

Initiated by **Gabriel Fontana**
Curated by **Margarita Osipian**
19 November - 18 December 2022

Tournament OF THE UNKNOWN

Unfolding over a period of one month, and running parallel to the World Cup, W139 is transformed into W139 Sporthallen for Gabriel Fontana's *Turning Towards Fluidity: A Tournament of the Unknown*. This exhibition aims to overcome binary thinking and rigid social values through a series of games, ceremonies, workshops, and public programs. The Tournament of the Unknown serves as a framework through which we think, act, and engage with one another, inviting us to re-imagine alternative modes of being together in society.

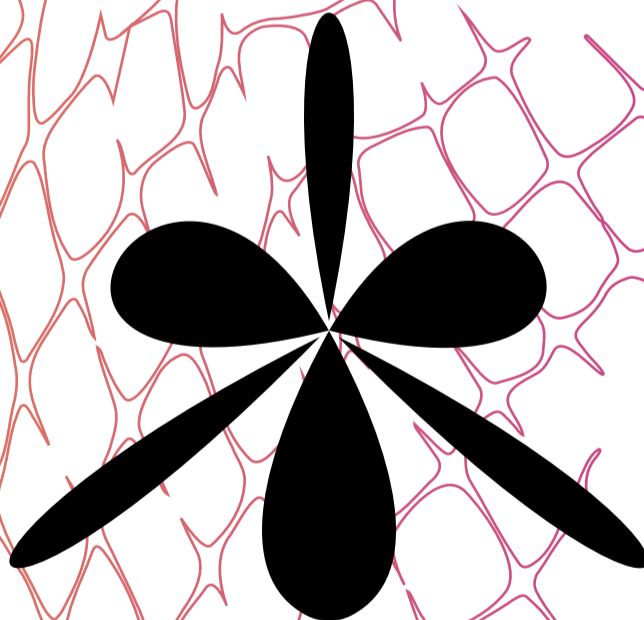
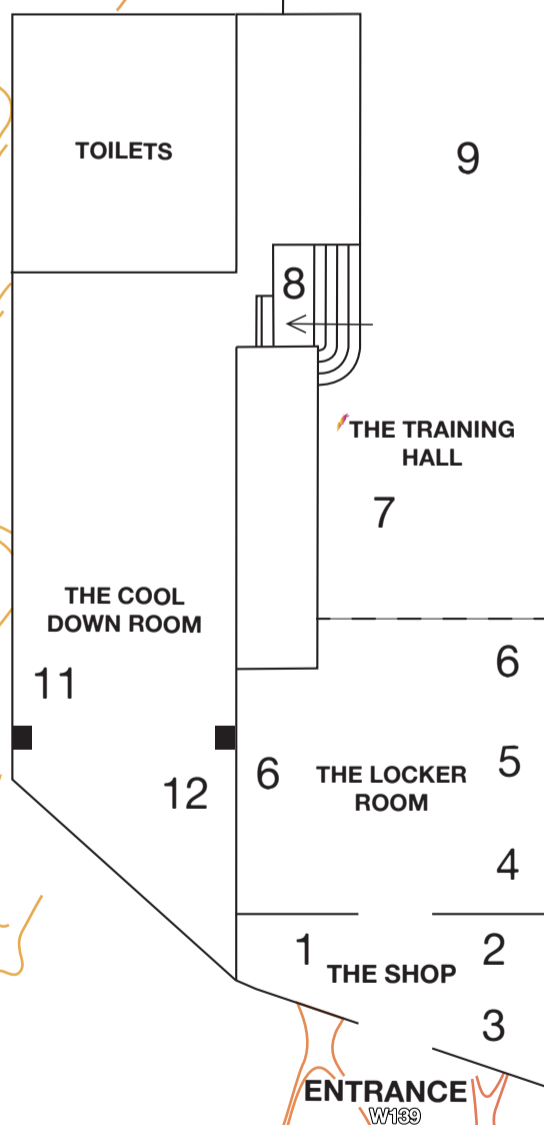
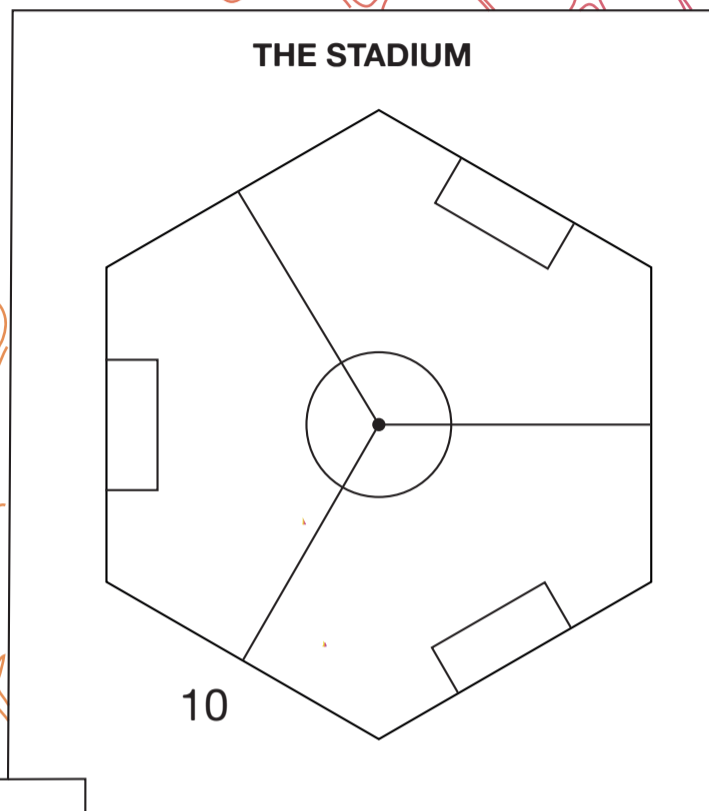
Sport operates as a cultural object—a system of representation that reflects the ideologies and unwritten rules of a wider socio-political context. However, these values are not neutral and often contribute to the production of social hierarchies and forms of exclusion related to gender, sexism, racism, and ableism. These ideologies affect our bodies, modes of thinking, and ways of interacting with others throughout our lives—defining our responses to concepts such as binary oppositions, competitiveness, or hyper-masculinity. As the culmination of the last five years of Gabriel's research, this expansive and large-scale practice-based project questions and re-invents the socio-political role of sport in contemporary society. The project envisions new worlds beyond the binary, where hegemonic heterosexist discourses cease to regulate bodies. By bringing together action and reflection, Gabriel proposes ways of unlearning dominant ideologies through a queer sports tournament that imagines and introduces new value systems.

Set in a unique scenography and spatial architecture, the tournament brings together groups across the social spectrum (children and teenagers; local businesses and organisations; cultural workers and art institutions) to play Gabriel's specially designed games. During the opening and closing program, the audience can actively participate in the tournament.

This exhibition also gestures back to the W139 archive by engaging with a social experiment initiated in 2010 by artistic director Tim Voss, who organised a football tournament in the W139, with various art and culture organisations. The football tournament aimed to create solidarity between different art institutions, at a moment where cultural funding was constantly under threat. For *Turning Towards Fluidity: A Tournament of the Unknown*, where solidarity between our communities is urgent, we reach back into the archive and re-engage with Voss' concept of the indoor football tournament, but re-imagine it together with our communities.

PUBLIC PROGRAM

To activate the W139 Sporthallen between games, and delve further into the intersections between sport, culture, and society, a public program will take place that includes lectures, a film night, and World Cup viewing sessions mediated by artists, DJs, and collectives. To find out more about the public program, scan this QR code:



Colophon
Initiating artist **Gabriel Fontana**

Participating artists, researchers, and collaborators
Joana Cavaco, Ronnie Close, Delphine Dénéréaz, Martynas Gailiūšas, Kexin Hao, Nathanja van den Heuvel, Davy de Lepper, John Lucas, The Platform, Queer Choir Amsterdam, Claudia Rankine, Sample.CM, snufkin, Julius Thissen, Versatile Forever, Paul Whitty, Florian van Zandwijk

W139 Team Nadia Benchagra, Dana Claasen, Levi van Gelder, Dil Ghale, Sam Geer van der Klugt, Margarita Osipian, Floris Rosenbaum, Fay Toxopeus, Annette Wolfsberger

Support Team André Avelās, Florine Zegers, Iza van der Klauw, ghenwa noiré, Pim Winkels, Ruben den Brok

Visual Identity Sheona Turnbull and TAL

This exhibition was generously supported by:



CONCRETE STORE AMSTERDAM

THE SHOP

From sports jerseys emblazoned with your favourite team to activewear and sport gear, fashion and sport have a deep entanglement. In the Shop we have curated a selection of clothing and accessories by independent designers and artists that engage with the intersection of sports and fashion. Specially designed exhibition merchandise is also available to purchase.

1 Versatile Forever

Versatile Forever, founded by designer Inez Naomi Correa Alves, aims to warp the design and production process of fashion and make upcycling the new norm. Versatile Forever is inspired by the many forms and shapes we humans come in—saying no to uniformity by creating new products out of existing garments and materials. They produce their collections locally as a series of similar one-of-a kinds.

2 Sample.CM

Sample.CM is a conceptual sportswear label created in 2015 in Berlin by the French designer Margot Charbonnier, who has a dual background in sociology and fashion.

3 Davy de Lepper—Homohooligan

Davy de Lepper operates on the spectrum of art and design. As a multidisciplinary maker, he specializes in visual communication to tell underexposed stories, brand identities, and educate on queerness. The Homohooligan is a loving supporter of the LGBTQIA+ community. What started as a social design project, rapidly grew into a queer counter-movement. Connected by the Protest Scarf, hundreds of 'Hooligans' are now spreading visibility, education and love for the LGBTQIA+ community.



THE LOCKER ROOM

The Locker Room is your first step into the W139 Sporthallen, and brings together works that engage with sports, community, representation, and queer identity through sound works, fashion, and photography.

4 Paul Whitty—Get Rid!

Paul Whitty is a composer and researcher and the founder of the Sonic Art Research Unit (SARU) at Oxford Brookes University. Get Rid! is a publication and accompanying cassette with field recordings, that investigates the sounding culture of grassroots league football in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, England; and farther afield in the Ligue de Football Nouvelle Aquitaine, France. The book documents the sounds of football happening—including transcriptions of on-pitch communication between players; and the sounds of football not happening—the everyday soundings of parish recreation grounds, village greens, and parks.

5 Julius Thissen—Turnbuckle

Julius Thissen is a multidisciplinary artist and artistic researcher based in Arnhem. Their works investigate notions of community and representation, masculinity, sports and competition. Embedded within the locker room environment of W139 Sporthallen, Turnbuckle investigates the complex tension and parallels between sports, capitalism, and queer visibility. The photos show an anonymous queer person, whose body is covered with protective kickboxing gear. It was the first step in a long line of research in which Thissen depicts himself and other queer people anonymously, in an attempt to break with extractive and restrictive forms of visibility. The title refers to the three-piece metal coupling device designed to increase or decrease tension on the ropes of a boxing ring.

6 Versatile Forever—Soccer Pennants Jacket and Custom-made Lace Jersey

Versatile Forever, founded by designer Inez Naomi Correa Alves, aims to warp the design and production process of fashion and make upcycling the new norm. These two pieces on display are custom-made one-of-a-kind works that embody the essence of Inez's vision and design process.

THE TRAINING HALL

The Training Hall, situated as a space between the Locker Room and the Stadium, brings together artworks that provide new entry points into sports as a microcosm of society. The three installations situate the symbols and signifiers of sport within their complex geopolitical and historical contexts.

7 Delphine Dénéreaz—My Om sweet Om; A jamais les premiers; Droit au but

French textile artist Delphine Dénéreaz's work is a testimony of the everyday and deals with her daily life and the motifs that surround her—teenage memories, Marseille streets, sports, and symbols from the internet. A central part of the Marseille identity, the OM (Olympique de Marseille) logo can be found in every store front, hairdresser, or bar. In this series of work Delphine takes discarded materials found lying around the streets of her native Marseille and weaves them into intricate carpets and tapestries to create a folk art shrine to her beloved football club. The exhibited works include the small textile piece My Om sweet Om, the woven scarves A jamais les premiers, and the large woven wall hanging Droit au but. The pieces embody the intersections that Delphine explores with her work—aesthetics, symbolism, technique, and ethical engagement.

8 Martynas Gailiūšas—The Tournament of Doubt

Martynas Gailiūšas is a mixed media artist, designer and researcher. His most recent work focuses on how political and ideological paradigms manifest in material culture and shape individual and national identities. The exhibited works are part of a larger installation, The Tournament of Doubt, which investigates how the ever-changing rules of the game proposed by the western dream influence how the game is being played. It is a fictional tournament that presents often overlooked discourses of post-socialist countries by drawing parallels between geopolitics and the language of sports—exploring the relationship between winners, losers, and the ones who set the rules.

9 Julius Thissen—Bang, Blast, Bolster

Bang, Blast, Bolster focuses on healing, nostalgia, and desire. The central object in this work is the medicine ball. This object has a history that goes back thousands of years. The first balls were made from animal bladders and skins filled with sand. The ball has a versatile function: the object is used to stabilise, mobilise, rehabilitate and strengthen the body. It is one of the few balls that does not primarily have a competitive function and thus carries a symbolic value for Thissen.



THE STADIUM

The Stadium is the main hall of W139 where the games take place. The arrangement of the custom designed seating, flags, and sports field echoes both the assembly spaces of athletic contests and the spaces of government and parliament. Based on a triolectic format, this forum configuration suggests a space for discussion, debate, and alternative modes of togetherness. The flags surrounding the field represent a spectrum of different fluid identities that blur, merge, and deconstruct the entities of the three different teams.

10 Gabriel Fontana—Arena of the Unknown

On the playing field, situated within the Stadium, we play games designed by Gabriel Fontana that use the three-sided sports field drawn by situationist artist Asger Jorn. By experimenting with this triolectic format, Gabriel realised that once we go beyond the usual binary system of oppositions, we open up infinite possibilities in developing new configurations, interactions, and collaboration between players. Therefore, he uses the potential of this non-normative playing field as a ground to develop the following games that engage with the notion of fluid identities:

GAME 1 Multiform

Transformable uniforms are the heart of the Multiform game—disrupting the traditional aspects of the stable team. Each time a new colour appears on a player's uniform, they change teams—forcing the players to constantly rotate between different groups. By allowing people to perform multiple identities the game challenges the way we usually oppose the 'other'. Not only does the composition of the team change, but its size also shifts—teaching what it means to be part of the majority or a minority.

GAME 2 Sonic-Crosse

This game is a revised version of the traditional sport Lacrosse. For this sonic version, Gabriel designed rackets fitted with sensors to produce a generative soundscape. In this game, the teams are defined by a specific sound and the only way to find your team is to carefully listen. Sounds are produced only when a player interacts with the ball, meaning that the gameplay needs to be shared equally, so that the whole team is identified. In this way, the games foster new forms of engagement towards one another by bringing our attention back and listening to the subtle gestures and sounds players make and the space they take up.

GAME 3 Fluid Field

Governed by an ideology of standardisation, traditional sport fields demand bodies to submit to the norms of dominant body measurements. Their dimensions vary depending on whether they are designed for bodies perceived as male, female, adults, children, able-bodied, disabled. By doing so, sport fields classify and divide bodies both spatially and socially into binary categories. In response to this, Fluid Field proposes a pitch that constantly changes shape and measurements, evading a concrete definition of the body.

GAME 4 Anonymous Allyship

This game plays with the notion of anonymity by creating a situation where players don't know who belongs to their team. The first minutes of play are always uncertain: Who do I pass the ball to? In which group am I? It is only by recognising and remembering where others attack or defend, that players start to understand which team they are playing for, and teams start to form. This game allows you to experience and learn about what the feeling of belonging brings to you, and how that feeling impacts your behaviour and the way you perform in a group.



THE COOLDOWN ROOM

This room is dedicated to the after-care and mediated group discussions that follow each game. Two video works that bring a critical socio-political lens on sporting cultures, and their accompanying publications, are also exhibited in the space. The room also has a selection of books and publications that emerge from Gabriel's research and the exhibition thematics.

11 Claudia Rankine and John Lucas—Situation 1 2006—World Cup

John Lucas and Claudia Rankine are interdisciplinary thinkers and makers committed to exploring the nuances of race and power in our daily lives. Claudia Rankine is a writer based in New York and John Lucas has directed and produced several films and multimedia projects. The exhibited video work is part of the Situations series, a multi-genre response to contemporary life in the twenty-first century. Each video is in dialogue with a natural disaster or a national or international event or policy. As artists and citizens, they are especially interested in how the media informs our understanding through specific racialised framing of these public events—interrogating the political and cultural impact of catastrophic events on individual lives. In Situation 1 these events were set in motion by a single encounter, the World Cup headbutt, where Zinedine Zidane felt the assault that language can yield and responded to it. The video installation is accompanied by Claudia Rankine's book Citizen: An American Lyric.

12 Kexin Hao – Total Body Workout

Kexin Hao is a visual artist and designer born in Beijing and based in The Netherlands. Her practice, a marriage of graphic design and performance art, challenges not only geometrical borders but also disciplines of design, film, performance, and music. Total Body Workout leads you through a 'total body' experience in which history unfolds not in chronological order but in a head-to-toe sequence. How is our body scripted and shaped by the times it lives in? How are national agendas and political ideologies woven into bodily semiotics? And how do we inhabit a historical and totalised body? Based on nationwide physical exercise routines and mass gymnastic performances in Asia, the Eastern Bloc, and the United States, Total Body Workout proposes a recomposition of the existing corporal movements and a reconfiguration of the past in the present.

You can find more information about each work on w139.nl