

GOWEN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

CLOSE ENCOUNTER

JÉRÔME ZONDER
JAN STEENMAN

GOWEN LAB

Rue Jean-Calvin 4

November 5 – December 5, 2026

Press Release | GOWEN | 2026

This Autumn, GOWEN is pleased to present ***Close Encounter***, a joint exhibition by leading French artist and draughtsman **Jérôme Zonder** (b. 1974, Paris) and Swiss artist-sculptor **Jan Steenman** (b. 1994, Geneva).

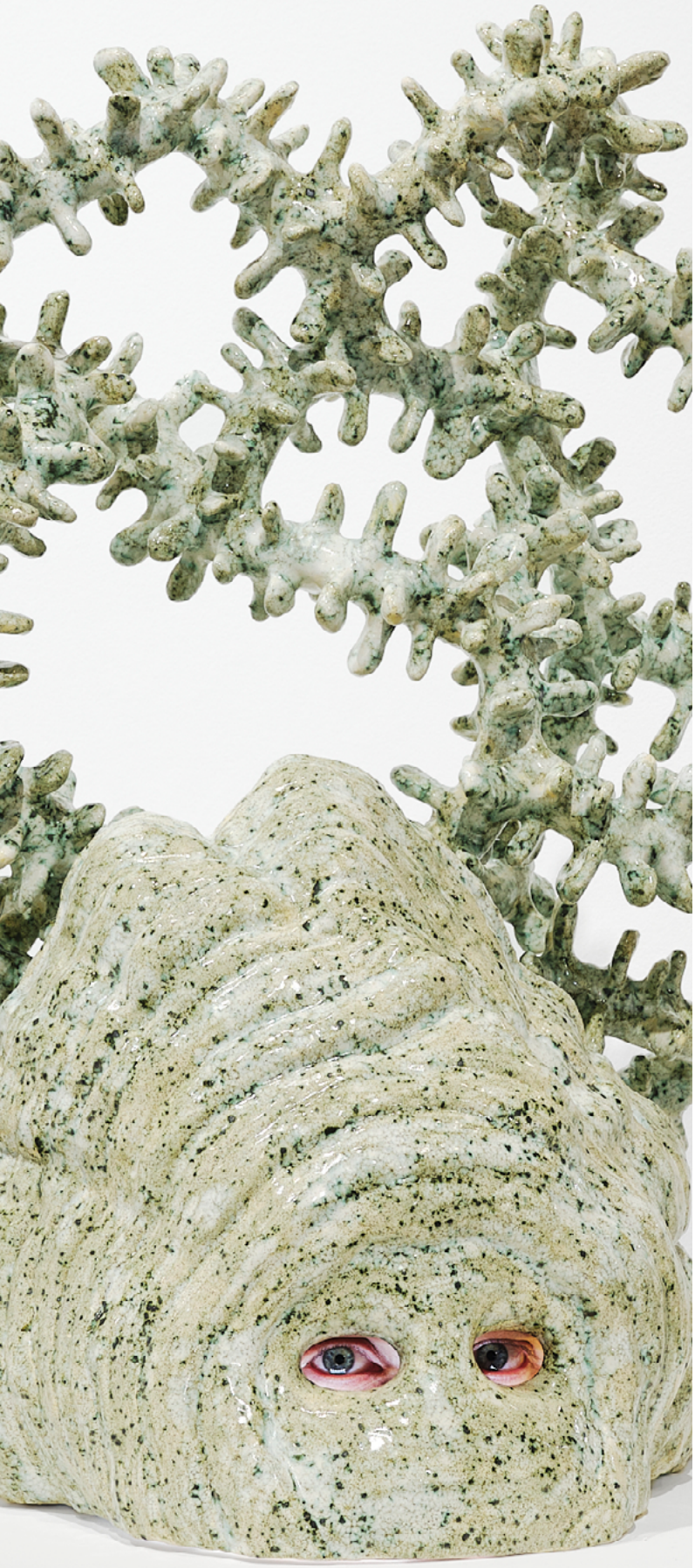
On view at the gallery's second space, conceived to offer a more immediate encounter with experimental works, the show brings together a selection of Zonder's small-format drawings with sculptural work by Steenman.

Zonder, who, for the past 20 years has developed a virtuosic oeuvre centred on the constantly reinvented practice of drawing, moves repeatedly between precise figuration and abstraction. His broad range of expression, from hyperrealistic portraiture to caricature is typically executed with obsessive attention to detail, without using instruments or even an eraser. Instead, using his fingertips, charcoal and graphite powder are smudged onto paper or occasionally on canvas surfaces.

Known for his monumental, immersive installations, the current show brings attention to the artist's smaller, intimate works. At this reduced scale, fingerprints, lines and accumulations of graphite reveal the physical gestures through which the image is made. Drawn from sources ranging from art history and popular culture to cinema and comics, Zonder's images – often integrating eyes or other parts of the body – shift between the familiar and the unsettling, resisting a single or immediate reading.



Jérôme Zonder, *Nous #1*, 2018,
Graphite and charcoal on paper, 200 x 150 cm.
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © The Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia.



In his sculptural work, Jan Steenman combines technical mastery with originality, imagination, and emotional depth. His sculptures, sometimes even involving the presence of the artist himself, reflect a distinctive artistic vision pushing beyond the conventional notions of sculpture.

In *Numineux*, 2025, a performative sculpture, Steenman conceals his own body within the ceramic form, becoming part of the structure's being and activating the work from within. A human presence reveals itself only gradually, shifting the viewer's perception between body and object. Like Zonder's drawings, the work asks for close and sustained looking: what appears at first to be a self-contained form begins to disclose another reality.

Presented in proximity, the pairing of these two contrasting artistic practices raises questions about how a portrait is formed, what it reveals and what it leaves unseen, while highlighting a shared concern with the body as both image and material presence. In Zonder's works, which question the very notion of portraiture, the body enters the drawing through the direct trace of the artist's fingers; in Steenman's, the body is physically absorbed into the sculpture itself. Across these independent approaches, figuration emerges, disappears and reappears, challenging conventional notions of representation.

Jan Steenman, *Numineux*, 2025,
Unique performative sculpture - Glazed ceramic, 58 x 70 x 43 cm.
Courtesy of The Artist and GOWEN. © Thomas Annaheim Lambert.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

JÉRÔME ZONDER



© Marc Domage

Graduating from the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2001, **Jérôme Zonder** (b. 1974, Paris) has, for the last 20 years, developed a virtuosic work centered on the constantly reinvented practice of drawing. The variations in the scale of his works - realized in lead pencil and charcoal - generate spatial circulation games: the visitor strolls spatially and mentally through the mysteries of an extremely vivid polygraphic system. In his work, there are neighboring references to Albrecht Dürer, Robert Crumb, Rembrandt, Charles Burns, Otto Dix and Walt Disney, and together, these compose narratives with eclectic, sometimes cruel themes: "Narration pulls us into the drawing, and only the body keeps us on the surface. Drawing, for me, is existing constantly between distance and proximity, figuration and abstraction, attraction and repulsion."

Jérôme Zonder's work is the subject of acclaimed solo exhibitions such as: *Au Village* at Lieu unique (Nantes, France, 2014), *Fatum* at the Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France, 2015), *The Dancing Room* at the Tinguely Museum (Basel, Switzerland, 2017), *Devenir traces* gathering more than 130 works in the historical spaces at the Chateau de Chambord (Chambord, France, 2018) and *Jérôme Zonder*, Portraits at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France, 2019). In 2023, the artist had a solo exhibition at Casino Luxembourg (Luxembourg) as well as at the Museum of Jewish Art and History in 2024 (Paris, France).

The artist has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Le Massacre des Innocents: Poussin*, Picasso, Bacon at the Musée Condé curated by Laurent Le Bon and Pierre Rosenberg (2017, Chantilly, France), *Guernica* at the Musée Picasso Paris (Paris, France, 2018), *Quel amour!?* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille (France, 2018) and at the Berardo Museum (Lisbon, Portugal, 2019), *Déflagrations - Dessins d'enfants et violences de masse* at the MUCEM (Marseille, France, 2021), *La Beauté du Diable* at the FRAC Franche-Comté (Besançon, France, 2022) and at the MO.CO. in Montpellier (France, 2023).Jérôme Zonder is receiving increasing attention on the international scene, as demonstrated by his participation in the exhibitions *Prière de toucher* at the Museum Tinguely (Basel, Switzerland, 2016), *La jeune fille et la mort* at the Drawing Centre Diepenheim (Diepenheim, Netherlands, 2016), XXL, *Le dessin en grand* and *Art cruel* at the Musée Jenisch Vevey (Switzerland, 2021-2022) and *Traverser la nuit - Works From The Antoine de Galbert Collection* at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon, Portugal, 2022).

His works can be found in numerous international collections, including: the Istanbul Modern Museum (Istanbul, Turkey), the Musée Jenisch Vevey (Switzerland), the Musée des beaux-arts du Locle (Le Locle, Switzerland), the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Neuchâtel (Neuchâtel, Switzerland), the Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain (Paris, France), the Abattoirs, Musée - FRAC Occitanie (Toulouse, France), FRAC Picardie (Amiens, France), FRAC Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand, France), Musée des Beaux-Art (Paris, France), Musée National de l'histoire de l'immigration (Paris, France), Collection Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France), Fondation Emerige, Collection Laurent Dumas (Paris, France), and Collection Florence et Daniel Guerlain (Paris, France). Jérôme Zonder has been represented by GOWEN since 2025 and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

JAN STEENMAN



Jan Steenman (b. 1994, Geneva) is a sculptor of Dutch and Swedish heritage. He works from his studio in Geneva's Quartier des Bains. He studied at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (Bachelor's degree, 2018), followed by a Master's degree at HEAD – Genève (2022). Today, he devotes his practice entirely to ceramics as a sculptural medium. His works have been exhibited in several institutions and art venues in Switzerland and internationally.

In Geneva, the Musée Ariana acquired his work *Biface I* and presented it as part of the exhibition *Liberté Conditionnelle* (2024–2025). His sculpture *Veritas Humanum Est* was exhibited at the Palais de Justice during the third edition of the HeART Biennale (2022).

Internationally, his sculptures have been presented at KunstRAI Amsterdam, FLATLAND Gallery in Amsterdam, and the Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert, California. In 2019, he exhibited and participated in an artist residency at Het HEM, a contemporary art centre in the Netherlands. In January 2026, he presented his series *Mutualisme* in a solo exhibition at Art Genève. This ongoing exploration continues in his Geneva studio and at the Fondation Bruckner, before extending to the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in the Netherlands, where he undertakes a three-month residency. During this residency, he pushes the boundaries of his working methodology by experimenting with larger and more complex sculptural forms. This is the artist's first collaboration with the gallery.