



FORECAST FESTIVAL MARCH 17–18 RADIALSYSTEM

An international mentorship program and interdisciplinary network for knowledge transfer, Forecast offers a new generation of artists and creative thinkers the chance to work with accomplished mentors toward bringing their project ideas to fruition. Forecast transcends neatly defined genres and eschews prescribed research themes to carve out space for the questions on the minds of future trailblazers.

In winter 2022, creative practitioners from around the world answered an open call and submitted their proposals to work with one of six mentors shaping Forecast's seventh edition. Active in a variety of disciplines, from stand-up comedy to investigative journalism, the mentors in the 2022–23 edition all share a common engagement with practices characterized by immediate encounters, either with the work's subject matter or its audience. In a climate defined by impersonal, screen-based interactions, Forecast seeks to forge audacious paths forward for practices that thrive and rely on corporeal, unmediated situations.

Reading a total of 600 applications from over 100 countries, the six mentors invited 18 nominees to participate in the Forecast Forum in July 2022 at Radialsystem, Berlin. Visitors experienced boundary-pushing contributions ranging from performance art and deconstructed magic to immersive explorations in moving images and vocal experimentations.

At the event's conclusion, the mentors each selected one mentee and accompanied the development of their respective projects until their premiere at the Forecast Festival.

Over the course of eight months between the Forum and the Festival, one-on-one mentorships took place, in which each of the six mentees went on an individual work-stay with their respective mentor. This time was a condensed period of creative exchanges, finetuning, and concrete mentoring ahead of the Forecast Festival. These personal exchanges and work sessions, which prove crucial for the final productions, were captured in short videos produced with local camera people on the ground. Having reached the end of their mentorship period, the mentees unveil their productions in the two-day Forecast Festival. In addition, the six mentors also offer insights into their own work, and the topics that inspire and move them.

Forecast 7 marks the first edition since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that could take place entirely as the mentorship program was originally structured: centered on in-person gatherings and exchanges not only between mentor and mentee, but among all participants across the six fields of creative expression. It is in this transdisciplinary approach that Forecast radiates far and wide, and new ideas blossom.

No Explanations

We humans may not be the most agreeable creatures on the planet, but one great civilizing achievement makes us an extremely interesting species: the capacity for creative production. Forecast believes that artists and creative practitioners are capable of unique things that are at the core of being human, and that this is reason enough to give them a platform and provide them with the space and means to do their work. Sufficient space and sufficient means.

Time and again we hear well-intentioned official speeches about the significance of art, arguing that it offers us important insights, enriches us with new perspectives, provides access to experiences of unfamiliar realities, or lets us tap into intense emotions. Which is exactly what you read about LSD. What is the point and who benefits from justifying the existence of the arts with such broad humanistic attributions? Is the experience of art a kind of LSD trip, just more democratic, socially acceptable, or morally elevated?

There is something else to learn from the mentors and mentees of Forecast 7: the autonomy and creative force of artistic work require no justifications and no explanations. Over the past months, each of the six tandems has developed their projects with the greatest energy and dynamism we could wish for. With humor and velocity, with full physical commitment and willingness to take risks, with the ability to reflect on complex questions, challenge clichés, and expose manipulations, with the insistent research of documentary practices—whatever the means and material they work with, the mentors and mentees go all out, completely independently and autonomously. Yes, they touch on human abilities and possibilities, bring to light experiences that can stir and fundamentally rearrange one's thinking and feeling, transform one's own understanding of existence and coexistence in a unique way. If one would like to formulate an attribution to describe artistic creation, then perhaps it could read more like this: Art is inherent to the human experience and is synonymous with being human. But it's an exhilarating, radical, exuberantly free, and pleasurable variant thereof.

As for the creative practitioners of Forecast 7 in particular, what unites them is that they all work with immediate encounters, be it in exploratory, experimental, playful, or confrontational ways. This interest in unmediated interaction with people seems more precious to us than ever in these post-pandemic and still turbulent times.

It is an honor and a great privilege for Forecast that the work of our high-caliber mentees and mentors has been generously funded by the BKM since our first edition in 2015, steadily supported by the resolutions of the Bundestag. We are fully convinced: the unique talents and abilities, as well as the impressive determination and courage of these truly audacious minds, have earned this recognition and support. And we are proud to have assembled and worked with the artists involved in Forecast 7.

Freo Majer

Artistic Director, Forecast

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Fascinated by absurd and humorous occurrences in every-day life, artist Mia Štark has decided to dedicate her work to their artistic investigation. Her project comprises a series of videos and an instructional performative piece. Inspired by her grandmother's way of looking at the world—a contradictory combination of absolute reliance on TV for information versus subtle attentiveness to the natural world around her and an instinctual approach gained through life experience—the work meanders around the topic of how we watch, look at, listen to, and receive visual input of any kind.

The multi-part project An Anthology of Glances is both a comment and a proposition on how to consume information more carefully. It reminds us that the onslaught of visual information we are exposed to on a daily basis affects us in ways we cannot always foresee or intuit. Embracing the slapstick potential inherent in any movement, Štark attempts to collect as many points of view as the human body renders possible. At the same time, she offers useful suggestions to viewers and readers on how to explore the world around them and discover the curious and amusing details just waiting to be noticed in plain sight.

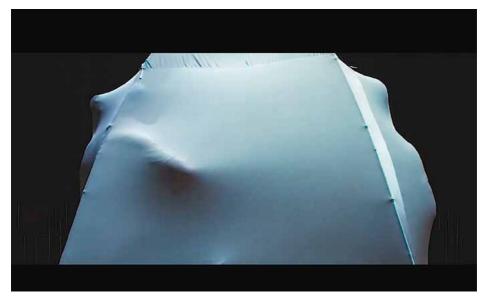
Štark worked with artist Ana Prvački as her mentor. "[Štark] plays with ways of seeing the world—and oneself," Prvački says. "Her background in fine arts and dance enables her to communicate how the body functions in relation to nature and the built environment."

Ana Prvački: Slapstick and Seduction

Ana Prvački is a conceptual artist of Serbian-Romanian heritage whose cross-disciplinary practice spans performance, installations, portable sculptures, watercolors, videos, augmented reality, and idiosyncratic Instagram posts. Her experimental approach incorporates scientific research, behavioral observations, and emotional affect into a strategy aimed at creating imaginative tools for the challenges of daily life. "I am interested in grounding contemporary experiences, anxieties, and technologies in physical and bodily pleasures," she says. Prvački's

backgrounds in music, theater, mask-work, and beekeeping inform her work, as does her keen interest in humor, language, and transcultural slips of the tongue.

Prvački has realized solo exhibitions at the NTU CCA in Singapore; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; and the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin. Her work has been featured in exhibitions including the 2021 Art Encounters Biennial in Timișoara; the 2020 Bangkok Art Biennale; the 13th Gwangju Biennale;





the 14th Istanbul Biennial; the 1st Singapore Biennale; and dOCUMENTA (13). Her performances have been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Chicago Architecture Biennial, among others. In 2020, she was part of Marina Abramović's *SkyArt TV* takeover. Prvački's solo exhibition at San Francisco's de Young Museum won the 2020 Webby Award and was recognized by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences for its significant achievement. In 2022, she was the first Digital Artist in Residence at Berlin's Gropius Bau.

On her role as a mentor Prvački says, "The work of the artist is an interesting combination of intuition and discipline, and I think it's the same for mentoring an artist. It combines understanding what the intention of the artist is, then finding ways to help them structure and home in on this intention."

"When I was in my twenties, I met Marina Abramović and she helped me immensely. She was and still is endlessly generous in sharing her experiences, both artistically and in the business of art. She has offered me incredible opportunities and she inspires me with her endless curiosity."

Ana Prvački

"Everyone needs mentoring at one point or another," Prvački adds. "Being understood and seen makes a huge difference in how we evolve. If you have a lifelong art practice, the work is bound to change; it is a dynamic process. Having support, insight, and inspiration is essential. It is always good to have colleagues and mentors you trust who can be critical and kind when you need it."



Hand Pollination Glove, 2018. Video still. © Ana Prvački Courtesy of the artist and de Young Museum, San Francisco

To Optimize Your View, Let Things Get a Bit Absurd First

The deadpan humor of Mia Štark's An Anthology of Glances is an opportunity to understand the wealth of perspectives available through our bodies.

Elise Morton

Elise Morton is a freelance writer and editor focusing on content relating to Eastern Europe, which currently involves monitoring and writing on the Russia-Ukraine war for Associated Press, Morton additionally works as a media development specialist supporting various online. TV, and radio outlets in the UK and across the Baltic States on behalf of the UK's FCDO. She has worked as News Editor at The Calvert Journal from 2015-2017 and Commissionina Editor at Culture Trip from 2018-2020. Her graduate thesis research was on media consumption and identity formation amona the Russian diaspora.

"Most people were looking through their phones," says Mia Štark, having spent part of the afternoon observing how visitors to Barcelona's Mies van der Rohe Pavilion responded to the pivotal piece of modernist architecture. She makes this observation without judgement, at the same time reflecting on technology's role in shaping and mediating our ways of seeing. The artist has, after all, witnessed this before: it was watching her grandmother—in spring and summer a "super connected person," retreat to her living-room to take in the world via her TV come wintertime—that provided the springboard for Štark's An Anthology of Glances: at once a comment on, and a gentle guide to, maximizing the way we see.

Though her project stemmed from her grandmother's reliance on TV news, Štark's exploration of visual consumption extends far beyond questions of media diet. Her grandmother, typically an engaged observer out in nature, would passively collapse in front of this new technology. But it is her active, or as Štark describes it, "old-fashioned way of looking" while outdoors that forms the backbone of *An Anthology of Glances*. What does this entail? "It's this moment of being grounded and simultaneously navigating your movements through patterns of perception," she expounds, something that the

artist recognizes and admires in the paintings of David Hockney and Croatian abstract painter Julije Knifer. He is known for his "meander" visual motif, which is endlessly repeated in his work to create a kind of monotonous rhythm bordering on the absurd. "I feel like painters are the ones who really know how to look," Štark adds.

Indeed, grounding and motion are not mutually exclusive; for Štark, they go together, even in the seemingly static medium of painting. "What I see in the works of both Knifer and Hockney is movement," she comments. But it is perhaps dance, in which she completed her initial training, that best demonstrates the marriage of movement and grounded awareness: "You simultaneously need to think about where your head is,

where your arm is, where your feet are. Are you going to hit somebody or is somebody going to hit you?" Computing the myriad visual stimuli is just one piece of the puzzle, however. "There is a scene happening around you and all this visual information to take in, but also sound and the sensation on your skin—a tactility," she notes.

Moving around a space when dancing can offer a range of fresh perspectives. How often do we look up to the cracks in the ceiling or down at the floor beneath our feet? To dance, therefore, is to begin to understand the wealth of viewpoints available to you. *An Anthology of Glances* offers a similar opportunity. In the vein of self-help podcasts focusing on how to "hack your psyche," says Ana Prvački, who mentored Štark on



Mia Štark performs at the Forecast Forum, July, 2022. @Camille Blake



OCamille Blake

this project, the piece "plays with the idea of how to optimize the way you see." This "hack" can equally be sought in how we approach art. Prvački speaks about often being "pigeon-holed" as a Serbian artist (despite also having Romanian and US citizenship). However, as she sees it, her work has little to do with analyzing the "post-Yugoslav situation." Addressing the "Balkan question" is not a priority for Prvački, although she acknowledges that 30 years ago, she and Štark, who hails from Croatia, "would have been enemies of sorts," and celebrates the progress that has been made. Instead, Prvački seeks to "free the pigeon" and views her work with a young, talented artist like Štark as something "cosmopolitan." This term, which in its most basic sense means having a worldwide scope or outlook, even serves as a helpful summation of An Anthology of Glances. Let's endeavor to make our vision, and approach both to art and the world around us, more cosmopolitan.

Cosmopolitanism may carry lofty connotations, but in Štark's work humor is what serves as the vehicle for a shift in perspective. Turning expectations on their head is implicit in the very title of Prvački's mentorship: Slapstick and Seduction. Slapstick is characterized by obvious, exaggerated physical humor. Štark, on the other hand, according to Prvački, is "not at all intentionally funny." Instead, she possesses an "organic humor," which in addition to Prvački's feedback, also draws inspiration from the wit she sees in the work of Knifer and Hockney. There are no jokes in An Anthology of Glances; instead, a gentle absurdity tickles and begins to free you from the constrictions of social mores.

A video work that forms part of the piece, for example, shows Štark at a lookout point in the forest. Rather than simply sitting on the stone bench and surveying the scene, as might be expected in such a spot, she also lies across the length of the bench with her head hanging off the end, moving

There are no jokes in An Anthology of Glances; instead, a gentle absurdity tickles and begins to free you from the constrictions of social mores.

it to survey the floor. This feat of deadpan absurdity carried over to our (virtual) interview, in which Štark asked me to nearly close my laptop. Being able to see my interviewees thus necessitated sliding beneath the computer, which not only afforded the artists an undoubtedly flattering view of my double chin and me a stifled laugh, but also offered a totally different view of my subjects.

Just as I was able to select my own (inevitably ridiculous) position to continue our interview, An Anthology of Glances is not prescriptive. It is, rather, what Štark describes as a "collection of all the possible views," offering up little "suggestions" that allow audiences to explore. This is where the "seduction" of Prvački's mentorship comes in—a gentle coaxing, not towards a particular conclusion, but towards a fullness of vision and an awareness of all possibilities. "I like how seduction can be extremely subtle," says Prvački, citing Štark's "pedagogical charm." "Štark's a little bit strict, she's showing and guiding vou through these things," Prvački reflects. "It's both very subversive and well meaning."

Štark and Prvački disagree about how to describe An Anthology of Glances. Prvački is keen on the word "pelvic," while for Štark it's the atlas joint—the pivot joint connecting the skull and spine, responsible for the movement of the head—that serves as the best illustration. Perhaps it can be both.

An Anthology of Glances invites a pelvic vision, grounded in the present and rooted through the body, while at the same time embodying the atlas, in terms of both the joint and the book of maps: flexibility, freedom, and an encouraging nudge to (really) see what's out there.

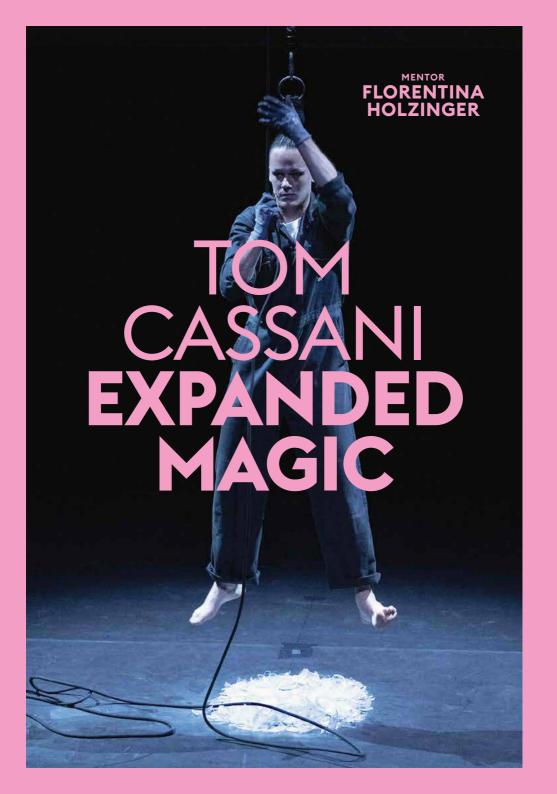
Project credits

Camera: Matija Kralj, Ivan Tripar, Alessandro Fagioli Video editing: Matija Kralj, Mia Štark Book design and layout: Damir Bralić, Mia Štark

Watch a video recap of Mia Štark and Ana Prvački's work-stay in collaboration with the Fundació Mies van der Rohe in Barcelona:



forecast-platform.com/ work-stay-mia-stark/



A performer working in the contexts of theater, circus, cabaret, live art, nightclubs, and gallery spaces, Tom Cassani's research focuses on the body as a site of apparent deception in contemporary performance practices. Drawing on an expanded approach to magic and sideshow, Cassani—who also performs under the moniker Strange Boy—tests the limits of bodybased illusion while mapping new territories in the fields of choreography, contemporary magic, theater, and performance art.

With Expanded Magic, Cassani has developed a captivating one-man-show centered on a series of deconstructed sleight-of-hand routines as well as other physical magic tricks and feats of wonder. He enacts these routines on stage while delivering a monologue that cannily manipulates the boundaries between performer and audience, highlighting the performing body as an unreliable measure of truth. A mind-bending physical and conceptual piece, Expanded Magic plays with the viewer's own investment in the success of a magic trick, challenging their anticipation and willingness to be deceived, wowed, and entertained. By deconstructing and reconfiguring the aesthetic and linguistic indicators of magic, Cassani seeks to observe the change in the audience's perception of physical possibilities.

Cassani worked with choreographer Florentina Holzinger as his mentor. She said: "In Tom Cassani's unique style—informed by years of practice as an entertainer—I particularly enjoy an interesting combination in which a very analytical and anatomical approach meets the mysterious and deceptive to create an almost mystical event for a thinking audience."

Florentina Holzinger: Bodies in Action

Austrian choreographer and performance artist Florentina Holzinger's ingenious, award-winning body of work has enriched the international dance and performance scenes since her debut more than a decade ago. Working with a cross-generational cast of women-identifying performers, Holzinger creates pieces that meld dizzying acrobatics, martial-arts fight scenes, and pop-cultural references.

Holzinger consciously plays with the ever-shifting boundaries between high culture and middlebrow entertainment. From her career's outset, she has made a point of challenging different modes of female representation on stage and exploring the full physical potential of the human body. Often featuring especially muscular women as performers, the artist's work is intrinsically linked with the aim of exploring embodiment in relation to identity, and the development of practices to support a physical life in action.

Holzinger has adapted themes from classical ballet such as *La Sylphide*, which she funneled into ensemble productions like her works *Apollon* (2017) and *Tanz* (2019). She crafted these into pieces that straddle the line between trashy spectacle and theater, incorporating stunts, gory splatter scenes, and crude sideshow humor into the



Apollon Musagete. © Radovan Dranga



A Divine Comedy. © Nicole Marianna Wytyczak

canonical ballet repertoire. In her work *A Divine Comedy* (2021), which has been described as a "feminist hell ride," Holzinger added hypnosis, female ejaculation, and references to Viennese Actionism to the already subversive mix of elements on stage. Since 2021, Holzinger has been a member of the creative team at Berlin's Volksbühne theater, working with artistic director René Pollesch.

As a mentor, Holzinger sought applicants who share a strong interest in physical work, and who fearlessly explore the body as a multifaceted medium. "I don't see myself

as someone who could teach anyone anything," she says. "For me, this mentorship was simply about spending time in someone else's mind. Taking time to pay attention and help that person to analyze their work and define an essence."

Thinking about the role of mentors, she adds that "one of the most important things for me was support and trust. This is crucial when one wants to explore unknown territory—people who encourage you to venture into the unknown and enter the darkness."



"My mentors were all kinds of people I met along the way. Some of them teachers, most of them colleagues and fellow artists; people who I felt understood me and my fantasies, and who could support that with their experience or expertise."

Florentina Holzinger

Participating in Feats of Wonder

Tom Cassani uses wonder to conjure conversations about the nature of perception and call for a shared understanding of truth.

Ana Finel Honigman

Tom Cassani demonstrates Picasso's dictum that "art is a lie to tell the truth." Combining the banal with the wonderous while building from within overlapping traditions of art, performance, and illusion, Cassani's (deceptively) humble presentation makes his audiences mindful of suspending disbelief and escaping into moments of magic. Working in an era where objective truth is disputed

and discredited, Cassani uses overt illusion to challenge audiences' credulity. But don't interpret his work as a statement about our cultural moment; Cassani doesn't want his magic to be illustrative, acting as a metaphor, but instead to gracefully guide viewers to their own conclusions about truth and belief through the experience of participating in feats of wonder. As Socrates believed, wonder is where philosophy begins. In this spirit, Cassani uses wonder to conjure conversations about the nature of perception and call for a shared understanding of truth.

Playing with disinformation is part of the sideshow tradition. According to legend, Djedi, the first magician, reanimated a decapitated goose for the Pharaoh around 2,500 BCE. He placed the goose's severed head at one end of a room and its body at the other, before speaking words that compelled the goose to its feet to walk the room until reconnected with its estranged head. This headless goose still roams popular histories of magic, but it originated from nineteenth-century promotional material announcing vaudeville magic acts. Alongside this myth of magic's origins is the assumption that audiences in bygone eras were always gullible and subject to deception, and by no means complicit in the process of creating a shared experience with the performer. Historical documents even demonstrate that some magicians were subjected to death because their illusions were believed to be evil or sacrilegious. Others, however, were



Tom Cassani performs at the Forecast Forum, July, 2022. @Camille Blake

appreciated as skilled entertainers who bent the rules of the natural world. Indeed, past audiences' lenses blended religion, alchemy, and scientific exploration—just as we pick our echo chambers today.

When Hocus Pocus Junior: The Anatomie of Legerdemain, the first written guide to magic, was anonymously published in 1635, readers were shown the mechanisms of magic without dispelling any of its wonders. (In fact, the full title reads Hocus pocus junior: the anatomie of legerdemain, or, The art of jugling set forth in his proper colours, fully, plainly, and exactly, so that an ignorant person may thereby learn the full perfection of the same, after a little practice: unto each tricke is added the figure, where it is needfull for instruction.) Cassani works within this tradition, drawing attention to the marvel of someone building an illusion.

The exciting element in his work isn't only the outcome but the process, involving human intelligence, endurance, and dexterity. By reminding audiences that magic and its myths are fantasies, Cassani promotes what he calls an "anti-theatrical fantastic," wherein he draws attention to craft and intention

Ana Finel Honigman is an arts writer with a Doctorate in the History of Art from Oxford University, and mental health clinician with a degree from Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of Cult Artists: 50 Cutting-Edge Creatives You Need to Know (White Lion, 2019) and What Alexander McQueen Can Teach You About Fashion (White Lion, 2021). She is based in Baltimore and Berlin.

The illusionist's allure is their expectational relationship with forces outside the natural world, whereas Cassani's great trick is evoking empathy and collaboration in his audiences.

instead of relying on deception. During a performance, he casually tells audiences how many years he required to master a trick while still demonstrating his mastery of something wondrous. But even intellectually understanding how a coin disappears in Cassani's hands can't dissolve the delight one feels when watching it actually happen.

Cassani's deconstruction of performing illusions extends to the way he defines what he does. He does not see himself as a magician; he identifies instead as using illusion and practices of deception while "acknowledging that [being a magician] is a thing in the world, but I do something to one side of that." There's a meta performance to every act: he explicitly pairs classic sideshow practices that he performs as himself, an artist, with ways of performing the same action "as a magician," to spotlight the contrivances and expectations associated with the history of magic. When performing a coin trick, he'll do it once, as himself, and then again as a "magician" to ask audiences to repeatedly opt into the process of being tricked and become conscious of the moment they agree to follow him into the illusion.

Cassani resists adopting an authoritative stance by dressing in everyday clothes or reading from written statements, thereby subverting the central illusion in traditional magic: that the performer is super-human. Blessed, according to their mythos, with otherworldly gifts that defy accessible reality, magicians historically existed in a risky zone between religion, science, and entertainment. To maintain balance, the hierarchy between audience and performer in traditional magic is clear and rigid. The illusionist's allure is their expectational relationship with forces outside the natural world, whereas Cassani's great trick is evoking empathy and collaboration in his audiences.

"I have a body," he says, "and they have a body—although my body can do stuff that it seems like it shouldn't be able to do." The body and its intrinsic limitations are the core playing field for magic. Even when the magical event appears to happen outside the magician, the performer's presence is portrayed as the conduit between reality and something extraordinary. Cassani, whose performances combine classic sleight of hand with acrobatics, is both object and



himself in vulnerable situations, he and his audience collaborate to create the illusion of danger and the experience of surviving a shared event. He sees his audience as "participating in the performance of that vulnerable situation as much as I am." Cassani takes his viewers to the brink of disbelief in this process, but ensures they remain conscious of the mechanisms of their own involvement while still retaining a sense of awe and excitement. "If I was just doing these tricks in my bedroom, they wouldn't be magic. It would just be me fiddling with something in my bedroom. But the moment that I perform for an audience, it becomes another thing, and I acknowledge that relationship."

subject of recognizable forms of corporal magic. If a coin disappears in his hands, his body seems to create the effect, but if he's dangling by his hair from great heights, his body becomes the very site of disbelief. In both instances, viewers are forced to remember that their bodies likely have no such experiences. Like dance or sport, fans of magic measure their bodies' abilities against those of the performer and viscerally feel this contrast when watching someone defy their physical limits.

In this tradition, Cassani describes himself as interested in how the body in performance acts as a "measure of truth or vector of impossibility." By appearing to place

Project credits

Thanks to: James Barker, BOLD!, Marisa Carnesky, Hester Stefan Chillingworth, Karen Christopher, Augusto Corrieri, CJ Mitchell, and Nik Taylor.

Watch a video recap of Tom Cassani and Florentina Holzinger's work-stay in Las Vegas:



forecast-platform.com/ work-stay-tom-cassani/



Islamabad-based filmmaker Hamza Baig's live-action series reimagines the traditional Pakistani game of Five Stones with a superhero twist. Set in the imaginary village of "Geetapur" (inspired by the artist's native village of Chakwal, Pakistan), the plot centers on the local children. Each child is born with a set of magical marbles that have the power to sustain life in the village. The story follows Guddo, whose attempts to help her peers by using her unique marbles repeatedly end in disaster.

The narrative interweaves humor with drama and unfolds in several episodes against the backdrop of an extremely modest community knit together by tradition. He anchors the plot around the game of Five Stones, which is rarely played nowadays, to shed light on the traditions and heritage of his native Pakistan and speculate on what a homegrown superhero might look like. Filming in the village where he grew up, Baig worked with amateur actors, casting relatives and their neighbors who had no prior acting experience.

Baig worked together with author and comedian Daliso Chaponda on the show's script. Chaponda said: "Baig's project *The Marblous Four* captivates me—it's so ambitious and unique. Each draft of his script was a step forward and he showed a singular talent in getting charming performances from non-actors. We also have a similar ethos of art; both of us want to share elements of our culture while entertaining."

Daliso Chaponda: Humor and Storytelling

Malawian comedian Daliso Chaponda shot to fame on *Britain's Got Talent*, making it to the finals of the 2017 series and establishing himself as a firm favorite with the judges and the British public. Since then, he has regularly appeared on TV and radio. Chaponda is also the writer, creator, and host of his Rose d'Or nominated BBC Radio 4 show *Citizen of Nowhere*. He has performed around the world and at the Edinburgh, Melbourne, Singapore, and Cape Town comedy festivals. He has also toured the UK several times to sold-out venues and rave reviews.



"There were many moments in my career when I felt like giving up or was overwhelmed. like receiving a rejection for my first novel or spending seven months writing a one-man show only to feel like it was rubbish. I never had a mentor as such but I kept in touch with Kate Bligh, who was my university playwrighting professor. To think of her as a professor actually feels disengenious as we are more likely to discuss relationships and hopes than writing nowadays. But when we talk, and whatever I'm working on comes up, my brain unclogs and it makes the terrifying peaks feel less high."

Daliso Chaponda

©Camille Blake



In addition to his stand-up comedy, Chaponda is also prolific fiction writer. He has published science fiction, murder mysteries, and fantasy fiction in numerous magazines and anthologies. He is currently working on a new novel and a children's book.

"Creativity is often very solitary and can be depressing and overwhelming. Having an ally who is also a creative is a bolster to one's work," Chaponda says about being a mentor. "It's just good to have a safe place to go to when you feel like your work is hopeless. All creatives have those moments."

The mentoring process has also brought new insights. "Surprisingly, I have found that I had a lot more to offer artists working in mediums very different from mine. I think I had the most to give with the narratives that had nothing to do with humor: I had more questions, challenged the mentees more, and their pieces seemed to change more from draft to draft," Chaponda said, referring to the work he had done with all three nominees. "The conversations we had also helped my own writing and I think it would be more honest to call it a collaboration than a strict mentor-mentee relationship."

Humor as a Resilient and Transcendent Remedy of Wonder

Comedy anchors Pakistani filmmaker Hamza Baig's project, which revives a traditional Pakistani game to imagine a homegrown superhero.

Rebecca Anne Proctor

Rebecca Anne Proctor is an independent journalist, editor, and broadcaster based in Dubai covering art and culture and current affairs in the Middle East and Africa. She is the former editor-in-chief of Harper's Bazaar Art. She has also written texts for several books and catalogues on Middle Eastern art and culture. Her forthcoming book Art in Saudi Arabia: A New Creativity Economy? will be published by Lund Humphries in Spring 2023.

During a time of great uncertainty, when it feels as if the world has gone mad, where trust in society, governments, and perhaps even fellow human beings, seems to have gone out the window, what is the use of telling a story? Humor, according to Islamabad-based filmmaker, artist, and lecturer Hamza Baig, is a key ingredient. His upcoming live-action comedy series called *The Marblous Four* reimagines the game of Five Stones to shed light on the traditions and heritage of his native Pakistan, and speculate on what a homegrown superhero might look like.

Rarely played today, the game used to be a crucial way for the Pakistani community to come together. For the series' first episode, which Baig wrote under the mentorship of British comedian Daliso Chaponda, he decided to revive this once beloved pastime, but with a surreal, comedic twist. In the imaginary village of "Geetapur," inspired by present-day Chakwal in the Punjab province of Pakistan, children are born with a set



Still from The Marblous Four. @ Hamza Baig

of five stones. The stones are magical and become powerful tools in the hands of animated Pakistani superheroes, who come to life throughout the film.

The game was traditionally played outdoors between competing teams or individuals in a large open space. But now, in the age of technology, with children and adults on their cellphones, the game has increasingly become an activity of the past. Baig demonstrates this through two protagonists played by local boys who, in the opening scene, attempt to film an older woman playing with her stones. Mocking the "ancient" tradition, the boys are determined to create an incredible clip to upload on YouTube and gain thousands of followers. But the woman's stones turn out to have unknown powers, and she beguiles them with her storytelling.

"One of my inspirations was to revive Pakistani art and culture," says Baig. "When I researched, I didn't find anything on Pakistani games. It's not archived anywhere. There are no films or stories about the game. Children don't even know about it." Just two generations ago, he says, the game of Five Stones was played regularly throughout Pakistan. He wanted to show its importance, how it brought people and the community together. And to do so, he filmed only with amateur actors in the village where he grew up, casting relatives and their neighbors who had no prior acting experience. "They added a unique charm to the film because through them we witness real, present-day Pakistani culture," he adds.

Baig's short films, which have garnered awards at various national and international festivals, center on themes of childhood, nostalgia, family, and forgotten traditions. He consistently weaves humor into his otherwise dramatic plots, thereby showing another, lighter side of reality. Baig also works as a lecturer of film in the Mass Communication department at the School of Social Science and Humanities, NUST,

Islamabad. "Pakistan has been plagued by economic instability, political instability, religious extremism, and sectarianism," Baig states. "We've always lived in this mess but within this mess is also beauty, and a lot of love. We have learned to navigate the mess with love, and that love is humor."

Comedy has a long history in Pakistan that dates back to even before the country's partition with India in 1947. Laughter is arguably a crucial element to most art forms on the Indian subcontinent, used as a way to soften political and socio-economic problems, bind the community together, and broach taboo topics. Arguably the most recognized and best documented tradition of comedy on the subcontinent can be traced as far back as the 15th century, to the reign of Akbar the Great, the third and best known Mughal emperor, who reigned from 1556 to 1605.

"Humor comes naturally to us because we are so sensitized to the mess around us."

Hamza Baig

Akbar's reign was the peak of Mughal power over most of the Indian subcontinent. Yet he also presided during a time of dark circumstances such as disloyalty among his own followers and threats from Hindu generals. Wit, humor, and laughter were a way for Akbar to preserve his benevolent rule during a challenging time without transforming him into a despot. In the book *Doolally Sahib and The Black Zamindar: Racism and Revenge in the British Raj* (Bloomsbury, 2022) by writer and journalist M. J. Akbar,



Hamza Baig and Daliso Chaponda at the Forecast Forum, July, 2022. @Camille Blake

the author underlines how under Akbar the Great humor was used as a "bond of confidence that sought to check power from becoming pompous." In the book's first chapter, he writes: "Monarchs without tolerance for laughter lost their compact with the people. In the political lore of India, the iconic king was blessed with an iconic jester."

Similarly, Baig's film uses humor as an act of resistance and a way to revive Pakistani heritage and tradition in the face of countless socio-economic and political challenges, to unite local communities again. "Humor comes naturally to us because we are so sensitized to the mess around us," Baig explains. "Humor is a way to live for us. It's a survival and defense mechanism. We must laugh—otherwise I think we'll just stop existing. In a country like Pakistan, laughter is all we have. It provides us with a sense of catharsis and relief."

Through revisiting a local tradition in his project, Baig also celebrates Pakistani women. The older woman's storytelling, which frames the series' story-within-a-story narrative thrust, captivates the young boys and compels them to consider the power of community. The boys, and the viewers, become engrossed in her tale about the adventures of a young woman whose attempt to help her community with her set of magic marbles repeatedly ends in disaster. She is a comical anti-hero, a superhero with a broken superpower, but her real power resides in her ability to spark the boys' interest in the old game. As the elderly woman finishes her tale, the young boys take out their video recorder again—but suddenly, an animated magical stone appears and zaps the device, which goes up in flames. It's a humorous special effect with a lesson: technology and its ills don't have the power to save a village, but reviving traditions and sharing one's humanity might.

Project credits

by Hamza Baig
Dialogue by Shabana Humayun
Art Director: Farah Khan
Assistant Director: Rajaa Khan
Directors of Photography:
Zaid Safdar, Hamza Qaisar
and Zeeru
Aerial Cinematography:
Lubaid Saram
Cast: Eesha Irfan, Sufi, Salman,
Haleema, Minna Khala, Haseeba,
Shimy Mamu, Ilza Mami

Written, directed, and edited

Watch a video recap of Hamza Baig and Daliso Chaponda's digital work-stay:



forecast-platform.com/ work-stay-hamza-baig/

LUCIANA DECKER DRO7 **HUMANS SEE** AS BL JAGUARS SÉE AS CHICHA

MENTOR
LAURA
HUERTAS
MILLÁN

© Luciana Decker Orozco

Filmmaker Luciana Decker Orozco's project looks at film as a continuation of the tradition of telling, listening to, and imagining oral histories. The title What Humans See as Blood, Jaguars See as Chicha is a Latin American phrase sometimes used in archeological and anthropological research, which talks about other-than-human perception and non-human and human social relationships since ancient times. It refers to the coexistence of different points of view and the perspectives of a variety of entities, including humans, animals, stones, mountains, and lakes.

Decker Orozco's film project forges its research around a tangled web of relationships between entities and people in the Bolivian Andes. These entanglements transit between different times and spaces and the survival of each component of the entire ecosystem depends on them. The project is presented to viewers in the form of a spatial installation that aims to generate communicative bridges between these various perspectives without privileging one over the other. In doing so, Decker Orozco seeks to generate awareness of different ecologies of survival and care.

Decker Orozco was accompanied by artist and film-maker Laura Huertas Millán as her mentor. Millán said: "Working with and through notions of expanded kinship, indigeneity, mestizaje, and anti-colonialism, Orozco raises crucial matters of sovereignty, ecological sustainability, political resistance, and worldmaking in a context marked by inequality and violence. Her work embodies, in ways that I relate to, the links between art and research, pushing the limits of discursive language through filmmaking's craftsmanship."

Laura Huertas Millán: Reworlding Stories

Laura Huertas Millán is a French-Colombian artist and filmmaker whose work stands at the intersection of cinema, contemporary art, and research. Entwining experimental ethnography, ecological and decolonial thinking, historical long-term inquiries, and fiction, her moving-image work engages with strategies of resistance and survival. Sensuous and immersive, her films propose embodied, emotional, and reflexive experiences—third spaces imagined as healing altered states.

Huertas Millán's films have been shown at major international festivals and have won prizes at the Locarno Film Festival, FIDMarseille, Doclisboa, and Videobrasil, among others. More than twenty surveys of her work have been on view around the world, screening in cinematheques and at leading festivals such as Mar del Plata International Film Festival and Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal. She has had solo exhibitions at MASP Sao Paulo, Maison des Arts de Malakoff, and Medellín's Modern Art Museum, while her films have also been exhibited and screened in art institutions and biennials.

Huertas Millán additionally works as an educator in both academic and alternative spaces. She is part of the artistic, research, and curatorial collective Counter-Encounters (with Onyeka Igwe and Rachael Rakes) on critical anthropology and the aesthetics and politics of the encounter.



Still from Sol Negro (Black Sun), 2016 © Evidencia Films and Les Films du Worso



Still from JÍIBIE. 2019 @Laura Huertas Millan

As a mentor, she sought artistic practitioners who "see fiction and storytelling as a space of emancipation, freedom, and collective ecological care." She also specified her interest in mentoring artists who "have had to resist systemic and colonial violence through their practices, but who don't want to alienate their artistic freedom and expansion."

Having selected Luciana Decker Orozco as her mentee, and accompanying her work process for nearly a year in the framework of Forecast, Huertas Millán describes how her role as a mentor has expanded beyond conversations about the work exclusively. "I think of being a mentor as different to being a teacher. Being a mentor also implies that I share and have conversations about some forms of struggles that I had to deal with in the past: as a woman artist, but also as a Latin American artist living in Europe, as part of a diaspora, a minority. And this is something that I see as a special relationship of transmission, of sharing artistic and intellectual resources."

"Being a mentor also means finding out how to create the conditions to spend enough time together, share a meal together, and hang out in a way that conversations develop and unfold organically."

Laura Huertas Millán



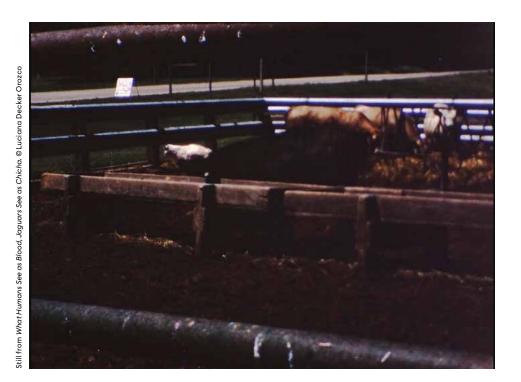
Reworlding Stories to Embody Collectivity

Luciana Decker Orozco's film installation draws upon ancient oral traditions from the Bolivian Andes that imbue nature with personhood to revere and protect it.

Stella Sideli

Stella Sideli is an independent curator, writer, researcher, and producer working in the UK, Europe, and the Mediterranean region. She is concerned with the intersection of institutional programs and feminist/queer theories, decolonial practices, and the ethics of curating. Other focal points in her work include the relationship between curator and artist, emerging technologies, capitalism, and the aesthetics of digital culture, with attention to interdisciplinary practices.

One way of interpreting the title of Luciana Decker Orozco's work, What Humans See as Blood, Jaguars See as Chicha, is as being inspired by wooden keros and gold or silver aquillas—conical drinking vessels used throughout the Incan Empire for the ritual consumption of chicha, or maize beer. The jaguar-like creature often carved into a kero's rim may depict a *katari*, a fantastic animal combining feline and reptilian characteristics. By evoking the ritualistic object in the title. Orozco introduces some of the work's central elements. It alludes to the entanglement of humans, animals, and nature as well as cultural, social, and historical artifacts. But the title also highlights the work's philosophy, namely that of interrelating—both as an act unto itself and as an ontology. People, deities, sacred and haunted entities, objects, spaces, and natural forces are all main protagonists, portrayed in the work chorally and equally. This act of interrelating is further echoed in how the work is experienced: it is installation-based, centered on a 16mm film projection, and activated by a performance that recalls the interdisciplinary experimentalism of artist Joan Jonas, or the embodied mysticism of performance artist María Teresa Hincapié.



Orozco shot the 16mm film in the region of *Kalaque*, Bolivia, where family ties connect the artist's past, present, and future. For her, *Kalaque* is a place of origin that continuously calls her back in visceral yet nurturing ways. The Andean region's unusual geological formations are therefore departure points for a journey that travels inward and outward at the same time. The work constitutes a personal quest that also manifests collectivity, going beyond the artist's circumstances. It somehow involves you, me, others—everything.

Orozco explores the oral traditions of elaborate horror stories told about the region's nature, marking it as "haunted" and thereby contributing to its protection. Only loosely narrative-driven, the work becomes a tale of something osmotic, like

Orozco explores the oral traditions of elaborate horror stories told about the region's nature, marking it as "haunted" and thereby contributing to its protection.

breathing—in, out, in, out—a set of connected movements that must converge to keep us alive, in a sort of embodied planetary rhythm, which, in the words of Bolivian scholar and activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, involves the lungs, heart, and liver and allows us to think, know, relate, and connect.



Still from What Humans See as Blood, Jaquars See as Chicha. @Luciana Decker Orozco

Orozco situates herself—her body, memories, identity, actions—as entangled with the landscape and the local community. It's in this space that the film exists, in the fluid tension between one and many, inside and outside, nature and culture, past and future. It is a space of potential, in which the expanded and unexpected connections between these elements are afforded through different layers of understanding. But what do we, as viewers, bring into the space when we interact with the installation?

This question was fundamental to the process of making the work, and is reflected, for example, in the collective use of the camera. Filming and directing were shared between the artist and the local community in a continuous exchange of power and perspectives. There's a constant shift in who is looking through the lens and who's being captured on film; who gets to remember and relate a story; who has the right to think

about the future; and who holds the power to imagine and world-build. Tales of spirits, legends, haunted springs and *ojos de agua*, fragments of life, embodied emotions, and natural forces are all co-narrated in a way that, essentially, tells of a collective inhabiting of this world.

And if world-building is so soundly an act of imagining, it becomes clear that this act of imagining cannot be ours alone. It is shared by *wak'a*, a sacred body, a territory, concentrating natural energy and manifesting itself in the form of mountains, grass, thunder, or lakes and a pure, cosmic personhood. Orozco requested permission not only to film people in the community, but all other things perceived as living beings as well, such as the wind, the mountains, the rain, or the plants, accumulating rituals that can mediate those encounters. Having established relationships that are non-extractive and non-exploitative, Orozco is aware of the

different nuances that the project commits to because of, or rather thanks to, its diverse protagonists.

But there are additional instances of feminist, decolonial practices in Orozco's work. She manipulated the celluloid film with soil, an act that, far from violent, seeks to be one that restitutes matter to its source. imbuing the process with an earthly character, in a trusting collaboration, and with an unexpected result. This tactile approach is familiar to the Kalaque people. Unlike Western epistemology, which is strongly linked to seeing and visual input, in Kalaque, making sense primarily relates to using hands and bodies in order to know and interact: sewing, crafting, and working the land in non-invasive ways reflect a spiritual and gentle connection with the earth. Indeed. ecological sustainability and the ethics of waste inform another act of resistance in Orozco's work, who is using 16mm film for the first time. While digital video can be taken, re-taken, edited, and deleted, working with analogue film requires a different way of thinking. Each moment will be imprinted on the celluloid material, therefore almost forcing itself into the world, taking space, demanding to be seen.

With its ever-present sense of a vital flow and interconnection with a multitude of others, the work rejects binary oppositions and, as a political vision, eschews a dialectics that pitches self-versus-other. It's this sense of being connected to other beings that we are left with after experiencing Orozco's work, an enhanced ability to understand and, hopefully, embody more ecologically sound relationships, and the capacity to shift approaches and switch perspectives, moving towards empathy and belonging.

Project credits

Thanks to: Hilaria, Alberto, Rodrigo, Ronaco, Muni, Karonita, Chalo, Camilita, Pancha, Marce, and La Nueva Sensación.

Watch a video recap of Luciana Decker Orozco and Laura Huertas Millán's work-stay in London and Paris:



forecast-platform.com/ work-stay-luciana-decker-orozco/

PENY CHAN

周頻

(SORROW OF THE PHOENIX)



RULLY SHABARA Malaysian singer and performer Peny Chan seeks to highlight cultural traditions alongside transformations within the Peking Opera's style of singing. In 鳳殞 (Sorrow of the Phoenix), Chan focuses on the character of Yang Guifei 楊貴妃, one of the emperor's concubines. Famous for her stunning beauty, some librettos blame the young paramour for the decline of the Tang Dynasty, claiming that the emperor was so beguiled by her charms that he had neglected his duties.

Chan revisits one of the concubine's traditional yet complex songs in which she expresses her excitement at being adored by the emperor, interspersed with observations about how birds can fly, sing, and love freely. The song also mentions a pear tree—a dark omen. According to some historical records, Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 was hung on a pear tree after members of her family were involved in an insurgency and condemned to death.

Through her reinterpretation, Chan seeks to give new agency to the female character with a richer, more versatile, and sometimes discordant voice. She uses southeast Asian languages and dialects to sing traditional librettos and push the envelope on the opera's accepted sounds. Her goal is not to undo but rather to innovate the genre's historic conventions in order to carve out space for contemporary impulses. Her mentor Rully Shabara said: "Peny Chan is inspired by the singing techniques and styles of the Peking Opera to create a modern piece that is more fitting to her new path as an experimental solo vocalist, developing and crafting a voice which is uniquely hers."

Rully Shabara: Your Voice Is Your Sound

Indonesian musician Rully Shabara's main interest as an artist and vocalist lies in exploring the human voice as a medium of creation and human languages as material for experimentation. A boundary-pushing, genre-bending musician, Shabara has initiated many concept-driven projects centered on the voice's malleability. This includes, for instance, navigating vocal range, textures, and spirituality in his collaborative project Senyawa (with Wukir Suryadi), or developing the ongoing language-driven band project



Samille Blake

Zoo. He has worked with notable international musicians and artists such as Keiji Haino, Stephen O'Malley, Otomo Yoshihide, Rabih Beaini, Damo Suzuki, Bob Ostertag, Yoshida Tatsuya, and many more.

"Japanese musician Kazuhisa Uchihashi was like a mentor in the early years of my musical career in terms of triggering my improv skills or delivering spontaneous responses when jamming with other people. He also opened up new paths for me, especially in Japan's experimental music scene."

Rully Shabara



Rully Shabara's Raung Jagat. ©Swandi Ranadila

"Voice can be a gateway to find one's true sound," he says. "I am interested in those who use voice as a tool to discover more about themselves, and what matters to them." Shabara has given workshops around the world, focusing on using the human voice as a rich resource to explore primal expression and improvisation. He has also composed music for film, theater, and dance performances. In addition to his musical work, Shabara also writes short stories and screenplays, and has cofounded a film production company dedicated to documenting live music.

As a mentor, Shabara sought applicants who were open to the wildest experiments, unafraid of embracing both darkness and beauty. The mentorship ended up becoming a mutually enriching experience.

"I learned that being a mentor is very different from being a teacher. The more I listen to the mentee's needs, the result always takes me to better, pleasant surprises. I had already suspected but finally confirmed it through this process: female vocalists have a much wider range and vocal possibilities than most male vocalists, and there is a lot for me to learn from that."

"Mentoring is a delicate approach to sharing or transmitting experience and knowledge," he adds. "It takes you out of your own narrative and explores it in the context of how your experiences and knowledge can become relatable and applicable to the specific mentee. The main goal should be showing those perspectives in order to take your mentee to their highest potential and ultimately be better than you."

Finding and Redefining the Concubine's Voice

Peny Chan casts a female gaze on the Peking Opera and finds her voice within it by teasing out the tensions between tradition and the contemporary moment.

Song Tae Chong

Song Tae Chong PhD is a Berlin based educator and curator. Currently a Trustee of the Martin Parr Foundation, Song focuses on praxis-based curatorial work and theoretical practice. She is part-time faculty at NYU, where she specializes in postcolonial visual culture and history, as well as the theory of photography. As the former Director of Milk Gallery in NYC, Song mounted over 40 exhibitions and numerous special projects. Her practice includes curation, zine and book publishing, writing, research, and exhibition design.

Vocal artists Peny Chan and her Forecast mentor Rully Shabara both use voice as a material to renegotiate the historical conditions of language and music. They do so, each in their own individual practice, by deconstructing traditional norms and re-casting the human voice as a critique of history, context, and gender performance. Their process of fine-tuning Chan's project for Forecast, entitled 鳳殞 (Sorrow of the Phoenix), suggests a paradigm of remaking both the production and the performance of the voice, emphasizing oral and aural difference and individuality, and normalizing these practices as a creative and generative gesture.

A common thread for both musicians is their shared conviction that the shape of language is often perceived as difference, especially within the binary of East and West. This difference manifests in intonation, melodic structure, and pitch, among other things, underscoring a distinct aesthetic and aural experience of the human voice. How, then, do these two artists work within and beyond these contexts? How do they create unique forms of expression that are no longer strictly tethered to history, language, and traditional gender roles and representations?

Indonesian musician and artist Rully Shabara's practice is rooted in experimentation and pushing the boundaries of what is individual and collective voice. Within



Peny Chan at her work-stay at Radialsystem, Berlin. Photo: Phil Dera

his practice and teaching, the human voice is first and foremost a malleable material, with a complex set of vocal ranges, expressions, and textures. It is a medium that can push against fixed genres and historicities, decontextualized as pure human sound-scapes. "Voice can be a gateway to find one's true sound," he says, arguing that voice itself is a language that can be explored and developed into new ideas and concepts as a tool of discovery. His explorations center on stripping away the constructs of existing

language, such as grammar, cultural meaning, and codes to abstract the voice as a central mode of expression. But there is a dual emphasis here: voice is also a necessary part of hearing, and the act of listening. Thus, both listening and vocalization are part of a methodology of creating outside of boundaries and established ideas about sound, language, and music.

Meanwhile, Malaysian polyglot performer Peny Chan applied a similar form of questioning to the highly coded artform of the Peking Opera. Characterized by its formulaic and symbolic style, the Peking Opera was inscribed in 2010 on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. But that didn't stop Chan from seeking to update and redefine one of its iconic female characters—the concubine. The Peking Opera's style of singing follows its own strict aesthetic system of language that does not bear a relationship to vernacular Chinese. Its librettos are composed according to a set of rules that prize form and rhyme. Archetypal and stereotypical gender-normative characters and historical plotlines are the primary source materials in its classic repertoire, which tells stories of history, politics, society, and daily life that aspire to inform as they entertain.

Performance in the Peking Opera is characterized by a fixed style rich with symbolic allusions, in which performers follow an established choreography for movements

of their hands, eyes, torsos, and feet. Traditionally, stage settings and props are kept to a minimum, yet costumes are flamboyant, and the exaggerated facial make-up uses concise symbols, colors, and patterns to portray characters' personalities and social identities in simplified, archetypal forms. Exaggerated facial expressions allude to the interior life of the character, without having to explicate them through the narrative form of the Peking Opera. Historically, female characters such as the concubine were played by men, since women were not allowed to perform until approximately 1870, depriving them of an actual voice and an authentic means of representation. For decades, it perpetuated an instantiation of gendered voice that is constructed outside of lived experience.

Through her project 鳳殞 (Sorrow of the Phoenix), Chan innovates the genre's historic conventions, especially its depictions of gender, and specifically within the trope



Peny Chan performs at the Forecast Forum, July, 2022. ©Camille Blake

Through her project 鳳殞 (Sorrow of the Phoenix), Chan innovates the genre's historic conventions, especially its depictions of gender, and specifically within the trope and archetype of the female concubine.

and archetype of the female concubine. Notions of individual agency and the power of voice are at the core of Chan's reinterpretation. Chan claims that she does not seek to completely break away from the traditions, which date back to the late eighteenth century, but rather to tease out and explore the tensions and breakages between tradition and the contemporary moment. It is there, between the cracks, that she found her own voice. In doing so, she also gives agency to the concubine character.

In her restructuring of the traditional methodologies of Peking Opera, Chan uses south-east Asian languages and dialects to perform traditional operatic librettos, transforming both the meaning of the texts as well as the audience's aural expectations. For Chan, this intervention is political. "Because I wish to fight for gender equality and women's empowerment through my creation," she says. Her practice is rooted in her upbringing and her sense that identitv is often constructed outside of the normative experience of culture and cultural hegemony. "I realized as a Chinese person growing up in Malaysia, that I should have connected to my roots and embraced my own culture." That is how she came to research and practice the Peking Opera singing style. "Through research and practice, I came up with a long-term methodology: Revisit, Reinterpret, Recreate."

The intersection between Shabara and Chan's practice occurs here, in the transformative moment in which the individual voice can serve as a form of critique and resistance to traditional and outmoded methods of representation. It pushes the boundaries of language and expression while simultaneously advocating for the individual voice to push against history. For Chan, Shabara's mentorship offered "more possibilities to develop my skills and creative thinking."

"Individual voice is as important as collective voice," she adds. "Because we need an individual voice to speak up and inspire our environment to become the collective voice. My creation will hopefully influence others to fight together."

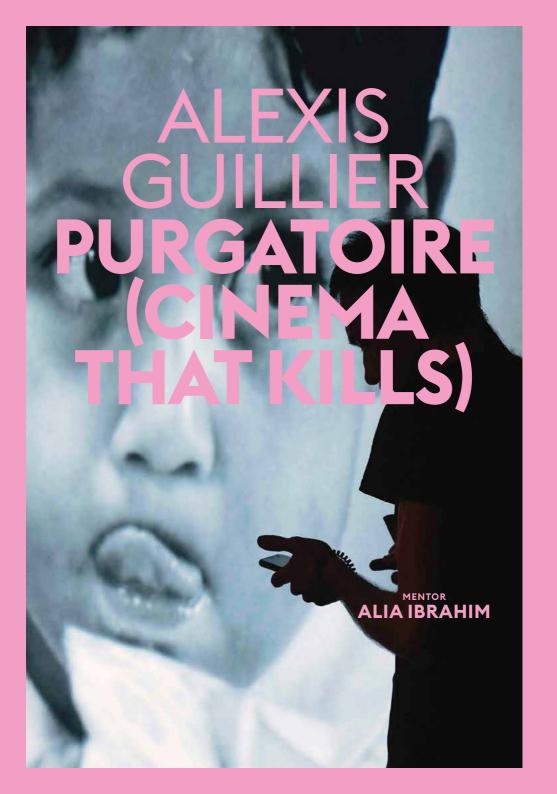
Project credits

Musician: Rabih Beaini Set designer: Jeth Leang

Watch a video recap of Peny Chan and Rully Shabara's work-stay in Berlin, in collaboration with Radialsystem:



forecast-platform.com/ work-stay-peny-chan/



Based on his artistic research into accidents on film sets. Alexis Guillier's project looks at the deadly fire that broke out on the set of the 1969 Lebanese film Koullouna Fidayoun by Gary Garabedian. The film's script, characteristic of cinema supporting the Palestinian resistance at the time, deals with a group of Fedayeen. It focuses in particular on one member who was captured by the Israeli army and reveals the location of his comrades under torture. The film's final scene was meant to show their revenge: a bombing at a Tel Aviv nightclub. The Lebanese club Purgatoire was chosen for the shoot, but when the special-effects explosives were detonated, a fatal flash fire broke out. Four people including the director died in the fire, but in the days that followed, sixteen others succumbed to their injuries. Guillier's research delves into the complexity of the film's context, the precariousness of Lebanese cinema, and the investigation of the accident.

Investigative journalist Alia Ibrahim accompanied Guillier in his research. "Alexis Guillier's work delves into the world of cinema and documents eye-opening facts exposing the layered costs of creative independence," she says. "My decision to select Guillier's project was driven by a personal curiosity to enter a fascinating world that looks at issues that are very important to me but from completely different perspectives. I am also intrigued by all the contradictions the work brings together and its fascinating melange of genres and spaces, from global to hyperlocal, from glossy to film noir, and from nostalgic to contemporary."

Alia Ibrahim: A Dance with Reality



Vorthern Syria, 2012. ©Hazemel Amin

Alia Ibrahim is a Lebanese journalist, news correspondent, and self-described "realist utopian," who has been reporting on the Arab region since 1996. Her assignments took her to countries across the region, including Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Between 2005 and 2011, her opinion and news stories appeared in *The Washington Post*, where she was a contributing reporter, among other publications. As a Senior Correspondent at *Al-Arabiya News* Channel, Ibrahim produced and directed

investigative reports for the network's program *Special Mission*. She has also been a journalism instructor at the Lebanese American University. Ibrahim is a Founding Partner and the CEO of *Daraj*, an independent digital media platform created by experienced journalists to offer Arabic speakers journalism free from political funding and influence.

"The more professional I grew, the more convinced I became that by focusing too much on what we, as journalists, assume



"The moments [I had mentors] that are most intense in my memory would be the times when I lacked the confidence to claim my voice and think of myself as a good journalist. Equally important were the times I was changing career paths and the times I needed inspiring role models."

Alia Ibrahim

people want or need to know, we omit some of the best parts of the narrative," Ibrahim explains. "After more than twenty years in the field, my passion for journalism and belief in its importance has continued to grow. And as attached as I am to the principles of strong, fearless journalism that holds power into account, I believe a lot can be done to push for more inspiring and empathetic storytelling. My personal dream is to revolutionize storytelling."

"Throughout our lives and our careers, there are times when a small piece of advice, a willingness to listen, a tap on the shoulder, or even a harsh wake-up call, is all that we need," Ibrahim says. "I know I was truly lucky to have such wonderful mentors at some of the most difficult times of my life. I look back to those times today, and the best I could hope for is to be able to give to others what was so kindly and generously given to me."

"I view this mentorship as an opportunity to learn about other forms of content production and to maybe even liberate myself from the limitations of the profession I love so much."



Mosul, 2017. ©Talal Khoury

The Latent Politics of Filmset Accidents

Alexis Guillier's project explores what happens when, instead of moving past accidents in Lebanon, we investigate them.

Sofi Naufal

Journalist Alia Ibrahim tells me of an old Lebanese saying: "We mention it and hope it does not happen again." Over time this expression has changed to "we mention it so that it does not happen again." This semantic shift reflects a social movement taking place in Lebanon. The Lebanese are beginning to look to the past for answers. A generation of post-war journalists and artists are leading the way, extracting the suppressed truths of the country's past in an attempt to heal old wounds and better understand the structures of Lebanon.

French artist and researcher Alexis Guillier's latest project has seen him join the archeological dig. From his home in Paris, Guillier spent much of 2022 trawling through archival documents on Lebanon. The research is for his upcoming film, a documentary that investigates a catastrophic accident on a film set in 1960s Beirut, Guillier is not Lebanese and before this project knew little of the country's history. Now, under the mentorship of Lebanese journalist Alia Ibrahim, he finds himself in the midst of an extensive research project uncovering the complex political, social, and economic webs that led not only to the accident but also the impoverished state of Lebanon today. I spoke to both Guillier and Ibrahim about what the investigation has uncovered so far and how this fits into their larger projects on cinema and Lebanon.

Beirut, 1968, director Gary Garabedian is filming the final scene of his pro-Palestinian film, Koullouna Fidayoun (We Are All Freedom Fighters), in a small basement club called Purgatoire. The scene shows a Fedayeen bomb attack on a Tel Aviv night club. Without enough funds for a generator, Garabedian harnesses extra voltage from the mains to power the smoke bombs that will imitate the bomb. Something goes wrong. A fire breaks out killing Garabedian and 19 other crew members. The 1968 catastrophe was one of the worst on-set tragedies in cinema to date but one that gained little traction. "What initially drew me to the project was that no one I knew had heard much about the accident." Alia recalls. "I'm talking about journalists and people who were in the country at the time. People who would know." We are left with two questions that Guillier's documentary hopes to answer: How could a fire like this happen on a professional shoot and why was it so under-reported?



Still from the trailer for Purgatoire (Cinema that kills). © Alexis Guillier

An accident on the controlled microcosm of a filmset punctures the protective membrane that surrounds it. Suddenly, the sociopolitical context of the work seeps in. The film enters a spontaneous dialogue with the realities of its environment. This is what attracts Guillier to exploring the history of cinema through its accidents. "Accidents will always reveal something about their context," Guillier explains, "that's why people in power hate to talk about them. They can destroy the system's concrete narratives." Guillier's previous work has largely focused on Hollywood and films such as *Twilight Zone* (1982) where an accident on

Sofi Naufal is a British-Lebanese writer and artist currently based in Berlin. As a writer, she publishes intimate portraits of artists, and is most interested in the power of vulnerability in art. In her own art practice she explores this through music, film, and poetry. set killed three of the cast. With *Purgatoire* (*Cinema that Kills*), Guillier delves into the more fragile social context of Lebanon for the first time.

In 1968 many narratives in Lebanon were on shaky ground. Guillier's research has led him to unearth a complex and interconnected matrix of failing systems: from the poor construction materials of the Purgatoire night club and Beirut's unreliable electricity network, to the 1966 financial crash sparked by the bankruptcy of Palestinian-owned Intra bank, which also owned the film's production house, Baalbeck Studios. Lebanon's once-booming film industry was slowly crumbling, leaving Garabedian's film severely underfunded. As Guillier's research deepened, Lebanon's lack of governance, money, and infrastructure reveals itself as the foundation for such a catastrophe. Lebanon was reaching the end of a prosperous era and the cracks in its foundations were beginning to show in the years running up to the 15-year-long Lebanese war of 1975.

"Every aspect of this accident is not only a reflection of what was going on in Lebanon at the time but also what is happening now."

Alexis Guillier

Ibrahim is a passionate supporter of Guillier's work. "The more I work with Alexis the more I think that there are no accidents. The connections are incredible." In addition to her ability to read documents in Arabic, Ibrahim's extensive knowledge of Lebanon's socio-political climate is invaluable to Guillier's project. Currently, she is investigating the immense powers afforded to the central bank governor in Lebanon. She locates these powers in the banking laws created around the time of the film's accident in response to the collapse of Intra bank. "We started on these roots when we compromised clear governance and allowed a marriage

between the political, private, and public spheres." Guillier agrees, "Every aspect of this accident is not only a reflection of what was going on in Lebanon at the time but also what is happening now."

In 2020, an explosion at the port of Beirut ripped through a city already ravaged by years of corruption, killing 228 people, and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. The catastrophe was the result of gross negligence in the form of improperly stored ammonium nitrate. Today, Lebanon faces one of the biggest financial crises the world has seen. The political sphere is still a hotbed for corruption and the country's infrastructure



Still from the trailer for *Purgatoire (Cinema that Kills*). ©Alexis Guillier destroyed, its residents receiving barely an hour's worth of state powered electricity per day.

As with the port explosion, following the accident on Garabadian's film set a number of conspiracy theories began to emerge. Ibrahim suggests that these types of events bring into question the very definition of an accident. They are perceived as attacks because in many ways they are. Although it is generally agreed that the fire at Purgatoire night club was unplanned, it was the culmination of a long and persistent attack on the arts and the Lebanese people, an attack with negligence and greed at its heart. Conspiracy theories give people an answer in a climate where the justice system is failing them, but these theories also benefit those responsible. Ibrahim explains why: "This idea of conspiracy is very popular in Lebanon. Accidents start to become part of the collective entertainment and holding anyone accountable becomes impossible."

In 1969, a police investigation named two of the deceased. Garabedian and the director of production, as responsible for the accident. Lebanese director George Nasser disagreed with the verdict saying, "the catastrophe would have been the same with or without cinema." Nasser expresses the exhausted mood of the country. Still today the victims of the Beirut Port explosion seek justice and compensation. The burying of information to protect the powerful is an entrenched part of Lebanon's systems and is likely one of the reasons that the 1968 accident was so underreported. Guillier's work is an anecdote to this phenomenon. He explores what happens when, instead of moving past accidents, we investigate them. When we pause and, instead of diverting our gaze, look towards the painful parts of our histories. Accidents can be extremely traumatic but also revelatory. Guillier's research lays the foundations for these powerful shocks to our systems becoming immense forces for change.

Project credits

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Archival material: the Baalbeck Studios collection, kindly made available by UMAM Documentation and Research and digitized by Arsenal Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V.; the collection of Bibliothèque Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut; the collection of Abboudi Abou Jaoudé, Beirut.

Thanks to: Daraj, the Syndicate of Lebanese Actors, Najib Aboukhaled, Bachir Al Ajam, Saleh Al Ajam, Neemeh Badawi, Nigol Bezjian, Monika Borgmann, Georges Boustany, Gregory Buchakjian, Nathalie Rosa Bucher, Emile Chahine, Samir Chamas, Rabih Damai, Sami Ghosn, Vernon Guillier Poulin, Mario Haddad Sr., Mazen Haidar, Abboudi Abou Jaoudé, Ghassan Koteit, Christiane William Mallouk, Laurence Mazaud, Mirva Kousa, Ayman Nahle, Céline Poulin, Joseph Rustom, Samir Abou Saïd, Ghada Sayegh, Mohamed Soueid, Alfred Tarazi, Salah Tizani. Giovanni Vimercati. Antoine Waked, Hady Zaccak.

Watch a video recap of Alexis Guillier and Alia Ibrahim's work-stay in Beirut, in collaboration with UMAM Documentation & Research:



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Thanks to: Aisha Altenhofen, Nikola Joetze, Sarah Lipszyc

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Special thanks to the technical team, the communications department, and all staff at Radialsystem.

Publication

Publisher: Freo Maier Editor: Hili Perlson

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Graphic design: Malte Kaune Lithography: Eberle & Eisfeld Typefaces: Euclid (Swiss Typefaces) Tiempos (Klim Type Foundry) Paper: Maano Natural

Printer: Druckerei Heenemann

Work-Stay Videos

All videos edited by Hannah Dörr Sound mix by Simon Peter Camera: Robert Alexander (London): Paul Rohlfs (Berlin): Alessandro Fagioli (Barcelona); Fadi El Nachmy (Beirut); Tom Cassani and Florentina Holzinger (Las Vegas)

Thanks to

Rasha al-Ameer Slim Sara Bernshausen Tulga Beyerle Ivan Blasi

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Forecast is a platform dedicated to the support, mentoring, and promotion of trailblazing creative practices and audacious artistic practitioners. Founded in 2015 by Artistic Director Freo Majer, Forecast encompasses one-on-one mentorships; the workshop series Forecast Condensed; and is the initiator of collaborative projects with multiple institutional partners, such as Driving the Human (2020–2023) and Housing the Human (2018–2019).

All Forecast projects, including its mentorships and collaborations are carried out by the German non-profit association Skills e.V., which was founded in Berlin in 2014. Since its inception, the charity has received funding from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), the EU program Creative Europe, the Goethe Institute, the Institute for Foreign Relations (ifa), and numerous international funding institutes, including the Australia Council for the Arts, Mondriaan Fund, Austrian Cultural Forum, British Council, Institut Français, and Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

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Forecast is a project by Skills e.V. It is supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.



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