

It happened tomorrow

When a futuristic space ship lands in a baroque chapel...

With the ambition to examine the practice of exhibition, the Miroir has chosen to explore the world of comic books and science fiction by way of two exhibitions presented in 2017 and 2018. After having recounted a history of science-fiction comics, certainly non-exhaustive, but nevertheless significant, by exhibiting a selection of original pages and drawings in 2017, a second episode entitled *C'est arrivé demain, le retour* ("It happened tomorrow, episode 2"), aims at examining the relationship between comic books, science-fiction, and new images.

In the same way as artistic, graphic, and visual practices as a whole, comics are affected by the development of new technologies. Even if the printed format is not in danger of disappearing, it seems relevant to scrutinize the relationship between science-fiction comics and these new tools. This exhibition prompts such an encounter in bringing together four contemporary authors/illustrators—some of whom use digital tools as part of their creative process—and a few inventors of new forms of images and sounds, whether they are researchers, entrepreneurs or artists. Varied experiences, sometimes interactive, sometimes contemplative, arise from these encounters, each offering a unique point of view on each of the four books.

This exhibition also acknowledges the fact that nowadays there exist many connections between science-fiction comics and the video game—the latter being perhaps the new popular art form that comics originally used to be, when comic strips could be found in all the daily newspapers. The imagery of video games is therefore quite prominent, in various forms, throughout the exhibition. Finally, this exhibition is characterized by its scenography, which is inspired by the aesthetics of spaceship design in films and in television series. It invites the visitors to discover the inside of a futuristic ship that could have landed in the nave of a baroque chapel...

Mathieu Bablet, *Shangri-La*, Ankama Éditions, 2016
Everyware

With *Shangri-La*, Mathieu Bablet has been revealed as one of the most promising hopes of science-fiction comics in the French language. This graphic novel of more than 200 pages, which begins with the death of a star, encompasses a great number of key metaphysical problems and founding themes of the genre. When the story resumes, a million years have passed. Humankind lives confined in a space ark. Due to the author's architectural craftsmanship, the drawing style creates a stunningly coherent environment, both stifling and maze-like. The concept of evolution, the density of the population in big cities, sciences, speciesism and communitarianism, consumerism, the dictatorship of monopolies, AI... nothing is missing from this global story in which the author includes recent scientific discoveries. Mathieu Bablet's writing, thus of rare ambition, is punctuated by a few beautiful metaphysical and poetic interludes, for instance when humanity comes face to face with the emptiness of space.

Everyware is a collective of three young artists recently graduated from the European School of Visual Arts (EESI) who have developed an alternative approach to creativity and dissemination in the intersecting spheres of the arts and the video game. The task of each member of *Everyware* is to design games that are supposed to be works of art by using different media and by taking a critical and pedagogical look at each game.

Here the focus of attention is on a selection of panels taken from Mathieu Bablet's book *Shangri-La* and embedded in the virtual reality of a tablet computer. Thus visitors can move around handling the tablet and multiplying the points of view within one panel. While in the act of reading the viewpoint remains one and the same, here we experience a dynamic "reading", which fully reveals the beauty of the drawings and the plastic power of Mathieu Bablet's world.

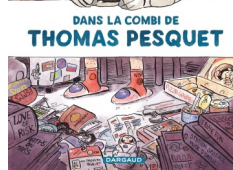


Marion Montaigne, *Dans la combi de Thomas Pesquet*, Éditions Dargaud, 2017

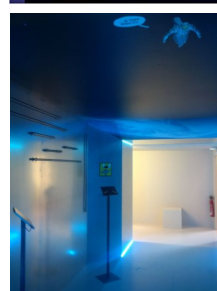
Nyktalop Mélodie,
Institut de recherche Xlim

As a teenager Marion Montaigne wanted to become a scientist but her parents persuaded her against it. She has blossomed as an author of comics and become well known with *Tu mourras moins bête... mais tu mourras quand même* ("You will die less stupid... but you will die anyway"), a blog on which she ridicules the concept of "Letters to the editor", replying in the most documented way possible to scientific questions under the scrutiny of Professor Moustache, the main character of this scientific world, which is as hilarious as it is informative.

With her book *Dans la combi de Thomas Pesquet* ("In Thomas Pesquet's space suit"), Marion Montaigne's writing has reached a more advanced stage. She followed the preparation of the soon-to-be famous French astronaut. The pages of this book reveal a new intensity in terms of graphic ideas, most of the time treated with humour. Marion Montaigne elevates her unique writing, which constantly takes up the challenge of combining opposites—scientific rigour and playful distance.



Module 1 : Marion Montaigne



Module 3 : Mathieu Bablet

Nyktalop Mélodie and XLIM invite the visitors to discover Marion Montaigne's comic book through three very different experiences which deconstruct the story to better reveal certain aspects of it, especially its often hilarious dimension. This is experienced in the heart of a module that conjures up a fantasized and distanced vision of the high-tech chaos of the International Space Station.

Combining the technology of video mapping and the process of thermoformed glass, three portholes offer a view not only of the outside of the ISS, but also of different stages of the story. A word machine makes it possible for visitors to connect sentences borrowed from the flowery language of Marion Montaigne. Thus the text reveals itself in its entire comic dimension on two panels of scrolling letters, outside the story and in a random way. A virtual stroll through various modules of the International Space Station reveal some of the funniest sequences of the chapter of Marion Montaigne's book devoted to Thomas Pesquet's sojourn in the station.

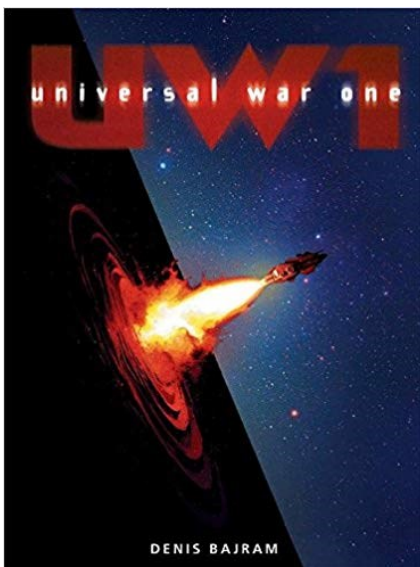
The video of a guided tour of the ISS by Thomas Pesquet, courtesy of the European Space Agency, completes the whole experience.

Denis Bajram, *Universal War One* (Tome 1), Éditions Quadrants solaires, 1998 / **Studio Nyx**

The future in Denis Bajram's work seems to be torn between the ascendancy of Catholicism and rationality. In his *Universal War* saga he unfolds the story of the first three universal wars. At the core of the writing lies a nagging question: will humanity be able to overcome its thirst for conquest without annihilating itself? Denis Bajram is characterized by his graphic approach. The story is punctuated by monumental scenes. A forerunner of computer-aided drafting, Bajram has an innovative approach to colour. Special effects, never previously used, have contributed to the creation of his fictitious world. From the fifth episode onwards, the drawing and inking are done with a graphics tablet. This ultimate transition completes the birth of a remarkable imagery, reminding us of Kubrick for its metaphysical excessiveness and Lucas for the smooth and flowing choreography of its space ships.

A company specializing in virtual reality in Angoulême, Studio Nyx develops video games, simulators, and visualization tools for different industries.

They were more than enthusiastic about being offered the opportunity to work on *Universal War One*, a cult series by Denis Bajram, of which many of them were already fans. They have designed a virtual reality experience that requires a helmet and takes the form of a trailer of the first book of Bajram's series. Devoid of interactivity, this creation is meant only for contemplation. Aboard an intergalactic fighter, the stupefied viewers watch a magnificent sequence in which they fly beyond the moon, discover the beauty of Saturn or marvel before a gigantic flagship. They are finally hurled against the Wall, a mysterious, evil, and menacing black sphere.



Marion Tampon-Lajarriette et Grégoire Lorieux
Space blues

Together plastic artist Marion Tampon-Lajarriette and musician and composer Grégoire Lorieux have taken possession of two modules situated in the centre of the exhibition space. These two modules are designed as transitions, as moments of rupture and contemplation, as spaces meant for breathing and stasis. The approach of both artists, who propose their own interpretation of the four comic books by means of video, sound, and light, comes as a counterpoint—in the musical sense of the term—to other sequences of the exhibition.

In a first module, Marion Tampon-Lajarriette has set up a neon light opposite three tablet computers on which "video paintings" (as she calls them) are played. She has made these films, in which she reinterprets several motifs taken from the four books presented here. The presence of water, the animal condition, fraternity, cloning... From this installation a dystopic melancholy emanates, enhanced by the music of Grégoire Lorieux. Relying on sparsity rather than frontality, Grégoire Lorieux invites the listeners/viewers to go in search of muffled sounds, from the highest to the lowest. The module is inhabited by water, both in some of the images from the video paintings and in some of the sounds that evoke drops of water or "drops of sound".

Beb-deum, *Mondiale™*. Texts : Alain Damasio, Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2017

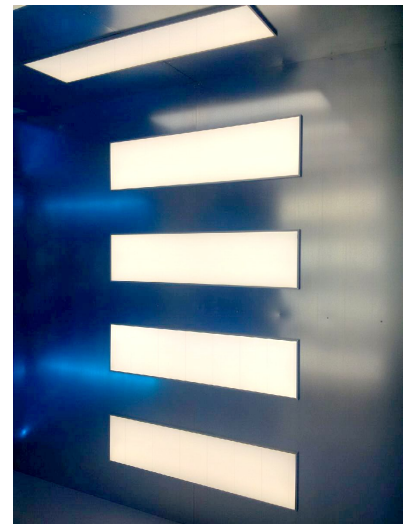
Philippe Boisnard (DATABAZ)

Beb-deum started his career in the early 1980s in the magazine *Métal Hurlant*. On account of its critical and subversive staging of the conflict opposing the individual to a crushing industrial and bureaucratic machine, his imagery was disturbing in this Cold War era. Soon, aside from publishing comics, the author also started to draw commissioned illustrations. As a consequence the artist's aesthetics evolved towards a still more highly polished rendering, stimulated by his discovery of digital tools. An upsetting perfection began to crystallize, imparting to his drawings a sense of inhumanity sometimes akin to that of advertising images. But this new tool intensified the search for contrasts and opposites, to finally corrupt an artificial sense of perfection.

The world of *Beb-deum* now anticipates a post-humanity that may carry within itself and assimilate the signs and consequences of modernity. The composite children of a digital revolution, in which the body and the world could merge.

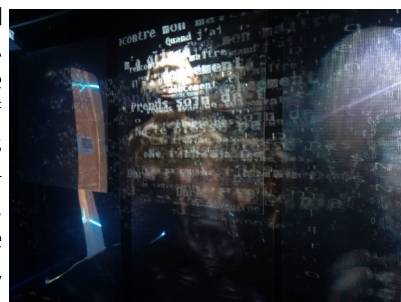
The documents received, as fragmentary and damaged as they may be, give us indeed a dizzying access to the evolution of the human species over the next thirty years. A major phenomenon is going to occur: the manufacturing and commercialisation of cultural bodies! Of living, intelligent, and sensitive human bodies, generally conceived around the attractive figure of a mixed race individual.

It is this prophecy announced by Alain Damasio that we discover in the projections created by Philippe Boisnard, in which retrieved images of merchandise-bodies sold from a catalogue are animated, in the same way as these conscious, unique "clownes" averse to the mercantile order and nevertheless always subjected to the tyranny of appearance and beauty, all revealed in *Mondiale™*. A digital artist and a writer, Philippe Boisnard examines the constitution of man through the materiality of codes and representations related to the political, social, and economic dimensions. In close collaboration with Beb-deum, he has created a regenerative installation, based on programming.



Module 5 : Marion Tampon-Lajarriette, Grégoire

In this second module, plastic artist Marion Tampon-Lajarriette and musician and composer Grégoire Lorieux have chosen not to show any image, opting instead for a minimalist sound and light installation. We enjoy a moment of slowness, to meditate and breathe, after having lived through an extreme experience in the three-dimensional world of *Universal War I*. Deep breathing in the heart of a bright, immaculately white space, where light and sound are in perfect harmony with in a unique and moving breath.



Module 6, Beb-deum