

# Mona Filleul



AIR DE PARIS



# MONA FILLEUL

Born in 1993

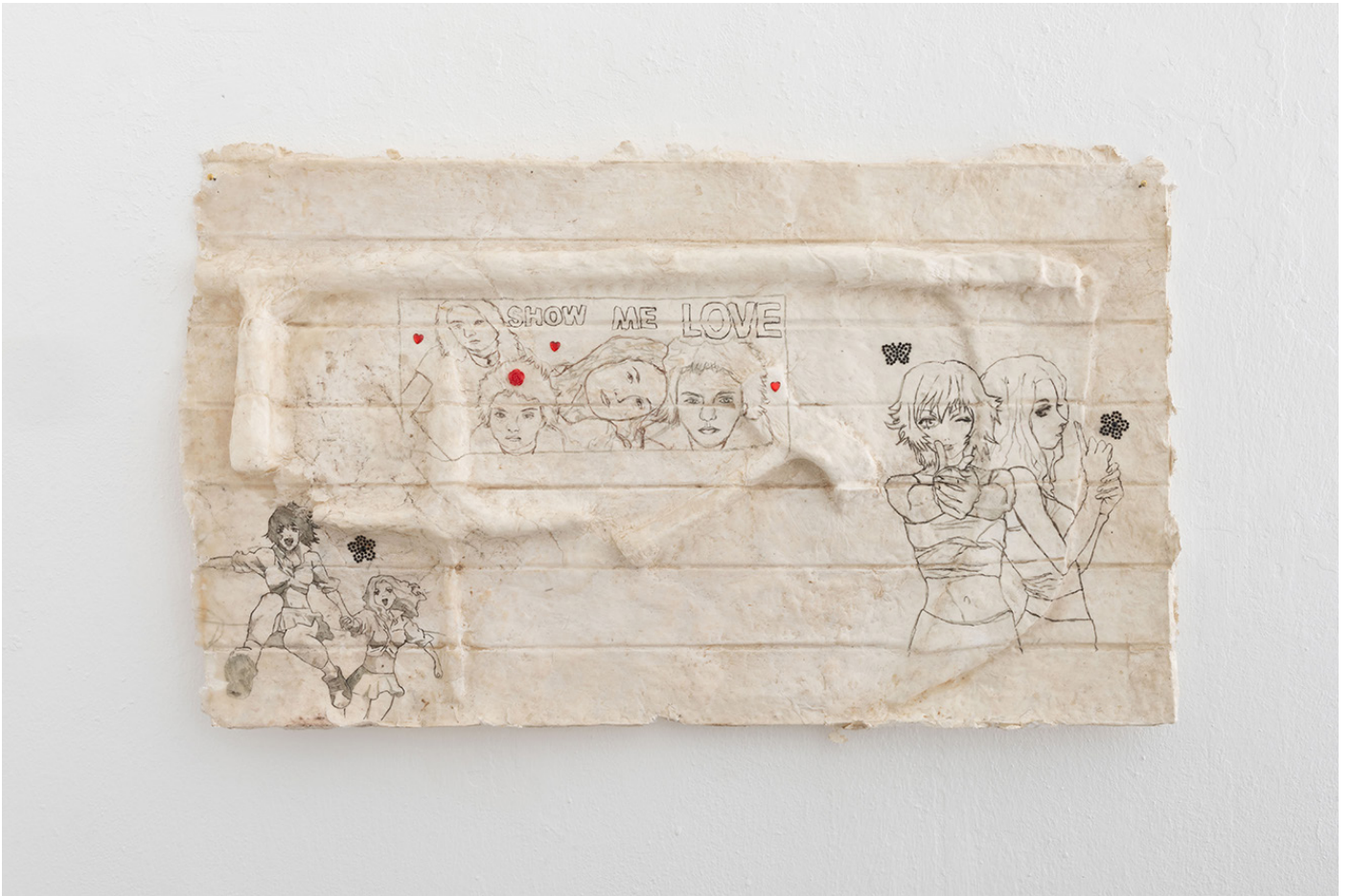
Lives and works in Brussels and Paris

«The art of Mona Filleul drags you into the cracks between life and survival. There is an off-the-grid quality to what she makes, where the grid is the one of actual supplies and that of art's institutions. Choices in her work come across as responses to a recurring question: what is the most honest thing to do in a specific moment. Think of being cold and getting an extra sweater to counter the uncomfortable feeling. Indeed, sincerity prevails over trickery in her work, whether as a necessity or a contingency, whether as an a priori condition - she is that way - or as an a posteriori one - she will act that way.»

- Piero Bisello

Mona Filleul was recently named laureate of the Swiss Art Awards 2023 and has just completed a residency at the Centre d'Art Contemporain WIELS in Brussels.

Filleul has exhibited her work in solo shows at various venues, including sis123 in La-Chaux-de-Fonds (2022), DuflonRacz in Bern (2021), Emergency in Vevey (2020), and Los Atlas in Brussels (2017). Filleul was assistant/curator for établissement d'en face (2021- 2023) and Duflon/Racz (2018, 2020, 2021) in Brussels. Her recent exhibitions have taken place in various venues, including off-spaces (a duo exhibition with Gaia Vincensini at Mayday, Basel, 2024), private galleries (a collective exhibition at Air de Paris, Paris, 2023), and public institutions (a collective exhibition at Z33, Hasselt, 2023).



Exhibition view: **Alde**, Sonnentube Off Space, Lugano, 2024





Exhibition view: Pocket Camp, Mayday, Basel, 2024



## Of Bodies in Digital Life, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Langenthal, Switzerland

04.04. – 23.06.24

The exhibition features young artists whose work engages with the body in digital life. Since the dawn of the internet era, the topic has continued to be a subject of discussion as well as of artistic exploration: Utopian visions of transcending the body and becoming cyborg confront the sober reality of swiping over

smooth, cold surfaces for hours on end, causing aching joints and disrupted sleep. The dream of a free, democratic network has given way to the mechanisms of the attention economy and commercialization. Virtual spaces and online platforms offer diverse opportunities for self-representation, artistic practice, as

well as networking and community-building. The past few years have seen the growth of emancipatory movements surrounding questions of body images and norms, particularly in regard to gender and race. At the same time, virtual spaces beyond these niches continue to be dominated by bodies that peddle normative and gender-stereotypical conceptions of beauty as erotic capital within platform capitalism. How does the youngest generation of artists, which was born in the 1990s, the decade that saw the launch

of the World Wide Web, and grew up with the internet, respond to these developments? How do they bring their everyday experience and critical reflection of media-saturated life to bear on an artistic tradition of representing bodies, which, after all, is one of the great topics in art history?

Mona Filleul contributes *Bonnie (2024)* and *Kuromi (2024)*, which is constructed from sheets of plasterboard into which reliefs and objects made from LED lights have been integrated. The reliefs are the result of labour-intensive manual crafting: Filleul first creates clay models, then covers them in mulberry fibre, and finally applies the actual surface, a layer of beeswax and colour. The outside relief alludes to the world of memes, while the inside is an intimate portrait of a friend.

Aside from the true-to-life head – albeit with the face hidden – the person is represented through their preferred texting emojis. The simultaneous presence in physical and digital spaces and the presence of the body in the allegedly disembodied digital world are central topics in the work of the artist. In which of these spaces do people feel at home? When is there a need for the creation of new (virtual and physical) spaces by communities of like-minded people – just as the installation consisting of building material quite literally delineates a new space? The motif of showing and hiding, which already occurs in the portrait, also comes up again in *Thank You and Me (2024)*, which was created with Gaia Vincensini and can be found on the opposite wall





Exhibition view: *Of Bodies in Digital Life*, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Langenthal, 2024



## Destinées, Air de Paris, Romainville, France

05.10 - 25.11.23

What if curating an exhibition involved «problematizing»? As David Vercauteren puts it: «What is problematizing? It's a kind of production of materials that takes place in the twists and turns of thought: between words and things, among the multiple realms of experience and the ways we tell them, among our lives and the wounds that shape our bodies, among all the signs that inhabit our perception and the meaning that shatters our established worlds ».

The exhibition Destinées presents works by Mona Filleul, Jeanne Jacob, Aurélien Potier, Émile Rubino and Leïla Vilmouth, young artists we have met here (Beaux-Arts de Paris) and there (Swiss Awards). What happens when, far from being based on a precise and assertive concept, which would imply that the visit is an opportunity to check its relevance, an exhibition is conceived to form a group that does not yet exist? It would be hard to find immediate links between their works, all the more so as they seem resistant to any hasty approach, which is nevertheless what we must try to do here.

The pieces of Mona Filleul's Starmix series consist of insulation boards whose proportions are similar to those of a smartphone. They are displayed perpendicular to the wall, and the artist has reproduced some of her stories on one side by carving them out and inserting reliefs. These images, «a combination of life images and of SoundCloud covers», are reproduced in clay covered with paper made from plant fibres and painted using traditional techniques (tempera and hot wax painting). The LED lamp wires inserted into the panel are visible on the reverse side, as are the Mp3 players in which sound loops, limited to 15 seconds by the app, are recorded. The works offer a new, comforting experience. They share with Instagram — the app they come from — the power to record powerful experiences using image and sound.





Exhibition view: **Destinées**, Air de Paris, Romainville, 2024

**Parking Me, SB34 Clovis, Brussels**  
**28.04 –03.06.2022**

I had a chat with Mona four days ago. Her playlist consists of five songs that are necessary survival items despite how bad they are. Urgency rules over banality—who would notice the cheesy color of the oxygen mask dropping from the panel above your head. Mona mentioned how relieving it was to present the work in an art nouveau house with post modern interiors. The simple white cube is complex—its ideology poses questions that Mona’s work is not comfortable with. Indeed comfort is a trope in her proposal for “Parking Me”. The music soothes while we cocoon in the squeezed layers of a warm niche, while the built city of bricks runs its course outside, likely a rough one, definitely cluttered. An art nouveau interior hardly included insulating material. Heat was created but not preserved. In Mona’s words, the un-conserved interior of the exhibition space is, “the clue about something sad, the project of someone who overlooks a common order, but shows their ideology with blunt clarity, and for this reason should be respected more than a cunningly counterpart who simply sugarcoats the same intentions.” Happily we see the back of Mona’s bas reliefs in this show. Naked yet covered, they are like that little itch: we are curious at first, we obsess shortly next.



Exhibition view: **Parking Me**, SB34 Clovis, Brussels, 2022





Starmix 1, 2023, insulation plates, Mulberry fiber, tempera, beeswax, hemp, mp3, led, 60 x 120 x 8 cm



Starmix 2, 2023, insulation plates, Mulberry fiber, tempera, beeswax, hemp, mp3, led, 60 x 120 x 8 cm





**Kuromi (Fantasia 1)**, 2023, 4 elements : beeswax, fabric, led, hair, embroidery, tempera, cellular concrete, mulberry fiber and electric circuit, 130 x 115 cm





**My Melody (Fantasia 2)**, 2024, 4 elements : beeswax, fabric, led, hair, embroidery, tempera, cellular concrete, mulberry fiber and electric circuit, 130 x 115 cm





Phantasia 3 - kiss me, 2024, tempera, cellular concrete, mulberry fiber, beeswax, fabric, LED lights, 76 cm x 90



Phantasia 4 - puppy play cookie, 2024, tempera, cellular concrete, mulberry fiber, beeswax, fabric, LED lights. 76 cm x 90