

## Joana Vasconcelos at artgenève 2024 / *Sur-mesure*

### *Valkyrie Mumbet*

Supported by Harsch and Indosuez Wealth Management

25th – 28th January 2024

VIP opening: January 24th, at 2 pm in the presence of the artist

artgenève Art Talk: January 25th, from 12:30 pm until 1:30 pm Stand A6

Joana Vasconcelos in conversation with Claire Koron Elat (free admission)

For the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of artgenève, GOWEN is honoured to present a special project by internationally acclaimed Portuguese artist **Joana Vasconcelos** (b. 1971 Paris). Having completed numerous high-profile projects across the globe, including collaborations with the French House of Dior in Paris and Shenzhen, the Rothschild Foundation at Waddesdon, UK and the Museu Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil, Vasconcelos' *Valkyrie Mumbet*, 2020, selected by exhibition curator Nicolas Trembley, will be installed in the fair's principal entrance hall.



Joana Vasconcelos, *Valkyrie Mumbet*, 2020

Handmade woolen crochet, Azorian lace, assorted fabrics including capulana, velvets, cotton and polyester, ornaments, pom-poms, LED, inflatable, fans, microcontrollers, power supply unit, steel cables. 900 x 1700 x 1600 cm. Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. With the generous support of Harsch and Indosuez Wealth Management.

Photo: Massart Art Museum (MAAM) Boston © Will Howcroft.

The monumental sculpture, commissioned to mark the opening of the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) Boston was unveiled as part of the artist's first ever solo show in the United States. One of a series of iconic *Valkyries* created by Vasconcelos over the past 20 years, and which frequently pay homage to groundbreaking women in history, as well as addressing cultural, societal or gender roles from a feminist point of view, *Valkyrie Mumbet* is a tribute to Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, an enslaved African American woman whose court battle for her freedom in 1781 contributed to making slavery illegal in Massachusetts.

The series takes its name from the fierce war goddesses from Norse mythology who determine the fate of others: «... *Valkyries* are goddesses who fly over the battlefields and pick up the brave warriors to bring them back to life – so that they can now work for the gods. They have a very strong power, so in a way, my *Valkyries* are flying over the art world and bringing it alive. It is a powerful association.» - Joana Vasconcelos, 2017

The work is a highly personal response by Vasconcelos in its direct reference to her country's role in the transatlantic slave trade. During the colonial era, European traders capitalized on trade routes between Africa, Europe and the New World and eventually monopolized the textile market.

Numerous elements are integrated to relate the story of Elizabeth Freeman. Assembled with handcrafted embellishments, fringe, and LED lights in Vasconcelos' atelier in Lisbon, the organic sculpture is primarily made with capulana, a colourful cloth from Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony and includes material from the artist's own personal collection. The capulanas exemplify the fluidity of cultures and reflect a complex, interwoven history of cultural exchanges across continents and centuries.

Vasconcelos points to Freeman's subsequent and rare independence and wealth for the time, notably in the use of velvet, one of the textiles listed in her will and bequeathed to her descendants. Yellow pom poms and metallic beads symbolize Freeman's gold bead necklace, and traditional Azorean lace acknowledges the large lusophone population residing in Massachusetts.

Capitalizing on the unique architectural space of the fair's entrance hall, *Valkyrie Mumbet* is able to engage the audience from multiple vantage points. From every angle, the viewer may discover something surprising. By bringing *Valkyrie Mumbet* to the heart of Europe, the artwork calls attention to a local story of global significance, in doing so contributing to current discourse on the legacy of European exploitation, colonization and slaveholding, with particular recognition of the female experience. Vasconcelos states: "*Valkyrie Mumbet is a symbol of freedom. It is a symbol for women and how you can transform your own life by your acts*".

Other notable *Valkyries* from the series include: *Valkyrie Miss Dior*, 2023, a collaboration with the French House of Dior, presented in the Jardin des Tuileries, Paris in February 2023; *Egeria* 2018, Guggenheim Bilbao; *Valkyrie Octopus*, 2015, MGM Macau; *Royal Valkyrie*, 2012 and *Golden Valkyrie*, 2012, Palace of Versailles and *Contamination* 2008-2010, Palazzo Grassi/Pinault Collection, Venice.

GOWEN has represented Joana Vasconcelos since 2017.

A special thank you to the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) for their kind cooperation. *Valkyrie Mumbet* was commissioned for, and originally presented in 2020 by the MAAM in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. A further, profound thank you to Harsch and Indosuez Wealth Management for their generous support and collaboration.



Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. With the generous support of Harsch and Indosuez Wealth Management. Photo: Massart Art Museum (MAAM) Boston © Will Howcroft.



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**Joana Vasconcelos biography** Joana Vasconcelos (b.1971 Paris) lives and works in Lisbon where she has established a unique, artisan-led artist studio working model employing some 50 people. She is a multimedia sculpture artist whose works are often complex installations on a monumental scale.

**Selected artworks and exhibitions:** **2023** *Between Sky and Heart*, Uffizi Galleries (Florence, Italy); *Wedding Cake*, Waddesdon Manor (England, UK); *Valkyrie Miss Dior*, Jardin des Tuileries (Paris, France) and Sea World Culture and Arts Center (Shenzhen, China); *Extravagances*, Oscar Niemeyer Museum (Curitiba, Brazil); *Through Mountains and Seas*, Tang Contemporary Art (Beijing, China). **2022** *Crowned Idols*, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi (Syracuse, Italy); *Stupid Furniture*, Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea (Milan, Italy). **2021** *Joana Vasconcelos*, European Union Delegation in Geneva (Geneva, Switzerland). **2020** *Beyond*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (UK); *Valkyrie Mumbet*, MAAM - MassArt Art Museum (Boston, USA); *Chá-Chai*, National Museum (New Delhi, India). **2019** *I'm Your Mirror*, Museu Guggenheim (Bilbao, Spain); Kunsthal Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Serralves Museum and Park (Porto, Portugal); *Branco Luz*, Le Bon Marché (Paris, France); *Glacée dorée. Seconde partie*, Gowen Contemporary (Geneva, Switzerland); *Maximal*, Max Ernst Museum (Brühl, Germany). **2018** *Glacée dorée. Première partie*, artgenève Art Fair, with Gowen Contemporary (Geneva, Switzerland); *I Want to Break Free*, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Strasbourg, France); *Gateway*, Jupiter Artland (Edinburgh, Scotland). **2016** *Textures of Life and Valkyrie Rán*, ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum (Aarhus, Denmark). **2015** *Material World*, Phillips (London, UK); *Giardino dell'Eden: Swatch Faces 2015 – Pavilion at Giardini*, 56th International Art Exhibition – *la Biennale di Venezia* (Venice, Italy); *Valkyrie Octopus* at MGM Macau, (Macao, China). **2014** *Time Machine*, Manchester Art Gallery (Manchester, UK); *Valkyrie Marina Rinaldi*, Palazzo Bocconi (Milan, Italy); *Casarão*, Casa Triângulo (São Paulo, Brazil). **2013** *Lusitana*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Tel Aviv, Israel); *Trafaria Praia*, Pavilion of Portugal, 55th International Art Exhibition – *la Biennale di Venezia* (Venice, Italy); *Joana Vasconcelos*, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda (Lisbon, Portugal). **2012** *Joana Vasconcelos*, Haunch of Venison (London, UK); *A Noiva*, Centquatre (Paris, France); *Joana Vasconcelos Versailles*, Château de Versailles (Versailles, France). **2010** *I Will Survive*, Haunch of Venison (London, UK); *Sem Rede/Netless*, Museu Coleção Berardo (Lisbon, Portugal).

**Career highlights:** International acclaim arrived in 2005 with *The Bride* at the first Venice Biennale curated by women. Joana Vasconcelos has returned to the Biennale seven times to date, in 2013 at the helm of *Trafaria Praia* as the Portuguese pavilion, the first ever floating pavilion at the event. The youngest artist and first woman to exhibit at the Palace of Versailles in 2012, her exhibition was the most visited in France in 50 years, with a record 1.6 million visitors. In 2018 she became the first Portuguese artist to have an individual exhibition at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the fourth best that year according to *The Art Newspaper* and the third most visited in the history of the museum. In 2023, the artist opened *Extravagances*, her largest solo exhibition in Brazil at the Museu Oscar Niemeyer. Marking the museum's 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary, the show included *Valkyrie Miss Dior* and *Valkyrie Matarazzo*. Vasconcelos' monumental *Wedding Cake*, 2023 located in the grounds of Waddesdon Manor, UK was selected as a highlight in The Guardian's annual art and design review "*The best art and architecture of 2023*". In the same year, Joana Vasconcelos was granted the rare honour to exhibit at the Uffizi Galleries and Pitti Palace, in Florence, alongside classical masters such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Caravaggio.



Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. With the generous support of Harsch and Indosuez Wealth Management. Photo: Massart Art Museum (MAAM) Boston © Will Howcroft.

## About GOWEN

Located in the heart of Europe in the historic old town of Geneva, GOWEN represents both Swiss and international emerging and mid-career artists. Inaugurated in 2010, the gallery prides itself on its rich exhibition program, including curatorial and site-specific projects, institutional collaborations, and participation in key international art fairs. In 2021, a new 200 sqm space was opened in Geneva at Grand-Rue 23. GOWEN aims to showcase pioneering and cutting-edge artists engaged in experimental and critical approaches, often alongside significant works by historical and highly acclaimed artists from private collections. The gallery welcomes all forms of medium and artistic expression. Aspiring to specific core values across all its activities, GOWEN continually strives to ensure relevance in an ever-evolving market, undertaking bold, enterprising initiatives, consistently delivering high-calibre offerings to an excellent standard.

[www.gowen.art](http://www.gowen.art)



Courtesy of GOWEN, Geneva. ©Julien Gremaud

Installation view: *Melting Pot. Selected ceramic and textile works by Joana Vasconcelos and Ai Weiwei*, GOWEN, Geneva, 2022.

## About Harsch

Harsch offers a first-class service for works of art. Fine art moving includes the packaging, storage, and transportation of works of art in Switzerland and abroad. Whether paintings, sculptures or antiquities, Harsch ensures special care and attention, which, during transportation or storage, is paramount. Building on many years of experience, Harsch's specialist staff work in accordance with the most demanding security standards currently applicable. The company also offers additional services associated with the transport of works of art.

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With 130 billion euros in assets under management (as at 31/12/2022), Indosuez Wealth Management is one of the global leaders in wealth management.

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**INDOSUEZ**  
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

## Giuliano Macca

### Solo show artgenève 2024

January 25 - 28, 2024, Stand D 45

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Giuliano Macca in his studio working on *La Caduta dei Titani*, 2023.  
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. ©Giuliano Macca

For his debut solo show, GOWEN is delighted to present selected new works on canvas and paper by Italian artist **Giuliano Macca** (b. 1988, Sicily). Exhibiting with the gallery since 2021, this latest show, the artist's most substantial project to date, is centred around the mythological themes of the fall of the Titans and the birth of the Muses. Unveiled at the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of artgenève, the show features an imposing, site-specific work in watercolour on paper as well as new works in oil on canvas. An oil diptych entitled *Nascita delle Muse* (*Birth of the Muses*), 2023 completes the presentation.

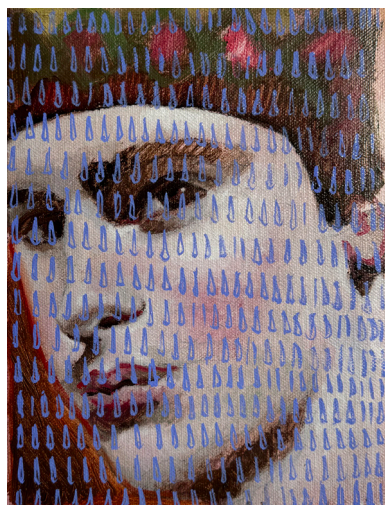
Mythology plays a prominent role in the works of Giuliano Macca, used by the artist as a way of deeper introspection, a reflection on human nature and our modern times. *La Caduta dei Titani* (*The Fall of the Titans*), 2023 exemplifies Macca's largescale compositions based on masterpieces borrowed from the art historical canon. Here, the artist reprises scenes by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century painters Leon Bonnat, Sebastiano Ricci, and Santiago Rebull, compositionally rearranged to depict the demise of the Greek gods. Divided into parts, as is customary for the artist, the work expresses flight with no impact, in which tautened musculature and the interaction of anatomical forms recall the clash between Titans and deities to suggest the decline of an era and the birth of another. Just as with the present, the work becomes temporarily paused, somehow blocked in the moment in which something happens, a moment of clarity and consciousness.

The rereading and reinterpretation of these ancient myths allows an expression of Macca's artistic vision in relation to his personal experience and on contemporary society. The Titans demise becomes a metaphor for the conflict, the descent, the loss, or wreckage from which humanity periodically becomes traumatized. A point of awareness occurs at the very moment of the fall, the moment that most interests the artist. Among the Titans, Cronos devours each of his children, except for one. Zeus not only manages to survive but becomes the King of Olympus. From his union with Mnemosyne the goddess of memory, the Muses are born.

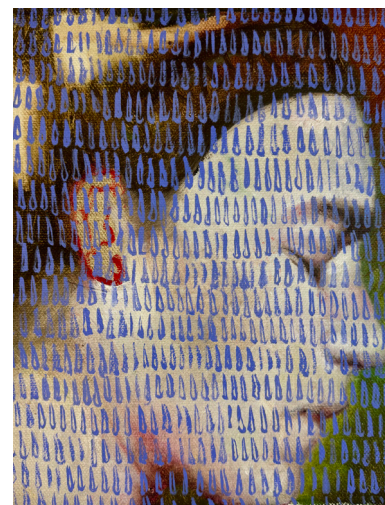
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. ©Giuliano Macca



Giuliano Macca, *Mnemosine*, 2023,  
oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm, 11.8 x 9.1 in



Giuliano Macca, *Ceo*, 2023,  
oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm, 11.8 x 9.1 in

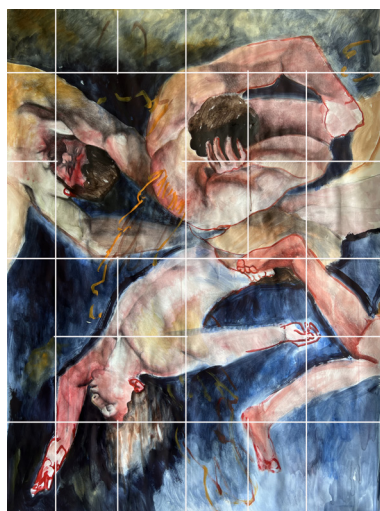


Giuliano Macca, *Febe*, 2023,  
oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm, 11.8 x 9.1 in

The twelve Titans arise in a series of smaller oil paintings. Materializing from the artist's imagination or using models or those from his own entourage, Macca veils their countenance with droplets of water, projecting contemporary aesthetic sensibilities onto painterly surfaces, like "*a dream between rain and memories*". The notion of succession is alluded to, from father to son, from generation to generation, other ideas are privately harboured in the narratives depicted by Macca. Questioning certain tragedies of contemporary history, these emotive retellings weigh heavily with Sicilian tears, shed from circumstances endured in the artist's own existence.

Giuliano Macca's relationship with classical art is both original and genuine, finding a response amongst a young generation of international artists who use tradition to invent new languages. The appropriation of the past in movements of art history reflect shifts in power, perspective, and ideology. Macca's commanding, sincere work, derived in perfect affinity with his native background, has emerged as a relevant voice within the contemporary panorama.

Each divided element of *La Caduta dei Titani* (*The Fall of the Titans*), 2023 is offered for sale separately.



Giuliano Macca, *La Caduta dei Titani* (C, B, A), 2023, watercolor on paper, 210 x 149 cm, 82.7 x 58.7 in  
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN, Geneva. ©Giuliano Macca

Giuliano Macca was born in Noto, Sicily in 1988 and is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. **Selected exhibitions:** 2023 artgenève, with GOWEN, Geneva, CH; 2023 *Revival I - XVIIIe siècle*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH; 2021 *Escape Line II - Drawings and Sculptures*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH; 2019, Museo Diocesano di Padova, Padova, IT; 2017, Scuderie Aldobrandini, Frascati, IT; 2016, MAAM Museo dell'Altro e dell'Altrove di Metropolit, Roma, IT; 2016 (solo), Tonnara di Marzamemi, IT; 2011 *Artexpo: collettiva dell'Accademia di Roma*, Arezzo, IT. In summer 2023, Macca completed a site-specific installation at the Nuovo Cineteatro Italia di Scicli, Sicily. His work is included in the following collections: MAAM (Museum of the Other and the Elsewhere), Rome, Italy; Raffaele Curi, Rome, Italy; Andrea Guerra, Rome, Italy. GOWEN will present a solo show by Giuliano Macca in winter 2024.

Also showing at the gallery: **Waseem Ahmed**. *Delusional Perceptions* solo exhibition at GOWEN, Grande-Rue 23, Geneva until 3 February 2024.



Installation view: *Delusional Perceptions*, Waseem Ahmed, GOWEN, 2023-2024.  
Courtesy GOWEN, Geneva. ©Julien Gremaud



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