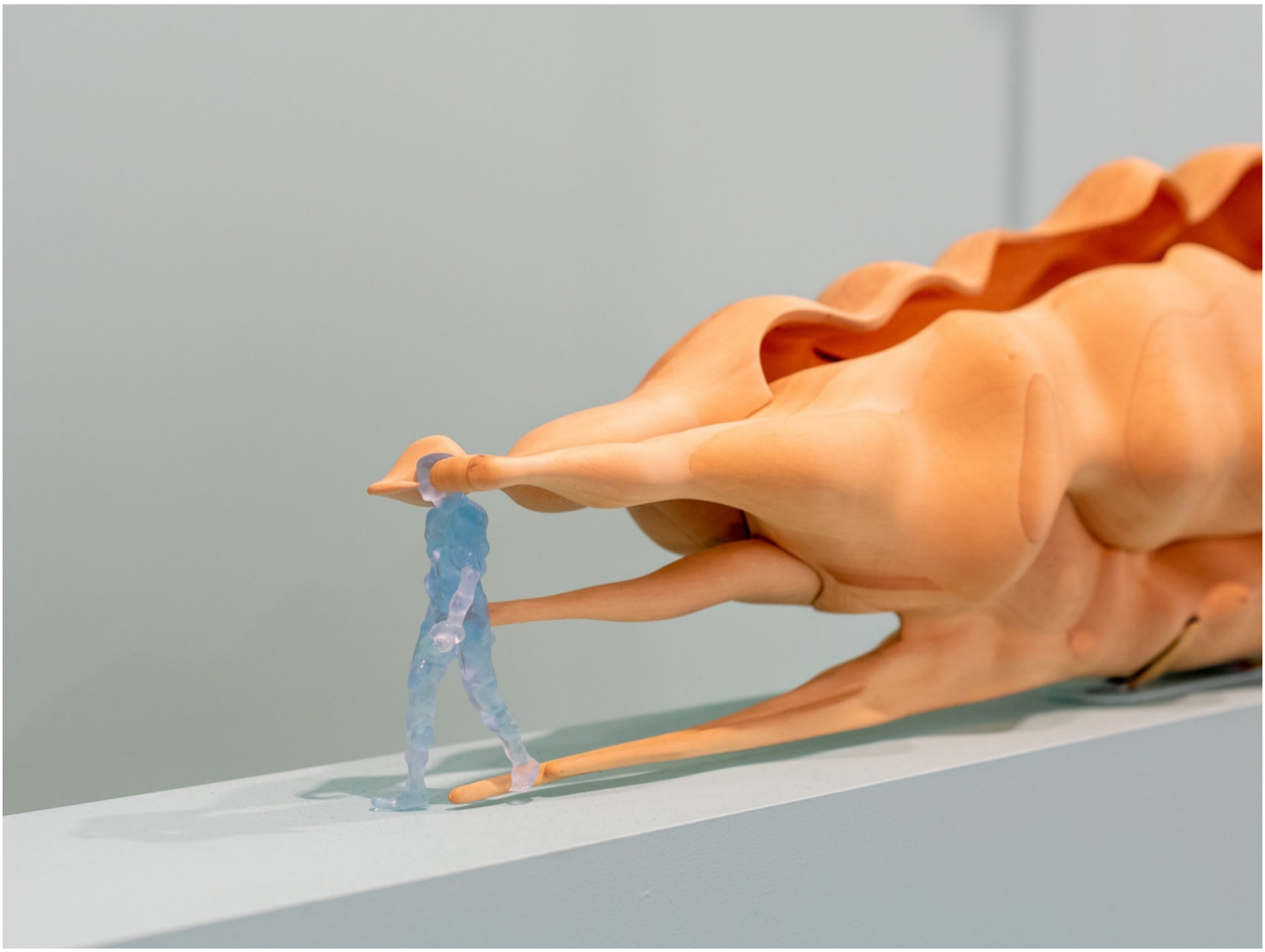
mudac Exhibition Presskit En



Magic and Design

Hocus Pocus | Encounterology

06.11.2026 — 11.04.2027

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Khoren Matevosy, *The Filter Between the Unconscious and the Collective Unconscious*, 2024, collection du mudac

© Khoren Matevosy

mudac presents its new season, dedicated to the relationships between magic and design. Through two exhibitions, *Hocus Pocus* and *Encounterology*, as well as a rich program of events at Plateforme 10, this season explores the links between contemporary creation and magical practices, and how they can allow us to perceive the world(s).

Long opposed to modern rationality, magic has nevertheless never ceased to accompany human societies. It shapes our narratives, beliefs and material cultures, questioning our relationship to the visible and the invisible, technology and emotion, reality and illusion. Like design, it mobilises objects, devices and expertise to create experiences, inspire wonder and transform the way we inhabit the world. By bringing together designers, artists, researchers and practitioners from diverse backgrounds, this season examines the resonances between magic and design, opening pathways into the invisible.

The first exhibition, *Hocus Pocus*, highlights the links between magic and design from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Through great illusionists, technical inventions, popular arts and the imaginaries of spiritualism, it shows how designers — like magicians — use innovation, staging and illusion to generate fascination and wonder. The exhibition reveals a shared history of ingenuity and creative détourning.

At the same time, *Encounterology* shifts attention toward contemporary magical practices understood as relational technologies. Bringing together immersive installations, ritual objects, speculative works and a selection of pieces from mudac's collection, the exhibition explores alternative ways of relating to living beings, non-humans and invisible worlds. By proposing new forms of dialogue between design, invisibility and ecology, it invites visitors to imagine new ways of being in the world, making design a mediator between multiple realities.

Hocus Pocus
Design of the Invisible
06.11.2026 — 11.04.2027

***Hocus Pocus* explores how design has been shaped alongside popular and material culture through its engagement with technology, magic and the occult. The exhibition revisits the enchantment of everyday life through the lens of design, beginning with the Anthropocene Industrial Revolution. Through the figures of great illusionists, technological inventions, popular arts and the imaginaries of Spiritualism, it demonstrates how designers — much like magicians — draw on innovation, staging and illusion to create fascination and wonder.**

Curated by Alexandra Midal, Full Professor at HEAD–Geneva and independent curator, in collaboration with mudac, the exhibition opens by dismantling the supposed prerogatives of conjurors through the figure of Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, the first modern magician. An inventor of automata and clocks, holder of numerous patents and designer of a smart home ahead of its time, Robert-Houdin differed little from contemporary designers in his methods, objects and ambitions.

Hocus Pocus then zooms in on the art of disappearance through three case studies: Harry Houdini, the "King of Handcuffs," who staged spectacular escapes before large crowds; the erasure of Alice Guy from the history of cinema; and Henry Brown, who in 1848, while still enslaved in the United States, escaped his fate by having himself shipped by post in a simple wooden crate. Performing thereafter under the name Box Brown, he became a magician and a symbol of the struggle against the enslavement of African Americans. Together, these strategies belong to a history of ingenuity that is as much about sleight of hand as it is about the political history of design.

Faced with stage magic and the innovations of photography and the phonograph — true media of the occult — the public experienced the same sense of astonishment, whether among spectators of magic performances or Spiritualist séances. In the name of morality, Houdini led a crusade against mediums, an all the more ironic position given that all parties constantly relied on illusion and deception.

Magic, which intertwined machines and living beings long before artificial intelligence, escapes any moral framework. Rooted in traditional, popular and syncretic beliefs and practices, its persistence within rationality itself,— across eras and ideologies, challenges the modern sceptical narrative that opposes reason to wonder. Through artefacts, inventions, automata, posters, objects, films, works of art, documents and projects created by contemporary designers and artists, *Hocus Pocus* examines the human condition through its material culture, whether invented or mobilised by magicians, Spiritualists, filmmakers and artists — many of them designers without naming themselves as such, and sometimes without even realising it.

Curation	Alexandra Midal - Double A
Scientific collaboration	Luisa Ferreira - mudac
Exhibition design	Adrien Rovero Studio - Double A
Graphic design	Marietta Eugster

Camille Brée, *Boîte à disparaître*, vue d'exposition *Forever Young*, MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine, 2025

© Photographe : Léa Mercier

Denis Savary, *Houdini*, 2019

© Françoise Ninghetto, Collection Jungo

William S. Marriott (1910) Pearson Magazine.
Harry Price Library of Magical Literature

© Senate House Library, University of London

Encounterology
Design for Magical Worlds
06.11.2026 — 11.04.2027

What if certain magical practices were not the remnants of a dark and distant past, but relational techniques capable of transforming the ways we inhabit the world? *Encounterology* explores the idea that these practices, far from being mere superstitions, derive their relevance precisely from their persistent resistance to the modern paradigm. In doing so, they may help initiate the transitions that we urgently need, both collectively and individually.

These practices — such as magnetism, trance, or dialogues with invisible entities—are grounded in radically different worldviews: ontologies in which humans are no longer the sole actors; rivers have a voice, forests think, energy acts, and objects themselves become mediators between different worlds.

Organised around encounters with non-human beings — spirits, elements, entities and invisible presences — the exhibition, spanning nearly 600 square metres, presents devices designed by designers to initiate such relationships. These objects do not merely represent invisible or subtle presences; they render them tangible and, in doing so, transform them into political agents.

Here, magic is not a return to the past but a force of divergence and transformation. These so-called “acausal” practices, which reductionist science struggles to accommodate, open up possibilities for reshaping our relationships with living environments as well as with technology. In doing so, they may help us begin to step out of the extractivist deadlock into which modernity has confined us. They invite us to relearn how to pay attention, to feel, and to coexist with beings and forces greater than ourselves.

Throughout the galleries, visitors will encounter immersive installations — such as *Lares and Penates,* presented by Poland at the most recent Venice Architecture Biennale, which combines technical and magical security devices—as well as projects, often commissioned by the museum, exploring animal perspectives on the human world (Dunne and Raby, *After the Festival*, 2023) or the process of becoming a healer. Visitors may also encounter Anna Zoe Hamm’s ecofeminist brooms, a man who wanted to become a goat, virtual-reality trance experiences, dialogues with grains of corn, and an oracular well designed by Felipe Ribon.

Encounterology thus explores a new commitment within design, positioning it as a mediator of subtle encounters: a space where reason and enchantment no longer exclude one another, where tools enter into relationship with the invisible, where we acknowledge that we live in a world made up of many worlds, and where each visitor is invited, for the duration of their journey through the exhibition, to become a magician travelling between worlds.

Curation	Scott Longfellow - mudac
Exhibition design	Adrien Rovero Studio - Double A
Graphic design	Marietta Eugster

Dunne & Raby, *After the Festival: Design for a World of Many Worlds*, 2023, collection du mudac

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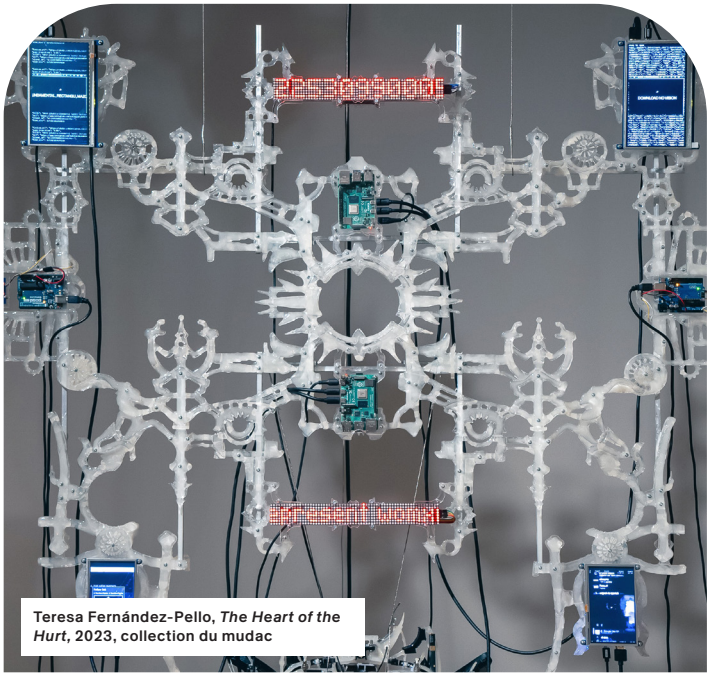

Teresa Fernández-Pello, *The Heart of the Hurt*, 2023, collection du mudac

© Jin Byun

Felipe Ribon, *Vase océanique*, 2024, collection du mudac

© Felipe Ribon

Main partner for construction

FONDATION LEENAARDS

Main partner for construction and partner of the exhibitions

LOTERIE ROMANDE

Partner of the exhibition *Hocus Pocus*

FONDATION CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
DÉLÉGATION EN FRANCE

mudac

Edouard Chapallaz. Swiss ceramist
25.09.2026 — 31.01.2027
Hocus Pocus. Design of the Invisible
06.11.2026 — 11.04.2027
Encounterology. Design for Magical Worlds
06.11.2026 — 11.04.2027

- More information: mudac.ch

MCBA

Ted Joans. Black Flower
09.10.2026 — 28.02.2027
Lucas Erin. La ronde
Manor Art Prize 2026 Vaud
28.08.2026 — 14.02.2027
Charles Blanc-Gatti. The Colours of Sound
25.09.2026 — 17.01.2027

- More information: mcba.ch

Photo Elysée

Ella Maillard. Photographic Encounters
06.03 — 01.11.2026
Hannah Darabi. Why Don't You Dance?
26.06 — 01.11.2026
Alfredo Jaar. Inferno & Paradiso
26.06 — 01.11.2026
Animal model. 200 Years of Photography
04.12.2026 — 04.04.2027

- More information: elysee.ch

Events at Plateforme 10

Interstices Festival
05—08.11.2026

- More information: plateforme10.ch

Press visit
Wednesday 4 November 2026, from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

Exhibition opening
Thursday 5 November 2026, from 6 pm

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Press
Press kit and HD images available for download at the adress:
mudac.ch/presse

mudac

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Opening hours

Monday	10 am – 6 pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10 am – 6 pm
Thursday	10 am – 8 pm
Friday	10 am – 6 pm
Saturday	10 am – 6 pm
Sunday	10 am – 6 pm

Cover visual : Dunne & Raby, *After the Festival: Design for a World of Many Worlds*, 2023, collection du mudac © NGVTriennial_KateShanasy