## Intro

So nice to see you here!

This is the platform where I speak about what I do, and it is just going to be in the shape of an easy **chatbox** between you and me.

There is a lot I want to share but I wouldn’t know where to begin. So here is the deal: you are the one to navigate and decide what you get to read about. And I’ll just go with your flow. How does that sound?

As we go, you will see some keywords appear in **bold** or *italic*. By sending these words in the chat, you are the one to navigate and I will respond by displaying the matching information.

You can call them at any time in the flow of your navigation.

Would you like to start with an overview of my **existing** **works** and of my ongoing *themes* of reflection. And later move on to my **work** **forecast**?

Or ask me about my *latest* *news,* or *about myself*!

You’re the guest! Where shall we start?

## Bold

Correct.

“Bold” is indeed a keyword. You’re so meta!

## exisiting works

A good part of my existing works were produced in the frame of a long research called .**ext** wich I lead between 2019 and 2022.

Like **Silicon Mountain**, **BULK, intuit®,** or the **Stone Beauty Contest.**

Before .**ext** I co-created a dance duet called **duet** with my colleague and friend Dan Mussett. And a first solo piece **if any question.**

And next to that I developed the *design* of two versions of my website as artistic *internet* objects: a **2016** edition and this current **chatbox.**

## Ext

.ext was a 3 year long research led between October 2019 and June 2022.

It started as an exploration of my practice of mountaineering, (a cornerstone in my personal life) coupled to a study of the figure of the mountaineer. The first observation was that this practice is situated in a specific socio-cultural context (white, educated, masculine, privileged) and is contingent to our western history. A legacy of unspoken rules pre-scripts the whole practice, imposing re-enactment as default behavior. It structures our desires, our perceptions, our subjective experience and our ethos when we are in *nature*.

My working hypothesis was : what we call nature is a dedicated space where we perform an idea of Nature. After 3 years of maturation, it proved to be true to a certain extent and in certain contexts. And to be not true to another certain extent. It boils down to the fact that our experience of nature encompasses a multiplexity of layers, sedimented over many other layers of human experience.

Next to what emerged as a *research methodology,* “speculate” was one of the *action* *verbs* that drove the research. For example **Silicon Mountain** speculates on the contemplation of nature under the pressure of *technology*, **BULK** on the commodification of hiking, **intuit®** on our faith in Gore-tex, and **Stone Beauty contest** on the origins of beauty in *nature*.

Even if the research is officially completed, it pervades the upcoming ideas I have for my **work** **forecast**. Some themes are invariably present such as *nature*, *technology*, *internet*.

## Silicon Mountain

Silicon Mountain is the main outcome of the .**ext** research. It is a performance that speculates on what contemplation of nature means today. It opens with a look back into history. We listen to contemplative descriptions of sublime landscapes, taken from the literature of the Golden Age of Alpinism (1860-1890). Then the performance makes us dive into the mind of a genius Silicon Valley *entrepreneur*. He announces the launch of an App for smartphones that emulates the sensation of being immersed in nature. Like this, our longing for beauty in nature is solved once and for good. The performance further proceeds by letting the audience navigate through his Contemplation-of-Nature App.

Choreography, text, lights, image, web-design… Silicon Mountain displays various media in unprecedented ways. The historical text is a collage of several authors from that period. The light and scenography create eerie seductive artificial tableaus. The photos and web-design revisit traditional representations of landscape, adding the time dimension to them. The images become one infinite landscape you can scroll, swipe or tap. It’s really beautiful. WiFi, HTML, DMX, JPG, MP4: After countless hours of preparatory work, technique rules in Silicon Mountain. The presence of the performer and public is entirely determined by the surrounding choreography of the *technique*.

Silicon Mountain compiles several layers of questioning. What do we look at when we look at nature? How do we deal with technology today? We say “Yes!” to it. Think about marketing, TED talks or start-ups. Strong semiotic strategies around us make us applaud *technology*. It now mediatizes large parts of our interaction with the world: social life, entertainment, memory. Will it go as far as to cover our interaction with nature? And WTF is an ‘im-mediate connection’ with *nature* anyways?

Voilà. OK. I stop. I got carried away and spoke too much. It was the biggest chunk in the **chatbox**, I promise.

From there I can zoom back out to the research .**ext**? or even to the **existing works**? Or dive in one of the *themes* traversing the project: *nature, technology, internet, technique, design, entrepreneur*? Or some aspects of *methodology* maybe?

## BULK

BULK is a fictional entrepreneurial project that brings the first indoor hiking gym to the world. It takes the form of a commercial facility branded BULK. Unlike climbing gyms, skating-rinks, indoor skiing, indoor skydiving, indoor swimming… we don’t have a place to practice indoor hiking! Speculating on this idea, BULK was co-designed with architect Jules Flocke.

When you push the door to BULK, the first indoor hiking gym in the world (and it’s coming to Brussels in 2026!), three hiking valleys open before you. Circular, they offer irregular terrain with various elevation gains, where you practice your stamina and balance. You set the level of difficulty, and our artificial intelligence engine INFINITRACK does the rest! It video-projects on the floor the route you have to follow in real-time. You can also compete in the Olympic valley and hone skills before it’s an Olympic discipline in 2028. Share your stats with your friends and give each other kudos!

#*entrepreneur*

Graphic-designer Timon Bloemen crafted the commercial brochure.

#*design*

Amongst my **work** **forecast**, there is this fantasy about going further with this. Check **BULK2**. In any case, it’s a very very good illustration of my *action verbs*.

## Intuit

Intuit® is pronounced “into-it” but derives its spelling from “intuition”. It is a textile work co-designed with (and entirely realized by) Ruby Russell. It is inspired by how Amazonian indigenous tribes devised special garments to invoke protection when roaming the forest. Think about the bright red and blue macaw feather headdresses, or jaguar teeth necklaces...

Adapted to our Western practice of the great outdoors, intuit® is made of technical water-proof Gore-Tex® fabric. The protection is woven within the technological fibers of the fabric, protecting you from the elements. It is not visible but it works just like magic. Intuit® is meant to be worn on the left arm and/or to be on sale in a shop window and/or exposed in an ethnographic museum.

Only so much for Intuit®… It is linked to *nature*, *technology*, in the .**ext** research.

## Stone beauty contest

Oh I loved this one.

The Stone Beauty Contest was a one-time online event organized with the Wandering Arts Biennale (Brussels) in December 2020. Participants were asked to submit the most beautiful stone they had ever picked. They had to write about why their stone should win. Participants could ask questions and challenge each other’s assumptions on true authentic stone beauty.

The overarching reflection is about why we would even pick up stones while on the hike, and upon what criteria. Come to think of it, it’s quite cute and absurd... Do we find beauty in stones? Or are stones beautiful in themselves? A vote designated the winning stone, earning a throne in the WAB office in Brussels.

The Stone Beauty Contest is a franchise that could be reproduced, but still hasn’t.

## Duet

The dance piece duet is actually entitled dddddddduettttttttttt. It was co-created with Dan Mussett, a friend and colleague from the Conservatoire of Antwerp. We started to investigate the question of how to become each other.   
The motif of modifying who you are was strongly influenced by our trajectories at school and by what started to boom in those same years: a whole new body culture on Youtube. Yoga, fitness, calisthenics… you-friggin-name-it!

Caught in that injunction to learn and transform, we assessed how it could be adapted to the goal of becoming each other. The piece manifests the dynamic between learning and teaching, and repeating repeating repeating…

So yeah, the theme of *internet* was already present back then. The *action verbs* too, somehow. And the first seeds of a *research methodology*.

Oh and do check Dan’s project: The Dating Project (on Instagram).

## Question

If Any Question is a solo I made in my 2nd year at school.

It’s an intimate performance about love and disillusion. It integrates a toaster as a main protagonist, which gives the timing and the cues during the 5minutes of the performance, and at the end, is the one to have the last word. While reading the opening chapter of a recipe book, the piece generates contrasting feelings and confusion among the audience. We are talking about family here. Three people at a time.

When I look back at it, I see: *choreographing technique*, and a first pass at some of my *action verbs*.

## 2016

In 2016 I designed my first artist’s website as an active medium to present my aspirations as a young artist.

Its title was “About the movie” since it adopted the looks of rolling credits at the end of films. It follows a dramaturgy of screenshots, and navigates linearly through a fake cult film from the 1960’s.

It’s really cool actually. You can look it up at laurentdelom.com/2016   
(although the contents are really outdated by now)

That website was my first artistic object on *internet* after graduating*.* It has been replaced in 2023 by this platformentitled“Hi! I’m Laurent”: the **chatbox** you are navigating right now.

## chatbox

While closing .**ext**, I conceived 2 Easy Conversations taking place on WhatsApp to present my work. The principle was to let people send keywords in the chat and I would display the matching information, by hand.

It came from the constatation that I had too much information to share in order to give an exhaustive report of the research. So, I delegated the task of selection to the audience, and I just organized a protocol for them to navigate through all of it. If they wanted to.

The underlying structure is like a neural network (vs. vertical choice-tree; vs. horizontal rhizome) where interest is triggered from one node to another like a nerve impulse.

Besides that, I am also fascinated by how familiar we have become with written-oral conversations on the *internet* and how it re-shaped the landscape of our online communications. I mean: WhatsApp is he-ge-mo-nic!

And the very specific kind of text that it produces.

+ I like that it is playful & representative of my practice. It echoes with *design* as well as with *entrepreneur*.

So, now I turned it into a stable version for my artist website, replacing the old *2016* version.

## work forecast

Work forecast?

What does that even mean?

In what I call my work forecast, I address all the things that I would potentially make in the future. Some fresh ideas, some vague visions, some further elaborations. Bear in mind that the future is unknown. So, don’t take my word.

But here is what could happen : **Travail!**, a research project that now arrived to the stage of maturity. Going in production, as we speak. **Deep beliefs** is the working title of my next “big research” after .**ext**. Expect water, darkness and prayers that it all goes well.

More on the fantasy side, I would love to develop **Vanilla** as a kind of social network for long distance sexual arousal. And I would dream about going further with **BULK2**.

## Travail !

Travail! is good.

Yes! It is a project co-created with Yannis Attard and Mina Perrichon, with the support of the program Chimères, in France. The research & development stage is now completed, and the project is going in production. It will become a performance flirting with the game world. In an ergonomic chill-working space, the participants join in a game of exponential accumulation of small tasks performed by their smartphones. Activated by their efforts on sport machines, they increase the speed, the growth and their gains. Whoever works the hardest goes the highest! But beware of not losing it all if the battery of your phone runs out!

That’s the rough pitch, basically.

With this playful simulation, what we really try to promote is a collective reflection within the group of participants about fruitfulness. It is so easy to lose sight of it when running behind figures and especially when it’s-so-much-fun… The performance proposes a miniature version of “taking a step back to contemplate how-the-heck we ended up here”. And hopefully the game works as a rehearsal for the real world.

Or are we completely naïve?

Very good so. Travail! is part of my **work** **forecast**. It’s linked to *technology* obviously, to the *action verbs*, to *technique* and to *design* a lot.

## Deep beliefs

Amen.

Deep beliefs is the title of my next artistic research starting in 2024, prolonging the previous one **.ext**. Where I am entering deep beliefs is via another natural landscape (symbolically a neighbor to the mountains of **.ext**) and another human practice attached to that environment. Namely the underwater and the practice of free diving (in apnea).

The exact same socio-historical + aesthetical bla-bla as developed in .**ext** applies here too, so I’ll skip that and jump to the more juicy part. What I find exciting is that the practice of free-diving mobilizes the psyche in a way I am not familiar with: to believe.

Whether it is about achieving outstanding performances in depth or in duration, or about managing the paranoia inherent to going under the surface of the water: you are with what you believe.

Bam!

How I got the first spark for that investigation was by noticing (and disapproving of) my utter fear of dark waters. (Not limnophobia yet, but in that direction). So, it got me extremely curious.

…

For now, I’ll let you read further on my *research methodology* and/or my *action verbs*.

## Vanilla

Vanilla. A title that shouts : Problems ahead!

Vanilla is a very young seed for a potential future project. It was planted in the wake of **Silicon** **Mountain** and the sheer joy I have with *design*. Again an App for smartphones, it will elaborate on its representational modality (namely: infinite scroll); but applied to the image of the human body. Imagine an infinite panorama of flesh, skin and hairs, shot in intimacy. It takes you to different body parts as you scroll down, parts you don’t always recognize: is it a neck or the soft flesh of a knee? It brushes more erogenous parts, and as you go down and down and down, the App triggers sexual arousal in you.

It is yet unclear where this is going to go. An instrumentalizing of the sexual body by *technology*? One more step towards digital sensuality? Think long distance relationships. A different perspective on our consumption of online sexualized content on *internet*? Think nudes, think Grindr, think Only Fans… Think big money, think *entrepreneur*!

Many questions. But way too soon to know. A proper first step will be to make the first Vanilla bodyscape and check if it is soft and sweet like ice-cream.

Or plain gross disgusting porn.

## BULK2

Before I start on BULK2, you know it comes from **BULK**, right? from the **existing works**?

For me BULK could go further. At the moment, it only exists on paper, in the form of a commercial brochure. But there is a call-to-action in it: if you’re interested and would like to know more, report yourself to [investors@bulkgym.be](mailto:investors@bulkgym.be). Any business-angel amongst you?

It is a door that the project could take to explore outside of the theater. Could BULK enter the realm of the real biz world? How does fiction operate in pitching, marketing or selling an idea? What system of beliefs does an *entrepreneur* surf on? The “innovative idea”, the “commodity”, the “solution”, the *technology*…

I have to think about Elizabeth Holmes’ crazy story in Silicon Valley.

Which, in turn, would be an a-ma-zing theater piece. Let me get famous and ask her if she wants to play her own role in it…

When she comes out of jail. Muhahaha.

## Themes

A few recurring themes run though my projects, informing them transversally. Either in the **existing works** or in the **work forecast**.

So, in this whole *italic* category you can read my thoughts about *nature*, *technology*, *internet*, *entrepreneur*, and *design*. And: about *choreographing technique*, my *research methodology*, and my *action verbs*.

## Nature

Well, nature is everywhere.

Huhu.

I mean, as a theme, it is almost everywhere in my work. I investigate the ways in which we relate to nature in the western context. Especially in .**ext** and in my upcoming research **deep beliefs**.

Nature is a conceptual production of Modernity ( XVIIth century). It endorsed the dichotomy between Man and Nature. As a result of this separation, humans must perform deliberate acts in order to re-access nature. “Harmony with nature” requires a ritual: go someplace do something. Re-enact.

Hence the idea that Nature is performed. And is in itself nostalgic.

Central to our relationship with nature, the trope of “re-connecting with nature” takes for granted that the “link has been broken”. What strikes me: when we speak about nature, or when we go into nature, we are reactivating this dichotomy.

My central hypothesis for **.ext** was: what we call nature is a dedicated space where we perform an idea of Nature.

## Technology

Technology constitutes a regular counterpart to the theme of *nature* in my investigations. Such antagonism between technology and nature is common discourse. Think video-games vs. walk in the forest.

In **.ext**, I use this common discourse and speculate on it. I don’t try to deconstruct it frontally. Used as a theme in **Silicon Mountain** and **intuit**, technology gets portrayed as an obstacle between us and nature and at the same time as a solution.

I am more interested in treating technology as a belief system.

New digital media are pretty fun to toy with. In **Vanilla** or in this **chatbox** for example, closely related to *internet.* To integrate it to a performance is a beautiful challenge, if you check *choreographing* *Technique*. Politically, it is also about reclaiming space and attention that is otherwise colonized by commercial interests. See *entrepreneur* if needs be.

## Internet

Pfew. Too much to say.

Internet is everywhere. Internet is internet. Internet is a metaphor. Just like *nature* is a metaphor.

I don’t know. It’s just very much present in my thoughts. Like: what do we do with internet? What does internet do to us? What do we do to Internet? What does internet do to anything that is not internet? Even a rock polished by the shoes of thousands of us walking on insta-famous hiking trails can feel internet at the border of its skin.

So internet was on the table in **2016** when I made the first *design* of my artist website, and in 2019 when we made **duet**, and in **silicon mountain,** and in this **conversation**, and in **vanilla**.

## Entrepreneur

When I am saying “entrepreneur”, I am referring to the archetypical figure of the successful creative businessman. Extremely present in the US economic landscape (think of Elon, Jeff, Mark, Bill…), the icon of the audacious entrepreneur has spread to worldwide economy. Associated with success, money and power, it is a career model that individuals aspire to. It is an ideal –a mythical figure- that magnetizes the economic field.

Through my family background, my studies as an engineer and my first years of professional activity, I have been impregnated by this model. A part of me is still inspired by it until today.

Even if it operates in the fields of business and consumption, there is still something that excites me about functional creativity, radical solutionism and their influence on people. Because with how the economic system works today, entrepreneurs do “change the world”.

My little inner entrepreneur was active in **Silicon Mountain** and in **BULK**. It will get extra legroom with **BULK2** & **Vanilla**. He works closely with the theme of *technology* and my *action verbs*.

## Choreographing Technique

Choreographic Technique is an ongoing reflection on the fact that technique has more agency over a live performance than the human performers themselves. It does exactly and rigidly what it was assigned to do by choices made in the past: the editing of the video, the encoding of a program.

Therefore, I feel that the artistic vision needs to encompass the technical dimension very early on in the process.

If my piece works with a program, the program needs to be approached choreographically. Hence choreographing Technique. With the big T to feel smarter.

It all really started with **duet**. Later in **.ext** I had technical set-ups rigorously prepared in advance so that they would direct the entire live performance (voice, rhythm, dramaturgy…). No rehearsing was involved there. In **Silicon** **Mountain**, technique conveys the discourse. And **Travail**! is nothing but choreographing Technique.

## Research methodology

I am very very careful when I speak about methodology. Firstly because I don’t have one. And secondly because I feel a bit bored about setting a methodology and abiding by it.

Trust me I’m an engineer.

What I do observe in my practice is that the mere thought of having a methodology has an efficacy already. I am not saying that any methodology does the job (I actually disagree). What I am saying is that observing the question present in my mind performs better than producing an answer to that question.

In a nutshell: This is my methodology : what is my methodology?

So far in my processes I observed that “instant methodologies” tended to arise, suited to the moment, the situation, the material and my skills. I also noticed that my thinking can start moving once I have made myself a “tool for thinking”. That’s all I can tell.

These divagations originated in **duet,** in .**ext,** in **Travail**! and in this **chatbox**.

## Action verbs

I have 3 action verbs.

Of-course-I-do!

I am an *entrepreneur,* remember?

Now, the number 3 is a bit arbitrary, but I do like to think in verbs for what I do and what my work does. Namely, in french: confondre, spéculer, explorer.

“Confondre” can mean a lot of things: to mistake something for something else, to blend two things (like a color gradient does to colors), to disconcert someone, to provoke confusion in someone, to unmask a liar. It is active here in this **chatbox**, as well as in **Travail**! And a lot in **duet**.

“Spéculer” was so far my main creative tool for what I produced within **.ext**. It is about taking what is already there and elaborate further on it, going the extra mile. “If we are already doing this, we might as well start doing that…”. **Vanilla** being an example. And “explorer” is about daring to go out of place, dealing with the unknown, not understanding, adapting, modifying yourself. Which is where I am at with **deep beliefs.**

Oh and may I add a fourth one?

Ah no, enough already…

## Design

I believe that the design of a web object (an app, a website like in **2016** or this **chatbox**…) can happen just like the making of a performance. Both can arguably be qualified as “organized protocols to display information and promote an experience, including time and attention management”.

LOL.

But it does get interesting when you start comparing design tools with dramaturgy tools, and start playing, swapping, mixing. So, an app can have a dramaturgy, see **Silicon** **Mountain**, or a performance can work like a human-machine interface, check what’s cooking with **Travail!**

My thinking on this has not fully blossomed yet. It’ll get updated soon. In the meanwhile, you can have a look at my *research* *methodology,* or my deep deep thoughts on the *internet.*

## News

Ok. Laurent, what’s on the menu?

At the end of March 2023 I am two weeks in residency in Nantes, at Le Lieu Unique to work on **Travail!**

The first week of April 2023 I will be performing **Silicon Mountain** during the Festival Bâtard in Brussels.

I am su-per-du-per-ex-ci-ted.

Check them out on insta @batardbrussels

After that I will be working as performer for a project in the Netherlands with Via Berlin company.

+ I have two weeks of field research in Brittany (Bretagne) in France to start gathering material for **deep beliefs.** *#research methodology*

Voilà.

## About myself

Sure.

Hi ! I am Laurent Delom de Mézerac. I am French.

I first graduated as an engineer in telecommunications in France and later in contemporary dance from the Conservatoire of Antwerp in 2016. And I stayed here since then.

Working and living in Antwerp, Belgium. With one foot in France.

At the moment my interests go towards performance *design* and exploratory practices. I love the mountains, I love sports.

Basic rule of thumb: where I smell danger, I go.

Besides what’s on the *news* at the moment, I dedicate a lot of time preparing **Travail!**, speculating on *deep beliefs*, and meta-thinking about this *chatbox.*

Hi! I’m Laurent!

## Yourself

Yeah yeah. I did think about that one too.

But no.

If you want me to speak *about* *myself*, you need to ask *about* *myself*.

Not about *yourself*.

So selfish…