

MAC VAL – Musée d’Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne is celebrating twenty years of exhibitions, innovation and the future. In relation to the exhibition of works from the special anniversary collection “Le genre idéal” (The Ideal Genre), inaugurated in March 2025, it is opening a symbolic and programmatic temporary exhibition, focusing on discovery: “Forever Young,” or 20 and 1 artists. In the heart of the Val-de-Marne, MAC VAL, the standout museum for French contemporary art from the 1950s to the present day, is celebrating its twentieth birthday this year. Since its creation in 2005, the institution has been committed to offering innovative, high-quality programming to an audience that is constantly growing and changing while adapting to changes in our world by ensuring the best possible collaboration with its artistic, cultural, institutional and media partners. “Forever Young” showcases the work of twenty young artists (most of whom were born between 1990 and 2000), tackling the themes of our time through a wide range of media: photography, sculpture, installation, drawing, video and painting.

Over the last two decades, MAC VAL has carved out a niche by its knack of conceptualising and giving voice to the movements of our world. In this new exhibition, the artists refer to their personal stories, all of them very singular, but all sharing one thing: a moment discovery at the MAC VAL, be it of an artist, a work, a talk, an architectural element, a welcome, a living space. All prophets in their own land, in the land of their discoveries and sometimes even their revelations. They are living and generous transmitters of an art that is constantly changing. Particular attention will be paid to the work of Mehryl Ferri Levisse, an artist whose capacities and sensibilities blossomed during previous key exhibitions at MAC VAL, and who died in 2023. Without him, the balance of this exhibition would certainly not have been right.

## Going further

### Documentation centre

A team of librarians will be on hand to help you continue your visit and find out more about reference works.

Free admission Tuesday to Saturday, 2 to 6 pm  
cdm@macval.fr or 01 43 91 14 64 — doc.macval.fr

July — Tuesday to Friday, 2 to 6 pm  
August — Open by appointment from Tuesday to Friday

### Tours

— For adults and young people aged 11 and over  
Every Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm  
— For families and children aged 4 and over  
Every Sunday, 2.30 pm  
Wednesdays during school holidays, 2.30 pm

Free with museum admission  
Information and booking:  
reservation@macval.fr or +33 (0)1 43 91 64 23

# MAC VAL

Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne — Place de la Libération, Vitry-sur-Seine

### MAC VAL

Musée d’art contemporain du Val-de-Marne  
Place de la Libération, 94400 Vitry-sur-Seine  
+33 (0)1 43 91 64 20  
contact@macval.fr  
macval.fr

### Opening hours

Museum

Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays, 11am to 6pm. Last tickets sold 30 minutes before closing time. Closed on 1 January, 1 May, 15 August and 25 December.

### Opening hours

Garden

Tuesday to Sunday, 9am to 6pm. Free access.



For full details of the exhibitions and programme: [macval.fr](https://macval.fr)  
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MAC VAL would like to thank its partners



# MAC VAL

Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne — Place de la Libération, Vitry-sur-Seine



Group show

14 June 2025 – 4 January 2026

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With works by Aïda Bruyère, Camille Brée, Chadine Amghar, Coco de RinneZ, Emma Cossée Cruz, Garush Melkonyan, Grichka Commaret, Hugo Vessiller-Fonfreide, Jordan Roger, Kim Farkas, Lassana Sarre, Loreto Martinez Troncoso, Mailys Lamotte-Paulet, Mario D’Souza, Raphaël Maman, Rebecca Topakian, Richard Otparlic, Sarah-Anaïs Desbenoit, Tohé Commaret, Yann Estève. Et Mehryl Ferri Levisse.

General Curator Nicolas Surlapierre  
Curated by Frank Lamy assisted by Julien Blanpied  
Lighting designer Serge Damon

## Text by the exhibition curator

*Let’s dance in style, let’s dance for a while  
Heaven can wait, we’re only watching the skies  
Hoping for the best, but expecting the worst  
Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?  
Alphaville, Forever Young, 1984*

To mark the twentieth anniversary of the opening of MAC VAL, the “Forever Young” exhibition looks to the future: it brings together twenty young artists for whom the encounter with MAC VAL was a pivotal moment, a turning point in their artistic careers. Perhaps the key words of this project are “frequentation” and “companionship”. Indeed, they grew up near and with MAC VAL. They have frequented its spaces and gardens ever since they were children. As neighbours. Here they played, learned, discovered art, set their hearts on being artists, watched and dreamed. They visited the exhibitions with their family, on their own or with their school (from nursery school to art school). They have taken part in art workshops, and sometimes led them. They have visited exhibitions, and sometimes even hung them. To prepare for this retrospective and prospective exhibition, I spoke to colleagues, to various partners, and to artists teaching in art schools` and, at the end of these informal interviews, I selected twenty artists who were born between 1973 and 1997.

This exhibition makes no claim to be exhaustive or neutral. It makes no attempt to paint a generational portrait. This exhibition bears witness to the diversity of backgrounds and attitudes, and to the richness of the so-called emerging scene, in a museum that is twenty years old. If the link forged with the MAC VAL is the smallest common denominator between these artists, their practices and works are all rooted, in singular and situated ways, in a reflection of and on reality, echoing the echoes of the world. The exhibition sequence is built on associations of ideas, one leading to or guiding another.

There’s pink, lots of pink. There are ghosts, lots of ghosts. Coloured lipsticks, luminous events, encapsulated scooters and toothpaste, empowered self-portraits, images and more images, machines of all kinds (for photographing, travelling in time and space, dreaming, disappearing), speculative narration, science fiction, Vitryan façades, evocations, a generational vessel, energies channelled or not, a castle on the verge of collapse and the odour of apocalypse, cocoons and an almost forgotten language, painted bodies, slogans and sentences, a space in waiting, folded fabrics and colour, concrete and questioned standards, stones and a love story, a sleeping lover and oracles, landscapes passed through, places filled with memories. Twenty singular universes as alternative ways of inhabiting the world.

We are greeted by an ironic Coco de RinneZ’s, made up like Marilyn Monroe as seen by Warhol. This image is part of a series of joyful, empowered self-portraits in which the artist mischievously embodies a variety of personalities and iconic figures. Alternately Angela Davis and Michel Polnareff, Snow White and Bob Marley, Coco de RinneZ jubilantly embarks on an enterprise of self (de)construction via a strategy of infiltrating representations.

Further in, Aïda Bruyère continues her analysis of mainstream aesthetics. With *Red Lipstick Monsterz*, she develops the artillery of an uncompromising mass feminism. Stiletto heels, sharp nails, make-up, glitter, night clubs and femmes fatales – a true warrior against gendered violence, she appropriates and turns the weapons of so-called feminine seduction against themselves.

Chadine Amghar’s dual culture has given her a taste for composites. She assembles elements with strong connotations, borrowed from urban and suburban landscapes (scooters, cinder blocks, anti-pigeon devices) in modular sculptural arrangements. Whether she’s taking a sexist everyday object and turning it inside out as a tribute to women agitators the world over, varnishing baguettes, packing breezeblocks in TATI bags, or invoking the figure of the pigeon or the motif of the watermelon, everything about her work is a sign, a meaning, in a broad layering of metaphors and reflections on cultural identities, globalisation and the circulation of goods and bodies.

Exuberant and lustful, flamboyant and angry: such is the world of Jordan Roger. Breaking with the religious conservatism of his biological family, he digs deeper and expands his elective family. An eschatological pantheon in which fairies, aliens, mermaids and other drag creatures all cohabit. Working towards the collapse of retrograde powers, his acidic, glossy, conspicuously handmade works aspire to dance on the ruins of an oppressive world and offer a completely different vision of the apocalypse.

Over the last few years, Rebecca Topakian has been (re)appropriating her family history. Born into the Armenian diaspora, she set off with her camera to discover the country and culture of her ancestors. Starting with the romantic love story of her grandparents, she uses her photographs to sketch a landscape beyond the stories, projections and fantasies of a geographical and cultural territory, in search of her own identity.

Over the last few years Mario D’Souza has conducted his experiments under the umbrella title of *Home Away From Home*. His environments evoke the question of “home” with fragility and impermanence. Ornamental, decorative, baroque and conceptual, he arranges spaces that are enveloping and welcoming. Fabrics folded, others spread out, colours painted, drawings laid down evoke the fluidity of identities. The in-between. Articulating an intra-cultural dialogue, between France and India, he is at home everywhere and nowhere, nowhere and everywhere.

Appearance and presence are the keywords in Camille Brée’s work. Her vaporous art keeps us in a state of alertness and vigilance. Something is happening. Or will happen. Or has already happened. Light, smoke, interstices, and the infra-thin interrogate the conditions of the visible and shift our gaze and attention. Here, a vanishing box, an essential accessory in any conjuring act, is on display, open and offered up to us. Everything is in plain sight, but the mystery remains intact.

Tarmac, pre-paid phones, cobbled-together seats, cement, *Caprisun*, football shirts and *Nike Air Max TNs*, plastic film and synthetic lace; cobbled-together,

displaced, transparent, superimposed and horizontal. Mailys Lamotte-Paulet’s installations nonchalantly propose spaces in waiting. In-between places. Suspended times. Thresholds. Spaces of projection. Something is imminent. We’re on the edge. It’s coming for us.

Raphaël Maman’s visual gestures and operations use construction materials and literally give body to the norm, making standards visible, revealing their logic, taming them the better to contradict them. And they propose alternative scenarios for occupying the world. Here, an installation that literally materialises the link between construction standards and body weight; elsewhere, furniture set in a slab of reinforced concrete provides a table to be occupied by a new kind of feast.

Decorative overload, hypertrophy of the body, saturation of colour – everything about Richard Otparlic’s work articulates a queer, camp aesthetic that combines elements from both popular and scholarly cultures, from Instagram to the Louvre, from the Kardashian family to Leonardo da Vinci. Otparlic’s practice plays on contrasts (pretty colours vs. the hypersexualisation of figures, etc.) to develop a tender, dreamlike, sharp, saturated universe, full of icons and mythological figures, between assumed naivety, a critical stance and playful joy in which non-hegemonic masculinities frolic.

In Yann Estève’s environments, memories, fleeting moments, sensations and reminiscences are organised in arrangements that are endlessly played out and replayed in dialogue with the places that host them. Ready-mades, recuperated objects, photographs and drawings combine to evoke the unstable layerings of the theatres of memory.

Emma Cossée Cruz’s *Théâtre des Machines* reflects on the making of images, their substance and weight, and the actual act of making an image. Photographs of medical imaging machines (linked to both the arms and health industries, these machines are used to control and normalise bodies) are transferred onto standardised sheets of plasterboard in a gesture reminiscent of the velvety art of fresco. Distributed across the space in a sort of *danse macabre*, they come face-to-face (or body-to-body?) with visitors.

Language and its structures, verbal and non-verbal communication between beings, truth and fiction, documentary and metaphor, codes, individuals, history and its writing, the trace, the residue – these are all areas of questioning at work in Garush Melkonyan’s work. What is an image? How is it made? What does it contain?

Sculptures with oblong, quasi-organic shapes, looking like cocoons and other envelopes, that seem to have come straight out of science-fiction films such

as *Alien* and *The Matrix*. Or perhaps they’re caskets encapsulating precious relics. Or simply lamps. Or maybe all of the above. And/and: it is in this movement that Kim Farkas questions his genealogy, at the intersection of several diasporas. The speculative materiality of these sculptures is matched by the ghostly evanescence of a spectral video immortalising the almost lost tradition of improvised sung poetry in the language of the Peranakans.

It looks like a rocket, a shuttle, a giant insect, a kind of generator, a new-generation sound system: this sculpture with Cronenbergian overtones takes us into a speculative dystopia. In it, Hugo Vessiler-Fonfreide continues his exploration of energy issues: energy, its production, its circulation, its mythologies, its promises and its dead ends. In this generational vessel, organs and machinery mingle. This pseudo-cyborg construction will be activated several times during the exhibition by the artist and his acolytes for electrified and electrifying musical performances.

In her immersive installations, Sarah-Anaïs Desbenoit invites us to be contemplative and slow down. Here reality is reconstructed as an architectural tale, looped and bodiless, borrowing from the world of model making, dioramas and fairgrounds. Strongly melancholic and cinematographic, her immobile crossings of urban landscapes reveal the invisible structures and mechanisms that set the pace of our daily lives, and the behaviours and affects generated by our ways of dwelling.

The landscapes of Vitry (from the dalle Robespierre to the 183 bus) form the matrix for the work of the Commaret siblings. Grichka paints and Tohé films and photographs. Grichka’s small, airbrushed paintings and Tohé’s still and

moving images evoke intimate memories, offering visions of a city rebuilt by memory and affection we feel for the places where we grew up. And the people who live there.

Lassana Sarre paints. He brings his body and his subjectivity as a black person to a reworking of the heritage of French-style painting. He takes an official history and turns it on its head, injecting a healthy dose of autobiography. Vitry-sur-Seine is the backdrop for his pictorial *machines*, where, in dialogue with Manet or Géricault, the *non-finito* and suspense both come to the fore.

Language situations are the raw material of Loreto Martinez Troncoso’s explorations. It’s a question of giving a voice or speaking out, of making reality resonate (ratiocinate?) by putting voices, our voices, to the test. The voice as synecdoche of the body, of bodies. Speech as an event that is always already situated. With Julie Pellegrin, her accomplice and friend of twenty years, they will close the exhibition on 4 January 2026 with a conversation that is part of their practice of long-term exchange.

Continuing in this vein of friendship and closeness, and because the present is full of our ghosts, I felt it was important to pay tribute to Mehryl Ferri Levisse. He was an artist, a fellow museum member and a friend who died in 2023. Starting with our first encounter in 2015, following his visit to the “Chercher le garçon” exhibition, we entered into an artistic dialogue that, over the years, had become friendly, regular and sometimes contradictory. The conversation continues, in a different way.

Frank Lamy

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank all the people who helped me with this survey, especially Alexia Fabre, Anne Rochette, Élisabeth Milon, Fatimata Konate, Julie Crenn, Julien Blanpied, Julien Sirjacq, Nicolas Surlapierre, Stéphanie Airaud and Thibault Capéran.