

EN

lieven de boeck

→ *breaking free*

breaking free

Belgian artist Lieven de Boeck presents a solo exhibition designed specifically for the Nave of the art center. True to his performative approach, the artist imagines in Tours a “parade - exhibition” that integrates the event-based nature of artistic gesture and the political power of encounter. The exhibition does not present itself as a finished form, but rather as a space to be activated, experienced, and reawakened by the presence of bodies — those of the art center’s team and of the public.

Building on his long-term project *The Archive of Disappearance*, a reflection on forms of erasure, voluntary refusal, and reappearance within the artistic field, Lieven de Boeck continues his exploration of the political and affective stakes of a *queer aesthetic*⁰¹. What is queer art today? How does it question binary modes of representation?

Can it disrupt normative logics of visibility, productivity, and legitimacy? And most importantly: when and how can queer art appear — or choose to disappear — within our societies?

Drawing on the historical figure of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica (1937–1980) and his iconic *Parangolés*⁰², Lieven De Boeck proposes a political and affective re-reading. The goal is not to reconstruct, but to reactivate these gestures under new latitudes, with other bodies, different rhythms, and new urgencies.

To this end, the artist has designed seven costumes for seven queer identities, each bearing a specific chromatic composition inspired by contemporary queer flags. These costumes — the seven *Parangolés* — have already been activated in previous parades. Here, they are displayed as silent witnesses

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nave

07.11.2025 — 31.05.2026

curator's exhibition : isabelle reiher

to those past activations, their presence imbued with the memory of bodies in motion. Though still, they resonate throughout the exhibition space, serving as the conceptual foundation for all the works on view and, more broadly, for the exhibition as a whole. These queer figures exist within a discontinuous temporality — one of appearances, disappearances, and slowness. The artwork comes into being only through its activation, in the fleeting interplay of presence and absence, in the opportunity offered to each person to become a co-author.

The exhibition transforms the Nave into a fluid and plural space, shaped by mobile sculptural forms and performative events, creating unexpected moments of exchange between the works and the visitors. The color codes of queer identities give rise to a non-verbal language

where bodies, emotions, and multiple belongings intertwine — letting art contaminate life, and life contaminate art.

- 01 Originally, the word was used for insulting LGBTI people. Today, it is claimed by people who do not wish to define themselves by traditional normative categories of gender and sexual orientation. Since the 1970s, queer theory has been associated with the critical field of visual arts. Contemporary artists who describe their practice as queer question power dynamics beyond sexuality and gender.
- 02 Cape-sculptures made from repurposed fabrics, created in the 1960s as acts of joyful disidentification and social liberation.

interview between lieven de boeck and isabelle reiher / July 2025

Isabelle Reiher: Lieven, what led you to work on the relationship between queer identity and art? How would you define queer in this context?

Lieven De Boeck : This project was born out of my own experience. Very early on, I had to practice a form of self-erasure in order to survive in a normative environment. This act of erasure, which I now recognize as queer, became a driving force in my approach to art. Queer, in this context, is not a fixed identity, but a critical method. It is a way of shifting frameworks, of disrupting norms—particularly those that govern visibility, productivity, or even temporality in art. I am quoting José Esteban Muñoz here⁰³: “we are not yet queer.” Queer is a becoming, an ethical practice, a way of inhabiting the world differently.

⁰³ (1967–2013) This researcher was a professor and then director of the Performance Studies department at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts from 1993. His work explores queer theory as a potentiality, utopia as a place of indeterminacy, and political and social hope.

IR: This research and exhibition project began with the figure of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica and the reactivation of his participatory cape sculptures called Parangoles. Can you tell us why you chose to work on this figure from art history?

LDB: Hélio Oiticica embodies a radical practice that connects art, politics, and sensuality. By reactivating his Parangoles—capes designed to be worn while dancing—I wanted to experiment with another form of queer presence in public space. Oiticica, as a queer artist in an authoritarian society, created works where art is not just something to be looked at: it is something to be experienced, shared, and traversed. These capes are not just objects; they are invitations to live an experience—a queer temporality, a joyful resistance.

IR: The exhibition raises fundamental questions about the relationship between the artist and the public: what is the artist’s position? Are they the author of the work? What relationship to the other does the work elicit? How do your general approach and this project in particular challenge the notion of the author’s autonomy in art?

LDB: In this project, I do not position myself as the sole author of the work. My role is that of a “proposer,” to use Lygia Clark’s words⁰⁴. The work only fully exists through the activation of others—performers, visitors, diverse audiences. The author becomes a vector, a catalyst for a shared experience. This shift calls into question the

⁰⁴ (1920–1988 Brazil) The artist devoted himself to art without any specific formal training, became part of the Rio de Janeiro art scene in the late 1940s, and participated in fundamental movements,

artist's autonomy: the work becomes co-produced, situated, and fluid.

including Concrete Art and Geometric Abstraction.

IR: Since the very beginning of your artistic career, you have been interested in the codes and norms that govern our societies and relationships between people. These conceptual tools allow you to establish the foundations for new interpretive frameworks that are then transposed into the field of art. Here, you use universal color codes associated with different queer identities to create works that invite visitor participation. Can you explain this dynamic and how it plays out between the works in the exhibition?

LDB: The colors of queer flags have become tools for costume design, but also floating signs of identity. In using them, I didn't want to illustrate or confine identities, but rather to activate a shifting visual grammar in which everyone can recognize themselves or lose themselves. The colors become entry points, invitations to interact with the works, to project oneself onto them, to move freely within them. It is a nonverbal language that connects bodies, emotions, and multiple affiliations.

IR: Throughout your recent research, you ask the following question: can art be a place that allows for queerness and critical questioning of neoliberal heteronormative society? How would you answer this question?

LDB: I believe so, but under certain conditions. Art can offer spaces for breathing, friction, and emancipation. But these spaces must be constructed with care, resisting their appropriation. The refusal to produce for the sake of producing, the refusal of the spectacular, are forms of queer resistance. Art then becomes a place of slowing down, of collective reinvention. As Isabelle Alfonsi writes: "Queer artists open up paths that are already there, but still invisible."

IR: Many citizens today are claiming a right to laziness, considering the large number of contradictory demands we face and the urgent need to slow down. Do you see your artistic practice as part of this movement?

LDB: Yes, in the sense that I work with a slow, non-linear temporality. My artistic work is based on a process rather than productivity. It takes time to listen, to doubt, to take detours. This "right to laziness" is a form of disobedience to the neoliberal logic of efficiency. It allows for the creation of intervals—moments that are useless but intensely alive.

IR: Could "Uniting art with life" be your motto?

LDB: Yes, but only if it is not understood as a total fusion. I would rather say: let art contaminate life, and vice versa. What I'm looking for are tipping points—where artistic practices can transform the ways we are together, move, and touch each other. For me, art is not a refuge; it's a testing ground for living differently. A place of loss and reunion, of disappearance and reappearance.

lieven de boeck

bio- graphy

Lieven De Boeck (b. 1971, Belgium) is a multidisciplinary artist working across performance, architecture, language, and textile.

His ongoing PhD in and through practice at Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) rethinks disappearance as a political and queer strategy of self-exclusion and reappearance. This research culminates in *Breaking Free*, a two-part publication and manual for reanimating disappeared works through collective memory, performance, and collaborative authorship.

Central to De Boeck's recent work is the reactivation of textile-based actions inspired by queer temporalities and collective embodiment. Twisting historical references into new rhythms, his work resists fixed narratives, exploring instead a choreography of latency, refusal, and potential.

He has exhibited widely, including at documenta fifteen (Cassel), Sarasota Art Museum (United States), *Untitled* Art Miami, and FRAC Sud (Marseille). He currently teaches at ENSAV La Cambre (Belgium) and is appointed professor at Marshall Rice University's Faculty of Architecture in Paris (France). He is represented by Meessen Gallery in Brussels.

acknowledgments

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to go further

> artiste's performance

"*Becoming*" with Lieven De Boeck, Vanasay Khamphommala and Maxime Aubert.

Thursday, 6 November 2025 at 7 pm

> c le stage fanzine

Be initiated into an artistic practice linked with the exhibition *Breaking free*, in partnership with the CCCOD bookshop.

Saturday, 13 December 2025, 2pm - 5pm | booking online www.cccod.fr

> collaborative performance

Public parade "*Transform*" through the streets of Tours, with Lieven De Boeck and students from the DN MADE fashion program at lycée Choiseul in Tours.

Wednesday, 27 May 2026 | city centre of Tours

selection from the CCCOD bookshop

Lieven De Boeck, *Breaking Free, Queer Temporality and Collaborative Art*

Publisher: Set-margins, Eindhoven, Artist book, 2025.

Lieven De Boeck, *Breaking Free, The Circus, Embracing Fluidity in Art and Identity*, Publisher: Set-margins, Eindhoven, Artist Magazine, 2025.

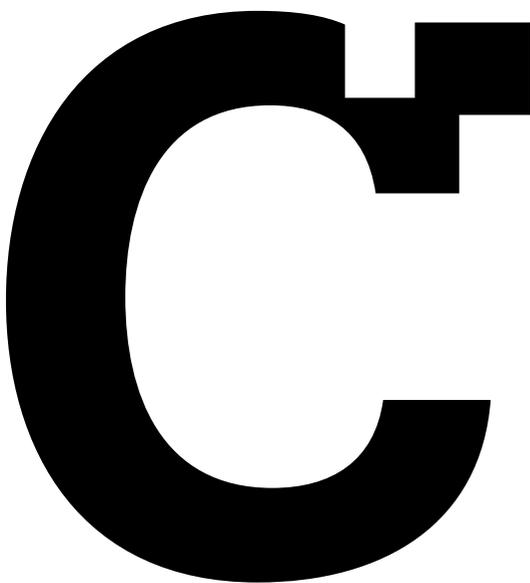
Lieven De Boeck, *X, Independence of Character, Novel figures perpetrating disappearance. Inscriptions by Lieven De Boeck*, Publisher: Onomatopée, Eindhoven, Monography, 2017.

Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre : Le Féminisme et la subversion de l'identité*, éditions La Découverte, 2006.

José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruiser l'utopie : l'après et ailleurs de l'advenir queer*, publisher Brook, 2021.

Delmari Romero Keith, *Hélio Oiticica, Parangolé, entre révolte et poésie*, éditions Mousse Publishing, 2023.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Épistémologie du placard*, éditions Amsterdam, 2025.



tours

> guided in French (all year round)
about a current exhibition
every Saturday, 4:30 pm (1 hour)

all dates and themes of guided tours,
[available online](#)

aces

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opening

from Wednesday to Sunday 11am-6pm
Saturday until 7pm



www.cccod.fr