

Pas-châssés, rue de la Coifférie

Yann Stéphane Bisso

14 June — 26 July 2025

*Myth is the threshold of history.*<sup>1</sup> - Sadiya Hartman

After its first showing at Halle Nord (Geneva) in spring 2025, the exhibition *Pas-châssés* [side-steps] by Yann Stéphane Bisso, now hosted at In extenso, returns bearing a subtitle: *rue de la Coifférie* [street of the hairdressers]. This is not only because the venue is literally located on this street, but also because the main artwork, *Waves Patterns* (2025), reveals a composition in which hair plays a central role. The motif of the painting echoes the hairstyle known as “waves,” an iconic pattern in Afro hair culture. Present in both exhibitions, the canvas crystallizes the artist’s research. Through his works, Bisso develops a unique cartography where landmarks are composed of textures and everyday objects—serving both as markers of identity as well as emotional and cultural coordinates.

*Waves Patterns* thus goes beyond mere hair representation to become a liquid territory, a turbulent sea charged with the memories of the Atlantic crossing. This aquatic landscape opens up an archaeology of the present—a quest for traces haunted by the voids of history: active silences that carry stories. Three coloured shrimp anchor this topography in a colonial past, referencing the etymology of “Cameroon”—the artist’s native country—named from the Rio dos Camarões (the river of shrimp), as given by Portuguese colonizers. The composition of the painting also recalls the layout of the board game Ludo, played by the random roll of dice. As Sadiya Hartman writes in *Lose Your Mother*—the artist’s point of departure for this exhibition—what we call “history” often results from an arbitrary sequence of narratives, structuring a world split between winners and losers—“like men gathered around a gaming table.” It is this tension between play and myth, between sea and memory, between hairstyle and cartography, that Bisso brings forth with both emotional and political precision.

In the exhibition, three landscapes seem to intertwine and coexist—one pictorial, the other sculptural, and the last sonic—evoking a multi-layered diasporic experience, and reflecting the hybrid symbolism within the artworks. Each of these landscapes carries a tension between loss and elevation, between disappearance and what remains. They bear witness to an almost archaeological quest for an elusive home, inscribed in the imprints of the present and permeated by the absences and silences of postcolonial memory. This quest takes shape in the painting *Faire-Part* (2025): at the center, a radiating flower-being acts as a symbol of fragility and mourning; around it, figures with closed eyelids. The composition reveals several dualities the artist explores: between what is shown and what is hidden, between collective experience and the intimacy of grief.

James Baldwin wrote: “You don’t have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you never can go back,” suggesting that home might not be a place but rather an

irrevocable condition. Even when one returns, the traces of other places linger—inhabited by other stories, other gestures, other languages. This feeling surfaces in the paintings, where the artist summons an imaginary woven from multiple influences to create a deeply hybrid visual language. The way light is treated as a sensitive, almost spiritual material in his paintings evokes kaolin, or white clay, used in Bulu rituals in southern Cameroon. This is seen in *Des attentions flottantes* (2025), where sharp bursts of light emerge from a landscape in the making. This play of light evokes both a shared visual experience and the beliefs of a community where ancestor worship structures the invisible.

Juxtapositions between precise gestures and more expressive strokes run through the entire body of paintings, reflecting the subtle but profound influence of comic books—a first field of visual learning for the artist. Comics remain a living source of forms and narrative: tight framing, expressive silences, fragmented rhythms, and tensions between brutality and delicacy all resonate in his painterly practice. In *Small Time Crush Away* (5-1), created in response to the loss of a previous painting, these elements take new form. Dark shapes cut into a light, misty background, composing a game of strong contrasts. At the bottom, a figure appears absorbed by this flow of forms, as if caught in a mental projection or inner shadow. There’s a sense of drifting, of absence—and perhaps of a suspended moment after upheaval.

Not far from there, a supermarket cart turned fountain grounds these immaterial—though visceral—experiences in a composition made from everyday textures. Draped in a jacket, the fountain holds a collection of satalas—ubiquitous plastic teapots in sub-Saharan Africa used for daily tasks like cooking or ablutions. These repurposed objects act as memory vessels, while also becoming markers of globalization. In the fountain, drops of tin recall both coins tossed in hope and tears—ambiguous symbols of joy, sorrow, pain...

The soundscape created by the fountain’s flowing water blends with a sound piece by 1000balles (*Cryptical Waves*, 2025). Emanating from the basement, the track features a voice describing a ritual to stop the rain. The tension between the constant sound of water and the stated desire to stop its flow reveals a perpetual, insatiable yearning that runs through the works—a dizzying yet soothing oscillation. This movement recurs in *Oscillo-battant*, a performance by Debbie Alogen during the opening night. In a basement once connected to In extenso through the network of tunnels beneath downtown Clermont-Ferrand, Debbie Alogen presents a performance that also explores the notion of “home,” and the tension between belonging and dissolution. *Pas-châssés* and boxing movements are choreographed to texts that precisely articulate the experience of Bisso’s works. Debbie recounts a story of lineage revealed through a photograph: “We unbury the living, those we buried too son /

and piece them together, like a puzzle / hoping that by squinting just a little / we might glimpse a coherent image of our genealogy [...]" Through the works in *Pas-châssés, rue de la Coifferie*, we come to understand how squinting to see more clearly—or zooming in and out on a familiar object—can help us piece together the myths that lie at the threshold of histories.

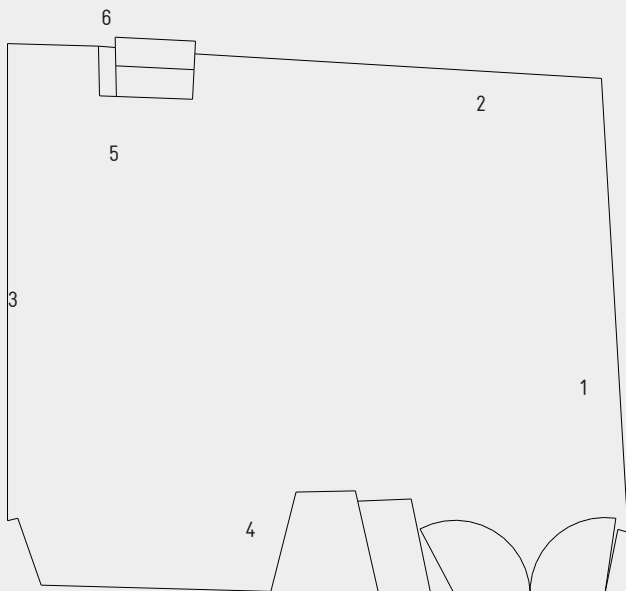
Katia Porro

<sup>1</sup> Sadiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>3</sup> James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Debbie Alagen, "Grand Grand", 2025.



1 *Des attentions flottantes*, oil on linen, 70×100×4cm, 2025.

2 *Waves Patterns*, oil on linen, 180×185×4cm, 2025.

3 *Faire-part, repos*, oil on linen, 67×80×5cm, 2025.

4 *Small Time crush away (5-1)*, oil on linen, 50×70×4cm, 2025.

5 *Fontaine-autel de la chance*, plastic, tin, canvas, water pump, jacket, 83×49×55cm, 2025.

6 Bob, alias 1000balles, *Cryptical Waves*, sound piece, 2025.

In collaboration with Halle-Nord (Genève).

With the support from Pro Helvetia, Fondation suisse and the République and Canton of Geneva.

- Yann Stéphane Bisso (born 1998, Cameroon) lives and works in Geneva. Yann Stéphane Bisso holds a Master's degree in Visual Arts from HEAD Geneva and has exhibited his work in several independent art spaces in Geneva (One Gee in Fog, Forde, Hit, Limbo), as well as in the Lemaniana exhibition at the Centre d'art contemporain in Geneva. In 2024 he was the winner of the Kiefer Hablitzel Special Prize and in 2023 he participates in Plattform23 at the Arlaud space in Lausanne, where he receives the Helvetia art prize.

At the heart of his work, Yann Stéphane Biscaut favours painting as a means of exploring identity and socio-political issues. Inspired in particular by the pictorial tradition of landscape, he creates a dreamlike universe that oscillates between memory and imagination, sometimes populated by figures.

- Debbie Alagen (1997) lives and works in Geneva. Debbie reworks ordinary moments from his own reality to give them a fictional, even "mythological" dimension, exploring a form of future hauntology where memories, pop symbols, and collective desires intertwine.

Through an aesthetic drawn from everyday objects, mundane gestures, and post-Internet signs anchored in collective memory, he questions identity constructions, intimate narratives, and the social fantasies that traverse them.

A multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans painting, sculpture, writing, installation, and performance, Debbie Alagen graduated from HEAD-Geneva (2023) and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels (2020). He is the recipient of the NEW HEADS and HEAD-Galerie awards. His work has been exhibited notably at the Windhager von Kaenel gallery (Zurich) and the Kunsthau Centre d'Art Bienne (Pasquart).

He is currently working on the publication of his first book, a collection of short stories to be released in 2025 in collaboration with the Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva.

- Jennifer "Bob" Siegrist, alias 1000 balles ou Bob1000, est DJ, musicienne et artiste sonore basée à Genève naviguant entre clubs, scènes expérimentales et espaces d'écoute, avec une approche éclectique et assumée.

Elle est membre du collectif Kakakids Records et joue depuis 2020 au sein de Maraudeur, groupe post-punk expérimental. Parallèlement, elle développe un travail sonore personnel, comme en témoigne sa création pour l'exposition *Pas Chassés* de Yann Stéphane Bisso à Halle Nord (2025).

Engagée dans la scène culturelle, elle est en charge de la programmation de concerts pour le magasin de disques et label Bongo Joe et programme notamment pour le Festival Face Z, le LUFF. Elle est également active au sein du lieu autogéré, l'Écurie.

