

## **Mapping Memory, Performing Solastalgia**

*A three-hour performance and storytelling workshop conducted by Chirine El Ansary*

**Friday April 17**

**4:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Room 13.003 (Ramon Turró Building, ground floor)**

**Open to all – [Register](#)**

Neighborhoods are razed, landmarks vanish, parks disappear, modern buildings rise, commercial areas expand, futuristic highways and dystopian bridges crisscross landscapes. That is, when houses, buildings, and monuments are not bulldozed or bombed, as in the too many war zones that stain the map of our ailing world. Citizens have little control over the drastic changes inflicted on their surroundings; in most cases, they are not even informed. If they are, it's typically at the last minute, without a full understanding of the scope of these changes. The result is an irremediable loss. Places filled with individual and collective memory vanish into thin air. Neighbourhoods we call home turn into alien, alienating spaces. In 2003, environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined the word *solastalgia* to describe the sense of loss experienced by communities witnessing the transformation of their environments. While Albrecht originally focused on Indigenous Australian landscapes, I find *solastalgia* equally relevant in urban contexts.

*Mapping Memory, Performing Solastalgia* is a workshop developed as part of *Mundus Vocalis: Activating Sufi Texts through Performative Storytelling*, a performance I am currently creating at the Haas Library in the Dipòsit de les Aigües. For this performance, I investigate the way ancient Sufi texts may shed light on the contemporary emotion of solastalgia. In the workshop, we will discuss the term *solastalgia* in depth and discover why—though related—it is different from nostalgia. Then we will delve into an exploration of the ways our bodies and minds may be considered archival loci and discover how performance can document, interpret, and resist the lived experience of urban erasure.

Participants will share their stories of habitat transformation — the disappearance of a beloved tree, the gentrification of a neighbourhood, the appearance of a shopping centre, the vanishing of a wasteland one secretly loved, the renovation of an abandoned building, the complete restoration of a ruin that made us dream — from the minutest changes to the most drastic reshaping, or even destruction. Drawing on a kinesthetic methodology I am developing, I will invite you to try a series of exercises exploring how experiences of solastalgia may be embodied and shared performatively.

At the heart of the workshop sits a double-headed question: what do we affectively and physically retain from the processes that transfigure the places we love? And can these experiences, with their profound and intimate reshufflings, be turned into performances through which valuable knowledge may be shared?

Your participation contributes directly to *Mundus Vocalis: Activating Sufi Texts through Performative Storytelling*. Parts of the workshop may be sound-recorded and used in the soundtrack of the performance, based on the signed consent of each participant.

## Chirine El Ansary

Chirine El Ansary is a Cairo- and Lille-based storyteller, performer, and researcher who works at the intersection of embodied practice and cultural memory. Born in Cairo and raised between Egypt and France, she holds a Practice-as-Research PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London, where her thesis *Performing in a Dominated Body: Redefining the One Thousand and One Nights Identity through Praxis* explored oral performance as a decolonial methodology. El Ansary has developed a distinctive practice of physical storytelling and physical performance that extends far beyond conventional stages.

Over 15 years, she has performed worldwide in diverse settings—from ancient palaces and historic Cairo alleyways to refugee camps, prisons, natural settings, and remote villages. Central to her work is a three-decade engagement with *The One Thousand and One Nights*, which she approaches as a dynamic archive of lived experience rather than a static collection. Her adaptations and original works include *Paradise Square*, *Damascus of Strawberries*, *Roses and Nigella*, *The Heart of a Hero*, *No Return*, *Hoda Day and Night*, *Fragments of Eternity*, and *Matrices*. This approach strips away Orientalist clichés to explore themes of exile, belonging, and memory's precariousness.

El Ansary's current research examines *solastalgia*—the grief of environmental displacement. She adapts this concept, usually associated with natural environments, to the rapidly transforming urban landscapes of ancient cities. Through collaborative, site-based projects, she investigates how oral performance can transmit experiences of cultural and spiritual disconnection beyond conventional academic frameworks, transforming them into shared, embodied knowledge. As an educator, she leads workshops globally with artists, various communities, and marginalized groups. Storytelling and physical performance reclaim silenced voices and make visible the invisibilized, thus challenging dominant narratives.

