



percorso di ricerca tra
teoria e pratica

LA PAROLA AI CORPI

CALL FOR ARTISTS 2024

7-days residency | 4-10th November 2024, Fabbrica del Vapore, Milano (Italy)

THE STOLEN HERITAGE

«Whiteness is not about genetics but power [...]. How can there be love between us if the privileges of some are based on the oppression of others?»

(Rachele Borghi quoting Houria Bouteldja in *Decolonialità e Privilegio*, p. 45)

«The ultimate level of colonization is the continuous mutation of its engine: cultural and economic injustice. For, although colonized countries have gained independence, they have become dependent on their former occupiers through two forms of ownership: one that is industrial, another that is imaginative.»

(Kader Attia in *Décolonisons les arts!*, p. 11)

What connects the Palestinian genocide to the Nefertiti Bust in the Egyptian Museum of Berlin? How many non-white people attend circus schools in Europe and how many of them manage to build a rewarding professional career making art *on their own terms*? Racism and oppression are at the heart of our economic system. Contemporary circus in Europe, often described as an innocent and free world that relies on the Romantic myth of the margin, replicates the same mechanisms of violence and oppression on which the Western world is based.

Colonialism is not just a dark page in Europe's history, it is the foundation of its political power. It is what legitimizes the current state of things and what makes it work efficiently. It is what allows those who are part of the dominant system to produce "values for money" at the expenses of others – subaltern classes, women, racialized groups, people without citizenship and, on more general terms, people without access to the economic, symbolic, cultural or relational capital that would give them access to a "free life." Colonialism, in the artworld and so in circus, is also what allows Europe to sell "multiculturalism" as a value. If we take a closer look, it is built on the appropriation of someone else's wealth: the creative capital of artists who come to Europe moves away from their country of origin. This is frequently framed as a lack of value in countries where art cannot be a viable profession, reinforcing the perceived superiority of European societies. Little attention is given to understanding the long-term consequences of this drain, which has deep roots in Western colonial history. The "diversity of cultures" that we capitalize here comes from a wealth that has deep roots elsewhere: our Western values are a "stolen heritage", an imaginative capital that will never be returned.

If we stopped being racist tomorrow, the current economic system of the West would collapse. The question is not *if* we are racist, but *how* we are racist.

One of the founding myths of the West is freedom. Exploitation and cultural appropriation are so embedded in this concept that we hardly recognise their internalization and perpetuation in our artistic practices. The "Western Freedom" - which, in Maggie Nelson's terms, appears to be more "White creative freedom" than mere "artistic freedom" - is a product of the White Western Modernity, entangled with the neoliberal concepts of private property, autonomy, individuality, productivity, activity, white supremacy, progress, mobility. It neutralizes options of collective future(s) based on solidarity, interdependence, class consciousness, growth, unproductivity and rest. In addition to that, it denies any possibility of historical reparation.

What impact does it have on our circus practices? To what extent and in what sense can we say that our practices are also "colonial"? Can we build alternatives?

The myth of the margin, which has largely influenced the circus narrative and led to many forms of self-absolution among circus practitioners, has served as a tool to conceal the deeply colonial heritage of the circus, even in its most contemporary forms. This edition of the project LA PAROLA AI CORPI starts from the notions of privilege and decoloniality to reconsider the oppression that we either suffer and/or deliver in our artistic practices.

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Starting from the idea that circus creation is a space where decolonial practices can be invented and experimented, we are looking for 7 professional circus artists interested in working collectively with independent researcher Gaia Vimercati and Amanda Homa, author, activist and circus artist, in a hybrid context of embodied research.

The main aim of this call is NOT to select people with an ongoing artistic project addressing the proposed topic, but rather artists who are open to a radical re-discussion of their practices – human, artistic, theoretical – within these horizons. Participants will be asked to question their research projects and to use the circus practice as a tool of research with the other participants for the sake of a common research ground.

The program LA PAROLA AI CORPI 2024 is not designed as a residency strictly aimed at the realization of a personal project but as a space for (un)productive research. It fosters an experimental encounter between theory and practices within the circus. It is based on the belief that unexpected creative possibilities can arise from the contamination of approaches and the dialogues between different perspectives and people. LA PAROLA AI CORPI is a space for horizontal dialogue which allows for dissonance and even conflicting perspectives. It defends a non-prescriptive dimension of work and criticism. It pushes toward the contamination and experimentation between discourses that might not be circus-related.

LA PAROLA AI CORPI is a project to encourage the legitimization of circus as an art of creation by promoting an experimental and hybrid approach to knowledge. It is a unique project in Italy and it is supported by the Ministry of Culture.

LA PAROLA AI CORPI 2024 includes:

- An online meeting with the selected participants on Wednesday, October 16th.
- A 7-days residency in Milan at Fabbrica Del Vapore (Monday, November 4th - Sunday, November 10th, 2024).
- Assignments between the online meeting and the beginning of the residency.
- Production of a written text at the end of the residency.

The detailed program will be defined at the end of the selection process.

This call selects 7 circus professionals:

- Of any origin and gender
- Preferably under 35
- With a creation project in progress or a clear project idea, regardless of its state of advancement
- Who are interested in questioning their practices from this specific point of view
- With a good written and oral understanding of the Italian and/or English language
- Available to follow the project in all its phases

Selected artists will be offered:

- A scholarship worth 800 euros each (gross)
- Free accommodation in Milan for the days of the collective residency (maximum period from November 3rd - November 10th), in a shared house with a kitchen and living room. Food and travel are at participants' costs.

HOW TO APPLY?

By 12:00 PM on Wednesday, September 18th, 2024, by sending an email with the subject **APPLICATION LA PAROLA AI CORPI 2024** to gaia.vimercati@quattro4.com including:

- A brief artistic CV (max. 1 page) or a short BIO (maximum 15 lines)
- Email and phone number
- What best represents the creation project at the moment (dossier, video, text, images, voice recordings, etc.)
- Clear indication its status (INITIAL – INTERMEDIATE – ADVANCED – COMPLETED)
- Indication of at least 3 non-circus sources of any kind (text/visual/audio, etc.) that play a fundamental role in this process
- Answer to the following questions in a single Word file:
 1. Why are you interested in participating in this call? (max. 200 words)
 2. What does "privilege" mean to you? Answer with an image and explain why you chose it (max. 200 words)
 3. Have you ever been interested in the theme of (de)coloniality? If so, was there a specific event that led to you to question this? If not, why?
 4. In light of your experience as an artist, is there a historical/political/cultural aspect of the circus that you would like to change radically? (max. 200 words)

IMPORTANT!

- If you are interested in participating and you have a disability, please indicate in your application which compensatory tools can facilitate your presence at the residency.
- If you are a duo, please apply with a single application. If you are part of a larger company, please send the application of the person(s) actually interested in participating. For specific questions: gaia.vimercati@quattro4.com.
- The space where the artistic residency will take place does NOT allow hanging aerial equipment or anchoring large circus equipment (e.g., Chinese pole, tightrope). To protect everyone's work, the focus will not be on the technical skills, but on the creation processes. The methodology will not disadvantage those who, for technical reasons, cannot practice with their reference equipment.
- Incomplete applications will NOT be considered.
- The call for artists is open also to artists that have already participated in this project.

COMMUNICATION OF THE SELECTION RESULTS

The selection results will be communicated via email to the participants no later than Friday, October 4th, 2024.

WHO ARE GAIA VIMERCATI & AMANDA HOMA?

GAIA VIMERCATI (she/her) is an independent researcher and cultural project manager for Quattro4, a contemporary circus center in Milan, Italy. She received a MA in Comparative Literature at Trinity College Dublin (2015) and a BA in Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Milan (2012). In 2016 she created *Censimento Circo Italia*, the first map of circus companies in Italy. She is external eye for GRETEL by Clara Storti (2021) and LA DONNA LAMPADA by Laia Picas Rodoreda (2024). She was a contributor in many conferences: Semiotics of the Circus (Muenster, 2015) BIAC 2021 (Marseille, 2021), CIRCUS AND ITS OTHERS 2021 (Davis, California) and 2024 (Bogotá, Colombia), EASTAP Conference (Bologna 2020, Milan 2022). In 2022 she published for La Biennale di Venezia *Sott'acqua tutte le isole si toccano. Il lascito di Monk e Mnouchkine alla Biennale del '75* and the article *Chaplin, Brecht, Fo: toward a Concept of Epic Clowing* for the anthology 360°. CIRCUS MEANING. PRACTICE edited by Routledge. Since 2021 she is the curator of the project LA PAROLA AI CORPI, a hybrid residency between theory and practice in circus. In 2023-2024 she was among the 10 fellows selected for New Horizons Leadership Program and she gave the keynote speech Queering the Leadership: against the myth of a progressive circus at the conference A SAFE(R) SPACE FOR DANGER in Antwerp (Belgium). Together with Maristella Tesio and Teresa Noronha Feio, she curated the Italian translation of the *Open Letters To the Circus* by Bauke Lievens and Sebastian Kann, published by Editoria & Spettacolo (2024).

AMANDA HOMA (she/her) is a japanese-brazilian artist who has been based in France since 2014. She trained at CEFAC (Brazil), FLIC (Italy), and Le Lido (France) from 2011 to 2017. After graduating, she collaborated as a performer with various companies, including Ockham's Razor, SCoM, and Rhizome/Chloé Moglia, in both outdoor and indoor performances. She co-founded the company Diagonale du Vide, which presented its first creation, "C'est l'Hiver, le Ciel est Bleu", in 2023. Alongside her performances, she collaborates with Malika Lapeyre in Body-Mind Centering® workshops at ESACTO-Lido, assisting and translating. Her goal is to promote more equitable access to knowledge and, consequently, to professional opportunities. Since COVID-19 pandemic, she has participated in various group discussions and panels on inequality of opportunities, lack of representation and discrimination in the arts, particularly in the circus field. In 2021, she completed the training "Facilitating Participatory Meetings", and in 2023, the training "Untangling Complex Situations", with the association Escargots Migrateurs. Her focus is on intersectional feminism.

LA PAROLA AI CORPI è un progetto di Quattro4 Circo ETS.
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