

# A vivid image of the FAI AR

(Formation Avancée et Itinérante des Arts de la Rue /  
Advanced Itinerant Learning Program for the Street Arts)

*Extract from the "Definition and feasibility study of advanced training in the field of street arts at the Cité des Arts de la Rue in Marseille", February 2002*

Imagine this story as the fabrication, over a period of three successive semesters, of a braid constituted by three different wisps simultaneously interlacing to gradually form one sole strand. The **apprentice**, as the participant in this **learning-transmission program** is called, acts as the master of this braiding.

The first wisp is the soul of the formation, it relates to the apprentice's **personal art project**.

The second contains the collective development of the transmission. It is the **common core**.

The third, more difficult to grasp, is that of the **individual adventures** initiated by the apprentice.

Each of these elements taken separately has its specificity but also its fragility. The resulting strand is on the contrary more solid. Its final texture depends on the nature of each fiber and the quality of the braiding. A braiding that is slow, and questioning, worked and animated by an avid will to advance.

The wisp of the common core can be imagined as the fording of a river, the apprentice progressing from stone to stone among the waters. These stones represent the **fundamentals**, the objects of a **collective questioning**, organized by groups of two, three...or fifteen, fifteen being the *numerus clausus* of the learning program.

These fundamentals, complex in contents, are tackled with research and innovation in mind, through the crisscrossing historical, informative, theoretical, technical, philosophical, experimental forms. Their practice incites one to consider "what one can't help but question oneself about", if one has decided to take the risk of staking an artistic claim in the public space.

They're entitled: "**third dimension: a metaphorical dimension**" or "**from the scene as object to the accessory: the scenographic object in the city**" or again "**Invent or I'll devour you**" ...

They can be experimented at different **operating bases**: three to five in **France** (L'Hostellerie in Pontempeyrat, Atelier 231 in Sotteville-les-Rouen, la Maison de l'Unité in Audincourt, le Parapluie in Aurillac,...) and one to two in **Europe** (Antwerp and Barcelona).

Along with them, **the Cité des Arts de la Rue** in Marseilles and its surrounding environment are the epicenter, the landmark/lair (*repère/repaire*) of this learning program.

These poly-localized operating bases, bound by an overall, coherent, responsible and willful approach, exist through the efficiency of their technical resources and/or the converging of recognized human competencies necessary for the most efficient development of the various fundamentals.

The collective, questioning journey through the fundamentals that the operating bases offer naturally instills an **itinerancy** of learning-transmission in keeping with the spirit and geographic reality of the Street Arts. It is in this way that all along their itinerancy the apprentices, guided by their **city smugglers**, confront territories of entirely different urban natures.

In counterpoint, another wisp of the braid contains the path of the **individual adventures** to be lived by the apprentice.

- The **extraordinary moments** are those **landmark events** of traditional or contemporary origin to be discovered in France or abroad (the Carnival of Dunkerque, Fallas of Valence, Ars Electronica in Linz...)
- A journey of urgency and confrontation, the **imagined journey** is to be realized in of the world's countries (Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Near or Far East) where real gaps exist in practices and customs, whether on an everyday level (social life, economic life...) or on a more specifically artistic and cultural level.
- **Volunteer collaboration** takes the form of a long **training period** in a company or collective in the process of creating a work, where the apprentice is associated as **assistant** to the director (scenography, musical direction or choreographic writing...)
- The **garden to be cultivated**, is a series of optional **accompanied subjects**, to initiate oneself to or maintain a specific know-how (foreign language, K4 pyrotechnics permit, playing an instrument, driving a heavy truck...)

All these individually lived adventures nourish stories and produce “**personal accounts**”, short but spectacular forms granting great liberty of (re)-presentation during encounters open to the public.

However, the main individual task takes place in a confrontation with the Socratic idiom “know yourself”, an indispensable key to “open the doors of one’s interior prisons”. A laborious process constituted by exchanges and generous encounters (**adventurous immersion** or **questioning feedback**) in places and with people capable of accompanying these needed moments of imbalance.

Finally the soul of the braid is the third wisp, the one where the expression of the perceptible, the intimate, and poetry takes on meaning, to become concrete in the form of the apprentice’s **personal art project**.

Present from the outset of the learning program, this underlying common thread depends on the braiding tying it to the two other fibers. The permanent interaction between “**knowing how-to-be**” (*savoir-être*), which must constantly grow in significance, and the continuously expanding **palette of competencies** shapes the evolution of the apprentice’s art project.

Dotted out at the start, it becomes decisive during the second phase (the second year) with the appearance of a **tutor** from outside the learning program, chosen by the apprentice.

A mentor, even someone to confide in, the tutor accompanies and supports the project. Even if this project is not an end in itself, its realization on a more or less long term level serves as a good indication of the autonomy acquired by the apprentice during the course of his/her education.

For the participants in the **Advanced Itinerant Learning Program for the Street Arts**, the end of this story, this 18-month path learning the “ropes”, ends with their attaining an awareness of the risk involved in creation by fully carrying out their personal art project. This same awareness is the best insurance that each produce his/her own Street Art.

**Michel Crespin and the Advisory Board<sup>1</sup>**

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