

FEBRUARY 15 → MAY 18, 2025

ART AND SCIENCE SEASON



Anna Zemánková, *Untitled*, c. 1960, pastel and cooking oil on paper, 84 x 59 cm. Courtesy of the artist and christian berst art brut, Paris

After a season devoted to contemporary figurative painting in France (Spring 2023), then to the ties between art and literature (Spring 2024), MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain opens this spring season with three exhibitions at its two art centres exploring the wide-ranging relationship between art and science.

The theme resonates directly with the history of Montpellier, a city that since the 12th century has played a major role in teaching and in the dissemination of knowledge, even before university status was bestowed on it in 1220 with the foundation of the Université de Médecine. It was the first institution to develop medicine and the life sciences within a formal framework that would lead to scientific research as we know it today.

During the Renaissance, Montpellier attracted many scholars and scientists, including François Rabelais, Guillaume Rondelet, and Nostradamus. The university stood out for the specialities it developed, particularly anatomy, botany, and pharmacy. With the creation of the Jardin des Plantes in 1593, the study of medicinal plants spread and helped to identify Montpellier as the capital of botany until the 19th century.

Today, the Université de Montpellier is remarkable for the size of its research community and the richness of its heritage: the anatomy conservatory, the Jardin des Plantes, the Musée Atger, the *droguier* and the herbarium are undoubtedly the jewels in its crown, but the collections also include scientific instruments, minerals, plant specimens, naturalized species...

There are many ways in which the fields of arts and sciences intersect and inspire each other: the visual representation of experiments and their results, the contribution made by technological advances, and the perspectives of how we understand the world. Just like scientists, artists observe, analyse, interpret, and experiment, often venturing into the unknown with no guarantee of results, accepting failure and exercising doubt. But it is above all the similarities in their approaches that can be highlighted.

“Truth” or knowledge are established until the moment that they are called into question, including for scientists, whose world view cannot be univocal or fixed. Artists and scientists connect ideas, transform hierarchies, and blur our sensitive perception. They look further afield or to the margins, exploring what we cannot see (the inside of organs, beyond the sky’s limits, the microscopic, the olfactory), manipulating the elements to bring out what we hadn’t thought of.

This season has enabled us to establish a partnership with the Université de Montpellier, which we would like to thank not only for its loans, but also for the exceptional support the MO.CO. has received thanks to the creation of a scientific committee, which has led to a number of collaborations (scientific texts for object labels, workshops, supporting the production of works, etc.).

As part of the Art and Science season, MO.CO. Panacée is hosting two solo exhibitions of Ivana Bašić and Pierre Unal-Brunet, two artists whose works create speculations based on scientific data.

At MO.CO., *Sense Unknown* brings together more than a hundred works by over thirty artists, offering an open-ended and porous journey between subjects, experiments, disciplines, and periods, in order to put reality—or at least what we know of it—to the test.

Curators of the Art and Science season: Pauline Faure, Anya Harrison, Alexis Loisel-Montambaux, Deniz Yoruc
Under the artistic direction of Numa Hambursin

In partnership with the Université de Montpellier, CNRS, ENSCM École Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Montpellier, ProPAC Parfums Arômes Cosmétiques degree, Faculté des Sciences, and IES Institut d’Électronique et des Systèmes (CNRS UM 5214) — Université de Montpellier.



Roy Köhnke, *Magnetic Tendencies #01*, 2025, (photogram), 3D animation video, 3'38". Produced by MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain, La fondation des artistes. 3D: Guillaume Seyller. © Adagp, Paris, 2024

In *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1987), James Gleick points out that the development of a scientific theory is often based on the repetition of experiments and the recurrence of an event. An isolated event is therefore considered an error. However, in the research process, serendipity, chance discovery, accident, and the acceptance of a twist of faith open up new pathways that were beyond our predictions. We then move from known worlds into the unknown.

The artists in the exhibition *Sense Unknown* sometimes come from scientific backgrounds, while others have worked with scientists or are simply passionate about one of these fields. They share a common interest in experimenting with the unknown through the reinterpretation of scientific forms and processes.

Mary Maggic's biohacking approach pirates biology with a sense of humour, proposing do-it-yourself methods of extracting oestrogen from urine as a means of emancipation from institutions. Candice Lin challenges the hegemony of Western scientism, contextualising knowledge and materials within the history of domination through the process of fermenting tea into kombucha. Works produced specifically for the exhibition build bridges between disciplines. For example, a new installation by Roy Köhnke offers a sensual approach to evolution and cross-species relations. Morgan Courtois has devised a series of sculptures smeared with olfactory liquids, portraits and sensory memories of his loved ones, using processes taken from the pharmaceutical and perfume industries. Joey Holder adopts a speculative approach to zoology in order to imagine an immersive multi-screen installation with artificial intelligence, playing with both our fears and desires for control.

For this exhibition, MO.CO. presents artists from across different historical periods, ranging from the Renaissance, with Bernard Palissy (16th century), to a new generation born in the 1990s, and with the inclusion of emblematic 20th century figures, such as Nam June Paik, Tetsumi Kudo, Kiki Smith, and Alina Szapocznikow.

SENSE UNKNOWN

GROUP SHOW
MO.CO.

Artists who were less identified with contemporary art during their lifetime are also present in the exhibition, including Anna Zemánková, H.R. Giger, Victorien Sardou, and Emma Kunz.

Finally, the collections of the Université de Montpellier underline the power of the cross-fertilisation of knowledge and forms, as well as the importance of historical markers (discoveries, concepts, objects), which are themselves sometimes doomed to a form of obsolescence.

With Isabelle Andriessen, Art Orienté Objet, Berdaguer & Péjus, Hicham Berrada, Morgan Courtois, H.R. Giger, Joey Holder, Tishan Hsu, Cooper Jacoby, Yunchul Kim, Josh Kline, Roy Köhnke, Kinke Kooi, Tetsumi Kudo, Emma Kunz, Candice Lin, Pei-Ying Lin, Špela Petrič, Dimitris Stamatidis & Jasmina Weiss, Mary Maggic, Guadalupe Maravilla, Nam June Paik, Jean Painlevé, Bernard Palissy, Eduardo Paolozzi, Luboš Plný, Lea Porsager, Josephine Pryde, Victorien Sardou, Jeremy Shaw, Kiki Smith, Alina Szapocznikow, Haena Yoo, Anna Zemánková.

And the scientific collections of the Université de Montpellier:

- Conservatoire d'anatomie, Faculté de Médecine, Faculté d'Éducation: Dr. Louis Auzoux, E. Soumac & Dr. Paul Gilis
- Institut Botanique: anonymous, Toussaint-François Node-Véran, as well as loans of scientific collections from Université de Toulouse III
- Paul Sabatier: Dr. A. Zieger in collaboration with Ernst Haeckel.

With the support of Fluxus Art Projects

METEMPSYCHOSIS IVANA BAŠIĆ

SOLO SHOW
MO.CO. PANACÉE



Ivana Bašić, *I had seen the centuries, and the vast dry lands; I had reached the nothing and the nothing was living and moist* (detail), 2018-2024. Stainless steel, pink alabaster, wax, blown glass, breath, pressure. 300 x 109 x 228 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Stefan Korte

Ivana Bašić's *Metempsychosis* takes the form of a rite of passage, a journey through space that questions the material and metaphysical boundaries of humanity.

Featuring more than 20 works, the exhibition brings together sculptures, drawings, video, and a seven-metre-long robotic altarpiece. The display takes visitors on a surreal journey in which the dissolution of bodies and the material world is seen not as a loss, but rather as an instance of radical potential.

The works of Ivana Bašić, born in 1986 in Yugoslavia, are strongly influenced by the experience of war, violence, and brutality that, following the collapse of her native country, ended up marking her childhood. Certain ontological obsessions then become urgent: the fragility of the human condition; the crisis of the Self and the Other; the possibility of reimagining life and death; the quest for immortality. Bašić's hybrid bodies propose metamorphosis as a substitute for escape, whether on an individual or collective scale: when there is nowhere left to hide, can transformation be the solution?

At nearly human-scale, each of Bašić's sculptures is made from a variety of materials—wax, glass, bronze, stainless steel, and alabaster—which together construct the artist's symbolic and material language. Her forms evoke uterine fluids and insect bodies. These figures are simultaneously violent and tender, evoking both subterranean and invisible primordial forces.

The title of the exhibition refers to its central piece, the seven-metre-long *Passion of Pneumatics* (2024), which takes inspiration from images of the Italian Renaissance and the depiction of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary. Here, the sunbeams of the Immaculate Heart are replaced by pneumatic hammers that progressively pound a stone, attempting to reduce the heart of the sculpture to dust.

Using the force of compressed air, the repetitive movements of the hammers are synchronised with the cadence of the artist's breathing, evoking the Gnostic idea of Pneuma, which stands for both "breath" and "spirit" in Greek. In Gnostic teachings, the Pneumatics represented the highest order of beings—those fuelled by the spirit, the "breath of life"—that transcend the purely materialistic realm.

Ivana Bašić's work has recently been presented in exhibitions at the Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2024), Lafayette Anticipations (2023), National Gallery, Prague (2021), Museum of Art+Design, Miami (2020), Het HEM, Amsterdam (2020), and Contemporary Art Museum Estonia, Tallinn (2019). Ivana Bašić's works are part of the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum, New York. The artist lives and works in New York.

Metempsychosis follows an initial presentation held in the summer of 2024 at the Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin and will be completed by new works produced for this reimagined reconfiguration in Montpellier.

PRODROME PIERRE UNAL-BRUNET

SOLO SHOW
MO.CO. PANACÉE



Pierre Unal-Brunet, *LAUGHING GILLS*, 2024,
co-produced by the artist and CCC OD, Tours.
Photo: Aurélien Mole. © Adagp, Paris, 2024

Pierre Unal-Brunet was born in 1993 in France and lives between Paris and Sète. He collects inert materials, debris, and other surpluses of the world from aqueous harvesting areas. He assembles them to form object-beings in installations combining paintings, sculptures, and ink drawings. With an approach to evolution that borders on cryptozoology, his research draws on scientific articles from ichthyology (the study of fish) and marine biology, as well as on fantasies about these harvesting grounds. The result is a science-fictional environment inhabited by composite bodies.

A prodrome is an early sign, a symptom heralding a change of state, an upheaval. To the attentive eye, it is an anomaly that emerges from everyday life and informs us of a disorder to come.

With some thirty works created over the past five years, *Prodrome* is Pierre Unal-Brunet's biggest solo exhibition to date. For MO.CO. Panacée, the artist is expanding his body of work, with the aim of altering how it is perceived and playing with the ways in which it is presented, thus allowing new species to surface in an older ecosystem.

The notion of eutrophication looms large in this complex and diffuse narrative. Eutrophication is the imbalance in aquatic environments caused by the increased presence of nitrogen and phosphorus. It is characterised by the growth of living organisms due to an excessive availability of nutrients. This excessive accumulation of biomass gradually saturates the ecosystem. Paradoxically, hyperfertilisation leads to the impoverishment and then the death of the biotope, which no longer disposes of the oxygen it needs to live. This phenomenon is also called the "asphyxiation of aquatic ecosystems." A sort of bio-orgy prefacing extinction.

The exhibition follows this idea of gradual hypersaturation. In a spiral-like stroll through five chapters, each room is marked by a particular colorimetry, like a signal about the state of health of each of the biotopes visited. In this introspective narrative, punctuated by the poem *Prodrome* written by the artist, we move from crystalline calm to acid exuberance.

In an ever-changing system, *Prodrome* takes a speculative look at the evolution of species, imagining the unknown based on known clues.

Beyond our emotional relationship with ecological phenomena, the exhibition invites us to shift our self-centred gaze. In this way, *Prodrome* draws out the possibilities of co-evolution, thanks to the ambivalence of empathy—often selective—from antidote to harmfulness, or regeneration after decline.

Pierre Unal-Brunet has recently been the subject of exhibitions at CCC OD in Tours (2024), at IAC Villeurbanne as part of the Jeune création internationale of the 16th Biennale de Lyon (2022), with the Nicoletti gallery at Art-o-rama, Marseille (2022), at the Maldormir beach with the support of Mécènes du Sud (2022), and in the first edition of *SOL! The Territory Biennial*, at MO.CO. Panacée (2021).

Prodrome follows on from the exhibition *Intrication* by Pierre Unal-Brunet and Anna Solal, which was held in the summer of 2024 at CCC OD in Tours.

Prodrome is complemented by a special publication designed by Clément Gicquel, with an interview between Pierre Unal-Brunet and Alexis Loisel-Montambaux.

Scientific Committee

UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER

Prof. Agnès Fichard-Carroll

Vice-president of Education and University Life, Université de Montpellier. Professor of Neuroscience

Prof. Gérald Chanques

Vice President, Université de Montpellier, Representative of Historical Heritage — Vice Dean for General Affairs, Heritage, and its Enhancement, and Campus Life of Faculté de Médecine Montpellier-Nîmes, University Professor — Hospital Practitioner (Anaesthesia — Intensive Care), Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care at Hôpital Saint Eloi (Montpellier University Hospital) Research Unit: PhyMedExp, INSERM, CNRS, Université de Montpellier

Prof. Isabelle Laffont

Dean of the Faculté de Médecine Montpellier-Nîmes University Professor — Hospital Practitioner (Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) — University Hospitals of Montpellier and Nîmes — Human Movement Sciences — Euromov Digital Health In Motion — Université de Montpellier

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Researcher, CNRS, Co-founder and Scientific Advisor of NanoMedSyn, Researcher at the Institut Charles Gerhardt Montpellier (ICGM)

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Pauline Faure, Anya Harrison,

Alexis Loisel-Montambaux, Deniz Yoruc
Exhibition Curators

St phanie Delpeuch

Director of Public and Education Department

SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATIONS

Morgan Courtois — Work residence with Isabelle Parrot-Smietana, Pharmacist. University Professor. ProPAC Parfums Arômes Cosmétiques Degree, Faculté des Sciences, Université de Montpellier

Joey Holder — Collaboration with Benoît Charlot, Research Director, CNRS. IES Institut d'Electronique et des Systèmes (CNRS UM 5214), Université de Montpellier

Pierre Unal-Brunet — Advised by Nicolas Mouquet, Researcher at the CNRS, Université de Montpellier, Scientific Director of the Centre de synthèse et d'analyse sur la biodiversité (Cesab)



PUBLIC PROGRAMME

A rich programme of events, workshops, and visits will take place around the season's theme.

MO.CO. PANACÉE THURSDAYS

Talks and conferences on contemporary art in partnership with Midi Libre.

MO.CO. Panacée Auditorium, at 7pm. Free admission.

MARCH 6: Leo Fourdrinier, Artist & Arthur Le Saux, Astrophysicist

MARCH 20: Benoît Pype, Artist

MARCH 27: Eva Jospin, Artist

APRIL 17: Itzak Goldberg, Art Critic

MAY 15: Pierre Unal-Brunet, Artist

Upcoming events www.moco.art

ABOUT MO.CO. MONTPELLIER CONTEMPORAIN

MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain is an artistic ecosystem that spans training, production, exhibition, mediation, and collection, thanks to the merger of an art school and two contemporary art centres: MO.CO. Esba (École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Montpellier), MO.CO. Panacée (laboratory for contemporary creation) and the MO.CO. (a space dedicated to world-class exhibitions).

EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

ART AND SCIENCE SEASON

February 15 — May 18, 2025

Curators for the Art and Science season: Pauline Faure,
Anya Harrison, Alexis Loisel-Montambaux, Deniz Yoruc
Under the artistic direction of Numa Hambursin

Metempsychosis

Ivana Bašić
Solo show

Prodrome

Pierre Unal-Brunet
Solo show

At MO.CO. Panacée

(14 rue de l'École de Pharmacie, Montpellier)

Opening on Friday, February 14, 2025 at 7pm

Sense Unknown

Group exhibition

With Isabelle Andriessen, Art Orienté Objet, Berdaguer & Péjus,
Hicham Berrada, Morgan Courtois, H.R. Giger, Joey Holder,
Tishan Hsu, Cooper Jacoby, Yunchul Kim, Josh Kline,
Roy Köhnke, Kinke Kooi, Tetsumi Kudo, Emma Kunz,
Candice Lin, Pei-Ying Lin, Špela Petrič, Dimitris Stamatis
& Jasmina Weiss, Mary Maggic, Guadalupe Maravilla,
Nam June Paik, Jean Painlevé, Bernard Palissy,
Eduardo Paolozzi, Luboš Plný, Lea Porsager, Josephine Pryde,
Victorien Sardou, Jeremy Shaw, Kiki Smith, Alina Szapocznikow,
Haena Yoo, Anna Zemánková.

At MO.CO (13 rue de la République, Montpellier)

Opening on Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 12 noon

SUMMER SEASON

June 21, 2025 — dates to be confirmed

Jean-Marie Appriou

Solo show

At MO.CO. Panacée

(14 rue de l'École de Pharmacie, Montpellier)

Co-curators: Caroline Chabrand, Numa Hambursin

Opening on Friday, June 20, at 7pm

Françoise Pérovitch

Solo show

At MO.CO. (13 rue de la République, Montpellier)

Co-curators: Rahmouna Boutayeb, Numa Hambursin

Opening on Saturday, June 21, at 12 noon

MO.CO. Esba 2025 Graduation Exhibition

Curator: Sophie Lapalu

Opening June 20 or 21 (date and venue to be confirmed)

SEE ALSO

OFF-SITE PARTNERSHIP

AVEC MO.CO. MONTPELLIER CONTEMPORAIN

Exhibition from January 25 to June 30, 2025

Les Historiens du Futur

Léo Fourdrinier

Opening on Friday, January 24, 2025 at 6:30 pm

Lattara archaeological site — Musée Henri Prades, Lattes

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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MO.CO.

13 rue de la République, Montpellier

Open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm (October-May)
and from 11am to 7pm (June-September)

MO.CO. Panacée

14 rue de l'École de Pharmacie, Montpellier

Open Wednesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm (October-May)
and from 11am to 7pm (June-September)

PHOTOS ET CRÉDITS

Exhibition visuals available online in the press room

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