

Around the exposition

Désidération(s)

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

“Les grandes mues”, during major events at the museum

Saturday 23 May 2026 – Opening

With Lilian Fraiji & Daniel Nicolaevsky, Radio Levanía, The Limiñanas

Sunday 28 June 2026 – PIC NIC at MAC VAL

With Barbara Carlotti, Radio Levanía, Youmna Saba

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 September 2026 – European Heritage Days

With Zoë Dubus, Mélissa Laveaux, Laure Murat, Queer As Us – Our Story,

Radio Levanía, Jean-Philippe Uzan...

Saturday 17 October 2026 – National Architecture Days

With Matthieu Barbin (Sara Forever), Radio Levanía, SMITH, Maria Helena Toscano

Sunday 31 January 2027 – Exhibition’s final day

With François Chaignaud, Balthazar Heisch, Clovis Maillet, Cy Lecerf Maulpoix,

Radio Levanía, Violaine Sautter

Full programme: macval.fr

“Les petites mues”, every first Sunday of the month

Individuals closely associated with Smith’s work are invited to share their perspectives on his oeuvre.

Sunday, June 7, in conjunction with World Ocean Day

3 p.m.: Screening of *Unda*, *In Somnis*, and *Les Apocalyptiques*, films by SMITH

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Agnès Godard and the Tara Ocean Foundation

Sunday, July 5

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Aurélie Moins and Château Palmer

Sunday, August 2

4 p.m.: Visit from Frank Lamy, curator of the exhibition

Sunday, September 6, in conjunction with the Bicentennial of Photography

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Taous Dahmani, Julie Jones, and Paul-Émile Pacheco

Sunday, October 4

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Eva Barois de Caevel and Émilie Houssa

8 p.m.: *Transition Pieces* by Hot Bodies, in partnership with the Jerk Off Festival

Sunday, November 1

3 p.m.: Screening of *Spectrographie*, a film by SMITH

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Corine Sombrun and Sergio Valenzuela-Escobedo

Sunday, December 6

Screening of *The NeverEnding Story*, a 1984 film by Wolfgang Petersen, as part of the Pouce! Children’s Festival

Presence of associations for World AIDS Day

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Marc-Antoine Bartoli and Hélène Giannecchini

Sunday, January 3, 2027

3 p.m.: Meeting with SMITH and Frank Lamy

4 p.m.: Visit from the Mystagogues Jean-François Clervoy and Valentine Umansky

Study Seminar

« Art et psychédéliques : les métamorphoses du sensible »

Fridays, October 2 and November 6, Thursday, December 10, 2026, Fridays, February 5, March 5, April 2 and May 14, 2027 — 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Seminar organized with Zoë Dubus, postdoctoral researcher in the history of medicine at Cermes3 (Université Paris Cité, CNRS, Inserm), within the framework of the ARCHE project and Pierre Léger, PhD in philosophy, associate researcher at the Gilles Gaston Granger Center of Aix-Marseille University.

Museum Auditorium

Reservations recommended: reservation@macval.fr or +33 1 43 91 64 23

Seminar in French, free with museum admission.

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

01 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.

Going further

Publication

A catalogue published in October 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 Caevel, Lucien Raphmaj and Marie NDiaye.

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 and 4.30 pm

— For families and children aged 4 and over

Every Saturday, Sunday and Wednesdays during school holidays, 3 pm

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

Young audience

— Cartels designed for young audiences offer alternative ways to explore a selection of works from the exhibition.

— A self-guided tour for children aged 5 and over takes them on a fun itinerary through the exhibition.

Free of charge, available on request at reception and downloadable from macval.fr

For full details of the exhibitions and programme: macval.fr

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Le MAC VAL remercie ses partenaires



BeauxArts



Les Inrockuptibles



Slash



SMITH exhibition
23 May 2026 – 31 Jan. 2027

Eng

Ici grand ouvert

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 recompose 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.

Chief curator Nicolas Surlapierre
Exhibition curator Frank Lamy, assisted by Julien Blanpied

Production Camille Gouget, Nadège Piton
Scenography Matthieu Prat (Diplomates) et Sami Rintala, assisté de Toni Lozano
Lighting design Serge Damon
Sound design The Limiñanas
Installation staff CORÉGIE
Production support Centre Pompidou, PICTO and AM EYE ART Dotation
Installation support MPI and CORÉGIE
Co-publisher of the catalog PALAIS BOOKS
Programme partners
Galerie municipale Jean-Collet (Vitry-sur-Seine), Festival Jerk Off, Fondation Tara Océan, Cermes3 (Université Paris Cité, CNRS, Inserm) dans le cadre du projet ARCHE, Centre Gilles Gaston Granger de l'Université d'Aix-Marseille, Le Nouveau Printemps, Château Palmer, Le Hangar Y / Festival Vent d’été 2026, Radical Production

*Exhibition organised with the collaboration and support of Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris. With the support of Studio Superpartners
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*

“Ici grand ouvert” (“Here Wide Open”)

Adoration addresses that which transcends all address. It addresses without seeking to reach, and even without intention; it may not even address, nor recognise the outside to which it sends itself. It may not even identify it as outside, for it takes place right here, nowhere else but here, wide open. Nothing but an open mouth, an eye, an ear: nothing but an open body. Through all their openings, bodies are in adoration. ‘Here, wide open’: this is the world now, this is our world. Open to nothing but itself. Transcendent in its own immanence.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’adoration*, 2010 (Galilée, Paris).

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“Ici grand ouvert” brings together works developed over the past twenty years, organised into cycles that I conceive as in-disciplinary systems, where photography, video, film, installation, sculpture and performance meet and respond to one another. Each group is built around a core, which takes the form of a persistent question, an obsession, a mystery, a desire to understand, and which drives every gesture, every story, towards a transformation. The exhibition is conceived as an observatory of the threshold, proposing a method of attention and metamorphosis, where the works convey an experience of passage. They offer a thread for finding our bearings in the world, because the world passes through them

and imprints its pressure, its ruptures, its returns. The works retain its trace, like a seismograph, and, by themselves taking on the metamorphic form of reality, they invite us to embrace this movement, to accept its fluidity, its displacements and its changes.

Traversal, crossing, remains central here. Everything that transits. Everything trans. Everything that passes through. Everything that moves the lines. With *Löyly* (2007-2012), a photographic project born from a focus on the transitions within my close circle of friends was created at a time when such questions were still rarely discussed in public discourse. Through images, I documented the way our bodies

transitioned, mutated, and reinvented themselves outside traditional scenarios. In *TRAUM* (2016), the question of transition shifts towards a more unstable realm, touching upon death and transubstantiation, where the moment of death ceases to be an end and becomes the opening of another mode of existence. *Désidération* extends ecology to the cosmos, seeking a way to navigate the turbulence of the present by shifting perspective, by exploring *endocosmology* as a living connection between the stars and the inner self, where we explore the outside from within, and where we allow the inside to take shape from the outside. With *Dami* (2024), this opening extends to an intimate scale, through an inner journey. The practice of altered states of consciousness becomes a technique of connection, a place where boundaries soften, where binaries lose their rigidity, where separation ceases to reign, where the self dissolves into that which shelters it – the living, its textures, its rhythms, its respiration, its continuities. The works reflect a broader, more unified perception, and the world can be grasped as a continuity.

Transition shapes the very form of the works brought together, like a shift in perspective, then like a reorientation of life, a change of cardinal directions. The hybridisation of bodies, materials and narratives is one of its driving forces: each piece reminds us that we are beings in transformation, part of a wider evolution.

I am drawn to the retrospective form – or, more accurately, *retroprospective* form – because of its power to fold back time, allowing for a non-linear temporality made up of folds, returns and unexpected connections between distant layers. The exceptionally long duration of the exhibition – the length of a human gestation! – reinforces this experience, making it possible to observe how forms, ideas and affects settle, transform and respond to one another within a queer, constellated time. The spatial organisation follows neither chronology nor the idea of works separated by rigid boundaries, but proposes a dreamlike logic, made up of detours, fertile dead ends and intuitive cartographies, in the manner of Tarkovsky’s *Stalker*, moving through a constantly shifting landscape. The exhibition space is conceived as an environment, whose layout opens up multiple pathways and allows the public to navigate it through intuition and resonance. The exhibition takes the form of an observatory of attention, based on presence, listening and imaginative recomposition, including the possibility of moments of dreaming and sleep, in the manner of incubation rituals amongst the works, as moments of integration.

In opposition to speed that simplifies, polarises and frays our nerves, slowness is embraced as a counterforce.

Attention becomes an ethic, an invitation to hold the threshold, the wide open, the nuance.

Four metaphorical figures structure the exhibition and guide the visitor’s exploration:

Compost offers a time of decomposition and recomposition where forms do not remain intact. They metamorphose. The works composted here behave like living matter, liable to being stirred, moved, recombined, metabolised by external gazes from critical, poetic, spiritual and scientific fields. They are also recomposed in the strongest sense: as in compost, they change environment, moving from one original ecology to another. They are brought into contact, mixed, fragmented, rearranged.

It is in this spirit that, together with Frank Lamy, the exhibition’s curator, we have invited a constellation of *mystagogues* to compose passages within the exhibition. This term, which derives from ancient rites, refers to those who accompany an initiation, who guide a crossing through that which eludes us, that which unsettles us, that which demands a different kind of attention. In the nineteenth century, it was also used to refer to certain psychedelic substances, understood as guides to a higher, hidden reality – a stratum of the world that our ordinary perceptions usually leave out of view.

Thus, the mystagogues Taous R. Dahmani, Sergio Valenzuela Escobedo, Eva Barois de Caebel, Edward A. Shanken and Florian Gaité will offer connections between forms, narratives and meanings, in a logic akin to dreams, mycelium networks and ritual, both in the catalogue and in the exhibition design. They play the role of earthworms, ferments and agents of transformation in our compost-exhibition. They accelerate exchanges, shift boundaries, and cause elements to migrate from one room to another. In this churn, the works partially come apart then reassemble differently. Layers settle. Reactions occur. A new meaning emerges as a form of metabolization. New works are born there. They spring up like shoots. They mushroom. At the same time, a wider circle of co-mystagogues, long-standing companions in thought, extend this work and broaden the scope of the activations by drawing on the works, so that the exhibition will come across as an organism in motion.

States of expanded consciousness, ushered in by trance or psychedelic experience, reconfigure the functioning of our brain. Perception, emotion and thought cease to operate in silos; they form a network and advance through feedback, correspondences and shifts. This logic of constellation informs the exhibition design and the flow of movement through the exhibition, maintaining a continuity of attention where meaning is formed through resonance, emerges in the vicinity, and constellates. We understand with the body and intuition; the outside is read from within; knowledge and mediums enter into relationship.

Finally, the forest-like form inscribes these principles in space. Designed with the Finnish-Norwegian architect Sami Rintala, the scenography is conceived as an unstable, self-generating forest, structured into clearings, dense zones, undergrowth and gradients of light, where we move through branching and bifurcations, with possible returns and

an attention that reconstitutes itself as the visit unfolds. Verticality and horizontality are of equal weight; dense nodes alternate with breathing spaces, and interstices or sensory niches provide access to voices, images, videos, forms and sounds. The building materials – porous, branched, opaque or translucent – , chosen as far as possible from recovered, recycled or recyclable sources, embed ecology within the very form of the exhibition. They represent a concrete eco-responsibility and make tangible the idea of a world in transformation, where we learn to work with what already exists.

« Désidération(s) »

On the upper floor of the museum, I am collaborating with designer Matthieu Prat (Diplomates) to create a foyer named “Désidération(s)”. This space functions as a living environment, serving both as an exhibition space and a venue for programming, designed to encourage movement and to host objects in the process of creation or transformation. Here, I shift the concept of a solo exhibition towards an understanding of alliance, which takes shape in the “in-between,” in exchange, in friendship, in the “wide open,” and in very concrete ways of holding together sensibilities, knowledge and practices. This space seeks to embody a fundamental political gesture: in a world that breeds separation, learning to hold things together becomes a practice of survival and joy. Against closure, it is not enough to denounce; we must create environments, a home, a method, a toolkit for collectively strengthening our capacity for transition.

« Désidération(s) » hosts my studio for the duration of the exhibition: a place of creation, research and trance, where personal and collective works can emerge and remain visible in their in-process state, with their share of risk, doubt and unstabilized material.

This space also hosts the *Mues*. These are moments offered to the public in the form of conversations, encounters, workshops, performances, pop-up exhibitions by artist friends, times of collective meditation, and corporeal practices, tattoos, alterations, rituals. What unfolds in these *Mues* gradually permeates the exhibition “Here Wide Open.” Forms, traces, narratives and gestures flow, connect and reshape the whole over time, much mycelium extending its connections, opening passages and creating a collective work by aggregation, contamination and continuity.

The title “Désidération(s)” refers to that of a work created between 2017 and 2022 (*Désidération*), drawing on the etymology of “desire” as a lack of the stars, when sailors were unable to find their bearings on starless nights. This etymology strikes me as even more relevant today because it resonates with another French word, *sidération*, which is often used to express a sense of powerlessness in the face of the intensifying destructive forces all around us. *Désidération* thus becomes a guide to orientation, compelling us to ask some simple yet formidable questions. How

do we emerge from *sidération*? Which stars will guide us? How do we translate knowledge, desires and intuitions into action?

To emerge from a state of *sidération* (shock) means regaining our sensitivity without being overwhelmed by what we feel, and learning a gentle strength capable of embracing complexity in order to find a way forward. Standing up to the erosion of reason, sensitivity and morality. Rejecting the anaesthesia that renders us passive in the face of brutality and cruelty. Not letting violence become the norm. Finding within ourselves the strength of conversion, the kind that reorients us. Remaining free, and therefore responsible beings, and restoring to our desires the power to translate into action.

The plural form “Désidération(s)” affirms a simple idea. There are multiple trajectories, heterogeneous methods to guide us through our disaster-stricken world, which coexist without merging into a single narrative. This space therefore takes on a fragmentary form, made up of echoes, survivals and repetitions, and is permeated by xeno-transfeminist, decolonial and ecological perspectives, opening up lines of flight and alternative imaginaries, while extensively incorporating a spiritual dimension.

Our “Désidération(s)” remain vigilant in the face of the capitalist paradox, that power capable of converting into value even that which challenges it.

The words ritual, care, trance and utopia are neither fetishized nor romanticized.

We treat them as operators capable of inventing sustainable modes of existence, which escape the axioms of productivity and accumulation, and which know how to reconfigure themselves before being captured, like ephemeral networks, encrypted languages, and subsistence practices that mutate faster than they can be identified. The *Mues* bring together rare voices: techno-shamans, ocean and forest activists, explorers of consciousness and psychonauts, astronauts, and campaigners whose areas of expertise and struggle open up pathways precisely where everything sometimes seems to be closing in. We listen to them so as to recognise signs, ways of holding on, of inventing, of caring – fragile, empirical clues that other ways of life remain possible, and that all is left to do is to take action.

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SMITH