

ELMGREEN & DRAGSET *BONNE CHANCE*

EXHIBITION FROM 10.06.23 TO 01.04.24
GRANDE NEF, FORUM , ROOF TOP GALLERY

Centre
Pompidou-Metz 

PRESS RELEASE

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OPENING HOURS
Every day, except Tuesdays and May 1st

01.11 > 31.03
MON. | WED. | THU. | FR. | SAT. | SUN. | 10 am – 6 pm

MON. | WED. | THU. | 10 am – 6 pm
FR. | SAT. | SUN. | 10 am – 7 pm



Elmgreen & Dragset, *The One & The Many*, 2010 et *The Outsiders*, 2020
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ELMGREEN & DRAGSET. *BONNE CHANCE*

Curator: Chiara Parisi, Director of Centre Pompidou-Metz

The Centre Pompidou-Metz is pleased to present ***Bonne Chance***, the first solo exhibition in a French institution by the artist duo **Elmgreen & Dragset**. For this extensive show, curated by Chiara Parisi, the artists will drastically transform the Grand Nef, the Forum and roof top gallery into numerous all-encompassing artificial environments. Notably, this is the first time that the museum has given over the immense Grand Nef gallery space to a solo exhibition.

Collaborating since 1995, Elmgreen & Dragset have redefined the exhibition format by conceiving temporary architectures and life-size models of public and private spatial settings that seem strangely incongruous within an art institution. Rather than considering their artworks as a collection of static objects in a neutral space, the artists see each individual work as a part of a bigger story, taking on a new life every time it is shown in a different context. Accordingly, at the Centre Pompidou-Metz, the duo will bring together both existing and recent sculptures in site-specific constellations, thereby setting the stage for new narratives to unfold. These often-realistic installations will replicate common urban settings that most of us come across regularly in

our daily lives, but rarely in a museum context. The environments appear mostly desolate, with occasional life-like silicone figures engaged in various activities. As the visitors wander through these spaces, they are invited to piece together various clues and imagine what might have happened or what is about to happen here. In this way, the audience becomes performers themselves, taking on the role of a detective, an uninvited guest, or an intruder. In addition to the installations within the galleries, occasional live elements will be integrated at random times throughout the duration of the show, with an emphasis on the opening weekend and in October. Infused with the artists' typical pathos and subversive humor, Bonne Chance will present a familiar yet unsettling world where the mundane is re-choreographed to become extraordinary.

From the start of the exhibit, Elmgreen & Dragset disorient our spatiotemporal coordinates by turning the outside inside and the inside out. In the midst of the Forum, they will construct a full-scale apartment building *The One & the Many*, an unexpected structure that reshapes the usual experience of Shigeru Ban and Jean de Gastines' architecture. The artists believe that every space, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, has a hidden alter-ego that they hope to reveal through alteration or displacement. In *The One & the Many*, they recreated an East German social housing block, a so-called "plattenbau", commonly seen in Berlin. Visitors can only see the apartments from the outside, with every window either covered by blinds or curtains. If they try ringing the doorbell, nobody will answer. In an old Mercedes estate car parked outside the building, the realistic figures of two men embrace in the trunk, surrounded by materials that suggest they might be art handlers *The Outsiders*. This work highlights the labor that usually goes on behind the scenes and that is not included in the social spectacle.

In the Grand Nef, the limits between the fictional and the real become even less clear. Here, Elmgreen & Dragset have conceived a layout like a computer game where the player must navigate a labyrinthine space, never quite knowing what the next turn might bring. As visitors move throughout the show, they encounter scenes from various parts of life, including a theatre auditorium, a public restroom, a laboratory, a conference room, a morgue, a CCTV surveillance room and a desolate office landscape. Like in a dream (or a nightmare?) these ordinary situations follow an incoherent logic where normal rules no longer apply. Almost troublingly familiar, the scenarios start to create a sense of discomfort and unease. The uncanniness intensifies as the viewer comes across peculiar characters such as a young man sleeping on the conference room table in a bunny costume and a tightrope walker who has slipped and is now clinging onto the wire with just one hand.

Throughout "Bonne Chance", Elmgreen & Dragset seem to invite the viewers to take part in different experiences while also denying their full participation. For example, a pair of doors in the conference room are locked together with a long, interconnecting security chain, rendering their function utterly useless *Powerless Structures*. In the bathroom, we can attempt to wash our hands, but the sink pipes are conjoined and won't drain properly *Marriage*. Not even the spinning wheel of fortune will bring us luck, since its mirror polished surface has no numbers, and the wheel never stops turning *Wheel of Fortune*. Many of the rooms appear to be haunted by the loss of community life, giving the impression that defeat and exclusion are built into these spaces. We can try our luck or we can try to take a short cut, but in Elmgreen & Dragset's maze, the game seems fundamentally unwinnable and without a specific goal. By exaggerating the familiar, playing with paradox, pushing purposeless to its extreme, and above all, magnifying the absurdity of it all, Elmgreen & Dragset render these spatial structures powerless. Through the distance of art, it becomes clear that space, whether institutional or of everyday life, is not an individualistic game of winning or losing predetermined by mechanistic systems of control. To the contrary, the artists insist, "these structures, unlike those in a computer game, always can change or be interchanged. Only as long as we in a society accept the structures that hold up power, does power stay the way it is». Providing a glimpse of hope, Bonne Chance reveals that it is not a matter of chance but maybe of choice.

On the occasion of Bonne Chance, the Centre Pompidou-Metz will publish an exhibition catalogue, including an interview with the artists by Centre Pompidou-Metz director, Chiara Parisi, and contributions by Emanuele Coccia and Quill Kukla.

Looking Back, 2002, the enormous eye peering out of the front windows of the Centre Pompidou-Metz, will be on view until Fall 2023.

Michael Elmgreen (born 1961 in Copenhagen, Denmark) and Ingar Dragset (born 1969 in Trondheim, Norway) are based in Berlin. They have presented solo exhibitions at numerous prominent institutions worldwide including the Fondazione Prada, Milan (2022); The Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2019-20); The Whitechapel Gallery, London (2018–19); Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2016); UCCA, Beijing (2016); PLATEAU, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul (2015); Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2013–14); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2011); ZKM Museum of Modern Art, Karlsruhe (2010); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (2009); Serpentine Gallery, London (2006); Tate Modern, London (2004); and Kunsthalle Zürich (2001). In 2009, they represented both the Nordic and the Danish Pavilions at the 53rd Venice Biennale. They have become well-known for their public sculptures such as *Van Gogh's Ear* (2016), a gigantic swimming pool sitting upright in front of Rockefeller Center in New York City, *Prada Marfa* (2005), a full-scale replica of a Prada store in the middle of the Texan desert, and *Short Cut* (2003), a car and trailer breaking through the ground.



Elmgreen & Dragset, *What's Left?*, 2021
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Elmgreen & Dragset, *The Outsiders*, 2020
Courtesy: Pace Gallery
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Photo: Elmar Vestner



Elmgreen & Dragset, *Untitled*, 2011
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