

Exquisite Pressure x Action at a Distance Guidelines

About the Program

Description

Exquisite Pressure (ExP) at What Lab provides creation support for new performance works. We want to give artists a platform to try something new— to celebrate vulnerability in support of an idea that's not yet fully formed, but still worthy of exploration.

ExP is What Lab's effort to foster community and honour newness in a creative process. More tangibly, ExP provides performance artists a creative residency, with free studio access and financial support. This residency will culminate in public showings of new work with opportunities for support, feedback, and documentation. This round of ExP is hosted and curated by [Action at a Distance](#). They will curate this round of ExP and provide selected artists with facilitated workshopping opportunities and other creative support.

Curatorial Note from Action at a Distance

As curator and mentor for this Exquisite Pressure, I am drawn toward artists working within generative performance ecologies where embodied sound, movement, rhythm, and sensation operate as living compositional systems. I am curious about practices that listen deeply to the unstable textures of “nowness”, performances that emerge through feedback, accumulation, interruption, and relational exchange, where choreography becomes a porous structure for attention, resonance, and collective perception. I am particularly interested in work that blurs disciplinary boundaries and treats the body as both archive and transmitter: a site where memory, technology, environment, and presence continually co-compose one another in real time.

I hope to gather a constellation of artists whose practices oscillate between deep experimentation and sustained practice, artists inventing performative languages, deepening embodied lineages, or building collaborative forms outside dominant production structures. I am equally committed to supporting artists who want to cultivate a space of rigorous BRAVE (Bold, Respectful, Accountable, Vulnerable, and Empathetic) accompaniment where risk, reflection, care, critical dialogue, and transformative artistic pressure can unfold collectively.

Submission Process

Who can apply

Artists, collectives, and collaborative groups working with any and all modes of performance are encouraged to apply. Please note the artist stipend will remain the same regardless of group size.

Support

Selected artists will receive

- 30 hours of studio space at the What Lab studio for creative exploration and research
- Creative support from the ExP hosts
- A copy of all photo and/or video documentation, for personal use
- An artist stipend of \$1,000 from What Lab

Submission and deadline

Submit the application form via whatlab.ca/apply-exp-x-action-at-a-distance by August 28, 2026 at 11:59pm.

Selection

Action at a Distance will review all application materials and choose three artists. Accepted artists will be notified by e-mail by late September 2026.

*Please note – A lead artist or collective can be selected for a maximum of two Exquisite Pressure iteration. Clearly, we love you, but we also want to share the wealth.

Important Dates/Timeline

Sept-Oct 2026 – Selected Artists build their creation residency timeline

Artists will schedule their 30-hour residency period, which will happen between January and April 2027. What Lab will assist artists in this process.

Jan-April 2027 – Residency Period

Artists have access to studio. Schedule can be altered during the residency period, subject to What Lab studio availability.

Late March / Early April 2027 – Private workshopping session

Exact date and time TBD, tentatively the week of March 29th. The cohort of selected artists will gather for a closed group works-in-progress showing, facilitated by Action at a Distance. Artist must be present for this showing.

April 15, 2027 – Tech/dress rehearsal

****Artists must be available for this date**** Each artist receives 2-3 hours of tech rehearsal with a What Lab Stage Manager.

Apr 16-17, 2027 – Public showing

****Artists must be available for these dates**** Public showing of work, to take place at What Lab. Includes feedback session led by Action at a Distance.



What Lab Studio Accessibility Details

The venue is located on the second floor up one flight of stairs, but there is a ground level accessible entrance through the back of the building, from the alley. There is one single-occupancy, gender-

inclusive washroom. The washroom is not big enough for style wheelchairs to completely turn around in while the door is open.

Seating is typically informal, and will include some combination of chairs, floor seating, couches, and cushions. We are a trans-inclusive space. There is no dedicated parking, only street parking.

Any questions about Exquisite Pressure or the application process can go to Jarin at jarin@whatlab.ca.