

magnanrama

Portraits, Networks and Contemporary Resonances of Nathalie Magnan

Vernissage : 19 February 2026

Press release
09 December 2025

From February 20 to May 31, 2026, the Villa Arson art center presents *Magnanrama. Portraits, Networks, and News of Nathalie Magnan*, a group exhibition dedicated to Nathalie Magnan, media theorist, filmmaker, cyberfeminist and hacktivist, sailor of seas and internets, who passed away in 2016. Bringing together numerous archival materials and films that trace her trajectory, and gathering around her artists with whom she collaborated or whose practices extend her own, the exhibition forms a collective biography that sheds light on the contemporary relevance of an important yet still too little-known figure in the history of media, technology, feminism, and LGBTQIA+ struggles. From the 1980s to the 2010s, Nathalie Magnan brought these fields of thought and action into dialogue — and at times into collision.



With Nathalie Magnan, Shu Lea Cheang, Cindy Coutant, Chloé Desmoineaux with Bobby Brim and Ada LaNerd, Guerrilla Girls, DeeDee Halleck, Barbara Hammer, Old Boys Network, Paper Tiger Television, Julia Scher, The Yes Men, VNS Matrix.

Curator : Mathilde Belouali

A co-production between the Villa Arson, Nice, the Centre d'art contemporain Les Capucins, Ville d'Embrun, and Bétonsalon – centre d'art et de recherche, Paris :

- 20 February - 31 May 2026 : Villa Arson, Nice – Vernissage : 19 February 2026
- 26 June - 23 August 2026 : Centre d'art contemporain Les Capucins, Ville d'Embrun – Vernissage : 25 June 2026
- 25 September - 12 December 2026 : Bétonsalon – Centre d'art et de recherche, Paris – Vernissage : 24 September 2026

Exhibition design : Cécile Bouffard

Graphic design : Clara Pasteau

Partners : Archives de la critique d'art / Université Rennes 2

Magnanrama was created in collaboration with Reine Prat.

Nathalie Magnan in Santa Cruz, 1980s © Fonds Nathalie Magnan, INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art, Rennes.

Magnanrama

A media theorist, filmmaker, cyberfeminist and navigator of the internet and the high seas alike, Nathalie Magnan (1956-2016) made a vital and generous interdisciplinary contribution to the history of thought, technology, feminism and LGBTQI+ struggles. An educator, webmistress, hacktivist and – although she never used the term to describe herself – an artist, Magnan acted as a mediator, bringing parallel but disconnected disciplinary fields into dialogue. Pursuing collective approaches and rhizomatic, feminist methodologies where “do-it-yourself” was a contagious incitation to act, throughout her life Magnan worked to facilitate the encounter and the intermixing of images, texts, people, activism and technology.

Whilst a graduate student at the University of California Santa Cruz in the 1980s, Magnan worked as an assistant to the philosopher and historian of science Donna Haraway, whose landmark essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*¹ she translated into French. She also participated in the public-access television collectives Paper Tiger Television and Deep Dish Television. After returning to France in the 1990s, she made several films, including *Lesborama*, which she created for the first edition of the “Nuit Gay” marathon on Canal+ in 1995.

The co-founder of the Paris Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (today Chéri-es Chéris), Magnan regularly contributed to the magazine *Gai Pied*. Later, she taught at national art schools in Dijon and in Bourges. Closely involved in cyberfeminist, tactical media and hacktivist circles, she organised digital counterculture events, moderated feminist mailing lists, coded for internet sites, and wrote, translated and co-ordinated collections of texts. In 2000, when the International Symposium on Electronic Art was organised in Paris with an all-male line-up, she convened a women-only fringe event at the Centre d'information et de documentation of the Beaux Arts de Paris.² In 2004 in Finland and in 2005 in the Strait of Gilbratar, she organised two editions of *Sailing for Geeks*, which brought together artists and activists around communication technologies and imagined links between maritime and online navigation.

Nathalie Magnan passed away aged sixty from metastatic breast cancer. She left behind her combats around questions of gender and technology, her incisive interrogation of the ways in which technology transforms our view of the world, her conviction in the agency of every individual to produce their own representations, her participative and investigative methodology and her humour. Many of those who knew her wonder what she would have thought about, written about and made of our era: of the social networks to which we confide our private life and our personal data, of the pandemic which reconfigured our relationships to distance and to vulnerability, of the potential and the danger of artificial intelligence, of media conglomerates concentrated in the hands of the far right and of genocides livestreamed to screens held in the palm of our hands. Many others have discovered Magnan through her archives, which were entrusted to the Archives de la critique d'art in Rennes by her partner, Reine Prat: the collection joyously blur the distinctions between private and professional life, institutional culture and self-organisation, activism and transmission – all the while reconfiguring disciplines, genres, genders and questions of legitimacy.

The exhibition is imagined not only as a portrait and a femmage, but also as a collective biography that opens onto the present, one in which the ideas, the struggles and the connections that Nathalie Magnan helped to bring about emerge anew in the work of different generations of artists and thinkers. “Magnanrama” brings together her predecessors (Barbara Hammer) with figures and groups that she spent time with (Shu Lea Cheang, Old Boys Network, VNS Matrix, The Yes Men) or which pursued parallel experiments (Guerilla Girls, Julia Scher), as well as those who have followed in her footsteps (Chloé Desmoineaux, Bobby Brim and Ada LaNerd, Cindy Coutant).

¹ The first translation was carried out with Marie-Hélène Dumas and Charlotte Gould. It was published in *Connexions. Arts réseaux médias*, ed. Nathalie Magnan & Annick Bureaud, École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 2002.

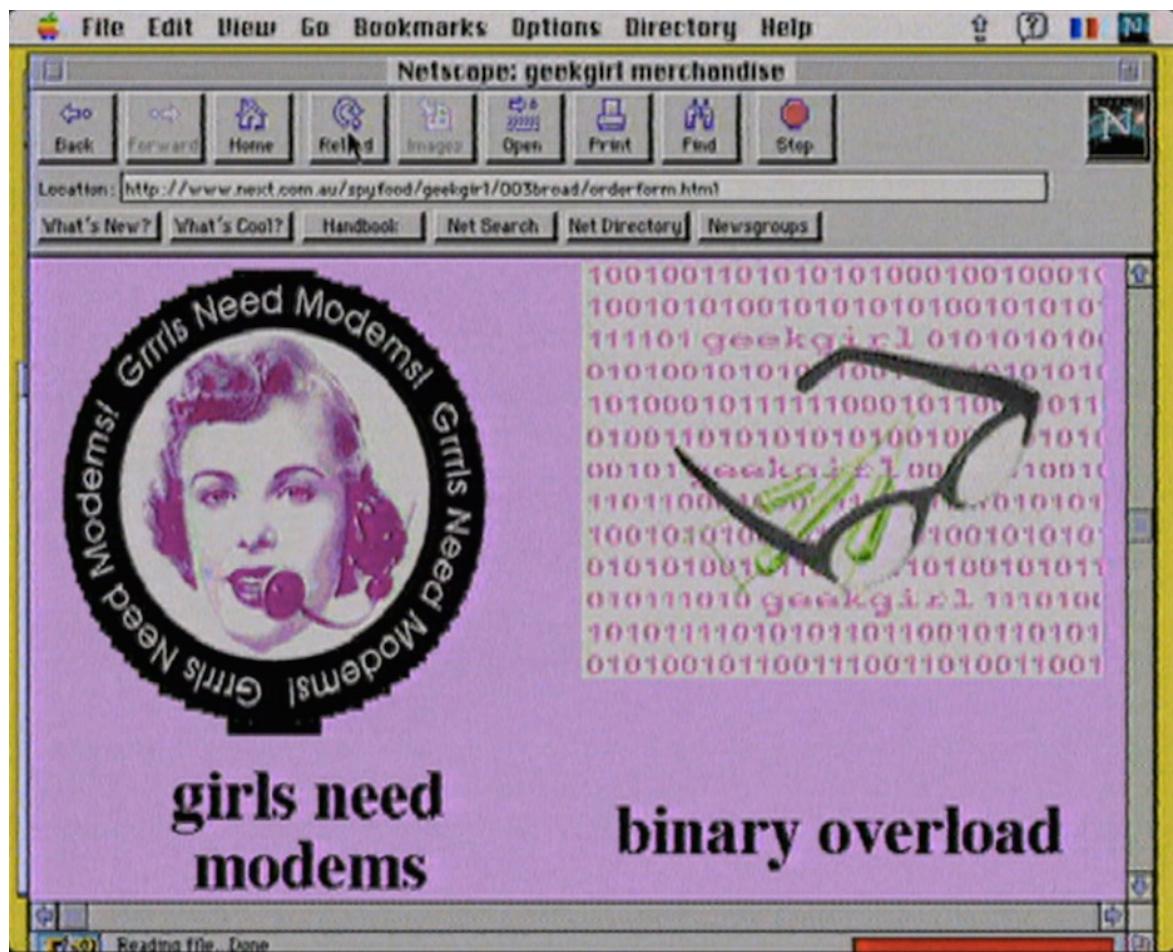
² This event was organised at the invitation of Mathilde Ferrer, then head of the Centre d'information et de documentation.



Film still from *Donna Haraway reads the National Geographic on Primates* realised by Paper Tiger Television, a collective of which Nathalie Magnan was a member, 1987. Diffusion : Heure exquise ! © Paper Tiger Television and Nathalie Magnan.



Nathalie Magnan activating her artwork *Now/Then*, Rencontres internationales de la photographie, Arles, 1983.
© Fonds Nathalie Magnan, INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art, Rennes.



Film still from *Internautes* by Nathalie Magnan, 1996. Diffusion : Heure exquise !



Nathalie Magnan in Santa Cruz, 1980s.

© Fonds Nathalie Magnan, INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art, Rennes.



Nathalie Magnan at the helm of a boat, 2000s.

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Press contact

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Practical information

Presented at the Villa Arson, the exhibition will be open to the public every day except Tuesday, from 2pm to 6pm. Admission is free and no reservation is required.

Address
Villa Arson, 20 avenue Stephen Liégeard, 06100 Nice

Access
Tramway line n°1 - Station Le Ray
Bus n°8, direction Las Planas / Sappia – station Deux avenues

Outside areas (gardens and terraces) and exhibition rooms are largely accessible to people with reduced mobility.

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