

# Benjamin Installé

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### Credits

Photos page 2 to 25 : Sébastien Capouet

Photos page 26 to 42 : Fabrice Schneider

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## **The Herborizer (Self-Effacing Protagonist of the Anti-Conquest)**

2023

Cement and epoxy-resin sculpture,  
varnished wood and glass pedestal  
45x45x145cm

«The Herborizer» is inspired by a figure from 18th-century European travel and exploration literature identified by comparative literature PhD Mary-Louise Pratt in her text « Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation » (London: Routledge. 1992).

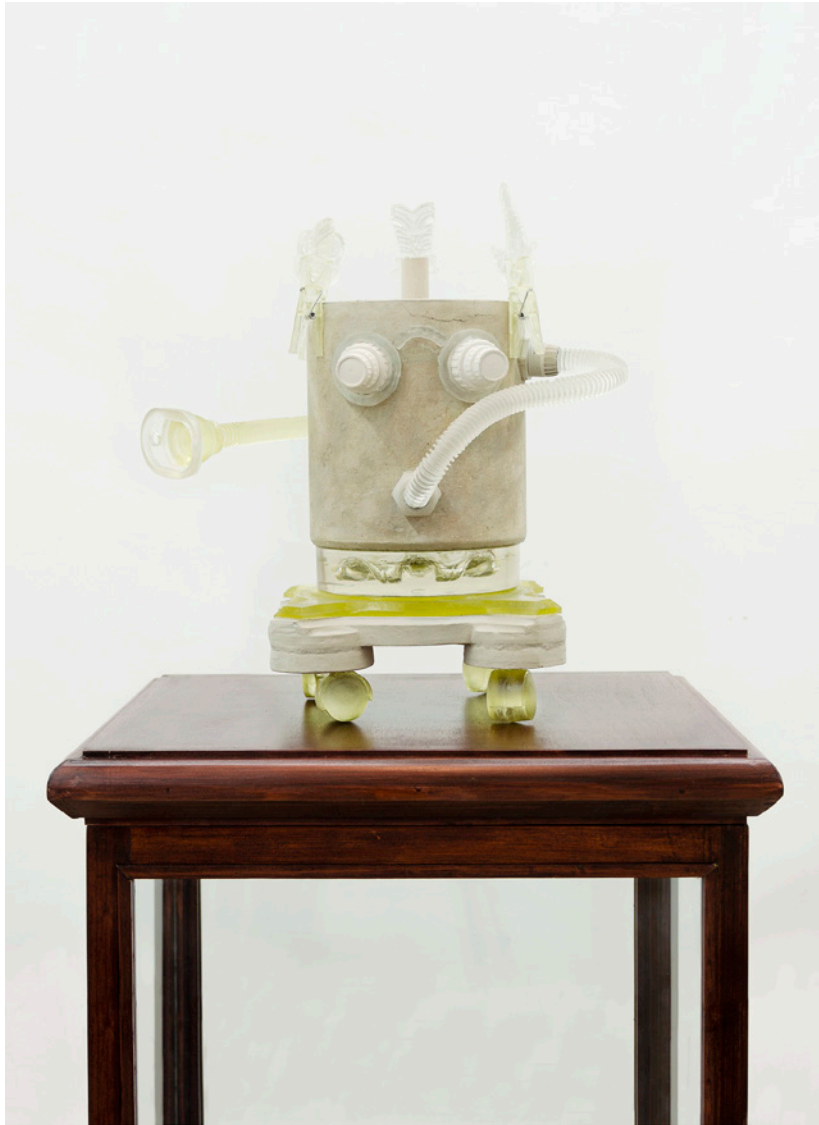
This figure, «The Herborizer», was a white, urban, educated, middle-class or aristocratic Northern European man, traveling through southern Europe, Africa and the Americas in search of natural elements that could be collected and added to the then nascent Linnaean classification system of nature.

Taking part as a man of science to the imperial or colonial expeditions of his time, he presents himself in his accounts as an innocent, passive, vulnerable being, devoid of erotic desire, a disembodied spectator, a stranger to the colonial brutality he nonetheless witnesses.

He considers everything that falls under his gaze as immediately available to him, untouched by any pre-existing historicity or political, economic, cultural or religious involvement. Under the guise of recent humanist values, he laid the foundations for the discourse justifying the «civilizing mission».

He was also the scout for European capital, sent on a mission to locate remaining unexploited natural and human resources.











## Multiple\_122023

2023

Epoxy resin, cement, LED G45 4W light bulb,  
foot switch, electric cable (10m)

22x22x31cm

Unlimited edition

The multiple 122023 consists of an unlimited edition of lamps made of epoxy resin and cement, each of which can be shown on its own or accompanied by identical copies. All the elements making up the lamp are produced from molds originally made for the sculptures «The Herborizer» and «The Romantic Traveler» in 2023.

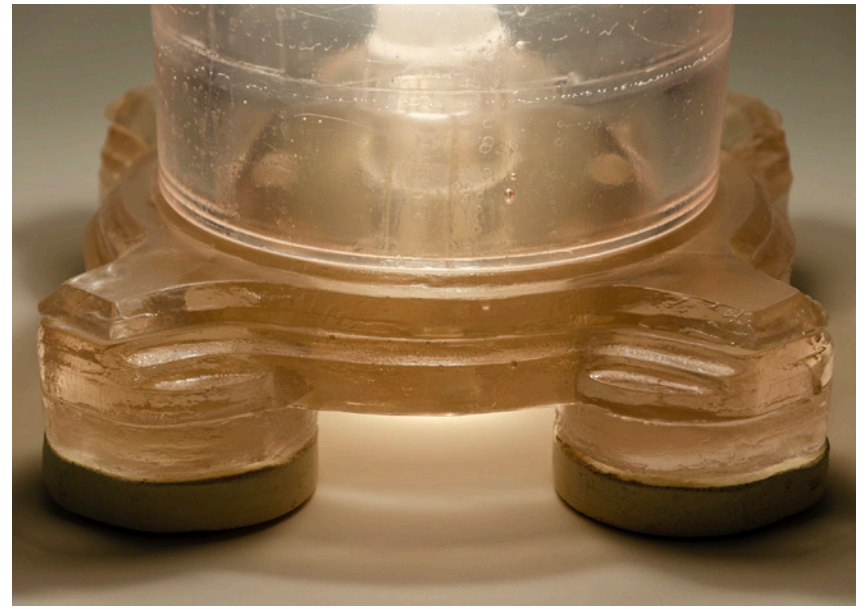
As a result, these hybrid works summon forms from my main work and revive them in objects evoking mid-century Space Age furniture.













## The Romantic Traveler (Emerging from the Contact Zone)

2023

Cement, epoxy-resin and silicon

40x40x46cm

«The Romantic Traveler» is largely inspired by the cultural and political legacy of German naturalist Alexander Von Humboldt, who traveled and wrote extensively about Central and South America in the beginning of the 19th Century.

Shortly after the time of his travels, movements for independence from Spain aroused. The newly independent countries, with their complex racial and classist social organization, had to invent how to function politically and culturally, within their new borders and in relation with European and American influence.

Humboldt's depictions of nature served on

both sides of the Atlantic as literary material to define the new American identity.

Europeans read Humboldt hoping to understand what America was, but most important, after having outruled the foreign occupants the American Creole elites also used a selection of his writings in order to define an unprecedented image of their continent. They had to invent a new national fiction in order to consolidate the freshly-independent states they were about to govern, while trying to maintain as much as they could their class privilege and domination over the vast majority of indigenous population.

Therefore, in «The Romantic Traveler», I represented this figure as a constantly rearranging cultural exchanger, situated at the intersection of divergent political, economic and cultural interests.



## Anguilas

2023

Cement sculpture and custom-made flight-case

Total dims 35x42x142cm

I made «Anguilas» a few weeks after coming across a group of fishermen at the end of a mangrove swamp, one night on the northern beach of a Caribbean island. Immersed up to their thighs and equipped with rudimentary nets and battery-powered lamps, I could at first only distinguish them out of the darkness by the white light emanating from their headlamps, directed towards the calm swell of the Sargasso Sea.

They explained to me that eels lay their eggs in the area, and that they would catch the fledgling larvae. These would then be shipped by the thousands to Asia, where they would grow to adulthood in breeding

farms only to be sold at a high price to unscrupulous distributors.

In principle, all European eels are born in the Sargasso Sea and, as larvae, are carried by the Gulf Stream current across the Atlantic Ocean to European shores. Metamorphosed into glass eels and then yellow eels, they live in rivers and ponds for three to eighteen years before transforming one last time into silver eels, crossing the ocean on their last journey to reproduce and die were they were born.

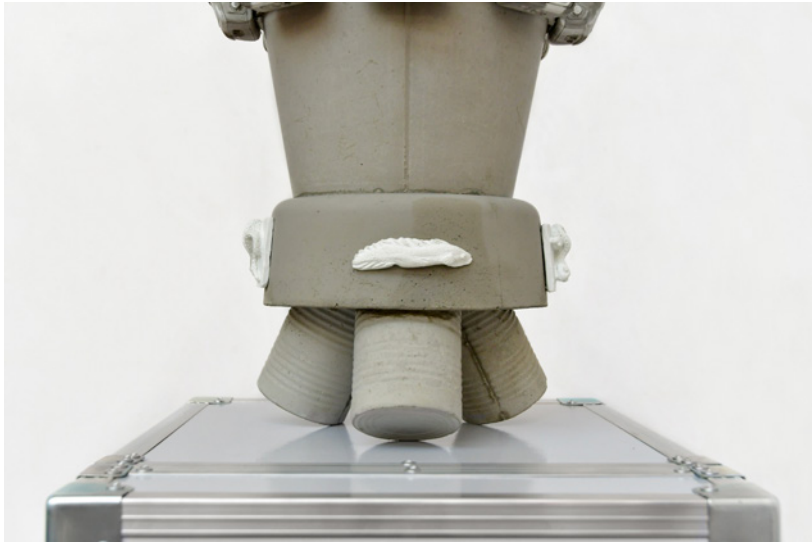
However, the eels I witnessed being netted that day will see their migratory destiny hampered by the interests of human commerce; they will supply the international black market, from the hands of men and women working clandestinely to the tables of the West.











## Spaanse Nederlanden

2023

Cement sculpture and custom-made flight-case

Total dimensions 67x47x158cm

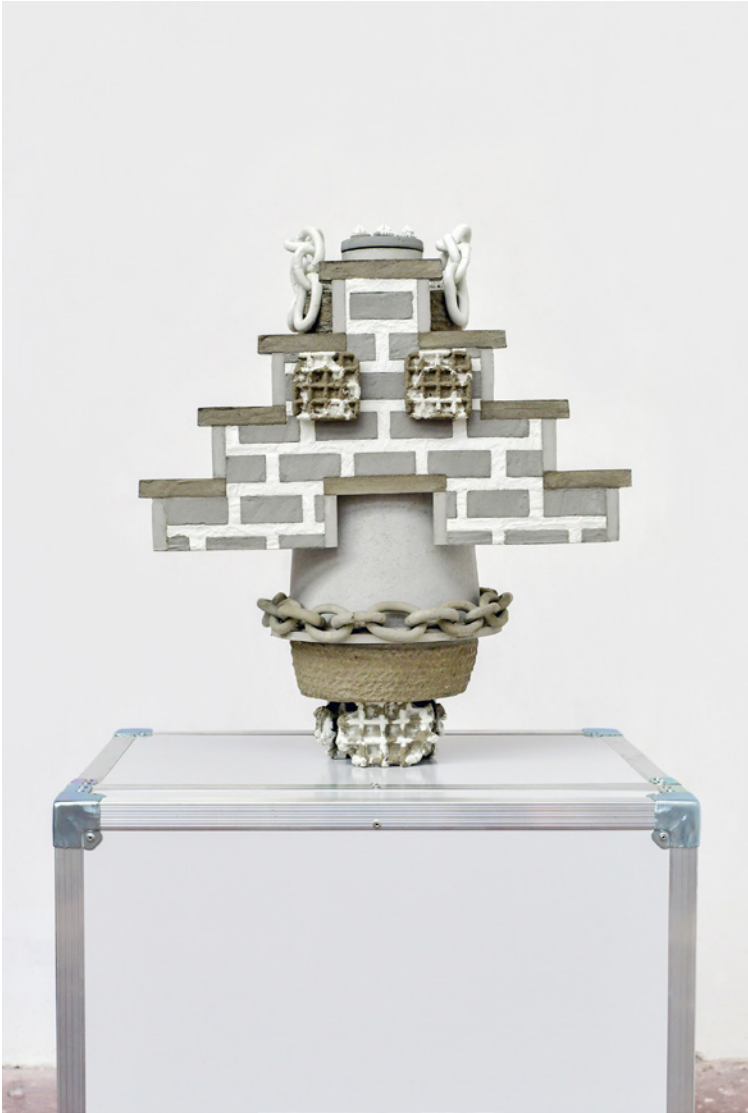
«Spaanse Nederlanden» is an artwork inspired by the braseros used by the Aztecs in religious and divinatory ceremonies before Spanish colonization.

Instead of displaying elements evoking pre-Columbian cosmogony it presents motifs from Flemish popular culture such as waffles, a stepped gabled facade or ship chains used on sea voyages between Central America and Europe.

These objects are inherited from the prosperous era of the Spanish Netherlands between the 16th and early 18th centuries and are the evidence on Flemish ground of a wealth attributable, among other

reasons, to the intense colonial exploitation of the resources of New Spain (present-day Mexico) and their redistribution in northern Europe by the Spanish Empire.

“Spaanse Nederlanden” recounts the historical event of a people who thrived on the gigantic appropriation of another’s resources; it is displayed on a custom-made flight-case for storage, transport and display. This choice of presentation underlines its status as a merchandise and its inclusion in contemporary global trade, characterized by the persistence of unequal exchanges between the post-industrialized West and its former colonies.













## Imperium

2021

Acrylic, paraffin wax and lacquer on paper mounted on 24 120x120cm wood panels

Total dimensions: 1440x240cm

Imperium is a fourteen-meter-long painting that represents a quite undefined, neither interior or exterior space which could have been all together a construction site, the building-up of an exhibition or a theatrical decor hastily deserted by its protagonists at the end of the representation due to a sudden disaster or because of general hangover.

In the image, various objects are lying around such as crowd barriers, empty beer cans, cigarettes, a jackhammer, screws, etc. It is the daily decorum of exhibition builders, an anonymous but indispensable army of workers that usually consists of artists who work on the side in order to

survive. The objects depicted are combined with elements from another register and epoch, such as Roman helmets, shields and amphorae. Through this combination, the depiction of an exhibition in demolition takes on a metaphorical dimension: the everyday scene almost becomes a historical tableau, with references to the downfall of the Roman Empire and the current feeling of defeatism and malaise in the West.

Influenced by Spinozian concept of «Imperium» pursued in an eponymous essay by philosopher and researcher Frédéric Lordon, the aim of this pictural project was to materialise in visible form hidden collective forces of passion laying out a specific societal situation, i.e an art institution under constant renovation, located in a city area daily crossed by precarious, anonymous workers.











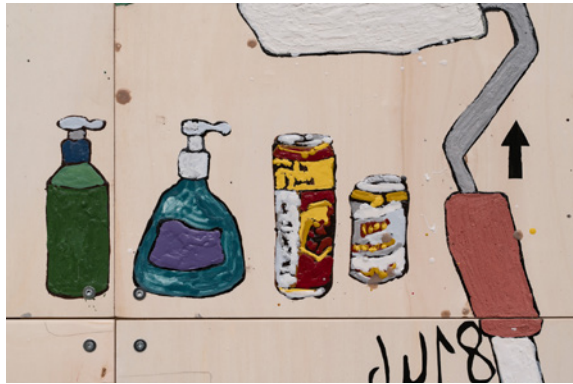












## Imperium (artist's publication)

2021

Edited by Surfaces Utiles. Design: Olivier Bertrand. Text: Julia Huet Alberola.

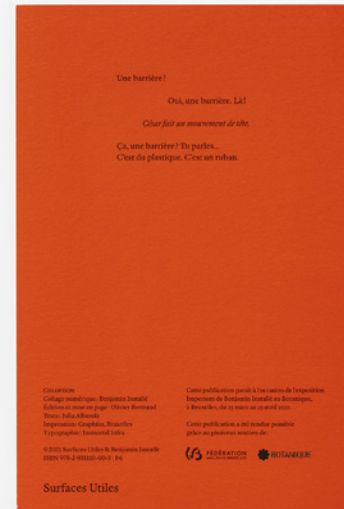
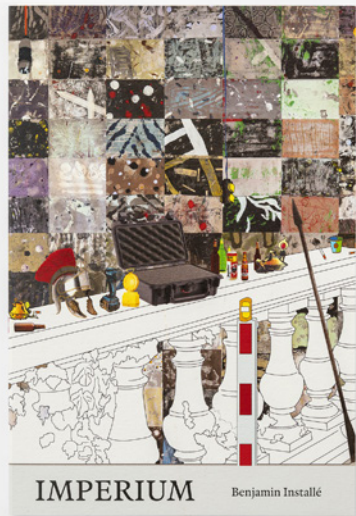
Image: Benjamin Installé. Printing: Graphius, Belgium.

19x12,5cm, 14 pages.

Imperium is an artist publication conceived as a visitor's guide for the eponymous solo exhibition that took place in Le Botanique, Brussels in 2021.

The edition is designed as a leporello. On the front it features a digital collage made when conceiving the painting "Imperium"; on the back is presented a fictional discussion between two young delivery persons happening in the collage.







<p><i>À l'invasion. C'est impossible de savoir Justifier comment on se lie.</i></p> <p><i>On se lie dans un espace sans règles (sans règles, convention qui ne sont qu'un jeu)</i></p> <p><i>Clair quand il s'agit de jouer à des jeux. Nouvelle partie la première</i></p> <p><b>Clair?</b></p> <p><i>Quand c'est... On n'y voit rien!</i> Tu n'as rien, non?</p> <p><i>Quand tu n'as rien en main?</i></p> <p><i>Non, tu n'as rien.</i></p> <p><i>Je suppose donc que... Tu n'as rien?</i> Non, rien du tout!</p> <p><i>On est? Ah, mais! C'est bon!</i> Je vais une partie? Partout?</p> <p><i>Clair et respectueux de l'identité. Il faut aussi un espace pour se lier. Nouvelle la partie en main.</i></p> <p><i>Clair quand on joue à des jeux.</i></p> <p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<p><i>On jouait souvent. Nouvelle (on regardait. Clair n'est plus de contour.</i></p> <p><i>Fait à l'ombre d'Edouard, Vieux?</i></p> <p><i>Tu n'as rien.</i> <b>ON NE PEUT PAS!</b></p> <p><b>Clair fait?</b></p> <p><i>Où, sans rien. Là?</i> <i>Clair fait un mouvement de tête.</i></p> <p><i>C'est, sans rien? Tu parles.</i> <i>Clair dit quelque chose de plus.</i></p> <p><i>Aucune idée pour nous en main. Puis il regardé à l'invasion de l'identité.</i></p> <p><i>Clair sans rien. On dit que je vais une partie? Partout?</i></p> <p><i>Tu n'as rien en main? Qu'est-ce que tu fais en main de la partie?</i></p> <p><i>Clair n'est pas en main.</i> <i>Clair n'est pas en main.</i></p> <p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<p><i>À l'invasion. Clair n'est plus de contour. Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p><i>Clair n'est pas en main. On dit que je vais une partie? Partout?</i></p> <p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p><i>Clair n'est pas en main. On dit que je vais une partie? Partout?</i></p> <p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p><i>Flair fait. Brigue, Clément, Raphaël, Zacharie, et autres à l'invasion dans le monde.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle et Clair dit regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie.</i></p> <p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p><b>Clair quel?</b></p> <p><i>Aucune idée. Mais ça peut recommencer.</i></p> <p><i>Nouvelle regardé à partir d'un autre dans la partie. Clair fait de mon mouvement de l'identité.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMPERIUM</b> Benjamin Installé</p>
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*A l'architecte. Des opinions de notes  
d'appels ensemble avec lui.*

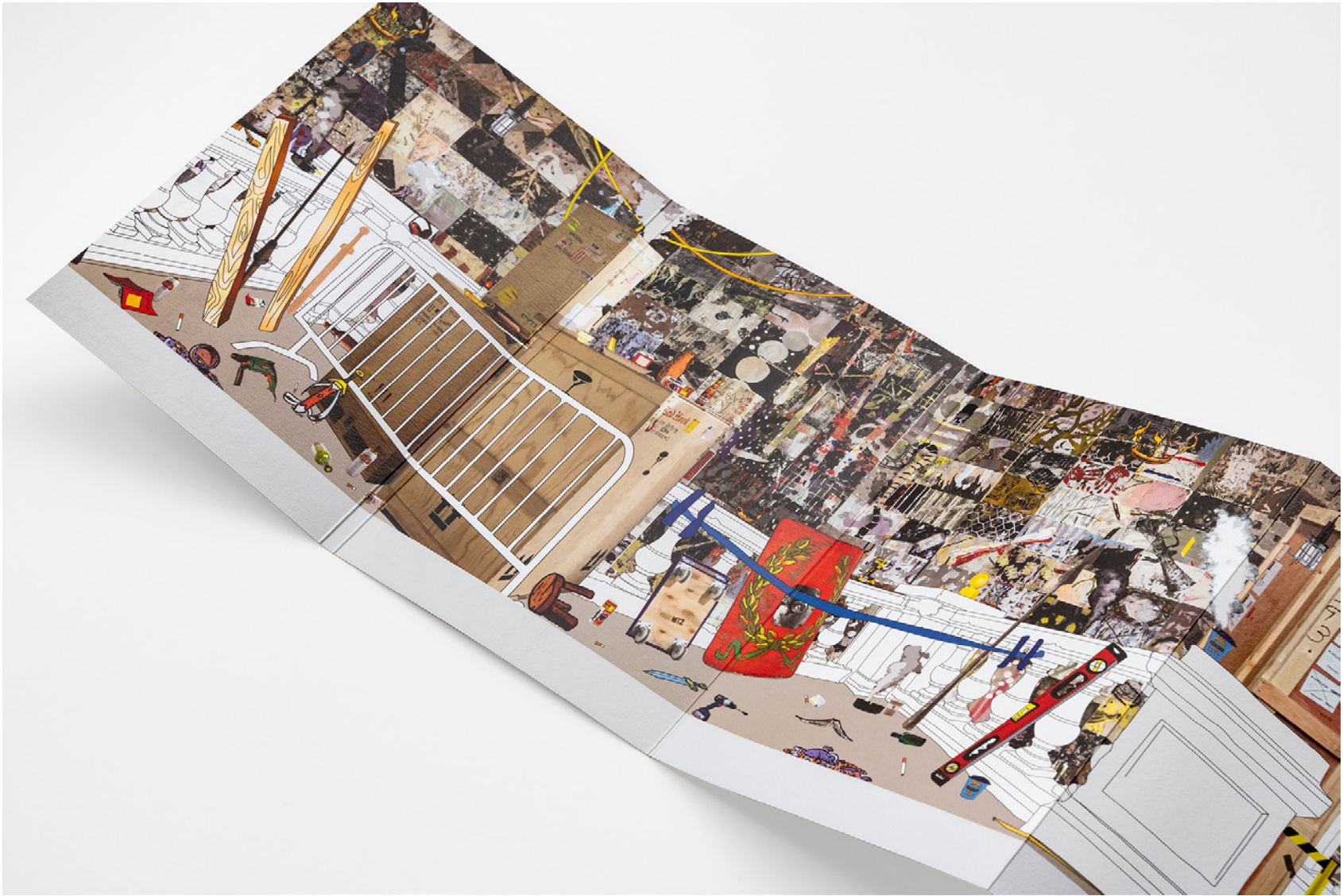
*Des livres en caisses ont rempli les  
murs, empilés par un monde pauvre  
N'aurait pas le problème.*

Ca va ?  
Ouais Et toi, tu m'vois ?  
Ouais va va... Ou n'y voit rien !  
Tu m'vois, toi ?

Non, j're voit pas.  
Le bouge mes bras. Là ? Tu m'vois ?  
Sur mon scooter !

Où va ? Ah ouais ! C'est bon !  
Re va ta ta ta ! J'arrive !  
*C'est se rapproche de Maman.*  
*Il part avec son casque sur la tête.*  
*N'aurait le pote au coude.*

*Glorie regardé au-dessus de lui.*  
C'était quoi ?  
Aucune idée.  
Mais ça peut recommencer  
*N'aurait regardé à gauche pour à droite  
dans la nuit. C'est fin les  
nouveaux mouvements d'écriture.*



## Benjamin Installé

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Benjamin Installé makes painting and sculpture using conceptual and narrative approaches. He aims to reveal through image making implicit social mechanisms that support highly asymmetric relations of domination and subordination in local contexts.

His recent ongoing sculpture project *Braseros* (2023) stem from analyzing unfair situations of global economical exchanges such as the upgrowth of a black market between the Caribbean, USA and Asia in highly endangered species of eels, or material benefits made by the Spanish Netherlands in the XVIIth Century

generated by colonial exploitation of Mexico. His latest large-scale painting *Imperium* (2021) pictured the current feeling of defeatism and malaise in Western politics and the emergence of the precariat through depiction of the daily decorum of exhibition builders with references to the downfall of the Roman Empire.

Benjamin Installé (b. 1990 in Brussels, Belgium, lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico) has presented solo exhibitions at Le Botanique, Brussels (2021), BPS22 (Charleroi, 2018), and WIELS, Brussels (2016) after his residency in 2015. Recent group exhibitions include among others *Zindering, Emergent, Veurne* (2023); *Closer, Gevaert Editions, Brussels* (2022), *Allez, allez!*, Centre WallonieBruxelles, Paris (2022), *Generation Brussels, Brussels Gallery Weekend, Brussels* (2018), *Tiger Juice, Cissiste International, Brussels* (2017).