CECILIA IACONELLI

What is the line between me and you, between what we consider overseen and what we consider as new. Cecilia Iaconelli is an artist and performer whose research-based practice draws on anthropological methods and perspectives. Her work investigates the symbolic infrastructures that organise everyday life: the rituals, institutional settings, social conventions and material objects through which collective realities are produced and maintained. Beginning with ethnographic observation, she examines how these structures shape behaviour, authority and shared imagination before subtly reconfiguring them through artistic intervention. Driven by a fascination with the symbolic richness of the mundane, her work seeks to reveal the theatrical, poetic and often overlooked dimensions of everyday life. Working across performance, video, stop-motion animation and sound, she develops each project according to the logic of the research rather than a fixed medium. Through a subtle dramatization of the mundane, objects become performers, institutional rituals become theatrical devices, and familiar situations are displaced just enough to reveal their humour, tensions and poetic potential. Rather than representing reality, her work creates performative situations that invite audiences to experience it differently. By introducing small misalignments into everyday systems (whether in public spaces, conferences or ordinary social interactions), she opens moments in which the familiar becomes strange, making visible the symbolic structures that often remain unnoticed and creating space for reflection, collective imagination and alternative ways of relating to the world. At the core of her practice is an interest in the collective imaginary and symbolic communication: how cultural norms are embodied, performed and negotiated through gestures, spaces and objects. Her recent work increasingly focuses on collective and non-verbal forms of performance that explore how shared symbolic structures can be questioned, re-performed and transformed.

WEBSITES

personal website

ceciliaiaconelli.com

EDUCATION

2024 - 2026 Master in Non Linear Narrative Den Haag, Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten diploma

2024 - 2024 Visual Anthropology Pre-master Leiden University

2023 - -- Object Theatre Residency Compagnia Girovago & Rondella / Teatri Mobili

2020 - -- FAI-AR - Formation supérieure d'art en espace public Art Creation in Public Space - Online Course FAI-AR Marseille

2020 - -- Lugares – Artistic Research Residency (Body, Landscape and Collective Imagination) Dança Imaginal

2018 - 2019 Visiting Researcher (Urban and Spatial Anthropology) Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile

EXHIBITIONS

2026 Graduation Show KABK - Royal Academy of Arts The Hague, Netherlands ttps://graduation.kabk.nl/2026/cecilia-iaconelli
Group

2025 NWO Closed Cycles Paradise The Hague, Netherlands www.kabk.nl/en/events/students-non-linear-narrative-and-interior-architecture-and-furniture-design-present-closed-cycles
Group

2025 NWO Closed Cycles Egmond aan Zee, Netherlands www.kabk.nl/en/projects/nln-iafd-nwo-closed-cycles
Group

2023 Propagazioni Bollettino - Open Studio #1 ISREC Bergamo, Italy www.propagazioni.it/propagazioni-open-studio-1/

2017 - 2019 MA in Applied Anthropology SDU - university of southern denmark diploma

2014 - -- Clown & Physical Performance Training Guillaume Ompahlos

2010 - 2013 Circus Arts Training Piccola Scuola di Circo Milano

PROJECTS

2026 I Don't Think We Could Go Back To Where We Were Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands graduation.kabk.nl/2026/cecilia-iaconelli I Don't Think We Could Go Back To Where We Were is a puppet, object and shadow theatre performance investigating how truth and authority are performed through the format of the conference. Emerging from fieldwork examining conferences as performative apparatuses, the work approaches the conference as a contemporary ritual in which protocols, postures and codified languages contribute to producing and validating collective understandings of truth. The speakers' hands become the protagonists of the performance. Isolated and re-scaled from the body, they expose the gestures through which authority is embodied and performed. As technical glitches and errors begin to fracture the carefully orchestrated setting, the machinery behind this performance of authority becomes visible. Conference objects gradually rebel, while speech gives way to an abstract vocal drone and rational protocol mutates into magical realism. The performance invites the audience into a shared space of uncertainty where truth-making can be questioned and reimagined.

2025 Object Poetry The Hague, Netherlands www.instagram.com/p/DS-yaYJjKGb/?img_index=1 Object Poetry is a collective performance conceived and co-curated by Cecilia Iaconelli that explores how communication and storytelling can emerge through objects, sound and visual metaphor.

Group

COMMISSIONS

2026 Oh, So Many Things To Feel Lost About National Opera and Ballet Amsterdam Amsterdam, Netherlands I worked as dramaturgist, music editor and visual artist, developing the visual language, dramaturgical structure and relationship between image and score. Drawing on an anthropological approach to opera as a cultural form, I examined its formal conventions, gestures, audience rituals and modes of theatricalisation, then amplified and displaced them to transform an ordinary everyday event into an operatic drama. A 20-minute digital opera following the journey of a lost glove after it falls into an Amsterdam canal. From this small everyday accident, two parallel stories unfold: one above the water's surface and one beneath it, as the glove descends into an underwater world of currents, dreams and transformation. The work draws on Amsterdam's particular urban condition, taking the city's position below sea level as a starting point for an opera set beneath the water. The ordinary glove — an object easily lost while cycling through the city — becomes the protagonist of an unexpectedly heightened operatic narrative. www.operaballet.nl/en/opera/dutch-national-opera/opera-forward-festival/labs-kabk finished

2025 Insects on the Menu? NWO, Den Haag Egmond aan Zee, The Hague, Wageningen, Netherlands A video art installation developed in collaboration with entomologist Marcel Dicke as part of NWO Life2025, exploring insects as food through the cultural meanings attached to eating. Working with another visual artist, I translated the research into a visual metaphor based on gummy worms: one of the most familiar Western sweets, whose

Taking place inside Emmaus Den Haag, a second-hand store, the performance transformed everyday objects into active participants in a shared process of improvisation, gesture and play. Rather than assigning fixed meanings to the objects, participants were invited to explore the symbolic possibilities embedded in their material qualities, histories, movements and sounds. Objects became prompts for visual metaphors and unexpected associations, allowing participants to construct and reinterpret fragments of a collective story. The second-hand store became a landscape of accumulated meanings, where ordinary things could be read, combined and reimagined in different ways. Iaconelli and Pietro M. Caramelli performed as a live foley duo, developing an improvised and pataphysical sound practice in response to the collective actions. Sound intertwined with the participants' gestures and visual compositions, extending and transforming the meanings produced by the objects. Through this interplay between objects, bodies and sound, Object Poetry explores how symbolic meaning can be negotiated collectively and how objects can become tools for communication beyond language.

2025 On Beavers and Bureaucracy The Hague, Netherlands On Beavers and Bureaucracy is an artist book exploring the encounter between non-human agency and human systems of classification, documentation and control. The project starts from a 2025 news story from the Czech Republic, where beavers constructed a dam in a single night at a site where authorities had been working for more than ten years to realise a similar project, delayed by bureaucratic procedures and corruption. The contrast between the efficiency of the beavers and the slowness of the administrative system became the starting point for a fictional bureaucratic scenario. Inspired by Andrea Camilleri's La scomparsa di Patò, particularly its use of documents and archival forms, I created a fictitious administrative dossier as if an

name, shape and texture mimic the very insects being proposed as food. The gummy worm becomes the protagonist of a stop-motion journey through the processes of food production and consumption, moving between the different stages through which food becomes culturally recognised, prepared and eaten. Pedestrian interviews further introduced everyday perceptions and associations around eating and insects. By placing a recognisable confectionery object between the categories of "candy" and "insect", the installation plays with cultural norms of eating and the paradoxes through which food becomes acceptable, desirable or strange.
www.kabk.nl/projecten/nln-iafd-nwo-closed-cycles finished

imaginary governmental authority had been assigned to classify and document the beavers' intervention. The work takes the form of a folder containing fabricated reports, classifications and photographic evidence, with the bureaucratic typography reproduced through stencil duplication. I photographed traces of beaver activity on trees in Oostduin Park in The Hague and incorporated these photographs together with scans of gnawed branches and pieces of wood. The photographs gradually become darker as their exposure is reduced. As the images darken, the black bureaucratic text printed over them progressively disappears into the photographic surface. By the end of the sequence, the administrative document has almost entirely vanished, leaving behind only the material traces of the beavers. Through this absurd bureaucratic fiction, the project questions who is authorised to classify, document and legitimise environmental interventions. The beavers' ability to transform their surroundings without permits, reports or institutional approval becomes a counterpoint to the human systems built to regulate them. The work reflects on how realities are made legible through social constructions and institutional systems, and how these systems can become attempts to reproduce, organise and ultimately contain reality itself. I developed and produced the entire work, including the photographs, fictitious documents, stencil-duplicated folder and document elements, as well as the scans of wood and other material traces.

2023 Cartographic Disillusions Valparaiso, Chile Cartographic Disillusions is an art installation emerging from a year-long ethnographic research on the urban space of Valparaíso. The project takes the form of a participatory archive, bringing together maps, photographs, drawings and field notes produced throughout the research process. The installation explores the symbolic relationship between Valparaíso and the sea. The city was largely self-built

by its inhabitants according to a cultural practice of constructing without obstructing their neighbours' view of the sea, a relationship deeply connected to local identity. This relationship is disrupted by a wall erected during Pinochet's dictatorship, which physically prevents residents from accessing the sea. Presented as an open research archive, the materials are arranged on a desk and can be touched, consulted and rearranged by visitors. Rather than presenting the research as a fixed narrative, the installation invites visitors to navigate and reconstruct connections between places, images, observations and memories. The archive thus becomes not only a record of the research, but also a space for questioning how urban space is documented, remembered and symbolically transformed.

2021 Spectator-pedia Milano, Italy
Spectator-Pedia is an artistic research project exploring how audiences can be observed and imagined through ethnographic practice. The project emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when live performance and the presence of audiences were disrupted. It began with observations of a clown rehearsing and performing without an audience, focusing on recurring behaviours and characters that normally emerge within a live performance situation. These observations became the basis for a fictional encyclopedia of spectators. Through collage, found imagery, drawing and handwritten text, observed behaviours were transformed into a series of visual audience archetypes. Rather than presenting the audience as a fixed category, the book treats spectatorship as fluid, performative and continuously reconstructed. The artist book functions as a portable audience, materialising absent spectators as a collection of visual archetypes. The artist book is divided into three sections: a collection of recurring spectator archetypes; a modular audience that can be recomposed into different configurations; and open

pages where new characters can emerge through future observations and encounters. The project combines ethnographic observation with playful visual storytelling, transforming research material into a speculative and material taxonomy of spectatorship.

PUBLICATIONS

2026 Transformative Ethnographies: Anthropological Methods for Context-Based Solutions. Book University of Queensland Cecilia Iaconelli Australia uq.pressbooks.pub/anthropology-vocation/chapter/transformative-ethnographies-anthropological-methods-for-context-based-solutions/
A chapter exploring applied anthropology through two ethnographic case studies in Belmonte Calabro and Milano Martesana Park, examining how anthropological observation can identify local cultural dynamics and inform context-based approaches to public space, urban regeneration and design.

2026 Conferences as Performance (of truth) Book Royal Academy of Art The Hague Cecilia Iaconelli The Hague, Netherlands www.researchcatalogue.net/researches/4714032
Conferences are among the most central epistemic infrastructures of the contemporary world. Attending a conference is not merely an intellectual activity, but participation in a codified performative event. Far from being neutral, conferences are highly structured environments in which knowledge is actively staged, observed and legitimised. Spatial configurations, material objects, temporal organisation and ritualised behaviours shape what can appear as true, trustworthy and authoritative. This thesis approaches conferences as performance and addresses the following research questions: What constitutes a conference as a specific epistemic format? What roles do space, objects, and participants play in the

SECONDARY ART-RELATED ACTIVITIES

2023 - 2023 Lios Lab – Spatial Anthropology Workshop for Artists, Błędowska Desert

2021 - 2024 Art and Anthropology Workshop for Children

performance of knowledge? How do implicit norms, rituals, and professional hierarchies shape the production and legitimation of truth in conference settings? Drawing on Science and Technology Studies and Performance Theory, the research situates conferences within a brief historical genealogy across scientific, technical, and political contexts. Methodologically, it adopts a situated ethnographic approach based on visual observation, fieldwork, and attention to embodied practices and material arrangements. Alongside this analysis, the thesis examines artistic and performative practices that work with the conference format itself. These practices function as critical devices that expose and intensify conference conventions, fostering reflexive awareness of institutionalised forms of knowledge transmission.

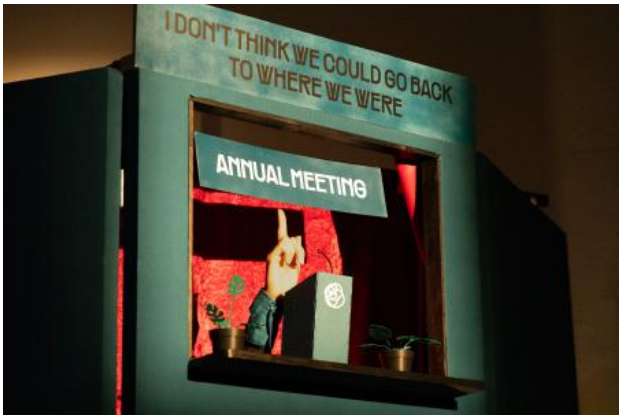
2023 Grounded theory: una pratica per cogliere l'inaspettato." (2023). Propagazioni Bolletino Di Esperienze Di Campo, 13–18. Book Propagazioni Cecilia Iaconelli Italy www.propagazioni.it/bollettino/ Article reflecting on grounded theory as an ethnographic practice and its potential to remain open to unexpected findings emerging from fieldwork.





I Don't Think We Could Go Back To Where We Were – Performance View, 2026
Performance

I Don’t Think We Could Go Back To Where We Were , 2026



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Digital opera, three-channel video installation, mixed media



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