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Rock-paper-balloon... a testing ground of a different kind ('Untried untested', Kate McIntosh)



Is it possible to lie down on soap bubbles? What happens if you squeeze a balloon real hard? For those who've never lost that childish urge of wanting to investigate the world and all things in it: *Untried untested*, by [Kate McIntosh](#), produced by [CAMPO](#) (Ghent). Four girls trying and testing what can be done to and with balloons, books, ropes, rocks, soap bubbles and... the body of a performer.

Warning, Kate McIntosh fans: the New Zealand-born, Brussels-based performer isn't taking part in these experiments. *Untried untested* is a performance for four other performers, all girls, directed by McIntosh, who has received advice from, among others, [Tim Etchells](#) (Forced Entertainment), the man who directed her in *Although we fell short*.

In one of the first scenes you'll see lots of grey balloons and four big fans, placed at the four corners of the stage. The performers switch them on, leave the stage and watch, from the audience, what happens. Thus making one thing clear, right from the start: tonight the stage will be a testing ground.



In the next scenes you'll see the girls walk on stage carrying books and rocks. They blow up new balloons and wonder where the air goes when a balloon deflates. In your stomach? And wait a minute: what can you do with a human body? Is it possible to fold it in two and put in a big bag? All of this happens in silence, although you can hear the faint sound of a sound scape.

What is an object? How do you relate to it? What can you learn from it? These are some of the questions on which *Untried untested* is built. Some of the scenes are funny, some of them take too long, some of them could easily have been dropped during rehearsals. Too often I was thinking: nice exercise for an improvisation, but not good enough to be part of a performance.



I do liked the shift near the end. When the girls tear the giant paper backdrop down, *Untried untested* almost becomes an art installation; more of a visual arts project than a theatre performance. All of a sudden I was looking in a different way at what was happening on stage. Nevertheless: being a fan of McIntosh's work, I couldn't help but be somewhat disappointed. *Untried untested* is based on lots of interesting questions, but I had expected this research team of a different kind to come up with a stronger performance.