

G r u P



(Working title)

An interactive performance between audiences and performers

PROFONDO ROSSO

Project

GruP (Working title)

Team

Cecilia Rosso - director/performer

Jakob Lohmann - performer

Thanks to Sofia Chionidou & Nick Verginis for the writing support and help in the the concept development.

G r u P

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

GruP (working title) is a participatory performance by Profondo Rosso that transforms public spaces through movement and interaction. With a gantry crane at its centre, the piece is brought to life by the three performers and their combined movement research, stemming from different disciplines: straps, balancing and breakdance. The team consists of Cecilia Rosso at the straps, Jakob Lohmann into balances & a third member which will be cast later on fulfilling the breakdance part. A previous research into the breakdance has been held in collaboration with Rapahel Albanese during past r&d residencies.

Together with the audience, themes of trust, agency and transformation are being researched. By repurposing the crane and inviting its physical exploration, GruP builds an ephemeral community where people from different backgrounds come together, turning individual experiences into a collective movement.



P R E S E N T A T I O N O F T H E C O M P A N Y

PROFONDO ROSSO is an international and interdisciplinary company founded by Cecilia Rosso.

Profondo Rosso combines the fields of performance, visual arts and plastic arts, to create dramaturgies around human themes. The work of the company focuses on performances and installations that involve the public to create a deeper connection with the performer and with themselves.

The collective is composed of:



Cecilia Rosso (1996) is an Italian interdisciplinary artist based in The Netherlands. Her work is personal and addresses themes like self-perception, self-reflection and identity, as individuals as well as in connection to society. These themes and personal expressions are translated through combining her movement language and circus background, with structures that reflect, absorb and manipulate lights. With her personal and ambitious approach, Cecilia aims to be active in the international artfield, connecting different worlds and individuals.

Jakob Lohmann (1995) is an artist from Germany. Jakob's stage work is concerned with the actor/spectator relationship in various forms and aspects, while drawing parallels to the structures in our society. This political aspect carries through into his work off stage, taking shape in public interventionist activities.

"How can we challenge the established expectations and performance formats within art to create work that goes beyond consumption and forces the spectator to take action as part of the development of the performance?"

Jakob is working as dramaturg, rigger and technician in Profondo Rosso and is also involved as performer in GruP.



C O N C E P T

I N T E N T I O N

With the new creation, Profondo Rosso is researching how a movement can be created through a participatory work actively involving audience members.

The aim is to create a community based on interpersonal connection by inviting the audience to co-create the work through physical interaction. The invitation in this case is not done in a predetermined way, but through opening up the possibility for the audience members to take agency and responsibility for their actions towards the co-creation. In that way, the crane, the performers and the audience members will act on building a feeling of collective consciousness and reclaiming public space.



CONCEPT

THE CRANE

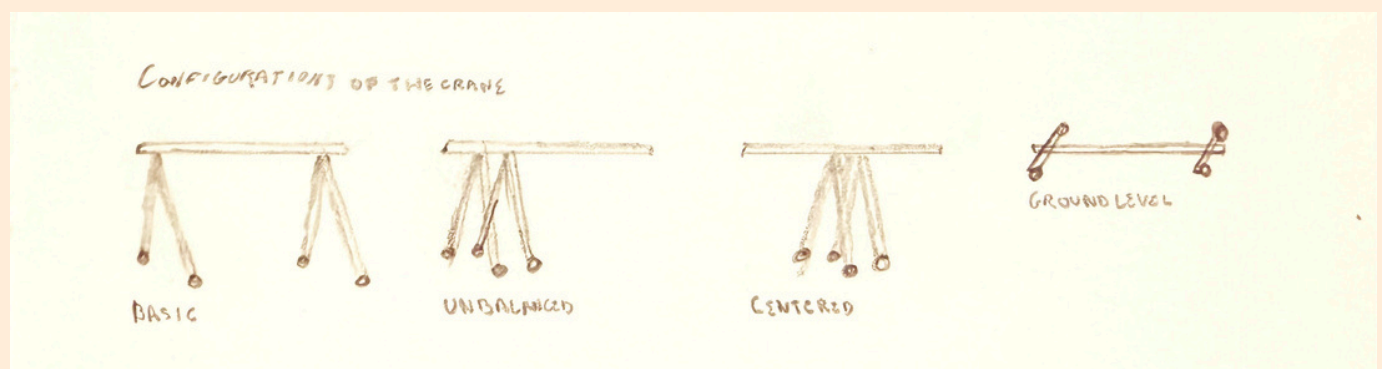
A physical connection between audience and performers.

The piece is an interactive work, where the audience is invited to connect with other audience members and the performers through a physical object, a gantry crane. A gantry crane is commonly used in construction sites to lift and move construction materials around. In the case of the performance, the crane will be move and be moved by, but not exclusively, the performers. The performance will lift the crane into a symbol of means to building community and construct an environment of physical interaction between spactators and performers.

Through the creation process the performers research the transformative qualities of the gantry crane and their opportunities for physical experimentation, interaction and collaboration. By introducing this unconventional object to the audience, they trigger their explorative interest in order to develop methods of bodily non-verbal communication.

As an example of how transformation invites physical participation, in a proposed first scene of the work, the building up of the crane is done in collaboration with the audience. This moment is the starting point for the performers to take up the facilitator role. By allowing the audience to actively take decisions and responsibility in the piece, they blur the established hierarchy between performers as leaders and audience as passive followers. So, as the crane gets built, also the codes of this group's communication are put into place and the fundamentals of their social contract are established.

Throughout the piece, the facilitators together with the audience, physically discover the object constructed in the public space. After the building process, different configurations of the crane as well as ways of moving with it get presented to the audience. Some of the situations that are explored are: transporting the crane through space, familiarising with circus techniques such as straps and equilibrium, breakdance cyphers and balances with the crane. And it is through the use of those physical explorations that community values such as the concept of interdependence, trust and mutual support are introduced.



AUDIENCE & PERFORMERS

The performance as a tool to develop mutual awareness and communication

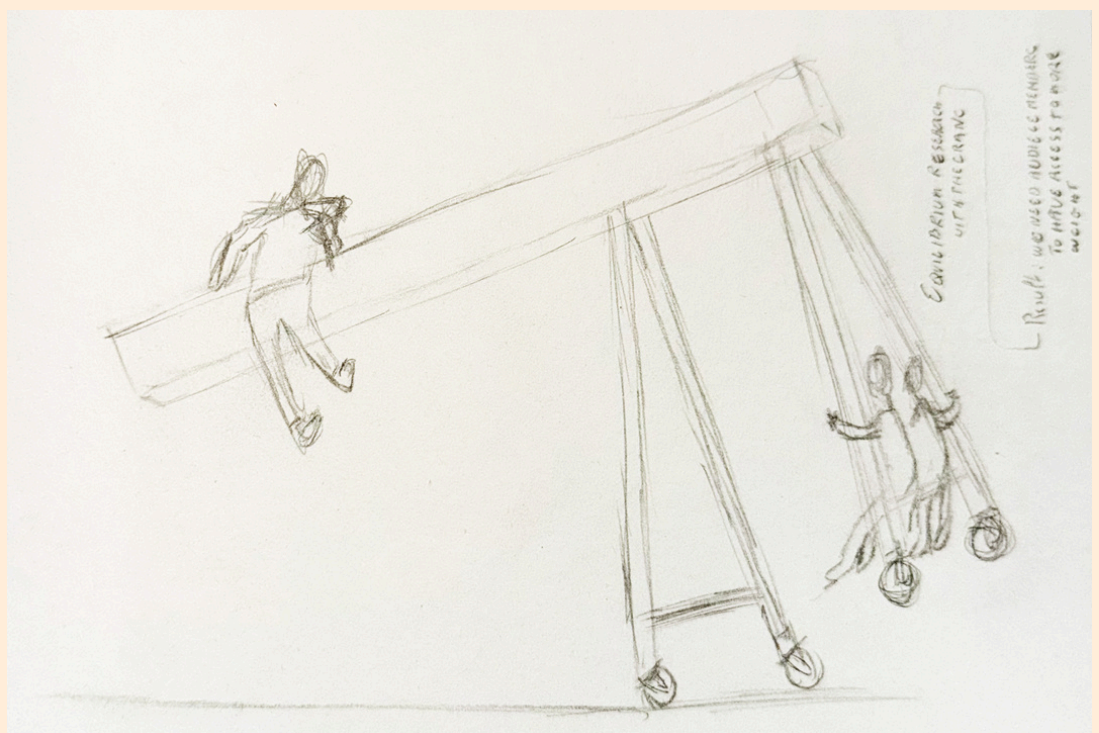
At the base of the work lies the research question: How can we create a sense of community? This entails developing mutual support and interdependence among audience and performers, to eventually lead to an emancipated audience with its own agency. Only then is an ephemeral community created, one that has the possibility to move from individual to collective consciousness.

In order to do that, the facilitators establish a set of codes that aims to invite the audience to share responsibility, both in ensuring the physical safety and successful experimentations of the performers and other audience members, as well as in co-creating the outcome of the performance. They also empower them into building trust towards each other and themselves, again in a physical and an emotional sense simultaneously, creating an environment where they are all encouraged to take the risk of expressing themselves. The artists encourage this empowerment and agency by creating an “incomplete” work, one that needs the audience’s participation to become complete (for example, see image #). With the vulnerability of the performers as a starting point, an environment of open communication and awareness, both sensorial and social, is established, one that is necessary for building a safe space.

The creation of a community, with values such as trust, responsibility and agency, is here the end goal of a transition this work proposes. Functioning as a liminal space, the performance suggests a passing from being in public space as an individual to being in it as part of a collective consciousness.

Image #

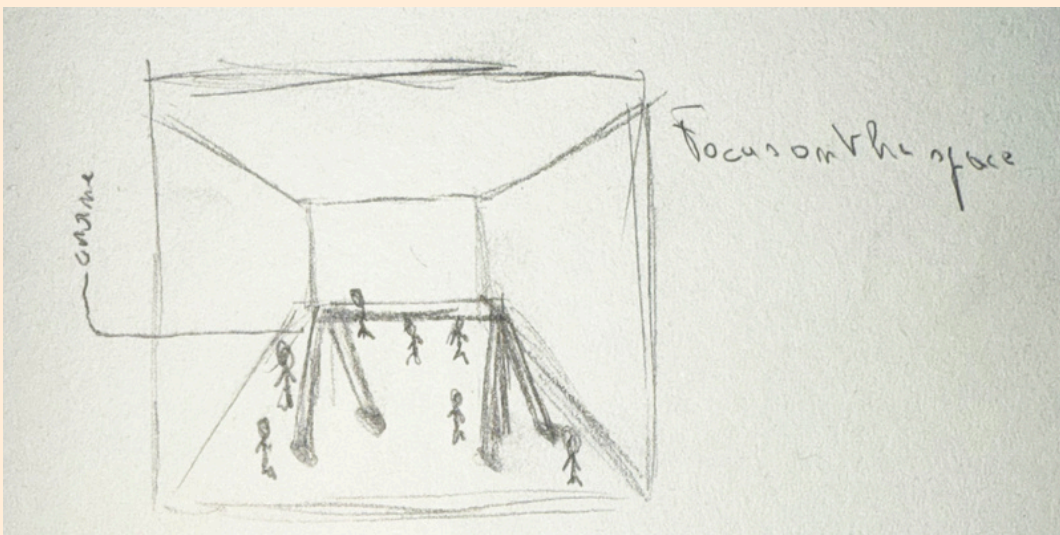
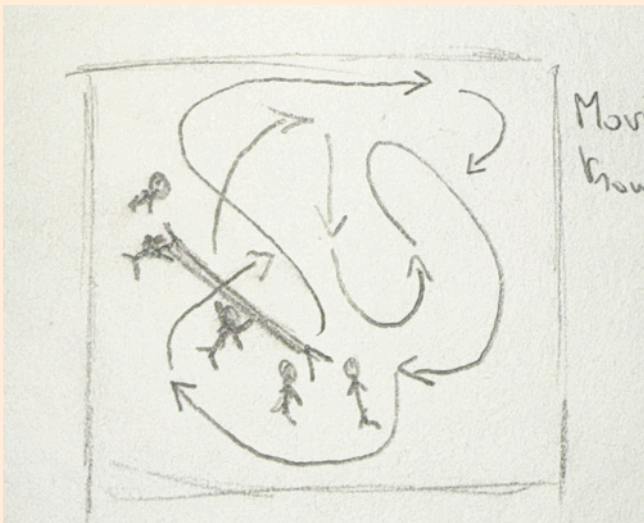
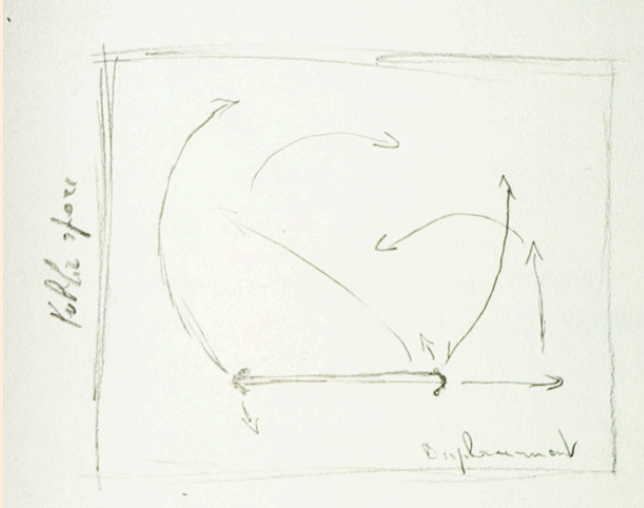
We envision the possibility to create a balance situation with the support of audiences. In the drawing you can see the three performers trying to balance in the L configuration, due to the weight of the crane this is not possible, so audience help is needed.



SPACE

The performance as a tool to reclaim public space

Recognizing that public space is always a contested space of conflicting interests, the performance is interested in reappropriating it. Bringing the performance to public spaces such as squares, neighborhoods or universities reflects Profondo Rosso's interest in redefining them as communal and collaborative areas. To do so, they use this work as a tool which creates an ephemeral social contract, uniting the audience and the performers into one community inside the, otherwise dispersed and antagonistic, public space. Additionally, connecting with the tradition of circus as an itinerant artform going to the audience, this performance is set in public space as a way to become accessible to a wider audience.



STEPS OF CREATION

Creation:

This phase will be divided in the stages presented below, with the following focuses: crane development, familiarisation between crane and performers, workshops with audience groups and tryout performances in public spaces, that will eventually lead to the piece's premiere and touring phase.

Crane development stage:

In this stage the team will be working with an unmodified crane to understand the kind of modifications and needs they have in order to realise this performance in a safe way. This goes from practical adjustments like the type of wheels, to ways of assembling the structure as well as modifications like the additions of platforms for people to stand or sit on.

Familiarisation between crane and performers:

This stage is envisioned as 3 weeks of collaborative work of all three performers and will be interlaced with the general crane development stage. During this time, they will familiarise themselves with the crane and physically work on the structure to see how it can be used. Finally, participatory workshops will be drafted for the next phase of the creation, as well as a risk assessment document discussing crane and audience participation.

STEPS OF CREATION

Workshops with audience members:

This stage will be divided in two different explorations: studio workshops that will focus on understanding the codes needed to safely involve the audience and workshops in public spaces that will look into the difference they make in the established modes of participation. In this entire phase the audience will be thoroughly informed about the piece and will be invited to join in the thinking and creative process of developing participation tools

The first part of the exploration is envisioned as 3 weeks of studio work, likely in connection with three different institutions that can support Profondo Rosso to connect with local audiences. Additionally, the input of a facilitation expert will be sought to support this research.

The second part of this exploration is envisioned as 7 days of guided workshops in different public spaces where the information gathered in the previous workshops can be applied. The focus of this will be in understanding how the setting of the public space can impact the work in terms of emotional safety.

Staging phase - work-in-progress showings:

A minimum of 5 work-in-progress showings are envisioned for this phase, to put in practice the outcomes of the above mentioned research and test the structure of the piece in consultation with a dramaturg. Here it is important that these showings take place in different contexts (organisations, locations, etc.) and that the audience gives feedback on the complete performance, without having been involved in the creative process beforehand.

The project is still searching for fundings, residency support and possible premier. We are also planning to define an open call to connect us with possible breakdancers.

POSSIBLE STRUCTURE OF THE PIECE

The current vision for the structure of the piece is based on R&D conducted in April 2023 (CIRKLABO) between performers, audience and the crane. It will also be further defined following the coming stages of creation as previously mentioned.

Currently, the structure has been imagined as such:

First, in a series of movements, the three performers are appearing “on stage”, bringing pieces of the crane, such as beams, screws, and wheels. A simple question such as “Can you hold for a sec?” is inviting the audience to feel that the crane cannot be built without them and starts planting the seeds of communal feelings towards a common goal. Small exercises of play and trust can help discover the crane, the space, and the relations between all of the elements.

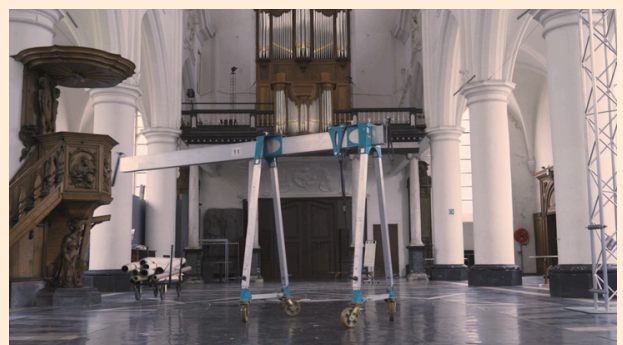
After building up the crane, the performers are inviting the audience to explore the crane physically, through demonstrating the different setups and configurations of the crane, as well as familiarizing them with different circus techniques and movement qualities.

The different configurations of the crane as shown in images are:

Basic - Portique



Unbalanced - L configuration



Ground level - skateboard/bench



Centered - T configuration

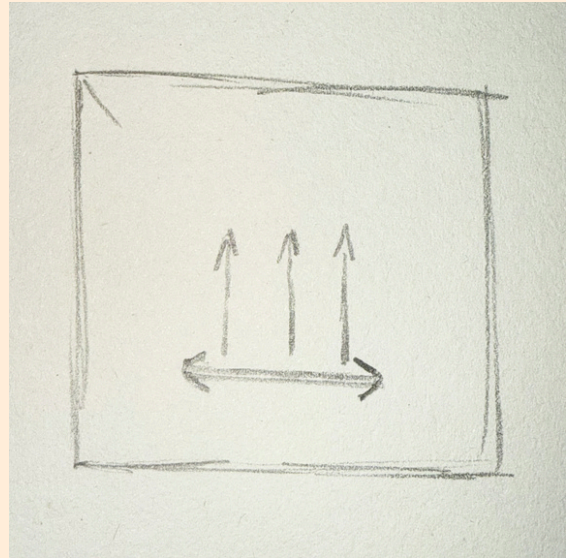


STRUCTURE OF THE PIECE

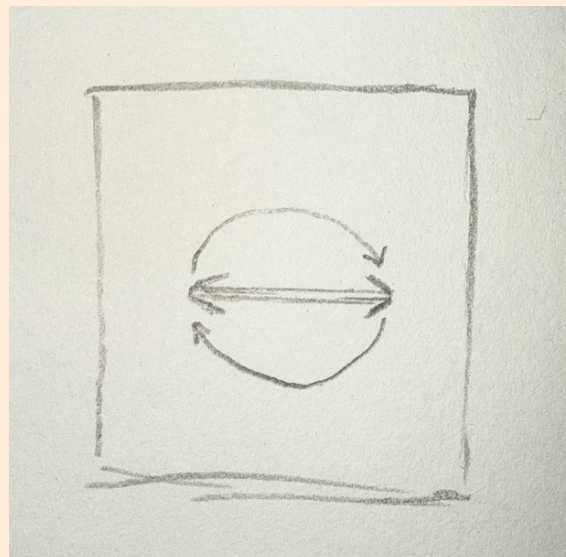
The movements start from simple counterweight and balance techniques and exercises, used to achieve equilibrium by the performer Jakob Lohmann. Audience members and facilitators can balance, sit, or stand on the legs and sides of the crane, or support when others are moving the crane into space (forward, round, diagonal → check photo and video material*).

Then, the straps are introduced in relation to breakdance. The dancer starts playing with the straps and creates the idea of using straps as a floor. Coming from the tradition of breakdance cyphers as an open communication space, the next scene involves 1 body in space (dancer) and the audience around. In this case, the dialogue between them is achieved by sounds coming from the crane, body percussion, whistling, or any kind of sound creation, echoing a sense of community. This could eventually lead to a creation of a musical piece on a physical level.

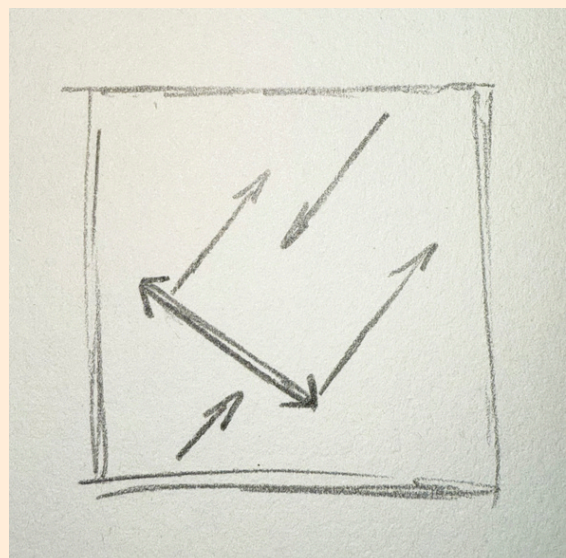
Finally, the audience can also experience how they can use the straps at the center of the crane. The two straps can be used either together or separately, used as a swing or as a rope, a pulley, and many different mechanisms that include a “flying” feeling of play shown by the performer Cecilia Rosso.



FORWARD MOVEMENT .



CIRCULAR MOVEMENT .



DIAGONAL MOVEMENT .



[*Link to the photo & video material](#)