

Welcome to **THE ESCAPE ROOM** - a surreal adventure into your inner world



Picture from Linda and Adrians researchtrip to Prague, fall 2025

In *The Escape Room*, the audience is invited into a surreal escape room, where they are welcomed by three psychopomps, performed by Adrian Kautsky, Linda Forsell and Ambrose Watts. A psychopomp is a mythological archetype, a guide who moves between worlds, between the visible and the shadow realm, the conscious and the unconscious. Psychopomps appear in moments of transition, guiding those they encounter to let go of the ego and fixed ideas of self and world, allowing transformation to unfold.

The work is grounded in the artistic team's lived experiences of therapy, healing processes, primal therapy, critical illness and gender transition, used both as artistic methodologies and as material for the performance. Another key source of inspiration is the experimental methods developed within the Surrealist movement, alongside esoteric practices for inner journeys. The performance is conceived as a space that is at once vulnerable, humorous and enchanting.

The work is carried by three performing artists with extensive experience in collaborative creation processes and immersive, audience-interactive performances. Their shared expertise

spans experimental performance and participatory theatre, as well as in-depth knowledge of religious studies and contemporary spirituality, forming a central foundation for the artistic language of the piece.

Background and Context

The Escape Room is an international performing arts project that began in 2023, when Forsell and Kautsky met at the international performing arts festival *Homo Novus* in Riga. The festival marked the starting point of a collaboration driven by a shared desire to challenge established working methods and to develop a work with international relevance within contemporary immersive performance.

In autumn 2025, the team went on a research trip to Prague, studying escape room culture both as a commercial phenomenon and as a spatial dramaturgical form. In parallel, a shared thematic focus emerged, the experience of both the individual and the world being in a spiritual crisis, where the rational, material and efficiency-driven have displaced the intuitive, dreamlike and collective.

The performance takes its point of departure in a contemporary reality shaped by widespread psychological distress, violence, geopolitical tension and a pervasive sense of emptiness and confinement. Many people experience themselves as trapped within identities, norms, relationships and language. *The Escape Room* does not activate an empty subject, but an already charged psyche, an audience carrying its own stories of being stuck, lost, or on the brink of change.

The Role of the Audience

In *The Escape Room*, the audience is not a passive observer but a partial co-creator of the work's dramaturgy. The performance is structured as an immersive environment in which interactions with the audience can affect both the experience and its progression. Expectations associated with the escape room format like problem-solving, progression and control are deliberately activated, only to gradually shift focus from external solutions to internal experience.

Unlike commercial escape rooms, no clear solution or exit is offered. The audience believes they are meant to escape, but are instead guided deeper into themselves. The work stages a kind of living psychic laboratory in which current therapeutic paradigms, often linked to self-optimization and adaptation are questioned. Rather than repairing the subject, its fractures are made visible. The promise of control is revealed as an illusion, and the audience is invited to remain within uncertainty, playfulness and transformation.



Surrealism: The Dream as Resistance

In 2024, the centenary of André Breton's Surrealist Manifesto was marked, ideas that serve as a central inspiration for *The Escape Room*. Surrealism regarded the dream and the unconscious as revolutionary spaces, where inner life could act as resistance to a rationalized, disciplined and violent society. Much like the period following the First World War, our present moment is characterized by rapid technological development, war, and an intensified interest in the psyche, today often channeled through therapy, self-improvement and medical normalization.

In *The Escape Room*, the dream is not used as escapism, but as a political and poetic tool. By activating archetypes, symbols and collective imaginaries, the work opens up the possibility of articulating alternative worlds and futures. Turning inward is not framed as a private retreat, but as a collective act, a way of reclaiming imagination, intuition and existential complexity in a time that privileges efficiency and function.

The Room as a Metaphor for the Unconscious

The stage area in *The Escape Room* functions as a central metaphor for the unconscious. Within surrealism, the room represents the psyche, a site of desire, memory, dreams and contradiction. In opposition to the rationally ordered space, surrealist artists worked with labyrinths, architectural displacements, unstable interiors and liminal worlds.