

Word play, the lab

**An interactive
installation to raise
children's awareness of
typography and design**

**Exhibition from April
6 to August 4, 2024.**

**mille formes, Center
for Early Arts Engagement,
Clermont-Ferrand (France)**

Atelier Baudelaire x Bold design

Wordplay, the Lab

An interactive installation imagined by Atelier Baudelaire x Bold Design (Camille Baudelaire, Olivia Grandperrin, Julien Benayoun, William Boujon, with the participation of Mathis El Idriss)

A production by mille formes, City of Clermont-Ferrand



Vue générale de l'exposition : en entrant dans l'espace, les enfants découvrent « l'atelier motricité » ; des caisses de rangement leur permettent, seuls ou avec l'aide d'un adulte, de manipuler des grands modules en mousse souples, légers et déhoussables. Ils construisent de manière collaborative des architectures et parcours imaginaires, au gré de leurs envies.

"Wordplay, the Lab" is an interactive design installation created by Atelier Baudelaire and Bold Design. The project originated during the first COVID-19 lockdown, driven by a desire to develop playful and innovative tools for learning to read and write — aimed at helping young children discover typography and modular design.

At the invitation of mille formes, a Center for Early Arts Engagement (0–6 years) in Clermont-Ferrand, the original prototype evolved into a multi-scale construction game. Using body- and hand-sized modules and stencils, children are invited to create both 2D and 3D compositions, stimulating their imagination and physical engagement.



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View the project online

→ **www.atelierbaudelaire.com**

→ **www.bold-design.fr**

→ **www.milleformes.fr**

In March 2020, during the Covid crisis, professional and family life merged — and a new question emerged in the daily life of Atelier Baudelaire: How can we approach learning to read and write in a context that has suddenly become so uncertain, yet so open? Born from a desire to create educational objects for children and marginalized audiences, a first experimental prototype was developed during lockdown.

Using upcycled materials and supplies available only in essential shops, forms and colors took shape and evolved through hands-on experimentation with children. These explorations led to a series of five small 3D-printed modules, produced by Bold Design, which can be combined to recreate the 26 upper-case letters of the alphabet — introducing children to the construction and recognition of signs. The concentric striations produced by this fabrication process help reinforce shape memory through touch.

From this set of five basic modular shapes, produced in different scales, the workshops progressively stimulate children's motor skills. With the help of stencils and instruction cards, a first drawing workshop allows for free graphic compositions in two dimensions on A4 sheets.

Next, a model-making workshop encourages children to build three-dimensional structures using the same shapes — experimenting with balance and gravity. Finally, a large-scale motor skills workshop uses oversized versions of the modules, allowing children to combine spatial construction with physical movement. This monumental scale invites them to imagine architectures and pathways together.

These three levels of play give children the chance to follow the designer's creative process: first reflection through drawing, then experimentation at the scale of the body and space.

In this lab, children develop their fine motor skills and are introduced to drawing, pattern, and spatial organization.

Each activity offers an alternative way to learn writing and composition — to be repeated, reinterpreted, and invented freely, according to each child's desires. Cooperation, dialogue, and negotiation between children become an open, joyful, and playful way of exploring design thinking.

Atelier Baudelaire

More infos

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Founded in 2021 by Camille Baudelaire and Olivia Grandperrin, Atelier Baudelaire is a research and design studio working at the intersection of graphic design, spatial practices, education and publishing. Their practice weaves together artistic experimentation, collective intelligence and a strong commitment to transmission — particularly through inclusive and intergenerational approaches. Rooted in feminist and socially engaged design, the studio creates tools, workshops, and scenographies that merge form and pedagogy. Atelier Baudelaire regularly collaborates with institutions such as the Centre Pompidou, the Cité internationale de la langue française, and design schools like EnsAD and Duperré. Their projects are guided by values of care, co-creation and material sustainability.

Bold design

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Founded in 2008 by Julien Benayoun and William Boujon, Bold Design is a studio working at the crossroads of design, technology, science and art. Their work explores the aesthetic and societal potential of emerging tools — from 3D printing to algorithmic design — while remaining deeply anchored in craftsmanship and research. Their creations range from experimental objects to scenographic devices, often developed through collaborations with institutions such as the Centre Pompidou, MIT Media Lab, Paris/Cambridge Lab, or the CNAP. Since 2015, Bold has been investigating digital fabrication with DOOD Studio and 8Fablab, especially through the development of clay-based printing techniques.

Beyond production, the studio is also an active pedagogical space, conducting numerous workshops and research residencies with students and professionals across Europe.

mille formes was born from an idea initiated by the Mayor of Clermont-Ferrand, Olivier Bianchi, as part of his reflection on the importance of artistic and cultural awakening in early childhood.

A public-public partnership between the Centre Pompidou and the City of Clermont-Ferrand led to the opening, in December 2019, of the first art center in France specifically designed for children aged 0 to 6.

Free and open access

Acknowledgements

The original prototype was developed during the lockdown through daily experimentation with children (Apolline Bouisson-Baudelaire and Cosmo Harari), with the participation of Arp is Arp.



At the back of the space, the exhibition reveals a fine motor skills workshop for the youngest visitors, with two child-height wooden activity tables. The first table features 3D-printed modules sorted by color and shape type.

A second table offers a drawing station with colored pencils and stencils based on the five core modules.



Instruction sheets help guide the more reserved participants into drawing activities.





Above: a large wall mural is created for each exhibition venue. This monumental graphic piece, composed of letters, numbers, pictograms and illustrations, dresses the space and serves as a source of inspiration for visitors.



The tables are ergonomically designed so children can easily identify and sort shapes — sorting is part of the game too.



Above: at the far right end of the mural, a mini-gallery allows children to exhibit their creations. Both children and adults are invited to participate!



Bottom left: large wooden crates with lids allow for easy storage and transport of the modules.

Below: minimalist signage can be displayed in the venue's front window.

