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# **Magical Realism**

**Bianca Baldi**

**Minia Biabiany**

**Gaëlle Choisne**

**Ade Darmawan**

**Edith Dekyndt**

**Suzanne Husky**

**Saadat Ismailova**

**Suzanne Jackson**

**Ann Veronica Janssens**

**Joan Jonas**

**Pauline Julier**

**Barbara & Michael Leisgen**

**29.05 —  
28.09.25**

# **Imagining Natural Disorder**

**Anne Marie Maes**

**Jumana Manna**

**Marisa Merz**

**Jota Mombaça**

**Nour Mobarak**

**mountaincutters**

**Otobong Nkanga**

**Kicsy Abreu Stable**

**Precious Okoyomon**

**Elizabeth A. Povinelli**

**Annie Ratti**

**Daniel Steegmann Mangrané**

**Maarten Vanden Eynde & Musasa**

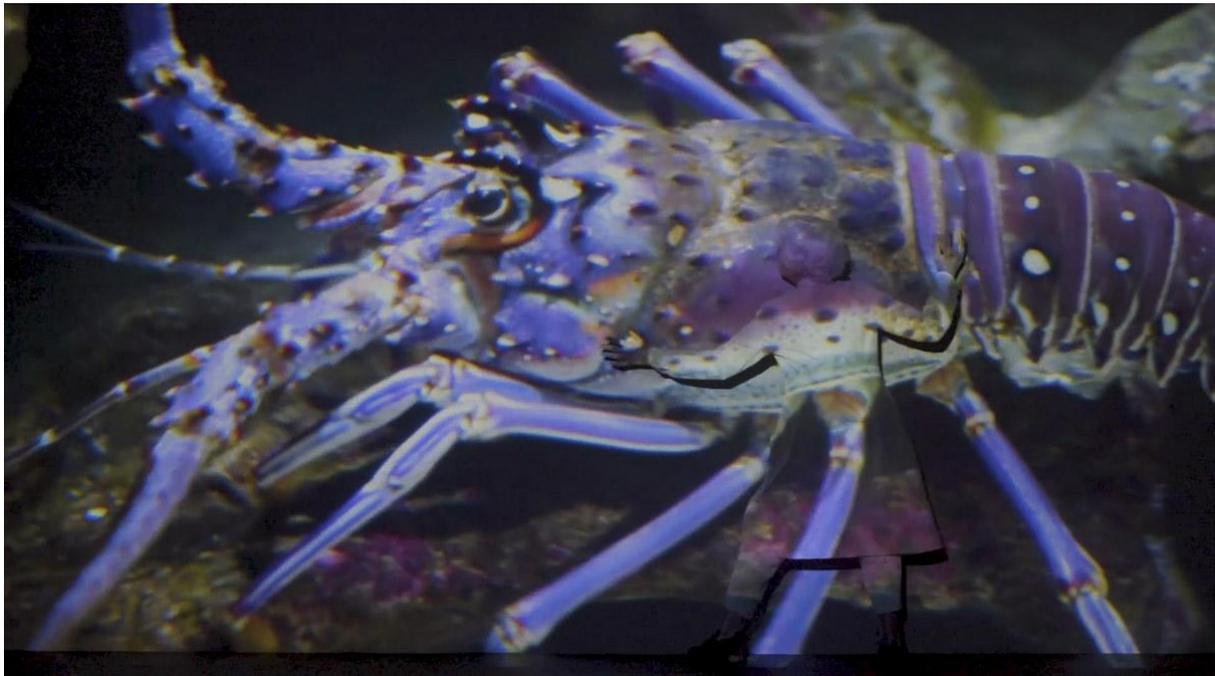
**Cecilia Vicuña**

**Adrián Villar Rojas**

**WIELS**  
ARGOS



## Magical Realism: Imagining Natural Dis/order



Participating artists: Bianca Baldi, Minia Biabiany, Gaëlle Choisne, Ade Darmawan, Edith Dekyndt, Suzanne Husky, Saodat Ismailova, Suzanne Jackson, Ann Veronica Janssens, Joan Jonas, Pauline Julier, Barbara & Michael Leisgen, Anne Marie Maes, Jumana Manna, Marisa Merz, Jota Mombaça, Nour Mobarak, mountincutters, Otobong Nkanga, Kicsy Abreu Stable, Precious Okoyomon, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Annie Ratti, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Maarten Vanden Eynde & Musasa, Cecilia Vicuña, Adrián Villar Rojas.

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### Press release

How do we imagine living environments in a world facing planetary shifts and ecological challenges? *Magical Realism: Imagining Natural Dis/order* brings together over thirty artists at WIELS and beyond, offering new ideas and perspectives on the relationship with our planet. The large-scale exhibition focusses on specific patterns within contemporary artistic practice that underscore the necessity for transformation.

*Magical Realism* is articulated through an exhibition, a publication and a live programme that invite us to move away from systems driven by endless growth and resource extraction. Encouraging connection with the many entanglements that shape our planet, the exhibition is also an occasion to engage with artistic and institutional ecosystems in ways that nurture collaborative processes. This translates into local partnerships—most notably with **argos center for audiovisual arts** which will host a section of the exhibition and respond to the

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Image : Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II* (video still), 2019 © Courtesy of the artist

issues at hand through several events—as well as through international coalitions for the commissioning, production, presentation and circulation of the works in the exhibition.

The title *Magical Realism* is borrowed from the artistic and literary genre of the same name, which is characterised by its infusion of worlds of magic, dreams and myth into secular narratives—creating stories that redefine the boundaries of reality. Among the multiple twists that have marked the use of the term throughout the twentieth century, magical realism has also been mobilised in resistance to Western cultural, economic and political hegemony. Remnants of these aesthetic and narrative patterns seep into contemporary culture through genres such as fantasy, science fiction, horror or cli-fi.

The exhibition looks at how the porosity between ‘magic’ and ‘reality’ may open up space for other solutions to emerge in response to the issues of our time, like proliferating monocultures, disposable life, and climate transformation. When the world of science and hard facts has been torn from the world of magic and intuition, how can we reconcile this fracture, what traces does it leave and how do we repair it? The exhibition navigates these questions through works that shape worlds via painting, moving image, sound and installation. They engage with different spaces, from the cosmos and its galaxies to the scientist’s lab; matters such as bodies of water, bacterial skins or 3D prints; and geologic processes surfacing through the underground rumbling of the earth or the noise of a sinking city. The artists navigate complementary and contradictory ways of relating to ecosystems and myths of the “natural” environment, seeking refuge in dreams and in the bare, raw matter of the world. At the confluence of analytic and speculative tools, *Magical Realism* gestures towards restoring connections in a biosphere exhausted by exploitation, dispossession and debt.

*Magical Realism* follows *The Absent Museum* (2017) and *Risquons-tout* (2020) as the third in-house realisation of a recurring ambitious exhibition format developed and conceived by the WIELS team. The exhibition, accompanied by a publication and a public programme including workshops, talks, walks and performances, reflects an ecology that addresses both the aesthetic implications of our relationship with natural worlds at a tipping point, as well as the social, economic and scientific implications of exploring and shifting our conceptions of the planet.

**Curators:** Sofia Dati, Helena Kritis, Dirk Snauwaert

## **Introduction: Tipping Points in Ecology and Imagination**

In WIELS's expansive, programmatic and thematic cycle of exhibition projects, *Magical Realism* constitutes the third chapter, whose scope coincides once more with the broader diplomatic calendar of the global world. Currently, climate change is the most pressing and urgent development, with farreaching consequences for life on our planet. The Paris Agreement has set various deadlines by which the measures taken to reduce global warming must yield tangible effects. One significant turning point in phasing out support for fossil fuels falls this year, in 2025.

This reality, studied within the 'hard' or 'positive' sciences, inevitably has an impact on our 'internal' dimensions – the emotions, affects, assumptions and ideas that drive the humanities, literature and the arts. The 'magical' thinking resulting from this actuality resists the shock waves of modernity caused by profound technological, industrial and urban disruptions.

As regards magical realism, the combination of these two seemingly opposing words arises from narrative traditions in which alienation and disorientation take centre stage. The term reflects how the disruptions of modernity deeply affect both the psyche and the body. A strictly rational and factual approach to reality is enriched with fantastic, mythological or supernatural elements, while clear boundaries between dimensions such as time and space, organisms and humans, and energy and matter become fluid and porous. Unlike surrealism, with its ideological and theoretical orthodoxy, magical realism lacks a manifesto or doctrine. Its classification as a style is based rather on loose elements that disrupt conventional logic with illogical or pararational components.

Through this perspective, it becomes evident how abstract models provided by fundamental sciences to push beyond the limits of the conceivable can often seem almost magical when juxtaposed with matter-of-fact realism. Theories that have long existed as dormant hypotheses within science – such as consciousness in animals, trees and other organisms; the idea that things themselves might be communicative and sentient beings; and concepts such as time travel or the bending of light and space, which are becoming increasingly conceivable, testable and even applicable – have been a constant in fables and myths for centuries. This applies not only to the subgenres of science fiction and fantasy but also to the ancestral and archaic folklore of peripheral, marginalised and underrepresented groups.

The immense upheavals that await us, which will irrevocably alter the course of evolution, are so vast and abstract that they can only be comprehended within paradoxical logics such as those found in magical realism. Within this framework, progress and regression, archaisms and futurology can manifest simultaneously. The disruptions caused by climate change and the accelerated disordering of ecological, oceanic and organic cycles – alongside the expectation that the singularity of artificial superintelligence will arrive sooner than predicted, supposedly solving all problems in time – exhaust our entire existing imaginative capacity.

*Magical Realism* is an exhibition and publication through which WIELS highlights alternatives to the logic of unrestrained extraction and exploitation of the planet as a resource. Instead, we can transition to symbiotic and metabolic regenerative growth processes, in which magic, intuition, the mythical, the subconscious and the not-yet-verifiable are no longer excluded but integrated into our world-view.

In a world marked by a new wave of expansionism, with its appetite for rare minerals and the profits of an unbridled market, the forms and stories gathered here nourish other imaginaries that give us a glimpse of what a habitable world could look like.

Dirk Snauwaert, Artistic Director of WIELS

## Artist biographies

### Ade Darmawan

Ade Darmawan (b. 1974, Indonesia) lives and works in Jakarta as an artist and curator. He is a co-founder and member of ruangrupa. He studied at the Indonesia Art Institute (ISI). In 1998, he attended a two-year residency at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. Darmawan researches the practice of distillation as a visual analogy for the multiple histories of extraction in colonial Indonesia, which continue to reverberate in attitudes towards nature and art making in the present. His exhibitions include *Doing Business with the Dutch*, Lumen Travo Gallery, Amsterdam (2018), and *Magic Centre*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2016), and Portikus, Frankfurt (2015). He participated in the Gwangju Biennale (2016) and the Singapore Biennale (2016). He presented the solo exhibition *Water Resistance* at ROH, Jakarta, and Cemeti, Yogyakarta (2024). As a curator, he has contributed to *Negotiating the Future: 6 Asian Art Biennial* in Taiwan (2017). He was the executive director of the Jakarta Biennale (2013–7) and the artistic director of the Jakarta Biennale (2009). Together with ruangrupa, he curated *SONSBEEK '16: transACTION* (2016), and for Documenta 15 in Kassel (2022), ruangrupa was appointed as the artistic director.

### Adrián Villar Rojas

Adrián Villar Rojas (b. 1980, Argentina) lives and works nomadically. He conceives long-term projects, collectively and collaboratively produced, that take the shape of large-scale and site-specific installations, both imposing and fragile. Within his research, which mixes sculpture, drawing, video, literature and performative traces, the artist explores the conditions of a humanity at risk, on the verge of extinction or already extinct, tracing the multi-species boundaries of a post-Anthropocene time folded in on itself, in which past, present and future converge. Recent exhibitions include *The End of Imagination*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2022); *El fin de la imaginación*, The Bass, Miami (2022); *Poems for Earthlings*, Oude Kerk, Amsterdam (2019); and *The Theater of Disappearance*, Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles (2017), NEON at the National Observatory of Athens (2017), Kunsthaus Bregenz (2017) and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2017).

### Ann Veronica Janssens

Ann Veronica Janssens (b. 1956, UK), who lives and works in Brussels, has been focusing on the visitor's experience since the late 1970s. Her approach produces intangible works. Her site-specific installations play with reflections, luminosity and transparency and are created using elusive elements, such as light, artificial fog, sound and simple materials like glass and mirrors, which are simply the means or supports to encourage visitors to experience the fleetingness of the moment and the subjectivity of the perception of space and temporality, as well as the perpetual evolution of both of those experiences. She represented Belgium at the Venice Biennale (with Michel François) (1999) and the São Paulo Biennial (1994), and she took part in the Istanbul Biennial, Sydney Biennale, Sharjah Biennial and Beppu Biennale. She has presented solo exhibitions at the Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan (2023); Panthéon, Paris (2022); South London Gallery (2021); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2020); and Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris (2019), among other venues.

## **Anne Marie Maes**

Anne Marie Maes (b. 1955, Belgium) is a Brussels-based multidisciplinary artist whose work blends art, science and ecology. With a background in botany and visual anthropology, she explores ecosystems, alchemical processes and the intricate relationship between nature and form. Her practice integrates living organisms and biological, digital and traditional media to examine self-generating art processes. On the roof of her studio, she has created an experimental garden and field laboratory, studying insects, bacteria and natural phenomena to understand how form emerges in nature. Maes's long-term projects, such as *Connected Open-Greens*, *Bee Agency* and *Laboratory for Form and Matter*, engage with ecological systems through collaboration with universities and fablabs. Maes has exhibited widely at Belgian and international venues, such as EMST, Athens (2025); M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2024); nGbK, Berlin (2024); Kunsthalle, Mulhouse (2023); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023); iMAL, Brussels (2021); IKOB Museum of Contemporary Art, Eupen (2020); Laboral, Gijon (2019); Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga (2019); Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (2018); Haus der Elektronischen Künste, Basel (2018); Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology – MAAT, Lisbon (2018); and Bozar, Brussels (2017).

## **Annie Ratti**

Annie Ratti (b. 1956, Switzerland) is an Italian artist based in London. Her transdisciplinary practice looks to specific geographical, historical and social issues, addressing concerns related to the aims of science, culture and ecology. Among her solo exhibitions are *Bombyx Mori*, Amanda Wilkinson Gallery, London (2022); *ANARGONIA*, Amanda Wilkinson Gallery, London (2019); *Lallazioni* (with Bruna Esposito), Auditorium Parco della Musica Ennio Morricone, Rome (2015); *The Shroom Project*, Kabinetten van de Vleeshal, Middelburg (2013); *Image of September*, Gallery Sejul, Seoul (2010); *Annie Ratti: Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*, KUB- Billboards, Kunsthaus Bregenz (2006); and *Annie Ratti – Objects*, Vorarlberger Kunstverein Magazin 4, Bregenz (1997). Her group exhibitions include *Sacred Landscapes*, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 18th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice (2023); *A Century of the Artist's Studio: 1920–2020*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022); *Dual Realities*, 4th Seoul International Media Art Biennial, Media City Seoul (2006); and *A Grain of Dust A Drop of Water*, Gwangju Biennale (2004).

## **Barbara & Michael Leisgen**

The work of Barbara (1940, Germany–2017, Germany) and Michael Leisgen (b. 1944, Austria, currently living in Germany) explores the links between humans and nature by inscribing the body within the landscape, utilising the light of the setting sun with the medium of photography. Barbara and Michael met at the Karlsruhe Academy of Fine Arts, where they studied between 1963 and 1969. They gave up their personal practice (painting and sculpture, respectively) in 1970 to devote themselves together, as self-taught artists, to photography. Their work is regularly shown in group exhibitions, which have included *Sublime*, Centre Pompidou-Metz (2016), and *Documenta 6* (1977). A retrospective exhibition was held at the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen (2000), and at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris (1997).

## **Bianca Baldi**

Bianca Baldi (b. 1985, South Africa) is a Brussels-based artist whose work deals with the role of narrative as a means of knowledge production in both fictional and historical contexts. She is interested in the staging of identity and history and explores these themes in photography, film, writing and publishing. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in 2007 from the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town, and completed her studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. Her work has been featured in large international exhibitions, such as MOMENTA Biennale de l'Image, Tiohtià:ke/ Mooniyang/Montreal (2023); 11th African Biennale of Photography, Bamako (2017); 11th Shanghai Biennale (2016); and 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2014). Recent solo exhibitions include Patina, Photoforum Pasquart, Biel (2022); Cameo, Grazer Kunstverein (2021); Versipellis, Superdeals, Brussels (2018); Eyes in the Back of Your Head, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof (2017); and Pure Breaths, Swimming Pool, Sofia (2016).

## **Cecilia Vicuña**

Cecilia Vicuña (b. 1948, Chile) is a visual artist, poet, filmmaker and activist based in New York. Her poetic work in space, performance and visual arts is considered a de-colonising vision that anticipates ecofeminism. In recent years, Vicuña has exhibited at the Toronto Biennial (2024); *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2024); Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London (2022); and Guggenheim Museum, New York (2022). Her retrospective *Soñar el agua* was on view at the Pinacoteca, São Paulo (2024); MALBA, Buenos Aires (2023); and Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile (2023). In February 2023, she was elected honorary foreign member of the Academy of Arts and Letters of the United States and was granted a doctorate honoris causa by the Universidad de Chile. She was awarded MOCA, Los Angeles's inaugural Eric and Wendy Schmidt Environment and Art Prize (2024) and won the Premio Nacional de Artes Plásticas (2023).

## **Daniel Steegmann Mangrané**

Daniel Steegmann Mangrané (b. 1977, Spain), who lives and works in Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro, considers art capable of reconfiguring our relationship with the world, inspiring new cultural paradigms that acknowledge the interdependence of all that exists. His research explores the relationship between nature, perception and technology and is particularly attentive to biological processes and anthropological discourses, which he uses as inspiration to create works that confuse the traditional separations between culture and nature, subjects and objects, human and non-human, reality and dream and corporeal and incorporeal, dissolving them into relationships of mutual transformation. Steegmann Mangrané has exhibited internationally, most recently at MACBA, Barcelona (2024); Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (2023); Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris (2023); MoMA, New York (2023); and Hamburger Bahnhof (2022), as well as at the Taipei Biennial (2020), among others. His works can be found in the permanent collections of Tate Modern, London; Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro; Inhotim, Brumadinho; Museu Serralves, Porto; Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo; MACBA, Barcelona; Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris; Hamburger Bahnhof; and Castello di Rivoli, among others.

## **Edith Dekyndt**

Edith Dekyndt (b. 1960, Belgium) lives and works in Brussels. A key characteristic of Dekyndt's artistic practice is the combination of an understated idiom and intensely evocative materiality. By merging conceptual, scientific and experimental approaches, the artist deconstructs the signs of her creative process. She archives, collects and catalogues images, sounds and objects using a rigorous methodology, manifesting an emblematic reality through her work. Recent solo exhibitions include *Animal Methods*, Konrad Fischer Galerie, Berlin (2024); *Specific Moments*, Walter and Nicole Leblanc Foundation, Brussels (2024); *Specific Subjects*, CAB Foundation, St Paul de Vence (2024); *Song to the Siren*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2024); *Ne pas laver le sable jaune*, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (2023); *L'Origine des choses*, Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris (2023); *Aria of Inertia*, Chapelle de Laennec, Paris (2022); *The Memory of Everything in the World*, Galerie Karin Guenther, Hamburg (2022); and *Concentrated Form of Non-Material Energy*, St Matthäus Church, Berlin (2022).

## **Elizabeth A. Povinelli**

Elizabeth A. Povinelli (b. 1962, USA) is an academic, artist and filmmaker. She is Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies at Columbia University, a founding member of the Karrabing Film Collective and Corresponding Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She received a doctorate honoris causa from ARIA at the University of Antwerp. Among her eight published books are *The Inheritance* (2021), a graphic non-fiction memoir, and *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (2016), winner of the Lionel Trilling Book Award. She has made more than ten films with the Karrabing Film Collective, which has received multiple prizes, including the Eye Art & Film Prize from the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, the Visible Award and the Cinema Nova Award Best Short Fiction Film at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Povinelli's drawings have been shown in multiple galleries, including a permanent display at the Museo delle Civiltà, Rome.

## **Edmond Musasa Leu N'seya**

Edmond Musasa Leu N'seya (b. 1950, Democratic Republic of the Congo) lives and works in Lubumbashi. An artist and teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lubumbashi, he specialises in figurative painting, focusing on habits, rules and systems that are part of life in rural environments and ancient societies. His work has been shown over the past 40 years in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in exhibitions in Lubumbashi, Likasi, and Kolwezi. Musasa and Maarten Vanden Eynde have been collaborating since 2015. Recent collaborative works have been presented at *Shifting Sceneries / 1st GIST Triennale*, Belgium (2023); *ON-TRADE-OFF: Charging Myths*, Framer Framed, Amsterdam (2023); *Compulsive Desires: On Lithium Extraction and Rebellious Mountains*, Galeria Municipal do Porto (2023); *Gravend naar de Toekomst*, Museum EICAS, Deventer (2023); and *Exhumer le futur*, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse (2022). Their collective works *Copper Connection* and *Wheel of Fortune* were acquired by Mu.ZEE, Ostend.

## **Gaëlle Choisne**

Gaëlle Choisne (b. 1985, France) combines a documentary approach (photography and video) with the use of raw materials, addressing socio-political issues related to the over-exploitation of natural resources and colonial history. Born of a Haitian mother and a Breton father, the artist blends oral traditions, Creole mythology and popular culture in works that refer to both Haiti's history and her own personal narrative. Choisne has been awarded the Marcel Duchamp Prize 2024. Recent solo exhibitions include *Maât and the tears of god*, Espace Croisé, Roubaix (2024), and Reiffers Art Initiatives with Lorna Simpson, Acacias Art Center, Paris (2023); *Monument aux Vivant·e·s – DÉNI*, Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris (2023); *Blue Lights in the Basement*, NiCOLETTi, London (2022); and *Temple of Love – Atopos*, MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine (2022). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *PickPocket*, Fondazione Zimei, Teatro Michetti, Pescara (2023), and *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)*, HKW, Berlin (2022).

## **Joan Jonas**

Joan Jonas (b. 1936, USA) is a world-renowned artist whose work encompasses a wide range of media, including video, performance, installation, sound, text and sculpture. Since 1968, her practice has explored ways of seeing, the rhythms of rituals and the authority of objects and gestures. Jonas's notable exhibition history includes the 5th Kochi- Muziris Biennale (2022); 13th Shanghai Biennale (2021); 28th São Paulo Biennial (2008); and Documenta 5 (1972), 6 (1977), 7 (1982), 8 (1987), 11 (2002) and 13 (2012). She has recently presented solo exhibitions at the Drawing Center, New York (2024); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2022); Dia Beacon, New York (2021); Museo Nacional Thyssen- Bornemisza, Madrid (2020); Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2020); Museu Serralves, Porto (2019); Tate Modern, London (2018); and United States Pavilion for the 56th Venice Biennale (2015). Most recently, MoMA in New York hosted a retrospective of Jonas's work (2024). Jonas is the recipient of many awards, including the Nam June Paik Prize (2024).

## **Jota Mombaça**

Jota Mombaça (b. 1991, Brazil) lives and works between Lisbon and Amsterdam. She is an interdisciplinary artist whose work unfolds in a variety of mediums. The sonic and visual matter of words plays an important role in her practice, which often relates to anti-colonial critique and gender disobedience. In 2021, she published the book *Não vão nos matar agora (They won't kill us now)*. She recently completed a residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her work has been presented in several institutional frameworks, such as the 32nd and 34th São Paulo Biennials (2016 and 2020), 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), 10th Berlin Biennale (2018) and 46th Salón Nacional de Artistas in Colombia (2019). Currently, she is interested in researching elemental forms of sensing, anti-colonial imagination and the relation between opacity and self-preservation in the experience of racialised trans artists in the Global Art World.

## **Jumana Manna**

Jumana Manna (b. 1987, USA) is a visual artist and filmmaker. Manna was raised in Jerusalem and lives in Berlin. Her work explores how power is articulated, focusing on the body, land and materiality in relation to colonial inheritances and histories of place. Through sculpture, filmmaking and occasional writing, Manna deals with the paradoxes of

preservation practices, particularly within the fields of architecture, agriculture and law. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Break, Take, Erase, Tally*, Rialto6, Lisbon, Kunsthall Stavanger, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, MoMA PS1, New York (2022–4); *Preservation Paradox*, Matadero Madrid (2023); *Foragers*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2022); *Jumana Manna / MATRIX 278*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2021); and *Thirty Plumbers in the Belly*, M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2021). Recent group exhibitions include *ALOHA NŌ*, Hawaii Triennale (2025); and *Small World*, 13th Taipei Biennial (2024).

### **Kicsy Abreu Stable**

Kicsy Abreu Stable (b. 1992, Cuba) is a multidisciplinary artist and architect based in Brussels. Her practice explores spatial storytelling through the intersection of sculpture, architecture and drawing. She began her academic journey at the Universidad Tecnológica de La Habana ‘José Antonio Echeverría’, where she earned a master’s degree in architecture (2015). She later completed a master’s degree in sculpture and spatial art at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Brussels (2021). Abreu Stable’s work investigates the complex relationship between human beings, the areas they inhabit and the environments that surround them, revealing latent narratives embedded within these lived spaces. Through the interplay of presence and absence, visibility and concealment, she reinterprets traditional craftsmanship while challenging the physical and cultural boundaries of materials. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including in *Release*, MINO Art Space, Antwerp (2023); *LUCIE(A)*, Centre Tour à Plomb, Brussels (2021); and *Laisser passer*, Maison de l’Architecture de l’Isère, Grenoble (2017).

### **Maarten Vanden Eynde**

Maarten Vanden Eynde (b. 1977, Belgium) has been engaged in long-term research projects that focus on numerous subjects of social and political relevance, such as post-industrialism, capitalism and ecology. His work is situated on the border between the past and the future, sometimes looking forward to the future of yesterday, sometimes looking back to the history of tomorrow. Vanden Eynde graduated in 2000 from the free media department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. In 2006, he participated in the experimental Mountain School of Arts in Los Angeles, later finishing a postgraduate course in 2009 at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent. He won the Public Prize for the first Belgian Art Prize (2017). In 2024, he received a PhD from the University of Bergen for his research project *Ars Memoriae, The Art to Remember*.

### **Marisa Merz**

Marisa Merz (Maria Luisa Truccato, 1926, Italy–2019, Italy) made her debut in 1967 with *Living Sculpture*, a work in aluminium sheets that anticipated Arte Povera. Merz introduced traditional and female materials and processes into the language of sculpture; in the 1970s, her interventions took on an environmental character, flowing between the private and the public dimension. From the 1980s, her creativity found its completion in highly refined drawings, clay heads and altarpiece-like paintings. In addition to her solo exhibitions at Bernier, Fischer, and Tucci Russo galleries, we recall exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Bern (2025); LaM, Lille (2024); MASI, Lugano (2019); Museu Serralves, Porto, and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2018); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Hammer Museum,

Los Angeles (2017); MACRO, Rome (2016); Fondazione Merz, Turin (2012); CIAPV, Vassivière (2010); Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna (1998); Kunst Museum Winterthur (1995 and 2003); and Centre Pompidou, Paris (1994). After receiving a Special Jury Prize at the Venice Biennale (2001), Merz was awarded the Golden Lion (2013).

### **Minia Biabiany**

Minia Biabiany (b. 1988, Guadeloupe) works and lives in Guadeloupe. In her practice, Biabiany observes how the perception of the body is entangled with the perception of space, land and history. Mainly in installations and videos, she convokes the gestures of weaving by creating poetical and political narratives linked with self-understanding and healing. Biabiany initiated the artistic and pedagogical collective project Semillero Caribe in 2016 in Mexico City and continues to explore the deconstruction of narratives through bodily sensations and concepts of Caribbean authors with the experimental platform Doukou. Her work has recently been the subject of solo exhibitions at Imane Farès, Paris (2025); Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, Harrisonburg (2024); MAC Panama (2023); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2022); Kunstverein, Freiburg (2021); La Verrière, Brussels (2020); and Le Magasin des horizons, Grenoble (2020). Her work has also been presented at CRAC Alsace (2019) and the 10th Berlin Biennale (2018).

### **mountaincutters**

mountaincutters (est. 1990) is a hybrid identity, an artist's collective working in Brussels. With a focus on in-situ sculpture, they draw on the connection between human beings and the environments they inhabit. Their steel structures, glass elements, ceramics, fabrics and organic materials, as well as their poems and copper circuits, form temporary ecosystems in which energy is channelled between the human, the organic and the inanimate.

mountaincutters' work has been presented in solo exhibitions at Meessen, Brussels (2024); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023); Centre d'Art Neuchâtel (2022); and La Verrière, Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, Brussels (2021), as well as in group shows in various institutions, such as Kindred Spirit, Lisbon (2024); Kyiv Biennial, Vienna (2023); and Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (2021). They are part of collections such as Plateforme 10 – Mudac, Lausanne; Middelheim Museum & Collection of the Flemish Community, Antwerp; and Collection du FRAC PACA, Marseille.

### **Nour Mobarak**

Nour Mobarak (b. 1985, Egypt) is a Lebanese American artist who lives and works between Bainbridge Island, Los Angeles and Athens. Mobarak excavates the compulsions and glitches surrounding violence and desire as it relates to the body, the earth and her surrounding environment through voice, sculptural works, sound, performance, video and writing. To experience Mobarak's rich interior world is like standing at the edge of an archaeological site and gazing upon enduring, petrified objects set into a new orbit. Her works are exercises in giving form to death and decomposition, in giving form to and making space for resilience. Her works have been shown at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2025, 2021 and 2019); MoMA, New York (2024); Castello di Rivoli (2024); Sylvia Kouvali, London and Piraeus (2023 and 2017); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2023); and MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2022). She has performed at Western Front, Vancouver (2023); Renaissance Society, Chicago (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2020); Cafe

OTO, London (2020); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2019); and Stadslimiet, Antwerp (2016).

### **Otobong Nkanga**

Otobong Nkanga (b. 1974, Nigeria) lives and works in Antwerp. Her multidisciplinary practice examines the complex social, political, ecological and material relationships between bodies, territories, minerals and the earth. Unsettling the divisions between minimal and conceptual or sensual and surreal approaches, the artist's research-based practice constellates humans and landscapes, organic and non-organic matter. She presented a new, site-specific commission at MoMA, New York (2024), and has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (2023); Frist Art Museum, Nashville (2023); Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges (2022); Kunsthau Bregenz (2021); Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2021); and Villa Arson, Nice (2021). Nkanga is the 2025 Nasher Prize Laureate and was the recipient of the Golden Afro Artistic Award in the Visual Arts (2024) and of the inaugural Lise Wilhelmsen Art Award Programme (2019).

### **Pauline Julier**

Pauline Julier (b. 1985, Switzerland) is an artist and director based in Geneva. With an approach that blends scientific and artistic perspectives, Julier explores the relationship between human and non-human environments. Her solo exhibitions have been held at places such as Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, Île de Vassivière (2025); Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau (2024); and Centre culturel suisse, Paris (2017). Group exhibitions have been held at international venues, including Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva (2023); Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne (2022); ICA Foundation, Milan (2021); ZKM Karlsruhe (2020); and the 14th Biennial of Media Arts of Santiago (2019). Her awards and fellowships include the Swiss Art Award (2010 and 2021) and the 'Mondes Nouveaux' Fellowship (2022). Her book *And so on, a single universe*, published by Scheidegger & Spiess, was awarded The Most Beautiful Swiss Books (2025). She is shooting her first feature film in autumn 2025.

### **Precious Okoyomon**

Precious Okoyomon (b. 1993, UK) is a Nigerian American poet and artist. Their work attends to the ongoing impact of the historical construction of race on the natural world. Recent solo exhibitions include *ONE EITHER LOVES ONESELF OR KNOWS ONESELF*, Kunsthau Bregenz (2025); *When the Lambs Rise Up Against the Bird of Prey*, The Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Madrid Foundation (2024); and *the sun eats her children*, Sant'Andrea De Scaphis, Rome (2023). They were included in the Nigerian Pavilion for the 60th Venice Biennale (2024) and the 59th Venice Biennale (2022), as well as in group exhibitions at LUMA Arles (2022); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021); and LUMA Westbau, Zurich (2019). Okoyomon's work is in the permanent collection of the Museum Für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, and LUMA Arles. Okoyomon received the Frieze Artist Award (2021) and the CHANEL Next Prize (2021). In 2024, *But Did You Die?*, their second book of poetry, was co-published by Serpentine and Wonder Press.

### **Saodat Ismailova**

Saodat Ismailova (b. 1981, Uzbekistan) lives between Paris and Tashkent. A filmmaker and artist, she came of age in the post-Soviet era. Interweaving rituals, myths and dreams within the tapestry of everyday life, her films investigate the historically complex and layered culture of Central Asia. Frequently based around oral stories in which women are the lead protagonists and exploring systems of knowledge suppressed by globalised modernity, these consciousness expanding works hover between visible and invisible worlds. She graduated from Tashkent State Art Institute and Le Fresnoy, National Studio of Contemporary Arts, France. In 2021, she initiated DAVRA research collective in Central Asia to develop and tap into the local art scene. Ismailova participated in the 59th Venice Biennale and Documenta 15 (2022). She is a recipient of the Eye Art & Film Prize from the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2022).

### **Suzanne Husky**

Suzanne Husky (b. 1975, France) is a French American artist whose multidisciplinary environmental practice focuses on the relationship between humans and the earth. Trained in agroecology and permaculture, she creates work that conjures the regenerative power of humans. She has made films on topics such as beaver mimicry, mermaids and agricultures of love. Husky started the artistic duo The New Ministry of Agriculture, which highlights a history of the ideologies behind agdepartments. She is also co-president of the movement 'alliance with the beaver people'. She has presented work at the Lyon Biennale (2024), Timisoara Architecture Biennial (2020), Istanbul Biennial (2019), San Francisco International Airport (2016), Headlands Center for the Arts (2011) and Bay Area Now 5 regional triennial at YBCA in San Francisco (2008) and MSN Warsaw (2020). Her works are part of several collections. Her recent endeavours are deeply engaged with the 'alliance with the beaver people'.

### **Suzanne Jackson**

Suzanne Jackson (b. 1944, USA) lives and works between Savannah and St Remy. For nearly five decades, the artist has worked experimentally across mediums, including drawing, painting, poetry, dance, theatre and costume design. In the early 1970s, Jackson worked as an artist and teacher in Los Angeles, where she engaged a community of artist peers and established Gallery 32, showcasing figures like David Hammons, Senga Nengudi and Betye Saar. During this time, Jackson was known for her figurative paintings using layers of watercolour-like acrylic wash to depict the melding of humans and nature. Jackson's recent works – which she calls 'environmental abstractions' – consist of pure acrylic and found materials, dispensing with canvas and allowing the paintings to move off the wall and function from all sides. The artist's first major retrospective (2025) is travelling from SFMOMA to the Walker Art Center and MFA Boston.

## Calendar public programme

MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p><b>28/05</b> <b>18:00–01:00</b> Festive opening <i>Magical Realism</i> with DJ-sets → Opening @WIELS</p> <p><b>28/05</b> <b>19:00–20:00</b> Suzanne Jackson, Jota Mombaça, Otobong Nkanga &amp; Sofia Datti (EN) → Conversation @WIELS auditorium</p> <p><b>29/05</b> <b>16:00–17:00</b> Ade Darmawan, Philippe Pirotte &amp; Helena Kritts (EN) → Conversation @WIELS auditorium</p> <p><b>29/05</b> <b>18:00</b> Fireflies Conversation: Elizabeth Povinelli &amp; Federico Campagna (EN) → Conversation @Beursschouwburg (in the frame of Kunstenfestivaldearts)</p> <p><b>31/05</b> <b>14:00</b> Look Who's Talking: Pauline Julier (EN) → Guided tour @argos</p>	<p><b>04/06</b> <b>18:00–21:00</b> <b>Summer Nocturnes</b> with guided tours, workshops &amp; music → Nocturne @WIELS</p> <p><b>04/06</b> <b>18:00–19:00</b> Cecilia Vicuña &amp; Catherine de Zegher (EN) → Conversation @WIELS auditorium</p> <p><b>04/06 &amp; 05/06</b> <b>19:30–20:15</b> Gaëlle Cholsne: AURA / ARUA → Performance (première) @WIELS</p> <p><b>21/06</b> <b>16:00–17:00</b> Maarten Vanden Eynde &amp; Oullmata Gueye (FR) → Conversation @WIELS auditorium</p> <p><b>22/06</b> <b>15:00–21:00</b> 'Summer Solstice Gathering' hosted by Back2SoilBasics (EN/FR) → Workshops, film &amp; dinner @Project Room / Wiels Swamp</p>	<p><b>02/07</b> <b>18:00–21:00</b> <b>Summer Nocturnes</b> with guided tours, workshops &amp; music → Nocturne @WIELS</p> <p><b>18:30–19:30</b> Look Who's Talking: Anne Marie Maes (NL) → Guided tour @WIELS</p> <p><b>02/07, 09/07, 16/07,</b> <b>23/07, 30/07</b> <b>13:30–16:30</b> Solar Punk School → Workshop @Project Room</p>	<p><b>06/08</b> <b>18:00–21:00</b> <b>Summer Nocturnes</b> with guided tours, workshops &amp; music → Nocturne @WIELS</p> <p><b>06/08, 13/08, 20/08,</b> <b>27/08–13:30-16:30</b> Solar Punk School → Workshop @Project Room</p>	<p><b>11/09</b> <b>18:00–20:00</b> Artist talk: Annie Ratti (EN) → Conversation @WIELS auditorium</p> <p><b>13/09</b> <b>10:00–14:00</b> 'Still Here – An Alliance of Care for the SZenne River' by Natural Contract Lab (EN) → Site-responsive artistic walk @From Lot to Halle, via the river banks</p> <p><b>21/09</b> <b>15:00</b> 'Autumn Solstice Gathering' hosted by Back2SoilBasics (EN/FR) → Workshops, film &amp; dinner @Project Room / Wiels Swamp</p> <p><b>21/09</b> <b>14:00–17:00</b> Family Funday → Guided tour @WIELS</p> <p><b>26/09 &amp; 27/09</b> <i>Faunalia Artificiosa</i> (EN) curated by Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Sofia Lemos &amp; Juliana Fausto → Two-day event with conversations, screenings, music, performance &amp; dinner @WIELS</p>

## Hosted by argos

### ARGOS COLLECTION SELECTS

From a collection of nearly 6000 artist films, argos selected work that offers a fresh take on the themes of the exhibition *Magical Realism*, to create a programme of films that will loop at argos throughout the exhibition.

#### SITES OF IMPACT (40')

The relationship between humans and nature is changing—and it's leaving marks, on the land and in our minds.

- *Reign of Silence*  
Lukas Marxt
- *The Monk*  
Paulius Sliupa
- *White Cloud*  
Emmanuel Van der Auwera

#### SHINE A LIGHT (43')

Three films shed new light on their surroundings. Some relationships are underexposed, while others are overexposed, causing the perspectives to constantly shift.

- *Light Displacement*  
Meggy Rustamova
- *3 minutes of darkness*  
Edith Dekyndt
- *Luces del Desierto*  
Félix Blume

### FILMS SCREENINGS AT WIELS

**19/06**  
**19:00**  
*Ojo Guareña*  
Edurne Rubio

**3/09**  
**19:00**  
*Mahere*  
Petna Ndaiiko Katondolo

Followed by a discussion with the artists

### MARAVILLOSO READING GROUP

Explore short fiction by queer and femme writers from Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. We'll explore how writers use elements of magical realism to reflect on art, colonial heritages, and the environmental crises affecting our world today.

**06/08**  
**18:00**  
Launch with a conversation at WIELS

**10/08, 17/08, 24/08 & 31/08**  
**12:00**  
Collective Sunday readings at argos (EN)



A free film from the argos collection on your screen every month. From June to September, argos TV follows the themes of *Magical Realism*.

Scan the QR-code to watch the film of the month.

## **Magical Realism Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication edited by the curators, assisted by Febe Lamiroy, published by Mercatorfonds/Fonds Mercator. The book features contributions by all artists as well as texts by Karen Barad, Federico Campagna & Febe Lamiroy, Chris Cyrille-Isaac, Sofia Dati, Vinciane Despret & Leticia Renault, Zayaan Khan, Shayma Nader, Susan Schuppli, and Dirk Snauwaert.

The book is rhythmized into three chapters that think through and expand the main threads running through the exhibition. *Cosmologies & Cosmogonies* explores the role of human and non-human storytelling in processes of worldbuilding. The authors and artists grouped in *Ecosystems of f-r-iction* map out paths of interdependence, difference and mythical fabrication diverting the course of systemic and binary thinking and making space for a poetics of resilience. In *Material Encounters*, matter surfaces to bear witness. From liquid to solid and vice versa, material manifestations introduce new recipes for transformation.

Bilingual FR-EN, with a digital NL translation

Price: 29,95€

## **Partners**

*A section of the exhibition is organised at argos centre for audiovisual arts.*

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**Specific projects within *Magical Realism* were realised in collaboration with Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Publiek Park, TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Serpentine Ecologies, TONO festival, L'Internationale Online.**

## Practical information

### WIELS

Avenue Van Volxemlaan 354  
1190 Brussels

Opening hours  
Tuesday — Sunday  
11:00 — 18:00

Nocturnes  
Every first Wednesday of the month  
18:00 — 21:00 (free entrance)  
[www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)

### argos centre for audiovisual arts

Werfstraat 13 Rue du Chantier  
1000 Brussels

Opening hours  
Tuesday — Sunday  
11:00 — 18:00

[www.argosarts.org](http://www.argosarts.org)

## Press contact

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