

+ LAURE
DROUOT



ENGLISH

DEEP SEE BLUE
SURROUNDING YOU
VOIS CE BLEU
PROFOND TE FONDRE



BONHEUR ANTEN



Laure Prouvost:
Deep See Blue Surrounding You /
Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre

Laure Prouvost (Lieumeconu, 1867) lives and works. It was there that her grandmother showed her how to weave tentacles across different languages and cultures. After swimming across the deep blue see she arrived in London where she received her BFA from Central St Martins in 2002 and studied towards her MFA at Goldsmiths College. Afterwards, she road her horses to imagine new havens for her art all over the world.

Over the past decade, Laure Prouvost has become one of Europe's major contemporary artists. In 2011, in collaboration with London's Whitechapel Gallery, she was awarded the Max Mara Art Prize for Women. She won the Turner Prize in 2013, which is considered one of the most important art prizes worldwide.

Prouvost effortlessly glides between different languages, cultures, art forms and techniques. Her work is characterised by a playful approach to words, language and translation. In her work she creates new worlds, floating between fiction and reality, reflecting and reimagining combinations of the foreign

and the familiar. *They Parlaient Idéale* and *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* suggest a possible utopia, but also an active pursuit of a better world, in which mutual understanding and connection with one another are key.

A concept that resonates strongly within Prouvost's work is the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's notion of 'liquid modernity'. He uses this term to describe a postmodern world governed by short-term thinking and empty communication. A world that erodes the bonds between people and reveals the fragility of a society based on individualism and constant change. Prouvost opposes this by making work that aims to connect people in times of polarisation and isolation.

In this exhibition, which is based on her show in the French pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale, the visitor is immersed in Prouvost's surreal world. As in many of her other exhibitions, a film work – in this case, *They Parlaient Idéale* – forms the fundamental cornerstone around which she constructs her space-filling installations.

Laure Prouvost constantly tries to mislead the visitor. This can prove confusing or even intimidating, but that is certainly not her

intention. By letting people interact with her art in an associative, playful and physical way, she hopes that her work will gain a unifying and emancipatory function. She attempts in her work to create a world that no one fully recognises or comprehends. By doing so, she levels the playing field: no matter what their background, age or education, no one has the correct answers to the questions posed by her work. In Prouvost's enchanting maze, the viewers are the masters of their own stories.



Room 2.17

Laure Prouvost's artistic practice is very varied. Her oeuvre encompasses video works, paintings and sculptures made of a range of materials. She combines individual works of art to create large and magical installations. The entire exhibition can be seen as one big work of art, one that will come to life only at the Bonnefanten and will never be seen again.

The visitor walks through a sea-blue environment in which small glass creatures appear. The space seems strange and yet familiar. Prouvost's installations work in a highly associative way. There are just as many references to the world around us as to, for example, the film industry. Partly because of this, visitors briefly imagine themselves in a place between reality and fiction. Prouvost's background as a film artist is also evident in the fact that the space feels like a set. This makes us sense for a moment that we are drifting between reality and madness. The objects are waiting for the presence of the public, who breathe life into the work.

Prouvost's fairy tale is disrupted by the litter spread throughout the rooms. These are objects that appear to have been abandoned, as if people have lost them, or objects that refer to people who are themselves lost. Here and elsewhere in the exhibition, visitors encounter combinations of pieces of wood, junk, scattered eggshells, leaves and twigs, as well as discarded tablets and smartphones or damaged electrical wiring. These appear to have been fossilised forever in the thick epoxy layer in this space, gaining new value.



Fossilized Laguna, 2021, installation with mixed media (detail), Courtesy the artist





Installation view Laure Prouvost: *Deep See Blue Surrounding You/Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*, 2021-2022, Bonnefanten, Maastricht

Room 2.19

However dreamlike Prouvost's installations may be, they carry a clear activist message. She plays with her own charming visual language by adding ironic elements. Her work is often an indictment of discrimination, whether on the basis of gender, cultural background, level of education or age.

Prouvost generally combines multiple messages in one work of art. Discrimination, for example, merges seamlessly with another key theme in her oeuvre: global warming. Her *Cooling Systems* are perhaps the best-known examples of this practice. These misty fountains are a laconic commentary on the climate crisis. They are a completely unrealistic solution for the ominous future that awaits us all: an overheated and parched world. The flowers and breasts ensure a playful atmosphere, while also creating a connection between the feminine, nature, breastmilk and water as the source of life.

The combination of themes such as discrimination and ecology constantly takes viewers by surprise and keeps them on their toes. Prouvost herself says that her works express their current context while at the same time lamenting our shared dystopian future.

The inclusion of teabags in the installation *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* is a reference to John Latham, an English conceptual artist for whom Laure Prouvost worked as an assistant. Latham dried his teabags as part of a practice of reuse and recycling.

Room 2.21

Prouvost's multinational background means that language occupies a large role in her work. Steering a course between French and English, she plays with spelling versus pronunciation, with sayings versus facts. The title of the exhibition, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You / Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*, is a good example. Prouvost is playing here with the English words 'sea' and 'see', which sound the same but have very different meanings. The French verb 'fondre', which means 'to melt', is used here with a nod to the English verb 'to melt', which can also be used figuratively to describe emotions, as in the expression 'it melts your heart'. With this playfulness, Prouvost demonstrates that people have the capacity to understand sentences that are not technically correct from a linguistic point of view. In fact, this kind of language opens up a whole new spectrum of associations and meanings.

The End of a Dream reflects a strong interaction between image and text. The inscription lends an extra layer of meaning to this toilet elevated to a fountain. What dream is this exactly? Within the context of Prouvost's oeuvre and this room, the words appear to refer to global warming. The hope that the world might unite to fight for a healthier environment seems to have evaporated – this is what Prouvost appears to be saying. However, this is not the only association that comes to mind. A sad lover might sense that their relationship is going down the drain, while an uninspired author could feel like flushing their unfinished manuscript down the toilet.

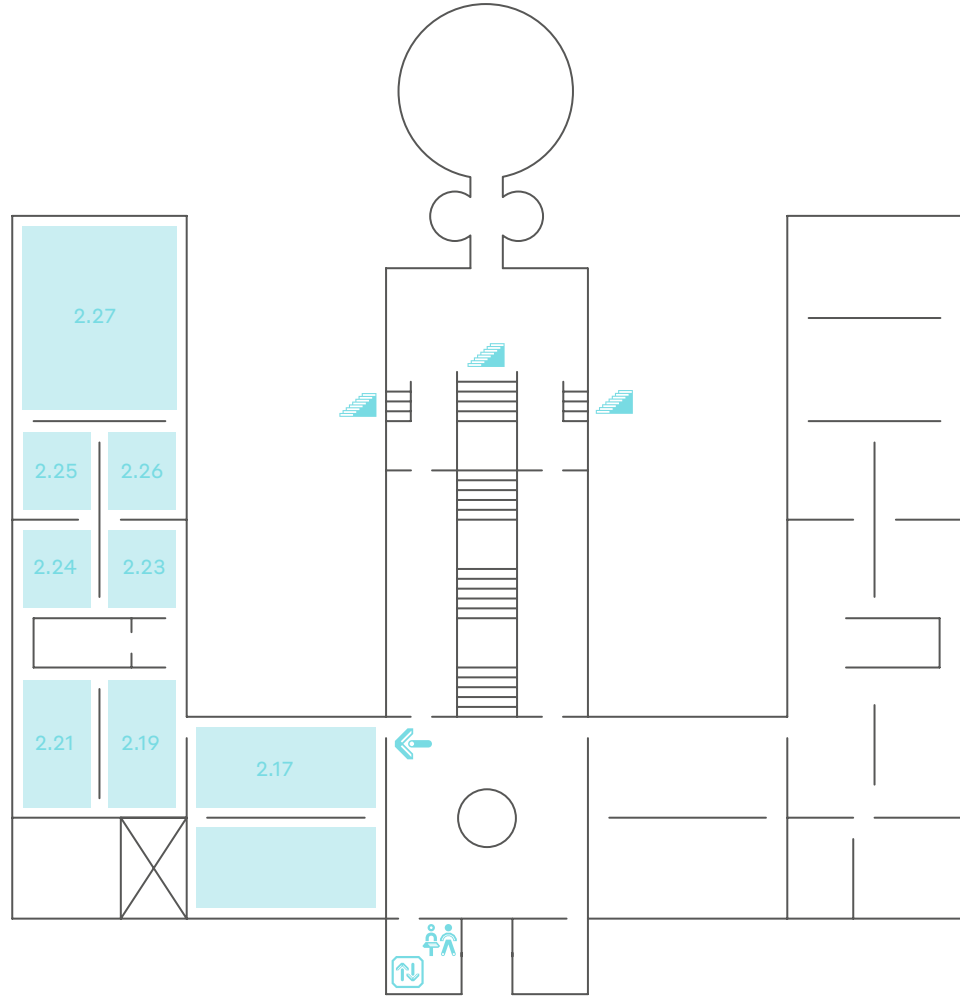
The words are also at odds with the sculpture. The end of a dream seems to be the beginning of a work of art, and the thoughts it provokes flow on and on, just as the water does. This is typical of Prouvost's relationship with language. Language is, in her view, both a means of communication and a source of miscommunication, a catalyst for both understanding and misunderstanding. Playing with language clears the way for the imagination. Prouvost's words leap and swirl, leaving us astonished.




The End of a Dream, 2019-2021, fountain with mixed media. Courtesy carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid





← Exhibition starts here

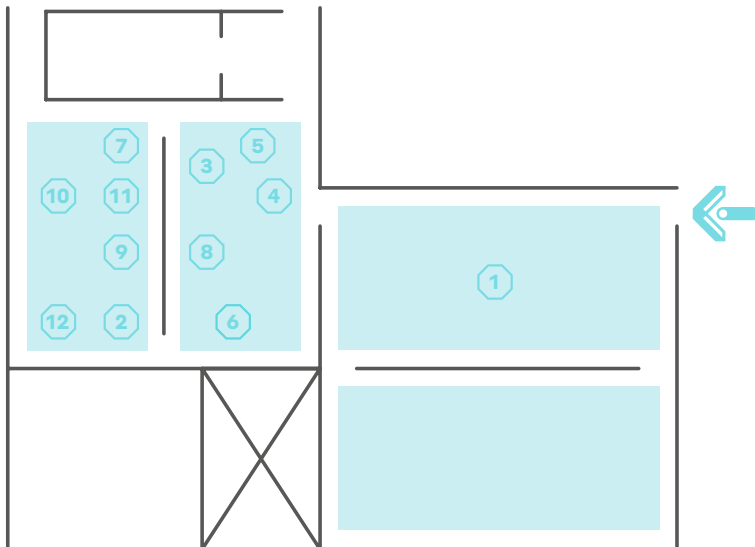


-  Elevator to other floors
-  Stairs to other floors
-  Toilets



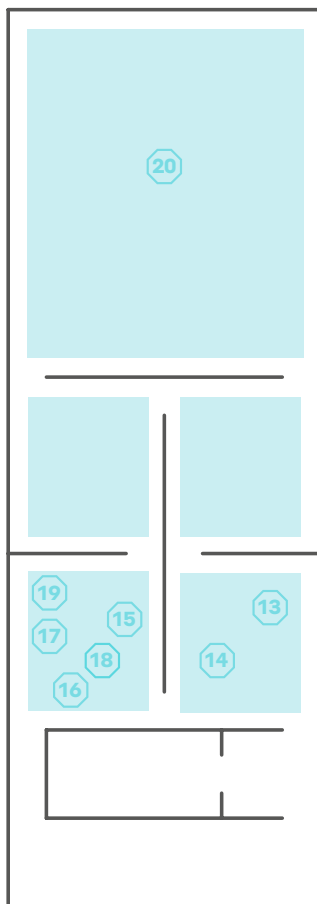


Floorplan



← Exhibition starts here

- 2.17**
- 1 Fossilized Laguna, 2021, installation with mixed media, Courtesy of the artist
- 2.19 en 2.21**
- 2 *Cooling System 2 (b) (for Global Warming)*, 2017, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, 3/3 ed., 1 AP, Courtesy carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid
- 3 *Cooling System 4 (for Global Warming)*, 2018, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, 3/3 ed. Collection Ivo and Monique Van Vaerenbergh, Zoersel, Belgium
- 4 *Cooling System 6 (for Global Warming)*, 2018, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, Private Collection
- 5 *Cooling System 7 (for Global Warming)*, 2018, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, Courtesy carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid
- 6 *Cooling System 8 (for Global Warming)*, 2019, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, 1/1, Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/ Brussels
- 7 *Cooling System 10 (for Global Warming)*, 2019, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, Collection Bonnefanten, Maastricht
- 8 *Cooling System 11 (for Global Warming)*, 2019, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, unique edition 1/3 + 1AP, Courtesy carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid
- 9 *Cooling System 12 (for Global Warming)*, 2019, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, unique edition 2/3 + 1AP, Private Collection, Courtesy carlier|Gebauer, Berlin/Madrid
- 10 *Cooling System 13 (for Global Warming)*, 2019, Murano glass, wood, concrete base, watercolour on paper, unique edition 1/1, Courtesy carlier|Gebauer, Berlin/Madrid
- 11 *How to keep cool*, 2021 HD video and installation 02:07 min, Courtesy of the artist
- 12 *The End of a Dream*, 2019-2021, fountain with light and soundeffects Courtesy carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid



2.23
13 *On était tous là*, 2019, table with dmx sound and light, glass objects and levitating systems, Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid and Lisson Gallery, London/New York/Shanghai

14 Victor Ruiz-Huidobro, *Mitre à maître*, 1995 - 27 VII 1997, balloon, cardboard, plaster tape, plaster, velvet, graphite, gouache, wood, acrylic and gold leaf. Courtesy Victor Ruiz Huidobro

2.24
15 *Feu que, I was born here*, 2019, tapestry and mixed media with glass elements Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid and Lisson Gallery, London/New York/Shanghai

16 *Metal Man: Deflated but there*, 2018, metal painting, private collection Switzerland

17 Agnès Varda, *Palais Idéal du facteur Cheval*, 1955, photographs, @Succession Varda, Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

18 *With our elastic arms we drink deep sea blue to parlaient idéal*, 2021. Installation video. Courtesy of the artist.

19 *Agnès*, 2019, mixed media, private collection

2.27
20 *They Parlaient Idéale*, 2019, video HD, ed. 3+2 AP, ed. 2/3, Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, carlier|gebauer, Berlin/Madrid and Lisson Gallery, London/New York/Shanghai

Ground floor, main stairs
21 *Ideally You Would go deeper to the back of this building*, 2019, beton, ijzer, privé collectie, Duitsland



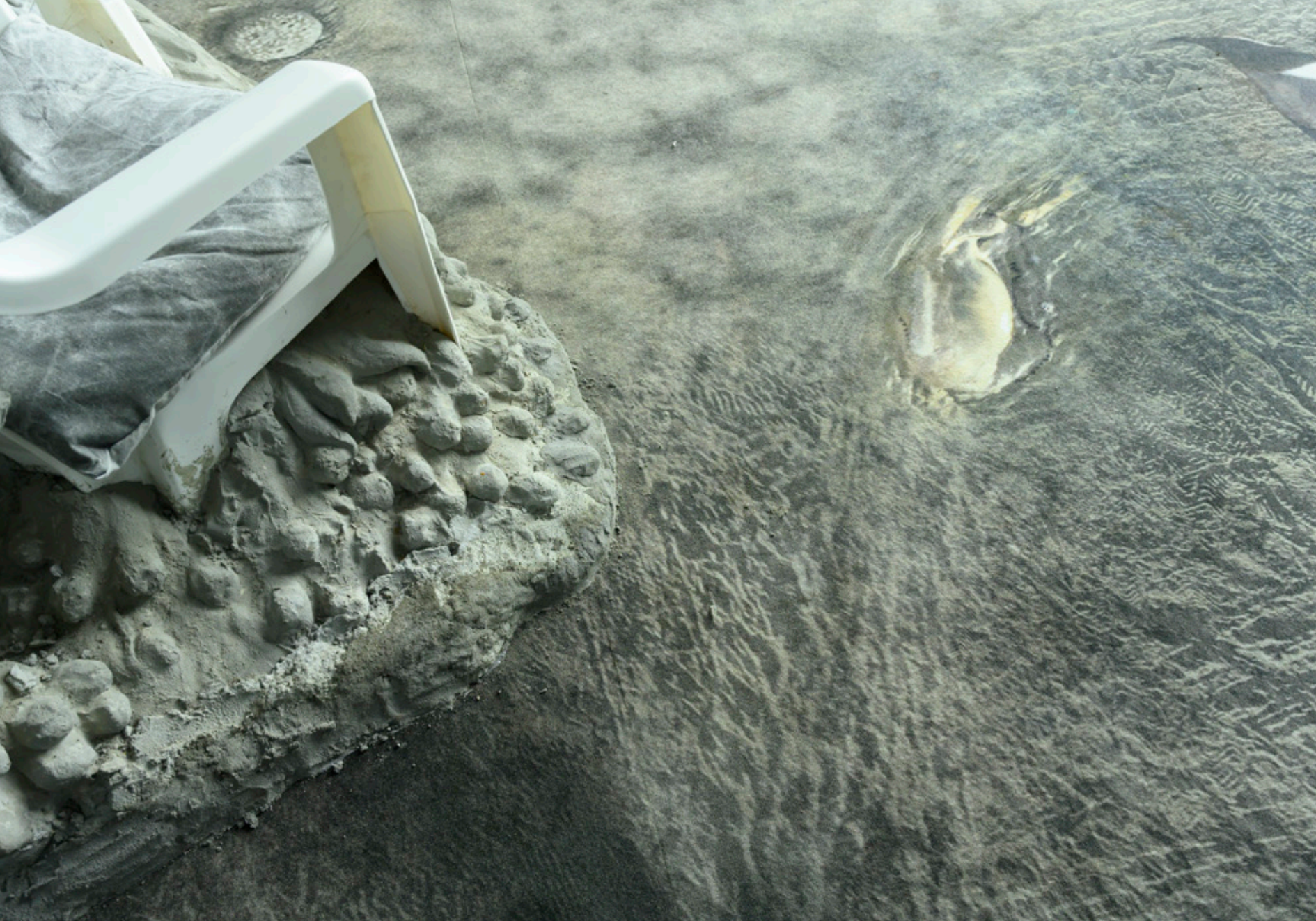
Both images and image on the next page: Installation view Laure Prouvost: *Deep See Blue Surrounding You/Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*, 2021-2022, Bonnefanten, Maastricht

Room 2.23

Laure Prouvost met the artist Victor Ruiz-Huidobro as a result of the film he made for the Venice Biennale in 2019. Prouvost has incorporated his *Mitre à Maître*, some of the details of which Ruiz-Huidobro explains in the video of the same name, in her installation. He has created more than 32 mitres and headdresses, most of them made from balloons covered with plaster, which he paints with great attention to detail.

In 1999 Ruiz-Huidobro founded the 'APOTHECARIES poëpla' group, the 'Association of Occasional Wearers of Tall Headdresses against the Insufficiently Prudent Height of Signs, Blinds, Doors and Ceilings'. In its first manifesto, the group called for a law to adjust the height of passageways, so that those wearing tall headgear could move through them with dignity. The humour and Ruiz-Huidobro's distinct fondness for the French language and its forgotten words allowed for a natural integration into Laure Prouvost's installation.

It is not uncommon for Prouvost to take inspiration from the practice of other artists. So, it is no surprise to find *On était tous là* in this room: a table buzzing with energy, long conversations, drink and cigarettes refers to the inspiration that an in-depth exchange of thoughts can bring. *They Parlaient Idéale*, which can be seen in Room 2.27, also relies heavily on the performance artists who appear in the film.

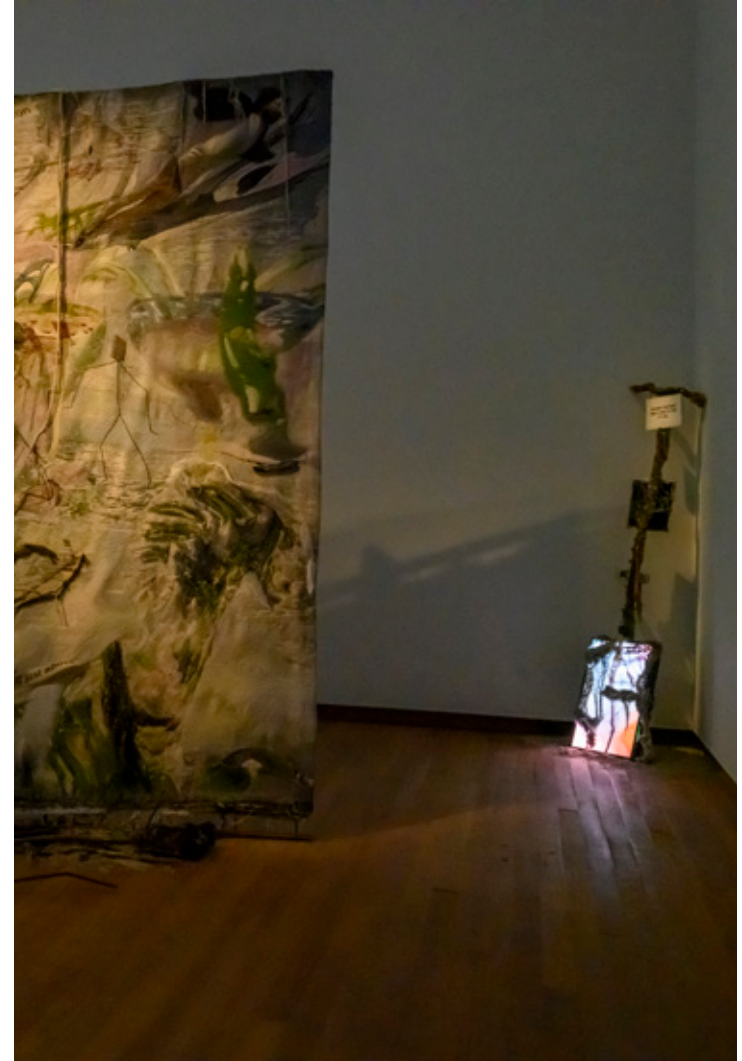


Room 2.24

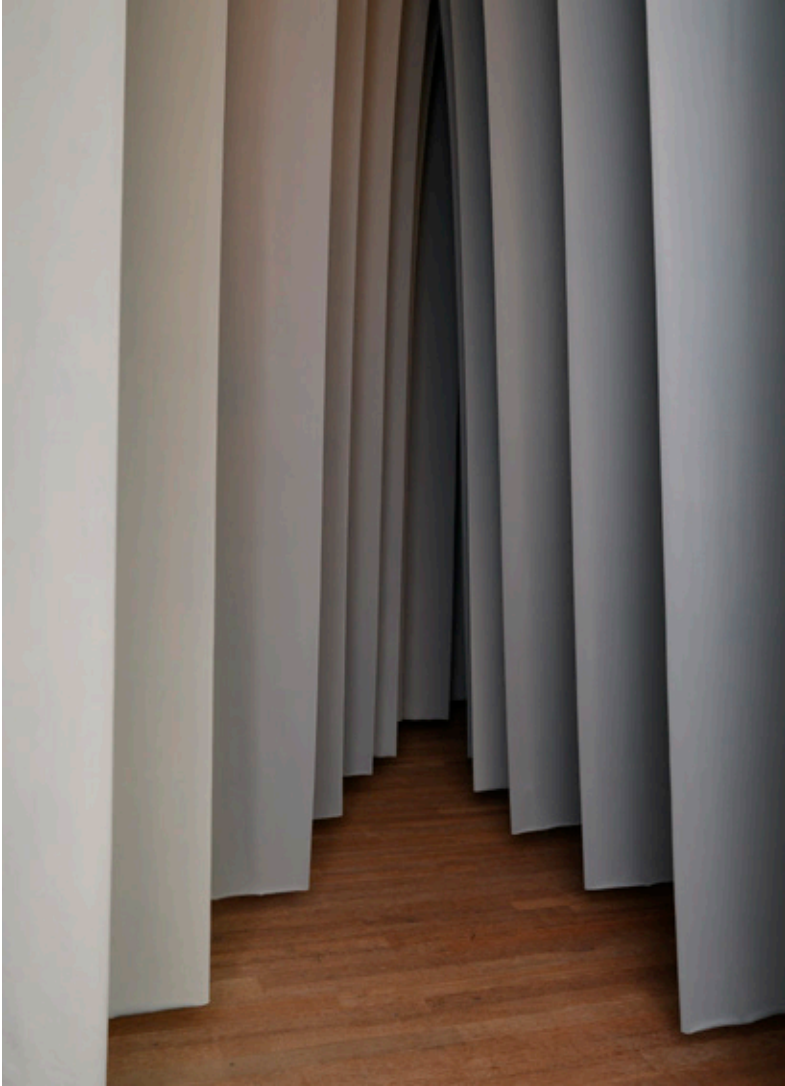
Since 2014, tapestries have been a significant part of Prouvost's oeuvre. This woven medium fits well with her artistic practice, in which the creation of associations and the intertwining of meanings are key elements. Every tapestry is an echo of one of her films, bridging two very different media.

Prouvost's tapestries also play an important role in the mythology she has created around her own background. Her work often features her fictional grandfather, a Dadaist artist and contemporary of Kurt Schwitters. For reasons unknown, this grandfather can never be found. In Prouvost's world, it is her grandmother who makes the tapestries, as she awaits her husband's return.

Feu que, I was born to be here... is a key work in Prouvost's oeuvre. The tapestry was made in 2019 for the Venice Biennale and is closely related to the film *They Parlaient Idéale*. It combines actors and scenes from the video and objects and sentences from the script. The dynamic composition evokes the acceleration of the images, the power and daring of the scenario. In a sea-green atmosphere that is reminiscent of the deep waters of Venice, Laure Prouvost plays with the iconography of the video. She capitalises on this to create a depiction that has to be read from left to right to follow the narrative of the film.



Installation view Laure Prouvost: *Deep See Blue Surrounding You/Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*, 2021-2022, Bonnefanten, Maastricht



Rooms 2.25 & 2.26

Laure Prouvost often connects her oeuvre to the figure of the octopus. The octopus serves as a symbol of intelligence, flexibility and eroticism, a member of the mollusc family with a remarkable characteristic: its senses and brains are located in its tentacles. In other words, it thinks by feeling and feels by thinking.

The concept for the exhibition's layout is also a reference to the octopus. The film *They Parlaient Idéale* forms the 'soft centre' of the show, which then branches out into the space to occupy the various rooms on either side, like tentacles connecting the objects and performances on display. Laure Prouvost's artistic practice forms her own tentacular universe, which is not about fixed points and facts but about a multiplicity of shifting and overlapping realities.

Room 2.27

The fictional film *They Parlaient Idéale* depicts a joyful road trip that Prouvost took from the outskirts of Paris to Venice. Along the way, she meets extraordinary people of various ages and backgrounds, including performance artists such as illusionists, dancers and musicians, who perform dialogues they have written together, switching between French, English, Dutch, Arabic and Italian.

Many objects on display in the exhibition also appear in the film. The artist once again blurs the line between fiction and reality and appears to philosophise about the idea of utopia: the perfect place, which does not exist anywhere. She and the other participants in the film think about a future in which everyone is equal and connected. The locations for the film were deliberately selected for these musings. The journey begins in the suburbs of Paris, where the dated ideal of living as a collective, which was so popular in the 1970s, is still in evidence. The group later makes a stop in Marseille, the port city in the south of France, which, since the days of the Roman Empire, has been a centre of trade, immigration and cultural exchange.

The most important location in the film is the Palais Idéal in Hauterives, built between 1879 and 1912 by the postman Ferdinand Cheval. This indefinable place, which is packed with Biblical, Egyptian and Hindu allusions, had a magnetic effect on Prouvost because of the connection she feels to her own associative, labyrinthine oeuvre. The cement chairs in the room, which visitors can sit on to watch the film, were inspired by Facteur Cheval's constructions.



Both images and image on the next page: Installation view Laure Prouvost: *Deep See Blue Surrounding You/Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre*, 2021-2022, Bonnefanten, Maastricht



Laure Prouvost:
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Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre

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They Parlaient Idéale (video still),
2019, HD video. Courtesy
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