

From Post-Posters to Un gilet

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In April 2018, Antonio GALLEGRO and I met in Strasbourg and talked about the way we felt about spontaneous forms of art in urban space regarding the current social movements and the celebration of May 1968. Most of institutions that have been commemorating May 1968 were evacuating the subversive nature of the collective appropriation of urban space, in favour of an iconic fetishism around L'ATELIER POPULAIRE's posters. We agreed that the best way to "commemorate" social struggles history was not to get into nostalgic reenactment. But, instead we had to contribute with our means to the actual struggles using forms of creative and collective visual presences, diffused in a viral manner during and beyond the demonstrations.

Antonio told his experience within GRATIS GROUP. As jury of the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Gérard PARIS-CLAVEL¹, graphic designer and founding member of NE PAS PLIER invited in residence activists, artists and designers in Stuttgart between 2000 and 2001: MIGRATIVE ART (BE-RS) formed by Ivana MOMCILOVIC and Ljubomir JAKIC, SKART Group (RS), EL FANTASMAS DE HEREDIA (AR); Charley CASE (BE), John JORDAN (UK), Antonio GALLEGRO (FR), Laura MARTIN (FR); Alexander KALTENBORN alias SANDY K. (DE), Marcin WŁADYKA (PL), Helena KLAKOČAR (HR-NL), Tony CREDLAND (UK); and theorist Brian HOLMES (US). PARIS-CLAVEL performed an act of smuggling, since the curation he did went beyond the "graphic" category to which he was assigned. The residence took an activist turn and its issue became collective: residents were

1 - See "Gérard PARIS-CLAVEL. Design. 2000-2001". *Akademie Schloss Solitude*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.akademie-solitude.de/en/fellowship/jurors/gerard-paris-clavel-pe1400/> [consulted February 02, 2019].

pooling their scholarships and energies to develop activist communication materials meant to be given on display donation and that can nurture and embrace the anti-globalization struggle. Under the name of GRATIS GROUP the first year, the collective designed and gave away stickers, posters, rolls of marked adhesive tape, T-shirts or banners stamped with critical slogans in several languages (French, English, Spanish, German, Czech...) including "FREE/GRATIS/ZDARMA", "MORE IS LESS", "PRINCELESS", "2 % OWN 98 %". These slogans were taken up and updated a decade later by the INDIGNÉS and OCCUPY WALL STREET. They accompanied the anti-globalization demonstrators who were protesting against the IMF Summit in Prague on September 26, 2000, the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City on April 20–22, 2001 and the anti-G8 counter-summit in Genoa, Italy in July 20–22, 2001. The group expanded the following year. It became COLLECTIVE DISTRIBUTION, and carried out its activities a fourth time, in particular through the creation and distribution in real time of a free newspaper, in response to the European Summit on December 14–15, 2001 in Laeken, which prefigured the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Many of the activist communication created during these protest movements continued to spread during other demonstrations that followed the dissolution of the group.

I mentioned the transformative quality of individual and daily action on the times of creative residencies or during cultural actions in the social field. Place Publique programme² was organized by BBB art center and Les Chamois social center and developed in Izards-Trois Cocus district of Toulouse between 2010 and 2011. It led to a

2 - See DUPEYRAT Jérôme, POBLON Cécile, TREMBLIN Mathieu. "Place publique". *Semaine*. May 20, 2011, n° 271. Arles: Analogues, since 2004, 16 p.

series of commissioned simple urban interventions created with isolated inhabitants: two moss graffiti putting back in situation an historical artifact that gave its name to the neighbourhood, two posters displaying alternative mottos to the French republic one, three banners with slogans that could be applied to the football field or to the social one, two chalk graffiti spreading common people wisdom over the wall of the municipal library. *L'Office de la créativité*³ was conceived as a fiction of public service financed by the City and organized in partnership with Lieu-Commun artist run space, among others, between 2011 and 2013 in Toulouse. This programme permitted to conduct four residencies with artists doing independent urban art interventions. These interventions were performed without authorization but accompanied by direct mediation with passer-bys and viral communication through voicemail. These complex attempts shown the need to carry out actions on a human scale; artists need to act outside spectacular times in order to be able to address the inhabitants of a city in a relevant manner.

Collaborative forms of creation—such as Tract'eurs⁴ and UN NOUS⁵ or *Porte-Parole*⁶ and *Paper Tigers Collection*⁷—also constituted significant artistic experiences capable of overcoming the obstacles to the sharing of insights in the context of capitalism, from the institutional to the commercial field. It led us to highlight a series of antagonisms regarding art practicing addressed by these

3 - See TREMBLIN, Mathieu (dir.) ; collective. *Office de la créativité*. [Online]. 2011-2015 [consulted February 02, 2019]. Available at: <http://www.officedelacreativite.com/>. See also DUPEYRAT, Jérôme (dir.); POBLON, Cécile (dir.); POMAR, Manuel (dir.); TREMBLIN, Mathieu (dir.); collective. *Office de la créativité*. Toulouse: Fais-moi de l'art, 2015, 16 p.

4 - See GALLEGO Antonio (dir.), MARTINEZ Roberto (dir.), collective. *Anthologie Tract'eurs*. Rennes: Incertain Sens, 2012, 112 p.

5 - UN NOUS is gathering Antonio GALLEGO, José MARIA GONZALEZ, Roberto MARTINEZ, Patrick PINON since 2006.

6 - TREMBLIN, Mathieu (dir.), collective. *Porte-parole [Spokes Door]*. Rennes: Lendroit/Phakt – Colombier cultural center, 2013, 24 p.

7 - TREMBLIN, Mathieu (dir.); collective. *Paper Tigers Collection*. [Online]. Since 2010 [consulted February 02, 2019]. Available at: <http://www.papertigerscollection.eu>.

experiences: formalist art versus conceptual one; the authority of the author versus the appropriation of the public; the artwork as fetish object versus the impossible conservation of intangible artworks; the created rarity linked to speculation versus the gratis and open source circulation of artworks; the need for recognition versus the self-determinism.

We reviewed a set of artistic gestures related to direct actions and the production of not limited artworks in the recent art history: activist campaign about female artist in the art world by GUERRILLA GIRLS (since 1985), “soft guerrilla” actions by Boris ACHOUR (*Actions-Few*, 1993–1997), viral signs creating miscommunication by Jeroen JONGELEEN (public trolling stickers since 1995 like *15 000 most popular words in advertising*), fake student cards that permitted people to get discount by Minerva CUEVAS (part of *Mejor Vida Corp.*® since 1998), influential adusting signs by François MOREL (*Pause*, 1999). We agreed that the best way to allow an unexpected encounter was to create artistic presences outside of dedicated, cultural or media spaces, that would address to the passer-by with other purposes than the art for art's sake.

We found this approach in contemporary fly-posting practices, such as the ones of OX⁸, MARDINOIR⁹, Jordan SEILER¹⁰. But also in initiatives such as le M.U.R.¹¹ in Paris (and in several French cities), and *Art in Ad Places*¹² in New York curated by Caroline CALDWELL and RJ RUSHMORE. We identified a continuity with “médiast-

8 - See BIEBER, Alain (dir.); ULLRICH, Andreas (dir.); OX. *Public Posters*. Dresden : International Neighborhood Verlag/Die Gestalten Verlag, 2015, 304 p. and OX. *Poster Time*. [Online]. Since May 22, 2009 [consulted April 01, 2019]. Available at: <http://postertime.blogspot.com>.

9 - See PRIOUL, Arzhel *alias* MARDINOIR. *Mardinoir*. [Online]. Since March, 2007 [consulted April 01, 2019]. Available at: <http://mardinoir.blogspot.com>.

10 - See SEILER, Jordan. *Public Ad Campaign*. Available at: <http://www.publicadcampaign.com> [consulted April 01, 2019].

11 - See le M.U.R. (Modulaire Urbain Réactif). Available at: <http://www.lemur.fr> [consulted April 01, 2019].

12 - CALDWELL, Caroline (dir.); PARK, Luna; RUSHMORE, RJ (dir.). *Art in Ad Places*. [Online]. Since January, 2017 [consulted April 01, 2019]. Available at: <http://www.artinadplaces.com>.

peintres” [media-painters] collectives¹³ like BANLIEUE-BANLIEUE group¹⁴ or the RIPOULIN BROTHERS. These groups from the 1980s were bounding links between graffiti and contemporary art, in the pursuit of precursors such as Daniel BUREN, Tania MOURAUD or John FEKNER.

Learning that a double exhibition of the BANLIEUE-BANLIEUE group (of which Antonio GALLEGRO is a member) is set to take place in AEDAEN and the Syndicat Potentiel in Strasbourg in spring 2019, we first propose to organize a physical path using fly-posting between the two places by inviting artists from our two generations. The enthusiasm of Raphaël CHARPENTIE (artistic director of the AEDAEN gallery) and Jeff MUGNIER (coordinator of the Syndicat Potentiel) about this project leads us to revise upwards our first idea. In early November 2018, we conceive a cooperative collection of downloadable and printable black and white posters called *Post-Posters*¹⁵. Our ambition is to gather contributions from artists of several generations around the artistic accompaniment of struggles related to recurring societal issues.

At the beginning of December 2018, following Act III of the Gilets Jaunes [Yellow Vests] movement in France, Antonio report to me the words of a social worker in the local newspaper¹⁶ on the fact that so called engaged

13 - See <http://medias-peintres.blogspot.com> [consulted April 01, 2019]. Médias-peintres [media-painters] were called that way because they diffused their painting on a viral diffusion mode. For example, they used their telephone number as signature on the advertising spaces they covered with their hand-painted posters.

15 - GALLEGRO, Antonio (dir.) ; TREMBLIN, Mathieu (dir.) ; *collectif. Post-Posters*. [Online]. 2019 [consulted April 01, 2019]. Available at: <http://www.editions-cartonpate.com/post-posters/>.

16 - “[...] Maria en a aussi contre les artistes : ‘Ils sont où ?’ interroge cette ancienne bénévoles des Restos du cœur. ‘Chaque année, ils nous disent : On compte sur vous !’ Là, c’est nous qui comptons sur eux, mais ils sont où ? C’est une vraie fumisterie...” In BATTINGER, Marie. “‘Un Pansement sur une hémorragie’. Gilets Jaunes. Après les annonces du Premier ministre Édouard PHILIPPE”. *DNA Région*. December 5, 2018,

artists in socio-cultural projects seem disinterested about this specific struggle as it goes beyond the institutional framework.

Majority of these artists live in financial precariousness comparable to the one of the participants they encounter during these actions in the social field, but many of them are part of a paradoxical system. This system, “art world”, works on election and recognition principles, both emancipatory and competitive, which extracts artists from a class consciousness and makes it difficult to reconcile ethical posture—as a citizen—with aesthetic posture—as an artist—and an economic posture—as a liberal worker.

From our point of view, this alignment between citizen awareness and artistic practice is far from being an impossible figure. As André CADERE said in 1975: “Any dependence on the museum inevitably leads to a state of fascination with the institution and an attempt to seize power within it. That is why their temporary revolts, their opportunists and spectacular withdrawals, are only a mask to their upstart activity¹⁷.” The only impossible figure is the product of art forms dependant with its modes of exhibition, which by reversal, have become their reasons to exist. The alignment between ethics, aesthetics and economics corresponds to the story of going beyond the limit between art and life that has been written successively by the avant-garde artists of the 20th century. And it seems to us that artists who have devoted their energy since the 1960s to the multiplication or dematerialization of the work rather than to the production and exhibition of object-works also respond to this concern. Thus, art in the city can contribute to the struggle, at the condition that it remains to the field of in vivo action rather than the one of in vitro representation, replaying street art forms as a simulacrum in the comfort zone of the exhibition space.

Moreover, the collective energy of the demonstrations gives rise to creative forms of appropriation of the city, which some individual gestures of artists prefigure. The

17 - André CADERE in *Waterloo*, text diffused during the opening of the exhibition “(12x1) – Une certaine actualité de l’art contemporain en France”, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, November 4, 1975.

safety vest is a rallying sign for the Yellow Vests. It has been used since the mid-1990s by writers, activists or artists to intervene in urban space without authorization by pretending to follow authority codes. For the people who witness the actions, the symbolic of the vest reverse the perspective on the legitimacy and legality of the act: this misuse of a sign of authority provokes a reconfiguration of an existing value system. If there is a link between direct citizen action and artistic creation, it is in a prospective dimension that it is played out, at the level of an imaginary in action: the concrete experimentation of an alternative reality—a possible one—against the consensus. Alain BADIOU enjoins us: “If we want to return to a true world, which presupposes [...] that we know how to use fiction in the service of truths and not in the service of unlimited desire, well, we must change fiction. [...] The responsibility of contemporary artists is to propose new fictions. This is not very easy because the new fictions at the beginning are not very well recognized. They are poorly recognized because they are foreign to the dominant world of competition and money¹⁸”. It is not a question of waiting for artists to “follow the movement” but to precede it; we meant to stand this position with Post-Posters, considering these prospective through the form of the poster whose history put it at the crossroad of a political opinion and an artistic expression. The poster posted in the city is the privileged vector for a short form of artistic creation adapted to the stealth time of everyday life—in comparison with the high points of a social movement that is the demonstration—and is able to accompany the on-going societal transformations.

The 58 posters or poster series include original creations and reissue of existing posters. They allow different modes of discourse: statement, conversation, interaction, imagery. They cover topics such as: poetry as a micro-political field (Céline AHOND and Valérie TORTOLERO, Raphaël CHARPENTIÉ, Carole DOUILLARD, La galerie des locataires presents André CADERE, Sebastian

18 - HECHT, Cecilia, video interview with BADIOU, Alain.

“Occidente: Portraits, Visions, Utopias”. *Project Bioecon TV*. [Online]. December, 2011 [consulté le 02 février 2019], 10 min 06 s. Available at: <http://www.bioecon.net/public/view/705> et <http://vimeo.com/43703770>.

FREYTAG, Laurent LACOTTE, Laurent MARISSAL, Tania MOURAUD); the perils of absolute capitalism and its societal repercussions (Liliana AMUNDARAÍN, Mathieu BOISADAN, ESCIF, John FEKNER, Jakob GAUTEL, Rafael GRAY, David HORVITZ, ICY & SOT, Lise LERICHOME, Jean-Claude LUTTMANN, Marianne VILLIÈRE); the ecological crisis and environmental issues (Vincent CHEVILLON, Roland GÖRGEN, Rodolphe HUGUET, Gabrielle MANGLOU, Patrick PINON, Arthur POUTIGNAT, Arzhel PRIOUL alias MARDINOIR, Jacque SY, Mathieu TREMBLIN, Éric WATIER) ; resistance to authoritarian forms of power (Émilie AKLI, Groupe BANLIEUE-BANLIEUE, Hervé BRÉHIER and Laura MORSCHKIHN, Alain DECLERCQ, Caroline DELIEUTRAZ, Antoine HOFFMANN); the control and trace society (Lénie BLUE, Émilie BROUT and Maxime MARION, Emma COZZANI, Justin DELAREUX, ENCASTRABLE, Jason KARÄNDROS, Thomas LASBOUYGUES, Addie WAGENKNECHT); the end and renewal of utopias (Michel DUPUY, Anahita HEKMAT, Jiem L’HOSTIS and Mary LIMONADE, Richard LOUVET, Cynthia MONTIER and Myriam SUCHET, Leila PAYET, Igor PONOSOV); social justice (Michel DECTOR, Antonio GALLEGRO and Mathieu TREMBLIN, Ann GUILLAUME and Tom BÜCHER, Roberto MARTINEZ, Aurélie NOURY); the consequences of colonization (Myriam OMAR AWADI, Minerva CUEVAS, Souad EL MAYSOUR).

In their mode of gathering and action, the Yellow Vests formulate the idea of horizontal power without governing—a headless body, like the vest—and also go against union traditions where it is the collective organization that relays the voice of individuals. In their unauthorized demonstrations, it is the abundance of subjectivities, through slogans, songs, signs or texts carried on their backs¹⁹, which achieves a form of intersectionality of struggles, where associative and trade union organizations struggle to converge demands. Far from the media instrumentalizations that polarised the movement, the corpus of texts and graphic elements

19 - See *Plein le dos* image bank gathering customised yellow vest backs anonymously crowd sourced during demonstrations of Yellow Vests movement in France since Novembre 2018. *Plein le dos*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.pleinledos.org/> [consulted le 02 février 2019].

drawn with a marker on safety vests replays both the intersection of demands from all social and political sides, as much as it is creatively positioning individual words within the bodies, between signs in demonstrations and graffiti on the street walls²⁰ they cross.

I suggest to Antonio to create together a poster in response to this social worker's question, and as a founding gesture of the collection. "Un gilet" [A Vest] written in capitals on a fluorescent yellow background uses the graphic codes of the posters pasted by Antonio in Paris in the 1990s: "Un nu" [a nude], "un arbre" [a tree], "un ministre" [a minister], "un collaborateur" [a collaborator]... each of them working on a combination of text and paper format; the inclusion of the text in the space of the sheet of paper and the typographic choice composing a kind of visual riddle without image and proceeding as much from metonymy as from alternative text²¹. Un gilet poster is first published in the form of stickers in two thousand copies posted furtively to street furniture in the cities of Paris and Strasbourg, then disseminated as a display donation to La Colonie in a targeted manner²² and at Syndicat Potentiel²³.

20 - See *La rue ou rien* image bank gathering *graffiti messages* in various cities of France anonymously crowd sourced in public space and during demonstrations since 2014. *La rue ou rien*. [Online]. Available at: <http://larueourien.tumblr.com/> [consulted February 02, 2019].

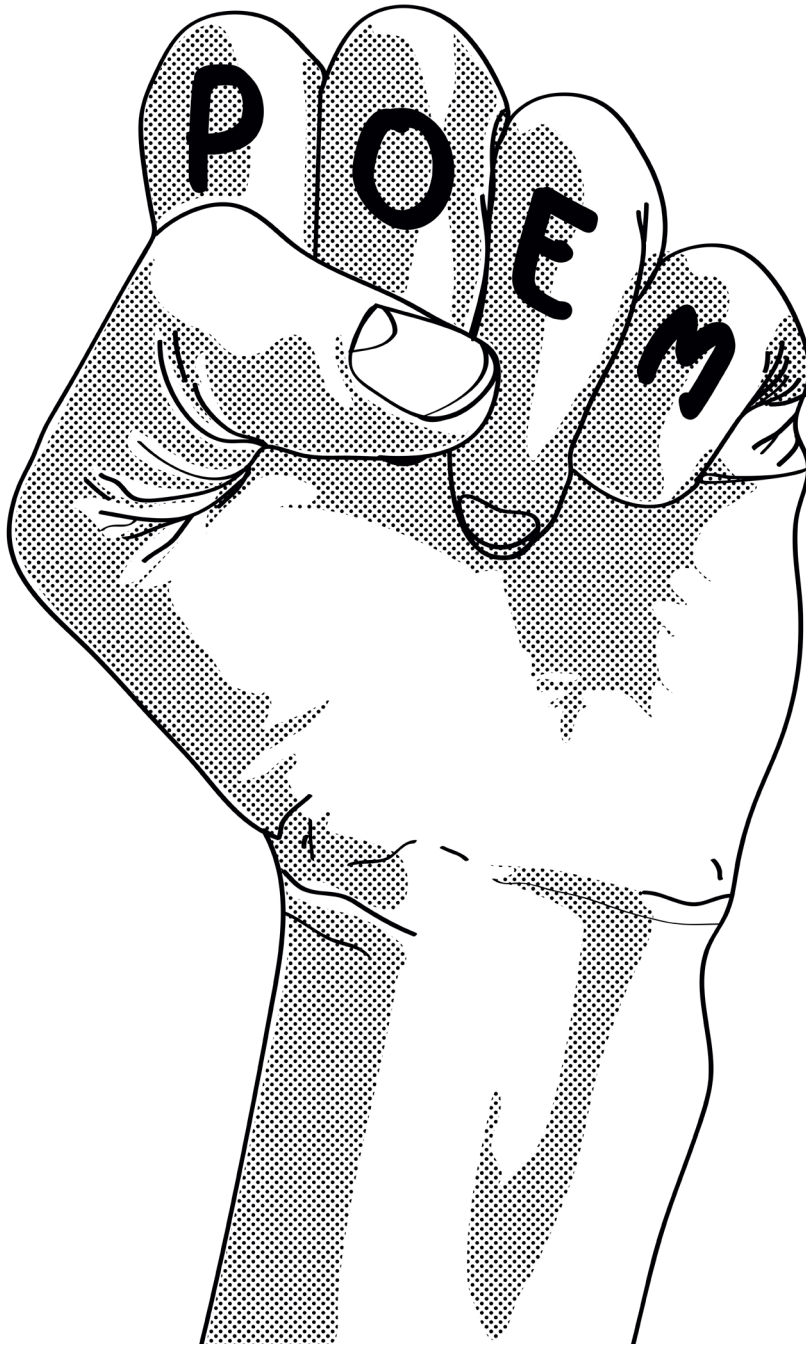
21 - On The Internet, an alternative text (alt text) is a text that displays information about the content instead of a visual element when it fails to load or when its link is broken.

22 - At the occasion of "Les Artistes, Les Gilets Jaunes, Et Vous Tous" à la Colonie, Paris, February 23, 2019, organized after the collective statement "Artistes, citoyens.nes parmi les citoyen.nes". *L'Humanité*. [Online]. January 14, 2019 [consulted February 01, 2019]. Available at: <http://www.humanite.fr/artistes-citoyens-nes-parmi-les-citoyen-nes-666293>. Event announce available at: sur <http://www.lacolonie.paris/agenda/appele-aux-artistes-et-a-tous-les-autres> [consulted le 01 avril 2019].

23 - At the occasion of public presentation of *Post-Posters* at Syndicat Potentiel, Strasbourg, from 14th March to 07th April 2019.

One, plus one, plus one, plus one, plus one... The fluorescent vest, a mandatory road safety accessory for the vehicle driver, by transposing it from a motorized to a pedestrian movement, becomes the uniform of the citizen making his voice heard; the repetition of the visual sign reflects the high visibility presence of bodies in resistance in the public square. The presence of stickers on the scale of the hand becomes metonymic with the one of the bodies of demonstrators in the city, while their destruction will evoke the marks caused by police violence, and their removal, the refutation of their legitimate occupation of the street as a space for democratic action.

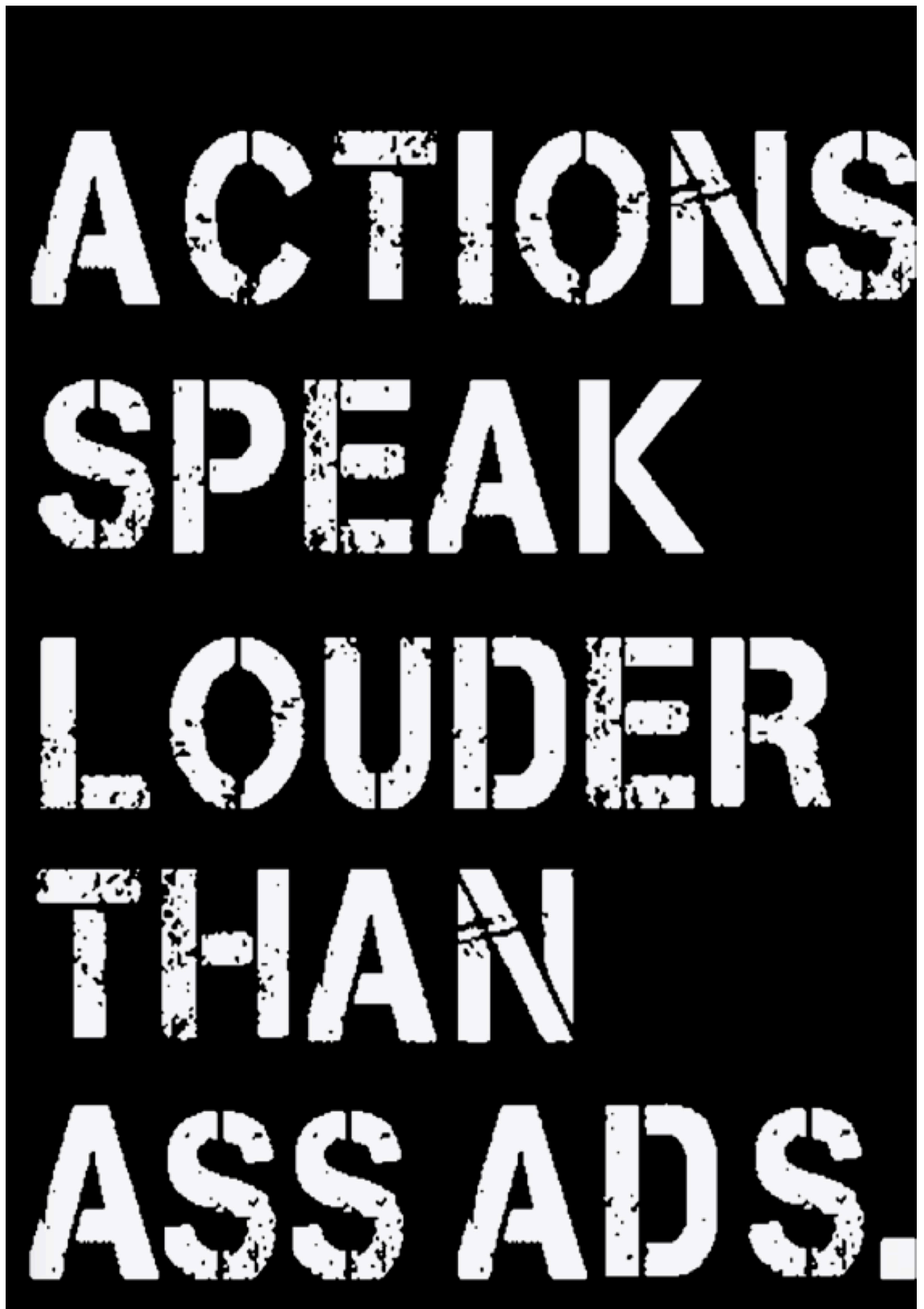
Concomitant with the Yellow Vests events, the Post-Posters collection develops on a cumulative principle, adding singular proposals with each one their degree of consciousness, their register of expression and their own problematic corresponding to the respective sensitivity and subjectivity of the artists. In the model of the collective, which would project a third and coherent identity and cover the eclecticism of its members' individual positions, Post-Posters proposes the cooperative, capable of bringing together in a common momentum the strength of differences and the proliferation of citizen positions.



Émilie Akli (FR), Poem [Poème], Post-Posters 02.2019



Vincent Chevillon (FR), \$HELL, Post-Posters 02.2019



John Fekner (US), That's the New Peace [C'est la nouvelle paix] Post-Posters, 11.2018



Post-Posters, Syndicat Potentiel, Strasbourg (FR), 14.03-07.04.2019 ,

Images from : Images from : <http://www.editionscartonpate.com/post-posterspost-posters>

