

[PRESS KIT]

23.05–31.07.2026

If words are to be sounded

Pierre Allain
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha
Claire Fontaine
Shadi Harouni
Mira M. Yang

An international co-production; a travelling exhibition
between CAP • Centre d'art de Saint-Fons, GAK Bremen (DE),
and Le 19, Crac Montbéliard (FR).

Open Tuesday to Friday, 12 noon–6 pm, and Saturday, 2 pm–6 pm
Free admission | lecap-saintfons.com  

© Shadi Harouni, / Dream the Mountain is Still Whole, 2017



Centre d'art
de Saint-Fons

As part of the PERSPEKTIVE fund for contemporary art & architecture,
an initiative of the Bureau des arts plastiques of the Institut français
d'Allemagne. Supported by the French Ministry of Culture, the Institut
français de Paris and the Goethe Institut



If words are to be sounded

**Pierre Allain, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,
Claire Fontaine, Shadi Harouni, Mira M. Yang**



An international co-production; a travelling exhibition between the CAP • Centre d'art de Saint-Fons, the GAK in Bremen (Germany) and Le 19, Crac Montbéliard (France).

Fruit of a cross-border collaboration between CAP • Saint-Fons, GAK Bremen and Le 19, Crac Montbéliard, the exhibition explores language as a space of tension, circulation and transformation.

What remains when words lose their meaning, when language is no longer enough to create a shared world? Drawing on the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, artists and curators examine what endures amidst the loss of familiar landmarks. Between poetry, image and performance, language becomes a material — fragile, political, alive. *If words are to be sounded* opens up new paths, tracing other forms of listening, of connection and shared meaning.

Curated by Annette Hans, Adeline Lépine-Delaborde, Alessandra Prandin.

As part of the PERSPEKTIVE fund for contemporary art & architecture, an initiative of the Bureau des arts plastiques of the Institut français d'Allemagne. Supported by the French Ministry of Culture, the Institut français de Paris and the Goethe Institut



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DURING THE EXHIBITION

23.05 — 31.07.2026

Press preview

→ Friday, May 22
2:00 PM — 4:00 PM
Press reception, coffee,
and exhibition tour

[Double opening]

→ Saturday, May 23
3:00 PM — 8:00 PM
Exhibitions opening

• *If words are to be sounded*

Pierre Allain, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Claire Fontaine, Shadi Harouni, Mira M. Yang
+ Sound performance — proposed by Pierre Allain

• *L'éclair ne trace pas de ligne droite*

Celebrating CAP's Artothèque: an exhibition featuring works of the CNAP *Natures diverses commission*, produced with the support of Centre national des arts plastiques

Performance *BLEAH!!!*

Annamaria Ajmone & Laura Agnusdei
→ Saturday, June 6 at 5:00 PM

In partnership with Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano Bozen and the Italian Council

+ Book presentation: Lucia Marcucci. Tutto qui?

→ Friday, June 5 at 6:30 PM
at the Italian Cultural Institute in Lyon

Family tours [free]

→ Saturday, May 30 at 2:30 PM
→ Fridays, July 10, 17, and 24 at 2:30 PM

Foreign Language Tours [free]

EN → Saturdays, June 6 and 27, and Saturday, July 18 at 4:00 PM
IT, ES → Saturdays, June 13 and July 11
2:30 PM — Italian
4:30 PM — Spanish

BLEAH!!! is supported by the General Directorate for Contemporary Creation of the Italian Ministry of Culture as part of the Italian Council program (13th edition, 2024), which aims to promote Italian contemporary art worldwide.



Exhibition

In 2024, an informal collective conversation began between Annette Hans, Adeline Lépine, and Alessandra Prandin — directors, respectively, of GAK Bremen, Le 19, Crac Montbéliard, and CAP • Saint-Fons — sparked by their shared interest in the various forms and circulations of the notion of “value”. Over the following months, their exchanges centered on the link between speech, communication, value, and language, as well as the social and cultural challenges their three institutions face in their respective contexts. It was a time of forbidden words, of language quickly co-opted in the public sphere, and of intense political and cultural debate. It was a time when new, more striking fractures emerged, intensifying notions of isolation and distance, and constantly questioning our relationship to words, both past and present.

A Co-produced Project and National/International Itinerancy

If words are to be sounded is a Franco-German project jointly produced by CAP • Saint-Fons, Le 19, Crac Montbéliard, and GAK Bremen. It examines language as a social contract and a performative medium of the imaginary. In collaboration with guest artists, and taking the poetic and artistic practice of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha as a starting point, the exhibition explores the possibilities of challenging this “distance” through transnational collaboration.

It is through language that individuals attempt to make sense of the world, establish rules, and communicate. It simultaneously enables and regulates social existence. It conveys values and demands constant translation. It is intimately linked to bodies, identities, and environments. Language is both sign and image. Yet, if language no longer serves as the foundation of a society and shared values are lost — even as we continue to believe it provides a concrete landmark — where might new proximities and meanings emerge?

The project explores the shared challenges and objectives of these French and German institutions within their specific contexts: from the production to the presentation of art in relation to their respective audiences. Automobile industry and rurality in Montbéliard, chemical plants in Saint-Fons, port industries in Bremen: it is from these local conditions, embedded in contexts of migration, post-industrialization,

and restructuring, that this collaboration interrogates the links between its constituent structures.

For this exhibition, artists were invited to consider these questions through the lens of language, specifically in relation to these three sites that are simultaneously close and distinct. By making visible the links between word, embodiment, and imagination, the exhibition explores the possibilities that emerge when these aspects are considered together, across languages and borders.

The Exhibition: If words are to be sounded

The exhibition takes place over the year 2026—2027, with the opening of the exhibition cycle at CAP•Saint-Fons in the summer, followed by GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen in September 2026, and finally at Le 19, Crac Montbéliard in 2027.

The exhibition takes its starting point in the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, whose artistic practice blurs the boundaries between conceptual art, literature, performance, and cinema. The interest and attention paid to the artist's work in recent years confirm the relevance and timeliness of her oeuvre, both poetic and performative. A performer and multimedia artist, Cha addresses themes of displacement, language, and intercultural identity through an interdisciplinary body of work. Her work traces feminist lineages at the intersection of several media, often constructed around the written word to highlight the capacity of language to shape identity, as well as its intrinsic limits.

Building on a collective reading of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's cult book, *Dictée* (1982)—a hybrid collage of poems, filmic narrations, texts, and found images—the exhibition opens perspectives on the materiality and physical presence of words, on their relationship to image, performance, value, and resistance.

The title of the exhibition, borrowed from a poem by the artist, provides the context: *If words are to be sounded*. What if we could make words resonate?

We invited and engaged in a dialogue with artists Pierre Allain, Claire Fontaine, Shadi Harouni, and Mira M. Yang to further explore the materiality and values of language. These artists trace proximities and complexities in accord with the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and the potential of the untranslatable. Traversed by questions of memory, borders, resistance, vulnerability, and transmission, the works gathered in the exhibition explore the possibility of a new social contract based on a redefinition of our relationships, the value of words, and our forms of collective attention.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's video work *Vidéoème*, as well as reproductions of her textual collages and a series of images from her famous performance *Passages* — from her collection held at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and Electronic Arts Intermix — constitute the foundation around which the exhibition is built.

With a commitment and attention to societal transformations, as well as the irony that characterizes their work, Claire Fontaine presents— alongside well-known works — *Human Colleagues*, a new piece specially produced for the exhibition, which marks the entry of artificial intelligence into the sphere of language and human-machine relations.

A form of incommunicability, the vulnerability of bodies, but also perception and listening in states of alteration or unconsciousness, are at the heart of Pierre Allain's inquiries. By repurposing materials from clinical and pharmaceutical contexts — super-absorbent polymers, ultrasound gel, electropolished steel — the artist highlights the vulnerability of bodies and the way they absorb, translate, or somatize the structures of exploitation in which they are embedded. Presented in the exhibition, an installation composed of steel tables covered with sound-absorbing materials creates an environment oscillating between industrial coldness and sensitive charge. A new sculpture with a minimalist appearance, from the artist's plastic repertoire, evolves with the meteorological variations of the environment in which it is installed.

Endangered or displaced languages, whose survival relies on oral transmission, are also at the heart of the work presented in the exhibition. The works of Kurdish-Iranian artist Shadi Harouni explore the political and poetic dimensions of language, with particular attention paid to Kurdish as a language marked by repression, exile, and diaspora.

The Owl Made a Nest in the Ruins of the Heart, the title of one of the films presented, borrows its name from a popular Kurdish poem transmitted through the Hawraman mountains and communities dispersed across the world.

New works specially produced for the exhibition continue the series initiated with the work *Xanî Xanî Xanî* and extend the artist's reflection on the links between language, territory, and resistance. They use texts and iconography from *Alfabe*, a Kurdish learning manual published in Turkey in 1968 by the writer Emîn Bozarslan, which was immediately banned by the authorities.

The relationship to memory, transmission, and exile constitutes one of the common threads running through the work of Mira M. Yang. With the video installation *mother may recall another* (2022), the artist revisits the story of Shim Cheong, a figure of Korean pansori — a tradition of sung storytelling born in the 17th century in connection with shamanic practices — in which a young woman sacrifices herself to the sea to restore the sight of her blind father. Interweaving ancestral narratives and memories of her own mother, the artist explores family transmissions, displacements, and memory constructions linked to exile.

By bringing different experiences of language, exile, and memory into dialogue, the exhibition opens a space for reflection on the way words, images, and bodies participate in building new forms of attention and coexistence, sometimes of resistance.

An exhibition curated by Annette Hans, Adeline Lépine-Delaborde and Alessandra Prandin.

Pierre Allain

Born in Nantes in 1998, lives and works in Paris. Pierre Allain's sculptures and installations focus on the latent power of language in the collective unconscious and how it affects our bodies, our lives, and our coexistence. Allain examines the abstraction and apparent neutrality with which language is reflected in materials and objects, both physically and psychologically, in an attempt to incorporate stigma and make it visible in the public sphere.

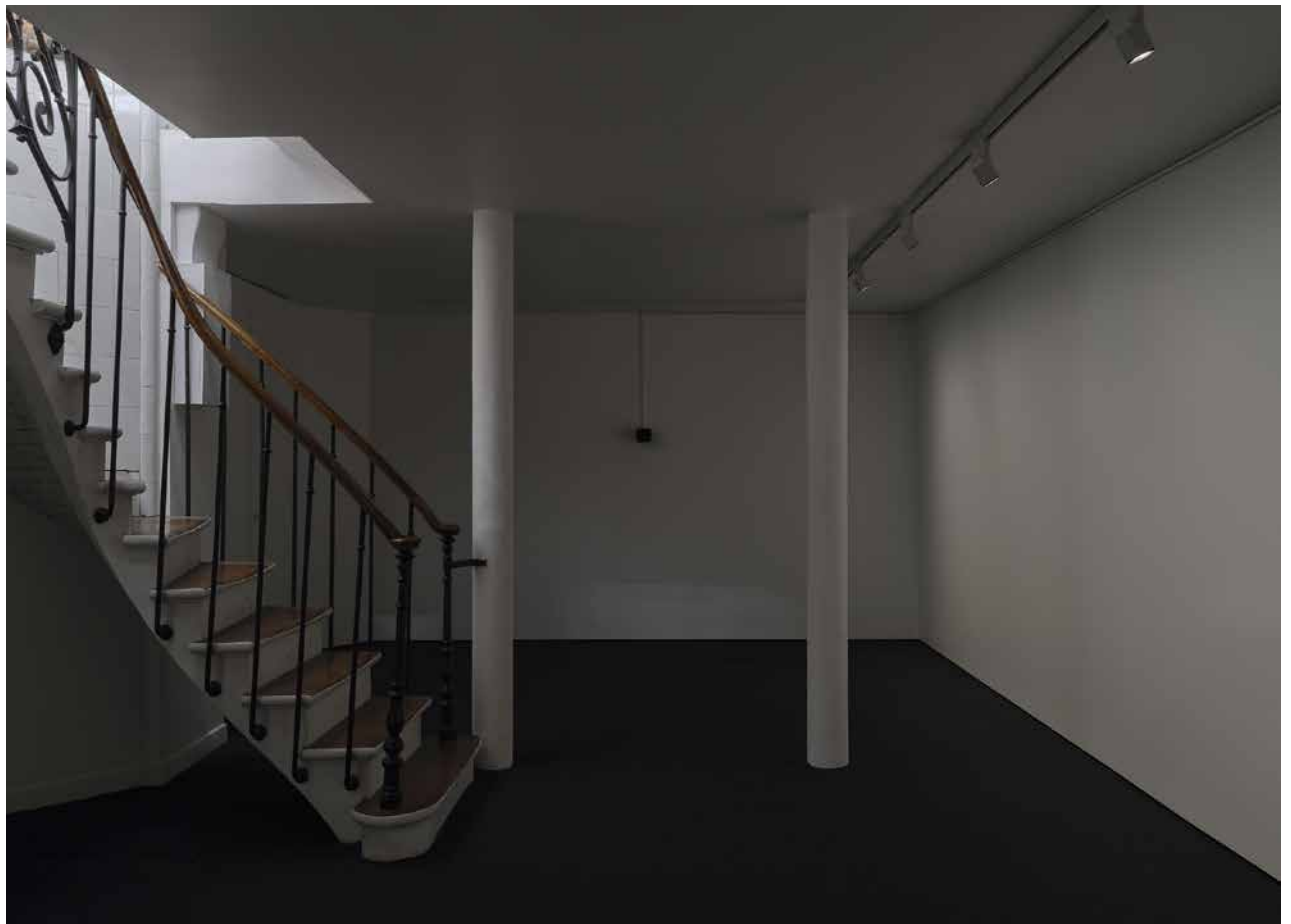
Through sound and surface, the artist attunes himself to the barely visible and audible, reflecting the absorption of traces, humanity, and repurposed uses. Whether through stainless steel surfaces, chemical substances that absorb and render other materials invisible, or deep sounds, Allain seeks to draw attention to what has been swallowed up or covered over.

His work has been presented at Petrine, Paris (2026), Petrine, Düsseldorf (2025); the 15th Kaunas Biennale, Kaunas (2025); Diana, Milan

(2025); No Name, Paris (2025); CAPC, Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2024); Cherry Hill, Cologne (2024); Petrine, Paris (2023); Frac Île-de-France, Romainville (2023); Frappant e.V., Hamburg (2023); 67th Salon de Montrouge (2023); Galerie Tator, Lyon (2023); CAP Saint-Fons, Saint-Fons (2022); Kunstverein Bielefeld, Bielefeld (2022).

He has held residencies at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris (2023) and the Salzburger Kunstverein in Salzburg (2022). From 2020 to 2023, he co-founded monopôle, an exhibition and workspace located in Lyon. Since 2025, he has been developing "Aléa," an exhibition program in collaboration with Antoine Dochniak. His work will soon be presented at Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne (2026).

→ Pierre Allain is represented by Petrine (Paris, Düsseldorf). Pierre Allain is a resident of Artagon studios (Pantin, Paris).



Pierre Allain, *Amplitude*, exhibition view at Petrine galerie, Paris, 2026 © Thomas Lannes

Shadi Harouni

Shadi Harouni (b. Hamedan, Iran) is a visual artist based in New York City.

Harouni's research and material investigations are rooted in disavowed histories of erasure and resistance that span from everyday acts of dissent to global mass movements, from modern revolutions in the Middle East to ancient transgressions in thought and poetry. Harouni's practice weaves together modes and media—film and photography, sculpture and site-specific interventions with text and folklore. She works with spaces, objects, and sentient subjects imbued with both the utopian dreams and broken promises of liberation and revolution. Harouni's films and photographs, set in time-worn dwellings, factories, and diminishing mountain quarries throughout her ancestral Kurdistan are

intimate studies of the histories of resistance in the region, centering the contributions of women to ongoing struggles for freedom and self-determination.

Harouni's projects have been exhibited at the Queens Museum (NY), Kunstmuseum Bonn (DE), Prague City Museum (CZ), Museo d'Arte Orientale (IT). She has been awarded prizes and residencies from the Gattuso Foundation, Civitella Ranieri Foundation, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She is a 2024-25 Guggenheim Fellow in Film-Video.

→ Harouni is an educator, Professor and Head of Video and Photography at New York University Steinhardt Department of Art. She is represented by Tiziana Di Caro.



Shadi Harouni, *The Owl's Made a Nest in the Ruins of the Heart*, 2021. UHD 4:3, Duration 19:00.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951, Busan, South Korea – November 5, 1982, New York City, US) was a Korean-American conceptual artist, writer, and filmmaker.

As a performance artist and multimedia artist, Cha explored themes of displacement, language, and intercultural identity through an interdisciplinary body of work.

After emigrating from South Korea to the United States, Cha enrolled in 1969 at UC Berkeley, where she studied art practice, comparative literature, and film. Keenly attuned to the active role that audiences play in the creation of meaning, she prioritized nonlinear narratives to allow for more open-ended forms of interpretation — what she termed a method of “Multiple Telling with Multiple Offering.”

Her work traces feminist lines at the intersection of multiple media, often built around the written word to highlight language’s

capacity to shape identity as well as its intrinsic limitations.

Cha’s poetic and eclectic writing—which tells the stories of different women whose lives, shaped by acts of dictation, have become an ongoing struggle extending into the present—navigates between memory and loss, through a continuous entanglement of words, languages, punctuation, and sounds, in order to capture, displace, and restore.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha was recently exposed at BAMPFA, US, becoming the first retrospective exhibition in twenty-five years dedicated to the groundbreaking work of the artist, whose interdisciplinary practice—blurring the boundaries between conceptual art, literature, and film—helped shape the experimental art scenes in San Francisco, New York City, and far beyond.



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Vidéoème*, 1976. Collection of the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Gift of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Memorial Foundation. © Regents of the University of California. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Mira M. Yang

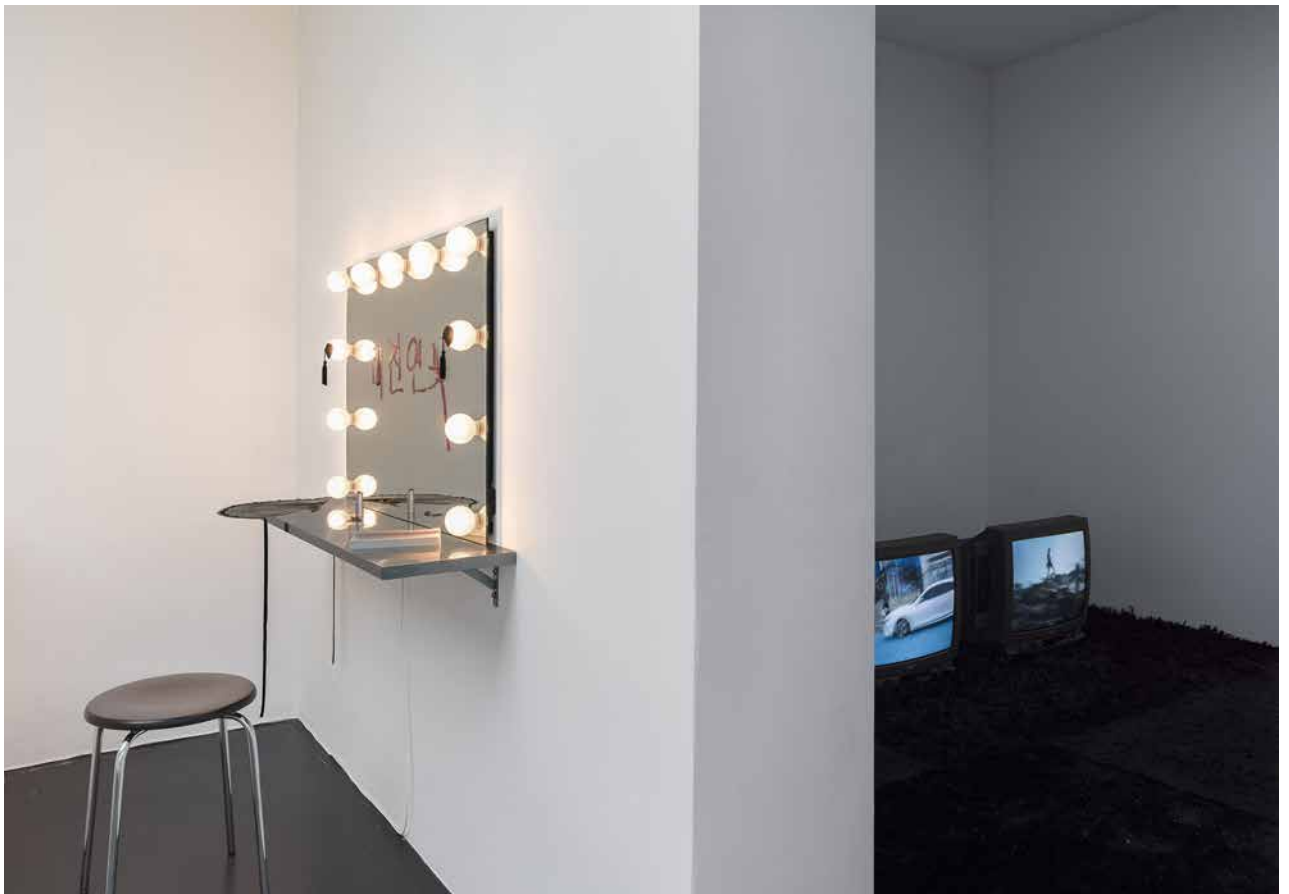
(b. 1993, Frankfurt, lives and works in Düsseldorf)

Mira M. Yang weaves together literature, ritual, and perspective in cinematic installations that lend presence and materiality to multiple temporalities. The artist connects past and present, memories and physical presence, in a play of proximity and distance, making the narrative potential of different languages tangible.

Their practice dwells in the ruptures between memory and experience, reality and fiction, that arise through transcultural relationships. Whether working with storytelling methods such as traditional Korean punmul or the anecdotes of their own Mother, M. Yang's practice visualises social structures, collective memory and the new narratives that emerge when identities and histories play, clash and intersect.

Their work has been exhibited and staged at DREI, Cologne (2025, 2022); K20, Düsseldorf (2024); the 15th Gwangju Biennale (2024); Shmorévaz, Paris (2024); Klosterruine Berlin (2024); IMAI Foundation, Düsseldorf (2024); KIT, Düsseldorf (2024); Gallery of the Bauhaus University, Weimar (2024); Friart, Fribourg (2024); N/A, Seoul (2024, 2023); Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2023); Frac île-de-France, Paris (2023); Heit, Berlin (2023); Brücke Museum, Berlin (2022); de Appel, Amsterdam (2022); Kunstverein Bielefeld (2022); Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2022); Lantz'scher Skulpturenpark, Düsseldorf (2021); PiK Deutz, Cologne (2021); Dortmunder Kunstverein (2021); Simultanhalle, Cologne (2020); and Kunsthalle Osnabrück (2019), among others.

→ They are recipient of the Peter Mertes Stipend 2025. Mira M. Yang is represented by DREI.



Mira M. Yang, *mother may recall another*, 2022. Exhibition view at Gallery Drei, Cologne, 2022.

Claire Fontaine

An artist collective consisting of Fulvia Carnevale and James Thornhill, founded in Paris in 2004 and based in Palermo.

Claire Fontaine explores the commodification of otherness through neon signs, sculptures, and paintings. Claire Fontaine often removes distinctive signs from their contexts in order to transpose them into artistic works and question their intrinsic meaning. Emoticons derived from digital communication or recently coined terms, for example, externalize states, reactions, and emotions through accessible, prefabricated symbols.

His recent publications include a 2022 interview with Iman Ganji and José Rosales titled *Foreigners Everywhere*, published by Diversity of Aesthetics, as well as a comprehensive collection of his writings published in 2020 under the title *Human Strike and the Art of Creating Freedom*, released by Semiotext(e) with a foreword by Hal Foster.

Among his recent solo exhibitions are: “Beauty is a Ready-made,” at Maison Hermès

Dosan Park, Seoul, 2024; “Star Reply Forward Copy Info Delete,” Memphis, Linz, Austria, 2022; “Siamo con voi nella notte,” Museo del 900, Florence, 2020; “I- WE-YES,” Studio Concreto, Lecce, Italy, 2020; “Your Money and Your Life,” Galerias Municipais, Lisbon, 2019; “La Borsa e la vita,” Palazzo Ducale, Genoa, Italy, 2019; “Les printemps seront silencieux,” Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France, 2019; “#displaced,” Städtische Galerie Nordhorn, Nordhorn, Germany, 2019; “Fortezzuola,” Museo Pietro Canonica, Villa Medici, Rome, 2016; and many others.

→ Claire Fontaine is represented by Mennour and Air de Paris.



Claire Fontaine, *Untitled (You are not from the Castle, you are not from the village, you are nothing.)*, 2015.
© Claire Fontaine — Photo Aurélien Mole.
Courtesy Air de Paris, Paris.

Paradoxe

**White Stout Beer 6% alc.
Malted barley and wheat, oat flakes,
buckwheat and barley, cacao nibs,
vanilla pods, coffee beans, lactose**

→ Brewed in his CAP studio, this white stout recipe is a liquid illusion. Beneath its pale colour, it reveals rich, spicy and roasted aromas reminiscent of dark beers.

Jules Maillot

Born in 1995 in Reims, he lives and works in Lyon.

Jules Maillot is a multidisciplinary artist and researcher whose practice combines sculpture, installation and fermentation. He is a PhD student in the research unit 'Contemporary Art and Historical Temporalities', based at the ENSBA Lyon.

Maillot's work sheds light on how individual and collective identities are shaped by altered states—whether induced by substances or social rituals—and by the governance of bodies. Using fermentation as a creative and conceptual process, Maillot explores the porous boundaries between the human and the non-human, and between inert and living matter. His practice takes the form of exhibitions and performances, revealing the complex networks of transformation that connect objects, bodies and microorganisms in contemporary culture.

His work has been presented in various group exhibitions, including at Casino Luxembourg Forum d'Art Contemporain, Luxembourg (2025); Le Réfectoire des Nonnes, ENSBA Lyon (2024); LAGE EGAL, Berlin (2022); and La Biennale de la Jeune Création Contemporaine, Mulhouse (2021).



[Photo: Jules Maillot]

CAP • Centre d'Art de Saint-Fons

Founded in 1986, CAP • Centre d'art has had two core objectives: supporting artistic production and promoting contemporary art in the heart of the former working-class district of Saint-Fons, an industrial town with a stimulating yet complex history, geographical position, and socio-economic situation. For forty years, the contemporary art centre has been a valuable resource for both artists and visitors.

CAP • Centre d'art is proud of its identity as a laboratory for contemporary art experimentation and a space that promotes a vision of culture as a space of freedom and a tool for emancipation. It is a lively, open and inclusive space where creation and transmission are at the heart of its project.

French and international artists, whether emerging or more established, exhibit their work here. The programme includes four exhibitions a year, comprising both

monographic and group shows, with an emphasis on residencies and support for the production of new works and projects designed specifically for the CAP. Throughout the year, the programme is enriched by research and production residencies, multidisciplinary projects, off-site collaborations and other formats yet to be invented.

The art centre has a space dedicated to mediation and an artothèque with over 800 works, which is a valuable resource for the education in the arts.

Since winter 2023, CAP • Centre d'art has expanded to include ten artists' studios. This new chapter strengthens our collaboration with artists, encouraging porosity between the artist's studio and the exhibition space.

CAP has become a platform where art emerges, takes shape, and is exhibited.



Anne-Charlotte Finel, Exhibition view of *Respiro*, CAP • Saint-Fons, 2023, photograph by Blaise Adilon.

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and 27, and Saturday,
July 18 at 4:00 PM
IT, ES → Saturdays, June 13 and July 11
2:30 PM — Italian
4:30 PM — Spanish

Atelier des saisons [Workshops of the season]

→ July 9 and 10,
from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM
With artists Alessandra Calovi and
Romain Coppin, in resonance with
the exhibition *L'éclair ne trace pas
de ligne droite* (Lightning doesn't travel
in a straight line).

Practical info

Exhibition

23.05.2026—31.07.2026

Free admission

Opening hours

Tuesday to Friday
• 12 AM to 6 PM
Saturday
• 2 to 6 p.m.
and by appointment

School Group Opening Hours

By appointment,
Monday to Friday
9:00 AM – 11:30 AM •
1:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Access

Espace Léon Blum
rue de la Rochette
69190 Saint-Fons
Tram T4: Lénine - Corsière
Bus 60: Yves Farge - Corsière
Bus 93: La Rochette - Clochettes
Reduced mobility accessibility

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