

# Johann Le Guillerm

## What's circus ?

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Circus / minority practice of the space of viewpoints

I define the circus as a place for demonstrating minority practices in a space that can accommodate opposing viewpoints.

Minority practices are what is not done, no longer done, or has never been done.

- What is not done: practices that have no application in the daily lives of people. If they did, they would not generate the same interest during public demonstrations. This is the case with all circus practices.
- What is no longer done: revives forgotten or outdated knowledge
- What has never been done: considers new perspectives on know-how and contributes to expanding possibilities

Today, the circus is defined by a list of newly accredited traditional or contemporary practices, while the performance space itself is being annihilated. These so-called circus practices are slippery. Their popularizations make them increasingly less minority and therefore less attractive. They are being demystified.

Therefore, I recognize the circus by its unique spatial characteristic. It's a space capable of accommodating opposing viewpoints where the focus is central and there are no blind spots. The audience surrounds the enclosed subject, nothing is hidden, the performance is explosive, multidirectional. This space is traditionally called the ring and is inscribed within a minimal circle of 13 meters in diameter for physical reasons related to the centrifugal effect exerted on the mass of the

rotating horses. I understand that a ring can take on any dimension and shape of a polygon, polyhedron, or even be made up of at least a corridor, putting the spectators in a bi-frontal relationship. The representation of the convergence diagram of gazes on the central focus is equivalent in these different configurations.

The formation of the architecture of this space can naturally emerge through the phenomenon of attraction to matter, through the spontaneous gathering around the living.

I therefore allow myself to speak of the natural architecture of gathering, a space of viewpoints that forms around what intrigues and surprises us, here considered as a minority practice. This brings forth the notion of an attractive value that varies depending on the observer and shifts the circus practice towards a relative value in relation to the space that seems more tangible.

The space of viewpoints is not currently identified as a specificity among public representation spaces and risks disappearing like anything that is not recognized as essential and receives little attention.

The specificity of this space generates particular methods and know-how, linked to its constraints. By analogy, if we look at the case of visual arts, the sculptor does not approach their work like the painter: one considers all surfaces of the material while the other rarely considers the back of the canvas. In a space of viewpoints, the artist on the ring must distribute information by addressing it to the audience around them; a gesture made will be seen from all sides, essential information must be given to everyone. On a frontal stage, if a gesture is made from behind, it implies a specific choice of viewpoints that is given to the spectator to be seen from behind. This difference emphasizes the specificities of envisioning staging and circus performance. For a circus director, the arrival and departure of sets and props are generally conditioned by the artists' entrances and exits from the ring. The lighting designer and sound engineer are also constrained to consider the space in a particular way. Each profession is conditioned by a specific know-how related to this type of space. Despite the efforts of some companies to invest in theaters by imposing central focus devices, very few people generate experiences within this spatial constraint, for multiple reasons (technical, economic, temporal, etc.).

The experiences and expertise of practitioners are diminishing, and history is being written sparingly. Although in recent years the circus label has expanded, particularly through the proliferation of schools and venues dedicated to the designation, representations within the space of viewpoints have never been so scarce under the circus label.

Language is alive, words evolve, their meanings change, and that is why today I no longer define myself as a circus performer but as a practitioner of the space of viewpoints, awaiting the rebirth of a word that would express the specificity that the word circus once had.

P.S.: At a time when there has never been so much talk about gathering and living together, this space of viewpoints, with its democratic and gathering characteristics, is neglected by the majority of cultural organizations and adopted for communication meetings by political organizations. This raises the question: Is the space of the circus political?