

Artist's Statement

As an artist, I like to work with people. My approach varies between a collaborative-dialogical performance-based practice, independent curatorial work and sociopolitical projects.

My work has developed from a focus on objects (life-sized sculptures until 1994), to solo performances (until 2003), to site-specific collaborative performance-based projects (since 2003), which primarily deal with cultural phenomena and narratives. I like to take idiosyncratic stories, societal processes or subjects of scholarly research and playfully transform them into tangible allegories.

I'm especially interested in finding – or inventing – unexpected connections, and investigating narrative structures. Each new work begins with a fresh conceptual approach, as I intentionally integrate local resources into my artistic process, especially the people I meet on site.

Working with participants who are mostly non-artists can be complex and challenging, yet highly enjoyable. I try to safeguard the energy that results from these interactions and to use it to create convincing formats. This calls for both artistic direction and social skills.

In addition to performance, I usually use photography, video and installation in my work. Occasionally I'll include drawings, texts and handmade objects in the installations.

“For nearly 15 years, Janet Grau has included professionals from various fields as well as local non-artist players in her experimental and interdisciplinary projects. She has developed an original form of theatrical art from her extensively researched and carefully staged collaborative projects. These combine improvisational dance and amateur performance, staged photographs and videos, sprawling object installations, costume and scenery landscapes, music, interviews, memories. The artist subtly choreographs the time-based and static art forms into an intriguing space for experience and thought, in which fractures, gaps and imperfections remain, and people from various backgrounds begin to communicate with each other about their desires, values and feelings, about existence, work, and identity.”

– Ulrike Lorenz, Director of the Kunsthalle Mannheim (2015)