



CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN  
D'INTERET NATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

# NOÉMIE GOUDAL POST ATLANTICA

EXHIBITION  
FROM 10.10.21 TO 2.1.22



# NOÉMIE GOUDAL

## "POST ATLANTICA"

Exhibition from 10 October 2021 to 2 January 2022

Opening on Saturday 9 October from 5pm

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Le Grand Café - contemporary art centre is delighted to present Noémie Goudal's first solo exhibition in a French art centre since her notable exhibition at the BAL in 2016.

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### POST ATLANTICA

Noémie Goudal's work, finely balanced between realism and invention, is an attempt to understand landscape by approaching it from multiple directions. For several years, the artist has used photography, video and immersive installation to develop a body of work related to discoveries made by paleoclimatologists. Paleoclimatologists look for clues (fossils, pollen, or carbon atoms captured in ice) that allow them to form hypotheses about past and future climate: how warm was it 300 million years ago? How have tectonic plates shifted and what climatic upheavals did this bring about? Researchers can draw extremely vast conclusions from elements that are sometimes microscopically small: in her work, Noémie Goudal, fascinated by this conceptual vertigo, replays these complex inquiries whereby landscape explains itself in the light of its own history rather than through the prism of the history of mankind. What has landscape been through to get to where it is today? What will it be tomorrow? How could this continuously moving *landscape material* be translated in physical terms? Using artifice and scenery, optical illusion and *trompe-l'œil*, Noémie Goudal's images sublimate their scientific foundations without abandoning them, opening up onto all kinds of imaginary interpretations.

### A TITLE CONCERTINAED

Any number of scholarly or technical terms include the prefix *Post* in their construction, indicating immediate succession in space or time. In particular, we use it to designate a concept following on from another, but which we are unable to directly and precisely name. Post-colonialism, post-industrial society or postmodernity are defined in relation

to what came before, but the contours of their immediate sense haven't yet been clarified.

There is a similar hazy indeterminacy in the title of Noémie Goudal's exhibition at Le Grand Café: POST ATLANTICA looks like an enigma, a rhythm of alliterative sounds contracting the notions of space and time into one expression. The title could easily refer to the artist's work in its entirety and not just this exhibition, Noémie Goudal's art being so often located in the constant to-and-fro between actual geography and the past and/or the future, between the information that she conveys and what she suggests. In its generality, this title raises questions about an enormous territory, the Atlantic, with disquieting or even crepuscular undertones: after the profound modifications of the Anthropocene, what will the ecological future of these waters be? As usual, Noémie Goudal also asks us to look to the past, to the distant times when Africa and America were a single supercontinent which then fragmented. The geologist John J. W. Rogers named this paleocontinent Atlantica, since the division of this space created the South Atlantic Ocean around 200 million years ago. The title POST ATLANTICA therefore incorporates the idea of a shifting landscape, and intimately connects the exhibition to a concertina of multiple spatiotemporal layers.

### BREATHING LIFE INTO LANDSCAPE

When she is building her pictorial devices Noémie Goudal uses a kind of handmade scenery that deliberately displays its structural archaisms and imperfections in opposition to the smooth aesthetic of digital retouching tools. The artist's new installation, presented in the large space on the ground floor of Le Grand Café, reasserts her knowingly rudimentary approach and the poetics of modest special effects in inventive paper scenery

that emphasises the materiality of the image itself. Entitled *Inhale Exhale*, two screens are set up and presented back-to-back, playing out-of-sync loops of the same video projection. The images immerse the visitor in a calm marshland landscape with characteristically dense bankside vegetation. A number of scenery flats emerge from the plane of greenish water, hoisted by a system of ropes and pulleys, then disappear once again beneath the stagnant surface. The setup, a performance filmed in a static shot, allows new layers of tropical vegetation to slowly appear: palm trees and banana plants, that make up different points in the memory of the landscape. Here, the artist is making a subtle reference to the history of geology, to the German climatologist Alfred Wegener's formulation of his theory of continental drift in 1912. Long after his death, the mechanisms of plate tectonics became clear to the scientific community, as did the visual interlocking of Africa and Latin America, the oceanic ridge, and the presence of particular plant species and minerals on both sides of the Atlantic. The palm or the banana recurrently appear as such in Noémie Goudal's work: they are markers of movement, standing on the two sides of the bank, witnesses to the history of a dislocated and torn landscape. This idea, dizzying for a human, that leads to having to think of a territory as being in perpetual movement, took a long time to be adopted. The installation *Inhale Exhale* integrates the *perpetuum mobile* in a meditative and choreographic form: the images turn their backs on each other with a delay, to a rhythm of point and counterpoint like a musical round or a vital, primal respiration. This is further amplified by an englobing ambient sound, sounds of wildlife and an alarming murmur that seem to surge from the bowels of the earth, coupled to the almost comical creaking of the scenery being operated. On a side wall, the artist presents exactly that: two photographs from the filming, full of inventive machineries, that reveal the construction of her own images.

Outside the projection space, on a full-height daylighted stud wall that stands facing the large window bay, the artist is showing *Décantation*, the recent developments of the *Démantèlement* series. It too evokes the continual metamorphosis of an almost crystalline topography, nuanced with delicate tints tending towards white, pale blue and evanescent pink: a mountain is photographed and printed on water-soluble paper, in a *mise en abyme* it is then repeatedly reinserted in its original landscape and progressively washed out. The photographic process that is employed means that the monolithic

mountain seems to gradually melt, just as glaciers are in the present day. The viewer's body stands between this mosaic of liquified minerals and the exhibition's surroundings (Saint-Nazaire and the stream of urban life that flows on the other side of the glass) like an interpretive medium, physically invited to take up a position in respect of the surrounding images.

### CAVE

In art as in architecture, caves are spaces that have always inspired very particular ways of imagining the world, of forming concepts that are both mental and geophysical, naturalistic and mythological. Noémie Goudal has already worked with this motif, which can be seen as an interface between mental and physical space, a terrestrial laboratory tied to the emergence of art and images. Most notably, in the installation *Haven her body was* the cave appears as the earth's matrix, treated as a border between reality and fiction, truth and invention. At Le Grand Café, the artist is presenting a new work in which the cave plays the principal role, correlated with questions of point of view and of perception: how to be part of the perspective of one image while offering up a landscape that is part-real, part-artificial?

To this end, Noémie Goudal revisits the technique of anamorphosis, *the secret art of perspective* (Albrecht Dürer): on large strips of paper falling from the ceiling to the ground like backdrops in a photo studio, she presents deformed photographs of the space which can be recomposed from a preestablished point of view. Once again, it is about superimposed planes and fragmentations that create unexpected perceptions, that question our relationship to space and our imagination of space, and that reconsider the active place of the spectator in general. The title of this new installation, *Study on Perspective III*, covering both the focus on reality and its framing, both landscape and a change of scenery, is a strong sign of the obsessive research that Noémie Goudal carries out through her work.

### PHŒNIX

Like a mobile in a field of forces, the world such as Noémie Goudal represents it is constantly subjected to the dynamic determinism of the elements; water and fire being recurrent operators. On the first floor of the art centre, fire takes a leading role: a symbol of destruction and purification, fire embodies an elemental comfort and warmth that is as connected to change and renewal as it is to death and hell.

Noémie Goudal's most recent film, created for this exhibition, relates to a comparatively recent discovery. On a mission in Antarctica, a team drilling boreholes discovered coal deposits, a fossil fuel created by the carbonisation of plant organisms, which would prove the presence of tropical plants at that spot. Like a memory of fire beneath the ice, this part of Antarctica would therefore have been much closer to the Equator than was previously thought. In a poetic translation of this discovery, Noémie Goudal's film is titled *Below the Deep South*, since Antarctica is at the southernmost point of the planisphere; once again it relies on an optical illusion, where layers of scenery that represent the jungle stand one behind another in front of the camera, from the smallest to the largest, to form a single body of landscape. Layer by layer the artist sets fire to it, and, as the scenery is consumed, paradoxical feelings are aroused: fascination in the face of the earth's power and its internal heat, fire as an instrument of passing time allowing the transition from one landscape to another, and the deathly sadness provoked by the destruction of an ecosystem, cruelly manifested by the recent huge wildfires connected to climate change. The volume of the soundtrack decreases as the public burning progresses: the noises of the jungle die down at the same rate as the flames, until finally there is just the chirp of a cricket.

Before we reach the film, Noémie Goudal is showing five photographs drawn from her *Phœnix* series in a pallid neon-lit space. Once again, through the allusion in the title, they recall the metaphor of fire as principle of death and rebirth. Picking up on the motif of the palm tree as a marker of temperature across the ages, these photographs are produced by a particular process: the artist photographs a palm grove that she has illuminated with white and artificial light, and then makes a life-size print of the electric landscape. The resulting image is next partitioned in strips, stretched on a frame, placed in front of the palm grove, and rephotographed to create a disturbing regression. With this complex device, Noémie Goudal arrives at a kind of optical marquetry, a disconcerting woven photography that disrupts the laws of both gravity and perspective. Even though they are made by hand, these *Phœnix* seem to relate to *glitch art*, computer images deformed by digital accidents that often show as de-structured pixels, abnormal colours or photographic aberrations. The artist and theoretician Rosa Menkman, author of *The Glitch Momentum*, describes this art as "*wonderful interruption that shifts an object away from its ordinary form and discourse*". Although technically distanced from these 'bugs',

Noémie Goudal comes paradoxically close to them: she defends the beauty of imperfection, and destabilises our ways of believing in images and representations. Alternating appearances and disappearances, these photographs ask us to excavate the multiple layers of their composition, and we should not forget the polysemy of the title: the date palm was named *Phœnix dactylifera* by the botanist Linné in 1734, perhaps because the Ancient Greeks considered it to be the tree of the Phoenicians (Phoinix); perhaps because the palm tree can survive a partial burning, like the bird being reborn from its ashes.

Strange circulations traverse the whole exhibition, clashing or harmonising on unexpected levels, where freezing links with burning, the mineral with the wet, brightness with darkness – Noémie Goudal's works pursue a turbulent and protean matter, paying constant close attention to understanding the movements of the world by augmenting the density of images, by enlarging their embrace of space and time.

Éva Prouteau, art critic

## AVAILABLE IMAGES

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These images are available in high-definition on request. Thank you for respecting and mentioning the caption and photo credit when reproducing them.

Pictures of the exhibition at Le Grand Café will be available on request from 12 October.



Noémie Goudal, *Below the Deep South*, 2021.  
Full HD film, colour, stereo, 11 min 34 sec  
Courtesy of the artist



Noémie Goudal, *Phoenix VII*, 2021, 200 x 149,4 cm, C-Print  
Courtesy of the artist



Noémie Goudal, *Phoenix V*, 2021, 200 x 149,4 cm, C-Print  
Courtesy of the artist



## AVAILABLE IMAGES

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Noémie Goudal, *Inhale Exhale*, 2021.  
Video installation  
Production Le Grand Café - contemporary art center  
Courtesy of the artist



Noémie Goudal, *Décantation I*, 2021  
Series of 8 prints, 45 x 34.2 cm each  
Production Le Grand Café - contemporary art center  
Courtesy of the artist

Next solo shows:

. Frieze London / Gallery Edel Assanti, London :  
11-17 October 2021

. *Échos toujours plus sourds*, Delacroix Museum,  
Paris: November 2021

. The Window Display, Le Plateau, Frac Ile-de-  
France, Paris, France: 2 March-10 April 2022

. Gallery Edel Assanti, London: March 2022

. Les Rencontres de la photographie, Arles  
(France), summer 2022: performance (creation),  
conception Noémie Goudal and Maëlle Poésy,  
director, with guests artists Chloé Moglia,  
performer and Chloé Thévenin, composer.

. In residence at the Manufacture de Sèvres  
(Paris) since 2018.



Noémie Goudal, making of *Phoenix*, 2021  
Courtesy of the artist



## BIOGRAPHY

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Noémie Goudal is born in 1984, she lives and works in Paris, France.

Noémie Goudal examines the potential of the image as a whole through films, photographs and installations, reconstructing its strata and possibilities for extension. Oscillating between reality and invention, her images present large-scale installations in natural spaces that renew the very notion of landscape in our contemporary society.

Noémie Goudal graduated from The Royal College of Arts in 2010. She was rewarded by HSBC in 2013.

Her work can be found in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; FOAM Photography Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Saatchi Gallery, London, UK; David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK, etc.

<http://noemiegoudal.com/>

Noémie Goudal is represented by Galleries Edel Assanti (London) and Les Filles du Calvaire (Paris).

<https://edelassanti.com/>  
[www.fillesducalvaire.com](http://www.fillesducalvaire.com)

### Recent solo shows (selection)

2019: Kunstverein Hildesheim, Germany; Exposure Award winner, Les Filles du Calvaire Gallery, Shanghai Photofair, China; Ballarat International Foto Biennale, The Art Gallery of Ballarat, Australia; Musée des beaux-arts, Le Locle, Switzerland  
2018: Fotografiska, Stockholm, Sweden; The Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, Finland ; Edel Assanti Gallery, London, UK  
2017: Abbaye de Jumièges, France  
2016: Le BAL, Paris



Noémie Goudal par Martin Argyroglo

### Recent collectives shows (selection)

2021: *A Year of 13 Moons*, Galerist, Istanbul, Turkey  
2020: *On Earth*, Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France; *Accelerate Your Escape: Gary Hume Explores the Hiscox Collection*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK  
2019: *Inner Space*, Lisbon Architecture Triennale, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Portugal; Alt+1000 Photography Festival, Switzerland; *On Earth*, Atelier des Forges, Les Rencontres d'Arles, France; Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria; *Moonlight: 50 Years of Photographing the Moon*, Hasselblad Foundation, Gothenburg, Sweden; Korea International Photography Festival, Seoul, South Korea  
2018: *Loading... Works from the Foam collection*, FOAM Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; *Elsewhere*, Joseph Gross Gallery, University of Arizona, USA



## EXHIBITION EVENTS

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### GUIDED TOURS

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Every Saturday at 4pm

The art centre's mediation team offers a guided tour of the exhibition, open to all.

Free admission, no reservation required. Duration about 1 hour.

### FRENCH SIGN LANGUAGE VISIT

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Wednesday 20 October at 5.30pm

Free guided tour interpreted in Fr/LSF (French sign language) by IDEM Interpretation.

Open to all, by reservation. Duration about 1 hour.



### RECEPTION CONDITIONS ACCORDING TO THE HEALTH SITUATION

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Access on presentation of the health pass.

The pass consists of either :

- A complete vaccination plan,
- A negative antigen or RT-PCR test less than 72 hours old,
- A positive RT-PCR test older than 11 days and less than 6 months.

Wearing a mask remains mandatory, hydroalcoholic gel is available, physical distancing is recommended.

#### Informations and reservations:

Pôle des publics du Grand Café

T. 02 51 76 67 01

[publicsgrandcafe@mairie-saintnazaire.fr](mailto:publicsgrandcafe@mairie-saintnazaire.fr)

Le Grand Café welcomes groups, by reservation.



Visits to the *Bella Vista* project at Le Grand Café - contemporary art centre in early 2021, with students in front of Noémie Goudal's work. Photographs by Le Grand Café.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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### Opening days and times

From Tuesday to Sunday 2pm to 7 pm. Closed on 25 December and 1 January.

Specific protocol for receiving the public according to the health situation

Free entrance

### Venue

By bus

Bus stop Quatre z'horloges: line U2

Bus stop Rue de la Paix: line Hélyce

By train

From Paris-Montparnasse (TGV): 2h40

From Nantes (TGV ou TER): 30 to 50 minutes

Then Bus:

Line U2 to St-Marc (Le Grand Pez) — bus stop Quatre z'horloges

Line Hélyce to Université — bus stop rue de la Paix

By car

From Nantes by the 4 lane road: 45 minutes

From Rennes: 1h30

From Vannes: 1h

Parking nearby

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Le Grand Café, contemporary art centre of national interest of the City of Saint-Nazaire, is supported by the French Ministry of Culture (DRAC Pays de la Loire), the Regional Council of Pays de la Loire and the Departmental Council of Loire-Atlantique.

Le Grand Café is certified "Centre d'art contemporain d'intérêt national" by the French Ministry of Culture.

It is a member of d.c.a / Association française de développement des centres d'art contemporain (French Association for the Development of Contemporary Art Centres) and the Pôle arts Visuels Pays de la Loire (Pays de la Loire Visual Arts Centre).

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