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**LANDSCAPES AND WATERSCAPES IN MOTION:
APPROACHES IN CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN
CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS IN RELATION TO THE
ENVIRONMENT**

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**Nature of Us
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About The Nature of Us

The goal of the international project The Nature of Us is to foster **collaboration and interdisciplinary dialogue between the performing arts and the natural sciences** in addressing the issues of climate change and environmental protection. It responds to the performing arts' need to gain a thorough understanding of environmental issues and to create works that meaningfully address the concerns of their audiences. This approach enhances the effectiveness of artistic works and outputs in raising awareness of climate change and inspiring concrete action. At the same time, scientific partners can find new avenues of communication through the thriving world of the performing arts, utilizing the narrative, aesthetic, emotional, and other creative tools that artists can provide. This should lead to better ways of engaging the public and promoting behavioral change regarding climate action at the societal level.

The Nature of Us is **an international collaborative project involving four cultural organizations from Central Europe**: Live Performance Bazaar (CZ), Polka dot Foundation (PL), PLAST - Slovak Contemporary Dance Platform (SK), and Workshop Foundation (HU), which are establishing relationships with scientific and institutional partners. The project's partner organizations are committed **to gradually transforming the social environment and citizens' perceptions of their identity in relation to nature**.

<https://natureofus.art/>

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INTRODUCTION

This text is an invitation to find inspiration and discover one’s own creative direction - perhaps even one that has not yet been reflected upon, explored, or applied by performance makers themselves within the current performative context of Central and Eastern Europe. Yet reflecting on the current state of the natural world or collaborating with natural scientists are already established practices among many theatre and dance artists across this broader European region. By comparing and interconnecting their approaches, I will endeavor in the following text to provide a more detailed insight into this specific practice.

The project THE NATURE OF US, funded in 2021 and 2022 by the Visegrad Fund and subsequently from 2024 to 2026 by the European Union under the Creative Europe program, showcases the creative practice of a number of prominent Central and East European artists in the fields of dance and theatre who address environmental issues and collaborate with the scientific community.

I have been systematically following the work of Central and Eastern European artists addressing environmental issues for many years, which is why I decided to include earlier works in this selection, as well as projects from countries outside the member states of THE NATURE OF US initiative. In other words, you will find works here not only from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, but also from their neighboring countries. Furthermore, in some cases, productions created in countries other than those where they were staged and shared with audiences are discussed.

These performative works and the practices of their makers are, to a certain extent, “body-based” - that is, they stem from the body - which does not necessarily mean that they are created or performed by dancers. Whether they are theatre or dance artists, the works discussed below share a common perception of the body as an extended entity - that is, a body that moves, reacts, interacts, thinks, and speaks as a resonator of its surroundings and the broader environment.

In closing this introduction, I would also like to note that the vast majority of the productions mentioned in this text combine several different approaches, which are described separately below; among other things, their combination can lead to an even more powerful audience experience.

Ewan McLaren, Prague, June 2026



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Lecture performance and the “in/out” format.

A standard approach used by many artists today is the lecture performance format. However, even without incorporating entire lecture passages into their productions, artists experiment with Brechtian breaks in the action, during which they address the audience directly (or project text that the audience can read). This second approach, which we might call “in/out,” is widely used in contemporary performing arts and emphasizes a recognition of the performer’s duality. Although the audience’s complete immersion in the illusion or in an emotional and aesthetic experience (“IN”) still exists, we find that an increasing number of makers also wish to acknowledge the manipulative nature of such passages and highlight it precisely by addressing the audience directly (“OUT”). A performer may interrupt a particular sequence of movement or acting - or other stage activity - and suddenly speak in their own voice about themselves and their experiences (and there is a question as to whether the audience believes that the performer is speaking for themselves and not as a character) or present information on a researched topic in the natural sciences.

Hungarian dancer, choreographer, and researcher in the field of the human body, Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi presents a striking example of the first of these approaches in her project ANTROPODENY. Although the production includes a number of artistic sequences (IN) - including, among others, those in which she plays the keyboard or dances for the audience - the fundamental meaning of the work is conveyed to the audience through a comedic lecture on how human bodies and their behavior are influenced as much by the microorganisms that have settled within them as by our own DNA. The key to this production lies precisely in its use of the IN/OUT principle, through which the author blends her scientific thinking and artistic sensibility into powerful metaphors.

At the beginning, the author explains (OUT) that invisible organisms live among us and that we are all immersed in a sea of microorganisms - the dance floor is full of fungi, the air is teeming with life, the audience is full of viruses, an aura of skin bacteria surrounds our skin, and so on. She also points to mitochondria, a bacterial structure inside the cell that we inherit only from our mothers and that serves as our fuel and energy center. She further notes that human DNA makes up only 50% of our cells - the rest is not human DNA, so we are not just humans but also a kind of colony. According to the author, our large intestine or colon is, in fact, also a colony.

In a “pure dance” (IN) sequence, she then returns to her own dance history - nearly twenty years ago, she danced with the Rosas Dance Company, led by choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker - and demonstrates how the body’s movements in space, following certain patterns, can become instinctive: they have become so deeply ingrained in her that she feels them in her very core, and even the bacteria in her body remember them. During the performance, we realize that our behavior and bodily movements are far more interconnected than we usually think. By witnessing her dance instinct firsthand on stage (IN), we understand the metaphor more deeply than if we had merely heard about it (OUT).

Czech dancer, choreographer, and researcher Tereza Ondrová may have been inspired to some extent by Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi’s lecture performance when, in collaboration with theatre director and “devised” theatre specialist Petra Tejnorová, she created a remarkable dance production titled GEO. It consists of a series of personal monologues and sequences akin to lecture performance, and I personally consider it one of the highlights of the past decade on the Central European performing arts scene dedicated to the theme of the natural world.

In it, the dancer tells her own story tied to a specific place - the theatre building where she is currently performing and where she has performed many times over the past twenty years. The dancer’s fragile, physically vulnerable life is thus powerfully juxtaposed with the history of our planet; she is aided in this by a geophone, a sound detector that picks up sounds from deep within the Earth’s surface. In the production, the geophone conveys information about what is happening beneath the surface of our planet while also providing updates on current events - not only regarding the dancer herself but also the dance theatre.



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The production also includes short lecture segments on the geology of the area beneath the theatre and its surroundings; in the version presented at the Bazaar Festival in 2023, these focused on the changes in the course of the Vltava River, which once flowed directly beneath the site where the Ponoc Theatre - the venue for the performance - now stands. By interweaving geology with the history of the artistic community and with personal stories, the production has an increasingly powerful impact. Just like the Earth itself, GEO features layered meanings, a captivating sound design, and surprising lighting and visual (video) effects. Furthermore, the production is being adapted into various versions for different dancers, theatres, and cities.

The production EXTINCTION ROOM: HOPELESS by Romanian choreographer Sergei Matthis, who lives and works in Berlin, also alternates between the principle of a lecture performance (OUT) and acted moments designed to immerse the audience in the illusion of the stage (IN).

During the performance, audience members can move freely among the individual performers - each of whom stands in a different location and gives a talk about a specific extinct bird species, with multiple performers speaking at the same time on occasion. The performers stand quite far apart from one another and from the audience, so each viewer must choose for themselves whom to approach and whom to listen to. It is precisely in this freedom of choice that the main principle of the production lies, which, among other things, more or less uses the format of a performative installation.

From each short lecture, we learn the basic natural history of the bird in question, whether it is already extinct or on the verge of extinction: what the plumage of the male and female looked like, how the bird behaved, what it ate, where it lived, how it cared for its young, where it migrated, and how it sang. The discussion also touches on the bird's place in human culture - from myths and legends through documented encounters with humans to the circumstances of its extinction. Over time, the frequency of the lectures (on extinct species) becomes overwhelming - the audience is unable to take it all in at once. Perhaps this is a deliberate choice - after all, how could we possibly keep up with the rapidly disappearing individual bird species all over the world?

At many points, the lecturers fall silent and, one by one - sometimes in groups - they transform into birds. They gather into a flock, or conversely scatter to all corners of the space, only to settle elsewhere a moment later and begin telling the story of another species - whether extinct or merely endangered. Here, once again, the "IN" and "OUT" principles are alternated.

Lecture performance and the "in/out" format have been outlined first here because of their obvious use in directly imparting scientific information and perspectives in the context of performance. However, they are rarely used in isolation in the performances observed above and in this paper. Artists making and performing work in Central and Eastern Europe continue to experiment with the many options available to them. By combining these two approaches, or combining them with other approaches, performance makers can enhance their effect considerably. A big reason to put facts and natural science onstage is to give them esthetic and emotional depth, and/or the authenticity of personal experience. Many of the further examples will show these combinations.

Questions

Under what circumstances do theatre audiences want to hear lectures as such?

If personal information, history or opinion is being imparted by the performer onstage, does (or should) the audience understand this is not spoken in character?

If scientific information is being imparted in a performance, how can we be sure the information is true and approved?

Can natural scientists be our co-authors, co-creators and what steps are necessary for such collaborations to be smooth and meaningful?

What strategies are there for lecture performances and in-out formats to amuse, entertain, surprise or impress so that audiences a. want to attend and b. realize something thanks to the performance and c. realize something on a different level than by reading an article or "dry" scientific data?



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Come taste the landscape/water with us.

Some artists have focused on food and drink - their origins and relationship to the landscape - and placed them at the center of a performative event. They offer meals or beverages to the audience for tasting and link this sensory experience to storytelling, a lecture performance, or other verbal or textual formats, ranging from poetry to recipes. Sharing food and drink thus enhances everything in the performance that is educational or informative - theory suddenly becomes something that can literally be tasted. Some of these approaches take place directly in the landscape as site-specific works (see “Direct Interaction with the Landscape/Seascape/Waterscape” below), while others, on the contrary, take place in theatrical spaces, as is the case with the first event listed below.

In the work *OPIUM CLIPPERS*, Slovenian visual artist, author, and performer Neja Tomšič draws us into the ritual of drinking tea - but through a hand-painted tea set that she crafted herself as part of her project. As she gently picks up the cups and teapot, caresses them, arranges them, serves them, pours hot water over them, she draws our attention to their painted details. It is through these very objects that she unfolds before us the story of the ships and trade routes used by Europeans to import tea, and simultaneously to transport opium to China along those same routes. In doing so, she recalls the opium epidemic and the tensions between China and Western trading powers that culminated in the Opium Wars of the 19th century.

As we sip our tea, her hands and the objects come to life in motion, as if dancing before our eyes. With carefully chosen words, the artist unveils a story that, thanks to this immediate experience, we experience much more intensely than if we had merely read about it. It is, in fact, a performance lecture - and yet we hardly perceive it as such.

With extraordinary delicacy and enchanting precision, within the ritual of preparing and drinking tea, Tomšič tells the story of European colonial aggression at its peak and violent retaliation against the country that resisted it. In doing so, she opens up a space for the audience to draw a whole range of parallels with the present day: reflections on contemporary economic wars, on the enormous profits from transporting crops and commodities across oceans - whether basic foodstuffs or sought-after drugs - and on the illegal trade in addictive substances, which continues to flourish to this day.

Czech artist Heidi Hornáčková, who focuses on food ecology and performative projects, found new trusted collaborators during her residency as part of THE NATURE OF US program in the form of Aslı Hatipoğlu (a Dutch artist of Turkish and Thai descent) and Suraie Abud Coaik (a Spanish citizen of Lebanese and Uruguayan descent). All three have long been engaged in performance projects in the field of food ecology, and together they explore the question of why so many of us know so little about the food we eat - where it comes from and at what cost. At the same time, they are fascinated by the stories, myths, traditions, and scientific reflections on the food we obtain, grow, and create; in doing so, they celebrate the way in which flavors and culinary experiences travel around the world.

They channel these interests into performative events they have developed and presented in Central Europe - partly as an anthropological lecture, partly as a popularization of food science, and partly as a site-specific cooking show combined with shared rituals of eating, in which the audience willingly participates. Audiences are invited to “taste the landscape.” The dishes and beverages they prepare for these events draw on combinations of local ingredients and international inspiration, allowing diners to reflect on the history, hard work, traditions, innovations, and environmental challenges associated with food.

In their project *WHISK THE WIND, ROAST THE LOAM, KNEAD THE FOG*, each of the numerous culinary acts is moderated by one or more performers from the trio. After introductory rituals and group activities related to food preparation, a performative feast follows. During the feast, participants are encouraged to feed one another dishes they helped prepare themselves. For example, they might have gathered local herbs that were later used to make Asian gyoza dumplings.



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The finished dishes are served along a large table. Throughout the feast, participants are gently encouraged to share their experiences with food, eat together, or feed one another. These simple acts create a unique atmosphere of sharing and mutual care. At the same time, they lead to a deeper awareness of the origins of food and the relationships that form around it.

Multisensory performative events *IF MY TONGUE COULD STRETCH INTO THE LANDSCAPE* (by Heidi Hornáčková and Aslı Hatipoğlu) and *STIRRING THE SOIL: UNEARTHING TOOLS OF CARE AND CO-EXISTENCE* (by all three artists) engaged intensively with the surrounding landscape. The first performance took place in the Mladá Boleslav district, while the second was held in southern Bohemia. In both cases, the audience wandered through the countryside, moving from station to station, where a specific experience related to food and drink awaited them. These refreshments were enriched by the artists' storytelling, brief commentary, poetry, games, inspirations from around the world, and their own wizardry in the kitchen.

Performative events in which food and drink are served to audiences have long had wide applications in creating or enhancing community in performance projects. The difference here is the direct application of this time-honoured technique to drawing our attention back to actual act of consuming and the related foraging, farming, harvesting, recipes and food-preparation, centuries of food culture and stories. All of the examples mentioned above also relate to the distances covered (by human migration, cultural exchange and trade) in bringing foodstuffs to their markets and our mouths.

Questions

How to manage giving unusually sourced food or drink to an audience safely and responsibly (allergies, food hygiene issues, with minimal or no plastic or trash)?

Such performative events seem to require intimacy and a relatively small amount of audience members – are there forms and contexts under which they could be for many more people? What are the useful examples of such?

How to work with locally sourced food out of season, when not much is growing?



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Direct interaction with the landscape and waterscape.

The following examples of artistic practice by selected makers move beyond traditional theatre buildings or studios, inviting audiences into direct contact with the landscape so they can experience the surrounding nature more intensely through site-specific performances.

A great example of such an experience is **.tektoparty** | a performative walk through the landscape by Zden Brungot Svíteková, a Slovak choreographer based in the Czech Republic. Audience members embark on a sort of geological excursion through the landscape, during which they are gradually introduced to various geological formations. For example, when looking out from a high cliff, a view opens up before them that reveals the very age of the Earth. The audience does not merely observe: they physically explore the site, touch it, move across its surface and through its surroundings, and perceive with all their senses the height, risk, and gravity of the place where they find themselves. The experience brings us face to face with just how insignificant human history and evolution are in comparison to geological time. The work also features the dancers' physical interaction with the surrounding terrain - their movements convey to the audience a deeper sense of the forces that truly shape the landscape.

In his remarkable site-specific performance TRACES, German circus artist, dancer, and ecologist JAKOB JAUTZ takes the audience deep into the forest, where he draws on his climbing experience while also serving as a visual artist creating masks and objects from wood and other natural materials for the project. In TRACES, Jautz engages with the surrounding trees not only as a narrator and performer, but also as a dancer and acrobat. Jautz literally dances in the treetops, climbing to incredible heights on climbing ropes, only to return to the ground and deliver his final monologue to the audience.

Polish choreographer and performer Aleks Borys also engages in the practice of nature walks combined with artistic content. Her performance series CHOREOGRAPHY OF IMAGINING THE FUTURE is based on listening to audio material that helps the audience envision the future. As the audience listens, walks, and observes the landscape around them, they visualize through their own bodies what the future will look like in one year, five years, ten years, fifty years, one hundred years, and even one thousand years.

The Prague-based group DIVADLO SETKÁNÍ (THEATRE ENCOUNTER) has also utilized this combination of a pre-recorded audio script and the experience of the surrounding nature during a group walk in its thoroughly crafted projects, which focus on the migration of wolves and bears in Central and Eastern Europe. Their performance titled HUNTERS HAVE EYES FOR CRYING takes on multiple versions depending on the location. For example, during a walk through a Prague park, we listen to stories about the nocturnal migration of wolves; as dusk falls, several pet dogs run about with their owners in the shadows of the trees. The dogs - not always on a leash - further enhance the narrative about the wolves' movements. A walk through the countryside around the Tatra Mountains, which focuses on bears, serves as a layered experience. On one level, as listeners, we gain factual knowledge - the authors explain why bears are moving closer to people: farmers stopped growing potatoes and started planting corn, which drew the bears near human settlements. In the second part of the audio guide, we hear stories about female bears desperately trying to protect their cubs from capture or death. The real-life challenges faced by bears in the very environment you're walking through make the walk a deeply moving experience.

What makes these events more than just guided nature walks is artistic content and imagination. For instance Svíteková's and Theatre Encounter's events involve sequences of biomorphism or other embodiments or natural phenomena performed by dancers or actors with the audience observing (see below for examples of such approaches). But this can also mean interactive moments where the performers guide the audience in physical activities related to e.g. geology, forest ecology or animal biology. Freed of the context of traditional seating arrangements, audiences may be more amenable to such interactions than usual.



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Questions

How best to deal with questions of audience and performer mobility and safety, and the liability of artistic and producing teams, in natural environments where many factors are outside of the team's direct control (e.g. weather, gravity, heights, lack of signage, wildlife, conservation regulations, etc.)?

How can such events be created and performed with minimal human impact on the very environment in which they take place?

This kind of event also seems to require intimacy and a relatively small amount of audience members – are there natural features and locales under which they could be for many more people? What are the useful examples of such?



Representation of natural phenomena - zooforphism and other embodiments.

Many makers of dance and physical theatre use the human body to create or portray the forms, voices, movements and behaviours - of non-human life and natural forces. When it comes to the interpretation of animals, we speak of zoomorphism. The obvious choice is to outwardly mimic the movements and forms of animals, but this is by no means the only option: studying the differences between human and animal anatomy can free the mind during research and creation and inspire artists, and audiences alike to “dive deeper.” Furthermore, this approach can also include plants (phytomorphism) and microscopic life (microbiomorphism) - and even chemical reactions and the behavior of molecules (molecular embodiment) or physical phenomena such as the movement of tectonic plates or interplanetary gravitational forces. The genre of dance, partially freed from the tyranny of the “need to tell a story”, offers many dramaturgical approaches that allow artists and audiences alike to explore patterns of life and science that lie far beyond human experience and the clichés of human conflict. (These possibilities are also explored by other body-based genres, particularly performance art.)

A. zoomorphism

As mentioned above, zoomorphism - that is, the transformation of the human figure into an animal or the mimicry of animal behavior - can go far beyond mere imitation, which we might associate with preschool or productions for young children.

Slovak choreographer Jana Tereková, currently based in Paris, demonstrates in her project ABNORMAL REPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR the connections between the behavior of captive animals - such as those in zoos or those facing habitat loss - and the behavior of humans in captivity¹.

In a related, more abstract dance performance titled FETTERED TO THE MOMENT, Tereková and her fellow dancers present movements inspired by specific manifestations of animal behavior - individual gestures or movements of a single animal or its limbs - and combine them with movements derived from mechanical, automatic machines. The production thus showcases an entire spectrum of movements, performed by humans: from those rooted in nature to those symbolizing a less free world, in which efficiency lies in the necessary, constant repetition of the most essential movements.

Prague-based Chinese physical theatre director Ran Jiao created the production SPIDER/TURTLE/WE, in which the audience sits on the floor in a dimly lit space among abstract, amoeba-like piles of discarded secondhand clothing. These piles gradually come to life - animated from within by performers who were initially hidden - and take on the form of various unidentifiable yet strangely familiar insect-like creatures. In this case as well, the performance requires a specific space and a limited number of audience members, as the performers need sufficient room to move, take shape, and capture the audience's attention through their behavior. If the lighting of the space and other conditions are ideal, we become witnesses to the gradual unveiling of these very different, previously unknown species - which first cautiously engage with the audience around them and eventually with one another, whether through playful combat, sexual gratification, or reproduction.

¹ Such behavior in animals is often self-destructive, and we can recognize it when observing animals at the zoo - for example, pacing back and forth, self-harming by banging their heads against hard surfaces, or recklessly attacking others.



B. Other biomorphisms and embodiments

Many performance makers view the natural world and its portrayal on stage from a more abstract perspective - they seek to break science down into its individual components. The performers' bodies become embodiments of forces that are barely discernible to the naked eye: microscopic life, the behavior of molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles, meteorological phenomena or those in which matter is transformed into energy. All it takes is a little prior knowledge of these scientific fields for the audience to discover movements and processes they don't typically encounter in theatre.

An unconventional example of this approach is the work of Isabelle Schäd - for instance, the dance production *PIECES & ELEMENTS*, in which Schäd and her team draw inspiration more from the science of the past - a time when the world was still divided into the elements of water, earth, wind, and fire - than from modern science. This ancient, though still resonant classification, becomes a remarkable source of movement vocabulary for a medium-sized ensemble of eight to ten dancers, who move and behave in harmony with nature without falling into mere imitation. The opening sequence, apparently inspired by air, wind, and changing weather, offers captivating, constantly shifting patterns: bodies form loops, sway, swirl, disperse, and reunite - sometimes as a single unit, other times in smaller groups.

A very enigmatic, even surreal dance performance by Alica Minar - who may have drawn inspiration from Isabelle Schäd's workshops - is titled *WOODS WON'T VAPORIZE*. A larger group of dancers and performers on stage creates shapes and patterns that at first seemed to me to be inspired more by the behavior of molecules than by anything I would associate with a forest. But what do those mysterious, David Lynch-esque masks that the dancers wear - stones and minerals - mean? Pieces of wood, roots? Or something even less recognizable? Are these figures perhaps some kind of forces of the forest undergrowth - not exactly mythical forest creatures, but rather its invisible actors, which an ordinary person without knowledge of biology cannot even imagine? And what about those long paper or cardboard rods, striped with color, that the performers carry - sometimes evenly spaced at regular intervals, other times selfishly gathered up together by one of them? We see the dancers lying on the floor, using the rods to arrange nearly precise geometric patterns together; the next moment, they leap up and swiftly dart across the stage with the rods. It's as if we're witnessing an urgent need to move that mysterious material. Perhaps it is precisely those biogeochemical nutrients - some substances, elements, enzymes, water molecules? - that drive the unstoppable force of the forest when it is left to its own devices and allowed to carry out its own processes. This production certainly doesn't offer easy answers, but it invites audiences who enjoy solving riddles to reflect on the processes normally known only to biologists and forest ecologists. For me personally, it was an entirely new stage iconography of forest forces - a sort of post-fairy-tale narrative about the true powers of the forest.

Another highly enigmatic performance piece that deserves careful attention is the dance production *BLOT* (Body Line of Thought) by the choreographic duo Simona Deaconescu from Romania and Vanessa Goodman from Canada. Here, two nude dancers (wearing only heart rate monitors) appear in a bright white space reminiscent of a laboratory. In the performance *BLOT*, the performers' own bodies are subjected to a symbolic deconstruction into individual parts. The aforementioned approaches of performative lecture and "in/out" are used in parallel with dance and stage action. One effect is to draw the audience's attention to the fact that the performers' bodies consist largely of microbial organisms, and even to the fact that the performers are not actually naked. This is because our skin is always covered with a layer of bacteria. The performers engage in various physical activities, such as jumping rope, during which they measure their heart rates and comment on the amount of sweat produced as well as the salt the body needs to function. During these and other activities, the performers communicate both with each other and with the audience, combining lecture performance and "in/out" approaches. Thanks to these we realize that the body is not only made up of a vast number of organisms but that it depends on minerals we either didn't know about or took for granted. But the remarkable, biomorphic aspect of *BLOT* is the physical vocabulary its dancers use, which differs from most of the choreography we are familiar with. As the performers take unusual positions sitting sideways on the floor, on their hands and knees or half bent over as if dealing with a stomach ache or cramps, we see their stomachs and bellies



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begin to ripple. This movement seems to expand into their spines and limbs and move them into taking steps, move their limbs into angular formations accompanied by sudden, jerky movements of the upper torso. The sense is that these movements are being generated live by none other than the microbiome in the dancers' own intestines. Few dance performances can boast of being choreographed by bacteria... Another inspiring aspect of this production is the restrained yet effective use of generated text projected onto the back wall of the stage, which provides the audience with simple facts about the microorganisms within and around us. At least part of the audience watching this remarkable and innovative combination of scientific facts, a brutally honest production, and a unique, nature-inspired movement vocabulary, experienced something akin to aesthetic rapture.

In the new production SEANAUT (a co-production of THE NATURE OF US project), by Czech Republic-based choreographer Carolina Arandia and her colleagues, a solo dancer and explorer dives into the depths of the ocean to convey to us the experience of depth, darkness, light filtering down from above, waves and movements, passing marine creatures, and a sense of wonder at the ocean's mysterious forces. These forces of the ocean are evoked through a combination of constantly shifting lighting effects, a soundscape - derived as much from rhythmic shifts as from recorded sounds of waves and water - and the choreography of solo dancer Sabina Bočková, who serves as our guide through the underwater world. Sometimes she is a diver, other times a fisherman, and at other times perhaps not even a fish, but rather a force that connects a school of fish rolling up and down, left and right. At other times, we realize that her stillness, punctuated by sudden movements across the wide stage, evokes underwater currents and sudden fluctuations that we usually perceive on the surface only as waves. The artistic team works here as a collective of painters, and the entire experience resembles an hour spent contemplating a series of layered paintings of the sea; if we give them our full attention, they lead us deep beneath its surface.

The dance production OLD POND by Hungarian artist Zsuzsa Rozsavölgyi presents three dancers as microorganisms pressed to the bottom of a pond or the seabed by the crushing weight of water. Rozsavölgyi drew on her many years of studying human anatomy - which she compared to the anatomy of other organisms - and on her understanding of their distinct capabilities. Building on this foundation, she created a dance production inspired by the movements of microscopic aquatic organisms.

We see a composition that begins with lives subjected to such incredible pressure that the bodies can barely lift themselves off the bottom; gradually, however, they struggle and vibrate until they finally gather the strength to rise and release themselves into a world of movement, mutual interplay, and ultimately freedom and transcendence. In the end, we see a trio of dancers spinning, swirling, and lifting one another into a world of bright, free possibilities - into those layers of water where sun, air, and water mingle.

Remarkable about these examples, whether they are about the embodiment of less obvious, not directly observable natural phenomena, or of flora, fauna or sea life likely more familiar to non-scientists, is that they pose questions rather than simply display recognizable forms or movement patterns. Each of them causes us to puzzle a little, revealing their inspirations only gradually to us, in theory activating audiences to contemplate, look further, or even do their own research.

Questions

What zoomorphic approaches are available beyond simple "imitation" of animal form and movement?

What inspirations are offered to dance and performance by collective bodies in motion such as animals in herds, flocks, packs, schools, murmurations, swarms or families, or by their migration patterns across the globe?

If more complex scientific phenomena are being interpreted, should they be accompanied by written materials and handouts that "explain" the science? or should lecture performance or "in/out" techniques described earlier be put to use for this reason? Or should the performance leave things unexplained and challenge audiences to pursue their own research?



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Giving nature a voice in human rituals.

Another approach is adopted by Central European artists in the fields of dance and theatre who work with rituals and their transformation. Some of these works refer to a certain extent to pagan rituals - such as old Slavic ones - thus reminding us that until recently, human rituals often revolved around nature itself. Other works, in turn, draw more on political rituals, such as court trials or parliamentary sessions.

Alica Minar and Dorota Michalak's project LUSH BLAST – the indoor version subtitled “Taming the Untamed” - transforms the stage into a ritual space: sequences of radical vengeance for the “murder” of forest areas alternate with sequences of intimate mutual care and harmony. In particular, the final part of the production, featuring an explosive nude dance by the three performers, comes across as a stormy celebration of the unifying forces of nature, reminiscent of a gathering of powerful, angry young representatives of a nature-worshipping agrarian cult in the forest.

In his work FUGK (short for “Finno-Ugric garage kabuki”), experimental physical theatre performer and analog musician Pasi Mäkelä references various types of rituals and performs them himself. He boldly intertwines the Finnish bear-hunting ritual Karhun Peijaiset (initially appearing as an old, wild, masked bear who invites us into his cave before the performance begins) with Kabuki traditions. Through this fusion of approaches, he manages to playfully parody contemporary theatrical practices. However, the comedy he creates on stage does not obscure his total determination to connect his body not only with shared human experience but also with the forces of nature - including that of an old, hunted bear. Mäkelä is a physically adept performer who moves deftly and precisely within a confined performance space where he is surrounded by the audience on all sides. He uses a series of different masks and costumes which act as significant obstacles, preventing him from seeing well in the space. Despite this, Mäkelä performs gestures, jumps, somersaults, and sudden changes in movement that seem just as spontaneous and dangerous as those of an acrobat. But key to this Prague-based artist's work is his exploration of the collective body, which he describes (by analogy with the subconscious) as a “sub-body.” This concept is influenced by his personal experiences during his theatre studies, specifically in connection with traditional funeral trance rituals in Zambia.

Polish choreographer Aleks Borys joined forces with Hungarian artist, lawyer, and performance artist Victoria Kaslik, and together they created the ritual AGENCY OF AMBER, in which they committed to giving a voice to an inanimate object - amber. This is a very specific type of stone that forms over millions of years, and only under very specific ecological conditions. The two artists perform a ceremony in which, through legal fiction, they grant amber actual rights. The ritual begins with the artists sipping herbal tea together and inviting the audience to sit around a small pedestal where the entire ceremony takes place. The performers recite a text about a repeal of ancient Roman law, which granted no rights to natural phenomena.

Based on this experience from the performance AGENCY OF AMBER at the Saturday Bazaar event in 2025, Viktoria Kaslik created another ritual titled DANDELION FEAST². In it, Viktoria Kaslik appears in a special dress and tells the story of how she became a lawyer, introducing the audience to the ritual through which she was admitted to the Hungarian bar association. This is followed by an explanation of why she decided to devote herself to the laws of nature rather than human laws. After that, the performance shifts its focus away from human destiny, and Kaslik turns her attention to the ubiquitous dandelion - not amber, as was the case in the previous version. She tells stories about the dandelion, describes its uses in cooking and cosmetics, and also mentions its medicinal properties. During this ritual, the dandelion becomes the centerpiece of all that is happening; we are offered dandelion tea, and at the end, we are invited to acknowledge the significance, importance, and power of this plant. Although this performative, lecture-style aspect of the ritual focuses more on traditional folk interpretations of the

² Presented as part of the RE:SHAPE LAB event of the NATURE OF US project on the island of Sobieszewo near Gdańsk, Poland.



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dandelion's uses and effects than on botanical science, it is nonetheless a phenomenological encounter with the plant - ubiquitous, often dismissed today as a weed, yet concealing qualities, stories, and powers that previous generations preserved in folk tradition. Hovering over it all is Viktoria's personal story, along with her interpretation of human laws and devotion to the laws of nature, which invites reflection. In conclusion, Viktoria presents us with a book in which she has summarized her insights about the seemingly insignificant dandelion.

Portuguese artist Marie Lucie Cruz Correia created a performance titled VOICE OF NATURE: TRIAL, which took place in August 2019 at the Mladi levi festival in Ljubljana, Slovenia, specifically in the town hall, in the very room where, incidentally, key municipal decisions are made.

The audience is seated in a circle around a large map of the world drawn on the floor, thereby disrupting the usual hierarchy of the space. The performance gets straight to the heart of the matter: it compels us to take full responsibility for the life forms on our planet by giving them a voice - or speaking on their behalf. In the first half, we are here mainly to listen. Or are we here to judge? This is, after all, a court case - or at least a simulation of one. The event's moderator addresses us, urging us to consider the case for nature and the ways in which it can be legally protected. The first half of the performance is a direct call to local experts to speak up and tell us what we can do to represent and protect nature - both in and out of court. We hear from a real Slovenian lawyer sitting among us who specializes in the legal representation of nature, to the extent that (human) law allows. From her, we learn that the fundamental problem is evidence: how can we prove in court that a particular company knowingly caused environmental damage? A smoking chimney, after all, is not as clear-cut evidence as a "smoking gun" - that is, irrefutable proof. Nevertheless, the lawyer advocates continuing to file lawsuits and cites examples where Slovenian courts have ruled against companies in cases involving the deaths of bears or wolves. It is much harder, however, to successfully prosecute the biggest polluters. The moderator therefore turns to another local expert in the audience, an activist who suggests not waiting for the courts but protesting directly, drawing significant media attention to environmental issues, and at the same time lobbying directly for new legislation. If the courts cannot give nature a voice, it is up to us to do so in city halls, in parliaments, in the media, and in the streets. The second half of the performance then focuses on manipulating the objects placed in front of us and interacting with them - you can read more about that in the following section...

Any of the human rituals in the examples mentioned here, from rituals of mutual support and protection of communities to funeral rites, from tea ceremonies to swearing-in ceremonies and court cases, have always involved performative elements, include special costumes, prescribed procedures, designated spaces or areas, official speeches or utterances, and even formalized movement, if not dance itself. Now, performance makers are putting their imaginations to use - and those of their audiences - to redirect human attention to questions to do with the natural world, and potentially, natural science through reimaginings of such rituals.

Questions

Which other social, political, legal, or business-related rituals carried out by humans can be used or borrowed from in performance projects to give natural forces at least a voice, or even agency?



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Direct contact with natural objects as part of performance.

Many performance makers observed in Central and Eastern Europe have chosen to bring natural objects into the theatrical space - branches, leaves, plants, moss, marine animals or their remains, stones, soil, animal parts, and more - and in some productions, they combine them with man-made objects. Artists manipulate these objects, wear them, or use them as props; generally, however, they strive to give them their own distinct role in the performance. In other cases, the opportunity to work with these materials is entrusted directly to the audience. As is often the case in theatre, objects and materials placed within such a framework take on more intense meanings.

In the inspiring work titled *YOU ARE SAFE* by Polish dance artist Agata Siniarska three nude female dancers-performers sit on a sandy island on stage, where they are not exposed to interaction with men or their gazes (with the exception of those in the audience). They behave freely and playfully. Their first interaction with an object is the sand itself, which they play with and toss into the air, creating an interesting lighting effect. They also manipulate a huge plastic sheet on which the entire island rests. Later the performers, kneeling on the island, sing and work - almost ceremonially - reassembling colorful plastic objects into flowers. This final sequence, during which the artists create a garden of diverse artificial flowers, gives the impression that we are watching the last women on earth, paying homage to lost nature.

The second half of Marie Lucie Cruz Correia's performance, titled *VOICE OF NATURE: TRIAL*, focuses more on the senses, specifically on touch. First, the host draws our attention to a large map on the floor in front of us: we are asked to mark which parts of the planet may need our support the most. Some place handfuls of soil - provided in a huge box - on certain continents, particularly over the Amazon and Siberia. Soon, a large collection of various natural and man-made objects is brought to us and laid out along the edge of the map so that we can smell and touch them. The question arises as to whether these objects function as evidence in a court of law. While some of them, such as moss and branches, appear to come from a local Slovenian forest, others - such as a plastic flowerpot with parsley, a salmon, and a whole octopus - are clearly from grocery stores. We are invited to reflect on these objects. What is their "voice"? What are they trying to tell us? This part of the performance calls on the audience to be more active: are we willing to communicate with natural objects in an improvised courtroom? As the event draws to a close and we wipe our dirty hands, the moderator invites us to make a contract in which individual audience members write down what steps they will take in the future to actively prevent damage to ecosystems or improve the condition of those already damaged. The final act of the entire performance is the audience member's signature at the end of the contract, which they can take home.

Kate McIntosh's production *IN MANY HANDS*, which was also presented at the Mladi levi festival in Ljubljana in 2019, also has a community-based character, but apart from a brief introduction delivered outside the performance space itself, not a single word is spoken in it. Before entering the auditorium, audience members are asked to wash their hands; they then enter a space with three long tables covered with white tablecloths, arranged in a sort of triangle, and are asked to take a seat, preferably not next to someone they know. The audience is very gently encouraged to look at each other's hands, and then, surprisingly, even many of those who do not like interactive performances find themselves quite naturally in a situation where they are holding hands. Kate McIntosh and her assistants then gently pass various objects from hand to hand across the table to the audience, and after a moment, we pass them on. No commentary is added, and no meaning is imposed on the objects, except that their selection and order were predetermined by the artist herself. However, the audience can discover meaning in them on their own, if they wish. Many of the objects are taken from the natural world - feathers, a small rodent skull, minerals, fossilized excrement, or mud. Others are man-made - such as a sailor's rope or powdered dye. At first, these are objects with a clear visual form; gradually, the focus shifts more toward textures, moisture, scents, and even odors... Viewers may find themselves asking questions in their minds: What is



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the relationship between them? What does it all mean? Do we handle them the same way we treat the natural products of the world around us? Within this meditative, contemplative performance about our relationship to the surrounding world, a sense of shared community emerges, and many questions arise about the objects we claim as our own, produce, and discard - and no one leaves the hall with clean hands.

In connection with such works in which real objects from everyday life come to life and take on new meanings, are events by some Belarusian artists working in Central Europe. The PYL collective, based in the Czech Republic, consists of Marie Komarová and Sviatlana Silich, along with Anna Romanova and Theresa Schrezenmeir from Germany. Together, they create performative events in which countless found artificial objects are assembled and rearranged to create the illusion of living organisms. In the remarkable performance REALITY SURFING, discarded boxes from iPhone and Apple products, artificial sponges, and small electronic components are assembled in unexpected ways to create a sort of artificial seascape on stage, where many inanimate objects move of their own accord, as if they were alive. Old and new technology thus replace increasingly scarce marine life. The irony is that nothing we see on stage (except for the performers) is actually a living creature.

Sviatlana Silich took a next step and, together with her compatriot Yanina Arlova - a set designer and director studying at the DAMU theatre academy in Prague - founded a new group called the Ghost Compost Collective, which combines performance and visual arts. The collective's concept is to work with "do-it-yourself" methods. The collective reflects on post-human life with an ironic detachment, emphasizing the processes of mutual understanding between the human and non-human worlds. They also explore how these relationships can lead to new ways of interacting with the surrounding world.

The Ghost Compost Collective took full advantage of the artist residency offered by THE NATURE OF US project in Gdańsk, Poland, where they explored humanity's relationship with the sea. After discovering a large amount of plastic debris as well as various natural materials on nearby beaches, and thanks to close collaboration with scientific consultants Max Rykaczewski and Jakub Fikowicz-Krośko from the Faculty of Microbiology at the University of Gdańsk, they decided to explore the idea of plastic as a membrane. Our bodies are, of course, full of membranes, some of which are designed to retain water, while others are designed to allow it to pass through. By comparing human biological membranes with those made of plastic, the duo succeeded in creating installations that invite us to draw a comparison: on the one hand, the new, artificial membranes that we created and then discarded into the sea; on the other hand, the membranes that once enabled us to leave that very same sea. The result was a temporary installation titled NATURE OF US ART/SCI RESIDENCY PRESENTATION by Sviatlana Silich and Yanina Arlová, presented as part of the RESHAPE LAB conference in Gdańsk. In a series of miniature habitats within the installation, we learn about the water resistance of plastic and see a comparison between plastic waste collected on beaches and the remains of marine animals. All of this leads us to reflect that these plastic remnants are like ghosts.

A later follow-up installation, GHOSTS OF THE OCEAN WITHIN US, which the Ghost Compost Collective created for the Bazaar Festival in 2026, deals with a different form of plastic waste: a massive, water-resistant floating plastic island featuring a palm tree assembled from a plastic tube and leaves. From the text accompanying the installation, we learn that if this plastic island were actually set adrift at sea, it could serve as a durational performance, with its decomposition taking hundreds or thousands of years...

It is hard not to notice that all the projects mentioned here, including those that showcase natural objects, also feature plastics. At the same time that we are learning that biodiversity is in decline due to shrinking habitats, pesticides, industrial pollution, monocultures and rising temperatures, we observe an exploding diversity of colourful plastic refuse all around us. While some projects suggest a dark future as they construct facsimiles of nature with plastics and other man-made disposable materials, others ask us to consider the meaning of plastic and natural materials in juxtaposition with each other here and now. In both cases we see a natural world full of the evidence of human impact...



Questions

Which experiences can be offered to audiences that heighten their senses?

How can such heightening enhance understanding of our existence as part of the natural world?

How are we to deal, in our performance projects as well as in our economies and environments, with plastics?

CONCLUSION

The six approaches outlined in this paper show a kind of movement of humans out into the landscape, asking us to go out into it and bring back a stronger relation to the natural world into our lives. At the start of that journey, lecture performance and in/out approaches familiarize us with certain issues to do with natural science, or our personal relation to it. Then there is an offer to taste these issues through food and drink clearly related to the natural world. The next step is to be guided into an actual physical experience in the landscape related to such issues. At a certain point actual representations of the animal, biological or scientific world from that landscape might be performed, stimulating us to ask questions or want to learn more. The fifth approach challenges us to preserve a place for nature in our culture and bring the natural world into our human rituals. Last but not least there is the call to examine together the things we have brought back with us from this said journey: not just natural objects but the debris of our way of life, cluttering our view of the natural world around us.

Of course, this imagined order is just one permutation and there are dozens of other ways of combining these options.

And, there are many more options to add. Some I have covered in a separate text for students of the Art in Times of Crisis course at the HAMU academy in Prague. Also using examples of works observed in Central and Eastern Europe, that text looks at basic approaches including: activating audiences through performance in the round (arena style) seating configurations, site specificity, options for direct involvement of natural scientists in performance making processes, and the application of literary genres such as speculative fiction in the creation of performance about the natural world.

Even more will be covered in future writings. We could certainly include the approach of queering the environment, which involves taking inspiration from drag practices' playful undermining of traditional gender roles to playfully undermine traditional roles in human relations to nature, as seen in Sonja Pregrad's performance O. Another important section would be about crowdsourcing finances for environmental conservation as practiced for example by Nico de Transilvania (Nicoleta Carpineanu), a Romanian-born DJ, producer, and environmental activist who has used her artistic work to raise funds to protect Carpathian forests. Nature of Us project partner Maja Hriesik has drawn attention to the need to cover research approaches themselves in a separate section.

As Nature of Us project draws to close in its 2024-2026 iteration, we look forward to all of these observed approaches being made available to dance and performance makers and researchers. We also anticipate teaching and mentoring programs that can bolster collaborations between dance and theatre and natural science into the future.



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Credits

Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi (HU): ANTROPODENY

Premiere date and venue: 30 August 2021, Ponec Theatre as part of the Bazaar Festival, Prague

Concept and performance: Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi

Music: Ryan Seaton

https://www.instagram.com/p/CfoTWvGoDFq/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ=
=

Petra Tejnorová, Tereza Ondrová (CZ): GEO

Premiere date and venue: 7 October 2023, PONEC – Theatre for Dance, Prague (presented as part of the 4+4 Days in Motion festival)

Created by (concept and choreography): Petra Tejnorová, Tereza Ondrová, Monica Gillette

Performers: Tereza Ondrová (with sound and visual assistance from the creative team: Jan Čtvrtník, Michal Cáb, Michal Kindernay, Daniel Kozlík)

Co-production: Temporary Collective, PONEC – Theatre for Dance and the 4+4 Days in Motion festival

Supported by: the European Union through the National Recovery Plan, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the City of Prague, the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic; project partners: Tanec Praha, HELLERAU – European Centre for the Arts, Rezi.dance Komařice, O Espaço do Tempo

<https://temporarycollective.cz/projekt/geo/>

Sergiu Mătiș (RO/DE): EXTINCTION ROOM: HOPELESS

Premiere date and venue: 20 September 2019, WASP Working Art Space and Production, Bucharest, Romania

Created by (concept, choreography and soundtrack): Sergiu Mătiș (concept and choreography), AGF aka Antye Greie (musical installation and original compositions), Philip Ingman, Sergiu Mătiș and Mila Pavićević (texts and research on bird species)

Performers: Sergiu Mătiș, Nicola Micallef, Kinga Ötvös / Manon Parent, Martin Hansen

Co-production: 4Culture Association (Bucharest), WASP Studios and the European network apap – FEMINIST FUTURES

Supported by: the European Union through the Creative Europe programme, the Romanian National Cultural Fund (AFCN), the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe (Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa), the German government fund NEUSTART KULTUR (as part of the TANZPAKT RECONNECT initiative) and the Life Long Burning (LLB) network

<https://vimeo.com/823680329?share=c&fl=cl&fe=cj>

<https://archive.lifelongburning.eu/projects/events/e/sergiu-matis-extinction-room-hopeless-5.html>

<https://divadloponec.cz/cs/extinction-room-hopeless>

<https://latitudescontemporaines.com/en/agenda-festival/extinction-room-hopeless/>

Neja Tomšič (SI): OPIUM CLIPPERS (in early versions also known as Tea for Five: Opium Clippers)

Premiere date and venue: 17 January 2017, Ziferblat community space, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Created by (concept, texts and porcelain illustrations): Neja Tomšič

Performer: Neja Tomšič (assisted by ceramist Anja Slapničar in preparing the tea ceremony and with the participatory involvement of seated audience members)

Co-production: Gledališče Glej (Glej Theatre, Ljubljana) and MoTA – Museum of Transitory Art

Supporters: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, City of Ljubljana and the European platform and network for independent performing arts

<https://www.glej.si/en/opium-ships>

Coven of Tongues collective: Heidi Hornáčková, Aslı Hatipoğlu, Suraia Abud Coaik (CZ/NE/ESP): WHISK THE WIND, ROAST THE LOAM, KNEAD THE FOG

Premiere date and venue: 26 March 2025, UMPRUM Kafkárna, Prague



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Created by (concept and culinary composition): Heidi Hornáčková, Aslı Hatipoğlu, Suraia Abud Coaik
Performers: Heidi Hornáčková, Aslı Hatipoğlu, Suraia Abud Coaik (with audience participation)
Co-production: Bazaar Festival and UMRUM (Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague)
Supporters: Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, City of Prague, State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic
<https://www.bazaarfestival.cz/program/asli-hatipoglu-trth-heidi-hornackova-cz-a-suraia-abud-lbuybrslehat-vitr-prazit-hlinu-hnist-mlhu>

Heidi Hornáčková and Aslı Hatipoğlu (CZ/NE): IF MY TONGUE COULD STRETCH INTO THE LANDSCAPE

20 March 2024 as part of the Bazaar Festival – Studio ALTA and Cabin Studio Pěčice

Concept and artistic direction: Heidi Hornáčková and Aslı Hatipoğlu.

Culinary composition and foraging: Heidi Hornáčková and Aslı Hatipoğlu.

Ceramics and tableware: Specially designed sets for a sensory dinner (created in collaboration with local artists and craftspeople).

Production: Bazaar Festival (as part of the 'Sharing Bold Practice' programme section).

Co-production and residency support: Studio ALTA (Prague) and Cabin Studio Pěčice (Central Bohemia)

<https://goout.net/en/if-my-tongue-could-stretch-into-the-landscape/szqdyxw/>

Heidi Hornáčková, Aslı Hatipoğlu, Suraia Abud Coaik (CZ/NE/ESP): STIRRING THE SOIL: UNEARTHING TOOLS OF CARE AND CO-EXISTENCE

Created, performed by: Heidi Hornáčková, Aslı Hatipoğlu, Suraia Abud Coaik

Co-production: Live Performance Bazaar & Rezi.dance Komařice

Supported by: The Nature of Us platform, the European Union through the Creative Europe programme

<https://www.bazaarfestival.cz/novinky/letni-performativni-zastavka-na-sklizni-v-komaricich>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DM-s1w4R1A/?hl=el>

Zden Brungot Svítěková (SK/CZ – in collaboration with the OSTRUŽINA z.s. association): . tektoparty (A performative walk through the landscape)

Date and venue of the premiere: 6 October 2022 (landscape premiere) / 8 October 2023 (official public premiere), Prokopské údolí / Žvahov, Prague

Created by (concept and choreographic research): Zden Brungot Svítěková, Matthew Rogers

Performers: Zden Brungot Svítěková, Matthew Rogers, Marek Menšík, Marika Smreková, Martina Hajdyla Lacová / Štěpána Nlása Mfuta

Co-production: OSTRUŽINA z.s., MOVE Ostrava z.s., Studio ALTA and the SE.S.TA Centre for Choreographic Development

Supporters: Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, City of Prague, State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, Visegrad Fund, Czech Geological Survey and The Nature of Us platform

<https://www.ostruzina.eu/2021/09/29/tekto-party/>

Jakob (Jakub) Jautz (DE): TRACES

Premiere date and venue: 14 June 2025, Bratislava / surrounding woodland locations (presented as part of accompanying community and multi-genre events in Slovak-German collaboration)

Created by (concept, dramaturgy and choreography): Jakob Jautz

Performers: Jakob Jautz (assisted by local performers and with the direct involvement of the wandering audience)

Co-production: Independent production platforms for contemporary dance and new circus in Germany and Slovakia (in collaboration with community projects such as Dobrý trh)

Supporters: International funds for the mobility of artists and German cultural institutions

<https://www.jakobjautz.de/projekte/traces>

Aleks Borys (PL): CHOREOGRAPHY OF IMAGINING THE FUTURE (originally CHOREOGRAPHY OF DREAMING THE FUTURE)

Date and venue of premiere: 29 May 2021, Görlitz TanzTage, Görlitz

Created by (concept, textual scores and soundtrack): Aleks Borys



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Performer: Aleks Borys (voiceover via headphones, accompanied by each participant's individual movement within the landscape)

<https://on.soundcloud.com/jDE1kbLnyTBabHQRLX>

Divadlo Setkání / Theatre Encounter (CZ): HUNTERS HAVE EYES FOR CRYING (Lovci mají oči pre plač)

Premiere date and venue: 15 May 2025, Letenské sady, Prague (Note: The project exists in two thematic versions – the Czech version focuses on the return of wolves to the Czech countryside, whilst the Slovak adaptation, presented for example at the Malá inventura festival, explores the situation of bears in Slovakia).

Author (creative team, concept and direction): Tobiáš Nevřiva and Tereza Dostálová

Cast: Tobiáš Nevřiva, Tereza Dostálová, Daniela Dostálová, Tomáš Košarišťan, Peter Podolský, Mária Ševčíková, Lenka Adamcová (voice-over and actors in the field, assisted by a canine companion and with the direct involvement of wandering audience members)

Co-production: Divadlo Setkání, the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) and Hnutí DUHA Šelmy

Supporters: Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU), Hnutí DUHA and festival platforms such as příští vlna/next wave, the Boskovice Festival and Malá inventura, the KIOSK Festival, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the citizens' initiative My sme les and the Zázrivá Rescue Centre for Injured Animals

<https://malainventura.cz/inscenace/lovci-maju-oci-pre-plac/>

<https://www.artmap.cz/eventy/lovci-maji-oci-pro-plac-2>

<https://goout.net/cs/lovci-maji-oci-pro-plac/ezirohi/>

Jana Tereková / bees-R (SK): ABNORMAL REPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Date and venue of premiere: 1 June 2023, A4 Cultural Centre – Space for Contemporary Culture, Bratislava, Slovakia (The performance was presented as part of the Slovak Dance Platform 2023 festival).

Performers: Eva Antalová, Daniel Raček, Jana Tereková

Co-production: bees-R, A4 Cultural Centre (Bratislava) and the French platform Danse Dense (Paris)

Supporters: Fund for the Support of the Arts (Slovakia), Tatra Bank Foundation, Bratislava Self-Governing Region and the Slovak Institute in Paris

<https://www.nudancefest.sk/clanok.php?lang=sk&id=328>

<https://a4.sk/en/events/2023/06/01/jana-terekova-bees-r-abnormal-repetitive-behaviour/>

Author: Jana Tereková / bees-R (SK): FETTERED TO THE MOMENT (Priviazaní na kôl okamihu)

Date and venue of premiere: 7 September 2020, Ticho a spol. chamber theatre, Bratislava, Slovakia (the Czech outdoor premiere of an adapted version took place in August 2021 in Prague at the ALTA Studio Garden as part of the international Bazaar Festival).

Created by (concept and choreography): Jana Tereková

Performers: Edita Antalová, Lukáš Zahy, Jana Tereková (Daniel Raček collaborated in the early stages and on the video projections)

Co-production: Independent arts association bees-R, independent platform NEWTIMES and theatre space Ticho a spol.

Supporters: The project received public funding from the Slovak Fund for the Support of the Arts, the international research network and residency platform The Nature of Us, and cultural centres such as Nová Cvernovka and the Slovak dance association PLAST.

<https://cv.janptacin.com/tag/jana-terekova/>

<https://operaplus.cz/fettered-to-the-moment-intuice-a-intelekt-v-slovenskem-soucasnem-tanci/>

<https://www.altart.cz/program/bazaar-festival/>

Ran Jiao (CN/CZ): SPIDER/TURTLE/WE

Date and venue of first performance: two work-in-progress performances on 4 November 2020 and 26 March 2022, PONEC Theatre, Prague (presented as part of the Saturday Bazaar programme)

Created by (concept and costumes): Ran Jiao

Performers: Ran Jiao, Jovita Siu, Matthew Rogers, Sai Morikawa, Elia Moretti



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Co-productions: Bazaar Festival, Studio ALTA and The Nature of Us platform

Supported by: SE.S.TA Centre for Choreographic Development, Cross Attic residency space, the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU), the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the City of Prague

<https://www.ranijaoran.com/#/spider-turtle-we/>

Isabelle Schad (DE): PIECES & ELEMENTS

Premiere date and venue: 25 November 2016, HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin, Germany

Created by (concept, choreography and production team): Isabelle Schad (concept and choreography), Jozefien Beckers, Barbara Berti, Frederike Doffin, Naïma Ferré, Josephine Findeisen, Przemyslaw Kaminski, Mathis Kleinschnittger, Manuel Lindner, Adi Shildan, Claudia Tomasi, Nir Vidan, Natalia Wilk (co-choreography); Susanne Foellmer (theoretical consultation), Saša Božić (dramaturgical consultation), Claudia Tomasi (artistic assistance), Mehdi Toutain-Lopez (lighting design), Damir Šimunović (music/sound), Charlotte Pistorius (costumes), Heiko Schramm (production manager), Maja Svartåker (costume assistant), Angela Millano (assistant);

Performers: Jozefien Beckers, Barbara Berti, Frederike Doffin, Naïma Ferré, Josephine Findeisen, Przemyslaw Kaminski, Mathis Kleinschnittger, Manuel Lindner, Adi Shildan, Claudia Tomasi, Nir Vidan, Natalia Wilk

Co-production: Isabelle Schad and HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin) in collaboration with HZT Berlin (Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin)

Supported by: Hauptstadt Kulturfonds (Capital City Culture Fund of the Federal Republic of Germany), the Governing Mayor of Berlin – Senate Chancellery – Cultural Affairs (Regierender Bürgermeister Berlin – Senatskanzlei – Kulturelle Angelegenheiten) and with the support of the association Wiesen55 e.V.

<https://isabelle-schad.net/pieces-and-elements/>

<https://www.hebbel-am-ufer.de/en/programme/pdetail/isabelle-schad-pieces-and-elements>

Alica Minar (CZ/SK): WOODS WON'T VAPORIZE

Premiere date and venue: 19 June 2023, Divadlo X10, Prague (a pre-premiere outdoor performance took place on 16 June 2023 at Přístav 18600 in Karlín)

Created by (concept and production team): Alica Minar (artistic direction and choreography), Dorota Michalak and Alica Minar (artistic research), Zuzana Žabková (dramaturgy), Breeanne Saxton (movement collaboration), Katarína Bakošová (text and research), Vi Huyen Tran (music), Anna Poleteli (set and costume design), Hana Brandejs (set and costume assistance), Raquel Rosildete (lighting design), Zuna Kozánková and Erik Baláž (consultants), Lauren Fitzgerald and Alica Minar & col. (production)

Performers: Adela Maharani, Eduard Adam Orszulik, Helén Tamaskó, Lenka Vořechovská, Milena Romanenko, Neus Montané, Suze Vonk

Co-production: CO.LABS (Brno), Divadlo X10 (Prague) and S03 e.V. (Berlin)

Supported by: Czech-German Future Fund, Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, Nová síť z.s., PerformCentrum, DACHverband Tanz Deutschland and BERLINER PROJEKTFONDS URBANE PRAXIS

<https://alicaminarcol.com/cs/repertoire/woods-wont-vaporize/>

<https://www.tanecniaktuality.cz/zpravy/alica-minar-col-predstavi-tanecni-dilo-inspirovane-prirodou-woods-wont-vaporize>

Simona Deaconescu (RO) and Vanessa Goodman (CA): BLOT (Body Line of Thought)

Premiere date and venue: 29 and 30 October 2022, The National Centre for Dance Bucharest (CNDB), Bucharest, Romania.

Created by (concept, choreography and production team): Simona Deaconescu and Vanessa Goodman (concept and choreography), Olivia Nițiș and Marta de Menezes (artistic consultants), Monocube (music), Ciprian Ciuclea, Paula Viitanen and Juan Carlos Aldazosa Bazua (object design), Marius Costache, Alexandros Raptis and James Proudfoot (lighting design), Georgeta Corca (choreography assistant), Laura Trocan and Andreea Andrei (production), Diana Miroșu (tour production design)

Performers: Simona Dabija and Maria Luiza Dimulescu.

Co-productions: Tangaj Collective, Action at a Distance, The National Centre for Dance Bucharest (CNDB) and Plastic Orchid Factory



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Supported by: Administration of the National Cultural Fund Romania (AFCN), Canada Council for the Arts and the pan-European platform Perform Europe

<https://www.tangajdance.com/my-product/blot/>

<https://tangajcollective.com/portfolio-item/blot-body-line-of-thought/>

Carolina Arandia and her company (a co-production of THE NATURE OF US project) (ARG/CZ): SEANAUT

Premiere date and venue: 26 May 2026, Studio Hrdinů, Prague.

Created by (concept, production team and research): Carolina Arandia (concept, choreography and direction), Valtteri Alanen (sound design and musical composition), Miriam Čandíková (lighting design), Karolína Jansová (set, costumes and graphic design), Claudia Groesman (dramaturgical consultation), Marco A. Lopez Marín (scientific oceanographic consultation), Anna Gazdíková (executive production and communications), Srdcem Zapsaný spolek z.s., Carolina Arandia and Valtteri Alanen (main production)

Performer: Sabina Palán Bočková (dance performance and choreographic collaboration)

Co-production: The Nature of Us international platform (in collaboration with four Central European organisations: Workshop Foundation, Bazaar Festival, fundacja polka dot and PlaST), Bazaar Festival and the Švestkový dvůr / Plum Yard residency centre

Supporters: The European Union through the Creative Europe programme, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, the Finnish network Finnagora TelepArt and the Prague 1 City District; The project was developed in partnership with Divadlo X10, the organisations DanceConnected and Žižkostel, CON Bamberg in Bavaria, the Bavarian Czech Platform, Casa Intermitente in Argentina and Aurinkobaletti in Finland.

<https://www.taneznizona.cz/performance-art-body-art/2026/seanaut/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DZlIt-cVEe7q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==

Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi (HU): OLD POND

Premiere date and venue: April 2014, MU Színház (MU Theatre), Budapest, Hungary

Created by (concept, production team and assistants): Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi (choreography and concept), Tóbiás Terebessy (concept), Sárosy Bárok (composer), Marcio Canabarro, Arnaud Blondel and Júlia Lányi (assistants), Dávid Mórász and Viktor Vicssek (digital systems programming), Tibor Roller (electrical engineer), Péter Juhász (video technician), Dávid Krolikowszki (lighting and sound effects), Nóra Bujdosó (costumes), Robert Trapple (consultant)

Performers: Tamás Bakó, Sándor Petrovics, Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi

Co-production: SÍN Culture Centre and Workshop Foundation (Műhely Alapítvány, Budapest)

Supported by: National Cultural Fund of Hungary (NKA) and the European dance network Life Long Burning (LLB), with the support of the European Union programme.

<https://divadloponec.cz/cs/old-pond>

<http://www.zsuzsarozsavolgyi.hu/oldpond>

Alica Minar and Dorota Michalak (SK/CZ/PL): LUSH BLAST: Tasting the untamed (subtitled as Taming the Untameable / A Taste of the Unbridled)

Premiere date and venue: 24 March 2025, Divadlo Radost (in co-production with CO.LABS), Brno, Czech Republic (the Prague premiere as part of the festival took place on 27 March 2025 at Divadlo X10).

Created by (concept and production team): Dorota Michalak and Alica Minar (choreography and concept), Maikon K. (dramaturgy), Ola Zielińska and Vi Huyen Tranová (music and live electronic composition), Katarína Bakošová (text research), Natálie Rajnišová (set design and costumes), Raquel Rosildete and Tereza Bartůňková (lighting design), Dorota Michalak, Alica Minar & col. (production); special thanks for guidance in the wilderness: Erik Baláž and the Carpathia Foundation team

Performers: Dorota Michalak, Alica Minar, Breeanne Saxton and Ola Zielińska

Co-productions: CO.LABS (Brno), Bazaar Festival (Prague), Studio ALTA (Prague), Teatrul Andrei Mureșanu (RO) and HELLERAU (Dresden, DE)

Supported by: the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, the European Union's Culture Moves Europe programme, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the National Recovery Plan, the Goethe-Institut, Prague City Hall, the Czech-German Future Fund, the Arts and Theatre Institute (IDU / PerformCzech) and the Contemporary Arts Alliance Berlin.



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<https://alicaminarcol.com/repertoire/lush-blast-tasting-the-untamed/>
<https://www.bazaarfestival.cz/program/alica-minar-dorota-michalak-czde-lush-blast>

Pasi Mäkelä (FI/CZ): FUGK (short for 'Finno-Ugric garage kabuki')
Premiere date and venue: 6 March 2025, Terén – Centre for Experimental Theatre (CED), Brno
Created by (concept and production team): Pasi Mäkelä (concept and choreography), Jonáš Garaj (lighting design), Mimosa Pale (bear mask production), Ester Hotová and Max Lysáček (set design collaboration), Vojtěch Procházka, Jakub Švejnar and Elia Moretti (collaboration on the musical soundtrack);
Performer: Pasi Mäkelä
Co-production: Terén – a platform for performing arts and the Centre for Experimental Theatre (CED, Brno)
Supporters: The City of Brno, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic; the project was realised with organisational support from Finnish artistic partners associated with the Reality Research Centre and Circus Maximus.
<https://www.jasuteren.cz/program/fugk-1>
<https://vimeo.com/1135684666>

Aleks Borys (PL) and Viktória Kaslik (HU): AGENCY OF AMBER
Premiere date and venue: work-in-progress performance on 29 March 2025, Alfred ve dvoře Theatre, Prague, as part of the Saturday Bazaar.
Created by (concept and artistic research): Aleks Borys (choreography, intermedia concept) and Viktória Kaslik (legal rituals, ecosomatic and systems research)
Performers: Aleks Borys and Viktória Kaslik
Co-production: Bazaar Festival (Prague), the international alliance The Nature of Us and the REZI.DANCE Komařice residency centre
Supporters: The European Union (through the programme of the European Executive Agency for Culture), the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, and a partnership between the organisations Workshop Foundation, fundacja polka dot and PlaST
<https://www.bazaarfestival.cz/program/sobotni-bazaar-br-ukazky-projektu>
<https://aleksborys.com/calendar/>

Viktória Kaslik (HU): DANDELION FEAST (or 'The Dandelion Festival')
Date and venue of the premiere: 11 September 2025, Bem József tér (by the statue of General Bem), Budapest, Hungary (performative book launch).
Created by (concept, visual design and choreography): Viktória Kaslik (concept, texts and legal rituals), Edyta Majewska-Rosińska (visual design and protocol), Aleks Borys (movement and choreographic collaboration)
Performer: Viktória Kaslik
Co-production: PLACCC International Festival (as part of the 'Sensing the City' programme series)
Supporters: Research and residency collaboration took place from 2022 along the axis between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Basin with the support of institutions in Gdańsk (Poland), and the project was funded by arts grant schemes for ecosomatic interventions and independent Hungarian research
<https://placcc.hu/en/viktoria-kaslik-dandelion-feast-sensing-the-city/>
<https://viktoriakaslik.com/works>
<https://www.forumdanca.pt/en/palestras-pacap8-mys-viktoria-kaslik/>

Marie Lucie Cruz Correia (PT): VOICE OF NATURE: THE TRIAL
Date and venue of premiere: 1 March 2019, Court of Appeal in Ghent (as part of the SameSamebutDifferent / Vooruit festival), Ghent, Belgium
Created by (concept, production team and assistants): Maria Lucia Cruz Correia (concept and direction), Ingrid Vranken (dramaturgy), Joao Bento (sound design), Vinny Jones (lighting design), Mark Pozlep (video, photography and research documentation), Anne-Catherine Kunz (costumes), Alain Decoen (technician), Tineke de Meyer (production), Maíra Wiener (intern), Luea Ritter (navigation of systemic constellations), Sébastien Hendrickx (research contribution), Jeroen Peeters and Starhawk (consultants),



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Hendrik Schoukens and Juan Auz (legal fact-checking), Brunilda Pali (collaboration on restorative justice), Hana Vodeb (research documentation), Stephanie Vandeveld (photography); produced by FoAM
Performer: Caroline Daish (performance-based process facilitation)
Co-productions: Vooruit (B), Kaaithheater (B), Bunker (SL), Workspacebrussels (B), Het TheaterFestival, t-theater & Circuit X (as part of the Roel Verniers Prijs 2017)
Supported by: the Flemish Community, the international platform Imagine 2020 and the European Union's Creative Europe Culture programme
<https://www.vinnyjones.com/project/voice-nature-trial>

Kate McIntosh (BE): IN MANY HANDS

Premiere date and venue: 14 October 2016, Kaaithheater, Brussels, Belgium

Created by (concept, production team and assistants): Kate McIntosh (concept and direction), Arantxa Martinez and Josh Rutter (project development), John Avery (sound design), Joëlle Reyns (lighting and technical direction), Koen De Saeger and Michele Piazzini (tour technical management), Dries Douibi, Sarah Parolin and Gary Stevens (artistic consultants), Lucie Schroeder (studio assistant), Daria Gatti (drawings), Sarah Parolin and Linda Sepp (production), Jana Durnez, Anneliese Ostertag and Mara Kirchberg (production assistants), Laura Deschepper and Ingrid Vranken (finance), Luca Napoli (tour management); produced by the independent Brussels-based platform SPIN vzw.

Performer: Lucie Schroeder (performative presentation and facilitation of situations involving direct tactile and physical participation by the audience).

Co-productions: HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin), Kaaithheater (Brussels), Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (Frankfurt), LES SPECTACLES VIVANTS – CENTRE POMPIDOU (Paris), Pact Zollverein (Essen), Tanzquartier (Vienna), SPRING Performing Arts Festival (Utrecht) and BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen).

Supporters: Flemish Authorities, the NPN (Nationales Performance Netz) network, funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, and the project was developed as part of the international Open Latitudes network, financially supported by the European Union's Creative Europe programme.

<https://vimeo.com/1001601618>

<https://www.spinspin.be/kate-mcintosh/in-many-hands/>

Agata Siniarska (PL/DE): YOU ARE SAFE

Date and venue of the premiere: 12 July 2018, Nowy Teatr, Warsaw, Poland

Created by (concept, production team and consultants): Agata Siniarska (idea and concept), Agata Siniarska, Ania Nowak and Katarzyna Wolińska (choreography), Mateusz Szymanówka (dramaturgy), Joanna Leśniewska (lighting design), Jeanine Durning, Julia Rodriguez and Karolina Grzywnowicz (expert consultants)

Performers: Agata Siniarska, Katarzyna Wolińska and Maque Pereyra

Co-production: Nowy Teatr (Warsaw) in collaboration with international residency partners and festival networks.

Supported by: Warsaw City Hall (Urząd m.st. Warszawy), the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the independent Polish dance platform Marta Festival Poznań.

<https://nowyteatr.org/en/kalendarz/you-are-safe>

PYL Collective: Mariia Komarova and Světlana Silič, Anna Romanova (BY/CZ) and Theresa Schrezenmeir (DE/CZ): REALITY SURFING

Premiere date and venue: 7 October 2021, Alfred ve dvoře Theatre, Prague (the Brno premiere took place on 18 November 2021 at the OC Dornych).

Created by (concept, production team and consultants): Světlana Silič, Maria Komarova, Anna Romanova, Theresa Schrezenmeir (collective creation and concept); Theresa Schrezenmeir (music and sound design); Cristina Maldonado and Sodja Zupanc-Lotker (dramaturgical consultation); Judita Čísařová (production);

Performers: Světlana Silič and Maria Komarova

Co-production: MOTUS – Alfred ve dvoře (Prague) and Terén – platform for performing arts (Brno)

Supported by: Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, City of Prague, City of Brno, State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic and Prague 7 – Art District



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<https://www.jasuteren.cz/archiv/pyl-reality-surfing>
<https://vimeo.com/622691460>
<https://www.alfredvedvore.cz/cs/program/reality-surfing-164/>

Ghost Compost Collective (BY/CZ): Svetlana Silich and Yanina Arlova: NATURE OF US ART/SCI RESIDENCY PRESENTATION

4 October 2025, Wyspa Sobieszewska (Gdańsk), Poland – presented as part of the Przestrzenie Sztuki – Taniec Gdańsk programme and the ReShape LAB 2025 platform

Ghost Compost Collective (BY/CZ): Svetlana Silich and Yanina Arlova: GHOSTS OF OCEANS IN US / DUCHOVÉ OCEÁNU V NÁS

Date and venue of the premiere: the opening took place on 14 March 2026 in Prague at the AVU Veletržní premises as part of the Bazaar Festival.

Created by (concept, production team and scientific consultants): Svetlana Silich and Yanina Arlova (concept and artistic direction); Max Rykaczewski and Jakub Fikowicz-Krosko (scientific collaboration and consultation from the Department of Microbiology at the University of Gdańsk); the theoretical framework draws on the posthumanist ideas of Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway; Prague curatorial team for the exhibition: Klára Davydová and Taber Kotík

Performers: Světlana Silič and Yanina Arlova (for the audience's intermediate and haptic engagement with the performative space)

Co-production: The Nature of Us international project

Supported by: the European Union through the Creative Europe programme and the international network IN SITU.

<https://www.bazaarfestival.cz/program/ghost-compost-collective-brduchove-oceanu-v-nas>

<https://www.in-situ.info/ghostcompost>