

CRAQ OCCITANIE

visitor's guide

Alexandra
Bircken

A-Z



Bianca
Bondi

Objects as actants



Exhibitions from 12 March to 22 May 2022

Alexandra Bircken

A–Z

Alexandra Bircken (born in Cologne in 1967) develops a protean sculptural work that incorporates an unusual range of materials : among them one finds rocking horses, motorcycles sawn in two, but also organic materials like wood, leather, bones and even a placenta, as well as textiles formatted either manually or through mechanical processes. Anything that surrounds us can become a sculptural medium. Her approach is characterized by an examination of the human body, its needs, desires, and relationship to its environment. Highly topical questions such as the need for protection of the individual, gender identity in its ambivalence, and the relationship between humans and machines are taken up and thematized in Bircken's sculptures. Today Bircken is internationally renowned in contemporary sculpture. By the time she became known as an artist in 2003, she already had a career

in fashion. In the early 1990s, she was awarded a coveted place on the fashion course at Central Saint Martins College in London and subsequently established herself in the field : first with her own fashion label, followed by a position as a designer in Paris. In the early 2000s, she began to experiment more freely with textiles - leading to the creation of her first sculptures. She was living in Cologne at the time, and the art scene there quickly took notice of her. National and international monographie shows and participation in important group exhibitions soon followed, including *Unmonumental* at the New Museum in New York in 2007, *Skulpturales Handeln* at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 2011, and *Material Encounters* at The Hepworth Wakefield in 2019, to name but a few. In France, her first solo exhibition was held in 2017 at the art centre Le Crédac in Ivry-sur-Seine (curator Claire Le Restif).

Bircken has played a significant role in shaping central themes of sculpture since the 2000s. Updating concepts and approaches first explored in Arte Povera and textile art, Bircken expands them to include questions of technology, albeit with an analog approach. Bircken has taught at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich since 2018, where she holds a professorship in sculpture.

This exhibition is the largest solo show of the artist and brings together works from throughout her practice: from the first sculpture completed in Bircken's store-front studio « Alex » in Cologne in 2003 to the work entitled *Slip of the Tongue*, created for public space in 2020, which welcomes visitors in front of the building. Rather than proceeding chronologically, this show uses themes and formal concepts to progress through the artist's oeuvre, attempting to capture her sculptural repertoire of forms from « A-Z »: from Bircken's exploration of textiles to the relationship of the human body to its environment and to her vibrant and organic seeming machines.

Exhibition partner

The exhibition A–Z by Alexandra Bircken was conceived in collaboration with the Museum Brandhorst in Munich, where the exhibition was presented from 28 July 2021 to 16 January 2022 (curator Monika Bayer-Wermuth).

Forecourt

Visitors are welcomed to the Crac by a monumental sculpture entitled *Slip of the Tongue*. The title refers to the physical process of misspeaking, creating a point of contact between language and sculpture where sculpture becomes a poetic, polysemic space in motion. A slip of the tongue, in turn, which causes language to deviate, is perhaps also that piece of jewellery piercing and enhancing the tongue.

The work enters into dialogue with the Crac building through a play of sharp contrasts: to the grey, smooth, mineral facade of a minimal concrete structure, *Slip of the Tongue* responds with an organic, brightly coloured organic representation. The visual triangulation between the facade, the sculpture and the tree in front of the Crac is the ideal introduction to Alexandra Bircken and her themes, which combine bodies, nature and architecture. Thus this gigantic tongue invites us to go from the outside to the inside of the architectural body.



Slip of the Tongue, 2020
Aluminium, stainless steel, steel, concrete, lacquer, 600 x 100 x 200 cm,
Collection Becker Family

Room 1

Knitting, knotting and assemblage are recurrent gestures in Alexandra Bircken's works, which assume the form of grids and networks. The work *Uknit Bonn* is a mesh created through the infinite repetition of a metal form. The title *Uknit* (as in « You Knit ») addresses the viewer directly, inviting them to take hold of the grid and continue knitting. If textiles—and knotting and weaving more broadly—are so important for Alexandra Bircken, this is also because they are part of a long cultural history of human technologies. The possibility of weaving and making knots made it possible to build tools for fishing and hunting, to protect the body with clothing, to make baskets and containers for transporting food, and tents for shelter..

Cagey is an archaic-looking microarchitecture taking the form of a shelter made of clothes, fabrics, but also branches, rope and mortar. This notion of «architectural clothing» is also found in *Birch Field*, a mural sculpture made of birch branches, held together by knitting, itself dipped in mortar. Alexandra Bircken draws an analogy between skin, clothing and architecture as membranes that either link us to, or separate us from the world protecting us while remaining vulnerable. At the back of the room, *Untitled* is a monumental installation made of crocheted ropes punctuated by various knots, bags and baskets. If the grid is a motif associated with modernist rationality, a stable and normative geometry, Alexandra Bircken gives it a more deviant form. It is also a way of suggesting the infinite dimension of the network, since this grid motif can extend and continue well beyond the structure and free itself from the boundaries of the frame.



Birch Field, 2011
Birch wood, textile, mortar, pigment, screws, 168 x 180 x 24 cm,
Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection, London
Cagey, 2012

Branches, wicker, wood, fabric, down jacket, mortar, wool, straw, rope, thermal blanket, bronze, castors, screws, 230 x 170 x 170 cm
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)

Room 1

Her works are made up of pieces sewn together, on the principle of patchwork or surgical suture. This is the case with the nylon canvas hung on the wall, entitled **Black Skin**. As the artist likes to remind us, the skin is the human body's largest organ. Having studied fashion, Alexandra Bircken has always been fascinated by clothing as a second skin, the way it changes us and changes other people's view of us. The notion of prosthesis, perceptible in several works, is a central one for Alexandra Bircken, because of its ability to shift the norms associated with the definition of the body, asking the question : what is a normal body? Motorcycles, skis, and small wooden horses are all extensions of the body, moulding it and increasing its abilities. The power that certain technologies give to human beings is implicitly evoked in a central installation of four black latex sculptures entitled **Big, Ugly, Fat, and Fellow**. These massive erectile forms also evoke artillery shells: in fact, the first letters of the titles spell the word BUFF, a nickname given to the American B52 bomber. Facing this installation, Alexandra Bircken has installed a figure entitled **The Doctor**. The leg of the mannequin in a white suit is replaced by a tree branch, like a kind of prosthesis. To potential destruction, to the dismantling of bodies, responds a potential for repair and reconstruction.



Ukmit Bonn, 2012

Steel, wood, nails, emulsion paint, 150 x 900 cm
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)

RSV 4, 2020

Motorcycle, steel, two parts: front: 117x 112 x 77 cm, rear: 100 x 103 x 57 cm
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)

Warrior, 2020

Bronze, two parts, each 13,5 x 16 x 28,5 cm,
Udo and Anette Brandhorst Collection

Room 2

Berge, created in 2003, is a sculpture crocheted with a thick wool yarn. **Gebilde** and **Ship** are in the same vein, combining knitting with tree branches. This shifting of materials, uses and techniques, sometimes going against the tide, is found in the bronze work **Klein's Jacket**: one of the jacket's sleeves enters the cuff of the other, in reference to the Klein bottle, which has no definable interior or exterior, and produces a kind of infinite knot, a notion that is also evoked by the work entitled **Origin of the World**. This consists of a glass box that contains a placenta in a preservative liquid. It is the placenta the artist preserved after the birth of her daughter in 2011. This piece by itself condenses a number of themes found in Alexandra Bircken's work: skin, tissue, the thread, the envelope, the shelter, the relationship between outside and inside, the woman's body as the ultimate place of production and creation. The placenta is asserted as the quintessential place of entanglement, of interconnection, of the production of links and relations, where entities that are different but respectful of one another coexist, in the deepest intimacy.



Origin of the world, 2017

Human placenta, Kaiserling solution, thread, glass, 24,5 x 19,5 x 6,8 cm
© Alexandra Bircken. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Roman März.

Room 3

The artist invites us to a kind of autopsy of familiar objects whose inside she looks at, or whose surface she stretches like a skin. This is the case with *Skin Deep*, flesh-coloured nylon stockings sewn together and stretched on the wall, and with *T(Raum)1*, a garment printed on a mirror, metaphorically dressing the person who stands in front of it, and also with *Snoopy*, a used biker suit, presented open and spread out, evoking the trophies that hunters exhibit on walls. A suit is also the best way to protect yourself against motorcycle accidents while covering yourself in the skin of another animal.

Just as the insides of a motorcycle are exhibited in the first room, here it is a wooden horse that is sawn in two (*Pferdchen*). The artist recognises having always wanted to know what was inside, in order to understand « how it works », a tendency that echoes a world of technologies making it possible to see through the human body like never before, thanks to scanners and other x-rays.



Snoopy, 2014
Motorbike suit, 153 x 161 x 14 cm ©Alexandra Bircken. Courtesy Udo und Anette Brandhorst Collection. Photo: Andy Keate

Room 4

Icarus Survivor recalls the mad attempt of Icarus, a figure from the Greek mythology, who drowned because he attempted to reach the sun with his wings made of wax. The pose of *Spaceman* is dictated by the growth of branches. In addition to objects found in nature like leaves or branches, the artist uses all kinds of household objects collected from her immediate environment. It was out of these objects that she developed *Blondie, Begging*. There is something sovereign and self-sufficient about the sculpture, and it seems to come alive in front of our eyes. It confronts viewers with its human scale, and the hollow, in the form of a basket containing a few coins, which makes it into a figure that is beseeching while also being the actor of its own story.

Voids, discontinuities, prostheses or dislocations enable new meanings to arise, as well as new ways of seeing our bodies and the objects that surround us. Thus we find complex form of networks, as in *Netz mit Maria*, a grid in which various objects are interconnected, or *Pferdchen*, a rocking horse enhanced with an elaborate mesh. In this manner, the relationship between objects supplants the objects themselves.



Icarus Survivor, 2009
Plaster, pigments, silver, brass, wire, wood, metal, spray paint, wool, waistcoat, shirt, cotton, plastic, adhesive, thread, grape stalk, 140 x 138 x 24 cm, Kienbaum Collection, Cologne

Room 5 and 6

In Alexandra Bircken's work, the body is often manifested through its absence or through an implicit presence. This is the case for *Madonna (ohne Kind)*, whose body is only materialised by a contour, or *Nabelschau*, a crocheted silhouette of a pregnant woman, which looks like a garment to don or an abandoned slough. Likewise, the car frame (*Smartie*) presented in the middle of the room is an emptied envelope whose wood-panelled interior takes on the appearance of a domestic space in which one could at least curl up. The car is a vulnerable body, presented defenceless like a skeleton, reinforcing the analogy with the human body.

By radically transforming objects, Alexandra Bircken alters their function. Thus, *AKS 47* is a gun sawn in two whose potential for violence has been annihilated, as it gains a new symbolic function. *Crown* is a bronze cast of female genitals where the cavity turns into an excrescence. In a society based on the commodification of desires, on the extolling of competition, power and the logic of domination, Alexandra Bircken offers a form of emancipatory self-derision. She defuses gender allocations and conventional representations.



Crown, 2014
Nickel silver, 36 x 27 x 21 cm,
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)
Smartie, 2017
Smart car chassis, wood, metal, peephole, 229,5 x 139,5 x 223 cm
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)
Thomas Brinkmann, *Flokati*, 2021, Sound, approx. 110 min, Courtesy of the artist
Madonna (ohne Kind) [Madonna (without Child)], 2017
Cotton wool, epoxy resin, ball, wood, twig, thread, human hair, 182 x 50 x 28 cm
Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)

Room 7

The final room of the exhibition presents a set of recent works entitled *Deflated Figures*. This series of men's and women's suits made of cotton and black latex were cut and sewn to cover the body as snugly as possible. More than a second skin, as a piece of clothing might be, they are skins themselves, body envelopes emptied of flesh, and of bone structure. This clothing series enters into dialogue with a ladder made of bones that stretch to the height of the building (*Knochenleiter*). If the object itself invites us to climb ever higher, embodying dreams of ascension and domination, it forces us to stand on bones, offering an infinite meditation on the meaning of history and the human condition. What should be built on the ruins of the present and past, on the destruction evoked by *Demolition Ball / Cassius*? Although the work recalls the shape of a demolition tool, it also contains that potential to discharge body energies, the confrontation of bodies and objects, and their potential for reciprocal resistance.



Deflated Figures, 2021
Latex, wadding, cotton fabric, coat hangers, ladders, Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)
Trolley II, 2016
Steel, wood, buffalo hair, bronze, 260 x 380,4 x 150,4 cm, Sprengel Museum Hannover
Eva, 2016
Bronze, 83 x 74 x 46 cm, Sprengel Museum Hannover
Demolition ball / Cassius, 2011, Leather, foam, metal, thread, Collection Dennis Kimmerich
UZI, 2016
Fusil mitraillette, deux parties, l'ensemble 52 x 56 x 4 cm, Ottmann Collection, Munich
UZI, 2016
Submachine gun, Two parts, overall 52 x 56 x 4 cm, Ottmann Collection, Munich

Plans and legends

* Courtesy of the artist, BQ (Berlin), and Herald St (London)

Forecourt

Slip of the Tongue, 2020

Aluminium, stainless steel, steel, concrete, lacquer, 600 x 100 x 200 cm, Collection Becker Family

Entrance

1 Taktstock (Rhythm Stick), 2020

Camshaft, 121 x 7 x 4 cm
Private collection, Basel

Room 1

2 Birch Field, 2011

Birch wood, textile, mortar, pigment, screws, 168 x 180 x 24 cm, Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection, London

3 Cagey, 2012*

Branches, wicker, wood, fabric, down jacket, mortar, wool, straw, rope, thermal blanket, bronze, castors, screws, 230 x 170 x 170 cm

4 Uknit Bonn, 2012*

Steel, wood, nails, emulsion paint, 150 x 900 cm

5 RSV 4, 2020*

Motorcycle, steel, two parts: front: 117x 112 x 77 cm, rear: 100 x 103 x 57 cm

6 Warrior, 2020

Bronze, two parts, each 13,5 x 16 x 28,5 cm, Udo and Anette Brandhorst Collection

7 Black Skin, 2012

Nylon tights, PVA adhesive, 170 x 220,5 cm, Private collection

8 Big, 2014

Wood, foam, plastic, fabric, latex, metal, 278 x 56 (diam.) cm, Private collection, Cologne

9 Ugly, 2014

Wood, foam, plastic, fabric, latex, metal, 161 x 50 (diam.) cm, Private collection, Cologne

10 Fat, 2014

Wood, foam, plastic, fabric, latex, metal, 235 x 91,5 (diam.) cm, Private collection, Cologne

11 Fellow, 2014

Wood, foam, plastic, fabric, latex, metal, 235 x 91 (diam.) cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne

12 The Doctor, 2020

Display mannequin, fabric, wadding, thread, metal, leg prosthesis, tree trunk, model boat, metal stand, 183 x 62 x 60 cm, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

13 Untitled, 2011*

Polypropylene, 700 x 800 x 50 cm

14 Knochen [Bone], 2011

Bronze 18 x 35 x 17 cm, Valeria et Gregorio Napoleone Collection, London

15 Trophy, 2016

Nickel silver, 21 x 17,5 x 11 cm, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

Room 2

16 INXS, 2016

Display mannequin, motorcycle gear, metal buttons, leather, denim, latex, nylon tights, wadding, metal, protective pads, human hair, metal stand, 165,5 x 53 x 26,5 cm, Danniel Rangel Collection, Paris

17 Lightning, 2019

Motorcycle, steel, 183 x 172 x 77 cm, Collection privée, Cologne

18 Ship, 2005

Wool, branches, 45 x 58 x 24 cm, Private collection, London

19 Berge [Mountains], 2003

Wool, cotton, 29,5 x 55 x 54 cm, private collection

20 Gebilde [Construct], 2005

Wool, branches, 23 x 64 x 43,5 cm, Marco Rossi collection, Turin

21 Origin of the world, 2017

Human placenta, Kaiserling solution, thread, glass, 24,5 x 19,5 x 6,8 cm, Courtesy of the artist

22 Klein's Jacket, 2017

Bronze, 74 x 84 x 9 cm, Loan from the Federal Republic of Germany – Collection of Contemporary Art

Room 3

23 Skiliesel [Ski Dolly], 2010

Skis, copper, screws, wax, cloth, broom, synthetic yarn, 160 x 42 x 43 cm, Collection Dorothea and Alastair Cookson, London

24 Flagge süß/sauer [Flag sweet/sour], 2021*

Telescopic rod, scarf, digital print on silk, 115 x 115 cm

25 Thanet, 2021*

Bicycle frame, two parts, overall 104 x 128 x 6 cm

26 T(Raum)1, 2019*

UV print on mirror-polished stainless steel, aluminium sandwich panel, 250 x 125 x 1,5 cm

27 Pferdchen [Little Horse], 2019

Rocking horse, human hair, sawdust, screws, hinge, 67 x 54 x 51 cm, Collection Danniel Rangel, Paris

28 Snoopy, 2014

Motorcycle suit, 153 x 161 x 14 cm, Udo and Anette Brandhorst Collection

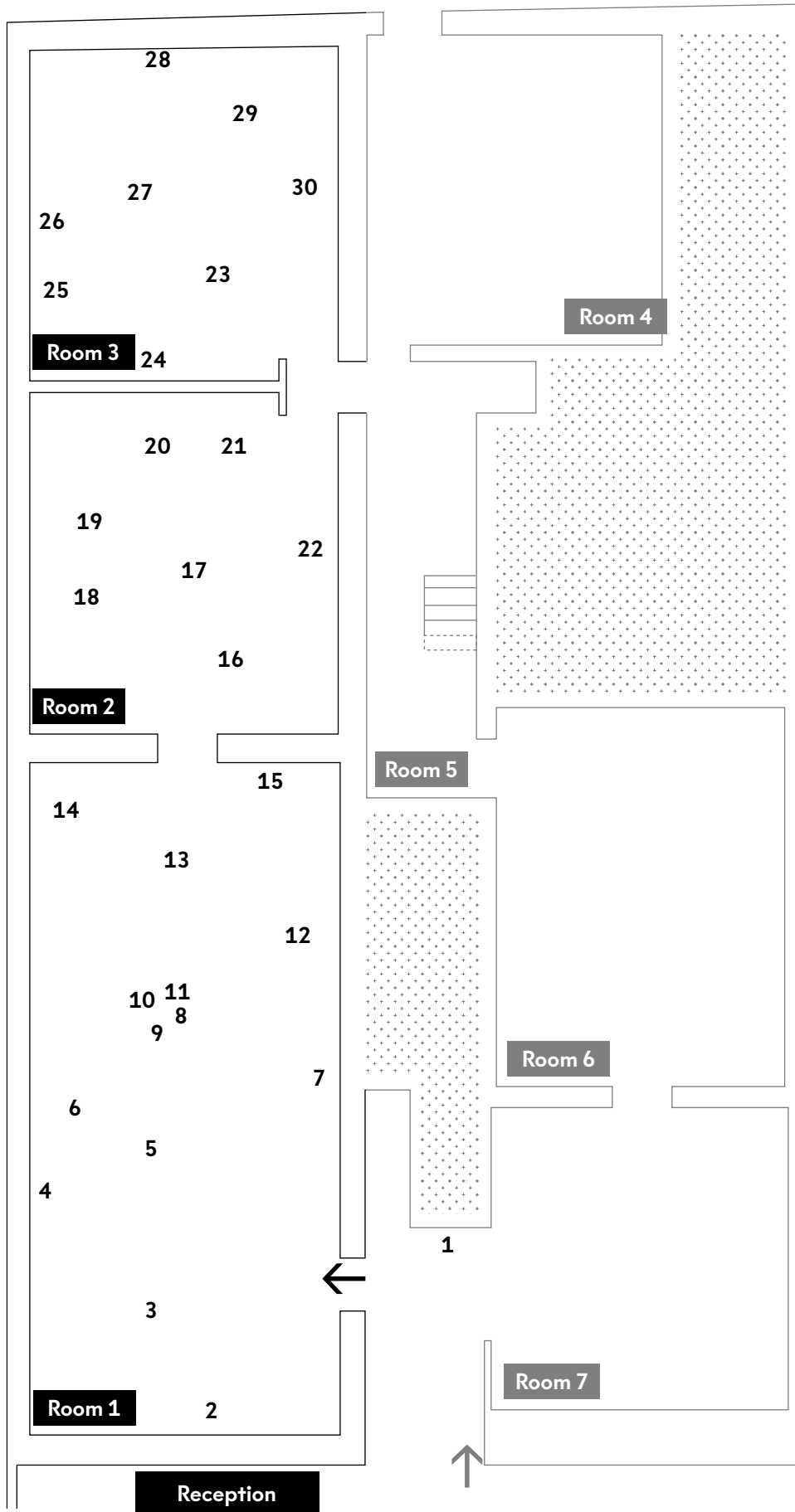
29 Ex, 2017*

Wire mesh, wood, textile, epoxy, thread, silk, screws, castors, 193,3 x 39,5 x 35 cm

30 Skin Deep, 2012*

Nylon tights, PVA adhesive, 148 x 190 cm

Ground floor rooms 1 - 3



Plans and legends

Room 4

31 *Knut*, 2010*

polyester wadding, plastic, adhesive,
240 x 150 x 120 cm

32 *Pferdchen* [Little Horse], 2008

Rocking horse, branches, screws, wool,
137 x 88,5 x 36 cm, Kunstpalast,
Düsseldorf - on permanent loan from
the Collection Stadtparkasse
Düsseldorf

33 *Icarus Survivor*, 2009

Plaster, pigments, silver, brass, wire,
wood, metal, spray paint, wool,
waistcoat, shirt, cotton, plastic,
adhesive, thread, grape stalk, 140 x
138 x 24 cm, Kienbaum Collection,
Cologne

34 *Blondie, begging*, 2010

Concrete, log, scarf, sweater, human
hair, coins, resin, wool, wadding, wire,
screws, 194 x 50 x 34 cm,
Private collection

35 *Spaceman*, 2005

Clamp, branch, fabric, thread,
polyester wadding, press studs, cord,
adhesive, 119 x 67 x 70 cm, Collection
Bruni and Wolfgang Strobel

36 *Ursula*, 2020*

Polyester thread, 111 x 121 cm

37 *Netz mit Maria* [Net with Maria], 2008

Wool, branches, polyester wadding,
wire, bags, soft toys, plaster soaked in
pigmented wax, shuttlecock and racket,
spray paint, dried grass, jeans chain,
paper, pearls, nylon thread,
212 x 288.5 x 23 cm, Kunstpalast,
Düsseldorf - on permanent loan from
the Collection Stadtparkasse
Düsseldorf

Room 5

38 *Storm*, 2013

Motorcycle suit, cotton felt stuffing,
52 x 131 x 63 cm, Private collection

39 *Deine Beine* [Your Legs], 2019*

Wood, metal joint, leather, nails, leg of
a mannequin, Acryl acrylic resin,
tea towel, epoxy, acorn, 62 x 58 x
55 cm

Room 6

40 *Crown*, 2014*

Nickel silver, 36 x 27 x 21 cm

41 *Madonna (ohne Kind)* [Madonna (without Child)], 2017*

Cotton wool, epoxy resin, ball, wood,
twig, thread, human hair, 182 x 50 x
28 cm

42 *AKS 47*, 2020

Assault rifle, two parts, overall 87 x 55
x 5cm, Private collection, Cologne

43 *Smartie*, 2017*

Smart car chassis, wood, metal,
peephole, 229,5 x 139,5 x 223 cm

43 Thomas Brinkmann, *Flokati*, 2021,

Sound, approx. 110 min,
Courtesy of the artist

44 *Nabelschau* [Navel-Gazing], 2021*

Wool, epoxy resin, 185 x 55 x 30 cm

45 *Modell* [Model], 2007

Concrete, stones, branches, screws,
copper wire, plastic foil, staples, 209 x
99 x 101 cm,
Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf - on
permanent loan from the Collection
Stadtparkasse Düsseldorf

46 *Honda Honda Bionda Onda*, 2017*

Motorcycle fuel tanks, wood, screws,
nails, paint, human hair,
211 x 40 x 200 cm

Room 7

47 *Löwenmaul* [Lion's Maw], 2019*

Human hair, bra, bronze,
40 x 30 x 15 cm

48 *Rückgrat* [Spine], 2019*

Concrete, metal hinges, screws, tree
trunk, wax, epoxy, 76 x 57 x 18 cm
(installation dimensions variable)

49 *Ortrand*, 2020

Lorry tyres, stove door, 375 x 37 x 14
cm, Private collection, Cologne

50 *Knochenleiter* [Bone ladder], 2022*

Beef ribs, polypropylene cord, cramps,
45 x 4 x 470 cm

51 *Deflated Figures*, 2021*

Latex, wadding, cotton fabric, coat
hangers, ladders

52 *Demolition ball / Cassius*, 2011

Leather, foam, metal, thread,
Collection Dennis Kimmerich

53 *Trolley II*, 2016

Steel, wood, buffalo hair, bronze,
260 x 380,4 x 150,4 cm
Sprengel Museum Hannover

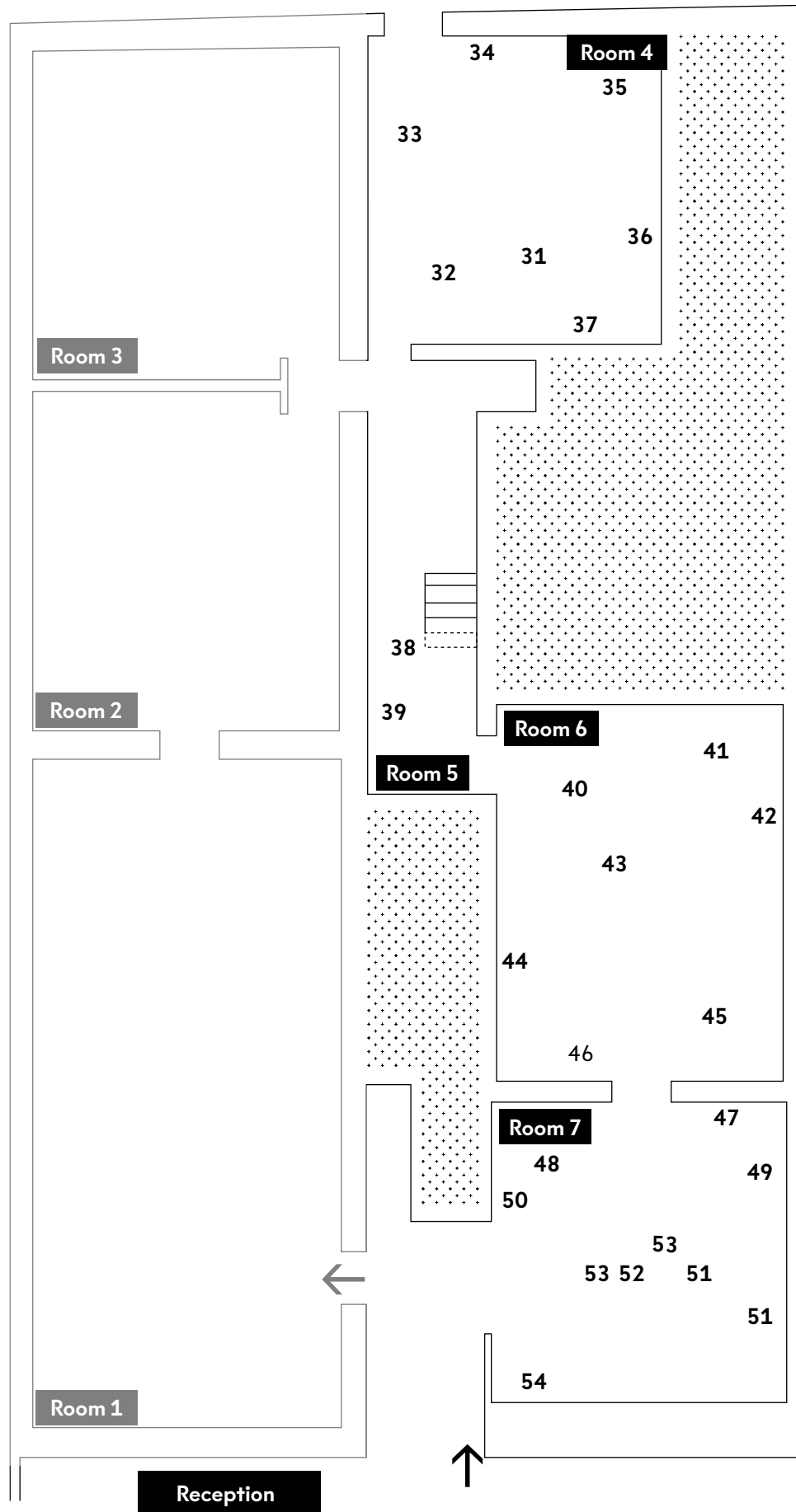
53 *Eva*, 2016

Bronze, 83 x 74 x 46 cm,
Sprengel Museum Hannover

54 *UZI*, 2016

Submachine gun,
Two parts, overall 52 x 56 x 4 cm,
Ottmann Collection, Munich

Ground floor rooms 4 - 7



Bianca Bondi

Objects as actants

Between fairytale and apocalypse, Bianca Bondi's installations and sculptures plunge the viewer into a universe both strange and familiar, where past, present and future intermix. As if in a waking dream or inner drift, her works suspend the boundaries between the astral and earthly worlds, realms of the living and the dead, the visible and invisible.

Working in connection to the exhibition site, its aura and its secret archaeology, Bianca Bondi proposes custom-made landscapes for the spaces in which she intervenes. Gardens, fountains and rooms are transfigured by the use of various chemical, climatic, olfactory, sound and light phenomena.

For over a decade, she has been using ephemeral and organic materials like wax, plants, spirulina, spices and especially salt, which has become her material of choice, both for its strong symbolism and its chemical properties. Present in religions as well as in spiritual and pagan practices, it is associated with a protective function, and repels the evil eye. In addition to its sacred dimension, it is also an essential component of body fluids. Paradoxically, salt corrodes, oxidises and permanently alters the objects it covers in Bianca Bondi's installations.

commissariat : Marie Cozette

About the artist

Bianca Bondi was born in 1986 in Johannesburg, South Africa. She lives and works in Paris.

Bianca Bondi was born to a South African mother and an Italian father. Her heart having been set on becoming a pilot since the age of six, she undertakes the equivalent of a BAC in Science while simultaneously studying French and Art in Johannesburg. Following a series of fortuitous events, she pursues her studies at the Wits School of Arts in Johannesburg majoring in Fine Arts, with the intentions of eventually directing a cultural institution. At the age of nineteen, she travels to Paris intent on seeing her favorite art works in real life. After meeting the drummer of a French punk band, she decides to stay in France and continue her studies at the École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris-Cergy. Her passion for physical science and the occult sciences enabling her to conduct experiments, using various techniques, on materials chosen for their potential for transformation or their intrinsic properties; thus developing her research and her formal and material investigations in art. Fascinated by ecology and spiritualism, Bianca Bondi creates multidisciplinary works of a transformative nature, in which the objects' aura is key. Her installations and sculptures highlight the interconnectedness of elements within the world, their transience, and reveal the cycles of life and death. Bianca Bondi is represented by Mor Charpentier in Paris.

Exhibition partner

The installation that Bianca Bondi is producing specifically for the first floor of the Crac Occitanie is the fruit of a three-week residency, in partnership with La cité scolaire Paul Valéry in Sète. It is a new work-experiment conducted through a close collaboration between the Crac's visitor services and the teaching staff at La Cité scolaire. Bianca Bondi was able to work with several secondary and post-secondary classes, instilling their teachings with a discipline-departmentalisation dynamic, between life sciences, chemistry, art, philosophy, and ecological issues.



Entre le vide et l'événement pur / coupe d'haleine, cheveux d'ange (Détail), 2022 Filets de pêche abandonnés, Production Crac Occitanie & Cité scolaire Paul Valéry Sète

Room 1

What could seem like a gradual destruction of objects in Bianca Bondi's work stems rather from the potential for transformation and regeneration. The artist even speaks of an « energy transfer » between the elements. Thus her installations are undergoing a constant metamorphosis: one can see copper objects covered in bluish stains, clothing invaded by crystals, water that slowly oscillates between purple and crimson.

In the context of a multi-week residency at La cité scolaire Paul Valéry in Sète, the artist worked with students, undertaking to retrieve abandoned objects from the city's canals, sometimes buried in the mud. A rope, a landing net and other everyday objects were cleaned. Already significantly altered by the flowing water and by marine organisms, these objects constitute the matrices of sculptures presented on the walls. Like poetic enigma, they are transfigured by the action of salt and the addition of plants.

The installation entitled *Entre le vide et l'événement pur / coupe d'haleine, cheveux d'ange* is made of discarded fishing nets. The thinness of the nets make them look like an immense aerial head of hair, installed in the centre of the room like a nave or protective shell. Nevertheless, the pinkish colour that appears here and there is the blood of fish that were caught in it. These nylon nets are sometimes lost in the sea after thunderstorms or by getting caught on reefs. They become « ghost nets » and continue to « fish » autonomously since fish get caught in their mesh. The title of the work loosely quotes Paul Valéry's poem *Le cimetière marin*, to which the artist is paying a discreet tribute.



Bianca Bondi's intervention in a class, and the collecting of objects in the canal with students from La Cité scolaire Paul Valéry during her residency in February 2022.



Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose, 2022
Fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, garland of dried orchids
A production of the Crac Occitanie and La Cité scolaire Paul Valéry in Sète

Room 2

For the exhibition, Bianca Bondi has produced a series of showcases which she describes as « living still lifes ». They consist of skilful amalgamations of objects that were bought in Sète at flea markets or in second-hand shops, then slowly covered with crystals, stains and oxidation. Encapsulated and as if suspended frozen in time, these micro-landscapes are in fact constantly evolving, and constitute something like miniature ecosystems. Across from the showcases, Bianca Bondi presents a pharmaceutical cupboard, also found on the streets of Sète. The object covered in salt and vegetation becomes a votive altar, while suggesting the healing potential that is central to Bianca Bondi's practice.

Bianca Bondi masters the alchemy of the materials she uses. She is getting to know them more and more, but for the most part, the organic or inorganic objects she summons have their own life, beyond of all human control. Thus the « actant objects » evoked in the exhibition title—a term borrowed from philosopher Bruno Latour—remind us that every object is a fully-fledged actor of the world, in a political ecology that involves the co-evolution of all beings, human and nonhuman. This is the source of the fundamental unpredictability that is the driving force behind Bianca Bondi's installations: substances parasitise them, and in so doing, establish relations, connect to one another, and create new alliances, with or without us.



Exhibition *Objects as actants* room2



Bloom (hot water / how do we keep going without shutting down or hardening into shells of ourselves), 2022, various objects in a plexiglas showcase : antique copper hot-water bottles (early 20th century), crab skeletons, lava rock, pink rock, text, fern, aquatic algae, gypsophila, salt, various chemical solutions
A production of the Crac Occitanie and La Cité scolaire Paul Valéry in Sète

Plan and legends

For all of the works : a production of the Crac Occitanie and La Cité scolaire Paul Valéry in Sète

Room 1

1 *Fehu, la première Rune*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, seal ribs

2 *Cheval de mer*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, Camargue pampa grass, salt, shells, fern

3 *Serpent*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, alum crystals, gypsophila

4 *Eclipse*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, copper porthole, mirror, alum crystals, shells, aquatic algae

5 *Lacet*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, alum crystals, shells, aquatic algae

6 *Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, garland of dried orchids

7 *Hag stone*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, salt crystals, smoke quartz

8 *Nyx*, 2022, silk organza, traces of salt and oxidation, abalone, shell, gypsophila, aquatic algae, amaranth, net, alum crystals, coins

9 *Entre le vide et l'événement pur / coupe d'haleine, cheveux d'ange*, 2022, discarded fishing nets

Room 2

10 *La clef d'huître*, 2022, fragments from the canals of the city of Sète, key, gypsophila, leather glove

11 *Instable trésor, temple simple à Aphrodite*, 2022, vintage pharmaceutical cupboard with mirrored doors, old pharmaceutical bottles, coins forming verdigris, scallop, pearl oyster, arrow, coral, white feathers, schoolbook on Graeco-Roman mythology, amethyst flower quartz, amethyst flower, myrtle branches, candles, gypsophila, amaranth, fern, aquatic algae, salt, various chemical solutions

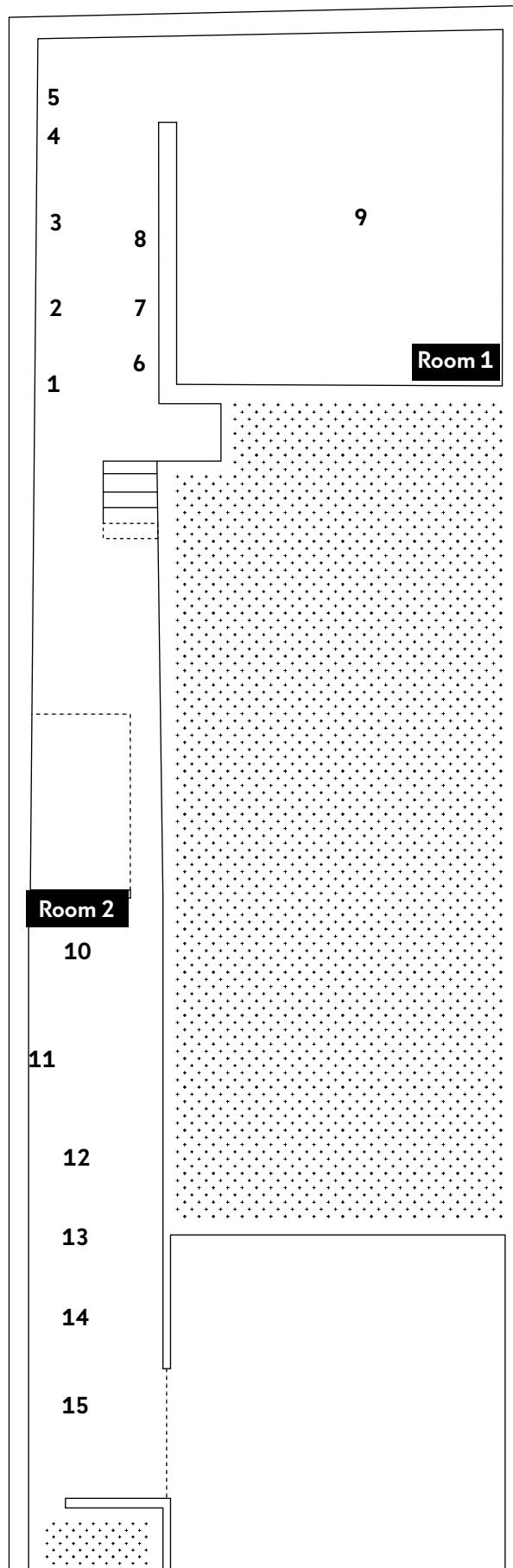
12 *Bloom (la boîte à bijoux)*, 2022, various objects in a plexiglas showcase : wooden box, amethyst, coral, copper vase, French coins, eucalyptus, fern, aquatic algae, salt, various chemical solutions

13 *Bloom (et si on laissait l'eau monter)*, 2022, various objects in a plexiglas showcase : Achillea filipendulina, vine, sea urchins, eucalyptus, fern, glass, text, salt, water, various chemical solutions

14 *Bloom (hot water / how do we keep going without shutting down or hardening into shells of ourselves)*, 2022, various objects in a plexiglas showcase : antique copper hot-water bottles (early 20th century), crab skeletons, lava rock, pink rock, text, fern, aquatic algae, gypsophila, salt, various chemical solutions

15 *Bloom (Age of Uncertainty)*, 2022, various objects in a plexiglas showcase : oyster, antique stoup, welk shells, *Times Magazine*, fossilised shell, fern, aquatic algae, water, salt, various chemical solutions

First floor



Visitor services

Workshops and tours

* reservation.

Group tours res. contact Vanessa Rossignol : +33 (0)4 67 74 89 69 vanessa.rossignol@laregion.fr

Toddlers

Fun tools available at the reception : detail cards, puzzles, difference games

7-12 years old

Children's discovery book available at reception

- **Workshop in Motion* with Maud Chabrol**
Sat. 26 March from 2pm to 4pm
- **Cric Crac workshops*** from 2pm to 3:30pm **school holidays**
Fri. 29 April (exploring Alexandra Bircken's exhibition)
Fri. 6 May (exploring Bianca Bondi's exhibition)
- **Tell me an exhibition**
Revolving around Bianca Bondi's exhibition, in partnership with the Médiathèque François Mitterrand in Sète **off-site**
Wed. 30 March from 2:30pm to 4pm, tale-telling session at the Médiathèque François Mitterrand in Sète off-site
Wed. 6 April from 2:30pm to 4pm, workshop-tour at the Crac.
Registration required at the Médiathèque: in person or phone :04 67 46 05 06

Adolescents

- **«Action Art» workshop* with the artist Pascale Ciapp**
Sat. 2 April from 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Families

vacances scolaires

- **Holiday course with culinary artist Débora Incorvaia*** (in connection with Bianca Bondi's exhibition) In conjunction with the art and design centre La cuisine in Nègrepelisse.
Wed. 27 & Thu. 28 April from 2pm to 4pm
- **Holiday course with the artist Eva Debra Debrececi*** (in connection with Alexandra Bircken's exhibition), Wed. 4 & Thu. 5 May from 2pm to 4pm

For all ages

- **Flash tours** **vacances scolaires**
Mond. and Thurs. from 4pm to 4:15pm
- **Weekend tours**
Sat. and Sun. from 4pm to 5:30pm
- **Interactive tour in French Sign Language** 
Sat. 9 April at 4pm
- **Signdance workshop*** 
Choreographic creations with Jos Pujol, choreographer of Singulier Pluriel company
Sun. 15 May from 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Events revolving around the exhibitions

- **Talk by Bianca Bondi** **off-site**
In partnership with MOCO. in Montpellier
Thu. 24 Feb. at 7pm in the amphitheatre at La Panacée in Montpellier
- **Before at the Crac**
In the early evening, students from various backgrounds share their unique perspectives on the exhibitions.
In partnership with the Cultural Centre at the Université Paul Valéry and Mécènes du Sud Montpellier-Sète.
Wed. 23 March special opening until 9pm, accessible to everyone.
- **Tours of the exhibitions with Marie Cozette**
director of the Crac
Sun. 27 March at 4pm
- **Tour : « From One Landscape to Another »** 
exhibitions of artist Max Hooper Schneider at the MO. CO. and artist Bianca Bondi at the Crac Occitanie.
In partnership with the MOCO. in Montpellier. **Hors les murs**
Friday 22 April 10am-12pm: MOCO. Panacea off-site
Wed. 18 May 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Crac
Registration: reservation@moco.art or 04 99 58 28
- **Two-voice tour**, of Alexandra Bircken's exhibition A–Z, with choreographer Alban Richard and a mediator from the art centre.
Sunday 22 May 2pm
Echoing the show Défilé pour 27 chaussures by Mathilde Monnier and Olivier Saillard (28 and 29 May)
- **Défilé pour 27 chaussures**, by Mathilde Monnier and Olivier Saillard
Saturday 28 May at 6pm and Sunday 29 May at 11am
In partnership with Le TMS national theatre, as part of Alors, on danse ! Admission 8 to 14€. To reserve or buy tickets, visit either the "Billetterie" page on the website of Le TMS: www.tmssete.com or the ticket desk in reception at the Crac on the night of the show.

Concurrent with the exhibitions

- **Le grand bestiaire des petites bêtes**
This exhibition is made up of plastic works created by primary school students in Hérault taking part in the "Arboebio" federative art education project favouring biodiversity.
In partnership with DSDEN 34, Direction des Services Départementaux de l'Éducation Nationale – Hérault from Thursday 12 to Sunday 22 May, in the mediation room at the Crac

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Bianca Bondi would like to thank :

Lucille Bréard and Marie Cozette, the art students at Lycée Paul Valéry, the teaching staff at Lycée Paul Valéry for their warm welcome, Marie-Laurence Manificier, Philippe Ménil, the Crac Occitanie team (Vanessa, Karine, Martine, Marion, Cédric, Sylvie, Manuelle, Jimmy), and the Backface team, the mediation team, the mor charpentier gallery, Guillaume Bouisset, the committed fishermen and fisherwomen of Sète.

The Crac Occitanie

Located in Sète, on the bank of Canal Royal in the heart of the city, the Crac Occitanie overlooks the port and the Mediterranean Sea. Its architecture's exceptional volumes reflect the industrial nature of the building, which was originally a refrigerated warehouse used for the conservation of fish. In 1997, architect Lorenzo Piqueras renovated the original building, giving it the current configuration and transforming it into an exceptional exhibition site, offering 1,200 square meters of gallery space distributed over two floors.

The Crac is dedicated to artistic creation. It offers a programme of temporary exhibitions, publishes exhibition catalogues and artist books, and develops a dynamic cultural and educational programme for all audiences, through guided tours, workshops, lectures, concerts, performances and more.

The Crac promotes local, national and international partnerships based on the dual principle of proximity to its visitors and an open attitude towards the world. As a place of production, research, experimentation and exhibition, the Crac has, over a period of more than twenty years, presented over six hundred artists from the French and international art scenes.



Vue de la façade du Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain, projection présentée dans le cadre de l'exposition *La première image*, 2009
Photographe: Marc Damage © Crac Occitanie.

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Practical information

Open everyday from 12:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. (except Tuesday) and weekends from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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facebook: @crac.occitanie
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twitter: @crac_occitanie

Cover captions:

Alexandra Bircken, RSV4, 2020 © Alexandra Bircken.
Courtesy the artist, BQ, Berlin and Herald St, London.
Photo: Roman März.

Bianca Bondi, Underland (détail), 2021. Courtesy the artist and mor charpentier gallery, Paris.

Introduction text exhibition A–Z :
Monika Bayer-Wermuth
Other texts Marie Cozette

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SUR LE PLATEAU DE TOURNAGE
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Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée

crac.laregion.fr

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