

# “ENLARGE YOUR PRACTICE”

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Friche la belle de Mai, Marseille.*

## A “Post-Jackass” Generation

In 2000, the program *Jackass* arrived on American TV, and several months later it invaded the websites and blogs of the Internet generation. Originating from the skateboard magazine *Big Brother*, and then broadcasted by MTV before becoming a movie, *Jackass* showed humiliating stunts and perilous challenges without any other goal than for the *fun of it*.

While it became the model of a teenage society founded on nervous laughter and risky enterprises, *Jackass* could also be seen as a mindless embodiment of extreme contemporary art performances, and a distant heir of Chris Burden’s 1970s Body Art, as well as the more recent wild imaginings of Paul McCarthy or Mike Kelley.

Close contemporaries to the *Jackass* performers are a whole new generation of artists, born in the 1980’s, who don’t hide their taste for this teenage culture of fan deliriums, super heroes, role games and *Star Wars*. Practicing Internet games, paintball, tuning and other fan fictions that proliferate on the net; and, quite surprisingly, they are conscious of recent art history. They not only observe its code, but also incorporate this universe into their own artistic languages as well.

With a title that resembles unwanted email or spam, the exhibit “**Enlarge Your Practice**” proposes to thoroughly examine the practices that have been imported today into the artistic field, and that contribute to the expansion of the contemporary art landscape. It comes from it a very open and large range of forms, borrowings, and artistic strategies. We now think, for example, about the spectacular but always hand-made *customisations* of the artistic tandem of Dewar & Gicquel that gave birth to heterogeneous sculptures, like a manta-ray in black latex armed with a nun chuck. But it’s also Thomas Lelu and his choreography of young people with Ipod, dancing each one on his own music. Fabien Giraud is investigating the fantasy of three roaring minibikes or, again, the innermost depths of a *straight edge* concert (a punk vegetarian movement that was born in California at the end of the 70’s). Finally, it’s also the “Fan films” of Raphael Siboni that have been conceived as prolongations of *Star Wars*, or again the landscapes that have been vandalised with smoke grenades by Cyprien Gaillard. By developing these practices - which internet culture has largely contributed to - there is a fascination for a certain kind of amateurism. The internet tool that

participates in the levelling of these practices and to their expansion, and then create forms but also an aesthetic of an aesthetic – we can for example talk about and “You Tube” aesthetic. Even if the works of the artists appear to address the unnecessary and hobby, they actually imply a certain level of scientific codification. The exhibition leads to travel through very specialised universes with their own rituals, their own temples, their own vocabulary, their own cults and their own very particular tribes.

Beyond the diverse strategies that are used by each artist, the exhibit **“Enlarge your Practice”** shows obviously a certain over-revving aesthetic. That is to say, an exaggeration and proliferation of forms, a compilation of codes and references, an excess of energy (that is, in case of artists working as a collective, increased tenfold). But it also implies a physical engagement and sometimes a technical virtuosity that is required by the full appropriation of these practices, that contains a strong performative aspect. Interesting then to figure out that the trigger for these artistic exaggerations is paradoxically boredom. Indeed, the artists incorporate different forms of leisure: Sunday boredom, skateboarding; TV or surfing on the Internet, as well as more or less active hobbies. Or, how the “fun” sphere invites itself into the art field, introducing a new distinction between “fun” and “non fun” that tends to substitute itself to the traditional criteria that define the beautiful, the ethical judgment, or the political engagement. It is a new serious division when we know that it could end up justifying the unbearable in certain “limits games”, like the “small death” (or “sharp game”) that recently laid waste in school playgrounds. Worse yet, the case of the Abou Ghraib’s episode that was built on the basis of cultural common references – even cinematographic references – and which goal was, as in the *Jackass*’ case, the production of images to broadcast on the Internet.

The exhibit attaches a big importance to video, because it is a favourite medium that has been largely linked to the development of Internet culture. It could be produced by artists themselves, or directly imported from the Internet (becoming then films ready-made). We have also chosen to include a database which has been entrusted to one of the artists, Fabien Giraud. Finally, the exhibit **“Enlarge your Practice”** -- which presents so many external practices that inspire a new generation of artists -- will also integrate oversized sculptures with extremely loud installations. In other words, an over-revving exhibit.

***Claire Moulène, Mathilde Villeneuve et Jean-Max Colard, Paris 2007.***