

**Zeszyty**

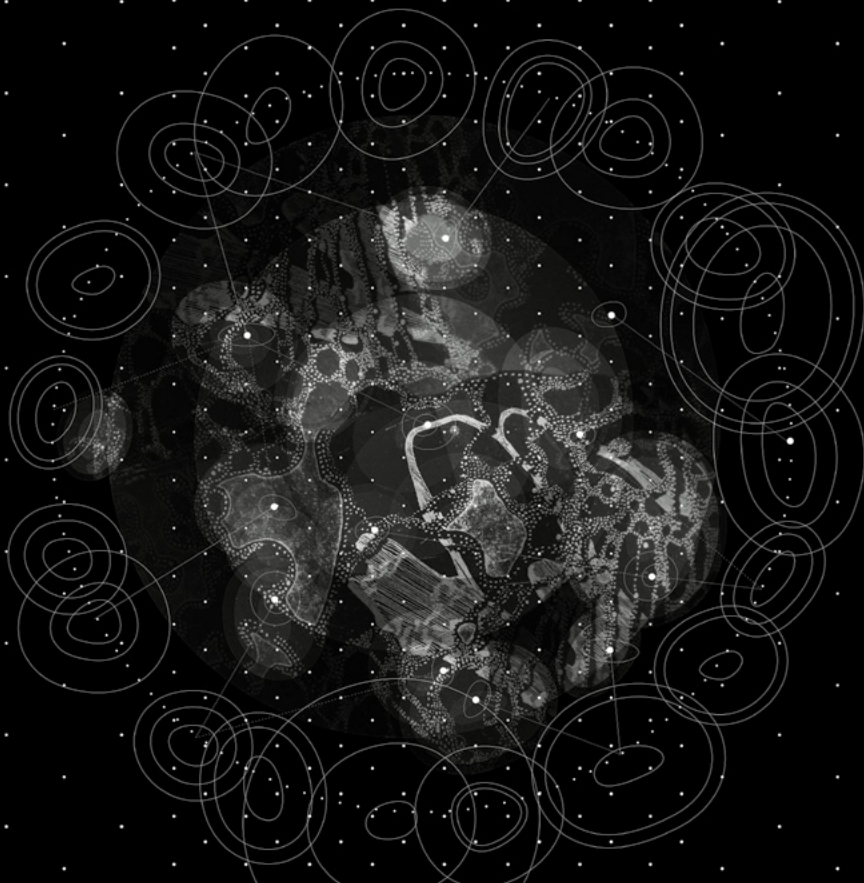
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Uniwersytet Artystyczny im. Magdaleny Abakanowicz w Poznaniu

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# ZA

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Kuratorstwo dla planetarnej  
równowagi: troskliwe strategie  
kuratorские wobec wyzwań  
współczesności

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Nat's PhD thesis, *Léopold Chauveau (1870-1940), Monstrous Diversity, and Widening Access*, relates Chauveau's creative responses to trauma and social alienation with current EDI challenges. For his doctoral research, Nat has collaborated with Glasgow disability arts charity Project Ability, and with Musée d'Orsay staff during a research residency at the Institut Giacometti, Paris. In 2024, Nat participated in the "Shifting Societies, Changing Museums" Summer School. Among other presentations, Nat spoke at the first Critical Neurodiversity Studies Conference. He has an article forthcoming in the "Critical Turn in Neurodiversity Studies" journal special issue. Nat is published in *Art in Translation* as winner of the journal's Student Prize.

## ***Dreaming of Interspecies Community: The Musée d'Orsay's Re-imagining of its Collections in Les arpenteurs de rêves and Pompon, Pompon***

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the Musée d'Orsay's (MO) response to current socio-ecological challenges in two recent projects: the exhibition *Les arpenteurs de rêves: dessins du Musée d'Orsay* [The pacers of dreams: works on paper from the MO], held at the Palais Lumière d'Évian, Switzerland (2 July- 1 November 2022) and Musée des Beaux-Arts de Quimper, Brittany (15 December 2022-13 March 2023); and Pascal Parisot's musical comedy *Pompon, Pompon*, emerging from Parisot's 2024 MO residency<sup>3</sup>. Curator Léila Jarbouai introduces the *Arpenteurs* exhibition catalogue by arguing: "In this period of war in Europe but also of sixth extinction and of general crisis, imagination, which allows openness and escape, could well appear as a primary necessity"<sup>4</sup>. Hence, Jarbouai adopts an innovatively oneiric approach, grouping works according to subconscious associations rather than historical schools. The exhibition further deconstructs traditional boundaries by displaying prominently recently donated works by unjustly neglected artists including women and Léopold Chauveau (1870-1940), an artist without formal training whose œuvre responds to severe social alienation.

The museum articulates these values of imagination and socio-ecological engagement to child and adult audiences in *Pompon, Pompon*, as François Pompon's sculpted polar bear searches for his icecap. This search leads to interspecies solidarity with two marginalised female characters: Degas' *Little dancer aged 14*, 'frozen' into her rigid pose; and the tiny skier in Cuno Amiet's *Schneelandschaft*, traditionally assumed to be male. Meanwhile, the bear's immediate 'neighbours' — anthropo-/zoomorphic hybrid 'monsters' Chauveau sculpted to be his own 'companions' — offer their consolatory friendship to Pompon. This paper assesses how MO and other museums can further re-imagine their collections in response to ecological crises and social inequalities, notably relating to gender, neurodiversity, and mental health.

**Keywords:** Musée d'Orsay, creative response, imaginative resistance, interspecies solidarity, gender, neurodiversity

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1 Pascal Parisot (author and composer), 2024, ill. by Charles Berberian and narrated by Bruno Podalydès, *Pompon, Pompon. Une balade au musée d'Orsay: Livre-CD avec QR code* ("Pompon, Pompon. A stroll through the MO. Book-CD with QR code", Paris: Gallimard).

2 Léila Jarbouai (ed.), *Les Arpenteurs de rêves: dessins du musée d'Orsay* ("The pacers of dreams: works on paper from the MO", Paris: In Fine Éditions, 2022 [Exhibition held at Évian: Palais Lumière, 2 July-1 November 2022, and Quimper: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 15 December 2022-13 March 2023]).

## **Marzenie o społeczności międzygatunkowej: nowe wyobrażenie zbiorów Musée d'Orsay w *Les arpenteurs de rêves* i Pompon, Pompon**

### **Abstrakt**

W niniejszym artykule przeanalizowano reakcję Musée d'Orsay (MO) na aktualne wyzwania społeczno-ekologiczne w dwóch ostatnich projektach: wystawie *Les arpenteurs de rêves: dessins du Musée d'Orsay* [Wędrowcy snów: prace na papierze z MO], która odbyła się w Palais Lumière d'Évian w Szwajcarii (2 lipca – 1 listopada 2022 r.) oraz Musée des Beaux-Arts de Quimper w Bretanii (15 grudnia 2022 r. – 13 marca 2023 r.); a także komedię muzyczną Pascala Parisota *Pompon, Pompon*, powstałą w wyniku rezydencji Parisota w MO w 2024 r. Kuratorka Léïla Jarbouai przedstawia katalog wystawy *Arpenteurs*, argumentując: „W tym czasie wojny w Europie, ale także szóstego wymierania gatunków i ogólnego kryzysu, wyobraźnia, która pozwala na otwartość i ucieczkę, może okazać się podstawową koniecznością”. Tym samym, Jarbouai przyjmuje nowatorskie, oniryczne podejście, grupując prace według podświadomych skojarzeń, a nie historycznych szkół. Wystawa dodatkowo dekonstruuje tradycyjne granice, eksponując w widocznym miejscu niedawno przekazane dzieła niesłusznie pomijanych artystów, w tym kobiet i Léopolda Chauveau (1870-1940), artyści bez formalnego wykształcenia, którego dorobek stanowi odpowiedź na poważną alienację społeczną.

Muzeum przekazuje te wartości wyobraźni i zaangażowania społeczno-ekologicznego dzieciom i dorosłym w *Pompon, Pompon*, gdzie wyrzeźbiony przez François Pompon niedźwiedź polarny poszukuje swojej pokrywy lodowej. Poszukiwania te prowadzą do solidarności międzygatunkowej z dwiema zmarginalizowanymi postaciami kobiecymi: *Małą tancerką* Degas w wieku 14 lat, „zamrożoną” w sztywnej pozie, oraz *małą narciarką* w *Schneelandschaft* Cuno Amieta, tradycyjnie uważaną za mężczyznę. Tymczasem najbliżsi „sąsiedzi” niedźwiedzia – antropomorficzne/zoomorficzne hybrydowe „potwory”, które Chauveau wyrzeźbił jako swoich „towarzyszy” – oferują Pomponowi pocieszającą przyjaźń. W niniejszym artykule oceniono, w jaki sposób MO i inne muzea mogą na nowo wyobrazić sobie swoje zbiory w odpowiedzi na kryzysy ekologiczne i nierówności społeczne, zwłaszcza związane z płcią, neuroróżnorodnością i zdrowiem psychicznym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Musée d'Orsay, kreatywna reakcja, opór oparty na wyobraźni, solidarność międzygatunkowa, płęć, neuroróżnorodność

# Dreaming of Interspecies Community: The Musée d'Orsay's Re-imagining of its Collections in *Les arpenteurs de rêves* and *Pompon, Pompon*

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## Introduction

This article examines a major national museum's re-definition of its collections and wider role in society, during and after 2022, the year when the International Council of Museums published this amended definition of the term "museum":

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.<sup>3</sup>

The two projects analysed in this article demonstrate the MO's commitment to adopting a holistic, "varied" approach to sharing its collections and knowledge with audiences. The museum "fosters diversity" by centring marginalised artists and perspectives, as well as by widening its audience, with particular emphasis on attracting child visitors. Both projects "foster sustainability" by inviting audiences to engage with older artworks in the context of the climate emergency, alongside other present-day challenges. However, the MO could develop this work further "with the participation of communities", beyond its existing, highly successful collaborations with professional artists.

## Part One: “The Pacers of Dreams”

While the MO regularly arranges multi-artist exhibitions in smaller partner museums, Curator in Chief of Graphic Art and Paintings Leïla Jarbouai conceived *Les arpenteurs de rêves* as a radical intervention. She begins her introduction to the exhibition catalogue with a desperate call for help from a marginalised artist, then evokes other urgent challenges and articulates the central role of creativity in addressing them:

‘Close the sky, the sky is killing us!’ repeated in March 2022 the Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan, in his country bombed by Russia. In the context of preparing the exhibition ‘The pacers of dreams’, that expression really struck me: the sky, vast, infinite, and airy, becomes in a wartime context an agent of death — like the sea, tomb of the migrants who drown their every day.

In this period of war in Europe, but also of sixth extinction and of general crisis, imagination, which allows openness and escape, could well appear as a primary necessity.<sup>4</sup>

Through her vivid evocation of the elements and of “general crisis”, Jarbouai situates inter-human injustices within an ecological context before appealing to creativity as a way of restoring planetary balance. Jarbouai’s appeal is limited because she does not engage with impacted communities beyond her initial citation of Kadan. The potential of deeper engagement through participatory approaches is demonstrated by recent projects, including: Moomin Characters Oy Ltd’s collaboration — for the eightieth anniversary of the publication of Tove Jansson’s *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, an illustrated fantasy novella that draws on Jansson’s wartime experiences to depict an inclusive community among people displaced by natural disaster — with Counterpoint Arts, a UK-wide charity that helps refugees express themselves creatively (in any medium) in therapeutic, recreational, and professional contexts.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in 2025 Counterpoint’s annual Refugee Week was organised around “the theme ‘*The Door is Always Open*’ — a reference to the Moominhouse, which offers shelter, comfort,

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4 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, p.10.

5 Cf. Counterpoint Arts, “About Us”, available at: <https://counterpoints.org.uk/about/> (Accessed 22 March 2025). Tove Jansson trans. by David McDuff, *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (London: Sort of Books, 2012 and anniversary edition forthcoming in 2025). Original Swedish-language edition: *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen* (Helsingsfors: Schildts Förlags Ab, 1945).

and security to all.”<sup>6</sup> Four cities in England hosted Refugee Week events to accompany the exhibition of new artworks, created by workshop participants.<sup>7</sup>

The refugee artists use Jansson’s story as a starting point to explore the challenge of nurturing equal relationships, based around shared vulnerability and embracing the more-than-human world. For “To Own Both Nothing and the Whole World” (Baltic, Gateshead, 11 June–6 July 2025), participants in workshops led by curators Henna Asikainen and Roua Houanieh built nests — writing their own object labels about how they brought together objects from their families and home cultures with materials from two local public gardens. Like the musical *Pompon, Pompon*, which I discuss in the second part of this article, the Gateshead exhibition holistically combines image, text, and sound — with an audio installation of inner-tree recordings from both local gardens, played next to a literally uprooted tree.<sup>8</sup>

In its future work, the MO could productively use similar forms of community participation in pursuit of Jarbouai and other curators’ goal to *re-imagine* collections and cultural heritage. Museums worldwide are drawing on community knowledge with exhibitions like “Museum of Things” (Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, 21 June–19 October 2025), which re-imagines the Hunterian’s collections through storytelling sessions led by Syrian artist Moussa Al-Nana in collaboration with the Maryhill Integration Network refugee charity. In Paris, artists and researchers supported by the Programme national d’Accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil (“National Program for the Urgent Welcome of Academics in Exile”, PAUSE) contributed to the exhibition “Trésors sauvés de Gaza – 5000 ans d’histoire” (“Treasures saved from Gaza – 5000 years of history”, Institut du Monde Arabe, in collaboration with Musée d’Art et d’Histoire de Genève and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities).<sup>9</sup>

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6 Refugee Week, “Moomin 80 x Refugee Week 2025”, available at: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/moomin-80-x-refugee-week-2025/> (Accessed 22 March 2025).

7 Refugee Week, “Moomin”.

8 Dr Usue Ruiz Arana, “Tree Sounds”, available at: [baltic.arts/treesounds](https://baltic.arts/treesounds) (Accessed 28 June 2025).

9 Columbia University, “President Macron meets Maha Al-Daya, Palestinian Artist-in-Residence at Reid Hall”, 25 April 2025, available at: <https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/news/president-macron-meets-maha-al-daya-palestinian-artist-residence-reid-hall> (Accessed 6 May 2025).



Nevertheless, *Arpenteurs* is an extremely valuable starting point due to Jarbouai's own self-awareness of the limitations of her museum's collections. As she writes when addressing the choice of drawings to exhibit:

An exhibition based on a collection, even the exceptionally rich one of the Musée d'Orsay, cannot claim to be exhaustive, especially not when it comes to drawing, a technique and practice particularly abundant during the 'age of paper' [i.e. the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period covered by the MO], when almost all artists draw, benefitting from the profusion and propagation of paper that can now be produced mechanically. In the collection, female artists for example are rarely present and, when they are, it is almost solely thanks to the will of their descendants to make them enter public collections and thus to make them accede to an official recognition by posterity. Famous names stand alongside recently rediscovered ones, like that of Léopold Chauveau, thanks to the donations by his grandson to the Musée d'Orsay in 2016 and 2019, through the museum's Society of Friends.<sup>10</sup>

Jarbouai thus expresses the museum's commitment to use this exhibition to raise the profile of neglected artists in terms that hint at the intersection between gender inequalities and the deeply personal struggles of Léopold Chauveau. The MO's 2020 exhibition *Au pays des monstres: Léopold Chauveau (1870-1940)* ["In the land of monsters"] was groundbreaking in its examination of Chauveau's bond with the sympathetic "monsters" he created in response to trauma and isolation from human society. Jarbouai, with her co-curators Géraldine Masson and Ophélie Ferlier-Bouat, used this theme to engage child audiences, making *Pays* the first exhibition designed around two alternative "routes": one traditional and chronological, the other ludic and inviting creative response. Creative responses from artists — including the renowned picture book author Claude Ponti, and students of animation at the prestigious *Gobelins, école de l'image* ["Gobelins moving image school"] — addressed themes of mental well-being, inviting each viewer to discover and befriend their own "inner monster".<sup>11</sup>

Although *Arpenteurs* did not feature such resources and was not designed to appeal to children, Jarbouai did reject traditional approaches in favour of a liber-

10 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, pp.10 and 12.

11 Claude Ponti, *Voyage au pays des monstres* ("Journey to the Land of Monsters", Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2020). "Les élèves des Gobelins-Ecole de l'image... face à Chauveau" ["Pupils of the Gobelins moving image school... facing Chauveau"], 26 February 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paDZhdbFD7I&list=PLwUa6C-NkpavUuqHc4XMf-lvTfuznjLO> (Accessed 25 July 2024).

atory, oneiric organisation of material, explaining: “The common thread chosen to guide ourselves through the collection is that of a journey through and across the imagination of artists, without shutting them away in schools or movements but weaving a conversation between their drawings rather through free and poetic association.”<sup>12</sup> She relates this freedom to the liberatory impact of the medium itself, arguing that “drawing [i.e. works on paper including watercolours] allows a greater freedom than [oil] painting”; and that, in the “age of paper”, these new media loosen “the distinction between major and minor art” and “deconstruct the expected hierarchies.”<sup>13</sup> The title of the exhibition celebrates the freedom of drawing, with the term *arpenteur* derived from the verb *arpenter* (to pace around), just as an artist’s lines can criss-cross through his or her dream-world. Taking inspiration from guest curator Werner Spies’ 2014 exhibition *Les archives du rêve* [Archives of the dream], Jarbouai likewise criss-crosses around decades and styles to organise her exhibition into thematic sections.<sup>14</sup>

This approach leads Jarbouai towards a politically radical, alternative art history. In her profile of Chauveau for the *Arpenteurs* catalogue, she writes of his monsters: “Alter egos or familiar demons of the artist, despite their singularity, they evoke other atypical monsters, such as the mediumistic creations of Victor Hugo or the grotesque figures drawn by George Sand in the 19th century.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the term *atypique* [evoking *neuroatypique*, a common French translation of “neurodivergent”] is applied to the canonical figure of Hugo as well as to the marginalised figure of Chauveau. The MO could usefully develop this theme through collaborations with neurodivergent artists and community groups — which ICOM and partner institutions now recognise are necessary.

Hence, the Manchester Museum won the 2025 European Museum of the Year Award for collaborations including its role in establishing Pinc Creative College, which offers individualised education and training to neurodivergent students (including many with lived experience of mental illness) aged 16-24 in campuses

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12 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, p.16.

13 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, p.16 and p.12.

14 Werner Spies (curator), *Les Archives du rêve, dessins du musée d'Orsay* [“Archives of the dream, drawings from the Musée d'Orsay”], Paris: musée de l'Orangerie, 26 March-30 June 2014 and Vienna: Albertine, 22 January-3 May 2025.

15 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, p.198.

at museums across England and Wales.<sup>16</sup> Not only will this project be transformative for marginalised students, but those students' perspectives will transform understanding of the museums' collections. This paradigm shift can inform the work of museums worldwide, including the MO, despite the financial and practical barriers to pursuing large-scale educational projects of their own.

Nevertheless, the MO has made great progress through its integration of Chauveau into its collections in a way that moves beyond the romanticised concept of "outsider art", produced for entirely personal and therapeutic reasons, without conscious influences or concern for recognition.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, Jarbouai stresses Chauveau's engagement both politically and within artistic circles as someone who, in the spirit of the *Arpenteurs* exhibition, "has always rejected every form of imposed authority, linked to any status...As a man of his time, he participates in the movement by the avant-gardes for the valorisation of children's drawings."<sup>18</sup> I will now analyse how this work is developed in a project that re-interprets the MO's entire collection in a way designed to appeal to both adults and children.

## Part Two: *Pompon, Pompon*

Following his residency at the MO, children's singer-songwriter Pascal Parisot created the musical comedy *Pompon, Pompon. Une balade au musée d'Orsay* ["Pompon, Pompon. A stroll through the MO"], named after François Pompon's sculpted *Polar Bear*, the symbol of the museum. In Parisot's musical, three of Chauveau's sculpted monsters, Marfou, Grapus, and Pernimase, housed in a cabinet next to the polar bear, console this new neighbour as they did their creator, while acquiring the central, "insider" status of "the monsters of the museum."<sup>19</sup> Parisot's story of the polar bear's search for his ice cap celebrates cultural heritage for its relevance to urgent present-day political and ecological

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16 "The Guardian View on a New Era for Museums: Letting the Public Take Control" (editorial), *The Guardian*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/30/the-guardian-view-on-a-new-era-for-museums-letting-the-public-take-control> (Accessed 6 June 2025).

17 Roger Cardinal, *Outsider Art* (London: Studio Vista, 1972).

18 Jarbouai, *Arpenteurs*, p.200.

19 Parisot, *Pompon*, p.9 (audio track 1, original emphasis) and p.10 (audio track 2). Alongside Podalydès as narrator, the production features actors playing multiple roles, including Parisot as Pernimase, Lydie Alberto as Grapus, and Patrice Thibaud as Marfou.

challenges, which it addresses not through didacticism but humour and a depiction of friendship that prompts empathetic identification with marginalised characters. Parisot's work is designed to be: accessible, appealing to children as well as adults; and inclusive, undermining traditional hierarchies both within the art world and in wider society. Linked to this, the project is collaborative and intermedial, re-imagining sculptures and oil painting: first through music and drama, with a performance at the museum in May 2024;<sup>20</sup> then in the picture book published together with a CD of the play, which in turn gave rise to a second performance at the museum in December 2024.<sup>21</sup>

During the bear's quest, he is greeted by multiple characters from artworks, each of whom sings a song and — apart from Paul Ranson's *Witch with a black cat*, whose song rejoices in malevolent plans and whom Pompon flees — is then asked by Pompon for advice. Pompon's first encounter is with his monstrous "neighbours", whom he has never seen — a fact that does not surprise them, "because we're small".<sup>22</sup> Thus, the museum urges its audiences to pay attention to works they may well not have seen for that very reason. Indeed, the prominent role of these "three kind little monsters" in *Pompon* helps ensure that their position next to Pompon's bear — used as the Orsay's symbol partly because it is one of the museum's largest and most popular works — acts to the monsters' advantage rather than their detriment.<sup>23</sup> As in many works by Chauveau, the monsters' acknowledgement of their small size reflects a neurodivergent, anti-didactic ethos of radical honesty, including openness about one's own limitations. Thus, the monsters immediately admit to Pompon that they cannot answer his question, before taking leave of him in a way that conveys their friendship and moral support.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Cf. Musée d'Orsay, "Pompon, Pompon: Pascal Parisot", 4 May 2024, available at: <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/agenda/evenements/pompon-pompon-pascal-parisot> (Accessed 19 January 2024).

21 Cf. Musée d'Orsay, "Pompon, Pompon: Pascal Parisot", 7-8 December 2024, available at: <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/agenda/evenements/pompon-pompon-pascal-parisot-0> (Accessed 19 January 2024).

22 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.9 (audio track 1).

23 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, back cover.

24 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.12 (audio track 3).

Before this, Marfou, Grapus, and Pernimase's song, "The monsters of the museum", is another expression of humility. With the refrain "We're here to amuse you/We're the monsters of the museum", the monsters emphasise their comic appearance over their true role as consolers that will become clearer later in the play.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in their song the monsters exaggerate their ugliness, comparing themselves to characters from Hollywood blockbusters (Marfou to King Kong, Pernimase to Dark Vador, and Grapus to E.T.);<sup>26</sup> then joke that they are frightened of their own reflections.<sup>27</sup> Pernimase makes a different kind of self-deprecating joke in the absurd lines "I'm Pernimase/I do without a nose/I think I've got two arms, but I'm not at all sure".<sup>28</sup> The song concludes with radical statements of acceptance, both of the self and of the other, when Grapus tells his audience, "I'm Grapus/What else to say?/I'm big, I'm small, I've got a floppy stomach/And then I don't care!"; and the chorus sings "He's one of us, he's like us."<sup>29</sup>

The monsters' offer of friendship, based around honesty and shared vulnerability, contrasts with the self-absorption of other characters but prefigures the support offered to Pompon by two companions who travel with him around the museum: first the guard, and then Degas' *Little dancer aged 14*, introduced by the guard to Pompon as "the poor thing, you'd say she was a prisoner in a sort of transparent bloc.../LIKE ICE/I say that, I say nothing...Well, I'll leave you, Pompon, I've got work to do."<sup>30</sup> The guard's humble suggestion proves entirely accurate, with Pompon freeing the dancer, named Marie, by blowing hot air over her to break the ice, after which she gratefully decides to accompany him.<sup>31</sup> In creating this friendship, Parisot re-imagines the Orsay collections in terms of "monstrous" solidarity between marginalised characters, linking the climate emergency to the gendered exploitation of child labour. Pompon's encounter with Marie prefigures the ending to the comedy, when Pompon joins another fe-

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25 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.10 (audio track 2). While the original lines are in rhyming verse, my translations for this article are literal.

26 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.10 (audio track 2).

27 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.11 (audio track 2).

28 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.11 (audio track 2).

29 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.11 (audio track 2).

30 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.24 (audio track 9).

31 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, pp.26-7 (audio tracks 10 and 11).

male character who like the monsters is aware of how her small size leads her to be overlooked: “the tiny little *skieuse* [female skier] inside” Cuno Amiet’s *Schneelandschaft*, which depicts a vast snowy landscape interrupted by a tiny human figure, usually assumed to be male.<sup>32</sup>

Before meeting the *skieuse*, Pompon — who has arrived near his plinth after unsuccessfully traveling around the gallery — remembers the comment of “an Eskimo tourist” about melting ice caps and the potential extinction of polar bears.<sup>33</sup> This sad prediction appears to be confirmed by Aleksandr Alekseyevich BorISOV’s *The Glaciers, Kara Sea*, which Pompon does not wish to inhabit because the ice caps are melting.<sup>34</sup> The ending — in which Pompon stays on his plinth during the day, “BUT REST ASSURED THAT HIS SPIRIT IS ELSEWHERE...AND THAT AT NIGHTFALL, HE KNOWS WHERE TO GO TO LIVE SECRETLY HIS LIFE AS A POLAR BEAR, IN THAT GREAT SPACE WITHOUT END, THAT ETENAL SNOW, CREATED BY A BRUSH THAT, BY THE MAGIC OF ART, WILL NEVER MELT”— is happy on a personal level, yet also contrasts consolatory art with harsh reality.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Marie and the monsters’ words of consolation for Pompon — especially the latter’s final statement, “Pompon, don’t forget, if you need anything at all, we’re here”— acquire new significance as an offer not only to Pompon but to the audience.<sup>36</sup> Like Jarbouai, Parisot celebrates creative imagination as a “primary necessity” that, in the face of immense socio-ecological challenges, can help audiences to develop emotional resilience and to imagine a better world.

## Conclusion

The two projects discussed in this article constitute an invaluable starting point for a radical re-interpretation of the entire MO collection. They offer powerful insights into the role of the arts more widely in responding to ecological crises and to social injustices relating to gender, neurodiversity, and to a lesser extent forced displacement. In a salutary move away from traditional claims of cura-

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32 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.55 (audio track 25).

33 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.50 (audio track 22).

34 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.52 (audio track 23).

35 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.56 (audio track 25).

36 Parisot et al, *Pompon*, p.51 (audio track 23).

torial “neutrality”, both offer a single person’s re-interpretation. There is thus considerable scope for the MO to develop this work “in participation with communities”, including neurodivergent people and refugees.

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