

GAËLLE CHOISNE
PORTFOLIO

BIOGRAPHY ~~~~~ 3

TEMPLE OF LOVE ~~~~~ 4

EXHIBITIONS ~~~~~ 68

WORKS ~~~~~ 108

VIDEOS ~~~~~ 149

TEXTS ~~~~~ 166

Gaëlle Choïsne (1985, FR) lives and works between Paris and Berlin.

Sensitive to contemporary issues, Gaëlle Choïsne's practice takes into account the complexity of the world, its political and cultural disorder, whether it be the over-exploitation of nature, its resources, or the vestiges of colonial history, where Creole esoteric traditions, myths and popular cultures mingle.

His projects are conceived as ecosystems of sharing and collaboration, pockets of «resistance» where new possibilities are created, notably with the «**Temple of Love**» project. Initiated from Roland Barthes' original essay on love, «Fragments d'un discours amoureux» (1977), Gaëlle Choïsne adds a political dimension to the concept of love by paying homage to invisible bodies, minority and fragile souls, and dispossessed hearts. «Temple of love » is an evolutionary project defining itself through its modes of appearance and genesis according to its invitations and its location.

The works/installations of Gaëlle Choïsne have been exhibited in many institutions: Centrale Powerhouse (Montreal), CAFA Museum (Beijing), Pera Museum (Istanbul), MAM - Musée d'art moderne de Paris, Musée Fabre (Montpellier), Zacheta Gallery (Warsaw), The Mistake Room (Los Angeles), Bétonsalon (Paris), G—und project space (Berlin), MAMO - Centre d'art de la Cité radieuse de Marseille, Centre d'art contemporain La Halle des bouchers (Vienne), Musée archéologique Henri-Prade (Lattes), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon...

She has also participated in a number of biennials and triennial: 5th New Museum Triennial (2021), 13th International Biennial of Lyon (2015), 12th Havana Biennial (2015), Sharjah Biennial 13 (2017) and 14th Curitiba Biennial (2017).

She has been part of many residency programs in France and internationally such as Bethanian-KW (Berlin), the Rijksakademie (Amsterdam), Atelier Van Lieshout (Rotterdam), the Cité Internationale des Arts de Paris and OPTICA & Art3 Valence (Montreal).

In 2021 she is the recipient of the Aware Prize. In 2019 she is nominated for the Ricard Foundation Prize and the Sam Art Project.

Gaëlle Choïsne is represented by the galleries Air de Paris, Romainville (FR) and Nicoletti, London (UK).

Gaëlle Choïsne (1985, FR) vit et travaille entre Paris et Berlin.

Sensible aux enjeux contemporains la pratique de Gaëlle Choïsne rend compte de la complexité du monde, de son désordre politique et culturel, qu'il s'agisse de la surexploitation de la nature, de ses ressources ou des vestiges de l'histoire coloniale, où se mêlent traditions ésotériques créoles, mythes et cultures populaires.

Ses projets sont conçus comme des écosystèmes de partage et de collaboration, des poches de « résistance » où se créent de nouveaux possibles, notamment avec le projet «**Temple of Love**». Initié à partir de l'essai inédit sur l'amour de Roland Barthes, «Fragments d'un discours amoureux» (1977), Gaëlle Choïsne ajoute au concept d'amour une dimension politique en rendant hommage aux corps invisibilisés, aux âmes minoritaires et fragilisées ainsi qu'aux cœurs dépossédés. «**Temple of love**» est un projet évolutif se définissant au travers de ses modes d'apparition et de sa genèse en fonction de ses invitations et de sa localisation.

Les oeuvres/installations de Gaëlle Choïsne ont été exposées dans de nombreuses institutions telles que : Centrale Powerhouse (Montreal), CAFA Museum (Pékin), Pera Museum (Istanbul), MAM - Musée d'art moderne de Paris, Musée Fabre (Montpellier), Zacheta Gallery (Varsovie), The Mistake Room (Los Angeles), Bétonsalon (Paris), G—und project space (Berlin), MAMO - Centre d'art de la Cité radieuse de Marseille, Centre d'art contemporain La Halle des bouchers (Vienne), Musée archéologique Henri-Prade (Lattes), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon etc.

Elle a également participé à de nombreuses biennales et triennales : 5^e Triennale du Nouveau Musée (2021), 13^e Biennale internationale de Lyon (2015), 12^e Biennale de La Havane (2015), 13^e Biennale de Sharjah (2017) et 14^e Biennale de Curitiba (2017).

Elle a fait partie de nombreux programmes de résidence en France et à l'international tels que le Bethanian-KW (Berlin), la Rijksakademie (Amsterdam), l'Atelier Van Lieshout (Rotterdam), la Cité Internationale des Arts de Paris et OPTICA & Art3 Valence (Montréal).

En 2021, elle est lauréate du prix Aware. En 2019, elle est nommée pour le prix de la Fondation Ricard et le Sam Art Project.

Gaëlle Choïsne est représentée par les galeries Air de Paris, Romainville (FR) et Nicoletti, Londres (UK).

TEMPLE OF LOVE PROJECT

Temple
Of
Love

Temple Of Love

MANIFESTO

Temple of love est un écosystème inclusif autour de la notion d'///amour.

Il est apparu essentiel de mettre en avant le concept d'+amour' comme une nouvelle donnée politique et de le rendre prédominant dans une société 999 hétérosexiste, raciste, homophobe, transphobe et dominée par un patriarcat autoritaire et majoritairement blanc. 000 Ce' communautarisme inversé et radical doit être remis en question rapidement par les institutions culturelles et dirigeantes.

Le projet « Temple of love » a débuté en 2 018- 2019

à Bétonsalon, à Paris, comme une préface à un cycle indéterminé géographiquement. Il se dessine comme espace ininterrompu, pluridisciplinaire, systémique.

Le temple doit être considéré comme un espace sacré c'est-à-dire reliant les espaces des hommes et des 111 Dieux et des entités spirituelles. 111

Ce qui implique une remise en question de notre manière de penser le monde, !!!! univers, la Nature qui nous entoure.

Il est d'utilité 888 publique.
Il contient ses propres règles et usages.)))))

111

Il permet la remise en question de l' espace muséal comme entité provenant de l'héritage colonial. Le temple of love est écoféministe en incarnant un « empowerment » queer donc inclusif..6//&

T.O.L est un espace de résistance. ; ; ; et de vulnérabilité Il s' active au travers de la rencontre, du partage.9 97

0000000 Temple of love se définit au travers de ses modes d' apparition et de sa genèse en fonction de ses invitations, de sa localisation.

Temple Of Love

MANIFESTO

Temple of love is an inclusive ecosystem around the notion of ///love.

It appeared essential to put forward the concept of '+love' as a new political fact et and to make it predominant in a 999 heterosexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic society dominated by an authoritarian and predominantly white patriarchy. 000 This' inverted and radical communitarianism must be challenged quickly by the cultural and ruling institutions..

The « Temple of love » projet began in 2 018- 2019

at Bétonsalon, in Paris, as a preface to a geographically indeterminate cycle. It takes shape as an uninterrupted, multidisciplinary, systemic space.

The temple must be considered as a sacred space i.e connecting the spaces of humans and 111 Gods and spiritual entities. 111

This implies a questioning of our way of thinking about the world, the universe, the Nature that surrounds us.

It's of public 888 utility.
It contains its own rules and customs.)))))

111

It allows the questioning of the museum space as an entity coming from the colonial heritage. The temple of love is ecofeminist by embodying

a queer « empowerment » thus inclusive..6//&

T.O.L is a space of resistance. ; ; ; and vulnerability It s' activated through meeting and sharing 9 97

0000000 Temple of love is defined through its modes of apparition and its genesis according to its invitations, its location.

It s adaptable.@

The unpublished essay on l'love by Roland Barthes,555

Il est adaptable.@

L))essai inédit sur l'amour de Roland Barthes,555

fragments d ff un discours amoureux, en 1977 nous guidera pour chaque nouveau chapitre 5 du Temple of love.

J>adapterai chaque chapitre de l,,essai de la sphère privée à la sphère publique.

⒯.Ⓔ.Ⓙ est un hommage. aux corps invisibilisés, ²²² aux âmes minoritaires et fragilisées ainsi qu "aux coeurs dépossédés..

J ff agis en tant qu ff artiste /et en collaboration très étroite avec les commissaires pour ainsi créer un jeu d ff invitations de poupées russes.---

888 Je propose// des oeuvres déjà existantes dans le corpus de ce projet, des oeuvres nouvelles produites pour le nouveau chapitre,,, parfois une nouvelle vidéo qui s ff y réfère.

Les oeuvres 444 correspondent à des sculptures fonctionnelles agissant ££££ au carrefour du design, &"

de ++art et de l*architecture.

Ⓙ""aspect fonctionnel des sculptures renvoie à une

⒯⒯⒯* désacralisation de l>>>art par la possibilité de toucher et d ff utiliser ceux-ci.

Ce que j!!aime mettre en lumière dans le projet -lorsque cela est possible- sont les invitations ponctuelles --999

ou permanentes au sein de !!!exposition, d8artistes vivant.e.s ou mort.e.s auxquelles je rends hommage, qui m ff inspirent et que j" aime ---

∴ ce sont mes « Ⓙuus* ».

)) Ⓙuus ; non-standard spelling of love`/6

fragments d ff un discours amoureux, from 1977 will guide us

through each new chapter 5 of Temple of love.

J>ll adapt each chapter of the,,essay from the private to the public sphere.

⒯.Ⓔ.Ⓙ is a tribute. to the invisibilized bodies, ²²² to the minority and fragile souls and to "the dispossessed hearts..

J ff act as an ff artiste /and collaboration with the curators to create a set of ff Russian dolls invitations.---

888 I propose// existing works in the corpus of this project, new works produced for the new chapter,,, sometimes a new video that refers to it..

The works 444 correspond to functional sculptures acting at ££££ the crossroads of design , &"

++art and architecture.

The functional aspect of the sculptures refers to a

⒯⒯⒯* desacralization of the>>>art by the possibility of touching and to use those.

Ⓙhat I like to highlight in the project -when est possible- are the punctual invitations --999

or permanent invitations within the exhibition, of living or dead artists to whom I pay homage, who ff inspire me and whom I love ---

∴ they are my « Ⓙuus* ».

)) Ⓙuus ; non-standard spelling of love`/6

Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (DE)

Presented at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, *Temple of Love - To Hide* is a new phase of Temple of Love – a long term project aiming at a global reunification of the living through the concept of love. This exhibition, freely inspired of the chapter "To Hide" drawn from Roland Barthes *Fragments of a lover's discourse*, is resolutely oriented towards self-reconstruction through the sharing of experience, connection to the ancestors, the respect of heritage, and inner corporal harmony.

Accumulation primitive is a movie which first images were recorded in 2017 — the interview of Madame Café, a blind, Haitian voodoo priestess whose ability to heal children earned her the title "docteur-feuille" — *leaf doctor* in English. Gaëlle Choisne took these images as the starting point of a wider project of interviews with feminine and transfeminine people, queried about their condition as racialized women in contemporary societies. Among these figures are artist and producer Christelle Oyiri, or even Choisne's mother, Marie-Carmen Brouard.

Gaëlle Choisne's *Accumulation primitive* is a truly kaleidoscopic series of portraits, inspired by Silvia Federici's essay *Caliban and the witch*. It presents itself as a pocket of resistance composed with women who developed the ability to "heal" through diverse mediums and disciplines: creation of communities, family caring, music, "alternative" medicine... These women are imagining "side paths" in reaction to the "primitive accumulation" of capital as theorized by Karl Marx in *The Capital* — one of the many exogenous effects on racialized people being the dispossession from their

being and free will.

A long-term video production, *Accumulation primitive* is part of a wider installation, in which it mirrors itself with another work considered by the artist as its doppelganger: *Primitive Amnesia*. The movie mixes a selection of found footage videos of women protests in France, Brazil or even Haiti, with close-up shots of flowers recorded by the artist in Normandy during the lockdown.

The installation, presented for the first time at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, presents itself as a safe space imagined for selfcare, and caring for others. One is invited to drink soothing concoctions, or receiving energy healing... Beyond the two videos, the visitor is invited to rest on *Lie close to your ancestors*, a monumental carpet weaved by women in the Berber mountains, on which Choisne pinned small portraits of inspirational figures. In another room, the video *Ahuehuate 1111* introduces the visitor to a bimillennial tree planted in Santa Maria de Tule in Mexico, filled with an incredible energetic and vibratory force.

Présentée au Künstlerhaus Bethanien, *Temple of Love – To Hide* est un nouveau volet de Temple of Love, projet au long cours de réunification mondiale du vivant au nom du concept d'amour. Librement inspiré du chapitre "Se Cacher" des *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* de Roland Barthes, cette exposition est résolument orientée vers la reconstruction de soi par le partage d'expérience, la connexion aux ancêtres, le respect de nos héritages, et l'harmonie avec nos corps.

Accumulation primitive est un film dont les premières images ont été collectées en 2017. Il prend comme point de départ une conversation avec Madame Café, une prêtresse vaudou haïtienne, non-voyante, soignant notamment les enfants par les plantes — lui valant le titre de « docteur-feuille ». Partant de ce portrait, Gaëlle Choïsne a décidé d'ouvrir son propos en interrogeant plusieurs figures féminines et transféminines sur leur condition de femmes racisées dans les sociétés contemporaines — parmi lesquelles l'artiste et productrice Christelle Oyiri, et la mère de Gaëlle Choïsne, Marie-Carmen Brouard.

Véritable kaléidoscope de portraits prenant comme base de réflexion l'essai *Caliban et la sorcière* de Silvia Federici, *Accumulation primitive* donne à voir une poche de résistance, des femmes qui « soignent » par différents médiums et différentes disciplines : la création de communauté, l'attention familiale, la musique, la médecine « alternative ». Ces femmes opèrent un pas de côté vis-à-vis de cette « accumulation primitive » du capital — telle que théorisée par Karl Marx dans *Le Capital* — dont l'un des effets exogènes sur les personnes racisées est la dépossession de leur être et

de leur libre arbitre. L'accumulation de témoignages tisse au fil du film en maillage d'hommages, d'héritages et de citations traversant les générations et les communautés.

Production au long cours, la vidéo *Accumulation primitive* vient s'intégrer à une installation plus large, qui la met en regard avec *Primitive Amnesia*, un autre film qui se présente comme son faux-jumeau. Il associe une sélection de vidéos récupérées de manifestations de femmes — ayant notamment eu lieu dans en France, au Brésil, ou en Haïti — à des gros plans de fleurs filmées par l'artiste en Normandie pendant le confinement.

L'installation présentée pour la première fois au Künstlerhaus Bethanien se présente comme un safe space pensé pour le soin de soi et des autres : on y boit des concoctions aux vertus relaxantes, on s'y voit prodiguer des soins énergétiques... Au-delà des deux vidéos, le visiteur est en outre invité à se reposer sur *Lie close to your ancestors*, un tapis, gigantesque tissé par des femmes dans les montagnes berbères, sur lequel Gaëlle Choïsne vient y épingler les portraits de figures de références. Dans une autre salle, la vidéo *Ahuehete 1111* présente un arbre bimillénaire planté à Santa Maria de Tule au Mexique, à la force énergétique et vibratoire hors du commun.







Temple of love —To Hide, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, 2022



MAC VAL

Carte blanche > invitée des collections

L'artiste Gaëlle Choisne introduit le vivant dans les salles du musée : elle accueille le corps des visiteurs comme sujet même du projet et met en œuvre le principe d'hospitalité si précieux au MAC VAL, afin de l'envisager et d'en prendre soin. Invitée à investir les espaces du musée, Gaëlle Choisne propose un projet total qui prend place dans son exploration des Fragments d'un discours amoureux de Roland Barthes, intitulé « Temple of Love », réalisation mise en œuvre depuis plusieurs années dans différents lieux comme ce fut par exemple le cas à Bétonsalon, en 2018.

Cette nouvelle occurrence au MAC VAL, Atopos, se décline au cœur de l'espace de l'exposition de la collection « À mains nues », en regard des autres œuvres. Par des dispositifs mobiliers et sculpturaux elle propose des formes d'accueil du public, l'invitant à participer et à écouter des interventions artistiques programmées par l'artiste : philosophe, artiste, musicien, anthropologue, masseur... une vingtaine d'interventions prendront place dans ces installations activables pendant une année.

Gaëlle Choisne accompagne les œuvres de la collection par du vivant, par ce qui fait l'essence même de l'humanité : la philosophie, la pensée, le contact, la soif de devenir, la germination, la vie. Ici, à nouveau, son projet est placé sous le signe de l'amour et des relations à l'autre, une expérience à vivre l'amour comme réponse politique, sociale et solidaire. Un écosystème au service du et des vivants.

The artist Gaëlle Choisne introduces the living in the rooms of the museum: she welcomes the body of visitors as the very subject of the project and implements the principle of hospitality so precious at MAC VAL, in order to consider it and take it from there. care. Invited to invest the spaces of the museum, Gaëlle Choisne proposes a total project which takes place in her exploration of Fragments of a loving discourse by Roland Barthes, entitled "Temple of Love", an achievement implemented for several years in different places.

This new occurrence at MAC VAL, Atopos, takes place at the heart of the exhibition space of the "À mains nues" collection, alongside the other works. Through movable and sculptural devices, it offers forms of reception for the public, inviting them to participate and listen to artistic interventions programmed by the artist: philosopher, artist, musician, anthropologist, masseur ... around twenty interventions will take place in these installations which can be activated for one year.

Gaëlle Choisne accompanies the works of the collection through life, through what is the very essence of humanity: philosophy, thought, contact, the thirst for becoming, germination, life. Here again his project is placed under the sign of love and relationships with others, an experience of living love as a political, social and united response. An ecosystem at the service of the living.







TEMPLE OF LOVE — LOVE TO LOVE

GAËLLE CHOISNE

New Museum - 2021 Triennial: *Soft Water Hard Stone*

Curators: Margot Norton, Allen & Lola Goldring, Jamillah James

Temple of love — Love to love (2021) is the eighth iteration of a series of environments inspired by Roland Barthes's book, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), in which the French philosopher explores the elusive phenomenon of love.

Choisne proposes the installation as an "inclusive ecosystem around the notion of love," combining organic and industrial materials, multiple detailed visual, olfactory, and sound components, and repurposing the printed crates that shipped her artwork overseas. Choisne considers this work as a site with its own dynamics where new forms and rituals might arise beyond the constructs that typically guide and limit aesthetic experiences in museums. *Temple of love – Love to love* (2021) was planned as a space for unexpected encounters, congregation, and refuge—one that elevates ideas of care, healing, and the potentiality of love as a form of resistance and transgression.

Temple of Love — Love to love (2021) est la huitième itération d'une série d'environnements inspirés par le livre de Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977), dans lequel le philosophe français explore le phénomène insaisissable de l'amour.

Gaëlle Choisne propose l'installation comme un "écosystème inclusif autour de la notion d'amour", en combinant des matériaux organiques et industriels,

de multiples composantes visuelles, olfactives et sonores détaillées, et en réutilisant les caisses imprimées qui ont servi à expédier son œuvre à l'étranger. Gaëlle Choisne considère cette œuvre comme un site doté de sa propre dynamique, où de nouvelles formes et de nouveaux rituels pourraient naître au-delà des constructions qui guident et limitent généralement les expériences esthétiques dans les musées. *Temple of love - Love to love* (2021) a été conçu comme un espace de rencontres inattendues, de congrégation et un refuge - un espace qui met en valeur les idées de soins, de guérison et la potentialité de l'amour comme forme de résistance et de transgression.



© Dario Lasagni









Temple of love —Love to Love, "Triennial: Soft Water Hard Stone", New Museum, New York, 2021

TEMPLE OF LOVE — TO BE ASCETIC (TOLALITO)

GAËLLE CHOISNE

GIBCA • Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2021

Curator: Lisa Rosendahl

This installation is the most recent iteration of Choisne's ongoing project *Temple of Love*, which is inspired by Roland Barthes's book *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Choisne's project explores love as a form of resistance and a catalyst for courage and transgression. Each iteration refers to a chapter in Barthes's book. Constructed as spatial and sculptural arrangements, the *Temple of Love* installations offer a delicate balance between shelter and confinement, and between the organic and the artificial.

The flags were inspired by political banners used during elections in Haiti and were made in Port-au-Prince by the graphic designer James Ford Auguste. The bricks reference those used as ballast by Northern European ships deployed in the triangular trade. In the center of the pool is a lingam stone, which holds healing properties and the ability to protect against bad energy.

Cette installation est la plus récente itération du projet permanent de Choisne, *Temple of Love* qui s'inspire du livre de Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*. Le projet de Gaëlle Choisne explore l'amour comme une forme de résistance et un catalyseur pour le courage et la transgression. Chaque itération fait référence à un chapitre du livre de Barthes.

Construites comme des arrangements spatiaux et sculpturaux, les installations

de *Temple of Love* offrent un équilibre délicat entre le refuge et le confinement, et entre l'organique et l'artificiel.

Les drapeaux, inspirés des bannières politiques utilisées lors des élections en Haïti, ont été réalisés à Port-au-Prince par le graphiste James Ford Auguste. Les briques font référence à celles utilisées comme ballast par les navires d'Europe du Nord déployés dans le commerce triangulaire. Au centre du bassin se trouve une pierre lingam, qui possède des propriétés curatives et la capacité de protéger contre les mauvaises énergies.

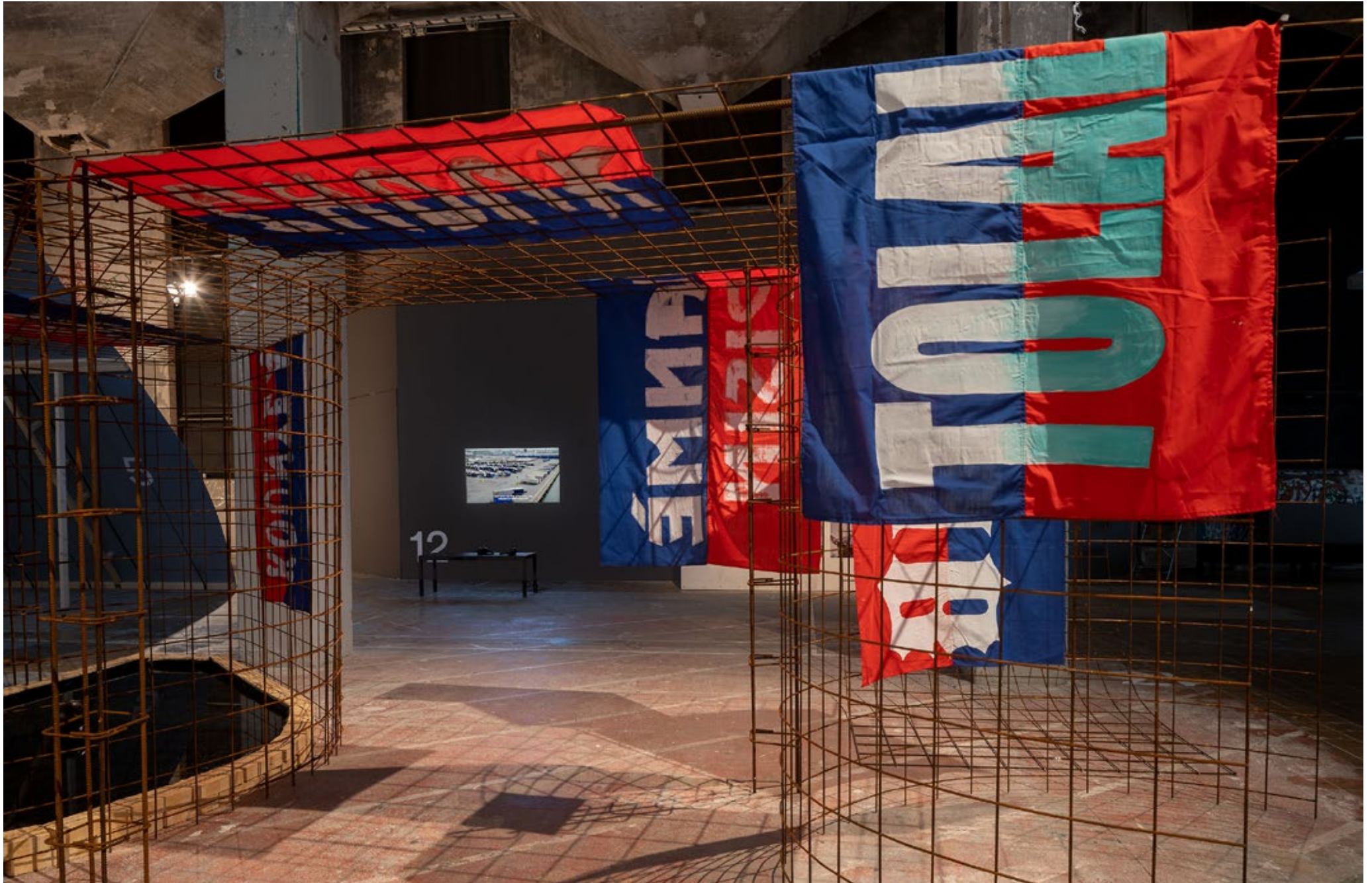


© Hendrik Zeiter



Temple of love — To Be Ascetic (Tolalito), GIBCA • Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Röda Sten Konsthall, 2021





Temple of love — To Be Ascetic (Tolalito), GIBCA • Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Röda Sten Konsthall, 2021

Nuit Blanche Kyoto / ROHM Theatre Kyoto, Japon, 2021

Curator: Nadia Chalbi

Gaëlle Choisne inaugure le projet Temple of Love lors de sa première exposition personnelle au centre d'art de Bétonsalon (Paris) en 2018. En référence au traité *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* de Roland Barthes, paru en 1977, elle en explore les différents chapitres à chacune de ses présentations : « Absence » (Lyon), « Attente » (Berlin), « Altération » (Curitiba) « Affirmation » (Paris), « S'abîmer » (Varsovie), « Adorable » (Los Angeles), « Angoisse » (Tel Aviv) et « Aimer l'amour » pour la prochaine Triennale du New Museum (New York).

A l'occasion du 20ème anniversaire de la Nuit Blanche, l'artiste investit au Japon le Rohm Theatre de Kyoto et revisite le volet Temple of Love : Affirmation, initialement conçu pour le Musée d'Art moderne de Paris lors de la manifestation parisienne de 2020. Fondé sur le concept politique et social de l'amour, Temple of Love est pensé comme un écosystème de partage et de collaboration, un espace de soin collectif, de résilience, de résistance et d'affirmation de soi, pour différentes cultures et communautés invisibilisées.

Dans un jeu entre intérieur et extérieur, une installation sonore et lumineuse, à l'entrée du théâtre, associe la récitation de « mantras décoloniaux » à une végétation luxuriante. Plantes médicinales, aromatiques, exotiques et comestibles locales sont assemblées selon le design de la permaculture et des jardins créoles traditionnels, dans le respect de leur équilibre et d'une conception animiste de la nature. En regard, dans un espace scénarisé, avec

des costumes originaux de l'artiste ornements d'accessoires japonais, se déroule à travers les vitres, une danse-performance. La spiritualité émanant des plantes-mantras entre en résonance avec la sensualité, les vibrations et le langage corporel des danseurs.

Après une performance inaugurale de voguing à Paris, celle de Kyoto se singularise par sa référence au butô, danse contemporaine japonaise qui exprime des concepts universels et interroge les dualités humain/non humain, féminin/masculin, beau/laid, agonie/extase. Le Temple de l'Amour mêle ces univers et ces énergies dans une alchimie magique, créatrice et émancipatrice, une célébration du monde vivant qui affirme, à l'instar de Barthes, l'amour comme valeur.

La performance a été réalisée en collaboration avec Daiji Meguro (chorégraphe et danseur), Moe Matsuki, Sho Takiguchi et Ryonosuke Endo (danseurs).

Co-organisateur : ROHM Theatre Kyoto (Kyoto City music art cultural Promoting Foundation) / Partenaire : Musée d'Art moderne de Paris / Concept : Gaëlle Choisne / Mise en scène (version Kyoto) : Daiji Meguro / Interprètes : Ryohosuke Endo, Sho Gakiguchi, Moe Matsuki, Daiji Meguro







Temple of love — Affirmation, ROHM Theatre Kyoto, 2021



TEMPLE OF LOVE — ATTENTE

GAËLLE CHOISNE

gr_nd, Berlin, Germany, 2020

Curator: Avi Lubin

Gaëlle Choïsne in collaboration with :

Asta Baradji, Issa N Diaye, Hasan Mahmudul, Djeba Gandega, Assitan Zaoura, Ibrahima Konaté and Aissatou Diallo, Judith Balso, Julien Machillot and Victorine Grataloup for « L'Ecole des Actes ».

Guests : Marina Stanimirovic, Moritz Marie Karl, Lukas Wegwerth, Sam Keogh

Metamorphic, itinerant and collaborative, « Temple of Love » is a project started by French artist Gaëlle Choïsne in 2018. Considering love as a political affect, and congregation as a space for creation, "Temple of Love" is an ecosystem built from a series of invitations that encourage the fusion of practices (cooking, performance, music, architecture, introductory workshops in artistic practices) and audiences (artists, visitors, traders, art workers, non-profits).

As part of the Fondation de France's Nouveaux commanditaires (New Patrons) initiative, and through the help of Societies, a non-profit organisation dedicated to bringing art and citizens together, Gaëlle was entrusted with an artistic commission revolving around l'École des Actes : a micro-institution set in the suburbs of Paris to accompany exiled people through learning French, and experimenting with art and culture. Gaëlle's docu-fiction

focuses on its participants and will be shot during the year 2020-2021. Following on from the initial construction workshop in Summer 2020 held in Paris, the film's set will be presented in an exhibition in Berlin gr_nd.











TEMPLE OF LOVE — AGONY

GAËLLE CHOISNE

Hamidrasha Gallery, Tel Aviv, 2020

Curator: Avi Lubin

Temple of Love — Agony is the new chapter in Gaëlle Choisne's ongoing exploration of the concept of love. Following Roland Barthes' book "A Lover's Discourse: Fragments," she focuses in the current exhibition on the idea of agony, on "the fear of a breakdown which has already been experienced," to quote from Barthes. Choisne's installation explores the idea of love as a social and political matter, an attitude and form of resistance and a catalyst for courage and transgression. Love in this ongoing project becomes a social and spiritual issue, a channeling source of profoundly political actions.

Choisne created a space for dialogue and conversation that invites people to collaborate and take part in the exhibition.

Temple of Love — Agony est le nouveau chapitre de l'exploration continue du concept d'amour par Gaëlle Choisne. A la suite de l'ouvrage de Roland Barthes "Fragments d'un discours amoureux", elle se concentre dans cette exposition sur l'idée d'agonie, sur "la peur d'une rupture déjà vécue", pour citer Barthes. L'installation de Gaëlle Choisne explore l'idée de l'Amour comme question sociale et politique, une attitude et une forme de résistance, un catalyseur de courage et de transgression. Dans ce projet continu, l'amour devient une question sociale et spirituelle, une source canalisatrice d'actions profondément politiques. Gaëlle Choisne a créé un espace de dialogue et de conversation qui invite les gens à collaborer et à prendre part à l'exposition.



© Courtesy Hamidrasha Gallery and the artist

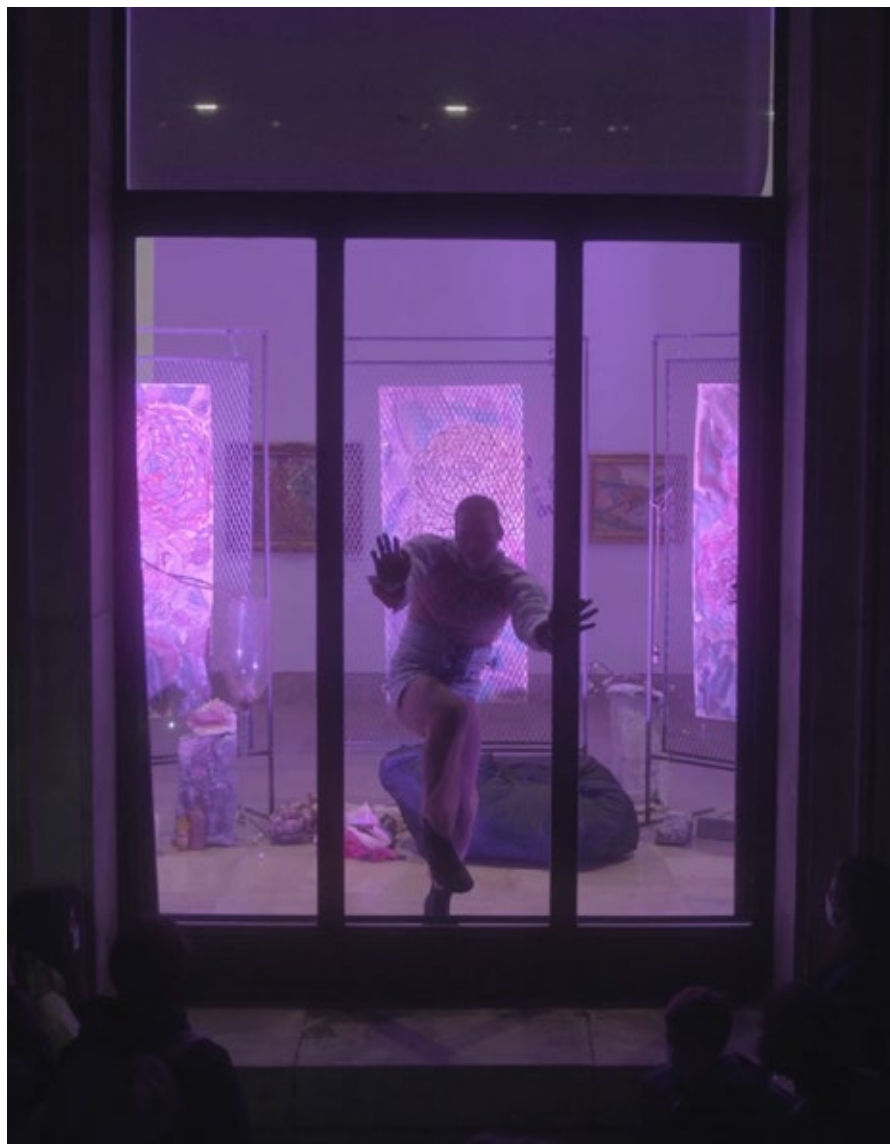


TEMPLE OF LOVE — AFFIRMATION

GAËLLE CHOISNE

MAM - Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, Nuit Blanche, 2020

A project in collaboration with HOUSE OF NINJA



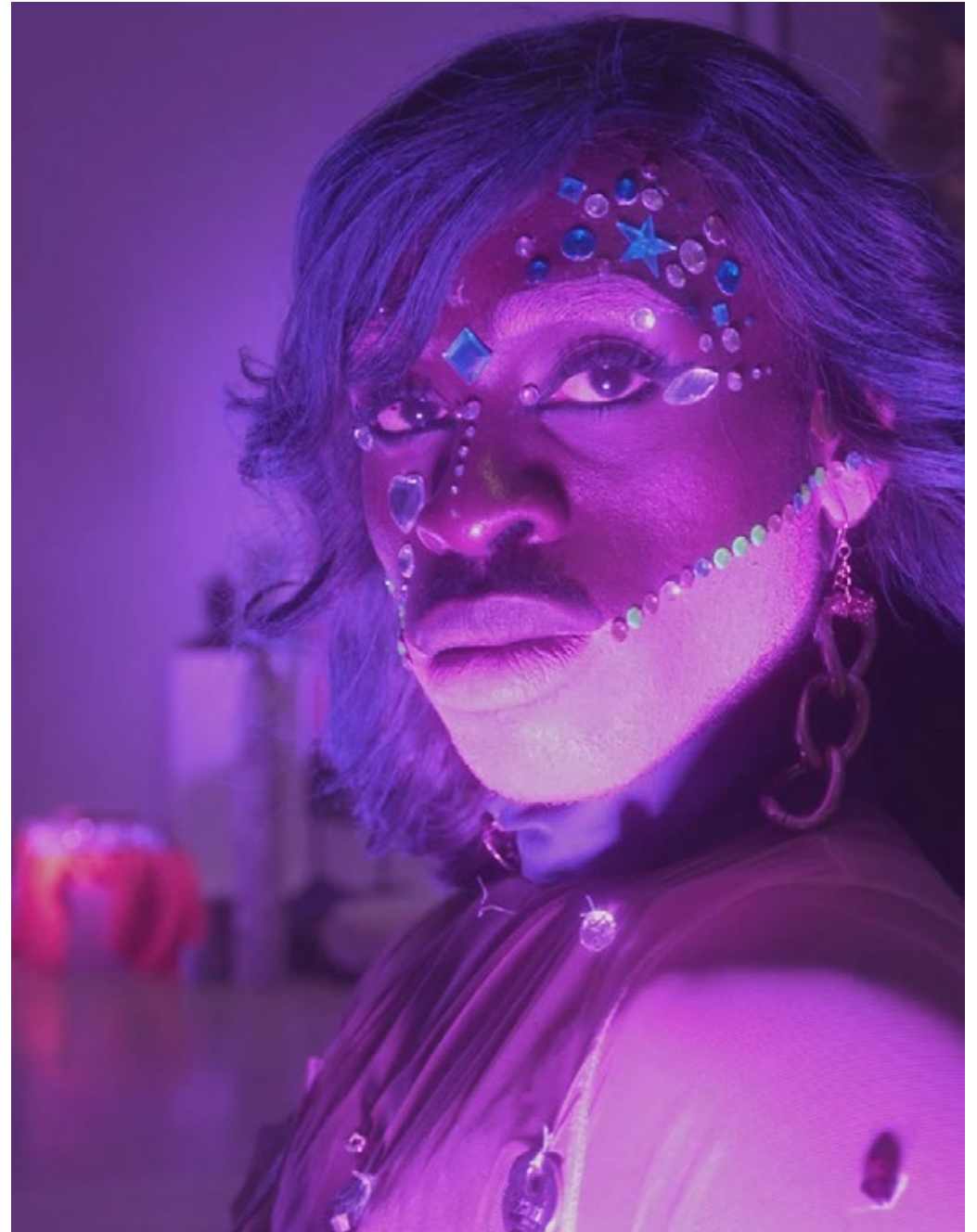
On the occasion of the Nuit Blanche, the artist proposes a project in the rooms of the Museum of Modern Art, visible from the outside as well as on the forecourt of the museum, mixing installation, sculptures, sound, dance and plants. A new chapter in a long-lasting project, *Temple of love — Affirmation* is an ode to love. Can we still «burn» with love for each other? Blending Ballroom culture and voguing, from the black American community, it places the living in the spotlight, questions the notions of culture and community, care, personal and collective development within a French museum institution. A sound installation of decolonial mantras takes place in the beds of plants in simple gardens, as a means of proposing collective care, political resistance through the affirmation of a being together in a different way.

A l'occasion de la Nuit Blanche, l'artiste propose un projet dans les salles du musée d'art moderne, visible depuis l'extérieur ainsi que sur le parvis du musée, mêlant installation, sculptures, son, danse et végétaux. Nouveau chapitre d'un projet au long court, *Temple of love — Affirmation* est une ode à l'amour. Pouvons-nous encore «bruler» d'amour les uns pour les autres ? En mélangeant la culture Ballroom et le voguing, issue de la communauté noire américaine, elle place le vivant à l'honneur, questionne les notions de cultures et de communautés, de soin, de développement personnel et collectif au sein d'une institution muséale française. Une installation sonore, de mantras décoloniaux prend place dans les parterres végétalisés en jardins de simples, comme autant de moyen de proposer un soin collectif, une résistance politique par l'affirmation d'un être ensemble autrement.







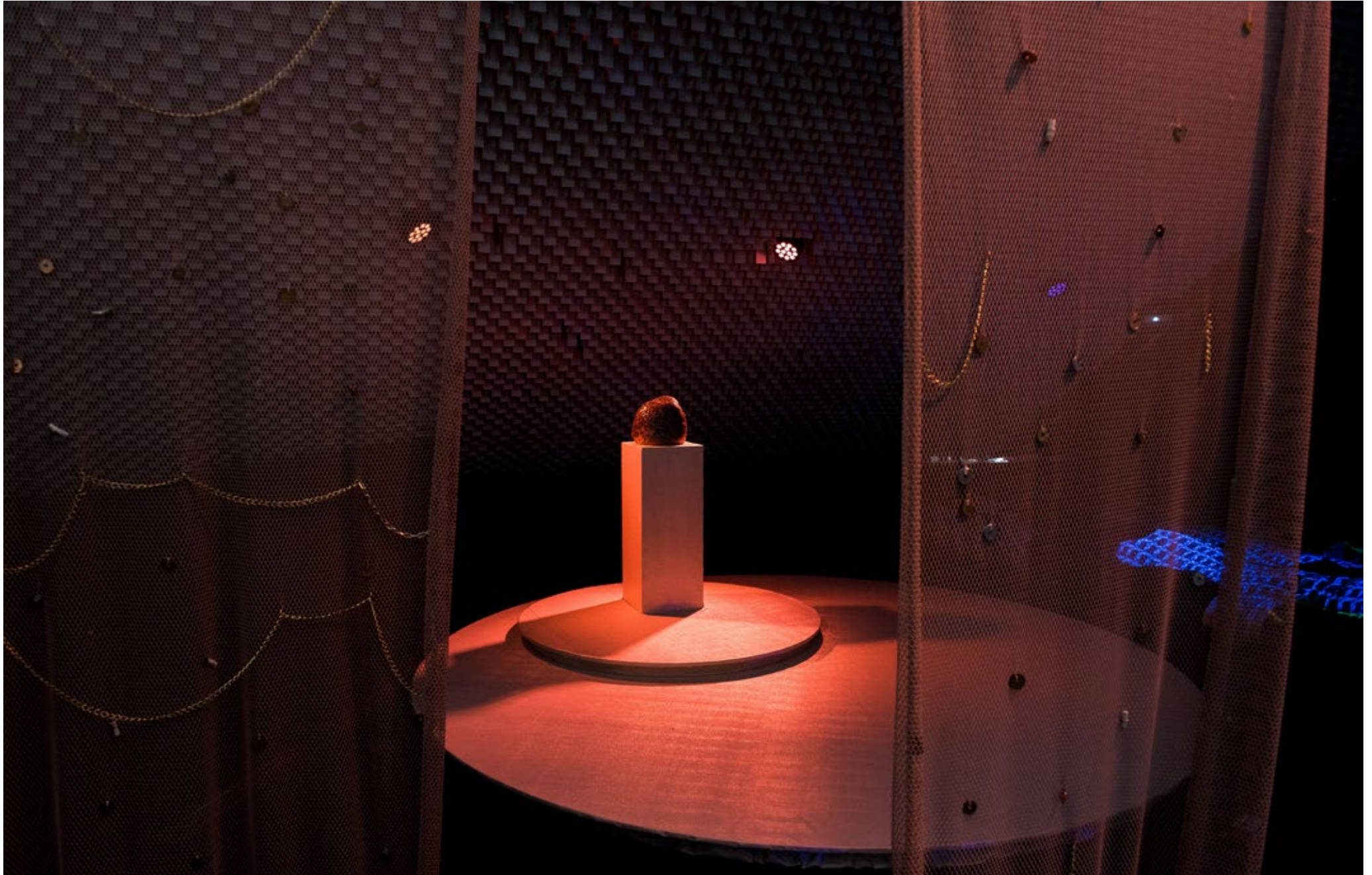


Temple of love — Affirmation, MAM, Paris, 2020

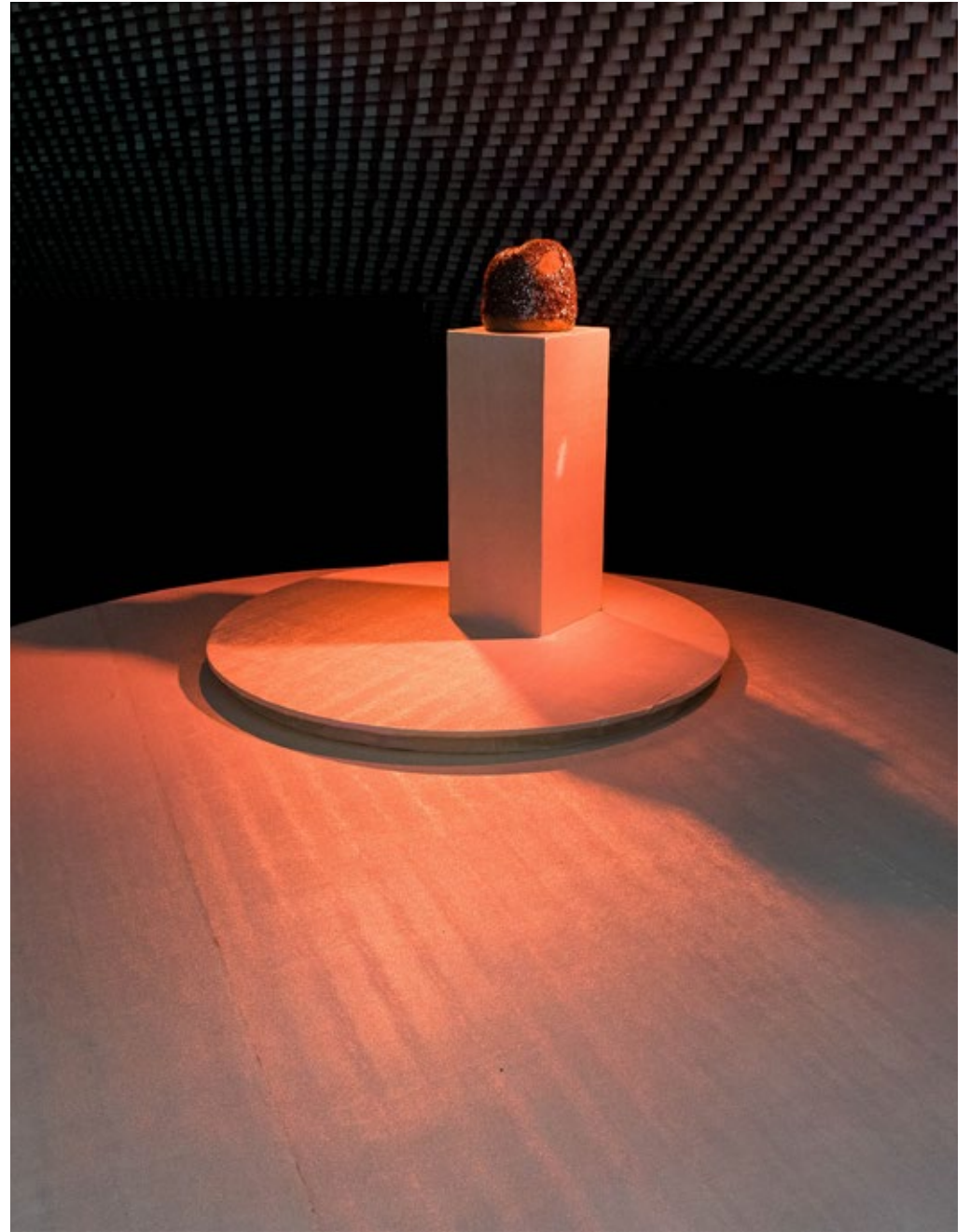
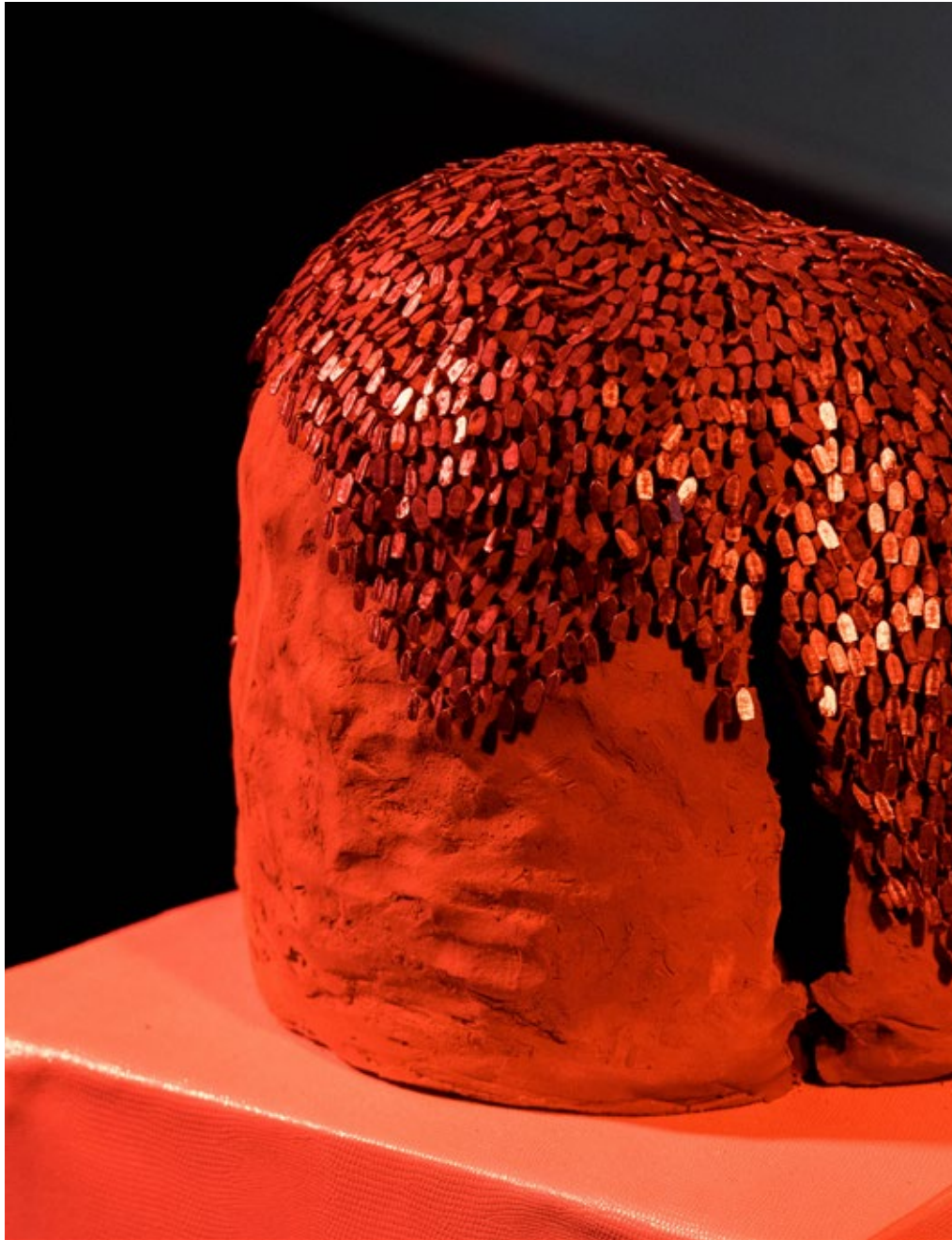
TEMPLE OF LOVE — ALTÉRATION

GAËLLE CHOISNE









TEMPLE OF LOVE — ADORABLE

(Tribute to the Haïtian black woman composer, Carmen Brouard)

GAËLLE CHOISNE

The Mistake Room, Los Angeles, 2019 Curator: Kris Kuramitsu

The Mistake Room presents *Adorable*, a new iteration in French-Haitian artist Gaëlle Choïsne's TEMPLE OF LOVE — an ongoing exploration of love as an unsettling and disruptive political form. This exhibition is in conversation with the music of modernist Haitian composer Carmen Brouard, who trained in France, and eventually came to live in Montreal, Canada. Her time spent on both sides of the Atlantic greatly informed the syncretic vision of modernity that she expressed through her compositions, which at The Mistake Room will be performed within the exhibition by a pianist and violinist from the Colburn School in Los Angeles. Choïsne's installation embraces the chance, intimacy, and processes of creolization found in Brouard's music to create an architectural space shaped by, and conducive to, the unforming and irreducible effects of love.

Temple of Love — Adorable is the second exhibition of *Histories of a Vanishing Present* (HOAVP), The Mistake Room's 2019-2020 curatorial cycle, which explores, through postmemory, how a generation of artists born at the cusp of the global turn inherit pasts that don't directly belong to them. For these artists, identity is not bound solely to biology, history, or geography but rather is sited in situationally specific processes of negotiation. The opening exhibition of this cycle, *Christopher Myers: Nobody is My Name*, examined how identity can be assembled from an accumulation of different locations and experiences. *Adorable* focuses instead on love's power to undo our sense of self, both exemplifying and confounding the self-justifying logic of identity which claims: "I do x things, because I am x". As French philosopher Roland Barthes puts it: "The adorable is what is adorable...I love you because I love you." Indeed, love can take us to a similarly tautological space as identity, yet— at least in Choïsne's practice— it disrupts identity's cold logic of causation by instead reveling in confusion and pleasure.

This confusion and pleasure can be formally located in the physical process of engaging

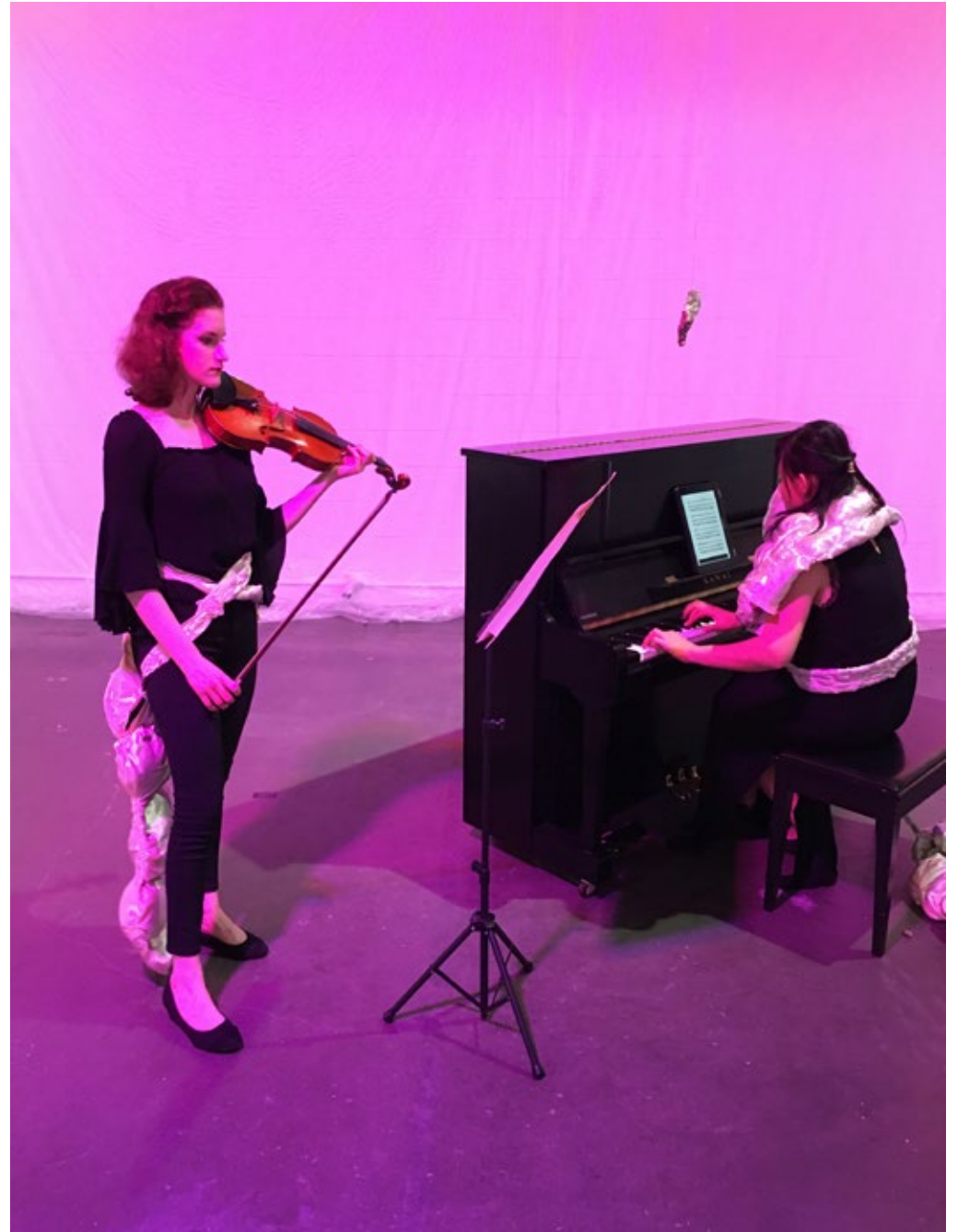
Choïsne's installation. Unlike artists in the United States who focus on confessional narrative and figurative imagery, Choïsne, like some of her Europe-based generational peers, privileges a poetic accumulation of unexpected moments and bodily experiences. Search out, for example, a dangling cigarette butt and the streaky marks of a moldy orange peel in Choïsne's hanging textiles, or notice the crinkly flowers strewn over water-logged plastic and the scattered photographic "tattoos" hidden about the space. Individually, they come across as mementos to a personal narrative, but together, they are an experience unto themselves. Less evidence of an underlying authorial presence or illustrations of a particular social condition, each new detail conspires to keep the viewer slightly off-balance, and thus actively present in their own bodies. Cumulatively, their corporeal effect draws in the viewer and creates a circular and engrossing space with parallels to love.

At the same time, it would be irresponsible to suggest that love can entirely transcend historical and geographic circumstances. The specific context of Choïsne's work— spread over, throughout and between Europe, Africa, and the Americas—deserves further attention. In her 2018 video, *The Sea Says Nothing*, representations of race in early cinema (including the first black kiss to be recorded on film, as well as sci-fi and zombie flicks), intermittently skitter across the surface of a looping clip of water speeding and spraying by the camera lens, as though endlessly traversing an ocean. Soundtracked by Brouard's 1966 piano and violin work *Sonate Vaudouesque*, the video places the exhibition within the space and discourse of the Black Atlantic. If *Adorable* is a terrain dedicated to love, it is not at the total expense or negation of social and historical context. With the bent aluminum prints and the pointillistic photographs, we see glimpses beyond the "temple." They implicate Choïsne's central proposition—for if love is an unsettling and disruptive political force, it is so not when it is secreted away, but rather when it engages with the world.









Temple of love — Adorable, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles, 2019

15^e Biennale de Lyon - *Là où les eaux se mêlent*, MAC, Lyon, 2019

Curators: Matthieu Lelièvre and Palais de Tokyo

Invitations : Ceel Mogami de Haas, Claude et Gaillard, Arghtee

The artist Gaëlle Choisne chooses to create a temple of love as a kind of apparition. An entire room of the MAC Museum is occupied by this multifaceted work. The main element, a large greenhouse, houses a device from her exhibition Hybris showing printed panels of images of plants from Haiti, bathed in electrically powered water fountains.

The surrounding part of the greenhouse features large, thick velvet sheets and paintings on the walls on which are sewn or hung various small objects and poor materials - shells, packs of chewing gum, cigarettes, lighter, Malabar tattoos, small pictures, coins, padlocks, condoms, medicines... like a giant coin box. A sculpture of bluish hands with long claws is placed on a table. On the floor, in a corner of the room, a multitude of white fortune cookies made of ceramic contain secret messages. On the floor, in a corner of the room, there is a bar-bed on which various small ceramic glasses and a jug of rum are displayed, and on the different walls, small objects are fixed with a glue gun. The installation is accompanied by the projection of her 25-minute film entitled S'abîmer (to be engulfed) which brings together documentary images

of Haiti, television news and an interview with the reading of passages from *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* de Roland Barthes by the artist herself. The video is in French with French subtitles.

The artist mobilizes the vocabulary of architecture, organic influences, permaculture teachings and an abundance of textile materials to shape a common habitat. Without wanting to literally recreate the material environment in which the poor part of the Haitian population lives, they aim to bring to the viewer's consciousness condensed images of these living conditions. The big one poses the question of our relationship to nature.

Here, the artist reappropriates the attributes of the temple as well as of the exhibition space: a place of congregation, a place of speech, a place of refuge where the gaze and the discourse are created and shared. This composite, fluid, complex universe, which like a landscape, offers a wealth of details, allowing the visitor to live his own unique experience of the place.











Zacheta, Warsaw, 2019

Curator: Magda Kardasz

The exhibition is part of the French artist Gaëlle Choisne's Temple of Love project, inspired by the Roland Barthes' *The Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. It is a heterogeneous mix of existing sculptures from the exhibition shown in Bétonsalon — Centre d'art et de recherche in Paris and a new production for the Zacheta Project Room, including a new experimental video inspired by the artist's recent visit in Haiti, from where her family derive from.

The artist says: "the challenges of the exhibition are always based on uncertain and precarious balances of the objects presented between organic and artificial, the chains are fragile and precious links, sensual and sign of confinement sometimes".

The video evokes the links between Poland and Haiti through the difficult history, retraces in a discursive manner between filmed moments and official archives of stories of death, love, politics, poetry, cultural interbreeding through the figures of Roland Barthes, Karl Marx and Stuart Hall punctuated by the original intoxicating sound from the musician *The Snowhoe*, production, Arghtee.

The sculptures are a formal mixture of political banner and cloth painting-sculpture, gripping on them, various objects or gri-gris, pockets-pockets and abstract flat areas engage in space with different posture. Some of them have shape of popular tiny altars.











Bétonsalon, Paris, 2018

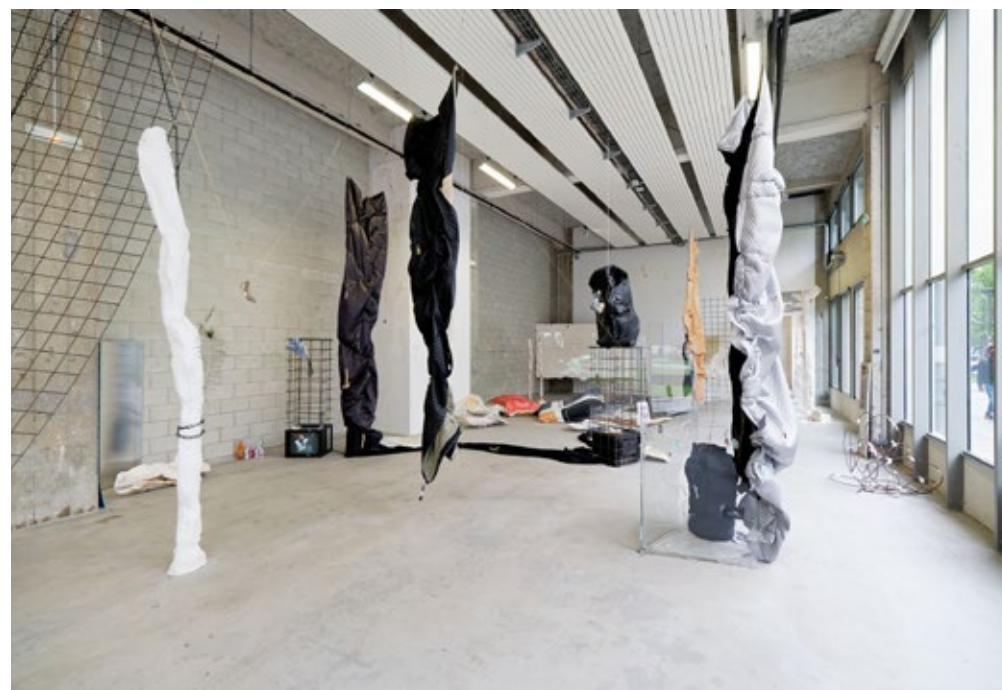
Curator: Lucas Morin

Parler d'amour, c'est l'invitation qui a été lancée à Gaëlle Choïsne pour cette exposition personnelle dans les espaces de Bétonsalon – Centre d'art et de recherche : une invitation, proche du piège, à traiter un sujet dangereux, aussi séduisant qu'éculé, hors de sa zone de confort. La pratique de Gaëlle Choïsne s'est jusqu'ici articulée subtilement entre une dimension formelle forte, sculpturale et organique, et une dimension politique abordant les enjeux historiques du fait colonial et d'Haïti en particulier. L'inviter à parler d'amour, c'était l'inviter à mobiliser son bagage intellectuel et son vocabulaire esthétique pour affirmer le caractère politique de l'amour. Parler d'amour, c'était aussi une suite logique pour une artiste qui mobilise les langages queer et féministes, tout en explorant un territoire nouveau en l'abordant frontalement pour la première fois.

Le travail que Gaëlle Choïsne développe à Bétonsalon s'inscrit dans un contexte politique qui, de plus en plus, place les pratiques militantes du soin, de soi et des autres, au cœur de la construction de communautés de soutien et d'entraide. En nommant son projet TEMPLE OF LOVE, l'artiste se réapproprie les fonctions sociales du temple, à la fois lieu de rassemblement, lieu de refuge, lieu de célébration, lieu de spectacle, lieu de réalisation du surnaturel au cœur d'une vie en commun, qui ne sont pas sans rappeler celles du lieu d'exposition. Ce titre résonne avec l'observation de l'anthropologue américaine Elizabeth A. Povinelli selon laquelle, dans les démocraties libérales, « l'amour est devenu le signe d'un nouveau mystère libéral, d'une religion laïque » en incarnant le mythe d'une individualité autonome, se voulant universelle, qui se débarrasserait de ses déterminismes de classe, de race et de genre pour connaître un amour conçu comme pur sentiment. Les majuscules du titre et le choix de la langue anglaise permettent d'établir une distance ironique avec cette prétention à l'universalité : le temple de l'amour agit ici comme une marque, devanture de magasin kitsch ou de mega church évangélique. Cette ambiguïté se retrouve fréquemment dans

le travail de Gaëlle Choïsne, qui choisit de désamorcer des sujets sérieux sinon tragiques par des dispositifs formels qui prennent le regard à contre-pied. Elle ouvre de nouvelles routes et de nouvelles errances à celle ou celui qui a cru pouvoir enfermer son propos dans une rigidité de sens.

Dans son installation, l'artiste fait usage d'un mélange de métaux, de verre, de céramique ou encore de résines et de textiles aux apparences organiques pour créer des équilibres fragiles et suspendus. En juxtaposant ces récits et ces matières, Gaëlle Choïsne parle d'amour en révélant des territoires de conflit et de discord.



© Aurélien Mole







SELECTION OF EXHIBITIONS/INSTALLATIONS







Blue Lights in the Basement, Nicoletti Gallery, London, 2022





















Entrée des artistes, Air de Paris, Romainville, 2021
work: *Eat me softly-If you come softly*



Entrée des artistes, Air de Paris, Romainville, 2021
work: *Eat me softly-If you come softly*







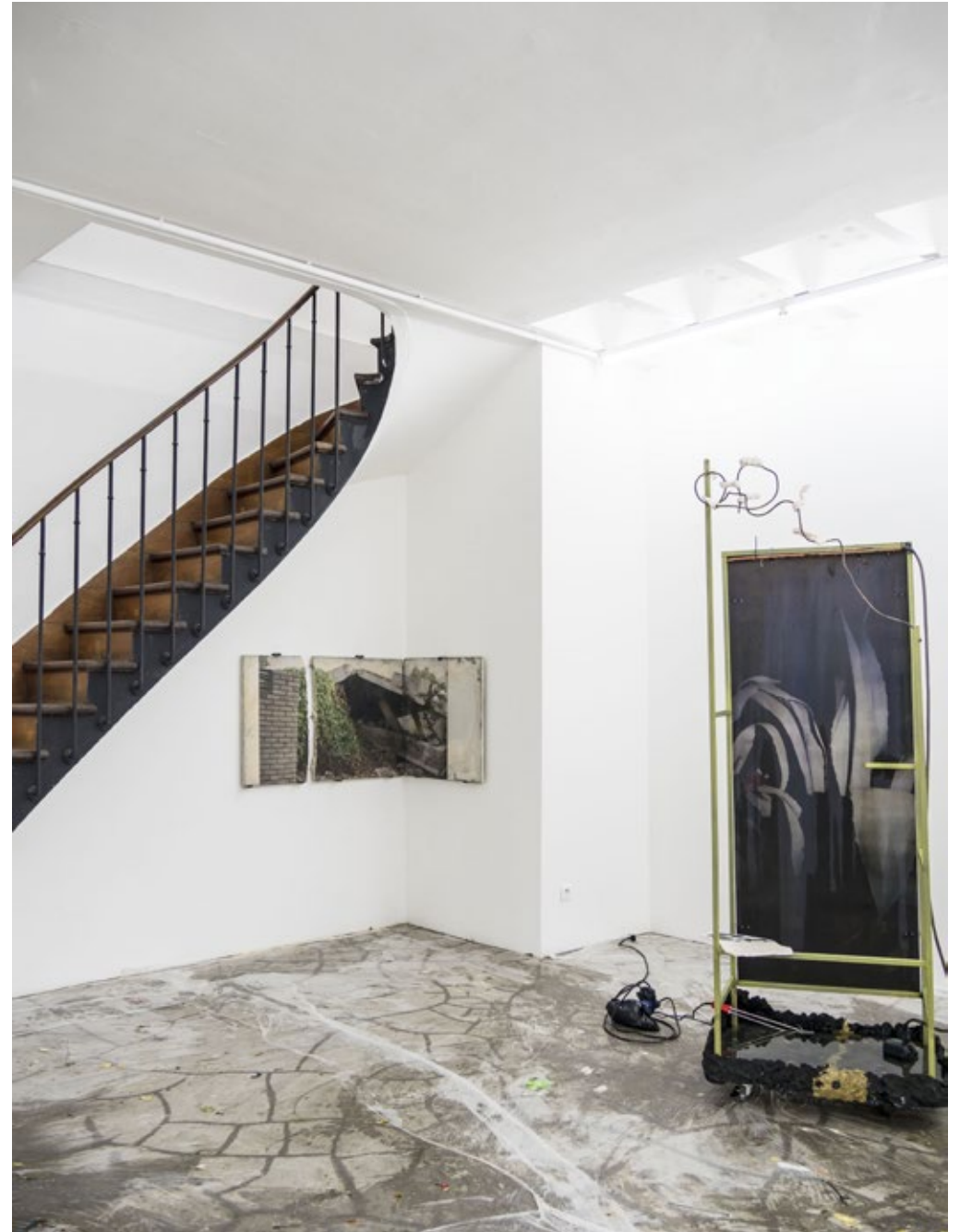
Defixion, Site archéologique Lattara-musée Henri Prades w/ MO.CO., 2020
work: *Bye bye memory*











Hybris, Untilthen, Paris, 2018











Rijksakademie, studio opening, Amsterdam, 2017















La survivance a le goût du sel, 2015, Biennale de Lyon 2015, IAC-Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, 2015
installation: *Signe que l'Histoire n'est pas terminée*



La survivance a le goût du sel, 2015, Biennale de Lyon 2015, IAC-Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, 2015
installation: *La survivance a un goût de sel*







C R I C C R A C, Centrale Gallery Powerhouse, Montreal, 2015







Constellation hétéroclite, Prix Félix Sabatier, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 2014

WORKS



DO YOU LIKE MY BLACK ASS OR THE BLACK AERTEMIS D'EPHEUS

2018

epoxy resin, plastic bags, acrylic resin, wax, various materials, iron structure

160 x 54 x 65 cm



AB JOI

2021

printed fabric, fabrics, webbing, cotton and nylon threads, chains, wind
220 x 160 cm



CONQUÊTE ET CARNAVAL (BAG LADY)

2021

chain, conch found in Haiti (with authorization request), black silicone
50 x 23 x 15 cm

LES MÉMOIRES AKASHIQUES

2021 (series)

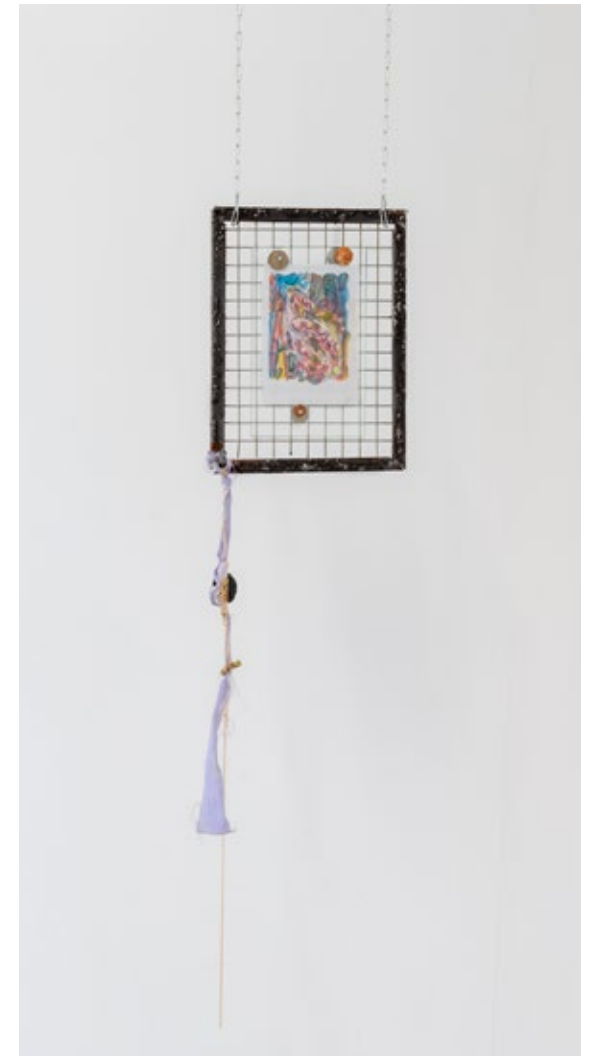
acrylic resin (friendly for the earth), food pigments, laser engraving
25 x 17 x 3,5 cm



LES MONDES SUBTILS

2020-2021 (series)

acrylic, pastel and black pencil on paper, glass, metal, silk, perfume
variable dimensions





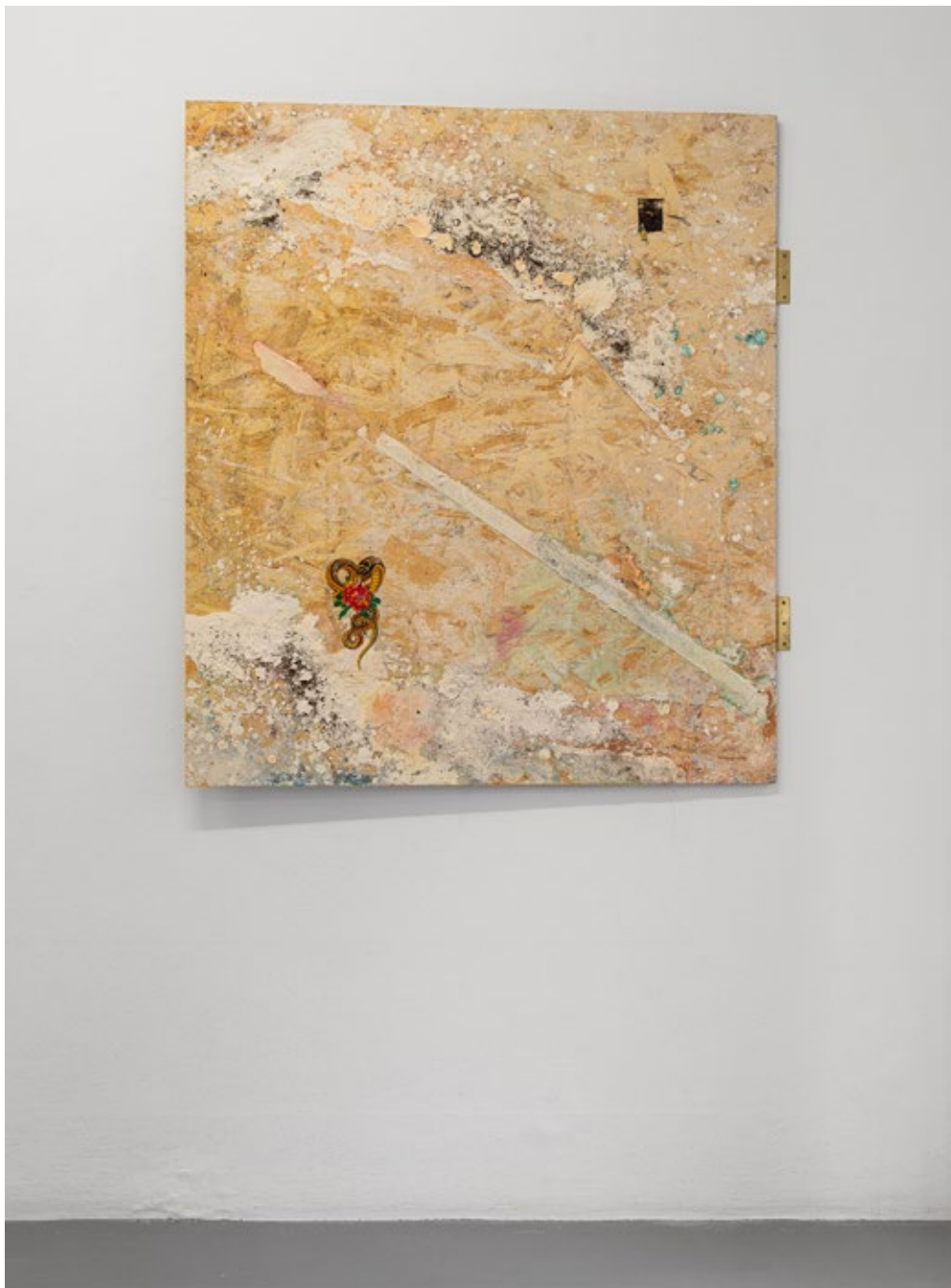
BAR / BED

2021

in collaboration with Ceel Mogani de Haas foam, metal, ceramic tiles, silicone, Polish glass bottle, Rhum Barbancourt 8 years old and 24 glazed ceramic glasses

107 x 190 x 91 cm





**«ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP», IMAGE OF DESIRE:
TOUCAN**

2019-2021 (series)

OSB, pigments, plaster, clay, temporary tattoo, pins and hinges

125 x 109 cm



KA

2020 (series of 7 unique works)
plaster, ceramics, UV color printing
61 x 45 cm



EAT ME SOFTLY

2020-2021 (protocol: unique work in a series)

laser engraving of a poem by Audre Lorde on watermelon, banana, orange, apple, pitaya, pomegranate, persimmon, Chinese pomelo, mango, lemon... (depending on arrival, season and location)

Eat me Softly is a protocolary and contextual work.

A poem by Audre Lorde is laser engraved on seasonal, local and exotic fruits, in the manner of a tattoo. The engraving alters the fruit, which carries a message beyond its own finiteness - ripen, rot, die. It traces the genesis of a memory in the manner of an offering and becomes a place of perishable memory.

I pay homage to an author, a great African-American theorist, activist and lesbian. I give an account of the living through this praise and I activate a colonial memory through a contemporary, cultural and ritual gesture, by placing these words on the fruits that represent life, commercialization and globalization.

Starting from these words and poems, I bring different levels of reading by engraving them: the poem is consumable, tasty, perishable but also elusive and ephemeral. It is a question of thwarting an industrial technique at the service of a sensual and militant poem.



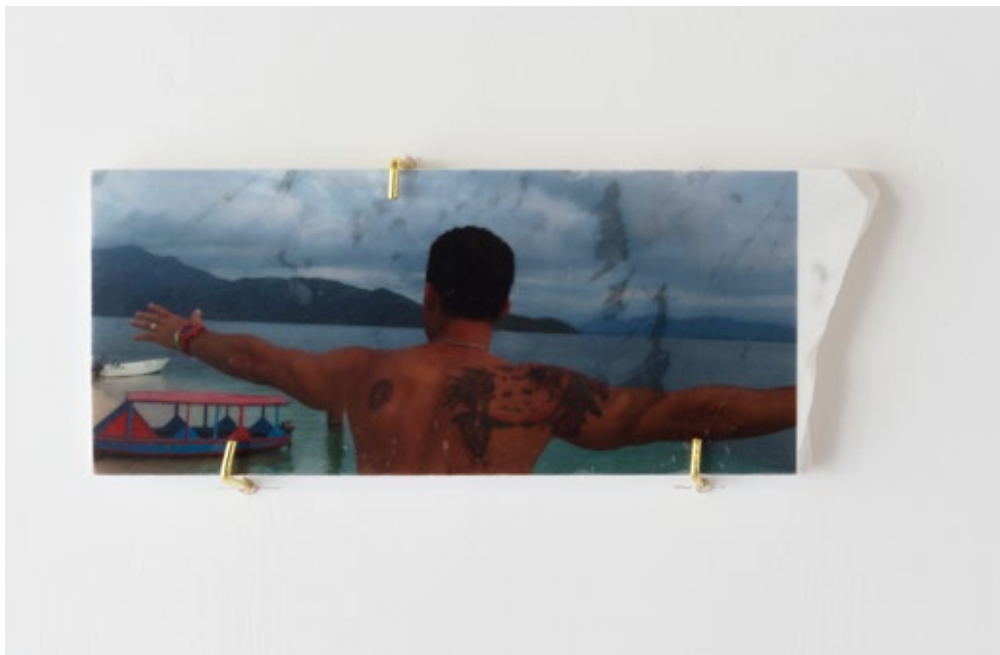
HERMAPHRODITE

2020

plastic, tattoo printed color sewed

This is a blurred photograph of a hermaphrodite sculpture taken in Pompeii, wrapped as if in a funeral sheet. This work questions our strong relationship to the other and his difference.

Il s'agit de la photographie floue d'une sculpture d'hermaphrodite prise à Pompéi, emballée comme dans un drap mortuaire. Cette œuvre questionne notre rapport fort à l'autre et à sa différence.



BYE BYE MEMORY

2020 (series of 17 works)

Marble printed color

Bye bye memory, goodbye memory.

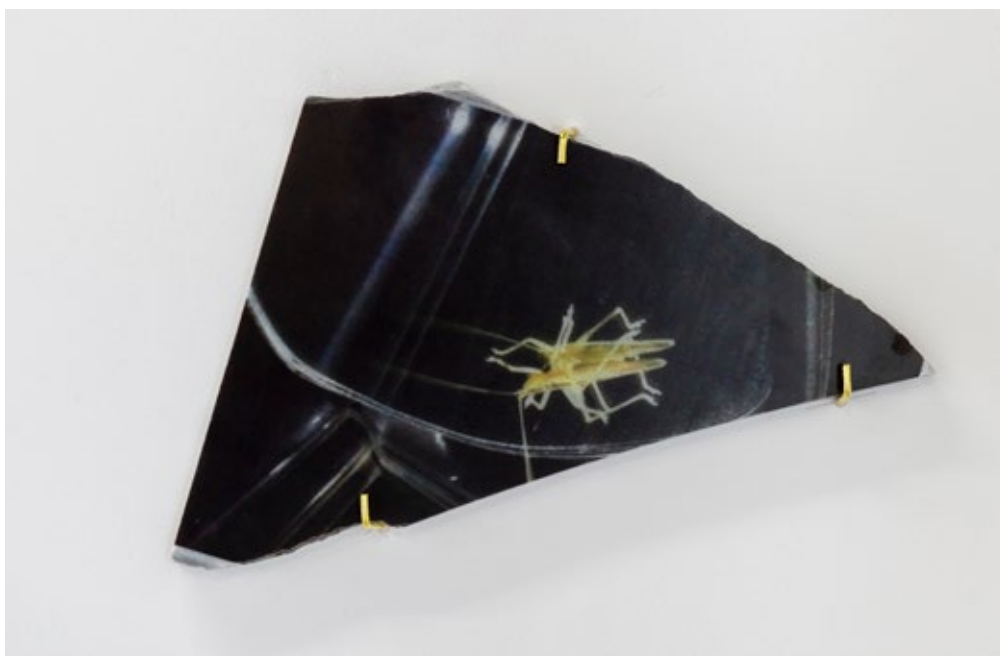
An oblivion, a temporary or complete amnesia: archaeology is a form of resistance to memory, a vivid memory of a distant past that sends us back to our current human existence, but do we really want to remember?

Selective memory helps us, after that long introspective moment linked to the traumatic global confinement, we know that it is timeless. People since the dawn of time have been fleeing the same things and trying to keep the same interests, the abundance linked to the food, health and living comfort.

Bye bye memory, au revoir mémoire.

Un oubli, une amnésie temporaire ou complète : l'archéologie est une forme de résistance à la mémoire, une mémoire vive d'un passé lointain qui nous renvoie à notre existence humaine actuelle mais veut-t-on vraiment se souvenir ?

La mémoire sélective nous aide, après ce long moment introspectif lié au traumatique confinement mondial, nous savons que cela est intemporel. Des peuples depuis la nuit des temps fuient les même choses et tente de conserver les même intérêts, l'abondance liée à la nourriture, à la santé et à un confort d'habitation.





CONQUE BONDAGE

2020

painted shell, gold chain
variable dimensions

This shell, suspended by golden jeweler's chains, is the symbol of a nature marked by a complex relationship with man, at the border of pleasure and suffering.

Ce coquillage, suspendu par des chaînes dorées de bijoutier, est le symbole d'une nature marquée par une relation complexe avec l'homme, à la frontière du plaisir et de la souffrance.



GRAND MA' HAND'S EXPLAIN ME HOW THE SEA WILL KILL US

2020

air dry ceramic, blue marker, silicone, chain, knives

17 x 20 x 20 cm



**IF MY HANDS TRY TO SAY SOMETHING
(PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DUE TO A
LACK OF HERITAGE)**

2019

wood, plaster, covering, fabric, red Korean blanket, chameleon covering,
felt pen drawing, printed plastic, cigarette butts, coins, medicine
variable dimensions



DISCOURS D'UN PAYSAGE AMOUREUX

2017-2019 (series)
porcelain, copper
20 x 20 x 2 cm

BACKROOM OR PLEASE LET ME KNOW HOW WE COULD VANISH TOGETHER BEFORE THE NIGHT, AFTER THE RAIN

2017-2019

Steel, ceramic, plexyglas, silicon, water, epoxy, anti-rust paint, coins, butts, pump, thermic paint

These are ceramic fountains, resins, cigarette butts, coins, hot water, ephemeral tattoos, greenhouse structure, pumps that feed hot water to thermo-painted pictures, paint used for cars. The image appears more or less. This installation is fragile, we must add water every day, take care of it, check that the nozzles are not blocked etc.

There is a form of poetry that has to do with the unconscious, the darkroom of repressed desires, that are difficult to assume. The relationship with the body is essential in my work. It does not act as an object of staged performance but behind the scene. As «performance solitude» is the very definition of experience, I work with different temporalities and gestures. For this work for example I chose a slow temporality of 3 years and worked in situ: the exhibition space became my studio and I accumulated fast, neurotic, obsessive gestures.

I imagine this rhizomic device imitating an organic system, absurd, dependent on humans. A perverse device, inspired by the devices of greenhouses. The heat and humidity, a tropical atmosphere creates an immersive and subtle physical experience.

Practice of ceramics or other crafts, tribute, and decomplexion. Punk gestures, awkward because I never aimed to be the virtuoso artist of this classical era. Trembling in the voice and hands. Doing it. Doing it. Saying, stammering. Saying, stammering, repeating, like a loop. A recycling of thought. Doing it wrong, less well, better. Always do your best. And then disaster, inevitable, or sabotage, flooding. Flooding those thoughts with hot water to relax. Nostalgia for the rain through the window, in Cherbourg, in Amsterdam, in London. A melancholy of Nature that is no more; that is already only an imagined memory. Post-romanticism. Those fountains that bring us back to our impulsive relationship with nature that had been neglected.

My works are the successive results of the failures of manufacture, haste, negligence, and lack of knowledge. Not mastered controlled. The disappearance of a species, of several species. This installation proposes a reaction on our relationship to the world, to Nature. A perverse relationship, sado maso and lovingly deviant. A catastrophe as rebirth, as necessity.

BACKROOM OR PLEASE LET ME KNOW HOW WE COULD VANISH TOGETHER BEFORE THE NIGHT, AFTER THE RAIN





LE PIED D'ALEP

2015-2019

Aleppo soap (collaboration with NAJEL (Syria), plaster, sysal, natural pigments, casters)

socle: 100 x 100 x 3 cm ; foot: 3 x 35 cm



Gaëlle Choisne places the work entitled *Pied d'Alep* on a plaster stele. This realistic molding of a foot in soap is the result of a collaboration that the artist engaged remotely with a factory located north of Aleppo in Syria. Sensitive to the raging conflict, particularly at that time, the artist sent the cast of his feet to be filled with soap and returned to him.

Gaëlle Choisne place sur une stèle de plâtre l'oeuvre intitulée *Pied d'Alep*. Ce moulage réaliste d'un pied en savon est le fruit d'une collaboration que l'artiste a engagé à distance avec une usine située au nord d'Alep en Syrie. Sensible au conflit qui fait rage, particulièrement à cette période, l'artiste a envoyé le moulage de ses pieds pour qu'ils soient remplis de savon et qu'ils lui reviennent.



A LA SOMBRA DEL PLATANO

2015

Installation in situ on the beach San Rafael (Veracruz, Mexico)
plaster, pigments, banana, expansive foam, ceramics and other materials
Thereafter photographic print documenting the artist's gesture.



CORAL PLUS AFFECTION

2019

chains and ceramic

119 x 32 cm

A HAND TO TAKE

2018

ceramic, chain, plaster hand, pearl, fake nails

16 x 29,5 x 8 cm



This work is like an offering towards creation but it is also interpreted as a gratitude to live the present moment, here, gathered in front of this sculpture. The model of this hand was taken from the hand of an ex-boyfriend of Gaëlle Choisne. Hand then masculine, the attributes that are added to it (false nails, pearl) feminizes it. *A hand to take* thus calls the spectator to reflect on homosexuality and transsexuality, on the acceptance of the other in his difference.

Cette œuvre est une offrande envers la création mais elle s'interprète aussi comme une gratitude de vivre l'instant présent, ici, réunis devant cette sculpture. Le modèle de cette main a été pris sur celle d'un ex petit ami de Gaëlle Choisne. Main alors masculine, les attributs qui lui sont ajoutés (faux-ongles, perle) la féminise. *A hand to take* appelle ainsi le spectateur à réfléchir sur l'homosexualité et la transsexualité, sur l'acceptation de l'autre dans sa différence.



**« ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP », IMAGE OF
DESIRE : PEACOCK**

2017-2019 (series)
wood, plaster, pigments, silicon, ephemeral tattoo
18 x 25 cm

QUELQUES VIVRES POUR L'AU-DELÀ

2018-2020 (series)

quilted textiles, chains, various materials (sunglasses, cell phone, ephemeral tattoo, chewing gum)

These survival blankets are monuments. They remind us of the disparus. A survival blanket for their passage from one world to another. The blankets can be reminiscent of shrouds. A shroud, also known as a shroud or shroud of death, is a piece of cloth similar to a sheet in which you wrap a bunting. It was once traditionally made of linen cloth, hence its name.

Here the sheet and the body become one. The sheet has become volume. I select each time an assembly of fabric, texture, color that sometimes contradict each other. My practice uses traditional techniques such as sewing, with decomplexion, I sew the fabrics which by my mistakes and my imprecision create waves, folds and bulges.

One of the stories that has nourished this work is my visit and support for some refugee camps expelled by the police where I and some associations were trying to save as much material and things left by the refugees. The traces of what was left of their identities appeared then as treasures (piece of mirror, comb and lighter). The gesture and the title is also a tribute to the artist Hessie. This Cuban artist who lived in France for more than twenty five years. She created the feminist movement «survival art». « For the art critic Aline Dallier, she was then part of the «Nouvelles Pénélopes» who used feminine language to subvert it. «Survival Art, an art of survival, to resist dissolution, loss, hence an assumed predilection for waste, obsolete objects, everyday materials, remnants of a life, or for sewing, an action that mends, heals and connects. I have proclaimed myself part of this movement.

Each blanket is a new micro-history embroidered «à la Ginzburg» where each sewn clue is a personal memory of my travels but also leaves the viewer free to project himself into new ones. A fragmentary and spiritual self-ethnography can be a potential reading. These blankets were influenced by the blankets at the entrance of the temple gates in Beijing, a kind of airlock between the world of men and Gods and functionally to protect from the cold.

These blankets are both carnal and erotic. Some traces of carnal pleasure are visible there: the seminal liquid as a symbol of fallen masculinity, for example, or the false nails as a sign of seduction. The series began with the death of two friends and continued, leaving each cover with its own ghost.

The title always announces a little bit the content of the objects on the cover and adds the word «survival art» in different languages as a propagation of the movement and its concept internationally. A form of solidarity is generated through this work.



QUELQUES VIVRES POUR L'AU-DELÀ, SLAM, HEADPHONES,
BUTTS AND MONEY, QUAND ON SE RÉVEILLE TRÈS TÔT,
QUEEN ROSA VENUS, DRA SIVIV

2019 (series)

reflective fabric, Korean blanket, sewn items

83 x 45 x 400 cm





QUELQUES VIVRES POUR L'AU-DELÀ (BLACK FACE, PORTE-CHANCE, CARNATION ET MÉLANINE, SENS DU PHYSIQUE)
ART DE SURVIE

2018 (series)

textiles and mixed media

83 x 45 x 400 cm





QUELQUES VIVRES POUR L'AU-DELÀ (BIZ-BIZ, L'AMOUR
DU RISQUE ET UN PEU DE MATOS, WEED, PHONE-TEL, UN
OEIL) SURVIVAL ART

2018 (series)

textiles and mixed media

400 x 90 x 40 cm





LA VIE SILENCIEUSE DU RESTE D'UN BANQUET D'HUÎTRES

2018

plaster, céramic, wax, pigments, saltl, silicon
variable dimensions

These oysters are like offerings deposited by the followers of certain goddesses, notably Ishtar and Erzuli Fréda, goddesses of love and war, respectively Mesopotamian and Haitian, long cherished. They have finished their oyster meal, the shells have been abandoned here and there.

The giant pearl, present in some oysters, refers to the ancient nickname of Haiti, once called «the pearl of the West Indies». Today, however, it is broken.

Ces huîtres sont comme des offrandes déposées par les fidèles de certaines déesses, notamment Ishtar et Erzuli Fréda, déesses de l'amour et de la guerre, respectivement mésopotamienne et haïtienne, depuis longtemps déjà chéries. Elles ont fini leur repas d'huîtres, les coquilles ont été abandonnées ici et là.

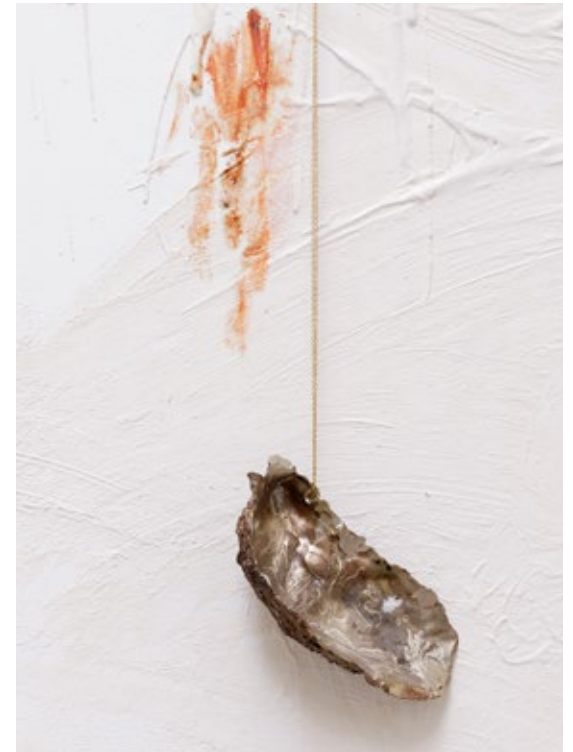
La perle géante, présente dans certaines huîtres, se rapporte à l'ancien surnom d'Haïti, un temps appelé «la perle des Antilles». Cependant aujourd'hui, elle est brisée.

NE ME BANNIS PAS DE TON CŒUR

2018 (series)

white bronze, chain, keys and padlock

In Ancient Greece, some Greek cities banned for ten years citizens who had attracted public disfavour. This sentence was emitted after a vote of the citizens, by means of shards or shells, ostrakon, on which were registered their answer. The etymology of the word ostrakon, designating the nature of this vote but by analogy the exclusion of a person or a group, comes from this practice. Passed in the Latin language, *ostrea* means oyster. For Gaëlle Choisne this shell, beyond its carnal dimension and its hermaphrodite side, becomes a strong symbol of the questioning of hospitality and solidarity to share the earth in tolerance.



WAR OF IMAGES - DISTORTIONS AND TEMPORAL ELLIPSES

2017-2018

Offset plate printed and ceramic

Variables dimensions 100 x 100 cm or 250 x 126 cm

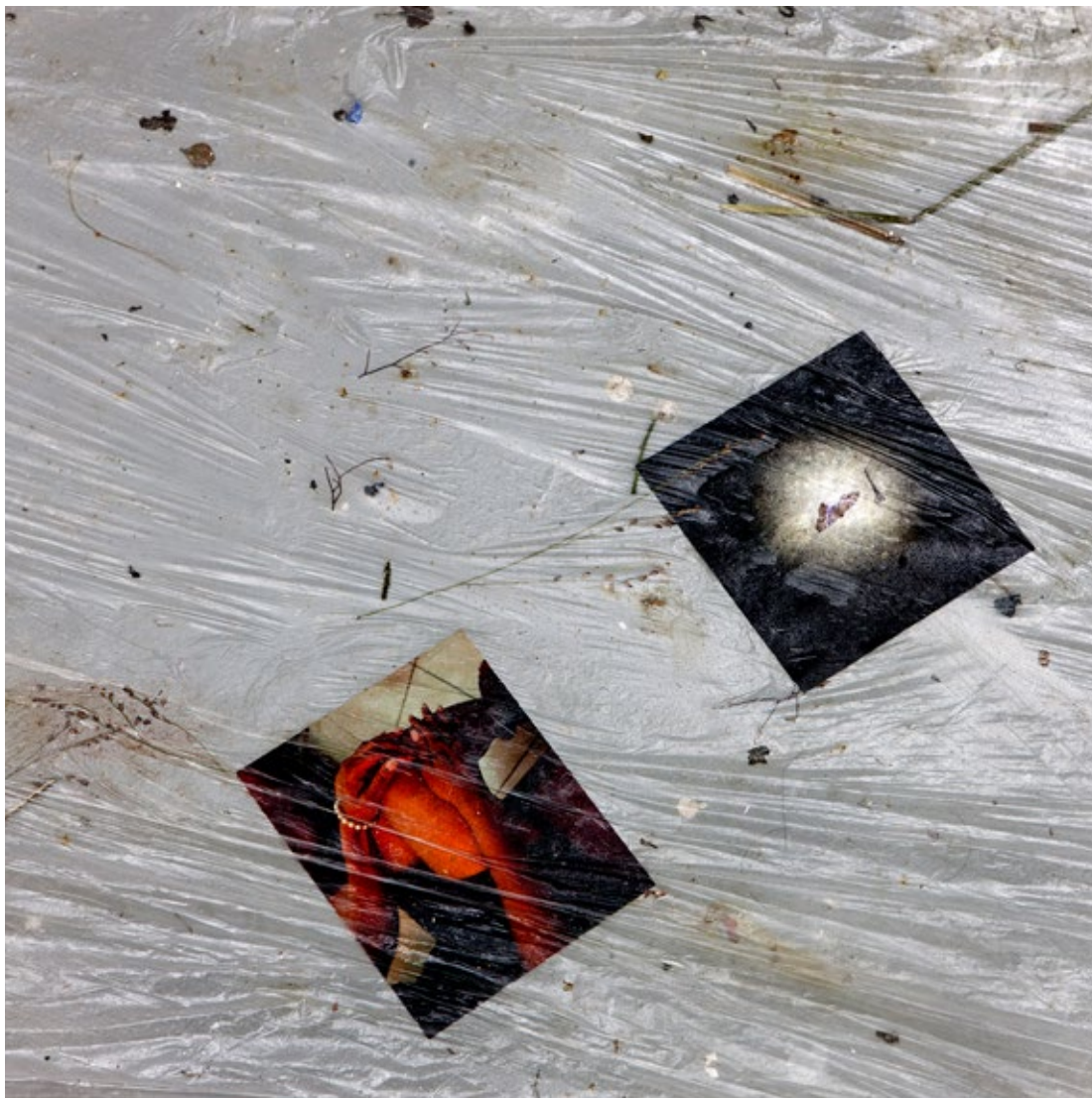
Scan from Rijksakademie archives, colonials originals drawings. Some part of my body are intercepted during the scan. The last layers of recording is the UV print on offset plate. It's a story of recordings of shapes, by the body and the machines.

Scan des archives de la Rijksakademie, dessins originaux de colons. Certaines parties de mon corps sont interceptées pendant le scan. La dernière couche d'enregistrement est une 'impression UV sur plaque offset. C'est une histoire d'enregistrements de formes, par le corps et les machines.



W.A.A.N. (WE ARE ALL NEGROES)

Color photographs collected since 2014 during travels and some internet archives
plastique, flowers and dried leaves and wastes



«WAAN (We are all negroes)» Our physical relationship to this indoor floor refers to an imaginary, fictional waste-filled, post-romantic exterior where the symptoms of the vanities accumulate on the ground. A frozen image, reconstituted by the filter of the plastic, brings back from poetic way to a fallen relationship with nature and others. The spectator treads the ground, experiments empirically with the work which he will at the same time destroy by his own presence on it. The spectator has to lower his head to look at what is happening on the ground, to look at the photographs, documenting the activity of his own human existence, of his own negro condition. Achille Mbembe speaks about it in an article on Afrofuturism. The future-nigger of the world, «the negro becoming». I quote him : African and diasporic reflection the «negro condition» has largely been done within the framework of the modern humanist thought that has prevailed in the West over the last three decades. Centuries. Since the mid- twentieth century, different currents have been attached to criticize Western humanism in depth. Among them, Afrofuturism declares that it is the very idea of the human species that is being defeated by the experience of the negro, forced, notably through the Treaty, to put on the clothes of the thing and to share the destiny of the object. Today, the «negro of background» - which refreshes the «surface nigger» without necessarily having the «background». black skin - corresponds to a kind of subordinate humanity whose capital has no which is hardly needed and seems doomed to zoning and eviction. He is doing his appearance on the world stage at a time when, more than ever before, capitalism is appearing is instituted in the manner of an animist religion, while the man of flesh and blood and the of old bones makes way for a new man-flux, digital.¹»

1-Achille Mbembe, «Afrofuturism and becoming a world Negro», Politics



PEAU DE CHAGRIN

2016-2019

Silicon, photography digital color
variable dimensions

With this experimental project that mixes sculpture and photography, Gaëlle Choïsne plays on the polysemic dimension of a work open to multiple reading grids. The title is taken from the eponymous novel by Honoré de Balzac, in which the hero finds a magical skin that shrinks as she grants her wishes and shortens the protagonist's life at the same time. The surface of the works (prints made with a very specific technology and then covered with transparent silicone), equivalent to that of human skin, and the chains of female jewelry are all elements that allow the artist to refer to the skin. The artist draws a parallel between this organ, marker of our uniqueness, and the photographic medium as a revealer of an original image. By bringing together two distant geographical points (here a cave in the Dordogne and the leaves of corossol trees in Haiti), the artist creates a new fictional space where real distances no longer apply.





HYBRIS DOOR

2017

fabric, plexyglas, photo color

250 x 120 cm

PATTE DE PINTADE (L'OISEAU-NÈGRE)

2017 (series)

ceramic, necklace chain, lead

variable dimensions

This leg is that of a bird from Africa, imported to Haiti during the active period of colonization. Nicknamed «Negro bird», it is a symbol of the marooning of freed slaves in the West Indies and the Caribbean. This work resonates again as a tribute to the memory of the exploited populations in Haiti.

Cette patte est celle d'un oiseau venu d'Afrique, importé en Haïti pendant la période active de la colonisation. Surnommé «oiseau nègre», il est un symbole du marronnage, c'est-à-dire des esclaves affranchis dans les Antilles et les Caraïbes. Cette œuvre résonne à nouveau comme un hommage à la mémoire des populations exploitées en Haïti.





CONQUÊTE ET CARNAVAL

2015

wax, salt, colors, polystyrene

70 x 50 x 20 cm

STÈLES (PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAÏTI)

2013-2020 (series)

concrete, salt, metal, digital imprint with argentic photographs color
variable dimensions

These steles are a tribute, a monument to the people of Haiti. The series began with images of architecture destroyed by the 2010 earthquake and continues to this day. The effect of salt on the prints allows the partial alteration of the image, like the memory sometimes erased or truncated.

Ces stèles sont un hommage, un monument pour les habitants d'Haïti. La série a commencé avec des images d'architecture détruites par le tremblement de terre de 2010 et continue encore. L'effet du sel sur les impressions permet l'altération partielle de l'image, à l'instar de la mémoire parfois effacée ou tronquée.



ET LE RESTE DU MONDE

2015

Ceramic, rum and green lemon

Installation performance, (drink together), collective exhibition Lejos del teclado Internationale Biennale of Havana, Havana (Cuba)



Vous,
 Les gueux,
 les immondes,
 les puants :
 paysannes qui descendez de nos mornes avec un
 gosse dans le ventre,
 paysans calleux aux pieds sillonnés de vermines,
 putains,
 infirmes qui traînez vos puanteurs lourdes de
 mouches.
 Vous
 tous de la plèbe,
 debout !
 pour le grand coup de balai.
 Vous êtes les piliers de l'édifice : ôtez-vous
 et tout s'écroule, châteaux de cartes.
 Alors, alors,
 vous comprendrez que vous êtes une grande vague
 qui s'ignore.
 Oh! vague,
 assemblez-vous,
 bouillonnez,
 mugissez,
 et que sous votre linceul d'écumes, il ne subsiste
 plus rien,
 rien
 que du bien propre
 du bien lavé,
 du blanchi jusqu'aux os.
 Carl Brouard, « vous ».



FIRE

2013
burned wood
100 x 8 cm



RUBBER

2013

used bicycle inner tubes - macramé braiding installation

600 x 40 cm

This work was realized by Gaëlle Choisne over a long period of time, through the accumulation of the raw material. By the repetitive gestures, it reminds him of the artisanal work of weaving carried out by women. In its interpretation, this work wants to be open and multiple: a tongue, a net, a bridge, a fishing or hunting tool... left free to exist by its presence in space.

Cette œuvre a été réalisée par Gaëlle Choisne sur un temps long, au fil de l'accumulation de la matière première. Par la gestuelle répétitive, elle lui rappelle le travail artisanal de tissage réalisé par les femmes. Dans son interprétation, cette œuvre se veut ouverte et multiple : une langue, un filet, un pont, un outil de pêche ou de chasse... laissée libre d'exister de par sa présence dans l'espace.

VIDEOS

2021**ACCUMULATION PRIMITIVE**

<https://vimeo.com/488656732>

password: AccumulationPrimitive8888

2020**TEMPLE OF LOVE - MAM**

<https://vimeo.com/498683300>

2019**ALTÉRATION**

<https://vimeo.com/442759289>

password: ILHO DE MIEL

2018**VERTIÈRE N'EXISTE PAS**

<https://vimeo.com/400283406>

password: CAPOIXLAMORT

LANGUAGE OF BIRD

<https://vimeo.com/400568962>

password: LYBN KESKIA

2017**NEVAQNALA**

<https://vimeo.com/377776804>

password: nevaqlana

2015**THE SEA SAYS NOTHING**

<https://vimeo.com/457520787>

password: MEMELEMOUVEMENTDESVAGUES

GLOIRE À LA RÉTENTION COLONIALE

<https://vimeo.com/153240836>

password: DECOLONIAL

GUARAPERA

<https://vimeo.com/145489316>

QUAND JE SERAI MORTE

<https://vimeo.com/154407958>

password: MORTE

CRIC-CRAC - ÉPILOGUE

<https://vimeo.com/399837270>

password: EPILOGUE

2014-2013**CRIC-CRAC (EXTRACT)**

<https://vimeo.com/153227624>

2013**CRIC-CRAC - PROLOGUE**

<https://vimeo.com/402171908>

password: ENPIL ZANMIS

DIORAMA

<https://vimeo.com/403716830>

password: GREENHOUSE

CROCODILE HUNTERS

<https://vimeo.com/144563703>

password: GREENHOUSE



ACCUMULATION PRIMITIVE

2021

color video 16/9

52'23"

<https://vimeo.com/user17577091/>

password: AccumulationPrimitive8888



Gaëlle Choisne meets several women, including artist and producer Christelle Oyiri. These stories are complemented by archival videos, poetic references to Haiti and philosophical reflections centered on the enslavement of women. The artist wishes to highlight the emancipating connections between personal stories and the great contemporary history. Text by Thomas Conchou

Gaëlle Choisne part à la rencontre de plusieurs femmes dont l'artiste et productrice Christelle Oyiri. Ces récits sont complétés par des vidéos d'archives des références poétiques à Haïti et des réflexions philosophiques centrées sur l'asservissement des femmes. L'artiste souhaite ainsi mettre en avant des connexions émancipatrices entre des histoires personnelles et la grande histoire contemporaine. Texte Thomas Conchou



ALTÉRATION

2019

color video 16/9

43'32"

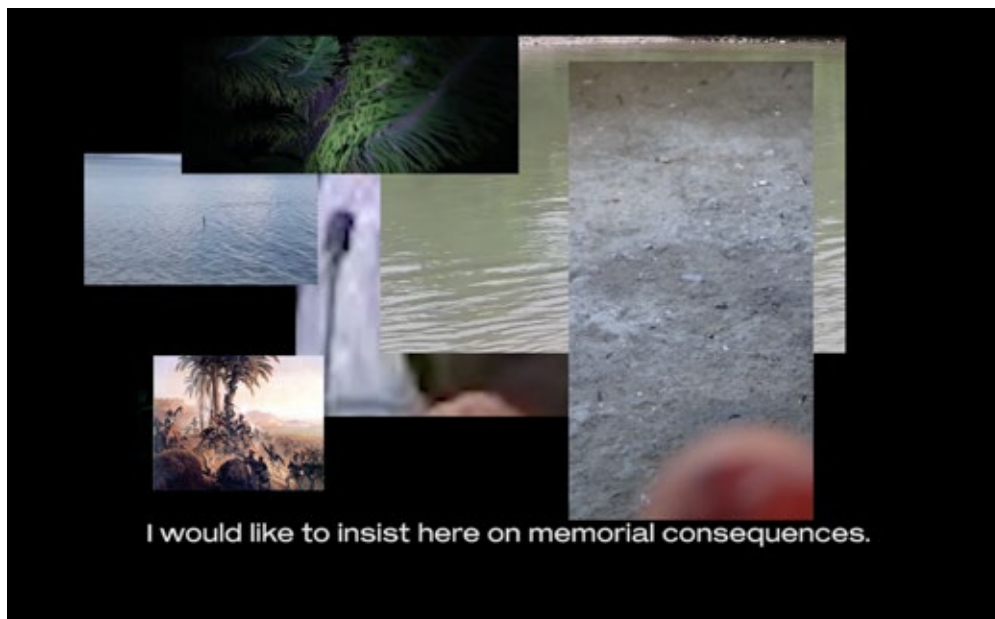
<https://vimeo.com/442759289>

password: ILHO DE MIEL



«Alteration» is one of the chapters of Roland Barthes' essay, A lover's discourse : Fragments. I'm moving the questions from that chapter on love where Barthes talks about the counter-image. «(The horror of damaging is even stronger than the anguish of losing.)» I translate the chapter from the private sphere of a dual relationship to the public dimension.

The video shows images of Brazilian Indian ornaments left as a token of memory in a private museum in Curitiba alternating with the movement of the waves near the enchanted cave on Ihlo de miel in southern Brazil and the frightened dances of the young people during the party organized by the Afro-descendant and political association «Um Baile Bom» in a kilombo in Curitiba. The alternation of images is punctuated by the music of the festival, sometimes traditional Brazilian and sometimes coming from African-American culture.



VERTIÈRE N'EXISTE PAS

2018

color video 16/9

12'45"

<https://vimeo.com/400283406>

password: CAPOIXLAMORT

«Vertière n'existe pas» (*Vertière doesn't exist*) is an experimental film that was produced as a re-mounted montage and so on, provoking a repetition of the film with different temporality as if the same story had been remounted several times but always with changes each time. The film is based on the reflections of the author Le Glaunec who explains how the Haitian Histiore has been censored in the History of Humanity - He says and repeats «vertiere does not exist» but by dint of repeating it even in its negation, it exists.

«Vertière n'existe pas» est un film expérimental qui a été produit sous forme de montage remonté et ainsi de suite, provoquant une répétition du film avec une stemporalité différente comme si la même histoire avait été remontée plusieurs fois mais toujours avec des changements à chaque fois. Le film est basé sur les réflexions de l'auteur Le Glaunec qui explique comment l'Histoire haïtienne a été censurée dans l'Histoire de l'Humanité - Il dit et répète «le vertige n'existe pas» mais à force de le répéter même dans sa négation, il existe.



LANGUAGE OF BIRDS

2018

color video 16/9

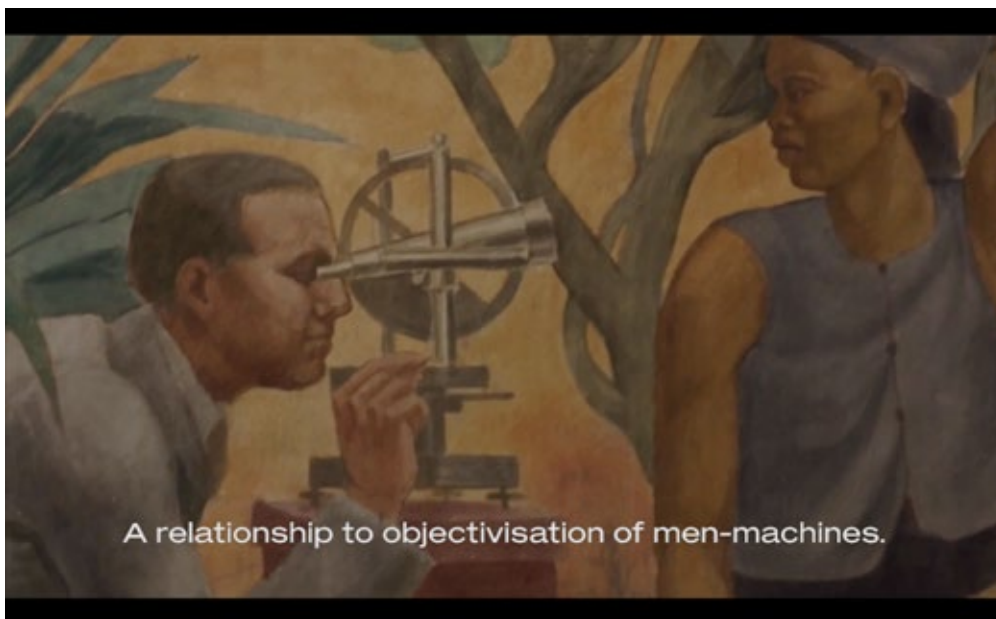
20'07"

<https://vimeo.com/400568962>

password: LYBN KESKIA

Continuing with the language of youth culture, in the work *Language of Birds* (2017), Haitian/French artist Gaëlle Choïsne follows the life of Libannstyle, a Lebanese rapper living in Lyon, born in Beirut and working as a waiter and cook in a small restaurant in Villeurbanne, as he writes texts, sings, stays with his friends and spends his time on the Internet searching for truths – both absolute and relative. Gaëlle uses the term 'language of birds,' a mythically divine language used only between the initiated, to parallel the use of 'verlan,' the term for French slang and the languages of secret internet societies and 'new world orders.' At the same time, she comments on the lives of young people in France who find themselves in a continuous struggle with the violence that a globalised system produces today. *Language of Birds* is a documentary-style video work that blurs the traces and positions of its protagonists and seeks to question the realm between fiction and reality.

Hicham Khalidi & Natasha Hoare, 2017, *An unpredictable expression of human potential*, Sharjah Biennale, Beirut.



N.E.V.A.Q.N.A.L.A.

(Nous étions les victimes alors que nous avons été les auteurs)

2017

color video 16/9

8'36"

<https://vimeo.com/377776804>

password: nevaqlana

(We were the victims whereas we had been the authors) . This installation comes from loporello's shape deployed like a book open. Exotism, racism, tourism, a lot of ISM and rituals which speak about this fragile balance kept by cheap chains.

(Nous étions les victimes alors que nous avons été les auteurs) est une installation reprenant la forme d'un loporello déployé, un livre ouvert sur des histoires d'exotisme, de racisme, de tourisme et de rituels entretenues par des chaînes de pacotilles pour un équilibre incertain.



THE SEA SAYS NOTHING

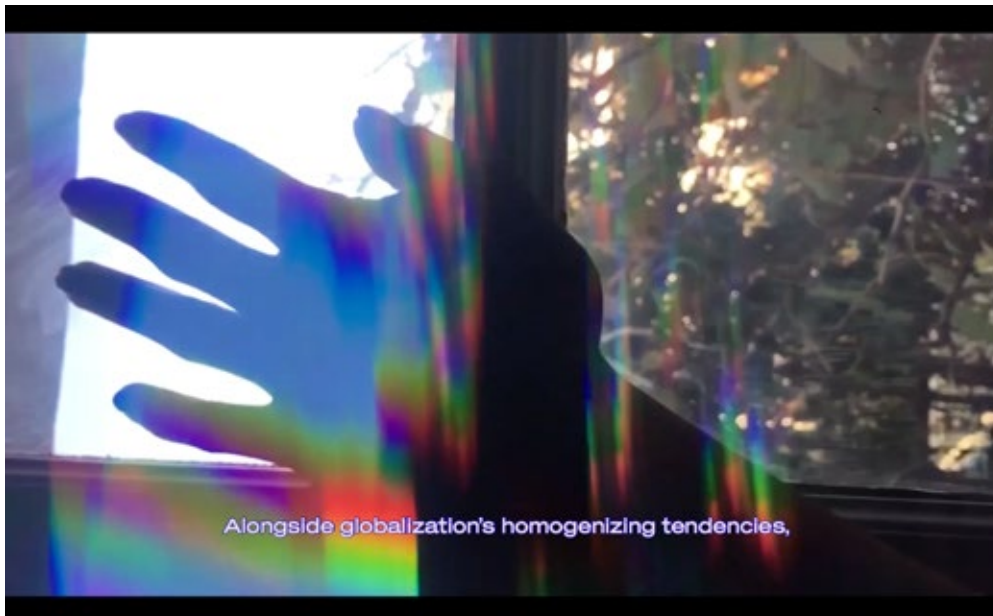
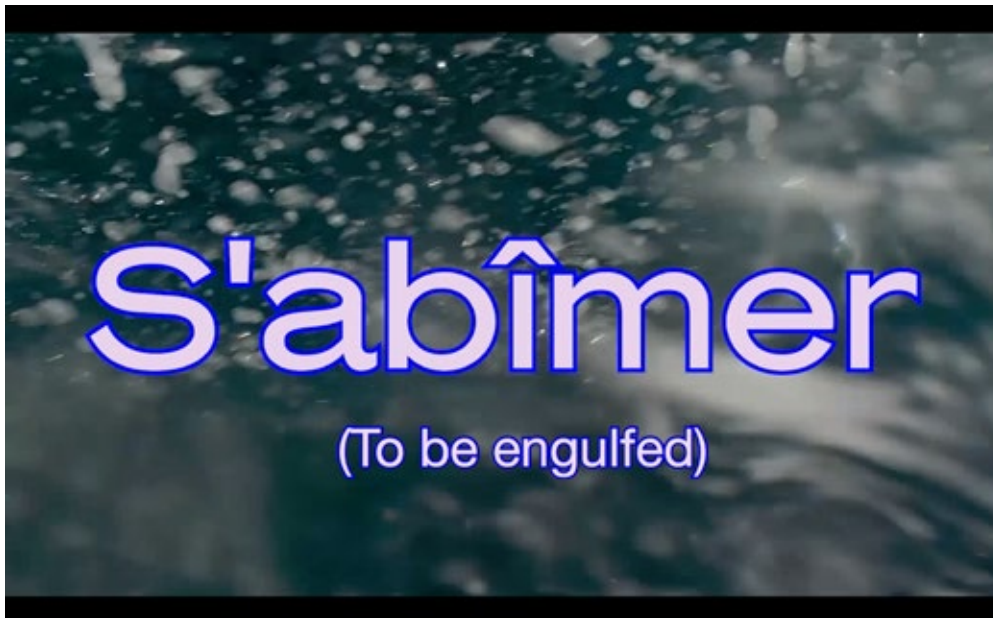
2015
color video 16/9
17"

<https://vimeo.com/457520787>

password: MEMELEMOUVEMENTDES VAGUES

The sea says nothing is a project that is a tribute to Carmen Brouard. Carmen Brouard, born February 10, 1909 in Port-au-Prince and died December 11, 2005 in Montreal, is a Haitian pianist, composer and music teacher and sister of the indigenous poet Carl Brouard (1902-1965). She is a brilliant composer who mixes classical music sounds with voodoo rhythms and influences. This woman of color did not get the recognition she deserved as a woman in the classical music world and more colorful. After meeting her best friend Françoise Forest in Canada who gave me the scores to play Carmen Brouard's scores around the world.

The sea says nothing est un projet qui est un hommage à Carmen Brouard. Carmen Brouard, née le 10 février 1909 à Port-au-Prince et morte le 11 décembre 2005 à Montréal, est une pianiste, compositrice et professeur de musique haïtienne et sœur du poète indigéniste Carl Brouard (1902-1965). Elle est une brillante compositrice qui mêle sonorités de musique classique aux rythmes et influences vaudou. Cette femme de couleur n'a pas eu la célébrité qu'elle méritait étant une femme dans le milieu de la musique classique et de plus de couleur. Après la rencontre au Canada de sa meilleure amie Françoise Forest qui m'a donné les partitions afin de jouer les partitions de Carmen Brouard à travers le monde.



S'ABÎMER

2015
color video 16/9
25'06"

<https://vimeo.com/375425834>

password: MARX

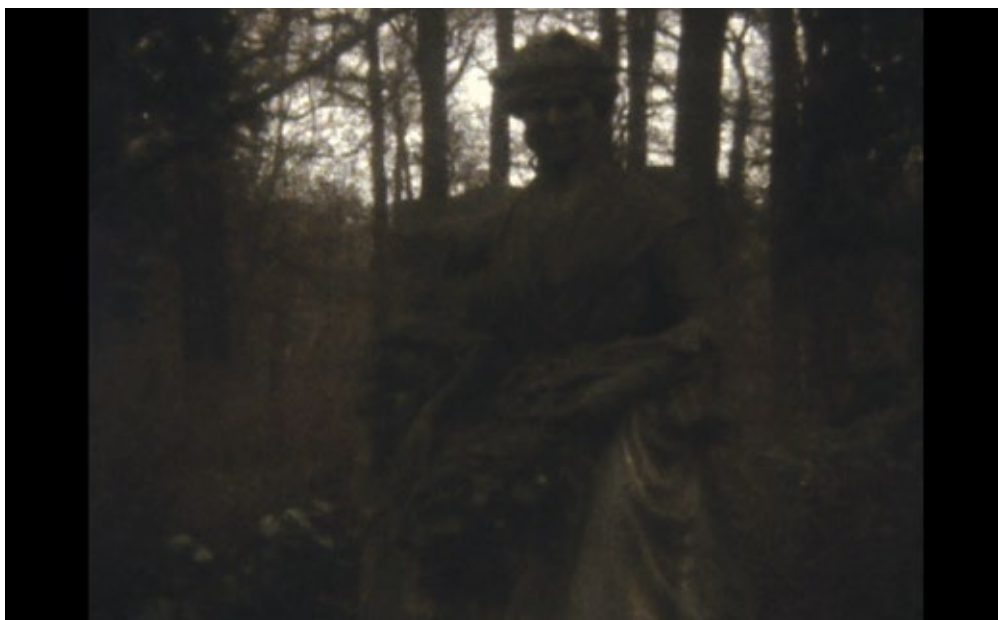
«To be Engulfed» is one of the chapters of Roland Barthes' essay, *A lover's discourse : Fragments*. I'm moving the questions from that chapter on love where Barthes talks about love and annihilation. «Therefore, on those occasions when I am engulfed, it is because there is no longer any place for me anywhere, not even in death. The image of the other to which I was glued, on which I lived-no longer exists; sometimes this is a (futile) catastrophe which seems to remove the image forever, sometimes it is an excessive happiness which enables me to unite with the image; in any case, severed or united, dissolved or discrete, I am nowhere gathered together; opposite. neither you nor me, nor death, nor anything else to talk to.» Between personal and poetic texts, by Stuart Hall and Marx in *The Kapital*, I wander between visual memories and the monument in Cazale (Haïti) where the Haitian-Polish communists were shot during the Duvalier regime.



GLOIRE À LA RÉTENTION COLONIALE

2015
digitized Super 8 video
4'21"

<https://vimeo.com/153240836>
password: DECOLONIAL



The monument to the glory of French colonial expansion (or greater France) is a sculptural group by Jean-Baptiste Belloc in 1913. In 2015, five pieces are exhibited in the tropical garden in Paris, France. This is a video of this super 8 abandoned sculpture and disuse, symbolic sign of a desire to see imperialism and neocolonialism abandoned as these sculptures.

Le monument à la gloire de l'expansion coloniale française (ou à la plus grande France) est un groupe statuaire réalisé par Jean- Baptiste Belloc en 1913. En 2015, ses cinq morceaux sont exposés dans le jardin tropical de Paris, en France. Il s'agit d'une vidéo en super 8 de cette sculpture abandonnée et en désuétude, signe symbolique d'une volonté de voir l'impérialisme et le néocolonialisme à l'abandon comme ces sculptures.



GUARAPERA

2015

color video 16/9

28" (loop)

<https://vimeo.com/145489316>

The guarapera is a juice from crushed sugarcane. Cuban tradition, the guarapera vendors increasingly rare, have artisanal machines to grind the cane live and serve in glasses ceramic. This is a big static shot, handheld camera when sugarcane is crushed. A hand comes occasionally removed the cane of the metal mouth.

Le guarapera est un jus obtenu à partir de la canne à sucre broyée. Tradition cubaine, les vendeurs de guarapera de plus en plus rares, possèdent des machines artisanales afin de broyer en direct la canne et la servir dans des verres en céramiques. Il s'agit d'un gros plan fixe, caméra à l'épaule du moment où la canne à sucre est écrasée. Une main vient de temps en temps retirée la canne de la bouche en métal.



QUAND JE SERAI MORTE

2015

digitized Super 8 video

2'56"

<https://vimeo.com/154407958>

password: MORTE



«Quand je serai morte» (*When I will dead*) is a direct reference to Carl Brouard. A walk in the cemetery of Port-au-Prince in Haiti, filmed on Super 8 camera lets us discover through the eye of a walker space lawless, silent and calm in appearance but in the context economic of the country is a dangerous place. The use of super 8 camera creates an anachronic document. It is also used for security reasons.

«Quand je serai morte» est une référence directe à Carl Brouard. Une ballade dans le cimetière de Port-au-Prince en Haïti, filmé à la caméra super 8 nous laisse découvrir au travers de l'oeil d'un promeneur un espace de non-droit, silencieux et calme en apparence mais qui dans le contexte économique du pays est un endroit dangereux. L'utilisation de la caméra super 8 crée un document anachronique. Elle est aussi employée pour des raisons de sécurité.



CRIC CRAC - ÉPILOGUE

2015
color video 16/9
16'38"

<https://vimeo.com/399837270>

password: EPILOGUE

The epilogue is a visual ballad in Haitian landscapes from a historiographic and anthropographic angle through the prism of legend, of detail, in the small stories that speak of Haitian culture, of the great History. *Cric Crac epilogue* is a title taken from a rather old Haitian tradition which proposes to a storyteller to say Cric to the assembly. The assembly responds Crac if it agrees to hear a story from the storyteller. Through this title, I clearly propose an invitation to listen to old and more contemporary stories.

L'épilogue est une ballade visuelle dans des paysages haïtiens sous un angle historiographique et anthropographique par le prisme de la légende, du détail, dans les petites histoires qui parlent de la culture haïtienne, de la grande Histoire. *Cric Crac épilogue* est un titre tiré d'une tradition haïtienne assez vieille qui propose à un conteur de dire Cric à l'assemblée. Celle-ci répond Crac si elle est d'accord pour entendre une histoire par le conteur. À travers ce titre, je propose clairement une invitation à écouter des histoires anciennes et plus contemporaines.



CRIC CRAC

2013-2014

color video 16/9

01'28'04

<https://vimeo.com/153227624>

Several voices in this film collide and create accumulations of layers of truth and points of view. The «voice of the people», my voice; the so-called «official» voice, that of the media, historians, ethnologists; the scientific, romantic, lyrical voice, orchestrated in part by René Depestre, author of novels, notably Haitian novels. The film is made in two different ways. A «low tech» shoulder camera signifying the regime of film documents on the internet and a static camera referring to the image regime of the traditional documentary in order to question the representation through the prism of colonial history and Haiti.

Plusieurs voix dans ce film viennent s'entrechoquer et créer des accumulations de strates de vérité et de points de vue. La «voix du peuple», ma voix ; la voix dite «officielle» celle des médias, des historiens, des ethnologues ; la voix scientifique, romanesque, lyrique, orchestrée en partie par René Depestre, auteur de romans notamment haïtiens. Le film est réalisé de deux manières différentes. Une caméra à l'épaule «low tech» signifiante dans le régime des documents filmiques sur internet et une caméra statique se référant au régime d'images du documentaire traditionnel dans le but de questionner la représentation par le prisme de l'histoire coloniale et d'Haïti.





Il y aurait lieu, dans cette étude, de vérifier si la notion de zombie est un piège de l'histoire coloniale. Les Haïtiens l'auraient profondément intériorisée et intégrée à des usages domestiques. Ce pourrait être un signe de l'imaginaire du tabac, du café, du sucre, du coton, du cacao, des épices; l'une des figures du naufrage ontologique de l'homme dans les plantations américaines, à placer dans la galerie des damnés de la terre.

CRIC CRAC - PROLOGUE

2013

color video 16/9

11'

<https://vimeo.com/402171908>

password: ENPIL ZANMIS

Cric Crac (Prologue) is the first part of a trilogy. This project is inspired by a documentary film on Haitian culture. It is about an interview in the park of the Colonial Museum of Moulin-sur-mer (Haiti) about the existence of zombies and werewolves in Haiti, punctuated with excerpts from the novel by René Depestre «Hadriana in all my dreams» (1988) and insertions of filmic documents. René Depestre is an important contemporary Haitian literary reference. He has a distant and humorous look on his own culture that he knows how to put into words.

Cric Crac (Prologue) est le premier volet d'une trilogie. Ce projet s'inspire d'un film documentaire sur la culture haïtienne. Il a pour sujet une interview dans le parc du musée colonial de Moulin-sur-mer (Haïti) relatant l'existence de zombies et de loups garous en Haïti, le tout ponctué d'extraits de textes du roman de René Depestre «Hadriana dans tous mes rêves» (1988) et d'insertions de documents filmiques. René Depestre est une référence littéraire haïtienne contemporaine importante. Il possède un regard distancé et humoristique sur sa propre culture qu'il sait mettre en mots.

DIORAMA

2013

installation video (16/9), wax, salt, artificial vegetation, sound : <http://anne-fff.tumblr.com>

42"

<https://vimeo.com/403716830>

PASSWORD: GREENHOUSE



«Diorama» thus takes its title from the ancestors of projection, these immersive devices, bringing into play painted images and objects in volumes to give a sensation of stage. The film shows images shot in the greenhouses of the Parc de la tête d'Or. Opened in the 19th century, they hosted the International and Colonial Exhibition of 1894, but no indication explains this history. Moreover, the plants it contains were planted there thanks to the technical development of plant conservation through the industrialization of glass and metal and marks the beginning of the movement of particular goods, plants, animals, men. We are thus dealing with a place that is both an ideal representation and a reconstruction of nature, a setting that bears the traces of a fascination for the exotic. A seduction to which this device responds, which also shows itself as a decor. (...) They are not neutral and their reading depends on the context, on the device in which they appear, which participates in a kind of montage that shapes the reading. Thus it is indeed imprints that this artist manipulates and to which she tries to give a new breath. The history that these elements conjure up is not presented as a univocal writing but calls for an imagination that comes to give life to these memory traces.»

François Aubart

CROCODILE HUNTERS

2013

installation video (16/9), wax, salt, artificial vegetation

6'44'00

<https://vimeo.com/144563703>



Constellation hétéroclite, Prix Félix Sabatier, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 2014

TEXTS

I propose chaotique sculptural landscapes at the crossroads of sculpture and photography, which is about painting. I set up confusions between sculpture and image. Questioning the representation and the illusory and theatrical character of the world. A Brechtian staging where man is no longer central in the world but is an integral part of a systemic arrangement that welcomes him. Dissonances and contradictions coexist and sometimes argue. Polyphonic and material stratification. Geology of non-linear and decolonial knowledge. The approach of my work can be seen as a kaleidoscopic prism with multiple entries of meanings and signs. It is always about moments that are in the process of transformation or that suggest it. Hybridization of image, photography and video. Biomorphie.

I evoke displacement, architecture, the organic, matter, waste as a means of reconstruction, of construction. The materials are in tension, resist, are in struggle, in cohabitation, in disharmony, in harmony, fragile. We sometimes have to deal with them or they become autonomous beyond the existence of the spectator's gaze. They live together but are autonomous and sometimes live alone. The finiteness of the world is felt. Material animism. By means of the extraction, of the extract, of the loan, of the fragment without direct references I propose new reconstructions to be made, of moments of micro-history as a process of palliation of the memory by the imaginary. The sown clues are the proof of an unsolved investigation. Afrofuturism is sometimes one of the answers. Intuition is the universal transmission value of this project. The detail becomes the whole. The device is its process.

The heritage of anthropological museums, archaeological history and its modes of presentation, cenotaphs, monuments and steles linked to colonial histories are search engines or counter-examples for the landscapes I propose. Thanks to the support of western and overseas myths, I speak of a local exoticism. I propose tributes to invisible and bruised bodies and offerings to spiritual entities and goddesses or I create gri-gris to protect. Queer issues are integrated as evident in a fight against the «ecological and political matricide». Nature and energies are part of my installations where an ecofeminist state of mind is

revealed. I have self-proclaimed myself as part of Hesse's «survival art» movement.

Between a liberal craftsmanship and local industrialization, I solicit falsely selling forms of seduction and their relation to a western toxicity. The homage to craftsmanship is clear but punk and decomplicated when I reappropriate it. It's about showing traces of a silent History. The body is absent but suggested. The spectator's body, on the other hand, is in the engagement, invited to constrain himself either in front of the obstacle or to relax. Between sometimes talkative abstract re-presentations and often silent figurative spaces, the setting and the very question of representation is questioned. Making ruins where I try to solicit people to live in the spaces, functionalize the sculptures and bring people together through events.

The relationship of domination, the symbolic elements of power are evoked. Experimental space to make, excessive and disordered, like a thought in movement, like everyday gestures moved in the degeneration of the empirical, intuitive moment. Revision of the canons of beauty, magnified or sacralized, art is on the ground without base, without support. I reinvent «contemporary vanities» with fags and silicone that resembles sexual fluids. Videos speak for sculptures that abstain, abstract or obstinate. The videos accumulate information, meaning, anachronistic, disorganized, non-discursive. An intimate expression blends with history or information. The mechanization of the living is shown, the hands that make. The black body of the woman is expressed, political power par excellence, her hands as a vector of transmission. «Empowerment» as a space of autonomy and visibility. The culture of weeds clings on, but persists. Weeds testify to the presence of life in inhospitable environments. We are in this curious heterogeneous mix of shaping, casting or reclaiming, remaking, reappropriation, we are bootlegs and mixing. Mixing and creolization. Cultural anthropophagy.

We are the whole world.

Je propose des paysages sculpturaux chaotiques au carrefour de la sculpture et de la photographie, qui parle de peinture. Je mets en place des confusions entre sculpture et image. Questionner la représentation et le caractère illusoire et théâtralisé du monde. Une mise en scène brechtienne où l'homme n'est plus central dans le monde mais fait partie intégrante d'un arrangement systémique qui l'accueille. Dissonances et contradictions cohabitent et se disputent parfois. Stratification polyphonique et matériologiques. Géologie d'un savoir non linéaire et décoloniale. L'approche de mes travaux peut être vue comme un prisme Kaléidoscopique à multiples entrées de sens et de signes. Il s'agit toujours de moment en cours de transformation ou qui le suggère. Hybridation de l'image, de la photographie et de la vidéo. Biomorphique.

J'y évoque le déplacement, l'architecture, l'organique, la matière, le déchet comme moyen de reconstruction, de construction. Les matériaux sont en tension, résistent, sont en luttés, en cohabitation, en désaccord, en harmonie, fragile. On doit parfois s'occuper d'eux ou elles deviennent autonomes au-delà de l'existence du regard du spectateur. Elles vivent ensemble mais sont autonomes et parfois vivent seules. La finitude du monde se fait sentir. Animisme matériologique. Par le biais de l'extraction, de l'extrait, de l'emprunt, du fragment sans référents directs je propose de nouvelles reconstitutions à faire, de moments de micro-Histoires comme un procédé de palliation de la mémoire par l'imaginaire. Les indices semés en sont les preuves d'une enquête irrésolue. Afrofuturisme en est une des réponses parfois. L'intuition est la valeur universelle de transmission de ce projet. Le détail devient le tout. Le dispositif est son procédé.

L'héritage des musées anthropologiques, l'Histoire archéologiques et ses modes de présentation, les cénotaphes, monuments et les stèles liées aux Histoires coloniales sont des moteurs de recherche ou des contre-exemple pour les paysages que je propose. Grâce à l'appui de mythes occidentales et outre-mer, je parle d'un exotisme local. Je propose des hommages aux corps invisibilisés et meurtris et des offrandes aux entités spirituelles et aux déesses ou je crée des gri-gri pour protéger. Les questions queers y sont intégrées comme

évidentes dans un combat contre le « matricide écologique et politique ». La nature et les énergies sont parties prenantes de mes installations où un état d'esprit écoféministe se révèle. Je me suis auto-proclamée faisant partie du mouvement « survival art » de Hessie. Entre un artisanat libéral et une industrialisation locale, je sollicite des formes de séduction faussement vendeuses et leurs rapports à une toxicité occidentale. L'hommage à l'artisanat est clair mais punk et décomplexé lorsque je me le réapproprie. Il s'agit de montrer des traces d'une Histoire muette. Le corps est absent mais suggéré. Le corps du spectateur est par contre, lui, dans l'engagement, invité à se contraindre soit devant l'obstacle ou à se relaxer. Entre re-présentations abstraites parfois bavardes et des espaces figuratifs souvent silencieux, le décor et la question même de la représentation y est questionnés. Fabrication des ruines où je tente de solliciter les gens à vivre dans les espaces, fonctionnaliser les sculptures et réunir les gens au travers d'événements.

Le rapport de domination, les éléments symboliques de pouvoir y sont évoqués. Espace expérimental de faire, excessive et désordonnée, comme une pensée en mouvement, comme des gestes du quotidien déplacés dans la dégénérescence de l'instant empirique, intuitif. Révision des canons de beauté, magnifiés ou sacralisés, l'art est au sol sans socle, sans maintien. Je réinvente des « vanités contemporaines » avec des clopes et du silicone qui s'apparente aux fluides sexuels. Les vidéos parlent pour les sculptures qui s'abstiennent, abstraites ou obstinées. Les vidéos accumulent de l'information, du sens, anachroniques, désorganisées, non-discursif. Une expression intime se mêle à l'Histoire ou à l'information. La mécanisation du vivant y est montrée du doigt, les mains qui fabriquent. Le corps noir de la femme y est exprimé, pouvoir politique par excellence, ses mains comme vecteur de transmission. « Empowerment » comme espace d'autonomie et de visibilité.

La culture des mauvaises herbes s'agrippe, mais persiste. Les mauvaises herbes témoignent de la présence de la vie dans les environnements inhospitaliers. Nous sommes dans ce curieux mélange hétéroclite de façonnage, moulages ou récupération, remake, réappropriation, nous sommes bootlegs et mixage. Métissage et créolisation. Anthropophagie culturelle. Nous sommes le tout-monde.

Gaelle Choisne's artistic practice is an address to the world's disorder. Without any pessimism or catastrophism, it mirrors the complexity of contemporary times through multiple medias and burgeoning installations. Sculptures, images and referential systems are imbricated here and merge in opulent environments, inhabited by the gestures of the artist.

Between occult fables and objective sciences, from the Caribbean to European literary traditions, she navigates through imaginaries as composite as the techniques which give them shape: casting, firing, printout, suspension, collage, torsion, extraction. The artist's interest in the work process is often left apparent in installations-sculptures-images whose fringes are always experimental. As if, lost in a permanent gestation, her work could not obtain a permanent status in regard to its arrangement, form and reproducibility. Thus, its pertinence is to be found in this discontinuous transformation, this systematic reversing of media, techniques and surfaces. This practice of becoming, in which meaning can arise only through perpetual movement, operates through palpation and seems always agitated, marked by an organic energy. One could say that the hand, which always fiddles, displaces and modifies plays a kind of drag, a falsely naïve craftsmanship.

By mobilizing and crossbreeding myths, legends, creole cultures and subcultures, Gaëlle Choisne's work raises the following question: what is knowing ? The mixing and wily-nilly counterfeiting of the vernacular, the popular, the scientific and the intimate clearly constitute an act of reappropriation, a takeover which reveals and puts at distance the systems through which knowledge and beings are characterized. The artist builds a perverse taxonomy, through displacement and contamination, which deceives the western obsession for archival and classification. By reclaiming and seizing the legacy of colonial histories, the effects of capitalism on the living as well as folklores, mercantile exoticism, imperialist remains and industrial productions of all types (cultural goods and commodities), this ambition lets the body emerge in negative as a space of resistance and submission to these phenomena. It seems that the body, often more suggested than actually present, intrudes by all sides into Gaelle Choisne's work.

The porosity of the materials, characterized by their treated and worked surfaces, as well as the permissiveness expressed by Gaelle Choisne's pieces, are actually the own porosity and permissiveness of corporeality. The way her works are suspended, always rough, sometimes violent, reminds us of the fragility of bodies swept by the cultural and social phenomena they face. Finally, the gaze of the spectator, directed and revealed by the installation, activates these apparatuses by continuously reminding him of his choice, his position and his guilt.

Thomas Conchou

L'œuvre que déploie Gaëlle Choisne est une adresse au désordre du monde. Sans pessimiste ou catastrophisme, elle fait miroir à la complexité du temps contemporain à travers de multiples médiums et des installations foisonnantes. Sculptures, images et systèmes référentiels s'imbriquent et se confondent dans des environnements opulents, habités des gestes de l'artiste.

Entre fables occultes et sciences objectives, des Caraïbes aux traditions littéraires européennes, elle navigue parmi des imaginaires aussi composites que les techniques qui viennent leur donner corps : moulage, cuisson, impression, suspension, collage, torsion, extraction. L'intérêt de l'artiste pour le processus de travail est souvent laissé visible dans des installations-sculptures-images dont les franges sont toujours expérimentales. Comme si, perdue dans une gestation permanente, l'œuvre ne pouvait pas atteindre un statut définitif dans son agencement, sa forme ou sa reproductibilité. Comme si elle trouvait sa pertinence dans cette transformation discontinue, ce retournement systématique des matériaux, des techniques et des surfaces. Cette pratique du devenir où le sens ne peut être atteint que par un mouvement perpétuel semble toujours agitée et opère par palpation, emprunte d'une énergie organique. De la main, qui tripote, déplace et modifie, on pourrait dire qu'elle travestit un artisanat, faussement naïf.

En investissant et en métissant mythes, légendes, cultures créoles et sous cultures, le travail de Gaëlle Choisne pose en question : qu'est-ce que connaître? Le mélange et la contrefaçon pêle-mêle du vernaculaire, du populaire, du scientifique et de l'intime tiennent bien d'un acte de réappropriation, d'une prise de pouvoir qui révèle et met à distance les systèmes par lesquels les connaissances et les êtres sont caractérisés. L'artiste bâtit par déplacements et contamination une taxinomie perverse qui se joue de l'obsession occidentale pour l'archivage et la classification des choses. Cette ambition qui vient réclamer et prendre pour soi l'héritage des histoires coloniales, les effets du capitalisme sur le vivant mais aussi les folklores, l'exotisme mercantile, les survivances impérialistes et les productions industrielles en tout genre (biens culturels, commodités) dessine en négatif la question du

corps comme espace de résistance et de soumission. Souvent suggéré plus que présent, le corps s'immisce dans le travail de Gaëlle Choisne, semble-t-il, par tous les côtés.

La porosité des matières, leurs surfaces traitées, travaillées, la permissivité qui s'exprime dans les œuvres, c'est bien celle de la corporéité qui s'infiltre par les objets ou les images. L'accrochage, toujours brut, parfois violent rappelle la fragilité des corps face aux phénomènes culturels et sociaux qui les balaient. Enfin, c'est le regard du spectateur que l'installation oriente et révèle qui vient activer ces dispositifs en lui rappelant incessamment son choix, sa position, son pouvoir et sa culpabilité.

Thomas Conchou

PREFACE

Lotte Arndt

Territories of the Soul
Gaëlle Choïsne's diasporic vernaculars,
counterfeited anti-canons,
and scintillating luvs

The refusal of mastery

"Punk gestures, awkward because I never aimed to be a virtuoso artist of the classical era. Trembling of the voice and the hands. Doing it. Doing it. Uttering, stammering. Uttering, stammering, repeating it, like a loop. Recycling thoughts. Doing it wrong, worse, better. 'Always do your best'. And then; inevitable disaster, or sabotage, oozing."¹

The verb 'to master' refers to an accomplished knowledge, a perfected skill, a constant know-how acquired through lengthy studies, often confirmed by institutional certificates and social recognition. It announces that things are under control: they are mastered; there won't be any unforeseeable outcomes, or formal shortcomings. European art history constitutes a long genealogy of "masterpieces" whose artistic achievements are attributed to technical skillfulness, patient maturation, and the signature of the head of the workshop, providing a guarantee of originality and authenticity.² Mastery provides the foundations of a refined cultural history, canonized and handed down through vertical transmission, from father to son, over generations.

Gaëlle Choïsne labors at the opposite of this tradition, in a space of referential impurity, associating scattered recycled matter, pixilated images, fluid, unstable installations, multiple collaborations, and the permanent possibility of dysfunction. Serendipity, the happy finding, is ubiquitous in her work. Lack of control and amateurism are deliberate here, and underlie a working process that rejects the authority of consecrated art history, names its gendered and racist bias, and claims its part through shaky gestures, compelling of heterogeneous cultural traditions and materials.

Choïsne borrows from sources as disparate as the French semiotician Roland Barthes; spiritual healing practices accessed on Facebook; Hessian (1936-2017), a feminist Cuban artist living in Paris for most of her life, whose practice has

been poorly recognized by art history; commercial pop cultures; and independent art house cinema. The components of her hybrid assemblages are drawn together along the lines of a diasporic imaginary: a fragmented articulation of a layered present in which here and there, bourgeois and popular, rational and intuitive are dynamic coexistences rather than separated and opposed realms. She mocks mastery and authenticity as illusionary and exclusive, and assembles instead what the writer and researcher Nadia Ellis calls *Territories of the Soul*: "Spaces that embody the classic diasporic dialectic of being at once imagined and material, [...] most lively as horizons of possibility, a call from afar that one keeps trying and trying to answer".³

Gaëlle Choïsne pursues a deliberately anti-canonical approach. She adopts traditions to which she has often not been invited; copies, pirates, and distorts them, substitutes institutional exclusivity by rough, handcrafted counterfeits, and luxury by fake and pop.⁴ She lurks lustfully into the well-hidden violence of seemingly noble classical traditions. *The Silent Life of the Left-overs of a Bouquet of Oysters*, 2018, for instance, a compilation of sculpted oyster shells made of plaster, ceramic, wax, pigments, salt and silicon, and scaled up to 110×50 centimeters each, references not only one of the world-wide celebrated gastronomic specialities of the famous French *haute-cuisine*, mentioned in European texts as early as Homer's *Iliad*. It rather refers to the oysters' queerness, highlighting that they are hermaphrodites, and change sex throughout their lives. It also recalls the common origin of the words oyster and ostracism: in ancient Greece, oyster shells have been used for voting the ban of undesired persons from the polis.⁵ Choïsne's gesture complicates the history of a seemingly local maritime product, and connects it to today's hostile anti-migration policies and their historical antecedents.

In Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic of recognition, which develops a universalist theory of emancipation, mastery is depicted as historically limited, and contested by the subjected, on whom it relies. The master depends on its opposite, the slave, the subaltern. For Hegel, movement in history is induced by the contestation of the master's power

through the enslaved. While both figures depend on each other, the slave is the decisive agent of change. In her seminal essay *Hegel and Haiti*, Susan Buck-Morss has demonstrated that the German philosopher has drawn his seemingly abstract thought on the background of the Haitian revolution, which abolished slavery and established the first Black republic in the world in 1804.⁶ She shows that narratives of Universal history, widely shared by Enlightenment thinkers, gained recognition at the same time that chattel slavery expanded in the Caribbean and the Americas. Her essay stresses that this contradiction lies at the center of Europe's global ascendancy and the rise of capitalism. While the Haitian revolution claimed and adapted the egalitarian principles of the Republic beyond its application in the colonial metropolis, it did not overthrow the extractivist plantation economy that fed modern capitalism, and still maintains the country suffering from the consequences of this asymmetrical inclusion.⁷

These briefly outlined historical entanglements resonate in Gaëlle Choïsne's film *To Be Engulfed* (2019, digital video, 25,36'). She edits low resolution mobile phone images sourced from social media and showing the repression of demonstrations in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince in July 2018, reacting to the government's announcement to considerably rise fuel prices to meet conditions set by the International Monetary Fund, in a context of widely spread economic difficulties; together with her own footage, interweaving shots of her body parts with erring images of ruins, covered with vegetation; hand-held camera movements on the construction sites of luxurious private houses, a memorial for murdered Haitian-Polish communists, and footage from internet shows.

The narrative is built on historical entanglements reaching back to the 18th century: In the small city of Cazale, 45 kilometers from the capital, still lives a community of Haitians with Polish origins. They were brought to the country by Napoleon to help repress the anti-colonial uprisings, but identified with the revolting slaves, deserted from the military, and joined the revolutionary forces.⁸ Subsequently, when the republic was declared in 1804, they were accorded Haitian citizenship, and settled lastingly on the island.

In the 1960's, Cazale became a center for communist intellectuals who were opposed to the governing regime and its strong US-American affiliations. Eager to end the contestation of François Duvalier's power, the paramilitary militia Tontons macoutes encircled the city on March 29, 1969, murdered and raped dozens to hundreds of people, in the biggest single massacre of the Duvalier era.

Choïsne is interested in the complexities of history, and includes footage showing the solemn speech of Duvalier's son and successor Jean-Claude Duvalier at the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit in 1982 (a man of Polish origin), in the presence of several officially selected representatives of the Haitian-Polish community. The artist films the ruins of an abandoned property of the ruling family while reading parts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto* from 1848, a text built on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. While Hegel drew on the Haitian revolution without explicitly referring to it, thus presenting a major collective movement as an abstract idea, and Marx turns Hegelianism "from its head on its feet",⁹ Choïsne takes the constitutive text of the successive Communist Internationals to present day Haiti, spinning it one more time, and highlighting that class domination, extractivism and exploitation do not belong to the past.¹⁰

The existential despair expressed in Roland Barthes' chapter *To be Engulfed* in his *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977) from which the title of the video is drawn, is here recontextualised by the images of monuments to murdered communists, syncretic worship practices, and new construction sites of the local bourgeoisie, interfering with Choïsne's voice-over reading excerpts of Stuart Hall's essay on multiculturalism,¹¹ the *Communist Manifesto*, as well as her own poems. It transposes the text from the individual confrontation with death as an abstract possibility to the engulfment as a socio-political condition: images of piles of false dollar notes; barehanded artisanal mining; television in Haitian Creole on the background of a photo wallpaper of a golden sunset; the Haitian shores filmed from a boat, and shots of clouds captured through a plane window, alluding to a diasporic access to social realities in Haiti; documentary footage of a Christian service broadcasted by a Polish website; and a man explaining Haitian history

while his T-shirt reads “España”, are small hints to the complexities and depths of transnational entanglement, exceeding the emotional experience in the private sphere by far.

Diasporic remixing and the contamination of the colonial archive

*Then came the white sisters clapping
to the waves' progress,
and that was Emancipation—*

*jubilation, O jubilation—
vanishing swiftly
as the sea's lace dries in the sun,*

*but that was not History,
that was only faith,*

*and then each rock broke into its
own nation.¹²*

In most of her work, Gaëlle Choïsne refers less to Haiti as a signifier of emancipation, than as a dense imbroglío of permanently hybridizing practices that she evokes in constantly recomposed diasporic mythologies. The excessive and disordered environments that she creates are charged with the persistent remnants of European domination, and the disruptive occurrences of global capitalism. They carry the marks of colonial classifications that the distorted figures of her complex assemblages allude to, while destabilizing and counterbalancing them.

In *A Decolonial Ecology*, the political theorist Malcom Ferdinand refers to what he calls the ‘hypothesis of Ayiti’ [the taíno name of Haiti] as the simultaneity of coloniality and resistance: “The hypothesis of Ayiti conceives the Earth as the pedestal of a world whose physical-chemical systems, geological strata, oceans, ecosystems and atmosphere, are intrinsically imbricated with the colonial, racial, and misogynist domination of humans and non-humans, just as with the struggles against them.”¹³ By the choice of materials and through her working process, Gaëlle Choïsne articulates this tension between domination and its contestation, and insists on her agency: while every work brings together a messy mix of matter-metals, fabrics, resins, clay, rubber, plaster, grids, chains, cheap consumer goods, and many more—all these heterogeneous components bear the traces of their manipulation.

Choïsne recurs to manifold crafts, often without previously knowing them, and keeps—even in the finished states of her works—the production process apparent. Subsequently, she reassembles the works dynamically for every new installation. The often allusive and narrative titles read as confusingly complex as the material components. Rather than relating to the work by describing or defining it, they add yet another possible entanglement.

One can think here of the sculpture provocatively entitled *Do You Like My Black Ass?* (Resin, plastic bags, metal, wax, chains, 2018), an irregular, rough life-size torso made of black resin, with golden chains and small flabby plastic bags pending on it, resembling the breasts of an elderly, not necessarily human, female being. The whole is standing on a pedestal built of construction grids, bumpily welded into a squared shape.

3 Here again the references are multiple: the polysemical ensemble speaks back to the tradition of idealized classical sculptures, the glowing whiteness of their “noble simplicity and calm grandeur”,¹⁴ and their normative proportions, and opposes to it a proudly monstrous torso.¹⁵ Choïsne presents the work as the re-interpretation of the Artemis of Ephesus, an alabaster sculpture from the second century conserved in Naples, which itself refers to the worshiped sculpted ebony figure at the Artemis temple in ancient Greece.

But the work evidently also references Sarah Baartman (1788–1815), the Khoisan woman exhibited at public viewings in London and Paris, measured and dissected after her death, cast in plaster, and kept at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris for more than a century before ultimately being repatriated to South Africa for burial in 2002. And it evokes the interlinkages between the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, an iconic 14-century painting of the Virgin Mary with the child, and one of the most worshiped images of Polish catholicism, to Erzuli Danto, the main loa (senior spirit) of the Petro family in Haitian Vodou. It is likely that the Polish soldiers who joined the Haitian revolution in the end of the 18th century brought reproductions of the painting, and that these merged in syncretic celebrations with yoruba gods, *oluwa*, that traveled with the enslaved Africans to the Caribbean.

Erzuli Danto is the *iwa* of vengeance and rage, central to the Haitian revolution that started, as is told, at her annual birthday celebration. She is worshiped with cacao, golden jewelry, and an annual pig offering, and she is a prominent reference for single mothers in Haiti. Today, the Polish LGBTQ movement, also uses the painting, and represents the halos in rainbow colors. In 2019, the queer activist Elżbieta Podleśna was arrested and accused of profaning the image, causing major international protests, including by the US-episcopal church that started selling T-shirts with a print of the rainbow Madonna in solidarity. All these dimensions resonate in the sculpture.

As many of Gaëlle Choïsne's works, the piece is frequently shown in changing configurations, shifting its meaning by renewed contexts. While *Do You Like My Black Ass?* strongly evokes the figure of the worshiped saint in the frame of the exhibition *Temple of Love* (2018, Bétonsalon), it calls the history of racist oppression to mind, as well as the invisibilization of Black women, and queer resistance strategies when associated with the film *The Sea Says Nothing* (2017, video, color, 17 min) and the multi-media installation *Backroom*, or *Please Let Me Know How We Could Vanish Before the Night*, *After the Rain* (2017–2019; 4.5×2.30×10.50 m; ceramic fountains, resins, cigarette butts, coins, hot water, ephemeral tattoos, greenhouse structure, pumps that feed hot water to thermo-painted panels, paint used for cars). The latter consists of an industrial greenhouse, made of transparent tarpaulin and an aluminum structure that creates a humid interior space lit by neon lighting. The humidity is caused by a series of five sculptural, body-height installations, all composed by images of plants, exotic in European contexts. They are printed in zoomed-in fragments on aluminum boards, held upright by welded metal structures painted in pastel green, and standing in roughly crafted, enameled porcelain recipients, sprinkled with cigarette butts and money coins. The parts are fixed with resins or latex, electric motors pump heated water through tubes that run over the images, as if they were constantly watered: a flow with a tranquilizing sound, reacting to the boards and bringing the tropical flower images to glow. Visitors are emerged in the installation, and experience with all their senses an environment

that evokes simultaneously the European domestication of plants from colonized territories, here only present as stumbling, DIY-crafted, displaceable assemblages, and a potential space for transgression, as indicated by the title: *The Backroom*, accompanied by an invitation to vanish in moist and poorly lit off-lands at sunset, after the rain. The title stands in strong contrast with the brightly lit space of an exhibition heavily burdened with colonial vestiges, in which the visitor navigates between encrypted floral structures and discretely suggested queer counter-cultures.

4 In midst of scarce mask-wearing audiences of the summer 2020, Gaëlle Choïsne showed the installation in a weekly evolving configuration at La Grande Halle, La Villette, Paris,¹⁶ together with the film *The Sea Says Nothing*. The title dialogues as a counterpoint with Saint Lucien poet Derek Walcott's poem *The Sea is History*, a text recounting the genesis from an anchorage in the Caribbean, and accounting for the destructions caused by slavery and the plantation. It is a quote by Carmen Brouard (1909–2005), a Haitian pianist and composer, and distant relative of Choïsne's family, whose homonymous composition underlies the film. Footage reaching from black-and-white silent films to George Romero's famous zombie movie *Dawn of the Dead* from 1978, and contemporary internet clips uploaded by anonymous private users are edited together, partly inserted in a looping shot of waves on the high sea. The film navigates representations of Blackness in cinema, inquiring about the unexpected fault lines in racist imagery, systematically counterbalancing the latter, and unsettling its authority.

A first sequence of black-facing in Jean Renoir's *Sur un air de Charleston* (1926, black and white, 25 min) is prolonged by internet footage of two white girls, filming themselves while applying charcoal masks on their faces. Choïsne frames their publicly displayed intimate action by the on-lay of the low-tech rendering of a smart phone, insisting on the inversion of the sense of observation as if she was telling them: ‘I am watching you!’; before applying a whitish nutritive cream with added green paint to her own hands. Through her editing and the special effects, savagery changes sides, and points to continuities of denigrating cultural representations, or resort to mockery and inversions: in Renoir's film, an African man travels

to Paris in an imaginary future a hundred years ahead (that is, back then, 2028)–finds the city devastated, and meets a young female dancer teaching him primitive white dances, directly derived from the cabaret stages of the 1920's.

Inversions and the exoticization of European cultural patterns are the structuring principle of the film, that jumps playfully from the Afro-futurist *Space is the Place* (1974, 85 min), authored by the experimental artist and Jazz-musician Sun-Ra, to examples of inverted cannibalistic panic, such as recorded by the British anthropologist William Winwood Reade in his travel account *Savage Africa*, published in 1864 after his journey across Angola. Reade narrates the fear of a young African woman that he had tried to kiss, and who was afraid of him attempting to eat her. While the text presents the scene as a cultural misunderstanding, highlighting the surprise of a European man to be considered as the cannibalistic savage, one can read between the lines the likely use of gendered violence perpetrated by the author on the woman.

The film further includes an action scene from Romero's successful zombie film *Dawn of the Dead*, featuring the heroes, three armed white guys, trying to run away from a crowd of zombies pursuing them in a shopping mall. One of the scenes used by Choïsne shows them behind the closed glass doors of the mall, poking fun at the zombies outside. It leaves the representatives of the American white middle class in their seemingly safe existence, locked up in the fortified shopping center, while the world around them succumbs to chaos. Choïsne's editing points thus to the self-confident consumer cultures, enjoying their existence as long as they can shield themselves from the excluded. And it underlines the weight of the representations of zombies in US-American cinema that dominates largely the representation of indigenous practices today.¹⁷ These are celebrated in her film *Accumulation primitive* (2020, in progress), in which Choïsne engages with present day practices of plant potions and spells. She films Madame Café, also named "Docteur Feuille" (Leaf Doctor), an initiated healer and midwife, in her preparation of remedies, philters and mixtures of plants, with a variety of purposes, potentially including zombification. Gaëlle Choïsne's use

of the scene from Romero's movie with a nearly all white casting in which the memory of slavery has disappeared, operates as a counter-point to these practices, and comments on their intentional oblivion in the voice-over. Romero's film resurrects zombification in the context of capitalist consumption, as the return of the living dead provoked by the brutal devaluation of labor through economic forces that remain occult.¹⁸ By bringing the film together with representations of Blackness in cinema, both racist and emancipatory, Choïsne insists on inscribing slavery and the plantation in the history of capitalism, while also pointing to its omission in the transformation of the zombie as a broadly shared signifier in global cultures. Excerpts from afro-futuristic narratives like Sun-Ra's *Space is the Place* appear as vanishing points to escape from the repetition of domination. The film ends with Choïsne's voice, pronouncing a poem on love and remembrance as a potentiality, as the camera flickers over parts of two standing bodies that never appear fully, focusing repeatedly on two interlaced arms, a black and a white one.

5 Trans-spatial incarnations

Choïsne's images and installations take the viewer to and fro the colonial archive, from her native French city Cherbourg to urban Haiti, from the capital of the Netherlands to export economies in China, from a long term residency at l'École des Actes, a plurilingual cultural project in Aubervilliers, a cosmopolitan working class suburb in the North of Paris to luxurious private spaces of metropolitan art collectors. Her gestures keep crossing and blurring division lines between supposedly separated cultural traditions, messing up illusions of purity, slyly contaminating bourgeois traditions, and investing and subverting exotist desires.

A striking example is *Patte de pintade* (oiseau nègre) (2017, ceramic, necklace chain, lead), a cast of a guinea foal's foot. Guinea foals have a complex and changing cultural history in the Haitian context, as they represent the resistance to enslavement, but have also been integrated in the National flag by Duvalier. The bird has been described as marooning, as it escaped from domestic culture, and re-gained life in liberty. Guinea foal's feet are

considered a talisman for protection against evils and spells, and their presence in Haitian dishes recall and commemorate the history of maroons, as an alternative source to written history.¹⁹ Choïsne presents them in the shape of a small sculpture, suspended on a golden chain and a stick, hanging from the wall. On first appearance, she displays a supposedly 'authentic' element of Haitian culture, hands it over to the avid gazes of the art audiences-only to secretly subvert it: the talisman is made of lead, and though the toxic properties of this heavy metal are invisible, they discreetly poison the lucky charm. Hence, the "postcolonial melancholia"²⁰ here expressed in the European desire for controlling cultural practices of formerly colonized territories through their fetishization is unsettled through the silent agency of matter. Choïsne further counters the objectification of the original through its multiplication, commodified forms of consumption, and shared cultural practices. During her exhibition *Hybris* at the galerie Untilthen in May 2018, she invited the artist Jephthe Carmil to prepare and share a "pintade marronne". Carmil inscribes his gesture in the commemoration of resistance through culinary practices, rather than through official accounts of history. Choïsne further included repeatedly in her exhibitions chicken feet produced in China, sealed in PE, and shipped worldwide: a cheap commodity, product of torturous meat batteries, reducing the birds to tradable objects, and feeding them into global commercial structures, as a product sold online, becoming an instant ingredient for culinary or ritualistic use across the world.

In her sculptures, films and installations, Gaëlle Choïsne's accounts for the distorting impact of racism, while unsettling its authority and shifting the points of reference. Some of her works challenge the colonial archive by directly addressing it, as she does in *War of Images! Distortions and Temporal Ellipses* (2017, 100×100 cm; 250×126 cm), a series of twelve printed offset plates, arched between two ceramic sticks that fix them asymmetrically on the wall. With a perverse ambiguity, the plates show on seductive shiny surfaces scans from anthropometric drawings that Choïsne has found in the archive of the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam, where she was a resident from 2017 to 2019.

With the help of machines and superposing several layers of images, parts of her body (her hands, fingers, and face) are intercepted during the scan, and plotted on top of the drawings in the final UV print on the plate. Choïsne inscribes her own body in a genealogy of nameless subjects, who have been reduced to evolutionary types by racist science. The image renders her body parts simultaneously glooming and distorted, magnified and injured, strongly affected by the history of dispossession and exoticization perpetrated in the frame of European colonisation, and its ongoing consequences in the present.

While bodies are mostly alluded to, rather than literally represented in her exhibitions, Choïsne grounds her sculptural spaces in her embodied experience, extending her own skin through the artefacts that she creates. *Peau de chagrin* (2017, silicon, photo paper, 2m2) is literally a skin, made of fine superposed silicon layers carrying images of a cave in the Dordogne region in the French countryside, and leafs from a corossol tree in Haiti, merging visually and materially both geographical references. The imaginary landscape becomes a skin, the porous border between the body and the world, the subject and the other; the organ for sensing contact, and simultaneously a racially highly signified, inescapable surface of projection. Choïsne recurs to the romantic trope of the landscape as an externalized mirror of the soul in the 19th century art and literature, inscribes it in the skin, while dissociating the latter from the body. Once more she borrows the title of her work from a canonic classic, generating multiple resonances with it, while reframing its meaning. In Honoré de Balzac's novel *Peau de chagrin* (1831), the protagonist obtains possession of a skin that allows him to achieve his desires. Belatedly, the hero becomes aware that the progressive retrocession of the hide shortens his own life. Choïsne's *Peau de chagrin* is not handed over to her but created by herself, a chosen space, intimately related to her lived experience. The sculpture is physically suspended on thin golden chains that are both ornamental and coercive: It brings a diasporic imagination into material existence, and creates an elective territory, torn between burden and jubilation.

Celebrating luvvs=Politics of Kinship

"I tremble.

I tremble at the thought of seeing him again after 200 years.
I tremble because he has surely changed. Maybe he won't recognize me again, or make me blush.
I melt.
I tremble so much that I cannot control my shaky legs anymore.
A fear mixed with excitement engulfs me. I recognize you."²¹

Gaëlle Choïsne's territories of the soul strive to open up spaces for reciprocal attention and affection. Amidst a burgeoning multiplicity of disparate material bodies, equally crafted and traded, she elaborates gestures of care and connection. Her work provides the settings for reconfiguring relations, accompanies the physical installations in the space by relating them symbolically to absent or omitted historical figures. She calls them her *luvvs*, picking up the voluntary misspelling of "love" by contemporary urban youth, that also shifts the word's meaning. Luvv is an expression of affection, without being burdened with the magnitude of love.²² Hence it participates in a web of intersecting partly chosen genealogies and affinities, activated by encounters, spiritual practices, exchanges, and caring gestures. Choïsne's post-romantic *luvvs* are not understood as belonging to the private realm, but rather emerge in a dense web of kinship that she alludes to, or welcomes into her exhibitions. They take shape as a series of events, dedicated to a practice or a figure, and taking place in the exhibitions.

Choïsne cherishes food as a cultural transmitter, insisting that her relation to Haiti first occurred through tastes, even more important in the context of French universalism that strongly discourages discrepant and minoritarian cultural practices. Over the past years, she asked her mother to tell her recipes of Haitian dishes, and integrated them in her exhibitions and publications, with the double attribute "Marie Carmel Brouard (my mother)", bringing together official recognition of a publicly unknown woman, and her biographical connection to her. Though minimalist texts, the recipes refer to experiences of tastes, colors, and smells; the visit of stores for the shopping of the ingredients, sometimes difficult to find.

They also point to a narrative dimension, rendering her mother's native country present as if it would still determine the changing compositions of the ingredients, as expressed in the lapidary last line of the "riz nat" recipe: "Add Salt Pepper Persil Thyme if available". The sober form of the recipes doesn't diminish their powerful testimony of how cultures are made of improvisation, affect, personal transmission, and the permanent site-specific rearrangements of available components.

It would be mistaken to read these constant remixes as a harmonious global community, living together in undisturbed unity. They emerge in disordered and difficult conditions, and often bear the traces of these journeys. In her performances and workshops, Gaëlle Choïsne has repeatedly proposed to prepare a *Colombo*, a tasteful dish named after the Spanish conqueror whose Atlantic crossing initiated the ferocious history of the Modern World, built on genocide and expropriation. Turning the ingestion upside down, the navigator's name is infused in the recipe through a mixture of spices that the imperial recomposition of the Caribbean populations have generated: curry powder brought from Sri Lanka by the indentured workers, who were displaced to the colonized islands to work on plantations since the 19th century, mixed with locally available vegetables and plants to replace missing ingredients. History here is accessed through practice, culinary and popular culture, rather than great narratives. The recipe becomes a script, and guides moments of transmission and renegotiation. Choïsne's workshops offer participants to get acquainted to local stores selling the spices, to compose and cook the dish together, to share its history, and to take it as a starting point to inquire about the close ties between (post-)imperial violence and cultural resistance. The meal is introduced as a ritual, marking a symbolic moment with a shared cultural signification agreed upon by the participants. It is a site of potential conflict, arising from the recontextualization of the preparation. Choïsne enables for instance the inverted cannibalistic ingestion to be vegetarian, while she insists to not evacuate its symbolic strength, enquiring thus: what does it take for a sign to be operative and when does it become too light to activate meaningful negotiations?

Politics of kinship are also navigated in Gaëlle Choïsne's installations as they open up spaces of mutual attention, seduction, and joyful devotion. She understands them as post-romantic, and composes these spaces of elective affinities out of crafted imitations of commercial symbols of love and affection: *Love* (2018), a plaster cast of two pastel painted hands forming a heart; *Ne me bannis pas de ton coeur* (2018), a golden chain wrapped around a suspended oyster shell cast in white bronze, holding it as in bondage; *A Hand to Take* (2018), the rough cast of the hand of Choïsne's ex-partner, wearing fake nails and holding a pearl; *lovelocks*, a *Vanity Ashtray* (2019) with fancy colors and cigarette buds... but also the small sculpture *Grandma's Hands Explaining Me How the Sea Will Kill Us* (2020, ceramic and seashells)... Most of these campy objects point to their ephemeral character; they are part of cheap capitalist consumer cultures, with low thresholds of accessibility. They can easily be shared, given away, and understood across the globe, with the notable exception of economically and culturally dominant classes, who would consider them of bad taste, and refrain themselves from use. They are the expression of minor cosmopolitanisms,²³ abundantly practiced on the peripheries of global cities across the world. They can be quick inebriations, signs of seduction, as the omnipresent cigarettes and cigarette buds in Choïsne's installations, the promise of easy ecstasy, and the rapid arrival of disgust. But they can also evoke offerings, arranged on small altars, hidden or ostentatious places of devotion.

All these highly mobile cultural signifiers share an ability to create connections and condense memories across distant generations and geographies. While many of these objects are light and easily removable, they can mobilize affects, touch the body and stick to the skin, as does, literally, the series of customized ephemeral tattoos that Choïsne designs and orders online. In her exhibitions, she applies them on objects' surfaces, or prints them on pages, extending once again her own skin through objects, and regressively recalling adolescent decoration practices. In the space, Choïsne relates to the bodies of the visitors, inviting them to make use of her works: *To Sit on Chance*, i.e.

on printed cushions for relaxing; to perform or get a drink on the table sculpture *Altar* (2018); to get to the floor or stand on the tip-toes for better viewing a hidden detail; or to walk in the space to change the view axis. Her *luvvs* are built practically through transmission and sharing, and symbolically, by paying tribute to ill-recognized historical figures. One of these is the aforementioned Haitian composer Carmen Brouard, whose compositions are included in several of Choïsne's installations and films. After learning about her work at the Centre International de Documentation et d'Information Haïtienne, Caraïbéenne et Afro-canadienne (CIDIHCA) in Montréal, and meeting her relatives and friends who take care of her compositions, Gaëlle Choïsne aspired to stage the work as live concerts. Over the past years, she has repeatedly invited musicians to rehearse *Sonate Vodouesque* (1977) during the opening hours of her exhibitions, accounting thus once again for transmission and embodiment as enduring practices and enactments.

NOTES

1 Many thanks to Jephthé Carmil, Thomas Conchou and Lucas Morin for their generous commentaries. If not mentioned otherwise, all quotes are by Gaëlle Choïsne.

2 Forgetful about its rootedness in crafts and collaboration, the figure of the artist becomes in modern times the fiction of a solitary creator, generating his productions from an innate inspiration.

3 Nadia Ellis: *Territories of the Soul. Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2015, p. 3. Ellis draws on Stuart Hall and José Esteban Muñoz, and quotes for the title of her book the Guyana-born British writer Mike Phillips.

4 See also: Thomas Conchou: *Hybris*, Gallery Untilthen, 2018.

5 Édouard Will, *Le monde grec et l'Orient. Le V^e siècle*, Paris, P.U.F., 1972.

6 Susan Buck-Morss: "Hegel and Haiti", *Critical Inquiry*, 2000, pp. 821-865.

7 Toussaint L'Ouverture himself owned several plantations, and until the present, monoculture remains dominant, while small peasants engaged in subsistence cultures only dispose of little land and resources. Michel-Rolph Trouillot: *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press, 1995.

8 See also: C.L.R. James: *The Black Jacobins. Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, Vintage Book Edition, 1989 [1938].

9 Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

10 Also see: Jean-Jacques Cadet, *Le marxisme haïtien* (1946-1986), Paris, Delga, 2020.

11 From the French translation: Stuart Hall: "La prolifération subalterne de la différence", in: Stuart Hall: *Identités et culture*, edited by Maxime Cervulle, Paris, Amsterdam, 2017, p. 520.

12 Derek Walcott: "The Sea is History", first published in 1979, quoted from: Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC, 2007.

13 Malcom Ferdinand: *Une écologie décoloniale. Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen*, Paris, Seuil, 2019, p. 305, my translation.

14 To quote Johann Joachim Winkelmann (1717-1768), German art historian, who strongly advocated the idealization of and mimetism to ancient Greece, leading to neo-classicism.

15 See Tod Browning: *Freaks. The Monstrous Parade*, film, black and white, 64 min, 1932; Sanaura Taylor: *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation*, The New Press, 2017; Paul B. Preciado: *Je suis un monstre qui vous parle. Rapport pour une académie de psychanalystes*, Paris, Grasset, 2020.

16 "Les moyens du bord", curated by Bernard Blistène, Paris, La Villette, 2, July-2, August, 2020.

17 Laënnec Hurbon: *Le barbare imaginaire*, Port-au-Prince, Henri Deschamps, 1987.

9 18 Hurbon 1987; and: Jean and John Comaroff: "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 4, 2002, pp. 779-805.

19 Jean-Marie Lamblard: *L'oiseau nègre. L'aventure des pintades dionysiaques*, Saint-Estève, Imago, 2005.

20 Paul Gilroy: *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Routledge, 2004.

21 Gaëlle Choïsne: *To Be Engulfed*, op. cit. 2018.

22 Lucas Morin: "Talking About Love", in: Gaëlle Choïsne. *Temple of Love*, BS 24, Bétonsalon. Center for Art and Research, 2018, pp. 4-9.

23 Ziarong Xiang (ed.): *Minor Cosmopolitanisms. Thinking Art. Politics, and the Universe Together Otherwise*, Diaphanes, 2020.

INTERVIEW

Margot Norton

How to Wake Up a Zombie

Margot Norton: What was your work like at the beginning? I ask this because your work blends every media, and does so almost without boundary, but I am curious as to what media or approach to artmaking you started with when you were younger.

Gaëlle Choïsne: I originally studied theater and was interested in scenography and set design. I also acted in plays, and have always been interested in literature. It wasn't until university that I started taking fine arts, and it started with photography. I went to a public school in Lyon for fine arts. I initially wanted to study design but the design class closed the year I started, so I studied fine arts and photography instead. It wasn't exactly a coincidence that I studied art, but also not what I wanted to do primarily.

MN: And how did you like studying photography?

GC: It was a really conceptual approach to studying photography, which was difficult for me. I thought why should we take these photos when there are so many pictures in the world. It didn't make sense to me. It wasn't until I started to make sculptures and introduce images through sculptures that it did.

MN: Did you print on different materials, or incorporate images in sculptures? How was this done?

GC: Yes, or I projected images on sculptures. I was interested in giving a body to the image, giving it a kind of identity and seeing it materialized. Something that could be touched or the opposite—the dissolution and apparition of the image. I was also obsessed by the cinema at the time and studied documentary film. I later wrote about cinema for my Master's degree. I started to do more work in video after school and mixed sculpture and video.

MN: It is interesting that you started with an interest in theater and cinema, and creating these material environments. All of these implicate the viewer and make their experience central to the work. It's as if you were not interested in creating an alternate optical universe, but rather, the way the viewer

enters and experiences the work seems to be central from the beginning. It was as if a photograph wasn't enough, it needed to be material, physical, or cinematic. It needed to be moving.

GC: In theater, the place of the audience is really important. I was interested in Bertold Brecht and Epic theater, which is a kind of political theater that emphasizes the position of the audience and their reaction to the piece. In Epic theater, audiences are meant to engage individual attitudes and political conscience in relationship to the play. In art, we also refer to this as the distancing effect or alienation effect, which is a performing arts concept that came from Brecht. In the distancing effect, the spectator should not personally identify with characters in the play, and see their actions from a conscious plane rather than a subconscious one.

MN: You mentioned being frustrated with conceptual photography in school. Did this frustration stem from the fact that conceptual art didn't take the position of the spectator into account in this way? I think this is interesting when considering the way you work since the experience of your work always places viewers in an active or conscious position, where they have to navigate your environments and draw meaning from your works themselves, almost as if they were searching for clues. By making your works active in this way, they do not simply give audiences an image to consume, but rather empower them to make decisions.

GC: Yes, at this time, I worked with a lot of images from archives that I would find, including video footage from archives and cinema. While much of the source material for this work was fiction, I felt that it was a form of cultural studies and in viewing this material, one could better understand a political and historical period. It wasn't until my first trip to Haiti when I was in school that I started to take my own photographs.

MN: Is that where your family is from?

GC: Yes, my mother is from Haiti. I went there against my mother's wishes because she was afraid. I rebelled by going there. On that trip, my vision of the world became completely different. I never took pictures like I did there.

I took hundreds and hundreds of pictures. It was the first time in my life that the act of taking pictures made sense because we only have images from a journalistic point of view or images of tourism, but it is difficult to find images from everyday life there. I also made my first video there, which was a bit accidental. During this period I worked a lot with salt, and superstitions about salt in zombie stories.

MN: Zombie superstitions about salt? Tell me!

GC: If someone wants to wake a zombie up in Haitian folklore, they say that you should give them salt in their food. A zombie can also mean someone who is in a lethargic state, or obeying someone blindly, who might give them food without salt in it. I always used this metaphor, and have often used salt in my sculpture with the idea of waking up. Salt also comes from the sea, and I think of the material as having a strong symbolic significance related to sea travel, colonization, and slavery or zombie-like oppression. So I made this video trilogy, about zombies, and the first video was about salt, and if the zombie ate it they could be free.

MN: Going back to your trip to Haiti: you mentioned that before you went on this trip, you were working with archival images, and it wasn't until you went to Haiti that you decided to create images yourself. Was your work prior to this trip also addressing these issues of colonization and oppression?

GC: My work was already about these themes relating to fights between human beings and relationships between different materials. Haiti became the body of this material. I discovered the country in different ways: through my own identity as a French-Haitian, and through its incredible history. I was particularly inspired to learn about the Black revolution at the turn of the 19th century, which was a successful insurrection by enslaved Black people against French colonial rules. We never learned about it in school in France, and it is seen as one of the first revolutions in the world and the only uprising of enslaved people that led to the founding of a state that was both free from slavery, and ruled by former captives. Learning about this became like a treasure, where I thought that all could be possible.

It made me understand more about the history of colonization through religion and culture, such as the stigmatization of voodoo. Before my trip to Haiti I was obsessed with zombie films, but didn't know why, and I discovered that the zombie figure was born in Haiti, and was imported by the Yankees in the USA. One of the first books to expose Western culture to the concept of the zombie was *The Magic Island* (1929) by American journalist and occultist W. B. Seabrook. It was a sensationalized account of his encounters with voodoo in Haiti. This exoticization of Haitian culture and Black people brings a lot of violent ideas through the figure of the zombie in the US. American Filmmaker George Romero was the first to think about what it means to be a zombie in his film series *Night of the Living Dead* in the 1970s. But before the zombie figure appeared in US cinema, the first zombies were related to the colonial slave trade in Haiti. Enslaved people were thought to be zombies because they were not free in mind and body.

MN: It is fascinating that the idea of the zombie came from those that were enslaved. I had no idea of this history.

GC: René Depestre who is a Haitian author living in France, wrote this important novel about zombies called *Hadriana* in *All My Dreams* (1988), in which a woman becomes a zombie. Depestre speaks about the figure of the zombie in relationship to the colonial slave trade, but he also said that it is uncertain if the zombie figure was born before or after the slave trade—if the zombie gave an example to someone who was enslaved, or if the figure of the enslaved person gave birth to the idea of the zombie.

MN: It is like this saying: "what came first? The chicken or the egg." Going back to what you said earlier about how your mother didn't want you to travel to Haiti, I wanted to ask you about this experience of being the child of an immigrant. Based on other conversations I've had, I feel as if it is common for the immigrant parent to not talk to their children about their experience in the country where they are from. I guess this relates to colonization and systemic racism in that their culture is stigmatized and they are taught to completely forget that past. It is interesting that you wanted to uncover and research these histories relating to your identity, as if your ancestors were calling you.

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MN: Going back to your trip to Haiti: you mentioned that before you went on this trip, you were working with archival images, and it wasn't until you went to Haiti that you decided to create images yourself. Was your work prior to this trip also addressing these issues of colonization and oppression?

GC: My work was already about these themes relating to fights between human beings and relationships between different materials. Haiti became the body of this material. I discovered the country in different ways: through my own identity as a French-Haitian, and through its incredible history. I was particularly inspired to learn about the Black revolution at the turn of the 19th century, which was a successful insurrection by enslaved Black people against French colonial rules. We never learned about it in school in France, and it is seen as one of the first revolutions in the world and the only uprising of enslaved people that led to the founding of a state that was both free from slavery, and ruled by former captives. Learning about this became like a treasure, where I thought that all could be possible.

It made me understand more about the history of colonization through religion and culture, such as the stigmatization of voodoo. Before my trip to Haiti I was obsessed with zombie films, but didn't know why, and I discovered that the zombie figure was born in Haiti, and was imported by the Yankees in the USA. One of the first books to expose Western culture to the concept of the zombie was *The Magic Island* (1929) by American journalist and occultist W. B. Seabrook. It was a sensationalized account of his encounters with voodoo in Haiti. This exoticization of Haitian culture and Black people brings a lot of violent ideas through the figure of the zombie in the US. American Filmmaker George Romero was the first to think about what it means to be a zombie in his film series *Night of the Living Dead* in the 1970s. But before the zombie figure appeared in US cinema, the first zombies were related to the colonial slave trade in Haiti. Enslaved people were thought to be zombies because they were not free in mind and body.

MN: It is fascinating that the idea of the zombie came from those that were enslaved. I had no idea of this history.

11 GC: René Depestre who is a Haitian author living in France, wrote this important novel about zombies called *Hadriana in All My Dreams* (1988), in which a woman becomes a zombie. Depestre speaks about the figure of the zombie in relationship to the colonial slave trade, but he also said that it is uncertain if the zombie figure was born before or after the slave trade—if the zombie gave an example to someone who was enslaved, or if the figure of the enslaved person gave birth to the idea of the zombie.

MN: It is like this saying: "what came first? The chicken or the egg." Going back to what you said earlier about how your mother didn't want you to travel to Haiti, I wanted to ask you about this experience of being the child of an immigrant. Based on other conversations I've had, I feel as if it is common for the immigrant parent to not talk to their children about their experience in the country where they are from. I guess this relates to colonization and systemic racism in that their culture is stigmatized and they are taught to completely forget that past. It is interesting that you wanted to uncover and research these histories relating to your identity, as if your ancestors were calling you.

It is also a ridiculous notion to assume that the past can actually be forgotten.

GC: I think so too. I think every person who has double nationality like me needs to know where they are from. With histories of colonization, especially in France, there is this desire to integrate and-in doing so-destroy memory and culture that is not French culture. My parents, being good students, did that too. For me, I wanted to destroy this process and come back to my history and to go somewhere where I was not supposed to go, not supposed to discover, not supposed to learn the language, or understand the rituals. I was supposed to be far away from this place and become French. However, I had this feeling of missing something, and I lived all my life with this idea that I would go there one day, and I just decided to do it. It was like a humanitarian trip and I organized an art workshop for kids there, and also thought it was going to be a good way to understand my culture. I didn't know it was going to fuel a new direction in my work and become so integral to my life. Now Haiti is definitely part of my life, and I go there often and have friends there. I'm really happy to be against this colonial process.

MN: How has your work developed now that Haiti has become a major part of your life?

GC: I think that recognizing my identity as being a product of mixed cultures also allowed me to be more adaptable. I think of the fluid quality in my work in its approach to using different media, which you mentioned at the beginning, is an attitude against colonization, against categorization and classification, against an idea of being pure blood or pure shape. I find this idea of fluidity between media and forms to be more natural, as with an ecosystem—the idea that everything can exist together and cohabitate or become hybrid. Perhaps they are nonbinary sculptures.

MN: I find, this idea of alchemy, fluidity, and transfiguration in everything you do. Whether it is in the media that you are using—the actual materials—or more conceptually. When you mentioned your experience in art school, I was thinking about how the way art is taught and even amongst departments in art museums, there is a framework that is divided by media that is categorized and segmented.

I like how you mentioned salt as being a primary material, which is of course a material that is non-traditional, and not incorporated into education in art school, yet it is one of the most ubiquitous and basic materials in the earth. It is part of our bodies and part of the natural world, yet we never think about using it or the possibilities of working with it. In your work there is an openness and inventiveness that expands an idea of what is possible. I think that this mentality is crucial, especially considering the fact that we're at a point in history where systems that were designed to oppress are being exposed and need to be reimaged. It's beautiful to see this type of creative thought that points toward how anything can be possible, you just need to find a creative way to make it work.

GC: Yes, and for me it is also a question of autonomy. Since the time I was a teenager, I spent a lot of time also with alternative and underground scenes. It was always important in my work to find a solution and produce things myself. I'm from a working-class family too, so I am used to building things that we couldn't have and imagining how to create them. The idea of recycling is also important in my work. I was educated to think about how to re-use things. It's also tied to respecting nature, and natural processes such as with permaculture, which uses patterns and resilient features observed in natural ecosystems to reimagine all systems from agriculture to design and companies. The term permaculture was coined in 1978 by Bill Mollison, a lecturer in Environmental Psychology from Tasmania. While it was originally addressing agriculture, it can be used for everything, and I try to use it in art. In permaculture, the problem is often the solution, and it speaks to how small efforts can lead to a bigger effect.

12 MN: I love how it refers to this idea of working with, rather than against nature, which also points toward a way of being that existed before you were here and will continue after you are gone. It perhaps relates to a more prehistoric or at least pre-colonial way of engaging with the world that goes beyond the systems that we are accustomed to and perhaps feel comfortable within, yet that limit our potential and understanding of things. I wanted to ask about HESSIE and "Survival Art". HESSIE was a Cuban textile artist based

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in France from 1962 to her recent death in 2017, and you have often mentioned her and her "Survival Art" movement, which you see as relating to ideas in your own work as well. Tell me a little bit about HESSIE and how her term "Survival Art" relates to your practice?

GC: I discovered the work of HESSIE just before creating *Temple of Love* in 2018 for a show at my gallery Bétonsalon in Paris. The idea was to create a funny and weird concept, yet also think about the function of an art institution. I wanted to create a place for community where we can live and spend time. Not a place where we can see art quickly and leave, but a place where we can linger and center the idea of love as a social and political act. For this project I invited people I admire to join me in my temple and HESSIE was the first guest. I contacted her gallery to have a work of hers loaned to be included in the temple. I discovered her work when I was invited to do a workshop at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in 2018 and I realized that she had an exhibition there in 1975. When I asked the Museum if I could see the archive from this exhibition, they showed me literally two A4 pages as a brochure for the show with one text. I couldn't believe that that was all that existed from her exhibition at such an important museum and didn't want that to happen to me. She was a Black Cuban artist living in France and she created this movement with several other women artists as counter to the predominately white male scene in France called the "Survival Art" movement. I was really touched by this name "Survival Art", because I had this feeling all of my life that I wanted to create art for two reasons: a political motivation to combat racism and also a form of psychological therapy. I grew up in a really small city in Normandie and when my mother arrived there, she was the first black woman in the town. My parents were also always in trouble and it was difficult to grow up in this context. For me, art was a way to access and express things I could not say with words related to racism, sexism, and what it meant to love in my family, among other things. "Survival Art" resonated for me because it was always clear for me that I made art for the same reason as survival. I also felt affinities with HESSIE, yet I didn't have time to speak with her because she died just one year before I came to know this movement. For me, HESSIE and her "Survival Art" movement

was an example of how it was possible to give a new life and affirmation for Black woman artists in France. While I did not know HESSIE personally, I see myself as part of her "Survival Art" movement.

MN: It is beautiful and interesting to think that HESSIE's "Survival Art" show was held at this prestigious museum, yet centered ideas of resistance, healing, and support of politically committed women artists. Ideas about care, community, love, and spirituality are baked into the *Temple of Love* project as well, and also related to this idea of survival. It is interesting that these ideas run counter to narratives of the singular, career-driven, original artist that has been a hallmark of Modernist thinking and relates to the kind of patriarchal thinking that permeates our culture. I find that your work rather runs counter to that kind of thinking in it's centering community and care. You mentioned a kind of political drive that you have to create space for a type of art making that exists outside of these ingrained structures.

GC: Yes, of course. Against patriarchy, sexism, and the persistence of white masculine authority. It is also about finding a balance by elevating the feminine part of the world.

MN: Tell me about your first *Temple of Love* installation. What were you thinking and how did it change your practice?

GC: It changed my practice because it gave a shape or structure to my work. While my work can look chaotic, *Temple of Love* becomes a kind of skeleton. Every time I install it I add flesh, muscles, nails, hairs, and so on. With *Temple of Love*, I have a structure, yet this structure allows me to experiment, and there is a freedom inside of it and because of it.

MN: I also love how when it is installed inside of a space like the white-walled galleries of a museum, these walls disappear. It's as if you are softening the edges of the space somehow. I wanted to ask about your process because you incorporate so many different materials in the work such as tiny chains, tattoos, printed fabrics, projected video, and larger structural pieces that you use to create walls. How do you approach your installations? Do you have a collection of materials that you draw from in the studio? Do you create a sketch before

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you start creating an environment? How exactly does your process work?

GC: I usually start with a material, looking into its history and the social, political, and symbolic aspects of it, as well as personal experience. After this research, I try to work as intuitively as possible. I'm also often working in parallel with researching and making sculptures and video so that they are in dialogue with one another. Sometimes the sculptures don't speak much and the video speaks too much, but I try to find a balance in between them. Sometime I imagine a micro society in which each sculpture is like a citizen and is autonomous but can be in dialogue with and influenced by those around it, just as we cannot exist alone. I can, of course show a sculpture by itself, but in doing so, I miss something. I miss the community and the dialogue. The same is true for the videos, they can live alone, but it is nicer when they live in society. In both video and sculpture, I assemblage and collage as though my thoughts are in movement. For example, right now I am working on my exhibition for Montpellier Contemporain (MOCO) at this archeological site and museum called Lattara Archaeological Site-Henri Prades Museum. I researched the site and asked them about a material used to construct objects there during the Third and Fourth centuries AD, which is a mixture of soil, water, and straw. So I started to create works with that material. The materials I work with always tell a story, an experience, they never come from nowhere. I also have a collection of objects that I find from everywhere, which are gathered in a manner similar to how a child might collect shells from the beach, some stones, anything. Every time I travel somewhere, I find objects on the streets or in unlikely places that I gather as I go, like a kid. With my projects I tend to first experience the site and then create a skeleton with the main elements such as the structure and the videos. The details then come in layers, working from the largest to the smallest elements such as drawings, notes, and writings.

MN: It's interesting because when I encounter your works, I have a similar sense of discovery as I observe them. You have to get super close to look at these details in your works such as the tiny chains or cigarette butts, and certain things become transparent

and then opaque as you move around them, shifting with the movements of your body. You take in these details and then you pan out, taking in the environment as a whole. That type of investigative experience of curiosity and discovery pervades all of your works, and the experience of bodies in the space is essential.

GC: It's true. I think this is a strong link with theater, in fact. I am drawn to this physical engagement, the investment of your energy and body in the space. I don't want the work to be digested too easily, but to create a subjective experience that is experienced with the whole body. Someone might remember a detail in the installation, while someone else might miss it, and see another detail instead. I like when the experience is subjective like that and think it's important. Also, it is difficult to capture my work in photography—you can find points of view or details, but it is impossible to capture the whole work in a single image. You have to see it to experience and understand it.

MN: It's very true, I have tried, and it's impossible. It also keeps moving and changing.

GC: Yes, I like the fact that there are multiple points of view, because it is necessary that we have different perspectives to see the world. It is important to move in the space to experience these different viewpoints. I also like that each experience and memories of that experience are unique. It is impossible to get multiple viewpoints and unique experiences in a single picture. This fact that it is not easy to understand my work from images has been difficult for me too in terms of getting into programs through applications. It is only when someone experiences my work in person that they get it.

MN: I think you have to, and that is something powerful and also refreshing because we are so used to the experience of viewing art on our smartphones and stepping into a space iPhone-first, snapping up an image up and owning it. It's de facto a one-second experience. You mentioned earlier that it is important for you to have time baked into the experience of the work, and I think that we feel a lack of these kinds of experiences of spending time

and allowing something to unfold. As someone who sees a lot of art, I think there is also a lack of the kind of work that draws you in in that way, where you want to spend that time and be rewarded for doing so. We have a very different sense of time now and I think it's important for artists to take that into consideration. It also goes back to what you were saying about printing photographs on different materials and noticing how the image and the material would interact so that it would go back and forth between being opaque and transparent. It was as if the photograph came to life when it was interacting with the world—it was throwing salt in your face, waking you up, making you aware of your surroundings, actually doing something! Tell me about the work you are making for your exhibition at Montpellier Contemporain, which you are working on now.

GC: Nicolas Bourriaud invited me to do a carte blanche exhibition at the Lattara Archaeological Site—Henri Prades Museum, close to Montpellier. The idea is for me to create works in dialogue with the collection of archaeological objects at this Gallo-Roman museum. I was super excited at the invitation, because I am fascinated by archaeology and ruins. In my work I am sometimes repairing broken objects in a way that recalls archaeology. I think of this repair as mending things that are physically broken as well as mending memories, histories, or emotions. There is also temporal confusion in my work so that some objects operate as fictional historical artifacts and play with the idea of the lack of history or the construction of truth. The exhibition will be a kind of micro-retrospective of my work since I will show works from different periods. For example, one of the objects is a bottle of Barbancourt, Haitian rum, which I broke and made into a kind of 3D puzzle to reconstruct the bottle, which of course is skewed. In the voodoo culture they say that when you become a zombie they put your soul in a bottle, so I broke the bottle to let the soul go free. It was also as though the history of Haiti was broken, and I tried to repair it.

MN: What is the material you used to fix it?

GC: I fixed it with glue—transparent silicone glue. I use this glue a lot. For me it relates to onanism, in the way that Cameroonian philosopher and

political theorist Achille Mbembe speaks about it in his last book *Brutalisme*, relating to patriarchy and white male masturbation.

So, for the exhibition I will include older objects I made, such as this bottle, as well as new works created specifically for the show. I'm working on new ceramic work, for example, where I mix metal and ceramic and I will fire everything at the same time. It evokes an older African aesthetic, but of course it's not. Perhaps I saw it somewhere, but I don't remember exactly. I like the tension created between these two materials—the ceramic and the metal nails. I am going to fire them now actually.

MN: Amazing, firing ceramics is often an uncertain moment where you are not sure of the outcome. You have to have a little faith but also not too much attachment in case they do not survive.

GC: I trust the universe.

MN: What is the title of the show?

GC: The title of the show is *Défixion*, which refers to a small lead tablet with a curse written on it from the Gallo-Roman period. The tablets were used for people to ask spirits or the deceased something, or to perform something—a wish, a bewitchment. I like this word. For me it also evokes a deconstruction of the separation between fiction and reality. A kind of new layer or worldview.

MN: So it evokes putting someone under a spell, which might also relate to this idea of zombies and waking up.

GC: Exactly. I would like to create one for people to become closer to nature and be more present and in love with nature and themselves.

MN: A kind of reverse bewitchment, perhaps one that reminds people of all that they have forgotten about.