

Le cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon.

[The Cyclops Had Only One Eye, But It Was The Right One.]

With artworks by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ulla von Brandenburg, Alfred Courmes, Sylvie Fanchon, Dora García, Shilpa Gupta, Sharon Hayes, Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza, Matthieu Saladin, and Marie Velardi, from the Frac Franche-Comté Collection.

Le vide en main

[Emptiness in Hand]

A solo exhibition from Silvana Mc Nulty

27-09-2025 → 04-01-2026

Le 19

2026 begins at Le 19, Crac with two exhibitions: on the middle floor, **Le vide en main** [Emptiness in Hand], a solo exhibition by Silvana McNulty; and on the first floor, **Le Cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon** [The Cyclops Had Only One Eye, but It Was the Right One], a group exhibition drawn from the collection of FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon, born out of the fruitful exchanges between Le 19 and its partner institution.

Each, in its own way, addresses language. The exhibitions indeed present practices with singular voices that contribute to the necessary creation of narratives bearing witness to our modes of existence, as well as to their future perspectives.

Le vide en main

A solo exhibition from Silvana Mc Nulty.

“Something bright, then holes is how a girl, newly-sighted, once described a hand.”

Le vide en main [Emptiness in Hand] sums up Silvana Mc Nulty's artistic practice in a few words. She continuously generates hybrid, flexible, and unstable entities based on the principles of assembling and repurposing objects combined with or by textiles.

The hand is that of the artist, who moves around with her tools, her ball of yarn, and her crochet hook every day, working in the places she passes through with continuous freedom.

The void is that which appears in the knots of the stitches, the perforations of the objects, and the gaps, in the minds of those who look to solve certain enigmas deliberately posed by the artworks. They are created, in fact, from the oxymorons and paradoxes that make up our world. Whether it is a subversive alliance of objects and materials that are a priori incompatible or the hesitant appropriation of space, Mc Nulty's sculptures explore the areas of friction between rigidity and flexibility, interior and exterior, fragility and resistance, transparency and opacity, visible and invisible, or perhaps even, useful and beautiful.



ÉQUERRE, COQUILLAGE, TRANCHES DE COQUILLAGES CROCHETÉS
BLEU, 30 X 30 CM, 2023
COURTESY DE L'ARTISTE ET GALERIE FLORENCE LOEWY © ADAGR,
PARIS, 2026 - CRÉDIT PHOTO : © AURÉLIE MOLE

1-Maggie Nelson, *Quelque chose de brillant avec des trous* [Something Bright, Then Holes], Éditions du Sous-Sol, 2024.



“Women’s lives intertwine with the fabric of life.”²

In 1598, Jacques Foillet, a printer from Montbéliard, published a *typographical curiosity*³ that would become a reference for needlework⁴ in France. Entitled *Nouveaux pourtraicts de point coupé et dantelles* [New portraits of cutwork and lace], it was addressed to “ladies and young ladies” and contained patterns for cutwork lace. The patterns are preceded by a poem consisting of six quatrains, which is an exhortation to young girls praising the dedication to work. Needlework has, in fact, been part of the history of women’s education in Western high society⁵, as an expression of their virtue and femininity. As in other needlework manuals, Frédéric de Vinciolo’s book, printed by Foillet places warnings to readers under the aegis of ancient figures (here Arachne and Minerva) to remind them of the sacred nature and long history of these practices.

With a touch of humor, *Le vide en main* [Emptiness in Hand] revisits this tradition of mythological references and links Silvana Mc Nulty’s artistic practice to that of her peers through the figure of Odysseus’ wife, Penelope. The film *Pénélopiade* (2022) by video artist Callisto Mc Nulty shows Silvana at work. Filming took place while she had been working on a monumental canvas for several months. This repetitive labor, which seems almost endless, recalls Penelope weaving Laertes’ shroud. The artist’s precise movements and the progress of her creation are accompanied in the film by a reading of a work by Margaret Atwood, which recounts the Odyssey from the perspective of Penelope and her twelve maids. The narrative alternates between the protagonist’s inner monologue and the intervention of the chorus of maids in the ancient style. The text brings together several sources freely interpreted by Atwood, giving a new voice to the mythological character. For Penelope’s weaving subverts the supposed virtue of the gesture by transforming it into a ruse and an act of resistance in the face of the constraints of femininity, confirming “needlework being both a symbol of oppression and a tool of liberation in women’s lives.”⁶

“On the Uses of Use”⁷

Aware that this genealogy will almost always be invoked when discussing her work, Silvana Mc Nulty mentions Anni Albers (1899–1994) as one of the artists whose thinking on weaving has particularly influenced her. The German artist was one of the famous students of the Bauhaus textile workshop. As the first workshop dedicated to this discipline in an art school in Europe, it was also exclusively female and the only production workshop that existed throughout the school’s existence, from its creation in 1919 in Weimar to its second incarnation until 1933 in Berlin. Anni Albers was trained there like all female artists of the time, by default and/or by necessity. However, she contributed to the reevaluation of these practices, then considered traditional, thanks to her ability to transcend the notions of art, architecture, craftsmanship, and industrial design. This relationship between manufacturing and thought allowed her to create a space of freedom within a restrictive framework. Albers considered that her practice was mainly “work with materials.”⁸

We find this same approach in Silvana Mc Nulty, who trained in jewelry making before pursuing a degree in visual arts. Her work is based on a practice of hybridization of media, objects, and materials, induced by a certain cooperation with/ or listening to the enigmatic voices of the latter. When the artist uses shells, protractors, spoons, and paper clips in her sculptures, cooperation takes the form of misuse, of subversion. Like an oracle, it reveals other qualities and properties of things –as “you must use something to keep it alive”⁹– by playing on the possibilities generated by the oblique strategies¹⁰ intrinsic to the assemblages.

The repetition of forms, gestures, and choices of materials and objects generates assemblages that carry their own narrative but which, when considered as a corpus, can be understood as the words that make up the lexicon of a foreign language. The works thus constitute a series of plots that can be unfolded or refolded, interweaving everyday materials, gestures, and fragmented narratives that may deal with another space-time.

2–Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*, Pavillons Poche, Robert Laffont, 2022.

3–Expression taken from Jean-Marc Debard’s offprint published in 1996, accompanying a reprint of the edition of the work as laid out and printed in Montbéliard by Foillet in 1598.

4–That is to say, sewing, embroidery, lace-making, tapestry, and knitting.

5–See the book by art historian Rozsika Parker published in 1984, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, which covers the history of embroidery from the Middle Ages to the end of the 20th century. She describes the evolution of the status of this technique,

initially a skill revered and practiced by both men and women, governed by a guild, before becoming an amateur pastime for wealthy women.

She also highlights examples of subversive uses of embroidery in order to trace a Western history of embroidery and its deep connections with the definition of femininity.

6–Needlework being both symbol of oppression and tool of liberation in women’s lives” Joseph McBrinn, *Queering the Subversive Stitch* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

7–Sara Ahmed, *Vandalisme Queer* [Queer Vandalism], Éditions Burn ~ Août, 2024

8–Anni Albers, *En tissant, en criant* [On weaving], Flammarion, 2021.

9–Sara Ahmed. Op. Cit.

“Renting time on the metaphysical void Says Space”¹¹.”

Silvana Mc Nulty also claims to create, through hybridity¹², an opening that invites the traces or language of a people that does not yet exist¹³, sensitive to a world where “lines are everywhere”¹⁴. This language made up of lines, patterns, and movements constitutes a unique visual writing that, in the context of an exhibition, adapts to each space thanks to the flexibility of the material. Able to be deployed vertically or horizontally, the works are constantly reconfigured in the present, leaving behind the “place of uncertainty”¹⁵ of their production. His works are conceived in close dialogue with the exhibition space, revealing its scale, its nooks and crannies, and perhaps even its secrets.

Doubt, uncertainty, and, to return to the subject, emptiness, generate a meditative and mysterious dimension in Mc Nulty’s practice. The slow, repetitive, and silent act of creation is expressed through the objects in their intrinsic

harmony, despite the occasional dissonance of the assemblages. This is another paradox, because the works are as much a “wordless and silent experience”¹⁶ as they are an artistic proposition filled with narratives and the potential sounds of the objects that compose them, something that could be described as «chaos can be structured as non-chaos”¹⁷.”

This paradox is also embodied in the artist’s hand, which oscillates between mastery and abandonment. The stitches are also the potential sutures of a repair. Collecting, assembling, crocheting, perforating, sculpting: these are all ways of inhabiting the world differently, of thwarting its oppressive structures, of creating island-spaces¹⁸ or fetishes to take refuge in, and of proposing other ways of circulating, communicating, or sometimes even escaping from it.

“For someone hooked up to Thou, The world may have seemed a kind of half-finished sentence.”¹⁹”

Curator of the exhibition : Adeline Lépine

Silvana Mc Nulty’s exhibition was made possible thanks to the invaluable support of Mille Formes, Clermont-Ferrand, as well as Callisto Mc Nulty and Max Gagnaire.

Silvana Mc Nulty extends special thanks to Adeline Lépine and the team at Le 19, Crac.

Le 19, Crac also thanks the Société d’Émulation du Pays de Montbéliard and the Musée de la Paysannerie de Valentigney.

11-Hesse, *Boîtes [Boxes]*, Catalogue d’exposition, Paris, ARC 2, Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris ; Rennes, Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1976.

12- See interview with the artist starting on page 26

13- According to Gilles Deleuze, in *Qu’est-ce que l’acte de création ?* [What is the Creative Act?], lecture at the FEMIS Foundation, May 17, 1987. « There is no work of art that does not appeal to a people that does not yet exist.»

14-Tim Ingold, *Une brève histoire des lignes* [Lines : A brief history], Zones Sensibles, 2011-2013.

15-Painter Pierrette Bloch is cited as a reference by Silvana Mc Nulty. Without ever joining an artistic movement, Bloch explored the possibilities offered by minimalist painting throughout her career. The repetition of gestures (dots, lines, strokes) led her, starting in 1993, to create paintings on long horizontal strips of paper. These consist of dots and brushstrokes juxtaposed in a rhythmic manner, which the artist describes as “a place of uncertainty” into which the viewer is invited to drift.

16- Joan Simon, « *Perfection Is in the Mind: An Interview with Agnes Martin* », Art in America, May 1996, p. 87

17- Quote from artist Eva Hesse featured in « Fling, Dribble and Drip » in LIFE Magazine, February 1970, p. 66.

18- Reference to the work *Les Îles* [The Islands] presented in the exhibition and created by Silvana Mc Nulty in 2024 for Mille Formes in Clermont-Ferrand. The crocheted piece is composed of four islands combining different colors and materials, in reference to painting or clothing. An interactive work, it is populated by animals and characters and constitutes a gentle and welcoming territory.

19- «For someone hooked up to Thou, The world may have seemed a kind of half-finished sentence.» Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony & God*, A New directions book 808, 1995.

Silvana Mc Nulty (born in 1995) lives and works in Paris.

She graduated with an AFEDAP Jewelry degree in Paris before continuing her studies at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam) and HEAR (Strasbourg).

She has exhibited at In Extenso (Clermont-Ferrand), the Manufacture de Roubaix, the Creux de l’Enfer (Thiers), Treize (Paris), the Salon de Montrouge, the Crédac (Ivry-sur-Seine), and Brey-et-Maison-du-Bois for the Biennale Art en Chapelles (Jura). She is represented by the Florence Loewy Gallery in Paris.

Silvana Mc Nulty

Adeline Lépine: During our second meeting in Paris in December 2024, we visited the Surrealism exhibition at the Centre Pompidou together. On that occasion, we paused for a long time in front of Dora Maar's photograph *Hand-Shell* (1934). You then mentioned that this work had accompanied you for a long time in a distant mental landscape, and we discussed the presence of the shell in your own work. In Dora Maar's piece, it is a conch from which a "perfect" hand emerges. The staging evokes mythology, dreams, the expression of the unconscious, and perhaps seduction. This photomontage shares with your work a certain incongruity in the encounter between heterogeneous elements.

You also later told me that you collect shells from fishmongers, and that for you they embody the capture of time.

Could you tell us about your relationship with shells and their recurrent presence in your work? Perhaps mentioning the shells could also allow us to discuss the repetition of certain objects in general, and how this repertoire of forms generates a new visual language.

Silvana Mc Nulty: This work by Dora Maar deeply affected me. Its staging, at once beautiful and unsettling, exudes a disturbing strangeness. It creates a tension between fascination and unease, attraction and anxiety. To me, this piece evokes birth and death. The hand seems to emerge from the shell, as if it has just been born or, on the contrary, is about to withdraw.

Shells occupy a particular place in my work. For me, they are both natural and symbolic forms, organic structures in which emptiness becomes architecture. They contain the memory of a vanished body while preserving traces of life, embodying the tension between presence and absence, fullness and emptiness, which I explore throughout my practice.

The starting point of this series of works around shells came from a study of an eggshell. I patiently pierced it across its surface until it eventually cracked and collapsed. This gesture explored the structural limits of the material—its resistance, fragility, and collapse—but also the cycles of life: birth, transformation, disappearance. The final collapse was not a failure, but a revelation.

This first, ephemeral experiment inspired me to continue exploring the shell, the interplay of fullness and emptiness, this time using a more resilient structure: the scallop shell. I collect them generously, in large quantities, from fishmongers. I enjoy working under these conditions, with lots or series of objects that I try, in a way, to exhaust. This introduces a form of economy of means and a repetitive dimension that echoes my crochet gestures. Each shell is similar yet unique. Shells capture time: their growth is recorded in the material itself, through layering and sedimentation.

They become, for me, natural archives of time, living sculptures in which emptiness is structured and densified.

More broadly, shells belong to a repertoire of recurring objects I select: measuring tools, scissors, beads, sink stoppers, school supplies... Modest, functional objects chosen for their shapes and associations. By assembling and transforming them, they generate a visual language of resonance and variation.

This object repertoire allows me to explore hybridization: between natural and artificial, precious and ordinary, soft and hard. Each work then becomes an attempt to invent a new form arising from the encounter of opposing worlds, a way to let a sensitive language emerge, written through emptiness, gesture, and repetition.

Within the repetition of the same gesture lies a space of freedom. Randomness arises in the interval between constraint and variability. "Because form is constraining, the idea bursts forth more intensely!" wrote Baudelaire. It is in this tension between rigor and the unforeseen that my research is rooted.

AL: In the titles you choose for your solo exhibitions, there is a whole vocabulary related to space, movement, and oxymoron: *Les îles, Forces contraires, Déborder de ses bords, Lier et laisser filer*. For this new exhibition, you chose *Le vide en main*, which still evokes a space, even though it is empty or uninhabited. This emptiness may refer to the numerous perforations found in the mechanics of your works or to the silences that accompany their perception (for there to be language, there must perhaps also be silence).

These titles also seem to suggest, each time, a discreet, loose structure, yet still present. The exhibition as a fluid container, a macrocosm to accommodate your microcosms.

Could you tell us a little about these structures and, more generally, your relationship to space?

SMN: The titles I choose — *Les îles, Déborder de ses bords, Forces Contraires, Lier et laisser filer, Le vide en main* — express this desire for movement: they evoke opposing forces, bonds that form and undo themselves, forms that escape fixity.

In the studio, each piece is born with a certain autonomy. I often work on them one by one, without projecting forward, without anticipating what comes next. What matters to me is being fully present, welcoming what arises: the object, its transformation, its metamorphosis. I enjoy surprise, displacement, not knowing in advance where the gesture will lead me.

Marguerite Duras said that she wrote to discover what she would write if she wrote; this phrase speaks to me deeply because it reflects the attentive, exploratory relationship I maintain with the material.

Then comes a second phase, that of stepping back: a pause in the flow of creation, where the possibility of a space to inhabit and share is revealed. I like when the pieces move beyond their initial autonomy to become interdependent, responding to each other and generating new narratives through their encounters.

During an exhibition, I try to attune myself to the space, to create circulation, passages, and breathing between the works. Textile pieces are particularly malleable: they fold, twist, stretch. They adapt to the space, merge with it, become part of it.

Emptiness in Hand]

I give them their shape by playing with the hanging: for example, in the chapel at Brey-et-Maison-du-Bois, they unfolded as columns, adopting an architectural presence. My relationship to space is therefore a dialogue and a listening: it is not about constructing a frame, but about allowing correspondences to emerge, welcoming what forms between the works.

Depending on the location, the pieces can be installed vertically or horizontally. I like to play with these two orientations, as they engage different relationships with the body and with space.

Horizontally, the works create a more intimate proximity with the viewer; they invite another type of gaze, more inward, almost tactile. It is also in this position that the textile finds its form without constraint, its own free form. The question of gravity is indeed intrinsic to this material: it shapes the fall, the flexibility, the weight of the fabric. I often conceive these installations in relation to the furniture that supports them, custom structures designed to sustain and extend the work.

AL: For this exhibition, you also chose to present the film *Pénélopeïade*, 2022, by your sister, the filmmaker Callisto Mc Nulty. In this film, you are at work creating a huge canvas. You had been dedicating several months to this project at the time of shooting, and your loved ones then nicknamed you Penelope, in reference to the character in Homer's *Odyssey*. The images are accompanied by the reading of a short story by Margaret Atwood, which tells the story from the perspective of Penelope and her twelve maidservants.

At 19, the film is projected alongside a carpet you wove for *Mille Formes*, which is a work that the public can sit on but also activate. Could you tell us about the presence of these two works in the exhibition *Le vide en main*, which, I believe, paradoxically convey something of fullness in your work?

BMN: The film *Pénélopeïade* and the carpet presented in *Le vide en main* converse with each other, but also with the rest of my work. Both speak of gesture, time, and matter in the process of being made.

The film, directed by Callisto, shows me at work crocheting a large canvas. It records the time of creation, a time that is often invisible. We see the repetition of gestures, the slow construction of the material, stitch by stitch. Crocheting has something mathematical: each gesture produces a unit.

In this film, one literally enters the material. The image oscillates between micro and macro: at times, it is unclear whether we are looking at a detail or an expanse, a fragment or a landscape. This shift in scale interests me greatly, as it reflects how my pieces are built, between intimate gesture and the deployed form.

One can also perceive hesitations, mistakes, moments when the material resists or breaks. These accidents, these doubts are integral to the work. They bear witness to the constant dialogue between hand and material, to a practice that progresses without certainty, in a delicate balance between control and letting go.

The figure of Penelope has always moved me: this character weaves and unweaves her work in a suspended temporality, both in waiting and in action. This approach seems deeply connected to my practice, where the thread becomes a way to inhabit time, to experience it physically. Each stitch, each loop becomes a fragment of duration. The film makes visible this silent, meditative temporality, where fullness emerges from the time accumulated in the hand.

The carpet extends this logic but opens it to the viewer. It is a work that can be touched, appropriated, activated. It introduces physical proximity, a form of intimacy and sensory anchoring within the exhibition space. Where the film shows the inner gesture, the carpet engages the visitor's body, inviting a shared experience.

The film and the carpet thus respond to each other as two ways of inhabiting the world: one introspective and silent, focused on the act of creation and doubt; the other open and collective, focused on relation and touch. Together, they embody the tension between withdrawal and presence that runs throughout my artistic practice.

AL: We have discussed the paradox and oxymoron present at every stage of your practice—in the choice of materials, in the concepts you explore (fullness and emptiness, order and chaos, the common and the precious), in the titles, and in the viewer’s perception. It seems to me that this might also express your own trajectory, shaped both by craftsmanship and the visual arts. I wonder, then, if it might be useful to consider more closely how you link these paradoxical notions, these oxymorons, to make them into hybrid propositions. Could you elaborate on your approach to hybridization that you mentioned earlier?

SMN: Connecting heterogeneous elements is about creating a link between things that don’t seem meant to go together. From this encounter arises tension and strangeness, but also openness. This approach invites the viewer to reconsider how they see: they rediscover familiar objects from another perspective, perceiving their form, singularity, and expressive potential. Diversity thus becomes a source of creation: it breaks habits and awakens the imagination.

I am fascinated by the figure of the oxymoron: it unites two elements that oppose each other, to create a connection where there seemed to be a fracture. What interests me is precisely this subtle stitching between two words, two materials, two contradictory ideas. In this sense, the oxymoron is a metaphor for what I do: creating unexpected relationships, making opposites coexist, giving form to improbable alliances.

Hybridization did not arise as a conscious intention but as a necessity. From these encounters emerge frictions, new combinations, and unstable balances.

I think with my hands, in a slow temporality where knowledge is built through sensory experience. The manual gesture produces its own intelligence: through repetition and experimentation, it simultaneously generates form and meaning. This empirical approach anchors me in a direct and intuitive relationship with the material.

The repetition of gestures, forms, and materials creates a network of signs, tensions, and correspondences that unfolds from one work to another. In this space, material becomes language: objects, gestures, and materials dialogue, respond, and embody forms of sensitive thinking.

Through these explorations, the very status of objects is questioned: are they decorative, utilitarian, portable? Their place in the artistic field remains deliberately undefined, and it is precisely this ambiguity and porous boundary that interests me.

AL: Precisely because you mention the ambiguity of objects, I am reminded of your own trajectory, which is itself porous and sensitive. You were first trained in jewelry and design, and beyond the fact that this is evident in the technical mastery of your works, I also feel that it has contributed to the way you conceive exhibitions and production. You have already spoken about your relationship to space, but I would also like to discuss your relationship to the studio, because in your case it is different from that experienced by other visual artists producing objects. In other words, what role do the notions of lightness and autonomy play in your way of working?

SMN: To create, I only need a crochet hook and a ball of yarn—tools that fit in one hand, in a bag. There is great freedom and a form of independence in this practice that I cherish: I can work anywhere—at a café, on the train, at friends’ houses, at home, or in the studio. I don’t depend on a fixed space or expensive, cumbersome equipment. It is a process that moves slowly, but never stops, and flows through my daily life.

This mobility, this material lightness, is deeply linked to the very nature of textiles: their suppleness, their capacity to fold, unfold, and adapt. Once completed, the pieces can be stored in boxes and transported easily. They do not impose themselves through monumentality, but through their potential for transformation. Each presentation is an opportunity for a new arrangement and a rediscovery.

In my current studio, where space is limited, this quality is precious. The pieces often remain folded, stored, in waiting. It is during exhibitions that they come to life and take on their full dimension. I love these reunions in a completely different context. It is a moment of revelation.



ULLA VON BRANDENBURG, LE MILIEU EST BLEU, 2020, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ
© ADAGR, PARIS, CRÉDIT PHOTO : DR

Le cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon.

With artworks by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ulla von Brandenburg, Alfred Courmes, Sylvie Fanchon, Dora García, Shilpa Gupta, Sharon Hayes, Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza, Matthieu Saladin, and Marie Velardi, from the Frac Franche-Comté collection.

**«Only when we are,
No more walking.
Straight to the bottom.
The future is my long arm.»**

The exhibition presented at le 19, Crac brings together artworks from the Frac Franche-Comté collection. Its title is borrowed from an enigmatic painting by Alfred Courmes from 1960, *Ave Maria, le Cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon* [Ave Maria, The Cyclops Had Only One Eye, But It Was The Right One], an artwork that has been in the collection since 1986.

This painting, by an artist once associated with surrealism, depicts a clergyman observing a young girl whose figure is borrowed from an enamel plaque made by the Japy company for Meunier chocolate. Presented in Montbéliard in 2013 at the Château des ducs de Wurtemberg museum, the work allowed the institution to echo the local industrial heritage and its links with religion. This is not the case in this actual exhibition, which involves the Frac collection to present various artists' perspectives on our world.

Since 2006, the Frac Franche-Comté has been enriching its collection around the vast subject of time and its corollaries: duration, movement, space, entropy, memory, etc. It preserves visual, sound, performative, and immaterial artworks and has opened up to transdisciplinary practices, reflecting artists who are constantly exploring new artistic territories.

The selection of artworks to design the exhibition at le 19, Crac brings together ten artists from all backgrounds who seek to recount the turmoil of our world and imagine its future through language thanks to its narrative and political dimensions. These unique voices express themselves through sculpture, installation, film, painting, and sound works, recounting historical events, testimonies of trauma in hostile environments, anecdotes, fiction, and visionary perspectives.

Ave Maria, le Cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon [Ave Maria, The Cyclops Had Only One Eye But It Was The Right One] thus questions the artists' view of our society and our environment, as well as their insight and vigilance. It also implicitly questions the way in which a public collection in turn becomes the narrative of our time and our world when it tells its story through the artworks that compose it and is shown in a context conducive to reflection and debate.

Co-curators of the exhibition :
Adeline Lépine and Sylvie Zavatta

1-Ulla von Brandenburg, *Le milieu est bleu* [The environment is blue], 2020. Extract from the subtitles of the French version of the artist's film presented in the exhibition.

Focus on the exhibition's artworks.

Unless otherwise stated, the entries were written by Sylvie Zavatta,
Director of Frac Franche-Comté.



SYLVIE FANCHON, VOICIUNEXEMPLE..., 2018, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ © ADAGR, PARIS, CRÉDIT PHOTO : BLAISE ADILON

 ENTRANCE, 19, CRAC

Sylvie Fanchon

(1973-2023)

« For a long time, Sylvie Fanchon produced paintings according to a strict protocol: economy of means, bichromy, flatness, extreme schematization, and a flat, even application of paint aiming at expressive neutrality. She depicted motifs drawn from the concrete world (diagrams, plans, comics, cartoons, etc.), which she transformed into quasi-abstract figures.

In 2014, with her *Tableaux scotch* series, she experimented with a new technique by applying an initial color to the canvas, onto which she placed adhesive strips before covering the entire surface with a second color. Once the tape was removed, the motifs appeared in reserve, establishing a disturbing relationship between form and ground. Letters, which had previously appeared only sporadically, then became increasingly present in Sylvie Fanchon's work. »

BONJOURCOMMENCONS..., 2018

[HELLOLETSSTART...]

Painting

Acrylic on canvas

H 100.3 × W 160.2 × D 4 cm

« In 2018, during an exhibition at Frac Franche-Comté, Sylvie Fanchon presented a series of paintings bringing together words borrowed from our everyday environment. These are words spoken by the synthetic voice of 'Cortana' on our computers, which its developer, Microsoft, describes as a 'new digital personal assistant [...] designed to help you do more. »

But Cortana, like its alter ego Siri, is also an intruder that invades our private space. Transcribed by Sylvie Fanchon using basic, neutral signage lettering purchased in supermarkets, and « redacted » to make them difficult to read, Cortana's sentences are reduced to simple forms, to simple codes comparable to plans or diagrams, while humorously echoing the language of conceptual art. Through a paradoxical reversal, Cortana's words, by entering the artistic register, resonate with sensibility and thought.



ALFRED COURMES, AVE MARIA, LE CYCLOPE N'AVAIT QU'UN ŒIL MAIS C'ÉTAIT LE BON, 1960, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ
© ADAGR, PARIS, CRÉDIT PHOTO : BLAISE ADILON

Alfred COURMES

(1898–1993)

Alfred Courmes was a French painter whose work is most often described as unclassifiable. He lived through the 20th century and the artistic currents and movements that shaped it. Irreverent and iconoclastic, he engaged with movements ranging from Surrealism to Pop Art, Neo-Cubism, and Post-Impressionism. Known for his subversion of mythological and religious representations, his sometimes dark humor, and his appropriation of advertising imagery, Courmes's painting is also considered refined and erudite, skillfully drawing on both contemporary sources and classical references from Flemish and Italian painting. This singular and multifaceted approach also reflects a posture as a painter of social history. Courmes was notably engaged alongside artists such as Fernand Léger in the association Travail et culture. AL

Ave Maria, Le cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon, 1960
[Ave Maria, The cyclops had only one eye but it was the good one]
Oil on canvas mounted on wood
H 120 x W 151 x D 6 cm

Ave Maria, le Cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon [Ave Maria, The cyclops had only one eye but it was the good one] is an enigmatic painting by Alfred Courmes, inspired by a news story. In the foreground, a clergyman observes a little girl drawing the words "AVE MARIA" on the wall.

Above her, a small alcove flanked by openwork columns houses a statue of the Virgin. The artist's note, "Le cyclope n'avait qu'un œil mais c'était le bon, pensait l'Abbé X, curé à Z dans le Jura," appears on the left side of the composition*. "Two chairs intended for confession and a column with a sculpted capital complete the scene." The figure of the little girl is diverted from its commercial origin and borrowed from an enamel plaque produced by the Japy company for Meunier chocolate. As is often the case in Courmes's work, the composition functions simultaneously as a collage, a détournement, a narrative, and a transgression. The background appears "crossed out," as if several texts had been written on the walls and then quickly erased. The work enacts a mise en abyme of the artistic gesture (to make, unmake, and remake), which the little girl literally embodies as she writes directly on the painting. AL

*Guillaume Lasserre

Matthieu Saladin

Born in 1978 in Versailles.

Lives and works in Paris and Rennes.

“Matthieu Saladin’s practice is rooted in a conceptual approach to art, examining the social, economic, political, and ideological relations that shape our contemporary world. Through the transposition of units, the indexing of values, or the assignment of statistics to objects or events, he investigates the power dynamics at play in a given situation and the political economy that governs it. His work takes the form of protocols, installations, and performances, as well as publications, videos, and software creations.”

La dette n’est qu’une promesse, 2016

[Debt is only a promise]

Installation: 3 embossing presses, embossed banknote

Variable dimensions

“Created in the context of the post-global financial crisis of 2007–2008, *La dette n’est qu’une promesse* [Debt is only a promise] offers a critical and philosophical reflection on the foundations of debt. Drawing in particular on Friedrich Nietzsche’s considerations of the notion of promise, Matthieu Saladin probes the imbalance inherent in social relations between creditors and debtors, and questions the imposition of a morality that affects individuals. Like a truth to be experienced firsthand, his installation allows visitors to emboss this phrase (in French, German, or Greek) onto their own banknotes using one of the three presses provided. Once put back into circulation and subjected to the fluctuations of exchange, these banknotes materialize the contractual framework of a quantified promise.”

MATTHIEU SALADIN, L'EFFEUILLAGE DES EFFACEMENTS, 2016, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ, © MATTHIEU SALADIN, COURTESY SALLE PRINCIPALE, PARIS, CRÉDIT PHOTO : BLAISE ADILON

L'effeuillage des effacements, 2016

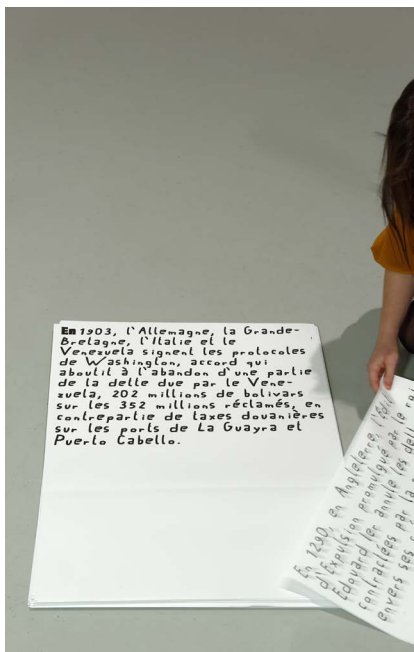
[The Peeling of Erasures]

Installation: stack of 151 inkjet prints

on paper

H 4 × W 85 × D 61 cm

“Composed of a freely accessible stack of 151 posters, *L'effeuillage des effacements* [The Peeling of Erasures] traces the history of debt cancellations from 2400 BCE to 2015. According to the work’s protocol, each poster corresponds to a unique event that disappears as soon as it is taken by the public. By taking a poster, viewers effectively reenact the erasure of debts. Like a true history of cancellation, or even a counter-history of indebtedness, *L'effeuillage des effacements* [The Peeling of Erasures] gradually reveals the real political motivations behind these ‘acts of grace.’”



ULLA VON BRANDENBURG

Born in 1974 in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Lives and works in Nogent-l'Artaud and Paris.

“Trained in scenography, Ulla von Brandenburg worked only briefly in theater before entering the Fine Arts Academy in Hamburg. There she discovered greater creative freedom and explored a variety of techniques and media, from watercolor to film, from collage to installation, often giving a central role to dance, music, and singing. She retains from her initial training the ability to transform exhibition spaces into flexible architecture or stage-like environments. The staging of timeless rituals, such as the use of theater and cinema codes, allows her to interrogate social structures and our place within them. Her multidisciplinary practice also draws on psychoanalysis, folklore, and the history of utopias.”

Le milieu est bleu, 2020

[The Environment Is Blue]

Super 16 mm film, video and sound transferred to HD digital file, video projection

Duration: 23'43”

“The artist chose to work with the Théâtre du Peuple in Bussang, Vosges, whose motto, inscribed on the stage frame, is ‘for humanity through art.’ She films actors and dancers ‘as a group of unsold, withdrawn, and settled individuals in this place.’ The characters engage in artisanal activities, making quilts and dolls in their own image, and playing with ribbons.

The work is simultaneously the preparation of a ritual, the ritual itself, and a narrative of transformation and emancipation. The sung text, besides referencing Joseph Beuys’ performance *Ja, Ja, Ja, Ja, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee*, is inspired by the play *The Deep-Sea Fish (Der Tiefseefisch, 1930)* by Marieluise Fleisser (1901–1974).”





SHARON HAYES, AN EAR TO THE SOUNDS OF OUR HISTORY (MLK/JFK), 2011, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ, © SHARON HAYES
CREDIT PHOTO : BLAISE ADILON

MAIN HALL

Sharon HAYES

Born in 1970 in Baltimore, USA.
Lives and works in Philadelphia, USA.

“Sharon Hayes engages in a practice that crosses multiple media (video, performance, installation) and allows her to explore the intersections of history, politics, and speech. Her work develops innovative strategies of representation that interrogate the present in its political dimension, examining it not as a moment without historical foundation, but as a moment always allegorical, participating both in the past and the future. Her approach draws on concepts and methods from artistic and academic practices such as theater, cinema, anthropology, linguistics, and journalism.”

An Ear to the Sounds of our History (MLK/JFK), 2011

Installation: 40 vinyl record sleeves
H 63 × L 630 cm

“An Ear to the Sounds of our History (MLK/JFK) captures the historical moment when the 33 rpm record became a medium for the dissemination and commercialization of political discourse. Situated between 1955 and 1980, this period was one of intense cultural and political activity in the United States. Sharon Hayes’ selection of 33 rpm record sleeves features recordings of speeches delivered by Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy. By pairing these two political leaders, the artist interrogates how they were represented in the public sphere, highlighting both similarities and differences.

The various sequences that make up the work are organized like visual sentences; they illuminate fundamental aspects of this form of technological dissemination, revealing certain political and commercial stakes that were not necessarily consciously considered by the record companies in question. The work thus reflects the tensions of the era, the influence of gender in political representation, the cult of personality, and the glorification of suffering in political life.”

Marie VELARDI

Born in 1977 in Geneva, Switzerland.
Lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland, and Paris, France.

Marie Velardi develops a multifaceted practice that revolves around the different temporal scales of our environment, as well as perceptions of the future, the possibilities generated by language, politics, space, and their interconnections. Through installations, images, videos, texts, and drawings, Velardi creates experiences that challenge our perception of the world and our place within it. Her work explores the complexity of our rapidly changing environment and the fragility of time. Focused on the intersection of art and society, Velardi's practice offers a critical and poetic examination of our relationship to time, space, and the environment, inviting reflection on the many possible futures. AL

Futurs Antérieurs, XXI^e siècle, 2006–2015

[Past Futures, 21st Century]

Laser print and handwritten texts in watercolor on paper, displayed on light table

H 70 × L 551 × D 41 cm

“The work takes the form of a long chronological frieze of our century, presented on a table nearly 5 meters long. The years are marked by events drawn from past fictions: texts extracted from books or films by science-fiction authors that at the time imagined what the future could be, in other words, our present. These include social considerations, technological fantasies, and other futuristic projections. Marie Velardi thus shows us how authors of literature or films envisioned our era. While a contemporary reading of these proposals can sometimes bring a smile because of their whimsy, some invite serious reflection on our world. For this Swiss artist, time is a central and recurring concern; her works open a reflection on the gaps between real, experienced, and anticipated time.”



MARIE VELARDI, FUTURS ANTÉRIEURS, XXI^E SIÈCLE, 2006 – 2015, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ,
© MARIE VELARDI CRÉDIT PHOTO: BLAISE ADILON

Dora GARCÍA

Born in 1965 in Valladolid, Spain.
Lives and works in Barcelona, Spain.

Known for her performances, Dora García chooses, in a radically conceptual form, to transmit coded messages designed to create a specific relationship with the audience. According to her, art no longer represents the world but becomes a producer of realities itself. It encourages experiences that differ from usual situations, both simple and difficult to grasp.

Since the beginning of her career, the artist has worked on different ways of organizing or staging narratives. She is particularly interested in artificiality and the shift toward fiction. Her works often aim to challenge spectators' perceptual habits, even to disturb them. Like a director, Dora García explores the resources of fiction: a carefully crafted scenario, the insertion of video archives or photographic images are all ways of capturing people and emotions. AL

Les fins du monde, 2006–2015

[The Ends of the World]

Text with layout instructions

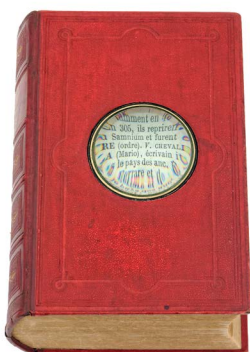
Dimensions variable

In the work *Les fins du monde* [The Ends of the World], the artist writes a text in the future tense, combining envisioned catastrophes with recent global and societal events. Scanned through a vocabulary drawn from apocalyptic and prophetic scenarios, the narrative is punctuated with dates and marked by touches of humor that lighten the serious tone such a text might take when addressing these assumptions of world endings.

Through this textual intervention, the artist challenges the conventions of viewing and exhibition. By inserting herself into ordinary situations, the artist's scenarios subtly destabilize reality, becoming micro-events with sometimes striking, muted resonances.



DORA GARCÍA, LES FINS DU MONDE, 2006 – 2015,
COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ,
© DORA GARCÍA, COURTESY DE L'ARTISTE ET
MICHEL REIN, PARIS / BRUSSELS
CRÉDIT PHOTO : DR



ESTEFANÍA PEÑAFIEL LOAIZA, LA VÉRITABLE DIMENSION DES CHOSSES N°7, 2016, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ, © ADAGR, PARIS, CRÉDIT PHOTO : BLAISE ADILON



Estefanía PEÑAFIEL LOAIZA

Born in 1978 in Quito, Ecuador.
Lives and works in Paris, France.

“All of Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza’s work, across her various modes of expression—symbolic, narrative, indexical, or simply evocative—and across her diverse media, including photography, video, installation, text, and performance, shows remarkable coherence, as if each piece were a fragment of a larger work, of which we are only seeing the beginnings. Her work addresses visibility and absence, history and memory, movement and territory, always with great simplicity and economy of means. The final revelation within her works often arises from a sometimes complex manipulation of linear time.”

la véritable dimension des choses n°7, 2016

[The True Scale of Things No.7]

Old history and geography dictionary (perforated), magnifying glass
H 9 × L 25 × D 18 cm

“*la véritable dimension des choses n°7* involves two objects: an old perforated history and geography dictionary and a magnifying glass. The artist carved and hollowed the book to insert the magnifying glass, through which a few words can be read. Among them, the term ‘Equinox’ and its definition immediately stand out. The equinox marks the time of year when day and night are of equal length. Around March 20 and September 20, the Sun passes through the plane of the equator. On these days, the Sun is exactly at the zenith over the Earth’s equator.

Using collected objects symbolizing science, the artist highlights our desire to always confront something greater than ourselves. However, instead of pointing the lens toward the sky to uncover its mysteries, it focuses on small printed letters arranged by humans, bearing witness to our tiny place in the cosmos.”

Shilpa Gupta

Born in 1976 in Bombay, India.
Lives and works in Mumbai, India

Shilpa Gupta develops an interdisciplinary approach to challenge dominant notions of individual and collective cultural identity. She examines the role of perception and subjectivity in the status of objects, places, people, and experiences, as well as how value is defined and influenced by nationalism, commerce, religion, and notions of security. By incorporating sculpture, text, sound, light, and ephemeral elements, Gupta explores the psychology of different media by inverting their traditional roles and encouraging audience participation to create meaning and provoke listening. The artist highlights the subjective nature of reality as reinforced by the media and questions the authority and autonomy of their means of dissemination. ^{AL}

In Our times, 2008, 2008

Sound installation: 2 microphones modified as speakers on a pendulum mechanism, 2 photocopies, 3 black stools

“The ‘historical moment,’ specifically the independence speeches of India and Pakistan in 1947, is the central subject of this work by Shilpa Gupta. The installation consists of two microphones mounted on a pendulum, through which the texts of the speeches—sung by the artist—of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru at the moment of independence can be heard.

The installation reflects a duality: on one hand, a speech calling for the easing of tensions and disputes in Nehru’s newly independent India, and on the other hand, the violent partition with Pakistan that arose the same day with Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s assumption of power.”

SHILPA GUPTA, *IN OUR TIMES*, 2008, COLLECTION FRAC-FRANCHE-COMTÉ
© SHILPA GUPTA, CRÉDIT PHOTO : PIERRE GUENAT



Le 19, CRAC

Centre régional
d'art contemporain de Montbéliard

* **Our civic commitments:** a dedicated team, trained in the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence, and attentive to issues of ecological transition – an inclusive space, accessible to people with disabilities and to very young audiences.

* **Our memberships:** signatory of the Môm'Art charter – member of the networks d.c.a, Seize Mille, Bla! – and mediator relay for the Société des Nouveaux Commanditaires.

Le 19, Centre régional d'art contemporain
19 avenue des Alliés, 25200 Montbéliard
Tél. 03 81 94 43 58 — www.le19crac.com

Tuesday to Saturday: 2PM – 6PM,
Sunday: 3PM – 6PM.
Closed on Mondays and public holidays.