

GIMME SHELTER

(DONNE-MOI UN ABRI)

Phénomènes Surnaturels



Experience an immersive
and unconventional workshop

The universe and the scenography of the show GIMME SHELTER enable the team to put together an original and immersive workshop with groups that can dive into the set...



The immersive workshop, an extension of the sensory experience

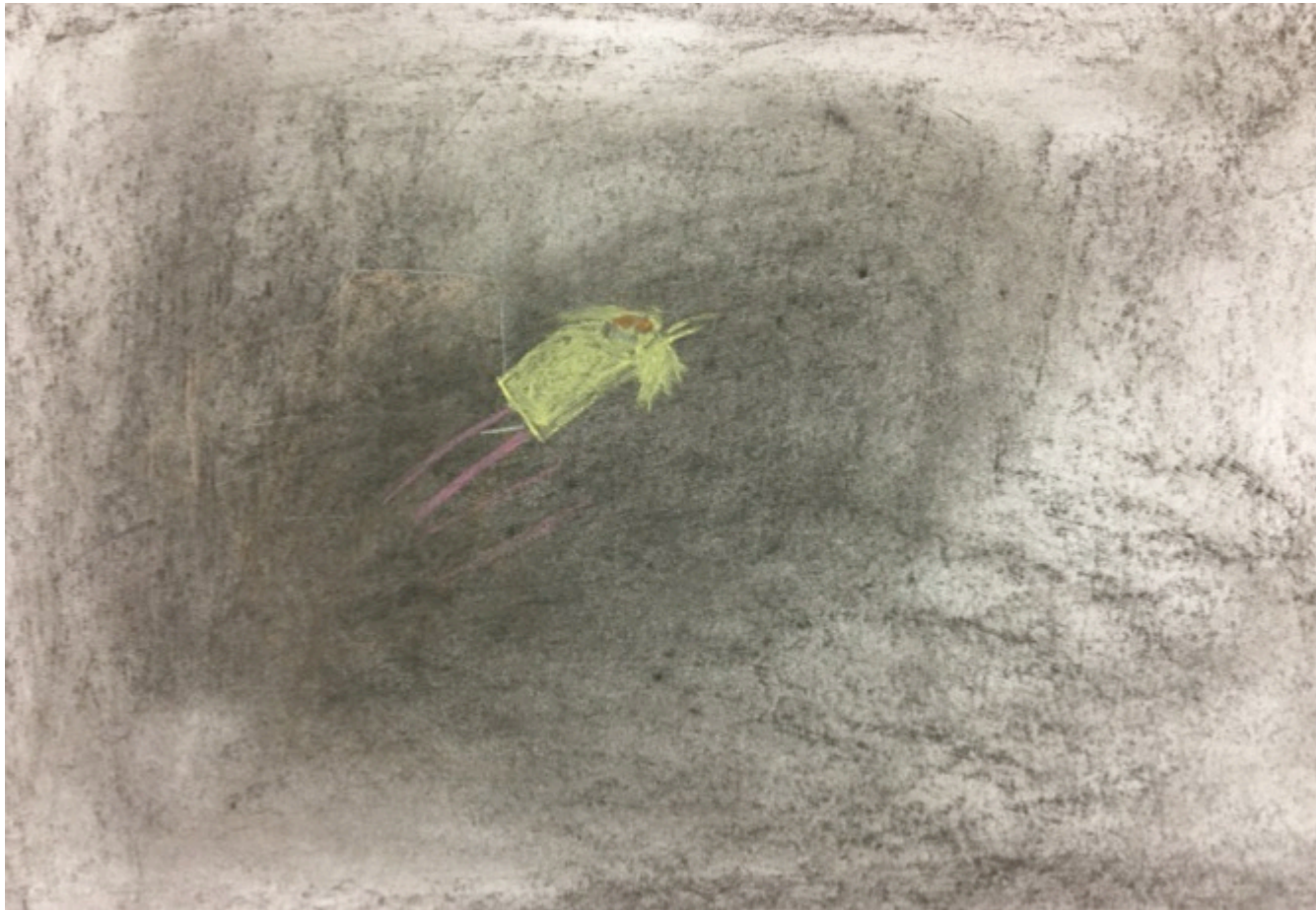


-Process-

This experimental and immersive workshop draws indirectly from the Freinet pedagogy. Based on his observation that people are naturally curious and want to learn throughout their lives, Freinet developed the concept of trial and error. This involves building on the questions and desires of children to create an environment conducive to discovery and experiment. Transmission doesn't happen in a top-down approach but collaboratively with the student based on their felt experience..



This workshop is built around the immersive experience of the show, people attend the performance, are immersed in the setup and let the sensory experience guide them through..



Then, the artistic team led by Violaine Fimbel proposes a discussion with the group. Each participant is asked about their experience, emotions and specific moments that have stuck in their minds. The emphasis is on the lived experience and the wide variety of possible interpretations. Each person's emotional core trumps any monolithic and imposed reading. This conversation time is critical. It allows the audience to exchange ideas around this strong experience and the artistic team to co-create the learning program.



For instance, during a previous workshop, a group of teenagers were particularly puzzled by the disassociation between a character in the show and his voice. The voice speaks, that's his voice, but it doesn't come out of his body. After asking them what this supernatural phenomenon felt like, the artist suggested they make a magical agreement, which is necessary in magic prior to any revelation. A theoretical and historical (modern and contemporary) presentation of ventriloquism ensued as well as on-site practice in the set with the puppets presented in the show. The great trust that is placed in the students and their privileged access to the magical pact and the manipulation of the show's puppets help build a strong trust connection with the artistic team and give the students a great sense of self-confidence.



This self-confidence is reinforced by the fact that the students bring up the subjects themselves during this workshop and participate in collective experiments that are very similar to those conducted during the making of the show GIMME SHELTER.

By applying this method to new magic, they collectively create an image that they later build by appealing to their practical sense and their imagination. In magic, there is never one solution but a range of options to achieve the desired effect: vanish, production, levitation, teleportation of an object.

The various techniques and collective experiments enable individuals to fulfil their potential within the group and discuss together the recurring issues facing adolescents. The show, along with the immersion in the setup offers insights into themes such as physical transformation – experienced by the adolescent or supernatural in the context of the show – self-retreat, disconnect with the surrounding environment, ecological disaster, fear of other people and whatever is external to the self.



-Themes covered-

According to this method, the content of the sessions is never predetermined.

Nevertheless, here are various themes that were covered in previous workshops. This content is subject to change :

- **Puppet making:** based on the question of the monster which is integral to the subject of *Gimme Shelter* and aimed at thinking about how to create a magical effect. Etymologically, the monster is "one that shows, reveals hidden and buried things." What does your monster look like? Using latex, natural fibers, and possibly deconstructed plush toys, this intuitive technique is very easy to use and produces beautiful results. This construction stage naturally culminates in puppet manipulation.
- **On-site manipulation:** theoretical approach to the various puppetry techniques, then experiments/ brainstorm on the manipulation hidden in the stage setup – in the amusement rides, in the vegetation, in the giant monkey. This is how the company works and it also allows children to play unselfconsciously, which isn't always easy for adolescents who are often uncomfortable with their bodies.
- **The magical element:** the artist outlines the various puppetry techniques – string, hand, shadow, mask, human) and then has students think about how to perform the manipulation movement they have just discovered without showing it. From then on, they start working on the magical process and come up with ways to implement it, as there are no preestablished solutions in magic. The students' responses as a result of this process are most surprising. This form of experimental workshop furthers individuals' development and autonomy. In the process they encounter all the techniques specific to magic and puppetry, namely the importance of light, ventriloquism, taxidermy, robotic and the classic "illusions" like vanish/production, levitation, object teleportation, etc.
- **What kind of shelter:** building shelters in the outside section of the setup in order to explore each and everyone's idea of what a shelter is. The artists ask the students to imagine what their shelter would look like if they had to protect themselves from a threatening/ contaminated environment and build that shelter accordingly. The fact that they are enacting this projection in the setup becomes a game for teenagers, who seek out that kind of experience (escape games, board games or videos in which they are the heroes). Developing an immersive and fictitious world makes it easier to tackle the topics evoked in the show and listed below.

The issues discussed through these various themes include:

- Adolescents' relationship with the world and the temptation for self-retreat and confinement
- The environmental threat and the seeking and building of a refuge/shelter
- The ambivalence of representations (inside/outside)
- Life/survival in hostile environments

Those themes can be developed further in class with the teachers of different subjects (see the experiment conducted at the elementary and middle schools in Moncornet, Aisne region).

An example of unconventional immersive workshops





Co-residency.

Lutkovno Gledalisce- National puppet theater of Maribor, Slovenia - 18 students, 10th and 11th grade with art, theatre or French elective.
February 2019, two weeks. Ten hours.
Performance of an installment of the show and discussion in the setup.

The reactions and questions of the students aged 15 to 17 focused the discussion toward the following themes:

- How to define magic, how to define the puppet: the loose boundaries of illusion, a sample of videos with selected works by puppeteers who might define themselves as magicians, and vice versa. Discussion of those principles and the New Magic movement.
- Feedback on the sensory experience: sharing with others one's most striking image of the show by drawing it, discussing what was striking about it and why (a chance to discuss the show's themes)
- Initiation to ventriloquism, work on the hidden voice, lip-synching, dissociation with a puppet, experimenting with puppets and the objects in the show.
- Talk by a sociologist specialized in the "Hikikomori" phenomenon, discussion-debate about self-retreat and its possible links with the show
- The monster: etymologically, the monster is one that shows. It can be scary sometimes because it makes visible things that are sometimes invisible. What does the monster look like? Construction of latex and natural fiber masks, then manipulation and work on the body, what is a monstrous body?
- Exhibit of the projects, public performances/walks around the theatre to finish off this immersive workshop.



Conditions



Here is a sample installation, which is adaptable:
Installation of the set in a non-theatrical venue for 2 to 4 weeks: wasteland, industrial building, multi-purpose room, gymnasium, church, etc.

Blackout is essential.

First week: set-up and performances, team of 7 company members + 2 venue staff members).
Capacity is 60 people, up to 3 performances/day.

Following weeks:

Installation/walk around the setup for all audiences and/or classes. Workshops with school or club groups, etc.)

Workshops from 1 to 4 hours depending on the duration of the session.

In groups, the workshop can last from 2 to 20 hours.

Within 2 hours, the workshop will be geared toward sensory feedback and exploration of the setup outside of performances.

Longer workshops will make it easier to tackle several themes or delve into one particular theme.

Each group will be treated individually. Arranging an end-of-workshop presentation – if so desired - can be discussed beforehand or early into the first sessions according to the group's feedback. Striking the setup requires 2 people for 1 day + 2 venue staff members.

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