

# Rob La Frenais Portfolio 2014-2023



**Rob La Frenais is an experienced independent curator, writer, lecturer and artist. He has been working as a curator since 1987, working internationally and creatively with artists entirely on original commissions. He believes in being directly engaged with the artist's working process as far as possible, while actively widening the context within which the artist can work. He is now working on artistic projects and collaborations. He was born in 1951 in the UK and is of Anglo-Indian French origin. He is a French resident.**



**Curator of the international art and science organisation, The Arts Catalyst from 1997 - 2014, he organised many exhibitions exhibited around Europe during this period. His last exhibition there 'Republic of The Moon' (above) took place at FACT Liverpool and the South Bank London, UK in 2013-14. Featured right, Berlin artist, Agnes Meyer Brandis, with whom he developed the major work 'The Moon Goose Analogue' for this exhibition.**



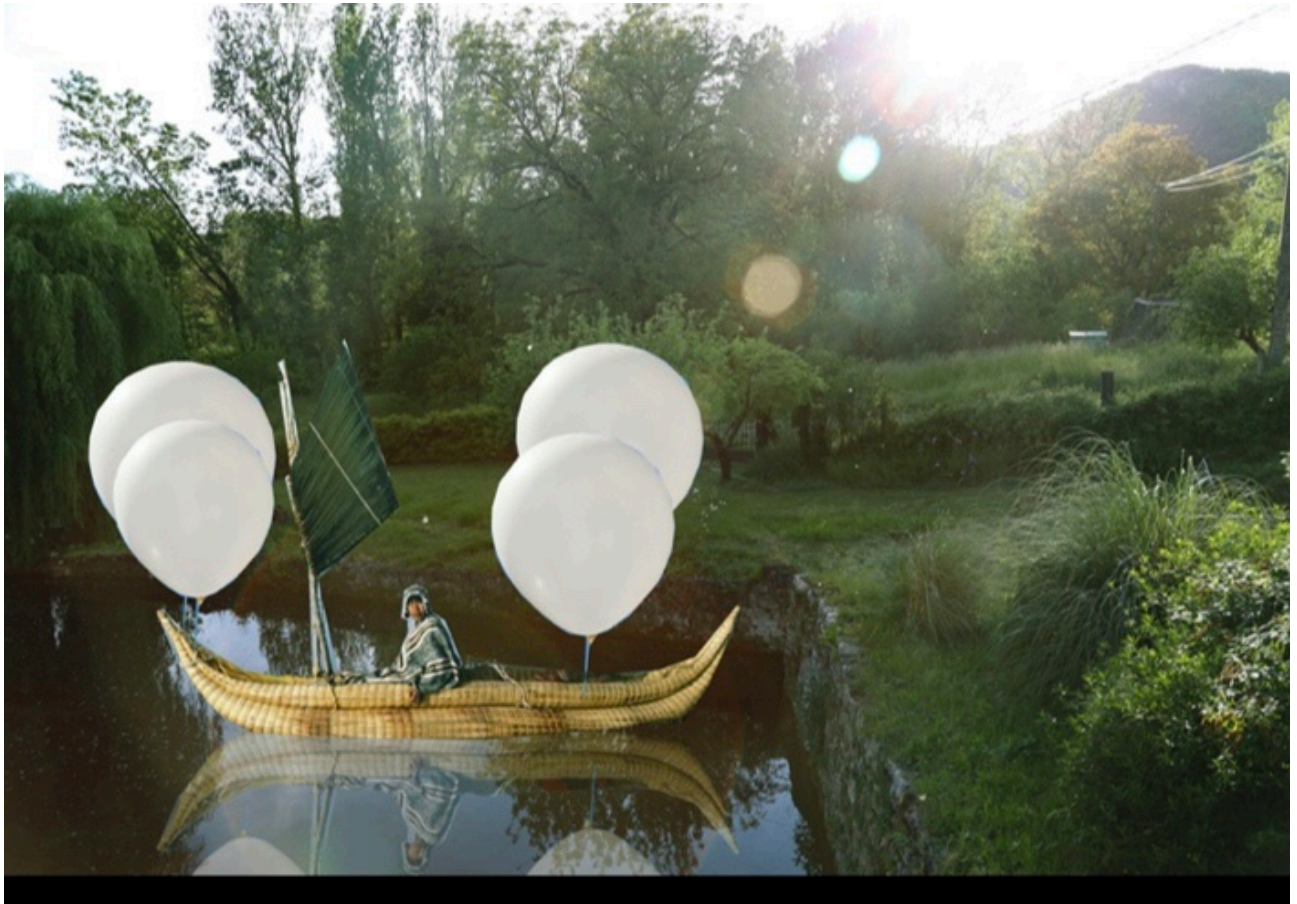
**After leaving The Arts Catalyst he became an independent curator. His first curatorial project as a freelance was 'Aerosolar' with Argentine artist Tomas Saraceno which launched in White Sands, New Mexico, USA (2015).**



Also in 2015 he revitalised the 80's magazine he founded, covering all aspects of European performance, in a major archive project, Performance Magazine Online, which has developed into an active social media base. Performance Magazine Live, which he is planning to develop into a European performance and live art communications network during his Culture Moves residency.



In 2016 he co-curated his first exhibition in his region of France, Exoplanet Lot, with Martine Michard, Director of the Maison Des Arts Georges Pompidou, on the River Lot near St Cirq De La Popie, summer home of the surrealists (pictured art hypnosis in grounds of André Breton's house).



The exhibition also featured Mexican artist Tania Candiani (above), who represented her country at the 2016 Venice Biennale, with her new commissioned work 'Flying Boat', a site-specific performance. Here he's travelling up the valley by bicycle, inspecting various site-specific works, including this new novel, Meanda, written in French on the tarmac of the Lot valley roads, by local writer Tracey Warr. Exoplanet Lot was about artists re-imagining the Earth as an exoplanet, with the chance to start again.



**Centipede, an artist-developed ecotrain by the French group HeHe, which travelled the length of the Lot Valley, accessible by the public.**



The public gathers for the opening of Exoplanet Lot.



Station Radio by French artist Thomas Lasbouyges. We transmitted an FM artists' radio station during the exhibition Exoplanet Lot.



**Future of Transportation. Project initiated at Srishti Institute in Bangalore and exhibited at Kochi Biennale, India in 2017. Here, Rob is offering free rides on an 'Indian Basic' bike.**

**Co-organised with curator Meena Vari, artist Suresh Kumar and others, Future of Transportation is an international collaborative project initiated by Rob exploring the ways we get around the planet. It continues as a collaborative social media project and was last manifested at ArtBomb in Doncaster, UK in 2022 and at the Soil Assembly at the Kochi Biennale in 2023.**

## FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION AT ARTBOMB DONCASTER 2022

The Future of Transportation project, founded in Bangalore by Rob La Frenais with curator Meena Vari and artists Sudipto Dasgupta and Suresh Kumar thinks about innovative bottom-up ways of thinking about how we can get around the planet sustainably. In Doncaster we will think about new concepts of transportation like perambulating, mobile labs, self-powered autonomous networked performances using pavements, squares, railways and the River Don. Some of the projects:



Artist/inventor Naveen Rabelli (above) drove this solar-powered Tuk-tuk from Bangalore to London, using only the power of the sun most of the way and staying in villages to recharge in exchange for stories about his journey. He will give workshops in Doncaster and we hope he will drive his Tuk-tuk around the streets, engaging with non-art audiences.



Miranda Whall undertook this crawling performance on Aberystwyth seafront in response to the 2020 COVID 19 lockdown. She recently performed this crawl in response to the perceived failure of COP 26 in Glasgow. She will perform a crawling performance in Doncaster Town Centre publicly during ArtBomb, hopefully at the same time as the renowned NY street artist Pope L (below) in an online global remote crawling performance on the big screen at Doncaster Unitarian Church.

**Future of Transportation was last shown at ArtBomb in Doncaster, UK in 2022 with Ingrid Pollard, Meena Vari, Miranda Whall, Inari, Naveen Rabelli, Aerocene, and Rob La Frenais as an artist as well as project curator.**





**'No Such Thing As Gravity' was the last major exhibition curated by Rob, co-curated by Mike Stubbs. it took place in 2017-18 in FACT, Liverpool, UK and the National Museum for Fine Art in Taiwan. It brought together artists from around the world and particle physicists from CERN to question the limits of known scientific knowledge. Above Evelina Domnitch and Dmitry Gelfand, below Nick Laessing with his hydrogen-propelled car.**



## Artist residency at Saari Residence, Finland



Photo Jussi Virkuma

In 2019 Rob La Frenais was selected for an artists residency at the Saari Residence, run by the Kone Foundation, Finland. Saari Co-ordinator Pirre Naukaninen writes: "At the Saari Residence for artists, the independent curator of contemporary art and writer Rob La Frenais is working simultaneously on two themes: the Moon and Water." "I have created a 'Moon Room' in the Barn where I am collecting material about art and the Moon, from time to time I am inviting the other fellows to come and watch films about the Moon (I have the first film night last night) and add their own comments and ideas for research. I am working on an extended essay 'Mirroring The Moon' that will be the basis for a book that has been commissioned by Intellect Books. I am also working on a young adult fiction novel 'Wild Way To The Moon'," he says. His second project involves exploring the archipelago surrounding the Saari Residence. "In the harbour, I am using the Saari vessel the 'Lovisa' to explore this part of the Archipelago. I have already taken some of the fellows on an expedition to a small island in the middle of the sea. I am hoping to research a new project that will be realised in Finland about artists' floating vehicles. I am hoping to do some active research on a new floating vehicle in the harbour, weather permitting he tells". He plans to continue this research in his Culture Moves residency at Live Art Ireland.

**London under clear skies.**



**During the first COVID lockdown in 2020 , Rob found himself in London, unable to return home to France. He wrote a series of articles for the French magazine [makery.info](http://makery.info) about the effects of the pandemic on mobility around Europe, titled 'New mobilities after the lockdown: How about retooling the airline industry?' and 'Slower Travel' Negotiating post-viral geographies'. These followed on from his 2019 article for the Kone Foundation describing his green travel experiences going by rail from Toulouse, France to Turku, Finland in three journeys 'Slow Travel - A Privilege Not A Sacrifice'. On his Culture Moves Residency he will write about his sustainable journey from Toulouse to the centre of Ireland. Rob La Frenais has written about art from 1979, firstly in his magazine, Performance Magazine, in Art Monthly, UK, ArtLink Australia and finally Makery in France. He has also contributed to and edited books for Intellect Press, University of Chicago.**



**Rob has chaired many conferences and artists talks. Between 2016 and 2022 he was a board member of ISEA International. Above he is in conversation with Turner Prize-shortlisted artist Ingrid Pollard. Below, the conference he organised for Dartington College of Arts, UK and chairing the Creative Europe-funded ' More Than Planet' conference in Paris in 2023.**



## Close To The Water



**As a result of his Saari Residence in 2019 he resumed his artistic practice, which had been halted by his career as a curator and writer. He was commissioned by New Performance Turku in Finland to undertake an opening keynote performance 'Close To The Water' - a performance done in a single scull rowing boat in collaboration with a rowing club. He has been a rower since 1992 and this performance tries to bring together the arts with the world of competitive rowing. This was done both live at New Performance Turku and virtually during the pandemic at Arts Meets Radical Openness in Linz, Austria and Pikel in Bergen, Norway and then again live at ArtBomb, Doncaster, UK. He recounts the history of rowing and compares his fragile situation in a light and easily capsize-able small boat with the fragility of civilisation approaching the climate disaster. On his Culture Moves residency he hopes to set up a similar collaboration with Shannon Rowing Club, Limerick.**



**In 2023 Rob La Frenais collaborated with composer pianist Lola Perrin to make a performative work over 6000 KM of railway lines taking audio and visual samples from passengers and landscapes on Europe's trains, commissioned by the Brussels NGO Transport and Environment for their Travel Smart campaign aimed at weaning business travellers from short haul air travel in Europe. The end result 'Let The Birds Have The Skies' was presented as an installation in Gare Maritime, Brussels. Below, Lola Perrin taking sound samples on trains in Europe and participants in the installation. Finally Rob is seen below making a micro-performance on the AVE train between Barcelona and Madrid, where passengers have to choose options about their mode of travel and imaginary speculations about their future journeys.**







