

Ambergris

an alchemical puppet operetta
by Patrick Sims



Opening in November 2018 in TJP of Strasbourg (CDN) and in Mini Théâtre of Payerne
Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes de Charleville en 2019

Producer/ Les Antliaclastes
Co-producers / TJP de Strasbourg/ CDN - Mini Théâtre de Payerne, Suisse/Festival Mondial des Théâtres de
Marionnettes de Charleville.

The Antliaclastes is helped by the DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the Conseil Départemental of Allier.

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Ambergris is the story of Pinocchio in the belly of the whale.

Pinocchio is a classic story about transformation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the episode in which Pinocchio finds himself in the belly of the whale, a pivotal moment in the tale in which the puppet is confronted with his maker and his own essence. It is inside the belly of this great whale the puppet begins his process of individuation before being spat out again into the world as a real boy.



Ambergris definition:

Ambergris is formed from a secretion of the bile duct in the intestines of the sperm whale, and can be found floating on the sea or washed up on the coast. It is also sometimes found in the abdomens of dead sperm whales. Because the beaks of giant squids have been discovered within lumps of ambergris, scientists have theorized that the substance is produced by the whale's gastrointestinal tract to ease the passage of hard, sharp objects that it may have eaten. The sperm whale usually vomits these, but if one travels further down the gut, it will be covered in ambergris, which smells like nothing else on this earth.

This bizarre digestive by-product, Ambergris, is highly sought after by perfumers for its key ingredient that makes sophisticated scents linger on the skin. Ambergris has an ability to transform a perfume through some sort of synergy. It has fixative powers, helping the perfume, or any object scented by it, such as clothing, retain the scent for years. In a perfume, it's not just the scent of the ambergris, it's the ability of the ambergris to "anchor" all of the other scents.

This rare secretion produced only by sperm whales is expelled at sea and floats on ocean currents for years, slowly transforming, before it sometimes washes ashore looking like a nondescript waxy pebble. Despite being one of the world's most expensive substances (its value is nearly that of gold and has at times in history been triple it), ambergris is also one of the world's least known. It can appear almost anywhere but is found so rarely, it might as well appear nowhere.

Ambergris tells the tale about the production of this rare substance through a blending together great literary characters- all of whom have been swallowed by a whale. Ambergris has a magical ability to bind disparate smells harmoniously. It is an odour that is inexplicable to anything else.

Appearing in the tale are....

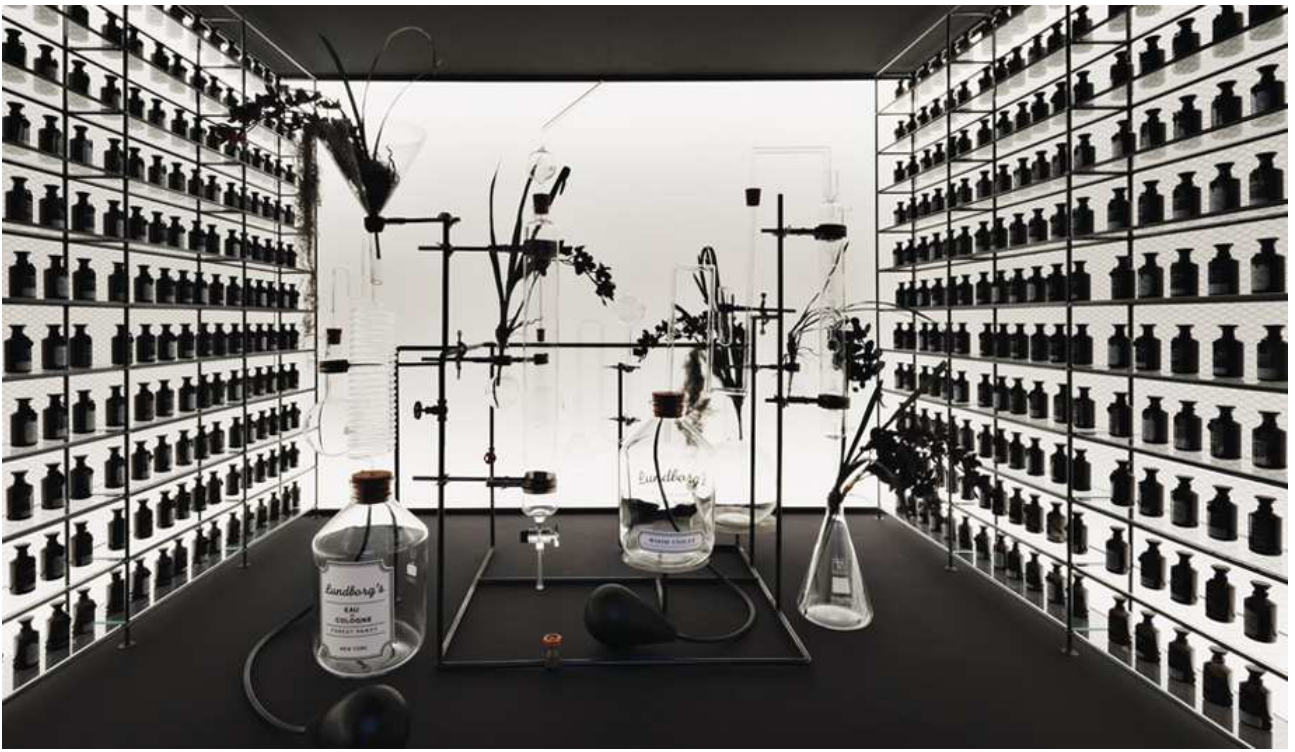
Jonah, the biblical character whom was swallowed by a whale for his disobediance, then spat out again thanks to his re-found faith.



Pinocchio, who threw himself into the mouth of the whale in search of his maker, and upon being reunited with his father, brewed a sneezing powder and was as well ejected from the beast.

Captain Ahab, in his obsession over his hunt for Moby Dick, is taken under by the mythical monster, refusing to let go.

We find these three characters together in a kind of rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub, The prophet, the puppet, the pirate whale hunter-fused together floating on the sea in a lump of ambergris.



Ambergris is set inside a giant perfume laboratory.

Behind the doors is a charlatan perfumer who is obsessed with finding the perfect lump of ambergris in order to complete his great olfactory masterpiece.

The inside of this perfume laboratory resembles the digestive interior of a whale.

The Quack perfumer dissects lumps of ambergris before considering their inclusion into his formula for the perfect smell.



Ambergris charts the process of a base substance into its purest form; from shit to gold, whilst following the psychological purification of our puppet hero.

Through its musical structure, *Ambergris* mixes play of string, shadow, hand and rod puppets, masks, and live perfume synthesis into an olfactory puppet operetta about being and its scents.

Patrick Sims, 2017

Patrick Sims / Les Antliaclastes

Les Antliaclastes are a puppet theatre company based in Maillet, France. The company is under the direction of Patrick Sims, founder and former creative director of Buchinger's Boot Marionettes. Les Antliaclastes use a unique blend of puppetry techniques and styles, masks, machines, and original organic soundtracks. The primarily wordless performance moves ahead fluidly through its countless surprises and often violently contrasting images. In *Hilum*, there are many references to classical, popular, hermetic and contemporary-visual and performing arts, music, cinema and literature. They are all delicately balanced in a highly original way that often eludes verbal interpretation.

Patrick Sims (b.1975, Vermont USA) has been a practicing puppeteer for the past 16 years. He first became involved with puppets whilst studying film and animation at Middlebury College, USA. He has worked with Bread and Puppet Theatre, studied shadow puppetry in Java, and pursued a Phd at Trinity College Dublin with a thesis on the 'Pataphysics of the Puppet, Alfred Jarry and the inhuman performer. For 5 years he was the artistic director, writer, puppet-maker and puppeteer for Buchinger's Boot Marionettes. He is currently artistic director of Les Antliaclastes with whom he is engaged with several projects, including film, theatre, installations, music, and a multimedia electronic opera. His next project is being researched and developed with the support of La Chartreuse, Le Centre National d'Ecriture des Spectacles, Villeneuve lez Avignon.

Antliaclastes Creations

Hilum - 2010



Photo Jean-Pierre Estournet

The old Man and the Mountain - 2012

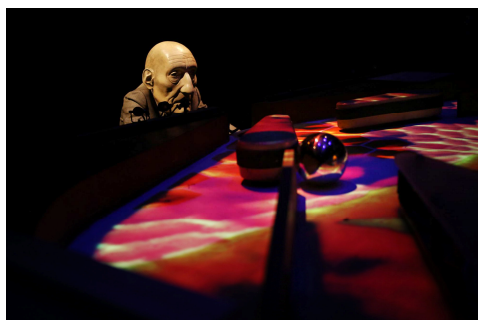


Photo Mario del Curto

Acting Bug - 2013

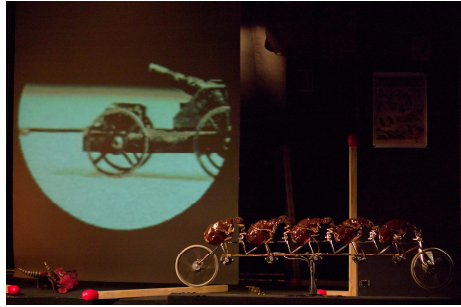


Photo Jean-Pierre Estournet

Here lies Shakespeare - 2015



Photo Jean-Pierre Estournet

The Waltz of Hommelettes - 2016



Photo Jean-Pierre Estournet

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