

the kettle is always on

Nolanders

General info
Contemporary circus show
Length: ca. 50 minutes
Location: Indoor
Language: English
Audience: Age 12+

Creation Dossier May 2025

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The Kettle is Always On

is a a contemporary circus show premiering in March 2026. It offers an intimate and irreverent look at the ways we search for meaning in a chaotic world.

Through handstands and acro-dance, two sisters reflect on their unconventional upbringing and the polarities that exist between them. Despite their diverging tendencies, ritual is what ties them together – to one other, and to themselves.

Sometimes these rituals can border on the obsessive.

Why do we still feel so tied to them? And how do we honor the rituals that matter to those close to us?

Circus in itself can become a ritual, both in its practice and its performance. Through countless hours of careful and attentive repetition, a sense of constancy emerges in the daily actions of training, and the shared ritual of performance. But what happens when a ritual is interrupted? Or even innocently trodden over by the shoes of an unobservant bystander?

Inviting the audience to question their own role in the ritual of performance, Nolanders wants to playfully problematize the modern function of ritual– in society, as individuals, and in relation to those around us.

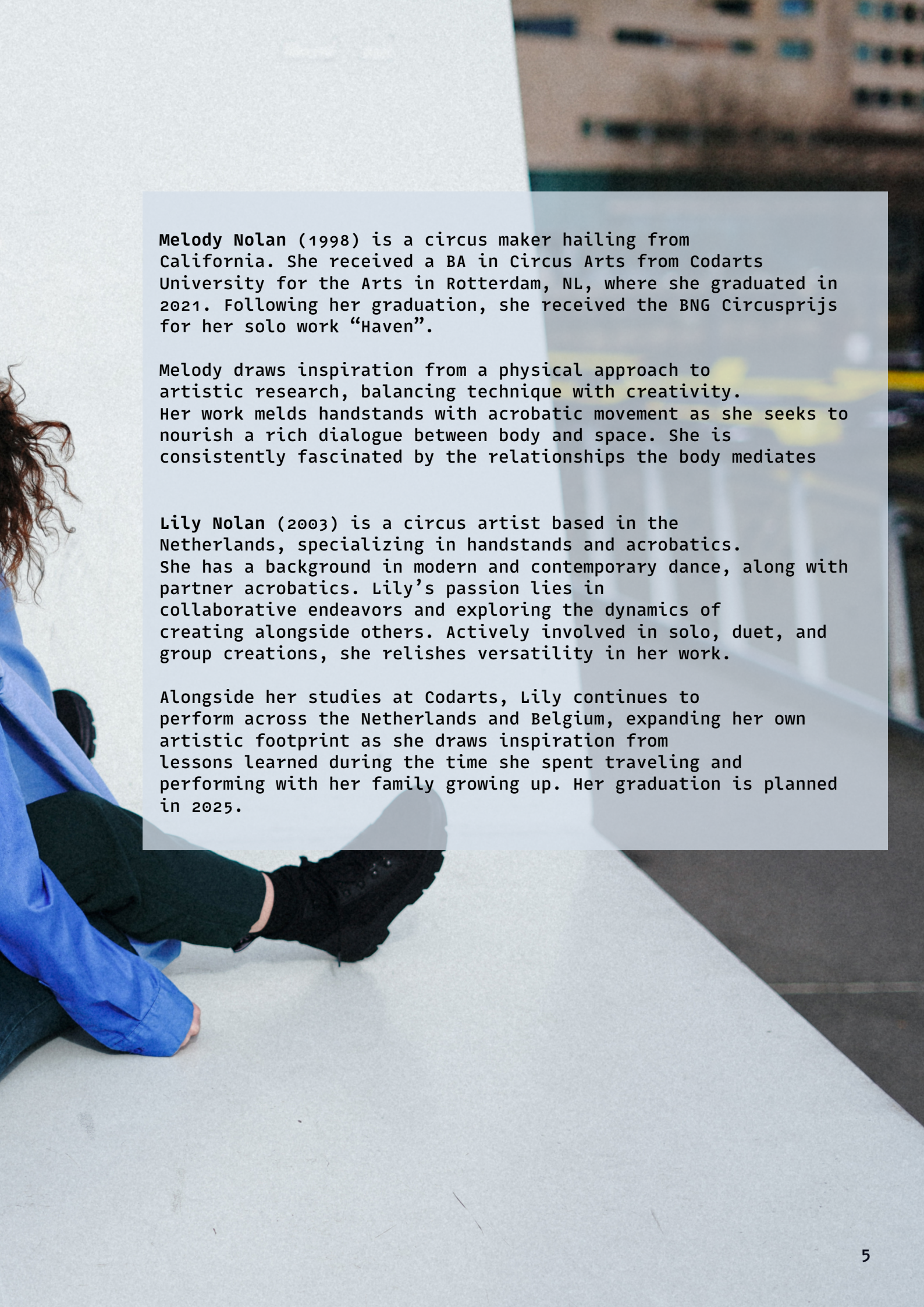
The artists want to address an intergenerational audience, including young adults who, like themselves, are often looking for a place to call their own. Nolanders hopes that the audience feels called to question the ways ritual may be present in their own lives, even if they know it by a different name.

About the Makers

Nolanders makes movement-driven contemporary circus shows that reframe common experiences through a physical and acrobatic language. They address social norms and values using circus as a lens to discover different perspectives on life experiences we all recognize.

Over a decade ago, Nolanders began as a family project. Introduced to circus training at the same time as their parents, sisters Melody, Lily and Juniper found joy in the collaboration, creativity and experimentation of the collective endeavor. Eventually, they moved from local performances to traveling across Europe and Asia. It so happens that all three girls have gone on to pursue careers in circus arts after leaving home. Now, eight years after their last collaboration, Melody and Lily are reuniting to create 'The Kettle is Always On'.





Melody Nolan (1998) is a circus maker hailing from California. She received a BA in Circus Arts from Codarts University for the Arts in Rotterdam, NL, where she graduated in 2021. Following her graduation, she received the BNG Circusprijs for her solo work “Haven”.

Melody draws inspiration from a physical approach to artistic research, balancing technique with creativity. Her work melds handstands with acrobatic movement as she seeks to nourish a rich dialogue between body and space. She is consistently fascinated by the relationships the body mediates

Lily Nolan (2003) is a circus artist based in the Netherlands, specializing in handstands and acrobatics. She has a background in modern and contemporary dance, along with partner acrobatics. Lily’s passion lies in collaborative endeavors and exploring the dynamics of creating alongside others. Actively involved in solo, duet, and group creations, she relishes versatility in her work.

Alongside her studies at Codarts, Lily continues to perform across the Netherlands and Belgium, expanding her own artistic footprint as she draws inspiration from lessons learned during the time she spent traveling and performing with her family growing up. Her graduation is planned in 2025.

Theme

As two people who grew up in an environment where change was the norm, the sisters learned how informal rituals can give a sense of consistency to life. A ritual is something that changes you, and something to return to. It's a way to be transported, and a way to return home. To find meaning in an otherwise overcrowded sea of input.

Why do we do what we do? Because we decided it matters—
and what matters to each of us is wildly different.

What is the difference between routine and ritual?

Can you create a ritual through repetition?

Can you live a life without ritual?

The show takes the form of a nested series of rituals: celebrations, preparations, pleas, superstitions, formalities, mindful reflections and cathartic episodes. We see the sisters communicate through the language of ritual—when each action is examined through this fine lens, the most minute detail can become both exquisitely meaningful and utterly absurd.

The characters share a common goal: to complete the ritual of the performance properly, completely, as it should be done. In order to finally manage, they need to find ways to complement each other's differences; not only through physical contrast in speed, quality, and movement texture, but also by seeing through the other's eyes in confronting the differences between them that define their relationship.



Scenography

Scene by scene, the show's entire scenography emerges from the two backpacks of the performers, emblematic of their nomadic lifestyle. Within the worlds contained in their respective backpacks, the artists offer a glimpse of the trappings of home carried along as they move through the world. Half-IKEA and half-Mary Poppins, they show that home is a thing that one does as much as something that exists outside of you.

Aided by a few crucial keepsakes (a party hat, an ornate rug, a bag of candles, a kettle...) they construct a ritual space which has the power to transform at any moment- and therefore, to transform the people within it. This lightweight scenography combines with a keenly devised light design to create a variety of atmospheres, from the most intimate candlelit ceremony to a raucous party.



Research and Dramaturgy

The sisters pair their individual approaches to handstands and acrobatics to discover new vocabulary that illustrates both their differences and similarities. A tangle of limbs moving acrobatically across the stage becomes the manifestation of a merged familial identity, wrestling with the question, “where do you end and I begin?”

Meanwhile, handstands become a metaphor for meditation and the return to self. Through full-body concentration and focus on breath, the transformation from an external to an internal focal point is represented visually through the handstand in its calm control and alignment.

In a series of escalating image-driven scenarios, they search for a physical vocabulary in acrobatic partnering that evokes the simultaneous qualities of symbiosis and opposition. Working together to construct a sacred space from the minimal scenography, they weave through and around each other.

Over the course of the show, the audience is invited by degrees to consider their own position in the implicit ritual of the ongoing performance. The artists invite the audience to join them in a fleeting moment where everything ranging from the ridiculous to the heartfelt can exist within the shared space forged by the ritual of performance.

Agenda

July 2024	Research residency at Motion Chapel (Ireland)
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Summer 2025

Start creation

7 - 11 July

Residency at Korzo (NL)

28 July - 10 August

Residency at Silence Residency (FI)

18 - 30 August

Residency at Arts Printing House (LT)

8 - 13 September

Residency at De Clinch (NL)

15 - 28 September

Residency at PERPLX (BE)

17 Nov - 30 November

Residency tbc (NL)

1 - 7 December

Residency at PERPLX (BE)

Spring 2026

Montage and premiere

January

Montage and try-outs at De Landing - Amsterdam

January

Premiere - This is Not a Circus - Amsterdam (NL)

March 19-22

CirqueMania Festival - Korzo, Den Haag (NL)

April 24-26

WOW Festival (Option) - San Diego (USA)

March - December

First performing period



Credits

Artists: Melody Nolan & Lily Nolan

Dramaturgical advice: Aurelia Brailowsky

Outside eye: Noëmi Wagner

Photos: Charlotte Hofer

Partners: TENT Huis voor Hedendaagse Circus, PERPLX VZW

Supported by: Gemeente Rotterdam, Motion Chapel,
Culture Moves Europe



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