

Presentation Summaries: ENGLISH

Balfe, Carmel (Ireland)

Immersive Installation with Neurodivergent Children

“Hedgehog Zone” a 6 week shadow puppetry project with neurodivergent children in their classrooms. The aim was to offer a space for creative engagement through light and shadow.

I explored how to create a safe and accessible environment where children could engage with shadow puppetry at their own pace. Aiming to encourage independence, enable children to operate puppets and develop narratives using sensory-friendly materials. Shadow puppetry proved to be a powerful tool for communication and self-expression.

Puppet Play: Children experimented with soft toys and animal shadow puppets behind a shadow screen. They added animal sound effects using homemade instruments.

Visual Exploration: The children created shadow puppets using wire-frames layered with tissue and bubble wrap for sensory texture.

Immersive Installation: The children’s shadow puppets were filmed and projected onto walls and floors alongside a soundtrack of natural sounds. A shadow screen was hung in the middle of the room and the children used torches to project the shadow puppets onto all surfaces including a tent.

This project gave children the chance to excel in a medium that suited them. One child began adding written words to her artwork; others were able to remain engaged in a space they would usually find overwhelming.



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Instagram |



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Bernier-Dionne, Caroline (Canada)

Puppeteer and Puppetry Artistic Coach

Show : Drawn to Life by Cirque du Soleil

Drawn to Life blends Disney animation and Cirque du Soleil's acrobatic feats. Explore an unforgettable family experience at Disney Springs.

Hi, my name is Caroline Bernier-Dionne. I’m a professional puppeteer from Québec, Canada and I’m currently working with Cirque du Soleil in the heart of Walt Disney World at Orlando in Florida. I got selected to perform one of the main characters as a giant puppetry professional in a wonderful show called « Drawn to life ».

In this journey, I had the chance to train acrobats who had to manipulate puppets for the first time, and I had to get them excited about the magical world of puppetry. In this show, we use different types of puppets, mostly on giant puppets as to cover the venue that has 1500 seats. Some puppets keep their secrets as « how » they come to life, similar to magic tricks, and some

of them also use high-tech technology that pushes further the boundaries of the art form.

As we are living in a world where technology could change our practice and make it evolve and as the theme of 2025 is Robot, AI and the dream of the puppet, I want to bring the spotlight on one specific scene of the show that is an amazing collaboration between projection art and puppetry art.

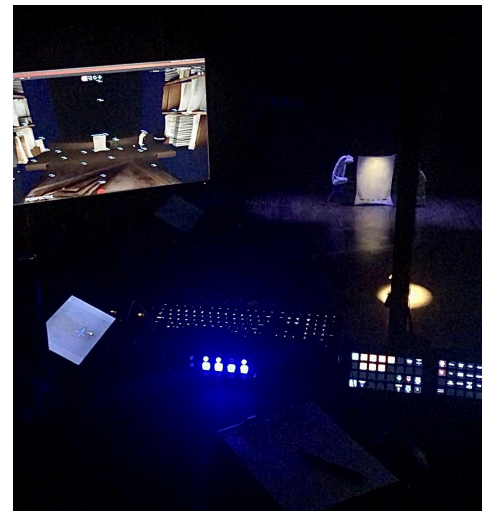
Drawn to life is a love letter to the art of animation. So, puppetry was the design art form to represent the lovely Disney character, but with keeping the idea that they come from two dimensions drawing seen on a 2D screen.

Those giant puppets require precise manipulation and sensitivity to evoke a sense of life “of life”. We call these puppets “Comforting Sheets” because they symbolize the blank canvas on which drawings come to life during the show. This dual meaning is powerful—these puppets not only come to life, but the projected drawings get more alive by the motion on stage added to the moving projections on them.

For Cirque du Soleil, we’ve taken this a step further by incorporating projections onto moving puppets. With the help of computers, cameras and infrared emitters, we project animations onto some of the puppets as they move on stage. My job is to make my team add the proper motion of the giant structure they manipulated so the projection look even more alive matching the motion of the animation itself. This innovative approach demonstrates Cirque du Soleil’s commitment to pushing the boundaries of art and technology.

I think those combinations of ideas are “Fresh”. They are for sure helping the narrative of the show and it’s interesting to hear the audience recognizing their favorite characters but with giving the concept of where the art of animation is from. It’s the perfect combination of magic as we keep the nature of an art form by mixing puppetry and projection on Disney Spring big stage.

Thanks for listening, and I hope I inspired you to accept any challenges to combine the field of new technology and puppetry art together, because for me it’s a true passion. Although the goal is to create a magical experience for an audience, and I wish every practitioner could feel the pride of it.



Baabii: Puppetry and Music for Indigenous Language Revitalization

[illegible]

Figure 2. Baabii with John-Paul Chalykoff at Michipicoten First Nation in northern Ontario, Canada.

<https://www.jpchalykoff.com/baabii/>
<https://www.instagram.com/baabii.thepuppet/>
<https://www.facebook.com/p/Baabii-61560200060510/>

When Clay Dolls and an Orb of Earth Start Telling Tales of Tigers and Humans, Will You Listen?

Presentation by Dr. Poulomi Das (Dramaturg and Content Guide of Maati Kotha)

Maati Katha (Earth Stories), an experimental tri-lingual Object and Material Theatre production devised by Tram Arts Trust in 2023, invites audiences to listen—truly listen—to stories whispered through earth and clay. At the heart of its production ideas are traditional handcrafted clay dolls from the Sunderbans, a fragile, often forgotten borderland between India and Bangladesh. These dolls—once playthings, votive objects, or folk art curios—are now storytellers on stage. The dolls do not move like puppets; instead, they are lifted, placed, spoken to and spoken for—by the performer, carrying both their tangible weight and metaphorical resonance. Drawn from years of ethnographic research into West Bengal’s doll-making traditions and inputs from my PhD project on the Bonbibi Cult of Sundarbans, *Maati Katha* brings these seemingly mute objects to life—not by animating them, but by allowing them to embody histories, quirks, and layered identities.

Apart from clay dolls, the play begins with a big lump of clay at the centre of the stage that is later pressed, stamped, moulded and shape shifted to become land, rivers, trees, animals and humans. The fact that these dolls are also made of clay is important. Clay—in essence earth becomes both the medium and the philosophical anchor of the play. What rises from earth, goes back to earth. Clay in its raw materiality is a character in the play—its existential presence omnipresent throughout the performance. It's becoming, changing, transforming into other life forms and again turning back to clay asking one poignant question: what does it mean to belong, to break, to transform?

In the Sunderbans, known globally for its mangroves and tigers, the people are rarely noticed. *Maati Katha* reverses that gaze. It speaks of those lives—resilient, interwoven with land and non-human kin, battling erasure in both memory and market. The dolls become bridges between the local and the global, the ancient and the urgent. This project is not only a performance, very close to our heart but a platform—for rural artists, for endangered traditions, and for future projects like children’s books, animation films, online digital archives, and workshops. So when these clay dolls and this orb of earth begin to tell their tales—of tigers, storms, gods, and forgotten humans—the question is: will you stop, stay awhile, and listen?

You can watch the English trailer on this link:

<https://youtu.be/uvEMjfhDfzY?si=CbyRMxEp9obo4kLq>

You can follow our work on these Instagram handles:

Tram’s Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/tramartstrust/>

Tram’s Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tramtheatre>

My Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/golpo_boli_sono/

Gavin Glover (United Kingdom)

The DARKER side of puppetry

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Contemporary Puppetry training

Introducing adult puppetry to new a audience is positive but many theatres that use puppets rarely dive into the deeper and more metaphorical dimensions of Puppet Theatre.

I am a puppeteer, director, and designer creating work for adult audiences.

First with Faulty Optic and later collaborating and teaching many different types of performer: actors, dancers, clowns and puppeteers.

I am fascinated by HOW the puppet is moved depending on WHO is doing the moving.

A dancer will be physical, a puppeteer will be precise but a clown may drop the puppet on its head for fun!

If we give our puppets deeper emotions: empathy, guilt, suspicion, rebellion or menace, we can discover new 'species' of puppets, the Imposter, the Effigy and the Haunted. We can walk with our 'Imaginary Friend' or begin to see an 'Elephant in the Room'. We can uncover unsettling new narratives where even the puppet-performer relationship may be challenged.

So I've developed a new workshop called *The DARKER Side of Puppetry*

It's open to any performer, no puppetry experience needed.

An intense but playful few days to explore these new puppetry ideas and to discover your own contemporary style.

I've taken it to UK, Norway, Germany, and CZ

And I would love to bring it to you

To host a workshop or learn more, visit my website.

I also run workshops in Micro-cinema theatre and micro-cinema filmmaking.

Kapokaki Emmanouela (Greece)

Title: *The Impact of Puppet Theatre, Ways of Funding Projects*

I will present "*Kouklopaizoume*", the main social project of our organization "Visual Puppet Theatre *Prasinaloga*", based in Athens, Greece. It is an online educational platform that trains teachers across all school levels to create short puppet theatre performances with their students, also open to facilitators working with vulnerable groups. Videos of the performances are presented digitally as part of a national competition.

Through this inclusive and creative process, we empower children and adults and strengthen social bonds. Participation is free, funded by the Greek Ministry of Culture, and complemented

by European projects and foundations supporting actions that address for specific social challenges.

We also create original puppet theatre productions, which we present at international festivals. So, we could be programmed to a Puppet Festival paired with specialised workshops on how puppetry can be used as a tool for community empowerment and emotional expression.

Puppet theatre becomes a bridge between art and education, between performance and social action. For puppeteers, European funding is a valuable opportunity not only to sustain their work, but to bring meaningful impact to society.

[prasinaloga.gr](https://www.prasinaloga.gr) | [kouklopaizoume.gr](https://www.kouklopaizoume.gr) | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/kouklopaizoume)



Mandera, Eraste (Burundi)

Proposed by UNIMA Burundi Center

Written by Eraste Mandera, President UNIMA Burundi.

Title: What if Puppetry Was Born Where It Never Existed?

I propose a project that questions the absence of puppetry tradition in countries like Burundi. What if these regions, often seen as puppetry deserts, were actually rich in stories, gestures, and beliefs capable of inspiring a new tradition?

This proposal seeks to explore the possible causes of this absence: neglect, marginalization, lack of transmission or documentation, consequences of conflict, or cultural isolation.

Burundi has taken a first step with the creation of the UNIMA Burundi center, which promotes training, creation, research, and collaborations, especially with UNIMA Italy. My project aims to lay the foundation for a concrete strategy to implant puppetry in these contexts: training, adapting oral stories to puppetry, integrating schools, documenting, and organizing exchanges.

I also propose the creation of a network within UNIMA International to bring together and support countries that, like Burundi, want to introduce puppetry where it has never

existed.



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Maunier, Sandrine (France)

THE THEATRE DES ACCORDES PRESENTS: LITEUL PIPOL

A show for first walkers from 12 months old. Puppet and Dance.

Presented at the Théâtre de la Licorne (Cannes, France) on October 29 and 30, 2025

A creation by Sandrine Maunier, Rémi Lambert and Angélique Naccache

Liteul Pipol is an encounter between daycare residents and a group of little people, so small that the daycare residents have become giants. Together, they will experience a metamorphosis that only puppets can create...

Liteul Pipol is a loose adaptation of Haruki Murakami's novel 1Q84. In this novel, characters called "Little People" create a "chrysalis of air" from which emerge clones of the characters in the novel. The poetic motifs of this novel are very powerful, and we wanted to share them with young children through dance and puppetry. The choice to share a work written for adults with young children was intentional; it challenges us to translate the novel through visual, choreographic, and musical arts. It inspires us to return "before words," to where bodies and puppets can tell the incredible. Liteul Pipol will have two versions: a highly portable version for

daycares and early childhood centers, and a "theater" version with an immersive set design that can bring together 50 children and parents.

You can follow Liteul Pipol on our website:

Instagram: @theatredesaccorde

Facebook: Théâtre Désaccordé

And on our website: www.desaccorde.org

Théâtre Désaccordé - theatre.desaccorde@gmail.com - +33 6 46 80 51 15

Møller, Vibecke (Norway)

Vibeckes Marionetteteater

PROJECT IN HIGH SCHOOL

Puppet theatre with young students 16-18 years old from different cultures

Objective:

Promote inclusion and prevent conflict by using puppetry and The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Pre-project:

- The students created small table theater performances based on the objectives of the curriculum
- The students created "POP-UP" scenes and paper puppets

The Main Project:

The class created a puppet show based on articles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a tool for inclusion and conflict prevention in the classroom environment:

- Cross-curricular with social studies, Norwegian and the program subjects
- Groups of 3-5 multicultural students aged 16-18 years
- Chosen their article after reviewing it in social studies
- Wrote a story based on the chosen article
- Time required: 5 full school days

The performances

Article 2: Non-discrimination

Article 3: Best interests of the child

Article 7: The right to a name and nationality

Article 34: Protection against sexual exploitation

Article 35: Protection against abduction, sale and trafficking

Feedback from students

"More interaction and cooperation in class"

- Got to know others better than the ones you were always with
- Increased sense of freedom
- Humor and joy
- Creativity and unity
- More inclusion because the puppets became the spokesperson
- Not so afraid of making a fool of themselves because the puppet "spoke"
- Conflicts did not arise because the puppets were intermediaries and harmless

- Increased helpfulness and interaction

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Oussoren, Joanne (Netherlands)
HAMLET 2025

The Hamlet 2025 project has been launched in a mental health and therapy organisation in the Netherlands.

We were open to neighbors, local residents, volunteers, clients, theater lovers, amateurs and professionals to share dreams, stories, drawings and puppet theater techniques.

We worked with new media, exchanged knowledge and learned how to use modern means of communication.

Watching a video about UNIMA project (VIPR-sea) on a big screen immediately generated an awareness of inclusion.

The capacity for local and global exchange, the 'glocal' quality, inspired local people ready to organize an international interacting group.

After a series of workshops in shadow theatre with hand-drawn puppets and storytelling, the meetings transformed into a digital puppet theatre café.

By experimenting with artificial intelligence to depict dreams and nightmares from a deep night consciousness, we try to steer and search for a gentle (mindful) understanding of human existence.

This new way of improvising with hand-drawn puppets in AI-generated backgrounds (backdrops) encapsulates weekly moments of pleasant togetherness, by supporting and helping each other, by chatting and by drinking endless tea and coffee together.

Hamlet 2025 was created from a variation of some simply edited texts from Shakespeare's legacy about living, dreaming, sleeping and maybe dying...

Dreaming or acting?

We sleep, dream, die.

We are!

That's what it's all about.

Joanne Oussoren

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Puppis Anastasia & Simioni Léandre (France)

TITLE: Under Punch's Canvas - Exhibition

Presenters: Anastasia Puppis and Léandre Simioni, UEUEUE Company (France)

Project: Exhibition on five centuries of glove puppetry in European public spaces (14th-19th centuries)

Methodology: As professional puppeteers, we have collected over 1,000 historical images of puppet shows across Europe during six years of research. Our approach combines iconographic and bibliographic analysis with contemporary stage experimentation.

Five research themes:

1. **Dramaturgy of gesture:** The technical constraint of a single puppeteer appears to generate a distinctive dramaturgy with two hands and two characters, based on gestural virtuosity.
2. **The polymorphic hero:** The main protagonist evolves through the centuries while maintaining his characteristics as a clairvoyant fool. His squeaky voice, produced by the swazzle, gives him a sonic advantage in public spaces, which likely contributes to his popular success.
3. **Custom-made tools:** The iconography reveals puppeteers who craft and use their own tools (booth, puppets) adapted to their morphology. This customisation enables optimal dexterity, whilst the lightness of the instruments meets mobility requirements.
4. **Performance economy:** Puppeteers operate within an ecosystem alongside other artists and professions (actors, musicians, charlatans, doctors). The figure of the barker appears crucial for managing economic aspects and mediation with the audience.
5. **Audience composition:** The images show evidence of a socially diverse and intergenerational audience, with crowds of 30 to 50 people that seem to foster proximity between artists and spectators.

Schedule: Exhibition opening in Paris in spring 2026, followed by a two-year tour throughout France, with prospects for international development.

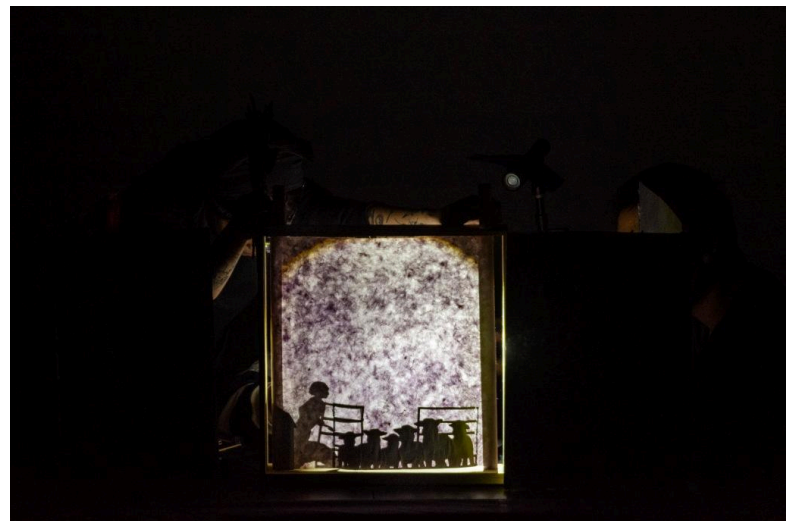
Objective: To create a space where this visual heritage is brought together to nourish contemporary puppetry creation and raise public awareness of this living European legacy.

UEUEUE Company wishes to share its research with the UNIMA community and remains open to international collaborations.

Sing, Samantha (United States)

Puppetry as a Tool to Inspire Compassion - An Alternative Approach to Animal Activism

After attending numerous protests and reposting graphic videos on the cruel treatment of animals, I started to question whether traditional animal rights tactics were becoming counterproductive. Even if the goal is to simply raise awareness, individuals will actively resist information that challenges their existing worldview, to maintain their sense of self and identity. This is known as the backfire effect; where presenting evidence that contradicts someone's beliefs, instead of changing their mind, actually makes them hold their original beliefs even more strongly. And so, I needed a new approach to my activism; one that inspires rather than guilts and sparks meaningful conversations rather than arguments. Instead of telling people that pigs deserve better lives because they are smarter than dogs or that mother pigs sing to their babies, how can I show them? Live performance and puppetry are a great visual medium to do so! Animals are individuals and have their own problems that they face and thus unique stories to tell. With each show I create, I center it on an animal and try to focus on one issue.



Subway Creatures: Rats and Negative Stereotypes Silence: Lambs and Animal Slaughter

Instagram: [@hannfriends](https://www.instagram.com/hannfriends)
Website: samnfriends.com

Williams, Chad (United States)

My name is Chad Williams from New York City, USA. Since 2019 I have been teaching hand puppetry technique to new puppeteers as a way to give them basic puppetry skills that they can then apply to any other form. We have evolved from teaching two students in my tiny apartment to now 60 students per year in a professional theater space. The classes run 8 weeks and are 100% free. The goal is to give young puppeteers a first step into puppetry, to provide access and equity, and give them a diverse, safe space that they want to return to.

As a well-known puppetry company in NYC, we have always been sought out by people looking for a way into the puppetry world. I noticed that there were zero guides online for hand puppetry,

and the tradition of apprenticing with a master puppeteer is great but inefficient. Because of this, I decided to write two manuals on hand puppetry that have lots of photos and easy-to-understand language, and made videos online to supplement the lessons. These became the curriculum for my classes. Since 2023 we have partnered with the Jim Henson Carriage House and many of our students have gone on to careers in the puppet theater community. We have also taught international students.

This Summer I will be teaching an advanced course online through the Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival which I hope to bring in-person someday. The name of my course is the Professional Puppet Theater Program. If you are ever in NYC, please come observe a class!

<https://www.wondersparkpuppets.com>
<https://instagram.com/wondersparkpuppets>
<https://facebook.com/wondersparkpuppets>

Photos: <https://pbc-productions.com/wonderspark/docs/2025-Fresh-Ideas-Photos/>

Zoltan Sapir, Erica (France)
Puppeteers without Borders

We are an international Organization promoting growth, change and conflict management through the art of puppetry. We have been active for twenty years creating customized programs for communities around the world. We are officially registered in France as a non-profit Our aim is to empower communities to deal with sensitive issues through the magical art of puppetry. Our focus is Health education, Family planning, non-violent communication, environmental topics, cultural diversity and Human rights. We train professionals to apply puppetry in their specific work environment. Our target training is with, but not limited to the following professionals:

Teachers

Therapists

Nurses

Social workers

Community Health Workers

Professional puppeteers.

Some samples:

Health education workshops

“The puppet as Health Ambassador”

This unique workshop prepares you to tell a story using puppets to convey factual medical instruction. Participants learn how to create puppets and a theatrical presentation to instruct and

connect to a community audience. Instruction includes health subject like Hygiene, family planning, nutrition... and provides entertainment AND pertinent information.

Therapeutic Puppetry

Therapeutic puppetry combines verbal and nonverbal modes of expression. It is most often thought of as being used with children, but it can be adapted to a variety of people of all ages to meet various treatment goals. Therapeutic puppetry can be applied with individual, groups and families. In the medical setting, in the hands of trained nurses, or counselors, puppets can serve as therapists in pre-and post-operative situations.

Puppets as peace ambassadors

Our current project focus on the school environment, providing a fun and unique way to deal with bullying, tolerance, accepting the different...

Children are taught how to make simple puppets, and in small groups reenact situations of conflict, opening then the possibility of dialogue and increased awareness.

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Agopian, Maïté (United States)

Story of Elvel: Return of the creation story and Itelmen language through multimedia storytelling.

This movie is a result of the ongoing collaboration of the Itelmen knowledge holders, artists, and anthropologists. We focused on a creation story, the Story of Elvel. In the 1970s and 80s this story was at the roots of a strong revitalization movement for Itelmen People of the Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East. With the loss of the Elders, continuing colonization, and forced silencing of Indigenous knowledge this story is becoming forgotten, and it is rare that young Itelmens have heard it neither in Itelmen nor Russian. It is a movie led by Itelmen, in Itelmen, with subtitles in English and Russian.

This project focuses on the following areas: puppet and shadow theatre as a way to animate the language and foster conversations in the language; film as a way to bring an original story and songs back into the heart of the households; art as a way to reconstruct the traditional ways of living and (re)matriate Indigenous knowledge from the archival collections; and Indigenous mapping as a way to challenge colonial cartographic narratives.

In my presentation, I will mainly focus on the puppetry aspect through a series of pictures

that depicts our methodology over the course of 3 years. We all embraced this project without much prior knowledge of how to make a puppet movie, but we all did what we knew: building a puppet, stitching, painting, filming, editing the subtitles, etc, all within the means (time and budget) we had (as students, professors, artists).

And if you wonder why I was part of this project, well, it is because I lived over a year in Kamchatka and have a good sense of the environment and cultural aspects of it. And more than anything, Tania, who is leading this project, is my dear friend. When her grandmother died, who I knew well, I told her that I would work with her on any story her grandmother would have liked to see done with puppets.

We learned a lot, made lots of mistakes, laughed and cried together, and it has been such a joy to see how simple puppets were able to create such a connection between all of us and will now continue their adventures to revive interest in a language and a culture. Our next goal is to see how to transform this film into a performance.

While we showed the movie for the first time in Boulder this March, it is currently getting the last few edits, which is why I am not showing any parts of it today.

If you are interested to know more about this project, you can contact me :
maite.agopian@gmail.com | Insta & FB: maite.agopian | Website: <http://chakpuppetry.org>