

CAROLINE MESQUITA

Compagnons

FROM JULY 6 TO SEPTEMBER 28, 2025, AT THE CENTRE D'ART BASTILLE, GRENOBLE, FRANCE

From the very entrance, the tone is set. A monumental brass hand, Caroline Mesquita's material of choice, greets us. Sculpted by the artist using her distinctive technique—rolling, folding, oxidizing the metal with secret recipes of her own—it seems to point toward a detail in the space, as if inviting us to look closer. There, an old ring, once part of a military mechanism for adjusting a ghostly cannon, has been covered in gold leaf. The ordinary object becomes precious, almost jewel-like, transformed into a ring at the scale of the fort and the sculpture. Like a sign or an emblem, this ensemble feels inseparable from the place, like a clue left behind, suggesting that more discoveries await.

Caroline Mesquita delights in this dialogue with brass: a material that can be folded, twisted, oxidized, and then melted down again to be reborn in a new form. These metamorphoses interest her as much as the sculpture itself: how, from a vast blank sheet, can one conjure a world populated with figures—"companions"—each unique yet resonating together? Her exhibitions unfold like stories to be invented, where the site, the material, and the audience all take part in a dramaturgy she imagines like a writer.

Descending deeper, a new atmosphere emerges: that of an imaginary museum. Large black boxes, like jewel cases, display treasures of uncertain origin. Jewelry? Amulets from another time? Inside these protective boxes, we find necklaces, bracelets, rings, adorned with human figures, birds, felines, but also strange creatures: a disproportionate frog perched on a ring, a sloth resting on a bracelet, groups of characters dancing in a farandole. The scale of the figures plays with that of the body: the frog seems ready to leap onto the hand, the sloth to climb up the arm, the tiny companions to accompany our gestures. Frozen in a moment of action, these objects seem to wait for us to pick them up so they can come alive and draw us into their silent stories.

To create these jewelry-sculptures, Caroline Mesquita trades the large brass sheet for wax, sculpted and then entrusted to a Marseille foundry to be cast using the lost-wax technique. Her familiar gestures—folding, rolling, deforming—are all there, but at an intimate scale, with a level of detail that is striking. The universe remains theatrical, populated with recurring characters and familiar animals, but the small size invites a more personal, almost secret, connection with the work. At the lowest level, the exhibition takes another turn. On three large black tables, facing mirrors that infinitely multiply the fort's vaulted ceilings, new boxes await visitors. This time, the jewelry can be tried on: necklaces, rings, bracelets become amulets, companions for a moment. The site's mediators, wearing white gloves, invite the curious to step forward. The gesture is ritualistic, intimate: the spectator becomes a participant, wearing a piece of Caroline Mesquita's phantasmagorical world, taking part in the joyful, poetic dance she envisions.

Climbing back toward the exit, the journey takes on its full meaning: from the monumental detail of the gilded ring to the intimacy of the worn jewelry, the exhibition leads us through a play of scales, stories, and metamorphoses, where material, place, and viewer unite to bring to life these companions of metal—joyful and silent all at once.