

On the Adamant

English Audio Description preshow notes

Welcome to 2025 “No Limits”, On the Adamant. This programme is co-presented by the Hong Kong Arts Festival and The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, with strategic supporting partner Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong. I am Roz Chalmers, the audio describer.

The programme will be screened at Laundry Steps, Tai Kwun, on Saturday the 8th of March 2025 at 4.30 pm and Sunday the 9th of March 2025 at 3.45 pm. For in-venue screening, subtitles are in Chinese and English, dubbing in Cantonese, audio description in Cantonese. The house programme will be available in audio format. Guide dogs are welcome. Admission is free.

In addition, the film will be available for free online screening from 24th March 10am until the 21st of April 2025 10pm on the No Limits website. Subtitles and accessible captions are in Chinese and English, dubbing and audio description in Cantonese and English. The house programme is available in audio format. The programme is a Class I film and contains strong language.

On the Adamant runs for approximately 104 minutes and is performed in French. These pre-show notes include information about the characters and settings.

On the Adamant is a French documentary film directed by Nicolas Philibert. It observes life on the Adamant, a floating building permanently moored on the right bank of the River Seine in Paris, almost in the shadow of the Charles de Gaulle Bridge.

The building is a daycare centre for people living with mental health illnesses. The centre takes a humanistic view of psychiatric care, treating the whole person by offering sessions such as creative workshops, communal work, music, and mediated group discussions with psychiatric professionals. Passengers – Philibert prefers the word to ‘patients’ – drop in daily to explore whatever interests them, to socialise,

and to receive counselling and support in a community atmosphere. There is no sign of white coats – staff are often indistinguishable from the people in their care.

The Adamant was opened in July 2010 and completed in 2019. It was purpose-built in partnership with the staff who work there and those who use its sanctuary.

The building is set on a platform and moored to the riverbank by steel cables. It resembles a large maritime vessel. It's topped by a white roof with a white dome-shaped structure at either end, like a chimney or aeration unit.

Viewed externally, at either end is a rotunda linked by a long straight section between them. The exterior of each rotunda is clad in wooden shutters which can be raised and lowered horizontally on metal hinges to allow the light and the reflections from the river to enter.

Between them, the central section is divided into two levels, each reached by gangplanks from the riverbank. The upper level consists of twenty-six narrow vertical windows and doors. The lower has six in the centre with the remainder of the level being clad with the same wooden shutters as the rotundas. Both have balconies where the passengers can sit outside to smoke, chat, or just take in the views of the Seine and the working boats that pass by. The balconies are bordered by chain link fencing with lifebelts attached. Pot plants are attached to them here and there.

This outer appearance is deceptive, as inside, the building has three storeys. It is bright, airy, and open – there are very few doors, a deliberate decision by those who commissioned it. Wood and steel are the main materials, with the welders' lines and annotations left visible as a mark of their work and their presence, an exchange of sorts. The top floor has seating areas in the rotundas for meetings and social gatherings. Between these are administrative offices and an open hallway.

The ground floor is home to studio spaces and a library in the rotundas, and places for relaxation and counselling in the central section. Downstairs the rotundas offer spaces for art, writing, music, and cookery. People often start the day with coffee at a coffee shop where some work as servers. Others tend the plants on the balconies.

There are over 230 people from four Paris administrative districts who have been referred to the care of the Adamant by their doctor or therapist. The camera lingers on just a few of them, and they talk to director Nicolas Philibert, although his face never appears in their conversations. They're mostly filmed from the waist up. Here are eight we meet regularly. Others are never named but will be described as they appear.

François is white, in his 40's with a wiry physique. His short hair is greying, and he has missing teeth. His shirt is a blue check with long sleeves. We first meet François performing a song for others. He sings passionately, eyes squeezed shut, body jerking to emphasise the lyrics.

Muriele is older, perhaps in her mid 50's, and a white woman. Her brown hair is pulled into a topknot, and she wears glasses with thin, rose-gold frames. She wears a charcoal grey hoodie and helps at the regular meetings that bring together passengers and caregivers. Muriele wears a blue surgical mask, usually under her chin, and uses an elbow crutch.

At one meeting **Bruno** talks about planning a film club event. He's middle-aged with short white hair, but his heavy brows are still dark. His complexion is tanned. Bruno is in a navy-blue jumper and jeans. His voice is calm and clear.

Alexis is one of the younger passengers, in his twenties. He has a round, pale-skinned, earnest face with a ginger beard on the tip of his chin and running underneath from ear to ear. His short hair is auburn, and he wears a black sweatshirt with the words All Night NY on the sleeves. We first meet Alexis at an art workshop. His speech is rapid, but hesitant, particularly when talking about his way of visualizing the world.

Olivier also contributes to the art workshop. He stands to talk about his artwork. He's white, tall and slim, with short dark brown hair and stubble. He smiles often, crinkling the corners of his eyes. Olivier is in a brown short sleeved shirt with white

edging to the sleeves and collar, and black trousers. Like Muriele, he wears a face mask below his chin.

Aziz has Bulgarian heritage, and his complexion is light brown. His black hair has receded, and he has a prominent nose and a sharp-boned face with a short black beard and moustache, sprinkled with grey. His jacket is black.

An ex-dancer, **Catherine**, has maintained her willowy figure into middle age. A white woman, her grey hair is short, combed back or worn in a crest on top, and her eyes are ringed with black eyeliner. She has an effortlessly cool vibe with her black puffa jacket and skinny pale blue jeans. Catherine can often be found limbering up on the Adamant's balcony overlooking the Seine.

Threading through the film is a passenger in his sixties, **Frédéric Prieur**. He arrives every day with a bundle of papers under one arm for his writing and music. He's pale skinned, his grey hair is jaw length, wild and wavy, and his brown eyes are gentle. Frederic wears jackets with dark trousers. The jacket may be black velvet or pale blue denim, but always with colourful shirts with large open collars, He walks with a stoop, taking long strides.

Production credits

All the people appearing in this film do so as themselves.

Director and Cinematographer – Nicolas Philibert, assisted by Remi Jennequin, Pauline Pénichout, Camille Bertin and Katell Dijan

Sound Designer – François Abdelnour and Erik Ménard

Editing – Nicolas Philibert, assisted by Janusz Baranek and Meryll Chandru

Sound Editing and mixing – Nathalie Vidal, assisted by Elias Boghedir

Post-production – Delphine Passant

Producers – Miléna Poylo, Gilles Sacuto, Céline Loiseau

Assistant producer – Clément Reffo

This is the end of the pre-show notes to On the Adamant. Please enjoy the film!