

Theatre workshop: Animation of public space through innovative artistic practices

10:00 – 18:30

Museu da Água de Coimbra

The Theatre Workshop brings together theatre professionals, planner/architects, students and others to share experience-based insights on techniques and approaches to animating public space and engaging the public through artistic and other practices. It is designed to be an active workshop consisting of a series of mini-workshops (about 1.5 hour each). It also includes a roundtable of project profiles and an analytical session in which participants will be invited to reflect on the techniques used during the day and how arts-based practices can most effectively animate public space and engage the public in different contexts.

Coordination:

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Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht

Workshop Leaders:



O Teatrão, Coimbra, Portugal –

Isabel Craveiro and Margarida Antunes de Sousa



Stut Theatre, Utrecht, The Netherlands –

Donna Risa and Jochem Naafs



Raons Públiques: Arquitectes Sense Fronteres, Barcelona, Spain –

**Amalia Speratti, Andrés Martínez de la Riva, and
Francisco Javier Fraga**

Theatre workshop:

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10:15-10:30 Orientation, welcome

10:30-12:00 Workshop 1 – **O Teatrão** (Portugal)

Three different spaces in Coimbra – spaces of movement and interrelation, vacant spaces, spaces of memory and patrimony related spaces

O Teatrão's main goal is to increase the relationship between people and urban spaces and between the idea of memory associated with urban spaces and the present time, creating new methods for the creation of local collective memory and new contemporary formats for the relation between urban spaces and communities.

The workshop is based on a work exploring different urban spaces in the city of Coimbra, considering as a starting point the experience of the street performance *Coimbra 1111*, recently produced by O Teatrão in collaboration with different amateur theatre companies from Coimbra, local city residents, local organizations, and local businesses. It was presented as an artistic pathway through different historical spaces of the city of Coimbra: starting at Parque Manuel Braga, going through Praça Velha, Arco da Almedina, Muralha antiga da Cidade, Governo Civil, and ending at Praça da Sé Velha.

The way the city and its urban spaces are understood today and how people relate and identify with those urban spaces will be explored by participants. Furthermore, it will explore how the perspectives of students from ESEC (Superior School of Education) and from Estudos Artísticos (Faculty of Humanities, University of Coimbra) compare with those of the Utrecht School for the Arts' students, who have been exploring Coimbra's historical urban spaces over the past week.

About O Teatrão

Teatrão, resident at the Municipal Theatre Space (OMT) in Coimbra, has developed from a theatre company dedicated to children and youth, to a theatre centre producing artistic work for different types of audiences, including youth and children. Since 2005, the Teatrão repertory has integrated theatre plays for all types of audience, based on an approach of projects of social intervention, including parallel activities and trying to explore social issues that may be presented on the stage. Teatrão co-production partnership programs with the Superior School of Education (ESEC) and the investment in the creation of a cultural center (Museu dos Transportes) that receives other artists and artistic groups have developed new relations with the broader city of Coimbra. Teatrão tries to blend its original objective, the creation of artistic pieces of work for audiences of young people and children, with the more contemporary need to create a new branch of the artistic organization dedicated to the relation between arts and the social world. It is strongly motivated to concretize this goal with a focus on international youth projects that may bring a more complete contribution in rethinking the issues of citizenship and artistic education in the world and in the local community, and to develop a learning network with similar organizations in other Portuguese communities.

12.00-12.15 Break

12.15-13.45 Workshop 2 – **Stut Theatre** (The Netherlands)

- Short introduction of Stut Theatre (mission – history – development – Stut today and in the future)
- The difference between community theatre and drama therapy
- Oral history: Collecting stories – Analyzing stories and translating translate them into theatre
- A practical example: From interview to scene
- Questions and answers

About Stut Theatre

Stut Theatre (Utrecht, The Netherlands) is a professional community-based theatre company. With its specialised qualifications and skills in theatre making, Stut facilitates the production of stage plays for with and by people with unheard stories. These are mostly residents of 'working-class quarters' in Utrecht, the fourth largest city of the country (approximately 300,000 inhabitants). Stut also caters to other social groups that likewise have little or no possibility to express themselves through theatre.

Stut's plays are based on the personal experiences of participants, the stories and attitudes of the above-mentioned residents of Utrecht. Over the years, Stut Theatre has developed its own unique concept and methodology of 'community- based theatre'. Founded in 1978, Stut Theatre has created more than 50 original productions in which hundreds of neighbourhood residents have performed and many more have contributed their stories. These shows have been performed close 1500 times for well over 10,000 spectators. In March 2011, the company will celebrate its 35th anniversary.

Stut looks to the future and seeks to experiment with new (or other) theatre styles and to explore other art forms. Besides text theatre, the company has begun to investigate the possibilities of music theatre, site-specific theatre, visual arts installations and music. But behind this continuous challenge to find the most effective form for each new project, the experiences of the people Stut chooses to work with remains paramount. They remain the performers in their own plays. Their audiences see honest, sincere, and powerfully authentic performances full of strong emotions and humour, which they can relate to and enjoy.

13.45-15.00 Lunch

15.00-16.00 Roundtable discussion of projects and insights, including:

Petra Johnson – KIOSK/Xiaomaibu project (with Xu Zhifeng in Shanghai and Esther Blodau Konick in Weimar), which was invited to the German Pavillon at the EXPO 2010 in Shanghai

Marnie Badham, Artist and PhD Researcher in Australia and Canada – insights from various community engaged projects, guerrilla lighting ...

16.00-16.15 Break

16:15-17.45 Workshop 3 – Raons Públiques (Spain)

Through interventions in public space, the workshop aims to highlight the contrast between the perception of the city from an external approach (external, temporal, pre-conceived ...) and that which is from the routine and daily use (by the neighbours).

Phase 1: Identification and contact with the city will take place during the days prior to the workshop, and has the dual intention for the *participants to get closer to the city* (experiencing this 'urban knowledge that comes from outside') and to *identify a location to do the intervention* on the day of the workshop. Members of Raons Públiques will identify sites characterized by having an intergenerational, intercultural use, with a large influx of varied people, by observing the city (using tools such as field notes or drifting). *Participants in the workshop* will receive a blank map three days before the workshop, where they will collect their perception of the city from personal experience (mapping their experiences)

Phase 2: Workshop development. The workshop will be divided into three parts: a brief introduction, joint intervention in public space, and a concluding discussion. There will be an intervention in the urban space identified in Phase 1, where participants come into contact with neighbours, regular users and create a collective mapping which expresses the passage from the 'outsiders' vision to the 'daily use' vision. We will apply a variety of tools used in other contexts: a model as an element of abstraction; forms/maps/drawings to obtain information about the daily experiences of regular users (neighbours); and the joint development of a map of the neighbours' real experiences. The *collaborative construction* of the experiences of the locals in the area will seek to highlight the changes/contradictions/differences between the initial perception of the participants and those of regular users.

The workshop ends with a *comparison between the external views* of Coimbra (individual plans of participants) *with the map the experiences*, built collectively by the residents.

About Raons Públiques

Raons Públiques is an interdisciplinary group formed in Barcelona in 2009, as part of the local partnership of Architects Without Borders (ASF). The group comprises a team of architects, urban planners, anthropologists, psychologists, social educators and designers critical of the current model of building our cities.

The group originated as a result of participation in the contest Racons Públics in 2009, organized by the Barcelona City Council and FAD (Fostering Arts and Design). The call posed different locations in the city for participants to submit proposals to give innovative solutions to improve public space. The call, open to anyone interested, ended up attracting once again only urban design professionals (urban planners, architects, artists ...). With the intention of reversing this situation, the group Raons Públiques used the contest as a pretext to work in the proposed neighbourhoods, collecting the different needs and approaching the neighbours' aspirations.

Thus a line of work began that through various projects and in different contexts, has led the group to focus its work on public space, in direct and close contact with users of the city, the "daily urban life." With the challenge of improving the management of the city through the direct inclusion of citizens in the decision-making, Raons Públiques has been formed as a group that investigates (always through action and practice) new approaches to intervention in public spaces that encourage citizen participation. In this context, performing arts and recreational activities in public space become an important component of our work method, always within a global process seeking social sustainability. These interventions are always looking for the population to be aware of its responsibility and capability of building their own space (the social construction of habitat), and they also allow the building of expression channels for

residents (between them and with the technicians and politicians) and bring the technical tools closer to the population.

17.45-18:00 Break

18:00-18:30 Roundtable discussion – reflections on the day, techniques used ...

18.30 Collective walk to student *in situ* theatre performances

19:00 Public theatre presentation on ‘animating the use of public space’

Developed by Utrecht and Coimbra theatre students during a week-long workshop in Coimbra (26-30 September 2011).

Open to all Symposium participants and the general public.