

# RISQUONS- TOUT

EN

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Ed Atkins - Neïl Beloufa - Manon de Boer & Latifa  
Laâbissi - Peter Buggenhout - CATPC / Irene Kanga  
Julien Creuzet - Shezad Dawood - Jean D.L.  
Lise Duclaux - Esther Ferrer - Jef Geys - Manuel Graf  
Kati Heck - Lubaina Himid & Magda Stawarska-Beavan  
Heide Hinrichs - Isaac Julien - Melike Kara  
Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven - Suchan Kinoshita  
Tarek Lakhrissi - Ghislaine Leung - Bernd Lohaus  
Cherish Menzo - Christian Nyampeta - Sophie Nys  
Lydia Ourahmane & Alex Ayed - Panamarenko  
Laure Prouvost - Sina Seifee - Philippe Van Snick  
Mounira Al Solh - Monika Stricker - Sturtevant  
Joëlle Tuerlinckx - Nora Turato - Evelyn Taocheng Wang

# WIELS WIEL



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## Intro

*Risquons-Tout*, which translates as *Risk all*, explores the potential of risk in relation to innovation. In an era increasingly marked by digital processes, how can anything new or unknown emerge when prediction algorithms protect us from confronting uncertainty and unpredictability? Such algorithms shape opinions and filter us into digital bubbles where we only encounter what is already known and “liked”. The growing influence of machine intelligence is accompanied by an increasing conformity of thought. The artists and thinkers invited for *Risquons-Tout* challenge this by venturing into territories of the unknown and the uncharted. The exhibition explores how innovation and creativity can emerge from attitudes that defy the norm. Risk is then a matter of passing beyond the boundaries

that limit the mobility of thought, ideas, or people in an age when the internet potentially provides unlimited access to all knowledge, human and non-human.

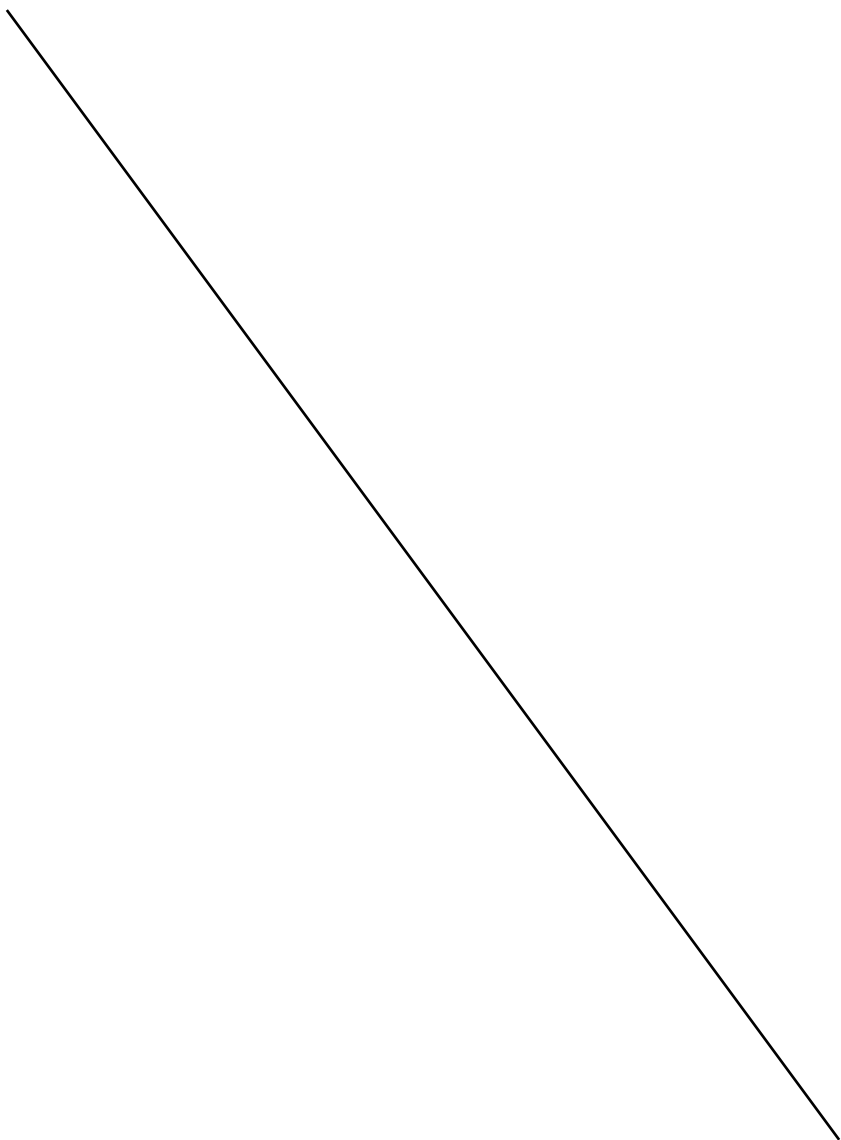
The title of the exhibition is borrowed from the name of a hamlet on the French-Belgian border. Risquons-Tout is, like most borderlands, characterized by a history of passing limits, of bridging, crossing and smuggling. Smuggling is a form of cross-cultural infiltration that eludes the law, an unauthorized passage or displacement, a way to encounter new canons, alternative rules and hybrid codes.

The exhibition engages with this quest for unboundedness, a new openness, of breaking out of safe bubbles, and explores the dynamics of transition, mixing and creolisation that occur in *in-between* places such as borderlands. It presents work by 38 artists of diverse origin who are located in the Eurocore region, as Belgium and its immediate neighbours are labelled. Its aim is to break the boundaries that limit contemporary thought and action, and to embrace the unpredictable and the non-normative as ways of triggering imagination and ideas.

## BREWING HALL

For *Risquons-Tout*, Kati Heck revisits the popular legends of the eponymous former smugglers' spot on the Belgian-French border. The liminal situation of a frontier often attracts deviant or rogue individuals, slipping through the cracks of the borderland. Initially the name Risquons-Tout came from a cabaret and its frivolous escapism, similar to that which attracted bohemian artists to particular neighbourhoods of 19th-century metropolises. Heck proposes a theatre curtain as a prelude to the exhibition, taking the form of two textile banners. Her idiosyncratic iconography is drawn from folktales (such as those of the Wildman) and Zadkine's hedonistic frieze for Cinema Metropole (Brussels, 1932). She thus combines the pictorial language of high-modernist abstraction with that

of subcultural popular illustrations and traditional woodcuts, on a monumental scale that is destined for collective, public reception.





**Shezad Dawood** interrogates the intersections of cross-cultural trajectories and “other modernities”; for example, how architecture in South Asia fused Western modernism with local philosophies, materials and traditional building methods. His installation places in dialogue the legacies of two key Tropical Modernist architects: Muzharul Islam (1923-2012) and Minnette de Silva (1918-1998). The Sri Lankan De Silva developed what she termed a “modern indigenous approach”, a symbiotic relationship between architecture and environment. Dawood’s wallpaper reproduces floral motifs from her wall tiles, on which he presents photographs of her friend, the dancer Ram Gopal, whose performances in London in the 1930s and 40s combined classical Indian dance with ballet. The other



*Deleuze*, an eight-hour TV documentary in which the French philosopher discusses his concepts in the form of an abecedarium. In her version, Sturtevant invited various personalities from the art world, mainly in Paris, to improvise a monologue. Each one chose as their point of departure a word that started with one of their initials. By letting their thoughts wander as in the TV documentary, Sturtevant emphasizes both the authority attributed to knowledge and dominant voices within critical thought, as well as the dissemination and dissolution of Deleuzian concepts which have lost their subversive quality and been assimilated in everyday language. Sturtevant creates what she calls “cognitive sabotage”, a whimsical pastiche that plays with references and quotes, words, subjectivity and “obsessive explanation”.

**Mounira Al Solh’s** projects are rooted in a collaborative and engaged practice. They include embroidered stories told by generations of women from the Arab world who defy norms and oppression;

performances narrating her-stories of defiance, courage and solidarity; capturing experiences of migration on legal papers; or the magazine *NOA* (Not Only Arabic), dedicated to feminist struggles in the Arab world. The central tent of her installation borrows from those of Mohammad Shah of Iran (Qajar dynasty 1834-1848). Titled *Mina al Shourouk ila al Fahama*, it repurposes a symbol of patriarchal power. Arabic symbols for the hours of the day adorn the tent's upper part, articulating alternative timelines. Accompanied by Lebanese musician Jana Jaleh, Al Solh creates poignant performances from the tent in which a megaphone plays a recording by Lebanese singer Rima Khcheiche. The embroideries become visual libraries attesting to resistance, while the surrounding oil paintings from the series *The Mother of David and Goliath* portray dense and layered narratives of ensnared women. In *I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous*, she elaborates a different type of portraiture. Initiated by Al Solh in 2008, the fourth edition of *NOA*, co-edited by



life. He uses her iconic staircase designed for the Museum of Modern Art (Bahia) as the stage for a work by choreographer Zebrinha, while the Coaty (Salvador) accommodates a series of performances by Brazilian art collective Araká.

In his sculptures, **Peter Buggenhout** seeks not to reproduce, imitate or mirror reality but to create composite forms which behave as phenomena almost as complex as reality itself. The idea of making something that is in continuous expansion, which is as ungraspable in its entirety as biochemical organisms are in nature, relates to the ideas of the *informe* (the formless), which led in turn to the open artwork. Incompleteness, open-endedness and indeterminacy are qualities of the living, which elude designed, industrial repetition. Buggenhout's sculptures from the series *The Blind Leading the Blind* are among the most striking realisations of this complexity according to a bio-molecular materiality, unperceivable as a whole because of a reflex of abhorrence, of rejection of the abject surfaces, and by

the abundance of details of this “strange” volume.

**Julien Creuzet** lends his voice and words to ancestral figures that were silenced by centuries of white domination and colonisation. While sculptures made of disparate root-like elements hover in the space like ghostly bodies, the first song of the film *Ogun, Ogoun, ou Ogou, ou Gou, mon Dragon* chants: “I have ghosts inside my voice.” Invoking Ogun, god of Iron in the Yoruba religion of West Africa and Haitian Vodou, the film bridges the realms of the living and the dead. The tin soldiers are (mis)named after their ethnicities, as was the case in the French army: #zouave #turcos #zoulou. They float in a cosmic space and embody the god of warriors and swords. The iconic figure of a naked, hairless dog refers to a species endemic to Martinique, called ‘chien fè’, or iron dog. Between antique toys and animal domestication, the work portrays rhizomatic histories of domination and their traces in collective imaginaries.

**Lise Duclaux's** work is structured by an investigation into the forms and processes of nature and ecosystems, similar to the methods of biology or cartography. Refuting any systematization of thought, the artist explores the complexity of the living through different disciplines, including drawing, writing, performance and installation. At WIELS, she creates a work in situ: her handwritten text on the windows traces the story of the wild plants that grow in the immediate vicinity. Duclaux reveals their origins and their clandestine journeys. In parallel, her drawings and silkscreens delve into the underground networks and territories of moles, thus extending the discipline of subterranean cartography, in the parts of the world that remain invisible.



The impact of digitization, science, and the imaginary worlds of artificial intelligence have been shaping **Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven's** oeuvre for over forty years. Her practice is rooted in feminism, ancient mysticism, and a wide array of complex theories. For this exhibition, Van Kerckhoven has produced a time-based work with computer-processed drawings going back to 1977 and a newly created sound design that brings together her key convictions: representation, repetition, opposition. In two adjoining spaces, connected by a hallway, *A-X+B=12* proposes a compressed version of past, present and future. Daily imaginations are transformed into memories, remnants of a lifestyle turned into art and desire.





The projects of **Sophie Nys** are derived from vernacular customs translated into everyday objects. She relies on an extensive archive of (historical) imagery to unpack their use, usefulness and signification. By questioning these objects, she mobilises the latent meaning of forms and symbols. For *Risquons-Tout*, Nys created a group of works that reflect or oppose the limit or norm in all of its sociological, political or architectural implications. Doors built according to the model of the German industrial standards (DIN-norm) are conflated with the exclusion of the sexual deviant, the jester or the vagabond. Nys also integrates the concept of the tally stick, an ancient system of (debt) notation connected both to banking and to notions of guilt and default.

**Lubaina Himid** is known for her vibrant paintings and installations that explore issues of black identity and the interweaving of cultures throughout (post) colonial history. Eschewing the traditional canvas, *Blue Grid Test* is a composition of

64 patterns painted on different supports, from maps to musical instruments. These patterns are borrowed from diverse traditions of abstraction and decoration, which allude to the secret codes that connect communities (particularly of women). The patterns are translated into different tonalities of blue, unfolding around the gallery like just as many languages, suggesting simultaneously a continuity of communication and the impossibility of fusing the specificities of the multitude into a global, homogenised language. A new sound work is created by **Magda Stawarska-Beavan** featuring Himid's voice that transforms colour into sound. It translates blue and the meanings and moods it has come to evoke in popular (black) music through different idioms.

In her installations, **Melike Kara** explores identity as something constructed, embodied and always in flux. The wallpaper collage features photographs of her Kurdish-Alevi family from her personal archive, together with photographs, poems and stories about all other Kurdish



and stories from the pre-Islamic to the modern era. In *Wonders of the Moon*, he sets out to explore the creatures and symbols that live in the dark, on ‘the other side’ of rationality. “Dark has been both the medium of worship and of deviation. It is where the forgetter (the conspirator), the sleepwalker (the associator), the eraser (the sorcerer), and the smuggler (the polluter) are active,” he writes. The dark is a place of wonder and horror, it is home to monsters, jinns and unidentifiable creatures. Between a bestiary and a cabinet of curiosity, systems of classification for the diversity and strangeness of nature, *Wonders of the Moon* conflagrates different civilisations and their systems of belief and knowledge.

— In collaboration with artist and researcher Goda Palekaitė and Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh.

Reflecting on what defines territory, **Lydia Ourahmane** and **Alex Ayed** develop montage-like, suggestive installations. They react to the immediate environment but are also influenced by their shared background and experience of increasingly

similar global peri-urban sprawl. For *Risquons-Tout* they had proposed a quest to link to the global south by way of Brussels' second-hand car recycling routes to subsaharan Africa. The pandemonium created by Covid-19 obliged them instead to embark on a destination-less *dérive* toward the borders of Europe. This road trip took them to Croatia and Montenegro, returning via Italy. After meeting mobsters and mythical gatekeepers near Stara Baska (Croatia), in Montenegro they stumbled upon a dead fox on their road. The sight of the dead animal marked the end of their errance. The fox is a common trope, a form of communication beyond linguistics. In folklore, it is smart but deviant, a wild being who is always seen to be trespassing on the human habitat.

*Damesroman (Roman)* is an example of how **Jef Geys** worked with intertextuality or hypertext as early as the mid 1960s. Similar to the *Nouveau Roman's* questioning of authorship and the omniscient, authoritarian narrator, this work inserts subjective voice-overs



and references. The *damesroman* is a sentimental pulp novel, a commercial genre aimed at women readers. Geys asked himself: “If I were the pulp fiction character, how would I think, how would I react?” He gives the clichéd narrative structure and the one-dimensional psychological profiles of the characters more depth and relief, emancipating them from their gendered sociotypes, and from the strictures of mass-produced, standardised pop culture.

In her series of 188 drawings entitled *Inscriptions*, Heide Hinrichs freely reproduces on notepaper works by artists such as Anni Albers, Lutz Bacher, Silvia Bächli, Louise Bourgeois, Andrea Büttner, Miriam Cahn Ulises Carrión, Hanne Darboven, Mirtha Dermisache, Ulrike Grossarth, Eva Hesse, Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, Lee Lozano, Agnes Martin, Ana Mendieta, Ree Morton, Meret Oppenheim, Lygia Pape, Lily van der Stokker, Sturtevant, Paul Thek, Cecilia Vicuña, Annette Weisser and Rachel Whiteread. This series is linked to the project *second shelf* that Hinrichs developed in collaboration with various

institutions with the aim of increasing library holdings of publications by non-binary, female, queer and artists of colour. By redrawing the works as so many models of a non-conformist sensitivity, Hinrichs rehabilitates them, not by copying them identically as a form of pop appropriation, but by reembodying them through her own gestures.

**Bernd Lohaus'** works with rope focus on the complex ideas that emerged from the post-war redefinition of the *informe* (or shapeless), using principles of chance, scattering, softness, expansion and variability, in a material translation of the definition of the open-artwork. Lohaus' search consists of withdrawal, a turn inwards, a probing of empathic experience, of tactility and sounding. He made sculptures using thick ship ropes that he arranged into bundles, knots and lines, and in which the thickness of the rope and its regular pattern is transformed into a chaotic mass.



at a standstill. The robot appears to be on strike or dysfunctional, and History looks like a cemetery or a storage area. A pallet truck nevertheless alludes to the possibility of latent reconfigurations, opening a breach in the inevitable fatalism of history.

**Panamarenko**, commonly known for his designs for flying machines and his fascination with the quest for human-powered flight, also investigated technical renderings of space travel, such as the major drawing *The Magnetic Spaceship*. In his spaceships, modernity's fascination for movement and speed meets technology's defiance of gravity. Panamarenko explores the space programmes' "discovery" and conquest of the most absolute abstract space, the cosmos, and parallels it with the experimental happenings by Land Artists that led to the investigation of remote, barren and dystopian sites evocative of Outer Space. This work recalls the 1960s Cold War space race, as well as the dream

of total liberation from the laws that govern mankind by extra-terrestrial flight, the iconic moment of victory over nature by science and technology.

**Irene Kanga** is a member of the collective Cercle d'art des travailleurs de plantation congolaise (CATPC). To counter the extractive exploitation of natural resources by Western companies in plantations, CATPC buys back land with the revenues generated by the sale of artworks on the Western art market. Kanga's *Forced Love* was modelled by the artist in clay before being scanned and modelled in chocolate, a material evocation of the exploitation of cacao on colonial plantations and the asymmetrical dynamics of the international chocolate industry for cacao farmers. The scene evokes a historical event: the rape of Kafutchi, one of the wives of the Pende chief Matema Kelenge by Belgian colonial agents during a campaign of forced recruitment for palm cutters on the Lever Brothers plantation in Lusanga (formerly known as Leverville)



Commissioned to create a project for an art space in Moscow, **Manuel Graf** discovered the drawings of Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). Famous for his pioneering avant-garde use of montage and heralded as the quintessential filmmaker of the Russian Revolution, Eisenstein had a complex relationship with Stalin and spent time in exile in the USA and Mexico, before being rehabilitated. In the 1930s, he wrote extensively on Walt Disney, whose work he greatly admired for its animism and “plasmaticness”. Graf uses his exuberant, (homo)erotic drawings from that period as the starting point for a new series of sculptures that underscore Eisenstein’s transgressive qualities. 3D-printed or machine-cut from foam, they are coated in plaster to give them the surface of neoclassical sculpture, while evoking the reliefs on facades that glorify the human body in service of authoritarian regimes.

**Monika Stricker** is interested in the social, symbolic and structural meanings of representations in art and in society,

which she reinvests with an open sensitivity, in particular through her choice of materials, which oppose the fixed and frozen nature of signs and symbols. Here she presents a collection of new clay and plaster sculptures, as well as pictorial and photographic works that focus on the male gender and the observation of genitals. These ambiguous works disrupt the distinction between the inside and the outside of the body, the mould and the counter-mould, in line with her previous works which explicitly represented sexual organs or gender symbols. Her radical work revisits – not without humour – art history and, more specifically, the representation of the sexualized body, but also the position of the observed and observing subject.

*Vitrine, Boules & Boulettes Witte de With* originated in Joëlle Tuerlinckx's 1994 exhibition at the eponymous Rotterdam art institution. The table-vitrine exposes and preserves artefacts whose common denominator is their roundness: their shape results from making ball-like volumes during the dismantling of

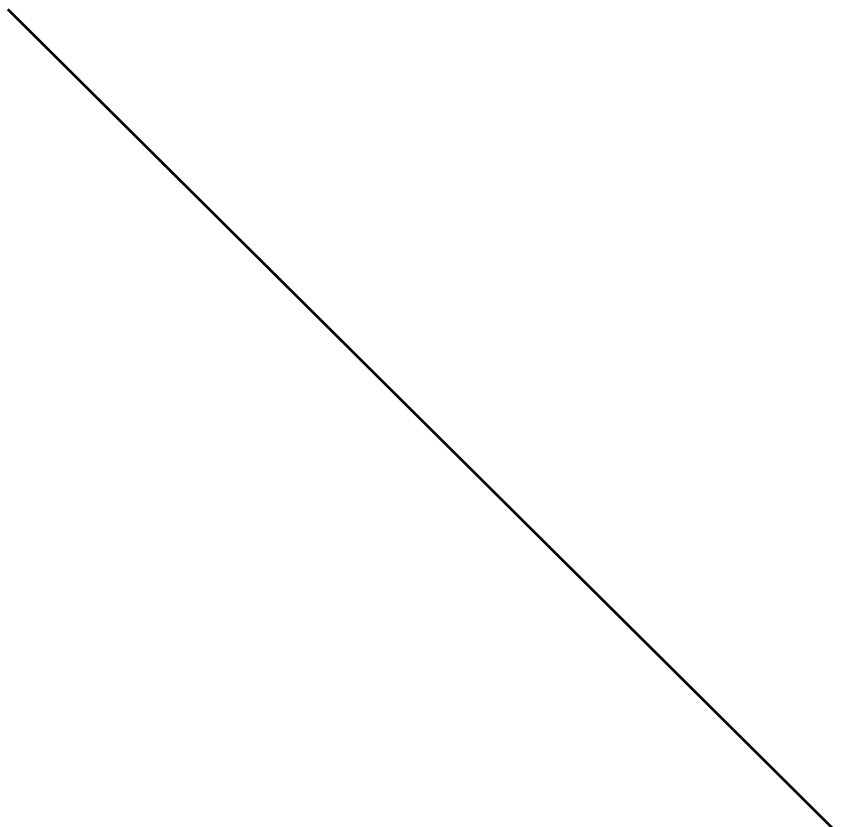


exhibitions, out of the various materials that comprised her spatial interventions. The material aspect of these “leftovers” claims no elegance or value; their form and (dis)ordered placement contain no discernible intrinsic qualities. Instead, they confirm their status as provisional, as ‘aggregates’, as intermediaries frozen in flux, that can be rewound or fast-forwarded. Tuerlinckx’s practice explores chance and contingent procedures that integrate time and space without attempting to control or subjugate them.

**Philippe Van Snick’s** wire compositions reflect the influence of John Cage’s thoughts on art, in which indeterminacy, contingency, chance vectors and non-linear temporalities are recognised as compositional principles. Van Snick’s use of gravity, which changes the geometric shape of his wire structures, reveals his interest in open form. The repetition of numbers by which he organises his compositions and patterns reveal his interest in circularity, repetition and open-endedness as universal or cosmic



flooring. Inspired by traditional Japanese Noh theatre and its customary walkway leading to the stage, Kinoshita creates an in-between space, not unlike a bridge or a crossing. Without any audience present, performers were invited to explore the crossing and engage with selected objects, and their movements were captured by different types of cameras. What is left is a ghost image in a liminal time and space.



## THROUGHOUT THE EXHIBITION

Ghislaine Leung's dematerialized practice reflects on the codes and categories that structure visual culture and art. She delves into given conditions to explore the limits and the inconsistencies of discourse. For WIELS, she developed an olfactory installation which, drawing on a marketing technique, diffuses the smell of fresh bread in the exhibition spaces. The work derives from the recent craze for home-baking during the lockdown, as well as the way fresh bread scents are used by businesses to increase their customers' sense of well-being. The artist also refers to different expressions – such as “to earn your crust” – which relate bread to work and money, associating it with an artist's survival through the sale of her work.















of thinking through discussions on the topics of transgressing boundaries, artificial and open-ended intelligence as well as the noosphere.

— CLEA Open School was initiated by Prof. Dr Francis Heylighen and Katarina Petrović.

Since 2013, the Hotel Eden in Geneva is neighbour to the Blue Brain and Human Brain projects, whose aim is the cartography and creation of a synthetic human brain. **Eden Studies** departs from this location to explore the relation between an ecosystem and an artificial life. This ongoing research unfolds through a series of round tables and a display, with a generative archive and documents that trace the intersecting territories of a neighbourhood, its history and the trajectories of artificial intelligence. The project is an attempt to strike up a dialogue between figures in the scientific and literary worlds, thinkers, architects, philosophers, artists and dreamers.

— Astrocyte Studio: Cédric Noël, Mira Sanders, Joachim Olender, Laure Cottin Stefanelli, Anaïs

Chabeur, Pauline Hatzigeorgiou and FieldStation Studio.

— A research project supported by FNRS-FRArt & Commission Consultative des Arts Numériques et Technologiques de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.

**Intersections of Care** is a research project that experiments with the notion of display in the fields of culture and art. Display stands for an interstice, an interface, through which issues of crucial importance unfold, in terms of seeing, knowing, but also of power relationships. Inspired by intersectional feminist approaches, the project seeks to identify and imagine other ways of creating links between objects, human and non-human beings. Through a display, workshops and conversations, artists and thinkers explore alternatives to a patriarchal, colonial, capitalist and ableist tradition. Curators, artists, designers and writers come together to build up a hybrid project that seeks to gather tools and guidelines of care.

— Loraine Furter and Florence Cheval, with Sofia Caesar, Laurie Charles, Clémentine



## PUBLICATION

The *Risquons-Tout* publication expands upon the reflections set out in the exhibition by weaving together intersecting lines of thought, like in a rhizomatic network. Drawing from postcolonial and feminist thought, from notions of intertextuality and hybridity, the book features key quotations and original contributions.

These explore the definition of the open artwork and John Cage's notion of the aleatory; Gloria Anzaldúa's border thinking in relation to the connectivity of the infosphere; automation in artificial intelligence and algorithmization; mixture as a form of crossing; and the border as an emotional limitation. Altogether, the book explores the potential of risk and transgression, delving into unbounded networks and forms of knowledge that can be conveyed (or not) through the Internet and the World Wide Web.

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