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# Monthly Newsletter

## **ARTSA Interview: Arne Quinze on The Absurd and the Dreamlike**



**ARTSA's July issue opens with an interview with Arne Quinze, reflecting on *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* at La Citadelle, Villefranche-sur-Mer. Quinze discusses the exhibition as a process of risk, research and transformation, shaped by nature, Jean Cocteau's legacy, the architecture of La Citadelle and his dialogue with Joana Vasconcelos.**

***You've often said you do your best work when you're out of your comfort zone. Where does *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* sit on that scale?***

The idea of stepping outside my comfort zone is deeply connected to the way I work as an artist. After more than 30 years of creating large-scale installations and complex projects, we have the experience, the knowledge, and the capacity to realize ambitious visions. The real challenge is always the search for something new. My mind is constantly in a process of creation. Since I was born, I have always felt this need to create, to evolve, to research. It never stops. For me, being an artist means continuously developing new insights, new concepts, new ideas, and exploring new materials and possibilities. It is an ongoing process of discovery. When I begin a project like *The Absurd and the Dreamlike*, which started more than a year ago, it takes over completely. I put all my energy into it. I go all in. I will only be satisfied when I have constructed and deconstructed everything possible, when I have questioned every element and explored every direction. The real challenge is not the project itself; the challenge is always with myself. It comes from my continuous research into the diversity of nature, its raw power, its fragility, and its almost divine harmony. Nature remains my greatest teacher. I am constantly trying to understand its systems, its structures, its rhythms, and the extraordinary balance between chaos and order that exists within it. The challenge is to translate these discoveries into my work, to transform the complexity of nature into a visual language that can be experienced by others. In order to achieve that, I always have to move beyond what I already know. It is not about repeating a technique or remaining within familiar territory. It is about searching for something that does not yet exist, pushing myself toward new materials, new forms, and new ways of expression. *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* is very much part of this ongoing journey. It brought together different energies: the history and atmosphere of La Citadelle, the spirit of Cocteau, the dialogue with Joana, and the challenge of creating an environment where new realms can be created. It is precisely in

these moments of openness, uncertainty, and research that something new can emerge. That is where the true excitement lies.

***The Absurd and the Dreamlike brings together two artists whose visual languages couldn't seem more different, your raw, almost botanical architectures, and Joana's crocheted, textile, ornamental worlds. When you talked with Selcan Atilgan first about this project, what was your immediate reaction?***

When Selcan first asked me to look into the project and the location, I immediately saw the powerful history of La Citadelle. The moment I started working on it, I was drawn into its layers of time, its architecture, and its atmosphere. A place that already carries so many narratives. Very quickly, this connected me to Jean Cocteau. You still feel his presence in Villefranche-sur-Mer, as if it is embedded in the landscape itself. I began immersing myself in his work, especially *The Testament of Orpheus*, which I had playing continuously in my studio during the early stages of the project. It was through this film that the title *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* truly emerged for me. From that point, I knew I wanted to invite Joana Vasconcelos to collaborate. The idea of diversity was already at the core of my thinking for this exhibition, and Joana's work kept returning in my conceptual process. I have known her work for a long time, and although our practices are very different, it is precisely in that difference that the foundation of this project lies. When Selcan presented the project, I saw immediately that this could become a space where contrast is not a division, but a generator. Cocteau himself embodies that same in-between state, between reality and myth, structure and imagination, the absurd and the poetic. That resonated deeply with what I wanted to build here. For me, diversity is not just the theme, it is a necessity. In a world that increasingly moves toward standardization and uniformity, I feel a strong need to defend complexity, contradiction, and multiplicity. Cocteau's work reminded me of that urgency, to resist the narrowing of perception and to remain open to other realities. This is also why Joana became so present in my thinking. Not because our works are similar, but because they are not. We are often positioned in very individual artistic trajectories, and collaboration is not always natural in our field. But here, I felt there was a rare possibility, to work freely, to trust the process, and to allow difference to become productive rather than restrictive. In that trust, something new can emerge, not a compromise, but an expansion. A space where both practices remain fully intact, yet begin to generate a new language together. That is what we are trying to achieve at La Citadelle, not fusion, but the creation of a shared realm where new forms, new readings, and new realities can appear.

***You both operate at monumental scale, but for very different reasons, yours rooted in nature reclaiming urban space, hers in the politics of craft, domesticity, and femininity. Did working alongside her change how you think about scale, or what scale is for?***

We both have artistic careers spanning more than 30 years, so we have each developed a deep relationship with scale through experience. For both of us, working monumentally is not simply a question of making something larger; scale is an essential component of the work. It is a tool, a way of shifting perception and allowing an idea that might otherwise remain hidden to become visible. Although our starting points are very different, we use scale for a similar reason: to remove things from their usual context and reveal their deeper meaning. By enlarging, transforming, and relocating elements, we create a moment where the viewer is invited to see them differently. For Joana, this means bringing the domestic realm, the objects, gestures, and forms of labor that have traditionally remained hidden within the walls of the home, into public space. By monumentalizing these elements, she liberates them and gives them a new visibility, allowing what was once considered intimate or overlooked to become powerful and universal. For me, scale is a way to bring attention back to nature and its incredible diversity. We have progressively pushed nature away from our daily environments, replacing organic complexity with monotonous grey structures. Through my work, I try to reintroduce a sense of wonder, to make visible the richness and beauty of the diversity of the natural world that we have forgotten. Scale is not only physical, it is also conceptual and emotional. A monumental work can create a space for reflection, imagination, and reconnection. Whether it is the hidden world of domesticity or the overlooked complexity of nature, scale allows us to reveal what has been erased, ignored, or forgotten. In that sense, our works meet in a similar place: they challenge the boundaries of

our built environments and invite a return to wonder. They create a space where the organic and the human, the intimate and the monumental, can coexist and open a new realm of perception, creating a new reality.

***Villefranche has a long artistic memory, Cocteau, the Riviera light, the Mediterranean as a dreamlike landscape. Were any of those echoes consciously present in your thinking, or did the place keep surprising you?***

Cocteau was absolutely present from the very beginning, and in many ways he shaped the foundation of this exhibition. The title *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* comes directly from my engagement with his work and his way of thinking. What struck me most in Cocteau is how he constantly turned inward, how he was researching within himself, moving between reality and imagination, and using the absurd not as contradiction, but as a method of transformation, a way to reach new forms of reflection and perception. That idea sits at the core of this project. In the spirit of Jean Cocteau, we also question the rigidity of built environments. Like him, we seek to subvert conventions with poetry and sensitivity, opening up space for other forms of reality to appear. Cocteau's presence is still very tangible in Villefranche-sur-Mer, a place he deeply loved and where he left a lasting imprint through his work, notably in the Chapel of Saint-Pierre. But his connection to this place was never only physical or historical, it was also imaginary. He transformed Villefranche into a territory of myths, symbols, and dreamlike narratives. That is still something you feel today. His spirit seems to inhabit the alleyways, the marine light, and the stones charged with history. This is Cocteau's territory, literally and spiritually. He blurred every boundary he encountered, between film, poetry, drawing, and dream. When I look at La Citadelle, and at what is being created there now, I feel that this spirit is still very much alive. So yes, those echoes were consciously present from the start, especially Cocteau. But at the same time, the place itself kept unfolding. Villefranche and La Citadelle are not passive backdrops; they carry memory, light, and atmosphere that continuously influence the work. It becomes a dialogue between intention and discovery, between what you bring into the space and what the space reveals back to you.

***The absurd often involves a refusal of rational meaning. Is there something in your work that you'd describe as deliberately, productively absurd?***

The absurd in my work is not a rejection of meaning; it is a way of opening new possibilities beyond what we already understand. This is my work, this is how I work as an artist: always on the edge, balancing between construction and deconstruction, constantly researching and questioning ideas, forms, and materials. I am always searching for attraction, for wonder, for the incredible diversity and complexity of nature. The deeper I go into that research, the more I encounter things that cannot be fully explained. Nature itself is full of contradictions: it is precise and chaotic, fragile and powerful, familiar and completely mysterious. By continuously pushing boundaries, by going further and deeper, you eventually come into contact with the unknown, the intangible, the absurd, and the dreamlike. For me, that is where creation begins. The absurd is not something I deliberately add; it emerges when you move beyond the limits of what is familiar and allow new relationships between materials, forms, and ideas to appear. That moment of uncertainty is important. It creates space for imagination, for discovery, and for a different way of seeing. The absurd becomes productive because it challenges our expectations and allows us to experience reality from another perspective.

***The exhibition runs until October 31st. What do you hope a visitor takes away intellectually and in their body, walking back out through the Citadelle's gates?***

I hope visitors leave La Citadelle with a feeling that stays with them, not necessarily with a single interpretation or a defined message. For me, art is not about giving answers; it is about creating a space where people can experience something, question something, and allow their imagination to become active. Walking through the exhibition is meant to be an encounter. The works reveal themselves slowly, through movement, through changing perspectives, through details that might first appear unexpectedly: a reflection, a texture, a material, a scale that shifts the way you perceive the space around you. I hope visitors allow themselves to wander, to take their time, and to experience the exhibition not only with their eyes, but with their entire body. Intellectually, I hope the exhibition

creates a moment of reflection about diversity, imagination, and the relationship between humans and the world around us. In a time where so many things are moving toward uniformity, I believe it is essential to celebrate complexity, difference, and the richness that comes from multiple perspectives existing together. The dialogue between Joana's work and mine is not about creating a perfect harmony or resolving our differences. It is about allowing two very different artistic languages to exist together, sometimes in conversation, sometimes in tension. It is precisely within that tension that new possibilities appear. When visitors walk back out through the gates of La Citadelle, I hope they carry with them a renewed sense of wonder. Maybe they look differently at the world around them, at nature, at everyday objects, or at the possibilities of imagination. If the exhibition can open a small space within them where curiosity, beauty, and a sense of possibility remain alive, then it has achieved what I hoped for.

# Venice Biennale 2026 continues through summer



The 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia continues throughout the summer, reaffirming its role as one of the most influential events on the global cultural calendar. Curated by the late Koyo Kouoh under the title *In Minor Keys*, this edition proposes a slower, more attentive way of looking at the world. Rather than responding to contemporary crises through spectacle, the exhibition focuses on quieter forms of knowledge, emotion and perception. Across the Giardini, Arsenale and multiple venues throughout Venice, more than one hundred artists explore memory, identity, ecology, spirituality and collective resilience through installation, film, sculpture, painting and performance.

One of the defining characteristics of this Biennale is its commitment to voices and narratives that have historically remained at the margins of the international art world. Artists from Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Global South occupy a central position within the exhibition, reflecting Kouoh's long-standing curatorial vision of expanding the geography of contemporary art. Rather than presenting a single political statement, *In Minor Keys* invites visitors into spaces of contemplation, where subtle gestures and emotional resonance become forms of resistance.

# Les Rencontres d'Arles 2026



## Photography as a Living Archive

From 6 July to 4 October, the city of Arles once again becomes the international capital of photography with the opening of the 57th edition of Les Rencontres d'Arles. Since its foundation in 1970, the festival has grown into one of the world's most influential photography events, transforming churches, industrial buildings, archives and historic monuments into exhibition spaces. Every summer, Arles welcomes artists, curators, publishers, collectors and institutions for a programme that extends well beyond exhibitions to include screenings, artist talks, workshops and public debates.

The 2026 edition explores narratives rooted in the African continent, the Mediterranean and wider global histories.

Through archives, documentary photography, contemporary image-making and experimental practices, the festival examines how photography shapes collective memory and public imagination. Alongside established names, emerging photographers are given significant visibility, reinforcing the festival's long-standing commitment to discovering new artistic voices. From 15 to 21 June 2026, Liste Art Fair Basel will bring together 106 galleries from 36 countries at Messe Basel. Known as one of the leading platforms for younger galleries and emerging artists, Liste offers a more experimental counterpoint to Art Basel's blue-chip landscape.

The 2026 edition includes solo and duo presentations, performances, talks, guided tours, a film programme, and the Spine Book Forum. It continues to serve as a key site for discovering new artistic voices and tracking the next generation of contemporary practices.

# Summer Exhibitions Across Europe



## A Season of Institutional Reflection

July also marks the beginning of an exceptionally rich museum season across Europe. Institutions are increasingly using the summer months not simply to attract larger audiences, but to present ambitious exhibitions that revisit major artistic figures while introducing new critical perspectives. From London to Edinburgh and Manchester, museums are foregrounding exhibitions that address identity, memory, ecology, politics and artistic experimentation.

Among the most anticipated exhibitions are presentations dedicated to Ana Mendieta, Richard Dadd, Ai Weiwei, Gillian Ayres and Eva Rothschild. Together, these projects reflect an institutional shift toward exhibitions that combine historical reassessment with contemporary relevance. Rather than presenting artists as isolated figures, museums increasingly position their practices within broader cultural and political conversations. This tendency mirrors a wider transformation within the museum sector, where exhibitions become platforms for dialogue as much as displays of objects.

## Looking Ahead: Aspen Art Fair 2026



Taking place from 29 July to 1 August, Aspen Art Fair returns during Aspen Art Week, bringing together galleries, artists, collectors and institutions in one of the most distinctive cultural destinations in the United States. While relatively young compared to established international fairs, Aspen has quickly positioned itself as a meeting point where contemporary art intersects with luxury hospitality, design and collecting culture.

Unlike large metropolitan fairs, Aspen benefits from an intimate scale. Conversations between galleries, collectors and artists unfold within a slower environment that encourages longer engagement and deeper relationships. This atmosphere has become increasingly attractive to international galleries seeking alternatives to more commercially driven fair models. Alongside exhibitions, the week includes talks, private events and institutional collaborations that reinforce Aspen's role as a broader cultural destination rather than solely a marketplace.

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