike yourself, she doesn't seem to be waiting for the next passing tram or taxi. She doesn't appear caught up in the daily commute of a simple round trip.

Lydia is her first name. Richardson the family name. You will think her somewhat foolish for taking her place amidst the bums at Brussels Gare du Midi railway station, or those good-for-nothings in the small neighbouring park. And there she is, Lydia adrift amidst those stinking of piss, the ravenous, the homeless, the undocumented. She is losing her marbles.

Made-up like a stolen car, she strikes poses of a Pietà smashed out of her head.

Keeping on the move, Lydia manages the situation "impeccably." Her outfit freshly pressed from the dry-cleaners. Her perfect "36-38". Her well-cut fringe and she has gone for a smooth bob just like the actress Carole Bouquet. Lydia has tinted her hair ash blonde. The thing is, though, it doesn't suit her.

And that bitch, she's well able to pop open a bottle of champagne bearing a hefty price tag and get plastered under the bridge. Or, for that matter, to have her portrait painted on a bench in some dive of a park nearby by a "black" artist, because Africa is hip. Because the blacks, they have beautiful colours in their poor villages, and anyway, they have really white teeth and rhythm in their blood. And, besides such skin they have!

Because, basically, it is Africa that fascinates Lydia.

Because, basically, it is Africa that fascinates Lydia. This journey, this interdiction. Maybe one day she will head off to the "Club Med Senegal"...<sup>10</sup> Who knows... With a girlfriend who's halfway alcoholic and equally as muddled as herself. The Africa she knows is that of her father's, the ivory he collected that sat enthroned

<sup>10</sup> Le Club Med is a French public limited company established in 1950 specialising in all-in holidays in holidays resorts through out the world.

on the mantelpiece. Those ivories that the white maid dusted every week, just as she used to dust down the marble staircase or the *Bang & Olufsen* TV set.

But, Lydia, what are you up to? You're hanging out with a bunch of people reeking of shit and you're talking with them at that? And about to become friends with them! And, you're even sharing *Ruinart* champagne with them, gulping it straight from the bottle? Get a grip! You never know what disease you'll pick up!

Lydia, go home! You surely have a totally dirt-free husband waiting for you in your luxurious apartment. You surely have kids that look like Nicole Lambert's *Triples*.<sup>11</sup> You surely have a *Cyrillus*<sup>12</sup> loyalty card you slipped into your luxury purse.

Lydia you've got to be kidding!

You've become as vagrant as those undocumented African migrants who paint your portrait gallery on the Place Sainte-Catherine. And your feet are swollen with anguish and from restaurants with six services by the sea. So, pick which side you're on. Or go home.

11. Upmarket comic books for a younger audience.

[bit.ly/25DI3cA](https://bit.ly/25DI3cA)

12. An upmarket online sales service.

## Redemption

Lydia Richardson tells of Anne Thuot's stop-off in the netherworld. The Franco-Brussels artist, director, performance artist and lecturer at INSAS<sup>13</sup> has not, unlike the refugees she meets at her performances, been driven from her native land. Yet, two bombs detonated right in the middle of her kitchen. First, she was to learn that her father was dying. But, that fate awaits everyone. Then, she learns that she will become an *heiress*.

13. Institut National des Arts du Spectacle - école supérieure de théâtre et de cinéma (National Institute of the Performing Arts) Brussels, Belgium.

As a child, Anne used to spend twelve out of every fourteen days being raised by her mother in a council flat. And the remaining two days with her father who used to order himself *Ruinart* champagne on the Place Stanislas in Nancy.

And in the midst of preparing for a burial ceremony, Anne was to learn from the notary that from now on not only could she afford a car or a holiday home with the proceeds of her future inheritance, but the entire housing estate in which her mother lives.

Anne knew all about making ends meet. And, if her budget allowed, she would give ten-euro to the tramps at the Gare du Midi. Well then, what was she going to do with all that money? First of all, she was going to take the opportunity to question the act of *metamorphosis*.

## Will she turn into decadent bourgeois?

Will she transform her newfound fortune by redistributing her wealth in small amounts? To whom? Why?

And what about all that dough? Is it not her father's as well? That which he had put aside by working twelve out of fourteen days, without spending any time with his two children? Isn't this bequest also absence money? Money for sustained emptiness, transformed into a consolation prize?

And with her life in a state of upheaval, Anne Thuot invents the character of Lydia Richardson. Dressing up as an outrageous bourgeois, she implicates herself flesh and bone, right down to the posh wig, in misery and the city's dire straits. She creates an off-the-wall icon, a new type of "cheesy", as the English would put it, person of means, dragging a fortune around, a fortune she doesn't know what to do with, as though it were too unbearable a grief.

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She implicates herself flesh and bone, in the city's dire straits

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When David Bowie created Ziggy Stardust, he unleashed a trail of unbridled and ultra-stylish Glam Rock sequins the world over. He conceived of this avatar from outer space to deliver a message, enabling thereby his generation greater access to freedom in terms of gender and image. He transformed himself physically and nominally to assert his demands and beliefs. A medium for the artist to express at once his troubled personality and sublimate it.

Lydia Richardson is Anne Thuot's Ziggy Stardust. Except, she does not dispatch dreams. She depicts the bourgeoisie, and then messes up their faces with a few strokes of blush. She then uses them as triggers for performative actions so as to create improbable encounters. Anne thus approaches strangers wandering about her neighbourhood Brussels' Gare du Midi. They become accomplices, Lydia R.'s followers in the city. In this way she deals with – not a twin sexual identity like Bowie – but her dual social condition. Between the block of tenements and the bubbly.

During the first phase of her work on Lydia Richardson, in the context of SIGNAL 2015, the artist told of her meeting with a Slovak family. Uprooted and in need of shelter, all five family members slept in under the bridge at the Gare du Midi. A mother, father, two children and a guitar. Becoming roaming companions with Lydia, they created a series of tableaux vivants, which depict the artist being comforted by the clan, who while certainly in distress, were united and up for anything.

In the next phase of SIGNAL (September 2016), Anne Thuot continues to develop her links with image-making. She assigns an official portraitist for Lydia; Saidou Ly, an undocumented Mauritanian painter, is commissioned to create her effigy. After having been comforted during the first stage Anne asks a refugee to reconnect her to her own image of the Woman. The artist will do portraits of Lydia in the street, and the ensuing paintings will place a *mise en abyme* even in the midst of the performance framework. An effect that enables a rupture of the linear narrative.

Isn't Lydia Richardson showing us the path of change? Isn't she engaged with the reinvention of a compelling form of socialism, of a neighbourhood socialism? A socialism that begins with one's fellow passengers in the tram.

Anne Thuot could have chosen to make out a bank draft for Unicef. She began by recalling, through the personage of Lydia, that to create in itself is an act of giving.

Lydia,

Don't go back home!

You're an outsider in your neighbourhood, a woman journeying through the city's underworld. You address those tragic heroes wandering the streets, talking to themselves. And in proposing that we tear the peacock feathers made of five-euro banknotes off your dress, you instil in us the idea that maybe today, that economically, everything has yet to be thought through, everything is to begin all over again.

Translated from French by John Barrett.



*Lydia Richardson at Midi Station*

Anne Thuot

Video still

Covered street of the Midi station

Brussels, September 2015

© Clémence Herbert and Jérémy Van Der Haegen



*Lydia Richardson at Midi Station*

Anne Thuot

Video still

Covered street of the Midi station

Brussels, September 2015

© Clémence Herbert and Jérémy Van Der Haegen





*Lydia Richardson at Midi Station*  
Anne Thuot

Video still  
Covered street of the Midi station  
Brussels, September 2015

© Clémence Herbert and Jérémy Van Der Haegen



*Lydia Richardson – Pietas*  
Anne Thuot

With Lydia: the members of the Slovak family, Cyril, Diana, Milena et Sebastian, and Anne Thuot's son,  
Oscar.

Video still  
Tunnel near Midi Station  
Brussels, September 2015

© Clémence Herbert and Jérémy Van Der Haegen



*Lydia Richardson – Pietas*  
Anne Thuot

With Lydia: the members of the Slovak family, Cyril, Diana, Milena et Sebastian, and Anne Thuot's son,  
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Video still  
Tunnel near Midi Station  
Brussels, September 2015

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*Lydia Richardson, sous le pont*  
Anne Thuot

Dress by Charlotte Lippinois.

SIGNAL  
Pierre Paulus Park and Pelgrims House  
Brussels, September 2015

© Charlotte Lippinois





*Lydia Richardson, sous le pont*  
Anne Thuot

Dress by Charlotte Lippinois.

SIGNAL  
Pierre Paulus Park and Pelgrims House  
Brussels, September 2015

© Colin Delfosse



*Lydia Richardson, sous le pont*  
Anne Thuot

Dress by Charlotte Lippinois.

SIGNAL  
Pierre Paulus Park and Pelgrims House  
Brussels, September 2015

© Colin Delfosse



*Lydia Richardson, sous le pont*  
Anne Thuot

Dress by Charlotte Lippinois.

SIGNAL  
Pierre Paulus Park and Pelgrims House  
Brussels, September 2015

© Colin Delfosse)





*Portrait of Lydia Richardson*  
Painting by Saydou Li

Brussels, april 2016

© Lydia Richardson

BIOGRAPHY  
Diane Fourdrignier



Diane Fourdrignier graduated in Dramatic Arts and started to work in the field of dance-theatre in 2007. She first assisted Michèle-Anne de Mey and then rapidly met the company Peeping Tom with which she has created five shows. She also signed several dramaturgies for Hans Van den Broeck. As an actress, she performed for the company Transquiquennal and for Anne Thuot. Since 2013, she teaches at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels.

Photo : © RR



## NEIGHBOURHOOD

## The Periphery as Threshold

### Jay Pather

At the Live Art Festival which I curated for the Institute for Creative Arts,<sup>14</sup> performance artist Gavin Krastin ended his work *Rough Musick*, a work with asphyxiation and the performance of other extremities by leading audiences lying on a cart drawn by

a donkey on the outskirts of the city. The audience members were given old iron and aluminium plates and utensils and were asked to beat these repeatedly. They created a bizarre soundtrack, the 'rough music' in the title, as they followed Krastin's abject near naked body in freezing temperatures. *Rough Musick* referenced a practice that originated in the small villages of medieval England as a means for the public to disgrace and humiliate petty criminals, sexual deviants and 'others'. In a courtyard close by, Cameroon based performance artist Christian Etongo performed *Quarter Sud*, a work based on border crossing and illegal immigration. The artist sliced raw fish, used copious amounts of bread flour, a range of foods, water and alcohol, body painting and a series of body actions that included deftly manoeuvring under, across, and through a maze of tightly tied up string. In a room opposite this space, Richard September performed *Category Syndrome*, which considers the South African Coloured identity embodied in the corporeal marginalized body which "like a worm in the brain interferes with the body's ability to cooperate between its parts." September probed ideas of coloured identity, a problematic reductionist term referring to people of Nam and Khoi descent or of mixed race. Performed in a new democracy, September brought to the fore the crux and plight of a people, indigenous to this country, that was considered to be peripheral to dominant white culture during apartheid, and considered peripheral in dominant black culture *after* apartheid. The resultant highly physical exploration of the body then serves as a vehicle for ideas of cultural difference and hierarchy as contained (and trapped) within the human frame.

14. Formerly the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts.

The periphery becomes a lens through which the centre may be viewed.

These works were amongst several that I curated working with the notion of The Periphery as Threshold. The artists shared more than just a common theme but also forms. The artists worked with extremities, spillage, overflow and a 'bubbling over' or excess. This 'bubbling over' as a characteristic of these various works seemed to bring our attention to how the periphery by nature of being relegated to the outskirts, contained and subjugated, starts to breed excesses and overflow. As such I was interested in how the periphery becomes a kind of threshold, a space or a lens through which the centre out of which they have been expelled, may be viewed. This space or lens then is a key to interpreting and 'knowing' or learning about the centre. The very act of exclusion and divestment is pure and unambiguous, and requires clear, rational legalities and policies to make it possible. The periphery (such as the continued presence of black shack settlements in South Africa in spite of a supposed democracy) provides a great deal of clarity about the centre's decree in formulating the periphery and the reasoning and logics behind this continued exclusion. The periphery then becomes invested with clear, unambiguous clues whereby the centre divested of a dressed up public relations image it normally perpetuates in central spaces such as state or corporate controlled media, appears naked for the world to see. I propose that this is one of the reasons why the periphery may be seen as a threshold. Ultimately it is how the periphery responds, acquiescent and compliant or fierce and oppositional, that the centre reveals its truths. In turn and if communities that are on the peripheries of society use force in an effort to be more visible and move to

the centre of a society, how that society responds will be significant. Whether that desire for visibility expressed by the periphery is met with change in the society or met with greater force making the 'outsider' place of the periphery a non-negotiable, without any possibility of inclusion as part of the centre of that society, would be instructive about the nature of that society.

## Making apparent that which remains submerged

My curatorial practice then very often touches on these notions of visibility and invisibility, periphery and centre and making apparent that which remains submerged. The festival *Infecting the City* is a case in point. I curated this festival between 2011 and 2015. It is an annual festival comprising around 60 visual and performing art works that occur in various parts of the city as site responsive interventions. Sometimes some artists do use the city as a backdrop while some are more investigative of the spaces they create their work for. The productions often are curated within a specified 'route' so that audiences may move from one work to another in sequence. This allows for an audience who knows about the Festival and have come especially for it to combine with those that may not know what is transpiring. And so the audience swells and becomes more diverse as the crowd moves from one space to another. This also allows for works to talk to each other in less obvious thematic ways and carried by the momentum of the works, for audiences to be led to parts of the city which they may not normally visit or pass by in their normal everyday.

Cape Town, one of the most well known cities in South Africa (an International Winner of Trip Advisor Travelers Choice Awards) is also a city where apartheid was born. Spatially these remnants of apartheid continue to be heavily reflected and present. Majority of the city's black population reside in far-flung townships known collectively as the Cape Flats. These were holding grounds for migrant workers brought in from rural areas to work in the city during apartheid. The centre has historically been a Central Business District surrounded by a number of predominantly white suburbs. The post independent, post apartheid South Africa imbued in 1994 with a change in political power but without any major shifts in economic power or land distribution, only reinforced a landscape wherein the spatial (and racial) demarcations of the city remain largely intact and unaltered. Within this context the idea for 'infecting' a city is very much about letting the outside in, how ever temporary. The word infection is loaded with negativity, anxiety and alarm. The body as a sacrosanct yet contested space, sealed shut with skin yet vulnerable and porous is an apt metaphor for land and country, constitution and status quo. Within the context of a public art festival in South Africa then, the active wilful infection of a city is as much a playful intervention on etymology as it is a conscious, virulent act of unmaking and re-constituting place.

The wilful infection of a city is a conscious act of unmaking and re-constituting place.

In my practice, I find it compelling to look at the city as a kind of massive theatre that is a palimpsest of various texts written and rewritten by several battles, inscribed with change, turbulence and aftershocks. The city of Cape Town is less of the predictable, modernist theatre of Anton Chekov, it resembles the anarchy and absurdity of the theatre of Peter Handke or Eugène Ionesco. The organizing and choreography of and playing a city is for me both an intuitive one not unlike in the manner of Walter Benjamin's *flâneur* but often led with the more rational and real complexities of the South African city, the

continued separations, the poverty, the lack of transformation and the continued imposition of colonial symbology. So while some of the walking through in the routes may resemble something intuitive and sometimes whimsical, the various experiences allow for clear and strong political commentary as well as inter cultural experiences that audiences seeming stumble into. Several principles of infection, memory, archive, the extraordinary in the ordinary and remaking place have informed curatorial choices with regards to site, works, routes and programming.

To elaborate on a few examples: In one of the festivals, a frequent participant, artist Tebogo Munyahi, erected five shacks removed from their original spaces from the townships and shantytown of Khyalitsha and brought them into the city. In these completely closed structures various performers created intimate works that spoke to the lives of shack dwellers. Munyahi constructed holes through which the public was invited to look through. Showed up as the voyeurs they were, audiences could take a peak at what was happening behind the temporary walls of a shack. The experience was unsettling. Employing the ordinary in the extraordinary and the simple towards spectacular ends were Leila Anderson and Stan Wannet who took up residence in a store front window. Both artists took turns to lie asleep in the window attracting curious passers-by to their shop. Inside the shop was a myriad of artefacts concerned with archive and archival practice. Further inside the shop were projectors and television monitors that replayed the activities the two artists had been up to the night before. In the middle of the night they would set off to various parts of Cape Town and create performances with no one watching, document these and play them inside the store during the day while they slept. The play on dream states and waking was a spectacular remaking of a meditative space in the middle of the busy-ness of the city. Artist Athi Patra Ruga reclaimed a public swimming pool when he performed an initiation ritual in a work called *Il-lulwane* (bat, in isiXhosa).<sup>15</sup> The word is a derogatory reference to men who are circumcised in a hospital as opposed to going through the proper traditional initiation ceremony. Sporting bright red high heels and with a bevy of synchronized swimmers below him, Ruga was hoisted high after being dunked in the pool, reclaiming tradition, sexuality, public space as a personal odyssey in one spectacular performance performed with an audience of 600 people. In similar camp style Kira Kemper dressed a stature of Cecil John Rhodes, the colonial rogue, in some shiny, soft fabric providing a temporary and humorous alternative to the real object and providing possibility for dislodging colonial concrete.

15. Xhosa, or isiXhosa, is one of the languages of Austral Africa.

Infecting the City then as with the Live Art Festival were imbued with ideas of periphery and centre. In working inside of a city that resists transformation arrested in the throes of neoliberal economics, one can only respond to this stasis. South Africans are performative in their demonstration of rage against the continued lack of change and the persistence of overwhelming poverty and unemployment. In curating these festivals I attempt to create continuities and flows between experiences of realities lived with those that are performed. This insertion of performativities inside of a highly charged city, both overt and covert, aim to be part of existing dialogue, simply and modestly affording other frames and lenses with which to view, experience and re-imagine the contested city.

[bit.ly/28R4t3j](https://bit.ly/28R4t3j)

[bit.ly/28KvW3N](https://bit.ly/28KvW3N)



*Quarter Sud*  
Christian Etongo

Live Art Festival  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2014

© Ashley Walters



*Quarter Sud*  
Christian Etongo

Live Art Festival  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2014

© Ashley Walters





*Right Inside*  
Tebogo Munyahi

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2013

© Sydelle Willow-Smith



*Right Inside*  
Tebogo Munyahi

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2013

© Sydelle Willow-Smith



*The Diagnosis*  
Leila Anderson & Stan Wannet

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2012

© Africa Centre





*Processional Walkway*  
Katie Urban

*Infecting the City*  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2012

© Africa Centre



*Ilulwane*  
Athi-Patra Ruga

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2012

© Ashley Walters





*Ilulwane*  
Athi-Patra Ruga

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2012

© Ashley Walters



*Ilulwane*  
Athi-Patra Ruga

Infesting the City  
Cape Town, South Africa, 2012

© Ashley Walters

BIOGRAPHY  
Jay Pather



Jay Pather is Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town, Director of the Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (ICA, formerly GIPCA) and Artistic Director of Siwela Sonke Dance. Recent publications include articles in *New Territories: Theatre, Drama, and Performance in Post-apartheid South Africa* edited by Marc Meaufort; *Changing Metropolis II* edited by Marie Polli; *Rogue Urbanism* edited by Edgar Pieterse and Abdul Malik Simone and *Performing Cities* edited by Nicholas Whybrow. Jay is curator for the Infecting the City Public Art Festivals and The ICA's Live Art Festivals, serves as a juror for the International Award for Public Art and on the Board of the National Arts Festival of South Africa. Recent art works include: *Body of Evidence* in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Den Haag, *Blind Spot* for the Metropolis Biennale, Copenhagen, *Qaphela Caesar* at the Stock Exchange in Johannesburg and *Rite*, in Maboneg, a re-imagining of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

[bit.ly/1UmrsVU](https://bit.ly/1UmrsVU)

Photo : © RR

**Klaxon**  
**(when art lives in town)**

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