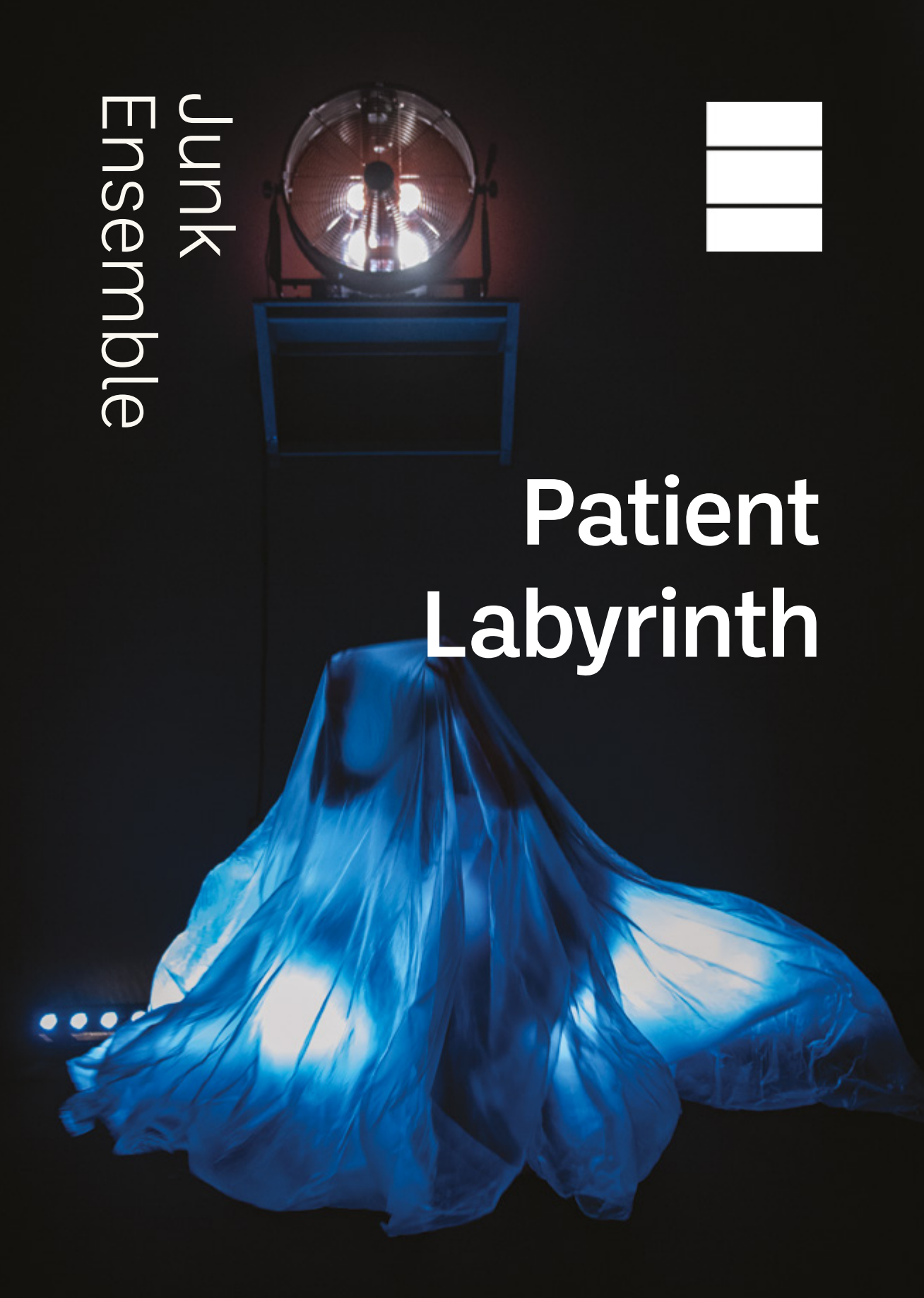
Junk Ensemble



Patient Labyrinth



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In a maze, you lose yourself,
in a labyrinth, you find yourself

Patient Labyrinth is both a maze and a labyrinth — exploring the delicate boundary between two worlds: the one in which we lose our way, and the one we try to find our way out of.

The installation weaves together myth, folk magic, and ritual to explore how we navigate uncertainty, entrapment, and transformation. As our constructed and natural world unravels to near collapse, we rely on storytelling as a tool for connection and protection. The labyrinth is a mirror, a code, a key, a tensabarrier, a reflection of ourselves and our worlds.

Drawing from the Greek myth of Ariadne's thread and Mincéirí / Traveller folklore, the space unfolds as a labyrinth within a labyrinth, where the five elements mark the thresholds — each an echo, a path, a memory, a reminder.

'The patient labyrinth of lines traces the lineaments of his own face'

—Jorge Luis Borges

Patient Labyrinth is the culmination of Junk Ensemble's two year dance artist residency at Rua Red.



The red thread, the sheep knuckle and the veil

Jesse Jones

"It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."

— Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene

What does it mean to world the world: in *Patient Labyrinth* we enter a world that has been worlded with instinct and intention, materials and magic, woven through the thread of folk memory, intergenerational stories, passed on like knots, reminding us of the pathways home and when to be lost.

Patient Labyrinth is a spell and like any spell, materials matter. The bones of a sheep, boiled and stripped of their meat, are ritually cleansed in fragrant herbs infused with magic and meaning. When I encountered this ritual for the first time in the studio with Jessica and Megan, I was struck by the metaphor it represented. This magical spell passed on by Oein DeBhairduin, a writer, activist and educator, formed a protection spell and spoke to the intention of the work, to strip back to the bone their practice of the body grounded in myth and movement and infuse it with instinct, conjuring, and enchantment.

There are many authors and collaborators in this labyrinth: Morgana Machado Marques in the scenography and architecture of the labyrinth, whose focus on darkness and hidden crevasses offer a space that is constantly opening and closing

its aperture to encounter. Julia O'Leary O'Reilly and Oein DeBhairduin continuously advised Jessica and Megan through the process during their studio residency at Rua Red. As part of this, Jessica and Megan crafted a bone blessing using cow and sheep knuckles, and Oein foraged and handcrafted a besom for the project. This gesture set the intention of the project, to disrupt, unnerve, to strip everything back to the basic elemental forces.

Yet before this world of the labyrinth there was a map, a map which became a witches path, through a portal from another artwork *Powerful Trouble*. Created by Junk Ensemble in 2023, this was an immersive promenade work that crossed between dance, installation and live performance, exploring the witch as a symbol of force, destruction and generation. Made in collaboration with Aideen Barry, Olwen Fouéré, Vicky Langan, Planningtorock, Katie Kim and myself, it was devised for six dancers and a live percussionist. *Powerful Trouble* became a point of departure in which a hybrid practice emerged across disciplines of visual art, performance and movement marked by muscular choreography, euphoric beats, visceral imagery, and live sound.

Braided through a deeply affectual atmosphere and staged twice; first in a former dockland warehouse in Cork and secondly in a white cube gallery space, the work functioned as a map of collective bodies that plotted the residues of the rise of capitalism, the violence that marked the witch trials, and its tentacles of colonial extraction. This map threaded the turns and trajectories of the archetype of the Witch through the chaos of *Kali* and the disruptive female body to a corporeal initiation of spells, which culminated in a collectivised body circling the audience under the cleansing fume of a burning thurible filled with sage, menstrual blood, frankincense, spikenard, and human hair.

Patient Labyrinth's path is less defined; it is not a map. It refuses the plotting of clear trajectories for the body, fixed to time, but instead proposes the structure of labyrinthine wandering, beyond cognition of space to a place of intentionally getting lost. Losing one's self is the antithesis of the current age, defined by fear of 'lostness'. Our reliance on google mapping for simple tasks and navigation as we scroll through continuous streams of visual information means our algorithms create false rhythms in the body, allowing for a continuous process of forgetting what has come before. It is a maze in which being lost creates disengagement with our collective bodies as we are each allocated a zoom scrolled maze of our own individuation.

Patient Labyrinth instead proposes a phenomenology of lostness in resistance to this Mazeophobia. Mazeophobia is defined as the primal fear of being vulnerable and alone when in unfamiliar environments and where escape feels difficult. In more than one conversation with Jessica and Megan throughout my dramaturgical process, they insisted this would not be a maze but a *labyrinth*, a place for a soft fascination with the pleasure of being lost, heightening the sense of being a body in place and time. Yet in this lostness there is always the body.

Scenes from a breathing labyrinth; reflections on the live performance intervention in the gallery spaces

Patient Labyrinth is both an architecture and a home, in particular a home to the body of performer Róisín Harten; whose activation pathway through the labyrinth reminds us of our own capacity to be untethered. From the first threshold: *the spirit world*, she ties her red threads through the hands and knuckles of audiences, echoing the red threads of Ariadne from Greek myth who gave Theseus a clew of yarn to enter the labyrinth and slay the minotaur. *Patient Labyrinth* is a warren of multiple minotaurs, made throughout the performance by Róisín from clay, an accumulative gesture folding between, object, relic, and ritual. The clay minotaur's companions are the cow's knucklebones which were ritually blessed by Jessica and Megan. These bones form an exterior spinal cord, we witness the body inside out, as Róisín crawls through the cavernous earthen floor. Clay, bones and flesh meet in this slow movement, dragging the body through the writhing darkness as an earthworm presses through its underworld.

The labyrinth continues, echoing the veils between worlds — both seen and unseen — and there is an insistence on breath as a pneumatic force throughout. The quotidian simplicity of a plastic dust sheet is transformed into a saint's reliquary of living flesh, undulating and rustling beneath the sheet until the rhythmic flow of the body becomes a watery pulsing serpent, a sea creature, a storm that dissolves the veil itself. In the patient labyrinth the body is never still, it is always in a propulsion between realms, gilded by intent through the elements; spirit, earth, air, to arrive at fire.

Here the serpentine figure becomes a shepherd, a hooded hermit, rhythmically striking her match, a flame lantern steering us forward again. The material entanglements of charcoal and hair recall the acerbic burning odours of the thurible burning of *Powerful Trouble*, but this time as a sister flame, born again, no more on the pyre but the fire itself.

The purging fire creates a desert, a land of thirst and dead ends, which must be crossed to find the centre of the labyrinth, the *Villa of Ormen*, where within a solitary island stands the womb of the labyrinth. This well of dark waters is a place in which we might wash away all that has passed and what is yet to be. It is a place of divination recalling sacred communal rituals and hydromancy that folds between times and repetitions.

Patient Labyrinth is forged in the belief that materials and our ordering of them in the world is a form of enchantment, a push back against the maze of the rational, and a release into soft fascination. Soft fascination as defined by environmental psychologists Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, relies on all the senses to create a state of effortless and gentle attention that restores the mind and body. It is a core component of Attention Restoration Theory (ART), which posits that time spent in natural environments allows the mind to disengage from cognitive labour focused tasks and be guided into ambient stimuli, like the leaves rustling in the wind or patterns in clouds. Its key quality is patience, a patience to allow for cognitive fascination to build, and the maze of overstimulation to disappear.

The soft fascination of *Patient Labyrinth* issues a reignition of the mesmeric qualities of the unknown, the pleasure of the body lost in darkness. A darkness that is not an absence of light but rather emerging from a continuous red thread. This red thread of artistic thinking, rooted in an embodied practice, believes in the body not only as a repository of archetypal myths mapped to histories of violence, but as a body with agency that is capable of remaking the world.

Again within each folding pleasure of this mounting lostness we find further labyrinths inside of labyrinths, a Russian doll of worlding worlds, these caracole shells of unfolding possibilities form a multiverse inside our own bodies introcosms and hidden hermitages:

"An invisible mansion of all moods, musings, and mysteries, an infinite resort of disappointments and discoveries. A whole kingdom where each of us reigns reclusively alone, questioning what we will, commanding what we can. A hidden hermitage where we may study out the troubled book of what we have done and yet may do. An introcosm that is more myself than anything I can find in a mirror."

— Julian Jaynes, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind

Mythologist Penelope Doob believes, "The labyrinth does not imprison; it instructs". The centre is not a point of resolution but a site of encounter with mystery itself. Like all mystery, the answer is always in the centre, and the centre heart of Patient Labyrinth waiting in stillness, is the well. These waters, expectant and whirling and drawn from the origin pool of the land, are pregnant with the possible blessings they might bestow; through protection and prophesy. They remind us that water itself, as it exists everywhere, its oceans, rivers and streams and living in the deep interior of every cell of our body, can predict the emerging shape of anything that touches it. Inside us all, pulsing and flooding in this darkness, is the very thing that will bring us out of the unknown, towards the conjured speculation of worlds that are yet to be.





Five Elements

Julia O’Leary O’Reilly

The red strings of faith

Our belief is that there is three strings connected to all souls, leading from the heavens to the Earth and back again. It is the stitching of these threads that are unique to each individual, and it is for them alone to play each string like a chord placed there for them all along. At any time we can jump from string to string, to know who we are and where we came from.

The wind

We believe the wind tells us when change is coming into our lives, for the wind itself is an extension of our soul. It is attuned to each soul as we carry the air between our lungs. To be solely alone with the wind in a forest is where we truly feel its power, the power of change.

The fire

We see fire as a light when night hits. With fire comes the ability to heal or destroy, it is in the hands of the person to master the element of fire. Fire heals and seals wounds against infection and can destroys cities. Fire is to be nurtured and maintained like the soul itself.

Water

In our native tongue, the word sky means water, for the heavens leaves its waters upon this earth for us to drink, to wash, and to bless. We are deeply connected to the element of water as ninety percent of a body is made up of water. Water has the ability to extend our intuition.

Earth

The earth can offer us growth. Even muck produces the most beautiful flowers, dry soil, sand, and shows us the earths’ ability to create silver, gold, minerals. All these materials run through our veins.

Coming Home

Julia O’Leary O’Reilly

As I walk through the valley of death may the string of faith guide me home
For I am mortal made of flesh and bone
As above is below
The turning of the ocean casts its murky water into my bones
There ever present is the howling of the winds’ bow
Before my brow the dark and heavy frost beneath my feet it grows
A flame burns bright within my eyes of foresight, bending like the trees and flickering like the leaves
The spirit of the earth guides me home
For all my dreams are wrapped around the bark
of life and it is there I sit upon the ledge of old
Storms of rain push down with thunder through
all the heavy earths conundrums
Still I wait to find the string stretch out between
the howling wind
Branches of the spirits reach out across the dark
and dusty night
All to help the blind to find their sight
Under the rocks lay all our prayers laced with crimson clouds of dust
Everything moves expect my feet no matter the weather or what they stand between
I see the clouds conjure a bright light of blue at night and then just like dawn it all seems bright
I have found the string of faith, it sat behind my heart all night
And only through the dew of morn it struck the cord that had been formed



An Tobar an a Beoir

Oein DeBhairduin

An Tober an a Beoir
The way of a woman
There is a road only women know,
Patted out in quiet footsteps
And the hush of things half said.

A Traveller woman walks it sure,
With a mind like a tucked blade
Sharp, and never wasteful.

Gathers knowing as easy as gathering firewood,
Picking up the grain of people,
The knots in their stories,
The shine or the shadow in their eyes.

Who's to say that this isn't magic
One that rises from years of watching the world
look back.

With the resourcefulness of rainwater,
Turning her hand to whatever the day asks of her.

Mending, making, moving.
Wringing coin from skill
From the soft heartedness she finds
Even in the palms of strangers.

Who's to say that what she reads
Are not fortunes
But the small brave truth
People sometimes forget to tell themselves.

This is one of her ways
The seer woven into a seller
The wit within the worker
The knowing threaded through every act.

Women, stepping through the world
With cleverness in their pocket
and a whole travelling people
Moving in the rhythm of her remembering.

Bog ar-mislo
The Labyrinth
The maze is not only of the earth
and turning paths
but an inner place
a threshold of quiet strangeness
where each twist asks something of us.

To be lost here
Is not a failing
But a soft beginning.
A wandering that circles inward
Until the self steps forward

From its own hiding place.

Sarog graisk
The red thread
There is a red thread,
Older than any tale
And stronger then the might of the moon

Sometimes it glimmers
like a shy flame, flickering in the dark.

Sometimes it is only a tug,
felt deep in the chest.

It is always there,
quiet as a held note.

It winds through the keepers of traditions,
Those who mind the old songs
And the half hushed, hid customs.
Those who carry fire cupped in their hands
So that its glow might reach

Another dawn.
It loops through the wanderer's road,
Guiding the unsure foot
Through mist and mischief,
Through wild adventures
And the terrible beauty
Of not knowing what comes next.

It is knotted into terror and tragedy
Those the long night hours
When the heart is a raw creature
Seeking its own shape.

It brings together great loves,
Not to mend or fill,
But to remind each heart of its strength,
Perfectly flawed, Perfectly whole.

This red thread,
This ever present whisper
Pulls us forward
Backwards
Inwards
Reminding us
That every step we take
Is already woven
Into something ancient.





Entangled

Oein DeBhairduin

We all went to the Labyrinth today
And she returned

She was Ariadne’s thread, bovine bone and dance
And She returned

She was earth, air, fire and water
And She returned

She was wick, flame and charr
And She returned

She was maiden, mother and crone
And She returned

She was weave, tangle and blade
And She returned

She was virgin, lover and whore
And She returned

She was sightless, seen and seeing
And She returned

She was straightness, movement and curving
And She returned

So we all went to the Labyrinth today

And She returned...

But did We?



Exhibition Credits:

Concept: Jessica Kennedy, Megan Kennedy
Creation: Jessica Kennedy, Megan Kennedy in collaboration with Morgana Machado Marques
Scenography: Morgana Machado Marques in collaboration with Jessica Kennedy & Megan Kennedy
Dramaturg: Jesse Jones
Lighting: Stephen Dodd
Music: Peter Born
Costume: Katie Davenport
Performer: Róisín Harten
Choreography: Jessica Kennedy, Megan Kennedy, Róisín Harten
Collaborators: Julia O'Leary O'Reilly, Oein DeBhairduin
Sound Engineer: Arran MacGabhann
Costume Associate: Florentina Burcea
Producer: Ciara Lynch
JE Communications Manager: Sally McCarthy
Rua Red Director: Maolíosa Boyle
Rua Red Technical Manager: Hugh McCarthy
Rua Red Team: Maolíosa Boyle, Joyce Dunne, Jordan VanStaden, Orla McGovern. Paul Heary, Ethan Soost, and James Ritchie

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