

Shaun McDowell & India Leire
L'IMPRESSION D'ANARCHIE & SUBSTANCE EN DÉSORDRE

Invited to invade the spaces with their respective practices and unique visions, India Leire's and Shaun McDowell's interventions will mark the beginning of a dynamic program envisioned by Vie Projects, on the fringe of the Marais. Approached as two different projects blending into a common intention to engage with space and time, nature, form and content, Shaun McDowell's *L'Impression d'Anarchie* along with India Leire's *Substance en Désordre* are two solo exhibitions that invite the audience to rethink Nature and question its multiple contrasts and other contradictions. While Shaun McDowell presents on the first floor a new body of works, India Leire deploys her practice on the ground floor through a bold selection of sculpted pieces that retraces her artistic venture. In this spirit, through painting and sculpture, both artists exhibit their personal explorations of their natural surroundings, creating portals into their very own perspectives of Reality.

L'Impression d'Anarchie is the first solo show of Rome-based British artist Shaun McDowell in Paris. Lyrical yet dynamic, the paintings presented combine striking colours and contrasting movements, creating an almost baroque or even mannerist atmosphere that plays with a much more modern spirit, typical of the artist's practice. Many works are elliptical, framed in handcrafted wood, sometimes gilded in gold, silver, or platinum. Whilst echoing American Abstract Expressionism in gesture and energy, McDowell's praxis, nonetheless, resists flatness.

The works in this way appear to be at the crossroads between History of Art and Contemporary practice, illustrative of their author's composite inspiration. While emerging from the artist's original cosmos, the works carry the mark of past practices and timeless conversations. The clear impressionist and pre-impressionist influence is perceived not only through the brushstrokes and vivid colours, but also in the works' titles. In that regard, three works in the exhibition are contemporary transcriptions of Cézanne paintings, while the exhibition's title nods to the political leanings of Pissarro—an anarchist who found inspiration in the everyday. For instance, an elliptical work in the show, *Bon Voyage*, takes its name from Monet's favorite painting in the Louvre, Watteau's *Voyage to Cythera*. And as Monet, Watteau, and others seem to whisper incantations behind closed doors, McDowell paints largely with his hands, spreading and smearing pigment across handmade wooden panels.

Like Pissarro and Monet, McDowell pursues his own vision of utopia. In 2018, he left London, and the UK entirely, for the hills above Rome, where he established a studio and artist residency, surrounded by the very landscapes that offered Art History some of its most recognisable scenes, from Corot to Poussin. In this sense, nourished by the springs and s(p)oil of History, the works presented here were either painted in Rome

or in the Roman countryside, shifting between Bernini's urban grandeur, and the classical idyllic depictions of Lazio's nature. McDowell's *plein air* practice and adaptability, mixed with his clear appreciation of the past Masters generate little metaphors of Life and Nature. Each piece opens into space, where light, shadow, and form emerge through tension. His work exists between eras, grounded in tradition yet wholly of the present. This exhibition merges the contemporary with the classical; modern in language, timeless in theme.



Bon Voyage, Shaun McDowell, 2025,
Oil on wood panel, 93.5 x 64.5 cm.

A floor below, *Substance en Désordre* is a selection of works that highlights Paris-based British artist India Leire's ongoing artistic modus operandi (and vivendi). But more than a retrospective, this exhibition is a well-thought demonstration of the different tangible nuances that characterize India Leire's practice. Her work is in constant metamorphosis, almost like the natural world she takes inspiration from. The pieces on display are in this sense a material rendering of the artist's perception of Nature, between harmony and chaos, betwixt grace and roughness, spikes and curves. Not far from a very Baudelairian metaphor for life, delicate and yet strangely threatening, Leire's sculptures seem suspended in a transnatural limbo that transcends time and space while challenging our common notion of sum and substance.

For the first time, *The Circle of Life (Cybele)* and *The Circle of Life (Gaia)* are displayed together as originally conceived. Representing spring and autumn, they evoke the cyclical and inevitable passage of the seasons, from birth to decay, to rebirth. Suspended from the ceiling nearby, *The Colony*, a pair of sculpted lights in ceramic, recalls the alien spiders from H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, descending ominously upon Earth. In a compelling paradox, viewers are both captivated and unsettled: drawn in by the delicate interplay of light, and suspension, yet hesitant to get too close. This feeling of strange appeal and cautious curiosity is somehow felt through all the works on display, engulfing the general atmosphere of the show in a sense of warm disquietude.

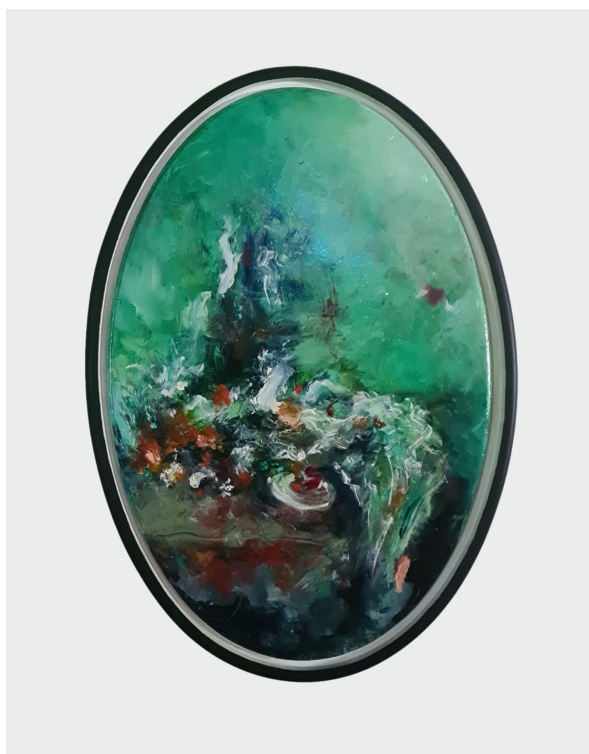
Not only do Leire's installations create an oneiric world where Nature and tales merge into a bucolic oxymoron of Humanity, they inspire profound introspection. In that respect, works such as *Symbiosis*, *Equilibrium* or *3031* recall the strange reality of human existence within the natural world, rooted in contrast and yet in osmosis, precarious and yet well-grounded. This Human existence that is also reflected in *Lotus*, as maybe the ultimate metaphor of the "Origin of Life" or as Gustave Courbet would refer as "The Origin of the World", is layered in a suspended fragility that we



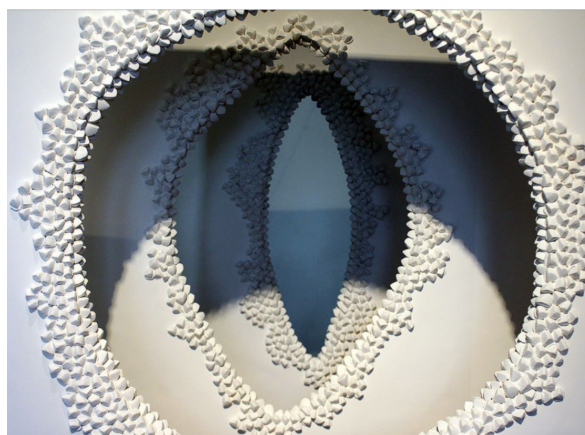
The Colony, India Leire, 2025,
Faience, electrical light, fishing thread, Variable dimensions.

tend to discard. The feminine aspect of Nature as a regenerative force is here highlighted by the artist's sensibility, but also sculptural practice, between grounded labor and poetic gesture. Almost pragmatic in the way she perceives the Human impact on the environment, Leire nevertheless lets herself dream and hope for what could be a utopian future "where we live side by side in harmony." Between a fatalistic vision of Earth's future, nourished by the rather depressing ecological conjuncture, and a genuine fascination for the organic powers that persist and regenerate continuously, India Leire creates chimerical sculptures that fluctuate between hope and spirit, fiction and reality, slowness and spontaneity.

Together and yet independently, both artists engage with Nature and Humanity in a compelling way that prompts reflection and contemplation. While Shaun McDowell energetically paints and creates landscapes and natural sceneries, with a clear understanding of his surroundings, India Leire imagines and reimagines new possibilities, playing with different materials and shapes, and allowing her sculptures to become hybrid allegories open to interpretation. Observers, actors and creators of the worlds they live in, the artists reinterpret in their own distinctive ways the physical and metaphysical presence of essence and substance. In this context, Vie Projects proposes two poetic initiatives transforming its two exhibition spaces into a dynamic platform that invites the audience to discover new perspectives on Nature through the peculiar lenses of two British artists hovering over a world they made theirs.



A Table Before Me, Shaun McDowell, 2025
Oil on wood panel, 39 x 27.5 cm.



Lotus, India Leire, 2019
Metal and plaster, 85 x 85 x 70 cm.

Exhibitions curated by Hala Matar and Yasmine Helou in collaboration with Vie Projects.

Opening Event: 07.05.2025 / 18:30 — 21:00

Dates: 07.05.2025 — 01.06.2025

Opening hours: 11:00 — 18:00

Address: Vie Projects

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For more information and high res images please email hello@vieprojects.com