

ARNAUD RIVIEREN  
NATURAL SUBLIME

October 7 – December 4, 2021



Custot Gallery Dubai is pleased to announce the first solo show by Dubai-based Belgian sculptor Arnaud Rivieren. Entitled *Natural Sublime*, the exhibition presents three new bodies of work that deepen the artist's engagement with representing our natural world through painstakingly precise industrial techniques.

Increasingly known for his series of oversized fruits and vegetables in reflective stainless-steel, Rivieren has built his practice on the twin pillars of respect for nature—by monumentalizing not only fruits and vegetables, but stones and trees—and an extreme attention to the shapes within the non-human realm.

Swollen to a scale that obliges viewers to assess their own physical presence in the gallery, the fruits and vegetables render nature's structural complexity. We sense the hidden geometric intricacy of works like the fig sculpture *Tyn* (2021), the subtle joint-like fixture of the cherry sculptures *Karaz* (2021), and the curvy regularity of the oversized capsicum *Felfel* (2021). The works' smooth reflective surfaces make an encounter with them oddly intimate, as they mirror the gaze back. While each specimen captures a perfect, almost archetypal form of the fruit, such as the shapely apple of *Touffaha Hamra* (2021), each work bears idiosyncrasies—surface pocks, textural patches, a defiant stem—that distinguish them individually. The play of perishable fruits created in corrosion resistant stainless-steel is emblematic of Rivieren's sensitive wit.

*Erratics*, a series of large and mid-size stones and rocks, sculpted in a darker, less reflective grade of steel, evokes the ancient boulders that have been transported by glaciers and deposited into regions where they differ from native rocks in both scale and composition. Like the fruits and vegetables, the *Erratics* invite touch and provoke an unusual connection with the viewer. But they are graver, as if their tale were more solemn: they ask us to reckon with them, to stand still and be silent. They are an homage to the truly eternal.

Equally monumental, Rivieren's series of trees freeze-frames a moment in a long-life cycle. The three works—*Oak (2020)*, *Ghaf (2021)*, and *Maritime Pine (2021)*—hold nothing extraneous: the architecture of the tree alone matters, and each transmits its unique tangle of life, from trunk to crown. Of all the works in *Natural Sublime*, these are the least intimate, yet they are the most emphatic. Here, the artist's deep respect of nature converges with his mastery of both material and technique.

#### *About the Artist:*

Arnaud Rivieren, born in Brussels in 1966, is a Dubai-based contemporary sculptor specialized in repurposing discarded industrial materials, which are scavenged around the dense industrial areas and scrapyards of the UAE.

Working in Dubai since 2002 after having lived in Singapore, Arnaud Rivieren has set-up his foundry in Jebel Ali, the heart of Dubai's expanding industrial landscape, in front of a scrapyard serving as source material for his large-scale outdoor sculptures.

Involved in the Oil and Gas field, Arnaud Rivieren has worked extensively in the steel industry, influencing his sculpting approach, teaching him the different properties of metals and alloys, bending, contorting and twisting, as well as industrial finishing techniques.

Rivieren transforms raw materials, such as tubular steel, iron beams and barrels through rigorous steel crafting techniques to produce large-scale outdoor sculptures. These structures contradict the solid and rigid function of the initial material and reveal a completely new shape, form and purpose for what was once deemed as disposable and forgotten.

This environmentally conscious practice has come to define the heart of Arnaud Rivieren's work. Often looking back towards nature for his inspiration, expanding it and subliming it through the lens of a metal-bending master, creating a dialogue between the organic natural elements and industrial recycled materials.

Arnaud Rivieren exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at B21 Gallery (2006 and 2008), Dubai; Gallery Leila Heller (2009), New York, LKFF (2011), Brussels and La Galerie Nationale (2014 and 2017), Dubai. In 2012, his installation *Paper Plane* was presented in the heart of Brussels and at Parc Egmont as part of Art Brussels's Art in the City programme. His works were exhibited in the Belgian Pavilion during Shanghai World Expo in 2010 and he has participated in the first two editions of Bastakiya Art fair (now Sikka Art Fair). He has participated in group shows at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde curated by Amanda Abu Khalil in 2016 and curated by Yasmina Reggad in 2017. Collections and public acquisitions include TDIC Culture (UAE), Masdar (UAE), Fondation Herpain (Brussels) and the Randolph Hearst Collection (USA).