

Raphaël Denis

Fates of Works

September 3 - October 3, 2026



Raphaël Denis, *Fonds Paul Rosenberg : les années parisiennes* (*The Paul Rosenberg Fund, the Parisian Years*), 2019.
Five volumes, 4,364 pages. Edition of 30. Photo by the artist.

Bienvenu Steinberg & C is pleased to present *Fates of Works*, Raphaël Denis's first exhibition in the United States. Bringing together works and series from 2018 to the present, the exhibition introduces the richness, maturity, and depth of his artistic corpus. An artist-researcher, Denis has spent more than ten years examining the looting of Jewish property during World War II. His conceptual practice takes the form of objects and installations characterized by sobriety and visual intelligence, addressing questions of provenance and the future of artworks as political, historical, and civilizational issues.

Fleeing Nazism before moving to New York during World War II, Paul Rosenberg was one of the greatest Parisian art dealers of the interwar period. Hundreds of works from his personal collection and gallery inventory—including paintings by Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Léger, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne, and Bonnard—were looted by the German occupiers. After the war, Rosenberg recovered most of his artworks, many of which eventually entered major American museum collections.

Presented on a console table in front of wallpaper featuring several hundred masterpieces from the collection, Denis's five-volume artist's book, *Fonds Paul Rosenberg, les années parisiennes* (*The Paul*

Rosenberg Fund, the Parisian Years), brings together more than 4,000 artworks in Rosenberg's possession during his years as a Paris gallery owner, from 1919 to 1939. A copy is now in MoMA's collection. Facing it are 14 recent works from *La Loi normale des erreurs* (The Normal Law of Errors), derived from the looting of the Rosenberg collection. Paintings by Picasso, Degas, and Matisse—some now in museum collections—hang facing backward. This dialogue between the archive and a symbolic selection of works reflects the movement between memory, archives, and History at the heart of Denis's practice.

The second part of the exhibition shifts to themes of censorship and destruction. A scale model reconstructs Denis's 2024 exhibition at the Sprengel Museum in Hanover, centered on provenance research into a painting in the museum's collection that Denis identified as looted and non-restituted. Thanks to his research and intervention, the painting, tentatively identified as a Modigliani, is currently in the process of being restituted to the descendants of the Jewish owner from whom it was stolen more than 80 years ago in France.

Fahrenheit, Shelf, a scorched wooden bookshelf in the shape of books, pays tribute to Alfred Kantorowicz, who founded the German Freedom Library (*Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek*) in Paris to preserve books condemned and destroyed by the Nazi regime. Inseparable from *Fahrenheit, Index Librorum Prohibitorum* evokes another form of literary censorship: the Vatican's prohibition, over more than 400 years, of thousands of religious, poetic, philosophical, and scientific works. Finally, *La Loi normale des erreurs : KRÄ 229* (The Normal Law of Errors: KRÄ 229), a sculpture depicting Marie Antoinette, serves as a deeply humanistic closing gesture. Sober and tragic, it evokes the fate of Jewish artists and collectors under the Occupation while recalling the universal violence inherent in war and armed conflict.

Raphaël Denis (b. 1979) lives and works between Brussels and Paris. Since the 2010s, his practice has examined the institutions, histories, and myths surrounding art through sculpture, installation, and archival research. His work considers the art market, museums, and collecting, with particular attention to the destruction, displacement, and restitution of artworks. His work is held in collections including Fondation Francès, FRAC Alsace, the Reiner Speck Foundation, and the Bibliothèque Kandinsky at the Centre Pompidou.

Select exhibitions include Galerie Sator, Paris, France (2026); Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany (2025); Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany (2024); Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris, France (2024); Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland (2023, 2021); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2020, 2019); Museum Berggruen, Berlin, Germany (2018); Musée National Picasso-Paris, Paris, France (2015); and Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (2014).