

SENSE UNKNOWN ART AND SCIENCE SEASON MO.CO. FEB 15 → MAY 18, 2025

After a season devoted to contemporary figurative painting in France (spring 2023), then to the links between art and literature (spring 2024), MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain offers three exhibitions in its two art centres this spring, exploring the relationship between art and science.

The theme resonates intimately with the history of the city of Montpellier, which played a major role in the teaching and dissemination of knowledge from the 12th century onwards, even before the university status was established in 1220 with the foundation of the Université de Médecine. It was then the first institution to develop medicine and the life sciences within a formal framework that would lead to scientific research as we know it today.

During the Renaissance, the university stood out for the specialities it developed, particularly anatomy, botany, and pharmacy. With the creation of the Jardin des Plantes in 1593, the study of medicinal plants spread and helped to identify Montpellier as the capital of botany until the 19th century. Today, the Université de Montpellier is remarkable for the size of its research community and the richness of its heritage.

Just like the scientist, the artist observes, analyses, interprets, and experiments, often venturing into the unknown with no guarantee of results, accepting failure and practising doubt. But it is above all the similarities in their approaches that can be highlighted. Both of them connect ideas, transform hierarchies, and blur our sensitive perception. They look further afield or to the side, exploring what we cannot see and manipulating the elements to bring out what we hadn't thought of.

This season has enabled us to establish an intense partnership with Université de Montpellier, which we would like to thank not only for its loans, but also for the exceptional support the MO.CO. has received thanks to the creation of a Scientific Committee.

As part of the Art & Science season, MO.CO. Panacée is hosting two solo exhibitions, one dedicated to Ivana Bašić and the other to Pierre Unal-Brunet, two artists whose works create speculations based on scientific data.

Ivana Bašić's *Metempsychosis* takes the form of a rite of passage, a spatial voyage to the material and metaphysical frontiers of humanity.

With *Prodrome*, Pierre Unal-Brunet has created a bio-fiction about the evolution of aqueous ecosystems and the ambivalence of our empathy for living things.

Curatorship of the Art & Science season:
Pauline Faure, Anya Harrison,
Alexis Loisel-Montambaux, Deniz Yoruc
Under the artistic direction of Numa Hambursin

In partnership with Université de Montpellier and the CNRS (including the ENSCM, the ProPAC Parfums Arômes Cosmétiques degree, Faculté des Sciences, IES Institut d'Électronique et des Systèmes, and the l'École de gérontologie de la Faculté de médecine).

SENSE UNKNOWN INTRODUCTION

Sense Unknown brings together more than a hundred works by some thirty artists, thus offering an open-ended and porous journey between materials, experiments, disciplines, and periods, in order to put reality—or at least what we know of it—to the test.

The artists in the exhibition Sense Unknown sometimes come from scientific backgrounds, while others have worked with scientists or are simply passionate about one of these fields. They share a common interest in experimenting with the unknown through the reinterpretation of scientific forms and processes. Therefore, some works stem from biohacking and question the clinical monopoly of experimentation with humour, while others focus on Western scientific hegemony, and many replay scientific imagery, either explicitly or almost unconsciously.

Works produced specifically for the exhibition, coproduced by MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain, allow to build bridges between disciplines. Thus, a new installation by Roy Köhnke offers a sensual approach to evolution and trans-species relations. Morgan Courtois has devised a series of sculptures smeared with olfactory liquids, like portraits and sensory memories of his loved ones, twisting processes from the pharmaceutical and perfume industries. He worked on such olfactory creations with Isabelle Parrot-Smietana, pharmacist and professor from the ProPAC Parfums Arômes Cosmétiques degree at the Faculté des Sciences of Université de Montpellier. Joey Holder, as for her, adopts a speculative approach to zoology in order to imagine an immersive multi-screen installation with artificial intelligence, playing with both our fears and desires for control. Benoît Charlot, Research Director at the CNRS, IES Institut d'Électronique et des Systèmes at Université de Montpellier, supported her in its implementation. This project is supported by Fluxus Art Projects.

For this exhibition, MO.CO. welcomes different generations of artists, ranging from the figure of Bernard Palissy (16th century) to the young international scene (born in the 1990s), including some emblematic figures of contemporary art such as Nam June Paik, Tetsumi Kudo, Kiki Smith, and Alina Szapocznikow. Some artists who were less identified with contemporary art during their lifetime have also joined the show, including Anna Zemánková, HR Giger, Victorien Sardou, and Emma Kunz.

Finally, the collections of Université de Montpellier underline the power of the cross-fertilisation of knowledge and forms, as well as the importance of the markers of history (discoveries, concepts, objects), which are themselves sometimes doomed to a form of obsolescence.

Isabelle Andriessen
Art Orienté Objet
Berdaguer & Péjus
Hicham Berrada
Morgan Courtois
H.R. Giger
Joey Holder
Tishan Hsu
Cooper Jacoby
Yunchul Kim
Josh Kline
Roy Köhnke
Kinke Kooi
Tetsumi Kudo
Emma Kunz
Candice Lin
Pei-Ying Lin,
Špela Petrič,
Dimitris Stamatis
& Jasmina Weiss
Mary Maggie
Guadalupe Maravilla
Nam June Paik
Jean Painlevé
Bernard Palissy
Eduardo Paolozzi
Luboš Plný
Lea Porsager
Josephine Pryde
Victorien Sardou
Jeremy Shaw
Kiki Smith
Alina Szapocznikow
Haena Yoo
Anna Zemánková

THE VISIT

This booklet has been conceived to accompany your visit. Artists and heritage collections of the university are briefly presented following the visitor's path.

Certain artists and collections appear in different rooms of the exhibition. Only their first appearance is commented here.

Some fifteen works (marked with ★) are also accompanied by labels that allow the cross-referencing of artistic and scientific perspectives, thanks to texts written by a scientific community in Montpellier that has joined forces with the University's historical heritage department to offer this dual perspective.

Our warmest thanks to them.

BERDAGUER & PÉJUS (CHRISTOPHE BERDAGUER, 1968; MARIE PÉJUS, 1969, FRANCE)

The works of Christophe Berdagner and Marie Péjus give form to the invisible interactions between the living, the environment, and the unconscious. They explore mechanisms of adaptation, the biological or psychic effects evoking what is not perceptible at first sight. Their work is produced in a variety of media and spaces: monumental installations, odours, volumes, etc. Physical, biological, parapsychological, and electromagnetic phenomena are translated and made visible in a way that is both distant and familiar, of disturbing strangeness.

JEREMY SHAW (1977, CANADA)

Jeremy Shaw creates intermediate spaces between consciousness, hypnotism, and manipulation, using images of his own or combining found ones. He explores dazed states from an aesthetic, scientific, and cultural point of view to offer viewers the experience of an uncontrollable dimension. *This Transition Will Never End* is a fluid editing of film sequences showing vortexes merging into vortexes. The artist plunges us into an infinite and vertiginous transition from one state to another, with no possible landmark, in silence.

KIKI SMITH (1954, GERMANY / USA)*

Kiki Smith is an American artist who crosses and explores techniques and materials. In her figurative work, she highlights the mysteries of the connections between myth and reality, the outside and the inside, between the organic, vegetal, and spiritual realms. The works on display show the body, or the idea we have of it—the womb welcomes the child, the Virgin exposes her flesh,* the bowel resembles a dried-up vestige,* and woman-tree filled with roses in the basement recalls the gentle power of blossoming.

AUZOUX COLLECTION – UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER*

Anatomy was learnt in the 18th century through dissections and wax models. In 1825, Doctor Louis Auzoux (1797-1880) perfected a new technique using paper and cork paste, which was liquid enough to take the imprint of the organs, but became solid once dried and allowed to be coloured. The resulting model could then be joined to another by hooks, allowing the fragments to be articulated to better understand the parts and sub-parts of a whole (“clastic” anatomy, according to Auzoux—i.e. one that can be “taken apart”). In 1828, he set up a factory in the Eure region of France, where anatomical models were made for the study of medicine and zoology, as well as botany from 1860 onwards. These models were marketed and purchased in France by numerous universities and schools, as well as throughout Europe.

KINKE KOOI (1961, NETHERLANDS)*

Kinke Kooi draws the invisible. She likes to unfold the subtlety of relationships within a whole, and plays with spaces that confine forms, just like the inside of our body or our mind. The cavities are scenes of realities sometimes perceived as shameful. They take on a mixture of genres, just like our insides, where the prosaic and the idea rub shoulders, where the image is transformed by its symbolism. With delicacy and simplicity, Kinke Kooi proposes a strange, sometimes naïve repertoire to reconnect the senses and the spheres of the invisible.

COOPER JACOBY (1989, USA)*

Cooper Jacoby’s work can be seen as an attempt to reconnect a communication between used debris. These sculptures speak to us and breathe through abused, burnt-out intercoms fitted with cameras. They are fed by fragments of texts found on social networks written by deceased content creators and interpreted by an AI. The mural sculpture Mutual Life functions as a clockwork mirror on which teeth move to mark the passage of time, a reminder of a common dating method.

2.

EDUARDO PAOLOZZI (1924-2005, UNITED KINGDOM)

Eduardo Paolozzi is a Scottish artist. An Italian immigrant, his family was arrested in 1940 when the Second World War broke out. Some of them died during an escape attempt. He spent several years in France, where his artistic career took off thanks to his encounters with Georges Braque and Alberto Giacometti in particular. On his return to Britain he helped found the Independent Group. He is recognised as one of the precursors of the British Pop movement. Paolozzi's fascination with technology was mingled with distrust, as he felt the threat posed by the abandonment of our free will to the potential of machines.

ERNST HAECKEL (1834-1919, GERMANY)*

Ernst Haeckel is a controversial figure. A doctor, biologist, zoologist, and philosopher, he is also renowned for his illustrations, which inspired the Art Nouveau aesthetic. Sponges, jellyfish, and micro-organisms were meticulously drawn on plates. In 1904, he published *Art Forms in Nature*. His theoretical works set out a number of ideas on the origin and evolution of life. A convinced monist, he sought to demonstrate the link between species. But he also developed and disseminated racist thinking, promoting the superiority of a so-called “white race,” which was taken up by the Nazis.

3.

HAENA YOO (1990, SOUTH KOREA / USA)*

Haena Yoo works between Seoul and Los Angeles. Her works are made from a variety of materials, often found and reused, combining textures, smells, and history. They are concerned with the effects of capitalist globalisation, which erodes particularities, history, and specific knowledge, eventually causing them to disappear. Her installations are an opportunity to highlight the ancestral knowledge of various minorities, confronted with what the capitalist industry has done with it or ignored.

4.

JOEY HOLDER (1979, UNITED KINGDOM)*

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5.

PEI-YING LIN (1986, TAIWAN), ŠPELA PETRIČ (1980, SLOVENIA), DIMITRIS STAMATIS & JASMINA WEISS (1963, SLOVENIA)*

Researcher-artist, scientific designer, biochemist, and leader of a BioArt community, these four protagonists have come together to propose forms that reflect scientific phenomena in an offbeat way. Their transdisciplinary approach offers devices that play on the mysteries of the living so that we can take greater ownership of what escapes us. PSX Consultancy looks at some of the sexual blockages in plants.

MARY MAGGIC (1991, USA)

Mary Maggic is a Sino-American artist and researcher who works at the intersection of the body, politicised gender, and the alienation of ecology by capitalism. Their work highlights the piracy of natural resources by the biotechnology industry. They make available to everyone processes that have been appropriated by an industry that wants us to believe that it alone can make them available to everyone. Political, militant, activist, Mary Maggic's art is as generous as it is subversive. A workshop on oestrogen extraction from urine will be run by the artist with a group of art and science students from MO.CO. Esba and the Université de Montpellier.

7.

GUADALUPE MARAVILLA **(1976, EL SALVADOR / USA)***

Guadalupe Maravilla is an artist and healer whose work reflects his own recovery from cancer, as well as the traumas associated with his unaccompanied migration to the United States at age eight to escape El Salvador's civil war. His iconography is a hybrid of Western references, vernacular practices, and Latin American healing rituals. The Disease Throwers are large gong sculptures that Maravilla activates during sound bath ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies are open to everyone, while others are dedicated to people undergoing cancer treatment, undocumented migrants, and their families.

8.

HICHAM BERRADA **(1986, FRANCE / MOROCCO)**

Hicham Berrada's works create the conditions for a scientific and aesthetic experience. His materials are those of chemistry, botany, and the environment: sulphates, UV rays, temperature, etc. He brings to life a laboratory so that phenomena can take place, and presents them to us in aquariums, terrariums, or films. This way, we are immersed in his laboratory, which perhaps reveals new knowledge, but above all changes and mutations that highlight natural phenomena by isolating them from their context.

9.

BERNARD PALISSY (1510-1589, FRANCE)*

Bernard Palissy is a self-taught ceramist who revolutionised Renaissance ceramics in France, particularly glazed firing, and is renowned for his "rustic figulines" dishes, which show a naturalistic repertoire in relief, moulded on nature and later glazed. He devoted himself to research and its dissemination, both in the field of pottery and the natural sciences. For instance, he was the first to understand that fossils were the remains of plants and animals. Both protected by kings and persecuted for his Protestantism, Palissy embodied a passionate humanism that was atypical of the French Renaissance.

VICTORIEN SARDOU (1831-1908, FRANCE)

Victorien Sardou, who was forced to abandon his medical studies to earn a living through teaching, enjoyed great success as a playwright from the 1860s onwards. At the same time, he developed a growing passion for spiritualist phenomena. Guided by the illustrious dead, such as Bernard Palissy, he produced etchings depicting their celestial dwellings at Julnius, on Jupiter.

TETSUMI KUDO (1935-1990, JAPAN)

Tetsumi Kudo is a key figure of the 1970s. His work, which can be likened to a New Realism that incorporates the threats of devastating technology, shows fragments of bodies, plants, and objects, often enclosed in cages. Marked by the bombing of Hiroshima, Tetsumi Kudo stages the remnants of a post-apocalyptic world with humour and irony, in a way that is both refined and crude. He makes use of a variety of techniques, often derived from poor recycling: string, boxes, artificial flowers... The new ecology presented confronts us with our role as both initiators and victims of spectacular technological advances that are endangering our environment.

ALINA SZAPOCZNIKOW **(1926, POLAND – 1973, FRANCE)***

Alina Szapocznikow is a major figure in European post-war art. Imprisoned in the Pabianice ghetto, where she worked as a nurse, and then in the Bergen-Belsen camp, she moved to France after the liberation, where she went on to study art. She was close to Surrealist and New Realist artists, but her work is marked by an obsession with physical pain and the fragmented, damaged body. Casts of her own body are used to compose landscapes or hybrid objects, into which she sometimes incorporates newspapers, gauze, texts, or photographs.

ART ORIENTÉ OBJET (DUO CREATED IN 1991, FRANCE, MARION LAVAL-JEANTET AND BENOÎT MANGIN)

Since 1991, the Art Orienté Objet duo have been working on installations, performances, video, and photography around the theme of living things. They take in biology, the behavioural sciences (psychology and ethology, hence the strong animal presence in their work), ecology, and ethnology in unexpected, poetic creations that are as political as they are visionary. Their concern for the environment leads them to produce works that are handcrafted and frequently recycled, giving them a high-flying DIY feel. But they could just as easily be classed as social observers, anthropological artists who advocate experimentation with the systems they analyse through form. Through anthropological, ecological, or biotechnological experiments, they seek to understand the limits of their own consciousness. The recycling of materials is also accompanied by the recycling of currents of thought, integrating the object into a flow from which it cannot be dissociated.

10.

ANNA ZEMÁNKOVÁ (1908-1986, CZECH REPUBLIC)*

When Anna Zemánková was over 50 years old and had both her legs amputated as a result of diabetes, she began to paint a repertoire of forms that resembled an organic, cellular, and mineral herbarium. She follows an established ritual, drawing every morning between 4 and 7 o'clock. Her technique combines pastels, collage, drawing, perforations of the support, embossing, etc. Her work constitutes an unclassifiable whole, whose shapes and colours recall natural forms and a certain generative process close to the fractal.

NATURALIZED BIRDS, FORMER COLLECTION OF THE FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER*

In the 19th century, collections of naturalised animals were developed throughout Europe for teaching and study purposes, and the practice of taxidermy was professionalised. Specimens were then used to teach zoology in universities. They were also sometimes displayed in showcases to create dioramas that evoked the animals' natural habitats. Particular care is taken by taxidermists to make the animals look as "alive" as possible. Now part of our heritage, these specimens are kept like the objects of conservation they have become.

FLORAL SKELETONS, 1954-1964, JEAN MOTTE COLLECTION, FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER*

The term floral skeleton is an image that highlights the vessels carrying the plant's sap, as well as their vascular tissues that conduct water and minerals. Microscopic cross-sections are enlarged and modelled with plaster on flexible tin structures. The technique was devised by Professor Jean Motte and technician Jean Rous at the Faculté des Sciences de Montpellier, and these objects, which resembled rocky ceramics, foreshadowed the 3D modelling of nowadays.

EMMA KUNZ (1892-1963, SWITZERLAND)*

Emma Kunz describes herself as a healer, telepath, and clairvoyant. The originality of her approach lies in her search for a scientific basis for what others call "gifts." She refuses to describe her interventions as miracles. For her, they are natural, unexploited potentials that may be rooted in observable explanations. Her hundreds of drawings on graph paper are produced in a single working session. She presents them as stylisations in an attempt to order and codify the symbols and metamorphoses of the energy fields she explores.

TOUSSAINT-FRANÇOIS NODE-VERAN (1773-1852, FRANCE), UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER COLLECTION*

In the 19th century, scientific illustration was an integral part of learning in the natural sciences. In botany, it was often done in the field, requiring close observation and strict adherence to scale, colour, and shading. Node-Véran produced over a thousand plates for the Université de Montpellier. Among them are a number of plates that determine the specific features of newly identified and named species. Identifying in order to classify, name, and illustrate are the scientist's first steps when faced with the unknown.

11.

CANDICE LIN (1979, USA)*

Candice Lin lives in Los Angeles. She works in a wide variety of media, including ceramics, textiles, painting, printmaking, drawing, and installation, often including organic materials. She questions Western hegemony, heteronormativity, and racial stereotypes, contextualising knowledge and materials within a global history of domination. In Lin's work, process and experimentation are visible: paintings made with lard, terrariums with carcass-eating beetles, urine fountains, and tea fermented into kombucha.

JOSH KLINE (1979, USA)*

Josh Kline's sculptures, installations, and videos play with a reality that is distorted in the context of a future dystopia, the signs of which are already very much in evidence. Often using manufactured objects or reconstructions, these works sample fragments of our daily lives that herald a dehumanising technocracy, the blind pursuit of productivity and profit, or the decline of democracies. Sleep Is for the Weak trivialises a strange relationship with health, a self-destructive quest for performance.

ROY KÖHNKE (1990, FRANCE / AUSTRALIA)*

Roy Köhnke challenges dominant narratives, alienation, and submission to norms in his sculptures, videos, and installations. Offering other forms and encounters, he invents new relationships between bodies, life, and technology. In a form of exhibition of intimacy, his videos highlight potential interspecies love and sexual intercours.

MORGAN COURTOIS (1988, FRANCE)*

Morgan Courtois's ceramics, plaster casts, flowers, and smells evoke a decrepit living being. The body is folded and secreted, marked by what it eats, injects itself, and breathes. The artist's portrait sculptures evoke a sensitive permanence of identity, even though the body is not there. What remains are fragments and smells that the artist creates and fabricates to reproduce something of the other.

SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATIONS

MORGAN COURTOIS

Work residence with Isabelle Parrot-Smietana, Pharmacist. University Professor. ProPAC Parfums Arômes Cosmétiques Degree, Faculté des Sciences, Université de Montpellier.

JOEY HOLDER

Collaboration with Benoît Charlot, Research Director, CNRS. IES Institut d'Electronique et des Systèmes (CNRS UM 5214), Université de Montpellier.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER

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TO SEE ALSO
ART AND SCIENCE SEASON
FEB 15 → MAY 18, 25

IVANA BAŠIĆ
METEMPSYCHOSIS

PIERRE UNAL-BRUNET
PRODROME

As part of the Art and Science season, **MO.CO. Panacée** is hosting two solo exhibitions, one dedicated to Ivana Bašić and the other to Pierre Unal-Brunet, two artists whose works create speculations based on scientific data.

Ivana Bašić's Metempsychosis takes the form of a rite of passage, a spatial voyage to the material and metaphysical frontiers of humanity.

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MO.CO. PANACÉE
14, rue de l'École de Pharmacie,
Montpellier

EXHIBITION
JAN 25 → JUN 30, 2025

LÉO FOURDRINIER
LES HISTORIENS DU FUTUR

As part of the annual artistic residency at Lattara organised with the MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain, Léo Fourdrinier, who draws inspiration for his work from mythology, science, and archaeology, will be presenting an exhibition of new works produced especially for the Henri Prades Archaeological Museum.

LATTARA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE,
Musée Henri Prades,
390 Rte de Pérols – Lattes

In partnership with MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain.

EXHIBITION
MAY 15 → JUN 20, 2025

CHIA LEE
LES ÉTALAGES DES POSSIBLES

Chia Lee will be presenting a second exhibition as part of the annual cross-residency at the Faculté d'éducation and the École Maternelle Florian in Montpellier, around the theme Art & Taste.

FACULTÉ D'ÉDUCATION, MONTPELLIER
Cultural center, Université de Montpellier

In partnership with MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain.