

Activity Report: EDN Carte Blanche Artist Exchange - *Dancing While Writing While Changing A Diaper*

Event Overview

From 7–10 November 2024, Dansehallerne, in collaboration with Andrea Zavala Folache, Adriano Wilfert Jensen, hosted the EDN Carte Blanche Artist Exchange: *Dancing While Writing While Changing A Diaper*. This 4-day residency brought together 20 international artists, choreographers, and dance professionals to collectively reflect on and explore the intersection of artistic practice and childcare. Through a combination of movement, writing, play, and shared caregiving, the residency sought to challenge the conventional separation between artistic and domestic labour, creating a supportive, inclusive environment for artists, carers and children.

Key Activities

Workshops & Reflections:

Participants engaged in workshops that explored the "temporalities of production" and the tension between creative careers and child-care duties. Cecile Ullerup Smith's personal letter-writing workshop invited artists to reflect on how motherhood had reshaped their creative practice. Viky Mendez Alves facilitated artistic reflection through collage and creative play, while Alex Bailey and Krõõt Juurak led a workshop on choreographing alongside children, emphasising the creative possibilities of co-parenting in an artistic context.

Collective Cooking & Sharing:

A key aspect of the residency was communal cooking, led by Swedish artist and chef Emma Kim Hagdahl. Participants and their families prepared organic, vegetarian meals together, using the kitchen space to facilitate conversations about artistic practice, politics, and the realities of balancing family and work.

Care and Wellbeing:

Cosmo M Soltani guided a calming session where children performed acupuncture on their parents, fostering reciprocity and relaxation. This was a unique moment of care that reflected the residency's broader ethos of mutual support and care.

Institutional Learnings:

Dansehallerne, as the host institution, gained invaluable insights into the practical and emotional needs of artists with children. The event highlighted the importance of adapting institutional structures to support artists balancing family life, including providing childcare resources, flexible schedules, and creating a family-friendly environment.

Key Takeaways

Redefining Artistic Practice: The residency offered a unique opportunity to rethink the boundaries of artistic practice. By integrating childcare into the creative process, the artists were able to explore how care work and artistic labour can be mutually enriching rather than opposing forces.

Institutional Flexibility is Crucial: Institutions like Dansehallerne demonstrated that creating an accessible, inclusive environment for artists with children requires significant practical preparation and a mindset shift. Institutions must move beyond rigid, predictable structures and embrace flexibility, unpredictability, and a commitment to supporting artists' diverse needs.

Care and Creative Work Are Interwoven: The residency reinforced that caregiving and creative labour are not separate spheres but deeply intertwined. Caregiving, when supported and integrated into the creative process, can deepen artistic expression and foster new forms of collaboration.

Social and Professional Support: The experience of sharing meals, childcare duties, and creative tasks helped create a strong sense of community among the participants. It showed how essential it is for artists with children to have access to networks of support both personally and professionally.

Practical Considerations: Institutional readiness to support artists with families requires attention to detail—everything from childcare supplies to flexible performance schedules, quiet spaces for napping, and opportunities for informal conversations. These elements are critical to creating a conducive environment for creative work when childcare is a constant responsibility.

Timeliness and Significance

The topic of integrating artistic practice with domestic and childcare work is particularly timely and meaningful in terms of creating more accessible opportunities in performing arts where schedules and physical demands are unpredictable. The need for accessible, family-friendly work environments is slowly being addressed. Historically, the structure of professional artistic institutions has not accounted for the realities of parenthood, which has disproportionately affected female artists and marginalised groups. This residency marks a critical step toward reshaping these dynamics by questioning the assumption that artistic careers and family life are incompatible.

Moreover, the importance of creating inclusive spaces for artists from diverse backgrounds—those who do not fit into the traditional, cis, able-bodied, white, middle-class mould—was emphasised throughout the event. The questions raised about who has access to artistic practice and how institutions can become more inclusive and supportive of caregivers are part of a larger, necessary conversation about equity and accessibility in the arts.

In this way, *Dancing While Writing While Changing A Diaper* represents not only a creative exploration of how childcare and artistic practice can coexist but also a call for systemic change within the artistic community and institutions, where care work and creative labour are equally valued.

About the Project

EDNext project investigates important topics relevant to the contemporary dance sector and disseminates the findings. In 2024, the project facilitated a platform to discuss and map practices of care and wellbeing in contemporary dance. EDNext is brought to you with the support of the Creative Europe funding.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.