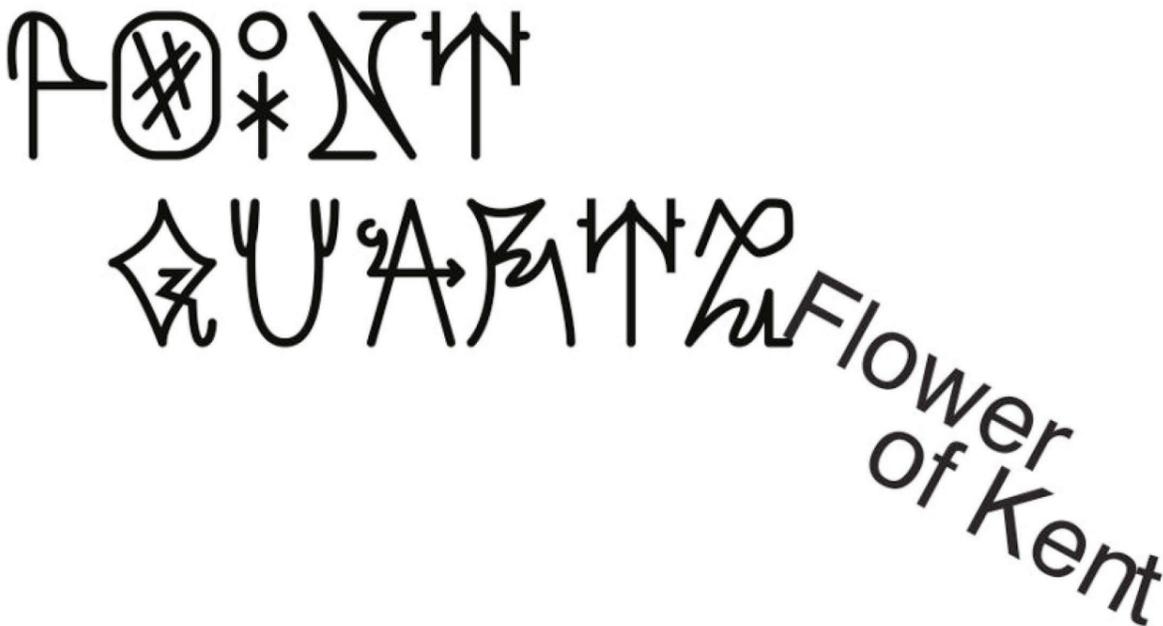


ENGLISH VERSION



VILLA ARSON NICE
EXHIBITION JUNE 4-SEPTEMBER 17 2017

POINT QUARTZ (QUARTZ INVERSION) *Flower of Kent* testifies to the interest that contemporary artists have been manifesting for ceramics, seen as a media to be explored without being dependent on specific skills, without becoming precious, sometimes irreverently, and certainly without the use of stands.

The exhibition is an in situ installation occupying the 300 square meters of the Villa Arson's Galerie Carrée, conceived as a garden with flowerbeds that have turned into a landscape. A landscape made of various strata, with the raw material of ceramics in all shapes and forms, from arable soil to terra cotta. Though the fundamental aspects of sculpture are present here, from verticality to its opposite horizontality, the uniqueness of the project stems from the pull of the law of gravitation.

The horizontal works on the floor by Bertrand Lavier, Dave Ball, Gladys Clover and others, compose a landscape that one can walk through, punctuated by vertical elements that seem irrepressibly pulled towards the floor, like Jules-Aimé Dalou's leaning peasant (1838-1902) made of Sèvres stoneware, the dripping enamel on Cameron Jamie's figures, or the flowing water on Vanda's fountain of hair by Natacha Lesueur.

*QUARTZ INVERSION is the precise temperature of 573° Celsius which corresponds to a tricky step towards the melting point that irreversibly transforms clay into ceramic.

Featuring works by: Dave Ball; Lyman Frank Baum; Baptiste Carluay; Paul Chazal; Marvin Gaye; Chetwynd; Nancy Crater; Johan Creten; Aimé-Jules Dalou; Bernard Dejonghe; Quentin Euverte; Guillaume Guerou et Paul Lebras; Gladys Clover; Cameron Jamie; Bertrand Lavier; Eun Yeoung Lee; Natacha Lesueur; Pascal Pinaud; Yvonne Roeb; Sterling Ruby and Elsa Sahal.

Curator: Frédéric Bauchet, artist and teacher of ceramics at the École nationale supérieure d'art of Villa Arson, Nice.

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A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART BY MEANS OF CERAMICS

A text based on Frédéric Bauchet's account of the exhibition in the company of Christelle Alin, Nina Campo and Maki Suzuki (May 2017).

In 2013, the art centre's director Eric Mangion asked me to reflect on an exhibition that would illustrate my "vision of contemporary ceramics". In recent years, there have been countless publications and exhibitions devoted to this medium. I accepted what turned out to be quite a challenge and imagined an installation, which I produced with the artists' invaluable assistance.

FLOOR, FRAMEWORK, STAGE

Starting the visit by smashing pottery seemed to be a good way of introducing the subject! That's why I asked Quentin Euverte, Guillaume Guerou and Paul Lebras to recreate their floor of shiny, white industrial tiles that, rather like an expanse of untouched snow, is damaged as visitors walk on it. [This piece was first shown at *Keep in Touch*, 06/02 – 04/03 2013].

When I last visited the Tate Modern (London), I stopped to look at Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (1966), a rectangular arrangement of 120 firebricks. That was the starting point for my thoughts on the installation project: "No above and no below, everything on the same level, on the same plane and without hierarchy". Logically I decided there would be a majority of works placed on the floor, in other words something very flat and this made me think of a kind of garden. Everything was orthogonal, following and underlining the building's architecture and so it wasn't long before I said to myself: "What about adding an angle?" An angle would take us 'out of the box' and towards something more open, more in line with the idea of a landscape. Next I wanted to populate this landscape and add verticals. I first decided on *Le Grand Paysan* by Aimé-Jules Dalou. My project is a fictional construction: I selected the characters who arrive on stage and each one has their own story to tell.

THE ATTRACTION

Flower of Kent sets the tone. Like a tribute to Isaac Newton, this piece is the attraction. Flower of Kent is the name of the species of apple that Newton supposedly saw fall from the tree and which inspired his law of universal gravitation. Working with ceramics brings you face to face with a soft and malleable material that it is difficult to construct with. Techniques obviously exist, but it is a struggle. And when it's time for glazing, this struggle is followed by another one. The installation comprises many floor-based pieces and, as far as vertical pieces are concerned, everything is slipping, sliding, leaning and falling as if part of some sort of debacle.

Quentin Euverte, Guillaume Guerou and Paul Lebras
Quand Wendy rencontra Carlos, 2013.
White glazed tiles (20 x 20 cm); Produced by Villa Arson.

This was the first piece I chose for the exhibition and it determined the rest of my selection. It constitutes the bedrock. I suggested an east-west orientation to the artists in order to break with the north-south alignment of the Galerie Carrée. Their floor is made up of white industrial tiles partially glued onto a carpet that break when you walk on them.

Dave Ball

Pink Wafer Equivalent VIII, 2003.

Floor-based installation of 10,500 pink wafer biscuits; 12.7 x 68.6 x 229.2 cm; Courtesy of the artist and Art Claims Impulse, Berlin.

My reflection into the exhibition project started when I was looking at Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (1966) at the Tate Modern (London), which comprises 120 firebricks placed on the floor. During my research, I came across a piece by a Welsh artist that quite clearly references Carl Andre's artwork. Its shape, volume and the process used are identical. The title of André's piece, *Equivalent VIII*, refers to the fact that there are eight different versions; eight different shapes, but of equal weight and volume. Dave Ball's creation comprises 10,500 pink wafer biscuits (made by Scottish brand Crawford's), which are reminiscent of the bricks used in *Equivalent VIII*. What's more there is a play on words in the chosen medium - pink wafer biscuits - in addition to being a cookie, 'biscuit' is the term used in ceramics for unglazed pottery that has been fired once.

Aimé-Jules Dalou

Le Grand Paysan, 1898-1899.

Stoneware; 195 x 67 x 67 cm; Produced by Manufacture de Sèvres. Courtesy of La Piscine, Roubaix – Musée d'Art et d'Industrie André Diligent.

Aimé-Jules Dalou was a 19th century artist and a friend of Auguste Rodin. He had to seek exile in London because of his support for the Paris Commune, but whilst there he received commissions and took part in international exhibitions. He was working on a project to build a large monument to workers, which he never finished. This sculpture of an agricultural worker was one of its parts.

The full-scale bronze (which measures 1.97 m) is on show at the Musée d'Orsay and the plaster version is at the Petit Palais. In parallel, Aimé-Jules Dalou made a copy in stoneware that was produced at the Manufacture de Sèvres. For this exhibition, the piece on show is what is called a 'troisième grandeur' (it measures 1.70 m) and is a piece that encountered a problem during production. It is what is known in Sèvres' technical jargon as a 'rebut' (scrap). In fact, there must have been a problem during firing, which explains why the figure of the farm worker is leaning sideways and seems to be looking at the ground even more insistently. I personally feel that Sèvres' failures deserve a major exhibition.

The Yellow-Brick Road after The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Lyman Frank Baum.

A piece produced for the William Wallace Denslow tribute exhibition.

While I was preparing this exhibition, my mind turned to the Wizard of Oz and the yellow brick road that Dorothy Gale had to walk along to seek help at Emerald City. I realised that I wanted to build my own yellow brick road. I'd have liked William Wallace Denslow's name to have been carved into each brick. It was during my research that I discovered the life and career of this illustrator and decorator who worked with the book's author, Lyman Frank Baum.

Natacha Lesueur

Les Chevelures de Vanda, 2013

Faïence, wigs, hydraulic system; Courtesy of the artist and Artelinea.

This piece was Natacha Lesueur's first contact with ceramics. As in her photographic work we can see her interest in ornamentation. Both the structure and the appearance of this construction are rooted in the aesthetic of the folly (a building constructed primarily for decoration, whose shape usually evokes the architecture of antiquity, historical periods, exotic countries

or nature), combined here with the extravagant court hairstyles worn by women during the reign of Louis XVI. The artist's motifs were inspired by the plant and aquatic worlds - fruit, flowers and exotic animals - in a reference to the great 16th century potter Bernard Palissy and his 'rusticware'. Les Chevelures de Vanda, its title is a reference to the strange hair disease that afflicts a female character in Honoré Balzac's 'L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine' (The Seamy Side of History), aims to create a crushingly excessive resemblance, something geological with petrified shells, moss, amphibians, snakes and fish cast from life, set against a rocky background.

Cameron Jamie

Untitled, 2013

Glazed stoneware; 172 x 37 Ø cm; Private collection.

Ceramics is one of several mediums that feature in Cameron Jamie's body of work. His practice is protean, a blend of performance, film, photography, drawing and installation. He says his approach is "guided by intuition" and describes his imaginary world by saying: "It looks like everything has died and come back to life as a zombie". In his ceramics, the shiny, glazed and decorated surfaces do correspond, at least in part, to expectations of beauty, but they seem to have been rerouted towards a horrific universe. A lot of his fragile creatures don't make it to the exhibition unscathed, as he explains: "There are lots of failures in ceramics, breakages and an important experimental aspect". The artist fashions the base in the same way as his sculptures, producing artistic objects that refuse to be figurative.

Yvonne Roeb

Agave, 2008

Ceramic, paint, leather and wood; 86 x 55 x 45 cm; Courtesy of Sammlung Köser, Kreffeld.

A ceramic agave with a milky transparent glaze rests on a leather-covered wooden trestle. Yvonne Roeb produced this piece when she was in residence at Villa Arson in 2008. She collected the agave leaves, which had been cut by the gardeners, before modeling them leaf-by-leaf and positioning them as if they were drying in the sun.

Gladys Clover

Gladys Clover, 2017

Screenprint glazed onto white earthenware ; 265 x 150 cm ; Collection Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour ; Produced by Villa Arson.

Gladys Clover is an artist who features in the Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour collection. Her origin is a character from George Cukor's 1954 film, *It Should Happen to You*. The film tells the story of an unemployed model in New York who sees a giant advertising space for hire on Columbus Circle and decides to use her life savings to have her name displayed. At first, the sign painters make a mistake and write her name with a 'C'. In the film she becomes a star and her name is everywhere, in the art world her signature comprises the sole motif used throughout.

Pascal Pinaud

On The Way (13A04), 2013

Grogged stoneware, glaze (produced in the Villa Arson ceramics workshop and fired in Gérard Crociani's workshop in Vallauris); 715 x 129 x 19 cm; Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Catherine Issert, Saint-Paul.

The motif in this piece – footprints on muddy ground – is a reference to a scene from Quentin Tarantino's film *Django Unchained* (2012/13). Pascal Pinaud wanted "to make a piece with feet and using feet". I know this artwork rather well because it was made in the Villa Arson ceramics workshop and I left my footprints alongside those of many other people.

Sterling Ruby

Basin Theology/Norpropoxyphene, 2012

Ceramic. 35.6 x 104.1 x 96.5 cm; Courtesy of Sterling Ruby Studio and Gagosian.

Each piece in the *Basin Theology* series of ceramics is made up of the remains of Sterling Ruby old works that have either been destroyed or damaged: the fragments agglomerate layer-by-layer as a result of successive firings. Here the basin evokes remains frozen in a verdigris coloured glaze that are reminiscent of lava or oxidised metal and whose significance goes beyond the material universe.

Johan Creten

Grande vague pour Palissy, 2006-201.

Grogged Sèvres stoneware, lustre glaze; 137 x 70 x 80 cm; Produced by the Manufacture de Sèvres; Courtesy of Johan Creten Studio / Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris.

Johan Creten is an exception amongst the artists on show because his favoured medium is undoubtedly ceramics. I wanted to present the Grande vague pour Palissy, a tribute to the great 16th century ceramicist Bernard Palissy, for the idea of its wavelike shape and almost plant-like aspect.

Johan Creten

Les Colonnes révolutionnaires - La source ou les lapins, 2009-2012

Stoneware, matt and glossy glazes, gold and platinum lustre glaze, metallic glaze, metallic wire; 162 x 30 x 25 cm; two rabbits: 50 x 13 x 8 cm and 66 x 17 x 10 cm; Produced by Les Rairies; Courtesy of Johan Creten Studio / Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris.

Les Colonnes révolutionnaires - Crocus Spring, 2009-2012

Stoneware, matt and glossy glaze, metallic glaze with platinum lustre; 158 x 40 x 41 cm; Produced by Les Rairies; Courtesy of Johan Creten Studio / Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris.

For his exhibition at Villa Arson in 1993, Johan Creten was one of the very first artists to show ceramics that addressed political issues in a contemporary art context. His recent *Les Colonnes révolutionnaires* series, featuring for example two, butchered blue rabbits hanging from a column, or crocuses in spring, their colour trickling down the sculpture, also have a political resonance.

Marvin Gaye Chetwynd

Snapdragon, 2017

Paper, latex, metal, wood, textile, and glazed ceramic; Produced by Villa Arson.

I invited Marvin Gaye Chetwynd to produce a piece for the exhibition with the idea that she could create a character who would inhabit the landscape and establish a dialogue with either Aimé-Jules Dalou's *Le Grand Paysan* or Elsa Sahal's *Alchimiste*. The snapdragon in the title is a plant whose distinguishing characteristic is that its seed pods look just like human skulls. The artist's creature is covered with weighty glazed earthenware elements that pull the costume downwards.

Eun Yeoung Lee

16th April 2015; 13th April 2015; 14th September 2015

3 glazed stoneware sculptures dating from 2015-16; 31 x 31 x 17cm; 21 x 27 x 17 cm; 31 x 31 x 10 cm; Courtesy of the artist.

10th September 2014; 14th September 2014; 20th April 2015; 19th April 2015

4 glazed stoneware sculptures dating from 2015; 25.5 x 25.5 x 10 cm; 29 x 20 x 12 cm; 21 x 28 x 11 cm; 29 x 21.5 x 9 cm; Private collection.

Eun Yeoung Lee is a Korean artist living in Busan; she was also my student at Villa Arson. Some of the stoneware sculptures on show have been covered in pencil marks, whereas others are very thickly glazed. Each piece represents the surface of a stretch of water and the title corresponds to the date of a sea disaster. This series began with the Sewol ferry disaster in South Korea and continued with migrant boats sinking in the Mediterranean. The sculptures' shapes constitute a platform, a continent, a world where all the individual twists and turns of existence come together and connect, woven together in a shared memory, the sea.

Paul Chazal

Colimaçon, 2013

Parterre of glazed ceramic tiles; 300 x 180 cm; Courtesy of the artist.

This puzzle-like work composed of black and white tiles represents a spiral staircase disappearing into the floor. Its visual effect opens out the exhibition onto a new dimension.

Bertrand Lavier

Composition bleue, jaune et blanche, 2003.

Glazed stoneware; 400 x 300 cm; Courtesy of Almine Rech Gallery, Paris.

This is Bertrand Lavier's first ceramic piece He decided to make it when he was invited by Hans Ulrich Obrist to take part in the Albissola Biennial of Ceramics in 2003, following in so doing in the footsteps of major post-war artists such as Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana. Transferring the same motif from one medium to another is a typical element of Bertrand Lavier practice. He therefore chose to produce a geo-

metric composition inspired by a section of a basketball court. This ceramic version was preceded by one made of parquet and followed by a carpet version. As part of this coming and going between figurative and abstract painting which is central to Bertrand Lavier's preoccupations, the ceramic version distances the spectator.

Baptiste Carluay

Pompéi (haïku), 2013

Faïence tiles, ash from Mount Etna; 20 x 20 cm; Courtesy of the artist.

One evening, during a study trip to Patti Marina in Sicily, a city that is famous for its historical pottery production, Baptiste Carluay left some freshly glazed tiles outside Caleca pottery works. The next day, seeing that they were dotted with particles of volcanic ash from Mount Etna, which was erupting at the time, he decided to fire them in and fix the particles in place. They represent a snapshot of Etna erupting, a negative constellation of the starry night sky.

Elsa Sahal

Autoportrait en forme de grotte I, 2005

Ceramic; 93 x 30 x 40 cm; Courtesy of Galerie Papillon, Paris.

Alchimiste, 2016

Glazed ceramic and breeze block; 190 x 90 x 75 cm; Courtesy of Galerie Papillon, Paris.

Alchimiste is an atypical piece in Elsa Sahal's body of work because, for the moment at least, it is not part of a series. She imagined it for *Athamor*, a recent exhibition at the CRAC in Sète. An athamor was the alchemist's famous furnace. Elsa Sahal has always had a special relationship with stones, crystals and the mineral world in general. Her ceramic alchemist is in fact the result of a metamorphosis, of the material's change of state. This piece becomes an imposing and intriguing character in the exhibition and the bearer of numerous narratives.

As for her *Autoportrait en forme de grotte I*, it is inspired by Mannerist gardens and Renaissance grotesques. The artist has added a personal remark: "Fragile inside under a robust exterior."

Bernard Dejonghe

Areshima, 2007

Glazed stoneware; 2 sculptures: 15 x 120 x 1.5 cm and 15 x 120 x 71 cm; Courtesy of Galleries Erskine Hall & Coe, London and Capazza, Nançay.

Areshima is the name of a Neolithic site in the Ténéré desert. For more than thirty years, during his many expeditions into the desert looking for prehistoric human settlements in the company of scientists, Bernard Dejonghe collected the bifacial tools, meteorites and fulgurites that inspire his ceramic and glass sculptures.

Nancy Crater

Collection Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour.

'Where's Wally?*', a small group of sharp-eyed observers could exclaim when faced with this landscape of ceramics leaning groundward under the influence of the earth's pull. It may actually be quite frustrating to look for the needle in the haystack and exciting to hunt for chocolate eggs in a luxuriant garden or try and spot the famous boy in his distinctive red-and-white-striped shirt and round glasses in the midst of a crowd of all sorts of people. But don't look any further because you won't find the famous Wally here surrounded by a crowd of ceramics. This is pure provocation designed to incite the spectator to try and pick up the scent of an artist who has gone AWOL. *Flower of Kent*, you are so attractive is makes the head spin, but although your list of artists is very chic, it's also a pack of lies: "Where is Nancy Crater?" Read Jérémy Piette's full text on: www.villa-arson.org/nancy-crater

* 'Where's Wally?' is the title of a series of children's books created in 1987 by British illustrator Martin Handford. The character is called Wally in Britain, Waldo in the USA and Charlie in France.

Translation: Simon Thurston