

JOHANNA DUMET

FOOL FOR A LIFETIME

KÖNIG GALERIE | NAVE

10 SEPTEMBER – 9 NOVEMBER 2025

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present FOOL FOR A LIFETIME, a solo exhibition by Johanna Dumet. For the first time, the artist introduces outdoor sculptures, placed at the entrance of St. Agnes and in the Nave, alongside a new series of 22 oil paintings. Together, these works build a game-like world—playful, unpredictable, intuitive, shaped by pleasure, and rooted in family legacy.

The exhibition begins on the façade of the church, where two large-scale sculptures—“Le roi de cœur” (The King of Hearts) and “La reine de pique” (the Queen of Spades)—greet visitors before leading them inside. Since 2010, Dumet has collected playing cards found in the street, a quiet practice of observation that asks how a single card leaves the deck—and where it might end up. Here, that question takes sculptural form. The works are made of hand-painted, subtly warped aluminum, echoing cards that have wandered—bent by time, weather, and chance.

At St. Agnes, the sculptures form a site-specific dialogue. The King rests gently on the overhang above the entrance, slightly crumpled; the Queen is positioned on the brutalist tower, gazing outward. Between them unfolds a silent exchange—a connection that spans both space and narrative, echoing Dumet’s fascination with objects imbued with memory, movement, and meaning.

Upon entering the Nave, visitors encounter “King for a Day, Fool for a Lifetime”, a monumental structure shaped like a house of cards. Standing nearly five meters tall and composed of 15 aluminum plates, each painted by hand and measuring 170×100 cm, the sculpture transforms a fragile game into an enduring monument. At its peak sit the King and the Joker—a pairing that upends traditional hierarchies. The Joker, or the Fool in tarot, is a figure of freedom, play, and creative potential. In Dumet’s structure, imagination holds equal ground with power. The card castle becomes a space where dreaming is its own form of resistance—and folly, its own kind of wisdom.

Surrounding this sculpture is a series of 22 large-scale oil paintings, each representing one of the major arcana from the tarot. Drawing on the Tarot de Marseille and the Visconti-Sforza decks, Dumet reimagines the centuries-old symbolic system through her own language. Each canvas, 205×105 cm, is framed with rounded corners to resemble giant tarot cards. She begins with a layer of rabbit-skin glue and pigments—a traditional ground that lends the surface a watercolor-like softness—and builds up her compositions with oil, stitched fragments of painted canvas, and found objects from her personal history.

Embedded into the surfaces are glass beads from India, French religious medals, vintage playing cards, ribbons collected over the years, and even pieces of jewelry the artist once wore. Each element becomes part of a quiet storytelling—in the painting “V Le Pape” (the Hierophant), a small medallion; in “XII Le Pendu” (the Hanged Man), a card from her grandparents’ deck; in “XIX Le Soleil” (the Sun), a ribbon kept since a trip to India 15 years ago. Together, the paintings function as both images and objects—talismans shaped by time, memory, and intuition.

Dumet’s fascination with tarot began in childhood, growing up in the French countryside. “My grandmother has the habit of reading the cards to herself—once I happened to witness this quiet, and intimate moment” she recalls. “I could only glimpse them from a distance, their meanings just out of reach, and so they settled in my imagination, becoming part of a private, enchanted world.” Over time, she began collecting decks—but always intended to make her own. Following in the footsteps of cartomancers before her, Dumet honors inherited symbols while reshaping them with her own visual voice.

From the streets of cities to the walls of St. Agnes, from personal memory to archetypal image, FOOL FOR A LIFETIME invites viewers into a world ruled by intuition, pleasure, and play—a space where structure wavers, time layers, and imagination becomes a kind of legacy.

KÖNIG GALERIE

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OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Sunday 11 am – 6 pm
and by appointment

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