

Beyond the show

Animal Religion



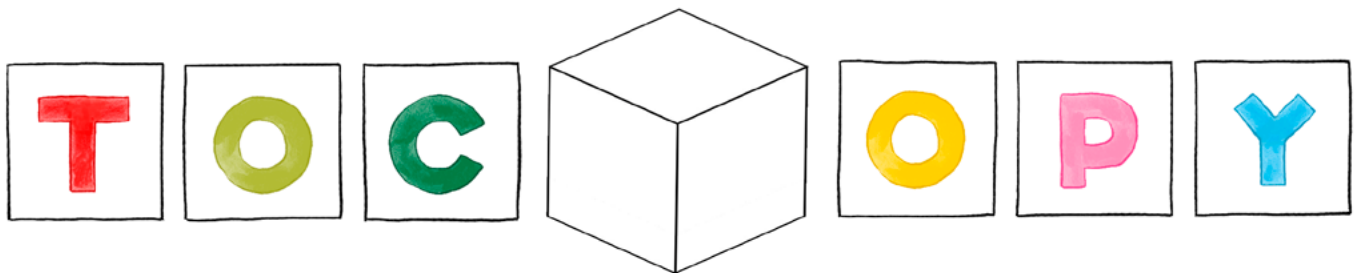


Copying is undervalued and being original is highly respected.

This dossier collects a series of artistic resources originating around the show by the company Animal Religion, To Copy.

To Copy is a show that explores the idea that in this society copying is very undervalued and being original is highly praised. It's an idea many of us have internalized, but which is actually based on a fallacy, since originality and copying are two sides of the same coin and one cannot exist without the other.

Without copying each other, society wouldn't evolve and we wouldn't have gotten to where we are. Everything comes from somewhere else and, at the same time, everything is original.



The show addresses these themes by inviting a group of children to the stage to participate in building the show together with Animal Religion.

In this act of participating and copying, the children show the journey of a community entering a new and unknown space, where they learn and develop.

A metaphor of origins and an example of

how copying feeds back on itself and ultimately generates community, culture, language, and undoubtedly originality.

In the audience, the other children who don't actively participate on stage also copy and get involved at various moments of the show from their seats, while observing this work that undoubtedly awakens different emotions and ideas in them.

Biography

Animal Religion is a circus company interested in researching new paths within contemporary circus and interdisciplinarity. Their three areas of work are circus, light, and music.

In their twelve-year career, they've created 10 shows in very diverse formats, received

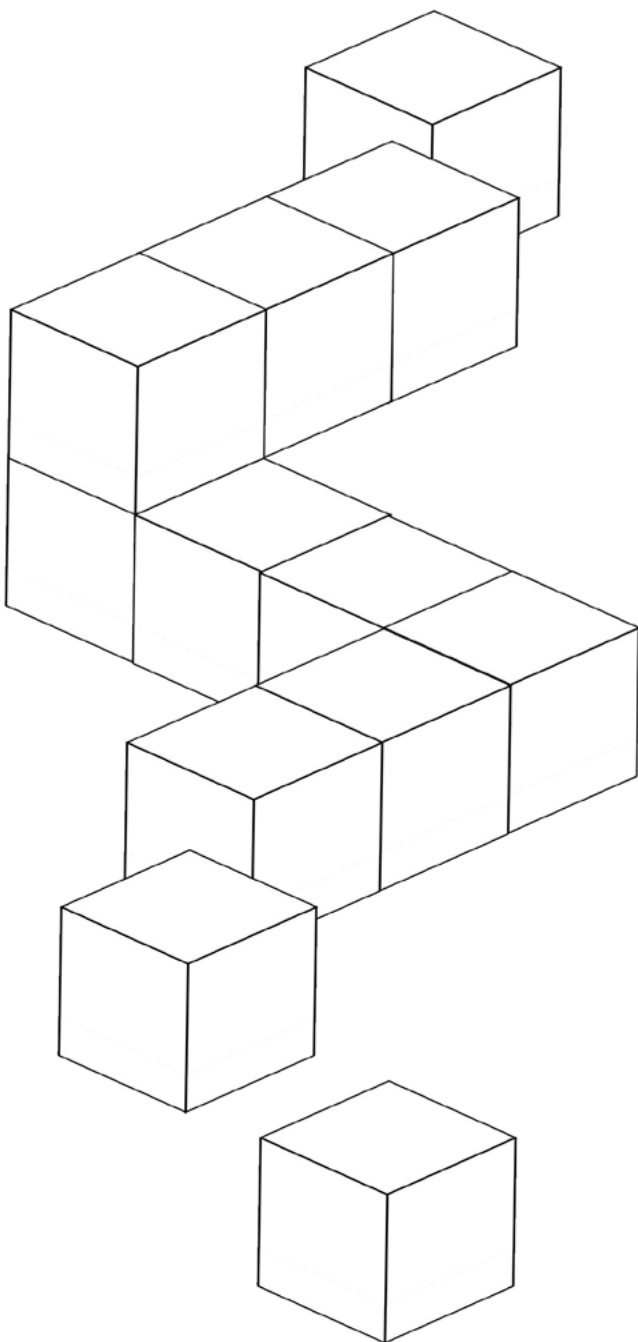
commissions from TNC (Teatre Nacional de Catalunya), Mercat de les Flors, laSala, elPetit, Fira Tàrrrega, Festival TNT and Auditori de Barcelona, and won several awards and recognitions. Most notably the Premi Especial Ciutat de Barcelona award for the show Siphonophore in 2016.

Areas of Work

The most important artistic research by Animal Religion in the last seven years is its interdisciplinarity: how the arts it expresses itself with (circus, light and sound) intertwine and influence each other.

This research isn't accidental. Animal Religion questions what elements can build the theatrical event and how to create a work where the body isn't always the center of the scene, nor of the emotion or intention being proposed. Giving relevance to other scenic elements - especially in a show for children - is an excellent pedagogical channel to make new expressive pathways visible.

In the show you can see multiple examples of this research, making it a good classroom topic. During our numerous practices in primary school classes to develop the work, we've received much feedback from children, and often light is one of the elements they comment on most and that sparks the greatest interest. It can be a good reflective exercise to try to decipher what that light has made us feel, those body movements we've seen or that music - three elements treated in a very abstract but deeply expressive way.



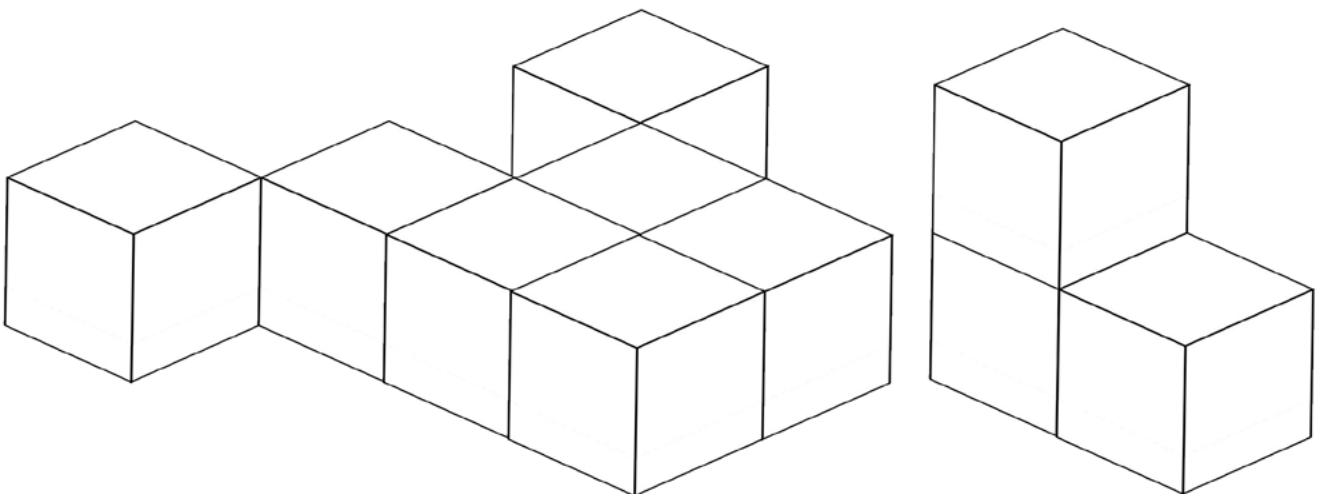
Work Process

The creation process for this work began in 2018. We were performing in Copenhagen and after finishing our show we invited part of the audience on stage and improvised a new show with the materials on stage. That experience touched us deeply, for its simplicity and originality, and planted the idea that someday we could make a show where we invited part of the audience to participate. One part of the audience watches and the other participates. Two different but very interesting experiences from both perspectives.

This way of working with participation extended to our children's workshops, and that's where the idea of Copying was born with much more strength. These workshops were full of improvisation and freshness, and we saw the children flowing in a very beautiful way. We always saw them being very present, without shame and eager to share.

Once we decided we wanted the framework of these improvisations to be the origin of our new piece, the creation process for Copying took a year and a half.

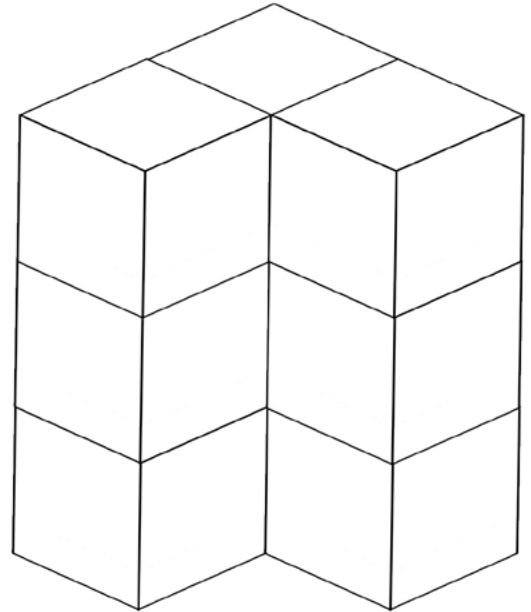
First we did practices in public schools aligned with the project with different class groups to understand which age ranges the proposal best adapted to. Then we did practices with class groups of the chosen ages, but already in theaters, where we could see how the children reacted when put on stage without knowing what would happen and without speaking. Finally, we did more practices with class groups participating and class groups watching, to better understand all the relationships and reactions. As can be seen, it's been a process very tied to practice with groups and subsequent reflection. Iteration after iteration the show Copying emerged.



Proposed Activities

In the show *To Copy*, being participatory for children, various interaction games appear that adapt very well for classroom work and for talking about the act of copying and what it means for our society.

Here we leave you various activity proposals to work artistically in the classroom:



MIRROR GAME

In pairs, standing and facing each other. The game consists of one partner copying the other's movements as faithfully as possible.

To this movement game you can add various ideas or concepts, like "Move as if we were underwater" or "Move like a robot" etc., to explore different types of physicality.

We recommend playing music to give a special sensitivity to the atmosphere and varying the word that dictates the movement quality.

CONTINUOUS MIRROR GAME

This activity follows the same rules as the previous one but makes them slightly more complex. One partner makes a movement, the other observes it, copies it and adds another movement after. Alternating movements back and forth until reaching a phrase of 10 movements. When all pairs have their choreographic phrase, they'll show it to the rest of the class. It's very important the game is done in silence, communicating only through movement.



TELEPHONE GAME

The classic telephone game is a very clear example of how copying is never the same and how new things always emerge from repetition. The copy can never be as faithful as the original. In this case we propose playing telephone, passing a word ear to ear in a circle and at the end comparing the word that came out with what arrived at the end. To make it more complex we propose not just passing a word but passing a short made-up story explained in a sentence like: “The dolphin left home, wearing glasses and duck feet and didn’t know where he’d left his keys.”



INVENT A STORY

The whole class is in a circle and one child is in the center. The one in the center begins by saying: “Once upon a time...” and points to someone in the circle. That person continues the story until the one in the middle points to another. Continue this way until the made-up story reaches its conclusion.

Copying isn’t just taking literally what others do but also includes continuing others’ ideas. Continuing these ideas and/or modifying them is also part of the copying mechanism.



ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR

This game is played with the whole class seated in a circle. One child leaves the room momentarily. During this time everyone decides on one person to copy. The child who left returns and observes everyone moving the same. They must observe their classmates until guessing who that person everyone is copying is.



THE PHOTOCOPIER

This activity is done in pairs. One sits in a chair with a table in front and paper and pencil. The other stands behind and with their finger draws on their partner's back what they want them to draw on the paper. While the one behind is "drawing" with their finger on the back, the one in front draws what they feel on their back on the paper. This collaborative process has a result that neither has absolute control over.

Once done, it can be made more complex by adding more people to the line, having the first draw on the second's back, who draws on the third's back, who draws on the paper. The chain can be made longer until the whole class is drawing on backs and only the last one draws on paper.



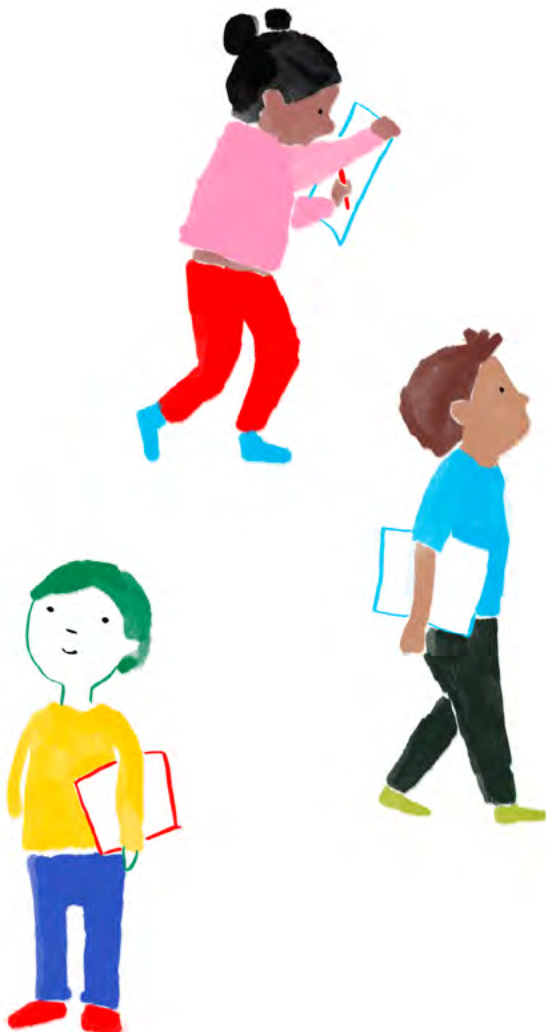
OBSERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

This activity consists of taking a silent walk around the school and observing everything that resembles something else and noting it on paper. It's very important the children walk in silence. When they see something that resembles something else they note it on paper.

For example, they see two children's very similar shoes, two identical windows, two very similar buildings, two identical trees, the water pipe and the gas pipe, two walls painted the same color, two striped sweaters with horizontal stripes, etc.

Obviously, it's an exercise that never ends, since copying and the origin of copying can be seen everywhere and it all depends on how deeply you want to look.

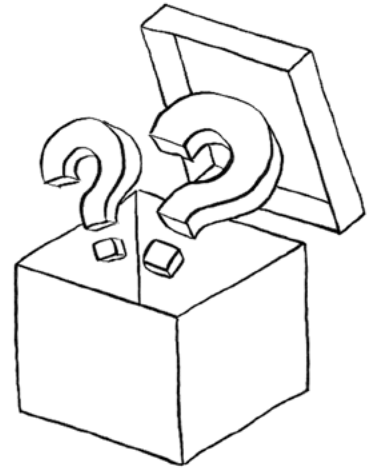
When they return to the classroom, they share everything they've seen that resembles something else between themselves and their classmates and make a mural with all the connections they've found.



WHAT'S BEHIND WHAT'S THERE?

We all have a head.
Our head is like a black box:
no one knows what's inside.

What's inside your black box?
Write four words that are in
your black box.



And now draw a world where these four things all live together.



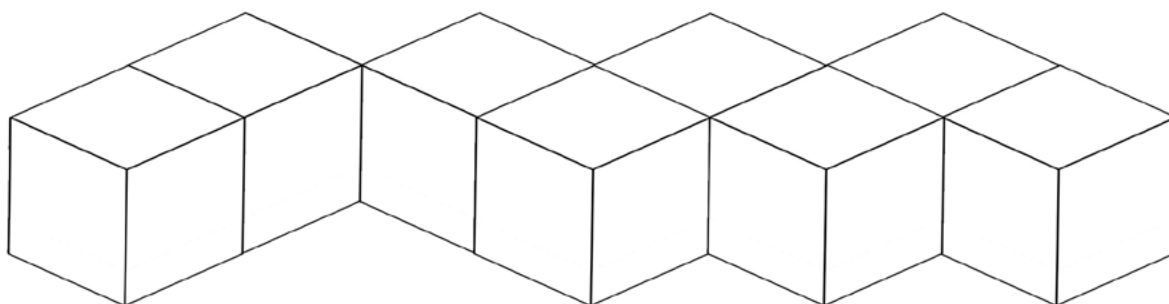


All these activities are designed to show how copying is deeply embedded in what we do and who we are.

We hope you enjoy the activities and that they serve as an excuse to reflect on this theme, and above all, to encourage children to make art and to open their artistic gaze.

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Illustrations and layout: Maria Girón



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