



# SESSIONS WITH FRIDA

A performance on the possibility of healing

In order to understand the trembling movement of the world, it is imperative to do it from where one stands. Eduardo Glissant said that there are innumerable visible and invisible ties binding all corners of the world. I am a Mexican woman living in Austria. Not only that, I'm an afro-latin brown artist who has travelled more than she had expected. I, as everyone else, am an island connected in an archipelagic manner to the trembling ocean that is the world.

The quest of this performance leans towards pain, towards understanding my suffering as a complex combination of personal, historical and social pain. I am constantly crossed, and affected, by numerous pulses that are inscribed in my memory, my fantasies, my surroundings, in the news and in my body. We are all a pulsating conglomeration of continuous affects.

The aim of this performance is to dig deep into my personal pain and story to reflect upon the possibilities of healing. With the understanding that nothing is more universal than the personal.

As part of a **real live psychoanalysis session on stage** (with a practicing psychoanalyst); the public will be able to witness the dilemmas, stories, traumas and reactions that I deal with on an almost daily basis. I face discrimination and violence constantly: I am affected by the chauvinistic violence in Mexico, by the drug cartel stories, by the racism in Vienna, by the impossible life expectations that Hollywood has planted on my head since I was a little girl. I will also dwell onto a personal suffering of loss and abandonment. Also, I'm crossed by the memories of different places that I have witnessed, by numerous encounters and thoughts.



This is a performance on the possibility of healing and it will reflect upon different healing perspectives from various places: psychoanalysis from Europe (taking especial consideration of Vienna as the cradle of psychoanalysis), shamanism from Mexico (through re-enacted whispers and movements) and healing songs from South Africa. The South African composer and musician Neo Muyanga will be part of the artistic team and will compose and perform music especially for this performance.

The main narrative thread will be the psychoanalysis session which will be, at some points, taken over by the originally composed music, by original video art (the Indian filmmaker Ujjwal Utkarsh will be part of the artistic team), or by movements, whispers and prayers performed by me. The idea behind this performance is that in order for me to heal I need to make use of the healing techniques from all the places that I'm crossed by. Which rituals are there to make use of when thinking of healing personal / social pain?

The stage, light and costume design will engage in a research on the theatricality of the healing spaces, particularly that of psychoanalysis. For this research we will have support from the Freud Museum in Vienna as we will be able to make use of their library and archive.

The script process will be an artistic research process together with the psychoanalyst, interviews conducted with a Mexican shaman (Ignacio Maldonado) and research on notions of trauma, collective pain and personal desires. The composition of the music will as well be created from an artistic dialogue with Neo Muyanga on the healing possibilities of songs and myths (both from South Africa and Mexico). As noted before, there will as well be a video projection that will be another narrative thread of the performance; which will as well emerge from a close dialogue with Ujjwal Utkarsh as an exploration of creating time and feelings of timelessness through filmmaking.



"Tell them about how you're never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside."

Audre Lorde, 1977

# SCHEDULE

ACTIVITY	REALIZATION
RESEARCH FOR SCRIPT	OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020
WRITING OF SCRIPT	JANUARY - MARCH 2021
RESEARCH, COMPOSITION AND RECORDING OF MUSIC	JANUARY - MAY 2021
RESEARCH, FILM AND EDITING	FEBRUARY - JUNE 2021
PRESENTATION AT BRUT WIEN	MARCH 2021
PERFORMATIVE RESEARCH	FEBRUARY - JUNE 2021
REHEARSAL - 1ST PHASE	JULY 2021
STAGE, LIGHT AND COSTUME DESIGN	JULY 2021
COMBINING ALL ELEMENTS	AUGUST 2021
OVERALL REHEARSAL	AUGUST 2021
PREMIERE AT WUK WIEN	3RD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 2021

# CAST

## On stage:

Frida Robles (writer and performer)

Markus Zochmeister (Psychoanalyst)

Neo Muyanga (musician and composer)

## Off stage:

Ujjwal Utkarsh (video and editing)

N.N. (stage, light and costume designer)

# Project supported by Huggy Bears 2020-2021

Studio visit in **Brut Wien** - March 2021 as part of the **Imagetanz Festival**.

Premiere at **WUK (Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus) Wien** in September 2021.

With support by the **Freud Museum in Vienna**.

# BIOS

## Frida Robles

Performance and conceptual artist and curator. Her practice focuses on an essayistic approach to street-based knowledge, interconnectivity, subversive power of imagination and site / context specificity. She holds a bachelor's degree in History and a master's degree at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. With the support of the FONCA Young Creators she wrote the speculative fiction book "All love letters are ghost stories" as an outcome of an open research on love for which she performed as a public scrivener in the Santo Domingo square in Mexico City in 2015-2016. She has been a resident artist at Q21 (Austria); Botkyrka Residency (Sweden); transeuropa performing arts festival (Germany); Residency 108 (USA) and De Liceiras 18 (Portugal), and Clark House Initiative (India). She was a fellow at the Raw Academy in Dakar, Senegal. She is currently a PhD in Philosophy candidate at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna with support from the JUMEX Contemporary Art Foundation.

<https://fridarobles.wordpress.com/>

## Neo Muyanga

Neo Muyanga is a composer, sound artist and librettist. His work traverses new opera, jazz improv and African idiomatic song. He learned indigenous African song in the school choir in Soweto in the 1980s; and he sang madrigals while studying in Italy in the '90s. In 1996 he co-founded (with Masauko Chipembere) the duo, Blk Sonshine, and in 2008, co-founded (with Ntone Edjabe) the Pan African Space Station - a platform for cutting-edge Pan African music and sound art on the internet. He has released 9 records to date - his latest, MAKEdbA (2019), explores the theme of exile as core to the human condition in the 21st century. His stage productions include the opera, *The Heart of Redness* - adapted from Zakes Mda's novel of the same name (2015), and *A Maze in Grace* – a ritual procession for chorus which opened the 34th Art Biennial of Sao Paulo (2020). Muyanga tours widely as a solo performer, bandleader and choral conductor.

<http://www.neosong.net/index.html>

## Ujjwal Utkarsh

Ujjwal Utkarsh is a Phd-in-Practice candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. He has been trying to develop a form that emerges out of the observational cinema tradition and he continues to do that through his PhD project. For Utkarsh, this has resonances with John Cage's ideas of beauty, and he has explored that through various forms and themes. He has looked at ideas of nothingness, of being in transit and also at labour practices, specifically at peculiar farming practices. In his current ongoing work, he explores if and how through this form he can look at and reflect upon political activity. In the current political situation, where the space for voice of dissent is rapidly diminishing, truth is either viewed very simplistically and reality as objective or the postmodern perspective renders all truth relative and all reality socially constructed. In this context, this is also an exploration to see if such ideas of observational form could create a space that avoids pitfalls of both these seemingly untenable theoretical extremes. Utkarsh has worked as an independent filmmaker while frequently dabbling into other forms like photography, sound and theater. He has also been a faculty of various aspects of filmmaking in several institutes across India.

<http://www.kanishka.co.in/>