



PHILIPPE CRAMER

Oculus Mirabilis



Photo credit © Fanch Le Bos

Philippe Cramer - *Oculus Mirabilis II* (2025)

Hand patinated plaster, LEDs, metal | Ø65 x 5,5 cm | Ø 25 5/8 x 2 1/8 in



Philippe Cramer - *Oculus Mirabilis I* (2021)

Hand patinated plaster, LEDs, metal | Ø104 x 5,5 cm | Ø 40 7/8 x 2 1/8 in



Photos credits © Fench Le Bos

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Here shown at *Révélation*, Paris, 2025

Philippe Cramer – *Oculus Mirabilis*

With *Oculus Mirabilis*, Philippe Cramer continues his exploration of the relationships between materiality, symbolism, and perception while introducing a new dimension at the core of his practice: time itself. Neither sculpture, painting, nor merely a light-based artwork, *Oculus Mirabilis* exists at the intersection of art, craftsmanship, technology, and ritual. It is an object whose form remains constant while its appearance continuously evolves through the passage of time.

Conceived around the circadian rhythm, the twenty-four hour cycle that governs life on Earth, the work unfolds as a slow chromatic choreography. Throughout the day, the sculpture gradually alters its colors, luminous intensity, and atmosphere. Its transformations are almost imperceptible from one moment to the next, yet profound when observed over time. The work does not merely occupy space; it inhabits duration.

Its title immediately reveals the conceptual foundations of the project. *Oculus*, the Latin word for “eye”, evokes perception, observation, and consciousness. *Mirabilis*, meaning wondrous, remarkable, or extraordinary, introduces the notion of wonder as a mode of understanding the world. Together, these terms suggest an extraordinary eye: an object that sees as much as it invites us to see differently.

The circular form of the sculpture recalls one of humanity’s oldest archetypes. Across cultures and civilizations, the circle has symbolized eternity, perfection, cosmic order, and cyclical time. From the solar disk of Ancient Egypt to medieval halos, from astronomical diagrams to the great abstractions of the twentieth century, it embodies a vision of existence founded not on linear progression but on perpetual return.

This cosmological dimension lies at the heart of *Oculus Mirabilis*. The work draws inspiration from the Ancient Egyptian belief that the sun dies each evening before being reborn at dawn to begin its journey anew. In this sense, it resonates with the symbolism of the Ouroboros, the serpent devouring its own tail, one of the oldest representations of perpetual renewal and cyclical existence. Each chromatic sequence ultimately returns to its point of origin, transforming repetition into rebirth.

Unlike a static sculpture, *Oculus Mirabilis* can never be experienced in exactly the same way twice. The work exists in a continuous state of becoming. Gentle tonalities gradually give way to more vibrant intensities before returning to quieter atmospheres. The sculpture appears to breathe. Its rhythm feels less mechanical than organic, evoking the cycles of sunrise and sunset, the succession of seasons, and the biological rhythms that govern human life.

This attention to light situates Philippe Cramer within a lineage of artists who have transformed light from a tool of representation into a material in its own right. Dan Flavin demonstrated that light could become sculpture. James Turrell made perception itself the subject of the artwork by dissolving the architectural boundaries of space. Olafur Eliasson has consistently explored the emotional and phenomenological dimensions of light, color, and atmosphere.



Dan Flavin - *untitled (to Virginia Dwan)* 1 (1971)

Oculus Mirabilis also enters into dialogue with the Californian *Light and Space* movement that emerged in Los Angeles during the 1960s through the work of artists such as Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, Craig Kauffman, and James Turrell. These artists were less concerned with the object itself than with the perceptual phenomena it generated. Through transparency, reflection, light, and color, they sought to make immaterial experiences perceptible and to transform the viewer's awareness of space and perception.

Like these artists, Philippe Cramer approaches light as a material capable of altering our perception of time, space, and ourselves. Yet where many *Light and Space* practitioners pursued the dematerialization of the artwork in favor of pure phenomenological experience, *Oculus Mirabilis* retains a strong sculptural presence. Light does not replace matter; it animates it. The work remains a tangible object whose circular form serves as a stable structure within an ever-changing luminous phenomenon.

This tension between permanence and transformation forms one of the conceptual foundations of the series. The sculpture maintains its identity while its appearance continuously evolves. The form remains; the light changes. The material endures; the color transforms. The work thus becomes a point of equilibrium between the long temporality of sculpture and the fluid temporality of light.

This duality is reinforced by the materiality of the piece itself. Handmade and delicately patinated, each ring is crafted from fine plaster whose matte surface absorbs and diffuses light with remarkable subtlety. Unlit, the sculpture appears almost dormant. It fully comes to life only upon activation, when color inhabits its surface and reveals new perceptual dimensions.

The choice of plaster is significant. Historically associated with casts, academic sculpture, and architectural ornament, plaster occupies a unique position between permanence and fragility. It carries within it the memory of sculpture while remaining extraordinarily receptive to transformation. In *Oculus Mirabilis*, it becomes the very skin of light.

The relationship between craftsmanship and innovation is fundamental to the project. Beginning in 2025, the editions are produced in collaboration with the artisans of the renowned GrandPalaisRmn Plaster Cast Workshop in Paris, a historic institution whose origins can be traced directly to the ateliers of the Louvre. This collaboration situates the work within a long tradition of artisanal excellence while simultaneously engaging with contemporary technologies of light programming and chromatic composition.

As in many of Philippe Cramer's projects, the work emerges from the encounter between ancestral knowledge and contemporary experimentation. Technology is never celebrated for its own sake; rather, it becomes a means of reactivating enduring questions concerning perception, beauty, and the human condition.

The true subject of *Oculus Mirabilis* may ultimately be time itself.



Larry Bell - *Triolith (Sea Salt · Red Poppy) D* (2021)

For centuries, artists have sought ways to represent the passage of time through static forms. From seventeenth-century vanitas paintings to the tradition of the memento mori, art history is filled with objects intended to remind viewers of the fragility of existence. Skulls, extinguished candles, wilting flowers, and hourglasses served as visual manifestations of human finitude.

Oculus Mirabilis revisits this tradition through radically different means.

Rather than representing time, the work embodies it. Its continuous chromatic cycle transforms temporality into a lived experience. The viewer becomes aware not only of the object's metamorphoses but also of their own position within time. The work acts as a subtle reminder that all things exist in a state of perpetual transformation.

Yet unlike the melancholy often associated with vanitas imagery and memento mori, *Oculus Mirabilis* proposes a cyclical and regenerative vision of existence. Time is not presented as gradual disappearance but as a process of continual renewal. Every ending already contains a beginning. Every sunset anticipates a sunrise. Every completed cycle prepares the next.

This perspective resonates equally with ancient cosmologies and contemporary sensibilities marked by a renewed attention to natural rhythms and living systems. The sculpture suggests an understanding of the world founded upon recurrence rather than finality, rhythm rather than linear progression.

Color plays a central role in this experience. Each chromatic transition evokes distinct emotional states. Some tonalities appear meditative and serene, others vibrant and ecstatic, while others introduce more introspective tensions. The work becomes a silent emotional score unfolding gradually through time.

Light is thus transformed into a language. Color ceases to function as a purely optical phenomenon and becomes a vehicle for emotion, sensation, and memory. The work communicates not through representation but through atmosphere.

Its circular form further amplifies this symbolic richness. It may simultaneously be interpreted as a solar disk, an eye, a halo, an eclipse, a portal, or a celestial body suspended in space. These readings remain intentionally open, allowing the work to operate across multiple registers at once: spiritual, cosmological, perceptual, and emotional.

While *Oculus Mirabilis* shares with the *Light and Space* movement a fascination for perceptual phenomena, it distinguishes itself through the symbolic dimension that permeates the entire project. The luminous circle is not merely an optical event; it invokes an ancestral imaginary associated with the sun, cosmic cycles, sacred halos, and representations of eternity. Where many Californian artists sought to reduce the artwork to an immediate phenomenological experience, Philippe Cramer reintroduces cultural memory, myth, and symbolism. Light thus becomes not only a phenomenon to be perceived but also a language through which broader questions of time, transformation, and



The color gradient of the human iris as inspiration

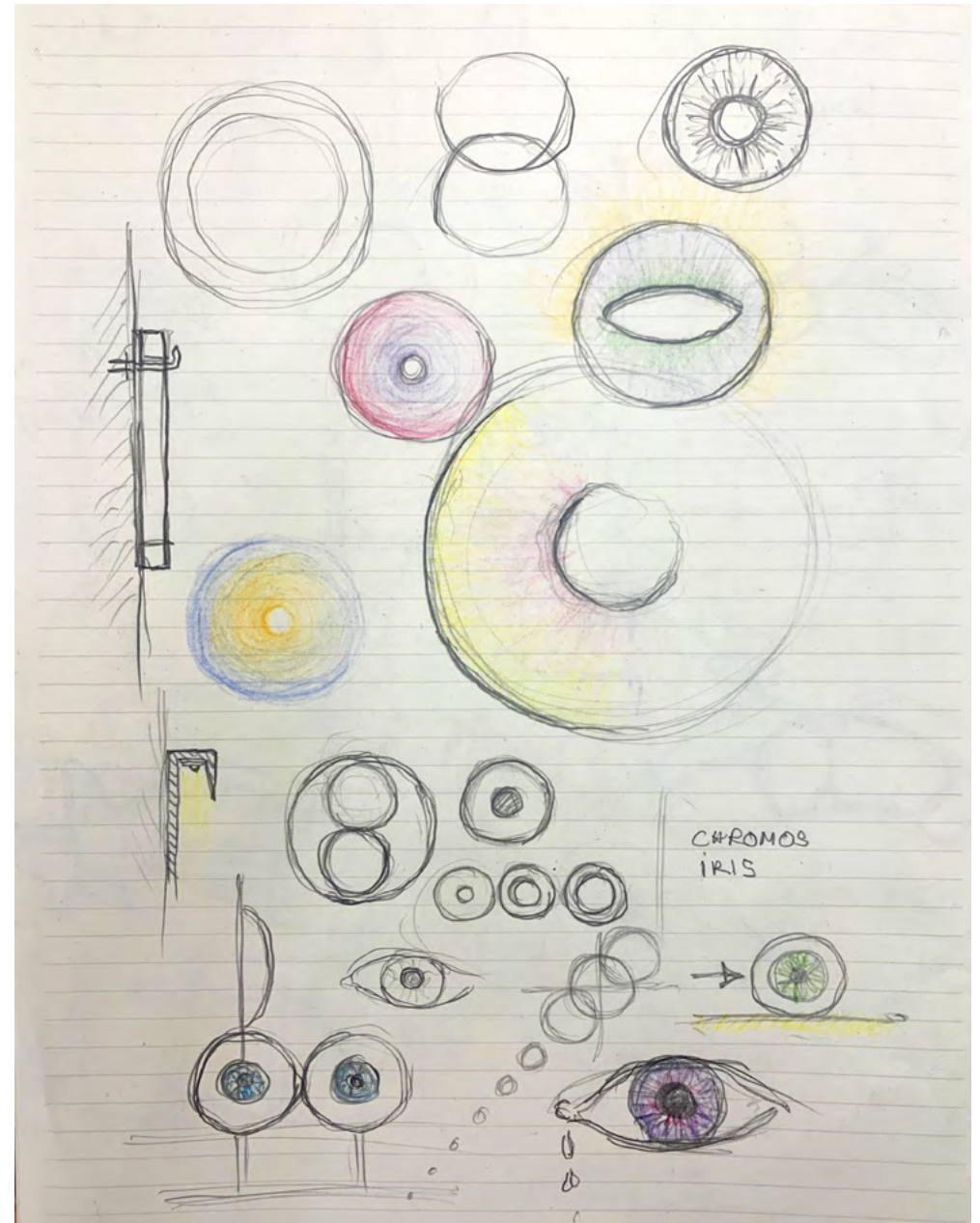
humanity's place within the universe may be contemplated.

This openness reflects Philippe Cramer's broader artistic practice, which consistently seeks to establish connections between nature and culture, craftsmanship and technology, materiality and symbolism. In *Oculus Mirabilis*, these concerns converge in a form of apparent simplicity whose conceptual depth gradually reveals itself.

Ultimately, the sculpture invites viewers to slow their gaze.

In a world increasingly defined by immediacy, acceleration, and constant stimulation, *Oculus Mirabilis* proposes another experience of time - one rooted in the observation of gradual transformation, in attentiveness to cycles rather than events.

More than a luminous sculpture, *Oculus Mirabilis* is a meditation on temporality itself: a contemporary monument to light, rhythm, and renewal. It transforms the invisible passage of time into a tangible, luminous, and contemplative presence.



Preparatory sketches

Philippe Cramer

Oculus Mirabilis I

2021

Hand patinated plaster, LEDs, metal

Edition of 15 + 4 artist proofs and one prototype

Co-edition Philippe Cramer & La Maison

Signed, dated and numbered

Ø104 x 5,5 cm | Ø 40 7/8 x 2 1/8 in

Philippe Cramer

Oculus Mirabilis II

2025

Hand patinated plaster, LEDs, metal

Edition of 20 + 4 artist proofs and one prototype

Co-edition Philippe Cramer & La Maison

Signed, dated and numbered

Ø65 x 5,5 cm | Ø 25 5/8 x 2 1/8 in



Photo credit © Claude Cortinovis

Philippe Cramer - *Oculus Mirabilis I* (2021)

Here shown during the exhibition *L'art en Héritage*, Geneva, 2024



Photo credit © Annik Welter

Philippe Cramer - *Oculus Mirabilis I* (2021)

Here shown during the exhibition *Angel Dust*, Gstaad, 2023

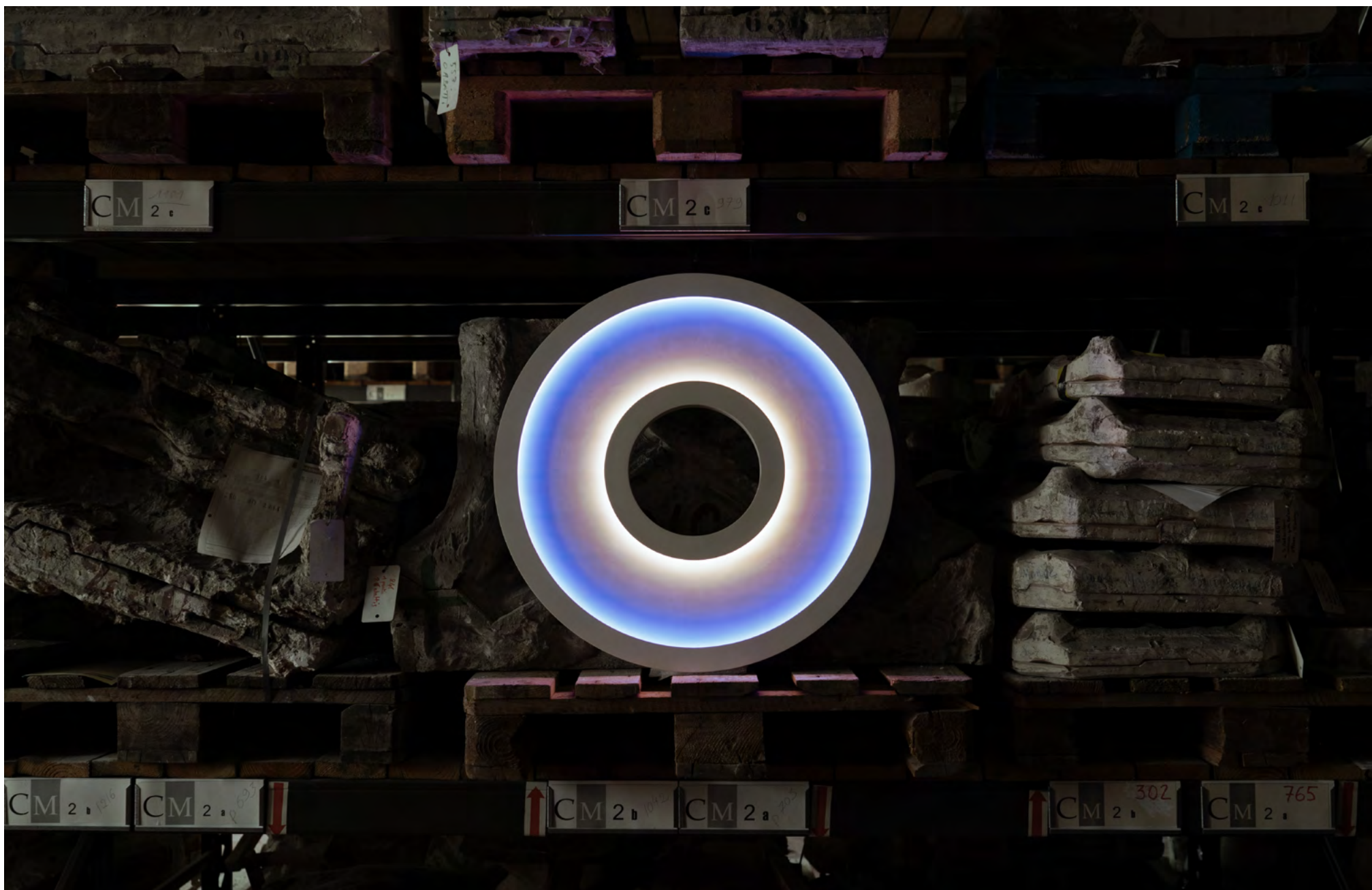


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Here shown at the GrandPalaisRmn Plaster Cast Workshop in Paris, 2025

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Photo credit © Daniela et Tonatuh

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Philippe Cramer

Born in the United States and having grown up in Switzerland, Philippe Cramer owes his first name to his ancestor Philibert Cramer, an 18th century figure who was celebrated in the poems of Voltaire and the paintings of Jean-Étienne Liotard. The artistic heritage of his family is rich: his great uncle Gérard Cramer collaborated with renowned artists such as Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse to produce artist's books, while his grandmother Adrienne Cramer founded a gallery in Geneva in partnership with Alexander Iolas, and she maintained close ties with Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle and Meret Oppenheim.

Drawing from this legacy, Philippe Cramer began his career as a designer of furniture and jewelry, creating pieces that were both dreamlike and functional. Rather than focusing uniquely on their practical dimensions, he became interested in the aesthetic qualities of the materials, as well as a large range of fabrication techniques, in order to apprehend the visual and tactile qualities of natural or synthetic materials, testing the limits and potential of each one. Gradually, he created the conditions for his own economic, symbolic and creative autonomy.

In 2001, Cramer made the decisive choice to focus on self-published editions and the production of limited series and unique pieces. In contradiction to an exponentially digitized industrial world, this positioning allows him to pursue his exploratory approach to creating. But above all, it reflects a deep and long-held conviction: in a world of accelerating dematerialization, handcrafted workmanship and the uniqueness of an object foster emotional attachment on the part of its user.

Today, Philippe Cramer focuses primarily on fine art, drawing on the knowledge of craftsmanship and contemporary production techniques he explored earlier in his career to bring his intuitions to life. His approach expresses itself as much through the care given to the formal aspects of his works, as in his philosophical vision of creating art - balancing tradition while pursuing new forms.

In 2010, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire of Geneva offered Philippe Cramer a carte blanche for the exhibition "L'Ornement Jamais" (Ornament; Never). The works created for this occasion have since been added to the MAH's permanent collection and are now part of the cultural heritage of the State of Geneva. His works are also featured in the collections of the Maison Tavel, the Ariana Museum, MUDAC, the Pictet Group, GNAMC (Rome) and numerous private collections.

In 2021, Philippe Cramer was also honored for his contributions to the arts by the UBS Foundation for Culture.



Photo credit © Indexprz

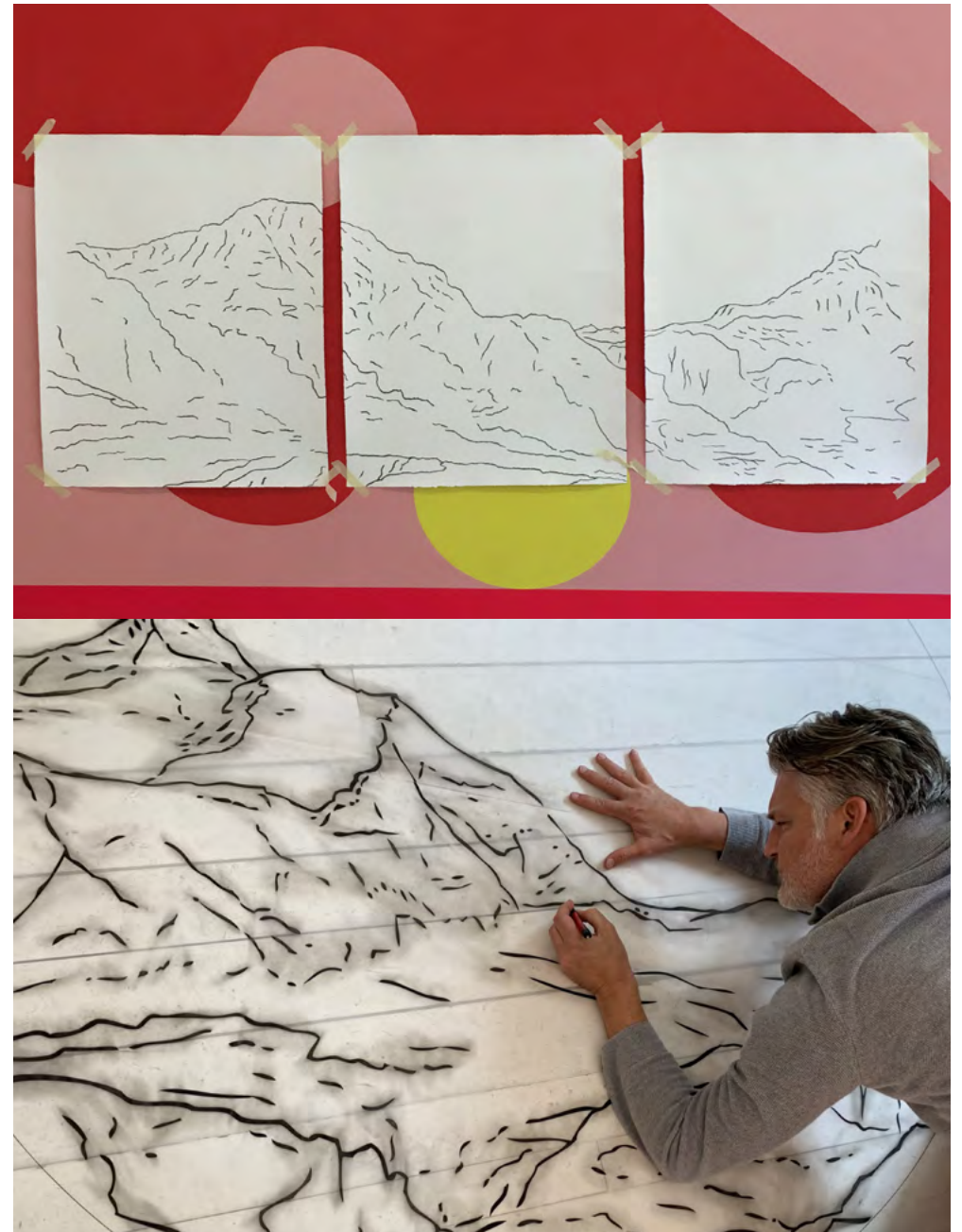
Artistic Practice

Philippe Cramer imagines artworks that alloy soft organic lines with rigorous geometric forms, often referring to Antiquity, modern art, and the poetry of nature. His vision combines bold colors with the finest of materials. Solid oak, walnut, ash wood, marble, limestone, onyx, gold leaf: his love of wood and stone confers a warm and tactile dimension to his body of work. But he has also skillfully manipulated industrial techniques and materials to produce unique forms that are always expressive. More recently, in an experimental approach, he has integrated generative AI to his range of production techniques.

If his work bears the mark of his attachment to Switzerland, to its spectacular landscapes and to its artisanal traditions, it also possesses a strongly evocative power reminding us that from Tuscany to California, from Japan to the Greek islands, his many travels continue to inspire him. Between ancient archetypes and childhood memories, his works ultimately possess the magical power of time machines.

Through his vision, we can take stock of deep time that allows us to escape from the ultra-present and nourish our imaginations in new ways. To develop his work, Philippe Cramer draws in his own manner from a type of paganism: he is inspired by a strong connection to ancient myths and a fascination with the cosmos. These imaginary worlds are marked by a form of open spirituality that has always been present in his art. Far from unbridled rationalism, they also inscribe his practice where poetry and magic reign. The totemic objects he creates thus take on a life of their own.

Intuitive and deeply committed to the act of creation, nourished by artisanal expertise, Philippe Cramer crafts pieces that are designed to be shared and passed down, thus building bridges between individuals, ideas, and eras.



The studio

Philippe Cramer established his studio in Geneva in 2001. Conceived as an artistic laboratory and an exhibition space for his work, the studio is a site for experimentation where he freely develops his creative ideas, linking traditional craft and the finest materials with innovative techniques.

He strives to offer ambitious works that are marked by the unique nuances that come with manual labor, producing one-of-a-kind pieces and limited editions that are meticulously crafted by artisans with whom he builds relationships of mutual trust.

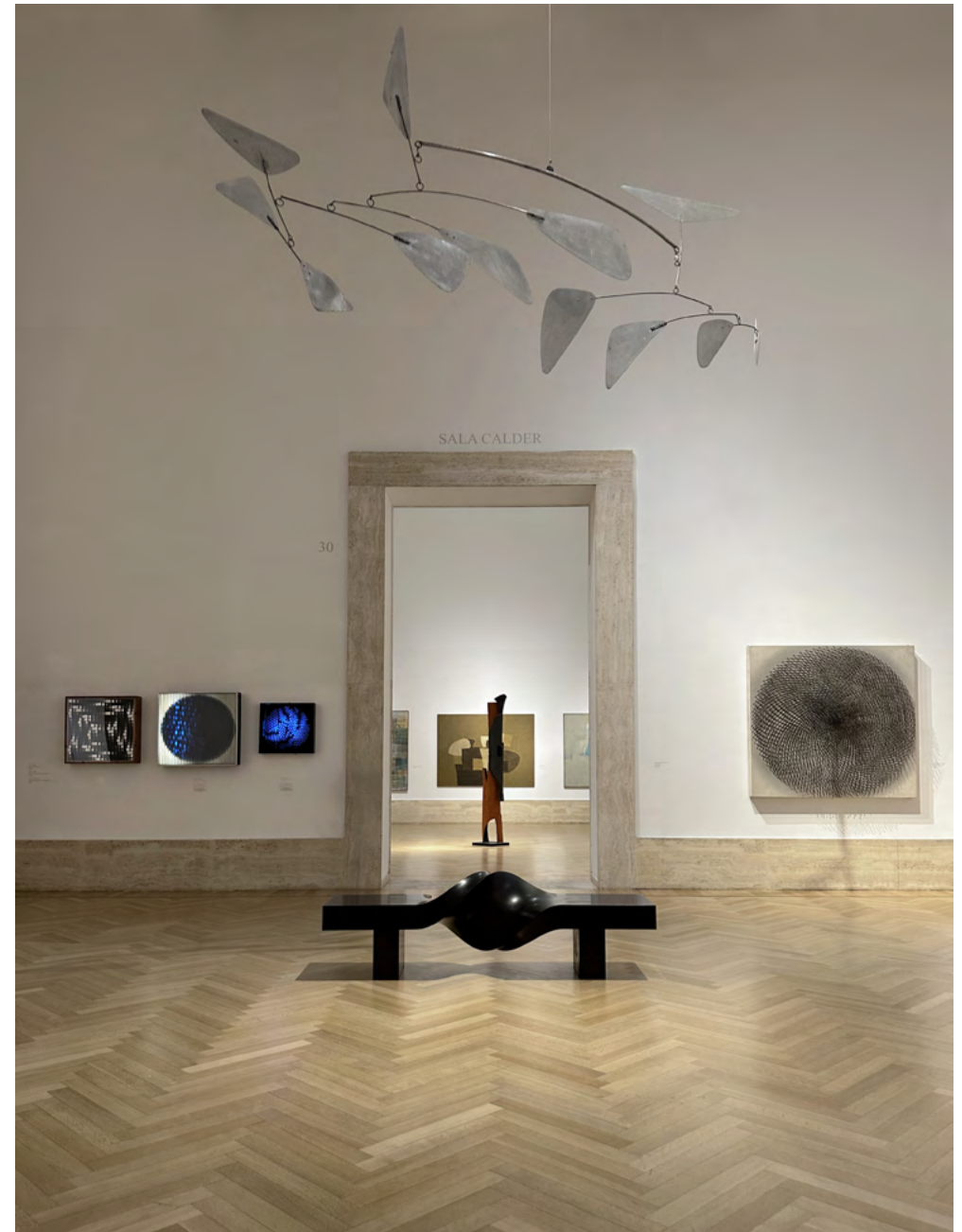
Believing in the importance of engagement with the public, Philippe Cramer keeps his studio open to visitors, inviting them to discover and appreciate his work up close. The studio is thus a space where he takes the time to discuss with visitors who stop by, inscribing his practice in a form of transmission of knowledge.

Miscellaneous

Philippe Cramer has designed trophies for the United Nations Young Activists Summit and the Louis-Jeantet Foundation, as well as projects for the Swiss consulates and embassies in Geneva and Pretoria. He has also created works for the headquarters of Banque Pictet and Banque Piquet Galland. In 2021, Art Genève commissioned him to design the set for the pop-up art restaurant Night Fall.

Several institutions and galleries have exhibited his work, including Gallery S. Bensimon and Not a Gallery in Paris, the Swiss Cultural Center and the Michelangelo Foundation in Milan, the Audi Foundation in Beirut, Gallery Farb in Gstaad, Ormond Editions in Zurich, the Kisceffi Muzeum in Budapest, the Lapidarium of the National Museum of the Czech Republic in Prague, and the TEI Foundation in Tokyo.

Feature articles on his work have been published in numerous magazines and newspapers, including Wallpaper, Vogue, AD, L'Officiel, T, Metropolis, Le Monde, and the Chicago Tribune.



Philippe Cramer - *Aeternus Eternus II* (2025)

Here shown as part of the permanent collection of the GNAMC, Rome. Donation F.P.Journe, 2025

Philippe Cramer - *Oculus Mirabilis II* (2025)
Detail view



Institutional collections

His artworks can be found in the following collections :

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva
Maison Tavel
Musée Ariana
MuDAC
Groupe Pictet
GNAMC

Exhibitions

His work has been exhibited at :

Centre Culturel Suisse, Milan
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva
MuDAC, Lausanne
Musée du Lapidarium, Prague
Fondation Audi, Beyrouth
Musée Kicelli, Budapest
Collectible, Bruxelles
Doppia Firma, Milan
Biennale de Crans-Montana
Cimetière des Rois, Geneva

Edward Mitterrand, Geneva
S. Bensimon, Paris
ArtCurial, Paris
Ormond Éditions, Zurich
Galerie Farb, Gstaad
Sabrier&Paunet, Paris
Mint, London
Speerstra, Bursins
Fondation TEI, Tokyo
Ambassade Suisse, Tokyo

Publications

Numerous publications have covered his work :

NZZ	Vogue (DE, BR)
Bilanz	Elle Décoration (FR, IT, UK, DE)
Le Temps	AD (USA, FR, IT, DE)
La Tribune de Genève	L'Officiel
Espaces Contemporains	Metropolis
Annabelle	The Chicago Tribune
Tendances Deco	Le Monde
Wallpaper	New York Times

Many books reference him or illustrate his art:

Pas Besoin d'un Dessin, Jean-Hubert Martin, Un Musée, 2022
Geneva at the Heart of the World, Assouline, 2021
Les Collections du Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève, Favre, 2019
Design Blok Book 2018, Profil Media, 2019
The New Jewelers, Olivier Dupon, Thames&Hudson, 2012
Wallpaper City Guide, Wallpaper, 2012
Decors, Design et Industrie, Alexandre Fiette, Somogy Editions d'Art, 2011
Design, teNeues, 2002

