

# PRODROME

## PIERRE UNAL-BRUNET

### MO.CO. PANACÉE

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Pierre Unal-Brunet gleans inert materials, debris, and other surpluses of the world from aqueous harvesting areas. He assembles them to form beings-objects in installations combining paintings, sculptures, and ink drawings. With an approach to evolution that borders on cryptozoology, his research draws on scientific articles from ichthyology (the study of fish) and marine biology, as well as on fantasies about these harvesting grounds. The result is a science-fictional environment inhabited by composite bodies.

A prodrome is an early sign, a symptom heralding a change of state, an upheaval. To the attentive eye, it is an anomaly that emerges from everyday life and informs us of a disorder to come.

With some thirty works created over the past five years, *Prodrome* is Pierre Unal-Brunet's biggest solo exhibition to date. For MO.CO. Panacée, the artist is expanding his body of work, with the aim of altering how it is perceived and playing with the ways in which it is presented, thus allowing ancient species to surface in a new ecosystem.

The notion of eutrophication looms large in this complex and diffuse narrative. Eutrophication is the imbalance in aquatic environments caused by the increased presence of nitrogen and phosphorus. It is characterised by the growth of living organisms due to an excessive availability of nutrients. This excessive accumulation of biomass gradually saturates the ecosystem. Paradoxically, hyperfertilisation leads to the impoverishment and then the death of the biotope, which no longer disposes of the oxygen it needs to live. This phenomenon is also called "asphyxiation of aquatic ecosystems." A sort of bio-orgy prefacing extinction.

The exhibition follows this idea of gradual hypersaturation. In a spiral stroll through five chapters, each room is marked by a particular colorimetry, like a signal about the state of health of each of the biotopes visited. In this introspective narrative, punctuated by the poem *Prodrome* written by the artist, we move from crystalline calm to acid exuberance.

Architectural elements, light signals, and other translucent membranes designed for the site create new interactions between these beings-objects. Perhaps it is the species themselves that, caught up in these tinted lights, have each moved closer to their corresponding hue. This sensitive taxonomy, a classification system based on superimposed colours, opens the way to possible rearrangements between such entities.

Here and there, parasitic drawings are grafted onto the walls, as if attached to their hosts for an indefinite period. The species they represent are said to be of minor interest, or even considered invasive species. Animals and plants classified as such by the regulations must in theory be eliminated by those who find them, in an attempt to limit their propagation.

In an ever-changing system, the *Prodrome* exhibition takes a speculative look at the evolution of species, imagining the unknown based on known clues. Beyond our emotional relationship with ecological phenomena, the exhibition invites us to shift our self-centred gaze. In this way, *Prodrome* draws out the possibilities of co-evolution, thanks to the ambivalence of empathy—often selective—from antidote to harmfulness, or the regeneration after decline.

# BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1993 in France.

Lives in Paris and Sète.

Pierre Unal-Brunet has recently been the subject of exhibitions at the CCC OD in Tours (2024), at the IAC Villeurbanne as part of the Jeune création internationale of the 16th Biennale de Lyon (2022), with the Nicoletti gallery at Art-o-rama, Marseille (2022), at the Maldormir beach with the support of Mécènes du Sud (2022), and in the first edition of SOL! The Territory Biennial, at MO.CO. Panacée (2021).

Pierre Unal-Brunet was mentioned in Les Inrocks magazine's 2024 arts guide as one of the "5 new faces to watch," as well as in the magazine Telerama.

His works integrate the collections of the FRAC-Artothèque Nouvelle Aquitaine, Limoges.

*Prodrome* follows on from the exhibition Intrication by Pierre Unal-Brunet and Anna Solal, which was held in the summer of 2024 at the CCC OD in Tours.

# CATALOGUE

*Prodrome* is complemented by a catalogue designed by Clément Gicquel, with an interview between Pierre Unal-Brunet and Alexis Loisel-Montambaux.

The publication of the catalogue will be accompanied by a public discussion on 15 May 2025, as part of the recurring event *Jeudis MO.CO. Panacée*.

*The mineral is reassuring because it moves slowly.*

*On the beach, I hear crystalline tinkling.  
Multicoloured pebbles that clatter discreetly,  
Crushed by my flabbiness and my dull skin.*

*The mineral is reassuring because it seems pure.*

*And yet,  
This beach is the graveyard of a thousand carcasses,  
A thousand reasons.*

*And my credulous body  
Here apathetic,  
Here boned,  
Doesn't seem to care.*

*It lounges on the skeletons that once were,  
Slimy, thick, iridescent bodies.*

ROOM 1

*But little by little, I hear it.  
It has come a long way,  
Or rather from my insides.*

*Anomaly.*

*Hostile anomaly of an immobile chimera  
Which of the last five great nebulae  
Only showed us the fossils.*

*But now the motifs are burning!  
And  
Of this chimera with a thousand cracks,  
Which starts to laugh and crawl out*

*I breathe in the rumours,  
The gas,  
And the bloating.*

*Tormented by composite signals  
It acidifies the colour,  
The mud,  
And my discernment.*

ROOM 2

*A sudden bubbling and I drown in its gullet,  
Distracted by a bloody silence.*

*To lose footing,  
To lose the skin,*

*Scarlet skin and webbed feet.*

*The inner surfaces macerate and my gaze sinks.*

*Why do we cover up the undergrounds?*

*I come across an elephant fish,  
Who strolls and tells me while searching:*

*“It doesn’t matter, just look at me!  
My trunk is electric and perceives this.  
This deafness is only the end of a phase.  
Inertia before exuberance,  
Before a mutation with its many choices.”*

*To lose footing,  
To lose the skin.*

*To gain scales.  
(Like thousands of teeth)*

ROOM 3

*It's the opulent ascent of a plump mousse,  
Acidulated!*

*A billion hatchlings.  
Little bits of bodies  
That come together and fall apart,  
Hurrying,  
Teeming with,  
And proliferating.*

*Overexcitement of my viscous eye;*

*It no longer holds on  
To shapes nor colours.  
It's either a bubble or an egg,  
Summoned by ecstasy,  
Of these wilful spasms.*

*Bloated nutrients adorn my greasy mouth.  
I parade among the beings-objects,  
Swollen with filaments,  
Wearing a sticky membrane,  
And a phosphorescent thorax.*

*Adipose spines and bewitchment.  
Nothing looks the same.*

*Alien invasion, lecherous chimeras, or bio-orgy.  
Alien invasion, erratic dancing, then asphyxiation.*

ROOM 4

*From greasy water to greyish skin.*

*From greyish water to greasy skin.*

*From greasy skin to greyish water.*

*From greyish skin to greasy water.*

*Silence in the spiral.*

ROOM 5

# ROOM 1

## *BRANCHIAL LAUGHTER (LAUGHING GILLS)*

A watery hiccup similar to a survival laugh present in certain fish. It exclaims like an erratic signal, a loud, repeated noise warning of a danger linked to the arrival of an extreme change in the biotope.

It enables living beings to enter an adaptive trance when faced with these disturbances. According to studies, this biological phenomenon would be a tragicomic form of resilience in the face of danger. This nervous expression leads to accelerated cell mutation.

## *GUANINE*

Component of nucleic acids. Present in the form of crystals with an extremely high refractive index in the bodies of certain living organisms. Through a mirror system, guanine enables abilities such as the vision of scallops, the camouflage of chameleons, and the shimmering of fish scales.

It has also been collected by humans and used in cosmetics to give a pearly, iridescent appearance to various products (make-up, cream, paint, etc.).

# ROOM 2

## *PLEURONECTIFORME*

Order of flatfish (sole, dab, turbo, etc.). The ocular migration proper to these species is characteristic of their final forms. In the larval stage, they are ordinary fish, with one eye on each side and a classic swimming pattern. When they reach the adult stage, an excess of cartilage pushes one eye to the same side as the other, reversing the body's buoyancy. Both eyes and the mouth are then on the same side, leading to pigmentation of the latter, the only surface in contact with light. The other side becomes ventral and remains white.

## *SWIM BLADDER*

Organ that allows bony fish to float. It is a double pouch filled with gas and connected to the oesophagus. Working by breathing in and out, it enables these fish to navigate in vertical columns of water without having to move, and therefore without wasting energy.

# ROOM 3

## *MORMYRIDAE*

Also known as elephant fish, these are freshwater fish from tropical Africa that are mainly characterised by an electrical organ that allows them to perceive and interact with their environment by sending out discharges. The impulses generated by this organ are brief but constantly repeated. Each fish emits a unique type of discharge, characterised by its species, size, weight, age, and sex. Certain types of Mormyridae are remarkably social, empathic, and intelligent. These electrical signals allow them to communicate with other fish, orientate themselves in space, and detect their prey, even in the absence of light.

## *ISCHYRHIZA MIRA*

A Cretaceous fish and ancestor of the sawfish, with a rostrum adorned with around twenty external teeth. According to recent studies carried out on fossils, these rostral denticles have the same characteristics as the teeth of sharks we have today. This theory, known as the outside-in theory, maintains that our human teeth also originated from these placoid scales. Therefore, our jaws would have migrated from the outside inwards over time.

# ROOM 4

## *ARGULUS*

A species of crustacean known as “sea lice.” They are ectoparasites that live in an aqueous environment and are highly adaptable. The male reaches a maximum size of 1 cm, while the female can reach up to 3 cm. Although they are able to swim freely using their four pairs of legs, they usually cling to their hosts. Argulus adhere to the softest surfaces of fish, like gills and eyeballs. They attach themselves using two cephalic suction cups with hooks that also enable them to inject a substance capable of destroying blood cells.

# ROOM 5

## *SEPIA*

Ink secreted by certain cephalopods (cuttlefish, squid, octopus) from an organ called the “black pouch.” This pouch is made up of two parts: one is a gland that produces a pigment (melanin), while the other serves as a reservoir for this pigment which, mixed with mucus, forms the ink. These creatures expel it like a nebula, compact enough to confuse their attackers and conceal their escape manoeuvres. There are theories that this cloud acts as a deterrent by recreating the shadow of a predator. This substance has long been used as a basis for making China ink.