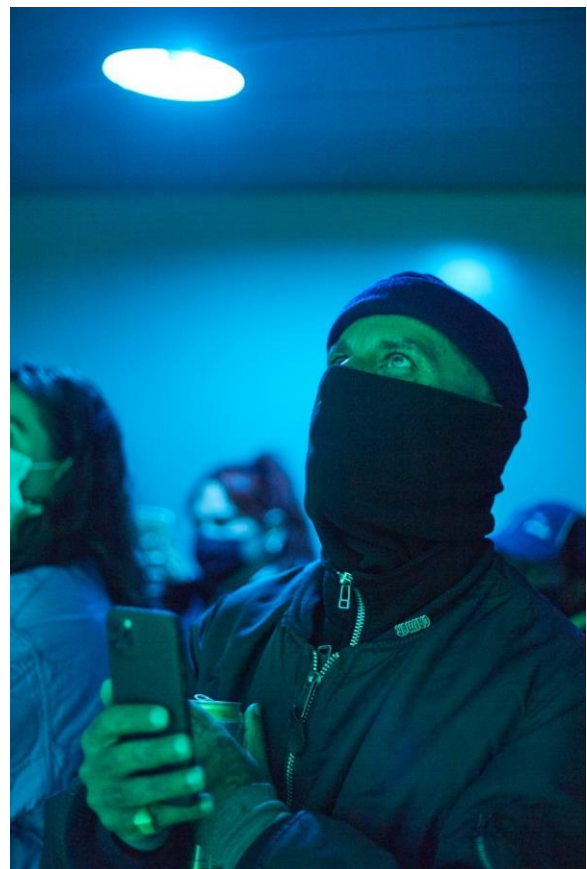


The Forum - contemporary performance art in public space as a method to discuss ownership, visibility and audience.

As an artist I mainly work on site specific installation and performance. I specialize in long durational performance art, regularly taking place in public settings. As a part of my practice I curate international performance festivals, as well as solo ones in public space, which sometimes are participatory. As a member of Kulturtraverse and other associations and collectives I also work for artist's rights and the perception of art work in general.

I am talking from a Eurocentric perspective and cannot express experience from contexts of oppression. As Liechtenstein is such a small country we have to work across borders to stay relevant. This is why I want to set the focus on the learnings from my solo practice as well as the curation of international performance festivals regarding the public realm. I feel that I would have deceived you in presenting my artistic work, which up until next year has unfortunately all physically taken place outside of Liechtenstein. With this lecture I like to stress the importance of contemporary performance art in public space. The lecture is structured into 1. the potential – 2. emotion – 3. strategy of the public.

In my opinion questions can be more important than answering them. I would like to pose many, as the search for their answers is, when we learn the most. Throughout the lecture I planned to show imagery of my work and curation. But as we know pictures seduce and distract, I decided to share them later in my hand out. I invite you to just listen to my voice. If you trust me, you can even close your tired eyes, if you like.



- The potential of the public

During the pandemic we have not only seen an increase (and now decrease again) in virtual efforts and digital events in the arts, but also a shift to the public sphere. Daily we see images from the streets in Ukraine and all over the world, might be on the streets ourselves to demonstrate and show our support.

As in the concept of the Forum Romanum, the public space holds the potential for political discussion, action and exchange. In an ideal world it is a place where *everyone* is able to meet, feel safe, move around, speak freely and express themselves. No matter if we just are in public space or consciously place action, in that moment we occupy the space with our bodies. As we do so, we inherently become part of a larger public body. As an artist showing a work, as an audience watching, even as a passenger we carry responsibility and thus create ownership of our ideas. This we can call a temporary counter-public agency and juxtaposes the hierarchical and patriarchal structures given in urban, but also rural space.

Art in public space can also be a de-centralization, a disentanglement from institutions, a statement for a more sovereign and grass roots approach to things. It creates an immediate field for feedback and resonance. But it is not only the fact that occupying space through art is important, but especially in what way, *how* do we go about it? Playing with anticipation, winning new audience during a performance, participating in landscape, creating a safe space, a common ground where art can take place, inviting relationships to happen. It is this, why I am passionate about the topic.



- The emotion of the public

If we talk about public space as stage, we have to talk about safety and accessibility. For art and cultural workers showcasing art in public realms holds many risks and concerns. As soon as we expose ourselves to public realm many fears arise. This applies to the artist(s) as well as the audience. Fears we have to understand and try to overcome. Through planning and organization we can only ensure that these stay as small as possible. Through performativity, and as we define a certain space and express our ideas, we become vulnerable instantly. In meritocracies the fear of failure is somehow omni-present as well. This is especially something to overcome and even a risk worth taking, as it holds great potential to learn along the way.

What if we welcome all these challenges, but ensure beforehand for the security of the artist(s), the team and the audience? The showcasing and production of the work hereby becomes more and more part of the work itself, as it requires a higher level of observation, scanning the environment, a better focus and collaboration of the whole team.

Another important thing which comes into play is the accessibility of the space, but also the art itself. When we temporarily claim space, take up a stance, suggest a political messages through action in public space, an energetic field is opened up and can be held by the performance. If done and organized well a public performance can occupy the mind of spectator in a way that the experience becomes so immersive one almost forgets being in public space. This is what we should aim towards, to create a moment in time which will echo into the future promising a utopia of social equality.



- The strategy of the public

Being wondrous, discovering and working with public space is a challenge I gladly take. In times of crisis, which we are not only since the recent war outbreak in Europe, but constantly, it is crucial to dare, to be courageous, to be responsible, to be visible, to be angry, to be radical, to overcome borders, to speak up, to be aware, to be accountable, to be empathic, to be avant-garde, to be art's accomplice, to hold agency, to be protective, to be patience, to share love.

To programme, to show and to witness art in public space means existing in community, through which we can connect to each other and the immediate context, more specifically the environment, the architecture, even nature. Maybe through a ritual we reconnect to forgotten meanings and collective ideas, maybe we just enjoy being next to other bodies within the same happening, we can feel the energy of the performer(s).

To grasp this feeling of what an event, not the performance, but the event itself, some specific happening in one specific time at one specific location, means being together and witness. Performance can evoke this connection and if we find this to happen in public space everything is more vulnerable, more fragile, more accessible, more porous, more transparent, more fluid, more open in general. The osmosis between the performance piece, the socio-political matters and additional random audience potentially passing by, provokes an exhilarating cocktail of emotions. We have to offer something to think about, something that resonates with the audience and ourselves. We have to debate about facts, and we have to share our emotions and raise our empathy towards all involved.

How do we connect our common experience? How do we tell stories in public space? How do we share humanity? How can we research on community, urban as well as rural living space through public performance art? How do we stimulate and challenge our audience? How do we sharpen their perception? How can we provoke real emotion? How do we perceive space and the others? How can we diversify our audience? How do we involve locals? How can we capture something less visible, ephemeral, temporal, something we can only satisfy to a certain level through documentation? How can art be in public space? How do we find beauty? How does it show itself? How do we talk through art? Who do we showcase something relevant? How do we include the more vulnerable? How do we suggest care and love?



Due to capacity of this lecture unfortunately we won't be able to touch on the importance of sustainability, ethics and intersectionality in regards to dealing with public space. Our actions should always be anti-racist, anti-fascist, feminist and caring, even after 'trends' appear to vanish. Thank you.







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