

Aléa

Gyan Panchal

*l'allègement*

26.10. – 20.12.2025

*What I like about you is what I imagine* <sup>(1)</sup>

08:00

*Antoine and Pierre, at a glance*

It's incongruous to see the sculptures of Gyan Panchal floating on the terrace of the first floor of the former middle school Jean-Lolive. One should take time to contemplate these coloured objects on the geometric gray slabs that structure the walkway. Because, not even the architects Jacques Kalisz and Jean Perrotet, nor Gyan, could have imagined one day to find these sculptures on this area of building A open to the sky, if the curators hadn't made this decision.

Its what Aléa's cycle of exhibitions invite us to consider : the collision between a place and artworks not destined to meet or converse.

Aléa is related to a site-specific program where art and a social context affect one another mutually, however in this instance, the works are not made for the location, but selected in resonance with it. Taking works out of the traditional exhibition space <sup>(2)</sup> to show them the heart of an inhabited space reminds us that the art must rest embedded *as close as possible to the processes of life* <sup>(3)</sup>, in that a work is not just a production. That a work exists in its economic value (freed from market logic), like a vehicle for emotion and thought for the viewer, where the perceptive experience rediscovers its political dimension.

The curatorial gesture of Antoine Dochniak and Pierre Allain render to the three works *la consolation, la moisson, le revenant* <sup>(4)</sup> their status as a concrete object : a slide and its drift, a rainwater collector. Pieces of things that the artist gathers from the landscape, on the sides of roads, before transforming them. By subjecting them to the contingencies of a new external environment, they elude the dimension of the artistic aura that the objects had acquired in the institutional exhibition space, to replace it with another, resulting in their re-entry into reality. The terrace becomes the site of a test, both material and symbolic, of the resistance of the object-works of Gyan to our gaze as spectators

12:00

*The call*

Last afternoon, by telephone, Gyan told me about his findings : the discovery of the objects, the work carried out on the material, the desire to render these objects to be visible once again. What I especially heard in his voice was the infinite tenderness addressed to this horde of objects nonetheless poor, undesirable, abandoned to their fate as obsolete instruments. And this tender enchantment brought me back to childhood : one that traces and builds fortified castles in the formless masses of sand ; one that straightens the stones into megaliths on paths — constantly inventing fictions as alternatives to our constituted knowledge.

When Gyan cuts open the stomach of a water collector, sands the torso of a slide, he produces these gestures of reduction and remodeling that reconfigure our relationship to the sensible. He suggests that our affection for something depends on our inclination to project a degree of invention and imagination into its representation. How does the sight of the slide lying on the ground affect me ? Is it its familiar form that acts as a marker of memory ? Or rather, the image of the slide is no longer considered to be upheld (its verticality has fallen), referring to something other than itself : a distinct sign in the profusion of formes in the landscape.

For him the act of transformation is *alleviating* <sup>(5)</sup>: he discovers, welcomes, cuts, sands, paints. And with this he relieves, sheds the form of a part from itself.

14:00

*Let's go see*

Playing with the points of view to transform the scene. Changing the scale, taking away height, dopting bird-eye-view, and watching the sculptures off Gyan become the precise harvest (peachy orange, coral yellow) of an autumn's labor.

We're changing seasons. *Gyan noticed it.*

18:00

*Wander*

We are at the doors of building A, large block from the 1970s, formed by volumes and primary forms that fit together like the squares of a Rubik's Cube with pastel shades. The spectator crosses the atrium, takes the central ramp, goes up to the 13th studio on the 2nd floor, which overlooks the terrace where the works lie. While wandering, everything is there to be seen. The architecture, organized according to a panoptic system around a central courtyard and its passageways, exhibits its forms — frames, crosspieces, supporting structures — and places the spectator in a situation of constant visibility. It plays on the circulation of gazes, from the one who sees to the one that is seen, and on shifts in perspectives.

This perceptive simulation that accompanies our progression to Gyan's sculptures, conditions our encounter. Absorbed by this system, they seem integrated in the logic of the exhibition site and to what we project of it through them. Designed to structure, frame and contain the space and the elements, the middle school assimilates the artist's objects in its own metabolism and language of forms. And the whole thing becomes one body, reviving the memory of the world of childhood. A playground that comes to life right before our eyes, conveying the image of sliding down this slide to a gatehouse turned towards the future.

*The night, the day*

When night comes, *la consolation*, *la moisson* and *le revenant* disappear little by little in the volumes of the building. We can still make them out — two standing up, one lying down — from the houses on Rue Denis-Papin. To daily observers leaning out of their apartment windows, searching for an event that would shake up the horizon, what would these black masses have to say ? What part of the work will participate in the phantasmagoria of the night ? The sculpture, that, everyday, combines their grammar with that of the site, progressively disintegrating into stains, into flows of matter (announced by the tears of the harvest) upon contact with external elements. It, ready to reconnect with its fragility as an object, abandons its density as a work.

From the courtyard, I observed school chairs and tables recount their adolescent stories. It could be that tomorrow these objects will meet the same fate as the rainwater collector and the slide, that they will find themselves thrown in the margins of the world's activity. Unless another destiny is reserved for them, if the artist, in an emancipatory gesture, choses to reinvents them, diverting them from the use that they were assigned. And our gaze, at the same time, will find itself regenerated.

— *Jeanne Turpault*

(Translated by Hayden Leeman)

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1. I did this writing exercise without having seen the installed works in the space. Therefore I had to imagine from my understanding of the project, the space, the received images and a telephone call with Gyan Panchal.

2. Galleries, museums, art centers, etc.

3. Pierre Alferi, Dominique Figarella, Catherine Perret et Paul Sztulman, « Research scenes for living art », *Hermès, La Revue*, n°72, 2015.

4. *la consolation*, rainwater collector, paint, 104 × 81 × 32 cm, 2025.

*la moisson*, rainwater collector, paint, 52 × 156 × 103 cm, 2025.

*le revenant*, slide, drift, copper wire, 32 × 275 × 48 cm, 2025.

5. *l'allègement*, title of the exhibition of Gyan Panchal at Artagon, Pantin, october 2025.

Gyan Panchal (born in 1973 in Paris) lives and works in Eymoutiers. His recent and upcoming exhibitions include Treignac Projet, Treignac (2025); L'art dans les Chapelles, Saint-Thuriau (2025); Marcelle Alix, Paris (2022); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Saint-Étienne (2019); Palette Terre, Paris (2018); Château Rochechouart, Musée d'art contemporain de la Haute-Vienne, Rochechouart (2017). He organized the exhibition Being Thing at the CIAP de Vassivière and Treignac Projet (2015), and teaches sculpture at Esacm, the École supérieure d'art de Clermont Métropole. Panchal's sculptures emerge from objects gleaned along the roadsides — found fragments cast off in their obsolescence, whose suspended functions still summon traces of human exchange, gestures reaching toward others and toward the world beyond.

Aléa is an exhibition program initiated by Pierre Allain and Antoine Dochniak in 2025, housed in Artagon Pantin, a former school repurposed into artist studios in Pantin. Conceived in dialogue with the building's history and the atmospheric conditions that may affect it, the program explores a sensitive reflection on the affective and emotional relationships between the artworks and their environment. Over the course of the year, international artists are invited to develop site-responsive proposals across varied timeframes. Each project will unfold in different parts of the building: a rooftop terrace, a meeting room, a screening room, and the hallways.