

Press release

From 7 October  
to 03 January 2021

Edi Dubien

*L'homme aux mille natures*

MACLYON



Edi Dubien, *Être enfin pour toujours*, 2020

Watercolour and ink on paper

40 x 30 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris

© Adagp, Paris, 2020

Musée d'art contemporain  
Cité internationale  
81 quai Charles de Gaulle  
69006 LYON – France

T +33 (0)4 72 69 17 17  
F +33 (0)4 72 69 17 00  
info@mac-lyon.com  
www.mac-lyon.com

Press contacts :

Muriel Jaby / Élise Vion-Delphin

T +33 (0)4 72 69 17 05 / 25

communication@mac-lyon.com

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<b>Press release</b>	<b>macLYON</b>
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**In fall 2020, the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon hosts Edi Dubien for his first solo museum exhibition. This self-taught artist has been making a name for himself over the past number of years with his accomplished drawings of an impressive psychological depth: in particular, his representations of taciturn children and teenagers. Their gaze is absent, elusive, at times direct, but always imbued with emotion and humanity. Often accompanied by animals, translated into sculptures for this exhibition, these young figures subtly embody some of the fundamental questions connected to the construction of one's identity and the freedom of self-expression. Particularly in today's world, both public and private, where violence, whether physical or mental, has been normalized or rendered banal.**

The Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon is pleased to host the first solo museum exhibition of artist Edi Dubien.

The exhibition will be conceived as a love song dedicated to nature celebrated in through a bucolic and poetic narrative. "*L'homme aux mille natures*" [*Man of a Thousand Natures*] will bring together sculptures, shown in relation to several hundred drawings and, what is new in its practice, large format paintings, united in a scenography that will evoke this highly complicit relationship that his work maintains with nature.

In this ensemble, composed by the artist, visitors will find several recurring themes from his previous pieces, including the figures of the young man and the child, sketched both vigorously and delicately, with a look often absent, yet immersed in the world. These young boys, sometimes inspired by photographs, evoke hundreds of faces of individuals who may have existed and appear frozen in time. Without an interest in the adults they will become, they seem to be waiting. These beings "in formation" seem to question themselves, calling out to the spectator. Sometimes contemplative, sometimes playful, they might simply refer to the little boy that the artist knew he was, but oftentimes certain curious elements make these figures even more complex.

Accessories such as shoes and make-up evoke the diktats of gender imposed by society from an early age. If Edi Dubien plays with these codes by adorning the young boys and animals with extravagant earrings made of branches and oversized insects, it is because he uses these as attributes that challenge the question of identity. Childhood is a seminal moment in an individual's development and affirmation of their identity, especially as the body matures.

Obtaining a balance between the physical envelope and the mind is not an easy thing.

The very categorization of gender is a cultural convention. As Teresa de Lauretis writes in *Technologies of Gender*: "gender is also constructed through deconstruction". It is precisely for this reason that the force of Edi Dubien's work lies more in experience and intuition than in the elaboration of a militant language or stance; he leaves room for emotion, doubt and above all, benevolence and tenderness.

Some allegorical objects, such as a fire-damaged tepee, surmounted by what the artist calls small "trans foxes and birds", could be a playground, but in reality, the blackened branches actually evoke an endangered childhood. The shelter is placed in an essentially natural environment, as as in the middle of a garden composed of leaves and branches from trees, occasionally flowers, but especially animals. The universe of childhood, in particular in terms of its relationship to nature, is at the heart of this exhibition.

While each of the works contains a palpable biographical charge, they also question our relationship to the plant and animal ecosystem, an issue central to the artist's personal development and the definition of his own identity. In some drawings, the fern leaf can just as easily evoke a scar as it can a substitute rib cage, thereby symbolizing the body under construction.



Edi Dubien, *Nature libre* [*Free Nature*], 2020  
Watercolour, ink and pencil on paper  
29,5 × 20,5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

In the exhibition, the cannons pointing at the backs covered in foliage and the collapsed crystal chandelier underline the absence of naivety in these pieces. They constitute the dialectic of a nature and a culture that confront each other in an open, transparent manner.

The development of a child's personality, as well as the potential physical and psychological violence stemming from their entourage, are the essential elements of an underlying personal story that runs throughout Edi Dubien's artistic project. On certain drawings, the threatening mouth of a dog or a winter landscape made up of bare trees replaces the face of the child. This is because the story is much more complex than it appears, and in this story, survival is key. The artist shares a powerful testimony that goes beyond his own person. He provides a visibility and a face to those who fight against a determinism imposed by the artificial harmony of body and mind

If his models are mute, it is because he considers language to be a cultural and conventional tool. Articles, pronouns and adjectives serve to crystallize categories and brutally exclude those who refuse to submit to them.

Edi Dubien develops a unique relationship with nature, as an escape route from normative conditioning. In contrast to this binary and segmented world, nature represents for the artist an absolute and an indisputable evidence, the imperative of survival certainly, but above all the freedom to be oneself. The enemy has therefore been identified and that enemy is culture (as a conventional and social order that imposes its norms on an individual), a superposition of artificial codes that is reinforced in the labelling and mapping of bodies.

In this respect, the broken chandelier that is the focal point of the installation evokes, according to the artist, "the light of humans breaking".

In Edi Dubien's words, this is an exhibition where "everything evokes chaos, childhood, gender, nature, resilience and love..." He sees his art as a space of conquest and freedom, but also and above all as a kind of crisis: that of freeing oneself from society, from its gaze and from everything that comes under categorization, so as to no longer have to negotiate one's relationship to the world.

Edi Dubien talks about love and nature. Through the power of his symbols and the force of his works, this garden of "man of a thousand natures" promises to be less a playground than a battlefield.

Matthieu Lelièvre, Curator



Edi Dubien, *Jeune chevreuil maquillé [Young Deer with Makeup]*, 2020  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
29,5 × 20,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020



Edi Dubien, *Naissance d'une nouvelle nature [Birth of a New Nature]* (détail), 2020  
Work under creation  
Epoxy resin, make-up and paint - Fox: 47 × 18 × 40 cm / Rabbit: 23 × 8 × 16 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

Born in 1963 in Issy-les-Moulineaux, Edi Dubien lives and works between Paris and Vendôme.

Edi Dubien was born for the first time in 1963 and officially a second time on 23 June 2014, following the judgement that altered his civil status allowing him to be recognized as a man. In February 2017, as part of the filmed interviews for the exhibition *HERstory - des archives à l'heure des Postféminismes* [Archives at the time of Postfeminism] at the Maison des arts Centre d'art contemporain in Malakoff, Edi Dubien spoke about his story, his difficult childhood, and his transition.

Self-taught (Edi Dubien did not attend art school), his work explores his own accomplishments, but also refers to the world, with its disasters, successes and possibilities.

His vision of the Lyon exhibition, and his work in general:

“All the works are connected, from the drawings to the pieces on the ground, from the canvases to the sculptures. It's all about chaos, childhood, gender, nature, resilience and love. Not everything is about gender however; I use my story as a free space. I talk about a whole, I'm connected to nature through the story of my childhood and through this, I find an echo and resistance. I talk about animals as much as myself, I talk about plants as much as myself, I talk about birth and upheavals. I talk about an existence that needs to be protected: children as well as nature, animals, a part of us.”

Edi Dubien



Edi Dubien in its workshop, 2019

#### Solo shows (selection from 2001)

- 2018 —  
*Apparitions sentimentales*, Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
*Beaux rêves*, Librairie Mazarine, Paris
- 2017 —  
*Voyage d'un animal sans mesure*, Maison des arts, centre d'art contemporain de Malakoff  
*Oscillation*, Librairie Mazarine, Paris
- 2016 —  
*Parler les fenêtres ouvertes*, Nuit Blanche à Versailles, Hôtel de Beauté, Versailles  
*Je n'ai plus peur de toi*, Galerie de la Voûte, Paris
- 2015 —  
H.P. Gallery, Tokyo & Yokohama
- 2014 —  
*Répare-moi*, Villa du Lavoir, Paris
- 2013 —  
*Lettre d'Amour à moi-même*, Villa Gabriel, Paris H.P. France, Tokyo
- 2011 —  
*I Love You Edi*, Villa du Lavoir, Paris
- 2002 —  
*Voulez-vous prendre un café?*, La Grande Masse des Beaux-Arts, Paris
- 2001 —  
*Grands portraits*, Atelier Annie Ratti with Galerie Pièce Unique

#### Collective exhibitions (selection from 2013)

- 2019 —  
*Drawing Now*, Paris  
*Blind Test*, Biennale Out of the Box, Genève  
*AS I LIKE*, Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
*Constellation Capricorne*, Écomusée du Véron, Savigny-en-Véron  
*Lignes de vies, une exposition de légendes*, MAC/VAL, Vitry-Sur-Seine  
*Paréidolie – Salon du dessin contemporain*, Marseille  
*Décoloniser les corps*, Eternal Gallery, Tours
- 2018 —  
*Paréidolie – Salon du dessin contemporain*, Marseille  
*Formes d'Histoires*, centre d'art contemporain Les Tanneries, Amilly  
*Don't Forget It*, Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
*I Am What I Am*, Ici Gallery, Paris  
*Drawing Now*, Paris  
*Art Paris*, art fair
- 2017 —  
*Sunny Winter & Pleasure*, Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
*Appartement Témoin*, Carouge, Genève  
*HERstory - des archives à l'heure des postféminismes*, Maison des Arts de Malakoff  
*Traversées Rena@rde*, Emmétrope, Bourges
- 2015 —  
*Genre Humain, 30 ans d'Emmétrope*, Palais Jacques Coeur, Bourges  
Artcurial, vente caritative, Paris
- 2013 —  
Exposition (Aides) Art Protects, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris

#### Public acquisitions

- Collection du Fonds d'art contemporain de la Ville de Genève (FMAC)  
Artothèque de Caen  
FRAC Poitou-Charentes  
Centre d'art de Vénissieux

### Edi Dubien, *Jeune lapin maquillé [Young Rabbit with Makeup]*, 2020

In the world of Edi Dubien, animals, both elegant and realistically portrayed through the brushstrokes of this lover of flora and fauna, are endowed with shimmering colours.

These animals “express a renaissance, a sense of hope. Trans, because this is my story and because it symbolizes both an openness and a freedom.”



Edi Dubien, *Jeune lapin maquillé [Young Rabbit with Makeup]*, 2020  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
29,5 × 20,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adapp, Paris, 2020

### Edi Dubien, *Jardin secret [Secret Garden]*, 2020

The figure of the child is a recurring one in the work of Edi Dubien.

“Obviously, it is central, it is also the symbol of the adult in becoming, born from chaos.”

In the ensemble of Edi Dubien’s artistic production, self-portraits are prolific.

The artist hides and reveals himself in these at the same time. He provides us with an honest account of his history: that of an individual who was forced to tame his personal history, to fight against his body and against society.

“[...] (collective) politics inevitably merges with the personal (private). The self-portrait plays a leading role in the heart of a cosmogony where reality is combined with a strange, surreal and poetic dimension.”

Julie Crenn, 2017, excerpt from the text of the exhibition catalogue *Voyage d’un animal sans mesure*, Maison des arts de Malakoff



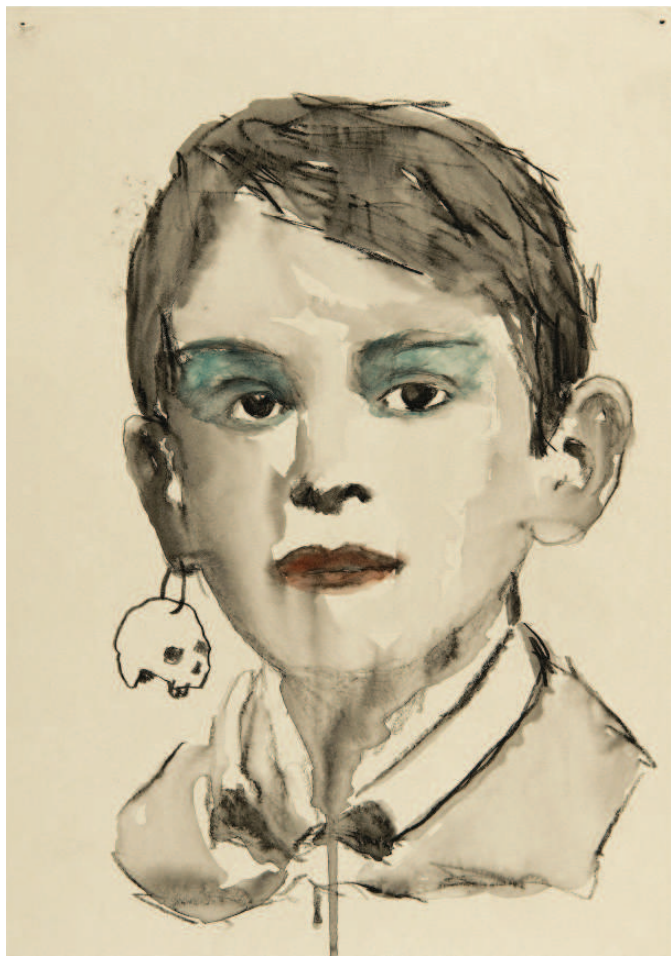
Edi Dubien, *Jardin secret [Secret Garden]*, 2020  
Watercolour, ink and pencil on paper  
110 × 75 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adapp, Paris, 2020

**Edi Dubien, *Jeune garçon trans [Young Trans Boy]*, 2019**

Transgender? Transhumanism? Transported to a strange dreamlike world?

“I have always lived as a boy, from my very early childhood. I draw a connection between nature and my own transition. The goal is to be sincere, to get to the heart of an emotion, there is ultimately something very universal about that.”

Edi Dubien for Arte



Edi Dubien, *Jeune garçon trans [Young Trans Boy]*, 2019  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
29,5 x 20,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

**Edi Dubien, *Espoir blanc [White Hope]*, 2020**

“There is always an opening in my work, an opening like the white backgrounds; sometimes however, I close those passageways. I become one with the surrounding space.”

Edi Dubien

“Most of the time in watercolour, sometimes in acrylic, Edi Dubien’s portraits consist of both empty and full spaces. The colour white, the preserve of the sheet or the canvas, is barely marked by the trembling line of a contour, a wash is applied, disturbing the form by superimposed layers rather than circumscribing the contours by means of upstrokes and downstrokes. The hues are faded, faint, as if emerging from the limbo of memory.”

Ingrid Luquet-Gad, *Les Inrocks*, september 2019



Edi Dubien, *Espoir blanc [White Hope]*, 2020  
Watercolour, ink and pencil on paper  
21 x 29,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

**Edi Dubien, *Enfant soldat [Child Soldier]*, 2019**

“Memory is one of the recurring themes in my practice, and, more and more, I combine it with the theme of ecological transition, which must not be transformed one day, into simple memory... There will always be a need to protect, be it childhood or the planet, which is the same as saving oneself...”

Edi Dubien in *Connaissance des Arts*, 2019



Edi Dubien, *Enfant soldat [Child Soldier]*, 2019  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
29,5 × 20,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

**Edi Dubien, *Transition*, 2020**

“My work is very autobiographical and deals with identity, initially linked to the notion of projection and transition, even if I quickly incorporated my passion for nature and animals. Long after the start of my career, I have remained sensitive to the woes of today’s youth and I like to bear witness to those whom I consider to be fighters.”

Edi Dubien in *Connaissance des arts*, 2019



Edi Dubien, *Transition*, 2020  
Watercolour, ink and pencil on paper  
29,5 × 20,5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020



Edi Dubien, *Squelette de paille* [Straw skeleton], 2020

The exhibition presents a vast collection of over 300 drawings, but also installations merging with sculptures: a tepee that is home to animals wearing make-up, a half-sleeping deer, human shields...

“I am making an installation of shields in the shape of men’s backs, with a herbarium inlaid in each one. There will be 14 in total. They will be installed, leaning against a branch, as precarious as playing cards. In front of each, there will be a small grey cement cannon. The cannon will be shaped like a child’s toy, but threatening nonetheless.”

Edi Dubien  
on his works under creation for this exhibition



Edi Dubien, *Squelette de paille* [Straw skeleton] (détail), 2020  
Work under creation  
Busts on polyster plaster - 82 × 53 × 21 cm  
Cannon on cement - 41 × 28 × 12 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Alain Gutharc, Paris  
© Adagp, Paris, 2020

## *Avec un parfum d'aventure*

*Avec un parfum d'aventure* («With a Hint of Adventure») is an exhibition directly inspired by the recent collective, worldwide experience of confinement, which was imposed more or less simultaneously for health reasons on the majority of people on the planet. Its main thrust is an exploration of the question of travel, whether impeded or imposed, voluntary or provoked, individually or in a group, and the consequences of it for those affected. It takes the form of an investigation across history, drawing on the collections of the Lyon Musée des Beaux-Arts and the Musée d'Art Contemporain (macLYON). Alongside these works, the exhibition juxtaposes works borrowed or specifically created by artists living in France, not to say geographically close to macLYON. The experience of moving through the exhibition and viewing the works is designed to encourage visitors to reflect on the links between political ideologies, economic systems, climate change and migration flows.

This new collaboration between macLYON and the Musée des Beaux-Arts is one of a series of initiatives by the Lyon Art Museums in active support of the French art scene.



Illustration: Jean Jullien

Established in 1984 in a wing of the Palais Saint-Pierre, in 1995 the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon moved to the site of the Cité internationale, a vast architectural ensemble spread over one kilometre on the edges of the Parc de la Tête d'Or, in Lyon's 6th arrondissement. The work of architect Renzo Piano, responsible for the entire site, the museum conserves the facade of the atrium of the former Palais de la Foire, overlooking the park. The Palais was designed by Charles Meysson in the 1920s.

The 6,000m<sup>2</sup> museum is spread over several floors and presents modular spaces that are perfectly adapted to the needs of the different artistic projects welcomed by the museum, as well as new forms of contemporary expression. The macLYON focuses on current national and international art, in all its forms, offering exhibitions and a wide programme of transdisciplinary events.

Its collection includes over 1,400 works. A selection of these is shown in rotation at the macLYON and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, as well as in several partner structures. It consists mainly of monumental works and ensembles of works, dating from the 1940s to the current day, created by artists from all over the world, the majority for exhibitions at the museum or for the Biennales d'art contemporain de Lyon, for which the museum oversees the artistic direction.

Brought together in an arts pole with the MBA since 2018, the two collections form a remarkable ensemble, both in France and in Europe.



View of the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon. Photo : Blaise Adilon

Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon  
Cité internationale  
81 quai Charles de Gaulle  
69006 LYON  
France

T +33 (0)4 72 69 17 17  
F +33(0)4 72 69 17 00  
info@mac-lyon.com  
www.mac-lyon.com

#EdiDubienLyon  
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Bus C4, Jean Macé/Cité internationale  
Bus C5, Cordeliers/Rillieux-Vancia  
● By bike  
Several vélo'v stations around the  
Museum  
Cycle lane from the Rhône's banks to  
the museum.