

Chroniques Biennial

The fourth [Chroniques Biennial](#) of digital imaginaries took place at various venues in Marseille, Aix-en-Provence and Avignon. This year, several creations were brought together around the theme of pleasure.

In Marseille



Smack, *Speculum*, 2019.

At its launch, digital arts professionals gathered at Marseille's Friche la Belle de Mai for exhibitions such as *Derniers Délices* (Last Delights) in the Panorama room, where studio [Smack](#)'s *Speculum* was installed. This video installation is inspired by Hieronymus Bosch's triptych *The Garden of Delights*, but with digital animation on the plus side, and social interaction on the minus. For if strangeness is also implicit in this contemporary version, it seems to us that each one of us is locked in our own madness.



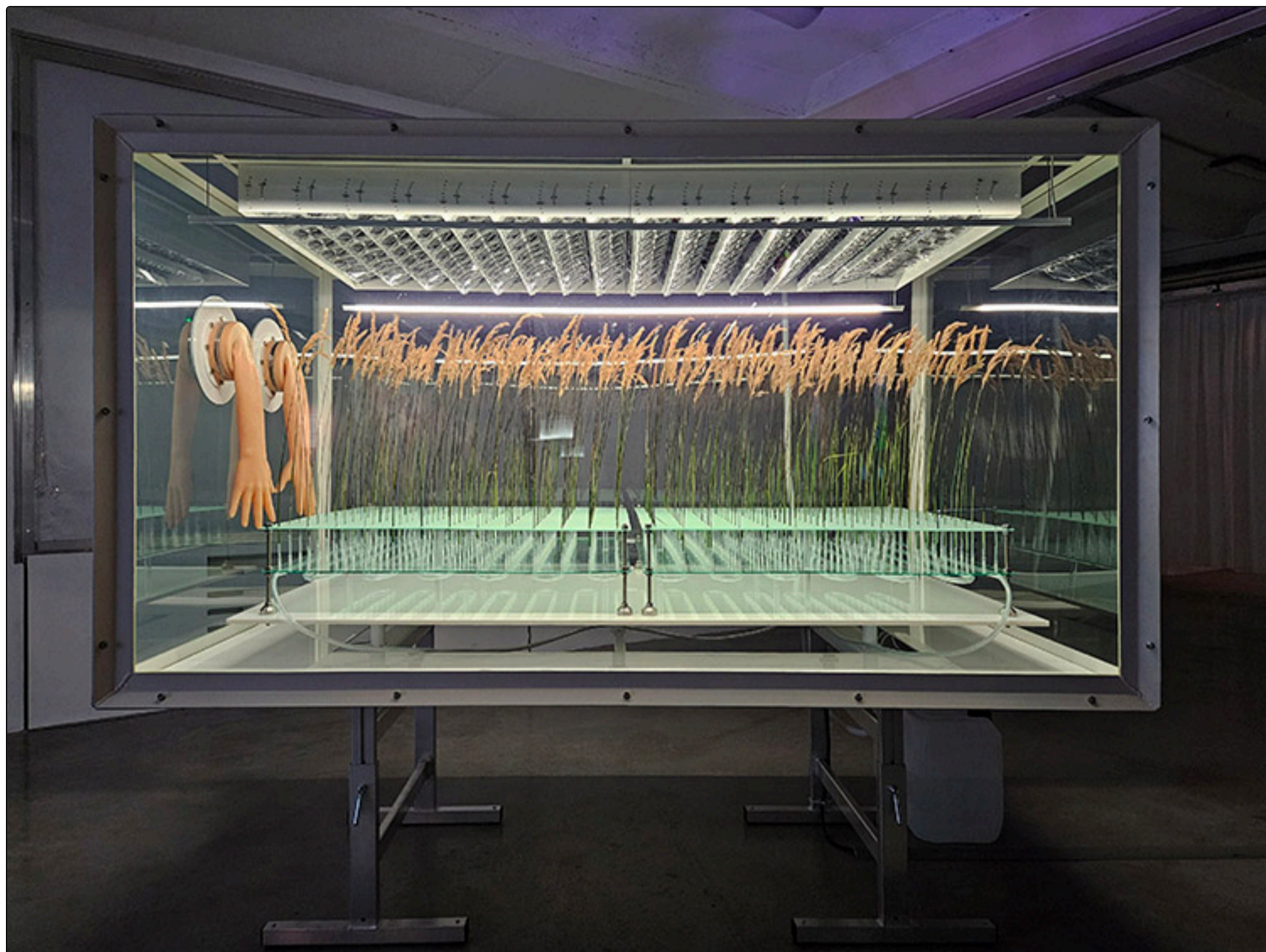
Jeanne Susplugas, *Disco ball*, 2018.

The sculptures in [Jeanne Susplugas](#) (Raw Internal Pleasure) exhibition in the Friche Belle de Mai tower, lend a festive allure. Their shimmering facets are more familiar than their shapes, inspired by the molecular structures of psychotropic drugs acting on our states of consciousness. The artist points out that when we dance, we naturally secrete "joy" hormones, so we dance, if only to forget all our worries.



Donatien Auber, *L'héritage de Bentham*, 2024.

The question of confinement is again central to [Donatien Aubert](#)'s film, *Bentham's Legacy*, also presented in the exhibition *Plaisir Intérieur Brut*. In it, the artist evokes the invention of panoptic prison architecture by 18th-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, creating the feeling of being under constant observation. We all experience this today, both outdoors, with video surveillance systems, and in digital environments, where we know we're being spied on, without really understanding how.



Marit Westerhuis, *Touch some grass*, 2024.

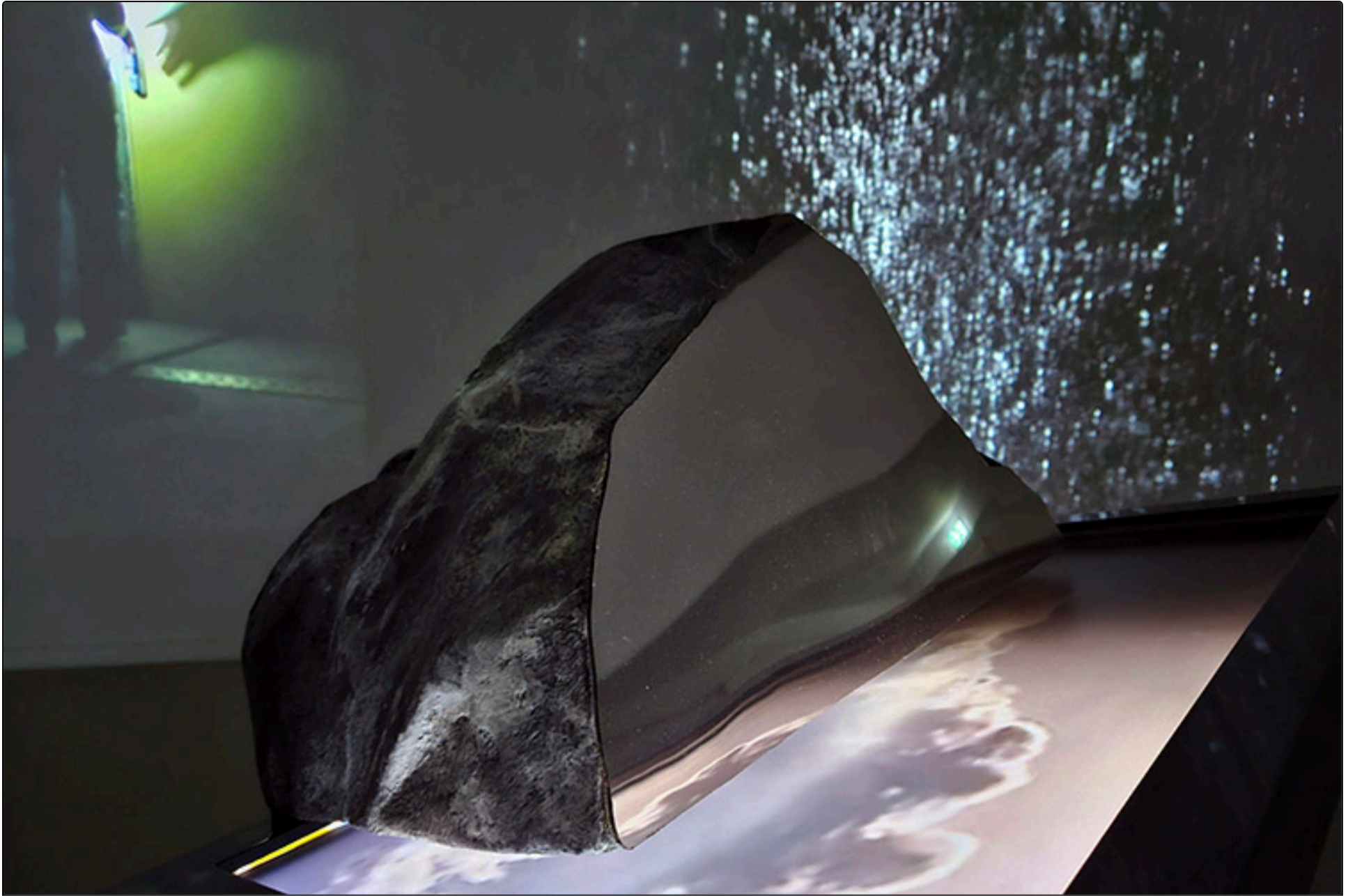
But what would pleasure be without a hint of frustration, as expressed in [Marit Westerhuis](#)'s installation *Touch Some Grass*, featuring a few blades of grass that a large glove box with insulators seems to protect from all forms of contamination. So, we can't "touch some grass" to reconnect with reality at a time when we need to protect nature, so that we never have to over-protect it!

In Aix-en-Provence



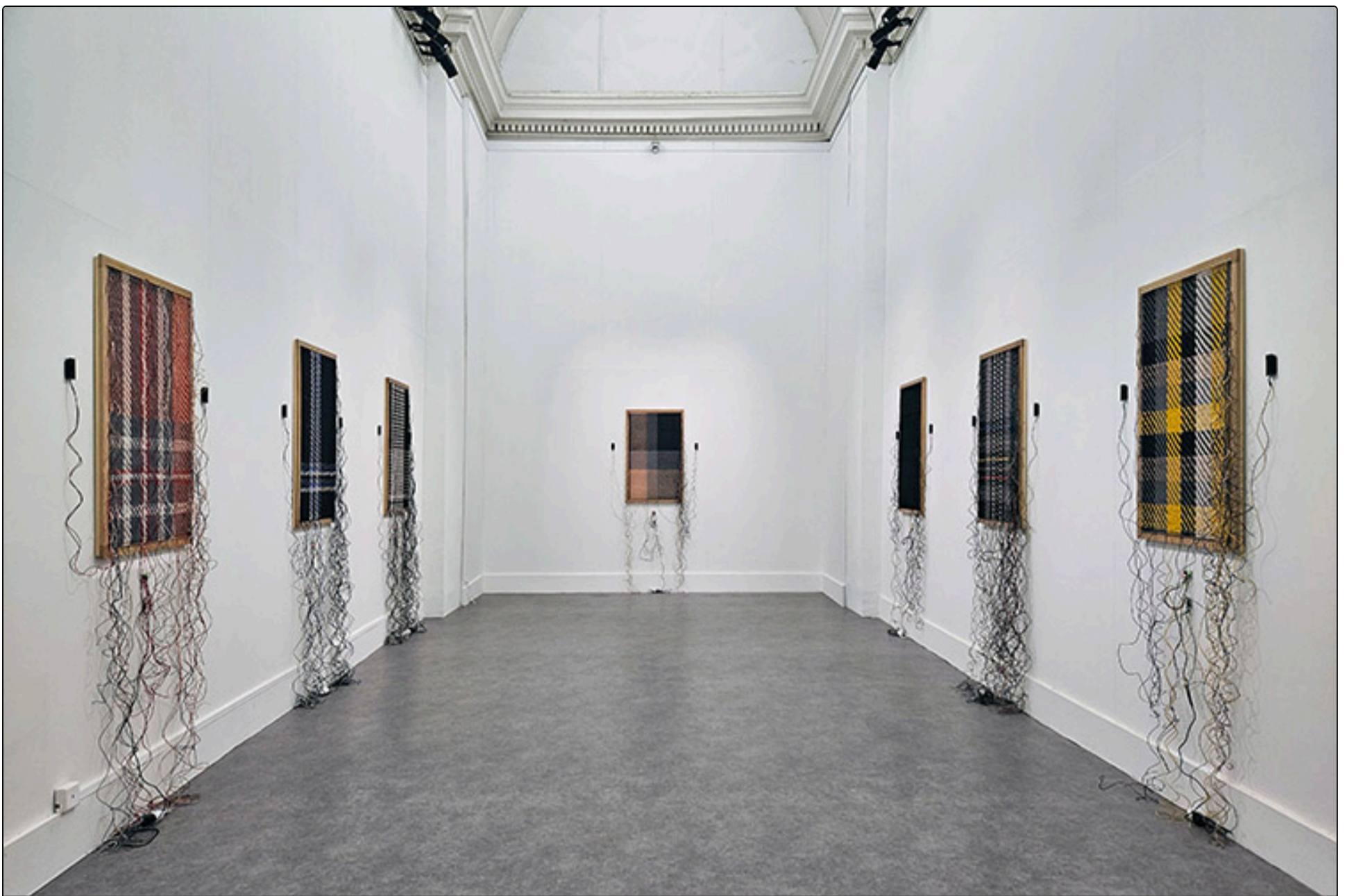
Ethel Lilienfeld, *Emi*, 2023.

There are no less than a dozen venues to visit in Aix-en-Provence, including 21bis Mirabeau, where the Like Moi exhibition is on show, featuring [Ethel Lilienfeld](#)'s mixed-media video installation EMI. EMI's character is a virtual influencer, like those that are developed on social media, to sell products. Here, it is food, with which she has a special relationship. But what's at stake here is the strange relationship between consumers of such embodied "content" and the community they form around it.



June Balthazard et de Pierre Pauze, *Demain si le jour se lève*, 2024

At the contemporary art centre 3bis f, the duo [June Balthazard](#) & [Pierre Pauze](#) have taken over the venue with the exhibition *Demain Si le Jour se Lève* (Tomorrow if the Day Comes). Presented in the form of an enigma reflected by its title, it blends the filmic aesthetics of documentary and fiction with contemporary sculptural practices, confronting materials that light never fully reveals, thus preserving the free reign of our imaginations.



Cécile Babiolle, *Loops of the loom*, 2024

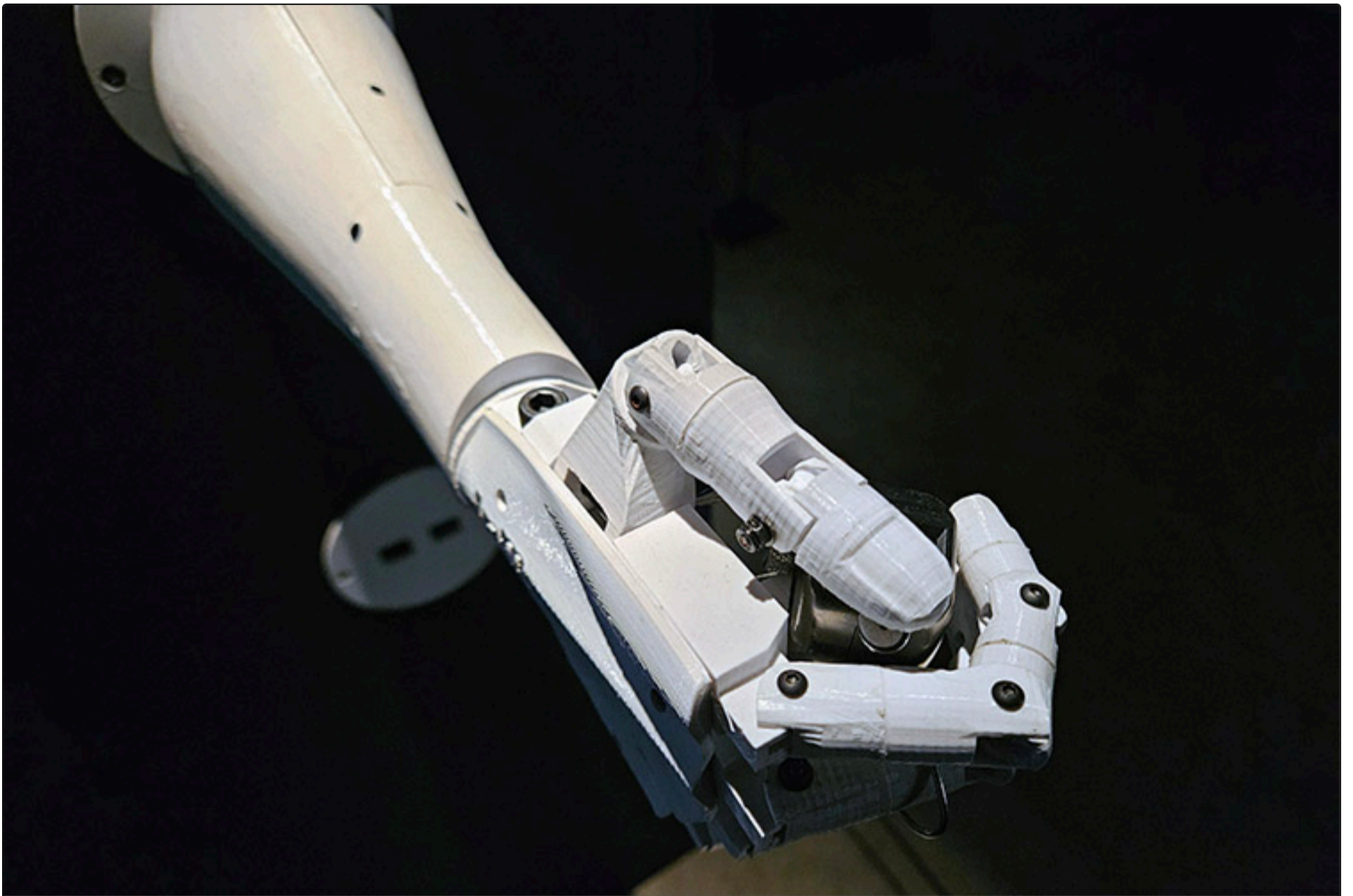
Among the exhibitions associated with this biennial, [Cécile Babiolle](#)'s *Loops of the Loom* at the Tapestry Museum in Aix-en-Provence presents sound weavings in which repetition is the rule. This applies both to the audio cables woven into the pattern and to the sounds themselves. The correspondence between what we see and what we hear is blatant. By using samples of her own voice, the artist refers to sound poetry as practiced by Kurt Schwitters in the first half of the last century.



Yosra Mojtahedi, *Sexus Fleurus*, 2021

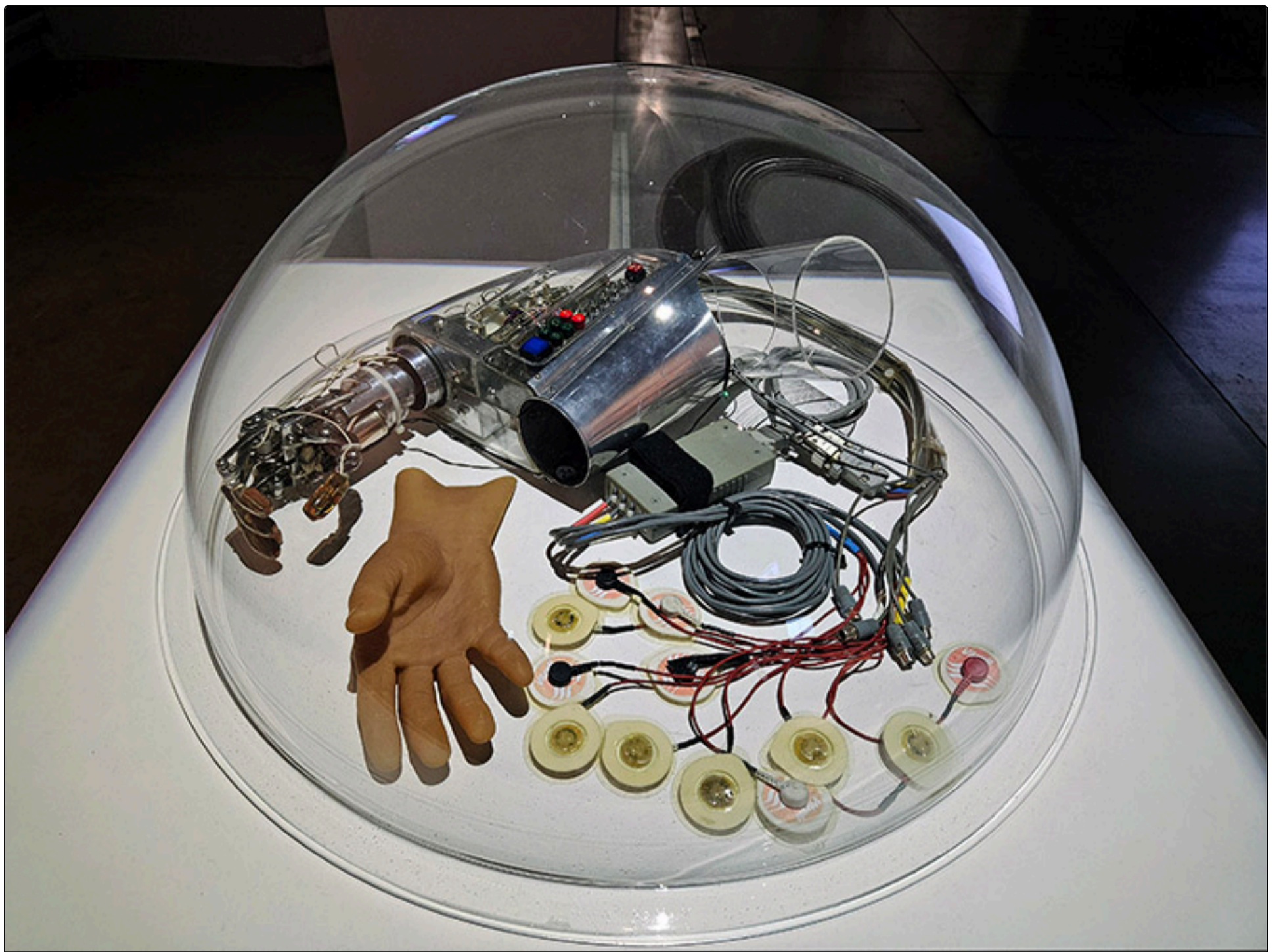
At the Vendôme Pavillion another solo show is dedicated to [Yosra Mojtahedi](#). Here we don't know exactly what we're looking at, from the living to the inert, from organic to mineral. So, we're amazed when the artist invites us to touch her hybrid sculptures, which are accompanied by a few drawings with explicit fragments of form. Here, we're reminded more of Meret Oppenheim.

In Avignon



Varvara & Mar, *Humans need not to count*, 2017

At the entrance to the *Le Futur est Déjà Là* (The Future is Already Here) exhibition at the Grenier à Sel in Avignon, we discover the robotic arm equipped with a manual counter by the duo [Varvara & Mar](#), created by Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet. The installation's title, *Humans Need Not to Count*, points to the problem of our uselessness when robots replace humans. Unless we consider that machines free us from drudgery... Two points of view clash, and the question remains open.



Stelarc, *Third Hand*, 1980

Perhaps the answer lies more in hybridization, as [Stelarc](#) suggested in 1980 with his robotic Third Hand. And there it is, on its pedestal adorned with the photograph documenting his performance where, at the same time, the artist was writing the three fragments "EVO" "LUT" and "ION" of the word EVOLUTION with his three hands. It's interesting to note that, since the democratization of generative artificial intelligence, the debate has shifted from the body to the mind, while raising the same questions.



Julien Prévieux, *What shall we do next ? (séquence #2)*, 2014

Among the dozen or so artists in the Grenier à Sel exhibition *Le Futur est Déjà Là*, there's also [Julien Prévieux](#) with *What Shall We Do Next?* This is a filmed choreography of gestures patented by the digital industry. We recognize some of them immediately, like the "Pinch-to-Zoom", while others, more singular, still seem to be in search of uses...



Finally, there's [Esmeralda Kosmatopoulos](#)'s installation of plaster hand sculptures, *Fifteen Pairs of Mouths*, in which contemporary gestures that made no sense before our frantic use of cell phone touchscreens appear frozen in action. Yesterday's possibilities have become today's realities, where devices and services enslave our bodies and intrude on our thoughts.

January 25, 2025 - By [Dominique Moulon](#) for [Art Press](#) & [TK-21](#), translated by Geoffrey Finch.

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