

MANIPULATE

Media Release

Thursday 19 November 2020

Puppet Animation Scotland Announce MANIPULATE Festival's 2021 Hybrid Programme

Tickets on sale today

Combining a bespoke multi-city outdoor installation artwalk, and a digital programme packed with performance, screenings and workshops, including an international celebration of womxn in animation on and off screen - MANIPULATE Festival returns in brand new form against the odds this January.

The innovative festival of international, award-winning visual theatre, puppetry and animated film will return for its 14th edition from **21 January – 21 February 2021** in a new hybrid format. The programme will take place in digital form providing festival fans and new audiences with the opportunity to enjoy the line-up from the comfort of their own homes, and for those in select Scottish cities - Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow - the chance to experience a specially commissioned kinetic sculpture series, called **Restless Worlds**.

Each year MANIPULATE Festival brings audiences together to experience boundary-pushing performances. With the aim of providing a spark of light at the top of a new year and making the tail end of winter a whole lot more interesting, the 2021 festival programme will celebrate themes of playfulness and fun, alongside works exploring connection and isolation.

The programme comprises an exciting blend of artists who were originally lined up to perform live at the festival's Edinburgh home of Summerhall, and have now adapted their work to film or are experimenting in a digital space, alongside artists whose work was specifically created for an online or outdoor context. Collaborations and creations in the programme comes from Chicago, Berlin and South Africa alongside Scottish and UK makers including Shona Reppe and MHz.

Dawn Taylor, Puppet Animation's new director came into the role in August of this year, as the pandemic had completely taken hold. Inheriting an already programmed line-up of live performance, Dawn and the Puppet Animation Scotland team had to swiftly reimagine the festival in a whole new way.

"In the challenging circumstances that the pandemic has thrown up for our sector, the immediate priority for myself and the Puppet Animation Scotland team was finding a way to generate work for as many artists as we could. Commissioning, hosting installations and digital theatre - all these represent uncharted territory for Puppet Animation Scotland, but we have been overwhelmed by the creativity and ingenuity of artists in meeting this brief, said Dawn.

"It's clear that there are challenges to come for us as a society this winter, and so we also wanted to create something exciting and concrete that audiences can put in their diaries and look forward to. We're thrilled to be able to keep providing boundary-pushing creative experiences through MANIPULATE in 2021."

The resulting programme comprises two strands:

MANIPULATE features a brand new **outdoor element in 2021**. In response to the ever-changing covid regulations and the real, tangible need for a live artistic experience, the kinetic sculpture installation artwalk, **Restless Worlds** will open at the **Lyceum**, Edinburgh (21-24 January), before visiting various locations across the city centre of **Edinburgh** (26 January - 31 February), **Aberdeen** (3-10 February) and **Glasgow** (12 - 21 February).

Eight artists have been commissioned to create stories combining moving sculpture works for windows and soundscapes around each city. The series of works will be created by some of Scotland's leading puppeteers, sculptors and animators, and will each be imbued with movement using motors, screens and mechanisms. Audiences will download a map and audio files to their phones to follow the trails to discover miniature moving worlds. In a moment of wider social and cultural upheaval, the selected artists and their curious creations include:

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Shona Reppe – with an intricate hospital for objects that have broken and been repaired through Kintsugi, the Japanese art of fixing things with gold lacquer; **Guy Bishop** with a huge vending machine which generates random Covid-19 policies using wheels and life size figures; **Chell Young** with a beautiful scale model of the Santa Maria Novella in Florence, symbolising escalating misinformation around issues like the climate crisis; and **Lucas Chih-Peng Kao and Katarina Cakova** displaying strange fictional animals, long extinct in Victorian-style curio case combining animated shadow movement.

Joining them, **Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre** and novelist **Heather Parry** create a bespoke story to accompany a classic Sharmanka kinemat - *Apple Eaters*, symbolises temptation and deception, resources and collaboration; **Gavin Glover** in his signature faulty optic style presents a cabinet of curious scenes, exploring myths and science; **Jessica Innes** creates a specially designed living room and animated film of an elderly puppet combating isolation; and **Samuel Watterworth** presents an exploration of radio signals, human technology, interconnection and disconnection where audiences can influence the shapes made on screen with their own movement via movement capture cameras.

DIGITAL FESTIVAL / MANIPULATE Festival #14 will take place from **27 January to 7 February**, with a visually led performance programme of 15 events, featuring exciting international and Scottish artists spanning puppetry, visual and physical theatre, animated film, aerial and contortion, alongside workshops, social events and discussions.

In **international work** Chicago-based Edinburgh Fringe favourites **Manual Cinema** will make their MANIPULATE debut presenting the UK digital preview of the acclaimed work *The End of TV* – set in a post-industrial Rust Belt city in the 1990s, told through a collection of 70's R&B inspired art pop songs; and *Boxed* by Berlin-based Israeli puppeteer **Ariel Doron** presents a one-man masterclass in minimalist puppetry; a funny, sensitive and scary fantasy about a lonely man trying to get in touch with himself and the world.

A dynamic collaboration, *The Lonely Sailor Weather Report* is the result of a partnership between South African animator **Meghan Judge**, theatre designer **Craig Leo** and the **Ukwanda Puppetry and Design Collective**. This exploration of amphibious living was commissioned by the National Arts Festival in South Africa.

In **UK performance**, female-led experimental theatre company **Snap-Elastic** present *EAT ME* - a new piece of visual theatre about two women who use the dark web to find each other and together commit an act of “consensual” cannibalism; and **Sita Pieraccini** returns to MANIPULATE with *Crunch* – a companion piece to 2017 show *Bird*, designed especially for a digital platform in response to the current moment, exploring themes of isolation and connection with nature.

Emergent theatre-maker **Sarah Cosgrove** makes her festival debut with new work, *Today I Bake* - a visually compelling, exploration of themes sourced from Grimm's Rumpelstiltskin; and following on from their highly successful cabaret performance of *Draculala* at MANIPULATE in 2020, physical theatre and cabaret collective **LARDS** are back with *Drackattack* – a brand new music video.

The digital format of the festival also provides some opportunity for some **sneak preview snapshots and works in progress**, of UK based artists including:

Performance maker **Tashi Gore's The Yellow Canary** – an epic true story and leap into the imagination of a young child fleeing from their home to escape the horrors of war; visual theatre makers **MHz** and circus artist **Hannah Finn** combine AV design, somatic choreography and the art of contortion to create *[dream]ENGINE offline memory processor* inspired by neuroscience, memory and surrealism; and **Kasia Zawadzka** makes her festival debut with *ILL LIT* - a powerful aerial and physical theatre performance exploring mental health, cycles of repetition and the struggle to break out.

Once again MANIPULATE has partnered with **Surge Scotland** to identify two exciting new indoor physical theatre projects for development. This year these works are: *tank* by **Zoe Bullock and Alice Langely** – a physical theatre exploration of how we cope when everything gets too much set in a UV fish tank, and *BALLAD OF THE CRONE* by Scottish-based Peruvian artist **Leonora Estrada Francke** – an autofiction performance lecture about the child-mother relationship, cannibalism, cooking, and community.

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In **animated film**, we are delighted to welcome back the **Edinburgh Short Film Festival** to curate another dynamic and vibrant programme of award-winning international short animated films, which explore moments of connection and isolation in **ANIMATED HIGHLIGHTS: 2021**. Featuring works from Slovenia, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, USA, New Zealand and the UK, each explores an aspect of the things which draw us together or pull us apart.

Featured as part of this programme is the Puppet Animation Scotland / Edinburgh Short Film Festival 2020 Best Animated Film Award winner, **NIGEL** by **Nataszyna Cetner**, alongside works by **Pieter Coudyzer**, **Segolene Romier**, **Izzy Gibbs**, **Milanka Fabjancic**, **Damon Mohl**, **Gabriel Bohmer**, **Martin Romero** and **Paul James**.

And for the first time, MANIPULATE presents **Animated Womxn** - a womxn led showcase of extraordinary stop-frame and VFX work from the animated film industry. Featuring 12 animated shorts from Brazil, Czech Republic, England, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa and the USA, the programme is made by and for womxn. The programme is curated by Puppet Animation Scotland and supported by **Animated Woman UK, Scotland (AWUK)** and the **PANIMATION** Network.

After the screening, **AWUK** will lead a creative panel discussion with 5 animators from the **Animated Womxn** programme to discuss their creative practice and to reflect on their experience as a womxn in the animated film industry.

PANIMATION is a multi-platform community of womxn, trans and non-binary people working within animation and motion graphics. The founders of the network will host a **DRINK 'N' DRAW WITH PANIMATION** workshop, an evening of chats and games, exploring how to combat gender stereotypes through character development when generating new stories.

MANIPULATE will provide further opportunities for creatives to develop their artistic practice, through a series of **workshops** specially designed to respond to artists' needs in the current climate including **Rene Baker**, with **Bringing the Metaphor to Life** and **Ariel Doron** with **Object Theatre & the Virtual Stage**.

Tickets for the 2021 festival go on sale at midday on Thursday 19 November visit [MANIPULATEfestival.org](https://manipulatefestival.org).

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Listings

DIGITAL FESTIVAL / MANIPULATE Festival #14

29 January - 7 February

DAY PASS - £10 full price / £7 concession

DIGITAL FESTIVAL PASS - £20 full price / £15 concession

RESTLESS WORLDS / MANIPULATE Festival #14

21 January - 21 February

£7 full price

£5 concession

All available at [MANIPULATEfestival.org](https://manipulatefestival.org).

For access information visit <https://manipulatefestival.org/access/>.

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Notes to editors.

About MANIPULATE Festival

MANIPULATE Festival presents the very best of Scottish and international puppetry, visual theatre and animated film to adult audiences in Edinburgh and beyond. The Festival aims to engage and challenge our audiences with high-quality visually led work which pushes boundaries, plays with form and challenges perceptions.

By bringing together the very best puppetry, visual theatre and animated film from across the globe with work which has been developed here in Scotland, we aim to spark opportunities for artistic exchange and to offer our audiences a diverse palette of rich visually led work.

Since 2008 leading, award-winning companies, artists and film-makers from Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and the USA have provided the vibrant, dynamic core of a festival that entertains, intrigues and inspires.

Over this period, we have presented 115 productions and 207 feature and short animated films at MANIPULATE, including 2 world premieres, 4 European premieres, 48 UK premieres and 70 Scottish premieres. In addition, through our Snapshots and Testroom programmes, we have presented new works in development by 64 Scottish-based theatre artists.

In 2021, for the first time we will present a digital programme, featuring 12 digital theatre productions, of which 5 are works-in-progress, 22 short animated films and 3 workshops, alongside a live immersive installation programme featuring work by 8 artists.

About Puppet Animation Scotland

Founded in 1984, Puppet Animation Scotland champions puppetry, visual theatre and animated film in Scotland and internationally. As well as our MANIPULATE Festival and Puppet Animation Festival, Puppet Animation Scotland provides year-round networking opportunities, practical advice, support and encouragement to all artists working in puppetry, visual theatre and animated film. We promote and celebrate these art forms as valued art forms integral to Scotland's rich and diverse cultural life. Since 2000 Scottish puppetry companies have presented their work to over 1,850,000 people throughout the UK.