

**Temple Bar  
Gallery + Studios**

**Fanny Gicquel**  
*breathing with heels,  
walking with eyes*

19 May - 2 July 2023

**Temple Bar Gallery + Studios**  
5-9 Temple Bar, D02 AC84  
Dublin, Ireland  
[www.templebargallery.com](http://www.templebargallery.com)

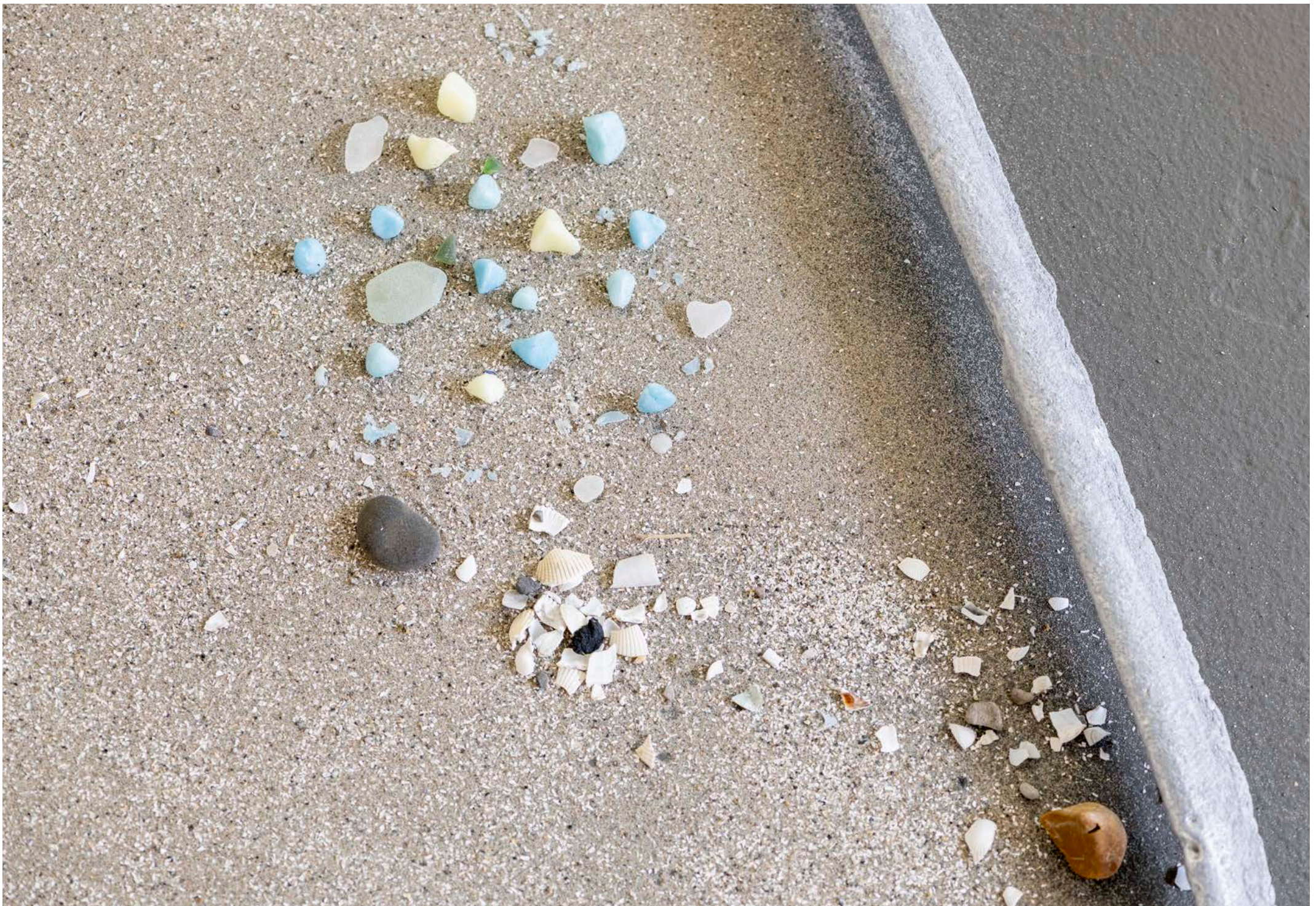










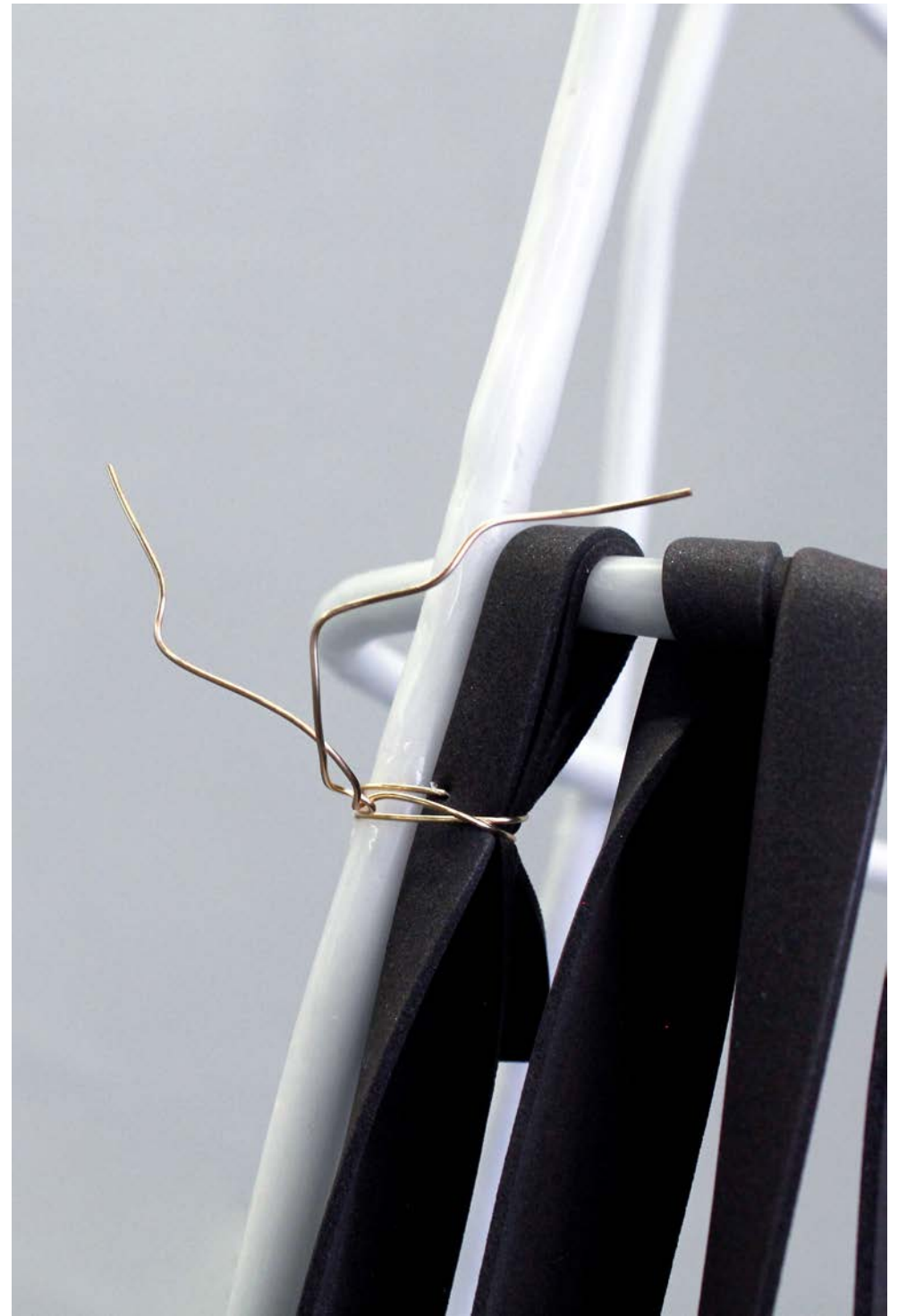


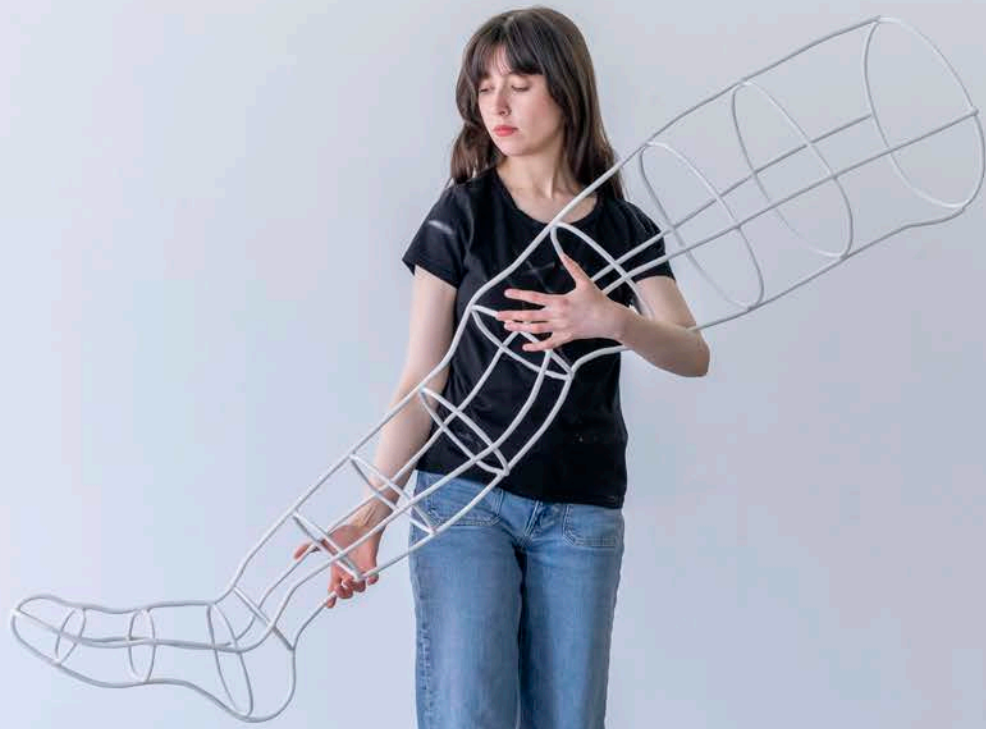


















## Fanny Gicquel

### *breathing with heels, walking with eyes*

Fanny Gicquel's tactile and adaptive sculptural environments refer to intimate and natural forms. Their components are dependent on one another, providing resting points where groups of objects and materials harmonise and perform. The serpentine aluminium stripes that delineate the gallery floor share likenesses with the curvature of a body in repose or an undulating shoreline. This alignment between discreet bodily outlines and formations in nature allows Gicquel to explore the touching point between the animate and the inanimate, tracing a moving and transitory landscape.

Language meets materiality throughout the exhibition. Its title pairs two references by David Le Breton, a sociologist and anthropologist who writes about walking as a metaphysical experience. In his book, *Walking Life: A Quiet Art of Happiness*, Breton discusses 'breathing with heels', a Taoist method of consciously engaging with the earth beneath our feet, its energy and connectivity; 'walking with eyes' is an expression by Alexandra David-Néel (1868-1969), an explorer and spiritualist who advocated moving through the world by intuition, without following a predetermined path. Comparably, Gicquel's approach to the

installation of the exhibition was determined by bringing together many disparate components and materials, and responsively composing their relationships in the gallery itself. For her this transitional approach is an amalgamation between studio and exhibition spaces, and the flow of work is circulatory. A terrain of aluminium tracks and drifting sandbanks opens up several circuitous routes through the exhibition. *how far is it? how far is it now?* (2023) takes its title from the opening lines of 'Getting There' by Sylvia Plath, *Ariel* (1965), and also recalls a child's excited anticipation on a day trip. The guiding pathways are made by casting directly from the beach itself, Penmarch in the artist's home region of Bretagne. Gicquel inscribed marks in the sand, at times with intent and others more aimlessly, to create spirals, trails and accents that were then filled with molten aluminium, incorporating traces of sand, stones, and flaws from reactions between the liquid metal with saltwater in the ground.

Visitors are encouraged to mimic Gicquel's beach 'drifting' and make decisions about their movements, attentiveness and pace in the room, echoing the motions of four performers who periodically inhabit the exhibition with a combination of individual and collective actions. The integration of choreographed and improvised activations, imagined by the artist and then carefully, yet playfully, enacted by the performers, create a curious sense of self-awareness. Their subtle gestures, which activate Gicquel's installation, include contact, rearrangement

and interaction with each other and elemental substances like water, air, vapour, and reflected light.

During her first visit to Temple Bar last year, Gicquel observed the passersby outside the gallery, and how this constant presence plays an intrinsic role in the exhibitions. Her observations of hurried purposeful movement in the street prompted a response to slow down and move without intention of getting somewhere, within the exhibition. This sensation is integrated into her work through the symbolism of a meeting point, or place of connection. The large glass windows are a visual and light-porous screen connecting inside and outside, just as the beach is the meeting point between land and sea, constituted by the merging of solid and liquid material. Gicquel utilises the window of the gallery as a site of seeing and being seen. The harmony between stillness and movement is also a feature of her installations, particularly resonant in the slow and meditative performances, where gentle concentration prompts close relationships between objects and bodies.

The setting of the beach is bound to leisurely mindfulness, activated by the relaxing sounds of rolling waves and seabirds. It is expansive by its own nature, and Gicquel plays with the associations of horizontal space between land and sea, and the actions that typically take place there, such as lying down and sunbathing. *sharing skysummer* (2023), a grouping of blue and purple fabric banners,

hangs at floor level in the gallery creating a horizon. It also resembles a windbreaker that offers protection from the elements and the privacy of enclosure. The banners signify potential for reconfiguration and can be folded, stretched and repositioned like picnic blankets, beach towels or semaphore flags. Gicquel hints at the possibility of a 'living painting' that could shift the backdrop of the exhibition, leaving the installation open to change, through the actions of the performers.

Throughout the installation, the channels of sand indicate moments to pause beside glass rock pools, filled with water (*a stone or a wave*, 2023), fragments of mirror and blown-glass implements (body of work for *aquaspace*, 2023). The surrounding areas also draw attention to particles of shell, weathered glass, and hand-formed, coloured paraffin balls; shapes that coalesce the natural and imaginary. During the installation, we reflected on Virginia Woolf's short story 'Solid Objects' (1920). One of its many entwined threads is the protagonist's increasing obsession with the discovery of material fragments (glass worn smooth by the waves, a broken shard of ceramic), however his inquisitiveness and childlike wonder about the sand, and its interaction with water, as well as the "half-conscious reverie" in which he increasingly experiences the world, is particularly resonant with Gicquel's exhibition.

As Woolf describes the 'unmistakable vitality' of figures walking on a deserted beach, Gicquel links the interior and exterior of the gallery, with works that exaggerate and playfully respond to the activity outside and their distance within the protected gallery setting. *mouth was thinking about eyes* (2023), is a trio of suspended glass cones, that reference loudhailers, telescopes, or listening devices that are a direct response to the vibrant and chaotic Temple Bar street, which also create the potential for personal sensory experiences like listening to the sound of the sea inside a shell. Gicquel's use of sand throughout the exhibition avoids a definitive configuration for materials due to its indeterminate positioning, while also acknowledging the links to care and restoration with the beach and sea swimming in the Dublin cityscape.

Three larger sculptures that take the form of disembodied limbs are placed on the floor, or against the wall, their title, *prendre corps*, meaning 'to take shape', draws parallels between the hand-wrought fabrication of the work, its visualisation as sculptural body parts, and activation by performers. Gicquel has considered the implied vulnerability of the objects' exposed knees, elbows and heels by placing upholstered cushions (*rest to the bones*, 2023) between the skeletal joints and the hard surfaces of the building; another point of connection, which has been considered with care and intimacy.

Exhibition text by Michael Hill, Programme Curator, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios.



## List of works:

*how far is it? how far is it now?, 2023*

Cast aluminium, sand, rock

Dimensions variable

body of work for *aquaspace, 2023*

Glass

Dimensions variable

*a stone or a wave, 2023*

Glass

19 x 42 x 39 cm, 15 x 44 x 45 cm,

14 x 44 x 44 cm, 14 x 39 x 40 cm,

18 x 36 x 38 cm

*prendre corps, 2023*

Steel, paraffin, foam, fabric

180 x 35 x 35 cm, 30 x 30 x 120 cm,

35 x 35 x 165 cm

*rest to the bones, 2023*

Foam, fabric, zip

5 x 12 x 40 cm (12 pieces)

*mouth was thinking about eyes, 2023*

Steel, glass

Steel length: 150, 200, 235 cm

Glass: 21 x 21 x 47 cm, 21 x 21 x 47 cm,

21 x 21 x 47 cm

*des astres, des outils, de la musique le jour*

*comme la nuit, 2023*

Brass

5 x 20 x 20 cm, 28 x 9 x 9 cm

*sharing skysummer, 2023*

Cotton, thread

98 x 150, 70 x 250 cm, 98 x 270 cm

*walking, stopping, watching, 2023*

Stainless steel

38 x 14 x 30 cm (pair, each),

18 x 13 x 36 cm (pair, each),

21 x 14 x 32 cm (pair, each)

All works courtesy of the artist and Hua International.

### Performers:

Sarah Joan K

Ania Kudriavtseva

Makrià Midèn

Ellen Reidy

Installation photographs by Louis Haugh.

Photograph for exhibition poster by Mandy O'Neill.

**Fanny Gicquel** lives and works in Rennes.

Her recent solo exhibitions include Hua International, Beijing (2022) and Berlin (2021); the left place the right space, Reims (2020); Passerelle Centre d'art Contemporain, Brest (2020); and Unworlding, Frieze, London (2021). Recent group exhibitions include Frac Bretagne, Rennes (2022); Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art, Nanjing (2022); Art Souterrain, Montreal (2021); Buropolis, Marseille (2021). Gicquel was awarded the Fieldwork Marfa Hostcall Prize, Texas (2022), and the Prix du Frac Bretagne - Art Norac, through a selection process made in collaboration with Frac Bretagne and Temple Bar Gallery + Studios.

The Prix du Frac Bretagne–Art Norac aims to support Bretagne-based artists through annual partnerships with international organisations, which realise a solo exhibition for the awarded artist.

**frac bretagne**  
www.fracbretagne.fr

**Art NORAC**

Temple Bar Gallery + Studios is supported by The Arts Council and Dublin City Council.

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