NATHALIE BÉREAU
Galerie nomade

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Nymphaea imago est
photography

Artists from the galerie :
Jean-Christophe Ballot
Frédérique Bouet
Philippe du Crest
Violaine Laveaux
Tony Soulié
photography
and
Véronique Pineau, *sculpture*

Introduction

To mark the Bicentenary of photography and the centenary of the death of the painter Claude Monet, the gallery presents a reflection featuring its own artists, visual artists and photographers: what image do we have today of the Water Lilies, which were more than just a subject for the painter?
What can be conveyed through this iconic image of modern painting?

Over three decades, Monet painted nearly 300 water-lily paintings; beyond mere obsession, this represents a genuine reflection on the very nature of the painter's gesture and the traces of lived experience that shaped the artist throughout those years. This culminated in the intense series begun at the outbreak of the 1914 war.

From its very beginnings, photography has clashed with painting – which was seen as a threat – to become the medium it is today. Painting, for its part, remains very much present. These two techniques therefore coexist, intersect, sometimes merge, and respond to one another. How can photography today appropriate the image of a flower which, having traversed both space (the water lily is native to China) and time, challenges the painter's deepest motivations for depicting a mental space—his own—beyond a mere vision inspired by nature, which he created from scratch in Giverny? How does one move from image to icon?

Through a selection of previously unseen works, the gallery offers a sensory journey in which the water lily reveals something more than a mere image of a flower.

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Some recommendations
Must-see:
https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/128087-000-A/monet-et-les-nympheas-l-eternite-retrouvee/
Recommended reading:
https://www.musee-orangerie.fr/fr/collection/les-nympheas-de-claude-monet/histoire-du-cycle-des-nympheas
« Le syndrome de l'Orangerie » by Grégoire Bouillier(éditions Flammarion)

Previously unseen works featured in the exhibition

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Giverny Garden, June 12, 2021, photograph by N. Béreau

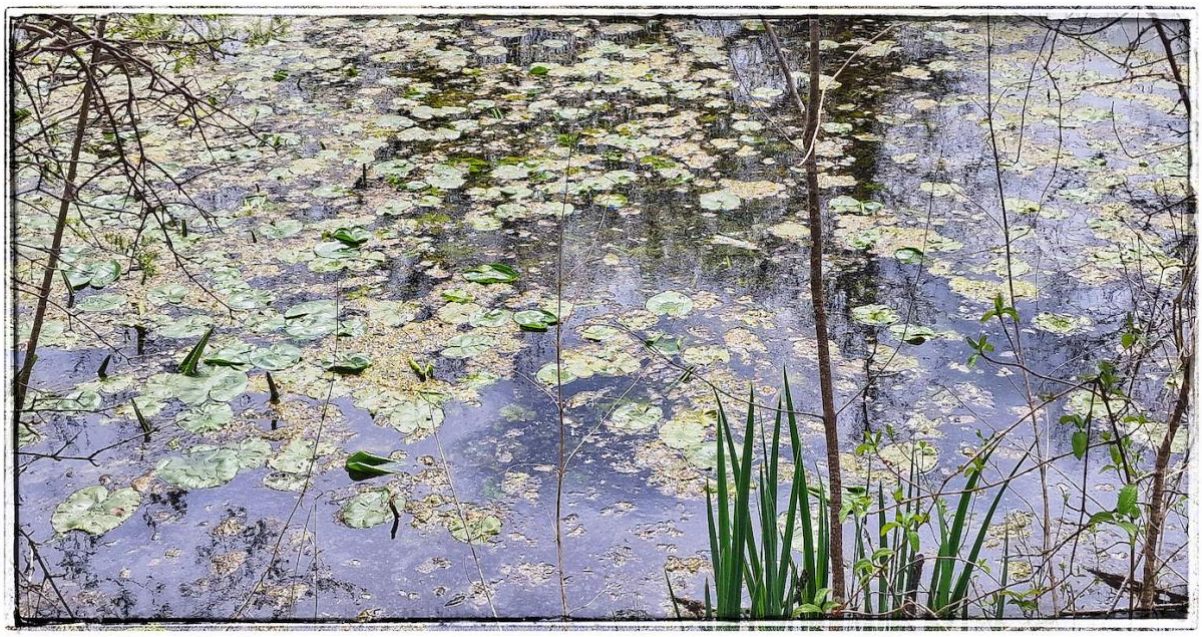


© Jean-Christophe Ballot, "En surface ?", triptych 1.50 m x 62 cm, chromogenic RC print mounted on aluminum, 2005, 9 copies, numbered and signed

Jean-Christophe Ballot

I pay tribute to the painter with the work titled "En surface?"—a contemporary interpretation that reimagines his work.
This triptych consists of photographs of the “Water Lilies”, taken at the Musée de l’Orangerie during the renovation work overseen by the OPPIC from 2001 to 2006.

The title of the work, "En surface?", poses the question: which surface should we be looking at?
The one formed by the protective tarp on which yellow elements float?
The surface of the pond, just below, or even that of the underwater algae?
Or perhaps the superimposition of all these layers that describe the abstract surface of a world?
The photographer will also present a triptych in the spirit of Monet titled “Urban Water Lilies.”



©Frédérique Bouet, L'heure bleue 1, 2025, photographic print using the subligraphy process, 60 cm × 35 cm. Edition No. 1/12, signed

Frédérique Bouet

I wanted to explore the boundaries between photography and painting through the theme of water and engage in a dialogue with Claude Monet's immense body of work, *Water Lilies*. Water is a poetic filter that holds the world and reflects the sky. The surface becomes depth. The reflection—an inverted mirror of reality and a liquid script of light—reveals the plasticity of the image. The loss of reference points creates a visual sensation akin to a sensory experience and opens the door to fiction.
It reveals, in a fragment of reality, the porosity of the world and the uncertain, poetic boundary between the visible and the imaginary.



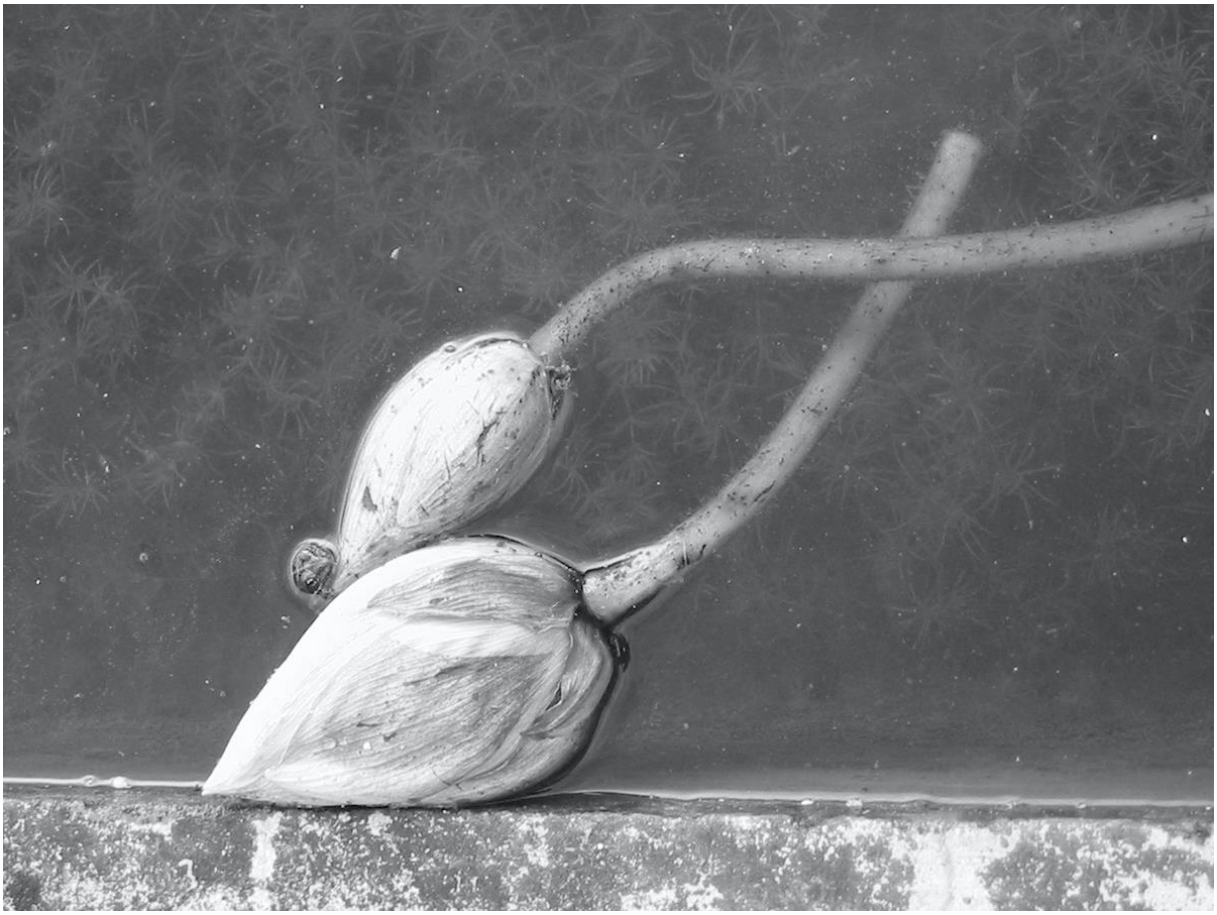
©Philippe du Crest, “Over the Rainbow” series, 2026, pigment print mounted on aluminum Dibond, 30 x 40 cm, 8 copies, numbered and signed

Philippe du Crest. “Over the Rainbow” series, 2026

These photographs were taken in 2026 while traveling through the Berre-l’Étang Peninsula—a Seveso-designated area—and along the Huveaune Riverbed at its mouth in Marseille.

How many landscapes seem beautiful to us, idyllic, havens of peace where life would be good?
But when we get closer, when we explore them, everything falls apart because these landscapes reveal themselves to be deeply dirty and polluted.

The title of the series is inspired by one of the most famous songs of the late 1930s, performed by Judy Garland in the film “The Wizard of Oz”. The lyrics refer to the longing for a new world, full of color beyond sadness and grayness, beyond the famous rainbow.
The photographer seems to have taken these lyrics and turned them on their head: beneath the beauty, a corrupt world may lie hidden.

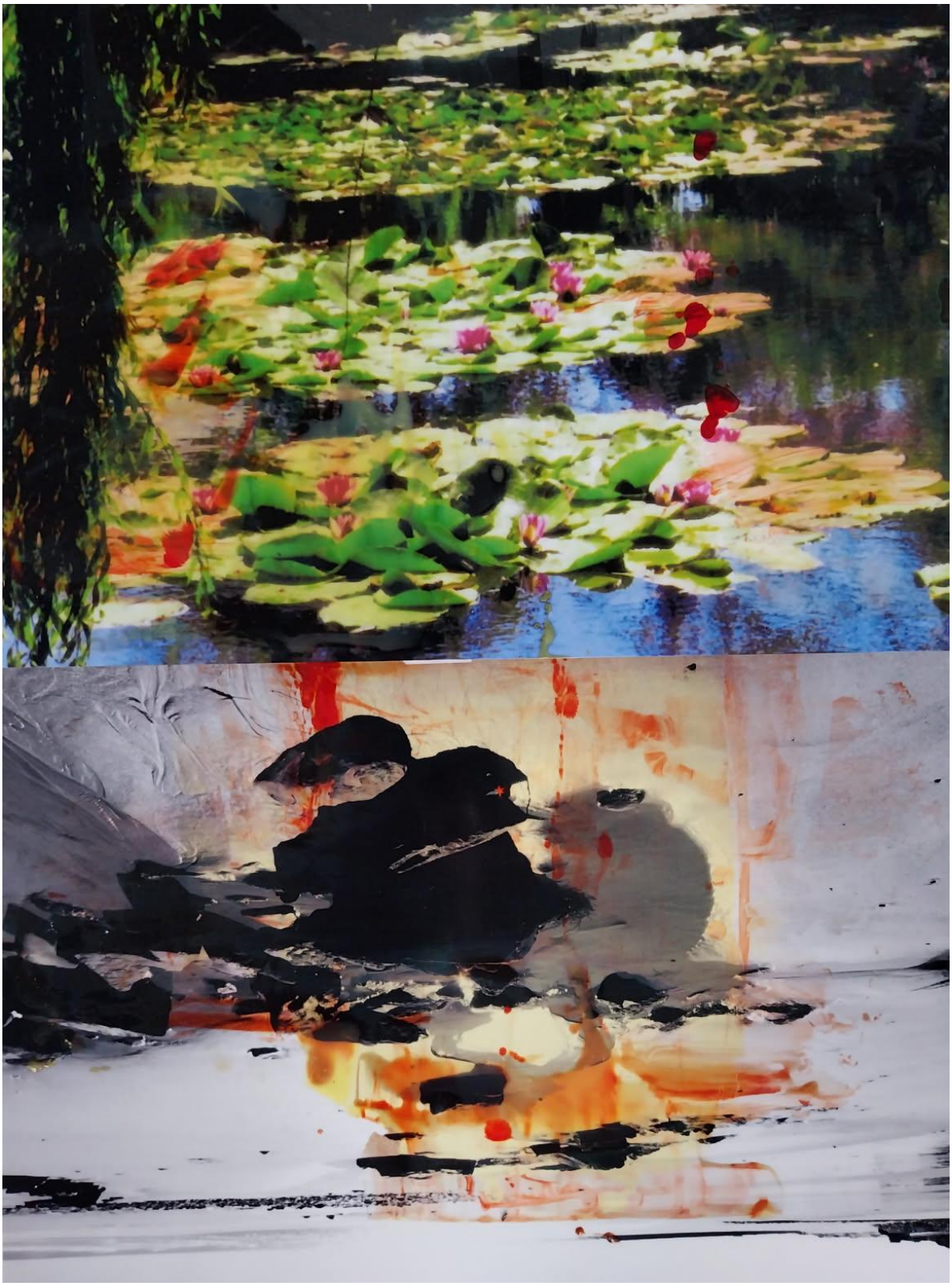


©Violaine Laveaux, Print Y from the series "Jardin des Établissements Latour-Marliac", 2005/2006. Epson black-and-white print on Hahnemühle Ultra Smooth 305g, 2026, 30x40 cm, 6 numbered and signed copies

Violaine Laveaux

“The first time I heard about the Latour-Marliac nurseries, I was captivated by the story of this botanist and painter of flowers who had discovered a mysterious method for hybridizing water lilies. At that time, the only hardy water lily in Europe was a white one. By crossing this white variety with other wild varieties—from America and elsewhere—Joseph Bory Latour-Marliac created a color palette ranging from a delicate yellow to fuchsia and deep red. Claude Monet’s famous Water Lilies originated in this garden, and the archives still contain a few copies of the letters exchanged between Monet and Bory Latour-Marliac.

During the winter of 2005–2006, I completed a residency at the Établissements Latour-Marliac. Spanning three seasons: fall, winter, spring. Presented in three tones: white, red, and black.
In three phases: on the wall, on the ground, in the space.
Driven by a desire to reveal the hidden side of a garden on the threshold of dormancy. Between vertigo and vestige. When it closes its doors to visitors and begins its metamorphosis. When the ponds become mirrors of ink—black, deep waters—and the wind, the cold, and the frost freeze the leaves and lotus seeds into a strange choreography.
“Between drawing and writing, on the scale of the place, of footsteps, of the gaze. The black-and-white photographs taken during this period set the tempo, give rhythm to the space, and suggest a phrasing. Between microcosm and macrocosm, pretense and *trompe-l’œil*. Calligraphic and choreographic.”



©Tony Soulié, Nymphée 11, 2026, photo-painting, 60 x 40 cm, signed one-of-a-kind piece

Tony Soulié. “Nymphée” Series, 2026

As its title suggests, Tony Soulié’s new series refers to a place “dedicated to nymphs, generally consisting of a natural or artificial grotto with a flowing spring; in particular, a monumental fountain; a structure built around a fountain or basin, richly decorated with statues, dedicated to the nymphs, and serving as a place of gathering or rest for the Romans.” In almost all of the ancient Romans’ country estates, there were nymphaea, which usually served as baths (Ac., 1835–1935).
Basins set deeper into the ground are called nymphaea; they are sometimes accompanied by porticoes beneath terraces and cool rooms (Guadet, Archit., vol. 4, 1901–04, p. 181). “I imagined it [the aqueduct], the very one that carried the crystal-clear waters of the nymphaeum to Carthage (Gide, *Si le grain*, 1924, p. 555).”
Definition from the www.cnrtl.fr (ATILF/CNRS / University of Lorraine)

With this highly detailed definition, one finds oneself dreaming, imagining Monet’s water lily pond traveling back in time to lose itself in the gardens of Roman palaces. Or could it be Tony Soulié’s photo-paintings, freely inspired by the water lilies, that lead us to drift toward other times?
The image, split in two, functions like a mirror but disorients us with the false reflection created by the artist.
In other compositions, brightly colored water lily leaves float in a play of dark water, standing out against the marshy background where they take root.



©Véronique Pineau, Nymphea ocre (Ochre Nymphaea), 2026, mixed media, glass, Ht. 15 x 30 cm, one-of-a-kind piece

Véronique Pineau

"I'm drawn to tableware that already has a story behind it, so I tirelessly hunt for pieces abandoned by their owners at consignment shops, flea markets, and street sales. I then assemble them to create compositions with balanced forms, giving them a second life through a variety of themes. I name them based on what they inspire in me, and each composition is unique. The assembly is guided by inspiration, following both technical and aesthetic criteria.
It's a bit like a musical score composed of a succession of notes that come together to form a harmonious melody and inspire the title."
For the exhibition, the artist selected glass and white porcelain pieces inspired by nature (leaves, flowers, corollas) and specially created two pieces as a tribute to the Water Lilies.