

LISTEN  
TO  
THE QUIET  
VOICE

Philippe Lepeut



9 782955 362211





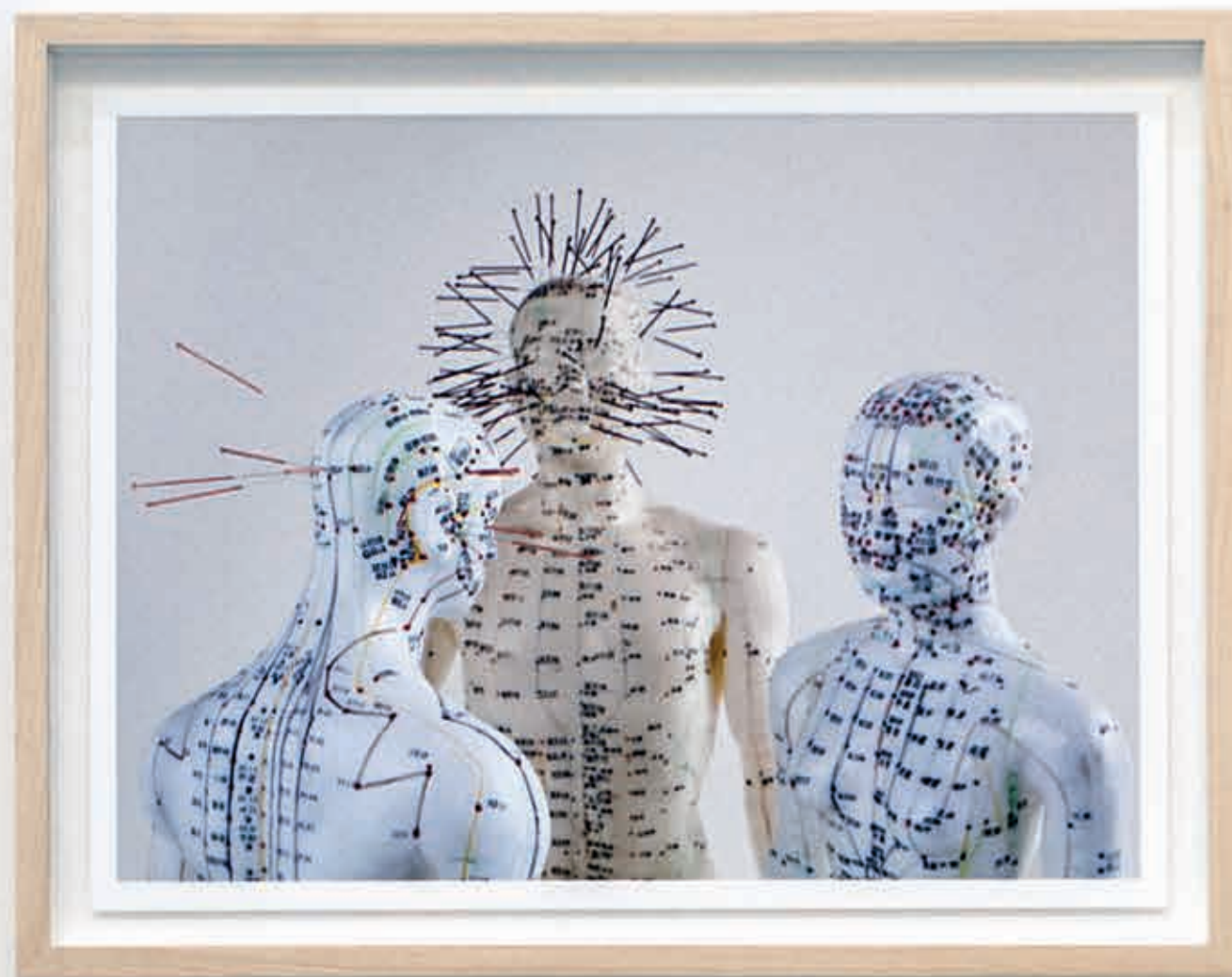
















# LISTEN TO THE QUIET VOICE

Une exposition de Philippe Lepeut

Janig	Begoc
Camille	Bondon
Anne-Céline	Bossu
Daniel	Bossu
Robert	Cahen
Christian	Charpiot
Camille	Clauss
Agnès	Daval
Daniel	Del Degan
Souad	El Maysour
Jacky	Fauster
Pierre	Fickinger
Alain	Fontanel
Juliette	Fuhs
Alain	Gautier
Olivier	Grasser
Christophe	Greilsammer
Manuel	Hauss
Jean-Luc	Hattemer
Thierry	Herry
Marinette	Jeannerod
Gabrielle	Kwiatkowski
Florence	Labalette
Simon	Laveuve
Jo	Lepeut
Joseph	Lepeut
E	Limongi
Yne	Loux
al	Mangin
ia	Mentrel
My	Mouthinot
	Nguyen
	Pietrzyk
	Pijaudier-Cabot
	Rabczuk
	Neffel
	g
	nt-Loubert Bié







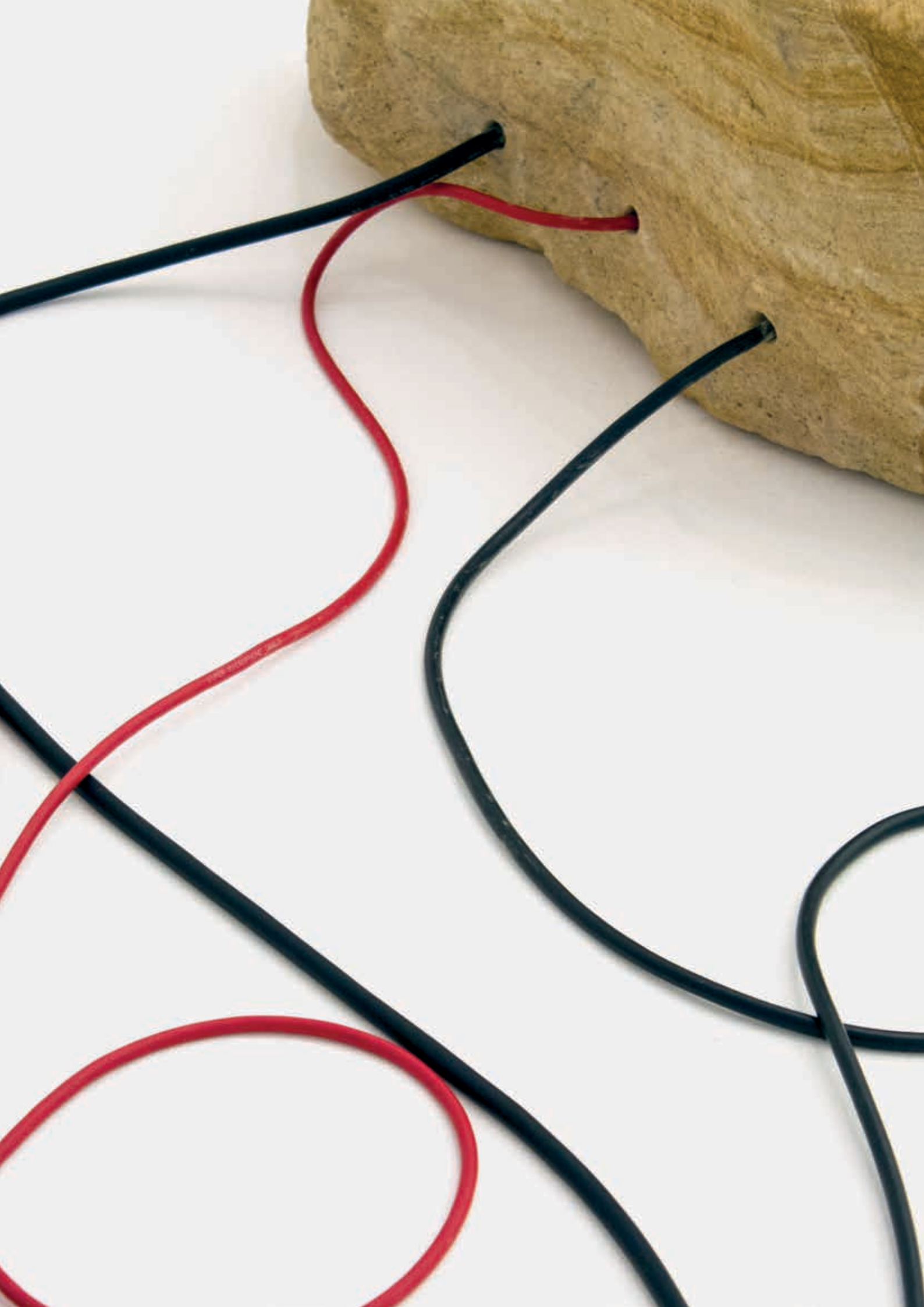












LISTEN TO THE QUIET VOICE



# LISTEN TO THE QUIET VOICE

Philippe Lepeut

Édition Écart Production

This book was published for the  
Philippe Lepeut exhibitions

*Listen to the Quiet Voice*

and

*À une autre vitesse*

presented at the Museum of Modern  
and Contemporary Art and the  
European Centre for Contemporary  
Artistic Actions (CEAAC -  
International) in Strasbourg.

*Listen to the Quiet Voice*

11 April to 30 October, 2015  
Strasbourg Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art (MAMCS)

Exhibition curator  
Estelle Pietrzyk, Head curator of  
heritage, Director of MAMCS

*À une autre vitesse*

17 September-18 October 2015  
European Center of Contemporary  
Artistic Actions, Strasbourg

Exhibition curators  
Elodie Gallina, international projects  
manager and Evelyne Loux, director of  
the CEAAC

Graphic design  
Yohanna My Nguyen and  
Jérôme Saint-Loubert Bié

Texts  
Janig Begoc, Laure Limongi and  
Estelle Pietrzyk

Translation  
Simon Welch

Proofreading and correction  
Anne Chougnet and Eileen Powis

Photos  
Mathieu Bertola (Strasbourg museum  
photos) [p. 18, 23, 39, 42],  
Agnès Daval [p. 52, 67], Marinette  
Jeannerod [p. 5, 12, 42, 61], Patrick  
Lambin [p. 50], Simon Laveuve [p. ii,  
1, 4, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14-15, 16-  
17, 18-19, 20, 39, 43, 55, 58, 64, iii],  
Philippe Lepeut [p. 19, 39, 43, 50,  
53, 54, 55, 60, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68],  
Yohanna My Nguyen and Jérôme Saint-  
Loubert Bié [p. 85 à 104],  
Élise Schann (CEAAC)[p. 68]

Page 3  
Behind the artwork *Silencio* by  
Philippe Lepeut, on the glass roof of  
the museum, one can see *Comme un  
jeu d'enfant*, an in situ piece by Daniel  
Buren, 2014.

Interns  
Marinette Jeannerod, Juliette Fuhs  
and Maïa Mentrel

The artist gives special thanks to:  
Janig Begoc, Camille Bondon, Daniel  
Buren, David Cascaro, Agnès Daval,  
Daniel Del Degan, Souad El Maysour,  
Alain Fontanel, Juliette Fuhs, Elodie  
Gallina, Olivier Grasser, Thierry  
Herry, Marinette Jeannerod, Gabrielle  
Kwiatkowski, Simon Laveuve,  
Florence Labalette, Laure Limongi,  
Évelyne Loux, Pascal Mangin,  
Frédéric Maufras-Samson,  
Maïa Mentrel, Yohanna My Nguyen,  
Estelle Pagès, Estelle Pietrzyk,  
Joëlle Pijaudier-Cabot, Aymée Rogé,  
Jérôme Saint-Loubert Bié.

And all those who contributed to  
these exhibitions:

Anissa Abbou, Alain Adami, Rebeka  
Aginako, Laurence Anneheim,  
Frédéric Baal, Alex Babazade,  
Julie Barth, Régine Baumgartner,  
Zineb Berkane, Vincent Berlocher,  
George Bilghiru, Anne Bocourt,  
Laura Bonfiglioli, Carine de Bortoli,  
Anne-Céline Bossu, Daniel Bossu,  
Cyril Bourgogne, Danielle Brucker-  
Strub, Michèle Buckel, Alice Burg,  
Robert Cahen, Éric Catel, Mai Chau,  
Limin Chen, Sophie Christiani,  
Camille Clauss, Xavier Clauss,  
Martine Debaene, Jean-Baptiste  
Defrance, Valérie Dufeutrelle, Rita  
Dumar, Mathieu Durand, Christophe  
Duringer, Éric Erbrecht, Ferat Erkal,  
Jacky Fauster, Aissatou Faye, Louise  
Flouquet, Hélène Fourneaux, Guy  
Friedrich, Jean-Paul Gangloff, Alain  
Gautier, Lionel Georg, Claudine Ghoul-  
Pettinotti, Roland Görgen, Christophe  
Greilsammer, Pierre Guth, Adrien  
Haefele, Éric Haenel, Badia Hank,  
Jean-Luc Hattemer, Manuel Hauss,  
Anne-Catherine Hecklen, Pascal  
Henninger, Pascal Hertz, Mustapha  
Hichami, Claude Hochwelcker,  
Catherine Hubert, Anne-Marie  
Jochum, Éric Jost, Chantal Kahn,  
Christian Kieffer, Sophie Kimenau,  
Pierre Kimm, Ernest Lang, Van Tien  
Lee, Stéphane Lentz, Denis Lepeut,  
Hugo Lepeut, Joseph Lepeut, Cathy  
Letard, Aurélie Madec, Miguel Marajo,  
Catherine Margaillan, Aline Martin,  
Corinne Masson, Scherrif Mellah,  
Sophie Miaskowski, Catherine Mog,  
Gladys Morinière, Natalia Mouthinot,  
Jacky Muller, Frédéric Noir, Pascal  
Noives, Marie Ollier, Jean-Claude  
Pasut, Margaret Pfenninger, Alain  
Piolet, Flore Poindron, Émilie Pouzet-  
Robert, Gabrielle Proetz, Philippe  
Queney, Katia Quirin, Małgorzata  
Rabczuk, Désiré Reiningner, Fred  
Rieffel, Augustin Robilliart, Marion  
Rouchet, Toni Sala, Fabienne Sattler,  
Philippe Schaefer, Mireille Schaeffer,  
Élise Schann, Claire Schmitt, Thomas  
Schwartz, Gauthier Sibillat, Corentin  
Sitter, Anatoli Sobine, Franck Sonrel,  
Peter Spronk, Pierre Tesson, Florian  
Tiedje, Arnaud Umecker, Anke Vrijs,  
Gérald Wagner, Murielle Waroquier,  
Anne Weckbrodt, Martine Wolff.

Thanks also for the support of the  
Friends of the Strasbourg Museum of  
Modern and Contemporary Art and  
their president, Pierre Fickinger; as  
well as the National Museum of Natural  
History: Gallery of Comparative  
Anatomy, Gallery of Paleontology.

This publication was supported by  
the City of Strasbourg  
the Alsace Region  
Regional Fund for Contemporary  
Art, Alsace  
Ministry of Culture and  
Communication, DRAC Alsace  
European Centre for Contemporary  
Artistic Actions (CEAAC)  
Strasbourg Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art (MACMS)  
Écart Production.

For Philippe Lepeut's artworks:  
© Adagp Paris, 2015  
For this edition, editor:  
© Écart Production, Strasbourg, 2015  
and the authors.

All rights reserved.  
Any reproduction, even partial,  
of this work is prohibited without  
the prior permission of the publisher.  
www.ecartproduction.net  
www.bylepeut.com

Printed in July 2016  
on the Alsace Region presses

Registration of copyright  
July 2016  
ISBN: 978-2-9553622-1-1

Strasbourg.eu  
eurometropole

MUSEES DE LA VILLE DE STRASBOURG

ecart production

Strasbourg  
Centre d'Art et d'Essai  
Rencontres Françaises

Strasbourg  
Centre d'Art et d'Essai  
Rencontres Françaises

Région  
Alsace

agence  
culturelle  
alsace

frac  
alsace

27

## ONE ONLY EVER SEES THE EFFECTS OF WIND

Laure Limongi

69

## WORDS AND MARVELS OF PHILIPPE LEPEUT

Estelle Pietrzyk

76

## THE UNDERSIDE OF STONES

Janig Begoc



ONE ONLY EVER SEES  
THE EFFECTS OF WIND

Laure Limongi

“He was forever building theories shaped like a shack.”

Claire Guezengar,  
*Two or Three Things I Know About Him.*

“The dust goes back and forth between us. We carve boats and beds in bark,  
we are in these huts with them, we listen to children,  
the insanity of children in our hands, in water, everywhere.”

Jean-Marie Gleize,  
*Le Livre des cabanes.*

*I had a strange dream. Time existed. Accordingly, there was an existence  
named “Life” followed by “death”—supposedly the cessation of life. On the  
death of someone, we gathered to bid him farewell with some ceremonies  
before his skin, his muscles left his bones to feed matter. At the funeral of a  
dear friend, I met an old close friend whom I had never seen before. Singu-  
lar hours on an island at the end of the world where ducks swam in the sea  
water. With a lot of sunshine and tears, dazzled irritated eyes, that saw  
everything through a salty halo. The friend was tall and an artist. He went  
towards the rising sun. In the boat and then on the train home, I talked a lot  
but I do not know what about and we were precisely gliding eastward as if  
to forget the end of things for a while. He put a stone in my hand, oddly not  
mineral, soft, almost warm. I made him listen to a song from an album that  
I had received the day I learned of the death of our friend:*

“So many stars, so many seas,  
so many smiles, so many trees,  
so many laughs, so many screams,  
so many scars, so many tears.

*It’s so wide, it’s so wide, it’s so wide, it’s so wide*  
.....”

*A few weeks later, he asked me to write a text that invents his life.*

It starts along a shore, as is often the case. There is the sound of the wind in competition with the sound of the waves and the childish ear plays at drawing boundaries so as to better sweep them away with an imagination reversal. Breton colours contain violence that upsets subtlety. No tender throbbing Norman washouts like E minor; not the relentless blue of the Mediterranean where dramas unfold in a holiday atmosphere, the smell of blood mixed with that of Monoi. The Armorican West: tints with a spicy flavour bring colour to the cheeks, accelerate the heart; large majestic tides that bring things to their proper scale. It's so wide.

The child is passionate about history and biology, but less for learning obligations and frenzied crowds. The intuition that solitude is a precious treasure. In a corner of the garden, he creates a "working" space, he says very seriously, devoted to the study of ant migration, the dancing of beetles, the development of cuttings. He brings a small radio that sizzles and evolves on FM, unaware he is already composing subtle music with the tuner. Gradually, he masters his hands to create related objects, small sculptures. He mixes gouache with soil to invent his own colours. The moment when the hand transmits something from the mind. The softness of the brush to be mastered.

Their neighbour is a master glassmaker who rises well before the birds begin to sing and the child thinks him a wizard until the impact of heat on this material, the transition to glass and the laws of physics are explained. Perplexed, a little uncomfortable, like on Boxing Day, the child has long reflected in his garden workshop, observing the nests, the effects of the moon on what is planted, testing which herbs to blend in order to dispel a nettle burn. And he came to understand that the vocabulary of men was aimed at demystifying things through fear of what they cannot explain, for the sake of social cohesion, so that shamans work regular hours and witches wash dishes. He understood that everything was magic: the formation of minerals, the birth of language, the gaze that crossed his own, and the precise gesture of infinite grace of the glassblower.

The bubbles that become prisoners at the point at which everything freezes, and which only burst with great noise, disperse a tiny amount of period atmosphere, potentially spreading life or death, according to the memories conveyed in the form of seeds or viruses.

And the demands of the glassmaker which glowed red dawn after dawn, vibrated through the careful repetition of gestures, placing beauty on display, such as the wrestling of a musician with his instrument or the confrontation between a painter and his painting, seemed to draw a path.

Artist.

The mother has a look that changes seasonally, reflecting the sky. At his birth, she was wearing Habanita de Molinard, whose top notes that were too powdery, smoky and spicy he never supported, but ended up passing out on her skin with amber, vanilla and patchouli accents. A trail of incense paper. She then brought in a bottle of Grasse violets with a pump covered in granular matter. Glass with rounded shapes standing on the fireplace, whose marble told so many stories in its veins, a plump vial grasped with a nonchalant gesture when leaving the intimate space for daytime activities. Pressing the pump several times, spraying the neck; the fleeting fragrance dissipated almost as quickly as a sound. The pump also emitted a strange noise that seemed to contradict the chic aspect of the languid gesture, the breathing of an asthmatic animal.

After the initial surprise, he had to accept the obvious: signs are not unequivocal.

There is always a *memento mori*, whatever the vitality of the moment, and it is anything but sad.

"Something is always rumbling somewhere."

This is the opening of *Death and the Maiden* by Schubert that moves each cell and makes you want to run off and devour life.

Endless summers in the Var. The cicadas. The sticky heat. The sticky boredom. The games with cousins that we tired of, stirred up by the landscape. The child also spends hours in the garden, as he does further west. These are not the same essences, not the same birds. From this point on the globe, a bit of mountain presents itself to him, while a non-tidal sea laps at the other end. He feels a strange sensation but does not know if it is pleasant or unpleasant. Like an inner vibrato, music that has yet to reveal all its secrets. He begins by walking a lot, pacing the space. Then, slowly, he begins to turn on himself, firstly with eyes on the ground, then gradually rising to the sky before returning to earth.

Transforming the horizon into a circle; a loop. So that the landscape delivers itself; while one presents oneself to the landscape.

On the beach, mica adheres to the skin like an armour-adornment. We find many fragments, on the shoulders, following the line of a bone on the leg. Their size is often hardly that of a tiny mole, and yet they stand out. And passing from the image of the observation of his skin thus magnified to a panoramic view, one can only note: mica is everywhere. With an almost worrying insistence. He is the king of the castle.

Later, he discovers that mica is frequently used for its electrical insulation and heat resistance properties and, in particular, is incorporated into other materials such as acoustic insulation or cosmetics.

A researcher at the University of Santa Barbara in California, Helen Hansma, formulated a hypothesis which may seem logical to fascinated admirers of the mineral:



the appearance of the first living cells took place in an aquatic space caught between sheets of mica.

What signaled the end of the vacation was the appearance of carpenter bees. Or rather the particular carpenter bee that crossed the terrace every evening at the same time. While the adults were sipping Martini on the hot stone, consuming cigarettes and laughter, the enormous insect crossed the scene slowly, very slowly, in a way that was too noisy to be majestic. It had a comic aspect with its heavy and easy-going flight. We could not be afraid despite its size, its helicopter racket and dark suit. It lived what insects live, for a season at most. And yet, every year, every late summer night, before dinner, imperturbably, a carpenter bee crossed the terrace following the same flight plan, as if for news of the family, to see how much the children have grown. They must have included several generations but the child always referred to “the carpenter-bee.” It dug an “enormous” hole (for its size) in the soft wood of a pomegranate tree in the garden. The insect disappeared but we still heard its industrious roar ejecting chips of wood while the galleries grew in number and bifurcations. A quiet, tenacious being; a lover of flowers.

The carpenter bee flying phase, after being an egg and then a larva, is called the imago – a term which also refers to the final stage of development of other arthropods and amphibians.

In other insects there is an intermediate stage between larva and imago. The coleoptera nymph, for example. The ephemerals, meanwhile, have a subimago – like other aquatic insects. This stage lasts only a few minutes or a few hours at most.

The body grows in rough fabrics, raw wool and denim, really fast. There comes a time when we no longer understand anything,

when the struggle deepens between the desires of the body and those of the mind. The quest for beauty has sweaty undertones and girls’ features.

In Paris, an excess of artworks, monuments, opportunities. Decide on a destiny in a double movement, gesture and thought. Draw figures but also know and meet artists and artworks – from today or from antiquity. There comes a time to get down to the canvas with the tenacity of the glassmaker, including a stay at the Villa Medici. A huge workshop with perfect light. Money to test new pigments, new formats. Everything is perfect. But something does not sound quite right; or is lacking.

Every step is a story, a palimpsest. “It is unclear where architecture begins and painting ends. If you move, everything unravels.”

Pacing the hills of Rome on foot in order to regain their landscape essence. On top of the Quirinal, turn on yourself to recreate a horizon; a loop. Again.

“The landscape, albeit a substance, tends towards the mind.”

Spending hours on top of the Castel Sant’Angelo to observe the virtuoso flight of starlings, a fascinating, perilous dance; the flexible swinging of their chirping creates a stormy score.

Clouds, clouds.

Spend hours watching the clouds, so baroque.

At a party in the park, he hears a pretty makeup girl from Cinecittà recount that a few days earlier, during a shoot, another makeup artist, who was jealous, cut all her brushes with the hairdressing scissors. Expensive brushes with bristles of sable marten, pony and goat. Brushes for the

contours of the eye, eyeliner, large and medium-size eye shadow, blusher brushes, loose powder brushes, others beveled, lip brushes, *ourleurs*, fan-shaped, shadders, fluffs, modeling brushes, *tapoteurs*, flat brushes, square brushes. All carefully shaved. How would she work now without them? The upset makeup artist, false eyelashes and small fluttering dress clinging to her body with all the heat and emotion, her jugular throbbing Tuberosa Santa Maria Novella to the curious or compassionate surrounding nostrils, Spritz wobbling in the left hand with ice cubes clacking in rhythm, mimed the guilty gesture of the right hand, “CHTACK! CHHHTACK! Porca miseria! Ora non c’è più niente da fare!” Everything was ruined.

He could not help finding the despair reddening her cheeks better than any blusher, this slight trembling of things was charming and he secretly thanked her for the solution she had just unknowingly confided to him.

A simple solution offered on a plate.

With that subtle involuntary waggishness beloved of dandies.

Painting is too silent. Something is always rumbling somewhere. Or: a great symphony only takes shape when played.

How to work now without brushes?

“The flux never stops.”

Fluxus.

And the thought of Dick Higgins who created the concept of *intermedia*. Freedom that rises like the fragrant wind of sea voyages.

“The radio that told me about the death of Billy The Kid  
(And the day, a hot summer day, with birds in the sky)

Let us fake out a frontier – a poem somebody could hide in with a sheriff’s posse after him – a thousand miles of it if it is necessary for him to go a thousand miles – a poem with no hard corners, no houses to get lost in, no underwebbing of customary magic, no New York Jew salesmen of amethyst pajamas, only a place where Billy The Kid can hide when he shoots people.

Torture gardens and scenic railways. The radio

That told me about the death of Billy The Kid.

The day a hot summer day. The roads dusty in the summer. The roads going somewhere. You can almost see where they are going beyond the dark purple of the horizon. Not even the birds know where they are going.

The poem. In all that distance who could recognize his face.”

He records the sounds of dusk standing in water up to his hips. The birds are really going for it, as if their blood beats faster at the approach of night with a vague anxiety. Will the sun rise again? The frogs are getting into it and form a continuous bass.

Some engines, other unidentified bangs. He feels moisture penetrate tissue then freeze the flesh, he carries the rather comical big fluffy microphone at arm’s length, the pain begins, but never mind. It is like a motionless antenna, a broad smile splitting his face. What he hears is absolutely not what he came for. That is why it is so valuable.

“The stories are the sounds that tell them. Possible stories will be folded into sounds. I do not impose a story, I create situations that allow sound to tell stories.”

He likes to listen to birds and record their singing, he likes their flight, he also loves their feathers which are also those of angels. He slips between the languages of the

vogel bird, illuminating a crystal designed by IBM engineer Marcel Vogel who, when retired, took off and dedicated himself to the mysteries related to crystals, including trying to channel universal energy. The shape of his quartz, reminiscent of the tree of life, was presented to him in a dream.

“Bird. Birds. It is likely that we understand birds better since we manufacture airplanes. The *word* OISEAU (bird) contains *all the vowels*. All right, I agree. But instead of an s, as the only consonant, I would have preferred L as in “aile” (wing): OILEAU, or the v of the wishbone, the v of spread wings, the v of *avis*: OIVEAU. Popularly pronounced *sozio*. I note that the s resembles a bird’s profile at rest. And the *oi* and *eau* on each side of the s are both fatty meat fillets surrounding the wishbone.”

Land. Landing with the dignity of a mountain. Legs bent. The spine as if stretched between earth and sky is a string to be played seriously lightly. Ask yourself, eyes half closed. Hands on knees. Let yourself breathe. Without changing anything. Let yourself be. Breathe. Live your breathing. Have the placidity of a sea. But the billions of small electrical currents never cease as long as the moving flesh sticks to the bones, so that the muscles can tighten, synaptic connections shine, conveying wishes, thoughts, concerns, exaltations, anger, digressions, etc. One has to endlessly regain one’s breath. It’s like trying to protect yourself with your hands against a multitude of tiny feathers on a windy day. They escape and whirl. The air is disturbed by their fluffy presence in overcrowded water. Far from a clear view. The human mind is thus. Constantly agitated, changing subject, opinion, tone. It’s hard to hold a single note, a single chord. Indulging in the simplicity of breathing. Silence does not exist.

The flux never ends.

“One does not bathe twice in the same waters of a river.”

His hand is poised on the radio and manipulates the button towards the right, to the left. The immediately recognizable sound of changing stations, trying to stabilize the flux. It sizzles, bawls, advertises, speaks, it broadcasts a sonata, it announces the cast, it cites the speaker, it does not agree, it apologizes, it resumes, it presents, it interrupts speech, it makes fun, it is moved, it raises its voice, it makes a slip, it represses crazy laughter, it reads from its sheet, it cites in the original language, it launches a jingle, a tube, it cites its sources, it rebroadcasts, it develops, it announces what follows

# SILENCIO!



Originally, radios contained galena—hence the name of the “galena set” invented by Karl Ferdinand Braun in 1906. This mineral has been used since ancient times for its colour properties, powerfully tinting black or white—via the carbonate that gives white lead. Galena was used to make kohl in ancient Egypt. Mixed with molten glass in its production of lead oxide, it enables the production of crystal.

Graphite is the ABC of text or drawing, including lead poisoning, for those obsessed with gesture. “Do not seek my drafts, they are all printed.” Researchers such as Lionel and Diane Needleman suggest that lead poisoning may partly explain the collapse of the Roman Empire. Wealthy families from the Roman aristocracy indeed favoured lead crockery and lead objects, from cooking vessels to piping, along with water tanks. It is thought that lead fumes emitted by ancient Roman foundries spilled over into the polar regions.

It is said that minerals are inorganic substances. Nevertheless, amber, copal, mellitus, red coral, jet, etc., are organic.

In the great music of the spheres, mineral emits.

It is not insignificant to touch a mineral. It is not insignificant to be near a mineral.

It’s so wide.

You can manufacture a mineral—and he does not deny himself this.

Nevertheless, while the rhodochrosite, with its strange pink fingers shaped like little branches—Daphne, who would have blushed at the time of her transformation into a laurel—seems from the hand of man, it really comes from Argentina and is a source of pride.

“The owls are not what you think.”

His body in his work is not only the eye that observes, the hand that draws and cuts, the ear which catches things. It is also on display, in performance. It was at this time he began to say, “I am many” with a sweet smile and an extremely determined gaze, reflecting the heavens but also, strangely, he who looks at it. He changes his name for a death metal look, Doom Brain. He sports butterfly-wing make-up, finding the black and white of old movies and galena white lead. Like a damaged angel. The flaying, the skeleton overprinted on the skin, the temperature of which is generally 37°. Doom, death in the form of judgement. The law of time.

“Will you dance, Our Lady,  
Dead and unexpected?  
Billy wants you to dance  
Billy  
Will shoot the heels off your shoes if you don’t dance  
Billy  
Being dead also wants  
Fun”

We pace out the period.

“I DANCE BECAUSE I’M AFRAID AND I MANIPULATE MY CARCASS TO EXHAUSTION FRONT IN BACK AND BACK IN FRONT, FROM MY HEELS TO MY TOES AND VICE VERSA.”

We pace out the period.

Between two trips to the Comparative Anatomy Gallery of the Natural History Museum.

Just bones. Just bones.

The wind rises and he dreams of islands. Lives like Robinson who finds himself in a mirror, breathing solitude.

# 36 ONE ONLY EVER SEES THE EFFECTS...

One can turn around the island as around oneself. Loops. It is radiant and cursed.

So one has to invent one’s landscape.

“Every island has a border with all the coasts of the world.”

Inventing the landscape by transforming this space ends up in an infinity of possibilities. New routes lengthen the journey, the movement slows down, he composes discreet mazes.

Ancient gestures, constantly relived, create forms: building huts, disguising himself, contemplating stones, the landscape, living in the radio, catalyzing, releasing the shutter, throwing dice, broadcasting, reading, speaking, whispering, shouting, transmitting, editing. The system becomes complex, a happy constellation, a rebus that is both serious and cheerful.

With quotations – in order of appearance – from Olivier Mellano, “So Wide”, *MellaNoisEscape* then a phrase by *Explosion*; Philippe Lepeut – interviews; Zong Bing, *The Principle* (translated by Augustin Berque); Jack Spicer, *Billy The Kid*; Francis Ponge, *La Rage de l’expression*; Heraclitus; Jean-Marie Gleize; David Lynch; Denis Roche, *Louve basse*; Philip Dunne and Joseph L. Mankiewicz from the novel by R. A. Dick, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*...

*I found him in another dream. Together we watched The Ghost & Mrs. Muir. My heart jumped at each Bernard Hermann chord or perhaps because I suddenly remembered, “You know that it was his favorite movie?” Of course he knew. On screen, what were supposedly British waves (but were actually Californian - black and white disguises things) looked exactly like those of the Isle of Wight. “And now my mind is made up. Oh, Lucy. I never heard of such a thing.*

*Oh, Lucy, Lucy.*

*Please don’t make it more difficult.*

*I’m leaving. I have my own life to live.*

*But where, Lucy, where can you go?*

*The seaside, I think.*

*I’ve always wanted to live by the sea.*

*Oh, goody. Well, that’s all I have to say.*

*I should think it’s quite enough.*

*Apparently there’s nothing we can do about it...”*





*Silencio*, 2014–2015.  
Sound piece for three voices and 3 stones: 3 speakers on stands, 3 audio players, cable and 3 yellow sandstone rocks.  
Courtesy of the artist.  
Behind *Silencio*, on the atrium of the museum, you can see *Comme un enfant*, an in situ piece by Daniel Buren, 2014.

*Listen to the Quiet Voice*, 2015.  
Wall poster, inkjet print, 700 × 500 cm.  
Graphic design: Yohanna My Nguyen, Jérôme Saint-Loubert Bié.  
Photo: Simon Laveuve.  
Production: Friends of the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.  
Courtesy of the artist.

*On Air*, 2014–2015.  
Galena stone, unidentified shell, brass supporting brackets, glass and integrated sound system, 120 × 120 × 30 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Vogel*, 2014–2015.  
Carved rock crystal, brass fixture, steel cable and light.  
Courtesy of the artist.



*Living With: Brintesia circe*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 43 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, France.

*Living With: Aporia crataegi*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 35 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, France.

*Living With: Colias crocea*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 32 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, Japan.

*Living With: Melanargia occitanica*,  
1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 32 cm in diameter.  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Living With: Pieris rapae*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 35 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, Japan.

*Living With: Brenthis daphne*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 28 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, France.

*Living With: Vanessa atalanta*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 35 cm in diameter.  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Living With: Papilio machaon*, 1999.  
Cibachrome under diasec and  
aluminum, 30 cm in diameter.  
Private collection, France.



*Dante*, 2005-2012.  
6 separable photographs,  
printed on 308 g Hahnemühle  
Photo Rag ("Ditone" process)  
mounted on aluminum, shadow  
box frame in natural basswood  
47.2 × 64.42 cm.

Each photograph is printed in an  
edition of 5 + 2 artist's prints.  
Courtesy of the artist and private  
collections.





*Reprises 1*, 2013-2014.  
Wall display, 5 stones:  
Siderite, Fluorite, Pyrite, Gypsum  
Flower, unidentified.  
Rosewood shelf, brass brackets,  
glass, 80 × 120 × 10 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.



*Reprises 2*, 2014.  
Wall display, 3 stones:  
unidentified, Creedite,  
Rhodochrosite.  
Ebony, brass shelf brackets, glass,  
80 × 120 × 10 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist.



*It's Just Wind*, 2014-2015.  
Sound piece for 5 speakers,  
2 benches face-to-face and  
a light bulb, various dimensions.  
Courtesy of the artist.



Founder in 2003 of the association Écart Production that he has run ever since, Philippe Lepeut has produced and distributed videos by artists for more than 12 years. Today, there are more than 30 artists for whom Philippe Lepeut has undertaken the task of collecting, archiving and editorial formatting, extending the dissemination and understanding of these artworks. His editorial approach is part of his artistic work so he has included a room dedicated to his “guests” within his own exhibition. This interactive space will be reserved to host guest artists invited to present a reading, performance or projection, as part of a dialogue with him and with the public.

29 editions/31 artists:  
Céline Ahond, Younès Baba-Ali,  
Vincent Bernat, Nicolas Boone,  
Robert Cahen, David Michael  
Clarke, Clément Cogitore,  
Alain Declercq, Alain Della  
Negra, Marcel Dinahet, Christelle  
Familiari, Pierre Filliquet,  
Lou Galopa, Francis Guerrero,  
Éléonore Héllio, Anabelle Hulaut,



Philippe Jacq, Robin Lachenal,  
Philippe Lepeut, Pierre Mercier,  
Joachim Montessuis,  
Anna Plotnicka, Ramona Poenaru,  
Jean-François Robic,  
Francisco Ruiz de Infante,  
Manfred Sternjakob, Arnaud  
Tanguy, Céline Trouillet,  
Maja Wolinska, Jacek Zachodny,  
Philippe Zunino.

*Gêris*, 2015.  
Scenography designed by students  
of the Design option at the Haute  
école des arts du Rhin under the  
supervision of Fred Rieffel and  
Nathalia Moutinho.

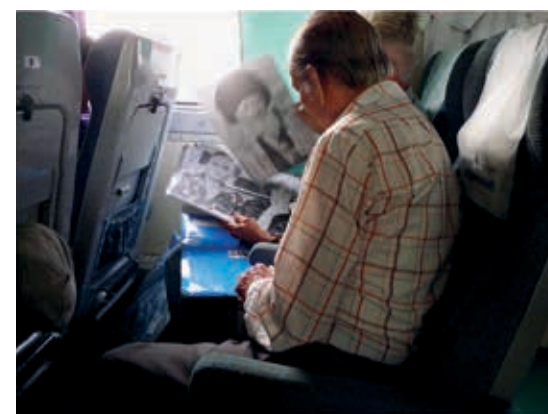
Meeting with Alain Declercq  
on 30 May 2015.





*Uzbek Suite*, 2008–2015.  
Set of 22 photographs:  
*Six cutaways*, *The Edge of things*,  
*Striking Images*.  
MAMC production.  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Six cutaways*  
(6 photos):  
*Highway and Wind*, *Three in a Landscape*, *Doors*, *Three Figures*,  
*Imperfect Book*, *Two in a Landscape*.  
Printed on 308 g Hahnemühle  
Photograf ("Ditone" process),  
each photograph 35 × 45 cm.



*The Edge of Things*  
(7 photos):  
*Stone*, *Bush*, *Sky*, *Traces*,  
*Iconographers*, *Mobile Screen*,  
*One in the Landscape*.  
Printed on 308 g Hahnemühle  
Photograf ("Ditone" process),  
each photograph 30 × 40 cm.





*Striking Images*  
(9 photos):  
*Diffractor, Pyrite Sun,*  
*Pyrites, Fluorite, Moquis,*  
*Tourmaline, Spheres,*  
*Aquamarine, Siderite.*  
Printed on 308 g Hahnemühle  
Photrag ("Ditone" process),  
each photograph 20 × 30 cm.







The photographs titled *Atmosphere*, followed by a serial number that links them in successive sets, were initiated in 2002 when the artist moved from Paris to Strasbourg. These photographs tell the stories on which his work is built.

*Atmosphere, Series 2 (-1 to -3)*, 2009–2013.  
Lightjet RA-4 print with diasec G (glass) bonding, 125 × 175 cm. Each photograph is printed in an edition of 5 + 2 artist's prints. Courtesy of the artist and the Frac Alsace collection in Sélestat (1/5).







*The Melancholy of the Stone Bird*, 2015. Installation, printed mesh, plaster sculpture, forms in zinc, raw rock crystal and carved, obsidian celestial eye, various dimensions. Art showcase, Galeries Lafayette, Strasbourg.

*At Another Speed* exhibition, CEAAC, Strasbourg, 2015:

*Balneo*, 1988.

*Ellipses*, 1990-1992. Charcoal and varnish on Ingres Fabriano, 70 × 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Life*, 1990–2012. India ink wash on Ingres d'Arches, 2 × 32.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Comments*, 2011-2015. Watercolour on Velin d'Arches, 28 × 38 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Comments on Death*, *The Robinson Cabin*, 2010. Watercolour on Arches Velin, 40 × 33 cm. Private collection, France.

*Shame, The Robinson Cabin*, 2010. *Untitled*, 2010. Watercolor on Velin d'Arches, 25 × 32 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Croatian*, 2005–2015. Video projector, 33 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.



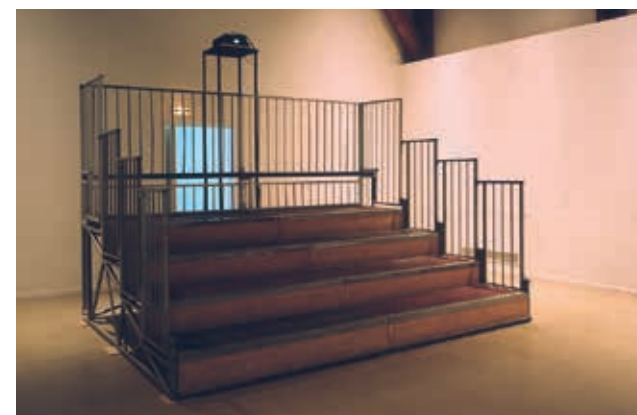


*The Robinson Project* directed by Philippe Lepeut, 26 minutes, 2001–2002. With Noémie Churlet, Bachir Saifi, Laurent Valo, the choreographic complicity of Hervé Robbe and Maison Martin Margiela, text and voice-over by Pierre Giquel, Claire Guezengar, Franck Marteyn, sound design by Philippe Petitgenet, video editing by Pierre Filliquet, titles by Jean-Baptiste Benoit, set photography by Mircea Cantor and Frédéric Méchineau, French sign language interpretation by Laure Boussard.

A coproduction by the Ministry of Culture/Visual Arts Delegation, American Center Foundation, City of Saint-Nazaire, Directorate General for Cultural Development, City of Paris/Department of Visual Arts.

The figure of Robinson has featured in Philippe Lepeut's work since his *Drop Zone* exhibition at Frac Alsace in 1999. The character of Robinson comes from *Robinson Crusoe* by Defoe, but also from *The Swiss Family Robinson* by Wyss, which led to the *Project for Garden with Zone*. This first collaboration with a young deaf artist was to continue in *The Robinson Project* and the meeting with 3 deaf actors from the IVT (International Visual Theater). The film is an opportunity, with the complicity of Hervé Robbe, to extend the choreographic

boundaries of sign language, but also of language as a construction of the world.

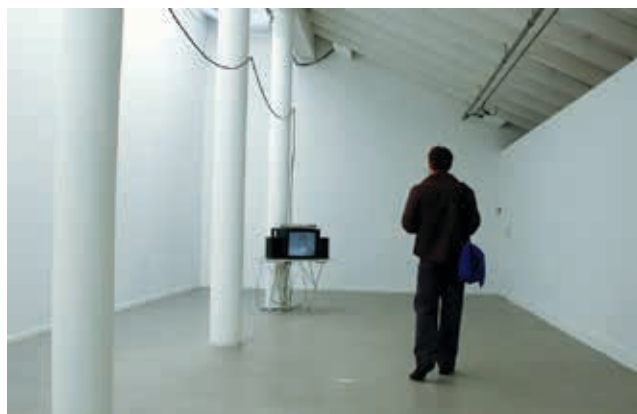


*Abode*, 2002. Installation, wooden container painted green, 3 aianthus, 3 painted skulls, 4 neon lights, earth, plank, 2 horticultural lamps, 360 × 240 × 240 cm. La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel (*Robinson & Son* exhibition). Courtesy of the artist.

*The Robinson Project*, 2002. Fairground device for video projection: tiered seating, screen on stand, 2 concert speakers, various dimensions, video 28 minutes long. La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel (*Robinson & Son* exhibition). Courtesy of the artist.

*The Robinson Project* was published by Écart Production, reference A005.





*SolAir*, 2002.  
Video device powered by a photovoltaic power system: frame, solar panels, electric cable, monitor, DVD player, video loop, various dimensions.  
La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel (*Robinson & Son* exhibition).  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Me, Robinson*, 2002.  
Wall video projection, sound, various dimensions, video 11 minutes long in a loop.  
La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel (*Robinson & Son* exhibition).  
Courtesy of the artist.  
*On Air* was published by Écart Production, reference A005 (bonus).



*Dansl'accastlefeu*, *Another World*, 2009.  
*Another World* video triptych (*Life*, 5 minutes 16 seconds, *The Messenger*, 11 minutes, *Postscript*, 37 seconds).  
Music, Josselin Roux and Jérôme Pergolési "cloud" (*Life*), Raphael Charpentier tamer of sounds (*The Messenger* and *Postscript*),

3 sound video loops, 3 screens and 6 speakers on stands plus luminous device consisting of 49 neons and a perforated skull.  
Apollonia – Accélérateur de Particules / Sophie Kauffenstein, Strasbourg.



*Dansl'accastlefeu*, performance for voice and loops, 5 February 2005.





*Atmosphere, Series 1* (–1 to –6), 2002.  
Lightjet RA-4 print  
with diasec G (glass) collage,  
125 × 175 cm. Each photograph  
is part of an edition of 5 copies +  
2 artist's prints. Courtesy of the  
artist and the collection of the  
Strasbourg Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, (1/5).





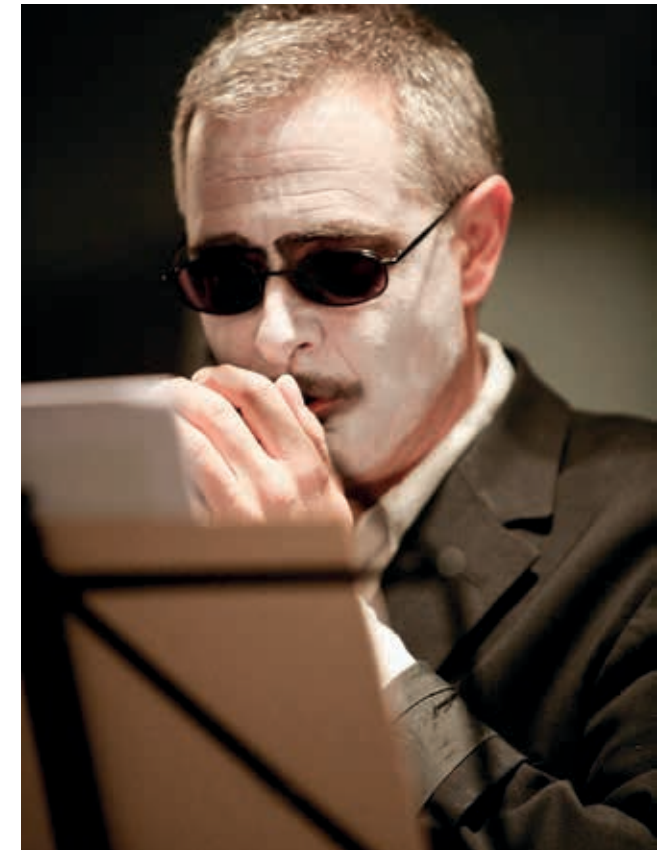


*Radiotopie*, 2005.  
Radiophonic film in 5 episodes, with a prologue and an epilogue. Installation, parquet and wooden wall, military tent, tables, benches, sound studio (recording and broadcasting), 5 video monitors, 18 m x 10 m.  
Galerie MicroOnde, Villeparisis.  
Installation to accommodate

a recording studio and the public in order to make 8 one-hour programmes. The recordings took place every Saturday from 6 April to 8 May. Each episode was broadcast by Triangle FM.

Design and production of broadcasts: Philippe Lepeut with the participation of Laurence Baudelet, Annick Bertrand, Jean-Luc Brisson, Sébastien Erhard, Yona Friedman, Claire Guezengar, Jacques Leenhardt, Fiona Meadows, Nicolas Michelin, Liliana Motta, Manuel Pluvinaige and

Pierre Belouin for producing signature tunes and artists published by the Optical Sound label.



*Radiophonic Circus*, 2008.  
Performative radiophonic installation: scenes, boxing ring, "Live" public audio and visual events. The whole constituted a radio programme of eight uninterrupted hours (ITV, jingle, etc) broadcast on the

web in real time on the Radio en Construction site. A collaborative project with Philippe Lepeut, Elsa Macaret, Raphael Charpentier, Dickheadmanrecords, Claudine Collilieux, Louise Hervé and Chloé Maillet, David Legrand and Philippe Zunino, Isabelle Anthony and Yann Weissgerber, Metz Boxing Club, the Marly showdown

and Radio en Construction. Gallery of the School of Art of Metz Métropole, Metz All Nighter 3 October, 2008.



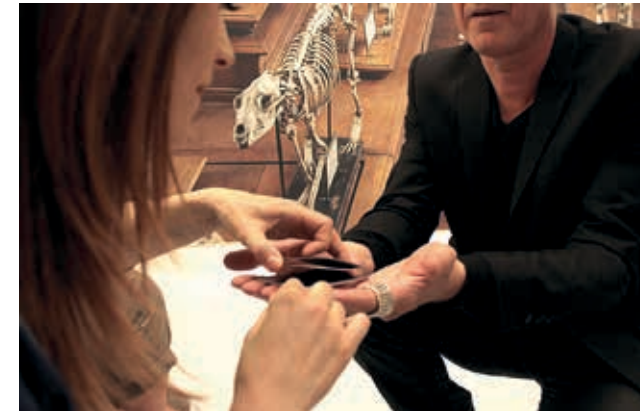


*Contrechamp*, 1999.  
Construction with video projection  
and independent sound diffusion  
(mixed by Vincent Epplay),  
220 × 650 × 235 cm.  
Cent8 Gallery, Paris.

*The Robinson Cabin*, 2010-2011.  
Watercolours 32.5 × 40 cm and  
19.5 × 25.5 cm.  
(*The Blue Hour, Flames, The Birth  
of Dead Trees, Pirate Prison, Bitter  
Tears, Nodes, Guts, The Chemical  
Extravagance of Robinson, Run with  
the Hare, Hunt with the Hounds*).

*Robinson's Episcopal Seat*, 2014.  
Installation in pit: nest, pyrite, flat  
stone, vegetable ball and feathers.  
*Voodoo Hemispheres* exhibition  
(cur. Thibaut Honoré), 2014.  
Ritsch-Fisch Gallery, Strasbourg.

*Tableau*, 1998.  
Spinnaker cloth and plants,  
400 × 600 × 400 cm.  
"Localized" exhibition,  
Goya museum Castres and  
"Delocalized" exhibition,  
Aître St-Maclou Gallery, Rouen.



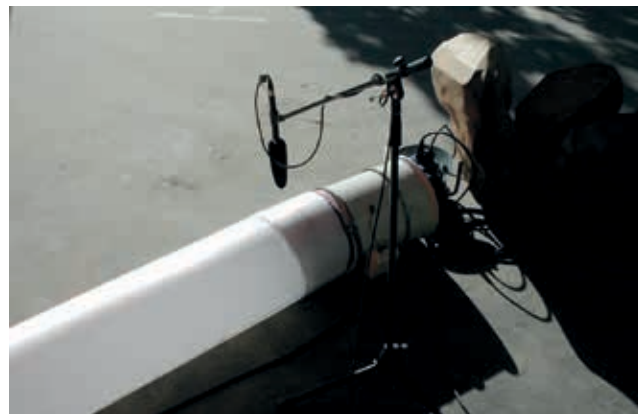
*Oblique commentaries from Listen to  
the Quiet Voice at the risk of the cards*,  
performance, 16 May 2015.

This performance conceived by the  
artist for Museum Night ushers in  
a series of prototype performances  
using playing cards or divination  
cards to attempt a nonlinear and  
constantly mobile commentary of  
his own works. For this "Oblique  
commentary" of Listen to the  
Quiet Voice, Philippe Lepeut  
fabricated an extension of the

game Oblique Strategies by Brian  
Eno and Peter Schmidt. The 30  
cards he has added bear the title  
and page number of literary and  
poetic works that nourish his work,  
issues related to his work or the  
names of artists as heroic figures.  
According to the draw performed  
by the public, the order and nature  
of comment on the work varies,

affirming the multiplicity of  
interpretations and viewpoints  
without any hierarchy of "truth."





*L’Air de rien (Nonchalantly).*  
Performance at Neudorf art library  
on 25 April 2013.  
As part of the event “Vibrate the  
air” around inflatable modules by  
the architect Hans Walter Müller  
(commissioned by the Art and  
Landscape Centre of Vassivière)  
and at the invitation of Madeline  
Dupuy-Belmedjahed.



*Faced with a choice, do both.*  
Performance on 10 June 2015.  
Prototype performance for one  
voice, a chair, two bare feet and  
a soundtrack for 6 speakers,  
20 minutes, auditorium of the  
Strasbourg Museum of Modern  
and Contemporary Art.





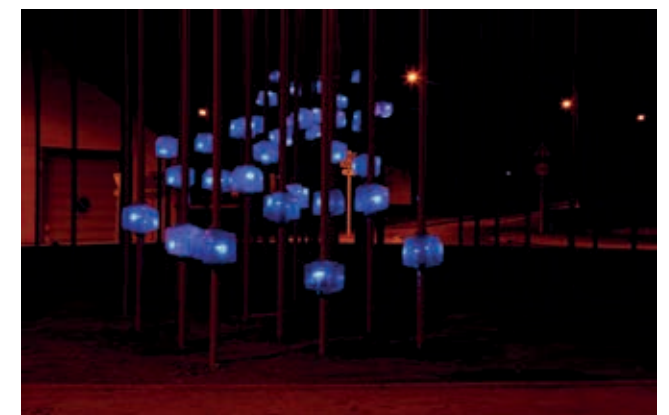
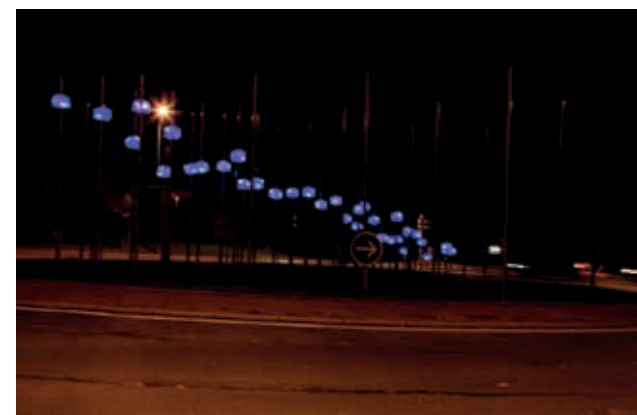
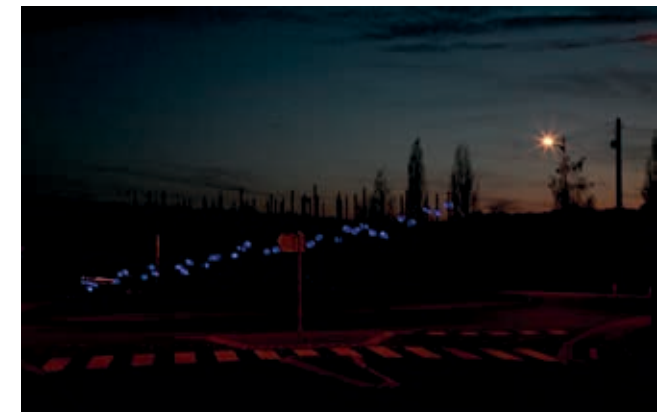
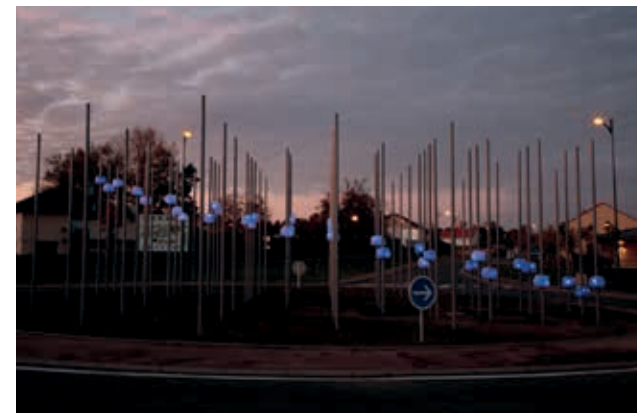
*DoomBrain* is an informal collaboration between Philippe Lepeut and Simon Laveuve which began in 2008.

Top: *DoomBrain*, 2008, *Livraison*, issue 10, "Soundtracks for the Blind", published in September 2008 (at the invitation of Pierre Belouin), devised and modelled

by Philippe Lepeut, photographs by Simon Laveuve, makeup by Sabrina Dorize; *DoomBrain*, *fallait pas provoquer*, Emmanuel Dosda, *Poly*, February 2009, p. 52-53; *DoomBrain* Logo, Benoit Galeron, 2008.

*DoomBrain*, *Green* and *DoomBrain*, *Blue*, 2008. Devised and modelled by Philippe Lepeut, photographs by Laveuve Simon, makeup by Sabrina Dorize.

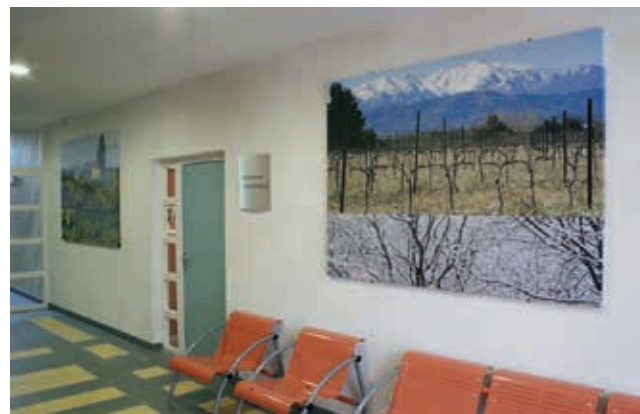
*DoomBrain*, *Black* (*dans le geste le feu*) performance on 5 February 2009, for the *dans le geste le feu* exhibition, Accélérateur de Particules, Strasbourg.



*Between Sky and Salt*, commissioned by the City of Dieuze, 2012. Kinetic vibration of a frame with 80 6-metre metal poles, supporting 36 white-blue glass elements manufactured at the International Centre for Glassmaking Art in Meisenthal. Each glass element is illuminated by 3 blue LEDs (3×3 watts).

City of Dieuze, project developer: Digital Landscape (Agnès Daval), representative: Philippe Lepeut, subcontractor for the artistic aspect.





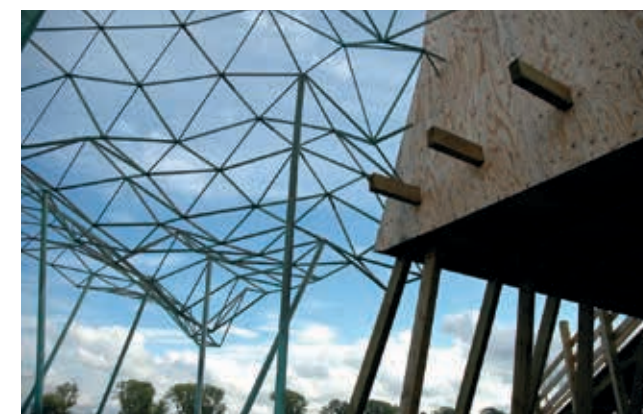
*PO66690*, 2006.  
Designed and produced by Philippe Lepeut, commissioned by the General Council of the Pyrénées-Orientales, under the 1% for art rule, for the Pierre-Mendes-France Middle School built in the town of Saint-André in 2005.

*PO66690* bridges the landscape surrounding the Pierre-Mendes-France Middle School in Saint André. As the Point Zero, the point of origin, the school became the centre of a network radiating out to Portbou in Spain, Serralongue in Vallespir, Marcevol in Conflent, the Table of the Dead in Corbières and Perpignan in Roussillon. The

photos were taken during several trips to Catalonia between January and May 2006. They enabled the production of a large printed book and photographic paintings on canvas scattered in different locations in the school. 10 wall images, inkjet print on canvas, 150 x 200 cm each, Pierre Mendes-France Middle

School, Saint-André.

*PO66690*, 176 pages, 2006. Layout by Sophie Despax, translated by Luis Losantos Vinolas, proofread by Anne Denis, printed by Les Compagnons du Sagittaire in Rennes on behalf of the General Council of the Pyrénées-Orientales.



*Bitter 6*, 2003-2004.  
Wood and patinated bronze construction, commissioned by the City of Strasbourg for the Jardin des Deux Rives in Strasbourg.





*Syneson*, 2013.  
Permanent sound installation for the marketplace in Neudorf, Strasbourg. Intermittent sound device controlled by a computer programme disseminating sounds via 7 speakers placed along the pergola.

Project undertaken in collaboration with Fred Rieffel, Lagoon, Charpiot Techniques, Carrosserie HH Services and Bruno de Chénérilles. Commissioned by the City of Strasbourg.



*Odonate*, 2008.  
Structure in stainless steel and polycarbonate, 7 stainless steel posts and 7 balls of blown glass (CIAV), 1% art rule, Technical and General Education Agricultural High School Le Chesnoy, Amilly, Central Region Council.

*Transfer*, 1998.  
Screenprinted glass, baked enamel, 400 × 400 cm, 1% art rule for the Toulouse IUFM.

## WORDS AND MARVELS OF PHILIPPE LEPEUT

*About the exhibition Listen to the Quiet Voice  
at the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art*

Estelle Pietrzyk

“Ut pictura poesis”

Horace

“Don’t you wonder sometimes about sound and vision?”

David Bowie

Everything starts with a phrase, encountered on a randomly turned card, taken from the game *Oblique Strategies*, a contemporary form of I Ching for artists created by two artists (the sound artist Brian Eno and the image artist Peter Schmidt) in 1975. These *Oblique Strategies*, subtitled “Over a hundred dilemmas that are worth it”, is like a divination technique whose open and polysemic injunctions invite those who consult them to make cross-paths in order to foster the emergence of an artwork. In this particular case, the card delivered by the oracle to Philippe Lepeut is the cornerstone, not just of an artwork, but of an entire project. Exhibitions are sometimes done this way, at least those that reveal as much about an artwork as a working method, if not a creed. “*Listen to the Quiet Voice*”, such was the phrase that seemed straight out of a book by Lewis Carroll, turned upside down by Philippe Lepeut. “Listen to the little voice” is therefore the recommendation from which he not only conceives the invitation to travel, but also the one that indicates to the visitor, who goes to meet his sounds, images and objects and all artworks that exist independently and yet have never seemed so connected, attuned to one another in this “music for the eyes”<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The expression “*Augenmusik*” comes from Thomas Mann with regard to *The Art of the Fugue* by Johann Sebastian Bach.



“I am many” repeats this polymorphous artist and aesthete whose work as a publisher (visible within the exhibition via a space dedicated to his Écart Production label) and linkman feeds an approach that, via the line, the wave or the pixel, constitutes a body of work that shines with a discreet, unspectacular grace. In the exhibition *Listen to the Quiet Voice*, where the path itself takes precedence over a possible outcome that is also non-existent, the walker lingers or moves on at the discretion of the facets the artist decides to reveal. “I am many” seems to refer to the monumental self-portrait Lepeut takes care to place at the beginning of the exhibition; the piece takes on the appearance of a movie poster, and could indeed be that of a fiction film. An artwork-synthesis which also gives a title to the exhibition, it sets the tone of the whole project and brings to a climax an intertextuality Philip Lepeut has been developing in his work for over 30 years: the sound (of the words that read like a slogan here beneath the silhouette of Lepeut, with a dark suit and frontal gaze, in a posture that is reminiscent of the determined Joseph Beuys of *La Rivoluzione siamo noi*) is inextricably linked to the image (a faked photograph in which the decor is a character in itself). Sound and vision yet again and, as in all of Philippe Lepeut’s work, there are the signs of a “hidden dimension”, the keystone of this nervous artwork. Amid this marching army to which he himself belongs (a possible variation on “One of us” by Tod Browning?) Lepeut advances and takes us into an exhibition that has more to do with staging than scenography.

#### The exhibition as cabinet of wonders

Within the museum’s white cube, Philippe Lepeut brings together raw natural elements and artifacts, all of which are valuable not only for their individual aesthetic qualities but also for the strong visual resonance these harmonics produce when combined. For Philippe Lepeut, Beauty – Baudelairian and bizarre – is a conscious and recognized quest; it gushes *mirabilia* which he brings together in the space of the exhibition, a space that temporarily becomes a cabinet of wonders. Like the princes of the late 16th century, the artist stages artwork-treasures, natural things and mental things, sometimes evoking microcosms and sometimes macrocosms.

By introducing sound into this setup, Lepeut renders the visit a unique experience that is different for each viewer.

The choice of unexpected juxtapositions that are not without echoes (a human skull and a hard disk) seems like a working method in itself, as Lepeut would like to have us believe in the artificial disorder of *Atmospheres 2.0*. This series of seven photographs, three of which are featured in the exhibition, invites the viewer to share the (knowingly composed) intimacy of the artist: on a work bench-come-painting, via an upright perspective and in a staging worthy of a Spoerri picture-trap, one can distinguish the “tools” of Philippe Lepeut: from the paraphernalia of the classical painter to scientific objects, seen here are the most sophisticated technology and the rawest ore combined, together forming a vast network of interconnected references that define a rhizomic method of production. With the large horizontal formed by the edge of the table-painting, Lepeut (who is a Haruki Murakami reader) builds a composition that updates the coexistence of an upper and a lower world, each as rich as the other and abundantly interconnected.

The *Atmospheres* are like maps bringing (for those who know how to see them) all the “treasures” into a single image; we will thus find here and there, in various parts of the exhibition, their components either isolated or combined with new elements. What stands out, among the network of wiring and artworks by some friendly hands, is the recurring presence of stones. Designed in full “lithic period” of the artist, the exhibition is full of “small stones” which, like those of the fairy tale, mark out the whole route.

“When I look at stones carefully”, writes Roger Caillois, “sometimes I apply myself, not without naivety, to guess their secrets.”<sup>2</sup> Lepeut, too, “plucks” stones that he has never considered inert. He makes them talk, discuss, and presents them in all their majesty. As in the privacy of lithophiles’

cabinets of old (enthusiasts of precious essences to dispose their treasures), Lepeut uses rosewood and ebony to arrange the stones of *Reprises*. Perhaps chosen for their properties (or their proprietors?), these stones are also there because of their history that is known only to the artist. The artwork is thus removed from the geology board in order to create souvenir photos, allusive and durable but also imperfect. In each *Reprise* there is indeed “an indefinite stone”, a contemporary intruder (one close to the polyhedron of *Melancholia*, the other to the scientific object) that disturbs the peaceful harmony of these natural displays and introduces a measure of the unexplained and the artificial into this silent alignment.

Not far away, another staging is playing out in which furniture is also of significant importance: the *Dante* series. These six photographic pieces, the accentuated contrasts of which owe more to the history of classical painting than to the reproducible image, derive their particular visual power from the presence of “boxes” (19th-century educational display cases as found in natural history museums). The display case provides distance while focusing the gaze, by which Lepeut sublimates his subject, glimpsed in another form in *Atmospheres*, namely a series of academic skulls. Accentuating the deep black and the shiny reflections as well as choosing a grain similar to the paint layer of a Dutch still life, Lepeut harks back to 17th-century painting, from Lubin Baugin to Philippe de Champaigne; he works on framing by precisely circumscribing his image to the display case; he applies editing by arranging the images in a certain sequence. Painting, photography and cinema thereby find themselves tightly mixed with poetry (that of the author of the *Inferno* who gives the title to the series). In the *Dantes*, Lepeut (who gladly states his attraction to all that is transmedia) reaffirms his desire to escape generally accepted categories. Tragic or farcical scenes are played

2 In *Pierres*, Roger Caillois, Gallimard, 1966, p. 90.



out through these contemporary vanities in which grimacing or laughing skulls serve as characters, damned heroes from one of the circles of Dante's poem. Image, yet again, is never far from word. While a voice resonates behind us.

### In the beginning was the Word

Although sound has been incorporated in Philippe Lepeut's work since the 1990s, it is not as an exclusive genre but complements his other artistic practices. In *Listen to the Quiet Voice*, the sound, in this case a voice, is truly the backbone of the exhibition that links the works together while quietly but effectively plunging "the walker" into a space-time that is different from the one before the visit and the one that will follow it: this "here and now" is that of the fiction of the exhibition. Three speakers, at three strategic points, each strangely connected to a stone, remain silent for long moments. When they come to life, it is to utter a single word: "*Silencio*". These three syllables become the starting point for a journey into fiction insofar as the voices that pronounce it (in all languages, genres and ages) alone embody a situation, a character or even an entire artwork. The first "*Silencio*!" is an order, it is the authoritative voice of a guard from the Sistine Chapel who intimates to visitors the order to remain silent. The second "*Silencio*!" relates to Fritz Lang, or rather the director he plays in the film *Contempt* by Jean-Luc Godard: this silence is that which precedes the word "Action" on a film set. The latter is whispered mysteriously by a woman. This "*Silencio*" refers to the eponymous club, a place of dreams and fantasy, in the film *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch. These "cries and whispers" occupy the entire space of the exhibition and can be heard during the contemplation of the artworks, giving them a different, random aura, the caressing voice that might encounter a photo of a skull, the authoritarian voice that might

encounter a photo of a butterfly wing that profoundly transforms our reading of things.

Two rooms escape this principle and are equipped with their own reading tracks. The first "apart" artwork is *C'est du vent* (*It's Wind*), which leads us into a half-light in which there is a storm. Curiously, none of this is really disturbing thanks to the "reassuring" effect of the simple light bulb that illuminates the centre of the room enough to feature the idea of shelter, a protective matrix. The wind is in itself neither visible nor audible, only meeting with an obstacle that allows us to detect its presence. In this empty room, mental images follow one another and visitors find themselves lingering and dreaming of the seaside, the wind noise being sometimes close to that of the surf. Capturing the intangible, such is the prowess of this artwork which, without using the means of painting, nevertheless eminently makes reference to it, recalling the cave art that came from the breath – *pneuma* – of men fixing their handprints on the walls of caves, or else the musings of some 18th-century painter-wanderers:

"We had to remain spectators", writes Claude Courtot<sup>3</sup> reporting on an imaginary walk of Joseph Vernet and Hubert Robert. "These were painters' expeditions. We were going to see colours in their free state, observe the pink wind in dresses and the green in the leaves of trees, the blue movement of passersby, the black spots of hats and the yellow of ribbons, gay as birdsong, the white noise of fountains. And the sky like a mirror."

*Un Autre monde – Le Messenger* (*Another World – The Messenger*) is the other artwork presented in a room of its own. A video Lepeut has previously shown as the centre-piece of a triptych is here displayed alone on a loop, which accentuates its hypnotic aspect despite an apparent banality. A fixed shot in slow motion, without beginning or end, shows a hand twirling a pen. The scene

3 *Journal imaginaire de mes prisons en ruines*, Hubert Robert 1793-1794, Claude Courtot, Éditions José Corti, 1988, p. 36.

is repeated again and again, without changes, without surprise. Yet the contemplation of this infinitely repeated micro-event immediately provokes a strange feeling, or even anxiety. While the slow motion captures the mechanical ballet of child's play, the soundtrack (also slowed down) which accompanies the scene, places a succession of enigmatic sounds in confrontation with each other. The slightest shock takes on the intensity of a thunderbolt and the breath (white noise?) punctuated by very low frequencies, which accompanies the image, gives it a new dramatic intensity. Invited by the strangeness of the sound to reconsider the innocuous nature of the film, the viewer can then try a less literal reading of the images: who sends and who really receives the message? When we look repeatedly, the moving pen soon takes on the appearance of an insect deploying its wing cases. The step towards entomology has been taken and is echoed at several points in the exhibition, especially in the *Vivre Avec* (*Living With*) series.

Philippe Lepeut combines the circular perfection of the tondo (in which one perceives, yet again, the artist's unabashed attraction to classical painting) with the delicacy of the powdery texture of a butterfly wing. Where Renaissance ceilings majestically displayed allegorical scenes, Lepeut grasps, via his lens, that which is never seen clearly because too furtive. These enlarged details of variegated lepidopteran wings are now just silky, ribbed patterns, pure abstractions arranged in irregular constellations. *Vivre avec* is not only worthwhile for the aesthetic satisfaction of enjoying the beauty of these "small living souls"<sup>4</sup>, it drives the furrow of language a little deeper in Philippe Lepeut's work. After silence, voice, wind and noise, the importance of the word is highlighted here, in this case the right word: the elements of *Vivre avec* are all followed by a specific Latin name (*Melanargia occitanica*, *Aporia crataegi*, *Colias crocea*, etc.) designating, without any possible confusion,

4 "Seelentierchen" is how Aby Warburg described the nightflies and moths with whom he "converses" during his detention at the Bellevue clinic in Kreuzlingen.

a specific butterfly. Here then is another role of language: to name, to distinguish and confer existence. These images, which are possibly unreadable at first glance, become, in the light of their title, specific evidence of observation, without a definitive judgement about the origin of the point of view: is the perfect circle that of a telescope or a microscope? No matter if the vision is micro or macro, both readings are brought together in Philippe Lepeut's collections, from which come these butterflies that are privileged guests in his Locus Solus. The word and the beautiful are once again related, returning to the origins of the first curiosity enthusiasts of whom Philippe Lepeut is a spritual descendent, namely those who collect treasures and can name them<sup>5</sup>. Naming is not explaining and Lepeut makes room in his creation for the unsaid if not the unspeakable. This "hidden dimension" is perhaps the most personal part of Lepeut's work, one that abandons one-way interpretations in favour of an infinite number of readings.

### Wave, fluid and eurythmy

"Despite the most stringent technical requirements, creative power leads to artistic creation like a mysterious fluid. The power of intuition is no less essential to the art of the future than to that of our time"

László Moholy Nagy,  
*Painting, Photography, Film and  
Other Writings on Photography.*

The project of the exhibition *Listen to the Quiet Voice* can be read as a sort of response in the form of an artwork to the Lamartine poem: yes, objects have a soul and Lepeut endeavours to provide, if not proof, then at least a sign.

From the stones of *Silencio* to the pen of *Un autre Monde* (*Another World*), the carefully chosen objects of *Listen to the Quiet Voice* are not inanimate but active. Escaping any exclusive reading (which would be strictly

5 The "*mirabilia*" fall within the competence of those who were known in Alexandria and in Pergamum as philologists, men of the text", Patricia Falguères, *Les Chambres des merveilles*, Éditions Bayard, 2003, p. 10.



scientific, esoteric or plastic), they give off “something else”; their specifically chosen location at the centre of the exhibition, along with the links they weave with each other, are conducive to the emergence of strong images.

The artwork *On Air* bears witness to this. The shiny galena stone positioned at the centre of this device is beautiful in itself and could be a sculpture in its own right. The choice of this particular stone refers to the origins of radio wave reception (captured by pyrite at the heart of the first crystal sets in the early 20th century) or the human ability to make the voice travel via waves. Instead of radio frequencies, and it is only when there is silence that one can appreciate this, it is nature that we perceive, by listening carefully: like a radio being tuned, the singing of grasshoppers, crickets and other Orthoptera issuing from strange pavilions of undetermined origin (animal? vegetable? artificial?). The chirping creates a decor, of an invisible prairie summer, which seems within reach. That is the strength of this work which, without being an image in itself, is a generator of numerous images. Philippe Lepeut, artist of suggestion, multiplies the situations that invite viewers to explore further into themselves to encounter the fruit of their labour. The means employed are often limited without being modest; they are, indeed, often beautiful objects, precious for some, products of sophisticated technology for others, placed at the heart of the device.

A work such as *Vogel* – half Foucault’s pendulum, half dowsing pendulum – yet again combines the tangible and the intangible, tangible reality and a zone of doubt conducive to making the inexplicable rise to the surface: the material lies here in the fascinating beauty of carved rock crystal. Its changing facets, magnified by light coming not from the zenith but the nadir, have a hypnotic power while long steel cable adds an impression of elevation and lightness (which is misleading because the crystal actually weighs several kilos). This “*Vogel*”,

bird in space or hieratic *Maiastira*, oscillates between several poles: earth and sky, science and the occult, the life before and after of Marcel Vogel<sup>6</sup> from whom – perhaps – the name is borrowed. Lepeut plays on the ambiguity with which the diffracted light relates as much to conventional science as to the esoteric, and to a universe of visual references that range from the *Basket of Glasses and Silverware Vases* by Stoskopff to the album cover of *Dark Side of the Moon* by Pink Floyd. Numerous registers unfamiliar to each other but which have in common the fact of requiring a specific initiation to be fully appreciated.

Might the first image of the nearby *Suite Ouzbèque* (Uzbek Suite) be a key to reading *Vogel*? The photograph that opens this series (of 22) shows a hand holding a crystal whose orientation in a ray of light tends to make the contours disappear. Its diffracted shadow seems more dense than the crystal itself which seems to be “evaporating”. Entitled *Le Diffracteur* (*The Diffractor*), it is the first “*Striking Image*” of this vast composition built like a musical sequence in which each instrumental part is played by a thematic ensemble. Thus three scores are simultaneously “played”, each comprising several photographs (with one format per series) that the artist distinguishes in the following way: above are “The Cutaways”, scenes of lives and landscapes arranged in diptychs shot during a journey in Central Asia; in the central part, “The Edge of Things” includes traces, footprints, shadows, all witnesses attesting to a disappearance; finally, below, a line with “The Striking Images”, in the most modest format, which presents itself as a sequence that combines hands and stones in an enigmatic gesture. The *Uzbek Suite* is almost 12 metres long and is an invitation to understand several temporalities, several places and several scales in a simultaneous reading. Each picture could be the pretext for a micro-narrative but Philippe Lepeut chooses to avoid anecdote in favour of a

6 Marcel Vogel (1917-1991) was a researcher known for his work on quartz having had a career with IBM before directing his thoughts towards lithotherapy.

### Epilogue

simultaneous image wall, like telescoping memories or the illustrated page of a research engine. The progressive erasure of elements of context (absent faces, characters replaced by models, anonymous landscapes, etc.), the highlighting of a detail (close-ups of anonymous hands holding stones), the book that one cannot read, participate in the photographic *mise en abyme* employed here, not as a tool for capturing reality but as a possible support for poetic writing in images. As an artwork with a photographic film format of which the “Striking Images” would be the mute soundtrack, *The Uzbek Suite* should perhaps be observed not in the scope it deploys but in the depth and the extensions it suggests: the number of images of which it is composed is “endless” and we see the rare figures who inhabit them turn their backs on us or become absorbed in an infinite horizon, like characters in a Caspar David Friedrich painting. Under these silent scenes, a line of hands signs some mysterious rituals: in this sequence worthy of a eurythmy session, hands show (or hide?) precious objects. Although we perceive the elegance of gestures and the beauty of treasures already encountered elsewhere, the deep meaning of this strange ballet remains hidden from us.

The Alpha of the *Suite* with its cut crystal was linked to transparency, the Omega is quite the opposite: it is an abandoned drive-in screen or an uneven wall with an opaque surface on which shadows are cast. Between the two, separated by a fine (if not infrathin) line, Lepeut proposes that the visitor *Listen to the Quiet Voice* of journeys filled with ghosts, a walk guided by an “imperfect book”.

It all started with a phrase, encountered while reading a novel by Jean-Jacques Schuhl<sup>7</sup> which features a writer lacking inspiration to whom a caring soul recommends *Oblique Strategies* for writing his book. The advice the game gives Schuhl himself (because it is a novel written in the first person) is “Listen to the quiet voice.” Thus do novels and sometimes exhibitions come about, whose authors – writers or artists – see their work in the style of the *Arabian Nights* in which no chapter is more important than another, where each story element can stand alone but says something quite different once embedded with the rest. *Listen to the Quiet Voice* is one of those sensitive and emotional experiences, which suspend time to promote the advent of a moment of epiphanic encounter with an artwork similar to the experiences recounted by Vladimir Nabokov, a big butterfly hunter before the Eternal: “I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip. And the highest enjoyment of timelessness – in a landscape selected at random – is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain. It is like a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love. A sense of oneness with sun and stone. A thrill of gratitude to whom it may concern – to the contrapuntal genius of human fate or to tender ghosts humoring a happy mortal<sup>8</sup>.”

7 *Entrée des fantômes*, Jean-Jacques Schuhl, Gallimard, 2010, p. 76-77.

8 *Autres Rivages*, Vladimir Nabokov, Gallimard, 1989, p. 120-139.



## THE UNDERSIDE OF STONES

*Comparative anatomy of the living and other metamorphic images*

Janig Begoc

“The obsidian stone is black, transparent and matte. They are used to make mirrors. They reflect the shadow rather than the image of beings and things.”

Roger Caillois,  
*Pierres suivi d'autres textes* (1966),  
Paris, Gallimard (Poésie), 1971, p. 18.

### Thread and trace [The geological paradigm]

“Remove specifics and convert to ambiguities”

Brian Eno/Peter Schmidt,  
*Oblique Strategies*, 1975.

“Another profitable field of investigation would undoubtedly involve comparing levels of organization in the inanimate, the living, the psychological, the social and the modes of passing from one plane to another. Such are the many broad domains for these sciences of a type both permanent and new that I once proposed calling ‘diagonal’.

These sciences overlap with the older disciplines and force them into dialogue. They try to detect the singular legislation that brings together distant and seemingly unrelated phenomena. They attempt to decipher latent complicity and discover neglected correlations by making oblique cuts in the shared universe.”

Roger Caillois,  
“Nouveau plaidoyer pour les sciences diagonales” (1965),  
*Cases d'un échiquier* (1970), in *Œuvres*, Paris, Gallimard (Quarto),  
2008, p. 569.

A white support with dimensions similar to those of a painting acts as a plinth. Laid on the ground, and thus transformed into a stage, this frame presents itself as the receptacle for a loudspeaker and a piece of rock, both connected by two-colour cables. A voice, screaming or whispering (depending on the three variants of the piece), asks the passerby to be silent.

A thread and a trace. The setup of *Silencio* (2014–2015) is simple, refined and cold. But it is effective. It is presented like a manual, a treasure hunt or an index. Philippe Lepeut installs a decor here: that of his visual vocabulary and, by implication, his pictorial heritage. If we were to anthropomorphize these objects, we might indeed see the figures from the *Bathers with a Turtle* by Matisse. In a landscape reduced to the simplest expression of three flat areas of colour (earth, sea, sky), the painter placed three female characters and a turtle in order to lend a metaphysical dimension to the space. Through this symbolic back-and-forth between plane and physicality, between flatness and corporal volume, he tried to locate the figure in a non-geometric but indefinite and cosmic depth.

This representational strategy, borrowed by Matisse from Giotto's painting before being modeled by modernist formalism (particularly that of Mark Rothko), is found in the astonishing flatness of the photographs in the series *Atmosphère* (2009–2015). Philippe Lepeut here shows his work bench. Photographed from above, the images combine a superimposition of two coloured planes by displaying the table and the floor as a single surface. Perspective is crushed but not quite denied. Like *The Red Studio* by Matisse, this crushing in fact encourages the exploration of depth.

Although employing the format of landscape painting, the *Atmosphères* are similar to the pictorial theme of the *Red Studio* of the painter. The accumulation of photographed objects – which highlights collections of skulls and stones – indeed invites us to daydream about the behind-the-scenes aspect of the production as much as it provides (especially literary) sources, tools and methods. And what is immediately striking is their transversality.

“It is time to try the accidental aspect of the diagonal sciences<sup>1</sup>”. It is with these words that Roger Caillois invited his peers, when faced with the beaten track of disciplinary research, to give preference to daring “cross-paths” to “be employed in the common world of oblique cuts<sup>2</sup>” to better penetrate “cross-cutting approaches to nature.” Some 20 years later, and with a completely different tone, Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt were also to make obliquity a procedure. *Oblique Strategies*, the card game they invented, is a collection of enigmatic sentences to be used as means to unblock creative situations.

1 Roger Caillois, “Sciences diagonales” (1959), préface de *Méduse et Cie* (1960), in *Œuvres*, Paris, Gallimard (Quarto), 2008, p. 483-484.

2 Roger Caillois, “Nouveau plaidoyer pour les sciences diagonales” (1965), *Cases d'un échiquier* (1970), in *Œuvres*, op. cit., p. 569.



Roger Caillois and Brian Eno: Philippe Lepeut's dissecting table is apparently the location for their chance meeting. For, like these two, the artist focuses on correspondences, resonances, random flows and cross-sections. The geological metaphor is, of course, no accident, not only because stone is at the heart of the artist's work but also because the dialectical relationship between flatness and depth, the idea of surface as sedimentary place observed in *Silencio* and *Atmosphère*, really characterizes the work in its entirety.

This article will therefore explore the tectonics of Philippe Lepeut's work, in order to track what rumbles secretly beneath the metamorphic rock, underneath stones, waiting for something to emerge. And to grasp how energy at work in the work in its underground regions locates the gaze in the realm of speculation.

### Presence *in absentia* [Relics, ghosts and medium]

"In a cramped space, it decrypts a world, thus in the case of an anatomical *gamahé* [...] 'In the flint paste, but with a slight relief, appears a human head, or rather the vertical section of a skull in profile as an anatomical specimen. The eye is reddish, an appearance I have sometimes observed in heads in relief, but this is not a general rule. This head, in semi-relief, has the fairly characteristic pale colours of an anatomical atlas. Inside the skull, instead of the brain, I thought I vaguely recognized a landscape; but I said nothing about this. Everything else is rather of an exceptional sharpness'."

Jules-Antoine Lecompte,  
*Les Gamahés et leurs origines*, Paris, 1905.  
Quoted in Roger Caillois, "L'Agate de Pyrrhus,"  
(1965), in *Obliques précédé de Images, images...*,  
Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p. 101.

In 2005, Philippe Lepeut used a view camera to photograph one of the cabinets in the skeleton collection of human remains at Strasbourg Zoological Museum. This old piece of furniture, highly representative of the museography in vogue during the era of colonial expeditions, was composed of

six cases with locks, placed on top of each other. They held an impressive collection of skulls on both the glass shelves of which they were composed.

The photographic series entitled *Dante* (2005–2012) inspires an undeniable fascination in the viewer, not only because it deals with the theme of death ambiguously but also because its technical and iconographic device condenses several systems of representation.

The first semiotic regime of these images is that of the index. It is characterized by a continuity of material between things and images. *Dante*, as photography, is indeed presented as a trace, that is to say, in the words of Rosalind Krauss, the technical result of "a physical imprint that was transferred onto a sensitive surface by reflections of light<sup>3</sup>". As evidenced by the founding narratives of the history of representation reported by Pliny the Elder, painting, born of the shadows, owes its essential power to the original contact with the model. And it is from this birth in negative that representation would have drawn its main power, the power to maintain the absent. If photography technically extended this power, *Dante* has the peculiarity of confronting us with two of the most widespread social uses of photography at the time of its emergence, increasing and disturbing the indexicality of the image.

The first is anthropological in nature, insofar as it is indeed as scientific objects that the labels associated with them identify the exhibited skulls. It refers to how the photograph was very early on used as an ideological weapon of control and hierarchical division of the body through the concept of race. Note, however, that given that the six photographs being presented are juxtaposed, it is as if the original display case were dismembered and the cases removed, thanks to a disruption in the measurement of time and status of the displayed skulls.

3 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the index" (1977), in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Paris, Macula, 1993, p. 69.

The phylogenetic time of the evolutionary history of the species is replaced by ontogenetic time describing the history of the individual; the superimposition of species leaving room for the chronology of a life. The skull-trophy, an object of political power, is then transmuted into skull-relic, a cult object, and is endowed with another type of power which renews the metaphysics of the image as incarnation of the dead.

The second social use of photography to which the series refers relates to the iconography of the occult sciences named (from 1860 onwards) "spirit photography". Indeed, the stunning beauty of *Dante* lies in the spectral ectoplasmic matter which floats on the surface of the images. Photographers of fluids thought they could capture the emanations of mediums merely through the sensitivity of photographic plates. As for those of "materializations" of ectoplasm, they used simplistic tricks, such as cutout drawings held with hairpins, to simulate ectoplasmic masses undulating around the body<sup>4</sup>. A similar substance seems to emerge from some of the *Dante* skulls. But the substance differs on some of the others. It looks like a rigid plastic bag and thereby helps divest the gaze of the reverie in which it was submerged. The illusion is optical. It results from the combination of the reflection of the view camera on the outside of the display case windows (exogenous movement) and the reflection on the inside of the display case (endogenous movement) of the plastic packaging in which some of the skulls are kept. While referencing a whole genealogy of photographic trickery, this false rigging (since it was unintentional), this "false fake" ectoplasm, celebrates the crazy history of the certainties concerning the power of photography to capture events from "the other side". But it also sets in motion the index-based economy that links the image to death. Two details of the work (related

to the image and its object) help eliminate this original contiguous link. Indeed it appears that, on one hand, the image is not at all an imprint since in reality it results in a digital print and, on the other, half of the exhibited skulls are reconstructions. The objects and photographs result from a purely imitative artifice reproducing the external appearance of the body.

It is into this economy of *mimesis* that the second representation system that works below the surface of *Dante* also projects us. It concerns the iconic regime, the name Charles S. Pierce attributed to the relation of resemblance that icons have with the things they represent. It has to be said that in many respects *Dante* resembles a painting. This pictorial regime relates to the illusionism generated by the quality and framing of the images. It was indeed the display case as a whole—not just the content—that Philip Lepeut was at pains to photograph. The sober marquetry of the six cases are therefore akin to a frame and in its photographic form the museographic device takes on the look of a painting. If the photograph is like a painting, then this "fake" painting itself refers to the pictorial method of *trompe-l'œil*. It is the lock on each case that produces this mimetic effect and thus doubles the simulacrum. Seen in this light, the *Dante* photographs are very close to 17th-century vanities that were "intended to warn the viewer against too much attachment to the world<sup>5</sup>".

Indeed, this sub-genre of the still life featured skulls often inserted in niches painted with an implacable illusionism<sup>6</sup>. As an incitement to piety, it was intended to remind the viewer of "the unsurpassable horizon of death<sup>7</sup>" and to demystify the value accorded to earthly pleasures.

Thus, behind the rather mocking skulls, the fable evoked by *Dante* questions the myths

6 As attested to by, for example, the *Braque Family Triptych* by Rogier van der Weyden (1450, Louvre, Paris), *Trompe-l'œil* by Georg Flegel (1610, National Gallery, Prague) and the *Carondelet Diptych* by Jan Gossaert (1517, Louvre, Paris).

4 See: Clément Chéroux and Andreas Fischer (Ed.), *Le Troisième Œil. La photographie et l'occulte*, Paris, Gallimard, 2004.

5 Marie-Claude Lambotte, "Les vanités dans l'art contemporain : une introduction", *Les vanités dans l'art contemporain*, Paris, Flammarion, 2005, p. 9.

7 Benjamin Delmotte, *Esthétique de l'angoisse. Le Memento mori comme thème esthétique*, Paris, Puf, 2010, p. 17.



and power of representation (“the medium is the message”, if you will) and tells the story of the shifting of the image towards art. And if the simulacrum appears alternately to be the product of a supernatural phenomenon, pure artifice or the interposition of a natural phenomenon, it is probably because Philip Lepeut seeks to question the way in which the terms of viewing (and, therefore, the belief systems that bind us to images) are arranged between true and false. Like the fascination felt by Dostoyevsky before Holbein’s *Dead Christ in the Tomb*, the images from *Dante*, in the transversal piercing of their depth, invite us to “undergo the aesthetic experience of a view that overflows historical knowledge in the contemplation of the painting, a view which incites the viewer to stop, forcing his activity as seer and demanding to see again<sup>8</sup>”.

### The “fantastic” vertigo of the earth’s archives [simulacra and fossils]

“Perhaps it was necessary for the sculptor first to carve, model or cast forms that were nothing but forms, for the painter to assemble lines and colours that deliberately did not represent anything, so that the eye accustomed by art to delight in pure relations of volumes, planes and colours could finally enjoy the same reserves of beauty in the mineral realm that it had learned to value in paintings and sculptures.”

“If the fantastic really lies in the confusion or coincidence of two realms, the inert and the living, chance and planning, if it appears in the insolent trashing of implicit rules on which the whole order of the world rests, then the prodigy is seen as a scandal as equally alarming as if, conversely, human industry managed to produce a flower petal, a feather, which could not only mimic the real uncannily, but which would be alive like them, quivering and therefore putrescible, destined to decay rather than, like sheet metal and scrap metal, to rust.”

Roger Caillois,  
“L’Agate de Pyrrhus” (1965), *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Two display cases lie at both ends of the same wall. Apart from the fact that the objects are real, the device is similar to *Dante* in that it evokes the scenography of cabinets of wonders while its dimensions, which far exceed the size of the objects it displays, are also those of a genre painting. Moreover, it is the scene of the simulacrum and the index, of the ratio between artifact and acheiropoietic image, which *Les Reprises* (2013–2014) re-enact before our eyes. What is exhibited in the display case (here on a rosewood shelf, there on an ebony shelf) are stones. Taken from the collection of the artist, they are seized and used once again—*reprises*, like one reworks an artwork. Siderite, Fluorite, Pyrite, Gypsum Flower, Rhodocrosite, Creedite: the beauty of the mineral world—a “life of forms” in the language of Henri Focillon—unfurl according to a formalist principle. An uncanny strangeness, however, appears beneath the surface. On each shelf lies a mysterious object that resists the gaze. The first, a convex polyhedron in the form of a star is of a lunar whiteness and geometry so perfect that it seems surreal. The second, also with sharp angles but less acute, is the colour of coal. It draws the eye through the slit which horizontally pierces its layers on both sides. An injury, a wound; almost a manufacturing defect.

A reversing principle really governs the surgical, creaky and spectral appearance of the objects that the card defines as “Unidentified stone[s]”. They are the synthetic product of a 3D printer. A vertiginous effect, the viewer will know nothing.

This disarming chasm between reality and simulacra, between fossil and artifact, index and icon, is reminiscent of the “natural fantastic” theory coined by Roger Caillois to analyze the stunning effect of certain phenomena, beginning with “stone images”. *Gamahés*, the name given to the figures which are formed naturally on stones, were thoroughly described in the early

8 Ibid., p. 12.

20th century by Jules-Antoine Lecompte, an adept of the spiritualist theories of that period. These are “drawings which, through external mechanisms, provide the simulacrum, the distant or close but wondrous image of other data scattered in the repertoire of things.”<sup>9</sup> Caillois uses Lecompte’s descriptions to show human resistance to accepting natural phenomena that resemble human structures.

“Anything natural, animal or plant, stone or landscape”, he says, “belongs to the fantastic, whenever its appearance (always via the same channels) efficiently captures and engages the imagination. Sometimes its appearance places the being under consideration apart from related species which it should most look like; it exiles it [...] in an enigmatic way to branches far removed from taxonomy. On the other hand, sometimes [...] its appearance recalls no other and seems to be the outcome of an unknown universe, subject to an indecipherable and threatening economy. Finally, disarray is sometimes caused by the anticipated duplication of a human object—a chess piece or a mythological mask—made independently, which required planning, calculation and choice, without reference, however, to the phantom model arising from nature by different paths. There, in the heart of inanimate matter, the paradoxes of the ‘natural fantastic’ are carried to their upmost limit<sup>10</sup>.”

If this phenomenon is deemed dreadful it is not only because man cannot bear that “the immutable order” of nature (or rather the taxonomy of realms and genres through which we have tried to control it) be flouted, but also because “that happy competition, [...] that usurpation of power<sup>11</sup>” which occurs when nature surpasses man seems to be even more unacceptable.

Philippe Lepeut’s synthetic fossils produce the same paradoxical effect, even though reversing polarities. By giving the illusion

9 Roger Caillois, “Idée paradoxale du fantastique naturel” (1966), in *Obliques précédé de Images, images...*, Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p. 156.

10 Ibid., p. 155-156.

of a natural object, these simulacra prove that human industry could be mistaken for, and might imitate, a stone. And this is all the more staggering because it relates to the archives of the earth, to prehistoric forms, the result of rupture and the erosion of time, like meteorites (also dear to the artist) whose extraterrestrial origin doubles and amplifies the vertiginous effect.

“In the beginning, in the most fiery chaos”, writes Caillois, “the balance that would attain so many miraculous delicacies was probably nothing other than a game of unstable and gross compensations, which gradually put an end to the turmoil of a star in the process of becoming fixed. Perhaps it is a more reliable model of profound beauty than forms emerging from great acrimony<sup>12</sup>”. To duplicate these objects is to crush and compress time, Like a profanation of the sacred.

### “The perfect essence of death, ultimate simplicity, absolute purity” [Making stones live and die]

“A sort of reflex pushes the learned to consider it sacrilegious or scandalous or crazy to compare, for example, the healing of living tissue and that of crystals. However, it is a fact that crystals, like mutilated bodies, reconstruct accidentally mutilated parts and that the injured area enjoys an increase in regenerative activity that tends to compensate for the damage, imbalance or asymmetry created by the injury. Is there only a misleading analogy here? A mere metaphor? Nevertheless, intense work restores the singularity in the mineral as it does in animals. I am aware, like everybody, of the abyss that divides inert matter and living matter. But I also imagine that both might present common properties, tending to restore the integrity of their structures, whether inert or living matter.”

Roger Caillois,  
“Sciences diagonales” (1959),  
*op. cit.*, p. 480-481.

11 Ibid., p. 156.

12 Roger Caillois, *Pierres suivi d’autres textes* (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 46.



André Gunther, in an article describing how photo editing in the digital era has done nothing to alter phenomena of belief in the truthfulness of images, returns to the technical economics of photography. Seeking to invalidate the index model advocated by Rosalind Krauss, he brings the latter closer to the traditional conception of simulacra of Lucretius. In his poem *De Natura Rerum*, the Latin philosopher provided the following definition:

“Let’s say now how easily and how lightly these images are formed and, like a mighty stream, constantly detach themselves from bodies. Because superficial elements flow and radiate endlessly from all objects. [...] And just as the sun must rapidly emit many rays for the universe to be constantly filled, similarly, and for the same reason, it is necessary that, in an instant, bodies emit from everywhere, in a thousand ways, in all directions, many simulacra of objects since, wherever we turn the mirror, we see them reflected in it with their shape and colour<sup>13</sup>.”

This definition could equally apply to the ghostly ectoplasmic matter that features in the photographs of skulls in the *Dante* series. It posits, in the footsteps of Plato, the image-simulacrum (*phantasma*) as being subject to the laws of imagination, an artificial construct devoid of the original model. According to Victor Stoichita, Lucretius saw the simulacrum as an “in-between, an ambiguous object between body and soul<sup>14</sup>”, a light membrane that flutters in the air, and whose luminous fluidity has something spectral about it. The fluid, formless substance seen in *Dante* is also characterized by a material ambiguity. Between the evaporation of bodies and the appearance of spirits, centripetal and centrifugal movement, it is difficult to grasp the origin of this phenomenon of oscillation between life and death.

These transformations of matter evoke the

permanent variation in representation regimes that disrupts image interpretation in *Dante*. But they also recall, in the organic tension they maintain between the inert and the animate, the theory of transmutation of stones devised by the naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in conjunction with his reflection on the evolution of animal species. Roger Caillois reports it thus: “It follows that plants and animals gradually acquire new organs through new needs and thus progress through the inheritance of acquired characteristics, to a complication that is in principle unlimited, with species being transformed indefinitely. At the same time, excrement, detritus and the remains of plants and animals are the only source of the whole mineral world. They are thrown into reverse transmutation which, from fall to fall, metamorphoses them, at the end of this evolution in reverse, into rock crystal. This seems like the perfect essence of death, ultimate simplicity, absolute purity<sup>15</sup>.”

This vitalism, which lends organicity to stones, largely echoes the theories of the inert and the living of Diderot who, thirty years prior to that, considered that “stones feel” and that one can “animalize a statue<sup>16</sup>”. Caillois, meanwhile, was interested in crystal damage and the ability to regenerate. He also scrupulously documented the mythology of stones, placing the fetishism to which they were subject, in China and in ancient Greece, on the same plane as relics, idols, fetishes and other simulacra.

Clearly, it is no coincidence that Philippe Lepeut has made rock crystal one of the basic materials of his work. For it is this tension between regeneration and degeneration, between the morbid and the fabulous, that makes sense of his use of this

14 Victor I. Stoichita, *L'Effet Pygmalion. Pour une anthropologie historique des simulacres*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 2008, p. 10.

15 Roger Caillois, “Une erreur de Lamarck”, in *Obliques précédé de Images, images...*, op. cit., 1987, p. 126.

16 “Il faut que la pierre sente. Cela est dur à croire.” See: Denis Diderot, *Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* (1769), Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1965, p. 35.

13 Lucrèce, *De Natura Rerum*, livre IV, 142-167, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1985, p. 11-12. Quoted in André Gunther, “L’Empreinte digitale. Théorie et pratique de la photographie à l’ère numérique”, Giovanni Careri, Bernhard Rüdiger (Ed.), *Face au réel. Éthique de la forme dans l’art contemporain*, Paris, Archibooks, 2008, p. 85-95.

## Thread and trace [The indicial paradigm]

“Humanize something free of error”

Brian Eno/Peter Schmidt,  
*Oblique Strategies*, 1975.

“Anthropomorphism, we exclaim. This is precisely the opposite, because we must be careful that this is not to explain from a human basis certain enigmatic data found in nature, but rather to explain man, who is subject to the laws of this nature and belongs to it, through almost everything about him, starting with more general behaviour that can be found in the great generality of species.”

Roger Caillois,  
“Nouveau plaidoyer pour les sciences diagonales”  
(1965), op. cit., p. 567.

mineral in the form of a pendulum. The 2015 installation *La Mélancolie de l’oiseau de pierre* (The Melancholy of the Stone Bird) is unique in that it brings together different “states” of crystal: a raw stone, two large pendulum clocks in suspension (chiseled to a point and attached to a cable with gold and silver rivets) and a clairvoyant’s crystal ball. But while Lamarck’s entropic viewpoint directs the stones towards death, clairvoyance and dowsing have been quick to erect the pendulum and the crystal ball as powerful divination tools, making the crystal not the end of a process but its starting point. Philippe Lepeut’s installation recognizes this double temporal movement and the multiple effects of beliefs that, between science and superstition – between therapeutic, lapidary and talismanic treatises – have influenced the destiny of mineralogy.

Two other sets of objects feature in this system. Firstly, there is a faceted metal cone that is long, hollow and honed to a salient point. Looking like a beak, it seems to denote, through synecdoche, the figure of the stone bird which itself refers to the many myths and images of petrification – from petrifying dreaming<sup>17</sup> to the divine punishments reported by Ovid – and, by extension, to phenomena of transformation. And, secondly, there is a suspended assemblage: a sort of white globe in polished plaster which, decked out with two holes, takes on the appearance of a skull. A stick of veined wood, around which fake ivy leaves are wrapped, is attached in place of the nose. Pinocchio in the belly of a Vanity. Or how the simulacrum and the fake return. Lies and vanity as antitheses of belief and as metaphors for the inexorability of fate beyond the powers of man.

In being presented literally as a thread and a trace, the apparatus of Silencio indicates a method. Like the stones in Tom Thumb (traces that describe the thread of a path to navigate the maze of reality), the installation raises the indicial paradigm at the heart of Philip Lepeut’s approach. However, while the “original contact” is omnipresent in the work, the rhetoric of evidence is undermined.

“The job of historians (and, in a different way, poets)”, Carlo Ginzburg writes, “is what is part of the life of everyone: to unravel the interweaving of the true, the false and fictitious that forms the trace of our presence in the world<sup>18</sup>.” It would seem that this is also Philippe Lepeut’s project. If the logic of transfer is central to his work, it is to bring into play changes in the state of material in favour of unstable images that cross it like flows. Between fiction and truth, his work brings out a third term, “the false, the non-authentic – the fictional posing as real<sup>19</sup>”. While questioning the archetypes, myths and beliefs that underpin our relationship with representation, he questions the false registers that structure the imaginary.

17 For an inventory of petrification images, see: Gaston Bachelard, *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté*, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1948, p. 205-232.

18 Carlo Ginzburg, *Le Fil et les Traces. Vrai faux fictif*, Paris, Verdier, 2006, p. 16-17.

19 Ibid., p. 16.



The second fault line that makes visible a cross-section in the sedimentation of the work, and which appears under the cold and uncluttered surface of *Silencio*, is an organic trace. Under the layer of mystery, there is undoubtedly something that is incorporated and embodied. An attempt to track down the fault line, the tear, the injury. Because ultimately, what Philippe Lepeut's simulacra and ghosts are talking about is human in the sense that Roger Caillois intended, that is to say, in all its obliquity. Like a *gamahés* reader, he deciphers the world in a restricted space.

\* \*  
\*





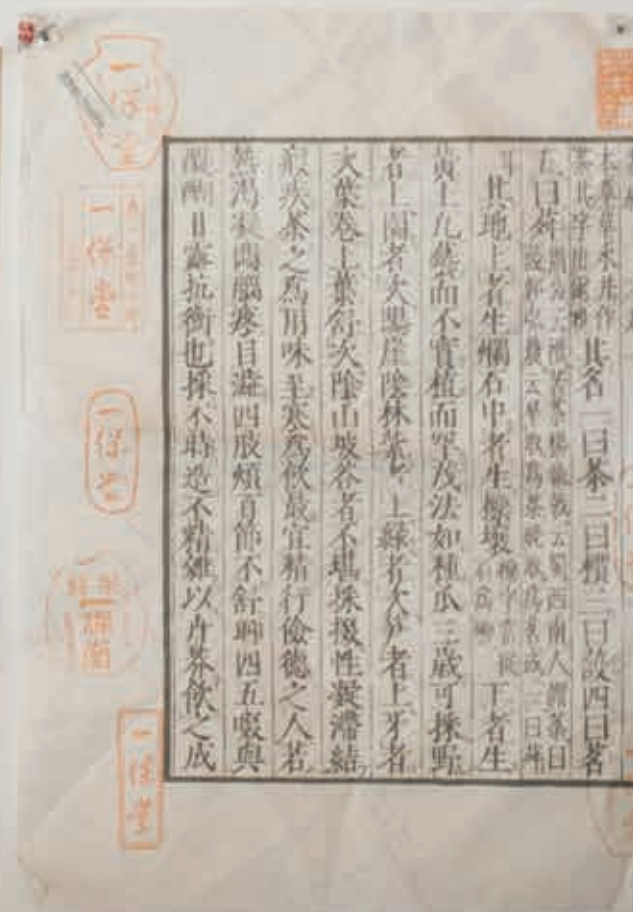




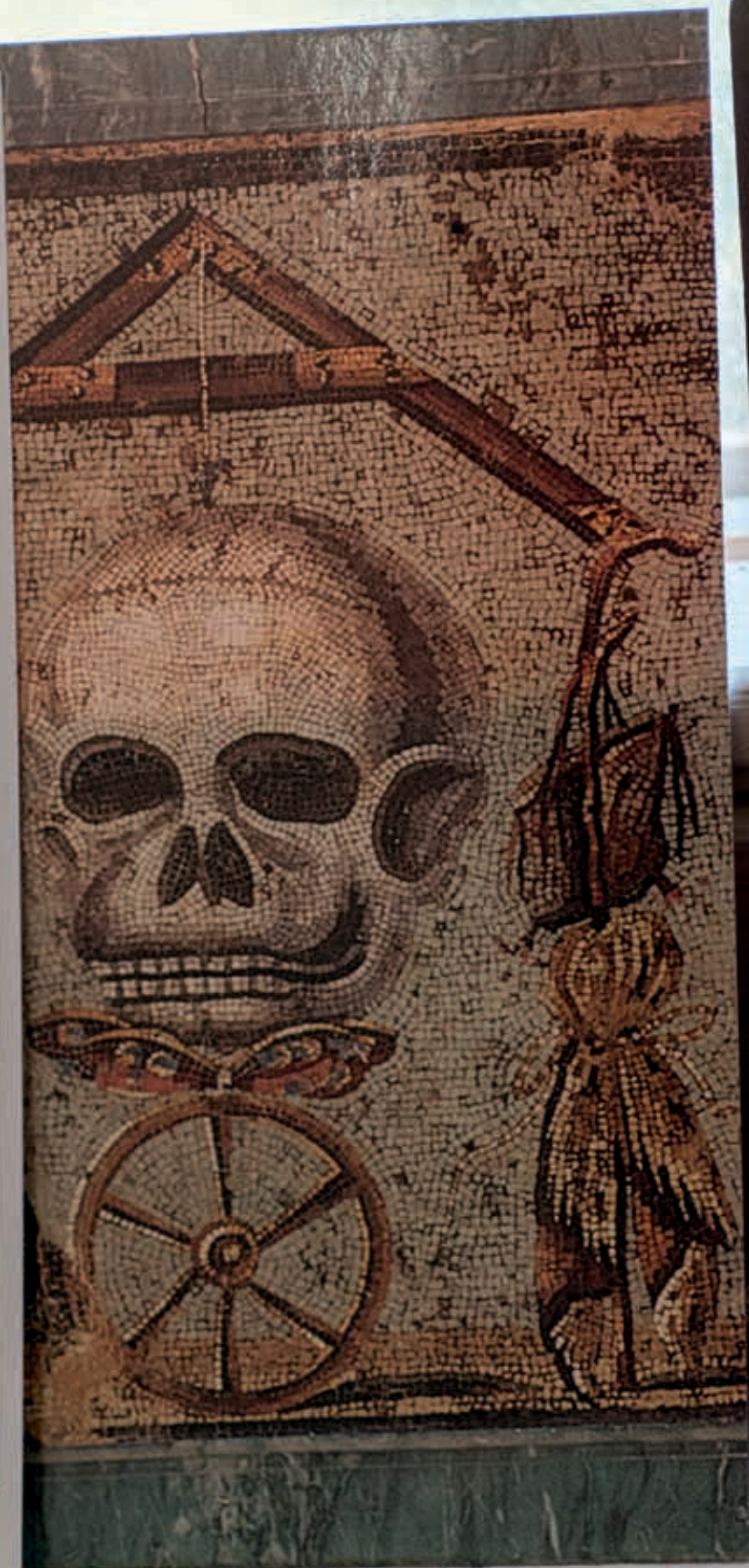
**COULD  
BE  
WORSE!**

IF YOU WANT IT

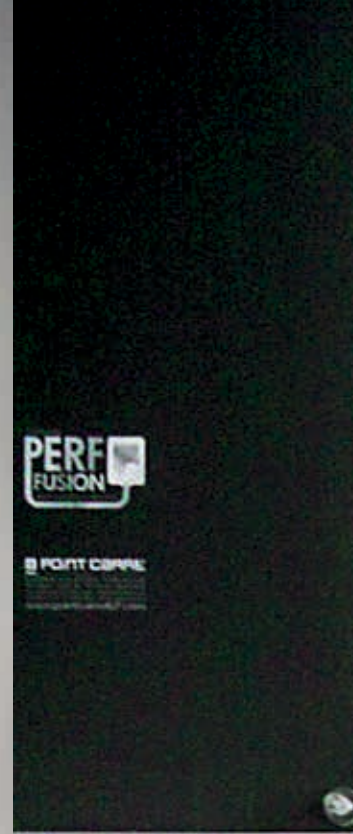
**MY  
BRAIN**

























REGIONALE ET ACCÉLÉRATION DE PARTICULES

REGIONALE 11 - ACCELERATION DE PARTICULES

REGIONALE 12 - ACCELERATORE DI PARTICELLE

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

PHILIP LEBERT

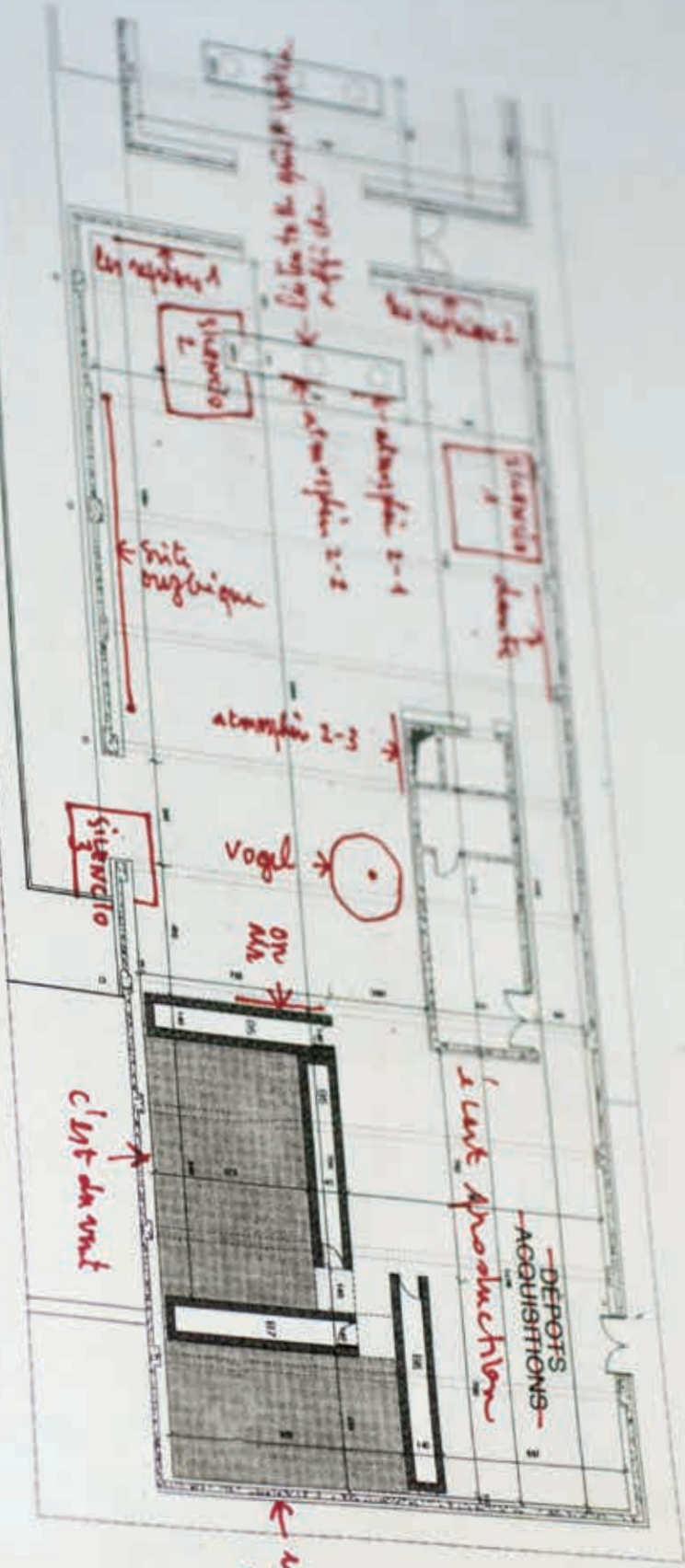
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILIP L. FULTON

PHILIPPE LEPEUT localisé > localised > lokalisiert

**11<sup>e</sup> FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL BANDITS-MOÏSES**

Linton to the great Vice  
Admiral Depart 11 April - 31 October 2015  
H A M C S de la Mance 2015



← un autre monde / la  
marguerite.





.....Objet : le projet robinson  
.....De : Claire Guezengar  
.....À : Philippe Lepeut  
.....lieu de tournage : Ouest Lumière, Poissy, septembre 2001  
..photographie recto : Agnès Daval

1- Tu dors encore. Tu as parlé cette nuit. Tu as dit des trucs incroyables, je te dirai ce soir.

2- On se verra sans doute pas aujourd'hui, je pense que je dormirai quand tu arriveras, n'oublie pas de mettre le réveil.

3- Ce matin je ne suis même pas fatiguée.

4- Ton père a appelé, il faut que tu le rappelles. Pense à me laisser le chèque du loyer.

5- Je te souhaite une belle journée. Il fait beau et presque chaud.

6- N'oublie pas qu'on mange ensemble ce midi.

7- Je te réveille en partant demain matin. J'ai pas pu t'attendre. Trop fatiguée.

8- C'est la dernière fois qu'on dort avec ce chat. Je suis crevée.

9- A cinq heures pile tu penses fort à moi. J'ai peur j'ai peur j'ai peur.

10- Il y a une fille qui a appelé ( le numéro est près du téléphone). C'est qui cette salope?

11- Pas le droit de l'ouvrir avant que je sois là. Je suis contente que tu rentres. Tu m'as manqué.

12- Je rentre tard ce soir. Ne m'attends pas pour manger mais laisse-moi un petit truc. J'ai loué «La prisonnière du désert», tu verras c'est super.

13- MERDE je ne suis pas la bonniche.

14- A ce soir mon coeur.







# LISTEN TO THE QUIET VOICE

Philippe Lepeut

20€  
English Version



9 782955 362211