Dildo's Lament,

Ceremony for a mirage

Helio Volana

Dildo's Lament, Ceremony for a Mirage **is a solo performance that conjures up the constraints of a white, heteronormative society. Combining performance, dance, and experimental music, this piece opens the body of work** *Dildo's Lament.*

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Dildo's Lament is a body of work that borrows its structure from opera: each of its forms constitutes an autonomous act. Each of these acts takes on a specific form, ranging from performance to installation, allowing the body of work to unfold in different spaces and temporalities. The title of the corpus is inspired by the aria *Dido's Lament* from the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell. Here, the vibrations of dildos (vibrators) have replaced Queen Dido, traversing the entire corpus like a chorus of melancholic mourners.

Dildo's Lament, Ceremony for a Mirage is the founding act of this constellation of work. It is a solo performance lasting approximately 50 minutes, combining performance, dance, and live music. It is divided into tableaux, each distinguished by its own sound and lighting atmosphere. Each one is inhabited by a singular figure, haunted by the memory of a gaze cast upon their body.

The piece is permeated by invocations of fragmented memories. Drawing on their memories, Hélio Volana exposes the mechanisms of a patriarchal and predominantly white society that assigns bodies perceived as racialized to hypersexualized or, conversely, threatening positions. Appropriating the gestures of funerals, they conjure up these limiting assignments in a camp and deeply empowering ceremony.

The ritual immerses us in the ruins of a granite chapel, bathed in twilight and the muffled vibrations of pink and purple vibrators. A hooded guardian floats in this sanctuary shrouded in thick fog. The lamentations of vibrant mourners punctuate the ceremony: they make cymbals and percussion membranes resonate, then reveal their cavernous ornaments.

The second scene opens in a pink, subdued light. Having removed her hood, the guardian wanders around a phallic mineral sculpture. Looking us straight in the eye, she plays with the gaze directed at her skin. The dildophonic polyphony mingles with her autotuned chants.

In a final tableau, Hélio Volana invokes the memory of the gaze on their hands, transforming them into threatening weapons of flesh. Under sparkling metal armor and an imperial purple cape, they become a powerful but vulnerable warrior.

Wandering through these stone ruins, Hélio Volana invokes one last time the memory of these assignments before burying them.

Helio Volana Artistic statement of intent

« **I have often been confronted with the dissonance between the way I experience my body and the way it is perceived by others. In intimate relationships or on apps, my supposed origin and my supposedly masculine gender have often led to me being fetishized.**

Outside of these spaces, these same attributes have exposed me to other forms of violence, particularly from the police. This is hardly surprising: hypersexualizing a body or perceiving it as dangerous are two sides of the same coin.

Stricken by these experiences, I began to develop practices of mourning—to accept my body as I experience it, not as it is viewed. In the course of this research, an aria began to haunt me: Dido's Lament (When I am laid), from the opera Dido and Aeneas by Purcell.

My penchant for wordplay quickly renamed "Dido" as "Dildo," which in French means vibrator.

From this shift arose a musical and conceptual obsession: how do you make a vibrator cry? How do you transform these vibrations into a chorus of mourners?

These questions led to various experiments, which gradually became the basisibs for a body of work: Dildo's Lament.

Thanks to the support of the FoRTE grant, and a production by La Muse en Circuit, I was able to design the central and inaugural form of this body of work: Dildo's Lament, Ceremony for a Mirage. In this ambitious work the performance becomes a ritual, the sound an oration, and the scenography a sanctuary. Iris Thérasse joined me in this adventure as associate composer.

Together, we composed the soundscape of the piece, deploying the vibrant laments to form a veritable chorus of dildophonic mourners. This work was constructed through my numerous trips back and forth between Parisian sex shops and our studio work sessions.

Taking these objects out of the closet and giving them a central place, making minor gestures — a caress, a brush, attentive listening — the heart of a drama-

turgy then seemed to me to be crucial, both formally and politically.

To guide this ritual and bury the assignments, I imagined several archetypal figures.

I entrusted the creation of the costumes to Henrique Oliveira Cardoso, whose spectacular pieces immediately allowed these characters to deploy their own gestural languages and sound registers.

The encounter between the body, sound, and these figures gave rise to a dramaturgy in tableaux, developed with the help of Antonija Livingstone as an outside eye.

The physical work around seduction was enriched by a collaboration with Willow Kohn Bisseck.

Finally, the lighting design by Maureen Béguin and the set design created with the help of Marie Dos Santos made it possible to bring to life the sanctuary hosting this ceremony.

Distribution

HELIO VOLANA
concept, direction, composition, performance, set design

IRIS THÉRASSE
associate composer

ANTONIJA LIVINGSTONE
dramaturgy, outside perspective

HENRIQUE OLIVEIRA CARDOSO
costume design

WILLOW KOHN BISSECK
choreography assistant (sexy dance)

MAUREEN BÉGUIN
lighting design

MARIE DOS SANTOS
set design collaboration

Agenda

22/23/25.10.2025 - Pre-premiere, FACT festival, Théâtre de l'Elysée, Lyon

21.11. 2025 - Premiere, Le Générateur, Gentilly

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Residencies

2025

du 24 au 28.03
Actoral, Marseille

du 07 au 10.04
La Muse en Circuit,Alfortville

du 14 au 18.04
Théâtre de Vanves

du 26 au 28.05
Les Instants Chavirés, Montreuil

du 10 au 13.06
La Ménagerie de Verre, Paris

13.06 2025
Sortie de résidence, La Ménagerie de Verre, Paris

du 16 au 20.06
La Muse en Circuit, Alfortville

HELIO VOLANA

Hélio Volana (born in 1994) lives and works between Paris and Antananarivo. Graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, after an exchange at the SNDO (Amsterdam), they also studied electroacoustic composition at the Pantin Conservatory.

They are the recipient of the FoRTE grant (2024) and the MIRA grant (2024, Institut Français). Accompanied by La Muse en Circuit as executive producer, Hélio is developing *Dildo's Lament, Ceremony for a Mirage*—the inaugural and ambitious form of the *Dildo's Lament* corpus.

Combining performance, installation, and sound creation, Helio Volana draws on their memories to question the mechanisms of our society's gaze based on domination.

The *Dildo's Lament* corpus benefits from the support of **La Ménagerie de Verre** (Paris), **Point Éphémère x Cheville** (Paris), **Théâtre de Vanves**, **Maison des Arts de Malakoff**, **Instants Chavirés** (Montreuil), **Actoral** (Marseille) and **La Pop** (Paris), through residencies and showings.

In resonancarise with these questions of memory, Hélio Volana develops a visual work in which fabric becomes a medium for invocation—to bring forth stories of resistance, invoke spiritual figures erased by colonial history, or commemorate the deceased members of the queer community.

du 23 au 27.06
Le Générateur, Gentilly

du 17 au 21.11
Le Générateur, Gentilly

Other forms of Dildo's Lament

Dildo's Lament, A story of my skin

2025

Du 6 au 10.10
La Pop, Paris (Residencies)

11.10.2025
la Pop, Paris (Performance)

Dildo's Lament, Whiteness shades me

2026

Du 26 au 30.01
La Muse en Circuit, Alfortville (Residencies)

31.01
La Maison des arts de Malakoff (Performance)

20.06
Point Ephémère, Paris (Performance)

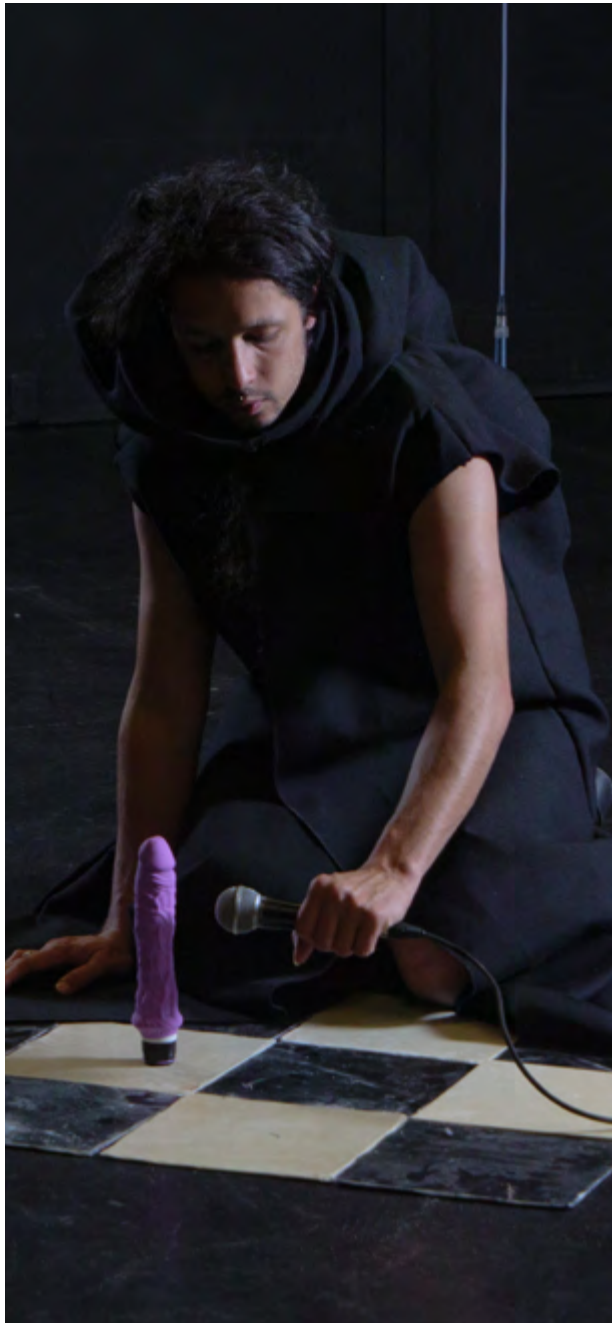
23.09 | Dildo's Lament – Whiteness Shades Me, Fesses-tival, Geneva

They created the MASO BE TSY MAHITA textile corpus, turning lambahoany (a Malagasy emblematic fabric) into a protective altar dedicated to forgotten revolts. This cycle was initiated in 2025 during a research residency at the **Archives nationales d'Outre-Mer** (Aix-en-Provence) and a production residency at **CRAAM** (Antananarivo). Voguing is not a crime is a textile installation paying tribute to O'Shae Sibley, presented notably at the Ceysson & Bénétière gallery (2024).

They have participated in group exhibitions at the **Galerie Éphémère du Centre Tignous pour l'Art Contemporain** (Montreuil) and at the **Is'Art Galerie** (Antananarivo). Their performances have taken place at the **Ceysson & Bénétière gallery**, the **Théâtre des Brigittines** (Brussels), and the **Centre d'Art La Tour à Plomb** (Brussels). Their writings have been published in Afrikadaa Magazine.

As a performer, Hélio Volana has collaborated with **Darius Dolatyari-Dolatdoust, Antonija Livingstone, Boris Charmatz**, and **Carole Douillard**, among others.

They have performed at the **Fiminco Foundation, Lafayette Anticipations, La Ménagerie de Verre, the Louvre Museum, the Centre Pompidou**, and the **Théâtre des Brigittines** (Brussels).



Credits & contacts

Delegated production : La Muse en Circuit.

This project is the 2024 winner of the Fonds régional pour les talents émergents (FoRTE).

With the support of :
La Muse en Circuit (Alfortville), Les Instants Chavirés (Montreuil), La Ménagerie de Verre (Paris), Le Générateur (Gentilly), Théatre de Vanves (Vanves), Actoral (Marseille), La Pop (Paris), La Maison des arts de malakoff (Paris), Le point Éphémère x Cheville (Paris)

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Dildo's Lament, Cérémonie pour un mirage

Dildo's Lament est un corpus d'œuvres empruntant à l'opéra sa structure : chacune de ses formes compose un acte autonome. Ces actes s'incarnent en forme spécifique, de la performance à l'installation, permettant au corpus de se déployer dans différents espaces et temporalités. Le titre du corpus s'inspire de l'aria de l'opéra Didon et Énée, Les lamentations de Didon (Dido's Lament). Les vibrations de dildos ont ici remplacé la reine Didon, elles traversent l'ensemble de ce corpus à la manière d'un chœur de pleureuses mélancoliques.

Dildo's Lament, Cérémonie pour un mirage est l'acte fondateur de ce corpus. C'est un seul·e en scène d'environ 50 minutes, convoquant performance, danse et musique live. Il est découpé en tableaux, distincts par leurs atmosphères sonores et lumineuses. Chacun est habité par une figure singulière, hantée par le souvenir d'un regard porté sur son corps.

La pièce est traversée par les invocations d'une mémoire en fragments. Convoquant ses souvenirs, Hélio Volana y expose les mécanismes d'une société patriarcale et majoritairement blanche, qui assigne les corps perçus comme racisés à des positions hypersexualisées ou, à l'inverse, menaçantes. S'appropriant les gestes du funéraire, iel conjure ces assignations limitantes dans une cérémonie camp et profondément empouvoirante.

Le rituel nous immerge dans les vestiges d'une chapelle de granit, bercé·es par une lumière crépusculaire et les vibrations sourdes de vibromasseurs roses et violets. Une gardienne encapuchonnée flotte dans ce sanctuaire traversé par un épais brouillard. Les complaintes de pleureuses vibrantes rythment toute la cérémonie : elles font entrer en résonance cymbales et membranes de percussions, puis dévoilent leurs ornements caverneux.

Le second tableau s'ouvre dans une lumière rose et calfeutrée. Débarrassée de sa capuche, la gardienne déambule autour d'une sculpture phallique minérale. Nous regardant dans le blanc des yeux, elle joue avec le regard porté sur sa peau. La polyphonie dildophonique se mêle à ses mélopées autotunées.

Dans un dernier tableau, Hélio Volana invoque le souvenir du regard porté sur ses mains, les transformant en armes de chair menaçantes. Sous une armure de métal étincelante et une cape pourpre impériale, iel devient une guerrière puissante mais vulnérable.

Déambulant dans ces vestiges de pierre, Hélio Volana invoque une dernière fois le souvenir de ces assignations pour mieux les inhumer.