

Laurent Le Deunff

10 October 2021  
→ 20 March 2022

# MY PREHISTORIC PAST

Curator: Clément Nouet



# *Mrac Occitanie*

Musée régional d'art contemporain  
Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée  
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# Laurent Le Deunff

## *My Prehistoric Past*

10.10.21 > 20.03.22

Curator: Clément Nouet

The *My Prehistoric Past* exhibition dedicated to the artwork of Laurent Le Deunff takes the form of a story narrated by elephant trunks, yawning cats that tease visitors to artists' studios, and earthworms burrowing into a minimal-mineral environment.

The exhibition unfolds like a fable, a pretext to free the imagination and to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. In this context, *My Prehistoric Past* is a time machine and an invitation to explore. It is a multidisciplinary account of a culture that abounds with sensitivity, expertise, and ambition. Laurent Le Deunff takes an ironic approach as he presents his archaeology using an infinite universe of created forms. The motifs, figures, and scenes have perceptible relationships with nature, childhood, and craftwork, and together they produce multiple resonances that are both anecdotal and hauntological.<sup>1</sup>

Laurent Le Deunff likes to transform spaces and play with the graphic conventions of natural history or civilisation museums: dioramas, trompe-l'oeils, curiosity cabinets, tapestries... The design of the exhibition examines the "fake" and the links between the artisanal and the industrial, the profane and the sacred. The sculptures, drawings, and bas-reliefs play on degrees of scale and are embedded in landscapes to create an immersive environment. The overall exhibition space and the space of the individual works are superimposed and dissociated. *My Prehistoric Past* is thus presented as a realm of history in the making, an imaginary domain whose goal is not to restore the past but to generate images and stories. The artist develops temporal and narrative layers that overlap and intertwine to create a multi-voiced tale that is similar to a cinematic montage. As a result, the works can be perceived as micro-fictions that leave the final montage to the observer.

In this new setting and scenario, Laurent Le Deunff recontextualises his repertoire of forms (shark, mole, shell...) while experimenting with materials, scales, and perspectives. "I am interested in ancestral forms, as well as the anachronisms they provoke when they meet modern forms. I try to locate the origin," explains the artist. Playing with forms and techniques (wood sculpture, rockwork, drawing, modelling, collage, etc.), Laurent Le Deunff plays with the "fossilised future of his sculptures" and offers an archaeology of his own work. "The fossil is no longer simply a being that has lived, it is a being that still lives, dormant in its form."<sup>2</sup> The dynamics of the work are thus constructed in a relationship to what is, what is no longer, what becomes, and what returns. Within this inventory of fossilised forms, Laurent Le Deunff proposes a new reading of creative work that was done over a ten-year period.

1. Hauntology is a neologism introduced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. It is a portmanteau of haunting and ontology and it designates the accumulation and resurgence of ghostly traces of the past. Here, these traces appear in the creations.

2. Gaston Bachelard (1957), *La poétique de l'espace* [*The poetic of space*], Paris, PUF

From elephants to beavers to tigers to crocodiles to cats, his bestiary brings together various creatures with no regard for hierarchy or rule. If the plant and animal world is highly present in his work, it should be considered an idea of nature and a space for projection. The human being is in no way excluded from this story, and a form of archetypical primitiveness is reactivated: prehistoric clubs, collections of stones, necklaces of teeth... it combines to bring civilisation back to its most beautiful origins. Moreover, isn't the title of the exhibition a nod to the American silent comedy short film *His Prehistoric Past* by Charlie Chaplin? A movie where the Tramp falls asleep on a bench and starts to dream... and to imagine himself as a prehistoric man. *My Prehistoric Past* is at the heart of a narrative device that can merge fact and fiction, illusion and narration, thus combining the past and the future. In Sérignan, the artist plunges us into a plural and fragmented storyline to create an immersive experience and a journey through time. In his utterly original manner, he deconstructs the history of the gaze and places it at the crossroads of ecology, archaeology, biology, and ethology. There is even a flicker of doubt: What if life is only a vast diorama?

### **About Laurent Le Deunff**

*Born in 1977, Laurent Le Deunff lives and works in Bordeaux.*

*Since graduating from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux in 2001, he has participated in numerous group exhibitions, notably the Dynasty exhibition in the spring of 2010 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and at the Palais de Tokyo, which presented collected work from the emerging art scene of the 2000s. Since then, his works have been part of several public collections and he has had numerous individual exhibitions.*

*Individual exhibitions:* The Mystery of Sculpting Cats, *Semiose, Paris (2021)*; Animaux fabuleux, Créatures imaginaires, *La Halle des Bouchers, Centre d'art contemporain, Vienne (2019)*; Stalactite & Stalagmite, *Le Carré, Scène nationale – Centre d'Art Contemporain, Château-Gontier (2018)*; Tête de tigre et Marie-Hélène, *Parc Zoologique de Paris, Paris (2018)*; L'Âge des pierres, *Musée Calbet, Grisolles (2017)*; Arbre à chat – Felis catus arbor, *Le Plateau – Frac Ile-de-France, la Vitrine, Paris (2015)*; Laurent Le Deunff, *Frac Basse-Normandie, Caen (2012)*.

*Group exhibitions:* SAGA, *La Station, Nice (2020)*; Rumeurs et Légendes, *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris and Cookbook, La Panacée MOCO, Montpellier (2019)*; Coïncidence(s), *CAPC – Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux and Clepsydre, Frac Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême site (2018)*; Recto/Verso, *Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2015)*; Drôles de gueules, *Frac Basse-Normandie, Caen (2014)*; Rituels, *Fondation Pernod Ricard, Paris (2011)*; Dynasty, *Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris | ARC and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2010)*.

*Laurent Le Deunff is represented by the Semiose gallery, Paris.*

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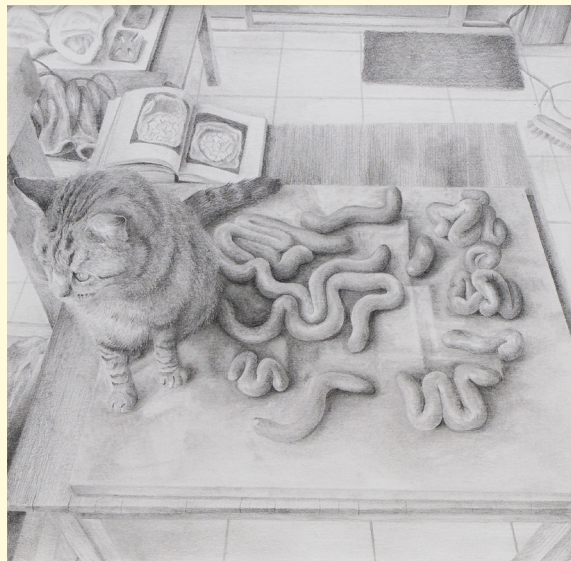




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1. *The Mystery of Sculpting Cats*, 2020.  
 Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole.  
 2. *Terrier (taupes) [Burrow (moles)]*, 2020. Tilleul,  
 101x120x5cm.  
 Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole.  
 3. *Grelot*, 2020. Pencil on paper, 18.5x18.5cm.  
 Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

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4. *Collection de pierres* [Collection of stones],  
2017. Artificial stones, pine, and walnut stain,  
320x240x80cm. Courtesy of Semiose, Paris.  
Photo: Marc Damage.

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5. *Requin des Bois I*, [*Shark of the Woods I*], 2015. Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, 110×169cm. Courtesy of Semiose, Paris.

6. *Collier de dents I* [*Teeth Necklace I*], 2020. Rope, paper mache, alabaster, fir, linden, and oak, 104×74.5×9.2cm. Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

7. *Galerie de Taupe* [*Mole Gallery*], 2011. Bronze, 40×70×60cm. Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Romain Motay.

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8. *Un long nœud de trompes (partie IV)* [*A long knot of tubes (part IV)*], 2013. Paper mache, cement, pigments, chicken wire, PVC, and metal base, 100×180×65cm. Courtesy of Semiose, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

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Coming to Mrac

## ***Arène project, Olivier Vadrot***

Opening 15.01.2022, on the ground floor

## **Exhibition by Valérie du Chéné with Régis Pinault**

15.01.2022 > May 2022, in the Cabinet d'Arts Graphiques

## **Exhibition of the Mrac collection**

15.01.2022 > Jan. 2023

Curator: Clément Nouet



Ulla von Brandenburg, view of the exhibition *L'hier de demain* [The yesterday of tomorrow] at Mrac, Sérignan, 2019. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

## ***Campo di Marte, Nathalie Du Pasquier***

17.04.2022 > 18.09.2022

Curator: Lucas Lo-Pinto

Exhibition realised in partnership with the MACRO in Rome



Nathalie Du Pasquier, view of the exhibition *Campo di Marte*, SOLO/MULTI, Musée de l'imagination préventive, MACRO 2021. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Agnese Bedini and Melania Dalle Grave from the DSL Studio.

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# Support for contemporary art from the Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée Region

**In 2016, the Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée Region began redefining its cultural policy in order to bring concrete solutions to artists, curators and cultural sites.** It is offering regional aid in all art and culture sectors: performing arts, visual arts, creative and cultural industries, heritage, languages, and regional cultures. Its action is aimed at reinforcing the equality between citizens and between territories.

In the field of contemporary art, the Region is making a concerted effort to enable artists and art-lovers to meet under optimal conditions. Occitanie's contemporary art landscape is an extremely rich and dynamic creative territory. The Region is very keen to support artists and the places in which art is created and circulated, and to bring contemporary art as close as possible to every resident.

## The Occitanie Region manages and supports key contemporary art sites

In addition to the **Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain (CRAC)** in Sète, the Region is also responsible for the development of the **Musée Régional d'Art Contemporain (MRAC)** in Sérignan. Thanks to investment by the Region, the MRAC now has an 3200-square-metre exhibition surface, dedicated to permanent collections and temporary exhibitions.

**As a founding member of several renowned public establishments, the Region makes a strong contribution to raising the standing of sites in Occitanie,** like the Musée d'art moderne de Céret, the Musée Soulages in Rodez, the Musée Cèrès Franco in Montolieu, Les Abattoirs, and the Fonds régional d'art contemporain Occitanie Montpellier.

**Finally, the Occitanie Region supports the circulation of contemporary art throughout its territory, in association with public and private partners** like the Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou (art centre in Cajarc), the BBB Centre d'art in Toulouse, Le LAIT (Laboratoire Artistique International du Tarn) in Albi, the Carré d'Art in Nîmes, and the galleries AL/MA, Chantiers Boîte Noire, Aperto and Iconoscope in Montpellier, Le Vallon du Villaret in Bagnols-les-Bains, Le LAC in Sigean, Lieu-Commun in Toulouse, and l'Atelier Blanc in Aveyron.

## The Region also directly supports art production on its territory

The Region is very involved in supporting visual artists, providing art production assistance. It gives special attention to artist residencies in rural areas (like Maisons Daura, Les Ateliers des Arques on the Lot, Caza d'Oro in Ariège, and Lumière d'encre in Céret).

**It also supports artist mobility,** thus contributing to the recognition of their work at the national and international levels. **The Prix Occitanie- Médicis,** created in 2018, is one of the jewels of this support. Dedicated to young artists, every year its aim is to discover, promote and support Occitanie's emerging talent on the international scene, thanks to close collaboration with the prestigious Villa Medici in Rome.

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Medias Partners



Toute  
La Culture.



A&P Poirier, *Le Purgatoire*, 2020.  
© Anne et Patrick Poirier, collection des artistes.  
Photo : Jean-Christophe Lett.

## Also to be seen at Mrac Occitanie in Sérignan

10 october 2021 > 20 march 2022

*La mémoire en filigrane*, A&P Poirier  
[Memory as backdrop]

Curators : Laure Martin-Poulet & Clément Nouet



Jimmy Robert, *Untitled (Ompdrailles)*, 2013.  
Courtesy of the artist ; Stitger Van  
Doesburg, and Tanya Leighton.



Antoine Renard, *Untitled (Olfa-chitecture  
study 02)*, 2020. Photo and courtesy of  
Galleria Mario Iannelli.

## To be seen at Crac Occitanie in Sète

9 october 2021 > 6 February 2022

*Appui, tendu, renversé*, Jimmy Robert  
[Supported, stretched, reversed]

&

*Pharmakon*, Antoine Renard

Curator : Marie Cozette

The Musée régional d'art contemporain, a Région Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée institution, receives support from the Ministry of Culture, the Prefecture for the Region Occitanie/the Drac cultural services department for the Region Occitanie.



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