

Under
constraint

Is constraint a threat?

Is constraint drudgery?

Is constraint a restriction?

Most often perceived through a kaleidoscope of pejorative facets, constraint is synonymous with inconvenience, frustration, obligation, or even oppression and slavery. It is an act of subjection by another person or of hindrance of environment or even of oneself.

However, this constraining and unidirectional role can be questioned, reshaped, especially in its centripetal movement: from a fatal external force gravitating towards oneself, constraint can generate a centrifugal and open counter-movement or become the core from which paths are built, from which possible routes emerge. In other words, constraint blocks out parts of the possibilities like blinkers do, but it can also become a point from which new horizons can be viewed.

Is constraint an obstacle or a safe pathway?

Is constraint hard or soft?

Is constraint anxious or soothing?

The manner constraint is perceived is not as much relative to its nature (material, time, space...) as it is to the way we imagine experiencing or overcoming it, to the attitude we have to adopt to grasp it. The question then arises whether it is preferable to ignore it, to accept it, to confront it, to sidestep it or to surf it like Kelly Slater in his glory days?

Although constraint may seem like it guides with too much insistency and channels one's thoughts and actions, for some people, it is a soothing and restful reference point. Used as the backbone or the common thread, it provides a marked path, a comfortable and structured frame. Accordingly, it is a well-founded groundwork to rely on to develop a project.

For others, constraint defines new areas of investigation and expression, it creates new plastic realities, as evidenced by Ou·X·Po. This body of research based on voluntary constraints leads to a break with conventions, clearing the way for further aesthetic paths among other possibilities. In music, with Johann Sebastian Bach (or with Schoenberg and the dodecaphony), constraint considered as a playground takes on its full meaning with compositions written as musical palindromes, or other compositional devices such as the crab canon (two musical lines, the first of which repeats the following sequence of notes in reverse order). Both imagination and creativity draw new energy, as some sort of rebound effect that triggers a new upswing.

Is constraint frightening or benevolent?

Is constraint authoritarian or voluntary?

Is constraint unambiguous or concerted?

Constraint can be found in every aspect of our lives. All our actions are consciously or unconsciously find their roots in dictates, contracts and conventions –of which our superego would be the greatest defender– that society have imposed on us or that we have imposed on ourselves in order to regulate our connection with the world and other people. At the same time destroyer and harbour of our liberties, constraint is, to a certain extent, similar to game instructions that organises, provides structure to elements and individuals. It unites disparate individuals who share common ground and forms a coherent group. It creates a community, an organism. When applied to all, constraint becomes the law, it regulates, tempers and establishes the conditions of the interactions and the cohabitation by a system mostly invisible and tacit that implicitly defines areas of freedom.

So, what is your representation of the idea of constraint?

Your involvement in the project starts here. You will be sent simple rules (one format, one colour, one visual element) to allow you to create a collective artwork. All you have to do is to produce a piece of information (image or text) on the topic of “constraint” that you can explore as a subject matter or as a process.

But what will your stance be? Docility? Battle? Refusal? Rebellion? Respect? Rejection? Annihilation? Acceptance? Submission? Rebound? Bypass? Appropriation? Integration? Reinterpretation?

The principle

After 2020, a personally, socially and politically unsettling year (and the postponement of the *Triennale* at that!), we invite you to reflect on the topic of constraint... in 48 hours!

In practice, each of you receives a page with a graphic element (a constraint to start with). In response, you will have to create an image with a monochromatic visual of your choice (text, photography, drawing...) which will then be overlaid. Lastly, a layer of colour – another constraint, kept secret from you – will be applied to this upper layer.

La procédure

1 – You will receive an image in a few days' time. Until then, think about how you would like to approach the notion of "*constraint*".

2 – Once you've received our image, you have 48 hours (like Inspector Mike Fletcher) to create and email us a monochromatic response-image of your choice in black & white. A3 format, vector (.eps, .ai) or 300 dpi image (.tif, .osd or .jpg) in black and white (grayscale). Your files have to be titled as follows: surname_first-name.jpg no accented letters, nor special characters.

If you want, you can also send us an accompanying text and title.

3 – We put together and overlay your image and the one you received. We will send you the result-image after a few days.

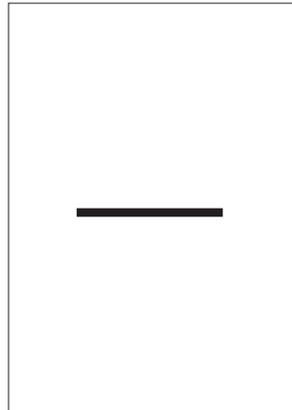
4 – Again, you have 48 hours to print the image in A4 or A3 and photograph it in your immediate surroundings (whether you are in lockdown or free to stroll around). Take a horizontal picture (preferably 4:3), in the highest possible resolution depending on your device. Send us the picture so that we can publish it on the website of the Triennale.

5 – We collect all the creations, publish them on the website of the Triennial and display them (individually credited for) in the streets of Luxembourg, as teaser posters for the upcoming *Triennial*.

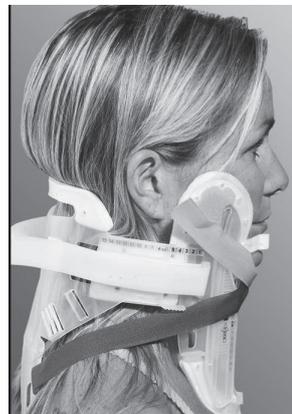
6 –Finally, all of your creations will be assembled to form a unique and collective artwork, presented at Rotondes and published as a collector's edition (Naturally, you will get your own copy!).

Exemple

you receive this:



you send this back:



we put them together
and get something like this:



Keywords

accept/refuse
algorithm
mark / mark-up
constrained concrete
bounds
frame
quarrelling
coercion
vertebral column
constraint
control
drudgery
docility
hindrance
exigency
create a community
force
common thread
frustration
discomfort, unease
imperative
inconvenience
Johann Sebastian Bach
game
Kelly Slater

labyrinth
head against the wall
law
threat
mirror
obligation
obstacle
oppression
Ou·X·Po
safe pathway
starting point
pressure
process
soothing
rebellion
rebound
reflector
game instructions
respect
restriction
revolt
revolution
structure
find your way
zig zag