

L'ÉTREINTE - EMBRACEMENT – GLAMONÉ

The exhibition is dedicated to the centenary of the birth of the famous Lithuanian modernist artist Antanas Mončas.

9 September – 29 October, 2021

Curators: Linas Bliškevičius and Yates Norton.

Artists: Antanas Mončas, Artūras Bumšteinas, Viltė Bražiūnaitė & Tomas Sinkevičius, Robertas Narkus, Deimantas Narkevičius, Marija Puipaitė, Vytautas Gečas, Neringa Vasiliauskaitė, Laurynas Skeisgiela, Martynas Kazimierėnas, Indrė Šerpytytė.

This exhibition presents works by Antanas Mončas, many of which have never been shown in Lithuania, alongside new commissions by the contemporary Lithuanian artists, Artūras Bumšteinas, Deimantas Narkevičius, Indrė Šerpytytė, Laurynas Skeisgiela, Neringa Vasiliauskaitė, Marija Puipaitė & Vytautas Gečas, Robertas Narkus, Viltė Bražiūnaitė & Tomas Sinkevičius, and Martynas Kazimierėnas. The exhibition focuses on Mončas's interest in the body, material, craft and how central intimacy and curiosity are to the creative processes — qualities we see shared in the practices of the contemporary artists.

The exhibition highlights Mončas's recurrent use of hands, mouths and worm-like, intestinal shapes that unfold, enfold, digest and embrace. These shifting morphological motifs testify to Mončas's affinity to a 'folk baroque' of spiralling, curvilinear forms and his commitment to the deep pleasure that comes from working with, rather than against materials. However, Mončas's playful approach to making is not limited by any dogma of 'truth to materials' or a hierarchy of arts over craft. Looking through his work we see instead how he explores camouflage and dissimulation, ornament and decor, play and imagination in a way that situates his work in a broad field of modern artistic styles as much as in the legacies of Lithuanian folk culture.

The contemporary artists have all made new commissions for this exhibition, often drawing on features of Mončas's work that have a particular resonance with their own practices and contemporary concerns. In this way, we see how the twisted and darkly humorous qualities of Mončas's practice find their parallels in the contemporary artists' interest in challenging our assumptions about technology — whether traditional or cutting edge — and the ways in which it can be manipulated, used and 'misused' to create works that emphasise their own 'artfulness'. Like Mončas's own work, the artists' practices are rooted in ambivalence, where difference and difficulty are embraced, and categories and meanings are held in unresolved suspension. In this way, all the artists show how materials and processes are not merely the support of meaning and concepts, but the site at which ideas of sincerity, intimacy, awkwardness and theatricality are played with and played out.

In particular, the exhibition focuses on how Mončas and the artists look at the body, matter and craft, focusing on how they see the creative process not as an imposition of form on passive matter, but as an ongoing dialogue between body, material, imagination, traditions, histories and place. By looking closely at the role of craft, artisanship and play in these artists' work, the exhibition seeks to draw out alternative narratives and legacies of modernism and abstraction. In doing so, the exhibition asks in what ways Mončas's sensibility and work continue to resonate with urgent contemporary concerns about the ways in which our bodies are interdependent with the environment and materials we live with.

The exhibition will feature the works by Antas Mončas from the private collections of Jean-Christophe Mončas and Sabina Mončas.

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Patron: Renata ir Rolandas Valiūnai.

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