

BENOÎT MAIRE
GRUNGE

FEDERICA SCHIAVO GALLERY, ROME
MAY 9 – JULY 25, 2026

Benoît Maire's work evolves as a field of tension between form and thought, matter and theory, object and language. Through sculpture, painting, photography, writing and installation, the artist constructs a visual system in which images, materials and philosophical references intertwine in open, often enigmatic configurations. His practice, closely related to collage in method and structure, brings together heterogeneous elements — natural and artificial, historical and contemporary, concrete and conceptual — generating works that defy a single interpretation.

For Maire, philosophy is not merely a theoretical framework, but the very substance of the work. References to Lyotard, Agamben, Bataille and Lacan run through his work alongside art history, psychoanalysis, mathematics and myth. The result is a body of work that constantly questions the boundaries between nature and culture, between the visible and the conceivable, whilst always maintaining a strong focus on the formal qualities of the works.

This ambivalence is evident in both his sculptures and his paintings. Assemblages such as **L'oreille de l'autre** and **Châteaux** combine shells, glass, metal, fossils and technical objects in polysemic compositions that transcend the logic of the ready-made and endow the objects with an almost anthropomorphic presence. In his paintings, however, there are recurring motifs of hands drawn from classical art, grids, words and signs that function as perceptual and conceptual indicators. Elements such as words or numbers, or the repetition of gestures and forms, open the work up to a logic of the alternative, of suspension and of semantic shift. The figure of Pierrot also fits into this context: for Maire, his silhouette is not merely an image, but a concept equivalent to a word. Through screen-printing, the artist repeats its form, transforming it into an element of a broader "theoretical and visual poem". Emerging gradually during his residency at Villa Medici in Rome (2021–2022), this motif evokes an image of solitude and fragmentation inherited from the *commedia dell'arte*.

The exhibition display is also an integral part of his practice. Maire conceives of the space as an analytical device, in which the works interact according to precise balances, sometimes even incorporating the traces of the creative process, the *déchets*, which are elevated to an active part of the composition. In this way, his work does not offer solutions, but constructs enigmas: visual and conceptual devices that ask the viewer to inhabit uncertainty, crossing the unstable boundary between perception and interpretation.

The title of the exhibition refers to the artist's approach to creating the exhibition, following a deliberately disjointed and anti-hierarchical logic, which Benoît Maire defines as follows:

«From the adjective "grungy": dirty, grubby, worn-out. Grunge refers to an intentionally casual and scruffy style of dress adopted by certain segments of youth culture in the 1990s. It is also a musical genre, a derivative of rock. A descendant of heavy metal, more anxious, more saturated, less confrontational than punk, more disillusioned. A rock that expects nothing. By extension, grunge also defines an exhibition style: casual, indifferent, slightly off-centre. The layout appears neglected: a painting is not perfectly straight, harmony is rejected, empty spaces appear for no apparent reason. The works gather in the corners, as if abandoned, like empty glasses after a party. Grunge could become a form of "classic" cultural sensibility, an expression of a typically Western weariness towards the return of the past.»

Benoît Maire was born in Pessac, France, in 1978. He lives and works in Bordeaux.

Maire has held solo exhibitions in France and abroad (Bordeaux, Paris, Brussels, London, Vancouver, San Francisco, Mexico City, New York), and his works are included in the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Vancouver Art Gallery, Villa Medici in Rome, the Mudac in Lausanne, the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, the FRAC Île-de-France in Paris, the FRAC Aquitaine in Bordeaux, the FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon, the FNAC – Fonds National d'Art Contemporain in Paris, the Kadist Foundation in Paris, the David Roberts Foundation in London, the Nomás Foundation and the Fondazione Giuliani in Rome, the Francès Foundation in Senlis, as well as the MAC/VAL in Vitry-sur-Seine and the CAPC Musée in Bordeaux.