

Emmanuelle Lainé

with
Flora Katz

Flora Katz A studio can be viewed as a private space, the space where the artist ventures to lose him or herself, to be surprised, without predicting outcomes. The space where there are no rules, where mind and matter can play without any need for justification or structure. This is the place where you have been deploying your practice since 2010. To begin with, could you explain the various steps that make up your work process, and how it all started?

Emmanuelle Lainé I have that compulsion to save everything. My studio has always been littered with a thousand things: casting remnants, body prints, kitsch objects, plants, junk food packaging, and so on. DIY videos playing on the computer, printouts of scientific images scattered around. In one corner there are stored personal items that always end up getting squirted with resin or other products. Since they've become unwearable, they usually get incorporated into other materialogical experiments, or they sop up new catastrophes.

I don't know how other people get organized, but despite my efforts to use materials in the best way possible, there always comes a moment when I get overwhelmed, when the forms collapse, the casts start leaking. Then it's hard for me to make drastic cutbacks in that jumble of forms and tools, to isolate an item, to place it in a box, to give it a title and an insurance value. Finally I decided to stop making selections among this diversity and instead invite exhibition photographer André Morin to come directly into the studio. We worked on views of the studio that were later printed "life-size" and glued right onto the walls of the places that invited me. Since then I no longer have a studio, I work directly in the exhibition spaces. I continue to collaborate with André Morin and other photographers on these large exhibition views, which I now show opposite my installations.

The photos are framed very large, they reveal the architecture of the place, the lighting, signage and security systems, like extinguishers and so on. They document the work before the exhibition opens.

FK No beginning, no end, no centre: one feels a bit lost when entering your pieces. Volumes and flat surfaces interlace, perspectives interweave to produce de-compartmentalized, almost endless spaces. Is that important to you, the loss of reference points?

EL It's true that through their multiplying effect, the photographs provoke, among other things, optical illusions that enlarge the spaces. My installations present several versions of the same situa-







tion, facing each other. I increasingly view them more as a space where objects are subject to different conditions of existence (presented directly, photographed, or filmed). Then their presence becomes the aggregate of all these realities.

So it's important to me to avoid producing a general narrative that's too regulated or linear. The exhibition must be a multiple-entry structure. What Donna Haraway develops in her *A Cyborg Manifesto* resonates with this idea. And I 'stole' an expression from it for the title of an exhibition in 2014, "pleasure in the confusion of borders" (Fondation Ricard, Paris). Likewise, for my most recent project (Villa Arson, Nice), we refrained from producing a press release. It was solely through a meticulous description on the floor plan that we brought language into the exhibition. All of the objects – over a hundred of them – were indexed through captions. Some of them were laconic – "49 porcelain soup tureen from Delft (without its cover) with floating insects" – and others had more historical, poetic or critical descriptions by different invited writers.

FK In fact, the objects speak for themselves; it's enough to pay attention to them and describe them. It is they that build your work's heart and soul, resonating in the space. So everything contaminates everything else, and becomes almost alive, outside of us. To that end, you work on developing a kind of porosity in relation to the invitation context, and this concretely translates into a long period of "residency" in the space. So it's a matter of letting the materials and ideas come to you. There's a fine balance to strike between a very perceptive, almost meditative attitude, and a point when you put things in motion, bringing out this universe that came to you, and transmitting it.

EL Yes, I like working with elements I find on-site, in the places that invite me. It's not just the objects that interest me, but also the people who inhabit the places.

During my last exhibition in Paris, I asked to keep a carpet that had been laid for the previous exhibition. This enabled me to work right on the floor and pour hundreds of kilos of liquid clay onto the coffee tables of the previous Bal Jaune and the Le Corbusier armchairs belonging to Fondation Ricard. In the middle of this mess of drying clay and aqueous resin, we set up a long dinner table, like a banquet table where the whole staff of the art centre and guest curator Sophie von Olfer ate lunch, had discussions, wrote, and received guests. The Fondation's conference facilities were integrated into the exhibition, and an intervention

by Sarah Morris even took place during the setup, while a large form that was hung in the background but removed from its cast too early was in the process of softly collapsing.

FK At the heart of this contextual incorporation is a lot of research on the history of the exhibition site. You describe your projects as memory palaces, referring to a mnemonic method invented during Greco-Roman antiquity that consists in organizing one's memory by storing items spatially. What memory did you want to activate for the Villa Arson project?

EL A random access memory. What's fascinating about the art of memory is that it's a matter of using architecture as a mental prosthesis and discoursing in a nonlinear way based on a mass of freshly acquired data and information. At Villa Arson, I started the setup by dismantling a few picture rails that hadn't moved since 1984, when the art centre had been restructured by its new director with a view to a major painting exhibition. For thirty years those picture rails had hidden a large bay window that opened onto a patio on which we discovered a hornet's nest...

FK So the exhibition becomes a living prosthesis of the place. Everything interlaces and breathes. For the first time at Villa Arson, you enlisted forms of external collaboration, by asking various people to suggest elements that you would incorporate into your project. What does this add, and is this something you'd like to develop further in the future?

EL It's true, the element of collaboration is becoming more important and will surely continue becoming increasingly important in the future. It goes beyond simply collaborating with a photographer, students or art centre staff, or even inserting other artists' works into my installations. I try to think of what becomes possible through the use of photography and now of video and 3D compositing as spaces added to the exhibition. They are so many dimensions or extra spaces for uniting, summoning and inviting all kinds of people. It's in this spirit that for each of my films, I've worked with different groups made up of friends, artists and curators, which you've been part of. Their suggestions were integrated in 3D compositing into my videos. I think objects of every kind are spaces of inter-relational possibility. So if they can be sent by e-mail and can be infinitely duplicated, this becomes an exponentially usable element for the composition of an exhibition.

Installation view, Beneath the Surface Are the Same Internal Organs as Everyone Else, Villa Arson, Nice, 2016 (pp. 168-169) Installation view, Le plaisir dans la confusion des frontières (Taking Pleasure in the Confusion of Boundaries), Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris, 2014 (pp. 170-171)

Installation view, Il paraît que le fond de l'être est en train de changer? (It Seems that the Background of Being Is Changing?), Biennale de Lyon, MAC, Lyon, 2015 (pp. 172-173) All Images Courtesy: the artist