



VALMONT

presents

TELEMACHUS

The Quest for Self

JAKUB FLEJŠAR

PAVEL ROUČKA

MAXENCE GUILLON

DIDIER GUILLON

CURATED BY

FRANCESCA GIUBILEI

LUCA BERTA

VALENTINA SECCO

03.05.25 - 22.11.25

Fondation
VALMONT

THE INTIMATE MUSEUM
PALAZZO BONVICINI

Santa Croce, 2161/A, Venezia

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 1 pm / 2 pm - 6 pm

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INTRODUCTION

TELEMACHUS. The Quest for Self marks the second chapter of a trilogy of contemporary art exhibitions inspired by Homer's *Odyssey*. This chapter delves into the character of Telemachus, exploring the father-son relationship from the perspectives of both Telemachus and Ulysses. Featuring four artists — Jakub Flejšar, Pavel Roučka, Maxence Guillon, and Didier Guillon — the exhibition presents a deeply personal and intergenerational dialogue, reflecting the relationship between father and son through two distinct pairs.

The genesis of this exhibition began at **Villa Valentine**, one of the four **Résidences Valmont**, located on the Greek island of Hydra. In this vibrant setting, the participating artists convened with curators Luca Berta, Francesca Giubilei, and Valentina Secco for an immersive, week-long workshop. Each artist was assigned a dedicated room of Palazzo Bonvicini, allowing them to create site-specific works that embody the essence of their designated room.



Left to right: Maxence Guillon, Didier Guillon, Pavel Roučka, Jakub Flejšar, *Villa Valentine*, June 2024

EMANCIPATION, UPHEAVAL, INTROSPECTION, HERITAGE

*Now indeed the time has come that I,
for my part, take my fate to heart.
Odyssey, Book II¹*

The exhibition weaves together themes of self-discovery, legacy, and transformation as Telemachus embarks on his journey to find his father and uncover his own identity. The works engage in a dialogue between the mythical past and the present, exploring how familial bonds shape the way we understand ourselves.

The first adjective that comes to mind to describe **TELEMACHUS. The Quest for Self** is *monumental*. The rooms at Palazzo Bonvicini are filled to the very last centimeter with powerful yet intimate installations, mesmerizing visitors on their journey of discovery. Each artist loudly affirms their presence through sculptures, paintings and installations that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression. Indeed, the exhibition narrates the father-son relationship – with all its fragilities, complexities, complicities, and synergies – in a manner that is monumental and introspective.

With Flejšar and Roučka, the rooms merge with one another, reflecting an intrinsic and indispensable personal and artistic relationship. The boundaries blur, with the artists' identities clearly defined yet in tension with each other. The focus shifts inward with the Guillon, prompting the artists to contemplate both what they have become and what they are becoming, with their gaze directed towards both the past and the future of generations.

¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, pag. 16, Penguin Classics, London, 2009.

The familial *complicity* of Jakub Flejšar intertwines with the tumultuous *champ de bataille* de Pavel Roučka

For the first time at Palazzo Bonvicini, rooms are metaphorically and physically intertwined to represent **Jakub Flejšar**'s and **Pavel Roučka**'s profound familial bond from a 360-degree perspective. Flejšar synthesizes this bond by placing a giant red steel sculpture between his room and Roučka's: a seated man, the artist himself, viscerally penetrates the space. This arrangement allows the visitor to discover, in Room 1, just a part of the whole. In the middle of the room, a large human figure is crouched down, gazing at the seated man, seemingly burdened by an inheritance too heavy to bear.

The two sculptures are portraits of the artist at different stages of his life: before and after mastering the ability to maintain his complicity with Roučka without slipping into dependency. *Complicity* is a key concept in the *Odyssey* after all, as Telemachus plays a pivotal role in Ulysses' attempt to reclaim power in Ithaca.

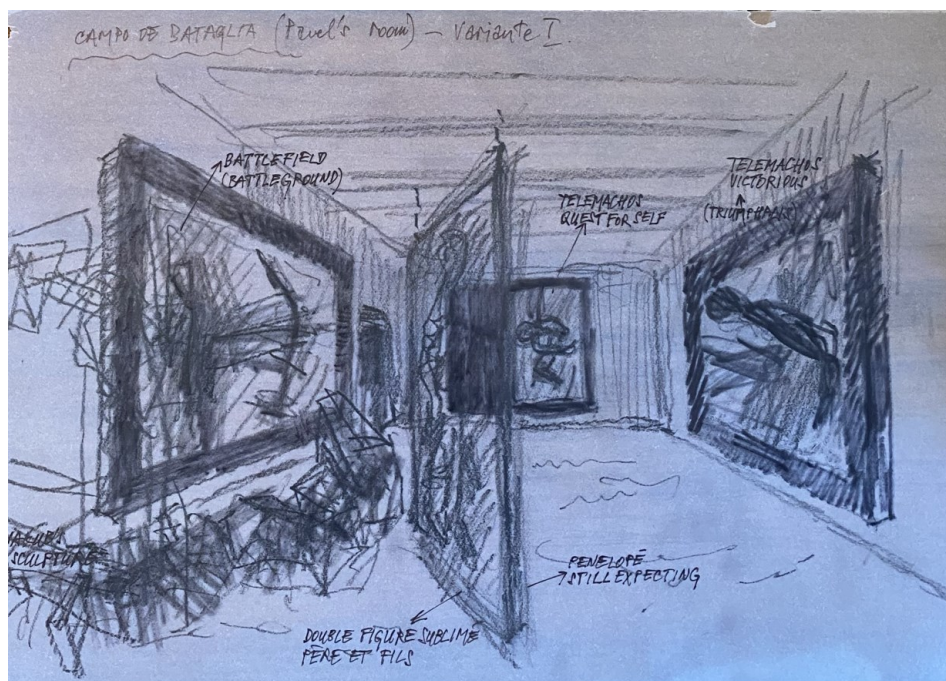


Jakub Flejšar, *Simulation of Room 1*, Villa Valentine – Hydra, 2024

The crossing sculpture enters Roučka's space which is imbued with the intensity of gesture and imposing paintings. *Champ de Bataille* unfolds as a moment of confrontation: Flejšar's seated man, situated between the two rooms, deliberately turns his back on his stepfather's paintings, preparing to make a bold decision. Though he understands his paternal figure's work, he is finally ready to forge his own path.

At the centre of Room 2, two large paintings depict the key figures in Ithaca: Penelope, still and silent in the front like an observing matriarch; Telemachus with Ulysses in the back, merging into a single entity – coinciding, sublimated, almost indistinguishable. This fusion raises a striking question: can the son ever truly break free, or is he destined to carry his father's legacy forever? This duality is at the heart of *Champ de Bataille* – a revolutionary battlefield in transformation.

Flanking this central vision, a series of scenes unfold like a protective embrace in Room 2. Telemachus appears in different stages of his journey – fighting, questioning himself, and ultimately triumphing. Father and son cannot stand as rivals but as figures entwined in the same struggle, navigating the fine line between lineage and self-determination.



Pavel Roučka, Study on Room 2, Villa Valentine – Hydra, 2024

Maxence Guillon's *virtuous circle* takes shape through the heritage tributed by Didier Guillon *beneath the dreams*

In Room 3 **Maxence Guillon's** installation *The Virtuous Circle* explores his journey as both a man and a son, following in the footsteps of his father, **Didier Guillon**. This path is initially represented by a red carpet, symbolizing the invisible presence of the artist, guided and protected by his father. As the carpet turns to a brownish tone, the scene shifts to a contemporary arena, where a multimedia installation replaces the physical presence of ancient Roman spectators. In front of the towering arena, a classic-style sculpture with Maxence's features performs like a gladiator.

The digital presence of Didier Guillon silently judges his son's performance — eternally watching from his ever-present/absent televised form. If Didier Guillon replaces the physical spectators of ancient Rome, actual visitors are invited to sit in front of Maxence on a special seat, taking on the role of his father. Maxence's journey, such as Telemachus' journey, mirrors the universal human experience of navigating an adventure made possible only through the awareness of his father's heritage.



Maxence Guillon, *Prototype for the arena*, Villa Valentine – Hydra, 2024

For Room 4, Didier Guillon has chosen to present two anatomical drawings of his great-great-grandfather, Alphonse Lami, printed on towering, monolithic totems that stand as monumental echoes of the past. These sculptures anchor the works in the present, linking several generations across time. Above these totems, the word *dream* glows in luminous, incandescent letters, translated into ten different languages. This universal term transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, embodying the shared human experience of aspiration and courage.

The installation *En dessous des rêves* invites us to reflect on the essential role of dreams in shaping our future. Without dreams, it becomes impossible to draw from the past the heritage needed to navigate the present and, above all, to gaze towards the unknown horizon.

As the final room of the exhibition, this space closes *the virtuous circle*, inviting the viewer to reflect on how heritage shapes not only the past but also the future. Much like Telemachus' journey reaching its conclusion, this room serves as a culmination, uniting the themes of legacy, transformation, and self-discovery. It leaves the viewer with a sense of resolution and potential.



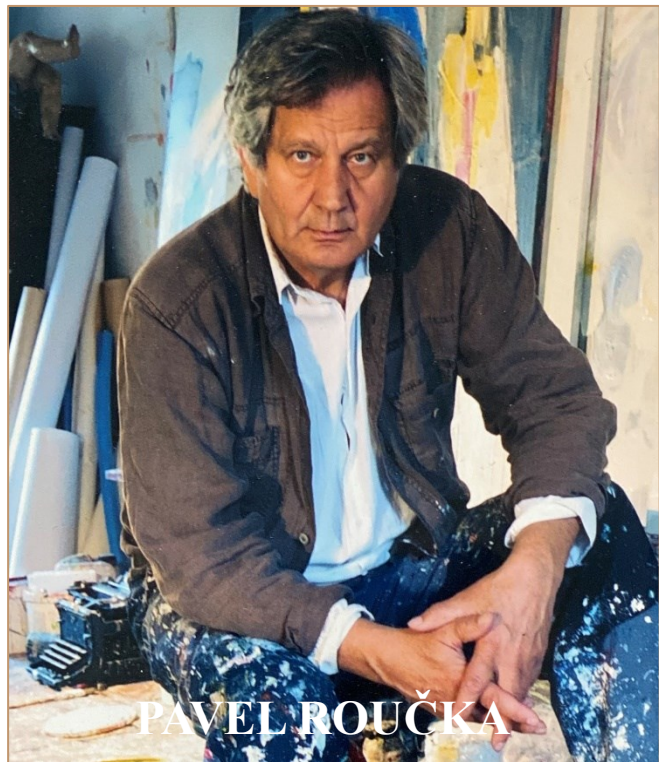
Didier Guillon, *Prototype for the totems*, Villa Valentine – Hydra, 2024

ARTISTS



Born in Prague in 1980, Flejšar graduated at the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague. His work is characterized by complex sculptural units resembling figures or abstract objects, crafted from natural fragments – most often wood. The art pieces are inspired by nature and mystical cultural traditions. His statues personify metaphysical considerations, stimulated by questions of human existence, its meaningfulness, and intangible factors beyond human understanding. Flejšar also served as the snowboardcross coach for the Czech junior national team.

Roučka lives and works in Prague. His career showcases mastery in various media, including geodesy, cartography, painting, graphic art, drawing, and lithography. On the recommendation of the Frederikshavn Museum in Denmark, Roučka was commissioned to illustrate editions of Franz Kafka's *The Castle* and *Diaries*. In 1988, he ultimately returned to painting exclusively. Since 1993, he has been leading the painting class at the Summer Academy in Frauenau, Germany. In 2003, the French prime minister appointed Roučka a Knight of the Order of Academic Palms. Roučka has held more than 100 solo exhibitions in galleries and museums worldwide.






MAXENCE GUILLON

In 2022, Maxence Guillon was appointed President of Fondation Valmont, succeeding his father, Didier Guillon. After studying law, Maxence furthered his academic career with a master's in business management in Madrid. Immersed in the world of art from an early age, Maxence has trained his instincts and honed his artistic eye over the years, much like his father. This paternal transmission has evolved into an intergenerational exchange where the two men complement and challenge each other, from discovering artists to making future bets on emerging talents.

Didier Guillon is the descendant of illustrious ancestors, including the sculptor Alphonse Lamy and the collector and art dealer Charles Sedelmeyer. Driven by his inextinguishable curiosity and creativity, Guillon explores many mediums, such as serigraphy, illustration, cardboard and glass sculptures, with a particular fondness for mixed-media installations. Since 2013, he has been deeply fascinated by the precious traditions linked with precious materials like Murano glass, bronze and marble, collaborating with renowned Italian craftsmen for the production of his artworks.



DIDIER GUILLON



Room 5 marks the grand finale of the trilogy inspired by the *Odyssey*, unveiling the theme of next year's exhibition. What story will it tell?

See you in April 2026

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