

Julie Béna &  
Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel

*Yesterday (when there were  
no jokes left to tell)*

Oct 26, 2024 - Jan 19, 2025  
Wed - Sun, 1PM - 6PM

#### Special thanks to

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#### Julie Béna thanks

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◇

#### Team

Rachel Daniels, Kevin Reynaert, Stef Renard, Clara Tashjian, Dimitri Vossen, Koi Persyn, Yesim Bektas

#### Exhibition

Curator: Koi Persyn

Exhibition text: Koi Persyn

Graphic Design : Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel

#### Website

[www.jester.be/en](http://www.jester.be/en)

#### Production

Almec bv (Genk), for the productional support for the realization of *Papageno*, and Bakule (Prague) for the realization of *The Carrousel of Death* and *Jester (the hanged one)*

#### Supported by

the Flemish Government, the City of Genk, the Czech Centre Brussels

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#### The Fool

\*dawn of folly\*

Hello, haven't we crossed paths in the past? How are you doing? Welcome to Jester, where we present the exhibition *Yesterday (when there were no jokes left to tell)* by Julie Béna and Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel.

Can't you see me? Well, I see you! (\*ÔÔ\*)

Allow me to introduce myself: I am the last jester - you might know me as the fool, the trickster, the harlequin, the joker or the shapeshifter - and today, I will guide you through this exhibition. Once bound to royal courts, I have captivated audiences with my artistry; jokes, songs, storytelling, juggling, acrobacy... you name it! But nowadays, I am independently seeking to recruit and empower a new generation of jesters. *Who were these jesters of yesterday, you might ask?*

We, the jesters, have existed across the globe and throughout the ages. Our role as court jesters was indispensable for the good governance of many countries, as our jokes, antics, tricks and humor would conduct people of authority to relate to the needs and wishes - but also to the frustrations and concerns - of the community. Our adventurous yet subversive tactics would appear to be constructive rather than Machiavellian, manifested through love rather than fear. Crossing nations and eras, we would jest and critique the rulers, allowing them to laugh at themselves, thereby humanizing the apparatus of power. Our position was highly regarded and we were well-loved, as we symbolized the aversion to convention. Our wit disrupted normative order to allow for a fairer society with equal rights, while coming from vulnerable social classes ourselves. We acted as mediators that applied humor and freedom as positive forces that could ease political tensions and social discrepancies between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the disadvantaged, the dominant and the eccentric. *Do you wonder where my fellow jesters have gone now?*

One thing is for sure: the jesters have left the stage. In these turbulent times, when geo-political, ecological, financial and social crises succeed each other at an unsustainable rate, there is a pressing need for a renewed trust in the future jesters of our world. We must summon the eccentric, critical, non-normative, subversive, creative spirits - those who dwell both at the center and the margins of society. Like the artist, you suggest? Yes, exactly, and that is why I brought these two artists, Julie Béna and Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, to Belgium to present their practices here for the first time.

Together, these artists wield the tropes of mass media to navigate our tumultuous era of technocapitalism, where deep-fake imagery, artificial intelligence, and censorship loom large. Later, you will encounter artworks that reclaim the motives of glitch, halftone, pixel and pictogram from this visual culture. The constellation of different media blurs the border between digital and analogue, metaphor and statement, versatility and immobility, dream and reality, comedy and tragedy, high and low culture. These interstices carve out a space of opportunity for the future jesters to rise above the fatigue, colondrum and hopelessness of today's existence. With one foot in yesterday and another in tomorrow, the artists try to balance as jesters on a momentum in motion, violated by global and local transitions. These shifts are orchestrated by the universal swing to the right-wing with multiple genocides (taking place across the globe as we speak) and a looming worldwide warfare as a backdrop. In a world yearning for jesters, we find them paralyzed, stifled in a landscape where freedom (of speech, expression and action) is under immense pressure. When there are no jokes left to tell, Bouzoubaa-Grivel and Béna propose as many works as the 24 hours of the day, consisting of deceptive drawings, absurdist animations

jester

Schachtboklaan 11, 3600 Genk, Wed - Sun, 1PM - 6PM

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and whimsical installations to perceive our daily reality differently. They encourage the future jesters (and you?) to leave the polarized nightmare of yesterday behind, and to look forward to the speculative dream of tomorrow. What will this dream of tomorrow be about?

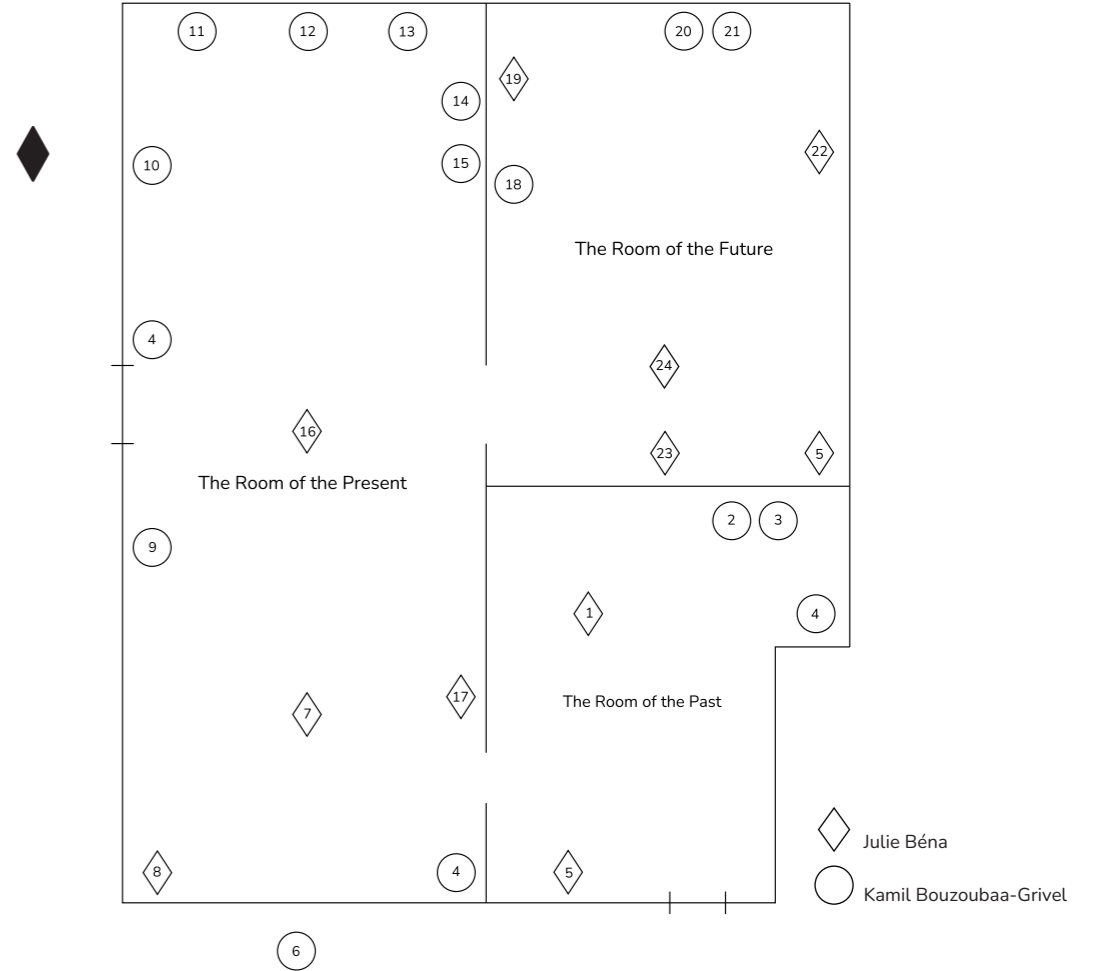
Let us help you, because Julie, Kamil and I have drawn three tarot cards - Wheel of Fortune, The Hanged Man and Death - inviting you to imagine tomorrow's dream. Each card opens up a dialogue about the polyphonic possibilities to experience the exhibition and its context. Each room mirrors one of the subsequent cards, and allows you to connect past, present and future to address complex questions - both personal and collective - in relation to the artworks. Furthermore, we invited the collective Apparatus 22 (RO/BE/Suprainfinit utopian realm) as jesters-in-residence to formulate questions that you can draw and ponder about. We believe jesters should spark questions rather than provide answers, allowing the exhibition to embody the open-ended spirit of a tarot reading. It is no coincidence that the card of 'The Fool' leads the tarot deck (n°0), representing the adventurous mind that roams freely.

Welcome to join Julie Béna and Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel on their journey from yesterday to tomorrow, traveling through the dawn of dullness, the light of luck, the shadow of sacrifices and the twilight of transformation!



**Julie Béna**, born in 1982 in France, is a wanderer between Prague and Paris. Béna graduated from the Villa Arson in Nice, and attended the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. In 2012-13, she was part of Le Pavillon, the research laboratory of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. In 2018, she was nominated for the Prix AWARE women art prize. Her oeuvre is made up of an eclectic set of references, intertwining contemporary and ancient literature, high and low art, humor and gravitas within parallel times and spaces. Comprising sculpture, installation, film, and performance, her work seems to float in an infinite vacuum, unfolding against a fictional backdrop where everything is possible. Over the past years, she has developed a range of personal cosmologies, where various characters and objects engage in enigmatic dialogues. A frequent passer-by is a fictional character wearing a ruff and a cap 'n' bells, named 'the Jester' who traverses her oeuvre as a symbol, spokesperson and alter ego.

**Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel** is a French-Moroccan artist born in 1992. He studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris, the Art Institute of Chicago and currently, he lives and works in Paris. He won the Takesada Matsutani Prize in 2020 and the Mustaqbal Prize in 2024. For him, drawing is a meditative act, similar to traditional embroidery in which patterns emerge from repetitive gestures. In playing with transpositions, repetitions and fixations, an artistic process emerges -at times following a precise and meticulous approach, at other times chaotic with bold edits. By creatively harnessing the imperfections and limitations of his material, he discovers new forms, and digital gestures such as swiping and pinching. In his practice, he combines typography and calligraphy with influences from North African Amazigh culture, biomorphism, and abstract comics. From the interplay of these media, he creates his own visual language with forms that resemble letters and signs. He often starts from black and white graphic grids and geometric patterns to create an evocative depth in shades of what appears gray.



#### The Room of the Past

- 1 *The Wheel of Fortune*, Julie Béna, 2018, Powder coated steel, bulbs<sup>1</sup>
- 2 *Lunettes de l'atelier*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2021, Blown glass, flexible ruler, zip tie
- 3 *Paire de gants*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2021, Embossed paper
- 4 *Dangos*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, 3D print, mini-car engine, piano wire
- 5 *Snails*, Julie Béna, 2019-2024, Blown glass, pigment

#### The Room of the Present

- 6 *Papageno*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Powder coated steel, magnets
- 7 *The Carousel of Death*, Julie Béna, 2024, Powder coated steel, wood, electric system, bulbs, polystyrene, fabric, rope
- 8 *Shh... ! (spikes)*, Julie Béna, 2021, Powder coated steel<sup>2</sup>
- 9 *Swing*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 10 *Les paravents*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 11 *Le repas*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 12 *Une paire de bottes incroyable*, Drawing: Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 13 *Le soir*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 14 *Le salon*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 15 *La montée*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: oil-based ink on coated paper
- 16 *Jester (the hanged one)*, Julie Béna, 2024, Polystyrene, metal, wood, fabric, polymer clay, rope
- 17 *The Jaws or the Claws*, Julie Béna, 2022, Hand-made lace<sup>3</sup>

#### The Room of the Future

- 18 *Solénoïdes (1)*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: gel ink on paper
- 19 *Eyes (one spider, two Jesters)*, Julie Béna, 2024, Hand-made lace
- 20 *Solénoïdes (2)*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: gel ink on paper
- 21 *Solénoïdes (3)*, Kamil Bouzoubaa-Grivel, 2024, Drawing: gel ink on paper
- 22 *Oops, I Did It Again*, Julie Béna, 2020, Powder coated steel<sup>4</sup>
- 23 *The Jester and Death*, Julie Béna, 2020, 3D video, colour, sound<sup>5</sup>
- 24 *Three Dice*, Julie Béna, 2019, Engraved wood<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Commission by 1646, the Hague

<sup>2</sup> Commission by Nicoletti Contemporary, London

<sup>3</sup> Commission by Galerie Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris

<sup>4</sup> Commission by Polansky gallery, Prague

<sup>5</sup> Art direction: Sybil Montet / Sound design: Simon Kounovsky / Supported by La Fondation des Artistes and produced by Julie Béna for Kunstraum, London, as part of the exhibition *The Jester and Death*, co-curated by Thomas Cuckle and Hannah Conroy.

<sup>6</sup> Commission by Jeu de Paume, Paris