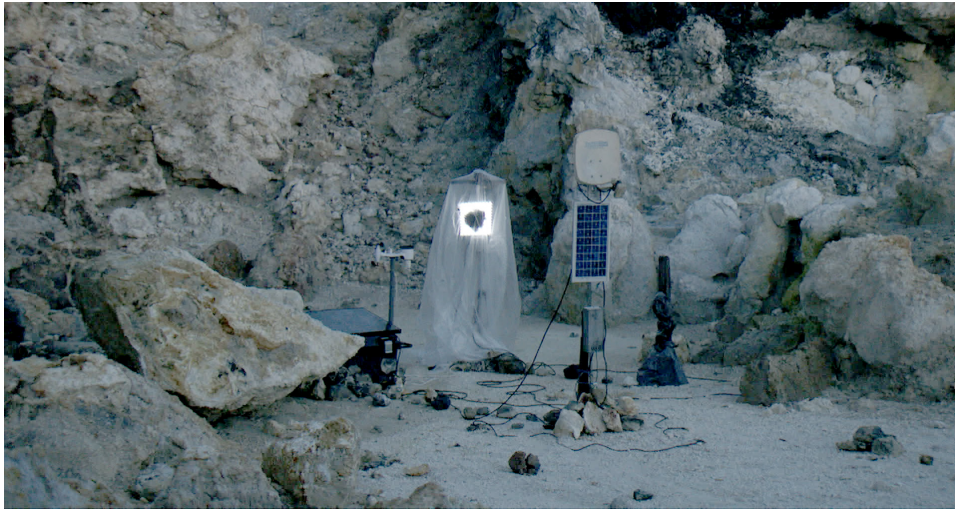


Clément Cogitore

Ferdinandea

September 5 – October 31, 2026

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4^e



Ferdinandea: Incertitudes, 2022
HD Video, Colour
Courtesy de l'artiste et de la Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Bruxelles.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present *Ferdinandea* in Paris, Clément Cogitore's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Following presentations at Madre — Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina in Naples — and subsequently at Mucem in Marseille, under the title *Clément Cogitore. Ferdinandea, l'île éphémère* — on view until the end of September — this body of work continues its journey in Paris in a new configuration. A film, videos, archival documents and engraved photographs compose the narratives of an island whose imprint endures beyond its disappearance.

Born in 1983 in Colmar (France), Clément Cogitore has developed a body of work at the crossroads of contemporary art and cinema. Trained at the École supérieure des arts décoratifs de Strasbourg and then at Le Fresnoy — Studio national des arts contemporains, he constructs narratives that oscillate between reality and fiction, questioning our ways of inhabiting the world today. Winner of the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2018, filmmaker, photographer and opera director — notably of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, presented from July 2 to 21, 2026 at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, and of Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*, staged in 2019 at the Opéra national de Paris — he continues, with *Ferdinandea*, his reflection on the powers of image and narrative, from documentary investigation to fiction.

Ferdinandea appeared between late June and mid-July 1831 in the Strait of Sicily, off the Tunisian coast. Born of underwater volcanic activity, the island emerged from the depths before disappearing a few months later beneath the waters of the Mediterranean. While the inhabitants of the nearby shores feared the awakening of a sea monster, this new territory aroused the curiosity of scientists and explorers, while European powers projected onto it their desires for appropriation. Within a few weeks, the island was claimed by Great Britain, France and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for its strategic position. Its multiple names — *Ferdinandea*, *Julia*, *Graham*, *Nerita* — remain recorded in the archives as so many attempts to possess it. No sooner had it been named than it disappeared, leaving behind a paradoxical territory: an ephemeral island, which existed without ever being durably possessed; a fragment of land whose disappearance did not erase its narratives.

The exhibition opens with *Ferdinandea: Prémonitions*, a 16 mm film presented as a fictional cinematic archive. Here, the island is not yet visible, yet everything already seems to announce it. A table is laid — tablecloth, plates, teapot, sugar bowl — while the image gradually darkens, causing familiar objects to tip into an unsettling presence. The teapot turning black, fish abandoned to the movement of the waves, the light struggling to bring forth an image: together they compose a series of “suspended signs”, heralding the island's appearance. In a book devoted to Clément Cogitore's work, the philosopher and anthropologist Federico Leoni identifies this situation and describes it as a “pure sign”¹: something is given to be seen in these elements, without its meaning yet being decipherable. Without documenting the island, the film explores this moment of uncertainty in which the land seems to want to say something, without yet delivering its message.

This attention to signs continues in *Ferdinandea: Incertitudes*, a nine-part video in which English, Italian, Sicilian, Maltese and Arabic intermingle. Following a prologue retracing the emergence of *Ferdinandea* in the nineteenth century — and its successive appropriations by colonial powers — the work evokes, in fragments, its twentieth-century history, before shifting into speculative

¹Federico Leoni, *L'isola sotto il mare. “Ferdinandea” di Clément Cogitore*, Ed. Castelveccchi, coll. “Cromie”, 2026

fiction. Archives, re-enacted moments, radio voices and scientific surveys compose a cartography of metamorphosis, traversed by popular beliefs, scientific knowledge and national rivalries surrounding the island.

As the exhibition unfolds, attention shifts toward a scientific investigation conducted on Graham Bank, of which Ferdinandea forms part. In *Ferdinandea: Vigilances*, a camera descends into the depths and gradually reveals blocks of basalt now eroded by the sea. The documentary style might suggest a form of objectivity: Ferdinandea finally seems locatable. Yet the closer the film comes to the island, the more unstable it becomes. Where is Ferdinandea situated? In the rock, the algae, the fish, the currents that surround it? Scientific exploration thus reveals its own limits, pointing to the island in a shifting and almost dissolved form. At the end of the expedition, a seismograph is placed on the seabed near the submerged island. The instrument becomes a listening device, capturing the tremors of a possible resurgence: here, Ferdinandea exists in what vibrates and makes itself heard.

Engraved photographs bearing phrases in several languages extend, within the exhibition, this connection between image and omen. Their inscriptions function like oracles: they do not explain the works, but open up several possible readings. The image always seems to be in transformation. *Ferdinandea: Cendres* confirms this idea: a reproduction of a nineteenth-century engraving by Benedetto Marzolla is immersed in a bath of volcanic ash. It does not merely serve to represent Ferdinandea; it recalls what defines the island: its deposits, accidents and metamorphoses.

Thus, Clément Cogitore never fixes the island in a definitive image. Federico Leoni recalls, following Gilles Deleuze, that “the event is not what happens,” but rather “in what happens”². Ferdinandea is therefore not merely a geological object: despite its disappearance, it continues to exert its force upon the present. Confronted with it, the viewer remains within a troubled zone, where what emerges is perhaps not only an island, but a way of thinking of the image as a fragile apparition, and of the world as an unstable surface, always liable to tremble once again.

-Marie Chappaz, editorial writer

²Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1969, cité par Federico Leoni, *L'isola sotto il mare. "Ferdinandea" di Clément Cogitore*, Castelveccchi, coll. “Cromie”, 2026

Clément Cogitore is born in 1983 in Colmar (France). Lives and works in Paris.

After studying at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg and at Le Fresnoy, the French National Studio of Contemporary Art, Cogitore developed an artistic practice at the crossroads of contemporary art and cinema. Combining film, video, installations and photographs, his work questions the modalities of cohabitation between humankind and its own images. It often addresses rituals, collective memory, the figuration of the sacred, as well as a certain idea of the permeability of worlds.

Cogitore's work has notably been screened and exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo, MADRE (Naples), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Institute of Contemporary Arts ICA (London), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), MoMA (New York), MNBA (Québec), SeMA Bunker (Seoul), MACRO (Rome), Red Brick Art Museum (Beijing), Rockbund Museum (Beijing), Kunsthau Baselland (Basel), Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington), MUDAM (Luxembourg), and biennials such as the Lyon Biennial (France), the Berlin Biennial (Germany) and the Yokohama Triennial (Japan).

In 2011 Cogitore was awarded the Grand Prize of Salon de Montrouge for contemporary art and the following year he became resident of the Villa Medici, French Academy in Rome. His cinematographic works have been selected and awarded prizes in numerous international festivals (Cannes, Locarno, Telluride, Los Angeles, San Sebastian).

In 2015, his first feature film *Neither Heaven Nor Earth* was selected at the Cannes International Film Festival – Critic's week, awarded by the Gan Foundation, acclaimed by critics and nominated for the best first film at the César award ceremony. That same year he won the BAL Prize for contemporary art. In 2016, he won the SciencesPo Prize for contemporary art and the 18th Fondation d'entreprise Ricard Prize for contemporary art.

In 2018, Clément Cogitore was awarded the prestigious Marcel Duchamp Prize for Contemporary Art. Since 2018, he has been teaching at the Ecole des Beaux Arts de Paris, where he directs a film director's workshop.

To celebrate its 350th anniversary, the Opéra National de Paris has entrusted Clément Cogitore with staging Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera ballet, *Les Indes Galantes*. The premiere took place in September 2019. *Les Indes Galantes* was selected by The New York Times as one of the best opera productions of 2019, nominated best opera production 2019 by the Giornale della Musica and won the Forum Opera trophy of the best new opera production 2019. In 2020, Oper! Awards presented him with the prize for best director.

In 2022, his second feature film *Goutte d'Or* was selected as a Special Screening at the Critics' Week of the Cannes International Film Festival. The film won the Hildegard Screenplay Award, the Best Director Award at the LEFFEST in Lisbon and the Interpretation Award at the Hainan Film Festival in China. In 2023, the film was shortlisted to represent France at the Oscars.

In 2026, he has a solo exhibition, *Ferdinandea, l'île éphémère*, at the Mucem (Marseille). He presents his documentary film *Memory Palace* at the Rencontres d'Arles (France). That same year, he stages Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (France).

Cogitore's work is represented in several public collections (Centre Georges Pompidou, National Fund for Contemporary Art, Contemporary Art Fund of the City of Paris, FRAC Alsace, FRAC Aquitaine, FRAC Auvergne, MAC VAL, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Strasbourg) and private collections (Louis Vuitton Collection, Daimler Art Collection).

Paris Saint-Honoré

Wang Keping
Érotique
September 11 – November 14, 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Clément Cogitore
Ferdinandea
September 5 – October 31, 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

Robert Kushner
Œuvres sur papier
September 5 – October 31, 2026

Brussels

Sophie Kuijken
September 10 – October 24, 2026

For any further information, please contact : Eva Ben Dhiab
evab@nathalieobadia.com / + 33 (0) 1 53 01 99 76

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T +33 (0)1 42 74 67 68 | INFO@NATHALIEOBADIA.COM | WWW.NATHALIEOBADIA.COM