

# Like Clockwork, a solo exhibition by Mona Benyamin at Triangle-Astérides from May 21 to September 27, 2026.

## Curators

Line Ajan  
Camille Ramanana Rahary

## Production

Camille Ramanana Rahary

## Technical management and installation

Jean-Christophe Aubert, Hugo Bonifait,  
Matthieu Girard, John Girard, Thibaut  
Magnan, Crao Man, Rocco Scaranello,  
Caroline Selig

## Outreach program

Key Soulié, Capucine Tible,  
Jeanne Le Scodan

## Reception & ticketing team

Céleste Ascar, Charlotte Kinon, Lion  
Pierres, David Soriano, Mia Suau

## Exhibition reception agents

Aude Bourhis, Elsa Gasnault, Rachid  
Hogas, Agathe Mirafiore, Souvenir Sitty  
Bahiya

## Exhibition assistant

Maya Giraudet

## The artist wishes to thank

Line Ajan, James Bagwell, Andrea Bellini,  
Mahmoud El Safadi, Oscar Gardea, Brent  
Green, Haitham Haddad, Adam HajYahia,  
Nabil Harb, Erica Kiesewetter, Lina  
Lazaar, Marc Mancus, Argyro Nicolau,

Walid Raad, Camille Ramanana Rahary,  
Zachary Schwartzman, Benyamin &  
Rouhana families, especially her parents,  
Michel and Nahia Benyamin, to whom  
she expresses her endless love

## Production

Triangle-Astérides

## Co-production

Friche la Belle de Mai, Kamel Lazaar  
Foundation

Presented as part of the Mediterranean  
Season 2026

Conception  
and production



Co-production



Network



Institutional partners



For her first solo exhibition, Mona Benyamin presents the first version of a new film diptych alongside three earlier video works.

Resonating like an invitation to move, a strangely familiar rhythm fills the exhibition space. Sustained by the drone of a cello and the snap of a snare drum, it gradually turns into a repetitive loop. Like clockwork. One by one, then in unison, the voices of twelve singers, whose faces are never revealed, overlap. Their spectral appearance echoes the embodied presence of two recurring figures in Mona Benyamin's films: her parents. Michel and Nahia Benyamin appear at times as the stars of sitcoms, music videos, newscasts, and most recently as protagonists of horror films.

Mona Benyamin draws on various TV conventions, editing techniques, special effects and sonic elements that evoke the media landscape of the 1990s—the decade that ushered in the revolution of digital video and free-to-air direct broadcast channels. The kitsch and surrealism associated with that cultural moment, particularly in the Arabic-speaking world, imbue Benyamin's work. Citing this distinctive audiovisual vocabulary, she plays with comic and tragic registers to tell stories relating to the Palestinian collective experience—from the continued dispossession of land to the enduring intergenerational transmission of memory and trauma.

Inspired by the composition's repetitive structure, large swaths of black curtains create a spiral-like scenography within the exhibition, where sound, language, and history intertwine. The exhibition begins with *Trouble in Paradise* (2018), a work the artist filmed in her parents' home while still an undergraduate fine arts student. A relentless satire of the enduring traumas of the Nakba and the Israeli occupation, the work draws from the past and replicates the looks and sounds of American sitcoms—from their blatant gender stereotypes to the canned laughter. In doing so, it sets the tone for *Like Clockwork*. Here, as often in Benyamin's work, it is the “astonishing absurdity”<sup>1</sup> of life in Palestine that serves as material for the dark knock-knock jokes told by her parents. They first utter generic jokes in English, a language that they do not master, as evidenced by their baffled and, at times, blasé expressions. The dissonance between the cruel jokes we hear and the ill-fitting facial expression we see fades halfway through the film when Michel and Nahia Benyamin switch to Arabic. This linguistic shift also marks an affective one, with the artist's parents gaining more authority and agency in deciding the tones of the jokes. They are no longer the objects of laughter, but rather the very subjects, dictating the work's mood and redirecting the audience's gaze. The violences inflicted on Palestinians are not only conveyed through her parents' speech and voice, but also through the repetitive rhythm dictated by the pacing of the jokes and the silences that follow them—like clockwork.

Indeed, while Mona Benyamin is mainly known as a video artist and filmmaker, she is also an amateur cellist and a music enthusiast, making her particularly attuned to film's aural elements, from sound to silence and the overarching rhythm. It made sense, then, that she would turn to the aesthetics of 1990s Arab videoclips and the melodies of Arabic ballads to construct the uncanny environment of *Moonscape* (2020). Set to the languorous melody of an original song reminiscent of the oeuvres of Marcel Khalifeh and Fairuz, the film's distinctive décor initially recalls the architecture and atmosphere of the Black Lodge in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990). Marked by a black-and-white checkered floor, *Moonscape*'s set was actually inspired by a recording of the late Syrian singer Sabah Fakhri performing his iconic song “Ib'atli Gawab” on *Jar e/ Amar*—a TV program that aired on the Bahraini Orbit Network in the mid-1990s and that hosted iconic signers from the Arab world, from Sabah Fakhri to Melhem Barakat and Diana Haddad. The filming and editing techniques used here replicate those of music videos of that era, from the dreamy shots of her father gazing at the sky, to the photoshopping of her mother's face onto the moon. This film, that the artist considers to be “in a state of search”<sup>2</sup>, draws on the long tradition of Arabic poetry and music that reflects on the moon, not only as a metaphor for the lover's face, but also as a symbol of hope and a promising futurity.

1. “I am also the child of astonishing absurdity: I grew up in half of my home, and the other half was stolen by Jewish settlers from Long Island, whose colonial endeavors, much like the settlers in Bet El, are also financed by tax-exempt American charities.” In: Mohammed El-Kurd, *Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2025.
2. Conversation between Line Ajan and Mona Benyamin on *ArteEast*, November 16, 2021, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3f9Q3P5wSA>

3. Palestinian psychologists have found, for instance, that the Western concept of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, does not apply to the experiences of Palestinians. Palestinian psychologist Samah Jaber, for instance, uses the concept of “chronic traumatic stress.” See: Fondacaro, Karen, & Mazulla, Emily, “The Chronic Traumatic Stress Framework: A conceptual model to guide empirical investigation and mental health treatment for refugees and survivors of torture”, *Torture Journal*, 2018, vol. 28, no. 1, URL: <https://doi.org/10.7146/torture.v28i1.105477>
4. The final version of this work will be exhibited at B7L9, the contemporary art center of the Kamel Lazaar Foundation, as part of the Biennial of Moving Image/ Jaou Tunis, which will take place between October and November 2026.
5. Conversation between the curators and the artist, October 6, 2025.
6. Michel Chion, “Prologue: Raising the Voice”, *The Voice in Cinema*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, p. 7.
7. Conversation between the curators and the artist, October 6, 2025.

By contrast, *Tomorrow, again* (2023) bears the mark of an unsettled present, where narrative starts to dissolve and affect begins to take over. The green screen of TV studios becomes a theater stage where the usual composure of journalists gives way to floods of sobs, screams, and hysteric laughs. These exaggerated reactions continuously interrupt the news cycle. For both the artist and her films’ protagonists, laughter functions as a potential coping mechanism—a strategy of psychological survival in the face of the lasting material and emotional effects of life under occupation. In Palestine, trauma is intergenerational, permanent, and persistent.<sup>3</sup>

In her new installation titled *Dress Rehearsal*<sup>4</sup> (2026), Mona Benyamin moves even further away from the narrative form, instead attempting to “alienate” Maurice Ravel’s *Boléro*.<sup>5</sup> The 20th-century ballet piece has been arranged and modified by composer Manar Hashmi for an intimate choir, in which voices replace the original orchestral instruments and modulate through various keys. The singers’ gradually intensifying chants disrupt the aesthetic and physical experience of this musical monument of Western culture, which the artist bends to the sounds of Arabic music. Here, the chants consist of the onomatopoeic sounds “dum tak”—markers of the *iqa’at*, or rhythmic cycles, of Arabic music—and introduce a nonlinguistic voice.

These opening notes set a nightmarish action in motion: on screen, Mona Benyamin’s parents repeatedly go up and down a spiral staircase, as if trapped within this overwhelming crescendo—a symbol of a suffocating hegemonic culture. The unique soundtrack binding the two video channels relates to the research that Mona Benyamin conducted on music as a tool of torture, as part of her master’s thesis at Bard’s Center for Human Rights and the Arts. In contrast to the singing choir, Michel and Nahia Benyamin appear as “voiceless”, to borrow the term used by French film theorist and composer Michel Chion.<sup>6</sup> They are neither mute nor silent, for we see their mouths wide open; rather, it is the filmic apparatus that is deaf to their screams. With *Dress Rehearsal*, Mona Benyamin deploys what we could call a musical gaze, a contemporary approach to audiovisual art that considers sound in all its encompassing complexity—from speech to silence, passing through music—as a defining element of the perception and aesthetic experience of moving image. While music and speech have always been present in Benyamin’s practice, here it is sound that launches and halts the work’s action.

In *Dress Rehearsal* as in her earlier works, repetition—in humor, in language, and in sound—operates ambivalently. First, it traps the subjects of the film in a temporality of reproduced violence, but is then subverted, becoming the very mechanism through which they restore their sense of self and time. In this slow-burn horror, Mona Benyamin’s parents eventually find relief, but only when the music stops. Like a fever dream, *Dress Rehearsal* ends where it began: Michel and Nahia Benyamin make their way back to their car. We would like to believe they are not travelling through space, but through in time, toward a future moment in which “repetition [appears] as a possible return”<sup>7</sup> to a free Palestine.

Line Ajan, with Camille Ramanana Rahary

Mona Benyamin (b.1997; Haifa, Palestine) is an audio-visual artist, filmmaker, and cellist who lives and works between Haifa and the Hudson Valley, New York. Her works explore the absurdity of life under occupation, delving into themes of repetition, trauma, and temporal awareness. Her video works are known for appropriating formats from mass and popular media, often manipulating their devices and structures to challenge the rigid boundaries between truth and fiction. Her use of dark humor further underscores her investigation into agency, victimhood, and the nuances of power dynamics. Mona’s works invite the viewers to reconsider established norms and the fluidity of memory, forging connections between personal expression and broader social commentary.

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### 1. *Trouble in Paradise*, 2018

Single-channel video, sound, duration: 8'

Twenty-seven shots unfold in succession, in which Michel and Nahia Benyamin exchange jokes and riddles, punctuated by pre-recorded laughter or disapproving boos. In *Trouble in Paradise*, Mona Benyamin draws on the formal codes of the television sitcom: the unity of place is centred on the family home, the dramaturgy built on the repetitive interactions of a bickering couple, the narrative structure organised into self-contained comic situations, sharp colour grading, and cross-dissolve transitions. As the video progresses, this well-oiled set of conventions begins to break down. The comic effectiveness—ordinarily grounded in fluency and rhythm—is suspended by hesitations and the visible discomfort of the bodies on screen: the two protagonists are reading their lines from a teleprompter in a language, English, that they do not master. Gradually, the misogynistic humour, rooted in stereotypes of the blonde, the wife, and the couple, gives way to an anti-humour whose punch-lines shift the comic register toward an exposure of the tragic absurdity of life under Israeli occupation. When the language slips into Palestinian Arabic, the artist's parents visibly change their bearing: their gazes become more direct, at times confrontational, as each of them gains in agency, reclaiming ownership of the narrative they are telling. In this video, humour emerges as a space of resistance and a survival mechanism in the face of events such as the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967), making it possible to move beyond the silence imposed by these collective traumas. CRR

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### 2. *Moonscape*, 2020

Single-channel video, stereo sound, duration: 11'

Within a surrealist setting, Michel and Mona Benyamin dance to a ballad composed by Mona Benyamin, narrating the story of a young girl who discovers the existence of the Lunar Embassy. This organisation, run by one Dennis M. Hope, promises anyone the possibility of becoming the owner of a plot on the Moon and acquiring its citizenship. Already in *Trouble in Paradise*, one of the riddles told by Michel Benyamin—"what is a Palestinian's favourite sport? Border jumping"—alluded to the restrictions on freedom of movement imposed on Palestinians. *Moonscape* extends this reflection by drawing a parallel with the impossibility of returning home\*. In an email exchange with an employee of the Lunar Embassy, Mona Benyamin explores the possibilities a lunar passport might offer for circumventing the travel restrictions tied to her Israeli passport. The Moon emerges as a horizon of hope, yet this promise—while it sketches the outline of an alternative future—remains suspended within a legal fiction whose symbolic reach does not erase its concrete inaccessibility. CRR

\*The so-called "Absentee Property Law", enacted in 1950, allows Israel to expropriate land belonging to Palestinians who fled their homes during the Nakba. Its application notably granted Israeli citizenship to Palestinians who remained on their land in 1948.

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### 3. *Lunar Passport*, 2020

Passport, dimensions: 17,6 x 12.7cm

The artist's lunar passport is displayed alongside the video *Moonscape*, in which it appears. Its stage lighting accentuates its artificiality.

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### 4. *Tomorrow, again*, 2023

Single-channel video, sound, duration: 11'

From the programme's jingle to the news ticker and the television channel logo, everything in this bulletin appears plausible. Yet the title of the video, *Tomorrow, again*, immediately introduces an unsettling note: that of a cyclical time, condemned to replay itself indefinitely. On screen, a news anchor announces the latest reports from Palestine. Confronted with the daily repetition of violence, the expected composure and neutrality of the presenter begin to crack, giving way to extreme emotional and physical reactions: for nearly a minute, Nahia Benyamin, facing the camera, breaks down in tears. The impossibility of language becomes the narrative engine of the video, and continues as two witnesses recount, in contradictory and confused statements, an event whose reality remains uncertain. Called upon to speak on the matter, the studio guests fail to articulate any coherent discourse, are unable to contain their gestures, and their conflict brings the programme to an abrupt end. True to the television codes with which Mona Benyamin plays, the weather forecast closes the bulletin. But, once again, the broadcast proves dysfunctional. Through a simple pun announcing the instability of the region, the presenter—embodied by the artist's father—concludes his segment with an interminable, forced laugh, answering the tears that opened the programme. Behind him, archival footage from 1948, 2014 and 2021 plays in succession, and a key—the Palestinian emblem of the right of return—begins to spin like the hands of a clock whose time would never cease to flow. CRR

*Tomorrow, again* was commissioned by The Mosaic Rooms/A.M. Qattan Foundation, 2023. With support from Arts Council England and Bagri Foundation. The work was completed in September 2023, a month before Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza began. Presented in loving memory of Boulos Benyamin. The artist would like to thank her parents, Michel and Nahia Benyamin, and express her unbounded and endless love for them.

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### 5. *Dress Rehearsal*, 2026

Two-channel video installation of a work in progress, duration: 10min, looped

A musical loop—an arrangement of Maurice Ravel's *Boléro* composed especially for the occasion by musician Manar Hashmi—accompanies visitors through the exhibition and into its centre, where the projection of a filmic diptych stages the artist's parents alongside a choir in the midst of rehearsal. The first notes given by the conductor simultaneously trigger the first action of Michel and Nahia Benyamin. On the opening beat, the couple steps out of a car to make their way home, pursued by a menacing camera and the music's crescendo. This chase grows increasingly threatening, reaching its peak in a frenzied pursuit up a spiral staircase—a staple setting of the horror film. Sound is treated here in the manner of a camera movement, acting upon the narrative and asserting itself as a protagonist in its own right. This engagement with music is part of a broader reflection the artist conducts on the physical effects of repetition, which the ostinato—the characteristic repeating rhythmic pattern of the *Boléro*—actively fosters. Close-up shots of bodies affected by the music, and the increasingly suffocating atmosphere it creates, bear witness to this: relief is found only at the moment the music stops.

The perpetual quality of the here-alienated *Boléro* is echoed in the exhibition's scenography, whose curtains draw visitors into a loop producing a sense of disorientation—recurring motifs throughout Mona Benyamin's practice. CRR

STARRING

Michel and Nahia Benyamin  
Reid Shriver: Conductor  
Maisy Fisher: Soprano (Solo 1)  
Annabella Capaccio: Soprano (Solo 2)  
Gilbert Otten: Soprano  
Abigail Arndt: Alto (Solo 1)  
Anora Otto: Alto (Solo 2)  
Charlotte Ferguson: Alto  
Ryan Michki: Tenor (Solo 1)  
Milo Sussman: Tenor (Solo 2)  
Damian James Ramirez: Tenor  
Javy Polanco: Bass  
Garrick Neuner: Bass  
Kielor Tung: Bass  
Alfred Western: Cello

SOUNDTRACK

*Unravel* (based on "Boléro" by Maurice Ravel)  
Arranged and modified for SATB choir, snare drum,  
and cello by Manar Hashmi  
Performed by: Bard Chamber Singers  
Recording Engineer: Noah Sonenstein  
Recording Consultant: Thomas Mark  
Sound Design: Ziad Moukarzel

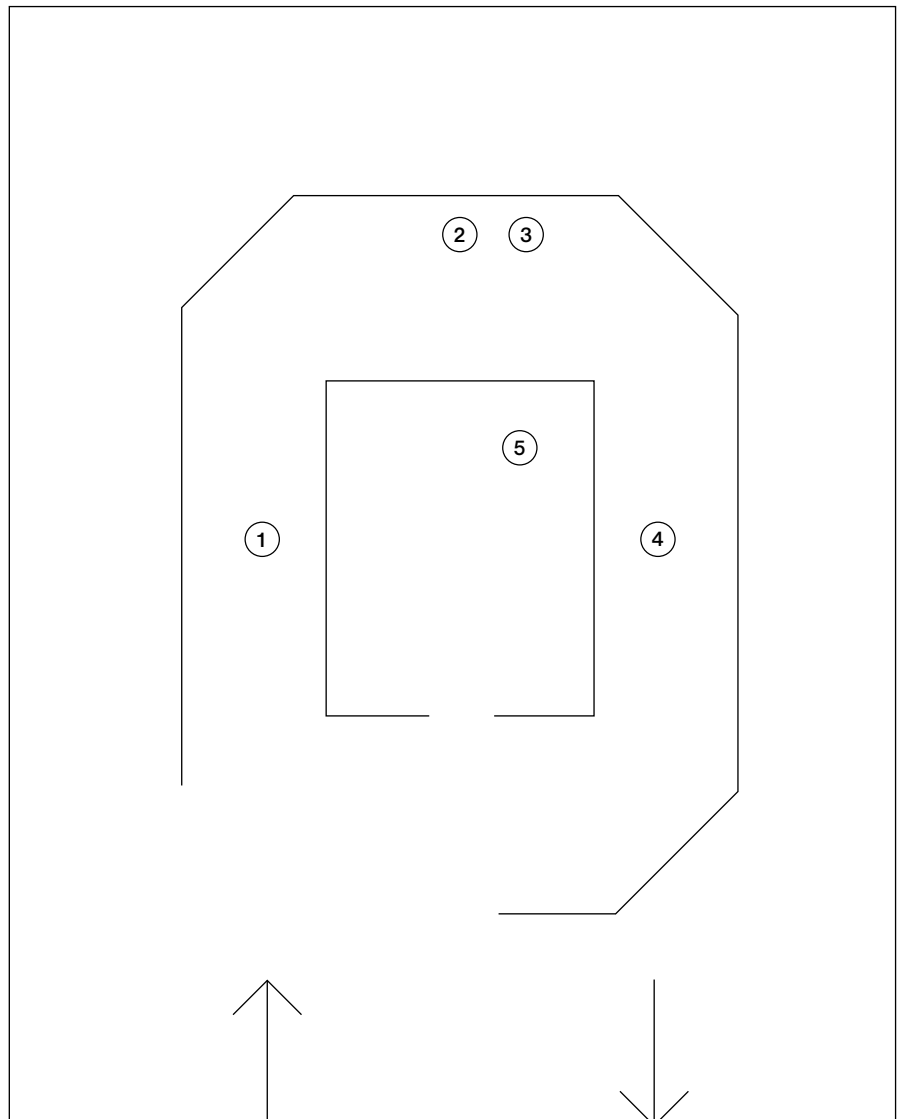
Cinematography

Omar Jabareen (Staircase Channel)  
Sarah Frazier (Choral Channel)

Make-up Artist (Staircase Channel): Wardy Abu Khadra  
Coloring: Chrystel Elias

*Dress Rehearsal* is a production of the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève and Kamel Lazaar Foundation for the BIM'26 as part of the 8th Jaou biennial event, with the support of the Contemporary Art Fund of the City (FMAC) and Canton of Geneva (FCAC). It was co-produced by Triangle-Astérides in Marseille (France) and B7L9 – The Artistic Factory of the Kamel Lazaar Foundation in La Marsa (Tunisia). The work was co-funded and first developed as part of the 2026 MA Thesis Exhibition in the Center for Human Rights and the Arts at Bard College (CHRA).

The artist wishes to thank: Benyamin & Rouhana families, Line Ajan, Jean-Christophe Aubert, James Bagwell, Andrea Bellini, Hugo Bonifait, Mahmoud El Safadi, Oscar Gardea, Souheila Ghorbel, John Girard, Matthieu Girard, Victorine Grataloup, Brent Green, Haitham Haddad, Adam HajYahia, Nabil Harb, Erica Kiesewetter, Lina Lazaar, Crao Man, Marc Mancus, Argyro Nicolau, Walid Raad, Camille Ramanana Rahary, Rocco Scaranello, Zachary Schwartzman, Caroline Selig.



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# At Triangle-Astérides during the exhibition

## Outreach program

— Public tours for individuals or groups, in French or English, upon request at [contact@triangle-asterides.org](mailto:contact@triangle-asterides.org)

— Wednesday, May 27, 10am and 11am, Tour Panorama, 4th floor: guided tour in French, registration through the Ciné-Palestine festival

— Friday, August 28, 5:30pm, Tour Panorama, 4th floor: guided tour in English by Line Ajan, guest curator of the exhibition, as part of the Art-o-rama fair, free admission without registration

— Saturdays, May 30, June 13 and 27, July 11 and 25, August 29, September 5 and 26, 4pm: “flash” tours (30 minutes) for all audiences from 6 years old (free tours with ticket collection)

## Residents

Session 2  
From 04/27 to 06/29  
— Mac Andre Arboleda <sup>PH</sup>  
— Clémence Lollia Hilaire <sup>GP/NL</sup>

Meetings by appointment:  
write to [contact@triangle-asterides.org](mailto:contact@triangle-asterides.org)

## Associate Artists

Single annual session  
— Elise Courcol-Rozès <sup>FR</sup>  
— Marguerite Maréchal <sup>FR</sup>  
— Sarah Netter <sup>FR</sup>

Meetings by appointment:  
write to [contact@triangle-asterides.org](mailto:contact@triangle-asterides.org)

## Events

— June 18, 4-8pm, Triangle-Astérides’ artists studios: open studios by Resident and Associate Artists, free admission without registration

— July, date to be announced on our website: event with Shed publishing (Marseille) and Wendy’s Subway (New York), free admission

— Friday, August 28, 2-4pm, Petit Plateau: meetings with the recipients of the Cnap support grant for art theory and criticism, as part of the Art-o-rama fair

— Reading and conversation with Karim Kattan, date to be announced on our website, La Friche’s bookshop, free admission

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## About Triangle-Astérides

Founded by artists between 1992 and 1994, Triangle-Astérides is a contemporary art center of national interest located in Marseille. It is unique in that it is a member of a cultural cooperative, the Friche la Belle de Mai, of which it is one of the founding organizations.

Triangle-Astérides brings together exhibitions and research residencies for French and international artists as well as local associated artists. Associated audiences, events, editorial programming, and close attention to cultural mediation to serve the largest possible audience enrich and complete the program.

To best meet the needs of each visitor, Triangle-Astérides aims for accessibility whenever possible (PRM, guided tours

in FSL, and audio description or easy to read and understand upon request). Triangle-Astérides has inherited international networks (through the Triangle Network, from which it was created and of which it remains a member organization), national networks, and local networks (through the merger of the Triangle France and Astérides associations in 2018). Connecting these different scales is at the heart of all of its activities. With a view to eco-responsibility, Triangle-Astérides now co-produces all of its exhibitions.

Triangle-Astérides is a nonprofit organization that receives funding from the City of Marseille, the Ministry of Culture – DRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region, and the Bouches-du-Rhône Department.

