Jean-Luc Moulène

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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, 11⅞ × 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 × 35⅛".

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

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.

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.)

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).

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Allison Katz, *Giant Cock*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and The Approach, London. Photo: FXP Photography

This piece could just as well be called “Against Allegory.” Or even “Against Representation.” Or maybe even better yet “Against Language.” Never mind “Against Interpretation” (which is obviously a precedent). I would even almost be inclined to call it “Against Everything,” if that were not already taken and most deftly accounted for, not to mention true. But it is not.

THEORY OF THE MINOR

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THEORY OF THE MINOR

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Allison Katz, *2 Cocks*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and Giò Marconi, Milan. Photo: Filippo Armellin

BY CHRIS SHARP

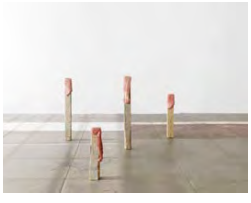
This text is *for* as much as it is *against*. Essentially positive, it nevertheless defines itself negatively against certain tendencies, assumptions, and givens in contemporary art. It should be stated that this text, and the thoughts and position that actively inform it, have been largely sponsored by living and working in the context of Mexico City, and more generally Latin America, for the past four years. Consistently exposed there to a series of doxas regarding the production and dissemination of contemporary art, which are characterized by an implicit protocol to confuse art with journalism, pedagogy, and compulsory assertions of collectivity, all of which are thoroughly embedded in language, I have found myself forced to articulate an increasingly antagonistic position, which militates, perhaps anachronistically, for art itself. Or to be more precise a specific kind of art, which I will antagonistically call *minor*.

By minor, I of course do not mean in the classical sense of the term, as in lesser or secondary to the major (e.g., Guido Reni to Caravaggio), but rather as a mode of making that is characterized by resistance not as a political position, but as a natural consequence of the practice itself (it goes without saying that this consequence is always already political, insofar as it introduces conflict as opposed to consensus). In order to start to sketch out the minor, it is necessary to first take a stab at defining the major, which is more of a verb than a noun. The major, like allegory, instrumentalizes. The major reduces and recuperates, streamlines, flattens out, absorbs, and eliminates difference. Art is never an end in itself, but a means, a vehicle. Seeking the lowest common denominator, which is often found in either spectacle, topicality, or use value, it continually asks what art can *do*, as opposed to what it *is* or *can be*, which it almost always takes for granted.

This is why most major contemporary art formally avails itself of the academicism of conceptualism, all but dismissing form or formal concerns as secondary or tertiary to the impetus of the work—which is to communicate or transmit a specific ideology *unequivocally*. The major is to art what pornography is to the (erotic) imagination (which it, unlike the minor, paralyzes). In other words, like the news, it takes much more than it gives (while the minor gives more than any one individual or era, for that matter, can take). The exhibition format par excellence of the major is the biennial. Servilely obeying the socially and politically expedient injunction to embody and communicate its moment as comprehensively as possible (for how else could it, as an exhibition format, be justified?), to be "contemporary," the biennial generally structures itself around a few key concepts or "urgent political issues" which the art is meant to embody or illustrate, as if it were so much three-dimensional visual aid (of the news or concepts related thereto).

This is not to say that all art in biennials is major, or that all biennials are always themselves major. Salient exceptions exist—Massimiliano Gioni's 2013 Venice Biennale represented a dubious attempt to deal with the minor on major terms, while Jay Sanders and Elisabeth Sussman's 2012 Whitney Biennial was refreshingly minor—but unfortunately they are few and far between. One of the final and most crucial characteristics of the major is that it always seeks to *speak for* (the disenfranchised and oppressed, art being apparently the most effective way and place to do such a thing) as if it were a duty, a civic responsibility to essentially ventriloquize. It aims for the multitude. Abiding by the twenty-first-century logic of the zombie, it always thinks mathematically, in terms of numbers and statistics (like the museum, in fact, or better yet a biennial,) which is how it measures "success."

The major's greatest antagonist is idiosyncrasy, which is a fundamental component, nay the very bedrock, of minor art.



Above, top - Nina Canell, *Treetops, Hillsides and Ditches* (detail), 2011. Courtesy: the artist; Daniel Marzona, Berlin; Mother's Tankstation, Dublin; Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin. Photo: Robin Watkins

Above, bottom - Nina Canell, *Treetops, Hillsides and Ditches*, 2011, *The Promise of Moving Things* installation view at le Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine, 2014. Courtesy: the artist; Daniel Marzona, Berlin; Mother's Tankstation, Dublin; Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin. Photo: André Morin / le Crédac

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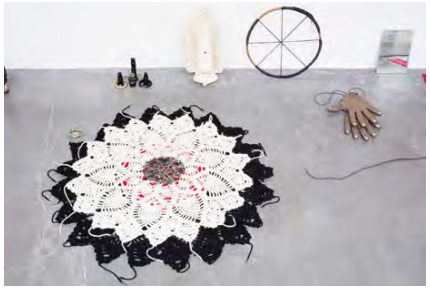

ektor garcia, *kriziz* installation views at kurimanzutto, Mexico City, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City. Photo: Abigail Enzaldo

In case anyone has forgotten the meaning of this word, its etymology might help. Circa 1600, from French *idiosyncrasie*, from a Latinized form of the Greek *idiosynkrasia*, "a peculiar temperament," from *idios*, "one's own" + *synkrasis*, "temperament, mixture of personal characteristics," from *syn*, "together" + *krasis*, "mixture," from PIE root **kere-* "to mix, confuse; cook." Therefore, a mixture of that which is absolutely one's own, peculiar to an individual, unique, perhaps even nontransferable. I think the *krasis*, to mix, is also interesting insofar as it suggests the appropriation, mutation, and integration of preexisting elements into something that is unmistakably one's own. **Irreducible and irrecuperable, it is intrinsically resistant to being co-opted or put into the service of allegory, nor can it be made to speak for, be deployed, or even assigned a function (the major positively loves to assign functions, socially, politically, and art historically).**

If anything, it interrupts and disrupts the process of assimilation to which the major continually and inexorably seeks to exercise on the world around it, like science. Incidentally, if my language here is evocative of Georges Bataille, it is because my thinking is directly informed by him, notably via Denis Hollier's *Against Architecture*, and in particular Bataille's notion, if it can be called that, of the heteorological, which is much more of a precedent of the minor for me than Gilles Deleuze's definition of it. Indeed, in sharp contrast to Deleuze, I would say that the three characteristics of minor art are: not the deterritorialization of language, but the development of one's own personal, highly idiosyncratic language; not so much the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, but the acknowledgement that form, which is art's primary duty, is always already political; and definitely not the collective assemblage of enunciation, but the impossibility of art to speak for anyone else if it does not first and foremost speak for itself. This is one of the reasons why the minor generally does not harmonize with ideologies of collectivity, or science for that matter ("knowledge production"). For in the spirit of scientific method, the collective generally cannot brook manifestations of idiosyncrasy due to the simple fact that they cannot account for anything but themselves, and therefore must be suppressed in favor of the logical accountability of collective decision making (one of the fundamental features of the heteorological is, it just so happens, unaccountability).

The minor is of course queer, but not due to its non-existent capacity to represent (the minor does not represent; it actually precludes representation, which is the domain of the major), but due to its non-classifiability, not to mention its inherent eschewal of the logic of the project, or better yet projects, which have identifiable beginnings and endings, or limits, as it were. I am thinking in particular of the markedly queer sculptural practice of the Mexican American artist ektor garcia, whose sprawling hybrid sculptures-cum-installations are continuous parts of an organic, ever-evolving, and unbounded whole. Devoid of partition, whatever he makes is a manifestation not of projects, but *the* project. Perhaps more importantly than this is how he and others like him elaborate their own personal formal language, and the extent to which it is indivisible from the materials and techniques they use. Drawing upon the iconography and material composition of everything from Mesoamerican religious imagery to southern Mexican ceramic-making techniques to gay leather subculture as well as, say, the likes of Paul Thek and Bruce Conner (both of whom could be considered minor artists), garcia absorbs it into the *krasis* (see above) of his crucible from which he fashions what is unmistakably his own way of making and non-linguistically signifying.

The Colombian artist José Antonio Suárez Londoño and the Mexican artist Rodrigo Hernandez have markedly similar ways of proceeding. Personal to a magnificently gnomic fault, Suárez Londoño's minutely labored, small-scale drawings and etchings are the result of a highly developed idiosyncratic formal language (in which written language itself never has more than an idiosyncratic, non-narrative, and non-conceptual function), which is inspired by indigenous, pre-Colombian iconography as much as it is by European modernism. Hernandez, whose ongoing highly plastic

Olga Balema, *Cannibals* installation views at Croy Nielsen, Berlin, 2015. Courtesy: Croy Nielsen, Vienna. Photo: Joachim Schulz

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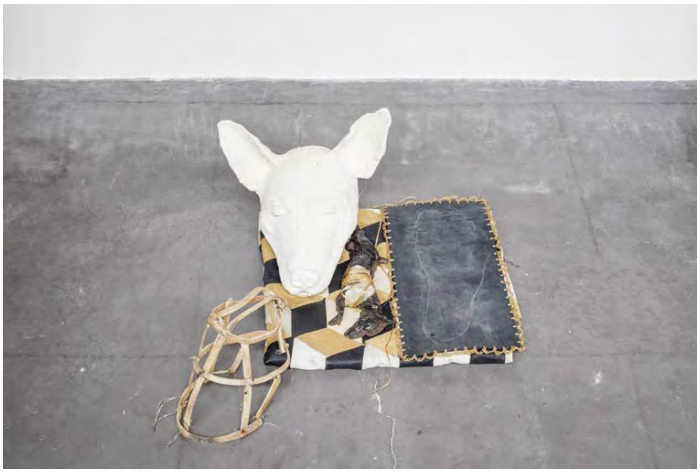
Olga Balema, *Threat to Civilization* 3 (detail), 2015, *Cannibals* installation view at Croy Nielsen, Berlin, 2015. Courtesy: Croy Nielsen, Vienna. Photo: Joachim Schulz

practice interrogates the divisions between drawing, sculpture, and painting, likewise draws on a heterogeneous variety of sources to construct his own formal idiom. It is perhaps not a coincidence that all of these artists, and those that follow, incidentally, are makers who work primarily with their hands—for what method of producing more directly registers and transmits the idiosyncratic?

Unlike the major, which ratifies, reaffirms, and relies upon specific, already thoroughly codified linear, if dialectical, art historical traditions (for instance Wade Guyton is the quintessential major painter, and it is perhaps no mere coincidence that his latest body of work was actually the news), the minor creates or unearths new or unexpected, if tangential, trajectories. To this end, examples of contemporary minor painting range in age and geography from the Canadian, London-based Allison Katz, to the Belgian *éminence grise* Walter Swennen, to the Texan Daniel Rios Rodriguez, whose practices variously engage and depend upon minor practitioners from Francis Picabia to René Daniëls to Forrest Bess (all of whom have recently been subject to revivals—meaning we could very well be in the age of the minor). Abandoning a linear approach toward the horizon of painting, they could be said to move along it in lateral shifts and jumps, while developing radically idiosyncratic pictorial methods and idioms.

Meanwhile the issue of allegory is a tricky one, because many minor artists and even writers would *seem* to traffic in allegory, but upon close inspection, it becomes clear that they do not (if you disagree, ask yourself why we still read Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka, while we barely read Jean-Paul Sartre or, say, Alberto Moravia, the latter of whom were egregious allegorists; a similar dichotomy could be established between the likes of Philip Guston and Bernard Buffet). The work of the Detroit native Michael E. Smith could be and has been read as an allegory of Detroit, and, by extension America, but that is obviously a simplistic interpretation of a practice whose formal, spatial, and affective complexity has few parallels in contemporary art. When it comes down to it, what he



ektor garcia, *kriziz* installation view at kurimanzutto, Mexico City, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City. Photo: Abigail Enzaldo

does is just too strange and, yes, idiosyncratic to logically signify (which is the business of the major—logically, nay serviceably signifying). It always already exceeds whatever function might be assigned to it, and is as such excessively dysfunctional. The sculpture of Olga Balema, by virtue of its relationship to the body, undergoes a similar procedure, a kind of feint, if you will, but always errs on the side of excess, and as such ungrudgingly refuses to submit to manageable systems of signification, such as allegory.

By the same token, a similarly quasi if pseudo allegorical attitude can found in the work of the likes of the Swedish artist Nina Canell or the German photographer Jochen Lempert. However, in their cases this elusive dalliance with allegory touches on the

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From top left, clockwise - Daniel Rios Rodriguez, *South St. Marys*, 2015-2016; *Pecs*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York; Michael E. Smith, *Untitled*, 2014. Courtesy: the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; *Untitled*, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Michael Benevento, Los Angeles. Photo: the artist; *Untitled*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and KOW, Berlin. Photo: Ladislav Zajac; Daniel Rios Rodriguez, *Morning Breath*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York

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From top left, clockwise - Rodrigo Hernández, *Kippfigur (Figure De Basculement)*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and P420, Bologna. Photo: Tim Bowditch; *I Am Nothing (Dinosaur)*, 2016. Courtesy: the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon. Photo: Marc Doradzillo; Jean-Luc Moulène, *Membres à queue (Paris, 2014)*, 2014. © Jean-Luc Moulène by SIAE, Rome, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn; *Ca Propre (Anse) [That Clean (Handle)], (Paris, 2016)*, 2016. © Jean-Luc Moulène by SIAE, Rome, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; *Fairy Fantasy*, 2016. © Jean-Luc Moulène by SIAE, Rome, 2017. Courtesy: the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Rodrigo Hernández, *Head (Pedro)*, *Pedro* installation detail at o.T. Raum für aktuelle Kunst, Lucerne, 2012. Courtesy: the artist

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Jochen Lempert, *Untitled (Flora)*, 2016. © Jochen Lempert by SIAE, Rome, 2017. Courtesy: BQ, Berlin and ProjecteSD, Barcelona. Photo: Roman März, Berlin

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domain of science, whose sincere and profound engagement is always ultimately exceeded by the minor quiddity of the work. Whereas Canell deploys and harnesses imperceptible currents, conductors, and energies to singularly sculptural (non-illustrational), effect, Lempert's black-and-white photographs of flora and fauna always go beyond the formal zoological and taxonomical origins of his photography, not to mention his training as a biologist. Any attempt to oblige their respective practices to signify in any systematic, scientific way is always already foiled not only by a healthy quotient of affect, but more importantly by a complete and total commitment to the plastic and formal (non-linguistic) qualities of their work.

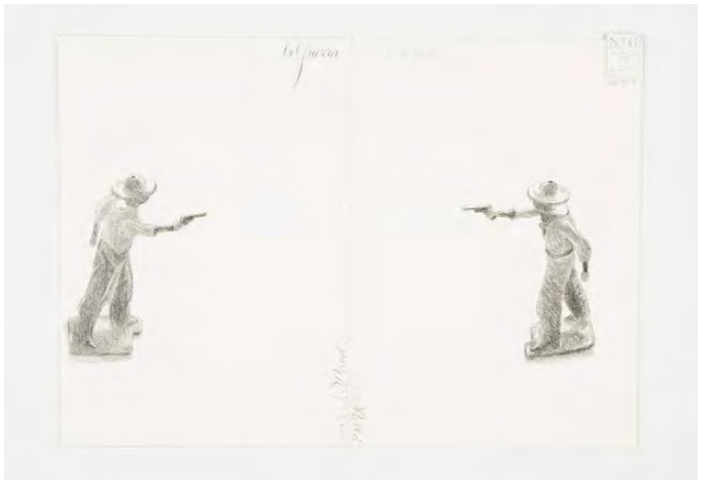
In an age of increasingly hypertrophic expansion (galleries and museums as well as the grand gestures that must fill them), the minor can also refer to a diminishment of scale and valorization of intimacy as a mode of engagement (the American sculptor Vincent Fecteau, for example, is a master of the minor). But this of course is not always the case. Notable exceptions to the question of scale include the German sculptor Manfred Pernice and the French artist Jean-Luc Moulène. Whatever scale they are working at, the material and formal properties of their inimitable practices always exceed and collapse any linguistic framework within which their work might be placed–never mind the radical heterogeneity at the heart of what they both do.

José Antonio Suárez Londoño, *Planas: del 1de enero al 31 de diciembre del año 2005,* 2005. Courtesy: Casas Riegner, Bogotá. Photo: Miguel Suárez Londoño

José Antonio Suárez Londoño, *Planas: del 1de enero al 31 de diciembre del año 2005,* 2005. Courtesy: Casas Riegner, Bogotá. Photo: Miguel Suárez Londoño

When all is said and done, however, any attempt to describe and codify the minor is potentially, and even ideally, an exercise in theoretical vanity. It almost doesn't need to be said that the minor, in keeping with its essential irreducibility, can be neither a formula nor a strategy. But if anything unites, binds together, and courses through the work of every artist I have just mentioned, it is the creation of their own thoroughly plastic languages, which naturally, non-serviceably refuse to submit to (written or spoken) language. To this end, at least where the viewer is concerned, the minor assumes an almost narrative property, not in the sense of recounting a story (or an allegory), but rather in the sense of positing and generating (new) possibility. For what gives, vitalizes, and renews in the spirit of discovery more than the sense of pure possibility (of being, experiencing, apprehending, and understanding)? Indeed, the irruption of each truly minor artist necessarily entails the introduction of a corresponding quotient of possibility into the world.

Chris Sharp is a writer and independent curator based in Mexico City. Together with the artist Martin Soto Climent, he runs the independent space Lulu. A contributing editor of *Art Review* and *Art-Agenda*, his writing has appeared in many magazines, on-line publications and catalogues. He is currently preparing exhibitions at kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Pivô, São Paulo, and Le Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, among others.



José Antonio Suárez Londoño, *Dibujo,* 2016. Courtesy: the artist and GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana. Photo: Miguel Londoño

José Antonio Suárez Londoño, *Cuadernos de año – Paul Klee,* 1988. Courtesy: the artist and GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana. Photo: Ela Bialkowska, OKNOstudio

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Duponchelle, Valérie, Bietry-Rivierre, Eric. « Les expositions à ne pas rater à Paris en 2017 », *Le Figaro.fr*, January 10, 2017.
http://www.lefigaro.fr/arts-expositions/2017/01/05/03015-20170105ARTFIG00307-paris-l-art-en-capitale.php

LE FIGARO

Les expositions à ne pas rater à Paris en 2017

CULTURE > ARTS EXPOSITIONS Par Valérie Duponchelle, Eric Bietry-Rivierre | Mis à jour le 10/01/2017 à 16:07 / Publié le 05/01/2017 à 19:35

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Picasso, Vermeer, Giacometti, Mondrian, Hockney... Les grands noms de la peinture, de la sculpture et de la photographie offrent un voyage à travers les époques, les genres et les continents.

Les 40 ans du Centre Pompidou

Le 31 janvier 1977 naissait le Centre Pompidou. En quarante ans , il est devenu un monument avec son architecture tubulaire signée Renzo Piano et Richard Rogers, sa collection unique de plus de 100 000 œuvres et ses quelque 25 expositions temporaires chaque année. Les expositions du Mnam (Musée national d'art moderne) ont souvent un retentissement international, de *Cy Twombly* (jusqu'au 24 avril) à *Magritte, la trahison des images* (jusqu'au 23 janvier). Elles ont un ton, incarnent l'esprit maison fait de recherche intellectuelle (*Art et Liberté, le surréalisme en Égypte* , jusqu'au 16 janvier) et d'une certaine sophistication (*Jean-Luc Moulène* , jusqu'au 20 février).

À partir du 31 janvier, Centre Pompidou (IVe).

Duponchelle, Valérie. « Jean-Luc Moulène nature au Centre Pompidou », *Le Fiagro.fr*, January 18, 2017.
http://www.lefigaro.fr/arts-expositions/2017/01/18/03015-20170118ARTFIG00276-jean-luc-moulene-nature-au-centre-pompidou.php

LE FIGARO.fr

Jean-Luc Moulène nature au Centre Pompidou

Par Valérie Duponchelle | Publié le 18/01/2017 à 16:48

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

EXPOSITION - Le prochain voyage sur la Lune commence à Beaubourg avec ce prototype d'artiste passionné par la théorie des ensembles. Les formes se déforment. Les êtres et les objets fusionnent. C'est bizarre et beau.

FIGARO SCOPE

Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé. Lamartine avait raison: ils sont tous chez Jean-Luc Moulène. Cet artiste né à Reims en 1955, que le monde de l'art a connu comme photographe acide, intense et décapant dans les années 1990, qui a fait de beaux nus surexposés de l'actrice Jeanne Balibar, a quelque chose du savant fou. Il en a le goût des constructions et des énigmes, des chimères, des belles mécaniques, des femmes sans tête et des matières brutes, plus nobles qu'on ne le croit. Ébouriffé et nerveux, joues maigres et grands gestes qui semblent dessiner des équations dans l'air, Jean-Luc Moulène est un personnage qui inspire le crayon mordant du portraitiste. Il faut suivre de l'œil ce prototype d'artiste contemporain qui partage le même fan-club à la convergence des chemins conceptuels et sculpturaux que sa galeriste, Chantal Crousel.

Forêt de formes

Le *Bleu de costume*, le smoking du travailleur qu'il a imaginé avec style et humour, lui sied comme un gant de soie à un chimiste. Édité à 600 pièces, cet emblème sans corps fait l'affiche de sa «rétrospective de protocoles» dans les rues piétonnes autour de Beaubourg et dans les couloirs populaires du métro. Ce *Bleu de costume* existe bel et bien: il est plié et accroché dans l'exposition, suspendu directement contre la vitre de la Galerie 3 qui donne sur les passants. Bizarre, vous avez dit bizarre. C'est un révolutionnaire qui s'expose au musée et déjà un collector de l'art, porté par Fabrice Bousteau, rédacteur en chef de *Beaux-Arts Magazine* pour le dernier *Bal jaune*, et par Christoph Wiesner, directeur artistique de Paris Photo pour sa dernière édition au Grand Palais.

Duponchelle, Valérie. « Jean-Luc Moulène nature au Centre Pompidou », *Le Fiagro.fr*, January 18, 2017.
http://www.lefigaro.fr/arts-expositions/2017/01/18/03015-20170118ARTFIG00276-jean-luc-moulene-nature-au-centre-pompidou.php

LE FIGARO·*fr*

Ne vous arrêtez pas aux discours. Les artistes ont l'art de filer sur la comète, histoire de vérifier qu'on les écoute vraiment, qu'on les suit jusqu'au bout du monde et que l'on a gardé cette étincelle héritée de l'enfance, la capacité à voyager dans le temps et l'espace. Les discours de Jean-Luc Moulène peuvent être terriblement ardus, voire abscons. Extraits: «C'est vrai qu'à un moment j'ai pu dire que je me plaçais au point de convergence entre une culture technique (dont participe la photographie), la communication industrielle et les recours expérimentaux au matériel du corps dans les années 1970.» Ça, c'est le début du chapitre «Déplacement».

Arrêtez-vous en revanche dans l'exposition. C'est beaucoup plus près que la Lune, aussi dépaysant et fascinant avec sa forêt de formes, de surfaces, de volumes tronqués, de cassures, de matières polies ou râpeuses, de couleurs changeantes. C'est à peu près aussi peuplé que le seul objet non terrestre visité par l'Homme. Autant de gardiens que de visiteurs, en ce vendredi après-midi (4 000 par jour chez Cy Twombly, 6 000 par jour chez Magritte!). D'où le plaisir infini de regarder pour soi, en paix. La beauté pure dans tout son mystère.

Jean-Luc Moulène au Centre Pompidou. Place Georges-Pompidou (IVe).
Tél.: 01 44 78 12 33. Horaires: tlj, sauf mar., 11 h-21 h. Jusqu'au 20 fév. 2017. Cat.: «Jean-Luc Moulène», sous la direction de Sophie Duplaix, Éditions Dilecta-Centre Pompidou (39 €).

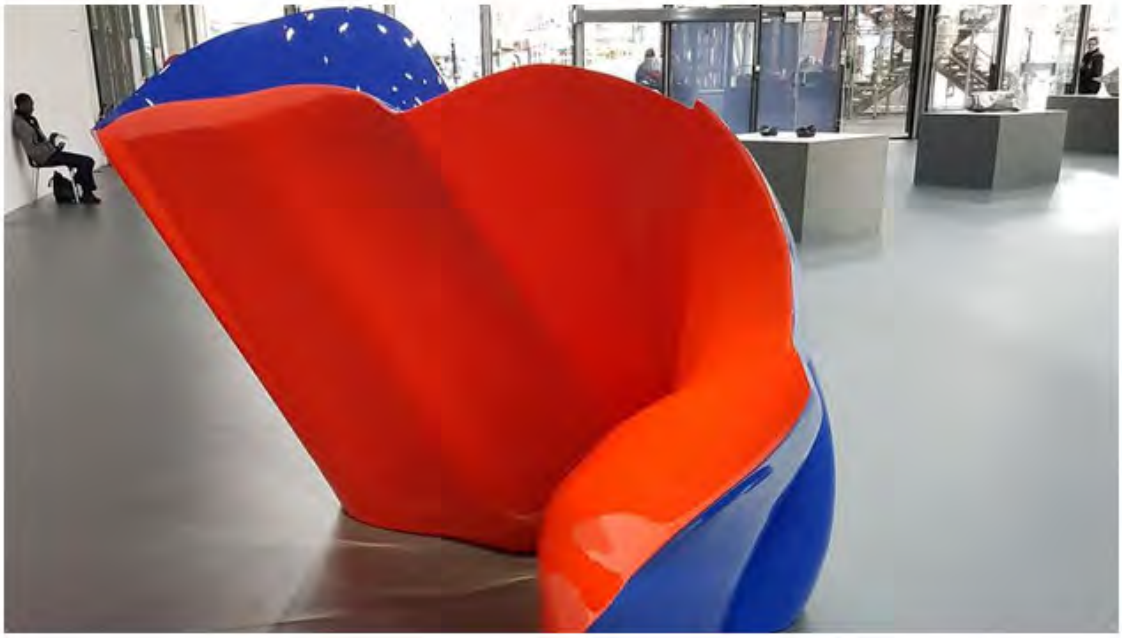
Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Bosio, Alice, Duponchelle, Valérie. « À Paris ce week-end: expos, lecture et ciné », *Le Figaro.fr Scope*, January 13, 2017.
http://www.lefigaro.fr/sortir-paris/2017/01/13/30004-20170113ARTFIG00306--paris-ce-week-end-expos-lecture-et-cine.php

LE FIGARO.fr SCOPE

À Paris ce week-end: expos, lecture et ciné

Par Alice Bosio, Valérie Duponchelle | Publié le 13/01/2017 à 19:13



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Découvrir Brassaï, Moulène et Twombly à Beaubourg, revoir les meilleurs films de 2016, visiter la BnF Richelieu rénovée ou veiller pour la première Nuit de la lecture.

• Lire le langage des signes. Il est étonnant que trois artistes s'interrogent sur le langage des signes en même temps à Beaubourg. Dans son impériale rétrospective, Galerie 1 au niveau 6, feu le grand artiste américain Cy Twombly (1928-2011) incorpore de petits dessins archaïques - couronnes, sexes, figures humaines, mains - dans le grand format de ses abstractions pâles (4000 visiteurs par jour!). C'est somptueux comme une longue et lente marche sacrée. Dans sa drôle de «rétrospective de protocoles», Galerie 3 au niveau 1, l'artiste français Jean-Luc Moulène réinvente des êtres hybrides entre femmes et voitures, corps et corsets, poupées sans tête et sculptures, géométries et géants. Lui aussi se demande où commencent les choses, comment dessiner la vie et le monde qui nous englobe, comment réinventer la beauté des choses. C'est beau et bizarre, bizarrement beau, vraiment fascinant comme si un musée de minéralogie avait fusionné avec un musée des beaux-arts et une usine de formes. Dans la Galerie de photographies, au niveau -1, les «Graffiti» de Brassaï vous attendent comme les sentinelles de la mémoire. Le regard de Brassaï sur les murs lépreux de la ville est bouleversant, si têtu, humble et décidé. Il photographie les trous de la paroi qui dessinent des yeux, la peinture qui s'écaille en faisant un nez, un ovale, des mots d'amour tout bruts, des organes identiques à ceux du premier homme, bref «des signes semblables à ceux des grottes de Dordogne, de la vallée du Nil ou de l'Euphrate». C'est fabuleux.

«Brassai Graffiti», jusqu'au 30 janvier 2017 au Centre Pompidou. 4, Place Georges Pompidou (IVe). Accès libre, tous les jours sauf mardi, de 11h à 21h. «Jean-Luc Moulène» au Centre Pompidou, jusqu'au 20 février 2017 (avec un ticket, fermeture des caisses à 20h). «Cy Twombly», au Centre Pompidou jusqu'au

Bosio, Alice, Duponchelle, Valérie. « À Paris ce week-end: expos, lecture et ciné », *Le Figaro.fr Scope*, January 13, 2017.
http://www.lefigaro.fr/sortir-paris/2017/01/13/30004-20170113ARTFIG00306--paris-ce-week-end-expos-lecture-et-cine.php

LE FIGARO.fr SCOPE

24 avril 2017 (nocturne le jeudi jusqu'à 23 h, fermeture des caisses à 22h).

14 janvier 2017 dans les librairies et les bibliothèques. A Paris et dans toute la France. Entrée libre.

• Séances de rattrapage. Jusqu'à mardi inclus, 12 cinémas UGC parisiens et franciliens vous proposent, en partenariat avec les rédactions du groupe Figaro, de (re)voir à prix doux les 16 meilleurs films de l'année 2016. Au tarif unique de 3,50€, vous aurez ainsi le loisir de (re)découvrir ce week-end: le drame de Xavier Dolan inspiré par la pièce de Jean-Luc Lagarce Juste la fin du monde ; Toni Erdmann de Maren Ade, coup de coeur du Figaro à Cannes ; le drame d'Houda Benyamina sur les banlieues Divines ; le dernier François Ozon au lendemain de 14-18 avec Pierre Niney Frantz ; et les films d'animation La Tortue Rouge et Ma vie de courgette.

Les Incontournables UGC - Le Figaro. Du 11 au 17 janvier 2017. Tarif: 3,50€ la séance dans tous les cinémas UGC participants à Paris, IDF et en régions.

• Soirée littéraire. Samedi soir (et après-midi), le ministère de la Culture et de la Communication organise la première Nuit de la lecture dans les librairies et bibliothèques de l'Hexagone. Soit plus de 1200 événements gratuits, ludiques et conviviaux , dont une centaine à Paris: rencontres, dédicaces, lectures, concerts, expos, déambulations, bals, spectacles et autres «speedbookings». Parmi nos favoris à Paris: une rencontre avec Magyd Cherfi, chanteur du groupe Zebda, de 17h à 18h30, à la bibliothèque Robert Sabatier (XVIIIe) ; Daniel Pennac en dédicace de son dernier roman, Le cas Malaussène, de 17h à 19h à la librairie Le Divan (XVe) et les pyjamas partys de la Médiathèque Marguerite Yourcenar (XVe, de 18h à 20h) et de la bibliothèque municipale Fessart (XIXe, de 18h à 20h30).

1ère Nuit de la lecture. Le 14 janvier 2017 dans les librairies et les bibliothèques. A Paris et dans toute la France. Entrée libre.

• Portes ouvertes à la BnF. Après six ans de travaux, la Bibliothèque nationale Richelieu rouvre au public. Pour l'occasion, un week-end portes ouvertes est organisé avec des visites des espaces rénovés ainsi que des présentations de trésors issus des collections patrimoniales de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art et de l'École nationale des chartes (manuscrits, estampes, cartes, éditions rares, objets précieux). Projections de témoignages sur la salle Labrouste et de films sur le projet architectural, conférences et performances théâtrales sont également au programme.

Week-end Portes ouvertes de la BnF Richelieu. 58, rue de Richelieu (IIe). Les 14 et 15 janvier 2017, de 11h à 22h (sam.) et de 11h à 19h (dim.). Entrée libre.

Sans oublier: les meilleurs films, expos, concerts et pièces de théâtre à voir à Paris en ce moment.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Gesbert, Olivia. « Jean-Luc Moulène : «J'ai toujours préféré les poètes aux artistes» »,
France Culture, *La Grande Table*, January 4, 2016.
https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-grande-table-1ere-partie/jean-luc-moulene-jai-toujours-prefere-les-poetes-aux-artistes

Jean-Luc Moulène : "J'ai toujours préféré les poètes aux artistes"

iTunes / RSS Exporter | 04.01.2017 | 27 min

La Grande Table reçoit l'artiste Jean-Luc Moulène pour sa « rétrospective de protocoles » au Centre Pompidou (jusqu'au 20/02) et de l'exposition à la Galerie Chantal Crousel (jusqu'au 11/02).

Jean-Luc Moulène: « Rétrospective de protocoles », Centre Pompidou · *Crédits : Centre Pompidou*

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Photo Story: Jean-Luc Moulène at The Centre Pompidou », *Art Fuse*, December 5, 2016.
https://artefuse.com/2016/12/09/jean-luc-moulene-at-the-centre-pompidou-124851/

ARTE FUSE

EUROPE, PARIS, REVIEWS AND PHOTO STORIES

Photo Story: Jean-Luc Moulène at The Centre Pompidou

4 WEEKS AGO *by* **GUEST WRITER**

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Photo Story: Jean-Luc Moulène at The Centre Pompidou », *Art Fuse*, December 5, 2016.
https://artefuse.com/2016/12/09/jean-luc-moulene-at-the-centre-pompidou-124851/

ARTE FUSE

The Centre Pompidou is giving a monographic exhibition to the French artist Jean-Luc Moulène. Invited to design his own retrospective, Moulène has chosen to present a "retrospective of protocols", a programme of production for some thirty new pieces, a manifesto for his artistic investigations.

The artist is known chiefly for his work with photography, but his more recent work on objects is of fundamental importance. The use of technologies drawn from industrial design combined with a meticulous approach to materials leads to the creation of works whose precision and "rightness" are crucial to them. Basing his thinking on mathematics, and on set theory in particular, the artist explores ideas such as intersection, laterality and section in a tension between body and object. His works metaphorically interrogate shared space, the form it takes, and its interaction with personal space. Here, objects "dialogue" less with the viewer than with other objects. The vast exhibition space might perhaps be compared to an urban environment, with its buildings and cars, its bodies making their way about, bodies that have to find their place in the chaos of individual desires, social conventions and political constraints. The exhibition is a poetic act that unites art, science and technology.

Curator : Mnam/Cci, Sophie Duplaix

Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris ; Miguel Abreu Gallery, NY ; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Galerie Greta Meert, Bruxelles © Jean-Luc Moulène / ADAGP Paris 2016. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn

Writing via press release

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Photo Story: Jean-Luc Moulène at The Centre Pompidou », *Art Fuse*, December 5, 2016.
https://artefuse.com/2016/12/09/jean-luc-moulene-at-the-centre-pompidou-124851/

ARTE FUSE

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Gesbert, Olivia. « Jean-Luc Moulène : «J'ai toujours préféré les poètes aux artistes» »,
France Culture, *La Grande Table*, January 4, 2016.
https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-grande-table-1ere-partie/jean-luc-moulene-jai-toujours-prefere-les-poetes-aux-artistes

Jean-Luc Moulène : "J'ai toujours préféré les poètes aux artistes"

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Jean-Luc Moulène: « Rétrospective de protocoles », Centre Pompidou · *Crédits : Centre Pompidou*

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Merle, Sandrine. « Body Conscious », *SL Les Echos*, *Série limitée*, December 29, 2016.
http://www.lesechos.fr/serie-limitee/horlogerie-et-joaillerie/joaillerie/0211570906958-body-conscious-2053369.php

Body conscious - DR UGO VANNIER DE HAUT EN BAS ET DE GAUCHE À DROITE :TIFFANY & CO., MANCHETTE BONE D'ELSA PERETTI.CHARLOTTE CHESNAIS, BRACELET BETA.KOVA, BOUCLE D'OREILLE EN OR ROSE, OR BLANC, PERLE GRISE ET DIAMANT BAGUETTE.JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, BAGUE OS. VANRYCKE, BRACELET STYLOÏ DE EN OR ROSE ET DIAMANTS.

Comment les porter ? Se placent-ils sur l'oreille ou la main ? En osmose parfaite avec l'anatomie, les nouveaux bijoux s'apparentent à des sculptures futuristes.

Les bijoux ne sont plus plaqués sur le corps, comme des décorations rigides. Hybrides de la bague et du bracelet, de la créole et du piercing, ils adoptent les courbes du corps et s'adaptent aux protubérances osseuses.

Organiques, ceux de Charlotte Chesnais sont formés par des fils d'or qui s'enroulent sur le poignet et se déploient en spirales zigzagant entre les doigts. D'autres, comme ceux de Kova, dessinent des formes plus géométriques, des lignes et des angles qui se positionnent en fonction des reliefs du corps.

Passionnés d'anatomie, les créateurs recherchent les parties « oubliées ». En 2009, Sonia et Katia Gaydamak lancent un bracelet de main qui s'apparente à un coup-de-poing américain : le motif précieux vient se placer sur la face dorsale. Il y a quelques mois, Lise Vanrycke a imaginé un bracelet extensible mettant en lumière le styloïde. En douceur, il « encapsule » dans ces maillons d'or ce petit os pointu placé sur le côté du poignet.

Les bijoux les plus radicaux se confondent avec le corps. Grâce à une radiographie et à la technologie 3D, l'artiste Jean-Luc Moulène a matérialisé sa phalange en bague sensuelle. Cette dernière, éditée en série limitée par la galerie MiniMasterpiece, s'inscrit dans la lignée du Bone de Tiffany & Co.

Mis au point dans les années 1970, par Elsa Peretti, le bracelet moulé directement sur le poignet est conçu pour se porter à gauche ou à droite ; il n'est pas interchangeable, à l'instar d'une chaussure. Incroyablement novateur, ce premier exosquelette joaillier reste un best-seller, tout en étant dans les collections du British Museum.

Sandrine Merle

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Jean-Luc Moulène, l'artista, che manipola il mondo », *La Lettura*, December 19, 2016.
http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/la-lettura/sguardi/16_dicembre_09/jean-luc-moulene-mostra-parigi-28f2ec3a-be17-11e6-b49e-d6d34448037e.shtml?refresh_ce-cp

laLettura

Jean-Luc Moulène, l'artista che manipola il mondo

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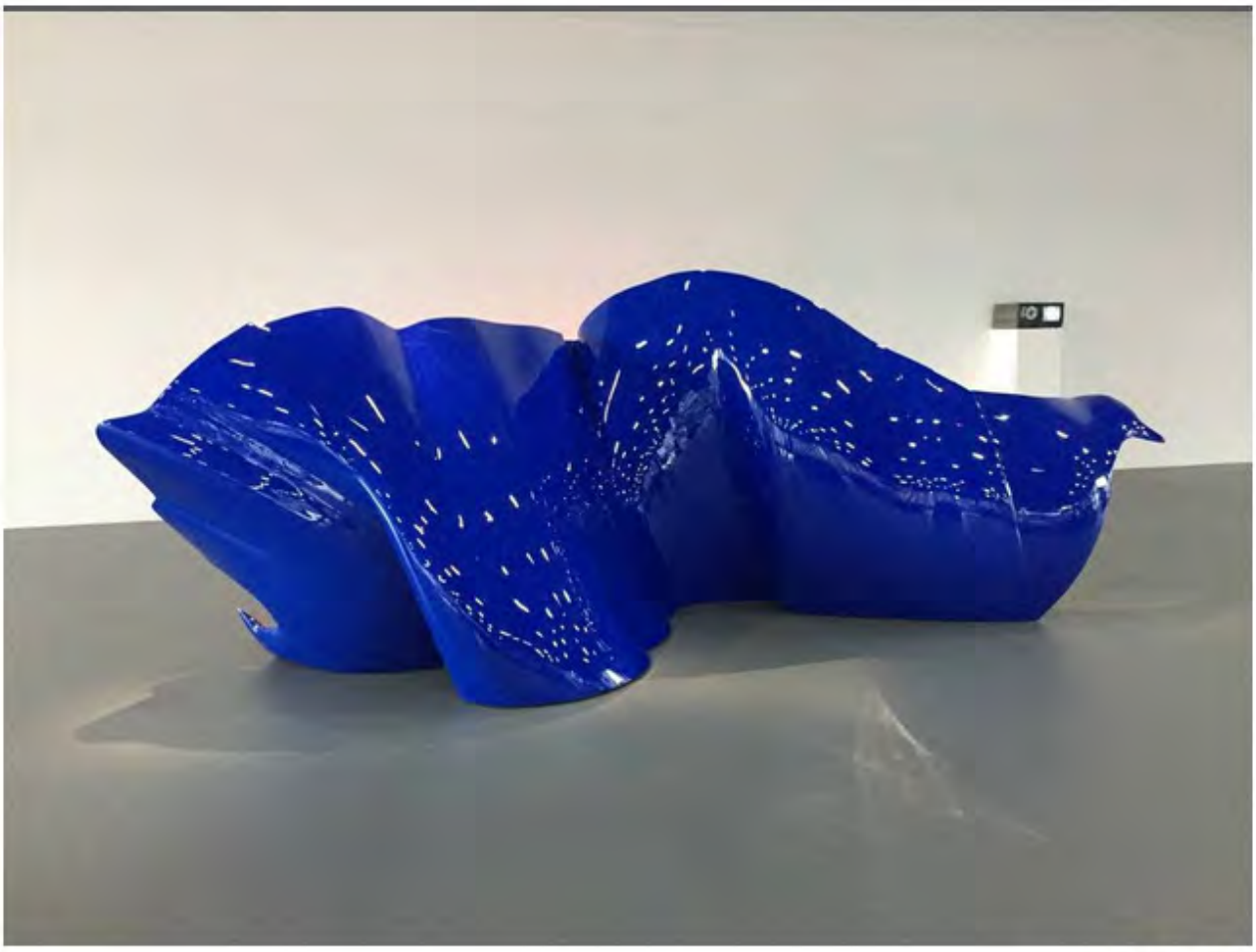

1 / 12

Slide Show

Una retrospettiva di Jean Luc Moulène (Reims, 1955), fotografo passato solo più tardi alle arti plastiche, è accolta al Centre Pompidou di Parigi fino al 20 febbraio 2017. *Jean Luc Moulène,* titolo della mostra curata da Sophie Duplaix (catalogo Editions Centre Pompidou, pp. 240, euro 39), propone 32 opere dell'artista che esplorano varie tecniche, compresa quella della stampante in 3D, nell'ambito di una riflessione che convoca insieme la matematica e la sociologia.
In questa fotogallery, *a cura di Jessica Chia,* sono presentate alcune opere della mostra e su «la Lettura» #263, in edicola da domenica 11 a sabato 17 dicembre, MAURO COVACICH racconta la sua visita al Beaubourg

Sopra: una delle opere di Moulène esposte al Centre Pompidou

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Jean-Luc Moulène, l'artista, che manipola il mondo », *La Lettura*, December 19, 2016.
http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/la-lettura/sguardi/16_dicembre_09/jean-luc-moulene-mostra-parigi-28f2ec3a-be17-11e6-b49e-d6d34448037e.shtml?refresh_ce-cp

laLettura

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

« Jean-Luc Moulène, l'artista, che manipola il mondo », *La Lettura*, December 19, 2016.
http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/la-lettura/sguardi/16_dicembre_09/jean-luc-moulene-mostra-parigi-28f2ec3a-be17-11e6-b49e-d6d34448037e.shtml?refresh_ce-cp

laLettura

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Duplat, Guy. « Moulène: la fusion d'une fille et d'une auto », *La Libre.be*, December 22, 2016.
http://www.lalibre.be/culture/arts/moulene-la-fusion-d-une-fille-et-d-une-auto-585ba4c7cd70fa7e37c4fd3d

La Libre.be

Moulène: la fusion d'une fille et d'une auto

ABONNÉS **GUY DUPLAT, ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL À PARIS** Publié le jeudi 22 décembre 2016 à 11h02 - Mis à jour le jeudi 22 décembre 2016 à 11h03

ARTS VISUELS L'artiste français Jean-Luc Moulène, né en 1955 et qui vit à Paris, a très peu exposé en Belgique. Pourtant il est un des plus intrigants de sa génération et une exposition au Centre Pompidou permet de découvrir son travail.

On le connaît d'abord comme photographe avec entre autres ses « objets de grève » (qui se retrouvent encore dans la belle expo « Soulèvements » au musée du Jeu de Paume. Il a récolté et photographié à partir des années 80, des produits fabriqués en petite série par des ouvriers à l'occasion de conflits du travail. Ils revêtent des formes et fonctions multiples : ne répondant pas aux standards de fabrication, ils servent notamment à populariser et financer la grève.

Une autre série a fait parler d'elle : les prostituées d'Amsterdam qu'il a fait poser, jambes écartées montrant leur sexe.

Comme sculpteur, on a retrouvé Jean-Luc Moulène dans les expositions Pinault à Venise avec ses sculptures faites de « collages » de sculptures kitsch de jardin, une hybridation qui crée l'étrangeté.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

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

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)

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

RELATED

VENUES
Galerie Chantal Crousel

ARTISTS
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.
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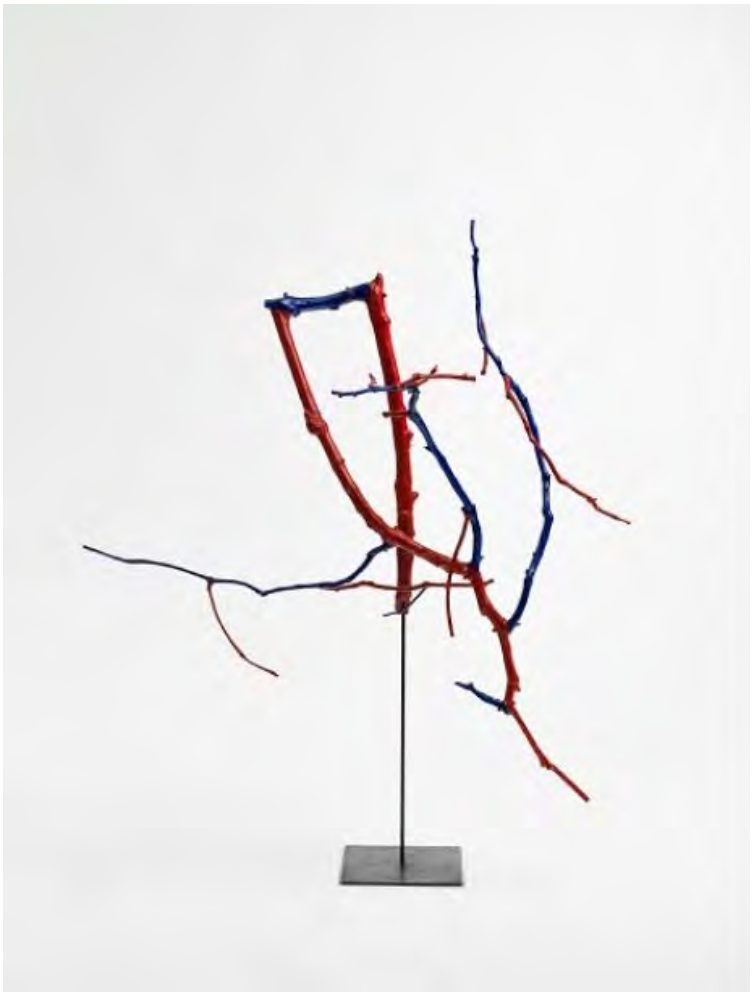

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http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2016/12/11/jean-luc-moulene-sciences-frictions_1534560

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.

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

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 ?

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Lavrador, Judicaël. « Jean-Luc Moulène, sciences frictions », *Libération*, December 11, 2016.
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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*

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Chantal Crousel

Luquet-Gad, Ingrid. « Les 5 expos à ne pas rater cette semaine », *Les Inrocks*, November, 27 2016.
http://www.lesinrocks.com/2016/11/27/arts/5-expos-a-ne-rater-cette-semaine-10-11882124/

les inROCKS

Les 5 expos à ne pas rater cette semaine

Chaque semaine, le meilleur des expos art contemporain à Paris et en province.

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Jean-Luc Moulène, "Monsieur propre jusqu'à l'os" (2016) (c) l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, paris / ADAGP, Paris 2016

Luquet-Gad, Ingrid. « Les 5 expos à ne pas rater cette semaine », *Les Inrocks*, November, 27 2016.
http://www.lesinrocks.com/2016/11/27/arts/5-expos-a-ne-rater-cette-semaine-10-11882124/

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Jean-Luc Moulène

Il y a le photographe des putains d'Amsterdam (*Les filles d'Amsterdam*, 2003-2004) et l'archiviste des soulèvements (*Objets de grève*, 1999). Voilà du moins deux des aspects les plus connus du travail de Jean-Luc Moulène, l'un des artistes contemporains français les plus innovants de sa génération. Le versant sculptural de sa pratique, en revanche, on le connaît moins. Peut-être parce qu'il est le plus dense, et que quiconque s'est retrouvé face à ses assemblages hétéroclites, ou encore ses formes vectorielles ultralisses, en est forcément ressorti destabilisé. Refusant le spectateur, ces objets sont comme retirés en eux-mêmes : un peu arrogants dans leur perfection, ils font mine de s'offrir aux sens mais résistent au besoin d'en faire sens. Ambiguës, les interprétations glissent sur elles comme sur une savonnette : on y retrouvera alors, au choix, la sexualité métaphorique ou la réflexion sur la production dématérialisée – les putains ou les grévistes. Alors que la rétrospective que lui consacre le Centre Pompidou reste ouverte jusqu'à février, un second volet plus intimiste vernit ce weekend à la galerie parisienne de l'artiste.

"Jean-Luc Moulène", jusqu'au 20 février au Centre Pompidou et "Ce fut une belle journée" de Jean-Luc Moulène, jusqu'au 11 février à la galerie Chantal Crousel à Paris

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Hontoria, Javier. « Lógica del corte en Jean-Luc Moulène », *El Cultural*, November 8, 2016.
http://www.elcultural.com/noticias/arte/Logica-del-corte-en-Jean-Luc-Moulene/10046

EL CULTURAL

Lógica del corte en Jean-Luc Moulène

El artista francés presenta una compleja e intrigante instalación en el Centre Pompidou de París

JAVIER HONTORIA | 08/11/2016

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Quien haya tenido la oportunidad de ver algunas de las exposiciones que el artista francés Jean Luc Moulène ha venido realizando en los últimos años habrá apreciado una práctica camaleónica que tiene como principal seña de identidad el persistente y elusivo rechazo de dicha seña. Moulène fue conocido en una primera etapa de su carrera como autor de fotografías que reunía en monumentales series ampliamente dilatadas en el tiempo. En fechas más recientes ha virado hacia la exploración del potencial expresivo de objetos -encontrados o no-, aunque en las dos etapas subyacen elementos afines y, sobre todo, ambas conviven plácidamente ajenas a cualquier sistema de jerarquías. Cuesta, de hecho, pensar en alguien más alejado del canon que Mouléne, que en sus exposiciones, ya sean éstas proyectos específicos o revisiones de carácter retrospectivo, hace gala de un constante ejercicio de subversión de las metodologías, las cronologías y de todo lo que pueda dar pistas sobre lo que de él podamos esperar. Yo de ésta muestra que ahora le dedica el Centre Pompidou esperaba tal vez otra cosa, y la experiencia me produjo una perplejidad y una fascinación posiblemente mayores que si el artista hubiese satisfecho mis pretensiones iniciales.

Moulène ha respondido al carácter antológico que se le supone a esta muestra parisina con un conjunto de trabajos realizados en su totalidad en 2016. Se reúnen bajo lo que el artista denomina un «conjunto de protocolos», es decir, un catálogo de formas de hacer, un supuesto estudio de las diferentes metodologías desde las que ha alumbrado su práctica. Más que asistir a los hitos de su carrera, nos enfrenta-

Hontoria, Javier. « Lógica del corte en Jean-Luc Moulène », *El Cultural*, November 8, 2016.
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mos a un particular conjunto de indicios de su particular quehacer, una suerte de inventario de posibles claves desde la que entender un trabajo que parece de lleno inscrito en lo objetual pero que no rehúye la impronta fotográfica desde la que el artista dio sus primeros pasos, aunque ésta solo esté visible testimonialmente en la exposición. Para Mouléne, lo fotográfico se encuentra en el centro de buena parte de la objetualidad que aquí nos presenta, porque su inclinación hacia la fotografía se sitúa sobre todo en los mecanismos que la hace posible. En ellas, el artista nos habla de cuestiones situadas en el ámbito social, pero adivinamos referencias, más o menos veladas, a la producción misma de las imágenes.

Jean-Luc Mouléne explora la relación entre el cuerpo y el espacio social. Por un lado, creció pronto en él un interés por las experiencias corporales de los años setenta, y, por otro, comprendió la incidencia que en lo cotidiano tenían los sistemas de producción en el tardo-capitalismo de los noventa. Cuando, hacia el cambio de siglo, Moulène introdujo formas tridimensionales en su obra, no lo hizo tanto para estudiar el lenguaje de la escultura como para explorar el modo en que estas formas -que se conciben más como un diseño manufacturado en las cadenas de producción que como una «iluminación» artística- entran en circulación e interactúan con nosotros. Esto parecería una actitud nítida y decidida de caminar al margen de los dictados normativos del lenguaje escultórico, pero él pronto constató que no hacía ninguna falta posicionarse de un modo tan explícito y decidió denominar sus trabajos con el contundente Opus, de tan magnas resonancias, como para enturbiar esa claridad y deslizarse hacia la ciénaga de ambigüedad en la que hoy se encuentra su proyecto artístico.

Como en las fotografías, decíamos, los objetos, u Opus, de Moulène no sólo surgen a partir de la especulación en torno al material sino también a partir del estudio del mecanismo que las produce. Esto implica que, en muchos casos, la forma final que adquieren estos objetos sea la viva imagen del proceso que lo ha hecho posible, que no sería el mismo de haberse gestado desde otra metodología. A esta ecuación se une la funcionalidad de los objetos, que en las cadenas de producción son arrastrados inevitablemente hacia un fin específico -y rentable.

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Hontoria, Javier. « Lógica del corte en Jean-Luc Moulène », *El Cultural*, November 8, 2016.
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En esta retrospectiva de protocolos que presenta Moulène observamos un territorio que bien parece un paisaje de ciencia-ficción. A excepción de unos pocos, todos los objetos han sido producidos a partir de diseños en 3D, una técnica que para el artista no tiene ni «dentro» ni fuera». La instalación ha de interpretarse como el paseo por cualquier calle, en la que los cuerpos (u «órganos», como dice Moulène) se entremezclan con objetos de toda índole («organizaciones») desde naturaleza a la parafernalia industrial que producimos. El suelo y las peanas sobre las que descansan los objetos son de un gris implacable, sin matices. El ambiente es gélido y cuesta entrar, pero sugiere y seduce pronto la lógica personal del artista y las extraordinarias complejidad y precisión con la que construye su mundo.

Tiene todo su origen en algo que viene ocupando al artista desde hace muchos años, la teoría de los conjuntos. Tiene cierta complejidad, pero tratemos de desgranarlo. Tres son los conceptos que Moulène vierte sobre su proyecto parisino: La «lateralidad», la «intersección» y el «corte». La primera alude a un modo de tratamiento del material, basado en la fricción, en el roce de la materia de elementos a menudo dispares que se ensamblan sin nada que los aglutine, unidos estrictamente por su contacto. Me viene a la cabeza un trabajo imponente que presentó el artista en una exposición en Extra City, Amberes, en 2014 que resultaba de la unión sin mortero de un busto masculino, un cuerpo de mujer y un buitre siguiendo una técnica arquitectónica ancestral utilizada en Perú. La «intersección» es tal vez la más sencilla y literal de las tres, pues implica el espacio creado por la convergencia de las esferas del cuerpo y del objeto industrial. La intersección es, de hecho, el fin de toda ambición de Moulène, pues da lugar al espacio común y político en el que nos movemos. El «corte», finalmente, es la acción indispensable en todos los procesos del artista. Cortar para desunir y unir más tarde, para alumbrar la heterogeneidad de la que hace gala toda su obra y huir de toda concreción.

@Javier_Hontoria

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

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DÉCEMBRE 2016 BILINGUAL ENGLISH / FRENCH

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

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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.

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■ 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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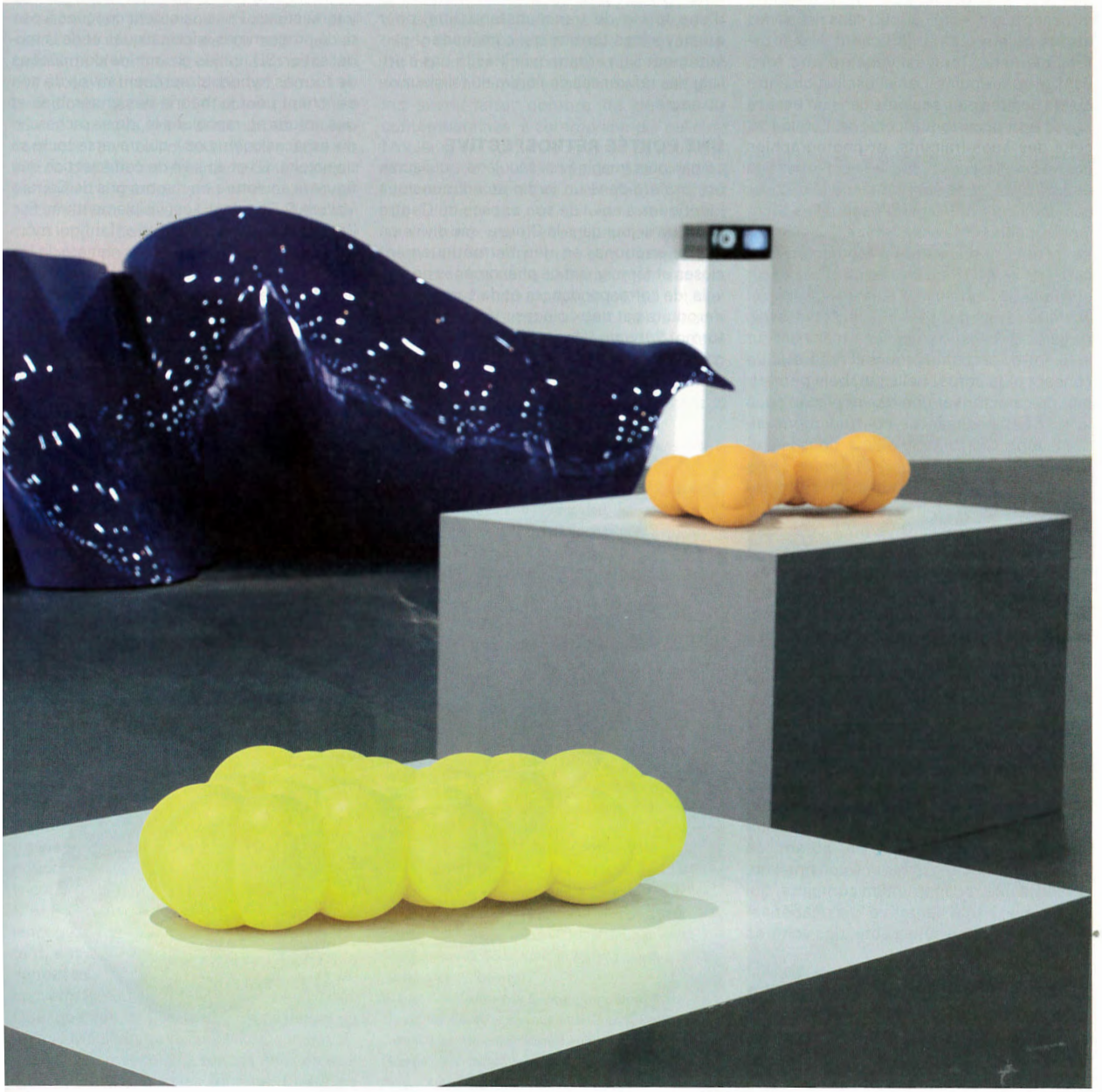
ainsi que chez Moulène, rien « n'est en réalité délié » : « Entre des images volontairement déconnectées des enjeux de société, et qui au fond ne paraissent vouloir s'occuper que de *photographie*, et celles qui empoignent au contraire frontalement des questions aussi fondamentales que la marchandisation 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

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

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

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

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.

Erik Verhagen est critique d'art et historien de l'art. Il enseigne l'histoire de l'art contemporain à l'université de Valenciennes.

« 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*

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.

art press

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.

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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Chantal Crousel

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

ved by a long monologue punctuated by the occasional question. The rhythm of his often herky-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*

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

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

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

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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

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

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

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

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

BeauxArts magazine

JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE ARTISTE ASSEMBLEUR

Galerie Chantal Crousel

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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magazine

L'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.

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

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EXPOSITION / **MOULÈNE**

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

ARTFORUM

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

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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

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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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

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 ?

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

Flash Art

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KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

DORA BUDOR / JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE / *On branding artifice* / SAMSON YOUNG / DEAN BLUNT / MATTHEW LUTZ-KINOY & TOBIAS MADISON / RODOLFO ARICÒ

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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

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

Flash Art

FEATURE

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Conflicts of Interest

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

McLean-Ferris, Laura. «Conflicts of Interest», *Flash Art*, *no. 310*, *Volume 49 - 2016*,
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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

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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 grêve* [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.

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

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.*

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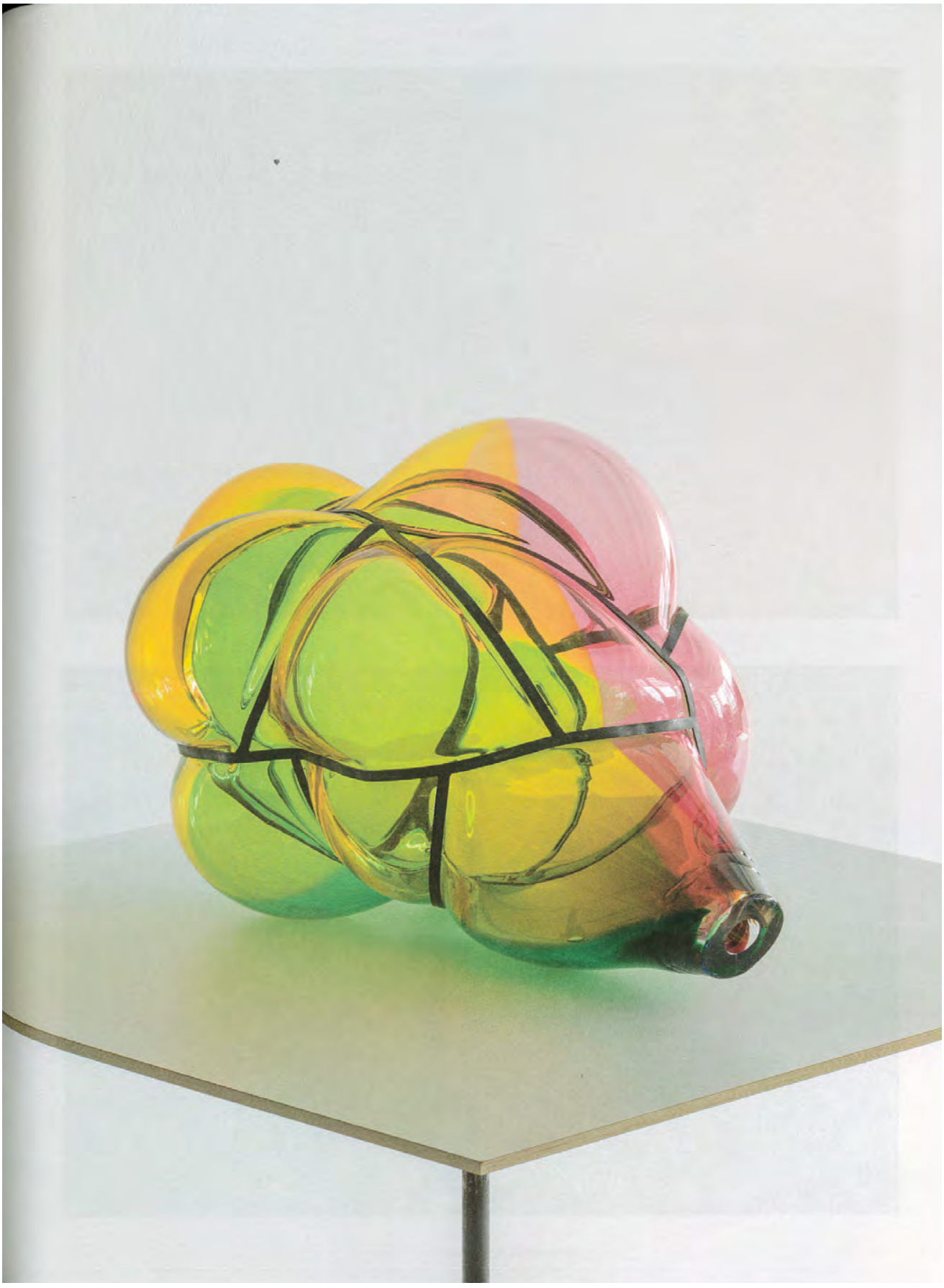

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Lemoine, Stéphanie. «Moulène, artiste au travail», *L'Oeil*, #694, October 2016, p. 73.

L'œil

MOULÈNE, ARTISTE AU TRAVAIL

« Il n'existe pas de pensée sans forme », revendique l'auteur des *Objets de grève* dans son expo à Beaubourg.

Dans les séries photographiques des *Objets de grève* (1999-2000) et des *Produits de Palestine* (2000-2005), Jean-Luc Moulène s'attachait à saisir l'articulation entre image et politique, entre œuvre (en tant qu'objet singulier) et production industrielle. La monographie que lui consacre le Centre Pompidou se tient à la fois dans la continuité d'une telle démarche et dans son altération – selon un procédé cher à l'artiste. Loin de toute idée de rétrospective, Jean-Luc Moulène y délaisse la photographie au profit d'un « programme de production » où la théorie des ensembles tient lieu de protocole à un travail sur la matière dépouillé de toute tournure expressive. L'accrochage met ainsi en circulation une trentaine d'objets produits entre 2014 et 2016, et autant d'espaces communs obtenus par intersections (entre une tasse à café et un flacon de Monsieur Propre, par coupes et par latéralité… Cette « entrée en matière » permet de plonger au cœur d'un métier et d'une démarche qui sont aussi une politique : « Je ne suis pas un artiste qui s'exprime, insiste Jean-Luc Moulène, mais un artiste qui travaille. » Dans la lignée du mouvement Faire et des théories d'un Crawford sur la part intellectuelle du travail manuel, le protocole auquel se soumet le plasticien décrit la création comme un processus de « vérification » par la technique : « Si la pensée reste au plan du langage, on ne peut pas être sûr qu'elle est effective, affirme-t-il. Il n'existe pas de pensée sans forme. Mes outils conceptuels sont l'imprimante 3D, les marteaux, la scie… —

9

7_Cabu, *Vivre comme les autres femmes*, sans date (années 1975-1980 ?), 37,3 x 56,7 cm.

8_Alan Aldridge, *Revolution*, 1968, paroles illustrées pour les Beatles. © Iconic Images, Alan Aldridge.

9_Jean-Luc Moulène, *La Pantinoise*, 1999-2000, série des *Objets de grève*. © Jean-Luc Moulène.

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

artpress 2

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

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Philippe Dagen. «Promenade poétique à travers la Création», *Le Monde*, November 22-23, 2015, p. 26.

Promenade poétique à travers la Création

A Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Marc Donnadieu a conçu une exposition en forme d'oratorio autour de la Genèse

ARTS

Depuis quelques années, un nouveau genre d'exposition est né et prospère : l'exposition-poème, dans laquelle les œuvres riment entre elles, comme les vers d'un sonnet ou d'un rondeau. La comparaison musicale est aussi juste : exposition-symphonie ou exposition-cantate, selon la taille et la formation de l'orchestre.

Le principe est le suivant : rapprocher des œuvres de natures, de styles et d'époques éloignés, mais qui se répondent, cependant, parce qu'elles ont en commun un motif, une idée ou un sentiment. Il faut, pour le mettre pleinement en pratique, des connaissances diverses et le sens des résonances. L'un des virtuoses français de l'exercice est Jean de Loisy, auteur de « Maîtres du désordre » au Musée du quai Branly et de « Formes simples » au Centre Pompidou-Metz. « Là où commence le jour », à Villeneuve-d'Ascq (Nord), relève de cette conception, avec Marc Donnadieu pour maître d'œuvre. Celui-ci a pris pour thème rien moins que la Genèse, et les chapitres se succèdent dans le musée au fil des salles, comme se succèdent les airs d'une Création telle celle écrite par le compositeur autrichien Joseph Haydn : le modèle est donc celui de l'oratorio.

Mythologies et cosmologies

Il est interprété par deux formations alternativement ou simultanément. L'une joue sur des instruments anciens : admirables bibles ornées, non moins admirables gravures de Dürer, de Cranach et de maîtres allemands du XVIe siècle, livres des merveilles et recueils d'emblèmes compilés par des savants rêveurs qui n'avaient pour la plupart jamais quitté leurs couvents ou leurs villes. Mythologies et cosmologies sont figurées par enluminures et gravures, et l'on découvre même deux œuvres chinoises, un cheval et un daim de bois sculptés, le daim ayant deux ramures de corne sur sa tête.

L'autre formation, plus nombreuse, joue sur des instruments modernes : vidéos, photos, transmutations d'objets. Les interprètes sont des artistes de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle ou d'aujourd'hui, occidentaux pour la plupart. Plusieurs appartiennent à l'histoire pour avoir participé à des mouvements reconnus comme Arte Povera (Alighiero Boetti, Giuseppe Penone, Giovanni Anselmo) ou performances (Gina Pane, Chris Burden, Dennis Oppenheim).

D'autres, tout aussi importants, ne relèvent d'aucun apparentement : ainsi en est-il de Jana Sterbak, Claudio Parmiggiani, Pascal Convert ou Jean-Luc Moulène. Ce sont simplement, si l'on ose dire, des artistes de grande qualité, ici présents par des œuvres qui ont quelque rapport avec la Genèse. Sterbak se trouve ainsi dans le cha-

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pitre consacré aux quatre éléments, du côté du feu, en compagnie d'Yves Klein. L'œuvre de fumée de Parmiggiani pourrait s'y trouver si elle n'était rangée sous le signe de la grâce, près des *Trois Grâces*, beau film en noir et blanc de Moulène, qui rend hommage autant à Cranach et Rubens qu'au corps de la femme.

Convert se trouve, lui, d'abord dans un cabinet de curiosités contemporaines, avec son extravagant corail fondu en bronze couleur cuivre, près d'Hubert Duprat, de Guillaume Leblon, de Laurent Pernot et de la *Cosmographia* de Petrus Apian. Il réapparaît plus loin à propos des mesures du corps, ses moulages de membres en porcelaine d'une inquiétante et grisante légèreté voisinant avec une gravure de Dürer réimprimée à Venise en 1591, avec une empreinte des mains de Vassily Kandinsky et des photos de bras et d'aile de faucon de Balthasar Burckhardt. Dans le même espace figurent aussi Penone et la jeune et habile performeuse américaine Rachel Garrard. Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de présenter une histoire complète de la curiosité, ni celle des longues relations entre art et anatomie, mais de les évoquer à différents moments à travers des créations remarquables.

Entre Anciens et Modernes, Marc Donnadieu réussit à rendre manifeste ce qu'ils partagent

Il faut en effet qu'elles le soient toutes également, quels que soient thèmes et techniques, de même que, dans un orchestre, chacun doit jouer juste. Ce genre d'exposition ne peut manquer de susciter des comparaisons entre les participants, bien que ce ne soit pas l'essentiel du propos. Etant donné la gravité du sujet de « Là commence le jour », la grandiloquence est une tentation dangereuse : les vidéos de Bill Viola et de Mircea Cantor, qui se trouvent de surcroît à proximité l'une de l'autre, y succombent alors que celles d'Edith Dekyndt et de Moulène lui échappent.

Entre Anciens et Modernes, Marc Donnadieu réussit presque à tout coup à rendre manifestes ce qu'ils partagent : des obsessions séculaires, des angoisses aussi humaines et actives au Moyen Age qu'aujourd'hui – mais aussi le culte païen de la nature et des plaisirs de l'œil et du corps sublimés dans le travail de la matière.

Ce que ces rencontres d'artistes qu'en apparence tout sépare rappellent avec force, c'est d'abord l'intensité de cette jouissance, qu'elle s'exprime vers 1500 ou cinq cents ans plus tard. Tous la cristallisent dans des formes, chacun selon les circonstances dans lesquelles il se trouve créer.

Au long du parcours, cette évidence est rappelée à intervalles réguliers par les tableaux de Laurent Grasso, de la série nommée « Etudes sur le passé ». Grasso, qui est né en 1972, peint à la manière des Siennois et des Florentins des années 1400, sur fond d'or, avec des minuties de dessin et de couleur dignes d'un contemporain de Gentile da Fabriano ou de Giovanni di Paolo. Il y a naturellement une grande distance et de l'ironie dans cet anachronisme exacerbé. Mais Grasso ne prend pas cependant moins de plaisir à créer – et n'en donne pas moins – que ses lointains prédécesseurs. ■

PHILIPPE DAGEN

Là où commence le jour, LaM, Villeneuve-d'Ascq (Nord). Du mardi au dimanche, de 10 heures à 18 heures. Jusqu'au 10 janvier 2016. Tél. : 03-20-19-68-68.

Judicaël Lavrador. « Jeux de mains, jeux de Villa pour Jean-Luc Moulène », *Libération*, August, 6, 2015.
http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2015/08/06/jeux-de-mains-jeux-de-villa-pour-jean-luc-moulene_1359817

Jeux de mains, jeux de Villa pour Jean-Luc Moulène

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Une des «Tronches», moulages à partir de masque mexicain. (Photo Leinefenn. Courtesy artiste et galerie Chantal Crousel)

L'exposition à la Villa Médicis du plasticien tout-terrain est parcourue de clins d'œil à l'histoire de l'Académie de France à Rome.

Il y a des années, Jean-Luc Moulène avait sans succès tenté sa chance à la Villa Médicis pour y être pensionnaire. Pas rancunier, l'artiste - qui l'est devenu sur le tard après une carrière d'ingénieur chez Matra - y déploie une exposition pleine d'allusions à l'Académie de France à Rome, à son histoire et aux fantômes qui la peuplent, en premier lieu celui de Balthus, dont l'empreinte picturale remonte à la surface dès la première salle.

Moulène a en effet demandé à une restauratrice d'en badigeonner les murs à l'éponge tel que le directeur de 1961 à 1977 (un record) l'avait fait à l'époque, un peu partout dans ces lieux avant que cet arrière-fond nébuleux ne s'efface avec le temps. Résultat : un bleu azur nuageux sur lequel Moulène accroche un dessin datant lui aussi de 1977, et esquissant une créature dotée d'une deuxième tête entre les jambes. A côté, la sculpture Janus, deux têtes accolées dos-à-dos, si on peut dire, enfonce le clou : l'exposition fera des va-et-vient entre le passé et le présent en érigeant le tête-à-queue comme principe moteur bizarre. Du coup, on reste encore dans la première salle avec ce portrait d'un homme nu qui

semble esquisser un mouvement des bras et des jambes : il a l'air empêtré d'un pantin qui se met en branle. C'est un homme qui pose tout en marchant et vice versa.

Ciment. Son pendant féminin se trouve à l'autre bout de l'exposition sous les traits de trois femmes que Moulène fait longuement poser devant sa caméra en un long plan séquence qui révèle discrètement la lassitude des modèles au travail, ces Trois Grâces contemporaines renvoyant par ailleurs au bas-relief homonyme qui orne l'une des façades de la Villa.

A force d'enclencher toutes les manettes à la fois, stop et en avant, en haut et en bas, devant et derrière, Moulène grippe les formes classiques et enraye les rouages académiques de la hiérarchie entre les arts. A l'image de cette pièce qui acoquine trois sculptures en ciment, reproductions bon marché de modèles anciens. Engoncées les unes dans les autres grâce à une technique de frottement qui rabote leur ciment, elles forment un amoncellement noueux et hybrides (humains et animaux) qui rappelle la manière dont s'entasse et se mêle les moulages sans valeur qui encombre les remises des musées.

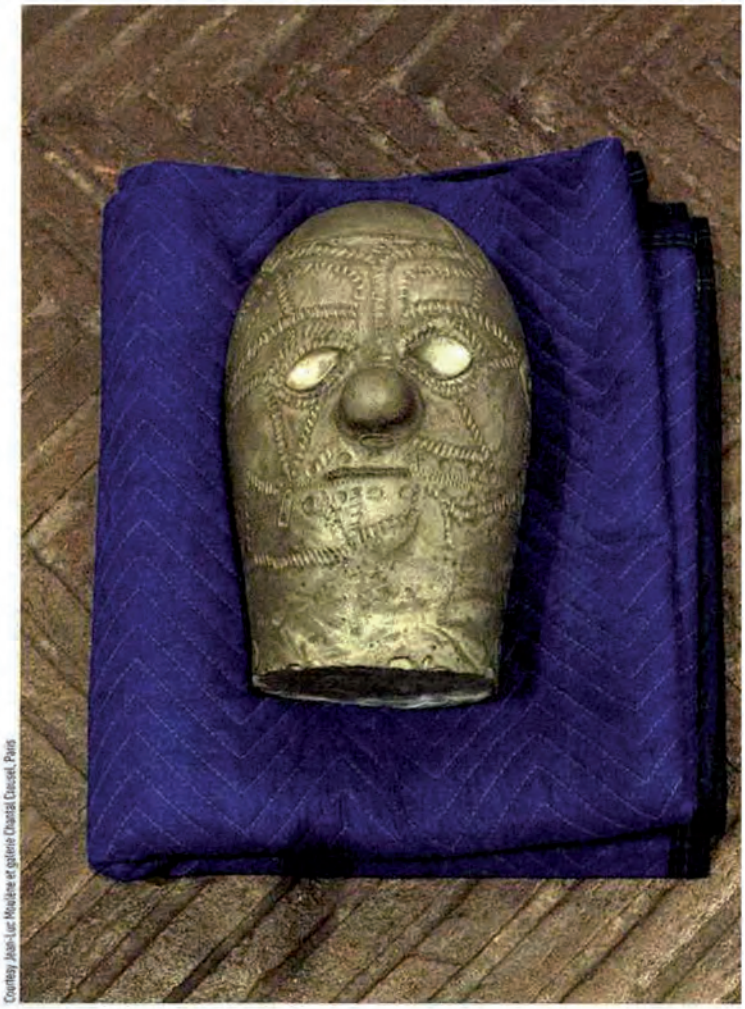
Et l'artiste serre le nœud plus fort vers la fin de l'expo, en proposant cet étrange objet «polyédrique résultant de l'intersection d'un cube, d'une sphère et d'un tétraèdre», explique Eric de Chassey, directeur de la Villa. Un casse-tête géométrique obtenu grâce à un logiciel de design graphique, qui porte un titre à la mords-moi-le-nœud : Gnou.

Baudruches. L'art de Moulène est donc celui d'un imbroglio généralisé, digne de ces carnavals au cours desquelles hommes et femmes, humbles et puissants, intervertissent leurs costumes. D'où ces Tronches, moulage en négatif de masques trouvés sur les marchés mexicains et figurant des personnalités réelles ou fictives, de Hillary Clinton à Freddy. Ici, les têtes, baudruches grimaçantes, bouffies et grises, gisent à terre comme les restes d'une décapitation. «Il était une fois», un conte délicieusement cruel.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

expos

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



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".

***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-neuviémiste 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

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Stolpersteine aus dem Alltag

Erstmals in Deutschland: **Kunstverein** zeigt eine Überblicksschau von **Jean-Luc Moulène**

VON STEFAN GOHLISCH

HANNOVER. Zigarettenpackungen, die, weil von streikenden Arbeitern hergestellt, mal nicht im üblichen Blau, sondern in Rot verkauft wurden. Aktaufnahmen, die einen Tick neben den üblichen künstlerischen Klischees liegen. Oder Bronzeskulpturen, für die explodierende Knoten die Grundlage waren – was wiederum verweist auf ein Werk voller Verschlingungen. Das alles erwartet ab heute den Besucher des Kunstvereins. Unter dem Titel **„Documents & Opus (1985–2014)"** wird ein Überblick über das Werk des Parisers Jean-Luc Moulène gegeben.

Der 59-Jährige studierte Kunst zu Zeiten von Punkrock und performativer Straßenkunst. Er fotografiert, zeichnet, schafft Skulpturen – und er setzt sein Werk in vielerlei Beziehungen zueinander. „Ich bin immer das Subjekt", sagte er gestern bei der Vorbesichtigung. „Moulène ist jemand, der ganz alltägliche Gegenstände auf den Sockel holt", sagte Kathleen Rahn, die neue Direktorin des Kunstvereins.

Ein Werk voller Querbeziehungen und gegenseitiger Rückschlüsse breitet sich aus. Ein „Netzwerk" nennt es Rahn. Am deutlichsten wird das vielleicht in einer neuen Serie ohne Titel: Moulène hat Politiker-Karnevalsmasken gesammelt, also Dinge, die man eigentlich nutzt, um jemand anderes zu sein. Er hat sie mit Beton ausgegossen und dadurch deformiert. Diese Skulpturen werden ab Mai in der Villa Medici in Rom zu sehen sein. Für den Kunstverein hat Moulène sie wie Porträtaufnahmen fotografiert. So hängen sie nun dort und betrachten den Betrachter – das Objekt wird zum Bild wird zur Skulptur wird zum Bild ...

Oder die einzelne Treppenstufe, die – jeder Funktion beraubt – mehr Stolperstein als Objekt ist und es gerade dadurch wird. Oder die Fotos von Alltagsgegenständen, die ausschließlich für den Export nach Palästina bestimmt sind, also einem Land, das es so gar nicht gibt, und die durch seine Kunst wieder in die Welt exportiert werden. Es ist ein Spiel von außen und innen; Kein Wunder, dass die Fenster des Kunstvereins für diese Ausstellung, die stets hinausweist, von ihrer milchigen Farbe befreit wurden und nun den Blick auf die Straße freigeben.

Rahn kennt und schätzt Moulène seit der Documenta X von 1997, auf der sie als 25-Jährige arbeitete. Ihre erste eigene Ausstellung im Kunstverein ist nun auch die erste Überblicksschau des Künstlers in Deutschland. „Ich bin froh, dass vorher noch niemand auf die Idee gekommen ist", sagt sie. Nächstes Jahr wird eine große Moulène-Schau im Pariser Centre Pompidou zu sehen sein. Rahn: „Wir sind stolz, dass wir mal wieder früher waren." Es scheint, der Kunstverein ist weiter in guten Händen. ★★★★☆

Die Eröffnung der Schau (bis 1. März) ist heute um 20 Uhr. Noch in diesem Jahr entsteht in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Centre d'Art Transpalette in Bourges und der Académie France à Rome eine Katalogbox.

MIT SPIEGEL: Der Künstler Jean-Luc Moulène in seiner Ausstellung im Kunstverein. *Fotos: Thomas/ Kunstverein*

KEIN HELMUT NEWTON: Dieses Foto erinnert an klassische Aktfotografie: wirkt aber anders. „Disjunktionen" (Oder-Verknüpfungen) nennt Moulène die Bilder dieser Serie.

INEINANDER VERDREHT: Explodierende Knotenstrukturen waren die Grundlage dieser Glasskulptur.

BEINAHE EIN GÖTZENBILD: Fotos von den Betonabgüssen von Karnevalsmasken entstanden extra für den Kunstverein.

WIE EIN INDUSTRIEOBJEKT: Dieses spacige Nicht-Fahrzeug wurde nach Plänen von Moulène für Renault gefertigt.

PROTESTKUNST: Mit roten statt blauen Gauloises-Packungen protestierten Fabrikarbeiter – Moulène dokumentiert das.

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.

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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.

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

Galerie Chantal Crousel

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.

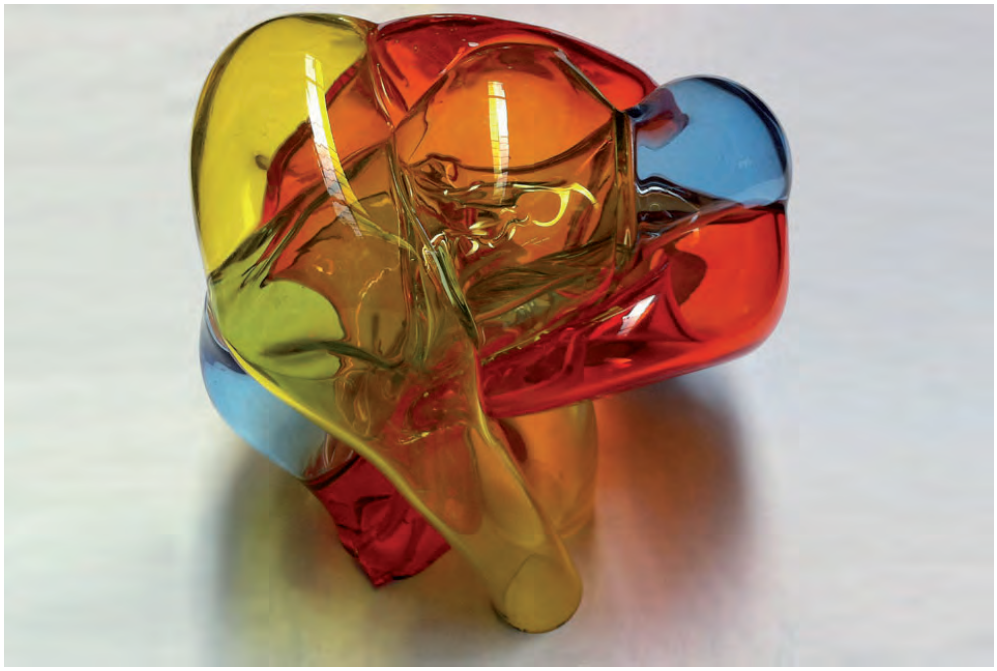
With forty works arranged into four sections, “Jean-Luc Moulène—Works” loops around the center like a sequence of strange and compelling riddles, from a skull cased in concrete (Arthur, 2010) and a haphazard chunk of plywood (Alexandria Made, 1997) to a suite of ink drawings disguised as monochromatic 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.

"Major solo exhibition of celebrated French artist Jean-Luc Moulène opens at Modern Art Oxford", *Artdaily.org*, September 28, 2012.

http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=58007#.UkbFh7zkW8V

Major solo exhibition of celebrated French artist Jean-Luc Moulène opens at Modern Art Oxford



Jean-Luc Moulène, Blown Knot 6 3(Borromean) Varia 1. Centre International de Recherche Vieu et ses Applicatian (CIRVA) Marseille, April, 2012. Glass. Unique piece. Courtesy of Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

OXFORD.- Modern Art Oxford presents a major solo exhibition of celebrated French artist Jean-Luc Moulène this month. Featuring a collection of Moulène's works from the 1990s to the present, it will showcase the artist's ongoing commitment to exploring the relationship between image and object through a series of glass and bronze sculptures, drawings, photographs and a new film work especially commissioned for the exhibition.

Structured as a ceremony or procession presenting several series of works from the last decade, the exhibition will also feature his celebrated monochromes painted with conventional BIC ballpoint inks: red, green, blue and black, and his extraordinary sculptural knots made from glass and bronze. The cast bronze works are dynamic, twisted objects made by tying knots through clay, marking the interior space of a knot that is usually invisible. In contrast, the glass sculptures are tied lengths of clear blown glass: their transparent, sinuous forms describe a knot and render its structure visible throughout.

Alongside Moulène's photographic work, manufactured objects are incorporated with drawings and prints celebrating the art of making as fundamental to human activity. The work continually highlights the artist's interest with anthropology, material cultures of the past, mathematics and geometry. Critically acclaimed for his documentary photography, Moulène's first comprehensive US exhibition is currently running at Dia Art Foundation, New York.

At Modern Art Oxford he explores the idea of material value and the social conditions in which images and objects are received and transformed. "My work seeks to produce differences through re-examina-

tion of tradition and theoretical statement. This exhibition reflects my response to all types of possibilities from the last couple of decades while also examining new ideas with the film The Three Graces." The Three Graces, the film commissioned for the exhibition marks another transition for the artist. Referencing traditional art history, 'The Three Graces' originated in Greek Mythology have been depicted countless times in Classical and Renaissance periods, in sculpture, drawing and painting; Moulène transposes the subject to reflect the era of mechanized reproduction, using black and white film as his medium.

Born in 1955 in Reims, France, Jean-Luc Moulène studied Literature and Philosophy at the Sorbonne University where he was awarded his Master's degree. He went onto train in advertising. Moulène's work has been exhibited widely over the past two decades.

His solo exhibitions of his work have been presented at: Dia Foundation, Beacon, New York (2011-2012), Carré d'art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2009), Culturgest, Lisbon (2007). Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève (2003), CCA, Center for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu (1998, 2004), Jeu de Paume, Paris (2005), Musée du Louvre, Paris (2005) and DAAD Galerie, Berlin (1996),. He participated in Documenta 10 (1997), XXV São Paulo Biennial (2002), 50th Venice Biennale (2003), 4th Taipei Biennial (2004), First International Biennial of the Image, Luang Prabang, Laos (2007) and 10th Sharjah Biennial (2011). Moulène's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions including: Witte de With, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Rotterdam (1990, 2003), ARC / Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1991, 2000), Le Magasin, Grenoble (1995), Museum in Progress, Vienna (1996), Yokohama Museum of Art (2000), KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2001), Ottawa Art Gallery (2001), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2002), Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes (2002), De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2004), Grand Palais, Paris (2006), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2007, 2011), Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nuremberg (2010), and CAC Brétigny, Brétigny-sur-Orge (2011).

Moulène currently lives and works in Paris.

Coline Milliard. “The Starting Point, I Think, Is Revolt”: A Q&A With Artist Jean-Luc Moulene”, *Blouin Artinfo.com*, October 31, 2012.

http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/836157/the-starting-point-i-think-is-revolt-a-qa-with-artist-jean-luc /page/0/1

BLOUIN ARTINFO

"The Starting Point, I Think, Is Revolt": A Q&A With Artist Jean-Luc Moulene

© Kleinefenn 2005

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

The highlight of Moulène’s yearlong exhibition (up through December 31) at Dia: Beacon, in Upstate New York, is Body, Guyancourt, October 2011, an extraordinary contraption: a racing vehicle unable to move, a carefully manufactured product with no obvious purpose. Produced in collaboration with automobile giant Renault using 3-D design software, Body is indicative of the French artist’s inquisitive mind. In his photographs and ever-growing body of objects, Moulène has embraced mathematics, the Louvre’s sculpture collection, and the Parisian everyday. He has made work about Amsterdam’s prostitutes and French strikers’ memorabilia. When Coline Milliard met him in London, he was about to shoot a film inspired by the Greek myth of the Judgment of Paris. Despite this dizzying array of subjects, the artist’s core concerns have changed little since his first photographs from the late 1980s. Moulène tackles the big questions: the nature of image and material, the role of art, and the artist’s place in society. His solo exhibition at Modern Art Oxford through November 25 includes his film, The Three Graces, and his third show at London’s Thomas Dane Gallery opens November 22.

CM: You have said, “I am interested in producing work that is, in itself, the site of conflict.”

JLM: Artworks are not peaceful. The tradition of combining two things and attempting to reconcile them in an artwork is a symbolic position coming from Catholicism, but I prefer to put together the parts of a conflict and let it be visible in the work. I don’t try to solve conflict; I try to show it.

CM: Is conflict a starting point?

JLM: No. I live the conflict. The starting point, I think, is revolt.

CM: Against what?

JLM: Stupidity, hypocrisy, injustice.

CM: Do you see yourself as militant?

JLM: No. Militant means "belonging" to a party. I'm an artist. I've been involved with militants. But with groups, it's always better to just be passing through. They all end up producing new constraints.

CM: With pieces like Objets de Grève (1999–2000), did you feel that you ran the risk of being instrumentalized?

JLM: It was part of the project. I did these images with the idea that they would be reproduced. I think Objets de Grève is my most exhibited piece; it has been shown in all kinds of places and in all kinds of formats. But that's normal. It means that the work lives without me—and works have to take on their own lives. It's when I cut my link to a work that the public can engage with it.

CM: Several of your pieces were distributed for free—in newspapers, for example. Is the process of dissemination part of the work?

JLM: No, the work is something concrete—the newspaper, not its diffusion. I'm thinking more and more that all these movements that have moved the artwork away from the material and the sacred are really problematic. Nowadays, it's as if the institutions were making the work. They don't need artists. And the most annoying thing for them is the material. If you make a virtual project, even if it's very critical, it's fine. But if you make a three-ton piece, you create a problem.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

CM: Was this your thinking behind Body?

JLM: Of course. Imagine the price! And someone had to pay for it. When I did the newspaper pieces distributed for free, someone paid for them to be made, but this part was hidden. This is a problem. Now, if I made more newspapers, I would charge one euro. People trust what costs. When it's free, there's no value. It's like with the city. Often you see beautiful things: events, feelings, sensitive things. But the only way to make them interesting is to sacralize them. Art is for that. A lot of readymades are just translating beautiful things from the street into the museum.

CM: Is the way you work with photography also a process of sacralization?

JLM: Of course. But what's interesting is that photography has almost no weight. Photography is just a circulation of feelings, without the weight of the readymade. It changes things—it's a system of metamorphosis.

CM: Tell me about the film you are shooting for your exhibition in Oxford.

JLM: It has to do with the old tradition of the Three Graces, from the Judgment of Paris. With the Three Graces, we go back to the notion of conflict. Paris has to choose between three possibilities: power, war, and love. The Graces always look very similar because basically it's the same woman; it's a trinity. I've been working with the idea of disjunction for a long time. These concepts continue to be alive, and society is becoming increasingly disjointed. Everything has turned into a vector going its own way. Complexity arises from there, and no one is interested in what is common. To show that, I'm putting together three girls who look very much like each other. In the film, they are standing five feet away from each other, each one acting alone. Their physical resemblance is the only thing they have in common. I tried to highlight the conflict between oneself and the activity of the group.

CM: You're working on a series of "knot" objects, some in bronze and some in glass.

JLM: First, we have to understand what a knot is. The idea is to produce tools to describe complexity. So back again to the conflict, and to the idea of making visible. Think of chaos: The best way to represent chaos is with a stream of water, a turbulence. If you throw a rope in it, there's a moment when it's going to form a figure. It could be a simple circle, or it could be a trefoil or any number of other figures. Knot theory was created to try to describe the activity of electricity. Nowadays we also use it for biology, weather, all kinds of systems, but it's just a describing tool. And my utopia for artworks is to create tools.

CM: To make sense of the world?

JLM: Not only to make sense of it. It's a tool for the mind. When you see a knife on the table, even if it's not moving it nonetheless cuts the space. The function is inside the form. That's something I always keep in mind when I make a sculpture or an image. To make the bronze pieces, I use a rope knot that I cover with modeling clay, and then I tighten the knot. The knot creates a form in the clay that I cast using a lost-wax technique. I'm trying to make visible different states of complexity.

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CM: How important is it for you to maintain physical contact with your artworks?

JLM: It's very important, because it's the only way to know something on a conceptual and sensitive level. That's why subcontracting the fabrication of a piece can be very dangerous.

CM: How do you experiment?

JLM: Mainly with drawings. I also go through all kinds of models and small constructions, but the main material thing is the drawing—between sign, writing, and surface.

CM: You've said that you got involved in the art world "because it was the only way to keep saying no." Do you still feel this way?

JLM: It's real. If you say no once, it's just like a child's no. But if you make a negation on negation, you produce an affirmation. You have to say no, but when you cut the artwork loose and give it to the public, it becomes an affirmation. If you try to show that this negation is the main activity of the creation, you have to show it as a yes.

Art in America INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
April 3, 2012

JEAN-LUC MOULENE

by saul ostrow

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

In the mid-'90s, the Paris-based artist Jean-Luc Moulène, known for his large-format, sometimes politically inflected photographs, initiated a parallel project consisting of three-dimensional "objects." (Moulène eschews the term "sculpture," with its historical and esthetic entanglements.) Collectively termed "Opus" (1995–), these pieces, now totaling just under 100, are each identified with a title as well as the city, month and year in which the work was fabricated.

The yearlong exhibition "Opus + One," the artist's first solo exhibition in North America, takes place at two venues. Dia:Beacon offers 37 of the objects, along with Moulène's urban-photo suite "La Vigie" (2004-11). Meanwhile, Dia's Dan Flavin Art Institute in Bridgehampton pre- sents newly commissioned works—wall-mounted panels slathered with ink using a palette knife—part of the series "Monochromes/Samples" (2011–).

"La Vigie" (The Lookout Man), which consists of 299 photographs (some black-and-white, some color), documents a type of nuisance vegetation, the Princess Tree, that grows in vacant lots, neglected buildings and cracked sidewalks. One tree Moulène has photographed over the span of seven years stands in the Parisian neighborhood of the Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Employment. Evidence of social changes—including posters and graffiti as well as the installation of antiterrorist barricades—can be detected here and there in the periphery of the images. Nevertheless, Moulène allows the works to speak for themselves. He does nothing to prompt a specific reading, beyond titling the extended series "The Lookout Man"—which may refer either to the tree or to the photographer himself.

Perhaps all that connects "Opus" to Moulène's other projects is its cumulative nature: the objects accrue over time with no predetermined end. They seem cut off from any overriding narrative, though they can be grouped, after the fact, according to themes (serial process, the body, decay). Most have been installed on white wood tabletops mounted on metal legs. This formal configuration is disrupted occasionally by larger pieces, which sit directly on the floor, as well as by several wall-mounted works and two pieces suspended at eye level.

Moulène's objects are made, either industrially or by hand, from a wide variety of materials, including bronze, cement, wood, bone, fiberglass, plaster, tobacco and plastic. Most range in scale from hand-held to body-size.

A number consist of interlocking planar forms: Model for Sharing, Paris, December 2007, for example, looks like a hastily slapped together architectural model. Others verge on the abject, such as *La tête noire (The Black Head)*, Paris, January 2007, a brutish, lumpy headlike form with pushed-in features. Head Box, Kitakyushu, October 2004, which hung on the wall, is pristine and minimal, while *Bitte à fruits (Fruit Bollard)*, Paris, September 1999, is a cast-concrete still life of apples set atop a short, crumbling concrete-and-aggregate column. Some works are slightly macabre. *Arthur*, Paris, August 2010, has the upper portion of a human skull protruding from cast concrete, making the whole work look like an eerie helmet with visor. *Mi-tronche (Nonosse) (Half-mug [Bobone])*, Paris, September 2010, is a head-shaped concrete cast that has been cut in half to reveal a child-size skull encased within.

Somewhat out of keeping with the other works is *Soleil noir (Black Sun)*, Paris, September 2008, a silent color video of the sun, its small cubelike monitor mounted high overhead on the wall. But the most striking anomaly is Body, Guyancourt, October 2011, a sleek, multicolored aerodynamic form, 28 feet in length, produced from 12 molds with the help of automotive engineers at a Renault factory. Resembling a brightly hued speedboat, the piece seems out of place in terms of material, size and logic, yet it contributes well to the show's formally open-ended effect. With its great diversity of works, "Opus" is an intense investigation of the formal possibilities of contemporary photography, painting and sculpture.

Photos: (left) view of Jean-Luc Moulène's exhibition "Opus + One," 2011-12 (right) view of Moulène's Body, Guyancourt, October 2011, 8 1/2 by 28 by 11 1/2 feet. Both 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
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.

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

■ 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 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.

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

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

Galerie
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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 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 Galeria 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

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.

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

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 polyuréthane, 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."*

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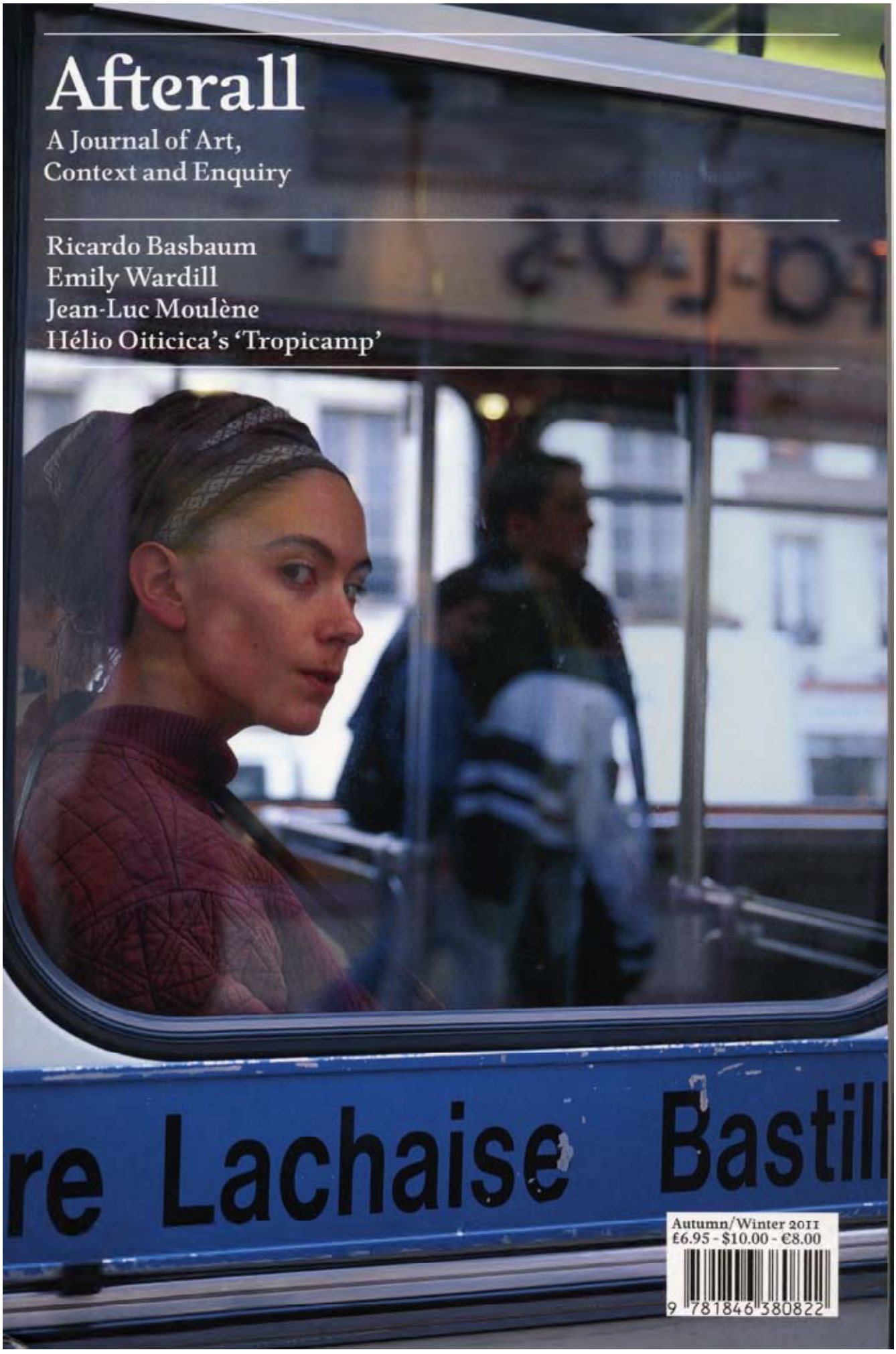
"Jean-Luc Moulène, Père Lachaise-Bastille", Afterall n°28, Front cover, Autumn/Winter 2011.



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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

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

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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

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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.

❁

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/Berrebi.pdf.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.

❋

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).

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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

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

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.

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.

❁

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.

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

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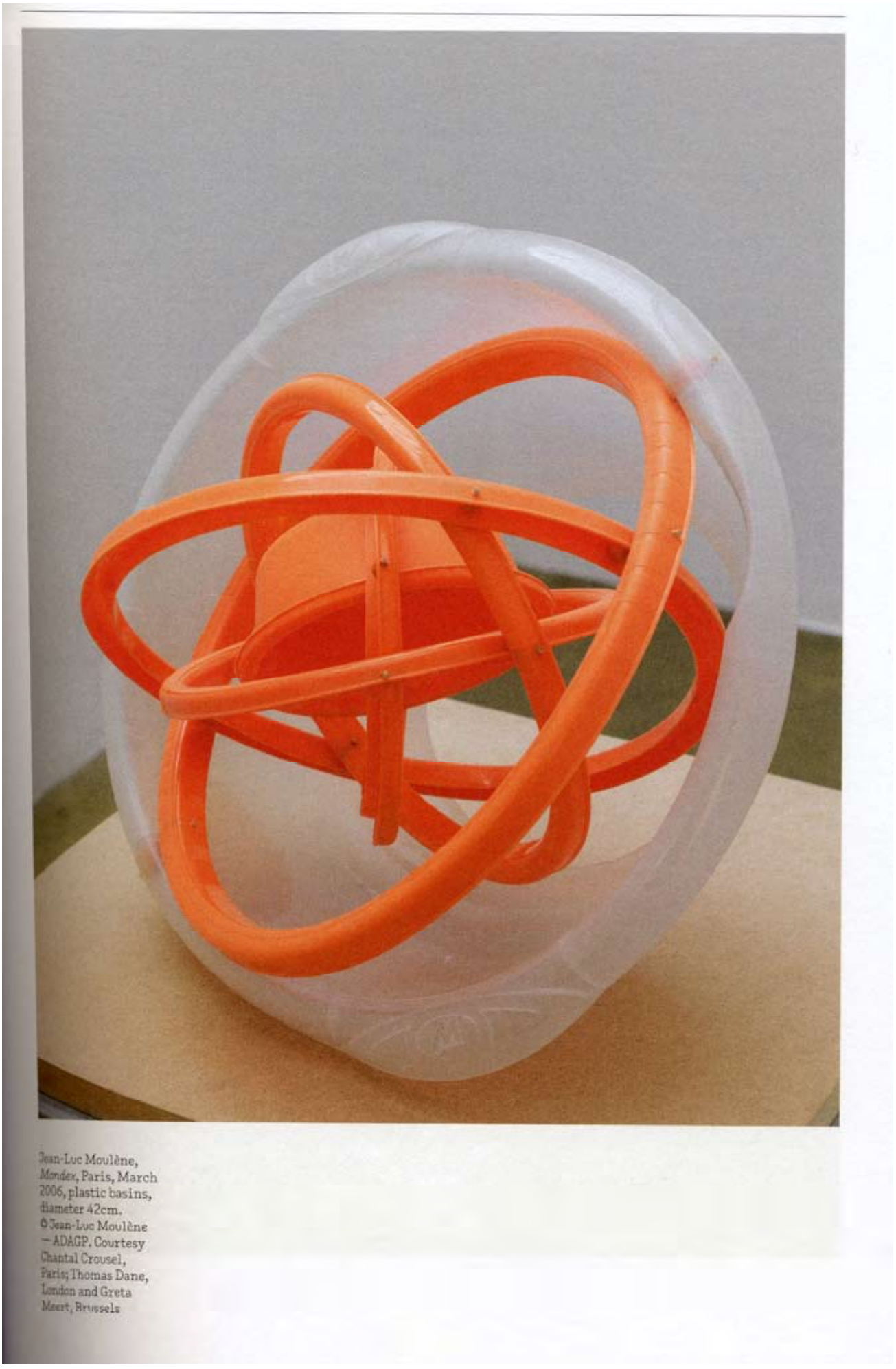
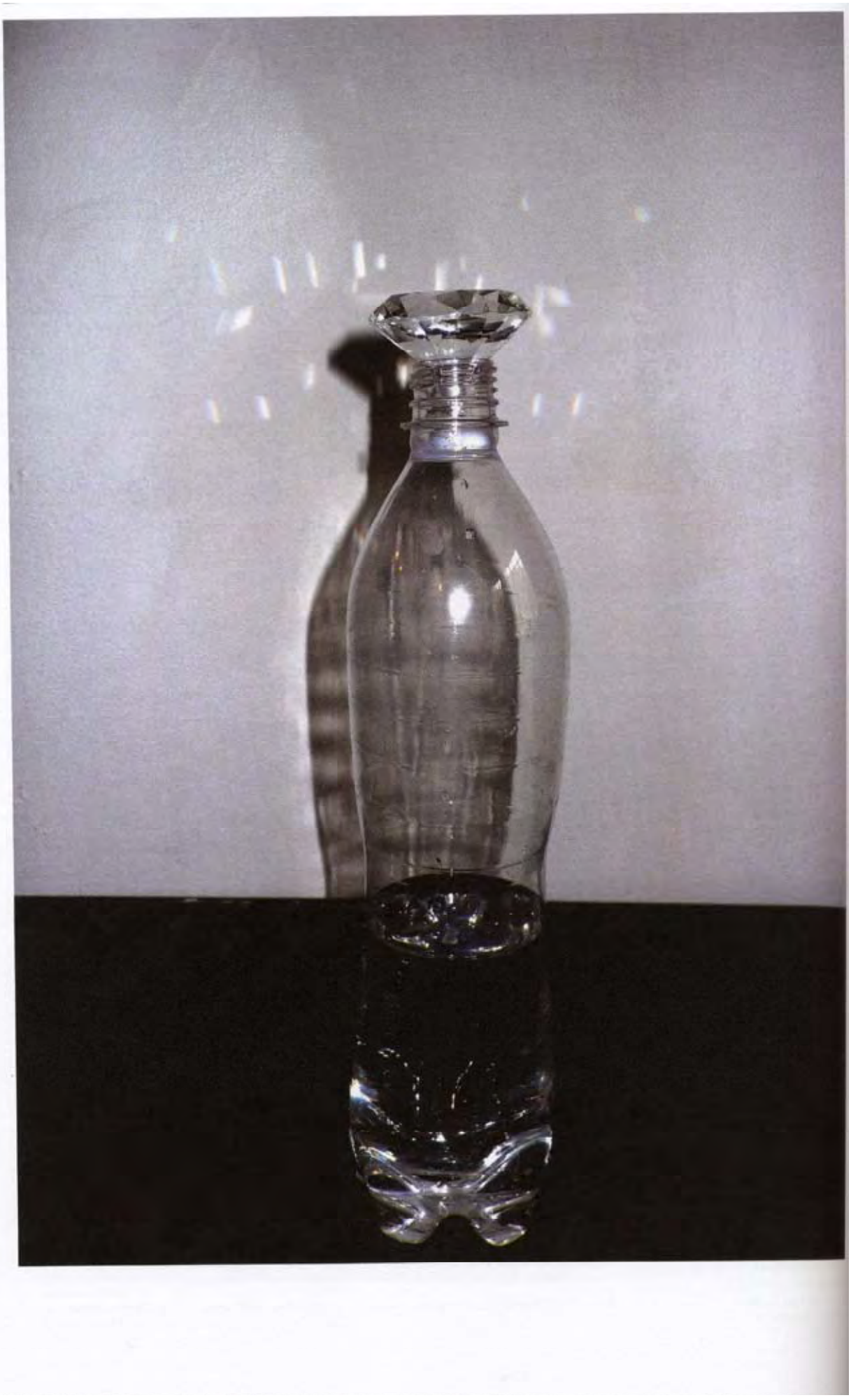


Jean-Luc Moulène, *Mondex*, Paris, March 2006, plastic basins, diameter 42cm. © Jean-Luc Moulène – ADAGP. Courtesy Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane, London and Greta Meert, Brussels

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.

Sophie Berrebi, Jean-Luc Moulène : Photography as Training Manual, Afterall n°28, 2011, pp 34-41.

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Jean-Luc Moulène: Photography as Training Manual

– Sophie Berrebi

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

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.) Sead.', 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]

*

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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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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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.

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

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

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-

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

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.

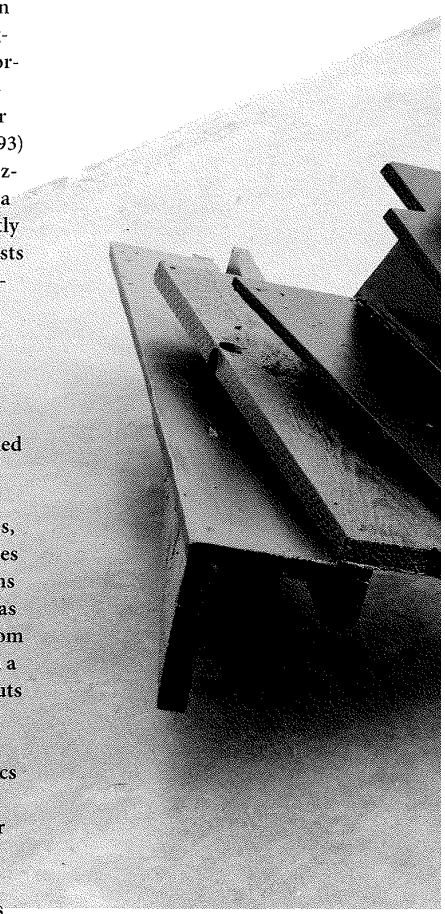
If any one factor could be said to unite the series of photos from the 1980s onward, it would be a preoccupation with questions of circulation. The "*Disjonctions*" series has often been described as an investigation of what constitutes the most banal categories of photography (still life, portraiture, 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, Nimes; 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.

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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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

Le fuseau et le polo, 1999-2000
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
Photo: Jean-Luc Moulène
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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

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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

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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

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

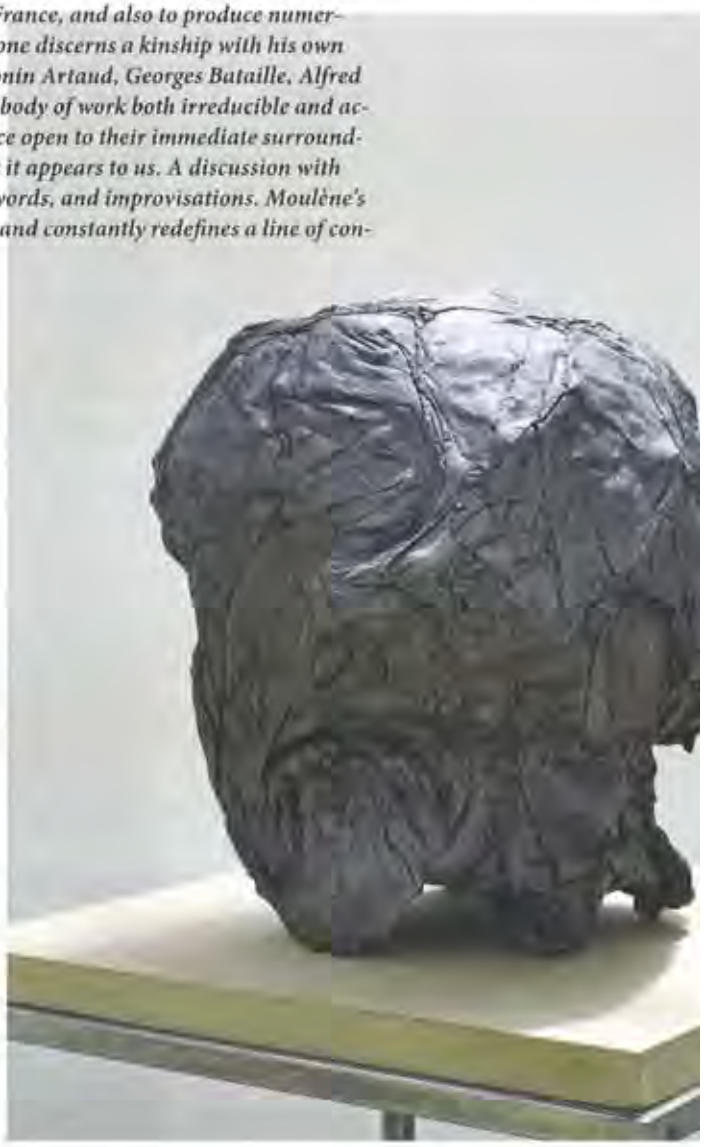
MONO: JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

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 Kleinef

All images © Jean-Luc Moulèn



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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 thoug
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

AUTHOR
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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

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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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