

EDITORIAL

UNKNOWN(s)? *An Attempt to Discover and Map the “Off-the-Grid” of Today’s Performing Arts and Cinema*

By Alexandru Bumbas and Anca Pop, Co-Chief Editors

The renewal of the *In Vivo Arts* platform through a visual lens (thanks to visual artist **Juan José Apolinar Romero**, Colombia, and web designers **Mauricio Daniel Herrera Mautino** and **Leticia Milagros Barboza Ayala**, from Octo Estudio, Peru), and the addition of a thematic cluster addressing technological developments in the Performing Arts and Cinema—titled VIRTUALITY(es)—coincides with the launch of a polymorphic issue, conceived and organised around a concept as abstract as it is concrete: UNKNOWN(s).

While preparing this issue, we were deeply moved by the diversity and richness of the proposals—pervaded by an intimate desire to speak, to question, to show, and to present artistic experiences that exist “beneath the required level of knowledge and aesthetic formalisation,” or outside “systems of knowledge and power,” to borrow Michel Foucault’s terminology.

From Colombia to contemporary Iran, from Vietnam to the Jungle Mohol in India, and from Bali to France, Belgium and Switzerland—including a visual detour through South Africa—the contributions collected by the *In Vivo Arts* team clearly show that concerns surrounding “unknown” artistic creation are undeniably universal. Moreover, such concerns are deeply personal for the artist and the researcher—or the artist-researcher, as is often the case. All the voices echoed in this issue reflect a necessity to create that defies aesthetic, socio-economic, and spatiotemporal norms, and perhaps suggest that the very notion of “amateur” creation has become obsolete. This term, after all, imposes an unjustly hierarchical “interpretation” of artistic work, stifling creative momentum and relegating the artist to an undefined space from which “upward” movement is scarcely imaginable. As a result, the contributors themselves have adopted—with sincerity and sensitivity—alternative terminologies such as “emergent,” “unclassifiable,” “unknown,” “lesser-known,” “undisciplined,” or even “utopian,” thus offering an inclusive and heterogeneous map of today’s Performing Arts and Cinema.

Amid this bustling network of unearthed works and artists, the UNKNOWN(s) issue is structured around the following sections: VIEWPOINT(s) AND OBSERVATION(s), EXPERIENCE(s) OF ARTISTIC LIFE(s), ESSAY, LITERARY JOURNAL, DIALOGUE(s), and PLAYS.

In PERSPECTIVE(s) AND OBSERVATION(s), researcher **Samuel Lhuillery**, exploring the *Voice & Body* creative laboratory, highlights the difficulties for performing artists and researchers to create outside “institutional frameworks”. **Azin Mohammadali** shows the significant mobilisation of the theatrical “amateur system” as part of cultural policies, politics and war developments in Iran after 1979. In Vietnam, researchers **Tien Phat Nguyen** and **Huan Bui** examine the challenges encountered by student theatrical representations, in the post-*Đổi Mới* era (the “renewal policy” initiated in 1986). Researchers **Nathalie Schieb-Bienfait** and **Pauline Boivineau** close the section with a socio-economic study straddling creation and mediation, focusing on a project titled *Le C(h)œur des femmes*, led by artist **Vanille Fiaux**. This initiative addresses the general population rather than traditional audiences, signalling a “paradigm shift in the artist-work-audience triangle.”

In EXPERIENCE(s) OF ARTISTIC LIFE(s), artists reflect on their own creative work and their place in today’s societies. **Marie Bonnarme** shares a touching account of her collaborative and co-creative work with **Marylyse Magerotte**, a Belgian artist with Down syndrome. Filmmaker **Lou-Andréa Désiré** paints an intimate portrait of a taxi driver and photographer, featured in her documentary *Sans influence*, in which the latter’s life story intersects with that of the director’s. **Maxine Reys** and **Alexandre Montin** dismantle the “myth” of Switzerland as an economic haven for artists, through the story of their “undisciplined” creation entitled *Amazing Journey*. Choreographer-researcher **Biliana Vassileva** takes us deep into the Balinese jungle, video-documenting her choreographic work inspired by the luwak—a small animal threatened with extinction because its digestive system has the ability to transform coffee beans into genuine “grains of gold” which sell at exorbitant prices.

In an “ante-utopian” visual ESSAY, Mara Mbele explores the potential for creativity and resistance of nomadic architectures, emerging from the ruins of capitalism and colonialism in South Africa. Using a different method, that of the LITERARY JOURNAL, **Jean-Frédéric**

Chevallier shares with us the challenges of a “theatrical proposition” produced in a tribal village in West Bengal.

The DIALOGUE(s) section brings together voices eager to freely share their experiences. **Pauline Boivineau**, a second-time contributor to this issue, interviews **Joséphine Boivineau** about the conditions of emergence in choreographic art, in an increasingly constrained economic culture. **Alexandru Bumbas** interviews **Karine Katia Bénac** about her play *La Biquette d’El Biar* (published in this issue). **Alexandru Bumbas** also talks with two Colombian artists—**Adela Donadio**, a key figure in Colombian theatre, and **Leonardo Petro**, her former student and artistic collaborator—about the creation of a *sui generis* work with three sex workers from Bogotá: **Carolina Calle**, **Inés Durán**, and **Jahira Quintero**. Finally, artist **Joé Lopes**, also known as **Dalidyke** offers perhaps the most poignant reflection of the UNKNOWN(s) issue when confessing to **Youn Le Guern-Herry** that: “Ultimately, being known or unknown also comes down to whether or not you can make a living from your work...”

Finally, two previously unknown dramatic works complete this symbolic mapping of living arts today. The first, *La Biquette d’El Biar* by **Karine Katia Bénac** is a work of memory and autofiction inspired by the artist’s life and the discovery of a family history turned upside down by History. The second, *Prestáme color* by young Colombian actor and playwright **Fabián A. Bonilla**, is described by its author as “a sensitive experiment” based on the theme of manipulation in human relations.

We invite thus our readers to discover this issue driven entirely by revelations of intimate positions, which—alas—become thus *extimate*, striving to convey new aesthetic visions, raise alarms about artists’ precarity, and call for their recognition. Long live the UNKNOWN(s)!