

This summer, Palais de Tokyo sees its exhibition spaces fundamentally transformed when it welcomes a major installation by Céleste Boursier-Mougenot (b.1961, lives in Sète). At the same time, this key figure in the French artistic scene represents France at the Venice Contemporary Art Biennale.

"There is only one thing which interests me: experimentation!"

"The piece exists as a phenomenon, as a living organism, indissociable from the conditions of its emergence and the circumstances in which it exists in the moment."(1)

Acquaalta is the annual flood in the Venetian lagoon. This same phenomenon is taking over the spaces of Palais de Tokyo. Céleste Boursier-Mougenot will create a lakeside landscape which leads visitors into an experience, at once tactile, visual and auditory, which will change their perception of the space: "Deploying a system which is fundamentally connected to the place or situation is, for me, similar to what other musicians accomplish when they give a concert."(2)

As they move across this flooded space, visitors enter a stream of images which set the scene for an imaginary journey, a voyage through their own psyche. This singular production also explores a new exhibition format.

The artist adds a final touch to the landscape with a zombiedrone. This is a technique he has tried out before and defines as: "a video signal processing system which encrypts the images, allowing only the moving parts in the frame to appear on the screen. Everything else fades into an opaque black. Accompanying the powerful effect of the transformed image, deprived of its message, is the pounding of the series of images being converted into an acoustic continuum."

For the acquaalta exhibition at Palais de Tokyo and the révolutions project that will be presented in the French Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot signed *Les Marches*, a hybrid modular work. The principle was elaborated along with the designers at Smarin. The modules from both installations and other elements along these same lines will be referenced in Smarin's September 2015 catalogue (www.smarin.net).

And it is this continuum, or sound wave, which guides the visitor through the exhibition by means of a coherent system in place to connect the flows (of visitors, water, video and sound): as the visitors walk through the exhibition, their movements are filmed and re-projected directly onto the walls. They all find themselves on an island, a mineral mass, where they can lie down to fully

immerse themselves in the surrounding images. Throughout the journey, the visitor plays an active part in the exhibition, its subject matter and its objective and, at the end of this imaginary, sensory experience will, the artist tells us, "cross through the image – literally – to leave the exhibition."

"This dreamlike universe is a nod to both ancient mythology (from Narcissus drowning in his reflection to Ulysses resisting the sirens' song) and the cinema (the children escaping in a boat in *The Night of the Hunter*). Here the relationship between nature and culture is reversed and the artist is, in his own words, "a simple medium through which visitors can give shape to their sensations", or lose themselves in the hypnotic sounds and images." Daria de Beauvais, exhibition curator

"Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's work begins with murmurs, with the invisible, propagation, alteration, contagion, an out of sync development at the heart of the standardized systems of the real, as though to infiltrate life. The artist is an engineer and scientist, an indefatigable experimenter who relentlessly creates perceptible, intangible forms which are secretly connected to life." (3)

Born in Nice in 1961, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot lives and works in Sète. Although his works have been exhibited for almost 20 years in contemporary art spaces in France and abroad, they have more in common with the work of a musician. From 1985 to 1994 he was the composer of author/director Pascal Rambert's "Side One Posthume Théâtre" company before embarking on a quest to give his music independent status through installations.

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot creates systems based on different locations and objects. He exploits the musical and sound potential of the materials and media he uses to create these systems, thereby reconfiguring the rhythmic and melodic possibilities, both visual and sonorous, to generate, often directly, sonorous forms which he describes as "living".

He forges a close connection between the system and the architecture and environment in which it is exhibited, thereby creating a special framework for the multi-sensorial experience which, in turn, draws visitors' attention to the processes which are producing the sounds and images. Over the last few years he has extended his practice to choreography, applying his "compositional" approach to moving objects.

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's work has been exhibited on the international scene for a number of years. Indeed, he was the first French artist to win the International Studio Program (PS1) in New York in 1998-1999. Recent exhibitions include the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne (2013), the Barbican Centre in London (2010) and the Pinacothèque in Sao Paulo (2009).

2015 is set to be an exceptional year for the artist: in parallel to his exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo he represents France at the Contemporary Art Biennale in Venice (9 May – 22 November 2015) with an ambitious, hitherto unseen project *révolutions*, curated by Emma Lavigne, the new Director of the Centre Pompidou-Metz who is presenting a new version of one of his most well-known works, *clinamen*. He has also been invited to show another of his famous works, from here to hear, at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art in November.

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's work is represented by Paula Cooper gallery (New York), Xippas gallery (Paris, Geneva, Montevideo, Athens) and Mario Mazzoli gallery (Berlin).

Curated by Daria de Beauvais

(1) and (2) Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, "Écoutes à l'œuvre – entretien avec Samuel Bianchini" in Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *Etats seconds*, Edition FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims. *Analogues*, Arles, 2008, p. 114.

(3) François Quintin, "Introduction" in Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *Etats seconds*, Edition FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims. *Analogues*, Arles, 2008, p.10, 14, 18

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