

PARTS ARTICULATED

Puppetry is a salient metaphor for the political architecture of our world.

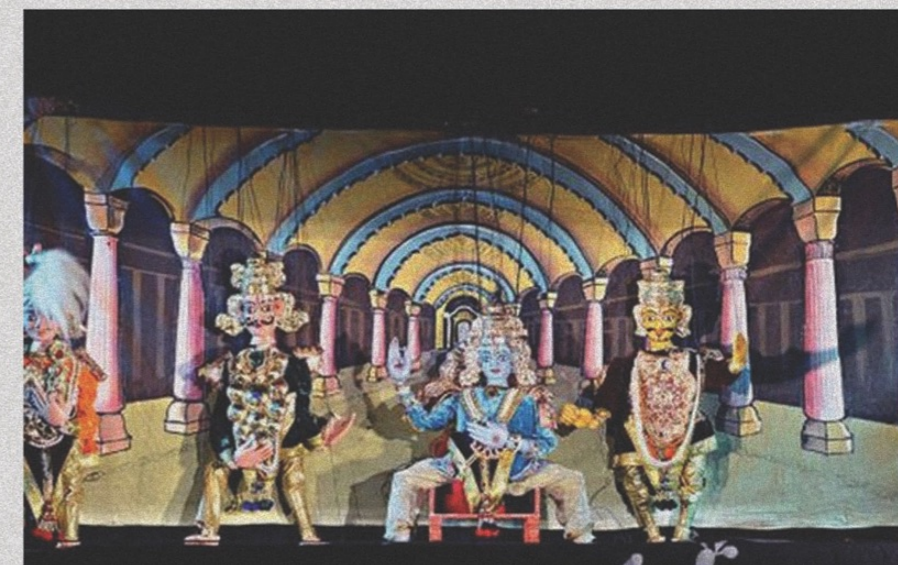
We live in puppet states led by puppets but, even still, when we appropriate and create our own puppets, they can provoke discourse, resistance, and conflict.

We propose that puppets can be used in communities as a form of discourse, conflict, performance, and action.

On the interaction between puppets and public space, we find our theoretical bearings with Tzachi Zamir, Céline Condorelli, David Graeber, Tali Hatuka, and Peter Schumann.

Puppets are "material images of humans, animals, or spirits that are created, displayed, or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance" (Proschan). As performance and protest — from South East Asian shadow puppets to Portuguese traveling carnivals to the Bread and Puppet Theater's anti-war marches to the Occupy movement — puppetry has a long and rich history.

As a historical phenomenon that taps into "nonrealistic, anti-logical, and even fetish roots," puppets are an "antithetical response to the development of European tenets of positivism, rationality, and realism" (Bell). As such, puppets call on a tradition that deals in resistance, satire, and critique. In today's public space, then, they are ripe for use as a tool for conflict and action.



"Puppetry proposes a unique relationship with objects and undermines our attachment to subjectivity" (Zamir); in being "not fluffy, lovely, or digestible" (Schumann), these puppets are actively in conflict with our everyday.

They challenge the narratives of those in power and encourage the creation of new, original narratives.

Schumann writes, "Why are puppets subversive? Because the meaning of everything is so ordained and in collaboration with the general sense of everything, and they, being only puppets, are not obliged to this sense and instead take delight in the opposite sense, which is the sense of donkeys confronting the existing transportation system."



roleplay

immunity (mask)

mouthpiece

expression

role appropriation

fun, but also productive

dissociation

"...[A]s constructed selves and bodies," writes Céline Condorelli, puppets "have the faculty to speak through someone else's voice, and are made of parts." These parts, as in democracy, are representative of the parts of a community that, though disparate and discrete, create a body that summons "external forces in order to form presence, speech, and authorship."

In all of this, puppets play the ultimately political role of resistance and subversion.

At the same time as providing equality for all participants by levelling the playing field — allowing us to transcend social, economic, or physical characteristics that can be disenfranchising in an exclusionary society — puppets create communication and confrontation between their actors.

accountability

anonymity

appropriation

Our proposal relies on a community's taking up puppets as a method.

This encompasses both the tradition of puppets, but also new modes that can reflect and resist the ideologies of today. The *demos* that quite literally handles the strings of the puppets is also responsible for the message the puppets may convey to the *polis*.

It is about speculation concerning the future as much as it is about critiquing the present.

As protesting is inherently performative, the performance of puppets is a claim to a self-aware space and one that deals with the boundaries between fiction and reality.

Utilizing puppets as a method may take many forms, but, here, we propose possible directions on varying scales.

REENACTING THE THEATRE

The co-opting of old theatres in Montreal to perform pieces that are openly critical of, for example, the devaluing of the arts and the favouring of capitalist materialism.

This performative aspect directly challenges those in power and aims at once to appropriate, subvert, and disseminate its political messages.



Théâtre Empress



Théâtre Rivoli



Théâtre Monkland

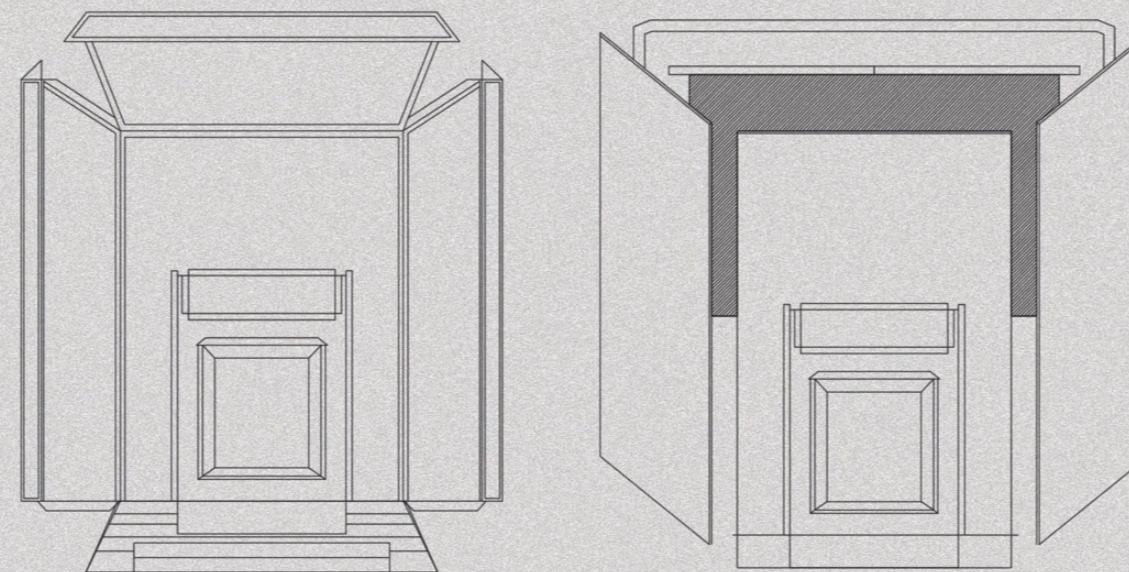
media as play

actions / claims

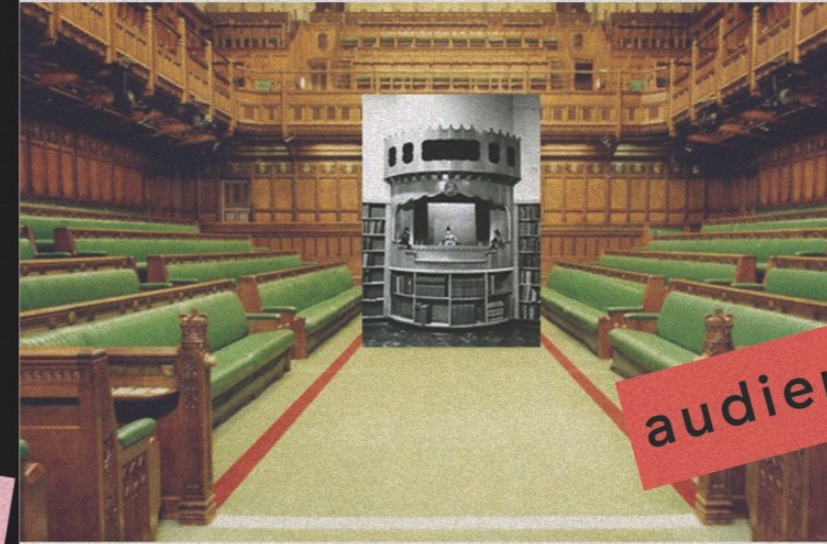
PUPPET THEATRE

Within a community, the ludic quality of puppets can become a space for imagining alternative narratives.

This results in a productive and collaborative endeavour for the community as a whole and as a network that acts both within and beyond itself.



GOUVERNEMENT FANTOCHE



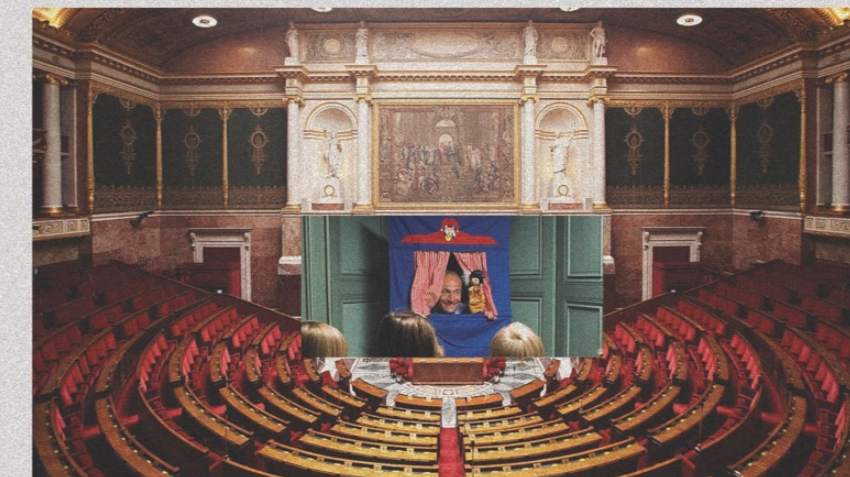
audience is assembly

For the puppeteer, the puppet becomes the representative; puppet theatre, the microcosm of direct democracy.

Take the stage and manipulate the strings to resist, act, lay claim.

network of subversion

disseminate to empower



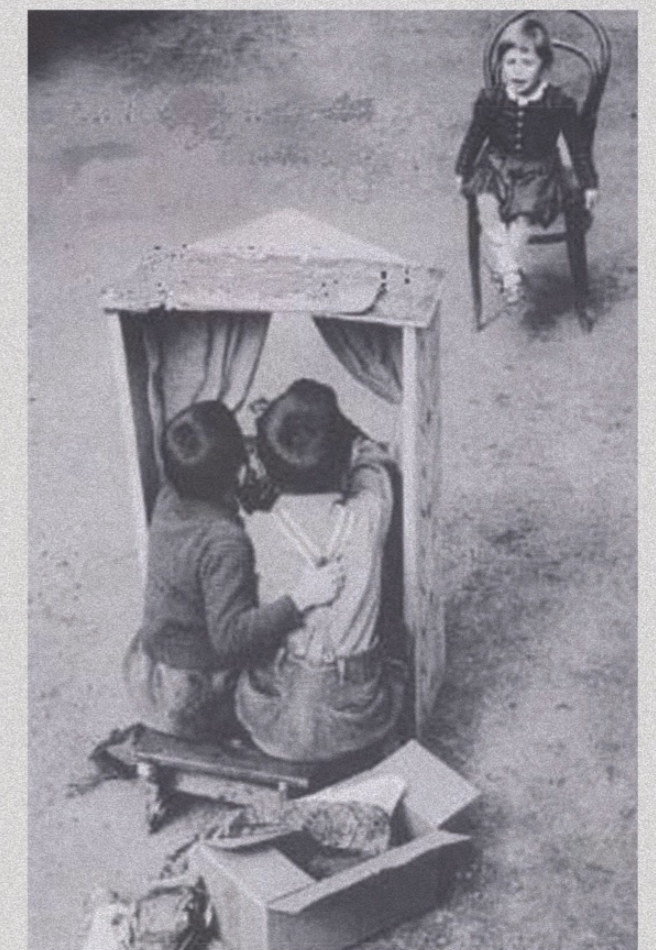
performance embraces discourse

THE PUPPETEER

On an individual level, the act of puppeteering creates a relationship between the self and an imaginary other.

In this, one puts oneself in another's shoes in a creative and empowering way.

reorient the individual



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