

**ART
BASE
RELEASE**

DOUARNENEZ
FROM 9 APRIL
PRESS

PORT-MUSEUM
TO 6 NOVEMBER 2022
RELEASE

ARTBALISE

A POETIC EXPLORATION OF MARITIME BEACONS

From 9 April to 6 November 2022, the Port Museum in Douarnenez is hosting an ambitious contemporary art exhibition on the theme of maritime navigation aids. It brings together around fifty artists in connection with metal sculptor Fred Barnley, who initiated this project.

This is a project born of encounters and alliances. It is the fruit of reunions between the former head of the metalworking studio at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués* (National School of Applied Arts) in Paris and some of his students, who make up the project's first on-board team. It is the product of their collaboration with the Port Museum in Douarnenez, a *Musée de France* (recognised French public interest museum) and undoubtedly the most maritime museum with this label. The museum has in the past called upon several of Fred Barnley's former students. It acts as a harbour for the exhibition, in which art meets the maritime navigation aids that are so common around the jagged and important Finistère coastline, and whose historical heritage is now in the spotlight.

The exhibition is a voyage of discovery, a poetic evocation of maritime beacons by a large artists' collective: these team members, mostly Fred Barnley's former students, have produced and made their works after responding generously to a call for projects. Others have also joined this crew, inspired by this evocative theme that lends itself so well to metal. This material is suited to a wide variety of sizes, from jewellery to monumental sculpture. It also allows the creation of highly diverse forms thanks to its many possible transformations. Other graphic and visual arts, such as video and photography, mingle with the three-dimensional works, answering and echoing them. Gildas Bitout's collages on the walls, for example, guide the visitor through the exhibition.

The Port Museum is responsible for the overall organisation, including the construction of the exhibition scenography for this gigantic 1300m² installation, public engagement and visitor experience, and the publication of the exhibition catalogue. The museum's workshop team, which specializes in maintaining and restoring maritime collections, is also designing and making the exhibition furniture and mountings.

This extraordinary exhibition navigates gracefully and expressively between beacons and the arts. It is an imaginary channel connecting technology and poetry, made possible thanks to the creativity of three successive generations of artists, against a background of constantly evolving beacons and navigation systems.





Concrete bead necklace. Marion Colasse / Moving luminous sculpture. Emilie Braun - Rights reserved



FRED BARNLEY, ARTIST AND TEACHER

Born in 1954 in Paris, Fred Barnley is a former student of famous goldsmith and designer Serge Mouille. In 1987, he succeeded him at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués (National School of Applied Arts), to teach in the metalworking studio. Alongside this work, he has pursued his career as an artist, exhibiting all over France, but also in numerous other countries, including Germany and China. From metal sculptures displaying strangely organic animality to retrofuturistic machines, his work has elements of the steampunk aesthetic, inspired by 19th-century industry. Today, he regularly welcomes interns in his studio in Courchamps, near to Château-Thierry in Aisne. In fact, his desire to work on specific technical problems with one of these interns led to the creation of the imaginary beacon that became the first of a series he offered to exhibit at the Port Museum. This became the starting point for the **ART-BALISE** exhibition.







MIK POUILLARD AND HIS STUDENTS

The exhibition brings together three generations of artists. Fred Barnley's student Mik Poullard now teaches too and has invited his applied arts students learning metal art and design at Lycée Vauban (a college and technical/vocational school in Brest) to join the adventure via a class project. The Finistère authorities have provided funding to purchase the materials. The students are working individually on a collection of small, imaginary, rocking buoys, based on a real place and its associated legends or its toponymy. In small groups, they are also making very large buoys to experiment with other metal working techniques.







DRIFTING, DISCOVERING AND DIVING DEEP

A tale by Sophie Desplancques, *La perle*, sets the tone for the visitor's journey, telling the story of beacon Y16. Like this marker that broke free from its shore, the visitor embarks on an exploratory voyage through the exhibition. They sometimes float freely on their inner currents, and at other times their discovery is guided as if following a marked channel into the port. The artists play on the appealing shapes and colours of the imaginary lighthouses, beacons and towers that mark the way, giving rise to creations like Oriane Poncet's carnivalesque buoys. They even propose twists on their utility and their codes. For example Alicia Long weaves a message in Morse code on the emotional swell of the ocean. The world of maritime beacons is also a world of light, sound and rhythm. Fittingly, the visitor's journey ends in the deep sea, spellbound and mesmerised by Laurent Cadilhac's sea creatures, with their subtle movement and fragile equilibrium.





EXHIBITION CURATORS

Fred Barnley, artist
Kelig-Yann Cotto, curator
Sophie Desplancques, collections manager
Emmanuel Meynard, photographer
Annelise Nguyễn, artist
Mik Poullard, artist and teacher

Graphic design

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

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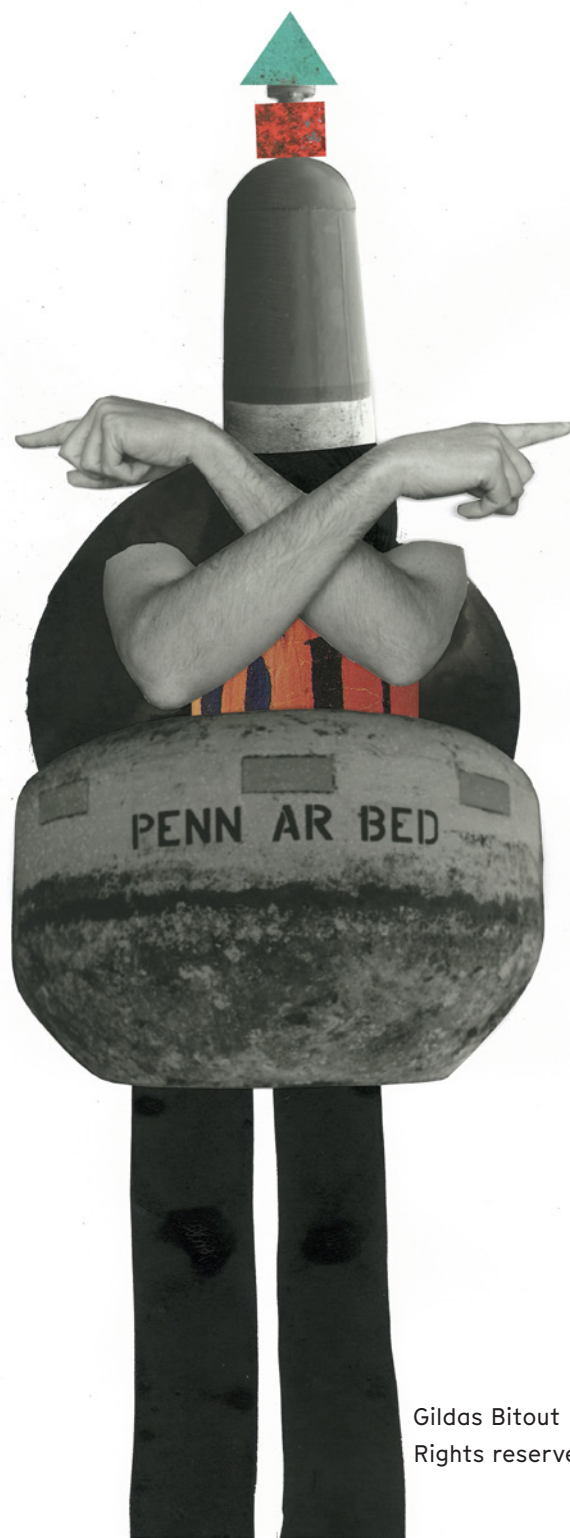
ARTBALISE

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The Port Museum (Port-musée) is a Musée de France
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The Port Museum (Port-musée) has the Musée de France label and is a member of the Bretagne musées and Tout commence en Finistère networks.

