



SNG MARIBOR



# Giants of the Plastic Landscape - Maribor, or: “How Did I Get Caught in a Cloud?”

26 - 27 November 2024 | Maribor, Slovenia

*On 26 and 27 November 2024, Ajda Tomazin and Špela Premelč participated in an artistic residency during which they developed the project Giants of the Plastic Landscapes - Maribor.*



## ARTISTS INVOLVED

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### AJDA TOMAZIN

Ajda Tomazin, a choreographer and designer, graduated in Contemporary Dance from the Art High School (SVŠGL) in 2005. She went on to earn her Bachelor's degree from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana in 2011, studying under Tanja Pak, MA, and Milan Erič, MA. Alongside her regular studies, she pursued film and television editing at AGRFT (Academy of Theatre, Film, and Television, Ljubljana) in 2010. The following year, her passion for the performing arts led her to the Institute for Applied Theatre Sciences at the University of Giessen, Germany, where she completed her Master's degree in Choreography and Performance in 2014 under the mentorship of Professor Dr. Bojana Kunst. Throughout her academic journey and beyond, Ajda has showcased her works—spanning photography, video, ceramics, and unique design—in numerous group and solo exhibitions. In the performing arts, she has collaborated as a costume and space designer with a variety of esteemed artists, including Maja Delak, Magdalena Reiter, Matevž Dobaj, and the M O N S T R A collective. Her exceptional contributions to scenography in contemporary dance earned her the Ksenija Hribar Award in 2019. As a choreographer, Ajda worked for several years at Schauspiel Frankfurt and has taught dance at KD Qulenium, Studio Dansa, JSKD seminars, and Schauspiel Frankfurt. During her master's studies, she initiated a long-term project titled *Imagination of Expectations*, culminating in a trilogy: the visual installation *Net in Work* (2012), the dance performance *String Theory* (2014), and the research performance *Audition for Producers* (2015–ongoing). Since 2014, Ajda has concentrated on two distinct artistic directions: creating dance performances for children and young audiences (*From Droplets to the Ocean*, *Chewgumitwist*, *Iceberg – The Giant*), and engaging in artistic-andragogical processes with older adults through social choreography projects (*Flock of Experienced Birds*, *Flock of Experienced Flyers*). What distinguishes her work is the seamless integration of choreography with visual design, spatial elements, and costume design, forming a unique creative language and methodology. These characteristics imbue her performances with originality and depth, gaining increasing recognition from the international professional community. Invitations to esteemed platforms and prestigious awards have affirmed the quality of her work. In 2019, Ajda established the Open Drawers Institute (*Zavod Odprti predali*) in Kranj, dedicated to contemporary interdisciplinary processes.

### ŠPELA PREMELČ

Špela Premelč holds a degree in Cultural Sociology and a teaching qualification in Geography. In 2015, under the mentorship of Tomaž Toporišič, she completed her thesis titled *Contemporary Dance in Slovenia: The Challenges of Establishing an Educational Vertical*. An active dancer and teacher of various dance styles, Špela began her journey in dance as a child, attending classes in ballroom and Latin American dances at the former Dance Center of Dolenjska, training in gymnastics, and completing elementary music school with a focus on guitar. At 15, she discovered jazz ballet and contemporary dance at

the Terpsihora Dance Society, where her teaching career in contemporary dance also began. Since the age of 18, she has taught contemporary and modern dance in Novo mesto and at the Imani Brežice Dance Society. She has consistently advanced her skills by attending dance workshops across Slovenia and participating actively in various dance events. At the ŽIVA 2012 Festival of Youth Dance Creativity, she received a Gold Award for her choreography Part: Whole with the Brežice group Ka'bavidas Pelera, and at the 4th Mini-Festival of Children's Dance Groups PIKA MIGA, she was awarded a Gold Award for her choreography Children's (Un)Luck. Since 2013, she has also been an active swing dancer and instructor at Studio Dansa in Ljubljana, regularly competing and achieving outstanding results. Her unique strength lies in her versatility as a dancer and her solid pedagogical and andragogical background, enabling her to teach diverse age groups and dance styles effectively.

## THE RESIDENCY

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*In the first phase of their artist residency, the creators focused primarily on the local atmosphere of the city of Maribor, its current needs, shortcomings in environmental policies, and the specific working conditions at the Slovenian National Theatre Maribor. As part of the residency, they toured all the technical workshops, the theatre's costume archive (the so-called fundus), and exchanged insights with key stakeholders in their creation process – from the technical teams for sound and scenography to the production team and expert staff.*

*To adhere as closely as possible to the principles of sustainable theatre, the creators brought most of the materials, recyclable for artistic purposes, with them. Through their own artistic reflection, they outlined the key themes they sought to highlight in the performance:*

*a) The movement challenges posed by objects representing environmental burdens, creating an allegory of difficult or problematic synchronization between the dancer and an inflated plastic object. The object, with its inherent movement logic, does not always conform to the dancer's intentions.*

*b) The persistence of these objects in our environment, symbolized through the concept of "stolen presence". This is reflected in the way oversized objects, larger in surface area than the performers themselves, can be "disruptive" by diverting the audience's attention toward themselves.*

*The creators then leveraged this fact to enhance the message of the performance, aiming to underscore the disruptive presence of objects that, at a certain point, can only be seen as waste.*

As a second part of the creative process, they hosted an experiential workshop, aimed at young audiences, titled How Did I Get Caught in a Cloud?

The workshop was conducted with a group of dancers aged 11 to 15 from Plesna izba Maribor, under the guidance of dancer and educator Dalanda Diallo. One of the main objectives of the research workshop was, on the one hand, to observe how young participants respond to the artistic use of plastic objects or, more broadly, objects that today represent a major environmental burden as non-recyclable waste. On the other hand, the aim was to identify their attitudes toward environmental issues in general. Furthermore, the authors aimed to gather new insights into the potential reception of their performance *Giants of Plastic Landscapes – Maribor* through the direct feedback of young participants on the themes addressed in the production. Their goal was to explore how the performance could be improved to ensure its message resonates more clearly and profoundly with young audiences.

The workshop included objects featured in the performance, with a primary focus on the “cloud” object, made of plastic. Participants began by engaging with the cloud through touch, observation, and interaction – walking past it, noticing its responses, hugging it, wrapping themselves in it, and more. Following this initial tactile and visual stimulation, a pre-recorded sound element was introduced. The dancers put on headphones and listened to a segment of the performance’s soundscape.

Within this task, they began to move and explore the landscape formed by the interplay of the clouds and the collective movement of all participants. Afterward, they reflected on their experience, discussing what had left an impression, both in memory and in bodily sensations.



The second phase of improvisation removed the physical clouds from the space, leaving only the soundscape in the headphones. Each dancer individually explored how the earlier experience had shaped and inspired their movement in relation to or in dialogue with the cloud.

After completing the improvisation, the dancers reflected on their feelings through drawing. The facilitators brought a long white sheet of paper, and the young participants used crayons to draw or write the stories that emerged during their improvisation. These included tales of mist, droplets, monsters, flowers, and more, as well as thoughts, obstacles, and doubts. Each participant shared their narrative, and the reflections concluded with a discussion on the overall experience of the workshop.

The workshop proved to be an inspiring exploration of different materialities, providing opportunities for imaginative engagement. The following day, the dancers attended the performance, which addressed environmental issues, further deepening the themes explored in the experimental workshop.

#### UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) LINKED TO THE WORKSHOP

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