

HAUSER & WIRTH
INVITE(S) **ARTHUR**
GILLET

3 – 26 SEPTEMBER

WITH A
TEXT BY

PATRICIA FALGUIÈRES

IN COLLABORATION
WITH

LA COLLECTIVE

GREATER PARIS



Arthur Gillet, Le Regard, 2026 © Arthur Gillet

A TEXT BY PATRICIA FALGUIÈRES

Edison, the story goes, reinvented the telegraph and then went on to invent the telephone receiver: a needle fixed to a membrane that transcribed Morse signals. Severely deaf, he had to run a fingertip along the needle to judge the strength of the incoming signal, and the day it drew blood he understood just how much force a membrane could exert once a magnetic system set it moving. ‘A telegraph as an artificial mouth, a telephone as an artificial ear—the stage was set for the phonograph’.¹ This play of substitutions, so much a part of how invention works, runs right through Arthur Gillet’s own practice. Think of everything that makes up an Italian Annunciation: a pink cubicle, inside or in front of which—depending on the version—a haloed woman sits with her hands clasped to her breast, an arrow piercing her ear, and an angel whose wings and halo leave no doubt as to who they are. Yet the two figures keep none of the distances pictorial tradition asks of them. They stand too close, and the angel is busy working a push-button telephone, wired by all the familiar machinery of sacred illumination—leading lines, coloured diagrams, halos and mystical fringes—to a transmission mast and a satellite. In the same breath, Gillet stages, as a *Sacra Conversazione* or a miraculous apparition, the glow of a baby monitor switching on, a row of coloured indicator lights, or a computer screen: the everyday technological miracles of a household with Deaf parents and hearing children. Gillet is what is known as a CODA—a child who, unlike his parents, can hear.

That is what made him such an accomplished interpreter, turning lip movements, expressions, gestures and signs into speech and speech back into

gesture and sign. He was the go-between his parents could not do without whenever they had to deal with hospitals, schools or the ANPE [job centre]—institutions wholly deaf to sign language, a code then barely tolerated and kept firmly to the private sphere. In solidarity with the swell of demands that led, in 2005, to the official recognition of French Sign Language as a language in its own right under the Republic, Gillet has been concerned, both individually and collectively, with activist campaigns that build on this legal revolution—for example, arranging, while he was in Tirana, one of the first meetings between hearing and Deaf Albanians. But it is the CODA way of life itself that he has opened up as a field of extraordinary richness. In a frieze 23 metres long and 1.70 metres high, shown in Berlin in 2023 [*Tout ce dont vous n’avez jamais entendu parler*], he unrolled across a silk panel, as in a *Golden Legend*, the searing history of his mother and her generation—a lavish account of empowerment and of a minority asserting itself, civically and politically, at last acknowledged, and told from the vantage point of the angel with detachable wings: the spokeschild. In 2026, for the Hilma af Klint exhibition, his tall silk banners hung like pennons beneath the arches of the Grand Palais, giving allegorical form to the mysteries of telepathy, telephony and auditory hallucination, from the age of the telegraph to that of cyberspace.

A third series belongs unmistakably with the first two. Borrowing the format of the little panels set into predellas—the bases that run beneath altarpieces—Gillet paints the fraught, unpredictable and often contradictory daily life of a family on the outskirts of Rennes through the 1990s and 2000s, its moments of anger and distress included. The strict perspectival framing looks lifted straight from manuals on the art of memory (how to build a *site of memory*), and while Gillet is not above nodding to G.B. Tiepolo or Watteau,

these panels answer to the Quattrocento even more strictly than the silk paintings do—when they do not simply lift specific motifs outright, such as the pink town walls of Cristoforo de Predis or, again by the same artist (a deaf illuminator at the Milanese court), the splintered ruins of a city at the end of time. Why such a pull towards an art so remote in time and place? Perhaps because nothing has ever told a story better. Centred perspective and *historia* forged a bond that could not be undone, holding each scene apart as the narrative moves forward, so that every ‘event’ or ‘moment’ can be dwelt on in its own right—and so offering, well beyond any sociological reading, a figural one: ‘history, with all its concrete force, remains forever a figure, cloaked and needful of interpretation. [...]’.² In short, because what cannot be represented can still be depicted. Hence, in the Italian *Quattrocento*, the deep affinity between the making of perspective and the Annunciation itself: everything inexplicable, immeasurable and invisible in the Incarnation, which the Angel’s words disclose to the Virgin, is set before us through the construction of space—through a swerve away from the norms of representation. Figurally ³. Every one of Arthur Gillet’s paintings turns on this: the artist is the one who slips free of the old quarrel between word and gesture, and speaks instead through figures.

1 Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Eng. by Geoff Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

2 Erich Auerbach, ‘Figura’, in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1984).

3 See Daniel Arasse, *L’Annonciation italienne. Une histoire de perspective* (Vanves: Hazan, 1999).



Arthur Gillet, La naissance de l'écriture, 2026 © Arthur Gillet

HAUSER & WIRTH INVITE(S)

This initiative reflects Hauser & Wirth's longstanding commitment to building a sense of connection in the places where it works, collaborating with artists (or estates) who may benefit from an additional platform, galleries of different scale and writers addressing new audiences, all in support of a sustainable art ecosystem. By hosting fellow artists, galleries and writers in our Paris and Zurich spaces, we offer wider visibility of their work and ideas to engage with the city's vibrant creative community.

Organized with Olivier Renaud-Clement, Hauser & Wirth Invite(s) is hosted on the second floor of our Paris location and complements our ongoing series of exhibitions by gallery artists on the ground and first floors.

ABOUT ARTHUR GILLET

Arthur Gillet (born 1986) is a painter who creates objects. His work explores the ambivalent nature of language and identity, its fragility, the constraints of social norms and the resulting strategies of over-adaptation. These themes have been a constant presence in his life since childhood, spent with his deaf parents, who struggled with schizophrenia, in a social housing estate on the outskirts of Rennes. He grew up at a time when the information revolution was transforming modes of communication, amidst the advent of the internet and smartphones, and his father's work in a factory manufacturing televisions and cameras.

For the artist, painting constitutes a space for communication, translation and self-determination. Drawing on practices of counterfeiting, disguise and 'passing' (whether in terms of gender, class or ableism), his approach engages with art history whilst simultaneously repositioning it through situated experiences. His work also draws on psychoanalysis, CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) studies and a political perspective rooted in his feminist, queer and social activism, echoing that of his mother within the Réveil Sourd.

In 2024, he presented a monumental fresco painted on silk, measuring twenty five metres, at the Institut français Berlin, accompanied by a guided tour with commentary in sign language alongside his mother. His solo exhibition 'CODA' at Galerie S in Paris continued this exploration through his paintings on wood and was featured in Le Quotidien de l'Art. He is currently exhibiting at the Grand Palais as part of the exhibition dedicated to Hilma af Klint.



Arthur Gillet. Photo : Nantene Traoré

ABOUT LA COLLECTIVE GREATER PARIS

La collective Greater Paris is a project with uncertain contours, it is a gathering composed of humans and non-humans, who don't remember when they met, but it was long ago. Since 2024, they have extended their conversation through exhibitions. The collective has no legal identity and it may change its name. It's an affinity group—as understood by activist movements, particularly those engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In solidarity, the collective brings together varied practices, forms of resistance and ways of surviving within the art worlds.

ABOUT PATRICIA FALGUIÈRES

Patricia Falguières was a professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris until 2024. Her work focused on Renaissance philosophy and art, and on Mannerism. She has published numerous essays, including ‘Les Chambres de merveilles’ (2002) and the French editions of ‘Le style rustique. L’emploi du moulage d’après nature chez Wenzel Jamnitzer et Bernard Palissy’ by Ernst Kris (2005) and ‘Les cabinets d’art et de merveilles de la renaissance tardive’ by Julius von Schlosser (2013). Her current research focuses on the regime of Technè in the Renaissance, the inclusion of artistic practices in the Aristotelian order of knowledge. At the same time, she contributes regularly to the field of contemporary art through her articles, essays and critical editions; from 2006 to 2024, she co-led the seminar ‘Something You Should Know: Artists and Producers Today’ at the EHESS, alongside Elisabeth Lebovici and Natasa Petresin-Bachelez. She is a member of La Collective Greater Paris.



Arthur Gillet, Atfaluna (Gaza), 2026 © Arthur Gillet

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday to Saturday
10 am – 6 pm

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