Call for Papers

International conference
Opaque Presences: Queer Diasporic and Postmigrant Stages in Europe and Canada

7-8 october 2027
MSH de Clermont-Ferrand

Scientific committee :
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Stages can be understood as political spaces of the gaze as much as sites for the transmission of memory and the creation of minoritized knowledges. Starting from this observation, this international conference focuses on queer artists and collectives in Europe and Canada whose practices are shaped by diasporic and postmigrant conditions: artists who have crossed borders, as migrants, refugees or exiles, as well as artists whose practice engages with histories of migration.

We deliberately draw on several notions, since institutions apply the categories of refugee, migrant or "person with a migration background" unevenly, and artists move between them. Diaspora emphasizes dispersal, memory and long-distance ties (Hall 1990). Applied to dissident sexualities and genders, it asks about the desires that national and community narratives of origin alike often render "impossible" (Gopinath 2005), but also about the narratives surrounding "queer exile" (Fassin and Salcedo 2015). We think, for example, of the performances and texts of Kama La Mackerel, a queer artist of Mauritian origin based in Montréal, which bring Creole, French and English into dialogue. "Postmigrant," a notion that emerged from Berlin (Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Maxim Gorki Theater), names what unfolds from migration for those who have not migrated themselves (Yildiz and Hill 2014; Foroutan 2019). It inhabits the plays by Sasha Marianna Salzmann, who came from Russia to Germany, the Gayhane parties at Berlin's SO36, which grew out of Turkish and Middle Eastern queer cultures, and the work of Rébecca Chaillon in France, which draws on the reclaiming of postcolonial bodies and memories.

From drag performance by migrant queens and kings to stand-up comedy, opera, ballet, and drama, we will examine the creative scope of these staged intersections. Which scenic strategies arise from the double demand for legibility placed on queer artists, who are asked to narrate both their migration and their gender or sexuality as proof of authenticity, in asylum procedures as well as in funding applications (Luibhéid and Cantú 2005)? Do programs hosting exiled artists offer

protection, or do they establish visibility by categorizing them as “exiled artists”? How do forms of belonging located elsewhere than in family and nation (chosen families, nightlife, drag and ballroom scenes, spaces run by the artists concerned) feed scenic creation, as suggested by the Afro-Caribbean lineages of Barbada de Barbades's drag in Montréal or by the Parisian ballroom scene and how are they carried by queer communities of color rooted in African, Caribbean and Maghrebi diasporas, whose balls take over institutional venues such as the Gaîté Lyrique? How do displaced and non-conforming body and language become sites where borders are enforced and contested?

We propose to read these questions with three intertwined notions in mind. Invisibility can be thought of as a relation rather than a property of bodies: it depends on the gaze of the other, as Ralph Ellison showed, for whom one is invisible because others refuse to see (Grønstad and Vågnes 2019). Opacity, in Édouard Glissant's sense (1990), is a fully exposed presence that refuses to be reduced to total transparency: the right to enter into relation without being entirely grasped by another's categories. Silence is a withdrawal of speech, imposed (Spivak 1988) or chosen, in which case it can become a resource, to the point that Audre Lorde makes it the site of a transformation into language and action (Lorde 1984). These notions offer a way into regimes of legibility and recognizability (Butler 2009): hypervisible as “refugees” or “stand-ins” for an identity, artists risk seeing their aesthetic choices go unheard or unrecognized. The work of artists like Sorour Darabi, whose whose piece *Farci.e* (2016) situates the audience between Iran and France, confronts Farsi, which does not mark grammatical gender, with a French that assigns it to every word, and invites us to examine to what extent masking, humor, partial translation or the untranslatable can, for example, become aesthetic strategies and not only constraints.

Approaches and Axes

This conference brings together theater and performance studies, queer studies, the sociology of culture and aesthetic analysis to question how these performative practices reconfigure the relationship between aesthetics and politics.

Papers may, for example, fall (non-exclusively) within one of the following axes:

- **Languages**: multilingual dramaturgies, accents, translation and surtitling, the right not to translate, mother tongues lost, refused or reinvented, voice and sound (radio, podcast).

- **Structures**: theaters, festivals, funding, cultural policies, artist-run spaces, digital platforms; regimes of legibility (diversity programming, asylum, papers).

- **Imaginaries**: lineages, archives and memory, the circulation of forms (theatre, drag, voguing, cabaret, stand-up), myths and futures, bodies and materials that resist identification.

Contributions may draw on performance analysis, translation studies, fieldwork, archival research or practice-based research. Comparative contributions are also encouraged. We invite scholars, artists, dramaturgs, curators and archivists to join the conversation.

Practicalities

Papers may be given in French or English; we encourage preparing slides in a language different from that of the presentation.

Please send an abstract (250 words) and a short bio (120 words), in either of the two conference languages, to priscilla.wind@uca.fr AND tatiana.klepikova@ur.de by **15 February 2027.** Notification will follow in March.

The organizers are seeking funding and will indicate by spring 2027 what kind of support can be offered to selected participants.

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