

PORTFOLIO

BENJAMIN
DESOUCHE

2021

benjamindesoche.com



BENJAMIN DESOCHE

Born in 1989

Lives and works in Dijon
Ateliers d'artistes La Volière

+336.67.16.34.83
desoche.benjamin@gmail.com

benjamindesoche.com

RESIDENCY

2021 Residency at HôpHopHop, ancien Arsenal de Besançon, supported by la DRAC

2021 Résidency at Provenchère with association Parabole, supported by la DRAC and Familles Rurales/

2021 Résidency at La Verrerie La Rochère, Passavant-la-Rochère/

2019 Résidency at La maison d'en face, la Prétière/

2015-2016 Résidency Sculpture céramique *Multiple*. Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon/

2014 Residence at Athens School Of Fine Arts, Athènes/

PUBLICATION

02.2019 *Aspirations*, catalogue in connection with the exhibition *L'artiste est-il un chamane?*, text by Laurent Devèze, Narbonne/

WORKSHOPS

2017 to 2021 Workshop conducted with students from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Mécanique et des Microtechniques, intervention at the Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon/

CONFERENCE

20.11.2021 Conference *X-files*, Service sciences art et culture de l'université de Franche-Comté, debate moderated by Magalie Cabana/

18.11.2018 Conférence *Sabas*: anagrammes contemporains, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon, debate moderated by Nicolas Surlapierre/

13.05.2016 Conférence for Le Jour du feu 5, Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon, debate moderated by Laurent Devèze/

EXPERIENCE

2017 to 2019 President of the association AVE, les ateliers d'artistes de la Ville de Besançon/

PERSONAL EXHIBITIONS

10.2021 *Corpus*, residency at HopHopHop, Besançon/

03.2020 *Parallèle*, La Coursive Boutaric, Dijon/

11.2018 *Relations*, L'atelier / Galerie Les 2 portes, Besançon/

05.2016 *Buste*, residency sculpture céramique Multiple, Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon/

12.2016 *Minimum*, Les Bains Douches Battant, Besançon/

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

08.2022 Residency at Provenchère with Association Parabole/

07.2022 *BeThAl*, residency at Galerie de la verrerie La Rochère, Passavant-la-Rochère/

11.2021 *Didascalies ou l'esprit d'escalier*, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon/ Curator : Nicolas Surlapierre/

2021 Exposition for Prix Icart artistik rezo, Espace Christiane Peugeot, Paris/

06.2020 *Des choses très Concrètes*, Galerie FEU, Besançon/

02.2020 *L'expo de la mort qui tue*, La Fabrica Sciences de Besançon/

11.2018 *Et le désert avance*, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon/ Curator : Nicolas Surlapierre/

10.2018 *Freak*, La Friche Artistique de Besançon, with les ateliers d'artistes de la Ville de Besançon/

01.2018 Presentation of Bustes at Galerie Bertrand Hassoun, Besançon/

10.2017 *Basses Résolutions*, La Mèche, Toulouse/ Curator: Adeline Leprêtre/

07.2017 *Back to the trees 6*, Chamblay/ Curator : Laurent Devèze et Julien Cadoret/

06.2017 *Production*, Hôpital St Jacques, Besançon/ Curator : Gregory Olympio/

04.2017 *Ellipse*, Église Notre-Dame, Besançon, with ateliers d'artistes de la ville de Besançon/

09.2016 *L'artiste est-il un chamane?*, L'aspirateur, Narbonne/ Curator : Laurent Devèze et Julien Cadoret/

09.2016 *Liaisons équivoques*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dole/ Curator: Stéphanie Jamet-Chavigny et Philippe Terrier-Hermann/

12.2015 *Déconstruction édition 1 Kapla*, Besançon/ Curator : Le KIT/

11.2015 *3,2,1... Les maîtres 2015*, Le Gymnase-espace culturel, Besançon/ Curator : Julien Cadoret/

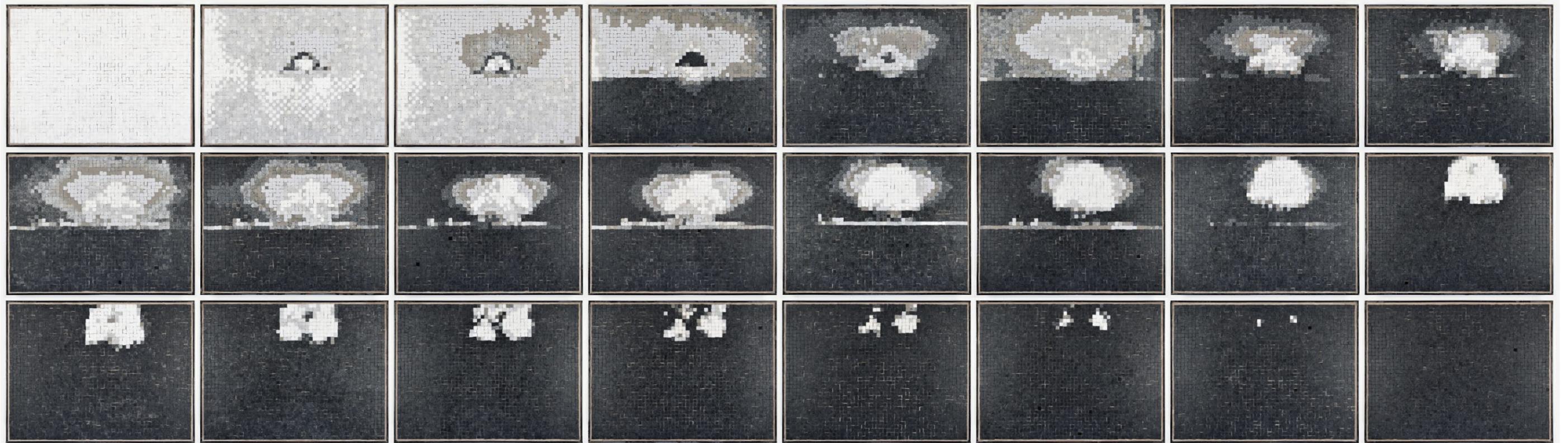
11.2015 *Tentations ou l'art de vouivre*, Musée Comtois Citadelle de Besançon/ Curator : Laurent Devèze et Julien Cadoret/

10.2015 *Multimédia*, Besançon/ Curator : Adeline Leprêtre/

05.2015 *Aperçu avant impression*, Friche Belle de mai, invited by Jules Lagrange, Marseille/ Curator : Caroline Hancock/

02.2015 *The End*, Galerie Ronchoux Room, Besançon/ Curator : Jean-Michel Jagot

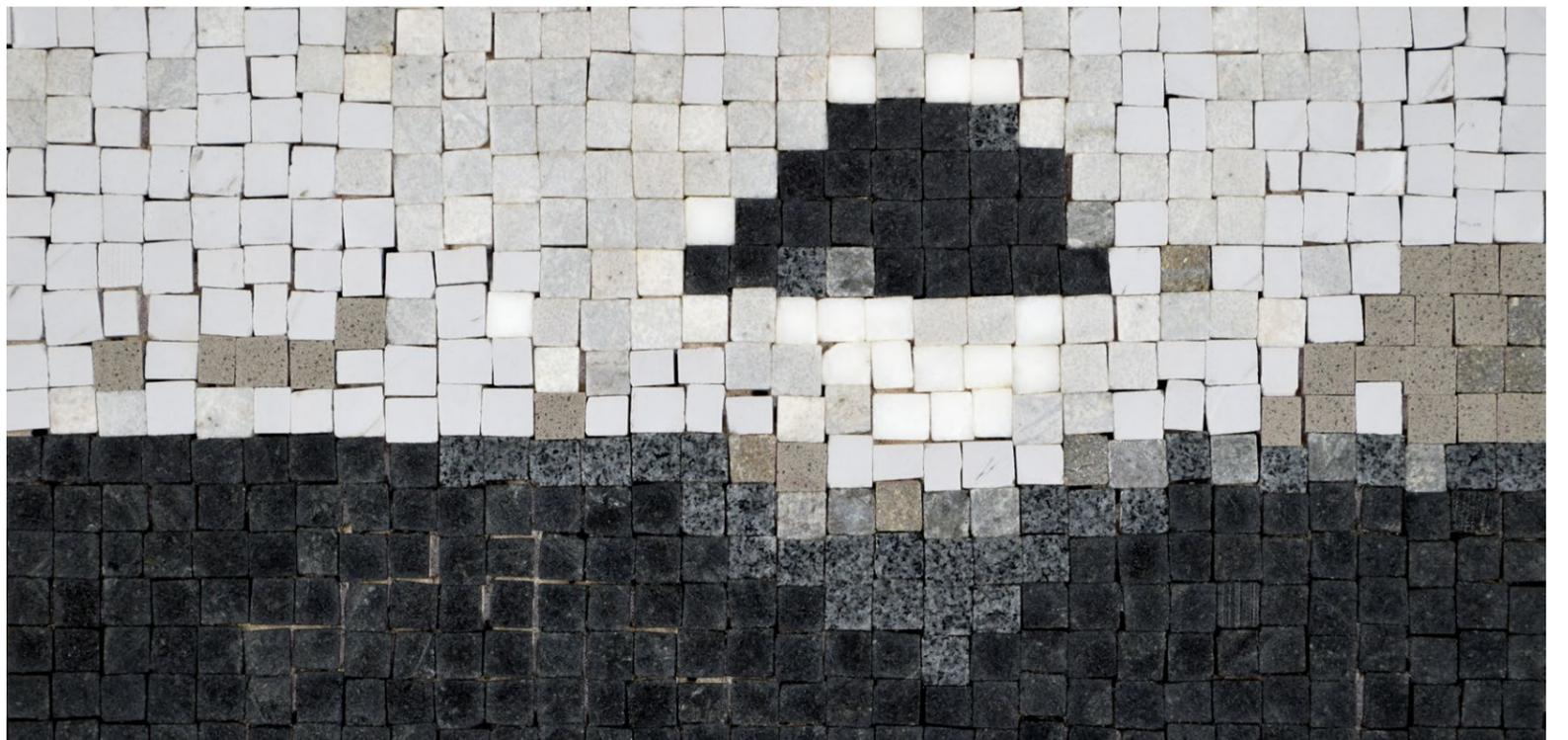
06.2014 *Hexagone*, Galerie Beton 7, Athènes/ Curator : Rania Kliari/



TRINITY
Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel
(24x) 52 x 41 cm
2021



TRINITY
View of the exhibition *BeThA1*
Galerie de La Rochère, Verrerie la Rochère
2021



TRINITY (detail)
Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel
(24x) 52 x 41 cm
2021



PORTRAIT THERMIQUE

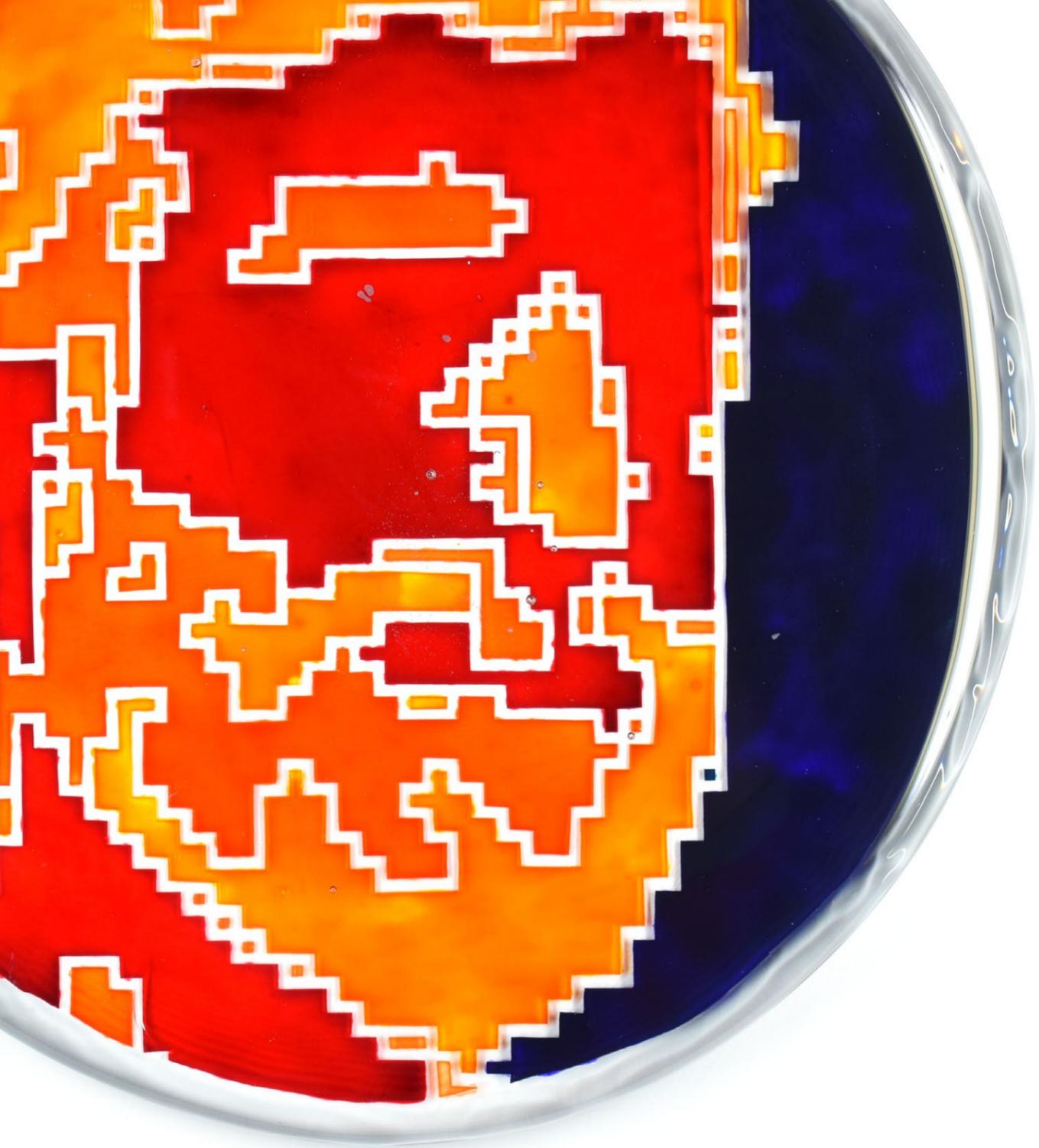
Engraved glass / painting

(18x) 30 cm ø

2021

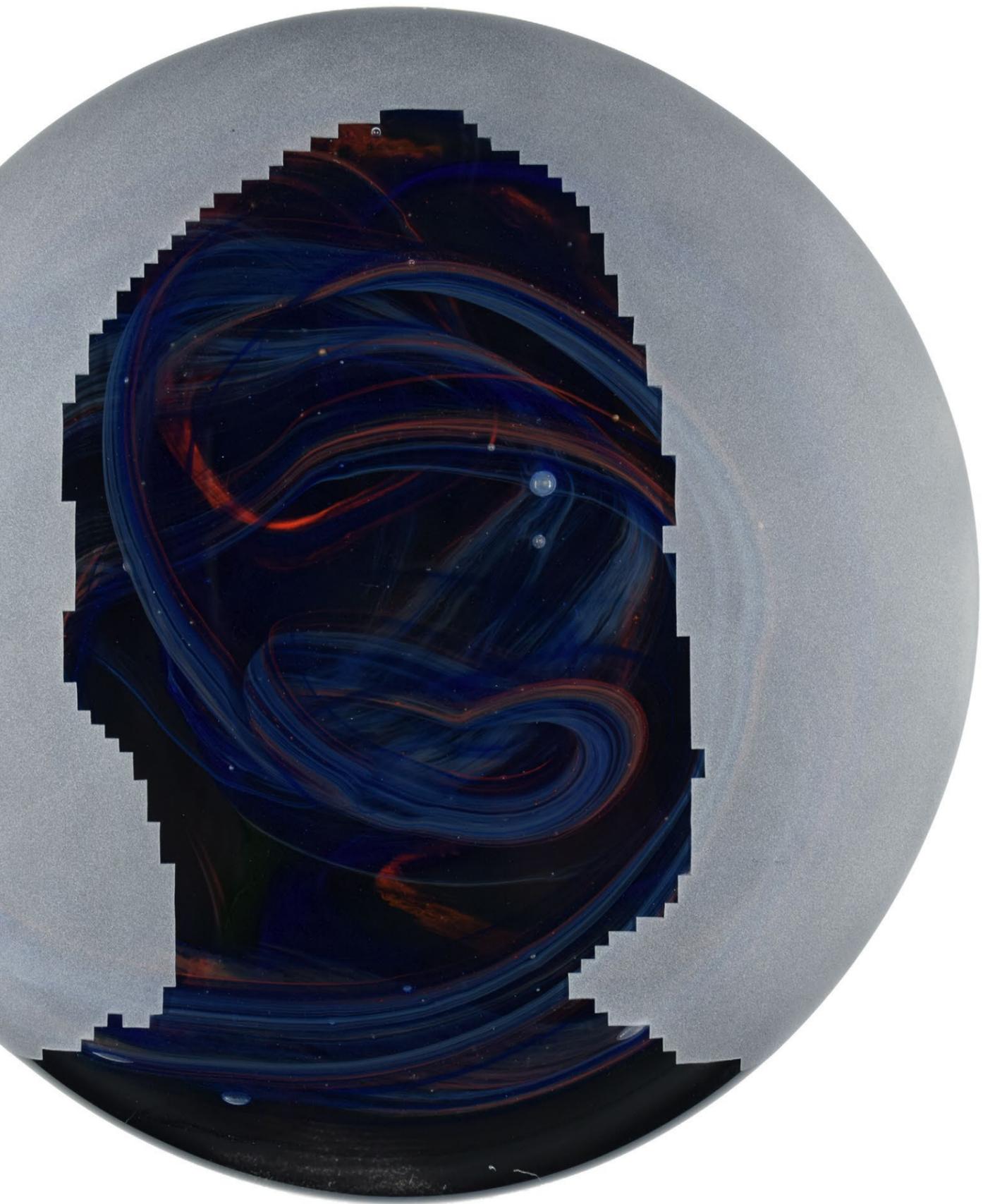


PORTRAIT THERMIQUE
View of the exhibition *BeThAI*
Galerie de La Rochère, Verrerie la Rochère
2021





SILHOUETTE
Engraved glass / painting
(12x) 30 cm ø
2021

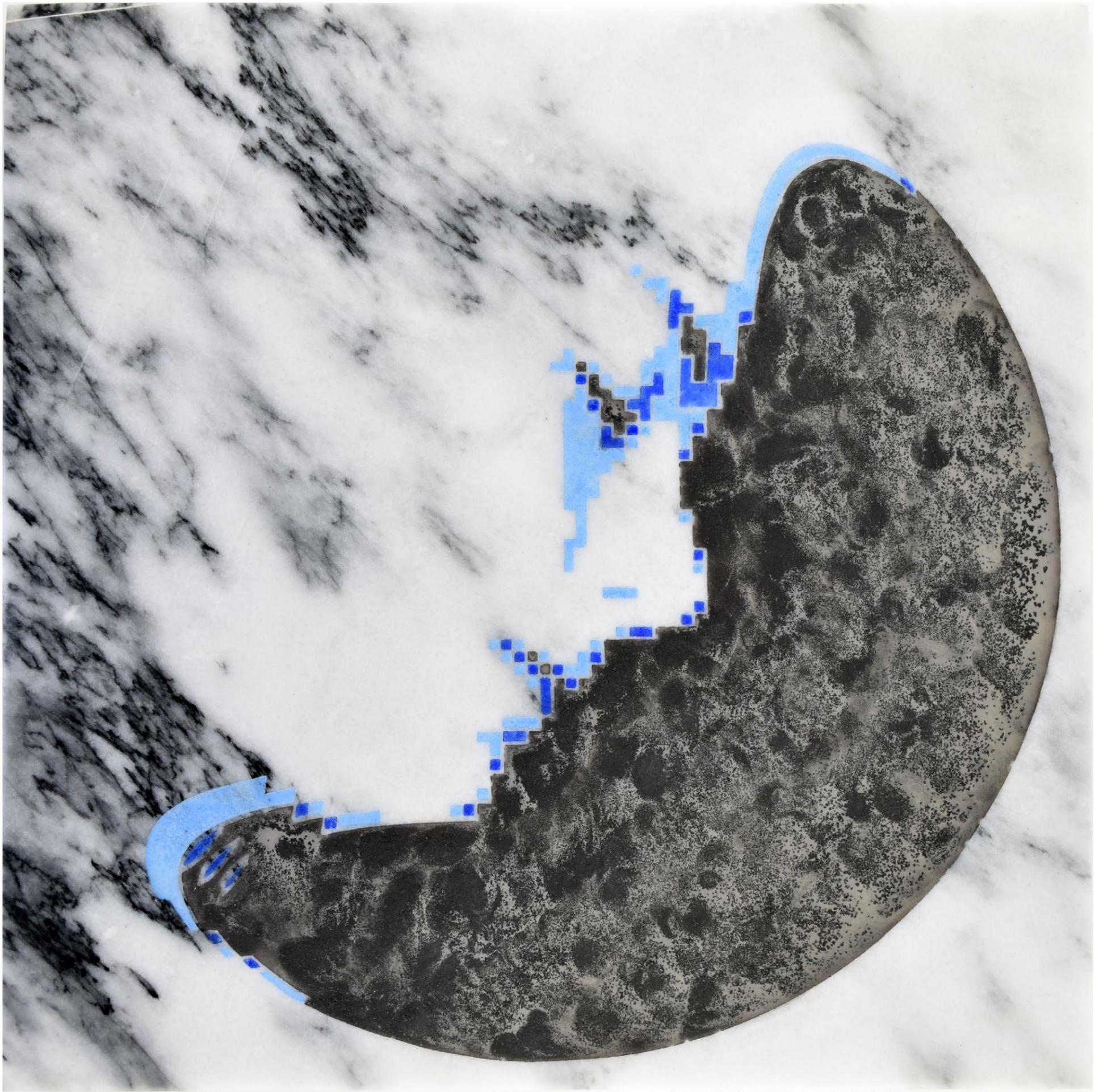




SAINTE NASTASIA
Engraved marble / painting
(7x) 40 x 40 cm
2021



SAINTE NASTASIA
View of the exhibition *BeThAl*
Galerie de La Rochère, Verrerie la Rochère
2021





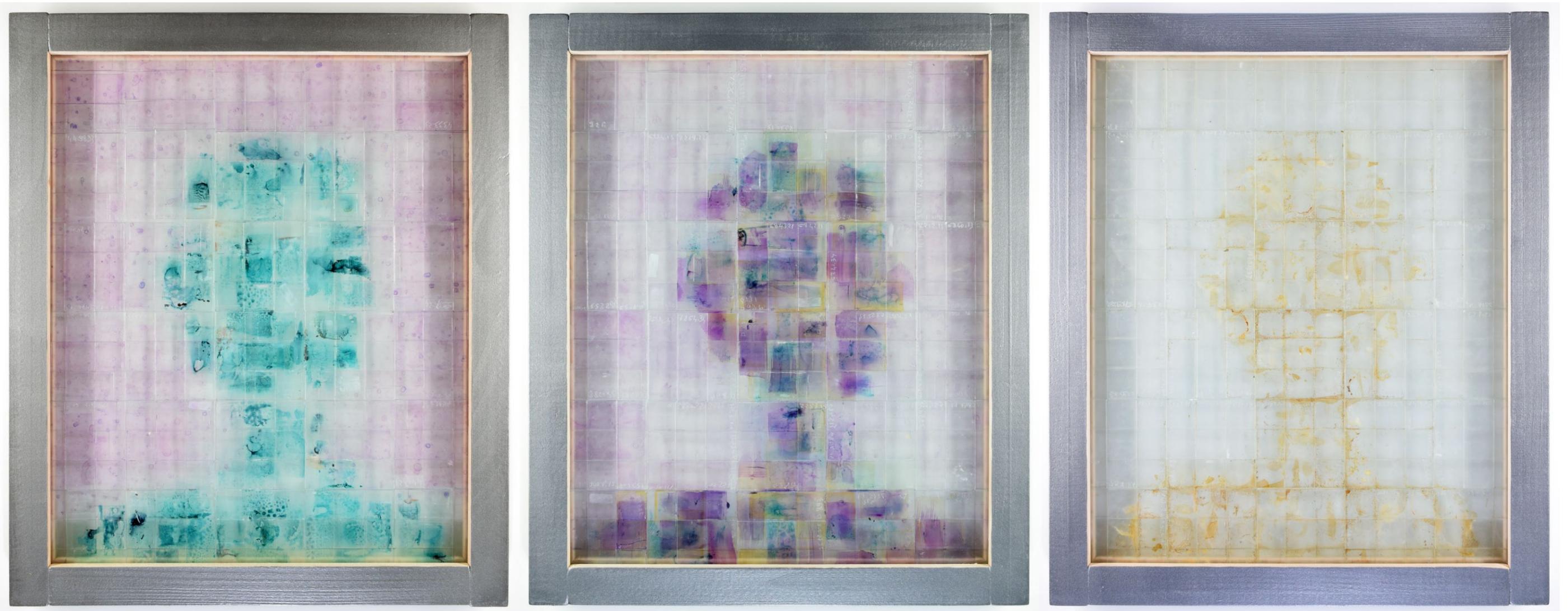
CORPUS PORTRAIT

Microscope Cover Glasses and Glass Slides / blood / sperm / wood

(7x) 43 x 50 cm

2021





CORPUS PORTRAIT 2

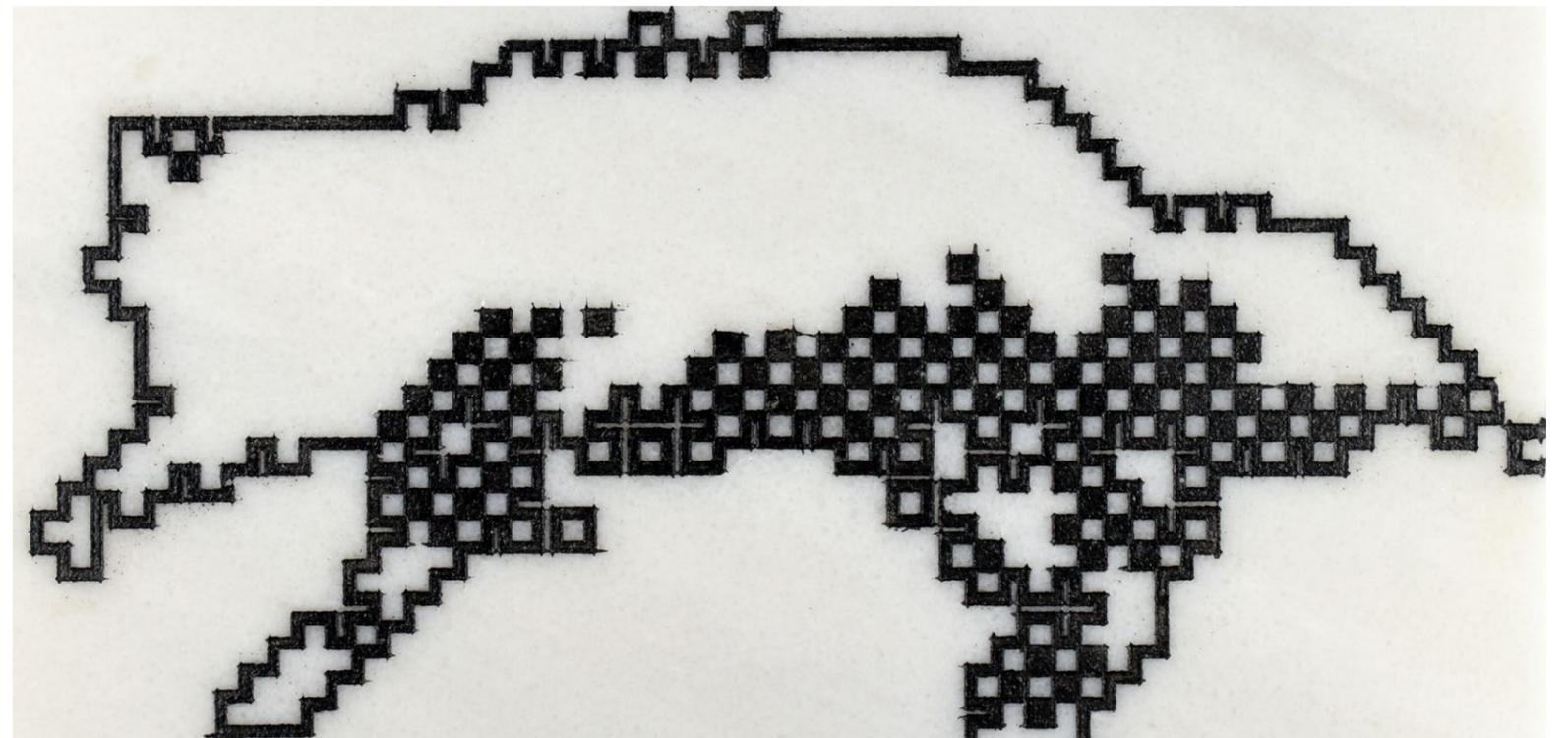
Microscope Cover Glasses and Glass Slides / blood / sperm / wood

(3x) 43 x 50 cm

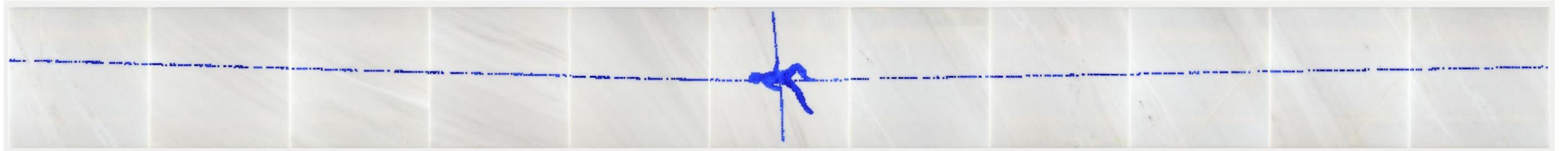
2021



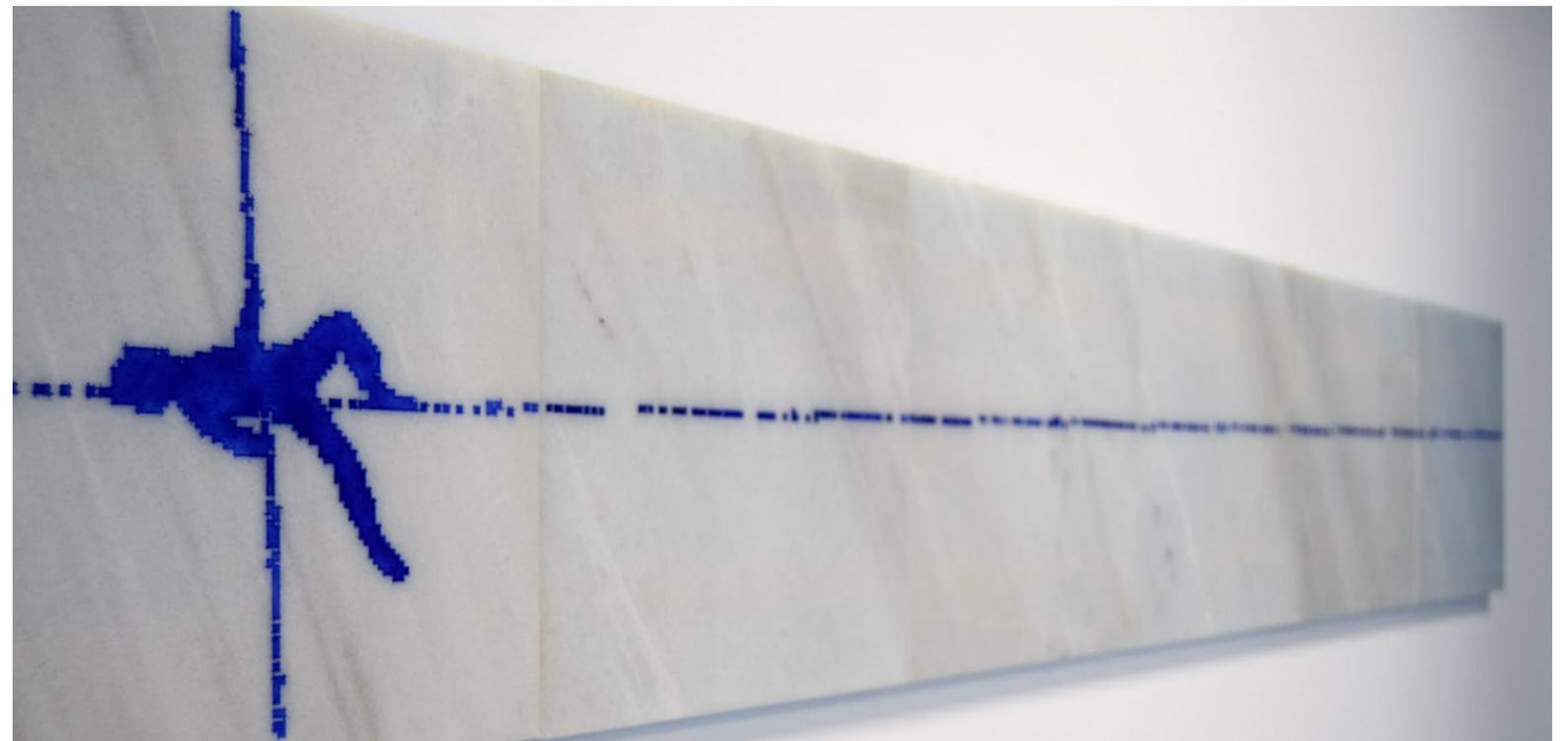
CHAT
View of the exhibition *Parallèle*
La Coursive Boutaric, Dijon
2019



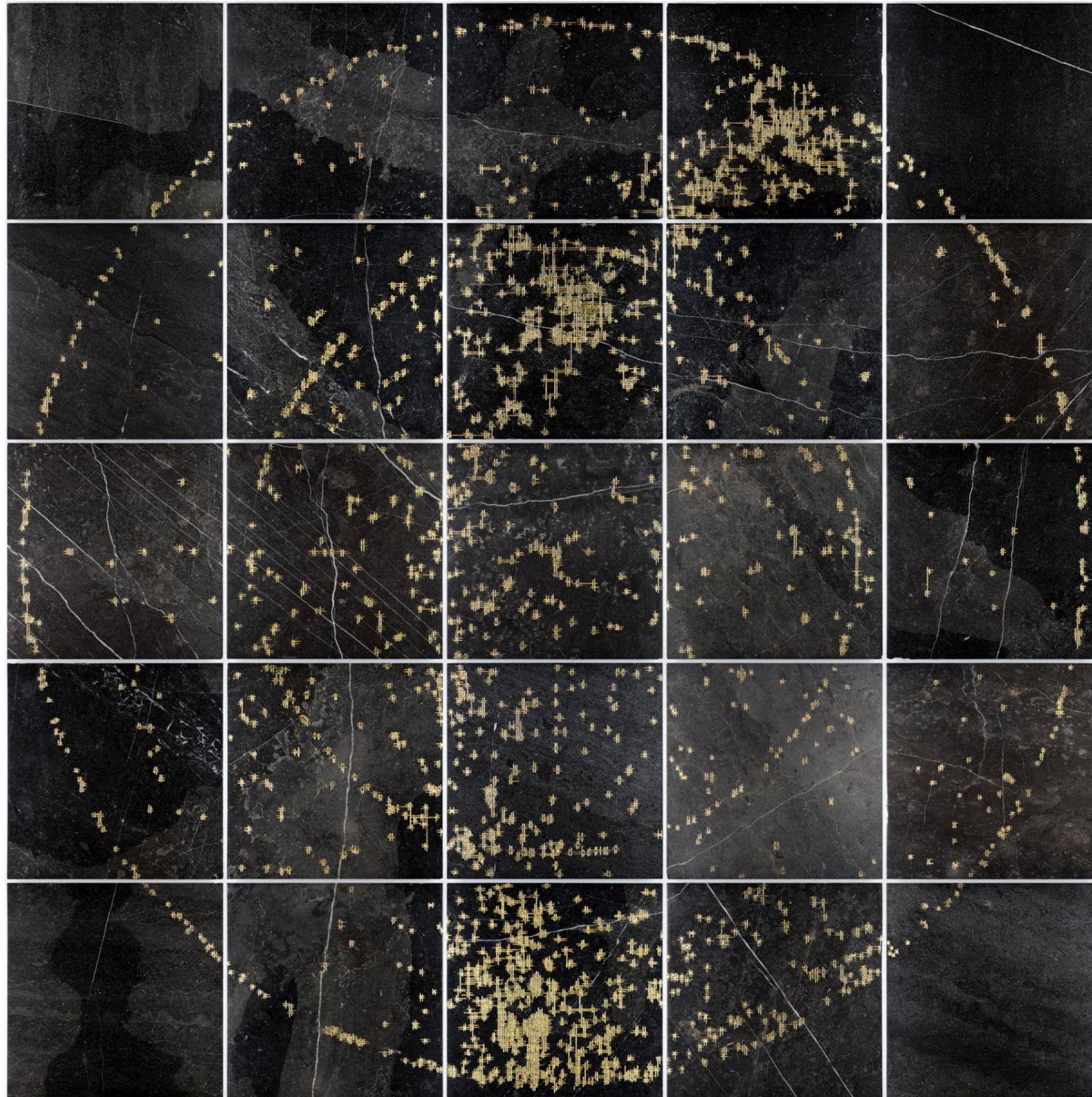
CHAT
Engraved marble / painting
(14x) 30 x 30 cm
2019



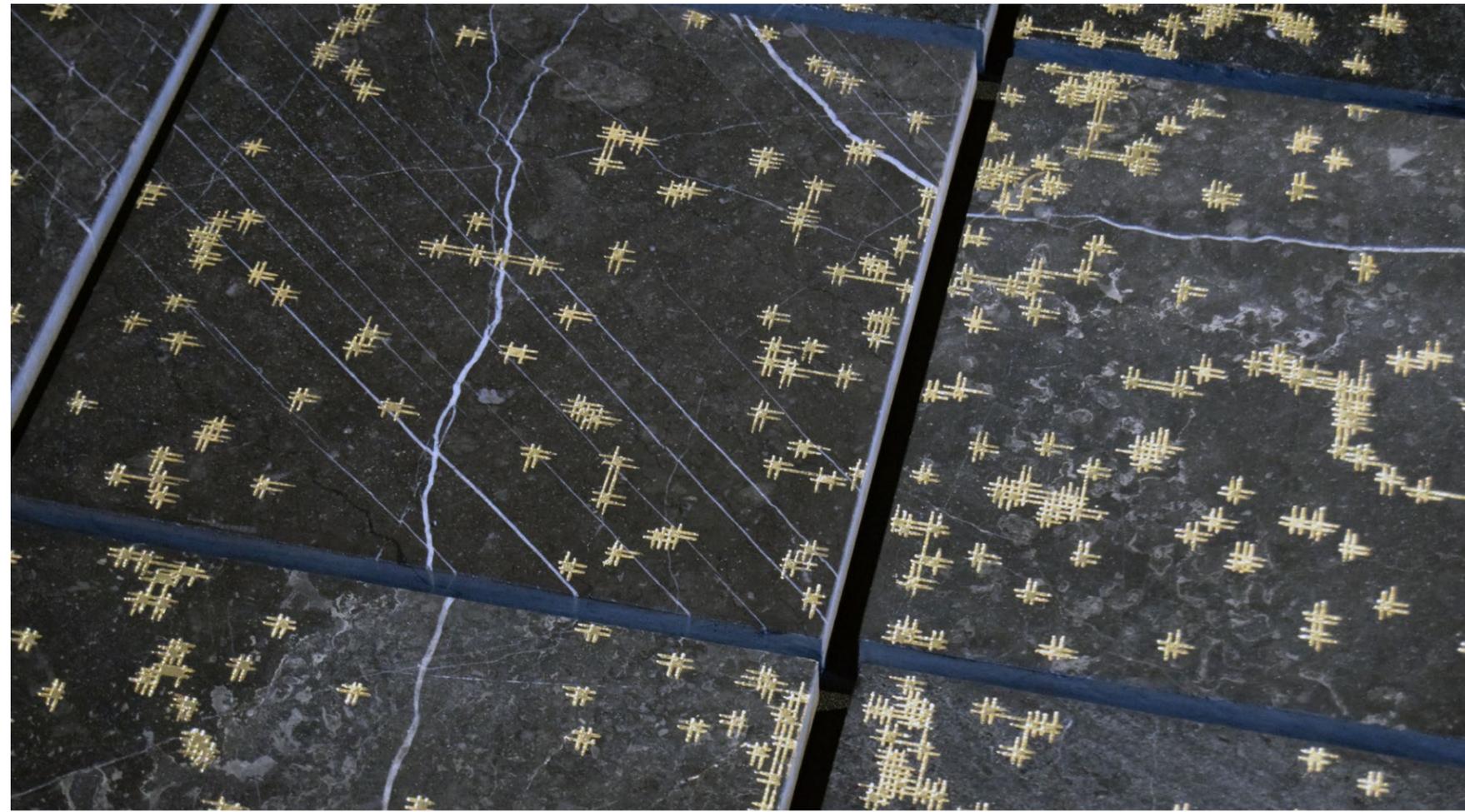
EQUILIBRE
Engraved marble / painting
(11x) 30 x 30 cm
2019



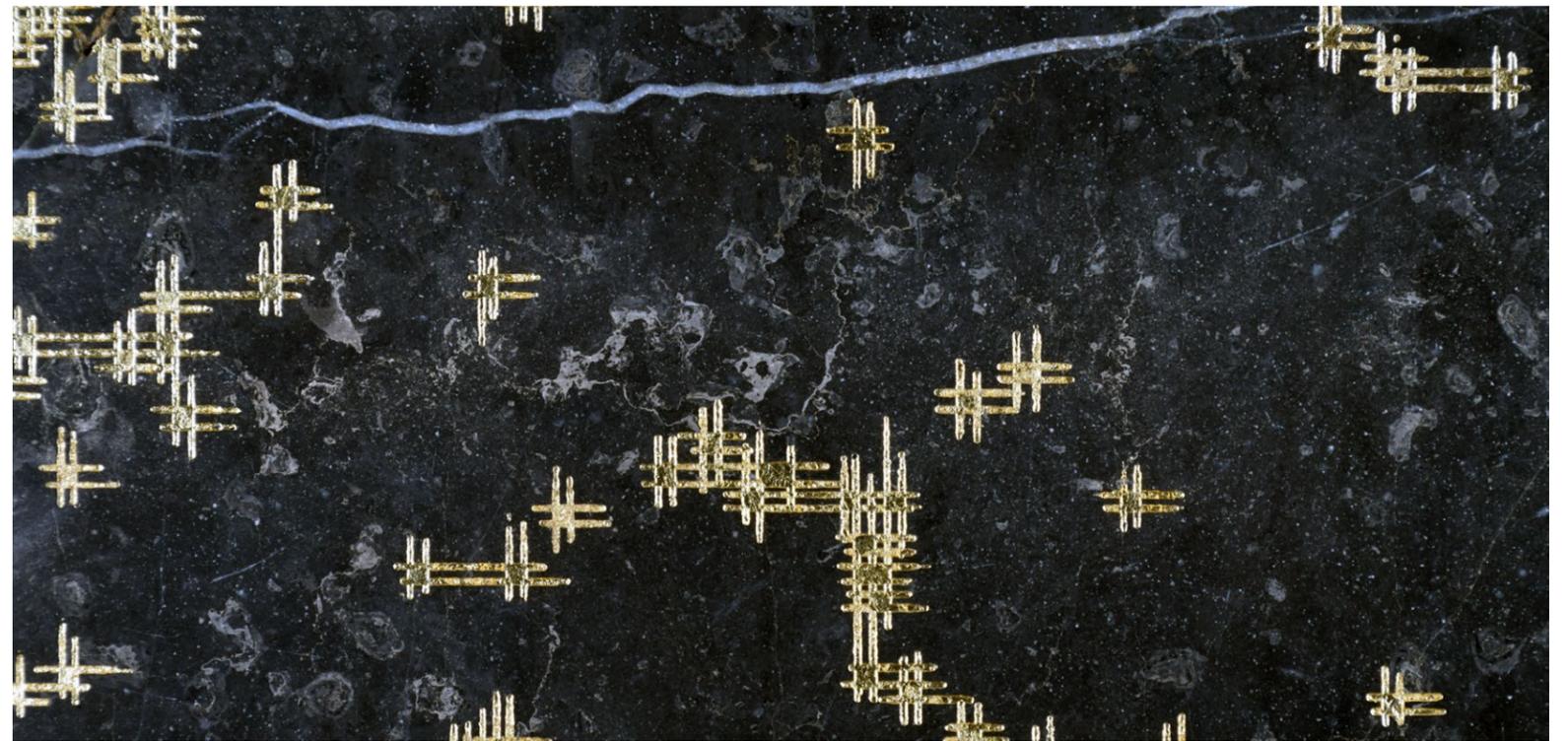
EQUILIBRE
View of the exhibition *Parrallèle*
La Coursive Boutaric, Dijon
2019

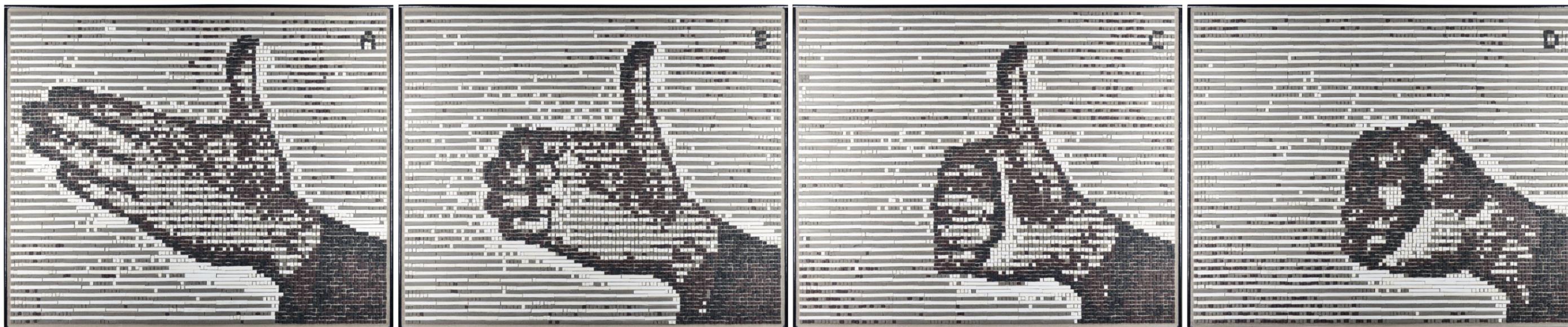


CARTE CÉLESTE
Engraved marble / gilding
150 x 150 cm
2019



CARTE CÉLESTE (detail)
Engraved marble / gilding
150 x 150 cm
2019





IRON FIST

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(4x) 62 x 52 cm

2018

IRON FIST

The mythical image has become pixelated, like so many fragments of an uncertain memory. We have already seen this bending hand, but where? This gesture reminds us of many others, in this incredible polysemy of the language of hands, as in the flow of pop culture images that flood our screens and irrigate our identities. In his books, Bruce Lee gives us in his books advice to adopt the right gestures in Kung-Fu so as to best destabilize the opponent.

Benjamin Desoche has fun with it, isolates a movement, cuts it out, pulls out several images with one hand that closes to become an iron fist. It is the image of power, where the hand gesticulates, almost an image of the sacred. We think of Jesus at his baptism, the Roman emperor deciding if gladiators live or die in the amphitheatre, the dominatrix working the orifices in thatched cottages or SM clubs. The facetious work, critical and light at the same time, also refers to the most ordinary human relationships, from the outstretched and open hand as a sign of friendship, to the angry punch one is about to give, to the raised thumb of the hitchhiker who hopes to continue on his way.

The artist, for his part, does not make any dazzling gestures, his method is part of the long time proper to mosaics. You have to use the grid to draw, gather the marble tesserae, arrange them in shades of grey, glue them meticulously to compose the image that becomes sculpture, the digital representation that becomes matter. The story is also born from the excessive cutting of movement, from the confrontation between the pixelated imagery of modernity and the ancestral roughness of the mosaic. We no longer know who takes over what, who shifts what, everything is mixed and tangled, attracts and repels each other, in a continuous and captivating game.

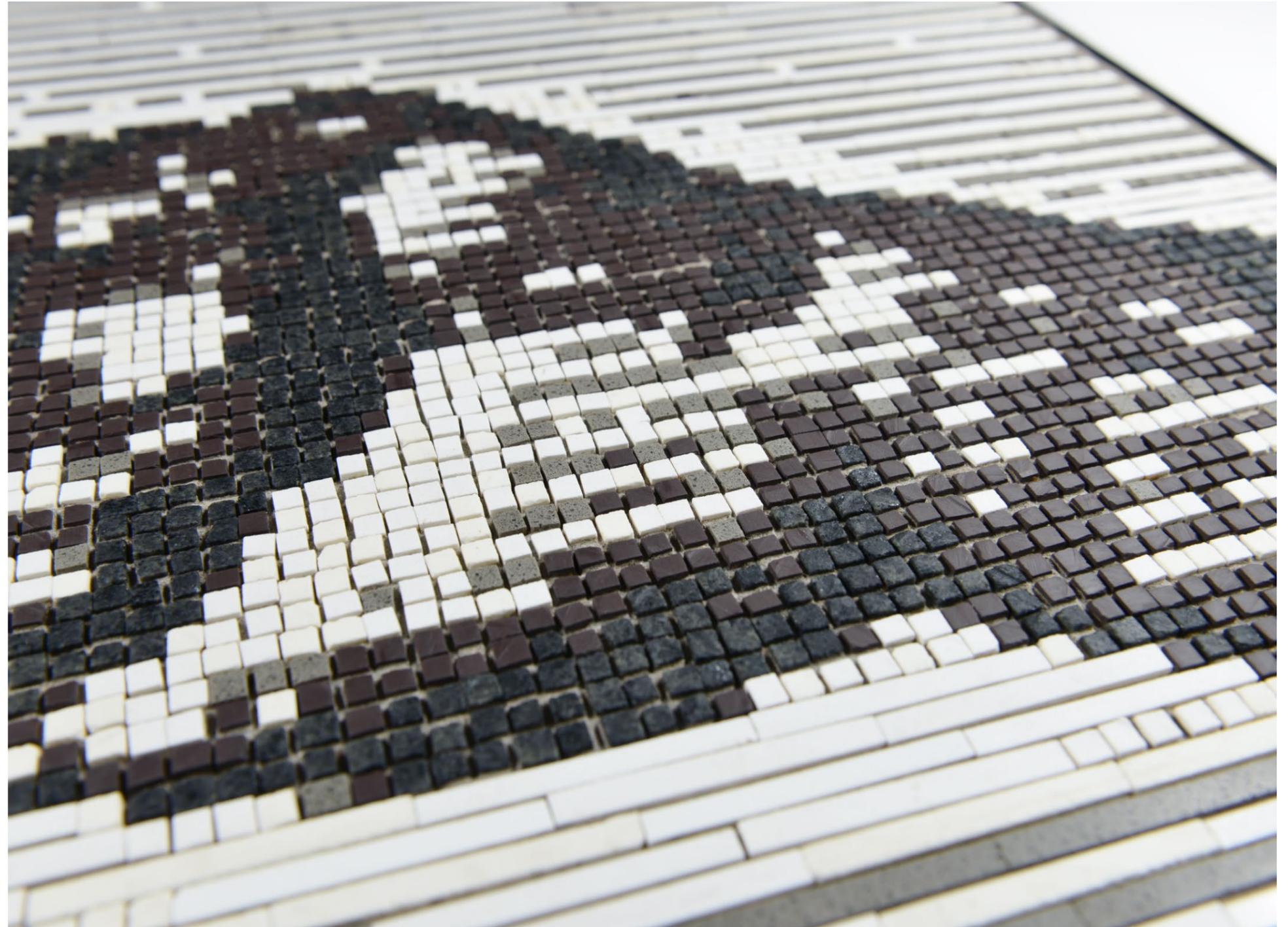
Florence Andoka / author and art critic

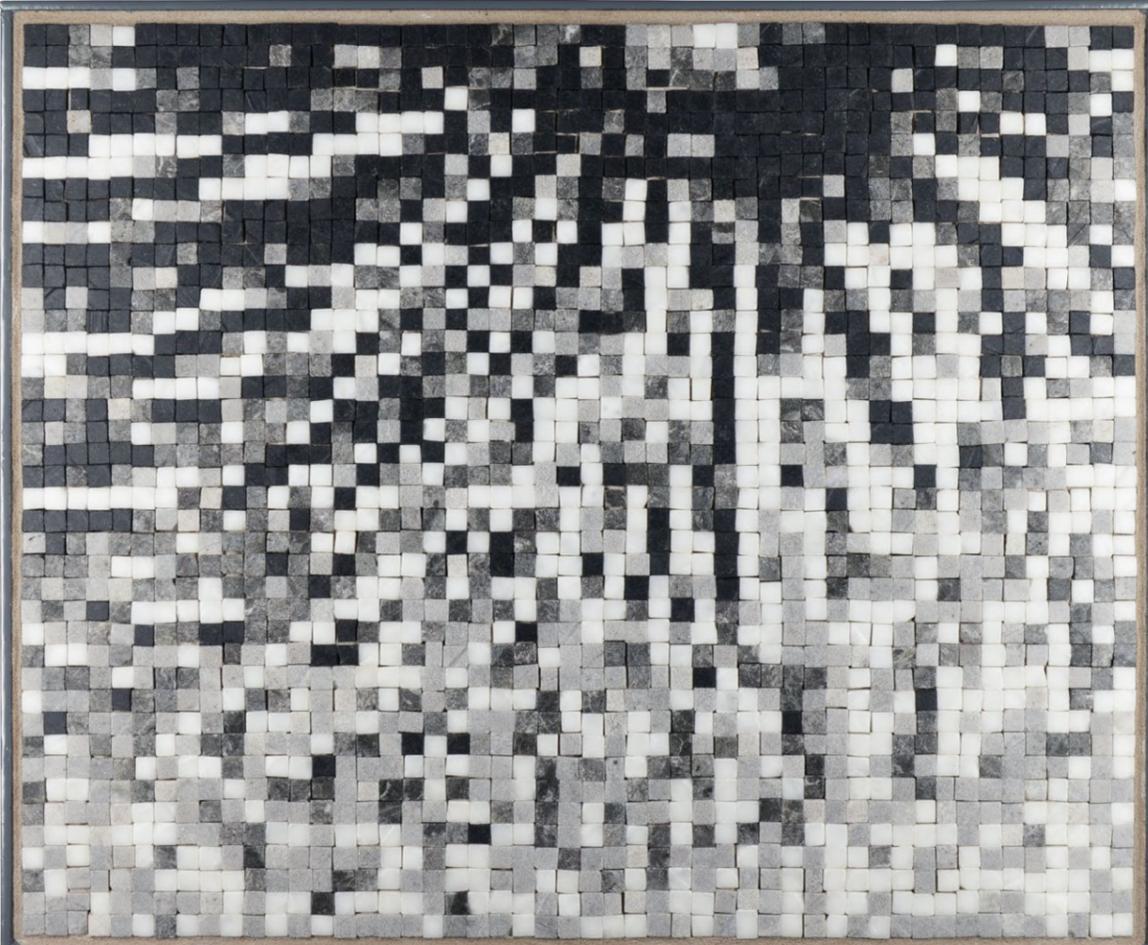
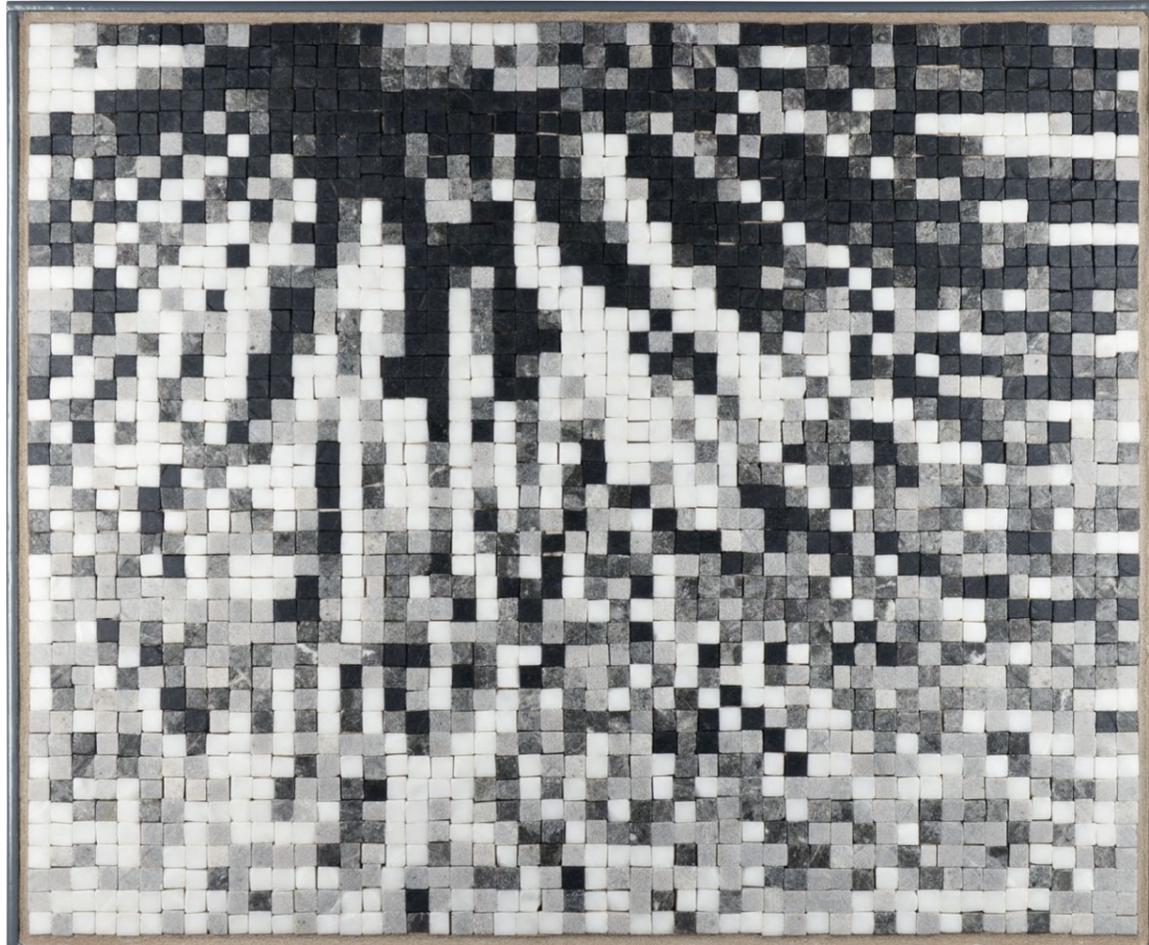
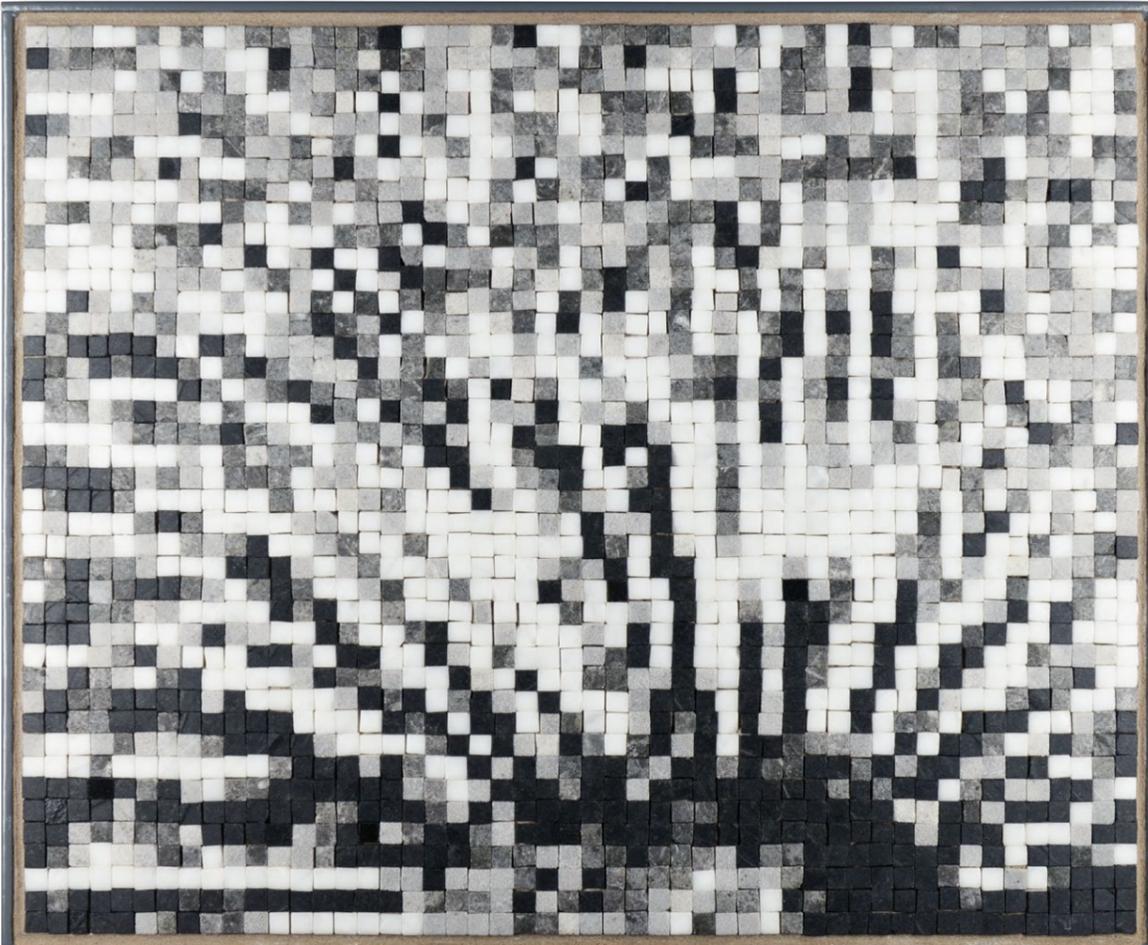
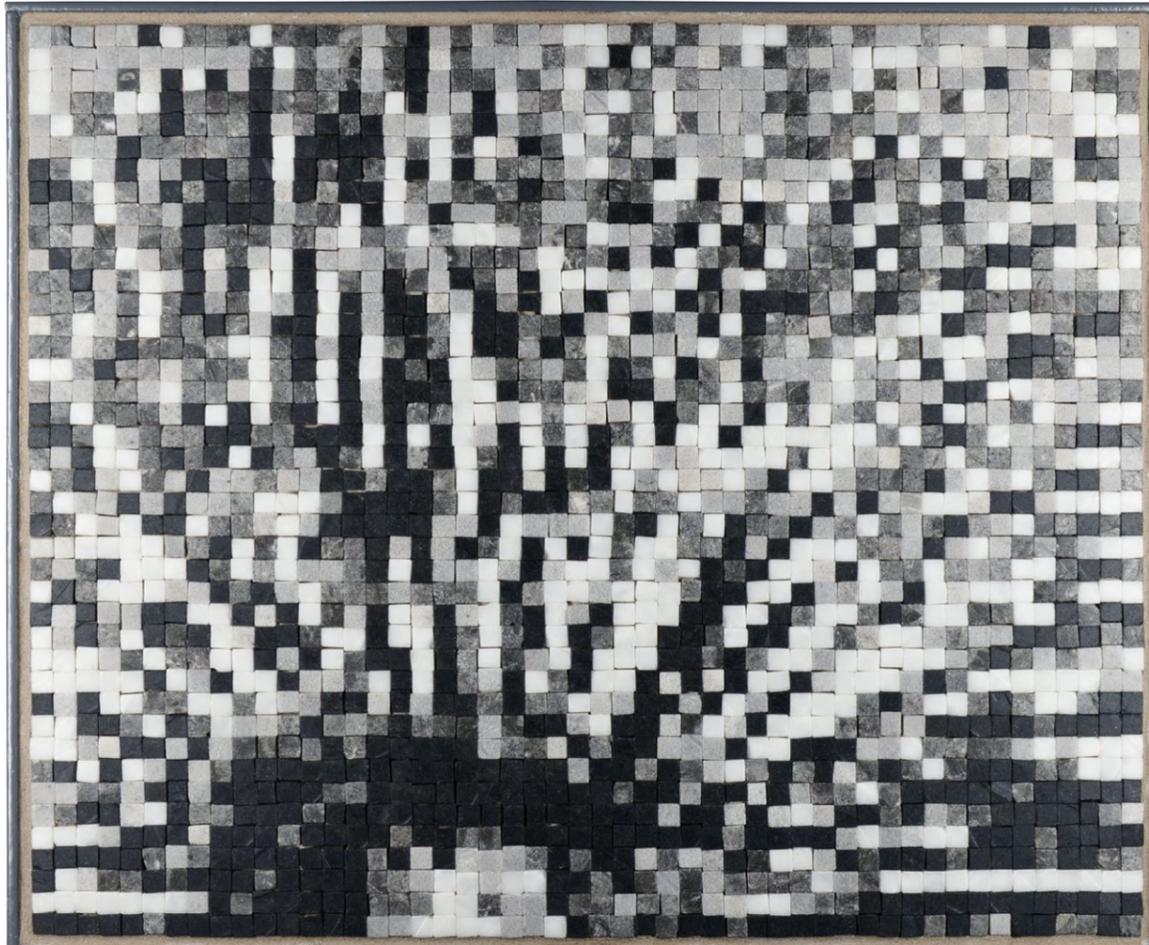
IRON FIST (detail)

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(4x) 62 x 52 cm

2018





MAGNETISME [MAGNETISM]

We could dwell for a long time on the elective affinities between beings who perhaps reason with pheromones or magnetic fields. Lovers love each other like magnets magnetize each other, like two poles of an inescapable physical reaction. It is the invisible which, through a simple experience like child's play, can become visible. But what is the metaphor of the magnetic field? Moreover, a metaphor is an image that slips into language to enrich it, a representation that weighs down thought so as to anchor it in existing flesh.

Here, the artist has retained the digital and abstract image of a magnetic field and given it relief, weight, texture, materiality through the use of mosaics. If the image is fleeting, the waves are elusive and invisible, yet here they are inscribed in the marble of the tesserae. The image has been decomposed and then recomposed. Each of the four mosaics remains abstract, if it is not associated with the other three to re-form the initial figure. Any attraction between two elements, be they living beings, pixels or tesserae, is necessarily inscribed in a space and a time, since space and time are interdependent.

Thus, Benjamin Desoche, in transcribing an image into a mosaic, also calls dimensions into play, moving from line to volume, from yesterday to today and vice versa. One thinks in particular of Kubrick's mythical film 2001, A Space Odyssey, where the mysterious black monolith of the beginnings sketches a possible link between the primitive and the complex, the ancestral and the contemporary, the origin and the end.

Florence Andoka / author and art critic

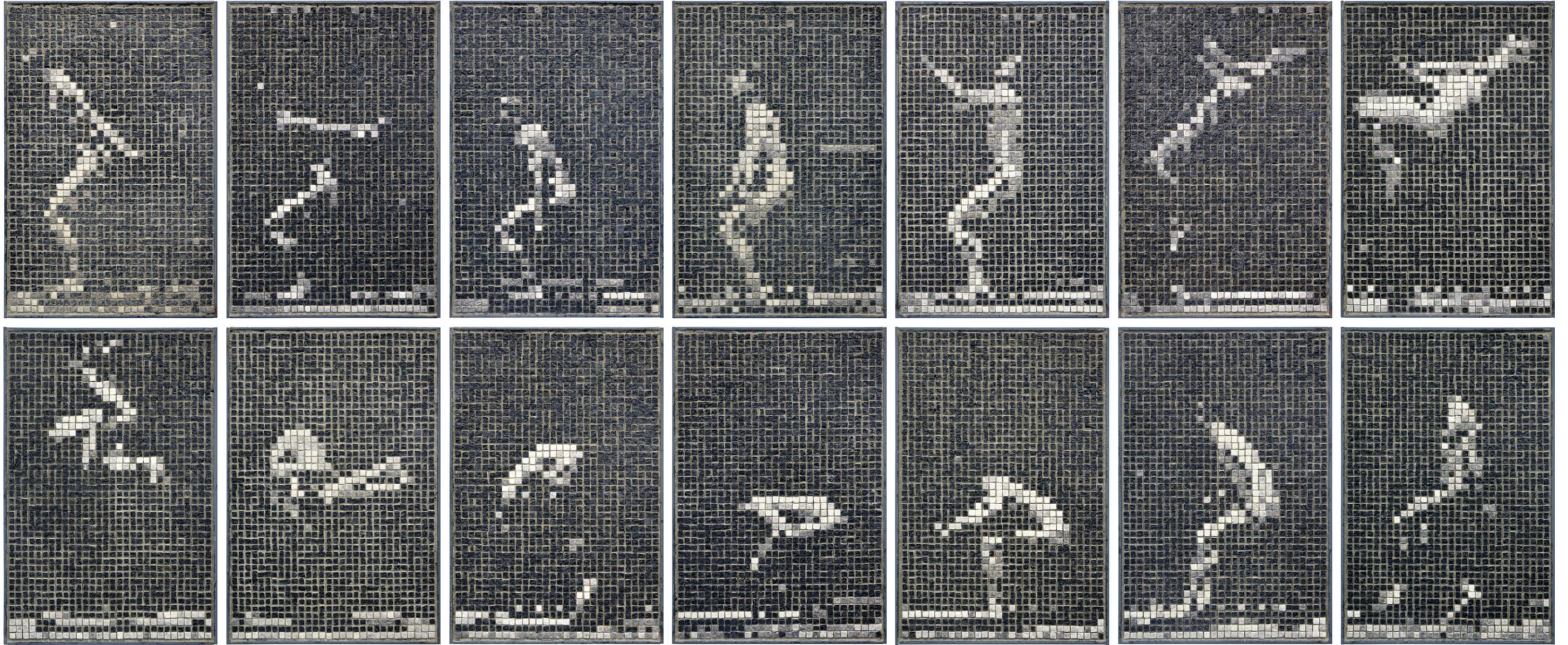


MAGNETISME (detail)

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

85 x 105 cm

2018

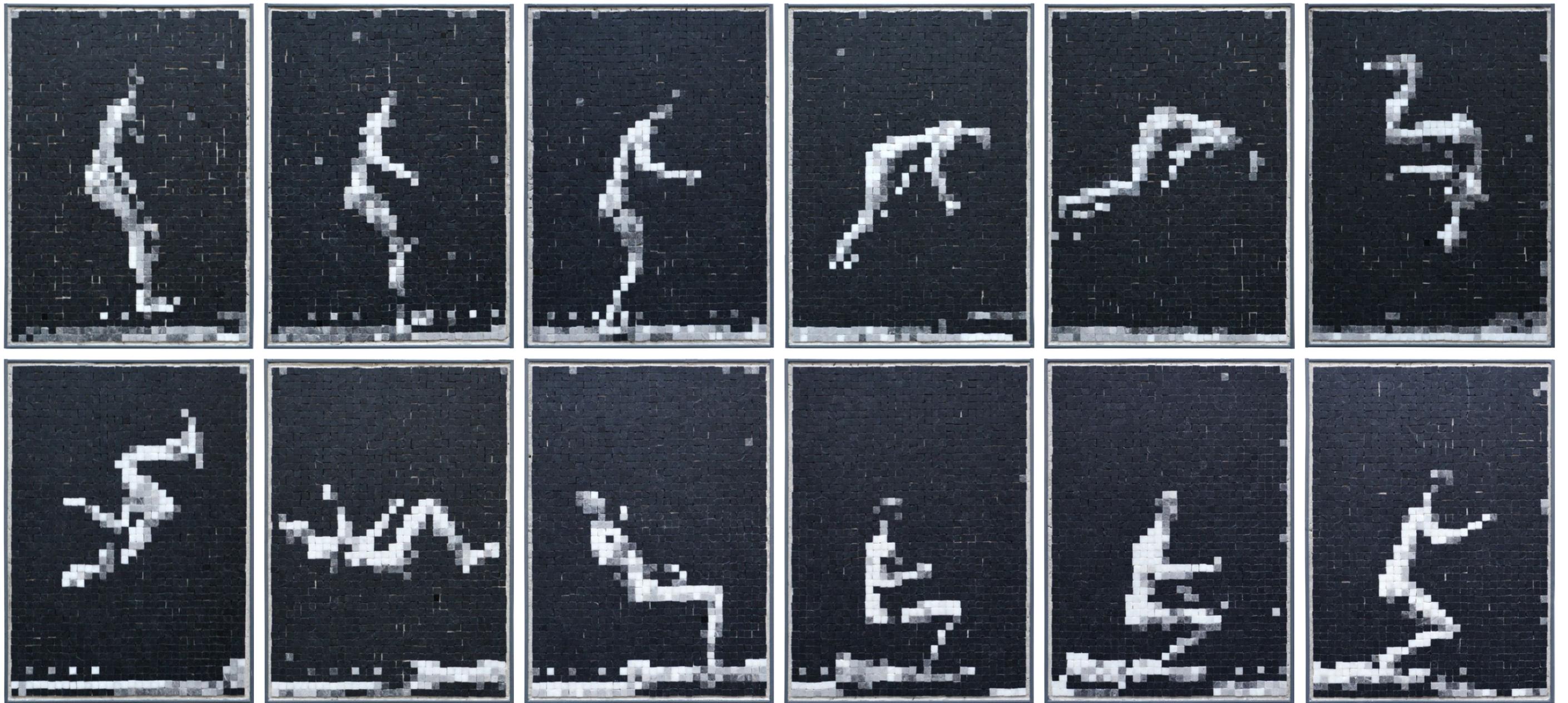


BACK FLIP

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(14x) 47 x 32 cm

2015



FRONT FLIP

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(12x) 47 x 34 cm

2018



BACK FLIP / FRONT FLIP

View of the exhibition *Et le désert avance*
Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon
2018

Text of the exhibition *Et le désert avance* / Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon / 2018

Back flip is a mosaic work consisting of 14 panels, taken from a chronophotographic plate by Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) Man Performing Back Somersault, which breaks down human movement to understand the secrets of locomotion. Back flip is now completed by a series of 12 panels entitled Front flip (a revival of Nude man performing a running somersault).

The tiles in Benjamin Desoche's mosaic are a direct reference to the grid of tiles that can be seen in the background of the chronophotographs, serving as a reference point for analysing movement. According to the artist, mosaic has often been understood as an art of immobility, which motivated his desire to integrate movement into this technique which is so singular in contemporary art.

Emmanuelle Tritsch

Catalogue text *Aspirations* / exhibition : L'artiste est-il un chamane / Narbonne / 2016

From his residency in Greece, Benjamin Desoche has kept the memory of a living contemporary mosaic which allowed itself many audacities in the homeland of Pella. Thus, he offers us this curious cyanotype which owes as much to the Lumière brothers as to the craziest attempts to capture movement. Here again, the shaded silhouettes take on a spectral presence in a work that makes the fragment its place. Splintered, necessarily fragmented, the shadow cast by the artist seems to advance towards us, unreal yet powerful. In an experience that is, strictly speaking, ghostly, we have to guess what inhabits the world without claiming first place. Leaving the thunderous boasting of the ghosts of the Elizabethan theatre in the distance, the ghosts of Benjamin Desoche are only modest ghosts.

And if the magic then works on today's spectator, it is because the shaman has this in common with the artist to be an effect maker, not as Plato of the Republic thought, because he seeks to deceive us, but on the contrary, because he knows that the deepest part of ourselves will come out of his magic lantern or his "dream machine". In short, the work of this brilliant young man owes as much to Byzantium as to William Burroughs.

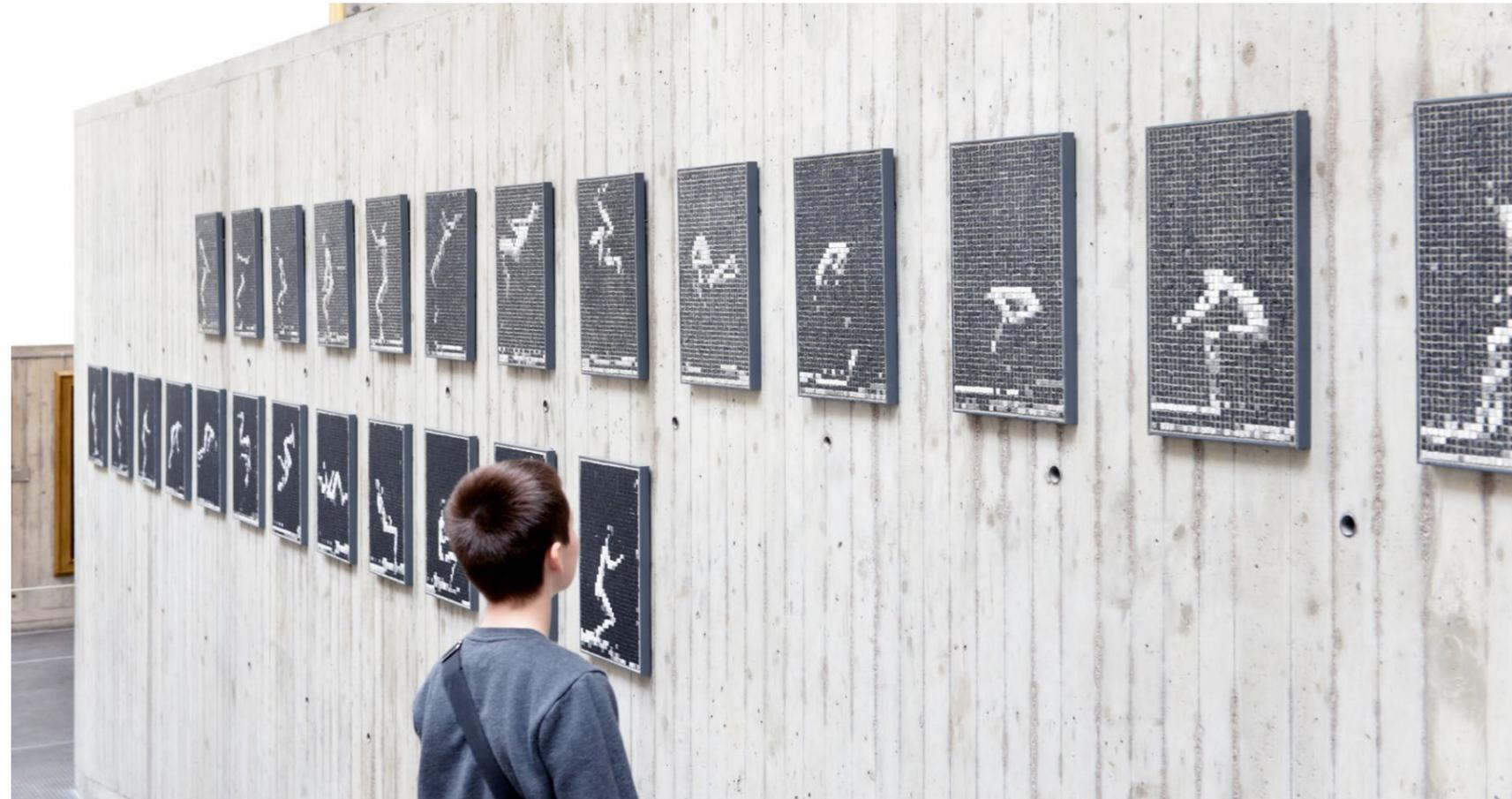
Laurent Devèze / Philosopher and director of the Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon

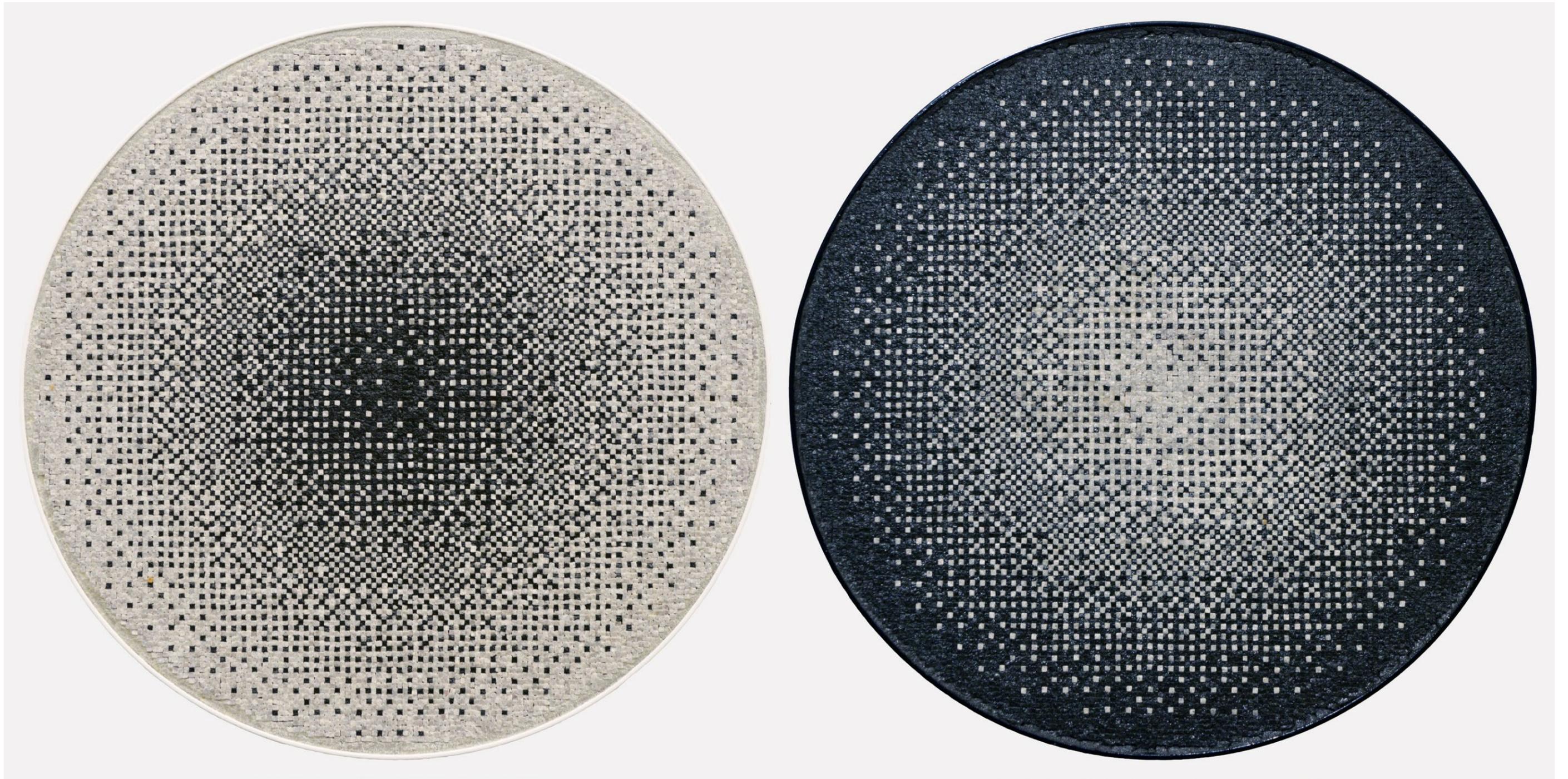
FRONT FLIP (detail)

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(12x) 47 x 34 cm

2018





SPRITE 1 / SPRITE 2

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(2x) ø 70 cm

2015 / 2016



Text of the exhibition *Et le désert avance* / Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon / 2018

In the desert, the sun can be a black star drying out tongues and deceiving hallucinated gazes. Two discs that we perceive from afar with a vibration, one black with a central pulsation that directs us towards white, while the second operates the opposite movement. It moves and yet everything is static since they are pieces made of mosaics, with small marble squares.

The work of Benjamin Desoche, a prolific young artist, includes numerous volumes composed of geometric fragments of the same material. One thinks not only of the pixelated images that surround us but also of the dialectical movement that considers the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts. Marble is an archaic material, mosaic an ancestral technique, and yet Benjamin Desoche, in the path of kinetic art and its optical games, manages to create two vibrant pieces that are also part of the contemporary popular universe.

It is hard to imagine Sprite 1, without Sprite 2, the two elves go hand in hand, answering each other, since "sprite" in English is a synonym of elf, unless there is some hidden element referring to the carbonated drink.

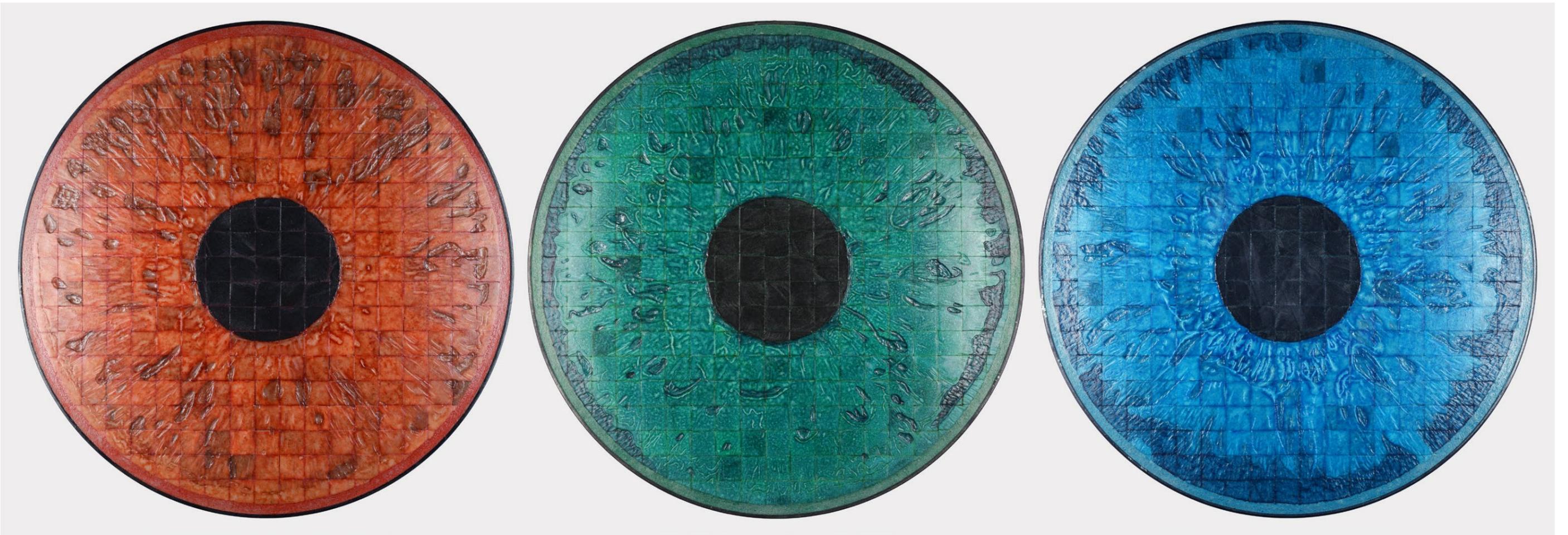
These two fragmented suns, despite the apparent rigour of their form reminiscent of geometric abstraction, sketch an inner link between archaeology and contemporaneity.

Florence Andoka / author and art critic



SPRITE 1 / SPRITE 2

View of the exhibition *Et le désert avance*
Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon
2018



IRIS

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(3x) ø 60 cm

2017



IRIS
View of the exhibition *Ellipse*
Église Notre-Dame, Besançon
2017

Au fond des yeux [In the depths of your eyes] / Essay / 2019

Bending is always a physical way of recognising the very great, whether it is a transcendental force that is beyond us and external to us, or an intolerable society whose screens we would like to finish off one by one with baseball bats. It is possible and even certain that ISIS kills less than the Internet. If we think about it, we should not dwell too long on certain thoughts at the risk of getting bogged down in them. He won't take a bus to Syria, he won't throw his mobile phone in the first dustbin that would offer him this radical but absurd salvation plan, everything seems absurd and therefore impossible, there is in him this morning a kind of anaesthesia of the heart that formed without any ambivalence. Nothing can be done about it, whatever it costs, he remains here to bend, here and now to bend, it is the apathy of long ago but without a Christian past, the low pressure to cancel the possibility of explosion, there is no burn out, there is no depression, the good news is that he is, that he is well, that he is still exists and therefore he can do again, again and again, as long as his hands are active and his brain allows him to do so. How do you know what's behind a glance ? At that moment he could have red eyes, green or blue iris, it doesn't matter, it has to come out, he has to come out, so he takes his bag, runs down the stairs like a bobsleigh track, walks staring at his shoes, straight towards his own escape, without any possibility of giving up, without any proud ambition to do otherwise or to produce change for the world.

He takes the road to the workshop because it is still the path that seems most right to him, for himself, with his standards, proper to his own life, without sinking in or even dispensing with the advice and eyes others, he moves forward as best he can where he can. From encounters to shared desires, his anger is an alchemical fluid that festers with deep gashes. He doesn't give lessons to anyone, he's not "Into the wild", he stops for a moment in front of the grocery store, runs a couple of errands, goes back to the workshop/barracks as others would go to church or the post office, he makes eye contact, nods, then goes on his way. Everything stops him, he observes the stones and constructions everywhere around him that he recognises without knowing it, he thinks of the invisible magnetic charges like bombs that cut into our skull, he is not paranoid, his discipline does not allow him this fantasy in the old-fashioned sense, what he imagines are shapes and processes to make them exist, the air is chilly, he gently pulls up the zipper of his sweatshirt. Later on, when he enters his castle in the air, he will play an audio book illegally downloaded onto his PC, Morel's Invention perhaps, because some say it's good, or anything else, whatever anchors his mind, he only focuses on what allows him to concentrate all his forces in a transparent circle binding his wandering thoughts to his moving arms like another enigma at the step.

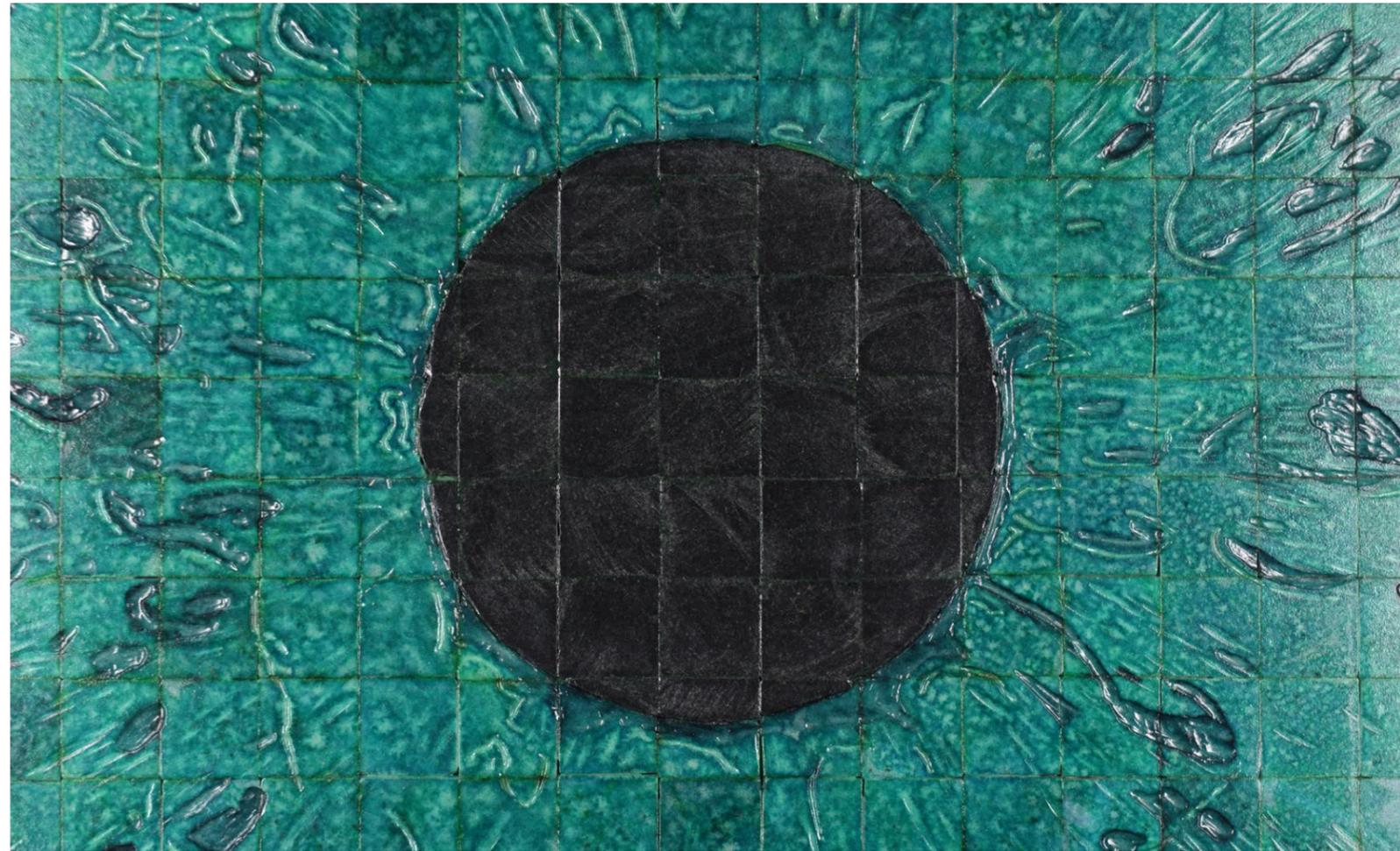
Florence Andoka / author and art critic

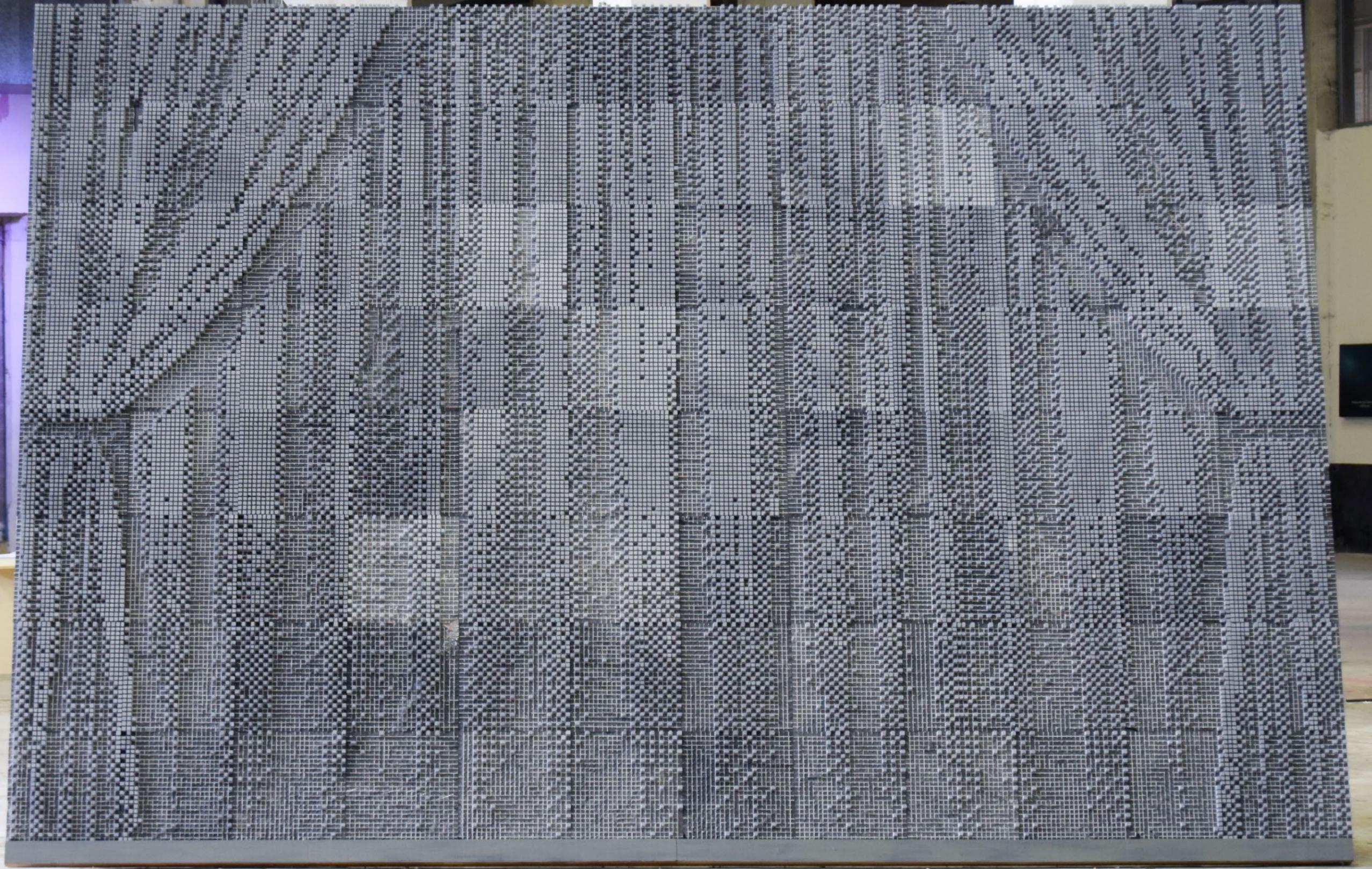
IRIS (detail)

Mosaic - marble / mortar / steel

(3x) ø 60 cm

2017

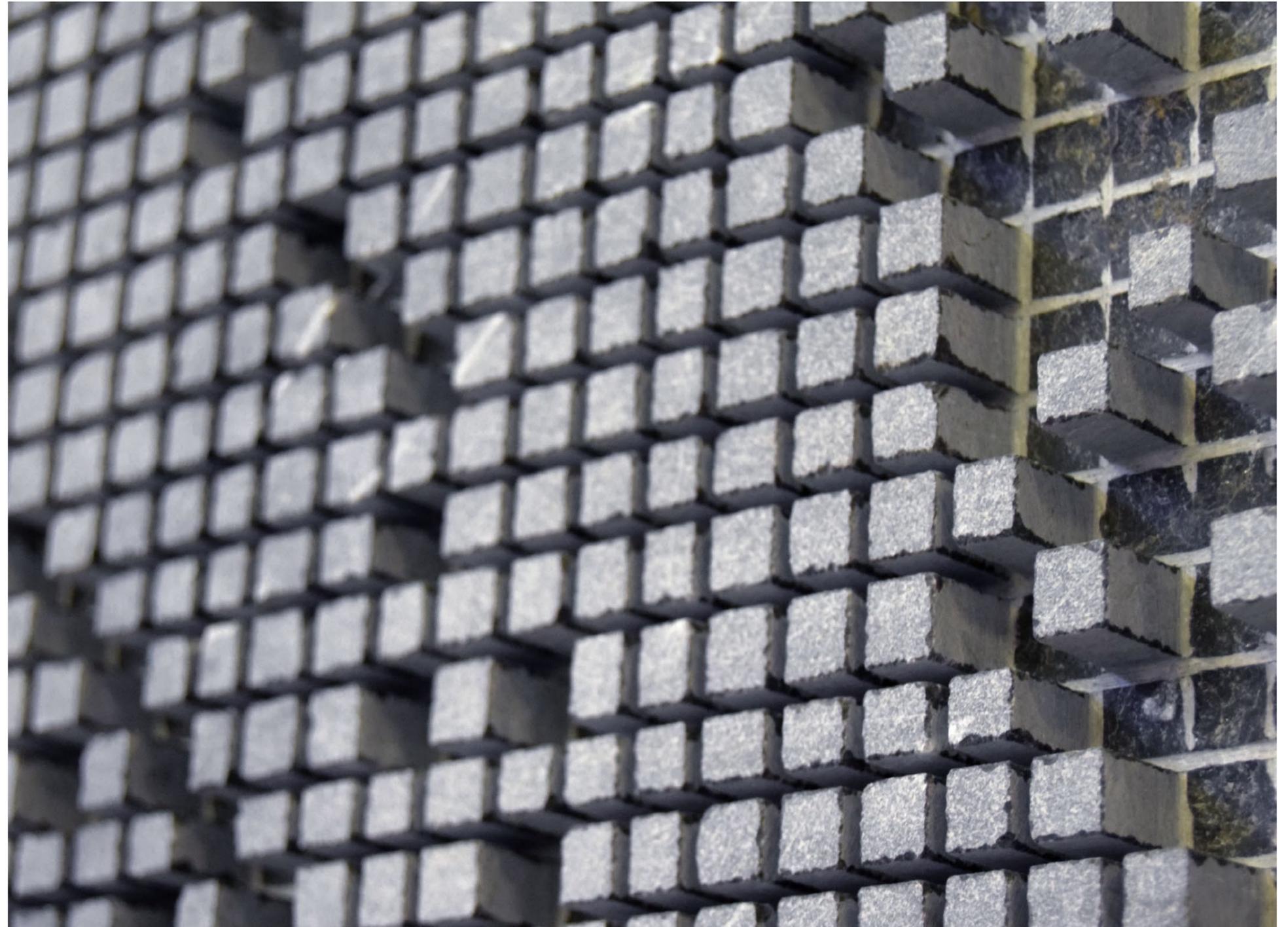




Text of the exhibition *FREAK* / Friche Artistique de Besançon / 2018

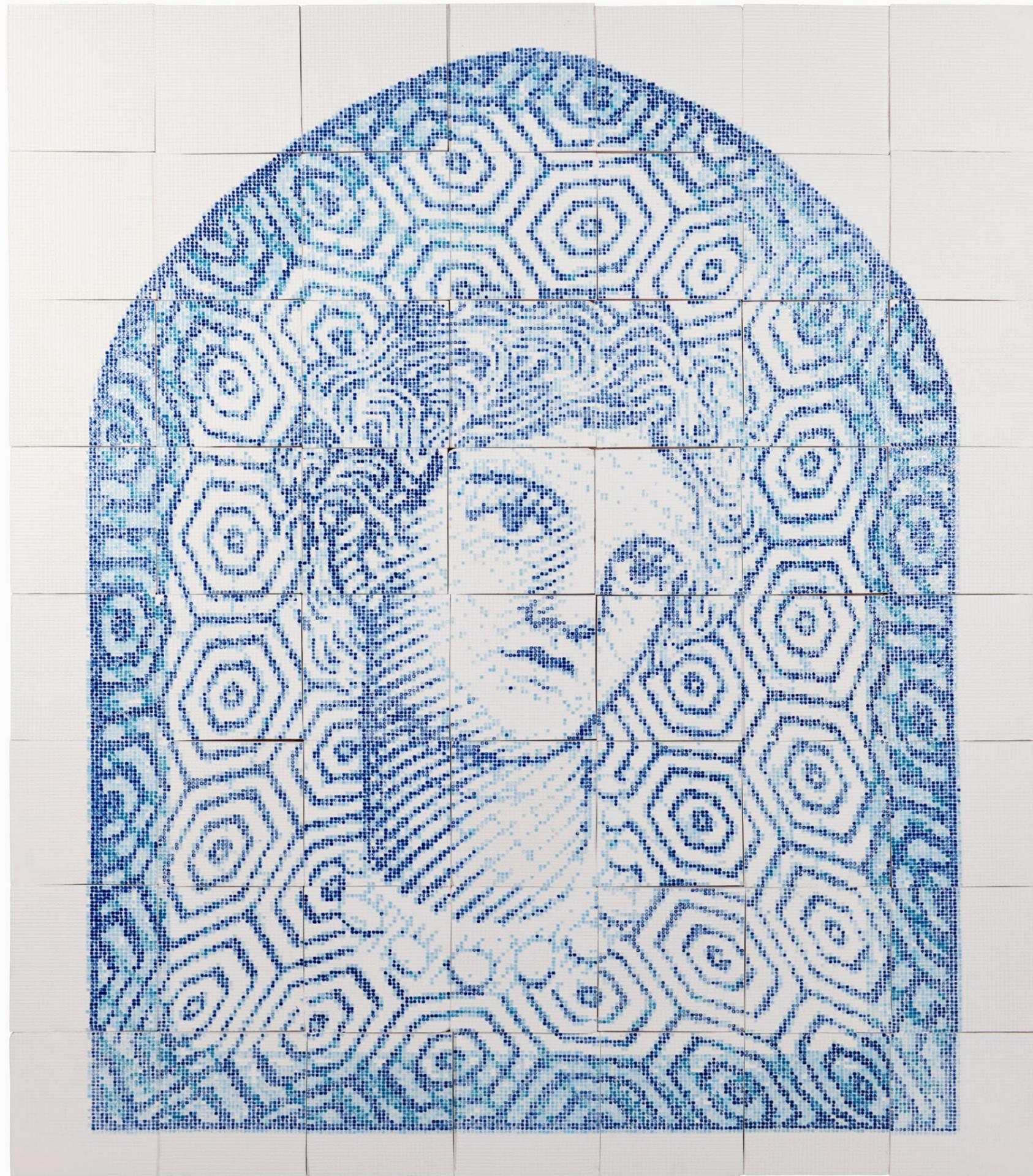
The “myth of the curtain” does not originate from the freak shows of the mid-19th century, but it is of great importance for these often-short shows, which were mostly exhibitions in which the freaks stood motionless, displayed in front of the audience. The curtain, originally, had a function of use, a practical function, called to dissociate spaces while preserving their communication. It is placed in the “in-between” of the stage and the auditorium, from both inside and outside. But, more importantly, it becomes a barrier between the so-called “normal” audience and the freaks, a kind of security between reality and fiction. It is the fourth wall where the actor’s imagination meets that of the spectator. For we must not lose sight of the fact that most of the freaks were in some way professional actors. Some were real stars; some even became famous and made their fortune. Freaks worked in show business and as such, their public image was a construction. Being a freak is not an intrinsic quality of the person on display. It is something that is manufactured: a social construction, based on devices and practices.

Benjamin Desoche chose to build this curtain and not to draw or paint it, in order, above all, to echo the construction of the myth of the freaks, how beings become monstrous. Similarly, the technique he used to carve his motif into the stone is also a declination of an architectural process that is used for the construction, this time, of buildings. It consists of grooving the stone in a line and then breaking the pieces with a hammer to create a scratch effect. By constructing this curtain in stone that is motionless and frozen in time, Benjamin Desoche deprives the audience of a curtain-raising, forcing it to go around the apparatus to discover what’s on the other side, the backstage of a freak show. At the same time, he changes the audience’s angle of vision, opening it to the outside rather than closing it.



RIDEAU (detail)
Engraved marble
360 x 240 cm
2018

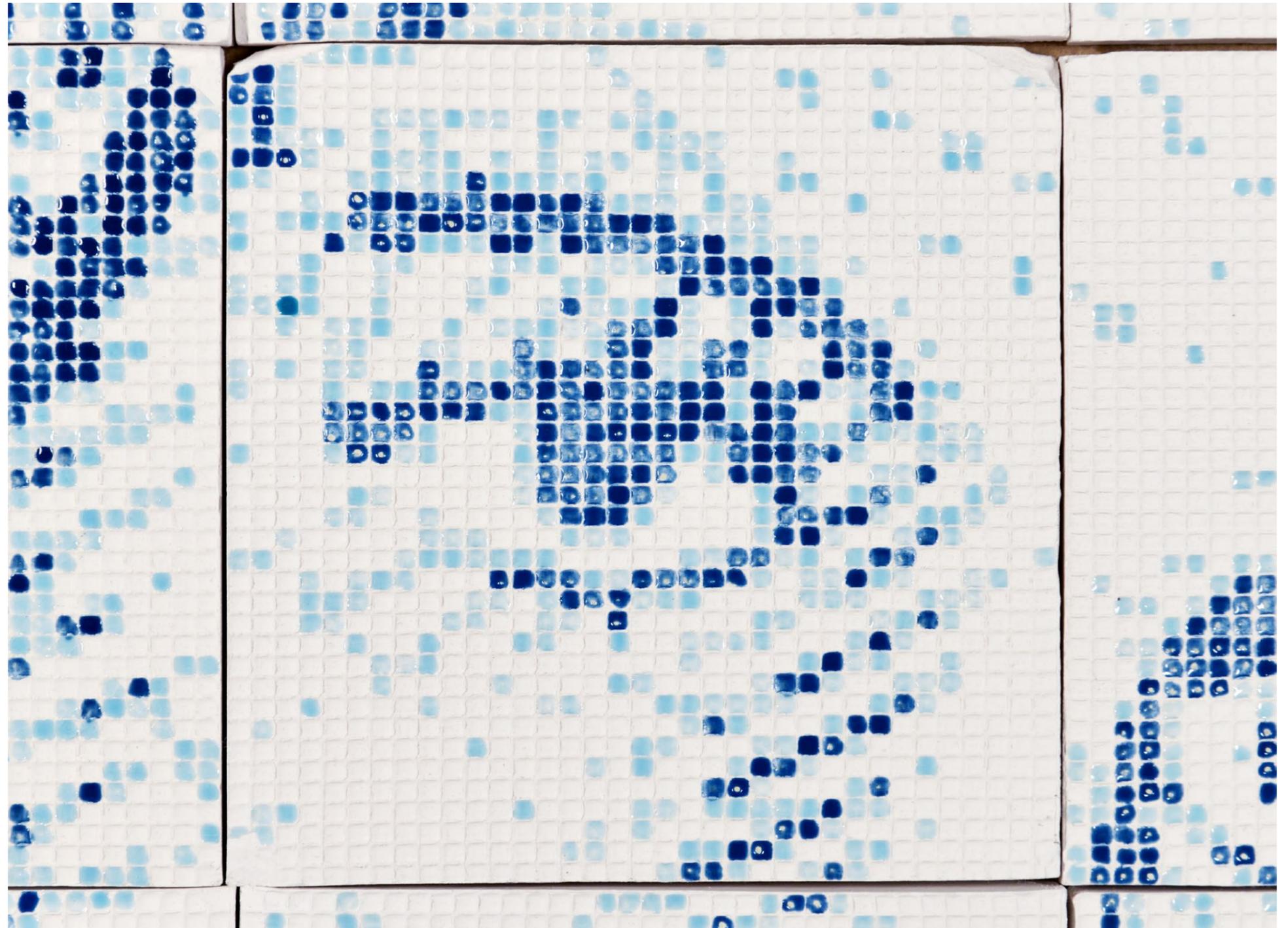




Text of the exhibition *Basses Résolutions* / La Mèche /
Toulouse / 2017

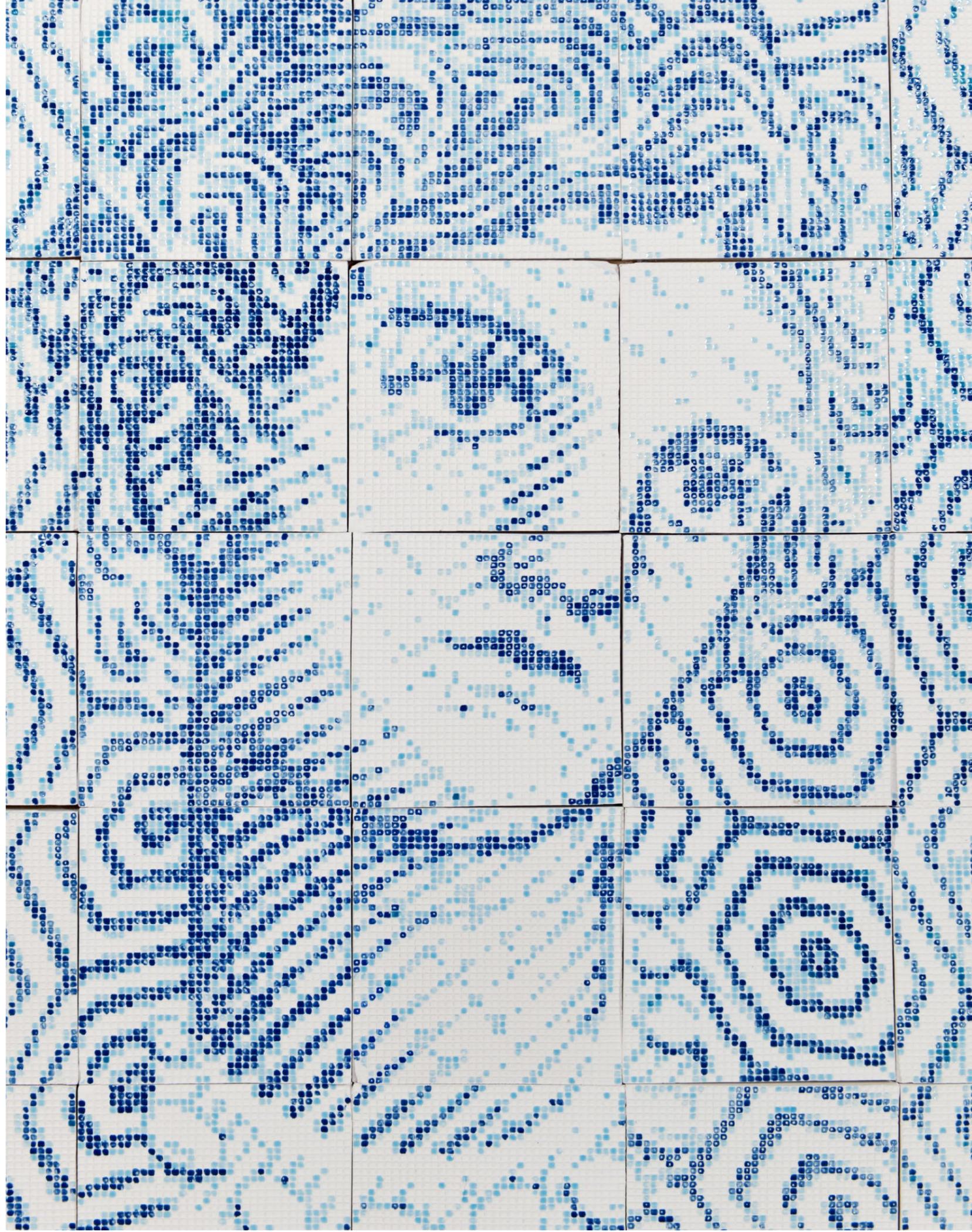
Following a trip to Portugal, Benjamin Desoche discovered the Azulejos and more particularly the “welcoming figures” dating from the Baroque period. These male and, more rarely, female “welcoming figures” generally represented valets, soldiers or ladies, destined to be posted in strategic places, such as landings, courtyards or gardens, to greet visitors on their arrival or to bid them well upon their departure, with a gesture or a phrase. Usually built to a life-size scale, with a cut-out outline and sumptuous clothing that strengthens the effect of realism, these figures are highly theatrical and contribute to the scenography of their location.

Benjamin Desoche chose to reinterpret the portrait of Europe as a “welcoming figure”. In Greek mythology, Europe, daughter of a Phoenician king, was seduced by Zeus who, transformed into a bull, kidnapped her and carried her to Crete. This myth inspired the ancient Greeks who used the geographical term “Europe”. Today it refers to our continent, whose fundamental values are peace, security and freedom for its citizens. Recently, moreover, this figure has been chosen to illustrate the new euro banknotes, firstly because it is in fact associated with the old continent and gives a sort of “humanity” to our currency.



EUROPE (detail)
Glazed ceramic
90 x 100 cm
2017

EUROPE (detail)
Glazed ceramic
90 x 100 cm
2017





Text of the exhibition *BUSTE* / Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon / 2016

Restitution of the “Ceramic Sculpture” residency directed by Jean-Luc Bari on the theme of the multiple, at the Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon.

During this residency, Benjamin Desoche developed his reflection on working in volume: How to transpose a virtual object created with the help of 3D software into a real object made of clay and enamels?

He finally opted for a new technique: stratification, a process that creates a volume made up of strata. Generally used to model a geographical surface, this allows for precision of scale as well as simplicity of construction.

As with pixelization in his previous work, the starting point of the work is a raw, schematic form. The number of multiples was determined by the number of standardised visible faces that the software proposed. So, there are eight faces which, arranged in a circle, show eight busts at a time from a single viewing angle.

The layering process made it possible to create shapes with a minimum of visual information. This mode of construction led to the materialisation of asexual, blurred, almost foggy human busts revisiting the “image” of the bust.

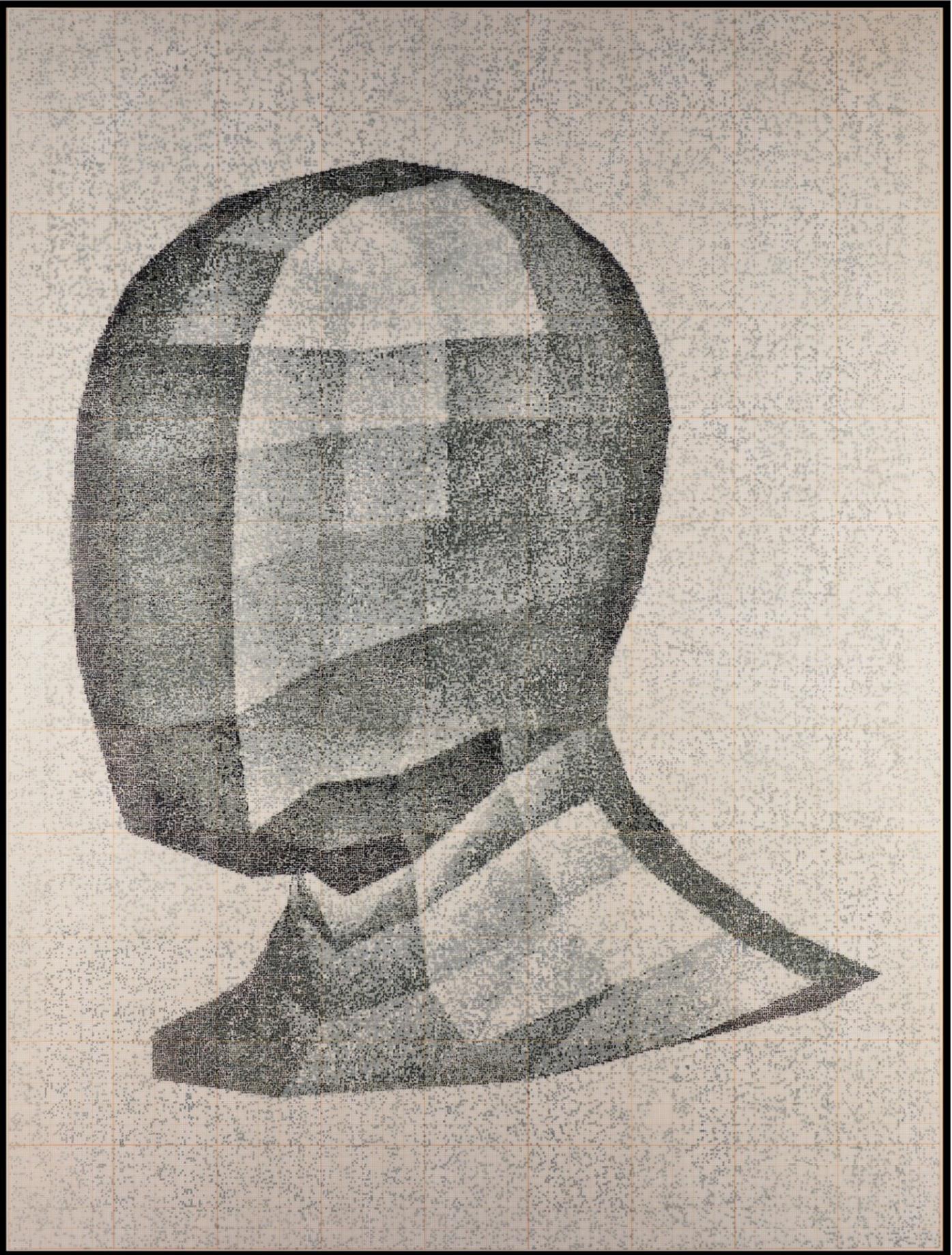


BUSTE

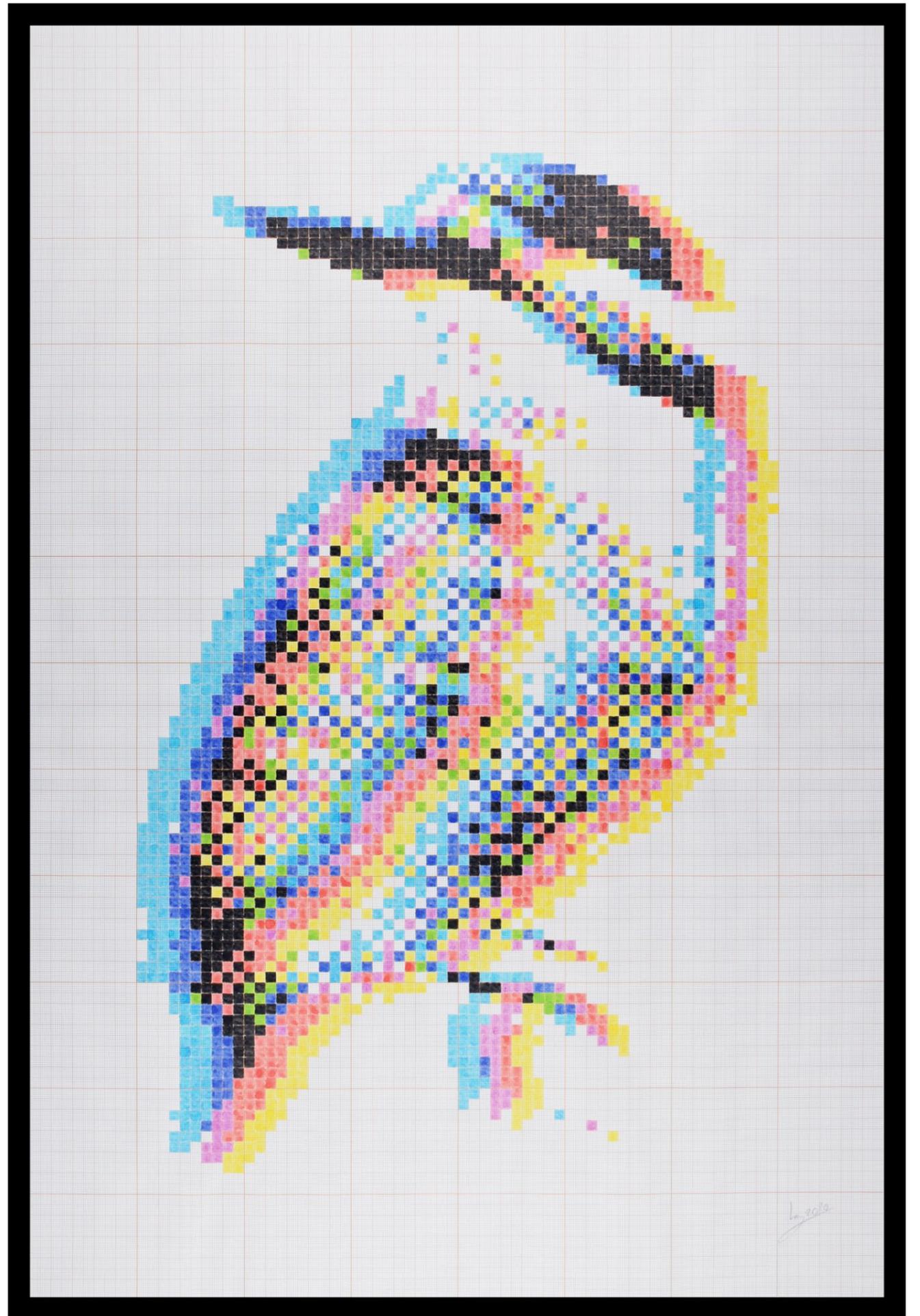
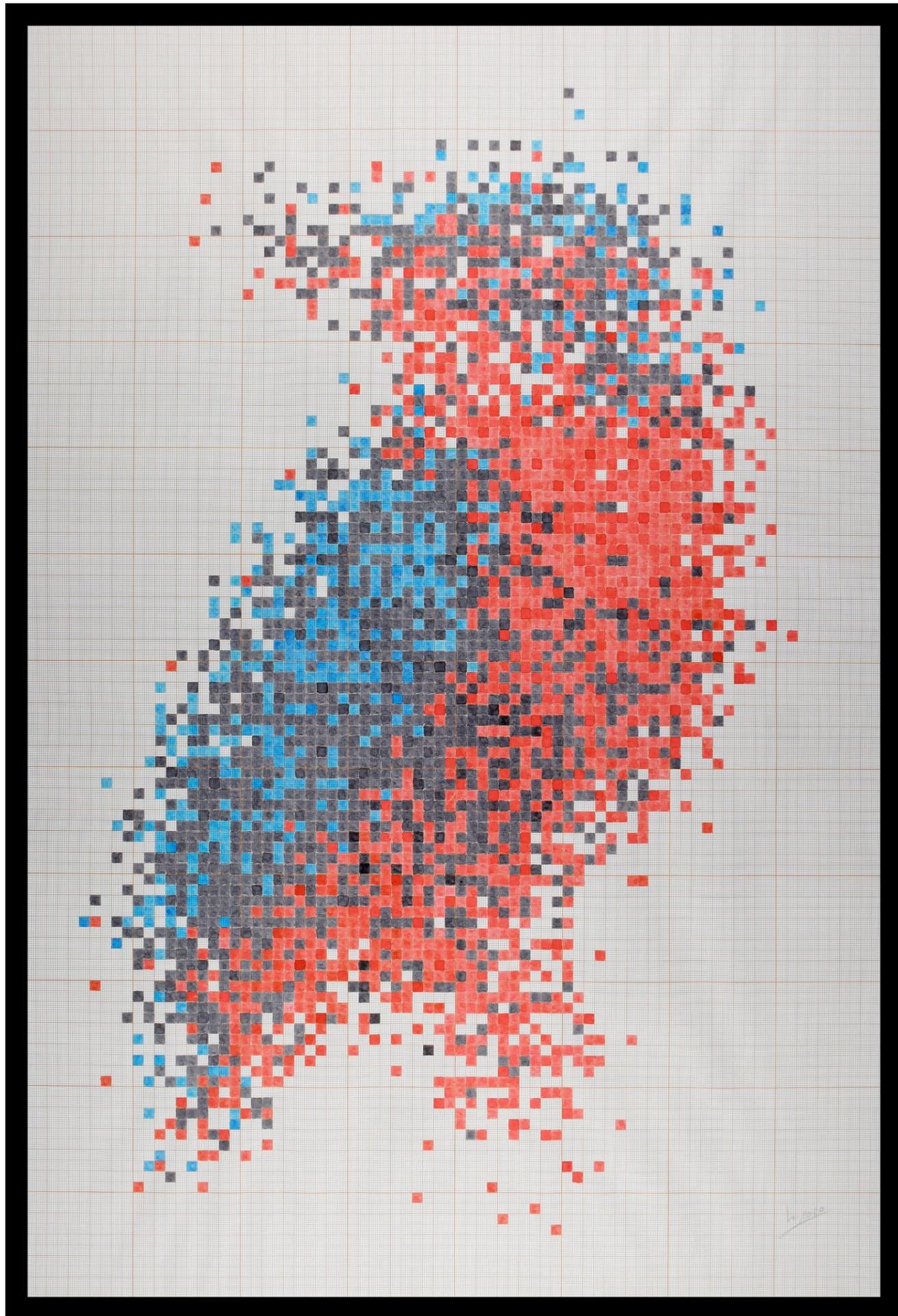
View of the exhibition *Buste*, Jour du feu 5
Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon
2016

BUSTE 1 / 8
Glazed ceramic
30 x 30 cm x 145 cm
2016



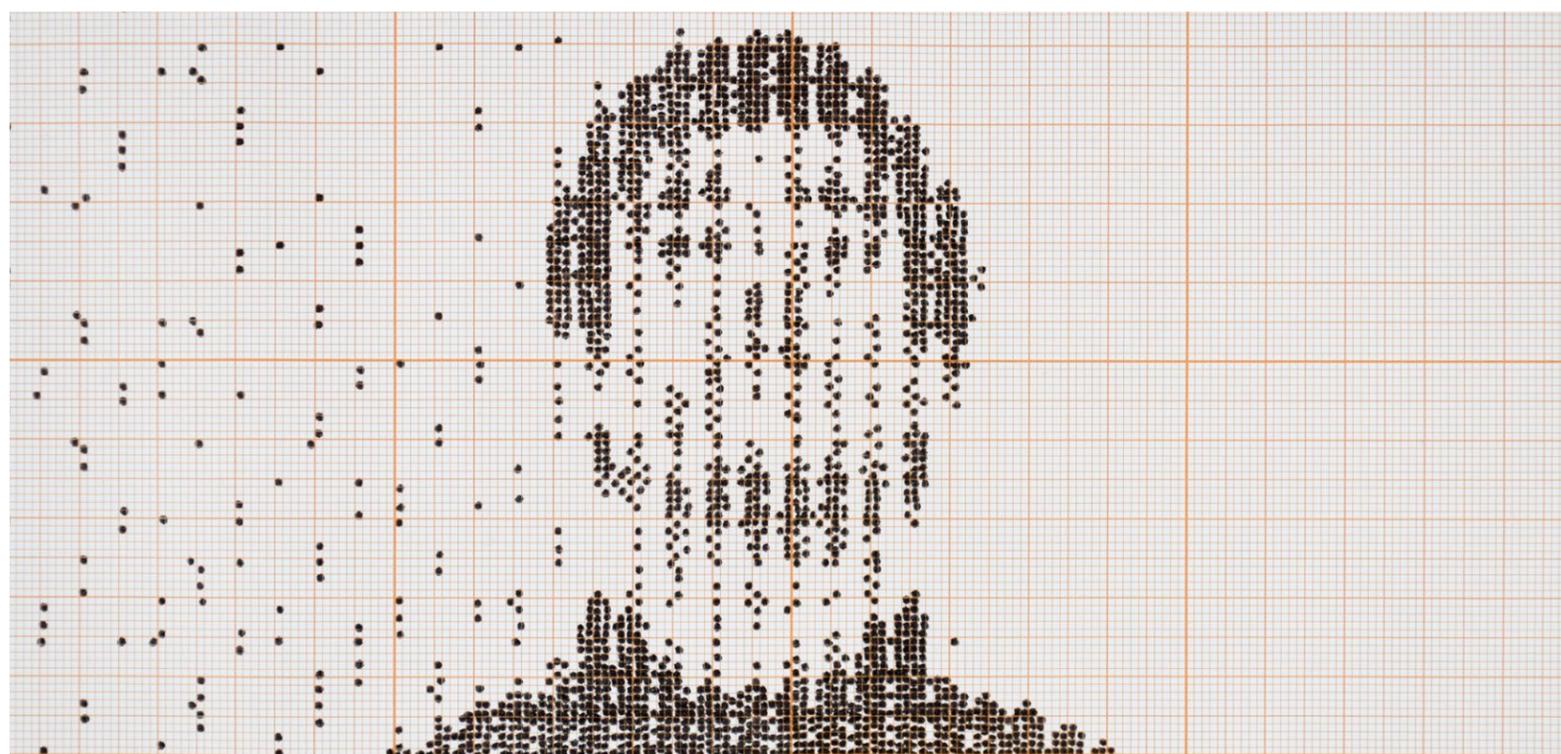
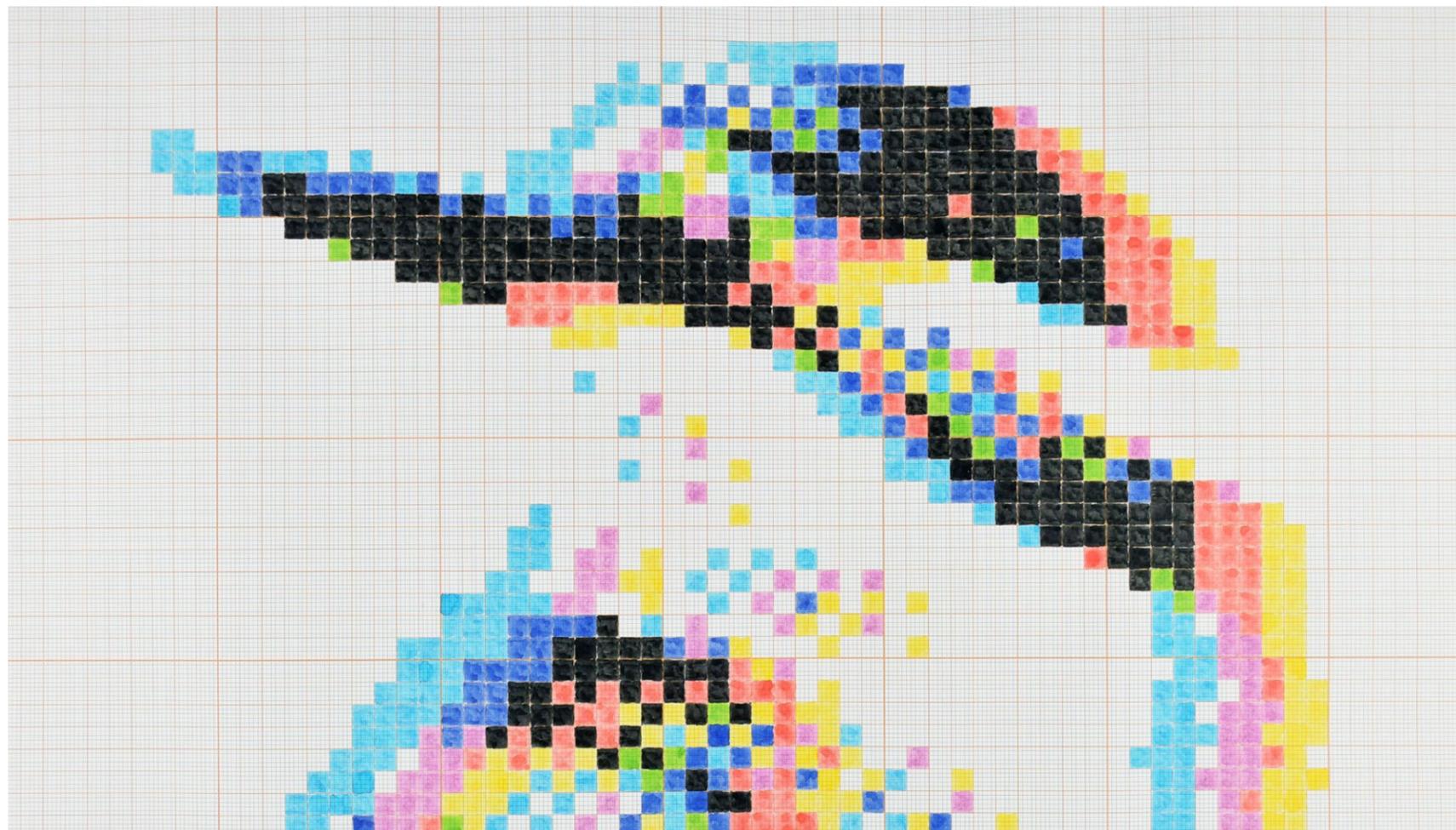


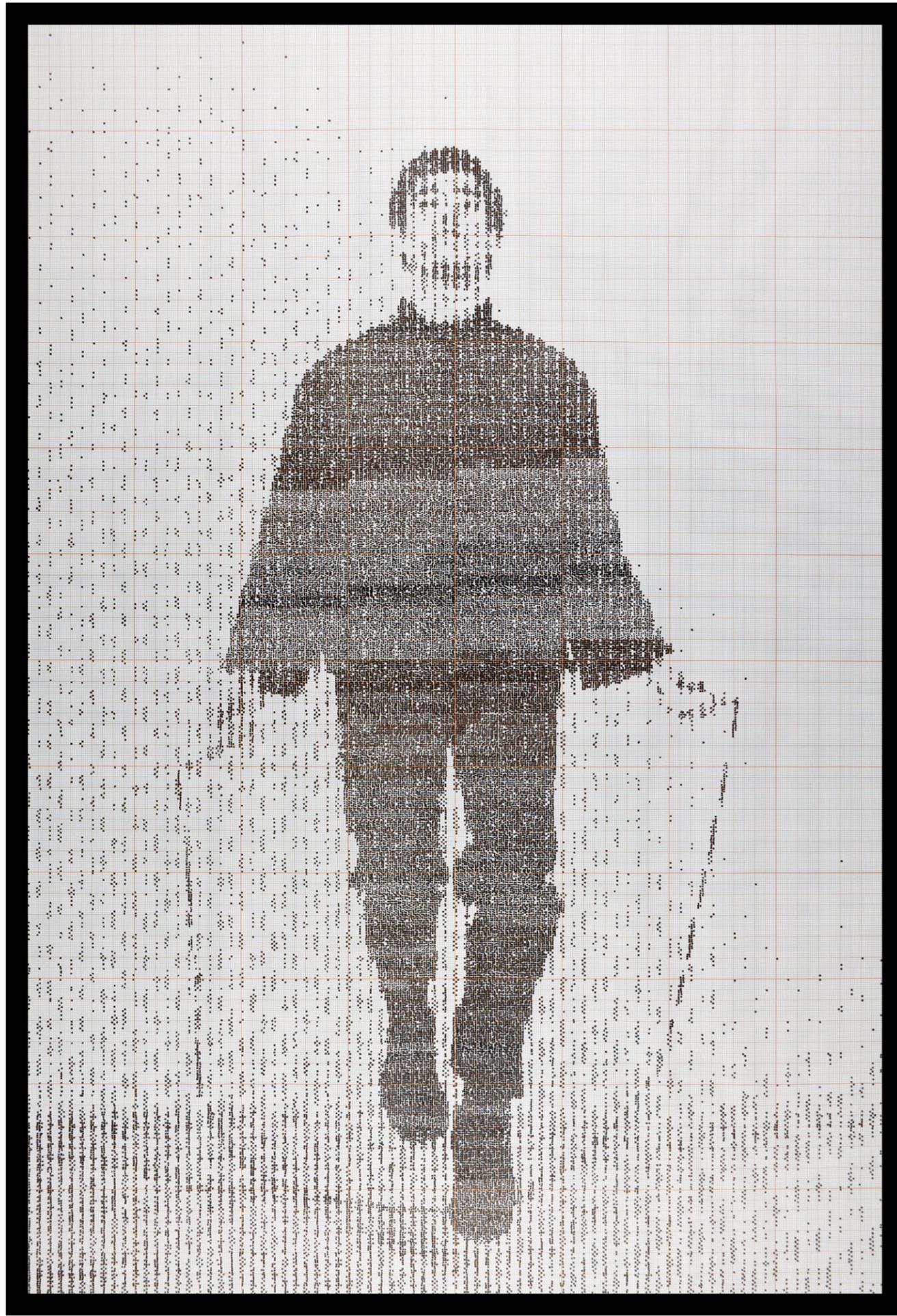
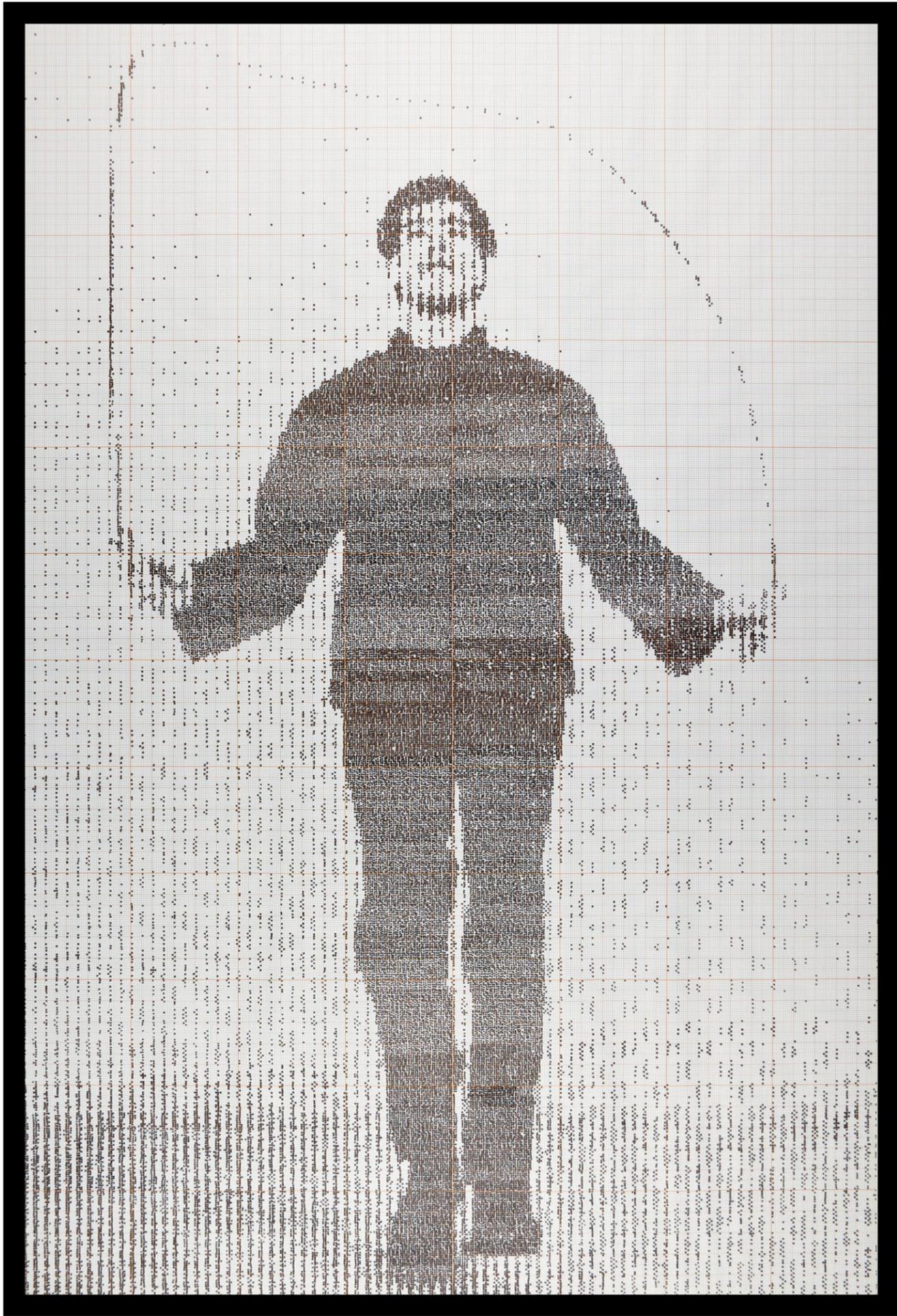
VUE 0
Drawing - graph paper / felt
52 x 67 cm
2016



NO BUGS NO BIRDS (detail and previous page)
Drawing - graph paper / ink
(2x) 60 x 40 cm
2020

BRUCE LEE (detail and next page)
Drawing - graph paper / felt
(2x) 60 x 40 cm
2020







PAYSAGE WI-FI [WI-FI LANDSCAPE]

There is a world behind the world, there is what we see and what we don't see. There is the visible and the invisible, the palpable and the impalpable. Of course, it could be metaphysical, and at the end of the day, maybe that's what Paysages wi-fi is all about. These drawings are ambiguous, as much due to the rigour of certain conceptual forms as to the saturated aesthetics of shamanic or asylum productions. Black dots invade the sheets of graph paper and compose landscapes borrowed from another planet. According to the classical method of tiling, Benjamin Desoche transcribes in these drawings the images of a mobile phone software mapping the waves that surround us.

As is often the case in the artist's work, the digital image finds a medium by freeing itself from the machine in favour of gesture, the pixels then becoming countless hand-made dots. The landscape is not simply an object perceived by a subject in which it is reflected according to the romantic perspective. Here the landscape is not an interior, it is a bath, in this case a bath of waves, produced by more or less powerful transmitters ranging from other human beings to machines of all kinds. The invisible landscape is neither the world of impulses rising from the limbo of the unconscious, nor even the place of ghostly spirits, it is the reverse side of modernity, where the subject is traversed by a fabric of imperceptible forces, dangerous and without any mystery.

Taking this software as a starting point for the work is also a way of questioning the hierarchy of values and strengths of all the elements that surround us. There are elements that emit a lot and elements that emit a little or less, and these forces are digitally transcribed by the machine to become points, lines, planes in Benjamin Desoche's drawings. The graphical value is therefore relative to the strength of the magnetic field too, the boxes of the houses are more visible than their inhabitants, the machine threatening another new day, an unsuspected force, no doubt an invisible poison.

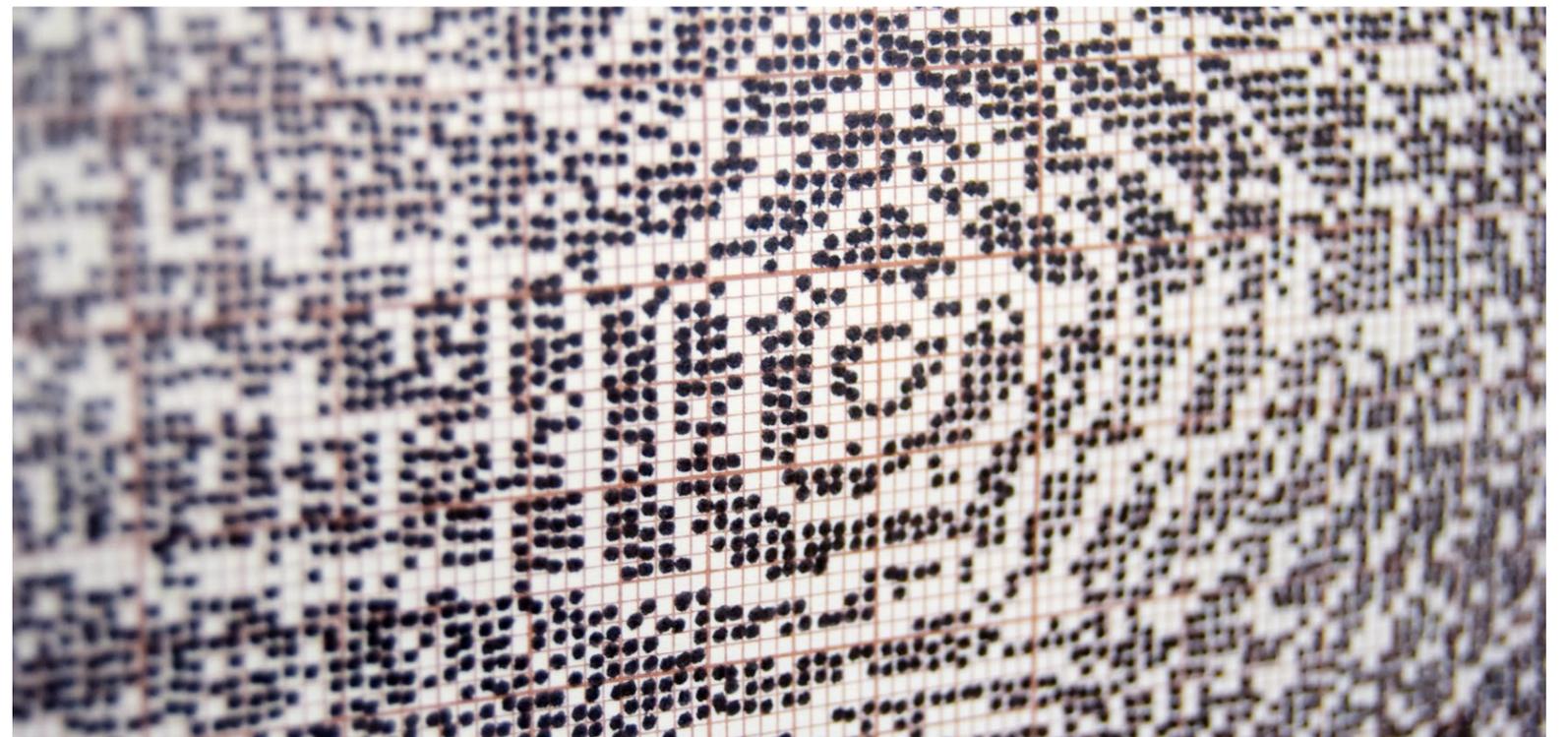
Florence Andoka / author and art critic

PAYSAGE WI-FI ONE (detail)

Drawing - graph paper / felt

100 x 70 cm

2018



[Benjamin Desoche – Racine carré \[Square root\]](#)

The writing of this text coincides with my visit to the Vasarely exhibition at the Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris, I hadn't made the connection between the two, I hadn't even come there for that. And without paying any more attention to the text I had to write, I was thinking of Benjamin Desoche's work, I was coming back to it because unresolved or vague proximities caught my attention; in their own way and in a very different way, both of them questioned the media mechanisms of vision and the way it sometimes produces a decorative and serial image and sometimes it tries to restore seriousness of decorum to the decorative image.

The origin of the digital image is obviously a question of course when it comes to Benjamin Desoche's work, and on this point the issue was rather specific. It is now possible to penetrate into the DNA of images, to go back to their very origins before digital imagery could be invented. What seems so smooth in digital imagery is in fact the accumulation of small cubes, or almost cuneiform signs. I immediately thought back to some of the works of analytical cubism and the best answer was given by Daniel Henry Kahnweiler in his *Confessions esthétiques* on the possibility that artists have of materialising extremely complex human and particularly philosophical questions. The great art dealer did not hide his particular sensitivity for Kant and in his simplest expression of not being able to separate the conceptual from the visual, and when he says cerebral, he also thinks of the approach to the image as a method and according to certain systems of deduction and decomposition.

[Le monde selon PI \[The world according to PI\]](#)

There is nothing riskier than working with mosaics, they are often rather the work of craftsmen who decorate or restorers who repair patios or luxurious bathrooms. However, in the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon mosaics had a very special place, because of the two great compositions: that of Medusa and that of Neptune. Sprite I and II were installed as part of a journey of works of contemporary art alternating collections from the Frac Franche-Comté and works by young or confirmed artists; they were brought together by the special relationship they had with the desert as an ecosystem and mythical place of contemporary art. Each of the works was a proposal on the meaning that was henceforth shifting and increasingly conjunctural. Often, in their simplicity and sometimes in their silence, correspondences were established and links were created.

The first, to return to Sprite I and II, is the possibility of staring at irises or pupils and imagining these two eyes, almost mismatched, symmetrical in shape and asymmetrical in colour, like two raised shields; they are a fitting reminder that, to protect themselves from the gaze of Medusa, soldiers and imaginary heroes of antiquity or even barbaric times used to brandish their shields. They polished

them so that the assailant would be reflected and that in the slight deformation of the pressed metal they could also feel the terror of their own assault and be amazed. Medusa is legitimately imposed, she whose gaze petrifies, strikes down, she who is found on numerous shields, some ceremonial, others the spoils of war, still others that were used in combat.

The interesting thing in Benjamin Desoche's work is that he goes back in time, instinctively finding the links that unite the images and their function, playing with dating and chronology as in a nonsensical bowling alley. Medusa's gaze is always, as said Roger Caillois in *Méduse et compagnie* (1960), one of intimidation, and there is a form of intimidation in the iris or the Sprite, either in a movement of retreat or a projective movement.

However, Benjamin Desoche has not tried to copy mosaics even if he remains faithful to the technique and codes associated with this medium; he is too mindful of the culture from which he comes, first the urban nature, a little hipster, a little skater, a little Gus van Sant, a little gamer, a little skate park, a little archaeological museum of the future. I prefer not to ask him or really know if his interest in mosaics comes from this return to grace of vintage video games, where the graphics was extremely minimal, often cubic; some media and new technology sociologists see in Pac-Man, invented by Toru Iwatani in Japan in 1980, or in the re-editions of Rubik's Cube (first edition in 1974) the comeback of the pixelized fundamentals. Sprite I and II are obviously targets which, with a certain distance and almost ironically, aim at what we might call the digital identity of the image, its genome. Almost all video games, including in their marketing or imaginary philosophy, seek a goal to achieve or a target to reach; they describe the skilful game between the hero taken for a target and the target taken for a hero that the hero is aiming for.

Benjamin Desoche is not far away, in a very different technique and in a context that is no less different, from Jasper Johns' Targets, Ugo Rondinone's fluorescences, because mosaics allow him to avoid focusing, literally and figuratively, preferring eternal tiling.

The pixelization of the world speaks of tiling, to the nearest millimetre to avoid context, the hyper-socialisation of art but above all of the digital decomposition of the world. The human being is thus summarised or reduced to a few simple signs and rudimentary quests; he is now a target and a pixel, as much a profile (in the sense of the new information and communication technologies) as a media genome.

The pattern and the message are therefore now included in a grid, real or readable, the one that Rosalind Krauss analysed in an eponymous article (1979) to give it a completely different meaning. The grid, that of the fantasies of Theo van Doesburg's paintings on the point, from Mondrian's compartmentalisation of the world to Bertoin's Diamond chair, speaks as much about the space of incarnation or appearance as that of prohibition.

[Flipper](#)

At the end of the tour of the permanent collections of the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon, two other proposals by Benjamin Desoche, Back Flip and Front Flip, which Laurent Devèze has already mentioned. I was initially seduced by the first of the two that I had seen in photos during one of his presentations. The photograph still corrected the diffraction of the wave pattern extremely precisely. Nothing seemed further removed from Muybridge and Marey's photography than the mosaic work, except for the grid of the material which imitated the one Muybridge had used as a neutral background for his study of human locomotion. The idea was all the more practical as it served as a precise measurement and referred these pictures to the scientific field.

Beyond Muybridge and Marey, who were of major importance in modern discourse, the decomposition of locomotion was closely linked to photography; yet the two series Back Flip and Front Flip are concomitant with the development of digital cultures and a new approach to photography. Benjamin Desoche mixes the two main types of pixels, the logical pixel and the physical pixel, in order to better valorise their matrix logic as if he were experimenting with what Axel Hanson-White had theorised in 2017 in *The pixel Aesthetic / Paradigm?*. Benjamin Desoche does not ask us to reflect on the path travelled by the pixel or the pixelated image (the latter term would be more accurate) but on the very nature of the pixel as a constituent element of how we view something, its proprioception. He brings together several aspects of the work that has become a pixel, which is above all an experiment in enlargement and, perhaps even, in close-up or freeze-frame. He can thus ignore the notion of detail, contrary to the definition given by Daniel Arasse, enlargement is not a detail. Detail infers getting closer to the subject. Benjamin Desoche synthesizes in a single technique the different manifestations of the picture elements whose contraction gave us the term pixels, spatial and semantic compression of representations and the new use of images. He obtains from their matrix concentration and their enlargement the impossible curtain-raiser where the spectacular and the spectator have no choice but to remain as static and petrified because mosaic images have the same power as a magnetic and magnetised Medusa. Benjamin Desoche's work reminded me of a collection of texts by Wim Wenders, *Les pixels de Paul Cézanne*, who, in observing Cézanne's series on La Montagne Sainte Victoire, understood that the cubic decomposition of patterns is part of the same gesture where seeing, showing and deconstructing what one has just seen and shown takes place at the same time, not in an impulse or even according to the principles of any interest in locomotion, but quite simply the almost lasting appearance of the mesmerized form.

[Nicolas Surlapierre - Director of the Musées du Centre de Besançon / Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie / Musée du Temps – Palais Granvelle / 2019](#)

2021

@benjamin_desoche

benjamindesoche.com