



Axel Gouala
Portfolio 2025

***Visual interference and hybrid correspondence:
objects transform and yet remain the same through the artist's irony***

Sculptor, designer, and engraver, Axel Gouala loves to use heterogeneous materials and techniques in his practice, giving life to creations that trigger a profound empathy in the viewer. Gouala's art starts from everyday life to lead us into a world made of possibilities, rarefied and full of symbols. The result is pieces that challenge conventions, inviting the audience to reflect on their essence; creations that convey messages full of meaning without putting aside irony and lightness. "An important component that runs through my work," says the artist, "is the desire to share ideas through mockery". Having graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Strasbourg, Gouala's education was imbued with a deep bond with artisanal traditions. "I do not hesitate to refer to crafting but I have no intention of creating a dichotomy between artisanal and industrial practice". Indeed, these two souls coexist in his work which is often guided by the materials themselves, by their shapes and peculiarities, transforming both the aesthetic aspect and the practical function of the objects. The artist's creative process is divided into different phases. "I am moved by a creative gaze that contaminates the objects that surround me; I let myself be inspired by them as if they were my lifelong companions." Gouala tries to extract the object from its specific context, focusing on the most generic and often standardized characteristics, those which, as he states, "the observer keeps in his mind" as the most relevant peculiarities from an aesthetic point of view. Gouala's work immerses us in an ephemeral and fantastic universe in which every element is reinterpreted and decontextualized. The wave is no longer in the sea just like the mountain is no longer in the range: through apparently simple interventions, the objects are profoundly modified while remaining completely recognizable. In Totem-Voyage, in a process similar to that of collage, a vacuum cleaner is transformed into a palm tree and the visual interferences between the two objects lead the audience's minds in very different directions, away from the objects' physicality if not for their location in space. "I enjoy exacerbating these links by applying them in hybrid drawings and sculptures in which worlds mix and where integrity merges." The artist emphasizes that his reference to everyday life does not simply aim to highlight its dramatic nature but rather to dismantle its predefined conventions and transform appearances through a playful artistic gesture. In his intent there is no pretense of outlining an exhaustive representation of human life: rather, Gouala directs his art to mirror everyday life, the anxieties and stress that permeate us all.

Sofia Di Gravio
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photo : exhibition view, Materials and Motions, Galleria Eugenia Delfini, 2025



Lingua, concrete, 31,5 × 90,7 × 40 cm, 2025



Banana Gloves

ceramic
7 × 15 × 26,6 cm & 6,3 × 10,4 × 26,3 cm
2023



Clic

ceramic
6,9 × 11 × 22,5 cm
2023



Sling slang slug

mixed material
2 elements, white 25 × 30 × 75 cm ; violet : 95 × 38 × 8 cm
2025

Sling slang slug

« Un’opera scultorea, inclusa in questa edizione del Premio Combat, in fondo ci ricorda che è proprio la lingua – come organo corporeo ma anche come mezzo espressivo – il ponte con il mondo al di là di noi. Sling slang slug (2025) di Axel Gouala stabilisce un dialogo implicito tra l’universo visivo e quello linguistico, entrambi caricati di valore simbolico ed emotivo. Le due sculture-lingua, ipertrofiche e ondulate, evocano le potenzialità appartenenti al linguaggio come veicolo di espressioni amplificate. In questo senso la scultura non si limita a rappresentare un elemento anatomico, ma si propone come metafora della tensione tra conoscenza e rivelazione, tra verità e finzione, tra potere e marginalità. Esattamente ciò l’espressione artistica dovrebbe essere capace di fare, sempre. »

extract from *La lingua della rivelazione*, Ilaria Gianni

“ [...] nel lavoro Axel Gouala la parola sembra molto importante: la dimensione onomatopeica del titolo, Sling, slang, slug è una cartina di tornasole e un codice interpretativo, ed esprime la presenza di una forza sotterranea e invisibile che sembra aver modellato gli oggetti, con un andamento serpentinoso e ondulato, un sibilo regolare e costante, rivelatore di potenziali forme organiche e naturali.”

extract from *L’appuntamento (the Appointment)*, Davide Ferri



Falaise (4) - Cathédrale, bricks, 225 × 301 × 138 cm, 2022

Falaise

Falaise è un'opera site-specific che cattura l'immagine di pareti rocciose plasmate da mattoni scolpiti. Questa fusione di costruzione e decostruzione enfatizza le qualità plastiche del materiale, creando un fluire armonioso con il soggetto. Il mattone, originando dalla terra stessa, diventa protagonista. Falaise si configura sia come paesaggio che come rovina ma è anche una visione di viaggio, un intreccio di paesaggi mediterranei, coste bretoni e montagne del Sichuan. L'idea nasce dalla materia stessa, il mattone alveolare, osservato durante i miei viaggi in America, Asia, Cina e Africa. Questo materiale estratto dalla terra crea un ciclo creativo: dall'estrazione nasce un negativo, che io trasformo in positivo e poi nuovamente in negativo. Inizialmente concepito come un modello, è poi stato realizzato su larga scala. Falaise è un'ode alla connessione tra materia e terra, un viaggio ciclico che prende forma attraverso l'arte.

Falaise is a site-specific piece that captures the image of rock walls shaped by sculpted bricks. This fusion of construction and deconstruction emphasizes the plastic qualities of the material, creating a harmonious flow with the subject. Brick, originating from the Earth itself, thus become the protagonists of the piece, making it appear both as a landscape and as a ruin but also a travel vision, a mix of Mediterranean landscapes, Breton coasts, and Sichuan mountains. The idea comes from the material itself - the honeycomb brick - observed during my travels to America, Asia, China, and Africa. This material, extracted from the earth, creates a creative cycle: from the extraction a negative is born, which I transform into positive and then back into negative. Initially conceived as a model, it was then realized on a large scale. Falaise is an ode to the connection between matter and earth, a cyclical journey that takes shape through art.

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Falaise (5)

briques
245 × 307 × 91 cm
Inside Art Talent Prize 2023
Mattatoio Roma, 2023



Falaise (3) briques, bonzaïs, 245 × 700 × 700 cm, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg Ville, 2021



Écailles d'une Île, ceramic, 49,6 × 24 × 23,6 cm, 2023



Écailles d'une île

ceramic
23,5 × 27 × 21,3 cm
2023





Bijoux (Le Vase Aquatique), charcoal on paper, 90 × 65 cm, 2023



Le Manteau, charcoal on paper, 244 × 150 cm, 2023



L'Ogre

monotype on paper Hahnemühle
49,4 × 34,2 cm printed on a 70 × 50 cm sheet
2023



L'Oste

monotype on paper Hahnemühle
32,5 × 24,5 cm printed on a 50 × 35 cm sheet
2023

Metamorphic Parody

Hidden behind the three thick roots of the Aristotelian poetic genres' family tree; the tragedy, comedy and the epic, one finds their often-forgotten sibling, the parody.

Scarcely addressed by Aristotle himself, at least in the surviving literature, the French literary critic Gérard Genette sat out to reclaim the parody into the literary fold with his 1982 seminal work *Palimpsests: La Littérature au second degré*. Genette presupposes two modes of production that engenders parody, namely imitation and transformation, and it is the latter which seems to best describe the process behind Axel Gouala's metamorphic sculptural objects. Where Ulysses recalls the Odyssey, or plaster copies their marble originals, Gouala humorously transforms materials much more familiar to the denizens of the 21st century: Plungers playing palms, palms playing coatracks, a mop turned snake slithering away from its bucket. It is precisely the intimacy with which we greet these familiar materials and made-to-be-held design objects that makes the viewing of Gouala's works an almost haptic affair.

Here, one may paraphrase Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* (1928), that reading a text compared to copying it, is what flying over a landscape is to walking its streets. Gouala's transformative copying not only echoes the metaphor, but seemingly translates it into the literal in his exhibit *Copyshop, Atlas Mnemosyne*. For the polystyrene onto which Gouala has carved details from classical cast copies found in the Bode Museum and the Neues Museum, was collected from the streets by the artist, and subsequently returned to them in the window-display on Künstlerhaus Bethanien's ground floor. Since one must only have unpacked a television or stereo set to judge the weight and feel of the polystyrene replica, or what it would take to snap it in half for that matter, curious passersby walking down Kottbusser Straße during the latter months of 2020 were themselves invited to tactilely take part in an unfolding copying and transformation of classical sculpture and philistine design – freed from the vantage of the museum.

Gustav Elgin

Be Magazine #28
Berlin
October 2021



Copyshop, Atlas Mnemosyne

Sculpted polystyrene packaging
165,5 × 140 × 140 cm
2020



Langage, détail

céramique, clavier, acrylique et acier
13,5 × 46 × 16 cm
2023

avec le soutien de la Région Grand Est et de la DRAC Grand Est



Yoga du matin
(série *Informatique et libertés*)

17 × 17,5 × 34,5 cm
clavier et céramique
2022

avec le soutien de la Région Grand Est et de la DRAC Grand Est

Unidentified Domestic Object (translated from french)

Axel Gouala comes from a dual culture that pushes him to take a dual view of things. The innocuous objects he presents in the exhibition are removed not only from their context of use but also from their setting. These installations reveal how much our minds associate an object with a universe and how fragile and superficial this determination is. By isolating objects, slightly repurposing them, or associating them differently, Axel Gouala opens new pages, glimpses new worlds in which work and travel coexist, bourgeois and exotic clichés blend, ethnic motifs and impersonal objects merge.

Sandrine Wymann

Director and head curator of La Kunsthalle, CAC
Mulhouse
November 2018

Le Grand Tour / Totem-Voyages

«In my serie of work Le Grand Tour / Totem-Voyages I am trying to bring romanticism back in the fitness room, to make Dresden closer to Miami, to use any object with wheels to really move. Some pieces are inspired by personal story, other not. I am interested by our spaces of work and leisure that are everywhere and nowhere : a palm tree or an office chair belong to two stereotypic places. They could be in any country and are two icons of a global world. Each one need the other to exist : we accept to suffer at work to go in holidays. Work is where space and time are controlled by rules, holidays is supposed to be the opposite. I am merging this two ruled spaces creating new lives for these objects, giving them a second chance to be better.»

Axel Gouala

Artline Kunstmagazin
Basel
November 2018



Totem-Voyage 10, Palmo

mixed materials
123 × 99 × 89,7 cm
2020



photo : Philipp Hänger / Kunsthalle Basel. Installation view, *A Tooth for an Eye*, Kunsthalle Basel, Bâle, 2018 ©



The Snake
a.k.a. the_geat_escape

mixed materials
71 × 45 × 245 cm
2020



Totem-Voyage 12, Aspiration Vacances

mixed materials
267 × 63,5 × 120 cm
2020

Totem-Voyage 07

mixed materials
207 × 103 × 110 cm
2018



MIS, Extrait d'un Paysage-Écriture, stainless steel, 350 × 246 × 177 cm, 2023



BWV 578

plaster, metal, table
 98,7 × 73,5 × 74,5 cm
 2017



Géométrie du Feu

La géométrie du feu décrit le désir insatiable de capter et retranscrire une forme en constante évolution. C'est l'irréductible part de sauvage qui résiste à la perpétuelle volonté de domestiquer. L'image d'un feu dans une cheminée ou dans un poêle rappelle l'animal en cage. C'est une forme de vie farouche qui partage notre habitat, mais c'est aussi le premier outil de confort et de domestication; il nous a permis de dompter la lumière et l'espace. Il a donné le nom de foyer à nos maisons. Malgré ce chemin parcouru à nos côtés, il a gardé sa beauté originelle et incorruptible. Il n'y aura jamais de géométrie précise du feu. C'est cet impérissable degré de sauvage que j'essaye d'exhumer de notre quotidien. Et pourquoi pas si possible, brouiller les frontières d'une zone de confort trop dessinées

Axel Gouala
 notes, janvier 2017



Mostro

polystyren, plaster, steel
 162,5 × 83 × 174 cm
 2014



PVC33

polystyren, plaster, steel
 118,8 × 33 × 33 cm
 2023

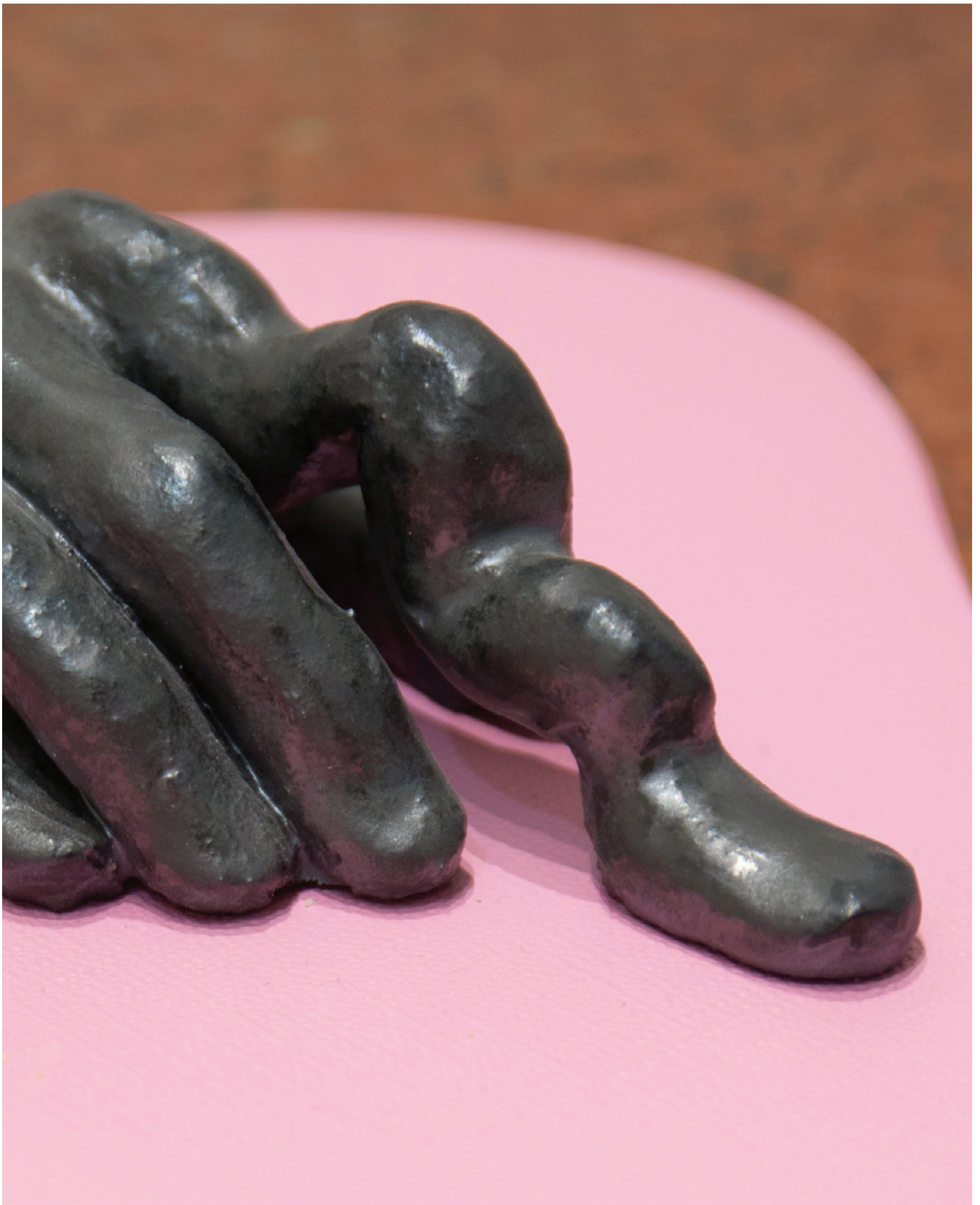


photo : Clic, detail, xhibition view, Materials and Motions, Galleria Eugenia Delfini, 2025

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