

ENGLISH GUIDE BOOKLET

**NICOLAS
DESHAYES -
GLISSEMENTS**

4TH FLOOR



NICOLAS DESYAHES GLISSEMENTS

Curators: Keren Detton and Sophie Auger-Grappin

A survey of ten years of output, this exhibition reveals Nicolas Deshayes' interest for industrial materials that are transformed via craftsmanship, with a focus on the relationships between living bodies, materials and objects.

A thermal flow of cast iron sculptures connect the different exhibition spaces. The design of these objects transform architecture into a deviant organism. They appear as an anomaly in the production line. The Thames Water series was named after the British waterworks. Deshayes creates objects inspired by the domestic world through the exploration of diverse techniques including moulded ceramic, anodized aluminium and enamelled castings. The body is often revealed; human or animal parts take shape. Sometimes, the body disappears behind its skin, cells and fluids, prompting visual analogies that shift the notion of scale. Dilutions, castings, aggregates... prolific, threatening or mysterious masses, yet behind the shimmering burst of colours, there is a certain vulnerability.

A cross between art history, design, anatomy and circulatory systems, the works seem to depict their own erosion, questioning the entropic phenomenon of the dispersion of energy and the depletion of natural resources. Ambiguous, symbolic, trivial and poetic, Deshayes' works take on a familiar language that is often trite, sometimes funny or even worrisome, but always full of paradox.

With support from Fluxus Art Projects and The Electric Heating Company and with substantial loans from the Musée de Picardie and the Fine Arts Museum in Cambrai

The second part of this solo show, titled "Gargouilles", is on display at the contemporary art centre Le Creux de l'enfer in Thiers (23 October 2021 - 6 February 2022) and at the Emergent gallery in Furnes, Belgium (20 February - 17 April 2022).

Curious about a work? Ask our on-site assistants stationed throughout the exhibition space. Exhibition texts are also available on our website in French, English and Dutch.

Nicolas Deshayes' exhibition calls circulatory systems into play. The techniques, materials and shapes encountered throughout the exhibition hint at the innumerable pipes, ducts, evacuations, tubes and other channels present in our lives and bodies, yet hidden from sight. The *Thames Water* sculpture series is a prime example.

These cast iron shapes bring the human organism to mind, limp and tube-shaped quite like the digestive tract. The externalisation of these internal body parts brings us to reflect upon this strange circuit inside us, to see it in a new light.

Beyond their ambiguous shape, *Thames Water* materialise the circulation of fluids in a concrete manner, through the interconnection of their pipework. These sculptures, like their utilitarian counterpart - the radiator, give off heat as do humans. Leading through the exhibition, they punctuate the space like a pulse pumps through a body.

Cramps further asserts this fascination for bodily innards. The work not only evokes the shape of internal organs; the colour and softness of this polyurethane and thermoformed polystyrene work directly elicit the body and its intestines.

From flesh to metal, from the scale of the body to that of the Frac, Nicolas Deshayes conducts us through the back and forth of his system between inwardness and outwardness.

Thames Water

2016

Installation made of seven elements

Cast iron, hot water

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London /

E-Werk für Kunststrom Collection/

Frac Grand Large— Hauts-de-France Collection

Cramps

2015

Plastic diptych shaped using a vacuum,

polyurethane foam coloured, lacquered

aluminium frame, neoprene foam

124.5 x 185.5 x 15 cm each

Frac Grand Large — Hauts-de-France Collection

Aluminium is prominent among the industrial materials frequently used by Nicolas Deshayes. His *Jetsam Ennui* installation is made up of eight vibrantly coloured aluminium tables; this colouring is the result of the industrial process called anodisation¹.

Nicolas Deshayes plays with the *trompe-l'œil* effect by integrating bronze academic busts to give *Jetsam Ennui* a tragic undertone. The juxtaposition of the elements transforms the perception of the multiple colours into something that contaminates the installation. They evoke an oil spill or chemical catastrophe to which we are witness. This spillage seems to spread to the tables installed on the neighbouring balcony that directly oversees the emptiness of Halle AP2.

The vertical format of the panels in the *Dear Polyp* series make reference to standard prefabricated partition walls.

The anodisation process takes over the artist's touch rendering abstract compositions. The characteristic flatness of pictorial art is disturbed through the thermoformed polystyrene plates that are attached to the surfaces and which allude to the irregularities and asperities of the human epidermis.

With *Jetsam Ennui* and *Dear Polyp*, Deshayes juggles with contrasts and contradictions. Through these works he transmits his idea of aesthetic, comprised of paradoxes, lying between the creative act and potential destruction.

¹ Anodisation: special aluminium treatment that creates an additional protective layer through a chemical reaction that can produce colours.

Jetsam Ennui

2015

Eight tables made of lacquered, anodised aluminium

200 x 80 x 60 cm each

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

Dear Polyp

2016

Five panels made of anodised aluminium, lacquered aluminium, plastic, neoprene foam

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

Represented on the *Jetsam Ennui* installation by Nicolas Deshayes are:

Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929)

Bust of Anatole France

1919

Bronze sculpture

70 x 46 x 28 cm

Fine Arts Museum Collection in Cambrai

Georges-Gabriel Tattegrain (1854-1916)

Crinon, Poet from Picardy

1892

Bronze sculpture

50 x 52 x 36 cm

Musée de Picardie Collection

The ceramics created by Nicolas Deshayes introduce another facet of his work; one that stems from modern hygiene.

An age-old process that can be traced back to the earliest periods of Antiquity, ceramic art was first used in luxury dining wares and table sets, only to be bastardised by industrial processes starting in the 19th century.

Through vitrification, glazed ceramics have become essential in the creation of medical, food or sanitary installations. Their impermeability and solidity make them choice materials for use in waste management installations requiring the evacuation of liquid considered impure or resulting from illness.

The daily use of glazed ceramics on a massive scale has brought Deshayes to illustrate a paradox. Although synonymous with hygiene and spotlessness, this material is relegated to the least visible parts of our domestic environments as it is inherently linked to the notion of dirtiness and contamination.

The sinks, basins or bowls represented here by *Paquerette*, *Fragolina* and *Kensington* reclaim our modern visual field, at times taking on human or animal shapes. *Victoria Plum* and *Blister* remind us that, although these shapes appear cold and sterile, they are closely connected to our most intimate bodily functions.

The *Swan* pair alludes to the animal's pureness, yet illustrates the transformation of bidets into elegant fowl by ingenuously replacing the drainage pipe.

On the wall, the panel series *Vein Section (or a cave painting)* take us deep into a microscopic world where crimson enamelled steel conjures up blood vessels or prehistoric paintings.

Vein Section (or a cave painting)

2015

Enamelled steel panels, lacquered aluminium frames

Series of seven panels, 30 x 150 x 5 cm each and two panels in two parts, each 110 x 71.5 x 4 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

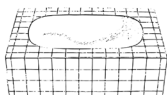
CERAMICS ON THE PODIUM



Pip
2018



Saddle
2018



Cochonou
2018



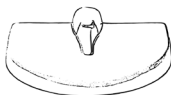
Fragolina
2019



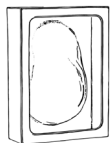
Victoria plum
2018



Captain
2019



Burchiello
2018

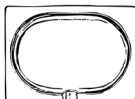


Spud
2018

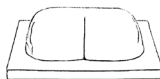


Kensington
2018

CERAMICS ON THE WALL



Paquerette
2019



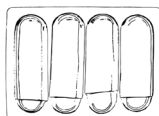
Mole's breath
2018



Blister [Cloque]
2018



Dolomite
2019



La Laitière
2019



Dock
2018

CERAMIC ON THE PODIUM



Swan [Cygne]
2018
Frac Grand Large —
Hauts-de-France Collection

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

In this space, one material links the works *Becoming Soil* and *Molars*: enamelled steel. Again, this industrial material is inhabited by the bodily dimension so valued by the artist.

An accumulation of steel tubes make up the *Becoming Soil* sculptures. Linked together, their coloured spots betray the use of the enamelling technique. The glistening aspect of the treated metal associated with a range of colours suggesting the venous system directly refers back to *Vein Section* in the previous exhibition space.

In the two pieces on the wall, the enamelled steel is associated with the screen printing technique to depict urban landscapes in which full-scale humans appear for the first time.

These figurative works are truncated, as if being seen through a window and, like a snapshot, capture fragments of daily life in the English capital. Nicolas Deshayes had these enamelled panels made by a company that works on signage for the London Underground a.k.a. the Tube. The artist's vision of a megapolis as a complex circulation system, with its transport and evacuation lanes, is transcribed onto the panels.

Vein Section, *Becoming Soil* and *Molars* can thus be viewed as a set of works, as a view of circulatory systems that function in the same way, be it blood vessels or city life, from a microscopic to a macro urban environment.

Becoming Soil
2015
Enamelled steel tubes
Variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

Molars
2015
Two panels made of enamelled manually screen printed panels, lacquered aluminium frames
67 x 252 x 4 cm each
Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

The works *Le Chant du Styène*, *Lupa* and *Grip* are sculptural variations using aluminum, Nicolas Deshayes' material of choice. These sculptures were produced using the industrial technique called sand casting in which liquid aluminium is poured into sand moulds, cooled and then excavated like a fossil.

Le Chant du Styène is a direct reference to the eponymic documentary film produced by Alain Resnais in 1959, which retraces the different stages of plastic production, from the final object back to the original fossil matter. While no trace of plastic can be found in the different versions of Deshayes' *Le Chant du Styène*, the material is indeed present as the matrix of the various works. The aluminium rectangles were shaped using polystyrene matrices that are destroyed during the casting of the metal. Two fundamental industrial materials are thus displayed, underscored by the manner in which they are hung, bringing the world of mass transit to mind and mirroring the infrastructure visible on the ceiling.

Lupa, the sculpture installed on the wall, brings us back to the origins of the history of Rome and the ancient Romans. Whilst in the city, Deshayes undertook a plastic reinterpretation of the city's symbol: the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, which led to the founding of Rome. Instead of the classic iconography of this myth, the artist preferred to highlight one detail: the teats of the nursing wolf. The organic matter, the flesh thus become not only the origin's foundations, but machines as well.

Grip is a bas-relief formed out of a clay matrix. The special properties of this material allowed Deshayes to create soft shapes, forbidden fruit gripping to the exhibition wall.

Once again, the fluidity of the shapes is at the heart of the artist's visual considerations, previously discernable in the reliefs on the wrinkled surfaces of *Le Chant du Styène* or in the anodised colours of *Jetsam Ennui*.

Lupa

2018

Aluminium casting

32.5 x 62 x 25 cm

Courtesy of the artist,

Modern Art, London

Grip

2013

Aluminium casting

14.5 x 11 x 2 cm (2)

Courtesy of the artist,

Modern Art, London

Le Chant du Styène

2013

Aluminium casting, six masts made of lacquered steel, metal and rubber fixings.

Variable dimensions

Frac Grand Large — Hauts-de-France Collection /

Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art, London

In this space, Nicolas Deshayes takes on traditional sculptural material: bronze. All the works translate the idea of growth that physically overtakes this last exhibition space.

Visible hair on a piece of flesh, *Crop* retranscribes the growth phenomenon in its most literal sense. Between an epidermis consisting of a mat textured patina and mirror polished hair, the bronze reveals its plasticity.

Piggy also appears to be a growing organism, fully expanding. Shaped like a worm with a blue patina, Deshayes turns growth into a transition between shapelessness and shape.

Gargouille represents tightly bound flesh, all excess constrained. It is the latest work by the artist, a version of which is presented in parallel in his exhibition at Creux de l'enfer in Thiers.

The complex interlacing of *Solitaire* stands up and spreads out; its apparent flexibility seems in contradiction with the actual stiffness of metal. Its tube-like aspect constitutes a new variation on the theme of ducts, present throughout the exhibition via the piece entitled *Thames Water*.

Connected to the same network of pipes as *Thames Water*, the older and more recent works physically communicate between each other and transmit more than just fluids. They transmit a vision of the world that is as organic as it is structured.

Crop
2020
Bronze
26 x 28 x 18 cm

Piggy
2016
Bronze
5.5 x 38.2 x 29 cm

Gargouille
2021
Bronze
30 x 21 x 11 cm

Solitaire
2016
Bronze, hot water
120 x 110 x 190 cm