

A person wearing a black hooded robe stands in a dark room, holding a microphone. A thin, glowing pink line extends from the microphone across the frame. The title "Dildo's Lament" and the author's name "Helio Volana" are displayed in a glowing pink, serif font in the lower right quadrant. The background is dark and textured, with a vertical line and a small rectangular object visible on the right side.

Dildo's Lament

Helio Volana

A contemporary funeral ceremony.
Solo performance
with experimental music,
performance and installation.

Dildo's Lament

Helio Volana

In an empowering camp funeral ceremony, Hélio Volana dismantles the normative assignments imposed by dominant systems, welcoming their body beyond binary structures and fetishizing gazes.

The artist meanders among the ruins of a granite chapel, cradled by the deep vibrations of purple vibrators. In this sanctuary, **the performance becomes ritual, and the sound, an intimate prayer.**

Drawing on their own experience, Helio questions the mechanisms by which, in a predominantly white patriarchal society, bodies perceived as racialized and queer are assigned either hyper-sexualized or, conversely, threatening positions. But here, **it is not their own body that is buried — it is the restrictive norms that have frozen it,** alongside the dominant gaze that witnessed their birth.

The title pays homage to the aria — ‘Dido’s Lament’ from Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas*. This is not an adaptation, but a nod: the piece explores lamentation and melancholic processes from a perspective of empowerment.

This contemporary funerary ritual is guided by the vibrant moans of a pink heart of mourners: the vibrations of dildos invite cymbals and drum membranes to resonate. Within this **dildophonic polyphony** emerge the autotuned agonies of a galvanized guardian, the sermon of a priestess, and the sword strikes of a mysterious warrior.

Through **a camp aesthetic**, Hélio Volana reclaims funerary gestures to cradle white-patriarchal norms one last time — before piercing through and laying them to rest.

Artist's Statement

◀ The way a body is perceived is always shaped by the culture in which that perception takes place. I have often been confronted with **the dissonance between how I experience my body and how it is perceived by others**. In intimate relationships or on dating apps, my presumed origin and my gender perceived as masculine have often led to fetishization. Outside these spaces, these same attributes have exposed me to other forms of violence, notably police violence. This is no surprise: **hypersexualizing a body and perceiving it as dangerous are two sides of the same coin**.

Affected by these experiences, I began developing practices of mourning to embrace my body as I live it — rather than how it is seen. Throughout this exploration, one aria began to haunt me: Dido's Lament ('When I am laid'), from Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. My taste for wordplay quickly transformed "Dido" into "Dildo." **From this shift emerged a musical and conceptual obsession: how do you make a dildo cry?** I then designed various instrumental de-

vices to amplify its vibrations and blend our respective laments into a unison.

Thanks to the support of the FoRTE grant, funded by the Île-de-France region, and La Muse en Circuit as delegated producer, these experiments took on a new dimension: **that of a ceremony mixing installation, contemporary music, performance, and ritual**.

Iris Thérasse joined me in this adventure **as associate composer**. Together, we composed the piece's sound universe, unfolding the vibrant moans until they formed a true choir of dildophonic mourners. This work was built through numerous back-and-forths between Parisian sex shops and our studio sessions.

"Coming out of the closet" with objects associated with penetrative sexuality, giving them a central place, and making minor gestures (a caress, a brush, an attentive listening) the core of a dramaturgy felt as necessary formally as it was politically.

To guide this ritual and bury the assignments, I imagined several archetypal figures. I entrusted **costume creation** to **Henrique Oliveira Cardoso**, whose spectacular pieces immediately allowed these characters to deploy their own gestural languages and sonic registers.

The encounter between body, sound, and figures gave rise to a dramaturgy in tableaux, developed with the help of **Antonija Livingstone** as external advisor. **Maureen Béguin's** lighting design and the scenography created with the help of **Marie Dos Santos** helped materialize the sanctuary welcoming this ritual.

Distribution

HELIO VOLANA

Conception, direction,
composition, performance,
scenography

IRIS THÉRASSE

associate composer

ANTONIJA LIVINGSTONE

external advisor

HENRIQUE OLIVEIRA CARDOSO

costume design

MAUREEN BÉGUIN

lighting design

MARIE DOS SANTOS

scenographic collaboration

Agenda

21.11. 2025

Creation, Le Générateur, Gentilly

Residencies

from 24 to 28.03

Actoral, Marseille

from 07 to 10.04

La Muse en Circuit, Alfortville

from 14 to 18.04

Théâtre de Vanves, Vanves

from 26 to 28.05

Les Instants Chavirés, Montreuil

from 10 to 13.06

La Ménagerie de Verre, Paris

13.06

Restitution professionnelle,
La Ménagerie de Verre, Paris

from 16 to 20.06

La Muse en Circuit, Alfortville

from 23 to 27.06

Le Générateur, Gentilly



HELIO VOLANA

Hélio Volana (1994) lives and works in Paris. They graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, following an exchange at the SNDO (NL), and studied electroacoustic composition at the Conservatory of Pantin (FR).

They are a recipient of the FoRTE grant (2024, Île-de-France Region, FR) and the MIRA grant (2024, Institut Français). Supported by La Muse en Circuit as delegated producer, Hélio is developing *Dildo's Lament*, a ceremony at the intersection of performance, installation and sound creation, celebrating bodies freed from restrictive norms. The piece will premiere in fall 2025 at Le Générateur, Gentilly

(FR). The project also benefits from residencies supported by La Ménagerie de Verre (FR), Théâtre de Vanves (FR), Instants Chavirés (FR), and Actoral (FR).

At the same time, they are preparing a solo exhibition at the Institut Français of Madagascar (MG, September 2025). Drawing on the traditional lambahoany fabric, they summon narratives of resistance erased by colonial history. This project was fed by research at the Archives nationales d'outre-mer (FR), the French national archives holding records from the country's colonial empire, and by a residency at La Cotonière in Antsirabe, supported by the SOCOTA group's artistic patronage.

Hélio's work has been presented through various group shows, performances, and festivals, including in Madagascar at Is'Art Galerie, in France at Galerie Ceysson & Bénétière and Galerie éphémère du Centre Tignous pour l'art Contemporain, and in Belgium at Théâtre des Brigittines and Centre d'Art La Tour à Plomb, among others.

Their writings have been published in *Politics of Sound #2* and *Afrikadaa Magazine* (2025).

As a performer, they have collaborated with, among others, Darius Dolatyari-Dolatdoust, Antonija Livingstone, Boris Charmatz, and Carole Douillard, and performed in various contexts including Fondation Fiminco (FR), Lafayette Anticipations (FR), La Ménagerie de Verre (FR), the Louvre Museum (FR), the Centre Pompidou (FR), and Théâtre des Brigittines (BE).

Credits & contact

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Delegated production: La Muse en Circuit

This project is a 2024 laureate of the Regional Fund for Emerging Talents (FoRTE), funded by the Île-de-France Region.

With the support of: La Muse en Circuit (Alfortville), Les Instants Chavirés (Montreuil), La Ménagerie de Verre (Paris), Le Générateur (Gentilly), Théâtre de Vanves (Vanves), Actoral (Marseille).

La Muse en Circuit – CNCM, Alfortville (FR)

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