

MELIK OHANIAN

# IN TIME

JAN 26 - MAR 18, 2017

DVIR GALLERY BRUSSELS  
RUE DE LA RÉGENCE 67, BRUSSELS

For his first one-person show at Dvir Gallery, Melik Ohanian, the laureate of 2015 Marcel Duchamp prize will exhibit recent works. Through a historical, scientific, philosophical and poetic approach the exhibition questions the human perception and consciousness, sometimes paradoxical, regarding time and space



Melik Ohanian  
**Portrait of Duration – Cesium Series (T1004), 2015**

For *Portrait of Duration*, Melik Ohanian focuses on the observation and representation of the measurement of time, and more specifically on its reference standard, the second. In a university laboratory, he conducts a scientific experiment to observe the state change of Cesium— a radioactive chemical element used in atomic clocks to define the universal second— as it transitions from a solid to a liquid state.

*Portrait of Duration – Cesium Series* is a series of black-and-white photographs showcasing 60 variations extracted from the experiments conducted. Through this representation of time through matter, each photograph presents a figure of time at a given instant.

The complete series of 60 photographs was exhibited in 2016 at the Centre Pompidou during Melik Ohanian's exhibition *Under Shadows*, following his win of the 2015 Marcel Duchamp Prize.



Melik Ohanian  
**Futuring (cosmos), 2011**

Short version (2017.01.27)

*Futuring (Planet)* is inspired by the inversion of the poles. This geological phenomenon, frequent on the scale of Earth's history, results from a disturbance in the core that causes the magnetic poles to migrate across the globe's surface. At the end of this process, the poles either return to their original positions or switch places.

The 30 cm glass globe recalls the terrestrial globes used by geographers since the late 15th century. As an object of attraction and fascination, the sphere absorbs and then reflects an inverted image of both ourselves and our surroundings, linking different points in space and transforming its context into a world that constantly evolves based on perspective. It functions like an eye—capturing a fragment of reality, inverting its image, and offering it for interpretation or imagination.

This measuring instrument, devoid of markers, scale, or graduations, provides neither certainty nor verification. Instead, it unfolds a paradoxical, silent cartography, erasing the rationality of our relationship with the world.

*Futuring* exists in two versions: *Planet*, made of industrially produced homogeneous glass, and *Cosmos*, crafted with artisanal glass filled with air bubbles.

Melik Ohanian  
**Futuring (planet), 2011**

Long version (2017.01.27) - Text by Garance Malivel, based on interviews with Melik Ohanian © 2012

A 30 cm glass globe, mounted on a metal stand. Fixed at two points along a tilted axis, it recalls the terrestrial globes used by geographers since the late 15th century. Displayed at the center of a one-cubic-meter pedestal topped with a mirror, it exists in two versions: *Planet*, made of industrially produced homogeneous glass, and *Cosmos*, crafted with artisanal glass filled with air bubbles. The artist sees in the former an image of our planet, while the latter evokes a universe—a macrocosm within a microcosm.

This sculpture is inspired by the concept of pole reversal. This geological phenomenon, frequent in Earth's history, results from disturbances in the core that cause the magnetic poles to migrate across the globe's surface. At the end of this process, the poles either return to their original positions or switch places. Today, the decreasing intensity of the magnetic field suggests a possible pole reversal within the next few thousand years. *Futuring* offers a visual interpretation of this phenomenon, whose consequences remain uncertain. The mirror forms an axis where an inverted image of the world is projected: the "south" pole of the globe becomes the "north," and the "north" becomes the "south." The glass sphere itself creates a complex play of inversions—flipping top and bottom, left and right—distorting and reflecting its surroundings.

An object of attraction and fascination, the artwork invites interaction and movement. It is an experience, turning the visitor into an experimenter who orbits around it. By absorbing and then reflecting an inverted image of both the observer and the space, the sphere connects different points in space. It transforms its context into a world that continuously evolves with each shift in perspective. Like a magnifying glass, it offers a hypertrophied and fragmented vision of reality, where the part becomes the whole. Ultimately, this sphere generates universes. It functions like an eye—capturing a fragment of reality, inverting its image, and delivering it for interpretation or imagination. By incorporating a lens, a mirror, and light, this object also possesses a photographic nature. In any case, it acts as a sensor, a space for projection and invention—an instrument for creating one's own cinematic vision.

A forward-looking work, *Futuring* invents a verb that expresses the future, a term that exists neither in French nor in English. Though its form may resemble a crystal ball, it does not claim to predict anything. This measuring instrument, devoid of markings, scale, or graduations, provides neither certainty nor verification. Instead, it unfolds a paradoxical, silent cartography that erases the rationality of our relationship with the world. As often in Melik Ohanian's work, scientific data is made visible, diverted, and reframed. Thus, what should be a tool for orientation becomes one of disorientation. It presents the world in detail but inverted, favoring multiplicity over singularity. Ultimately, it invites us to take a step aside—to question the relativity of our perceptions and the place we occupy in space.



Melik Ohanian

**Deviation, [03] – Dislocate, [01] – Disgrace, [04] – Disorder, 2014**

Short version (2017.01.27)

With the *Deviation* series (2014), language literally merges with architecture. Letters take shape as much as they disappear, gradually sinking into the wall. A selection of English words beginning with the prefix *DIS*—which signifies reversal or deprivation—invites a semantic experience linked to our perception and practice of space. The repeated layering of the same word, in two distinct forms, creates a potential paradox.

*Deviation* was first presented in the solo exhibition *Stuttering* at the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Sète in 2014. More info: [stuttering.melikohanian.com](http://stuttering.melikohanian.com)



Melik Ohanian

**Portrait of Duration – Cesium Series II T0174, T2553, T1902, 2016**

For *Portrait of Duration*, Melik Ohanian focuses on the observation and representation of the measurement of time, specifically its reference standard—the second.

In a university laboratory, he conducts a scientific experiment to observe the state change of Cesium—a radioactive chemical element used in atomic clocks to define the universal second—as it transitions from a solid to a liquid state.

*Portrait of Duration – Series II* is a collection of large-format color photographs capturing different moments observed during this experiment. In this color version, the photograph's format is slightly enlarged compared to its original maximum definition, revealing the very texture of the image.

The *Portrait of Duration – Cesium Series II* currently consists of 17 photographs.



Melik Ohanian  
**Nowhere, 2016**

Just like in *Word(s)* and *Deviation*, Melik Ohanian creates tension and a rupture of meaning between two words. *NOW* and *WHERE* overlap, asserting themselves as much as they vanish—both words referring to questions of place and time.

The artist thus exposes us to both a geopolitical and existential uncertainty, where our attachment to space is intensified as much as it is denied. The glass renders the question of belonging and identity transparent, weakening our certainties.



Melik Ohanian  
**Pulp Off, 2014**

*Pulp Off* is an installation that begins with the book *Mémoires du génocide arménien – Héritage traumatique et travail analytique* by essayist Janine Altounian. A testimony to the history of a people, the book consists of a facsimile reproduction of the deportation journal written by the author's father between 1915 and 1919, alongside an analytical dive into these writings through the lens of history.

In 2014, Melik Ohanian offered to purchase a portion of unsold copies—120 copies—of this book, which had been destined for pulping by the publisher, to take responsibility for its destruction himself.

At the center of the exhibition space, the pile of torn paper represents this act of decomposition and recomposition of the original work. On the walls, the original ethnographic object—the deportation journal written in Armenian—has been extracted and then rephotographed. Finally, in an effort to preserve access to the book, the artist digitized it before its destruction, making it available for free on the website: [memoires.ommx.studio](http://memoires.ommx.studio).





Melik Ohanian  
**Post-Image, 2014**

*Post-Image* is a series created from media images extracted from international press and meticulously torn by the artist. These front-page images have become fragments, micro-territories, and now elliptically question our collective unconscious.

Melik Ohanian

**Word(s) – Series II, 2014**

In one word: words. Through addition or subtraction, they oscillate between two definitions. Two notions merge, forging a third: the hypothesis of silent utopias, with their transformative function placed in parentheses. Hybrid words or boundaries, they evoke a critical plurality, exploring in turn the lexical, mental, political, or social fields.

Melik Ohanian

**Gradient – Light, 2016 Limited Edition**

*Gradient – Light* was the lighting for Melik Ohanian's *Under Shadows* installation, presented for the Marcel Duchamp Prize at the Centre Pompidou in 2016. The lightbulbs in the installation were hand-engraved with the names of personalities who passed away between 2010 and 2016. The lighting for the exhibition is now available as a limited edition, with each of the 80 unique bulbs available for individual sale.