

Nicolas Deshayes

The Natural World

18 July – 6 September 2025

Bury Street, SW1

Modern Art is pleased to present *The Natural World*, Nicolas Deshayes fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, which comprises new slip-cast earthenware sculptures.

Since 2017, Deshayes has been making ceramics in the Italian province of Vicenza, an area historically known for manufacturing hand-decorated majolica plates and glazed fruit. Over time, the local workshops have expanded to produce sanitary ware, crockery, funerary urns and ornaments. Deshayes is best known for exploring the material of the human body via amorphous sculpture. Here, he pivots to a more notably figurative language. Each work is modelled, cast, sponged, baked, honed and polychromed, and the exhibition encompasses many cultural registers, from classic historical motifs to contemporary cultural objects. For Deshayes, this multiplicity allows him to question our preconceived notion of taste.

Installed in the Ground Floor gallery is the exhibition's eponymous work - *The Natural World*, 2025. Here, two shells zoomorphically recline, both painted in a high gloss big cat pattern, one is upturned, and calls to mind a designer chamber pot, or the concentric spiral shape of a mid-century museum. Similarly architectural, in *Opera House*, 2024 an arrangement of plates is stacked inside a catering tray, recalling a scale model or Modernist design proposition. In the work *Organ*, 2025, a concertina finished with a velvety chocolate glaze, hosts several hearts at various heights, as if about to ascend or contract. In the work *Progress*, 2025, a porous terracotta cast of Deshayes' foot evokes Roman antecedents. In contrast to the impermeable finish of many other works in the exhibition, this work is unglazed, a reminder that for all their seemingly slick, and impermeable surfaces, each of these sculptures possess a fragile materiality.

In the Lower Ground Floor gallery, Deshayes has created a soporific, dreamlike environment of sleeping sculptures. A shrouded bat *Bone*, 2025, installed on the wall could be said to resemble a religious emblem. Similarly, *Lagoon*, 2025, features a napping lion cub in a shallow tray, its contours roughly map those of La Serenissima; and *A Night at the Museum*, 2025, a sculpture of a unicorn shaped slipper is glazed to emulate the tones of the polyester fur of the original reference slipper. In the work *Constellation*, 2025, a patterned mattress functions like an astrological background, to a constellation of green peas that spill across its surface.

A new book documenting a trilogy of solo exhibitions by Deshayes, taking place across 2021–2022 at Frac Grand Large, Hauts-de-France, Dunkirk, Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers, and Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire, published by Tombolo presses, will be launched alongside the exhibition.

Nicolas Deshayes was born in Nancy, France, in 1983, and lives in Dover, Kent. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Monteverdi Gallery, Castiglioncello del Trinoro (2024); Modern Art, London (2022); Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire (2022); Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (2021); FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France, Dunkirk (2021); E-WERK Luckenwalde (2019); and Tate St Ives (2015). He has participated in recent group exhibitions at Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich (2025); Compton Verney, Warwickshire (2024); Stavanger Art Museum (2023); MK Gallery, Milton Keynes (2023); Falmouth Art Gallery (2021); Belgrade Biennale (2020); Ca'Pesaro, Venice (2019); Museion, Bolzano (2019); Frac Ile-de-France, Bussy-Saint-Martin (2018), Fridericianum, Kassel (2015) and Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover (2015). In 2014, he was artist-in-residence at Tate St Ives. Deshayes' works are held by the Arts Council Collection, London; Stavanger Art Museum; Le Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris; FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France, Dunkirk; FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Nantes; Mona – Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart; and Tate, London. Deshayes will present a solo exhibition at Fondazione Sandra e Giancarlo Bonollo, Vicenza, in September 2025.

For more information, please contact Pascale de Graaf (pascale@modernart.net).

Ground Floor



Ribs, 2025
glazed earthenware, platinum lustre
35 x 30.5 x 9 cm
13 3/4 x 12 x 3 1/2 in
(MA-DESHN-00614)



Moth, 2025
glazed earthenware
27 x 27 x 21 cm
10 5/8 x 10 5/8 x 8 1/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00619)



Organ, 2025
glazed earthenware
39 x 37 x 17 cm
15 3/8 x 14 5/8 x 6 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00612)



Opera House, 2024
glazed earthenware
40 x 62.5 x 10.5 cm
15 3/4 x 24 5/8 x 4 1/8 in
(MA-DESHN-00592)



Ponies, 2024
glazed earthenware
30 x 30 x 12 cm
11 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 4 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00565)



The Natural World, 2025
glazed earthenware
37 x 100 x 73 cm
14 5/8 x 39 3/8 x 28 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00606)



Nude, 2025
glazed earthenware
20 x 60 x 35 cm
7 7/8 x 23 5/8 x 13 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00610)



Progress, 2025
earthenware, engobe
10 x 28 x 12 cm
4 11 x 4 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00626)

Lower Ground Floor



Lagoon, 2025
glazed earthenware
39 x 62 x 16 cm
15 3/8 x 24 3/8 x 6 1/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00627)



Constellation, 2025
glazed earthenware
50 x 66.5 x 10 cm
19 3/4 x 26 1/8 x 4 in
(MA-DESHN-00630)



A Night at the Museum, 2025
glazed earthenware, mother of pearl lustre
18 x 40 x 12 cm
15 3/4 x 7 1/8 x 4 3/4 in
(MA-DESHN-00624)



Bone, 2025
glazed earthenware
36 x 14 x 6 cm
14 1/8 x 5 1/2 x 2 3/8 in
(MA-DESHN-00620)



Villandry, 2024
glazed earthenware
38 x 31 x 8 cm
15 x 12 1/4 x 3 1/8 in
(MA-DESHN-00566)