

GOWEN

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

**WHAT
IS
REALLY
MATTER**

**SYLVIE
LAMBERT**

Press Release |

March 5 - May 16 | 2026

Public opening
March 5th
from 5pm to 8pm
In the presence of the artist

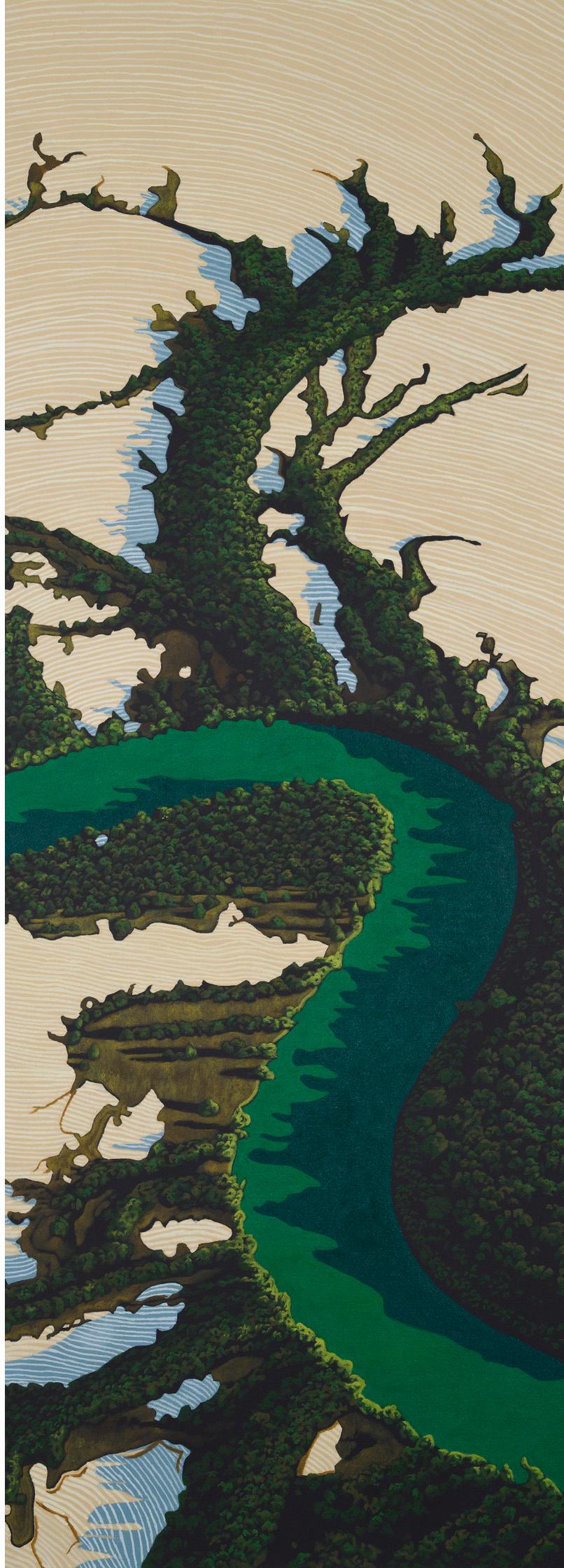
This spring, GOWEN is excited to present ***What Is Really Matter***, the first solo exhibition by Canadian-French artist **Sylvie Lambert** (b. 1984, Montréal). Following her participation in several of the gallery's recent group presentations, the show unveils a brand new body of work produced predominantly since 2025.

Marking a decisive evolution in Lambert's artistic practice, the exhibition comprises around eighteen paintings and drawings, executed in oil, acrylic, and coloured pencil, and includes a specially conceived wallpaper installation created from magnolia leaves. Together, these works articulate a sustained reflection on the notion of matter - understood simultaneously as solid substance and as an invisible, spiritual, or energetic force that exceeds material definition.

Central to the exhibition is the idea of cyclical balance and interrelation. Lambert's work reflects how these concepts, present in the seasons, the human body, nature, and life itself create a whole, within which everything is understood as part of a cycle, and where each ending opens into renewal. This balance unfolds across physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, finding expression in rhythms, where human, natural, and inner realms remain in continuous dialogue.

In her paintings, Lambert constructs matter at the surface of the canvas through the interplay of light, colour, texture and gesture. Pigment becomes substance, and surface becomes a site of encounter between the tangible and the intangible. The act of painting itself is something on which the artist thrives and central to her inquiry, grounding abstraction and imagination within a physical, lived process. Through this approach, she gives form to sensations, energies, and presences that resist direct representation. As she states, "*In the end, I paint what really matters - the living - through life embodied in matter.*"

Sylvie Lambert, *With the flow* (detail), 2025,
Acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm.
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © Claude Cortinovic.





Many of the works are set - as is customary for the artist - within unfamiliar or subtly displaced environments. These imagined spaces destabilise notions of normality and invite viewers into a world where the boundaries between the real and the unreal are deliberately blurred. Lambert combines elements drawn from everyday life with fantastical or incongruous details, creating compositions that oscillate between recognition and estrangement.

Recurring motifs serve as anchors within this shifting terrain. Fungi appear frequently throughout the exhibition, embodying a complex symbolic role. Simultaneously fragile and resilient, they elicit ideas of danger and magic, collapse and revival, rooted in the ground yet capable of sudden re-emergence.

The magnolia leaves used in the wallpaper installation extend these concerns into the exhibition environment itself. Collected after summer, the dried leaves are reassembled into an immersive curtain, these remnants of the natural world, in the hands of Lambert are not fixed in their state of decay but granted a renewed presence. Evoking cycles of material transformation and metamorphosis, the work recalls the myth of the phoenix and reinforces the exhibition's meditation on reassertion or the persistence of matter.

Shaped by her personal journey, Lambert's work unfolds through narratives that are poetic, humorous - often with a subtle sense of second-degree irony - and at times quietly dystopian. While she does not identify as a Native person, the artist's origins in Quebec are accompanied by an intuitive and spiritual trace of her Iroquois Native American heritage. This sensibility, combined with later French and Swiss influences, informs her artistic language and contributes to its layered complexity.



Sylvie Lambert, *Volcanious* (detail), 2025, Acrylic and colored pencils on canvas, 120 x 150 cm.
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © Claude Cortinovis.

Lambert's thinking is particularly arborescent, branching and associative, a mode of thought perhaps intensified by the imaginative use of the Québécois language. She conceives her canvases as sentence elements, where a shift in context, form, or relation can entirely alter meaning. Attentive to the power of communication in all its forms, Lambert considers words as carriers of history and images as possessing an even greater capacity for universality and intuition.

Rendered in a flamboyant chromatic palette, the artist's imaginary worlds draw inspiration from her everyday milieu, touching on habitat, food, artificial or disfigured nature while extending toward more universal meanings. Within her contemporary compositions, distinctions between décor, reality, fantasy, and fiction intertwine, offering a layered exploration of life, matter, and the strange, magical connections that bind them.

Sylvie Lambert has been represented by GOWEN since 2023.