



# RELATING FORESTS

PRESS-KIT

# RELATING FORESTS

## The Cross-Border Art Project that Reimagines Humanity's Bond with Forests

How can art play a key role to re-establish contact between humans and forests? This question is at the heart of this interdisciplinary collective of European creatives, searching for new pathways inside European myths and Forest-landscapes.

### Crisis of Cultural Imagination

*'We are facing a crisis of Cultural Imagination'* states Marianne Cornil, one of the initiators of 'relating forests'. Cornil is creative director and co-founder of *TheatreFragile*, together with Luzie Ackers. *TheatreFragile*, a German Mask Theatre Company and one of the three collaborating partners in the project, has worked with performance in public space, on topics like flight and exile, ideas of home and climate change for more than 15 years. These days, Cornil and Ackers are concerned. They highlight the urgent need for rethinking outdated notions of nature and culture and developing a more comprehensive understanding of ecological challenges.

By now, we are well acquainted with the fossil-fuel industry's immense impact on the alteration of planetary ecology and climate change, fueling the Anthropocene and larger challenges, across all borders, boundaries, cultures and nations. The effects of climate change are not stricken equally around the globe, and do not contain one single truth. "We need a re-conceptualisation on a fundamental level of the human-environment relationship. That is why we have initiated this project; to look at forest myths, their various local characteristics and differences in our larger European region, and engage in an intercultural exchange with our communities" Cornil explains.

The French art historian Estelle Zhong Mengual writes that "the ecological crisis we are going through is not just a crisis of living things, but a crisis of our relationship with living things." "This project is our desire to change that," Ackers explains. "We are drawing on practices from various European Cultures, with input from several local experts. Throughout the year, there will be exchanges between artists, intellectual reflections and local events for a diverse European audience."

## European Tour

The project; created by a diverse artistic team of storytellers, mask theatre makers, sound artists, choreographers and outdoor educators from Germany, France and Norway, sets out on a journey through European forests this summer. Premiering in the French region of Chateauroux Les-Alpes in May with workshops for local children; the team continues to Germany's Detmold area in July, with interactive workshops in mask theatre, voice and field recordings. The project culminates in the forests of Ås, Norway in October where the team will explore narratives of native storytelling through wandering and listening, and present their findings. The journey will happen in a way where travel is reduced to a minimum and preference is given to trains or buses.

## Audience Interaction

Engaging with local audiences is key for the project. They are creating a variety of workshops for diverse audience members at each location. The workshops will be experiential, experimental and responsive, encouraging interdisciplinary and intercultural exchanges in different outdoor settings. "We would like to host a diverse group of audiences and are keen on getting a sense of what they experience in these settings" the duo explains. The project team will facilitate tools along the way so that audiences can discuss their thoughts and ideas about their experiences.

Through transformative experiences, the hope is that the project can assist in rethinking and resensitize human-forest relationships and narratives.

Cornil states "We want to open up people's ideas to what we perceive or experience a forest or a landscape to be."

# ABOUT 'RELATING FORESTS'

## Key project dates



## Facts

- Project spans 16 months (November 2023 – March 2025) and takes a strong interdisciplinary approach
- A collaborative project between TheatreFragile (GER), Cultures Eco Actives (FRA) and NOBA (NOR)
- The project responds to the urgency of addressing the ongoing climate crisis and biodiversity loss by transforming our relationship with nature.
- The project focuses on reimagining the relation of nature and culture through explorations of imaginaries, European mythologies and rituals in relation to different forest landscapes.
- Brings together four artists from different fields—storytelling, mask theater, sound art, choreography, performance and outdoor education
- Will create a platform for artistic and intellectual reflection through workshops, performances, and digital events.
- The workshops will include aesthetic experiments in nature, meetings with local experts, and artistic presentations.
- 'relating forests' is co-funded by the European Union

## Key concepts

Western conceptions of nature and culture have historically been shaped by separation and hierarchy. "Relating Forests" challenges these notions through artistic practice and new research. The project draws inspiration from European fairy tales, mask traditions, and rituals to foster a more sensory and emotional approach to ecology. By combining traditional expressions with modern technology, such as bioacoustics and digital art, the project aims to open new spaces for understanding and interaction between humans and the more-than-human world.

## Project goals

- Investigate the transformative power of art on audiences
- Reconstruct forest-human relationships, through storytelling, imagination and experiences in forest landscapes
- Interdisciplinary and intercultural exchanges
- Become messengers of *other* models or ways of understanding, working or *becomings* with human-forest relations

## Sustainability

**Circular Economy:** Only existing and found materials, such as second-hand clothing are used for the sets and workshops and reuse of existing resources are made where possible.

**Travel** is reduced to a minimum, with preference given to more sustainable options such as train or bus for distances of less than 20 hours.

**Food and catering** will be vegetarian and vegan, sourced from organic farming where possible.

**Digital carbon footprint:** The goal for internet communication during the project is to use energy-efficient online platforms.

**Performances and rehearsals:** Respect for natural sites: The sites used will be respected and protected. Rules of conduct for participants will be suggested.

**Collaboration and co-creation:** The project encourages collaboration through co-creation processes to foster the exchange of ideas and skills while reducing duplication of work.



# RELATING FORESTS

FRANCE

**Concept:** Anne Bouchon and Anne-Claire Dromzee (Cultures Eco Actives)  
in cooperation with Marianne Cornil  
and Luzie Ackers (TheatreFragile)  
and Rebekka Sæter (NOBA)

**Research direction:** Anne Bouchon

**Artistic conception:** Anne Bouchon  
and Anne-Claire Dromzee

**Public relationship, dissemination  
and production :** Anne Bouchon

**Graphic design, Technical management  
& support, Press:** Camille Foucault

## Workshop

The project includes three days of workshops across France with artists, natural heritage specialists, and school educators, including two half-days with children present. These experimental workshops are designed to be replicable, with a focus on how to observe the transformations that artistic proposals provoke in audiences

Educating children about forest landscapes aims to provide an immersive and engaging experience that goes beyond simple nature exploration. It strives to spark curiosity and wonder in our minds, while also imparting a deep understanding of the importance of forests in our world. This interactive educational approach encourages us to discover the cultural richness of forests through age-appropriate activities, such as exploring storytelling. By creating a new,

positive perspective on the legends, and practices related to forests, we develop an emotional connection with these environments, strengthening our desire to preserve them.

Relating Forests France places great importance on the voice of children. Before the activities begin, children will be encouraged to freely express their perceptions of the forest. At the end of the workshops, a time for interactive discussion will be dedicated, where children will be invited to reflect on their new perspectives and impressions of the forest. This participatory approach will not only enhance children's creativity, but also actively raise their awareness of the importance of the forest in our environment. By involving them in this process in an engaging and stimulating way, we aim to foster a more respectful and responsible attitude towards the forest.

At the same time, Relating Forests France proposes a gaze exchange on the forests, between imaginaries and reality to an adult audience. Using 3 artistic proposals, storytelling, theater, masks, it aims at enhancing awareness of the living in the forest in a participating way.



APRIL 8  
Online seminar with photographer  
Yannick Cormier (FRA))



# RELATING FORESTS

GERMANY

**Concept:** Marianne Cornil and Luzie Ackers  
/ TheatreFragile in cooperation with  
Anne-Claire Dromzee and Anne Bouchon  
(CEA) and Rebekka Saeter (NOBA)

**Artistic direction:** Luzie Ackers  
and Marianne Cornil

**Production:** Marianne Döller

**Production assistance and bookkeeping:**  
Lianne Mol

**Accounting:** Doren Gräfendorf

**Graphic design:** Silke Meyer

**Public relations:** Neurohr & Andrä

**Digital support:** Dirk Schröder

**Scientific advice:** Catherin Persing (theater  
studies) Yannick Cormier (photography)

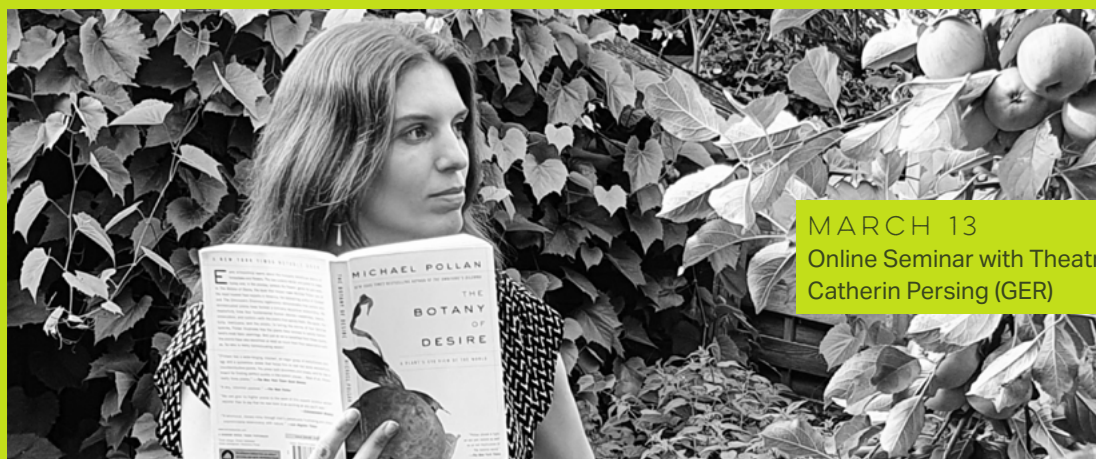
with experts in biology, cultural studies  
and theatre studies will provide insights  
into local issues. TheatreFragile's shares  
an element of the actual creation "STILL",  
which already fuses contemporary mask  
performance with experimental music  
and bioacoustic elements.

Building on these experiences, the 4 artists  
involved in the project are immersed in  
collaborative exploration, exchanging ideas  
on how traditional narrative forms such as  
fairy tales and ritual masks can merge with  
modern artistic expressions such as digital  
creativity and bio-acoustics. Their aim  
extends beyond artistic experimentation  
to the development of new ways of  
storytelling and understanding human-  
nature relationships.

## Workshop

In July 2025, the artists will convene in the  
Lippe region of Germany for a workshop  
exploring the complex boundaries between  
cultural heritage and contemporary  
artistic expression. The local forest will  
be used as a living laboratory for artistic  
transformation. Interdisciplinary encounters

The final day will focus on knowledge  
transfer, with the artists sharing their  
research in a workshop with young  
participants. This approach enables  
intergenerational dialogue about cultural  
heritage, creativity and our connection  
to the natural environment.



MARCH 13

Online Seminar with Theatre Scholar  
Catherin Persing (GER)



# RELATING FORESTS

NORWAY

**Concept:** Rebekka Sæter (NOBA) in cooperation with Marianne Cornil and Luzie Ackers / TheatreFragile and Anne-Claire Dromzee and Anne Bouchon (CEA)

**Artistic Director:** Rebekka Sæter

**Artistic Collaborator:** Lajla Buer Storli

**Visual Identity & Graphic Design:**  
Raquel Marques

**Technical Management & Support:**  
Geir Eilertsen

**Accounting:** Vemund Vindedal

**Press & Marketing:** Elina Gobeti

## Workshop

In the final workshop taking place in October 2025, the artist will gather in the forests outside of Ås, Norway, for their third workshop. Throughout the week they will experience and familiarize themselves with a range of local forest areas, from production to natural forests, and they will be visited by experts in folk singing, Norwegian outdoor education and philosophy during their initial days. The artists will create and live on site throughout the week incorporating their living and live experiences of the place and places into their creative practices.

The research they will embark on during this time will take a deep dive into Norwegian stories spanning from nation-building in the 1800s, to local myths, fairy tales and folk songs as well as Arne Næss' *Deep Ecology* and outdoor educational practices such as *Wild Pedagogies*. The artists will exchange ideas on how forest landscapes can be



APRIL 8  
Online seminar with Professor of Sámi  
Literature Harald Gaski (NOR)

used as co-teachers and co-creators and how to build and communicate encounters with the living world.

The workshop will culminate in an atmospheric cultural wandering, open for local audiences of all ages. During the walk the artists will unfold materials created by their experiences and from their communal artistic practices, and can for the audience be experienced as small encounters and performative happenings on the way. The walk will be followed by a gathering where exchanges of experiences and ideas will be made.

## Final Hybrid Event

The workshops in the project will be experiential, experimental, and responsive, encouraging interdisciplinary and intercultural exchanges in outdoor settings. The participating artists will research and produce together, not only about nature in particular the forest, but also in it. In doing so, they acquire theoretical and practical knowledge on sustainable action and production of art, which they can implement in their further work.

Building on the insights gained throughout the project's 16 months; from online talks, workshops, meetings, writing and discussions, the artists will exchange ideas and develop artistic translations, bringing the different art forms into dialogue with each other.

Their findings will be thoroughly documented and presented orally, visually, and in writing. They would like to capture insights gained during the immersive engagement with nature and culture and to share this with a broad international network of artists and institutions alike. Specifically this will take place in a final hybrid event in the autumn of 2025.

# ABOUT THE PARTNERS



**Cultures Eco Actives (FRA)** experiments, studies, develops, promotes, and generates the awakening and strengthening of environmental awareness through art, cultural cooperation projects, experiments, and field studies in collaboration with its members. Cultures Eco Actives supports environmental responsibility, encourages reconnection with nature and landscapes, and investigates cultural contexts.

## **Anne-Claire Dromzée**

### **Artistic Work of storytelling, Mountain leader**

As a storyteller and mountain guide, Anne-Claire Dromzée has been connecting nature experience with artistic narration for over a decade. Through her various creations featuring birds, plants, and trees, she believes that stories create connections with living things and make us more aware.

In 2020, she founded the Compagnie Entre-Deux with musician Jean-Benoît Blandin, developing storytelling that take various artistic expressional forms. They have created shows that they will play, especially in the mountain huts while walking. The challenge is to discover the tales to an audience that does not expect to become a spectator. In 2022, she realized the hiking project "Histoires itinérantes" in the Ecrins massif with Sophie Kahn, director of animated films. They will play their show for 14 days by moving on foot and collecting testimonies around the walk. She is convinced of the richness of sharing and the power of stories.

## **Anne Bouchon**

Project Management, Cultural Policies, Environmental Education, Social Impact

As a co-founder of Cultures Eco Actives, Anne Bouchon has been committed to nature conservation and ecological responsibility for years. Since 1996, she has led complex, multi-partner projects for governments and non-governmental organizations.

Her expertise encompasses cultural policies, impact studies and environmental education through art. With experience in managing European creative projects, she brings comprehensive competencies in project development, management, and evaluation.



### Norwegian BioArt Arena (NOR)

Founded in 2018, Norwegian BioArt Arena (NOBA) is the first permanent arena for BioArt in Norway. We organise art exhibitions and events featuring Norwegian and international artists and scientists with a focus on sustainable development, the environment, and life sciences. NOBA is the arts department at Vitenparken Campus Ås – a science center dedicated to the environment, food, and climate change, located on the territory of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. NOBA aims to be a platform for art that engages with the living world, with questions and methods from the sciences. A critical attitude combined with playful, sensory exploration is central to NOBA's approach.

### Rebekka Sæter

Choreography, Interdisciplinary Art, Ecological Research

Rebekka Sæter is a Norwegian choreographer, artist and outdoor educator working in-between body, movement, place and narrative. Her interest lies in critically questioning and unfolding historical and ongoing narratives that dwell and manifest themselves in humans and more-than-human places and beings in relation to topics like capitalism, conquest, power, ideas of belonging, dwelling and repair.

She has studied performance at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire and choreography at Dartington College of Arts and Centre for Dance Berlin. She holds an MA in Transcultural European Outdoor Studies from University of Cumbria and trained as an outdoor educator at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

In 2022 she received the Norwegian Dance Artist Association stipend for the interdisciplinary art project 'ghosting Glacier'. In addition to working at NOBA, Rebekka is a board member of PRAXIS Oslo.



## Theatre Fragile (GER)

TheatreFragile explores critical societal issues through performative art, creating performances in public spaces that transform complex discourses about flight and exile, ageing, climate change, deforestation or environmental challenges into accessible, poetic visual experiences. Since 2006, the company has developed ten productions that have been performed across Germany and Europe, consistently pushing the boundaries of artistic expression by engaging directly with communities and experts from diverse fields. Recent works such as "Are You Ready?", "How you call into the forest..." and the current creation "STILL" delve deeply into the emotional landscapes of environmental change, using different dramaturgical forms such as immersive forest parcours and multi-perspective narratives to explore human connections with natural ecosystems.

### Luzie Ackers Artistic Direction, Project Management, Mask Making

Luzie Ackers has been co-founder and co-director of TheatreFragile since 2007. As a physical actress and mask artist, she has developed over 100 masks used not only in her company's productions but also by other theater groups. Her artistic engagement extends beyond the stage into cultural education: she designs workshop formats for children and young people that playfully introduce the art of mask-making. Due to her long-standing expertise, she has been a jury member for performing arts funding in NRW since 2021. In the "relating forests" project, she is responsible for communication, documentation, and artistic accompaniment, with a special focus on masks as a transformative medium

### Marianne Cornil Artistic Conception, Project Management, Documentation

Also a co-founder of TheatreFragile, Marianne Cornil has been developing national and regional theater projects since 2007. In her artistic work beside performing and directing creations she creates voice collages based on interviews with those directly affected, enriching productions with deep contextual layers. In 2013, she deepened her artistic research in the master's program "experimentation politique & art" under the guidance of Bruno Latour. Her interest lies in the societal role of art and its mediation. In the "relating forests" project, she is responsible for conception, Creative Meetings, and artistic documentation through her characteristic interview collages.

### Marianne Döller Production and Management

After her acting training at HMT Rostock (2005-2009), Marianne Döller gained experience at various theaters including Staatstheater Schwerin and Theater der Jugend Wien. Since 2018, she has also been working as a producer in the performing arts for various collectives. With her master's degree in Cultural and Media Management (2020-2023), she has been strengthening the TheatreFragile team since May 2023. Her focus is on fundraising and project management; in the "relating forests" project, she is responsible for overall management and financial administration.

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