

# Hugues Reip

## — *L'Évasion*

### Foreword

“Putting escape to the test in its ambivalent connection with boredom, must one dream up things to get away or give into it?”  
Hugues Reip

Sculptor, draftsman, musician, video filmmaker, photographer, Hugues Reip (born in 1964) freely draws his inspiration from works in the tradition of alternative-world fiction, so-called social science fiction, from the early 20th century, as well as the beginnings of animated cinema and the history of scientific illustration. His art is fueled as much by a certain '90s underground rock as it is by the infinite variety of land and sea fauna and flora.

Viewers of Reip's work travel through a landscape in which perception and illusion are two major experiences. In his pieces, each tree, each object seems to conceal a fantastic divinity in some form of surrealist syncretism.

Hugues Reip is a gardener of the supernatural. In his show called *L'Évasion* (The Escape), which combines past masterpieces and new works, we get to watch the dream of a butterfly, for example, that flits among clouds of dust. *Black Sheeps* (2014) is a group of five spinning mechanisms. They are sorts of dust planets and make their revolution in Crédac's large main gallery. Further along we witness the creation of a fantasy island that is planted with a tree from which immortal flowers and other plants dangle. *The Eyeland* (2018) is a colorful island that is overlooked by a watchful eye, suggesting Odilon Redon, or putting us in mind of the guardian balloon from the mythic TV series *The Prisoner* (1967), where no escape is possible. Playing as always with artifice, Reip places in his unserious worlds rocks that are sometimes minuscule and sometimes oversized, and creatures from

the deep that exist right beside simple matchsticks. And in *Windowblow* (2018), he superimposes reality on illusion through a trompe-l'oeil image of the city landscape outside the window.

The series *Noirs desseins* (Dark Designs – 2012–2016) shows the artist's fondness for the history of scientific illustration and the work of Lucien Rudaux (astronomer, 1874–1947) and Ernst Haeckel (biologist, 1834–1919), along with the film special effects of Ray Harryhausen (1920–2013); while *Mushbook* (2008) displays his reading of the hallucinatory work of the Beat Generation. *Nova Express* (1964; first French edition, Christian Bourgois, 1970) is the title of the book that is central to the piece and is incidentally the name of Reip's first rock group.

He shows off his references, both to Joseph Cornell (1903–1972) through a diorama in which he plays with surrealist techniques, juxtaposing fantastic and dreamlike elements; and to Öyvind Fahlström (1928–1976) for assemblage and collage in a form of poetic invention. Considered his first work of art, *0,25* (1990–1991) is made up of tiny sculptures that could almost be spontaneous drawings. His entire vocabulary is already in place, the vocabulary over which floats the esthetic of the artist H. C. Westermann (1922–1981), which combines Surrealism, the spirit of Dada and Folk Art. Seen through the prism of the macro- and the microscopic, his worlds harbor the patient reality of work, the compulsive collections of small found or jury-rigged objects, and the mysteries of the art studio.

Claire Le Restif  
Curator

### The works

#### —> Gallery 1

##### ① *Black Sheeps*, 2014

Dust, butterflies, metallic grids, kevlar wires, aluminium tubes, motors. Courtesy of the artist and Le Carré, Scène nationale and Centre d'art contemporain du pays de Château-Gontier.

*Black Sheeps* is a mobile installation made up of dust balls hanging from wires to which miniature elements have been attached (tamed butterflies, beads, bits of paper, etc.). Put together for an earlier exhibition called *La Renonciation* at Le Carré, Scène Nationale, Centre d'Art Contemporain la Chapelle du Genêt in Château-Gontier, the piece refers to a Bible verse, Genesis 3, 19, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” These sheeps are also an homage to the photograph entitled *Dust Breeding* (1920) which Man Ray shot from Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915–1923), which he discovered covered in dust in the artist's New York studio. During their springtime move to other pastures, the herd, apparently set out to graze, is nonetheless confined by the movement of its motors and seems to go round and round in circles, condemned to “bite the dust” in the concrete-paved prairie of Crédac's main gallery.

##### ② *Windowblow*, 2018

Print on transparent vinyl.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Designed specifically to merge with the architecture of Crédac, *Windowblow* employs an overlay, a superimposition that is both spatial with the urban landscape and temporal with the passing of the seasons, using one of the building's

windows. The piece, which is a token of the passing of time, recalls, with the esthetic of the window and the chosen point of view, a certain history of art and its techniques for creating illusions. From the “squaring” used when passing from the cartoon or sketch to the frescoed surface in the work of some artists, to reproduction in the work of scribes, to the method of perspectival representation employed by the Renaissance painter and architect Filippo Brunelleschi, Hugues Reip summons a multitude of references here. Those that seem closest to his esthetic, however, mix technique and Surrealist poetry. In his paintings *The Human Condition* (1933) and *The Key to the Fields* (1936) René Magritte uses a subtle mise en abyme that brings together a depiction of a landscape and the supposed landscape itself.

**3 Sssans titre, 2018**

Metal.  
Courtesy of the artist.

**4 Q.I. Al dente (à François Curlet), 2005**

Neons.  
Courtesy of the artist.

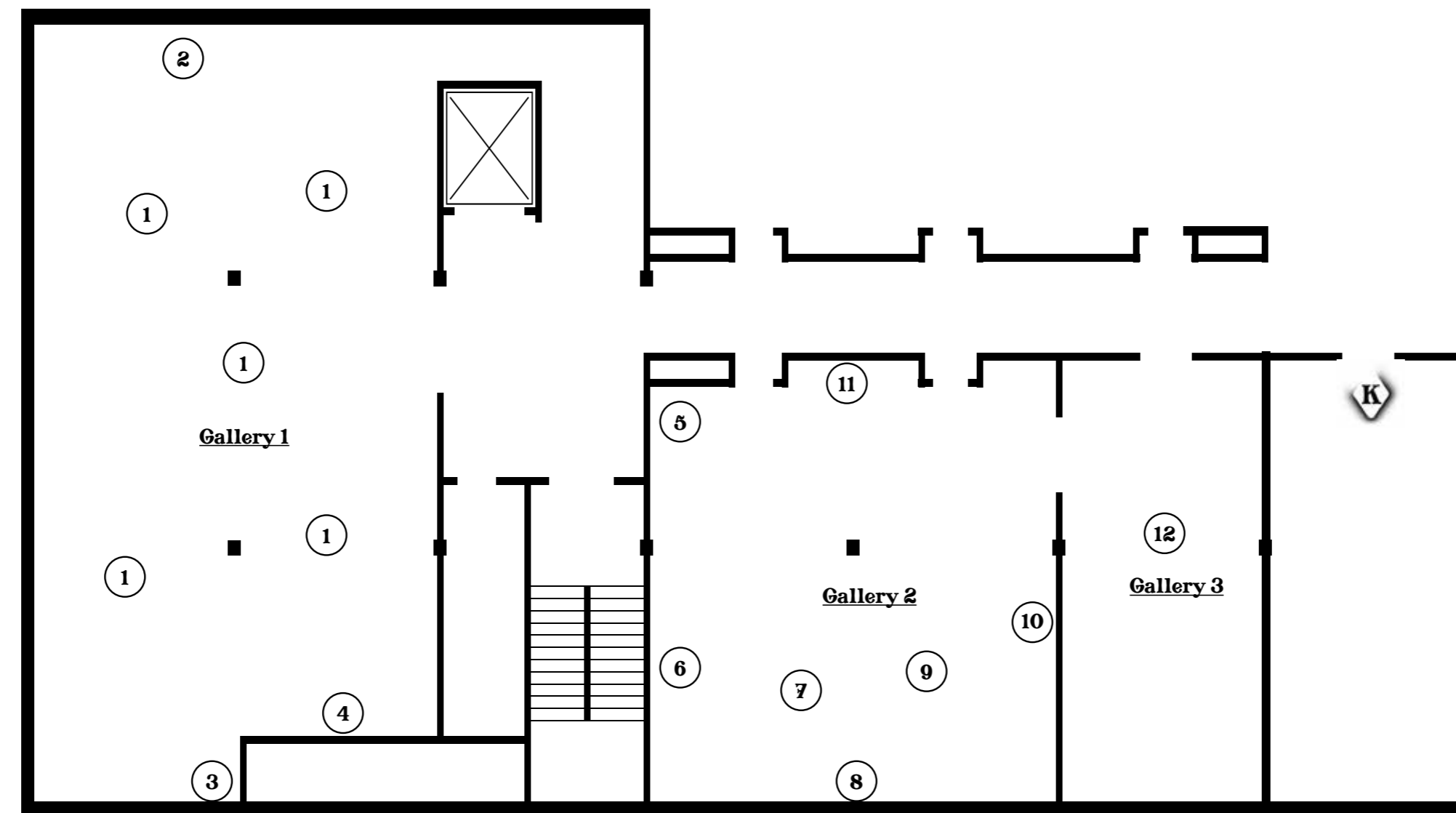
Reip shares with his friend the artist François Curlet a fondness for puns that work on two, even three levels. Q.I., pronounced something like “cue ee” in French, is the French equivalent of I.Q.; it also sounds like various tenses of the verb cuire, to cook. Thus, “cooked” (cue-ee) al dente, the illuminated strand of spaghetti is a nod to Curlet’s color “Arte concettuale spaghetti” in neon lights called *Western (E.A. tricolore italien)*, from 2005–2012, which draws a parallel between certain codes of conceptual art, which the artist claims to follow without strictly toeing the line of the movement’s doctrine in its pure form, and the image of the Italian spaghetti Western, which springs from the classic American one.

→ **Gallery 2**

**5 Les Pistils, 2007**

Polystyrene, acrylic, motors.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Nature, specifically its depiction, is one of the themes of Reip’s work, which shows us nature up close and on a large scale. *Pistils*, the ovule-bearing reproductive



organ of flowers, slowly rotate while waiting for their pollen and nectar to be gathered. Thanks to their size and the loss of their attractive colors, leaving in their place a spotless white, these pistils have become organic Brancusian forms that hesitate between figuration and abstraction, while retaining their sexual aspect.

**6 Night Music (Deep) (à Öyvind Fahlström), 2007**

Illustrations on magnet, metal.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Hybrid figures mixing the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms form a surreal constellation floating on a midnight blue expanse suggesting by turns the watery deep or the vault of heaven. The painted elements seem to have escaped from a cabinet of curiosities where mutant species come from the abyss have long been kept. Reip characterizes this

work as a “variable painting” in homage to the painted magnetized mobile elements of the Swedish writer and painter Öyvind Fahlström (1928–1976), who wanted to introduce in modern painting “the possibility of breaking the rigidity” of reality.

**7 L’Orque, 2018**

Acrylic resin, painting.  
Courtesy de l’artiste.

*L’Orque* (The Orca) is a fake zoomorphic rock. Reip loves painted sets and the outmoded special effects of cinema’s pioneers. He plays here with sham depictions without wanting the illusion to be perfect.

**8 Mushbook, 2014**

Digital prints on paper, *Nova Express* by William S. Burroughs (1964)  
Collection André Magnin.

A small forest of hallucinogenic and poisonous mushrooms has sprung up on a chapter called “No Good, No Bueno” from the 1964 novel *Nova Express* by William S. Burroughs (1914–1997), an emblematic American novelist of the Beat Generation. Using his cut-up technique, Burroughs invented an abstract, hallucinatory language drawn from an experience of excess, too much alcohol and psychotropic substances. Paperback fungi – this edition can be opened and closed like a pop-up book.

**9 0,25, 1990–1991**

Mixed media.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Originally these tiny sculptures numbered 250; the artist kept 10% of them. They were fashioned almost spontaneously from materials he had on hand (nail, rubber, paper, the inside of a loaf of bread...), and are considered Reip’s first – modest – works of art.

**10 Noirs desseins (séries n° 2, 4, 5 et 6), 2012–2016**

Ink, coloured pencils, watercolour and collage on papier.  
Collections Sonia Perrin ; Véronique de Bellefroid ; Sémiose ; Bernard Prévot (Bruxelles) ; André Magnin ; galerie Magnin-A (Paris) ; private collection (Bruxelles).

Since 2008 Reip has been doing drawings that he has heightened over the years with fine collages. To dark ends and on dark backgrounds, a multitude of abstract forms exist side by side with plants and animals. Microscopic organisms swim in the vastness of interstellar space while whorls of smoke twist beside colored synapses whose mutant interconnections spark phantasmagoric visual associations. The bigarre incongruous juxtaposition of this flora and fauna, depicted with a scientific precision and realism worthy of the plates in naturalists’ books of old, conjures up an

alternative reality.

**11 Dreaming out of windows, 2018 - d’après Joseph Cornell’s dreams, 18 décembre 1965**

Digital prints on paper, acrylic on wood, found objects.  
Courtesy of the artist.

In creating this diorama installation, Reip was inspired by the dream of another artist. This new window opens onto a fantastic world where each element seems ready to play a part in some surreal nightmare of a scene. The American artist Joseph Cornell only rarely ventured beyond his native region (State of New-York). This homage to him is also an ode to the power of escape that the imagination can provide. The work that gives the title of Reip’s piece is a collection of short narratives relating some of the dreams that Cornell recalled during a period that ran from 1944 to 1972. The particular dream that lends its name to the title of the diorama displayed here is one of the most concise and hence one of those that leave the most room for the imagination.

→ **Gallery 3**

**12 The Eyeland, 2018**

Wood, artificial flowers, soil, mixed media.  
Courtesy of the artist.

With its powerful light, an eye overlooks this fertile land. Are we welcome on this island of immortal flowers? Are we in the lair of Scaramanga, 007’s enemy in *The Man with the Golden Gun*? Unless we are rather with *The Prisoner* under the ever-vigilant gaze of the Rover, or one of the castaways of *Lost* (one of the musical themes from *Season One* is indeed called *The Eyeland*). As a musician (he founded the group SPLITt with Jacques Julien and Dominique Figarella, and recently sang with Rodolphe Burger), Reip plays with words and their sounds. The titles of most of his works and exhibitions are homophones, like in the song *I Come From An Island* by the American group The Residents, whose anonymous members perform on stage dressed in tuxedos while their heads are ensconced in gigantic eyeballs sporting top hats: An island, an I land, an eye land, a nigh land, an island, an ‘igh land.

## Markers (selection)

2017-2018 : *La Tempête*, Actes I et II  
- exposition collective - commissaire :  
Hugues Reip, Centre régional d'art  
contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-  
Méditerranée, Sète.

2017 : *Phantasmata* - sélection de films  
(1995-2009), *Crédakino*, Le Crédac.

2016 : *La Rhétorique des Marées*, vol.2  
- exposition collective, La Criée, Centre  
d'Art Contemporain, Rennes.

2015 : *The Wall 2*, La Boîte, Tokyo ;  
*ROC* - exposition collective - commis-  
saire : Hugues Reip, galerie du jour  
agnès b., Paris.

2014 : *Phantasmata* (sélection de films)  
cinéma 2, MNAM Centre Georges  
Pompidou, Paris ; *La Renonciation*  
- exposition personnelle, Le Carré /  
Chapelle du Genêteil, Château-Gontier ;  
*La Renonciation*, - exposition person-  
nelle, galerie 59 pm, Bruxelles.

2012 : *Black Soul* - exposition person-  
nelle, Crystal Palace, Bordeaux.

2009 : *Le Château* - exposition per-  
sonnelle, Domaine Départemental de  
Chamarande.

2008 : *Parallel Worlds* - exposition per-  
sonnelle, M.O.T Museum, Tokyo.

2007 : *Eden* - exposition personnelle,  
Sañ Museum, Reykjavik.



— From 19 April to 3 June —

### Ariane Michel, *Hugues et les vagues*, 2018

After *Wavers* by Hugues Reip.  
Excerpt of the projet *La Rhétorique des marées*, 2015-2018. HD video, sound.  
16 minutes ; loop.

This video is one of the forms resulting from a project, *La Rhétorique des Marées* (The Rhetoric of the Tides), which Ariane Michel began in 2015. Michel invited twenty artists to do a work of art on a wild bit of the Finistère shoreline, on the Audierne coast. For this "coastal exhibition," which was also a film location for her, the central idea was to put the artistic gesture in contact with the elements, especially the sea. This film is the result of her work with Hugues Reip, who embraced the concept completely. His installation, a thriving garden in a small pool of seawater between the rocks, was washed out to sea with the very first tide. Hunting around for the point of view of everything that lives there - rocks, limpets, algae, and waves - Ariane Michel observes the development of the piece amid the elements. Following the flowers right into the depths of the waves, she chose to be a part of the landscape in order to make us feel more immediately its presence.

Avec : Hugues Reip  
Caméra: Ariane Michel  
Assistante Image : Liga le Tonquer  
Prise de son : Perrine Arru.  
Montage image, son et Mixage : Ariane Michel  
Régie : Lucie Pinier, Charles Roussel et Emma Cogan  
Production exécutive : Sophie Kaplan, Norbert Orhan, Colette Quesson  
Une co-production de La Criée centre d'art contemporain, À Perte de vue et Ariane Michel. Avec le soutien de la Région Bretagne, du FRAC Bretagne, de la DRAC Bretagne, du Centre National des Arts Plastiques, de la Mairie d'Esquibien et du Fonds de dotation agnès b.  
Remerciements à Hugues Reip et à l'Ecole des Beaux Arts de Quimper  
Courtesy Jousse Entreprise

**Ariane Michel, *Laisse de mer*  
(Après *Wavers*), 2015**  
Fishing net and artificial flowers



— From 5 June to 1<sup>st</sup> July —

### Hugues Reip, *Yurei*

Animated film  
(subject to changes)

Characters in Hugues Reip's new film, the yurei in Japan refer to the tourmented spirits of the dead. In Japanese folklore, they exist beside yokai, those strange phenomena or wonderful, often animal-shaped creatures that go beyond human understanding. Using settings from animated films done in gouache - and ranging from a forest to interstellar landscapes - Reip superimposes his own world to create a long "from the Earth to the Moon" tracking shot.



02



Grolsch

### Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac

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