

## CORNISA, in a Life Border

By and with Erika Webe



Grete Stern, Dream n°17 Who is there?, serie of photomontages « Dreams interpretation», Argentina 1948 - 1960.

**Year of creation:** 2025-2026

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Presentation:** The project CORNISA, in a Life Border is a clownesque piece of gestural and choreographic theatre that addresses madness and psychological, physical, and sexual trauma. Mental fragility, intrusion, invisibilized bodies, justice, and the relationships we have with ourselves, with others, and with the ecosystem that conditions us, are questioned.

**Could madness protect us from the world?**

**Gender:** Dark Comedy.

Visual and Gestural Theatre. The piece uses a visual language created between sign languages and gestures through the project Cultural Weavings between deaf and hearing artists.

<https://www.theatrestate.art/researchanddevelopment>

Suitable for all audiences, recommended for ages 12 and up

The performance is accessible to: Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. **A piece created by a team of deaf and hearing artists and technicians.**

**Synopsis:** Cornisa was formerly Cara, a secretary at the Department of Culture in the city of Namdal (somewhere in Central Europe). Today, she finds herself in the visiting room of a psychiatric hospital where she resides. A friend (the audience) comes to visit her. Through this encounter, Cornisa will begin to recall the reasons that led her to be there and how she has made madness her refuge in the world.

By telling her story, her memories and thoughts will be projected live through video. In this way, different dramaturgical planes are connected, and the boundaries between fiction and reality fade. She becomes the dancer of her nightmares and the skin of her ghosts in this mental labyrinth from which Cornisa will search for a way out.

She wants to establish a connection with reality in order to exist in society. But what does it mean to exist in an occidental society as a woman today? How is it possible despite the wounds of the past?

She will then need to create «a refuge that lives within her» in order to exist in society once again.

CORNISA is an ode to hope, resilience, and rebirth.

Cornisa is a one-woman piece.

This work is a fiction inspired by the testimonies of women and the author herself.

**Vision:** We are questioning humanity so that it may rediscover its essence in a society that pushes us towards performance, and glorifies superficial success. These intimate reflections can resonate with everyone, and it is through this that we can spark positive change through art.



## Director's Note:

I have never dared to address madness so directly before. I feel that I have circled around it for some time in my previous collaborations and, more generally, in my life.

It is a subject close to me because, in the last three generations of my own family, a woman was committed to a psychiatric hospital by her husband, my great-grandmother, my grandmother, and my mother. In 2022, I began the R&D project Cultural Weavings - Theatre State, with a team of deaf and hearing artists. It was through meeting these team that I realized I had been deaf to my own story, and my mind had taken refuge in an «attic.»

By deciding to confront it, I delved into depths my memory had allowed me to forget, and traumatic memories of abuse and abandonment resurfaced.

**The creation of a piece became a necessity: to explore these questions through the character of a woman who can represent us, women, awakening from traumatic amnesia and searching for connections to find a new way to exist in society.**

## Why Cornisa?

Cornisa derives from the Greek koronís, which translates to «cornice» in English. «The term refers to the protruding part that crowns a building. The cornice extends

Erika Webe, «in an attic», photo by Isi Zar.

beyond the façade, preventing rainwater from directly touching the walls. Cornices and suicide are often closely linked concepts, especially in urban settings. While such cases do not always lead to the final act, it is common for cornices to be used in suicide attempts. The term is also used to describe something located at the edge of a cliff or a precipice.»<sup>1</sup>

Cornisa is also the word my psychologist, Georgina della Maggiore (from Argentina), used to describe me during one of our sessions.

Since September 2022, I have been leading body expression workshops through dance for women at the CHUComfort emergency shelter in Champigny-sur-Marne, in collaboration with the Red Cross. In every workshop, the need to address «sensitive» topics emerges among the women, topics such as physical and psychological violence, submission, and the abandonment of children by their fathers. I listen to them, and together, **we become each other's echoes**. It is from these testimonies, among other sources, that the dramaturgy of this piece draws its inspiration.



## The Creative Process

I aim to develop a story that unfolds across multiple «levels of reality,» with various spatial and temporal perspectives. In confinement, time is no longer linear, and space ceases to exist.

To achieve this, I am inspired by the concept of «planes of reality, memory, and hallucination,» as used by Nelson Rodrigues in his play Vestido de Noiva. (1963, Sao Paulo, Brasil)

In Cornisa, the narrative expands, and become the different planes of dramaturgy interwoven on stage:

**Plane of Reality:** The character is in a waiting room of a psychiatric hospital.

**Plane of Memory:** The character revisits her memories as she recounts them.

**Plane of Hallucinations:** The character experiences psychoses.

I am committed to using a visual aesthetic, minimalist, unconventional, and focused on transdisciplinary gestural theatre. a poetics of illusion that transcends reality without obliterating it, offering a deeply sensory experience.

Erika Webe

