

BETH

DILLON

Beth Dillon (b. 1987, in Sydney, Australia) is an artist and curator based in Biel/Bienne. She was co-directrice of espace libre (Visarte Biel/Bienne) in collaboration with Vera Trachsel from 2021-2023. She is also a founding member of artist collective 110%, with Lachlan Herd and Kieran Bryant.

Dillon's practice embeds personal narratives within wider issues such as mothering and care-work, mobility and tourism, identity construction, and the sociology of luck, achievement and success. Taking form through diverse solo, collaborative and curatorial contexts, Dillon's work honours handmade processes, found and recycled materials, the awkward, embarrassing, overlooked and underrated, domestic dramas, friendship, family, bodies at work, bodies at play, dressing up, storytelling and spreading rumours.

PORTFOLIO

SELECTED WORKS
2018-2023

I.

who cares?



PIA MATER (2021)

Performance, 20 mins

Created during the artist's second pregnancy, PIA MATER explores the somatic experience of gestation and forms of observation and surveillance that accompany the reproductive body. Through text, costume and movement, the performance playfully deconstructs the enormous amount of medical, wellness, relationship and lifestyle advice that women receive, seek out, and internalise in their role as 'BABY MAKERS.'

Supported by the Commission Temporaire, fOrum culture, Jura/Bienne.

Presentations:

Karte Noire: Hysteria, La Voirie, Biel/Bienne, 2021

Photos: Simone Haug





CUMBER CORE (2021)

Baby linens, cotton and wool yarn dyed by hand with onion skins; rice and linseed scented with dried lavender and eucalyptus oil; plasticised breastmilk pearls; aluminium carabiners, pillows, dressing gowns, hand-plaited rope



A series of wearable sculptures created for the post-natal body. A costume in which the body holds and is held, between a cradle and a caress.

Installation view,
Kunsthau Pasquart
Cantonale Berne Jura 2021

CUMBER CORE (2021)





CUD (2021)

Installation and performance
Joli moi de mai (Visarte Biel/Bienne)
Krone Couronne, Biel/Bienne

Using improvised processes of domestic alchemy, Dillon transformed the 'materials of mothering' including baby poo, breastmilk and cow's milk into costumes and objects to create a tactile, grubby and tender archive of infant caregiving. The installation included a live demonstration of milk plastic (casein) production methods.





SHIT BRICKS (2020)

Installation view, Cantonale Bern Jura 2020
la Nef, le Noirmont

A series of bricks created from the poo of the artist's first child, red clay collected from the local tennis club and water collected from the fountain in front of the artist's house. These bricks represent an attempt to create a standard unit of measurement for the often invisible and undervalued work of infant care.



WET NURSE (2019 - 2021)

Live performance and installation series by 110% collective (Kieran Bryant, Beth Dillon, Lachlan Herd)

“Wet Nurse” is a mutating performance and installation work that imagines how artistic practice can function as a form of caregiving. The work explores choreographies of care through interspecies collaboration, focusing on intimate contact zones between fermentative microorganisms, and the bodies of artists and audiences.

The root of Wet Nurse is a collective ‘mother’ cultivated from live yeast strains reared in the separate studios of the three members of 110% in Sydney, Melbourne, and Bienne (Switzerland). In each iteration of the project’s development, the yeast ‘mother’ continues to transform in response to the microbial conditions of the surrounding environment, and daily support work of nourishment, moistening and temperature adjustment. From this “mother”, 110% have been creating ephemeral installations of fermenting dough and broth and sculptural support systems.

Moving with the audience through a series of ‘nursing stations’, a 60 minute performance imagines the labour of caregiving as an oozing interplay of symbiosis and contagion between the 110% trio and their microbial collaborators. Accompanied by live sound from Enderie, the collective embody the roles of worker, sculptor, lover, nurse and mother in relation to the dough bodies under their care. The audience is also implicated in this volatile power play as the presence of their bodies and their microbial clouds mingle with the elaborate biome of yeast fungi and bacterial cultures in the space.

Images: Stills from 60 mins performance, c3 Contemporary Arts Space, Melbourne, December 2019.

Hand-dyed textiles, synthetic stockings, bread, flour, fermenting yeast, water, plastic pipes and sheets, LED work lamps, glass containers, ceramic tiles, leather, mirror, Hebel blocks. Live music from Enderie.

TO THE VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/390512583>



WET NURSE : MOTHERLODE (2021)

Video installation and live performance by 110%

Commissioned for MICRO-(BIAL)TENANCIES (Artist as Host), curated by Abbra Kotlarczyk, BLINDSIDE GALLERY, Melbourne, AU

As a material and conceptual fermentation of their 2019-20 material incubation and live work “Wet Nurse”, “Wet Nurse: Motherlode” situates original textile elements and thematic accretions to present a renewed view to microbial transference—one that is site-and-time-specific to the conditions of life amidst global pandemic. Framed in two consecutive parts, Unconditional Love and Selective Feeding, the video applies a low-fi, quasi-scientific lens to the use of branching processes for exponential yeast mother reproduction that is redolent of COVID-19 growth modelling.

Where Wet Nurse was welcoming of “intimate contact zones between fermentative microorganisms, and the bodies of artists and audiences,”[8] this new work—filmed and developed under viral duress in Sydney, Australia and Biel/Bienne, Switzerland—finds stark resonances with current divisive geo-realities and fears of bacterial intermixing and viral panic. In that it presents an unsustainable aesthetic of care and reproduction to the point of excessive overload, this work not only articulates a conundrum of unconditional interspecies care, it also prods at the inherent volatilities of broader care work, wherein too much hospitality can smother and undo the efficacy of its intention. The power of this work additionally lies in the messaging around care for, and not just by, all mothers: it playfully suggests what we all know about society’s disdain for what it believes to be an unmanageable excess of motherly demand on a system that must divide and control, in order for it to survive.

Excerpt from exhibition essay, Abbra Kotlarczyk

Installation view, BLINDSIDE gallery, Melbourne

Single Channel Video 10:07 mins, tea, terracotta and dough stained muslin, mother-care diary [updated daily in the gallery and online]

TO THE VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/515686492>



DOUGH PIT (2019)

Live performance and installation by 110%.

Commissioned by Soft Centre Festival, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney, September 2019.

A 6 hr outdoor performance installation in which 150kg of fresh dough was mixed, moistened and massaged by the 110% trio. The festival public gathered on a temporary scaffold viewing platform to witness the action unfold in the dough pit below.

Photos: Maja Baska





SWEATING THE FOUNDATIONS (2018)

Live performance and installation by 110%.

Commissioned by Performance Space for Liveworks Festival, Sydney, Australia, October 2018

Using a combination of steel scaffolding, a tonne of raw terracotta, foam, canvas and performing bodies, 110% collective transformed a former railway shed into a stage for a monumental choreography of caregiving. Throughout the three week festival period, the installation of porous and leaking architectural forms received ongoing support and attention from a team of performers / workers who performed gestures of construction, maintenance and care.

Photos: Document photography



SWEATING THE FOUNDATIONS (2018)

Performance 60 mins, Liveworks Festival, Sydney

Closing night performance with live sound from Enderie. The three members of 110% collective moved through the installation, moistening, massaging and wrapping the clay and foam columns to enact a choreography of caregiving.

Photos: Document photography

II.

being(s) between borders



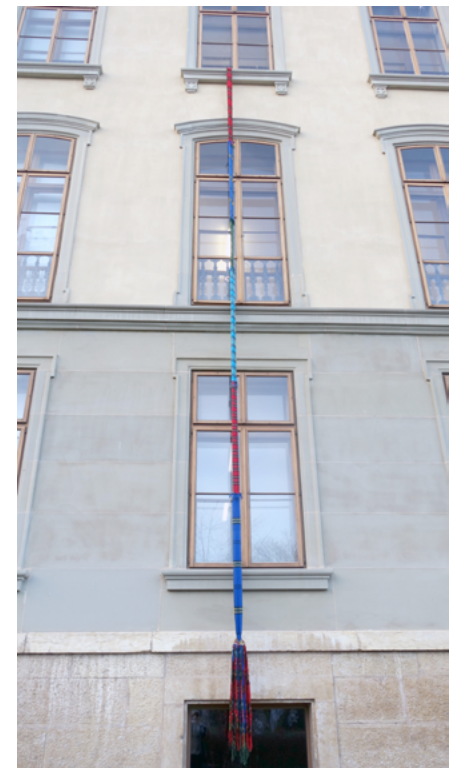
DE LIONS (2021)

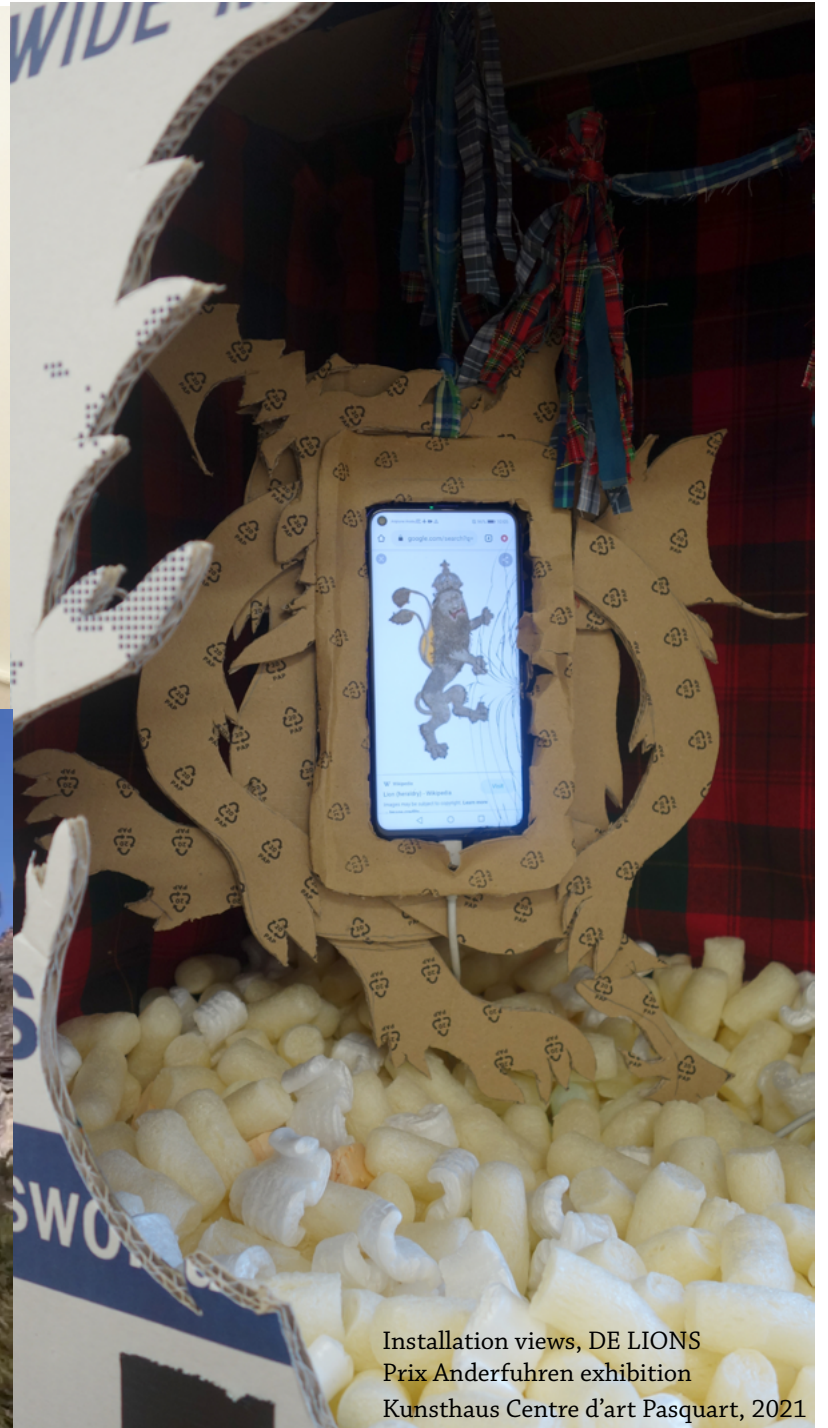
Mixed media installation, Prix Anderfuhren
Kunsthaus Centre d'art Pasquart, Cantonale Bern Jura 2021

Unfired clay, packing foam, cardboard and plastic, moving boxes, ratchet straps, recycled checked shirts and tartan scarves, brass rings, mobile phone, international adaptors, looped HD video 1:18 min.

In her installation and video work, 'De Lions', Beth Dillon examines her own family name and its supposed origins. While it is well known how family myths shape one's self-image and can influence one's biography, by following Beth Dillon in her attempt to pick up the pieces of her family china, the audience is reminded of how confronting one's own self-image remains a Sisyphean task, for which critical distance, humour and perseverance are essential.

Exhibition text, Hannah Külling, Fondation Anderfuhren





Installation views, DE LIONS
 Prix Anderfuhren exhibition
 Kunsthaus Centre d'art Pasquart, 2021



Installation views, DE LIONS
STITCHES: HOME AS COMPOSITION,
Krone Couronne, January 2022



The sky to here

2 messages

From the sky to here,
There was a patato
On every dish served in the plane,
As reminders the fun has to end.
All is to be digested.

Broth of feelings.
I drank your words
And woke with a pool on my pillow.
Perhaps it was an echo of caresses.

Seagulls are very present this morning.
I warm up the benches, the trees,
The canal, the bridges,
Waiting for us to meet,
And meet,
And meet.



The night,
The night,
And all those things
That float by noiselessly.

Do you dreams?
We were together in mine
But I lost the plot.

Fantasies become more as flesh every day.
I received your nipples,
And it was strong.

I wonder what view
You have from your window.
I see a plane pass by,
Maybe I'll see yours.

I'd like to make decisions with you.

Where will we live in January?

WHEN SHOULD WE REALISE THIS SCENE? (2016 - 2018)

Four A4 Giclée prints on museum rag

A series of digital collages made from scrambled extracts of email correspondence sent between the artist and her Swiss lover during periods of long-distance separation from February 2016- April 2018.

*You are the first untouchable partner I ever had
We meet in some particular places
Sometimes, I am frightened
By the unknown feelings you live in
The phone call can feel as a void
Waiting for the next leg photo
Anyhow, it felt good
To see your clothes gave the impression you were closer.*

*Sorry
Sorry
For the sad taste I gave you
There were beautiful moments
And my brain is nothing surprising
First, you need to arrive
Feel the space and necessities
And then extend to other places.*

There are ways around borders

Extract, When should we realise this scene? (sad taste)



THIS IS ALL GOING TO BE WORTH SOMETHING, SOMEDAY (2018)

Video and sculpture installation created from images, materials and objects collected during a three-month observation and infiltration of Geneva's free ports while in residency at the Embassy of Foreign Artists (la Maison Baron).

During her residency, Dillon went undercover as Michéline - mobility agent, surveillance professional, art spy - to investigate the mysterious circulation of precious art objects within the Geneva Free Port storage and trading systems.



Installation views
Exhibited as part of solo exhibition:
BEEN THERE, DONE THAT
UNSW Galleries, Sydney, November 2018

Single channel HD video projection (11:27 mins), LED panel with scrolling text, mystical egg installation of secondhand decorative objects wrapped in recycled fabrics, stockings and packaging materials



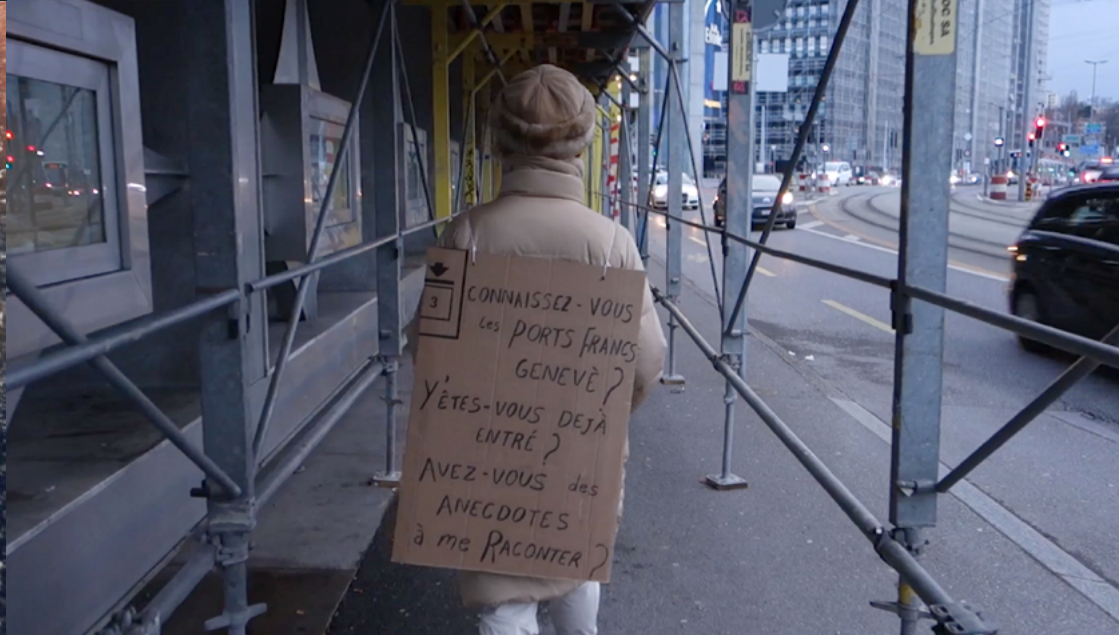
THIS IS ALL GOING TO BE WORTH SOMETHING, SOMEDAY (2018)

Single-channel HD video, 11:27 mins
Sound composition: Nicholas Stueklin
Concept, camera and editing: Beth Dillon

A three-part video staging the artist's attempts to infiltrate the Geneva Free Ports as a detective thriller.

Part I (The Site), establishes the scene of investigation through footage from daily surveillance exercises. Part II (The Objects), speculates on the contents of the Free port art storage warehouses. Part III (The Subject) portrays the artist's transformation into undercover agent Michéline, following her as she stalks the Free Port exterior.

TO THE VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/311074337>





**ALL YOU OBJECTS MADE FOUND BOUGHT SOLD
TRADED STOLEN SHIPPED STOCKED SENT
UNDERGROUND GUARDED BY RIFLES SMUGGLED
IN POCKETS SCANNED BY CAMERAS DIGITALLY
VERIFIED ACCUMULATING VALUE GATHERING
INTEREST WAITING IN THE DARK WAITING TO BE
SEEN, (2018)**

An installation of secondhand decorative objects, assorted fabrics, and packaging materials scavenged from the Free Port rubbish bins. The materials were gathered during a three month investigation of the Geneva Free Ports, then installed in six glass display cases on the ground floor of an administrative building located opposite the Free Port site. The collection of carefully wrapped kitsch and cheap objects were exhibited as parodic doubles of the luxury artworks stored in the high security warehouses across the road.

Installation view, glass display boxes, Cantonal Office of Statistics, Detention and Security, Rue des Acacias, Geneva, March 2018

III.

in the field

LUCKY DAYS (2022)

Installation views of solo exhibition, Lokal-int

A constellation of three works documenting actions in the landscape exploring themes of luck, chance and coincidence.

Lucky day (2022)

HDV, 48:03 mins, polyester blanket trinity

On the 12th September 2022, Dillon invited her parents, visiting from Australia, to spend the afternoon searching for 4-leaf clovers with her on the lawn of the LagoLodge, Biel/Bienne. Filmed in collaboration with Ben and Kath Dillon.

TO THE VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/813295135/4ec00f3eea>

Switzerland for beginners (2022)

Collection of lucky clovers, book, rubber bands





LUCKY DAYS (2022)

Installation views of solo exhibition, Lokal-int

The foot is an excellent witness (2018)

Collection of sticking plasters (Band-Aids) used during an 18-day journey on foot between Geneva and Paris in June 2018.



The sky is falling (2021)

Sand, wire, clay, glass container

Sand sediments from the Sahara collected from the windscreens and roofs of cars parked in the old town of Biel/Bienne on the afternoon of the 6th February 2021.

THE FOOT IS AN EXCELLENT WITNESS (2018)

Installation, BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, UNSW Galleries, Sydney

Collection of sticking plasters (Band-Aids) used during an 18-day journey on foot between Geneva and Paris in June 2018.



In June 2018, I walked from Geneva to Paris.

I walked to travel between one artistic project and another.

I walked because I wanted to know how such a journey would resonate in body, mind and spirit.

I walked in resistance to the notion that women should not walk alone.

I walked to work.



TRACES (2018)

A series of eleven digital photographs that document the carrots consumed on a solo journey on foot between Geneva and Paris, undertaken in June 2018.



SOME SPACES BETWEEN US (2018)

Single Channel HD Video, 6:30 mins

Produced during a three-month artist residency at the Cité internationale des arts, Paris, 'Some spaces between us' presents a playful engagement with the expectations, experiences and sightseeing behaviours of the contemporary tourist. In the video, two mimes visit the Luxembourg Gardens to perform a slow dance picnic fantasy that gleefully appropriates Parisian stereotypes presented in tourism advertising and popular culture.

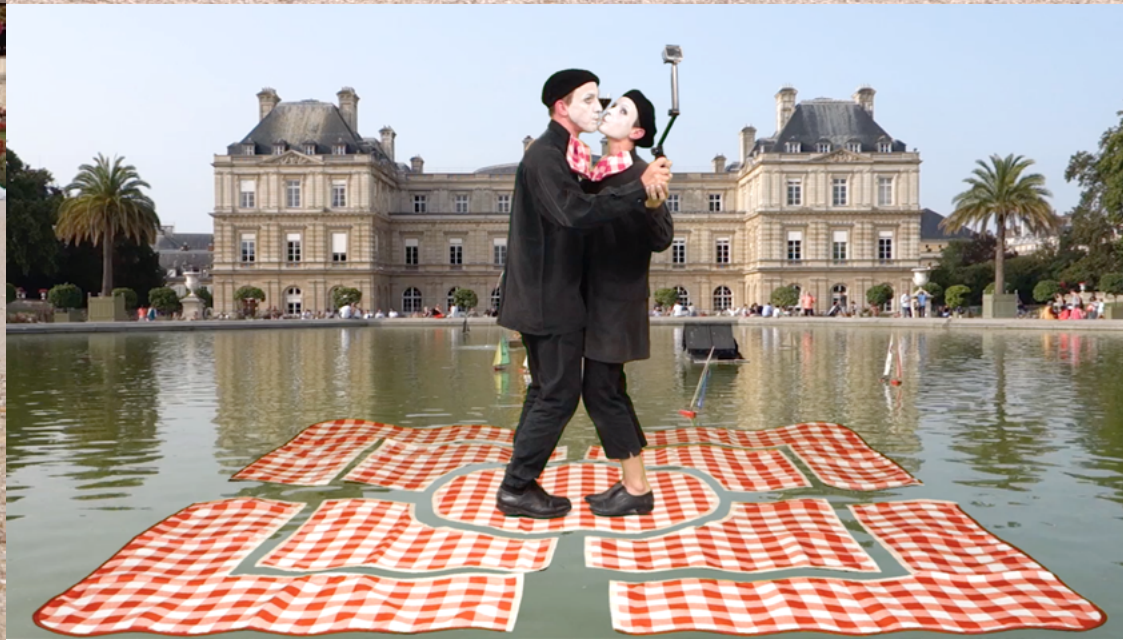
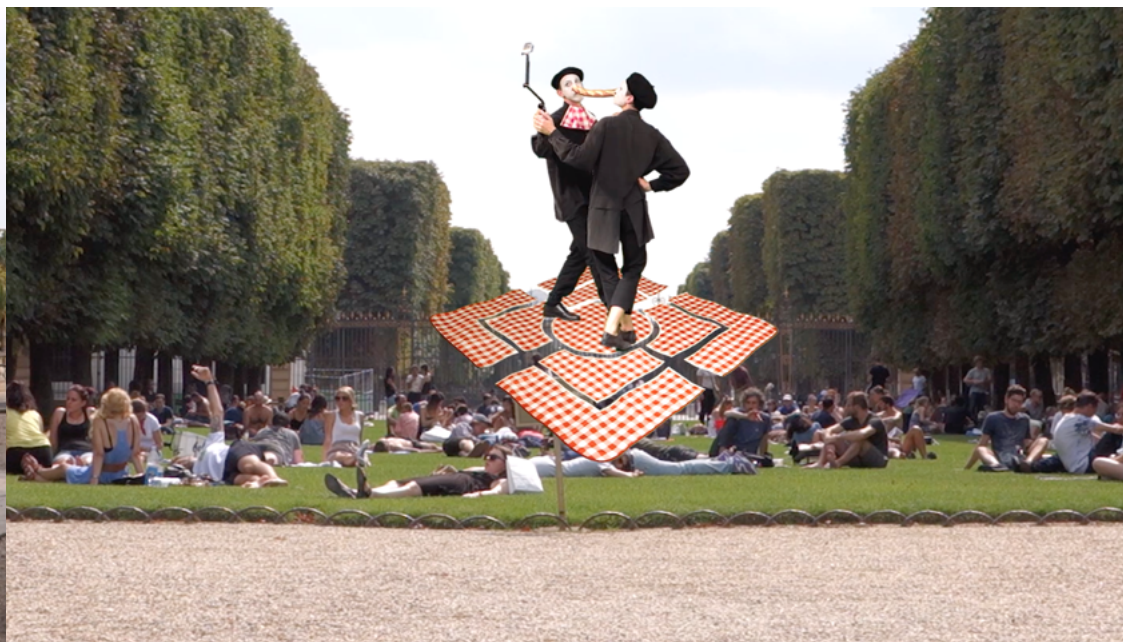
Performers: Beth Dillon and Gregory Stauffer

Sound composition: Ariel Garcia, with text by Beth Dillon

Concept, camera and editing: Beth Dillon

TO THE VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/312568488>





SOME SPACES BETWEEN US (2018)
video stills