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CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORAIN  
RENNES - F



VERNACULAIRE ET  
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2019-2022

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PRESSE PACK

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# MIME MATHIS COLLINS & PAUL COLLINS

exhibition 26 September – 30 December 2020

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MATHIS COLLINS



# MIME

## MATHIS COLLINS & PAUL COLLINS

exhibition 26 September – 30 December 2020



Mathis Collins carves wood into figures laughing or crying, mocking and mute. He begins by roughing out different planes in the thickness of boards, then gouges their surface so that the force, angle and attack of each stroke definitively mark their volumes and textures.

The black outlines and colours he uses to embellish these bas-reliefs are likewise obtained by elimination: after painting his chosen surfaces, he sands them back, leaving only the coloured residue in the grain of the wood. In addition to being unpredictable – a knot suddenly pops out, leaving a hole – this method is slow to bring forth its smeared faces, wan street-lighting and pale sunrises. Self-taught, Collins is now a master of his craft, but he shares with practitioners of art brut a mortal horror of a vacuum. Here he has complemented his carved compositions with moving parts whose rudimentary mechanisms reveal a parade of tricolour cockades that pass for targets.

All this toil to produce these primitive shapes leaves Collins's errant characters the time to clamber up from the limbo of their micro-histories to the surface of a limewood plank. Sometimes undertaken bit by bit and involving the mouths, feet, noses and hats of people with sometimes no more than the costumes on their backs, this is quite a journey. The launchpad, in Paris around 1680, was something between the

premises of the Comédie-Française and the trestles of street theatre. So much for the overall picture: the theatre that took shape in the city's fairs was the core factor in the rivalry between the Comédie-Française and the Commedia dell'arte. Jealous of the popularity of the streetwise competition, the tiny élite of "the King's troupe" persuaded Louis XIV to grant them exclusive rights to on-stage dialogue in French – with armed enforcement from the police. The dissident troupes, however, very quickly found canny modes of resistance: placards were displayed and marionettes and ropewalkers spoke; mimes mimed; actors and actresses delivered monologues, replying from among the crowd or letting the crowd itself reply; speech bubbles were brought out; there was gibberish in Latin. Result: all sorts of gambits for subverting the academic constraints of classical theatre.

For Mathis Collins the emergence of these Parisian proto-countercultures driven by working-class dissent has become an image source and the underpinning of a transhistorical narrative he has been monitoring with regard to himself and his time. This is the history of the control of voices, bodies and behaviour, impelled by a network of skilled mimes who have rendered it more discreet, more nuanced and more democratic. Given today's omnipresent abuses of power, Collins resorts to all the costumes. His work is peopled by comical, solitary alter egos – artist-clown, artist-educator, artist-cop – sprung from the popular archetypes of the Commedia dell'arte, carnivals, bistros, life after dark, and art and culture education programmes for sensitive urban areas. He is the mime who knowingly exaggerates, who works both sides of the fence, gifted with an ambiguous

silence. He is the watchful cop who sometimes lashes out, the bureaucrat who gives orders, the mediator who reconciles, the clown trying to act the buffoon, the willing public or the guy with his own idea of art. He is also his artist father, invited here to help him invent a different kind of interactive aesthetic. Through them, he mimes.

A conversation about the artistic value of artistic education is taking place here between two artists, a son and a father. Each of them is also a teacher: the former in creative workshops, the latter in an art school. At issue are work processes and their reciprocal influences.

In his new series, *History of Modern Art*, Paul Collins looks back to his art studies in Toronto in the 1970s, reproducing pages from the books that impacted his training either academically or aesthetically: the school textbook *History of Modern Art* by H.H. Arnason, the art magazine *Parachute*, a catalogue of the painter Robert Motherwell, a typographical composition guide, a grid setting out the standard canvas formats according to the pictorial genres "portrait, landscape, marine", and a page of concrete poetry. Already famous by that time was *The Medium Is the Massage* (1967), by Marshall McLuhan and graphic designer Quentin Fiore, a book whose title wittily exploited a typographical error in the media's handling of a phrase that had become a slogan: *The medium is the message*.

McLuhan's theory was that the medium was the true vehicle of information, and described a form of collusion between the channel (the medium) and its content (the message). While McLuhan was paving the way for "media studies" in Canada, Paul Collins was making the transition from experimental "free schools" to university lecture theatres. The hallucinatory effects of a message with a message can be applied to Collins's paintings because they are based on printed documents which, in the course of their successive modulations, have both lost some of their content and gained a certain sensuality.

Replicated by means of overlaid, slightly out of register grids, text and illustrations dissolve into shimmering, more or less dense coloured areas. In the course of its transfers from one medium to another – from printed page to photocopy to canvas – the message seems to have evaporated on contact with the canvas, giving way to free-floating images. These pictorial processes show Collins returning to the printing profession he learned hands-on at the same period, working in independent publishing houses.

Here, in his *History of Modern Art*, he recounts a personal journey in the context of a collective visual culture: in other words a late 20th-century, vernacular vision of art in a North American vein.

— Émilie Renard

# Visual for press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Mathis Collins, *Bicornes (stand de tir)*, 2020  
lime tree, wood stain and motor, 200 × 360 × 3 cm

fabrication: ateliers Nathanaël Moix

courtesy de l'artiste et de la galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris – production : La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes

photo: Benoît Mauras

# Visual for press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Mathis Collins, *Artiste policier quittant Paris*, 2020

*Artiste policier et le Guignol's Band*, 2020

*Artiste policier contre Poulbot*, 2020

lime tree and wood stain, 200 × 120 × 3 cm, each

courtesy of the artist and Crève-cœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes

photo : Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

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Mathis Collins, *Artiste policier cible de toutes les critiques*, 2020

*Artiste policier hué*, 2020

*Artiste policier mort de rire*, 2020

lime tree and wood stain, 200 × 120 × 3 cm, each

courtesy of the artist and Crève-cœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes

photo : Benoît Mauras

# Visual for press

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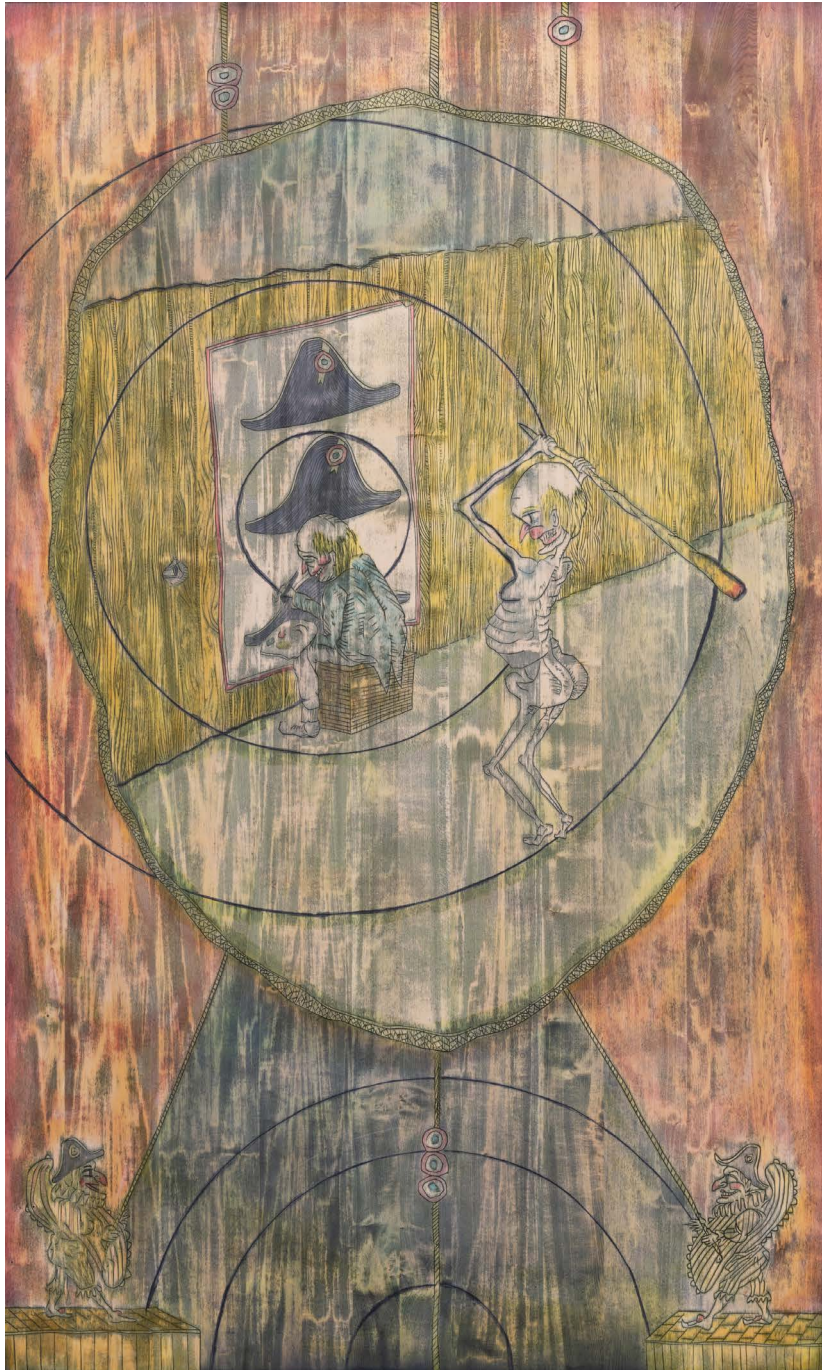
Mathis Collins, *Artiste policier mime*, 2020  
lime tree and wood stain, 200 × 120 × 3 cm

courtesy of the artist and Crève-cœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes  
photo : Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

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Mathis Collins, *Artiste policier surpris par la mort*, 2020  
lime tree and wood stain, 200 × 120 × 3 cm, each

courtesy of the artist and Crèvecœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes  
photo : Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

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Mathis Collins, *Artiste policier et le Gignol's Band* (detail), 2020  
lime tree and wood stain, 200 × 120 × 3 cm, each

courtesy of the artist and Crève-cœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes  
photo : Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

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Mathis Collins, *Mime*, La Criée centre for contemporary art, Rennes, 2020

courtesy of the artist and Crèveccœur, Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes  
photo : Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Paul Collins and Mathis Collins, *History of Modern Art (for D. R.)*, 2020  
acrylic on linen, lime tree and wood stain, 146 × 97 cm

courtesy the artists, General Hardware Contemporary, Toronto and Crèvecœur, Paris  
production: La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes – photo: Benoît Murras



# Visual for press

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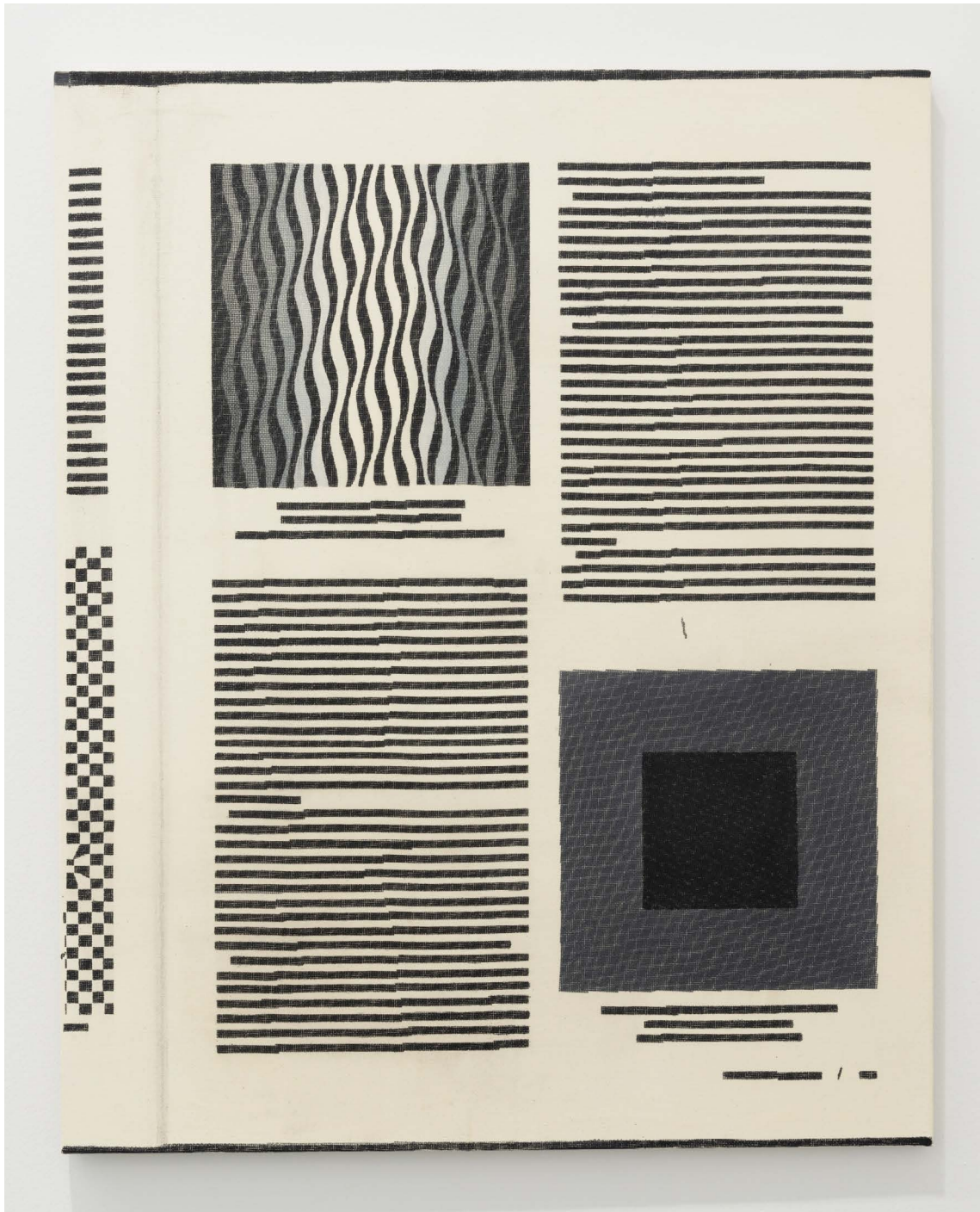
Paul Collins, *Mime*, La Criée centre for contemporary art, Rennes, 2020

courtesy the artist and General Hardware Contemporary, Toronto – photo: Benoît Mauras



# Visual for press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Paul Collins, *History of Modern Art - p. 617*, 2020  
acrylic on linen, 100 × 81 cm

courtesy the artist and General Hardware Contemporary, Toronto – photo: Benoît Mauras



# Works Exhibited - Mathis Collins

*Bicornes (stand de tir), 2020*

lime tree, wood stain and motor

200 × 360 × 6 cm

fabrication: ateliers Nathanaël Moix

*Artiste policier à la fête à neuneu, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier en procès, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier mime, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier surpris par la mort, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier contre l'art et l'artisanat, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier danseur de corde, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier quittant Paris, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier et le Guignol's Band, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier contre Poulbot, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier cible de toutes les critiques, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier hué, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

*Artiste policier mort de rire, 2020*

lime tree and wood stain

200 × 120 × 3 cm

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courtesy of the artist and Crèvecœur,  
Paris – production: La Criée centre d'art  
contemporain, Rennes

# Works Exhibited - Paul Collins

*Titres*, 2019

screen print on paper  
33.5 × 50 cm

*Les formats*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*Basic Typography - p. 84*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*Basic Typography - p. 85*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*At Five in the Afternoon*, 2020

acrylic and ink on linen  
81 × 100 cm

*PARACHUTE 7*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*At five o'clock in the afternoon*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*History of Modern Art - p. 344*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*History of Modern Art - p. 249*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*History of Modern Art - p. 624*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

*History of Modern Art - p. 617*, 2020

acrylic on linen  
100 × 81 cm

Paul Collins and Mathis Collins, *History of Modern Art (for D. R.)*, 2020

acrylic on linen, lime tree and wood stain  
146 × 97 cm

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courtesy of the artist and General Hardware Contemporary, Toronto



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### Mathis Collins

born in Paris in 1986, he studied art in Cergy, Metz, Montreal and Brussels before enrolling at the Open School East in London. His practice includes sculpture, performances and group workshops centred on craft objects and skills, and subsequent involvement in forms of collective creativity. He is represented by Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris.

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### Paul Collins

born in 1955 in Toronto, where he studied and began his career as an artist. He moved to Paris in 1982. His multidisciplinary practice alternates and combines painting, print and music. In 1986, he began teaching in art schools in France. He currently teaches at the École supérieure d'arts et média, Caen/Cherbourg. He is represented by General Hardware Contemporary, Toronto

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### Émilie Renard

born in 1976 in Vendôme, France  
Émilie Renard is a curator and art critic whose research focuses in particular on the power of art to represent and act within the structures of both the imagination and society.

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**curator** Émilie Renard  
**production** La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes

Émilie Renard and Mathis Collins are joint winners of the 2019–2020 Chroniques Européennes production grant, sponsored by the Fondation Thalie, the Fondation Hippocrène and the Camargo Foundation.

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This exhibition takes place in the La Criée cycle *Lili, the Rozell and the Marimba*, which looks into popular knowledge systems, local productions and contemporary creativity.

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### Green Flashes

#### Morgan Azaroff

performance

Saturday 14 November 2020, 6 p.m.

as part of TELL ME: performance and radio event

partnerships: Frac Bretagne and Museum of Fine Arts of Rennes

#### Azimuth #5

meeting with Pascal Pierrey

Thursday 3 December 2020, 6 p.m.

partnership: Spéléographies

#### Paroles, paroles, paroles

Rémi Baert, Mathis Collins, Paul Collins, Helena de Laurens, Émilie Renard, Raphaële

Jeune and students from

the art school of Rennes

readings, conferences, performances, concert

Saturday 12 December 2020

from 3 pm to 6 p.m.

partnership: EESAB - Site de Rennes

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### Rendez-vous

#### Family workshops with Line Simon

Sunday 4 October, 8 November.

and 6 December, 2:30 p.m.

#### European Museum Night

Saturday 14 November

from 20 p.m. to midnight

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**reservation:** [la-criee@ville-rennes.fr](mailto:la-criee@ville-rennes.fr)  
or 02 23 62 25 10

