

Magic Maids

Women's domestic work through bodies and minds

Multidisciplinary round table discussion with two special guest artists

Eisa Jocson and Venuri Perera

Thursday 27th March, 10 AM – 1 PM, Centre Panthéon, University Paris 1, Salle 06

Interweaving ritual, pageantry, performance and possession, *Magic Maids* presents an encounter with two figures engaged in the ritual act of sweeping.

Eisa Jocson and Venuri Perera are from the Philippines and Sri Lanka respectively, two countries known for their significant export of domestic workers. Their collaboration began in 2022 when they noticed the absence of women at Basel Museum of Pharmaceutical History in Switzerland. This observation sparked their investigation of the historical persecution of witches; in Europe and its implications for the exploitation of female labour in colonised regions. They discovered that the accusation of witchcraft continues to be a tool for persecuting migrant workers from the Global South.

Magic Maids is a bodily response to their grappling with these complex entanglements. They call upon practices of incantation and intention, using their bodies to traverse multiple territories: physical, conceptual, transnational, emotional, and gendered. The labour in performance enables an embodied inquiry into questions of representation, political subjecthood and histories of oppression. Having individually presented solo work across international festivals and platforms that follows this line of inquiry, Jocson and Perera come together for the first time to sweep out and unsettle oppressive power structures. Rewilding the domestic, they aim to release, reclaim, rejoice, and reconnect with the primal energies.

Magic Maids is an invitation to witness and reflect on the visibility of the working body, the power of female solidarity, and the enduring impact of historical injustices on modern labour practices.

Round table discussion with

- **Elodie Bertrand** (ISPJS, PHARE, Université Paris 1) historian of economic thought
- **Jules Ramage** (Associate fellow CERILAC d'Université Paris-Cité) visual artist
- **Sarath Amarasingham** (Cie AdvaitaL) dancer-researcher
- **Muriel Gilardone** (Université de Caën), historian of economic thought



Organised by : Ariane Dupont-Kieffer (PHARE), Nadeera Rajapakse (PHARE / DDL / UFR 06)

Programme

10:00-10.30

Venuri and Eisa will “perform” among the crowds in the corridors of the Panthéon.

10.30 – Round table discussion with

*Elodie Bertrand, * Jules Ramage, * Muriel Gilardone, * Sarath Amarasingham

Moderated by Emmanuel Charrier

12.00 – Open discussion with the audience

Élodie Bertrand, Associate Research Professor in Economics at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), focuses on the intersections of law, economics, and philosophy, with particular attention to the concept of commodification. Her work examines how various aspects of society, including elements related to the female body and labor, are transformed into marketable commodities.

In her co-edited volume, *The Routledge Handbook of Commodification*, Bertrand explores contested markets and the ethical implications of commodifying different facets of human life. This includes discussions on the commodification of the female body, such as in the contexts of surrogacy and reproductive labor.

Jules Ramage is a visual artist and associate researcher at the CERILAC laboratory of the University of Paris, as well as a member of the Cité du Genre. Since 2013, he has conducted in-depth fieldwork within prison environments, implementing collaborative protocols with both inmates and prison guards. His creative approach emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge and practices, focusing on our capacity to inhabit spaces.

In the summer of 2022, Ramage established a working group at the Fleury-Mérogis women's prison. This initiative invited female prisoners, queer researchers, and artists to engage in collaborative projects, fostering a multidisciplinary exchange of perspectives. The participants explored the techniques of care and self-care developed and circulated in an environment where inmates are subject to over-medication. They drew up mutual aid cards from this corpus of objects, gestures, instructions for use, songs... which bear witness to their daily micro-resistance practices, linked to sisterhood, love and sexual relationships.

Sarath Amarasingham is a choreographer whose work intricately weaves themes of migration and identity, reflecting his personal experiences and cultural heritage with the aim of developing a choreographic language based on the concepts of transdisciplinarity and interculturality. Since 2018, he has been working on a choreographic series titled "Terre Sèche" (Dry Land), composed of four episodes "Vavuni Kulam" (2020), "Kattu Maram" (2021), "L'Équilibre de la Bicyclette" (2022).

Muriel Gilardone, a historian of economic thought at the University of Caen Normandy, focuses on the intersection of economics, philosophy, and gender studies, with a particular emphasis on the works of Amartya Sen. Her work critically examines concepts of freedom, responsibility, and justice, especially as they pertain to gender inequality.

She and choreographer Flora Pilet co-developed a course on ecofeminist practices, blending academic and choreographic practices. Movement-based workshops encourage students to embody concepts like power dynamics, oppression, and resistance, translating theoretical ideas into physical expression. By using dance as a medium for critical reflection, the course fosters sensory learning and emotional engagement, complementing traditional academic methods. This innovative pedagogy allows students to challenge hierarchical thinking and experience alternative ways of knowing. The initiative emerged from a shared interest in justice, social change, and feminist thought.