

**KUNSTHALLE  
MANNHEIM**



# **URBAN NATURE**

**BY RIMINI PROTOKOLL  
(HAUG / HUBER / KAEGI / WETZEL)**

**15/07 – 16/10/22**





# CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	3
THE SEVEN EXPERTS OF THE EVERYDAY ....	6
ENRIC.....	6
MIGUEL .....	9
SIHAM .....	10
CALAMANDA .....	12
LEYLA.....	15
CHRISTIAN .....	19
CAMILA.....	20
RIMINI PROTOKOLL .....	22

# FOREWORD

## THE CITY IN THE MUSEUM AND THE MUSEUM AS STAGE

With “Urban Nature” the artists Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzl, known for many years under the label Rimini Protokoll, turn the museum into a stage. On this stage they show us, in their biggest exhibition to date, a city composed of seven settings in which one person respectively shares their special perspective on the urban space with us. While we wander through this labyrinth, we get to know the seven protagonists. However, we don't really meet them on location, instead we find ourselves in situations in which we slip into their role. We are guided through a technical setup composed of screens, tablets, light sources and countless audio tracks synchronized with each other down to the last millisecond.

In the joint project between the Kunsthalle Mannheim and the Nationaltheater Mannheim, an image of the city is composed from the perspective of a number of its vastly different inhabitants. We meet a financial advisor, who works exclusively for clients with investment portfolios of more than two million euros, a homeless person in search of somewhere to sleep and a prison officer who has a side job as an undertaker. In addition, a twelve year old presents her view of the city, a smart city investor and an urbanist report on the advantages of city life as well as the common use of property and we meet a former graphic artist who has given up her profession in favor of growing cannabis. It is precisely the contrasting experiences of these protagonists, who all live and work in Barcelona, where the first version of “Urban Nature” was staged in 2021, that combine to produce a whole that is greater than its parts.

Every real city, whether Mannheim or Barcelona, consists of numerous individuals which, like a collective body, combine to form a whole – sometimes harmonious, sometimes with clearly perceptible dissonances.

Throughout the course of the exhibition, the Kunsthalle and the Nationaltheater will be hosting the joint program “Stadtzimmer” (City Room), which will provide the inhabitants of Mannheim with a stage to present their personal views, experiences and hopes for their city.



The artists of Rimini Protokoll are no strangers to Mannheim. In 2013 they presented their vision of Schiller's "Wallenstein" on the stage of the Nationaltheater at the 13th International Schiller Festival. The performance was invited to the renowned Theater-treffen in Berlin, which contributed to Rimini Protokoll's rise to become one of today's most internationally sought-after artists' collectives. They have their origins in the theater. Instead of professional actors, they almost always work with "experts of the everyday" in their stage performances – in other words people that have special knowledge, special experiences or capabilities in a specific area which they share with the audience. Thus Rimini Protokoll succeeds, in a striking fashion, in bringing reality into the theater and sharpening our vision for the theater of the everyday. In many of their projects the border between those who play with their roles and those that look on becomes blurred. The audience itself is often set in motion. Therefore, it is only logical that the latest work from Rimini Protokoll, for which they continue their collaboration with the scenographer Dominic Huber, should be shown in a museum and that the audience have to move through the space in order to unlock the content of "Urban Nature".

**Johan Holten**  
**Director**  
**Kunsthalle Mannheim**

**Christian Holtzhauer**  
**Artistic director drama department**  
**Nationaltheater Mannheim**

# THE SEVEN EXPERTS OF THE EVERYDAY

**”IN A CITY WE SHARE NOT ONLY WALLS, BUT MUCH MORE. THE CITY IS NOT JUST A MARKET BUT A COMMON PLACE TO SHARE AND INTERACT WITH MANY OTHER PEOPLE.”**

Enric, environmental and economic historian

We enter a square in the middle of the city with a fountain and a citrus tree. A narrow alley with small shops borders the square. The fountain provides refreshment. We sit on a park bench and linger, with a view of the fountain.

Enric Tello, an elderly man wearing a hat, approaches us. He is the first protagonist that we get to know in “Urban Nature” and who introduces us to the theme of the city as a social space. Tello is an expert for life in the urban space. He wasn’t just born here and lives in the city, he also works as a professor for environmental and economic history at the university. As a child he dreamed of a life in the countryside. The city appeared to him to be made for cars, not for people. However, as an adult in his mid-sixties, he is of the opposite opinion as a scientist and private person. For him the city is the perfect model for living. He considers it disastrous that more and more people are moving to the suburbs.



The desire for a life in the countryside results in the incorporation of further settlements, for which more and more ground is sealed. Their residents are generally reliant on cars for the daily journey to work. They have their own gardens and a high water and energy consumption. In contrast, in the city people live together in far less space. Here critical resources such as water, living space, infrastructure and possessions are shared. Here, at a square like this one beside the fountain, one can come together and experience what Tello describes as a philosophy of urban living: sharing.





**“WE CALL CITIES ‘SANDBOXES’ BECAUSE THEY ARE A TEST SPACE – A SPACE TO TEST INNOVATIONS THAT WILL CHANGE THE REALITY OF THE CITY AND THEREFORE OUR FUTURE SOCIETY.”**

Miguel, lobbyist for courier services

*In the bar The Last Mile* we participate, as a group of the city’s decision makers, in a meeting. We enter under dim lighting and sit on bar stools along the bar.

Miguel, who we have arranged to meet, is expecting us behind the bar. He initially worked as a lawyer. Now, in his mid-30s, he has dedicated himself to his passion as a lobbyist for courier services and tech companies. He is convinced that smartphones, online platforms and algorithms improve life in the city for everyone. His central example here are the food delivery services such as *Gorillas* or *Lieferando*, which bring together restaurants and delivery partners via an online platform for a temporary contract. Miguel tries to convince us of the advantages of the so-called *Gig Economy*. He illustrates his statements with play figures, which he mixes like a barkeeper and arranges on a tray according to his ideas. According to him, this form of employment, above all, provides migrant workers with a low-threshold entry in to the city’s labor market. However, Miguel does not mention with one word the precarious employment conditions of the delivery riders, who, in expectation of temporary contracts, are on standby in all weathers. As a tech entrepreneur, Miguel’s philosophy is: Everyone should have access to everything in the city. Food delivery services are symbolic of this attitude for him. He sees the changes they have brought about to the city’s economic structure as exclusively positive, and also hopes to convince us of this assessment.

**“MY FUTURE – I HOPE TO STUDY AND BE WELL-OFF,  
NOT MORE. I DON’T WANT A LOT OF THINGS.  
I WANT BASIC THINGS.”**

Siham, a young woman in search of work

Next to a bar is the entrance to a shelter for homeless people. We enter the central room in the shelter. It is filled with close rows of bunk beds. A gentle snoring can be heard from some of the beds. Towels, clothes and other possessions are hung over the bed-frames. There is a subtle note of perfume in the air. The young woman who is showing us this place is called Siham. She left her home in Morocco in the direction of Melilla at the age of twelve in search of freedom. She finally arrived in the city via the Spanish enclave, where she initially found refuge in the shelter for homeless people. However she didn’t want to stay here long. She now mainly sleeps on the street.



We accompany her in her search for a suitable place to sleep for the night. Siham carries all her possessions with her in a shopping bag. She is not only conscious of the social inequalities in the urban fabric, she also knows what it means to have nothing or almost nothing. She is an expert for surviving in the metropolis. Her strategy is to be as invisible as possible and not to stand out. She attempts to appear as a girl like any other, not a young woman living on the street. For Siham, whose name means arrow, the city is above all a place where she dreams of a better future. She tells us about her dream of becoming an air stewardess and living in a house with a garden. Alluding to the meaning of her forename, she asks us whether her dream will come true: Will the arrow point upwards and she becomes an air stewardess, or will she have to work in a bar for low pay, as she did once in the past?



**“I ALWAYS LIKED TO HAVE LEADERSHIP, INFLUENCE AND POWER. AND POWER IS TIED TO MONEY, ISN'T IT? IN POWER YOU LOOK AT THE CITY FROM A BIRD'S EYE PERSPECTIVE.”**

Calamanda, financial adviser

High above the city streets we enter a pleasantly air-conditioned office. Through the room's glass façade we have an impressive view of the city. We enjoy the view and take a seat at a generous conference table.

In this luxurious office we are scheduled to meet the financial adviser Calamanda. She works for a private bank and takes care of customers who want to invest large sums of money. Only people who are prepared to invest at least two million euros are accepted into this elite circle. Generally it is about property investments. Calamanda is an expert at sustaining and increasing wealth. She advises her clients to invest in *Smart Cities*. She doesn't think much of Bitcoins. Investments in industries that work on various aspects of the city of the future are profitable.

For Calamanda being a banker means living on the sunny side of life. For her money, power and influence are closely connected. From the twelfth story she looks down on the city and observes the people moving around it. The bird's eye view mirrors her economic and social capital. The elegant-sportily dressed woman mainly moves in her own circles, in her glamorous bubble within the city. She avoids public transport. She likes to wind down after work on the tennis court – faithful to her motto “You don't just need to know how to play, but also how to win.”





## **“I WONDER, WHY HAVE THE GROWN-UPS CREATED A CITY THAT IS TOO DANGEROUS FOR THEIR OWN KIDS TO WALK ALONE?”**

Leyla, a young resident of the city

We walk through the streets of the city and take a seat on pedestals with a view of a row of apartment blocks. Individual buildings in the city scene attract our attention.

Here, in the middle of the city, we meet Leyla. She is around twelve years old and lives with her parents in the Raval quarter in the old town of Barcelona. Around half of the people living in El Raval have a migration background. At Leyla's school pupils from around 40 nations are taught. She takes us through the city and tells us that her parents constantly warn her not to walk around the city on her own.

The parents' warning raises the question for Leyla what exactly it is that is dangerous about the city: Is it the city itself, or is it the people that live in it, which Leyla so likes to watch? There are rules for our living together that are designed to provide safety. Leyla thinks about whether these rules can really protect one from dangers, or whether it is not the people who make precisely these rules that represent a greater threat. With a view to the origin, the social and economic position of its inhabitants, Leyla asks how much diversity the fabric of the city can cope with, and whether an excessive uniformity represents a danger. She is critical of the continual growth of the city – along with the fact that the city primarily appears to be made for rich people who spend their time in bars. Wouldn't it be better if the city's inhabitants mixed more, rather than always remaining in their bubbles?







Oh, ¡hay una monedat

Oh - there's a coin!





**“GETTING INTO PRISON ISN’T EASY.  
OTHERWISE PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREET WOULD SAY:  
‘LET’S GO TO JAIL FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS’.”**

Christian, prison officer

In the prison *Quatre Camins* we enter a workshop together with other inmates. Sitting at workbenches we assemble electronic components for air conditioners under contract from external companies. For this purpose there are plastic containers on our tables with individual parts to be sorted and then assembled. During our work we are overseen by Christian, alias Don Christian, who works as a prison officer and also has a second job as an undertaker. As he explains to us in his office, the inmates receive payment for their work. This is credited directly to an account from which they can transfer money to people outside the prison, but not to other inmates. This is designed to prevent the payment of protection money or the purchase of drugs in prison. The digital transactions enable payment flows to be monitored, and thus the control of the inmates. At the same time inmates can purchase everyday necessities in the prison using a chip which is connected to their respective account. In Christian’s eyes the prison is an economic subsystem, a city within the city. Life in prison is better than a life on the street. In prison one can take up legal employment and thus participate in the urban economy – albeit severely restricted and invisible to outsiders.

## **“NOW I’M IN CONTROL OF MY TIME, OF MY LIFE. ON THE OTHER HAND, I’M IN A RISKY SITUATION.”**

Camila, graphic designer

We are invited into a living room and take a seat on the sofa, in armchairs or chairs in the dining area. The room is comfortably furnished. The play carpet on the floor with its streets and houses can be found in almost every child’s bedroom and awakens a feeling of intimacy.

Our host welcomes us wearing a wig and sunglasses. She doesn’t want to be recognized and introduces herself as Camila.

She worked as a graphic designer for ten years for diverse companies in the advertising industry, without finding fulfilment in her job. The poor payment and continual overtime contributed to her dissatisfaction. Now as the single mother of a five year old son she has decided for an alternative: She cultivates a small cannabis plantation directly next to her living room behind a second wall and earns her living through the sale of marihuana. Thanks to her alternative living model she has more time for her child, while on the plantation in her apartment the sensitive cannabis plants grow under special lamps in a well-heated room. From time to time her parents help out and water the plants. Friends help with the harvesting.

Camila sells her crop to marihuana associations that sell it to their members. The payment is booked as a membership fee and therefore is not directly connected to the purchase of drugs. Ideally, thanks to this legal grey area, Camila can sell around two kilos of marihuana every three months and thus secure her livelihood and that of her son – fully aware that she could end up in prison at any time as a result of her activities.



# RIMINI PROTOKOLL BEYOND THE EDGE OF THE STAGE

Anja Heitzer

They bring elderly people, Vietnam war veterans or policemen onto the stage, re-enact a complete parliamentary debate or transform a truck into a glass auditorium. The author-director team Rimini Protokoll, composed of Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzl, have decisively shaped contemporary theatre with their innovative stagings, content and formats.

The collective leave the limited space of the stage behind them, create sites of irritation and include the audience as active protagonists. With creativity and curiosity they develop interdisciplinary exhibition concepts and performances which are as much at home in the theatre as they are in the museum.

A special feature of their projects is the work with non-professional actors who report on their own lived reality from the stage. The spectrum ranges from long-distance truck drivers and intelligence service operatives to call center workers. In contrast to the theatrical term of the lay actor, Rimini Protokoll have coined the term experts for their unusual ensemble, referring to people who have abilities and knowledge which they draw from their own reality. However, it is not primarily about everyday anecdotes or private narratives. Instead, these stories contain highly political, societal and socially critical questions. Within the context of the documentary staging "Wallenstein", realized at the Nationaltheater Mannheim in 2005, a range of different people came together on the stage; a local politician, who was running for the office of mayor in Mannheim and who was the victim of an internal party intrigue, an astrologer who read the horoscopes of the participants or the owner of an agency for affairs who reported on her work.

Instead of simply reproducing the characters from the classic drama, the dominant motifs such as faith and superstition or love and deception were taken up and people presented who can identify with them.

The concept of the experts of the everyday was tested here for the first time in a comprehensive form on the basis of the text of a drama. However, the majority of their works are produced without any reference to a classic script. The texts grow out of long discussions and in close cooperation with the participants. They represent a completely unique text genre which combines the reportive and the poetic. The majority of the experts' narratives are in the form of a monologue and give the impression of a putative reality. The boundary between performance and reality becomes blurred.

Reality flows into the performance on the stage, and simultaneously the theatre penetrates our environment. In everyday life we also slip into different roles, set ourselves in scene or take our place in the stands. Political or economic meetings in particular – whether analog or digital – follow a precise dramaturgy and are held in a clearly defined setting. One of the most elaborate of the collective's stagings was the project realized in 2009 in which they asked shareholders of the Daimler AG to surrender their invitations to the annual general meeting in order to allow members of a theater audience to attend. Thus the meeting was spontaneously transformed into a performative readymade whose ensemble consisted of circa 8,000 shareholders and board members.

Rimini Protokoll are interested in the hidden structures that hold our society together. This includes the urban space as both theme and performance site. They guide pedestrians through metropolises on interactive *Audio Walks*, stage interventions in public institutions or transform airports and major construction sites into venues. Their successful format "100% City" employs a statistical chain reaction to bring together 100 people onto the stage as a representative sample. They give urban society a face, instead of just turning it into a theme.

For years Rimini Protokoll has declared the active involvement of the audience as one of its goals. In the project “Situation Rooms” realized in 2013, they employed the interactive format of the Video Walks for the first time. Equipped with tablets and headphones, the participants are guided through a trail and in the process slip into the role of different people whose biographies are shaped by weapons. They are not just invited to watch the experts, but also immerse themselves in their lived reality – from child soldier to arms manufacturer. The audience becomes a part of the performance, observes and is observed, and experiences the close intermeshing of the individual stories in a direct fashion.

For “Urban Nature” they have developed the format of the interactive trail even further. The immersive exhibition project has been produced in cooperation with the Nationaltheater Mannheim and thus continues the cooperation begun in 2005 with “Wallenstein”. The installation is integrated into the Kunsthalle’s exhibition rooms, and combines different urban spaces to form a walk-in stage set. In “Urban Nature” the participants get to meet seven specialists for life in the city, walking through a heterogeneous set which leads from a shelter for homeless people to the top story of a tower block. Rimini Protokoll take us into a parallel world which appears strangely similar to our own reality and at the same time far removed. We are repeatedly invited to adopt different perspectives, and thus alter our view of our own city and its inhabitants.

Founded in 2000 by Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzel, Rimini Protokoll has realized internationally successful projects in different constellations for over 20 years. They have received numerous prizes for their theatre performances, exhibition concepts and audio plays. In 2007 they won the Mülheim Dramatist Award, the most important prize for contemporary theatre productions, have been invited to the Theatertreffen in Berlin on numerous occasions, and in addition to the European Theater Prize have also won the Silver Lion at the Venice Theater Biennial.



The collective's exhibition projects have already been held at numerous institutes worldwide, for example the Royal Academy of Arts London, the Brooklyn Museum New York, the Kunsthaus Zürich or the Heidelberger Kunstverein. With "Urban Nature" Rimini Protokoll continues its collaboration with the scenographer Dominic Huber which began in 2008.

Together they have realized numerous performances including "World Climate Change Conference", "Society under Construction (State 2)", or the interactive multiplayer installation "Situation Rooms". The focus of his work is the extension and manipulation of spaces and situations and the active involvement of the observers. In addition to his work with Rimini Protokoll he also realizes his own projects in theaters, museums or public spaces.





## **THE EXHIBITION PROJECT HAS BEEN REALIZED BY AND WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF:**

### **Rimini Protokoll:**

Concept, text and direction: **Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi, Daniel Wetzel**  
With the assistance of: **Andrea Bel, Martín García Guirado, Julla Kroner, Estela Santos, Lotta Schäfer, Polina Solotowizki, Georgina Surià, Carolina Vouga**  
Concept and scenography: **Dominic Huber**  
In collaboration with: **Cristina Todorova**  
Scenography assistance and furniture: **Laura Galofré**  
With the assistance of: **Júlia Bauer, Jessica Fabritius, Georgina Marquès, Mireia Oltra, Marco Pinheiro**  
Technical production management: **Sven Nichterlein**  
Production management: **Carlota Broggi, Chloé Ferro, Juliane Männel**  
Communication: **Alexandra Lauck**  
Coordination, research and casting: **Clara Duch**  
In collaboration with:  
**Andrea Bel, Meret Kiderlen, Montse Novellón, Judith Paletta**  
Interns: **Gianna Gkioni, Alžbeta Vrzgula**

### **Cast:**

Barcelona:  
**Calamanda Grifol, Camila Verde, Miguel Ferrer Jiménez, Leyla Mancebo Zamora, Christian Perez Vignau, Enric Tello, Siham**  
Mannheim:  
**Wolfgang Dürnberger, Andreas Eichhorn, Max Hofmann, Joelle-Gloria Ngouepgheu Ngatat, Claudia Pfaum-Richter, Nazli Saremi, Margarita Zarkova** and numerous extras from Mannheim and the surrounding area  
Speakers:  
**Christoph Bornmüller, Asmaa Hamadah, Jessica Higgins, Boris Koneczny, Jacques Malan, Joelle-Gloria Ngouepgheu Ngatat**

### **Kunsthalle Mannheim:**

Project management: **Johan Holten**  
With the assistance of: **Pia Goebel, Anja Heitzer**  
Technical production management and restoration: **Katrin Radermacher**  
Exhibition technology and Art handling: **Filip Antonijevic, Skafte Kuhn, David Maras, Christian Patruno und Prisma Fine Art Services**  
Press and public relations, marketing and communication, digital communication / online marketing: **Sophia Baum, Leon Kaessmann, Julia Laukert, Saskia Schallock, Ewa Wojciechowska**  
Art education: **Christiane Wichmann, Dorothee Höfert**  
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Digital strategy: **Heiko Daniels**  
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**Nationaltheater Mannheim:**

Artistic director drama department: **Christian Holtzhauer**

Organisation management drama department: **Emily Keller**

Technical director: **Harald Frings**

Dramaturgy: **Dominika Široká**

Head of carpentry / Technical production management: **Christian Thurm**

**And the department of workshops, especially the trainees in the departments carpentry, technical trades and the assistants of direction**

**Audiovisual media:**

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With the assistance of: **Marco Kempf, Alex Thelen**

Lighting: **Thorsten Schwanninger**

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**Mustafa E. Büyükoşkun, Helene Kummer, Luise Peschko, Tilmann Rödiger**

General synchronization: **Mediapro, Alex Lucena**

**Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona – CCCB**

Director: **Judit Carrera**

Head of exhibitions section: **Jordi Costa**

**Credits:**

Installation views **URBAN NATURE** by Rimini Protokoll, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona – CCCB

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**Alice Brazziti and Martí E. Berenguer**

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