



**CLAUDE COMO**





*Rosacerdoce*  
*Peinture mise en serre*  
 Installation of 1000 tableaux (Oil on canvas)  
 Parc de St-Cloud  
 2004



## ***The living at heart***

Since the 1980s, Claude Como (born in 1964, lives and works in Marseille) has used oil paint, ceramics, resin, charcoal and wool to fathom her own history. She also experiments with her complex relationship to the realities of the world, where the living finds a central place.



*Biosynthèse*  
 Oil on canvas  
 260x157cm  
 1998-2002



*Still life*  
 Oil on canvas  
 130x97cm  
 2011





*Medusa*  
Oil and resin on canvas  
116x89cm  
2018



*Still water*  
Oil on paper  
65x50cm  
2010



*Abyss encounters II*  
Porcelain 30x20x10cm  
2018



*Icarus I*  
Céramic  
27X16x10cm  
2019

## Abidjan

Claude Como grew up in Ivory Coast. Her father, a chemist, moved to Abidjan the year she was born. She lived there until she was sixteen, and still has a visceral attachment to a country where she lived freely, in a collective way, close to the living. Since her difficult departure, Claude Como thinks of herself as a floating body, neither really here nor there. An in-between body that addresses the questions of home, wandering, roots and belonging.

She began drawing at the age of five. Every Saturday, in front of a blackboard on an easel, she “does her job”. She would imagine a ballet: its staging, its characters, the details of the costumes. The following Saturday, she would erase the blackboard and recreate new situations according to very precise rules. In the end, this is what the artist has continued to do since the 1980s. She creates new worlds out of images gathered from her memories, her sensations, but also from the art history she continues to explore. The figuration of these worlds goes through the mastering of different techniques for the realization of long term series. She assumes that she knows nothing so that each work becomes an adventure in itself. This thinking by series allows her to investigate deeply into her subjects, dedicating to them all the time that is required : “My artistic approach is part of a permanent challenge, that is also a game. I go towards that which I do not know how to do. Nothing is ever taken for granted.” Each series involves a technical reset, but also a visual one, as the artist immerses himself in a new area of the living. The result is a plural writing that adapts to the subjects to which she devotes herself fully.

She says that she has no style, that she is not programmed to write in a unique manner. “I don’t have a single way of doing things. I follow my intuitions even if I am not recognized. It is in the long run that my work unfolds.



*Icarus II*  
Céramic  
38X13x20cm  
2019



## Exiting the Anthropocene

Since 2015, Claude Como is gradually moving away from an anthropocentric representation in favor of a physical and mental dive into the heart of the living. Human figures hybridize with vegetal elements or fade away into the abyss and cataclysms, and animal figures like the jellyfish – a majestic floating body. “I like the movements of the living: a volcanic eruption, a fire, a hurricane. It manifests itself violently as if it were breathing very hard, it overwhelms and impresses me.” The Gaia series (2018) brings together terrestrials (animals, plants and other living organisms) to decenter the place of the human and think more deeply about the interdependencies that exist between beings and their environments. Another series is dedicated to animals. Since her childhood, the artist has had an intense relationship with them. “When I was little, my friend was an otter.” She represents in particular the strangeness of their bodies. “They are clusters of feathers and hair, I want to treat the material, the sensuality of bodies.” Like a scientific observer, Claude Como decomposes, radiographs, fragments, opens or hybridizes animal bodies to reach a dimension as mysterious as it is monstrous.

In 2019, we observe the emergence of an unusual technique: tufting. Armed with a tufting gun, traditionally used by craftsmen to make rugs, she projects wool threads to create works that are both supple and monumental. The result is two first works: *J'aurais aimé t'envoler*, a pair of white wings with a three-meter wingspan, and *Tributes to Masters*, an open and suspended animal carcass that reminds us of Rembrandt as well as Soutine or Bacon. These works open a new writing and a new relationship to space.

*Les Déracinés II*  
Handtufted wool  
170x140cm  
2019



*A l'origine*  
Oil on canvas  
180x130cm  
2010



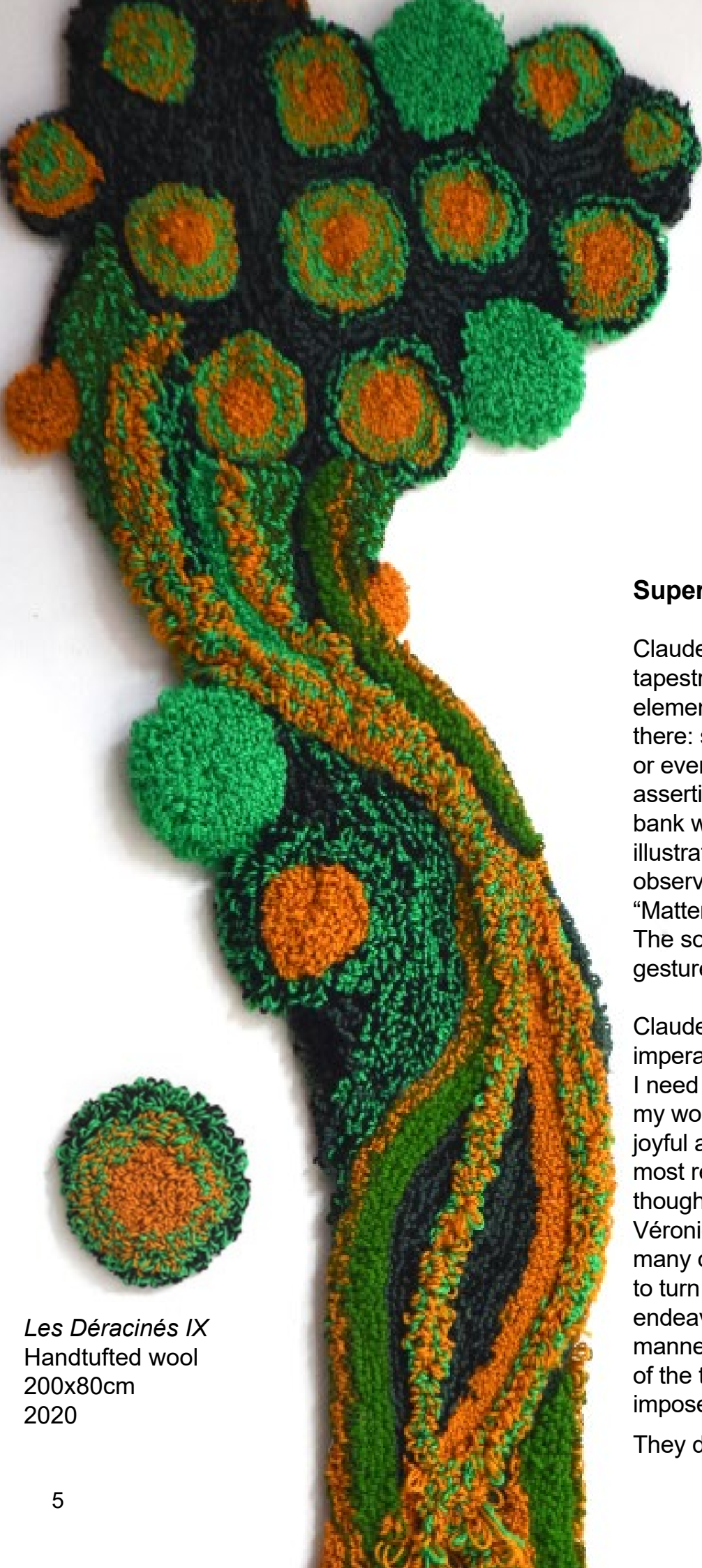


*Lost Paradise*  
Charcoal on paper  
120X80cm  
2018



*Les Déracinés I*  
Handtufted wool  
170x140cm  
2020





### Supernature

Claude Como then begins a series of tufted tapestries that represent abundant vegetal elements, luxuriant micro-organisms. We can find there: seeds, stones, buds, roots, flowers, foliage or even mushrooms, endowed with bright and assertive colors. The motifs come from an image bank where microbial universes and botanical illustrations meet. The artist is an attentive observer of plant, mineral or cellular forms. "Matter influences the form, and vice versa". The source images drift and transform through gestures, technical shifts and fictional necessity.

Claude Como expresses a physical and spatial imperative of proliferation. "It is an explosion. I need to experience intense feelings through my work." To make works that reflect a more joyful and vibrant dimension of the living. The most recent works resonate with the ecological thoughts of Bruno Latour, Dénètem Touam Bona, Véronique Mure, Starhawk, Gilles Clément and many others. Since humans globally choose to turn away from the living, Claude Como endeavors to represent it in a disproportionate manner. We are physically taken by the presence of the tufted artworks. The images of the living impose themselves on us.

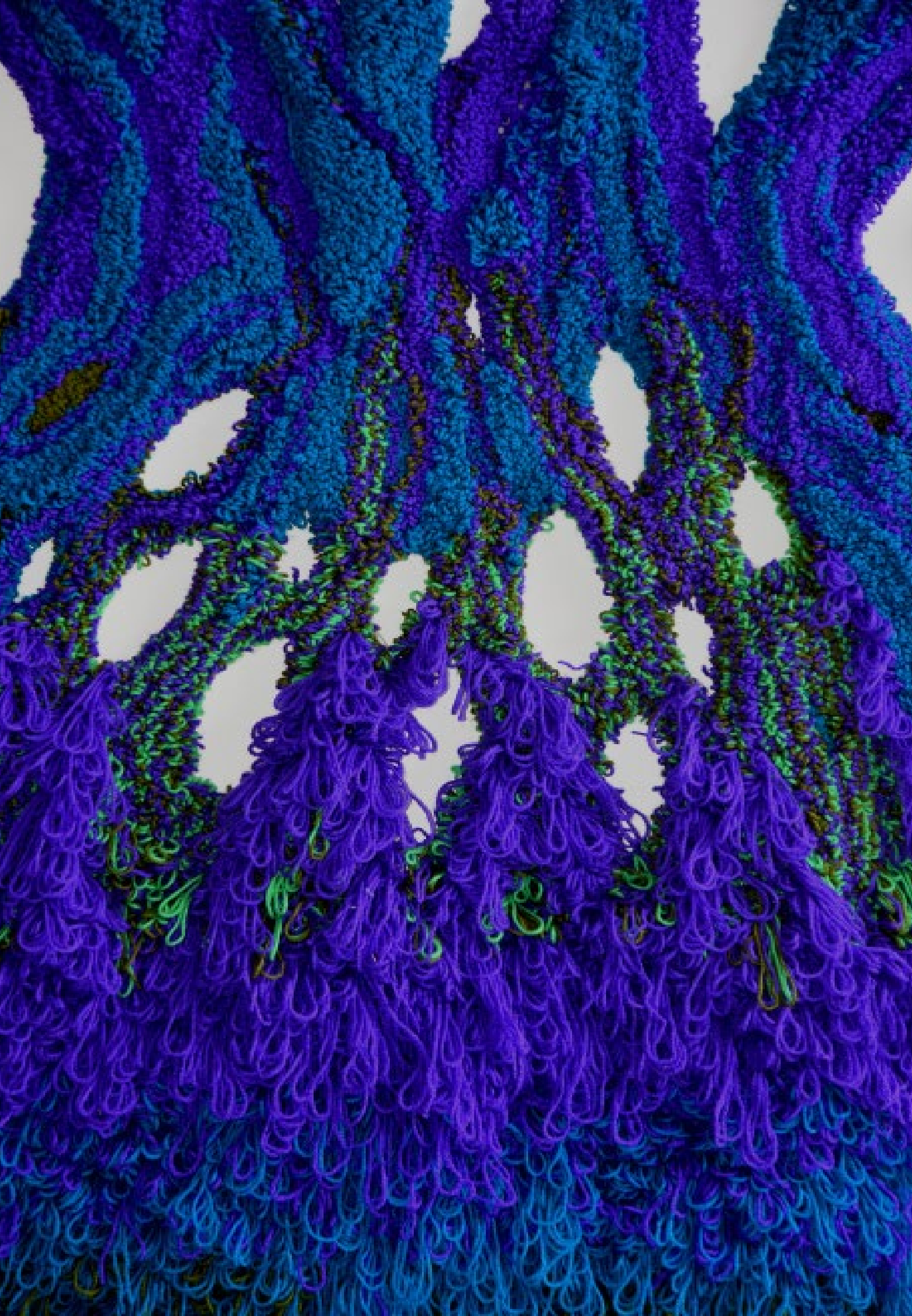
They demand our attention.



*Full Mellow Yellow*  
Handtufted wool  
220x400cm  
2020

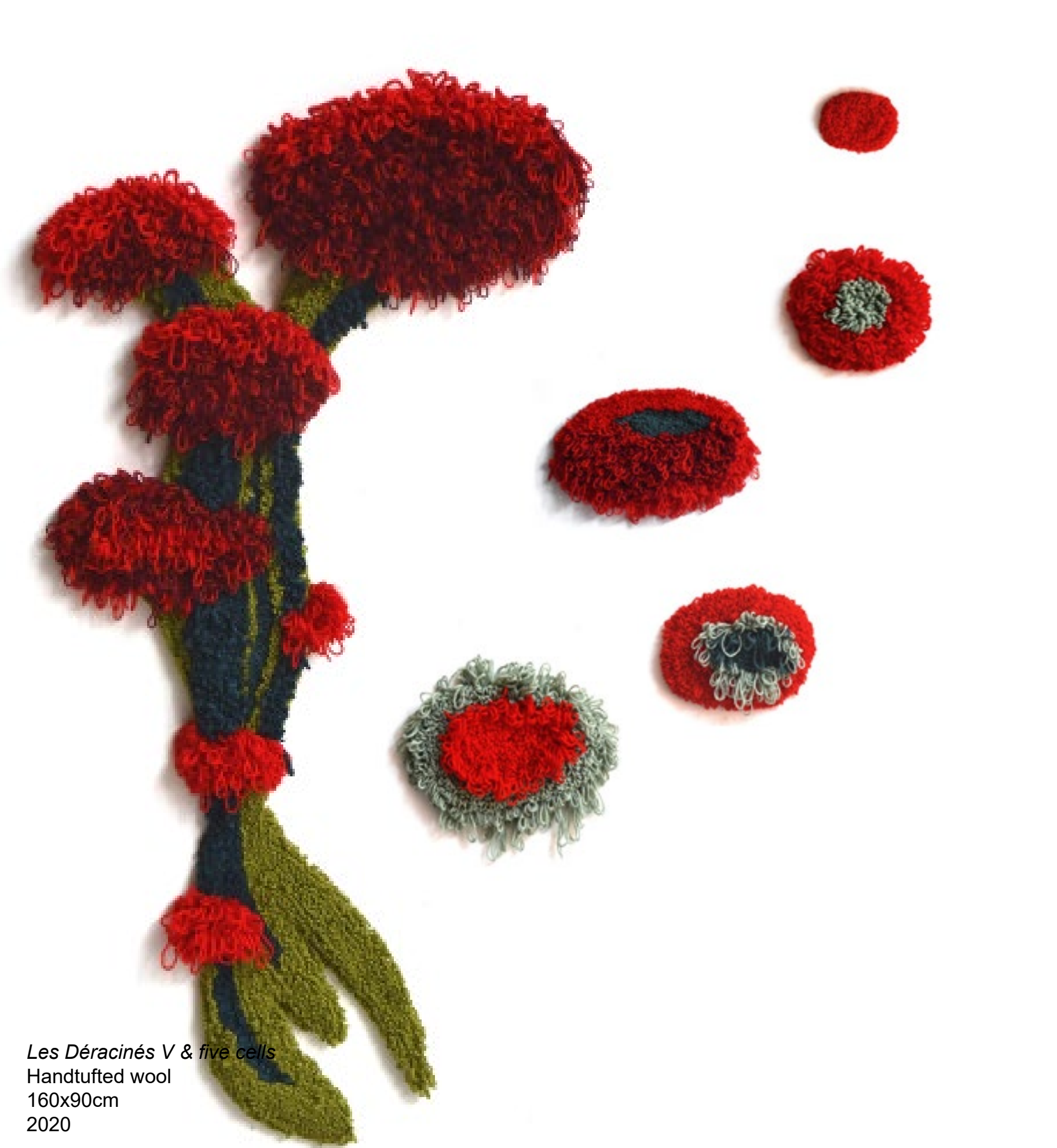
*Les Déracinés IX*  
Handtufted wool  
200x80cm  
2020





*Purple Heart*  
Handtufted wool  
270x140cm  
2020





*Les Déracinés V & five cells*  
Handtufted wool  
160x90cm  
2020



*Bubble Tuft*  
Handtufted wool  
200x350cm  
2020





*The Last Volcano*  
Oil on canvas  
280x200cm  
2011



*Blood & Burning*  
Handtufted wool  
360x240cm  
2020





*Tous les chemins ne mènent pas à Rome*

Handtufted wool

350x200cm

2020



*Seed XI*

Handtufted wool

54x39cm

2020





*Ad Vitam Æternam*  
Handtufted wool  
180x170cm  
2020





About that technical choice, the artist prefers the word *touffeté*, it calls for a greater tactility of the woolly material and the colors. To a greater sensuality also. The tufted tapestries emancipate themselves from the rigid and constraining formats. "I wanted to free myself from the canvas frame, to free the forms." By their flexibility, they extract themselves from the frame to literally colonize the walls and give an organic dimension to the architecture that hosts them. If Claude Como used to tie her forms to the limits of the painting, she now chooses to float, to multiply and to regenerate. Each element is autonomous and has its own title. If the works can be presented separately, it is collectively that they find their plastic power. On the walls, the artist (de)composes infinitely for an immersive and sensitive experience of an extraordinary biocenosis.



Révolutions, *Amorphophallus*  
Handtufted wool  
185x270cm  
2021

Révolutions, *Creepy*  
Handtufted wool  
140x80cm  
2021



*Révolutions 0-500 cm*  
work in progress  
Handtufted wool  
500x350cm  
2021







## Supernature

Photo Studio Tropicalist

View of the exhibition  
Gallery Le Cabinet d'Ulysse  
Marseille 2021

### Getting rid of “natures mortes”

The choice of tufting places the artist in the history of tapestry. Indeed, since the Middle Ages, works representing the plant and floral world have been woven. From Millefleurs to Verdures, through trees of life and stylized motifs, the approaches evolve over time. The history of tapestry combines symbolic, religious, naturalistic, decorative, figurative or abstract approaches. If she confesses that she “feels very small in front of a world that she is learning to know”, Claude Como likes to explore the history of Western art in order to rework and (de)represent the great classifications or subjects considered traditional: vanity, animal figures, human anatomy, psyche, portrait, landscape, architecture, etc. Representations of the living (the word “nature” is voluntarily excluded, since it constitutes an argument to maintain a binary and mortifying thought between nature and culture) are here generous. Supernature thwarts the question of the “nature morte” – still life or, literally, “dead nature” –, which, if one thinks about it, is a nonsense since the living is an ecosystem in perpetual metamorphosis.





## Supernature

View of the exhibition  
Gallery Le Cabinet d'Ulysse  
Marseille 2021





Révolutions, *Velvety Polyporus*  
 Handtufted wool  
 120x130cm  
 2021



Révolutions, *Carmina Pod*  
 Handtufted wool  
 2021  
 impact de l'installation avec les  
 semences 340x230cm





The tufted works contribute to a reactivation and an extension of the history of tapestry. Nothing is fixed, everything is redefinable. The cut-out forms are mutually articulated resulting in tentacular, moving and rhizomic installations – cut-out forms which inhabit, by the way, the whole of the artistic approach of Claude Como, constantly confronting volume and flatness.

With a mixed feeling of wonder and gravity, she presents decontextualized bodies, scenes deprived of horizons, suspended ecosystems. The artist, who has long experienced herself as a marginal being, has built her work around notions such as uprootedness, movement, absence, impermanence, death and possible rebirths. Nourished by a strong autobiographical dimension, her protean work is built in the long run. She thus compares her approach to that of a spider weaving its web. The ramifications between the series generate the embodied narrative of a terrestrial and psychic cosmogony – as intimate as it is collective.

#### **Julie Crenn**

Doctor in art history, art critic (AICA)  
and independent curator

*Sun Seeds*  
Handtufted wool  
180x90cm 3x(75x160cm)  
2020



*Dans l'atelier* Photo Patrick Amsellem





*Supernature Révolutions II*  
0-500 cm  
Work in progress  
Handtufted wool  
500x350cm  
2021





PhotoThomas Gogny

*Supernature Révolutions I*  
Handtufted wool  
350x1100cm  
View of the exhibition Forest Art Project  
Church of Jacobins - Agen Fine Arts Museum