Dawn Nilo 2026

Statement

This is the story of **Liminal Play**, a medium I have coined for works that necessarily bring together consciousness studies, intelligent absurd naiveté, improvisation, collaborative practice, performance, art works, installations, and all-inclusive public events or exhibitions. The liminal is the threshold between fixed structures, a state of openness in which ordinary roles are suspended. As a result, the receiver of the work is challenged to step inside, making the work audience sensitive, that is, sensitive to change through its reception.

This is the story of **The Great Work**, the alchemical quest to create the philosopher's stone through the transformation of body, mind and soul – from the point to the periphery, inside out. The Great Work does not imply success, but a slow path of learning to understand and act within previously unknown realms.

This is the story of **Intelligent absurd naiveté** and how I use it in defiance of the conditioned structures that oppress. The combination of these seemingly contradictory states of being, when mediated by absurdity, becomes a tool for healing, because seemingly impossible situations require comparably impossible solutions.



IMAGE: Dawn Nilo performing with audience participants during *PLAY & PRAY,* at Basel Social Club, June 17, 2026.

Current and ongoing work



IMAGE: *Dusk till Dawn*, 2026. 2 lanterns, installed on either side of a window, create an optical illusion of a mirrored image. Upon close observation, it can be seen that one is lit and the other not.

A Body of Hope

Date: 2024–2026
Medium: research database and monograph
Data Entries: 337
Pages: 300
Publisher: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, Vienna
Data Bank: https://dawn-nilo.kleio.com/research

DESCRIPTION

Over the last 2 years I have been analysing and creating a research database of all of my works for a comprehensive monograph covering the last 12 years. The book will be published in 2027 by Verlag für Moderne Kunst in Vienna.

With text by me, as well as others, the book will elucidate the 7 motifs that express the central ideas in my work. Taking the form of poetic riddle-like phrases, they circle around each other like the ouroboros eating its tail:



IMAGE: The 7 motifs: The Great Work – The Kingdom of Fools – Is a Poet is a Fool – A Body of Hope – A Circle is Not Just a Circle – Portraits from the Book of Life – The Curiosity Shop

Quotes by Contributing Authors

I drift into the wish of building institutions with her—an Applied Mysticism Institute, a School of the Arts of Laughter—as places where learning is inseparable from the art of living together differently. These wouldn't just be spaces for personal transformation, but for rehearsing systemic change. At the Applied Mysticism Institute, participants might experiment with cooperative forms of decision-making, with spiritual tools for economic solidarity, or with rituals that redistribute attention and mutual aid.
Maria Ines Plaza Lazo

This work projects us into the cosmic realm. And what is the cosmos, if not that space that every bit of DNA in us is linked to and a part of. Dawn Nilo invites us to navigate this world we are in and a part of.
Chantal Pontbriand

We are already playing 1 game—the Game of Art—so why not take this further and play a game with the game? What do you really have to lose? With the suspended Order of Things here on Earth revealing each of our entangledness in each others' lives, the air we breathe, the way we place our bodies in relation to each other, the way we spend our money and our time, the energies we expend, there is no time like the present to start to seriously play.
Lauren Fornier

[Nilo's] transformation thus becomes an inherent part of life and experience. But what of perfection? This seems not a goal but a horizon, resonating as motivation to question the status quo. Where the questions and experiments may lead remains open, but perhaps it is not the object of research that matters most, but the fact that research is undertaken at all.
Elsa Himmer

Despite its apparently highly organised structure, Dawn Nilo's artistic world does not resemble a demonstrative treatise, but rather a tentative labyrinth oriented to transformation. Thus, it is a magic world, in the literal sense of a world of possibilities, of transformative possibilities, a world where any possibility seems to find its place and its sense.
Giuseppe Di Salvatore

PLAY & PRAY

Including *Summer Training, 2026*

Date: June 14–21, 2026
Medium: Liminal Play
Duration: 06:00 hrs. each day
Venue: Basel Social Club, Basel, CH
Represented by Monk Contemporary – an artistic project by Dawn and Johannes (Nilo&NILO), and a conceptual gallery on the border of reality.

DESCRIPTION

PLAY & PRAY
With Johannes Nilo
Upon a 3 × 3m altar to all the good gods of the universe, moving bodies are exhibited alongside art works and daily objects. Spontaneous improvised performances are played and offered as sacrifices through absurd acts of reverence. Art works and daily objects are installed for contemplation in various constellations.
Exhibited artists: Charles Benjamin, Ralph Bürgin, Maude Léonard-Contant, Manuela Morales Délano, Dawn Nilo, Hannes Schüpbach, and Alex Silber. **Performers:** Charlotte Böttger, Juno Feierabend, Susanna Grob, Dawn Nilo, Marie Louise Pizzighella, Sabine Schädler, and Micha Schweizer.

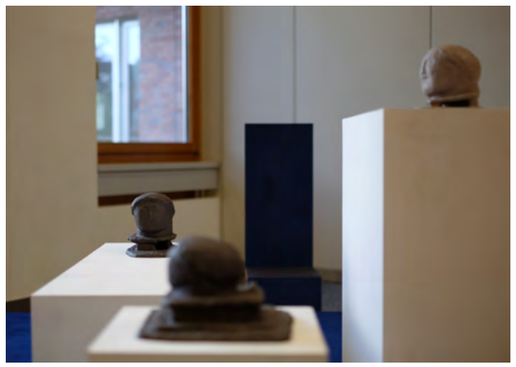




IMAGES: Top: *The Curiosity Shop*, 2025, by Dawn Nilo, installed as a gallery booth at the east end of the room. It contains daily objects and art works from the Monk Contemporary collection, as well as art works by represented artists. Sometimes the performers interact with the objects, which are also regularly installed on the altar for contemplation in different constellations, and then returned. **Bottom:** The plinth installation before being activated by installations and performances.

IMAGES: A selection of PLAY & PRAY installations. With works (from left to right) by Alex Silber, Maude Léonard-Contant (top), Ralph Bürgin (bottom), Hannes Schüpbach, Maude Léonard-Contant, and Dawn Nilo.











IMAGES: 22:00 hrs. of PLAY & PRAY. Performers shown are Juno Feierabend (yellow), Charlotte Böttger (green), Micha Schweizer (orange), and Dawn Nilo (under veil and blanket and in blue).















The Great Game

Date: 2016–
Medium: Liminal Play
Duration: 02:00–06:00 hrs.
Venues: www.thegreatgame.ch, *Great Game TV* (2026–), Sundays, 5–20 min. each; **Basel Social Club**, *Summer Training*, three × 02:00 hrs. each (2026); **Roxy Theater**, Birsfelden, *The Great Work*, 45 min. (2025), **GGG Haus**, Basel, *A Circle is Not Just a Circle*, three × 04:00 hrs. each (2018); **Kunsthalle Basel**, *How the Work Works*, Master's Exhibition, 6 hrs. (2016); **Volks/ Margarethen Theater**, Vienna, *Remember Why*, 4 hrs.(2016)

DESCRIPTION

The Great Game is an interactive performance based on game play, improvisation, and audience participation. I have been slowly and methodically working on this performance for the past 10 years. Trained performers lead the game and invite the audience to participate.

IMAGES: Right: The game instructions have taken on several forms. On one occasion, they were printed like a Fasnachtszeedel. **Far right (top to bottom):** *The Great Game* at **1.** Volks/Margarethen Theater, Vienna (2016); **2**. Kunsthalle Basel/Kaffee Mitte satellite (2016), shown performing are Dawn Nilo (left) and Steven Schoch (right); **3.** GGG Haus, Basel (2018), Shown are Sabine Schädler (left) and J.B.K. Ransu (right); **4.** Roxy Theater, Birsfelden (2025), shown (from left to right) are Yeonji Han, Charlotte Böttger, Simea Cavelti, and Saskia Edens.

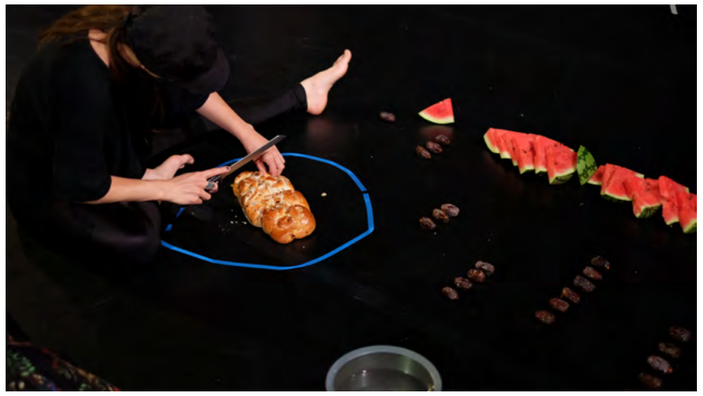
THE GREAT GAME
A game of initiation

In 3 steps
1. Observe what's happening
2. Enter the happening
3. Make something happen

With 3 rules
1. Don't hurt yourself
2. Don't hurt anybody else
3. Don't break anything

As in The Game, so in life
Observe what is happening. There is a history. Feel free to ask questions. When you think you know what is happening, take the next step. There are a myriad of fluid sub rules, guidelines, protocols, traditions, supposed tos, definitely do nots and other such things that we are constantly discovering, forgetting, breaking, remembering, changing, dissolving and transforming. Learn them. Unlearn them. Make them up. When you get confused start over. The task is almost, but not entirely, impossible. Try anyway. (That is the nature of Hope.)

Expect agony. Expect Ecstasy. Be nice. Play fair.









IMAGES: The Great Game *Summer Training* at Basel Social Club, 2026. **Performers:** Bibi Enasni, Dawn Nilo, Isabelle Jossi, Juno Feierabend, Linus Finn Riegger, Micha Schweizer, and Solemn Javet.





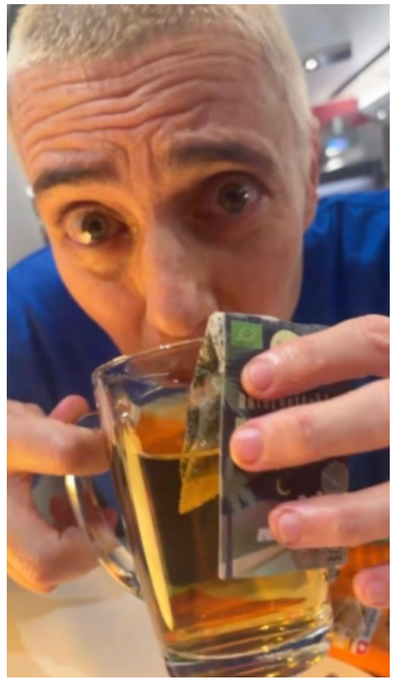


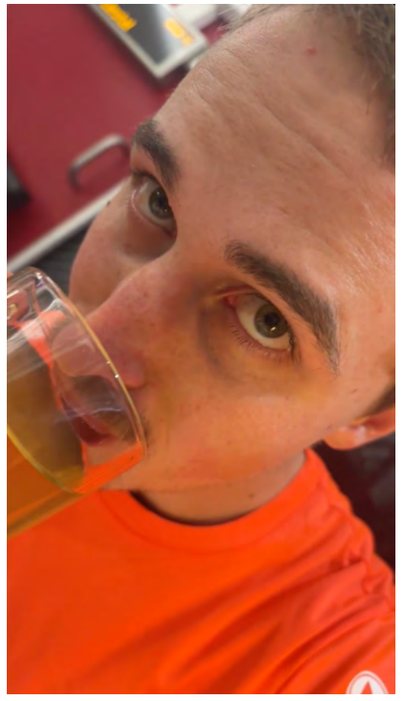
Great Game TV
Research
Date: 2026–
Medium: Liminal Play
Duration: Long-term pilot project
Website: www.thegreatgame.ch

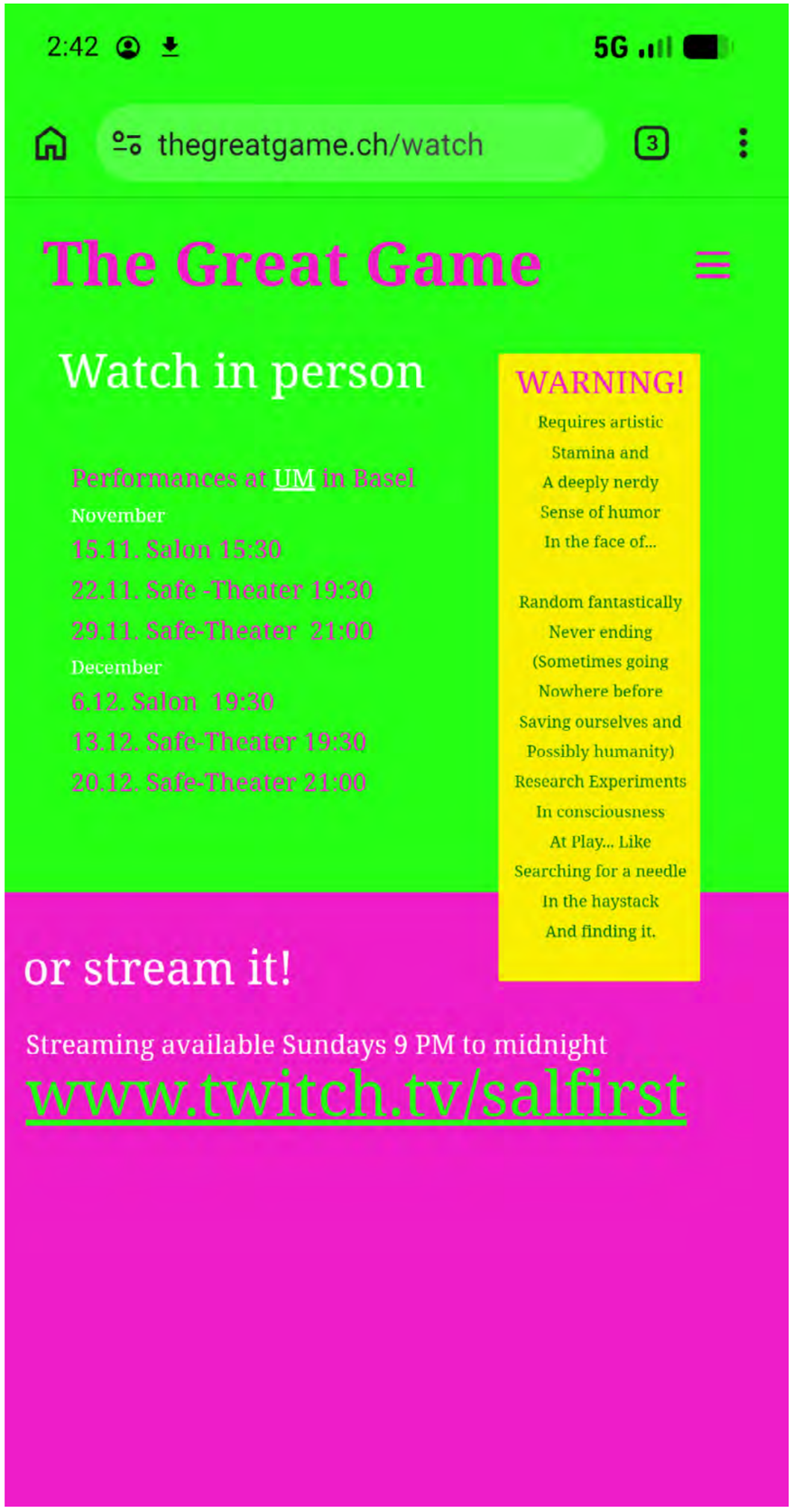
DESCRIPTION

I am in the research phase of the next iteration of *The Great Game* – a hybrid experiment combining improvisation, initiation game play (live action role play as the self), and live stream TV. The open, in-person games and performances explore embodied consciousness through play. This is the absurdity that nestles itself uncomfortably, but joyfully between intelligence and naiveté.

Great Game TV is a conceptual work that experiments crudely with the in-frastructure of live streaming and the off-off of entertainment, performance art, and online gaming. While seeking a home in the underground of the Fediverse, and keeping within some rather esoteric rules, the players show up absurdly, improvise wildly, fail honestly, and offer it all up as a prayer – funny, absurd, political, profound, and cringe.







IMAGES: Left: Hosts Dawn Nilo (blue) and Micha Schweizer (orange) performing in the premiere episodes of *Great Game TV.* **Right:** Screenshot from The Great Game TV website.

Is a Poet is a Fool

(or Active Imagination)

Date: in process
Medium: Immersive installation with live performance
Materials: Found objects and works
Venue: To be announced





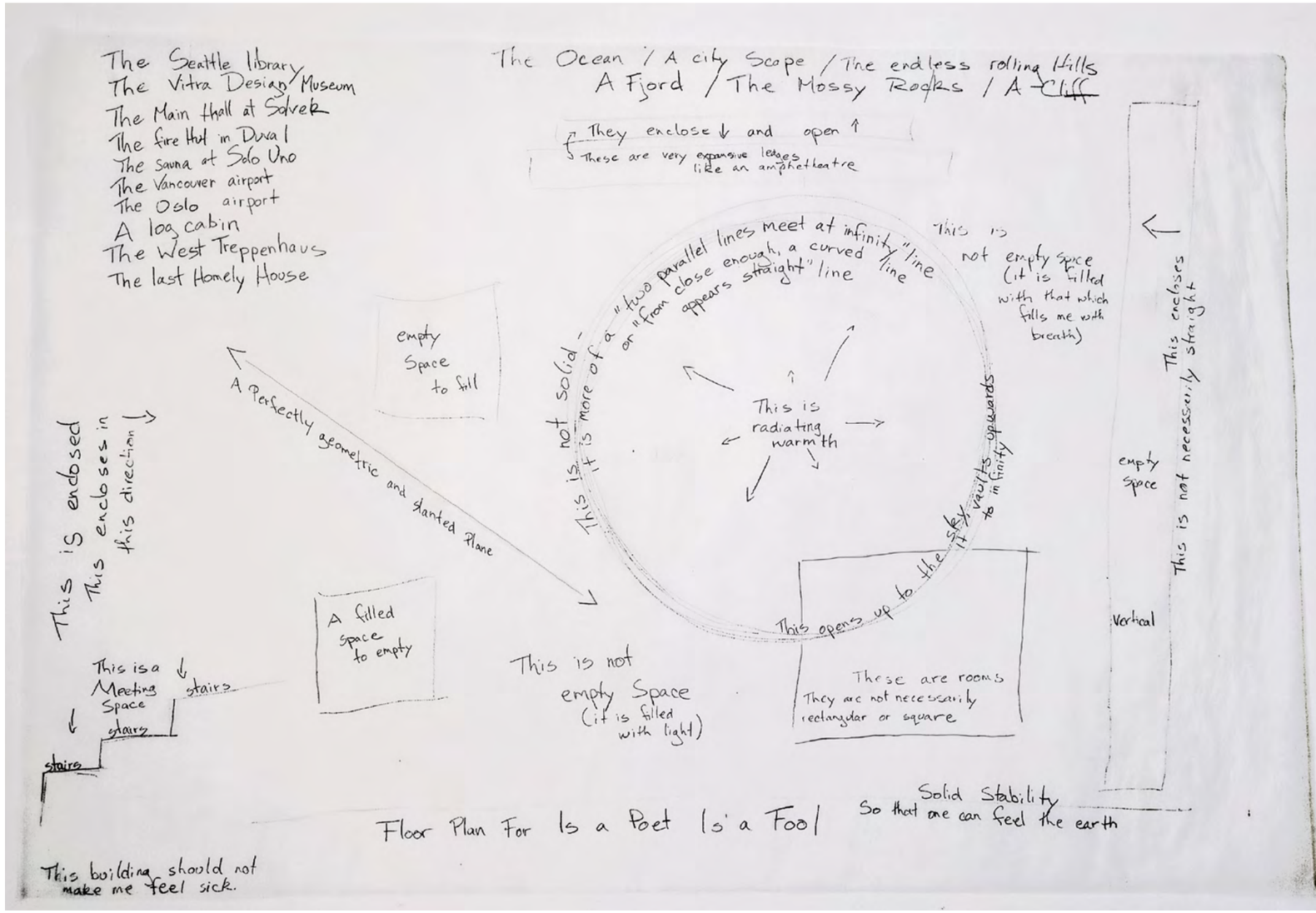


DESCRIPTION

Is a Poet is a Fool or
Active Imagination

This is a long-term project to create a large scale immersive environment using rooms as prompts for working with active imagination – a technique developed by Carl Jung that involves engaging with the unconscious mind through images, symbols, and narratives. Each room will offer 1 symbolic mood, or prompt, within a performative setting. Alongside new site-specific works, objects from my archive and performances will be included. For example, in a game of hide and seek, a live "is-a-poet-is-a-fool?" will roam the installation in a continuous improvised performance.

Other artists will be invited to engage in active imagination to respond to the prompts, thereby changing the installation over time.



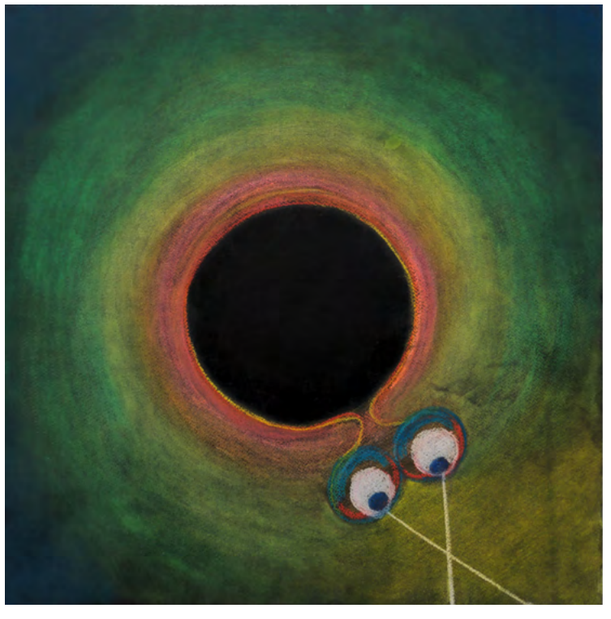
IMAGES: Part of a mood board for Is a Poet is a Fool: **Top:** Documentation of previous installations as examples of active imagination prompts. **Bottom:** A fantasy sketch of the containing space

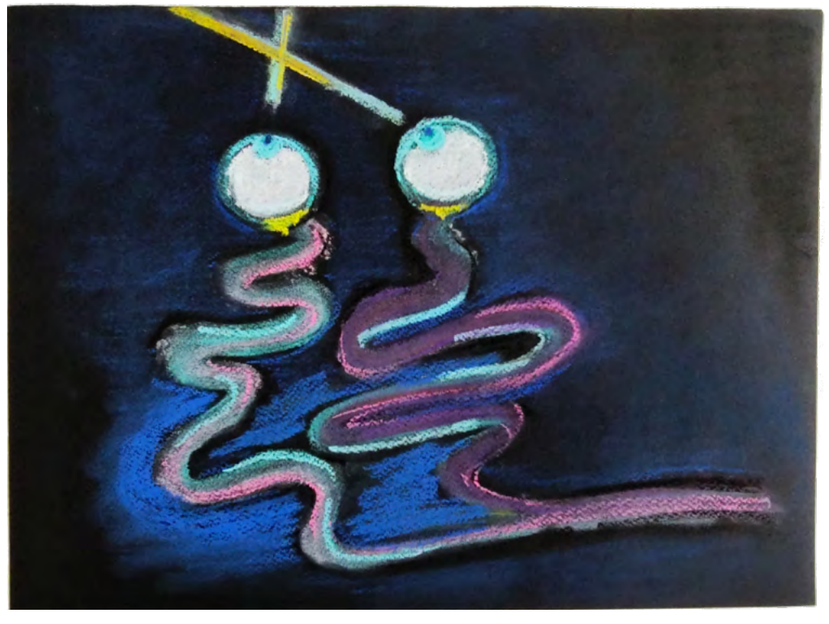
Crash Bang Boom

Date: 2022– (ongoing)
Medium: drawing
Materials: chalk on paper
Sizes: varying from 10 × 18 cm to 70 × 100 cm

DESCRIPTION

A comic book about forces. What is beyond the Crash Bang Boom? The book will likely be printed in a traditional comic-book style from the 1970s, emulating the haptic of the open paper and the visuals of dot printing. The plot offers an abstract myth or manual for the path of initiation. The images will be taken from the best of the chalk drawings, of which there are currently over 50 in 2 series.







IMAGES: Selection from *Crash Bang Boom II*, 2024, Drawings, Series of 40, Chalk on paper. **Top Left:** No. 1, 50 × 50 cm; **Right:** No.2, 30 × 40 cm; **Bottom:** No. 17, 30.5 × 79.6 cm

Advertising Nothing

Date: 2023 & 2027
Medium: Public Art Project, System of works including a 06:00 hr. performance; 100 signed and numbered photo prints; and two 10-second videos
Video Link: https://vimeo.com/804369746
Prints: 250 × 350 mm each
digital prints on card stock, edition of 50 each +1AP
Venues: Public Space Basel (2023), **Periphery 8**, Basel (2027)

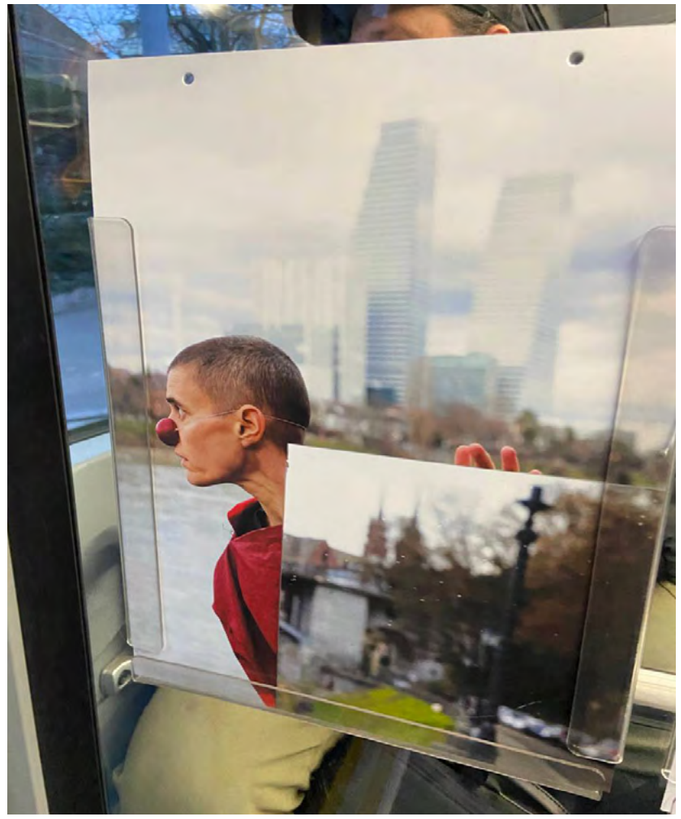
DESCRIPTION

I rented advertising space in the Basel trams, exhibiting signed limited-edition prints, two 10-second video ads, and performing live for 06:00 hrs. during Museumsnacht. Viewers were encouraged to take the prints home. A press project aimed to create a *Stadtoriginal* (a locally known eccentric who is somehow accepted), and Bajour named me Basler of the Day for bringing art to people.

The videos flashed images in rapid, rhythmic succession, like a hidden picture book: the longer you look, the more you see.

In 2027 I will recreate the work with Periphery 8, Basel, as part of a year-long Liminal Play project with public workshops and performances.





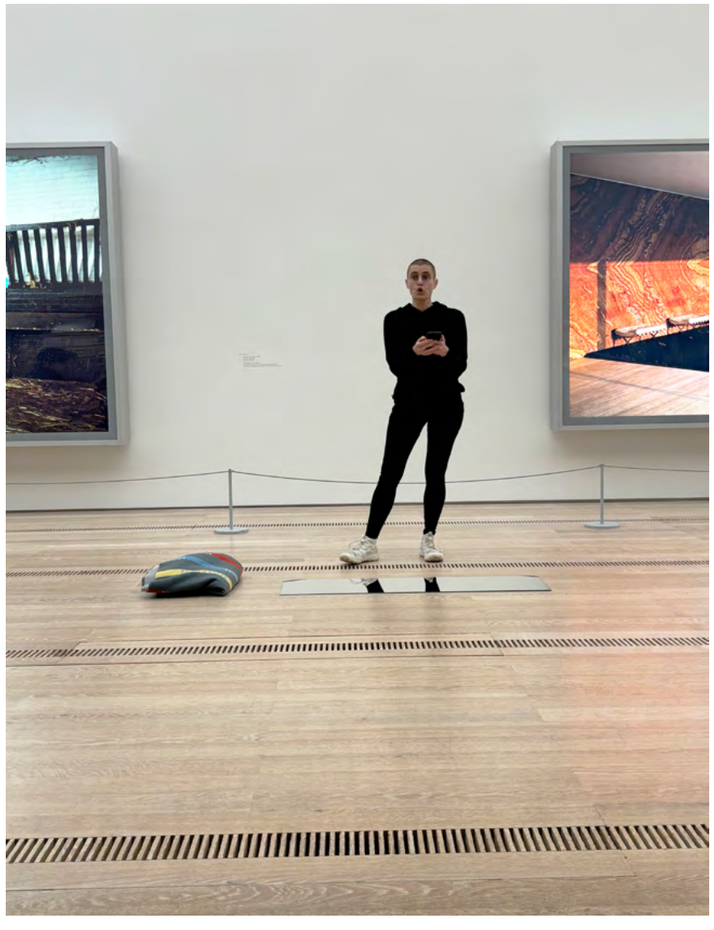


IMAGES: Top: *Advertising Nothing: Red*, 2023, HD Video, Colour, 10 seconds. **Bottom:** *Graffiti*, 2023 (right) and *Towers*, 2023 (left) as seen in the Basel Trams.

Selection 2020–2025

Visual Collage, work details on page 19














DAWN NILO
BASEL
THE GREAT WORK
7












TODAY
Like almost now
16:00–16:20
Basel time
https://meet.jit.si/Oracle













Work details from previous pages

PAGE 14
Left and right: Video Stills from *"The Ball", 2022,* Video performance, Video, Digital file, 3rd in a series of 3, 04:08 min. Filmed and exhibited at Kunsthalle Basel for the "we are so many here exhibit", 2022/3.
Middle: *Now You See Me. Now You Don't,* Mar. 8, 2024. Performance, 00:20 min. As part of "Critical Cringe Night" (with Sophie Jung), Fondation Beyeler, Riehen.
Top far right: *Crossings*, 2024, Painting, Acrylic on canvas, 35 × 30 × 2 cm

PAGE 15
Left: Programme page: *The Great Work (of The Great Game)*, Feb. 16, 2025, Performance, A Game of initiation, 45 min. Work showing at Roxy Theater, Birsfelden, CH.
Middle top: Video still from *Circus of the Soul,* 2021, Video performance, Digital file, 2nd in a series of 3, 04:10 min.
Middle bottom: Installation view of *The Portal, 2020,* Painting, Pigment, water and acrylic binder on the wall (realised by Pascal Garcin), 700 × 270 cm
Right: *O Ho!,* 2021, Sculpture, Papier mâché, 50 × 52 × 18 cm

PAGE 16
Left: Top: *Super Star*, 2022, Painting, acrylic on cotton or canvas, 10th in a series of 16, 153 × 208 cm and **Bottom:** *Super Hero*, *2022,* Painting, acrylic on cotton or canvas, 11th in a series of 16, 153 × 209 cm. Both shown before and after being performed in for the video, *"The Ball"*, 2022 at Kunsthalle Basel for the "we are so many here exhibit", 2022/23.
Right: Instagram promotion for *The Oracle*, Dec. 19, 2020, Performance, 00:20 min, "Ce qui peut être montré ne peut être dit (What can be shown cannot be said)", LE CAP, Saint-Fons FR

PAGE 17
Left: *Mother Pearl* from *Activation Painting in a Box*, 2024, Conceptual Work/Installation, Red rubber ball and sheepskin, 6th in a series of 6, as exhibited at *Parkett*, Monk Contemporary in 2024.
Middle top: Installation view, *Conference of Angels I*, 2019, Installation, Chairs and found objects, as exhibited at "Feinstoff", St. Maria Als, Stuttgart, DE, October 2–5, 2025
Middle bottom: *Profane Body Holy Object* (with Charlotte Böttger), October 2–5, 2025, Performance, Series of 6, 00:20 min. each, "Feinstoff" Festival, 60 Jahre MAHLE-Stiftung, St. Maria Als Stuttgart, DE.
Right: *Copper Plate II*, 2020, Object, 2cnd in a series of 4, Oxidised urine, Tabasco and soya sauce on copper, 72 × 72 cm. Exhibited as part of the work group *Timeless Perceptual Beings of the Sun*, 2022 at Corona Call Lausanne: "Vibrant Imaginaries".

PAGE 18
Left: *Just Play Dead* (with Johannes Nilo), 2022, Photographs, Digital file, 1st in an open series.
Right: *Alvaret (An open fairy tale)* (with Johannes Nilo), July 2022, Installation/Performance, 02:00 hrs., Monk Contemporary at the Alvaret preserve, Mörbylånga, SE

PAGE 19:
Direct Right this page: *Crash Bang Boom II (No.31)*, 2024, Drawing, 31st in a series of 40, Chalk on paper, 70 × 70 cm.



Dawn Nilo

Exhibitions and Performances

2026
Great Game TV, www.thegreatgame.ch, Performance and Live-stream.
Basel Social Club, CH, Represented by Monk Contemporary.

2025
Roxy Theater, Birsfelden, Residency work showing of The Great Work.
Freiform Kollektive at Auf dem Wolf, Basel, CH, *Trade,* curated by Freiform.
St. Maria Als, *Feinstoff* für die MAHLE-Stiftung, Stuttgart DE, curated by Ania Corcilius and Romy Range.
N54 Regionale 26 Basel, *Ui...Non! Oui NN – Union!*, curated by Axel Töpfer, The Gathering group performance.

2024
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, CH, Critical Cringe Night with Sophie Jung.
Monk Contemporary, Spalentorweg 1, Basel, CH, *Parkett*, curated by Johannes Nilo.
UM (Unternehmen Mitte), Basel, CH curated by Alex Silber.

2023
Witten/Herdecke University, DE, *What is Planetary Thinking?.*

2022
Kunsthalle Basel, CH, *We are so many here*, curated by the Basler Kunstverein for the Regionale 23. Kombine Art Fair, Griffin Arts, Vancouver, CA, curated by Wil Aballe.
Espace Arlaud, *Corona Call Lausanne: Vibrant Imaginaries*, curated by Antoine Félix Bücher.
Museum Tinguely, Basel CH, *Bang Bang*, curated by Revolving Histories/Performance Chronik Basel.
Mörbylånga, Sweden, *Alvaret,* The Kitchen at Monk Contemporary.
Kunstraum Riehen, CH, *Remember Why.*

2021
WAAP Gallery, Vancouver, CA, *Dawn Nilo: Blueprints* and *Circus of the Soul*, curated by Wil Aballe.
Pop-up Space Locarno, CH, *Corona Call*, curated by Christoph Doswald.
Gallery 3000, Bern, CH, *Patrick Binda and Dawn Nilo*, curated by Alice Wilke.
Salon Mondial, Münchenstein, CH, *Mother Earth Calling*, curated by Rama Kalidindi.

2020
Swiss Art Awards online exhibition.
LE CAP, Saint-Fons, France, *What can be shown, cannot be said*, curated by Ekaterina Shcherbakova.
Jahresausstellung Solothurn, CH, juried exhibition.
Art Rotterdam, The Performance Show, Netherlands, curated by Zippora Elders; *Performing Negotiations,* Represented by Monk Contemporary.
Kunsthaus Aussersihl, Zurich, *Bonus Track 6.*
The Kitchen Aufderhoehe, *Nilo&NILO: What Remains*, curated by 18 international curators.

2019
A Performance Affair, Brussels Gallery Weekend, Belgium, Represented by Balzer Projects and Monk Contemporary.
Gerðarsafn-Kópavogur Art Museum, IS, *Lots of tiny people*, (2019/20) curated by G. Helgadóttir, J. Bock, J. B.K. Ransu, and S. Gunnarsdóttir.
Hidden Bar Art Basel, CH, curated by Judith Kakon, Hannah Weinberger, and Alice Wilke.
Kunsthaus Baselland, CH,
Contracted performances for Simone Forte.

2018
Nord Theatre, St. Louis, FR, Regionale 19.
Kunst der Begegnung VII, Basel, CH. European/Asian Collaboration.
Liste Art Fair, Basel, CH, with PANCH (Performance Art Network Switzerland).
American College of Art Gallery, North Athens, GR, *Rag to Rich,* curated by Poka-Yio.

2017
Kunsthaus Baselland, CH, *Regionale 18: Being Syntopic,* curated by Ines Goldbach and Poka-Yio.
Gessnerallee Zurich, *Swiss Performance Art Award.*
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen CH, contracted solo performances for Tino Sehgal (This You).

2016
Leopold Museum, Vienna, AT, ImPulsTanz visual arts X dance series, *A Moment in Time,* curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Tom Stromberg.
Volks/Margarethen Theater, Vienna, AT, *The Great Game: REMEMBER WHY,* Director.
Kunsthalle Basel, CH, Basel Art Intstitute's Masters' Exhibition, curated by Chus Martinez and L. König.
Museum für Neue Kunst, Freiburg DE, *Film Fridays.*

2015
Filter4, Basel CH, *The Kingdom of Fools,* Dawn Nilo, Curator/Director.

2014
Schaulager, Basel Münchenstein CH,
Blah Blah Blah Poetry Night.
Stadtgalerie, Bern, CH, *spoken words and spukende worte*, with John Giorno.
The third International Visual Festival of Patras, GR, *Risk RE-CULTURE 3.*
The Goetheanum, Dornach, CH,
The Art of the Fool, Theatre Director.

Residencies

Roxy Theater, Birsfelden, CH, with work showing (2025)
GGG Atelier Haus, Basel, CH, (2016–2018)
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwest Switzerland, Residency, exhibition & artist's talk, (2016)

Collections

Kunsthaus Grenchen, CH (2023)
Frédéric de Goldschmid Collections, Belgium (2019)

Grants/Awards

Kultur Basel-Stadt, Work grant, final round (2026)
Stiftung Evidenz, Work grant (2026)
Kultur Basel-Stadt, Public Art project, final round (2021)
Pro Helvetia, Event grant – LE CAP (2020)
Swiss Art Awards Finalist (2020)
Visarte Corona Call Shortlist (2020)
Edith Maryon Stiftung Production Grant (2019)
Kultur Basel-Stadt Production Grant (2018)
Swiss Performance Art Award Nomination (2017)
danceWeb Residency, ImulsTanz, Vienna, AT (2016)

Publications as Author

The Question. Arlesheim: Nilo Press, 2019. Print.
"By Allan Smithee." *Jan Mot Gallery Newspaper*, no. 103, 2016. Brussels. Print and web.
The Question. New York: Badlands Unlimited, Nov. 24, 2014. iBook.
"Welcome to Wanita." *Quasi Events*, online journal of the Basel Art Institute, Basel, October 5, 2014. Web.
"This Time and Leaving." *Die Drei*, June 2014, pp. 94–101. Print.

Press and Publications About

Dawn Nilo: A Body of Hope. Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2027 (forthcoming). Print.
Honegger, Mélanie. "Art to go: A fool is on the loose." BZ Basel, Jan. 19, 2023. Print and web.
Rawlings, A. "The Skeleton Is the Seat of the Soul." Reykjavík Grapevine, issue 19, 2019. Print.
Quettier, Francis, and Dora Tennant. "Dawn Nilo." Women Cinemakers, vol. 6, 2017. Web.
Ronner, M., and J. Bock. "Art and Science of the Fool." Das Goetheanum, no. 36, Sep. 4, 2015. Print.

Teaching

University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwest Switzerland, College of Art and Design, Basel CH., Cocreate teacher 2025, Associate Professor, Institute for Aesthetic Practice and the Art Institute, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015.

Education

2016 Master in Fine Art,
Art Institute, Academy of Art and Design, Basel, CH
1999 Master in Education,
Antioch New England Graduate School, NH, US.
1996 Bachelor in Social Work with distinction, University of Victoria, BC, CA.