

Esther Schipper

Etienne Chambaud

Inexistence

July 3 – August 28, 2021



Detail: Etienne Chambaud, **Uncreature**, 2021
Photo © the artist

Esther Schipper is pleased to announce Etienne Chambaud's exhibition **Inexistence**, the artist's first with the gallery. The works included in the exhibition are a scent and a sound installation, a sculptural work generating a pattern of temperatures, three light installations, glass works, bronze sculptures and modified panel paintings.

The first work encountered by the visitor is **Multiplex**, a scent installation invoking familiar spaces but also acting as a subtle disruption. It uses the chemical compounds present both in animal markings and in human environments to create a molecular link between tiger habitat and movie theatre. The work draws on the notion of involuntary memory: the often unconscious association of a place or an experience with a scent.

The only light source in the exhibition space is provided by the three works from Chambaud's series **Models for Afar**. Between a video screen, a lightbox and a lamp suspended from the ceiling, each work from the series emanates softly modulated light formations as it is programmed to simulate the atmospheric and meteorological light conditions of the sky at a specific time and place. Bathed in a red glow, **Model for Afar (Solis Lacus, 7 November 1492)** the spectator will experience a solar Martian day of the late 15th century. **Model for Afar (Regensburg, 5 November 333 BCE)**, on the other hand, takes as point of departure a painting by Albrecht Altdorfer, combining the date of its depicted event—Alexander the Great's battle at Issus in 333 BCE—and Altdorfer's location when he painted the representation in 1529. A third work shines with the never setting sun of a Canadian arctic summer over the yet unnamed Terror Bay, on 14 July 1789. Yet the staying power of these works doesn't come from neatly unpacking the web of references hidden in its making. Rather **Models for Afar** creates an experiential disconnect: the works propose other sites—both

temporal and spatial—yet the imaginary travel is grounded by our perceiving body which eventually must return to its own reality.

A glass sculpture from the series **Globes** that contains and conserves the remains of objects and materials that were destroyed and transformed by the very process of their inclusion in the molten glass, refracts the light from **Models for Afar**.

With the installation **Fever** Chambaud transposes the symptoms of an illness onto an inanimate object: a section of the wall exhibits the temperature pattern of a specific disease. Palpably warm, the development can also be read on the thermometer's display from where several sensors extend antennae-like across the wall.

A sound installation entitled **Syrinx*** brings into the gallery space the sound of multiple songbirds. Their intricate vocalizations, synthesized with artificial neural networks, are in a constant process of metamorphosis as each bird's distinct voice is differently affected by another.

A bronze sculpture from the series **Necknot** is placed on the floor. Both organic and mathematical, it consists of an assemblage of severed bird's necks joined together in a continuous knot.

In a reversal of sort, throughout the exhibition visitors will be confronted with the quiet gazes emanating from Chambaud's series **Uncreatures**. The historical icons, panel paintings of religious figures represented against a golden background—the symbol of uncreated light—, have been modified and the figures, except for their eyes, covered entirely with gold leaf. Their gazes act as spatial markers but also, again in an echo to the exhibitions common thread of dislocation and separation, as temporal ones.

The title, **Inexistence**, suggests the exhibition as condition of contradictory states, as a site where things and beings could alternatively or simultaneously emerge, change or remain absent. The works in the exhibition share a certain tension between what can be experienced, seen, and known. They manifest as ephemeral sensations—the perceptions of smell, sound, light and warmth—appearing and disappearing. Yet, in the midst of this exhibition, it is also the spectators' certainty in their position that is being destabilized, as is the necessity of their presence: the synthetic birds will continue to sing their songs long after they have left.

Etienne Chambaud was born 1980 in Mulhouse, France. He studied at Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL), Villa Arson, Nice, and Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA), Lyon. Since 2018 he has been conducting a doctoral research in the SACRe program of PSL University, Ecole Normale Supérieure and Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. The artist lives and works in Paris. Chambaud's solo exhibitions include: **Negative Knots**, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse (2018); **Undercuts**, Forde, Geneva (2012); **Contre-Histoire de la Séparation**, CIAP, Vassivière (2010); **The Sirens' Stage**, David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2010). Selected group exhibitions include: **Foncteur d'oubli**, Le Plateau – FRAC Île-de-France, Paris (2019); **IF THE SNAKE**, Okayama Art Summit 2019, Okayama; **Persona Grata**, MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine (2018).

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