

09.05–22.11.2026



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

LA

LUXEMBOURG PAVILION

MERDE

ARSENAL • SALE D'ARMI • 1ST FLOOR

ALINE

CURATOR STILBÉ SCHROEDER • CASINO LUXEMBOURG

BOUVY

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The artist

Aline Bouvy (b.1974, Watermael-Boitsfort, Belgium) is a Luxembourgish artist who lives and works in Brussels and Luxembourg. She studied at the ERG – École de Recherche Graphique in Brussels and the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. Her multidisciplinary practice questions social structures, normative systems, and the power mechanisms that control behavior and desire.

Working with detailed formal systems, a rigorous aesthetic, and a decidedly quirky sense of humor, the artist explores how certain norms—especially those related to gender and the body, or to the understanding of cleanliness and dirtiness—establish hierarchies, induce exclusion, or create invisibility. Her projects are inspired by the contexts in which they are exhibited, exploring narratives or images deemed marginal, inappropriate, or unsuitable.

Aline Bouvy describes her approach as an expression of artistic freedom that refuses to adapt to society's expectations, thereby causing friction with its very presence. For her, shame is an area of instability between order and chaos, between the body and its appearance, between symbolism and substance.

In response to the resurgence of exclusionary mechanisms in contemporary society, Aline Bouvy's project, presented at the Biennale Arte 2026, emerges as a coherent choice, transforming the pavilion into an immersive and reflective artistic experience.

La Merde – Presentation of the film project

At the Biennale Arte 2026, Aline Bouvy presents *La Merde*, a film project that is in line with her artistic reflections. The film features a main protagonist—an anthropomorphic excrement figure that, by turns, materializes as a puppet, a 2D animation, a mere trace, and an embodied character. The spectators follow them through various stages of their life: during a hygiene lesson in a classroom their existence comes to serve as a teaching tool; on a tram ride they are restrained, shoved, and made invisible in the public space; in a bar, intimacy and desire become the grounds for negotiating their own body; in a bedroom their solitude reveals the attrition of self-restraint; and finally in a public performance, based on Dan Graham's *Identification/Projection* (1977), they come face-to-face with an audience and a system that leads to judgement, unease, and identification.

Between the scenes, archival images are blended in, drawn from art history, popular culture, scientific illustrations, and the internet, showing bodies as they relieve themselves, expel dejections, lose control, and transgress cleanliness. These documents create a collective memory of the things society tries to relegate to the sidelines—a history of gestures of rejection, their uses, and their moral treatment.

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La Merde is a film that explores shame as a social construct and exposes the thresholds at which humans are categorized, tolerated, repressed, or excluded. Through the figure of the anthropomorphic excrement, the film analyzes the way society produces bodies over which it demands control and restraint. When restraint gives way, not through choice but because a limit has been reached, the situation changes dramatically: that which has been contained, shows its true nature and reveals itself in broad daylight. It leads to a discharge—political, physiological, emotional—where the internalized violence outs itself in the same way in which it was inflicted.

La Merde is a Rabelaisian farce in which the anthropomorphic excrement serves to criticize the place of abjection in Western culture. Here, shame functions as a moving line between inclusion and rejection, between visibility and invisibility. The film is part of a broader theoretical reflection in which abjection is seen as blurring categories, threatening the coherence of the subject, and exceeding the symbolic framework of cleanliness, form, and control. Waste—whether material, emotional, or symbolic—becomes a vector of subversive energy. The figure of the anthropomorphic excrement experiences grotesque, pathetic, ironic, and tender moments, revealing the mechanisms behind rejection and the areas where they crack.

La Merde can be seen as a feminist manifesto in the form of a cinematographic essay, an exploration of shame as a social construct, but also as a potential response to the systemic violence that shapes bodies and behavior.

An immersive audiovisual installation

The audiovisual installation—which consists of a 4.5 by 2-meter high-resolution LED screen set up in the Pavilion—employs cinematography reminiscent of a feature film and uses the conventional codes of cinema.

The film team and cast were selected by the artist, film director, and screenwriter Aline Bouvy. It includes co-screenwriter François Pirot, external eye Tanguy Poujol, director of cinematography Olivier Boonjing, and actors Marie Bos, Damien Chapelle, Lucie Debay, Marc Guillaume, and Louise Manteau; 2D animation by Lora D'Addazio, visual effects by Boris Wilmot, and editing by Laurence Vaes. *La Merde* is a coproduction by Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, escautville, and Salzburger Kunstverein.

Sound plays an essential role in the installation. It was designed in partnership with sound engineer and composer Pierre Dozin, with whom the artist has collaborated for many years.

The design uses cutting-edge audio spatialization tools that evolve and transform in real time.

The acoustics were designed to create an anthropomorphic, lively, almost autonomous entity, a space that is in constant flux, blurring the lines between the soundtrack and the surrounding space. The audience is immersed in a dynamic soundscape, a unique experience where the audio unfolds freely.

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To ensure full immersion, a soundproofed, semi-circular structure was designed in collaboration with architect Antoine Rocca and Ateliers Arseni (Brice Dreessen). It consists of a pre-existing, newly adjusted version of the work *Wall* (2025-26), a mirror-glass and steel structure produced for Bouvy's solo exhibition *Hot Flashes* at Casino Luxembourg in 2025. The mirrored surface creates layers of reflections, blurring the perception of the surrounding space and of one's own place within it, entangling the relationships it forms.

The augmented visual experience is enhanced by a sculpture representing an imaginary character. Exposing yourself, being yourself, or being someone else leads to an extraordinary experience. An alter-ego in the body of a utopian mutant, where the appearance of the extra-terrestrial from Steven Spielberg's iconic film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) merges with the face and body of the artist and becomes *E.T. The Excremential* (title of the sculpture). As a modern, popular tale of difference and otherness, the sculpture resonates with the film in its engagement with the abject.

La Merde is an immersive audiovisual installation that combines film, sound, and sculpture into a hybrid experience. The scene is set; an inner upheaval may arise.

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VISUAL IDENTITY

The poster design

Aline Bouvy's project *La Merde* is first and foremost a film. The decision to rely on typography alone was an instinctive choice as the title is already charged emotionally, politically, and poetically; it is brutal yet ambiguous, raw yet mysterious.

Set against a black background, the title's brown lettering embodies the topic at hand, becoming a physical, organic, and almost tangible presence. The white lettering, smaller and set between the brown blocks, acts as captions or subtitles, structuring the silence and creating a rhythm for the reader, reminiscent a film sequence.

The typeface

The title *La Merde* is set in Futura. Created in the 1920s by Paul Renner, the typeface embodies the modernist belief in rational nature, clarity, and the universality of the character. Its geometric design, meticulous and unembellished, evokes order, functionality, progress—the exact opposite of what the title stands for. This contrast forms the very core of the project's visual identity and enhances the impact of the content, as the "cold" font is used to refer to organic matter. The title becomes an object that is both linguistic and sculptural.

By accepting the confrontation between form and meaning, the visual identity echoes the spirit of modernity while also highlighting its flaws: the supposed neutrality, the fear of the body, and the rejection of what is abject. The design turns the title into something that is striking, composed, and head-on.

PUBLICATION

The publication is a book-object, dense yet simple. With approximately 300 pages, it was designed as a visual archive and manifesto. The book includes about 250 images taken from art history, popular culture, folklore, academic research, and the internet. Rasterized and printed in a brown duotone, the images have been consciously standardized, despite the wide range of sources, to create a visual continuum that transcends time and categories. The graphic flow presents images of excrement—as matter, metaphor, or political act—throughout the centuries.

The book opens with a preface by the editorial directors, Stilbé Schroeder (curator of the Pavilion) and Mirela Baciak (director of Salzburger Kunstverein). Additional texts were commissioned from British researcher, writer, and critic Robert Garnett and Belgian writer, artist, and activist Jessica

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Gysel. The text is followed by a section of captions and a selection of color stills from the film. The publication is considered a work in its own right, both conceptual and sensory and is co-published by Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, Triangle Books and Salzburger Kunstverein.

BIOGRAPHIES

Aline Bouvy, artist

Aline Bouvy (b. 1974 in Watermael-Boitsfort, Belgium, lives and works in Brussels and Luxembourg) is a visual artist whose work touches on the universal. She studied at the ERG – École de Recherche Graphique in Brussels and at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. Her art acts as a tool for questioning bodies, spaces, and norms, subverting conventions while drawing on a feminist vision. Among her solo exhibitions, *Cruising Bye* at MACS Grand-Hornu in Charleroi in 2022 constitutes the largest selection of her works shown to date. Her work has been recently exhibited at Triangle-Astérides in Marseille (2024), Kunsthall Gent in Ghent (2021), New Space in Liège (2020), and Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (2019). In 2025, Aline Bouvy presented the solo show *Hot Flashes* at Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain. The exhibition featured works that played with scale and perception, and invited visitors to question their relationships with the body, identity, and social spaces.

Stilbé Schroeder, curator

After living, studying, and working in Brussels and Strasbourg, Stilbé Schroeder (b. 1985, Luxembourg) returned to Luxembourg in 2015 and joined Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain as exhibition coordinator. In 2017 and 2019, she was assistant curator of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the International Art Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia. Since 2023, she has been head of exhibitions and curator, participating in the reflections and the development of Casino's exhibition program.

Robert Garnett, author

Robert Garnett is a researcher, writer, and independent critic based in London. Since the mid-1990s, he has published reviews in various magazines and journals in the United Kingdom and abroad. His theoretical work has appeared in various collective works, books, and journals. His recent research has explored ethics, aesthetics, and the use of pre-absurd humor, rhythm, and the notion of the inframince in contemporary art.

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Jessica Gysel, author

Jessica Gysel is an editor, author and cultural events organizer. In 2005, she co-founded the magazine *Girls Like Us*, a queer-feminist art magazine that questions gender binaries and explores the body, desire, activism, and community. Her approach focuses on collective practice, inclusive publishing, and creating communities (queer and feminist).

Her recent projects include *Love and Lightning, A Collection of Queer and Feminist Manifestos* (Girls Like Us/Valiz, 2025) and *Spiraling*, a collective exhibition at CRAC Alsace in Strasbourg. Her writing has been published in *Metropolis M*, *Glean* (formerly HART) and *MacGuffin*. Currently, she is the coordinator for Team Publiek at the Kaaitheater in Brussels.

Triangle Books, editor

Triangle Books is an independent publisher based in Brussels, Belgium. Founded by Olivier Vandervliet, Triangle Books designs, produces, and distributes books, catalogues, and limited editions produced in close collaboration with artists, institutions, and galleries.

ABOUT

La Biennale di Venezia

Founded in 1895, La Biennale di Venezia is considered one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world. At the forefront of research and promotion of new trends in contemporary art, events are held for several disciplines: art (since 1895), architecture (since 1980), cinema (since 1932), dance (since 1999), music (since 1930), and theatre (since 1934), alongside research and training activities.

The history of La Biennale di Venezia is documented in its historical archives, located in Marghera, and the library in the main pavilion in the Giardini. The format for the international art and architecture exhibitions was changed in 1998. In recent years, La Biennale di Venezia has developed new teaching activities, training programs (Biennale College), conferences and round tables at its headquarters at Ca' Giustinian.

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Luxembourg at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Since 1988, Luxembourg has taken part regularly in the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia. Initially set in different locations, the Luxembourg Pavilion settled on the ground floor in the Ca' del Duca on the Canale Grande. In 2003, Luxembourg won the Lion d'Or for the best pavilion with artist Su-Mei Tse. Since 2018, the Luxembourg Pavilion (architecture and art) has been presented inside the Arsenale in a section of the Sale d'Armi according to a contract signed in 2017 by the government of Luxembourg and La Biennale di Venezia Foundation, guaranteeing the country's presence in the Arsenale for twenty years.

About the commissioner, Kultur | Ix – Arts Council Luxembourg

Kultur | Ix – Arts Council Luxembourg was created in July 2020 as an initiative of the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture. The establishment of this new tool for the support, promotion and development of the Luxembourgish cultural scene is the result of a broad consultation with the creative sector.

Kultur | Ix is the chosen intermediary for support and promotion of professionals in the following sectors: Architecture, Design, Arts and craft, Multimedia and digital arts, Visual arts, Literature and publishing, Music, Performing arts.

In 2022, Kultur | Ix was appointed commissioner of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the International Art and Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia by the Ministry of Culture.

More information: www.kulturlx.lu

About Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain

Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain is an internationally renowned art center and a hub for contemporary creation in Luxembourg, with a strong focus on supporting and promoting emerging artists. Housed in the historic 19th-century building of the former Casino Bourgeois, this public institution, located in the heart of the capital, has become a place of artistic experimentation and creation open to everyone. Its bold and innovative programming invites visitors to discover artists from across the world. Driven by sensitivity, a sensory experience, and artistic affinities, Casino Luxembourg embraces ambitious research and forward-looking exploration. Committed to making contemporary art accessible to all audiences, it complements its exhibitions with a varied program of talks, encounters, educational activities, and workshops for young visitors. Many projects are accompanied by publications—visual, sound, or audiovisual.

More information: www.casino-luxembourg.lu

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COLOPHON

61st International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia
Luxembourg Pavilion, Arsenale. Sale d'Armi 1st floor

La Merde
Aline Bouvy

Commissioner appointed by the Ministry of Culture, Luxembourg: Kultur | Ix – Arts Council Luxembourg
Curator: Stilbé Schroeder | Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain

Exhibitor: Aline Bouvy

Assistant curator: Thibaud Leplat

Organizer: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain

Visual Identity: Olivier Vandervliet | Triangle Books

Film

Coproduction: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, escautville, Salzburger Kunstverein

Artist: Aline Bouvy

Screenwriters: Aline Bouvy, François Pirot

External eye: Tanguy Poujol

Director of photography: Olivier Boonjing

Production director: Ravit Bechor

Post-production director: Julien Sigalas – Stempel

Actors: Marie Bos, Damien Chapelle, Lucie Debay, Marc Guillaume, Louise Manteau

Sound engineer/composer: Pierre Dozin – Late Bush

2D animations: Lora D'Addazio

Visual effects: Boris Wilmot

Editing: Laurence Vaes

Scenography

Scenography: Antoine Rocca, Brice Dreessen – Ateliers Arseni, Bureau Des Solutions

Sound design: Pierre Dozin – Sonic Shelter

Original Score: Late Bush

Executive producer: ARTER

Bronze work: Art Casting

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Publication

Co-published by: Casino Luxembourg — Forum d'art contemporain, Triangle Books, Salzburger Kunstverein

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Luxembourg Pavilion, Arsenale. Sale d'Armi 1st floor

Sestiere Castello, Campo Della Tana 2169/F, 30122 Venice

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Official opening of the Luxembourg Pavilion

Thursday, 7 May 2026 at 17:30

Press preview of the Luxembourg Pavilion

Thursday, 7 May 2026 at 14:00 TBC

Preview days at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia

6-8 May 2026

Exhibition

9 May to 22 November 2026

Summer opening hours: from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (from May to September, last entry at 6.45 p.m.)

Until the end of September, Arsenal site only: late opening on Fridays and Saturdays until 8 p.m. (last entry at

7.45 p.m.) Autumn opening hours: from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (from October to 22 November, last entry at 5.45 p.m.)

Closed on Mondays (apart from 11 May and 16 November)

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