

Wherever we are We are what is missing

— JL Murtaugh & Goda Palekaitė

One morning in late October in Marseille, it's so warm that we're still wearing t-shirts. We grab espressos to go, squeeze onto a crowded bus, and hurry through the quartiers nord to reach the entrance of a warehouse-like building. Bullet holes stipple the concrete walls. There's no sign, but someone opens the door—they've been waiting for us. We've arrived at *Le Polygone Étoilé*, the 'star polygon'. Behind this enigmatic name lies a community of radical care and transparency. For twenty years, this experimental cinema space has created, shared, and discussed film with some of the city's most vulnerable residents—the inhabitants of the *quartiers nord*, an area even the police do not enter. *Triangle-Astérides*, our hosting institution, is also located in the north, at *La Friche la Belle de Mai*, a former tobacco factory. The majority of that factory's workers have historically been children—their tiny fingers were more suitable for rolling cigarettes.

It's no coincidence that the epicentre of this year's Rupert Alternative Education Program became its two-week residency in Marseille. This is a city of contrasts, radically Mediterranean—dazzling, unsettling, charming, desperate, inspiring, exhausting, decadent. In its lush, wealthy outskirts, we cross paths with wild boars and foxes. In the noisy city centre, the dealers operate around the clock with the backdrop of French colonial grandeur, now covered in the slurry of social segregation. This place is all about identity, displacement, memory, grief, illness, addiction, upbeat tempos, cacophony, uncanniness, wealth, legacy, delusion—and hope. These are all keywords suited to the practices of this year's AEP participants. And yet, the sun is always shining. Marseille welcomes us, as it has long welcomed people seeking answers. Etel Adnan (1925–2021), who once wrote, “Wherever I am, I am what is missing” in her poem *The Arab Apocalypse* (1980), also lived here. Her Lebanese voice of loss, destruction, and hope, echoes in our present moment. It is easy to lose sight of the world and focus on cultural funding results or art-bubble gossip while sitting in a Scandinavian-style riverside artist residency. This is precisely why we must step outside that frame—to return to wherever 'home' is for us, with fresh, perhaps even aching eyes, and a broader, decentralised field of vision. This is what we consider education.

Wherever we are We are what is missing is not only an homage to Etel Adnan, Marseille, and the extremes of today's world. It's also a riddle, an invitation to embrace the ephemeral, to disappear in the haze, to sing publicly for the first time.

It is a deliberate choice to hold this final event for the 2024 Rupert AEP in the Composers House, the home of the Lithuanian

Composers Union and a landmark dating back to a difficult history. It is a monument to idealism in the face of tyranny, the power of creative voices, the value of collective labour, and a domestic sanctuary that welcomes all visitors. We could not imagine a more appropriate location in Vilnius for the practices of this year's artists. This venue bears significant meaning for the role of public institutions, the importance of artistic process, and the politically fraught moment where we all stand, simultaneously, as witnesses and participants.

You might find yourself, like **Greta Štiormer**, reinterpreting lines and filling the gaps in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of humanity's oldest surviving literary works. Written on clay tablets in ancient Mesopotamia, most of the epic poem is missing. Greta's practice delves into queer grief and community-building, using *Gilgamesh's* incomplete format as a scaffold for performed hermeneutics apprehended through homoerotic experiences.

Or, like **Markéta Slaná**, choreographing a ballet of robotic creatures, perpetually cleaning the house. Markéta's humorously banal scenarios explore the interplay between the grotesque post-human body, meta-irony, and the transformative potential of digital mysticism.

How do we assign value to labour and representation, for example in the arts? Markéta and **Ieva Gražytė** assembled a collection of songs and sounds representing money, spinning endlessly on a compact disc like the wheel of fortune—a hyper-pop mix including computer game soundtracks, TV series themes, and bitcoin mining. They emphasise the siren charms of capital exchange through post-Marxist sarcasm.

This is **Ieva's G.** expertise—as an analytical writer on the commodification of value in the arts, spirituality, and finance. Her *Theory of Care* is embodied in a sentimental piece of family property—a carpet her mother won at a casino while pregnant with Ieva. This work is a reminiscence of the *dystopian times of scarcity* in 1990s Lithuania, as the country experimented with the value of goods, property, and laws. Wherever we are now, aren't we nostalgic for that radical unknown that went forever missing?

Martyna Ratnik, too, is busy with memory or the blank spaces within it. She narrates absence, displaces the centre-periphery of historical discourse, and trivialises politics in ways that reveal its absurdity. In her poetic piece, *she's waiting for the sunset*, the love and life story of Martyna's Babushka is distilled into a single page and a short 16 mm film, transforming a family

archive into a grand narrative that captures the bizarre forms of oppression under Soviet ideology.

An interdisciplinary artist and composer, **Samuel Barbier-Ficat** knows the conceptual freedom of hybridisation between disciplines. In a concert with, and for, the wrapped grand piano, he performs the role of a conductor interpreting the classical format as a spectacle. Confounding audience expectations and prescribed forms of performance, he confronts the inevitable twin pressures of personal fate and societal tradition, placing himself on the brink of disaster yet striding confidently and purposefully toward the unknown.

In manifesting her quest to understand the life of Charlotte Bach, a mercurial personality, radical thinker, and challenging political contradiction, **Donna Marcus Duke** possesses powerful courage, composure, and energy. Her aptitudes in theatre, communication, and writing are critical investigatory tools to commune with a complicated character in Bach; who believed she would receive the Nobel Prize for discovering that transness is the driving force of evolution. In her performance lecture, Donna previews their own Nobel Prize laureate speech, given Bach's posthumous ineligibility.

Vulnerability and affliction are critical mediums for **Ieva Rižė**, straining the limits of her autobiographical voice and personal fiction as mortal prompts to stimulate repressed intentions, beliefs, and actions. Is rehearsing self-love enough to yield equivalent pleasure? As our bodies and minds struggle to adapt to social media and artificial intelligence, is *fake it till you make it* a viable strategy or a recipe for emotional collapse?

Gabrielė Černiavskaja works with exposure conditions and intimate voices in crippled space. Grounded in architectural practice, she probes the spatial consequences of addiction and dependence, at personal and societal levels. For Gabrielė, spaces are bodies, with a nervous system affected by habit and substance. Our psychological and physiological responses to these normally disregarded margins reinforce how social dynamics are collectively actualized.

These two days of events at the Composers House are an enthusiastic conclusion to the 2024 AEP programme. Its prelude was a public presentation on Marseille-based *Ola Radio*, where the participants explored ways to translate their research into sound alone, collaboratively composing a three-hour live program. However, this coda arises only after six months of forging a community of trust built from the moment of their arrival.

Our initial, informal meeting in Vilnius the night before the

programme officially commenced was cautious and tentative, like in all new relationships. Several international participants were still in transit. Surprisingly, even the Lithuanian contingent did not yet know one another well. However, it was clear from those first moments that the intangible qualities and potential vibrations we hoped to see from this group were already beginning to crystallise.

Assembling in the railway station early the following morning, the remainder of the participants arrived. With each person's appearance, our momentum began to gather. A long, noisy train journey followed, deep into the countryside. We exchanged coffee and introductions in a mobile housewarming party blended with a game of musical chairs.

We spent the next few days at the Žeimai Manor House cooking, walking, and introducing each participant's practice and research topics. Here, the resonances we'd recognised in their proposals, and hoped to cultivate over the months ahead, became immediately tangible.

The group is remarkable in its unquestioned openness, communication, honesty, and support. They transformed quickly from a gathering of individuals to a functioning cooperative, all while retaining and refining their unique identities. It's fair to say it's been an unusual time for the AEP—and Rupert in general—but these artists' resilience, optimism, and realism give us energy for education's purpose and the future of artistic work.

It's in this spirit we present *Wherever we are We are what is missing*, a meditation on the distinct practices of these artists and a reflection of their communal dynamism and thematic fluidity. These two days invite you to join the group in their temporary home, to share their emotions and hope. Here is a provocation of intimacy and frankness, a pronounced resistance to weaponised fear, despondence, and ethical vacancy.

Exhibitions, publications, films, and performances are not singular or isolated, they are points on a continuum. This event is not a conclusion, it's a statement of intent.

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2024 Rupert Alternative Education Programme Final Event

28–29 November, 6–10pm

Composers' House, Vilnius

EN

Programme

Thursday, 28 November

- 18:00 Doors open
- 18:30 **Gabrielė Černiavskaja** Whisperer
- 19:00 **Martyna Ratnik** conversation with curator **Goda Palekaitė**
- 20:00 **Donna Marcus Duke** Nobel Prize Lecture in Physiology or Medicine
- 21:30 **Ieva Rižė** imagine GOAT talking

Friday, 29 November

- 18:00 Doors open
- 18:30 **Gabrielė Černiavskaja** Whisperer
- 19:00 **Greta Štiormer** Weeping Opera
- 20:00 **Ieva Gražytė** Theory of Care
- 21:00 **Ieva Rižė** imagine GOAT talking
- 21:30 **Samuel Barbier-Ficat** Curtain Music
- 22:00 Party

Ongoing

Upper level

- Markéta Slaná** home alone
- Ieva Gražytė and Markéta Slaná** Motherlode
- Ieva Gražytė** Theory of Care
- Gabrielė Černiavskaja** Whisperer

Lower level and exterior

- Martyna Ratnik** she's waiting for the sunset

Rupert Alternative Education Programme (AEP) is a transdisciplinary para-academic programme centred around the principles of collectivity, performativity, and criticality, embracing non-linear, decentralised knowledge. Each year, Rupert's team selects a diverse, international group of artists and other cultural practitioners from an open call to join the six-month programme. Through workshops, lectures, research trips, peer criticism, other collective engagements, and individual mentoring sessions, participants develop and share their projects, in close relationship with Rupert's curatorial team and guest tutors.

This year, the AEP held sessions at the Žeimai Manor House, Akee residency in Aleknaičiai, and two weeks in Marseille, hosted by Triangle-Astérides as part of the Lithuanian Season in France. The first AEP public presentation took shape as a three-hour-long radio program on Ola Radio streaming live from Marseille. The tutors of this year's programme were Aikas Žado Laboratory, Ama Josephine Budge Johnstone, Billy Bultheel, Marie-Therese Bruglacher, Ceci Moss, Domas Noreika, Eglė Ambrasaitė, Laura Marija Balčiūnaitė, Lithic Alliance, Nabila Tavolieri, PRICE, Ren Loren Britton & Goda Klumbytė, Sara Sassanelli, Sarah Friend, Vaida Stepanovaitė, Hannah Black, and Mariam Benbakkar.

Work list

Samuel Barbier-Ficat
Curtain Music
Performance installation, 30'

Gabrielė Černiavskaja
Whisperer
Musical instrument, sound recording
Performance, 10'

Ieva Gražytė
Theory of Care
Family carpet, lights, text
Performance, 20'

Ieva Gražytė and Markéta Slaná
motherlode
Audio mix on compact disc

Donna Marcus Duke
Nobel Prize Lecture in Physiology or Medicine 2024
Performance, 60'

Martyna Ratnik
she's waiting for the sunset
Three-channel HD video projection, audio, LED architectural lighting, LED panel
Cameraman Tomas Andrijauskas, composer Viktoras Urbaitis, analogue filmmaking mentor Miki Ambrózy, archival footage Šiauliai Drama Theatre

Ieva Rižė
imagine GOAT talking
Performance, 30'

Markéta Slaná
home alone
Autonomous vacuum cleaners

Greta Štiormer
Weeping Opera
Performance, 30'
Performer/vocalist Vaidas Bartušas, composer Evaldas Alekna, costume designer Nunilo Rumbutis, makeup Sidas Martinavičius

Publication



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