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DRAC Normandie

Agathe Simon at L'Estrade: 'Ex Nihilo', When Gazes Shape the World

In Athis-Val-de-Rouvre, in the bocage region of the Orne department (France), the contemporary art space L'Estrade hosted, from April 18 to June 7, 2026, artist Agathe Simon's first exhibition in Normandy. It was an immersion into a body of work that sought not only to take visitors on a journey but also to question the very nature of their perception and their relationship to the world.

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Actualité

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Création artistique

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Europe et international

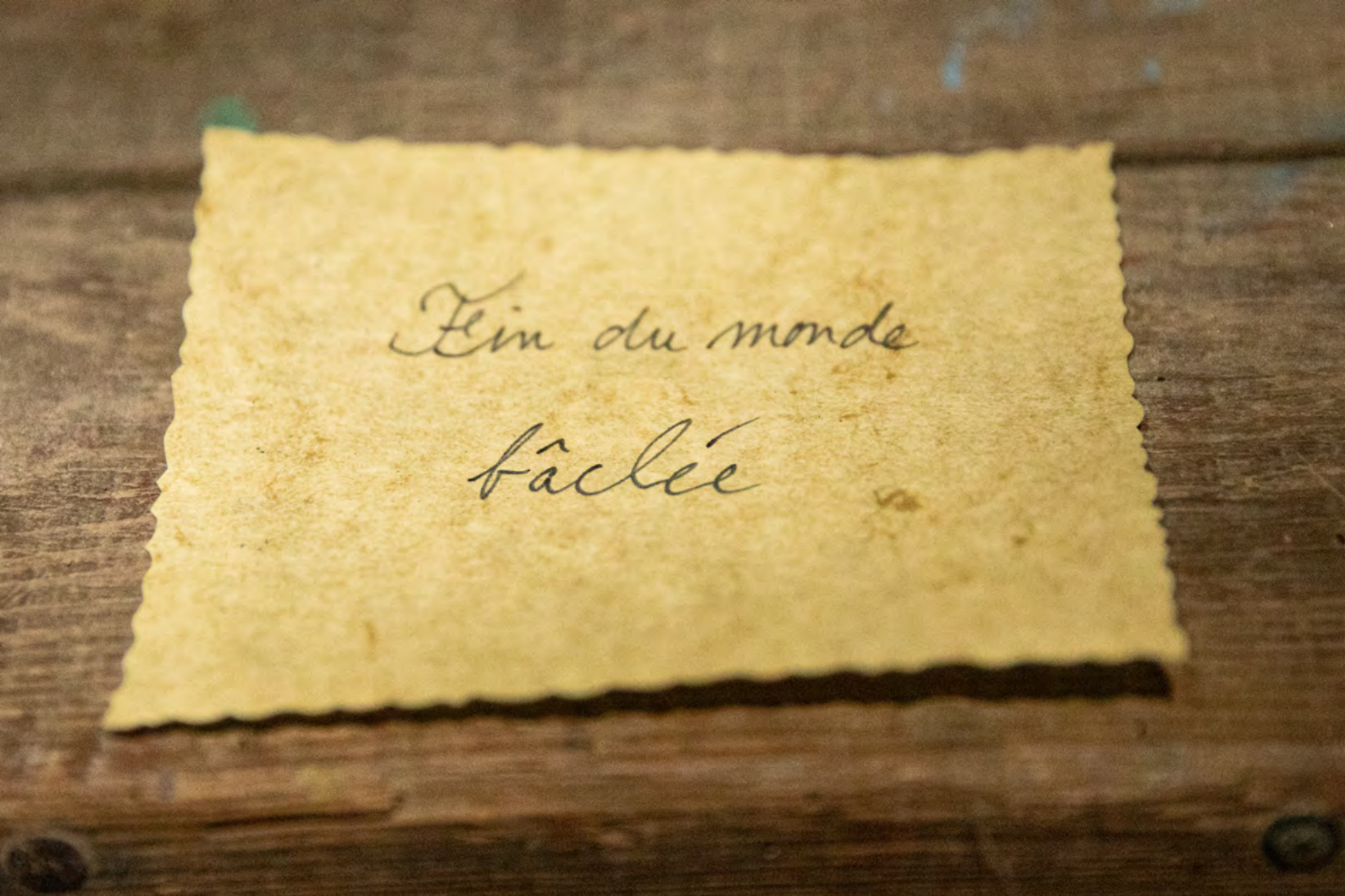
Sorties, expositions

Arts visuels

Arts plastiques

Original article in French (available online)

<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/regions/drac-normandie/actualites/agathe-simon-a-l-estrade-ex-nihilo-quand-les-regards-fabriquent-le-monde>



Fin du monde
@Agathe Simon

Supported by the DRAC Normandie, in partnership with the Normandy Region, as part of the [Splash](#) program led by the [RN13BIS](#) contemporary art network, this exhibition was part of a strong commitment to supporting contemporary art in the region.

Two voices for one origin of the world



Attraction céleste
@Agathe Simon

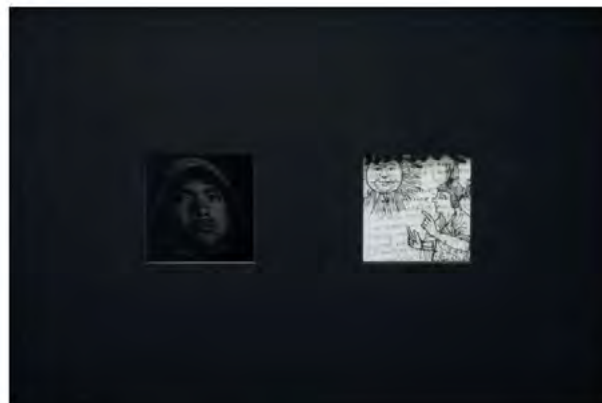
At the heart of [Agathe Simon](#)'s exhibition, *Celestial Attraction*, a fifteen-minute video triptych filmed in the arid landscapes of the Andes in Argentina, offered a nonlinear narrative approach, with two voices responding to and intertwining with one another: that of a cosmologist, searching for traces of the birth of the universe from a high-altitude observatory, the QUBIC telescope, and that of a llama herder, whose gaze remains anchored to the earth, torn between two worlds—Christian faith and Pachamama.

In the exhibition space, a second layer shifted the experience: a live connection to that same telescope, located in Alto Chorrillos at an altitude of 5,000 meters (16,400 feet), creating an unexpected shift from the Orne to the Andes—between representation and reality, from the exhibition to ongoing scientific observation. In contrast to the video triptych, with its deliberately desaturated color palette, the unedited image from the telescope thus imposed a luminous, almost blinding reality.

New artistic experiments

Alongside the film, the exhibition featured two series of artworks never before seen in the artist's body of work, made possible thanks to support from the Splash program.

A series of six paintings on a black background, titled *Hypothèses de création* (*Hypotheses of Creation*), brought together fragments of ancient diagrams, scientific data, and philosophical quotations exploring the concepts of belief, knowledge, and temporality, revealing, layer by layer, various human attempts to give form to the probabilities of the unknown.



Hypothèses de création
@Agathe Simon



Fins du monde 1
@Agathe Simon

Three ceramic sculptures, technically crafted by a local artisan, expanded on this reflection by drawing inspiration from the most plausible scientific theories regarding the end of the universe. Three possible forms of the world's demise—oblong, flared, and conical—embodied these scenarios, conceived as an open field of inquiry where fragile, cracked, or incomplete pieces were integrated as conflicting hypotheses.

Writing Beyond

Set apart from the exhibition, another video triptych featured the artist in the Orne countryside, secluded in a cabin, writing, and creating a portrait in “philagnostic”—a neologism the artist defines as “the love of the unknown.”



La Philagnoise
@Agathe Simon

This daily meditative writing practice inspired the ‘carte blanche’ that Agathe Simon contributed to the [Interstice Festival](#), marking its 20th anniversary (May 6–10, 2026, Caen). Building on the themes explored in *Ex Nihilo*, her contribution focuses on the relationships between art, science, and the construction of narratives of knowledge; it will appear in the festival’s anthology, published by [Les Presses du réel](#).

Ongoing Projects Internationally and in Normandy

Agathe Simon is continuing to develop *As a Shadow*, an interdisciplinary performance project created for the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet, with a second creative residency at the EMS Studios in Stockholm scheduled for September 2026, following an initial residency in February–March. The project is supported by the Swedish Arts Council and the Goethe-Institut.

Conceived as a speculative fiction set in 2031, the work features four saxophonists forced into hiding under a fictional authoritarian regime, rehearsing in a basement in preparation for a banned concert. Through this narrative, Agathe Simon explores art’s capacity to create spaces of symbolic resistance in the face of political abuses and violations of fundamental freedoms. The premiere of *As a shadow* is scheduled for 2027 at ‘La Générale’ in Paris, followed by performances in Normandy and Sweden, notably in Stockholm.

At the same time, Agathe Simon is filming her participatory fiction film *La Bouineuse* (*The Potterer*) in the Orne bocage, with a crew of about 70 amateur actors. This project was commissioned by the Orne Bocage Cooperation Cluster and is funded by the DRAC Normandy and the Normandy Region.

Extensive Support

This project was supported by the [CNC](#) (National Center for Cinema and the Moving Image), the [DRAC Île-de-France](#) (Ministry of Culture), the [ADAGP](#), and the Splash initiative led by RN13BIS—contemporary art in Normandy—thanks to support from the DRAC Normandie and the [Normandy Regional Council](#). It was developed as part of [La Fémis's](#) 2022 Documentary Workshop.

It was also developed in partnership with the [AstroParticle & Cosmology](#) (APC) Laboratory, led by the University of Paris, the [CNRS](#), the DIM-Origines of the Île-de-France Region, and the [ANR](#), as well as, in Italy, the [INFN](#), and in Argentina, the [Institute of Detection and Astroparticle Technology](#) (ITeDA), led by the [National Atomic Energy Commission](#) (CNEA), the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), the [University of San Martín](#) (UNSAM), and the [UTN Mendoza](#).

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