

ZHENYU SELECTED WORKS

www.zhenyuwu.com

instagram : @genhyu
zhenyuwoo@outlook.com



La langue des fantômes

Paintings, installation, photographs and objects
2025–2026

Cooking is a contemporary ritual. Through fire, tools, time and the body, human beings keep transforming their surroundings into conditions for living.

My paintings take recipes as their point of departure, though they are not concerned with food itself. What interests me are the ghosts inside culinary practice — knowledge passed down without being explained, adaptations shaped by a climate, strategies developed against scarcity, and the long relations between people and the ground they live on.

Through painting I try to give form to these barely perceptible presences. Each image works as another kind of recipe: it does not resemble what it produces, and what it holds only appears through the act.





Paintings with printed table canvas



First Dish: Stir-fried Pork with Chili

Stir-fried pork with chili is one of the most common dishes in Hunan, yet every family cooks it differently. Chili is closely tied to local ideas about humid climate, the body and the strong taste associated with Hunan food. I separate the recipe into ingredients and actions: chili, garlic, meat, soy sauce, fire and tasting. The amount of oil, colour contrasts and density of paint follow the sensory character of the dish. Together, the paintings function more like a recipe than a still life.



Le piment lavé / Washed Chili
Painting on canvas, 15 × 15 cm, 2026



L'ail / Garlic
Painting on canvas, 15 × 15 cm, 2026

Couper la viande / Cutting the Meat
Painting on canvas, 30 × 30 cm, 2026



La sauce soja / Soy Sauce
Painting on canvas, 30 × 30 cm, 2026



La préparation 1 / Preparation 1
Painting on canvas, 30 × 30 cm, 2026



Le feu / The Fire
Painting on canvas, 30 × 30 cm, 2026





Position de manger / Eating Position
Painting on canvas, 50 × 40 cm, 2026

Table à manger / Dining Table
Installation with a wooden table, 80 × 97 cm, 2026



Le sac de riz / The Bag of Rice
 Painting on polystyrene foam, 120 × 55 cm, 2026



Deux morceaux de pastèque / Two Pieces of Watermelon
 Painting on canvas, 15 × 20 cm, 2026



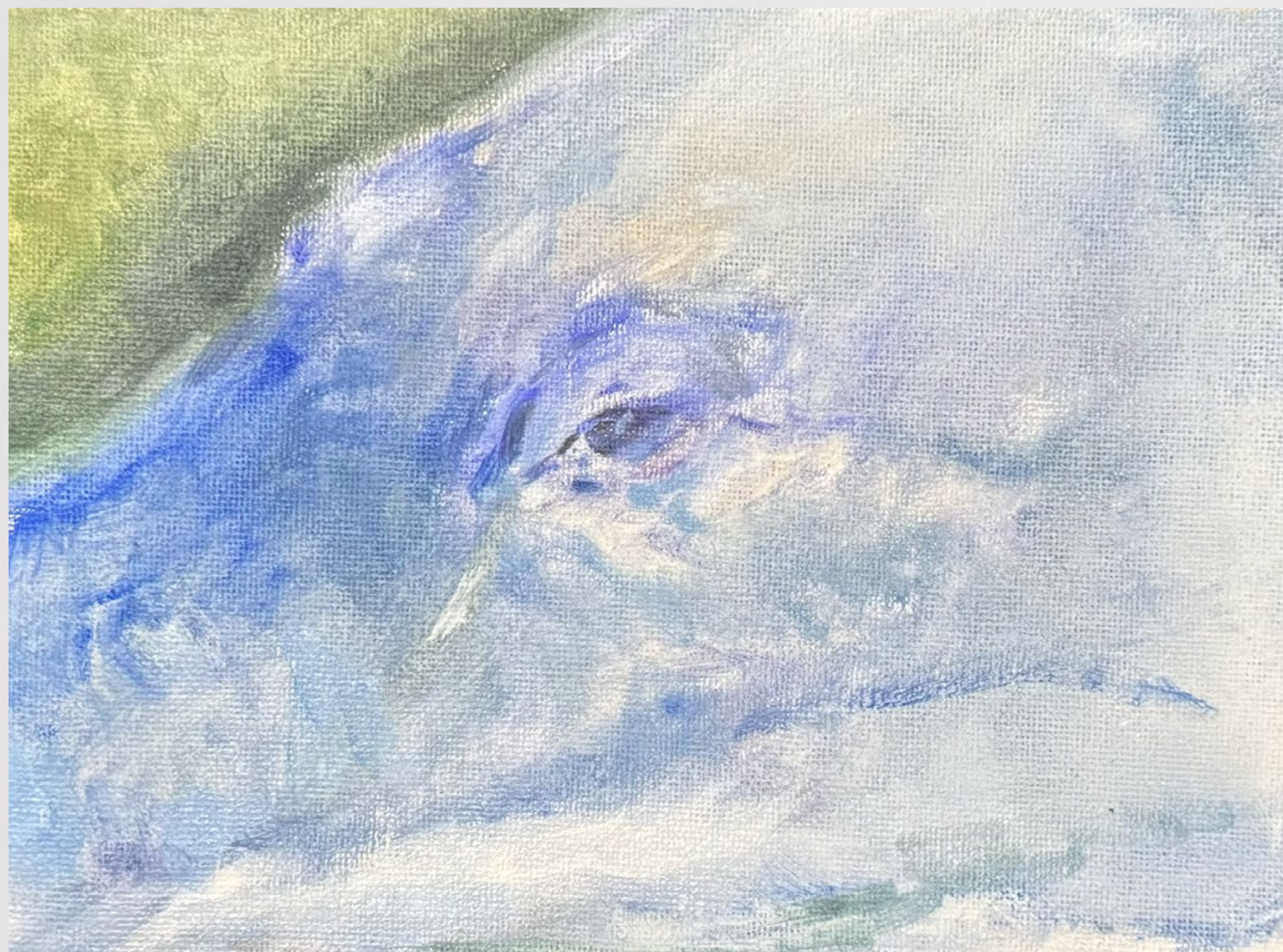
Goûter 1 / Tasting 1
Painting on canvas, 50 × 50 cm, 2026



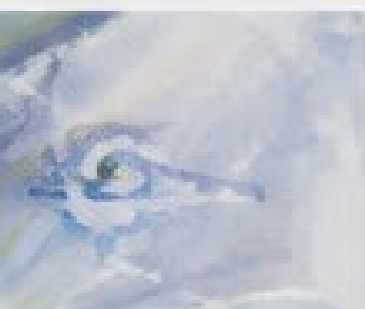
Les fenêtres (dans un restaurant chinois) / Windows (in a Chinese Restaurant)
 Painting on canvas, 60 × 70 cm and 50 × 50 cm, 2025

Interlude: Chinese Restaurant Window

Chinese restaurants in France are both familiar and strange to me. Orchids, flowers, red decorations and landscape images repeatedly construct a recognisable image of "China". I began copying some of these visual elements into the paintings. This part of the series moves away from the kitchen itself and looks at how Chinese food is surrounded, displayed and culturally recognised elsewhere.



Un crocodile en train de manger / A Crocodile Eating
 Painting on canvas, 20 × 15 cm, 2026



Un crocodile en train de manger

Peinture sur toile
 20 x 15 cm
 2026



Les yeux de l'instinct / The Eyes of Instinct
Painting on canvas, 24 × 30 cm, 2026

Photo retouched



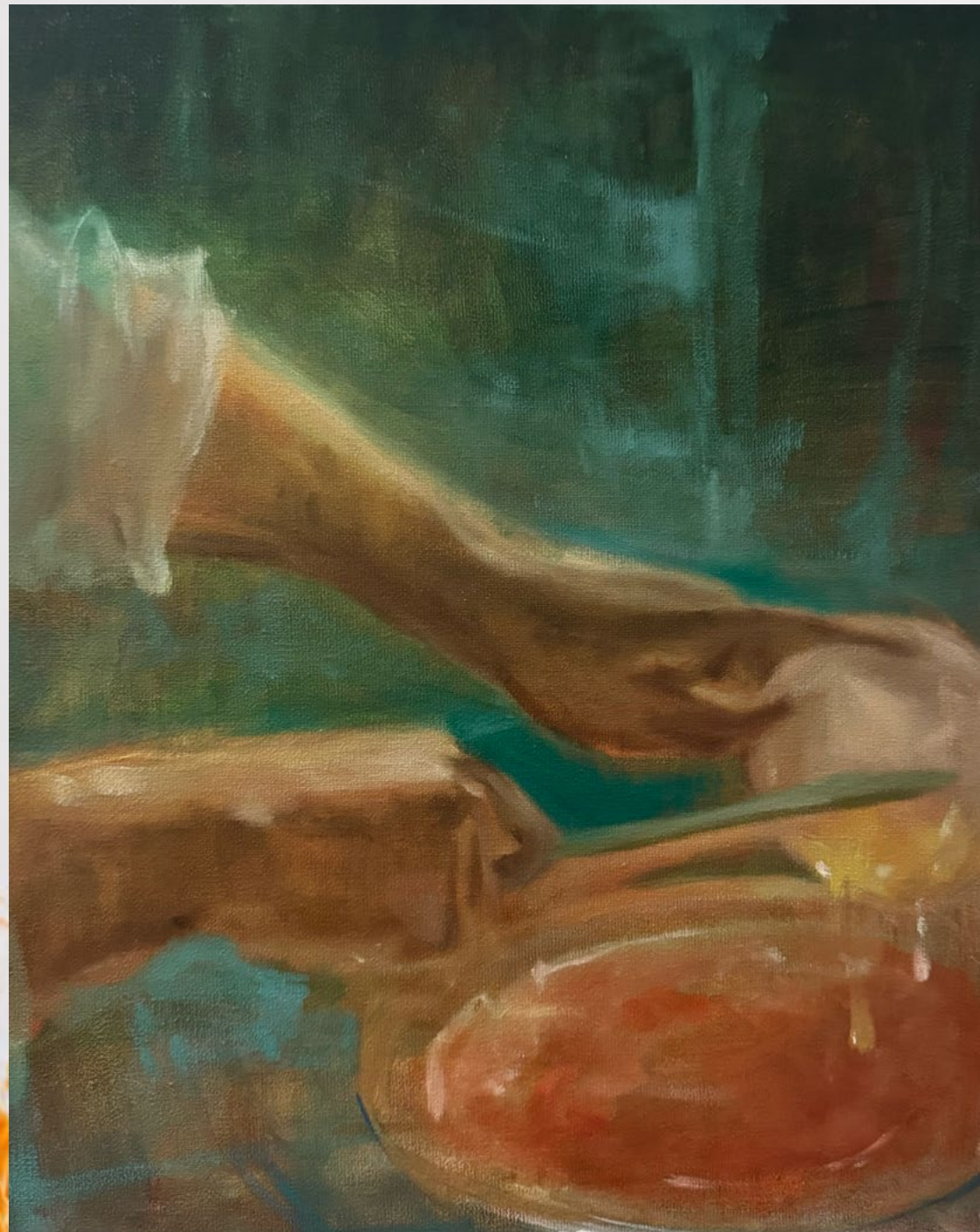
Les yeux de l'instinct
Painting on canvas
24x30 cm
2026



Les yeux de l'instinct
Painting on canvas
24x30 cm
2026

Second Dish: Tomato and Egg

Tomato and egg is one of the simplest and most familiar dishes in China. It often appears at family meals and is also one of the first dishes many Chinese students cook after moving abroad. Even this simple recipe changes from one household to another through small decisions of order, sweetness and texture. Its red and yellow also open an unavoidable visual association with the Chinese flag. For me, however, it remains first of all an ordinary food whose meaning changes once it is eaten far from home.



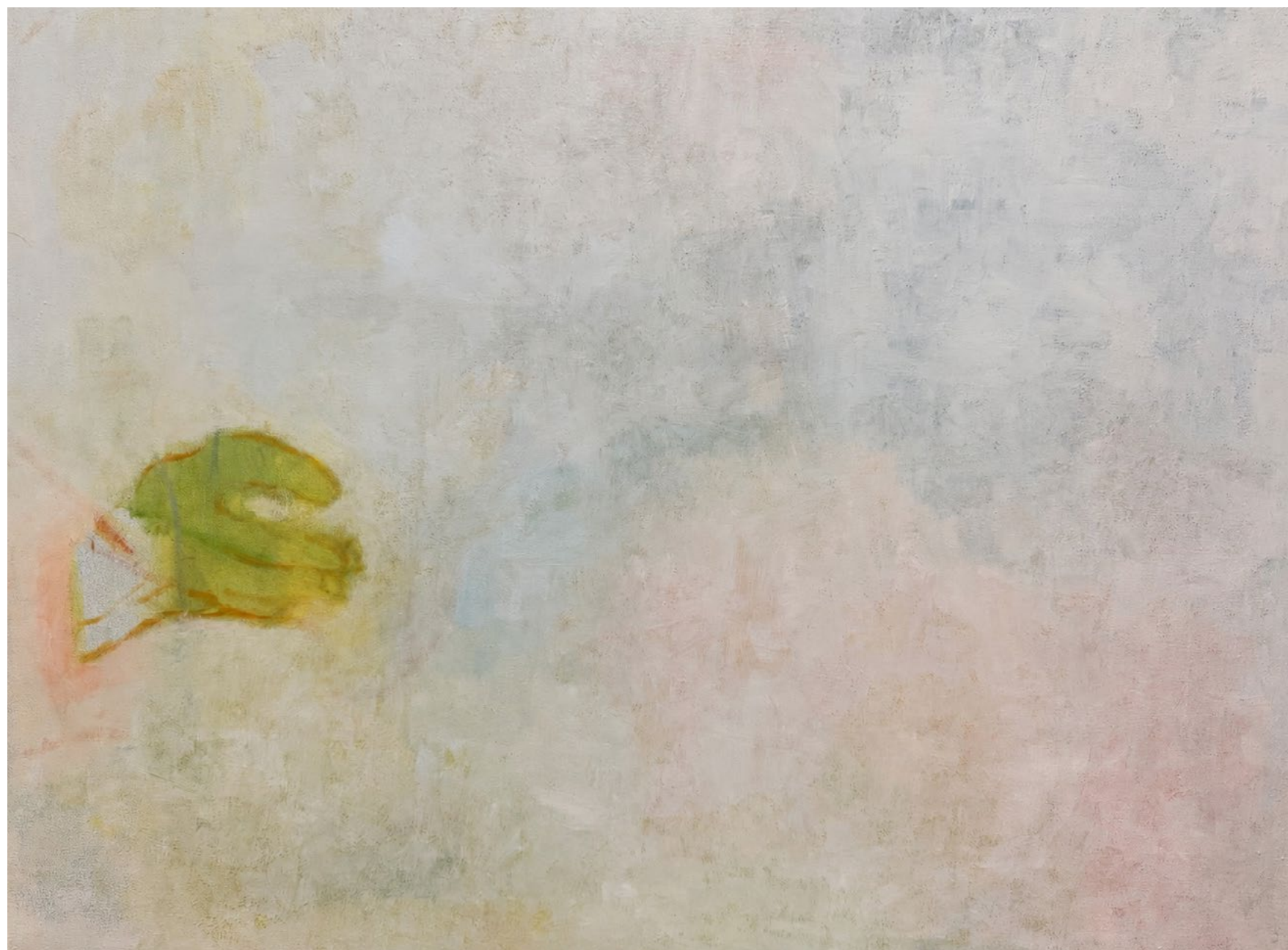
Les mains 1 / Hands 1
Painting on canvas, 50 x 40 cm, 2026



Des œufs battus / Beaten Eggs
Painting on canvas, 15 x 15 cm, 2026



Là où tu regardais en mangeant / Where You Looked
While Eating
Painting on canvas, 30 × 30 cm, 2026



Chanter quand il prend un verre / Singing While Having a Drink
Painting on canvas, 60 × 70 cm, 2026



Porter les choses disparues (Carrying What Has Disappeared)

Participatory performance in public space, 20 min., Lieshi Park, Changsha, China, 2026.

Porter les choses disparues begins with a simple proposition: to carry something that is no longer there.

In public space, passers-by are invited to lift, hold, move or pass on an invisible weight. Although no physical object is present, its weight gradually becomes perceptible through posture, effort, hesitation and the adjustments made between bodies.

Each participant may understand what is being carried differently: a memory, a pressure, a vanished place, a family history, or something that cannot easily be named. The work does not require these meanings to be explained or disclosed.

Through this simple collective action, the body becomes both a site of memory and a temporary material for absence. Carrying is no longer only an individual gesture: as the invisible weight moves between people, questions of transmission, responsibility, refusal and shared burden begin to emerge.





EL MAR MÁS PEQUEÑO DEL MUNDO

(The Smallest Sea in the World)

20 minutes

Participatory performance

Presented at Hospital de la Santísima Trinidad, Torrijos & Museo La Neomudéjar, Madrid 2026

The Smallest Sea in the World is a participatory performance exploring plastic as a material shaped by geological time, global circulation and human movement.

The transparent sheet, originally used to cover objects and protect them from dust, was carried by the artist from China to France and later to Spain. During the performance, the artist and the audience unfold it and hold it together at the level of their hearts. Their breath and subtle movements make its surface rise and fall, forming a fragile sea without water.

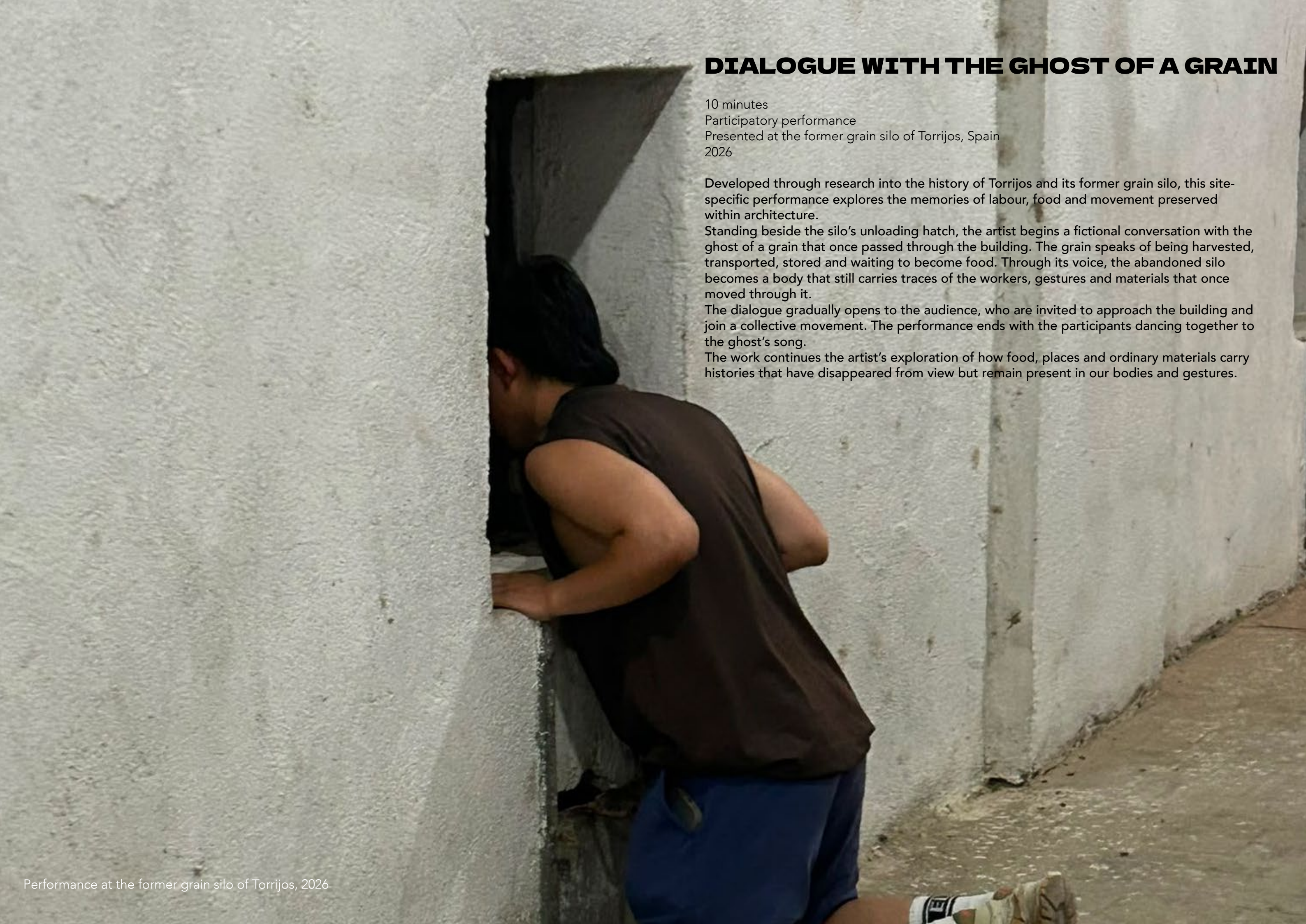
At the end, the participants fold and compress the moving surface into the smallest possible shape. An ancient sea transformed into petroleum, an object transported across borders and a temporary collective body are gathered into the same folds.



Performance at The Museo La Neomudéjar, 2026



Performance at Hospital de la Santísima Trinidad, 2026

A photograph of a person with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark brown sleeveless shirt and blue shorts. They are leaning their head and shoulders into a rectangular opening in a light-colored, textured wall. The person's arms are extended into the opening. The wall has a rough, plaster-like texture. The ground in the foreground is a light-colored, uneven surface.

DIALOGUE WITH THE GHOST OF A GRAIN

10 minutes

Participatory performance

Presented at the former grain silo of Torrijos, Spain

2026

Developed through research into the history of Torrijos and its former grain silo, this site-specific performance explores the memories of labour, food and movement preserved within architecture.

Standing beside the silo's unloading hatch, the artist begins a fictional conversation with the ghost of a grain that once passed through the building. The grain speaks of being harvested, transported, stored and waiting to become food. Through its voice, the abandoned silo becomes a body that still carries traces of the workers, gestures and materials that once moved through it.

The dialogue gradually opens to the audience, who are invited to approach the building and join a collective movement. The performance ends with the participants dancing together to the ghost's song.

The work continues the artist's exploration of how food, places and ordinary materials carry histories that have disappeared from view but remain present in our bodies and gestures.



Performance at the former grain silo of Torrijos, 2026

Being happy is just another way of crying

Performance
10 Minutes
2024

This performance draws inspiration from my professional experience and social observations.

In this absurd and theatrical piece, a performer—like a stand-up comedian—peels onions while crying and telling political jokes to console himself. The audience surrounds him, singing with ironic anger: "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands."

Meanwhile, a screen projects online searches about happiness: stories about the evolution of dogs, "the happiest people in the world," and the latest photographs of those who have taken their own lives.

In this theater of contradictions, happiness becomes the stone of Sisyphus.

The opposition between happiness and unhappiness resembles homeopathy: we lie to ourselves, and yet, within this misery, we manage to find a strange form of joy.

As Camus said, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Can we too, in our collective rage, be truly happy in such a state—both real and surreal?



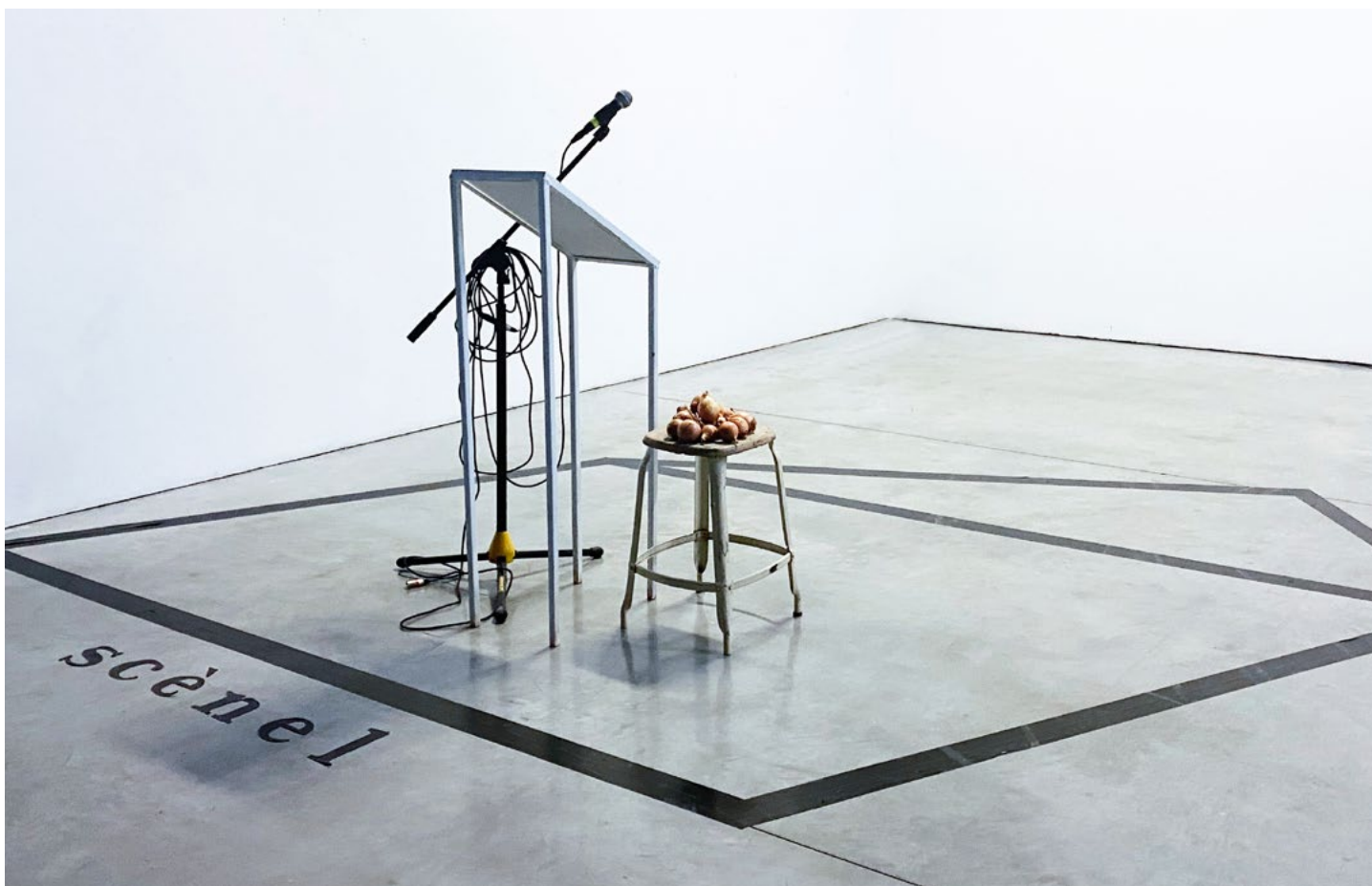
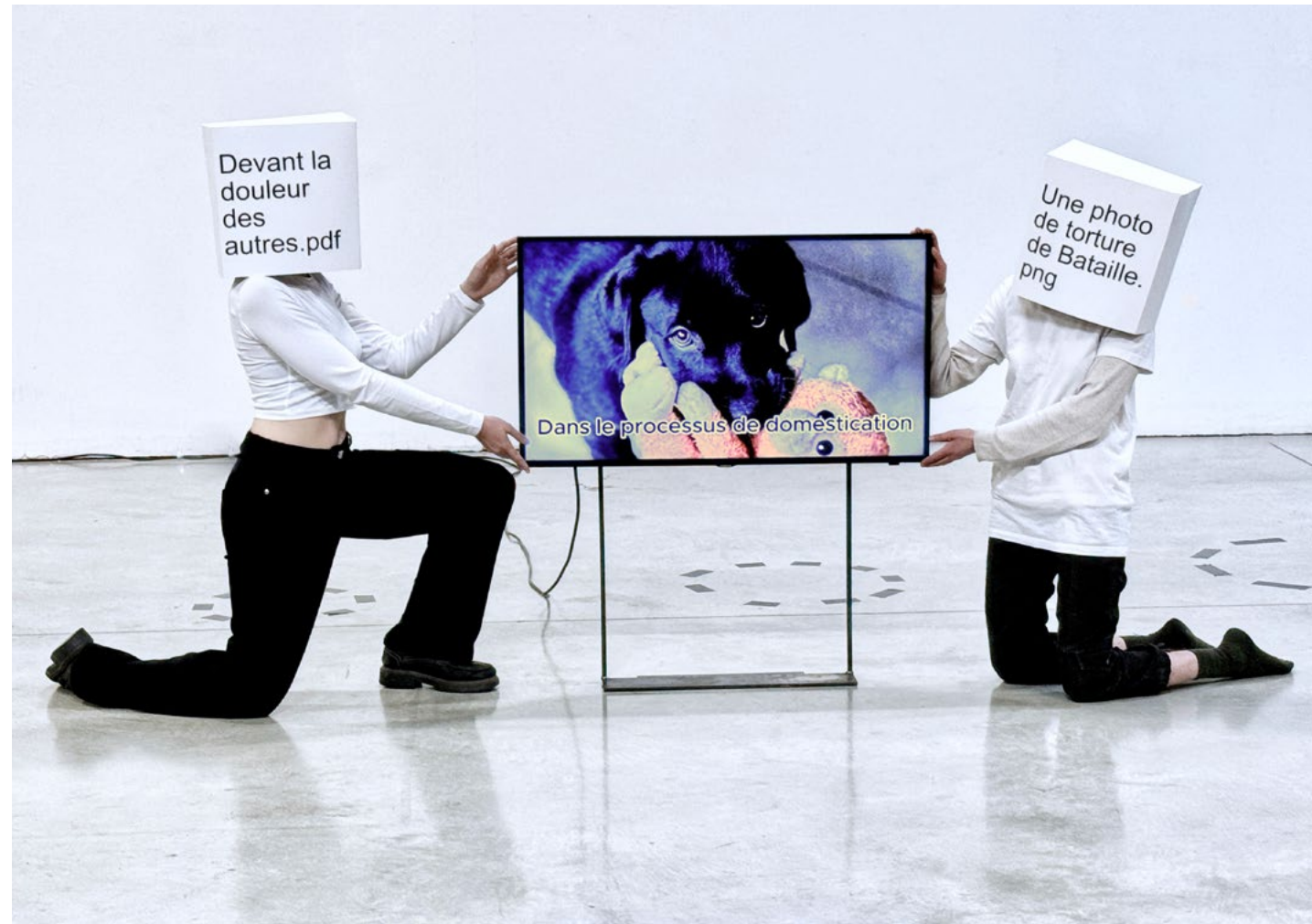
The research about the happiness Video 5min

Clips in the video : The Last Photo (ITV x CALM)



Poster





Homeopathy heals joy with diluted sadness;
we awaken reflection through jest,
and build a ritual of will to live out of death.

References

Raoul VANEIGEM. *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*. Paris : Gallimard, 1967.

Albert CAMUS. *L'Homme révolté*. Paris : Gallimard, 1951.

Susan SONTAG. *Devant la douleur des autres*. Paris : Christian Bourgois Éditeur, 2003.

Wikipedia contributors. "Homeopathy." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, dernière modification : juillet 2025.

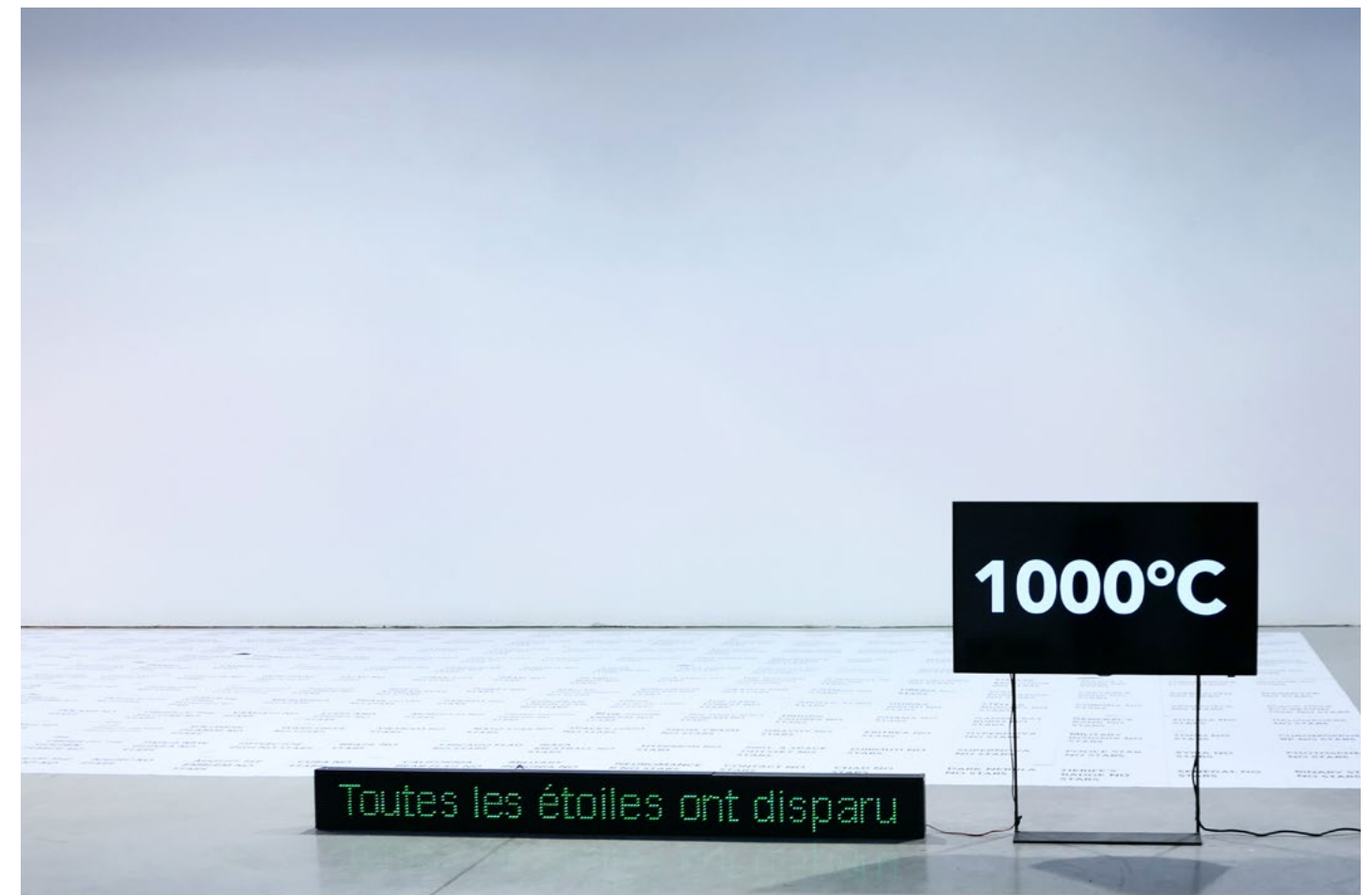
Slavoj ŽIŽEK. *Žižek's Jokes: (Did You Hear the One about Hegel and Negation?)*. Edited by Audun Mortensen. Cambridge (MA) : The MIT Press, 2014.

Samuel HAHNEMANN, *Organon of the Medical Art*. 6e édition, Hahnemann Publishing, 1842.

Là où toutes les étoiles ont disparu

(Where All the Stars Have Disappeared)

Installation et Performance
300 papers A3 , LED screen, 21' Screen
Variable dimension
10-15 Min performance
2025



How can we imagine a world where all the stars have disappeared?
Those on flags, those on monuments, those of our cultural constellations.
Like my blurred political identity, like the people uprooted by war whose nationality fades away, the stars that once guided navigation and illuminated our civilization are now drowned out by the roar of weapons.
In this stage installation, documents related to stars cover the ground.
On a screen laid over white paper, a narrative poem about war scrolls by.
Together, they construct the negative of a world — a place we are slowly forgetting.
Even the metaphor linking the stars to each individual is fading.
As if we could no longer imagine the disappearance of all stars — even as it is truly happening.
In the vast and enduring history of humanity, loss is a theme that continually slips from our memory.
Only by revisiting and restoring these vanished fragments — these stories and figures like extinguished stars — can the common sky above our heads once again be constellated with light.
In these times marked by conflict and the clamor of arms, this search brings us together — and it is precisely this that peace reminds us of.





Poster

The pain traced by borders, the flags, and the stars that adorn them.

It resembles a hereditary scar,
which, without hesitation, reminds me —
that we, that they, are made of pain.

Christian Boltanski – *Les Archives de Cœur* / Monumenta 2010
Doris Salcedo – *Shibboleth* (2007, Tate Modern)
Cornelia Parker – *Explosions, suspended objects*
Ryoji Ikeda – *Data-driven installations*
Haruki Murakami – *La Fin des temps*



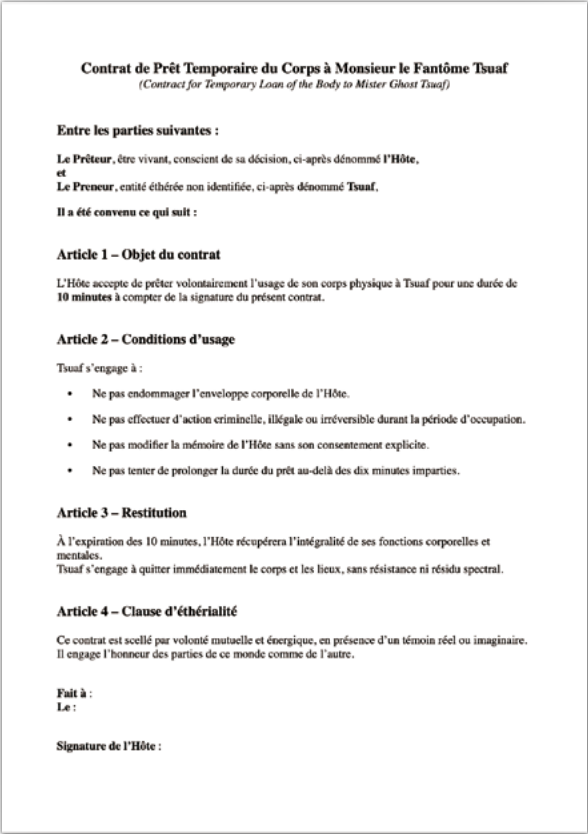
Presented at the Mulhouse Biennale, 2025.



Presented at the Rothko Museum alongside paintings by Yves Brayer, 2026.

La bonne manière de poser des questions

Performance
10 Minutes
2025
@ Bibliothèque d'Ensad Limoges



The contract for the performance

Muß es sein ?
Through this classic existential question, I seek to reveal the possibility of the return of what has been excluded from contemporary life and secular thought.
We should imagine a discipline without discipline, a freedom beyond freedom, a modernity prior to modernity.
In this performance, the performers settle within a library — that sacred site of knowledge — and use a traditional divinatory tool, the Ouija (or “spirit of the pen”), to interrogate a trilingual dictionary.
The questions they ask arise from current social issues and classical reflections on art.
They then invoke a spirit: Monsieur Tsuaf, the great ghost of the library, to whom each performer is contractually bound to complete the ritual.
When the answers no longer rely on institutional knowledge or dominant disciplines, are they a form of spectral poetry?
Or rather, the manifestation of an unknown law — one that lies beyond the human?
Before modernization, there may already have been that which comes after.
This is my answer to Bruno Latour.
Es muss sein !



Muß es sein?
Jahrgang / von Geburt an / groß und dick
Qui sommes-nous ?
Riddler / Anaphora / flötteur
D'où venons-nous ?
économiste / Riddler / inhumain
Où allons-nous ?
médaille / œuvre / produit
Qu'est-ce que l'art ?
nouvelle / la / récemment
Quel est le sens de la guerre ?
vous avez jusqu'à / chose la / est pas
Y aura-t-il vraiment des extraterrestres ?
d'abord pour / facile / cède
Les numéros gagnants du prochain tirage du loto ?
fêter / être / année
Le moment du prochain assassinat de Trump ?
de la musique / en France / haute
Où est la fin du monde ?
Budgetierung / disposition / matière

Les réponses

- Les questions
- 1 Muß es sein?
 - 2 Qui sommes-nous ?
 - 3 D'où venons-nous ?
 - 4 Où allons-nous ?
 - 5 Qu'est-ce que l'art ?
 - 6 Quel est le sens de la guerre ?
 - 7 Y aura-t-il vraiment des extraterrestres ?
 - 8 Les numéros gagnants du prochain tirage du loto ?
 - 9 Le moment du prochain assassinat de Trump ?
 - 10 Où est la fin du monde ?



In this speculative theatre, buyers and sellers endlessly confront each other on an oversaturated NFT market. Transactions unfold at a dizzying pace — until an unknown virus infects everyone. When the dust settles over a ruined world, only one figure remains standing: a stylish trader, calmly boarding his rocket to settle on Mars. Through this performance, I question the chaotic structure of the contemporary digital art market, the absurdity of its speculative logic, and the way technological capitalism...

Elo Mask VS. Zombie

Performance
7minutes
2022



Scene 2

Scene 1

In this performance, I simultaneously distribute handmade indulgences of negative face value, both online and in public spaces.

Drawing from the history of debt, I question the contemporary form of indulgences — documents that first appeared in the Middle Ages in relation to forgiveness and the commodification of salvation. This simple gesture opens a critical discussion on money, guilt, moral and economic debt, as well as the effects of current inflation.

By introducing notes of negative value, I interrogate the very fiction of exchange: in a world where both forgiveness and suffering can be sold, what is the worth of a gesture without profit? Who pays, and why?

Indulgence VS. Dette

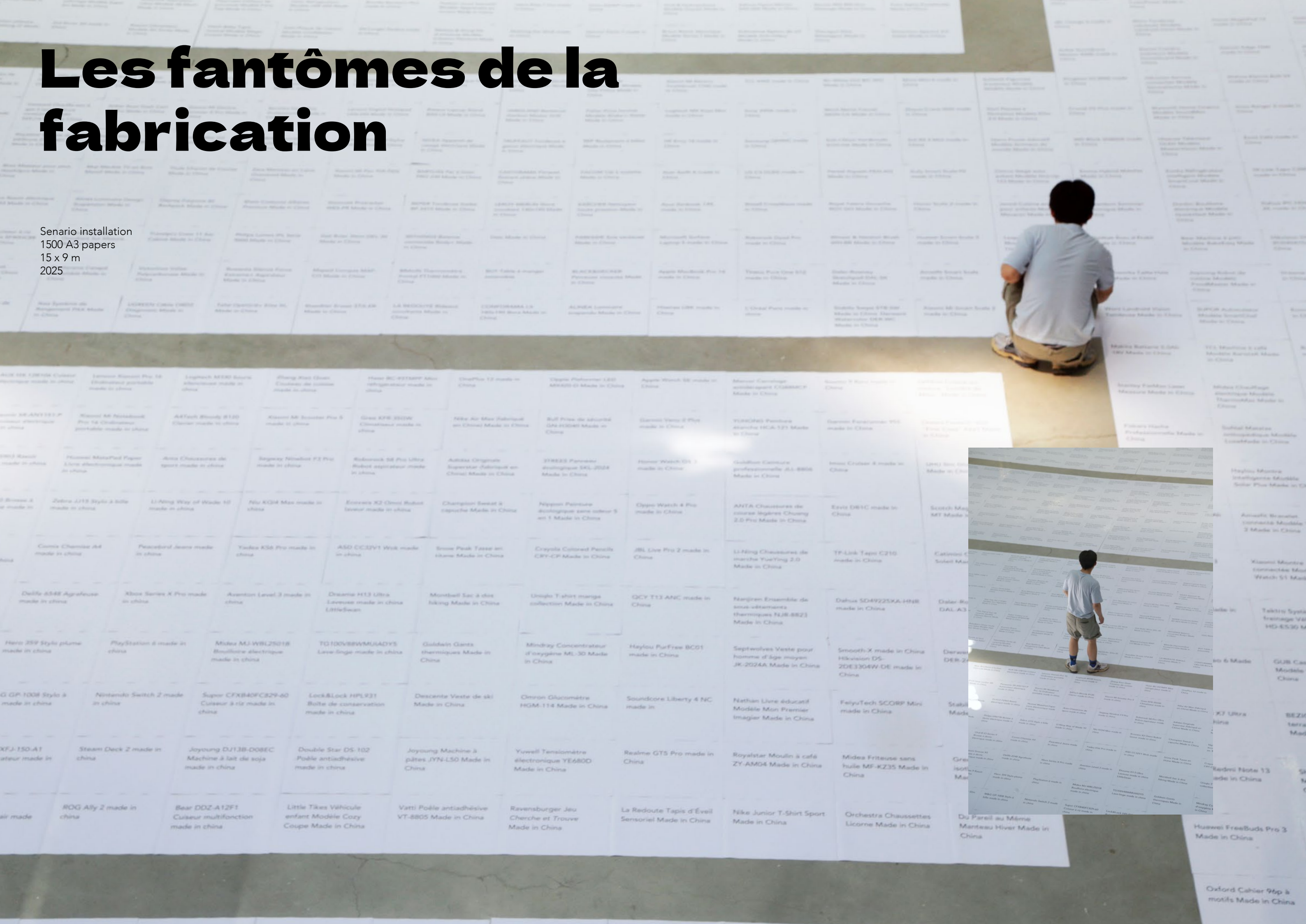
Performance
9 heure (9:09-18:18) et en ligne sur Instagram
2022



installations

Les fantômes de la fabrication

Scénario installation
1500 A3 papers
15 x 9 m
2025



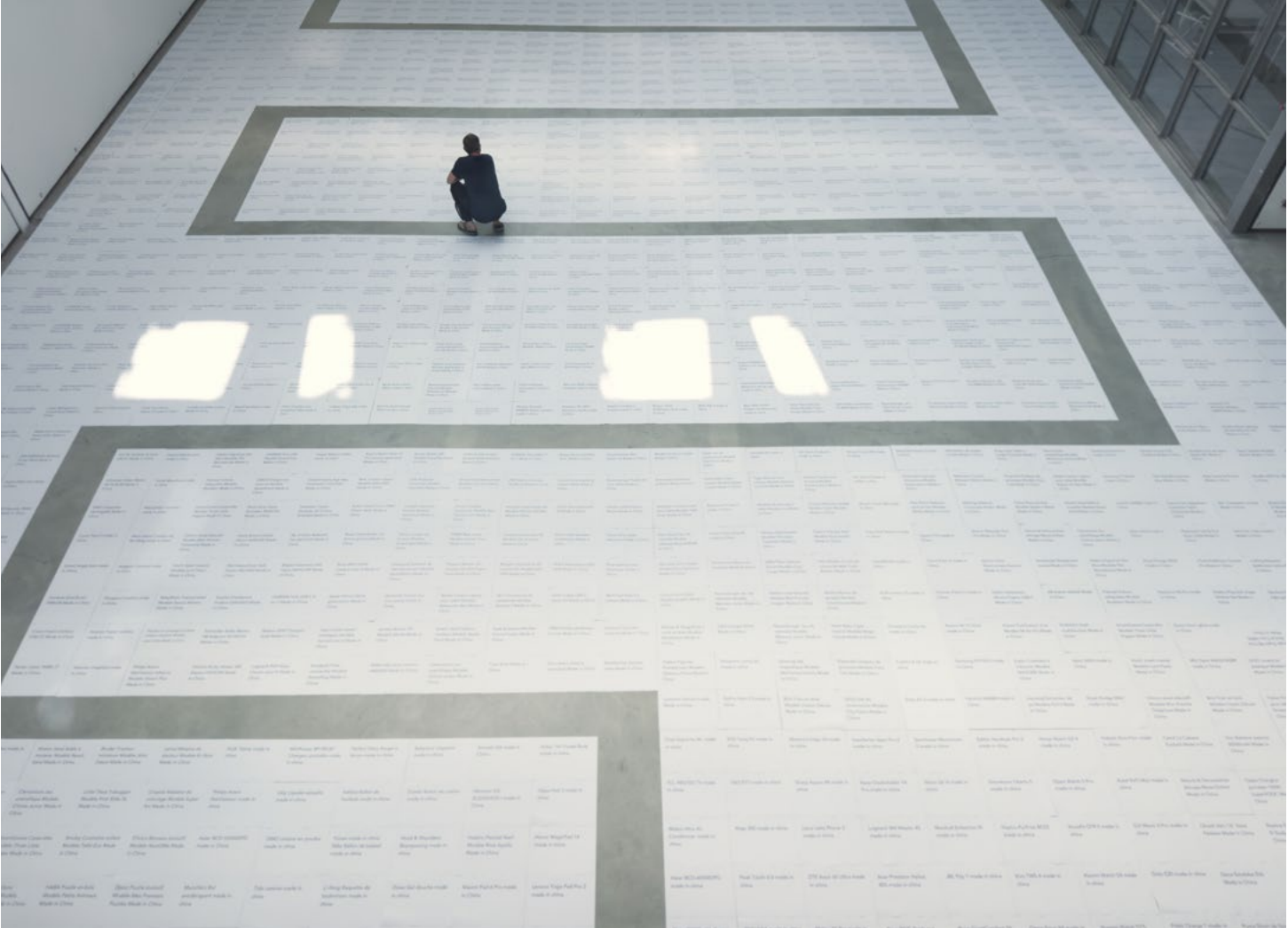
One day, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, underprivileged children in Africa received backpacks donated by the United States. Printed on the bags were Japanese manga characters, while a small label read: “Made in China.”

What interested me was not the label itself, but the constellation of invisible lives hidden behind it. The image revealed a world in which objects travel across continents, cultures, and generations, while the people who produce, transport, repair, and use them gradually disappear from view. This installation brings together more than 1,500 objects, events, and fragments of stories connected to contemporary histories of production. Displayed on an equal number of sheets laid across the floor, they form a paper landscape without beginning or end: a fragmented archive that visitors navigate physically. Like Borges’ The Book of Sand, each fragment can become the starting point of a different narrative. Together they suggest a vast network of circulation in which objects often outlive their makers. Products remain visible; the workers, drivers, machinists, farmers, technicians, and countless others whose labour sustained them slowly fade from collective memory. The work is conceived as an unfinished cartography of disappearance. Through their movement, memories, and personal associations, visitors are invited to extend this map and reflect on the invisible relationships that connect individual lives to global systems of production.

Rather than telling the history of objects, the installation asks a different question: what happens to the people who made the world once the world no longer remembers them?



Photography of White Paper Protests, 2022, China



This installation takes the form of a house inhabited by three generations of the same family. Through a television set, a sofa, work clothes, tools, and ordinary domestic objects, visitors encounter traces left behind by people whose lives were shaped by the transformations of industrialisation: a textile worker, a toolmaker, a farmer. Using augmented reality environments reconstructed from scans of real spaces, rooms gradually reappear as visitors move through them. The house becomes a living archive where personal histories intersect with broader economic and social transformations. Rather than focusing on what was manufactured, the installation centres on those who made manufacturing possible. It invites visitors into the spaces where labour was lived daily and where large historical shifts took the form of ordinary routines, gestures, relationships, and memories. The work explores the distance between the visibility of products and the invisibility of the people behind them. While objects continue to circulate, the lives that produced them often disappear from historical narratives. As visitors move through the house, they become temporary custodians of these fragmented memories. The installation asks how personal histories survive after the individuals who carried them have vanished, and how domestic spaces can preserve traces of lives that history has overlooked.

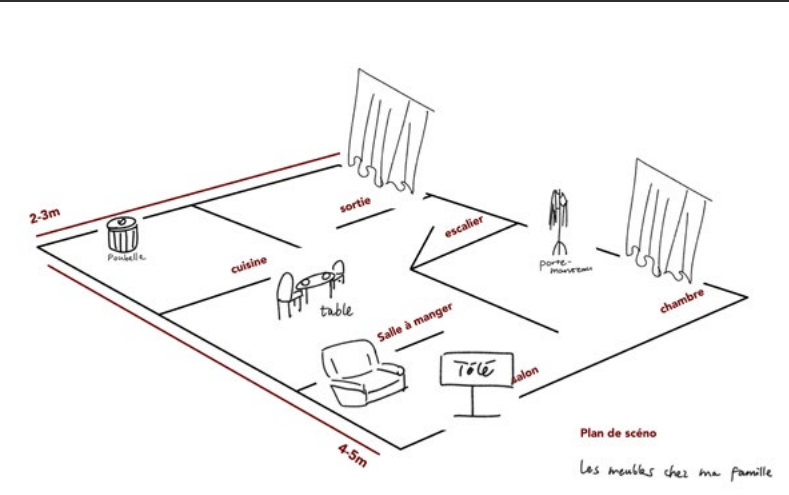
La Maison des fabricants

S nario installation with video and AR (augmented reality)
Variable dimension
2024



Exploration with AR





Real scene map



Expo À(f)faire, à suivre.version



Details in the 3D scene with interaction (living room)



Full augmented reality map generated by 3D scanning



Langue des anges

(Researche in progress)

Ceramics, oil painting and sound intsallation
444 x 333 cm
2025



Oh sacred images,
I offer you the tongues of angels as a sacrifice.
Appear again please.



In *The Christ Appearing to the Virgin* by Juan de Flandes, delicate parchment scrolls float slowly through the air, defying the laws of physics and modern logic, making visible the sacred words exchanged between Jesus and the Virgin.

From the 19th and 20th centuries onward, these scrolls evolved into speech bubbles in comic books. Once sacred objects in Jewish tradition, then floating elements in Renaissance paintings, they have become, in contemporary digital interfaces, standardized frames for communication. The form of the speech scroll gradually detached from religious iconography to enter the visual vocabulary of secular societies and popular culture.

As a visual device, it establishes a paradigm of language and dialogue while standing at the boundary between image and text. It materializes narrative through gestures, postures, directions, and material supports. In this dual-sided structure, I seek to explore the religious disenchantment evident in the transformation of these forms, as well as the moments of re-enchantment in contemporary society — cyclical forms of the return of the divine.

I am also interested in the evolution of relationships between text, image, and symbol in religious iconography and contemporary visual culture, particularly in the digital age, where these elements are recomposed, disarticulated, and intertwined anew.

Through this series of works, I employ ceramics — a traditional and symbolic medium — combined with the off-screen voice, to construct a narrative at the threshold of the real and the cultural imaginary, where everyday experiences meet visions of the sacred.



Christ Appears to the Virgin with the Elect of the Old Testament
Juan de Flandes
Painting on wood
Between 1499 and 1500
London, The National Gallery



**# Mythologies, intelligence artificielle
et corps post-humain**

vidéos

La machine qui transcende tout

(The machine that transcends everything)

Video
5min
2023



I tried to retell a Chinese origin myth through a short film: the ancient story of the goddess Nuwa, who created humans from clay. The metaphor of human creation continues to resonate to this day. Perhaps we can imagine a near future in which artificial intelligence attempts to create humans by copying itself, while, conversely, humans strive to become artificial intelligence.

<https://youtube.com/@zozozenzen>



Capture de la vidéo

Quand tes mains, tes yeux et ton cœur se posent à nouveau au même endroit

(When your hand your eyes, and your heart settle once again in the same place)

Video
16min
2024

This film is a journey of returning to myself — a lyrical prose written both for family and for strangers.

The camera drifts through small towns and large cities, wandering the streets, markets, kitchens, and around mah-jong tables, following the subtle rhythms of parents, grandparents, and loved ones. It captures the delicate traces of a changing era: from factory layoffs to mobile payments, from coal to seeds, from working the land to life in high-rises.

Gently, the film poses this question: how can we remember those seemingly insignificant moments that quietly shape our lives?

When hands, eyes, and hearts return once again to the same place.

<https://youtube.com/@zozozenzen>



Comment imagines-toi ta vie, au milieu d'une myriade de personnes ?

Capture de la vidéo

Repeating without end

Nearly identical, Footprints

Short
10min
2025

Projet: <https://www.zhenyuwu.com>



The film does begin with a trace.

Through the AI-based reconstruction of archives from lost expeditions, it revisits the myth of the yeti — from protective spirit to media specter, from footprint to simulacrum.

As the archives dissolve into data, the work questions how we name, classify, and domesticate what eludes us — nature, myth, or memory itself.

Interwoven with the history of the Inuit and the disappearance of the Arctic landscape, this meditation explores extinction, repetition, and the uncertain boundary between human and image.



Photograph of the first presumed Yeti footprints (1937), taken by Frank S. Smythe and published in Popular Science in 1952



Video still