

Espèces humaines / Fides

gethan&myles&la-chorba, 2025
Cyanotypes on cotton, acrylic paint,
wheelbarrow 'l'Inusable, Marseille', foreign
and French demonetized and repolished
coins, soundtrack.

Commissioned by
Musée de la Monnaie de Paris

Espèces humaines / Fides was created by
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Curator: Dominique Antérion,
Head of Collections and Coins Cabinet
at the Monnaie de Paris Museum

With logistical support from the Office
of Public Finance, Hauts-de-France,
and the département du Nord

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Explore and discuss the installation
with gethan&myles, La Chorba and
Dominique Antérion



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Espèces humaines / Fides

an installation by gethan&myles&la-chorba

2 OCTOBER 2025 – 8 MARCH 2026

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

You've been given a coin. Now it's up to you to
decide what you want to do with it: put it with
the other coins in the installation, keep it as a
souvenir of the artwork, give it to someone,
or even take another one... There is no right or wrong
action. Money circulates, that's what it's made for.



So many hands.

Shining, glittering coins. Thousands, tens of thousands of coins with
a sound and sparkle familiar to us all. A reassuring, even excessive,
image of abundance? Or is it just a pile of worthless metal?
Dream or nightmare? The end of the rainbow or the end of an era?

Hands that give or hands that take? Hands at work or hands
that suffer? Confident hands or uncertain hands? Hands of those
who have – or those who have not?... Aren't they all just hands?

So much money changing hands.

And me? How should I react faced with all these riches, all these
demands? Should I take? Give? Or maybe both? What will I do?
Which will I choose?

The installation encourages us to think about money moving from
one hand to the next, its value also always moving, forever in flux...
until the day it's decommissioned and becomes worthless. It incites
us to become an active participant, to reassert money's human
dimension and decide to act: to donate a coin, to accept charity or
to support a charity (like La Chorba, who the artists worked with),
to have the kindness to help, or the courage to ask for help.

affirmation: money is, above all, human.

gethan&myles' work asks us directly: have we not forgotten
that money, so often the source of conflict and division,
is at its heart a collective creation? A social contract?
A powerful symbol of cooperation and cohesion, of shared
hopes and values? Values that are embodied by La Chorba
in all their humanitarian actions.

*The installation 'Espèces humaines / Fides' was commissioned
by the Monnaie de Paris. It will be exhibited until spring 2026
as part of the museum's permanent collection, and its part
of the institution's global exploration of society's relationship
with cash, and its policy of supporting contemporary creation.*

QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

Boom or bust?

The coin-filled wheelbarrow evokes both positive and negative images: is it a symbol of abundance or crisis? We can see it equally as treasure chest, crock of gold at the end of the rainbow... or as an archetype of the fall, where hyperinflation results in a wheelbarrow of banknotes being needed to buy a single loaf of bread (Weimar Germany, Zimbabwe, Venezuela).

Bolts from the blue?

The fabric banners are cyanotypes: a photographic technique which produces a monochrome image in blue and white. The cyanotype process was created in the mid-19th century and initially used by botanists to record plants, and then later to produce blueprints for machinery or architecture (examples of these can be seen in Rooms 4 and 5 of the museum). Like all photographic images, cyanotypes fade when exposed to light. However, if left in darkness, cyanotypes have the unique ability to 'regenerate' and recover their original blues. Much like currencies with their ever-fluctuating values, they are unstable, living works.

Money may talk, but do humans listen?

Money is such an inherent part of our daily lives, we often forget that it isn't some external force which guides our lives, but a collective, human creation, based on beliefs and mutual agreement. Exchange and cooperation are the basis of every human society, with or without money. Currency is above all a convention designed to facilitate economic exchanges; its form shaped by human beliefs and interactions. 'Coin a phrase', 'Payback time', 'Bank on it', 'Save us'... in every language a multitude of expressions draw on financial terminology. But they are often ambiguous in meaning. Looking specifically at the installation, 'espèces' means

both 'money' and 'species', 'épargner' means 'to save' (both money and 'souls'); 'pièce' is both a coin and a room (and the 'pièce de vie' is the center of the home); 'échange' can be an exchange that is monetary or human; and 'compte' is a 'count' that evokes both accounting, and reliance and trust. Thus, the expressions on these banners question our relationship with the work, with money and with society at large.

And Fides?

Money is a collective human creation – its value based on the trust we place in it – and the word Fides (from the Latin for 'faith', 'trust' or 'loyalty') in the title of gethan&myles' work refers to this idea. This word is also inscribed into the walls in the main courtyard of the Hôtel de la Monnaie, where the goddesses Copia and Fides illustrate a Latin expression: 'The riches that Copia pours from her large horn are examined with scrupulous attention by Fides (Good Faith).' These words, carved in the 18th-century, still ring true today, and sum up the role of a monetary institution: guaranteeing the value of and *trust in*, the money which passes through our hands.

Lending a hand?

The hands featured in the cyanotypes belong to either an employee or volunteer at La Chorba (the charity the artists worked with). They are hands that give, that embody help and solidarity. But they are also hands that receive something intangible from this work. And then there's one hand that belongs to a homeless man who wished to take part in the project. But which hand is it? Over the course of our lives, each of us will at some point hold out a hand to give and to receive. Hands are also present in the printing of the cotton banners, in the stitching, the painting of the slogans, and in the action of giving or taking a coin. All these gestures are intrinsically human, generators of connection, exchange and meaning.

What is the 'true' value of an object?

The thousands of coins piled in the wheelbarrow also raise questions about value. They suggest treasure, abundance and wealth – but in reality, they're worth next to nothing; they've been demonetised, ie, they have no trade value, and have reverted to simple pieces of metal.* And yet they can still have an aesthetic or sentimental value: as a souvenir of our travels, our childhood, or of this installation even. Like a work of art, whose value is based not on its raw material but on the feelings it inspires and trust in the artist, the value of these coins is the result of a choice, a human decision.

**70,000 coins from around the world were donated for this work by the Office of Public Finance, Hauts-de-France, and the département du Nord. They were repolished at the Monnaie de Paris factory in Pessac.*

Traditional currencies?

Traditional currencies, examples of which are exhibited in Room 6, remind us of the role of humans in the creation of currency and value. The metal disks stamped with symbols which rapidly took hold in Western societies are but one of many forms of past and present currencies. A vast range of objects have served as a medium of exchange around the world, whether in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe or Oceania: cocoa beans, tobacco leaves, tea bricks, cowrie shells, salt, paper, fabric, beads, furs, etc. At one time or another, all these items had a value which was collectively agreed by those using them. The cyanotypes made by gethan&myles are a specific reference to 'cloth money' and the indigo-dyed fabrics used as the main currency in 19th-century Guinea, the value of which varied depending on the intensity of their blues.

gethan&myles

Based in Marseille since 2011, the Irish artist duo gethan&myles was formed on a death slide in the London rain during the summer of 2008. Their work is based on the idea of encounter, exchange and collaboration, between themselves, but above all between them and the environments or communities they come into contact with. The resulting works are equally at home in venues devoted to art, or in public spaces – seeking other emotions, reactions and perspectives; interacting with the life of a neighbourhood, a tower block, an ecosystem... These encounters result in a creative practice formed in contact with the real world, in an ongoing relationship with lived and shared experiences. All their art is underpinned by the desire to forge deep connections, to redefine co-creation and the role of art within society. Through installation, film, sculpture, image, text and books, they assert the ability of art to enrich our relationship with the world – and each other.

Hand in hand: La Chorba

gethan&myles chose to create this work, and to share their fee for it, with La Chorba. This charity was born out of a simple observation: the number of people who can't afford to feed themselves is growing, while our food systems produce staggering amounts of waste every day. Twenty-seven years after its creation, an impressive human network works day and night to respond to this challenge. Every year, over 2000 volunteers, 17 permanent staff and 56 trainees serve 408,000 hot meals to people in need – including 150 breakfasts served daily in museums and cultural venues as well as 800 meals distributed every evening in Paris. They also distribute 10,469 food packages. Each year their work prevents over 484 tons of food going to waste. All of La Chorba's actions are guided by tolerance, sharing, openness and togetherness.