



A topographic map painted over  
by Bernard Garo using latex and minerals  
collected on glaciers →

# Give Us Back the Beauty

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Arts and Sciences  
Exhibition and Residency  
by Bernard Garo  
Natural History Museum of Geneva, 2023



Presentation of the Arts and Sciences residency of the visual artist Bernard Garo, guest of the Natural History Museum of Geneva

As part of the exhibition *All Against the Earth* (*Tout contre la Terre*) 25 July 2022 to 25 June 2023



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# The Residency – Introduction

## *Give Us Back the Beauty*

A year-long arts and sciences residency by Bernard Garo at the Natural History Museum of Geneva (Paintings – wood engravings – photography – video and performances, created and presented *in situ*)

1 –  
Monograph Title,  
edited by Till Schaap Editions, in 2016

*“I’m not the one lamenting,  
it is the glacier moaning”*

Bernard Garo

Hervé Grosscarret,  
Head of Visitors and Exhibitions Unit,  
Natural History Museum of Geneva

Painter, photographer and visual performer, Bernard Garo casts his committed gaze on the planet Earth.

As a continuation of his monograph *Garo Deflagration. In Praise of Painting and Poetry of our Earth. Alexandria, Reykjavik, Lisbon, Istanbul and the Matterhorn*<sup>1</sup>, the Natural History Museum of Geneva extended an invitation for him to take part in a dialogue and a residency in arts and sciences, as part of the temporary exhibition entitled *All against the Earth*. It is a story of an ongoing project that will keep unravelling as long as climatic and social emergencies shake our planet!

With *All Against the Earth*, the Museum outlined trajectories for introspection and transmission of scientific knowledge – philosophy, psychology, linguistics, ecology and natural history – as tools that allow visitors to understand our current situation and to act in the face of climate change, the collapse of biodiversity and the overall degradation of the natural world.

With this invitation to Bernard Garo to take up residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva, we aimed to offer a new trajectory, a new “climatic insight” rooted in the transdisciplinary dialogue between sciences and arts. Previously, *All Against the Earth* explored the relationship between humans and animals, while *Give Us Back the Beauty* places the spotlight on rocks, mountains and glaciers – the iconic and identity-defining features of Switzerland. It also looks at vulnerability, beauty, awareness, poetry, and time.

By means of installations and *in situ* performances Garo’s works encourage us to apprehend differently and perceive emotionally a form of *The Sublime Disaster* – an urgency expressed by the artist. In parallel, this project also incorporates scientific knowledge by means of scenography and by giving access to the exchanges with scientists and researchers within the institution.

Mobilizing all its activities (reception, research, collection, exhibition, mediation, publishing and communication) the Museum as a whole engaged in this intense and exciting synergy with Garo. He is an artist whose very DNA is informed by the transdisciplinary approach to the artistic gesture: enriched by science and committed to preserving the universal natural heritage, Garo is deeply concerned with the health of glaciers in the face of accelerating climate change.

This residency, organized between 2022 and 2023, was presented in the form of a succession of sequences that use different media, including ephemeral installations accompanied by performances and screenings open to all audiences over a weekend, according to a scenario that allowed the public to follow the development of the works before a final exhibition over three months.

Within the temporal and spatial limits of this residency, everything imagined, conceptualized and planned was produced as extraordinary works of unique artistic exploration to allow the circulation of awareness of amazing beauty around us that will quickly disappear should we refuse to be attentive to it. But deep down, the conviction that solutions awaiting to emerge is there, and there is a light breeze of hope that the paradigm can shift in the air.

## A Dialogue Between Arts and Sciences in the Context of Climatic Emergency

"The opposite of art is indifference" says Bernard Garo. These words form the counter point of his evolving, exploratory, eleven-month-long residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva. Transdisciplinary by its very nature, as it maintains a constant dialogue with sciences, Garo's work is rather an invitation to travel, an initiation into the artist's fascination with nature, which he integrates into his art, as well as his explorations of landscapes alongside geologists and expert mountain guides. The stories his installations tell do not seek to imitate the landscape: on the contrary, through his use of mixed media, performances, photography, film, and incorporation of minerals taken from the places he depicts in his paintings, he creates multisensory and immersive installations which allow visitors to find experiential entry points into his art and, by extension, into the world.

Garo is also an artist who is deeply committed to the environmental cause. From this vantage point he shows us how, if nothing changes in our approach to the environment, in less than a century 50,000 years of memory preserved in ice will simply vanish. His works display the degree of urgency to preserve the Earth and its biodiversity – including humans – and his immersive and emotional artistic gesture generates thought and raises consciousness on the subject. Thus, his art outlines trajectories of thought on the ambivalent relationship of humans and the environment, on human memory, on vulnerability.

From this vantage point, Garo created a series of photographic and cinematographic works awarded with the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at the *Artivist Lion – Venice* – chosen by a jury of gallerists from New York, Berlin and Paris. This Prize is given to artists for achievement throughout their career, for their original approaches and commitment to environmental causes. The film *Crevasse* – codirected by Garo and Marc Décosterd and shown at the opening of the residency, also received international acclaim and multiple prestigious awards.

Whether it is graphite prints, or works made with walnut husks, Chinese ink on translucent film, or his monumental xylography created in real-time in front of an audience, the works deeply marked the viewers at the opening of the show. During a special weekend event, Garo also created a temporary exhibition within the larger project – an ephemeral Art installation showing hands of melting ice coupled with transdisciplinary performances.

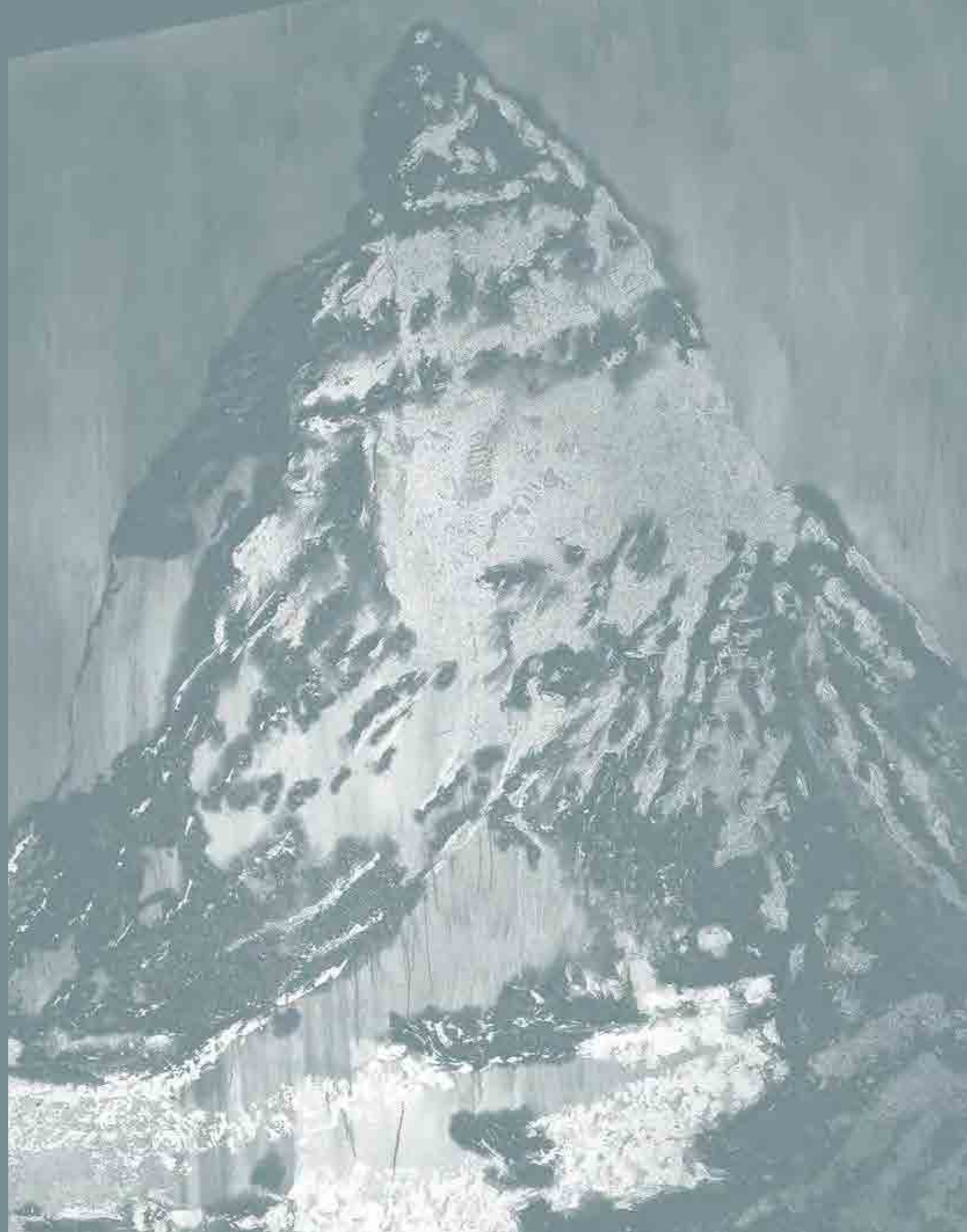
A rock crystal, part of the Museum's collection, is used by the artist as a leitmotif throughout the different stages of the residency. The crystal stands as a symbol of beauty hidden in nature, a treasure that must be urgently protected – a treasure that Garo reveals as vital to us all.

Joan Francesc Ainaud  
(Art Historian and Critic – Barcelona)

Scenographic sketch from the first sequence of the residency entitled *The Mountain* →



# Sequence 1 – The Mountain



Pictorial  
Installation



## Pictorial Installation Entitled The Mountain

To watch the full episode  
please follow the link:  
RTS: <https://youtu.be/JVLGCUVHwew>



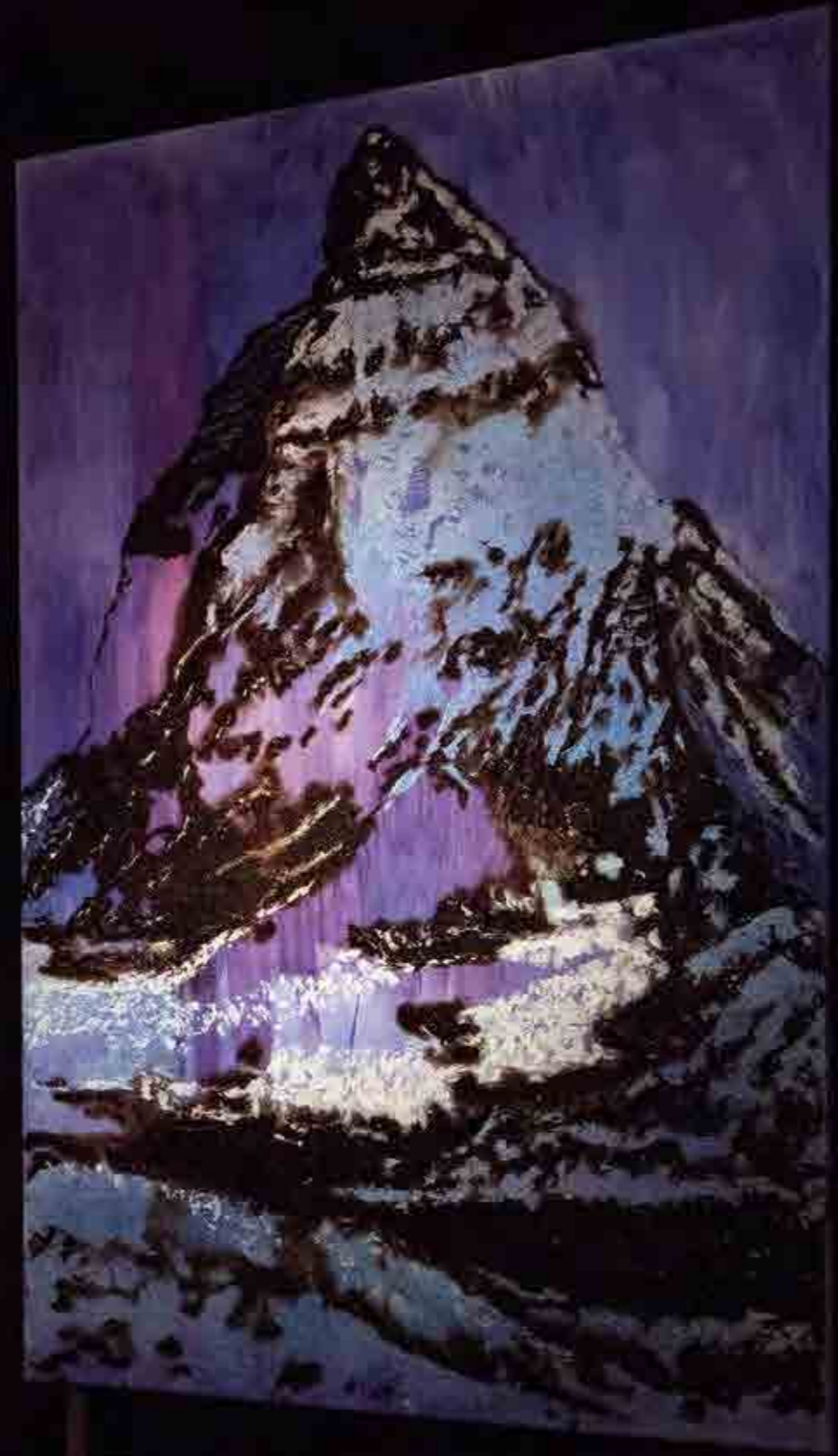
Four freestanding canvases of the Matterhorn (Cervin) set in a circle around a rock crystal and in a dialogue with it. In the back of the room, a large, 242 x 299 cm painting entitled *Monte Rosa – Give Us Back the Beauty* draws the eye.

Between the two, cairns of stones accentuate the space and, like morse code, set the pace, echoed by videos on small screens placed beside the piles of stones on the floor. The films illustrate the movement of a glacial landscape over 100 years.

On the giant screen, in a continuous loop, runs the projection of the short film *Crevasse*. Codirected by Marc Décosterd and Garo, *Crevasse* received numerous international awards.

In the opposite corner, the Radio Television Suisse Romande's documentary television series *Hand Me the Binoculars (Passe-moi les jumelles)* is projected and visitors can enjoy an episode about Garo, directed by Laurence Mermoud.



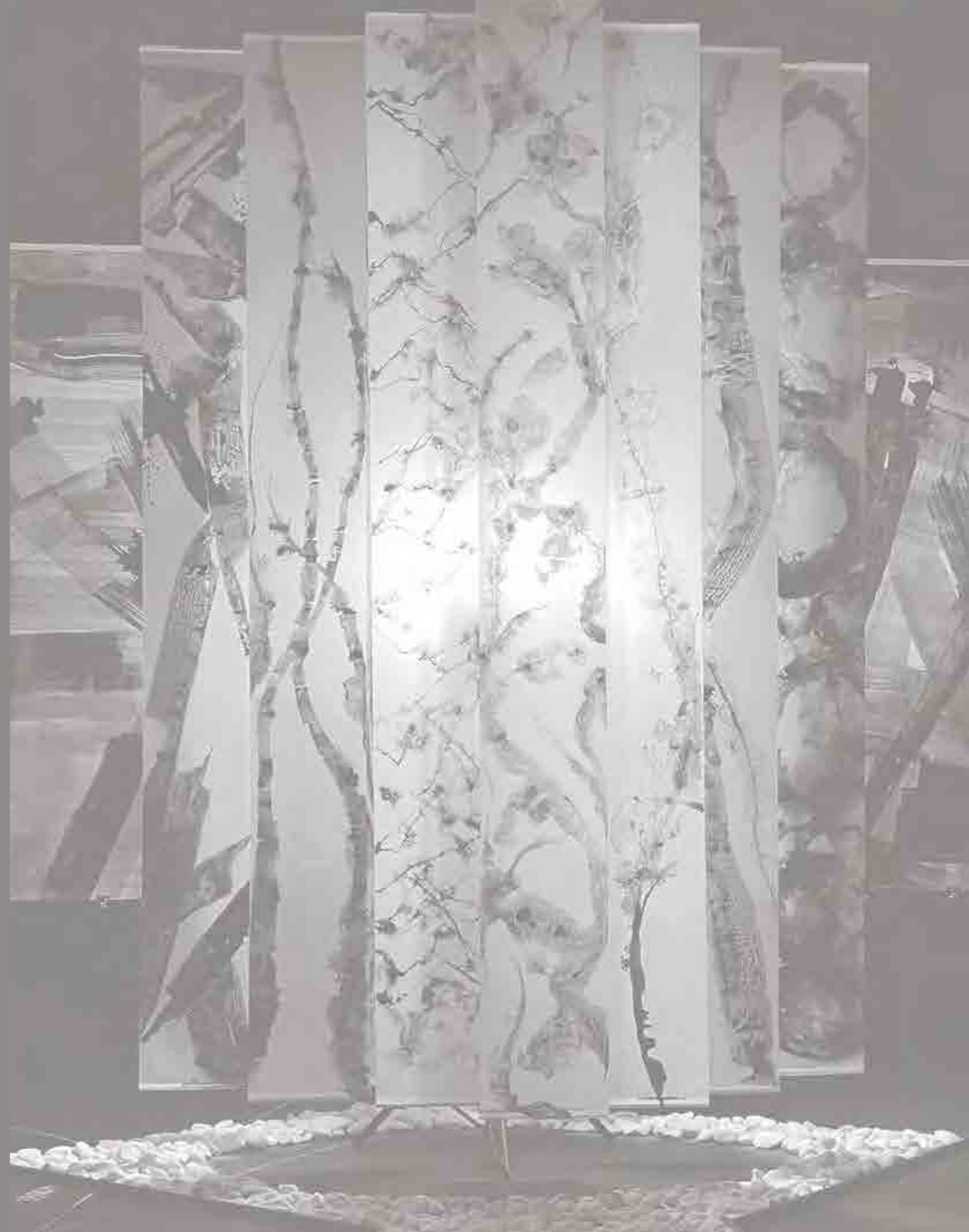




Garo Deflagration  
p.4 (artist's monograph  
edited by Till Schaap, 2016)

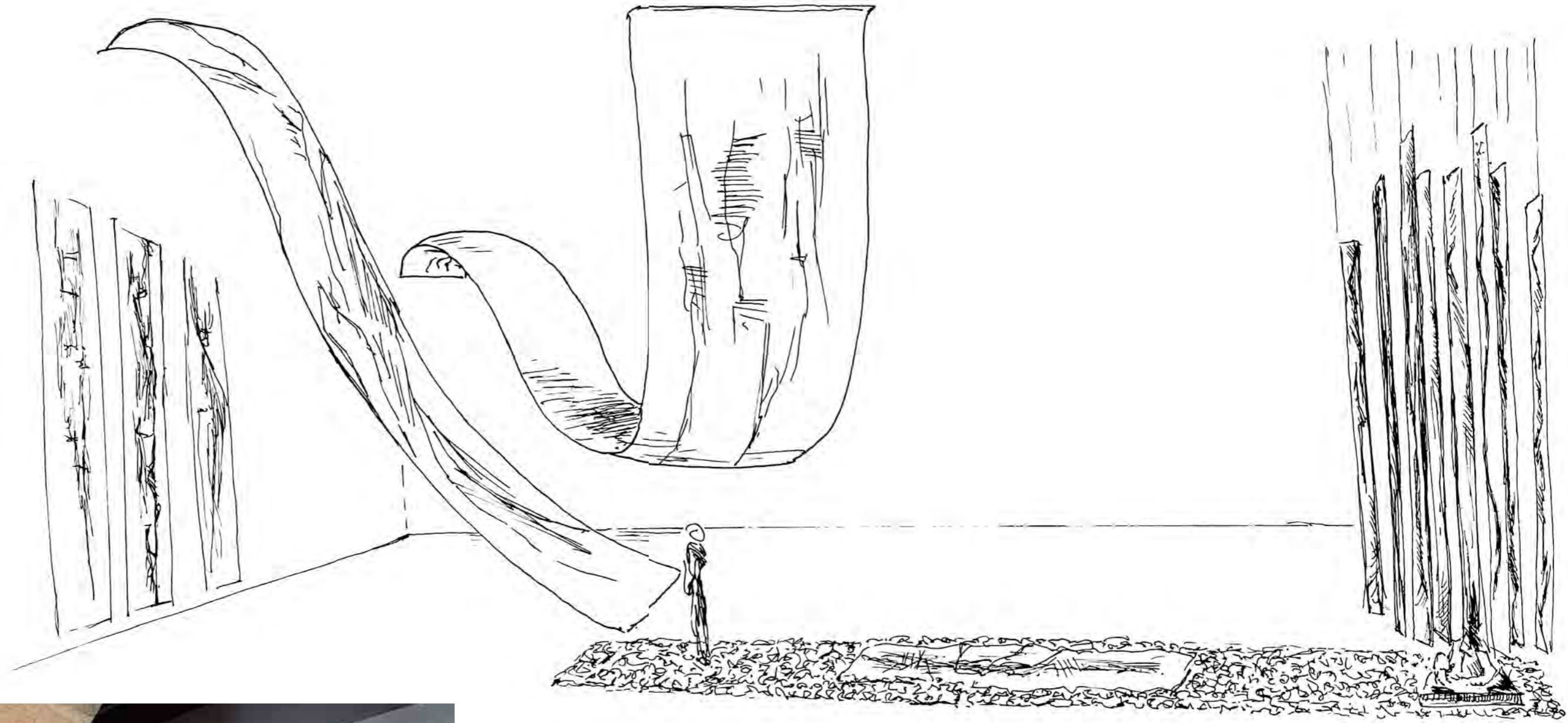
*Painting represents unruliness as light, relativity as writing, freedom as struggle, humility as attitude, and doubt as permanence, while awaiting grace, hope for chaos, possibility of an unveiling, an absolute which could contain everything, but which can only emerge from doing after having tried to move mountains.*

# Sequence 2 – The Mountain a Scarification or The Imprint of Time

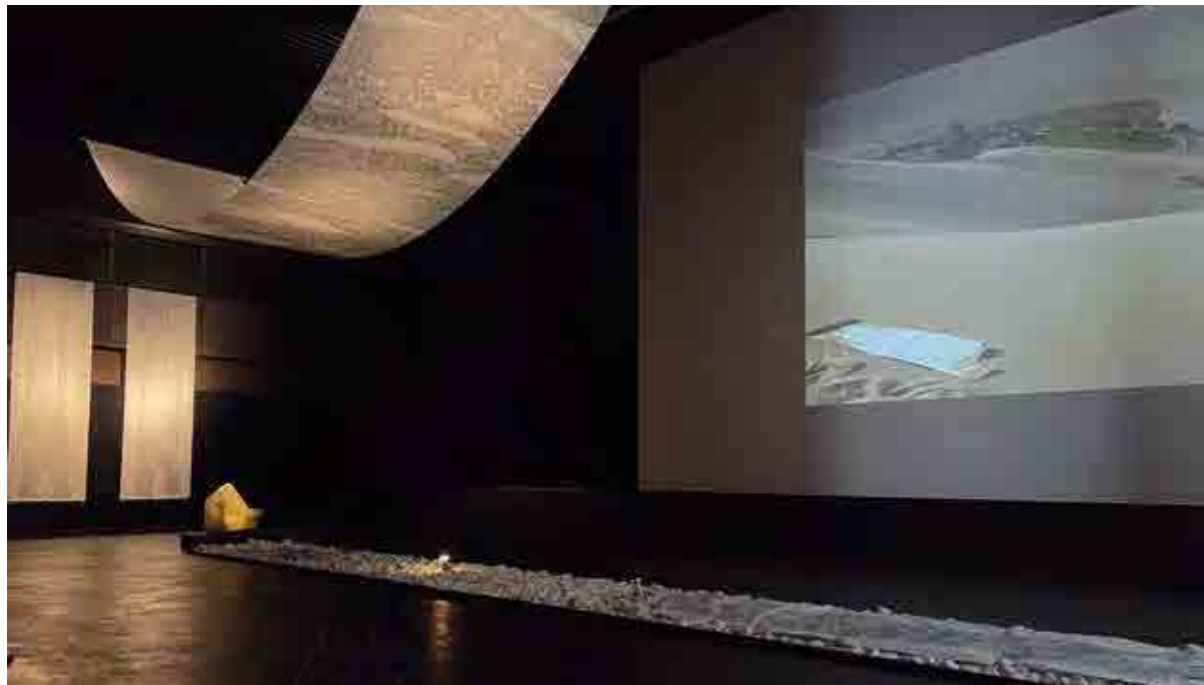


Installation with  
Washes and Graphite Prints

Installation Project: Chinese ink and walnut husk washes on translucent film, 400 x 45 cm.



Conceptualizing the special positioning of graphite prints on 100% cotton paper, 1000 x 196 cm.



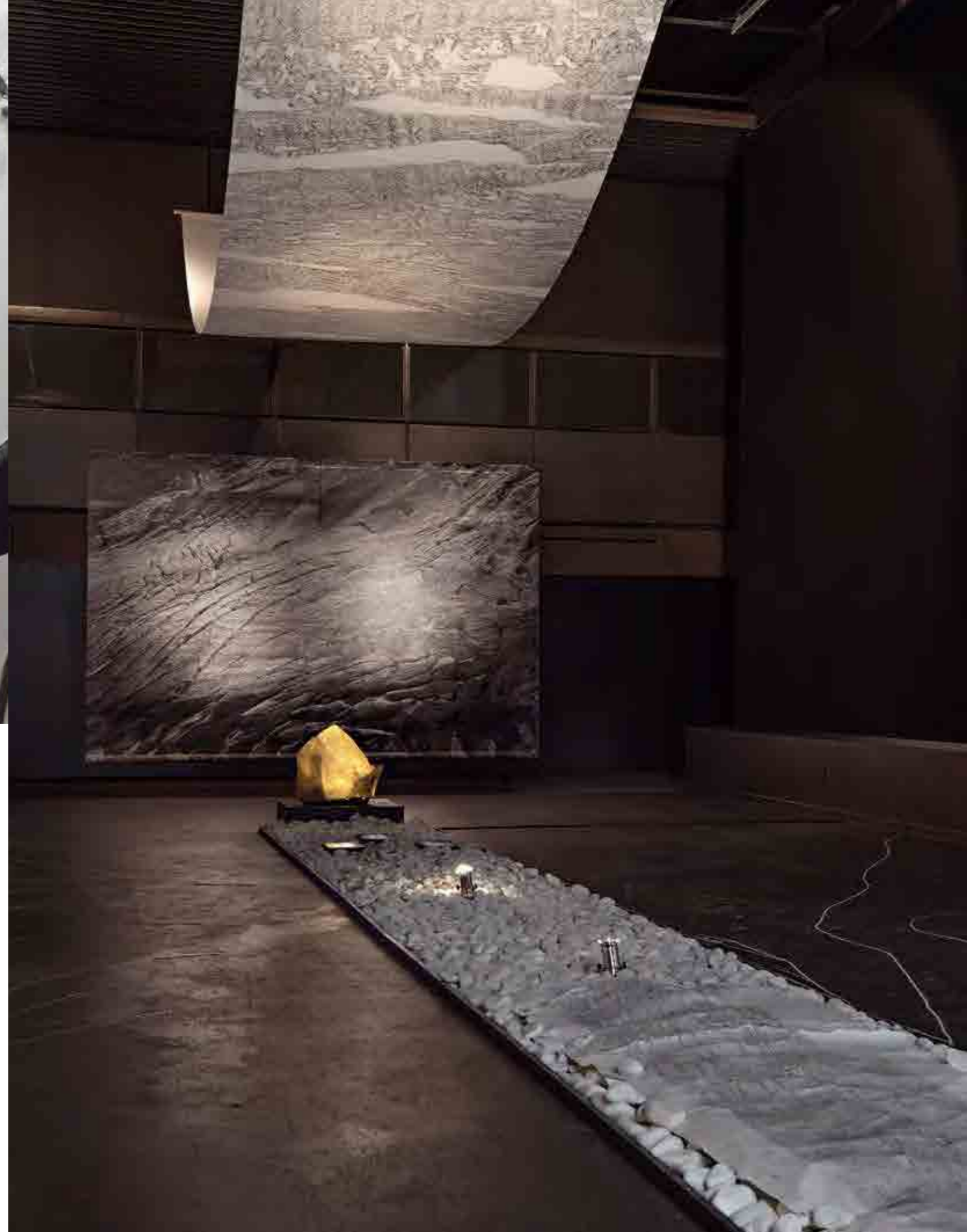
The installation entitled *Metamorphosis* captures the moment of transition from solid to liquid state.





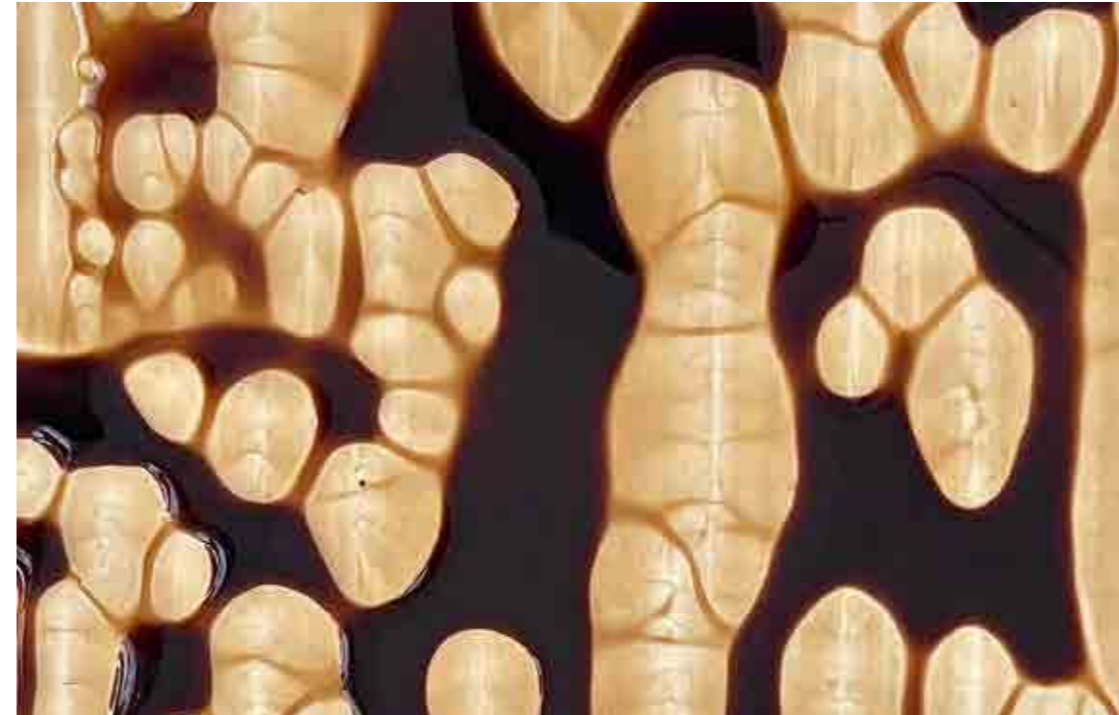


Rock Crystal: a treasure hidden in the heart of the Alps, functions as a guiding thread throughout the exhibition. ↑





Exploration of liquid inks on translucent film, combining Chinese ink, walnut husk and water.



## Of Meaning and Matter

The steles, drawn with Chinese ink and walnut husk wash, form the center piece of *Metamorphosis*, catch light through transparencies overlaying into more or less dense and opaque strata. They reveal plant-like structures fixed in a translucent space and, like ice, make plant life frozen in time visible.

They tell the story of transformation of a glacier from one state to another. As ice thaws, we discover natural elements (trees) that have been lost for millennia, captured long ago by the rapid advance of the ice age. The rhythm of advancement of these glaciers certainly mirrors that of their retraction in our present time and give an opportunity to witness, like memories of a moment from a distant past, the re-emergence of the fossilized trunks.



This monumental, 10 by 2 meters work, executed on paper and suspended from the ceiling of the space in the Museum, was created specifically for this exhibition with the proportions of the exhibition space in mind.

The wave-like suspension evokes rock fields shaped by the passage of glaciers, which leave behind smooth mineral surfaces polished by the moving ice.

The paper itself carries prints of patterns that look like intricate designs on wooden surfaces. Drawn using graphite, they activate memories of traces found on rocks that emerge once the snow fields melt away. They reveal life from other geological contexts, like dinosaurs who roamed there over 60 million years ago.

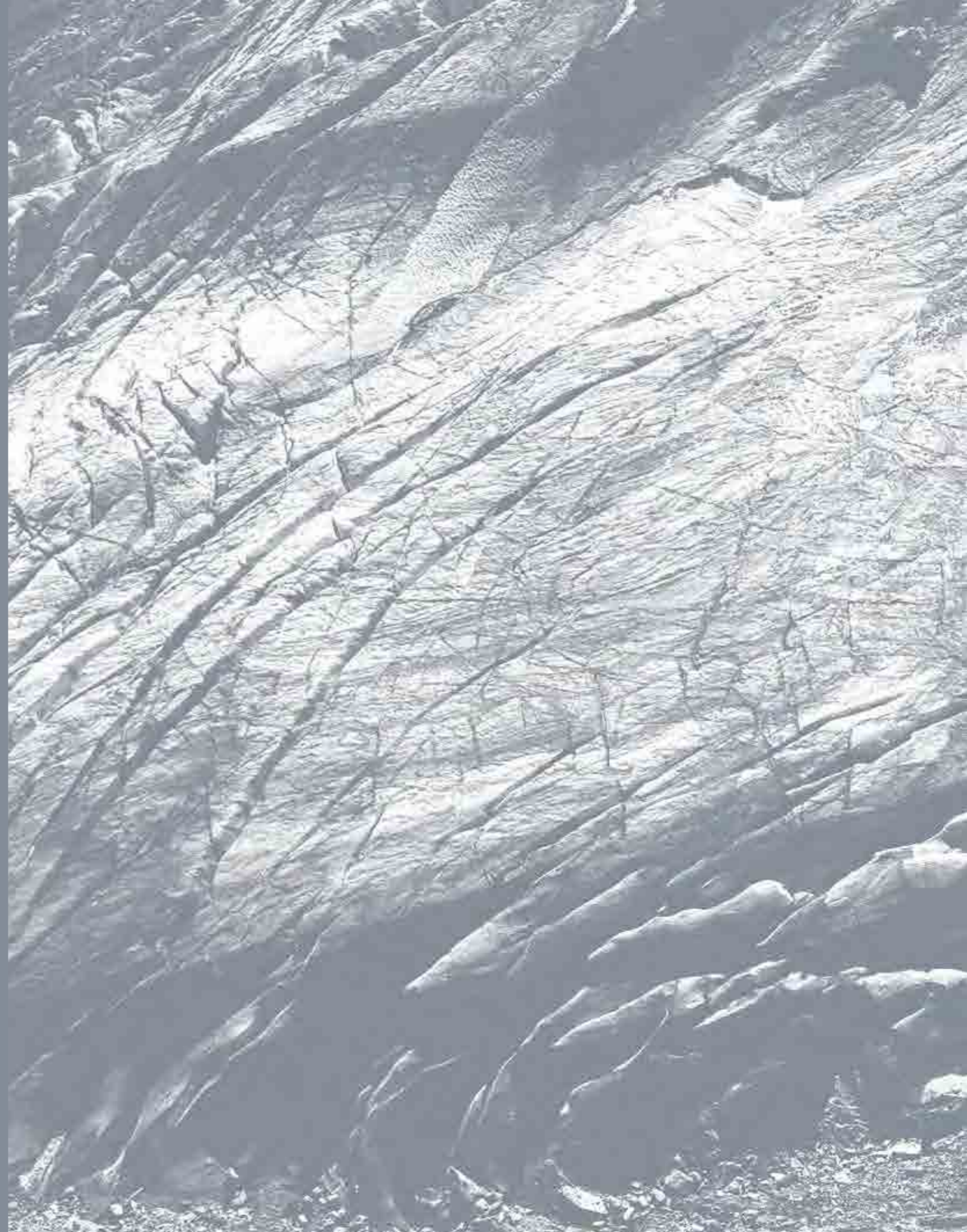
This work strongly echoes with the collaborative research by the paleontologist Lionel Cavin and the micro-paleontologist André Puiz, highlighting how art and science can enter in a resonant discussion.

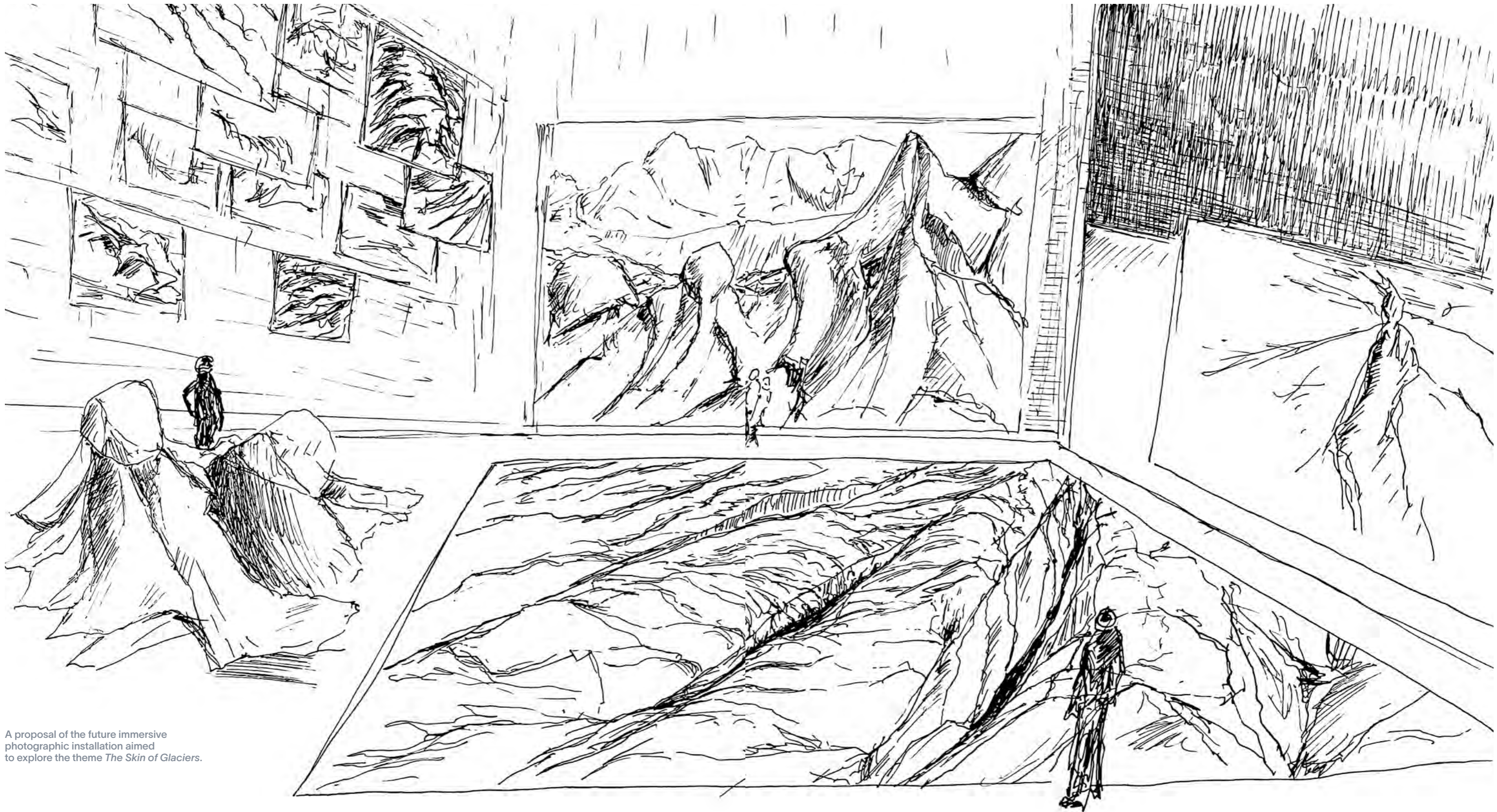
Garro creates his paintings by integrating into them various natural elements he collects during his travels around the world. He grinds samples of marble, malachite, azurite, alabaster, marine sediments, and volcanic ash into powder and uses latex or tar as binding agents.



Emergence of works at the artist's studio and at the Natural History Museum of Geneva →

# Sequence 3 – The Skin of Glaciers





A proposal of the future immersive photographic installation aimed to explore the theme *The Skin of Glaciers*.









Assembly of the different sequences with the scenographers and technical designers of the Museum, coordinated by the communications department. The installation entitled *The Skin of the Glaciers* comprises several different works. There is the wooden engraving (264 x 407 cm) created *in situ*, where rhythm and direction reverse those of the thaw (see pp. 66-67) as the piece grows instead of receding, as a compensation of current glacial movements. There is also a large painting, created entirely with minerals collected from locations Garo explored, and which create a membrane-like surface. Finally, the installation also shows a series of 60 x 60 cm silver gelatin coal prints of glaciers (by Fresson Paris).

# Photography

Thematic and Technical Developments

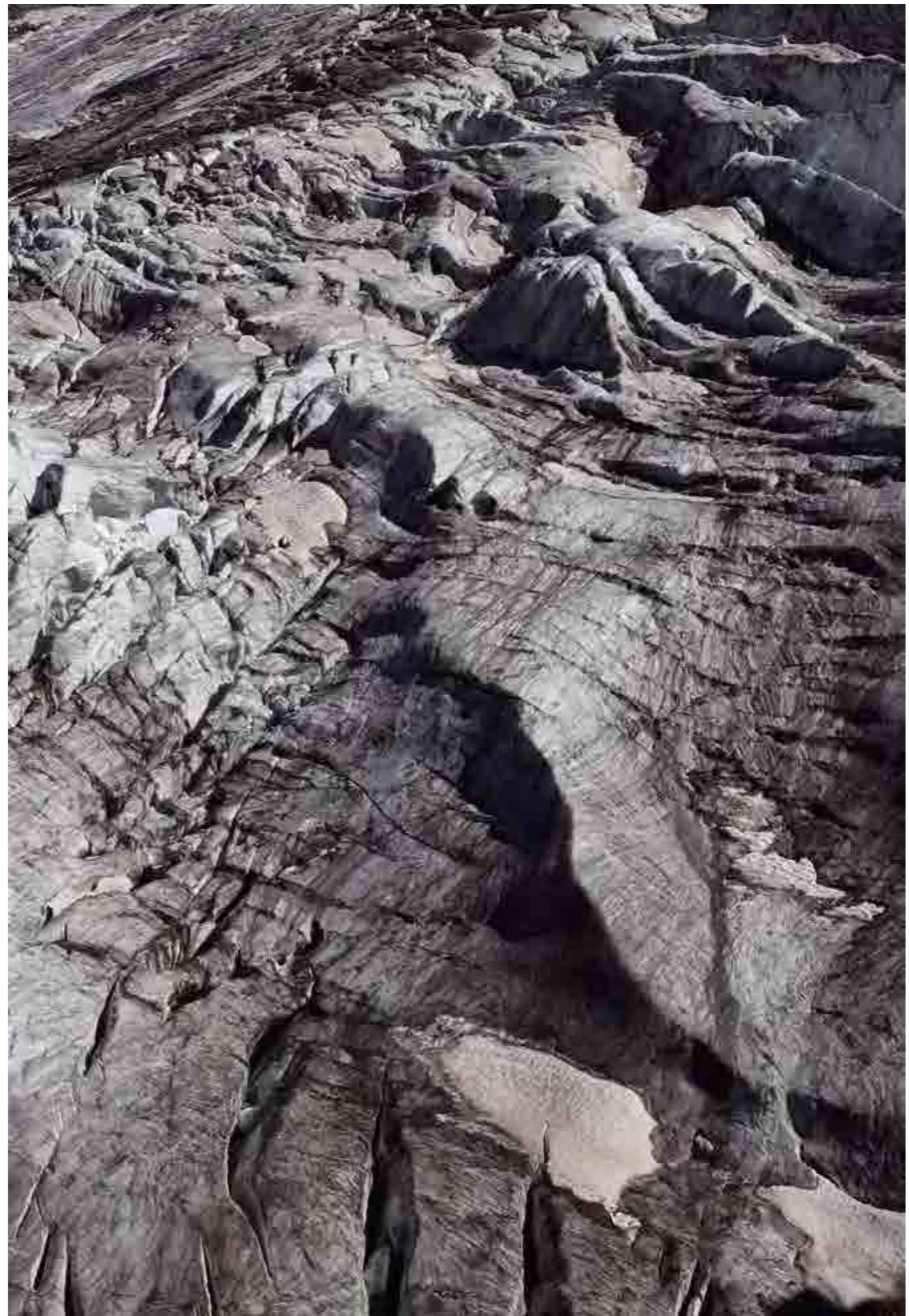


Presentation of a series of digital photographs entitled *Skin of Glaciers* that precedes the hanging of the analog coal prints (see p. 56)

*The Shroud of the Glacier* is a series of digital photographs showing glaciers wrapped in tarp. Printed on Hahnemühle Rag 305 gsm paper and mounted on Alu-Dibond plates (limited edition). →











*Skin of Glaciers*, a digital photography series depicting glaciers. Printed on Hahnemühle Rag 305 gsm, on Alu-Dibond support, limited edition.

Each summer the glaciers look more and more like traces left behind by animals, or like scarified human skin that reveals significant and perceptible degradation. It recalls the vulnerability of this universal, shared heritage.



## Black and White Analog Photography Coal Powder Prints

Both series, while using two different techniques, offer a particular esthetic approach that confers a unique aspect to each photograph. Indeed, one of the series is a printing coal process and the other uses coal ink – the very carbon whose combustion is seen as the primary cause of pollution we denounce today in climate change and global warming.

### Series Entitled Skin of Charcoal

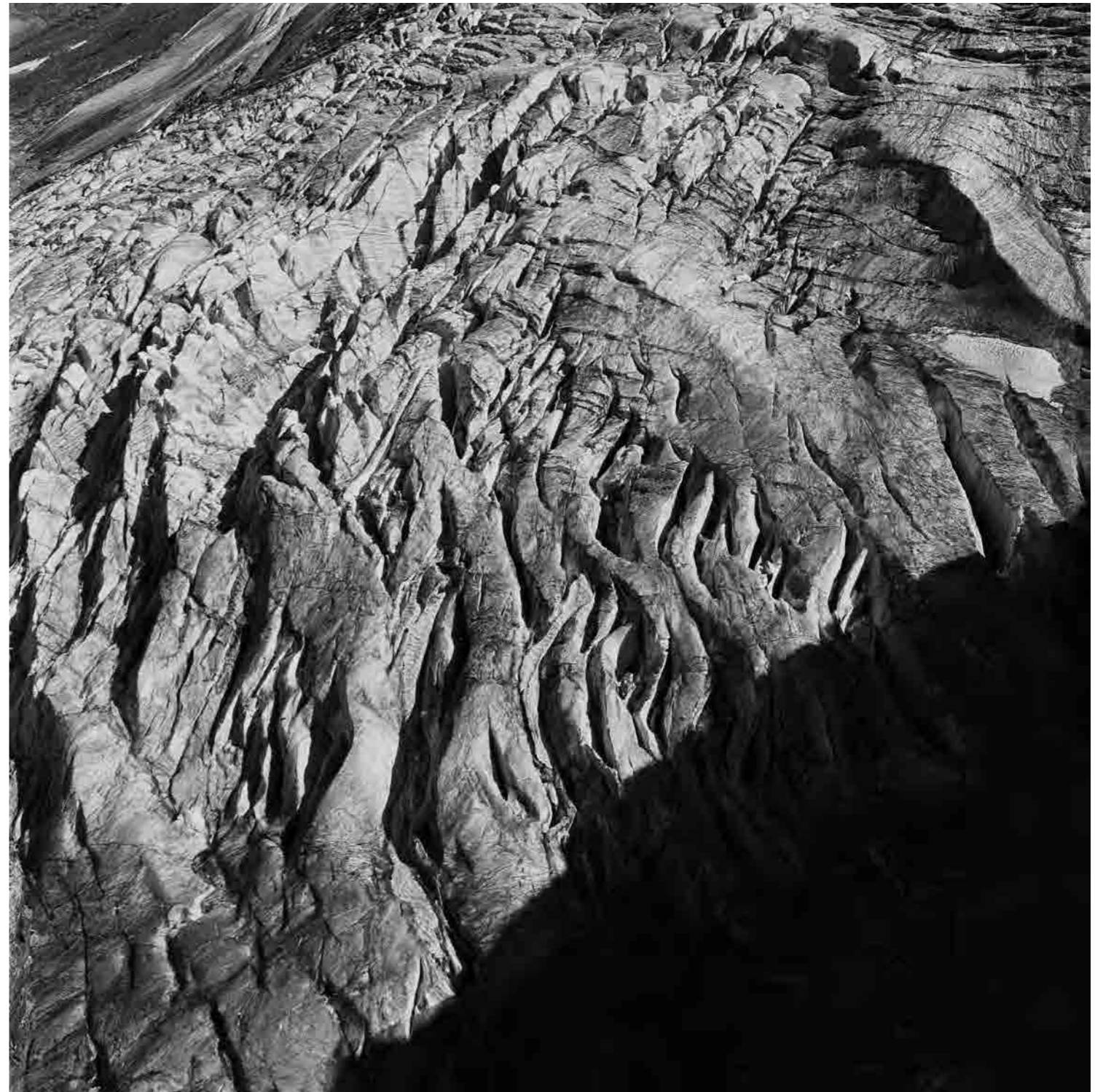
This limited analog series on glaciers entitled *Skin the Color of Charcoal* (medium format, black and white). Produced by the Fresson laboratory in Paris, the series proposes a critical rendering of the ever-accelerating process of glacial melting.



### Series Entitled Skin the Color of Charcoal

*Skin the Color of Charcoal* is a complementary limited edition analog series on glaciers (medium format, black and white), composed of (PIEZOGRAPHY®) prints produced by inkjet technology using coal ink (the highest resolution digital printing currently available). →







## The Imprint of Time, a Concept and a Series of Digital Photographs

*The End of Time* is an artistic concept embodied in a limited edition digital series entitled *The Imprint of Time*. It problematizes themes like the passing of time and the vulnerability of our world and shows a paper stele executed in graphite with drawings of the state of our world. The series functions like a metaphor, grasping the fragility of humankind as well as the impact it has on the environment.

The paper stele accompanied Garo on a number of his expeditions throughout the world over a two-year period. He photographed its degradation as the work entered in contact with nature by means of exposures to the elements until its complete disappearance in the mill of a glacier.





*The Imprint of Time* is a digital photography series.  
Printed on Hahnemühle Rag 305 gsm,  
on Alu-Dibond support, limited edition.  
(see film "1000 Years Under the Ice", p. 100-117)

## Wood Engraving, Upside Down

*Upside Down*, a wood engraving in indigenous wood, large format (264 × 407 cm).

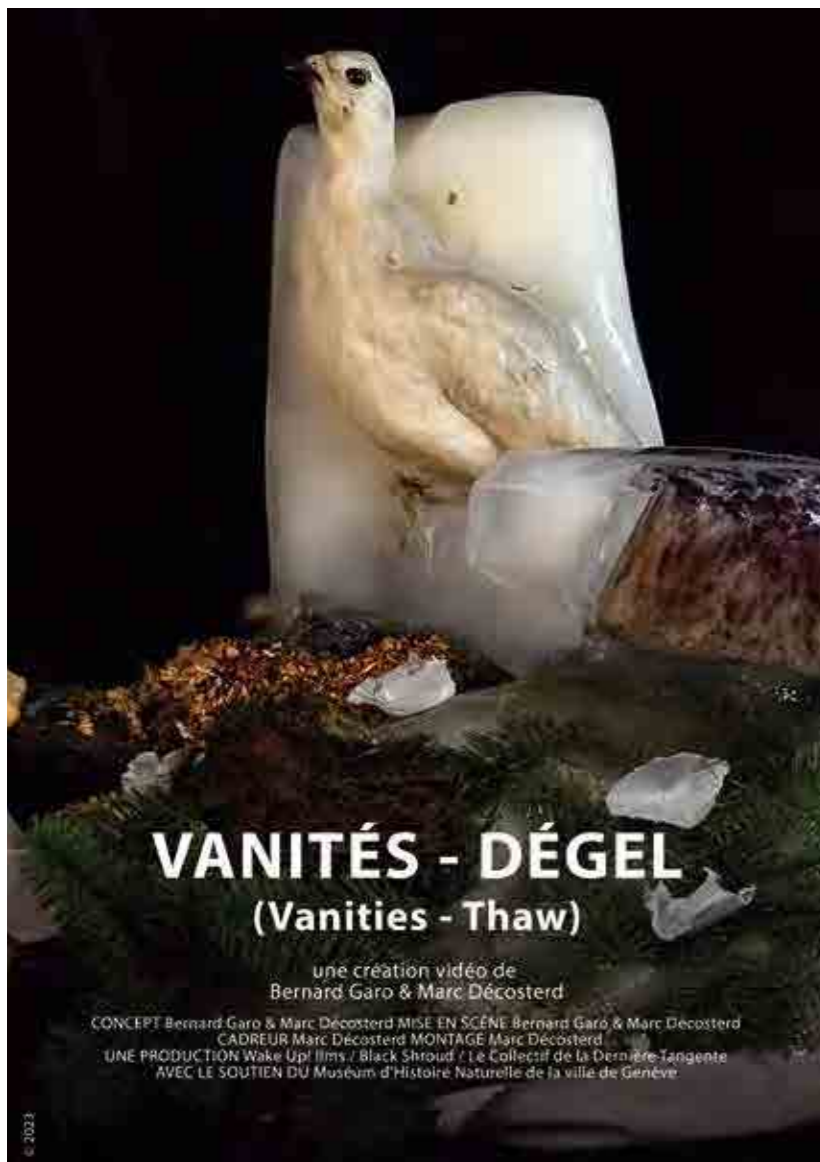
Garó's idea for this work was to begin at the bottom of the surface, using the thinnest chisel to create the finest grooves, then work his way up in the direction of the light, while progressively increasing chisel sizes. His creative movement, thus, reverses the direction of water which runs down from the thawing glaciers. This process embodies hope in a possibility that this retraction can be stopped, and that the memory of this universal heritage will be preserved.

It took Garó two months to create this work in front of the visitors of the Natural History Museum. While he worked, he also explained to the public his environmental and artistic approach. →



# Sequence 4 – The Thaw





## Vanities – Thaw

*Vanities – Thaw* (1:23) Video Art Installation, 2023

Referencing paintings of the classical period concerned with oblivion and death, this video installation takes the form of a triptych showing still life and skulls.

The works reflect a troubled, changing time of shifting paradigms, like the one we are confronted with today. In accelerated time, we witness transformations of still life compositions, going from solid blocks of ice to their complete thaw, which reveal the objects the blocks of ice contain.

This transformation from one state to another reveals to consciousness the degraded aspect of the natural elements that suddenly emerge from the ice, highlighting the effect the defrosting has on still life compositions.

With these transforming compositions, Garo and Décosterd recreate a raw image of the processes happening in our world today. Their video work entitled *Vanities – Thaw* was filmed in a studio, using elements related to glaciers and lent by the Natural History Museum of Geneva. Their goal was to create a visual triptych, which presented simultaneously the different compositions trapped in ice, thawing in acceleration (over 10 minutes instead of 12 hours in real time), revealing otherwise imperceptible but dystopian and imperfect environments, leaving no room for complacency. The work problematizes the disaster that will emerge once the glaciers have melted.

To see the installation, please visit:  
<https://vimeo.com/834669782>  
password: Vvulgaris





00:00



02:00



03:30



04:00



04:20



05:00



06:00



08:00



*Vanities*, series of photographs  
Printed on Hahnemühle Rag 305 gsm paper,  
under Acrylic, on Alu-Dibond support,  
limited edition.



## Collaboration Between Arts and Sciences

Like scientists, artists attempt to make sense of the world. Scientists take their inspiration from what is available in the world that surrounds them, including works of art. They can use their intuition, subjectivity, tastes, their preferences and their unconscious to resolve problems. There is little doubt that artists quench their thirst at the same fountain of inspiration to create their works. This fountain also holds real stories told by scientists.

I tend to believe that the beauty of a work of art relies significantly on its coherence, evaluated by means of criteria also used in apprehending natural phenomena and beauty.

Whether they are apprehensible by our reasoning or not, the constraints which give rise to sunsets, to the shapes of granite pebbles on a beach, or to the firefly laying its eggs in a pond, these constraints confer onto these objects a coherence, a relentlessness which I see as forming a core in their esthetic.

Victor Hugo once wrote that "Form is the essence brought to the surface." This explains my preference in artists who privilege feeling and experiencing, rather than explaining. Whose subjectivities enlighten. Whose artistic gestures engender moving and coherent works, like embodiments of attempts to bring order among chaos.

These attempts can only succeed when they are granted freedom at each stage of their realization. This is why I fully appreciate Garo's "art total" when he paints water, ice, or rock.

Laurent Vallotton  
Ornithologist

*Vanities – Thaw*, a tryptic art video installation, codirected with Marc Décosterd, and presented at the Natural History Museum of Geneva with other films on the same theme (see p. 114-127). ↑

Presenting works of art in a different context than that of an Art Museum, gives a new dimension to the artist's œuvre which expands through this contact. When arts and sciences enter into a dialogue, both work to complement each other. Scientific research can shed light on artistic concerns and questions, and art, while retaining its primary function, informs scientific methodologies.

# Sequence 5 – The Sublime Disaster

Performance and  
Ephemeral Installation



## The Sublime Disaster

While Romanticism constructed an idea of the sublime as intimately linked to beauty, grandeur and the power of nature which revealed human vulnerability, nowadays we are confronted with the impending disappearance of nature and its memory as a result of human action, with *The Sublime Disaster*.

In the beginning of this ultimate sequence of Bernard Garo's artistic residency a video documents a kind of ritualistic descent into a glacier's mill where the artist deposits a cotton paper stele and a stone collected on the shores of Lake Geneva. The stone is thus returned to its place of origin on the mountain. However, while the ice melts and the stone will certainly move, the chances that the stone will return to the lake's shore ever again are very slim, because the glaciers have shrunk substantially in the past 150 years, making the stele Garo carries into a tribute to commemoration, to memory, and to funeral rites.

Throughout the exhibition, Garo renders visible various micro-plastics contained in samples of glacial ice, pointing to the fact that its purity is only a belief. The glacier is perceived as a dying organism, like a gigantic whale stranded on the beach, which emits sounds. These sounds were recorded by a musician who accompanied Garo in his descent into the glacier and will be used in later performances.

There is also the video triptych entitled *Vanities – Thaw*, projected in accelerated mode, that makes thaw visible and reveals animals which are part of the glaciers' ecosystem and, therefore, also endangered. Other objects that have now become strongly associated with the idea of *memento mori*<sup>2</sup>, like a chandelier with two burning candles, are also present to draw attention to this impending extinction and death. These are juxtaposed with a video showing the process of melting is reversed and which evokes hope in the possibility of stopping the destruction of glaciers.

*Melting Hands* is an ephemeral and transformative installation that showcases hands made of ice and hung on strings, melting in real time. Simultaneously agents of artistic creation and destruction, this ambivalent and fragile work is a representation of human condition of both perpetrators and victims ultimately of their own doing. The specific pink color of these hands draws a parallel between humans and the landscape where in summer glaciers acquire a pinkish hue from the presence of an algae.

2- Remember that you will die

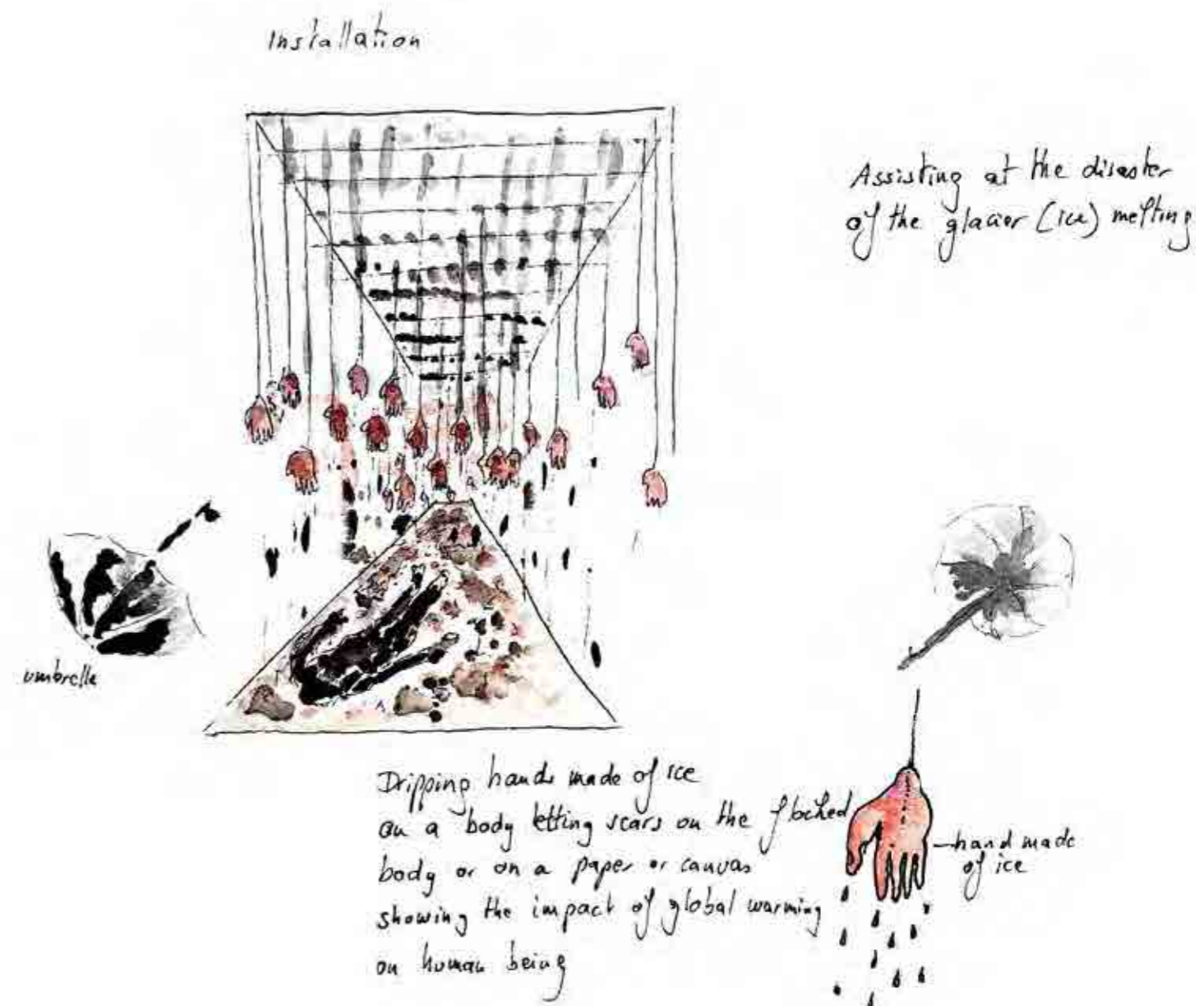
A scenography sketch for the ephemeral installation entitled *Dripping Hands* and created for the sequence entitled *The Sublime Disaster*. It is the fifth sequence created in the context of this evolving residency. →

As they melt, these hands turn into hearts and other organic forms. Meanwhile, we can hear the drops of water impacting on paper below and which, like rain, will become a river that will join a larger body of water. Once the hands completely disappear, we are left with pebbles suspended on strings. Thus, Gaia survives humanity which endangers her.

The installation also carries an umbrella attached to its wooden structure, symbolising the indifference of governments and their inability to resolve the destructive process that has been unleashed. We shield ourselves from running water, but not from the unfolding climate crisis and the active search for solutions. This urgency is not to be taken lightly.

Next to the installation, we see the tarp used for covering glaciers to protect them from the sun's radiation – a gesture that is both useless and ridiculous when we consider momentarily the size of the tarp in relation to the immensity of the glacier. However, the emergent message is clear: with *The Sublime Disaster* Bernard Garo interpellates us and makes visible the call for a collective strategy capable of stopping and, perhaps, even reversing this process of destruction in order to preserve the treasure of nature for the future generations.

Joan Francesc Ainaud





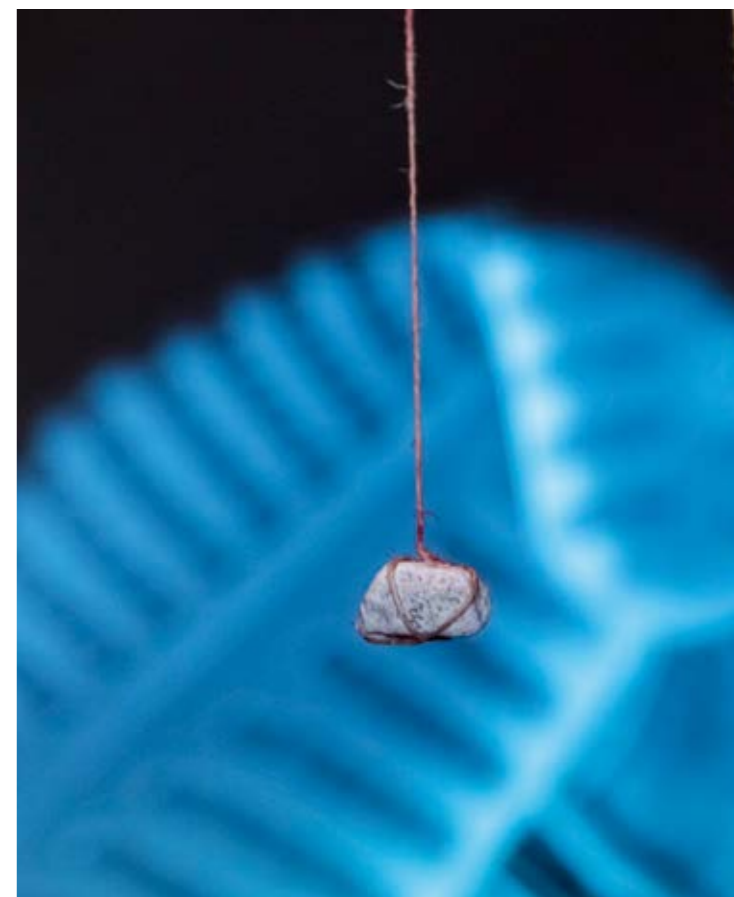
## Dripping Hands

To watch the video  
*Dripping Hands* (1:53) please go to:  
<https://vimeo.com/831825950>  
Password: Vvulgaris



*Dripping Hands* a concept for an installation presenting thawing frozen hands – was imagined by Bernard Garo together with Marc Décosterd and Katarina Boselli, and developed by the artist at the Natural History Museum of Geneva.

The installation creates a spectacle of extinction enhanced acoustically and visually by the thawing of a hundred pink ice hands, dripping progressively faster with time, evoking perceptively the melting glaciers. Once these hands completely dissolve, they leave behind stones collected on the shores of Lake Geneva, which also carry this memory of glacial past. They are presences calling forward to the stones left once glaciers completely retreat from the Alps, taking with them a part of the depository of our world's history. Art Historian, Joan Francesc Ainaud, presented the work during the opening of the exhibition.





## Impure

*Impure* is a piece of performance art that Garo conceived and created as part of *The Sublime Disaster* – the 5<sup>th</sup> sequence of the exhibition, in collaboration with the artistic Collective *The Last Tangent* (*La Dernière Tangente*).

During the performance, accompanied by Éric Fischer on his saxophone, Garo paints with natural pigments added to translucent glacial water, obtained from the ice he melts using a blowtorch. This ice was sampled by means of a coring machine from a depth of about 2 meters (approximately 6 feet) below the surface of the Rhône glacier. An examination of the sample under an electronic microscope revealed the presence of soot and micro-plastics, along with the expected sedimentary elements. This performance brings to consciousness the fact that pollution can remain imperceptible to human eye in drinking water coming from places we think as the most preserved. The actor François Chattot enriched this performance by reading a selection of texts related to the subject.

To watch *Impure* (3:07)  
please go to:  
<https://vimeo.com/847997016>  
Password: Vvulgaris





## Water-Fire-Ice

To watch the video  
*Water-Fire-Ice* please go to:  
<https://vimeo.com/826934218>  
 Password: Vvulgaris



Garo also experiments with painting directly on glaciers, using surface sediments collected as he melts ice with a blowtorch. The filmed performance *Water-Fire-Ice (Eau-feu-glace)* (see p.114) illustrates the accelerated rate at which the glaciers are melting due to human activity. With this work Garo hopes to attract attention to the fact that if nothing changes now, the last glacier will disappear from Central Europe by 2100.



Work created on pure cotton vellum paper, using water and sediments found on the Fee glacier. ↗

# Is Purity of Our Glaciers a Myth?

In August 2017, a team from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ) and the Paul Scherrer Institute in Villigen (Switzerland) drilled an ice core in the Rhône Glacier. The core, over 80 meters (262 feet) in length, was used to study movements of ice and its crystallization process (Hellman *et al.*, 2021)<sup>3</sup>.

Dr Margit Schwikowski, a member of the research team from Paul Scherrer Institute, donated the first 1.6 to 2 meters (5 to 6 feet) of the core sample to the Natural History Museum of Geneva (MHNG) to be used by Garo during his residency. The artist also carried out a parallel core sampling thanks to his guide. The 30 centimeter sample taken from a 15 meter crevasse on the Fee Glacier will be used in his paintings. At first glance, the core sample from the Rhône Glacier seems to be about 50 years old and very clear and pure, at least to the naked eye. Nicolas Greber (geologist) and André Piuz (micropaleontologist), along with Garo were encouraged to analyze it. They liquefied the sample, filtered it, and then used both an optical and a scanning microscope to examine the residue. The question they asked was whether this sample, from the highest peaks and half a century old, contains organisms and particles brought by wind or human activity?

4 – Painter, T.H., Flanner, M.G., Kaser, G., Marzeion, B., VanCuren, R.A., Abdalati, W., 2013. End of the Little Ice Age in the Alps forced by industrial black carbon. PNAS 110, 15216-15221.

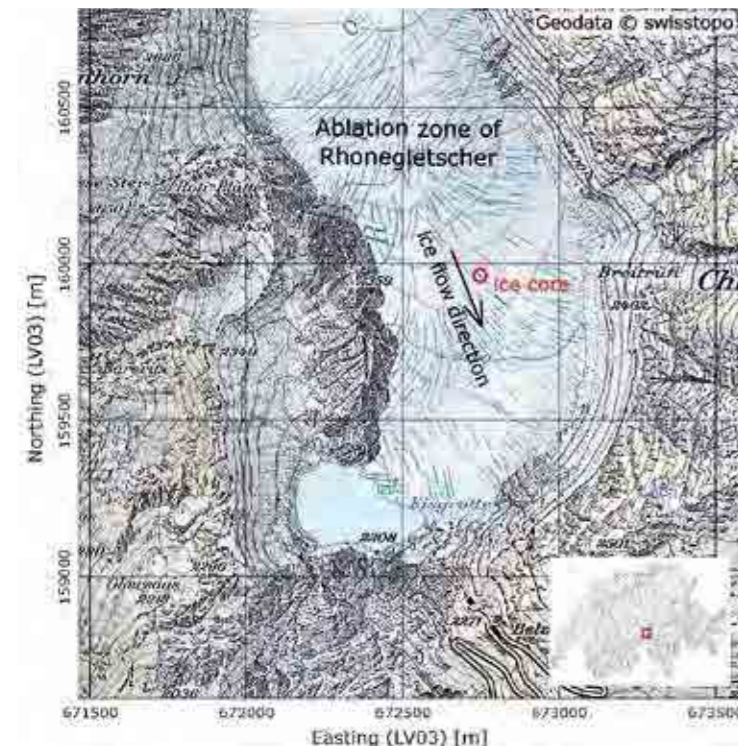
5 – Ambrosini R., Azzoni R.S., Pittino F., Diolaiuti G., Franzetti A., Parolini M., 2019. First evidence of microplastic contamination in the supraglacial debris of an alpine glacier. Environmental pollution 253, 297-301.

Scientists found numerous particles of microplastics and soot in the samples. Previous studies have shown that large amounts of soot in alpine glaciers led to greater absorption of heat, causing, in turn, increased melting rates (Painter *et al.*, 2013)<sup>4</sup>.

Contamination of glaciers with microplastics is less known, and was first signaled in 2019 (Ambrosini *et al.*, 2019)<sup>5</sup>. The authors of the paper claim that the glaciers are contaminated with microplastics as much as oceans and lakes. The abundance of these colored plastic particles and fibers found in the core sample confirm this idea.

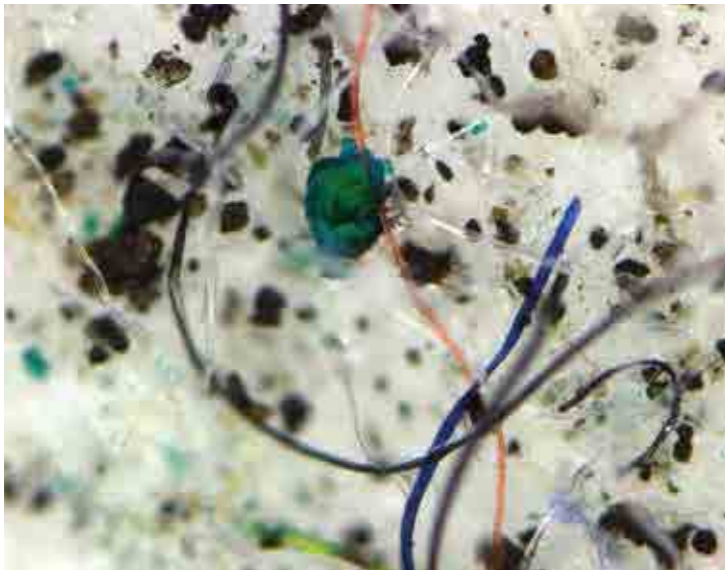
3 – Hellmann S., Kerch J., Weikusat I., Bauder A., Grab M., Jouvet G., Schwikowski M., Maurer H., 2021. Crystallographic analysis of temperate ice on Rhonegletscher, Swiss Alps. The Cryosphere 15, 677-694.

The map on the left indicates with a red circle where the ice core was collected. The photograph on the right presents the sample transmitted to the Natural History Museum of Geneva. ↓

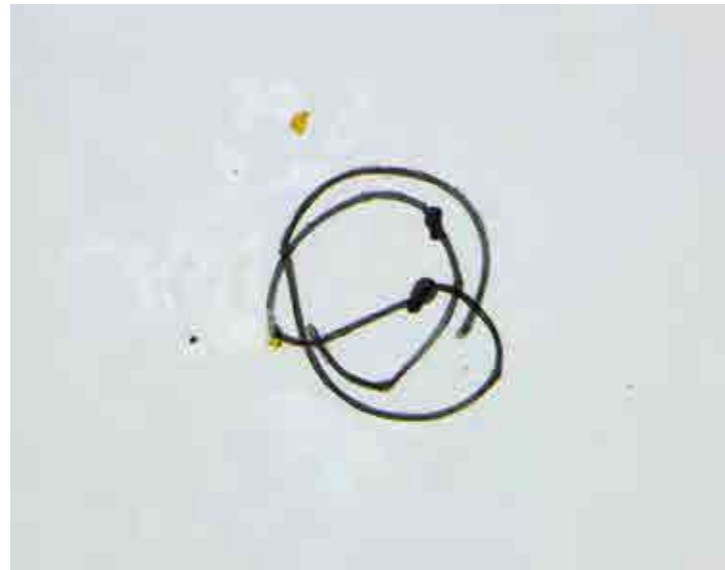


The ice core used during the performance ↘





Fiber and colored particles of microplastics found in ice. The round and black particles in the photograph on the left, is mainly soot, probably of industrial origin. ↑



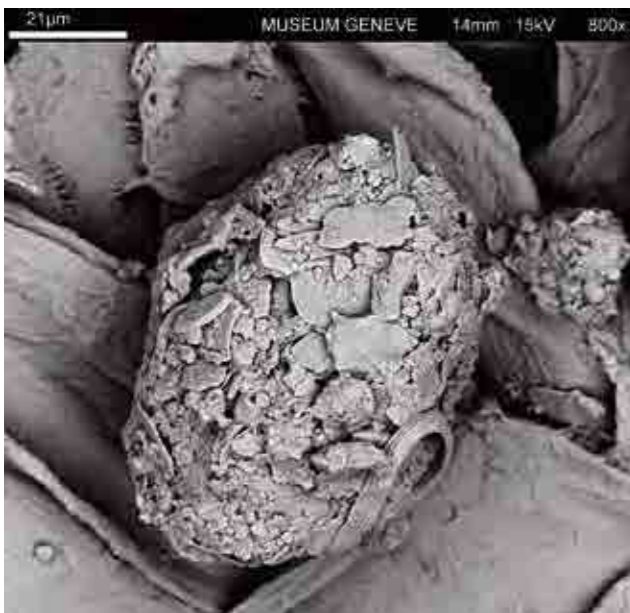
Different types of mineral particles, carried on the wind as dust particles, are also revealed. These are mostly small grains of quartz or clay. Pine pollen is also frequently found, and so are insect wings and frozen red mites.



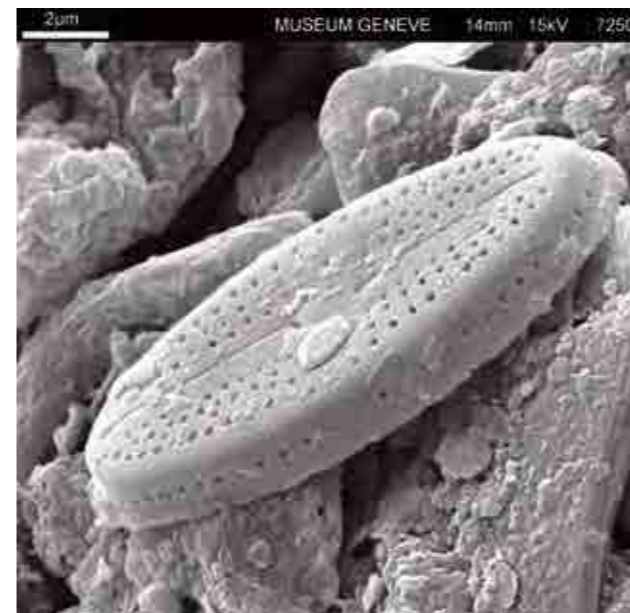
On the left, a part of an insect's wing and on the right, a red mite. ↑



Another interesting observation is the presence of single cell microscopic algae (diatoms), formed by two fine silica valves held together by a thin "belt". The diatoms are principally found in oceans and lakes, where they play an essential role in the food chain and in the formation of oxygen. There are several hypotheses that explain the presence of diatoms in the glaciers. One is that they were carried on particles of dust blown to the summits or carried there by birds.



Photos taken with a scanning electron microscope. On the left, a cluster of mineral dust and small particles of clay. On the right is a grain of pine pollen. ↑



Pictures of diatoms taken with a scanning electron microscope. On the left, an isolated valve and on the right, two valves held by a "belt". ↑



In short, 50 years ago, our glaciers, which were thought to be of a rare purity, already contained a variety of organisms and particles both natural and anthropogenic. This suggests that the microscopic analysis of the ice on the upper surface of the glaciers today would be even more alarming. Today, our glaciers are still majestic, but if we look at them from other angles and scales, from the glorious landscapes to the minute elements composing it, we see the paradox of the *Sublime Disaster* emerge.

Lionel Cavin, Nicolas Greber and André Piuze

## An Experiment in Accelerated Deterioration of Works on Paper

To watch the video  
*Degradation 2023*: →  
<https://vimeo.com/artmyn/mhn-garo2023>



Given the transformation of the landscape caused by global warming, during his residency Garo experimented with the accelerated deterioration of several of his works created for this experiment. Several paintings underwent brutal treatments from which they reemerged transformed: successive exposures to extreme heat and cold, but also periods of humidity, followed by direct sun.

The works were created using only natural materials like walnut husks, Chinese ink, latex, powder of malachite and azurite, provided by the geologists of the Natural History Museum and documented by the *Artmyn* through each phase.

Garo's collaboration with *Artmyn* spans a few years now. *Artmyn* develops high-definition scanning, which allows us to look into a work of art on a granular level. This experience is a journey into matter and generates an impression of entering new landscapes. By means of natural elements employed in their creation this process also unveils the very depth of works.

The purpose of the series entitled *Degradation* is to symbolically reveal the evolution of a painting which carries the memory of the forces of climate change through beauty and the aleatory.

Loïc Baboulaz CTO of *Artmyn* and Bernard Garo present their collaborative work on a digital screen in front of an audience at the Museum.



To see other works created using this technology please go to:  
<https://artmyn.com/explore/collections/bernardgaro>



*Degradation* is a work metamorphosed by a dilatation pushing it to evolve into a 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension after undergoing cumulative extreme conditions. ↑

# Sequence 6 – Give Us Back the Beauty

An Exhibition  
with Film Screenings





Activities organized for students at the Museum with the artist to raise awareness of future generations on questions of the importance of glaciers.



Films and photographs of expeditions and performance art on the glaciers taken by Garo and the guides were presented at the Museum. The exhibition was accompanied by texts of scientific studies of water, glaciers, geology and climate.



## 1000 Years Under the Ice or In the Belly of a Glacier

During the year of his residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva, Bernard Garo created various installations and also a number of filmed, original and poetic performances. His inspiration and privileged source of exploration are both located in the fascinating alpine glaciers. Some of his expeditions were true adventures and real physical achievements for a non mountain professional. One of them in particular is an artistic world premiere: descending into a glacier mill, an abyss of 50 meters (164 feet) deep, into a world of frozen galleries created by the glacial melt-water in summer, allowed an incredible new perspective on numerous levels. It inspired the creation of the film *1000 Years Under the Ice*, a visual performance depicting little-known aspects of glaciers (see p.116-117) and a unique immersive experience into its 2000 year old core. By means of these beautiful and striking images, Garo interpellates us to think about the passages of time, glacial movement and the Anthropocene.

A filmed performance  
(see p. 116-117)







At the bottom, 50 meters under the surface, we enter an unknown, immaculate world and take a step of 1000 years into the past. ↑



Like a transept crossing of a cathedral, this drop with gigantic ice stalactites and its layers, unveils memories of history of our Earth. ↑



Garo's idea was to create a meaningful performative exploration by returning a serpentinite stone to the Alps. Carried down by the Quaternary glaciations and found on the shores of Lake Geneva, 200 km from its place of origin in the heart of the glacier at the foot of the mountain.

The artist engraved and signed this mineral that was then deposited and surrendered to the flow of melting water and the movements of the glacier together with a piece of cotton paper on which an imprint of the current state of our polluted earth was traced using graphite (pure carbon).

The paper's natural fragility with respect to the forces of nature represents human vulnerability and the impact humans have on the environment. It will dislocate and disappear quickly, pulling the stone with it on a journey that will probably end much earlier than any of the previous ones.





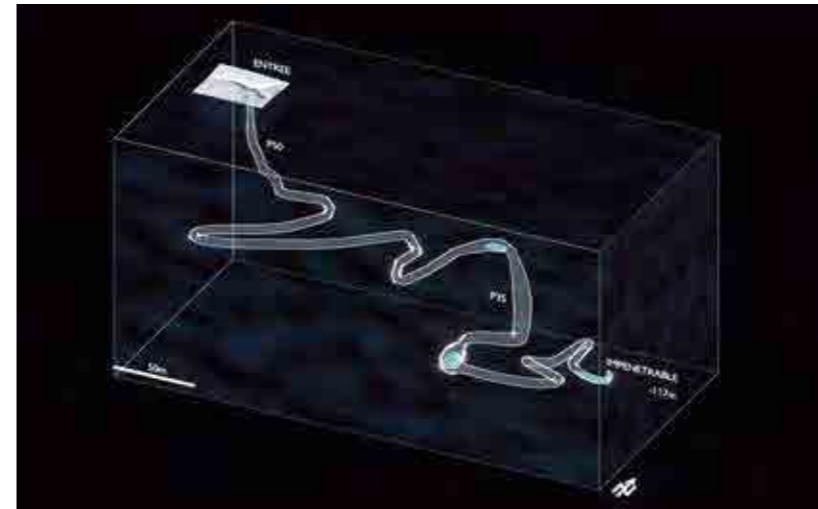
This voyage in time was filmed according to the storyboard drawn by Marc Décosterd. In order to film the expedition and the performance, Bernard Garo benefited from support of three guides – a geologist, a glaciologist, and a glacial speleologist. Loïc Pérez was both the architect of the project, as well as the expedition leader and without whom this adventure would have not been possible. Other members of the expedition included Hugo Béguin, an extreme adventure photographer and cameraman, Jérémie Gentizon, Philippe Wagneur, drone operator and photographer, and Jérôme Bourquin, drone operator.

Éric Fischer, the internationally recognized saxophone player and composer (cofounder with Garo of *The Last Tangent* Interdisciplinary Art Collective), was also part of the group, and recorded the sounds of the glaciers for memory to use them for some of the performance works in the exhibition.



Using a climbing rope, Garo is lowered into the depths of the glacial mill with his team, where he begins his exploratory performance by following the canals dug through the ice by the energy and power of the rivers of thawing water. The canals are flooded in summer and freeze over in winter. There he deposits the paper stele, whose degradation in contact with nature he photographed throughout his trips in the world.

These meanderings under the glacial surface reveal other, deeper openings into the extremities of the glacier. Beyond about a hundred meters under the surface, the density of the ice stops the water from penetrating further, forcing it to dig narrower horizontal passages and making it impossible to reach the karst base. This is where this exploration stops.



A topographic rendering by Philippe Wagneur of the glacial mill and the passages explored. The access begins in a 50 meters vertical drop, followed by about 70 meters of horizontal canal, before dropping abruptly for another 35 meters and reaching the second level of galleries, significantly more narrow, leading for yet another 40 meters. A total of 117 meters under the ice surface.



Together with the guide Loïc Pérez, Garo made it to one of the extremities of our planet – at the end of canals forged by waters that traverse the glacier in complete darkness. It is there that Garo deposits the stele that travelled the world for 3 years and a stone polished by erosion on a short distance but several thousands years long trip.



Back on the surface, the perfect weather conditions are suddenly replaced by fog and cold, forcing the expedition to promptly leave the site. This is a gentle reminder that the mountain is a wild terrain, able to transform at any minute into a dangerous trap. It is a true privilege to be able to explore glaciers respectfully and to witness this perpetual spectacle of beauty – a sublime beauty, in danger of disappearance.



Map of Switzerland entirely covered in glaciers, approximately 25,000 years ago. (@swisstopo) ↗

In 2023 there were still about 220,000 glaciers in the world, with 1399 of them in Switzerland alone. Almost all of them are currently melting and, if global warming continues at its current pace, in the next 100 years all glaciers of Central Europe will be gone.

It is estimated that the oldest ice on the Gorner Glacier and the Colle Gnifetti Glacier (both part of the Mont Rosa Massif) is between 24,000 and 50,000 years old. We cannot yet imagine or measure what the loss of such ecosystems will bring, but we know that the melting of glaciers will erase more than our memory.

Glaciers, including the polar regions hold more than 70% of the fresh water on earth. Should this ice disappear, a problem will quickly emerge for over a third of the world's population. As a consequence, and should the ice caps and all glaciers melt, the sea level will rise by a considerable amount, submerging under its level certain terrains and human habitations.

The study of the formation and subsequent thawing of glaciers, allows us to come to certain conclusions about the ecological changes in recent geological history.

- The cold peak of the last great Würm ice age was around 25,000 years before present. It began around 115,000 years ago and ended around 11,700 years ago.
- There were then considerable glacial retreats which meant that during the Roman period, around the year zero, the glaciers of the Alps were further in retreat than today.
- A Little Ice Age then began around 1300, causing the glaciers to advance for more than 500 years until around 1850. This was followed by another rapid decline, the one we are currently experiencing.

## List of Films Coproduced by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd During the Residency

*1000 Years Under the Ice, Within the Glacier's Depth*, 2023 (10:03 – see p.116-117)

Film was nominated at the *FIFAD 2023 – Festival International du Film Alpin des Diablerets* – and selected for the *FIFG 2023 – Festival International du Film sur les Glaciers de Genève*.

An exceptional expedition into the belly of a glacier and the past to reveal a misunderstood world that holds traces of human activity and memory that are inexorably disappearing.

*Crevasse*, 2022 (11:35 – see p.118-119)

A documentary in artistic exploration about melting glaciers prized in Germany, Italy, Argentina and Norway.

*Crevasse* is an emotional journey between the virtual and the real, made almost entirely from photographs, taking us to the heart of the glaciers and into the structure of the artist's canvases.

*The Sublime Disaster*, 2023 (10:18 – see p.124-127)

A short poetic film produced for the Natural History Museum of Geneva winner of the *Heidi Movie Awards, Switzerland*.

An artistic, scientific and poetic tale about the cycle of water which uses imagery generated by electronic microscope.

*Not for Long*, 2023 (5:58 – see p.120-121)

Selected for the *Festival International du Film sur les glaciers de Genève (FIFG 2023)*.

A film about the placement of a time capsule inside a crevasse of a glacier.

*Tabula Rasa*, 2023 (11:35 – see p.122-123)

The film received prizes in Paris, Berlin and Los Angeles.

A short experimental film that puts in tension by means of a split-screen projection the paradox of human helplessness in the face of, and simultaneous denial of war and climate change, responsible for the disappearance of glaciers.

*Vanities – Thaw*, 2023 (1:03 – see p.70-76)

Art video triptych – inspired by classical still life paintings, composed with contemporary objects.

*Dripping Hands*, 2023 (1:53 – see p.82-85)

Video of the ephemeral exhibition of melting hands. *Dripping Hands* was displayed as part of *The Sublime Disaster* during the opening weekend of the exhibition.

The work raises questions about the link between climate change and disappearing glaciers.

*Impure*, 2023 (3:07 – see p.86-87)

Video capsule of a performance presented for the first time at the Natural History Museum of Geneva during *The Sublime Disaster* weekend.

Bernard Garo paints with water from a melted ice core (see the film *Not for Long*). The analysis of the core showed both natural and man-made pollutants carried by winds.

*Water-Fire-Ice*, 2023 (16:56 – see p.88)

Video screen animation for the live performance by the artist at the Natural History Museum of Geneva. This video can also be used independently or as part of another work. As an example, it was projected on the tarps covering glaciers in an installation at the Museum.

The artist melts ice with a blowtorch and then uses the water with its sediments to paint.

## Other Films Codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd Since 2002

*Pas sage (Unwise)*, 2002

*Festival des arts vivants, Far°, Nyon. The Last Tangent Collective*

*Les foules (The Crowds)*, 2011

*Festival de la Cité, Lausanne. The Last Tangent Collective*

*Première détection certaine (First Certain Detection)*, 2011

Different Swiss and European art scenes.

*The Last Tangent Collective.*

*History of our humanity*, 2016

A video clip which showcases Bernard Garo's approach to art.

*La disloquée (The Dislocated)*, 2017

The film was shown in various Swiss and European festivals.

*The Last Tangent Collective.*

*Les otages (The Hostages)*, 2018

*Usine à Gaz* in Nyon and the open-air Festival So Art & Design in Megève. *The Last Tangent Collective*

*Humanity*, 2019

Film was commissioned for projection on the façade of the Castle of Nyon as part of celebration of the twentieth anniversary of *The Last Tangent Collective.*



Marc Décosterd and Bernard Garo  
(*Black Shoud Collective*) ↑

*Echoing the evolution of glaciers, our films show the invisible movements of the world.*

Marc Décosterd



**Festivals** FIFAD 2023  
FIFG 2023

**Screenings** Natural History Museum of Geneva 2023  
Hohental and Bergen Gallery, Berlin 2023  
(presentation of the *Artist Prize*)  
In galleries and schools



## 1000 Years Under the Ice

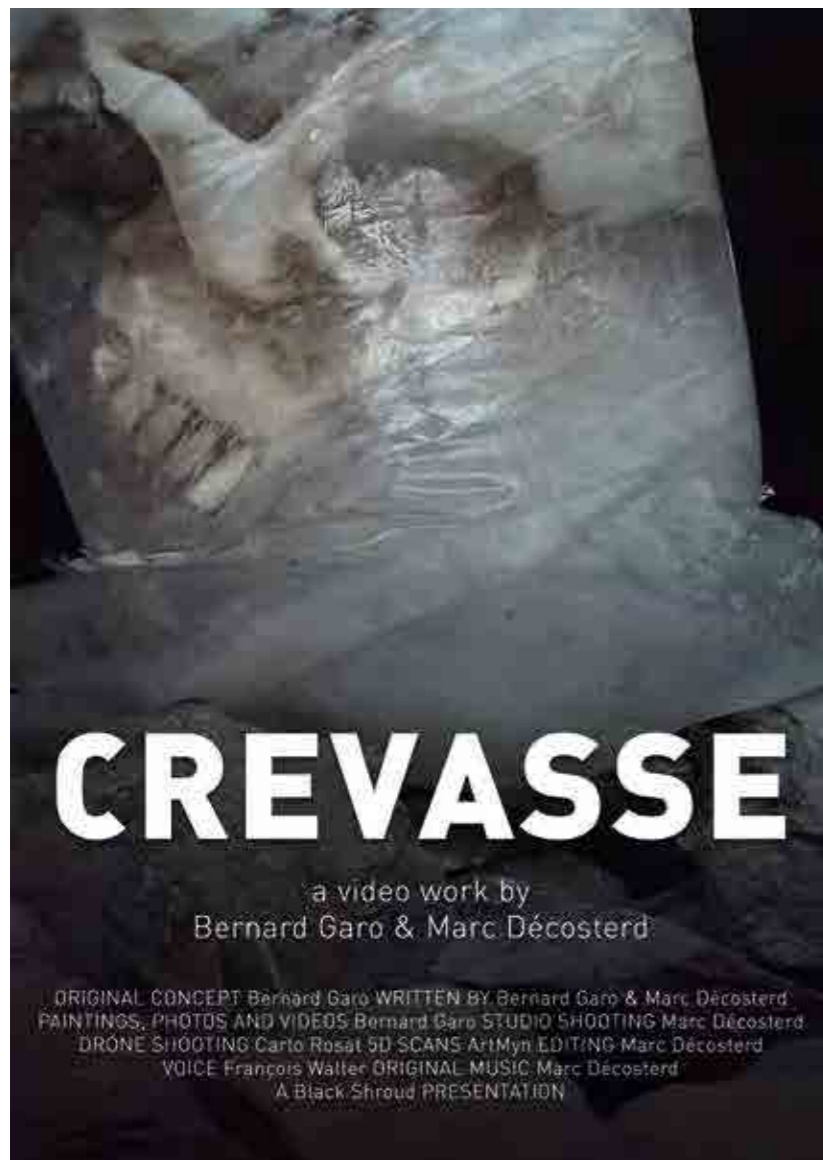
*1000 Years Under the Ice*, 2023 (10:03)  
Cowritten and codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd  
(*Black Shroud Collective*) with the original soundtrack  
by Marc Décosterd.

The film was nominated at the *FIFAD 2023 – Festival International du Film Alpin des Diablerets* – and selected for the *FIFG 2023 – Festival International du Film sur les Glaciers de Genève*. Coproduced by the Natural History Museum of Geneva, the *Black Shroud Collective* and *The Last Tangent Collective*.

**Synopsis:** The film tells the story of how Bernard Garo deposited into the very depth of a glacier a paper stele and a rock that the artist brings back to its place of origin. During this journey, which is an exploration of space and time, the artist reveals the world beneath the ice where water flows through the strata of perpetually changing ice.

To watch the film:  
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/799507302>  
Password: Vvulgaris





- Prizes**
- Best experimental film  
*Berlin Art Film Festival 2022*
  - Best second short film  
*ARTeNonSTopFestival 2022*  
*International Film & Art Festival,*  
*Buenos Aires, Argentina.*
  - Best photography  
*Sea of Art Film Festival Average,*  
*Norway 2022*
  - First Grand Prize  
*Artist Lion, Venice.*  
The award recognized the importance  
of the environmental and social nature  
of the artist's œuvre.
- Festivals**
- FIFAD 2022*
  - Aventiclap 2022*
  - Aqua Art Miami 2022*
  - Saturnia Film Festival 2022*
- Screenings**
- Natural History Museum of Geneva 2022*
  - Artist Lion Award, Venice 2022*
  - In galleries and schools



## Crevasse

*Crevasse, 2022 (11:35)*  
A short film codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd.

A documentary in artistic exploration about melting glaciers was presented at the opening of Bernard Garo's artistic residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva. The film also received awards in Berlin and Venice and presented in festivals throughout 2022.

The short film coproduced with *The Last Tangent Collective* and *Wake Up! Films* and with the support of *Raiffeisen Bank* and the *Gobelet Foundation*, was awarded the Best Experimental Film award at the *Berlin Art Film Festival 2022*, as well as for Best Photography at the *Sea of Art Film Festival* in Norway. It was also awarded Second Best Short Film at the *ARTeNonSTopFestival 2022* in Buenos Aires.

The 12 official nominations received exemplify how relevant the film is today. The film was created using photographs, paintings, mobile phone and drone footage, by the multidisciplinary artist Garo and then edited by Décosterd who also wrote the original soundtrack.

To watch the film:  
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/704609887>  
Password: Vvulgaris





# PLUS POUR LONGTEMPS

un film de Bernard Garo & Marc Décosterd

CONCEPT Bernard Garo CADREURS Jérôme Boisson et Philippe Wagner  
MONTAGE Marc Décosterd MUSIQUE ORIGINALE Marc Décosterd GUIDE ET GÉOLOGUE Loïc Pérez  
UNE PRODUCTION Wake Up! Films / Black Shroud / Le Collectif de la Dernière Tangente  
AVEC LE SOUTIEN DU Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de la ville de Genève

Festival

FIFG 2023

Screenings

Natural History Museum of Geneva 2023  
In galleries and schools



## Not for Long

*Plus pour longtemps (Not for Long)*, 2023 (5:58)  
Codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd  
(Black Shroud Collective).

The film was screened at the Natural History Museum of Geneva and at the *FIFG – Festival International du Film sur les Glaciers de Genève*.

The film takes place on a glacier where the artist deposits a time capsule to measure the movement of the ice. Perhaps this time capsule will be discovered by a walker on a riverbank in the not-too-distant future, but this depends on the speed at which the glacier disappears due to global warming.

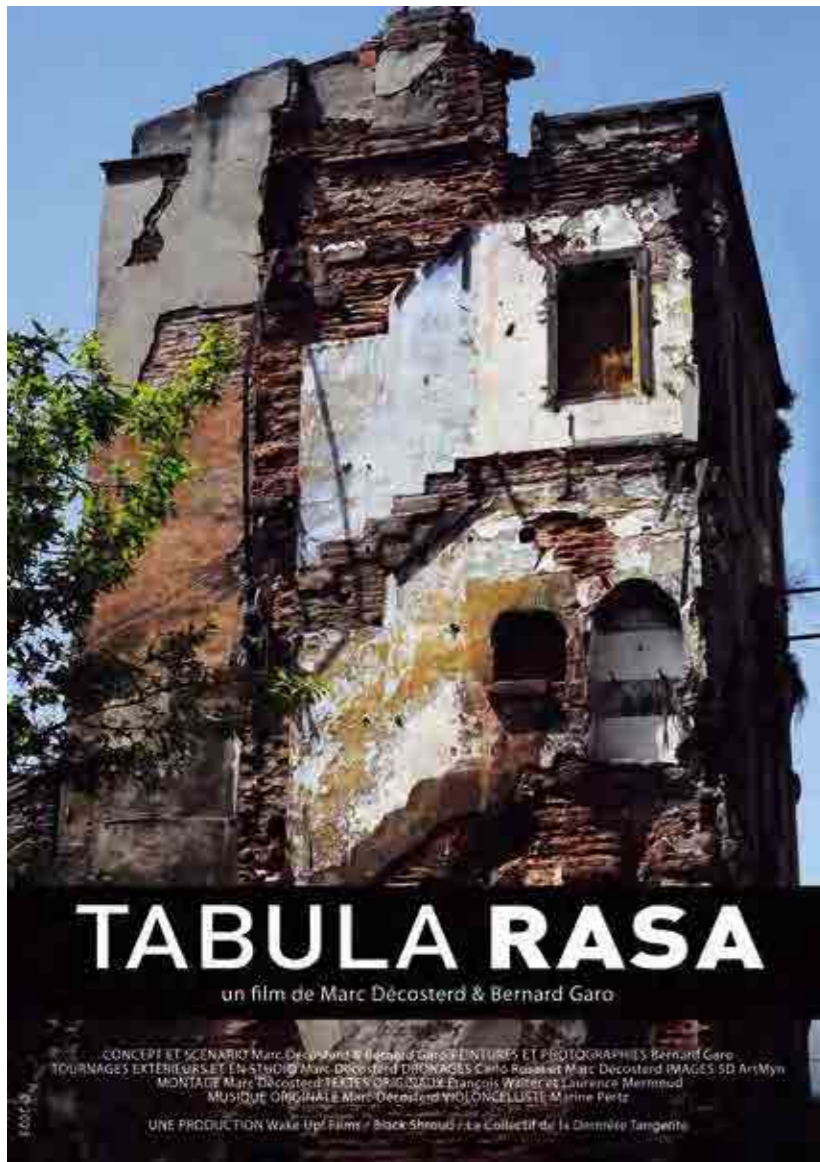
The capsule contains information on the artist's concept for the project, as well as the state of the glacier in August 2022. Data contained in the capsule will allow someone in the future to measure the changes of the glacier.

In parallel, and thanks to the extraction of an ice core, it was also possible to analyze the quality of the ice and the microparticles it contains (pollens, coal dust and microplastics). This sample, once melted into water, was also used in painting works which now carry the imprint of this peculiar history and temporality.

To watch the film:  
<https://vimeo.com/805859705>  
Password: Vvulgaris

Press the CC button underneath the Vimeo screen for English subtitles





**Prizes**

Best eco documentary  
*Bridge of Peace Film Festival*,  
 Paris 2023

Best composer  
*Berlin Art Film Festival* 2023

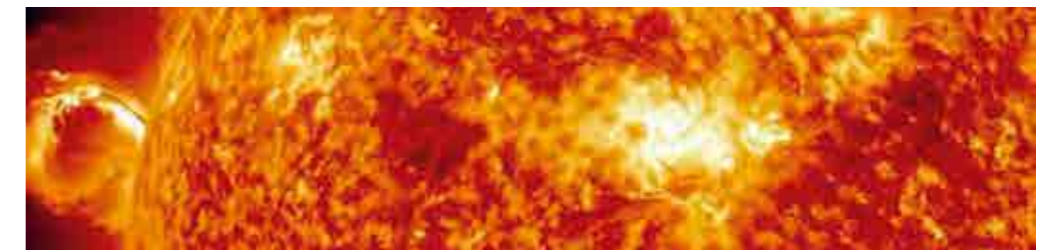
Best original soundtrack  
*9th Music Film Festival* 2023  
 Los Angeles

**Screenings**

Hohental und Bergen Gallery, Berlin 2023  
 Cinéma Capitole, Nyon 2024  
 In galleries and private events



Examples of split-screen stills from the film *Tabula Rasa* ↑



**Tabula Rasa**

To watch the film:  
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/781833540>  
 Password: Vvulgaris

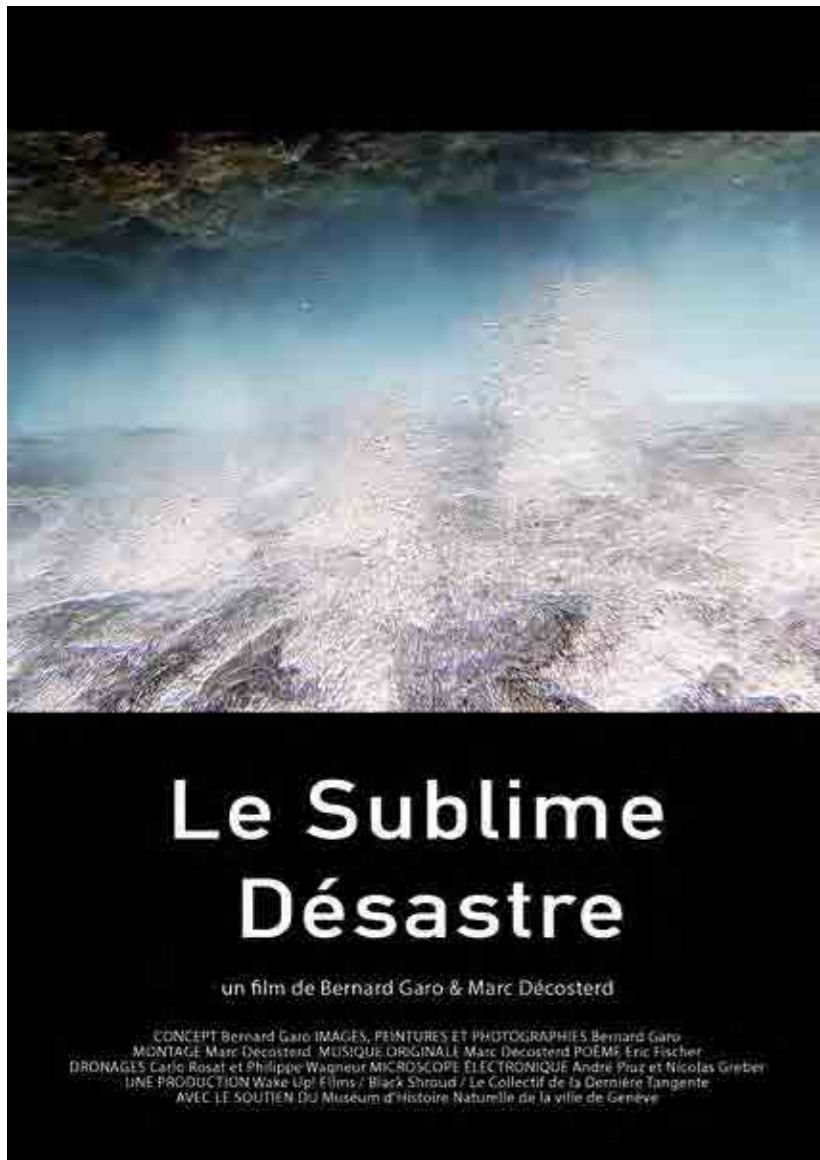
Press the CC button underneath  
 the Vimeo screen for English subtitles



*Tabula Rasa*, 2023 (11:35)  
 Codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd  
 (*Black Shroud Collective*).

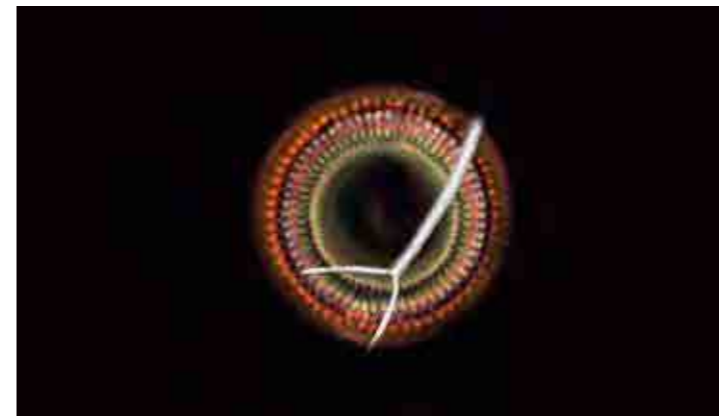
The film won the Best Eco Documentary at the *Bridge of Peace Film Festival* in Paris (Champs Élysées), the Best Soundtrack at the *Berlin Art Film Festival* 2023, and the *9th Music Film Festival* 2023 in Los Angeles.

Synopsis: This documentary art film on environment and war shows both self-destruction and that of the environment inflicted by humans, by means of a split-screen projection format.



**Prizes** Prize for the environmental commitment  
Heidi Movie Awards Switzerland

**Screenings** Natural History Museum of Geneva 2023  
In galleries and schools



## The Sublime Disaster

To watch the film:  
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/801902480>  
 Password: Vvulgaris

Press the CC button underneath  
 the Vimeo screen for English subtitles



*Le Sublime Désastre (The Sublime Disaster)*, 2023 (10:18)  
 Codirected by Bernard Garo and Marc Décosterd and the *Black Shroud* Collective in the context of Garo's residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva. Text by Éric Fischer.

This poetic film is the winner of the environmental commitment prize at the *Heidi Movie Awards Switzerland*.

From the particles found in a drop of water to microplastics imprisoned in ice, this short film is a journey upstream – from the sea to the glaciers – telling the story of the vital resource: water.



## A poem by Éric Fisher

Sitting under the awning  
Rain curtains  
Combed through by shapes of tiles

Crosses the evening's fall

A robin on gray  
On the other side of the veil

Grass gorged

To the underground

Cushions our footsteps

It may already be dark

After the shower

Confused,  
The bed dries up  
The itinerary interferes  
Resisting cohesion  
Into other cracks  
It will take universal patience

To summon accountability for the erosion of gullies

Until they run into

Stream Torrent River

One day,  
Freed from the corridors of shores  
From the shadow of the riparian forests  
The flux will moult  
In the luminous opening of estuaries

From fresh to salty  
Every drop  
Matured in such a journey  
will re-learn the immense borderless mixing

Water will not concede

To sleep in a flow

And to renew the millennial pact

Of underwater exchanges

Where the fever lurks  
To a half degree

Caressing the bleached corals

Joining the liquid cohort  
Roaring together  
On southern borders

Fleeing at full speed  
An inevitable evaporation

At the edge of the sky  
Moving up along cracks  
All seems eternal  
In a singular time  
Nevertheless  
From one colossus to the next  
The last reserves run out

Glacial torrents stretch their melodies

In the blue of ice & snowfields  
They bejewel drama  
Into a sublime  
A tragic bewilderment  
A glittering scar  
From a white fallow land  
That the cold will no longer freeze

Such fall  
Such noise  
A vertigo at the bottom of the mill,  
It rushes and  
Hits the necks of glacial galleries  
Unfathomable and our retina only perceives  
it in slow motion

So total that it could border eternity

The membrane between the definitive and the eternal  
seems more tenuous

A sublime disaster...

A prose poem by Éric Fisher  
written for the film *The Sublime Disaster*  
(see p. 124 à 127) ↑

## The Great Outdoors: New Perspectives of Committed Environmental Art

Initially, Bernard Garo was concerned with topographies of passing and oblivion, with elemental forces, with natural and artificial boundaries, with time and geological histories of mountains. More recently, erosion made incursions into his work, followed closely by water and carbon cycles, and glacial erosion resulting from acceleration in climate change in particular.

Garo develops his methodology by giving thought to materiality as he incorporates natural elements that appear within the very works he creates. He collects mineral and water samples in the physical landscapes he depicts in his paintings and this process distinctly sets him apart from other artists working in the field. His paintings, therefore, transcend the order of representation, and become a reality, a pictorial "skin" which contains materials of our very own origins. The surface, the vibration, the color-carrying structure of the works become the carriers of emotion that reinstates affect as the highest artistic value uniting all arts.

This technique also allows him to incorporate into his works what interpellates and concerns him the most – *The Great Outdoors*. Thus, Garo articulates his works around experience with and research into environments, with or without human presence, inscribed into a geological temporality which stretches our limited perception of human life-based time. He thinks in real-time that collapses the past and the future into a flux scaled to the persistence of rocks, magma, ice, water, including atoms that take place of symbolic interlocutors.

Garo reveals a universe facing the impending climate tragedy, but devoid of humans. His works avoid representation of human individuals: they are left outside, as spectators, as powerless witnesses of the looming disaster of melting glaciers, as both perpetrators and victims of the destruction of their own habitat.

Confronted for over twenty years with this reality, Garo investigates the fragile nature of human memory by means of paintings, installations, sculptures, drawings, but also performances, photography and video, which become tools of research into the impact and the vulnerability of humans with respect to their environment.

In his ongoing quest for the absolute and the evolving that stretches beyond the visible and the present, Garo borrows freely from the artistic vocabulary to generate spaces that challenge and enlarge our perception of the world often at the extremes: from the gigantic to the infinitely small, from glaciers to rock dust.

This freedom also extends to his performances with the transdisciplinary Collective *The Last Tangent*, which Garo creates with Éric Fischer and François Chattot (a musician and an actor respectively). For his video work Garo creates in 2022 the *Black Shroud* Collective with the filmmaker Marc Décosterd and with whom Garo creates original short films and art videos. He uses both performance and video to bring new perspectives on painting and matter through the prism of emotional response generated visually, while preserving the link to the tangible, the concrete, to the bodily reality and plasticity.

Several films Garo coproduced with Marc Décosterd between 2002 and 2003, in the context of his residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva, received prizes at international festivals. The impact generated the creation of the *Black Shroud* Collective and strengthened the duo's commitment to pioneering environmental works in video and film, installation and performance arts that will shed new light and bring more meaning to our relationship with the earth and our being in a world of which the human is no longer the central focus: a new paradigm of *The Great Outdoors*.

## Press and Media References 2022 to 2023

TV	RTS 1	<i>Passe-moi les jumelles</i> (Hand me the Binoculars), March 4, 2022, "Garo – <i>The Urgency of Nature</i> ", directed by Laurence Mermoud. Link on YouTube "The Fragility of Giants": <a href="https://youtu.be/JVLGCUVHwew">https://youtu.be/JVLGCUVHwew</a> or link on RTS: <a href="https://www.rts.ch/play/tv/emission/passe-moi-les-jumelles?id=394095">https://www.rts.ch/play/tv/emission/passe-moi-les-jumelles?id=394095</a>
	La Télé	<i>Portrait d'ici</i> ( <i>Portraits from Here</i> ), May 5, 2023, a short film, directed by Melisa Oriol. Link: <a href="https://latele.ch/emissions/portrait-dici/portrait-d-ici-s-2023-e-1">https://latele.ch/emissions/portrait-dici/portrait-d-ici-s-2023-e-1</a>
	RTS 1	<i>RAMDAM «Rendez-nous le futur»</i> (Give Us Back the Future), June 15, 2023, directed by Joëlle Rebetez and Rayane M'zouri. The program was shown on TV5 World. Link: <a href="https://www.rts.ch/play/tv/emission/ramdam?id=11797509">https://www.rts.ch/play/tv/emission/ramdam?id=11797509</a>
	France 5	<i>Échappées Belles</i> ( <i>Close Call</i> ), 90 minutes October 7, 2023, directed by Morgane Belloir, 90 minutes film about escapes and encounters around the world, which followed Bernard Garo, Valais, Switzerland, and his artistic approach to the melting of the Rhône Glacier.
RADIO	RTS 1	<i>Le Grand Soir</i> ( <i>The Great Evening</i> ), February 2023, interview by Mélanie Croubalian. Link: <a href="https://www.rts.ch/audio-podcast/2023/audio/bernard-garo-peintre-photographe-et-performeur-25895968.html">https://www.rts.ch/audio-podcast/2023/audio/bernard-garo-peintre-photographe-et-performeur-25895968.html</a>
	RSR 1	<i>Prise de Terre</i> ( <i>Taken from the Earth</i> ), April 3, 2023, interview by Lucile Solari. Interview with Bernard Garo on the subject of the melting glaciers. Link: <a href="https://www.rts.ch/audio-podcast/2023/audio/sublime-desastre-la-fonte-des-glaciers-selon-l-artiste-bernard-garo-26104264.html">https://www.rts.ch/audio-podcast/2023/audio/sublime-desastre-la-fonte-des-glaciers-selon-l-artiste-bernard-garo-26104264.html</a>
	Radio Vostok	Garo presents a moving tribute to glaciers, March 2023: Link: <a href="https://radiovostok.ch/bernard-garo-rend-un-emouvant-hommage-aux-glaciers/Bernard">https://radiovostok.ch/bernard-garo-rend-un-emouvant-hommage-aux-glaciers/Bernard</a>
PODCAST	Chahut média	Audio interview on Bernard Garo's artist in residency at the Museum of Natural History by Chahut Media. Link: <a href="https://vu.fr/wkOdR">https://vu.fr/wkOdR</a>
PRESSE	French press	<i>Tribune de Genève</i> , March 6, 2023, by Irene Languin Au Muséum: L'Art Confronte a La Fonte des Glaciers (At the Natural History Museum: Art confronts the Melting Glaciers)
		<i>La Côte</i> , February 2, 2022, by Clement Vuagnat La Suisse représentée à Pekin par Bernard Garo (Switzerland Represented in Beijing by Bernard Garo)
		<i>La Côte</i> , August 3, 2023, by Arthur du Sordet, Bernard Garo dans les Entrailles d'un Glacier (Bernard Garo in the Belly of a Glacier)
	French online Press	<i>24 Heures</i> – March 6, 2023 <i>La Côte</i> – February 2, 2022 and August 3, 2023
	English press	<i>Paper Magazine</i> – The Edge, Winter 2023, written by Alexandra Mas. <i>Artist Lion Prize</i>
English online press	<i>Art Vista Magazine</i> , April 2022 Link: <a href="https://art-vista.com/bernard-garo-the-fragility-and-power-of-nature/">https://art-vista.com/bernard-garo-the-fragility-and-power-of-nature/</a>	
Link: Part 1 Link: Part 2 Link: Part 3	Beijing ParkView Museum, Beijing, 2022, written by Camilla Latini: <a href="https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Cu3ssvvRUsz8WErG-EK3lg">https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Cu3ssvvRUsz8WErG-EK3lg</a> <a href="https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Z3jnzTR3kl4VuEh1BPA2jQ">https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Z3jnzTR3kl4VuEh1BPA2jQ</a> <a href="https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/suJfofh9OiVmMXv7zEb4g">https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/suJfofh9OiVmMXv7zEb4g</a>	

Bernard Garo was born in Geneva in 1964. He studied Art History, Architecture and Egyptology at the University of Geneva, followed by the Art School of Lausanne (ECAL). He received his diploma with mention in 1989 and numerous awards for painting, photography and xylography (wood engraving). He currently lives and works between Beijing, Paris and Nyon, Switzerland – a beautiful Roman town founded by the emperor Julius Cesar more than 2000 years ago and located on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Throughout his career, his ideas have taken him to Paris, Barcelona and Berlin, along with Beijing and Moscow in the more recent years. His immersion in other places and cultures encouraged Garo to develop an outlook that informs his artistic gesture, deeply connected to humans and their impact on the environment with a focus on memory, vulnerability and the passage of time.

Following his major solo exhibition at the Arlaud Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland in 2017, Garo focused on sustainable development and the environment, creating a series of works linked to alpine geology and erosion, which form an inseparable part of his own DNA.

In the last few years, he has been preoccupied by the acceleration in the meltdown of glaciers that he took time to observe and to measure the extent of their retraction and the consequences or their erosion. He purposefully decided to make this context the central paradigm of his transdisciplinary artistic practice.

Garo's oeuvre is primarily pictorial and material, but it is also transversal, as, in parallel, he also develops installations alongside photographic and performative practices.

His works speak of painting as well as of our earth, as he incorporates into his medium natural elements he gathers on cliffs, in volcanoes and under glaciers. His paintings confront us with materials that form the very heart of our own origins and they impact us with a physical and mineral presence that leaves no room for indifference. At the same time, Garo rethinks painting as an artform open to plurality: emotional and technological, scientific and philosophical at once.

His practice of painting celebrates nature as much as human fragility, and creates new artistic forms and practices that emerge from transversal cross-overs with photography, video and performance.

Driven by his own personal commitment, Garo engages in free transdisciplinary practices in order to stimulate innovative and creative thinking. His art problematizes strong contemporary ideas by means of a hypersensitive and attentive gaze. Its scope is total and limitless.

With over a hundred solo shows presenting his works in museums and galleries in Switzerland and abroad in Europe, Russia, the United States as well as China, they can also be found in private and public collections throughout the world.

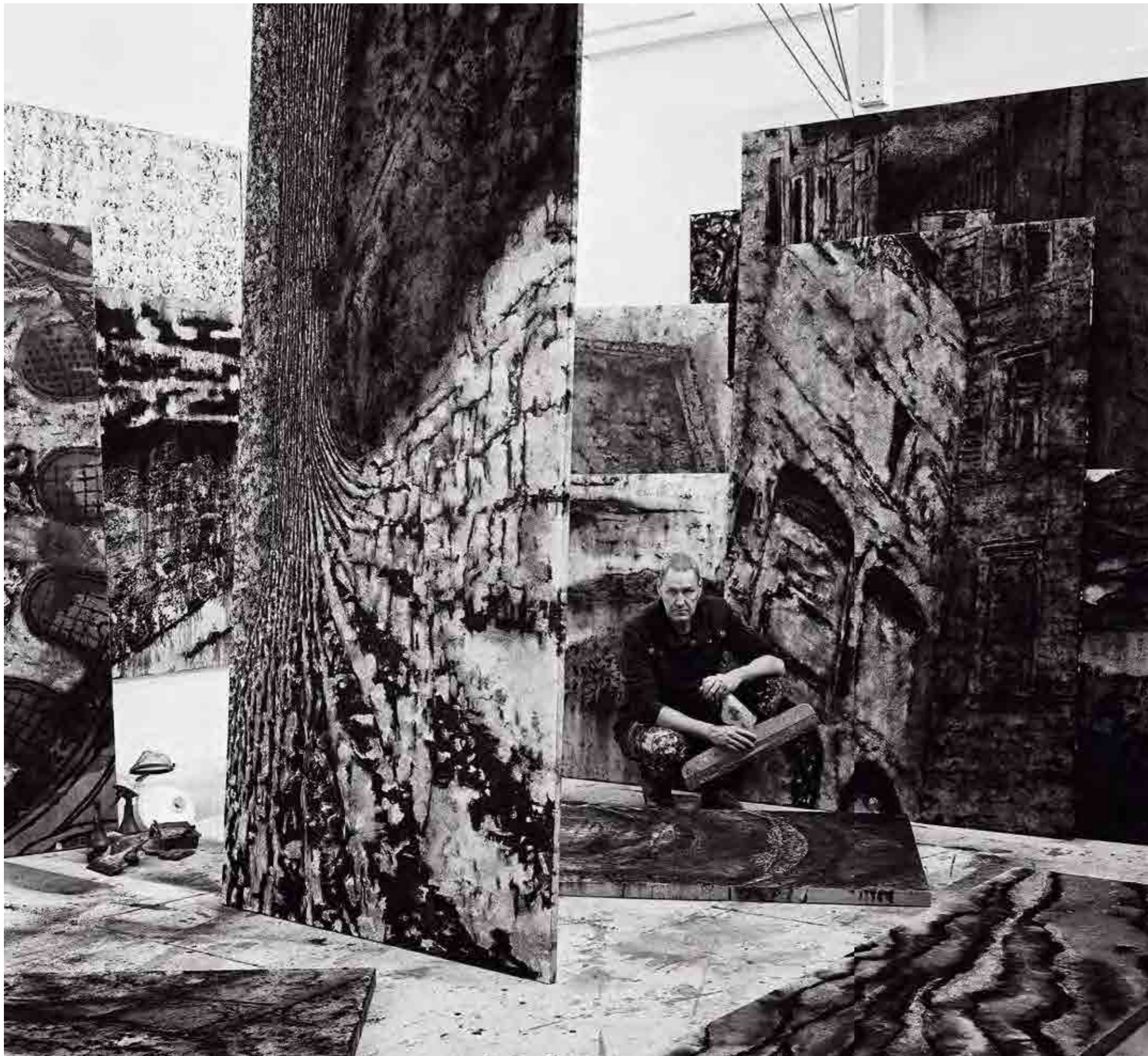
In 2017, Espace Arlaud produced a major and largely acclaimed solo exhibition of Garo's works, curated by Camille Avellan. The following year, he participated in the Contemporary Art biennale in Beijing where his works were shown in the main hall of the Chinese National Art Museum. Between 2019 and 2021 his works were present in solo and collaborative exhibitions at the LV Lang Art Center in Nantong, the Guiyang Art Museum as well as those in Kuanzhai and Chengdu, to arrive at the Shanghai 21 Contemporary Art Fair. In parallel to these, Garo also held projects in New-York, Berlin, Venice, Aqua Art Miami and in Switzerland. In 2023, Garo represented Switzerland at the NordArt 23 exhibition near Hamburg in Germany.

His dedication to societal and environmental issues made him the laureate of the very first Grand Prix *Artivist Lion* in Venice with his 2022 manifesto-film *Crevasse* codirected with Marc Décosterd. The prize, awarded by three galleries based in Berlin, New-York, and Paris, precipitated an invitation by the Natural History Museum of Geneva to an arts and sciences residency where Garo could enjoy a creative *carte blanche* between 2022 and 2023.

Bernard Garo in the middle  
of his installation at the Natural  
History Museum of Geneva ↓



For more information:  
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← Bernard Garo in his studio  
and on the "covered" Rhône glacier ↘



## Short Biographies of Contributors

Hervé Grosscarret

Director of the Public Relations Unit and Exhibitions at the Natural History Museum of Geneva.

He is in charge of the overall event and exhibitions programming. He studied neurosciences in Lyon and Scientific Communication in Strasbourg. Since 1997 he has been working in the domains of culture and museology, with a particular interest in contemporary environment and social questions that he discusses by means of thematic exhibitions, the works of the invited artists and other activities that blend science, nature, and society.

Joan Francesc Ainaud

Art Historian and Critic

Born in Barcelona (Catalonia) in 1964, he graduated with a diploma in Art History from the University of Barcelona, and went on to get his MBA (ESADE) at New York University. His career developed around management of organizations and projects linked to visual arts, museums and cultural industries.

Between 2011 and 2014 he was the Deputy CEO in the Promotion of Culture for the Government of Catalonia. He held the position of Associate Professor of Art at the University Autònoma of Barcelona (1997-2006) and published extensively on art and cultural heritage and contributed 123 commentaries on works of art linked to current events for *Betevé* (a public broadcasting television channel in Barcelona). Many art publications and for television including the Public State in Barcelona. Member of several Spanish and International associations of art critics (ACCA & AICA), he is the current Director of an art consulting group *ArtisPlus*.

He met Bernard Garo in 1999 and together they developed several projects such as the conference entitled *Tradition et innovation dans l'art contemporain (Innovation and Tradition in Contemporary Art)* (Abbatiale et Musée de Payerne, September 5, 1999). He contributed essays to Garo's monographs *Barcelona-Basel-Berlin ou la matière et le virtuel (Barcelona-Basel-Berlin or Matter and the Virtual)* (Benteli Verlag, Bern, 2002, p. 45 and 60-63).

Laurent Vallotton

Ornithologist

Born in Le Sentier (Switzerland) in 1969. He is a graduate in biology from the University of Lausanne (1993) and holds a Master's degree in ornithology from the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach (LU) (1996). Together with Lionel Maumary and Peter Knaus, he coauthored a major resource volume entitled *Birds of Switzerland (Les oiseaux de Suisse)*, edited by the Swiss ornithological Institute and the society for the study and protection of birds (*Nos Oiseaux*).

At the Natural History Museum of Geneva he manages collections of birds and mammals, and organizes various exhibitions, notably *Birds* in 2013. He is also involved in public relations and manages groups of visitors.

He collaborated with the Geneva-based artist Gérald Poussin on the artbook *Prise de bec* (Éd. Zoé, 2006) and with the photographer Paul Starosta on another volume about eggs (*Oeufs* Éd. Cinq Continents, 2018).

He also codirected the bicentennial celebratory publication Museum of Geneva: *Muséum Genève: 200 ans d'histoire naturelle* (Éd. Favre, 2020).

Lionel Cavin

Paleontologist

Studies the evolutionary history of bony fish of the Mesozoic Era with a special interest in the continental forms. He participates in promotion collections and research in Earth Sciences at the Natural History Museum of Geneva.

He holds a degree in biology from the University of Neuchâtel (1987-1992), a Master's degree from the University of Montpellier 2 (1992-1993), a doctorate from the University of Pierre and Marie Curie in Paris (1993-1997), a post-doctorate in Advanced Research from FNS at the Museum of Dinosaurs in Espéraza, France (1999-2000) and another post-doctorate *Marie Curie* at the Natural History Museum of London (2003-2005). He worked as a researcher/teacher at the University of Mahasarakham in Thailand (2001-2002).

Nicolas Greber

Geologist

Greber has been a research fellow at the Natural history Museum of Geneva since 2021. He also holds a position of Assistant Professor at the University of Bern (Switzerland). In his research he uses different chemical tracers to study geological processes and their interaction with the biosphere.

His main research interests focus on formation and evolution of the continental crust, use of sedimental archives as witness of Earth's evolution, and the link between major volcanic eruptions and biotic extinctions.

André Piuze

Micropaleontologist

Since 2005 Piuze has held a research fellowship at the Department of Geology and Paleontology as well as the Department of Scientific Imagery at the Natural History Museum of Geneva. He divides his time between research, academic work, collections, and the management of the scanning electron microscope.

He began his studies in geology at the University of Geneva in 1992 and graduated in 1995 with a degree in Earth Sciences, followed by a geological engineering degree (1997) specializing in the Upper Jurassic Era of the Vocontian Basin (southeast France) and wrote his doctoral thesis (2004) in micropaleontology on the echinoderm (spiny-skinned marine animals) bioclastic platform of the Bajocian Era in Jura and Burgundy, France.

Since 2008, he focused his research on the Cenomanian-Turonian Boundary Event of the southern Tethyan region, Morocco, Algeria and Oman. His main interests lie in micropaleontology, stratigraphy, taxonomy and paleogeography.

Marc Décosterd  
Filmmaker

Born in 1977 in Kloten (near Zurich), Décosterd is a film director, writer and film score composer. Recently, he has won several awards for his musical compositions for both *Crevasse* and *Tabula Rasa* in Berlin and Los Angeles. Both films were codirected with Bernard Garo. He also directed four full length films and has won Best Film in Singapore and Chicago, and Best Director in North Macedonia for *Vasectomia*.

Décosterd often works with Garo, notably on transdisciplinary projects for which he makes videos, short films and music. In 2018 they created the short art film *Humanity* which was projected for two nights on the facade of the Château of Nyon (VD, Switzerland). Then in 2022 they codirected a documentary, an artistic exploration entitled *Crevasse* that won several international awards including Best Experimental Film at the Berlin Art Film Festival 2022.

He also collaborated with Garo during his residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva, on works going from documentaries and performative films, to video installations and poetic art films. Their latest film *Tabula Rasa* won the 2023 Best Environmental Documentary at the Film Festival *Bridge of Peace* in Paris, among other awards.

Éric Fischer

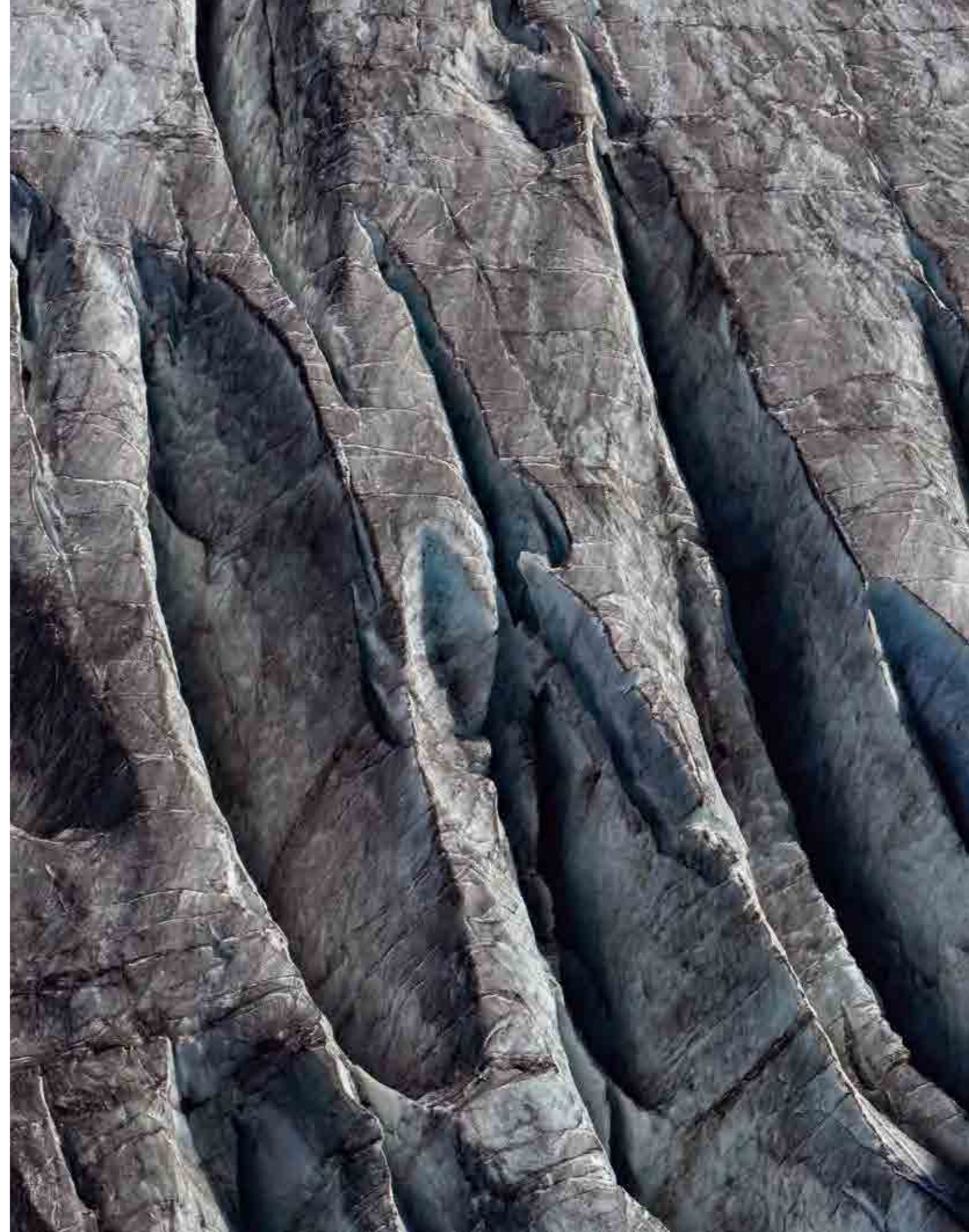
Composer, musician and poet

Born in Paris in 1961. He is the author of more than 400 musical opuses and moves seamlessly between solo instrumentals to symphonic compositions, vocals, music for the stage, contemporary, improvised, electronic genres and ancient instruments.

Between 1989 and 2014 he collaborated with the choreographer Shiro Daimon (Japan) and he cofounded *The Last Tangent Collective* with Bernard Garo and the actor François Chattot (France) to create multidisciplinary immersive installations. He also wrote the music for the film *The Wild Eye* of Johanna Vaude (2006).

He works frequently with the poets Dominique Brand (Switzerland), Emmanuel Damon (France) and Jean-Pierre Siméon (France). He's written music for Richard Galliano, David Liebman, François Bou, Jacqueline Mefano, Siegfried Kessler, Marianne Muller, William Dongois, Riga Quartet, Ensemble FA7, Jean-Pierre Baragliol, Borel Quartet, Rock Adelaide Collective, the Chamber Orchestra of Latvia, Sylvain Kassap, the KDM Trio, the International Saxophone Quartet, among many others.

He is also the author of several literary and poetic publications: *Canopée de cailloux* 2014, poetry, Edition L'Harmattan; *Un Ru d'outre-main*, 2011, poetry, Edition L'Harmattan; *Nous Marcherons pieds nus sur La Lune*, 2011, short story about the Scottish composer Tobias Hume, published by Istesso Tempo. He is currently writing an essay on the composer Heinrich Schütz. He also created poetry for the visual performances and films Bernard Garo presented at the Natural History Museum of Geneva in 2023.





## Photography Credits

Bernard Garo	Photos	Pages	Cover, 2, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 83, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 115, 117, 119, 120, 122, 124, 126
	Drawings	Pages	1, 9, 20, 21, 34, 35, 81, 89, 95, 123, 124, 125
	Engraving	Pages	66, 67
	Painting	Pages	123, 125, 138
Philippe Wagneur	Photographs	Pages	13, 16, 17, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 82, 84, 85, 88, 91, 94, 100, 111, 112, 117, 121, 137
Marc Décosterd	Posters	Pages	70, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124
	Photographs	Pages	117, 119, 123
Loïc Pérez	Photographs	Pages	101, 108
Adriana Höhn	Photographs	Pages	Back cover, 82, 84, 86, 99
Carlo Rosat	Photograph	Page	125
Maya Chollet	Photographs	Pages	109, 110, 111
Joan Francesc Ainaud	Photograph	Page	87
Maude Girard	Photographs	Pages	85, 86, 87
Pelin Montmayeur	Photograph	Page	139
Julien Raemy	Photographs	Pages	Black and White Portrait 132,133
Suzanne Garo	Photographs	Pages	30 portraits <i>in situ</i> , 67, 131, 133
Alexandre Darbellay	Photograph	Page	88
André Piuze	Photographs	Pages	90, 92, 93 under the electronic microscope
Muséum Swisstopo	Visuels Map	Pages Page	2, 3 113

Paintings of glaciers in progress  
at Garo's studio. ↓



Paintings of glaciers created using  
mixed technique with crushed rocks and  
sediments found in the mountains  
and glaciers.

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A big thank you to all those who contributed to the success of this residency including, but not limited to, the exhibitions and the book: the administration team, the communications team, the designers, the technical team, the researchers and the photographers.

My gratitude goes to my family and friends: my wife, sons and friends, all the artists in *The Last Tangent Collective*, *Black Shroud Arts*, as well as the members of the association *AABG (the friends of Bernard Garo)*, my assistants, the *Artmyn Society*, without forgetting my faithful guide, his father and my colleagues without whom this project will not have been possible.

I would particularly like to thank the following people for their support, their participation, and their help during this residency:

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## Editing

Bernard Garo, artist  
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## Artistic Direction

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# A Conversation Between Arts and Sciences on the Subject of Climate Emergency

Front cover –

*The Shrouded Glacier (Le linceul du glacier)* is a series of digital photographs by Bernard Garo, showing glaciers wrapped in tarp and available as a limited edition. →



The invitation to take up residency at the Natural History Museum of Geneva extended by the institution to the artist Bernard Garo, aimed to create a new “climatic insight” into the conversation between arts and sciences.

*Give Us Back the Beauty (Rendez-nous la beauté)* looks at rocks, mountains, and glaciers – at the emblematic and identity forming figures of Switzerland. It raises questions of vulnerability, beauty, consciousness, poetry, and time...

Through his immersive and monumental artistic practice, Bernard Garo foregrounds the ambivalence in human relationship with surrounding environment. This ambivalence also concerns the fragility of our collective memory.

Garo's use of photography, painting, video installations and *in situ* performances, confront spectators with *The Sublime Disaster (Sublime Désastre)*, making us perceive physically and emotionally the current environmental emergency.

Throughout this residency, where everything imagined was produced, extraordinary works and unique artistic explorations were developed in conjunction with scientific experimentation, in order to better share the beauty of our deteriorating world.

This exploratory and evolving residency, composed of 6 sequences, is an invitation to travel into the artist's own ascination with the natural world, which he perfectly integrates into his art. Garo states a simple, but a laden fact: should we keep resisting change in our approach to the environment, then in less than 100 years, 50,000 years of memory currently preserved by glaciers will simply disappear due to climate change. Thus, Garo reminds us that it is urgent to preserve as much as possible the biodiversity of our Earth... ourselves included.

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