

ANNE-MARIE OUELLET

Cohesion. An Inquiry on Group Making

“An inquiry isn’t so much about describing an experience as it about making it exist. As such, any inquiry is first and foremost an experiment.”
– Vinciane Despret

Since 2019, Anne-Marie Ouellet has been interested in how we take part in collective projects. What incites us to create or join an association, a collective, a community, or to work collaboratively? What keeps us in a group, what binds or connects us? What is the uniting principle behind these initiatives: an activity, a practice, an identity, a cause, a need? Through small group experiments, knowledge-sharing activities, and a series of interviews, Anne-Marie Ouellet examines how groups, whether informal or organized, generate a feeling of belonging, and how these groups influence our activities, behaviours, emotions, and ideas.

At the core of the exhibition, these investigations unfold through a performative installation titled *Cohesion*. Intended to be viewed or experienced alone or as a group, the artwork takes the form of a temporary gathering place with a variable composition. It is a moment in the process, an invitation to share our current thoughts. A zine and a performance weave together words and gestures from interviews, and interact with the narrative space of the installation. Trying to be and to do things together, to observe group dynamics, to share power, to embody the figure of a group in motion: these offer a new jumble of experiences, between necessities, utopias, loss, care, and solidarity.

In parallel, the exhibition underlines some of the issues Anne-Marie Ouellet's practice has raised over the past twenty years by connecting a selection of works with traces from several projects that examine collective space. Brought together in a "diagram of a practice," these elements are organized according to the links that were established between the strategies or subjects of certain projects, but mainly in terms of their ongoing relationship with *Cohesion*. This diagram underlines the methods, motives, and questions that occur throughout her entire work and that are reflected in the collaborations and speculative gestures that define her current investigations. Grounded in the experimentation of actions in social space and on creating narratives out of these inquiries—especially through drawing, performance, the creation of uniforms, video, and photography—Anne-Marie Ouellet's works invite us to inhabit our imaginings of communality.

Véronique Leblanc, Guest Curator

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ANNE-MARIE OUELLET

Rimouski, Québec, 1982

1. *Cohésion*, 2023

[Cohesion]

Performative installation: platforms, shelter, counter, ceramic dishes, posters, prints on linen and paper, various objects and zine
Variable dimensions

Performances: June 11, 3 p.m. | June 22, 4:30 p.m. | September 3, 1 p.m.
Group experiment meeting: June 18, 2 p.m. (registration required)

In a space reminiscent of an outdoor site, *Cohesion* brings together images and objects that bear witness to knowledge sharing activities and small group experiments initiated by the artist. The installation can also be experienced through a zine, and will be the setting for a performance that will be presented three times over the course of the exhibition. Assembled from parts of interviews, these two narrative forms discuss the feeling of belonging to a collective and how one can consider or feel involvement in a group.

Property of the artist

Acknowledgements: AdMare, La Chaufferie, la Municipalité de Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs, Centre SAGAMIE

Collaborators:

Performers:

Maïa Djambazian, Ariane Dubé-Lavigne, Joanni Grenier, Amélie Murdock, Lili-Rose Vaillancourt

Artistic advisor for the inquiry narrative and performance:

Mathilde Benignus

Furniture design:

Louis-Philippe Côté

Ceramics production technical support:

Marianne Chemla, Annie-Cécile Tremblay

Photographs:

Marc Heckmann, Diana Le Nézet, Anne-Marie Ouellet, Antonin Monmart

With contributions by:

Louise Alain, Mathilde Benignus, Sylvie Berthaud, Suzanne Beth, Caroline Blais, Vincent Blouin, Marjolaine Bourdua, Brigitte Bournival, Claude Bourque, Mélodie Caron, João Catalão, Joceline Chabot, André Pierre Contandriopoulos, Christina Contandriopoulos, Colette Daudelin, Laetitia de Coninck, Sylvie Desrosiers, Clovis Dionne, Morgane Duchêne Ramsay, Agatha Evans, Ipatia Evans, Nadège Fiot, Karine Gaulin, Joanni Grenier, Emmanuelle Jacques, Laurène Janowsky, Alphiya Joncas, Natalie Lafortune, Anne Lardeux, Catherine Lavoie-Marcus, Véronique Leblanc, Claudette Lemay, Sophie Lepage, Katia Marchand, Andréanne Martin, Géraldine Morel, Annie Morin, Hermine Ortega, Josianne Poirier, Christine Richard, Adeline Rognon, Alex Rowan, Isabelle Sentenne, Monique Solomon, Anick St-Louis, Véronique Thériault, Ariane Turmel-Chénard, Lili-Rose Vaillancourt, Maélys Vaillancourt, members of the Cercle des fermières de Havre-aux-Maisons, and the many people who took part in informal discussions and collective experiments

2. Schéma de pratique, 2023

[Diagram of a Practice]

This diagram creates links between various elements from Anne-Marie Ouellet's projects since 2004. The photographs, drawings, videos, documents, and uniforms included here each, in turn, function as artworks, documentary elements, and traces of the interventions that occurred in a social space. Their presence helps us to explore the artist's practice in relation to the *Cohesion* project, while also materialising part of the dialogue between the artist and curator that took place while this piece, and the exhibition as a whole, were being produced.

Property of the artist

Acknowledgements: Louis-Philippe Côté, Morgane Duchêne Ramsay, Est-Nord-Est, Maryse Goudreau, Mathilde Martel-Coutu, Centre SAGAMIE

FACTION, *Localité générique* and **SECONDES ZONES** [**FACTION**, **Generic Locality** and **SECOND ZONES**] are urban interventions based on guided actions carried out by participants dressed in uniforms that were specifically designed for a given site. Through actions of displacement, occupation, and infiltration

in public and commercial spaces, *FACTION* and *Localité générique* aimed to observe the conventions that govern our use of, and behaviour within, so-called public spaces. In *SECONDES ZONES*, individuals who took part in an action were also asked to collectively define which configurations and actions the group would perform in Montréal's Quartier des spectacles, so as to reveal the expectations around an intervention's "entertainment" aspect in that specific space, which the cultural industry could then reappropriate. Each of these projects is organized around a base site, allowing participants to prepare for and discuss their experiences while deploying a regimental and bureaucratic aesthetic that reflects ideas of standardization and control.

FACTION · visual documentation of the actions (photos: Louis-Philippe Côté), video-still from the surveillance camera installed at the base site, participation form facsimiles, drawing based on the documentation, diagram of the project's different stages, uniform.

This project was made possible thanks to the contribution of the 24 participants, and was presented at Galerie de l'UQAM from May 11 to June 11, 2011.

Localité générique · visual documentation of the action (photos: Steve Leroux), diagram of route, uniform.

This project was made possible thanks to the contribution of the 12 participants, and was presented as part of the Espace Blanc event at Caravansérail from January 24 to February 12, 2013.

SECONDE ZONES · visual documentation of the actions (photos: Geneviève Massé), description of the four actions, project logo and question based on a found declaration from a statement by the Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles in 2012, uniform.

This project was created in partnership with the 16 collaborators and DARE-DARE, between May 18 and June 27, 2012.

Collaborators

Sophie Aubrey, Danielle Arcand, Marcel Bergeron, Fabienne Boursiquot, Clarisse Delatour, Eleonora Diamanti, Émilie Fondanesche, Jorge Garcia, Raphaëlle Gillé, Véronique Leblanc, Toni Pape, Tommy Philys, Nezha Rhondalt, Claudine Robillard, Ludivine Thiburs, Pascale Tremblay.

Penser le futur [Thinking About the Future] begins with a survey the artist conducted with 187 people on their general perceptions of the future, and more specifically on the future of public, domestic, and political spaces. The survey is then transformed into a performative installation based on a script presented in a kind of newspaper. While the work is activated by the performance, two actors and an avatar take turns speaking. One embodies the optimistic portion of the responses, the other notes their pessimistic nature, while the avatar recites more generic affirmation on the idea of the future. The three protagonists' texts thus contradict each other in a kind of polylogue that hinders any form of discussion. The survey results' visual presentation also offers a glimpse of the aesthetics of administration the artist has used in other projects that address different forms of power and their influence on community life.

Newspaper with performance text and diagram representing the survey's statistics.

Collaborators

Performers: Arnaud Doiron, Mylène Bergeron, an avatar

Dramaturg: Pascale Tremblay

Cellule domestique [Domestic Unit] is a reflection on new residential developments and the sales pitches that lure potential buyers with the promise of innovative ways of inhabiting the city in harmony with nature and the community. This participatory performance was created for a public space in Laval, the future "downtown" area, currently an isolated block surrounded by parking lots and a booming commercial complex. The piece is based on a script that was freely inspired by condominium marketing material, as well as essays by Bruce Bégout, J. G. Ballard, and Jean Baudrillard. The text is recited by different characters—a real estate agent, a choir, a messenger—in the presence of a model family. A crowd of potential buyers gathers around them, members of the public who have been invited to wear masks and hold flags. Using the metaphor of the island and borrowing references to Greek theatre, the action questions the relationships between innovation and convention, between dream and dystopia.

Video documentation of the action (11 min 43 s), watercolour drawings on paper, artist's book, flag, costume, mask.

Collaborators and participants

Choir: Georges Audet, Jean-Simon Bilodeau, Thomas Duret, Marc-André Fabi, Claudette Lemay, Eva Michel, Charles Roy

Hostess: Julie Fortin

Messenger: Arnaud Doiron

Model family: Éliott Côté, Louis-Philippe Côté, Saskia Heckmann, Emmanuelle Jetée

Crowd: approximately fifteen members of the public

Dramaturg: Pascale Tremblay

Video: Julie Bourbonnais, Geneviève Philippon, Isabelle Darveau

Artist's book: created in collaboration with Hermine Ortega and the Centre SAGAMIE

Tenue sociale [Social Uniform] is a group experiment that uses the uniform as a starting point. It is based on a survey conducted among people who wear a uniform on a daily basis, and seeks to understand how this experience can generate a sense of belonging. During a residency at AXENÉO7, the artist met with a cloistered nun from the Servants of Jésus-Marie, students from the private college St-Alexandre de Gatineau, fast-food chain employees, a peace officer from the Gatineau courthouse, and employees from the Société de transport de l'Outaouais. Many other people also answered the survey online, including security guards, sports team members, a mail carrier, and nurses. This research inspired a series of drawings and the design of a uniform that has no predetermined function or social identity value. Then, a group of six participants set out to determine its function and use it during an action in the city. Through this experience, the artist was able to observe the group's dynamics, their power relationships, and how they were able to arrive at a consensus.

Video documentation of the experiment (7 min 30 s), survey submitted to people who wear uniforms, a participant's letters to the artist, watercolour drawings on paper, uniform.

Collaborators

Laurence Beaudoin Morin, Laure Bourgault, Louis-Maxime Joly, Simon Labelle, Hélène Lefebvre, Fivi Lu, Sara Anne Mailhot, Jean-François Nault

Miel de tank [Tank Honey] is a project by the artist Maryse Goudreau produced with residents from the town of Escuminac, in Gaspésie, and nine other artists. It follows the *Festival du Tank d'Escuminac – première et dernière édition* [the Escuminac Tank Festival: First and Final Edition], which was organized around the exhumation of a mysterious army tank buried on the edge of the property the artist shares with her neighbours. The festival concluded with a collectively decided proposal to transform the military vehicle's carcass into a beehive. The five beekeeping suits designed and made by Anne-Marie

Ouellet, along with other manufactured outfits, were worn by about twenty people during an event organized for this new project, both to carry out the various beekeeping tasks and to wander through the area as a mysterious new community of apiarists. Collaboration and community involvement are an integral part of Anne-Marie Ouellet's practice.

Visual documentation of the beekeeping suits and activities, stills from the shooting of the experimental film *Tankonautes* (2018), directed by Maryse Goudreau and Bogdan Stoica.

Team Building is an ongoing series of watercolour drawings. It corresponds to research that took place during the creation of *Cohesion*, a project that examined the position and interaction of bodies engaged in collaboration: in equilibrium and in tension. Several of the group figures featured on the cups and bowls designed for the exhibition are part of this series.

Watercolour drawings on paper.

Contingences [Contingencies] brings together several duo experiments with the artist Morgane Duchêne Ramsay. The artists came together to discuss the gap between what they create as artists and what they produce as craft or for utilitarian purposes. Their research examines the social and economic contexts behind their activities, which include sewing and textile production, herbalism, and the production of cosmetics. Together, they reflect on the distinction between the act of fabricating something as a means of subsistence and practicing creative hobbies, and the way in which these activities are marketed and merchandised in the dominant economic system. In an effort to decompartmentalize their individual practices and call into question the status and value of different types of production, they organize knowledge-sharing workshops both in the gallery and in other community contexts. In this way, they seek to reflect on the possibilities of collective organization and raise awareness around making as an act of resistance.

Video documentation of the experiments (8 min 13 s), participation forms, visual documentation of knowledge-sharing activities printed on cotton, cross-words printed with home-made ink stamps.

Project presented at Le Lieu artist-run centre, Québec, November 22 to December 15, 2019.

The drawings and photographs from **Zone d'isolement**, **Housse-à-tête** and **Tente-à-tête [Isolation Zone, Head-Cover, and Head-Tent]** are just

a few elements from some of Anne-Marie Ouellet's larger-scale works from the early 2000s. They involve protective prototypes designed to isolate the wearer in public spaces or social situations. These textile devices, accompanied by instruction manuals, explored the need to find personal space or temporarily removing oneself from others within public or private areas. While *Housse-à-tête* and *Tente-à-tête* allow users to spontaneously experience the work in various situations, *Zone d'isolement* is an installation that can be experienced alone or in a group within an interior space. As such, it reflects various discourses around personal comfort and raises the idea of collective individualism.

Zone d'isolement · drawing reproduced in cut adhesive vinyl.

Housse-à-tête · ink jet print mounted under Plexiglas. Project made in collaboration with the Musée régional de Rimouski, as part of the project *Un refuge dans la ville*. Curator: Lianne Nadeau.

Tente-à-tête · watercolour, fabric, and thread on paper.

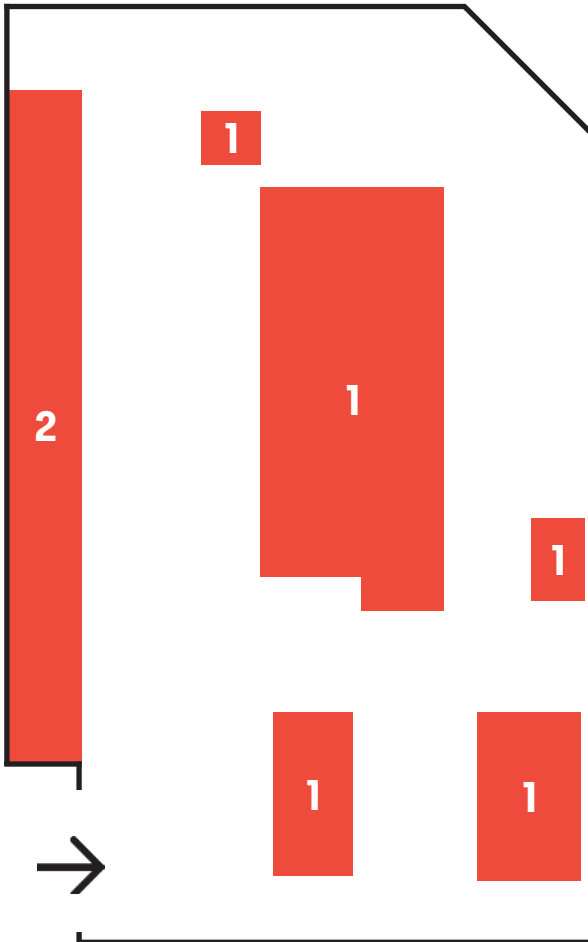
L'idée du commun [The Idea of the Common] is a data collection project that offers an evolving reflection on living with others. In an era that fluctuates between returning to community (sharing resources, supporting local activities, the growth of virtual or social communities) and increased individualism (centered on performance, personal achievement, reaching a level of material comfort and security), Anne-Marie Ouellet asks how this tension comes across in how we think about community and our communal experiences. Presented in the form of a public consultation office, the survey project began in 2015 in Montréal and was continued later that year in Marseille (France) and in Neudorf (Austria) in 2018. It reveals a range of perspectives recorded on four variations of postcards that ask different questions.

Poster, post cards. Project made in collaboration with Espace Projet, Montréal, October 4 to November 3, 2015.

FLOOR PLAN

1st floor

Salle EBI



MAKING | EXPERIMENTING

EXPERIENCING | C

PRACTICING | TRANSMITTING KNOWLE

ASKING | ENTRUSTING THE GROUP TO DEFINE THE ACTION

PROPOSING | TESTING THE GROUP ACTION GUIDELINES

PLAYING | THWARTING THE INQUIRY RESULTS

INVEST

REACHING OUT |

INTERVENING IN PUB

...G THROUGH ACTION - - - - -

...QUESTIONING THE MEANING AND VALUE OF OUR GESTURES -

...DGE -

...- - - - -

...GATING | INTERVIEWING - - - - -

- - - - - CONSIDERING TOGETHERNESS | IMAGINING OUR COMMUNALITY -

...ISOLATING OURSELVES -

...UBLIC SPACE | QUESTIONING COLLECTIVE SPACE - - - - -