

Alain Séchas

JE NE M'ENNUIE JAMAIS ...
[I never get bored...]



+ Juliette Vanwaterloo

Tout cramer
[Burn it all down]

Press release

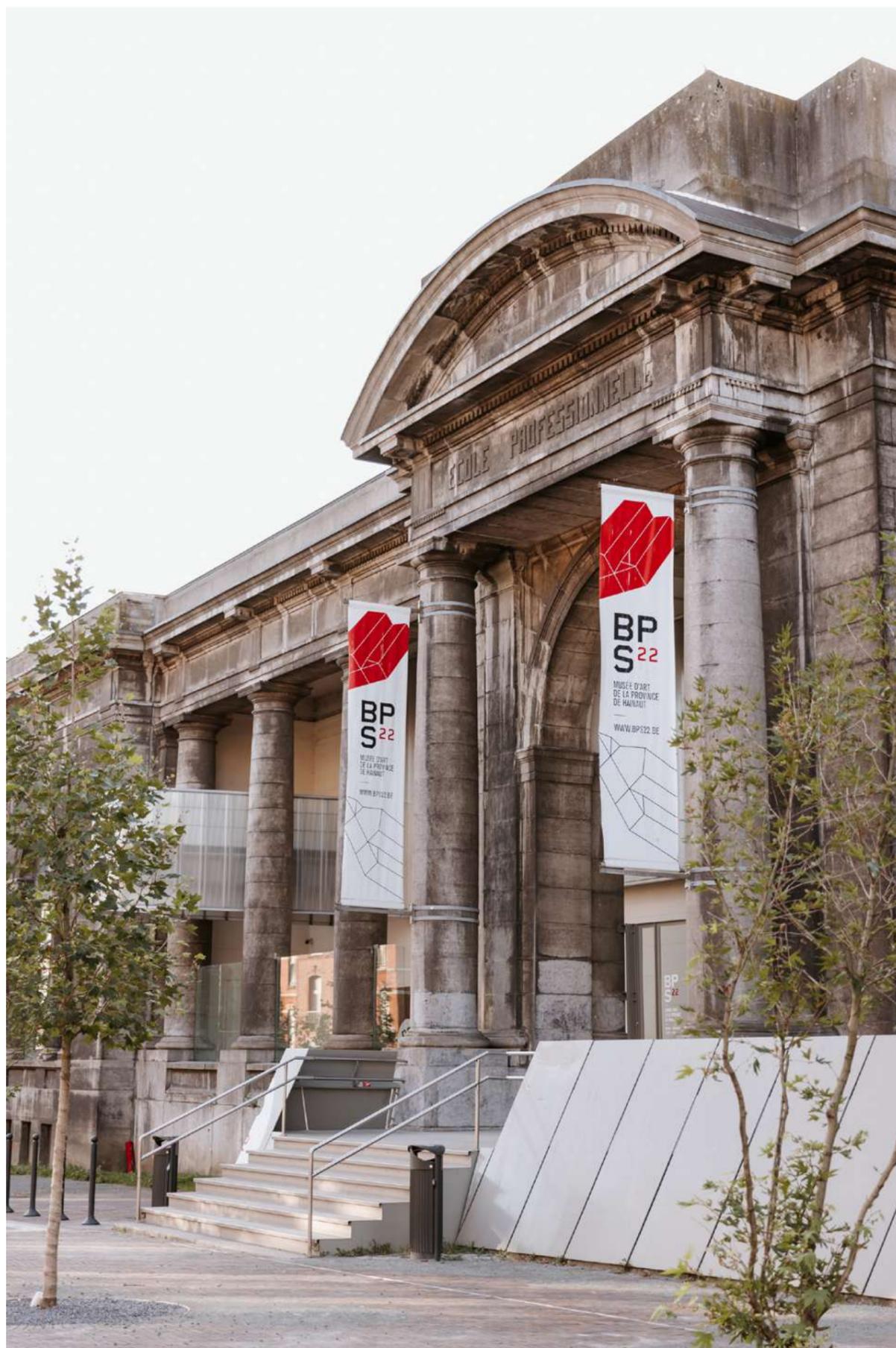
28.09.2024 > 05.01.2025

BP MUSÉE D'ART
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Duvel





Programme 28.09.2024 > 05.01.2025

Exhibitions

- 4 **Alain Séchas**
JE NE M'ENNUIE JAMAIS...
- 12 **Juliette Vanwaterloo**
Tout cramer

Cultural mediation

- 16 **Petit Musée**
Artworks from the collection

To come

- 18 **Next exhibitions**
February > December 2025

Alain Séchas

JE NE M'ENNUIE JAMAIS...

BPS22 is hosting Belgium's first ever major museum exhibition of the French artist **Alain Séchas** (Colombes, 1955). Although not a retrospective in the strictest sense, *Je ne m'ennuie jamais...* [*I never get bored...*] brings together over 200 emblematic works from different periods of the artist's career, ranging from the early cats sculptures that made him famous to his most recent paintings, including animated installations, videos, and posters, all linked by one common thread: the act of drawing.

Alain Séchas first gained wide recognition in the late 1990s with his elongated cats-figures, whose minimally-sketched expressions engage viewers with their large, bulging eyes. Placed in absurd or comical situations, these figures—initially cats, later Martians—address serious or trivial subjects with a sometimes humorous, sometimes disenchanted tone. In doing so, he places deep societal issues amidst the most trivial every day episodes. While his works are quite accessible at first glance, they require time to fully appreciate their conceptual and artistic depth. Behind a smokescreen of light humour, Séchas offers a sharp critique of our world, highlighting its flaws and absurdities.

Curator: Pierre-Olivier Rollin

Alain Séchas, *Insta Dessin* (*Je ne m'ennuie jamais...*), 2021. Acrylic felt pen on paper. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris.

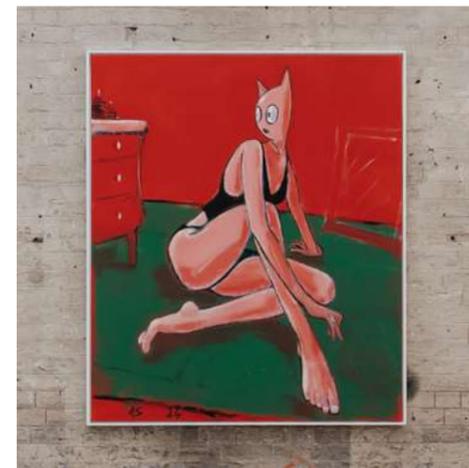


In 1996, Séchas created *Le Chat Écrivain*, an installation consisting of a sculpture and a painting, which has become central to his career, depicting a young painter writing a pompous letter to his sister, expressing his pride in finally completing a convincing portrait of their father, which he believes will bring him fame. This work, belonging to the Musée d'art moderne de Paris—and featured in this exhibition—is retrospectively seen as a key milestone in the artist's journey. It was not only his first cat sculpture, which would earn him his renown, but also marked the return of painting to Séchas' work. Having previously taken pains to avoid the art form, he uses the painting here as "scenery" intended to contextualise the sculpture. It is this particular "journey" that the BPS22 exhibition takes us on, with painting initially serving as an accessory to the

sculpture, in the form of murals or painted canvases, before gradually becoming the artist's favoured medium.

While the exhibition is titled *I never get bored...*, reflecting the abundance of the artist's output, it could also have been called *Changes in method*, given how much Séchas delights in exploring different technical registers. Each series of paintings, drawings, or sculptures provides a pretext for new technical experiments, allowing the artist to develop specific narratives. Recent, previously unseen series like *Maryline* or *Monaco* are punctuated by emblematic pieces from different periods, allowing these older works to be viewed from a new perspective and for admirers to grasp the underlying unity of a seemingly multifaceted practice, driven by drawing.

Alain Séchas, *Le Chat Écrivain*, 1996.
Polyester, acrylic on canvas, various objects.
Paris Musées Collection/
musée d'Art moderne.



Left:
Alain Séchas, *Maryline 4*,
2024. Acrylic on
canvas. Courtesy of the
artist and Galerie Laurent
Godin, Paris.

Right:
Alain Séchas, *Concorde 1*,
2023. Acrylic on
canvas. Courtesy of
the artist and Galerie
Baronian, Bruxelles.

Indeed, Alain Séchas places drawing at the heart of his work. With a few sharp and precise lines, he builds his shapes and organises the space around them. While his work occasionally resembles press cartoons, caricature, or comics, from which he borrows some of their codes, he always strives to distinguish himself from these models, in order to build the unique artistic identity that characterises him. The speed of execution and fluidity of his gesture allow him to soften his shapes, which come to fruition through the work of numerous drawings, reproduced directly on walls, silkscreens or posters, all of which the exhibition offers pride of place. In this context, sculpture is then seen as a form of drawing, or what the artists calls a “drawing in volume.”

For this exhibition, the artist has chosen to vary the sizes of his sculptures to create different spatial relationships. While large sculptures or installations, such as *Platée*, *La Grosse Tête*, or *Jurassic Pork*, naturally fill the BPS22's Grande Halle, smaller pieces like *Mister Mazout*, *Petit Baldaquin*, *Le Monument pour Jacques Lacan*, or *Cycliste édition*, operate on a different level: they are displayed on various types of pedestals within a classic scenographic arrangement, highlighting playful scale interactions with visitors and the different paintings on the walls. Rather than “competing” with the volumes of the Salle Pierre Dupont, these sculptures prioritise a 1:1 scale relationship with the viewer.

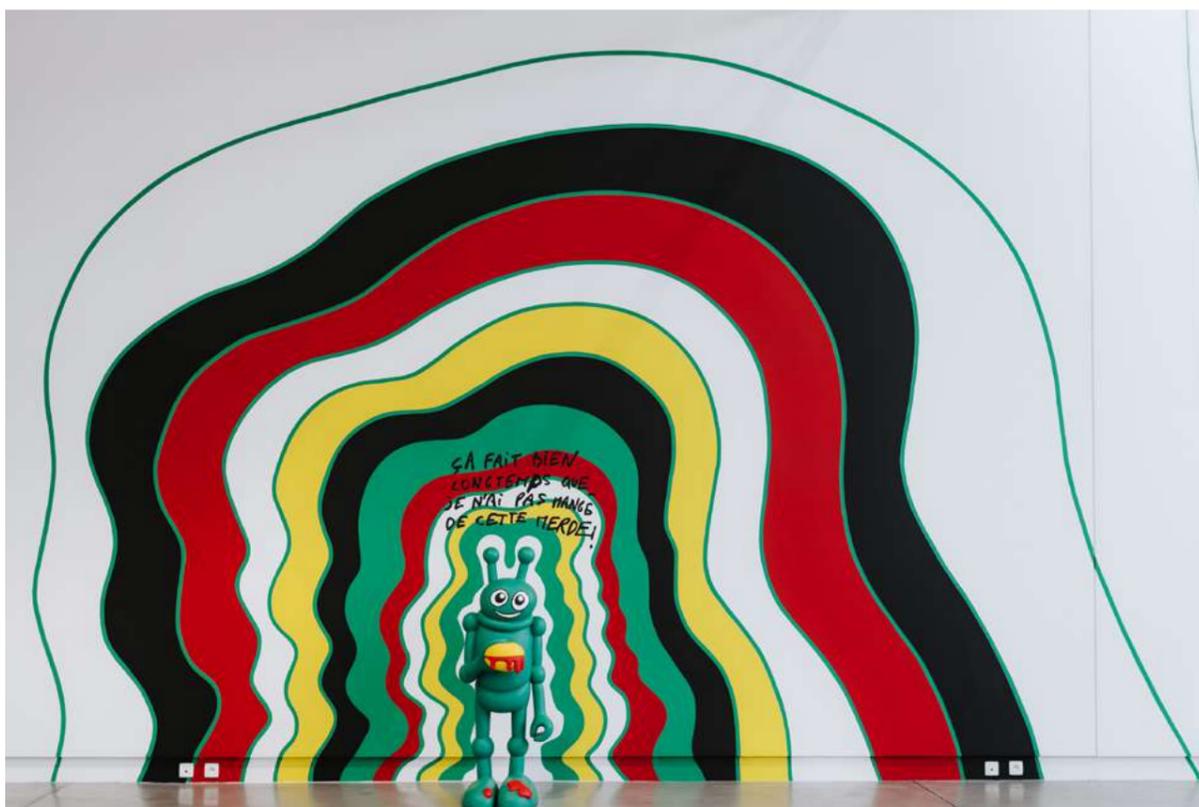
Je ne m'ennuie jamais... thus offers a new perspective on the artist's work, through constant back-and-forth between drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, and even video.



Right:
Alain Séchas, *Platée*,
2005. Polyester, acrylic.
Le Consortium Unlimited
Collection, Dijon.

Bottom:
Alain Séchas, *Cycliste
édition*, 2006.
Polyurethane moulding,
acrylic. Courtesy of the
artist and Galerie Pietro
Spartà, Chagny.





Alain Séchas,
Le Martien hamburger,
2001. Polyester, acrylic,
wall paint. MAMCO
Collection, work acquired
thanks to a subscription
from the Association les
Amis du MAMCO and
anonymous donors.



Portrait of Alain Séchas,
2024.

Born in 1955 in Colombes, France, Alain Séchas came to prominence in the 1980s after finishing his studies at the École supérieure normale des arts appliqués in Paris, where he learned to draw. He was soon supported by the Chantal Crousal gallery in Paris, and by the Albert Baronian gallery in Brussels, and participated in important exhibitions in France and abroad. During this time, he was a secondary school art teacher, first in the Metz region and then in the French capital. He worked as a teacher until 1996 when he was invited to represent France at the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil. From his years in teaching the artist says he learned the need to reinvent his work so as to constantly engage his students, as well

as the ability to move from one technique to another so that he could transmit whatever best responded to each student's aspirations.

The 2000s saw several major solo exhibitions, notably at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Strasbourg and the Consortium in Dijon (2001), the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2005), Mamco in Geneva (2009) and the Musée d'art moderne in Paris (2016). Simultaneously, he created several monumental works for public spaces, such as *Superchaton* in Bezons, France, *Les Grands Fumeurs* in Vitry-sur-Seine, France and *La Cycliste* in Brussels, a miniature edition of which appears in this exhibition.

Juliette Vanwaterloo

Tout cramer

The *Tout cramer* [*Burn it all down*] exhibition forms part of the anniversary edition of the Prix Médiatine, established in 1983 by the Centre culturel Wolubilis in Brussels. As a partner of this prestigious prize, which is reserved for young Belgian visual artists or residents in Belgium, BPS22 has chosen to support Juliette Vanwaterloo, the 2023 laureate. For the occasion, the artist has produced a textile installation in line with her struggles against state violence in service of the capitalist agro-industry, and against dominant political and media narratives.

Curator: Dorothee Duvivier

Juliette Vanwaterloo, *Stop Amazon* (detail), 2020. Hand embroidery, embroidery thread, silk, cotton. Private collection.



In 2018 and 2019, Juliette Vanwaterloo embroidered laws, excerpts from the Civil Code, the Labour Code, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Citizen on table doilies and cotton handkerchiefs. While these citations are embellished with floral or Japanese-inspired motifs, this contrast serves to highlight, paradoxically, the decoration of a cosy home where a woman is expected to conform to her assigned duties. Although these dated legal articles may seem amusing today, it is important to remember that the “Code civil des Français”, for example, promulgated by Napoleon at the beginning of the 19th century—reintroducing, among other things, the death penalty, life imprisonment, and branding—remained in force in France until 1994. From the picturesque to the symbolic, from the right to wear trousers to the right to abortion, Juliette Vanwaterloo illustrates the fragility of hard-won rights and the ever-present risk of regression for women’s rights, both in Europe and worldwide.

The following year, Juliette Vanwaterloo began to address the issue of police violence. As early as 2018, the Yellow Vest movement provoked significant police and judicial repression, particularly in France. In *La démocratie en état d'urgence*¹, legal scholar Stéphanie Hennette-Vauchez questions the incorporation into common law of a series of emergency measures, as well as the passing of eight anti-terrorism laws, an “anti-riot” law (2019), and a global security law (2020). These measures, which today restrict the freedom to protest, to report, and to oppose reforms, have been marked by the use of excessive force against thousands of demonstrators. Far from the narratives legitimising police actions, the artist created several delicate lace pieces, including the ironically titled *Au coin du feu* [*By the fireside*]. This lace depicts a burning, overturned police

car, with loose orange woollen threads, soft and fuzzy in texture, escaping from the artwork to evoke flames.

In response to these images of protests, often portrayed in the media in ways that absolve the police and criminalise the protesters, Juliette Vanwaterloo produced a series of small hand-embroidered pieces—none larger than a postcard—some of which are exhibited at BPS22. These images, taken from copwatching and/or photographs captured by the artist in public spaces, question how police violence is represented in the media, on social networks, and in television and film fiction. Whose perspectives are prioritised? What are the sources? Who is allowed to speak? In opposition to the dominant narrative, that of the police, the judiciary, the political sphere, and certain media outlets, the fight against police violence requires the creation of a diverse and multifaceted counter-narrative. Fuelled by the rise of digital technologies and the internet, this counter-narrative is also a form of resistance that the artist chooses to amplify.

Juliette Vanwaterloo’s works draw their power from the unexpected combination of subjects reflecting the state of the world in its most extreme excesses and a delicate, comforting treatment rooted in the long history of tapestry. A courtly art form in the Middle Ages, tapestry adorned the walls of castles and churches, serving as a luxury object, a medium of exchange, or a diplomatic gift, celebrating the glory of monarchs and Historicism, even if its intentions remained decorative. In the 20th century, tapestry was expected to meet the demands of public and popular art. Today, contemporary artists blend techniques and materials to subvert and reappropriate them, transcending prejudices and giving tapestry a sculptural—sometimes even monumental—dimension.

1. Hennette-Vauchez, Stéphanie, *La démocratie en état d'urgence. Quand l'exception devient permanente*, Paris, Seuil, 2022.

Yet, tapestry has always warmed the atmosphere, absorbed light, softened noise, soothed the eye, and calmed the mind. Aware of this duality, Juliette Vanwaterloo has embraced an activist, violent, rage-filled art that literally immerses us, as her installations leave the wall and force viewers to navigate through charred car chassis.

Behind this apocalyptic landscape, the large tapestry created especially for her exhibition at BPS22 addresses current social, economic, and political concerns: police repression, dismantling of ZADs, agricultural pollution, urban sprawl, homelessness crisis, capitalist consumerism, and more. While governments and certain major media outlets continuously emphasise the violence of social movements, Juliette Vanwaterloo raises the question of legitimate violence. In our Western society, protest practices are discredited, systematically depicted as violent, whereas police and state violence is heavily downplayed, to the detriment of the social cause. Is self-defence an act of aggression? When protests are no longer enough, should we reconsider the constant demand to condemn the young people who burn cars? Soft, gentle, and colourful, Juliette Vanwaterloo's work reminds us that dominant media and the State lead us to interpret power's violence in ways that lose sight of those engaged in it.



Embroidery on recycled doily, embroidery thread, cotton. Artist's studio.



Portrait of Juliette Vanwaterloo.

A graduate of the École Supérieure d'Art et de Design in Angers (France) with a master in Tapestry and Textile Arts from the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (Belgium), Juliette Vanwaterloo (FR, 1998) works with hand embroidery, bobbin lace, tufting, and other textile techniques, which she combines with an installation-based practice. As an activist artist committed to feminist, ecological, and decolonial issues, she has tackled the long-term issues of State violence, injustice, and systemic oppression throughout her career.

In 2023, Juliette Vanwaterloo won the Prix Médiatine, the Prix artistique of the City of Tournai, and the first prize at Art Contest.

Cultural mediation

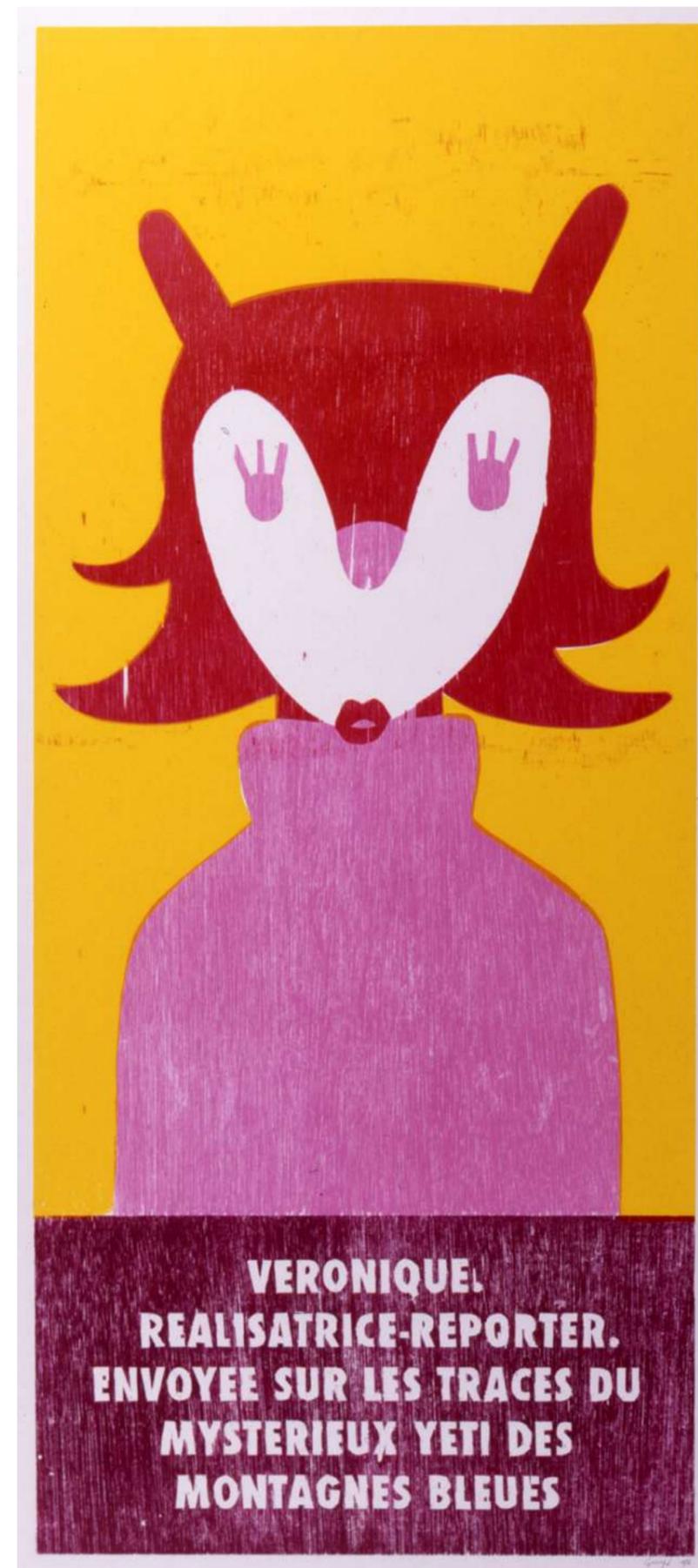
Petit Musée

The Petit Musée is a space for mediation, specifically designed for and adapted to children.

In tune with the figurative works of the main exhibition, it offers a selection of drawings in precise lines or cartoon styles. Some works evoke the world of comics, while others use animal figures to explore human nature. In this space, as in Alain Séchas' exhibition, some works are abstract.

The Petit Musée exclusively features works from the collections of the Province of Hainaut and the BPS22.

Laurence Gonry, *Starring.*
Marie-Edelweiss, 1995.
Gravure (xylografie).
Province of Hainaut
Collection, on deposit at
BPS22. Photo BPS22



Next exhibitions

Candice Breitz

Feb. > May 2025

Democracia / Hervé Charles

June > Aug. 2025

La "S" Grand Atelier

Oct. > Dec. 2025



Candice Breitz, Gabbi
on the set of *TLDR*
(production image),
Cape Town, October 2017.

Press visuals

Available for download via [Google Drive BPS22](#)

Mandatory mention = File name

Unless stated otherwise, all photos by Leslie Artamonow.

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Open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Closed on Mondays, 24, 25, 31 December and 1 January
and during exhibition set-ups.

Prices

Adults: 6 €

Seniors: 4 €

Students en job seekers: 3 €

Free for children under 12 and on the
first Sunday of each month.



Cover photo:

Top: Alain Séchas, *Grosse Bêtise*, 2003. Province of Hainaut Collection, on deposit at BPS22.

Bottom: Juliette Vanwaterloo, *Tout cramer* (exhibition view), BPS22, 2024. Photo BPS22