



FONDATION  
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HERMÈS

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OUR GESTURES DEFINE US

06/19 TO 09/11/2021



MOUNTAINCUTTERS

## LES INDICES DE LA RESPIRATION PRIMITIVE

Press kit

mountaincutters  
"Les Indices de la  
respiration primitive"

"Matters of Concern |  
Matières à penser"

La Verrière  
Brussels (Belgium)

Curator  
Guillaume Désanges

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mountaintcutters, *Supplique pour le beau temps* (still), 2021,  
digitized film 16mm, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters

# PRESS RELEASE

For the seventh exhibition in the series “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser”, curator Guillaume Désanges presents “Les Indices de la respiration primitive” (“Signs of primal breath”), an exhibition by the French artist duo mountaintcutters, at La Verrière, the Brussels art space of the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, from June 19 to September 11, 2021.

“Invited to La Verrière for their first solo show in Belgium, where they have lived and worked since 2015, mountaintcutters have devised a new project for the gallery, with a scenography that addresses its unique characteristics: the high roof, natural light, and the cubic geometry of the space. A continuance of their recent work on the dynamic transformation of matter, the present exhibition is the seventh in the series ‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’, and directly responds to its themes. ‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’ explores art curatorship from an ecological perspective, showcasing practices that run counter to the at times cynical overproduction of contemporary artistic output, and which enact a more mindful, humble engagement with raw materials, in a spirit of healing rather than mastery.”

Extract from the text by curator Guillaume Désanges, reproduced in full below.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### **La Verrière**

Boulevard de Waterloo 50  
1000 Brussels (Belgium)

Exhibition open from June 19 to September 11, 2021  
Closed from July 31 to August 23, 2021 included

Admission free, Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 6 p.m.  
Guided visit, Saturdays at 3 p.m.



(silence)

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

## Extension sustained by disorder

The artist duo mountaintcutters are a hybrid identity that practise sculpture *in situ*, investing spaces with materials and objects. Reflecting the duo's ambivalent identity, their hybrid aesthetic favours transitional situations and incomplete forms, as the basis for strange compositions with a distinctive, wild beauty. Their work deploys altered, deformed or evolving materials (dust, earth, rust, raw or barely worked clay, organic fragments placed in metal boxes, crude furniture that resembles prosthetic limbs or mechanical appendages) in large-scale installations that bear the mark of indefinable human activity, suspended between artisanship and industry, construction and destruction, architecture and archaeology. At times, the work resembles a derelict industrial landscape or an archaeological dig in progress, at others a factory or laboratory. Invariably, it obeys a functional logic, whose ultimate purpose escapes us. The raw, sometimes brutal nature of mountaintcutters' forms is balanced by the subtlety of their handiwork, the finesse of particular treatments, the recourse to specific skills and know-how which together generate a unique tension: we are invited both to doubt and to be seduced by what we see. The quasi-archaic simplicity of their forms combines rigour, mindful attention to detail and precision, in presentations that range from the discreetly theatrical to the frankly spectacular.

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In mountaintcutters' work, industry and nature – the mineral, organic and plant kingdoms – combine and branch out, leading us endlessly from one to the other, with no sense of hierarchy. The result is a salutary "dis-order", in the literal sense: an established order that is contested or turned on its head. And it is here, behind this formal facade, that the work's discreetly political message is secreted. Because mountaintcutters' relationship to nature, their interest in raw matter and its biologically altered states, does not eschew human creativity. On the contrary, the act of creation is referenced continually. The "wild" impulse in their work readily admits aspects of culture and cult ritual, science and industry. In this context, drawings, film and writing – frequently raw poetry composed in the first person – contribute snatches of narrative to the whole. The point is not to put two ideas in opposition, nor to enshrine a return to nature or the wild in place of the ideal of progress, but rather to show how every artefact, every aspect of human production has its place in a wider ecosystem, in which it is a guest, and to which it owes a debt. Here, the vital intersection of nature, craftsmanship, art and industry, the modern and the archaic, creates hybrid entities rather than superimposed layers of reality. This challenge to domination and hierarchy, this rejection of fixed identities and the prerogatives associated with a specific material practice, is what gives mountaintcutters' work its contemporary relevance, coupled with thinking that expands our concept of ecology to reflect on mankind's place in the living and inanimate worlds.

## The body as machine

The question of physicality is omnipresent in mountaintcutters' work, though the body is essentially an imprint, a recorded absence. Something marginal. The work is loud with the body's absence: we perceive the duo's sculptures as things of human making, or material avatars, or prosthetics. Their characteristically clinical aesthetic (metal chairs, beds, benches and furniture) manifests strength, resistance and vulnerability alike, as if matter existed not to be bent to the creative will, but rather to extend, support or facilitate the creative gesture. Yet the work's material fabric is not pre-eminent or unassailable. Signs of fragility are everywhere (wheels or feet are made of glass, there are visible alterations, repairs, scars). But this is a shared vulnerability, conceived in a spirit of solidarity. mountaintcutters' objects and installations reify abstract concepts of "care": positive thinking that has influenced our collective morale and

impacted specific social and sanitary practices. The duo's seemingly abandoned relics – suffused with an ambivalent aesthetic of corruption and decay – are paradoxically a celebration of life. Each of these imperfect forms or broken structures, at once powerful and fragile, quietly manifests an unstoppable life force. Their material flesh, their veins and fluids, their outpourings, oozings and decomposition identify them as systems that are both sick and affirmatively alive, drawing strength and vigour from their very precarity.

mountaincutters' work comes to us from a dystopian world; it is a representation, perhaps, of a past catastrophe, or one still to come, as hinted in the duo's first exhibitions. It has evolved over time – it is warmer now, more physical – but has lost none of its radical essence. A little less raw, a little more concocted. More chemistry, less physics. Tresses of copper enlase stone, transparent glass is shaped into delicate leaves, fine blades of brass are folded. Here are oiled paper, enamel, carpets of natural fibres, technically complex items with an emphasis on the transformation of energy. As if the tough asceticism of the earlier work had gradually given way to a potent, restrained intensity that manifestly pierces the surface of things, whether raw materials or objects: thin shafts of blinding light shine from beneath spotlights placed close to the floor, ceramics are fired at super-high temperatures. We may speculate that this turning point in mountaincutters' work hints at a kind of reactivation of dormant cells, an act of resistance to the cataclysmic fatalism of the world, a quest to re-enchant the world by subversive means.

These multiple aspects of mountaincutters' work, and their direct connection to the speculative thinking that defines the core concept of "Matters of Concern | Matières à panser", inspired this invitation for them to work at La Verrière. But make no mistake: regardless of any discourse we may seek to impose, the duo's original, timeless œuvre continually evades interpretation. An unfathomable mystery is communicated in these forms that speak more to the gut than to the eye, to the emotions rather than to reason. The work belongs in the realm of the ineffable, the (literally) unnameable. It is an œuvre that we understand here in the two-fold etymological sense of work and *opera*, connected with effort, labour, and the alteration or modification of physical states, but also the mystery of creation.

Text by Guillaume Désanges



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters

# MOUNTAINCUTTERS



Autoportrait of mountaintcutters, courtesy of the artists

## Biography

mountaintcutters is an artist duo born in 1990, France. Based in Brussels, they practise mainly sculpture *in situ*. They graduated from ESADMM in Marseille in 2014 and worked in residence at the STRT Kit international platform in Antwerp in 2016. They have since completed numerous exhibitions and residencies in France and Belgium (Kunsthall Extra City, 61st Salon de Montrouge, CAB Foundation, La Friche/Panorama in Marseille, La Borne residencies, Le Wonder/Liebert, etc.). In 2018, invited by Guillaume Désanges, they developed the SPOLIA project as artists and co-curators, at the Grand Café – Centre d'Art Contemporain in Saint-Nazaire at the mouth of the Loire. In 2019, they exhibited at the Creux de l'Enfer in Thiers, exploring the interconnectedness of industrial oral history, geology and labour. In 2020, the duo worked in residence at the Fondation Martell, experimenting with glass and ceramics.

## Selected recent solo and group exhibitions

- 2021**  
"Du pouce jusqu'à l'auriculaire", Espace Croisé – Centre d'Art Contemporain, Roubaix (France).
- 2020**  
"Le sens du sol", 29th edition of L'Art dans les Chapelles, Chapelle Saint-Meldéoc, Guern (France).  
"Drie Handen", in tandem with Jot Fau, Encore, Brussels (Belgium).
- 2019**  
"Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France).  
"Équation du vent zero", Chapelle des Jésuites, ESBAN Nîmes (France).  
"Asphyxie fonctionnelle", Le Papillon, Musée du Vieux Nîmes (France).  
"Les morceaux de paysages enrayaient l'appareil corps", Centre Céramique Contemporaine, La Borne (France).
- 2018**  
"SPOLIA (Généalogies fictives), Guillaume Désanges et mountaintcutters", Grand Café de Saint-Nazaire (France).  
"Situare II", Le Wonder, Paris (France).  
"Perception model", BRDG Antwerpen, Antwerp (Belgium).
- 2015**  
"Becoming Ground", IDK Contemporary and Ping Pong Gallery, Brussels (Belgium).
- 2014**  
"Heures-Reliefs", art-cade, Galerie des Grands Bains Douches de la Plaine, Marseille (France).  
"Concrétions", Project Room, Galerie Gourvenec Ogor, Prix ESADMM 2014, Marseille (France).

# PRESS VISUALS

Hi-def visuals are available for download at:  
[presse.fondationentreprisehermes.org/connection/](https://presse.fondationentreprisehermes.org/connection/)  
(password on request)



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters





View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, Edgard. F. Grima Collection, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, Edgard. F. Grima Collection, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



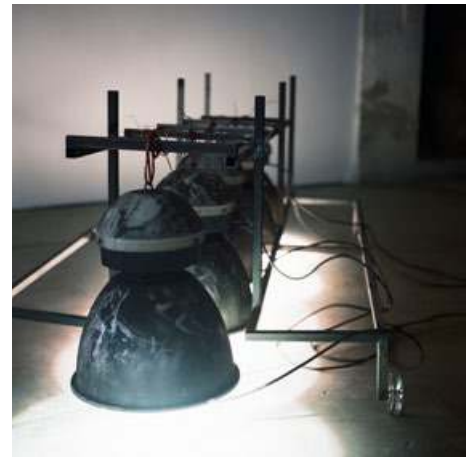
View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, Edgard. F. Grima Collection, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



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View of the exhibition "Anatomie d'un corps absent", Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (France), 2019, production Le Creux de l'Enfer, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



mountaincutters, *Objets Incomplets (Anatomie d'un corps absent)*, 2019, courtesy of the artists © mountaincutters



View of mountaintcutters' studio, 2020, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



View of mountaintcutters' studio, 2020, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



mountaintcutters, *Études (ponctions)*, 2020, copper wire, copper offcuts, collage, graphite, adhesive paper, water and pigments on paper, 29.7 × 42 cm, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



mountaintcutters, *Le Sens du sol*, 2020, 29th edition of L'Art dans les Chapelles, Chapelle Saint-Meldéoc, Guern (France), courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



View of the exhibition "Les morceaux de paysages enrayaient l'appareil corps", Centre Céramique Contemporaine La Borne (France), 2019, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



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View of the exhibition "Les morceaux de paysages enrayaient l'appareil corps", Centre Céramique Contemporaine La Borne (France), 2019, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



mountaintcutters, *Supplique pour le beau temps (still)*, 2021, digitized film 16mm, courtesy of the artists © mountaintcutters



View of mountaintcutters' exhibition  
"Du pouce jusqu'à l'auriculaire", Espace  
Croisé – Centre d'Art Contemporain, Roubaix  
(France), 2021, courtesy of the artists  
© mountaintcutters



View of mountaintcutters' exhibition  
"Du pouce jusqu'à l'auriculaire", Espace  
Croisé – Centre d'Art Contemporain, Roubaix  
(France), 2021, production Fondation  
d'entreprise Martell, courtesy of the artists  
© mountaintcutters



mountaintcutters, *Objets incomplets*  
(*Anatomie d'un corps absent*), 2019,  
industrial lamp, steel, glass, copper,  
animal fat, ceramic, insect remains, paper,  
in the group exhibition "SIGNAL\_ Espace(s)  
Réciproque(s)", Panorama, Friche La Belle  
de Mai, CWB Paris, Marseille, 2020, courtesy  
of the artists © mountaintcutters

# “MATTERS OF CONCERN | MATIÈRES À PANSER”

## About the series

Launched by Guillaume Désanges at La Verrière in spring 2019, “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser” celebrates the resurgence of materiality in art, from an emerging symbolic, animist, ethnographical, fetishistic and therapeutic or magical perspective, as a critical alternative to the increasing dematerialisation of our dominant economic paradigm. Referencing “other” thinking and practice at the heart of contemporary society and beyond, the series focuses on modes of attention and curiosity that subtly undermine the accepted categories and disciplines of contemporary art.

“Matters of Concern | Matières à panser” is the third series of themed exhibitions presented at La Verrière, after “Des gestes de la pensée” (“Gestures, and thought”, 2013–2016) and “Poésie balistique” (“Ballistic Poetry”, 2016–2019).

## Guillaume Désanges

Guillaume Désanges is an exhibition curator, art critic, and director of the independent production group Work Method. He develops exhibition projects and conferences worldwide. Recent projects include “Contre-Vents” (2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire), “SPOLIA” (2018–2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire), “L’Ennemi de mon ennemi” (2018, Palais de Tokyo, Paris), “L’Esprit français. Contre-cultures 1969-1989” (2017, la maison rouge, Paris), “Poésie balistique” (2016–2019, La Verrière, Brussels), “Méthode Room” (2015, Chicago, USA), “Ma’aminim (les croyants)” (2015, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, Saint-Denis & tranzitdisplay, Prague, Czech Republic), “Curated Session #1: The Dora García files” (2014, Pérez Art Museum, Miami, USA), “Une exposition universelle (section documentaire)” (2013, Louvain-la-Neuve Biennale, Belgium) and “Amazing! Clever! Linguistic! An Adventure in Conceptual Art” (2013, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria).



View of the exhibition “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser”, La Verrière, Brussels, 2019.  
© Isabelle Arthuis/Fondation d’entreprise Hermès



Portrait of Guillaume Désanges  
© Isabelle Arthuis

Next exhibition at La Verrière  
Majd Abdel Hamid  
From October 2 to December 4, 2021

# NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FONDATION D'ENTREPRISE HERMÈS

## EXHIBITIONS

### Group exhibition

“Sables brûlants” (“Burning Sands”)

Opening soon

La Grande Place, Musée du Cristal Saint-Louis,  
Saint-Louis-lès-Bitche (France)

### Nahm Huynh

July 23 → August 19, 2021

Atelier Hermès, Seoul (Korea)

## SKILLS ACADEMY 2021

“Glass”

Programme Director:

Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance

### Public lectures

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2021

The basics

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2021

Glass: artisanship, art and industry

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 2021

Light and transparency I

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2021

Light and transparency II – Clearer and clearer?

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2021

Look further, see far, watch closely

SATURDAY, MAY 29, 2021

A point of view...

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 2021

Glass in tomorrow's world

## NEW SETTINGS #10

Until July 3, 2021

Paris and the Paris region (France)

Cindy Van Acker

Ann Van den Broek

Clédat & Petitpierre

Marco da Silva Ferreira & Jorge Jácome

Vincent Dupont

Joris Lacoste, Ictus, Pierre-Yves Macé, Sébastien Roux

Euripides Laskaridis

Ariane Loze

Théo Mercier & Steven Michel

Meg Stuart

Cyril Teste

## MANUFACTO, THE SKILLS FACTORY

2020–2021 school year

Workshops in 55 schools, across nine boards of  
education in France: Paris, Créteil, Nice, Lyon, Besançon,  
Bordeaux, Versailles, Normandy and Occitany.

“Our gestures define us.” Our commitment to this unifying statement drives everything we do at the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès. Put another way, individual actions nurture growth and well-being for us all. The Foundation ensures that the necessary conditions are in place to create new works of art, transmit skills and know-how, protect the environment and encourage gestures of solidarity, through nine programmes that allow us to support our beneficiaries as they build tomorrow’s world.

Together, these actions reflect our fundamental aims: to cultivate shared intelligence, harness progress for the greater good, and enshrine humanitarian values at the heart of today’s society. Established in 2008, the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès is directed by Laurent Pejoux, and presided by Olivier Fournier.

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