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Sofia Pantouvaki

Extreme Costume

Extreme Costume: A conversation with Simona Rybáková

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Abstract

This contribution is developed from a series of discussions with Simona Rybáková, Czech costume designer and curator of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition that was presented at the Prague Quadrennial in 2011 (PQ11). Following an overview on the presence of costume at recent editions of the Prague Quadrennial, this text focuses on the *Extreme Costume* exhibition, which showcased cutting edge costume practice in a full-scale independent display, for the first time shown separately from the PQ11 general performance design exhibition. The discussion provides a critical reflection on the curatorial process for the *Extreme Costume* exhibition and illuminates the curator's enquiry and her intentions behind specific choices. It includes a review of the audience's response and, most importantly, concludes with Rybáková's insights on her personal 'emancipation' from her long-lasting professional role as costume designer to the role of costume curator working with her colleagues' practice for the purposes of this exhibition. Given the limited documentation available about *Extreme Costume*, the aim of this contribution is dual: to provide a resource on the scope and reach of this significant event; and to offer materials to costume research for further discussion related to exhibiting costume beyond the context of its original performance.

Keywords

Extreme Costume, exhibition, Prague Quadrennial, costume design, material, performance

Introduction: Costume at the Prague Quadrennial

In its over 50-year history, the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space (PQ)^I has presented costume as integral to performance making. Since its founding, the PQ has included costume in its exhibitions as one of the main artistic components of performance. The accompanying catalogue of the very first edition of the PQ in 1967 indicates this clearly when defining the exhibitions' content in the description: 'Stage design and costumes' (Ptáčková and Jindra 1967: 9, 19). Since this first version of the PQ, costume has been exhibited at the Prague Quadrennial in various formats, depending on the trends and technologies of the time: through costume drawings, photographs, three-dimensional physical costumes, or in screens and projections. However, in the context of such a large international exhibition of design for performance, costume has been at times 'a rather underrepresented branch of performance design within the frame of the official PQ national expositions' as Sodja Lotker observes, given that 'the national curator's concept determines whether costume will be exhibited or not' (Zupanc Lotker 2016: 180). Indeed, the exhibits prepared for the various PQ editions have had diverse curatorial approaches and variations in their format and content in response to different themes that have been used as inspiration for the Quadrennial over the years. Given that the PQ presents how professionals have designed performance around the globe, the exhibition is structured through individual participating countries, each of which has a national curator – or curatorial team – responsible for the exhibit that represents them. It is, therefore, largely dependent on the curatorial concept, as noted by Lotker, as well as on the interpretation of the given themes by each country, to include, or not, costume in the exhibits of PQ in any format. In addition to the national exhibitions, costume has been

present in the programme of activities and events that run parallel to the PQ international exhibition, i.e. in performances, talks and workshops, in ways that often are 'able to foreground bodies and costumes more effectively than the international exhibition' (Barbieri 2016: 199).

The Prague Quadrennial has recognized costume designers with a designated award since its very beginning. The catalogue of the first PQ in 1967 explains this clearly: '[t]he international jury will furthermore award a gold medal to the best stage designer and costume designer from abroad for the best set of works on exhibits' (Ptáčková and Jindra 1967: 17). The international jury would also award 'a gold medal to the best set of work of one stage designer and one costume designer' from the Czechoslovak exhibit (Ptáčková and Jindra 1967: 17), which used to be displayed independently in the first six editions of the Quadrennial and was not part of the international competition. It is interesting to observe the variations in the language used to define this award over the decades. Although the first few PQ catalogues explicitly refer to an award for the 'best costume designer' (1967, 1971, 1975), when the awards are again mentioned in the introductory section of later catalogues, the focus is on the work rather than the creator or the creator's 'set of works'. The new descriptions define the 'Gold Medal for the Best Theatre Costume' (1999, 2003, 2007), later 'Gold Medal for the Best Costume' (2011) and most recently two individual awards, the 'Gold Medal PQ 2015 for Costume Design' and the 'Honorary PQ 2015 Award for Costume Design' (2015). This shift in the use of language reflects the changes in the Prague Quadrennial's approach to design for performance as professional practice that expands beyond the borders of the theatrical stage. It also indicates a changing perspective that moved from

the costume designer to the actual work and its product (the costume) and, more recently, to the field of practice (costume design).

However, in 2015, no prize was awarded for costume design despite the high participation of countries, artists and audiences. This gave space for commentary and critique on 'costume's invisibility in curation' (Barbieri 2016: 199) also taking into account the large-scale PQ15 costume project *Tribes* which invited costume 'to escape the boundaries of the conventional exhibition space' (Pantouvaki 2016: 51). The jury claimed a lack of 'sufficient evidence of presentation that shows the materiality and movement in performance; how costume lives' and proposed that 'that PQ, curators and designers re-think how costume [...] is presented at future PQs' to ensure that this 'important element can be given the recognition that [it] deserve[s]' (Prague Quadrennial 2015). This offers a challenging invitation to costume designers and curators in light of the forthcoming PQ19 in June 2019 and informs the discussion that this contributes provides.

Select past PQ editions have, however, offered dedicated space to costume. Alongside PQ 71, an exhibition of theatre costumes was organized by the Theatre Division of the National Museum in Prague and presented at the National Museum (Svoboda 2015: 14). Although this exhibit was not organized by the PQ itself as a part of its programming and was considered an accompanying event, it was addressed to the PQ audience.² More than 30 years later, in 2003, Helena Albertová, curator of the National Exhibitions for PQ03, presented costume in a visible, dedicated installation entitled 'Crowd of Dramatic Characters'. This was a kind of static costume parade that traversed the exhibition space at the Industrial Palace (Průmyslový palác), the host venue of the

Prague Quadrennial over several of its iterations. This display expanded the national exhibits by forming 'the time axis of the whole exposition' (Albertová 2003: 24) through an embodied spatial dramaturgy. The 'Crowd' was arranged in a timeline according to the author for whose dramatic artwork the chosen costumes had been created, representing plays from 'the Ancient times and legends until today' (Albertová 2003: 24) irrespective of their country of origin. The installation expressed the designers' interpretation of global dramaturgy in a bodily form. The costumes displayed in the 'Crowd of Dramatic Characters' were part of the national exhibition⁸ and, therefore, representative of the practice from the five years prior to PQ03, pre-selected by the national curators. Albertová placed these costumes in a spatial dialogue highlighting their artistic and dramaturgical value beyond national borders.

Following, PQ07 proposed an enriched approach to exhibiting performance design by introducing live events that turned 'the entire city of Prague' into 'a living stage' (Čepcová et al. 2007: 314).⁴ This PQ edition included installations and site-specific projects that represented 'theatre design in the context of various artistic and theatre disciplines' (Čepcová et al. 2007: 314), among which were three costume-centred projects. One of these, entitled 'Second-Hand Fashion', ran daily and involved site-specific live presentations (called 'Second-Hand Fashion Shows' in the PQ07 catalogue) of models, costumes and props made especially for the PQ07 from recycled materials.⁵ A street project entitled 'Alchymista' researching 'the new possibilities of walking on stilts as a form of dance' (Čepcová et al. 2007: 316) was created by Czech artists in front of the Industrial Palace and involved a performance that began with a long costume parade through the city.⁶ The set-up of a parade was also used by the Costume Working Group

of OISTAT (the International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians) in their project entitled 'Bird Walk'. Based on a Carnival Master Class that explored examples of carnivals from across the globe, led by the group's Chair, US designer Laura Crow, the 'Bird Walk' took place as a 'unique celebration of design' in a carnival parade that developed from the PQ exhibition space in Výtavisti to the centre of Prague.^[7] The latter is an example of how a workshop develops into a live event, a performative installation – in this case a parade – that is directly integrated in the programme of the PQ; this is a format that has been used multiple times in PQ since then. The PQ07 also marks the development of Scenofest, the festival of scenography organized by the OISTAT Education Commission for the second time during PQ07, following its successful launch at PQ03. The PQ07 Scenofest included five distinct costume workshops,^[8] costume designs by numerous young designers created in response to Aristophanes' *The Birds*, and costume-related talks.^[9] These projects and events demonstrate a continuing interest for the subject of costume as a distinct field of practice within design for performance, but none of them was a fully curated event as was *Extreme Costume*, which was part of the following PQ, in 2011.

The *Extreme Costume* exhibition showcased cutting edge costume practice in an extensive independent display, for the first time separately from the PQ11 general performance design exhibition. *Extreme Costume* was hosted at the underground space of the National Gallery's Trade Fair Palace.^[10] It was curated by costume designer Simona Rybáková and designed by scenographer Marie Jirásková, who worked in close collaboration with the PQ new artistic director, Sodja Lotker. Rybáková underscores Lotker's key role in launching the idea for this dedicated exhibit:

It was thanks to PQ creative director Sodja Lotker and her interest in the performing arts and in how artistic fields can surpass their defined limits that in 2011, for the first time, a special space was created for the presentation of these interacting elements: costume, light and sound design.

(Rybáková 2013: 1)

As Rybáková further explained in the discussions that form the basis of this article, the theme of the exhibition was a result of collaboration between herself and Lotker; the topic is closely connected to her personal interest in alternative materials and innovative ways to design costume, evident in both her artistic work and research. It is important to note that, although the *Extreme Costume* exhibition used the existing PQ structure with national institutions and curators to collect entries for the exhibition,^[1] its approach was very different from that of the ‘Crowd of Dramatic Characters’ of PQ03, which also included costumes proposed by the national curators. The significant difference between these two projects lies in the fact that *Extreme Costume* had a clearly articulated independent subject and was announced as a separate section of the PQ in a dedicated call for contributions. This provided to the exhibition the possibility to have a distinct focus and allowed the curator and the PQ team the freedom to make the final selection of its content.

Developed through the motto ‘Extreme- Provocation’, the *Extreme Costume* exhibition team looked for ‘extreme material, extreme use, extreme size, extreme relationship [...]’, because ‘extremists provoke’ (Rybáková 2011: 281). As Rybáková remarks, their aim was to provoke the national curators and encourage them to search for ‘unconventional, exceptional and unusual costumes, costumes that broke free from established patterns’ (Rybáková 2011: 281). The result was an exhibition that expanded

its original concept to a level far beyond the design, use and materiality of costume, and included costumes that provoked not only the traditional boundaries of performance costume in terms of character articulation and representation, but also the connections between costume and the performer's body. The costumes displayed at the *Extreme Costume* exhibition proposed the deconstruction and reconstruction of bodies, bodies composed of unexpected materials, bodily absence and illusion. The costumes' materiality was emphasized particularly when displayed on lifeless mannequins, but the multiple formats used (photographs and videos in addition to three-dimensional costumes) were able to demonstrate multisensory, dissolving and disappearing, ephemeral costumes. As Barbora [Příhodová \(2012\)](#): 80) notes, 'costume was presented as a distinctive element removed from syntagmatic relationships (within the performance) and resituated within paradigmatic relations (with other costumes)'. This intensified the performative agency of costumes, allowing the visitors to experience how costumes can embody a performance within themselves, carry dramatic meanings and generate new performance narratives.

In addition to the *Extreme Costume* exhibition, Simona Rybáková co-curated and moderated with Donatella Barbieri the Costume Talks, a series of presentations and discussions accompanying the *Extreme Costume* exhibition. The Costume Talks hosted costume designers, fashion and costume researchers, and performance artists,^[12] to discuss costume from a wide range of perspectives, with the aim to look into 'extreme conditions of making costumes, as well as extreme strategies of exhibiting and performing costume in theatre, visual arts, performance art and fashion' ([Čepcová et al. 2011](#): 285). The Talks provided a suitable frame to discuss the notion of 'extreme' in a holistic approach to

costume, not only in relation to materials, technologies, collaboration and design processes, but also in their interaction with the performer's body. Through this, they further explored the agency of costume as embodied art and intervention.

The following edition of the PQ is the most recent one, in 2015. Even though costume was insufficiently presented, according to the jury, the costume element was existent in PQ15 as a component of many national exhibits in the professional or student sections as well as in all the performances selected in the programme.^[13] Notably, PQ15 included a rather vast independent costume-based project, the *Tribes*. Conceived as a 'walking exhibition' by the PQ artistic director and curator of the *Tribes*, Sodja Lotker, this project was one of the three experimental additions to the main national exhibitions of the [Prague Quadrennial 2015](#). In the *Tribes*, the artefacts of the exposition were groups of masked wearers, while the exhibition's scenography was the public space of Prague (Pantouvaki and Lotker 2017). Over the course of the eleven days of PQ15, a continuous flow of groups of masked professionals or students walking through the centre of Prague at regular intervals made it difficult for any spectator to grasp entirely or to attend fully the impact of *Tribes*. This experimental project, which has been documented more comprehensively elsewhere through its participants, spectators and the curator's view (see Pantouvaki and Lotker 2017), opened a wider discourse on the agency of masking and costuming within the context of contemporary performance. The *Tribes* project was distinctly different from the costume parades of the previous PQ editions by following a clearly articulated curatorial concept that invited participants through an individual call for presentations. It was, therefore, a curated event, 'an experiment in exhibiting, a play on what makes an exhibition of performance design' (Lotker cited in Pantouvaki and

Lotker 2017: 7) and offered an alternative format to exhibiting costume using living bodies in direct communication with the audience of the daily urban environment.

The *Extreme Costume* exhibition in conversation

This contribution is developed from a series of discussions^[14] with Simona Rybáková, Czech costume designer and curator of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition (PQ11). It intends to provide a critical reflection on the curatorial process for the *Extreme Costume* exhibition and to illuminate the curator's enquiry and her intentions behind certain curatorial and exhibition design choices. The text that follows is based primarily on oral materials that were revised, reorganized and edited. The discussions are informed by Rybáková's concise curatorial introduction from the PQ11 exhibition catalogue (Rybáková 2011) and draw materials from her conference presentation at the 4th Global Conference, *Performance: Visual Aspects of Performance Practice* organized by Inter-Disciplinary.Net in Oxford (Rybáková 2013). These two sources (of which the second remains unpublished) provide only few aspects of the curator's perspective on the *Extreme Costume* exhibition; the current article, therefore, gives space for further contextualization of this significant costume exhibition.

The text also includes a review of the audience's response to the *Extreme Costume* exhibition and, most importantly, concludes with Rybáková's insights on her personal 'emancipation' from her long-lasting professional role as costume designer to that of costume curator of her colleagues' practice for the purposes of this exhibition. Given the limited documentation available about *Extreme Costume*, the aim of this contribution is dual: to provide a resource on the scope and reach of this significant

event; and to offer materials for further discussion in the context of costume research regarding exhibiting costume beyond the context of its original performance.

Simona Rybáková: From costume designer to costume curator

Simona Rybáková is a Czech costume designer who originally studied textile and clothing design at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (AAAD) (1991). She also spent some lengthy study periods abroad,^[15] enriching and expanding her professional formation. After completing her studies, she started working as a freelance designer, first in textile design and later in costume design.^[16] The start of her professional practice as a textile designer is of great relevance to the *Extreme Costume* exhibition theme and approach.

For over 30 years, Rybáková has been a multifaceted textile and costume designer whose work includes original prints of textiles and carpets, jewellery, sculptures and drawings, in addition to her numerous costume design projects. Thanks to the wide scope of her education and the experience from the influential dance and theatre group *Ballet Unit Cramp*^[17] founded by her life partner – the architect, director and scenographer Šimon Caban – and his brother Michal, choreographer, director and producer, while they were still students, she has had the opportunity to work in costumes for many different fields from early on. She designed for a wide range of performance events, including text-based and devised theatre, opera, dance, film, TV, festivals and multimedia projects, in the Czech Republic and abroad.^[18] Her professional practice has been awarded with

several national-level and international prizes.^[19] Since 1996, she has been actively involved in the OISTAT.^[20]

Her manifold interests in costume, design, materiality and inter-disciplinary collaboration led her to develop a practice-based doctoral project at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU) focusing on alternative ways to design contemporary costume. This subject, which was formulated around the same period that Rybáková was in discussion with Sodja Lotker for the *Extreme Costume* exhibition – i.e. during 2008 – eventually became her doctoral dissertation, which was defended in 2014.^[21] In her research, Rybáková studied costume design in relation to fashion, theatre, performance making and visual arts. As she remarks, the postmodernism of the 1980s was a significant starting point for her work and, since then, she has searched for ‘new paths, techniques and materials for costume design’ (Rybáková 2014). To be able to explore her topic freely beyond traditional conventions related to designing costume for the stage, she chose to be based at the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre and was supervised by the acclaimed scenographer, pedagogue and puppet designer Petr Matásek. In our discussions, she recounted:

Matásek told me, ‘you always try to look at different ways, different materials, different things in relation to designing costume, so why don’t you make the dissertation about alternative ways and materials?’ That was my general topic in the beginning.

(Rybáková, interview with the author, 2016)

As a Prague native, Simona Rybáková has had close contact with the Prague Quadrennial since her student days. In 1999, she acted together with Šimon Caban as commissioner of the Czech National entry in Prague Quadrennial 1999, receiving for the Czech Republic, for the first time in the event’s history, its top award, the Golden Triga. Having the

experience of both visitor and organizer, she was invited in due course by Sodja Lotker to curate an exhibition in her own field of practice, costume design, the *Extreme Costume* (*Extrémní kostým*) exhibition for PQ11.

The very first encounter with PQ took place when I was still a student – a visitor of the international show of stage design. Later I became a participant, curator of the winning Czech national pavilion in 1999 that was awarded the Golden Triga. Performing the role of a curator of a special exhibition within PQ which focuses on costume for theatre and live events was, therefore, something we could call a logical result of my activity in previous years but also 'a great challenge'.

(Rybáková 2013: 2)

The text that follows synthesizes the conversations with Simona Rybáková on how the *Extreme Costume* exhibition took its final form and how she shifted her focus from costume design practice to costume curation informed by her practice, but expanding beyond it. Given that our discussions took place after the *Extreme Costume* exhibition had been presented, our dialogue takes the form of a continuous interview in which Rybáková reflects on her role and process in curating the exhibition, while also sharing her thoughts on its value for her as a practitioner.

Sofia Pantouvaki (SP): *When and how did your collaboration with Sodja Lotker start for the Extreme Costume exhibition?*

Simona Rybáková (SR): I think it was after PQ07, just a year later, when Sodja came to me and asked if I had any ideas on making a special costume exhibition. She was interested in making an exhibition really focusing on costume. She told me there was already a space, so we started to talk about the idea. [...] I knew that the condition was that we had to find the costumes through national curators so it would have been an open

call [circulated and coordinated] through nations and national exhibitions. Then we started to talk about the topic.

***SP:** The topic of the exhibition was closely related to your personal interests and research. Did your research help to formulate the subject for the Extreme Costume exhibition?*

SR: The discussion for the exhibition started around the same time as my dissertation – my entry exam at DAMU for the Ph.D. was in 2007, so it was the first year of my research. [Curating an exhibition] might be an unusual role for a practicing designer, but for me this was an opportunity to engage more deeply into the topic of my own dissertation and it undeniably helped me advance with my research.

***SP:** We have become familiar with Sodja Lotker's interests in site-specific projects, performance beyond the stage, as well as in costume, from her work with the Prague Quadrennial in various roles – as artistic director (2008–15) as well as before, when she acted as programming director of live events in PQ07 and of the 'Heart of the PQ' section in PQ03. How did the two of you work together to develop the Extreme Costume exhibition?*

SR: As artistic director of PQ11, Sodja acted as creative director for the project and decided to give space to costume. It was her initiative. As a practitioner, I am not as theoretically and conceptually oriented as Sodja so I think the combination of her and I was promising. I was glad not to be 'just flying' alone. I have a solid base in costume and knowledge of costume; I know how to make costumes but I am still a very experimental person who likes to discover new things. Therefore, this combination was a good condition for that task. So then, we agreed that we would specify the call together.

SP: Nowadays, an increasing amount of designers decides to step out of their field of practice to curate events and actions in order to reveal the dynamics of their field. The PQ99 Czech National Exhibit was your first experience in co-creating an exhibition, but Extreme Costume was your first exhibition as main curator, dedicated to your own field of practice, costume design. Other than the topic itself, what was your motivation to curate this exhibition?

SR: What motivated me to take the offer was the opportunity to reflect on the position of costume design in contemporary theatre in all its forms and [to investigate] how costume breaks the limits set by traditional perceptions, how it challenges the boundaries of otherwise commonly accepted approaches.

SP: When you talked about the experience of curating the Extreme Costume exhibition at the 4th Visual Aspects of Performance Practice conference in Oxford (2013), in your paper 'Costume as Stimulus' you reflected on your role and your personal emancipation. I remember that you also posed several questions to yourself:

Why would a costume designer accept the role of curator of a costume exhibition? Why would she focus on the work of her colleagues instead of her own? Why would she step out of her practice and set off to explore a theoretical perspective, taking an academic approach?.

([Rybáková 2013](#): 1)

SR: These are the questions I was asking myself and was given answers to during the preparations for Prague Quadrennial 2011 and the *Extreme Costume* exhibition. There was no sense for me to exhibit the works within a certain theme and statically as it used to be done in the past. I assumed that an artist with a deep knowledge of his or her field, in the curator's role, would be able to transmit much of his or her experience as well as

find substantial facts and present those to both lay and expert audience. [...] The aim was to show a section of costume's development in the present day with a particular focus on theatre directors in order to demonstrate how inspirational this discipline, costume, can be if not perceived solely in its subordinate role.

Curating *Extreme Costume*: Theme and content of an extreme exhibition

SP: *How did you formulate the theme of the exhibition in your collaboration with Sodja Lotker?*

SR: We discussed with Sodja that we were not looking for classical costumes, something we'd know, but for something which would be extreme from different points of view.

Such perspectives could be, e.g. extreme from a political, a design, a material, a context point of view. We wanted to give everyone a sign that they had to think differently, not in a classical way about the performances. So, in the beginning it was the extreme materials.

SP: *You have explained, also in your PQ11 exhibition catalogue curatorial introduction, that your original impulse was 'the theme of "extreme material," with a greater focus on form than on content' (Rybáková 2011: 281). How did the curatorial concept develop further?*

SR: Initially, the topic of 'extreme material' was supposed to be an impulse to inspire curators; clearly a theme aiming more for the form than for its contents. Our aim was to find materials that are unusual, unexpected, cosmic, virtual, intangible, dissolving, flying, disgusting, technical, deforming, ecological, decadent, floating, making sound, emanating

light, and so on. However, based on this initial impulse we eventually received costumes speaking both through their interesting materials and their content.

We tried to provoke curators to look for extreme costumes within their country's art scene; to look for unusual, unorthodox, limit-surpassing costumes. What we received in return was a very diverse collection of works. Nevertheless, the choice of each national curator reflected a wide spectrum of today's trends in the field. Moreover, it reflected the territorial, political and sociological aspects of each country as well as the level of traditional or experimental approaches and the cultural diversity. In the end, we got many connecting points, which helped us create a framework for the exhibition. Through materials, we were made to think what extreme costume means. I felt we had to open this field really very broadly.

***SP:** Did you engage the national curators mainly to facilitate the process, to have some kind of communication and organizational channel? About eight years ago we didn't have as an expansive mailing list with contact details to reach the artists directly, as we do today through OISTAT's Costume Sub-Commission, Critical Costume and other costume-related networks. So, was the collaboration with national curators a practical request, was it for example related to finance, to help participants get their costumes transported through the national institutions participating in PQ?*

SR: Yes, much of this is true. [Initially] we were also looking for non-traditional artists who were not part of the national exhibitions, but we realized that we had to follow the structure of PQ because the *Extreme Costume* exhibition was included in the PQ and was part of the competition. Therefore, it was not possible to include some other pieces, external curatorial choices. There was also the financial issue. At first, I was interested in

artists like Nick Cave, outside the PQ participants; but we had limited budget and of course we had to face other practical things, too. So, we decided to continue working only through national curators. Hence, we had to take the costumes out of the national exhibitions and use them in our exhibition. It was up to the curators to give their costume pieces to our exhibition or keep them in theirs. [On the other hand,] if we didn't accept a costume in our exhibition, if there was nothing interesting in relation to the theme, then the costumes had a chance to stay in their national exhibition. Many countries, like Brazil and the United States, sent great costume proposals. They really got the point. Some of the countries didn't get the point – didn't understand the theme – at the beginning, but they still sent something. If we saw that they had sent something that was interesting, we tried contacting them again to guide them to find something that could function better within our concept. The problem was that there was a limit to what national curators could do. We knew, for example, that Germany or the Netherlands could have great material but there were no people in the team of national curators to act as the channel to those designers. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to make direct contact with designers because it was all going through the national curators. Regrettably, the complete exhibition did not demonstrate the entire global situation for some countries such as Germany, Canada, Israel – countries with a tradition of quality work in this domain – could not be represented due to economic and communication issues. Although we knew which works we would receive, we could only finalize the composition once they all arrived. Despite this, the exhibition ended up as being representative of costume as extreme and communicating its values well.

SP: *Did good communication with the national curators enrich the contents of the exhibition? What was the role of the national curators in mediating the concept?*

SR: Good communication was very important. You can see, for example, that the USA curator, Susan Tsu, sent diverse costumes that we finally included in the exhibition. Pat Oleszko (*Betty Boob on the Beach*), as an example, was fine, it was an extreme site-specific performance piece. But they also sent Constance Hoffman's work ('Louis XIV') designed for Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam,^[22] so the American [national curators] looked [at designers' work] also in Europe and this specific work was really very interesting – the materials, the costume – it was a great performance. They also sent Achim Freyer's work ('Hagen'),^[23] a German director–designer working in the USA, so they really showed an understanding of the topic. They sent, let us say, high-level productions which were interesting from the point of view of materials. Of course, [the entries from] Brazil, proposed by curator Rosane Muniz, were completely different, they were very experimental. I loved the ice costume by Leo Fressato (*The Girl and the Autumn*)^[24] (Figure 1); also, the special costume with the plastic cover sprayed with colours by Hedra Rockenback and Karin Serafin ('End #01')^[25]. They also had some research-based costumes with a sociological approach, such as costumes with pockets carrying rubbish.^[26] They [Brazilian artists] really were the strongest [participants in the] exhibit. Eloise Kazan, on the other hand, from Mexico sent a powerful costume of Queen Tamora, made of bullets ('Queen Tamora's Wedding Dress').^[27] From Russia, we received an independent piece of free art by the performance artist Misha Le Jen,^[28] who performed outdoors, independently. The national curator sent this work. These examples show that the national curators were key for sending proposals.

This is very important experience for the future: to know how to write, how to title your concept, how to explain it to get a good response in order to make the exhibition what you really want. That was important for me – to communicate it, to name it, to articulate it. I think this is key: if you articulate your focus, your topic, what do you want, then people will understand and will come along. If you are not very articulate, they are lost and you miss the chance. This kind of communication was very important for me. [In our costume practice] we can communicate with people, actors, but this [curatorial process] was different because you're talking to designers and producers.

SP: *You mentioned indeed some of the many fascinating exhibits. By working with the national curators, was the content of the exhibition somehow 'pre-curated', mediated by their choices? What was the process of curation in terms of content and how did you perform the final selection of the exhibits?*

SR: Such an exhibition is pre-curated if you have a good national curator. We cannot say that the *Extreme Costume* exhibition was fully curated [by us] but we did some work [to instigate proposals] and made the final decision. The team included Sodja, Marie [Jirásková, the exhibition designer], and me. After we had received the entries, we talked in a second round together about what to choose, and in which way [to display it]. You need to know what is good for the purpose. For some people [*she means national curators*] it was interesting to know what would be someone else's point of view. They were able to send different things and if I told them the context, they were able to say 'this one will be much better because it will suit the exhibition better and it will bring something new'. Of course, as a curator you have to choose, and some people said in the end, '[o]h, if I knew I would have sent something else' – but you never [have the full

picture] because it is a process. After the whole exhibition is finished, you will see what is there.

SP: *Is it important to acknowledge the breadth of costume practice that the Extreme Costume exhibit embraced. The works included in the exhibition covered a wide spectrum of fields where costume exists, ranging from theatre performance^[29] to performance art, from experimental practice in education-related projects^[30] to mainstream opera stage,^[31] and from performances in which the costume ‘performs’^[32] to personal explorations by experienced professional costume designers.^[33] In these exhibits, you can see how costume can expand beyond body and fabric, touching other areas, such as lighting design and sound design.*

SR: Yes, and you can see what people generally think as ‘costume fabric’, beyond conventional fabric, which can become boring. There are other types of materiality, which can express much more. In this sense, I received good response for what I wanted to have in the beginning: to have the extreme materiality in connection to body and space. We also had a sound costume from Taiwan (Figures 2a and 2b).^[34] It was exhibited only in a photo; we did not have a video, that wasn’t available, but it was interesting because this costume represented a completely new extreme. What is also important is that the costumes of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition showed different ways and directions [to approach the topic]; for instance, next time we can go for sound and action in costume with materials, like in the case of the ice costume, or with the connection between sound and body (Figure 3), and so on. If I were to make another exhibition, these examples specified different ways to exhibit costume, so I could say that from these 30–40 works different calls for different themes and exhibitions could be developed.

Exhibiting costume and curating the space

Another central characteristic of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition was that the costumes were displayed as a whole in a shared space (Figure 4), without boundaries related to their geographic or national origin as in the main part of the PQ exhibition, the Section of Regions and Countries. They were therefore, 'divided neither by nation nor culture; no countries, no sub-divisions (mental or physical)', but instead provided 'a space of costumed representations of bodies' (Příhodová 2012: 76).

SP: *The text that introduces the Extreme Costume exhibition in the PQ11 catalogue notes the following:*

This project creates space for costume projects to be taken out of their original context of performance in order to be looked at 'close up' as autonomous art with individual quality. It includes costumes used in the theatre as part of the performance design components as well as costumes used in the visual arts as objects, elements of action, or environment.

(Čepcová et al. 2011: 282)

How did you approach costume in relation to the given space and how did the design of the exhibition space evolve?

SR: We started by posing questions to ourselves: With what should we fill this space?

What to choose from the wide spectrum of creativity? In what context and relation should it be to the objects in the national expositions? What is it that makes the audience to stop, pay attention and participate in today's 'liquid' society? Our intention was indeed to withdraw each costume from its original context; we tried to stop the performance time in which the costumes come to life and to show details and forms that could be easily

overlooked in the flow of the performance onstage. Because we suppressed the original context, we could create a new one; through an installation in a neutral space and with use of other media. Thus, in some cases we created even extreme relations between the two. Then the artefacts started to interact and communicate [...].

What was very important for me was how to exhibit each different kind of costume; because all costumes have different qualities and there are different ways to exhibit them. [During the second phase of our work,] when we got the space, I realized that I needed someone who would create with me the exhibition in the space, with lighting. I proposed to Sodja to work together with the Czech scenographer, costume designer, puppet and exhibition designer, Marie Jirásková, whom I knew, and who gladly joined this collaboration. When Marie became part of the team, I told her that I would really like the staircase to become the stage; so, we started discussing together the connection between the entries and the space.

The space that we received [*the underground space of the National Gallery's Trade Fair Palace*] was covered with a red carpet and underneath it, were blue and beige carpets because it was previously used for concerts of alternative music. These elements were removed. With Marie we decided to have low lighting, that made the space quite dramatic. [Another important decision made early on] was that we would not display all of the entries because we wanted to have more space, allowing the visitors to walk around the costumes. Hence, although we had collected more costumes, we decided that 25–30 costumes and ten screens would be maximum. In addition, we wanted to use large-scale printed photographs powerfully showing the costume in a specific moment.

SP: *The exhibition included three-dimensional, physical costumes, still enlarged photographs, as well as action in motion shown in videos. How did you make your decisions regarding format of display?*

SR: After finding out that it was not possible to have video materials [of certain proposed costumes], we realized that, in some cases, the costume itself was actually nothing special. For example, Misha Le Jen brought the rubber boots but you know that if you bring rubber boots without the body, the water and the action, then it's just rubber boots. But if you have the video, the whole context, then it's really something (Figures 5a, 5b, 5c). As we decided to have water in the space for Paul Brown's waterproof costumes from Bregenz, we eventually also decided to include the rubber boots, and so we found that there was space for this costume, the boots. Although the boots were not as stimulating as a costume object, they were good for the exhibition as a whole and were contextualized through the use of water.

In the case of Emma Ransley's 'InHABITing dress', we found the costume interesting because it was simple, gentle; we liked it because it was in good contrast to the other pieces. As we were looking for extremes, this was a good extreme to the bullet dress, for example. However, this costume wasn't very fascinating as a physical object, either; it was interesting because of the process of tearing the fabric off. Therefore, we didn't request the garment for the exhibition and only exhibited the video of its 'performance'.

On the other hand, I was interested in Madeleine Trigg's costume from *Sutre*, which was made of a special material that dissolved in water, which she had shown us in a video. I really wanted to present this costume as a hologram because I saw her performing in London; although we worked for two years to bring it as a hologram, it was too

expensive. What we finally exhibited was a video and a relic of the costume, pieces of the melted material with an intertwining red wool yarn. I liked this small relict.

SP: *The actual exhibition did not provide easily visible information on the exhibits.*

Barbora Přihodová has noted that, 'although there were labels on the floor that identified the name of the designer, his/her work, and the country of origin, they could be easily missed or ignored in the semidarkness of the exhibition space' (Přihodová 2012:

78). This invited the audience to view and experience the costumes in the space and in relation to one another, as 'the political and cultural borders performed at countries and student sections were eliminated' (Přihodová 2012: 78). I understand the value of such a deliberate choice for you as a researcher; but was it an actual decision to keep the contextual information 'in the background' instead of providing it accessibly the audience? Was your intention to create sensory impact through the physical costume, the photo or the video?

SR: When it comes to deciding the concept of an exhibition there are usually more than one possible ways to go and it is difficult to choose the one that gives the best impression. In our case, we had two options: either to exhibit the works with all the contextual information such as accompanying text, image materials, photographic documentation and initial designs, to show its process of creation. Quite a lot of artists were even insisting on providing these but we feared it would harm the whole space and atmosphere. Alternatively, the second option was to let the works speak for themselves without any backing up material and thus emphasizing the context of the costumes exhibited in relation to one another. Taking in consideration the wide audience spectrum of the PQ, we eventually choose the second option. We preferred to provide strong visual

information in the space, with low lighting, to allow the visitors to come in and think for themselves. I am aware of the fact that some works might have been left weakened by the lack of information but, as I said, in the chosen concept we preferred the visual experience rather than providing a study. We wanted to offer the viewers a closeness with the exhibits and let them enter into interaction. In the final result the costumes themselves became part of groups with different meanings and some of the pieces, otherwise weakened in their 'extremity', mutually intensified the effect.

That is why we chose a limited number of costumes, so that there could be 40–50 visitors in the space between them, becoming part of the performance. Once there were three or four viewers in red dresses who connected with two big red costumes in the exhibition – they changed completely the dynamics of the space. That is why we decided to make it performative and this was the value we were expecting – and it happened, interaction came naturally.

SP: *As a professional, you have been a costume designer working with the living actor.*

In the Extreme Costume exhibition, you had to work 'in the absence of the actor's body' (Pantouvaki 2014), a topic that we have discussed widely. How did you feel dealing with mannequins and finding solutions?

SR: We knew that we would have several actual three-dimensional costumes. We were originally thinking about finding a special kind of mannequin, but we had neither time nor budget. So, we decided to choose the simplest and most invisible mannequins we could find because the main focus was on the costume. Of course, some of the costumes missed a big part of their whole – the masks, the make-up, the wigs make them different. This was very visible in Achim Freyer's costume which required make up [to

be complete] – something you cannot do on a mannequin. If I had been able to work with a good budget, I would have made a replica, or the mask, or a projection as a real face, there are many possibilities. Unfortunately, we didn't have this option. When I work in film and theatre, this is my motto: if there is something that we know how it was in the history, our duty is to reproduce it right. But if we do not know or do not have the possibility to make it right, then we should do as little as possible. To not disturb. That was the practical reason why we chose the specific mannequins.

Reception of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition

SP: *You have mentioned that 'very helpful for the further development of the topic in the future were the reactions and feedback given after the event' (Rybáková 2013: 4). Have you observed how the visitors perceived the exhibition? Have you collected any audience responses?*

SR: The feedback of the groups involved was generally positive towards the event and the concept. Despite the predominant positivity of feedback, however, reactions to specific projects [*exhibits*] differed. The lay audience and children focused on shapes, materials and structures of the costumes. Thanks to the fact that individual works were installed freely in the space, people could study them from minimal distance and observe the creativity, the artisanship and the ideas of the designers; details which are usually impossible to see during the show. This audience was mostly interested in the names of the works, their country of origin and they generally showed a great interest during the guided tours of which I had organized a few. They weren't, however, particularly

interested in the type of event for which the costumes were used, they were still rather discovering and unveiling these fields of performance.

The more expert audience, on the other hand, found the topic intriguing and – to my joy – they commented that costume is often ignored as an important part of the theatrical whole. They particularly appreciated the wide spectrum [of presented works] and the informative value of the exhibition, as well as its sophisticated yet simple and non-aggressive installation; the dim lights were maybe at the limit of visibility but they were inviting the viewer to come closer and interact with the costumes.

SP: *You have also mentioned that you had a strategically targeted audience: the theatre directors.*

SR: Out of the entire creative team [*various theatre professionals who visited the exhibition*], some directors' reactions varied the most. They tended to be attracted the most by the costumes close to their personal tastes, independently from the works' value as craft. Often they were surprised by the functions and the materials, which themselves could use in their projects. This clearly demonstrates the lack of information and [the type of] interest of this particular group of artists. Therefore, it is essential for the designers to 'inform and educate' their directors so that they learn how to demand more in favour of the whole show.

SP: *Extreme Costume was part of the PQ, an international exhibition and festival. What was the value of the exhibition on an international level?*

SR: For its international scale, this event was especially important for the costume designers themselves; they were able to present their work not only as an 'accessory', but foremost as an autonomous artwork in its own right. The exhibition offered a place to

meet colleagues from other countries and to discuss troubles, experiences and passions in the field; this I consider an important aspect of one's work. I enjoyed observing how someone's working process resonates with the processes of other participants, what is the role of tradition and what is the situation and standing of costume design in their country in comparison with others.

SP: *Who else visited the exhibition? What was the response from younger generations?*

SR: I was pleased to see craftsmen in the audience; tailors, shoemakers, jewellers, prop men, seamstresses. [...] They observed the techniques used in [costumes coming from] abroad [*from outside the Czech Republic*], their inspirations, and how anything can be used to create a costume.

Students' reactions were certainly an important part of the feedback, too. Those not involved in the arts looked at photographs, videos and objects without prejudice and rather freely as they are used to when looking at art. Art and design students, on the other hand, were already more knowledgeable and some of the works were familiar to them from their studies. They showed interest in projects for performance arts indicating independence and open-mindedness.

Analysing audience's reactions is an important part of the feedback and it gives the author essential information for achieving higher quality in future projects, especially when it comes to choosing the concept and the target audience.

Curation as the designer's emancipation

In her presentation of *Extreme Costume*, two years after the exhibition had taken place, Simona Rybáková was particularly interested in the emancipation of costume design as a field. She notes:

I would like to show costume design as an essential artistic field, which, in its effort to emancipate, surpasses the limits of applied arts, [considered] just decoration. We find ourselves in a period of theatre evolution where costume significantly broadened its possibilities and it became a creator of new aesthetics. It can determine the habitus of the human body, the actor, but also of the whole show, project or even demonstrate the artistic intentions of the respective theatre.

(Rybáková 2013: 5)

SP: *How can we support the field of costume design beyond the borders of our own profession? You have suggested that events like curated exhibitions can help to articulate the agency of costume and to highlight the potential of our work to a broader audience.*

SR: This emancipation effort has been emerging for a long while now. It is, however, not strong enough yet; therefore, it only stays within the field. That is the reason why I would like to take up all the opportunities to promote costume design in media, published materials and exhibitions. Exhibitions such as PQ 2011, *Extreme Costume*, or *Transformations - Theatre Female Artists at the Turn of Centuries*³⁵ confirmed the public interest in costume if presented with an attractive curator's concept. At the same time, this has proved that costume designers themselves must be the agents [for their field] and look for collaborators among young theoreticians and curators who are able to perceive costume design as a majestic artistic discipline. Moreover, some of the designers who are not always satisfied with the amount of importance given to their creative work in a show

initiate their own projects in a certain emancipation effort where the costume becomes the central theme. In that case, they become the creators of the idea and the technique.

SP: *These ideas are much in line with the words of our colleague, Professor Deborah Nadoolman Landis, costume designer, researcher and curator, who recently wrote about the reasons why she chose to create and to curate the Hollywood Costume exhibition (see [Nadoolman Landis 2018](#)). You have stressed the importance of your experience of the Hollywood Costume exhibition,³⁶ which we visited together in January 2013. What kind of thoughts did this experience bring to you and how does it connect to your experience of curating the Extreme Costume exhibition?*

SR: The *Hollywood Costume* exhibition in London was especially interesting for me as costume designer having taken the role of a curator. It focused on film costumes and it was unique in its concept and depth of the message transmitted, in its presentation, choice of objects and its vivid educational aspect. In my opinion, the reason was that the author [the curator] was not only a theoretician in the field, but an active connoisseur who was able to transform her experiences and knowledge into an attractive event.

Although the two exhibitions, *Hollywood Costume* and *Extreme Costume*, cannot be compared in their scale, they are connected by the fact that both were curated by a working costume designer. This brought interactivity [*between visitors and exhibits*] and an insider's point of view into presenting otherwise 'inanimate' artefacts.

SP: *We have often addressed the issue of exhibiting costume in stillness and in the 'absence of the body', and exhibition making as a making of 'a new performance' ([Pantouvaki 2014](#)). What kind of role does the costume designer have in such a frame?*

SR: The costume designer as curator takes up the role of a director. With his/her team s/he chooses the actors—characters—costumes and puts them in the space, connecting them with other aspects of dramatic work such as light, sound and multimedia. S/he creates a new interpretation, an interactive show.

SP: *You have presented your artistic work in various contexts, onstage, on-screen, as well as in exhibitions. With Extreme Costume, you had a chance to become curator and make the exhibition yourself. What did you gain as a costume designer-researcher through making this exhibition? What did the experience of working as a curator offer to you?*

SR: I can recognize three things. First, that you are very close to the concept of the work; the participating designers give their concept, their value so you get to know more – not only the results, but their thinking process, too. That became also part of my dissertation: that I really described the concept and process of the work of the designer, because they wrote to me about it and some of them I found them great with talking. This was very deep knowledge for me and enriched my research. Secondly, it was important for me to discover different approaches, how people around the world communicate through costume. Thirdly, to build the exhibition and get feedback from a third part, that of the audience: the theoreticians, the public, the professionals who work in the theatre, directors and so on; also, the designers. It was interesting to see how the *Extreme Costume* exhibition was able to ‘speak’ to the general public, to expert scholars, as well as to our colleagues.

SP: *You could have included some of your own work in the Extreme Costume exhibition and yet you did not. What did the experience of curating work by other designers, your international colleagues, offer you?*

SR: An important decision for me in this exhibition was in fact not to be part of it as an active designer. I was tempted to have some of my own work there. Then I realized that I would be freer not to include my own work and to focus on other people. In the three-year long process [*of preparing the exhibition*] it was very interesting to see how others understood the call, what you were looking for, whether you were asking for red and they gave you green, and so on. It was about finding common language to understand or about giving to other people the right sight of what you really want. Some of the people [you work with] do their best, but if they don't understand the concept which may be difficult or written in complicated language, then, they cannot give you what you want, even if they have it.

Of course, it is great to go into people's heads because they uncover their conceptual thinking for you, which is very valuable. It doesn't happen at all times especially with designers. We know that if you submit something for an exhibition you have to communicate [*with the curator/team*] because you want to exhibit the best for the purpose. Exhibiting the best means that you really want to be in close contact with the curator because you always have a specific vision, a specific task. Therefore, to exhibit the work of other colleagues and through their work to reflect on my own work – this was great value for me.

SP: *Did this curatorial process offer you new knowledge and perspectives?*

SR: Definitely a lot and I really regret that we didn't have more participating countries, which I know have great value in costume design. But, by how the PQ is organized, we were not able to get the contact with everyone. Of course, [as our international networks expand,] we know more and more interesting people who could have contributed to this exhibition, but at that time, in this context, what happened was the best possible.

***SP:** Is there anything that you have regretted, anything you would have done differently in relation to the Extreme Costume exhibition?*

SR: I only regret that we did not make a dedicated catalogue. If we had kept all the materials with all the concept statements that the participants had sent us, we could have made a catalogue for those who are interested in research. [All the designers] were willing to publish their materials. But initially, we believed that all the materials would have been placed in a general PQ catalogue. So that, I feel, was my fault. We didn't have enough experience and we were under time pressure, it is a pity. I think that not all the materials have to be in the exhibition necessarily, but all should have been in the catalogue. I think that the exhibition should be visually strong and this interesting research material could be in a book. You would then have the pictures and the memory of a strong feeling from the performative piece.

***SP:** I have one last question, which relates to something that you said earlier. You said you were interested in presenting the possibilities and the potential of costume design to different types of audiences, and this was done by inviting them to the exhibition. Did you have any chances to discuss with any of the visitors to see what the impact has been?*

SR: Yes, and I included notes [about this] in my dissertation, too. For me, very important was the 'normal' [general] audience, my friends, who were fascinated by how colourful

and how wide costumes for theatre can be – because they just knew conventional costumes. They were surprised that there could be water or paper costumes used for classical opera performance. Many discovered the action, the site-specific aspect, the different kinds of performance disciplines [related to costume]. Very important for me was also the reaction of some directors who visited the exhibition and said, ‘[w]ow, I didn’t know costume could be so inspiring and so different, I will think about costume more now because you can offer more’. It was important to show to our colleagues how costume can be performative and what they could ask for more.

I also had quite good responses from Czech theoreticians, for instance Věra Ptáčková. I realized that costume could really be a very good medium to tell about theatre because it is physical and attractive to people. I always make a comment, that perhaps costume is put in a less important position, but when it comes to documenting a performance, it becomes the number one element, the material object that is brought to the exhibition because it is physically present. Because it is connected to the actors, costume is used to make an indication of the actor. What the costume means, the physicality of the costume for all kinds of audiences – that was also very interesting to observe.

SP: *A few years after the Extreme Costume exhibition and working towards new costume events, what do you see as important for the future?*

SR: I believe that there are enough costume designers, but at least in the Czech Republic, there is a lack of theoreticians able to offer an expert and versed reflection. We can see much more often now that artists themselves get more knowledgeable in articulating their work academically and theoretically. Using both viewpoints [*the designer’s and the researcher’s*] can provide the field with important feedback and theoretical analysis.

Afterword

A year after PQ11, Barbora Příhodová wrote: '[o]ften somewhat neglected and silenced in the whole of the performance, costume in this exposition found its voice and became consecrated as the crucial site from which to view theatre and performance' (Příhodová 2012: 83). As Simona Rybáková joins her voice and her practice to that of other costume practitioners—researchers, such actions and events contribute to the emancipation of both designers and of the field of costume. Hopefully, this conversation will also contribute towards this direction.

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Notes

[1] The Prague Quadrennial was originally called in English ‘Prague Quadrennial of Theatre Design and Architecture’ (1967–95); it was renamed ‘Prague Quadrennial of Stage Design and Theatre Architecture’ (1999) and later ‘Prague Quadrennial of Scenography and Theatre Architecture’ (2003–07). Since 2011, it has been called ‘Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space’, its current name. Amongst the professionals in the field, it is known simply as the Prague Quadrennial, or its acronym, PQ. These changes in the name reflect the ongoing international discussions on the nature of this professional field and the growing concept of performance design as an artistic and cultural activity that expands beyond the traditional notion of the theatre stage.

[2] Jarmila Gabrielová includes information on this event in the volume *Kronika prazskeho Quadriennale (Chronicle of the Prague Quadrennial)* (2007: 56). I am grateful

to theatre researcher Barbora Přihodová for this clarification (e-mail communication, 28 February 2019).

3. The catalogue of PQ03 lists in detail each costume chosen to participate in this special section from a large number of countries: Australia, Brazil, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Sweden, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States and Ukraine. These costumes are indicated in the pages of their respective countries of provenance.

4. It is important to note that the programming director of live events in 2007 was Sodja Lotker, who, a year later, became artistic director of the PQ for its following two editions.

5. Participating artists in this event included: Silvie Zimulová Hanáková (CZ), Tomáš Bambušek (CZ), Cristina Maldonado (Mexico), DoMa/At Home (CZ), Doina Levintza (RO), Olga Plchová and the Theatre Institute (CZ), Ye Treoré (Mali) and Valerie Broumová (ČR); for more information see the PQ07 catalogue (Čepcová et al. 2007: 315).

6. For more information, see the PQ07 catalogue (Čepcová et al. 2007: 316).

7. This project was a collaboration between OISTAT and the PQ as part of Scenofest. For more information on the ‘Bird Walk’, also presented as ‘The Birds Carnival Parade and Workshop’, see the PQ07 catalogue (Čepcová et al. 2007: 301, 316).

8. Scenofest costume project leader for PQ07 was Donatella Barbieri, United Kingdom.

9. Most relevant to the topic of this article is the talk entitled ‘Extreme Costumes as Living Art’ by textile/costume artist Mariaelena Roqué (Spain/Venezuela), as part of the Top Ten Talks chaired by Pamela Howard.

10. This space was originally built as a cinema, with an amphitheatrical layout, but was not finished nor equipped and never used as a cinema. The Section of Countries and Regions as well as the Student Section were also displayed in this Functionalist building, which was used by the National Gallery’s Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art (Svoboda 2015).

11. The exhibits of the *Extreme Costume* exhibition were from the following countries: Austria, Brazil Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Taiwan, United Kingdom and United States. For the detailed list of exhibited projects, see the PQ11 catalogue (Čepcová et al. 2011: 282).

12. The Costume Talks speakers included Caroline Evans (United Kingdom), Rosane Muniz (BR), Lucie Loosová (CZ), Rollie de Leon (PH), Pat Olezsko (United States), Misha Le Jen (RU), Mareunrol’s (LV), Rosalinda Lourens (NL) and Karolína Hermánková (CZ) (Čepcová et al. 2011: 285).

13. For a critical review on this topic, see Bakal (2016).

14. The discussions took place in 2011, 2013, and between 2016 and 2019, and include a semi-structured interview (July 2016), conversations during academic conferences, and numerous communications face-to-face, by e-mail and on Skype.

15. At the University of Industrial Art in Helsinki, Finland (1991) and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence, United States (1996).

16. Biographical information on Simona Rybáková is based on her ČOSDAT and OISTAT profiles as well as on materials collected personally by the designer.

17. *Ballet Unit Cramp* (*Baletní jednotka křeč*) was founded in 1981 by Šimon and Michal Caban as a dance and theatre ensemble, which eventually earned reputation for its avant-garde stage productions, multimedia events, films and television shows (ČOSDAT 2018a). The group was formed in Prague as an artistic form of protest against uniformed life and was at that time part of the cultural underground of the 'Prague Five' (Chtiguel 1990).

18. She has worked for productions and international co-productions in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom.

19. Her design awards include the Gold Medal for textile design at the International Fair of Brno (1995), the first prize of the Swarovski Award (1996) and two World Stage Design awards for best costume design (Gold in Cardiff, 2013, and Bronze in Taipei, 2017). She has also received a special mention for her design for the dance film *Piece by piece* at the Dance festival in Frankfurt (2000) and three nominations for the Czech annual film award, the Czech Lion, where she won the award for Best Costumes in 2015 for her costume design for the film *Trři Bratři* (ČOSDAT 2018a).

20. Rybáková was the Czech representative in the OISTAT Executive Committee (1997–2007) and the president of the Czech OISTAT, ČOSDAT (2001–11). She has been a member of the OISTAT Performance Design (formerly Scenography) Commission and of the Costume Design Sub-commission (formerly Costume Working Group) since 1996, where she currently (since 2015) serves as Chair.

21. The original title of her doctoral dissertation in Czech is ‘Alternativy a nové cesty kostýmního výtvarnictví’, which translates in English: ‘Alternative and new ways of costume design: Concepts - materials - procedures and applications’. For the English abstract, please see Rybáková (2014).

22. This refers to the costume of ‘Louis XIV’ designed by Constance Hoffman for a production of Francesco Cavalli’s *Ercole Amante* staged by the Dutch National Opera in 2009.

23. This refers to the costume of ‘Hagen’ from the 2010 staging of Richard Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* for L. A. Opera, directed and designed by Achim Freyer.

24. This costume was made of pieces of ice and was created by director–costume designer Leo Fressato with Débora Vecchi and Elenize Dezgeninski for an experimental production entitled *The Girl and the Autumn*, presented at the Novelas Curitiba Theatre in Curitiba, Brazil in 2007.

25. The dancer Karin Serafin performed in the costume ‘End #01’ co-designed with Hedra Rockenbach for the play *Pequenas frestas de ficção sobre realidade insistente (PFdSRFi)*, performed by the Grupo Cena 11 dance company at Sesc Pinheiros Theatre in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2007.

26. This remark refers to Marina Reis’ costumes ‘Parangolixoluxo 2’ from Peri Pane’s production *Man and Woman Reflux*, presented at the Contemporary Cultural Centre of Barcelona during the Festival Drap Art, in 2006. These costumes combine her research with the body and collage technique.

27. Costume by Eloise Kazan for 'Queen Tamora', for *The Titus Procession* based on William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, presented at Theatre de la Paz, San Luis Potosi, Mexico, in 2007.

28. This refers to Russian media and performance artist and 'actionist', Misha (Mikhail) Le Jen (Lezhen) and his 'Extreme Birthday Suits' used in public 'actions' in 2005 and 2009. Le Jen performed in outdoor spaces, including in rivers, combining body-mounted constructions as part of his costumes to create illusions e.g. of the body emitting water, boots walking on the water void of any body, etc.

29. See, for example, the work of the Catalan/Venezuelan performer and costume designer Mariaelena Roqué with the costume 'Aurembiaix Dona Lluna' from Josep Palau i Fabre's *Don Juan, Prince of Darkness* performed at Teatro Español in 2008. Also, Belinda Radulović's costume made of hair for Vili Ravnjak's *A Journey to Rome (Caravaggio)*, staged at the Slovene National Theatre, Maribor, Slovenia, in 2010.

30. See Emma Ransley's first-class Honours dissertation 'InHABITing dress' (2009) from Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand, winner of the Gold Medal for Best Costume Design in PQ11. Also, Konstantinia Vafeiadou's costume for *Inspired by Beckett/Retrospective* (2009) originally developed during her studies at London College of Fashion, University of Arts London, United Kingdom.

31. Besides the aforementioned exhibits by Hoffman and Freyer, a significant example here are Paul Brown's 'Priests' waterproof costumes, floating in water, designed for Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* at Bregenz Festival in Austria, 2010.

32. See, for example, Madaleine Trigg's collaboration with Francisca Rios and Cristina Valls for *Sutre* (2009), a costume gradually dissolving with water during the

performance. Also, Fruzsina Nagy's 'Porsche' costume for *Pestiest (Budapest by Night)*, a show staged in co-production with the artists of Krétakör Theatre, Hungary, in 2007. Ransley's and Fressato's aforementioned costumes also express the performative agency of costume.

33. For example, Lise Klitten's costume 'Sixty-Nine', made using 69 used bras as a Danish vision of a Turkish sultan's kaftan, created at a workshop in Istanbul in 2010 and used in the performance *Ritual Cell* (2010) by Danish composer Jørgen Teller. Also, Pirjo Valinen's manipulated paper surfaces in her costumes for W. A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for Oulu City Theatre, Finland, in 2006.

34. This refers to Yu-Teh Yang's costume for *Body • Sound* choreographed by Huang Wei (2008); a type of fish-bone costume allowing the dancers to make a sound when they move, based on the activity of each joint of the human body.

35. Shown in May 2008 in Prague (see Koubská et al. 2008).

36. The *Hollywood Costume* exhibition was on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 20 October 2012 to 27 January 2013 (Nadoolman Landis 2012).

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