

## Jungle

Lionel Sabatté and Cima Rahmankhah's jungle emerges from the depths of Downtown Los Angeles, an exceedingly industrial and arid area, where unplanned plants and lianas spontaneously grow around concrete highway bridges under which the most vulnerable find shelter. Both artists, using drawing as their medium - Cima on paper on the walls and Lionel with lines of metal scattered through the exhibition space - invite us to enter an environment in which body hair becomes landscapes, where prey animals graze, not exactly at peace.

Using metal rebars as his drawing tool, Sabatté keeps the lightness of his repetitive lines, almost as a quick doodle around which we can walk and wonder. His bestiary for this exhibition brings together fantastic creatures, all evoking herbivores and vulnerable animals, all are potential prey. He transforms urban and economic building materials into interconnected and wild natural biotopes. His research on the mineral, the animal, the organic gives us access to poetic, sensitive and disturbing works that participate in a global reflection on our condition and the place we occupy in our environment.

Sabatté's practice has always been very influenced by parietal art. Animals have been represented in all civilisations, on multiple supports since the earliest times. Somehow, their representation has always echoed their long lasting relationship to mankind. Animal iconography takes its roots in its strong symbolic charge, a result of both the proximity and distance between man and animal, a source of fascination and fear. It became a genre, evolving at each time within the history of the arts. Claude George Mallet defines the artists quest to "reveal the animal soul"\* . This sacralisation of the animal reign has shifted today and Sabatté's creatures tend to act as mirrors to reveal our own souls. Each of his sculptures is a milestone, staged on cinderblocks, defining a path we are invited to take, almost as voyeur of both their raw vulnerability and strength.

They are surrounded by Rahmankhah's drawings, landscapes made of body hair, with a direct reference to "L'Origine du Monde" by Courbet. The fame of this painting, the fascination it aroused is in part due to its escape of pornographic status thanks to Courbet's great virtuosity and the refinement of his amber colour scheme, a direct reference to Renaissance Masters as Titian and Veronese. Yet the question of voyeurism remains and by building landscapes with representation of discarded and ignoble bodily waste, Rahmankhah opens a similar path between fascination and disgust. "I'm attracted to things that are neglected – to their otherness" she says. An interest she shares with Sabatté who collects materials that

keep the traces of an experience, a living. Both of their work results in a "disturbing strangeness", in latent violence.

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\* Les représentations plastiques de l'animal, Claude-Georges Mallet