



Mercer Union  
a centre for contemporary art

For Immediate Release

## Mercer Union presents Paul Maheke's first institutional solo exhibition in North America with the new sound commission *In spite of my own desire to see you disappear*

28 August 2024 (TORONTO, O.N.) — Mercer Union presents *In spite of my own desire to see you disappear*, the first institutional solo exhibition in North America by French artist **Paul Maheke**, on view from **28 September to 30 November 2024**. The exhibition is titled after the sound work commissioned and produced by the gallery in partnership with Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin, Lethbridge. This is the eighth project in Mercer Union's *Artist First* commissioning platform, following Danielle Dean's exhibition *Out of this World* earlier this year.

Paul Maheke's multidisciplinary practice spans drawing, video, sound, and dance. His work brings personal narratives into the public forum, challenging us to consider the interplay between the self and the collective in the shaping of our identities. Commissioned for *In spite of my own desire to see you disappear*, Maheke's new sound installation attempts to render the experience of being affected, recognized, and understood. While Maheke's work in dance often includes his physical presence, here the visual representation of his body is conspicuously absent. He instead uses the temporal, experiential, and emotive qualities of sound to uncover the sensation of the body and guide the audience's movement. For the work presented at Mercer Union, Maheke shared a journal from 2021 with R&B musician Ndob-emma to sonically and lyrically interpret. Together, Maheke and Ndob-emma recite fragmented ruminations in English and French against an ambient musical dissonance. As their voices process dreams, flashbacks, insights, and reflections, a hesitant and melancholy narrative takes form. Memories intensify and the notes crescendo into sweeping chords and a soulful song, before resolving into a chamber piece. The work's ethereal soundscape is scored in collaboration with Ndob-emma, with sound design by Smogy and Romain Bernat.

*In spite of my own desire to see you disappear* teeters between the confessional and the restrained as the narrators grapple with feelings of dependency, hope, and personhood. At the gallery, the sound work is situated in a series of provisional structures—a narrow corridor, a soft platform, and a set of benches—that invite moments of respite, gestation, and interconnection. Wall drawings depicting hybrids of mythical creatures and abstract figuration allude to less visible forces at play within the field of relations. The surrounding built environment acts as a representation of an interiority in the state of becoming, as well as a conduit that transmits one's experience to another. For Maheke, such sites of encounter offer the audience different forms of legibility for the work, asking what type of resonance can be shared from knowing only partially.

"*In spite of my own desire to see you disappear* takes a deeply personal and impactful memory for Paul Maheke and renders it into an experience that is understood by being felt," says **Theresa Wang**, Director & Curator of Mercer Union. "The work delves into a question of visibility that comes up around the representation of identity, asking how we impart ourselves to others. At Mercer Union, our recent collaborations with artists contemplate different types of social relations to discern what motivates a collective sense of responsibility. With Paul, we are beginning with the self and thinking about embodied ways of engaging and relating with the world."

**Paul Maheke** is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Montpellier. Maheke's work has been shown in solo presentations at Mostyn, Wales (2024); Kunsthalle Bratislava, Slovakia (2023); High Line Art, New York (2022), The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2021); Collection Pinault, Paris (2021); and Chisenhale Gallery, London (2019). He has participated in group exhibitions and festivals at institutions including Tate Modern, London (2024); Rudolfinum, Prague (2023); ICA Miami (2019); and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2018). He has been featured in major international exhibitions including Biennale du Congo (2022); Glasgow International, Scotland (2021); 58th Venice Biennale (2019); Performa, New York (2019); Baltic Triennial 13, Estonia (2018); and Manifesta 12, Italy (2018).

Paul Maheke: *In spite of my own desire to see you disappear* is commissioned by Mercer Union, Toronto; and Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin, Lethbridge.

The exhibition is presented with the support of the Consulate general of France in Toronto, and Trampoline, Association in support of the French art scene, Paris.



*In spite of my own desire to see you disappear* is presented as part of *Artist First*, a Mercer Union commissioning platform. *Artist First* commissions are made possible with the generous support of Femi & Aminat Adeyinka, Kaye & Paul Beeston, Rebecca Carbin, Joanna & Meric Gertler, Christie Kirchner, Margaret McNee, David & Erica Neligan, Frances & Tim Price, Lauren Charyk Silverberg, and Morden Yolles. Learn more at [mercerunion.org/support](https://mercerunion.org/support)

## artistfirst

### About Mercer Union

Mercer Union is a non-profit, artist-run centre dedicated to commissioning and producing new works of contemporary art, and providing an engaging program that encourages critical inquiry and conversation. We champion ambitious exhibitions that empower diverse Canadian and international artists in formative and established stages of their practice.

### Press kit

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