



I want ! I want !
(angry voices angel faces)

Christophe Hamaide-Pierson
 assume vivid astro focus

September 5 - October 3. 2020

The Franco-Brazilian duo **assume vivid astro focus (avaf)** formed by Christophe Hamaide-Pierson and Eli Sudbrack is best known for their complex and profuse, exuberant and joyful multimedia installations, which have been taking over galleries, museums and public spaces for the past fifteen years. The recycling of high art and popular culture has long guided the two artists in their quest for a form rendering fluid identities in their perpetual reinvention—that of the museum object (unique pieces, video loops, digital files, performances, spatial arrangements); that of the exhibition format (in-situ, retrospectives, commercial spaces, interactions with the public); and that of the duo itself (which works sometimes anonymously under the **avaf** alias, sometimes affirming the specificity of each of its two members).

From this triple point of view, *I want! I want!* marks both an extension and a new beginning. Lately, each of the two artists has been signing his personal exhibitions with his own name and that of **avaf**; the present exhibition, the work of Christophe Hamaide-Pierson, remains under the aegis of the collective from which it takes up certain codes to better free itself from them. For example: the metamorphosis of bodies is clearly a constant preoccupation for **avaf**—in the contortionist and dismembered curves of the sculptures presented today at Hussenot Gallery, one might recognize the arched back of their “Big Lady” (*homocrap#1*, MoCA, Los Angeles, 2005) or the open thighs on stiletto heels of their huge “slide-tongue” (*affektert veggmaleri akselererende faenksap*, National Museum of Art, Oslo, 2009); but, while the duo often had their pieces made by other hands (a carnival floats workshop in Los Angeles, a manufacturer of inflatable structures in Oslo), the sculptures in *I want! I want!* are by the artist’s own hand: the glossiness of industrial paint and the sleek perfection of the vectorized image are replaced, for the first time, by forms that seem to be shaped in clay or moulded in concrete.

Placed on the ground, leaning against the walls or balanced in mid-air, these sculptures are interrupted gestures cast in stone, transgender creatures in the midst of metamorphosis, on the verge of imbalance, humanoid pieces of furniture that seem to be having fun trying to escape their condition as inert objects, but also their status as works of art. The ladder with its large outstretched hands takes up a famous image of William Blake (*I want! I want!* 1793) – but what exactly does it “want”? To reach the moon, as in the English poet’s engraving? To make the impossible possible by uttering it twice, with the stubborn insistence of some spoiled child? If indeed the juxtaposition of objects tells a story, we can assume that the broken ladder placed not far away, as if overwhelmed by the failure of its ascent, constitutes the inevitable second part of a tragic diptych—spleen and ideal. A few yards away, a body without a trunk or head picks up a daisy; a twisted shape wraps itself around parallel bars; a dismembered table drags itself on the floor, as if wounded to death, pointing two asymmetrical breasts towards the sky; an armchair with elephantiasis legs takes a rest; two chairs converse and light each other up. In each case, the viewer may well spot an intention or even a desire in the figures of this anthropomorphic furniture, and notice that metaphors are here taken literally—in everyday language, after all, a bed does have a head, an armchair has arms, a chair has legs: here they all are, disassembled and reassembled under a rough paper-clay skin.

Faithful to **avaf**'s autophagous tendencies, Christophe Hamaide-Pierson "cannibalizes" his own past and current works. The video loop "Jeanne Jeanne Jeanne (Tutti Fruti)" thus reworks an unreleased videoclip made by the artist in 2018 for Jeanne Balibar. "Men under control" recycles the central element of a previous exhibition (*Blanche Monnier, Confort moderne, Poitiers, 2018*), a huge printed carpet whose pattern is inspired by the fetishist imagery of the fanzine *Men who get spanked by women*, which, between 1990 and 1993, published the fantasy letters of inspired spankers; in its playful relationship to socio-sexual prohibitions, the wall-to-wall carpet also frees itself from all prohibitions, tearing itself away from its platitude to intrude into a three-dimensional space, running over the mezzanine and covering the walls, inviting us to step or lie down on it. Finally, the "Peintures Peintures" series transforms tee-shirts (all custom-made and worn by the artist) into explicit artworks stretched on frames and varnished: while the carpet aspires to three-dimensional form, the ample clothing renounces it in favour of verticality; while the earth-paper sculpture dreams of movement, tee-shirts that were worn many times are ending their life in the restricted immobility of a gallery frame. In one way or the other—from the animate to the inanimate, from one material or one gender to another, and vice versa—metamorphosis seems to be at work everywhere.