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B. ANELE JEAN-MARIE APPRIOU CYRIL DEBON ELINA LAITINEN MATHIS PERRON WILL SHELDON EETU SIHVONEN ANNA SLAMA & MAREK DELONG TOM VOLKAERT



THE COMMUNITY CENTRE & GARDEN 9 & 13 RUE MÉHUL 93500 PANTIN www.thecommunity.io



To celebrate the Midsummer and the long-awaited endless summer nights, The Community welcomes ten artists for our second exhibition in Pantin to take over The Community Centre on 9 rue Méhul and the neighbouring The Community Garden on 13 rue Méhul.

In "Mystic May", the artists, whose works linger between fantasy and realism, reinterpret the existing structures of the urban environment and place them into re-imagined settings with otherworldly characters and narratives. The works witness a search for alternative identities, spaces and times, and a sketch for imaginary universes surrounded by magic and folklore tales. Suburban houses become alive and haunted, alley cats rule from the rooftops; metamorphosed plants grow in the garage boxes while sculptures become shelters for bucolic spirits and totems erect from the concrete garden. The conveying forces and energies of the natural and spiritual world are expressed through careful study of materials in their contemporary forms - including 3D printing, bronze, clay, epoxy resin, and graffiti. The techniques and materials reflect a quest for sensuality and a return for expressivity, even romanticism, recalling the artist's role as a refined craftsman.

At 9 rue Méhul, the gallery groups together works by B. Anele, Jean-Marie Appriou, Eetu Sihvonen, Will Sheldon, Anna Slama, and Marek Delong. Upon entering the exhibition space, visitors can step into the acid-green covered tale of Eetu Sihvonen. The video work *Heavy Iron Gate* tells the story of a tall-legged house, which transforms from an idyllic domestic environment to an alienating edifice. This research on aestheticised barricades continues with the 3D-framed prints on the wall. Three paintings installed on the opposing wall lead us towards the entrance of a grim staircase and facades of stylised houses. Wellknown for his tattoo practice, artist and illustrator Will Sheldon equally paints and draws, always informed by the same Gothic, fairytale-like characters and landscapes also seen in his practice as a tattoo artist.

In the middle of the gallery space, two sculptural works, *Lip Kit Situation* and *The Oracle* by artist duo Anna Slama and Marek Delong, have entered a dialogue. In both pieces, the emphasised tactile materials and figurative aspect highlight the relationship created between the author(s) and the work. Sculptures and installations become characters and an act within a psychedelic summer theatre play. On the left wall, one discovers a bronze bas-relief work *Alpha and Omega (Mist)* by Jean-Marie Appriou. The work narrates an archetypal chivalric hero, a vulnerable yet always protected knight whose destiny intertwines with the serpentine folkloric creature.

In the very back of the space, a pink-hued room glimmers. It is taken over by B. Anele, a transdisciplinary artist who works with painting and drawing, moving image and garments. The video work *More 2 C* shows an ornate mural forming the backdrop for the stage where the artist changes moods, colours, and clothing. Everyday artefacts seem familiar, both in the video as in the works on paper and garments: yet they are revisited as if it was a second childhood discovered within realms of the unknown.

In The Community Garden, on 13 rue Méhul, the artists have been inspired by the topography of the outdoor space, positioned somewhere in-between a concrete highway and suburban jungle. In the middle of the garden, Tom Volkaert's sculpture, Steering Wheels & Horfeeceries, erects from the ground like a totem. Featuring circles, contorted

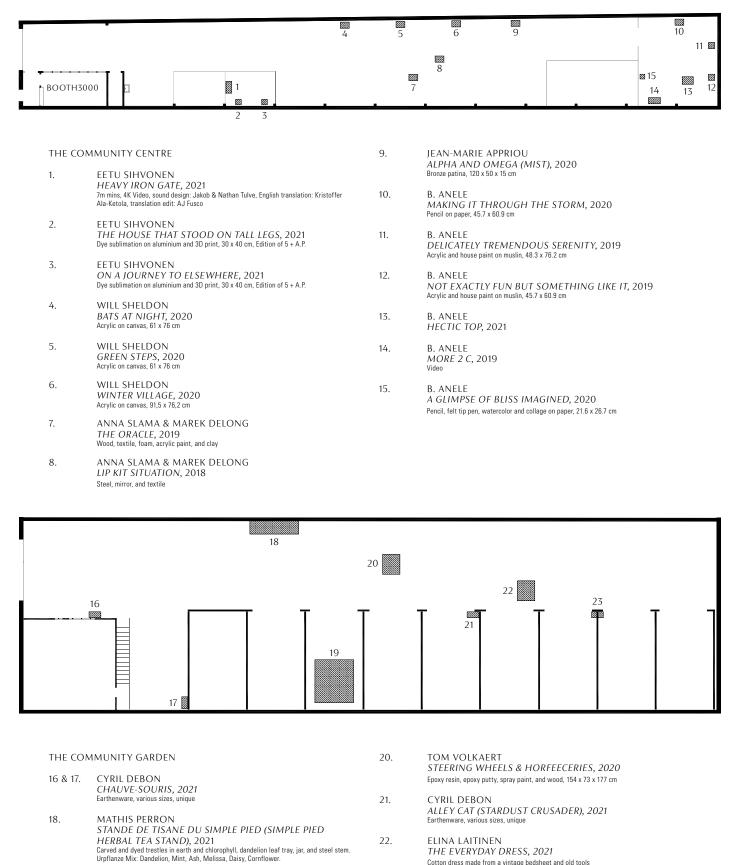
arachnoid limbs, intestines and sickly satanic tongues that are carefully arranged, the sculpture can be seen as a testimony to the materiality of memory as much as it is an ongoing tribute to the spiritual and shamanic force of art. Carefully researched materials, forms, and colours also embody both personal and universal memories, and the matrixial mother in which all creativity is situated.

Positioned towards the sunlight is *The Everyday Dress* by designer and artist Elina Laitinen - a process-based installation that will transform throughout the exhibition. The work brings forward the artist's interest in the transformative and haphazard processes dictated by nature. In her native Finland, the Midsummer nights are long and enveloped with sunlight: this generates the sun-dyed forms of everyday tools that are positioned on the garment and reference to highly domestic settings.

Under the neighbour's giant tree, protecting the central part of the garden, artist Mathis Perron has installed a performative tea bar. Working in tandem as a herbalist, he has prepared a new infusion from seven different plants that he has cultivated for Mystic May. The artist's detailed studies on plants and their literal and functional meanings continue with his installation in one of the garages: a massive dandelion installation which is inspired from the Goethian notion of Urpflanze, the mother of all the plants. It is the archetypal prototype plant that contains all the plants of the past, present and future.

A gang of alley cats and dormant bats play hide-and-seek above the garage boxes: Cyril Debon's ceramic pieces in the form of empathetic animal characters are layered with the expressions and poses we all know from children's tales in all its theatricality and naïvety. The animal characters also provide us with a new navigation outdoors, guided by a feline point of view on architecture.

The fantastical characters and sometimes zoomorphic limbs and structures in the exhibition guide us towards a more sensitive and embodied relationship with the surrounding nature: the ensemble of works creates shelters and manifestations of collective imagination and communal care, questioning the liminal space of physical and imaginative boundaries. Eco-sculptures and organic artefacts intertwined with sometimes shamanist layers and historical tales provide a different scenario as if revisiting a childhood dream. By looking deeper into the moods of suburban and metropolitan realities and environments, the artists bring forward the potential of this expanded space as a site for daydreaming, bringing forward a different psychology of space and time.



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MATHIS PERRON

URPFLANZE-NIRNROOT, 2021

clothes. Sound of Nirnroot from the video game Skyrim

Parrot coat rack, PVC sheets, metal rings, green wire, resin ear, paper pulp, and yellow

- **FLINA LAITINEN** 22 THE EVERYDAY DRESS, 2021 Cotton dress made from a vintage bedsheet and old tools
- CYRIL DEBON 23. CHAUVE-SOURIS, 2021 Earthenware, various sizes, unique

#### B. ANELE



www.instagram.com/surprisinghealthbenefits

B. Anele is an American transdisciplinary artist. With a body of work ranging from video to garment construction, they expound their perspective via the resulting products of an uninhibited exploration of mediums. Simultaneously haphazard and considerate, their practice is an ongoing experiment in producing physical evidence from a metaphysical exploration of existence: Akin to visions realised on their own accord, the work disregards canonical confines and sheds light on advanced paths of realisation. Their perspective is inherently complex, filtered through Nigerian roots, blackness, and queerness. Producing sculptural garments that challenge the boundaries between clothing, art and gender, B. Anele's work can be seen as a colourful commentary on the reciprocal relationship between the wearers of clothing and their surroundings and how fashion allows us to perform our identities while also reflecting on the definition and usability of a work of art. For them, garments are both a form of creative expression and social activism against harmful gender confines. Finally, the combination of mediums, materials, colours and motives evokes a practice that itself can be described as non-binary - a rhizomatic approach avoiding any dichotomy. Each of their objects is imbued with a sense of spiritualism as the artist makes a point to meditate over their designs, honouring indigenous art garments that once were intended for sacred purposes, highlighting the unique value of clothing items and style as a whole.





#### JEAN-MARIE APPRIOU



www.instagram.com/jeanmarieappriou

In his work, the French artist Jean-Marie Appriou explores materials such as aluminium, glass, bronze or clay in unconventional processes in his sculptural work. From his experiments of an alchemical nature, human, animal and plant figures emerge, responding to and completing each other, giving rise to different scenarios. This marvellous universe is nourished by various cultural inspirations and references, going from medieval and Egyptian mythology to craftsmanship and pre-Raphaelite painting, from science-fiction literature to cinema and comics. Constituting the artist's interest in cosmology, both the shape and texture of the material, such as the presented symbolic motives and characters, embody a great subversion and metamorphosis of the past and present. By following the tradition of medieval bas-reliefs seen in Christian churches, which had a significant impact on Appriou growing up in Brittany. The displayed bronze-relief "Alpha and Omega (Mist)" converts Christian tradition and iconography into a more personal, fantastical one by combining it with folkloric, nostalgic, and mythological elements. The dreamlike scenery, featuring a floating, unarmed Arthurian knight and a prehistoric dragon jointly protecting a set of eggs from a snake, can be seen as a general reflection on the significance and relevance of the archetypal chivalric hero and a symbol for the cohesion of human and nonhuman species.





#### CYRIL DEBON



www.cyrildebon.com www.instagram.com/kyriltrentrois

By fusioning sentimentalist painting together with animal ceramics, French artist Cyril Debon's practice creates a fantastic, fairy tale narrative, spinning delicate references of history of art and decorative arts, such as tableware and furniture design. Subtly citing various references ranging from the Grimms' tales, children's books to B-movie archetypes, he elaborates his imaginary universe, evoking both happy and bitter-sweet associations, feelings ranging from joy to nostalgic melancholy in the viewer. His works often appear as a gentle intervention in the existing space: a small, humorous added gesture that nevertheless changes its original connotation. His ceramic animals, totemic even though small-in-scale, take over the exhibition space and garden and play hide-and-seek with the visitors: they can be seen as a joyful homage to nonhuman existences, reacquiring and inhabiting the urban landscape.





#### ELINA LAITINEN



www.elinalaitinen.com www.instagram.com/elina\_lai

Elina Laitinen is a Finnish fashion designer working at the junction of art and design. Her Master's thesis "Pyhävaatteita" (Sunday Clothes) from 2016, studying the significance of handmade clothes and aiming to evoke discussion about modern clothing consumption, can be seen as a starting point for her practice, which is still very much driven by this aspiration. In her work, Laitinen is intrigued by the value-creating elements of fashion design. Through the making process, she seeks to give the garment a story that increases the experienced value of the clothing. In doing so, her practice aims to pay attention to materials such as emotional and social values, stating that artistic research and creative practices should lead us towards more ethical systems. Alongside making her art, Laitinen works in new environments to improve the accessibility of art. She has been working as a community artist at an activity centre for disabled people and at a day-care centre, aiming to highlight the importance and meaning of collaborative artwork. Her work "The Everyday Dress", which is on display outside in "Mystic May", can be considered a vivid example of her practice of not maintaining any boundaries. The installation, consisting of a cotton dress made from vintage bedsheets and a set of old tools, will be exhibited in the communal garden during the entire length of the exhibition, being exposed to sun and rain, literally soaking up its environment and the passing seasons, becoming one with nature. Almost like an archaeological site, its constant metamorphosis can be considered a physical witness of the past and present.



#### MATHIS PERRON



www.instagram.com/pseudoscience\_17

Mathis Perron is a French artist whose hybrid environments are organised in the chaos of the spaces he invests in: he works with drawing, video, sound, and sculpture that take different narrative forms. The imagination that drives him is infused by the agricultural environment of Charente-Maritime, where he grew up and where his garden studio is now located. His work explores this territory and tells its parallel stories. He brings out its ghosts, its fantasies and shows the invisible strings that bind the protagonists of this immense theatre. Since 2015, his pseudonym Simple Pied has been cultivating, picking, drying, infusing and bagging mixtures of aromatic and medicinal plants. By displacing the gestures of herbalism into his artistic activity, Perron seeks to think outside the box to invent new artistic models. This project, such as the presented work "URPFLANZE-NIRNROOT", directly pursues the ghost that Johann Wolgang von Goethe, poet, botanist and author of "The Metamorphosis of Plants", tracked throughout his life. The so-called "Urplanze"; an expression that can be translated as the original plant, the plant matrix, or the primitive mould, one that would exist among all plants. In 1786, he suddenly left Germany for Italy, convinced that he would find the secret of this primordial plant in the exotic botanical garden of Naples. "In the presence of so many new and renewed figures, my old chimaera was awakened. Will I not be able, in this multitude, to discover the primitive plant?"\* The adventure was futile. It was necessary that in 2021, in Pantin, a strange sound pushed the new occupants of 9 rue Méhul to raise the iron curtain of an old garage. Any Skyrim explorer who has ever walked in a wetland would have recognised the throbbing sound of the Nirnroot, the bioluminescent and bioacoustic plant used by alchemists to elaborate a potion of invisibility. Goethe would have done better to look at his feet, for it seems that the "Root of the World" is nothing more than an ordinary dandelion. Of a disconcerting simplicity, the "Urplanze" that here forms since always the infinite variations of its serrated leaves.

\*Excerpt from J.W. von Goethe's Journey to Italy, found in Olivier Cheval's experimental film, Die Urpflanze.





#### WILL SHELDON



www.instagram.com/willsheldon

Will Sheldon is an American artist living and working in New York. His artistic practice moves between tattooing and painting, which are both defined by his fantastical imagery, featuring all kinds of otherworldly creatures and motives such as gothic fairies, dragons, and mythic sceneries, often influenced by pop culture, horror or fantasy movies. While playful, bright colours typically mark his tattoos, his paintings are characterised by a much darker palette of blacks, greens and purples, showing landscape settings that are surrounded by a spooky, mysterious atmosphere and aura. Combining hand-painting with airbrushing techniques, Sheldon creates the effect of deep space, a landscape that seems to fade away, crossing the painting's spatial and temporal boundaries. The three paintings on display in "Mystic May" present familiar architectural sceneries, including castles, that are directly associated with historical periods like the Middle Age and artistic epochs, such as the silent ruins of European romanticism, but are subtly fictionalized, allowing viewers to imagine Sheldon's fantasy characters. No human beings are seen, only a few animals that populate the landscapes, radiating a special, ghostly silence.





#### EETU SIHVONEN



www.instagram.com/uwubeibi

Eetu Sihvonen is a Finnish artist who lives and works in Helsinki. Their practice mainly uses 3D modelling and animation, and more traditional materials, such as plaster, wood, and metal. Merging them into installations, the works are informed by aestheticized barricades in Western urban culture, utopias, and the world of role-playing games. Their 3D prints and video work on display in "Mystic May" form a body of work and design a world moving between a dark, capitalist dystopia and the search for alternative utopias of social coexistence. In "Heavy Iron Gate", we observe the development of a society whose self-imposed work ethic ultimately leads to its decay. Although told in the manner of a fairy tale, similar to a moral fable, the story immediately brings to mind reference points such as the capitalist system we live in today. However, while this system still shapes our society and lives, Sihvonens' story takes a turn: People liberate themselves from the doctrine of work and create an alternative society that upholds values such as collectivity and closeness to nature.





#### ANNA SLAMA & MAREK DELONG



www.instagram.com/annxtrw www.instagram.com/marek\_delong

The Czech artist's Anna Slama and Marek Delong have been working as an artistic duo since 2015. Merging their different backgrounds that move between arts, design and film, they, in their practice, started to focus on installation - often assuming the dimensions of site-specific scenography in which they embed their sculptures, objects, videos, and paintings. The duo has shown a long-term interest in emotional strain and returns to the artwork's sensitivity and genuineness. By creating scenes that subvert the rational rules of our postmodern existence, they open a space for therapy and distance from the anxiety of the current generation facing the pressures of predatory capitalism and the loss of a positive vision of the future and hope. They aim to escape logic and calculation, employing elements of fairy tales, sensuality and magic to invent a space for vulnerability, intuition, and unbiased navigation of the world. When otherworldly characters, such as a fluid witch consisting of soft fabrics emerge and a sharp-edged metal mirror invites us to reflect our position in this mystical ensemble, the ambiguous scenery moves between scary and gentle, between self-reflection and liberation.





#### TOM VOLKAERT



www.tomvolkaert.be www.instagram.com/c0ldchain

The Belgium artist Tom Volkaert's sculptural work can be seen as a testimony to the materiality of memory as much as it is an ongoing tribute to the spiritual and shamanic force of art. The carefully balanced combination of refined artistic craftsmanship and the strategic use of unpredictability that comes into play when working with enamelled ceramics, epoxy or oxidized metal very much forms his fluid practice. Many of his works, such as the one displayed in "Mystic May", consist of circles on legs, the so-called steering-wheels. These works are like totems: symbolic and organic artefacts that bring the otherworldly alien life in the cosmos to life and put us in touch with something radically different from us. It is as if these circles are portals to another cosmic dimension and something wholly other than human life is trying to get through, a lumpy otherworldly and alienated organic gesturing at us in a way that feels both familiar and estranging. But Volkaert's steering wheels can also be seen as a totem for his personal life and memories, a form of navigating and coming to terms with his biography. In his practice, colours embody memories - especially personal ones. Some of them evoke and contain specific associations connected with his past and experiences. Others act on a more universal, symbolic level. "Steering Wheels & Horfeeceries" holds another very personal detail: By spraying his friends (Antwan Horfee, a Parisian artist who has a background in graffiti) name on the back of the sculpture, the work doesn't only honour this special friendship but also reflects on the limits between private and public, sacrality and secularity, and how an art piece changes when it becomes part of the public landscape - when it gets reappropriated and transformed by gestures of civil disobedience such as graffiti.







#### EETU SIHVONEN HEAVY IRON GATE, 2021

7m mins, 4K Video Sound design: Jakob & Nathan Tulve English translation: Kristoffer Ala-Ketola Translation edit: AJ Fusco



EETU SIHVONEN THE HOUSE THAT STOOD ON TALL LEGS, 2021 Dye sublimation on aluminium and 3D print, 30 x 40 cm, Edition of 5 + A.P.



EETU SIHVONEN ON A JOURNEY TO ELSEWHERE, 2021 Dye sublimation on aluminium and 3D print, 30 x 40 cm, Edition of 5 + A.P.



WILL SHELDON BATS AT NIGHT, 2020 Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 76 cm







WILL SHELDON GREEN STEPS, 2020 Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 76 cm



WILL SHELDON WINTER VILLAGE, 2020 Acrylic on canvas, 91,5 x 76,2 cm



ANNA SLAMA & MAREK DELONG THE ORACLE, 2019 Wood, textile, foam, acrylic paint, and clay



ANNA SLAMA & MAREK DELONG LIP KIT SITUATION, 2018 Steel, mirror, and textile







JEAN-MARIE APPRIOU ALPHA AND OMEGA (MIST), 2020 Bronze patina, 120 x 50 x 15 cm



B. ANELE MAKING IT THROUGH THE STORM, 2020 Pencil on paper, 45.7 x 60.9 cm



B. ANELE DELICATELY TREMENDOUS SERENITY, 2019 Acrylic and house paint on muslin, 48.3 x 76.2 cm



B. ANELE NOT EXACTLY FUN BUT SOMETHING LIKE IT, 2019 Acrylic and house paint on muslin, 45.7 x 60.9 cm







B. ANELE *HECTIC TOP*, 2021



B. ANELE MORE 2 C, 2019 Video



B. ANELE A GLIMPSE OF BLISS IMAGINED, 2020

Pencil, felt tip pen, watercolor and collage on paper, 21.6 x 26.7 cm



CYRIL DEBON CHAUVE-SOURIS, 2021 Earthenware, various sizes, unique







#### MATHIS PERRON STANDE DE TISANE DU SIMPLE PIED (SIMPLE PIED HERBAL TEA STAND), 2021

Carved and dyed trestles in earth and chlorophyll, dandelion leaf tray, jar, and steel stem. Urpflanze Mix: Dandelion, Mint, Ash, Melissa, Daisy, Cornflower.



#### MATHIS PERRON

URPFLANZE-NIRNROOT, 2021 Parrot coat rack, PVC sheets, metal rings, green wire, resin ear, paper pulp, and yellow clothes. Sound of Nirnroot from the video game Skyrim.



TOM VOLKAERT STEERING WHEELS & HORFEECERIES, 2020 Epoxy resin, epoxy putty, spray paint, and wood, 154 x 73 x 177 cm



#### CYRIL DEBON ALLEY CAT (STARDUST CRUSADER), 2021 Earthenware, various sizes, unique







ELINA LAITINEN THE EVERYDAY DRESS, 2021 Cotton dress made from a vintage bedsheet and old tools





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