

Le Regard éloigné
A Selection from the Collection

14.06 > 16.08.26
06.09 > 01.11.26



Laura Henno

Adel Abdessemed
Emily Bates

Marcel Berlangier
Marie Bovo
Marcel Broodthaers
Jimmie Durham
Jot Fau

Latoya Ruby Frazier
Mekhitar Garabedian
Alexis Gautier
Laura Henno
Olivia Hernaiz

Alfredo Jaar
Tarik Kiswanson
Michaël Matthys
Johan Muyle
Emmanuelle Quertain

Jimmie Durham



Tour of the exhibition

Bringing together some fifteen works from the MACS collection, the exhibition underscores the critical reach of an anthropological vision that embraces the near and the far, the familiar and the foreign, the centre and the periphery. This shift in focus produces a double reframing: a gaze turned outward towards elsewhere and, in turn, estranged from itself as though seen from without by a foreign eye. Putting into practice what Claude Lévi-Strauss, that 'astronomer of human constellations', calls 'the distant gaze', these artists seek to bring the distant closer and push the near further away, to illuminate the one through the other. There is a reformed humanism where the modern and the traditional, the rational and the sensuous, and progress and nature, are at last reconciled. Just as Marcel Broodthaers' geopoetic atlas reduces the outlines of different states to the same scale, creating an archipelago of kindred othernesses, this subversion of boundaries is also a struggle against ethnocentrism and the imperialist model of the 'conquest of space'. Against the backdrop of globalisation, many of the works presented here foreground minorities who have been affected for generations by acculturation, exclusion or immigration within territories marked by a colonial history: from the Naxi of Tibetan origin in China (Emily Bates) to the Native Americans of North America (Jimmie Durham), and the young undocumented Comorian migrants on the island of Mayotte. Like Johan Muyle's *Tireur d'épine* (The Thorn-Puller), wrested from Christian iconography to become a tragic and ironic allegory of atonement, does contemporary art have a mission to warn us – much like the anthropologist – of the fatal destiny that awaits a humanity whose gaze, absorbed by the near, has neglected the far?

Featuring works by: Adel Abdessemed, Emily Bates, Marcel Berlanger, Marie Bovo, Marcel Broodthaers, Jimmie Durham, Jot Fau, Latoya Ruby Frazier, Mekhitar Garabedian, Alexis Gautier, Laura Henno, Olivia Hernaiz, Alfredo Jaar, Tarik Kiswanson, Michaël Matthys, Johan Muyle, Emmanuelle Quertain.

Alfredo Jaar

1,30 EURO. PREMIÈRE ÉDITION N°8860 MERCREDI 4 NOVEMBRE 2009 WWW.LIBERATION.FR

Libération

Le siècle 1908-2009 Lévi-Strauss



M 00135 1104 F 1,30 €

LIBERATION

CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS, 1908. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES HARRIS. © CONTEMPORARY PUBLICATIONS

IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE / PRINTED IN FRANCE Allemagne 2 €, Autriche 2,60 €, Belgique 1,40 €, Canada 4,25 \$, Danemark 21 Kr, DOM 2 €, Espagne 2 €, États-Unis 4 \$, Finlande 2,40 €, Grande-Bretagne 1,50 £, Grèce 2,20 €, Irlande 2,25 €, Israël 16 ILS, Italie 2,20 €, Luxembourg 1,40 €, Maroc 15 Dh, Norvège 25 Kr, Pays-Bas 2 €, Portugal (cont.) 2,10 €, Slovénie 2,50 €, Suède 21 Kr, Suisse 3 FS, TOM 390 CFP, Tunisie 1700 DT, Zone CFA 1 500 CFA.

The works and artists

The exhibition opens by invoking two major figures of twentieth-century thought: the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), from whom it takes its title, and the political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), who, like Lévi-Strauss, denounced in her essays the narrowness of classical humanism and its failure to recognise otherness and cultural diversity as essential values. Both cast their gaze ‘afar’, beyond the modern world, towards social models – from elsewhere or from the past – that might help lay the foundations for what Lévi-Strauss called a ‘democratic humanism’ and Arendt a ‘world common to all’. For both thinkers, Western society requires us to decentre ourselves, collectively and individually alike, in order to break with the ethnocentrism of modern culture and the egocentrism of ‘mass man’ – two pillars of colonial and totalitarian regimes.

While **Alfredo Jaar** (1956, Santiago de Chile) casts an ironic eye over the front page of *Libération* published on the death of Claude Lévi-Strauss – fully aware of the human catastrophes of his own time, such as the genocide of the Tutsis, which he documented in *The Rwanda Project* (1994–2000) – **Emmanuelle Quertain** (1987, Brussels, Belgium), for her part, illustrates an excerpt from Hannah Arendt’s essay ‘The Crisis in Culture’ (1961), on the psychology of a mass society in which the consumption of leisure has dramatically diminished the individual’s political faculty.

In *Pigeon* (2015), **Adel Abdessemed** (1971, Constantine, Algeria) locates the fracture within the ‘world common to all’ to which Hannah Arendt aspired at the very heart of public space. Having personally experienced the threat of terrorism in Algeria during the Black Decade (1992–2002), Abdessemed sees society losing its cohesion and becoming a place of mistrust between citizens, particularly towards ‘the foreigner’. Part of *La Grande parade*, a cycle depicting a bestiary laden with explosives, this drawing underscores the violence and absurdity of our rupture from nature and, more specifically, from animals, ‘our brothers in suffering’, to borrow Rosa Luxemburg’s beautiful phrase.

The three photographs by **Emily Bates** (1970, Basingstoke, Great-Britain), from the series *Love Scenes* (2006–08), were made during her residency in Lijiang in a province in south-west China where she encountered the Naxi, an ethnic minority with a farming tradition whose way of life has shifted towards the tourist trade. Lilisha, a young Chinese woman wearing clothes emblazoned with ‘Hello Kitty’ and ‘Calvin Klein’, speaks of a culture now steeped in modernity. The sacred Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, by contrast, evokes a tradition of love songs, courtship songs and farewell songs that this new generation has forgotten. For two centuries, young lovers frequently took their own lives in this community because the Nuptial Code forbade love marriages; according to legend, this was the site where the first pair of lovers met their death.

Adel Abdessemed



Marcel Berlangier



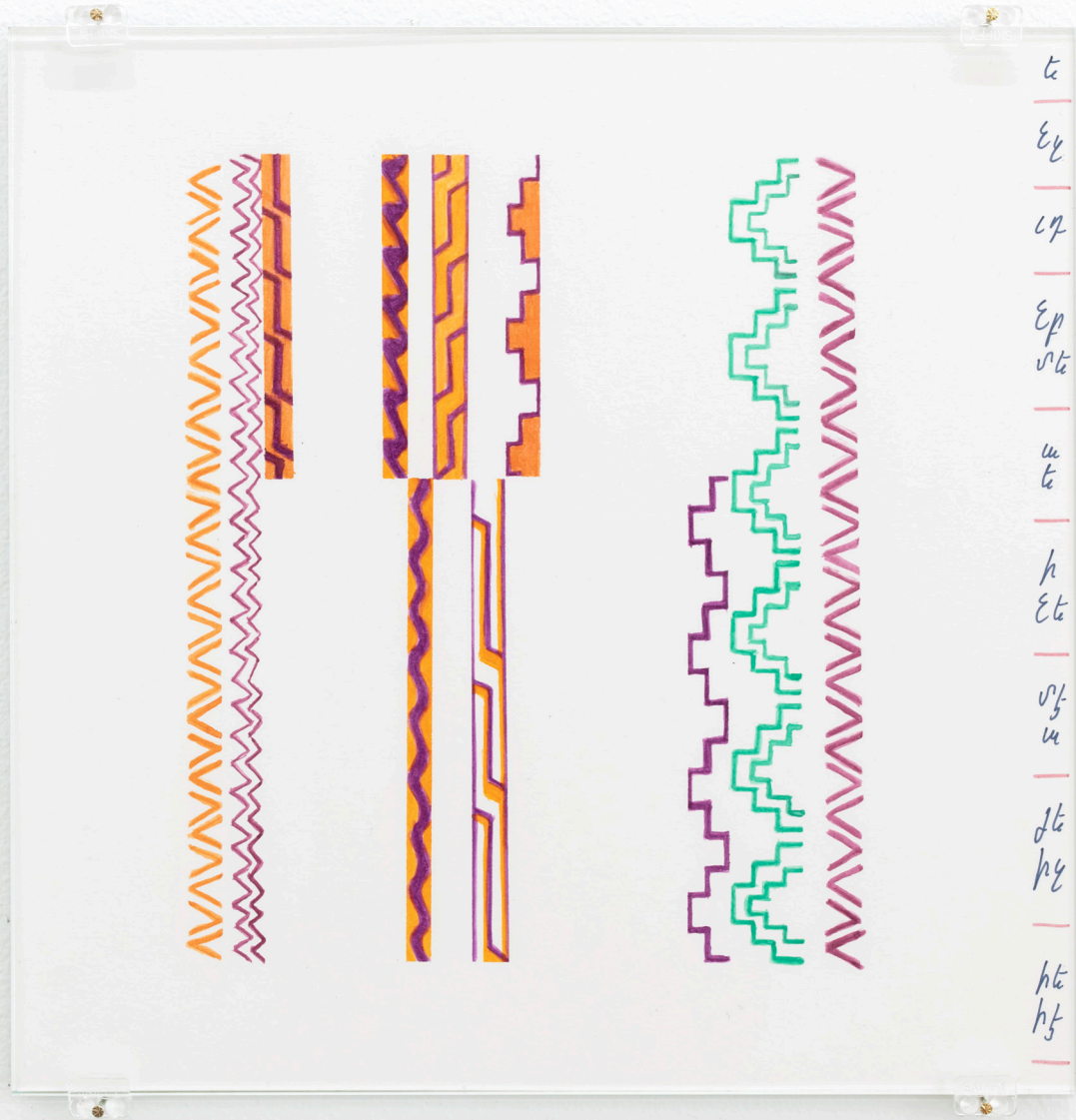


Marie Bovo

Recalling René Magritte's rocks suspended in the sky – *Le Château des Pyrénées*, *Le sens des réalités* and *La flèche de Zénon – Aérolite* (2010) is a painting that 'defamiliarises' our vision, drawing the eye into the chaotic jungle of its weave, where signs blur at the threshold of 'white noise'. Against the ideology of transparency – seeing everything, knowing everything, deciphering everything – **Marcel Berlanger** (1965, Brussels, Belgium) sets a mode of representation that, by contrast, asserts its degree of opacity: unfinished, perforated or blurred images, corresponding in Broodthaers's poems to his erasures, spelling mistakes, and accumulations of typographic characters or figures blocked out by an excess of ink. This opacity of painting, paradoxically revealed by the translucency of the fibreglass support, also requires the viewer to step back in order to grasp the motif, becoming aware in the process of the illusions and snares inherent in all representation. Dialectical in nature, Marcel Berlanger's art can be read through Vasari's remark on the ageing Titian, quoted by the art historian Louis Marin: 'When one thought there was no labour, there was in fact an enormous amount; seen close up, his impastos of paint became visible, while from a distance everything seemed self-evident, like transparencies.'

Marie Bovo's (1967, Alicante, Spain) photographs, taken from her series *Cours intérieures*, were made in the working-class district of Belsunce in Marseille, a central hub of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s. From this urban fabric and its diverse communities – Spanish, Armenian, Jewish, Algerian, Tunisian and others – the artist looks upwards, offering us a relatively optimistic and poetic perspective. Transfigured by the low-angle view, this cosmic expanse becomes a monochrome screen against which a myriad of hanging laundry is silhouetted. Here, the photographer's gaze aligns with the ethnologist's perspective as Claude Lévi-Strauss defined it: that of an 'astronomer of human constellations'.

The anthropologist must 'look at his own culture from a distance', estrange himself from it, and break with the collective, normative imaginaries that unconsciously shape his thinking about otherness, particularly that of the humblest peoples. Among these Western norms, the geopolitical map, which represents nation states through borders, plays a major ideological role through its use in school textbooks. Here, one might recall that in 1973 the German historian Arno Peters replaced Mercator's Eurocentric world map of 1569 with an alternative projection that corrected the reduced representation of the land masses of countries in the Global South, particularly Africa and Latin America. Produced from the printer's proofs for **Marcel Broodthaers's** (1972, Charleroi, Belgium) miniature book *La conquête de l'Espace / Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires* (*The Conquest of Space / Atlas for the Use of Artists and the Military*, 1975), this offset print reproduces the silhouettes of 32 countries at an identical size, rather than to scale, thereby placing empires and colonies on an equal footing. Like the edition from which it is taken, *Atlas* also reclassifies the various nation states in alphabetical order, placing Austria and 'little' Belgium – formerly conquered in the eighteenth century – side by side by a twist of fate of the kind the artist relished.



Mekhitar Garabedian

Inspired by Native American art, **Jimmie Durham**'s (1940, Washington, USA - 2021, Berlin, Germany) pseudo-totem invites us to reflect on the acculturation and cultural appropriation to which ethnic minorities are subjected under the alienating effects of colonisation and globalisation. In the 1970s, Durham was active in the civil-rights struggle of Native Americans in the United States and claimed Cherokee identity – a claim that has since been contested. In his work, the artist mixes reality and fiction, humour and seriousness, pursuing an approach that – like the rear-view mirror in his sculpture *Bonjour* (2007) – underlines the importance of how we project ourselves and our own industrial age onto often stereotyped representations of the culture of the Other.

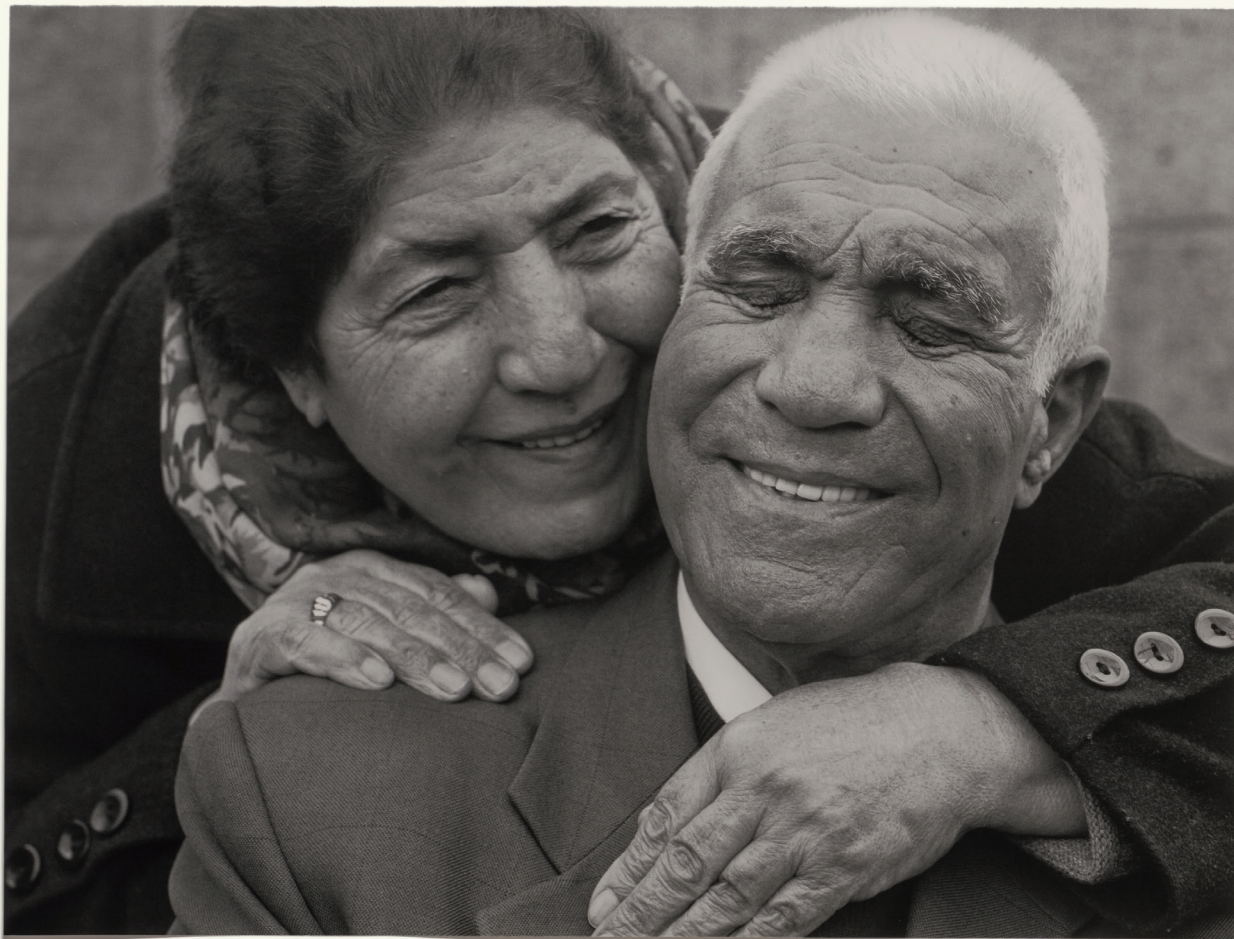
Through artefacts produced by various processes of assemblage and overlaying, arranged in space or worn as accessories or costumes in performances and staged actions, **Jot Fau** (1987, Ypres, Belgium) reconnects with the therapeutic power of art. Within the anthropological perspective opened up by Joseph Beuys, the artist conceives his works less to aesthetic judgement than to the reparative uses they make possible: caring for oneself, for others, and for the world we share.

Guided by a personal, intimate form of 'savage thought', Jot Fau 'bricoles' with modest materials – fabric, leather, branches, toys and the like – to create various magical objects: fetishes, relics, ex-votos, ornaments bearing amulets, heraldic devices, words, and more.

Bearing seven small hands on the front, some open and some closed, with the same number of rings on the back, *It's a Game of Give and Take* (2023) appears as a sculpture-armour: suspended in space, it seems to await being worn and activated before entering the ever-dangerous theatre of social life and its 'interaction rituals' – that stage on which one must 'keep up appearances' and avoid, as Erving Goffman observed, 'publicly losing face'.

In 2016, MACS invited the American photographer **LaToya Ruby Frazier** (1982, Braddock, USA) – herself from a working-class background and a post-industrial region, the Rust Belt – to make a documentary on former miners in the Borinage. She met with a dozen members of this 'community' to gather testimonies of what their lives had really been like during the era of the coal mines. One of them was Ali, who left his native village in Turkey to work in Hensies and settle there with his family. In the narrative caption accompanying this triptych, he evokes the harshness of working 'underground', the solidarity and fraternity among workers and, through his poetic view of the world, the imaginative power of coal.

Shaped by the Armenian diaspora, **Mekhitar Garabedian** (1977, Aleppo, Syria) develops a body of work from the cultural inheritance bequeathed to him, in fragmentary form, by political history and family memory. From this precious heritage, wounded and scattered by successive wars and exoduses – as recently evidenced by the 'ethnic cleansing' carried out by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 – the artist focuses in particular on this mother tongue that is foreign to him. He makes it his own through learning its script, translating its vocabulary, and studying the ways in which it has been transmitted in manuscript and printed form. In this



J'avais 16 ans et Fecire 13. Mon oncle a dit à sa maman qu'il cherchait une femme et une famille pour son neveu. Elle vivait à 30 kilomètres. Nous sommes partis à pied la nuit pour la voir. En Turquie, les toits des maisons sont plats. Nous marchions sur le toit et ma femme était à l'extérieur avec sa belle-sœur qui lui peignait les cheveux. Elle était parfaite. Ce jour-là, elle est repartie dans mon village avec son père et moi. Un mois plus tard, on se mariait. Après le mariage, j'ai travaillé sur les rails de chemin de fer, puis j'ai été à l'armée. Pendant cinq années, elle a vécu seule avec ma famille. Ça me brise le cœur qu'elle ait souffert plus que moi. Elle a élevé nos enfants et ceux de mes parents. Je vais envoyer une lettre à Dieu et lui demander que le jour où je mourrai, il ne la fasse pas souffrir, qu'elle meure vite pour qu'on puisse se prendre dans les bras dans la tombe.



Je viens d'un petit village d'une centaine de personnes qui s'appelait Tiginler Köyü. Aujourd'hui, c'est Akynlik Köyü. Le premier nom était arménien. Il est à 2200 mètres d'altitude. On faisait pousser de l'avoine, du blé et du fourrage pour les bêtes en hiver. L'été, les gens partent dans les montagnes avec les animaux pour qu'ils puissent se nourrir d'herbe fraîche. Il y a un grand fleuve à côté du village qui va jusqu'en Arabie Saoudite et qui traverse les pays où il y a la guerre: la Syrie, l'Irak. Le fleuve s'appelle l'Euphrate ou Frot en arabe.

Laura Henno



series of watercolours, the artist transposes to the centre of the paper the ornamental motifs and canon tables that medieval monks, in the Armenian tradition of illuminated manuscripts, copied in the margins of images and texts. Similarly, each drawing is accompanied by a title borrowed from a phrase in their colophons, where the scribe would leave, at the end of the work, sometimes humorous notes on the political, social or personal context of his labour – the reader might, for instance, be asked to excuse transcription errors supposedly caused by an overly ‘talkative’ friend.

Alexis Gauthier’s (1990, Amiens, France) works are grounded in collaboration rather than in the modern Western notion of individual authorship. Their making opens onto encounters with others: sometimes those close to him, such as artist friends; sometimes strangers, from artisans encountered on the other side of the world to museum guards, as in his exhibition at M Leuven in 2021. Oriented towards the creation of narratives, his artistic practice is deliberately refracted through the appropriation and interpretation of scenarios by other cultures, both near and far. In the series *Village Diary* (2018), made in collaboration with several embroiderers from a village in the northern Indian state of Bihar, Gauthier gives form to the desire to decentre his own authorship, allowing the work to be shaped by other hands and other forms of making. These Indian women traditionally make embroideries known as *sujuni*, whose motifs address everyday life or social, cultural and political subjects. Here, however, they interpreted scenes drawn from an entirely different repertoire: in one instance, Marcel Duchamp’s painting *Nu descendant un escalier*; in another, the English custom of ‘telling the bees’, whereby the hive is informed of the death of its beekeeper.

Since 2013, **Laura Henno** (1976, Croix, France) has travelled regularly to the Comoros Archipelago, a former French colony where the island of Mayotte chose not to become independent, subsequently becoming a destination for clandestine migration from the other Comorian islands. Her documentary project seeks to bring into focus the marginal position of those left behind by history, and the spaces of resistance they inhabit. Taken from the series *M’tsamboro*, centred on children trained in the dangerous role of passers, or clandestine boatmen, *Fayal* (2016) derives its emotional force from the gaze of this young pilot, himself caught up in a disenchanting journey and an absurd wandering. By contrast, *Smogi et Rex* (2018) adds a dreamlike dimension to this pitiless logic of flight and refuge, bearing witness to the vitality of the relationship between human beings and nature – a lingering animist presence that still sets the heart of Mayotte’s tropical forest beating.

Olivia Hernaiz (1985, Brussels, Belgium) roots her artistic practice in the social body, attentive to the exchange of viewpoints and to the civic dialogue on which every political society is founded – in the Greek sense of the *polis*. Since 2016, this grounding has led her to research the exile of some 30,000 children to the USSR and Europe during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), drawing in particular on her own family history: her grandmother was adopted by a Belgian family at the age of thirteen. This practice, based on the gathering of testimonies and documents, here leads to the reproduction of drawings made at the Pau Claris school in Barcelona by children who, in their own way, recorded the disasters of war. This moving



Tarik Kiswanson

body of works – preserved in the archives of the Institute of Social History in Ghent, Amsab-ISG – forms a kind of apolitical or naïve counterpart to Picasso's *Guernica*. The artist translated these drawings into a series of engravings on granite, where they take on a memorial dimension.

Tarik Kiswanson (1986, Sweden) belongs to the second generation of Palestinians in Sweden, his parents having arrived there in 1982. He grounds his artistic practice in his family history and personal experience, particularly the experience of preadolescence. Turned at once towards the past and the future, his is the gaze of a Janus figure, simultaneously closing and opening a cycle, at the threshold between mourning and rebirth, forgetting and anamnesis, trauma and resilience. The notion of passage, central to Kiswanson's work, is addressed within the political context of diaspora and against the sociological backdrop of integration, or even assimilation. It brings into focus the contradictions at work in his identity and his transformations. To this end, the artist draws on the agency of objects that affect us inwardly while also signalling to others, as clothing does. In the series *Passing* (2019), Tarik Kiswanson uses X-ray imaging to superimpose ethnic costumes from the Middle East, drawn from the collections of the Tiraz Centre in Jordan, and sportswear of the kind popular among young people in European suburbs. The work reflects on a minority's ability to become legible to, and accepted by, the dominant group in society. It also addresses the individual's capacity quite literally to 'pass' as someone other than himself – a question that resonates with Kiswanson's own family history, since his surname, al-Kiswani, was altered by the Swedish immigration service.

Executed in bone black and ivory black, **Michaël Matthys's** (1972, Charleroi, Belgium) drawing, from his series *Muganga* ('healer' in Swahili), shows King Leopold II as a horseman emerging from the mists of the jungle. It probes the rift that separates us from the utopia of a 'world in common', exposing the absurd idea of progress in whose name Belgium's colonial history and its crimes against humanity were enacted. Haunted by this heavy legacy, the artist – whose great-uncle was a colonial settler from the 1930s until Congo's independence in 1960 – illustrated the hundreds of pages of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). In this novel, which also inspired Francis Ford Coppola's film on the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the narrator sets out in search of a certain Kurtz, an ivory trader who has sunk into the barbarism of slavery.

As an allegory of our tragic humanism – or of its ironic expiation – **Johan Muyle's** (1956, Charleroi, Belgium) *Le Tireur d'épine* (2017), warns us of where a worldview centred exclusively on modern man may lead. Its motif, rooted in antiquity, became one of the most widely copied in Western art from the Italian Renaissance onwards.

The MACS | Grand-Hornu

Established in the former Grand-Hornu colliery (an example of 19th century industrial archaeology now listed as UNESCO world heritage), the MACS is acknowledged as one of the most successful examples in northern Europe of the conversion of an abandoned industrial site into a cultural centre. Since it was opened in 2002, the museum has indeed offered a broad public the opportunity to discover major international exhibitions within an architectural showcase that combines the site's history with contemporary creation.

Located away from major urban centres, the Grand-Hornu site is noted for the "genius of the place" which for 20 years has inspired a number of internationally recognised artists, including Christian Boltanski, Anish Kapoor, Giuseppe Penone, Tony Oursler, Adel Abdessemed, Matt Mullican and Haim Steinbach, to create specific projects here. As an engaged partner alongside the artists, the MACS supports the production of ambitious works, notably through its artists' residency policy, undertaken by the museum's team both in situ and extra-muros (LaToya Ruby Frazier, Fiona Tan and Daniel Turner), and pays particular attention to the visual arts scene in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation through its monograph exhibitions. Together with the Centre for Innovation and Design of the Province of Hainaut (CID), the MACS forms a cultural hub which, has become a popular destination for art lovers and cultural tourism, not least as it can also offer them the pleasures of a park, a gastronomic restaurant and a specialist design and contemporary art shop.

Engagement programme and arts education activities

MACS is dedicated to making contemporary art accessible to everyone through a variety of engagement activities. These include free daily guided tours, creative workshops, family days, meetings, debates, and lectures. The museum places a strong emphasis on serving schoolchildren, for instance, by offering mobile classroom activities as part of the PECA (Cultural and Artistic Education Public Programme). Additionally, MACS is committed to including vulnerable audiences and collaborates with local institutions to create innovative partnerships that support mediation and arts education activities.

ALL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ORGANISED AROUND THE EXHIBITION CAN BE FOUND ON THE MUSEUM'S WEBSITE.



Practical information

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#macshornu

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MACS

Lucia Bru. Aux choses mêmes
14.06.26 > 01.11.26

Ravi de te connaître. Les dons au Musée
14.06 > 16.08

CID

Memo. Souvenirs du futur
29.03 > 30.08.26

Damien Gernay. Mimesis
14.06 > 15.11.26