

LIFT

JANUARY 2022

CONCEPT



CREDIT: RHIANNON ARMSTRONG & TIM SPOONER

TOURING

EVALUATION REPORT

BY DR MEG PETERSON

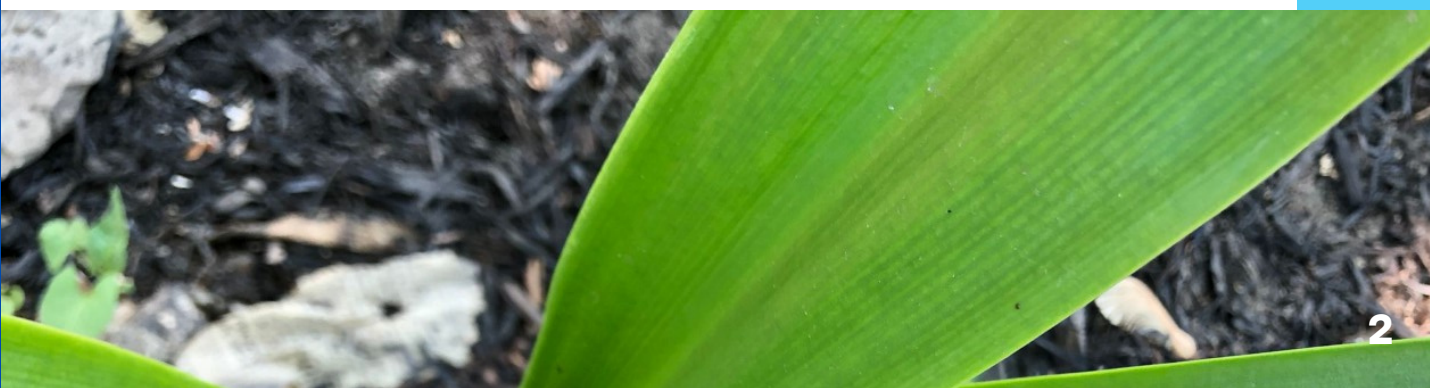
21ARTISTS

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, a group of artists from Kenya, The Nest Collective, were planning a residency with LIFT to create *The Feminine and the Foreign*, a documentary series of filmic portraits on the work and lives of Black feminist, queer, and immigrant activists, and their communities in multiple cities around the world. When their trip was cancelled as the world went into lockdown, LIFT and the artists spent the following months trialling how they could still do this work but without travelling. Working with East London-based filmmaker, Timi Akindele-Ajani, they co-created a remote filmmaking project, developing an unexpected collaboration between these artists in London and Nairobi.

For LIFT, the experience was pivotal. It led the festival to see what other kinds of experimentation it could offer to artists to develop international collaborations with little to no travel. Born from this experience in a time of global pandemic, Concept Touring was a constructive and critical response to the radical shifting nature of performance and touring in a time of extreme flux and change internationally. The term was coined by LIFT, and used to describe a pilot programme where artists tour and share their work at multiple stages of development outside of the conventional models of touring in the performing arts.

Concept Touring builds on a movement or body of knowledge around the world from artists and collectives such as Kate McIntosh, Mammalian Diving Reflex, Nassim Soleilmanpour, Tim Crouch, Theatre Replacement, Tania El Khoury and others; elaborates upon touring practices in international contemporary theatre; builds on ideas of remote performance and performative objects from 20th Century conceptual visual art and arrives in the world alongside similar movements such as Ant Hampton/Theatre Vidy's *Showing Without Going* – an atlas of non-touring touring shows.





CREDIT: PETER MCMASTER & ERIN BRUBACHER


In addition to being informed by these trends in contemporary performance, and the increasing desire from LIFT and the sector to move towards more sustainable practices, there were two other considerations that formed the basis of Concept Touring. The first was pressing concerns around freedom of movement. Even prior to Covid, LIFT was experiencing obstacles to obtaining visas, especially for artists from Sub-Saharan Africa. With globally uneven vaccine distribution and increased limitations to movement across borders during the pandemic, Concept Touring offered a potential new avenue for LIFT to offer greater opportunities to artists based in the Global South in the future. The second, a movement that has been growing since the early 2000s, was the continuing desire for international touring projects to have more local relevance and embeddedness mostly in the form of local artists or participants. This has both been a cost-saving measure as well as a desire to integrate touring work more authentically into the places where it tours. By focusing on more sustainable and often radical alternatives to the traditional touring model, Concept Touring proposes new models and new ways of looking at touring which are pandemic-resistant and environmentally sustainable. Concept Touring also creates a mechanism to propel these movements forward.

Concept Touring started with the provocation of what it might be like if artists do not need to tour their work by physically going to different places around the world, with the ideas or concepts travelling, with little to no expectations that artists will travel with the work. So, LIFT decided to pilot what this might mean in practice, bringing 15 artists together with four programmers or curators who served as mentors from around the world. In this pilot project, artists or artist pairs were commissioned to explore how this might apply to their practice with either new or pre-existing ideas or works, laying the early foundations for developing new models and ways of working. Each artist or artist pair was connected to a mentor who helped them develop their work throughout.

WHAT IS CONCEPT TOURING?

Concept Touring offers the provocation of how concepts or ideas can tour, where artists do not necessarily have to. It is a methodology that challenges the traditional model of touring where artists and often sets and casts tour around the world, contributing to climate change in ways that are unsustainable in the long-term. In practice, LIFT considers that Concept Touring can take a variety of forms such as: remote working, transference of a performance, interpretation of scores and designs, room for local aspects to appear in an existing production, digital collaborations, hybrid digital-physical collaborations and more. Concept Touring is part of a wider global movement for the performing arts world to think and act in ways that are more ecologically mindful and sustainable.

Through this residency and process facilitated by LIFT, it was evident that Concept Touring is a journey and a **spectrum of engagement**, not a prescriptive model for how artists can think differently about how they might tour their work and how curators and producers might programme it. Rather, Concept Touring is an exciting range of models, still very much in its early stage of development. It is along that continuum where innovation can and is happening.

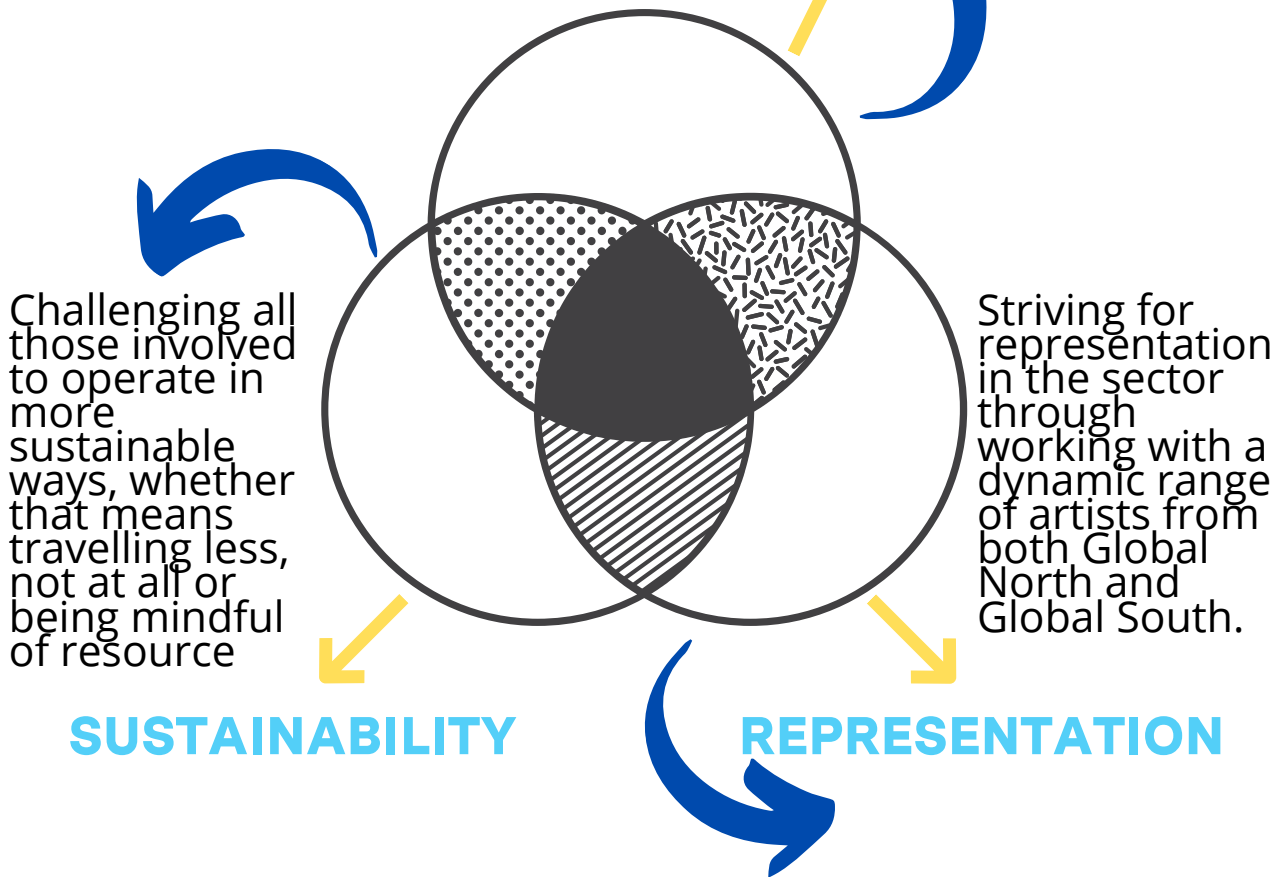


*Concept
Touring is a
whole new
playground
with what
already
existed.*

-Concept Touring artist

Working closely with audiences, artists and communities to co-create the performance experience

CO-CREATION

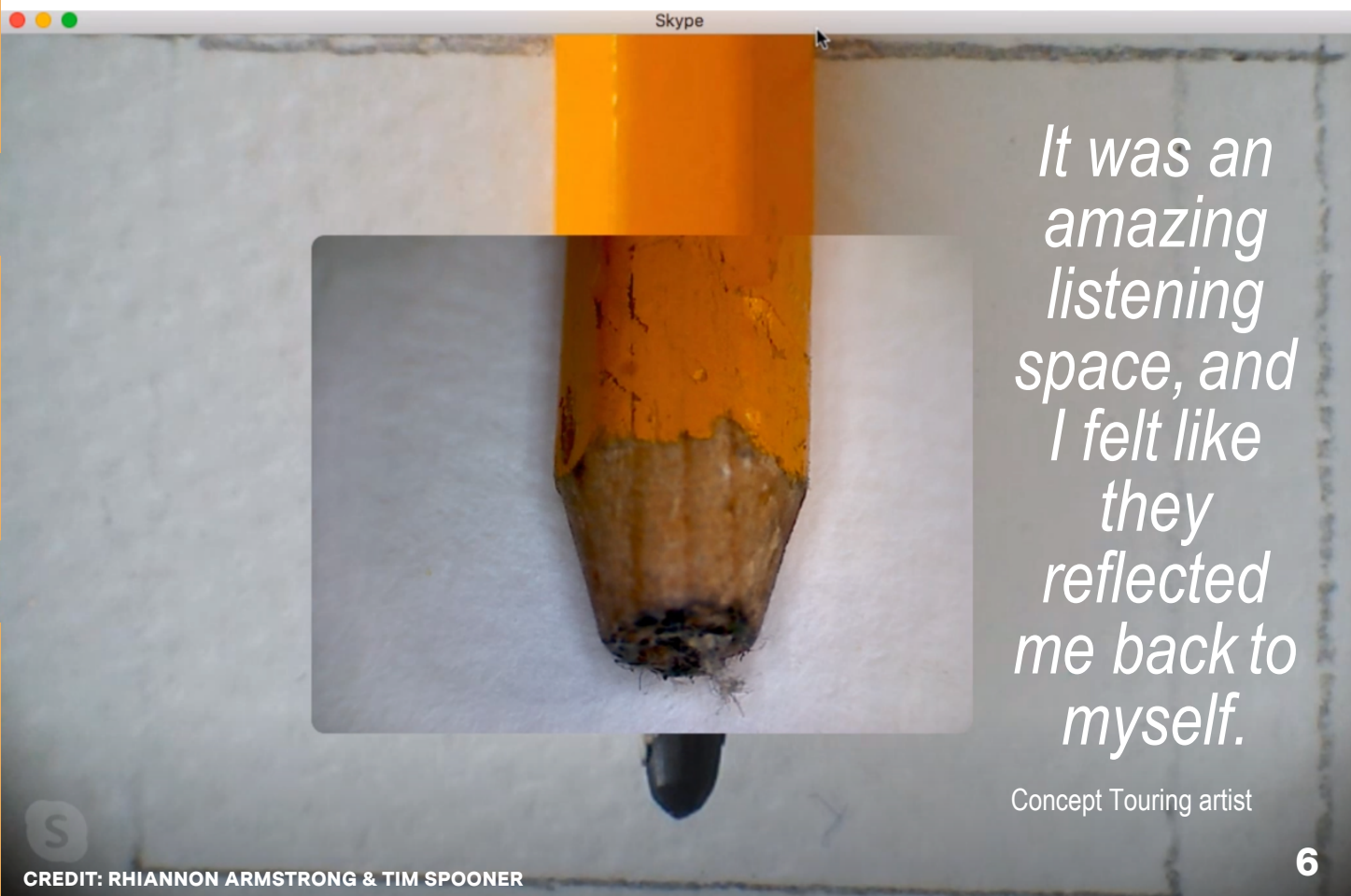


STRUCTURE

The Concept Touring residency pilot took place over the course of four months, April-July 2021. There was a great deal of interest from artists around the world with a total of 294 applications submitted from 48 countries and across the UK. Fifteen artists from Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Scotland, South Africa and USA working on nine projects were chosen based on criteria set initially by LIFT and were invited to take part in a residency that was held online over the course of four months. Artists were shortlisted by LIFT and a group of freelance artist-readers who tour sound, dance and theatre work, with final selections made by LIFT and mentors. Most of the world was still in lockdown with physical movement extremely restricted in many countries, so this was an opportunity for artists to still develop work in a time when a lot of their work and conventional ways of working had been challenged. Artists were given the provocation of how Concept Touring might work for their practice without the expectation of creating anything aside from the development of the idea at the end of the residency.

Artists or artist pairs were given a mentor that was there to offer external support and guidance on the development of their ideas. The pilot began with a one-week intensive followed by check ins and independently-led meetings between artists and mentors. Mentor meetings were responsive to the needs of the artists they were working with, so it was difficult to pinpoint a process that was used universally except for the flexibility of the mentors to what the artists were developing. Artists often sent over progress for mentors to look over before the meetings and often mentors took part or tried out work in progress to then give feedback. The meetings were artist-led and while the initial structure included two meetings, in many cases the engagement extended beyond this, based on a genuine interest in the work and the artists' development. One of the mentors had a framework they used, but mostly it was a bespoke sounding board for artists to have another voice in the room to bounce ideas off in a way that felt non-hierarchical, open and accepting.

There was then a final sharing at the end where artists and mentors came together to reveal their progress throughout the residency. LIFT had challenged the artists to present their progress and identify their next steps for the work - be it a prototype, a rehearsal plan, an idea for a funding application, a pitch to a presenter, a demo or a production-ready project. Artists and mentors agreed that this point of coming together was essential and important that a safe space for them to share was created and fostered by the team at LIFT and others who took part.



It was an amazing listening space, and I felt like they reflected me back to myself.

Concept Touring artist



While many artists still felt their work was in the early stages of development so didn't know exactly who their audiences were for the work or ideas developed, they generally fit into three categories of innovation in the relay between where they're based and where their work would land:

Artist-to-artist In this model, the work was made for artists for the means of collaborating and furthering the relationship or collaboration with other artists. The main focus was on how exchange could be facilitated in new ways with artists in different places, how one artist could transfer their work to another and have these projects meet an audience. Key considerations for this way of working:

- How can genuine connection and exchange be facilitated remotely?
- What are the criteria for collaboration? How can this be fostered in a digital or non-live space?
- What 'casting' needs to take place by the artist and their counterpart?
- How can digital serve as a conduit for other ways of connecting? Are there activities or rituals that can further develop these connections?
- Is this just about the process or is there a product that can come out of this way of working that can be shown to an audience?
- Where does authorship or intellectual property sit in these pieces?
- What is the role of co-creation versus interpreting or working on the ideas of another artist?

Case Study: Գիշեր | *gisher*

Գիշեր | *gisher* is a video for a performance space by Milan-based Armenian artist Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin. At the center of *gisher* are images, that multiply and discompose the action of looking, asking the viewer to orient. There are words, written and told and offered and translated and read out loud. The next iteration of *gisher* will be commissioned by LIFT in the form of a digital residency co-hosted by a local artist where the only travel will be to honour the cultural politic of the importance of being present to build shared relationship and understanding, but the impact and emphasis will be local and London-based. Giorgia and their London co-host will work with 8-10 London-based artists from SWANA (South West Asian/ North Africa) backgrounds held with Giorgia working remotely in the beginning, later travelling to London for three performances of the piece.



Artist-to-Audience In this model, the focus is on a set of conditions created by an artist which are then experienced by an audience, often with the provocation of taking the artist out of the equation in terms of being present in a space. The emphasis here is to think of how the work could be taken on and adapted by another host or artist in another city and how other audiences who have a very different reality or way of being might perceive or be moved by the work. Key points to consider:

- Is it an artist who takes on the implementation of this work? Or can it be done by some other facilitator in a venue in another place? What are the criteria for this person?
- What care needs to be in place from the venue to ensure success?
- How can trust be built that these will be implemented in a way that feels right for the artist?
- Is there a way to monetise this way of working? Can you shift the balance of how these types of work are created and consumed?

Case Study: ZU-UK's Ghost Hunt- *DATUM* (working title)

DATUM is a locative urban game by East London-based ZU-UK that uses binaural sound to transform shopping malls into fantastical spaces. As a post-pandemic game, *DATUM* promotes a safe return to shopping malls encouraging ethical consumption and circular economy, inspired by the Japanese concept of Tsukumogami. Tsukumogami /付喪神 is the name given to a type of yōkai or spirit which can be found in all objects. It's a Shinto belief that everything has a spirit, and the team were interested in unlocking the 'ghosts' that represent the hidden stories of the supply chain. For the Concept Touring residency, the aim was to develop an exceptionally personal and 'live' experience that did not rely on touring performers or international flights. They also wanted to make sure expensive equipment was not a requirement for the experience so that people with older phones would not be excluded from the game. The concept is based on a triadic relationship between players/audiences themselves, as well as the site in which they play. It is a ghost-hunt for malls, and therefore malls play a huge part in the experience, in terms of its architecture, its visitors, its adverts, its sounds and individual shops. First and foremost, this is an audience-to-audience proposition, where each of the 3 players in each team have a defined role and work together throughout the game to locate and report back on the ghost stories they find.



Artist-to-Participant Community in this sense is quite broad but this type of work related more to concepts which involve or engage a group of local non-artists as participants or co-creators. Key points to consider:

- How can a group of participants be gathered around the work and project – who do you need? What do the presenters need to do?
- What's the legacy after the engagement?
- What's the potential for co-creation models as well as participatory models in a concept touring format?
- How are partner organisations or spaces chosen? What are the criteria for engagement in this way of working?

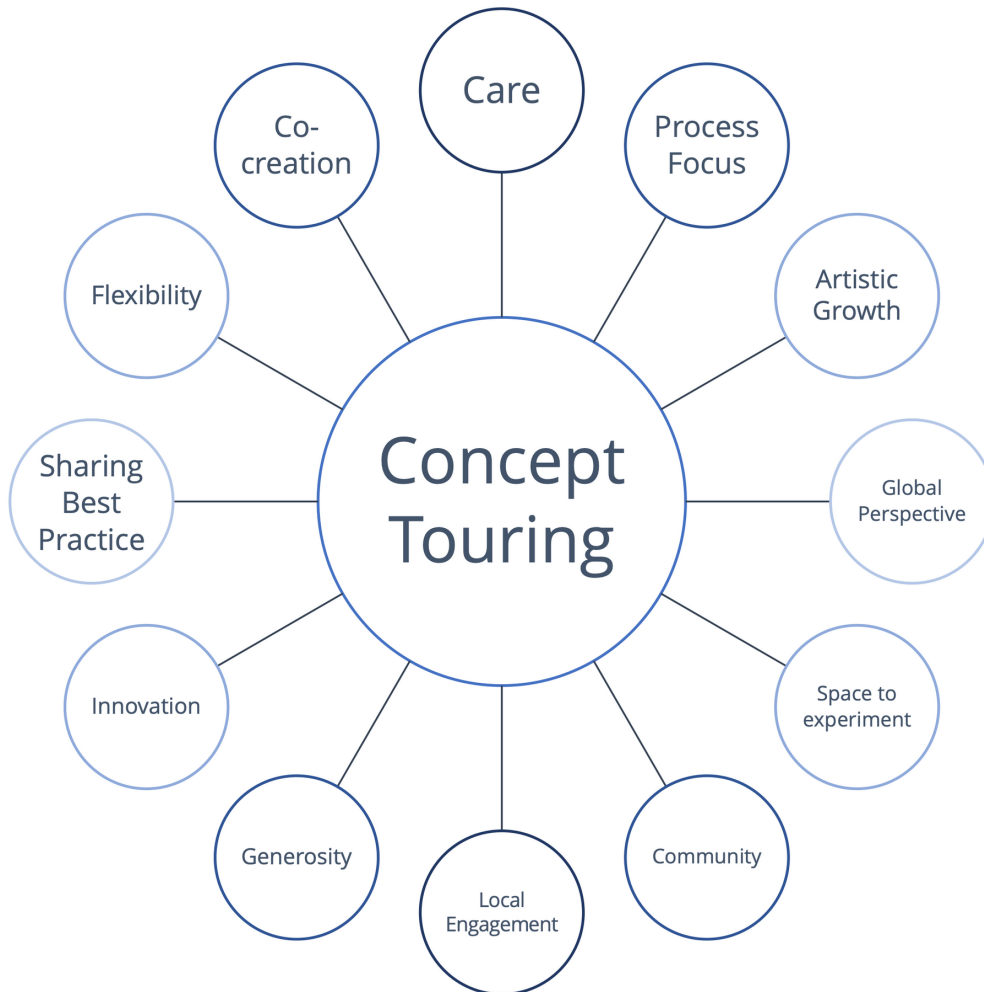
Case Study: Action Hero

As part of their LIFT residency, Bristol, UK-based Action Hero are working on a new project using sound to connect groups of girls all over the world. Re-imagining old technologies as the technology of the future, the project will facilitate communication between girls who would never meet in real life (or even online) to talk about the world they will inherit, using self-built analogue audio equipment. The focus of the residency was on building the audio technology and imagining how it would work. The next steps are to build a prototype and test it with small groups. They are also getting to grips with the limits and possibilities of the technology, understanding how easily it can be built by a non-expert. The ambition is to create a project that uses a self-built space to amplify the voices of girls from every continent, including those for whom digital connectivity is not easily accessible, and facilitate a dialogue between them. There is great potential for this model to work, particularly with participants in remote areas, though because of the added layer of technical expertise, it still needs more residency time and investment to make the project a reality.



LIFT'S BLUEPRINT

What are Concept Touring's key values going forward?



1_Generosity- working with artists in a way that is generous to their ideas and open to their ways of working.

2_Freedom of Experimentation- we allow artists the space to experiment without the pressure of coming up with a piece that can be toured or shown on a larger scale. Without this pressure, we believe innovation will take place.

3_Commitment to Innovation- LIFT commits to taking risks around this work and building on the innovative potential of this way of working.

4_Sharing of Best Practice- Concept Touring provides a rare space for artists to share ideas and best practice at an early stage which is not as common in other residencies.

5_Focus on Process- in Concept Touring, the process of creating is just as valuable as the outputs from the artists. By allowing space and time to focus on creative process, these methodologies and different ways of working will emerge and solidify.

6_ Learning and sharing- we acknowledge that we are initiating new conversations and ways of working but we are part of a wider global movement and are committed to learning and sharing what we know openly with the sector and beyond.

7_Shifting Success- as Concept Touring is so process oriented, how can we shift the way we think about what a successful piece or project is?

8_Provocation of Constraint- the limitations imposed by Concept Touring are viewed as a means of creative constraint, meant to further ignite the creative process and serve as a proactive provocation.

9_Flexibility- this way of working requires an open, bespoke way of connecting and relating that is key to the approach.

10_Co-creation- Concept Touring opens up pathways for new, innovative ways of co-creating with artists, audiences and communities in different cities around the world. How can this be embraced as a model for challenging artists creating in isolation and open up this as a new normal for the creative process?



OUR PRINCIPLES

LIFT believes...

1_Holding space for experimenting and innovating together.

2_Bringing divergent minds together from across sectors and disciplines.

3_Embracing failure and things not working as learning opportunities.

4_Investing in how artists can use Concept Touring as a **tool for innovation**.

5_Embracing process over product.

6_Challenging neo-liberal notions of production and consumption in the creative industries- prioritising ideas and exchange over people and product.

7_Celebrating Concept Touring as the potential for increased impact through **advocating for more resources** to be allocated to this in the wider sector.

8_Using tech as a conduit for connection and innovation, not as a replacement for the live experience.

9_Working in a **bespoke way** depending on the needs of artists and venues equally- aiming to **equalise power dynamics** between artists and organisations.

10_Practicing discernment with travel for equity, no travel might not work for everyone.

11_Placing emphasis on reflection as a key element of creation.

12_Distinguishing between a **research and development** phase in the creative process.

13_Practicing in a way that **acknowledges ecological crisis**- being a part of the solution.

14_Building international networks sustainably- engaging with the disparity between the global north and global south in an intentional way.

15_Embodying the importance of the local on an international stage.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

What set this residency apart?

- **Time-** this residency allowed artists the space to explore ideas in their early infancy whereas most residencies require artists to have already tested or more fully formulated their ideas.
- **Connection-** this residency provided a key point of connection for many during the difficult days of the pandemic and lockdowns around the world. It was a supportive space where artists could come together, share ideas and be together in a time when the world was so separate.
- **Expectation-** Artists in this residency did not feel the same pressure they often feel in other residencies or commissions to have a 'product' at the end. In this Concept Touring pilot, they had the space to explore and play with ideas without feeling like they were pitching it at the end.
- **Research-** often in other residencies, the space is used for both research and development which means an actual testing of ideas. In this model, the focus was on research and allowing more time and space for that aspect.
- **Power-** while artists are what drive arts organisations and venues, it is still larger institutions who hold the majority of the power. In the Concept Touring pilot, the power dynamic shifted and was placed in the hands of artists. It was up to the artists to inform LIFT and hopefully eventually the wider sector what they need to make it more equitable and sustainable. In this approach, structures are challenged which needs to be embraced by organisations and venues as well.
- **Process-** by focusing on research and what the artists need, there is an increased emphasis on the creative process, not just on the creative product that comes from it.
- **Solution orientation-** as the performing arts world was severely impacted by the global pandemic, there was an element of grief for many in the art world, mourning what was lost during that time. The Concept Touring programme offered a way to channel that grief into action, uncovering the opportunities from a time of global change.
- **Bespoke-** Working outside of the traditional touring model, there is the potential for the work to be more bespoke based on the needs of the artist, the venue and the nature of the work.

POTENTIAL FOR THIS WORK

Why is this work important right now?

The sector is in a state of flux. Even before the impact of the pandemic on touring, ticket sales and venues, there was an immense need for the sector to do things differently, especially as it relates to contributing to a more sustainable way of working.

By encapsulating the term, Concept Touring, LIFT put a name to a way of working that has been happening in places around the globe. Particularly in a time when artists felt at a massive disadvantage in the way that Covid response funds were distributed and were arguably the most affected by the lockdowns imposed by the pandemic, this way of working allowed more agency to artists to pave their own way forward.

Concept Touring is a new string to the bow in the way the sector already operates, rather than a replacement for touring or live performance. To develop that further, more organisations need to take it on board and more training and development needs to be put in place for it to be accepted by the wider creative industries on a broader scale.

Concept Touring challenges the sector to think about how these new models can be a space of innovation where the potential impact of creativity and the arts be magnified with great potential for other sectors to be involved, expanding where funding comes from and how innovation takes place.



IMPACT ON ARTISTS AND MENTORS

I feel like this process opened up a new door inside of my work.

-Concept Touring artist

For many artists involved, this process was a breath of fresh air during a difficult time of global uncertainty and change. The residency not only opened up a new way of working but offered a supportive space of connection when the world was in lockdown and they were unable to travel as they once did. The impact of the pandemic on artist's livelihoods has been significant so this pilot offered artists the space to get back into the process of making, albeit with a different lens.

It was also an opportunity, particularly for many of the artist pairs, to build on pre-existing connections. The Concept Touring programme enhanced many international relationships and, in some instances, sparked new collaborations that will remain ongoing. Even for those who worked on their own for this project, the exchange with other artists benefitted their practice by hearing more intimately what other artists are doing and learning more about their process, expanding their thinking about their own work. For some artists who are more reluctant to allow their work to travel without them, the connections with artists and mentors can be a way to ease and work through some of those concerns in a constructive, supportive way.

The artist-mentor relationship was also extremely valuable for all artists and mentors involved. It is rare to have a space of genuine exchange and feedback on work in early stages of development where it does not feel like a pitch or weighted in some way towards programming the work in the future. While that may be something that comes out of this project longer term, none of the artists felt like it was a pitching exercise. They could be authentic in their space of sharing and exchange with their mentors.

For mentors, it was also an important, reflective space that allowed them to work with artists in different ways. They found it to be an enriching experience that benefitted their practice moving forward. It also helped them to build new or strengthen pre-existing connections between artists they already knew and with LIFT too.

The projects developed were a return to human connection that was missing, encouraging people to return to forms of intimacy. It was the right programme that came at the right time.

-Concept Touring mentor



*Some people need to write, talk, sit in
silence, make something, etc- there was space for all
of that here which is quite rare.*

-Concept Touring artist

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1_This way of working in many cases will require **more time and funding** to be successful, at least in the early stages of Concept Touring a piece. Often the misconception with digital or remote collaboration is that it is more cost effective. But not travelling means putting resources into building expertise and ownership over a project on the part of local artists and organisers who will receive and deliver the work. For Concept Touring to really take off, there needs to be more time and support for artists to adequately tour their pieces and ideas. Particularly because the model has so many different ways of working depending on the artists involved, they need the flexibility and time for these concepts to be fully realised.

2_Connected to this, there needs to be **more care for communities and artists** working in these spaces, especially if artists do not travel. The artists will need more care and those who are taking on the work will need more resource put into ensuring the work is properly taken on and implemented in a way that does justice to the work. However, as there is more labour required, there is also the potential for greater social impact, demanding more tools to measure that change and impact on communities.

3_As there will need to be more time and care for artists and communities, there also needs to be the understanding that a **basic level of trust** needs to be developed for another artist or collective to take on a piece where its creator does not travel. How that trust is developed is dependent on that relationship and how their work has been developed so will be bespoke to that piece, but it needs to be carefully considered.

4_Concept Touring in the sense of artists **not travelling at all might not work for all artists**, particularly in the Global South. Artists in many countries rely on touring to sustain them financially throughout the year and if Concept Touring takes off, the sector needs to ensure there is equity of opportunity for artists in all these different places. Many who live and work in the West said they would happily not travel if it meant that artists from other countries who perhaps need these opportunities more could travel to share their work. So, in some instances artists can travel, but might mean that they rethink how other aspects of their work can be more locally sourced and integrated.

It gave us time to think about what is interesting or important about distance? What is the emotional power behind that?

-Concept Touring artist

5_Building on that, there **still needs to be some space for travel** somewhere in the nexus of Concept Touring. Coming together in a physical space is important for building connections and networks that lead to further projects and opportunities as well as deepening the ways that artists feel inspired and whole. There is also a certain level of control that artists lose if their work is toured without them. This may be about travelling less and being more intentional about when travel happens but eliminating it altogether felt difficult to grasp for many artists.

6_Concept Touring will **require technological innovations** that are not currently being applied in the performing arts or touring space. Therefore, more investment needs to be made for the potential of Concept Touring to be realised. This does not mean that all of the work needs to exist in a digital space. All of the projects we worked on were intended for audiences to experience physically and in person. Because of the increasing reliance on technology for connection and collaboration in the creative industries, there is potential for technological innovation happening in other sectors to help to further develop this form.

7_The Concept Touring project proved there is no one-size fits all for artists to make this type of work, rather a **spectrum of models** that still need further development. For example, some artists did not see the need to be present at all in how their work was performed or implemented and were excited about how others might adapt and take on the work. Others were quite hesitant about how their absence might affect how the work was adapted for a new context and sought alternatives such as them travelling to that venue with other things such as set or others who might take part in the show coming from that place.

8_The project provided an integral space for sharing and connection but for longer impact, there needs to be **ways to connect with other sectors**, beyond the creative industries, which can sometimes serve as an echo chamber. This way of working can also shift the way other art forms or even other sectors think about their working models, so connecting with them in future iterations could have a much broader impact. Artists and arts organisations may not genuinely be the ones who have the best solutions to these issues so inviting other sectors into the room could help further the ideas in new ways.

9_Concept Touring has the potential to be a space for resistance, **a space of change and activism** where things are done differently. Many of the artists that tour or travel rely on this as their main source of income, even if it is not aligned with the values they uphold in connection with sustainability and climate change. Developing new forms of making and consuming can also be places of activism where arts organisations, artists and venues take a stand against outdated systems and ways of working.

10_If an artist lets their work go to a different place where other artists or facilitators take on showing the work, there is also a **major reputational risk** that those artists who created the work need to take on. Furthermore, they are not there to foster new relationships in those spaces so there is the potential of losing out on the networking opportunities associated with touring as well. Hence, new systems and ways of working need to be put in place where artists feel safe to let their work go and there are still ways for them to build relationships as part of their work being shown in another place without them there.

11_There is a **certain level of privilege** in saying that an artist or programmer/curator won't travel as many are not in a place in their careers to give up that crucial aspect of being an artist, especially in the global south. There is an opportunity in this process to explore and attempt to equalise that privilege but it needs to be very carefully understood and humbly addressed to ensure a diverse range of voices feel heard.

12_Cultural exchange is an important part of how artists get **inspiration** for their work and for connecting to one another and opportunities. It is important to think about how that exchange can still be fostered if less travel is involved. Touring of the work also changes the work in the way it is taken on in new environments- the work often changes and transforms as a part of that- so how can that still be factored in as a part of the exchange process?

13_The nature of Concept Touring also allows **more space to explore how work might be adapted for non-arts environments**. The work not only requires connections with other sectors for it to continue to develop but there is also potential for the model to be a provocation for the value of art and creativity beyond the traditional structures of performance of artists in venues.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

LIFT is in the process of commissioning two of the projects from the first residency, mapping out how the Concept Touring blueprint might be implemented more widely, with hopes to commission further projects as they become more fully developed. The organisation is imagining new ways of working with artists, other organisations and even other sectors to continue to build upon the blueprint created from this pilot. At the moment, it is a blueprint which means that it will shift and evolve with further testing and trialling with the hope of one day becoming a well-tested methodology. It will have an even greater impact on artists' practices who see even more potential in Concept Touring, on contributing less and less to climate change and investing more and more in the Global South, while working in more meaningful ways with the places, space and people around us we call community.

Now that the foundation for Concept Touring has been laid, built upon from already-existing methodologies, LIFT is at an exciting starting point for the organisation as well as for more of the sector to join the movement. There is great opportunity in this moment as the sector transitions away from the pandemic, with climate change and global social issues looming, to imagine new formats and ways of working. LIFT is embarking on an organisational shift, treading in new and potentially profound territory and the organisation hopes the sector will join them. Some questions for the sector:

1_How can we work collectively to continue to explore many of these ideas and ways of working?

2_How can we build on this body of knowledge in an international space to gain the understanding for this to be more commonplace?

3_Can we let go of ways of working that are not sustainable in favour of new and innovative methods?

4_How can these new models like Concept Touring be a mechanism not only for innovation but for activism and aligning the creative industries more authentically with its values?

Creativity flourishes within limitation and pioneers in difficult times.

-Concept Touring artist

Concept Touring artists

Dickie Beau (London)

Erin Brubacher & Peter McMaster (Toronto & Glasgow)

Gemma Paintin & James Stenhouse – Action Hero (Bristol)

Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin (Milan)

Maiko Yamamoto (Vancouver)

Namatshego Khutsoane & Sacha Yanow (Johannesburg & New York)

Omar Elerian & Nassim Soleimanpour (London & Berlin)

Persis Jadé Maravala & Jorge Lopes Ramos (London & Rio de Janeiro)

Rhiannon Armstrong & Tim Spooner (London)

Concept Touring mentors

Carla Nobre Sousa, Co-Director, Alkantara (Lisbon)

Low Kee Hong, Director (Theatre), West Kowloon Cultural District (Hong Kong)

Kopano Maroga, Dramaturge, Vooruit (Ghent)

LJ Findlay-Walsh, Artistic Director, Take Me Somewhere (Glasgow)

Concept Touring project inception and dramaturgy **Kris Nelson** (Artistic Director/CEO, LIFT), project delivery by **Camila Guitérrez Aguilera** (Assistant Producer)

About this report

This evaluation was led by 21 Artists Founder, Dr Meg Peterson, with the provocation to look at two things: how LIFT conceived and delivered the online residency and commissioning programme and to offer insights on the idea of concept touring itself. What is it? What methodologies did we uncover? What potential is there for LIFT to develop Concept Touring more as a set of tools and practices to share with other artists and peers in the future? The goal is to share the results with industry colleagues in hopes that these insights can spark something in your practice and propel new ways of thinking and collaborating. Questions or reflections are very welcome. All interview quotes have been anonymised to ensure honesty and openness from artists interviewed.

I am full of so much gratitude for this whole experience -- it was awesome. Thank you so much for being such a beacon during this time. It has been amazing to be a part of this residency, but I've also been so inspired with all the other initiatives that LIFT has on the burner right now -- it feels very critical to have these moving forward/through conversations, and where I feel like that's been hard to have in my own community, it has been so invigorating to have had the opportunity to start a new project in this way. Thank you, from my heart, truly.

-Concept Touring Artist

Special thanks to all the inspiring Concept Touring artists and mentors who generously gave their time for this research.

Report written by Dr Meg Peterson, 21 Artists

About 21 Artists

21 Artists is a values-driven company facilitating, hosting, documenting and evaluating art and social change on an international scale. In addition to offering creative approaches to social impact evaluation, community consultation and creative business development, 21 Artists runs place-based arts interventions and research projects in collaboration with local communities and organisations. Recent projects have worked with organisations around the UK such as Battersea Arts Centre, Contact and LIFT as well as internationally in the US, Chile, Uganda, Morocco, Ghana, and Brazil. Find out more at twentyoneartists.com.

About LIFT

LIFT is London's international biennial festival of theatre. LIFT stands for radical empowerment and inclusion. They promote the power and urgency of international perspectives, understanding that difference makes us stronger. LIFT is where artists and audiences meet for necessary conversations and essential cultural experiences. The theatre we offer audiences is compelling, meaningful, provocative, excellent, topical, singular. They advance contemporary thought, introduce new forms and ideas and offer new ways of experiencing art. Every two years, LIFT presents a festival full of daring and relevant culture, international perspectives and unforgettable theatre. LIFT is the essential link between leading international artists and London and the UK. They connect British makers abroad. They engage and create communities around ideas and projects connecting leading artists to locals and together to make incredible art happen. Get in touch via info@liftfestival.com and find out more at liftfestival.com.

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