

**ROBIN YERLÈS**

*Aventures(s)* .





## INTRODUCTION

This is the presentation folder for the different pieces I decided to group under the title *Adventure(s)*. This project is the result a reflection which extends over my whole grown-up life, growing slowly in the background and finally coming to life after a lucky path of encounters and experiments. It is purposely overly challenging, unrealistic in its ambitions and still full of shadow areas, but I felt it was time to structure it in an orderly and introductory format which is what you are reading now.

In the following pages I will unfold the project as a whole, its main characteristics and the challenges it poses for its different actors. I will speculate on the conditions in which it could be deployed. Finally, I will describe the individual works and share the instructions for the performers.

The project consists in two main ideas. The first one is to experiment with the notion of the exhibition as a dynamic group experiment aimed towards direct social interactions, refuting both the status of the museum as an archive, to turn it instead into a live stage, and the status of the artwork as commodity. To turn the production of an exhibition into the production of reality, while encouraging its actors to grow philosophically and introspectively.

The second one is to open the art institution to its physical surroundings and look in this process for a new audience, one that is at the same time close to it and not anticipating an interaction. By putting a foot outside the walls of the often intimidating institution, I hope to create a discussion about what should be expected from public art in a democratic society.

These two ideas come with their whole lot of challenges. For the hosting institution, be it a gallery, a festival or a museum, in terms of how to communicate about the project, how to deal with its usual and newly found audience, and with the space freed by the externalization of the work in the street. I hope to find partners who, by welcoming the project, are willing to take it as a opportunity to challenge their own identity, discourse and habits.

This project also comes with important challenges for the performers themselves. By confronting them with an unprepared audience in a very uncontrolled environment, I'm conscious of the difficulties they will encounter. My role will be to give them the best conditions to confront their practice with this new context.

For these reasons, finding the right partners will be the most crucial step leading to the accomplishment of the project. To embark on the *Adventure(s)*, you have to be ambitious, and maybe even slightly crazy. Because art is still a place for dreamers, a space full of energy, movement and crave for change. I hope you will be as excited as I am after reading these few pages and I thank you for your attention.

Robin Yerlès  
september 28th, 2018

## INTENTION NOTE

It's maybe worth to explain briefly from where I come and how I got there.

I divide my artistic life in two identifiable periods. The first one is linked with my youth: As a teenager, my only interest was in graffiti and the rebellious lifestyle that came with it. As naive as I was back then, this unwritten ideology made me develop a posture of independence and criticality over the instances of power and the mechanisms of the system while developing a pure and free experimental calligraphy practice.

The second phase is when I began a conceptual web-based practice in the form of simple websites that I was using as starting points to research and expand my understanding of our visual culture of today. This is how I got into more serious reflection and through my readings started to question the position of the art and the artist in our society, while keeping this independent, outsider position.

As much as I managed to provide a commentary on what I was observing through my websites, I always thought this was quite a passive attitude, a comfortable position. I was also very isolated and suffering from the lack of collective dynamism. In a way I had fell in the trap of using a contemporary medium to address contemporary issues, whereas a better strategy would maybe have been to listen to my attraction towards performance and contemporary dance. This is why I started to research in this direction and decided to follow the conventional path of studying art within the institution.

Following my entrance in the art academy, it's only recently that I started to consider my artistic career in strategic terms and realized I needed to feed myself philosophically through something else than readings. This is where I found that my interest and fascination for the work of choreographers like Meg Stuart or Mårten Spångberg and artists like Tino Sehgal and Yves Klein was all colliding in the same direction: an urge to invent an immaterial and social form of art practice to build a collective philosophical practice away from the academic conventions, that would go against the logics and temporalities of the dominant cultural forms of our times.

I feel this project may be the inception of my third artistic period. I wish to create a space to experiment and discuss what it is to be an artist, a privileged individual and ultimately a human in today's world. *Adventure(s)* would be the matrix for this project, a safe space for creation. The construction of a dynamic. A wild ride directly confronting what has to be confronted: the position of art in society and the society itself. An open-ended object, constantly nourishing and reshaping itself and its satellite actors. And hopefully, an incentive for its observers to create their own adventures.

This project is also for me a way to decide: I will take command of the way I want to spend my time. I won't accept the terms and conditions in which I am asked to act as an individual in this society. I will define the rules of my simulation, in order to simply go through this in a joyful and meaningful manner.

## DESCRIPTION

*Adventure(s)* consists of a series of street performances involving direct interactions between the performers and their audience found in the passers-by. Some performers also take a more sculptural presence. Finally, the project involves instructions placed in the urban environment, incentives for participatory and sometimes disruptive actions. The project can be implanted with a flexible scale, between 8 and 60 performers. The group should ideally be partly constituted of local performers in which case a selection process and a workshop would happen prior to the implantation period.

Climbing rethoricians, prophetic interventions in public transports, tactile interruptions of the commuters routine are all components of the invasion that will happen in the surroundings of the hosting institution. For the duration of the manifestation, the stability and predictability of urban space fluxes and rhythms will be challenged by the presence of these anomalies, in order to reveal how public space maintains public order (public prison) whereas it is also the very space to redefine it (public forum).

In case of severe weather, some components of the project are replaced with a joyful and contaminative dance, a simple celebration of life and nature. Also once a day, all the performers join together in a big protest around the block of the welcoming institution. The protest is about fighting against the way society is organized through design to avoid friction and smooth our experience of the real, with slogans like “long live the anomaly” or “forget daily life”.

The absence of material artworks as well as physical presence of the performers inside the walls of the institution is an essential quality of the project. For every implantation, a dialogue is opened to decide what will happen in this empty space. The starting impulse is to focus on transmission and sharing of knowledge, creating community, but what actually happens may be radically different each time and is open to other sorts of experiments, for example putting light on the architecture or the collection in an innovative manner.

Mostly, the project would take place in spring/summer, while the fall/winter period would be dedicated to research and production.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

This project is very much nourished by my theoretical readings, therefore constituting a bibliography is an important starting point. In studying the ways we are subjected to ideological power, we can forge new ideas to counter-act them. These books and essays would be studied together with the performers, and I also like the idea of constituting a library that would travel with the project. Here I propose a first list of references:

- Louis Althusser, *"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"*
- Vito Acconci, *"Making Public: The Writing and Reading of Public Space"*
- Jean Baudrillard, *"Simulacra and Simulation"*
- Guy Debord, *"The Society of the Spectacle"*
- Michel Foucault, *"Discipline and Punish"*
- Félix Guattari, *"Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm"*
- Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *"Anti-Oedipus"*
- Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *"A Thousand Plateaus"*
- Fredric Jameson, *"Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"*
- Brian Massumi, *"Parables for the Virtual"*
- Brian Massumi, *"The Power at the End of the Economy"*
- Jacques Rancière, *"Ten Theses on Politics"*





**AVENTURE(S)**

*Hand (2018)*

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## DESCRIPTION

The main object of this piece is to provoke a tactile interaction between the performer and his/her audience consisting of the performer posing his hand on his temporary partner's skin. The focus is on what is transmitted during this process.

The intimacy taking place during this interaction is a simple strategy to create a pause, a break in the daily commute. By a physical and perceptive shift, this request, absurd in its futility is a simple way of getting around the flux of the modern world, of stopping time.

## PERFORMER'S INSTRUCTIONS

- You should be dressed in white or light, pastel colors. Avoid reflective or harsh fabrics and wear ideally flowing, natural materials.
- I would prefer no piercings but if you feel like they are part of you, then you should keep them.
- Every decision you make should be intuitive. Listen to your body, don't do anything that makes you feel scared or uncomfortable.
- Every action should be performed in a neutral, not cold but peaceful way. You are very zen, untouched by the urban environment.
- Try to adapt your behavior to your partner and his natural rhythm. Try to induce calmness and find a balance.
- Breathe. Stay yourself, don't act like a brainwashed, preprogrammed human or a member of a sect. You have your own personality.
- At any time, feel free to break the performance and leave. If it happens, come back to the meeting point and share it with me.
- Concerning the places you have to pick, I'm not giving too many examples as you can interpret it your way. Again, you are in control, trust yourself.
- One important rule: try not to interact or have other performers in your sight. You should be performing alone, it's a solitary type of concentration we are trying to achieve.

## PROCEDURE

1. Leave the meeting point and walk in the streets for a few minutes.
2. Find a spot where you can feel some sort of tension: it can be for example, an intersection, a gap between two spaces, a place that pops out from your environment. You must be able to stand there safely, make eye-contact with passers-by and reach them with your voice.
3. Your mission now is to find your partner. You must look at the people around you, and feel with who you may be able to perform the piece. Ideally, you should feel a certain distance with him, but not something that is unreachable. You should feel like interacting with this person is a challenge, but with at least a certain probability to make contact positively. Don't pick someone too old: it may sound very dictatorial, but my decision as artist is to focus on reaching young brains and active citizens.
4. As soon as you found him, walk in his direction. With your own words, ask him if he has a few minutes to spend with you. Explain to him that this is a performance by robin yerlès, which is part of an art project at X. If he says no, go back to n°3, or n°2.
5. If he says yes, tell him that he may want to turn his phone off during the performance. If you feel like it, ask him if he wants to take your hand. Otherwise, just tell him that you are going to have a walk and ask if he wants to follow you.

6. Walk for a few minutes. Your goal is to find a place where you can feel some sort of calmness: it can be for example, under a tree or a ray of light, a place that is slightly less noisy than the other places around. This place has to feel like the right stage for your intimate moment together. If after a few minutes you didn't find this place, execute the exit procedure.

7. When you found the place, explain to him that you are going to perform the piece, and that he must feel free to say no to anything or leave at any moment.

8. Decide on a part of his body and ask him if you can put your hand on it. Again this is following your instinct. Ideally it should be a body part where you can flatten the palm of your hand completely, like arm, back, leg or belly. Don't pick a body part that you could easily squeeze or where it would feel like you're holding it like wrist or throat. If the vibe is safe enough, you can pick a part under his clothes.

9. Explain to him that you would like to put your hand against his skin. If there is any sexual ambiguity at this point, either explain that there should be none, execute the exit procedure, or escape. Feel very free to escape. However if you like it and are comfortable, feel free to go on.

10. Put your hand on the chosen part of his body, delicately. Don't press too much but try to really follow the curvature of your partners skin with the palm of your hand. The two skins should be really connected. tell him that nothing more will happen, that you will stay like this for a little moment, and that he can close his eyes. If you feel like it, close yours

11. When you feel it's time, or your partner shows signs that he feels like it, remove your hand, give him a few seconds to put back his clothes in order and wait a few seconds more. You can look at him or take this moment for yourself.

12. If you liked it, tell him thanks. You can now be yourself more than ever and act the way you feel like. You are not performing anymore.

13. Let your partner go, or leave him. Wash your hands and take a break. If you don't feel like performing again, come back to the meeting point and share it with me.

## EXPLANATION

The performance is almost self-explanatory. Touch is the first sense that comes before vision. As a species we used to touch each other all the time, like monkeys; obviously this is very much neglected in our modern society.

By slightly shifting the physical position of its audience and taking it away from its usual path, we create a real breakpoint, a suspended moment to delicately induce the will to change our rhythm as well as the way we look at strangers.

The underlying focus is a research on the potency of performance to counter-act logics and somatic temporalities of the current stage of capitalism and the implications of its digital aspects.



**AVENTURE(S)**

*Tree (2018)*

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## DESCRIPTION

This piece focuses on rhetorics. It is an invitation to reconsider the way we are expected to behave in the collectivity, the ideology of productivity and speed that are dominant in our capitalist society. Inspired of Italo Calvino's *The Baron in the Trees*, it consists of performers climbing into trees and prompting passers-by to react to their condition of outsiders. It comes from a very simple idea: what if they didn't want to come back?

In parallel to this interactive part of the piece is a more meditative presence in the form of performers sitting in higher trees, out of reach for the audience. They are part of the mythology of the project, an evocation of melancholy and an invitation to distanciation.

## PERFORMER'S INSTRUCTIONS

- You should have some climbing experience and be able to move at ease between branches. For the performers in higher trees, meditation is also a good pre-acquired competence.
- You should ideally have a formation in philosophy or a strong interest for that field of knowledge. A good rhetorics aptitude is also needed.
- The preparatory work consists of spotting the trees where you will be performing. There should be some people walking around, but not too many. Examples may be: in a park, in a quiet street. Ideally, contact should be possible between the performer's feet and a person standing on the floor, raising his arms. However, the performer should have the possibility to go on a higher branch/raise his legs to close this contact.
- You should feel comfortable sitting there for a long period of time and be able to stand and stretch without leaving the tree. The branch should be really thicker than needed to make sure you won't hurt the tree or yourself.
- For the higher performers, you will be wearing a security harness hidden behind your clothes. You may be helped whenever you have to get up or down from the tree. You then just have to contemplate the sky or the horizon, and avoid any contact with the passers-by.

## PROCEDURE

1. Leave the meeting point and walk in the streets in direction of your tree.
2. Climb in it and sit there for a while. Look up, observe the tree.
3. You should start noticing the people walking under you. Whenever you see one with who you feel there may be potential for interaction, try to create contact. Here are a few examples of sentences you may use:
  - excuse me, do you have a minute? I'm sitting here on this tree but I'm not sure if I should come back. Can you help me?
  - Hi, excuse me? I'm not sure why I climbed here and now I don't know if I should come back. What do you think?
  - Hello! How is it down there?
4. if it worked, start the conversation. Otherwise, just go back to your contemplation for a while and start back from n°3.
5. The main idea behind this conversation is to question everything people do on ground level. You are like a naive explorer who just landed in this tree and is skeptical of what he is observing. Ask the people you're talking to where they are going, and why. What does make them happy? Are they focused enough on this, or following a pre-defined path that doesn't especially lead them to happiness? This sort of questions must be addressed.

6. Whenever you feel like it, close the conversation and go back to your meditation. If you somehow become an attraction for a group of people, or if the conversation doesn't lead anywhere, close yourself. In a passive state, you are a living statue. You are not touched by anything you may hear, or see.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The performers interacting with the audience should have read and discussed together the following books and essays:

- Italo Calvino's *The Baron in the Trees*
- Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*
- Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*
- Henry David Thoreau's *Walden & Civil Disobedience*





**AVENTURE(S)**

*Prophet (2018)* .

## DESCRIPTION

Street prophets disseminating the voice of important thinkers of our time, using public transports as their agora. A bold, theatrical presence in the urban space, infusing some mysticity in the daily commute.

## PERFORMER'S INSTRUCTIONS

- You should have acting training and be able to memorize a speech based on an audio or video document.
- While you should speak and act as you would say the text yourself, it is important to reproduce the attitude or mindset of the source in the document.
- During the whole performance, you will be drifting, wandering around public transports. You should be **inhabited**: inside you is the truth, you are holding the key of transcendence. You are the gate of salvation, but you are anxious about your chances of saving everyone.
- You are a tragic figure. Every movement you make should embody this idea and be slightly exaggerated, a bit too ample.
- Move, act and look with intensity. Everytime you enter or leave a public transport there should be a sudden switch of tension in the air, a sort of alert.
- Your gaze should either be diving in someone's eyes, or in the complete void.
- You are not affected by time in a linear speed; you may suddenly freeze in the middle of a gesture, or run out of a tramway after two minutes of stillness.

## PROCEDURE

1. leave the meeting point and walk around for a few minutes.
2. Whenever one comes near you, enter a public transport. You should not look like you are heading to anywhere in particular. However, you should very much act like you are looking for a situation, your attention should be visible.
3. As long as you don't find the right space to perform, don't push it. Your main identity is the one of the drifter: change directions, move chaotically.
4. At some point, you should sit or stand, usually in a bus/tram/subway, ideally in front or surrounded by people.
5. Perform your speech.
6. Do some theatrical move, and disappear. The obvious way to do this last thing is by leaving the public transport you are in but you may also find more creative ways.
7. Giving your speech has sucked up all of your mystic energy. You are now in recovery mode: find a place where you can rest, take a posture and freeze. After a while, get back to life and start again from n°1.

## EXPLANATION

The only prophets we encounter in urban space are so predictable: jehovah witnesses and paranoid junkies. It is time to add our own take on this powerful theatrical figure!

The selected extracts are all composed with some sort of "eureka" moment: when suddenly everything makes sense. Their reenactment embodies the idea as they contain in the urban space. By giving them a voice in the city, the piece instillates curiosity and reflexion, confronting these strong speeches with our small daily anxieties. By using material sourced from audio or video, the work creates an immediate closeness to the thoughts of the thinker in an ode to oral transmission.

## DOCUMENTS SELECTION

- Martin Heidegger speaking about biotechnique (extract from the documentary *Martin Heidegger - En chemin dans la pensée*)
- André Lepecki speaking about selfies and choreopolicing (extract from the podcast *SON[II]A #248*)
- Adam Curtis speaking about filter bubbles (extract from his movie *Hypernormalisation*)
- Henri Bergson speaking about joy (extract from *The possible and the real* read by Georges Claisse in the podcast "*Bergson, La pensée et le mouvant*")



**AVENTURE(S)**

*time (2018)*

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## DESCRIPTION

This piece is a permanent installation in the urban space. By leaving this trace behind, the project creates a symbol of its presence for the continuation of its spirit, as an eternal diffuser of its aura. It is a direct invitation to take part in the game.

## INSTALLATION

The work should be installed in an slightly awkward spot of public space and take over this unreclaimed area. For example: an overly large sidewalk, a space created from a hole in the architecture. It should be a place that many people walk around but rarely step inside.

there is a rectangle on the floor created from the use of a different pavement's color. The superficiality of the rectangle should be around 8 square meters. In the middle of this rectangle, there's an engraved metal plate that says: « let's play a game: stay here and do nothing. Only leave when someone else enters the square. Or if you feel like staying, wait for the next person to enter the game. Let's see how much time we can waste together. »

## EXPLANATION

Ultimately, it is all about wasting time, and playing games.



## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

By welcoming the project, the host institution must provide a space for the performers and has to fulfill these logistic requirements:

- the meeting point must be equipped with a fully functional kitchen, enough chairs and tables for all the performers plus 7 people, toilets and at least one shower.
- facilities must be cleaned everyday.
- institution must provide organic quality teas and infusions from local tea-shop, quality (filtered) hot water, ceramic teapots and cups.
- institution must provide organic fruits in quantity, including local fruits as much as possible.
- provided lunch must include a vegan option, or a b.
- institution must provide one quality refillable bottle per performer and one un-dyed, blank tote bag.
- performers must be paid atleast: local average wage + 10%

Of course, every situation is different and these conditions can be reevaluated on a case by case basis.