

# LES HISTORIENS DU FUTUR

Solo exhibition by Léo Fourdrinier at the Site archéologique Lattara - musée Henri Prades, in partnership with MO.CO Montpellier contemporain

Discussion between Léo Fourdrinier and Diane Dusseaux, director of the Site archéologique Lattara - musée Henri Prades.

*In your sculptures and installations, quotations from ancient works are combined with contemporary elements in a form of anti-co-futurist collage. How do these connections come about?*

I've been watching and loving the ghosts of ancient civilisations since I was a child. History fascinates me and my first contact with traces of this heritage came from my life in Nîmes and Montpellier, the ancient Gallo-Roman city and medieval town where I grew up. This context strongly influenced my view of old stones, their significance and the place they occupy in a contemporary urbanised space. At the same time, before expressing myself through the visual arts, I was studying at the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique. The question of embodying a character arose. How do you play - and therefore interpret - emotions? By collage, association, anachronism, mimicry and connection. These methodologies, linked to performance, have never ceased to infuse my sculptures. They tell the story of an era in which layers accumulate, temporalities mix and influences collide. It's all about links and flows. In the exhibition, at the top of a scaffolding incorporating funerary amphorae (African amphorae, 370-420, Lunel-Viel, inv. D-SRA 995.1.1 / 995.2.1 / 995.3.1), I present the neon text 'the limits of the Earth, at the end of Paradise'. This phrase is attributed to Janus, the two-headed Roman god of beginnings and ends, choice and passage. Archaeology, and more broadly the sciences, help me to understand my environment. Poetry and the arts allow me to express my sensitivities. Perhaps it's in the creative process that we find the meeting point between the heritage of the past and the construction of the future.

*In 'Historians of the Future', we are transported to an imaginary world, radically altered by the effects of climate change, in which museums are a vital resource for the survival of humanity. Far from a dystopian universe, this installation raises the question of the importance of art and history in a society undergoing accelerated change. What place should we give to the concept of beauty in this context?*

'Les historiens du futur' plunges us into a fictional world where the depletion of resources becomes a tangible reality. This narrative was inspired by my visit to the archaeological site of Lattara, where hydromorphological transformations - variations in the coastline, ponds and sea levels - have profoundly shaped the landscape. From an ancient trading port, the landscape was transformed into the site we know today. This history was the starting point for my work on the exhibition. I imagined a group of survivalist individuals scouring museums to 'feed' on the past, for want of other resources. Dystopia is not far away, but I'm glad you've left it out. 'The historians of the future are in a way the living of the present. The importance I attach to the arts and history shapes my life and my relationships. Through the fifteen characters created for the exhibition, I wanted to bring to life my love of museums. The pleasure of discovery. That little moment when, for a moment, worries are naively masked by contemplation. The vibrant neon light on the figures illustrates this appetite. In my fiction, the historians of the future are adorned with a variety of

items: fabrics and protective shells, plaster casts and reproductions of antique busts, jewellery, electric cables, minerals and glazed ceramics. Are they dressing themselves in objects they love, or are they simply stockpiling artefacts to feed on during their journey?

In the mural at the start of the exhibition, a photograph of two antique vases from the Musée de la Romanité in Nîmes stands alongside a black Ikea vase. Further on, opposite the ancient funerary amphorae, on the luggage rack of the Kawasaki motorbike is a reproduction of a terracotta amphora. Finally, a buckle plate (520-610, gold and silver, Maguelone, inv. MAG 2038) in a display case is paired with a sculpture made from a modern leather belt. This itinerary is less about beauty than it is about the evolution of forms, craftsmanship, objects and their usefulness, and the value attributed to them at different periods in history.

*Your sculptures include biker accessories, and even a real motorbike. Why are you so fascinated by this world?*

I have an intimate relationship with motorbikes. For years I've seen my parents riding together on a motorbike, their bodies embracing and clinging to each other - it's very sensual. Motorbikes represent freedom and love. A motorbike is also a rather strange crossroads, where solitude becomes an encounter, with others and with the landscape. It's amazing how motorbikes bring people together! For the exhibition, I was incredibly lucky to meet Anthony, who works at the museum. A motorcyclist and DIY enthusiast, he helped me with my project and even lent me his bike for the central installation in the exhibition. If 'Historians of the Future' are represented as bikers, it's to evoke the community and the need to move together. We think of MCs, biker clubs, (the most famous of which are the Hells Angels, Outlaws, Bandidos), Caramel Curves (New Orleans) and feminist collectives, or even the Bōsōzoku in Japan. I'm a big fan of the aesthetics and countercultures associated with motorbikes, which are associated with music and have inspired the arts, particularly cinema. In the road movie 'Easy Rider', for example, Dennis Hopper captures the spirit of the 1960s counterculture, a pivotal moment when ideals of freedom, rebellion and individualism collide with conservative America. The film expresses utopia, but also its limits.

Above all, it is about persistence. In 'Venus', which opens the exhibition on the museum's porch, the motorbike is taken to the extreme. The work is a Yamaha XJS Diversion 600 motorbike with a body made entirely of white Carrara marble. It is inspired by the Venus of Vienna in the Louvre, a Roman marble copy of a Greek statue that has disappeared. Venus, the goddess of love, is here mobilised for eternity. Is sentiment a never-ending journey? No. This vehicle, for two people, is above all the enduring image of an encounter.

*What is your relationship with the processes of copying and moulding? Is there a heuristic dimension to your work?*

I collect copies and reproductions of ancient statuary on a daily basis. The iconography of Greek and Roman antiquity has been endlessly reproduced and reused for artistic, decorative and political purposes throughout history. It's an abundant source of raw material. By making my own casts in the studio, I'm trying to be part of this process of transmission and circulation, but by appropriating these forms and incorporating them into new compositions. There is a heuristic, formal and intellectual dimension to this, because casting allows me to reflect on the nature of the original and the copy, and contributes to a wider reflection on the historical analysis of this iconography. While the omnipresence of Antiquity in our Western cultural heritage is admirable, it also seems to me essential to question and recontextualise it, to better understand the present, our beliefs and our political issues. This iconography is highly symbolic, and it seems urgent today, in an age of hyper-powerful images - conveyed by social networks in particular - to understand how it is used, sometimes for tragic ends. Current events are proof of this. Elon Musk's recent Nazi salute at Donald Trump's inauguration, although some of his supporters have tried to defend it as an apolitical Roman salute, has no basis in antiquity. Historians are unanimous: this gesture is a late invention, appearing at the end of the 19th century and popularised by the theatre and the first peplum films. It was Gabriele D'Annunzio, poet and

soldier, who inspired Benito Mussolini to make it a symbol of the Fascist regime. Knowing the past means being aware of the manipulations that threaten freedom, and fighting them.

*References to Antiquity have permeated your work for many years, yet this is the first time you've been invited to exhibit in an archaeological museum. What will you take away from this experience?*

Your invitation was a turning point in my career, and I can't express my gratitude in words. The 'historians of the future' project that we've been working on together over the last year has given me a wealth of historical and archaeological knowledge, and I hope to be able to pass on this shared passion through the exhibition. It should be seen as a science fiction film that plunges us into a future where resources are running out and, in order to survive, humanity has to 'feed' on the past in museums, the guardians of our collective memory. Ultimately, 'Historians of the Future' tells us just one thing: the essential role of museums in providing information and passing on knowledge, a role fully embodied by the Lattara archaeological site.