

THE MONTREAL  
WORKING GROUP ON

circus  
circus

RESEARCH

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**TODAY! AUJOURD'HUI!**

**The Apparatus and the  
Performer**

**L'appareil et l'artiste**

**Marion Cossin,  
Erin Ball and Vanessa  
Furlong**

**Thursday 21 September,  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.,  
National Circus School of  
Montreal Library.**

**11:30  
Modélisation biomécanique de  
l'interaction homme-structure  
dans la performance**

**acrobatique circassienne  
*Biomechanical modeling of the  
human-structure interaction in  
the acrobatic circus***

**performance (talk in French)  
Marion Cossin (Université de  
Montréal)**

**Dans le cadre de ce projet**

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**Circus and its  
Others II, Conference  
27-29 August 2018, Prague**

From powerhouse stage and television shows to Cirque du Soleil's status as the world's most successful live performing arts company, circus in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has undeniably gone mainstream. While this is positive news for circus companies, artists, and audiences with a taste for thrilling, high-performance entertainment, it also raises questions about circus's historic status as a site for the celebration and exploitation of differences. To what extent and in what ways is circus always-already different, and *about* difference? How does the mainstreaming of contemporary circus affect its status as a haven for the different, the outsider? In what ways are contemporary circus artists and companies embracing and exploiting (or not) difference in their practice? How do we discuss, stage, theorize, and practice such differences including questions of gender, sexuality, embodiment, ability/disability, ethnicity, class, and species?

The Circus and its Others research project was launched in 2014 under the aegis of the Montréal Working Group on Circus Research to explore these questions. The scholarship and conversation during our exciting conference in the context of the 2016 Montréal Complètement Cirque festival proved lively, provocative, and vital, with work showcased there being published in an upcoming issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Performance Matters* (May 2018, vol. 4.1).

**We are thrilled to announce the expanded international exploration of these concerns with the organization of the second Circus and Its Others conference to be held in**

doctoral, on propose d'étudier la phase d'impulsion et de réception de l'acrobate sur la planche coréenne, ainsi que l'interaction homme-planche dans la réalisation du mouvement acrobatique.

L'objectif est d'améliorer la technique acrobatique des acrobates ou la conception de la planche coréenne. En comprenant le lien entre la technique de l'acrobate et le type de planche sur laquelle il saute, il sera possible de personnaliser la conception de la planche selon l'acrobate qui l'utilise (selon sa morphologie, son potentiel acrobatique et son objectif de performance) afin qu'il puisse développer au mieux sa performance acrobatique.

Marion Cossin est candidate au doctorat en génie biomédical à l'Université de Montréal et à l'École Polytechnique, Avant cela, elle a complété une maîtrise recherche en génie mécanique à l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. Ses travaux portent sur l'interaction entre l'équipement de cirque et l'acrobate d'un point de vue de la sécurité, de l'amélioration des performances ou de l'innovation technologique.

**Noon to 1 p.m.**

**Erin Ball (Kingston) and Vanessa Furlong (Halifax), circus artists and members of LEGacy Circus, talk about their work with prostheses and adaptable acrobatics.**

**LEGacy Circus is a duo contemporary circus collective**

**Prague, Czech Republic, 27-29 August 2018, during the Letní Letná circus festival, who joins us as a partner along with Cirqueon and Charles University.**

We invite proposals for research talks that address questions of difference and otherness in the context of contemporary circus. We further make explicit invitation for presentations from artists and practitioners who address such questions in their work, practice, and/or research-creation (our conference venue also includes some space for performance).

Possible areas of inquiry might include, but need not be limited to:

#### **Histories of circus and its others**

- What hidden histories of circus practice may be located in the visual archive?
- What are the histories of areas of circus practice that today are considered other to the mainstream, such as the use and display of animals?
- How do the histories of circus practice intersect with histories of colonialism and imperialism?

#### **Periphery and center**

- What might the Czech context tell us about the place of circus and its others in European or global perspectives?
- To what extent do hierarchies in academic research, funding practices, and artistic recognition affect the place and presence of “the other”?
- How do differing regional or national practices affect recognition on the world’s stages?

#### **Travelling otherness**

- What happens when circus talent and circus acts travel outside their cultures of origin and become “other”?
- To what extent do circuses use their national/regional/linguistic/ethnic difference as branding to enable their circulation in the global entertainment market? What practices of exotification and self-exotification may be employed in this?

#### **Circus bodies: Normal, extraordinary, other?**

- What are the implications of shifts in the mainstreaming of contemporary circus and related changes in skill, artistry, and training for circus artists including those who may carry historical baggage of “born otherness” with them?

featuring artists Erin Ball and Vanessa Furlong. The multi-disciplinary duo have focused their performances on adaptable acrobatics, aerial arts, flexibility, strength, dance and theatre. Their performances are unique, evocative and often humorous. What sets them apart is their focus on legs and leg attachments. Erin Ball is a double amputee who works both with and without her leg prostheses. Vanessa Furlong is a stilt dancer who also works with and without leg attachments (stilts).

- What is required and expected of the bodies of today's elite circus artists? With their toned, strong bodies do they now represent a societal ideal rather than society's outsiders? How do circus trainers as well as circus artists deal with questions of body image?

#### Gender and queerness in contemporary circus

- How are circus artists and companies resisting commodification and mainstreaming to keep the freak and queer in contemporary circus?
- Are women circus's perennial other?
- What and where are queer circus performances?

#### Creation, pedagogy, and practice

- What place is or should be granted "the other" in our schools and training facilities?
- How are differences given space and form in creation and practice-based research, and what are the related roles of dramaturgies and direction?
- How does doing the "business" of circus affect the role of difference in the art?

#### Social circus – the other of professional circus?

- How are circus artists and researchers using the circus arts to intervene in the lives of, and support, those othered by mainstream society?
- What are the power relations between social circus and professional circus, and how do questions of race/class/gender/ability figure in this?
- If social circus has become a conduit for those still considered other from the largely white European talent base to enter professional contemporary circus, what is the relationship of this flow of bodies to historical and current power relations between Global North and South?

Please send 300-500 word proposals for 20-minute presentations to [CircusOthersPrague@gmail.com](mailto:CircusOthersPrague@gmail.com) by **15 December 2017**. Please articulate clearly in your proposal if you plan to make a formal paper presentation or if as a practitioner/creator/researcher you wish to engage in a hybrid practice/talk/research/creation exploration. We hope to reply to all applicants in January 2018. The organizers are applying for financial support for the conference, but we regret that we cannot promise bursaries or travel grants at this time.

[Circus and Its Others Prague Academic Committee /](#)  
[Comité scientifique](#)

- Charles Batson, Union College, USA
- Michael Eigtved, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- Karen Fricker, Brock University, Canada
- Louis Patrick Leroux, Concordia University, Canada
- Martin Pšenička, Charles University, Czech Republic
- Veronika Štefanová, Cirqueon, Czech Republic

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