



# MAJA KAROLINA FRANKE

DANCE – CIRCUS – PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Portfolio

# The Artist

Maja Karolina Franke

Maja (she/her) is a dance and circus artist, performer, choreographer, and advisor based in Vienna.

Her practice is informed by contemporary dance, contemporary circus, improvisation, partnering, meditation, use of objects, and Shibari techniques. One of her main focuses is on how to relate the body to either other bodies or other objects, structures, and floors.

She likes to create physically challenging situations to see how the body deals with it. A special interest is the encounter and communication between two or more bodies, which manifests in Maja's work with a wide variety of techniques, perspectives, and approaches like contemporary partnering, couple dance, or partner acrobatics. She also works with the topics of responsibility, trust, and the role of the audience in a performance context.

In her work, Maja questions (traditional) gender roles in which we are socialized, and investigates this influence on our bodies. In 2021, she received the BMKÖS Startstipendium for her research on gender roles and gender clichés in partnering and partner acrobatics. For her research "Stand.Punkte" together with Nina Dafert about the relation between physicality in communication and communication in physicality, she received the Arbeitsstipendium from BMKÖS for the year 2024.





## Bio

Maja Karolina Franke

Maja (born 1988) studied classical and contemporary dance at Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität and Dance pedagogy/Movement Studies at Institute of Dance Arts – Anton Bruckner University Linz. Since 2012 she has been working as a freelance artist in the dance and performance art and and since 2017 within the realm of contemporary circus as well.

In the course of her career Maja has worked among others with *KreativKultur*, *Theater Ansicht*, *Tanztheater Homunculus*, *Töchter der Kunst*, *tanz.coop*, *tauschfühlung* and *Momomento*, as well as with *Spielraum Ensemble*, *Follow the Rabbit*, *Planetenparty Prinzip*, *Theater Feuerblau*, *theater t'eig*, *Salzburger Festspiele* and *Burgtheater Wien*.

Her creations were performed at various festivals and venues, such as *Winterfest Salzburg*, *Codarts Research Festival Rotterdam*, *Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ Amsterdam*, *ON THE EDGE Festival Vienna*, *Tanzhafen Festival Linz*, *Codarts Theatre Rotterdam*, *Tadaa! Festival Estonia* and *Latvia*, *Kaskade Festival for Contemporary Circus Austria*, *Krapoldi im Park Innsbruck*, *Toihaus Salzburg*, *Imaginarium Portugal*.

For 2024/2025 Maja is a member of the artistic jury for curating residencies and performances at *Red Sapata, Linz*.



current work in development

## *contours of constraint*

“contours of constraint” is an artistic research that revolves around the question of space. Utilizing her background in dance, circus and performance art the aim is to examine how her body as well as social habits are trained to claim space or prefer to withdraw themselves and leave it to others. She is investigating how her body responds to different kinds of extrinsic and intrinsic limitations. With the use of a variety of props that either restrict her body or help to claim more space she seeks to challenge the prevailing norms and status quo regarding the socialization and perception of a female-presenting body, exploring potential alternatives to being and claiming space.

" ..The plays become less like a story,  
more and more like a court of  
investigation."  
Berthold Brecht



Creation and Performance:  
Maja Karolina Franke

2024

PARL, Ljubljana

residency program and showing

backpulver feedback training, Vienna  
sharings, artistic practice, feedback  
talks

Kunstunj Linz

invited artist for filming Workshop  
(time-based media class)





current work in development

# *Stand.Punkte*

a performance  
about words and body

between self-determination  
and speechlessness

Creation and Performance:  
Maja Karolina Franke and Nina Dafert  
Dramaturgical Support: Cäcilia Färber

2024

On the edge Festival Vienna: Residency and Showing

Kultursommer Vienna: Work in Progress Showing

Bears in the Park Vienna research and rehearsals

Arbeitsstipendium (grant for research)

for Contemporary Circus of BMKÖS

2023

Residency at ZirkusZeit, TRAP Vienna

A relationship between two individuals, two bodies, two voices. The audience gains insight into the depths of human communication and acts as a witness, a confidant, an ally.

What is needed to speak at all, to be heard, to be understood? How much pressure can be endured? Who can speak up when someone else is standing on top of them? Do words get stuck in one's throat when suddenly seeing the whole picture from above? At what point are words not enough – or not even possible? When the world is turning 'round and 'round and upside down, how can we put it into words?



previous work

## *RE/ACT!*

Contemporary circus meets dance, meets performance art. Two performers create their own game: They play with falling, with being caught, with unexpected risk and blind trust. Again and again, the game threatens to tip, pushing trust to its limits.

This negotiation takes place not only between the two performers but also between them and the audience.

The performance deals in a nuanced way with the themes of responsibility and civil courage. Who ultimately takes responsibility in the end?

“Theater is a form of knowledge; it should and can therefore be a means of transforming society. Theater can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”

Augusto Boal







Creation and Performance:  
Maja Karolina Franke & Ralph Öllinger  
Music: Christof Ressi  
Advisor: Arne Mannott

### Performances 2021-2023

Imaginarius Festival, Portugal  
Krapoldi Festival, Innsbruck  
Kultursommer Vienna  
Zirkustheater Festival, Dresden  
Craft Choreography, Vienna  
Raw Matters, Vienna

supported by

bmkoes – Bundesministerium Kunst, Kultur,  
öffentlicher Dienst und Sport  
Red Sapata, Linz  
Raw Matters, Vienna  
Klisope, Linz





# *Hold me, Baby!*

a research project, 2021

Maja Karolina Franke questions traditional gender roles and their reproduction in partner acrobatics practice: "It is time to scrutinize my tools through a feminist lens. Which aspects of the technique adhere to gender stereotypes, which perhaps do not, and how can I use them choreographically? I am interested in various perspectives: both physical and social. Specifically, I want to explore different theses, structures and power relations with bodies."

supported by  
Startstipendium for performing arts (grant for research) of BMKÖS 2021  
Residency and Performance:  
on the edge-Festival / WuK performing arts Vienna

Creation and Performance: Maja Karolina Franke  
Performance: Ralph Öllinger

*Hold me, Baby!* - [FULL VIDEO](#)



# OUT-SIDE-IN



## Performances 2018-2020

Winterfest, Salzburg  
Codarts Research Festival,  
Rotterdam  
Tanzhafen Festival, Linz  
Codarts Theatre, Rotterdam  
Toihaus, Salzburg  
Vollmond Varieté, Hohenems

Creation and Performance:  
Maja Karolina Franke & Ralph Öllinger  
Music: Christof Ressi





The performance is not a show in a conventional way, it is understood as a performance process. All participants - the performers and the audience - can give information from their inside out, as well as take the outside information in.

The aim is to create an honest dialogue. Therefore the term and meaning of responsibility is an important part of the research.

They are looking for an honest physicality, individually and in connection with each other. Giving and receiving weight of the other, taking and overtaking responsibility, sharing it or leaving it to someone else and having trust are essential parts of the process.



## Photo Credits

Title: Ayni

Artist + Bio: Claude Hofer

contours of constraint: Pino Sereno

Stand.Punkte: Milena Nowak

RE/ACT! title page: Max Schorch

RE/ACT! content page: Imaginarius

Hold me, Baby!: Igor Ripak

OUT-SIDE-IN: Lisa Horvath



[www.majakarolinafranke.com](http://www.majakarolinafranke.com)