

J&J
(JESSICA HUBER AND JAMES
LEADBITTER)
THE ART OF A CULTURE OF HOPE



PHOTO BY JAMES LEADBITTER

Created by J&J (Jessica Huber and James Leadbitter)
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PHOTO BY JESSICA HUBER

The future isn't looking hopeful. Climate change, peak oil, mass migration, wars in the Arab world and beyond, destabilisation within Europe, financial instability, the rise of nationalism and the erosion of human rights.

It's difficult to look into the future without fear.

J&J (Jessica and James) feel that culture can influence this narrative. They believe that people need a space for shared creativity and that during a time of fear there is little space for this. The art of a culture of hope confronts the catastrophes and misfortunes of the contemporary world. It opposes the politics and social structures of fear with the utopian idea of a 'Culture of Hope', and asks, "How do we deal with fear and understand its causes and effects on us?" and, "How can we create a space for potential, a space for hope?"

J&J have been developing a socially engaged creative process that begins with Space for Hope workshops, moving into evenings of performance and sharings called Tender Provocations of Hope and Fear, and manifesting into an installation, Archive of Hope and Fear. In each site, J&J work with different groups identified with the location partner for the workshops, offering a sustained period of engagement and ending with the performance event or exhibition that will ideally be placed in non-arts space in the heart of those communities.

The project was born in response to Switzerland's unique form of direct democracy, where regular referendums offer the electorate a chance to vote on constitutional changes. J&J frame the project with a provocation, an aim to make this 'culture of hope' a new paragraph within the Swiss constitution. With this ambition at the heart of the project, J&J want to give people a sense of agency and a tool to demand their right to hope. Together with people across the world, they want to evolve a collectively authored definition of what a culture of hope can be, and ask 'What do we need in the hand to fight the politics of fear?'

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

J&J

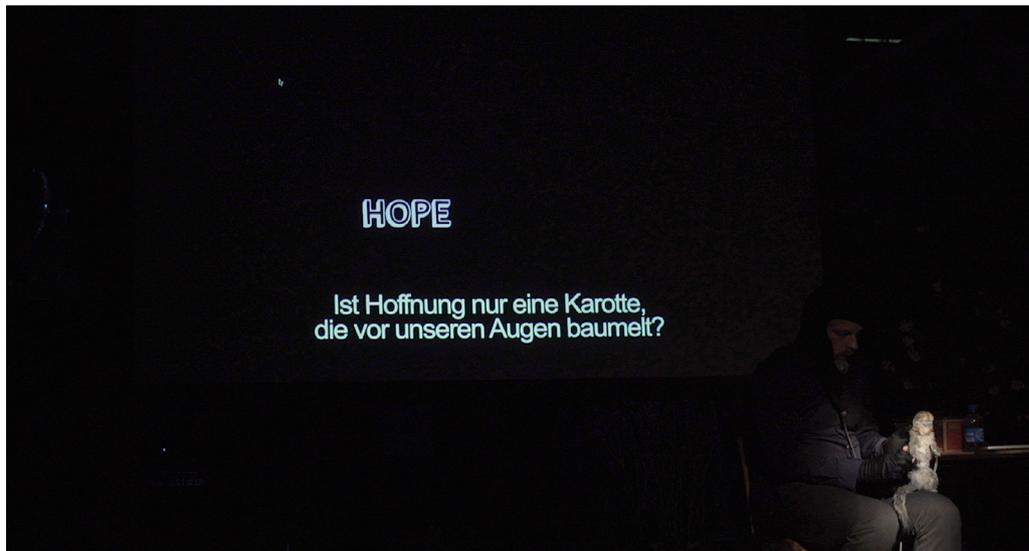
J&J is a collaboration between Jessica Huber (Switzerland) and James Leadbitter (aka the vacuum cleaner, UK). In 2015 Jessica invited James to participate in her research project 'la MARCHE', where they took a walk through Bristol and spoke about their fears and the importance of hope. During the summer of 2015, J&J undertook residencies together at Gessnerallee Zurich and Südpol Luzern, where they developed the conceptual framework for the project. Life experience forms a strong foundation for their collaboration. Having lived through periods of hopelessness, emotional distress and a 'lack of place' in the world, their work is supportive of difference and takes critical approaches to care.

Individually they both have distinctive practices. Jessica Huber, is a Zurich-based performance and installation artist. She studied choreography and dance at the Laban Centre London and City University of London before shifting the focus of her artistic work to performance art. In 2005 she co-founded the mercimax collective, a theatre group and performance installation collective, based in Zürich and receivers of the Cultural Theatre Prize of Zurich 2012. Jessica works with curiosity and has a special interest in the texture of relationships and in how we function as individuals in society.

JAMES LEADBITTER

From one man shows to large scale participatory actions, the vacuum cleaner's approach is both subtle and extreme, but always candid, provocative and playful. His work has been exhibited throughout the UK, including commissions from Tate Modern, Wellcome Collection and Nottingham Contemporary as well as for BBC4 and Channel 4.

He regularly present work internationally both on the streets and in art spaces. He is an Artsadmin Artist.



KIM NOBLE: TENDER PROVOCATIONS OF HOPE AND FEAR, ZÜRICH, 2015

FURTHER INFORMATION

The art of a culture of hope takes a number of different formats and manifestations. These can be toured together or individually. More detailed individual technical riders are available on request.

WORKSHOPS: SPACE FOR HOPE

We need a bit of 'space' and a lot of hope – a space for hope! We also need space for fear, to talk about it and understand what it does to us. Through a process of informal workshops J&J ask groups and individuals to engage in dialogue and exchange to consider questions such as 'What does hope smell like?', 'What does fear taste like?', 'What causes your fear?' and end with the concrete task to 'create an article for your constitution that is hopeful or confronts fear in your society.'

Length:

Varying and adaptable to each location. Minimum would be 3-4 hours (with a break) . J&J prefer to work with a group over 3 days to a week rather than one-off sessions. This produces a much deeper engagement.

Requirements:

- We would work with the location partner to identify particular groups (size 6 – 20). It is the locations responsibility to find and communicate with this group. Past groups have included patients from local mental health hospitals, young people, older people in care homes, women's groups, local artists, homeless people, asylum seekers, workers groups, firefighters or police officers. The aim is to collect a broad and diverse range of voices, experiences, hopes and fears.
- The location partner will also need to identify and organise a welcoming space to conduct the workshops.

Travelling company: 2 x artists and 1 x producer

PERFORMANCE: A SHARING

A sharing of the ideas and process behind the art of a culture of hope project in an informal performance lecture style. Jessica and James talk about how the project developed and share questions, stories and experiences that they have encountered in Space for Hope workshops, with a particular focus on the stories that have emerged in that particular site (if combined with Space for Hope workshops). It begins with a sharing ritual (for example, a silent walk) and an ending ritual (usually a collectively made fire). This welcomes the audience into a certain state of calm, creating an environment that feels like a place to stay and talk, and an experience that is shared.

Length: 60-75 minutes

Technical specification:

- Presented in an informal environment, e.g. studio, independent gallery, school hall, found space, theatre stage (with audience sat on stage) or something similar.
- Small stage (minimum 3 meters by 3 meters)
- Benches, small boxes, cushions, stools (or similar) for audience seating
- Video projection for live-feed
- The performance begins with a silent walk with the audience. The space should therefore have easy access to outside space and together with venue we would identify an interesting route (e.g. quiet street/by water/through a park). At the end of the performance we light a fire with the audience outside.
- Surtitles or audio translation for non-English speakers
- Travelling company: 2 x artists & 1 x producer

[Watch film documentation on Vimeo](#). Password: cultureofhope

PERFORMANCE: TENDER PROVOCATIONS OF HOPE AND FEAR

An evening of informal sharing and exchange that is part theatre, part cabaret, part lecture and part concert. In each location, J&J curate a specific set of artist/thinkers/doers who make work about hope and fear today, or who have close personal experience with the subject (aiming for a mix of international and local). Presented in a non-traditional environment the evening creates a unique atmosphere that supports a caring, critical and activating approach. Previous artists have included Kate McIntosh, Kim Noble, Reverend Janet Ashton, Jeremy Wade, Tourettes Hero and Sarah Vanhee. The performances end with music, drinks and soup.

Length: 3-4 hours

Requirements:

- Preference is for an informal performance space or studio rather than a traditional theatre so that audience feels close and involved.
- J&J travel with the set made up of a wooden stage and wooden blocks covered in soft felt for audience.
- Video screen, projection, radio microphones and sound system
- Surtitles or audio translation for non-English SPEAKERS
- Travelling company: 2 x lead artists (Jessica & James), 2 x designers/stage managers and up to 4 additional travelling international artists

[Watch a 19 minute overview of the evening here](#). Password: cultureofhope

INSTALLATION: ARCHIVE OF HOPE AND FEAR

Growing in each site, the Archive gathers the materials and encounters of the whole process of the project. It uses the form of a public archive to create a forum for civil groups and organisations and facilitate a long-term debate among a broad network of citizens. It serves to connect themes large and small, the public and the personal, the struggles of individuals, with the very largest stories that alarm the world. The archive will become a sort of catalogue in which the different phenomena of hope and fear are classified. It can be seen as a map of hope and fear, where new connections continually evolve.

Physically, the archive will exhibit sound bites, stories, objects, writing and video documentation collected during the workshops. It will also have a 'live' element, with performative 'hosts' who will give introductions and tours to the visitors. Each day the hosts will present readings of existing and new content in the archive, sharings that become mini events in themselves. There can also be short performance evenings – mini Tender Provocations of Hope and Fear.

Eventually, a digital archive will accompany the physical exhibition, with content continually being added and shared worldwide.

Length: 2 – 4 weeks, open daily

Requirements: A space in the heart of a community, e.g. library, empty shop, social club, youth centre. It could also be an art gallery or arts centre, but it would need to align with target communities or additional work will need to be done for it to feel accessible (e.g. transport to and from the venue, particular opening times). Full technical requirements available on request.

Travelling company: 2 x artists and minimum 2 x designers

PREVIOUS TOUR DATES

Gessnerallee, Zurich, Switzerland	June 2016
MIR Festival, Athens, Greece	December 2016
Sudpol, Luzern, Switzerland	January 2017
Tate Britain, London, UK	February – June 2017
In Between Time Festival, Bristol, UK	February 2017
Wild Wuch Festival, Basel, Switzerland	June 2017
B-Sides Music Festival, Luzern, Switzerland	June 2017
Homo Novus, Riga, Latvia	June – September 2017
Far Festival, Nyon, France	August 2017
Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Austria	September 2017
HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin, Germany	November 2017
Théâtre Vidy, Lausanne, Switzerland	April 2018
Festspiele/Gessnerallee, Zurich, Switzerland	June 2018

ACCESS

For a detailed access rider, please email mary@artsadmin.co.uk.