

The Artistic Jury's editorial for 2023

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We understand circus to be an ever-evolving art form, nourished by a continuous engagement with the world and by its blurring of rigid genre definitions. Circus creation is a vibrant art practice that encourages its practitioners to push myriad boundaries, physical and conceptual; to renew and revolutionise its methods, and to perpetually challenge its own tenets.

We believe that circus has the power to inspire, entertain and challenge audiences of all ages and cultures, to rouse emotion and provoke conversation. We see circus authors' potential to be forces for good in the world, to confront our assumptions and prejudices, to engender unity in diversity.

We aim for circus to be an inclusive form that allows artists of all backgrounds and experiences to share their unique perspectives. We believe circus should be accessible to everyone, and should reflect the heterogeneity and complexity of the world we live in. It should be a place where artists can come together to create and offer their work, and where audiences can be moved and transformed by what they've shared.

We do not adhere to the notion of invariability in the historical traits that would define the circus, nor any essentiality that would definitively differentiate it from other art forms. We recognize the current vitality of the circus, which is apparent in its inherent plasticity and the extraordinary variety of definitions given to it. Today's artists tend to carve out for themselves a place in the continuity of circus' time-honoured characteristics: the circus as a nomadic or anti-conformist lifestyle, as an architectural space, as a gravity-defying spectacle, as a list of uncommon skills, as popular entertainment, as a crossroads of marginalities, as the act of surpassing oneself, as a tool for social action, as equestrian theatre, as an exhibition of the bizarre, as a philosophy of freedom...

We do not particularly adhere to any of these visions of circus, nor do we reject them a priori. We do not exclude practices such as fakirism, magic, clowning that from time to time have found themselves relegated to the periphery of the circus realm. Nor would we exclude practices outside the historical circus domain, (who knows, astronomy, bakery?) provided the artists are able, in a substantiated manner, to inscribe their work within the living sphere of the circus arts. We don't deny there are certain recurrent discussions: the relative importance of texts, choreography and images in some works presented to this jury can lead us to proclaim, "this belongs to the realm of theatre, dance, fine arts rather than that of circus". As varied, protean and inclusive as the circus may be, however open-minded we as a jury may be, we are today more intrigued by that which deepens the form of circus rather than expands it, without ignoring that expansion may, in itself, be a form of deepening.

We encourage authors to seek out their own unique voice, to not fear the taking of artistic risk, to move beyond normative aesthetics, to not allow themselves to be limited by outside expectation, to surprise us.

We hope for circus works that are unapologetically:... radical, humble, deliberate, touching, benevolent, grandiose, sincere, beautiful, monstrous, profound, archaic, urgent, feminist, empowering, welcoming, reckless, tender, poetic, intelligent, anchored, gratuitous, weird, courageous, aloof, cheeky, beastly, avant-garde, adrift, poetic, shocking, experimental, post-

apocalyptic, obscure, ecological, disquieting, vital, queer, guileless, innocent, callous, unhurried, true, rash, clear, transformative...

We promote a subjective artistic standpoint and the exploration of otherness at all levels: dramaturgically, scenographically, technically, conceptually.

We are committed to supporting the development and growth of circus as an art form, and to fostering an inclusive and supportive community of artists and audiences. We will work to ensure that circus has a strong and vibrant future, and that it continues to captivate and inspire audiences for generations to come.

About artistic selection criteria

There are no defined artistic criteria for selection. There is no preferred aesthetic, there is no preferred subject, form, spatial arrangement, discipline, duration or target audience. All creative contexts, all forms, aesthetic formats, all disciplines and all interdisciplinary endeavours between circus and other art forms are admissible, without any exclusion.

The jury understands virtuosity not only as excellence in relation to a technical standard but above all as the ability to deconstruct, conceptualise and reinvent frameworks that attracts other levels of understanding about the circus.

The jury understands emergence as a process of 'finding one's artistic signature' and (re)defining one's artistic position as an author of original circus works. Emergence is in no way to be misunderstood as synonymous with youth. There is no age limit for applicants.

The jury understands "author" as an artist having authority over their work of which they may or may not be the performer.

It is the jury's role to facilitate a space that allows circus authors to verbalise their personal working approach and relationship to the practice of circus. It is not the role of the jury to define what circus is, or is not.

What the artistic jury values in candidates

- the author is able to create a strong artistic universe.
- the author can thoughtfully defend their work and stand by their artistic choices.
- the author is able to create a work that cannot be attributed to someone else, and to assert what belongs to them, what they've borrowed, and what they reference.
- the author has the capacity to situate themselves within the field of the circus arts, and in regard to past and present forms of circus.
- the author has the capacity to situate themselves in the broader artistic and societal discourse and can speak to the relevancy of their work.
- the author is able to apply concepts and transform content into a final form.
- the author is able to translate a unique approach through their work.
- the author can demonstrate a certain coherence within their body of work, denoting a sustainable identity.
- the author is able to explain the dramaturgical organisation of their work.
- the author displays a certain perspicacity in their working methods, stance, conceptualisation and form.