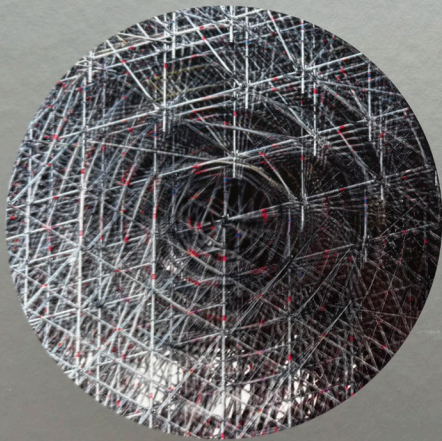
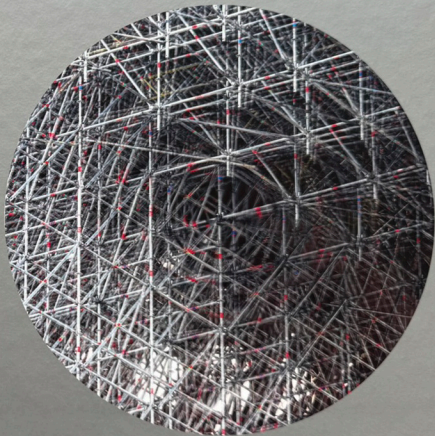


Cyprien Gaillard
HUMPTY DUMPTY



Cyprien Gaillard
HUMPTY DUMPTY



As Paris goes about frenetically restoring its most prestigious monuments and erasing any traces of wear and tear ahead of the Olympic Games, Cyprien Gaillard considers the city as a privileged site for the expression of chaos, where humanity struggles against the elements through vast and regular renovation campaigns. It is in the margins, the hidden corners, and the spaces of dissidence that he finds narratives of new possible relationships with the living, and explores the limits of our desires for order and permanence.

HUMPTY \ *DUMPTY* is an exhibition in two chapters, presented simultaneously in Paris at the Palais de Tokyo and at Lafayette Anticipations. The title refers to the

INTRODUCTION

Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel

nursery rhyme character who has fallen off a wall and, despite many attempts to rebuild him, will never return to his original state.

At the Palais de Tokyo, *HUMPTY*, the first chapter of the exhibition, brings together a selection of Cyprien Gaillard's new works or pieces that are being presented for the first time in France, as well as a number of works by guest artists (Giorgio de Chirico, Käthe Kollwitz, Robert Smithson and Daniel Turner) that constitute a form of study of entropy. It is through the relationship between the body and architecture, abandoned territories, and so-called invasive species that Gaillard draws a portrait of our relation to collapse and reconstruction. He speaks to our obsession with the conservation of things, to the temptation to maintain or return to a particular order, and to our undeniable vulnerability in the face of time and its effects. The exhibition itself unfolds as a spiral, a recurrent motif that recalls the shell of a nautilus, a vortex, or a representation of cyclical time.

For the second chapter at Lafayette Anticipations, *DUMPTY*, the artist has given new life to a work that has been slowly left in oblivion since 2003, Jacques Monestier's automaton *Le Défenseur du Temps*: a monumental clock installed since 1979 in the heart of Paris in the Horloge district. A one-of-a-kind sculpture, it consists of a man perched on a rock carrying a sword and shield who regularly fights against creatures representing the elements. This automaton has been abandoned for over twenty years to the effects of time, against which it was trying to protect us. Cyprien Gaillard makes its restoration an act of creation and turns it into the main actor in an opera in the heart of the Foundation before it is reinstalled in its original location at the end of the project. The rebirth of the *Le Défenseur du Temps* is placed in perspective with the impossible return of a loved one, Gaël Fouchet, known as "El Magnifico," a friend who disappeared a few years ago, to whom Cyprien Gaillard has dedicated this exhibition.

Cyprien Gaillard,
Prise 1, exhibition
 view at Lafayette
 Anticipations
 (DUMPTY), 2022



Cyprien Gaillard,
The Lake Arches,
 exhibition view #
 the Palais de Tokyo
 (HUMPTY), 2022

"He who jumps into the void owes no explanation to those
 who stand and watch."

Jean-Luc Godard

Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel: In preparation for the *HUMPTY \ DUMPTY* exhibition, which is divided into two chapters at the Palais de Tokyo and Lafayette Anticipations, you have named incessantly across the city of Paris. You captured many images around the Eiffel Tower and the Place de la Concorde, as well as all those historical monuments currently being renovated for the 2024 Olympic Games.

Cyprien Gaillard: I like the idea that we are at a time when Paris is conducting its own entropic examination. The city is trying to preserve certain buildings, but its public policy of restoration is inevitably exclusive: it cannot include the entire built environment. A hierarchy is therefore already in place that identifies those buildings and monuments to be restored as a priority. These are precisely the limits that I am interested in exploring.

I have always been fascinated by fault lines. I remember playing marbles when you had to push the agate into a hole—for me, cracks in the ground were always spaces to aim for, to occupy. This motif of the interstice often comes up in my work. I think that every artist is looking for an entry point into the world around them, a gap for the light to pass through, and I feel that with our increasingly rationalized, standardized urban environment, there is less and less free space into which you can project yourself, where you can experience something other than yourself...

Restoring *Le Défenseur du Temps* (The Defender of Time), the work by Jacques Monestier installed in 1979 and abandoned since 2003, was an obvious response to your invitation. I have always had this idea of breathing new life into someone else's work, because I was particularly touched by the fate that befalls public

CONVERSATION

Cyprien Gaillard and
 Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel
 July 2022

artworks, especially those that sink into a form of anonymity. *Le Défenseur du Temps* is even more symbolic of this idea of a new life as it was in motion and then stopped. I remember seeing it operate as a child and feeling a great sense of strangeness. It was an enigma in a neighbourhood I could not quite understand or identify. It wasn't central because it was "on the way" to the Centre Pompidou, but, in the eyes of a child, it was much more interesting than the museum. I remember passing through this interstitial space, the Horloge district, many times—it is a pedestrian space that lends itself to drifting. The automaton is located between the Centre Pompidou and the Musée des Arts et Métiers, but it doesn't belong in either of these locations. It exists in a "counter-space", as Foucault said of his heterotopias.

The Horloge district is also seen as a bit of an urban fiasco in the collective Parisian consciousness, in the same way as Les Halles. These two sites were part of the same ZAC (urban development zone) project at the time. True to post-modern ideas and their taste for historical reappropriation, the Horloge district takes up the concept of the medieval island. It is also a neighbourhood full of stories. Gordon Matta-Clark's *Conical Intersect* was created on rue Beaubourg in 1975 in a building that was being demolished to make way for the Quartier de l'Horloge, just a few years before the inauguration of *Le Défenseur du Temps* in 1979. There was also this nightclub, Le Saxo, an after-hours club that was quite famous in the 1990s—there were often police raids, then the place would close for months before secretly reopening to the great dismay of local residents...

Around the corner, a young man is said to have overheard in a fountain, just past Max Ernst's "owl". The latter seems to be signalling to us: "Don't go any further." Wedged between the Leroy Merlin home improvement shop and the Flunch restaurant chain, it seems to be a landmark indicating the end of the Centre Pompidou's sphere of influence.

The idea of restoring *Le Défenseur du Temps* was also a response to the architecture of Lafayette Anticipations, designed by Rem Koolhaas. The Foundation is a manifesto, and it seems to me that it will always feel more like visiting a building than an exhibition. It's quite "technological", transparent, and open about its capacity for movement, with these mobile platforms in the centre, these visible cylinders painted in a specific colour. There is also the grating-metal is everywhere. It is a museum for the twenty-first century: performative, modular.

RLV: Yes, it is very much inspired by Cedric Price's *Fun Palace* project. He imagined a flexible museum, with programmable spaces, at the service of its users. He believed that new technologies would contribute to the liberation of humanity. He also said that the *Fun Palace* was to be "the university of the street." It was a kind of antidote to the fact that the museum had become a mausoleum, unmoving and frozen, obsessed with conservation and removed from the world. This building by Rem Koolhaas, echoing Price, celebrates metamorphosis, transformation, and even disorientation.



Le Défenseur du Temps under construction in the workshop of Jacques Monestier in Valmondois, Val d'Oise, 1976-1977



The automaton *Le Défenseur du Temps*, by Jacques Monestier, in the Horloge district in Paris, France, December 1979

CG: I wanted to dialogue with this building head-on, but I needed a soldier, a centurion to enter it with confidence. So, I wrote a letter to Jacques Monestier, the creator of *Le Défenseur du Temps*, to propose the idea of breathing new life into his automaton, of thinking of the act of restoration as an act of creation. It was a proposal of mutual aid, because without him, I had no answer to the Foundation's architecture, and without me, the days of his automaton were numbered. We now know that there were three hundred kilos of pigeon droppings inside the sculpture's rock and that it was on the verge of collapse...

RLV: The *Défenseur* was also quite central for a certain community, like a kind of beating heart that, every hour, brought together curious people of all kinds, from neighbourhood residents to tourists from all around the world.

CG: Many Parisians don't know him, but he was central to a few others: the inhabitants of the district who used to meet at the Bistrot de l'Horloge to see him fight his three adversaries at noon, 6 p.m., and 10 p.m. The *Défenseur* fights against the elements: the crab represents water, the bird represents air, and the dragon represents fire. In truth, I have known him mostly to be broken down. In the 2000s, I remember that there was a sign up asking for funds for restoration. I wondered how much it would cost and I was quite touched by this gesture, like a thrown together distress call. I always kept the *Défenseur* in mind, but sometimes it takes years to find the right opportunity to bring an idea about.

RLV: I remember that reviving the *Défenseur* at the Foundation was a foregone conclusion for you.

CG: Yes, and I didn't have a plan B. I liked the idea of decontextualising this automaton, to increase its scope of action so that it would no longer be attached to its wall, so that it would start working again a few blocks away in Rem Koolhaas's building, which everyone agrees is important, in contrast to the indifference encountered by the *Défenseur*. I wanted to combine this automaton with the

building, giving the *Défenseur* a new skin and a new context in which to be reconsidered. There are mechanical limits to what the *Défenseur* can do: it works with these pneumatic cylinders that power a rather archaic choreography. But I wanted it to be able to make up for the time lost since it came to a halt, hence the new frequency of movement and the hands of the master clock which move backwards, freeing it from quartz time.

RLV: In 2003, the *Défenseur* came to a halt after its creator Jacques Monestier decided to pull the plug when the maintenance budget for the automaton was cut, thereby condemning it to a slow decay. Rather than see it decline, its founder, Monestier, preferred to send it into a kind of coma.

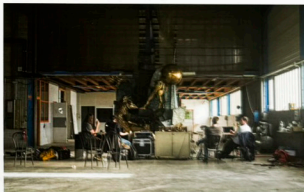
CG: It's a form of self-sabotage. There are three key dates: in 1979, the work was inaugurated; in 2003, it was switched off; and in 2022, it was reactivated. It was important to me that the work display evidence of this reanimation, that it should keep certain traces of its out-of-commission life.

However, for Jacques Monestier, it was highly problematic to embrace these traces of time, to leave the patina and the pigeon droppings. After a long discussion, we came to a compromise which consisted in retaining the traces of wear and tear on the central figure and restoring the rest of the object. I conceived this exhibition as a piece of fiction, and I wanted this automaton to play a central role within it. This role is not the one that Monestier had initially attributed to it and this story is not the one he had written for it; with this work, I am trying to tell the story of its second life, between its death in 2003 and its rebirth in 2022. So, I had to rethink a choreography for the occasion, to reprogram it.

RLV: *Le Défenseur du Temps* will only be your work for the three months of the exhibition. You embrace Marcel Duchamp's vision, for whom the artist of the twenty-first century would disappear. You breathe this new life into the object, creating an immaterial work that will fade away when the *Défenseur* is reinstalled in the Horloge district in 2023.

CG: Yes, there will be nothing left in my name.

RLV: You put this rebirth into perspective with the death of Gaël Foucher a few years ago, a dear friend of yours who will never be reborn.



Le Défenseur du Temps by Jacques Monestier being reprogrammed by Cyprien Gaillard after its restoration at the Festive in this workshop, Marolles, France, September 2022

CG: Indeed, he will not be able to come back to life. These questions of architectural and cultural conservation are only interesting to me when you connect them to our instinct to preserve beings, to preserve ourselves. The city is constantly trying to look after itself and maintain objects so that they survive us. There are two major obstacles to this project of regenerating the city of Paris: one is a metal-lead-and the other a mineral-asbestos. Lead is mainly found in paint, as in certain layers of the Eiffel Tower; asbestos is found in the Grand Palais and the Palais de la découverte, among other locations. These monuments are the subject of construction sites which I have been able to visit: they are extremely toxic. An asbestos removal project is highly risky. I often think of the people who are on the front line of this war against ruin, who risk their lives to preserve these

monuments, which end up existing only in two dimensions in the collective memory, in the form of printed postcards, or virtually on social networks and mobile screen savers.

I have an emotional relationship with architecture: a ruined building is for me comparable to the state in which one can find oneself at a given moment in the city, as the body is also a spatial fragment. Asbestos reminds us that our built environment is not only around us, but also inside us. We are porous beings. It seemed to me that there should be a human presence in the exhibition that evokes the instinct for self-preservation. I wanted to pay tribute to my friend Gail Foucher who died in 2013 and who was very fond of *Le Défenseur du Temps*. I imagine that he saw in this abandoned work the intact soul of the outsider on the fringe of the institution that the Centre Pompidou represents.

It is possible to project oneself into public artworks: one can make them one's own for the duration of an evening of drifting, unlike works in a museum, which always have a very clear context, an imposed temporality, an access limited by opening hours, a ticket purchase, etc.

When I passed this automaton a few days after receiving your invitation to do this exhibition, I looked at it again. I saw in it a character connected to the everyday as much as to the supernatural, capable of embodying a person other than the one imagined by its author.

RUV: In the *HUMPTY \DUMPTY* exhibition, the human often appears in a complex relationship to the built environment and to history. This can be seen in the works presented: de Chirico's anonymous figures digesting layers of architecture, or Smithson's drawings of an inner crisis, where elements of the city, language, and myth emerge. In Käthe Kollwitz's work, the human figure becomes monstrous in its attempt to protect childhood against the force of time and the barbarity of war. What is the place of the human in your work?

CG: The human being appears very little in it. These appearances and disappearances are more related to questions of representation of a space. In my films, a subject traditionally treated in the foreground, such as a figure, becomes a background, and vice versa: a landscape can also become a central element, which can sometimes be a source of collision, as in my film *The Lake Arches*.

At the time, I was constantly filming: I had a small Sony Handycam with me all the time. I initially wanted to show an idyllic scene—two friends looking at their reflection in the water before going for a swim—starting with a very tight shot to film the reflection of the sky in the water, and then slowly zooming out to reveal Boffill's architecture in the background. It wasn't a very good scenario per se... I started filming without knowing that they were going to dive. One of them did a bit deeper, coming out of the water with a bloodied nose, while the other one was unharmed. The camera kept rolling—in fact, at one point it seems to me that



Place d'Espagne
(Spain's Place),
Ricardo Boffill,
Les Arcades du Lac,
Montigny-le Bretonneux,
France, 2002

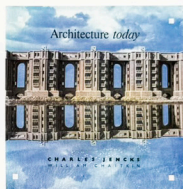


Giorgio de Chirico,
Oreste e Pilade, 1928

my childhood friend Nicolas looks directly at the camera and seems to say that this is now an important document. It's a film I made very early on, representing the idea of a confrontation between man and architecture, but also the entanglement between our bodies and our environment. It reminds me of the work of Hajo Rose who, in his twenties, made his self-portrait by superimposing his face on the facade of the Bauhaus school in Dessau.

In Boffill's buildings, and in the Arcades du Lac in particular, one sometimes has the impression of being in a de Chirico painting, with those arches, the pedestrian world, the piazzas. *The Lake Arches* refers more directly to de Chirico's gouache painting presented at the Palais de Tokyo, *Orestes and Pilades*, two faceless beings, with the swallowed architecture still visible in their stomachs. This painting also evokes for me the difficulty of assimilating all of our Western culture, the burden of heritage exemplified by those indigestible ancient fragments lodged in the intestines, our second brain.

Ricardo Boffill's
Les Arcades du Lac.
Le Vaudou on the cover
of *Architecture Today*,
Charles Jencks and
William Scharoun,
Abrams/Academy
Publishers/Papadakis,
1982



Hajo Rose, *Contested*
(Self-Portrait), 1931

RUV: It is a form of indigestion that is reminiscent of Flaubert's Bouvard and Pécuchet, who want to know everything about the world, to assimilate everything, but who do not succeed, of course. The character in *The Lake Arches*, Nicolas, also experiences a painful episode: he breaks his nose in a space that was imagined for human pleasure and leisure. It deals with the difficulty of domesticating and controlling the world.

CG: The difficulty of knowing everything, of making sense of our fragmented culture. It's interesting, that Boffill is now enjoying a resurgence online. Many people are looking at his building in Noisy-le-Grand, the Palacio d'Abraxas, as a destination in which to take pictures of themselves for their Instagram accounts. Terry Gilliam also used it for *Brazil*. In a sense, *The Lake Arches* punctures these flat representations. This facade, initially in the background, becomes central when Nicolas hits the bottom of the lake. Paradoxically, this accident also restores the image we have of Boffill's architecture. It brings it back into a tangible world, restoring it to the foreground, far from its role as a backdrop on social networks and other fictions.

RUV: These questions of fragmentation, fracture, and decomposition are central, notably in the title *HUMPTY \DUMPTY*.

CG: *HUMPTY \DUMPTY* refers to a character and his story is that of his fragmentation, as told in Lewis Carroll's book *Through the Looking-Glass*, a work conceived as a sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This character had previously appeared in an eighteenth-century nursery rhyme. In Carroll's book, Humpty Dumpty is shaped like an anthropomorphic egg, but the nursery rhyme tells us nothing of the sort. It is about a fictional character who stands on a shaky brick wall, falls off and breaks, followed by the collective effort to restore him to his original state. It is then explained that it is impossible to return to that state. Even though, put back together, he will never be the same again; it is the idea of

the spiral that performs the same movement as the loop, but never returns to its starting point. This title seemed particularly appropriate in relation to this great restoration campaign of the center of Paris in preparation for the Olympic Games, and to evoke the preservation issues which are involved.

RLV: The obsession with heritage conservation is indeed increasingly present. It has developed throughout the twentieth century in a concern for the preservation and permanence of these objects. Today there are 121 million items to be preserved in the collections of French museums, but this obsession leads to a strange reality that requires works to be completely cut off from the world, to achieve a permanence of climate, to be removed from all expressions of time, from seasons, the day, the night, light—to reduce all variation to nothing.

CG: Yes, these are recent ideas. An obsession that, in fact, goes against the general preservation of the world, because keeping the temperature of a museum or a warehouse between 18 and 21 degrees at all times necessarily has consequences for the outside world. Again, these desires to preserve works of art are exercised at the expense of the preservation of the Earth and of living beings. It is this intertwining of desires that interests me. One is always preserved at the expense of the other. But if there is no one left, who are the works for? Returning to the Palais de Tokyo, its difficult-to-control climate led me to show fragile pieces such as Giorgio de Chirico's gouache, but also to think of a device in which this work could be shown without being damaged. The idea was to show it in a context other than that of a traditional, standardized museum, to emphasize its fragility. This device alters the work visually: a painting becomes a sculpture the moment it is placed under a cloche. This idea of care and consideration for the other is reflected in the very subject of this work where the hand of one of the friends rests on the shoulder of the other, with this hydrometric control system at their feet, like an artificial breathing apparatus.

RLV: The fact that the conservation of some leads to the deterioration of others is reflected in the work *Love Locks*, at the entrance to the exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo. These are huge bags from the city public services in which we discover thousands of "love locks" hung by passers-by on the bridges of Paris which threatened to sink them. How did you come up with this idea?



Oscar Wilde's tomb
in Père-Lachaise
Cemetery
(created by Jacob
Epstein in 1914)

CG: By walking through the city, I was aware of them, but one day I reconsidered. These padlocks are not left by Parisians, but by tourist couples who come from the United States, Asia, and elsewhere, leaving this trace that symbolizes the permanence of their love sealed by these padlocks once the key is thrown into the Seine. These padlocks not only pose an ethical problem because they symbolize a love linked to possession, but also a structural problem because they symbolize the Pont des Arts where their weight caused part of the railings to collapse. In 2018, all these padlocks were removed and the bridge's railings replaced with glass panels. It's like Oscar Wilde's tomb in Père-Lachaise, sculpted by that English vorticist Jacob Epstein, whom I love very much, which is now under glass so as not to be damaged, especially by the traces of lipstick left by the kisses of his

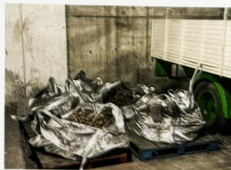
admirers, but it is nevertheless altered by these glass panels. A paradox emerges in these examples: preservation destroys. This is the irony of these conservation efforts: they obstruct our access to the work in the present moment, but at the same time ensure its continuity for future generations. I really conceived this work—these large bags salvaged from the warehouses of the Paris public works department—as ready-mades. It's a highly ironic object, isn't it? Wanting this padlock to be an expression of love, when the padlock really represents confinement, as well as waste that is difficult to remove from the public space.

RLV: Yes, they speak of a certain contemporary form and understanding of love. The exhibition is very much about love, dignity, and the attention we give to things and beings. These padlocks represent a conditioned love that is expressed through this object; public cultural policies designate which works, which monuments, which buildings are worthy of love and therefore of preservation. *Le Défenseur du Temps* is reborn after being "unloved" and forgotten. All this evokes the question of restoration: material restoration seems to proceed from spiritual and affective restoration.

CG: Yes, the padlocks evoke generic love and indeed deal with normalized love. For *Le Défenseur du Temps*, it was also a question of making a work that does not add to the long list of objects that weigh down our world, such as these padlocks. The gesture of reanimating the *Defenseur* is profoundly immaterial. I have always liked works of art that have an economy of means. You have to work with what is around you.

RLV: That is also the position of Tino Sehgal, with whom I collaborated on his "carte blanche" at the Palais de Tokyo in 2016. He considers that an artwork can be embodied in an encounter, that it is possible to produce only immaterial objects and turn them into an exhibition. It is not fanciful to think that what makes a work of art will change profoundly in the next few years and decades, and that the cult of the object and the ritual of the exhibition will evolve, or even possibly disappear. They speak of our culture and our relationship with the living, which are undergoing profound changes. The relationship to the world that you have created with *Le Défenseur du Temps* goes beyond the cult of permanence and of the author; it is rather a question of giving it back a new dignity and intensity, of changing our affects towards it. The immaterial and its qualities recur frequently in the project, especially through sound and music, which are fundamental in your work.

CG: For *Le Défenseur du Temps* I have made a soundtrack for a sculpture for the first time. I usually think of sound in relation to my films, and my musical choices are conceptual considerations in relation to the subject. I try to take myself out of the equation and think about what sound this fossil, tree, or firework would like to hear—just as you have to ask the brick what it wants to become before you build a building, as Louis Kahn used to say. In *Ocean II Ocean*, I quickly arrived at the steel drum. In Trinidad and Tobago, there were several refineries in the 1940s. Large oil barrels were readily available, and Ellie Mannette was the first to tune this empty fossil fuel container. The sound of this instrument is often associated with calypso, a style of carnival dance

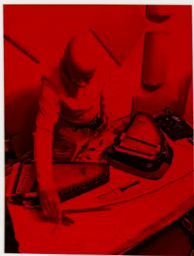


Bags of padlocks from
the Department of
Roads and Transport
of the City of Paris, 2022

music. I associate it more with an industrial sound related to offshore drilling, with those reverberating notes emanating from a metal casing. That's why I see the empty oil barrel as a prophetic sound. Nearly a century later, its resonance seems to be coming closer and closer to us, like an echo played in reverse.

The carnival is over.

For *Le Défenseur du Temps*, I tried to allude to the beginning of my project: a date, 2003, the year the automaton was stopped. How can one evoke this recent past for an audience? It made sense to me to use songs that were most popular at the time. So, I started sampling the hits from that year.



Laraaji in the studio recording "Heal", the soundtrack of *Le Défenseur du Temps*, New York City, 2022

RLV: These songs are like asbestos, aren't they? They contaminate, they get into our memories, they assault our psyches.

CG: Yes, they are indelible from our memories and refer us to a specific period. I wanted to introduce the idea of music which is hard, not seductive, aggressive. It's a more experimental choice, so I knew from the outset that sound would not have the immersive role that it can have in my films. The soundtrack oscillates between the idea of repair with the "Heal" section and more "corrosive" moments with "Hit".

RLV: The "Heal" composition is a piece of spiritual music driven by the search for harmony and the healing power of sound carried by Laraaji's composition.

CG: Yes, the healing comes from new age, ambient music, sometimes referred to as "elevator music", but the elevator is also an inessential, a public space that oscillates between the earth and the heavens, and Laraaji's sound is definitely heavenly. His music has had a new lease of life in recent years—even though he was already working with Brian Eno in the 1980s—and it seems to me that there is a new interest in ambient music in general. It's a porous music, you never hear the same track twice, because this kind of music lets the sounds of the outside world in—a siren, children's laughter, or the sound of air conditioning. It's an inclusive music, without sonic barriers, open to the world, interested in the common good, the street, parks, public space.

From the late 1970s onwards, Laraaji played in Washington Square Park, a noisy New York park. His music is embedded in the city like a musical field, a substratum that is barely discernible at first, but then slowly reveals itself like an apparition. We met by chance in a public space last winter on 125th Street in Harlem. Two days later, we met again at the top of Marcus Garvey Park. We didn't talk much about music and art, but mostly about psychedelic experiences, the possibility of transcending binary worldviews and eroding some perceived barriers between old and new, nature and culture, at home and abroad. He has a great ability to think about the world in a holistic way. A month later we were in the recording

studio together. He played two zithers, which he had electrified himself, and an *mbira*. I then edited this recording into a four different pieces that emanates directly from the automaton in the exhibition. Laraaji's soundtrack alternates with four different remixes of various hits of 2003 and the early 2000's that I made together with Joe Williams. I also worked with Nicolas Becker to spatialize the soundtrack in the exhibition space—he is a big collector of silent recordings, who understands the importance of space between the notes. We had the idea of augmenting the automaton by installing a sound system within it. During its restoration, we also grafted on four transducers and some microswitches to amplify the sound of its movements.

RLV: The theme of spillover and loss of control appears in the exhibition at several points: *Le Défenseur du Temps* and its slow decay, Smithson's drawings and the expression of an inner implosion, and the spillover into public space with the parakeets considered to be invasive, which are present in the video work *Formation*. The idea of vomiting is also central, as a counterpart to the motif of swallowing asbestos and the music that contaminates the mind.

CG: Nothing is set in stone. If there are examples of facade *revalements*¹ everywhere in Paris, then there can also be instances of a facade "vomiting". One only has to find these, which are quite rare. This is the case of the old Reims Cathedral gargoyles which are presented at the Palais de Tokyo. In 1914, after a shell hit the cathedral, there was a fire that was fuelled, not without irony, by the burning of a wooden scaffolding surrounding the north tower of the church. The cathedral's frame then caught fire, melting the lead roof which slowly poured out of the gargoyles' mouths. In a sense, it is an authorless object that bears both the traces of a first intention—the restoration of the cathedral by Viollet-le-Duc at the end of the nineteenth century with the creation of these gargoyles—and the traces of the First World War, materialized by this leaden flow. The intertwining of these two opposing intentions—to restore and to destroy—, expressed in the same object, is visually extremely powerful.



Gargole spewing lead from Reims Cathedral, as displayed in the Palais du Louvre, Paris, 2022



Gargole spewing lead, 1873-1914, with its new hanging system, exhibition view at the Palais de Tokyo (JH/UMPT), 2022

My idea is to show these fragments anew and to take them out of a context that is only historical. I want to restore their sculptural potential by giving them a new space, with a new hanging system which I have designed to allow our gaze to focus on this disorientation that is both frozen in time and levitating in space. The idea was not to dissociate them from their original context, but rather to imagine, for the duration of an exhibition, an alternative to the official culture of memory. I am not a historian, I have more of a psychedelic relationship with History. History is a malleable material with which one can experiment—it is a case of the past in the present. A century later, this reconfiguration of heritage might be telling us something else: perhaps it is also inviting us to practice a form of healing, like the vomiting that is needed at the beginning of a peyote ceremony. I can also see this psychedelic journey in Robert Smithson's early drawings.

1. In French, the restoration of a building's facade is known as a *revêtement*, a term similar to *avalement* which literally means swallowing.

CG: In fact, among the selection of drawings presented, there is one in which

RLV: In a letter to his gallery owner George Lester in Rome in 1961, he wrote: "Pain has overwhelmed my entire nervous system."² It is this inner disorder that seems to drive him to seek out what lives elsewhere, the outside space.

Between each drawing I placed a fragment of vitrified asbestos, also known as "inert asbestos". This is the end of a cycle for this mineral, which was first extracted from the earth, added into a large number of construction materials, which were in turn introduced into the built environment, and finally removed during asbestos removal work. The current trajectory of this fibrous crystal is a return to the earth in asbestos waste disposal centres. France currently has a dozen such centres. How can we intervene in this loop? How can we modify the path of this crystal to give it a new destiny, a new life and reintegrate it into a cycle close to the spiral motif, so central to Smithson?

I found this possibility of a rebirth at Inertant, a factory in the Landes region of France that is unique in Europe. Using plasma torches capable of heating to 1,600 degrees, it transforms asbestos waste into a pitch black glass, like obsidian, which the company calls Cofalit. These are the fragments of vitrified asbestos that are used as paperweights for these entropic drawings in the showcase.

2: Robert Smithson to George B. Lester, 1 May 1961, Letters from Smithson to George B. Lester, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

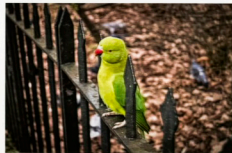
RLV: William Blake said that the role of the artist is to open the doors of perception. With the video work *Formation*, you literally open a door to a perspective that was previously beyond our reach. You change our way of considering beings, in this case parakeets, which are seen as invasive. Did you not agree with our way of saying making, and representing the world of birds, and particularly that of parakeets?

CG: A few years ago, I wanted to refocus my *gaze* on something small in the city. I started to develop an interest in birds in New York. It's a pretty special place to see them during migration, as they stop in Central Park to break their journey. I spent time looking at these birds through my binoculars, like this community of professional and amateur birder watchers who create intangible collections of the birds they have seen. For them, seeing is enough to create a collection. The idea of memory as a place of collection seems very accurate. However, their way of understanding birds is academic and always directly linked to their identification (male, female, juvenile, migratory or not, etc.). They often do this with the help of applications that recognise the sound of birds and even imitate their calls to get them to come closer. They have one eye on the bird and the other on the phone. In Central Park one can

One of the species that has been introduced—one that is increasingly common in Europe—is the Indian ringneck parakeet native to southern India. It can be seen in many European parks, such as Kew Gardens in London, in front of the Prado in Madrid, in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, or in Düsseldorf, where *Formation* was filmed. This bird has a dual identity: it is considered a nuisance by some, because it disrupts an existing ecosystem, but it is also admired by others because it illustrates a form of regained freedom as it comes from a line of domesticated birds. Their origins and the way in which they escaped their cages are often mysterious or the stuff of urban legend.

RIV: London legend has it that Jimi Hendrix released a pair of parakeets in the middle of Carnaby Street. Other stories tell of parakeets escaping during the filming of *The African Queen* (John Huston, 1951). These theories explaining the reason for their arrival are very much linked to our representation of the "wild" and the uncontrolled or anarchic gesture, to disorder.

CG: Yes, I know that myth of Jimi Hendrix on acid freeing his parakeets from their cage. These swarms of psychedelic birds play their part in a form of overflow from the world of fiction into the real world, escaped from a film or a book—like those starlings in Central Park. The first reports of parakeets in Düsseldorf date back to 1982. At that time, they were said to have escaped from an exotic bird farm. This species of parakeet has no place in European bird shops today: it is now considered too common due to the progress of crossbreeding since the 1980s.



Parakeet in Hyde Park,
London, 2017

As the Indian ringneck parakeet is a tropical bird with no migratory instinct, it remains on the streets and in the parks of Düsseldorf, finding no legitimacy either in freedom or in captivity. The interstitial space of the Königsallee—the Ruhr area's main shopping street lined with plane trees—is therefore also their "biocorridor": the parakeets flock there all year round as the daylight fades.

I see an admirable resilience in these beings. In wildlife documentaries, however, these birds only appear in their original habitat, a pristine, untouched nature. In Düsseldorf, they have uncharted ground to occupy, a new interstice. I therefore thought of filming them with the same conventions as in animal documentaries—with a telephoto lens in slow motion—and, above all, to film their flight from below to admire their plumage without backlighting.

When it rains, as it does in my film, they fly quite high, past the buildings of the Königsallee, some pre-war and some more recent, such as Daniel Libeskind's Kö-Bogen, which reminds me of the Rheintmetall headquarters, also located in Düsseldorf. Rheintmetall is one of Germany's largest weapons producers and has been operating in the region since the late nineteenth century. Historically, the Ruhr was the centre of the arms industry and it was also for this reason that Düsseldorf was severely devastated during the Second World War. The flight of these Indian paraquets over the Königsallee at dusk immediately made me think

Käthe Kollwitz's
*Mutter mit zwei
Kindern* (1932–36)
installed in front
of Käthe Kollwitz
Museum in Berlin,
2022



of a military formation. It's an ironic twist to the story to have this tropical bird, this foreign bird, taking over the city, gradually gaining the ascendancy on the German birds, thereby generating a form of reverse colonialism.

RLV: You talk about the liberation of the museum's present, which leads to the question of the domestication of the wild. The subject of liberation is also evoked by Käthe Kollwitz's bronze *Mutter mit zwei Kindern*, which faces *Formation*, and when you wanted to take out of its presentation context at the Käthe Kollwitz Museum in Berlin.

CG: This sculpture stood on a piece of lawn wedged between the museum's entrance gate and the grilles of the ground floor windows, with a pile of seamless bricks as a pedestal, reminiscent of the wall from which Humpty Dumpty falls. I felt a responsibility to take this work out of this context, to free it from its condition, because it was very difficult to see it in this situation in Berlin. I had the idea of showing a sculpture under the large glass roof of the Palais de Tokyo that would evoke the outside world, in dialogue with my film *Formation* in the background, which would act like a new set with the sculpture as the central figure. The Käthe Kollwitz finished the plaster in 1936 and died in 1945 before the end of the Second World War. Like her *Pietà* in the Neue Wache, a symbol of reunification, this work was posthumously cast in bronze.

RLV: Kollwitz's idea of the fate of history and rebirth also takes shape in your installation *L'ange du foyer* (*Vierte Fassung*). This hologram, a ghostly form that appears and disappears according to our position in space, is inspired by a work by Max Ernst (*Der Hausengel*, 1937). It is also an evocation of a certain relationship to time which, as with Smithson, takes the form of a spiral. This vision of cyclical time is opposed to the linear path towards progress or a triumphant form of history often advocated in the West.

CG: The idea was to continue the movement of Max Ernst's monster, which in the original painting is frozen in the air, this angel who, once again, has a double, ambiguous identity. The title of the work is surprising, as this character is more reminiscent of a monster and is associated with the rise of fascism in Europe. Like the Indian parakeets in *Formation*, it is both a monster and an angel. In Ernst's painting, there is an empty space at the height of the character's belly, without any information, which is in the shadow of its shredded clothes: I saw this as a gap to take over in order to animate the creature. The animation of the angel devouring bulbs was also designed in relation to the shapes of the holographic fan on which *L'ange du foyer* (*Vierte Fassung*) was to appear. Its propellers, on which micro-LED bulbs are placed, rotate at a speed that the eye cannot perceive. The result is like an apparition. As these bulbs are only located on one side of the blades, I decided



Käthe Kollwitz's
graphic work
painted onto
in her study
in Berlin, 1932

to turn them towards the back of the room: in this way, the audience only sees the work from the second half of the room. A certain number of people therefore seem to be looking into the void, as the animation cannot be perceived from the entrance. It is a work halfway between a sculpture and a moving image. In fact, I installed it like a sculpture. It is not aligned with our eyes like a video, but in a more visceral position—it is in line with our stomachs.

My desire to animate a frozen motif is also reflected in the film *Ocean II Ocean*. The fossils embedded in the walls of the Stalinist metro stations came from quarries far from Moscow, located in the Urals, the Crimea, or the Caucasus, and act as a space-time vortex that also takes us back to a distant geological time. These ammonites evoke a timespan much longer than the history of communism. Another vortex is present in the flushing scene, shot in a public toilet in New York: first an abstract image resembling a wormhole appears, then a zoom out reveals the toilet bowl. Beyond evoking the idea of cyclical time, this scene also allows this film to be freed from the linear time of cinematographic projection. My film is a loop, without beginning and without end, without splitting sound and image, where the subway becomes a ship that sails back and forth in time, between the Atlantic Ocean and the primitive ocean from which these fossils originate. It reminds me of that practical primary school exercise, where a pupil is asked to unroll a thousand-sheet roll of toilet paper in full to represent the class the length of our geological time, only to point out that the appearance of humans on Earth is located somewhere in the last centimetre of the final sheet. Returning to the exhibition and its evocation of different timescales, I think of Daniel Turner's contribution which he produced using the now defunct cables of the first Eiffel Tower lift. His sculpture, made in search of an ultimate reduction by transforming these elements to dust, perfectly illustrates a metaphor that appeared in an essay by Mark Twain in 1903. More than a century separates these two American artists who cast their gaze on the Eiffel Tower. One sees it in its fragmentation, the other in its entirety, one to evoke the present, the other to represent the age of the world.

"Such is the history of it. Man has been here 32,000 years. That it took a hundred million years to prepare the world for him is proof that that is what it was done for. I suppose it is. I don't know. If the Eiffel Tower were now representing the world's age, the skin of paint on the pinnacle-knob at its summit would represent man's share of that age; and anybody would perceive that that skin was what the tower was built for. I reckon they would, I don't know."³

Mark Twain

3. Mark Twain, "The Damned Human Race," in *Letters from the Earth* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1966), 178.



Ocean II Ocean film set,
Asiatica, New York City, 2019

HUMPTY

Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Cyprien Gaillard, *Love Locks*

2022

Bags, locks taken from the Pont des Arts and the Pont de l'Archevêché, Paris

Work produced thanks to a donation from the City of Paris
Courtesy the artist

At the entrance to the exhibition we are greeted by five large bags filled with padlocks. Not so long ago, they hung from the railings of the Pont des Arts and the Pont de l'Archevêché. One after the other, however, they repeated the same ritual. After buying a padlock for a few euros from a street vendor, they write a declaration of love on it, usually made up of a few syllables: "Jack + Sheila 2018", "R.G. ♥ E.F.", "Iris & Sean forever". They then lock the padlock to the bridge railings and throw the key into the waters of the Seine, as if to seal a certain state of the world and of their relationship.

Over time, these "acts of love" accumulate like so many excrescences, gradually modifying the bridges' morphology which they parasitize with all their weight, at the risk of breaking them, as was the case with the railings of the Pont des Arts, which almost collapsed in 2014. In order to preserve their structural integrity, the City of Paris carries out occasional removal operations, from which the metal debris that makes up this work is drawn. These pieces bear witness to the way our romantic lives are interwoven into architecture, and the friction that can result from their encounter.

Supposed to represent eternal love, the padlocks have been unable to resist the passage of time. They are found in the exhibition, torn from the urban landscape and rusted by the rain; an agglomeration of dislocated desire.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Overrunner*

(*Sjöguden / Kungsträdgården / East River Park*)

2019

Diptych, double exposure polaroid, mat, aluminium and plexi frame

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

This diptych juxtaposes a public toilet in New York's East River Park with Carl Milles's sculpture *Sjöguden*, a work located across the Atlantic on a quay in Stockholm. Gaillard's work depicts the sea god with a Kungsträdgården metro platform running through it, seemingly bursting out of its gaping jaws.



Cyprien Gaillard, *The Lake Arches* (Restored version)
2007–2022
Video 1'39", rear projection on glass screen
Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

Two friends exchange a few words in front of an artificial lake. The next moment, they launch themselves and dive into the water. One of them emerges in pain with a bloody face. His dive was cut short by the surprisingly shallow bottom of the pool, which he hit with force. The camera zooms out to reveal the Arcades du Lac in the background, an architectural ensemble by Ricardo Bofill. Its piazzas lined with arches are reminiscent of the metaphysical landscapes painted by Giorgio de Chirico. Conceived as a "people's Versailles", the postmodern style imbued with classicism of this monumental project could be described as "facade architecture", like the watery mirror that serves as a lake. This discrepancy between form and function is sometimes a source of misunderstanding, or even of accidents, revealing the ambiguous—and sometimes painful—nature of our relationship to the built environment.



Giorgio de Chirico, *Oreste e Pilade*
1928
Gouache, charcoal, black chalk
Courtesy The Mayor Gallery
© Adagp, Paris, 2022

In Greek mythology, the figures of Orestes and Pylades are known for their unflinching friendship and the strength of the love between them. Here, they occupy the centre of the drawing, side by side. Their featureless faces give them the appearance of mannequins or ancient statues that have been eroded by time. From their stomachs emerge fragments of columns, scrolls, and a few sparsely decorated buildings. The architecture is inside their bodies just as they are inside it, the neo-classical frame around the painting separating off their world. They face the video piece, *The Lake Arches*, which, like them, offers a vision of the entanglement of bodies and architecture.

De Chirico's drawing is presented in a display case that contains a number of devices that regulate the air circulation and the humidity level in order to avoid exposing the painting to excessive climatic variations that could damage it. The preservation of the painting requires that it be placed at a distance from the outside world and placed, as it were, "on life support".



Gargoyles spewing lead
1873–1914

Hanging display by Cyprien Gaillard, 2022
Gargoyles originating from Reims Cathedral removed after the fire of 1914, lead, stone from Courville
© Centre des monuments nationaux, Palais du Tau (Reims)
Classified as historical monuments by decree of 1 January 1862

Stone creatures float in the Palais de Tokyo. These gargoyles, survivors of the Notre-Dame de Reims cathedral, are like mineral ghosts. Thick lead flows from their mouths, a kind of reflux spewing forth from the architecture.

These gargoyles were created between 1861 and 1873 during the restoration work undertaken by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc to restore the cathedral to its twelfth-century appearance. They were severely damaged on 19 September 1914 when German shelling caused a fire to the wooden scaffolding of the restoration site. The building's lead frame liquefied in the heat of the fire, leaking into the gutters and through the gargoyles' mouths.

By exhibiting them alongside prehistoric fossils and contemporary works, Cyprien Gaillard makes their temporality even more complex. Both embodiments of a nineteenth-century architect's fantasy of the Middle Ages and collateral victims of the First World War, they are now freed from their historical context and their initial function as drains.

By presenting them in a state of suspended weightlessness, Cyprien Gaillard offers a new reading, tinged with strangeness and surrealism.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Overburden (1), Overburden (2), Overburden (3)*

2020

Aluminium honeycomb, sedimentary rock, stainless steel inlay

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

This series, which echoes the video work *Ocean II Ocean*, takes its title from the verb overburden. In the mining industry, this term refers to the layers of material that need to be removed before the targeted resource can be reached.

This series of sculptures is a genuine marble and steel inlay, scattered with fossils. The New Jersey Transit Corporation logo appears in steel on the surface of the marble as do inlaid screws identical in every way to those found on the windows of New York subway cars. Each of the slabs was refined with an industrial wet sander and a water jet cutting machine used to cut out the edges of the work and the space for the logo inlay. This process of reduction by water is reminiscent of the sedimentation process which occurs on the seabed, condensing the passage of time into an extremely dense mineral form. At the same time, the marble slabs are also a primitive form of recording, like prehistoric photograms preserving the imprint of a distant past.



Daniel Turner, *Eiffel Cable Burnish*

2022

Stain made from dissolved parts of the western elevator
(1899) of the Eiffel Tower

This work benefits from the generous support of the
Société d'exploitation de la Tour Eiffel, Paris
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen

Daniel Turner works primarily in sculpture involving the transformation of materials, objects, and environments into tactile or atmospheric forms. His works are often characterised by a specific response to a site, under a controlled set of mechanical and chemical processes.

The current renovations of the Eiffel Tower include the removal and replacement of the very cables used for its vertical lifts. The residue of these historic cables serve as the raw material for the work. The artist diverts them from their initial function, which consisted of fighting against gravity by lifting heavy loads on a vertical axis, to create an expression of lightness deployed horizontally. The Eiffel Tower, which is the subject of regular restorations, is one example of the extent of the resources required for heritage conservation and the efforts made to preserve architecture outside the confines of time. The cables extracted from the Eiffel Tower have been melted into a cylindrical solid form before being milled into micro steel filaments through a digital machining process (CNC). The reduced iron strands are bound together to form a kind of steel wool, which he burnishes against large sections of wall. The result is a dark stain that spreads out from the corner of a room like a shadow without an object. Working with the Parisian monument, Daniel Turner focuses our attention on the inexorable metamorphosis of the material world, where even the most prominent towers are eventually reduced to dust.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Everything but Spirits*
2020

Double exposure polaroid, mat,
aluminium and plexiglass frame

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

Beer fridges, typical of American convenience stores, are invaded by mineral-looking plants whose sculptural forms evoke an underwater landscape of algae and coral. Thanks to the technique of double exposure, these compositions juxtapose several photographs like layers of sediment that the artist conglomerates into a single image. The title of this series of photographs plays on the polysemous nature of the term spirit, referring both to the spiritual and to strong alcohol.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Sober City*
2015

Double exposure polaroid, mat,
aluminium and plexiglass frame

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

In his novel *The Crystal World* (1966), J. G. Ballard tells the chaotic story of a physicist who makes his way through a jungle plagued by a mysterious phenomenon that transforms its flora and fauna into a multitude of crystals. These crystals end up completely swallowing up the jungle, pulling all its beings and things outside of time and into an intermediate existence.

Situated in New York, *Sober City* presents a similar vision.

Outdoor shots are superimposed on photographs of an amethyst geode from the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, which emerges in the shadows of the city and disappears in its light. These double exposures are the result of repeated displacements between the urban space and the geode, which is both the geographical and conceptual point of departure.

According to the practice of crystal healing, amethysts have purifying properties that can, among other things, help cure drug, alcohol, and tobacco addictions. They are therefore part of the healing process, as in the embrace between

Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson—the first black player in the American Major League Baseball—depicted on one of the Polaroids. This gesture of friendship has come to symbolise the breaking down of the racial divide that still affects society today. Cyprien Gaillard points to the possibility of repair.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Ocean II Ocean*

2019

HD video with soundtrack composed by Moritz von Oswald
and Cyprien Gaillard, 10'56"

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

At the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, marine creatures venture into an abandoned subway car to the sound of steel drums, Caribbean percussion instruments made from empty oil drums. A logo indicates that the carriage belongs to the MTA, the authority responsible for public transport in the New York metropolitan area, which took the decision to sink thousands of subway cars off the East Coast of the United States to create artificial reefs. Criticised by some environmental groups, supported by others, the project has resulted in a strange seascape punctuated by, among other things, the stainless steel carcasses of old Brightliners, the iconic silver railcars that have marked the New York cityscape since they were introduced in the 1960s.

A point of light then appears on the surface of clear water, like a distant star swept up in a vortex that turns out to be the flush of a New York public toilet.

On the other side, an underground train threads its way between the platforms of a station dating from the Soviet era. Then follows a succession of shots filmed in the metro stations of Kiev, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Tbilisi, Bucharest, and Berlin. Their walls and floors are covered with marble from the mountains of the Urals, Crimea, the Caucasus, and Transylvania. A few fossils of ammonites, nautiloids, belemnites, and other marine creatures from ancient geological times are visible on their surface. Some of these, dating back to the Jurassic period, are evidence of the presence of extinct oceans, notably the Panthalassa, known as the "primitive ocean". In the reflection of the marble, these ancestral footprints are juxtaposed with the subway cars, echoing their submerged New York counterparts, which, through the process of sedimentation, will form new fossils on the bottom of the Atlantic.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Gates PASSAIC*

2013

Graphite on paper

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

The manholes that line the road are as many doors leading to the underground world which unfolds beneath our feet.

They separate the urban space from its waste which travels secretly through the pipes that spread out under the city like a root system. By exposing their traces, Cyprien Gaillard gives a new form of visibility to these confidential objects.

These marks were obtained through a two-step process, by rubbing graphite chalk on a sheet of paper placed directly on two manhole covers located on either side of the river that runs through the town of Passaic in the state of New Jersey, where Robert Smithson was born. The variations in their typography point to the gap in time between them.

In 1967, Smithson wrote an article about this New York suburb which takes us on an excursion presented as a guided tour of the local monuments. Through the text, we encounter, among other "monuments", a sandbox, concrete pillars supporting a motorway, and pipes pouring greyish water into the adjacent river. Like Robert Smithson before him, Cyprien Gaillard is interested in the entropic aspect of these spaces left to their own devices, seemingly outside of time—somewhere between a bygone past and impending ruin. Towards the end of his article, Smithson asks:

"Has Passaic replaced Rome as the Eternal City?"¹

1: Robert Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic," *Artforum* 6, no. 4 (December 1967): 48–51.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Nautilus Dub (First Half)*

2022

Nautilus shell, Ortofon Concorde cartridge

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

A half-shell of a nautilus embedded in a wall is surrounded by two mirrors in which it is reflected endlessly. From its centre emerges an Ortofon Concorde cartridge, a model popular with DJs around the world whose slender shape is reminiscent of the eponymous aircraft. The title of the work refers to dub, a musical genre born from the practice of remixing originating in Jamaica that has had a decisive influence on the development of electronic music. Often associated with the notion of echo because of its use of delay and reverb, dub sometimes gives the impression of a vast underground space, at the bottom of a cave or of an ocean.



Robert Smithson

Untitled, 1961, pencil and watercolor on paper, 32.1 × 37.8 cm

Untitled, 1962, ink on paper, 45.7 × 61 cm

Ill Defined Drawing or What Not to Do [recto/verso],

ca. 1960–1963, pencil on paper, 48.3 × 61 cm

Work, 1960, pencil on paper, 43.2 × 45.7 cm

The Whore, 1960, pencil on paper, 61 × 45.7 cm

Usury, 1960, pencil on paper, 45.7 × 54.6 cm

Untitled, 1962, ink on paper, 55.6 × 41 cm

Disease, 196, pencil on paper, 45.7 × 44.5 cm

First Drawing for a Shrine in an Abandoned Quarry in Montclair,

N.J., ca. 1960–1963, pencil on paper, 61.3 × 45.7 cm

Untitled, n.d., ink and gouache on paper, 31.1 × 29.8 cm

Untitled, 1962, ink on paper, 45.7 × 61.6 cm

Usury, ca. 1960–1963, pencil on paper, 25.4 × 45.7 cm

Devil, 1960, pencil on paper, 48.3 × 36.2 cm

Chaos, 1960, pencil on paper, 61 × 35.6 cm

Exhaust, 1961, ink on paper, 61 × 45.7 cm

Courtesy Holt/Smithson Foundation and

Marian Goodman Gallery

© Holt/Smithson Foundation/Adagp, Paris, 2022

Robert Smithson's early drawings are populated by ominous figures, monsters devouring mangled bodies, menacing demons, and winged creatures tumbling from the sky like fallen angels. At first glance, these Dantean visions, somewhere between a carnival and hell, seem completely alien to Smithson's later *Earthworks*, environmental works based on outdoor sites. Yet, in them we can see the emergence of many of the obsessions that punctuated his entire practice:

the interweaving of the human, architecture, and the landscape; cosmological themes; the sedimentation of bodies; the expanse of geological time; and *in situ* investigations, as evidenced by a sketch of an unrealized sanctuary project in an abandoned New Jersey mine.

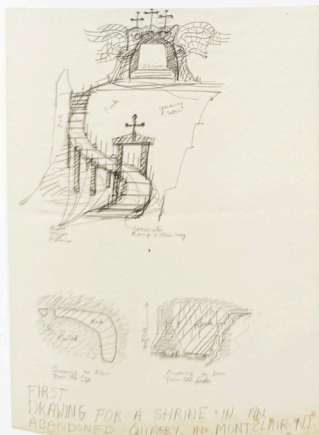
On either side of the drawings, Gaillard uses pieces of Cofalit as paperweights to bridge the gap between the different sheets. This vitreous material, sometimes referred to as "end matter", is the result of research aimed at detoxifying waste containing asbestos through a vitrification process that melts the asbestos fibres to render them harmless. This metamorphosis is reminiscent of some of Robert Smithson's work in which landscapes are transmuted. Although it is rooted in the material, his practice is not without transcendence, as evidenced by the themes of his early drawings, which outline a form of earthly mysticism marked by chaos and entropy.

Robert Smithson,

First Drawing for a Shrine in an Abandoned Quarry in Montclair, N.J.,

ca. 1960–1963

Fragment of vitrified asbestos used as paperweight, exhibition view at the Palais de Tokyo (*HUMPTY*), display by Cyprien Gaillard, 2022



Cyprien Gaillard, *Nautilus Dub (Second Half)*
2022
Engraved nautilus shell, Chinese ink
Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

The second part of the diptych, this nautilus half-shell evokes with its spiral the layout of the *HUMPTY* exhibition, which begins in large spaces, continues in a long, curved gallery, and ends with a stairwell that winds around itself.

In the tradition of shell engraving which dates back to the seventeenth century, this work is adorned with an engraving carved from mother-of-pearl depicting a man banging his head against the wall facing him. It is a reproduction of a detail from a painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, which literally illustrates the Flemish proverb "banging your head against a brick wall", referring to the action of attempting the impossible.

The work also refers to the figure of Humpty Dumpty falling off a wall, a symbol of the impossibility of reconstituting what, like him, has irrevocably been broken. This sculpture, like the exhibition, aims to ward off this impossibility by creating a whole from scattered fragments. The device of the work thus allows the shell to regain its complete form from a simple fragment that is doubled up in the mirror. As is often the case in Cyprien Gaillard's practice, fragmentation is combined here with a desire for unification.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Formation*
2021

Ultra-panoramic video, 1:7.45, 4'17"

Produced by VOLTE, funded by Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien
Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

A flock of birds with light green plumage flutters between the skyscrapers and luxury shops of the Königsallee, a street in central Düsseldorf. They are ring-necked parakeets, a species that was introduced to West Germany from Africa and Asia in the late 1960s. Some of the specimens that escaped captivity are at the origin of the parakeet colonies in several urban centres in the Rhine Valley, where the temperate climate and lack of predators have favoured their proliferation. Their impact on the local fauna has since been the subject of debate. Some studies show that the competition with native birds is only relative, while others are more alarming, prompting the city of Düsseldorf to reintroduce the peregrine falcon, a predator of the ring-necked parakeet.

At the heart of the ecological issues raised by the presence of these exotic birds in Europe there is an apparent opposition between invasive and indigenous species and the commitment for conservation, which seeks to preserve nature as it is. However, as Emanuele Coccia reminds us, "there is no such thing as a strictly indigenous life form.... The relationship to the territory is always a result, never a presupposition."¹ Each ecosystem is a synthesis between a territory and the life forms that settle there while others slip away. The presence of the parakeets of Düsseldorf illustrates this constant fluctuation of life that engages humans and non-humans in a common world, thus rejecting any form of binary opposition between nature and culture.

1: Emanuele Coccia, "Toutes les espèces sont constamment en train de changer le monde," *Le Nouveau Magazine Littéraire*, no. 16 (March 2019).



Käthe Kollwitz, *Mutter mit zwei Kindern*
1932–36 (1984)
Bronze, posthumous casting, Fine Art Foundry
Hermann Noack Berlin
Courtesy Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum (Berlin)

The silhouette of a naked woman, hunched over, stands out in the empty space under the large glass roof. Her body, slumped on the floor, seems particularly vulnerable to the skyscrapers of the *Formation* video behind her. The woman nests her face against two young children whom she holds tightly in her arms. With this powerful embrace, she becomes one with her offspring. She becomes a barricade against the surrounding world, as if to protect them from the immense city dominating them, the swarms of birds swooping over them, and the visitors staring at them. Having long been installed outdoors in front of the Käthe Kollwitz Museum in Berlin, this sculpture exposed to the abrasiveness of the elements speaks to a form of resilience and resistance to the effects of time.

In a letter to her daughter-in-law Otilie, Käthe Kollwitz confided that she had added a second child to the group following the birth of her granddaughters Jutta and Jödis. She planned to give her a copy, with the caption "*Die Mutter – der Mutter – von der Mutter*" (The mother—of the mother—by the mother). With these few words, the artist brings about a generational collision that allows the characters to be both daughter and mother in the making. At the time when she wrote this letter, Kollwitz had been working on this work for over twenty years without ever having exhibited it. It is no coincidence that she has returned to this work, which was cast in bronze posthumously in 1984, over and over throughout her career, as it deals with the eternal cycle of life and creation.

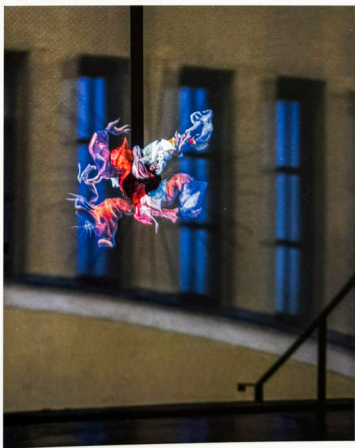


Cyprien Gaillard, *L'Ange du foyer* (Vierte Fassung)
2019

LED holographic fan, stainless steel, aluminium
Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

The three versions of Max Ernst's *The Angel of Hearth and Home* which Cyprien Gaillard draws upon in this piece were created within weeks of each other in 1937, shortly after the victory of the Spanish nationalist troops of General Franco with the support of Nazi Germany. Fascism is here represented as a monster, "a sort of ungainly beast that tramples down and destroys everything in its path," as Ernst put it. The last of these three versions—the largest and most detailed—serves as the basis for a new iteration conceived by Cyprien Gaillard. Modelled in 3D, the nightmarish creature takes shape thanks to a fan with holographic propellers. Invisible at first, it suddenly appears when the viewer faces it. Gesticulating in all directions, as if gripped by uncontrollable spasms, the monster even plunges within itself, into the black hole of its torso towards which the entire work converges.

This is a "monster" in the etymological sense of the term, from the Latin *monere*, warning, and *monstrare*, the act of showing. It reveals the drive toward death and destruction which, over the course of History, constantly reappears and, no sooner does it seem to have waned, surges forth once more.



Cyprien Gaillard, *White Vessel Study*

2021

Double exposure polaroid, mat,
aluminium and plexiglass frame

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Gladstone Gallery

Like a spaceship setting out to discover unexplored galaxies, a syringe sinks into fern leaves spiralling in space, like so many weightless fractals. It seems to point us in a direction beyond the apparent shape of things, like an invitation to dig beneath their surface in order to explore their inner life and unearth the ghost slurking there. While passing through a forest, it encounters conifers and overgrown weeds.

The images do not reveal what this syringe is injecting—it is unclear if it is poison or an antidote, daydreams or a powerful sedative. Vaccines and syringes have recently been given a new social role, and the imaginary they invoke has been renewed in a mixture of hope, fear, relief, and extreme anxiety. By avoiding any form of context, Cyprien Gaillard restores to this pluralistic object its symbolic density.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Constat d'état*
(HUMPTY, Palais de Tokyo)

2022

HD video, original soundtrack by Laraaji, 1'57"
Courtesy the artist and Laraaji

At the bottom of the spiral staircase of the Palais de Tokyo, a monitor shows video footage of *Le Défenseur du Temps*, an automaton that has sat above the Horloge district in the 3rd arrondissement of Paris since 1979. Since 2003, the clock has been stopped and has fallen into disrepair. We see it in this dormant, lethargic state as it presides over the surrounding neighbourhood. One sequence shows the employees of Prêtre et Fils, a company that specializes in the restoration of monumental clocks, preparing to dismantle it ahead of a restoration effort, done at the request of Cyprien Gaillard. This video is accompanied by a soundtrack by the ambient music composer, Laraaji. This video announces the restoration and renaissance of *Le Défenseur du Temps* one of the centrepieces of the exhibition at Lafayette Anticipations.



DUMPTY

Lafayette Anticipations

Cyprien Gaillard, *Constat d'état*
(*DUMPTY*, Lafayette Anticipations)

2022

HD video, original soundtrack by Laraaji, 1'57"
Courtesy the artist and Laraaji

As a link between the two exhibition spaces of *HUMPTY* \ *DUMPTY*, this video closing Palais de Tokyo's course, is presented again at the beginning of the stairs leading to Cyprien Gaillard's project at Lafayette Anticipations.



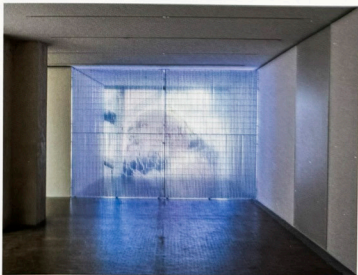
Cyprien Gaillard, *Frise 1*

2022

HD video on LED screen, 4'08"

Courtesy the artist

In anticipation of hosting the 2024 Olympic Games, Paris is going through a period of intensive restoration of its heritage resulting in a proliferation of scaffolding in the urban landscape that Cyprien Gaillard captured in his video. The metal frames punctuate the urban fabric, obstructing the view of the structures they are helping to restore. A complex tangle of poles and platforms covers monuments inherited from past centuries, such as the Grand Palais, the Eiffel Tower, the National Assembly, or the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde, for the duration of the work which aims to breathe new life into them. The constructions to be renovated and therefore preserved have been selected, while others, like *Le Défenseur du Temps*, have been left out of public restoration policies.



Jacques Monestier, *Le Défenseur du Temps*
1979

Reactivated by Cyprien Gaillard, 2022

Soundtrack composition, *Hit* by Cyprien Gaillard and Joe Williams, and *Heal* by Laraaji (total length: 60')

Brass, lead, steel, speakers, microswitches, and transducers,
Courtesy the artist, Jacques Monestier, Laraaji, Joe Williams
and ASL du Quartier de l'horloge

© Adagp, Paris, 2022

Le Défenseur du Temps, installed at the heart of the Foundation, is the central element of the Horloge district, a post-modern housing project built at the end of the 1970s in the area of the Centre Pompidou, where one of the last slums of Paris was located. Created in 1979 by Jacques Monestier, this automaton was shut down in 2003 following the withdrawal of the budget allocated to its maintenance. In 2022, Cyprien Gaillard has brought it back to life, installing it at the heart of the prototype building by Rem Koolhaas. It is activated, at regular intervals, brandishing his sword to protect the clock above him from the creatures that surround him. His battered body, covered in pigeon droppings, bears witness to the long period of neglect during which he was left to his own devices.

The time he is trying to regain is revealed through the movement of the clock's hands, which turn counter-clockwise. By giving new life to the automaton, Cyprien Gaillard is restoring a peripheral monument, neglected by public policies of heritage restoration. The renovation of another's work becomes an act of creation.

Transposed into the new context of the Lafayette Anticipations foundation, the automaton emerges from its paralysis to the sound of hit songs released around 2003, the year it stopped. These pop hits alternate with soothing atmospheric music composed by Laraaji, a multi-instrumentalist of ambient music. At the end of the exhibition, *Le Défenseur* will return to its original location in the heart of the Horloge district, a few hundred metres from the Foundation, and will once again be able to watch over the place where it was born.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Palais de la découverte vitrifié*
2022

Vitrified asbestos (Cofalit) from the Palais
de la découverte, Paris
Courtesy the artist

This deep black obsidian-like monolith in the centre of the platform is a block made of Cofalit, a synthetic material resulting from the transformation of asbestos waste, melted at very high temperatures. This process, which is unique in Europe and was developed by the French company Inertam, offers an alternative to burying this carcinogenic material. This impressive ingot was produced from asbestos debris collected by the artist in the Palais de la découverte, which is currently undergoing ambitious renovation work. By exposing them in this way, these fragments of the museum, which houses a collection of minerals, become a geological specimen of their own and the testimony of a material born from a cycle of metamorphosis.



Cyprien Gaillard, *Frise 2*

2022

Slide show and HD video on OLED screen, glass hatch, 10'14"

Courtesy the artist

An OLED screen is placed in an open trapdoor on the floor, near *Le Défenseur du Temps*. Cyprien Gaillard opens this access to the building's mechanisms to show its operation. He thus reveals the invisible devices that breathe life and movement into the architecture of the Foundation. The video brings together different sequences. On the screen are shown hundreds of portraits of Gaël Foucher, a dear friend of Gaillard who died tragically in 2013. The artist pays tribute to his friend through these fragments of memories captured on the fly and imbued with complicity. They are followed by a video of *Le Défenseur du Temps* filmed in 2022 at night in its former location in the Horloge district, where the camera seems to be examining traces of time and wear on its surface and its crevasses. A last sequence shows a worker from the Lassarat company, responsible for restoring the metal framework of the Grand Palais. The demanding task carried out in the noise and dust reminds us that the restoration of buildings is accompanied by human efforts that are themselves a source of wear and tear.



Cyprien Gaillard, *L'Irrestaurable (pour Gaël)*

1979–2022

Chromogenic print, pneumatic jack of the dragon's neck, jack of *Le Défenseur*'s right leg, pneumatic dispenser of the rooster, pigeon eggshell found in the ruins of *Le Défenseur du Temps*

Courtesy the artist

This portrait of Gaël Foucher, a close friend of Cyprien Gaillard who died in 2013 and to whom the exhibition is dedicated, is presented alongside the pieces of the *Défenseur du Temps* that could not be restored. The photograph taken by the artist in the metro in Mexico City in 2007, is a tribute to his dear friend and to a shared time that has now passed. The fragments of the mechanical body of the *Défenseur du Temps* in front of the photograph are parts that had to be replaced in order to allow the renovation of the work. The possibility of bringing back the machine and overcoming the effects of time appears here, echoing the impossibility of bringing back a man. A pigeon's eggshell found in the ruins of the *Défenseur du Temps* before its restoration evokes rebirth and the power of living cycles.

