



LA FERME
DU BUISSON
CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

SCÈNE NATIONALE
DE MARNE-LA-VALLÉE

BÉATRICE BALCOU

L'ÉCONOMIE DES APOSTROPHES

exhibition
from 11 Nov 2018
to 10 Feb 2019

opening Sun 11 Nov at 3 pm
shuttle from Opéra Bastille
(book in advance)

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In partnership with Villa Kujoyama – Kyoto and MAC VAL, Val-de-Marne Contemporary Art Museum
and with the backing of Flanders State of the Art



cover photo:
Béatrice Balcou, *The K.Miyamoto Boxes*, 2016, Exile Gallery – Berlin, 2017

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

For her first major exhibition in France, Béatrice Balcou takes a personal look at the importance of discretion, care and mediation.

In performances, sculptures, drawings and installations, she offers innovative exhibition rituals in the form of artistic experiences at once sensory and emotional. Her orchestration of new and different relationships between art, work and rest blurs the conventional distinctions between production, distribution and consumption.

Her artistic stance is atypical: addressing creations that are not her own, replicating them and playing the role of technician or artworks registrar, she radically challenges our relationship with the work involved in making art and its value.

For her the artwork is not an ephemeral image to be rapidly identified or consumed, but rather a physical entity to be cared for and to spend time with as a group. What is essential for her is the way we look at things and what we make of the results.

Trained in the visual arts, dance, the martial arts and the tea ceremony, she brings her skills together in a form of gestural exploration. While for Balcou gesture embodies the importance of touch and movement, it is also, as Giorgio Agamben has written, "the other side of the merchandise." Here the exhibition room becomes a locus for resistance to touristic consumption of cultural goods.

Following her presentation of *Untitled Ceremony #10* at La Ferme du Buisson in 2017, Balcou is back with a mix of works old and new. In the vein of her recent *Pièces Assistantes* [Assistance Pieces] she undertakes a meditation on vulnerability as strength and an exploration of withdrawal, discretion and silence as factors in the definition and the core role of mediation.

In this near-retrospective she amalgamates work past, recent and in progress, with the accent on mutual aid and cooperation. The exhibition we are invited to is an evolving landscape in which a host of relationships take shape as we move through arrangements of placebo sculptures, a filmed ceremony, hitherto unshown drawings, works we can actually handle and input from mediators. These spatial and temporal settings invite us to live with the works, contemplate them, take them in our hands, comprehend them and become attached to them – and to take the time to *become a spectator*.

BIOGRAPHY / CURRENT

Born in Tréguier (France) in 1976, Béatrice Balcou now lives and works in Brussels.

After studying visual arts at university in Rennes and Paris, she took the Ex.e.r.ce postgraduate course at the National Choreography Centre in Montpellier in 2007, working under Mathilde Monnier and Xavier Le Roy. Since then she has been granted residencies in France, Belgium and elsewhere, notably in Japan (2009), at FRAC Franche-Comté (2011) and at Casino Luxembourg (2014).

Her recent monographic exhibitions include *Double Suicide* with Yuki Okumura at Kumagusuku in Kyoto (2018); *Béatrice Balcou – Kazuko Miyamoto* at L'Iselp in Brussels (2016) and Exile gallery in Berlin (2017); *Walk in Beauty* at Casino Luxembourg Contemporary Art Forum (2014); *Calme, luxe et volupté* at Le Quartier Centre for Contemporary Art in Quimper (2014); and *Chaque Chose En Son temps* at FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon (2013).

Her works are to be found in numerous private and public collections and over the last few years have featured in group shows including *Plateforme de jeux* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2015), *Un-Scene III* at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels (2015), *Des choses en plus, des choses en moins* at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2014), *Temps Libre* (Partitions Performance) at Fondation Ricard in Paris (2011), *Tes Mains dans Mes chaussures* at La Galerie in Noisy-le-Sec/Paris (2016–2017), *Playground* at M-Museum Leuven (2014) and *Sculpter, faire à l'atelier* at FRAC Bretagne in Rennes (2018).

In 2018, Béatrice Balcou and Yuki Okumura were selected for residencies at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto. In parallel with her exhibition at La Ferme du Buisson she is preparing a number of *Untitled Ceremonies* for the new premises of the National Centre for the Visual Arts in Pantin, *Attention Fragile* at MAC VAL, Val-de-Marne Contemporary Art Museum and Performatik 19 – the Brussels Biennale of Performance Art (Kaattheater/Villa Empain).

beatricebalcou.com



© Jade Joannés

WORKS ON SHOW (SELECTION)

Untitled Ceremony #14

A survey carried out in various museums has revealed that on average a visitor spends between 2 and 17 seconds looking at a given work. The aim of Béatrice Balcou's ceremonies is to achieve the complete opposite: an enduring attentiveness. Drawing their inspiration from the tea ceremony, these anti-spectacular performances centre on works by other artists chosen from public or private collections, and take place in silence for a small audience gathered around Béatrice Balcou. Repeating the actions of a museum or gallery registrar, she unpacks the work, assembles it if necessary, shows it to those present and then puts it in its place. In a choreography of slow, precise, detailed gestures she looks into the attention given to the materiality of the work of art and the behaviour of the viewer, triggering an awareness not only of the work required by the making and presentation of art, but also of the accompanying sounds, the setting, the other spectators and the viewer's own body. Concentration and the artist's presence turn ordinary gestures into a near-magical moment of sharing. At La Ferme du Buisson she will be presenting a new ceremony drawing on the collection at MAC VAL, Val-de-Marne Contemporary Art Museum.

coproduced by La Ferme du Buisson / MAC VAL,
Val-de-Marne Contemporary Art Museum

Tôzai, 2018

Video, colour, sound, 30 mins

Filmed during Béatrice Balcou's recent residence at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, *Tôzai* is her first ceremony intended specifically for the camera. Its source, a work by Yuki Okumura, was itself inspired by the work of another Japanese artist, Genpei Akasegawa. In 1964 Akasegawa created a sculpture titled *Canned Universe* by eating the contents of a can of crabmeat and gluing the label onto the inside of the can, which he then resealed. In thus reversing the inside/outside binomial he canned the entire universe. In 2012 Okumura organised a workshop in which each participant had to bring a can of his favourite food and make his own version of *Canned Universe*, the aim being to explore what the juxtaposition of the different cans in the same space-time context could mean. Balcou is fascinated by this work by Okumura and has created a presentation ceremony for it. She makes up a collection by asking each participant to send in their can by post, then orchestrates their handling with the help of a tea master. *Tôzai!* is the word used to signal the beginning of a performance of Bunraku, the traditional Japanese puppet theatre. Following the Bunraku model, the ceremony requires several operators, whose bodies are hidden and who harmonise their gestures and rhythms in a choreography for hands.

produced by Villa Kujoyama and Kumagusuku, Kyoto



WORKS ON SHOW (SELECTION)

Œuvres placebos [Placebo Works]

Béatrice Balcou's *Placebo Works* are wooden replicas of pieces by other artists. Initially designed for learning the movements of the ceremonies, they are like the wooden swords used in the martial arts: their use in training avoids damage to the original. Often exhibited in resonance with the ceremonies, they back up flawed memories of works seen only very briefly. Questioning – differently each time – the relationship between resemblance and dissimilarity, and between original and copy, they have gradually taken on a kind of autonomy as exhibits in their own right. During the exhibition some of them are on display while others are on standby in their boxes. In some cases they are on show all the time, in others only intermittently, coming and going like ghosts. They serve as a medium for the narratives of the mediators, who can move them around, and in this way they generate different registers of interpretation and relationship. The neutrality of the wood can be seen as the equivalent of the silence of the ceremonies, demanding the viewer's close attention while allowing the imagination free rein.

produced by La Ferme du Buisson / La Galerie Centre for Contemporary Art in Noisy-le-Sec / Frac Franche-Comté / Performatik Festival – Kaaitheater / Casino Luxembourg Contemporary Art Forum / M-Museum Leuven / Wiels / FRAC Corsica / L'Iselp / Angers Museum of Fine Art.

Pièces assistantes [Assistance Pieces]

This recent group of works sees Béatrice Balcou once again adopting an offbeat stance. As with the *Placebo Works*, she has chosen to situate herself not in the foreground, but just a fraction behind a work by another artist. Her use of the term "assistance" dates from her recent projects, notably *Walls for K. Miyamoto* (2016), a wooden structure whose two knockdown walls form an angle and allow her to present a sculpture by Kazuko Miyamoto and make it move about. This would become the first of the series she calls *Assistance Pieces*. Most often made of wood, each piece aims to assist – to back up physically – a work by another artist, while claiming to remain an independent, standalone artwork. A discussion takes place between the two artists before the work is made and during its installation as either a solo or a two-person exhibit. It is often during this final stage that questions arise regarding the dependence/autonomy issue. Just when can the *Assistance Pieces* act as works of assistance or mediation without at the same time abandoning their artistic status? They are not just props or supports: Balcou endows them with freestanding status, granting them a place of their own in the exhibition space and, according to circumstances, placing them at varying distances from the work they are assisting.

produced by La Ferme du Buisson / L'Iselp



INTERVIEW

Béatrice Balcou in conversation with Devrim Bayar & Zoë Gray, curators of the exhibition Un-Scene III, Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2015). Excerpts.

Devrim Bayar & Zoë Gray:

"Ceremony" is the term you use to describe your performances centring on an existing artwork. What exactly do you mean by it? And what's the role of the sacred in your practice?

Béatrice Balcou:

Here "ceremony" denotes a ritual carried out for just a few people. There's also an implicit reference to *chanoyu*, the Japanese tea ceremony, which I draw on for its subtlety of gesture and its specific space and time frame. Via a ritual that is simply the installation of the artwork, my ceremonies create an ephemeral community around a single object and ask us to think about how we look at works of art [...] During the ceremony the work becomes sacred, but at the same time it's demystified by our discovery of its packaging and the peripheral aspects of handling and installing it.

Devrim Bayar & Zoë Gray:

In your ceremonies you present works by other artists. How do you achieve a balance between approval, criticism, appropriation and expropriation?

Béatrice Balcou:

Before each ceremony there's a discussion with the artist or the person in charge of the collection. This is important, because it leads to a better understanding of the work and functions as an unwritten agreement. While we're together the person in charge or the registrar or the artist shows me how to handle the work and we come to an understanding as to how the ceremony will take place. I don't think there's any question of approval, criticism, appropriation or expropriation: I don't modify the work or comment on it, I just show it in a different context.

Devrim Bayar & Zoë Gray:

Time seems to play a core part in your work. In a speed-crazed society with a shrinking attention span, your ceremonies make people press the pause button and encounter an artwork in a really unusual time frame ...

Béatrice Balcou:

Yes, my work does involve slowing down and suggests the opposite of the "tourist" approach to the museum as a venue for consuming artworks. To get the most out of this encounter with an art object I deliberately set my ceremonies in another time frame: when possible outside museum hours – sometimes even at 8:30 in the morning!

Digressions

Launched in 2017 in association with Captures Édition, *Digressions* is a series of interviews with artists: group conversations bearing on the Art Centre's programme that take the reader behind the scenes with accounts of the thinking, research and methodology underpinning specific projects, and sometimes the doubts and trial and error that fuel creative work. Speaking freely, the artists take us into their heads and thought processes in bilingual booklets handsomely printed on fine, distinctively coloured papers and accompanied by postcards documenting the various projects. Claire Moreux's elegantly dynamic layout mirrors the intricacies of the ideas by inviting the reader to literally navigate through the text. In letting artists have their say, the series brings us voices which, while retaining their singularity, intermingle in explorations of shared concerns with performance, exhibition styles, physical and political commitment, the opening up of artistic disciplines and the figure of the artist as researcher, musician, stage director or intermediary.

Digressions #06: Béatrice Balcou

publication date: 8 December 2018

After Kapwani Kiwanga, Benjamin Seror, Alex Cecchetti, Virginie Yassef and Céline Ahond, this addition to the series is devoted to Béatrice Balcou and marks her exhibition at La Ferme du Buisson, in which the artist makes a connection with her earlier work while at the same time putting recent changes in her practice into perspective. The new *Digressions* title echoes this significant turning point and its concrete implications for her work; and in her choice of interlocutors – Emilie Renard, Christophe Gallois and Julie Pellegrin – Balcou has decided to submit her current lines of exploration to the gaze of three kinds of curator. Via the interplay of these different but complementary voices she looks into the political dimension of discretion, the intertwining of time frames, the accountability of the exhibiting institution, the viewer experience and that of the public generally, and the relationship between working gesture, care-giving gesture and choreographic gesture.



WHAT'S ON

Press
invitations
available on
request

Sun 11 Nov 2018

3:00 – 7:30 pm

exhibition opening

shuttle from Paris - Opéra Bastille (book ahead)

Sat 8 Dec 2018 at 4 pm

discussion

Béatrice Balcou and sociologist Yaël Kreplak

launch of *Digressions* #6

Sat 9 Feb 2019 at 3 pm

Béatrice Balcou

***Untitled Ceremony* #14**

admission free, but seating limited – book ahead

Christmas break

22, 23, 27, 28, 29 Dec

2018 and 3, 4, 5 Jan 2019

family tours/workshops

age 3+, according to what's on offer:
tactile, meditative and collaborative
workshops focusing on gesture, listening
and attentiveness

5 € per child but places are limited
– book ahead

SAVE THE DATE

Sun 2 Dec 2018

2 pm & 4 pm

Béatrice Balcou

***Untitled Ceremony* #14**

"Attention Fragile" festival, MAC VAL,
Vitry-sur-Seine

3 March – 21 July 2019

Take Care

group exhibition
La Ferme du Buisson
curator: Christine Shaw
(Blackwood Gallery – Toronto)

26 May 2019

Performance Day #4

La Ferme du Buisson

PRESS IMAGES



Béatrice Balcou, *Children's trolley (I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew) Placebo* (after a work by Rodney Graham), 2015, Wiels
© photo Sven Laurent



Béatrice Balcou, *Les Apostrophes Silencieuses*, 2015, Wiels
© photo Sven Laurent



Béatrice Balcou, *Walls for K. Miyamoto*, 2016, L'Iselp
© photo Gilles Ribero



Béatrice Balcou, *Untitled Ceremony #03*, rehearsal of the performance, 2014, Casino Luxembourg © photo Béatrice Balcou



Béatrice Balcou, *Cérémonie sans titre #10*, 2017, Ferme du Buisson, Centre national des arts plastiques © photo Émile Ouroumov

PRESS IMAGES



Béatrice Balcou, *Four wedges for D. de Tcharner*, 2017
© photo Béatrice Balcou



Béatrice Balcou, *Untitled Performance #03*, 2015, Centre Pompidou
© photo Hervé Véronèse



Béatrice Balcou, *Untitled Ceremony #04*, 2014, M-Museum Leuven
© photo Dirk Pauwels



Béatrice Balcou, *Paysage Placebo* [Placebo Landscape] (after a work by Théophile Narcisse Chauvel), 2015, La Galerie - Centre for Contemporary Art, Noisy-le-Sec © photo Pierre Antoine, 2016



Béatrice Balcou, *Tōzai*, 2018, still frame

LA FERME DU BUISSON CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Located on an exceptional site, La Ferme du Buisson is a national cultural centre of international reach. This 19th Century “model farm” features an art centre, a theatre, a cinema and a concert hall, all enabling in an exemplary manner the permeability between disciplines.

The art centre has for over 25 years been an active producer, diffuser and publisher. Insisting on emerging or rarely seen artists in France, it is a reference for performance, pluridisciplinarity and experimentation on exhibition formats, focused on a dialogue between visual arts and other fields. Under the direction of Julie Pellegrin, the centre aims to seize every opportunity to create a dialogue between contemporary art and other art forms (with a particular

emphasis on theatre and dance), as well as social science (economics, philosophy, anthropology, etc.) The art scene is viewed as being part and parcel of the wider social, political and cultural context. Solo and group exhibitions mix with publications, talks and performances. The programme focuses on new or rarely seen talent in France, and on the significance of processes and experimentation in the performative dimension of art.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Centre d'art contemporain de la Ferme du Buisson

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how to get here

public transport
RER A towards Marne-la-Vallée,
get off at Noisiel
(20 mins from Paris Nation)
by car
A4 towards Marne-la-Vallée,
exit Noisiel-Torcy towards Noisiel-Luzard

opening hours

wednesday – sunday
2 – 7:30 pm
Open to 9 pm on event days

for the family

– parent/child workshops: gesture,
listening, attentiveness
age 3+
Christmas break: 22, 23, 27, 28,
29 Dec 2018 / 3, 4, 5 Jan 2019
5 € per child, book in advance
– exhibition tour with a snack
1st Sunday of the month 4 pm

guided tours

– "new-style" tour every Saturday at 4 pm
– guided tours whenever you like

groups

– book in advance:
rp@lafermedubuisson.com

admission

free

La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art is supported by the Ile-de-France Region Cultural Affairs Office/Ministry of Culture and Communication; the Communauté d'Agglomération de Paris - Vallée de la Marne ; the Seine-et-Marne Département; and the Ile-de-France Region. It is a member of the Relais network of art centres in Seine-et-Marne, the Ile-de-France contemporary art network Tram, and d.c.a., the French Association for the Development of Art Centres.



d.c.a.