

MAC

Press Release

VAL

"Ici grand ouvert" "Here Wide Open"

**SMITH exhibition from 23
May 2026 to 31 January 2027**

**Exhibition curator: Frank Lamy,
assisted by Julien Blanpied**

An artist-researcher, SMITH (born 1985) navigates between photography, moving images, installation, sculpture and performance. His work develops in open cycles, often starting with photographs. Shrugging off chronology, he shifts the boundaries of portraiture and landscape, opening up a space where the human, animal, plant, mineral and celestial realms intertwine. His work is informed by a poetics of metamorphosis which overflows the realm of the real, traverses in-between spaces, and inhabits thresholds rather than certainties. Forms slide, identities shift, bodies transform, perception shifts gears. From fluctuating states of consciousness, between trance and psychedelia, SMITH weaves a network of correspondences between bodily and cognitive practices and experimental scientific and technological devices, in search of a point of contact where spirituality, sensitivity and technology can finally recombine together.

At MAC VAL, the artist's works have featured in the group shows "Lignes de vies – une exposition de légendes" (Lifelines – an Exhibition of Legends) in 2019 and "Histoires vraies" ("True Stories") in 2023.

This exhibition has been designed in collaboration with architects and designers Matthieu Prat (Diplomates) and Sami Rintala, assisted by Toni Lozano. The monograph "Ici grand ouvert" brings together old and new works in a sweeping movement that reveals the artist's output in the light of his present and future inquiries.

The words of the exhibition curator

SMITH was born in 1985. After completing a Master's degree in philosophy at the Sorbonne, he studied at the École de la Photographie d'Arles and then at Le Fresnoy. In 2022, he submitted his thesis at UQAM (Montreal). A research-driven artist, he moves between photography, installation, moving images, sculpture and performance.

Working at the intersection of expanded states of consciousness, philosophy and cutting-edge scientific research – from IRAP (Institute for Research in Astrophysics and Planetology) to the CNES Space Observatory (National Centre for Space Studies) – and by focusing on the points where these regimes of knowledge come into friction or resonance with forms of spirituality, SMITH surrounds himself with a constellation of intellectual and practical collaborators, from Lucien Raphmaj to Jean-Philippe Uzan, from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to Timothy Leary, from Corine Sombrun to the Limiñanas, from Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy to Donna Haraway, from Paul B. Preciado to François Chaignaud, from Marie NDiaye to many others. Most of the time, he works in collaboration with philosophers, scientists, researchers, thinkers, artists, writers, performers, and musicians, and this way of working creates a temporary family, a living compost, where ideas mingle, mutate and are passed on.

He seeks to bring forth alternative perceptions of reality. He practises an art of trance and weightlessness, in which the experience is composed of presences, spectres, apparitions, flashes of insight, and sometimes epiphanies. In this context, conversion refers less to a new belief than to a shift in attention, a point of convergence from which to reorient ourselves.

Driven by a lucid romanticism, SMITH endeavours to lift the veil of the obvious in

order to re-establish a fundamental connection with other forms of life and with the cosmos. This exploration is undertaken from the viewpoint of resistance, which means creating alternative ways of inhabiting the world. A corpus of thresholds, transmutations and metamorphoses, constructed in porous series that undo linear chronology, whilst blurring the boundaries between portraiture and landscape and, more broadly, the binary markers of the disciplines he engages with – between the visible and the invisible, between inner experience and the political, between science and spirituality, between documentary and fiction.

For it is indeed a matter of mutation, transformation and metamorphosis, but also of incompleteness and restlessness, understood as working conditions rather than as gaps to be filled. Conceived as a labyrinth, a cluster, a forest of initiatory journeys and transformative gestures, the exhibition affirms its role as a laboratory. Something is underway. It remains in motion, bringing together works already established, almost fossilised, and works in the making.

Nothing stays stable. He develops a poetics of metamorphosis, attentive to the in-between zones, to states of fluidity where identities and forms cease to be assignable. In this vein, his artist's name, SMITH, in capital letters, functions as a generic handle, deliberately non-specific in time, difficult to pin down, gender-neutral, and suggests an attempt at emancipation that involves a relative erasure of the ego in favour of that which circulates, transforms and connects.

His work takes the form of interdisciplinary projects that subvert the very notion of a work of art (in the sense of a unique and rare object caught up in a logic of capitalist value). It seeks to materialise portals, portals between different levels, different strata of reality.

Entitled "Ici grand ouvert," the exhibition is organised into zones of intensity, porous platforms bringing together works, series and projects such as *CH19H2802 (Agnès)* (2010–2011), *Spectrographie* (2010–2014), *Saturnium* (2015–2018), *TRAUM* (2015–2018), *Löyly* (2007–2012), *Astroblème* (2017), *Désidération* (2016–2021), *Dami* (2022–ongoing).

The exhibition brings together older works and new productions in a grand scenographic gesture that composes series and ensembles, examining the artist's past and future productions in the light of his present and future questions.

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To activate this process of transformation, events unfold under the umbrella title of 'Désidération(s)'. Some are scheduled, others arise spontaneously, sometimes announced, sometimes not, so that the exhibition transforms over the course of the days and embraces its own variability.

Excerpt from the text by Frank Lamy

Exhibition organised with the collaboration and support of Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris. With the support of Studio Superpartners. With the support of Centre Pompidou, PICTO and AM EYE ART Dotation.

This project has been awarded the Bicentennial of Photography label by the Ministry of Culture and is part of the official Bicentennial program from September 1, 2026 to September 30, 2027.

A regular **programme** of talks, performances, screenings, gestures and actions accompanies the exhibition.

"Les petites mues", every first Sunday of the month

Talks, screenings or guided tours around the exhibition space

Sundays 7 June, 5 July, 2 August, 6 September, 4 October, 1 November, 6 December 2026 and 3 January 2027.

"Les grandes mues", during major events at the museum

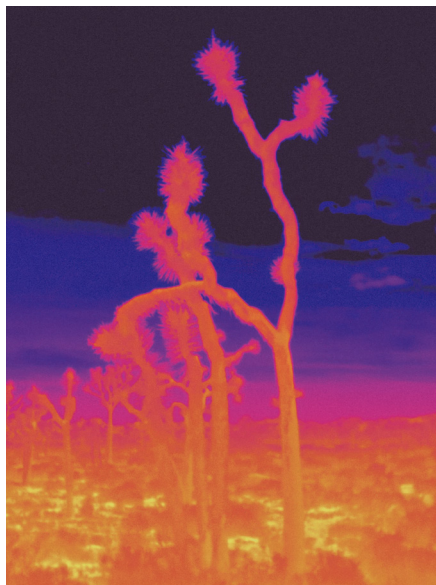
Saturday 23 May 2026 for the opening, Sunday 28 June for the PIC NIC at MAC VAL, Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 September during European Heritage Days, Saturday 17 October to coincide with National Architecture Days, and Sunday 31 January 2027 for the exhibition's final day.

Full programme: macval.fr

A **catalogue** published in 2026 accompanies this retro-prospective exhibition. Co-edited with PALAIS BOOKS, it features contributions from Taous R. Dahmani, Sergio Valenzuela-Escobedo, Florian Gaité, Edward Shanken, Eva Barois de Caebel, Lucien Raphmaj and Marie NDiaye.



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Captions

1 SMITH, *Untitled*, in "Dami (Fulmen)", 2024. Image created as part of the INSTANTS residency, "Château Palmer x Leica". Thermogram on brushed aluminum. Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard.

2 SMITH, *Untitled*, in "Dami (Fulmen)", 2023. Thermogram on brushed aluminum. Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard.

3 SMITH, *Untitled*, in "Desideration" (Prologue), 2019. Print on brushed aluminum. Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard / Modds.

4 SMITH, *Untitled*, in "Dami (Travelogue)", 2024. Print on brushed aluminium. Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard / Modds.

5 SMITH, *L'extase de M. Patate*, 2024. Installation view. Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard.

Royalty-free images for the promotion of the SMITH exhibition at MAC VAL, for the duration of the event from 23 May 2026 to 31 January 2027. For any requests for additional images to promote the exhibition, please contact the MODDS agency – Marie Delcroix – marie.delcroix@modds.fr – +33 6 70 38 36 23 – modds.fr

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MAC VAL - Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne

Opening hours

Museum

Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays from 11 am to 6 pm.

Last tickets sold 30 minutes before closing time.

Closed on 1 January, 1 May, 15 August and 25 December.

Garden

Free access

Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 6pm.