

THU VAN TRAN

**Art Basel, Basel (Switzerland)**  
**Statements sections**  
**2013**

For Statements, artist Thu Van Tran (1979, Ho Chi Minh City) offers a metaphorical reflection about collective memory and the principle of recollection. An artist born in Vietnam and exiled in France, Tran questions recent European history and links it implicitly to the torments of the Belgian colonisation of the Congo.

Fed by her own uprooting, this young artist has dreamed up a project of great maturity that casts light on a dark collective past. Her idea associates an exploration of symbolic places in the former Yugoslavia with a corpus of works with their roots in the Joseph Conrad novel *Heart of Darkness*, an instructive account of the effects of colonisation in the Belgian Congo. One could compare the exploration by Tran in lands marked by the folly of men to the progress of Marlow, Conrad's main character, along the Congo River. In both cases, there is apparent progress that suggests a moment of clarity, understanding and redemption, whereas the journey is only heading towards total darkness, a blur and disorientation, whether real or symbolic.

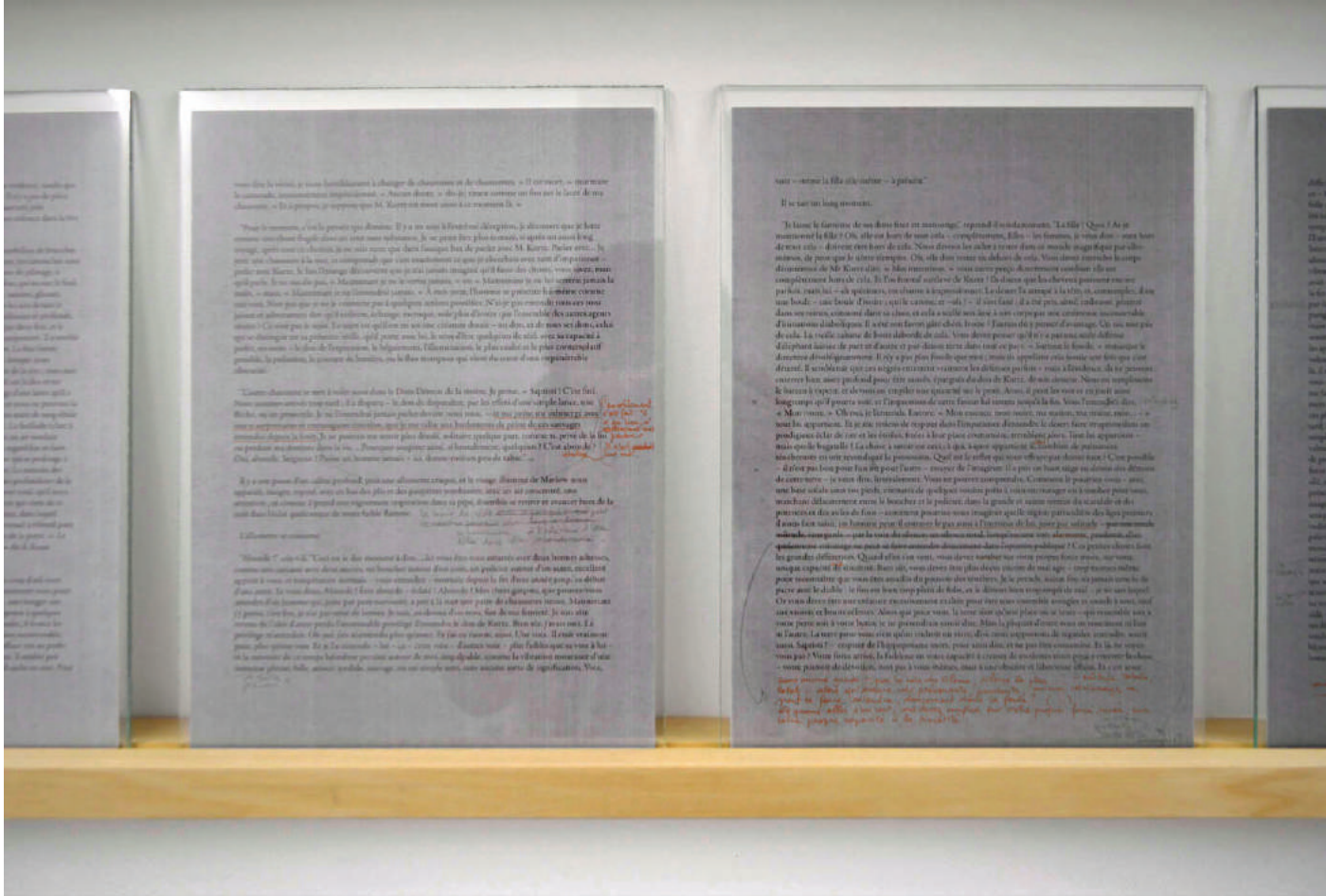
The project consists of two groups of works with a common theme; on the one hand, the film and documents relating to a crossing of the former Yugoslavia, and on the other hand works evoking *Heart of Darkness*.

During her journey, in Bosnia (from Tuzla to Neum), Thu Van Tran filmed historical sites and landscapes lit by means of a transportable light machine (called the Cyclops, consisting of a powerful halogen spotlight, a battery). She filmed by stealth, in broad daylight as well as at night, showing moments rather than descriptive shots. Her approach may seem naive or even absurd since in broad daylight, she is lighting what we can already see plainly, and in a vain attempt, she tries to illuminate the darkness of night. Her desire is to enter the thickness of the night, but with the idea of “making it visible”.

To accompany this work, Thu Van Tran shows under glass and placed on discreet shelves made from hevea wood, sixty sheets ranging in colour in a scale from white to the darkest black. Transcribed texts on these pages, initially perfectly legible, then more and more difficult to decipher, are the full translation into French of *Heart of Darkness* by the artist herself. She understands English without speaking it perfectly. She only used an English-English dictionary to achieve her purpose. So she puts herself in the position of a blind person groping to find her way around, to give meaning to her research. Translation is a metaphor for a process of discovery, exploration and difficulties overcome. To complement this project, Tran's translation is published in paperback in a print run of several thousand copies intended for the public during the fair. The books are stacked, giving them a sculptural appearance, and are available free of charge.

Finally, under the title *We live in the flicker*, Tran displays photographs based on photograms reproducing excerpts from the book in English concerning light and darkness (“The white patch had become a place of darkness”...). The blue pigments of the initial photograms are not fixed and therefore disappear over time. Slowly but inexorably. We could see a moment of light that returns to the darkness.







grandes herbes sans plier une seule tige.

"Dans quelques jours, l'Expédition Eldorado arrivera dans le désert patient, qui se refermera sur elle comme une mer sur un plongeur. Une longue suite de nouvelles arrive : tous les ânes sont morts. Je n'y connais rien au destin et je suis plutôt enthousiasmé devant la perspective de rencontrer Kurtz très bientôt. Quand je dis très bientôt, je veux dire comparativement. Juste deux mois depuis le jour où nous avons quitté le ruisseau pour venir jusqu'à la rive qui borde la station de Kurtz.

"Remonter cette rivière est comme voyager en arrière pour revenir tout près des premiers jours du monde, lorsque la végétation s'était révoltée sur terre et que les grands arbres étaient rois. Un courant vide, un grand silence, ahurissant, une forêt impénétrable. L'air était chaud, épais, lourd, lent. Il n'y avait aucune joie dans la brillance de la lumière du soleil. Les longues lignes d'eau navigables couraient, se vidaient dans les ténèbres bien au-delà des ombres. Les hippopotames et les alligators des bancs de sable argentés prenaient le soleil côte à côte. Les eaux s'élargissaient et coulaient alors au travers d'une foule d'îles boisées ; vous perdiez votre route sur cette rivière comme vous le feriez dans un désert, et vous vous battiez toute la journée durant contre des bancs de poissons, essayant de trouver un chemin, jusqu'à ce que vous pensiez être ensorcelé et ne coupiez à jamais tout lien avec ce que vous aviez su jusqu'alors – quelque part – loin, ailleurs – dans une autre existence probablement. Certains moments passent derrière d'autres, comme parfois ce peut être le cas lorsque vous ne pouvez les faire vôtres. Ils vous rattrapent ; et vous emportent dans un rêve bruyant et si peu reposant, et se souviennent avec merveille des accablantes réalités de ce monde étrange parmi lesquelles figurent les plantes, l'eau et le silence. Et ce calme de la vie ne ressemble en rien à une paix. C'est le calme d'une implacable force nous faisant agoniser sur une intention impénétrable. Elle vous regarde avec un aspect vengeur. Je m'y suis habitué ; je ne l'ai pas rencontrée de toute manière ; je n'ai pas eu le temps. Je dois continuer à discerner le chemin, la plupart du temps par intuition, les signes d'un banc de poissons caché ; je surveille les pierres sous l'eau ; j'apprends à claquer mes dents vivement avant que mon cœur ne s'envole loin, lorsque j'aurais rasé par un heureux hasard cet infernal secret, vieux problème, qui aurait déchiré la vie du bateau à vapeur de pacotille et noyé tous les pèlerins ; je dois garder un œil attentif sur les signes de bois morts que nous pourrions découper dans la nuit pour produire la vapeur des jours prochains. Lorsque vous attendez des choses de la sorte, le moindre accident à la surface, la réalité – la réalité, je vous dis – disparaît. La vérité intérieure est cachée – avec chance, avec chance. Mais quand bien même je la ressens ; je la sens souvent, mystérieuse, dans le calme, me regardant faire mon numéro de singe, juste en même temps elle vous observe, vous, camarades, effectuant vos respectives tâches – nouer des cordes – Qu'est-ce ? Une moitié de couronne, une chute – "

« Essaye d'être civilisé, Marlow, » gronde une voix, et je découvre alors que je ne suis pas seul et – qu'il y a au moins un autre auditeur qui veille, en plus de moi.

"Je vous demande pardon. J'oublie la souffrance que le cœur endure et qui compose le reste du prix. Et donc que représente le prix, est-ce que le tour est bien joué ? Vous faites vos tours très bien. Et je ne fais pas mal le mien non plus, depuis que j'ai réussi à ne pas couler ce vapeur lors de son premier voyage. C'est un étonnement pour moi encore. Imaginez un ensemble d'hommes aveugles, prêts à conduire un camion sur une mauvaise route. Je sue et fais trembler tout le considérable business, je peux vous le dire. Après tout cela, pour un marin, gratter le fond de l'engin et supposer que cela flotte en continu sous son regard, par ses soins, est un impardonnable péché. Personne ne peut connaître cela, mais vous n'oublierez jamais ce battement – N'est-ce pas ? Un coup sur le même cœur. Vous vous souvenez de cela, vous en rêvez même, vous vous réveillez la nuit et vous y pensez – après des années – et vous virez chaud froid, partout. Je ne prétends pas dire que cette embarcation à vapeur a flotté de tout temps. Plus d'une fois, elle a dû avancer face au

"« Meuseu Kurtz – il est mort. »

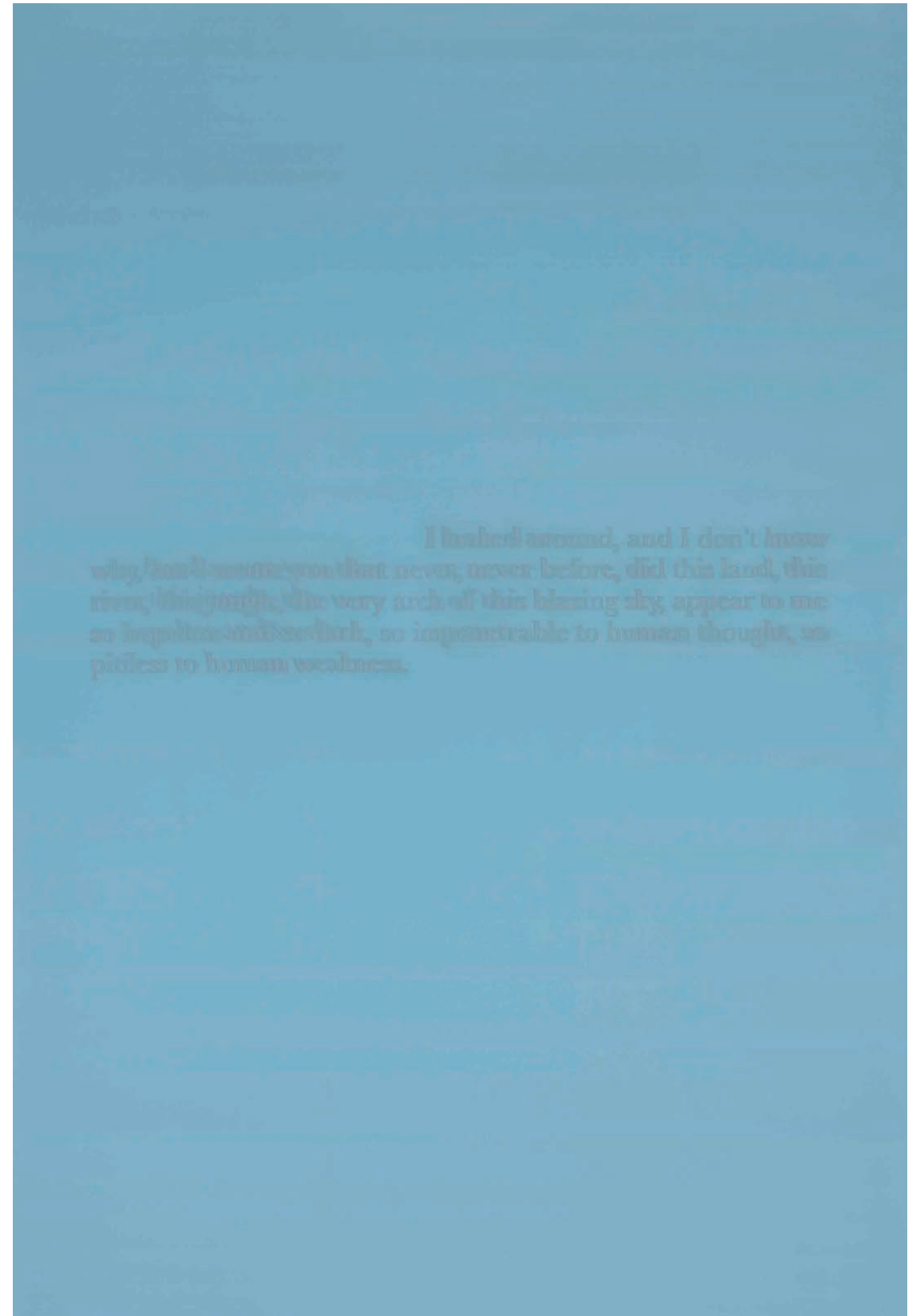
"Tous les pèlerins se ruent dehors pour voir. Je reste là, et sors avec mon dîner. Je crois que l'on me considère brutalement insensible. Bien que je ne mange pas beaucoup ce soir là. Il y a une lampe là-dedans – une lumière, vous savez – et dehors il fait si terriblement, terriblement noir. Je ne vais pas plus près de ce remarquable homme qui a prononcé un jugement sur les aventures de son âme sur cette terre. La voix s'en est allée. Quoi d'autre est là-bas ? Mais je suis bien sûr au courant que, le jour suivant, les pèlerins enterrent quelque chose dans un trou boueux.

"Et alors, ils sont très près de m'enterrer.

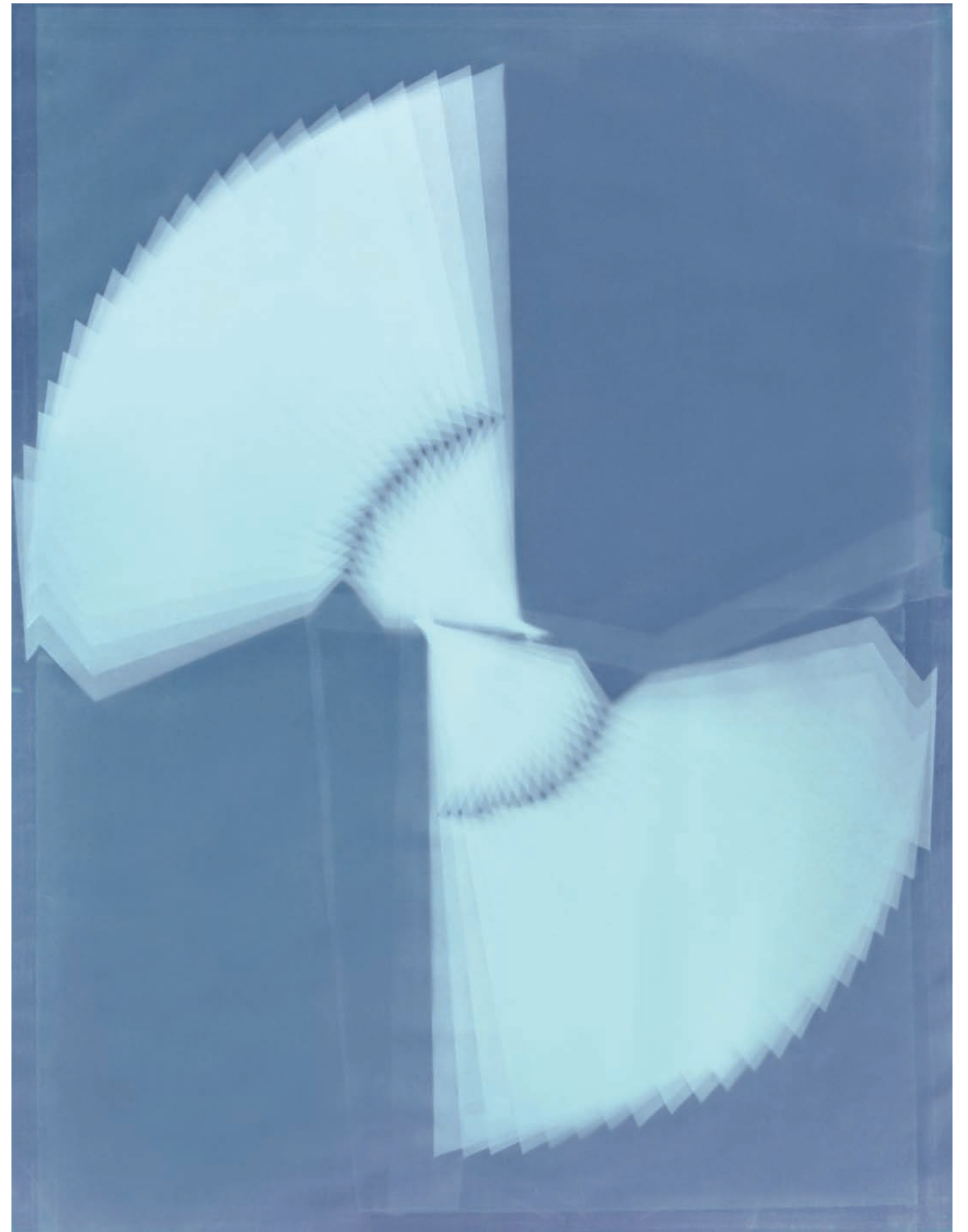
"Cependant, comme vous le voyez, pour l'heure je n'ai pas rejoint Kurtz là-bas. Non. Je reste pour vivre le cauchemar jusqu'à la fin, et pour montrer encore ma loyauté envers Kurtz. Le destin. Mon destin ! Drôle de chose que la vie – ce mystérieux arrangement de logiques pitoyables pour de futils buts. Le plus que vous pouvez espérer est un peu de connaissance sur vous-même – qui vient trop tard – la récolte de regrets indicibles et tenaces. J'ai lutté avec la mort. C'est le duel le plus inintéressant que vous puissiez imaginer. Il a lieu dans un gris impalpable, avec rien sous vos pieds, rien autour, sans spectateurs, sans clameur, sans gloire, sans le grand désir de victoire, sans la grande peur de la défaite, dans une atmosphère malade de tièdes dépit, de scepticisme, sans confiance en vous, et encore moins en votre adversaire. Si cela est la forme de l'ultime sagesse, alors la vie est une énigme plus grande que nous l'avons pensée. Je suis sans voix – respirant la dernière opportunité de prononcer une parole, je découvre avec humiliation que je n'ai probablement rien à dire. C'est la raison pour laquelle j'affirme que Kurtz est un homme remarquable. Il a quelque chose à dire. Il dit la chose. En jetant un regard sur le côté, je comprends mieux moi-même le sens de son regard fixe, qui ne pouvait voir la lueur de la bougie, mais était assez large pour embrasser tout l'univers, suffisamment perçant pour pénétrer tous les cœurs dans l'obscurité. Il avait tout résumé – et avait jugé. « L'horreur ! » ce fut un homme remarquable. Après tout, il était l'expression d'une sorte de croyance ; elle avait la sincérité, elle avait la conviction, elle avait dans son chuchotement la note vibrante de la révolte, le visage épouvantable d'une vérité entrevue – l'étrange mélange de désir et de haine. Et ce ne sont pas mes propres retranchements qui se rappellent à moi – la vision d'une grisaille sans forme remplie de douleur physique, un négligent mépris pour l'évanescence de toutes choses – aussi pour cette peine elle-même. Non ! Ce sont ses retranchements à lui qu'il me semble avoir vécu. Réellement, il a fait ce dernier pas, il a franchi le bord, tandis qu'il m'a été permis de reculer d'un pied hésitant. Et sans doute, cela fait toute la différence ; sans doute, toute la sagesse, et toute la vérité, et toute la sincérité, sont compressées dans cet instant inappréciable dans lequel nous avançons et dépassons le seuil de l'invisible. Sans doute ! J'aime penser que ma conclusion n'aurait pas été un mot teinté de mépris. Encore mieux était son cri – bien mieux, une affirmation, une victoire morale, valant pour les innombrables défaites, les abominables terreurs, les abominables satisfactions. C'est ce cri qui est une victoire ! C'est pourquoi je suis resté loyal à Kurtz jusqu'à la fin, et bien au-delà, quand, longtemps après, je ne l'entendrais plus, pas sa propre voix, mais l'écho et sa magnifique éloquence jetée sur moi, depuis une âme aussi translucide et pure qu'un éclat de cristal.

"Non, ils ne m'ont pas enterré, quoique je ne me souviens que vaguement d'une période, un souvenir que je vis avec une frissonnante surprise, comme un passage à travers d'inconcevables mots qui n'ont pas d'espoir en eux ni de désir. Je me retrouve retranché dans la ville funéraire ressentant le regard de gens ahuris dans la rue, dérobant à la hâte un peu de monnaie aux uns et aux autres, dévorant tristement leur infâme cuisine, absorbant leur bière malsaine, et rêvant leurs insignifiants rêves malades. Ils abusent de mes pensées. Ce sont des intrus au cœur de mon savoir sur la vie, ce qui est pour moi un prétexte irritant, car je me sens si sûr : ils n'ont pas la possibilité de savoir les choses que je sais. Leur comportement, qui est le



















**Le Plateau - FRAC Île-de-France - Paris (France)**  
**“Interprète”**  
**Curated by Xavier Francesci**  
**2014**

Thu Van Tran is a Franco-Vietnamese who creates works associated with historical events which regularly explore notions of displacement, separation, mixture and precariousness. *Arirang Partitions* is an installation made up of a wooden piano and musical scores torn in two. The piano is completely sanded on the left side and worked in an artisanal way on the right side. With this work, Thu Van Tran transposes the history of the separation of Vietnam, after de-colonization, to the Korean context. The piano is accompanied by Arirang scores, popular music from the period when Korea was a single country. Today, both North and South Korea lay claim to this legacy. In the North, historical frescoes in the form of moving paintings, propaganda tools of the party, are called arirang. For the South, Arirang has remained the popular song, but it is also a national TV channel and the name of a traditional cake. The “demi-scores” are played on the piano during the show, revealing the missing other half; this melody thus becomes the derisory anthem of a people reunited by being torn apart.

(...) It is ultimately a question of play, remake and transposition, beyond the fact of rendering the unintelligible intelligible. The different artistic projects have in fact been prepared on the basis of an already existing reality, which is then translated. Beyond this guiding principle, however, the works on view distinguish themselves by the singular translation being offered to us. Here the performance is free and thoroughly personal, and thus truly meaningful. Therefore, even if we see an inherent paradox—namely, that while we need the performer to be able to hear and understand the work, the act of interpretation moves us away from the truth—the paradox is as it happens, surpassed...

The other aspect uniting many of these works lies in the quintessential connection they have with music. It is clear that these ideas of play, version and remake reverberate like certain basic features of any musical work. Far from merely suggesting this close link, some of the works themselves aspire to the form of music, as they exist in the form of activation. The visual work, seemingly fixed once and for all, is now dreamt about as a piece to be enacted and re-enacted, and thus differently perpetuated. From the musical score to the conceptual procedure (and vice versa), there is but just one step: the artists easily cross the line to offer us pieces to be experienced and re-experienced.

In this spirit, *Interprète* will propose a series of interventions and performances in counterpoint to the show. The set of works presented will thus form the basis of an orchestration in the making. “The exhibition” may be regarded as a fully-fledged medium. *Interprète*. is in this sense the broad instrument which must be played to get the full measure of it. A game permitting the spectator to make his or her own interpretation of things...

(...)

Xavier Francesci















By capturing historical materials, art reflects and manufactures our relationship with History and stories; it relates and evades its own story, the history of art, but it also weaves and updates minor stories that were constantly infringing upon the dominating, ideological, great History. Artists counterfeit forms of historical discourse: imaginary archives, fantastic archaeologies, subversive hagiographies, ghost museums for the ghost theater that is the history at work within contemporary art.

The *Histerical Materialism* exhibition proposes to examine this obsession with respect to the historical reality of artists, whose artistic proposals succeed in making “delirious world”, beginning with the discourse that structures it as the world, the account of its history. If historical materialism imposed the history of class struggle as the only model to interpret reality for the vast majority of Marxist thought, would the reverse side of the coin and below this confusion, be histerical materialism. Would its challenge for art be to destabilise the awareness gained of our historiographical orthodoxy?

**Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (France)**

**“HISTeRICAL MATERIALISM”**

**2014**







**Centre d'Art Villa du Parc, Annemasse (France)**

**“La dix-huitième place”**

**Curated by Garance Chabert**

**2014**

Drawing on the shifts, connections and intervals in terms of representation between the cultures of her past and the culture she have come to adopt, the artist Thu Van Tran takes a singular approach to memory and the individual recollection, her forgone loss as we forget, and her fragmentary resurgence, circulating in images and texts. Tran explores various visual possibilities for translating and transmitting these themes.

Borrowing a supposedly Brechtian expression whose exact reference momentarily escapes Thu Van Tran, *the eighteenth place* brings together works that display what normally only exists in the background, barely apparent and already almost gone, from paper scraps littering the artist's studio to impermanent images on fragile supports or supports in tenuous balance.

Books and the formal, artistic transcription of publications with a very clearly oppressive, notably colonial connotation come up again and again in Thu Van Tran's approach. The artist, for example, has just completed a free translation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Recounting a young English officer's voyage up the Congo, the novel also relates an inner journey and experience that is given voice in particular through the author's description of an increasingly threatening, impenetrable nature. Thu Van Tran's project, which is scheduled to be shown at Art Basel in June, has a number of echoes and parallels in pieces being shown at the same time at the Villa du Parc. In *From Green to Orange*, the artist has covered images of tropical vegetation with an orange coloring agent and obtained a rendering that is dense, sharp and strikingly pictorial. Linked to Conrad's life through a series of digressions, the deadly volcanic eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902 is conjured up by the repetition of the same image that is more or less fixed on its paper support, displaying the gradual stages of its own iconic disappearance.

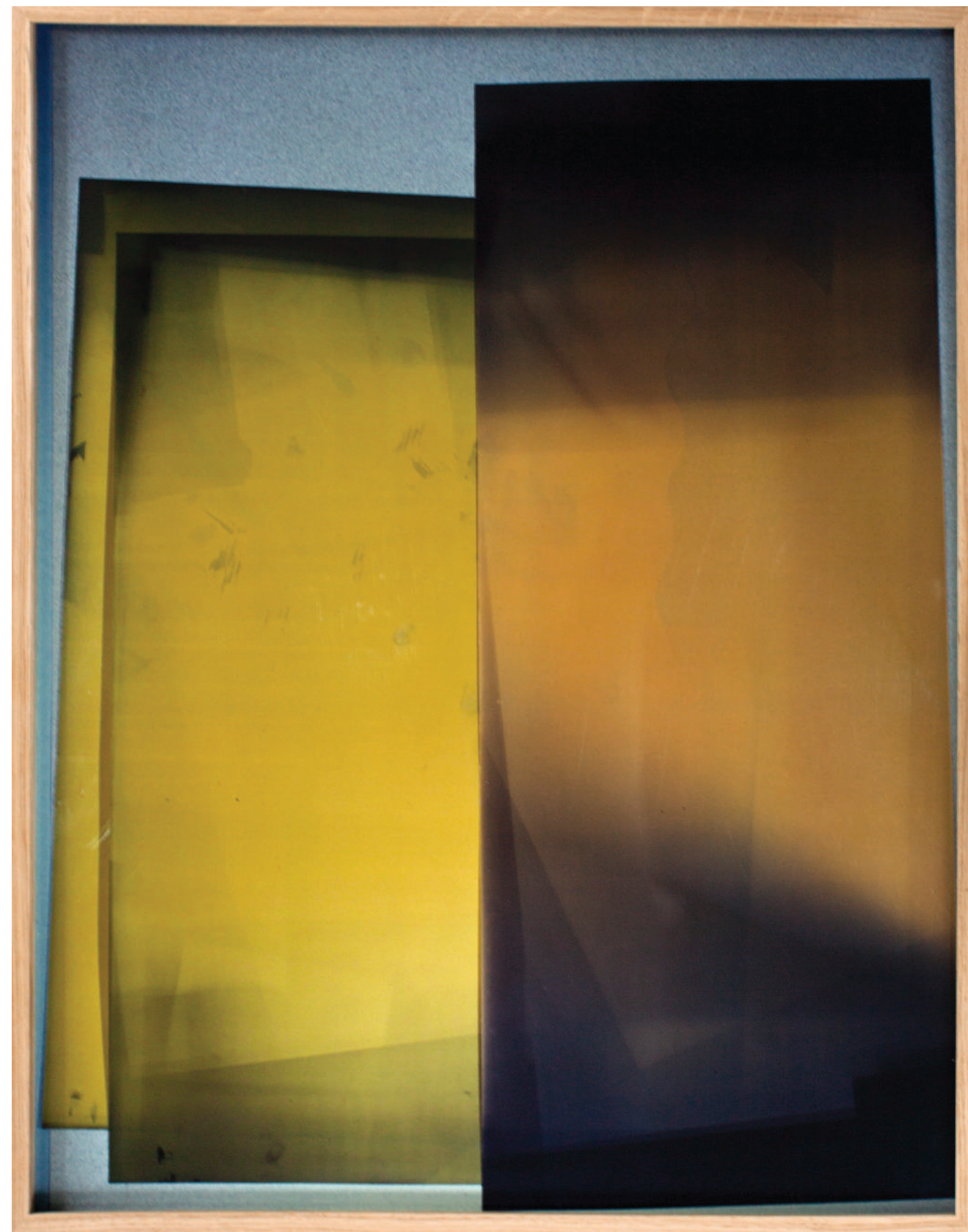
The physical impact of light, which leaches out, seeps into, damages and discolors images and materials, is palpable in most of the pieces on show, inviting a metaphorical reflection on the effects of time—the more fragile the original material the quicker the transformation of the supports. So it is with a number of rather delicate posters featuring tourist landscapes. They are already depicted through the lens of exotic locals; we see them now, their colors fading and disappearing the more they are exposed to sunlight. Or, finally, in a more abstract vein, we have the series of the artist's residue-photograms made up of scraps of photosensitive paper exposed to light in the studio.

Garance Chabert

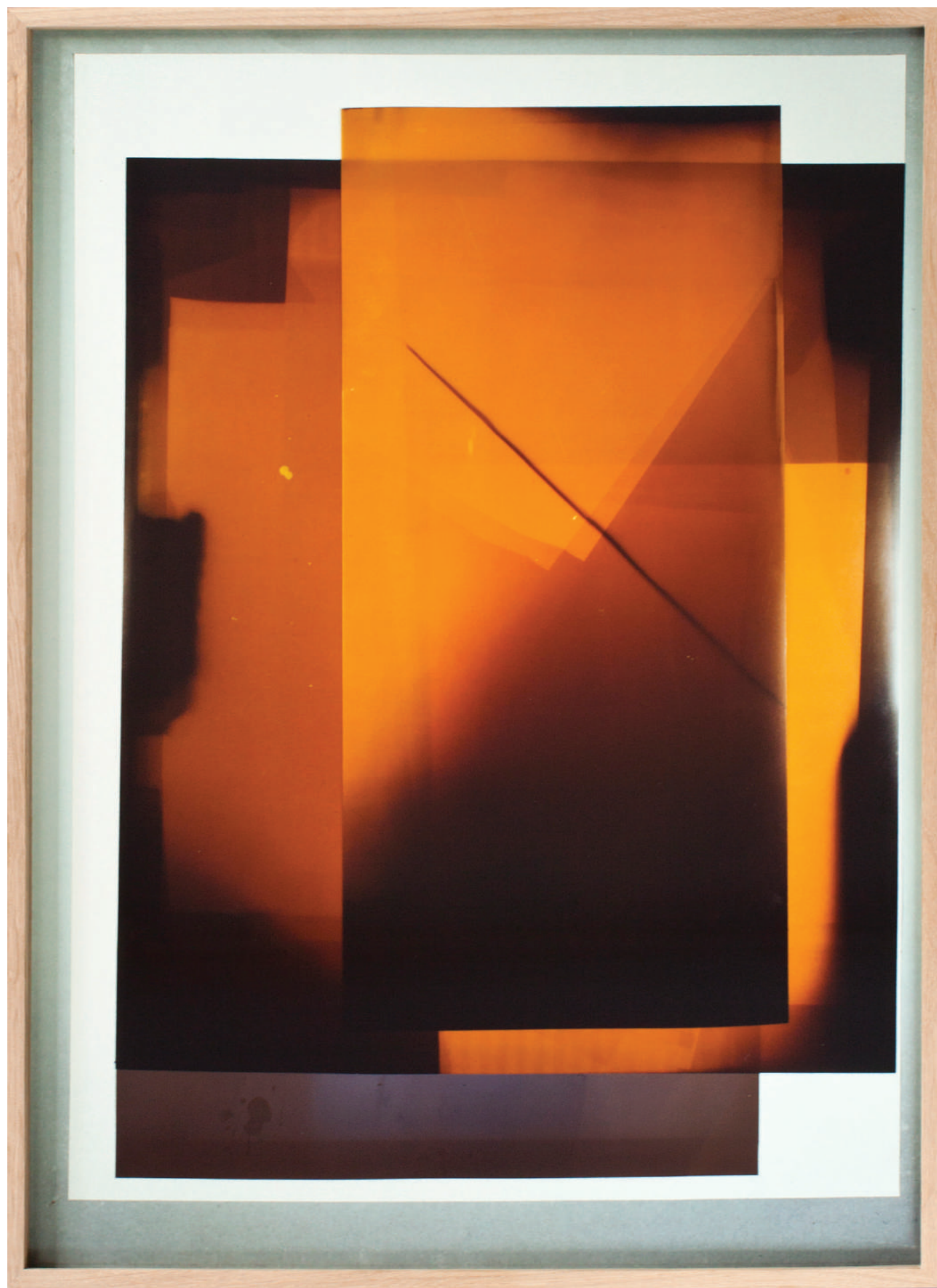






















**Centre Georges Pompidou - Bpi, Paris (France)**  
**“Duras Song”**  
**An exhibition on the archives of Marguerite Duras**  
**Installation conceived by Thu Van Tran**  
**2014**

On the occasion of the centenary of Marguerite Duras’ birth (1914-1996), the Bibliothèque publique d’Information and the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine have come together to present the Duras Song exhibition, dedicated to this important figure in 20th century literature. The mind behind such important books as *Le Barrage contre le Pacifique* (‘The Sea Wall’, 1950), *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (‘The Ravishing of Lol Stein’, 1964) and *L’Amant* (‘The Lover’, 1984), and participating in the renewal of the narrative form while probing the mysteries of love and the depths of the individual subject, Marguerite Duras also worked with her resolutely contemporary writing in other media: in cinema with *Hiroshima mon amour* and *India Song*, in theatre, in radio and with numerous interviews and articles in the press that reveal her political commitment.

In order to offer the visitor a portrait of this writing, the Duras Song exhibition is organised in two large and easily identifiable sections corresponding to two structural aspects of Duras’ œuvre: outside and inside.

Inspired by the title of the two volumes of press articles published as a collection from 1980 (*Outside* and *Le Monde Extérieur* 2), the outer part of the exhibition focuses on the author’s public writings, political engagements and work as a journalist, as well as on documents concerning her biography: for Duras’ life and work are closely tied to the currents of history and cover a large part of the 20th century. Then the visitor is invited to penetrate into the interior of Duras’ world, into the “inside” of her writing.















**Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels (Belgium)**  
**Palazzo Reale, Milan (Italy)**  
**“Une brève histoire de l’Avenir - A brief history of the future”**  
**2015 - 2016**

The exhibition is an encounter between a book, *A Brief History of the Future* by Jacques Attali, and the world of contemporary art. The works do not illustrate the text but demonstrate how many of today’s creators treat, at times metaphorically, the broad social issues developed by Jacques Attali in his vision of the future of our world.

The project is in two parts: one at the Louvre Museum, the other at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. The part in Paris revolves around a reading of man’s past, which is structured by Jacques Attali in eight different “hearts”, i.e. the cities where the economic evolution is indissolubly connected with technological revolutions such as the development of the merchant galley (Venice), printing (Antwerp), the steam-powered engine (London), and so on. In Brussels the exhibition opens with the ninth “heart” – Los Angeles – the home of the invention of the microprocessor whose development has shaped the new millennium.

The exhibition explores the various social themes studied by Jacques Attali in his book and highlights how visual artists often go beyond a simple observation to take an active part in the debate by developing projects inspired by a sort of creative utopianism.

It includes a section devoted to the representation of time and the changes that this brings – the underlying thesis of *A Brief History of the Future* – and ends positively with a look towards Utopia, in particular the political utopia based on the construction of Europe. This last theme is the fruit of collaboration between the MRBAB and ENSAV-La Cambre et l’Institut d’Etudes Européennes (ULB) with the support of the Fondation Bernheim.

With this project the Royal Museums of Fine Arts are taking the initiative towards a policy of mounting exhibitions focusing on creative contemporary work. To this end thematic choices are made from the collection of modern and contemporary art, in the hope that these will be once again available for public viewing. Similarly, the museum wishes to strengthen the synergy between itself and private individuals and organizations, who also have an essential role to play in the contemporary art world.







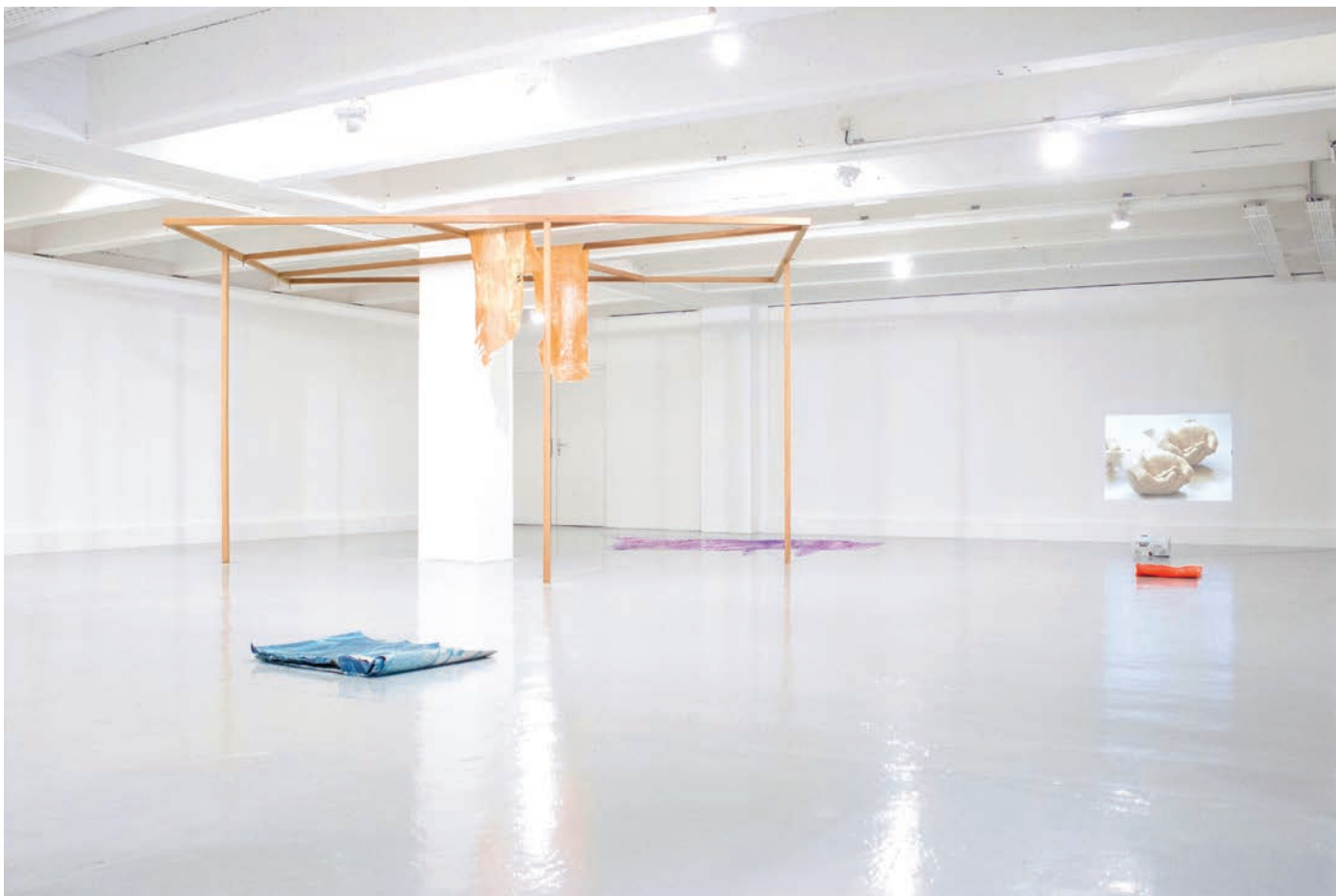
For the Galerie Art & Essai, Thu Van Tran pursues her esthetic and conceptual research into hevea, the tree of which latex is extracted for the manufacturing of rubber. Originally from Brazil, the hevea grain was imported and exploited by several colonial regimes in Asia as well as on the African continent. The displacement of the hevea can be considered as a metaphor of social and cultural transplantations at the heart of colonial and postcolonial spaces.

**Espace Art et Essai - Rennes 2 University, Rennes (France)**

**“Cao Su pleure”**

**2015**

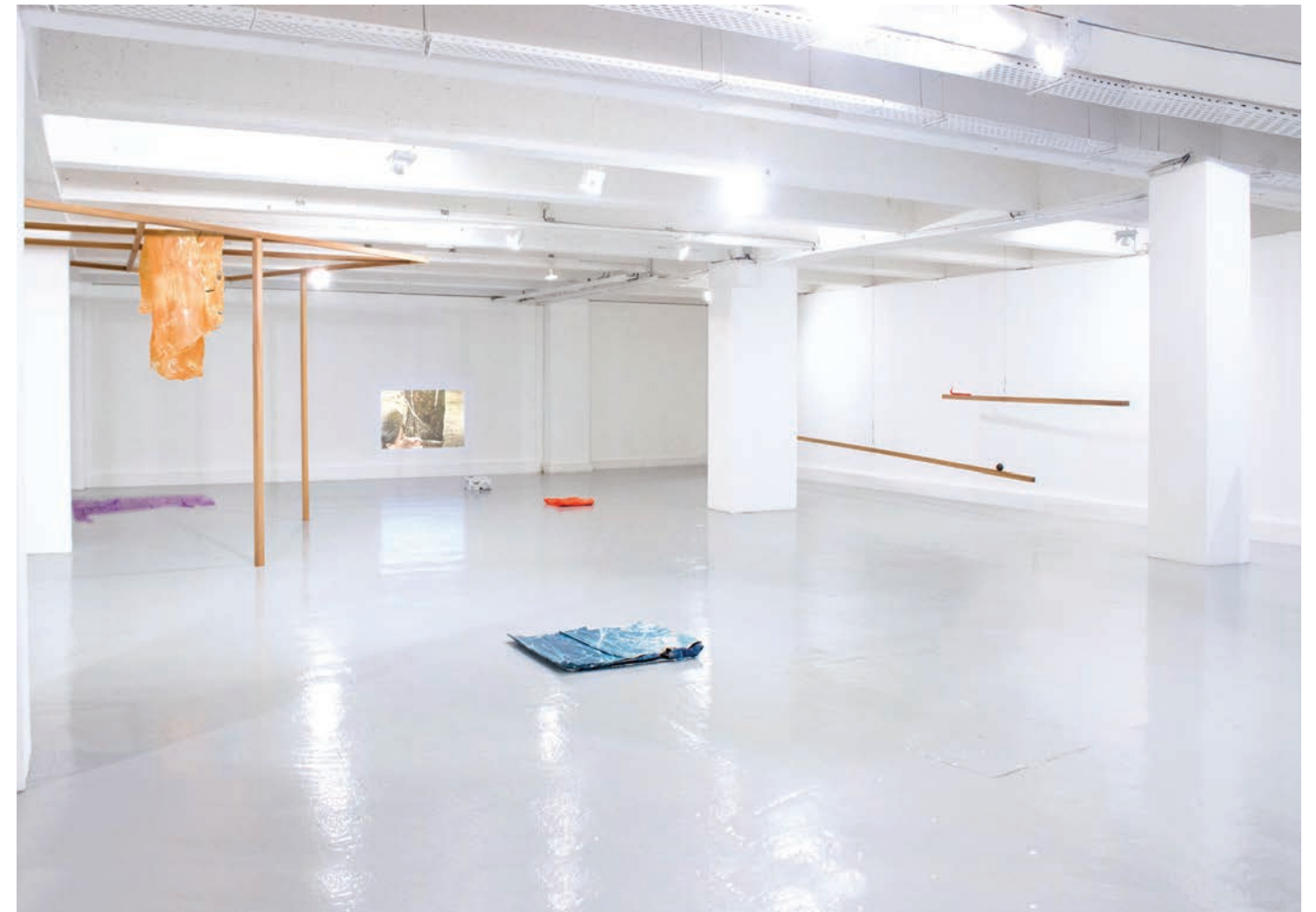


























**La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse (France)**  
**“Presque la même chose”**  
**Curated by Sandrine Wymann**  
**2015**

Translation is everywhere, in every form. It is neither a science nor an instinct; it communicates thought and facilitates travel. *Translation as Negotiation* is an attempt to understand others. Let’s remember the Tower of Babel myth: Nimrod, the sovereign king of Noah’s descendants decided to build a tower in Babylon whose summit would reach the sky and in which one single people would speak one single language. God brought a powerful end to the project by multiplying the languages to keep humanity divided.

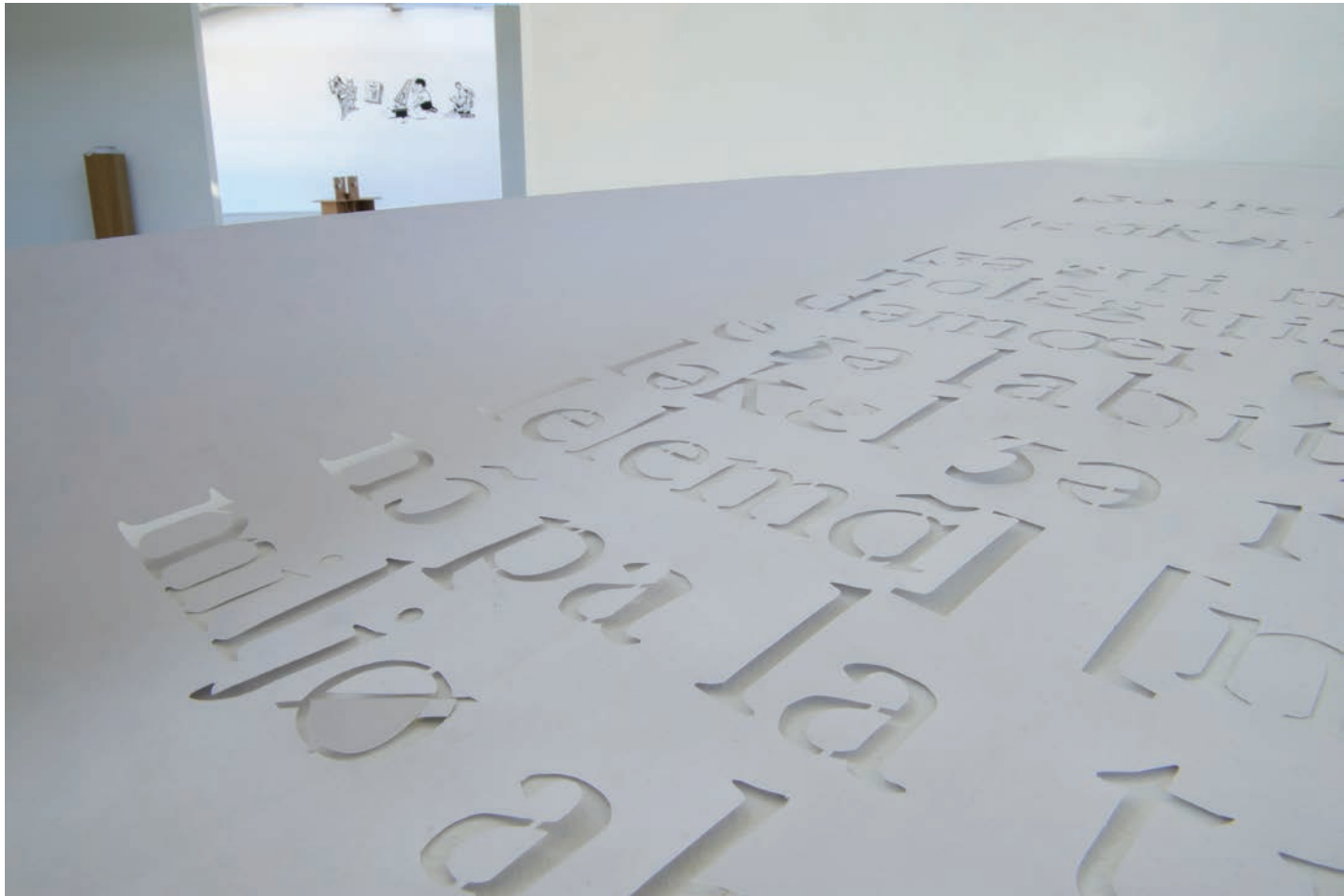
One single language is a factor of force and power. It federates and brings together a people. It allows the understanding and agreement, holding groups together and giving them confidence. These qualities are both attractive and frightening. Attempts to create one single language have continually tormented humanists or strategists but the reality of division has always taken precedence over any linguistic convention. Maybe by accepting this and taking it as a point of departure, analysing it and going beyond it, we would get closer not to a shared language but to universal understanding, which would be the most advanced stage of this quest for uniqueness. And what if translation came in at this point, and constituted a reasonable alternative to the universal plan? This is a tempting line of thought, but one must admit that it is not the key to solve the problem and those who have tried to establish its significance and consequences have had to accept the complexity of the exercise.

This exhibition is clearly part of a set of questions asked by Umberto Eco in *Mouse or Rat?* *Translation as Negotiation*, an essay on his experiences in translation. In his view, translation does not allow us to say the same thing, but at best, almost the same thing. He continues by highlighting that all the complexity of the task lies in the word almost. This almost, central but indefinite, appears as an elastic and extensible adverb to be used as a form of “negotiation” This is at the heart of any attempt of translation. What value should we give the word almost? Translation can be applied to all forms of language, written, aesthetic or auditory, and that each has its own perimeter for negotiation.

In *Translation as Negotiation*, Umberto Eco uses a series of examples and personal accounts to illustrate the problems which translation poses. For this exhibition I will trust his experiences and follow the structure of his reasoning. *Translation as Negotiation* takes up the thread of his text, chapter by chapter, and I hope that the artists and artworks will at times provide a response, and at times build on the questions the author raises. The idea is not to create a corpus of artworks related to the subject, but rather to continue the reflection through formal or textual research, but also through knowledge or personal stories. Artworks, conferences and portraits, without any hierarchy, will also make up the content of this exhibition, which is a modest attempt at saying how difficult it is to negotiate a translation.

Thu Van Tran (1979, born in Vietnam, lives and works in Paris) often gets inspiration for her work from history and personal experiences. Language and the written word as a means of transmitting a culture and its evolution have a major role in her work. *Un Alphabet éteint* is an artwork based on the first pages of the philosopher Jacques Derrida’s book *Monolingualism of the Other*. The text is translated into phonetic language using a Vietnamese alphabet and a latinised version from 17th Century Jesuits, and the letters have been stitched into white paper. The artwork’s fragility, in the materials used but also in its symbolism, reflects the artist’s attention to the importance of language as the vehicle for history, including those details we hold back, and those we want to transmit.







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**n.b.k. (Neuer Berliner Kunstverein), Berlin (Germany)**

**“Exchange of presents”**

**Curated by Silke Wittig**

**2016**

The exhibition at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein is Thu Van Tran's first solo exhibition in Germany. Based on her experiences as a Vietnamese woman living in France, in her work she addresses the colonial history of her native country and the impact of power and exploitation. In her latest series of works she deals with the raw material rubber, which in this context stands for the suppression of Vietnam under French colonial rule.

The starting point for the works, specially produced for the exhibition, is a relief on the facade of the Palais de la Porte Dorée, which was built in 1931 on the occasion of the Colonial Exhibition in Paris. Here, the peoples of the French colonies are depicted while extracting raw materials such as rubber and exotic woods, yet in the inside of the palace the so-called „intellectual“ contributions by France to the civilization of the indigenous peoples are illustrated on a monumental fresco. In the mural work *Penetrable* (2016) and the sculpture *Échange de présents* (2016), Thu Van Tran takes up the material and the symbolism of the commodity rubber and illuminates the bitter irony in the depiction of the supposed exchange. Her works visualize how the writing of history is manifested with the occupying power's Western view on the population of the colonies. The memory work materializes in the photograms *Sunstroke* (2016) through traces of her notebooks, sketch blocks and remnants from her studio. In addition, the Super 8 film *Far East* (2016) will be shown, in which Thu Van Tran examines the historical and political links between Vietnam and the former GDR and how in Berlin she embarks on a search for traces and repercussions of the conceived communism.

Silke Wittig









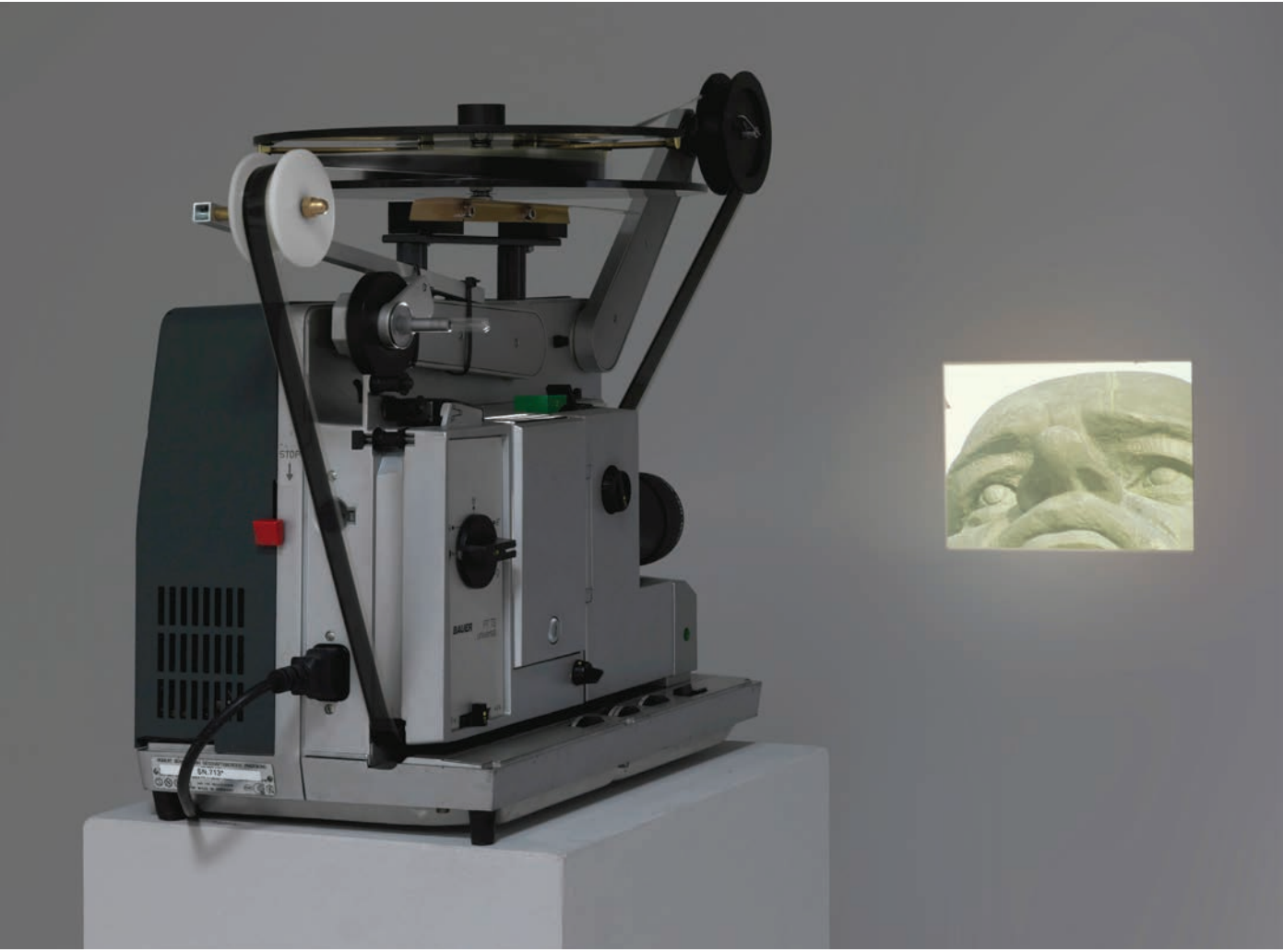


















Thu Van Tran’s uniquely sensitive work is informed by both historic events, particularly those related to postcolonial history, and literary and fictional experiences. Fernando Pessoa, Joseph Conrad, and Marguerite Duras are some of those who regularly collaborate on her work. Here she offers us a look at a future project, to be created in Brazil, in a colonial residence in Petrópolis, the town where Stefan Zweig ended his life after writing his final work, *Chess Story*. For this exhibition, she has chosen to show the first two pages of the interior monologues she wrote for each of the chess players and a model of a life-size chessboard that will be surrounded by a contaminated rubber wall.

Claire Moulène

**Le Meurice, Paris (France)**  
**“Prix Meurice 2016”**  
**2016**











1565, Rio de Janeiro. Un missionnaire.

« Éveillez la divine présence qui repose en chacun de vous. Chaque homme, femme, enfant, connaissez vous l'un l'autre en cet amour qui jamais ne change. Aucunement.

Voilà d'où je viens, de cette parole, de cette force supérieure, extra-terrestre. ... Une vision de l'homme. Cet horizon m'aura tenu si longtemps, le temps de devenir homme. Ce corps, son âge, sa perte, me sont un fardeau aujourd'hui alors que je reconnais les formes, auparavant floues, aujourd'hui limpides d'un territoire terrestre hors limite et total ~~mais sans Dieu~~. Pure folie de le nier, ou bien n'a pas trouvé sa place. J'ai vu. La France Antarctique. Une telle certitude.

J'ai appris qu'ici la simple présence des choses ne garantie pas leur existence. Je l'ai vu, jeune, en apprenant à lire la forêt. Un arbre, par exemple, ne se suffit pas à lui-même pour prouver qu'il existe. Il lui manquera toujours un peu de réalité. Il est présent comme un miracle, une sorte de tolérance que les Indiens veulent bien lui accorder. Ils la lui concèdent en échange de certains profits : fruits, bois, ombre. Mais dans leur for intérieur ils savent que la vérité effective de cet échange ne convient pas. L'arbre est là et eux ils sont l'arbre. Sans eux il n'y a pas d'arbre. Mais sans arbres ils ne sont plus riens. Ils dépendent tant l'un de l'autre qu'il ne peut y avoir de confiance. Les indiens ne peuvent se fier à l'existence de l'arbre car ils savent que l'arbre dépend de la leur. En même temps, comme l'arbre contribue avec sa présence à garantir la leur, ils ne peuvent se sentir pleinement exister car ils savent que, si l'existence leur parvient de l'arbre, l'arbre lui-même tire son existence de celle que les indiens lui accordent, et cela ne convient pas. Cette évidence fait d'eux des prisonniers, logés dans un cercle de miroir. Une spirale sans vue ni perspective. Ils ne peuvent en sortir pour vérifier de l'extérieur cette vérité.

Comment cet arbre peut-il ne pas être la création de Dieu ? Seigneur !

Moi, venu de l'horizon stable, le premier souvenir que j'ai d'eux n'est encore cette extériorité. Le goût de l'indestructible. Vue d'où je venais ils semblaient à l'abri de toute détérioration. De toute certitude. Je me mis à douter moi-même de ma propre cellule divine. Les premiers temps ils me donnaient l'impression d'être la mesure même qui définit, entre terre et ciel, le lieu de chaque chose.

Je vois. Je les vois maîtriser avec rapidité et efficacité l'aspérité du monde, comment une telle chose ? J'ai pu penser tout naturellement, que ce monde était fait pour eux et qu'au fond d'eux-même ces Indiens, même s'ils passaient par des moments de confusions intenses, résistaient sans étonnement, fidèles à leur gestes.

Je les regarde parfois pendant de longs moments, essayant de deviner comment, de leur intérieur ils vivent ces gestes que, dans le centre du jour, ils projettent vers l'horizon matériel qui les entourent. Et si ces mains tellement sûres qui saisissent les os, les branches, le poisson et modèlent l'argile ocre de la terre pour lui donner la forme de leur rêves, ne sont jamais envahis d'aucune sorte d'hésitations. Non jamais. Aucunes. Leur gestes sont muets et ne laissent transparaître aucun signe, aucune faiblesse. Ils semblent, ils sont comme des animaux, bêtes conscientes, contemporains de leurs gestes. On eut dit que ces actes, au moment de leur exécution, épuisaient leur sens. Pour eux le présent ouvert et précis du jour vigoureux, sans commencement ni fin, semblait être la substance où, comme des poissons dans l'eau, il se meuvent. Ils donnent l'impression, enviable ? d'être en ce monde plus que tout autre chose. Et de dominer l'ingouvernable. Bruts, de gouverner la terre, son essence matérielle, sa présence. ils gouvernent

Leur manque de gaieté, leur air farouche sont la preuve que le bonheur leur est superflu. Lentement je finis par comprendre qu'il me fallait toujours actualiser ce monde, qui a l'air si solide, afin qu'il ne s'évanouissent pas comme un filet de fumée dans le crépuscule. Me rejetant dans la fumée de processions divines, d'où je venais. Car sinon sur quoi alors me reposer ? J'avais perdu Dieu ici au milieu de cette vérité, de cette sauvagerie vraie et luxuriante. Perdu au milieu de la présence terrestre.

Cet horizon chaotique d'eau, de sables, d'arbres et de ciel, je me suis mis peu à peu à le voir comme un lieu définitif. C'est alors que j'ai espéré, mes yeux guettaient ce qui viendrait me délivrer moins du besoin que de cette étrangeté. Cela a duré des mois, des années peut-être. Et cette espérance s'effaça. Ce que je n'osais croire, la possibilité de vivre dans l'étrangeté de cette plénitude matérielle et tellurique, croire que je pouvais vivre cette plénitude, a eu lieu. Le vécu avec son épaisseur trompeuse, l'inattendu et l'expérience de cette forêt réelle, rongeaient mes souvenirs fixes et sans défenses, ma filiation.

Quand nous oublions c'est que nous avons perdu moins la mémoire que le désir. Et je mutais.

Comment puis-je encore nommer celui par qui mon être s'est construit, toi si haut, comment ? Je m'en remets à cette terre vivante et ses racines qui semblent descendre jusqu'aux entrailles de nos idées. J'entends déjà la sentence divine tombée sur ma tête, je veux alors sentir le bonheur de mourir sur cette terre en me fondant poussières dans ses racines.

ces racines — quel bonheur alors de penser mourir et redevenir, dans la terre, à l'aune de ma révélation, pourri — je retourne à la terre, de notre père nous savons que nous retournerons pourri, et de cette terre je sais quelle sera mangée dans ses racines.

1843, Petrópolis. Un conquérant.

« De l'arbre s'écoule une substance blanche qui nulle part ailleurs ne produit un tel miracle. Serait-ce insignifiant de dire que ce blanc est celui de la pudeur ? Car c'est bien dans la nuit que l'arbre saigne de son meilleur lait. Et c'est dans la nuit que la pudeur se délire : l'arbre se vide et saigne, et à l'abri de nos regards et de nos attentes il pleure. Ce lait que nous connaissons à présent, puisque nous sommes venus de loin le chercher, c'est pour lui que nous avons semé ici une guerre. Il est notre richesse, il affirme notre certitude sur ce monde. Cette pudeur semble être ce que l'arbre cache à l'intérieur, un secret laiteux, voluptueux, qui lui en appelle la volupté. Mais ce dedans nous ne sauront jamais réellement à quelle souffrance il est égale.

L'arbre se livre à nous car nous le saignons, est-ce là l'équilibre immuable ? Nous sommes présomptueux à ce point dans l'ignorance que nous avons de cette nature. Nous connaissons ce secret depuis très loin nous le connaissons, pourtant. C'est pour lui que des continents entiers s'affrontent, pour lui que nous traversons par des vents secs et qui fouettent, par des courants contraires qui animent des étendus d'océans hors limite où s'affrontent des dieux marins terribles et inconnus, pour lui que nous risquons tout et venons jusqu'ici. Des mois de navigation, des mois de luttas pour garder cette conviction intacte, pour saisir alors et consolider le secret de notre certitude dans cet arbre... Des mois sans la perspective du temps, sans le clair à l'intérieur de la tête pour savoir au moment d'arriver pourquoi nous sommes là. Ormandite et impériale.

C'est alors que cette substance nous éblouit de son potentiel. Serait-ce ce blanc ? Evidemment nos yeux n'étaient pas préparés, comment le pouvaient-ils ? Les miens ont été fusillés en un éclair blanc. Un éclair franc, qui ne laissa aucune circonstances atténuantes à mes désirs de crimes. Je n'avais, je le sais aujourd'hui, aucune chance d'échapper à cette totale révélation. Ce blanc, cette sorcellerie, aura en une fraction de seconde révélé la pure immuabilité du monde : d'une saignée s'écoule la semence, qui au lever se récolte, au coucher recommence à couler. Ce cycle-là, celui de recommencer, au coucher, au lever, cette immuabilité-là est ce qui a existé à l'origine. Est ce qui existe à l'origine. Ce n'est pas notre savoir, notre besoin sur le monde, récolter et assoir la couronne royale qui existe à l'origine. Nous serions-nous à ce point trompés ? Enrôlé dans une procession irréaliste et sans repère, cette idée m'apparue dans toute sa douce sauvagerie, une sauvagerie venue du centre de la terre, délivrant une vie, apportant une source de vie puissante, sans précédent. Cette pensée, provoquée par la pure vision d'une chose élémentaire, une coulée blanche, l'effet d'une conséquence terrestre naturelle, m'assiégea. Prisonnier, je me résignais à l'abstraction de cette blancheur. ce n'est pas une idée (qui existe à l'origine).

Une vie pour une saignée. Un saigneur pour mon salut.

Je n'ai su que plus tard l'effet que la vue d'une première saignée fit sur moi. Plus tard seulement, cette vision qui avait tachée ma mémoire d'un blanc indélébile, s'est révélée. Elle ressortit quand nous coupâmes les bras de quelques saigneurs à la mi-saison des pluies l'an passé. Elle revint et tacha à nouveau, s'agrandit, se révéla alors immense à l'égal des océans que mon âme avaient gardés en force. Elle refit surface, cette tache, et contamina méthodiquement mes pauvres pensées, qui unes à unes, prises dans le blanc, se mutèrent. Bien plus tard, je compris que j'avais été soustrait de ce monde de couleur qui me parlait de race et de lignée pure, de couronne, ce monde coloré de conquérants, j'y étais soustrait depuis lors et sans recours possible.

Cette blancheur là était hors de notre regard, hors de nos yeux, qui n'étaient d'aucune façon préparés à la voir, à la lire. Elle pénétra jusque nos rêves pour nous expliquer notre désir du blanc.

Et j'ai vu. J'ai vu pourquoi nous faisons cela. Nous avions peur de la souillure. Et ce blanc là, qui n'était pas le notre, échappé de l'hévéa, ce caoutchouc dans sa candeur dans sa blancheur en était la preuve. Il était une souillure, totalement vraie, totalement parfaite, d'une entière beauté. Et cette souillure tachait le tronc de la vie d'une blanche beauté voluptueuse.

À l'arrivée, cette terre brumeuse et folle se préparait à nous envelopper de son nappage stupéfiant de sens. Tandis que notre respiration se faisait dense, oxygénée, rythmée, un rien aurait fait s'envoler cette ardeur qui nous avait tant tenue. Elle s'était abstraite. Mélangée à présent à notre respiration devenue mutante, luxuriante, notre aspiration perdait en substance, elle remonta le fil du temps pour se vider dans les eaux de ces mers déchainées d'où nous venions. Cette brume qui nous accueillait à notre accostage, allait nous coller jusqu'à la mort, c'était certain. Cette moiteur, je suffoquais, envahit notre peau et nous submergea, vivants. Tout ce vert, je me demandais comment nous dessinerions notre route. Comment nous n'allions pas fondre nous-même dans cette moiteur et dans ce vert. Tout cela vue de l'extérieur semblait si fermé et voilà que nous entrions dans les méandres arborés, par un filtre, une vert palpable méconnu de nos pensées.

Ce miracle de la saignée, n'était pas celui d'espérer d'une victoire, mais celui d'une libération. Je vais raconter

m'allait pas être

mais le miracle d'une libération, celle de nos âmes. Je vais raconter.



**Ladera Oeste, Guadalajara (Mexico)**  
**“Listen, the Darkness Deepens”**  
**Curated by Geovana Ibirra**  
**2016**

(Conversation heard on the steamboat *Roi des Belges*, Congo free state, 1899)

Translator 1: I listened and the darkness deepened.

Translator 2: Observe, we pass from darkness to light and in reverse.

T1: Darkness is not the absence of light, there is as much light in darkness as invisibility in the visible.

T2: We move from thought to writing, from writing to sculpture, from language to object.

T1: We are this, and that aren't we?

T2: We have translated from here to there, from this to that, from the I to the Us.

T1: We live in the flash of a blink. In the flicker.

T2: People are surprisingly different, separated by unpopulated space.

T1: It is both a solid and fragile object, the tongue.

T2: It is Collect and Revolt.

T1: Simultaneously what we are and what not.

T2: Listen, the darkness deepens.

T1: Yes, the shadows have deepened.

T2: Observe, the light disappears.

T1: Darkness becomes impenetrable.

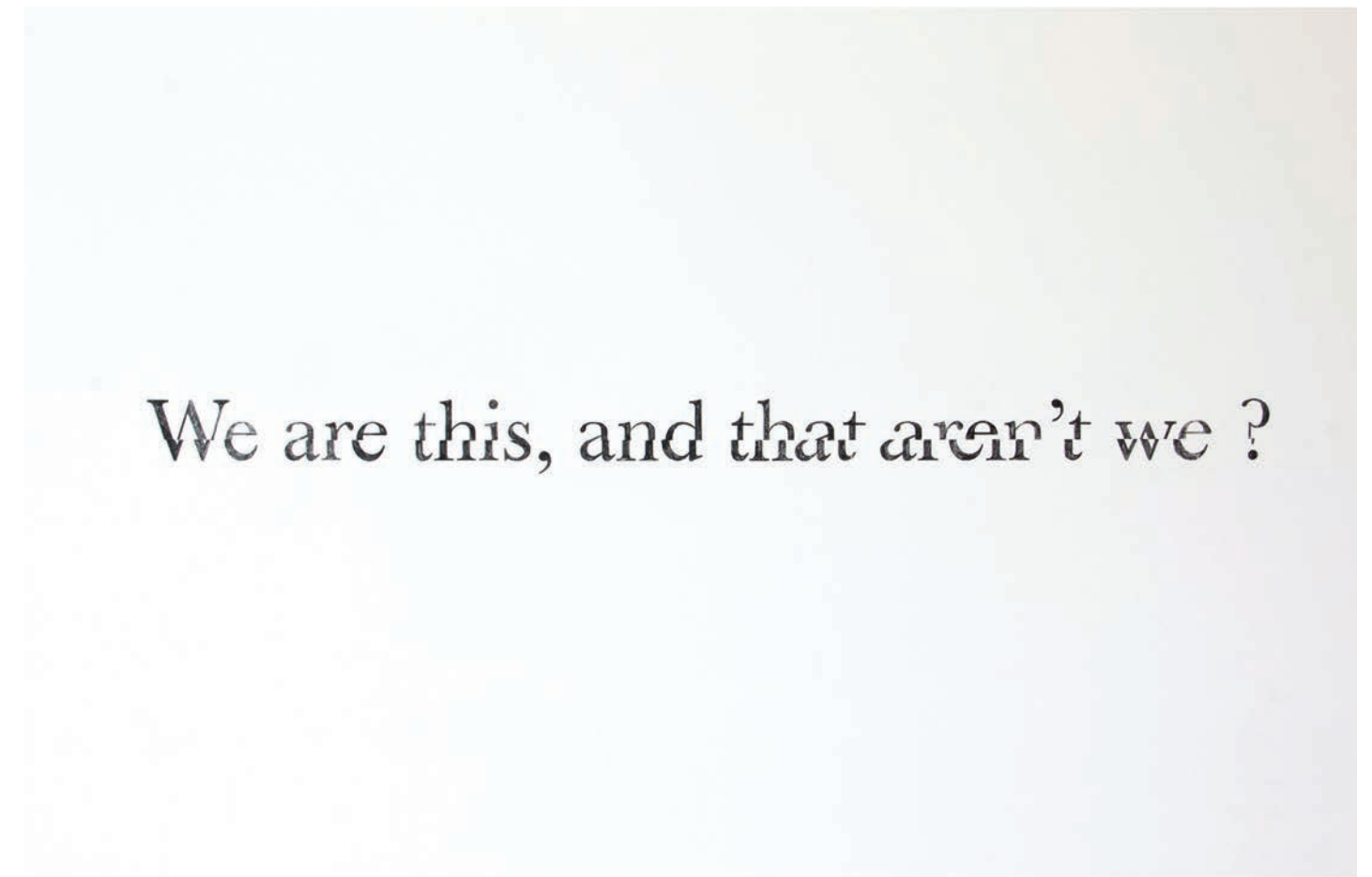
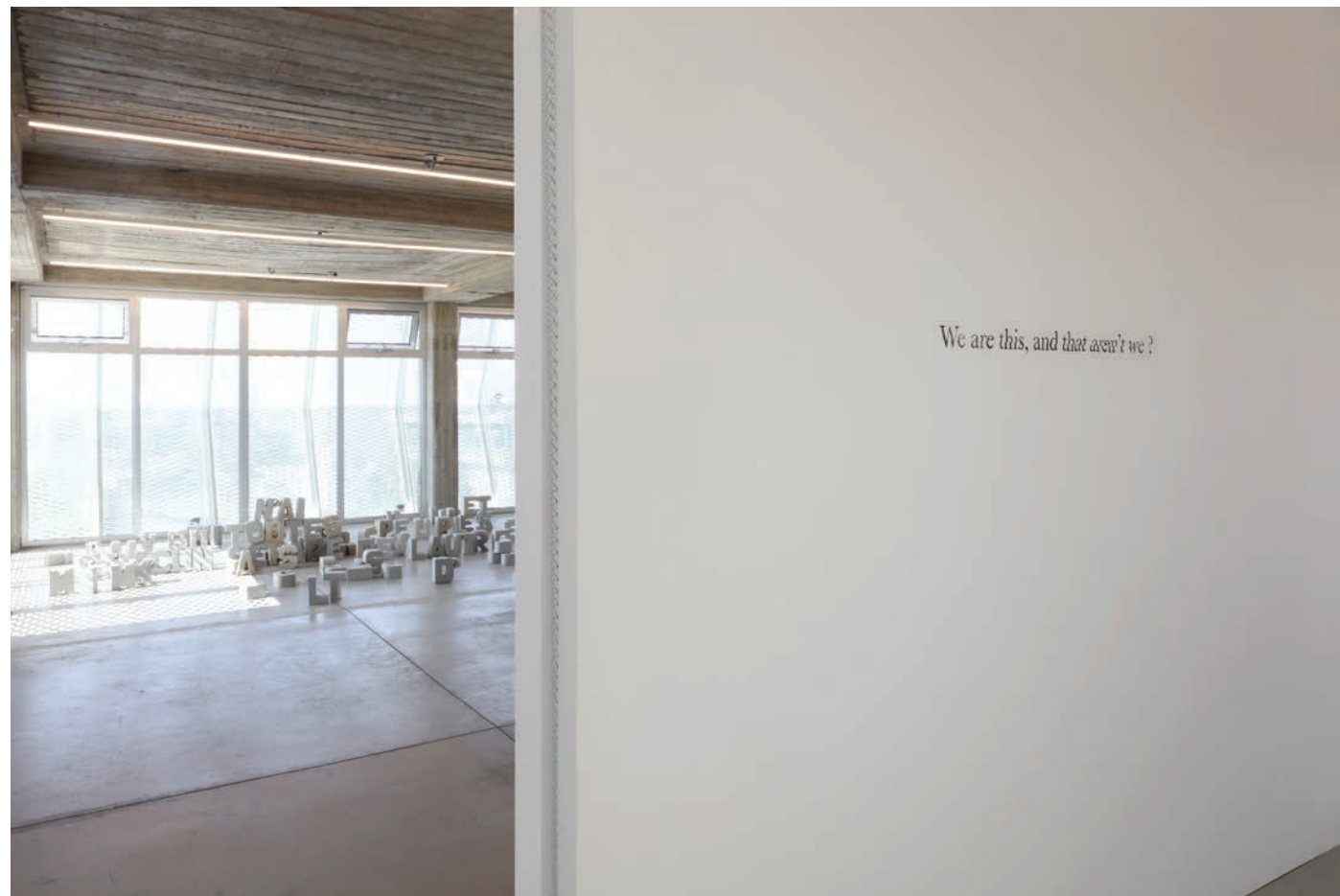
T2: Listen, the light deepens?

T1: Here and there.

T2: We.

G. Ibarra, J. Mendez Blake

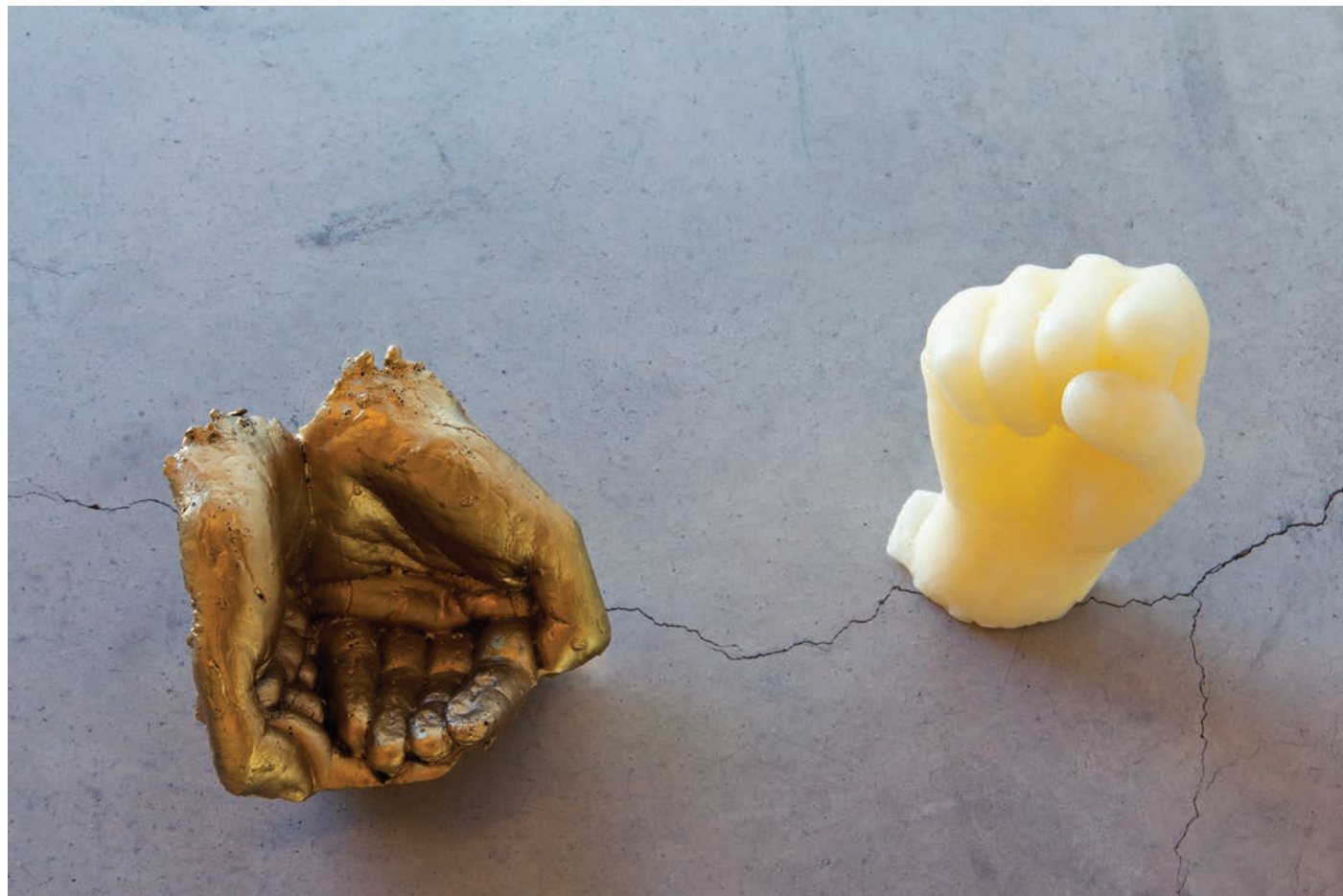
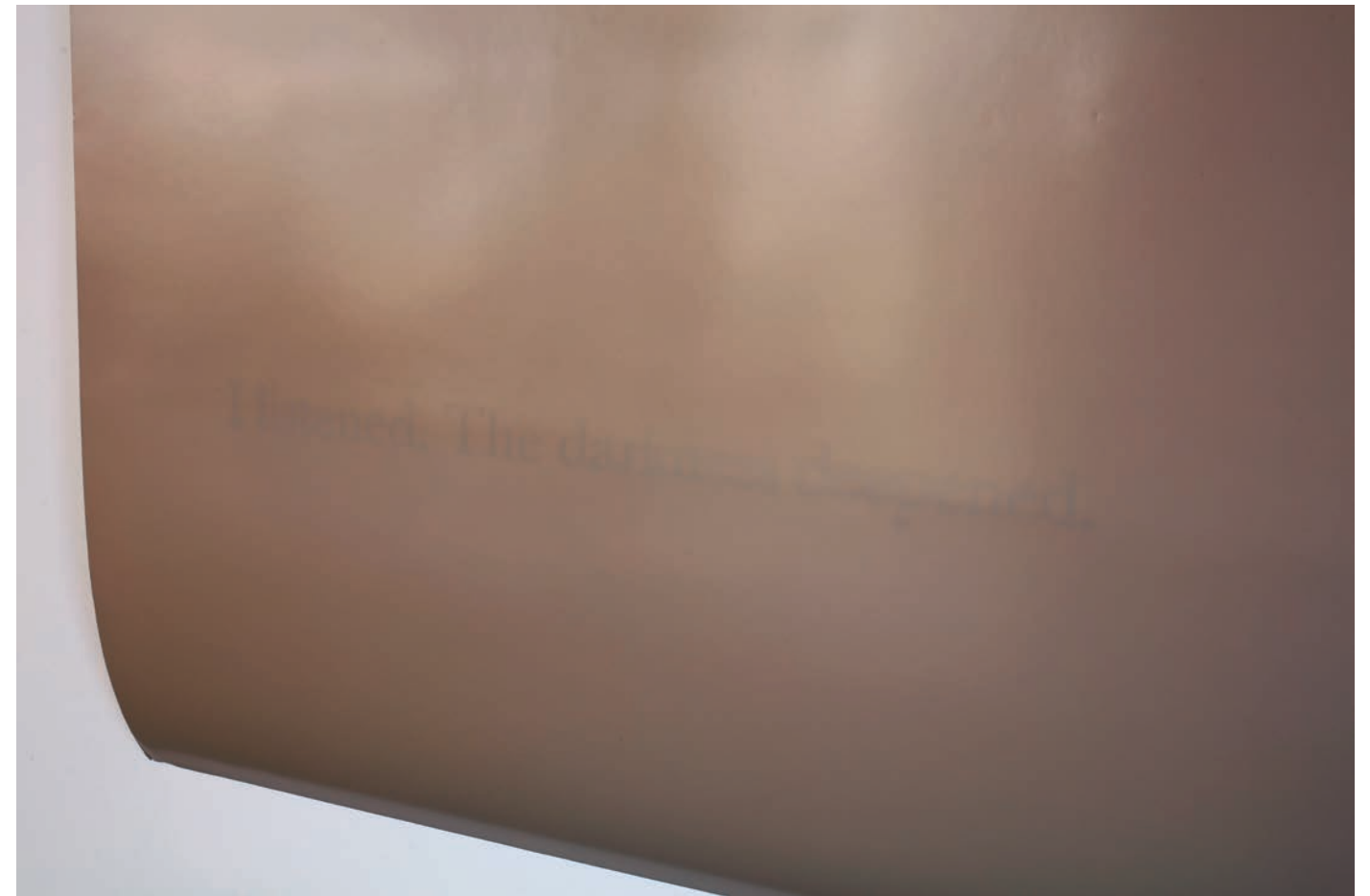




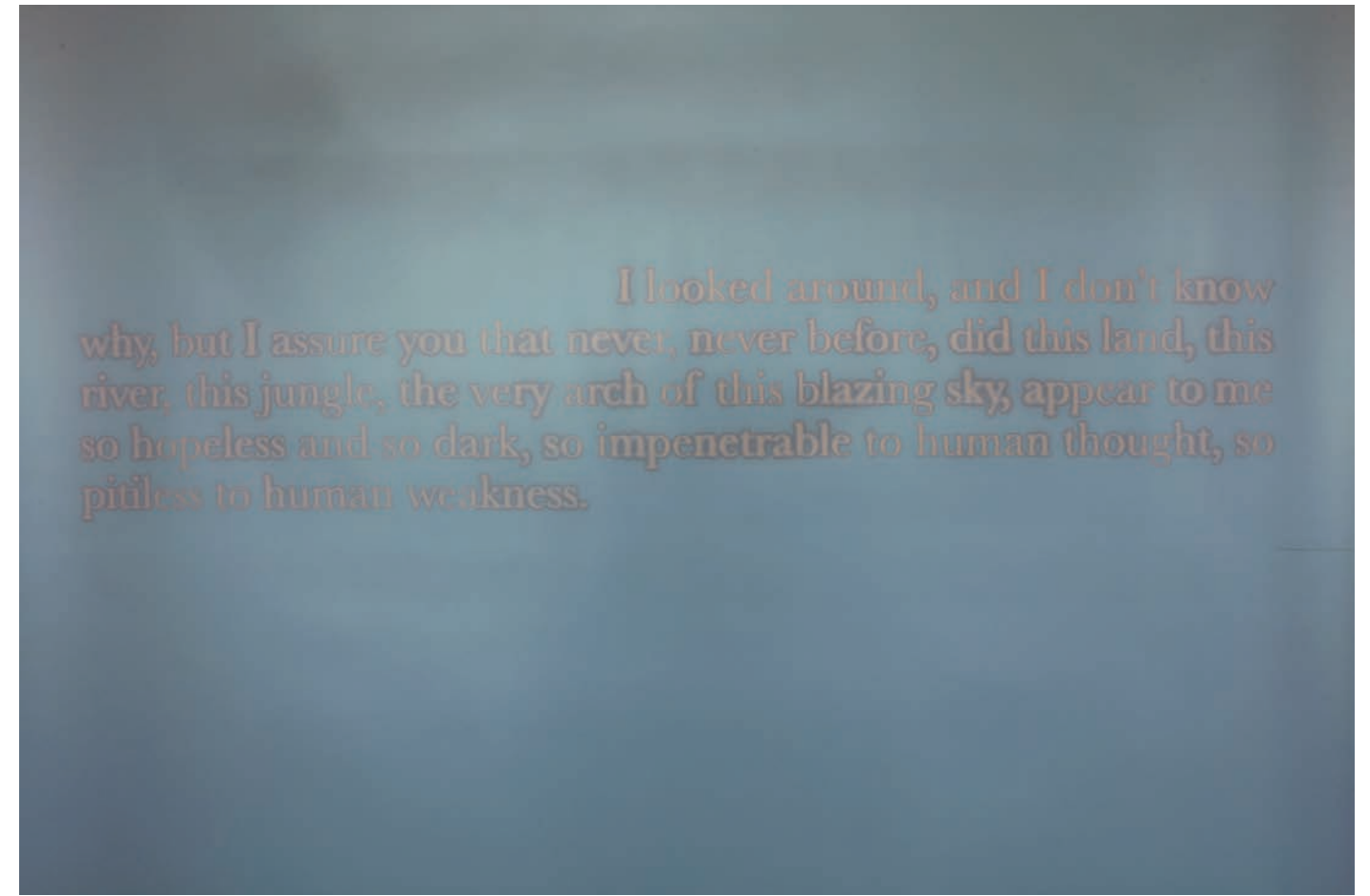




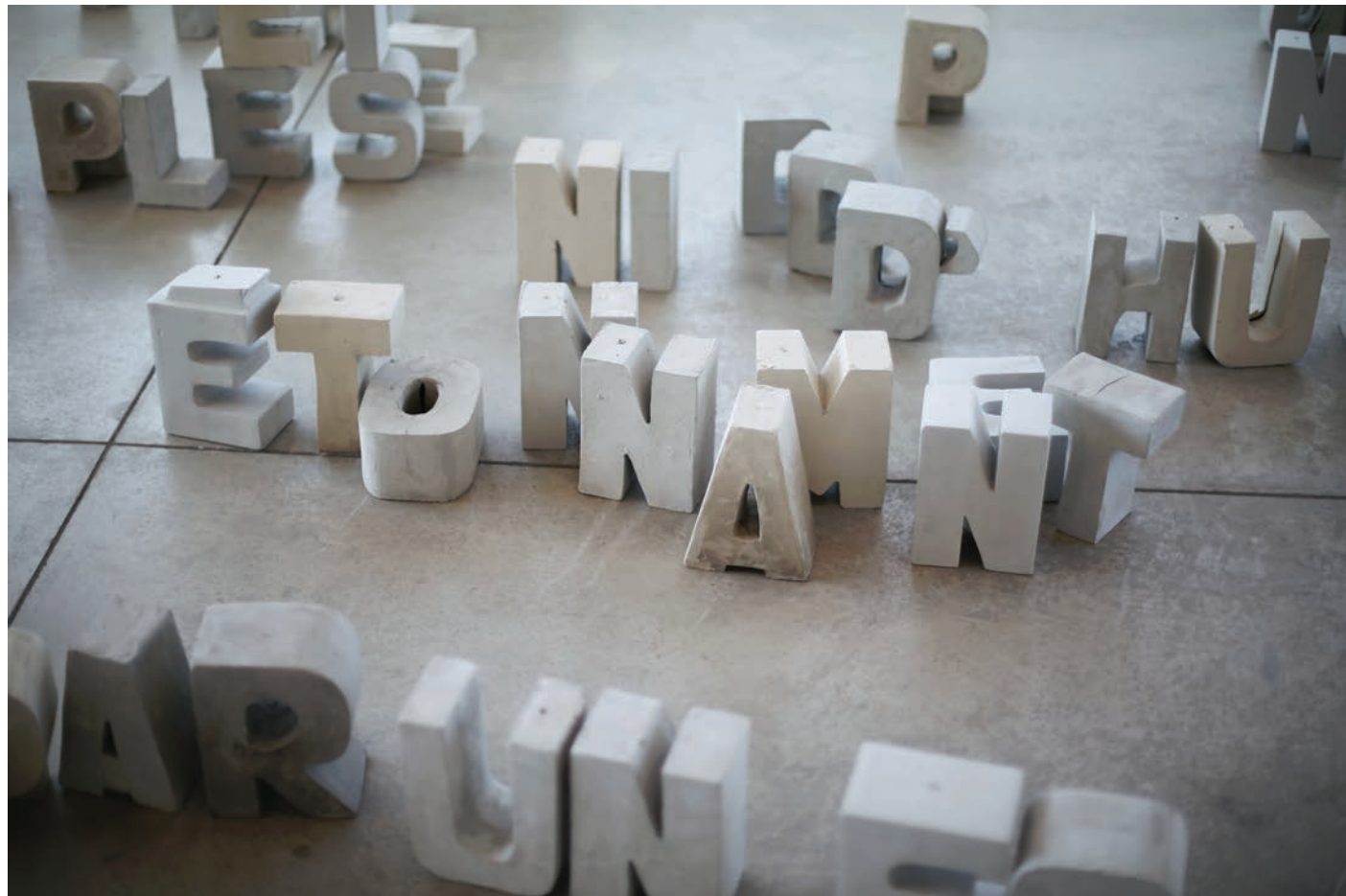
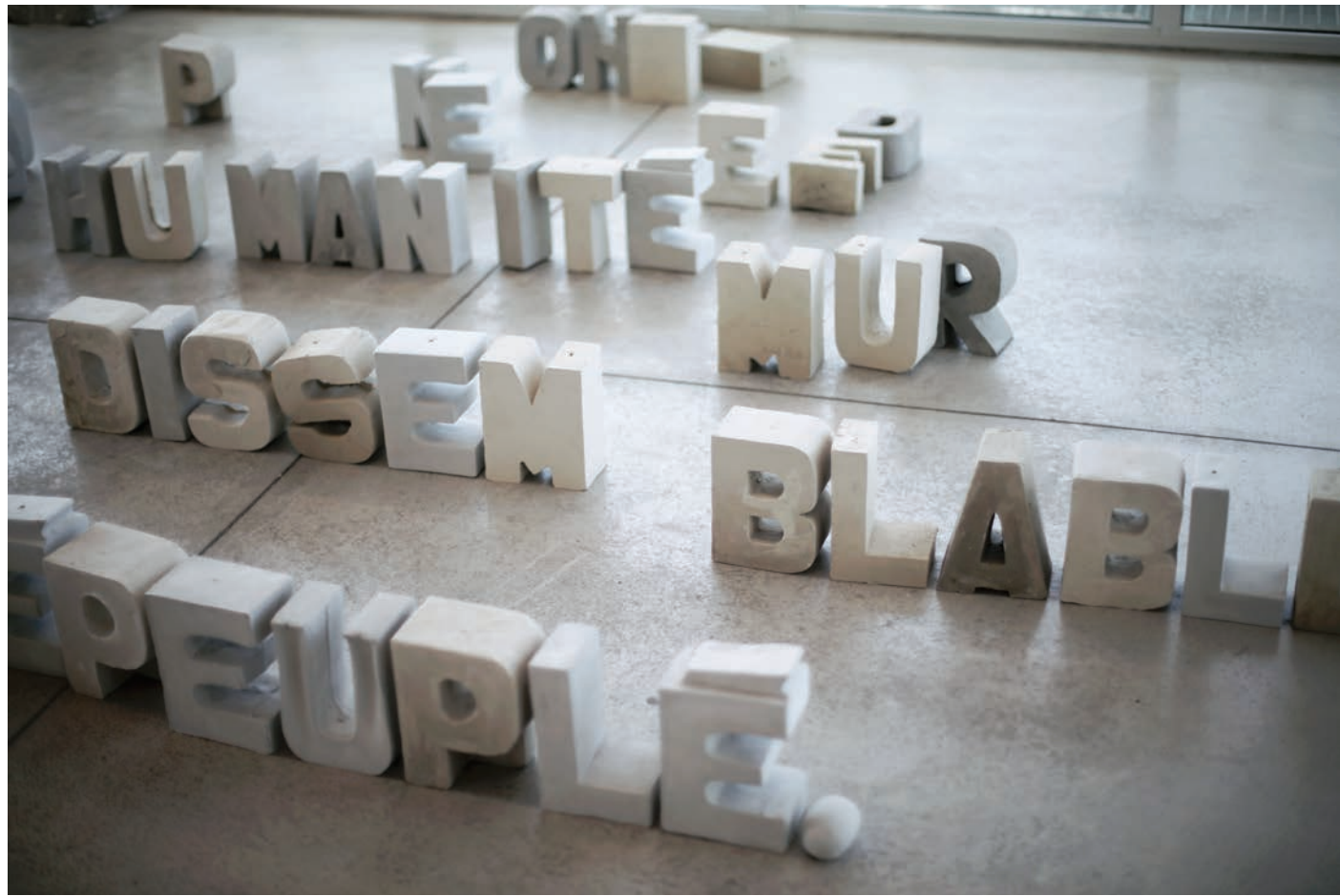




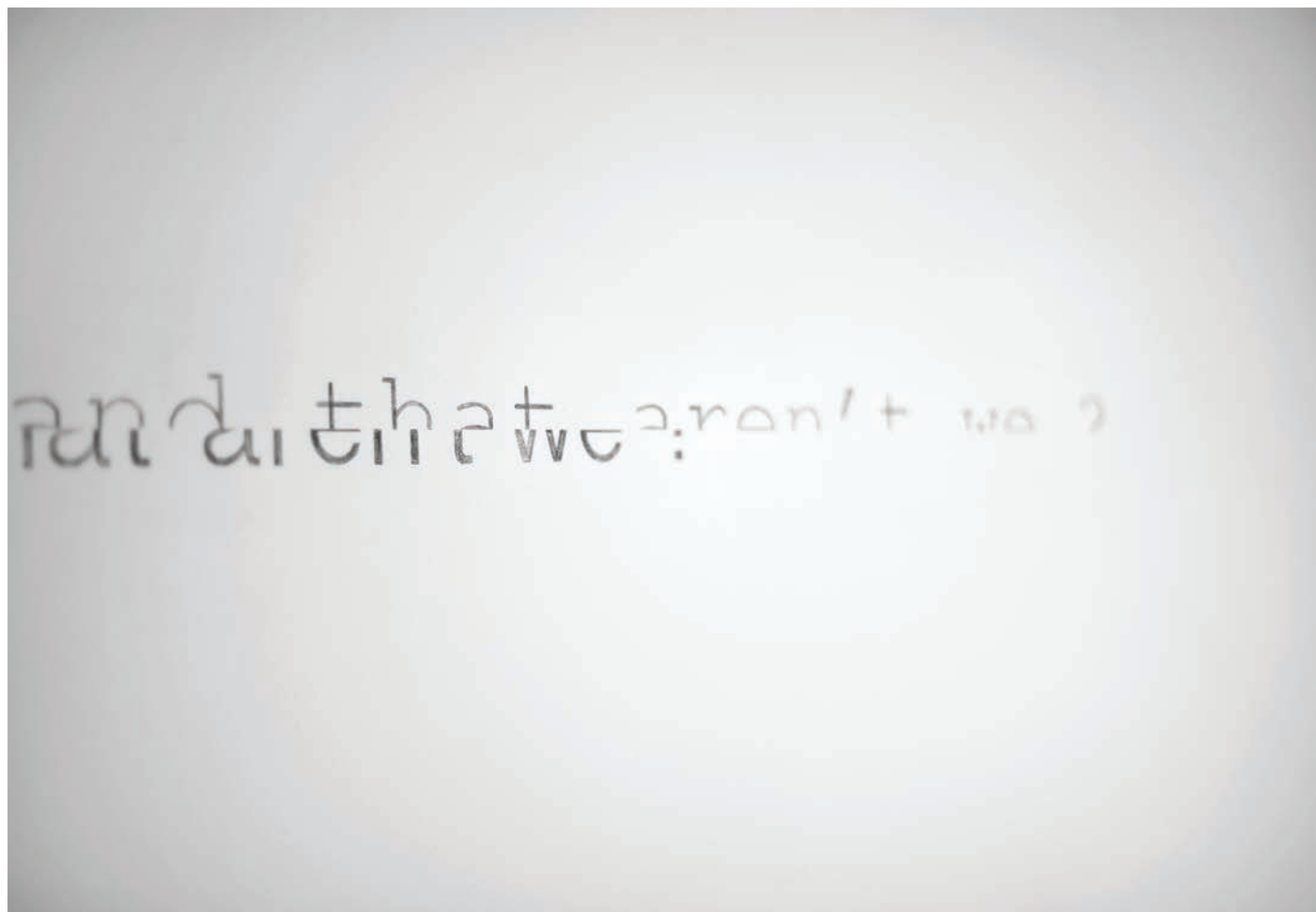




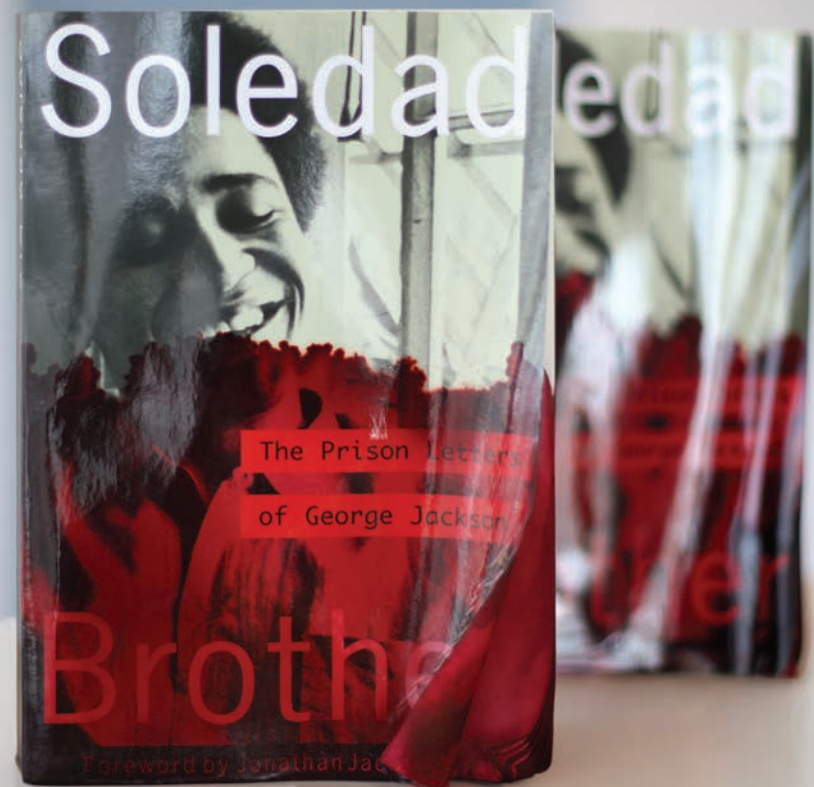














**Centre Pompidou Metz (France)**  
**“Infinite Garden. From Giverny to Amazonia”**  
**Curated by Emma Lavigne and Hélène Meisel**  
**2017**

It was believed that gardens had been buried by modernity under the triumph of green spaces limiting the organic to functional areas. Yet, they remain a source of fertile inspiration all along the 20th century and continue to deeply appeal to many artists. The garden captivates, not only for its nourishing, curative and ornamental virtues but also for its subversion. (...)

This exhibition of the Centre Pompidou-Metz depicts nature in the perspective of a metaphorical spring. Germination, blossoming and degeneration suggest the cycles of Earth, where the winter stop is the promise for future revolutions. Many artists venerate this vital momentum. Fertile ground of forms, the garden inspires artists with morphologies and fantastic metamorphoses revealing the intelligence of a nonhuman world. The explorations of the Earth lead to the ends of the known nature towards unspoiled territories that become new reserves of forms and motifs.

The garden is also the place of genetic bifurcation which alters determinisms in favour of evolution. While he immortalises in his glass framed herbarium a cherished flora, Émile Gallé takes interest for the anomalies – Are the Orchids wonders or monstrosities? At the same time, Claude Monet creates hybrids and gets plants from all over the world, triggering the ire of the local farmers who fear poisoning by these foreign flowers. A century later, Pierre Huyghe creates “condensates of Giverny” in climate-programmed aquariums. If acclimation awakes the naturalists’ curiosity, it also serves the interest of a “botanic of power”, working on the colonisation then the eradication of “green pests”. Yto Barrada, Thu Van Tran and Simon Starling study the problematic of coexistence between “native” and “neophyte” plant species. Beyond the exoticism, the tropical and biomorphic alternatives of Roberto Burle-Marx or Lina Bo Bardi in Latin America and in Brazil revivify the functionalism of the European modernity. (...)

At a time of intense intermixing, melting pot and migration phenomena which constantly reconfigure the biodiversity, the original fence of the garden, being material or conceptual, needs to be reevaluated. The exhibition takes the garden out of itself, going beyond the dialectic on which Michel Foucault had articulated during his conference “Of Other Spaces” in 1967, his heterotypic definition of the garden as “the smallest parcel of the world” and as the “totality of the world.” (...)

Emma Lavigne and Hélène Meisel











Born in Vietnam, French-Vietnamese artist Thu Van Tran addresses the colonial history of her native country and the impact of power and exploitation. Through readings of postcolonial inspiration, Thu Van Tran's work leads to a reflection on notions of temporality and space, geographical and cultural displacement.

In her latest works she deals with rubber, a symbol of the suppression of Vietnam under French colonial rule. The starting point for the works is a relief on the facade of the Palais de la Porte Dorée, which was built in Paris in 1931 on the occasion of the Colonial Exhibition. Here, the inhabitants of the French colonies are depicted while extracting raw materials such as rubber and exotic woods, yet inside the palace the so-called “intellectual” contributions by France to the civilization of the indigenous peoples are illustrated on a monumental fresco. In the sculpture *Échange de présents* (2016), Thu Van Tran takes up the material and the symbolism of rubber and illuminates the bitter irony in the depiction of the supposed exchange. Her works also visualize the influence of the occupying power's Western view on the population of the colonies in the writing of history. This memory work materializes in the photograms *Sunstroke* (2016) through traces of notebooks, sketch blocks and remnants from the artist's studio. The perspective passed on by Thu Van Tran is both conscious and poetic, an interrelationship that expresses itself as an idea that has its appropriate form.

**Frieze New York, New York (USA)**

**Solo show**

**2017**

























**La Biennale de Venise, l’Arsenale (Italy)**  
**“VIVA ARTE VIVA”**  
**Curated by Christine Macel**  
**2017**

Originally, there was no immaculate space. The phenomena of contamination oppose this phantasm of purity and so true are they that they achieve a form of perfection, reflecting what we are: mutant identities, woven of particles that have crossed the deserts of the Sahara, ardent and atomic clouds, murderous dioxins and the paths of exile. We, identities determined by our moving geography, forced to learn a foreign language, live and negotiate with our stains.

Contaminate, being contaminated, are also principles that we find in the vegetable world; they trace a history of the displacements of our modern world. I invest a work of contact, from the most concrete sculptural imprint to the most symbolic or embodied linguistic translations. It is always a question of grasping, of fixing the memory of contiguous forces and of translating their reciprocal intensities.

In this context, the project for Venice combines light as a source of energy and capture (photogram), the imprint as a process and activation of a memory (casting), the stain as an overflowing and autonomous landscape countering the idea of purity (flat white) and, finally, a film that petrifies the gestures executed under domination and delivered somewhere in the field of sculpture (from harvest to revolt). The whole feeding on a total relation to nature.

Thu Van Tran

The work of Thu Van Tran, which grew up between two cultures, is inspired by literature, history, architecture and nature. She presents four works that raise questions about rubber from the point of view of history and the senses. The rubber tree symbolizes the abuse of power and domination of the colonial conquests in many countries. The film *Des Gestes Démesurément Contraints. De Récolte à Révolte* gathers images on the old Michelin plantations in Vietnam, where some people are shown at work. Later, hands appear shaping other hands, frozen in gesture and sculpture, a liberation which results in the appearance of a language. To be indignant, gather, abandon, build, destroy, betray, milk, flee... are all gestures and acts that can be transcribed. A site-specific painting spreads colorful stain over two adjacent walls consists of an indelible mixture of rubber and chemical pigment which, like a second skin, coats and penetrates the white and immaculate body of the wall. On the surface, hang three photograms with the imprints of different tropical plants, including the Hevea tree, reproduced also on the floor in wax casts arranged symmetrically in wooden boxes. The artist's works, offering art as a means of transformation of our determinism due to the history, reveal the shortcomings and irrationality of human nature.

Claudia Buizza

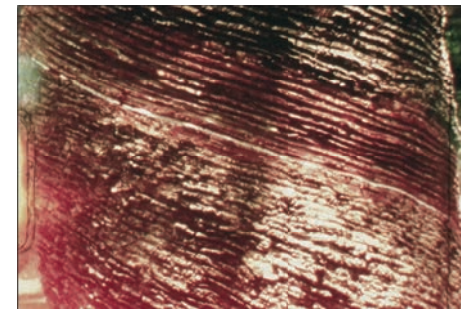


































**Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)**  
**“Mountains are like the bones of the earth. Water is its blood.”**  
**2017**

The geography of Vietnam is meandering. From the outset, some would say that its unusual configuration raises the question of the oneness of the country. Vietnam extends for 1600 km, from the Chinese border in Upper Tonkin to the tip of Cape Camau in the far south. This elongation of the territory, this symmetry running from the northern mountains to the waters of the south, passing from one delta to another, and which is separated from fine soils in its centre could introduce a certain bipolarity into people's view of my country. But in reality, this is a simplistic vision, as the two extremities have been linked since the dawn of time by the flow of the currents and natural energies. The country's skeleton is the undulating and luxuriant land that we know from North to South, nourished by the waters that come down from the high plateaux to flow abundantly into the Southern Delta, its lifeblood. Filling the country's entire geography with life, sound and magic. The nature of Vietnam is what has returned it to what it is. It is nature that, with equilibrium and strength, enabled some to cope, and forced others to retreat. Vietnam's bipolarity comes from its occupation. From the dual ways of thinking that intervened on its soil with the Western presences. Whereas the uniqueness of its geology, the equilibrium of its resources and the beauty of its nature form an integral whole.

The French occupation of Vietnam took various forms, sometimes barbaric, sometimes ridiculous. Dedicated to the city of Paris, a 'monument to the glory of French colonial expansion' completed in 1920 stood in front of the Palais des Colonies following the colonial exhibition in 1931. It was moved to the Tropical Garden of Paris (in Nogent-sur-Marne) much later, amid the ruins of the pavilions of other colonised countries. Today, this fragmented monument is still on display, although hidden from view, since it is now a ruin acting as a reminder of the decline of the colonial empire: the glorious cockerel is missing a foot, fungus is eating away at the face of the Republic and the grey of the stone is overgrown with moss.

I felt it was important to take a plaster cast of the feet of the Republic and photograph the dimension of the ruin in black and white. A film sublimates the sculpture, whose capacity to reveal history is weighty but powerful: substance as evidence. It also shows a contemporary aspect of this garden, as its users take back ownership on a daily basis, with some of them reacting to the site's past.

In fact, there is nothing tropical about this tropical garden: the bamboos there are stringy and not very green, and there are no glasshouses. On the other hand, local Kung Fu clubs come here to train, and veggie Oriental Yoga courses are proving a great success in this setting, and crews come here to film RAP or R'n'B videos. The only thing that is tropical about this garden is the feeling of a voluntary, contrived exoticism.

Why, when a Vietnamese firm, involved in the construction of a new urban landscape in Saigon, the former capital of Vietnam, was decorating its site, did it decide to adorn the outside walls with tarpaulins printed with scenes depicting the West? Why, right in the middle of Saigon, should we be seeing Miami Beach, Swiss mountains or French formal gardens? Why should these oversized photographs (sometimes up to ten metres long) reign supreme in the city? I recovered several of these tarpaulins to exhibit them as evidence of a political reality (decline of communist thinking and a reminder of the past occupation) as well as a physical reality (fading due to sunlight, worn fabric). These tarpaulins, after just a few years of exposure to daylight, were turning blue. These pallid landscapes that we were supposed to find appealing are outdated, obsolete, as if belonging to old dreams or hopes. A blend of nostalgia and envy. The Western ideal turned out to be just a distant memory, an illusion, something that fades away, like these eroded, worn out landscapes, increasingly inaccessible. Renamed Ho Chi Minh City, my city will always remain Saigon, the colonial city.

Thu Van Tran, July 2017













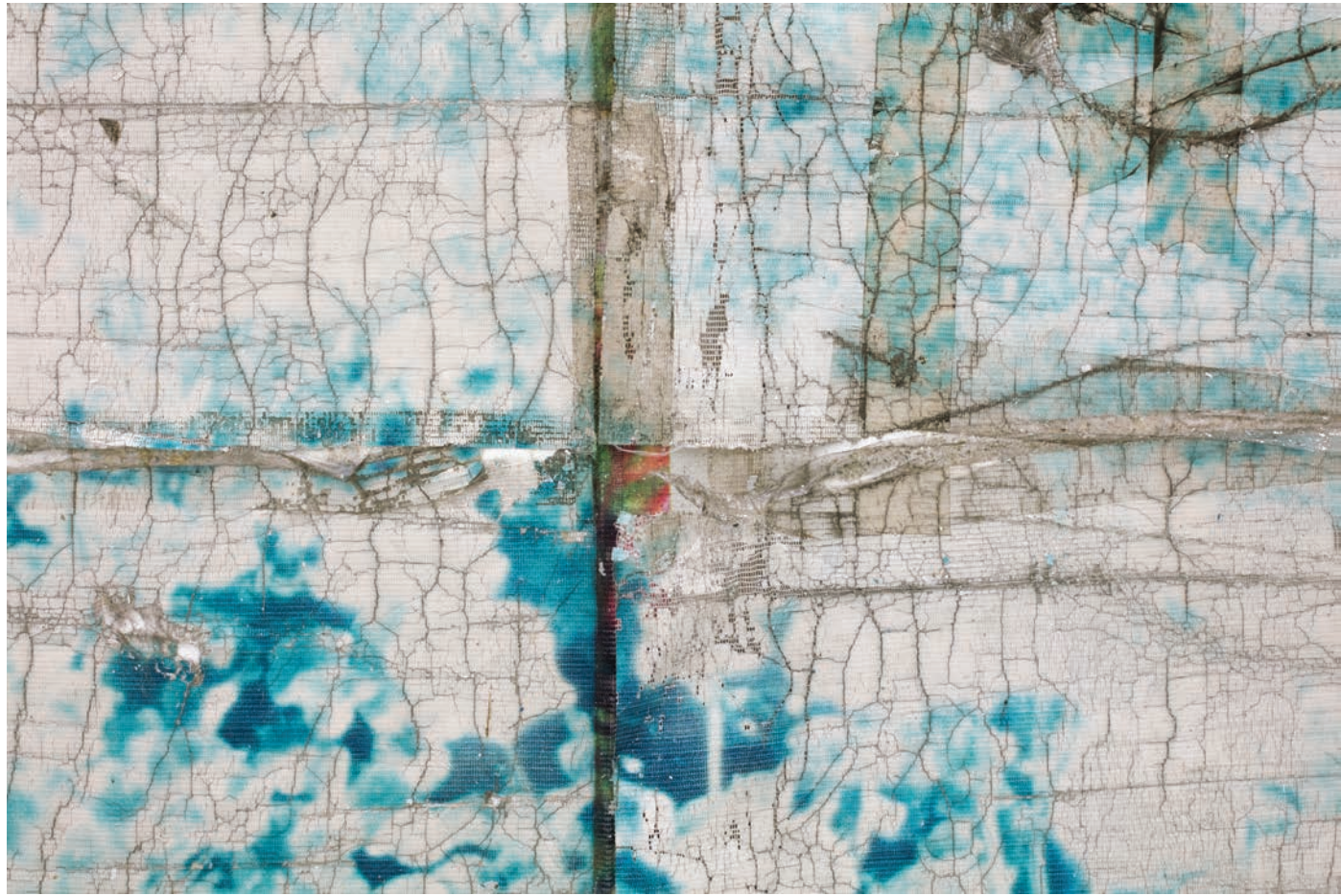




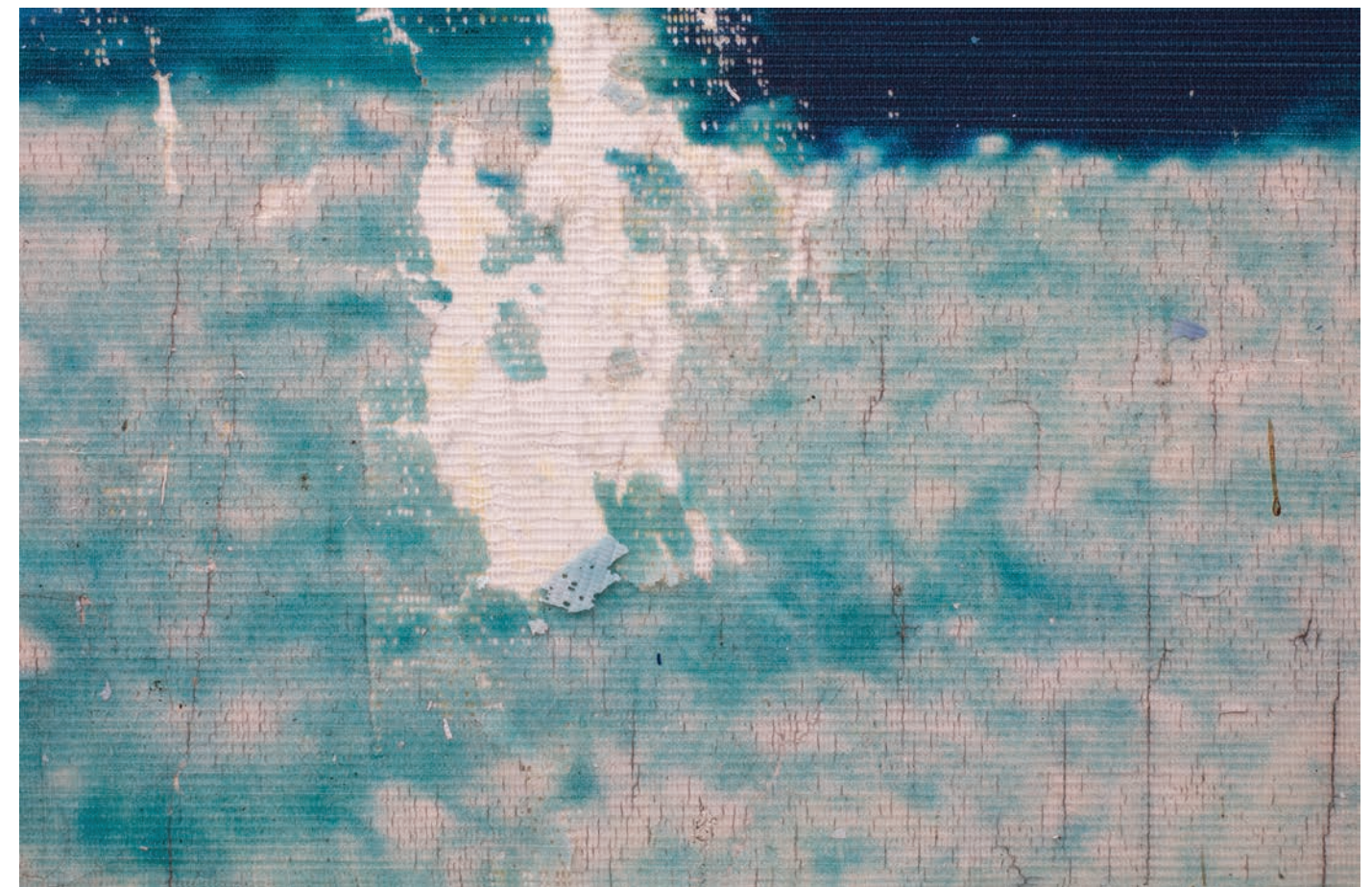














**Joseph Tang Gallery, Paris (France)**  
**“The blind excuse”**  
**Duo show with Marieta Chirulescu**  
**2017**

















**FIAC 2017, Paris (France)**  
**Stand Meessen De Clercq**  
**Duo show with Claudio Parmiggianni**  
**2017**

The library collects molds made in plaster of nineteen letters and two punctuations which allowed us to materialize in clay a poem in four verses by Fernando Pessoa. This poem excerpted from “ other poems “ evokes the impossibility to belong to an earth, the feeling of a political and melancholic exile. A subtraction of the man from the reality. Pessoa signs then under a heteronym: Alberto Caeiro, a fictitious author.

Molds appear as the possibility for these verses to exist, and for any poetry to exist. The word here is shown in what contains it. In the fragile frame, the mold, which I have tried to protect since the plaster being mineralized, became brittle, broke, and has fossilized, the wax prostheses come to support this possibility of the speech to be born and to emancipate itself by its own appearance. These molds are at the same time the possible proliferation of the word while alarming us on its absence or its potentiel disappearance. Becoming fossils of letters, they are a sculptural genealogy of the word. Word which was lacking and is still lacking for the exiled identity.

Finally our melancholy has also a color, the bleu, the blue of the sky, a light, the blue of our dreams. The library hides then these moments of breath where the look stops and can marvel on nuances of blue, a window. The wood of oak is here harvested from our French forests.

Thu Van Tran, october 2017.  
Project shown w/ Meessen De Clercq.

“They spoke to me of people, and of humanity.  
But I’ve never seen people, or humanity.  
I’ve seen various people, astonishingly dissimilar,  
Each separated from the next by an unpeopled space.”  
Alberto Caeiro.















Montag or the library-in-the-making explores the links between literature and the visual arts, reflecting artists' unflagging interest in the literary medium. It brings together some thirty works on the subject, either in the form of adaptations of famous texts via the visual arts (sculpture, videos, installation, design, etc.) in particular, or by directly reworking the textual matter, subjecting it to a host of transformations, new twists, recoups and other 'affronts'. A final section is devoted more specifically to libraries, as well as to books, which are regularly the targets of censorship in repressive political regimes; in view of such violations book production has become stronger than ever among artists for whom literature remains an unrivalled field of experimentation and who are highly instrumental in its revival.

**FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon (France)**

**“Montag or the library-in-the-making”**

**curated by Patrice Joly**

**2017**











**Moderna Museet, Stockholm (Sweden)**

**“Manipulate the world”**

**Curated by Fredrik Liew, Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby**

**2017**

“Manipulate The World” is a contemporary group show that departs from three historical works by Öyvind Fahlström, Dr Schweitzer’s Last Mission (1964-66), World Bank (1971) and Mao Hope March (1966). These works establish a playing field for the exhibition where Fahlström’s theatrical stagings of fact and fantasy are returned in a contemporary “game” about politics and economy.

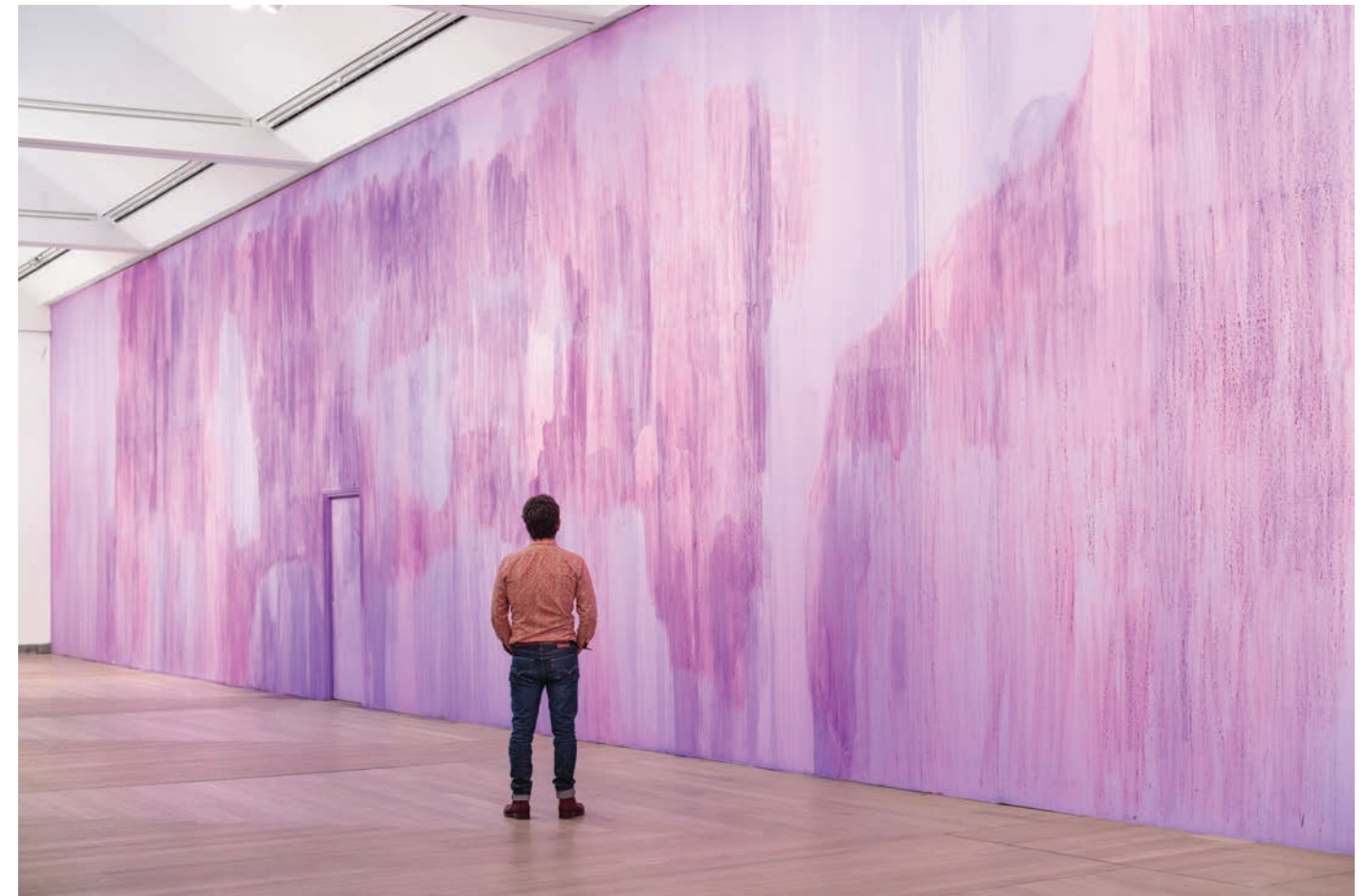
The exhibition is divided in two exhibition spaces occupying ground and bottom floors of the museum. The ground floor takes its cue from the installation Dr Schweitzer’s Last Mission (1964-66). The work has borrowed its title from the missionary Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), information and pictures are gathered as fragments and put together as a whole in a scenographical tableau. Even though the work is not strictly a game, the form of it brings to mind game pieces distributed on a surface where fact, fiction, irrationality and psychedelic esoterism are mixed in a story with an open end. In a similar way the exhibition seeks to put in motion the theatrical as a way of relating to the world. In the window less rooms in the bottom floor a staged depot of gold (Öyvind Fahlström’s World Bank, 1971) is the center for a story about the distribution of money and power in the world. Taking its cue from Fahlström’s installation this part of the show is taking form as a “hidden zone”.

(...)

Thu Van Tran’s work consists of three parts, each relating to rubber as a historically important raw material in the colonial exploitation of Vietnam. The large wall painting, made of rubber and a chemical pigment, stains the white wall of the exhibition space and seems to spread infinitely. One of the films projected on the painting shows workers on a plantation in Vietnam belonging to a major tyre manufacturer; the other shows a series of petrified hand gestures relating to dominance. The Hevea tree from which rubber is extruded, is monumentalised in casted sculptures.

(...)















## THU VAN TRAN

Born in 1979, in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Lives and works in Paris (France)

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

#### **2018**

Cristallerie Saint-Louis, Fondation Hermès, St Louis (France) Curated by Marie Colette - upcoming

VCCA (Vincom Center for Contemporary Art), Hanoi (Vietnam) Curated by Mizuki Endo - upcoming

SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (Germany), Curated by Lynhan Balatbat and Marleen Schröde - upcoming

Fondation Martell, Cognac (France) Curated by Nathalie Viot - upcoming

#### **2017**

*Mountains are like the bones of the earth. Water is its blood.*, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

*The blind excuse*, Joseph Tang Gallery, Paris (France) with Marieta Chirulescu

*Frieze* New York, New York (USA)

#### **2016**

*Listen, the Darkness Deepens*, Ladera Oeste, Guadalajara (Mexico)

*From stamping to reading*, Macleay Museum, Sydney (Australia)

*Echange de présents*, Curated by Marius Babias, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (Germany)

*Ecrire et autres Eclats*, Médiathèque - Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (France)

#### **2015**

*We are this and that aren't we?*, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

*Cao su pleure*, Galerie Art et Essai, Rennes (France)

#### **2013**

*Statements*, Meessen De Clercq, Art Basel, Basel (Switzerland)

*La dix-huitième place*, Centre d'Art Villa du Parc, Annemasse (France)

#### **2012**

*We Live in the Flicker*, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

#### **2011**

*La Tache*, Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris (France)

#### **2010**

*Le Nombre Pur selon Duras*, La Maison Rouge-Le Patio, Paris (France)

#### **2009**

*Fahrenheit 451 -Homme Livre Homme Livre*, Bétonsalon-Centre d'Art et de Recherche, Paris (France)

#### **2007**

Thu Van Tran, L'Espace-Centre Culturel Français de Hanoi, Hanoi (Vietnam)

#### **2006**

*Lumière Arrière*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Mulhouse, Mulhouse (France)

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

#### **2018**

Carré d'Art, Nîmes (France) upcoming

#### **2017**

*Manipulate the world*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (Sweden)

*Montag or the possible libraries*, curated by Patrice Joly, Frac Franche-Comté (France)

*Ostranénie*, ENSAPC YGREC, Paris (France)

VIVA ARTE VIVA, 57th Biennale di Venezia, Venice (Italy)

Jardin infini, De Giverny à l'Amazonie, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz (France)

#### **2016**

*La timidité des cimes*, Le Parvis, Tarbes (France)

*Remember Lidice*, Lidice Museum, Lidice (Czech Republic)

#### **2015**

A.N.T.H.R.O.P.O.C.E.N.E, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

*Soudain... la neige*, Maison d'Art Bernard Anthonioz, Nogent-sur-Marne (France)

*Dévider le réel*, FRAC Midi-Pyrénées, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (France)

*A brief history of future*, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium)

*Presque la même chose*, Kunsthalle, Mulhouse (France)

#### **2014**

*Matérialisme hstérique*, Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (France)

*Le corps invisible*, Galerie Édouard Manet, Gennevilliers (France)

*Sans titre (Je suis là)*, Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (France)

*Saint Jerome*, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

*Interprète*, curated by Xavier Franceschi, FRAC Ile-de-France, Paris (France)

*Nuit Blanche*, Espace des arts sans frontière, Paris (Fance)

#### **2013**

*The Unanswered Question*, curated by René Block, TANAS, Berlin (Germany)

*Le Musée éclaté de la Presqu'Île de Caen*, Le Mécip, Saint Aubin d'Arquenay (France)

#### **2012**

*L'Homme de Vitruve*, Le Crédac-Centre d'Art d'Ivry-sur-Seine (France) Curated by Claire Le Restif

*Twentieth to twentieth*, End of Century Gallery, New York (USA) Curated by Joseph Tang

*Particles*, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels (Belgium)

#### **2011**

*Soudain déjà*, Beaux-Arts de Paris, Paris (France) Curated by Guillaume Désanges

*Au grenier quatre pièces de mémoire*, Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart, Rochechouart (France)

Curated by Olivier Michelin

#### **2010**

*All Over*, Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris (France)

*Le Carillon de Big Ben*, Le Crédac-Centre d'Art d'Ivry-sur-Seine, Ivry-sur-Seine (France) Curated by Claire Le Restif

#### **2009**

*Meeting you half way*, Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris (France)

*Phase Zéro*, Galerie Serge Aboukrat, Paris (France)

*Là où je suis n'existe pas*, Le Printemps de Septembre à Toulouse-Lieu Commun, Toulouse (France) Curated by Christian Bernard

*Memory of void*, Kimusa, Seoul, (South Korea) Proposal by the Artsonje Center and curated by Nathalie Viot

#### **2007**

*Expérience Insulaires*, Le Crédac - Centre d'Art d'Ivry-sur-Seine, Ivry-sur-Seine (France) Curated by Jean-Paul Felley and Olivier Kaeser

#### **2006**

*Voir en peinture 2*, La Générale, Paris (France) Curated by Éric Corne

*Tolerate me*, Galerie DAP, Warszawa (Poland)



## 2005

Galerie Hengevoss-Durkop, Hamburg (Germany)

## 2004

Félicité, Beaux-Arts de Paris, Paris (France) Curated by Maria de Coral and Éric Corne

PremièreVue, Galerie du Passage de Retz, Paris (France) Curated by Michel Nuridsany

Singles, Galerie Pitch, Paris (France) Curated by Christian Bernard

## CURATING AND ARTISTIC DIRECTION

## 2014

*Duras Song*, an exhibition concerning Marguerite Duras archives activated in an installation by Thu Van Tran and curated with Jean-Max Colard, Centre Pompidou, Paris (France)

## 2006

*Hradacany*, curated with Yann Chateigné, La Générale, Paris (France)

## RESIDENCIES

## 2016

Neuer Berliner Kunstverein Residency, Berlin (Germany)

## 2014

Capacete, Rio de Janero (Brazil)

## 2012

Hors les Murs, Institut Français, New York (USA)

## 2010

La Fabrik, grant of the city of Burgdorf, Bern (Switzerland)

## 2009

Seoul Art Space, Geumcheon, Seoul (South Korea)

## 2007/2008

Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (France)

## PUBLIC ACQUISITIONS

## 2017

Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris (France)

## 2015

Collection of Les Abattoirs - Musée d'art moderne et contemporain and FRAC Midi-Pyrénées (France)

## 2011

Collection of Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart, Rochechouart (France)

Commission by the Centre Georges Pompidou for the realization of works for the Children's Museum of the Louvre Abu-Dhabi, Abu-Dhabi (United Emirates)

## 2010

Collection of the Fond Municipal d'Art Contemporain de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France)

## 2008

Public commission for the multimedia library of the city of Poissy, Poissy (France)

## GRANTS AND PRIZES

## 2016

Short listed for The Meurice Prize for Contemporary Art, The Meurice Hotel (France)

## 2013

Production allowance, Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphique et Plastique (France)

## 2010

Installation allowance, Drac Ile-de-France (France)

## 2009

Finalist Audi Talents Awards, Paris (France)

Individual creation allowance, Drac Ile-de-France (France)

Support of the Amis de la Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris (France)

## 2008

Exhibition allowance, Département des Affaires Culturelles de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France)

## 2006

Individual creation allowance, Drac Ile-de-France (France)

## 2005

Installation allowance, Drac Ile-de-France (France)

Laureate Mulhouse 05 Prize, participation proposed by Henry-Claude Cousseau, Mulhouse (France)

## 2004

Project allowance, Département des Affaires Culturelles de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY / ARTIST PUBLICATIONS

## 2017

*Tié menteur*, edited by Manucius, 50 pages black and white, further to the research seminar Les Contemporains (Universités Paris 7 et 13), invited by Magali Nachtergaele - upcoming

*Viva ArteViva*, 57th International Art Exhibition: La Biennale Di Venezia, exhibition catalog, Christine Macel (ed.), Rizzoli, ISBN: 978-0-8478-6115-6

*Jardin infini. De Giverny à l'Amazonie*, exhibition catalog, Centre Pompidou Metz, 256 pages, ISBN 978-2-35983-046-0 (Text Emma Lavigne, Hélène Meisel)

## 2016

*A brief history of the future*, exhibition catalog, edited by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, 240 pages, ISBN 978-94-6161-247-2

## 2015

*La Rouge*, exhibition catalogue, edited by Lendroit Éditions and University-Rennes, 68 pages, ISBN 978-2-917427-86-6

*Au plus profond du Noir*, subjective translation of Joseph Conrad novel *Heart of Darkness*, 18x11 cm, 248 pages, second edition, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, ISBN 978-2-930528-12-0

## 2014

*D'Emboutir à Lire*, contribution for the magazine "Initiales" - n°3 on Marguerite Duras (directed by Claire Moulène)

## 2013

Thu Van Tran. *Nos Lumières / Our Lights*, monography, edited by Meessen De Clercq

*Au plus profond du Noir*, a subjective translation of Joseph Conrad novel *Heart of Darkness*, 18x11 cm, 232 pages, ISBN 978-2-930528-11-3

A 24 pages edition by Manuel Burgener

## 2012

*L'Homme de Vitruve*, exhibition catalogue, edited by Crédac (Text Claire Lerestif)

## 2011

*Soudain déjà*, exhibition catalogue, edited by Beaux-Arts de Paris (Text Hélène Meisel)

*Menteur*, magazine "J'aime beaucoup ce que vous faites" (invited by Christian Alandete)

## 2010

*Le Dessin Collectif*, magazine "ROVEN" - n°2 autumn (Text Daphné Lesergent)

## 2009

*Là où je suis n'existe pas*, Le Printemps de Septembre, exhibition catalogue



**2007**

Expériences Insulaires, magazine “Semaines” - n°61, Edited by Analogues

**2006**

ICI-ICAR, exhibition catalogue, edited by the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Mulhouse

**PRESS**

**2017**

Le Monde, 20 October 2017, “A la FIAC, de l’étrangeté, mais peu d’horizon” by Emmanuelle Lequeux

Beaux-Arts Magazine, 18 October 2017, “FIAC 2017 - Nos artistes coup de cœur” by Emmanuelle Lequeux

HART, September 2017, “Thu Van Tran” by Sam Steverlynck

Le Vif / Focus, 22 September 2017, “Civiliser dit-elle” by Michel Verlinden

Creators, 21 August 2017, “9 Breakout Artists from the Venice Biennale” by Marina Garcia-Vasquez

Monopol, June 2017, “Treffer versenkt”

Le Quotidien de l’Art, 11 May 2017, “Christine Macel réenchante la Biennale de Venise” by Roxana Azimi and Philippe Régnier

blogs.leschos.fr, 10 May 2017, “Biennale de Venise 2017 : un art loin du marché, des artifices et de la décoration” by Judith Benhamou

The Art Newspaper, 10 May 2017, “ ‘Reinventing the world’: Venice Biennale gives older and lesser-known artists their due” by Jane Morris

Le Monde Magazine, March 2017, “Puissante Amazonie” by Roxana Azimi

**2016**

Leap, October 2016, “Raw Material in the Broad Daylight” by Jo-ey Tang

**2015**

Código, Mexican magazine, February-March 2015, “Thu Van Tran” review by Amanda de la Garza

**2014**

Libération, 28th October 2014, “Duras un écrivain pur Song” by Philippe Lançon

Le Quotidien de l’Art, 22th October 2014, “Du No future au No Past une fusion entre nature et culture à (Off)icielle” by Cédric Aurelle

France 2, 22th October 2014, reportage Culturebox by Marie-Christine Sentenac

Beaux-Arts Magazine, October 2014, “En route vers la gloire” by Emmanuelle Lequeux

**2013**

Zérodeux, N°67, “Derniers usages de la littérature” by Patrice Joly

**2012**

Les Inrocks, 10 October, “Outils de résistance” by Claire Moulène

L’art même – N°55 2nd term, 2012, “Art et littérature” by Magali Nachtergaele

**2011**

Le journal des Arts - 4 - 17 November, “Multiplicité d’une époque” by Frédéric Bonnet

Connaissance des Arts - October, “Jeunes pousses” by Damien Sausset

Artforum - summer, “Thu Van Tran” by Liliane Davies

Lunettesrouges.lemonde.fr - 28 March, “Entre gui parasite et l’amour victorieux, une courbure dans la trajectoire de la lumière” by Marc Lenot

**2010**

Lunettesrouges.lemonde.fr - 18 February, “Marguerite Duras, Billancourt, et le nombre pur” by Marc Lenot

**2009**

Artparis.com, December, “Meeting you half way”, by Sarah Ihler-Meyer

Le Monde - 29 September, “Printemps de Septembre” by Emmanuelle Lequeux

Lacritique.org - 14 October, “Printemps de Septembre. Dialogue de dessins, vidéos, sculpture et dialectique critique” by Christian Gattinoni

Lunettesrouges.lemonde - 1 October, “Les quatuors de Christian Bernard” by Marc Lenot

Lacritique.org - 22 April, “Fahrenheit 45, Homme livre Homme libre” by Daphné Lesergent

**2008**

Lunettesrouges.lemonde - 21 February, “Fahrenheit 451 à Bétonsalon” by Marc Lenot

**2007**

Archistorm, Summer 2008, “La possibilité d’une île” by Juliette Soulez

**2006**

Mouvement - “La culture de l’alternative” by David Samson

Art21 - ”Expériences insulaires” by Garance Chabert

Lacritique.org - 5 April, “Les faux-semblants de l’héritage formaliste” by Daphné Lesergent

**EDUCATION**

**2003**

MFA (with mention) delivered by the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts of Paris, France (from Bernard Piffaretti and Jean-Marc Bustamante studios)

**2002**

Exhibition practice seminar (Directed by Christian Bernard)

**2001**

Formation Fonderie Coubertin - Compagnons du Devoir (France)

**2000**

Glasgow School of Art, UK (Environmental Design Department)