

MAC

Full details of exhibitions and programming at MAC VAL at www.macval.fr

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Vimeo

Opening hours

Tuesday to Friday, 10 am–6 pm. Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, noon to 7 pm. Last admissions 30 minutes before closing. Closed on 1 January and 25 December.

VAL

Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne

Place de la Libération — Vitry-sur-Seine (94)

T +33 (0)1 43 91 64 20

contact@macval.fr www.macval.fr

See below a selection of texts written by the artist “afterward”, once the work was produced and shown to the public, as part of its experience. She describes the conception steps, details the work’s technical and physical characteristics, the various forms in which it was successively exhibited, its relationship to a series, its inspiration and finally the intention behind.

NB EB's texts are not to be mistaken with the descriptive labels of the works displayed in the exhibition. Here cut in order to adapt to the comfort of motion reading, they are reproduced in their entirety in the exhibition catalogue.

To prolong your visit, discover Elisabeth Ballet’s work included in the exhibition of the collection artworks entitled “Sans réserve”, and on its website: www.elisabethballet.com

BCHN, 1998–2017

BCHN, only work specifically produced for the exhibition. It revives for the MAC VAL the work exhibited at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1997.

My exhibition at the ARC is an extension of a work titled *ZIP* installed in Austria. Although its form is renewed, this is not due to the change of location. This ensemble includes a video and sound apparatus. In Linz, two corridors raised on a wood floor run alongside a succession of windows giving onto the city. Their conception here responds to the qualities of the space (noises from the city, the run-down room), whereas at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the space with its thick walls and overhead lighting, is cut off from the urban setting. In Paris, the interpenetration of the museum spaces with the autonomous ones of the sculpture re-establish the notions of exterior and interior. (...)

It is impossible to take in *BCHN* at one go. The elements are all organised around the floor plan of the corridors, which meet at right

angles. Their trajectories define new spaces. They follow the space but do not work to hide or forget it; on the contrary: the lateral spans not covered with plastic sit alongside the concrete presence of the walls 30 centimetres away. They guide our steps in the tunnel. Each connection composes a black, white and red geometrical abstract painting that is perfectly framed. Especially at the beginning of the exhibition. (...) The red carpet induces visitors to enter the passage. From the room they can see only the wall on their left; confined by the depth of the tunnel, they slowly adjust their steps to their thoughts. (...)

The sculpture is an obstacle that cannot be crossed, it delineates a formal territory that is circumscribed and informed by my observations in the street. (...)

Bande à Part (Vie privée series), 2000–2002
Frac Basse-Normandie collection

(...) Manufactured in a workshop in New York using thick aluminium tubing, the sculpture titled *Mouth*

came up against the wall of a gallery. I later added a low construction in grey breeze blocks that detached it from the architecture. I changed its name. I didn't want it to be subordinate to a supporting wall any more: the wall had to be evident, with what it hides, empty spots, other walls. (...) At the Carré d'Art, the breeze blocks were white, the museum's fine marble floor tiles on which the piece stands were turned over and reset in the original metal frame to show the galvanized steel back. The silvery tone of the aluminium barrier reflects its surroundings, it mingles its reflections with those of the floor. The powdery texture and whiteness of the breeze blocks blend in with the wall. The enclosure acts as a barrier to crossing one part of the room without concealing it. The piled-up rows of breeze blocks form an interlacing; as they cross each other they create a new composition of internal space within the sculpture, which becomes completely independent of the museum architecture.

Leica, 2004 (C'est beau dehors series), 2004
Fonds régional d'art contemporain collection, Ministry of Culture and Communication

The sculpture *Leica* was built for my exhibition 'C'est beau dehors' at the cent8 gallery in 2004. (...) The idea was to create a permanent work in response to this staircase, [From the Swiss Cottage Library, building designed by architect Sir Basil Spence in 1962-1964] which is now closed to the public

(the site is being completely renovated). I saw the staircase as an independent object, which had no practical use but was nevertheless necessary in that it revealed the existence of a basement area. In all public buildings emergency exit signs are placed above doors to guide users in the eventuality of imminent danger. I decided to use this symbol enclosed in a glass cylinder in order to reactivate the staircase. (...)

The sculpture does not speak to us only of architecture: the floor on which we tread as we walk connects us with the long corridor where we could also walk if it was accessible. This is not a box, but a cover placed on the floor. We can imagine ourselves inside it. The pictogram combined with the dynamic form, inspired by the legendary camera of the title, reflects the surroundings at the same time as its own image. The total closure of the piece and its transparency contrast with the matt, concrete real space. The sculpture is an impassable obstacle. It is a mental object that resists political space, the one outside it of which it offers a distant echo. This sculpture is the most explicit of a series of pieces in which real physical space is reflected by the abstract, more mental space that has been part of my sculpture from the very beginning.

Vous me direz, 2014

This work is a permanent sound installation inside and around the old train stop at Issantouans, opposite the Moulinon milling factory in Eyrieux-aux-Serres

(Ardèche). It constitutes an observation post high in the valley, and also a listening chamber. The stop has its back to the factory and the river and now stands along *la voie douce*, the largely pedestrian pathway that has replaced the former railway line, along which walkers can explore the valley with its mills, farms and other factories.

Recordings were made of the machines on various production sites and interviews were carried out with the women who worked in the factories over a period of two years. (...) This piece sets out to do justice to the work accomplished within these walls, to describe and make it visible in our present. We had forgotten this activity and even the name of the people. The noise of the machines mingles with voices to bring back the aural atmosphere of the factory, but also its human and technological organisation; the machines are once again heard in action, in the valley landscape around the old factory.

Wool & Water (Vie Privée series), 2002
Fonds municipal d'art contemporain of Paris collection

Wool & Water, the staircase made up of odd bits of cardboard put in boxes, and *La Tristesse des clous* [featured in the exhibition of artworks from the MAC VAL collection], are two 'household' sculptures that have been dissociated from the buildings of which they should be an integral part. Such a dissociation, and the isolation it affords, are necessary to my

idea of sculpture: you can walk round it. The cardboard box immediately conveys the idea of packing, moving, precariousness. The staircase seems to be waiting to be carried off. The boxes exude a very special kind of time, one that deadens any movement. The interior calls up the façade, urgently. Although materially fragile, these objects are hard. Taking a long look at them, we have no sense of transparency but merely a stronger awareness of their inner silence.

Schlüterstrasse, neige, (Vie Privée series), 2002

The camera lens is trained on the closed window, curtains hopelessly drawn, of the man I am waiting for. It is snowing hard, the front of the building almost disappearing behind the flakes that form a screen between me, my neighbour opposite and the viewer watching the film. Imperceptibly, the snowfall eases off and stops, and at the same time the frontage hidden behind the falling snow reappears clearly in the foreground. My camera was set to auto mode, it focused on the snow, and when the snow stopped it focused on the tree and on the front of the building. This very short video is about the image of passing time. The light and weather variations at different times of day give things and events a fleeting quality. Basically, I am interested in the time we take to cross a space, in the way one sculpture reconfigures into another, and in the time we allow ourselves to see.

Schlüterstrasse, matin et après-midi (Vie privée series), 2000

The picture shows the façade of a residence in Berlin on the courtyard side that has a rather luminous orange rendering. Between my windowpane and the building facing me stands the bare trunk of a horse chestnut tree. There is no wind, no birds, no sound; the action takes place in the middle of winter.

There is a man living opposite, on the second floor, one floor up from me. All day long, just on Sundays and bank holidays, he is naked, regularly disappearing behind his window; now and again he moves out of my field of vision, taking his time, slowly, and sits

down on what must be his bed. The man has a silent relationship with me, he stands up, as if on a theatre apron with the curtains drawn – curtains half-drawn – curtains right open. I work on the first floor of this building, which is otherwise completely deserted at weekends; I am alone with him, I wait, and I film him. He came to me and inevitably this was the beginning of a story . . . at the CNP, with 'Entrée dans la cour', and now today at this 'Vie privée' exhibition at the Carré d'Art in Nîmes. This man in his nakedness refers me back to the interior of my apartment, to a mirror image of myself. [Video featured in the exhibition of artworks from the MAC VAL collection]

Tout En Un Plus Trois

Exhibition of Elisabeth Ballet's work

Curator Frank Lamy assisted by Julien Blanpied
Lighting engineer: Serge Damon

English

Élisabeth 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 *replay* ground.

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

"Tout En Un Plus Trois"¹: with this title, Elisabeth Ballet suggests the idea that the exhibition is an elaborate narration that goes beyond and exceeds the sole gathering of artworks. "Tout en un" (*all in one*). "Trois" (*three*) is the answer to a riddle. It could refer to some missing pieces or to the exhibition catalogue, the real transfer of her thought and work into an editorial object published in collaboration with the Syndicat collectif.

In *L'Art de la mémoire*, Frances Yates underlines the importance of building a mental house to organize our thoughts. Each of Elisabeth Ballet's sculptures is like a door opening on one of the rooms of this mental house.

Elisabeth Ballet is no conceptual artist. Each new work is rooted in a real life experience that the artist then tries to put into form. First, she hit the road, inspired by Jack Kerouac's libertarian spirit –author of *On the Road* in 1957. Ideas don't come to her in the studio but during travels, trips, and observations of her surrounding environment.

The exhibition takes up the form of thought in the making, a fresh look cast on a selection of pre-existing artworks in tight relationship with the setting. It is also a story being told to us. Walking (an action required of visitors invited to have a physical experience of the sculpture) activates the links between the artworks. These links also build through our eyes (that embrace, organize and project ourselves in spaces inaccessible to bodies, reflective, opaque and luminous surfaces), through words and plays on words (that provide subtexts, connect isolated pieces

to a series or literary, philosophical and cinema references).

For example, the work *Corridor Noir* is displayed in the unoccupied and inaccessible space provided by *BCHN*, a passable sculpture built from a loop traced with a marker on a drawing connecting two architectural spaces: the exhibition room and the museum entrance hall. *Contrôle 3*, a block made of five Plexiglas walls proposes his/her own reflection to the viewer but also that of his/her immediate environment occupied by the *Olympia* needles scattered around. "The two works draw energy from one another." E.B.

Motion is one of the exhibition leitmotifs. The moveable pieces contain their own movement by nature. They evolve from one exhibition to another. For the artist, they represent visual or physical obstacles: hallways, outer walls, fences, spaces of mental projection that the walker/viewer is invited to experiment, occupy, and put into words.

Stéphanie Airaud, Coordinator of cultural and outreach programs

1 All In One Plus Three.

Around the exhibition	
Check out the entire museum programming on our website	
Sunday 5 November 2017	
Starting at 3 pm	« Habiter l'espace » 3 to 5 pm: architectural tour of the museum with Ahmet Gulgonen and Catherine Furet 4 pm: tour by Elisabeth Ballet and exhibition curator Frank Lamy <small>Free</small>
Sunday 3 December 2017	
Starting at 3 pm	« Catalogue » Roundtable around Elisabeth Ballet's exhibition catalogue. Event organized in collaboration with Syndicat (François Havegeer & Sacha Léopold): graphic designers, authors, critics and curators of the catalogue <i>Tout En Un Plus Trois</i> . <small>Free</small>
Sunday 7 January 2017	
4 pm	Sign language tour by Levent Beskardes "Natural sign language" tour -accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors as well as the general audience- given by deaf poet, artist and comedian Levent Beskardes. Natural sign language allows each and everyone to express his/her emotions and exchange in front of the artworks without background knowledge. <small>Free</small> Information: Luc Pelletier accessibilite@macval.fr or (+33) 1 43 91 64 22

5 pm	"Le mélange des genres ou l'appel à la révolution" Performance by Celine Ahond, Marie-Charlotte Hautbois, Jean-Guillaume Gallais <small>Free</small>
Sunday 4 February 2018	
Starting at 4 pm	Interludes Critiques Carte blanche of Gaëlle Obiégly: readings, encounters and roundtables by guests invited to give their personal and subjective visions, whether critic or poetic, on Elisabeth Ballet and her work.
Sunday 25 February 2018	
	Last day of the exhibition Concert
Young visitors	
From 2 to 5 January 2018	
10 am-4 pm	« La fabrique de l'architecture » Contemporary art lab Workshop conceived and animated by Charlotte Charbonnel. Children 8+ Booking for one day or the entire cycle 2€ / participant and workshop. Information and booking: reservation@macval.fr or (+33) 1 43 91 64 23
A step further	
Exhibition catalogue	
304 pages, 220 copies, French-English bilingual, 17×22 cm, 25€. Texts by Elisabeth Ballet, Alexia Fabre, Michel Gauthier, Frank Lamy, Elisabeth Lebovici, Julie Portier, Philippe Vasset.	

Guides tours
Free museum tours included in admission ticket on Wednesday at 3 pm, Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm.
Documentation center
A team of librarians has gathered a selection of reference books to prolong and deepen your visit. <small>Free access from Tuesday to Friday, 12am to 6pm and on Saturday, 12am to 7pm. cdm.macval@macval.fr or (+33) 1 43 91 14 64</small>
The MAC VAL thanks its partners:
ANOUS PARIS       