

GENERATOR
40mcube formation

48 avenue Sergent Maginot
f-35000 Rennes
+33 (0)2 90 09 64 11
generator@40mcube.org
www.40mcube.org

Text by Eleni Riga
about Maxence Chevreau's work
GENERATOR #7



Maxence Chevreau, *moyen droit*, 2021, paper, glue, paint, 130 × 190 × 11 cm.
Production GENERATOR, 40mcube/Self Signal.
View of the exhibition *Tendres gravats*, HubHug 40mcube, May 2021.

Maxence Chevreau

“Learning to see perhaps means learning to translate into the language of color harmony.”

Yannis Tsarouchis, peintre grec (1910-1989)

Throughout Maxence Chevreau’s endoscopic residency in the framework of GENERATOR #7 the artist engaged with different methods of producing paper sculptures and meticulously arrived at four new forms that appeared in the group show *Tendres Gravats (Tender Rubbles)*, evoking the way he approaches the material: tenderly.

Chevreau, a native of Brittany and originally from Nantes, graduated from DNSEP EESAB Quimper in 2018 and has since accomplished two successful solo shows: *LISIÈRE* (2021) at Le 4ème étage in Rennes and *Zippping Along* (2020) at Centre d’Art Contemporain Passerelle in Brest. The artist, completely inscribed in his natural habitat, continuously develops his practice through form and color.

His work, organized dialogically, creates a conversation that accompanies our course in the exhibition. Unlike previous strict categorizations in the types of works he produces or the type of interaction they have between them, I would propose to apprehend it as a continuum of forms and meanings creating a dialectic environment. Any other attempt would create a deep rupture of the coherent whole of his thought process and practice which, like life, is made from varied and interwoven elements.

The artist himself associates this interchangeable passage with the style of strip cartoons, evoked in the installation *Zippping Along* which was inspired by the colored backgrounds of Wile E. Coyote and Roadrunner. Cartooning and other methods of popular illustration were in fact an important part of the formal education of many artists between the 1900s and 1950s and had an impact on the practices of many important artists such as Philip Guston, Franz Kline and David Smith who grew up with movies, advertising and comics as prime cultural facts.

Small anthropomorphic or zoomorphic forms have appeared in Chevreau’s work in the past. In the series of sculptures *Slaps*, for example, presented on the occasion of his graduation, we witness a different relation between inorganic and organic forms, one of careful attention to volume, shape and color. The scales have changed: the dimensions are closer to the human scale, putting them in a direct relationship with “somatics”, the physical dimensions of the body. If we accept the assumption that these sculptures are relatable to our body, we get a distinct impression that they are in a position of rest or waiting. Some look like a bench where we can sit and contemplate the rest of the exhibition, others look like they are leaning back and resting against the wall. Although these sculptures indeed seem self-sufficient, they could exist forever in suspension. This feeling of relatability might have something to do with the powerful emotional and synesthetic experience they offer. His shapes and textures are associated with colors and those colors with emotions. The process of color fabrication is associated with a hedonistic process, a process of pure pleasure. Chevreau generally chooses pastel colors, luminous and matte, that evoke, along with the paper, softness and tenderness.

It has come to my attention that in this exhibition Chevreau's colors are more earthy, associated with the natural environment in Brittany that the artist enjoys so much. The light makes colors feel somehow faded and dusty. Also, the shades of some sculptures like *Cligne* (Blink) evoke natural materials such as argile clay or green soap. In fact, it has been particularly entertaining talking about color and light with an artist trained as a sculptor. Given the sanitary conditions due to Covid-19 at this time I have not yet been to Rennes. I have lived in Paris and visited the South of France extensively but I have not experienced the light in Brittany and the way it changes our perception. Moreover, I come from the South of the South: the light at my birth place is warm, fleshy, direct and vulgar. The screen between us offered a supplementary filter interfering with our respective realities and the work itself.

Having said that, I would like to insist on the notion of "locus", a place with certain characteristics and how artists transmit this feeling of a place through their chosen materials. The use of paper, its simultaneous vitality and vulnerability cannot go unnoticed. Our dialogue brought us to Matisse's works on paper, especially in terms of conservation. Later on, I was thinking about how Matisse worked intensively on paper in the last decade of his life when he could not travel anymore. Some cutouts are directly inspired by memories of specific places such as Tahiti, while others are more generic, evoking gardens and swimming pools. This is a comforting feeling, somehow I feel satisfied I experienced Rennes through this, hopefully mutual, exchange.

On a different note, Chevreau's training as a sculptor pays off as his new works express motion, not only the idea of movement as intended in archaic Greek sculptures but actual movement. The paper almost imperceptibly moves with a current of air or the inattentive gestures of the neurotic visitor, especially in the case of *Cligner*, with its rhythm of voluminous solidness. The sculptures remain balanced without any reinforcement, as everything in nature has a point of balance. Attempting a music analogy with visual arts, Maxence's work aspires to the condition of music. Alternatively, his sculptures could be thought of as arrangements or harmonies borrowing the vocabulary of the painter James McNell Whistler.

Feelings associated with tenderness, serenity and harmony are more a state of mind rather than an intention. Maxence Chevreau incorporates subtly, through his materials and colors, ways of existing in the world.