

# SAUROCTONE YAN TOMASZEWSKI

Solo show  
March 14 – May 24, 2025  
Curating by Patrice Joly

Yan Tomaszewski has a particular interest in the sauroctone saints, these monster-slaying saints, whose origins are lost in the meanders of Christianity's prehistory, encapsulate a number of themes, such as the persistence of pagan cults, imagery that could be described as fantastic, and the fear people have of rivers, which can cause devastating floods. This fear is embodied in the figure of the monsters (dragons and other devils) that the saints in question come to fight. There is also a moral background to the struggle waged by the saints, and therefore by Christianity, against the forces of nature that need to be mastered.

Although eels do not belong to this legendary category of animals, they do resemble it in their movements and their serpentine appearance, which also reminds us of the course of wild rivers. In the 13th century, eels were the subject of excommunication proceedings, reflecting the way in which local populations viewed these animals, which were suspected of being evil. This very contemporary subjectivisation of the animal is accompanied by a desire to punish these animals, a moral connotation that can also be found in the term 'correction' applied to the rectification of river courses, a term that is still in use today.

These eels are now threatened with extinction precisely because of the many changes that man has made to wild rivers, making it increasingly difficult for them to reach their breeding grounds. At the same time, they are the subject of extensive research by scientists who are studying movements capable of propelling them to the middle of the ocean using a minimum of energy : the art centre will be presenting an 'eel robot' that reproduces the shape and movement of the animal, designed in collaboration with the Robotics and Life laboratory at IMT Atlantique in Nantes. An avatar that also refers to the very contemporary and, to say the least,

distressing desire to replace the living by machines, a theme that goes hand in hand with the artist's preoccupations: he has already looked into the question of the river and the conservation of its biotope, not forgetting all the religious events that are attached to it, and which have already been the subject of a major project by the artist with the Jean Collet Municipal Gallery and the MACVAL, located near the banks of the Seine.

For the *Sauroctone* exhibition at the Zoo art centre, the artist has created a large-scale installation made up of islands that display a number of elements linked to the historiography of rivers and the mythologies they inspire, notably by producing a stained-glass window depicting the famous Saint Sauroctone, and by creating hybrid sculptures in ceramic and coloured glass that offer renewed imagery of the river imagination. This imagery is blurred by the thousands of microplastics that cover the floor of these islets and open our eyes to the reality of the damage being done to the biotope, while the robotic eel, over and above the scientific feat that it represents, alerts us to the threats facing the fauna of natural aquatic environments.

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If you'd like to keep up to date with all the latest news, check out the art centre's website ([www.zoo-cac.fr](http://www.zoo-cac.fr)), Instagram (@zoo.cac) and sign up for our newsletter.

If you have any questions about the Sauroctone exhibition, don't hesitate to ask the on-site mediation team. We're here to help!

1. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*La Correction*, 2025.  
Leather whip, enamelled  
stoneware, variable dimensions.

2. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*Fluviatile beasts*, 2025.  
Installation, glazed stoneware,  
blown glass, plastic shavings,  
sand, dimensions variable.

3. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*Sauroctone*, 2023.  
Stained glass mounted  
on brushed steel lightbox,  
52 x 62 x 9 cm.

4. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*La Correction*, 2025.  
Plexiglas print mounted on a  
luminous caisson of chestnut  
wood, 73 x 104 x 9 cm.

5. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*Post-eel*, 2025.  
Animatronic system, PLA and  
PC printing, Python programme,  
variable dimensions.

6. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*Meandering*, 2025.  
Wood, mortar, fluorescein,  
115 x 240 x 5 cm.

7. Yan Tomaszewski,  
*La Correction*, 2025.  
Sound extracts from the  
film in post-production,  
with Mathis Josselin and  
Alexandros Anastasiadis,  
3 minutes 35 seconds.

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Amélie Vidgrain, Jean-Claude Legrand,  
Aurore Branswyck, Clémence Pétard,  
Simon Muller, Elisabeth de Bourleuf,  
Evor, Raphaël Sprenger, Christophe  
Constantin, Mathis Josselin, Alexandros  
Anastasiadis, Simon Bousquet,  
Seoyoung Choe and Florence Hamon.

Thanks to our partners for this  
exhibition, IMT Atlantique -  
Laboratoire Robotique et Vivant,  
EPFL - Plateforme de constructions  
hydrauliques and Eco Recycling.

Several of the works in the exhibition  
were co-produced with the École d'art  
de Douai, Ateliers Médicis, Ateliers de la  
Ville de Nantes BONUS and Ferme Asile.

