



Élisabeth Leverrier

8 rue de Ravenne,
14200 Hérouville Saint Clair
Normandie, France
06 67 67 44 88
elisabeth.leverrier@laposte.net
Site web : elisabethleverrier.net
Instagram : ElisabethLeverrier

Atelier

15 bis rue Dumont d'Urville,
14000 Caen

Élisabeth Leverrier

Née en 1962
Vit en Normandie, France

<http://www.elisabethleverrier.net>
elisabeth.leverrier@laposte.net
06 67 67 44 88

DNSEP art, félicitations du jury, 1987
Beaux-arts de Caen



Instagram
elisabethleverrier

Presentation

Graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Caen in 1987 (jury president: Sarkis), by presenting her ephemeral burnt-wood drawings for the first time. The aim was to make visible the memory of the place, the sound energy that runs through us. A sort of ritual. This was followed by a development in which the drawing grew to become a social aim: film shoots, directing, interviews, writing workshops and musical inventions appeared in social space. Fire became a night-light, a torch, grandiose, fireworks too, in these creations in which individual memory crossed paths with collective memory.

In 1997, *La grande veilleuse* was published by Jean-Michel Place.

After this time devoted to men, in 2005 I tightened memory like an intention around women. Fire, dance, song and the ever-present drawing of burnt wood captured in the film *Éternel regard*, which will be presented at the Mar del Plata Film Festival in Argentina.

A new page was turned in 2009, with the burnt-wood drawing fixed for the first time on a large format: 12.90 m × 3.50 m... like a new breath to share for the future. The idea of sharing took hold: a fresco was published in 2017 by La Manufacture de l'Image. The book brings together over 20 years of ephemeral drawings and works around fire.

New series of drawings appear, figurative or not, but because they are fixed, the status of the drawing has changed. And time has worked to make the drawing incarnate: it's a question of presence, of being, of its shadow, of its capacity to move, of its vibration.

The exhibition becomes a necessity for sharing what we have in common: something on the order of consciousness, where the infinite of possibilities opens up. *Touching infinity* is the generic title.

Expositions collectives

- 2023 – *Traverses*, répertoire en ligne des artistes en lien avec la Normandie, présenté par RN13bis.
- 2015 – *Peau*, dessin bois brûlé sur toile, 14/18, Usine Utopik (50).
- 2014 – *Éternel regard*, film, Rencontre des arts Berlin/Berry, Mers sur Indre (36).
- 2008/2009 – *PANORAMA*, peintures de cendres, Musée des Beaux-arts et de la dentelle, Alençon (61).
- 2007 – *Éternel regard*, film, «Arte de Pantalla» 22e festival du Cinéma, Mar del Plata (Argentine), présenté par Pilar Altilio.
- 2006 – *Éternel regard*, film, festival «Les Instants Poétiques et Numériques de Marseille», Alliance française de Mar del Plata (Argentine).
- 1999 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, Concarneau (29).
- 1995 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, Courant d'Art, Deauville (14).
- 1991 – *Peintures*, Musée Saint Jacques, Lisieux (14).
- 1990 – *10/20/30*, peintures, Théâtre de Caen (14).
- 1989 – *Bois brûlé*, photographie, Biennale européenne des écoles d'art, Anvers.

Expositions personnelles

- 2023 – *Toucher l'infini 6*, Chapelle Royale Saint-Julien, Petit-Quevilly (76), avec le soutien de la ville et de l'association Les Inspirations de la Chapelle
– Les Veilleuses-eurs, ou l'intimité du monde, avec le soutien de la ville d'Hérouville et Matrimoine en Normandie (14)
- 2022 – *Toucher l'infini 5*, Église Saint Nicolas, Caen (14), avec le soutien du Conseil Régional de Normandie, de la ville de Caen et de Pleins-feux.
- 2021 – *Toucher l'infini 4*, exposition inaugurale de la Grange aux Dîmes de Rots (14), avec le soutien de Pleins-feux
– *Toucher l'infini 3*, Centre culturel des Fosses d'enfer (14), avec le soutien du Conseil régional de Normandie et de Pleins-feux.
- 2020 – *Toucher l'infini 2*, galerie IGDA2.0, Caen (14).
- 2017 – *Toucher l'infini*, Hérouville Saint Clair (14), présentation de l'ouvrage *a fresco*.
- 2013 – *Au bout du geste*, fresque bois brûlé, Centre chorégraphique l'Hippocampe (14).
- 2011 – *Meuvaines 2010*, propuesta sur bâche, Hérouville Saint-Clair (14), emplacement définitif.
- 2009 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ, Au bout du geste*, port de Caen, production Pleins-Feux, Mairie de Caen (14), Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie, Conseil général (14).
- 2005 – *Éternel regard*, film 12'30", production Pleins-feux et DRAC de Basse-Normandie, Conseil général (14), l'École des Beaux-Arts Caen la Mer, Mairie de Ouistreham (14).
– *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, Galerie 2Angles, Flers (61).
- 1997 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, port de Caen (14). Parution de *La Grande Veilleuse*.
- 1994 – *SMN Feux* : film (10 min), production Pleins-feux, avec le soutien en Normandie : DRFP, DRAC, Conseil régional, DDJS, Conseil général (Calvados).
- 1992 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, Festival Artcaval (14).
- 1987 – *Dessin bois brûlé in situ*, DNSEP: Félicitations du Jury – Président : Sarkis, Caen (14).

Publications

- 2017 – *a fresco*, aux éditions La Manufacture de l'image (75), avec le soutien du Conseil régional de Normandie, du Conseil général (14), des villes de Caen et d'Hérouville Saint Clair, des entreprises Shema, Master toiles et Colori, et association Pleins-Feux.
- 1997 – *La Grande Veilleuse*, direction artistique du livre-objet: deux courts métrages dont SMN feux et un livre aux éditions Jean-Michel Place (75), avec le soutien du District de Caen, de la ville d'Hérouville Saint Clair, de la DRAC de Basse-Normandie, du Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie, du Conseil général (14), de l'ACCAAN (Atelier Cinéma de Normandie), de Pleins-feux.

Collections

- Artothèque (14), Musée Saint Jacques Lisieux (14), Collection Jacques Pasquier (14), Collections privées, Artothèque 2Angles (61).

Approach

My research and creations revolve around the question of painting and memory, with fire as the essential medium.

The four action verbs of cracking, unraveling, emerging and dreaming govern my creation.

It's all about being in tune with Nature/Memory.

What is the essence of painting?

To arrive at nothing, to add nothing to the world, to open up a space where reality seems whole, limitless, outside time; a fabulous energy emanates, how can we channel it and make it visible? The expression "The thing in itself» accompanies my questioning of our mental space, the energy that drives us and the creation of large-scale burnt-wood drawings in industrial wastelands or vacant spaces.

Is social space a necessity?

The quest for the origin of painting goes hand in hand with a quest for the origin: cracking/reopening the memory of places. Recovering memory becomes necessary, as working with the people affected by these places. Rediscover meaning/unravel and make visible the essence of place. Reclaiming memory also involves sharing with the general public, and raises the question of our common memory.

Dreaming the intimate

"Dreaming the place" with each project allows me to uncover constants such as movement, contradiction, memory, the other, the background. Create dream territory, moving towards bliss seem to me to signify our belonging to the world.

Of our wholeness? Making the idea of consciousness (shared knowledge) tangible is making headway.

Details

A fresco is the common denominator of all burnt-wood drawings, whether ephemeral or fixed.

"La chose en soi" is an expression discovered when reading *Les Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part* by M. Heidegger; *Ethics and Infinity* (by E. Lévinas who answers to Heidegger), allowed me to rediscover the link between self and other: the other as a necessity.

Pina Bausch in particular, but also Joseph Beuys (who speaks of an expanded present) have inspired my projects in the public space.

Yves Klein's hyper-sensitivity has certainly fueled my fire.

The expression "le soi a envahit le moi" ("the self has invaded the ego" about Jackson Pollock (book *Center Georges Pompidou*) and Hans Namuth's photographs gave me the authorized me to draw with burnt wood, fresh from the fire.

I've been questioning magic realism ever since my film *Eternel regard* has been shown several times in Argentina.



Feu in situ

1995
Hérouville 14



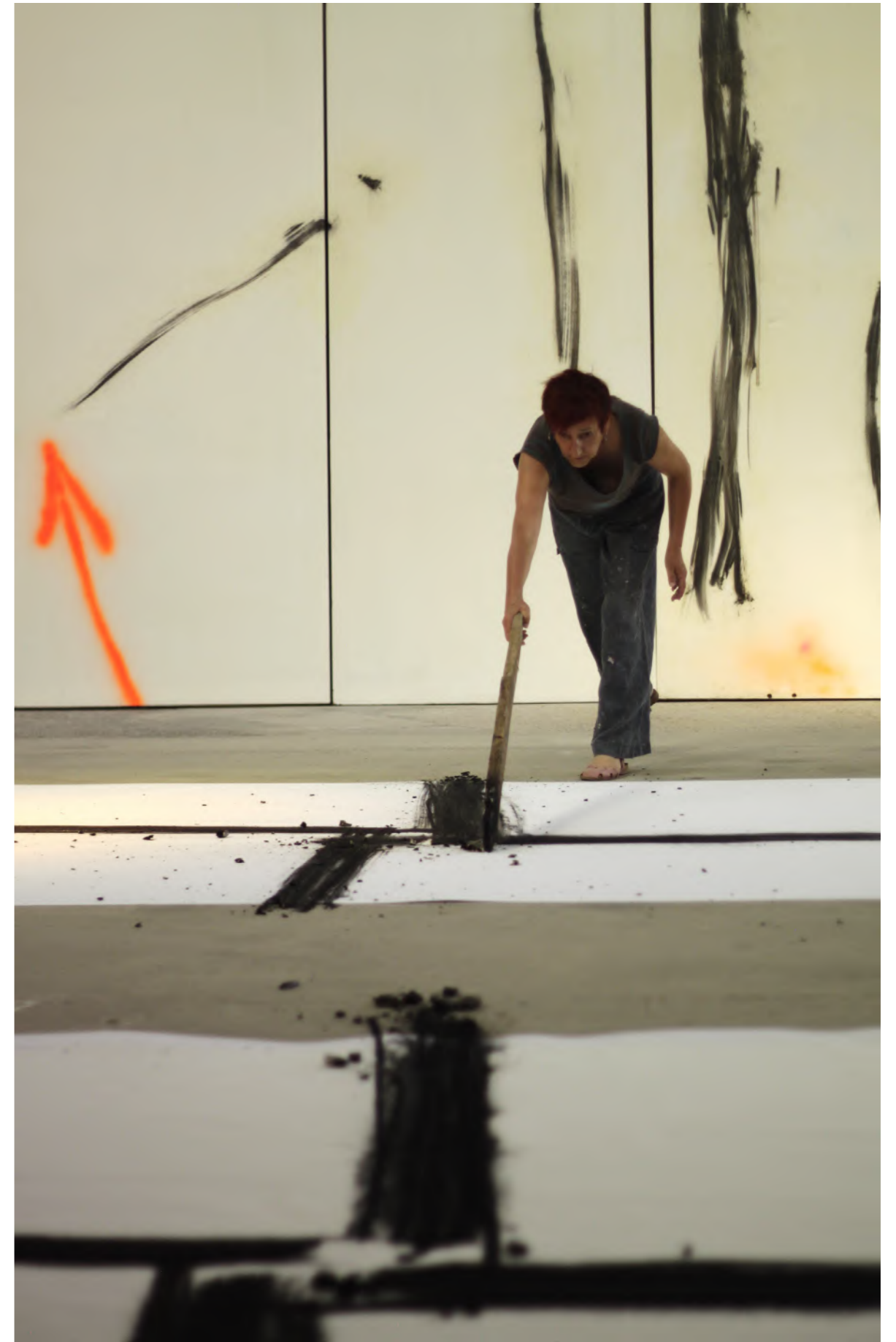
Feu bleu

2015
Hérouville 14



Le Grand flux

2009
Bois brûlé sur carton
12,90m x 3,50m



Résidence Port de Caen

Été 2018
Élisabeth Leverrier
par Marion Phalip



Le Grand flux

2019

Bois brûlé sur carton,
acrylique et enduit
12,90m x 3,50m



Toucher l'infini 6

2023

Chapelle Royale Saint-Julien (76)



Toucher l'infini 5

2021

Grange aux Dîmes, Rots (14)



«*Take a breath*»

2018

Bois brûlé sur papier
2,75m × 2,75m



«*Take a breath*»

2018

Bois brûlé sur papier
2,75m × 2,75m



Sculpture Humanité

2017
bois brûlés, socles acier, flèche métal
1,50m x 1,90m



Peau

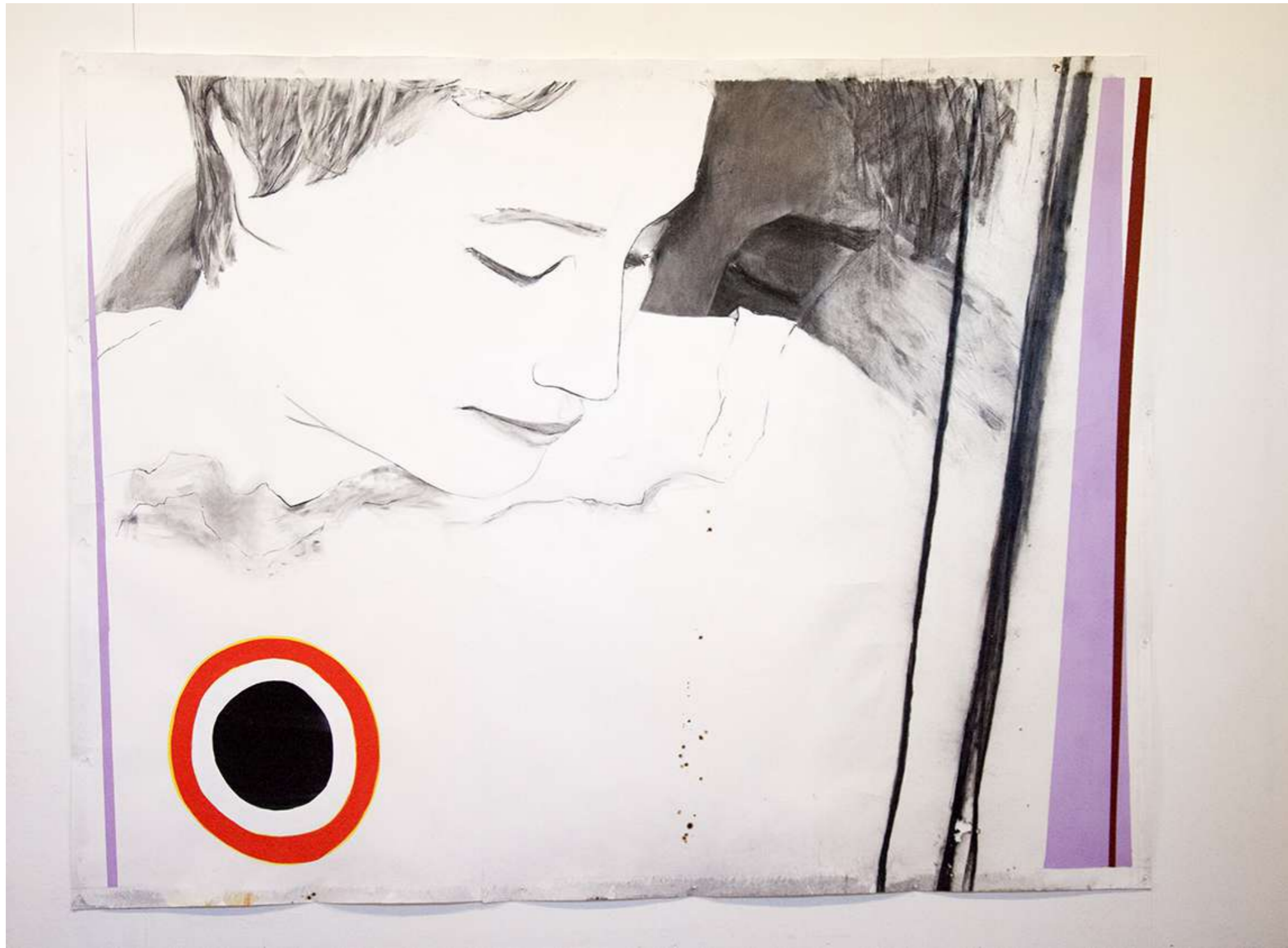
2015
Bois brûlé et peinture sur toile
1 m x 1 m



Tenderness & Take a breath

2021

Centre Culturel des Fosses d'Enfer (14)



Tenderness

par Marion Phalip
2018 - 2020

Bois brûlé, huile sur papier enduit, 2 x 2,60 mètres



Tenderness & Take a breath

2018 - 2020

Bois brûlé, huile sur papier enduit,
2 x 2,60 mètres et 2,40 x 2,75 mètres



Veilleuses-eurs Sud

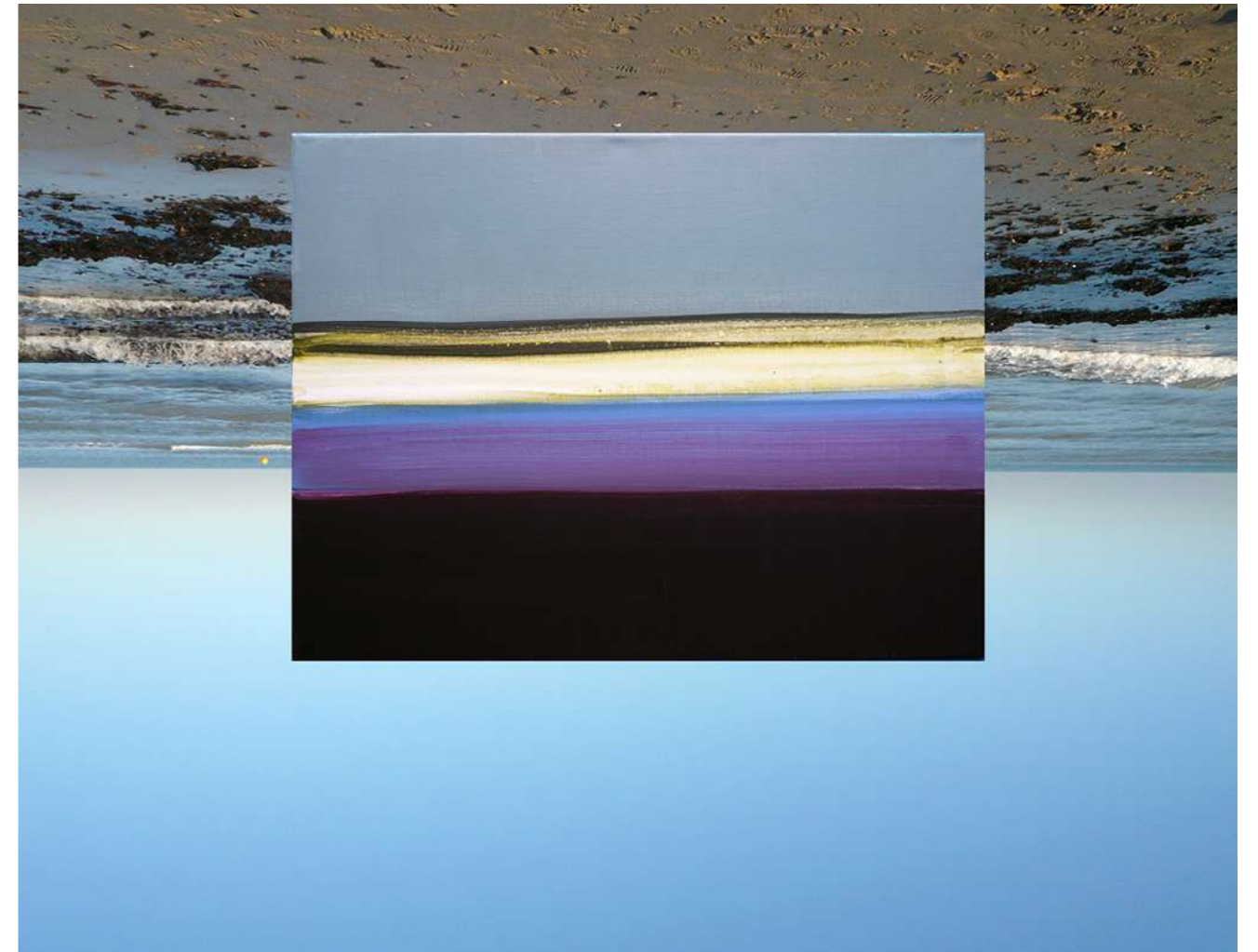
par Michèle Gottstein
2012 - 2021

Bois brûlé, huile sur toile, 2 x 2,30 mètres



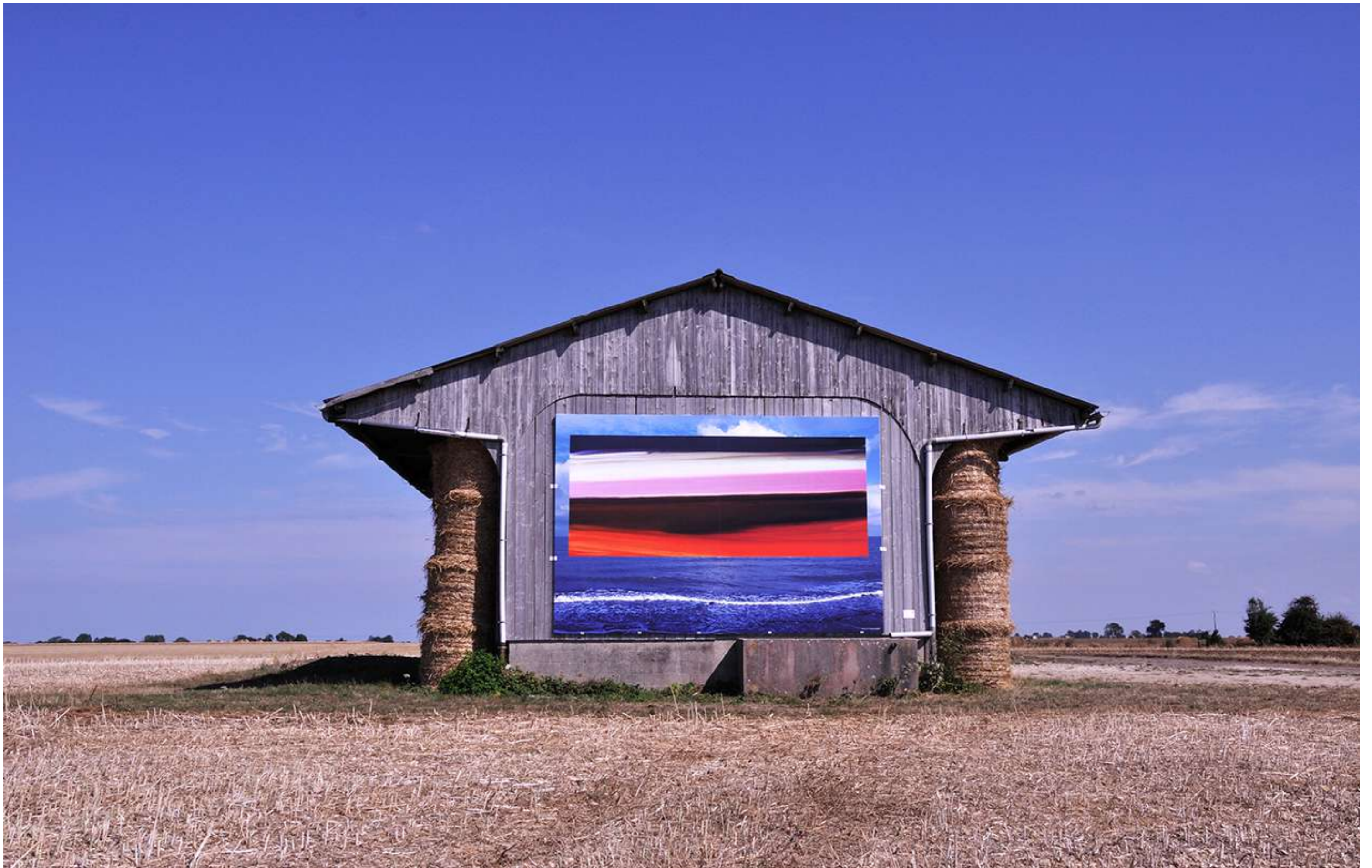
Oscillateur, peinture de cendre

2008 - 2015
Huile sur toile, dyptique, 90 x 116 cm



Propuesta

2008 - 2015
Photomontage, dimensions et supports variables



Meuvaines

2010

Propuesta, photomontage imprimé sur bâche, Festival de la
Pluie (14)





Propuesta

2020

Photomontage, dimensions et supports variables

A fresco In the Skin of Élisabeth Leverrier

Text by Marion Cazy, *Livre/Echange*, Journal trimestriel édité par le Centre Régional des Lettres,
N°73 / Novembre 2017

In this book, the artist invites us to explore the process that has driven her since 1985. With supporting texts, memorial photographs of transient installations and captures of performances, the book reveals a creative process that dialogues between dance, theatre, cinema and photography.

It is naturally as a dancer, at the brink of ritual, that Élisabeth Leverrier appears to us with her fresco approach, which focuses on the verbal energy of vacant spaces. The artist works to transfer this energy through a body that becomes an instrument, blending seamlessly with the charred beechwood pieces that serve as her brushes. Capturing the waves of disappeared energy, she rises and elevates herself to reach the walls, which are like white sheets installed in space, drawing a graphic memory of the soundscape of the places. The surfaces—floors and walls—become covered with abstract lines that nonetheless do not disregard the gesture that brought them to life. To fully accompany this visual immersion into the A Fresco project, the book allows the reader to experience an auditory immersion into her work via a QR code. The reader then journeys through the artist's interventions in space, at the rhythm of the drawing, to the sound of the burnt wood piece as it crushes and leaves the mark of its passage. The line, at times heavy and thick, occasionally begins to breathe, becoming light, almost absent. It traces a boundary, tears through the space, and makes it vibrate, thus restoring to the spaces and our imagination an energy that has vanished.

Another aspect of her work, Élisabeth Leverrier's Oscillators, ash paintings, are akin to endless variations of horizon lines. With fire as the origin of creation, contrasts and hues play with impressions and invite contemplation, like landscapes vibrating from sky to earth.

Retracing twenty years of the artist's life, A Fresco is a book of memory that speaks of birth—the birth of a gesture, a fire reignited, drawings fixed that become a fresco.



A Fresco
Élisabeth Leverrier
The Manufacture of the Image—112 pages, 35 €

Élisabeth Leverrier Réenchanter le monde

Texte de Marion Phalip, artiste plasticienne et auteure – août 2023

In the series *Veilleuses-eurs* as in the *Tenderness* series, the burnt wood drawing – the artist's signature style – blends with the figure of the circle and the depiction of faces. A regular in site-specific performances where she evoked the memory of abandoned and disused spaces that she appropriated for drawing, Elisabeth Leverrier now prefers to work in her studio in Normandy. When I watched her draw with burnt wood for the first time in 2018, in an industrial warehouse on the Caen peninsula, I saw her breathe. As in the yoga she practices in her free time, breathing here seems to be a conscious act. Her breath accompanies the combustion of the wood, which, unlike charcoal that is burned in a closed space, marks the artist's working temporality. The time of drawing merges with the time of combustion and escapes the order of the mechanical clock. Oxygen does not maintain the fire as one stirs it, but allows the emergence of the line: solid wood requires a total involvement of the body, which begins to dance with its tool. At the same time as she traces a charcoal-like line with the burnt wood, Leverrier draws her own line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari). Where charcoal allows for a change of mind, neither burnt wood nor the Deleuzian line of flight permit this. Elisabeth Leverrier thus fully commits to an artistic and spiritual experience that seeks, with fire, to reunite what has been divided – some might say by it. The quest for unity passes through simple gestures, as with the association *Pleins-feux* that she founded in 1993, which gathers human beings around the blue fire, making it the subject of both individual and collective reverie. In *Eternal Gaze* (a 12-minute 30-second film made in 2005), it is only women who dance, sing, and keep vigil around what appears to be the hearth of the world. However, it is ten years earlier, with the SMN, that the artist names «the great night-light», and the term appears for the first time in her artistic lexicon. The light produced by the activities of the Normandy metallurgical company is compared, if not to the small night-light that accompanies childhood, then to the votive light that accompanies prayers and manifests the divine. The soft, androgynous faces of the *Veilleuses-eurs*, created between 2012 and 2021, then evoke the memory of an orange sky, marked by fire and human activities now outsourced. With the tip of their fingers, they touch the memory of the world.

Élisabeth Leverrier Toucher l'infini, ouvrir l'espace temps par le dessin

Text by Katia Hermann, art historian, author and curator – Berlin, 2022

Elisabeth Leverrier grew up in the Normandy countryside, surrounded by trees. Since her childhood, trees and forests have been an integral part of her life, and she has never stopped being attracted by nature and its mysteries – living in nature. Author of a multidisciplinary artistic work where the elements of nature play a primordial role she has made tools of wood and fire within her performative drawings. Monumental, ephemere, her drawings traced in chevron ashes and burnt branches are applied directly on the walls or floors of disused buildings and have formed, for over twenty years, subjects of performance art and films, filmed by herself. According to the artist, the choice of ancestral fire as the medium to create her drawings in abandoned places is a means of reaching another world where the barriers disappear, and reality changes, time and space is suspended and a quiet and fabulous energy unfurls, allowing one to feel the unity of the whole. A unity, an entity, which is not visible but remains very present during her artistic performances.

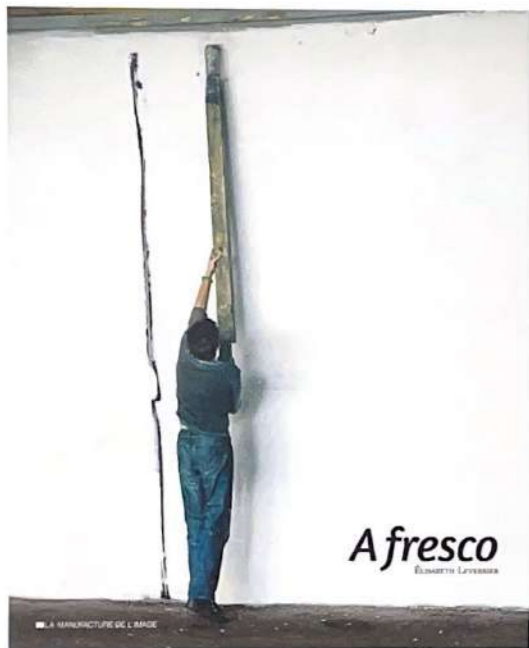
During each new performance, the artist works on the memory and the characteristics of the place she has invested in. In these abandoned hangars, empty of their former lives, the world of work, time seems to have stopped : the calm dominates, accentuating the perception of time and space of the place, and is more intense. The artist is looking to connect with the memories of these places, the collective memory which inhabits them still and the way in which she reacts allows her to access to a state of consciousness, to the mental state required to accomplish her performance. Her large drawings in situ in burnt wood are also an emanation of this mental state, achieved by the artist under the double influence of ancestral fire and the chosen place. Listening to the place during her performance – the solitude in an empty building – the artist measures up to it as it imposes its memory, its constraints and its dimensions. Thanks to the fire which she lights inside the building with wood collected in the surrounding area, Elisabeth Leverrier accedes to the state of consciousness which she is looking for. She achieves her drawings very swiftly. Her hands are one with the piece of wood that she brandishes. She has only certain rules that she has predefined before hand, for example to only touch the top of the wall once or to draw from left to right. Apart from that, her creative work is essentially intuitive. While driving the unconscious towards the conscious through the movements of her body, there is an echo of the techniques used like automatic writing developed by the surrealists.

The mental images which immerse in Leverrier's mind are then transposed as drawings by the rapid gestures of all her body demanding a great deal of energy. The instant is transformed into the immediate present. Outside of the performance, chance and accidents also decide the traces. The final drawing is composed of monumental traits, traces of the symbolic act which have just been accomplished and which unlock what the artist sees as well as the space of the performance. Leverrier's traces are like the cracks opening the space and reopening the memories. The artist transcends the silence of the place to refind its social memory, to let energy circulate anew, often involving the other people in these filmed performances. Whilst realising these big black traces with kindness, Elisabeth Leverrier brings out bribes of this memory of space while creating another dimension at the same time.

Her large mural drawings in situ evoke at the same time frescos, rock paintings, graffiti, in other words traces left by man as proof of his passage on earth. Like certain contemporary graffiti artists who like to occupy abandoned spaces for their energy and realise with spray cans and paint works which are often gigantic. Leverrier is one of these contemporary artists working outdoors, looking for disaffected unusual spaces to create these graphic works which she realises with ash, in calm and emptiness, transforming the place in a poetical manner.

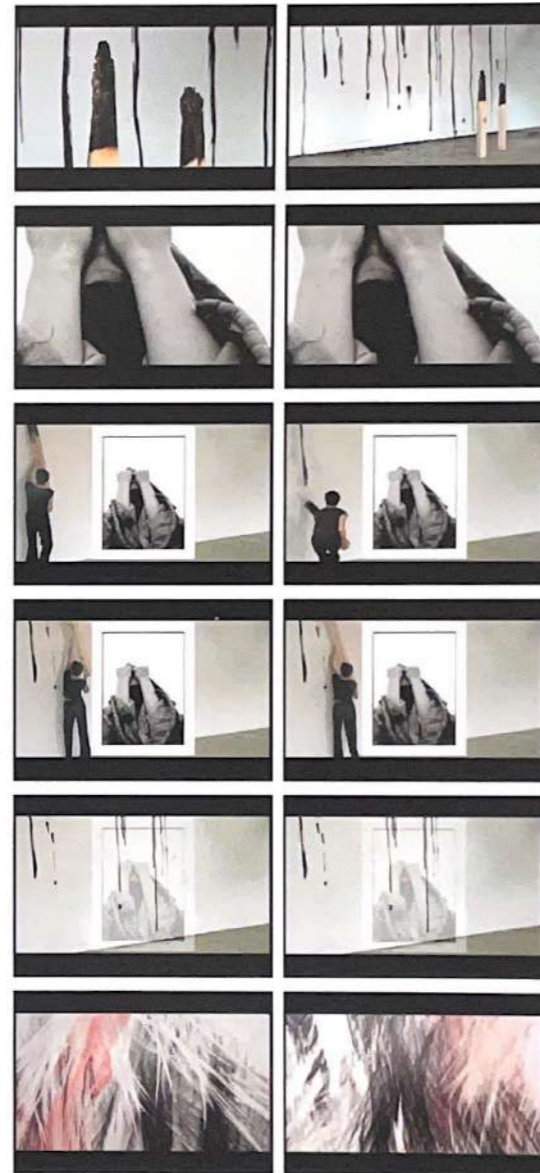
In her series "Veilleuse/Veilleur" (The Watchers), Leverrier has transposed her work in situ for the first time onto four large canvases. Created on the floor of a hangar, these works are a mixture of the ash traces of the drawing and the fluorescence of spray cans, symbolising fire and its light. Gentle faces with enigmatic smiles, neither feminine or masculine, plus the hands that seem to want to caress these faces or touch with a finger another reality, bring gentleness and kindness to this series which make you want to dream : these four beings coming from another world seem to be watching over ours. Dreamlike and timeless, they are there in the present, placed in the four cardinal points in the luminous transept of the Saint Nicolas church in Caen. The fire – represented by a negative photograph – reveals to us here by its blue colour this other world by which we transverse time and space, and perhaps even touch infinity.

ANNONCE DE PARUTION



ÉLISABETH LEVRIER

LA
MANUFACTURE
DE
L'IMAGE



Éléments de parcours

2013 *Oscillateurs*, la chapelle de Bessé (49).

2009-2010 *Propuesta* (diaporama), réseau d'espaces art actuel (Basse-Normandie).

2005 *Éternel regard*, 12'30 min, production Pleins-Feux avec le soutien de la DRAC de Basse-Normandie, du conseil général (14), de l'école des beaux-arts de Caen la Mer, de la mairie de Ouistreham (14).

1997 *La Grande Veilleuse*, direction artistique et parution du livre-objet : deux courts métrages et un livre aux éditions Jean-Michel Place, avec le soutien du district de Caen, de la ville d'Hérouville-Saint-Clair, de la DRAC de Basse-Normandie, du conseil régional de Basse-Normandie, du conseil général (14) et de l'ACCAAN.

1994 *SMN Feux*, 10 min, production Pleins-Feux avec le soutien de la DRFP Basse-Normandie, de la DRAC Basse-Normandie, du conseil régional de Basse-Normandie, du conseil général (Calvados), de la DDJS (14).

Les éditions La Manufacture de l'image

Éditions d'art contemporain. La Manufacture de l'image publie des catalogues d'exposition, monographies d'artistes et livres d'art en partenariat avec les institutions et les galeries.

Pour faire émerger les propositions artistiques défendues par nos partenaires, chacun de nos ouvrages bénéficie d'une communication ciblée auprès d'une sélection d'acteurs les plus influents du milieu de l'art, couplée avec une diffusion traditionnelle en librairies.

Le livre

Les auteurs :

- Jeanne Verdun, professeur agrégé de lettres classiques et responsable de la galerie d'art au lycée Napoléon de L'Aigle
- Véronique Piantino, dramaturge
- Catherine de Torcy, artiste plasticienne
- Serge Nail, comédien, metteur en scène, pédagogue
- Jérôme Anquetil, journaliste
- Emmanuelle Dormoy, consultante culturelle
- Pilar Altilio, critique d'art et commissaire d'expositions (Argentine)

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113 boulevard Richard-Lenoir, 75011 Paris - France
01 40 01 04 26
info@lamanufacturedelimage.com
www.lamanufacturedelimage.com

LA MANUFACTURE DE L'IMAGE

Projects

I would like to develop two key points:

- A body of work related to nature, where the aim is to promptly restore a strong energy to the world;
- A collaborative approach with others: stage manager, graphic designer, camera operator, fire assistant.

Feu bleu

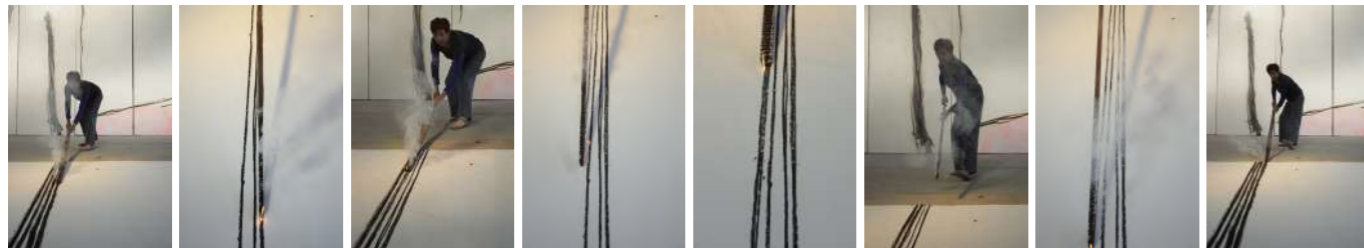
For the first time (and the public will be invited), fire will be filmed; rather at night, and its negative image will be projected simultaneously. An orange fire and its blue image, therefore. While on-site fires have been synonymous with a presence in the chosen locations, this new project presents a simultaneity, that of the fire and its image, not necessarily matching, even dissonant. A possible response to my quest regarding the origin, where the aim is to reach nothingness: here, dissonance is understood as the primary principle. Dissonance or contradiction.

(See also my few notes on *The Supernatural Knowledge* by Simone Weil in my book *A Fresco*, p. 84, paragraph 8).



Leporello

During a residency at the port of Caen in the summer of 2018, in an industrial warehouse, I was able to create 18 large burnt wood drawings, for the first time in the presence of a photographer: the aim is to use photographs in the leporello to convey this experience of drawing and the body in motion through the fumigations. One or more texts may be included.



The project of the Blue Fire and the leporello can be integrated into the exhibition project of works related to burnt wood drawing, whether figurative or not, as well as those that, in any case, are connected to my fire.

Propuesta

Since 1986, I have had to keep an analogue record of my works because they are ephemeral... This photographic work continues methodically and digitally for the paintings "the filters of the sky"; also, to gain some distance and see what is truly at work in the painting. But a photograph of a painting is never more than a deferred image of reality, a fiction: I have returned to the sea, to the real, to the very source.

What is reality? The photograph of the sea painting? The photograph of the sea landscape? In the realm of the transcendent, Simone Weil speaks of contradiction as something possible, like a door.

The "Propuestas" are an attempt to make visible a space of contradiction, a dialectic between fiction and reality; they feed off the question I have been asking myself for over twenty years: "of what I see, I do not know if it is an image or the thing itself."

The "Propuestas" were born in 2008 from a proposal by Pilar Altilio, an art critic (Argentina), to work on the idea of travel. I see in it the possibility of introducing into Normandy a bit of that inner feeling known as magical realism. They are also proposals for frescoes.

