Tragicommedia Umana

As a director and teacher, my work is rooted in the art of the theatrical mask. When I speak of the “mask,” I mean it not only as a tangible object but as a deeper idea—a living principle. My artistic and pedagogical journey unfolds in the space where these two dimensions meet.

While Commedia dell’Arte is certainly a key reference point for many who work with masks, my practice goes beyond the traditional form. Although it's part of my foundation, it's not the focus of my work.

I run the Atelier Mask Movement Theatre with Alay Arcelus Macazaga. It is an international theater center based in Tuscany, Italy. The center's activities focus on a permanent lab for researching and creating new forms of masks, the creation of theatrical performances, and a school of mask and movement-based theater. I also collaborate with various companies as a director, playwright, and teacher. Although performing isn’t the main focus of my work, I have performed in the past.

My path has been shaped by doing. Practice is where I learn the most. I studied with Jacques Lecoq, he was my starting point. I gained a great deal from his teachings and his approach to analyzing movement and its pedagogic journey from the neutral to the expressive. This included not just *commedia*, but also tragedy, buffoonery, melodrama, and other "dramatic territories" that were integral to the school’s training. This was my first true encounter with this type of artistic expression.

Before that, I knew *commedia* only as a spectator. I grew up in a region of Italy where *Commedia dell’Arte* was often performed, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes less so, but it was always a meaningful source of inspiration for me.

I design and work with both half-masks and full masks and my creative direction leans more toward *Commedia Umana*—the Human Comedy—rather than the traditional *Commedia dell’Arte*. That’s an important distinction, and perhaps we can explore that further: where to draw the line, or how the two forms diverge.

Very often, when people refer to *Commedia dell’Arte*, they use the shortened term *Commedia*. In my opinion, this can be misleading.

As we know, *commedia*—or comedy—in its classical sense refers to a narrative that begins with a state of conflict or disorder and moves toward a positive resolution, without being necessarily humorous. At its heart, it explores profound themes—love, power, deception, identity—approaching them with lightness, yet always leaving space for reflection.

Commedia dell’Arte, on the other hand, is a style of comedy, a theatrical form born and developed within a specific historical context. It was a popular art, remarkably adaptable, capable of expressing itself both in the grandeur of courts and the lively atmosphere of public squares. Its humor reflected the human condition within the social fabric of its time, from the Renaissance through the 18th century, in a particular region of Europe.

This tradition was characterized by the use of masks representing stock characters and improvisation based on a framework known as the *canovaccio*. It introduced fundamental innovations to the world of theater: the rise of professional actors, the creation of touring companies, and, for the first time, the opportunity for women to perform on stage.

Commedia dell’Arte is much more than just a style of theatre—it represents a key turning point toward modern drama. It’s important to remember that the stock characters and stories of Commedia dell’Arte made sense within the society where they were born and grew.

But today, if we want to bring those characters and stories into the present, we need to recognize how much the world has changed. Although human nature remains basically the same, the society we live in is very different now. And because of that, our relationship with the world, and with each other, has changed too.

I often come across efforts to adapt it for contemporary audiences, typically framed as 'Modern' or 'Contemporary Commedia dell'Arte'. More often than not, I find that both the dominant approaches and the terminology fall short of fully realizing their intended goals.

Commedia dell'Arte used visual and symbolic archetypes to portray social behavior in a comical and grotesque way. As I mentioned earlier, each mask represented a stock character and was associated with a specific social class, much like in Latin comedy. The servants, or *Zanni*, played a central role in Commedia dell'Arte as comic protagonists and agents of social change. Their lowly social status often made them the victims of humorous situations; however, they frequently managed to subvert the social order by outwitting or humiliating their masters and noble figures.

The other major categories of types were the olds, *Vecchi*, the best known of whom were the *Pantalone* and the *Dottore*; captains, *Capitani*, who represented braggart and cowardly adventurous soldiers; and lovers, *Innamorati*, it is around their passions that the plot of the *canovaccio* is usually developed.

I'm not particularly interested in plays that place Commedia dell'Arte characters into modern settings—like *Arlecchino* as an exploited immigrant worker in some modern european company, *Pantalone* as a ruthless insurer, or *Capitano* as a blustering gang leader. I happened to see these attempts at modernization, but I never empathized with them. They seemed to me a historical clash: something from the past being forced into today's reality, resulting in sterile intellectual exercises. No matter how much we update scenarios, costumes, language, or tone, if we keep the classical masks, the characters remain the same stock types from a distant era.

Commedia dell'Arte captures social roles and customs that may seem outdated today. Yet beneath this centuries-old tradition lie timeless human traits and relationship dynamics—archetypes that continue to mirror the human condition.

With irreverence, it exposes greed, hypocrisy, vain passion, deception, and hardship. Laughing at life's painful truths, even if bittersweet, is a vital and liberating ritual that reconnects us to theatre's origins.

For all these reasons, I believe Commedia dell'Arte does not need modernization to stay relevant. Its classical form has endured precisely because it is inherently contemporary, still resonating deeply with today's audiences without the need for any modern label to define it as such.

It is also necessary as a pedagogical foundation for theater training. There is so much to learn from its practice: the body as an expressive tool, the use of the mask, building a character through codified elements, improvisation, readiness, active listening, and adapting to the scene and audience. Plus, ensemble work, rhythm, energy level, and comic timing.

Despite the great value of Commedia dell'Arte, I believe we must explore new masks and forms of play that can express the realities of the present human condition. Today, society is increasingly centered on the individual rather than the collective, while global crises loom ever larger. Reality is fragmented, making it difficult to define social categories as clearly as in Commedia dell'Arte's time. Our task is to uncover the true conflicts and dramatic essence of our era. This complexity calls for new narratives and theatrical languages—both in masks and in performance—that reflect contemporary sensibilities.

In a world that is both fragmented and globalized, clear social archetypes are harder to define. Poverty, for instance, is no longer just Arlecchino's hunger; it now includes lack of access to education, healthcare, housing, technology, meaningful relationships—and even time, opportunity, or hope. Loneliness, anxiety, and alienation spread in a society shaped by growing individualism. Global issues such as climate change, war, migration, identity struggles, gender, and civil rights demand not only political action but personal and collective responsibility.

These challenges exist across all layers of society. They either didn't exist—or weren't represented—when Commedia dell'Arte was born. Social dynamics then were more defined: the master and the servant. Today, boundaries blur. In some sense, we are all poor or hungry and perhaps all, at times, arrogant, vain, or miserly.

So, we must ask: *Where does the humanity within each person truly reside?* It is no longer about masks embodying rigid social types such as "the businessman," "the worker," "the retiree," "the refugee"… If masks are used, they must be reimagined, deeply researched, and constantly evolving. They should create space for inner conflicts, subtle emotions, and the complexity of relationships to emerge.

The masks we seek must allow for characters who are multifaceted and alive, capable of expressing a full range of emotions and dynamics. They should be clear in their intent yet adaptable to different styles and narratives. Rather than fixing identity, a mask should hold multiple possibilities—a dialogue of masks and counter-masks—shaped by the writer, the director, and the actor. From one mask, many lives can be born.

We need masks that can endure the boldness of the grotesque while also allowing space for subtlety and poetic nuance.

Personally, I prefer to refer to today's *commedia* as *Commedia Umana—Human Comedy*—or more precisely *Tragicommedia Umana—Human Tragicomedy*—: a term where tragedy and comedy coexist—where the weight of the human condition meets moments of levity, irony, and grace. It does not separate light from darkness but weaves them together, revealing the fullness and complexity of life I strive to explore.

The ultimate *Human Tragicomedy* is that of Dante Alighieri. He simply called it *Commedia*, and it was later named *Divina Commedia* by Boccaccio. In his allegorical journey, Dante presents humanity in every imaginable register, revealing its full complexity and many facets. At the end of his journey, Dante is granted a beatific vision of God, allowed to gaze directly into the divine light, and in that light he sees his own face. A face that becomes the mask of humanity.

Finding the form

I have been creating masks for over twenty-five years. I started my sculptural mask research on my own, after some year I had the opportunity to meet and study with the great master Donato Sartori. Some masks I make are for pure research purposes, others are used in the shows I direct, and still others are designed for my school and the pedagogical path that continues to evolve. In any case, the creation of masks is closely linked to my vision as a director/playwright and pedagogist. I create both half and full masks, using a wide range of materials, from papier-mâché, wood, leather, fabric, latex, thermoplastics... Aside from the form, the material the mask is made of has contributed to me stepping out of my comfort zone and exploring and encountering new expressive sensibilities and new registers of play. Depending on the show, the work may require a specific type of mask.

Every mask is rooted in the same principle: a structure of volumes, planes, and lines that generates a dynamic projection—a dramatic impulse charged with forces, tensions, and conflicts. Once the work is complete, this framework may appear more or less visible to the eye, depending on the mask's style. What

truly matters, however, is that the mask is never fixed in a single expression. It must move, shift through different emotional states, and come alive through the performer's play.

When I begin sculpting, beyond questions of style—whether larval, grotesque, or shaped by a specific design—I search for two things: an inner structure and a dramatic thrust. The face is not the starting point, but the arrival: it emerges later, born from these forces as they guide my hand and suggest the directions that will give it form.

As a director and playwright, when I begin working with a company or a group of collaborators on a new production, we always start by exploring and understanding the theme. Then, we initiate the performance creation process through a deep investigation into the stylistic direction we feel is most fitting and exciting for engaging with that theme.

I envision the final form of the show as a kind of *master mask*—a face that gives shape to the theme, the story, or whatever needs to be expressed. This *master mask* isn't literal, but rather a fusion of all the elements that make up the performance: the dramatic territory we choose to explore, the way the actors move and perform, the text (when there is one), the set and costumes (if used), the lighting, the sound and music and, of course, the masks themselves—when they are part of the piece's language.

All these components come together to form the overall expression of the performance.

Here we open the reflection toward a broader understanding of the mask, beyond the idea of an object that represents a face and is worn. The Mask can be understood as a living structure in motion; a spatial presence that gives form to what is otherwise unseen. Through it, the invisible becomes visible. In this sense, we touch the very essence of theatre: characters, the set, choreography, the text; each one is a mask. The performance itself is, in the end, a mask.

Returning to the process of creating a performance: once the theme has been explored and the style considered one of the first practical steps is researching and sculpting the masks—provided, of course, that their use aligns with the concept. Often, I need to create new masks because those I've made in the past don't meet the specific demands of each story. For example, a few years ago, I worked with a theatre group from Slovakia. They wanted to adapt a powerful true story about a young girl facing a serious illness, based on a poetic and emotionally rich book. I felt I couldn't simply layer theatrical elements over the book's existing poetic language — it would have felt out of place; something essential would have been lost. Instead, I needed to find a different approach: a theatrical language that could express the depth and seriousness of the subject with dignity and emotional resonance, without becoming heavy or overblown. I needed to discover a personal poetic language for the piece.

That's when I turned to full masks—and silence. No words. This choice allowed us to focus purely on the girl's journey through her illness, a journey that moved between realism and fantasy. Along the way, she faced medical treatments and decisions alongside doctors and family members, while also encountering fantastical characters who embodied fear, courage, death and hope.

First, I tried using expressive full-face masks, but they felt too intense and overly dramatic. Then I tried full masks inspired by larval forms: simple, white shapes, the same ones I had originally created for my theatre school. Yet they seemed confined to a pedagogical context: excellent for training, but not strong enough to sustain a poetic world on stage. That approach didn't work either

I experimented with various forms, exploring the space between realism and abstraction, and also tested different materials. In the end, I found a simple shape that was expressive yet light—able to carry emotional depth without feeling heavy. I chose linen fabric as the material. It blended well with the form

and offered the right balance of texture and presence that I was looking for. From this basic form, I went on to explore other dynamic variations in order to create the full set of masks needed for the performance.

The type of mask we used had a strong influence on the overall tone and style of the piece. It helped shape all the elements of the "master mask"—even guiding the dramaturgy itself.

During the creative process, I rarely create just one mask per character. If a play has four characters and four actors, I might end up sculpting ten masks once I've settled on a style to explore. Each mask carries its own structure and inherent sense of projection, not a fixed image of a character, but an open possibility: a constellation of trajectories that invite multiple combinations and expressive pathways. This openness allows actors to discover different facets of movement, expression, and interpretation. In this way, the character is never predetermined but emerges from the unique encounter between actor and mask. The same mask can even give rise to completely different characters.

We then hold a session where the actors try on the masks, exploring them through improvisation and interaction. With four actors and ten masks, there are theoretically at least forty possible combinations. In reality, not every mask resonates with every actor—some pairings spark a stronger response than others. Yet the range of possibilities goes far beyond simple numbers. The session becomes a kind of casting process—not only for the actors, but for the masks themselves and the characters they might bring to life. Through this exploration, we begin to discover the specific constellation of characters whose interplay creates the right alchemy for the performance.

In this process, characters do not originate fully formed from the script or from a fixed directorial vision. They emerge organically in the rehearsal room.

This process takes time, but when it begins to unfold, the soul of the performance starts to reveal itself. From there, everything finds its flow. The writing, the scenes, the emotional rhythm, they no longer feel constructed, but discovered, as if the masks and characters are already breathing within the world we're bringing to life.

Sometime the initial impulse comes from an existing source, a novel, a play, or a real event that provides a framework to inhabit and transform.

At other times, the process begins in a more open space. We might start with nothing more than a theme, an image, or a question that draws us in. It begins as an exploration, an investigation. The story is not written, it emerges slowly through the act of creation. In this approach, the narrative grows from the inside out. Rather than imposing a fixed structure from the start, we allow it to unfold from the characters' needs, tensions, and transformations. It's a more organic process, sometimes unpredictable, but it often leads to deeper, more authentic storytelling, because the characters truly drive the plot forward.

The space in which a play is performed and the kind of audience it seeks to reach are vital elements that help shape the work. Whether the performance unfolds in a theatre or on the street, within a fully equipped venue or an improvised corner, in a fixed location or as part of a traveling production, these conditions inevitably influence the choices we make.

The set, for instance, may need to be minimal and easily adaptable, especially when moving through unconventional or shifting spaces. Sometimes, flexibility is key; in other cases, a more defined structure can take root. These practical realities guide not only the visual language of the piece, but also the form of the masks and the overall tone of the performance.

This, too, is part of theatre's essence, particularly in the spirit of *commedia*. It is a craft born of resourcefulness, of shaping something alive from whatever materials and circumstances are at hand.

Constraints are not obstacles; they are the fertile ground from which the identity of the performance grows.

As a director, I'm responsible for shaping the overall architecture of the work—establishing the rhythm, the schedule, and the pace of the rehearsal journey. While the process is deeply collaborative, built on ongoing dialogue and exchange within the group, the final decisions ultimately rest with me. I guide the dramaturgical vision—both in terms of proposals and overall direction—even as it takes shape through close conversation with the actors. After all, many creative minds can illuminate more than one alone.

Of course, there are moments when the abundance of ideas feels overwhelming. In those times, my role is to distill and listen carefully to find the thread that unites everything. It's important that the actors feel I'm guiding the process while allowing them the freedom to contribute, explore, and trust the direction. I aim to integrate their input, especially from improvisation, shaping that raw material into structure, coherence, and purpose to serve the story we create together.

When it comes to creating props or elements of the set, much depends on the ensemble. Some groups include actors who are skilled with their hands, who enjoy making and shaping objects; others may not. When resources allow, we bring in scenographers, lighting designers, or costume artists to collaborate.

In a recent project with just two actors, for example, everything revolved around a single screen. That one object became the heart of the performance world. The space shifted around it; it transformed the narrative landscape. It was simple—just one screen—but it was enough. And we made it together. In the end, everything depends on the people in the room and the context we're working within. The process is never the same, and that's what keeps it alive.

Working with mask

Lecoq used to say, "Every mask is a form moved by a soul." But I would add: that soul does not reside within the mask itself. It arises in the encounter between the actor and the mask. It is born in the relationship, in the subtle connection that unfolds. That's where the character begins to take life.

The actor must offer themselves fully to that meeting, with presence and humility. For the mask, too, offers itself—it serves as a frame, a form that invites. And within that frame lies an open space, a silence waiting to be inhabited. The nature of that space, and what it reveals, depends entirely on the mask itself and on the truth of the connection with the actor.

When I work with Commedia dell'Arte, the structure is well defined and strongly rooted in tradition. A servant is always a servant, and a lover is always a lover. These aren't just stereotypes, but specific social roles, and the actor's job is to fully represent that role according to the established style. However, even within these limits, there is still some room for the actor to bring their own personal interpretation to the mask.

In the Tragicommedia Umana, the approach shifts. The structure offered by the masks remains, but, as I mentioned earlier, the dialogue between mask and actor is more open.

Yet even in this freedom, one principle remains: the actor must serve the mask. Because the mask always leads. The actor must undergo dedicated training to begin exploring the world of masks.
A mask requires precise technique—a physical language capable of bringing it to life.

Since the actor's face is masked, the body and its movement must also become masked.
The mask is a structured, articulated form; to animate it, the actor's movement must be equally intentional and refined—it must be articulate.
A sensitive and playful spirit is valuable, but not sufficient on its own.

During the creative process of a performance, one of the first things I do, when the actor begins to explore a new mask, is to search together for a sense of verticality.
Not the actor's own verticality, but that of the character, revealed through the mask.

The spine becomes our first sketch—the line that gives structure to the body and offers a glimpse of the physical presence that is about to emerge.
We begin by exploring the body's natural undulation—the subtle wave that moves through us.

And we ask: At what point in that wave does the character's verticality emerge?
What is the actor's personal alignment, and how does it differ from that of the character?

From that point, a dialogue begins between the tensions of the mask's architecture and the living form of the actor.
These two elements must grow into one—unified, alive, and fully integrated.

From verticality, we move to breath: how this new structure breathes.
Breath connects the character to space. It shows us how they receive the world: with openness, with direction, or resistance.
What is the nature of the relationship between this new presence and the world around it?

Gradually, through this sensitive exploration, a soul begins to emerge.
Then comes the drive, the inner motor, the impulse that moves the character.
Where is the energy focused? Does it push, or does it pull?
Which part of the body initiates movement? What kind of force is at work here?

We begin to map the character's energetic landscape: their rhythm, tension, and tempo.
The actor starts to feel the truth of the mask. They can breathe with it and sense it come alive.

The actor begins to act and react not only from their personal self but from something deeply human, something archetypal.
And yet, because it is universal, it remains something that belongs uniquely to them as well.

The process is never linear—each step might loop back, deepen, or reshape what came before.
And if something doesn't resonate, we let it go. We change the mask.
And the search begins again.

Building the Mask

The Mask as a Tool and Beyond

Since I create my own masks, a special connection exists from the very beginning. It starts with clay or wood, shaped by my hands.
That physical act of sculpting establishes a unique relationship. I've spent time with these masks, they are not just objects I work with; they feel like familiar companions.

We treat the mask with care. We don't throw it. We don't turn it face down on the floor. We don't poke its eyes or, if it's a full mask, we don't speak while wearing it. These are not arbitrary rules—they are signs of respect. And this same care extends to all of the tools we work with. The props, the space, the costumes—everything becomes part of the same language of attention.

It's not about superstition or treating the mask as something religious. But the process does have a ritual feel, because it asks for focus, presence, and care. When you're working with masks, you enter a space where play and discipline go hand in hand. You have fun, yes, but the work goes deep.

Theatre itself is already a kind of ritual. From the ancient Greek tragedies to earlier Dionysian celebrations, and even further back, humans have always used masks to express what can't be said in words—to give shape to emotions, spirits, forces, and stories that go beyond the personal. That's why theatre is powerful: it brings people together in a shared moment of imagination and truth. It only really works when something flows between the performer, the story, and the audience.

That shared space is what makes the work special. And that's why we respect the mask. Not because it's sacred in a religious way, but because it helps something important happen. It's a doorway. A tool that works not just for us, but with us.

To go even deeper into this idea: the mask is not a prop, nor a kind of costume.
It is not merely the structural representation of a face; in truth, it's not about the object itself at all.
What truly matters is not the mask, but the act of masking.
Mask as a verb, not as a noun.

Because when we mask, we are not hiding. We are shaping. We are bending reality, not to escape it, but to reveal something deeper.
We create form, build tension, give structure, not to adorn the surface, but to touch what lies beneath.
Through masking, you might say, we glimpse and explore the collective unconscious.

Training in Mask and Masking

At our Atelier Mask Movement Theatre center, we offer a training program— an in-depth creative exploration for actors, directors, playwrights.

At the heart of it all is the Mask and the act of Masking.
The mask is not just an object or a tool, but a lens, a way of seeing and acting.
It serves as the compass that guides the entire journey.

We begin where many theatrical journeys begin—with neutrality, inspired by the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq.
From there, we gradually move through layers of expression: from the more elementary forms that allow us to explore the naïve dimensions of drama, to the bold extremes of the grotesque.

The tragicomedy of human existence is always at the root.
It's the dramatic source behind both the more innocent and the more satirical styles.
From the wordless to the text-based, what nourishes a melodramatic scene is the same deep humanity found in a comic one.

What we're constantly searching for, through the art of masking, is the poetic and universal core, no matter the stylistic register.

Our training moves across three interconnected dimensions:

Becoming the Creator of the Mask
Students delve into the art of shaping dynamic forms and structures in clay as a foundation for mastering the design and creation of original half-masks and full masks, which will be used throughout the program itself.

Becoming the Mask
We journey into the art of movement analysis and mask play, gradually moving toward the creation and writing of the *Tragicommedia Umana* in its various forms.

Becoming Part of the Mask
Through chorus work, the ensemble is transformed into a collective mask.
Many bodies moving as one: one shape, one breath.
This is where the solo meets the ensemble, where the individual becomes part of a dinamic structure.

We're constantly shifting between these three perspectives. From sculpting sessions to movement labs. From individual to group improvisation and creation. From hands in the clay to bodies on stage.

Not everyone feels at home in every area. Some students shine in performance but struggle with sculpture. Others are masterful with form, but freeze when they have to improvise. Some people have difficulty working in a group, while others find it challenging to work alone. It's all part of the journey. Each discipline nourishes the other.

The distinct languages of these three approaches gradually begin to intertwine, allowing all concepts to become transversal—enriching them and granting greater depth and dimensionality. We find ourselves discussing clown presence or choral movement when examining a detail of a mask, exploring planes, volumes, and structure when shaping a character, and considering tension and extension, mask and counter-mask, when working with the chorus.

And once the student begins to sense that dialogue between form, presence, technique, and play—across all levels, from sculpting to the character's interplay on stage, and the subtle work of the ensemble both on stage and behind the scenes—they will never view performance the same way again.

The Poetic Space of the Human Tragicomedy

As I mentioned before *Commedia dell'Arte* is a grotesque style. The word *grotesque* comes from *grotta*, the Italian word for cave.

In the 15th century, during excavations in Rome, decorative frescoes dating back to the Roman Empire were discovered underground, actually inside buried rooms from ancient Roman buildings, particularly within Nero's Domus Aurea. Since these artworks were found in cave-like spaces, they were called *grotesque paintings*.

These frescoes depicted fantastic and surreal imagery: human figures blended with animals, plants intertwined with architectural elements, and dreamlike scenes—a mix of fantasy and distortion.

Over time, the term *grotesque* took on a broader meaning, coming to describe anything strange, deformed, exaggerated, humorous, but also unsettling—a blend of the comic and the terrifying, the familiar and the monstrous.

So the question is: what is hiding in the cave?

In the grotesque, forms are pushed to their extremes. The playful vitality of the *Commedia dell'Arte* characters likely finds its origins in the demons of medieval sacred plays—creatures far from gentle. Even the lovers are neither tender nor delicate; they, too, act in extremes. There is nothing mild about *Commedia dell'Arte*. And it is precisely this intensity that makes it so powerfully comic, because, even as it makes us laugh, it strikes at the heart of things, revealing them with unflinching clarity.

Today, this tradition offers us a pathway to explore a renewed form of Human Tragicomedy. Through the grotesque, we can engage with themes that are as urgent as they are delicate, such as abuse and misogyny. The grotesque exaggerates form in order to expose truth. It enables us to see both the mask and the counter-mask simultaneously, not only in the progression of conflict but within the very structure of each character.

However, one essential point must be made clear: the exaggeration I refer to concerns tensions and forms—both physical and spatial—as well as settings and dramatic developments. Even within exaggeration, it is crucial to preserve the mask and its codes of transformation. All of this must be framed through a satirical, ironic lens, guided by high-level play, precision, and intelligence. Without these elements, the work risks falling into realism. And when realism becomes excessive, it loses its poetic sensitivity toward the themes it seeks to express, making them less accessible to the audience. Exaggeration, therefore, should not wound or shock for its own sake; its purpose is to open a space for reflection, to provoke thought.

Other registers beyond the grotesque can also generate the necessary tension that reflects the paradoxical nature of human existence. The mixture of suffering and absurdity, nobility and ridiculousness, despair and hope — which defines the Human Tragicomedy.

If one chooses to work in a more delicate register — lyrical, restrained, or introspective — the poetic space must adapt. This approach calls for a different kind of mask: one capable of holding nuance, silence, and emotional subtlety without losing theatrical presence.

It is no longer about exaggerating form or pushing toward extremes, but about discovering a mask that can sustain and breathe within the dramatic space with gentleness.

Still grounded in the essential principles of mask work — structural clarity, spatial extension, dramatic tension, articulation of the movement — this mask does not explode outward; it listens. It stretches time rather than rushing it. It builds tension not through sharp contrasts, but through suspension — through the quiet weight of presence, of what is left unsaid.

Alongside the masks, the play itself, and the writing that shapes it, must also embody subtlety. They must carve narratives that cut deep, like a blade, moving through the tragedy of the human condition while alternating moments of comedy with passages of emotional depth.

What binds all of this together—from the grotesque to the subtle and delicate—is the poetic space: that threshold where only the art of masking can lead us. A space where illusion and truth, laughter and sorrow, move hand in hand.

That's the research.

That's the work.