

MAC

Press Release

VAL

Tout En Un Plus Trois All In One Plus Three

Exhibition of Elisabeth Ballet
from 21 Octobre 2017 to
25 February 2018

Opening on Friday 20 October,
6:30pm

Curator Frank Lamy
assisted by Julien Blanpied

For the MAC VAL, the exhibition around Elisabeth Ballet's work is the occasion to reconnect with monographic shows by dedicating the entirety of its 1,300 m² space to this established French artist who had stayed away from the spotlights for a while. "Tout En Un Plus Trois" offers a comprehensive look over more than 30 years of production. However, it is not entirely conceived as a retrospective show since each work, picked from one of the many artist's series –all featured here- is reactivated for the occasion, reinvented, if not reinterpreted. Curator Frank Lamy rather calls it a "prospective retrospective". The MAC VAL exhibition thus sheds light on Elisabeth Ballet's work from the perspective of 2017, telling a story in present instead of past time. Materials and forms build in, complete, repel, attract each other and invite visitors to wander through a big scenography playing with and turning into an architecture; where bodies interact with sculptures, artworks channel our attention, define spaces of protection, create perspectives, turn into sculptures, paths, hallways, and threshold; where sometimes words create artworks and artworks play on words. As always, Elisabeth Ballet scatters bits and pieces of her autobiography by unveiling a subtle opposition between public and private space, drawing the outline of a story.

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Elisabeth Ballet's works usually originate in the experience of a specific site; they are elaborated and constructed out of the constraints and specificities of the occasion for which they are produced. In the case of a retrospective, which by definition is an assemblage of heterogeneous elements, how can original, strong interdependence with the originating locus be conveyed in a secondary space whose architecture is itself very resonant?

We worked out several hypotheses, several scenarios. We made choices. 'We concentrated on the sculptures independently of the context of their making. They were sampled from the series *Vie privée*, *Sept pièces faciles*, *Night Roofline* and *Face-à-main*. The material and personal constraints are essential in choosing, creating and conceptually shaping an exhibition.' And we opted for a retrospective view, preferring autonomous works, simply placed there, as if nonchalantly laid out, in a dandyish arrangement where they reflect the question of place and orchestrate movement. She says: 'I imagine the works rather as the pieces in an electronic billiards game. Seeing the exhibition is like rebounding from one piece to another.'

An exhibition tells a story/stories. A spatial and mental narrative. This goes beyond the simple fact of bringing together disparate works in the same space. For Ballet, each exhibition is a *replayground*.

Each of the works here is a fragment, part of a narrative constituted by the series and/or the exhibition for which they were made. The retrospective exhibition samples sections and heterogeneous elements from these narratives, organising them and modulating them in other narrative weaves.

All in one plus three.

The notes that accompany each work and each exhibition, written by the artist after the event, relate their origins, their movements and their making. They are related, narrated and placed in an overall narrative, a 'biographical' chronicle that is itself made up of the assemblage of all these related *gestures*, but never assigns a meaning, a direction, a signification other than that of their necessary presence.

Ballet's works are grounded in the place of sculpture. Often, these works designate a space that they do not occupy. They frequently contain movement that is suggested, induced, represented. They are islands, narrative archipelagos that are anchored in, translate and formalise something of a singular experience of the world.

Each work functions like a syntagm. Reassembled, reconfigured, reordered, they produce new sentences, new utterances. Fresh stories.

The work shapes a journey, a personal and unique way of using the real. It activates something of a quasi-psychoanalytic economy, or one that is analytic, at the very least. It suggests the 'proposition of a new, more psychoanalytic reading in which this emptiness, this degree zero, may have a more personal source, a kind of space of memory intentionally left vacant (for reasons of survival in general).'

She says: 'The staircase, the ladder, the corridor, are sculptures of the passage from one place to another; cardboard indicates the ephemeral, moving; the box, that which is hidden, preserved.' And also: 'Absence, silence . . . occupy my work.' She adds: 'The enclosure-sculptures are full of self-absences, as if withdrawn from the space they occupy. It is the place of a silent story. I meticulously draw each detail as if they were seen through a magnifying glass. Their gravity is in their external contours and in the assemblages, while their centre is silent.'

There is something of vacancy here. An emptiness, a suspension, an absence, an availability.

Each of Ballet's works is a materialisation of ideas in gestation. The mind and body in motion. They also activate the reflection of those who look and circumvent.

Orienting the gaze, perspectives, bodies. Drawing, organising trajectories, the pleasure of disconcerting, imparting rhythm to space. Surrounding, inseting, nesting, superposing, imbricating, enclosing, delimiting, protecting, isolating, surrounding, outlining, sampling,

preserving, apprehending, qualifying,
designating . . .

Measuring, circumventing, ambulating,
walking, crossing, covering, entering,
leaving, butting.

Ballet's works invite individual
experience. Visitors are confronted with
objects, situations and places. Places of
projection and designation.

Thresholds, transitions, stages, barriers,
corridors, enclosures, balustrades, covers,
screens – she specifies: 'Everything that
separates'. She prefers spaces of passage,
of transition.

Neither one nor the other. Both one and
the other.

Building materials, materials for
transition, movement, protection.
Cardboard, breeze block, metal, plastic
film, etc. A particular world of materials.

What is represented (like so many
fragments breaking off from the real,
remade, reprised, reproduced), the
materials used and the titles (of each work
individually and of each series) together
activate poetic deflagrations, semantic
suspensions that produce as many new
narratives.

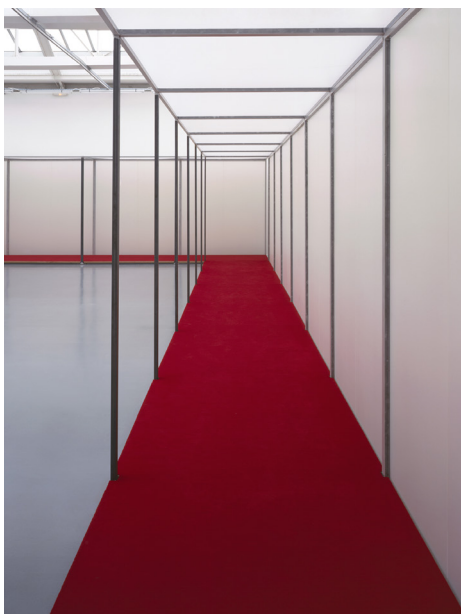
Although Ballet's work is grounded in an
inner, personal experience of the real and in
its possible transcriptions, although the
artist resists any socio-political
interpretation of her works, at least when it
comes to describing their intentions, these
variations centred around motifs such as
enclosure, threshold and frontier resonate
to singular effect with current events.

As beautiful as the chance encounter
between a kitchen hood and a breeze-block
wall on a toposcope.

Frank Lamy
Curator of the exhibition



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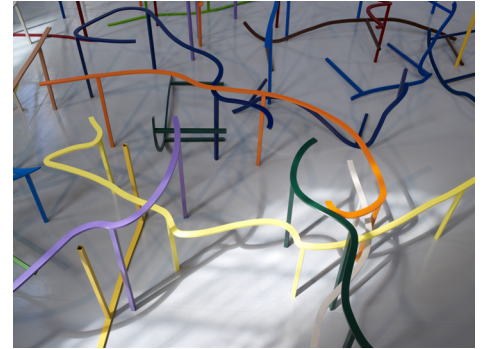
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1 Élisabeth Ballet, *Bande à part*, 2000/02. Aluminum, cellular concrete, 80 H x 700 L x 550 D cm. FRAC Basse-Normandie collection. "Vie privée" exhibition view, Kunsthalle Göppingen, GR. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Frank Kleinbach.

2 Élisabeth Ballet, *BCHN*, 1997. Translucent plastic, steel, wood, red carpet. "BCHN" exhibition view, Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris, ARC. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Marc Damage.

3 Élisabeth Ballet, *Lazy Days*, 2007. Wooden scale, wall painting, variable dimension (scale 315, 5 H cm) "Sept pièces faciles" exhibition view, Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Marc Damage.

4 Élisabeth Ballet, *Emmanuelle*, "JEJ" series, 1988. Coated medium, 100 H x 156 L x 220 D cm. FRAC Bretagne collection. « Un, deux, trois...sculpture » exhibition view, 1989, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Jouy-en-Josas. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Florian Kleinfenn.

5 Élisabeth Ballet, *Les idées*, "Sept pièces faciles" series, 2007. Neon sign, 40 H x 226 L x 8 D cm. "Sept pièces faciles" exhibition view, Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Marc Damage.

6 Élisabeth Ballet, *Jeanne*, "JEJ" series, 1989. Stainless steel, 114 H x 81 L x 22 D cm. FRAC Île-de-France collection. "Un, deux, trois...sculpture" exhibition view, 1989, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Jouy-en-Josas. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Florian Kleinfenn.

7 Élisabeth Ballet, *Blump Piece*, 2007. Resin, boom operator 175cm H, boom 500 cm L. « Contrepoint de la sculpture » exhibition view, Department of sculptures, Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Elisabeth Ballet.

8 Élisabeth Ballet, *Fabrique II*, "Night Roofline" series, 1999. Plywood, 115 H x 188 L x 151 D cm. FRAC Aquitaine collection. View of Le Creux de l'enfer contemporary art center, Thiers. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © J.Damase.

9 Élisabeth Ballet, *Leica*, 2004. Green translucent film on Plexiglas, 180 H x 980 L x 80 D cm. Fonds national d'art contemporain collection, Ministry of Culture and Communication. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian /Dist.RMN-GP.

10 Élisabeth Ballet, *Smoking & Brillantine*, 2011. Steel, variable dimensions. "Immersion" exhibition view, Musée d'art et d'archéologie of Valence. © Adagp, Paris 2017. Photo © Marc Damage.

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