

Guided tours

- Thurs 27.2.2025, 18:30 (fr)
Guided tour in French of Denis Savary's exhibition, with the artist and Paul Bernard, director KBCB
- Thurs 3.4.2025, 18:30 (de)
Guided tour in German of the exhibitions by Denis Savary and Susan Hiller, with Selma Meuli, curator KBCB

Art at noon

- Lunch with the Kunsthau team: short tour followed by a snack (with Epicerie Batavia)
- Fri 28.3.2025, 12:15 (de/fr)
CHF 15.-
Registration until the day before
info@kbc.ch

DENIS SAVARY

NASHVILLE

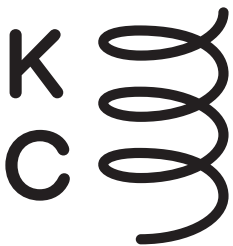
16.2.-20.4.2025

Videographer, sculptor and scenographer Denis Savary (*1981) has been working for twenty years on a body of work that is both demanding and playful, steeped in references of varying degrees of sophistication. Like a writer immersed in a stream of consciousness or an artificial intelligence finding unexpected correspondences between different motifs, the artist never ceases to proceed by derivations and associations of ideas, mixing the most heterogeneous imaginations. In this way, each of his exhibitions is criss-crossed by a strange narrative taking place in unstable territory. The most mundane everyday events, the most insignificant details, can meet with fantastical narratives and grandiose images.

The starting point for the exhibition in Biel is an earlier project that the artist developed by invitation to mark the centenary of the Dada movement. Savary created *Lagune* (2016), a choreography featuring a Sophie Taeuber-Arp puppet set against a backdrop of backlit Plexiglas building facades, all moved by dancers. After being performed in Paris, Zurich and Geneva, the piece was presented for the last time in 2018 on the roof terrace of the EMST, the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, which offers a breathtaking view of the Parthenon. The footage of this final performance was then edited to create *Athènes* (2018-2025), the video in the passageway leading to the Poma Room. In a way, this work constitutes the scenographic script for what is to follow.

The title of the exhibition may help us to understand the artist's approach here. Indeed, while Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, is famous for its music, it is also renowned in the United States for its cultural and educational commitment, earning it the nickname of the Athens of the South. At the end of the 19th century, a replica of the Parthenon was built here. The monument, which soon fell into disrepair, was renovated in 1920 before a reproduction of the statue of Athena – now lost – was added in 1990. The exhibition in the Salle Poma reflects these echoes of time and these replicas that have deteriorated or disappeared. While all the works on show were produced specifically for the occasion, they are also reworks and reinterpretations of existing works by the artist, arranged in a way that recalls the video Athens. The roof terrace of the Greek museum is suggested by a backlit low wall. The presence of this external architectural element in this large white cube is in itself a disturbance to the space represented. All the more so as the low wall is dotted with sculptural elements that could evoke the miniature ruins of some ancient temple or the emblematic radiators of the older part of the Kunsthau – in fact, they are a blistered and bleached version of Savary's earlier pieces, inspired as much by the sculptor Brancusi as by the painter Philipp Guston, as by ice hockey pads.

This topographical ambiguity, this interplay between outside and inside, is again found in *Figueras* (2021-2025): closed parasols made of semi-transparent fibreglass, whose shape and material suggest a costume as much as a confectionery shop. Here, the sculptures are fitted with an LED device that provides constantly changing internal lighting. This continuous flow of light is sometimes agitated by stroboscopic jolts, as if these parasols were harbouring a storm, as if they themselves contained the bad weather from which they could protect



Kunsthau Centre d'art
Biel
Öffnungszeiten
Anfangshauptver
Wochne 122000±188000
Wochne 122000±220000
Frühe 122000±188000
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us. The wooden platform on which they are placed evokes both the outdoor terraces of cafés and a raft floating in the exhibition space. But the romantic tone can also make us see *Figueras* as a strange echo of Arnold Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*, the parasols representing the cypress trees in the famous painting.

The ceiling-mounted sculpture *Charm* (2025) is made of glass using a recycling technique known as «bousillé». Its shape, originally inspired by a ritual doll, is reminiscent of a rudimentary puppet. Its milky consistency and its position several metres above the ground make it a satellite, or a kind of floating mollusc. Or perhaps it's the improbable disco ball of a deserted discotheque – a motif that obsesses the artist and appears in his video *Le Must* (2004), presented at Hochparterre. This last aspect gives us a glimpse of an essential component of Savary's work: his appetite for peripheral areas and vernacular practices.

The same is true of *Night Shift* (2025), the latest work created for the exhibition. Inspired by a fountain seen in a Geneva park, the sculpture is composed of a superposition of conical basins reminiscent of the capitals of Greek columns – there is a fountain with a similar structure in the city park in Bienne. From Marcel Duchamp to Meret Oppenheim, artists' fountains have often been the occasion for avant-garde experimentation and scandal. Savary's fountain is first and foremost the sign of a village square, and in its own way, completes the connotation of the entire exhibition. On its surface is the image of a sleeping owl with its wings spread by two hands – a photograph taken by a Swiss civil servant while the animal was being ringed. The nocturnal bird, here somnolent but with its wings spread, could thus embody a kind of paradoxical guardian of this exhibition plunged into the night. Moreover, as a symbol of Athena's wisdom, it is the ultimate reference to Athens.

PASSAGE SALLE POMA

Athènes, 2018-2025
video, 6'00"
image: Daphné Bengoa,
montage: Nicolas Ponce

Le Phare, 2017-2025
glass, cement, ballon,
helium
court. collection privée

SALLE POMA

Night Shift, 2025
with Eliot Möwes
painted wood, blueback
poster

Lovers, 2025
resin

Figueras, 2021-2025
fibreglass, metal, wood
production: MB composite,
lights: Daniel Mudrecki

Charm, 2025
blown glass, silver
glassmaker: Vincent Breed

HOCHPARTERRE

Le Must, 2004
video, 35'00"

unless otherwise stated, all works:
court. the artist and Bernheim Gallery, Zurich.

The exhibition is kindly supported by the canton of Vaud and Pro Helvetia.

Das Kunsthaus Biel ist Teil vom Pasquart.
Le Centre d'art de Bienne fait partie de Pasquart.

Das Kunsthaus Biel wird unterstützt von der Stadt Biel, dem Kanton Bern und dem Gemeindeverband Kulturförderung Biel/Bienne-Seeland-Berner Jura.
Le Centre d'art de Bienne est soutenu par la ville de Bienne, le canton de Berne et le syndicat Biel/Bienne-Seeland-Jura bernois pour la culture.