

Philippe DURAND *Vallée des Merveilles 2*
Olga KISSELEVA *Sea View*
Philippe RAMETTE ...*Promenades Irrationnelles...*

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Three artists from the same generation share the ground floor spaces in the art centre. Philippe Durand, Philippe Ramette and Olga Kisseleva each offer an interpretation, a definition, an experience of a landscape.

In the exhibition “Valley of Marvels 2”, Philippe Durand brings a different perspective to the Valley of Marvels (*Vallée des Merveilles*) site situated in the Mercantour National Park (Alpes Maritimes). The exhibition also examines the practice of photography as a technique for reproducing the real, as well as the very foundations of art and of the museum.

The exhibition ...*Promenades Irrationnelles...*, (Irrational Walks) revives Philippe Ramette’s photographic work which has been dormant for several years. A collection of photos, taken especially for the exhibition in the port of Sète, is combine with a selection of existing works. The exhibition offers a portrait of the artist in “current flow”.

The *Sea View* project has nothing to do with holidays, nor with a pleasant coastal address. It is a scientific project based on collaboration between the artist-explorer and the researchers of the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) and environmental NGOs. Through her installations, the artist applies three resolutely contemporary methods to marine backgrounds: data visualisation, the study of consumerism, and its consequences, and a foreshadowing of the future.

By offering three monographic exhibitions rather than a collective exhibition it is possible to accentuate the meeting of three artistic universes that are easily identifiable and based on their relationship with the world, nature and the public space.

Philippe DURAND *Vallée des Merveilles 2*

Philippe Durand developed the photographic technique of wandering in search of visible traces of expression in public spaces: objects placed and moved, self-generated collages, graffiti. Playing with the evocative power of images and with visual analogies, he produces shots which show the constant relationship of strength between nature and civilization.

In 2014, Philippe Durand decided to explore the Valley of Marvels¹, in the National Park of Mercantour in France. Fascinated by that natural wonderland, he found in it an outstanding archaeological heritage, which he believed constituted “another public space, obviously not urban yet sign-posted, marked, passed on from one person to another”. Considering this site to be an open-air

¹ Located on the Italian border, 50 kilometers from Nice, dominated by Mount Bego and classified as a historical monument since 1989, the Valley of Marvels, 2500 meters in altitude, has more than 40,000 petroglyphs (rock engravings) which were made around 5,000 years ago. Like the Val de Fontanalbe, located on the other side of the mountain, it was shaped by glaciers which disappeared 10,000 years ago, leaving behind flat and finely-polished rocky slabs.

proto-museum, with no designer or curator, with no audience or communication plan, the artist turned it into a place where his work could develop, in a new dimension of space and time.

The exhibition project attempts to recreate the rocky chaos topography of the Valley of Marvels, considered by its very structure to be like a rocky chaos. The visit follows an installation of inflatable rock engravings placed on the floor in the form of rocks. Their fun popular nature, recalling the decor of theme parks, contrasts with the video projections which invite you to a more meditative reading of the site. Made and filmed on the spot in super 8, they alternately show views of various landscapes of the Valley of Marvels and close-ups of rock engravings and 'graffiti' which has appeared over the centuries.

One the rocky chaos, reproduced as a mirror image on wallpaper and placed on both sides of a separating wall, contains all by itself, the project of the exhibition. It allows one to pass from the 2nd to the 3rd dimension, a toing and froing between photographs and inflatable structures.

Photographs also document ancient engravings and graffiti that has appeared from the Renaissance to today. Among these are the bull deity, Mickey Mouse, and the twin towers of September 11. Isolated and removed from their original context, these inscriptions seem to stretch across time. Moreover, their juxtaposition creates a chronological jarring effect. Fragment after fragment, this is a part of the history of humanity which seems to want to come back to life and appeal to our collective memory.

In this way, Philippe Durand offers to plunge us into "Vallée des Merveilles 2", not as a perfect facsimile, like the tourist replicas of famous grottoes (Lascaux 2), but rather as an attempt at reconstitution within the exhibition space, offering time for different perceptions and dreams.

OLGA KISSELEVA *Sea View*

The world of digital science, nanotechnology and coded messages comes visibly to life in the work of Olga Kisseleva². It questions our relationship with the world in a hyper-connected society of excessive consumption.

The project "AnthropOcéan" was produced during a residence at the Surfrider Foundation. A QR code made from driftwood gives access to a database devoted to the issue of climate change, and the links between the Ocean, the Climate and Society. The website projected onto the wall enables the visitor to control the distribution of data throughout the exhibition.

Mesure is an evolving work based on the composition of the water analysed at coastal locations around the Mediterranean. This work has been produced in collaboration with the Laboratoire de Chimie Bactérienne (Bacterial Chemistry Laboratory) of the CNRS, which has been involved since 2006 in a project to rapidly detect and count the bacteria that can be grown in the marine environment all around the Mediterranean. The final arrangement takes the form of an interactive light installation, in which the raw data from different types of biosensors are transformed into a form which can be perceived emotionally by the viewer.

Conquistadors uses an interactive programme updated in real time. *Conquistadors* examines the economic reclaiming of the Arctic Ocean whose areas are constantly being redrawn and re-divided by governmental bodies and public and private enterprises. This project was produced in partnership with the Department of Economics and Political Sciences of the Sorbonne, the Economic and Industrial Consultative Committee of the OECD, the International Barents Secretariat in Norway. The Russian word сеть (*set'*) means both "net" and also "network". By comparing the pattern of a fisherman's net and that of a social network, we can see a series of similarities. The project consists in comparing these by their structure, as well as by the way they function and from this deducing predictions for new ways of functioning for the "connected society" of the future.

² She founded the Art&Science laboratory, which plays a pioneering role in the area of contemporary creation of research and thought on emerging forms of creativity.

Among the futurist projects, involving both nets and the Internet, we find a project to clean the oceans of plastic thanks to an interactive system, piloted online, which imitates the structure of fishing nets. The plastic recovered and mixed with elements from the marine biosphere may be used as a raw material in the manufacture of a new type of biological fuel whose prototype has already been created and patented at the University of Cairo.

“Self organization” is a performance that was presented in December 2015 at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, and in January/February 2016 at the Kuwait Museum of Modern Art. This work, the result of collaboration with researchers in chemistry and nanoscience, is choreography for three groups of dancers each representing a molecule: red, white and black. The dance’s movements represent mathematical models portraying the replacement of oil derivatives by products of vegetable origin. The search for alternatives to the production and consumption of oil requires individual awareness and personal commitment, symbolised by the dancers’ improvisation. A new version of the performance is being created in partnership with the Centre chorégraphique national (national choreography centre) in Montpellier.

Philippe RAMETTE ...Promenades Irrationnelles...

Although Philippe Ramette defines himself above all as an artist-sculptor, photography, which was initially not one of his declared points of focus has become the pretext to all kinds of experiences and tests. Philippe Ramette puts himself on the stage in unlikely situations, experimenting and proposing points of view that are out of step with the world.

“My approach is a contemplative attitude. The recurring idea is to represent a character whose vision is out of step with the world, with daily life. In my photos, I do not see an attraction for the void, but the possibility of acquiring a new point of view.” Philippe Ramette

Philippe Ramette’s site-specific project at the Centre Régional d’Art Contemporain in Sète combines a collection of photos, taken especially for the exhibition in the port of Sète, with a selection of existing works : the *Promenade irrationnelle* (2003) and the *Explorations rationnelles des fonds sous-marins* (2006). These photos all open on a maritime world, like an exploration of the marine and sub-marine landscape from a very unique point of view which plunges the spectator into a delicious blurring of perception.

Entering a Philippe Ramette exhibition is to enter a universe which questions tangible a physical reality. It creates improbable objects or situations, works that are about “Imagine what you could see” and presents his sculptures in photographs.

Yet, it is in no case a question of illustrating the absurd, but rather of building an irrational image in a rational way. Philippe Ramette invents objects which he calls “prostheses” allowing him to float in the air, to climb trees, walk under the water and so on.

The perception of this force of gravity, which no longer obeys terrestrial norms, felt in its staging, disarms the onlooker and obliges him to invent a new way of looking at the world, a new contemplative state.

“This spectator will turn their head one way, and then the other before testifying to the poetic power of these images, capable of putting down the theories of Copernicus or Galileo. A loss of bearings, a breakdown in the laws of gravity, angles that seem to be against nature or reason; these are all consequences of something that started as merely an object, but which now becomes a «prosthetic attitude», as the artist is so fond of calling it. Philippe Ramette plays with the meditative stolidity of his body, immersed in these irrational horizons, between the Buster Keaton-style slapstick silhouette and the image of the romantic hero, definitively alone and aspiring to the infinite.” Jean Philippe Mercé Teaching Advisor in Visual Arts and Art History