

Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz

Abbatiale Bellelay 22.06–31.08.2025

Precautions

We encourage visitors to wander around the abbey church, to take the time, as they pass from one location to another, to listen to the variations in the echoes and climb up to the balconies to see things from different angles.

To avoid any risk of accident, it is strictly forbidden to touch the rails, climb or step over them, or cross the lines marked on the floor. Children must remain under the supervision of accompanying adults at all times. The Bellelay Abbey Foundation declines any liability for accidents that may occur as a result of failure to comply with these safety instructions.

Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz have worked together as a team since 2007. Their work combines video, installation and research so as to offer alternative narratives to straight mind. They regularly work with performing artists and musicians.

In the monumental Baroque space of the Bellelay abbey church they are presenting the installation *You Ask Me To Not Give Up Up Up*, a roller coaster made of wood and PVC. Its hundred-meter-long circular path weaves between the church's columns, soars over the alter, gently slopes to a height of eight meters approaching the balconies and then drops vertiginously, leaning to one side as it rounds a corner and slipping through a narrow doorway. Its graceful curves replicate the abbey's arches. Its spectacular dimensions and movements evoke aspects of the Baroque period.

The figure of a roller coaster is often employed to describe dramatic moments in our lives that produce strong contradictory emotions. At a time when a reactionary offensive threatens to wipe out, overnight, the gains in individual freedoms won through long-term struggle, this representation of a roller coaster by Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz constitutes a deeply meaningful image of recent historical sequences.

Nevertheless, the two artists do not intend their piece as simply a metaphor. They conceive it as a functional model of reality that serves to test hypotheses. Rolling up and down these sharp slopes is a single self-propelled loudspeaker that navigates along the rails and through the obstacles in its path, from which it cannot turn aside. Its only option is to keep going and do another lap, over and over again. This artistic experiment shows that the fatigue of endless repetition can weigh us down, but also that persistence becomes a kind of resistance.

The loudspeaker broadcasts a sound piece composed by Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz in collaboration with Colin Self and performed by this artist and musician. With its voice and movement, the loudspeaker comes alive, like a person urgently expressing themselves. Colin Self's melancholic singing, with a voice ranging widely from falsetto to bass, opens a space for lamentation. This refrain echoes the twists and turns of the circuit and embraces the ornamentation of the abbey church.

Speaking of rights, gender and power, the lyrics recount both the odyssey of the loudspeaker and the personal journey of someone who loves freedom but is subject to the contradictory demands of the social fabric they confront. The speaker, a word that in English can mean either an electronic device that magnifies sounds or a human orator, becomes an undefined subject, a queer embodiment.

Known for their collaboration with performers whose filmed work becomes the raw material for videos, Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz are fascinated by *répétition* in the French senses of the word, which means both repeating and rehearsal. With each recurrence the body acquires a greater skill. This obstinacy is at the very heart of the

notion of commitment. Antigone, a mythological symbol of resistance, is thus known as the child who stubbornly disobeys. Her tragic heroism shakes the tyrant because he knows it can become contagious.

The powerful echoes produced by the vastness of the church further amplify the words spoken by Colin Self. Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, describes the myth of the nymph Echo, who is condemned to passively repeat the words of others. Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz cite a reinterpretation of this myth by the philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who considers the nymph's repetition of speech fragments as a way of altering the message. Amplified by the persistent environmental echo, the song is transformed and emancipated from its source, opening up a collective and transhistorical space. The overlapping voices create a polyphony joined by the choir of visitors expressing their own emotions, mixing in with the voices of the past that haunts Bellelay and even those of a future to which Echo is calling out.

Far from sinking into the helpless melancholy that often afflicts emancipatory movements after experiencing defeats, this exhibition suggests that by listening attentively we can become aware of a subtle upward spiral, and acquire the confidence that comes from repeating our acts, our words, our slogans and our songs again and again. It also celebrates the pleasure of joining together and remaining together, of reliving the joy of speed and the thrills of crazy swerves and dizzying roller coasters descents.

Guided tours:

13.07.2025, 16:00

09.08.2025, 14:30

Finissage:

31.08.2025, 14:00

Exhibition:

22.06 – 31.08.2025

Wen– Sun: 11:00 – 18:00

Curators : Sylvain Menétrey, Katia Leonelli

Music: Colin Self

Mastering: Rashad Becker

Production: ASAP Studio, Atelier Lorraine, Kunstbetrieb AG

Communication: Mélinda Fleury

Graphic design: Boris Meister

Photographer: Annik Wetter

Translation: Leo Stephen Torgoff

Reception staff: Mario Badini, Maria Fabricio, Monique Moll, Sonia Queloz, Brigitte Roth

Foundation council: Pierre-Yves Moeschler (chairman), Markus Baumann, Géraldine Berberat, Eliane Boegli, Delphine Fähndrich, Magali Giglio, Pierre Edouard Hefti, Pierre Mosimann

Visual arts committee: Markus Baumann (chairman), Paul Bernard, Jean-Loup Clément, Monique Moll, Vera Trachsel

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Bellelay, June 2025

Dear visitor,

All alone, a speaker moves along an extensive parcours, up and down a Baroque former church, exploring its architecture, while a beautiful song by Colin Self reverberates from the overabundance of the church's decorative elements.

For our project, You Ask Me To Not Give Up Up Up, we suggest a roller coaster as a model in the face of recent politics: let's remind ourselves of the importance of keeping hope and pleasure up between us, even though, after a small stretch of optimism, we might rush down deep, screaming. But we insist: we go around obstacles, go in circles, go again and again, cherishing a space for sadness, but also for queer companionship, for glamour and resistance.

An extraordinary echo accompanies the song on its journey, transforming it into an acoustic mirror: space, visitors, history resonate. Being reflected, the song is changed, and becomes a dense portrait. We invite you to take part.

Yours, Renate and Pauline

Lyrics of the song You Ask Me To Not Give Up Up Up

Come here my love, come here my love,
come here
Watch me, watch me going up

You ask me to not speak up
You ask me to not give up
I'm going up
If I want my rights. In my passport.
I want money. And no gender.
Would a museum protect my rights?
You ask me to not give up up up
I'm going up

I am a speaker. Sex non-binary.
Running out. I want power.
A museum. I want rights.
I'm going up
Don't let me down

You ask me to not speak up
You ask me to not give up
I'm going up
If I'm not defeated. A place at war.
I need allies. I have no nation.
I want an echo. Of my pleasures.
You ask me to not give up up up
I'm going up

I am a speaker. Sex non-binary.
Running out. I want power.
A museum. I want rights.
I'm going up
Don't let me down