

AN ARTIST IN ARCTIC

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rom June 2 to July 2, Aude Maréchal, actress, puppeteer of the Créa Spectacles company (France), flew to Greenland! “Artist in Arctic” residency by Les Amis du Manguier.



Meet the ice giants during a boat trip.



Puppet facing Disko Bay.

An artistic residency held in the small village of Akunnaaq in Disko Bay. Creation took place as close as possible to nature and its inhabitants. Meetings, presentations, workshops made it possible to build links with residents and share artistic practice with them and much more! Aude immersed herself in their stories and the incredibly powerful yet fragile nature that touched her so much.

It is with great emotion and a lot of inspiration that she returns, ready to share on stage her experience between storytelling and object theater. A show which will be released in spring 2025, a small form intended to be performed in schools, libraries, festivals...

Some questions to Aude:

Why did you embark on this adventure?

I am always looking for new experiences and new contexts to create. I came across a call for applications to which I responded without much hope and the response came in positive in November 2023, we had to prepare! I attach a lot of importance to observing and understanding my environment and this possibility of withdrawing for a month in this exceptional setting immediately made sense. It's a continuation of my creative journey which came at just the right time. I am convinced that you need to take a step back, see things differently, confront the unknown to better reclaim your daily life and your practice.

- How did you direct your creative work on site?

At first, it was very difficult to “get into it”. No matter how much I sat at the office and thought about it, nothing came of it... I wanted to rush things too much and be “efficient” at all costs. So I abandoned the workshop for several days to devote myself completely to the things around me. I walked in the tundra for hours on end, I observed the icebergs until I could no longer feel my feet, I drank liters of coffee with the locals... Truly in this desire to soak up everything, everything the weather. And it was only after several days that a story, images imposed themselves on me resulting from all these sensations, these new things that I had welcomed.

So I came back with a story written on site and ideas for working in object theater to illustrate it.



*Presentation at the end of residency
June 29, 2024.*

- What were the activities outside your residence?
- Can you tell us about a particular meeting?

The village of Akunnaaq is made up of around fifty inhabitants and everything that happens there concerns everyone. I was lucky to celebrate the national day on June 21 and participate in the events set up. Phil from “Les amis du Manguier” team took us fishing, discovering the surrounding area, watching whales. And then, there was the practical part: going to fetch water because the house in which I lived did not have running water, going to the shower at the bottom of the village, shopping at the grocery store, organize meetings and prepare small snacks for our visitors. I say “we” because I was in residence and shared accommodation alongside Anne Schmauch, novel author, with whom I shared a lot.

There have been so many ! Maybe this time we went to drink coffee (again) with Jens Peter, the village teacher. He is also a writer and artist and has always lived in Akunnaaq. He told us for hours the stories of the surrounding area and in particular those concerning the Quivitoq (creatures which inhabit the tundra and the surrounding area). He is a generous and welcoming person who knew how to put us at ease and who shared a lot of his culture and history.

- What are you coming back with?

A suitcase full of objects made on site for creation, a story, memories in my head, landscapes in my eyes, new friends in my heart...



Icebergs bordering the north coast of Akunnaaq Island.

- If you had to tell us about a feeling, which one would you remember?

1 a.m., full sun (perpetual day) - The cold wind that hits my face and against which I try to fight as long as possible to stay a few more moments observing, mouth agape, the hundreds of icebergs with incredible shapes . A captivating landscape that captures our eyes, clears our heads and leaves room for a whole imagination.

- Of a sound?

During my stay I was very attentive to the sounds that I recorded, in particular. One evening, in the midnight sun, we went for a walk by the lake in the center of the island. The layer of ice covering it was thawing. I sat for a while and in this “almost silence” of nature I could hear the sound of ice breaking. A fine, crystalline and delicate sound, almost imperceptible. A gentle tick, tick which adds to the poetry of the already magnificent place.

Besides that, in the distance, the icebergs break in the bay and thunder like a storm. Just by the sound, we can feel the power of these ice giants. Several times, at the beginning, these rumblings made me stop in my tracks and look up at the sea. What was happening there?



Arrival in Akunnaaq June 4, 2024.

- A difficulty?

The main difficulty was undoubtedly verbal communication with the inhabitants. Few people speak English and I don't speak Greenlandic. Even if I learned a few words, communication was done through gestures, through facial expressions. It led to funny situations and it was also very pleasant. However, I would have liked to be able to speak the language in order to ask more questions, understand more things and let my curiosity go even further.

- Can you reveal to us an extract from your travel diary?

“I am lying on the soft tundra, sheltered from the wind. There is not a cloud in the sky. Two eagles pass back and forth above me. I'm warm, I'm good, I could almost fall asleep here, now.

I realize how much closer I have become to nature since I arrived. I wonder a little what I'm doing here, why be an artist when everything is in nature?

Icebergs are sculpted and take on shapes and appearances that are impossible to reproduce and of unparalleled beauty. The birds, the wind, the waves create music with such a relaxing, soothing harmony. The whales put on a show and dance with incredible grace. The rocks are drawn by the lines of time and write the memory of the past. The earth turns and unwinds the film of a film in which we are simple extras. We can't hold a candle to him. We think we're climbing peaks but we don't realize that we're painfully clinging to the first rung of the ladder and that we're about to fall apart.”

Yes, if it was a good day though!



Performance during the presentation evening on the first day.