



Nos diables rouges, nos dérives commotions
Julien Creuzet
Sep 4 – Oct 25, 2025

*Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage.
Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love.*

– Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*.

Mendes Wood DM is pleased to present Julien Creuzet's first solo exhibition at the gallery in Brussels.

A red and black presence emerges like an ectoplasm, a visible emanation that serves both as an introduction and a guide for the entire exhibition. At once provocative, sacred, masked, horned, shrouded in mystery, and adorned with mirrors, the figure never fully reveals itself. It originates from the Martinican carnival; the Red Devil roams the streets like a festive specter. Its annual appearance during Martinique's Mardi Gras opens a symbolic portal to ancient worlds buried in the folds of history, to hybridized beliefs and exiled tales. Although seemingly local and specific, this figure resonates across other territories such as Haiti, Brazil, and countries surrounding the Gulf of Guinea.

Julien Creuzet takes this carnivalesque figure as his point of departure, probing both an archaeology of the masked body and of contemporary myth. His intention is not simply to represent the Red Devil, but to extend its evocative power and potential for transformation.

Elsewhere in his work, Julien Creuzet conjures classical figures from Western mythologies. Here, Saint George, Perseus, and Andromeda are not fixed, impenetrable symbols: they become shifting matrixes traversed by history and the present. The Red Devil is reinvested with new strength: no longer a chained victim, but a plural, fluid, androgynous, dancing, untamed entity, becoming at once Andromeda, Perseus, and Saint George.

This figure, at once master and sacred beast, embodies the oppressed and the powerful alike. Julien Creuzet's mythological retelling and his visual language are key elements in an equation for emancipation. By questioning the role of foundational narratives in our collective imagination, he proposes unexpected alliances between ancient figures and Afro-Diasporic spiritualities.

When the hero becomes the monster, or when the victim seizes control of their destiny, traditions grow attentive to metamorphosis and open up to syncretism – not as a perverse fusion, but as a zone of creative tension. We'll use this term with caution, though, as it is often used to reduce entire spiritualities to an exoticizing blend and to flatten their complexities.

The exhibition space is conceived as a whole, as an artwork in itself – an immersive environment. Within it, the artist has assembled a constellation of fragmented films, wallpapers, and sculptures to form a single narrative body – or is it a shattered poem? Singing in both Creole and French, Julien Creuzet's voice weaves an essential sonic layer, conjuring multiple presences throughout the gallery.

Arms, hands, feet, and other fragments emerge across his entire oeuvre. The body remains central, even when it appears in pieces or as a ghostly presence. These are political bodies, absent-yet-present, carriers of silenced histories; the same bodies we encounter in these works on paper, made from pages torn from anthropology books that have been partially erased.

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Materials and elements recur like visual and ritual leitmotifs. Rice occupies a singular place: present in many of the artist's works (at Frac Normandie – Caen in 2015 or at the Lyon Biennale in 2017), here it is considered a votive, almost sacred material. This grain symbolizes at once sustenance, fragility, collective memory, and the power of offerings. The trident, meanwhile, is an ambivalent weapon. It evokes Neptune, featured in the French Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024 as well as the Red Devil and the arquebusier. It stands as an attribute of power, a sign of resistance, of resurgence even.

The artist invites us to take a leap of faith in imagination. The many dimensions of the intimate and the political come together in each of his works. Boundless pantheons emerge to revitalize and enrich the present with poetic force. There may well be a new cosmology taking shape – one capable of stirring unexpected emotions.

Nos diables rouges, nos dérives commotions opens, unsettles, and invents. By reflecting on our contemporary relationship with multiple narratives, the official history, ancestral spiritualities, and contemporary myths, the exhibition cultivates a productive tension that reignites some of art's most fundamental purposes.

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