

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 basis 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 Généra-
teur, Gentilly

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)

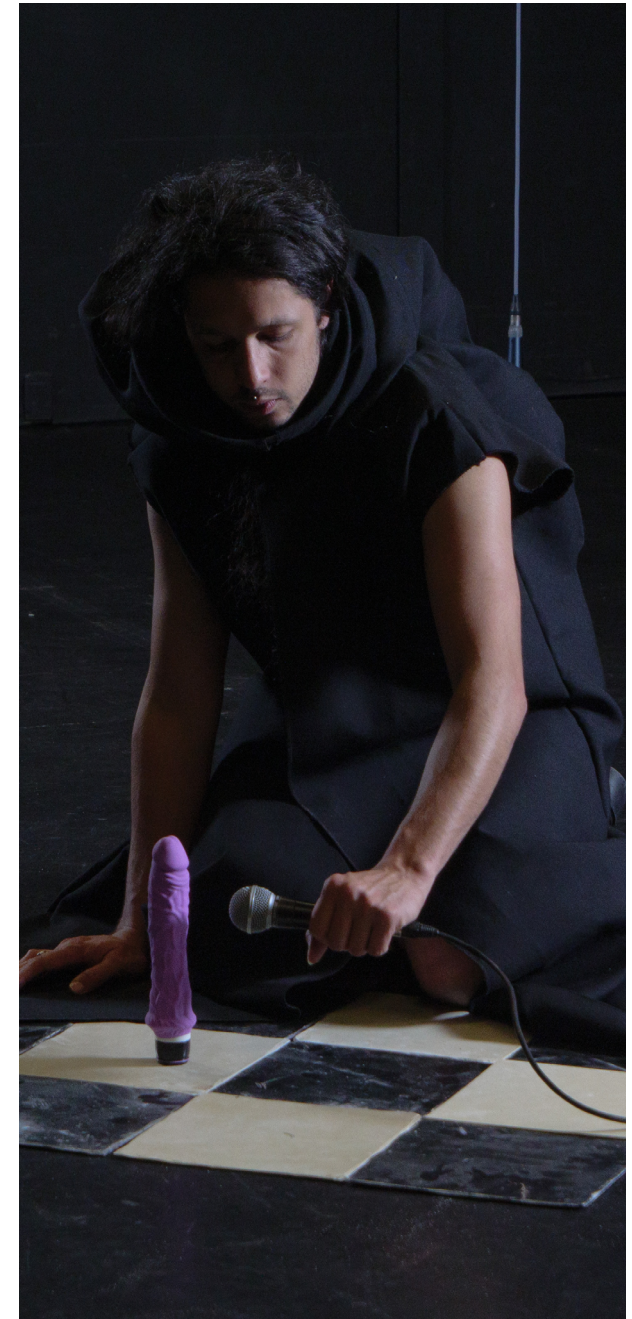
31.01
La Maison des arts de Malakoff
(Performance)

They created the MASO BE TSY MAHI-TA 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.

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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 Pop (Paris), La Maison des arts de malakoff (Paris), Le point Éphémère x Cheville (Paris)

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La Muse en Circuit – CNCM

www.alamuse.com

01 43 78 80 80

Production

Margaux Guerin - margaux.guerin@alamuse.com

Communication

Enzo Hiltiak - enzo.hiltiak@alamuse.com











