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# Jean-Luc Moulène

REVUE DE PRESSE | SELECTED PRESS

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# Quand les chapelles bretonnes s'ouvrent à l'art contemporain

**Au cœur du Morbihan, vingt chapelles sont ouvertes tout l'été pour présenter des créations artistiques inédites et permettre de redécouvrir le riche patrimoine architectural breton. En mettant l'art contemporain à l'honneur, les élus locaux font un pari audacieux en milieu rural.**

**À chaque chapelle son œuvre : tel est le principe de l'exposition itinérante *L'Art dans les chapelles* proposée du 5 juillet au 15 septembre en pays de Pontivy (Morbihan).**

**Depuis presque trente ans, les élus locaux misent sur l'art contemporain pour attirer les estivants.**
**En 2018, 70 000 curieux se sont arrêtés dans un des vingt sites participants.**

**« *Il y a des gens de passage, des randonneurs ou des cyclistes, qui s'arrêtent parce que la chapelle est ouverte. Et puis aussi des visiteurs qui viennent de loin, d'Allemagne, d'Espagne, des États-Unis…* » témoigne Ghalia, guide de la chapelle de Gohazé, à Saint-Thuriau. L'édifice du XVe siècle accueille l'œuvre toute en volumes de l'artiste Jean-Luc Moulène.**

**Quinze chapelles pour une « *vue en coupe* » de l'art contemporain**

**Peu importe si tous les visiteurs ne suivent pas l'un des circuits prévus par l'association *L'art dans les chapelles ;* l'essentiel, selon son président Philippe Boivin, « *c'est de découvrir* ». Toute l'année, Eric Suchère, le directeur artistique, compose la liste des artistes invités, afin d'offrir une « *vue en coupe des pratiques actuelles dans l'art contemporain* ».**

**Une Marche de l'hospitalité réciproque en Bretagne**

**Photographie, sculpture, création sonore… tous les supports sont représentés. Parmi les créateurs choisis pour cette 28e édition, Marc Couturier, qui a réalisé la croix dorée rescapée de l'incendie de Notre-Dame de Paris. Il expose un grand dessin en noir et blanc, se déployant sur les murs de la chapelle de la Saint-Trinité, au domaine de Kerguéhennec.**

Marie-Elisabeth Jacquet
« *Quand les chapelles bretonnes s'ouvrent à l'art contemporain* »,
La Croix, July 30, 2019.

## Entre patrimoine et création

Comme le souligne Eric Suchère, si les édifices sont déjà en eux-mêmes des œuvres d'art, il y a aussi dans ces créations un « *objectif politique* » : faire sortir l'art contemporain des grandes villes et le faire venir en milieu rural. *L'Art dans les chapelles* est « *un projet voulu par les élus, pas une structure parachutée.* », ajoute-t-il avec fierté.

Qu'advient-il alors de la dimension religieuse des lieux de culte ? Tandis que l'art contemporain est parfois considéré au mieux comme hermétique, au pire comme provocateur, la rencontre de l'œuvre avec une chapelle consacrée soulève des interrogations, anticipées par l'association et la commission d'art sacré du diocèse de Vannes.

## Les liens entre art et foi

Une charte, révisée il y a trois ans, permet le dialogue entre organisateurs, artistes et religieux. « *Je suis très attentif à ce que les lieux soient respectés. Aujourd'hui, les choses se passent bien* », déclare le père Francis Le Goff. Trois chapelles relevant de son ministère sont concernées par le dispositif.

Ghalia, la guide de Saint-Thuriau, sait qu'il faut parfois arrondir les angles avec les visiteurs. Elle essaie de montrer la fécondité des liens entre art et foi : « *Dans l'œuvre de Jean-Luc Moulène, il y a la notion de communauté, qui fait écho aux pardons bretons encore célébrés dans cette chapelle* ». Patrimoine religieux, culturel, architectural et régional se réconcilient alors avec l'art contemporain.

Marie-Elisabeth Jacquet
« *Quand les chapelles bretonnes s'ouvrent à l'art contemporain* »,
La Croix, July 30, 2019.

art
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6 MAI 2019 / DANS ACTUALITÉS, EXPOSITIONS, LES PLUS CONSULTÉS / PAR JOSEPH-LOWERY FRÉDÉRIQUE

# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE. MORE OR LESS BONE

**PAR FRÉDÉRIQUE JOSEPH-LOWERY.**
**SCULPTURE CENTER, LONG ISLAND CITY, DU 29 AVRIL AU 29 JUILLET 2019.**

Au Sculpture Center de Long Island, Jean-Luc Moulène présente *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization)*, œuvre étrange où fusionnent vestiges préhistoriques et haute technologie. Elle a été conçue avec l'aide de GDTech Engineering (Europe) et réalisée, par impression 3D, en fibre de verre et époxy, aux États-Unis par Digital Atelier (New Jersey) et Seal Reinforced Fiberglass (New York).

Ce qui ressemble « plus ou moins à un os » monumental, couché à même le sol comme le reste d'une espèce préhistorique qui n'a jamais existé, est en fait un exemple de haute technologie, dans lequel se rejoignent étrangement deux extrêmes du temps. L'idée est simple : demander à un logiciel de créer une pièce qui réunisse les données scientifiques de trois formes hétérogènes par leur nature : une forme géométrique (une sphère), une forme fabriquée (un escalier en spirale) et une forme naturelle (un os). Les données fournies sont la pesanteur, la taille et diverses autres caractéristiques permettant d'obtenir, selon l'artiste, « une forme qui ne soit rien d'autre que sa propre condition d'existence ». Car ce qui est imprimé est en fait *l'espace négatif* qui maintient entre eux les différents composants.

Frédéric Joseph-Lowery
"Jean-Luc Moulène: More or Less Bone"
*Artpress* - 06/05/2019
https://www.artpress.com/2019/05/06/jean-luc-moulene-more-or-less-bone/

En tournant autour de ce grand Y, qui n'est pas sans faire penser aux œuvres d'Henry Moore, on reconnaîtra en creux la sphère ainsi que les autres formes de départ. Cet objet « à fonctionnement philosophique » est très dalinien, surréaliste dans son esprit et sa fabrication (le logiciel prenant ici le relais de l'inconscient), à cette différence près que les objets assemblés se fondent ensemble en une même forme, même si l'artiste a choisi de laisser visibles les points de contact entre les trois pièces produites par la machine.

L'ensemble n'est pas très beau parce que pas très net ; des enflures et des renflements amoindrissent l'effet général du mouvement de l'ensemble. Le rendu minimaliste souhaité, qui justifie le recours au logiciel, est raté d'un point de vue visuel. Malgré la précision des données fournies, le résultat semble le fruit d'une sorte de hasard improbable.

L'intervention de l'artiste après l'impression de cette pièce s'est concentrée sur les éclairages qui, par les ombres portées de la pièce sur elle-même, suggèrent des cartographies d'océans ou de reliefs terrestres imaginaires, ce qu'un Dalí aurait appelé « les lignes géodésiques ». Quel rapport avec le schmilblick ? Aucun, naturellement. Ces tracés gratuits n'apparaissent pas aussi clairement sur les reproductions photographiques. Il faudra donc se déplacer dans cette obscure impasse de Queens pour voir la réalité de ce travail.

**Frédérique Joseph-Lowery**

Jean-Luc Moulène est actuellement exposé à la galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, jusqu'au 18 mai prochain.

Frédéric Joseph-Lowery
"Jean-Luc Moulène: More or Less Bone"
*Artpress* - 06/05/2019
https://www.artpress.com/2019/05/06/jean-luc-moulene-more-or-less-bone/

# 28è ÉDITION DE L'ART DANS LES CHAPELLES

Par Guillaume Clerc  Posté le 2 juin 2019

**Bernard Pagès, LES TROIS …PIS, Chapelle Saint Adrien, Saint Barthélémy. L'art dans les chapelles 2017. Photo by Aurélien Mole**

Guillaume Clerc
*"28è ÉDITION DE L'ART DANS LES CHAPELLES"*
Artaïs, Art Contemporain, 2 juin 2019
https://artais-artcontemporain.org/28e-edition-de-lart-dans-les-chapelles/

**Flora Moscovici, La lumière vient du sol, Chapelle de la Trinité Castennec, Bieuzy. L'art dans les chapelles, 2016. Photo Laurent Grivet**

**Cécile Beau, La Fontaine hépatiques. Chapelle Notre-Dame du Guelhouit, Melrand, L'art dans les chapelles 2018. Photo Aurélien Mole**

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*"28è ÉDITION DE L'ART DANS LES CHAPELLES"*
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https://artais-artcontemporain.org/28e-edition-de-lart-dans-les-chapelles/

A partir du 05 juillet, L'art dans les chapelles revient pour sa 28ème édition. Presque trente ans après sa première occurrence, la manifestation d'art contemporain continue de faire vivre le territoire du Centre Bretagne, dans le Pays de Pontivy et la Vallée du Blavet.

Sur toute la période estivale, cette association de communes, menée par une petite équipe de professionnels, s'emploie à proposer un dialogue entre création contemporaine plastique et lieux patrimoniaux d'exception. Une programmation de quinze artistes auxquels chacun se voit attribuer une chapelle (édifiée entre le XVème et XIXème siècle) où intervenir, est faite par le directeur artistique de la manifestation : le critique d'art et commissaire d'exposition Eric Suchère. Aucune thématique n'est associée à ces programmations annuelles, comme peuvent le faire d'autres manifestations d'art contemporain. Le dialogue entre l'artiste et la chapelle est le point de focalisation du projet artistique de L'art dans les chapelles. Il est avant tout le lieu d'une originalité renouvelée à chaque édition. Et c'est cette modalité qui fait perdurer le pari pris il y a plus d'un quart de siècle par des élus locaux.

En 2019, la programmation d'Eric Suchère reste dans la lignée des précédentes, avec un partage égalitaire entre artistes hommes et femmes, ce qui est assez rare pour le faire remarquer… Sa proposition offre une visibilité sur le travail d'artistes français et étrangers, de différents niveaux de notoriété. Voici la dite programmation : Estèla Alliaud, Benjamin Laurent Aman, Marc Bauer, Roxane Borujerdi, Claire Chesnier, Clément Cogitore, Marc Couturier, Isabelle Ferreira, Agnès Geoffray, Kacha Legrand, Katja Mater, Jean-Luc Moulène, Thomas Müller, François Pourtaud et Gilles Teboul.

**Flora Moscovici, La lumière vient du sol, Chapelle de la Trinité Castennec, Bieuzy. L'art dans les chapelles, 2016. Photo Laurent Grivet**

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*"28è ÉDITION DE L'ART DANS LES CHAPELLES"*
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Ce qui marque, dans la découverte d'une telle programmation, et cela a toujours été la volonté des différents directeurs artistiques de la manifestation, c'est la diversité des médiums représentés. Même si les projets des artistes ne s'arrêtent jamais à leurs médiums de prédilection, et que l'expérimentation est aussi au cœur des interventions dans les chapelles, on trouvera toujours des occurrences des pratiques fondamentales de l'art contemporain ; en 2019, la peinture avec Gilles Teboul ou Claire Chesnier, le dessin avec Marc Couturier, Thomas Müller ou Marc Bauer, la sculpture avec Isabelle Ferreira, Kacha Legrand ou Jean-Luc Moulène, la photographie avec Agnès Geoffray, le son et la vidéo avec Katja Mater, Benjamin Laurent Aman ou Clement Cogitore, l'installation et le travail de la lumière avec François Pourtaud ou encore Estèla Alliaud…

C'est avec l'intime conviction que ces pratiques peuvent se conforter les unes les autres, que l'équipe fonctionne dans son travail d'organisation de cette manifestation. Cela par le développement de trois circuits de visites des chapelles à travers le paysage pastoral breton. Avec plus de 68 000 entrées réalisées en 2018 sur ses circuits, une présence à l'année sur le territoire de son service des publics pour l'organisation de résidences d'artistes, de workshops de création, de rencontres autour de la création, L'art dans les chapelles est un outil de développement du territoire et d'une intelligence collective autour de la création plastique, ce qui en fait la cinquième manifestation d'art contemporain à l'échelle nationale.

Par Guillaume Clerc

**Adam Jeppesen, Work n°122 (t), Work n° 123 (t), Work n°124 (t), Chapelle de la Trinité, Cléguérec, L'art dans les chapelles, 2018, Photo Aurélien Mole**

Guillaume Clerc
*"28è ÉDITION DE L'ART DANS LES CHAPELLES"*
Artaïs, Art Contemporain, 2 juin 2019
https://artais-artcontemporain.org/28e-edition-de-lart-dans-les-chapelles/

**Roland Cognet, La poutre et l'échelle. Chapelle du Gohazé, St Thuriau, L'art dans les chapelles 2018. Photo Aurélien Mole**

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# Saint-Thuriau. Au Gohazé, l'artiste Jean-Luc Mouléne s'empare du lieu

Jean-Luc Mouléne a envahi l'espace sans le dénaturer. | OUEST-FRANCE

Chaque été, l'art dans les chapelles invite des artistes nationaux et internationaux à présenter leurs œuvres dans des lieux remarquables. Les œuvres de Jean-Luc Moulène, artiste invité à la chapelle Notre-Dame De Joie au Gohazé sont très diversifiées. Entre le dessin, la peinture, la photographie, l'écriture et la sculpture, c'est un artiste touche à tout.

Il avait été surpris quand il y a 3 ans, Eric Suchére, le directeur artistique lui avait demandé de venir. **« Je connaissais cette manifestation, et même certaines œuvres pour en avoir parlé avec des amis. Je suis venu, il y a 6 mois pour m'inspirer et m'imprégner des lieux, et j'ai laissé mûrir. Il y a 3 semaines, je participais à une exposition au Culture Center à New-York et il y a 10 jours je participais à la biennale de Venise, maintenant je suis dans cette chapelle, et quand on est dans une chapelle, on rêve cathédrale, on pense toujours plus grand. »**

La couleur rouge est de mise et permet à son œuvre de prendre sa part dans l'espace. Pour lui, pas question de s'arreter à la surface des murs, en réutilisant par exemple les trous existants, dans l'édifice. Il a recréé un cœur de bois rouge, qui, grâce à la lumière, se dessine comme un mirage sur les murs blancs. Ses motifs en spirale, renvoient à la croissance naturelle.

Du 5 juillet au 15 septembre, 29e édition de l'art dans la chapelle

*"Saint-Thuriau. Au Gohazé, l'artiste Jean-Luc Mouléne s'empare du lieu"*
Ouest France, 30 mai 2019
https://www.ouest-france.fr/bretagne/saint-thuriau-56300/saint-thuriau-au-gohaze-l-artiste-jean-luc-moulene-s-empare-du-lieu-6374522

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MAY 16, 2019 BY BEST ARTWORK

# SculptureCenter's Spring 2019 Exhibitions Include Jean-Luc Moulène, Fiona Connor, and More

*Jean-Luc Moulène, More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19), (2018-19), installation view, SculptureCenter, New York. Courtesy the artist, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London and Naples. Photo: Kyle Knodell.*

***Jean-Luc Moulène: More or Less Bone***

April 29 – July 29

*More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)* is a monumental new work in fiberglass and epoxy paint by Jean-Luc Moulène. Collaborating with engineers with advanced expertise in formal optimization, Moulène produced an object that is nothing but its own condition of existence: a form defined as efficient for a given set of material conditions and environmental variables. *More or Less Bone* continues Moulène's recent investigations into the intersections of advanced technology and contemporary material culture.

*"SculptureCenter's Spring 2019 Exhibitions Include Jean-Luc Moulène, Fiona Connor, and More="*
Best Artwork, 16 mai 2019
http://bestartwork.xyz/index.php/2019/05/16/sculpturecenters-spring-2019-exhibitions-include-jean-luc-moulene-fiona-connor-and-more/

The New York Times

# At Venice Biennale, the Art's for Sale, if You Know the Right People

**By Scott Reyburn**

May 14, 2019

VENICE — The Venice Biennale, whose 58th edition opened to the public on Saturday, is the world's biggest and most influential survey of what artists currently make of the times we live in.

The event, lasting more than six months, and spread across the whole of this historic city, epitomizes how conflicted today's art world feels about financial concerns. For some, particularly in officialdom, "la Biennale" should have the commerce-free purity of a museum. "We must not fall into the trap of letting ourselves be guided by the market," Paolo Baratta, the Biennale's president, said last month in a statement. The Biennale, he added, should avoid being suspected of "compliance with selling strategies."

For others, the event is also the world's biggest art fair, if you just know whom and how to ask.

The main event, held in the Giardini gardens and the Arsenale, a former shipyard and arsenal, consists, as usual, of two elements. First, there is a sprawling international group exhibition, featuring a relatively pared-down selection of 79 invited artists or artist partnerships showing pieces in both the Central Pavilion in the Giardini and in the Arsenale.

Scott Reyburn
"At Venice Biennale, the Art's for Sale, if You Know the Right People"
*The NewYork Times* - 14/05/2019
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/arts/venice-biennale-art.html

**"Donatrice," a 2019 work by the French sculptor Jean-Luc Moulène, is priced at 135,000 euros, a representative of the Paris dealership Chantal Crousel said.**
Jean-Luc Moulne/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel; Florian Kleinefenn

Dealers were less in evidence at the Biennale's international group show, but there was a tendency to display artists' works in distinct groupings that at times resembled commercial gallery exhibitions. Five large paintings by the Los Angeles artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby hung in a row at the Giardini, just as a show of her recent works was opening at the Victoria Miro gallery in Venice.

Museums are lining up to buy Ms. Crosby's paintings, but prices for other artists could be obtained by email. The Paris dealership Chantal Crousel quickly responded to a request for the cost of pieces by the technically innovative French sculptor Jean-Luc Moulène on show at the Giardini and the Arsenale. "Donatrice," a 2019 work that places a battered 15th-century terra-cotta sculpture of a praying girl on a steel table, is priced at 135,000 euros, or about $152,000, she said.

The high proportion of known quantities (at least in the art world), such as Mr. Moulène, George Condo, Henry Taylor, Christian Marclay and Ms. Crosby, has led some to question just who and how much there is to discover in Mr. Rugoff's selection of artists.

Scott Reyburn
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*The NewYork Times* - 14/05/2019
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/arts/venice-biennale-art.html

ARTFORUM

**Jean-Luc Moulène, *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris–NY, 2018–19)*,** fiberglass and epoxy paint, 63 x 335 x 177".

NEW YORK

## Jean-Luc Moulène

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves Street
April 29–July 29

Jean-Luc Moulène's new sculpture sits in a room like an unearthed piece of technology from the future. To think of its weight, one might consider the epigraph from Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 film *Stalker*: "What was it? A meteorite that fell to Earth? Or a visitation from outer space?" For *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris–NY, 2018–19)*, Moulène collaborated with France's Aerospace Valley, a civilian and military aircraft engineering cluster, to render an optimal form that amalgamates a set of various shapes: spheres, stairs, and human knuckles. This seemingly random fusion, developed with modeling software (though the object itself was not 3-D-printed), yields something not too unlike a cattle skull.

With its coldness, this mammoth structure becomes the inverse of Ana Mendieta's *On Giving Life*, 1975, a photographic work in which the artist, bathed in sunlight reminiscent of Eric Rohmer's springtime romps, lies atop a human skeleton, lending warmth to ever-present death. Moulène's fiberglass-and-epoxy colossus defies such tenderness, trading sense experience for a work worthy of our technocratic era. But there is something impish in Moulène's grinning skull, faceless though it is. A bodily form, couched on the concrete floor, reaches toward a trapezoidal shape that dominates the construction, becoming a line break that ends in a snarled enjambment of splintered material at the trapezoid's tip. The incidental demarcations between these forms allow for the possibility of grace, an offering to climb inside and be cocooned there.

In an interview, Moulène stated that he sees his sculptures as "surfaces, with no inside or outside, only holes." His object suggests the physical representation of a cinematic idea, something approaching Soviet montage theory, which forces the question: If technology trickles down from a military to a civilian populace over a decade, what, then, is nature when photography is augmented by a third dimension?

— *Matthew Carlson*

Matthew Carlson
*"Jean-Luc Moulène"*
Artforum, mai 2019
https://www.artforum.com/picks/jean-luc-moulene-79889

L'OFFICIEL ART

# Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle

by Miguel Abreu

*More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)* is a monumental work in fiberglass and epoxy paint by Jean-Luc Moulène (b. 1955, Reims). Produced for his solo exhibition at SculptureCenter in New York, the commission has been conceived as the result of "material, bodily, economic, and historical conditions." In conversation with Miguel Abreu, the artist discusses the relationship between sculpture and formal optimization, offering deep insight into the new work.

Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

**MIGUEL ABREU: Formal optimization is the theme of your exhibition that will take place at the SculptureCenter in New York at the end of April. What does this idea imply?**

**JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE:** I think the first thing that needs to be solved is the question of form. What is the point of form? Has Moulène become a formalist?

**We are talking about a very large work, more than eight meters long, a monumental object created by using very sophisticated aeronautical software.**
With the help of GDTech, a European consulting, development and research company in engineering, analysis and numerical modeling.

**The object has three parts, which you could describe for us.**
Yes, but before getting to this work itself, I would like to address the question of form in general. Because in our hearts we know that form cannot suffice. This means, quite simply, that a formal argument is not reason enough to create a work. On the other hand, I am not certain that complete suppression of form in favor of "process," as in certain contemporary experiments, i.e. the famous dematerialization, is not an impasse for art. Form allows me to establish either a descriptive rhetoric of the experience, or to produce the experience in the viewer. To produce the experience is simply to produce a relationship of consciousness with regard to objects. It's something that I've always used. That is, I make forms that account for or produce experiences. I'm not interested in knowing whether the square is better than the circle or the triangle. I'm not at all into that kind of thing. It turns out that today, advancing technologies are in some sense just starting to take an interest in form. And they are starting to take an interest in form simply with the objective of their profitability, which is not really experimental. We have heard about this story of the profitability of forms long ago, in the United States. Minimalism is the maximum of effect for the minimum of form! This maximization of effect is not my problem at all. I am not here to make experiments profitable. So we can forget about this maximization of effect. If I indeed produced effects,

Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

I would be a cosmetics manufacturer, like many artists are today. That is, they make surface effects. The human experience is simply made static in these surface effects. So to get back to this piece, technologies have invented methods of formal optimization, which consist in creating profitable pieces, often mechanical pieces, structural objects. These objects meet needs, they are ultra-light, often fiberized, and have left behind machining for printing. Their atomic composition can be precisely observed. There is total control of the amount of material needed etc. And why is this? Because it's expensive to send satellites into space! So, in the end, formal optimization, as its name suggests – just like tax optimization – is about producing profit. (Profit being the thing which, in the end, no one speaks about anymore). Everyone is supposed to profit. Profit, in principle, is only the profitability of capital. So we end up today with a capitalism that produces a technology that deals in forms. Which even does so experimentally. I would say this is a tendency: all the objects that surround us will be produced in an optimized way. Obviously, this pays. It means that we are at the dawn, in a way, of the invention of a new style; just as we had the Louis XVI style, now we will have an optimized style!

**Just as there was functionalism?**
Just as there was functionalism. And given that this optimization is extremely expensive, and that for the moment these tools for optimization are not accessible, it seemed important to me to show, from today on, what technologies are going to tend towards. It turns out that what they are tending towards is, well... The first time I saw an optimized piece, I burst out laughing, because it tends to produce something that looks like a bone.

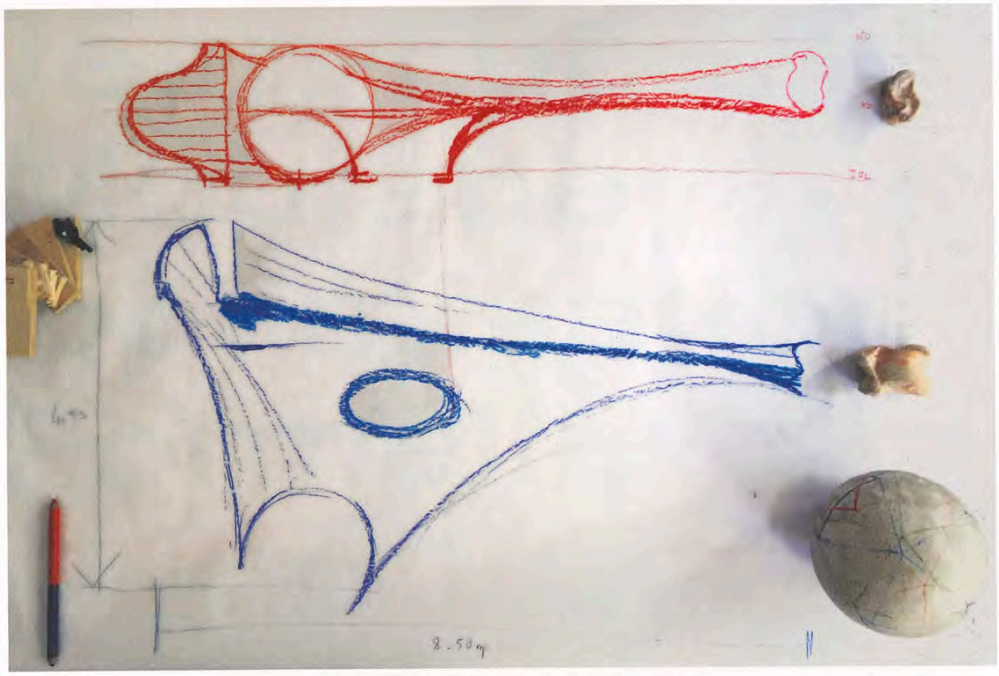
**Hence the title of this immense sculpture called *More or Less Bone.***
It looks like a mechanical part, a mechanical structure, something that has both bones and elements of classical mechanics. At the same time, that's what's beautiful. One could almost say that the formal ideal of capital is the cadaver. Because for us, who are living, a bone is only perceptible on someone who has been accidentally opened up, or who is dead. This is what will survive us, in theory: the bone. In the sense of surviving our dead selves.

**In the material sense.**
Yes, that's it. An execution.

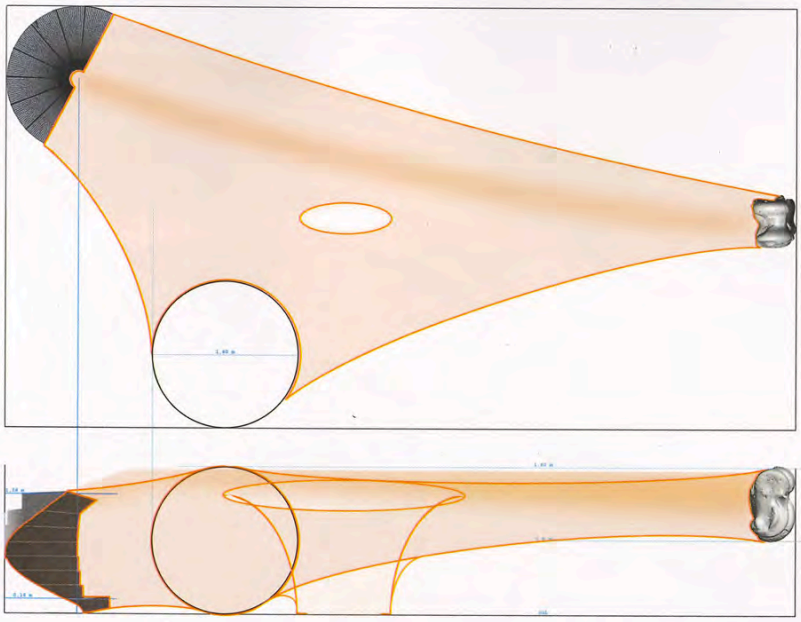
**A skeleton.**
You see my head, my skull. It is quite beautiful that the technologies we are talking about today allow us to place, if you will, your face, your skull in bronze above your fireplace. Because we are able to print a medical scan or an MRI. So today you can have your collector's vanity on the mantelpiece. It should be possible to show and make others aware that the objectives of profitability are in fact objectives of reduction of the quantity of life. Who or what is in excess is unprofitable. Life is everything around the bone, everything around profitability, but this is not taken into account by profitability. And here, in my opinion, we have a real political problem.

**So let's finally talk about how you started this piece from these three elements.**
First I met people through the University of Toulouse, which has developed an IT hub, in modelization. It is very interesting, they are brilliant. Obviously, since they are in Toulouse, they are not very far from the Airbus aerospace teams. There is a lot of industry around. So first they invited me to speak in a professional conference about new printing technologies. A conference in which there were, obviously, mainly software manufacturers, machine manufacturers, manufacturers of control systems between machines on production lines... and also things that do not leave the labs.

**They are engineers...**
Indeed. But they are research engineers. They are not necessarily applied engineers. There is one who works on the digital printing of life: on cells. So they invite me in there. I do my presentation in front of fifty guys in suits, who are the salesmen for their companies. And I remind them of a number of fundamental principles regarding new inventions. For example, if they do not get the public on their side, these new inventions will not work. As in the case of theories in mathematics or physics. We must get the public on our side. As soon as there is invention, it must also invent a specific rep-

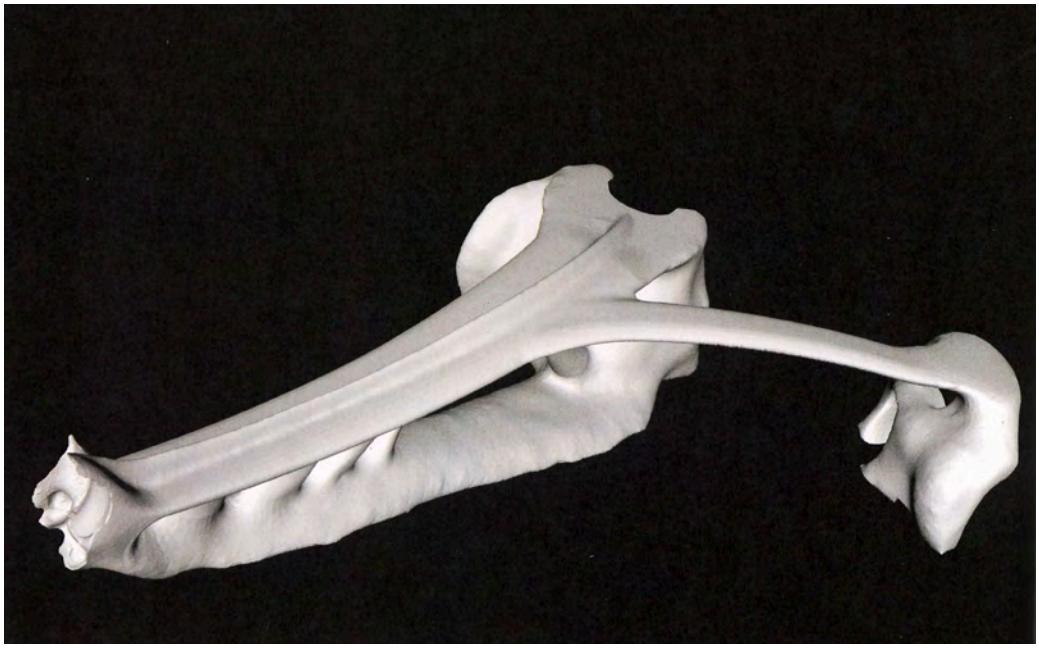


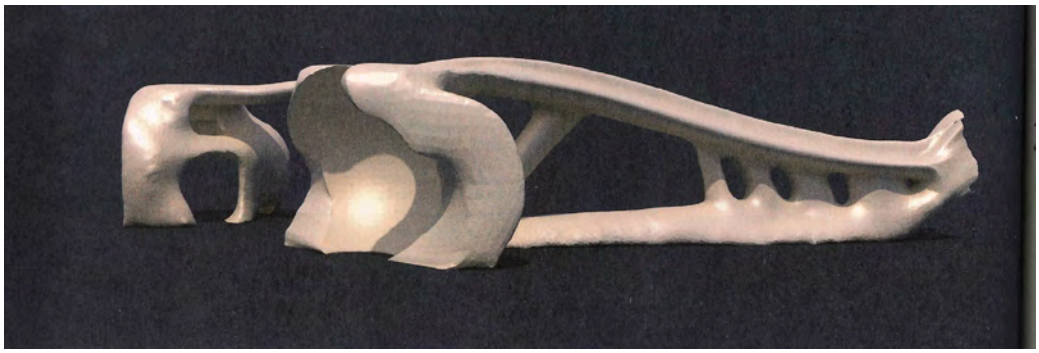
Jean-Luc Moulène, *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)*, 2018-19 (preliminary sketch); fiberglass and epoxy paint; 160 x 850 x 450 cm.

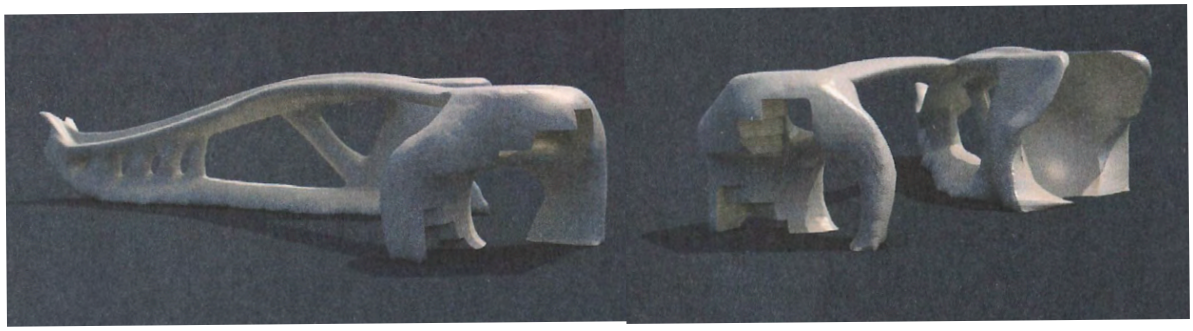


Jean-Luc Moulène, *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)*, 2018-19 (design profiles); fiberglass and epoxy paint; 160 x 850 x 450 cm.

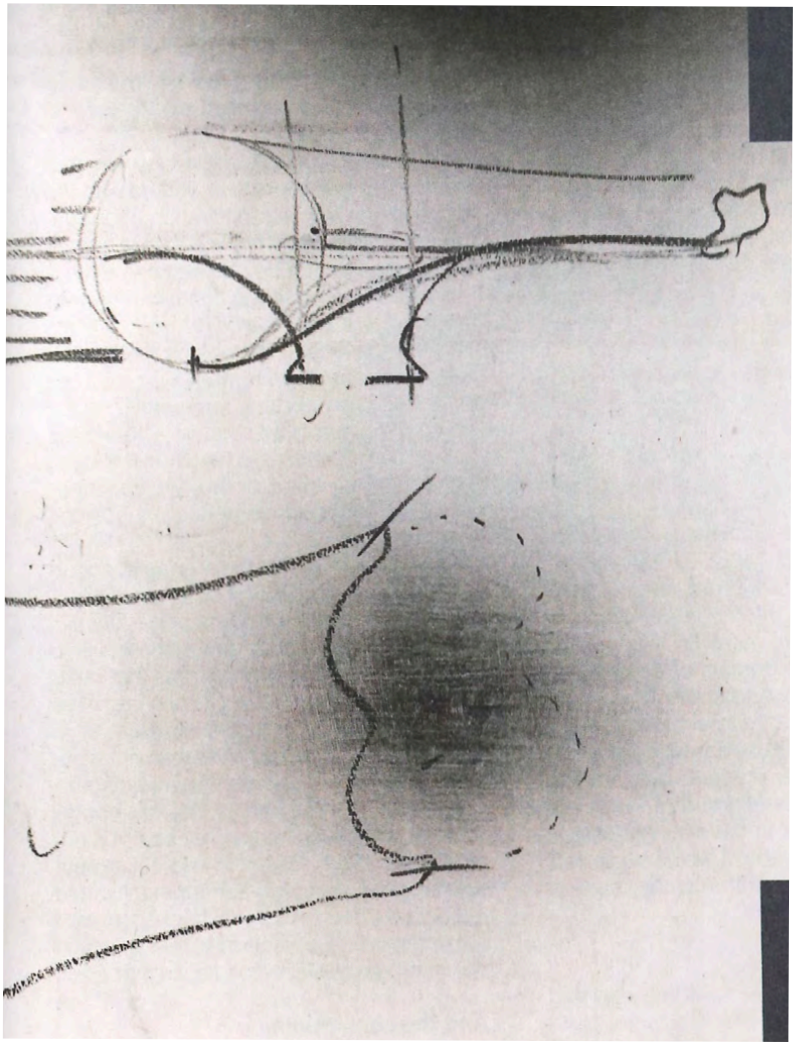
Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

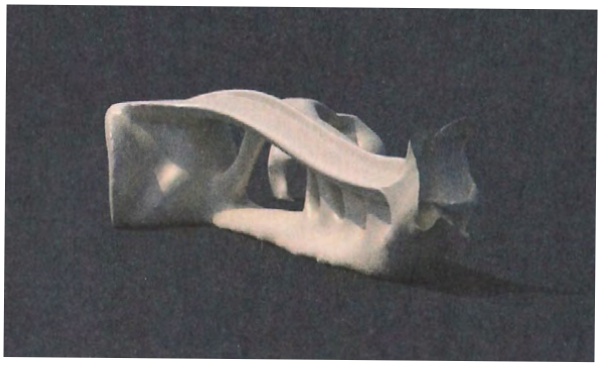






Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019





Jean-Luc Moulène, *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)*, 2018-19 (digital sketch and simulations; in the middle: preliminary sketch); fiberglass and epoxy paint; 160 x 850 x 450 cm.

Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

resentation. We must invent our own popularization. I gave them my general speech, and I told them very clearly: if I accepted this invitation to spread a so-called cultural discourse it is because I need these machines. I do not have access to the machines. No researcher in the field of visual arts has access to these machines. It's just too expensive. Machines and programs... So I told them, "I need machines." And three teams came to me, including this person who deals with biological morphogenesis; this team of European engineers who are a consulting agency, called GDTech; and a small company from Toulouse. In the end, the GDTech team confirmed their commitment, which proved fruitful throughout the work. At that time I started to...

**To imagine the piece.**
To imagine the project we have in front of us. Why though? Because, from my point of view as an artist, I have always said that there is no work without conditions. There are no works without conditions. Without material, bodily, economic conditions, the conditions of history. The artist is now, tomorrow, or the day before yesterday. He was born in an optimum period, or not. So there is no work without conditions. And in my opinion this is an extremely important question, because I think many people think that art is free, because the artist is free. Not at all. The artist is no more free than any other citizen. The artist is corporeally conditioned like everyone else. Art is not free, and neither is the artist. On the other hand, works are systematic liberations. And thus concrete acts in the real world. There is no liberty, there are only liberations. And it's quite important in a piece like that to come back to this question of the condition, because what the optimization machines fundamentally take into account are exclusively the conditions. So I have tried to make a piece that is merely its own condition of existence. It is the calculators and the optimization machines that have drawn the object. What I provided are the conditions. I entered into the conditions, which, by the way, at the end of the experiment, are removed and are no longer visible.

**What are these conditions?**
The conditions are first of all the machine's working definition of volume, so 8.5 meters in length, by 1.6 in height, by 4.5 in width. We give the machine its work volume. At three very precise points of the space in question I placed a sphere (thus an abstraction), a spiral staircase (thus a construction), and a bone (thus something of an organic order). Three types of objects that, to be clear, together can form a world. I entered these three conditions. We gave these generic objects a weight. The sphere is a bubble without weight; the staircase weighs 128 kilos and the bone 80 kilos (also their height in centimeters). We entered conditions of gravity: the earth's gravity. We could, moreover, have entered a lunar gravity. Wind conditions. Earthquake conditions. All the legal conditions which were provided as necessary to install a public sculpture in the United States. What else did we introduce? The length of the fiberglass. Its weight, its breaking point, its coefficient of elasticity.

**Is the fiberglass a condition in itself?**
Yes, it was entered as a condition.

**Okay, so there is a kind of stabilization of these three objects, which must stay in place. The machine will then link them, make them join together in some way.**
Yes: the order given to the machine is to calculate a junction object.

**So there is no fusion, a junction.**
Absolutely. In my older works people instead talked about disjunction, discontinuity, heterogeneity, etc. And here, for the first time – because obviously one must always try what one does not know how to do – there is a connecting piece.

**I think it's also interesting because we could say that today's world is nothing but disjunctions!**
That's exactly what I think today. When I did the *Disjunctions* in the 1980s, I had the intuition that this was the only way to describe events in an intense and lyrical way. It turns out today that the world has become this generalized disjunction from which the common is excluded, each citizen has become a pure vector. So the question of joining comes back. It returns...

**Because it is absent.**
Ys, because it is absent.

Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

**And of course, we have to create a work, a work against the state of things.**
With and against the state of things. In fact, art is there to implement the tension between these two states... So that's about the whole story. After that, the machine works. It works on the "negative," that is to say it does not add material. It considers that the block, the domain of definition is a block of material. And in this block it will remove all the parts that yield to the forces – all those which are useless to the tensions of the forces. In the present case, we had worked out as a condition that we would present a sculpture in the almost classical sense, that is to say that it would be closed. A closed volume that stands alone, made of a single material.

**And with contours...**
With contours, with an end. When I say that there are only conditions, this is not quite true, because, for example, when I decide that the bottom part of the piece is going to be 80 cm, this is because I know that 80 cm is the height of a desk, and that in the bodily pathway that will be traced around the object, there is a moment when simply the height of the object is going to be familiar, and thus will allow for contact, in a way, including the hand's reassuring touch. When I introduce the three basic elements, as I told you, I do not introduce just any three elements. I introduce three elements that a priori make a world. They will then be removed, since in the final piece we do not see the sphere, the staircase, or the bone, but...

**The imprint.**
The imprint, a hollow space, by which the piece joins with the absent objects. In a way, I can say that the piece is the result only of its own conditions, since I have removed mine. But there is obviously always ambiguity about the degree of involvement... it's always the same, as in artificial intelligence, there is someone behind it who says, "I want these conditions."

**Well, I think that we have aptly described this kind of prototype of a work, a prototype of thought.**
To emphasize all that, we made it bone white.

**This piece is going to be made in America, and presented on its own at the SculptureCenter.**
We should also mention the very committed team of engineers that worked with me in France on this demonstration about the future of capitalism. They put a lot of energy and desire into it. They were great. Even if this desire is precisely in contradiction with profitability. It must be said that this team is virtually inventing the optimization equations. One can imagine that for an inventor, for an engineer, it is more satisfying to work on a piece of art than on a cannon. If people do not do things that interest them, they will not do them; or they will do something that has been imposed upon them, but do it badly.
Obviously after all that, there is the concrete production of the object. The simple fact that we can make a file cross the Atlantic, in terms of the mode of production, is also rather new. These are processes that need to further experimentation. It soon becomes clear that manufacturers of objects in Europe and the United States do not work in quite the same way. So the manufacturing, which is local, enters into the conditions of the piece. I could not say, "It's not what I expected." Because I do not expect anything. If I expected something, I would expect an effect. I do not expect anything. I am in the process of manufacturing, which will incorporate all the conditions that arise.

**And the constraints.**
And the constraints. Conditions and constraints.

Miguel Abreu is an art dealer and founder of Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York.

Jean-Luc Moulène, *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)*, 2018-19 (early software calculation); fiberglass and epoxy paint; 160 x 850 x 450 cm.

Miguel Abreu
"Jean-Luc Moulène Optimisation Formelle"
*L'Officiel Art* - March, April, May 2019

art
press

6 MAI 2019 / DANS ACTUALITÉS, EXPOSITIONS, LES PLUS CONSULTÉS / PAR JOSEPH-LOWERY FRÉDÉRIQUE

# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE. MORE OR LESS BONE

**PAR FRÉDÉRIQUE JOSEPH-LOWERY.**
**SCULPTURE CENTER, LONG ISLAND CITY, DU 29 AVRIL AU 29 JUILLET 2019.**

Au Sculpture Center de Long Island, Jean-Luc Moulène présente *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization)*, œuvre étrange où fusionnent vestiges préhistoriques et haute technologie. Elle a été conçue avec l'aide de GDTech Engineering (Europe) et réalisée, par impression 3D, en fibre de verre et époxy, aux États-Unis par Digital Atelier (New Jersey) et Seal Reinforced Fiberglass (New York).

Ce qui ressemble « plus ou moins à un os » monumental, couché à même le sol comme le reste d'une espèce préhistorique qui n'a jamais existé, est en fait un exemple de haute technologie, dans lequel se rejoignent étrangement deux extrêmes du temps. L'idée est simple : demander à un logiciel de créer une pièce qui réunisse les données scientifiques de trois formes hétérogènes par leur nature : une forme géométrique (une sphère), une forme fabriquée (un escalier en spirale) et une forme naturelle (un os). Les données fournies sont la pesanteur, la taille et diverses autres caractéristiques permettant d'obtenir, selon l'artiste, « une forme qui ne soit rien d'autre que sa propre condition d'existence ». Car ce qui est imprimé est en fait *l'espace négatif* qui maintient entre eux les différents composants.

Frédéric Joseph-Lowery
"Jean-Luc Moulène: More or Less Bone"
*Artpress* - 06/05/2019
https://www.artpress.com/2019/05/06/jean-luc-moulene-more-or-less-bone/

En tournant autour de ce grand Y, qui n'est pas sans faire penser aux œuvres d'Henry Moore, on reconnaîtra en creux la sphère ainsi que les autres formes de départ. Cet objet « à fonctionnement philosophique » est très dalinien, surréaliste dans son esprit et sa fabrication (le logiciel prenant ici le relais de l'inconscient), à cette différence près que les objets assemblés se fondent ensemble en une même forme, même si l'artiste a choisi de laisser visibles les points de contact entre les trois pièces produites par la machine.

L'ensemble n'est pas très beau parce que pas très net ; des enflures et des renflements amoindrissent l'effet général du mouvement de l'ensemble. Le rendu minimaliste souhaité, qui justifie le recours au logiciel, est raté d'un point de vue visuel. Malgré la précision des données fournies, le résultat semble le fruit d'une sorte de hasard improbable.

L'intervention de l'artiste après l'impression de cette pièce s'est concentrée sur les éclairages qui, par les ombres portées de la pièce sur elle-même, suggèrent des cartographies d'océans ou de reliefs terrestres imaginaires, ce qu'un Dalí aurait appelé « les lignes géodésiques ». Quel rapport avec le schmilblick ? Aucun, naturellement. Ces tracés gratuits n'apparaissent pas aussi clairement sur les reproductions photographiques. Il faudra donc se déplacer dans cette obscure impasse de Queens pour voir la réalité de ce travail.

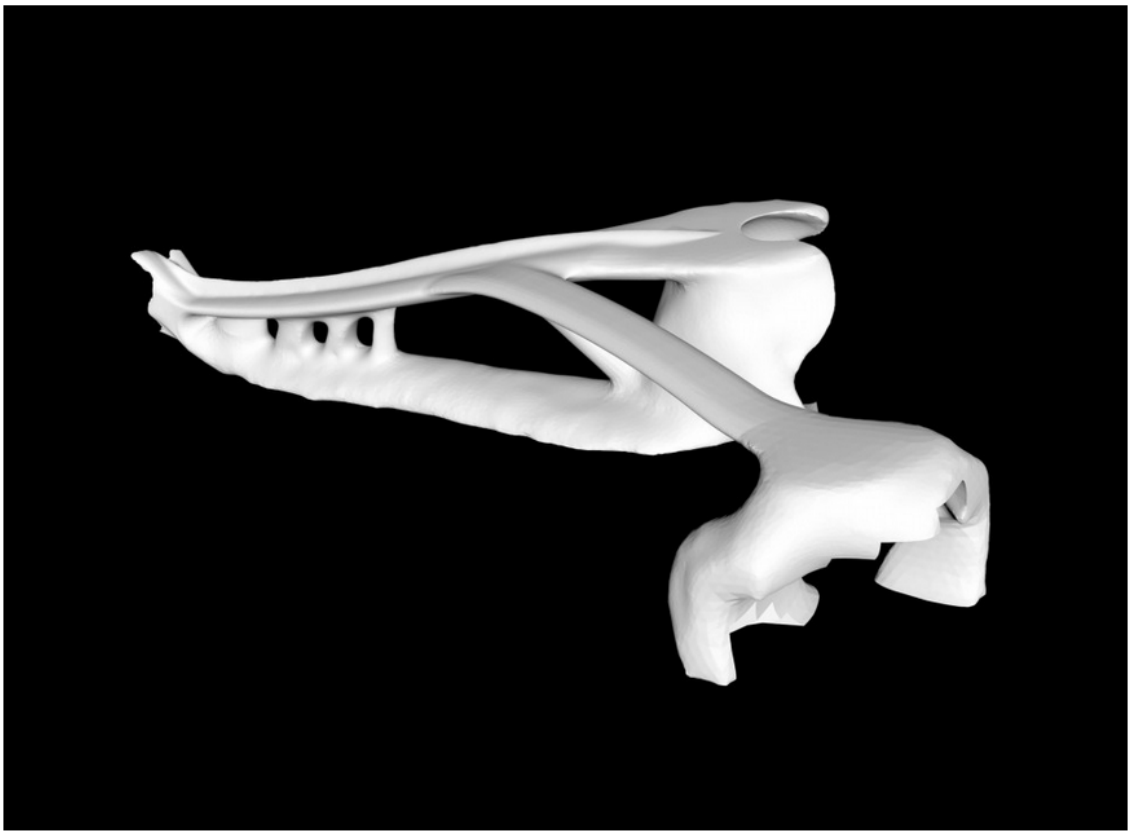
**Frédérique Joseph-Lowery**

Jean-Luc Moulène est actuellement exposé à la galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, jusqu'au 18 mai prochain.

Frédéric Joseph-Lowery
"Jean-Luc Moulène: More or Less Bone"
*Artpress* - 06/05/2019
https://www.artpress.com/2019/05/06/jean-luc-moulene-more-or-less-bone/

CULTURAL SERVICES
FRENCH EMBASSY
IN THE UNITED STATES

# Jean-Luc Moulène at SculptureCenter



Jean-Luc Moulène, Study for More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization)(Paris-NY, 2018-19).

« *Jean-Luc Moulène at SculptureCenter* »
FrenchCulture.org, April 2019
http://frenchculture.org/events/9684-jean-luc-moulene-sculpturecenter

**From April 29 to July 29, SculptureCenter** presents *More or Less Bone (Formal Topological Optimization) (Paris-NY, 2018-19)*, a monumental new work in fiberglass and epoxy paint by **Jean-Luc Moulène**.

Initially known for his enigmatic photographic endeavors, Moulène's more recent projects have investigated the intersections of advanced technology and contemporary material culture. In consideration of current advances in 3D modeling and fabrication, Moulène compares this moment in the history of object making to the advent of photography and its total transformation of human experience. While photography reproduced the world as an image, we are now about to print it in 3D.

Moulène insists that no work of art exists *"without conditions and constraints...without material, economic, historic, and bodily conditions."* For ***More or Less Bone***, Moulène pragmatically centers the production of his work on these conditions, generating form through the exploitation of advanced engineering procedures, or, as the artist describes, making "a piece that is nothing but its own condition of existence."

For this new commission, Moulène has collaborated closely with engineers from **Aerospace Valley** (France's Silicon Valley) with advanced expertise in formal optimization, wherein the form of an object is defined through a process that identifies the best (most efficient, least wasteful) solution given a set of discrete variables. The "problem" devised by the artist is to produce an optimized form connecting three generic objects: a sphere (an abstract form), a spiral staircase (a constructed form), and a knucklebone (an organic form). Modeling these conditions in CATIA and other software, Moulène and the engineers introduced further constraints, manipulating the form of this "object of juncture" to account for a set volume, scale, terrestrial gravity, the material properties of fiberglass, and environmental conditions like wind and earthquakes.

« *Jean-Luc Moulène at SculptureCenter* »
FrenchCulture.org, April 2019
http://frenchculture.org/events/9684-jean-luc-moulene-sculpturecenter

Born in 1955, **Jean-Luc Moulène** studied Aesthetics and Sciences of Art at the Sorbonne University in Paris, where he currently lives and works. He participated in the Taipei Biennial (2016 and 2004), the Sharjah Biennial (2010), the First International Biennial of the Image (Laos, 2007), the Venice Bienniale (2003), the São Paulo Biennial (2002), and Documenta X (1997). Among the institutions that have dedicated solo exhibitions to his work are the Secession, Vienna (2017); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016-17); Villa Medici, Rome (2015); Kunstverein Hannover (2015); Dia:Beacon, New York (2011-12); Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2009); Culturgest, Lisbon (2007); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2005); and Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève (2003).

This project is curated by **Mary Ceruti**, Executive Director, Walker Art Center (formerly SculptureCenter Executive Director and Chief Curator) with **Sohrab Mohebbi**, Curator, SculptureCenter.

« *Jean-Luc Moulène at SculptureCenter* »
FrenchCulture.org, April 2019
http://frenchculture.org/events/9684-jean-luc-moulene-sculpturecenter

Le
Quotidien
de l'Art

BIENNALES

# Venise 2019 : des expositions en miroir, des *fake news* et 5 Français

Photo Andrea Avezzu/Courtesy La Biennale di Venezia

L'Arsenal, Venise

Le commissaire Ralph Rugoff a présenté hier à Paris sa vision de la prochaine Biennale de Venise et annoncé les artistes qui exposeront dans « May You Live in Interesting Times ».

**Par Pedro Morais**

Le titre est emprunté à Austen Chamberlain, ministre britannique des Affaires étrangères, qui évoquait un faux proverbe chinois aux contours de malédiction (« Puissiez-vous vivre des temps intéressants »), à l'orée de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Si le proverbe était une fiction, il a néanmoins été répété par des responsables politiques tout au long du siècle.

**Que des artistes vivants**

« *Que peut-on faire à une époque où les* fake news *ont des effets réels ?* », s'est interrogé Rugoff lors de la présentation hier à l'Institut culturel italien à Paris. *Lorsque les gouvernements utilisent des idées fausses et des outils d'artifice qui brouillent les frontières entre réalité et fiction, la manière dont les artistes remettent en question les catégories doit prendre une nouvelle forme. La simple critique ne suffit pas.* » Avec un nombre réduit d'artistes (83) par rapport aux éditions précédentes, tous vivants – « *Les artistes disparus sont du ressort des musées* », a-t-il précisé –Rugoff a décidé de présenter deux expositions avec la même liste d'artistes, mais avec deux atmosphères radicalement différentes, aux Giardini et à l'Arsenal. « *Idéalement, les visiteurs ne pourront pas saisir qu'il s'agit des mêmes artistes* », poursuit-il. Dans sa perspective, cela répond à « *la nécessité d'avoir plus qu'une opinion* » à une époque où les « bulles de filtrage » d'internet (chaque internaute n'accède qu'à une version du web, basée sur son profil numérique supposé) « *ne font que confirmer le monde dans lequel on croit déjà* ». Il s'est inspiré du roman de science-fiction de China Miéville (*The City and the City*), une dystopie urbaine où la coexistence de deux États ennemis dans le même espace physique est fondée sur le fait que chaque partie apprend à ignorer l'autre.

Gaggiandre, Venise.

Photo Andrea Avezzu/Courtesy La Biennale di Venezia.

**Résistance de la peinture**

« *Il y a 300 biennales dans le monde qui recyclent des thèmes similaires année après année, sans expérimenter les formats de l'exposition* », poursuit-il. Pour cela, il travaillera avec l'architecte Nikolai Delvendahl, de manière à imaginer une nouvelle navigation dans l'espace, incluant des murs en tissu transparent. Les murs seront d'ailleurs un enjeu récurent de l'exposition, ce qui, conjugué au principe d'une ère de la post-vérité, ne manque pas de rappeler Donald Trump. « *Sa présence hantera, d'une certaine manière, la biennale. Ses opposants ont douloureusement appris que l'attaquer directement ne faisait que le renforcer. Articuler une contre-proposition est le chemin que j'aimerais emprunter avec cette biennale* ». C'est la première édition où le nombre d'artistes femmes dépasse celui des hommes, avec une présence considérable de la peinture (« *Je suis toujours attentif à cette résilience zombie de la peinture qui a su trouver les moyens de se réinventer, y compris par des artistes plongés dans la culture digitale* », dit-il). On verra la première œuvre de réalité virtuelle jamais présentée dans la manifestation (Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster autour de la Colonisation de la planète Mars).

**5 Français, 16 Américains**

L'artiste compte parmi les cinq Français de cette édition (avec Neïl Beloufa, Antoine Catala, Cyprien Gaillard et Jean-Luc Moulène), sans oublier ceux qui y vivent au moins partiellement (Tarek Atoui, Ryoji Ikeda et Cameron Jamie) ; loin des 16 artistes issus des États-Unis, avec un contingent remarquable (9) de Los Angeles. Au-delà des plus reconnus (Stan Douglas, Lara Favaretto, Jeppe Hein, Lee Bul, Christian Marclay, Teresa Margolles, Slavs and Tatars, Hito Steyerl, Rosemarie Trockel, Danh Vō, Apichatpong Weerasethakul ou Christoph Büchel), la plupart des artistes a néanmoins déjà exposé en France – Lawrence Abu Hamdan (galerie Mor Charpentier), Alexandra Bircken (Crédac d'Ivry-sur-Seine), Korakrit Arunanondchai, Ed Atkins, Tomás Saraceno, Carol Bove (Palais de Tokyo), Jesse Darling (galerie Sultana et Triangle France-Astérides), Shilpa Gupta (Synagogue de Delme), Nicole Eisenman, Haris Epaminonda (FRAC Ile-de-France), Anthea Hamilton (Shanaynay), Arthur Jafa (fondation Luma), Ad Minoliti (galerie Crèvecœur), Otobong Nkanga (Kadist), Maria Loboda (IAC Villeurbanne), Julie Mehretu (galerie Marian Goodman), Michael E. Smith (CAPC Bordeaux) ou Anicka Yi (Lafayette Anticipations). Le plus jeune des artistes est le Lituanien Augustas Serapinas, né en 1990, et le plus âgé, Jimmie Durham, né en 1940.

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KUNSTFORUM
International

# 58. Biennale Venedig
# MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

## Zentrale internationale Ausstellung: Giardini

Kurator: Ralph Rugoff
11. Mai – 24. November 2019

"58. Biennale Venedig, May You Live in Interesting Times"
*Kunstforum International Biennale Speciale*
https://www.kunstforum.de/artikel/58-biennale-venedig-4/

66 Tarek Atoui (geb.1980 im Libanon, lebt und arbeitet in Paris), *The GROUND*, 2018, Mixed Media; Foto oben: Andrea Avezzu, Courtesy: La Biennale di Venezia

"58. Biennale Venedig, May You Live in Interesting Times"
*Kunstforum International Biennale Speciale*
https://www.kunstforum.de/artikel/58-biennale-venedig-4/

55 Danh Vo, *All Work*, 2019, Arbeiten verschiedener Künstler, Mixed Media, Foto: Andrea Avezzù, Courtesy: La Biennale di Venezia

Portrait: Danh Vo (geb. 1975 in Vietnam, lebt und arbeitet in Mexiko), © Nick Ash

"58. Biennale Venedig, May You Live in Interesting Times"
*Kunstforum International Biennale Speciale*
https://www.kunstforum.de/artikel/58-biennale-venedig-4/

09 rechts oben: Jean-Luc Moulène, *La Faucheuse*, Paris, 2015, Plastik, Harz, Stahl, Farbe

Portrait: Jean-Luc Moulène (geb. 1955 in Frankreich, lebt und arbeitet in Paris), Foto: Florian Kleinefenn

"58. Biennale Venedig, May You Live in Interesting Times"
*Kunstforum International Biennale Speciale*
https://www.kunstforum.de/artikel/58-biennale-venedig-4/

26 diese Seite: Jean-Luc Moulène (geb. 1955 in Frankreich, lebt und arbeitet in Paris), *Skulpturen*, 2009–2019, verschiedene Materialien

"58. Biennale Venedig, May You Live in Interesting Times"
*Kunstforum International Biennale Speciale*
https://www.kunstforum.de/artikel/58-biennale-venedig-4/

# Jean-Luc Moulène at Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue Delme

*« Jean-Luc Moulène at Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue Delme »*
Contemporary Art Daily, September 26, 2018.
https://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2018/09/jean-luc-moulene-at-centre-dart-contemporain-la-synagogue-delme/

Jean-Luc Moulène is a major artist on the French scene. For nearly forty years, he has been charting a unique course that eludes categories of genre and style, through a dizzying body of work that includes photographic images, books, sculptures, paintings and installations.

The exhibition *Objets et faits* (Objects and facts) brings together twenty-four works created between 1978 and 2018. It offers a journey through the artist's multifarious practice in the form of objective poetry—a writing in space "without plinth or ceremony", in which each work simultaneously refers to all of the others.

It is a chance for Jean-Luc Moulène to present new works in which questions of heritage, genealogy and kinship open new perspectives in his approach.

At the centre of the exhibition, an installation entitled *Cosmos*, consisting of two continuously moving mirrors, induces a physical and mental displacement of bodies, objects and spaces, while literally putting the viewer to work. The geometry of the surrounding architecture, the gazing games between the viewers and the works are infinitely reconfigured by the mirrors' slow displacement in the space.

The exhibition at the Synagogue de Delme is another step in Jean-Luc Moulène's research through action: as an unrepentant philosopher or poet, he never stops asking questions that are put to the test of the material: what is the shape of a colour? How can one be in a pair? What is the shape of a communal space? What unbinds bodies and objects?

« *Jean-Luc Moulène at Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue Delme* »
Contemporary Art Daily, September 26, 2018.
https://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2018/09/jean-luc-moulene-at-centre-dart-contemporain-la-synagogue-delme/

Vidal, Pauline. « Jean-Luc Moulène et le creuset alchimique », *Le Journal des Arts n°497*, March 16-29, 2018.

LeJournaldesArts

# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE ET LE CREUSET ALCHIMIQUE

*À La Verrière à Bruxelles, la sobriété de l'accrochage contraste avec les forces déstabilisatrices mises en jeu*

## ART CONTEMPORAIN

**Bruxelles.** Après une exposition au Centre Pompidou où le parti pris était d'emplir l'espace d'étranges et volumineuses sculptures, à La Verrière, Jean-Luc Moulène a privilégié les petits formats et les objets en deux dimensions, dans un accrochage des plus sobres. Au premier coup d'œil, rien ne détonne. On aperçoit des photographies, des monochromes, des miroirs... Plane un sentiment de quasi-vacuité. Mais ce serait mal connaître Moulène que de s'en tenir à cette première impression. Derrière le calme, la tempête. *« L'art n'est pas un espace pacifié, c'est un espace de conflit. S'il n'y a pas de conflit à l'œuvre dans une œuvre, cela ne sert à rien, c'est juste décoratif »*, affirme l'artiste qui, presque vingt ans plus tôt, réalisait sa fameuse série photographique des « Objets de grève » façonnés par des grévistes.

Ses nouvelles productions intitulées « Sous-chromes » – des peintures monochromes présentées en diptyque – offrent des surfaces en tension. Chaque diptyque est constitué d'un panneau de bois peint à l'huile avec une couche de noir recouverte d'une couleur (rouge, bleu, vert, jaune) et d'un autre panneau où la peinture noire est remplacée par du goudron qui, peu à peu, contamine la couleur. Cette confrontation entre une matière vile et une autre noble conduit, sous l'effet de la température, à des métamorphoses dont l'issue reste incertaine pour les décennies à venir. Tel un condensé de violence, la métaphore d'une menace sous la forme d'une balle de mitraillette posée sur une lame de rasoir – une minuscule sculpture des années 1970 – interrompt la succession de ces monochromes.

Jean-Luc Moulène, *Sous-chromes 5* (partie du diptyque), 2017, peinture à l'huile sur goudron sur panneau, 45,5 x 60,5 x 5 cm.
© Photo : Émile Ouroumov, courtesy Galerie Greta Meert.

### Empreinte de champignons

*« J'expérimente la projection de la pensée dans la matière »*, confie Moulène au commissaire, Guillaume Désanges. L'artiste recueille l'empreinte de champignons par simple contact sur des feuilles en papier, obtenant des paysages aux allures stellaires presque mystiques.

Adepte des points de suspension, il présente également trois photographies qui pourraient bien conduire vers le champ de la métaphysique. Dans deux d'entre elles, noir et blanc, la couche nuageuse d'un ciel bas et lourd d'Auvergne semble avoir été criblée d'impacts de balles. Dans une autre, en couleur cette fois-ci, une échelle posée contre un arbre dessine un trait d'union entre le ciel et la terre, comme l'échelle du livre *Mutus Liber* de l'alchimiste médiéval Altus, que l'artiste cite volontiers.

Rien chez Moulène ne s'impose jamais avec évidence. Lui qui revendique l'importance de *« s'intéresser à ce que l'on ne comprend pas »* préfère les zones d'ombre à la lumière, le questionnement à la certitude. Deux immenses machines « célibataires » sur roulettes recouvertes de miroirs circulent entre les quatre murs de La Verrière, démultipliant les perspectives et dématérialisant l'espace. Tandis que les murs s'effacent, les œuvres, dont on aperçoit subrepticement le reflet, se transforment en images virtuelles... Manière de prolonger la réflexion sur la place de l'art dans le monde dématérialisé et robotisé au sein duquel nous baignons un peu plus chaque jour.

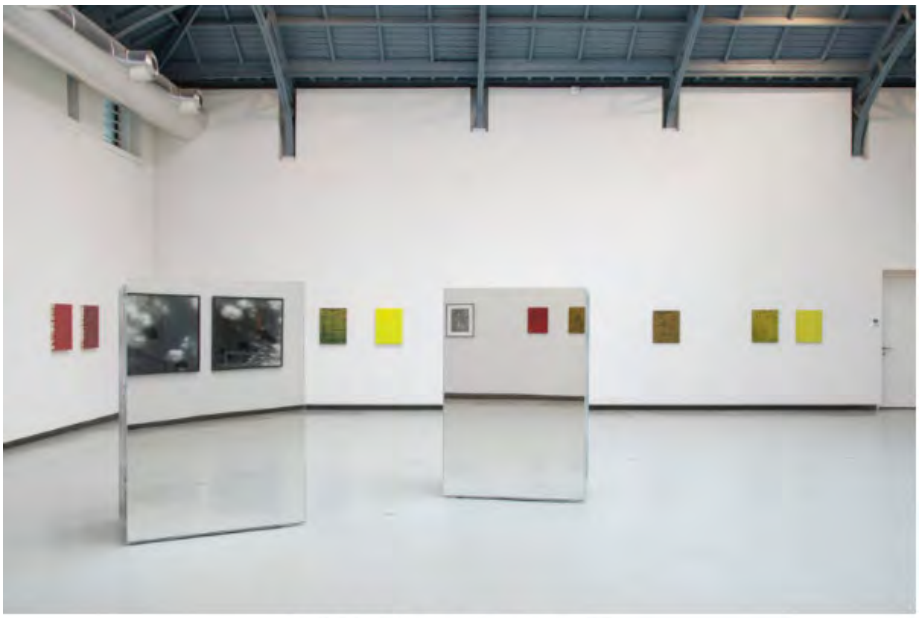
● PAULINE VIDAL, CORRESPONDANTE À BRUXELLES

**JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, EN ANGLE MORT,** jusqu'au 31 mars, La Verrière, 50 bd de Waterloo, Bruxelles, fondationentreprisehermes.org

Galerie Chantal Crousel

Brianchon, Jean-Christophe. « Va-et-vient de l'âme », *IO Gazette*, February 1, 2018.
http://www.iogazette.fr/critiques/regards/2018/va-vient-de-lame/

# Va-et-vient de l'âme



*© Isabelle Arthuis. Fondation d'entreprise Hermès*

**Pensée comme objet de réflection, la matière peut-être plus que ce matériaux qui autorise le monde à transcender son abstraction. Ainsi imaginée, elle pourrait devenir ce médium qui permet à l'Homme de trouver une place et de comprendre son être en envisageant le temps et l'espace bien au-delà de la dimension physique qui est la sienne.**

C'est en tout cas ce que semble dire Jean-Luc Moulène, alors qu'il participe pour la seconde fois au cycle de Poésie Balistique pensé par Guillaume Désanges pour La Fondation Hermès à La Verrière de Bruxelles. Disposées en diptyques, les huiles-objets, qui partagent l'espace unique d'exposition avec les photographies et les dépôts sur carton, entrent parfaitement en résonance avec ce qu'évoquait l'artiste en 2016 au Centre Pompidou alors qu'il parlait de ce « travail de la matière » qui « fait surgir un langage non articulé qui va orienter les décisions ». Car en effet, que pourraient nous dire d'autre ces huiles desquelles le goudron suinte ? Elles sont l'image même de ce temps instable des souvenirs qui devient langage de l'âme et toujours évolue jusqu'à transformer nos coeurs monochromes en un reflet purulent des douleurs du monde. C'est tout au long et au terme de ce processus que les décisions se prennent, et Jean-Luc Moulène nous le dit : la matière est le seul résidu sensible du temps passé qui impose à chacun avec autant de force la vision du soi. Ce soi qui pour être justement dépeint doit englober le temps individuel du goudron des huiles, mais aussi la vanité du monde dans lequel il s'inscrit et se reflète, à l'image des robots/miroirs qui parcours l'espace, montrant tour à tour les oeuvres, les hommes et les sacs Hermès à plusieurs milliers d'euros que propose la boutique dans laquelle l'exposition prend place.

C'est ici exactement que le geste curatorial et artistique trouvent leur force et expriment leur brio, car à cet instant l'exposition devient plus que le miroir des âmes. Ce faisant, elle impose l'image d'un monde dans lequel le visiteur-colibri est obligé d'assumer sa part, et ou l'artiste accepte avec humilité de déposer un photogramme de son être… Un artiste à l'image de ces champignons magnifiques, qui au moment de mourir ont déposé une trace d'eux-mêmes sur ces cartons accrochés aux murs qui séparent les huiles, perdus au milieu de ce monde qui de toute façon les survivra.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Durand, Jean-Marie. « L'art du hasard », *les Inrockuptibles*, *N°1157*, January 31, 2018.

les inRocKuptibles





# L'art du hasard

**Jean-Luc Moulène expose des toiles livrées aux caprices du temps et de la vie.**

Invité à La Verrière de Bruxelles, dans le cadre du cycle d'expositions *Poésie balistique* proposé par Guillaume Désanges, Jean-Luc Moulène déplace son travail à la fois dans l'espace (d'un grand musée comme Beaubourg qui présentait l'an dernier une monographie vers une petite fondation bruxelloise) et dans la forme de son geste (des objets sculpturaux vers des objets picturaux). Dans la salle unique de La Verrière, l'artiste expose des peintures en diptyque, oscillant entre le rouge, le vert et le jaune : moins des monochromes que des réceptacles d'une matière évolutive née du mélange de l'huile et du goudron. L'alchimie des substances transfigure la peinture soumise à un processus de décomposition, à l'image d'une autre toile où des champignons impriment leurs spores striées sur le papier. Jean-Luc Moulène parle d'une *"dimension conflictuelle"* dans ses toiles : les conflits chimiques et de surfaces dynamitent l'ordre figé de la couleur. En livrant ses peintures au hasard de la vie et du temps, l'artiste n'a que la nécessité de la poésie à offrir au regard du spectateur, confronté aux mystères des objets qui se reflètent dans les miroirs de deux mobiles automates. Dans ce jeu sur la mobilité – de la matière picturale, des corps dans l'espace –, les angles morts sont comme des lignes de vie, des lignes de fuite qu'il appartient à chacun de suivre selon la place qu'il accorde au regard. Si *"l'art n'est pas fait pour être compris"*, Moulène suggère qu'il est fait pour être pris dans son étrangeté. Ici, son art vibre de tous ses secrets ardents.

**Jean-Marie Durand**

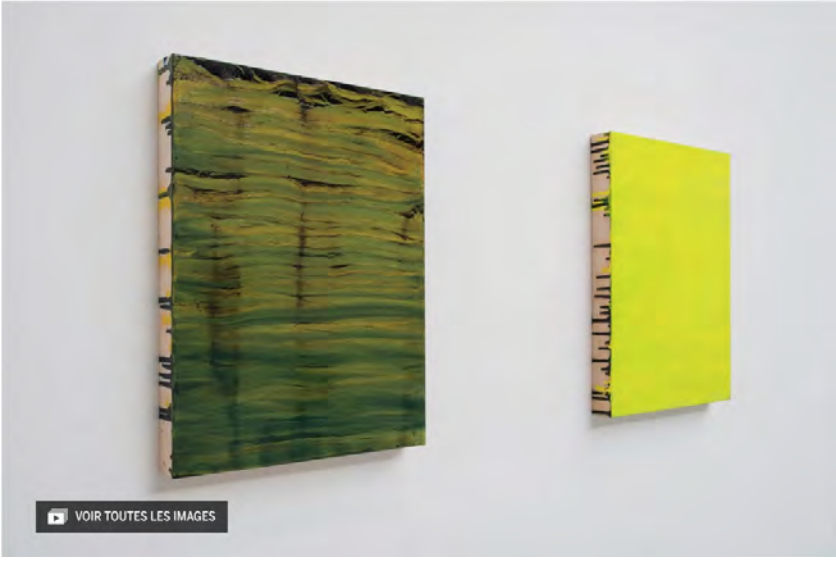
**En angle mort** Jusqu'au 31 mars, La Verrière-Fondation Hermès, Bruxelles

Celeux-Lanval, Maïlys. « Jean-Luc Moulène, ausculteur des matières », *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, *n°404*, February 17, 2018.
https://www.beauxarts.com/expos/jean-luc-moulene-ausculteur-des-matieres/

BeauxArts

# Jean-Luc Moulène, ausculteur des matières

Qui savait que les champignons laissent des traces ? Que les miroirs n'en font qu'à leur tête, et que le goudron se marie très bien avec la peinture à l'huile ? En expérimentateur attentif, Jean-Luc Moulène décline ses poèmes visuels dans une série d'œuvres inédites à voir à la Verrière de Bruxelles, jusqu'au 31 mars.




*Vue de l'exposition de Jean-Luc Moulène « En Angle Mort », La Verrière, Bruxelles, 2018*

**Voilà une exposition dont on a du mal à imaginer le vernissage**. 500 personnes serrées les unes contre les autres, le brouhaha qui va avec, l'attention partielle et mondaine… Rien ne semble aller avec le travail fragile de Jean-Luc Moulène, qui s'apprécie mieux dans un silence de recueillement. Cela est d'autant plus sensible lorsque l'on sait qu'il est l'homme qui a photographié patiemment et abondamment les abords de sa maison de Fénautrigues, un petit village du Lot, épiant les moindres variations des paysages humides ; il y consacra un livre entier. Il investit aujourd'hui, à l'invitation du commissaire Guillaume Désanges dans le cadre de son cycle d'expositions « Poésie balistique », l'arrière d'une boutique Hermès transformée il y a quelques années en centre d'art contemporain, nommé La Verrière.

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Celeux-Lanval, Maïlys. « Jean-Luc Moulène, ausculteur des matières », *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, *n°404*, February 17, 2018.
https://www.beauxarts.com/expos/jean-luc-moulene-ausculteur-des-matieres/

BeauxArts

*Vue de l'exposition de Jean-Luc Moulène « En Angle Mort », La Verrière, Bruxelles, 2018*

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**Le lieu est très beau, lumineux et vaste**, et détonne avec le luxe voisin. Passés les sacs en cuir orange, les foulards de soie et les pulls en cachemire, légèrement intimidants, il faut se diriger vers les cimaises blanches que l'exigeant Guillaume Désanges dédie à un art protocolaire et critique, cela à travers des expositions monographiques. Jean-Luc Moulène est son cinquième invité.

## Il faut cultiver son tableau

Un paysage photographique (justement tiré de son travail sur Fénautrigues) introduit une série d'œuvres quasi monochromatiques, austères expériences de peinture à l'huile sur goudron. L'artiste étale cette matière pauvre, noire et changeante sur des supports plats, puis la recouvre de peinture à l'huile colorée. Celle-ci s'accroche difficilement et laisse apparaître des failles, voire s'affaisse légèrement vers le bas du support exposé à la verticale.

Celeux-Lanval, Maïlys. « Jean-Luc Moulène, ausculteur des matières », *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, *n°404*, February 17, 2018.
https://www.beauxarts.com/expos/jean-luc-moulene-ausculteur-des-matieres/

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Sous-chromes 7*, 2017

**Impossible de parier sur le résultat final**, celui-ci changeant au fil des jours et des températures, mais l'imagination s'emballe. La matérialité étrange de ce bitume si commun donne aux écailles de la peinture des allures d'écorces, de terre séchée, de brume effilée. Et fait écho à la photographie exposée, repère puissamment organique, où des arbres nus, une échelle blanche et une lumière rosée semblent formuler une proposition d'échappatoire, une fuite poétique.

Celeux-Lanval, Maïlys. « Jean-Luc Moulène, ausculteur des matières », *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, *n°404*, February 17, 2018.
https://www.beauxarts.com/expos/jean-luc-moulene-ausculteur-des-matieres/

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Spores 5*, 2017

**Deux autres feuilles provoquent** cette même impression naturelle : les *Spores*. Brunes et blanches, elles sont le résultat d'une seule nuit pendant laquelle Jean-Luc Moulène a simplement attendu que des champignons sèchent sur les feuilles pour y laisser leur trace. La recette est élémentaire : prenez des champignons de Paris, ne gardez que les chapeaux et posez-les sur une feuille de papier. Ceux-ci y imprimeront leur fantôme, forme ronde et irrégulière évoquant aussi bien une méduse qu'une cellule, une plume ou un oursin.

*Vue de l'exposition de Jean-Luc Moulène « En Angle Mort », La Verrière, Bruxelles, 2018*

**Mais tendez l'oreille :** un léger cliquetis vous indiquera, si par un hasard malheureux vous les auriez manqués, que deux robots s'aventurent lentement dans la salle, s'évitant de justesse et tournant sur eux-mêmes. Leurs faces étant recouvertes de miroirs, leur ballet fait tournoyer les œuvres et les visiteurs sur eux-mêmes ; on entrevoit dans un mouvement fugitif regards et monochromes mêlés, quand ils ne reflètent pas la boutique, dont l'agitation commerçante paraît si lointaine. L'idée de processus, de protocole, de mobilité des matériaux guide ainsi Jean-Luc Moulène dans ses abstractions. Il regarde aussi bien le sol, son bitume et ses champignons, que le ciel, qu'il photographie et expose en très grand format, œuvres finales de cette courte exposition. Concret, obsessionnel, sensuel, son art est attentif aux moisissures et aux mouvements des nuages… Et semble approcher de près l'essentiel, le brut.

Coste, Christine. « L'organique selon Jean-Luc Moulène », *L'Œil*, *#710*, March 2018, p. 95.

L'œil

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

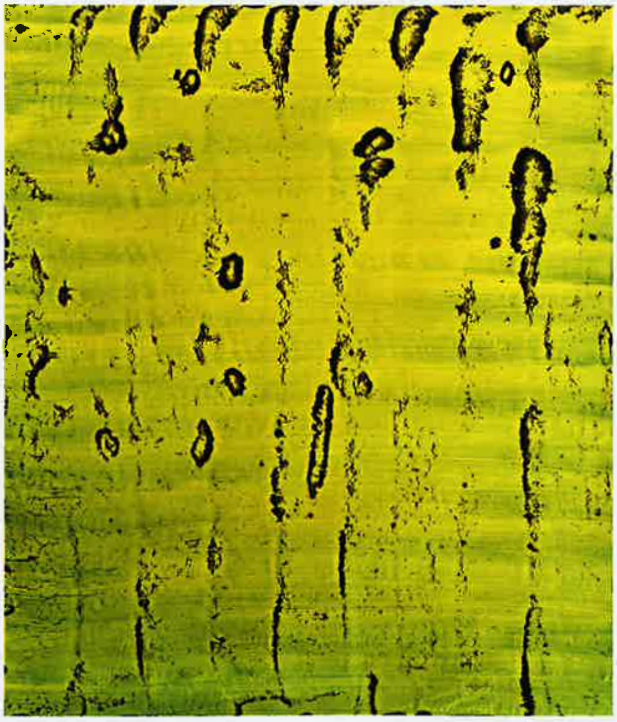
Bruxelles (Belgique)

# L'ORGANIQUE SELON JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

## La Verrière
## Jusqu'au 31 mars 2018

L'œuvre pour Jean-Luc Moulène « n'est pas un lieu pacifié où l'harmonie règne. Elle est un lieu de conflits. » Devant les peintures inédites de l'artiste intitulées *Sous-Chromes*, on ne le mesure pas au premier abord. Au contraire, les monochromes présentés à La Verrière opposent une belle matérialité et une gamme de couleurs où, souvent par paire, le jaune, le rouge disputent au vert son éclat, mais surtout sa présence pleine et entière. Surface lisse, craquelée ou veinée, rien ne suggère le conflit intérieur qui les travaille. Seul le vécu au fil du temps avec ces peintures permettrait de saisir les métamorphoses progressives induites par les réactions chimiques de la peinture à l'huile sur le goudron, sous l'effet de la lumière, de la chaleur ou du froid. Les peintures organiques de Jean-Luc Moulène sont des objets vivants aux matériaux voués à s'affronter pour finir fondus au sol. D'une surface à l'autre, les réactions diffèrent selon le nombre de couches alternées de peinture à l'huile ou de goudron. On en prend conscience si l'on est attentif aux nombres de coulures sur les rebords de chaque pièce. Les réactions de spores de champignons déposés sur du papier sensible ne sont pas davantage pour déplaire à l'artiste, qui rejoue constamment ses pratiques artistiques, y compris en photographie. « Je ne m'intéresse qu'à ce que je ne connais pas », dit-il. L'expérimentation, donc, pour donner aux éléments une autre matérialité poétique que rien ne condamne à l'immuable, mais qui se perd quelque peu dans le vaste espace blanc de La Verrière. **CHRISTINE COSTE**

**« En angle mort. Jean-Luc Moulène »,** La Verrière, 50, boulevard de Waterloo, Bruxelles (Belgique), www.fondationdentreprises.hermes.org



**Jean-Luc Moulène, *Sous-chromes 13***, 2017, huile sur goudron sur panneau, 55 x 46 x 2 cm. © Photo : Émile Ouroumov, courtesy Galerie Greta Meert.

M. Elcott, Noam. « Picture Industry », *Art Forum*, *VOL.56*, *NO.4*, December 2017, pp.188-189.

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Left: **Martha Rosler's photomontages and newspaper reproductions, ca. 1967–72**, Installation view, 2017. Photo: Chris Kendall. Below: **Harun Farocki, *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (detail), 2006**, still from a 37-second color and black-and-white video component of a twelve-monitor installation. Right: **Stan Douglas, *Monodramas* (detail), 1991**, still from a 30-second color video component of a mixed-media installation with ten gelatin silver prints and five monitors.

# "Picture Industry"

CCS BARD GALLERIES AND HESSEL MUSEUM OF ART, ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY

**Noam M. Elcott**

**"PICTURE INDUSTRY,"** curated by the artist Walead Beshty at the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard, has quietly thrown down the gauntlet, not only for exhibitions that address the history of photography, but for all future surveys of twentieth-century art and political imagery broadly. The exhibition is unabashedly ambitious and pedagogical: Three hundred works by more than seventy individuals and collectives spread across seventeen galleries, with extensive wall labels culled from primary sources and the leading scholarship. But the show's lessons can be found not in the texts so much as in the objects themselves. "Picture Industry" offers at least three essential insights for historians, curators, critics, and practitioners of modern art and media.

1. The long twentieth century, from which we are still emerging, was the cinematic century.

Ostensibly a presentation of photography from its origins to the present, the exhibition opens and closes with cinematic images of workers leaving the factory—by the Lumières (1895) and Sharon Lockhart (2008)—and is structured by Harun Farocki's thirty-six-minute video *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995) and twelve-monitor video installation *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (2006). As such, "Picture Industry" posits a long twentieth century anchored aesthetically, conceptually, and technologically in cinema. The repercussions are vast. The eminent art historian Erwin Panofsky had already put it bluntly in 1936:

> If all the serious lyrical poets, composers, painters, and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small fraction of the general public would become aware of the fact and a still smaller fraction would seriously regret it. If the same thing were to happen with the movies the social consequences would be catastrophic.

The declaration is dated—cinemas could go dark without spawning too much awareness or regret; and museums have become outlets of mass media, especially in cultural capitals and around art festivals—but the provocation holds. Indeed, if "the movies" describes a cinematic century, one encompassing film, television, video, digital imaging, lantern slide shows and other projections, photo essays, illustrated magazines, postcards, chronophotographs, etc.—that is, the very objects that constitute the picture industry suggested by "Picture Industry"—then Panofsky's provocation is self-evident. To nearly everyone outside the art world it is. "Picture Industry" assembles many of the artists and nonartists who recognized this fact most powerfully, even—or especially—if many of them did not make movies. Visitors encounter objects, images, and artworks that emerged at the cusp of cinema's arrival (the chronophotographs of Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge; the images from lectures by Jacob Riis, who was an early adopter of the lantern slide) those that realized cinema by other means (the photomontages of John Heartfield and Martha Rosler; the magazine work of Walker Evans, Gordon Parks, and LaToya Ruby Frazier; the slide shows of Allan Sekula) and those that carry us into a post-cinematic future (the film and video works of Stan Douglas, Seth Price, and Hito Steyerl). (Warhol is absent. But his spirit is omnipresent.) "Picture Industry" announces itself as an alternative account of photography. That is too modest. It is an alternative account of art and images in the cinematic century.

That century's historical subject is widely acknowledged and named at the start, through the very title of the Lumière's film: *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* is, in a sense, the history of industrialization and exploitation as told from a postindustrial moment, with an emphasis on the human body as dissected by science and as spectacularized by entertainment—from the biometrics of Alphonse Bertillon through the poetic documentaries of the Black Audio Film Collective and the *Objets de grève* (Strike Objects), 1999–2000, of Jean-Luc Moulène. The century's central aesthetic techniques are familiar and, here, well represented: framing, cropping, montage, serialization, projection, looping, de- and rematerialization,

**We are still emerging from the cinematic century.**

reproduction, and so forth. And yet the watershed intervention staged by "Picture Industry" lies neither in its depicted subject nor in its represented techniques, but rather in its constitution of the picture as an image in circulation across media platforms.

2. There are no mediums, only media platforms; no stable works, only their circulation.

Whether in textbooks, museums, or auction catalogues, the history of photography is still largely told as the history of photographic prints. As such, it enters into the history of art prints more broadly and, thus, into the history of art and its collectible objects. (Their more recent emergence as tableaux merely raises the stakes and prices without altering the logic.) As everyone knows and everyone knows to ignore, this is a museum and art-market

M. Elcott, Noam. « Picture Industry », *Art Forum*, *VOL.56*, *NO.4*, December 2017, pp.188-189.

ARTFORUM

Below: **Hito Steyerl, *The Tower*, 2015**, mixed media with three-channel HD video (color, sound, 6 minutes 55 seconds). Installation view, 2017. Photo: Chris Kendall. Right: **Arthur Jafa, *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*, 2016**, digital video, color and black-and-white, sound, 7 minutes 25 seconds.

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Chantal Crousel

fiction. "Picture Industry" combats that fiction with the reality of images that circulate across media platforms, both within and beyond the world of art.

The exhibition largely forgoes collectible prints, instead presenting the books, reports, magazines, postcards, portfolios, etc. that constituted the primary platforms for the production, dissemination, and reception of works by many photographic heroes—William Henry Fox Talbot, Timothy O'Sullivan, Lewis Hine, Riis, August Sander, Evans, Frazier, Stephen Shore, etc.—and an even greater number of less familiar names. Stated polemically, the argument is that *photography* does not exist—only photographic platforms do; *the* photograph does not exist—only its circulation does. (The rule is most readily discernible in cinema, despite the protestations of celluloid and movie-theater fundamentalists. "Picture Industry" includes 16-mm film, film transferred to video, assorted video formats, television sets, black-box galleries, and a petite movie theater, among other moving-image platforms.) It demonstrates that what is true for photography and cinema is true for much ambitious modern art.

Fittingly, the emblematic instance is *Schema (March 1966)* (1966–70; there are several iterations on display), a nonphotographic work by the Conceptual artist and amateur photographer Dan Graham. *Schema (March 1966)* inventories the grammatical content and graphic design of its immediate publication context—e.g., "35 adjectives, 7 adverbs, 35.52% area not occupied by type" (*Aspen*, no. 5/6 [1967])—such that the work cannot be exhibited except through its placement in a magazine. As it was elaborated by Graham, who is quoted in the wall text, "Conventionally, art magazines reproduce second-hand art which exists first, as phenomenological presence, in galleries. Turning this upside down, *Schema (March 1966)* only exists by its presence in the functional structure of the magazine and can only be exhibited in a gallery second-hand. . . . The meaning of the work is contingent upon the specific meaning of each of its appearances; collectively it has no one meaning." Crucial, he continues, is "the use of the magazine system as support." The artist-theorist Beshty has learned deeply from the artist-theorist Graham. What *Schema (March 1966)* is for magazines, "Picture Industry" is for photography's multifarious platforms. Both are also didactic demonstrations of the conditions that determine the production, dissemination, and reception of art.

3. Politics are platform specific.

In the seven-and-a-half-minute video *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*, 2016, Arthur Jafa overlays footage found online—contemporary and historical, professional and amateur—with Kanye West's anthem "Ultralight Beam" to create a harrowing portrait of black life in America. We recognize many of the images because we've seen them online. The formal structure—found footage combined with popular music—is a YouTube commonplace. But the work is projected in a black-box gallery. *Love Is the Message* arrives toward the end of "Picture Industry," after Douglas's *Monodramas* (shown on '90s TV monitors) and Frazier's *Flint Is Family* (2016), which is represented via two platforms: a nearly twelve-minute video and a spread in *Elle* magazine, accompanied by related contact sheets and page proofs. In other words, by the time we arrive at *Love Is the Message*, the gallery—be it white cube or black box—has been stripped of its status as neutral platform. The black-box gallery is a choice, and a stark one, since, unlike its source material, the video is unavailable online. Why did Jafa limit the work to the gallery? The art market is a significant but only partial answer. The limitation is also a response to Jafa's own question: "But this footage is all over the place. . . . It's literally everywhere so the question becomes: How do you situate it so that people actually see it . . . as opposed to just having it pass in front of them? And simultaneously, how do you induce people to apprehend both the beauty and the horror [of] these circumstances?" In order to make ubiquitous images visible, Jafa takes them out of circulation. The choice is considered, urgent, and—given the trajectory of the exhibition—productively problematic.

Several galleries before Jafa's video, attentive viewers can find a bound copy of *Jet* magazine (vol. 8, no. 19, September 15, 1955)—also available online through Google Books—open to the story "Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped Chicago Youth." The article includes four pages of text and seven photographs, three of which depict the mutilated face of Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African American victim of lynching. The inclusion of *Jet* magazine reads like an implicit rebuke to the 2017 Whitney Biennial and its scandalous painting of Till, which is comparatively decorative and tasteful. Face-to-face with the wrenching four-page story and documentary photographs reproduced in the diminutive fifteen-cent magazine, we are forced to ask whether gestural painting is germane to, let alone valuable for, the representation of photographs conscientiously circulated in magazines such as *Jet*—that is, photographs we now recognize as direct precursors to the traumatic videos gathered by Jafa. Rather than pass judgment on a medium such as painting—let alone make declarations about who has (or does not have) the right to represent black anguish—"Picture Industry" tests the aesthetic and political limits of platforms such as galleries and magazines. Jafa's *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death* takes uncomfortable refuge in the gallery. *Jet* marks the limits of such a withdrawal. □

*"Picture Industry" is on view through December 15.*

NOAM M. ELCOTT IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, AN EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL *GREY ROOM*, AND THE AUTHOR OF *ARTIFICIAL DARKNESS: AN OBSCURE HISTORY OF MODERN ART AND MEDIA* (2016).

Boutet de Monvel, Violaine. « Jean-Luc Moulène, Ce fut une belle journée », *Art Review*, *VOL 69*, *no2*, March 2017, p.99.

ArtReview

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

## Jean-Luc Moulène *Ce fut une belle journée*

### *Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris 26 November – 11 February*

Running in parallel to a supposed retrospective at Centre Pompidou that Jean-Luc Moulène twisted into what he calls a 'retro-prospective of protocols' featuring mainly new sculptures from 2015–6, *Ce fut une belle journée* presents another ensemble of recent works: 16 previously unshown hybrid objects, supported by knowingly naive drawings and two videos. Whereas the sixty-one-year-old Frenchman gained recognition during the late 1990s for his work in photography, his practice has since become essentially sculptural, leaving art critics chewing their nails over the impossible task of defining his overtly anarchistic, shapeshifting aesthetics. The way the artist verbalises his ideal sculptures should give you a hint as to why. Here is an attempt to paraphrase bits and pieces of conceptual gibberish from his latest interviews: 'my utopia for artworks is to produce mind tools to describe complexity, using mathematical knot and set theories to affirm disjuncts based on Michel Journiac's notion of *body as conscious social meat*.' Got that? Me neither.

Armed with the knowledge that mathematical knots are embedded circles with no ends to tie – not unlike Moulène's heteroclite exhibitions – and for the sake of proceeding through this review without resorting to Journiac's performed cannibalism in his 1969 *Messe pour un corps* (he offered his public a sausage made with his own blood), I'll turn to *Seule au sommet, Paris, 2016* (2016), displayed in the back of the gallery. According to the artist, this statuette, made from seashells and epoxy resin, was inspired by Bubu, mascot of the French literary review *Le Grand Jeu* (1928–32). This fictional character is the offspring of Baubo, a mythological female figure often represented with her face in the body and her vulva in the chin, and Ubu Roi, the leading protagonist of the 1896 eponymous play by Alfred Jarry, who was not only the French precursor of Surrealism, but also the inventor of 'Pataphysics, the wonderfully absurd science of imaginary solutions. (As chance would have it, for months I've contemplated joining the Collège de 'Pataphysique in exchange of a modest €40 fee, taking my commitment to useless research and nonsensical digression very seriously.)

Now call me crazy, but I swear I heard Bubu whispering to me: "Don't let Moulène fool you with maths, instead hijack his show with the first random idea that sparks a fire in your guts." Surveying the images and captions of his curious artefacts – among others, the stunning, reptile-like *Créature, Paris, 2016* (2016) covered with false nails, the wood knot *Tête couronnée, Paris, 2013* (2013) crowned with five of the artist's teeth, the portmanteau work *ConquOs, Paris – Mexico* (2016) joining together a bone and a conch shell, as well as *Silex neufs, Barneville, 2013* (2013) and *Poing, Barneville – Paris, 2016* (2016), both brain-shaped assemblages of flint chunks – the overall ensemble begins to read as some kind of anthropological display, and by association, the name of an eminent French paleoanthropologist slowly emerges in my mind: André Leroi-Gourhan. Leafing through the latter's 1965 masterwork *Le Geste et la parole*, one might stumble upon this passage, which roughly translates into: 'Australanthropians seem to have possessed their tools the same way as an animal has claws [...] as if their brains and bodies had gradually exuded them.' 'Pataeureka!

It is now with a renewed faith in the nonsensical, then, that I'd like to advance the following hypothesis: whereas twenty-first-century technologies seem to alienate more and more of us, Moulène's tools exude bodies back, as if the latter were surrealistically pulled over the former. For example, in the show, which remains mostly organic, this subversion additionally assumes the form of *Inverse – Reverse, Barneville – Paris, 2016* (2016), an intricate assemblage of branches covered with blue and red paint, which suggests a vascular system, and *Silver Puke, Paris, 2013* (2013), a rounded arabesque of spoons, whose shape is equally reminiscent of a rotavirus (the agent that causes vomiting and diarrhoea). Whether or not you'll choose to validate my 'pataphysical proposition, Moulène's art is to neurons what an oyster is to gustatory cells: an exquisite acquired taste.

*Violaine Boutet de Monvel*

*Silver Puke, Paris, 2013*, 2013, silver soup spoons, silver dessert spoons, epoxy paste.
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn. © the artist /ADAGP 2016.
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Durand, Paul. « Jean-Luc Moulène at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris », *Blouin Art Info*, December 5, 2016.
http://enfr.blouinartinfo.com/photo-galleries/jean-luc-moulene-at-galerie-chantal-crousel-paris?image=all



BLOUINARTINFO

# Jean-Luc Moulène at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

BY PAUL DURAND | DECEMBER 05, 2016

Jean-Luc MoulèneCe fut une belle journée. Exhibition views at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (November 26, 2016 - February 11 2017). Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Jean-Luc Moulène / ADAGP Paris 2016. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn.
(Courtesy: Galerie Chantal Crousel)

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JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

Jean-Luc Moulène's fifth exhibition with Galerie Chantal Crousel presenting a unique body of works is on display until February 11, 2017.

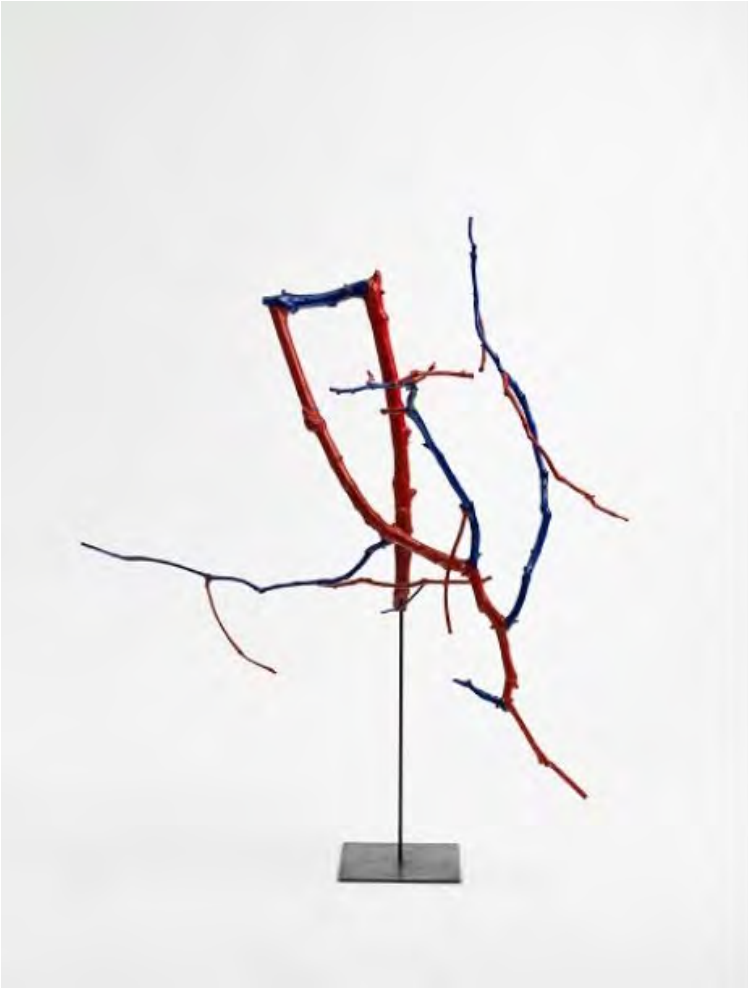
All the exhibited artworks were created between 2012 and 2016, from the end of his last exhibition until today, and are expressly intended for this event. There are 16 new and odd objects, all laid out with precision within the gallery space. Amongst these is ConquOs which, as its title points out, is an association of a bone and a shell. The work's interior and exterior spaces intertwine and reverse themselves with one another. A group of static and moving images, several watercolor drawings and two short videos emphasize the exhibition's structure.

*The exhibition is on view at Galerie Chantal Crousel, 10, rue Charlot, 75003 Paris.*

*For details, visit: https://www.crousel.com/home/exhibition/829/*

*Click on the slideshow for a sneak peek at the exhibition.*

Durand, Paul. « Jean-Luc Moulène at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris », *Blouin Art Info*, December 5, 2016.
http://enfr.blouinartinfo.com/photo-galleries/jean-luc-moulene-at-galerie-chantal-crousel-paris?image=all



Venturi, Riccardo. « Jean-Luc Moulène, Centre Pompidou, Paris », *Art Forum*, February 2017, pp. 207-209.

ARTFORUM

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Below: Jean-Luc Moulène, *Bi-face*, 2016, coated and painted hard foam. Installation view. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn.
Right: Jean-Luc Moulène, *Monsieur Propre jusqu'à l'os* (Mr. Clean to the Bone), 2016, foam, colored resin, 11⅝ × 31½ × 18¾".

# Jean-Luc Moulène

CENTRE POMPIDOU, PARIS

**Riccardo Venturi**

**PROTOTYPE AND PRODUCT,** sculpture and document, corporate brand and abstract object: Jean-Luc Moulène's protean sculptures stubbornly resist our efforts to classify them. Yet the sheer multiplicity of his work, whether generated through high-end fabrication or via skilled traditional craftsmanship, inspired by esoteric mathematics or base bodily matter, is not simply meant to provoke or obscure. Rather, Moulène's objects are produced in service of an ambitious investigation of complexity, a rigorous, near-metaphysical study of how things hold together, either on a small scale, as with the parts that make up a single sculpture, or on a large scale, as when he addresses the relationships between one sculpture and another, or between a sculpture and the world.

The Paris-based artist first came to acclaim in the early 1990s as a producer of singularly enigmatic, at times profoundly visceral photographs; only in the past decade have audiences begun to recognize his equally significant sculptural practice, which Moulène has underscored via a sequence of prominent international exhibitions: at Carré d'Art—Musée d'Art Contemporain in Nîmes, France, in 2009; Dia:Beacon, New York, in 2011; and the French Academy of Rome, Villa Medici, in 2015, to name just three. The artist's current show, a midcareer retrospective curated by Sophie Duplaix at the Centre Pompidou, adopts a similar focus. In fact, photography plays only a marginal role, relegated to printed matter around the exhibition's entrance. Copies of *Quiconque*, 2016, a forty-eight-page newspaper that Moulène printed in an edition of 131,000, sit in a stack on a wooden pallet. In a vestibule, four books contain photographic series made by the artist between 1996 and 2011. Aside from these examples (plus three videos), the remaining works are objects, all of them new, and most made using 3-D digital modeling.

Speaking with critic Jean-Pierre Criqui during a public conversation at the museum this past fall, Moulène joked that the show is the opposite of a retrospective; it is really his first "prospective." It is also installed in a bewildering way: There is a total absence of clues suggesting why individual sculptures are placed where they are. At the entrance, visitors are greeted by *Bubuglu*, 2015–16, a small imaginary, nonanthropomorphic bronze deity, which reads as though it were an icon meant to protect the rest of the sculptures. The two largest works are installed at the opposite ends of the show: These are *Bi-face*, 2016, a slick, undulating object sculpted from foam and coated in bright blue and red pigment, and *No, no, no*, 2016, a work consisting of three types of barriers cast in Jesmonite—one, a tetrapod, meant to keep waves at bay; another a highway noise barrier; and the third a Jersey barrier, designed to keep cars from lurching off the highway. The other pieces—oscillating between barrier and focal point, border and center—are counterintuitively scattered throughout the open space, eluding any rational layout or defined path. Adding to the confusion, visitors can view this dizzying array from both inside and outside the museum: External urban elements—the Pompidou's colorful pipes, an advertising kiosk, a bus stop, pedestrian barricades, even the noise of traffic—penetrate the membrane of the museum's glass-curtain walls.

Moulène is not drawn to complexity in itself, however, but to the fact that complexity can be made visible—that it can be revealed through an image. This is the genesis of

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Left: **View of "Jean-Luc Moulène," 2016–17.** Center: *No, no, no*, 2016. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn. Below: **Jean-Luc Moulène, *Ça propre (trou)* (That Clean [Hole]), 2016.** Rendering.

the artist's interest in advanced mathematics. A previous body of sculptures took inspiration from knot theory, a branch of topology that studies mathematical properties such as intersection, continuity, and surface. As much a tool for formal invention as a method of classification, the knot presents a radical challenge to classical sculpture's division between interior and exterior, opening up new possibilities for reckoning with—or even systematizing—surface, form, and matter. The works at the Pompidou build on those observations, variously employing a set of procedures inspired by set theory: *laterality*, *intersection*, and *cut*. These are executed using 3-D design software and fabricated using cutting-edge industrial tools.

Moulène employed at least one of these procedures to make each of the works on view. The first, laterality, simply involves joining individual forms together in a row, side by side. This action—which is visible in works such as *Indexes*, 2016, and *Voyelles* (Vowels), 2015—yields sequences of juxtapositions that might involve, say, quotidian domestic objects and intricate abstract shapes or, as in the case of the aforementioned *No, no, no*, three types of barricade. Intersection, meanwhile, involves using CAD software to make objects overlap in three-dimensional space, so that they simultaneously occupy the same volume. The works in this category include *Voiture&Fille* (Car&Girl), 2016, featuring a somewhat inexplicable (and unavoidably Ballardian) form overlaying volumes in the shape of a car and a female torso, as well as *Un os bleu qui voit* (A Blue Bone That Sees) and *Monsieur Propre jusqu'à l'os* (Mr. Clean to the Bone), both 2016, composed via intersections of a bottle of Tide laundry detergent and a human knucklebone. The third of Moulène's procedures, cutting, is self-explanatory, most commonly realized as an incision or slice, as in the Hans Bellmer–esque *Jeanne* and *Bouboulina*, both 2016. In some works, however, it manifests in more oblique ways. To create *Bi-face*, for example, Moulène undertook a complicated series of interventions to stretch the primary surfaces of the weld line in *Voiture&Fille*.

By foregrounding these procedures in his work, Moulène may bring to mind Richard Serra's famous *Verb List*, 1967–68, a catalogue of processes such as "to split" or "to scatter" that could guide an artist's relationship to materials such as lead and rubber. For Moulène, however, intersection, cut, and laterality are not used to modify forms but to imagine relationships. They propose ways in which we might classify, organize, or interpret; they model possible systems. As Moulène says, somewhat whimsically, "Since in the street, there are bodies and cars, then let's make bodies and cars intersect! We'll see what it looks like."

To this end, one should also consider *Bleu de costume* (Dungarees Suit), 2016, a men's suit inspired by (or, should I say, intersecting with) the typical French worker's outfit, produced in an edition of five hundred and sold for 140 euros at the BHV Marais department store a few steps from (and nearly lateral to) the museum. Here what matters, according to Moulène, is the layer between the work's interior surface and the skin of whoever wears it—a space that can only be revealed with a cut.

**THE SHOW'S ECCENTRIC INSTALLATION** makes it difficult to determine the part of the viewer, if there is one. "The role played by people in this exhibition is not at all calculated," says Moulène. "There is no scenography or choreography; the distances between works are not measured for the observer. Essentially, man is necessarily foreign in this space: he is welcome, yet foreign." The visitor's sense of estrangement only intensifies when he or she is face-to-face with the sculptures themselves, which are strangely indifferent. They neither ask for interpretation nor seek an external gaze to attain completion. They are

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Below: **View of "Jean-Luc Moulène," 2016–17.** Foreground: *Body versus os* (Body Versus Bone), 2016.
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn. Right: **Jean-Luc Moulène, *Âne* (Donkey), 2016**, concrete, donkey skull, 7⅛ × 19¾ × 35⅞".

alien objects. And it is often impossible to determine, simply by looking at them, the methods by which they were fabricated, the by turns luxurious and extraordinary material from which they are made (carved stone, porcelain, bronze, concrete, wax, polystyrene, foam, sintering powder), or even to approximate their weight. More than touch them, I would have liked to lift them up, to verify them. (In fact, the burnished-bronze works *Ça propre [trou]* [That Clean (Hole)] and *Ça propre [anse]* [That Clean (Handle)], both 2016—intersections of a Tide bottle and a coffee mug—even sport handles.)

**Moulène is not drawn to complexity in itself, but to the fact that complexity can be made visible—that it can be revealed through an image.**

While Moulène's works may originate in such familiar ready-made forms as cars and detergent bottles, his deformations and intersections frequently conceal those origins, rendering the final object wholly nonreferential and abstract. In works such as *Un os mauve* (A Purple Bone), 2016—a warped, striated, lacquer-covered foam object with indeterminate folds and curves—we fundamentally have no real grasp of what the object *is*. It exists in a state of raw indeterminacy and otherness, rejecting our efforts to make sense of it. Moulène's use of digital modeling and fabrication with these unorthodox materials echoes the most ambitious sculptural experimentation of our time, undertaken by artists such as Charles Ray and Jeff Koons, yet Moulène forthrightly rejects the figuration and representation that so viscerally inform their work.

There is, however, a through line connecting many of these heterogeneous materials and morphologies. Moulène repeatedly resorts to a substance that, curiously, could not be more bodily: namely, bone. This can be seen in works where the artist has taken the shape of the bone and fitted it together with other objects: *Os météorite* (Meteorite Bone), *Body versus os* (Body Versus Bone), and *La fille de l'os* (The Bone's Daughter), all 2016, as well as *Monsieur Propre jusqu'à l'os*, *Un os bleu qui voit*, and *Un os mauve*. He also uses real bone: Moulène made *Âne* (Donkey), 2016, by filling a rubber donkey mask with wet concrete, submerging an actual donkey skull in this cement-filled mold, then violently cutting the thing in two after the concrete hardened. Real mammalian teeth project from the far end, embedded in the material like a fossil. The head—broken in two halves, in a play on the near-homophony in French between *âne* (donkey) and *crâne* (skull)—sits at the center of the show, like a fulcrum.

According to Moulène, the bone is "what's left of us when we die; it is the 'noyau dur' ['core'], but it is also an internal object, seen as whole when separated from the body." Amid his knots and sets, cuts and intersections, what is Moulène doing with bone, the *noyau dur* of sculpture? Bone indicates a kind of timelessness: As much as it is something that speaks to us of and from the past—a relic of deep, archaeological, and indeterminate time—it is also what remains of man after death, which survives his extinction. It implies deep structures or organizing principles that are otherwise unrealized or unseen. Bone has an essential quality: It functions not alone, but as an armature. □

*"Jean-Luc Moulène" is on view through Feb. 20.*

RICCARDO VENTURI IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND CRITIC BASED IN PARIS.

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*

*Visit our archive at artforum.com/inprint for Jean-Luc Moulène's portfolio of photographs "M. Chaudin's Garden" (April 2012).*

Lavrador, Judicaël. « Jean-Luc Moulène, sciences frictions », *Libération*, December 11, 2016.
http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2016/12/11/jean-luc-moulene-sciences-frictions_1534560

Galerie
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EXPOSITIONS

# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, SCIENCES FRICTIONS

Par Judicaël Lavrador
— 11 décembre 2016 à 17:36

Le plasticien présente au centre Pompidou une trentaine d'œuvres mêlant matériaux et techniques ainsi qu'une expo plus ramassée à la galerie Chantal Crousel.

«Pythie», 2016, de Jean-Luc Moulène. Photo Florian Kleinefenn. ADAGP Paris

Lavrador, Judicaël. « Jean-Luc Moulène, sciences frictions », *Libération*, December 11, 2016.
http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2016/12/11/jean-luc-moulene-sciences-frictions_1534560

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Pour son exposition au centre Pompidou, Jean-Luc Moulène prend le parti incongru, voire casse-gueule, de mettre les choses à plat et de laisser les sculptures, comme des gisants, ne pas se dresser sur leur socle, mais bien plutôt s'y coucher. Si bien qu'il faut se pencher dessus. Si bien aussi que l'exposition s'écrase, s'aplatit, s'aplanit à la faveur de la rue et de son agitation, les baies vitrées de la galerie Sud n'étant en outre opacifiées par aucune cimaise. La position des sculptures couchées, celle du spectateur penché, plus le dehors qui s'engouffre au sein du musée disent déjà ceci : que les œuvres s'avouent poreuses et contaminées par autre chose que l'art et son histoire. Et que le socle sur lequel elles reposent tient davantage de la table de dissection ou de l'établi que du promontoire.

## Polyester.

Moulène, né en 1955, est un artiste qui renâcla longtemps à faire carrière : *«Dans les années 80, confiait-il aux Inrockuptibles en 2002, je travaille chez Thompson et je bois. C'est la période de la constitution du marché dans laquelle je refuse tout simplement de rentrer. Parce que je vois bien que ça va à l'encontre de tout ce qu'on a pu vivre.»* On ? Sa *«bande de potes»* (notamment Michel Journiac) avec qui, dans la décennie précédente, il fait *«du rock, des performances et des fanzines»* qui peineront à se glisser sans accroc dans la professionnalisation de la création, la mise en vitrine, en majesté - ce qu'il appelle *«la mise en art»* - de l'œuvre, des artistes habitués à l'underground et au bricolage.

Ce n'est pas un hasard, donc, si dans l'expo l'altitude est négative : les œuvres se terrent. La verticalité, la droiture, le surplomb n'appartiennent guère au champ (de vision ou lexical) de l'artiste qui préfère en effet l'inversion, les nœuds et la courbure. Tout comme les matières métalliques et minérales, les ossements, le ciment, les lapis-lazulis, la céramique, le bronze patiné, le marbre de Carrare. Mais aussi - sinon ce serait trop pur et calibré, trop historique et académique - les matières synthétiques telles que le plastique, le vinyle, le polyester, la résine.

Alors on se penche. Pour découvrir parmi la quelque trentaine de pièces, espacées comme celles d'un jeu d'échecs ou d'un jeu de go, le crâne d'un âne farci de ciment *(Donkey)*. Quelques dents dépassent et on croit se souvenir qu'un peu de crin dépasse de cette concrétion scellant un lien calcifié entre l'animal et le minéral. Surtout, le crâne est fendu. C'est une coupe transversale dont la netteté contraste avec l'imbroglio qu'on a sous les yeux. D'une œuvre à l'autre, il s'agit toujours un peu de cette alliance oxymorique, d'un geste précis et net appliqué à un alliage de matières qui n'auraient jamais dû se rencontrer, se frotter l'une contre l'autre, ni être solidaires. Le sont-elles seulement ?

Lavrador, Judicaël. « Jean-Luc Moulène, sciences frictions », *Libération*, December 11, 2016.
http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2016/12/11/jean-luc-moulene-sciences-frictions_1534560

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## Bétonneuse.

Ça tire à hue et à dia chez Moulène qui maque, par exemple, un os et un coquillage (avec un titre en forme de mot-valise : *ConquOs*), ou bien encore plantant ses propres *«chicots»*, comme il dit, dans un nœud de bois *(Tête couronnée)*, deux pièces présentées à la galerie Chantal Crousel dans une exposition plus intuitive, plus relâchée et, il est vrai, finalement plus abordable, que celle du centre Pompidou. Où les sculptures, passées pour la plupart au filtre préalable de la modélisation en 3D, relèvent pour beaucoup de ce vieux rêve des avant-gardes abstraites du début du XX^e^ siècle de lier art, science et technique. Du coup, l'exposition se pare d'une apparence de salon des techniques et des métiers, comme il s'en tenait dans les années 20 et comme il s'en tient aujourd'hui à la Porte de Versailles.

De fait, Moulène est féru de maths et se réfère - et là on est bien incapable de le suivre - à la théorie des ensembles, plutôt qu'à l'histoire de l'art. N'empêche, on est resté pantois devant cette manière technique et sensuelle d'acoquiner ensemble trois scultpures de jardin, en béton, en déclinant le mouvement de leurs mains. Titrée *Indexes [Index]*, la pièce cimente une nymphe pensive, la main au menton et l'index au coin des lèvres, un pâtre qui se gratte le menton, puis une troisième figure, une espèce de satyre qui, levant un doigt professoral, semble édicter une sorte de mise en garde. Or, ces trois pièces, bien en ryhtme, n'ont pas été seulement accolées : elles ont été mécaniquement frottées l'une contre l'autre. Fixées sur une bétonneuse, elles se sont meulées et pour ainsi dire fritées mutuellement. Une manière de se ratiboiser et cependant de se coller qui dit aussi comme la sculpture de Moulène embrasse, dans la chair et dans la pierre, les questions du vivre ensemble, ou du vivre avec.

Judicaël Lavrador

***Jean-Luc Moulène*** *Centre Pompidou, 75004. Jusqu'au 20 février. Rens. : www.centrepompidou.fr*

***Ce fut une belle journée*** *Galerie Chantal Crousel, 10, rue Charlot, 75003. Jusqu'au 11 février. Rens. : www.crousel.com*

Verhagen, Erik. « Jean-Luc Moulène, une leçon de sculpture », *Art Press*, N°*439*, December 2016, pp.44-50.

art press



# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE
## une leçon de sculpture

**Erik Verhagen**

**Le Centre Pompidou présente, jusqu'au 20 février 2017, non pas une rétrospective de l'œuvre de Jean-Luc Moulène, notamment photographique, mais une trentaine de pièces inédites, axées sur son travail, plus récent, sur les objets. La technologie issue du design industriel, le recours à la théorie des ensembles associés à une réflexion sur la matière, la forme et la couleur mettent en lumière la complexité d'un univers à la fois ludique et déroutant.**

Galerie Chantal Crousel

■ Électron libre au sein du paysage artistique français, Jean-Luc Moulène a joui d'une importante visibilité ces vingt-cinq dernières années, aussi bien dans l'Hexagone qu'à l'étranger, comme l'atteste notamment la présentation conséquente de ses travaux à la DIA Beacon, près de New York, en 2011-2012. Il n'en demeure pas moins que son œuvre, au sens exhaustif du terme, demeure confidentielle, l'artiste n'ayant cessé de multiplier des pistes « complémentaires » traduisant une forte résistance à toute approche globale qui en épuiserait le potentiel. Aussi quand le Centre Pompidou l'a sollicité en vue d'une rétrospective, là où d'autres de ses confrères et consœurs auraient sauté sur l'occasion pour étaler leur trajectoire sous toutes ses facettes, Moulène a préféré proposer une exposition d'œuvres récentes et inédites sans pour autant se soustraire à l'exercice qui consisterait à *exposer* les « pratiques opérationnelles » et les « protocoles » caractérisant son parcours et ses différents jalons. Ne nous méprenons pas : l'artiste est joueur et le cahier des charges selon lequel ses protocoles seraient *exposés* à Beaubourg n'est finalement qu'un prétexte à la mise en place de nouvelles pistes, quand bien même celles-ci se nourrissent d'anciennes. Moulène affiche donc un refus de la rétrospective et de l'idée, qui la sous-tend, de « reconstruire ce que l'on a fait avant ». Il s'en est expliqué dans un entretien qu'il nous a accordé début octobre. Entretien dans lequel on peut d'ailleurs voir la métaphore même de sa manière, ludique et *déroutante*, de procéder. Initialement, il était question de publier une interview en bonne et due forme. Mais, au moment de commencer, l'artiste a finalement refusé de se faire enregistrer, se méfiant, à ses dires, de ses propres mots et de leur caractère définitif et irréversible. S'est cependant ensuivi un long monologue, ponctué par de rares questions, laissant transparaître, via le rythme de ses phrases, souvent saccadées, et la mise en place de silences bien dosés, une qualité toute musicale. À travers sa parole, à l'image de ce qui se trame depuis plusieurs décennies dans sa démarche, Moulène s'appuie en effet souvent sur des lignes « mélodiques » qui s'enchevêtrent par le biais d'un faisceau de voies (et de voix) discursives relevant du contrepoint. Cette qualité musicale, nous la retrouvons enfin dans nombre de références. Fils de musiciens, l'artiste travaille actuellement à la construction d'un atelier, dans le Perche, pensé par Didier Faustino. L'espace qu'il faudra le moment venu investir sera, dit-il, structuré comme une fugue de Bach. Le free jazz, le rock et le punk seront également mentionnés lors de l'entretien. Et si l'œuvre de Moulène relevait justement d'une vaste partition qui comprendrait les familles de travaux pris isolément, mais aussi leurs conjugaisons, telles qu'elles s'offrent à lui puis au public au moment de l'exposition ?

On a beaucoup glosé sur la prétendue dimension hétérogène de son entreprise artistique, fort heureusement battue en brèche par certains de ses commentateurs, tels qu'Éric de Chassey ou Nathalie Delbard, laquelle a signé une remarquable monographie aux Éditions Petra (1). Car cette *supposée* hétérogénéité n'est, à regarder de près, que la mise en accord de notes *prétendument* disparates que l'artiste parvient à fédérer. Dans sa préface, Delbard note

**Vue de l'exposition au Centre Pompidou**
(Court. de l'artiste, galeries Chantal Crousel, Paris, Greta Meert, Bruxelles ; Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York Thomas Dane Gallery, Londres © Jean-Luc Moulène Ph. G. Meguerditchian). *View of the Pompidou show*

Verhagen, Erik. « Jean-Luc Moulène, une leçon de sculpture », *Art Press*, N°*439*, December 2016, pp.44-50.

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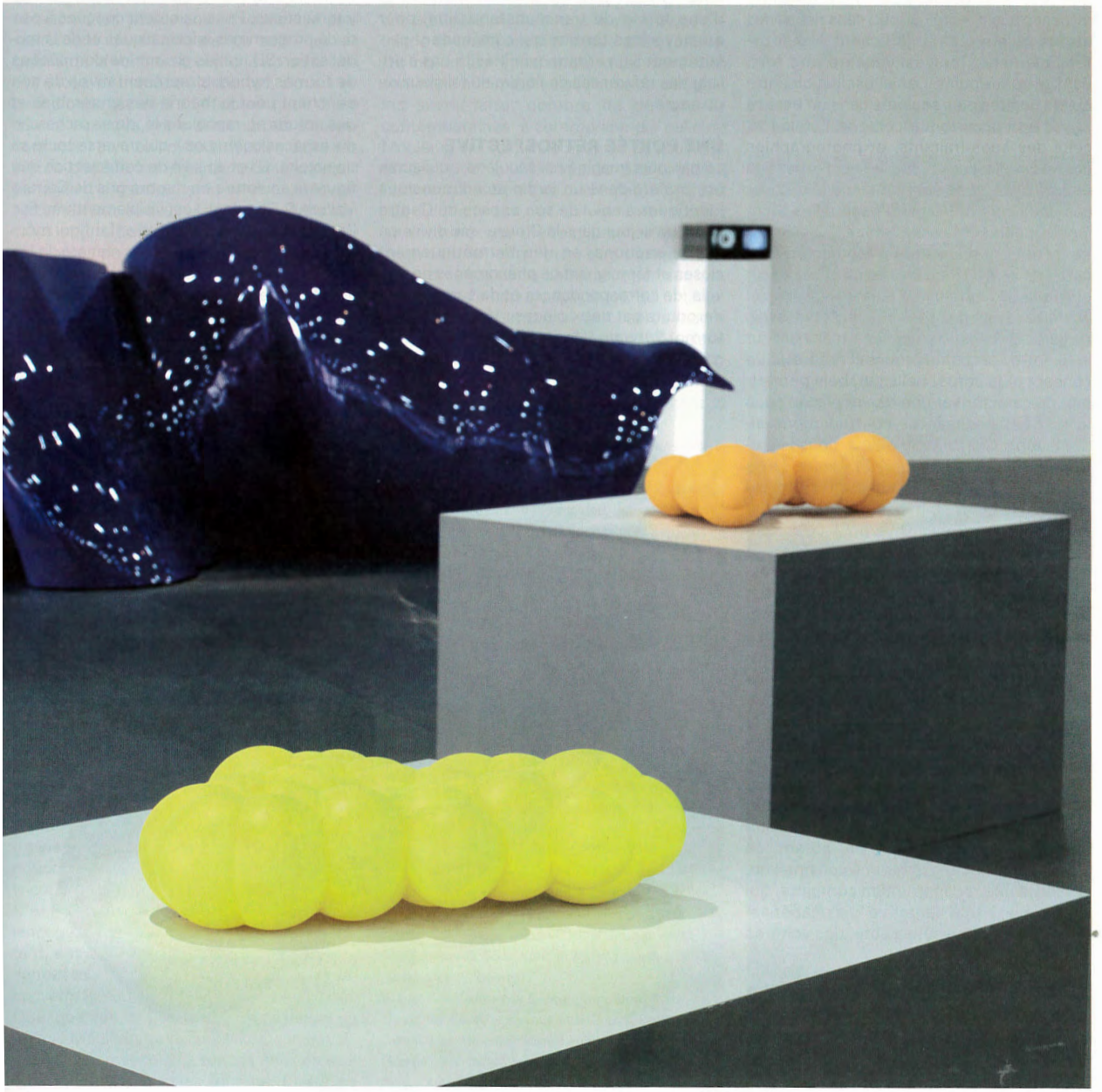
ainsi que chez Moulène, rien « n'est en réalité délié » : « Entre des images volontairement déconnectées des enjeux de société, et qui au fond ne paraissent vouloir s'occuper que de *photographie*, et celles qui empoignent au contraire frontalement des questions aussi fondamentales que la marchandisation des corps, par exemple *(les Filles d'Amsterdam)*, il n'y a pas [...] rupture ou incohérence ». Delbard parle à raison de la difficulté qui consiste à déceler, dans le *corpus* de Moulène, une « quelconque constance formelle ou thématique », renforcée par une absence de continuité stylistique ou technique, aucune « ligne de conduite apparente » n'étant susceptible de « cimenter les œuvres, sinon la relative variété des procédés, des sujets et des rendus ». Elle conclut toutefois que c'est dans le « "désordre apparent" que vont pouvoir se forger les conditions d'une position critique véritable ».

Les quatre tomes de documents photographiques mis à la disposition du public du Centre Pompidou parviendront-ils à mettre de l'ordre dans ce « désordre apparent » ? On peut en douter, l'objectif de Moulène n'étant pas de clarifier des situations, mais, au contraire, de « rentrer en contradiction » avec le système – avec le genre rétrospectif imposé par l'institution ou celui de l'entretien cher à la revue d'art. Certes, l'exposition du Centre témoigne de « protocoles nommables et non nommables », traduit son goût pour les opérations d'addition et de soustraction et laisse transparaître sa volonté d'interroger les « espaces communs » et les différents vecteurs et facteurs disparates le composant. Cette ex-



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position, précise-t-il de manière elliptique, permettra(it) ainsi de divulguer, nous y reviendrons, « l'espace d'intersection entre une femme et une voiture ».

## DES OBJETS D'INTERPRÉTATION

Fournir des « objets d'interprétation » aura toujours été au cœur du propos de l'artiste, quitte à engager le spectateur sur des sentiers *trop* balisés et trompeurs. Ses *objets de grève* ou *produits de Palestine* flattaient déjà les poncifs – surtout en raison de leur dénomination – de « l'artiste engagé », alors que ledit engagement se trame de toute évidence aussi, voire surtout, dans des séries et des objets qui ne l'affichent pas si ostensiblement. Tout est, encore une fois, dans le contrepoint. Dans l'oscillation entre objets cogités puis sculptés dans un espace *privé*, en l'occurrence celui de l'atelier et celui des sous-traitants, et photographies prises dans l'espace *public*, le lieu d'exposition étant la plateforme permettant de télescoper ces deux polarités à partir desquelles Moulène conçoit ses présentations.

La trajectoire de Jean-Luc Moulène n'aura cessé de se développer et de se *déplacer* sur et autour de ces (en) jeux paradoxaux, Michel Journiac l'ayant dès ses années d'études mis en garde de ne pas tomber en « marchant sur le fil entre l'art conceptuel et corporel ». Le concept et le corps : belle parabole permettant de caractériser une œuvre placée sous le signe d'incessantes contradictions simultanées. Ces contradictions, nous les retrouvons dans l'exposition du Centre. Dans le vestibule, le spectateur est invité à se procurer un journal, publié pour la circonstance, composé exclusivement de photographies. Récentes, celles-ci s'immiscent ainsi sur un mode déambulatoire dans un espace qui, à l'exception de trois vidéos, est rempli de propositions sculpturales. La première, *Voyelles*, sous forme de clin d'œil à Rimbaud, accueille le spectateur dans un espace intermédiaire. Placée sous verre, elle évoque le dispositif de présentation que Moulène a voulu ouvert sur le tissu urbain, révélant en conséquence l'une des constantes de son œuvre, à savoir la perméabilité entre intérieur et extérieur, privé et public, immuabilité, fixité et flux permanent. « Ma pièce, dit-il, pourrait être une objectivation du poème. Pour autant, ce n'est pas une lecture, mais une construction, et même une reconstruction complète, qui ressemble à une tentative d'alphabétisation. Des maisons côte à côte, des voitures alignées le long des trottoirs, des inscriptions sur les façades, des tags lettre à lettre colorés : la rue. Donc cette pièce se trouve à l'entrée de l'exposition, davantage pour marquer une objectivation de ce que l'on voit dans la rue que pour évoquer Rimbaud (2). » Dehors, la ville. Dedans, les sculptures posées sur des socles. Entre les deux, nous, spectateurs. Il s'agit pour Moulène de proposer des pièces afin de laisser les œuvres éclore. « Une fois qu'elles sont rendues publiques, elles ne m'appartiennent plus. On passe de l'objet à l'œuvre », précise l'artiste. On est proche du rite initiatique et d'une forme de transsubstantiation, pour employer des termes qui conviennent parfaitement à un artiste qui n'hésite pas à utiliser des références de l'ordre du religieux ou du sacré.

## UNE PORTÉE RÉTROSPECTIVE

Le parcours imaginé par Moulène – qui aurait été *projeté* dans un jardin aux dimensions identiques à celui de son espace du Centre lors d'un séjour dans la Creuse – se divise en quatre sections, en rien hermétiquement closes et témoignant de phénomènes de renvois, de correspondances et de survivances, introduits par deux pièces : *Voyelles* et l'informe *Bubuglu*. Une première section regroupe des sculptures conçues à partir de coupes droites ou rotatives. La seconde relève de disjonctions et d'assemblages. Deux sculptures, *Jeanne* et *Bouboulina*, servent à ce titre de transition entre les deux sections. Anthropomorphiques et prothétiques, ces œuvres ne sont pas sans évoquer les poupées de Bellmer et reflètent la fascination exercée par le corps – dans ses possibilités organiques, sexuées et médicales – sur un artiste qui en appelle à la démultiplication des « genres ». « L'homme est mal construit. Il faut le reconstruire. Le corps s'invente », note-t-il.

La troisième partie se caractérise par les intersections. Principalement conçues à partir de programmes informatiques et de la modélisation 3D, celles-ci sont (dé)composées de formes hybrides représentatives de son penchant pour la théorie des ensembles et des nœuds et, rappelons-le, de sa recherche d'« espaces communs » qui traverse toute sa trajectoire. C'est au sein de cette section que figure la sculpture en marbre gris de Carrare *Voiture & Fille*, dont il est visiblement très fier, l'exhibant à la manière d'un enfant qui montrerait sa dernière invention en matière de bricolage. Car Moulène, c'est aussi ceci : l'artiste qui cherche à retrouver la fraîcheur du gosse « maniant le petit bout de bois sous la pluie ». En cela, tout geste produit par lui a finalement une portée *rétrospective*.

Ci-contre :
**« Car & Girl - Paris-Bolzano, 2016 ».** 2016
Marbre gris de Carrare. 72 x 48 x 172 cm
(Court. de l'artiste et galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
© J.-L. Moulène/Ph. F. Kleinefenn).
*Gray Carrara marble*

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L'artiste peut passer de longs moments en parcourant l'exposition à établir l'identité des éléments disjonctifs fédérés par ses soins. Avec toujours le même émerveillement. Par exemple, l'anse de la tasse et la fiole de Monsieur Propre *(Ca propre [Anse])* ou les différents volumes géométriques de la *Figure intermédiaire*.

## DU LANGAGE AU HORS-LANGAGE

Selon les cas, les intersections reposent sur des formules « harmonieuses » ou jouent une carte ouvertement disjonctive. *Voiture & Fille* se range à ce titre dans la première sous-catégorie, les détails anatomiques – le seul clairement identifiable est un sein – et les galbes de la voiture se confondant dans une symbiose et osmose sidérantes. Pour s'en tenir à cette œuvre, l'objet obtenu jouit d'une qualité haptique, mais ses courbes s'adressent aussi à un œil invité à déceler, dans des pièces placées à une certaine distance mais partageant le même champ de vision, des correspondances et des reprises. Il y a dans certains objets composés, et pour ainsi dire réinventés par Moulène, quelque chose qui serait de l'ordre du fondu-enchaîné cinématographique. Dans d'autres œuvres, les intersections sont au contraire plus abruptes et les soudures soulignées. Comme si l'artiste cherchait, à travers ces pièces, à dévoiler justement les interstices et les zones de transitions à la manière d'un compositeur (Webern) qui accentuerait les silences départageant des notes. C'est par exemple le cas d'*Indexes*, œuvre composée à partir de trois fragments de sculptures anciennes. Cette façon de procéder évoque une phrase de Carl Andre lue sur une cimaise du musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris quelques jours après la visite de l'exposition du Centre : « Pendant un certain temps, je coupais dans les choses. Puis j'ai réalisé que la chose que je coupais était la coupe elle-même. Plutôt que de couper dans le matériau, j'utilise maintenant le matériau pour couper dans l'espace (3). »

Quant à la quatrième section, plus anecdotique, elle enveloppe des sculptures qui interrogent, en s'attachant à saisir et agrandir la structure moléculaire de tel ou tel colorant, « la forme de la couleur ».

L'exposition du Centre Pompidou, la « rétrospective de protocoles », ce sont donc des notions comme la latéralité, l'intersection ou la coupe, auxquelles l'artiste a donné corps. C'est dire à quel point aussi le mot et le langage, ce langage dont l'artiste se méfie tant, est le dénominateur commun et le fil conducteur de sa démarche. Mais un fil *reconverti*. Rendu, à défaut d'être lisible, *visible*. Quel que soit le discours derrière lequel se réfugie Moulène, voire corollairement son *absence*, qu'il revendique, tenons-nous en à ce que donnent à voir ses œuvres. Et sur ce point, nul ne saurait nier l'extraordinaire inventivité formelle dont l'artiste sait faire preuve. En cela, la « rétrospective des protocoles » est avant tout la démonstration plus que convaincante d'une panoplie de propositions sculpturales témoignant d'un éventail de techniques, de pistes exploratrices, d'ambiances et de références contrastées qui connaissent peu d'équivalents aujourd'hui, bien que la sculpture contemporaine, à la différence d'une peinture souvent plus confinée dans un registre et une signature identifiables, n'a cessé, au cours de ces dernières décennies, d'engendrer des pratiques placées sous le signe d'une extrême diversité expérimentale et stylistique. On objectera sans doute que, dans une continuité minimaliste soucieuse de déléguer les savoir-faire, nombre de démarches contemporaines, à commencer par celle de Moulène, ont su s'accompagner de sous-traitances, dont on ne mesure pas toujours l'extensibilité. Il ne s'en cache pas, n'hésitant pas à louer « les mains » qui ont façonné ou terminé ses pièces. L'enjeu est évidemment ailleurs, bien que l'artiste soit par moments tenté de se réfugier derrière l'une de ces postures, agaçantes, qui ont marqué le paysage artistique de « l'après-mort » de l'auteur. Est-ce bien nécessaire ? Moulène aurait en effet tout intérêt à revendiquer pleinement la paternité de cette leçon de sculpture. Car elle lui revient. Légitimement. ■

(1) Nathalie Delbard, *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Paris, Petra, 2009.
(2) Jean-Luc Moulène dans *Jean-Luc Moulène*, catalogue de l'exposition du Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2016, p. 56. Toutes les autres citations de l'artiste sont extraites de notre entretien (Paris, 3 octobre 2016).
(3) Carl Andre, entretien avec David Bourdon, 1966.

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**« Voyelles, Paris, 2015 ».** 2015. Bronze, laiton, plastique, mousse, acier, résine époxy, colorants. 56 x 29 x 50 cm. (Court. de l'artiste et Thomas Dane Gallery, Londres ; © J.L. Moulène/ Ph. F. Kleinefenn). *Bronze, brass, plastic, foam, steel, epoxy resin, pigment*

**« Tricolore 2, Marseille, février 2015 ».** 2015. Verre, fers plats, 10 x 2mm. 44 x 78 x 54 cm Exposition « Jean-Luc Moulène. Il était une fois », Académie de France à Rome, Villa Médicis, 2015). (Court. de l'artiste et galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris ; Ph. D. Molajoli). *Glass (Gold Ruby/Brillantgelb/ Spring green), flat steel*

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# Jean-Luc Moulène
# Not Being Pinned Down

**The Pompidou Center is currently showing some thirty pieces by Jean-Luc Moulène (thru February 2, 2017). In a way typical of this artist's position, this is not a retrospective featuring, for example, the photographs he is known for, but a selection of more recent, previously unexhibited objects playing with industrial design and invoking set theory and questions of form, material and color. It's all very much in keeping with the complexity and elusive, playful spirit of this artist who is both prominent and obscure.**

Galerie Chantal Crousel

Jean-Luc Moulène, who marches to the beat of his own drum, has enjoyed a high degree of visibility over the last twenty-five years, in France and abroad, as attested by the major show of his work at the DIA Beacon in 2011-2012. Yet the body of his work as a whole remains little known. He has ceaselessly explored new "complementary" pathways, fiercely resisting entrapment in any single, overarching line of attack that would exhaust its potential. When the Pompidou Center approached him about a retrospective, instead of doing what other artists might have done and seizing the occasion to present all the facets of his lifetime production, Moulène chose to mount an exhibition of recent, previously unshown work, and yet also bring out the "operational practices" and "protocols" underlying his long career and its different milestones. Let there be no misunderstanding: this artist is an inveterate jokester and his self-assumed brief to demonstrate the protocols underlying his work at the Pompidou is just a pretext for opening new pathways, even though they build on the old ones. In short, Moulène rejects the whole idea of a retrospective, which is "to reconstruct what you did before." He explained this position in an interview with *artpress* in early October giving a glimpse of the metaphor behind his method, the playful and disconcerting ways he does things. The original idea was to publish a classical interview. But when the time came, he refused to let himself be recorded, saying that he distrusted his own words and did not want them to become definitive and irreversible. Yet this was follo-

**« La Pucelle, Paris, novembre 2013 ».** 2013 Ciment. 90 x 120 x 76 cm. Exposition « J.-L. Moulène. Il était une fois », Académie de France à Rome, Villa Médicis, 2015. (Court. de l'artiste et galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris ; Coll. privée ; Ph. D. Molajoli). *Cement*

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ved by a long monologue punctuated by the occasional question. The rhythm of his often jerky-jerky phrases and well-placed significant silences made his discourse highly musical. Moulène's way of speaking, so much like the approach he has forged over decades in his work, often relies on intertwining melodic lines, a bundle of contrapuntal discursive pathways (and voices). The son of musician parents, the artist is currently working on the construction of a studio in the Perche region designed by Didier Faustino. This space where he will one day work is structured along the lines of a Bach fugue, he explained. He also touched on free jazz, rock and punk during this interview. Perhaps Moulène's body of work could be best compared to a vast musical composition, comprising whole families of work taken individually and their interplay as well. This is how his work comes to him, and how he will offer it to the public on the occasion of this exhibition

## APPARENT DISORDER

There has been a lot of commentary about the supposedly heterogeneous character of his artistic enterprise, a thesis fortunately countered by a few critics like Éric de Chassey, and Nathalie Delbard, who wrote a remarkable monograph about him.(1) When closely examined, this supposed heterogeneity turns out to be a harmony achieved by the allegedly disparate notes that this artist manages to bring together. In her preface, Delbard notes that "everything is tied together" in Moulène's work: "There is no rupture or inconsistency between the deliberate disjunct of images concerning social issues that in the end seem to be about nothing but photography, and those that on the contrary seem to directly take on questions as fundamental as the commodification of bodies, for example (*Les Filles d'Amsterdam*)." Delbard correctly talks about the difficulty of discerning "a formal or thematic consistency" in Moulène's corpus. This is made all the harder by the absence of any stylistic or formal continuity, "any clear guiding principle" that could "cement together his work, if not the relative variety of procedures, subjects and renderings." Still, she concludes, "it is this 'apparent disorder' that provides the conditions for forging a truly critical position."

Will the four volumes of photographic documents available to the public at the Pompidou Center succeed in bringing order to this "apparent disorder"? Not likely. Moulène's goal is not to clarify situations but, on the contrary, to repeatedly "enter into contradiction" with the system—in this case, the museum-mandated retrospective model or the kind of interview favored by art magazines. Of course, the Pompidou exhibition demonstrates "namable and unnamable protocols," conveys his taste for addition and subtraction, and reveals his desire to interrogate "the common spaces" and various disparate vectors and factors that make it up. This exhibition, he explains elliptically, makes it possible to reveal "the space where a car and a woman intersect." We'll come back to this later.

## OBJECTS OF INTERPRETATION

Furnishing "objects of interpretation" has always been at the core of this artist's enterprise, even at the risk of leading viewers down overly well-marked—and misleading—paths. In the past, especially because of their explicit titles, his "strike objects" and Palestinian products pandered to the cliché of the politically engaged artist, whereas that engagement is obviously—and above all—at work in series of far less ostentatiously political objects. Once again, the whole point is the counterpoint. Oscillating between objects he conceived and sculpted himself in a private space (his studio and the workplace of his subcontractors), and the photos taken in public spaces, this exhibition becomes a platform where these two poles that frame Moulène's presentations can come together. Moulène's work has always developed and revolved around these paradoxical and profoundly significant games. When he was a student, Michel Journiac warned him not to fall down while "walking the tightrope between conceptual and corporeal art." The concept and the body—an excellent metaphor characterizing a corpus marked by cea-

« Indexes ». 2016. Béton. 139 x 74 x 50 cm (Court. de l'artiste et Thomas Dane Gallery, Londres © Jean-Luc Moulène). *Concrete*

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seless and simultaneous contradictions. These contradictions are strongly present in the Pompidou exhibition. In the entry hall visitors are invited to take a copy of a newspaper published for the show, exclusively comprised of photos. These recent images actively interfere with a space that, with the exception of three videos, is full of sculptures. With the first, entitled *Voyelles* in homage to Rimbaud, visitors enter into an intermediary space. The sculpture under glass evokes Moulène's preferred mode of presentation, open to the urban fabric, thereby bringing out one of the constants in his work, namely the permeability between exterior and interior, private and public, immutability/fixedness and a permanent state of flux. "My piece," he says, "could be the objectification of a poem. Nevertheless, it's a construction, not a reading, a complete reconstruction that resembles an attempt to teach literacy. Houses standing side by side, cars lined up along the sidewalk, inscriptions on the walls, colorful letter tags: the street. This piece is located at the entrance more to mark an objectivization of what we see in the street than to reference Rimbaud."(2) Outside, the city. Inside, sculptures sitting on pedestals. Between the two, the visitors, us. Moulène has given us these pieces so as to let the artworks blossom. "Once they are made public they no longer belong to me. They go from being objects to artworks," he says. This is a rite of initiation, an act of transubstantiation, to use terms that are perfectly appropriate in speaking about an artist who does not hesitate to employ religious references or invoke the sacred.

## A REAR-VIEW MIRROR

Moulène's exhibition layout was apparently planned during a countryside stay in the Creuse, in a garden of the exact same dimensions as his allocated space at the Pompidou. It is divided into four sections that, instead of being hermetically sealed off from one another, are full of mutual references, correspondences and survivals, introduced by two pieces: *Voyelles* and *L'informe Bubuglu*. The first section is a group of sculptures made with a straight or rotary cutter. The second is about the dislocations and assemblage of objects. Two sculptures, *Jeanne* and *Bouboulina*, serve as transitions between these two sections. Anthropomorphic and prosthetic, they bring to mind Hans Bellmer's dolls, and reflect the fascination that the body, in terms of its organic, sexed and medical possibilities, holds for this artist who uses the word "genders" to describe these multiples. "Human beings are badly constructed," he says. "They have to be reconstructed. The body has to be reinvented."

The third part is characterized by intersections. Principally conceived using 3-D modeling software, they are (de)composed of hybrid forms representative of his penchant for set theory and mathematical knots, and, it should be recalled, the investigation of "common spaces" he has conducted throughout his career. The gray Carrara marble sculpture *Voiture & Fille* appears in this section. Clearly he is very proud of it, like a child showing off his latest invention. This is who Moulène is: an artist who seeks to recapture the freshness of a kid "waving around a little piece of wood in the rain." In this sense, everything he makes has a dimension of looking back. He can spend hours walking through the exhibition as he identifies the disjunctive elements he amalgamated. Always with the same sense of wonder. For example, Mr. Clean's handle and bottle in *Monsieur Propre (Ca propre [Anse])* and the various geometric volumes in *La Figure intermédiaire*.

## LANGUAGE TO OUTSIDE LANGUAGE

Depending on the case, the intersections may be "harmonious" or wildly disjunctive. *Voiture & Fille* (Car and Girl) belongs in the first subcategory. The anatomical details of the woman—the only one clearly identifiable is a breast—and the car's curves melt together, producing an astonishing symbiosis and osmosis. The object produced has a highly haptic quality, but its curves also invite the eye to discern the correspondences and reiterations among the various elements situated at a certain distance from one another but all within the same field of vision. In some of the objects composed and reinvented by Moulène, there is something analogous to a cross-dissolve. In others, on the contrary, the intersections are more abrupt and the welding more visible. It is as if he sought, through these pieces, to reveal the interstices and transition zones, like a composer (Webern) who accents the silences separating the notes. This can be seen, for instance, in *Indexes*, a piece made up of three fragments of ancient sculptures. This method brings to mind a quote from Carl Andre seen on a partition wall at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris a few days after going to the Pompidou show: "For some time I cut things. Then I realized that what I was cutting was the cut itself. Rather than cutting the material, now I use the material to cut space."(3)

As for the more anecdotal fourth section, it contains sculptures that by representing blow-ups or close-ups of the molecular structure of various dyes, interrogates "the form of color."

The "protocols" of which the Pompidou Center exhibition is a retrospective are conceptions like laterality, intersection and cut, which Moulène makes material. This shows how much words and language, despite his disdain for language, are the common denominator and the thread running through his approach. But this thread is recycled and made visible, if not legible. Whatever discourse he may hide, including, as a corollary, his self-proclaimed absence, we need to stick with what there is to see in his work. In this sense, no one can deny his extraordinary inventiveness. Thus this "retrospective of protocols" is above all a more than convincing display of a panoply of sculptural works demonstrating a wide range of techniques, paths of exploration, ambiences and contrasting references. This work has little equivalent today, even though contemporary sculpture, unlike painting, which is often confined to an identifiable register and signature, has never, over the last few decades, stopped engendering extremely diverse experimental and stylistic practices. Of course, one could object that in continuity with the Minimalist advocacy of delegating skills, many contemporary approaches, starting with Moulène's, have relied on subcontractors to an as yet unknown extent. He does not hide this; he praises the workers who make or finish his pieces. Obviously the making is not the point, even though this artist is sometimes tempted to hide one of those annoying postures that have marked the artistic landscape since the death of the author. Does it really matter? Moulène has every right to claim the paternity of this lesson about sculpture. It is his. Legitimately. ■

Translation, L-S Torgoff

(1) Nathalie Delbard, *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Paris, Petra, 2009.

(2) Jean-Luc Moulène in *Jean-Luc Moulène*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2016, p. 56. All the quotes from the artists are from our interview (Paris, October 3, 2016).

(3) Carl Andre, interview by David Bourdon, 1966.

*Erik Verhagen is an art critic and art historian. He teaches contemporary art history at the Unversité de Valenciennes.*

**Jean-Luc Moulène**
Né en/*born* 1955 à/*in* Reims
Vit et travaille à/*lives in* Paris
Expositions récentes/*recent solo shows:*
2015 *Documents & Opus (1985-2014)*, Kunstverein Hannover, Hanovre; *Il était une fois*, Académie de France à Rome; *The Lookout from the Kadist Collection*, collectorspace, Kadist Art Foundation, Istanbul; *Verde Azul Blanco Negro Rojo*, Torre de los Vientos, Mexico
2016 *Larvae and Ghosts*, Thomas Dane Gallery, Londres; *Jean-Luc Moulène. Circa 1977-2016*, Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny; *Productions de Jean-Luc Moulène au BHV Marais*, Paris, 13 septembre - 31 octobre; *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, 19 octobre 2016 - 20 février 2017

Bonnet, Frédéric. « Multiplier les espaces entre savoir et non-savoir », *Journal des Arts*, *N°467*, November 11-24, 2016, p.17.

Le Journal des Arts
L'ACTUALITÉ DE L'ART ET DE SON MARCHÉ À TRAVERS LE MONDE

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Le Journal des Arts
L'ACTUALITÉ DE L'ART ET DE SON MARCHÉ À TRAVERS LE MONDE

5,90 € | UN VENDREDI SUR DEUX | Numéro 467 | Du 11 au 24 novembre 2016 www.LeJournaldesArts.fr

En prélude à l'« Année France-Colombie », la ministre de la Culture **Mariana Garcés Córdoba** explique sa politique en Colombie

*Entretien page 6*

Le Centre Pompidou présente une rétrospective de **Jean-Luc Moulène** qui, dans l'esprit de l'artiste, se veut prospective

*Entretien page 17*

À 90 ans passés, l'expert en arts extra-européens **Jean Roudillon** est toujours en activité, exerçant son métier avec droiture

*Portrait page 35*

Bonnet, Frédéric. « Multiplier les espaces entre savoir et non-savoir », *Journal des Arts*, N°467, November 11-24, 2016, p.17.

Le Journal des Arts
L'ACTUALITÉ DE L'ART ET DE SON MARCHÉ À TRAVERS LE MONDE

PAROLES D'ARTISTE **JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE**

# « Multiplier les espaces entre savoir et non-savoir »

**JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, jusqu'au 20 février 2017, Centre Pompidou, place Georges-Pompidou, 75004 Paris, tél. 01 44 78 12 33, www.centrepompidou.fr, tlj sauf mardi 11h-21h, entrée 14 €. Catalogue, 240 p., 39 €.**

Au Centre Pompidou, à Paris, Jean-Luc Moulène propose un nouveau corpus de sculptures engageant corporalité et espace commun.

**Votre exposition est présentée comme une « rétrospective de protocoles ». Qu'est-ce qu'un protocole ?**
J'ai refusé de faire une rétrospective car j'avais plutôt l'idée d'une « rétro-prospective », car si ce n'est pas prospectif cela ne m'intéresse pas. Il fallait donc que je trouve un argument pour convaincre le Centre Pompidou et j'ai avancé l'idée des « protocoles », qui ne sont jamais que les modalités, les vitesses. Dans le cas présent il s'agit surtout de la vitesse de la pensée, de son énergie abstraite qui rencontre une matière qui la fige ; ce ne sont pas des choses au sens raisonnable, qui s'exprimeraient par a + b = c. Au lieu de faire du corps l'enjeu de la représentation, le corps sert de relais interprétatif. J'ai inversé le rapport : le corps n'est plus ce qui est remis en question, c'est ce sur quoi je m'appuie formellement pour dégager des vitesses de pensée.

**Cette exposition est pourtant très « genrée »...**
Ce que vous dites m'intéresse car pendant la conception de l'exposition je disais : « je milite ici pour la multiplication des genres, car deux ne me suffisent pas » ; ni deux ni les intermédiaires.

**Par extension le corps rencontre le corps social, or une grande sculpture en béton (*No, no, no*, 2016) est présentée dans cette galerie ouverte sur la rue qui induit une forte contingence urbaine...**
Oui, cet espace commun est justement l'objet même de mon investigation. Et j'ai essayé d'avoir le même type d'exposition, aussi bien dedans que dehors. C'est-à-dire que dans l'espace de la rue vous avez aussi bien des objets qu'une scène ; en tout cas on est presque dans une forme classique du fond et de la figure en équilibre, entre voitures, vélos, plots, signes, boutiques, etc. J'ai donc essayé de construire l'intérieur de la salle de la même manière, et comme c'est ouvert vous avez la possibilité de comparer. C'est pourquoi les deux œuvres qui organisent complètement l'espace sont cette pièce en béton et la grande sculpture rouge et bleue (*Biface*, 2016) : minéral et carrosserie ! Et au milieu, directement posés au sol, circulent des objets qui sont à la taille d'un buste, et sont donc les passants tout simplement. Il y a autant de propositions corporelles qu'il y a de pièces, et elles sont toutes combinables ; vous pouvez parfaitement vous amuser à croiser les molécules avec la tête d'âne, etc. Le travail de construction est donc aussi le travail interprétatif.

Vue de l'exposition de Jean-Luc Moulène au Centre Pompidou, Paris.
Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris ; Miguel Abreu Gallery, NY ; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Galerie Greta Meert, Bruxelles. © Photo : Florian Kleinefenn.

**De quoi la forme procède-t-elle chez vous ?**
La forme n'est jamais première. Il y a des expériences, des logiques réflexives, analytiques, d'observation, et je cherche ensuite la bonne forme, non pas pour rendre compte de mon expérience, mais pour, éventuellement, la rendre possible. Mon expérience de l'espace commun, j'essaie de la rendre possible en manifestant clairement des espaces communs. Et des espaces communs très matériels, très concrètement obtenus, donc à travers des formes abstraites aussi bien que des objets réels, des saisies.

**Votre travail de sculpture constitue-t-il une translation de votre travail photographique et de celui effectué sur les objets dans la photo ?**
[La critique d'art] Nathalie Delbard me disait : *« Tu es en train de faire à la sculpture ce que tu as fait à la photo. »* Je ne l'avais pas formulé aussi directement, mais dans le fond c'est sans doute vrai. Curieusement, j'ai toujours fonctionné avec l'ignorance : des choses que je ne comprends pas me permettent d'identifier des champs pour lesquels j'ai la même non-compréhension, ce qui me fait dire qu'ils ont peut-être quelque chose à voir [entre eux]. Ce sont des manières qui me permettent de rentrer dans certains types d'agencements. Je fonctionne donc très souvent en posant des incompréhensions. Comment peut-on fonder une activité sur l'ignorance ? Il y a un très beau texte là-dessus de Jacques Rancière [philosophe] qui dit exactement comment il faut faire : observer, comparer, vérifier. Et qu'est-ce que vous observez ? D'abord des choses que vous ne comprenez pas, et ce sont elles qui fondent votre activité. Nous avons abordé les genres en disant qu'il faut les multiplier. De même, entre savoir et non-savoir il faut multiplier les espaces.

**Propos recueillis par Frédéric Bonnet**

Lequeux, Emmanuelle. «Jean-Luc Moulène artiste assembleur», *Beaux Arts magazine*, *N°321*, November 1, 2016, pp.120-123.

BeauxArts
magazine

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# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE ARTISTE ASSEMBLEUR

**PEU CONNU DU GRAND PUBLIC, CET ARTISTE ENGAGÉ CONNAÎT UN SUCCÈS CROISSANT À L'INTERNATIONAL. SES SCULPTURES SONT DES OBJETS HYBRIDES, NÉS DU MARIAGE DE FORMES ET DE MATIÈRES IMPROBABLES, FABRIQUÉS GRÂCE À DES IMPRIMANTES 3D. DES ŒUVRES DONT ÉMANE UNE BEAUTÉ PÉNÉTRANTE ET DÉFINITIVEMENT ÉTRANGE. L'ART DU XXIe SIÈCLE?**

PAR EMMANUELLE LEQUEUX · REPORTAGE PHOTO LÉA CRESPI POUR BEAUX ARTS MAGAZINE

La rencontre inattendue d'une voiture et d'un corps de femme, d'une tasse à café et d'une bouteille de Monsieur Propre... Jean-Luc Moulène est le joaillier de curieux alliages. Ses dernières sculptures, dévoilées cet automne au Centre Pompidou, sont des mariages impossibles. Les contraires y fusionnent pour muer l'objet quotidien en abstraction. En infinie singularité, aurait-on envie d'écrire. «Mais être singulier, c'est devenu le mot d'ordre aujourd'hui, rétorque l'artiste, son éternelle gauloise au bec. Tout ce que j'espère, c'est décevoir les attentes, au sens noble. C'est-à-dire ne pas les recevoir.» Ne pas chercher l'évidence, le commun, surtout, quand on le rencontre dans son atelier, près de Bercy. Il accepte de parler, certes. Mais en évitant à tout prix l'intime autant que le poncif. «La parole de l'artiste reste du domaine de l'expression, et cela, je le garde pour mes potes. Je ne cherche pas à exprimer, mais à objectiver.» À 61 ans, Jean-Luc Moulène n'a rien perdu de son exigence, ni son regard bleu de son étonnante force de pénétration. Un œil si aigu qu'il semble pouvoir entrer dans le secret de la matière. En un sens, c'est l'expérience qu'il propose au visiteur. Confronté à ces formes de bronze, de porcelaine ou de grès jaspé, il doit, pour les envisager, s'en saisir et les faire tourner dans sa tête, comme un ordinateur ferait valser une simulation en 3D. Sinon, impossible de comprendre quelle étrange figure géométrique peut naître, par exemple, de la rencontre d'une sphère, d'un cube et d'une pyramide isocèle...

L'os, la porcelaine, la pierre... Dans son atelier, comme auprès des maîtres artisans avec lesquels il collabore fréquemment, l'artiste exploite toutes sortes de matières.

Surtout si l'on en est resté à la pratique initiale de Moulène qui, pendant vingt ans, a travaillé le médium photographique. Or, d'images, il n'en est pas dans l'exposition, si ce n'est dans l'album qui ouvre le parcours. Comment expliquer cette rupture? «Il n'y a aucun glissement dans ma pratique, aucune discontinuité, hormis dans la nature des pièces, rétorque-t-il en fin rhéteur. C'est bel et bien le même boulot. J'ai toujours produit des objets. Simplement, il y a vingt ans, ils n'étaient pas recevables. Si je me suis autant

Lequeux, Emmanuelle. «Jean-Luc Moulène artiste assembleur», *Beaux Arts magazine*, *N°321*, November 1, 2016, pp.120-123.

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Œil aigu pour artiste intransigeant… Refusant la comédie de la communication, Moulène passe d'un médium à l'autre, de la photographie à la sculpture, sans rien changer à l'essence même de sa recherche.

Lequeux, Emmanuelle. «Jean-Luc Moulène artiste assembleur», *Beaux Arts magazine*, *N°321*, November 1, 2016, pp.120-123.

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***La Fille de l'os***
2016, mousses, plastique, résines colorées, sangles en PVC, vinyle, 58 x 33 x 30 cm.

***Indexes***
2016, béton, 138,8 x 73,8 x 50,2 cm.
Des corps hors normes, une couleur faite forme, des dialogues décapants d'objets : Moulène dévoile au Centre Pompidou une trentaine de sculptures inédites, nées d'une infinité de techniques et de protocoles mathématiques.

***Yellow 6, Disodium 6-hydroxy-5-[(4-sulfophenyl)azo]-2-naphthalenesulfonate (CI 15985) - E110,*** 2016, céramique colorée, 21 x 83 x 53,8 cm.

***Voyelles***
2015, bronze, laiton, plastique, mousse, métal, résine époxy, colorants, 50 x 29 x 56 cm.

battu pour la photographie, c'est qu'elle n'était pas acceptée dans le monde de l'art. Aujourd'hui, ce combat est gagné. Il s'agit désormais de dire l'intégralité de ma pratique. De parler après la photo.» Cela lui vaut un succès notable : la très respectable Dia:Beacon de New York lui a offert une exposition l'an passé, et François Pinault a craqué. Pas question pour autant de s'accorder le repos du guerrier. L'image, il continue à l'explorer, en se posant de drôles de questions : «Quelle forme a la couleur ? Cette interrogation peut paraître absurde, reconnaît-il. Mais il existe dans la nature des molécules carbonées qui ne sont que couleur. Le Yellow 6, par exemple, connu sous la forme du colorant E110, en est une.» De cette molécule, il fait un magma d'émail. Forme ET couleur, unies en un seul objet. Car, aime-t-il à dire, «j'essaie de faire en sorte que chaque œuvre se charge de toutes les contradictions. Une œuvre, ce n'est jamais oui ou non, c'est à la fois oui et non. Je suis pour tous les possibles.»
Si le musée national d'Art moderne voulait une rétrospective, il peut s'asseoir dessus : «Je ne me sens pas trop vieux, et je peux encore travailler, s'amuse l'artiste. Montrer une exposition intégralement inédite, pour moi, c'est la seule promesse qui puisse être faite aux gamins. Cette question de la transmission est essentielle : je ne serais rien sans les artistes qui m'ont précédé.»
Pourtant, il poursuit dans le paradoxe : «L'exposition n'est pas conçue pour le spectateur, mais pour les objets. Ils peuvent parler pour nous, ou se parler entre eux. La question intéressante, c'est comment regarder un objet, comment montrer une œuvre d'art qui soit le moins possible prise dans son fonds culturel, politique, ses

Lequeux, Emmanuelle. «Jean-Luc Moulène artiste assembleur», *Beaux Arts magazine*, *N°321*, November 1, 2016, pp.120-123.



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lieux communs?» Ainsi l'exposition ne livrera-t-elle tous ses secrets qu'à ceux qui accepteront de faire un effort, au-delà de l'évidente beauté du paysage qu'il compose à partir d'une trentaine d'objets disposés en chaos ordonné, sans scénographie aucune. «Un truc un peu science-fiction, au sens où c'est une constellation en devenir. Une perspective conçue comme un tableau de Maria Elena Vieira da Silva, avec deux grands éléments, une architecture de béton et une carrosserie, tels des guillemets entourant des objets qui obéissent à trois ou quatre protocoles.»

## LA FUSION D'UNE RENAULT ALPINE ET D'UNE FEMME

Des protocoles? À savoir le processus de création de la pièce. C'est là que cela se complique. «Disjonction, interrelation, intersection, latéralité», énumère l'artiste, pour résumer quelques-uns de ses principes. Un vocabulaire issu de la topologie, science mathématique étudiant «les déformations spatiales par des transformations continues (sans arrachages ni recollement des structures)», dirons-nous en plagiant Wikipédia. «Des espaces qui n'ont ni dedans ni dehors, mais qui se nouent sur eux-mêmes, qui pensent la complexité», précise-t-il. Pour être prosaïques, reprenons: soit la fusion d'une Renault Alpine avec la silhouette d'une femme en un glissement qui crée un corps sans rupture, en marbre gris; ou le glissement doux d'une tasse vers une bouteille de nettoyant ménager, en bronze noir. L'un devient l'autre, sans discontinuer. «Pour le déceler, cela demande sans doute un niveau d'observation que personne ne possède, mais cela peut être perçu sans être nommé, au niveau inconscient», espère-t-il.

La plupart de ces sculptures sont fabriquées à l'aide de techniques dernier cri telles les imprimantes 3D, «cette technologie qui a envahi l'industrie, qui est en train de créer des géants mondialisés et qui nous fait entrer dans une phase de normalisation qu'il me semble essentiel d'interroger. Ce que je cherche en produisant ainsi mes pièces, c'est l'altération réciproque de mon projet et de la main de l'ouvrier intervenant dessus.» À ces machines qui formatent notre quotidien, Moulène répond en les détournant de leur fonction première, pour les faire aller vers une absolue étrangeté. «Altération et altérité.» Dans l'exposition, seule une pièce garde la trace de la main: une tête d'âne, sciée en spirale, afin qu'elle s'ouvre comme un fruit. «Un squelette, oui. Car après tout, quoi d'autre?» ■

**«Jean-Luc Moulène»** du 19 octobre au 20 février
Centre Pompidou · place Georges Pompidou · 75004 Paris
01 44 78 12 33 · www.centrepompidou.fr

***Bleu de costume***
Marier le bleu de travail et le smoking-cravate? Moulène a osé, et fait sensation à la rentrée en dévoilant au BHV, à Paris, cet ironique hybride, produit avec Objet Sens Fonction et édité à 500 exemplaires avec l'aide de la fondation Galeries Lafayette.
2016, coton et polyester, prix de vente 140 €.

Tang, Jo-ey. «Jean-Luc Moulène », *Art Forum*, November 4, 2016.
https://www.artforum.com/words/id=64485

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# Jean-Luc Moulène

11.04.16

Left: **Jean-Luc Moulène and Object Sens Function, *Bleu de costume*, 2016,** cotton and polyester. Installation view at Bazar de l'Hotel de Ville, Paris. Right: **Cover of Jean-Luc Moulène's *Quiconque*, 2016.**

*The haunting photographs and sculptures of Paris-based artist Jean-Luc Moulène are material sleights of hand, vibrational time-space objects. Here, in a "discontinuous interview," he speaks about inhabiting fields outside art as well as his "retrospective of protocols," featuring thirty new pieces, which is on view at the Centre Pompidou in Paris through February 20, 2017.*

**SOPHIE DUPLAIX,** the curator of this show, has come to my studio every year for the past ten years. To answer the question of an institutional retrospective, I originally asked to do it anonymously. So, I did two things for culture and communication. One is *Bleu de costume*, a unisex suit, which is being sold at the department store BHV. The other is *Quiconque*, a newspaper that I produced with graphic designer Marc Touitou.

*Retro-Prospective / capital is attached to names / That was not possible / An agreement between states / customs and etiquette / a protocol is an abstraction, the speed of the thought looking for its material /*

The blue in *Bleu de costume* is derived from the traditional French worker's jacket. The suit is a link between the master who makes decisions and the workers—fit for business negotiations, as well as production in the factories. It is, however, not a political statement. *Quiconque* contains eighty-eight full-page images that I took over the past five years in different cities, from Paris to New York to Beirut to Mexico, printed on the same paper stock—eighty grams and white—as *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the monthly newspaper. One hundred thirty-one thousand copies are placed on eighty-one pallets outside the exhibition space.

*I don't take pictures because I like this or that, but to know what it looks like / always out of territory, always migrant / solutions in the world. I observe, compare, and check. / an activity of knowledge, an exact chronology of something being known /*

In the exhibition there are two new big pieces: one that looks like concrete and the other made with automotive surfaces—like everywhere in the world. *Bi-face* is made out of two big surfaces with automotive finishes, one side red, the other side blue. *No, no, no* is an assemblage of three huge concrete objects: a tetrapod that has been used in seaside towns since the 1960s as a breakwater; a sixteen-foot-tall wall similar to the separation barrier in Palestine; and a barrier like the kind you can find along highways.

*Against sound / Against waves / Against entry / on pedestals almost twenty new artworks at body size / bones – cars – girls – Mr. Clean – coffee cups / Not belong. As a child, I also grew up in Spain and Morocco before returning to France. At that moment, I shared nothing with what it means to be French. I still don't. No belonging /*

Often I do things without any practical knowledge. I make one piece and move on to another one. I don't need to dominate over materials. My objects are surfaces, with no inside or outside, only holes. Through the holes there are other surfaces. I am more interested in the water running unstable at the peak of the mountains than in the brook. In the show, some objects are done really rough, others by the finest fabricators, such as from the Coubertin foundry or handmade ceramics from Guadalajara, Mexico. I abandoned early on the idea that art is a personal expression. I engage in *pression* (pressure), not expression.

*My objects block or guide you / point outward / the viewers find their way back / become aware of energy blocks as in butoh, to be conscious of their own condition / The world is going fast. Let's go slow. I will die, but I am not getting older / I am getting something else.*

*— As told to Jo-ey Tang*

PERMALINK | COMMENTS

Boudier, Laurent. «La sculpture mutante de Jean-Luc Moulène», *Télérama.fr*, November 7, 2016.
http://www.telerama.fr/sortir/avec-jean-luc-moulene-la-sculpture-devient-mutante,149698.php

Télérama.fr

*Art contemporain*

# La sculpture mutante de Jean-Luc Moulène

Laurent Boudier Publié le 07/11/2016. Mis à jour le 08/11/2016 à 10H43.

Voyelles [Vowels] Paris, 2015 Bronze, brass, plastic, foam, steel, epoxy resin, pigment, 50 x 29 x 56 cm

© Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London

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Boudier, Laurent. «La sculpture mutante de Jean-Luc Moulène», *Télérama.fr*, November 7, 2016.
http://www.telerama.fr/sortir/avec-jean-luc-moulene-la-sculpture-devient-mutante,149698.php

Télérama.fr

**Dans une exposition déconcertante, le photographe ne présente plus les images qui ont fait sa réputation, mais d'étranges volumes réalisés en 3D par ordinateur. La sculpture qui devient objet de design, une révolution ?**

On dirait une sorte de hall d'aéroport. L'exposition de Jean-Luc Moulène à Beaubourg aligne sur un plateau ouvert, sans cloison ni mur ( une scénographie très à la mode en ce moment mais pas pratique du tout), une très large suite de sculptures. Torse d'une femme en matière plastique mauve et blanche sanglée de prothèses ; petit os creux en poudre de marbre tout blanc ; carcasse futuriste de voiture sexuée ; vêtement - un bleu de travail en coton indigo, très chic,conçu récemment pour les 160 ans du BHV... Autant l'avouer cet étal mal rangé et assez déconcertant réserve autant de surprises que d'embarras.

## Surprise : un photographe sans image

Jean-Luc Moulène, né à Reims en 1955, ex-conseiller artistique pour le design chez Thomson, ex-enseignant et désormais artiste à temps plein, s'est fait connaitre au cours des années 1980-1990 pour ses photographies (qui lui ont valu bien des expositions, de la galerie parisienne Chantal Crousel au Jeu de Paume). Des travaux devenus célèbres, comme les «Objets de grève» (1999) - minutieux inventaire de clichés neutres d'objets réalisés par des ouvrier en grève- ou encore sa fameuse série choc, réalisée en 2003 et qui fit couler beaucoup d'encre, sur les prostituées d'Amsterdam, clichés XXL de femmes aux jambes écartés, au sexe épilé impudique et exposées sur fond rouge.

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Pourtant, aucune image dans l'expo, l'artiste ne montre ici que des sculptures. Ce n'est pas une nouvelle lubie, Jean-Luc Moulène conjugue depuis toujours photographies, dessins, écrits et sculptures. Mais sa pratique de la sculpture est ici abordé de manière spectaculaire.

Dans un entretien avec le commissaire de l'exposition, Sophie Duplaix, Moulène s'explique : « Selon moi, l'idéal, l'exposition parfaite, ce serait l'exposition où l'on pourrait prendre les pièces une par une et aller lire toutes les autres pièces avec. Donc on en prend une, on s'en sert comme mode de lecture pour les autres, on la repose, on en prend une autre, et ainsi de suite jusqu'à épuisement de l'ensemble des pièces. Et il faut que tout ce qui apparaît à ce moment-là développe l'intégralité du programme. Il faudrait aussi préciser une chose importante : c'est que la place de l'homme dans cette exposition n'est pas du tout calculée. il n'y a ni scénographie ni chorégraphie : les distances entre les œuvres ne sont pas mesurées pour le regardeur. Dans le fond, il est nécessairement étranger, l'homme, dans cet espace : il est le bienvenu, mais il est étranger...»

## Embarras : un sculpteur sans forme fixe

Bien déboussolante est la manière radicale dont Moulène fait acte de sculpteur. Partout, dans ses créations s'invitent la modélisation, le logiciel de l'ingénieur, et l'algorithme. Et partout apparaît le plastique lisse, la poudre de marbre injectée, la mousse expansée par le truchement de techniques industrielles.
Moulène tricote, avec un rare plaisir de la perturbation, tout une grammaire de styles qui va de l'hybridation aux rébus de formes, de l'altération à la redéfinition de la tradition des beaux-arts. Pour aller vite, il invente une nouvelle voie dans la sculpture : sorte de crash-test où se percute le polyèdre abstrait en plâtre d'un Brancusi et l'aluminium d'une aile d' Airbus.

D'ou ce truc un peu absurde pour tout critique d'art patenté : comment donc dénommer ce petit objet

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insaisissable, aux formes lisses, peu incarné de formes connues et tendrement teinté de couleur orange abricot, que l'artiste appelle «Jeanne, 2016» ? Une stèle féminine aux envies métaphoriques, sans corps ni tête, incarnée dans la mousse dure enduite de pigments ?
Comment appréhender encore sa sculpture en copié-collé de formes évidentes, mi voiture de courses et mi fesses rebondies de femmes, au titre «Car&Girl» ? Un objet à la Ballard, sculpture furtive en marbre gris ?

Voilà bien en réalité toute la saveur et la complexité de la sculpture de Moulène.

> « Son art s'oppose à l'inertie des matériaux»

« Son art s'oppose, par la modélisation des formes, à l'inertie des matériaux», note le patron du musée, Bernard Blistène. « Il les coupe, les assemble, les contraints, les plie. Il les souffle et les forge, les hybride et les greffe. Attentif aux objets du présent, sensible aux figures les plus archaïques, Moulène semble forcer la nature des choses. leur imposer sa loi, agir sur elles pour que surgisse, à partir de ses manipulations, une hypothèse inconnue jusqu'à lui…»

## Un nouveau chemin artistique

C'est bien la question d'une fraternité intellectuelle de formes, à priori contraires, qui vient tout le temps cueillir et perturber le visiteur. Il y lit l'affirmation d'un nouveau chemin que les artistes d'aujourd'hui empruntent : à la place du ciseau, bienvenue à l'ordinateur ; et au lieu du praticien qui bossait anonymement pour Rodin, voilà venu le temps de l'ingénieur 3D (qui est cité lui dans l'exposition).

Jean-Luc Moulène n'est pas le seul artiste qui va sur ce chemin de la forme vectorielle et de la proposition mutante. Il incarne au contraire une large école d'artistes d'aujourd'hui, par où la sculpture file allegro vers l'objet design, et l'image jpeg se profile de formes spatiales possibles….

Cent ans après que le père Duchamp ait ouvert la voie par son porte-bouteille acheté au BHV du coin, avec son ready-made novateur (oeuvre historique exposé en ce moment à la galerie Ropac), cette quête de sculpture n'a rien de bien scandaleux. Et si Moulène, par la modélisation et l'ode à hybridation, voulait nous égarer d'un art désormais génétiquement modifié ?

Galerie Chantal Crousel

McLean-Ferris, Laura. «Conflicts of Interest», *Flash Art*, *no. 310*, *Volume 49 - 2016*, September - October 2016, p. 41 and pp. 68-75.

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Blown Knot 63 2, Borromean, Varia 03 (CIRVA, Marseille, 2012)* (2012)
Courtesy the Artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

The cover of this issue of *Flash Art* reproduces a painting by African American artist Kerry James Marshall. In the painting, titled *Untitled (Pink Towel)* (2009), an unidentified woman casually covers her naked body with a towel. She looks obliquely at the viewer and tilts her head, unveiling a pearl earring reminiscent of the jewel depicted in the renowned portrait *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665), by Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. *Untitled (Pink Towel)* is paradigmatic of an artistic practice that integrates a wide range of pictorial traditions in order to challenge platitudinous depictions of blackness in society, thus amending the portrayal of the black figure within the canon of Western art.

On the occasion of Marshall's traveling retrospective "Mastry" (opening at The Met Breuer, in New York, in October, and at the MOCA, in Los Angeles, in March 2017), the artist talked to MOCA chief curator Helen Molesworth. In their conversation, he discusses the racial dynamics of art education and specifically, his experiences as a university professor in contexts that fostered and reinforced privileged white art discourses. Marshall remarks, "it's challenging when there are so few students of color so you don't really get a chance to shape with them the conversation about what kinds of things are possible in making art, but you constantly have to keep doing it with students who already have access to that kind of experience." Marshall's description of how academic structures inhibit non-white artists' access to learning that may "rev up" transformations in art recalls the marginalized history of blackness in the pictorial iconography that his paintings so persistently challenge.

The question of how art explores the possibility of empathy is one that *Flash Art* Associate Editor Laura McLean-Ferris takes up in her essay on the work of French artist Jean-Luc Moulène, also the subject of a forthcoming retrospective, opening in October at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris. "Moulène's recent work involves not only looking, but attempting to reach into the innermost interior of another object, presence or material," wrote McLean-Ferris. "In this way he allows one to think about both peculiar and important forms of empathy — not a kindly, gentle thought about how someone else might feel; but an attempt to get inside something violent or difficult or alien in the only ways that are available to you."

Moulène's most recent works — for example, the sculpture *Blown Knot 63 2, Borromean, Varia 03 (CIRVA, Marseille, 2012)* (2012), in which loops of colored glass seem to wrestle with each other around an empty center —envision and materialize a space that is impossible for the viewer to access. One can read in them an invitation to empathize with what (or whom) is unreachable.

Good reading,

The Editors

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FEATURE

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# Conflicts of Interest

*Laura McLean-Ferris on the work of* Jean-Luc Moulène

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FEATURE

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Writing about the work of the French artist Jean-Luc Moulène (b. 1955, France; lives in Paris), I've reached, many times, for words that describe the deep center of a thing — bone marrow, heart, central core. Beholding Moulène's recent work involves not only looking, but attempting to reach into the innermost interior of another object, presence or material: to make an approach into the center. And in this way Moulène is an artist who allows one to think about both peculiar and important forms of empathy, one of the most critical problems of the current age. I don't mean a kindly, gentle thought about how someone else might feel. I mean an attempt to get inside something violent or difficult or alien in the only ways that are available to you: speculation, imagination, experience, logic, some kind of Stanislavskian embodiment technique. Don't forget that all of these strategies by which we try to understand others are rude, reckless and, by their very nature, flawed. And yet still the effort itself is deeply important in an era of confirmation bias, consensus bubbles, post-factual reportage and emotion-led politics. The structures by which we assemble ourselves politically — algorithms, social networks, clickbait media, the markets — insulate us from those with whom we might disagree. We have entered an era of polarization and fantasy with cavernous moral and political divides that can seem, at times, unbridgeable.

Certain works by Moulène offer a material realization of that problem, presenting affective voids that are genuinely unreachable. For instance, *Tronches / Gardiens écorchés (Paris, May 2014)* (2014): an object made by using a full-head Halloween mask as a mold in which to cast concrete. Placing my own head before this concrete one, encountering it one-to-one, I'm struck by how hermetic an object it is — a concrete, sealed-in face turned inward, impenetrable. And yet, this head and its presence works its way into my own head, because the sense-making, relation-forming part of my brain wants to compare this head to my own. I fixate on two rows of strangely protruding teeth, an imprint seemingly taken from the back of a set of teeth, and suddenly my gaze tries to convolutedly swing inward. I think about a form of vision that could be located in the center of the head and look out at the back of my teeth, instead

*Page 69:*
Purple Graces *(2016)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London*

*This page:*
Tronche / Slipknot (Paris, 2014) *(2014)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris*

*Next page:*
Tête-à-Cul *(2014)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York*

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of on their exterior, as well as other views of the body from within. That sensation, of turning oneself inside out, seems particularly relevant to the monster masks that the artist selects. For a 2014 exhibition, "Torture Concrete" at New York's Miguel Abreu Gallery, many more of the *Tronches* — made from other masks including the Joker, a dragon and a flying monkey — were laid on the floor on top of blue packing blankets (it seems that a *gardien* écorché [tormented guard] mask is a flayed-head mask). The works seem to suggest a difficult truth regarding the nature of empathy: you cannot materially turn yourself inside out in order to consider another being without being at war with yourself and your own body.

Creating something that is clearly and immediately fighting itself, choking, gagging, spitting itself out or questioning its own status as an object, is a central part of Moulène's stock in trade. Take what is perhaps his best-known series, *Objets de grève* [Strike Objects] (1999–2000), a series of photographs documenting products made by industrial workers on strike, each depicted cleanly and objectively on a neutral background. (Moulène worked primarily in photography until the early 2000s; these images in particular seem to draw from the time he worked in advertising.) A packet of Gauloises cigarettes, for example, has been produced in red instead of its signature blue, and has the words "ocupée depuis le 23.2.82 pour le redémarrage, contre la fermeture de l'établissement" beneath the logo. A bottle of cleaning product announces that it is scented with "parfum de solidarite" and features the upturned palm of a striking hand, with the words "touche pas a mon emploi!" emblazoned across it. The back of a watch is engraved with details of a conflict from October 1974, while the base of a frying pan reads "relaxe," encircled by the words "emploi," "solidarité," "liberté" and "justice."

As fascinating as these objects are in an anthropological or historical sense, they also carry a strange form

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of tautology at the core of their very existence. While "not producing" the objects, workers have nonetheless produced them, and so the markers of stoppage must be conveyed by other means. A product's relationship with its consumer is conveyed and circulated by continuing to create and distribute that product, despite the fact that the very nature of its production is in dispute. The conflict is the core of the object. Moulène took a related approach to a later series, *Produits de Palestine* (2002–04), photographing products made in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and West Bank and branded as Palestinian. Due to sanctions, the products, which advertise a form of Palestinian identity, cannot leave the place in which they are produced. Bottles of olive oil and tinned tomatoes are beautifully depicted in pairs, in the style of lush, still-life product photography, yet they represent a kind of blockage within the circulatory system, an occlusion, a strangulation.

But human bodies and territories are not the only zones of conflict that Moulène's works form themselves around. *La Vigie (The Lookout Man)* (2004–11), the artist's monumental photographic essay, is a series of images of one particular species of plant, *paulownia tomentosa*, sometimes called the "princess tree." The series began when the artist noticed a plant sprouting out of the asphalt next to the Ministry of Finance. Following the progress of this tenacious sprout in the area for the following seven years, the artist created a suite of 299 images in which both artist and plant are intertwined as witnesses to a backdrop of escalating fear made physically manifest in Paris streets: anti-terrorist security measures such as bollards, fences and barricades instituted by the *Vigipirate* national security system. It's a baleful irony that in the years since the series was completed, the relationship to terror in Paris and France has become ever more grim.

But what does it do to us to imagine that the plant, as much as the artist, is a kind of watcher, and to consider the world from this quiet being's perspective at ankle-biting height? In the recently published novel *Pond* by Claire Louise Bennett, the protagonist describes the narrative of a half-remembered book in which the last woman alive realizes that she has become equivalent to any other type of object, for there is no species or community, just her singular body.

> "For a few moments I looked away from the pages so that there was some opportunity for me to feel a little of what she must have felt when she looked at her face with the same sort of attention one brings to bear upon the bark of a tree, the surface of a rock, the skin of a peach, and in those few moments it was as if the pupils in my own eyes became tunnels and I was suddenly sucked backwards." [Riverhead Books, 2016, p. 90]

*Previous page:*
Noeud 4.1 Varia 01 (Paris, 2012) *(2012)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York*

*This page, from left:*
Alzahara – Néroli
*From the series "Produits de Palestine" (2002-04)*
*Courtesy of the Artist; Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; and Thomas Dane Gallery, London*

PPP-Ratidine
*From the series "Produits de Palestine" (2002-04)*
*Courtesy of the Artist; Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; and Thomas Dane Gallery, London*

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This description of an internalized gaze that is "sucked backwards" when confronted with the possibility of viewing oneself and the world on the same register, and even intertwined with animals, objects or rocks, strikingly evokes the experience of engaging with one of Moulène's works — for example *Arthur* (2010), a sculpture in which a human skull is partly encased in cast concrete, so that only the crown of the head appears. Or *Tête-à-Cul (Paris, spring 2014)* (2014), a hanging sculpture of a boar's jawbone and a doe's hipbone connected by a pale balloon that has been inflated inside them, affixed with latex. Cream bulges protrude like eyes, cheeks and other forms of bodily swellings. Somehow it is possible to treat this head-body as a complete entity with a possible spirit and character, however truncated, malformed, squeezed and inhuman that presence might be.

Allowing a flexible and viscous material to react to a more rigid structure also informs one of Moulène's most important bodies of work, which takes knots and knottiness as a formal point of departure. The artist is avowedly interested in the mathematical study of knots and knot theory; as he told me via email "The knot can be considered like a tool for describing the behavior of complexity and chaos, even at a first glance." In several works, a lattice-like knot structure is made with thin steel laces before a colored glass form is blown inside the structure, as though it is attempting to rupture its encasement within the tangle. Other knots, such as versions of the interlinked Borromean rings, are made entirely of loops of colored glass, such as *Blown Knot 63 2, Borromean, Varia 03 (CIRVA, Marseille, 2012)* (2012), in which linked and fused rings of sky blue, neon yellow and treacly orange seem to wrestle with each other around an empty center.

Returning to the question of empathy, Moulène's knot sculptures also communicate, through material, an important commitment to complexity. "What interests me," the artist has said, "are the functions of transformation." [Jean-Luc Moulène in conversation with with Briony Fer, in *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König; Nimes: Carré d'art–Museé d'art contermporain de Nimes, 2009, p. 139.] It's for this reason that his upcoming exhibition at Centre Pompidou, in Paris, is not a retrospective, but rather a "retrospective of protocols," which are positions that refuse to resolve. This thinking through of the unstable, tangled position is elegantly expressed by a series of slender bronze sculptures, "Nœuds" (2010–12), which resemble hipbones, blossoms or other folded forms on stalks. These works, which also begin with knot theory, are made by making wire knots in blocks of soft clay before pulling them tight and displacing the center of the block in cleaved-away slivers. Casting the spaces that are left in bronze, the artist thereby casts the heart of a knot, a space that is impossible for us to access, which is as strong a material definition of empathy as I can imagine. "Gently, the 'Nœuds' have occupied my thoughts with a clear complexity that has rejuvenated my world." The works recall certain pieces by the brilliant Polish sculptor Alina Szapocznikow, whose sculptures summon a sensual, degrading body, in all its joys and traumas. Moulène's work, however, arrives in an altered, widened plane of existence. It doesn't stop at the human body, but reaches toward the esoteric, the mathematical, and the flora, fauna and other objects of the planet — suggesting complex, elaborate binds with other materials and presences.

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*Jean-Luc Moulène's retrospective exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, will be on view from October 19, 2016, to February 20, 2017.*

*Laura McLean-Ferris is* Flash Art *Associate Editor.*

*This page:*
La Vigie *(2004-11)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris*

*Next page:*
Trichrome 2 Marseille, février 2015 *(2015)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris*
*Photography by Florian Kleinefenn*

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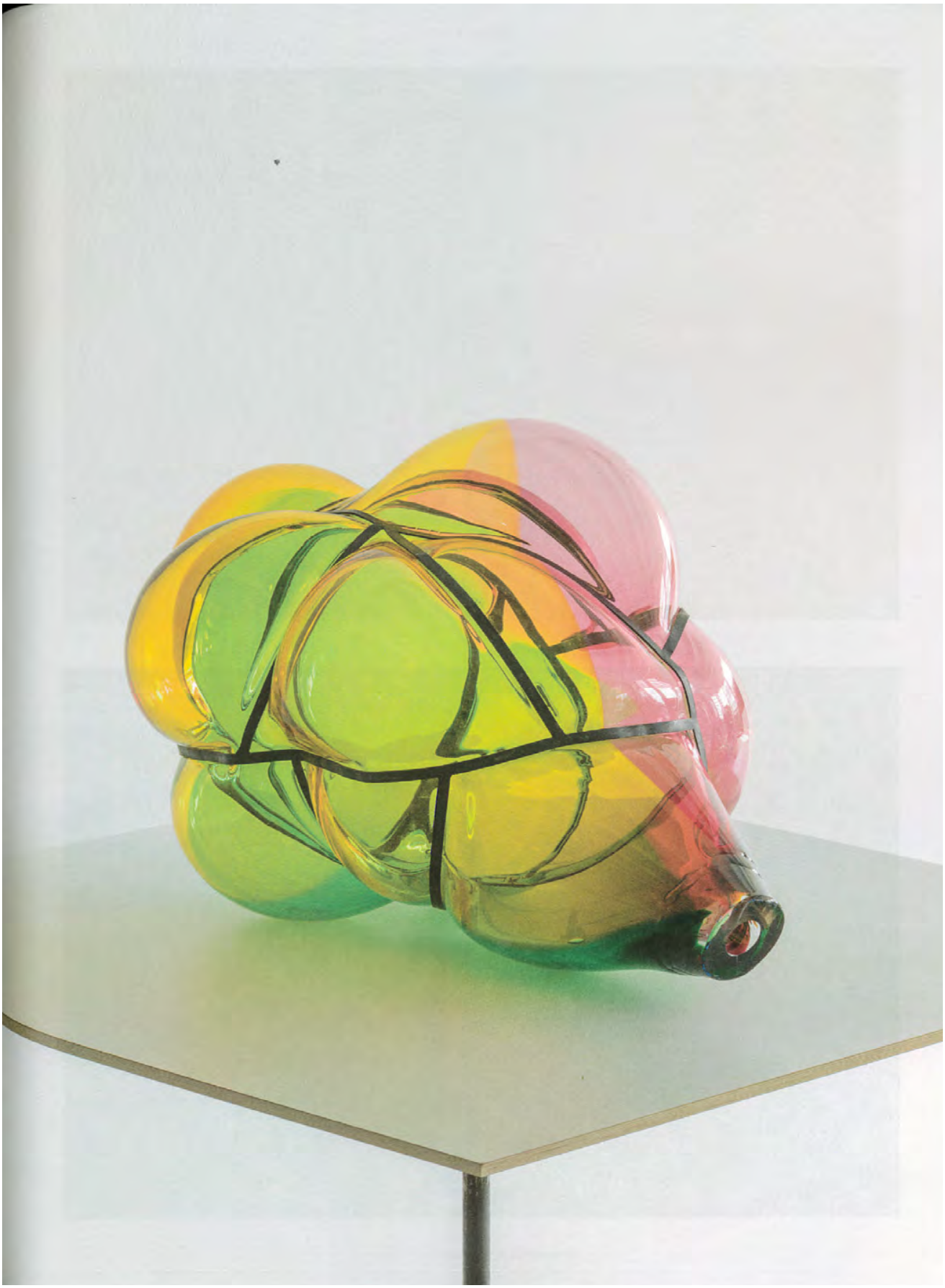

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Delbard, Nathalie. «Jean-Luc Moulène. No foto», *ArtPress 2*, *n°41*, May/June/July, 2016, pp. 96-98.

artpress 2



# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE
## NO FOTO

NATHALIE DELBARD

Pour parvenir à diffuser des images de presse pour la plupart interdites, Jean-Luc Moulène a articulé, visuellement, les images incriminées aux décisions de justice qui s'y rapportent, de façon à couvrir l'objet même du litige. Pour autant, ce serait mal comprendre les montages effectués pour *NO FOTO* (2005) que de les considérer comme une simple bravade à l'égard de la loi ; ce qui s'expose en réalité dans ces doubles pages de magazine recensées par l'artiste, n'est pas tant l'image interdite que le dispositif légal auquel elle est soumise, et le contexte dans lequel il s'exerce. Droit d'auteur, droit au respect de la vie privée, droit à la dignité des personnes ou droit à l'information notamment, sont autant de lignes de partage autorisant ou non la divulgation des photographies concernées. La grande singularité de *NO FOTO* est alors de rendre sensibles ces injonctions juridiques par le biais d'opérations strictement plastiques, un certain agencement formel, occultant éléments du discours ou morceaux d'images – tels ces post-it de couleur précisément disposés – pour mieux désigner ce qui fait problème. Le jeu visuel est efficace : il rend explicite, à la fois, le lieu dans l'image où se cristallise la pression juridique et le cadre qui, au-delà, l'organise.

L'impossibilité de donner à voir l'une des photographies de la série des *Filles d'Amsterdam* (2004) à laquelle s'est confronté Moulène lors de l'exposition *Gravedad*[1] à Mexico, s'inscrit à sa manière dans le prolongement de *NO FOTO*, la loi obligeant l'artiste à imaginer un procédé susceptible de dissimuler l'image tout en la maintenant présente (en l'occurrence, un coffrage de bois sur lequel est affiché l'article de référence). La contrainte juridique s'est ainsi vue retournée une nouvelle fois : la photographie certes n'est plus visible sur place (ailleurs toujours), mais elle porte ses propres conditions d'existence à notre attention. En particulier, elle donne à percevoir la loi mexicaine, qui à cet égard, mérite commentaire : assez similaire à l'article du code pénal français concernant la protection d'un public mineur – on se souvient de ce qui justifia la plainte à l'égard de l'exposition *Présumés Innocents* –, elle étend l'interdit à des « personnes incapables de comprendre », supposant une distinction difficilement recevable.

Reste à saisir le véritable motif de la demande de retrait. Si les *Filles d'Amsterdam* n'ont jusqu'alors connu aucun obstacle à leur présentation, le contexte d'exposition est ici déterminant, sur au moins deux plans. Dans le lieu lui-même d'abord, Moulène a installé *Errata*, un ensemble de palettes de canettes colorées, qui forment un chemin au bout duquel se tient la figure de la prostitution. Ce n'est donc pas la photographie seule qui dérange, mais son association directe à un contexte de production, qui désigne frontalement une marchandisation des corps en même temps que celle des biens de consommation. Ensuite, lorsque l'on sait que les objets en question ont été produits localement, dans une proche banlieue dont la surpopulation favorise la prostitution, on mesure ce qui, bien au-delà des murs du musée, résonne avec *Errata* – et ce d'autant plus fortement que selon le choix du commissaire, *Carmen* se révèle être la seule présence humaine parmi les œuvres exposées.

Il en va finalement de même pour les montages de *NO FOTO* et celui occasionné par *Gravedad* : le geste artistique vient toucher à travers la loi l'exact endroit où quelque chose de l'organisation sociale se refuse à l'entendement.

[1] *Gravedad*, Casa del Lago, UNAM, Mexico DF, Mexico, 17 mars - 29 mai 2016. Commissariat : Michel Blancsubé. Artistes : Carlos Amorales, Malachi Farrell, Sofia Goscinski, Jean-Luc Moulène, Fernando Palma Rodriguez, Jean-Marie Perdrix.

Doubles pages précédentes :
*NO FOTO*
2005
Magazines et textes imprimés

Ci-contre :
Au premier plan, *Errata* (détail)
2002-13
Neuf palettes de canettes de 500 ml en neuf couleurs monochromes (3240 canettes par palette), 181 × 141 × 112 cm (chaque palette)
À l'arrière-plan, *Carmen, Amsterdam, 08 04 04*
2004
Photographie encadrée, 152 × 119 × 6 cm, et panneau de bois vissé au cadre avec mentions imprimées
Exposition *Gravedad*, Casa del Lago, UNAM, Mexico DF, Mexico, 2016
Ph. Francisco Kochen
Court. Desiré Saint Phalle, Mexico City

Page suivante :
*Carmen, Amsterdam, 08 04 04*
2004

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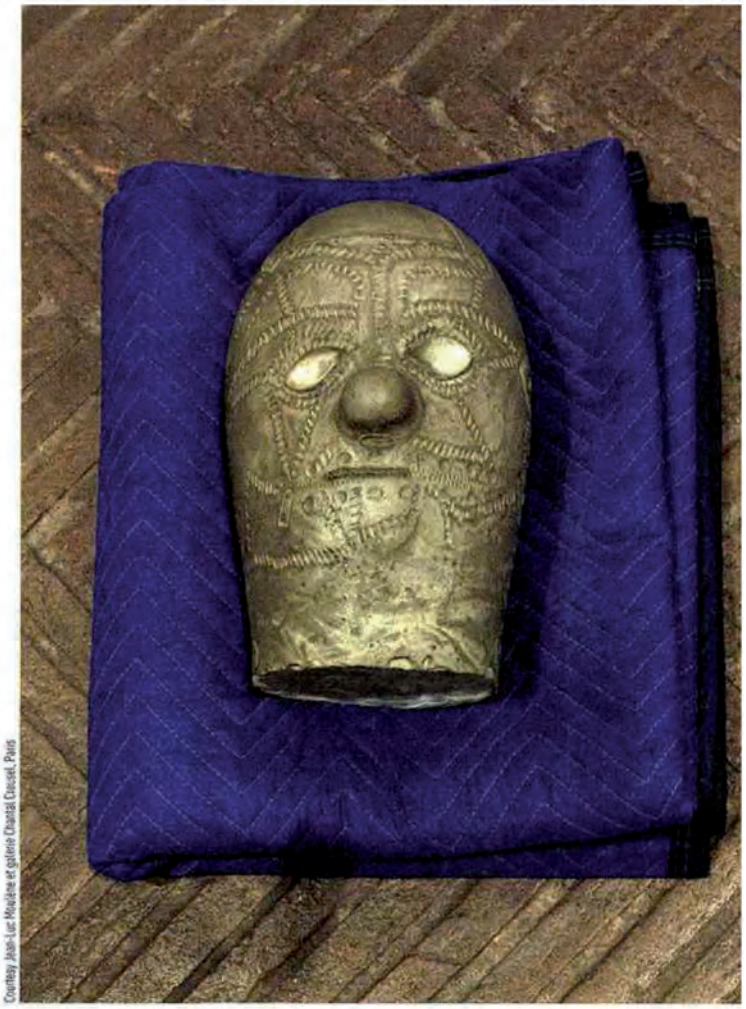
Claire Moulène. « Vice-versa », *Les Inrockuptibles*, July, 22, 2015, N°1025, pp. 88 et 89.







Courtesy Jean-Luc Moulène et galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

# vice-versa

A Rome, **Jean-Luc Moulène** investit la Villa Médicis et accomplit tout en dépit du "bon sens". Des tête-à-queue et des conflits plus que fertiles.

Il suffit de parcourir les jardins de la Villa Médicis, jardin à la française par devant, portions sauvages sur la partie latérale, pour se rendre compte que Jean-Luc Moulène est un homme qui sait y voir. Et fait de son environnement la pierre sur laquelle aiguiser son regard tactile. Aussi, ses nouvelles sculptures en ciment aggloméré, dont on avait déjà pu voir certains spécimens à Venise lors de l'exposition orchestrée par Danh Vo ce printemps à la Pointe de la Douane, et que l'on retrouve ici dans une forme plus complexe encore (trois éléments, figure masculine sur figure féminine et faciès animal enchâssé), doivent sans doute beaucoup aux sculptures composites de ces chevaliers, bras croisés en guise de résistance passive, corps en granit et tête en marbre, qui construisent l'arrière-plan du jardin de la Villa. A cette statuaire suturée et donc impure, mais aussi à une technique venue du Mexique, où l'artiste séjourna récemment, qui consiste à fondre, à l'usure, deux corps étrangers par une technique d'abrasion.

Pour cette exposition à la Villa Médicis, Eric de Chassey, son directeur, aura su patienter quatre ans, depuis 2011, date à laquelle Moulène s'exporte pour la première fois outre-Atlantique au musée d'art contemporian Dia:Beacon. L'idée première était de faire voyager l'exposition. Puis, finalement, faute de place et face à des coûts de transport exorbitants – parce que Moulène n'aime rien tant que de se frotter aussi au surplace –, il est apparu évident qu'il fallait faire une "exposition romaine". Comme l'on demande aux résidents de la Villa Médicis de penser un "projet romain".

Claire Moulène. « Vice-versa », *Les Inrockuptibles*, July, 22, 2015, N°1025, pp. 88 et 89.

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***Tronches* (série), Paris, 2014**

**de ce monde à l'envers des Saturnales, Jean-Luc Moulène semble nourrir l'ensemble de ses productions les plus récentes**

C'est ce qu'a fait Jean-Luc Moulène, qui réussit, avec la délicatesse et la précision qu'on lui connaît, à croiser ses obsessions avec un certain nombre de sujets directement inspirés par le lieu, depuis cette accumulation de strates encore perceptibles dans les sculptures des jardins donc, jusqu'à l'empreinte toujours palpable de Balthus, directeur mythique de la Villa Médicis de 1961 à 1977.

Ainsi, l'exposition ouvre par une salle bleue entièrement peinte à l'éponge par la restauratrice qui travaille actuellement à la réfection des fresques du peintre (à qui sera consacrée à la rentrée une grande rétrospective). Plus loin, c'est son pendant jaune poussin qui illumine et *"rapproche les objets"* que l'artiste a commandé.

Dans la deuxième salle, un accrochage très classique rejoue les standards de la peinture académique, dans les formats autant que dans les techniques utilisées, avec un ensemble de monochromes vert-de-gris patinés sur un mélange de cuivre et de fonte. Dans la salle jaune, c'est un plâtre taillé qui rappelle l'académisme dix-neuvièmiste autant que la passion de l'artiste pour les figures mathématiques. La pièce, posée sur un imposant tronçon de bois brut (que l'on imagine tout droit sorti du jardin de la Villa Médicis) s'appelle *Gnou*. Elle est un clin d'œil au programme informatique Rhinoceros, normalement utilisé pour produire ce type d'opérations a priori inaccessibles à l'esprit humain. De même que la série de sculptures sensuelles à cinq branches, réalisées dans le nord de l'Italie, nécessite le concours de machines plus performantes que celles qui les ont créées.

**Dans la grande montée qui servait autrefois à faire entrer les chevaux, c'est une armée de "tronches"** que Jean-Luc Moulène a déposées à terre sur des couvertures de chantier bleu nuit. Quinze têtes sans corps, en ciment, coulées dans des masques retournés. Si bien que l'on reconnaît à peine, sous ces traits déformés, les contours des personnalités politiques (de Mitt Romney à Hillary Clinton) ou populaires (de Frankenstein à Dark Vador) que l'artiste renvoie ainsi à la longue tradition des masques mortuaires, des gisants mais aussi du carnaval.

Car ces figures monstrueuses disent bien l'opération à l'œuvre dans les pièces tardives de Jean-Luc Moulène, où plane l'ombre du charivari (qui signifierait "mal de tête" en grec et évoque cette tradition populaire, née au XV^e^ siècle, qui consistait à recouvrir de cris et de sifflets la musique religieuse et l'ordre établi), mais aussi, puisque nous sommes à Rome, celle des Saturnales qui, sous l'Antiquité, célébraient le solstice d'hiver. Au cours de ces fêtes païennes, l'ordre hiérarchique volait en éclats, ce qui permettait aux esclaves de jouir d'une liberté provisoire et aux maîtres de se glisser dans la peau de ces derniers, délestés de leur toge à laquelle ils préféraient la simple tunique des pauvres. De ce monde à l'envers, Jean-Luc Moulène semble nourrir l'ensemble de ses productions les plus récentes.

A l'image de ses pièces en verre soufflé "tricolores" (mais dont le ratio bleu, blanc, rouge laisse place à une déclinaison rose, jaune, vert), véritable prouesse technique réalisée grâce aux efforts conjoints de trois souffleurs de verre. De la taille d'une cage thoracique, elles sont la représentation en creux, ou en négatif, d'une matière a priori impalpable : l'air. Comme ce *Janus* qui montre en recto-verso Bush père et fils, rappelant le *Tête-à-Cul* organique que Moulène présente actuellement à Venise, mais également, dans un autre registre, la série des *Filles d'Amsterdam*, où tête et sexe étaient présentés sur un même niveau, faisant ainsi coïncider deux traditions photographiques : judiciaire et pornographique.

Dans cette exposition composée quasi exclusivement de pièces inédites, seul un petit dessin de 1977 permet d'établir une filiation et une persistance dans le travail de Moulène. Intitulé *Bubu 1^er^*, figure tronquée et primitive là aussi, il est, comme l'expliquait Jean-Luc Moulène dans un entretien avec Briony Fer lors de sa rétrospective au Carré d'art de Nîmes, *"un mélange d'Ubu roi d'Alfred Jarry et de la reine mythologique Baubo qui lève sa robe et dévoile un visage en lieu et place de son sexe, puis se met à danser"*. *"Tout s'inverse*, concluait l'artiste à l'époque, *le haut vaut le bas et le corps est la plastique de la représentation"*, avant d'ajouter, comme s'il préméditait déjà ce tête-à-queue sous lequel viendraient se placer ses œuvres à venir : *"Mon travail est concrètement le lieu de ce conflit."* **Claire Moulène**

**Jean-Luc Moulène – Il était une fois**
jusqu'au 13 septembre à Rome, Villa Médicis, villamedici.it/fr

Alexandre Costanzo. «Jean-Luc Moulène l'embarras postural», *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Avril 2014, p. 66.



EXPOSITION. La galerie Greta Meert à Bruxelles expose jusqu'au 5 avril des films rares de l'artiste.

# Jean-Luc Moulène, l'embarras postural

COURTESY DE L'ARTISTE ET GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL, PARIS

*Les Trois Grâces de Jean-Luc Moulène (2012).*

Initialement présenté à Oxford en 2012 où il a été tourné sur la plus haute colline des alentours à la fin d'un après-midi d'été, puis exposé à Paris au printemps dernier et aujourd'hui à Bruxelles jusqu'au 5 avril par la galerie Greta Meert, où l'on découvre également sculptures et dessins, *Les Trois Grâces* compte parmi les rares films de l'artiste Jean-Luc Moulène. Là où de puissantes mécaniques s'approprient les imaginaires, les langages et les pratiques, il conçoit à chaque fois une entorse dans les lois de la perception en provoquant un désordre. Et son film affirme ainsi un écart entre les usages et un imaginaire pour nous confronter à une poétique et à une politique des gestes. C'est debout que l'on regarde cette œuvre muette en noir et blanc, projetée dans la pénombre sur un mur, où trois femmes nues – droites, fières et belles –, disposées à intervalles réguliers, occupent le devant d'un plan d'ensemble tandis que, derrière elles, la profondeur de champ ouvre sur un grand ciel mais comme une matière dense qui nous ramène aussitôt aux trois figures du devant. Ces dernières sont d'autant plus troublantes qu'elles apparaissent presque à l'échelle un dans l'espace dont elles donnent en quelque sorte la mesure. Soumises au vent ainsi qu'aux derniers rayons du soleil, ces femmes plutôt immobiles se tiennent debout sur l'herbe – dont la ligne sombre ménage un effet de socle dans le plan, les surélevant quelque peu – et elles forment ainsi une communauté séparée, chacune agissant indépendamment. Car la beauté de l'œuvre provient d'abord de l'énigmatique théâtre des gestes délicats, des postures et des attitudes qu'elles affirment. Dans un même plan fixe, elles se livrent donc aléatoirement à des chorégraphies triviales, abandonnant le bras le long du corps, le calant plus tard dans le dos ou pudiquement à hauteur de ventre, pivotant légèrement de trois quarts puis de profil sans jamais nous tourner le dos, redressant un visage ou exécutant de légers mouvements de jambes pour assurer une pose avant de s'immobiliser de nouveau. Dans ce temps calme qu'invente Moulène, nos yeux s'attardent sur l'une tandis qu'elle esquisse un simple geste, parcourent son corps nu jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient sollicités par une voisine. Et puis ils décrochent en prêtant attention à l'agitation de l'herbe ou à la densité du ciel pour revenir aussitôt à un visage, un corps, une expression. Il n'y aura pas beaucoup d'autres événements dans cette œuvre dont la singularité repose sur le fait que le film tend paradoxalement vers l'image fixe, mais cette attente sera toujours désavouée par le mouvement léger d'une figure, le soulèvement du vent, les variations de la lumière. Et tout se passe à la fin comme s'il s'agissait pour Moulène de constituer ou alors d'épuiser l'inventaire des manières de trois jeunes femmes nues, exposées et qui attendent.

Il faut dire que si cette scène nous impressionne autant, c'est qu'elle renvoie à une tradition passant par Raphaël, Cranach ou Rubens, adaptant le thème mythologique des trois Grâces. Mais alors que ces dernières étaient plutôt représentées selon l'harmonique d'une collectivité décrivant une sorte de ronde, une danse rotative, dans le film, il ne subsiste plus que la communauté des ressemblances – il s'agit en réalité de trois sœurs dont deux jumelles. Ces femmes sont ensemble mais en étant toujours séparées les unes des autres, chacune effectuant pour elle-même une suite de parades déliées. Et ce serait là, à en croire Moulène, un portrait de notre monde dont il ramasse un théâtre gestuel pour appréhender la forme d'une communauté éclatée. Or devant ces femmes quel n'est pas notre étonnement en nous surprenant tout à coup, là debout, à soutenir à notre tour une pose ? Nous constatons alors que nous sommes également d'étonnantes statues dans l'espace ou plutôt qu'en miroir de ces chorégraphies nous effectuons les nôtres, enchaînant mécaniquement des poses tout au long du film. Car il n'y a pas de chaises dans cette salle de sorte qu'on s'arrête un moment devant l'écran avant de s'approcher ou de s'éloigner pour s'immobiliser de nouveau : aux postures des femmes répondent nos intimes parades. Alors si l'œuvre est ainsi vouée à recueillir en miroir, comme un complément d'objet, un catalogue à chaque fois singulier d'attitudes et de gestes, si elle prolonge une histoire contrariée de la statuaire, de la tragédie ou même de la danse, elle s'affirme surtout comme un objet qui nous ramène comme un mystère à notre corps, à la situation et à ce qu'est notre position. « Nous pénétrons dans le monde de la perception par nos pieds et non par la tête », disait Walter Benjamin, or il se trouve qu'en nous incluant physiquement dans la matérialité du contrechamp, Jean-Luc Moulène définit aussi la salle comme un espace théâtral et sculptural pour nous abandonner à un embarras postural.

Alexandre Costanzo



Galerie Chantal Crousel

Bernard Marcelis. «Les disjonctions assumées de Jean-Luc Moulène à Bourges», *Quotidien de l'art*, n°638, 4 juillet 2014, p. 6.



# Les Disjonctions assumées de Jean-Luc Moulène à Bourges

PAR BERNARD MARCELIS

À l'instar d'une de ses images, on pourrait qualifier les photographies de la série des *Disjonctions* de Jean-Luc Moulène de « paysage culturel français », au sens large, datant des deux dernières décennies du XXe siècle. En effet, toutes ces images ont été prises entre 1984 et 1995, et il n'est pas nécessaire de se pencher sur les cartels pour s'en rendre compte.

Redécouvrir cet ensemble près d'un quart de siècle plus tard en modifie évidemment la perception, non seulement parce qu'il est figé dans le temps, mais aussi parce que l'on ne photographie plus de la même façon aujourd'hui. La photographie a effectué sa mue, s'est allégée de sa minorisation par rapport aux arts plastiques et au champ de l'art contemporain en général. S'il s'agissait, pour ce faire, d'opérer une « *déconstruction du langage photographique* » en tentant d'en évacuer tout affect et toute vision personnelle, la démonstration est éloquente et se suffit à elle-même.

Le fait que Jean-Luc Moulène, à l'occasion de cette exposition à Bourges qui présente l'intégralité de cette série, ait décidé de figer définitivement ces *Disjonctions* (en en établissant le catalogue raisonné dans la foulée) clôt définitivement un cycle. Elle prend date dans le parcours de l'artiste et, de façon plus générale, dans une histoire de la photographie en France. Son inscription dans le temps lui confère désormais un statut particulier, le témoignage d'un état de la société, au travers d'images d'une époque que l'on a bien de la peine de nos jours à considérer qu'elles aient pu être « *les modèles d'une vision critique de l'ordre politique contemporain* ». Qu'elles aient contribué à modifier la perception de notre environnement - à l'instar des tenants des « New Topographics », des premiers travaux photographiques de Jean-Marc Bustamante, ou de la mission photographique de la Datar (toutes proportions gardées), pour rester dans le domaine du « paysage » -, nul ne le contestera. Rien à voir ici avec la France de Raymond Depardon.

Il y a dans cette série des *Disjonctions* une unité du regard, du point de vue et donc du cadrage, renforcée par l'homogénéité du format de ces images. Réalisées quasi intégralement en couleurs, elles se gardent bien de basculer dans le syndrome du « tableau photographique » et restent en quelque sorte « à leur place », celle d'un instantané définitif. Cette opération de décantation des images a amené Moulène à finaliser un corpus traitant majoritairement du paysage urbain au sens large, qu'il soit habité ou non. Autrement dit, dans cette série, rares sont les portraits au sens strict et les figures humaines qui y apparaissent sont presque toujours contextualisées.

Jean-Luc Moulène, *Sans titre (GTX)*, boulevard de la Bastille, Paris, été 1992. Courtesy de l'artiste et Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Galerie Chantal Crousel

La lumière est sourde et pesante, comme s'il s'agissait de mettre le doigt, d'appuyer sur une société empesée (déjà ?) où toute chose paraît trop bien à sa place, comme subissant les contraintes d'une tradition dont l'inertie semble le moteur. Il n'y a guère de mouvement dans les photographies de Moulène, tout a l'air anesthésié, si ce n'est ici un piéton pressant le pas, là une femme se dressant nue dans les dunes.

La force de cette série tient peut-être à ce principe d'équivalence, de mise sur le même pied entre une vue urbaine, une nature morte ou le portrait d'un arbre. Toutes ces images ont un point commun : elles sont d'une extrême densité, leur composition est saturée ; les lignes de fuite sont presque inexistantes, de même que les perspectives. Elles ne renvoient qu'à elles-mêmes et donc à ceux qui prennent la peine de s'y attarder.

Un second volet, plus contemporain, du travail de Jean-Luc Moulène, intitulé « Surjonctions », sera consacré à ses sculptures récentes et se tiendra à la Villa Médicis à Rome, au printemps 2015. ▮

***JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, DISJONCTIONS, 1ER VOLET***, jusqu'au 12 juillet, Transpalette, Emmetrop, 26, route de la Chapelle, 18000 Bourges, tél. 02 48 50 38 61, http://emmetrop.pagesperso-orange.fr

***À VOIR ÉGALEMENT*** : « Voir en Peinture IV », avec des œuvres de Omar Ba, Damien Deroubaix, Youcef Korichi, Pierre Laniau, Iris Levasseur et Claire Tabouret, jusqu'au 5 juillet, la Box, 7, rue Édouard-Branly, 18000 Bourges, www.ensa-bourges.fr

Kaelen Wilson-Goldie. "Jean-Luc Moulène", *Artforum*, October 2013.

http://artforum.com/picks/section=world&mode=past#picks43324

Jean-Luc Moulène
BEIRUT ART CENTER
Jisr El Wati, Building 13, Street 97, Zone 66
July 11–October 12

Jean-Luc Moulène, Arthur, 2010, concrete, bone, 8 3/4 x 10 1/4 x 8 1/4".

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

In 2001, the French artist Jean-Luc Moulène took a series of photographs in the Lebanese port city of Sidon, which included portraits of people he met there by chance or through friends. The resulting images were displayed on the crumbling facades of the old souk. Twelve years later, many of them are still there. One portrait in particular, titled Abou Baker, 2001, after its subject, was later borrowed by mourners for the young man's funeral. For Moulène's illuminating, inscrutable exhibition at the Beirut Art Center, Abou Baker and another picture from the same series—featuring three bare-chested young men, all tattoos, charm, and tender affection—are placed at the top of an industrial stairwell. They are the only clear link between artist and place. The rest of the show revels in shadows and echoes, which move and multiply among the objects, photographs, drawings, videos, and architectural installations on view.

With forty works arranged into four sections, "Jean-Luc Moulène—Works" loops around the center like a sequence of strange and compelling riddles, from a skull cased in concrete (Arthur, 2010) and a haphazard chunk of plywood (Alexandria Made, 1997) to a suite of ink drawings disguised as monochromatic paintings (4 Bic Drawings, 2013). Categories fall into disarray as Moulène collapses conventional understandings of what constitutes an image, an object, or a mode of communicating the meaning and status of one as the other.

Wrapping around the main hall are two fantastic L-beams—one red, one blue—that bifurcate the space. Produced in Beirut and commissioned for the exhibition, the steel structures, when viewed from above, form two rectangles bolted on top of one another but shifted slightly apart. Together, they are called debrayeur, French for "disengage" but also the word for a clutch pedal, itself an apt metaphor for Moulène's practice as a mechanism that controls how two things moving at potentially different speeds connect and decouple, if and when needed.

Anaël Pigeat. "Jean-Luc Moulène une oeuvre qui fait image,"
*Art press* N° 388, April 2012, p.39-44.



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

# JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE
## une œuvre qui fait image

**Anaël Pigeat**

Depuis le début des années 1980, les œuvres de Jean-Luc Moulène ont été exposées, entre autres, au musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (1997), à la Galerie nationale du Jeu de paume (2005), au Carré d'art de Nîmes (2009). L'artiste est invité aux États-Unis, à la Fondation Dia. Bien que nourri de culture populaire américaine, rock, punk, cinéma underground, il dit n'avoir jamais eu de fascination pour l'Amérique, ni pour New York, où il s'est rendu pour la première fois afin de préparer l'exposition *Opus + One*, en outsider.

« Body », Guyancourt, octobre 2011. Structure aluminium, fibre de basalte, résines et peintures. 250 x 850 x 350 cm. Œuvre produite avec le concours de Renault Automobiles. (Toutes les photos, court. de l'artiste et galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris © J.-L. Moulène)
*Aluminum structure, basalt fiber, resins and paint.*

Anaël Pigeat. “Jean-Luc Moulène une oeuvre qui fait image,”
*Art press* N° 388, April 2012, p.39-44.



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

■ C'est un geste de résistance : Jean-Luc Moulène empêche que l'on cerne son travail comme une image de marque – un sujet qu'il connaît pourtant bien, pour avoir, à ses débuts, travaillé dans le département de publicité de Thomson. Une évidence réunit toutefois ses œuvres : elles « font image », elles sont des images mentales égrenées dans sa tentative de description du monde. Jean-Luc Moulène cherche à savoir comment le regard fonctionne. Il montre tour à tour des photographies et des objets fabriqués. Et c'est la complexité du sujet choisi qui détermine si l'œuvre est en deux dimensions (de l'ordre de la représentation) ou en trois dimensions (de l'ordre de la présence, une affirmation politique). Ses œuvres sont conçues comme des outils, d'où leur ressemblance avec des maquettes.

En réponse à la question « Comment avez-vous commencé ? », Moulène raconte une anecdote de son enfance. Un été de vacances, avait lieu sur la plage un concours de châteaux de sable. Le premier prix était un appareil de photo et le second la maquette d'une Dauphine, la voiture Renault des années 1960. Il a été classé premier ex-aequo, mais c'est l'aîné des vainqueurs qui a reçu l'appareil de photo dont il rêvait – il était le cadet. Toute sa vie, Moulène a fait de la photographie, mais sa pratique consiste en réalité à monter des maquettes.

## DES IMAGES MENTALES

Jean-Luc Moulène est d'abord connu comme photographe du réel. Sa série des *Disjonctions*, dès le début des années 1980, pourrait être un filtre de lecture de toute son œuvre. En théorie mathématique, la disjonction est l'union de deux ensembles, moins leur intersection. Dans ses photographies, Moulène crée un écart, un déplacement, qui permet de percevoir le réel. Il prend en compte le hors champ pour éviter toute empathie avec l'image. *Sans titre (GTX), boulevard de la Bastille, Paris, été 1992*, montre une souche d'arbre sur un trottoir au premier plan ; une voiture grise est garée juste derrière. C'est une disjonction du mobile et de l'immobile.

S'interrogeant encore sur la manière dont le regard se forme, Jean-Luc Moulène a réalisé des séries de photographies prises sur un même lieu pendant une longue période. Il dit parfois que sa vie est « une performance au long cours » (1), une sorte de circonscription de la performance à son rituel, ce que Michel Journiac, avec qui il a travaillé autrefois, avait réalisé d'une manière si exemplaire. Au cours d'une résidence à Berlin en 1996-1997, Moulène a photographié la ville, se donnant pour principe d'éviter les scènes de chantiers et de reconstruction ; l'ensemble de ce travail formait un portrait atemporel. À propos de la série de photographies *Fénautrigues* (1991-2006), prise à la campagne, sans habitations ni figures humaines, Moulène parle de la grande usine de la nature, d'un lieu de travail lié à la promenade et à l'errance.

C'est encore pour décrire le monde, que Moulène classe des images par séries selon des thèmes, les *Objets de grève* par exemple, photographiés à partir de 1999 comme des publicités, souvent sur fond neutre, éclairés à la lumière du jour, chacun décrit dans un bref texte. Mais ces classements ne sont que l'apparence de l'ordre, car une image, un sujet ou un détail les perturbe toujours. Moulène ne dit-il pas son goût pour la géométrie, mais une géométrie non euclidienne, celle des perspectives aberrantes ? En parlant de ces images organisées, il cite les organigrammes des entreprises ou des institutions, qui sont sans cesse perturbés – la manière de faire avancer les choses, dit-il. Il rapporte aussi ces perturbations aux détournements érotiques de nos organes. Dans la série des *Filles d'Amsterdam* (2005), que l'on reverra bientôt au Palais de Tokyo à l'occasion de la Triennale, ce sont les questions de l'identité et de la pornographie qui sont explorées. Des prostituées dans des positions suggestives ont été photographiées à Amsterdam, dans un atelier ; chaque image est légendée par le nom de scène de ces femmes. Selon un principe semblable, pour son exposition au Louvre, qui était accompagnée d'un supplément gratuit du journal *Le Monde*, Moulène a photographié son musée imaginaire, en quelques œuvres, avec des notes d'historiens de l'art en guise de légendes, interrogations sur la circulation et la nature des images.

Le travail de Jean-Luc Moulène est engagé, hors des rapports de pouvoir. Ainsi *la Vigie* (2004-2011), actuellement exposée à la Dia Foundation, se compose de deux séries de photographies : une plante rebelle poussant entre les barrières Vauban installées dans le cadre du plan Vigipirate sous le ministère des Finances à Bercy, et le décor tout autour de cette plante, à quelques centimètres du sol, en hors champ de la première série. Il y a, dans ces images, un rythme qui relève de l'allitération. Elles sont tour à tour chaudes, froides, dures, douces, très nettes ou parfois floues. Les textes qui les accompagnent sont simplement des dates. Plus que l'image d'un artiste, *la Vigie* évoque ce que l'on croit être un artiste.

## D'UN MÉDIUM À L'AUTRE : LA COUPE

En quête d'images mentales, Jean-Luc Moulène ne cesse de passer d'un médium à un autre, de la figuration à la non-figuration. Il a exploré le genre du monochrome à plusieurs reprises, que ce soit en deux dimensions avec la photographie *Grand Monochrome jaune Kodak* (1988), ou en volume avec la *Croix jaune* en bois (2005), dans laquelle on ne sait si c'est le signe ou la couleur qui prime. Pour l'exposition de la

« Les Filles d'Amsterdam / Monika », Amsterdam, 5 avril 2004. Cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium. *"Girls of Amsterdam/Monika." Cibachrome/aluminium*

Fondation Dia, Moulène a peint quatre *Monochromes* sur des châssis aux dimensions standard, choisis parce qu'ils avaient été utilisés par Josef Albers en son temps. Avec des spatules, il a étalé, sur la toile enduite, deux couches d'encre Bic dont la formule est gardée secrète par la marque – nouvelle perturbation du système social. Rouges, verts, noirs, bleus, ces reflets mordorés sont moins une image de la littérature ou de l'histoire de l'art, que l'image populaire de quelqu'un en train d'écrire au stylo Bic. Ils se rapprochent du dessin qui est pour Moulène de l'ordre de l'expérience, une manière d'élaborer sa pensée.

« Souvenir 1er conflit » Objets de grève 1999-2000. Cibachrome sous diasec 47 x 36 cm. *"Strike object"*

Anaël Pigeat. “Jean-Luc Moulène une oeuvre qui fait image,”
*Art press* N° 388, April 2012, p.39-44.



Jean-Luc Moulène réalise aussi des objets (il préfère ce terme à celui de sculpture) qui sont une extension de sa pratique photographique. Il donne parfois l'exemple d'un couteau posé sur une table ; c'est une image, et pourtant le couteau coupe l'espace en deux. Alors que les photographies de Moulène sont presque toujours figuratives, ses objets le sont parfois moins, sans pour autant être abstraits. C'est la notion de « coupe » qui réunit, chez lui, ces techniques diverses, et qui donne à son œuvre toute sa cohérence. La photographie est en elle-même une coupe : elle tranche dans le réel dont elle extrait une vue partielle qui met le regardeur en arrêt. Elle condamne à des séquences. La sculpture, de même, consiste à trancher dans la matière, ou bien à la repousser. Le *cut-up* de Burroughs fonctionne de la même manière, comme un mode de connaissance du monde qui permet de faire apparaître ce qui est donné, mais pas forcément visible.

Depuis une dizaine d'années, Jean-Luc Moulène réalise une série d'objets qui, selon ses termes, vont du bricolage à l'industrie lourde. Cette vaste grammaire visuelle porte le titre d'*Opus*, comme l'œuvre achevée d'un musicien. En 2009, il a assemblé des sculptures d'Antoine Bourdelle, formant un corps à quatre dos, co-signé avec le sculpteur à titre posthume. Cette forme rejoint celle de *Body* qui sera analysée plus loin. Moulène a aussi poncé, avec du papier de verre, le moulage d'un plâtre de Bourdelle représentant une jeune fille dont il a redessiné les formes. Virtuellement, sa pièce pourrait loger à l'intérieur de celle de Bourdelle.

Alors que jusqu'à présent, Moulène ne s'était intéressé qu'à la banalité du réel, il vient de concevoir, pour la première fois, deux œuvres monumentales qui explorent le spectaculaire : *Body* et *Body Versus Twizy* (récemment exposées dans le jardin des Tuileries). Mais dans notre ère de l'après Debord, ce spectaculaire n'est qu'illusion. Plus ou moins précisément, ces deux objets évoquent de loin la forme d'une voiture, une forme qui se dérobe. *Body* évoque aussi un corps humanoïde, et le corps social des usines et des ouvriers. D'ailleurs une grande partie du matériel qui a servi à le construire se trouve cachée à l'intérieur comme un cheval de Troie. De loin, *Body* est une masse ovoïde rayonnant par ses dégradés de couleurs primaires dans lesquels on se perd si l'on s'en approche. Il se compose de feuilles de fibre de basalte assemblées, dont les coupes sont produites par des machines (à la différence de *Body Versus Twizy* qui a été fait selon des coupes déterminées à partir d'un dessin d'automobile). C'est grâce au soutien de la Fondation Renault, qui a relancé à cette occasion sa pratique de commande d'œuvres, que *Body* et *Body Versus Twizy* ont été conçues dans les ateliers de recherche automobile de la marque. La surface de *Body* ressemble à une topographie irrégulière, presque une carte de géographie, mais sans entrée. Cette œuvre est un manifeste sur la manière dont Jean-Luc Moulène conçoit ses expositions, avec des surfaces continues et des « coupes » mitoyennes qui engendrent des discontinuités.

Les images de Jean-Luc Moulène sont peut-être des objets post-photographiques, qui auraient intégré en eux-mêmes un appareil de photo producteur d'images mentales. Selon ses termes, « elles décrivent des choses quelconques avec exactitude. » Elles ne résolvent pas de conflits, elles ne sauvent rien, mais sont plutôt des espaces de tension dans lesquels s'opposent le visible et l'invisible. L'art n'est pas fait pour éclaircir mais pour complexifier le réel. ■

(1) Yasmil Raymond, *Jean-Luc Moulène, Opus + One*, 2011 (texte de la commissaire de l'exposition).

**Jean-Luc Moulène**
Né à Reims en / *born* 1955.
Il vit et travaille à / *lives in* Paris.
Expositions personnelles récentes / *solo shows:*
2009 Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny Carré d'art, Nîmes
2011 - 2012 *Opus + One*, Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York, Dan Flavin Art Institute, Bridgehampton, New York, décembre 2011 - décembre 2012
Galeria Desiré Saint Phalle, Mexico
Festival d'Avignon, Cloître St Louis, Avignon
Galerie Greta Meert, Bruxelles
Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, 28 avril - 16 juin 2012

Vue de l'exposition « Opus + One », Dia : Beacon, New York, 2012. (Ph. B. Jacobson, New York)
*Exhibition view at Dia : Beacon*

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Anaël Pigeat. "Jean-Luc Moulène une oeuvre qui fait image,"
*Art press* N° 388, April 2012, p.39-44.



# Jean-Luc Moulène
# The Mental Life of Images

« L'épouvanté », Fénautrigues, Lot. Été 1991.
Cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium
125 x 155 x 6 cm (encadré). *"The Frightened One"*

**Jean-Luc Moulène has exhibited widely since the late 1980s, notably at the Paris municipal art museum (MAMVP, 1997), Jeu de Paume (2005) and Carré d'Art in Nimes (2009). He is now the guest of the Dia Foundation in New York State. Strangely, for a man whose work draws on American popular culture, rock, punk and underground cinema, he claims never to have been fascinated by the U.S., or even New York. In fact he'd never been there before he went out to prepare this show, *Opus + One*.**

Jean-Luc Moulène doesn't like having an image, a brand image, put on his work. But then brand images are something he knows all about, having started his career in the publicity department of French electronics firm Thomson. Now he resists all that. Still, one thing all his pieces do is "convey an image," insofar as they are mental images registered and recreated in his attempt to describe the world.
Jean-Luc Moulène is interested in taking apart the mechanics of looking. He makes photographs and he makes objects, and it is the complexity of the subject that determines this choice between two dimensions (the realm of representation) or three (presence, political statement). His works are conceived as tools, which is why they often look like maquettes.

## MENTAL IMAGES

Asked how he started out as an artist, he evokes a childhood memory, a sandcastle competition held one summer holiday on the beach. The first prize was a camera, the second the model of a Renault Dauphine, a popular car of the early 1960s. Jean-Luc came equal first, but it was the older winner who got the camera he had set his heart on. Moulène has taken photographs all his life, but in reality his practice is all about making models.
Moulène first became known as a photographer of what everyone at the time was calling *le réel* (the real). In fact, his

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*Disjonctions* series, begun in the early 1980s, could be taken as a filter for reading all his work. In mathematics, a disjunction is the union of two sets, minus their intersection. In these photographs, Moulène creates a similar gap, a sense of displacement which intensifies our perception of the real, while using the sense of what is out of frame to prevent any sense of empathy with the image. *Sans titre (GTX), Boulevard de la Bastille, Paris, summer 1992*, shows a tree stump on the pavement in the foreground and, in the background, a parked gray car. A disjunction of the mobile and the immobile.

In another series, Moulène regularly took photographs of a given location over a sustained period. He has said that his life is like "a long-term performance,"(1) as if circumscribing performance to its ritual dimension, which is something that Michel Journiac, with whom he once worked, achieved in exemplary fashion. During a residency in Berlin in 1996–97, Moulène photographed the city while trying to avoid construction and reconstruction sites. As for *Fénautrigues* (1991–2006), the series of photographs he took in the countryside, with no human figures or dwellings, he spoke of the "great factory" of nature, of a workplace related to movement and wandering.

In other series, such as the *Objets de grève* (objects made by striking workers, from 1999), which are photographed like advertisements, often against neutral grounds, shown in natural light, each image is described in a short text. But the classifications here offer only an appearance of order, for they are always disrupted by some image, subject or detail. Speaking of these images, he mentions corporate organization charts, which are constantly being perturbed—that, he says, is the way things progress. He relates these disruptions to the erotic diversion of our organs. In the *Filles d'Amsterdam* series (2005), to be shown again in the upcoming Triennale at the Palais de Tokyo, he explores questions of identity and pornography. These very explicit photographs of prostitutes were taken in a studio and were given the working (or stage) names of each woman. For his show at the Louvre, which was accompanied by a special free supplement from the newspaper *Le Monde*, Moulène photographed his own imaginary museum, the pictures of a handful of works with accompanying notes by art historians by way of captions, questioning the nature and circulation of images.

Moulène's work seeks out a zone outside power relations. Now exhibited at the Dia Foundation, his *Vigie* (Look-Out, 2004–11) comprises two series of photographs: one showing a plant growing rebelliously

beneath the "Vauban" barriers positioned as a security measure below the Finance Ministry building in Bercy, Paris, and the other, as what is out of frame in the first, the surroundings of this plant, to only an inch or two above the ground. These images are linked by a kind of alliterative rhythm. They are alternately hot, cold, hard, soft, razor-sharp and hazy. The accompanying texts are simply dates. More than the image of the artist, this *Vigie* evokes the image people have of artists.

In his search for mental images, Moulène moves constantly from one medium to another, and between figuration and non-figuration. He has explored the genre of the monochrome on a number of occasions, both photographically, in *Grand monochrome jaune Kodak* (1988), and in three dimensions, with *Croix jaune en bois* (2005), in which we are not sure whether it is the color or the sign that is more important. For the Dia show, he has painted four monochromes on standard-sized stretchers which he chose because they were the ones used by Josef Albers. With spatulas he spread two layers of secret-formula Bic ink—another disruption of the social system—over their prepared surfaces. The resulting red, green, black and blue monochromes with their metallic highlights are not so much an image of literature or art history as of the most ordinary form of writing using a very common ballpoint. These pieces are close to drawing, Moulène's customary tool for articulating his ideas.

Jean-Luc Moulène's objects—he prefers that word to "sculpture"—extend his photography. He sometimes gives the example of a knife resting on a table: it's an image, and yet the knife cuts the space in two. Where Moulène's photographs are nearly always figurative, his objects can be less so. The notion of cutting is what links these different practices and makes his work coherent. Photography itself slices into the real, arresting the viewer. It imposes sequences. Sculpture, likewise, cuts into matter, or forces it into shapes. Gyson and Burroughs' practice of the cut-up, too, explores the world by bringing out what was always there but not always visible.

De haut en bas/*from top*: « Body Versus Twizy », 2011. Mousse polyurethane, résine polyester, peinture, vernis 140 × 230 × 100 cm. Œuvre produite avec le concours de Renault Automobiles. (Coll. Renault. Ph. M. Domage) *Polyurethane foam, polyester resin, paint, varnish*
« GTX », Bld de la Bastille, Paris. Été 1992. Cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium 86 × 100 × 3 cm (encadré) *Cibachrome mounted on aluminum*

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The objects that Moulène has been making for some ten years now range, in his terms, from bricolage to heavy industry. This vast grammar is called *Opus*, like a completed musical composition. In 2009 he assembled sculptures by Antoine Bourdelle, forming a body with four backs, and co-signed with the sculptor (posthumously, of course, in the latter's case). This form is related to *Body* (on which more below). Moulène also sanded one of Bourdelle's plaster casts of a young girl, thus re-shaping its forms. It would, theoretically, be possible to fit Moulène's piece inside Bourdelle's.

So far Moulène had been interested only in the banality of the real, but now, for the first time, he has made two more spectacular, monumental works: *Body* and *Body Versus Twizy* (recently exhibited in the Tuileries gardens). In our post-Debord world, the spectacular is of course an illusion. These two objects look more or less like cars, but the form is itself elusive. *Body* is also humanoid, evoking the social body of factories and workers. Indeed, much of the material used to make it is hidden inside, like Odysseus and his cohorts in the Trojan Horse. From a distance, *Body* is an ovoid form radiating primary colors which become less certain as one gets closer. It consists of assembled sheets of basalt fiber, cut by machine. *Body Versus Twizy* was cut in accordance with the design for a car. In fact, both pieces were made with the support of the Renault Foundation: the auto maker revived its old tradition of commissioning artworks specially for the occasion, and the two works were conceived in its R&D studio. The surface of *Body* forms an irregular topography, like a geographical map but with no point of entry. The work is a manifesto regarding the way Moulène conceives his exhibitions, with continuous surfaces and median "cuts" engendering discontinuities.

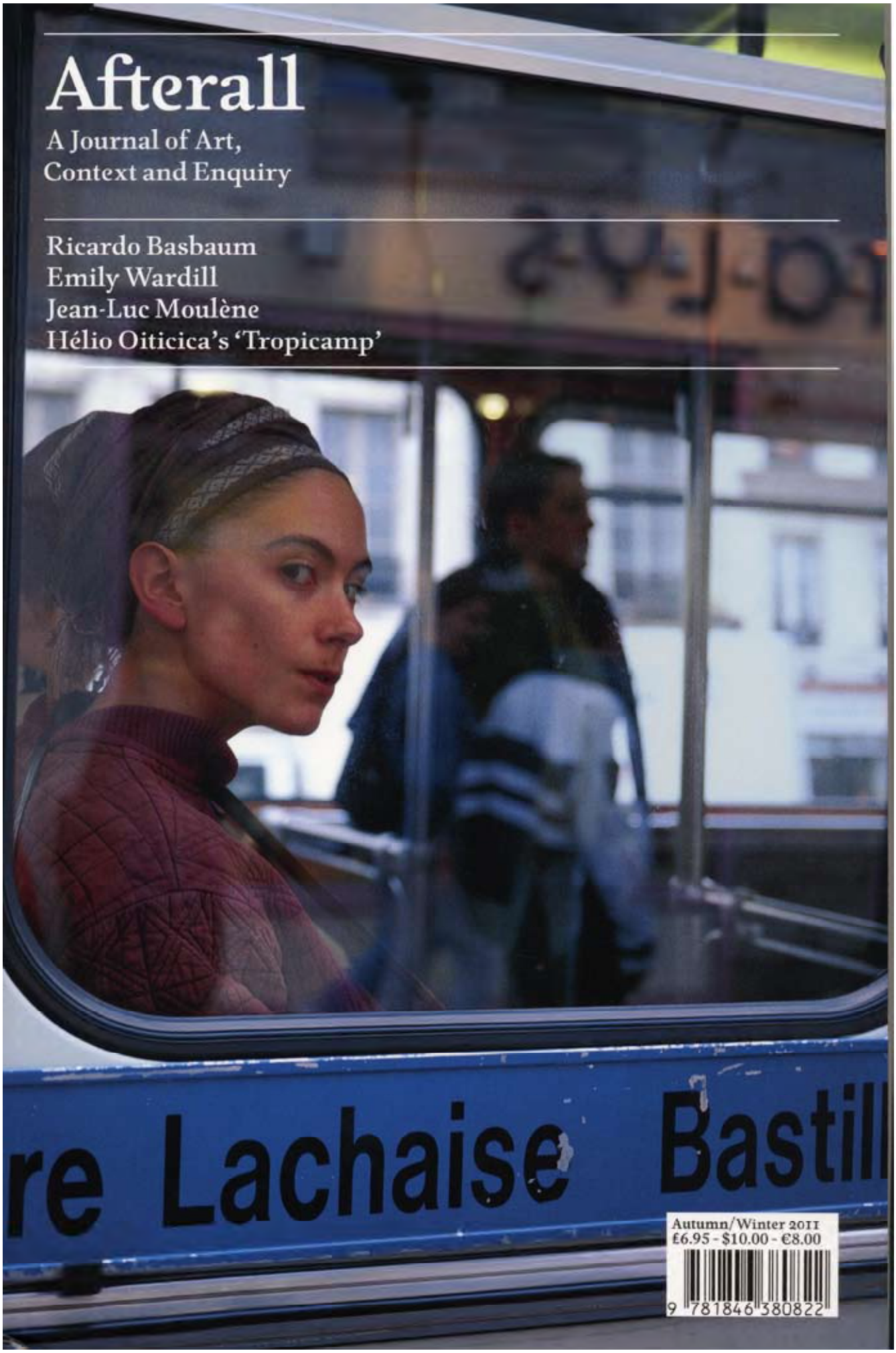
Moulène's objects could be seen as post-photographic objects which have integrated a camera that produces mental images. "They describe ordinary objects with exactitude," he says. They do not resolve any conflicts, they do not know anything, but are more like spaces of tension in which the visible and invisible are opposed. Art is made not to clarify, but to complexify the real. ■

Translation, C. Penwarden

(1) Yasmil Raymond, Jean-Luc Moulène Opus « One, 2011 (text by the curator).

De haut en bas/*from top*:
« La Vigie », Paris, 23 juin 2005 Cibachrome sous diasec, 52 x 40 cm. *"Look-Out," Cibachrome*
« Dos », Paris, Mai 2010. Bronze, 21 x 37,5 x 27,5 cm (Coll. part., France ; Ph. F. Kleinefenn). *"Back"*

"Jean-Luc Moulène, Père Lachaise-Bastille", Afterall n°28, Front cover, Autumn/Winter 2011.

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Caroline Hancock, “Jean-Luc Moulène : A Plasticien”, Afterall n°28, 2011, pp 25-33.

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Bitte à fruits*, Paris, September 1999, cement, sand and stones, 72 × 30 × 30cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

Previous spread: *BGB Bleu Gauloises Bleues — 441*, Fleury les Aubrais, Lille, June 2000, 7 × 5 × 2cm. Collection Fond National d'Art Contemporain, France

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# Jean-Luc Moulène: A ‘Plasticien’

– Caroline Hancock

**Caroline Hancock explores Jean-Luc Moulène’s analysis of material production via sculpture and photography.**

Particularly since the 1960s, the French language has rather uniquely championed the term ‘arts plastiques’ (‘plastic arts’), a term long-abandoned in other languages and contexts in favour of alternatives like the ‘visual’ or ‘fine arts’. Probably because of this, some artists still define themselves as ‘artiste-plasticien’ (‘plastician’), as opposed to ‘artiste-peintre’ (‘painter’) or ‘artisan-designer’. The term suggests an emphasis on matter rather than image, and points at artistic activity as an exploration of materials and forms through a variety of modes. Jean-Luc Moulène tends to call himself a ‘plasticien’, even though photography is the medium for which he first gained recognition in the 1990s. But this choice is not just a matter of French habit – rather, it is a revealing move that suggests not only that image-making is just part of his practice, but that the idea of materials, their manipulation and what they might say about the form of society and the possibility of its transformation is at the core of his work.

Moulène studied *arts plastiques* (and literature) in Paris during the 1970s, after which he worked as an artistic adviser for a branch of the French electronics company Thomson, from 1981 to 1989, and, for a brief period in 1989, in commercial advertising. These early experiences with the fabrication of the imagery of products and brands familiarised him with the specific methodologies used in publicity and communication, and helped him analyse the desired effects of images on the social behaviours of consumers. As a result, his photographs, which span the genres of portraiture, still life, landscape and the street scene, critique the seductive character of conventional media representation, and the manipulations it allows. Though he prefers his titles to remain untranslated – lest they lose the wordplay and linguistic specificity that is key to his practice – he specifies that many of his photographic works from the last fifteen years are accompanied by contextual information, indicating the date and location of the picture, as a way to make explicit every factor that intervenes in the construction of the images. This information is on occasion heavily nuanced, for example with the title accompanying the series *39 Objets de grève présentés par Jean-Luc Moulène* (1999–2000), which integrates a disclaimer, stating that they are not ‘by’ Moulène but simply presented or made visible by him. Likewise the names of the photographers of his sculptures or installations is often credited in his captions. (Such concern with authorship or agency reflects his consistently critical standpoint on copyright, reserved rights and originality, which often emerges in his work.) By systematically deploying that level of clarity, each caption emphasises power struggles at work during the making of works of art and post-production, and also pre-empts future confusions, erroneous interpretations or uninformed appropriations of his work. That is, Moulène’s interests lie in the full life of the artwork – in the process, on the one hand, that goes from the production to the circulation and reception of the object and its image, and, on the other, in the social conditions in which the artist and the labourer operate in the contemporary world.

Despite this apparent focus on the image as an entry into this discussion, Moulène’s artistic practice has also always included traditional, assembled or manufactured sculpture, work with found objects and the production of drawings and prints. Boundaries between disciplines often blur in his work, for example when photographs capture his found objects, combining ‘actual work’ and ‘documentation’ in an

Caroline Hancock, "Jean-Luc Moulène : A Plasticien", Afterall n°28, 2011, pp 25-33.

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almost undifferentiated manner — as the title of the catalogue that accompanied his exhibition at Culturgest in Lisbon in 2007, *Jean-Luc Moulène, opus 1995—2007 / documents 1999—2007*, indicates.[1] This heightened awareness of and experimentation with ideas of reality, plasticity, image and documentation bring his work close to that of the Nouveaux Réalistes — a genealogy he has himself acknowledged. Speaking about '60—72. Douze ans d'art contemporain en France', an exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1972 that showcased the more political, sculptural and site-specific work produced after the heyday of painterly abstraction, he said:

*Suddenly, everything was possible. All the materials were available for us to use. It was as if the exhibition was trying to tell us something like: 'Go ahead boys, take over the space and do whatever you want'.*[2]

Rather like Nouveau Réaliste Raymond Hains, whose phenomenal photographic output has yet to be fully acknowledged, Moulène is open to chance encounters, making art from street-level reality, and infusing it with both humour and critical rigour — photographically or otherwise.[3] He shares this approach with artists of his generation from other locations, such as Gabriel Orozco, who invited him to exhibit objects within 'The Everyday Altered', the show he curated at the Venice Biennale as part of Francesco Bonami's 'Dreams and Conflicts' in 2003.[4] *Bitte à fruits* (Paris, September 1999), a work Moulène presented in that context, consists of a concrete bollard with a crumbling top that reveals stones and pebbles resembling, as the title suggests, pieces of fruit, giving the impression of being a sculpted still life. *Bleu Gauloises bleues 441* (June 2000), also included in 'The Everyday Altered', is a limited edition (441 copies) of the legendary blue Gauloises cigarette pack without any of the manufacturer's 'fine print' in the design. Again, by recasting a commercial product within an artistic context, like Orozco in his work, Moulène captures and conjures the unexpected and the banal.

But these subtle, fleeting, seemingly unintentional interventions are accompanied in Moulène's oeuvre by a conspicuous, explicit appropriation of art history. In terms of sculpture, to cite just a few examples, he often refers to Alberto Giacometti in his interviews; ancient and classical art is the basis of his project *Le Louvre* (2005), for which he photographed objects from the museum's collection; and homages to Marcel Duchamp and Bruce Nauman are at play in *Cinq concentrés concentriques* (Paris, April 2007), a sculpture composed of the five grey polyurethane fingers of a hand that, instead of being attached to the palm, all point to a precise point, where the fingertips touch, composing a figure that is both an axis and a vortex, and suggesting at once conflict, tension, connection, visibility and actuality. Mathematics and geometry are in fact at the core of Moulène's thinking: abstract, geometrical and scientific forms pervade his work — concentric circles, suns, plastic basins, pierced found stones, contorted staircase fragments fashioned from scrap-heap material, bronze knots on wire stems — offering an seemingly comprehensive catalogue of articulations of how the world functions (or does not). For example, *Boule fixe (sphère de Lisbonne)* (Paris, 1 May 2007) looks like an oversize disco ball firmly grounded on the floor, lined with cobblestones from the Portuguese capital instead of mirrors. Recent abstract works utilising plastics like epoxy resin and polyurethane (for example, *n Trous Outremer Rose* (Paris, May 2009)) are placed on plinths or tabletops like modular or cellular sculptures or architectural models, inviting us to consider notions such as clamping, knotting, expanding, transparency and density, as well as vanishing axes, grids, intersections, edges,

Jean-Luc Moulène, *Boule fixe (sphère de Lisbonne)*, Paris, 1 May 2007, polyurethane foam, epoxy, black cobblestones from Lisbon, diameter 88cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

1 See Jean-Luc Moulène, Rosário Sousa Machado, Marc Touitou and Miguel Wandschneider (ed.), *Jean-Luc Moulène, opus 1995—2007 / documents 1999—2007*, Lisbon: Culturgest, 2007.

2 Interview of J.-L. Moulène by Florence Ostende concerning 'The Pompidou Show', cataloguemagazine.com, issue 6, March 2011. Available at http://www.cataloguemagazine.com/contemporary-art/magazine/article/jean-luc-moulene/ (last accessed on 13 June 2011).

3 This element of the work of both artists was highlighted by Pierre Restany, the art critic who coined the name 'Nouveaux Réalistes' in 1960, when he curated both artists in a group show, 'Cette culture qui vient de la rue' ('The Culture that Comes from the Street') at the Galerie municipale de Vitry-sur-Seine in 2000.

4 See Francesco Bonami (ed.), *Dreams and Conflicts: The Viewer's Dictatorship* (exh. cat.), Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 2003, pp.310—11. Orozco also presented work by Abraham Cruzvillegas, Jimmie Durham, Daniel Guzmán, Damian Ortega and Fernando Ortega.

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Le Monde*, newspaper insert, *Le Louvre*, 2005. Installation view, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2005. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP, Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

directions and gaps. The plasticity of the materials is at the core of these exercises. Underneath the undeniable visual quality of the photographs and sculptures, Moulène's interest lies in moulding and manipulating the things that he makes and finds, to the point that they are (or seem to be) no longer how they began.

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*I conceive of them all like objects after a world of photography. Therefore they are not objects in the sense of statuary or sculpture. They are objects linked to the questions of production, representation, post-photography objectivation. As such, photography continues to be the research tool for these objects, even if at the end of the day I don't propose a print.*[5]

There is something sculptural about most of Moulène's photographs, as if the objects were about to pop out of the printed surface, igniting desire in a manner akin to advertising. Some of them could even be argued to be meditations on sculpture or puns on three-dimensionality laid flat. For example, *Méduses* (São Paulo, 7 April 2002) shows two jelly shoes ('méduse' means jellyfish), placed sole against sole in a manner that resembles the aquatic creature and simultaneously offers a volumetric study of light and shade. A sculptural conceit is at work again in his photographs of chewed gum, which also dwell on the incongruous malleability of the substance and delight in endless permutations of transparency and opacity.

In both of these works there is a play between document and reality: the 'thing' and its registration are distinguishable but at the same time permeable, and are given equal weight. Moulène inserts photographs in exhibitions together with sculptures or actual objects, creating disjunctions and/or associations that recall the visual games of *Documents*, the magazine through which Georges Bataille, Michel Leiris and Carl Einstein attempted to offer a common front against positivism, idealism and André Breton's Surrealism, published in

5 J.-L. Moulène, 'Series Entretiens avec les artistes, Académie de Paris', http://www.ac-paris.fr/portail/jcms/p1_124706/jean-luc-moulene (last accessed on 13 June 2011).

6 Sophie Berrebi discussed Moulène's work in relation to *Documents* at 'The Use-Value of *Documents*: Bataille/Einstein/Leiris', a symposium at the Courtauld Institute, London (23 — 24 June 2006) that accompanied the exhibition 'Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and the Magazine *Documents*' (2006) at the Hayward Gallery, London. The paper, titled 'Jean-Luc Moulène's Dialectical Documents', was subsequently published in *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 7, 2007, and is available at http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal7/acrobat%20files/articles/Berrebipdf.pdf (last accessed on 13 June 2011).

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Paris from 1929 to 1930.[6] The use value of documentary evidence essential to *Documents* has echoes in Moulène's attention to varied modes of presentation — including spatial presentation. Indeed, the *mise en espace* of his photographs could be compared to the practices of Richard Wentworth or Wolfgang Tillmans, and their non-hierarchical, formal and sculptural considerations and installations.

In 1998, for the exhibition 'Tu parles / J'écoute' ('You Talk / I Listen') at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Ferme du Buisson near Paris, Moulène was invited to work with the haircare and cosmetic company Shiseido. He directed a series of photographs of two naked female models covered with Shiseido's Perfect Refining Foundation. The function of this product — to cancel out any facial blemishes — was pushed to the extreme by Moulène, as the foundation was applied to the models' entire bodies. The resulting images, *We Were Here and There* (1998), are subtly pleasing and ironic: the women's bodies are redolent of mediaeval statuary and recumbent figures on tombstones,[7] while at the same time Moulène subverts contemporary commercial publicity tactics via their installation as traditional prints within the exhibition and on billboards outside it.

If on that occasion bodies were turned into objects by means of the image, in other works the transformation is of objects into images and again into objects: at the Louvre's invitation in 2005, Moulène selected 24 small statuettes, fragments and amulets from different departments of the museum — objects that he considered overlooked in their conventional presentation context (often a large vitrine filled with other artefacts). They were brought to a studio, where he photographed each of them against a plain background, in typical archival or museal fashion. Enlarged to approximately 50 by 40 centimetre photographs, the objects were then exhibited in the museum as flat images, but images endowed with an object status: the bare prints, mounted on aluminium, were placed directly on plinths, which were installed in a manner that overemphasised the shadows resulting from the museum's overhead lighting. Tracing this movement from object to photograph and back to object, Moulène also published this series as reproductions in a special *Le Monde* newspaper supplement distributed both in the museum and within the regular paper on the day of the opening. Exponentially broadening his audience, Moulène often distributes pamphlets, prints, leaflets and flyers through different channels, or leaves them to be picked up from piles (paper mounds that are objects/sculptures in themselves) included in his displays — the image, again, becoming object, and through it, witness to a materiality that might otherwise have left behind.

Moulène's systematic questioning of the function and productivity of images has also entailed the analysis, replication and transformation of the mechanisms active in different photographic genres, from advertising to pornography (as in the series *Les Filles d'Amsterdam*, 2005), from investigative or crime scene photography to archiving practices. It could be said that he plays at creating documents, material proof or evidence of sociocultural facts and projections. He repeatedly refers to police vocabulary — his exhibition at ARC, Paris in 1997, for example, was titled 'Deposition'. As suggested by *Cinq concentrés concentriques*, Moulène's work denounces and points fingers. Notions of scrutiny, enigma, excavation, observation, forensic light and vigilance recur in and around his images and titles, as if they were captured events, peppered with strange clues for varied interpretations.

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Moulène says he has been a handyman ('bricoleur') since his youth.[8] He talks of working as an assistant carpenter as well as an artist, and maintains that both should be understood as labourers. He sometimes appropriates for himself a qualifier used for Jean-Luc Godard: 'technicien libertaire', or 'libertarian technician'.[9]

7 For this comparison, see Cécile Bourne, 'Jean-Luc Moulène', in *Tu parles, J'écoute. You Talk, I Listen* (exh. cat.), Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1998, pp.70—73.

8 See interview between Patrick Javault, Jean-Luc Moulène and Daniel Foucard, 'Jean-Luc Moulène / Une photographie polymorphe', *Entretien sur l'art*, Paris: Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, 23 septembre 2010, http://fondation-entreprise-ricard.com/en/conferences/entretiens/art/moulene/ (last accessed on 2 August 2011).

9 See Raphaël Brunel, 'Jean-Luc Moulène', *02*, Spring 2009, pp.11—14, www.zerodeux.fr/jean-luc-moulene-par-raphael-brunel (last accessed on 2 August 2011).

Caroline Hancock, "Jean-Luc Moulène : A Plasticien", Afterall n°28, 2011, pp 25-33.

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Labour-intensive sculpture did not have pride of place in French post-War art and criticism — for example, Robert Filliou made fun of it with his DIY *Principe d'équivalence: bien fait, mal fait, pas fait* (*Equivalence Principle: Well Made, Badly Made, Not Made*, 1968), an absurd collection of objects, both crafted and found.

But at a time when work is becoming increasingly dematerialised, Moulène defends making things as fundamental to human activity. His attention for some time now has focused on the preservation and valorisation of objects produced in the context of working-class cultures, in particular that of trade unions and industrial action. The photographic series *Objets de grève présentés par Jean-Luc Moulène* constitutes an invaluable archive of French industry, manufacture and craftsmanship of the Years of Lead, from the 1960s to the 80s, that is not dissimilar in spirit to Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane's *Folk Archive* (1999–2005), their collection of contemporary British popular traditions and culture. The objects themselves are now part of the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail in Roubaix, in northern France, and the ethnologist and archivist Jean-Charles Leyris has produced a detailed account of each of the forty objects preserved as national industrial heritage.[10] Among those objects is a 'three 8s pipe', carved in France in the late nineteenth century, when the idea of dividing the working day between three teams working for eight hours each was a proud labour claim rather than the normal practice it is today in some countries; also in the collection is the red Gauloises La Pantinoise packet made from 1982 to 1983 by strikers protesting the closure of their tobacco factory in Pantin, in northeast Paris.

***At a time when work is becoming increasingly dematerialised, Moulène defends making things as fundamental to human activity.***

This interest in the representation of the working class is part of a wider engagement. Moulène has collaborated with, or made reference to in his work, the French workers' unions Lutte ouvrière and CGT (Confédération générale du travail). In 2003, he collaborated with *Nouvelle Vie Ouvrière* to publish a special edition of the *Objets de grève* series for the CGT's 47th congress. The arresting use of the colour yellow as a background in some of his photographs (for instance some of the *Produits de Palestine* series, 2004–05) or painted on his sculpture and objects (*Marche (palière et balancée)*, Paris, 1994, and *Croix Jaune*, Paris, 2004–05) presumably refers to the historical use of the colour in syndicalist movements and its regular appearance in bold political communications.

Bridging formal and social concerns, Moulène connects the 'arrêt du travail' ('stoppage of work') with the 'arrêt sur image' ('stop-frame' or 'still'):

> *The notion of work stoppage is a useful metaphor to use in relation to what I do: I stop things, make the image concrete. The idea is simple: if you objectify floating mental images, they no longer float, they become legible. My work has often been about that: giving concrete existence to mental images.*[11]

As if they were calls to action, his object/sculptures function autonomously like dissonant, ethical, potentially empowering ammunition.

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The effectiveness of Moulène's individual works lies in their capacity to occupy space and imagination. In tandem with his focus on arrest and occupation, Moulène also seeks movement, visual slippage and enquiry. The codification of movement through ritual and conventional or unconventional modes of social circulation is deeply ingrained in his practice, probably as a result from his work with French performance artist Michel Journiac during the late 1970s. Corporeal awareness, exchange and confrontation were central

10 Jean-Charles Leyris, 'Objets de grève, un patrimoine militant', *In Situ*, no.8, March 2007, http://www.insitu.culture.fr/article.xsp?numero=8&id_article=leyris-0 (last accessed on 13 June 2011).

11 'Entretiens avec Régis Durand', *Jean-Luc Moulène. Document 1*, Paris: Jeu de Paume, 2005, p.10. Translation the author's.

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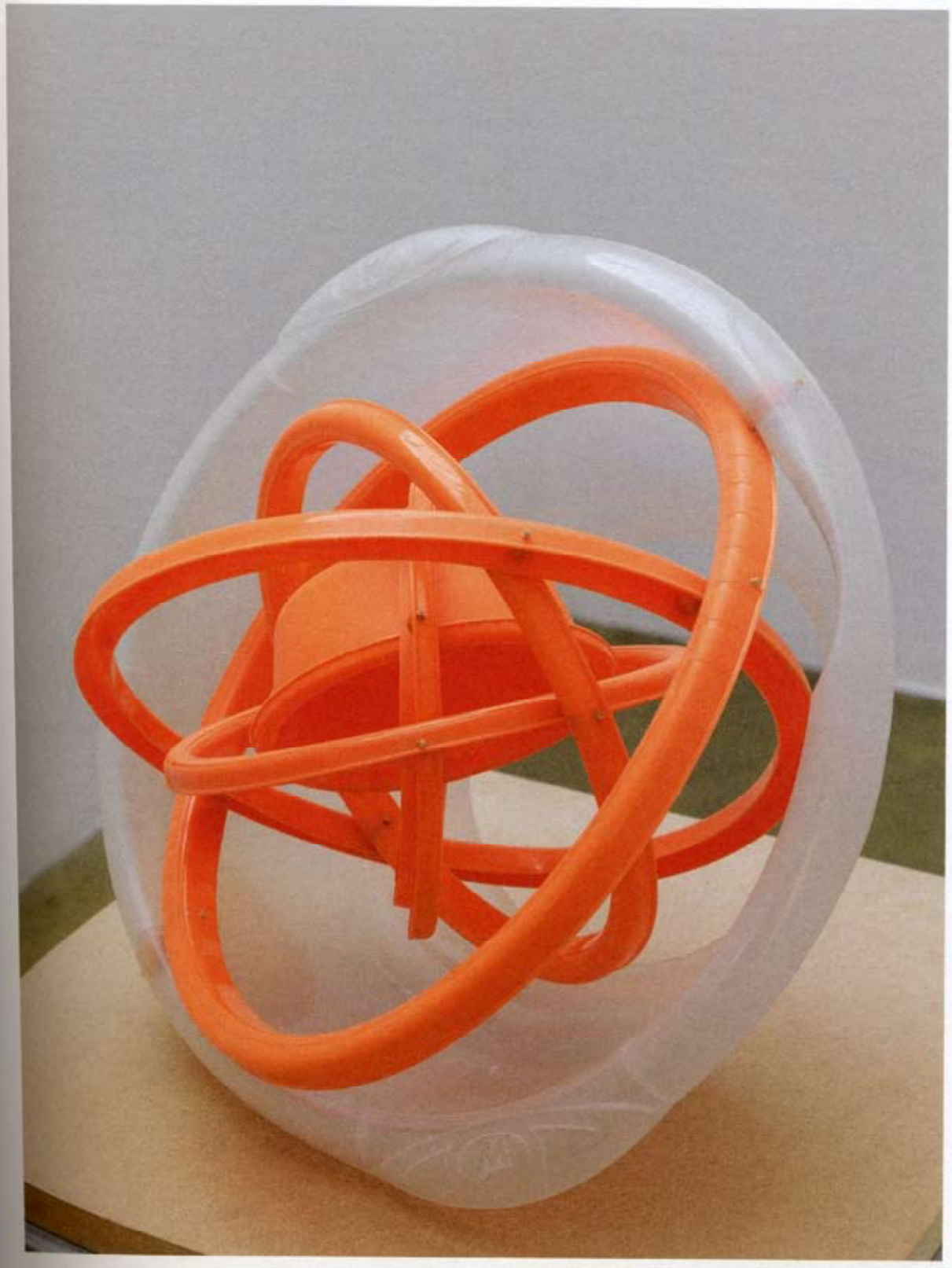
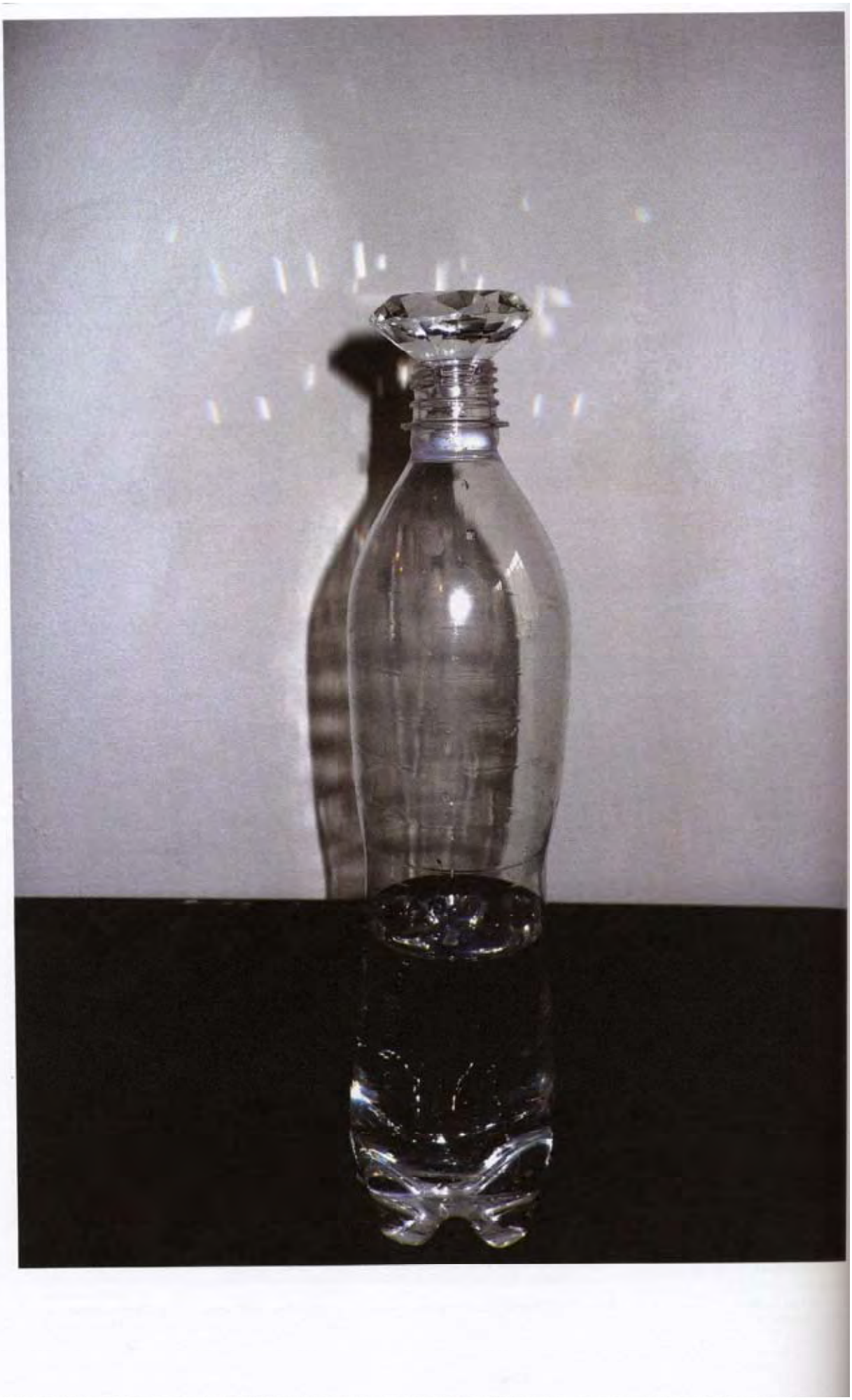


Jean-Luc Moulène, *Mondex*, Paris, March 2006, plastic basins, diameter 42cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène – ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

Caroline Hancock, “Jean-Luc Moulène : A Plasticien”, Afterall n°28, 2011, pp 25-33.



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Jean-Luc Moulène *Riche*, Le Havre, January 2010, reduced plastic bottle, water, fake diamond top, diameter 7cm, height 32cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

to his collaborations with dancer and choreographer Boris Charmatz (for example, *Ouvrée — artistes en alpages*, 2000, and *Statuts. Exposition à géométrie variable*, 2001—02). But variable geometry is also at work in his photographs, sculptures, objects and take-away piles of posters and printed papers. Across his whole body of work discontinuities, articulations, instabilities, tensions and release come together to produce a heightened interrogating presence, which translates into installations in which the relationship between work and space (and therefore the institution) is key. In the exhibition 'Mental Archaeology' at the Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry last year, Moulène showed *Riche* (Le Havre, January 2010), a sculpture consisting of a plastic bottle (Moulène began collecting bottles in 2000) sporting a disproportionately large fake-diamond cap and sitting atop a precariously tall, narrow plinth. The bottle was partially filled with water, which emphasised the tilt of the floor and, through it, the original function of the space as a cinema. Material relations here suggest, like in *Objets de grève*, wider social relations.

*I am interested in producing work that is, in itself, the site of conflict, that presents existing conflicts in pre-sensitive and therefore sensitive form. From these forms, a detachment and a gap are created and a critical consciousness can occur.*[12]

Moulène's forms defy typology, in that they are fabricated from resemblances and alterity, preferably nondescript, formless, with no clear usage. His plasticity of choice has 'patatoïde' (potato-shaped) qualities — that is to say, his forms are somewhat absurdly undefinable and challenging.[13] He confirms his predilection for this term in interviews such as one regarding the maquette for a body (2007—2011) presented in the 'Paris-Delhi-Bombay' exhibition at the Centre Pompidou this year. His recent exhibitions, like the one at the Crédac, which then travelled to Nuremberg Kunstverein, and his solo show at the Carré d'Art in Nimes in 2009, incite new or different volumetric perceptions against a flattening out in capitalist production, projecting out of the box and beyond the frame. Moulène is now preparing his first US exhibition for Dia: Beacon, opening this autumn, continuing his exploration of political meanings inherent in images and objects and in the production behind them.

'One should reward anticipation.'
— Jean-Luc Moulène[14]

'When we have decorticated, deconstructed, destroyed the real, there still remains this network of extremely solid metallic threads, a very potent human construction. This is where the work continues. These wires, we take them and we tie them together: new figures are formed, new realities are imagined. Imagination liberates. On this horizon of being, freedom is maximal, and *potenza* approaches possibility. New subjectivities, new fields of action, new syntheses of cooperation can thus be glimpsed.' — Antonio Negri[15]

12 J.-L. Moulène quoted in *Mental Archaeology: Matti Braun, Thea Djordjadze, Jean-Luc Moulène* (exhibition leaflet), Ivry-sur-Seine: Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry — le Crédac, 2010, p.39. Translation the author's.

13 See 'Études pour Body', interview with Jean-Luc Moulène recorded on the occasion of the exhibition 'Paris-Bombay-Delhi', Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2011: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xj5okc_paris-delhi-bombay-jean-luc-moulene_creation (last accessed on 2 August 2011).

14 Hans Ulrich Obrist and J.-L. Moulène interviewed Antonio Negri in Italy. An extract from the interview was published in the magazine accompanying the exhibition 'Voilà: Le Monde dans la tête' at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2000 (published by Paris-Musées and Les Inrockuptibles).

15 Antonio Negri, *Art & Multitude*, Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2009; English edition, trans. Ed Emery, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011, pp.36—37.

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Père Lachaise — Bastille*, Paris, 15 September 1998, Cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, 67×56cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

# Jean-Luc Moulène: Photography as Training Manual

– Sophie Berrebi

**Sophie Berrebi elucidates the history of visual culture and typology of skills found in Jean-Luc Moulène's photography and objects.**

It is not unusual for one artist to display admiration towards another, but it is more so perhaps when the two are almost contemporaries (give or take a decade) and the appreciation takes the form of a dedication at the beginning of a book. In giving 'tribute to the work of Jean-Luc Moulène' on the credit page of *Akram Zaatari: Earth of Endless Secrets* (2009),[1] Akram Zaatari acknowledges the undeniable formal proximity that exists between his photographs showing material evidence related to the stories he presents in his films and installations projects and Moulène's photographs of objects set against neutral grounds. More than that, however, and despite tackling different subject matter, Zaatari's images consider the ambiguousness of the photograph as evidence – a reflection that can be traced back to Moulène's own experimentations. Rather than the industrially manufactured objects of daily life that commonly turn up in Moulène's images, Zaatari's photographs most frequently present objects that bear the marks of the conflicted history of Lebanon, from postcolonialism to intermittent war. A handbag stuffed with letters from a war prisoner, vintage audio and videocassettes, an archive of old photographs and pages from a diary are shown as material traces of the narratives that unfold in such films of Zaatari's as *Al-Sharit Bikhayr* (*All Is Well on the Border*, 1997) and *Fi Haza al-Bayt* (*In This House*, 2005). But, once they are captured in the form of a photograph, the folded letters become illegible and the tapes inaudible. For all their clarity of composition, these images show the limits of photographic evidence. As with the work of Jean-Luc Moulène, they underscore the muteness and codification of the image.

If Moulène's photography seems to offer guidance for Zaatari's practice, it could be said, in turn, that photography functions as a training manual for Moulène himself, furnishing him with a way of critically looking at and learning from the world. From Moulène's early acquaintance with the medium in the 1980s to his most recent work, photography, most often practiced in the form of long-term and open-ended series, appears as a means of studying his surroundings, uncovering conventions of seeing as well as economic, social and political networks of production and exchange. Within this practice, the notion of the document, understood in different semantic contexts that include the legal, the scientific and the historical, plays a central part.

'All [the artists] were using photography as evidence. That's where I took up the work.'[2] Looking back at his formative years in a recent interview with Briony Fer, Moulène underlined the importance as well as the limitations of the use of photography in the context of performance art. He came to photography in the context of the Art Corporel movement, which developed in Paris in the first half of the 1970s. For artists like Michel Journiac and Gina Pane, the key figures of this French body art scene, photography was an integral part of the work rather than simply ad hoc documentation of live performances. Journiac, for instance, differentiated 'photographic actions' ('actions photographiques'), which were made

1 Karl Bassil and Akram Zaatari (ed.), *Akram Zaatari: Earth of Endless Secrets* (exh. cat.), Frankfurt, Hamburg and Beirut: Portikus, Sfeir-Semler Gallery and Beirut Art Center, 2009.
2 'Each Any — Interview with *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Paris, October 2008', in Jean-Pierre Criqui (ed.), *Jean-Luc Moulène* (exh. cat.), Nîmes and Cologne: Éditions du Carré d'art and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008, p.135.

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specifically to be recorded on camera, from 'photo-documents', which amounted to documentation of performances. The phrase 'constat d'action' (or 'certified report of an action') was the most frequently used term to define the data collected from a performance, likening the document to a certificate or an affidavit and conjuring up legal associations. Having once participated in a collective event directed by Journiac, Moulène was asked to record 'photo-documents' of several performances.[3] Even in these early works, well aware of the clear categorisations of photography's role, some of the resulting images, such as *Espace du sacré* (1985), implicitly acknowledge the blurriness between straightforward recording and staging for the benefit of the camera, and suggest one of the directions that Moulène would follow from the 1990s onwards.

In *documents / Journal impersonnel*, the open-ended series that regroups a large number of his photographic works since 1999, Moulène uses again the term 'document' to define his own work. But while the term remains a trace of his involvement with body-art documentation, its meaning becomes more complex in his reuse. The series contains pictures made in different geographic locations and belonging to various genres: still life, portraiture, street photography, architectural views and so forth. They include both un-staged, snapshot-like photographs and carefully arranged still lifes. The precise date and location given for each picture offer a connection to the artist's own life: many images appear to be made in his Paris neighbourhood or in the context of travelling, with a broad diversity of subject matter and geography, and an enigmatic touch. Yet while the series borrows qualities from the diaristic form, *documents / Journal impersonnel* presents a selective choice of images. Many linger in one's mind, conveying a feeling of intimacy and triggering a vague impression of *déjà vu* that operates on personal and art-historical levels.

Exemplary in this respect is *Père Lachaise — Bastille* (Paris, 15 September 1998).[4] The picture shows a Parisian bus — easily identified by its blue destination plate — steering away from the sidewalk on a busy street in Paris. The reflection in the glass window of the bus hints at the commotion on the rue de Rivoli, which the bus's route follows for part of its journey. Amidst this tumult, Moulène has caught a moment of respite in the form of a fleeting look addressed to him by a young woman on board. Responding to the camera pointed towards her, she turns her head slightly, letting appear a turban hairdo, widened eyes and an inscrutable expression. The image, snatched in an instant, conveys something of a flâneur's accidental encounter, such as Charles Baudelaire evoked in his 'Tableaux Parisiens' poems, published in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). 'A lightning flash... then night!' is what marks, in 'À une passante', a sudden — almost photographic — exchange of glances between individuals that will never meet again.[5] But the image that *Père Lachaise — Bastille* brings to mind is stronger than a literary one: the anachronism or exoticism of the headdress, the three-quarter profile framed by the bus window and the modest, perhaps teasing look eerily but unmistakably recall Vermeer's *Het Meisje met de Parel* (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c.1665). The bus window encloses the figure like the painting in its frame — only the reference seems to act the other way round, as if the Vermeer image were the imperfect mirror of Moulène's. If in Baudelaire's text, the momentary exchange of glances enables the narrator to be 'suddenly reborn', the recognition of the similitude between photograph and painting is what makes the photograph suddenly come to life for the viewer. This recognition, which turns the photograph from a mysterious and mute image into a familiar one, recurs elsewhere in the series. A close-up view of the Cologne cathedral (*Cathédrale*, Cologne, 16 March 2002), evokes in its particular framing Claude Monet's serialised depictions of the cathedral of Rouen (*Rouen Cathedral*, 1892–94). A picture of the Seine, as dirty and muddy as a roadside gutter (*La Seine à Paris*, 10 March 2010), reverses the effect

Jean-Luc Moulène, *Cathédrale*, Cologne, 16 March 2002, Cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, 77 × 65cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

3 Moulène recapitulates his work experience with Journiac in his statement 'Histoire de l'image de Darek. Temoignage de Jean-Luc Moulène', in Vincent Labaume (ed.), *Michel Journiac* (exh. cat.), Paris and Strasbourg: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Les Musées de Strasbourg, 2004, p.166.
4 Moulène often includes identifying information alongside his titles beyond the traditional date.
5 Charles Baudelaire, 'À une passante', in *Les Fleurs du mal*, Paris: Poulet Malassis et de Broise, 1857. English translation by William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil*, Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954.

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achieved by André Kertész in a 1929 close-up view of a gutter that is surreptitiously transformed into a river.

Transposition, transformation and displacement are some of the ways in which images, and in particular artworks from the past, are summoned in Moulène's photographs. Hence *Ongles* (Paris, 5 November 1999), which depicts a row of cut fingernails (or perhaps toenails?) aligned, not in a row, but turned around and stacked vertically in a column from small to large, evokes Jacques-André Boiffard's well-known photographs of an isolated big toe on a dark background, which were published in 1929 in issue 6 of the Surrealist journal *Documents*. The reference, even though it jumps out, is indirect, and partially relies on an affinity of texture and body parts, but mostly acts through a parallel process of anthropomorphism — in which *Ongles* suggests a thorax and Boiffard's *Big Toe* a human face.

This extensive network of visual references, which is never suggested directly nor explicitly acknowledged, sheds light on the second part of the series' title: 'Impersonal Diary'. The expression recalls Claes Oldenburg's response to a journalist who questioned him about his habit of quoting or referencing the work of other artists in his early practice: 'It's true that every artist has a discipline of impersonality to enable him to become an artist in the first place.'[6] The 'discipline' of impersonality self-imposed by Oldenburg as a learning system appears in a slightly different form in Moulène's work. While the latter's working practice also suggests an idea of training through making images that bear the traces of others, the resulting images also suggest the impossibility of making an innocent, spontaneous photograph. Even though *Père Lachaise — Bastille* was in all likelihood the result of a split-second decision, the result of the artist acknowledging a 'decisive instant', as described by Henri Cartier-Bresson, the picture, perhaps having been selected from a series made at the time, acquires permanence and timelessness once the artistic reference appears. In Moulène's *documents / Journal impersonnel* every image is triggered by the memory of another image. This realisation reconfigures Cartier-Bresson's motto of photojournalism and complicates the notion of document as straightforward evidence. It proposes that documents are not objective manifestations, but the subjective traces of culture, be it of the image's producer, recipient or both.[7]

The pictorial and cultural references that slip in between the decisive moment of the camera shot and the artist's cultural baggage suggest something of a history of visual forms. In other series, however, Moulène's interest lies in the visual conventions through which images are composed and produced in a particular area of knowledge. They follow the principle, developed by photography historian John Tagg, that 'the idea of what constitutes evidence has a history [that] implies definite techniques and procedures, concrete institutions and specific social relations'.[8] Moulène has investigated a number of these fields in different projects. *Plant* (rue de Bercy, Hôtel Mercure, Paris 12e, 1 September 1997—24 December 2002), an observational project that is supported by an academic essay by a botanist, follows the spontaneous growth, disappearance and re-emergence of a foxglove tree on the sidewalk.[9] *No Foto* (1995—98) collects press photographs censored or legally contested in the press. *Documents / Le Louvre* (2006) explores conventions of museum archives and artwork reproduction, whereas *documents / Le tunnel* (boulevard de Bercy, Paris, 12th arrondissement, 1996—2001) suggests ethnographic fieldwork and the issues that arise from its documentation. Originally presented as a newspaper offprint, *documents / Le tunnel* is concerned both with a sampling of city signs (somewhat similar to documents resulting from the the Situationists' *dérives* in the city and their efforts to organise the results into psychogeographic studies). It consists

6 Quoted in Bruce Glaser, 'Oldenburg, Liechtenstein, Warhol: A Discussion', *Artforum*, vol.4, no.6, February 1966, pp.20—24.

7 The tendency on the part of photojournalists and photography editors to select pictures of disaster that recall in their composition Christian religious imagery is a simplification and broadening of this phenomenon.

8 John Tagg, *The Burden of Interpretation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, London: Macmillan, 1998.

9 See Audrey Murate, 'Paulownia tomentosa (Thunb.) Seud.', in *Jean-Luc Moulène, opus 1995—2007 / documents 1999—2007* (exh. cat.), Lisbon: Culturgest, 2007, pp.211—15.

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of a series of twenty photographs of graffiti discovered by the artist in the covered section of the boulevard de Bercy, close to the Gare de Lyon and the Palais Omnisports de Bercy in the twelfth arrondissement of Paris. Returning to the site over a period of several years, Moulène recorded in photographs the insults and notices and slogans scribbled across the walls, creating a disjointed narrative with recurring protagonists and thematic obsessions of sex and violence: 'Solange Cavagna la triple putain la criminelle la tueuse' ('Solange Cavagna the triple whore the criminal the murderess'), 'R. merde bique neron vient ecrire matraque salo' ('r. oldgoart shit nero come write beat me basturd').[10] This collection is presented in spreads in books or as diptychs juxtaposing a photograph of graffiti with a transcription of the graffiti words in printed letters on the facing page. The anthropological characteristics of this display are enhanced by the claim of anonymity that accompanies the title of the work: 'Le Tunnel est anonyme' ('The tunnel is anonymous'), and together they give a sociological and an anthropological dimension to the project. How many voices authored these graffiti? What kind of exchange is going on through these injunctions? What does it say about social relations, about hopes and fears and menaces?

***Moulène argues that most objects now produced can be described as 'post-photographic', meaning that they are designed before they are manufactured, and they exist in two-dimensional computer visualisations before emerging as material things.***

The project makes visible, for instance, the tension of the formerly working class neighbourhood since its gentrification through the import of a middle class and the development of cultural centres (for example, the Frank Gehry building now hosting the French Cinémathèque, on the nearby rue de Bercy). The *tunnel* photographs' ability to indirectly reflect this suggests they are less accidental encounters between graffiti and camera than the results of a deliberate investigation over a period of time, in which raw material has been systematically collected and transcribed according to particular rules – those of typography. The graffiti, in other words, has been framed and organised in order to make it legible and interpretable in scientific terms. Though presented as an art project, Moulène's *tunnel* leans towards the social sciences, and the work gives credit to his statement: 'I operate in the more or less of anthropology, of culture, of sociology, etc.'[11]

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The process of showing how documents are produced from within sited forms of knowledge and ideologies, which shape these images through specific conventions, continues beyond Moulène's photographic work to inform his sculptural practice. The 'objects' (a term he favours over 'sculpture') he creates can be seen as direct extensions of his photographs in several ways.

Firstly, Moulène argues that most objects now produced can be described as 'post-photographic', meaning that they are designed before they are manufactured, and they therefore exist in two-dimensional computer visualisations before emerging as three-dimensional, material things. An object typical of this 'post-photographic' condition is the Ty Nant mineral water bottle shaped to evoke flowing water as captured by a camera, which Moulène has taken as subject for a photograph (*Bi-Fixe* (Paris, 7 September 2007). Images such as *Bi-Fixe*, along with other still lifes from the *Documents* series, seem to function as research for making his own objects, and indeed several of Moulène's 'sculptures' also result from computerised pre-conceptions, while others are made using special industrial-production methods. The latter follow a process reminiscent of the *39 Objets de grève présentés par Jean-Luc Moulène* (1999) series that documented specially produced objects by industry workers on strike. Other works, by contrast, openly oppose industrial finish and production, and are made using manual techniques that include casting (*Enfant*, 2006 and *Baignoire*,

10 Translated in *Le tunnel / documents de Jean-Luc Moulène*, Paris: Éditions al Dante, 2005.
11 'Each Any – Interview with Jean Luc-Moulène, Paris, October 2008', *op. cit.*, p.136.

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Jean-Luc Moulène,
*Cinq Concentrés Concentriques*,
Paris, April 2007,
black polyurethane elastomer,
18 × 18 × 18cm.
© Jean-Luc Moulène — ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

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1995), welding (*Chrome*, 1999), paving (*Boule fixe (sphère de Lisbonne)*, Paris, 1 May 2007) and carpentry (*Croix jaune*, 2004–05), amongst others. Not a specialist in any of these crafts, Moulène learns them through practice, and the degree of imperfection varies from one object to the next. In this way, when exhibited as an ensemble, the objects display a broad typology of skills and modes of production, from the shabbily executed *Marche (palière et balancée)* (Paris, 1994), one of his earliest objects, to flawless industrial production in *Bière totale* (special production Karlsberg Brauerei GmbH, Hamburg (Saarpfalz), May 2004), produced specially by Carlsberg under Moulène's direction.

This typology of skills and techniques is suggestive of a 'training manual' that comes to existence in the very process of making, and which is perceptible in the objects' diversity of polish. At times, the act of making itself seems on show. The strange sculpture *Cinq concentrés concentriques* (Paris, April 2007), for example, reprises the procedure of disorientation experimented with in *Ongles*. Here, it is fingers rather than fingernails that have been submitted to an impossible dislocation. Cast from the artist's five fingers, in black polyurethane elastomer, the fingers are detached from the hand and joined at the tips. Rather than God breathing life into Adam, as in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, and the infinite reproductions of this image, it is the artist's fingers that designate the centre point of finite creation. They suggest manual activity, but their converging position, more importantly, evokes the necessary reflexive quality of an artwork. Instead of pointing outwards, they converge towards a centre. This centripetal quality is a central feature of Moulène's art, and unifies his production beyond its diversity of subject matter and mediums, and his work's sometimes opaque quality. Moulène has said: 'In my view the work is also a theoretical act. As for its conditions of existence, it must be reflexive.'[12] The statement echoes the idea of the theoretical object as defined by Hubert Damisch, for whom it is 'an object that obliges you to do theory but also furnishes you with the means of doing it'.[13]

In Moulène's work, both theorisation and the means to do it are closely intertwined: just as the photographs contain a history of visual culture, the objects reflect a typology of skills. The photographs obey a similar principle as that which directs the creation of objects: both types of works are documents of the real that reflect on what this reality may be, and how it might be changed, through the artist's practice and the very process of making.

12 *Ibid.*, p.142.
13 Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Hubert Damisch, 'A Conversation with Hubert Damisch', *October*, vol.85, Summer 1998, p.8.

Sharp, Chris (Essay); Cormack, Emily (Focus); Piron, François (Interview). “ Jean-Luc Moulène : Mono”. Kaleidoscope issue 09, winter 2010, pp. 121-147.

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# MONO

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## Jean-Luc Moulène

Having first achieved recognition for his photography in the late '80s, the French, Paris-based artist and his work have since and continue to radically evolve, incorporating a variety of media from drawings to objects, such that his ever-transmogrifying practice is almost impossible to characterize, and remains one of the better-kept secrets of contemporary art today.

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"Art is and remains for us a thing of the future."
—Jean-Pierre Criqui

Previous page:
*Digest Sound*, Paris, 23 septembre 2001, 2006
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

This page, from top:
*Cour jaune*, Paris, 2004-05
Courtesy: the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London
Photo: Todd-White

*Pivoines*, Paris, 14th April 2002
Courtesy: the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

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The composition of a monographic text on an artist, at least for me as a critic, is almost always fraught with the fear of failure: failure to fully grasp and convey the complexity and stakes of a given artist's practice, and, in doing so, misrepresent that artist's work. Such are the risks you take on as an art writer, and they constitute one of the essential challenges and thrills of writing criticism itself. In contemplating and approaching the practice of Jean-Luc Moulène, however, the fear of not doing his work justice is different. It is not a mere possibility; it is a certainty. I will fail. (There, I said it.) But if this awareness doesn't discourage me from the undertaking, it is only because I know that my failure is inevitable, and that others before me have failed—beautifully, I might add—and others after me will fail just as surely.

Yet we are not Beckettian buffoons. Our failures, although some more gracious, erudite, and dazzling than others, are reflective of a core quality of Moulène's work itself. I think that quality is this: The past of his practice is continually in the process of being fluidly and sometimes radically modified by the present of his production, and vice-versa. Upon first glance, this may seem superficially true of all art, but it is not. Most artists develop a given identity early on, to which they generally stick thereafter, thus spending the rest of their careers negotiating that identity. Any later variations are perceived as either confirmations (for instance, through a change in scale) or attenuations (mere repetition of early work) of that original identity and the basic concerns that shape it. Total departures in art-making are rarely tolerated, and can, as is generally feared, result in professional suicide. The Paris-based Moulène (born in 1955) has approached the issue of identity differently. Predicated upon disjunctions, discontinuities, and an apparent open-endedness, his practice has been protean almost since the beginning. As such, it is engaged in a continual "becoming." Hence the impossibility, and subsequent failure of the critic (me), to comprehensively represent what he does.

As might be expected, this continual "becoming" and lack of easily identifiable signature has not served Moulène well in terms of mainstream recognition (despite his on-going international appearances in exhibitions like Documenta in 1997, the São Paulo Biennial in 2002, and the Venice Biennale in 2003). If Moulène remains an artist for initiates and one of France's best-kept secrets, it is presumably because appreciation of his work resides within a quasi Zen-like paradox: although best viewed in large groupings, the more you see of it, the less you understand. At least initially. My first real exposure to Moulène's oeuvre came during his 2007 survey at Culturgest in Lisbon, Portugal, which featured a broad presentation of photographs and objects. Until around that time, Moulène had been primarily valorized as a photographer who worked in series, beginning in the late 1980s with "*Disjonctions*" (Disjunctions), skewed straight photography of everyday happenings; "*Objets de grève*" (Strike objects), photos of objects made by strikers, in the late '90s; and the "*Filles d'Amsterdam*" (Girls of Amsterdam), "*Produits de Palestine*" (Palestinian products) and "*Documents, Le Louvre*"— respectively portraits of prostitutes, contraband products, and religious fetishes—toward the middle of the past decade. Only later was the artist seen as a maker of objects as well, when his objects were included in "The Everyday Altered," the exhibition organized by Gabriel Orozco for the 50th Venice Biennale. Accordingly, the 2007 Culturgest exhibition presented an extensive selection of Moulène's objects alongside his photos, making no hierarchical distinction between these two apparently distinct aspects of his production, and thus allowing it to flower forth in all its alternatively intriguing and perplex-

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*n Trous Bleu*, Paris, February 2008
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
Photo: Philippe Degobert
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Café, Paris, February 21, 2002
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène
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*Régulier*, Barneville, January 24, 2008
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène
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ing glory. Since then, the artist has continued to surprise and confound with his increasingly variegated ensembles of images and objects, as well as drawings, all of which are often less reminiscent of visual art per se than they are of unseemly artifacts, sociological data, and anthropological anomalies of a cultural and even physical order.

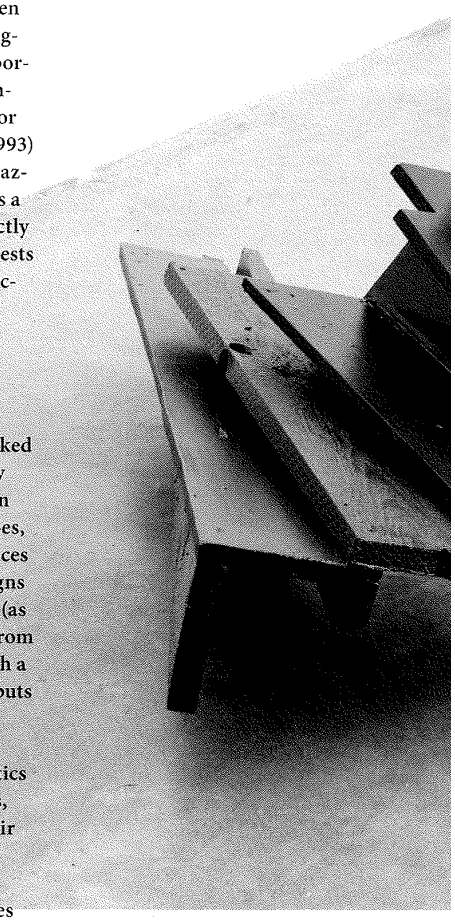
If any one factor could be said to unite the series of photos from the 1980s onward, it would be a preoccupation with questions of circulation. The "*Disjonctions*" series has often been described as an investigation of what constitutes the most banal categories of photography (still life, portraiture, street scenes, etc.) and how these categories, and what they portray, remain in circulation. Moulène approached the issue by misusing the terms and conventions of those categories to depict a given subject in such a way that was either subtly or directly unacceptable to that category. For example, *Untitled (Pont d'Austerlitz, Paris)* (1993) offers an ambiguously lyrical portrait of a street person, surrounded by his belongings, gazing at the Pont d'Austerlitz at sunrise. *Image Blanche, Paris* (1992-05-20), in turn, depicts a double portrait of a wall-eyed mother and her distracted child, finger in mouth, imperfectly framed in the image. In both cases, the discomfort produced by the photos exposes and tests the aesthetic, political, and linguistic parameters as well as the commonplaces that implicitly govern the production and distribution of images.

A natural corollary of Moulène's investigation of circulation would be the idea of resistance—and this characterizes the whole of his practice, from its very constitution to its methodology to its subject matter. However, the artist is not necessarily interested in resistance as a revolutionary force, or resistance for the sake of resistance, but rather as a force of production and possibility. (Or, to put it another way, "I say *No*," Moulène remarked in a recent studio visit, "so the viewer can say *Yes*.") Perhaps no other series more literally exemplifies this triad of interests and methods—circulation-resistance-production—than "*Objets de grève*" (1999–2001). This series consists of 39 photographs of objects (baby shoes, clothes, a watch, maps, etc.) fabricated by strikers while forcibly occupying their workplaces of production. Despite the essentially elegiac character of the series, Moulène shot the signs of resistance as an unassuming inventory of rare objects given a new lease on circulation (as images). "*Produits de Palenstine*" (2002–04), meanwhile, features contraband products from Palestine—bottles of orange water, chewing gum, cigarettes—and photographs them with a dispassionate objectivity on luminous white grounds. The series of images symbolically puts back into circulation items that are otherwise unavailable through international trade.

Finally, Moulène's most controversial series, "*Filles d'Amsterdam*" (2005), directly engages his preoccupation with the body: the body as object, as commodity, and the politics of aesthetics that govern depictions of the naked body. These decidedly unsettling photos, taken from above, unconventionally portray female sex workers from Amsterdam on their backs, legs akimbo, with their faces on the same plane as their sex. The blunt parity with which faces and genitals are presented prevents them from becoming pornography to be passively consumed, or pornography *tout court*, transforming them rather into active sites of conflict between viewer, convention, and image—and thus interrupting the flow by which such goods (images, bodies) normally circulate. In 2005, Moulène was invited to collaborate with the Louvre, the result of which was a newspaper supplement for the newspaper *Le Monde*. The artist selected a series of 24 ancient religious fetishes and sculptures of primarily polytheistic origin, shot them in natural light (once again, from above), organized them into a chain of association, and put them into circulation outside the museum in the supplement (Moulène had worked in the format of a newspaper supplement numerous times, notably for the São Paulo Biennial in 2002).

So far, so good. Even if, for the sake of brevity, I have had to forsake many crucial nuances of Moulène's photographic practice, it would seem as if we are dealing with a relatively coherent beast here, with nothing unmanageable or out of the ordinary. And yet were you to walk into "Ce que j'ai (What I have)," Moulène's 2009 exhibition at Chantal Crousel in Paris, or his 2009 survey at the Carré d'art in Nîmes, or his recent showing at the Crédac in Ivry (none of which feature examples of his well-known photographic series), you would most likely find it hard to believe that you were looking at the same artist. A good example of his radically disjunctive mode of working is his exhibition at Chantal Crousel. Featuring seven abnormal objects of a corporeal or geological nature, a constellation of plinths or tables, two photographs, one video, and six drawings, as well as older works, the exhibition reads like an elegant, idiosyncratic, group show, discreetly saturated with all the perverse corporeality of the poems of E.E. Cummings and the interdisciplinarity of Bataille's journal *Documents*.

The effect was one of a strangely organic collection of variously banal and teratological phenomena organized around Bataille's notion of heterology, succinctly defined by Branden W. Joseph as "[...] what remains 'completely other,' constitutively unassimilable within general cognitive systems, whether they be advanced philosophical speculation or



**ARTIST'S BIO**

JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE (b. 1955) is a French artist who lives and works in Paris. He participated in Documenta X, Kassel, in 1997, and has also shown at CCA, Kitakyushu (2004); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2005); Thomas Dane Gallery, London (2006); Culturgest, Lisbon; Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels (2007); Centre d'art Passerelle, Brest (2008); Carré d'Art - Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2009).

**CURRENT & FORTHCOMING**

JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE's first solo show in the United States, organized by the Dia Art Foundation, will be on view at the Hispanic Society in New York from October 2011 to June 2012.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 21.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 149–50.

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common sense."[1]. For instance, the sculpture *Os non os* (2009), displayed alone on a table and fashioned out of bones and epoxy paste, looked like a skull with no face, while nearby one encountered *Head Box* (2004), a small green box hung open on a wall at average head height (as if to say "insert head here"). Ostensibly an ironic reflection on authoritarian modes of seeing, the work could have also just been a comment on one-point perspective. One particularly captivating photo, *Régulier* (2008), featured an empty plastic bottle wedged between two rocks in what was presumably a natural outdoor setting. Perfectly centered, the uncomfortably evocative container both mutely resists and seems manifestly resigned to its fate as an unassimilable object. Elsewhere, *Chute d'escalier* (2008) (literally "stair leftovers" or, better yet, "stair rind") comprised a dark segment of wooden stairs unevenly reconfigured such that they seemed to writhe in the middle of the floor. An unlikely grotesque, this improbable bit of bricolage resisted classification with a tenacity that bordered on the obscene. To say it was enthralling says perhaps more about me than it does of the object. And yet I am not so sure: for to enthrall is to arrest movement, to capture attention, to interrupt, and ultimately to ramify the flow of circulation. To use the adjective "enthralling," however, might also be a bit misleading, as there is nothing spectacular about Moulène's practice. If it produces fascination, it nevertheless does not disarm intellectually: The resistance at the heart of the work doesn't brook passive consumption. Instead, it invariably produces more questions than it does answers.

Moulène often speaks about his work in relation to the body, about how his practice is an attempt "to build his own body." While such a notion is linked to the influence on Moulène of the French performance artist Michel Journiac and his interest in the body as a site of social and political negotiation, it is also reminiscent of Antonin Artaud and his "body without organs." In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari transform the "Body Without Organs" into a strategy of circulation. They write, "It is not at all a notion, a concept, but a practice, a set of practices. You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it. It is a limit."[2]. This is what they describe as "becoming." Nevermind that in the Crousel show, there was a work entitled *Bordel d'organes* (Mess of organs, 2008), which consisted of three objects, in addition to a drawing, arranged on a wooden display, one of which was a stone resembling a skull, another an amorphous knob of clay with half a set of human teeth jutting out of it, another a piece of dark oak, which resembled a heart. The cumulative effect was as if this emptying out were a mode of construction itself.

Despite the existence of such objects, it is also important to remember that Moulène issues from a tradition of straight photography: he perceives the street to be his studio, one whose center is inevitably unfixed and therefore continually shifting. Looking back at his past work from the vantage of his present production, I think it becomes clear that his practice is even less stable than it looks, that it is somehow organic and fluid. Although documentary, if anything is essentially registered in his work, it is a set of practices that seek to investigate and push against limits and resist dominant modes and myths of circulation, while nevertheless hinting at the existence of others. Exactly how this will add up or what it will engender is, as the French critic Jean Pierre Criqui trenchantly observes about Moulène's work, a thing of the future—which is to say, it is both the source of a potential alternative future and that which can only be resolved by a time that has yet to come. ◇

**AUTHOR**
CHRIS SHARP is *Kaleidoscope*'s Paris editor. A writer and independent curator based in Paris, he has recently organized the exhibition "Under Destruction," co-curated with Gianni Jetzer, which opened in October at the Museum Tinguely in Basel and will tour to the Swiss Institute in New York in March 2011, while preparing *A Necessarily Incomplete Anthology of Withdrawal*, to be published by Archive Books in 2011.

From top:
*Chute d'escalier*, 2008
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn

*Môme*, Paris-Batignolles, June 6, 1999
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

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# MEMENTO MORI

**Simple portraits of products created in the spirit of protest, the photographs from Moulene's "*Objets de Grève*" are acute points of rupture—showing how meaning can be dismantled and realigned without necessarily dramatizing significance.**

**words by EMILY CORMACK**

*Le fuseau et le polo*, 1999-2000
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène
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Viewed from above, human activity could be seen as a series of three-dimensional Venn diagrams: with each sphere, a system. It is our onus to struggle between them, colliding and dividing as we progress through these sealed spheres within which we rotate. Whether they are biological, semantic, rhythmic, financial, visual, commercial, economic, or ontological, whether imposed or innate, systems are integral to existence. However, it is only when these systems fail, rupture, or spin from their axis that we become aware of their grip.

Within this network of spheres, there can be points of rupture so acute and potent that their effect ripples across the ecosystem, disorienting and displacing objects and processes. In his photographic series "*Objets de grève*" (Strike Objects), Jean-Luc Moulène articulates these breaking points through photographing objects that have breached the conditions and systems of their own production.

Created by disenfranchised factory workers embroiled in a range of industrial disputes throughout France since the late 19th century, the objects that Moulène photographs in this series were created in the spirit of protest and revolt. To create these objects, the workers commandeered the means of production, diverting the machinery ordinarily used to create commercial products, and redeploying it as an instrument within the worker's rebellion. A Manufrance frying pan, for example, was gilded with the words "Employment – Solidarity – Freedom – Justice" to commemorate attempts to preserve jobs at the Manufrance factory in 1984. A packet of Gauloises cigarettes was colored red and printed with the details of the workers' occupation of the Pantin cigarette factory in defiance of its closure in 1982. In all of the objects that Moulène documents, what was once domestic or utilitarian is transformed into a symbol of industrial agitation and unrest. Through the subtle modification of a pipe, a packet of cigarettes, or a newspaper, these objects shift from belonging within a commercial system of production to operating outside of any sanctioned economic system.

The front page of the *International Herald Tribune*, Friday 5 June 1987, which comprises one photograph in the series, was printed and distributed with large vacant spaces where photographs should be. These voids give the viewer, the reader, or the casual consumer space to think through the rupture in their daily read. The retoucher, whose hours had been cut, was on strike, and in this work, his revolt becomes emblematic of an increasingly rationalized work place, where hours and benefits are cut, as financial profit is valued over the worker's well-being. It is through these blocks of silence on the page that consumers are made aware of the mechanics of the systems of production and distribution and their role within them. The subtext of the newspaper's production and the vast human narratives within it is revealed through erasure. This judder in the usual flow of news and views destabilizes the newspaper's function, transforming it from a vehicle for daily news into a symbol of protest. Like a vocal inflection, this pause in the layout of the paper brings new significance to the meaning of this otherwise everyday object, shifting it from one sphere of meaning to another.

More generally, the objects that Moulène photographs in this series are representative of hot spots within the history of revolution. The objects cluster chronologically around 1968 and 1973–78, corresponding with the close of the *Trente glorieuses* in France—when France's economy grew steadily for thirty years—and the global oil crisis, followed by another spike in the late 1980s when the global financial markets crashed (Black Monday, on 19 October 1987), and again in the early 1990s, coinciding with the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. They testify to the rebellion and defiance that percolated throughout Europe over the past 150 years, and can be seen to plot a subjective and intimate course through various upheavals and crises in recent history.

Lit by a dead gray light and placed uncompromisingly in the center of the frame, the objects are photographed like evidence. They are presented simply, economically, placed on backgrounds that seem unrelated, without any illusion of pictorial depth. The objects appear to have been found and placed before the camera, recorded for an as-yet-unknown significance. The objects are elevated through documentation, loaded with poignancy, and yet they are completely removed from the energy of their narrative.

Since the industrial revolution, the factory worker has become one of the most well-theorized professions of the 20th century. The treatment, status, and level of agitation experienced by factory workers both subjectively and collectively have come to be seen as indicative of much broader financial and political contexts. Factory workers' capacity as an active lobbying force has also been recognized and harnessed by numerous artists and theorists. Significant among the more recent commentaries on this force is Antonio Negri, whose own activism led to his incarceration for ten years. Negri speaks explicitly of the power of the workers to generate social change in a contemporary setting. "What liberates history, what frees us from slavery, is living work, the capacity of work to oppose capital. And only

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From left:
*La poêle des 17 de Manufrance*, 1999-2000
*International Herald Tribune*, 1999-2000
*La Pentinoise*, 1999-2000
All images courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
All photos: Jean-Luc Moulène
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when this occurs is capital forced to assume democracy. The time has come to put an end to it, once and for all."[1] In "*Objets de grève*", Moulène focuses precisely on this moment, when the workers have made a break to oppose the forces of *capital* and to use their work to revolt from it. These points of resistance sound out the depth of wider dissent, and represent the first wave to break on the shore.

While there is little doubt that these objects played an important role within various industrial disputes over the past 150 years, they also reflect the changing status of the object in contemporary society. As the forces of neo-liberalism diminish the potency of revolution by co-opting the language of revolutionary activity, we are also faced with the dramatic global rise in consumerism. "*Objets de grève*" reveals how the forces of neo-liberalism, coupled with the resultant rise in rampant consumerism, have deprecated the status of the object as a potential tool during revolution. As Moulène himself has stated, "We're producing fewer strike objects these days. In the 1980s, the product was the dominant mode of communication: when a strike needed to be made known, we manufactured objects. Today, spectacle has become the primary mode of communication..."[2] This community of codes has now been replaced by campaigns that are more media-aware, such as culture jamming and web- and social networking. Particular objects that signify revolution and protest in themselves are now comparatively scarce, indicating an increased dematerialization of rebellion, and enshrining Moulène's objects as *memento mori* for an age of protest that has passed.

A small ceramic pipe, for example, from the late 19th century, features three number 8's in relief on its bulb. The three eights refer to the late 19th- and early 20th-century trade unionists' mantra calling for an eight-hour work day, eight hours of leisure, and eight hours of rest. Although Australia and New Zealand passed a law assuring the satisfaction of these demands in the 1850s, France did not legislate this guideline until the Popular Front was elected to government in 1936. This utilitarian pipe therefore bares the stamp of a distant aspiration epitomizing a working class struggle that was not to be resolved for another four decades.

The valorization of an object such as a pipe—from utilitarian object to political symbol and call to arms—transforms its status as a commercial product and embeds in it a new load-bearing rhetoric. In the hands of the factory worker, the objects are shifted between spheres of meaning and their potential is freed for further signification. However, what does it mean for Moulène then to take these objects decades later and momentarily tug them from their resting places (in archives and pockets, and on mantelpieces) and reframe them? Collated as a series and presented independent of didactic captions, these photographs take on the formal qualities of documents within an archive. Positioned as such, the archival connotations of "*Objets de grève*" serve both to revive the object's revolutionary status and simultaneously to dull it, for as with any kind of archive, the energy of the original object is displaced. What was once so fierce, so full of fire is collated and itemized, sunk into the archive, which is, after all, another system, another sphere designed to corral human behavior. While Moulène resuscitates the factory workers' utopian voices for a moment, baring their narratives, opening them for discovery, their stories will fade as the viewer moves past the photograph hung on the gallery wall, just as the archivist's box is slotted back in the vault. And perhaps just as photography captures and freezes the everyday, empowering the photograph only to depict the appearance of things, these objects are only able to reveal a small portion of the actual events that they signify. Like fragments flaking from time, these formerly revolutionary objects, once they are archived within Moulène's "*Objets de grève*", become mere outlines of their fierce origins, revealing as little of their story as sediment in the rubbish heap of revolution. ◇

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Commonwealth*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 2009, p. 291
2. Jean-Charles Leyris, "Objets de grève. un patrimoine militant," *In Situ*, n 8, 2007, http://www.insitu.culture.fr/article.xsp?numero=8&id_article=leyris-0. Author's translation.

**AUTHOR**

EMILY CORMACK is the Exhibitions and Public Programmes Officer at the Victoria University's Adam Art Gallery in Wellington. She is also an artist and was a founding member of the Melbourne artist-run space Conical.

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# A SERIOUS FARCE

*(Pierre percée) percée*, Les Arques, Lot, juin 2008
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn
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**As described in his own words, Moulène's practice stems from the 1970s notion of art as an enigma—hence the programmatic discountinuity and the constant evasion of realism, leading a descent back toward a sympathetic space.**

**material collected by FRANÇOIS PIRON**

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# MONO: JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

*Jean-Luc Moulène continues to be recognized more for his photographic work than for his objects and drawings, which he only began exhibiting a dozen years ago. Some of his pictures are better known than their author, such as his* Objets de grève, *a photographic inventory of objects manufactured on the assembly line by workers on strike and sold on the black market to help finance their cause, the workers thus re-appropriating their skills and inventing a parallel circulation and economy. Both the economy and the circulation of objects are themes that arise frequently in Moulène's work. His thinking on the subject of the circulation of images has led him on multiple occasions to occupy the pages of wide-circulation newspapers, such as the Brazilian daily on the economy,* Valor, *or* Le Monde *in France, and also to produce numerous publications in collaboration with writers in whom one discerns a kinship with his own practice, which is anchored in the literary legacy of Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Alfred Jarry, and René Daumal—writers who have produced a body of work both irreducible and accessible to many fields of knowledge, texts that are at once open to their immediate surroundings and founded on the radical negation of the world as it appears to us. A discussion with Jean-Luc Moulène involves a game of paradoxes, watchwords, and improvisations. Moulène's rhetorical choreography fashions thought on the tongue and constantly redefines a line of conduct that seeks, above all, to avoid being tied down.*

From left:
*Marche (palière & balancée)*,
Courtesy: the artist and Thomas Dar
Photo: Todd White

*La tête noire*, Paris, Janua
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Cha
Photo: Florian Kleinel

All images © Jean-Luc Moulèn

I became interested in art during the 1970s with the practices of body a
cal art, or what was called "non-art" or "anti-art." Photography was importan
as a record of a performance. I also became aware at that time that I had no ta
myself on show, or for occupying even a trace of the symbolic position of an a
myself that I would be a long-term performer, in the sense that presence is my
concern is to authorize rather than to be an author.

Culture consists in the coexistence of the singular and the commonplac
ment to singularize the artist-individual, certainly necessary in the 1970s at a
ciety was undergoing a process of normalization, has nevertheless today beco
capital, and consequently must be reconsidered.

My notion of art comes from this period of the 1970s, when it was thou
work was an enigma to everyone, and not just a secret reserved for a few, and
be open to the whole of human knowledge—to aesthetics, to history, to psych
sociology. The work of art is a focal point of all disciplines; it is shot through

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FRANÇOIS PIRON is an art critic and a curator, teacher at thÜe Lyon School of Fine Arts since 2002, and a founding member of castillo/corrales, Section 7 Books and Paraguay Press in Paris. He formerly founded *Trouble* and was part

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## MONO: JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

I am above all discontinuous rather than heterogeneous, and in this discontinuity I find a critical convergence with present-day modes of knowledge, which favor availability to the detriment of experience. I have never thought of my work from the perspective of a coherent whole. I think of my shows as group shows. As Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes said, "Me and me, that is millions!" I am interested in the work without art, rather than the artist without the work. I work on this hypothesis. I make works, but I am "on strike from art," and by the same reasoning, obligated to it.

A good proportion of contemporary art consists in introducing popular practices into a separate world. Art ennobles and celebrates these popular practices. Historically speaking, it was photography that forced art to take up a position: whether to regain the work by introducing the vernacular, or to withdraw from it into the self-sufficiency of radical abstraction. Photography forced the world into art, and the history of its practices is more interesting than the history of its authors, since most of its practices are anonymous. It might even have been considered a form of Outsider Art that had not been identified as such.

For my part, Outsider Art interests me because its productions, its works—if they have an aesthetic and an intentionality—exist prior to being regarded as art. This has to do with my own practice, in the sense that I consider my images and objects as tools, articles of use: practical above all else.

The point of departure of my work consists in images that have found a support in photography. I am not saying that I do photography, but that I make images, in the same way as I make objects, not sculptures, because sculptures are only a typology of objects.

What are the conditions of the work? My criteria are that it should be complete in itself, separate, and that it should bring with it, in such a way as to be plainly visible, all the conditions under which it was produced. But also that it should have a direct link with

From top:
*Clous*, Paris, December 21, 2003
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

*Viande / Os*, Barneville, February 16, 2001
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

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Sharp, Chris (Essay); Cormack, Emily (Focus); Piron, François (Interview). " Jean-Luc Moulène : Mono". Kaleidoscope issue 09, winter 2010, pp. 121-147.



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Page 144:
*Bitte à fruits*, Paris, September 1999
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

Page 145:
*La Main Noire*, Paris, 4th September 2006
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

This page:
*Cinq Concentrés Concentriques*, Paris, April 2007
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn

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what it has been separated from, which is to say, the world. This separation I speak of is not pathological, but liberating. It is in being as impersonal as possible that I try to keep looking at the world. To separate oneself is first and foremost to elude the temptation of realism, of moralizing. My wall images play on representation, while my objects play on presence. To go into the sense of impression or expression doesn't interest me; rather, it is the tension between the two that matters to me. A work is an affirmation and, at the same time, a negation. It is a battlefield.

Duchamp said that he didn't choose his ready-mades, but that his ready-mades chose him. Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" posed the question directly: who decides? In this decision, there is a suggestion of faith; there is even something weirdly divine about it. As for me, I avoid believing. In the same way, there is a double manner of thinking in Duchamp: if the ready-made is an additional object in art, it is also an object subtracted from industry. The decision Duchamp took may possibly involve both aspects: to show, in art, that an object has been taken away from the world. But he was very careful to not make this explicit, and this enabled him to avoid making works that bore an ideological stamp.

I do not attempt to control the discourse and analysis of my work; on the contrary I try to surrender all control. Nevertheless, this does not mean that I do this work before having the work invaded by different disciplines. No one discipline can entirely encompass a notion of the world, not even history, law, or economics. In my work, I attempt to cut diagonally through different regimes or separate spheres that divide the world into the areas of economics, politics, and culture. And these diagonal cuts enable me to obtain another figure. This kind of diagram helps me a lot. In tracing this figure, I try to strike hard enough for it to produce a swelling on the world. There resides my ideal for a work, as well as this idea of separation: a swelling, bearing witness to a blow, situated on the outside of the world, like an excrescence. One only has to hit hard and up it comes.

I never use the word "project" concerning my work; it is always simply a matter of practice. Becoming aware of your own practice is retrospective. There is no art, and no theory, that comes before practice. It is only when you become aware of your practice that you can begin putting something into form. When the first phase of the practice is of the order of feeling, allowing a return into the area of perception, it is then that a conceptual space

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arises through the act of forming. The act of forming is of the order of technique. Academicism in painting consisted in finding a proper equivalence between a technique and its subject, and this problem is still present in my own work. Technique does not come first, and yet technique is necessary, closely linked to the problem of the subject that it put in place. To tackle a technique does not imply mastering that technique. Such knowledge does not concern me, except when it becomes a matter of construction, not of discipline.

The difference between art and other fields that require technique resides in its method: whereas the scientist or the mathematician publishes the results of his experiment, an artist has to produce something that is not merely the result of an experiment, but must also render the experiment available to others. This means that to create a work, having done the experiment, he has to go back to his sources, and the form created must make it possible to perceive and re-open a sympathetic space. The work consists in a descent back toward sympathetic space, toward the observer.

The form of a work has no stake in the game other than to make experience possible; it is a kind of rhetoric that helps to communicate thought. That's why what is common interests me far more than what is singular. I share something with the other, and that shared something is my playing field.

Thought, to my mind, is an act that forces one out of oneself, not an imposition of personal singularity. This means that I must take into account even what I reject. It is by starting from the center, not the periphery, that one can gain an overall view of what goes on in the world. Photography is an instrument of frontality.

I am often reproached for my seriousness. Whereas I work very seriously to manufacture artefacts (which is, after all, a scam), to savor a dirty trick that hits the right spot. A dirty trick is this admirable, surprising, unexpected, and successful space in which one encounters truth: like a set-up, in fact. I would say that my works lie on the side of serious farce rather than grim ardor. My works examine the evidence, which is something really close to imbecility. Robert Filliou and George Brecht are members of my family, and with them I share the aspiration to create works that make me ashamed. The ones that make me most ashamed are, in the long run, the truest. ◇

From top:
*Deux Bassines*, Paris, 11th February 2006
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

*Nuguirit*, Paris, 14th December 2004
(with Jeanne Balibar)
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène

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