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Alëa, Miriam Josi et Stella Lee, *Prowse Back to dirt* 2021-2024 © Alea [Miriam Josi & Stella Lee Prowse]

press
release

WHAT DO YOU WANT, BRICK?

Curator : Caroline Naphegyi
Scenographer : Marie Douel

25.05.25 → 28.09.25

INTRODUCTION

From Babylon to Rome, "the brick is the yardstick and the measure of the great Empires", according to historian Patrick Boucheron, an expert in urban history. In the 1st century CE, the city of Rome was built of bricks covered in marble. This construction principle was used in all of the territories conquered by Rome, a demonstration of the power of the Emperor Augustus and the economic influence of the Empire. As a matter of fact, the bricks were produced in Rome and exported throughout the Mediterranean region. Made using natural raw materials from the earth, whether air-dried or fired, the methods used to make them has evolved dramatically alongside industrialisation and, more recently, in response to environmental challenges.

The exhibition ***What do you want, Brick?*** encompasses fifty or so pieces by architects, designers and artists, from the modernist era to the present day. Its name is inspired by the famous American architect, Louis Kahn. By addressing the brick in this way, the architect incorporated the specific characteristics and properties of the material into his designs, rather than imposing his own conceptual vision on to it. What does the brick tell us about its location and the quality of its clay, its thermal properties, depending on whether it is hollow or full, air-dried or fired, and whether or not it can be recycled?

From the reception hall, a first work by Roel Vandebeek presents the brick created for the Nelissen brickyard arranged in the shape of a tondo, placing his research within an artistic approach.

Today, bricks present a whole array of issues. The exhibition chooses to draw on the brick's constructive and ornamental properties on the one hand, and how it is produced and its environmental impact on the other, to showcase projects, works of art and applied research by architects, artists and designers. In the 3rd part of the exhibition, designers take free rein with the brick, rethinking its shape, use, material and relationship with life.

PART 1

Brick's constructive and ornamental properties

In this first part, the exhibition takes the assembly of a number of bricks as its starting point. Contemporary creatives have embraced the traditional standard brick as a construction system, whilst also exploring their shapes and how they are arranged. The structural setting evolves into patterns on a façade or claustra.

This structural setting refers to all of the different arrangements, the choices made and the techniques used to assemble and position the bricks. From a simple parallelepiped, depending on its arrangement and how its shape has been formed, a whole array of patterns is possible: header (laid with its short end facing outwards), chantignole (half-brick), stretcher (long end visible), face on or at an angle.

It is exactly this array of patterns that the designers from **Pinaffo Pluvinage** have explored in the installation *Appareillage Palace*. The bricks are reproduced using cardboard and are crying out to be arranged in countless combinations using different shapes and colours. This is the piece that introduces the exhibition.

In this first part of the exhibition, the layout encourages a free-form visual dialogue between **Bosco Sodi**'s massive columns, **Raphaël Zarka**'s twisted ones and **Pierre Culot** and **Aurélien Veyrat**'s willowy ones, **Jorge Méndez Blake's** monumental wall, Pierre Culot's claustra wall, or the series of vases that speaks the same architectural language as brick laying, or **Bijoy Jain**'s chair.

The process used to create **Bosco Sodi**'s columns, which are made out of solid terracotta cubes, on display at the entrance to the exhibition, is an integral part of the piece, as demonstrated by the video *The Making of Clay Cubes* that accompanies the installation. The artist takes the clay from the forest near his workshop, and uses it to create solid, smooth cubes. He leaves them to dry in the sunshine, and then the kiln is built using coconut shells and compact blocks of raw earth. The colours and textures created as they are wood-fired gives each column its own unique character.

The material, where it comes from and how it is shaped are also the guiding principles underpinning the work of Indian architect **Bijoy Jain**, who founded the Studio Mumbai and is a key figure in the neo-vernacular architectural movement. The studio brings together local architects and craftsmen under a shared philosophy: to embrace local resources and age-old savoir-faire. The objects and furniture on display are perfect examples, on a small scale, of the research carried out into the materials and construction methods used by the studio. The chair that features in the exhibition comes from *The Brick Study I,* 2016 (Maniera Gallery). Its seat is made of wood, while the backrest combines full (brick) and empty spaces.

At the turn of the 1970s, after working on large-scale projects exploring landscapes, the Belgian sculptor and ceramicist **Pierre Culot** also introduced an architectural dimension to his utilitarian objects. The different parts of *Vases composés* (*composite vases*) on display in the exhibition fit together perfectly to form a "metamorphosis of the pot into architecture, into a wall", according to historian Anne Bony. When he turned his attention to objects, the artist somehow transposed his experience of the monumentality of sculptural walls.

Clay bricks, with full and hollowed patterns, triangles, hemispheres or moons, arranged in squares and offering infinite combinations, Pierre Culot's claustras approach the wall in a whole new way. He was commissioned by a number of architects to design these visually animated walls in keeping with kinetic art and then with Op Art. The claustra wall featured in the exhibition has been reproduced according to a photo from the 70^{s} and original elements recovered from the workshop.

Echoing **Pierre Culot**'s dual columns, whose overflowing mortar reiterates their sculptural dimension with little regard for any kind of functionality, the two twisted columns of the *Cénotaphe d'Archimède* by French artist and designer **Raphaël Zarka** cannot help but remind us of the unending screw invented by Archimedes, reproduced in the arrangement of the bricks. Last but not least, rather than carrying the structure, the column created by A**urélien Veyrat** using discarded bricks rejects its original function and leans on the building in order to stay upright.

The long brick wall by Mexican artist **Jorge Méndez Blake** is one of the exhibition's major works, cutting through space. The artist called it *Amerika*, the title of a novel by Franz Kafka. The monumental scale of the wall is inexorably linked to the wall built between the United States and Mexico, which Donald Trump was keen to extend by more than 700km during his first term in office. The book is positioned at the foot of the wall, making its very structure less secure, expressing the disillusionment of a young immigrant in the United States. This piece is as symbolic as it is expressive, and is still as relevant as ever. It was built using "Aubergine" bricks made by Belgian company Nelissen, the exhibition's partner. The wall was built with...

America is also the name given by German-born American artist **Josef Albers** to the wall he was commissioned to complete in 1950 for the new Harvard University building. The exhibition features a photograph of this work. The name alludes to the height of the skyscrapers in American cities that were built during a period of economic prosperity towards the end of the 19th century. Albers demonstrates his fascination for complex masonry, the shadows that it can create, techniques that he discovered when he visited the Mitla archaeological site in Mexico a few decades earlier.

"We are still a long way away from having the right building materials for the architectural forms that we need. However, it should be possible to design shapes that are as strong as a brick wall, but round, convex, concave, orthogonal etc." This was the rule followed by **Alvar Aalto** in 1952 when he built his summer home, called the *Experimental House*, on the island of Muuratsalo. Original plans and designs, combined with photographs taken at the time, illustrate the different ways that bricks are used and their resistance to the harsh climate, how they evolve when they come into contact with moss and lichen.

The process used to produce *Casted Objects* (*Objets moulés*, 2019) by Belgian artist and designer **Bram Vanderbeke** originates from the objects he created as a child in the workshop belonging to his father, who was a mason, with leftover bricks. These architectural pieces of furniture were created using a construction technique that involves pouring concrete into brick moulds. The result pays tribute to the texture and material characteristics of bricks, as well as the laborious construction processes used by the manual workers involved in the building trade. The piece on display in the exhibition belongs to the Grand-Hornu's collection.

The last work in this sequence is the architectural photograph by Belgian artist **Filip Dujardin**, which raises some challenging questions thanks to its singular strangeness. It shows a Brutalist concrete building, whose rigorous grid-like framework is interpreted freely by the addition of brick walls. The artist draws on his extensive digital archives and ignores the constraints associated with construction to recreate his imaginary *Fictions* made possible by Photoshop.

To conclude this first part of the exhibition, the last room is dedicated to the longevity of regional and vernacular savoir-faire in building with bricks.

Designer, artist and architect **Olivier Vadrot** presents a number of the studies and models he used to create the communal bread oven in Nègrepelisse. The oven was previously made of "brique foraine", a brick specific to the Toulouse region that is longer and flatter than a brick from the North of France. "One of the cleverest and most successful forms of this art of assembling bricks is the cupola, a shape that we might find in a fairly commonplace construction (a bread oven), but one that is still very clever", the artist explains.

Three impressive non-Western figures represented in the exhibition illustrate their experience of building with bricks in local communities. The interview with **Francis Kéré** and the two filmed talks by **Anupama Kundoo** and **Booserm Premthada** were carried out as part of the *Global Award for Sustainable Architecture and produced* by the Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine (Paris). This international competition explores the role of the architect in a period of huge transition, in terms of demographics, the urban landscape, the environment, energy and industry.

The architect **Francis Kéré** studied in Germany and decided to return to the village of his birth, Gando, in the South of Burkina Faso, to share traditional construction techniques with villagers. Since the 2000s, Gando has been an architectural laboratory, in which the whole community has got involved in the construction of its infrastructure, from its school to its hospital, which they continue to maintain and renovate. The film shown as part of the exhibition was made by Julien Borel (26') and produced by the Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine (Paris) for the exhibition "Réenchanter le monde : architecture, ville, transitions" (Re-enchanting the world: architecture, city, transitions), bringing together the 40 winners (2007-2014) of the *Global Award for Sustainable Architecture*.

The research methods adopted by Indian architect **Anupama Kundoo** involve "developing human skills in order to make more economic use of natural resources and experiment in order to break away from the methods and instincts of a post-industrial society". Her main exploratory laboratories are in Pondicherry and Mumbai. She works with local communities to develop all sorts of construction techniques that make the most of local artisan savoir-faire. For example, instead of using bricks or tiles, large terracotta basins made by potters are used to cover the roofs of houses.

Boonserm Premthada's projects make use of natural and local resources such as wood and brick and add a twist to traditional construction techniques, while also taking today's big challenges associated with climate and biodiversity into account. He takes a socially responsible approach to architecture, working in particular with rural Kuy communities in North-East Thailand. These people face the threat of mass deforestation, which is aggravating the effects of increasingly dry conditions, a direct consequence of climate change.

PART 2

Producing and using bricks: how should we respond to climate issues?

The process used to make bricks is a simple one involving craftsmanship or industrial techniques. Their constructive properties depend on the quality of the raw materials, the production process, the firing conditions and their format. Historically, the brick industry is dependent on the location of material deposits near construction sites. For this reason, it has played an important role in the local cultural identity of certain regions in Europea and around the world.

Although still popular today as a material for façades and construction, can bricks be regarded as an ecological material with a low carbon impact? What does the future hold for bricks given recent European directives (2011) about the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPB), which are designed to improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage the use of renewable energy. This raises questions about the environmental impact of the materials used for eco buildings and renovation projects, and about the energy needed to produce them. What happens to these materials when they come to the end of their life cycle? And what about all the materials removed from renovation or demolition projects for new buildings?

The second part of the exhibition offers us some different artists', architects' and designers' perspectives on how bricks are produced today (**Harun Farocki**). What does the future hold for brick making (**Ellie Birkhead**, **Patrick Fry**)? How can we continue to use bricks in buildings, notwithstanding new European environmental regulations (**BLAF architecten**)?
How can the waste produced by extracting the raw materials, or the scrap generated by demolition sites be turned into a new resource (**Studio Eidola**, **BC Materials**, **Zuzanna Skurka**, **Anna Saint-Pierre and Mercedes Klausner**)?

The film *Verlgeich über ein Drittes* by German artist **Harun Farocki** (1944-2014), introduces the second part of the exhibition, raising questions about our relationship with work through its representation: the production and transformation of bricks in traditional societies in India and Burkina Faso are compared with the increasingly industrialised production methods used in France and Germany. Images are projected simultaneously on two screens – alternation, comparison, permanence –the artists challenges the consequences of the streamlining and automation processes specific to mass production.

From the 18th century, brickyards throughout the United Kingdom used to stamp their mark, provenance and year of production on the "frog" of the brick, the hollow space where the mortar goes, which also makes the brick lighter. The 155 photographs taken by **Patrick Fry** based on a private collection of around 7,000 bricks, show these stamps indicating the names of the brickyards, most of which no longer exist. Young designer **Ellie Birkhead** is keen to engage in a dialogue about the future of these UK brickyards. At a time when globalisation is posing a threat to small-scale industries, her film, *Building the Local*, reiterates the importance of maintaining local industry, a key element in the region's cultural identity and sense of belonging.

For industrial designer **Baptiste Meyniel**, bricks are one of a number of manufactured objects whose form he explores through the marks that they leave. The video entitled *Des briques*, shown as part of the exhibition, is accompanied by a series of drawings, graphic representations of a creative process that is constantly called into question. Produced against the backdrop of the Pompidou Centre's online series *Mon œil*, it follows on from several series of drawings produced by a single gesture using objects found in the workshop, which have been renamed "drawing tools". Drawing is the result of a movement, created by moving a brick dipped in ink across paper. Each drawing is therefore both unique and reproducible, thanks to the manufactured object that created it.

In Europe, Construction and Public Works are responsible for the huge impact of all areas of industry (textiles, aeronautics, automotives, food, health etc.) on the environment, so 40% of CO_2 emissions, atmospheric pollution, the exhaustion of resources and the production of waste. Architects and designers are exploring new strategies to tackle this two-fold crisis. By rethinking traditional production processes, the exhibition uses a number of examples to explore complex questions associated with the circular economy in construction, including in particular the viability of localised construction, the availability of local resources and the exploration of recycled materials.

Historically, in Belgium, wood was the most popular construction material, encouraging a circular lifespan for materials (deconstructing and reusing materials). The switch to brick was driven by factors such as urban fires and wood shortages. Today, in light of new European regulations governing energy performance and zero carbon targets, it is brick's turn to be called into question.

The characteristic brick wall of the architecture in Belgian and its neighbours is gradually being replaced by walls covered by thin, lightweight materials. The three houses designed by **BLAF architecten** presented in the exhibition, DnA, wsT and jtB, apply a radically different construction method, where the brick wall acts as a long-lasting supporting structure, allowing wood to take over on the inside. The bricks used are recycled or produced within close proximity to the site. Reusing these terracotta bricks helps to extend the lifecycle of a building. This construction system is easy to reproduce, and so contributes to the applied research programme, "Big Brick Hybrids" developed by the agency.

Reuse is one of the solutions that could help us move towards greener industry,

and stands out as an area worthy of further exploration. The use of bricks made using bio-based raw materials and the reuse of waste generated by demolition and industrial overproduction offer significant alternatives when it comes to research focusing on construction.

The *Tectonic Dust* project explores a source of waste generated by the mining and processing of Vals Quartzite quarries (Switzerland). The stone's journey, from the quarry to the end product, includes a number of processing stages, each one contributing to the growing volume of waste material (up to 35%). **Denizay Apusoglu** and **Jonas Kissling** (**Studio Eidola**) strive to recycle this waste and turn it into building materials: bricks, tiles and interior design elements. As well as the potential recycling outlets for this waste, the two designers' ambition is more importantly to change our perception of the lifecycle of materials, to help us rethink waste and see it as a resource to be valued and preserved. "Each fragment of stone that is discarded has its own story, a geological biography that dates back thousands of years... This waste is not just a relic: it is a witness to natural history and human activity", they explain.

According to architectural firm Encore Heureux, who commissioned the exhibition *Matières grises*, hosted by the Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris in 2015: "Reusing means realising that raw materials are no longer under our feet, or on the other side of the world, but in our cities, our buildings, our infrastructure". This is an ambition shared by **BC Materials**, a cooperative involved in producing materials founded in 2018 by architects from **BC** (Bruxelles Cooperation) Ken De Cooman, Nicolas Coeckelberghs, Laurens Bekemans & Wes Degreefagence. They dream of a bio-regional, low-tech, circular approach to design that is beautiful and inclusive, based on making the most of the flow of urban mineral waste available (such as excavated earth), transforming carbon-free, accessible construction materials (such as earth-based plasters, blocks of compressed earth and beaten earth). And so the *Gent Waste Brick for DING* (*Design In Gent*) is a low-carbon brick made from 63% aggregates produced from recycled municipal waste from the city of Gent. This brick, which is featured in the exhibition, was developed for the imminent construction of the new wing of the Design Museum. Hardened with lime and not fired, its carbon footprint is 1/3 of that of a terracotta brick. It has been certified by the BCCA (Belgian Construction Certification Association) to be used in building façades.

On a whole other scale, the artists and designers featured in the exhibition rethink the bricks leftover from demolition and give them a new lease of life, as practical as it is symbolic, like many other speculative variations of this unexploited material with all sorts of potential uses.

The young Polish designer **Zuzanna Skurka**, a graduate of the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen, explores the different possibilities for the brick collected from her great-grandmother's field in Poland after the neighbour's barn was demolished in the early 20th century. These pre-war regional bricks stand out thanks to their bright orange colour. The exhibition presents a number of bricks made from different materials: earth and seaweed, straw and brick from demolition projects, rye bread - the only thing they have in common is their moulded shape.

Not all of these bricks are necessarily functional, as she explains, but they are "containers of potential ideas", destined to explore the challenges of design and architecture in a geopolitical, ecological and specifical societal context. Other developments can also be seen in the exhibition: brick textiles and fibre (see details of the exhibits further on).

Designer **Anna Saint-Pierre** and artist **Mercedes Klausner** joined forces to embark on a research project in Roubaix. The brick building next to the Couvent des Clarisses (the subject of a restoration project involving a temporary occupant based there for three years) was destroyed to open up the view of the town from the convent's windows. Using the bricks and scrap left behind, Anna and Mercédès created a colour scheme featured in the exhibition designed to reproduce the view from the convent's windows in the form of screen prints.

The screen-printed photograph that is included in the exhibition represents the very object of demolition, the breakthrough, as much as it constitutes a tangible mark.

PART 3

Rethinking bricks in all of their shapes, uses, materials and relationship with life

The pieces that make up the 3rd part of the exhibition take into account, by no means comprehensively, some of the potential different methods that could be used to produce bricks: from extrusion (**Floris Wubben**, **Studio BISKT**) to moulding (**Atelier Polyhèdre**), not forgetting using the raw material for purposes other than brick (**Frédérick Gautier**). As well as this, other designers explore new, bio-based materials to produce bricks or objects with a totally different use that are the same shape as a brick: avocado stone (**Maria-Elena Pombo**), coffee (**Marijke Jans**), mycelium (**Aléa studio**), or earth from a termite mound (**François Azambourg**).

Extrusion

The extrusion of clay to make terracotta is an industrial process used to mass produce bricks, but also to create a range of shapes depending on the cut of the extrusion tool. The Belgian **Studio BISKT** and the Dutch designer **Floris Wubben** have embraced this tool and used it to create all sorts of new shapes and potential avenues.

Charlotte Gigan and **Martin Duchêne** set up **BISKT** in 2018 when they graduated from ENSAV La Cambre.Together, they make use of ceramicist Charlotte's craft skills and industrial designer Martin's grasp of industrial processes.

All of their output involves extruded earth, a production process borrowed from industry. Mechanically, the ceramic paste is forced through a mould, whose shape is determined by whatever they want to produce. The studio experiments as much with the design of the mould as with ways of playing with this shape.

As well as their uses, the unique artefacts produced by the Studio BISKT aspire to an everyday poetry inspired by a multitude of manufactured objects found in an urban environment, from gears and belts to bricks.

A furniture and interior design graduate from the Faydherbe Academie in Belgium Floris Wubben launched his studio in Amsterdam in 2009. In recent years, the designer has become increasingly interested in designing production processes using low-tech machines. The "pressing machine" designed by the artist calls into question the relationship between man and machine, artisan and industrial production, and single and multiple objects. Rather than transforming what the machine produces by hand, Floris' approach focuses on the machine itself, offering endless potential for different shapes. This makes each piece unique, even though it is produced by a mechanical industrial method.

Moulding

Set up in 2007 by Baptiste Ymonet and Vincent Jousseaume, **Atelier Polyhèdre** is comfortable in their position at the crossroads of plastic and decorative arts. Earthenware (brick earth) is their material of choice. The six *Terracotta domestica* vases featured in the exhibition are part of a larger series made up mainly of vases, but also wall-mounted objects. Very early on, the studio decided to use plaster moulds, allowing them to produce multiple identical objects or, in contrast, leaving some of the end result to chance. Red earth is poured into a mould in the form of a clip. Most of the vases in this series have been left in their original state, or partially enamelled in black, white, "bleu de Sèvres" or transparent enamel.

Brick earth

The inspiration for the series created by ceramicist **Frédérick Gautier** (FCK) came from his time at the

Dominican Convent in Lille, and was completed in partnership with the Briqueterie du Nord. This convent, designed by Pierre Pinsard, was the first religious building to be recognised as a 20th century heritage site. This remarkable building, made of brick and concrete, and the day-to-day sharing of the Dominican friars, were the main sources of inspiration for this tableware and these seats made of brick earth and designed to be used at the convent.

Biomaterials

A graduate of the Parsons School of Design (New York, United States) and the Universidad Simón Bolívar (Caracas, Venezuela), artist and designer **Maria-Elena Pombo** studied both fashion design and industrial engineering. Her approach to design is first and foremost speculative.

Welcome to la Rentrada is a film/manifesto based on historical fact, an invitation to go back to the country in order to envisage a desirable future there. 2021, the

anniversary of Venezuela's independence (1821), offered the designer an opportunity to take back control of her country's destiny, following on from the unprecedented economic crisis that it has been experiencing since 2020. Cabimas, in the West of Venezuela, is the region from which Maria-Elena hails. It is also the site of an oil field discovered in the early 1920s. This black gold, "the excrement of the devil" as the designer calls it, turned the country from an agricultural economy into a globalised capitalist system. The economy, culture, ways of life and morphology of its towns and cities were transformed. Through her *Fragmentario* research, Maria-Elena attempts to reinvent a new economy that transforms avocado stones using vernacular processes. This raw material is an unexploited local resource, and offers some innovative possibilities from fabric dyes and bioplastics to electricity production. The bricks on display in this exhibition were made using powdered avocado stones and Sargassum seaweed, a natural binder.

Producing objects using living things

In response to an invitation from Poltrona Frau to design a chair for the 2010 Designers' Day, **François Azambourg** took it upon himself to bring back a termite mound from Burkina Faso, disguised as a thrown. "Abandoned termite mounds are a source of the clay material used in Africa to produce ceramics", he explains. This object/manifesto, the throne, is the result of a collaboration with one of his former students, the Burkinabé designer Vincent Bailou Beloua, demonstrating the designer's desire to incorporate the living into his work. Thaïs Coutinho's film, shown as part of the exhibition, tells the story. This material boasts unique qualities for ceramics: "the earth in a termite mound is particularly fine, and enriched with saliva, a natural additive that means that the clay does not contract much at all during firing". Beyond some initial experiments firing and enamelling *Termibriques* carried out at the Manufacture de Sèvres, François Azambourg dreams of continuing his research by recruiting termites as his allies. Would they be able to work with a different clay from the one they are used to? Porcelain for example?

After completing a Master's degree in design inspired by natural science at the Ensci-les Ateliers, **Miriam Josi** and **Stella Lee Prowse** started **Aléa**, an experimental design and material research studio, in 2021. They explore new regenerative production methods, including *Back to Dirt*, featured in the exhibition, a mycofabrication process that uses mycelium and waste substrates. The Boisbuchet Residency Award allowed them to apply this process on a larger scale and "grow" a mycelium chair underground. This artisan process overcomes the need for sterilisation and an electricity supply. The bricks featured in the exhibition are made using this same experimental process, combining mycelium with other natural

and organic materials. One of them will be shown as it grows, which means that the contribution of a lifeform to its production can be seen.

Artists, designers and architects featured in the exhibition

Alvar Aalto, Olivier Vadrot, Baptiste Meyniel, Patrick Fry, Harun Farocki, Jorge Méndez Blake, Bosco Sodi, Filip Dujardin, Pinaffo Pluvinage, Josef Albers, Raphael Zarka, Bijoy Jain, Bram Van Derbeke, Anupama Kundoo, Pierre Culot, Frédérick Gautier, Atelier Polyhèdre, Francis Kéré, BC Material, Ellie Birkhead, Aurélien Veyrat, Denizay Apusoglu and Jonas Kissling (Studio Eidola), Floris Wubben, Boonserm Premthada, François Azambourg, Miriam Josi and Stella Lee Prowse (Aléa studio), Marijke Jans, Maria-Elena Pombo, Zuzanna Skurka, Mercedes Klausner and Anna Saint-Pierre, Studio BISKT.

7 EXAMPLE WORKS

Marion Pinaffo and Raphaël Pluvinage
Appareillage Palace, 2024
Installation, card printed in 3 colours.

On display at the beginning of the exhibition, *Appareillage palace* by the designers **Marion Pinaffo** and **Raphaël Pluvinage** is inspired by bricklaying patterns throughout history, offering a new graphic, colourful interpretation of this phenomenon. These screen-printed cardboard bricks were commissioned by Hangar Y, inviting members of the public to build a multitude of architectural forms. An animated film details all of the different possible combinations, encouraging the visitor to take part in the construction game.

Bosco Sodi (Mexico City, 1970)
Untitled (*Four Cubes Stack*), 2018.
Terracotta. (H) 224.00 cm (W) 56.00 cm
(D) 56.00 cm

Photos taken at the Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Kanaal.

Clay is one of Mexican artist **Bosco Sodi**'s preferred materials. With a small team of craftsmen, he loves working with earth, which he sources locally and incorporates into his sculptural pieces as well as his paintings. Heavily influenced by the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, an aesthetic that leaves the ravages of time and imperfections visible - so much so that he called his studio in Oaxaca, Mexico, the Casa Wabi - the artist incorporates an element of the unpredictable and accidental in his work. In order to better understand the universe, our humanity and our relationship with the world, the artist "lets the process of the organic materials follow its course", he explains.
The overlapping terracotta blocks on display in the exhibition also invite visitors to reflect on our human condition and our relationship with the earth. The creative process is a key part of the piece, as demonstrated by the video *The Making of Clay Cubes* that accompanies the installation. The artist takes the clay from the forest near his workshop, and uses it to create solid, smooth cubes. He leaves them to dry in the sunshine, and then the kiln is built using coconut shells and compact blocks of raw earth. The colours and textures created as they are wood-fired gives each cube its own unique character.

Jorge Méndez Blake
Amerika, 2019

Installation, bricks, Amerika by Franz Kafka, 185.1 x 30.2 x 1016 cm.

Exhibition at the James Cohan Gallery, New York, in 2019

The monumental brick wall designed by Mexican conceptual artist **Jorge Méndez Blake**, entitled *Amerika*, was unveiled at the James Cohan Gallery in New York. This highly political work condemns the Trump era's migration policy, based on deterrents. Securing the Southern border of the United States by building a wall was the President's ambition from the start of his election campaign in January 2016. The process had been started by his predecessors, and he wanted to extend this wall by more than 700 km - paid for by the Mexicans. Blake's installation is called *Amerika*, after Franz Kafka's novel of the same name. The book is positioned at the foot of the wall, making its very structure less secure, expressing the disillusionment of a young immigrant in the United States. Blake's piece is as symbolic as it is expressive, and is still as relevant as ever.

Pierre Culot
Vase composé, 1974

Partially enamelled sandstone, fired in an electric kiln at 1240°.
h93 x w61 x d24cm

Photo taken in Pierre Culot's workshop in Roux-Miroir during a slide-based report by Guy Manguin.

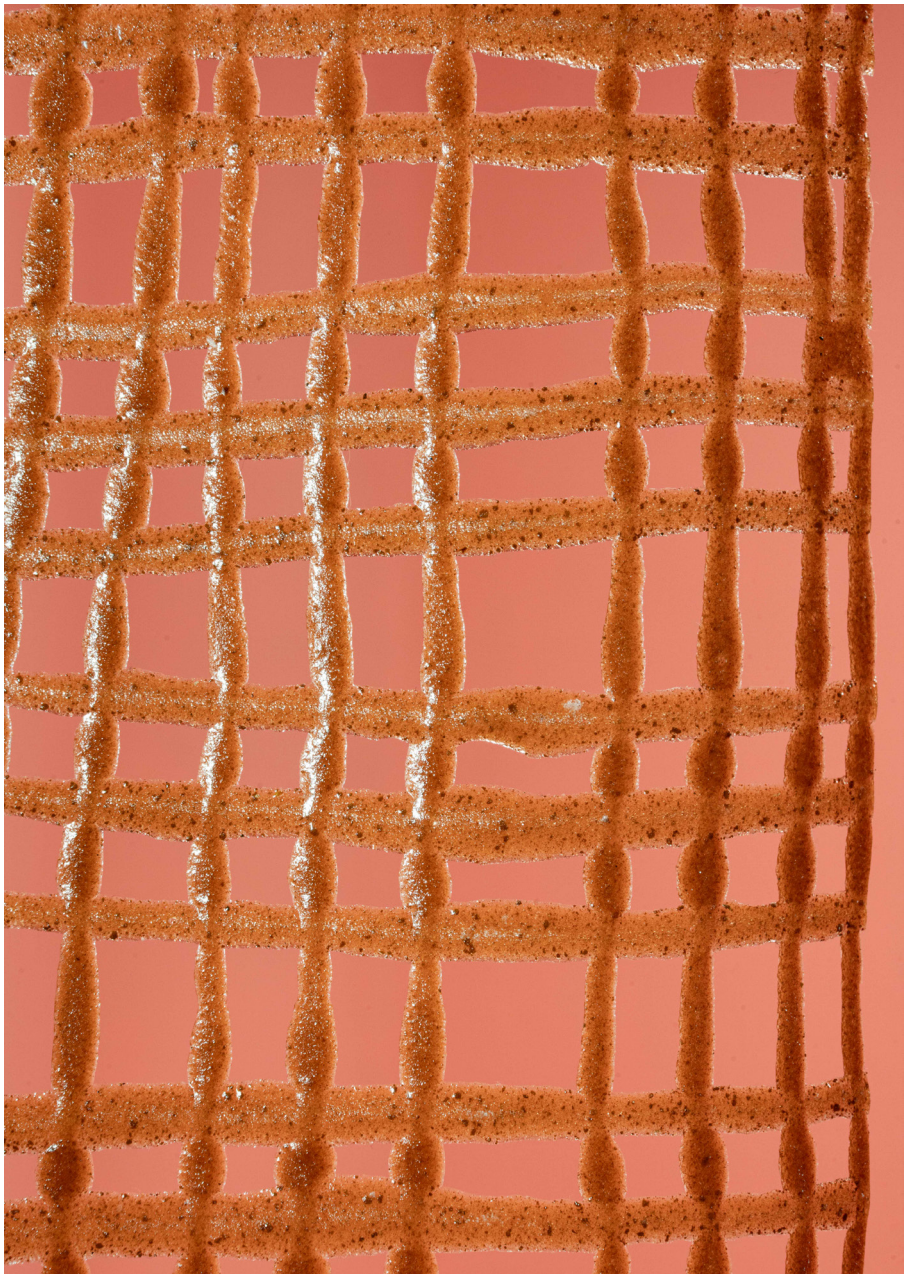
At the turn of the 1970ˢ, after working on large-scale projects exploring landscapes, the Belgian sculptor and ceramicist **Pierre Culot** also introduced an architectural dimension to his utilitarian objects. The different parts of *Vases composés* (composite vases) on display in the exhibition fit together perfectly to form a "metamorphosis of the pot into architecture, into a wall", according to historian Anne Bony. When he turned his attention to objects, the artist somehow transposed his experience of the monumentality of sculptural walls. The wall is more decorative, in keeping with kinetic art, and then Op Art, when Pierre Culot worked with different architects to come up with visually animated walls. Clay bricks, with full and hollowed patterns, triangles, hemispheres or moons, arranged in squares and offering infinite combinations, these claustras approach the wall in a whole new way. The one featured in the exhibition has been reproduced according to a photo from the 60ˢ and original elements recovered from the workshop.

BLAF architecten
Maison dnA, 2013

Historically, wood was the most popular construction material in Belgium, encouraging a circular lifespan for materials (deconstructing and reusing materials). The switch to brick was driven by factors such as urban fires and wood shortages. Today, in light of new European regulations (EPBD) governing energy performance and zero carbon targets, it is brick's turn to be called into question.

The research carried out by **BLAF architecten** (Bart Vanden Driessche, Lieven Nijs) into designing and building with bricks led to the launch of a series of projects based on a research and learning methodology based on construction, the *Hybrid Big Brick*. The design and construction iterations offer lessons that can be transferred and used in other projects. Three of these projects feature in the exhibition: the dnA, wsT and jtB houses. One of the principles of this research is based on the notion of the "intelligent ruin", a concept borrowed from the architect Bob Van Reeth, according to which "intelligent buildings must be adaptable, reusable, capable of being reconfigured and reorganised". This idea of ruins examines the relationship between the permanence of materials and the temporality of their use. BLAF explores alternative hybrid constructions combining a wooden frame with a brick shell, highlighting the appropriate use of materials (brick for permanence, wood for adaptability).
The brick façade acts as a supporting structure. Thanks to the minimal addition of concrete joists inside the building, the façade supports the roof, turning traditional construction methods upside down. This topsy-turvy approach allows BLAF to offer an effective response to recent energy regulations.For the DnA house, the façade is made using recycled bricks. The inner envelope is not load-bearing, and is made of a wooden frame, thus saving on materials. And so the external recycled brick envelopes and the wooden interiors function independently of one another, making any future renovations or adaptations easier.

In subsequent projects using the same construction method, BLAF began using insulation made of bio-sourced lime and hemp. All of these layers exist independently of one another and can continue to be treated as distinct material flows, and so reused.



Zuzanna Skurka
Brick textiles, 2023

Brick textile, biopolymer.

©Michał Maliński - *Learning from Minecraft, Things You Can Make with Brick,* Art Industry Standard gallery, Krakow, Poland (monographic exhibition).

Young Polish designer **Zuzanna Skurka** has carried out a wide range of research since she graduated from the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen. Her first foray into exploring the idea of reusing bricks from demolition sites and turning them into textiles was carried out in collaboration with Danish agency Natural Material Studio (Bonnie Hvillum). Their research led to a brick-orange coloured composite material made of crushed brick combined with a protein-based bioplastic, procel, giving it its supple textile texture. Its properties - flexible, resistant, translucid, waterproof - make it a product to look out for in the future. The designer continues her own personal research into this supple material using bricks collected from her great-grandmother's field in Poland after the neighbour's barn, built in the early 20th century, was demolished. This region's pre-war bricks are characterised by their bright orange colour, and offer a wide range of tones and possibilities. Starting with a flat surface, her recent research has resulted in a brick fibre, opening up all sorts of potential applications.

Aléa, Miriam Josi et Stella Lee Prowse
Back to dirt, 2021-2024

Brick cultivated from mycelium and recycled denim off-cuts.

After completing a Master's degree in design inspired by natural science at the Ensci-les Ateliers, **Miriam Josi** and S**tella Lee Prowse** started **Aléa**, an experimental design and material research studio, in 2021. They explore new regenerative production methods, including *Back to Dirt*, featured in the exhibition, a myco-fabrication process that uses mycelium and waste substrates. The Boisbuchet Residency Award allowed them to apply this process on a larger scale and grow a mycelium chair underground. This artisan process overcomes the need for sterilisation, electricity and plastic moulds. The bricks featured in the exhibition are made using this same experimental process, combining mycelium with other natural and organic materials. One of them will be shown as it grows, which means that the contribution of a lifeform to its production can be seen.

Press visuals can be downloaded on SOPHIECARREE.BE/PRESS

Studio Floris Wubben
Brick Chair, 2024

BC Materials
Gent Waste Brick for DING.

BC materials for Design Museum Gent and sogent 2021

Press visuals can be downloaded on SOPHIECARREE.BE/PRESS

Studio BISKT
Sinir Sculpture, 2023

Press visuals can be downloaded on SOPHIECARREE.BE/PRESS

Atelier Polyhedre
(Vincent Jousseaume
& Baptiste Ymonet)
Cascade, 2016

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OPENING TIMES
Every day from 10 AM until 6 PM, except Mondays.
The Grand-Hornu is closed on 24, 25, 31st December and 1st January.

The office can be reached during weekdays from 8 AM to 4.30 PM.

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ADMISSION FEE
— Combined ticket for the Grand-Hornu site / CID / MACS: €10
— Discount: €2 or €6
— Group rates (minimum 15 ppl.): €6
— School groups: €2
— Free for children under 6
— Free entry on the first Sunday of the month
— Free guided tour from Tuesday to Friday at 3.30 PM, Saterday at 11 AM and 3.30 PM, Sunday at 3 PM and 4.30 PM
— Audio-guides for the historic site: €3
(FR / DUTCH / GERMAN / ENGL / IT / SP)

Free guided tours for individuals
- From Tuesday to Saturday at 11 AM for the historic site, at 3:30 PM for the design exhibition
- Sunday at 3 PM for the historic site, at 4.30 PM for the design exhibition.

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BOOKING NUMBER
Advance reservation required for guided tours (by appointment) of exhibitions and/or historic site (FR / DUTCH / GERMAN / ENGL).
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reservations@grand-hornu.be

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CATERING
Run by Olivier Devriendt, former second-in-command to Sang Hoon Degeimbre at L'Air du Temps, **Rizom** offers a cuisine that is a cross between cultures.

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