

villa

**local temperature
2016-17 season**

Topknots

**An exhibition of
Nicolas Momein's work**

**from January 14th
to March 11th 2017**

du

press release

parc

**centre d'art contemporain
parc montessuit,
12 rue de genève 74100 annemasse, france**

villa du parc

local temperature 2016-17 season

Villa du Parc is starting its 2016-17 season under the banner of “ local temperatures ”. Focusing on the territorial ecosystem -artistic, geographic, human, economic, or something else altogether- this season aims to mobilize and highlight the wealth of local identified and/or occasionally unexpected resources. The subjects and ways of working to be dealt with play out on several scales, i.e., micro and macro, local and international, through collaborations between the artists and the businesses, associations, and networks found throughout the region, presenting extensive perspectives to act.

The Villa du Parc benefits from the precious support of The French Ministry of Culture - DRAC Rhône-Alpes, The Région Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, The Département de la Haute-Savoie, and the City of Annemasse.

**villa du parc
centre d'art contemporain
parc montessuit,
12 rue de genève 74100 annemasse
+33(0) 450 388 461, www.villaduparc.org
open from tuesday to saturday from 2 pm
to 6:30 pm and with appointments**

Topknots

Topknots show enjoyed the support of Fonds Cantonal d'Art Contemporain in Geneva and Provendi in Bons-en-Chablais.

At the Villa du Parc, we have been preparing for some time for the new piece by Nicolas Momein, a functioning artisanal soap production unit installed in the center. We have slowly been taking in and taming the terms, specificities and difficulties of the artist's proposed work, e.g., type of vat, choice of oil, price of soda, hot and cold soap-making techniques, expertise of master soap-makers, drying methods, etc. Additional questions have naturally arisen, ones that are more familiar to an art space, such as the form of the monochrome mass of soap, the public performance of cutting the product up, and where to place the resulting sculptures.

Make way then for saponification, that chemical reaction with an esoteric name that Nicolas is going to turn into a processual work of art at the Villa du Parc. Developed over a long period by the artist, this bold project is the logical extension of a certain number of experiments with the plastic qualities of everyday materials, which began with a series of sculptures done in 2012 using bars of soap produced by Provendi¹. Working his way back from the object to the formula for making it, Nicolas will be showing in a context that is foreign to it the manufacturing process itself, a mix of several traditional techniques from Marseille, Alep, and Naplouse that have been selected for their potential as sculpture and formal expressiveness. The transformation of the raw material will be visible in two stages, from the pouring out of the newly made soap on the gallery floor during the show's opening, to the drying of the cut and stacked bars of soap during the rest of the exhibition.

Could his appropriating of production techniques hold the key step that will allow the artist to know his material and eventually be able to separate it from its use? Something on the order of the "trade secret,"² or the "soul of objects"³ as we have read here and there? Surely there is something that plays out in the meeting of gesture and raw material, that know-how of the craftsman or engineer which molds and structures the form of the object. Its design or ergonomics, in a language we would like to be metaphysical or materialist, the choice is up to the viewer.

Around the installation, which for now we see as fairly raw and totemic, Nicolas deploys a set of related sculptures, from

the great family of buffer materials, protective, reassuring, conservative things – soap, rubber, horsehair, rubberized table pad, etc. The sculptor snaps up these haptic substances, most of which are elastic, or easy to handle, or something to accumulate, and were invented to protect our skin, houses, or wooden tables. Raised up to the level of unproductive sculpture, they display novel, charming forms.

As for the title, after an intense brainstorming that plucked apart a range of possible names – painless sculptures, soft arm frissons, hot or cold head, bras mou tête chaude (rougher), dans l'écume, etc. – Nicolas pulled up short at the image of a tall hair bun atop a head and therefore chose "TopKnots." I admit, we were not totally convinced. But when all is said and done, I like it. For me the title conjures up in no particular order a toy making a tinkling sound, a pin in the mouth freeing up fingers to coil locks of hair, an overheated bathroom, even the shrill cries of a grandmother, "Stop tearing out each other's hair or I'll give you such a whopping!" If he tosses in somewhere a stretched bath towel, an invasive rubber table pad, and the old leather of an easy chair, it might indeed be possible, in rediscovering these overlooked secondary materials, for you, too, to recapture certain shivers of delight, no?

Garance Chabert

¹ He was initially interested in the rotary blocks of soap that hang over sinks in schools, that yellow vintage-looking oval that is immediately recognizable in France. He displayed them in a line, the upper part intact and the lower one worn down by a legion of little hands, objects catapulted into a history of sculpture both ready-made and modeled. With Provendi, the company that produces these cakes of soap, he next created, working with Corinne Louvet, a special soap collection that was pressed at the factory, changing the scale, shape, and texture of this cult object. The artist was thus able to tame the material and the possibilities of transformation that he can impose on it.

² Camille Azais, "Nicolas Momein, Les Déplaceuses," Press packet for the Nicolas Momein show at the White Project Gallery in Paris, 2016.

³ Christophe Kihm, "Introducing Nicolas Momein," art press (November 2013).

Nicolas Momein

Nicolas Momein (born in 1980 in Saint-Etienne) studied art at ESAD in Saint-Etienne and later HEAD in Geneva. Since 2012 he has been invited to put together several solo shows of his work at a number of institutions in France, both public (the art centers of La Galerie de Noisy-le-Sec in 2013, Les Eglises in Chelles in 2015, Micro-Onde in Vélizy-Villacoublay in 2016) and private (the White Project, Bernard Ceysson, and Tator galleries). He has also taken part in a number of group shows in France and Europe since 2010, including the IAC of Villeurbanne, Le Magasin in Grenoble, the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and Art Contemporary Center in Geneva. He is currently represented by Bernard Ceysson Gallery.

More infos :

**-www.nicolasmomein.com
-www.dda-ra.org/fr/oeuvres/momein_Nicolas
-creative.arte.tv/fr/episode/nicolas_momein**



Nicolas Momein, *Le renard*, capture vidéo



Nicolas Momein, *Finger trap et Bulgomme (détail)*, 2016.
Photo Jérôme Michel



Nicolas Momein, *Manchettes*, 2016. Photo Jérôme Michel



Nicolas Momein, *Sideslip*, 2016. Photo Jérôme Michel

**details and pictures on request :
communication@villaduparc.org**

**Topknots,
An exhibition of Nicolas Momein's work**

**from January 14th
to March 11th 2017**

**opening with the artist
Saturday 14/01 at 5 pm**

**lecture by the artist in ESAAA
16/01 at 6 pm**

**screening evening
7/02 at 7:30 pm**

**guided tours
27/01 at 12:15 pm and
22/02 at 4 pm**