



COLLABORATIVE
ARTS PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMME

RESTOCK
RETHINK
REFLECT
FOUR

ON
LIVE ART
AND
PRIVILEGE

TOOLKIT



Live Art
Development
Agency



toolkit for itinerant artists

ELENA MARCHEVSKA
2017



Co-funded by the
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of the European Union

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toolkit for itinerant artists

Welcome to the toolkit for itinerant artists, for those on the move, for those who are still and for those who can't travel really. The hardships of being displaced, of constantly being in flux are both an existential ordeal and an opportunity to exercise your creativity. I invited ten artists to contribute advice, exercises and tools for survival when an artist is on the move or stuck in a place of discomfort and unfamiliarity. I invited them to think of movement as a privilege. They all offered generous, contemplative tools to help you move beyond nations and state-invented, irrelevant obstacles. Use these tools wisely, use them often, and don't forget: another world is possible.

ELENA MARCHEVSKA
2017

Tania Canas

Nothing About Us Without Us

RISE Refugee is an advocacy organisation and the first organisation in Australia to be run, governed and controlled by refugees, asylum seekers and ex-detainees. The organisation applies a self-determination model throughout its structure, as well as programs. Our motto, “nothing about us without us” is painted across one of the walls at our drop-in-centre, with the Aboriginal flag sitting just below, to acknowledge First Nation sovereignty and our solidarity with First Nations’ self-determination struggles. “Nothing about us without us” is a methodology we fiercely defend in advocacy and in practice- in particular throughout our Arts Portfolio¹.



Over the last few years there has been a huge influx of artists approaching RISE in order to find participants for their next project. The artist often claims to want to show ‘the human side of the story’ through a false sense of neutrality and limited understanding of their own bias, privilege and frameworks. It became evident that under the guise of advocacy, these approaches asked for props, not people; dramatic devices not navigational lives; bodies not complex, relational, socio-political beings. Furthermore, these artistic approaches often prescribed modalities of existence, within designated spaces of self-expression which only served to reproduce subject-positions and essentialised definitions of ‘refugee’ rather than an understanding of contextual refugeeness. They invited our community to speak, but only on limited, pre-existing terms of enunciation. We could tell our stories but were denied autonomy to analyse them. Working with refugees thus becomes an exercise in ill-thought-out, quick responses to stage refugee narratives, rather than an opportunity to re-imagine process or practice let alone challenge privilege or power.

‘Ten points to consider if you are an artist- not of the refugee and asylum seeker community- looking to work with our community’ was written as a response to exploitative, problematic arts models and the white saviour complex that disregards our creativity, our agency and our autonomy. It offered a means of reflexive allyship – by turning the gaze away from the homogenous idea of ‘other’, through humanistic, cultural competence models and inverting the pathologising gaze. In identifying the voicelessness of our community to be a result of the refugee discourse (and such arts projects) rather than the lack thereof, it looked to change the point at which the conversation began and thus the types of questions posed. The article sought to problematise the very pretence of ‘helping’ to argue that consciousness raising, ‘making you think’ and good intentions are not only not good enough, but potentially violent and erosive in and of themselves.

1. <http://riserefugee.org/>

1 Process not product

We are not a resource to feed into your next artistic project. You may be talented at your particular craft but do not assume that this automatically translates to an ethical, responsible and self-determining process. Understand community cultural development methodology but also understand that it is not a fool-proof methodology. Who and what institutions are benefiting from the exchange?

2 Critically interrogate your intention

Our struggle is not an opportunity, or our bodies' a currency, by which to build your career. Rather than merely focusing on the 'other' ('where do I find refugees'.. etc) Subject your own intention to critical, reflexive analysis. What is your motivation to work with this particular subject matter? Why at this particular time?

3 Realise your own privilege

What biases and intentions, even if you consider these 'good' intentions, do you carry with you? What social positionality (and power) do you bring to the space? Know how much space you take up. Know when to step back.

4 Participation is not always progressive or empowering

Your project may have elements of participation but know how this can just as easily be limiting, tokenistic and condescending. Your demands on our community sharing our stories may be just as easily disempowering. What frameworks have you already imposed on participation? What power dynamics are you reinforcing with such a framework? What relationships are you creating (eg. informant vs expert, enunciated vs enunciator)

5 Presentation vs representation

Know the difference!

6 It is not a safe-space just because you say it is

This requires long term grass-roots work, solidarity and commitment.

7 Do not expect us to be grateful

We are not your next interesting arts project. Our community are not sitting waiting for our struggle to be acknowledged by your individual consciousness nor highlighted through your art practice.

8 Do not reduce us to an issue

We are whole humans with various experiences, knowledge and skills. We can speak on many things; do not reduce us to one narrative.

9 Do your research

Know the solidarity work already being done. Know the nuanced differences between organisations and projects. Just because we may work with the same community doesn't mean we work in the same way.

10 Art is not neutral

Our community has been politicised and any art work done with/by us is inherently political. If you wish to build with our community know that your artistic practice cannot be neutral.

11 Not just expression- challenge the terms of enunciation

Just because we exist in a space, doesn't mean we've had autonomy in the process by which the existence has occurred. It is not about 'giving a voice', we already have one what we are talking about is power and self-determination.

Işıl Eğrikavuk

Dear Young Artist,

Almost ten years ago, right before graduating from my masters degree at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I had read a book titled “Letters to a Young Artist”, which included a number of letters and pieces of advice from older and established artists to younger ones. I remember that I really enjoyed reading these living voices instead of cold and distant exhibition catalogues, which I often found difficult.

Now I am asked to write one, even though I do not yet fit into the category of “old” or “established”. Still, with my ten years of experience of collaboration and teaching, I will try to pass on to you some advice, which hopefully will reach your hearts.

- How do you choose your community? Do you lean towards communities that you think are problematic? Do you choose communities that are economically, age-wise or status-wise lower than you? Think about your pre-interests before you start. Sometimes you can try going the opposite way.
- Think of also what community means to you. Is it a block, human masses or is it diverse individuals? Try to imagine the people you work with first as individuals, then see them as community.
- Talk to the people, but listen to them more. People always need to be listened to. Try to be open to them but do not present yourself as a servant either. Be honest, sometimes you do not even have to make anything out of it right away.
- Do not go to your site with a pre-made idea. Formulate your idea from your everyday experiences with people. Write your daily encounters down. The idea will come to you.
- Do not rush to make an artwork right away, I know it’s hard. Wait, just wait for the best idea. You will know when it comes to you.
- Think about how you present yourself. Do you explain yourself in complicated ways? Do you use a language that only the art world will understand? Try to formulate a simple language, but keep your core.
- Do not forget how fragile your position is. You are doing a complex job, which requires you to be a creative mind, a leader, a therapist and a social worker too. You cannot be all at the same time, so do not overly push yourself. Know your limits.
- Enjoy the process, focus on the small acts, not the big outcome. Remind yourself not take everything too seriously. Laugh at things and to yourself too.

Roberto Sifuentes

Performance As Visibility and Disruptions of Space: Performance experiment for students or small groups

- Bring 3 students or a team of collaborators.
- One or two participants/performers with one observer/documentor.
- Find a charged location or community you would like to investigate or that is relevant for your research. The location should be public and populated.
- Create a simple performance/action or intervention for that site. These should be simple non-aggressive interventions, where the people you encounter have to somehow acknowledge you.
- You must note and be aware of the location; its cultural, political, historical significance, and the reason the action must take place at this location.
- If your intervention/experiment is particularly short, you may repeat it several times to gather more information.

Observers:

- Observe the interactions, document, watch out for your colleagues.
- Write about the experiment/ re-perform
- Note your “costuming” why you chose to wear those particular clothes, hairstyle, etc. What is your perceived identity? What are the demographics of involuntary audience? Why did you choose this audience? Were you welcomed Y/N? / How were you perceived?
- Always be aware of private versus public space. Always be safe. These are simple, small, almost invisible interventions.



Aram Han Sifuentes

Write a lot and write often. Sometimes give yourself 5 minutes to respond to questions that you ask yourself. During this time, don't let your pencil leave the page and write whatever comes to mind.

Sophie NL Besse

Monster

For group of 5-6 people.

You have to act as the body part of a monster. You need to sit down all together at the same place, walk through the room together, even talk together! Improvising what the monster will say in synchronicity is difficult. A facilitator or member of the audience will ask some questions. It involves a lot of listening, but it's fun, so enjoy!!!

Mark Jeffery

Performing Labour

Performance Exercise

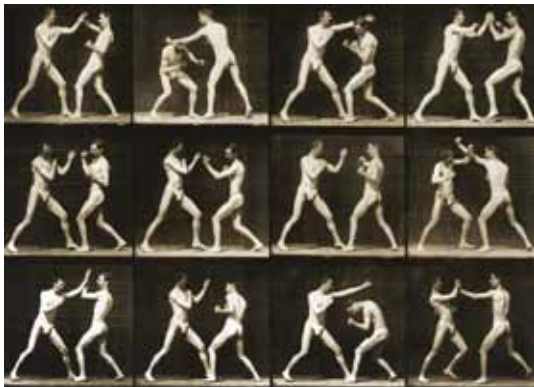
(by way of creatively introducing yourself in a workshop)

Provide each participant in the workshop two sheets of blank paper. On one sheet of paper write down the occupation of either your parent or grandparent. Underneath the title of the occupation, write down a minimum of one to a maximum of three instructions for another person in the workshop to perform. Be specific and write each instruction clearly. On the second sheet of blank paper now write down a occupation that you imagine you would like to do in the future. Again write down a minimum of one to a maximum of three instructions for yourself that you will perform.

Pass the parent / grandparent instruction to another person in the workshop. You will keep your future occupation sheet. Each person in the workshop has: 1. Instruction for 'parent occupation' that they got from someone else in the room and 2. Their own instruction for an imagined future job.

From these two sheets of paper create a 1 minute and 10 second performance. Within the frame of 1 minute and 10 seconds create 3 actions, each action lasting 20 seconds, to perform in the workshop. Allow the additional 10 seconds as a place of transition, beginning, end and stillness. Consider each action being divided into 5 'images' that you will blend from the instructions you received or from your own instructions. Create a hybrid of the two occupation instructions given on the two sheets of paper. As a reference point show examples of Edward Muybridge and his human and animal locomotion series as a way to begin to develop from instruction to action.

Allow 30 minutes of work time to develop the assignment. After 30 minutes each workshop participant says their name aloud and performs the 1 minute 10 second composition.



La Pocha Nostra

Imagination exercise #69: Imagine the world as a human body & write about it

(This text can be used as part of a live performance or during a class visit.

For this version, Balitronica reads/gives the most recurrent answers we have received from audience members and workshop participants.)

GP: Dear class/dear audience...

Let's all close our eyes, breathe deeply and for a moment imagine our bodies as territories & our planet as a human body...

Oooooooooooooooooooooo...

If the world was in fact a human body, where would the brain be located? In Paris or London perhaps?

BG: No, that's just a colonial stereotype. Why not Paraguay or Madagascar?

GP: And the memory? In Egypt, China or Mesopotamia, allegedly the oldest civilisations?

BG: Or at the 4 corners of the Anazasi? Hard to tell, there are so many different memories.

GP: ... & where would the heart be located, in Mexico?

BG: No, that's more like the liver.

GP: And the lungs...in the Amazon?

BG: Nah, that's a terrible cliché. Besides, if they were truly located in the Amazon, they would have TB or emphysema.

GP: The arms would probably be... the industrious USA

BG: Nah, I think the US would be more like the stomach, the ultimate organ of consumption, digestion.

GP: And the legs? Where would the legs be located? I need some help here...

BG: Brazil? Not to stereotype them but those Brazilians are great dancers.

GP: And the feet?

BG: Pata-gonia?

GP: Too literal! The nalgas? El culo del mundo? Australia or Antarctica?

BG: Nah, that's a literal geographic transference. No, more likely Washington DC.

GP: OK, cambio de pregunta... Where are the headquarters of the IMF? Switzerland or Belgium?

BG: There are no headquarters. The IMF is everywhere; in every part of our colonised bodies.

GP: Now, the location of the genitalia would be quite contested que no? Let's debate it. Any ideas?

BG: Should we do it by gender?

GP: OK, what about the vulvae?

BG: I'd say either the Mediterranean or the Caribbean?

GP: Good guess. And the penis and testicles? Africa?

BG: See that's racist! What about the Himalayas?

GP: Too PC! Any other parts of the human body that you can connect to geography or culture?

(People continue responding)

Now, with these images in mind, let's write an improvisational poem, 5 minutes max with the first line being "If the world was a human body..."

Run with it! Be as wild as you can & then, we will read some of them out loud.

Tara Fatehi Irani

Make Yourself at Home: A Site-Sensitive Dance

I get on the bus – it’s raining way more than I’m prepared for. This is before ‘the advanced GPS technology that tracks ships now tells you when your bus is due’. I get on the bus – soaked – and ask the driver: ‘Do you go to Tulse Hill?’ The driver looks at me confused ‘Tulse Hill?’ I say ‘Tulse Hill’ [this time I slightly twist my tongue to say it] He says ‘Tulse Hill?’ and again I say ‘Tulse Hill?’ [trying a different twist of the tongue] and then he says ‘Oh, Tulse Hill, yes’ and nods. I go through to the back and Tulse Hill is three stops away.

You can be anywhere –
you can be anywhere to not feel at home:

on the train or the bus, at school, the post office, the supermarket, in your room (not everyone feels at home in their room), the pub, the street, wherever.

But as you’re going about your daily life, perhaps trying to make sense of the *Look Right, Look Lefts* printed on the asphalt

---Pause---

[don’t run for the bus – miss the first or even the second one]

Look around you [for at least three minutes]

What do you see?

I see a half-wet building and a man in a bright yellow rain coat

---Pause---

A dog jumping about with his ears flapping in the air as if in a Disney animation. Someone drops a coin. Beep Beep. The red handrail is warm, moist and sticky. Scent of a sweet melon perfume dashing by. The traffic light is slightly dented and you can see where a car has hit it not so long ago.

---Look Right---

Let the colours, the motions, the billboards, the grass, the shapes, the smells, the bikes, the lights, the lines, the noises, the conversations, the patterns and the thoughts move you.

A move as miniscule as a twist of a finger or as visible as taking large steps and jumping up and down. As ordinary as blinking your eyes or standing on tiptoe, or as specific as moving an arm in a 36° angle or wiggling your shoulders 12 times per minute. As quick as a memory flashing in your head or as slow as taking a whole minute to inhale. It just needs to happen in the pause.

---Look Left---

The spider is munching the other nameless bug --- the shadows get longer and instantly shorter --- I'm still on tiptoe.

If others look at you in confusion: smile and continue. Make yourself at home. Chances are they'll smile back. Keep in mind you're probably the only one who knows you're dancing.

Kimbal Quist Bumstead Performance Walk

Find an historical map of a place that no longer exists, or exists in a different way than it used to.

(For instance this resource can be used: goo.gl/XU52Qw)

On that map choose 2 points of significance.

Use that map to walk between those two points in the current reality, following the same layout of the roads that used to be there (to the extent which is possible).

Notice what you see on the way. Who is there? Imagine who would have been there 10, 50 or 100 years before.

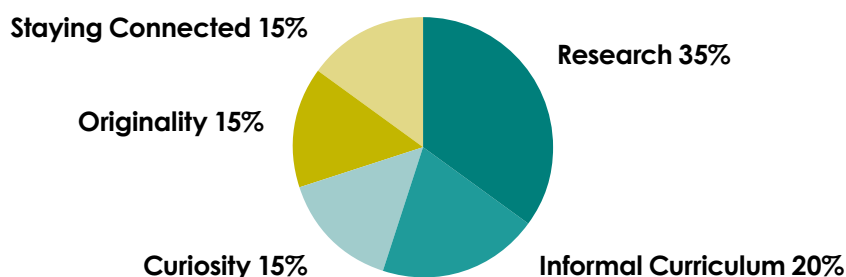
During your journey, make contact with a stranger, and ask them something about this place and what they know about it, what does this place mean to them, or what do they wish it was. The conversation is up to you, it could be a question about the past, or something about the present, it could be personal or distant.

Record your meeting with a photograph of the location, and a text, audio recording, or drawing and then upload it and tag it onto the map at the same spot where you were.

There There

Eastern Europeans are blunt. So is their advice. Take it or leave it.

Making work



Research: Work does not create itself. Once your subject is established, look up anything seemingly adjacent. Archival work is fundamental: take notes, photos and document it all, otherwise it will amalgamate in your memory. Remember that research resources might be slightly more available in the UK than in your native country. If in London, make good use of the plethora of libraries with content in the English language, and do not forget that you can always ask your local libraries to order books in. They might not be the most popular ones, but you can convince the librarians the community will benefit from them. While relying on personal experience could be tempting, learn to use it solely as a starting point. Not only it does not suffice, it is potentially detrimental to the quality of the work.

Informal curriculum: Accidental sources are often the biggest influence. Do not limit yourself to what is considered to be relevant to your subject. To what use to read the latest theory on displacement, if you haven't let Joyce, Marquez, Woolf, Milton, Baldwin, Chekhov, Khalo, Hokusai, Bosch, Penderecki and Handel ferment.

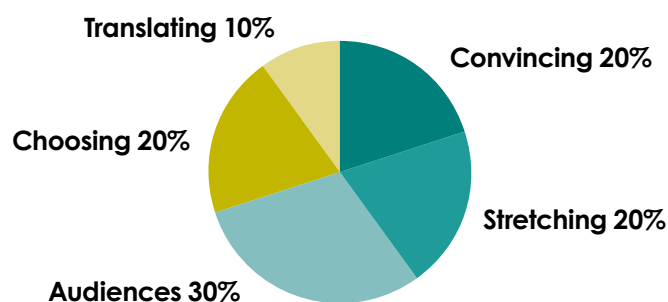
Staying connected: Scrolling endlessly through current news is never uplifting, but equally, if displacement is your chosen field, you must acquire those investigative skills. Political engagement will also help you attune worldviews.

Curiosity: It's easy to live in your own bubble, and focus only on specific demographics. Burst it by engaging with other minorities, listen to their concerns, and draw parallels between your practice and their experience.

Originality: Repetition is boring, and even in the field of performance and live art, some voices become recurrent and lose their idiosyncrasies. Learn to assess your skills by creating original content that doesn't follow the canon. Do not run a million workshops with the local community unless there is something specific in your reasoning for it. Create unique ways of establishing your identity within your framework.

continues over

Producing



Convincing: Just because you recognise the importance/relevance of your topic, doesn't mean curators and programmers will. Sometimes - often - you have to argue the case for your topic, before you can make the case for your work, especially if you tick the 'other' box on equal opportunities forms.

Stretching: The pound. There's not a lot of money in the arts, end even less when you're dealing with topics of immigration/displacement. Ask boldly, fight for more, but learn how to manage your budget, work on a shoe-string, diversify your sources of income (and alas, get used to that vocabulary). Try to always pay yourself.

Audiences: Think about who you are performing for. Most venues come with monolithic audiences, and there's no point making work about immigration for only British / only immigrant audiences. For actual political resonance you'll have to do audience development as well.

Choosing: Don't trust just anyone with your work. Immigration is a complex topic and in the long-term it only makes sense to show your work within contexts that appreciate that complexity, not those looking for a quick diversity check.

Translating: It can take a while to get used to how feedback works in a different country; it's not about the language as much as it is about the culture. You need to know what the perception of your work and practice is though - so learn the lingo and adjust to it. (For us, it was learning to read between the very subtle lines).

Finally... don't forget to make work while you're doing all of that. Easy-peasy.

Contributor biographies

Tania Cañas is the Arts Director at RISE Refugee and a Lecturer and PhD candidate at the Centre for Cultural Partnerships at The University of Melbourne. She also sits on the Editorial Board at the International Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Academic Journal/ PTO Inc.

Tania's research, writing and theatre practice focuses on community engaged methodologies: authorship, ownership, ethics, self-determination and resistance. Tania regularly delivers masterclasses on what best practice means in the context of arts, culture and community engagement. She recently delivered a masterclass on *Nothing about Us Without us*, at the International Community Arts Festival 2017 (the Netherlands) as well as workshops such as *Ethics and Self-Determination*, *Decolonising Narratives*. She has been a keynote for the Women of the World Festival 2017, The Guild Conference 2016 and the upcoming Theatre Forum (Ireland).

Tania has had her creative work published through Currency Press Australia as well as academic journals. She has presented at conferences both nationally and internationally, and facilitated community theatre workshops at universities, within prisons and youth groups in Australian, Northern Ireland, The Solomon Islands, the United States and most recently South Africa.

Over the last four years has been working with RISE and NMIT to develop a series of Forum Theatre workshops with students who are recent migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

<http://tania-canas.squarespace.com/>

- This piece is about how our community's sanctuary is currency subject to reproducing white Australia ideology and bureaucracy. How we become cooped as extensions of ongoing colonial, genocidal violence. We refuse to ascribe to such lies. We acknowledge indigenous sovereignty and seek sanctuary under this sovereignty.
- First performed at Sovereignty + Sanctuary, a First Nations and Refugee Solidarity Event (RISE and WAR- Warriors of Aboriginal Resistance)

Işıl Eğrikavuk studied Western literature at Boğaziçi University (Istanbul) then went to The School of The Art Institute of Chicago with Koç Foundation scholarship for her MFA in Performance Art. She is currently teaching art and media at Istanbul Bilgi University. She also wrote a weekly column, *Güncel Sanat Kafası* (High on Contemporary Art) at national newspaper *Radikal* for three years, where she commented on the intersection of daily news and contemporary art.

Eğrikavuk is the winner of Turkey's first contemporary art prize, Full Art Prize in 2012. She is also the first recipient of SPOT Production Fund's artist grant. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions, residencies, and her work has been published in both local and international journals.



Aboriginal Flag (First Nations flag)

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Roberto Sifuentes is an interdisciplinary artist from Los Angeles and now living in Chicago, where he is a Professor at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work combines live performance with interactive technologies and video as a presentation medium. As a member of La Pocha Nostra from 1994 - 2000, Sifuentes collaborated with performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, presenting performance and installation work at over 200 venues throughout the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Aram Han Sifuentes uses a needle and thread as her tools to examine immigration, citizenship, race and craft, drawing on both personal experiences and shared cultural identity. Her work has been exhibited and performed at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago, Illinois; Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago, Illinois; Whitney Museum of American Art in NYC, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Wing Luke Museum of Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle, Washington; Chung Young Yang Embroidery Museum in Seoul, South Korea; Elmhurst Art Museum in Elmhurst, Illinois; and the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design in Asheville, North Carolina. She earned her BA in Art and Latin American Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and her MFA in Fiber and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is currently a Lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Sophie NL Besse is a playwright and theatre director trained in both drama and therapy. She has run PSYCHEdelight theatre company since 2013. She creates socially engaged theatre and provides drama workshops as a place of expression and integration.

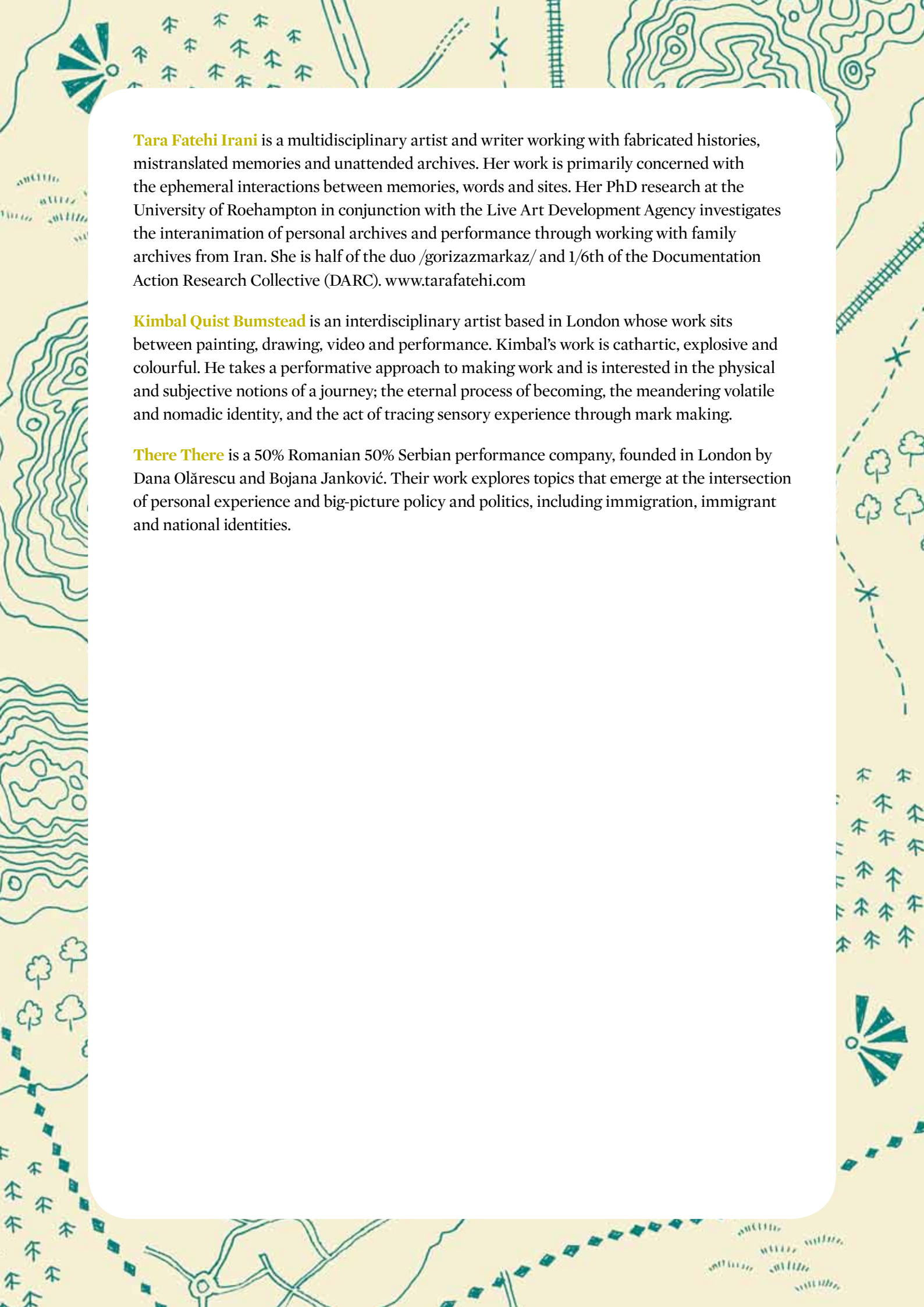
Mark Jeffery (B. 1973 Doveridge, UK) is a Chicago based performance / installation artist, curator and teacher. Mark received his BA (Hons) in Visual Performance from Dartington College of Arts in UK. He was awarded a Junior Fellowship in Live Art between the University of the West of England and Arnolfini Live.

He has been making collaborative and non-collaborative performance / installation / internet / screen works and participation based exhibits in numerous spaces and contexts since 1993. He was a member of Goat Island Performance Group from 1996 - 2009. He collaborated and performed in 5 of Goat Island's works, touring and teaching extensively across North America and Europe. Teaching included a 10 year-long annual summer performance institute at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Mark is currently an Assistant Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where he teaches in the Performance Department.

La Pocha Nostra is an ever-morphing transdisciplinary arts organisation. Based in San Francisco with factions in other cities and countries, their original mission statement (2003) read: "We provide a center and forum for a loose network of international rebel artists from various disciplines, generations, gender persuasions and ethnic backgrounds."

For 23 years La Pocha Nostra has been fully engaged in the field of performance and live art through a myriad collaborations, lectures, writings, pedagogy, activism, and digital art. They have reinvented themselves constantly in order to remain current, sexy and edgy. They operate at the intersecting points of new and old (political, cultural, geographic and conceptual) borders. Inevitably, their language, performance strategies, aesthetics, membership and location have changed with the times.

continues over



Tara Fatehi Irani is a multidisciplinary artist and writer working with fabricated histories, mistranslated memories and unattended archives. Her work is primarily concerned with the ephemeral interactions between memories, words and sites. Her PhD research at the University of Roehampton in conjunction with the Live Art Development Agency investigates the interanimation of personal archives and performance through working with family archives from Iran. She is half of the duo /gorizazmarkaz/ and 1/6th of the Documentation Action Research Collective (DARC). www.tarafatehi.com

Kimbal Quist Bumstead is an interdisciplinary artist based in London whose work sits between painting, drawing, video and performance. Kimbal's work is cathartic, explosive and colourful. He takes a performative approach to making work and is interested in the physical and subjective notions of a journey; the eternal process of becoming, the meandering volatile and nomadic identity, and the act of tracing sensory experience through mark making.

There There is a 50% Romanian 50% Serbian performance company, founded in London by Dana Olărescu and Bojana Janković. Their work explores topics that emerge at the intersection of personal experience and big-picture policy and politics, including immigration, immigrant and national identities.



Live Art
Development
Agency

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