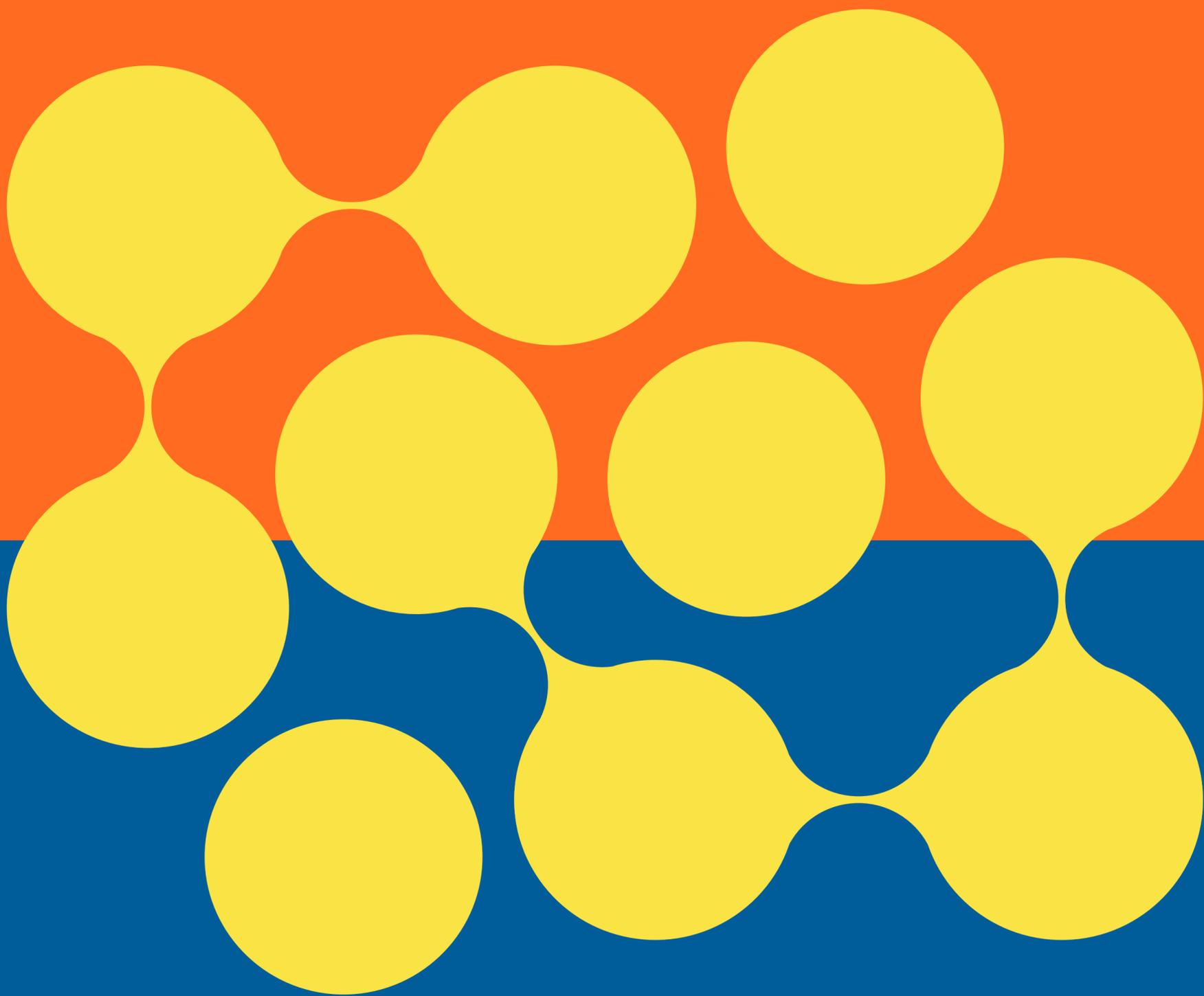


OCEAN SPACE

THE SOUL
EXPANDING OCEAN #2:
ISABEL LEWIS



CURATED BY
CHUS MARTÍNEZ

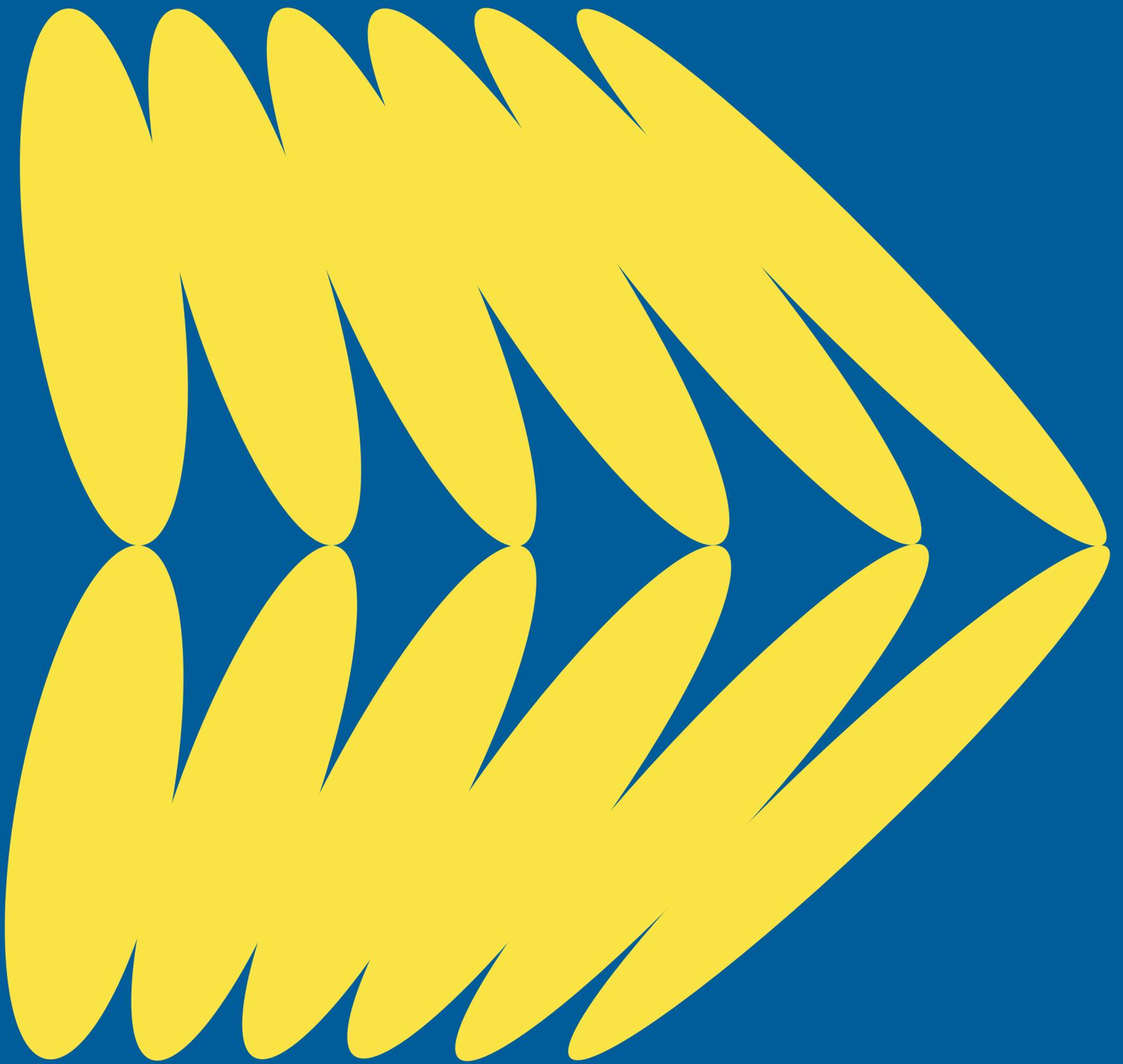
OCEAN SPACE
CHIESA DI SAN LORENZO, VENICE
17.09 – 17.10.2021

T  Thyssen-Bornemisza
B Art Contemporary
A Academy

ISABEL LEWIS, 2021

O.C.E.A.N.I.C.A.

(Occasions Creating
Ecologically Attuned Narratives
in Collective Action)



Exhibition-performance
with 20 performers

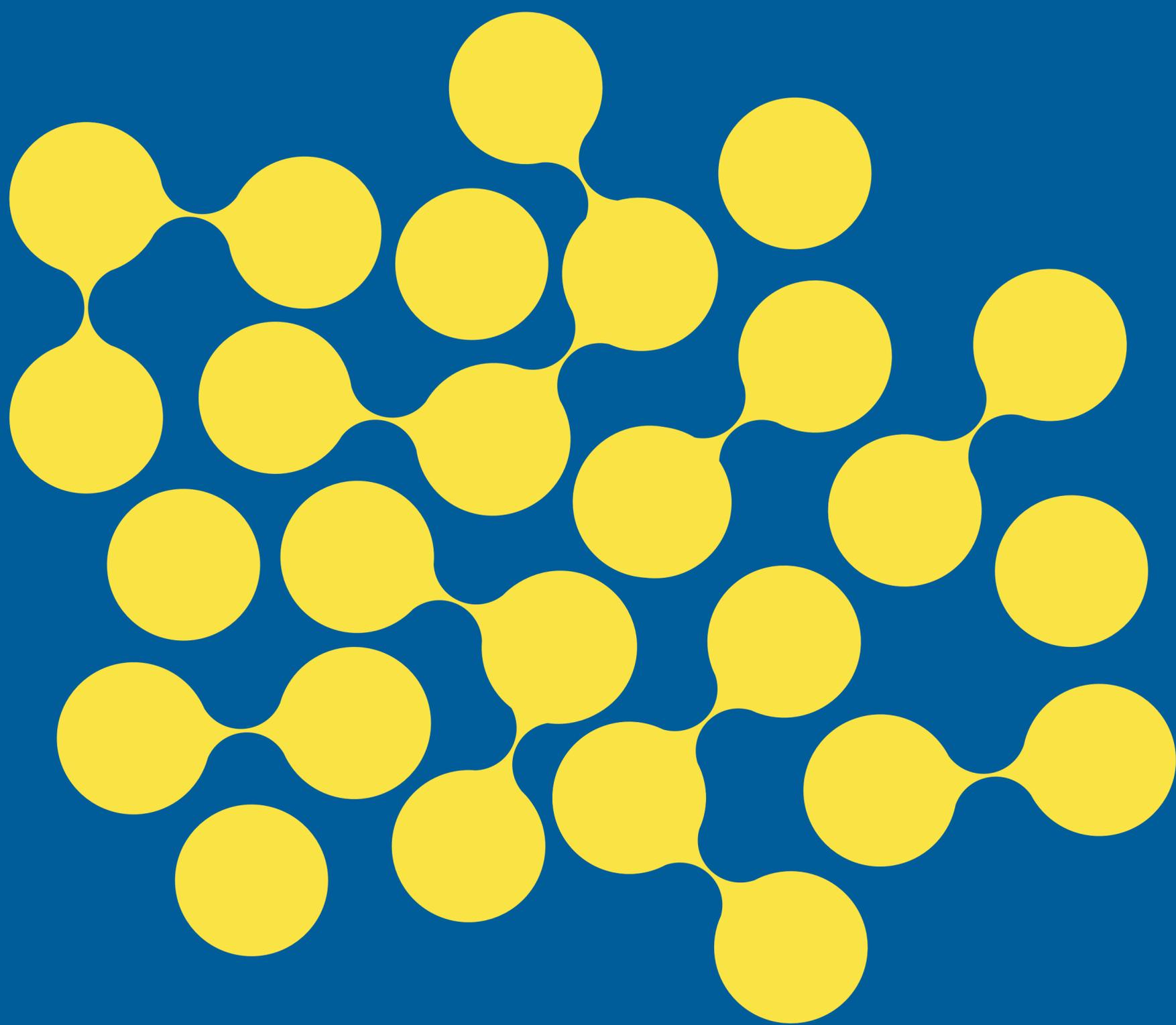
Imagine the breathing of all the beings alive inside the body of the Ocean. Fine bubbles, air forming a reverberation of primordial harmonies, and these melodies forming waves. How can we learn, process trauma, and find strategies of healing together as a human community from within our broader ecological relations while maintaining our distinct differences? In a framework in which individual agency can perform again and again, instantly, with no rehearsal, with no hesitation. Oh yes, the Ocean is full of dancers, the bodies of those inhabiting the depths are made for the fluid life, for the rhythms created by the soft touch of cold and warm waters, for the winds caressing the surfaces and molding the crests of the currents. It took long until we realized that becoming one with the Ocean implies the embrace of a body—a collective body that can move, that is flexible, attentive to the nameless influences

of all that lies ahead for us to experience in the waters. It seemed only natural that, after listening the winds and the sounds of the Pacific in the sonic work of Taloi Havini, we invited artist and choreographer Isabel Lewis to dance the Ocean.



Dance is a collective exercise that invents the space anew. Through an open call, addressed to professional and amateur dancers alike, Lewis formed a spontaneous, diverse company aimed to introduce movement, togetherness, rhythm, and music as a method to experience oceanic joy.

Did you notice that coastal communities often sing when recalling their experiences of the Ocean? It is as if singing could help us to recreate the watery ways.



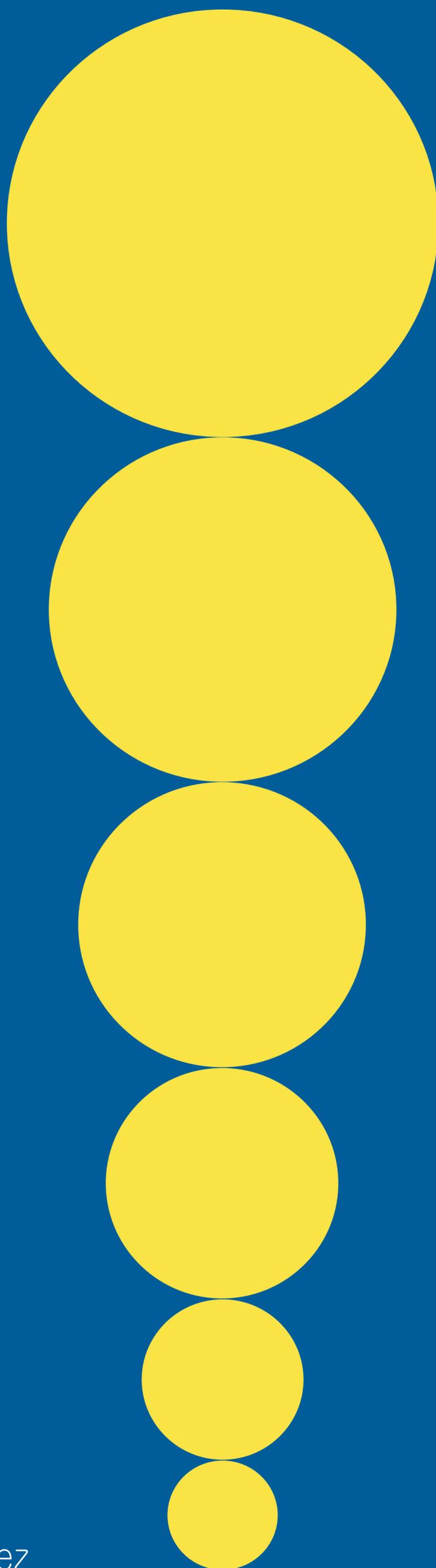
The voice moves, the body moves, we are moved by the music and move along the scores. Ah! Did you notice that Ocean life has no fear when it comes to busting a move? Dancing the Ocean can become a critical method, don't you think?

In this piece—specifically created for TBA21–Academy's Ocean Space and Venice and for the Oceans—Lewis takes inspiration from Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed', a set of dramatic techniques which aim to bring to light systemic exploitation and oppression, in order to discover ocean life inside us.



She creates a situational choreography where the boundaries between performance and spectatorship fade, and the very real living conditions and labor struggles across society materialize together, and find an interlocutor in the Ocean.

Binaries are impossible when all forms of life, human and nonhuman, must unite their bodies in care, in dance, in struggle.

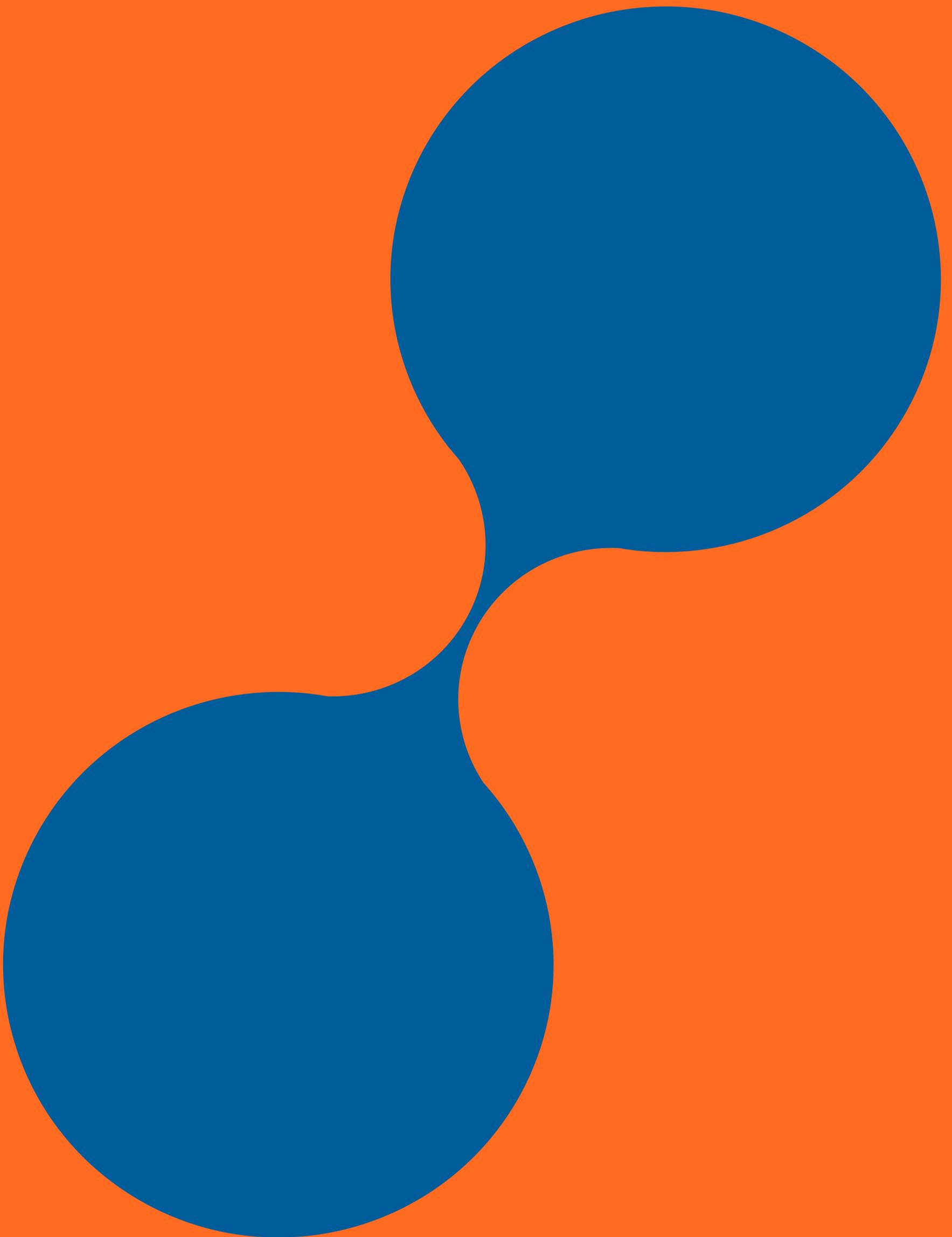


FOUR RULES OF PLAY
CHOREOGRAPHIES FOR SPACE
SHAPERS, INTENT ATTENDANTS
AND INHABITERS

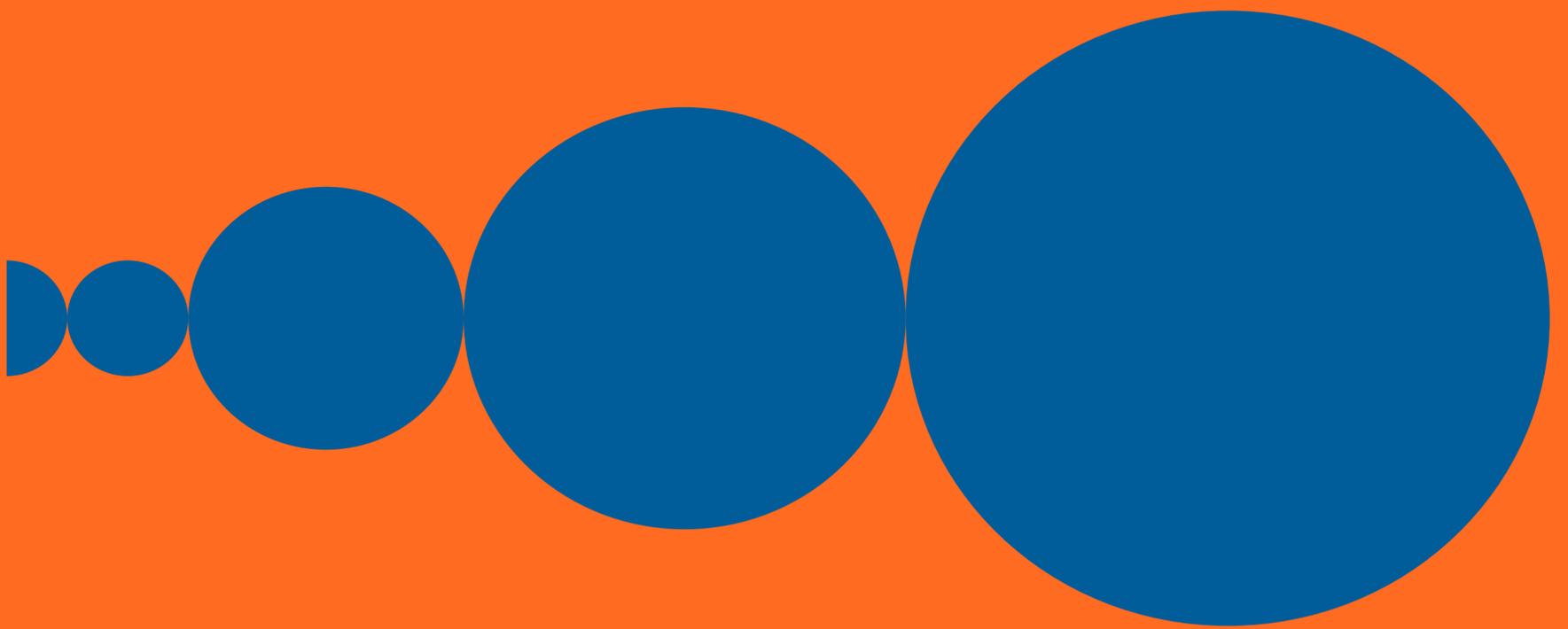


'O.C.E.A.N.I.C.A. (Occasions Creating Ecologically Attuned Narratives in Collective Action)' takes as its foundation a game structure for collective composition called 'Communal Experience in Performing Instantly Created (EPIC) Fiction' created by artist and choreographer Isabel Lewis in 2008. 'Communal EPIC Fiction' is an artistic proposal for co-creation in the form of a workshop that distributes agency in temporarily assigned roles that are both task-based and performative. Participants collaborate together in real time to compose a form of instant situational choreography. In 'O.C.E.A.N.I.C.A.' weekend sessions begin with workshops that attune the individual to their bio-social surroundings and heighten the bodily awareness and receptivity toward ecological attunement. Discussion as well as writing and movement exercises are offered as a way to prepare

participants to enter into a state of performative activation. Thus "warmed-up", the game structure or score is proposed, the rules of the game elaborated and roles are taken up.



Compositional choices are made by individuals in response to the evolving collective arrangement in a series of responses and counter-responses so that what emerges is a unique performance, fiction co-created in the very moment.



Individual agency is coordinated into collaboration in a way that can lay bare or subvert social power dynamics that tend to emerge within groups in relation to gender, age, socioeconomic status. This workshop explores the possibility of accessing creative and embodied new subjectivities from the participants through imaginative and playful social interaction.



Each performance lasts for a predetermined amount of time after which roles are exchanged and the score is enacted anew. All those in attendance are subjects, actors on equal footing, no longer delegating power to others to either think or act in their place; they think and act for themselves. Theatre itself is not revolutionary but is a rehearsal of revolution.

Game Structure

At play is a game of replacement and switching roles. All roles are active performing roles. By employing a game structure participants create instant compositions that are responsive to the entrances, exits, energetic qualities and behaviors of the all participants, passersby and coincidental attendants.



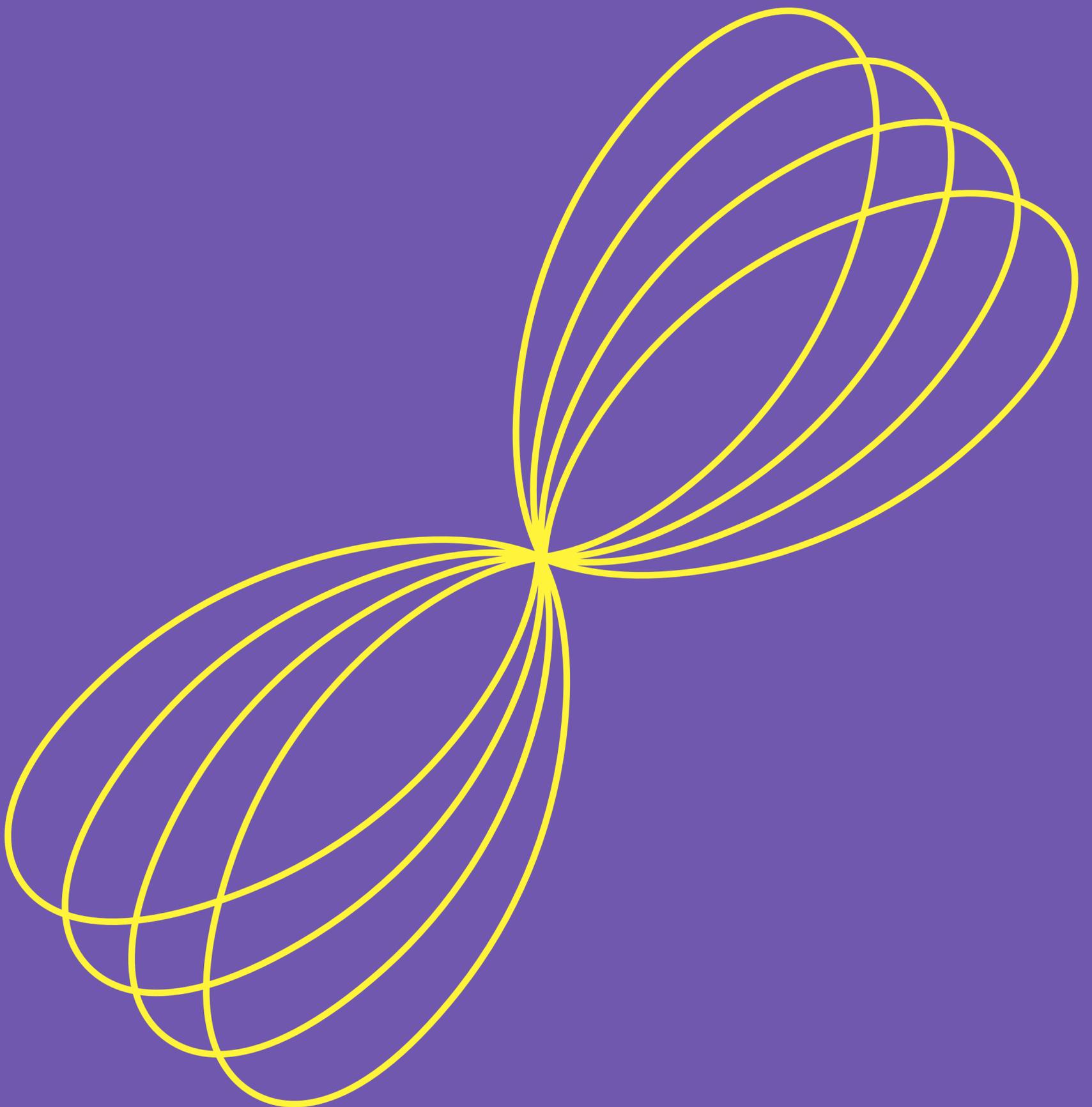
Four Rules of Play

"I developed the following rules in 2008 in the aftermath of a series of painful collaborations that all had the same common feature: the assumption of an all-inclusive democratic situation without clear articulation of agency. These rules became the cornerstone for a workshop called 'Communal EPIC (Experience in Performing Instantly Created) Fiction'. I see these rules are essential for creating dynamic and affective collaborative creations. Individual agencies within assumed roles play off one another and respond to other agencies in other roles. Essentially each player has a lane to move in. The boundaries of the roles ultimately blur, but the assumption of each role provides a specific point of view or focus for the player while in that temporarily assumed role."

—Isabel Lewis

1. Everyone is an expert in everything

If everyone is an expert in everything then the opposite is also true—no one is an expert in anything. This rule is about giving oneself the permission to be playful, to take risks, and to try things that may seem out of reach or beyond one's knowledge or area of specialisation.

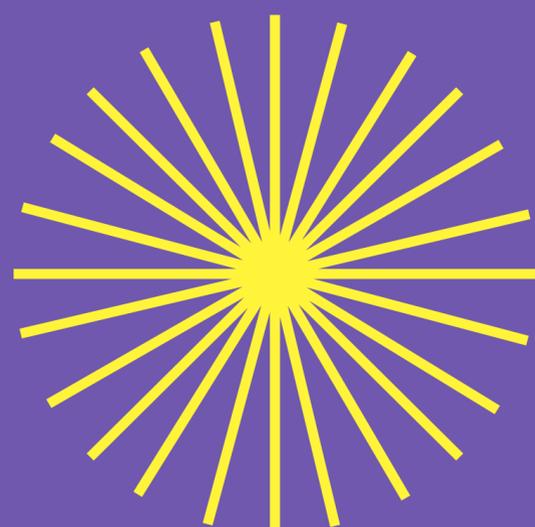
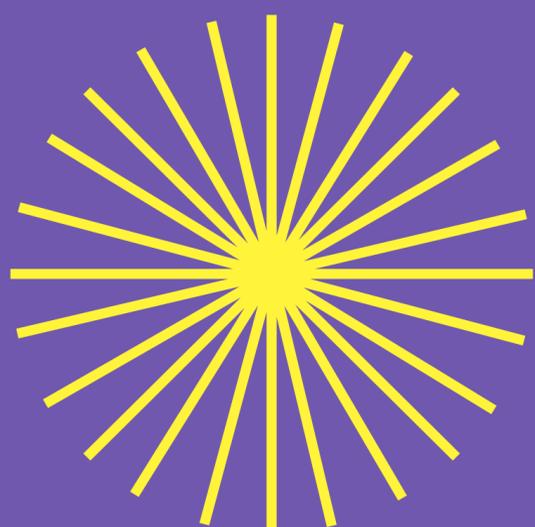
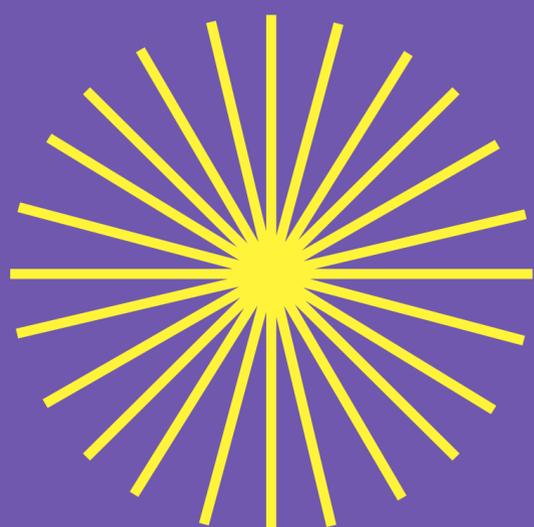


2. We will be civil, but we will NOT be polite

This is perhaps the most important rule of the game. By agreeing to play players agree to a common goal: to create something together that is bigger than each individual contribution. Civility requires taking care of each other as the given precondition of any other act, as the foundation upon which action is taken and decisions made. As such individual egos remain secondary to the common goal. Politeness puts the individual ego first and in doing so kills all productive, life-generating tension. Politeness literally smothers and flattens the dynamics of the situation and thus the potential power of the collective composition.

3. Anyone can direct the situation

This rule gives space for individual conviction and passion. When someone has a clear impulse and a strong feeling for what must happen in any given moment in response to the new conditions they have observed in the space, they must go for it and assume a directorial position. They have to find ways to effectively communicate their vision to the other players through whatever means available, be they verbal or written instruction, auditory or other sensorial cues and embodied interventions.



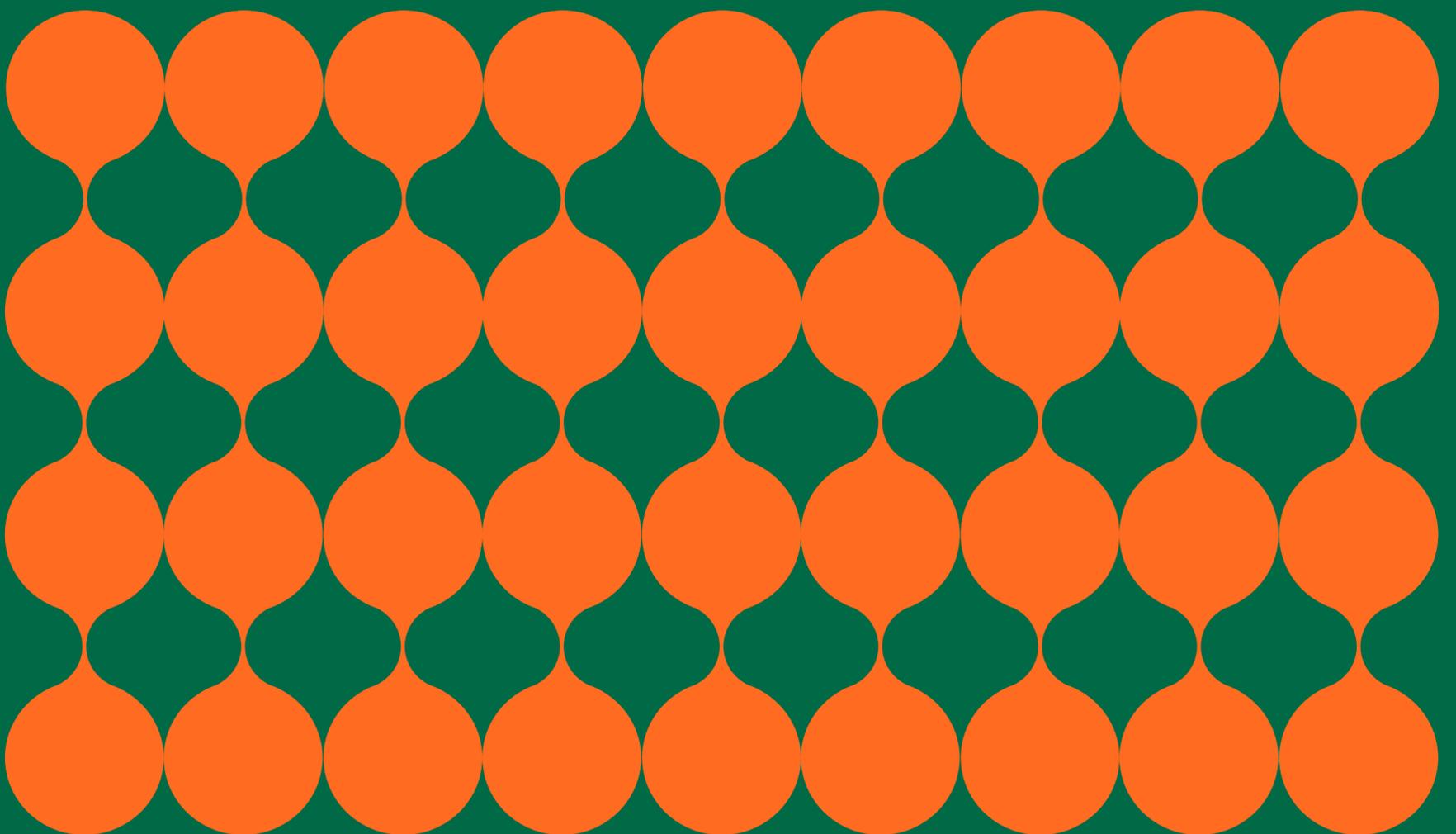
4. No one is obliged to follow

This requires players to exercise their always already active agency. One must consider whether or not they choose to join the temporary director's vision for the group. In either joining, saying no, or proposing an alternative, each player reflects upon their relation to the group and its modes of communication. Automatic obedience is just as suspect as the knee-jerk reaction to resist or say no for the sake of being contrarian.



Roles

SPACE SHAPER—takes care of composing the space; arranges and rearranges the elements of spatial composition which can include participants' positions in the church or on the square, light sources, furniture elements; attends to the placement of bodies to achieve dynamic scenes; places one's own body in dynamic spatial relationships that address architecture and spatial constraints as well as framing views for intentional (and coincidental) attendants.



INTENT ATTENDANT—actively gives attention to all that is happening in the space; hungrily and urgently pursues the way they wish to experience what is going on; authors their viewing/listening/feeling experience by how and where they position themselves, frame their points of view and react in the situation.



INHABITER—inhabits the evolving situation and responds; dwells inside and is in dynamic conversation with the compositions that are being created; analyzes and assesses the effects, impacts, and impressions of their actions and those of the other participants; initiates compositional movements and sequences in response to the changing dynamics.



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DIRECTOR TBA21:

Carlos Urroz

DIRECTOR TBA21–ACADEMY:

Markus Reymann

CEO TBA21–ACADEMY:

Niall Smith

CURATOR:

Chus Martínez

ORIGINAL MUSIC:

Isabel Lewis

PERFORMERS: Heidee Lyn Alsdorf, Federica Bastoni, Antonio Giuseppe Bia, R. Elio Bonaccini, Beatrice Brunetto, Eleonora Camerotto, Emilia Cantieri, Chiara Ceconello, Margherita D'Adamo, Danila Gambettola, Laura Inzoli, Vittorio Messina, William Y Erik Nylind, Giulia Pellin Mattiocco, Miriana Reale Calabrese, Leonardo Sinopoli, Gaia Tinarelli, Gabriele Valerio, Marta Vergani, Claudia Giovanna Veronesi, Cecilia Xuetong Feng, Umberto Zanette

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