

Performing *MANUAL* in the Library

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Lightning talk objective:

This lightning talk focuses on the initial development of *MANUAL* as an exploratory and sensorial artists' project created with libraries in mind; how *MANUAL* evolved over time; and how it navigates through the institutional frameworks of the libraries that host it.

Method:

- analysis of documentation about *MANUAL*
- published reviews of the performance
- interview with Adam Kinner + Christopher Willes
- interview with David Stokes, Library of Birmingham

MANUAL promotional photo by Manuel Vason, 2022, courtesy of Adam Kinner + Christopher Willes.

Previous image: "MANUAL: Adam Kinner + Christopher Willis," OFFTA, 2022, <https://offta.com/archives/2022/en/evenement2022/manual/>.



MANUAL @ the Webster Library, Concordia (2022)

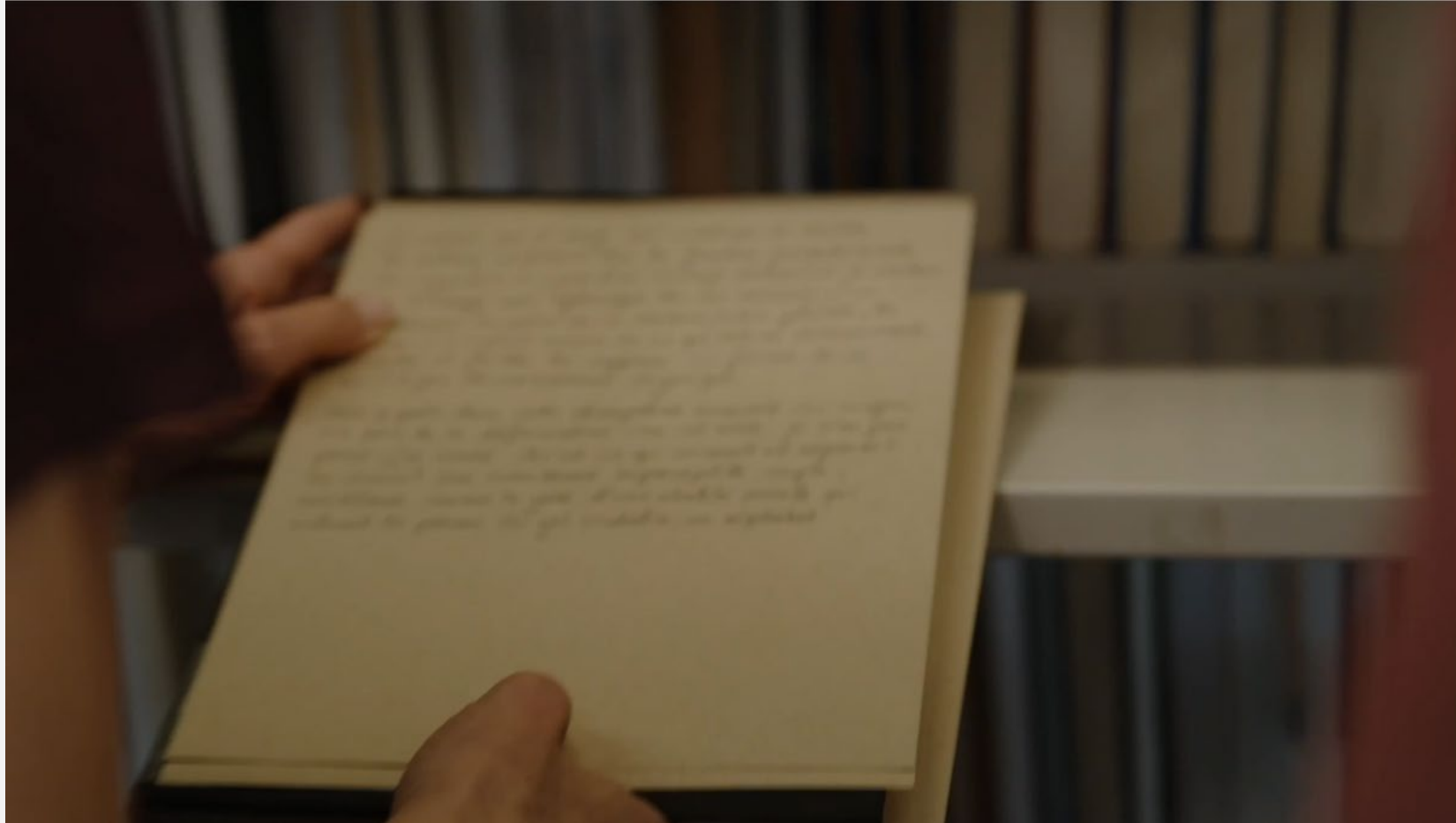


Two people meet and sit next to each other in a public library. With headphones on, they are guided through a series of tiny actions – a manual for their meeting. Silently, they look at books together. They read to each other and flip through an elaborate, home-made book that contains the traces of many readings. They listen to music that holds a ghostly presence in the space. And as these activities progress, they create a web of reflections on the act of listening and the intimacy of reading together. By the end, the viewer is left alone to reckon with the books not as objects but as shared experiences in time, and the public library as a site of collective memory.[1]

[1] *MANUAL (MANUEL)* unpublished document submitted with exhibition proposal, 2022.

MANUAL promotional image by David Wong, 2022. Courtesy Adam Kinner + Christopher Willes.

MANUAL



Adam Kinner + Christopher Willes. Documentation of *MANUAL* at the Webster Library, Concordia University (Montreal, Canada) and the Mitchell Library (Glasgow, Scotland). Videography by Albédo (*OFFTA*) and Sam Scrivener (*Take Me Somewhere* Festival). Uploaded on August 18, 2022, on Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/740785851/909564ff09>. Courtesy of Adam Kinner + Christopher Willis.

Some take-aways about *MANUAL* – its evolution, and its navigation of institutional frameworks

- Kinner and Willes train local artists and non-artists as performers whenever they bring *MANUAL* to a new city or country.
- The artists carry out onsite explorations of the unique spaces and collections of each new venue prior to performing *MANUAL*.
- Although the performance evolves each time it's presented, the artists' interest in exploring the complex relationships with images, texts, sounds and library spaces remains constant.
- Inasmuch as *MANUAL* asks their audience to reflect upon how they relate to libraries; it holds a mirror up to those who work in these organizations and shows us the boundaries of our own institutional frameworks.
- Projects like *MANUAL* will pose administrative and logistical challenges for the libraries that host them, but they can also be rewarding for everyone involved.

Thank-you!

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Some references

“MANUAL.” Christopher Willes. <https://www.christopherwilles.com/manual>.

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Moore, Sam. “Fierce Festival: The Body as Material.” *FRIEZE*, November 18, 2024, <https://www.frieze.com/article/fierce-festival-2024-review>.

Wilson, Elspeth. “Reviewing ‘MANUAL,’” *Diverse Critics, Take Me Somewhere*, TMS news, November 30, 2023, <https://takemesomewhere.co.uk/tms-news/2023/11/27/diverse-critics-elspeth-Wilson>.