

## INTERVIEW WITH EMA DROUIN

©S.Fernandes



Ema Drouin is a trapeze artist, actress and director. She co-founded Compagnie Off in Tours in 1987. She trained at the Ecole Nationale du Cirque au Carré - Sylvia Montofort and attended flying trapeze classes. She later founded Deuxième Groupe d'Intervention and directed various productions. She also played the title role in *La maman du prince* and was involved in outdoor arts

programmes. In 2007, Deuxième Groupe d'Intervention settled in Malakoff (near Paris), where she deepened her writing, notably by writing the texts of her shows, while taking up the question of artistic involvement in the city through the relationship with landscapes, sensitive cartography and urban explorations.

### What drives your artistic approach?

My plays are inhabited by characters on the margins who speak out and emancipate themselves. I'm interested in uncovering what's not always visible to the naked eye: our humanity. My approach is to create from reality itself, giving voice and body to the unspoken, to get as close as possible to a reality that's not always easy to live with. Urban unspokenness, when the city undergoes transformations and forgets the men and women who live there; unspoken symbolic or more concrete violence directed at women, the young and the elderly.

This vital urge to speak is born from my personal history. By writing artistic situations in the public space, I seek the joyful, reflective path of encounter. I fictionalise the words of an angry young man to better convey the distress of uprooting (*Le Garçon qui Veillait*). Do people chain themselves to railings to prevent demolition? I call on my alter ego Marianne Rausalor and her group of researchers to create an offbeat cartography (Le Grep - Groupe de recherches poétique - *Vous avez du feu?*). A real-fake live radio broadcast is invited into the public space to give voice to helpless passers-by who are confronted with the mutations of a neighbourhood or an over-present drug sales outlet (*Radio Canapé*),

while headphone-based urban journeys, combining the words of local residents with music and poetry, bring out the intimacy that shapes public space (*D'ici on voit la tour Eiffel*).

My daily practice is to invest in ordinary times, to listen to the subjects that agitate, to invite ourselves into offbeat places to propose works of art. This interweaving and experimentation is possible because our host town, Malakoff (which is also where I live), gives me the artistic freedom and experimentation I need to create my work and then share it further afield, in other contexts.

### How does your current creation *Espace(s) de gratuité*<sup>1</sup> fit alongside your approach of emulating reality and creating from places of personal entanglement?

*Espace(s) de gratuité - Plastic, theatrical and musical performance* (expected to premiere in 2025) is a ceremony where a musician and four assessors display 5,830 objects, like a river flowing straight into the sea. Joyful or more disconcerting memories come to mind, the inconsistencies of a consumer society gone mad emerge, emotions collide between desire and disgust. Stories unfold, objects come to life, and others self-

1 In English : Free space(s)



we tested for the first time that day. The opportunity provided us with a chance to confirm our artistic choices, and to share with the audience, most of whom were non-French speakers, the textual dimension of the show, which was presented in French that day. Some of the text may be translated at a later date.

The question of the overproduction of objects and the need to question the predominant place they occupy is universal. As we noted in our discussions after the presentation, the public felt concerned and moved by the issues at stake. No doubt the choice of objects on display, some for their individual histories, others for their universality, helped to make the proposal accessible to all. The question of our being swallowed up by incredible quantities of objects is a global one.



*Espace(s) de gratuité - Plastic, theatrical and musical performance* ©Ema Drouin