

BÉATRICE
BALCOU
CÉRÉMONIES
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Performance, 25', 2013

Avec une planche de bois, substitut d'une œuvre non datée d'un·e auteur·rice inconnu·e, collection du Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège.

CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #01*

* Présentée dans le contexte de RAVI – Résidences-Ateliers Vivegnis International, les 11 et 13 décembre 2013, à la brasserie Haecht, 251 Nord, à Liège.
Production: RAVI, Liège.

La première *Cérémonie sans titre* a lieu dans l'urgence, en hiver. Sans œuvre d'art. Sans annonce. Sans chauffage. Les quelques personnes présentes – huit au plus – ont reçu une invitation personnelle. Certain·es ont été choisi·es parce qu'elles ou ils étaient en guerre les un·es contre les autres, d'autres tout simplement parce que je désirais partager ce moment avec elles ou eux. Elles et ils doivent attendre d'être au complet avant de prendre l'ascenseur et de pénétrer au dernier étage de la tour de la Brasserie Haecht à Liège dont personne n'a pu me dire qui en était le propriétaire ni à quoi servait cet espace. Ce refuge inoccupé et loin du centre de la ville est un endroit idéal pour effectuer la *cérémonie*. La lumière y est reposante et depuis les fenêtres, on aperçoit le flanc de la colline d'un côté, le début de la ville de l'autre. Nous nous asseyons en cercle sur des couvertures posées au sol, autour d'un paquet placé sur une fine palette de bois. Je déballe silencieusement le paquet. Mes gestes ne couvrent pas l'objet qu'il contient, mais le contournent. Il s'agit d'une simple planche de bois remplaçant l'œuvre d'art prévue initialement mais absente pour des raisons administratives. Situé dans la réserve de "deuxième zone" du musée des Beaux-arts de la ville de Liège, à un kilomètre de la tour, le tableau manquant représente un paysage. Cette réserve abrite des œuvres que le musée ne peut restaurer. La plupart d'entre elles n'ont pas été identifiées. Je ne touche pas la planche de bois mais frôle de mes mains ses surfaces et extrémités tout en décrivant de façon détaillée l'œuvre manquante. Je me concentre sur les détails, particulièrement sur les marques infligées par le temps. Puis j'accélère légèrement le rythme, remballé l'œuvre dans le papier Tyvek, ensuite dans le papier bulle que j'attache avec du ruban adhésif et enfin la repose délicatement sur la palette. Silence. S'ouvre alors une discussion avec les invité·es, tantôt vive et politique,

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UNTITLED CEREMONY #01,
LE 13 DÉCEMBRE 2013,
À LIÈGE, BELGIQUE

SEPTEMBRE TIBERGHIEU

J'entre dans une salle lumineuse, grande, ouverte sur le monde: une sorte de mirador. En réalité, nous sommes plusieurs à y pénétrer après s'être déchaussés et à marcher à pas feutrés sur le parquet de planches de contreplaqués brutes. Sur le rebord de la fenêtre, une tige d'encens fume. Il y a aussi une mouche qui virevolte, cherchant sans doute à échapper au froid de l'hiver naissant. Différents objets sont dispersés dans l'espace. Au fond, près de la fenêtre, un socle blanc sur lequel est posée une œuvre emballée dans du papier bulle et prise en sandwich entre deux couvertures. Dans un angle de la pièce, des cadres en bois, une planche, des bouts de scotch sont disposés contre le mur. Par terre, un assemblage constitué d'une planche de bois, de deux briques et d'une branche de cerisier semble orienté de façon à projeter une ombre au sol lorsque le soleil sera dans le bon axe. Ce n'est pas le cas pour le moment. Au centre de la pièce, sont alignées en arc de cercle cinq couvertures en feutre pliées. Face à elles, sur un tapis de papier bulle, un caillebotis de bois sur lequel repose une œuvre, ou ce que je suppose être une œuvre.

Béatrice Balcou nous invite à nous asseoir confortablement en tailleur sur des couvertures. Une atmosphère calme et silencieuse règne. La *cérémonie* commence. L'artiste défait consciencieusement l'emballage de l'œuvre, nous laissant le temps d'apprécier ses gestes. Puis elle nous raconte son histoire et son parcours jusqu'ici. L'œuvre qu'elle avait initialement choisie est absente, elle n'a pas pu l'emprunter pour des raisons administratives. L'artiste a substitué à cette dernière une œuvre de remplacement. Cette peinture de substitution, trouvée au marché aux puces, est de facture pauvre et représente un paysage de Grèce. Dans les versions ultérieures de cette même *cérémonie*, Béatrice Balcou utilisera une simple planche de bois comme surface de projection abstraite qu'elle nommera *œuvre placebo*. Cependant, lors de cette performance inaugurale, elle décrit l'œuvre absente avec moult détails, s'attardant particulièrement sur les blessures infligées par le temps et l'humidité. Elle le fait avec une telle conviction et une telle

sensibilité que j'arrive presque à m'imaginer la peinture en question. La parole a pallié le geste, elle s'est immiscée entre deux sphères de reconnaissance : l'une visuelle, l'autre textuelle. Puis, d'un geste précis et empreint de gravité, l'artiste essuie la surface de l'œuvre-substitut avec un tissu rouge. Là encore, la présence imaginaire de l'œuvre originale se fait ressentir plus que son absence. Cette attention accordée à un geste de purification redonne en quelque sorte vie à celle-ci. Plus encore, elle la bonifie, lui octroie une valeur insoupçonnée. Une fois remballée avec les mêmes précautions et le même soin, la peinture est à nouveau invisible. Fin de la *cérémonie*.

L'artiste nous invite ensuite à échanger. Deux ou trois personnes prennent la parole. Il n'y a pas vraiment de discussion ou de débat, chacun·e étant plongé·e en lui·elle-même, dans un état d'introspection mutin après cette expérience cathartique. Par le biais de ce rituel, Béatrice Balcou a voulu réparer quelque chose, une nature en danger prise au piège de la culture ou inversement. Ce faisant, elle a ouvert un espace, pratiqué une brèche dans notre réalité tangible. Et nous, spectateur·rices, nous sommes engouffré·es dedans. En sortant de la salle, je confie à ma voisine la lecture récente d'un livre de Marguerite Duras, *Écrire*, dans lequel elle raconte la lente agonie d'une mouche. Il me semble comprendre en cet instant ce que l'écrivaine cherchait à exprimer par le biais de cette métaphore. Non pas le sentiment d'effroi devant la mort, mais bien celui de l'épaisseur du temps.

Écrit en 2013, à l'occasion d'une des présentations de la *Cérémonie sans titre #01* à Liège.

principalement au sujet de la gestion des œuvres d'art par la ville, tantôt plus calme, au sujet de l'expérience que l'on vient de partager ensemble.

[IMAGE P.99]

Performance, 45', 2014

Avec l'œuvre *Paysage* (1870) de Théophile Chauvel,
collection du Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper.

CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #02*

* Présentée lors de l'exposition "Calme, luxe et volupté", Le Quartier,
centre d'art contemporain, Quimper, 31 janvier – 16 février 2014,
cur. Keren Detton.
Production: Le Quartier, Quimper.

La *Cérémonie sans titre #02* se déroule dans un centre d'art qui n'existe plus aujourd'hui, Le Quartier, à Quimper. Elle a lieu en hiver, une ou deux fois par jour pendant une semaine. Lorsqu'elle se tient le matin, nous commençons presque dans l'obscurité, ayant fait le choix de n'utiliser que la lumière du jour. L'œuvre autour de laquelle nous nous rassemblons provient des collections du Musée des Beaux-Arts de la ville de Quimper. C'est une peinture à l'huile réalisée en 1870 par l'artiste Théophile Chauvel. Avec moi, il n'y a qu'une dizaine de spectateur·rices, assis·es par terre sur des couvertures brunes de déménagement. Parfois, nous ne sommes que deux ou trois. Nous entourons l'œuvre couchée au sol. Je commence la *cérémonie* en dépliant les côtés d'une première couche protectrice de l'œuvre, constituée de papier bulle doublé de kraft. J'enlève ensuite les morceaux de ruban adhésif puis ouvre le papier Tyvek, dernière couche protectrice avant que l'œuvre ne soit révélée au public. On découvre d'abord son dos et les informations qu'il livre. Je soulève l'œuvre par son cadre et la fait pivoter pour qu'elle soit vue de tous les côtés. Ensuite, je la dépose côté face sur le papier Tyvek étendu au sol et commence avec un fin tissu de soie à la survoler, comme si je la nettoiais ou lui apportais un soin. Je me concentre sur les parties endommagées de l'œuvre d'abord par mes gestes puis par la parole. Je décris les interventions de restauration entreprises pour une occasionnelle sortie du musée. L'œuvre n'ayant pas d'intérêt pictural, le musée l'a placée en fin de liste des œuvres à restaurer. La toile présente en effet de nombreuses craquelures et son vernis est très oxydé, ce qui lui donne une couleur jaun-brun foncé. Il faut beaucoup de temps pour percevoir les détails du paysage représenté. Une discussion commence alors – ou pas – avec les spectateur·rices, qui partagent leurs

impressions. La *cérémonie* s'achève en silence. Je replie sur l'œuvre le papier Tyvek puis le papier bulle kraft avec la même attention qu'au début du rituel, peut-être même un peu plus lentement, pour mieux ressentir le départ – assisté – de l'œuvre, puis son absence.

[IMAGE P. 103]

Performance, 30', 2014
Avec : Lola Franzen, Anne-Cécile Heussner, Melinda Mucsi,
Agnese Negrini, Nathalie Neuser, Elodie Parachini et Keith Wirrell
Avec *Vitrine (film 3)* (2008) de Bojan Šarčević, collection Mudam,
Luxembourg.

CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #03*

* Présentée lors de l'exposition "Walk in Beauty", Casino Luxembourg,
14 juillet – 7 septembre 2014, cur. Kevin Muhlen et Christine Walentiny.
Production : Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain,
Luxembourg.

Deux fois par semaine, la *Cérémonie sans titre #03* est activée par trois performeur·euses dans le cadre de mon exposition "Walk in Beauty" au Casino Luxembourg. À chaque fois, elle a lieu en dehors des heures d'ouverture habituelles du centre d'art. Pendant trente minutes, ils et elles installent, regardent et désinstallent l'œuvre *Vitrine (film 3)* de Bojan Šarčević devant un public restreint. Auparavant, les performeur·euses se sont entraîné·es, lors d'un atelier mené conjointement avec l'équipe de régisseur·euses du Mudam d'où l'œuvre est issue. Ils et elles ont appris à manipuler non pas directement l'œuvre originale mais sa réplique, réalisée en bois, un accessoire de répétition que j'appellerai alors l'œuvre *placebo*. Ils et elles sont pieds nus – en contact avec le sol – et portent des habits noirs ainsi que deux paires de gants, du nitrile sous du coton, nécessaires à la manipulation de l'œuvre. La sculpture de Bojan Šarčević comprend une vitrine en bois et en verre, à l'intérieur de laquelle des objets sont disposés sur un fond noir en papier. Les performeur·euses positionnent d'abord la branche en bois puis les éléments en plexiglas. Les feuilles de cuivre sont délicates, notamment la plus grande qui sera donc placée en dernier. Les performeur·euses appréhendent des yeux la trajectoire à effectuer avant de les disposer dans la vitrine. Leurs gestes sont directs, clairs et précis, sans bégaiements ni remords. Ils et elles perçoivent la forme, la texture et le poids de chaque objet et s'assurent ensuite de leur stabilité dans la vitrine. Selon les indications de l'artiste, la position définitive des objets est à déterminer à l'œil en se référant aux photos de ses précédentes installations. Lorsque l'œuvre est complètement installée, les performeur·euses la regardent quelques minutes, aux côtés des spectateur·rices. Puis commence le réemballage. Les éléments en cuivre et en plexiglas sont reconditionnés dans du papier de soie – il faut éviter toute pression – puis placés

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CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #03, 2014 : QUARANTE MINUTES D'ATTENTION EXTRÊME

EVA WITTOCX

«Le propos de l'art n'est pas l'art en soi, mais l'attention qu'on lui porte. L'acte de créer n'appartient pas à l'artiste seul ; le spectateur met l'œuvre en contact avec le monde extérieur en déchiffrant et interprétant ses qualités intrinsèques, et apporte donc sa contribution à l'acte créatif.»¹
— Marcel Duchamp

Dans la performance *Cérémonie sans titre #03*, réalisée dans le cadre de son exposition *Walk in Beauty*, Béatrice Balcou nous invite à contempler la manière dont nous appréhendons le temps et regardons les choses – en particulier les œuvres d'art. Lors de sa résidence au Casino Luxembourg, l'artiste a travaillé avec un groupe de sept performeur·euses, la plupart sans expérience professionnelle, pour créer une *cérémonie* toute en silence autour d'une œuvre de Bojan Šarčević, empruntée à la collection du Mudam Luxembourg. Béatrice Balcou met en quelque sorte en scène la rencontre entre l'œuvre et les spectateur·rices dans l'espace d'exposition. Les performances ont lieu deux fois par semaine, en dehors des heures d'ouverture habituelles. Le Casino Luxembourg n'est alors ouvert que pour cette seule et unique œuvre qui ne s'adresse donc pas au simple passant mais à ceux et celles qui sont sciemment venus assister à la performance.

Béatrice Balcou va plus loin que Marcel Duchamp qui, dès le début du vingtième siècle, postulait que l'art résidait dans l'attention que le·la spectateur·rice accordait à l'œuvre. Ses *ready-mades* traitent du sens qu'il y a à présenter une chose dans un contexte artistique, de la manière dont le sens d'un objet peut changer et de la façon dont une chose acquiert de la valeur. Béatrice Balcou, en revanche, s'intéresse à une attention davantage focalisée sur la matérialité de l'œuvre d'art et sur le comportement en soi de celui ou de celle qui regarde. Ici, l'œuvre n'est pas une image éphémère à reconnaître rapidement ou à consommer mais une matérialité physique.

1. Michel Sanouillet et Elmer Peterson, éd., *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1973. Traduit de l'américain par le traducteur.

La plupart des œuvres qui constituent les collections ont leur propre partition, un mode d'emploi ou un document précisant comment les conserver ou les présenter au public de manière optimale. Béatrice Balcou s'intéresse à ces codes et aux gestes techniques nécessaires à la manipulation de l'œuvre : gants blancs, instruments de travail et matériaux d'emballage, photos et instructions écrites... Tous ces éléments dénotent une attention et un soin extrêmes pour les objets, pour les œuvres d'art. Alors que dans ses performances précédentes, l'artiste agissait elle-même, elle a cette fois fait appel à un groupe de non-professionnel·les et a délégué l'exécution à des personnes peu coutumières des arts plastiques. Du coup, l'ensemble des codes et des comportements prend une dimension particulière.

Pendant la résidence, l'artiste et les performeur·euses ont collaboré avec les régisseur·euses professionnel·les du Mudam Luxembourg. Dans *Cérémonie sans titre #03*, trois performeur·euses exécutent une série de gestes pour débarrer la caisse et débarrasser soigneusement chaque composant de son emballage protecteur. Dans le court espace-temps de *Cérémonie sans titre #03*, le·la spectateur·rice est invité·e à aiguïser le regard qu'il·elle porte sur l'art. Munies de schémas et d'instructions d'installation, trois personnes disposent un à un les éléments dans la vitrine qui composent l'œuvre, vue de face par le public. Après un bref instant de contemplation commune, pendant laquelle le public découvre l'œuvre – en partie aussi à travers le regard des performeur·euses –, celle-ci disparaît à nouveau dans son emballage et sa caisse de transport.

Cette performance, qui est exécutée avec une précision extrême, dure quarante minutes. Les performeur·euses ne se donnent pas en spectacle, ne font pas de représentation ; tout est axé sur la présentation de l'œuvre d'art. Les quelques mots qu'ils ou elles échangent sont d'ordre pratique et limités au minimum. Le prêteur de l'œuvre a donné des conseils pour chaque geste et chaque manipulation auxquels est accordée la plus grande attention. Ce processus conscientise le·la spectateur·rice qui valorise dès lors davantage l'œuvre et les compétences techniques qui vont de pair avec sa présentation. Dans un certain sens, la valeur de l'œuvre augmente. En même temps et de manière presque paradoxale, l'œuvre est également démystifiée puisqu'on découvre son installation, sa manipulation, les précautions prises et les conditions marginales qui la rendent possible. En outre, la performance se déroule

dans l'espace d'exposition où ce qui a trait à sa préparation est également visible : une réplique en bois de l'œuvre permettant de s'exercer et une photo sur laquelle, grâce à de la peinture orange fluo, on peut repérer les endroits où toucher l'œuvre lors de sa manipulation. Ces éléments contribuent à contextualiser la fragilité et la valeur de l'œuvre. Les voiles en soie tendus dans la pièce ajoutent encore au caractère sacré et caché des événements se déroulant dans cet espace public vitré du Casino Luxembourg. Au fil de la performance, les différents aspects – apparemment contradictoires – qui créent une tension se rejoignent en un moment unique, celui de la contemplation de la sculpture de Bojan Šarčević.

Une enquête menée dans différents musées a révélé que le public contemple une œuvre en moyenne entre deux et dix-sept secondes. Il passe en fait plus de temps à lire les légendes et les explications qu'à regarder l'œuvre elle-même. Dans son livre *How to Use Your Eyes* consacré aux personnes qui, pendant toute leur vie d'adulte, vont chaque jour au musée pour voir un seul tableau, James Elkins écrit : « Il faut l'écouter, penser à une chose qui fait écho en soi, puis regarder à nouveau et voir comment l'œuvre a changé. Il faut croire qu'on peut avoir une relation permanente, évolutive, avec quelque chose d'immuable. Nombreux sont ceux qui disent que c'est impossible. Les gens n'ont pas l'habitude de regarder longtemps une œuvre d'art. En général, l'interaction se résume à un coup d'œil rapide ou un regard furtif. Ce que j'ai en tête n'est pas un simple regard à la sauvette, mais regarder, fixer, se poser ou se trouver comme hypnotisé : oublier, le temps d'un instant, la vie trépidante que l'on mène, la réunion à laquelle on est en retard, et penser, vivre, uniquement à l'intérieur de l'œuvre. Tomber amoureux d'une œuvre, découvrir que – quelque part – on en a besoin, avoir envie de retourner la voir, de la garder dans sa vie. »²

Dans *Cérémonie sans titre #03*, les performeur·euses nous accompagnent dans une perception attentive de l'œuvre d'art : pas de regard furtif ni superficiel mais un regard qui prend le temps de contempler l'œuvre dans des circonstances idéales. Au cours d'une cérémonie qui se déroule dans la sérénité la plus complète, les performeur·euses accompagnent notre regard comme s'il s'agissait d'un moment

2. James Elkins, « How Long Does it Take to Look at a Painting », The Huffington Post, 11 août 2010. Voir également, 2 James Elkins, *How to Use Your Eyes*, New York/Londres, Routledge, 2000. Traduction du traducteur.

sur un lit de copeaux de polystyrène et calés dans un carton. Ces opérations sont effectuées sur une table attenante et au même niveau que la vitrine, afin de réduire les mouvements inutiles. Enfin, deux performeur·euses apportent la boîte en carton de la branche, tandis qu'un·e troisième la place délicatement à l'intérieur. Tous les cartons doivent ensuite être empilés par ordre de taille dans une très grande caisse de transport. Entre les performances, la vitrine et la caisse en bois demeurent visibles dans l'exposition. Parfois, la performance se fait sans aucun·e spectateur·rice.

[EMAIL P. 109, IMAGE P. 111]

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magique. Le temps que l'on passe devant une œuvre est prolongé et nous entraîne dans un autre mode d'attention. Le calme qui émane des trois performeur·euses joue ici un rôle essentiel. Ils et elles sont en fait totalement neutres, sans expression ni émotion susceptibles de colorer leurs gestes pratiques et leurs agissements. Béatrice Balcou parle d'un certain « absorbement » dans le moment présent. Le regard initie et clôture leurs gestes. Leur calme se transmet au public. La performance rend le public plus conscient des choses et de soi-même, précisément en mettant l'accent sur la matérialité des objets, des œuvres d'art, des instruments, des regards, des gestes, de l'espace, du temps, du·de la performeur·euse et du·de la spectateur·rice. L'artiste fait référence à la cérémonie du thé japonaise, avec ses gestes minutieusement orchestrés, ou encore à un état d'esprit semblable au yoga, où le corps et l'esprit sont alignés.

Cette attitude est radicalement opposée à tout ce que nous faisons par routine ou en pilote automatique. Les différents niveaux de conscience qui guident nos actes quotidiens sont décrits par Virginia Woolf dans son texte autobiographique *A sketch of the Past* (1939). Elle y fait une distinction entre les actes que nous vivons réellement au quotidien (*moments of being*) et ceux que nous ne vivons pas consciemment (*moments of non being*)³. Ce qui change essentiellement, ce n'est pas la nature de l'acte mais l'intensité du ressenti. Selon Virginia Woolf, les moments vécus dans l'intensité procurent une meilleure compréhension de l'essence de la vie. Ils ouvrent sur la perception d'une dimension plus vaste sous-jacente à la superficialité du quotidien. C'est ce type de ressenti auquel on accède lors de la performance de Béatrice Balcou : pendant la *cérémonie* – la rencontre entre l'œuvre et le·la spectateur·rice – nous sommes, l'espace d'un instant, davantage conscient·es de l'ici et du maintenant.

À une époque où chacun·e photographie en permanence son environnement et partage des photos (et des œuvres d'art) via internet et les médias sociaux, l'objet est ici posé de manière centrale dans sa dimension physique et matérielle. Dans cette performance, Béatrice Balcou parvient à révéler des situations soi-disant cachées et à nous faire prendre conscience de cette construction particulière qu'est une œuvre d'art. Ce nouveau travail de l'artiste,

3. Virginia Woolf, « A Sketch of the Past », in : *Moments of Being*, Jeanne Schulkind, éd., Londres : Hogarth Press, 1976.

Performance, 35', 2015
Collection FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon
Avec *Cars Non Finito* (2010) de Nina Beier,
collection FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon.

CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #07*

* Présentée au FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon, le 8 mars 2018.
Production : FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon.

Le FRAC Franche-Comté a acquis en 2015 le protocole de la *Cérémonie #07* afin de pouvoir la réactiver. En mon absence, une autre personne, professionnel·le du champ de la régie d'œuvres, du théâtre de marionnettes ou de la danse contemporaine, peut me remplacer. Il s'agit d'exécuter une série de tâches de manière concentrée. Au préalable, cet·te interprète étudie, avec l'aide du ou de la responsable de la collection, le protocole qui précise comment installer l'œuvre de Nina Beier de manière optimale, dans un rapport au temps et à l'espace propre à la *cérémonie*. Lorsque je réalise *la cérémonie*, mes gestes sont sobres et entièrement dédiés à l'œuvre empruntée, à son environnement et au public qui l'entoure ainsi qu'aux outils nécessaires à son déballage et à son installation. L'œuvre en question est issue de la série *Non Finito* qui se compose de blocs de bois que l'artiste a commencé à sculpter et qu'elle a délibérément laissés inachevés. Nina Beier peut décider de modifier ou de compléter ces sculptures à tout moment de sa vie, cette clause étant incluse dans le contrat de l'œuvre. En 2018, c'est ce qu'elle fait, quelques mois avant que j'active la *cérémonie* pour la première fois. Elle recouvre le cube, initialement en bois, de cuir synthétique matelassé, le transformant en une sorte de pouf et le débarrassant de son socle en fer. Ce nouveau cube est très lourd à porter. Lors de la *cérémonie*, il est posé au sol sur un épais carré de polystyrène de sorte qu'il puisse être déplacé sans subir de dommages. Je commence par retirer les feuilles de carton maintenues en place par du ruban adhésif sur chacun des six côtés, puis le papier bulle et enfin le papier de soie. Ces mouvements s'effectuent facilement et sans hâte, me laissant le temps de m'installer dans chaque position. Pour retirer le ruban adhésif, je protège le papier avec ma main afin d'éviter que tout ne se détache en même temps. Cela

Installation et activation de répliques en bois à échelle réduite d'œuvres de Kazuko Miyamoto, 2016
Collection FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon.

THE K. MIYAMOTO BOXES*

* Activée lors des expositions *Béatrice Balcou – Kazuko Miyamoto* à l'ISELP, Bruxelles, du 21 avril au 2 juillet 2016, cur. Florence Cheval; *Tes mains dans mes chaussures* à La Galerie, centre d'art contemporain, Noisy-le-Sec, du 23 septembre 2016 au 26 janvier 2017, cur. Émilie Renard et Vanessa Desclaux; *Kazuko Miyamoto <> Béatrice Balcou* à la galerie Exile, Berlin, du 24 mars au 15 avril 2017, cur. Christian Siekmeier; *L'Économie des apostrophes* au Centre d'art contemporain de La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, du 11 novembre 2018 au 19 février 2019, cur. Julie Pellegrin; et *Béatrice Balcou* au Musée M, Louvain lors du festival Playground du 14 au 17 novembre 2019, cur. Eva Wittocx.
Production: ISELP, Bruxelles.

Une série de sept boîtes contenant des répliques en bois d'œuvres de l'artiste Kazuko Miyamoto (1942) sont exposées tantôt fermées tantôt ouvertes. Il s'agit de répliques d'œuvres qui ont été endommagées, détruites, qui ont disparu ou n'ont tout simplement pas, à ce jour, suscité d'intérêt. J'ai réalisé ces répliques à échelle réduite afin de faciliter leur déplacement et leur manipulation. Certaines sont exposées, tandis que d'autres sont stockées dans des boîtes en bois que j'ai réalisées pour leur transport. Elles sont comme des *sculptures placebo* de voyage. Une personne de la régie ou de la médiation du lieu d'exposition est chargée de les activer de temps à autre, selon sa disponibilité. Pour cela, il s'agit de déplacer ces sculptures ainsi que leurs socles, de les ranger, d'en sortir de nouvelles et de les installer, éventuellement en présence de spectateur·rices invitées à participer à cette activation. Chaque boîte contient une photo en noir et blanc de l'œuvre originale et une description. Lors de cette manipulation, une discussion peut avoir lieu au sujet du travail de Kazuko Miyamoto. Les participant·es portent des gants en coton et ont été informé·es des précautions à prendre pour la manipulation d'une œuvre d'art. Le simple fait de les traiter avec soin et de leur accorder de l'attention, tant par les gestes que par les mots, confère à ces répliques une aura particulière et momentanément, une valeur qui se répercute sur les originaux. Lorsqu'elles ne sont pas activées, les sculptures exposées demeurent en état de veille, comme des fantômes.

[EMAILS P. 150-151, IMAGE P. 153]

Performance, 25', 2016

Avec une œuvre (1991) inspirée des *Incomplete Open Cubes* de Sol LeWitt, d'une auteur·rice inconnu·e, collection privée, New York.

CÉRÉMONIE SANS TITRE #08*

* Présentée lors de l'exposition *Béatrice Balcou | Kazuko Miyamoto*, le 19 mai 2016, à l'ISELP, Bruxelles, cur. Florence Cheval. Production : ISELP, Bruxelles.

L'œuvre que je manipule lors de la *Cérémonie sans titre #08* a fait l'objet de nombreuses discussions avant d'obtenir l'autorisation d'être montrée à un public, même limité. La *cérémonie* se déroule dans un espace attendant à mon exposition en duo avec l'artiste Kazuko Miyamoto, qui fut l'assistante de Sol LeWitt. Les spectateur·rices sont assis·es sur des tabourets et entourent une boîte en carton contenant l'œuvre, posée sur un socle. Debout, j'ouvre les rabats du carton un à un. Je glisse ma main à l'intérieur et attrape l'extrémité d'un film de mousse de polyéthylène qui se déroule au fur et à mesure que j'étire mon bras. Une fois ce mouvement terminé, de mon autre main, je saisis l'extrémité opposée du film, donne un coup sec pour l'étirer, puis le plie en deux. Je l'accroche à ma taille, le temps de prendre le paquet à l'intérieur de la boîte et de le déposer à droite du socle. Je m'agenouille puis positionne le paquet en face de mon regard. Après avoir retiré le morceau de scotch papier et l'avoir collé temporairement au socle, je déplie et ouvre le papier bulle entourant l'œuvre. Les deux éléments qui la composent sont enveloppés dans du papier de soie que j'enlève doucement. J'aplatis la surface de chaque feuille de papier comme pour laisser les objets respirer. Ce sont deux cubes en bois avec des arêtes de dix centimètres, peints en blanc et patinés par le temps. Ils s'emboîtent. J'inspecte puis nettoie à l'aide d'un chiffon la surface du socle sur laquelle ils vont reposer. J'ai mis des gants en nitrile bleu avant de les manipuler et de les installer. Je les touche du bout des doigts, vérifie leur emboîtement et n'écarte mes mains que lorsque je suis sûre de leur stabilité. Je m'assois ensuite dans le cercle des spectateur·rices pour regarder ces deux petits cubes. Ils et elles pensent certainement qu'il s'agit d'une œuvre de Sol LeWitt. Nous restons ainsi, immobiles, pendant deux minutes. Je fais pivoter l'œuvre pour que les

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BÉATRICE
BALCOU
CEREMONIES
&



Norbert David, registrar, during the performed exhibition *Chaque chose en son temps (One Thing at a Time)*, FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon, 2013

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Performance, 25', 2013

With a wooden board replacing an undated work by an unknown artist, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #01*

* Presented as part of RAVI – Résidences-Ateliers Vivegnis International, at the Haecht brasserie, 251 Nord, Liège, 11 and 13 December 2013.
Production: RAVI, Liège.

The first *Untitled Ceremony* was a rush job. In winter. With no work of art. No advance publicity. No heating. The few people present – eight at most – had each received a personal invitation. Some because they were at loggerheads with others, some simply because I wanted to share this event with them. They had to wait until they were all there before taking the lift to the top floor of the Brasserie Haecht tower in Liège. Nobody could tell me who the owner was or what this space was used for. Unoccupied and a long way from the city centre, this refuge is an ideal venue for the *ceremony*. The lighting is restful, with the windows giving onto the sloping hill on one side and the beginnings of the city on the other. We sit in a circle on blankets on the floor, around a package placed on a fine wooden pallet. I silently unwrap it. My gestures do not cover the object inside the package, but rather follow its outline: a simple wooden board replacing the envisaged work of art, unavailable for bureaucratic reasons. The picture, a landscape, is to be found a kilometre from the tower in the “secondary” storage of Liège’s Museum of Fine Arts; this is where the museum keeps works that cannot be restored, most of which have not been identified. I don’t touch the board; I brush my hands over its surfaces and its extremities while describing the missing work precisely and focusing on the details, especially the wear and tear of time. Then I speed up the rhythm a little, wrap the work in its Tyvek paper, follow up with its bubblewrap, seal it with adhesive tape and carefully put it back on the pallet. Silence. Then comes a discussion with the guests, sometimes spirited and political – mainly when the city’s handling of artworks crops up – and sometimes more tranquil, when we talk about the experience we have just shared.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #01,
13 DECEMBER 2013,
LIÈGE, BELGIUM

SEPTEMBRE TIBERGHIEU

I’m entering a big light-filled room looking out onto the wide world: a kind of belvedere. Actually there are a number of us going in, first taking off our shoes, then tiptoeing across the floor’s untreated plywood boards. An incense stick is smouldering on the window ledge. There’s also a fly buzzing about, no doubt trying to escape the chill of the oncoming winter. Different odds and ends are spread around. At the far end, on a white stand near the window, is a bubblewrapped artwork sandwiched between two blankets. In a corner, wooden frames, a board and bits of adhesive tape against or on the wall. On the floor, an assemblage comprising a wooden board, two bricks and a branch of a cherry tree seems to have been set up to cast a shadow when the sun is coming from the right angle. Which for the moment it isn’t. In the centre of the room five folded felt blankets are aligned in an arc. Facing them, a piece of duckboard on a bubblewrap mat; on the duckboard is an artwork, or what I suppose is an artwork.



Untitled Ceremony #01 waiting to be activated, Liège, 2013

Béatrice Balcou invites us to sit comfortably, cross-legged, on the blankets. Calm and silence reign. The *ceremony* begins. The artist scrupulously undoes the work’s wrapping, leaving us the time to appreciate her movements. The work initially chosen is missing: for bureaucratic reasons it could not be borrowed, and Balcou has replaced it with another. Picked up on a flea market, this substitute painting – a Greek landscape – is a poor piece of work. In later versions of the same *ceremony* Balcou used a simple wooden board as an abstract projection surface, calling the result a *placebo work*. Even so, during this inaugural performance she describes the missing work in great detail, lingering in particular on

the wounds inflicted by time and damp; and does so with such conviction and sensitivity that I almost succeed in imagining the painting in question for myself. Speech has compensated for act, slipping in between two spheres of recognition: one visual, the other textual. Then, in a movement precise and imbued with gravitas, she wipes the surface of the substitute work with a red cloth. Once again, the imaginary presence of the original is felt more powerfully than its absence: in a way this attentiveness to a gesture of purification gives the original a new lease of life. Moreover, it enhances it, endows it with undreamed-of value. Once re-wrapped with the same precautions and care as before, the painting is out of sight again. End of *ceremony*.

Now the artist invites us to talk. Two or three people have something to say, but there's no real discussion or debate, each of us being lost in a state of mute introspection after this cathartic experience. Via this ritual Béatrice Balcou was out to repair something: nature endangered, perhaps, caught in the snare of culture – or vice versa. In the process she opened up a space, effected a breach in our tangible reality. And we the spectators rushed in. As we left the room I mentioned to the woman who had been sitting beside me that I had been reading Marguerite Duras's *Writing*, in which the author recounts the slow death agony of a fly. I felt that at that moment I understood what Duras was trying to express through that metaphor. Not the feeling of dread when confronted by death, but that of the depth of time.

Written in 2013 on the occasion of one of the presentations of *Untitled Ceremony #01* in Liège.

Untitled Placebo, 2013
after a work by an unknown artist
Birch multiplex, 18.5 × 12 × 2 cm
Production: RAVI, Liège
Photo: Émile Ouroumov



Performance, 45', 2014
With *Paysage* (Landscape), 1870 by Théophile Chauvel,
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #02*

* Part of the exhibition *Calme, luxe et volupté* (Calm, Luxury and Sensuality) at Le Quartier Contemporary Art Centre, Quimper, 31 January–16 February 2014.
Curator: Keren Detton.
Production: Le Quartier, Quimper.

Untitled Ceremony #02 unfolds in an art centre which no longer exists: Le Quartier, in Quimper, Brittany. It takes place in winter, once or twice a day over a week. The morning sessions begin in near-darkness, as we've opted exclusively for natural light. The work we're going to group around – an oil painting by Théophile Chauvel dating from 1870 – belongs to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Quimper. With me are barely a dozen spectators, sitting on the floor on brown removal men's blankets. Sometimes, though, there are only two or three of us. The work is lying flat on the floor, with us sitting around it. I begin the *ceremony* by unfolding the sides of the work's first protective layer: bubblewrap lined with Kraft paper. Next I remove the bits of adhesive tape, followed by the Tyvek paper, the last layer of protection before the work stands revealed to the public. First we see its back and the information to be found there. I lift it by its frame and make it pivot so it can be seen from all sides. Then I place it face up on the Tyvek paper spread out on the floor and it begins to skim over it with a thin silk cloth, as if I were cleaning or healing it. I concentrate on the damaged parts of the work, first with my gestures, then with speech as I describe the restoration work undertaken for an occasional trip out of the museum. This work being devoid of any painterly interest, the museum has put it at the bottom of the restoration list. The surface is extensively crackled and oxidisation has turned the varnish a dark yellow-brown, which makes identifying the details of the landscape very time-consuming. Then a discussion begins – or doesn't begin – with the spectators, who share their impressions. The *ceremony* ends in silence. I fold the Tyvek paper back over the artwork, then the Kraft bubblewrap, as attentively as at the beginning of the ritual – and maybe even a little more slowly, for a fuller awareness of the work's – assisted – departure and then its absence.

Landscape Placebo, 2015
after a work by Théophile Chauvel
Fir, 107 × 89 × 7 cm
Production: Wiels, Brussels
Photo: Béatrice Balcou



Performance, 30', 2014

Performed by Lola Franzen, Anne-Cécile Heussner, Melinda Mucsi, Agnese Negrini, Nathalie Neuser, Elodie Parachini and Keith Wirrell

With *Vitrine (film 3)* (2008) by Bojan Šarčević, Mudam Collection, Luxembourg.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #03*

* Presented at the exhibition *Walk in Beauty*, Casino Luxembourg, 14 July–7 September 2014.
Curators: Kevin Muhlen and Christine Walentiny.
Production: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg.

Twice a week *Untitled Ceremony #03* is activated by three performers as part of my exhibition *Walk in Beauty* at Casino Luxembourg. Each time it takes place outside the usual art-centre hours. For thirty minutes they install, watch and un-install Bojan Šarčević's *Vitrine (film 3)* for a smaller audience. Prior to this the performers practised in a workshop jointly run with the team of registrars at Mudam, the source of the work. They learned how to handle not the original work directly, but a wooden replica, a rehearsal prop I decided to call the *placebo work*. Barefoot and thus in contact with the ground, they wear black clothes and the two pairs of gloves – nitrile under cotton – required for handling the work. Šarčević's sculpture consists of a wood-and-glass display case, inside which objects are arranged on a black paper background. The performers begin by positioning the wooden branch, then the Plexiglass items. The copper leaves are delicate, especially the largest one, which is put in place last. The performers establish visually the trajectory that precedes arranging them in the showcase. Direct, clear and precise, their gestures are free of hesitation and second thoughts. They discern the shape, texture and weight of each piece, then check its stability. Following the artist's indications, the definitive position of the objects is to be determined visually, with reference to the photos of her earlier installations. Once the work is fully installed, the performers contemplate it for a few minutes, alongside the spectators. Then the repackaging begins. The copper and Plexiglass items are wrapped in tissue paper – no pressure should be exerted – then placed on a bed of polystyrene chips and wedged in a cardboard box. These operations are carried out on an adjoining table at the same level as the display case, so as to avoid unnecessary movements. Lastly, two performers bring the cardboard box for the branch, which

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UNTITLED CEREMONY #03, 2014: FORTY MINUTES OF EXTREME ATTENTIVENESS

EVA WITTOCX

*“Art is not about itself but the attention we bring to it. The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”*¹

— Marcel Duchamp

In the performance *Untitled Ceremony #03*, which is part of her exhibition *Walk in Beauty*, Béatrice Balcou invites us to contemplate our understanding of time and how we look at things – in particular works of art. As an artist-in-residence at Casino Luxembourg, the artist worked with a group of seven performers, most of whom had no professional experience, to create a quiet *ceremony* that focused on a work by Bojan Šarčević (which had been borrowed from the collection of Mudam Luxembourg). In a certain way, Balcou stages an encounter between the work and the spectator in the exhibition space. The performances take place twice a week, outside the usual opening hours. On these days Casino Luxembourg is open only to present this performance – which is thus not aimed at the accidental visitor who happens to pass by, but at those who deliberately come to see it.

Balcou goes further than Marcel Duchamp, who at the beginning of the twentieth century claimed that art has to do with the attention the spectator devotes to the work. Duchamp's ready-mades are about what it means to present something within an art context, how the meaning of an object can change, how something acquires value. Balcou, by contrast, is interested in a focused attentiveness that is directed towards the materiality of the work of art and towards viewing behaviour *as such*. In this context, the work of art is not an ephemeral image that must be recognised or consumed quickly – it is a physical materiality.

Most of the works in art collections have their own score, their manual or some document that specifies how the work

1. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

should be preserved and presented to the public in optimal conditions. Balcou is precisely interested in these codes and in the technical particularities that must be met to handle the work. White gloves, tools and packing materials, photographs and written instructions ... All of these elements are telltale of the attention and the extreme care given to objects and works of art. Whereas in her earlier performances the artist took part herself, on this occasion she has enlisted the help of a group of non-professionals and has delegated the actual performance to people who are not particularly familiar with the visual arts. Because of that, the whole of the codes and behaviour acquires a special dimension.

During her stay in residence, the artist and the performers have worked together with professional staff from Mudam Luxembourg. In *Untitled Ceremony #03*, three actors perform a series of gestures to retrieve items from a box and remove carefully the protective wrapping around each item. In the short span of time of *Untitled Ceremony #03*, the spectator is invited to articulate his or her view of art. Equipped with diagrams and instruction leaflets, three persons arrange the items one by one in the showcase destined for the work, the front of which is turned to the public. After a brief moment of shared contemplation, during which the public also discovers the work through the eyes of the performers, the work is returned to its shipping box.

The performance is executed with extreme precision and lasts for forty minutes. The performers do not indulge in presenting a show – they merely focus on presenting the work of art. They exchange only a minimum of words, and when they do, they do so for practical purposes. The lender of the work has advised them with regard to every gesture and every action that involves handling the work, and the performers pay meticulous precision to everything they do. Through this process the spectator learns to appreciate the work more fully, as well as the technical skills that are required for its presentation. In a certain sense, the value of the work increases. At the same time, almost paradoxically, the work is also demystified, for we learn about the installation of the work and its manipulation, about the caution required and the conditions that are prerequisite to make the work possible. Furthermore, the performance takes place in the exhibition space where elements that have to do with its preparation are also visible: there is a wooden copy of the work that was used to practise, and a photograph

with traces of fluorescent orange paint that shows how to touch the work when manipulating it. These elements help to contextualise the frailty and value of the work. The silk veils that have been hung also add to the sacred and hidden character of the events that take place in the public glass space of the Casino Luxembourg. In the course of the performance, all these different – apparently contradictory – aspects create a tension that comes together in a unique fragment of time: the moment we contemplate Bojan Šarčević's sculpture.



Rehearsal of *Untitled Ceremony #03*, Casino Luxembourg, 2014

A study conducted in various museums has revealed that the public contemplates a work of art on average for between two and seven seconds. The average spectator actually spends more time reading the captions and texts on the wall than looking at the works themselves. In his book *How to Use Your Eyes*, James Elkins writes about people who every day of their whole adult life go to the museum to look at just one painting: “You have to listen to it, and think something in response, and look again, and see how the work has changed. You have to believe that you can have an ongoing, evolving relationship with something that is unchanging. Many people might say that is impossible. Looking for a long time is not the usual way people see artworks. The usual interaction with an artwork is a glance or a glimpse or a cursory look. What I have in mind is not just glancing, but looking, staring, gazing, sitting or standing transfixed: forgetting, temporarily, the errands you have to run, or the meeting you’re late for, and thinking, living, only inside the work. Falling in love with an artwork, finding that you somehow need it, wanting to return to it, wanting to keep it in your life.”²

In *Untitled Ceremony #03*, the performers accompany us in an attentive experience of the work: no cursory, superficial glances – we take the time to contemplate

2. James Elkins, “How Long Does it Take to Look at a Painting”, in: *The Huffington Post*, 11 August 2010. See also James Elkins, *How to Use Your Eyes*, New York/London: Routledge, 2000.

a third performer gently puts into place. All the cartons must then be stacked in order of size in a very large transport crate. Between performances, the display case and the wooden crate remain visible in the exhibition. Sometimes the performance takes place with no spectators at all.

the work in ideal circumstances. During a *ceremony* that unfolds in absolute serenity the performers lead our glance as if we were living a magical moment. The time we spend in front of the work is stretched and draws us into a different mode of attentiveness. The composure radiated by the three performers plays an essential part here. Their attitude is in fact completely neutral – their practical gestures and actions are not coloured by their emotions or the expressions on their faces. Balcou refers to a certain “absorption” in the now of the moment. The glance of the performers initiates and completes their actions. Their calm is passed on to the public. The performance makes the public more conscious of things and of themselves, precisely by emphasising the materiality of objects, of works of art, tools, glances, gestures, space, time, the performer and the spectator. The artist refers to the Japanese tea ceremony, with its carefully orchestrated gestures, or to a frame of mind that is related to yoga, a discipline in which body and mind are in harmony.

This attitude is radically different from the one we adopt when we do things routinely or move on automatic pilot. The different levels of consciousness that guide our daily actions are described by Virginia Woolf in her autobiographical text “A Sketch of the Past” (1939). Woolf distinguishes between actions in everyday life that we really experience (*moments of being*) and those we do not experience consciously (*moments of non-being*).³ What makes these actions different is not their nature, but the intensity of the feeling that accompanies them. According to Woolf, the moments we experience intensely make us understand better the essence of life. They open a window onto a much vaster dimension beyond the superficiality of the everyday. It is precisely this sort of experience we get access to during Balcou’s performance: during the *ceremony* – the encounter between the work and the spectator – we are, for a brief moment, more aware of the here and now.

At a time when everyone is constantly photographing the surroundings and sharing images (and works of art) on Internet and the social media, the focus is in this instance on the object as a physical and material entity. In this performance, Balcou succeeds in exposing so-called hidden situations and making us aware of the specific construction

3. Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past”, in: *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, London: The Hogarth Press, 1976.

of the work of art. Unlike performances that seek an emphatic link with theatre or dance, Balcou's new work subscribes to the serenity that is typical of the visual arts. And unlike in the artist's two previous performances, *Untitled Ceremony #01* and *#02*, in this case, language – which always fails to translate reality adequately – is banned. *Untitled Ceremony #03* does not tell a story. It is being itself that is inscribed in a temporary, specific fragment of space, of time, of the spectator. In today's consumer society in which an incessant stream of images sponges on our attention and concentration, the work of Bojan Šarčević, selected among so many other works, becomes – thanks to Béatrice Balcou's performance – the focus of all attention, the symbol of an instant that tears itself loose from the everyday hustle and bustle of social life.

First published in: Béatrice Balcou, *Untitled*, Casino Luxembourg, 2014. Translated from the Dutch by Dirk Verbiest.

SUBJECT Vitrine (film 3) / "Walk in Beauty" by Béatrice Balcou
23 Apr. 2014 11:52
FROM Marie-Noëlle Farcy
TO Bojan Šarčević
CC Béatrice Balcou, Christine Walentiny, Lisa Baldelli,
Veronique de Alzua, Charlotte Masse

Dear Bojan,

We were in touch a few years ago regarding "Only after Dark / Untitled (film 5)", which that Mudam purchased and then exhibited in 2009. You might know that the museum acquired a second piece "Vitrine (film 3)", closely linked to the series "Only after Dark".

We have been recently asked by the Casino, the contemporary art centre of Luxembourg, to loan the vitrine within the frame of an art project by Béatrice Balcou, entitled "Walk in Beauty". I enclosed a presentation that will give you an idea of the process. Among the collections in Luxembourg that Béatrice had the opportunity to visit, she selected "Vitrine (film 3)", a choice I can easily understand: besides its museographical form, "Vitrine (film 3)" creates a powerful inner landscape.

The work would be loaned for the whole exhibition, from 11 July to 7 September 2014, but will be displayed packed during the opening time. The project consists in training a small group of people to safely manipulate the work in order for three of them to perform a ceremony – to use Beatrice's term – that takes place according to a fixed schedule, before or after the opening time. The ceremony is organised into three steps: unpacking and installation, contemplation, dis-installation and packing.

We have already been discussing with Béatrice and the Casino the way the process of unpacking and packing should be simplified in order to protect the various elements of the work. For example, the black paper used would not be the original one and the glass wouldn't be fixed to avoid screwing and unscrewing too many times. Of course, Mudam registrars will be involved and will make sure the elements are manipulated appropriately. Our main concern is to ensure the good conservation of the piece.

Due to the nature of this project, it would be important to get your thoughts. The placebo created at this occasion will become a work in itself that could be exhibited by Béatrice in the future, clearly mentioning the reference work and the context of creation.

I hope my description is clear enough, but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get back to us. In cc of this message, you will find Béatrice and Christine, who is working in the Casino and is responsible for the project.

We look forward to hearing from you,
With best wishes,
Marie-Noëlle

Marie-Noëlle Farcy
Curator/Head of Collection

Vitrine (film 3) Placebo, 2014
after a work by Bojan Šarčević
Beechwood, paper, 187 × 125 × 80 cm
Production: Casino Luxembourg –
Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg
Photo: Émile Ouroumov



Performance, 50', 2014
 Performed with Agnese Negrini
 With *Bain de Lumière* (1998) by Ann Veronica Janssens,
 Cera / M Museum Collection, Leuven.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #04*

* Presented at the Playground Festival, 13–16 November 2014,
 at the M Museum, Leuven.
 Curators: Eva Wittocx and Steven Vandervelden.
 Production: M Museum, Leuven.

In 2014, I performed *Untitled Ceremony #04* in a conference room on the top floor of the M Museum in Leuven, with its panoramic view of the city. Scattered around the floor were folded blankets for the spectators to sit on. For almost an hour my assistant and I would be installing and uninstalling Ann Veronica Janssens' sculpture *Bain de Lumière* (Light Bath; 1998), borrowed from the museum's collection. We begin by filling four 35-litre spherical fish tanks with water; stacked one on top of the other, they form a column. Various tools are laid out on a trolley: a spirit level, to make sure each tank is exactly horizontal and will not make the column tip over; protective sheets; a strainer for removing any dust from the water; towels for the drops of water on the tanks; plastic film to cover the top tank; a box-cutter to trim the film to size, rendering it invisible; plastic piping for siphoning the water; paper tissues for wiping down the tanks before repackaging them; and information cards regarding the borrowed work, to be handed out at the end of the *ceremony*. Over by the wall are jerrycans of distilled water, fifteen buckets for the siphoned-off water, and a stepladder that enables me to reach the top of the column. Once the work is in place, I open the curtains for a few minutes and we look at it together with the audience: we can make out the reflections of the city, inverted and slightly distorted by the magnifying effect of the water in the tanks, as were all our gestures during the handling of the work. Finally we close the curtains and set about dismantling Ann Veronica Janssens' piece. Our gestures are in harmony with the waiting period required by the emptying and drying of each tank.

“There is no reality that does not come with a cloud of potentialities following it like its shadow. Every existence can become an incentive, a suggestion or the seed of something else, the fragment of a new future reality. Every existence becomes by right unfinished.”

— David Lapoujade,
Les Existences moindres

Of the fourteen “Untitled Ceremonies” Béatrice Balcou has performed since 2013, the fourth, *Untitled Ceremony #04*, presented at the M Museum in Leuven in November 2014 as part of the Playground Festival, is undoubtedly the one in which the question of time and the experience of its passing looms largest. The central role played by water, one of the source work's main components, has a lot to do with this. The work in question, part of the museum's collection, is a sculpture by Belgian artist Ann Veronica Janssens titled *Bain de lumière* (1998). Emblematic of her focus on perception, light and space, it comprises four spherical glass containers of identical size, filled with water and stacked vertically to form a column. In line with Balcou's principle for her *ceremonies*, the performance will last some fifty minutes, the time needed for unpacking and installing the work, a brief period of contemplation, then dismantling and repacking.



Untitled Ceremony #04 waiting to be activated, M Museum, Leuven, 2014

The venue chosen by Balcou for the presentation of *Untitled Ceremony #04* isn't part of the museum's usual circuit. It's not an exhibition space, but a conference room known as the *loge* to the museum team. To reach it the spectators had to pass through several other rooms seen by the artist as forming a kind of physical and symbolic threshold between the performance space and the outside world. As for each of her *ceremonies*, she had meticulously prepared the setting, paying

particular attention to the lighting and the arrangement of objects. The ochre curtains running the length of the wide bay window giving onto the city were three-quarters closed, letting in a little natural light on one side, while the thirty or so bulbs forming a kind of constellation around the room were all lit.¹

On arrival the spectators saw, in the middle of the space, the four cartons holding the glass containers, together with a small wooden base. Facing the cartons in three arcs of circles were twenty-five art transport blankets, folded to serve as cushions; along the curtain behind them were eighteen buckets of water, each covered with a square of cardboard to keep out dust. Nearby, in a corner, was a group of jerrycans, also containing water.² In addition, there were various items on a cart: rags, a sieve, tarpaulins, plastic film and a spirit level. “Nothing more”, to quote the sixteenth-century Japanese tea master Sen no Rikyū on the essence of *chanoyu*, the tea ceremony that is one of the sources of inspiration for Béatrice Balcou’s performances. In the introduction to a recent interview, she commented on this expression in terms that implicitly reflect her own conception of space: “The Japanese tea ceremony can be seen as an art of relating, and that’s the thing that interested me most. It takes place in a subdued space where there’s not much of anything – but a carefully calculated ‘not much’. The tea master goes about his movements attentively, using meticulously chosen objects that blend the useful and the ornamental and handling them in ways reflecting the season, the location and the guests.”³ Everything, in the configuration envisioned by the artist for *Untitled Ceremony #04*, contributed to offering the spectator a spatial and temporal parenthesis, a suspension of time and space.

During the performance, the gestures of the artist and her assistant showed the same meticulousness, motivated by the extreme fragility of Ann Veronica Janssens’ work, and the same economy of means: lift the glass containers out of the cardboard boxes, remove them from their bubblewrap, place a first container on the wooden base, fill it with water to the brim, carefully place the second container, check with a spirit

level that it has been placed correctly, fill it with water, and so on until the installation of the work is complete. The curtains were then opened, leaving the image of the city reflected, upside down, in each of the containers. After a few minutes of collective contemplation, the curtains were closed and the dismantling of the sculpture began. One by one, the containers were emptied using the siphon technique: pipes were plunged into the water and, once the siphons had been primed by suction, the water flowed into the buckets. The containers were then wiped dry, repacked and finally returned to their cardboard boxes.



Rehearsal of *Untitled Ceremony #04*, M Museum, Leuven, 2014

Each action here is essential and part of a gestural continuity with a single goal: the installation, contemplation and ultimate dismantling of the work. At a far remove from any spiritual dimension, this is the primary meaning given by Béatrice Balcou to the term *ceremony*. As in the *chanoyu*, which simply consists of “boiling water, steeping tea and drinking it”,⁴ everything converges towards the experiencing of the work. There results an atmosphere of absorption free of any form of theatricality, “an insistent duration, a duration whose importance is made perceptible and necessary”, as Florence Cheval has noted.⁵ Absorbed in their gestures, the performers carry the spectators along with them, in an experience that becomes collective.

In the specific case of *Untitled Ceremony #04*, this “absorbed” temporality, fruit of the harmonising of the gestures of the performers with the contemplative experience of the spectators, combines with that embodied, concretely and metaphorically, by water. It is above all water that determines the time of the performance, its duration and its flow. Over and above the gestures

1. The lighting system and overall layout of the room were designed by Stéphane Beel, the museum’s architect.
2. These cans match the provisions of the protocol for this work, which the artist had to adapt to meet the technical requirements of the performance. The cans remain in sight, however, “for the process to be as transparent as possible” (conversation with the artist, March 2020).
3. *Béatrice Balcou* in “Digressions” (Noisiel: La Ferme du Buisson/Valence: Captures Éditions, 2018), p. 4.

4. Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), quoted in Sen Soshitsu XV, postface to Kakuzō Okakura, *Le Livre du thé*, trans. Corinne Atlan and Zéno Blanu (Arles: Philippe Picquier, 2006).
5. Florence Cheval, “Béatrice Balcou. Des gestes de l’attention”, *Gestes en éclats – Art, danse et performance* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2016), p. 77.

that punctuate it, the time frame of *Untitled Ceremony #04* is first and foremost that of the work by Ann Veronica Janssens: the singular time frame of its appearance, its ephemeral presence and its disappearance; the rhythm of its existence, of its respiration. It is around this time frame that the other temporalities are braided together: those of gesture and gaze, and of life too, as it takes its course in the world outside. The *ceremony*, a moment on hold in the flow of the everyday, is also the special moment when temporalities intertwine.

This meshing extends into the *placebo works* that Balcou produces in connection with each of her *ceremonies*. She has often emphasised the complex, ambiguous, elusive nature of these wooden replicas of the works from which she develops her performances. “They’re hard to define, as if they had no status of their own”, she says.⁶ The first of them, *Vitrine (film 3) Placebo* (2013), was made at the same time as Balcou was preparing *Untitled Ceremony #03* as an aid to learning how to handle the performance’s source sculpture by Bojan Šarčević. Starting with *Untitled Ceremony #04*, however, the *placebo works* rapidly became more autonomous. Composed of four wooden volumes replicating the contours of Ann Veronica Janssens’ sculpture, *Bain de lumière placebo* (2014) was exhibited in its own right at the museum for the few days when the performance was scheduled. Subsequently it was regularly featured in installations, interacting with other *placebo works* in, for example, *Apostrophes silencieuses* (Silent Apostrophes), presented at Wiels in Brussels in 2015. Béatrice Balcou sees these “traces”, these “ghosts” of the original works, as the very image of a crossroads in time. Of *Apostrophes silencieuses* she has said: “The *placebos* are objects that come into being and anticipate at the same time, and it was this temporal complexity that I wanted to conjure up, rather than narratives. Then again, making and handling them and including them in the exhibition gave rise to a host of narratives...”⁷

This combination of temporal complexity and narrative multiplicity permeate her entire oeuvre and constitute its vital spark. By availing herself of the practice of other artists, by devoting her work to other works, by striving to create the right conditions for their appearance, and by giving them attention, care, support and assistance, the artist reminds us that

the existence of works of art extends far beyond their mere physical presence and is continuously drawing lines in time and space. These lines link the works back to their founding intuitions and the ideas they triggered, the gestures that generated them and those they generated, and to their hidden, unfinished dimension. In this respect the works pass through the multiplicity of worlds described by David Lapoujade in his remarkable book *Les Existences moindres* (Lesser Existences), a study of French philosopher Étienne Souriau and his ideas about different modes of existence. “A being”, Lapoujade says in his introduction, “can take part in several planes of existence, as if he belonged to several worlds. An individual exists in this world; he exists as a body, he exists as a ‘psyche’, but he also exists as a reflection in a mirror, a theme, an idea or a memory in somebody else’s mind. These are all ways of existing on other planes. In this sense humans are plurimodal, multi-modal realities; and what we call ‘world’ is in fact the locus of various ‘interworlds’, of an intertwining of planes.”⁸

Works of art, Béatrice Balcou suggests, are beings of this kind. Her entire oeuvre is aimed at making tangible the many ways artworks have of existing: their different modes of existence, beginning with the most fragile, the most evanescent. As an artist, she is both witness and counsel. It is in this sense that we must understand the temporal complexity and narrative multiplicity she makes the core of her practice. It is here, too, that the scope of the forms of effacement, discretion⁹ and silence that guide her work and her thinking is to be found. It is by making room for the “lesser existences” and “clouds of potentialities” surrounding works of art that the too-often hidebound certainties on the subject can crack. In terms that fit so well with Béatrice Balcou’s *ceremonies*, David Lapoujade writes: “We are entering a world where the solidity of bodies, sharpness of contours and fixity of images are being dissipated, to be replaced by verbs affecting every mode of existence: appear, disappear, reappear.”¹⁰

6. “Béatrice Balcou” in *Digressions*, op. cit., p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8. David Lapoujade, *Les Existences moindres* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2017), pp. 13–14.
9. See also *Béatrice Balcou*, op. cit., pp. 6–8.
10. David Lapoujade, op. cit., p. 92.

SUBJECT Bain de lumière – installation instructions
5 Sept.2014 17:11
FROM Tine D'haeyere
TO Béatrice Balcou
CC Lore Boon, Eva Wittocx

Dear Béatrice,

I was in contact with Ann Veronica Janssens. She gave me these installation instructions for Bain de lumière:

The aquariums should be clean, placed on a flat surface, you first fill one completely with demineralised water and then delicately place another one on the top and fill that too (tree time). How long will the sculpture be visible? Normally I protect the top surface from the dust with a transparent foil, like alimentary foil, well stretched on the surface and after I cut the side, then it looks invisible (maybe it's necessary to train in this manipulation beforehand).

She is currently abroad and will be back in Belgium on the 21st of September. You can call her after her return. She will be pleased to provide you with more information.

Best wishes,
Tine D'haeyere

SUBJECT Re: Untitled Ceremony, Collection CERA / Musée M
2 Oct.2014 14:26
FROM Ann Veronica Janssens
TO Béatrice Balcou

Bonjour Béatrice

Merci pour la proposition, nous pouvons nous appeler et prendre un café. J'habite dans le sud de Bruxelles, vous pouvez passer chez moi ou bien on pourrait par exemple se rencontrer au « bar du matin » ?

Je suis à Bruxelles ces prochains jours excepté mardi prochain

amicalement
Ann Veronica Janssens

Bain de Lumière Placebo, 2014
after a work by Ann Veronica Janssens
Beechwood, 128 x 40 x 40 cm
Cera / M Museum Collection, Leuven
Photo: Sven Laurent



Performance, 35', 2015

With a 16th-century sculpture, private collection, Belgium.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #05*

* Performed on 21 & 26 March 2015 during the Kaaithheater's Performatik Festival at Don Verboven Exquisite Objects, Brussels, curator: Katleen Van Langendonck; and on 15 & 16 November 2019 during the Playground Festival at M Museum, Leuven, curators: Eva Wittocx, Lore Boon and Steven Vandervelden. Production: Kaaithheater, Brussels.

When all the spectators are seated in a circle around the crated work and its base, I welcome them, sometimes in several languages if the geographical context warrants it. I indicate the duration of the *ceremony* – 35 minutes – then ask everyone to turn off their phones and refrain from taking photos. I begin by opening the crate, then one by one I remove the protective wrappings, install the sculpture on its base and adjust its position. My gestures are carried out silently and cautiously, like those of people installing a work of art. The wooden sculpture is very fragile and has to be held by the middle and at the same time supported from underneath. I have to be very careful with the central part, the back and the hair, which are losing a little wood dust. Sometimes I carry it tenderly, like a newborn baby in need of special care. It seems to respond to my breathing, my steps, my arm movements and my touch through the gloves I'm wearing. We're attuned to each other. After we've all looked at the work together – the *ceremony* has an audience of thirty or so – it disappears back into its packaging and then into its crate. In the first version of the *ceremony*, in 2015, the work was packaged in a black plastic box and wedged in with pieces of polyethylene foam. When I performed the *ceremony* again, in 2019, the work had found a new owner and was protected in a very heavy transport crate. On the inside was foam that had been hollowed out to match the sculpture's contours. The work itself was a reliquary of St John from northern Italy, probably dating from the early 16th century.

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of the exhibition, the work is a familiar friend, whom I am sad to see packed up and returned home, or sent onwards on its journey. Initially, in considering Balcou's *ceremonies*, I thought of them as exhibitions in miniature, slowed down in time and reduced in focus to one artwork. However, in reconsidering them now, I see that each *ceremony* is in fact a high-speed exhibition, its installation, presentation and de-installation squashed into the space of some forty minutes, forcing the viewer (and curator) to attempt all the conversations and circulations, compressing the process of growing understanding and affection that normally take place over several weeks or months into the space of just a few minutes. "Within the *ceremonies*, we experience multiple temporalities", writes Balcou, "that of installing the work, that of contemplation, the moments when the work isn't yet completely installed but is nevertheless observed, the moments when we discover the work as it should be shown... Precisely because of this deceleration of the gaze, the *ceremonies* can be an agreeable moment for some, and a challenge for others."¹²

In her embracing of slowness, silence and boredom, there is a radicality in Balcou's work that runs as a counter-current to our society of speed, verbosity and spectacle. With humour, which undercuts any risk of pretension, Balcou offers a nuanced alternative to today's culture of "likes", to the pervasive positivity fostered by consumerism and fuelled by social media. It is not that she inverts such typically "negative" qualities, but more that she allows space and time for them to exist and for us to encounter them. This pause that she offers, this suspension of judgement, this lack of immediate resolution or even commentary makes for an in-between space that feels increasingly necessary. As such, she challenges the edict to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative, and don't mess with Mister In-Between.¹³

Children's Trolley (I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew) Placebo, 2015

after a work by Rodney Graham
Fir, 42 × 43 × 21 cm
Production: Wiels, Brussels
Photo: Sven Laurent

12. Béatrice Balcou, *Un-Scene III*, op. cit., note 5, pp. 2–3.

13. Johnny Mercer & the Pied Pipers, chorus to *Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive* (1944), American anthem of post-war positivity.





Exhibition view *Un-Scene III*, Wiels, Brussels, 2015. Photo: Sven Laurent

Performance, 2 hours, 2015

With *Hard Measure Placebo* by Béatrice Balcou, a small-scale wooden replica of *Hard Measure* (2006) by Claire Barclay.

UNTITLED PERFORMANCE #03*

* Performed as part of the New Festival at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2015, curator: Florencia Chernajovsky; and at the exhibitions *Se prendre au jeu: rêves, répétitions et autres détours* (*The artist is a mysterious entertainer*) at FRAC Franche Comté 2015, curator: Vanessa Desclaux; and *Your Hands in My Shoes*, La Galerie Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisy-le-Sec, 2016–2017, curators: Vanessa Desclaux and Émilie Renard. Production: FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon.

I'm kneeling, but I could just as easily be standing, given that my movements are adapted to the performance space. I slide open the lid of a wooden box containing a small-scale wooden replica of a work by the artist Claire Barclay. One by one I take out the various components of the sculpture and put them on the floor, each in its own place. As in the *ceremonies*, my gestures are precise and attentive. I'm focused. Several times during the next two hours, under the watchful eyes of visitors passing through the museum, I construct and deconstruct this "travelling sculpture" with myself inside and outside its volumes. I begin by manually assembling four dovetailed battens; this forms a frame to which only three uprights are screwed, thus making a fragile table. Then I take two thin strips of wood, slide them together horizontally and edge to edge, and place this new assemblage on the table, slightly offset towards the missing leg area so as to restore a precarious balance. It's a tricky exercise. Then I take a long, folded, strip of light beige faux suede and unfold it over the table frame so that it runs down to the floor. Lastly, as in a children's building game, I place a group of geometric shapes on the fabric: cones, cubes, cylinders and pyramids. A narrow piece of wood placed on the floor between the two legs of the table completes the installation of this *placebo work*. I step back, study the sculpture and adjust the details from memory. In the event of any doubts as to how the objects should be arranged, I take a quick look at the photo of the Claire Barclay work in the box. Maintaining the same rhythm and level of intensity, I lift out the narrow piece of wood and begin dismantling. Being constantly in progress, the work appears in its final form for only a few seconds before being dismantled once again and taking on other configurations. When

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Until the late 18th century and the somewhat belated appearance of the notion of artistic originality, academic tradition had put the copy and its pedagogical virtues at the core of the learning process. Even in the 19th century, writes Florence Rionnet, "the plaster-cast reproduction was still the reflection – the very embodiment – of its model, a 'true, positive, complete reproduction different from the original only in terms of its material.' ... Thus did the double replace its model in the unconscious, with supremacy being granted to inventiveness, to the *cosa mentale*. The 'originality' of the artwork lay not in its mere materiality, but in the very concept it was conveying – in the Idea and its formal transcription."¹

Since she began her *placebo* sculpture series (2014, ongoing), Béatrice Balcou has been formally transcribing the works of other artists including Nina Beier, Rodney Graham, Ann Veronica Janssens, Liz Magor, Kazuko Miyamoto, Bojan Šarčević, and Pierre Tal Coat. Through a radical transubstantiation – the conversion of materials as diverse as glass, metal, paint, water, and photo and video images into the living matter that is wood – the *placebos* are intended to highlight the material character of art while avoiding the pitfalls of petrification and mummification. These ligneous translations have their origins in Balcou's *Cérémonies sans titre* (Untitled Ceremonies), performances devoted to the displaying of works of which she is not the creator. Each of these events meticulously assembles the concrete conditions for close observation, offering the attentive eye an object exhibited in its naked physicality before being rounded off, at the end of the session, by the information on its label. Free of distorting or biased appropriation, Balcou's performative framework guides and restores the patient perception required by the work of art, whose auratic element is tending to decline in the age of its widespread technical reproducibility. Paradoxically, in this case replication provides a means of circumventing the detrimental effects of reproduction.

1. Florence Rionnet, "Les multiples en sculpture face à l'originalité", in *De main de maître. L'artiste et le faux* (Paris: Hazan, 2009).

Initially intended as a training tool, the *placebo* replica allows Balcou to rehearse her handling of the absent original with no danger of damage – in the same harmless way, that is, as wooden beginner’s implements like the Kung Fu sabre and the Tai Chi ball, both from disciplines Balcou herself practises. The *placebos* are also evocative of Friedrich Fröbel’s *Spielgaben*, playful educational objects or gifts whose simple geometrical forms lend themselves to creative observation and activity. In *Untitled Performance 03* (2015) Balcou, in the wake of Fröbel’s famous construction game and its influence on architects Buckminster Fuller, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and numerous Bauhaus alumni, enjoys assembling and disassembling *Hard Measures Placebo* (2015), a scaled-down wooden copy of a work by Claire Barclay, whose cubes, pyramids and other volumes are brought together as miniature columns, domes and buildings. Balcou first presents them in their original configuration, then endows them with a new mode of existence by re-combining them at will.



Untitled Performance #03, Nouveau Festival, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2015

Her series of sculptures were initially shown as echoes to the performances – by-products functioning as prompts for the originals and the contemplative experience. The point, however, was not to spot the similarities and differences between the original and the copy, but rather to prolong and maintain a certain quality of perceptual attentiveness. Balcou’s ceremonies take their inspiration from another type of protocol – that of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Meticulously codified, this measured, pared-down ritual is above all an art of relating: as the adage of Sen no Rikyū, master of the pure and simple, has it, “This occasion, this meeting”.

Gradually the series of *placebo* replicas gained in autonomy, being exhibited independently of the ceremonies and thus of the source works, but without ever being dissociated from them. Each *placebo* functions as a system of constant cross-referencing between copy and original. In a kind

of silent appeal to our imaging capacity, this system oscillates between recollection (of the vision offered to the attendees during the ceremony) and projection (what the person looking at the *placebo* can imagine of the absent work). Far from a challenge to erudition, Balcou’s sculptures are, on the contrary, an invitation to discover works other than themselves, probably first of all through their illustrative images. Then, like a pendulum, our thoughts can swing back to their initial – and yet second – object of contemplation. Balcou thus disrupts while taking advantage of the conventional mode of dissemination and thereby establishes an unprecedented circulation of forms and images.

As the artist has stated, she prefers “working with what’s already there rather than imposing new forms”.² As close as possible to the general features of the original work, whose silhouette and proportions are maintained, the *placebos* obey a formal reductionism, accentuated by the levelling use of a single material. Nonetheless, close observation of different sculptures reveals a variety of species chosen according to the models in question: softwoods like beech are more responsive to being worked manually, while hardwoods such as oak are better suited to machining. Natural shades and patterns can likewise be decisive: the veins and knots of fir were chosen for their evocativeness in *Landscape Placebo* (2015), while the inexpensive walnut and cedar of *She Falls Down Placebo* (2017) serve as a counterpoint to the sophisticated materials of Susan Collis’s original.

Similar in appearance to the wooden prototypes of craft objects, the *placebos* tend to give rise to artistic archetypes: archetypes or model work types. Here reduction is also expansion (less is more). The dominant aspect of the encounter is its equivocal character, essentially dialectical rather than merely dualistic. At once “memory and omen”, to borrow from Jean-Christophe Bailly’s commentary on the Fayum funerary portraits, the *placebos* are sculptural embodiments of a threshold, tangible markers of the endless slide from appearance to disappearance. In a further paradox, they remind us in an intensely material way that art can never be reduced to its pure materiality, a materiality ignorant of the physical and symbolic networks of which it is a part.

This probably explains the choice of medical terminology. The notion of placebo

2. *Digressions: Béatrice Balcou* (Noisiel: La Ferme du Buisson/Valence: Captures éditions, 2018).

the performance is not taking place, the wooden replica of *Hard Measure*, *Hard Measure Placebo* is displayed: assembled, partly assembled or stowed away in its box.

relates not exactly to falsehood and trickery, but rather to the capacity of a so-called “inert substance” to produce real effects. An exemplary expression of body-mind interaction, this therapeutic phenomenon – which by the way also contributes to the effectiveness of active substances – hinges partly on the decisive impact of the care context and relationship provided for the patient. Become artworks in their own right, Balcou’s replicas have acquired full legitimacy, in the same way as the miraculous copy of the Image of Edessa. Regarded by the Orthodox Church as the first icon, this imprint of Christ’s face on a mandylion (literally, “a piece of fabric used to cover the head”) is said in a tenth-century variant to have been accompanied by two copies as well as a replica to which part of the healing power of its model was transmitted.

In short, Béatrice Balcou’s body of work functions as an apparatus of dissident vision, a system for intensifying a gaze embodied in time and space. Discreetly, in a minor mode, the artist stands up against the oppression of permanent visibility and the excesses of the individuation of creativity. Initially an art of disappearance, this sculptural and performative practice enables Balcou’s works and those of the artists she is championing to truly appear. By partially pulling out of the game of appearances, she allows us to truly pay attention to it: “What matters is to assist the world, that is to say to accept on the one hand not to be first, not to be at the centre or at the origin, and on the other hand to support what is, to put oneself at the service not of oneself: balloon, chimera or lie, nor of the Other: tyrant or fantasy, but of every thing, every being, every moment.”³

3. Pierre Zaoui, *La discrétion ou l’art de disparaître* (Paris: Autrement, 2013).

Performance, 35', 2017
CNAP Collection, Paris

With *She Falls Down* (2009) by Susan Collis, CNAP Collection, Paris.

UNTITLED CEREMONY #10*

* Performed at La Galerie, CAC, Noisy-le-Sec, 20 May 2017, curators: Émilie Renard and Vanessa Desclaux; La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, 3 June 2017, curator: Julie Pellegrin; FRAC Brittany, Rennes, France, 24 April 2018, curators: Anne Dary, Catherine Elkar and Sophie Kaplan; La Nouvelle Adresse (CNAP), Pantin, France, 15–16 September 2018, curator: Juliette Pollet and M Museum (Playground Festival), Leuven, 15–16 November 2019, curators: Eva Wittocx, Lore Boon and Steven Vandervelden. Production: Commissioned by the CNAP, National Centre for Visual Arts, *Untitled Ceremony #10* was a coproduction with La Galerie, Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisy-le-Sec, and La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel.

The audience is seated close together on stools around the transport crate containing Susan Collis's *She Falls Down*. I inform them of the duration of the *ceremony* and ask them not to take photos. I sit down near the crate, grip it between my knees and remove with an electric screwdriver one by one the fourteen screws holding down its lid. Each screw is then placed – first the point, then the head – on the lid. My body hardly moves; the crate revolves on its casters. I then put the screws in a plastic cup. Now I circle the crate, gathering up the rubber tips that cushion the impact of the screws on the wood. Once I've got them all, I put them in my pocket. Now I slide the lid along the crate, tilt it slightly so I can carry it and prop it against the wall. I do the same with the sheet of polyethylene foam – the second protective layer – as I uncover the work's components. Returning to the crate, I gently shift it to one side so as to leave room for the work in the centre of the circle. I position myself on my knees, facing the crate. Inside, the work's five components have been wrapped in tissue paper and set in compartments cut to size. I put on nitrile gloves to extract the components one by one from the crate and remove their tissue paper. Each element is carried in both hands, with one hand always underneath. Check out the spot where the work will be installed, then place the pieces one by one on the floor – the most fragile last of all – and if necessary I adjust them according to a photo the artist has left in the crate, together with the installation protocol. Looking like DIY leftovers, the components take up about a square metre of floor space: three boards studded with nails and two bent hinges. The materials are semiprecious – Lebanese cedar, oak, American holly, walnut, lemon wood, Douglas fir, white and yellow gold, silver, Brazilian agate, smoked topaz, garnet, aluminium overlaid with gold leaf – as you can see by observing

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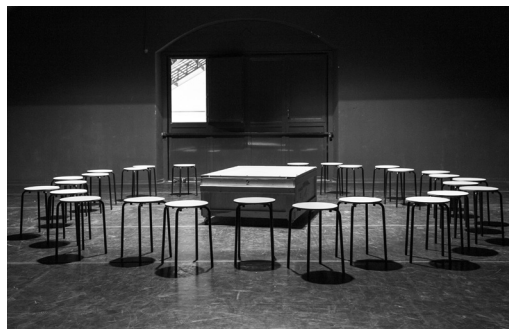
Last month I came upon this visiting card handed out by Béatrice Balcou at the end of her *Untitled Ceremony #10*.² Forming a tight circle around the artist, we had watched as she unwrapped and installed on the floor what seemed to be just a bunch of strips of wood and old bent nails. Intrigued by the care she was lavishing on them, we became more attentive, leaning in to discover exotic woods and precious stones and metals. The choice of English artist Susan Collis's sculpture *She Falls Down*, had seemed to me especially emblematic of Balcou's work; like her, Collis questions art's production structures and spectator expectations as to its display and value. Now, though, it's the title that I find striking. *She Falls Down* involves building materials supposed to come together and form something, but this thing – or person – has fallen apart, revealing its skeleton and its fragility. Who is this *she*? And why does *she* move me so much in Béatrice Balcou's presentation of her?

These questions bring me to recent thinking about care – which, to paraphrase Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, I would define here as an ethico-political imperative to think in a world that is human and more than human³ – and to the conviction that Balcou's work is more political than it may appear.

Care means a chain of technical and affective acts aimed at maintaining life and the living world, and Balcou is speculating about the possible equivalent of this chain

1. The title is a reference to the conclusion of Yvonne Rainer's *No Manifesto* of 1965. Then at the beginning of her career as a choreographer, Rainer publicly said “No to moving or being moved” – a stance she would later moderate.
2. The presentation referred to here took place in June 2017 as part of the Performance Day festival at La Ferme du Buisson.
3. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p.1. For Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, “more than human worlds” include “objects, other animals, living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities and humans”.

in the production, conservation, circulation and reception of art. For the past ten years or so she has been designing her *Untitled Ceremonies* as profane rituals for taking care of the works of other artists. Over time she has developed a singular, heterogeneous style embracing gestures that are technical, learned from art professionals;⁴ choreographic, deriving from task-oriented dance;⁵ ritual, borrowed from the tea ceremony; theatrical, inspired by bunraku;⁶ and a range of affective gestures such as one might bestow on one's children, the sick, lovers and the deceased. Like every ritual, her *ceremonies* demand skills, a trained body and perfect execution. Concretely this is an expression of a physical engagement with the world that could be described as materialist in that it suggests a way of using tools and interacting with materials as well as organising bodily movement, energy circulation and spatial layout. Moreover, it offers passive resistance to the widespread violence that is damaging our social and natural environments.



Untitled Ceremony #10, La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, 2017

For Béatrice Balcou, the artist's gestures cannot only be productive; they must be meaningful, *imbued* with something. Her gestures bear witness to what sustains and perpetuates the life of artworks, by making visible activities that are socially less valued than those of the artist: those of technicians, curators and mediators. By connecting her gestures to theirs in an unbroken chain, she affirms an interdependence essential to the survival and life of art and its institutions. This ethic goes hand in hand with deliberate self-effacement: she chooses not to put herself centre-stage, but to *accompany* – as in bunraku, whose

performers unobtrusively put themselves at the service of another body, that of the puppet. The titles of her pieces are borrowed from the vocabulary of care, either medical/social (*Placebo Works*, *Assistant Pieces*) or magico-ritual (*Untitled Ceremonies*). These works are intended to support, literally and figuratively, other artists' creations – some of them unknown, unsound, damaged, of uncertain status, or fragile – by attending to their needs. This attentiveness does not exclude anything or anyone: each interlocutor is treated on an equal footing and given equal consideration, as is each object, gesture and detail. Everything is taken into account. Everything counts.



Untitled Ceremony #10, La Galerie, Noisy-le-sec, 2017

Within this largely inclusive context, Balcou redistributes the roles and engages us in a process of reciprocity. Her *ceremonies* give us the feeling of being offered a special moment, one requiring a gift in return. Yet far from rendering us indebted, they make us custodians of a precious asset that it is up to us to hand on in our turn: the story of our particular experience, now an integral part of the work. Balcou's protocols reinstate viewers as capable of giving as well as receiving. Her last two solo exhibitions⁷ were structured around the bunraku-inspired sculpture *Transformer*, whose four wooden segments, complete with handles – like pieces of a life-size marionette – require four members of the audience for its activation. Here the artist delegates the actual existence of the artwork, basing its completion on a concrete, collective assumption of responsibility, a necessary distribution of roles and *consensus*. The scattered pieces of *Transformer* waiting on their tatami and the *K. Miyamoto Boxes* half unpacked on their shelves seem to be saying, “We’re counting on you!”

In the La Ferme du Buisson exhibition the *placebo sculptures* were consigned to their crates if the weather so required, and could be huddled together on very

them or reading the information card I’ve handed out a little before the end of the *ceremony*. After looking at them with the audience for a minute, I reinstall the five components, this time working in the opposite direction and producing a mirror effect that allows the spectators to spot details they might not have seen in the initial configuration. I continue the *ceremony* by repackaging the work. The tools, the crate and the screws have to be handled with the same delicacy as in the work by Susan Collis. I linger more particularly over the last two screws, slowing down the rhythm and closing the ritual with a certain insistence.

cold days.⁸ Cultivating forms of empathy with respect to objects, space and climatic variations means creating “non-exploitative forms of co-existence”⁹ between humans and non-humans, while subverting a certain anthropocentrism by redistributing agency within a more broadly ecological conception of care.

As an integral part of the modalities of knowledge, care relationships also take on an epistemological dimension for Béatrice Balcou, in that they make us “subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning”.¹⁰ As in scientific contexts where care consists in observing before taking care of, Balcou opts for studying objects and practices the better to understand them. Gifted in the art of description, she develops descriptive “body techniques” for physical and spatial games whose emphasis on methodical exploration sharpens her attention and ours, focusing on every detail, whether microscopic – the fineness of wooden pins or barely visible precious materials¹¹ – or macroscopic, as in the case of institutional mechanisms or the passing of the seasons. Her exhibitions and ceremonies are testing grounds that reveal the methodological and epistemological issues raised by description, where the latter also functions as a heuristic device capable of generating new knowledge. The tactile relationship plays a central role in this descriptive practice. Breaking with an entire segment of art history, Balcou challenges the omniscience of the gaze. From the threshold of her exhibition at the M Museum, all the works could be seen at first glance. However, one's gaze alone cannot embrace what is at stake here. Stubbornly opaque abstract forms turn their backs on us, rejecting any process of recognition or identification. They merge into a monochrome of browns, flee into corners or flatten out on the ground in a kind of isometric perspective that makes them ungraspable from a single point of view. To “access” these objects, we are forced to circle them, bend over them, stick our nose into them, and sometimes touch them. For me the sensuality of the different species of wood, the softness of the light reflected in the polish, the delicacy of certain sculptures, and the

4. Registrars, mediators, curators, restorers, etc.
5. Introduced in 1957 by Anna Halprin as a means of bringing everyday acts into the orbit of dance, the concept of the task had a considerable influence on the choreographers of the Judson Dance Theater. In the process, American post-modern dance rediscovered an essential gestural quality and shed the artifices of virtuosity.
6. A Japanese theatre form in which each life-size marionette is controlled in plain sight by three black-clad marionettists.

7. *L'Économie des apostrophes*, La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, 2018 and *Béatrice Balcou*, M Museum, Leuven, 2019.

8. Béatrice Balcou was writing regularly to the mediators regarding weather conditions. This enabled revision of the activation protocols for the *Placebo Works* and their changes of place according to the seasons punctuating the exhibition.
9. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *op.cit.*, p. 24.
10. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 36.
11. *Pins for R. Heyvaert and Untitled Ceremony #10*.

abandoning of their “poses” summon up those touching visions described by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa.¹² In her view, these touching visions are essential to rethinking our relationship – speculative, embedded, situated – to knowledge. To touch, to be touched, or to be in touch helps counter the univocity and detachment inherent in the classical, patriarchal Western model of vision. Because scientific and technical systems transform not only our knowledge modes, but also our modes of interaction, Balcou focuses on the importance of reconnecting with the tactile and the sensory.

Starting from the premise that our gestures know more than we do, she learns the gestures of others: those of carpenters to replicate artworks, of registrars to unpack and install them, and of tea and tai chi masters to analyse space and organise the sequences of movement. Despite the fluidity of their sequences, these “borrowed” gestures deliberately retain a form of artificiality that betrays the long learning process that underlies them. If she is so interested in martial arts or bunraku – the learning of whose gestures can take a lifetime – it is because she has made learning her end as much as her means. It’s always *through others* that she acquires new knowledge and skills. To make them her own, she doesn’t just settle for mimicking their gestures, she *incorporates* them. Referring to care, Yves Citton speaks of “a kind of trance that puts me inside the skin of some other person whose actions I have to assume responsibility for”.¹³ By repeating these actions until they “stick to her skin”,¹⁴ Balcou develops new faculties and with them new perspectives. Her descriptive project thus involves incorporating other points of view – heterogeneous, unfamiliar, situated – while also ridding herself of her own.

At this point the perspective of care homes in on the limitations, not to say the impossibility, of representation. This is why Balcou replaces representation with an improvised, subjective experience by organising the site where this experience can be deployed. *Ceremonies* and exhibitions are designed as performative landscapes composed of sedimentary strata of actions, relationships and effects which have taken, are taking, and will take place there.



Transformer, La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, 2018

These landscapes constitute the stage on which care can be performed, because they offer us sites for resubjectification. In these non-authoritarian settings we find no compulsory itinerary, few pedestals or works hanging on the walls, sculptures spilling over onto each other, and a proliferation of self-contradictory points of view. By its very absence of oversight, this unstable topography allows us to clear our own perceptual pathways. The slowing-down, the scantiness of available information and the restraint of the *Assistant Pieces* help desaturate the space of its demands and so sharpen our sensory experience. By inviting us to pause and draw breath, Balcou gives more space and time to the experience. The *ceremonies* make us fully receptive to the sliding of a curtain, hands performing domestic gestures and the rustle of bodies as it mingles with birdsong entering through a window deliberately left open. While the mutism and lack of action that characterise the *ceremonies* could give rise to a desiccated objectification, they convey, on the contrary, a *moving* fragility, gravity and sensuality. Here the artist is taking care to fuel an aesthetic experience which “exacerbates our awareness of how our gestures affect other people”¹⁵ and tends to re-inject effects into an over-objectified world. The grounding of her own subjectivity, as evidenced by her self-effacement and her sculptures lying on the floor, bears no relation to a subjective collapse of the kind suggested by Susan Collis’s title, but rather suggests a claim to an enabling vulnerability. Because it modifies our point of view, this vulnerability summons us to a resubjectification. In letting herself be permeated and transformed by gestures not her

own, the artist is implementing a patient process of disaffectation and re-affectation, thereby inventing a way of *feeling through others*. Her affective gesturality sets up an interface between what affects her and those she affects in turn, together with alliances between vulnerable or damaged bodies (human and non-human). She is the precondition for the emergence of a common body made up of patched-together fragments capable of holding together temporarily – like the nameless dismembered body of *Transformer*. This sculpture can only be assembled and set in motion if we synchronize our gestures and breathing. It then requires us to brace the wobbly, precarious arrangement that binds us together. Care according to Béatrice Balcou thus implies a world where we move not only *for the other*, but also *through the other*. A world where we can glimpse that what produces community is not the shared spectacle of art, but a complex interweaving of co-presence and intersubjectivity that *binds us together* while also *moving us bodily and emotionally*.

12. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, “Touching technologies, touching visions. The reclaiming of sensorial experience and the politics of speculative thinking”, *Subjectivity* no. 28, 2009, pp. 297–315.

13. Yves Citton, *Gestes d’humanité: anthropologie sauvage de nos expériences esthétiques* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012), p. 116.

14. Idem, p. 117.

15. Idem, p. 18.

SUBJECT about your work "She Falls Down" 2009
7 Apr. 2017 09:53
FROM Béatrice Balcou
TO Susan Collis
CC Sébastien Faucon, Juliette Pollet

Dear Susan Collis,

I would like to ask you for your permission regarding a work that I wish to make, which involves your own work.

As a performer artist I have developed a series of performances titled *Untitled Ceremony* entirely dedicated to the act of exhibiting and contemplating works of art. Each *ceremony* is based on a particular work. In these performances, I use real artworks borrowed from private or public collections.

In the context of my collaboration with CNAP in Paris, I have proposed the production of *Untitled Ceremony #10* based on your work that belongs to the CNAP titled *She Falls Down* acquired in 2009.

My work will consist in fabricating a replica of your work, entirely made of wood. When this replica is presented in the context of an exhibition, a performance is activated, which consists in unpacking, installing, contemplating and repacking the original work *She Falls Down* with attention and extreme care. All the information about your work (title, date, author, collection) will be written on a card that is given individually to each spectator (the number of spectators is limited to a maximum of 25 persons). In another space, my replica (*She Falls Down Placebo*) is shown and the spectators can see it before and after the ceremony as a trace, a memory of the performance and your work.

This entire work constitutes for me a way to emphasize a personal appreciation of your work. Most of the works in art collections have their own form of 'score', I mean instructions for caring, conserving and installing them, kept through some documents that specify how the work should be preserved and presented to the public in optimal conditions. I'm precisely interested in these codes and in the technical particularities that must be met to handle the work. White gloves, tools and packing materials, photographs and written instructions ...

Here are pictures of other placebos works I made.

I should add that it would be really great to hear your thoughts on this as soon as possible as we plan to realise the ceremony soon. We can also talk by phone if you prefer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
Béatrice Balcou

SUBJECT Re: about your work "She Falls Down" 2009
7 Apr. 2017 11:07
FROM Susan Collis
TO Béatrice Balcou

Hi Béatrice – I don't have a problem with this at all, but I've passed your email to the Director of my London gallery, Seventeen, who I feel, should also agree.

As soon as I hear back from him I'll let you know.
It sounds like a very interesting project.

All the very best, Susan

SUBJECT Re: about your work "She Falls Down" 2009
7 Apr. 2017 11:18
FROM Susan Collis
TO Béatrice Balcou

Hi Béatrice – very positive response from Seventeen, so fine to go ahead.

It sounds like a really interesting project and I'm happy to be involved.
I would love to be kept informed as it unfolds.

Very best, Susan

She Falls Down Placebo, 2017
after a work by Susan Collis
Walnut, ash, cedar, larch, oak, 100 cm² approx.
CNAP Collection, Paris
Photo: Émile Ouroumov



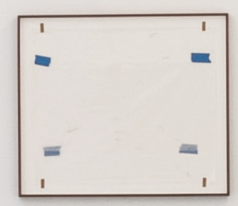
L'économie des apostrophes

La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel
November 11, 2018 – February 10, 2019
Curated by Julie Pellegrin
Photos: Émile Ouroumov





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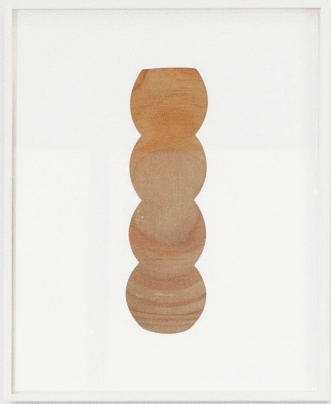


Béatrice Balcou

M Museum, Leuven
September 20, 2019 – January 26, 2020
Curated by Eva Wittocx
Photos: Miles Fischler, Robin Zenner









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L'économie des apostrophes

La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel

November 11, 2018 – February 10, 2019

Photos: Émile Ouroumov

	(from left to right)	
[1]	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
[2]	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Impressions Placebo IV, III, VII, IX, VIII, V, 2016	Print on cotton paper, frame, 42.8 × 52.8 cm each
	Recent Work, 2018	Various materials, variable dimensions <p>Production: La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel</p>
	Measurements of Bojan Šarčević’s work, 2014	Pencil and ballpoint on tissue paper, adhesive tape, walnut frame, 84.5 × 73.5 cm <p>Production: Casino Luxembourg Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg / La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel</p>
	Measurements of Yuki Okumura’s work, 2018	Drawing and printing on paper from a book about Japanese theatre, walnut frame, 43 × 52 cm each <p>Production: Villa Kujoyama, Kyoto, Kumagusuku Art Hostel, Kyoto, La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisiel</p>
[3]	Impressions Placebo IV, III, VII, IX, VIII, 2016	Print on cotton paper, frame, 42.8 × 52.8 cm
[4]	Emails with Béatrice Balcou and artists, registrars, collectors, curators, gallerists, publishers	
	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
[5]	Impressions Placebo VI, II, 2015–2016	Print on cotton paper, frame, 42.8 × 52.8 cm each
[6]	Transformer, 2018	Oak, variable dimensions
	She Falls Down Placebo, 2017	After a work by Susan Collis <p>Walnut, ash, cedar, larch, oak, 100 cm² approx. <p>CNAP Collection, Paris</p></p>
	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions <p>Production: ISELP, Brussels <p>FRAC Franche-Comté Collection, Besançon</p></p>
[7]	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
	Untitled (Artificial Light) Placebo, 2017	After a work by Ane Mette Hol <p>Oak, 114 × 2 × 2 cm each <p>Production: La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse <p>1/4: Émilie Renard and Vanessa Desclaux Collection</p></p></p>
[8]	A La Ferme du Buisson staff member and a spectator activating the K. Miyamoto Boxes	
[9]	Cars Non Finito Placebo, 2015	After a work by Nina Beier <p>Oak, pine, 130 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm <p>FRAC Franche-Comté Collection, Besançon</p></p>
	Hard Measures Placebo, 2015	After a work by Claire Barclay <p>Birch, mahogany, paper, faux suede, variable dimensions <p>Production: FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon</p></p>
	Fortunate Loss #574 Placebo, 2018	After a work by Eva Barto ^{vs} <p>Cedar, beech wood, 32.4 × 41.9 × 1 cm and 21.5 × 30.4 × 0.1 cm <p>Olivier and Nicole Gevart Collection, Brussels</p></p>
	Double Cube Placebo, 2016	After a work inspired by Sol LeWitt <p>Oak, meranti, 12.7 × 9.7 × 9.7 cm (sculpture), 15 × 15 × 15 cm (box) <p>Production: La Galerie, CAC Noisy-le-Sec</p></p>
	Children’s Trolley (I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew) Placebo, 2015	After a work by Rodney Graham <p>Fir, 42 × 43 × 21 cm <p>Production: Wiels, Brussels</p></p>
	Transformer, 2018	Oak, variable dimensions
	Untitled Placebo, 2017	After a work by Pierre Tal Coat <p>Fir, meranti, 18 × 8.5 × 4.5 cm</p>
	Untitled (Artificial Light) Placebo, 2017	After a work by Ane Mette Hol <p>Oak, 114 × 2 × 2 cm each</p>
	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
[10]	Saint John Placebo, 2015	After an early 16th-century sculpture, Northern Italy <p>Fir, meranti, 49 × 25 cm (sculpture), 67 × 35 × 36 cm (box) <p>FRAC Ile-de-France Collection, Paris</p></p>

	Landscape Placebo, 2015	After a work by Théophile Chauvel <p>Fir, meranti, 107 × 89 × 7 cm (sculpture), 114 × 97 × 18 cm (box) <p>Production:Wiels, Brussels / La Galerie, CAC, Noisy-Le-Sec</p></p>
	Vitrine (film 3) Placebo, 2014	After a work by Bojan Šarčević <p>Beech wood, paper, 187 × 125 × 80 cm <p>Production: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d’art contemporain, Luxembourg</p></p>
	Double Cube Placebo, 2016	After a work inspired by Sol LeWitt <p>Oak, meranti, 12.7 × 9.7 × 9.7 cm (sculpture), 15 × 15 × 15 cm (box)</p>
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	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Cars Non Finito Placebo, 2015	After a work by Nina Beier <p>Oak, pine, 130 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm</p>
	Hard Measures Placebo, 2015	After a work by Claire Barclay <p>Birch, mahogany, paper, faux suede, variable dimensions</p>
[12]	Plank for V. Goalec, 2017	Meranti, 40.7 × 6 × 23 cm
	Valérian Goalec, Untitled Portrait No. 1, 2017	Steel, found objects, 24 × 15 × 169 cm
	Walls for K. Miyamoto, 2016	Painted oak, 127 × 130 × 116 cm <p>Production: ISELP, Brussels</p>
	Nail for I. Ist Huzjan, 2017	Beech wood, 4.3 cm <p>Olivier and Nicole Gevart Collection, Brussels</p>
	Four Wedges for D. de Tscharner, 2017	Beech wood, 15 × 3.5 × 1.5 cm
	Picture Rail, Hanger and Hook for T. Lowe, 2017	Beech wood, 54.3 × 3 × 107 cm <p>Emmanuel Lambion Collection, Brussels</p>
	Pedestal for E. Hock, 2017	Meranti, 41 × 37 × 66 cm
[13]	Walls for K. Miyamoto, 2016	Painted oak, 127 × 130 × 116 cm
	Kazuko Miyamoto, Illusion of Trail Dinosaur (remake), 1979	String and nails

Béatrice Balcou

M Museum, Leuven

September 20, 2019 – January 26, 2020

Photos: Miles Fischler, Robin Zenner

	(from left to right)	
[14]	Bain de Lumière Placebo, 2014	After a work by Ann Veronica Janssens Beech wood, 128 × 40 × 40 cm Cera / M Museum Collection, Leuven
	Ann Veronica Janssens, Bain de Lumière, 2008	Glass, 128 × 40 × 40 cm Cera / M Museum Collection, Leuven
	Walls for K. Miyamoto, 2016	Oak, 127 × 130 × 116 cm With <i>Illusion of Trail Dinosaur by Kazuko Miyamoto (remake)</i> , 1979. String and nails
	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Transformer, 2018	Oak, variable dimensions
[15]	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
	Emails with Béatrice Balcou and artists, registrars, collectors, curators, gallerists, publishers	
	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Bain de Lumière Placebo, 2014	After a work by Ann Veronica Janssens Beech wood, 128 × 40 × 40 cm
	Ann Veronica Janssens, Bain de Lumière, 2008	Glass, 128 × 40 × 40 cm
	Walls for K. Miyamoto, 2016	Oak, 127 × 130 × 116 cm With <i>Illusion of Trail Dinosaur by Kazuko Miyamoto (remake)</i> , 1979. String and nails
	Hard Measures Placebo, 2015	After a work by Claire Barclay Birch, mahogany, paper, faux suede, variable dimensions
	Saint John Placebo, 2015	After an early 16th-century sculpture, Northern Italy Fir, 49 × 25 cm
	She Falls Down Placebo, 2017	After a work by Susan Collis Walnut, ash, cedar, larch, oak, 100 cm² approx.
	Fortunate Loss #574 Placebo, 2018	After a work by Eva Barto ^{YS} Cedar, beech wood, 32.4 × 41.9 × 1 cm and 21.5 × 30.4 × 0.1 cm
	Landscape Placebo, 2015	After a work by Théophile Chauvel Fir, 107 × 89 × 7 cm (sculpture)
	Children's Trolley (I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew) Placebo, 2015	After a work by Rodney Graham Fir, 42 × 43 × 21 cm
	Double Cube Placebo, 2016	After a work inspired by Sol LeWitt Oak, meranti, 12.7 × 9.7 × 9.7 cm (sculpture), 15 × 15 × 15 cm (box)
	Four Wedges for D. de Tschарner, 2017	Beech wood, 15 × 3.5 × 1.5 cm
[16]	Impressions Placebo IX, IV, V, III, 2016	Print on cotton paper, frame, 42.8 × 52.8 cm each
	Vitrine (film 3) Placebo, 2014	After a work by Bojan Šarčević Beech wood, paper, 187 × 125 × 80 cm
	Untitled Placebo, 2017	After a work by Pierre Tal Coat Fir, meranti, 18 × 8.5 × 4.5 cm
[17]	Hard Measures Placebo, 2015	After a work by Claire Barclay Birch, mahogany, paper, faux suede, variable dimensions
	Saint John Placebo, 2015	After an early 16th-century sculpture, Northern Italy Fir, 49 × 25 cm
	She Falls Down Placebo, 2017	After a work by Susan Collis Walnut, ash, cedar, larch, oak, 100 cm² approx.
	Fortunate Loss #574 Placebo, 2018	After a work by Eva Barto ^{YS} Cedar, beechwood, 32.4 × 41.9 × 1 cm and 21.5 × 30.4 × 0.1 cm
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	Vitrine (film 3) Placebo, 2014	After a work by Bojan Šarčević Beech wood, paper, 187 × 125 × 80 cm

[18]	Pins for R. Heyvaert, 2019	Beech wood, 18 mm Production: M Museum, Leuven
[19]	Vitrine (film 3) Placebo, 2014	After a work by Bojan Šarčević Beech wood, paper, 187 × 125 × 80 cm
	Hard Measures Placebo, 2015	After a work by Claire Barclay Birch, mahogany, paper, faux suede, variable dimensions
	Saint John Placebo, 2015	After an early 16th-century sculpture, Northern Italy Fir, 49 × 25 cm
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	Impressions Placebo IX, IV, V, III, 2016	Print on cotton paper, frame, 42.8 × 52.8 cm each
[20]	A spectator activating the K. Miyamoto Boxes	
[21]	Untitled (Artificial Light) Placebo, 2017	After a work by Ane Mette Hol Oak, 114 × 2 × 2 cm each
	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
[22]	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
[23]	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Untitled (Artificial Light) Placebo, 2017	After a work by Ane Mette Hol Oak, 114 × 2 × 2 cm each
	Cars Non Finito Placebo, 2015	After a work by Nina Beier Oak, pine, 130 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm
	The K. Miyamoto Boxes, 2016	Okoumé, beech wood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, fir, silk paper, and black acrylic paint, variable dimensions
	Transformer, 2018	Oak, variable dimensions
	Emails with Béatrice Balcou and artists, registrars, collectors, curators, gallerists, publishers	
[24]	Stools for an Exhibition Space, 2016	Wood and metal stools, 31.5 × 45.5 cm
	Tōzai, 2018	Video, colour, sound, 30’ Production: Villa Kujoyama, Art Hostel Kumagusuku, Kyoto and Centre for Contemporary Art of La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel

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Graphic design:
Luc Derycke, Jeroen Wille; Studio Luc Derycke

Published by:
MER, imprint of Borgerhoff & Lamberigts
Ghent, Belgium
www.merbooks.be

ISBN 9789463933278
D/2021/11.089/68

Printed in Belgium

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With the support of:

Centre d'art contemporain de la Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel
Museum M, Leuven
FRAC Franche Comté, Besançon
Olivier Gevart
Fondation des artistes, Paris

This publication was supported by:

 Centre national
des arts plastiques

Béatrice Balcou thanks:

The artists:
Genpei Akasegawa, Claire Barclay, Eva Barto, Nina Beier,
Marinus Boezem, Théophile Chauvel, Susan Collis, Guy de
Cointet, David de Tschanner, Valerian Goalec, Rodney Graham,
Erika Hock, Ane Mette Hol, Istvan Ist Huzjan, Ann Veronica
Janssens, Thomas Lowe, Agnes Martin, Liz Magor, Kazuko
Miyamoto, Charlotte Moth, Bojan Šarčević, Yann Serandour,
Pierre Tal Coat, Yuki Okumura.

The authors:
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Béatrice Gross, Julie Pellegrin, Émilie Renard,
Septembre Tiberghien, Eva Wittcox.

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Clémence Belisson, Thomas Bouric, Olivier Crabbé,
Charlotte Debeer, Maëlle Delaplanche, Tom Heene, Pieter
Eycken, Henk Lutjeharms, Caroline Nug, Philippe Riche,
Laszlo Umbreit, Yann Vekemans.

The performers:
Xavier Cormier, Lola Franzen, Anne-Cécile Heussner,
Melinda Mucsi, Agnese Negrini, Nathalie Neuser,
Elodie Parachini, Nathanaëlle Puaud, Adèle Simon,
Keith Wirrell, Takuya Wakayama, Dimitri Zagorjewsky.

The collection managers and registrars:
Lisa Baldelli, Norbert David, Véronique De Alzua,
Tine D'haeyere, Xavier Demolon, Marie-Noëlle Farcy,
Stéphanie Fischer, Catherine Le Guen, Virginie Lemarchand,
Charlotte Masse, Janet Passehl.

The directors, curators and collectors:
Stéphanie Airaud (MACVAL), Anne Alessandri (FRAC Corse),
Devrim Bayar (Wiels), Florence Bonnefous (Alr de Paris),
Lore Boon (M Museum), Florence Cheval (ISELP), Hugues
de Cointet (Guy de Cointet Society), Herman Daled, Vanessa
Desclaux, Keren Detton (Le Quartier, FRAC Nord-Pas de
Calais), Sandra Doublet, Sébastien Faucon (CNAP), Xavier
Franceschi (FRAC Ile-de-France), Charlotte Fouchet-Ischii
(Villa Kujoyama), Olivier et Nicole Gevart, Zoë Gray (Wiels),
Laurent Jacob (251 Nord), Sophie Kervran (Musée des
Beaux-arts de Quimper), Emmanuel Lambion, Enrico
Lunghi (MUDAM), Francisco Mederos-Henry, Kevin Muhlen
(Casino Luxembourg), Julia Mullié, Julie Pellegrin (Centre d'art
contemporain de La Ferme du Buisson), Juliette Pollet (CNAP),
Émilie Renard (La Galerie, CAC Noisy-le-Sec), Christian
Siekmeier (Exile), Nick Terra, Katleen van Langendonck
(Kaaaitheater), Steven Vandervelden (Stuk), Don Verboven,
Christine Walentiny (Casino Luxembourg), Eva Wittcox
(Museum M), Sandrine Wymann (La Kunsthalle de Mulhouse),
Sylvie Zavatta (FRAC Franche-Comté).

The photographers:
Pierre Antoine, Marc Damage, Miles Fischler, Laura Klingenberg,
Sven Laurent, Yves Petit, Gilles Ribero, Regular Studio,
Émile Ouroumov, Hervé Véronèse, Robin Zenner.

Special thanks to Luc Derycke, Tom Heene and Émilie Renard.