

LE BONHEUR DE DEVINER PEU À PEU

THE JOY OF GUESSING... LITTLE BY LITTLE ➔ 30.09.16 – 15.01.17

With works by Eduardo Basualdo, Cai Guo-Qiang, Ilya Kabakov, ORLAN, Jean-Luc Parant, Mel Ramos and Tavares Strachan
Opening: Thursday, September 29, 2016



Mel RAMOS, *Candy II Snickers*, 2004
Courtesy The Hilger Collection
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#lebonheurlyon

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LE BONHEUR DE DEVINER PEU À PEU / THE JOY OF GUESSING... LITTLE BY LITTLE

Seven works – by Eduardo Basualdo, Cai Guo-Qiang, Ilya Kabakov, ORLAN, Jean-Luc Parant, Mel Ramos and Tavares Strachan – assembled in the form of a puzzle, add up to ... *LE BONHEUR DE DEVINER PEU À PEU* at mac^{LYON}, 30 September 2016 – 15 January 2017.

All the works are taken from the mac^{LYON} collection.

SUMMARY

THE EXHIBITION	3-4
THE WORKS	5-11
SIMULTANEOUSLY: 3 EXHIBITIONS	12
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	13

COLLECTION

The collection is for the most part a collection of exhibitions. As a consequence, it juxtaposes fragments of a poetic discourse which the visitor elaborates, alone, as he or she goes round. The collection is offered to the visitor as a puzzle that will give rise to the joy of gradually solving it... A narrative, perhaps... Really?

POETRY

The poetry of a work is its ability to arouse emotion and reflection in the spectator. The works assembled in the exhibition are tinged with a poetry that the visitor is invited to discover and gradually recognise.

UTOPIA

Artists open up possibilities. They imagine whole universes, which are based on reality or are detached from it. Utopia is sometimes their subject; sometimes it results from their invention; sometimes it can seem to be their vanishing point. Through their poetry, artists make a modest proposal to change the world.

THE MARKET

Increasing the collection involves being permanently on the look-out for works likely to interest history in general and the museum in particular. Collaboration with artists, collectors and galleries is an important factor in finding the most significant pieces.

THE BODY

The body is the inevitable link between works. It is involved everywhere: the artist's body as material for the work; the visitor's body as they walk around and take things in; the body as the subject of an experiment or a representation.

GENDER

The notion of gender was first developed in comparative literature research, it was then taken up and extended by the social and human sciences. It describes all the forms which the distinction between male and female can take. Applied to works of art, it helps describe how these genders are expressed in the works.

HERITAGE

In France, a work which enters a collection acquires the protective status of national heritage, which happens when it is listed in a museum's inventory. But having been given 'heritage' status, it is essential for it not lose its poetic potential. In Lyon, this does not happen because of the collection's permanent mobility.

Jules Huret's famous literary survey *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* appeared in 1891. On the subject of form and content, he asked Stéphane Mallarmé about the supposed impenetrability of contemporary poetry. Mallarmé's reply was the inspiration for the title of our exhibition – a possible reference to artistic modernity:

'To name the object is to destroy three-fourths of the enjoyment of the poem, the joy of guessing at it little by little: to suggest – that is the ideal. And symbolism lies in the accomplished use of that mystery: evoking an object by degrees in order to show a state of mind, or else, choosing an object and slowly disclosing the state of mind it implies by means of a series of decodings.'

These few words of Mallarmé inspired us the title of the exhibition, as a possible reference to artistic modernity.

Le navire (The Ship) is made of archives. After this presentation, it will return to its original state as a pile of documents, filed in folders and carefully preserved in the mac^{LYON} reserves, as they were in the artists own studio in Moscow. Well before the fall of the Berlin Wall, **Ilya Kabakov**, who, out of necessity, also worked as an illustrator, discreetly designed works that were impossible to exhibit in the Soviet world. In 1988, *Le navire* crossed the border in a Swiss diplomatic bag for an exhibition in Bern. The mac^{LYON} acquired it immediately. *Le navire* is imbued with a kind of tragic **POETRY**. It is a book which traces the grand narrative of history through the little, personal stories of the residents of communal apartments in Moscow from the 1960s to the 1980s. In one movement, the **UTOPIA** of an idealistic future world mutates into the words of absurd propaganda, moves from the hope of a better life to the petty anguishes of daily life. Although exceptional, the work is fragile because of the origin of the archives that constitute its material. It was restored in 2015, which led to a necessary limit on the amount it can be exhibited.

A few metres away, there is an exhibition involving some sixty nudes – fantasies from the consumer and *entertainment* world. We get to see pretty, naked women, precisely drawn, polished and in cleverly assorted colours. These examples of ideal female beauty conform to the *Playboy* and Hollywood ideal. These male magazine models, top fashion models, famous actresses, heroines and muses straight out of *comics*, are from the versatile paintbrush of **Mel Ramos**. Some sixty lithographs from the Hilger Collection are on display to be donated to the museum. It is **an exhibition within the exhibition**, and it bears the title '*Beautés familières*' because advertising and the media have used them so much that they have become familiar. Just as *Le navire* embarks its cargo of reality under cover of an idealised world inhabited by cosmonauts and winning sportsmen, the world of Mel Ramos is inhabited by illusory women acting as tokens for all kinds of consumer objects: sugar refineries, cigars and cigarettes, soft drinks and wine. Objects of desire and pleasure.

It is these notions of women's **BODIES** and female beauty, formatted by consumer needs and ideological and cultural demands, that **ORLAN** undermines and deconstructs, opposing them in the narrative of her profound, personal commitment. Totally at the other end of the scale from Ramos, who works in a studio, she speaks to us from the operating theatre, where she reveals the violence done to women by surgery intended to reconstruct that beauty that women are not only obliged to achieve, but also supposed to preserve at all costs. Long before the word **GENDER** had become hackneyed and overused, she contended that this internalised, 'gendered' canon assigned the female body, socially and culturally, to the Madonna/whore or virgin/harpy polarity, and this status needed urgently to be demolished. The work exhibited at the 1995 Biennale de Lyon, *Un peu de temps... et vous ne me verrez plus... encore un peu de temps... et vous me verrez...* ('A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me') involves the sources and the consequences of conforming to this gender stereotype. The work, whose title is taken from a verse in the Bible, makes **VISIBLE** the violent constraints imposed on the female figure. The operating theatre became the studio where the artist worked on the visible portion of her identity. Quite intentionally, there is nothing subconscious involved in these schemas. It is about the power of the image.

Psychological interiority, on the other hand, is inherent in *La Isla* (*The Island*), a hut on stilts, into which one penetrates to discover the **INVISIBLE** forces that lie therein. *La Isla* is a shadow theatre in which the outlines of mental circuits, perhaps those of **Eduardo Basualdo**, are revealed. Created in 2009 in Argentina, where it was acquired by a collector couple, a second (different) version made its way to the Gwangju Biennale in 2014, where it was acquired by the mac^{LYON}. If *Le Navire* is a 'qualitative' sociological **NARRATIVE**, *La Isla* is a 'shared' psychological proposition, in spite of its personal nature. What kind of theatre should sculpture be made from? The interior landscape created by Eduardo Basualdo is a dramaturgy in which the visitor takes part by entering into the sculpture itself. The artist was invited to exhibit *Le Silence des Sirènes* ('The Silence of Mermaids') at the 2011 Biennale de Lyon; it was a huge installation in which visitors were likely to find themselves surrounded by water and needing to wait for them to recede before pursuing their visit. It was not possible to acquire this work at the time, but an opportunity to buy *La Isla* came up in 2014. And the museum duly did. Eduardo Basualdo's work is a poetics of landscape. It seeks to make visible the limits of its interiority.

For **Tavares Strachan**, on the other hand, landscape extends to the entire universe, to the cosmos. Utopia lies in the exploration of hostile environments, in the human body's ability to adapt, in the homeostatic equilibrium that rules our central circulatory system. Space exploration is the ultimate utopia and Sally Ride, the first female astronaut, has been his heroine since childhood. The artist is keen to attract our attention to this personality because he is interested in the reasons why prominent actors in the scientific history of humanity disappear out of our memories. The first female astronaut was forgotten by history because she was a woman, a lesbian and slightly odd. But the sculptures *Chalk Desk and Chair*, 2013, and *Astronaut Jesus*, 2013, return her to our memory by embodying frozen images from two moments in her biography. Childhood and death, but also, in the second sculpture, the central circulatory system that lays the basis for the adaptability of the body. Tavares Strachan sees the homeostatic system as a clear metaphor for the mechanisms of equilibrium which rule our existence on the planet, as well as the way different **CULTURES** adapt to one another reciprocally.

The *Cultural Melting Bath* was inspired by the same relationships between cultures. An effect of globalisation is that cultures sometimes clash, but **Cai Guo-Qiang** prefers to draw from their well in a spirit of harmony. The *Cultural Melting Bath* is a bath into which one is not allowed to plunge in France, because there are (hygiene) laws forbidding it. All the same, it is on display. The work has entered the collection. The artist, who conceived it in the United States and displayed it in Japan and then in China, would have liked people to experience it by bathing in it. But he had to resign himself to the fact that, in Lyon, that could not happen when the work was shown at the 2000 Biennale, even though it is still possible to bathe in it in Japan where there is a version of the work. It matters little that Cai involves water, earth and air, animal, vegetable and mineral, inertia and movement in a quest for a harmonious balance that only phytotherapy (i.e. science and the universe; i.e. nature) can restore. With a poetry drawn from the wellspring of science, Strachan would talk about homeostasis and circulatory equilibrium. Of course, the natural elements can be recomposed in different ways – through literature and visual art –, but poetry is always present.

The **UNIVERSE** for us is the earth. If the horizon of our aspiration is in space, the earth is a ball. We live on a sphere which we do not see, as **Jean-Luc Parant** would say. That was the trigger for *Éboulement* ('Collapse'), which plays constantly with the visible and the invisible, light and shade, the tangible and the intangible, nearness and distance, in the telling of a narrative that constantly revolves on its own axis. The ball is its seminal vehicle; the ball, the star, the planet, the head, the monad endowed with sex and speech. The eyes, the head and the earth are the main characters in a narrative driven by contemplation of a world created by poetic language. When the museum acquired *Éboulement* in 1991, after that year's Lyon Biennale, the conversation with its creator boiled down to this constant in his work: potentially infinite proliferation is the work's ultimate uniqueness. The museum therefore suggested to Jean-Luc Parant that he leave the work 'incomplete', and decided to regularly take stock of its inevitable, and hoped-for expansion. Today, his *Éboulement* remains 'incomplete'. The artist now intends to invade the museum. *Éboulement: un envahissement* ('*Éboulement: an invasion*') is a **second exhibition within the exhibition**.

All these works, which all constitute, as it were, encounters with the artists, are the mac^{LYON} collection – a collection composed of exhibitions and moments in time constructed with the artists, a collection which does not fail to question every aspect of the museum itself: curatorship, acquisition, display, keeping the works active, and preserving contemplation.

VISIBLE/INVISIBLE

The visibility of things, energies, natural and psychic forces, is present in all art. Basically that is what art is, and artists commit most of their energy to seeking ways of making perceptible the tenuous, sometimes invisible realities which are their poetic matter.

NARRATIVE

The work of art is a narrative, insofar as it is a configuration of the elements in a story or an interpretation which has yet to be constructed. What the spectator looks for is the poetry of a form which contains the implicit narrative that he or she must then 'write'. This is how it is in the collection, which juxtaposes the fragments of a more immense story.

CULTURES

Globalisation is nothing more than a meeting of cultures. It is an old phenomenon that has surely always existed. This meeting is as likely to be a dialogue as a clash. Artists often opt for the former by drawing from other cultures, thus demonstrating that they are neither blinkered nor rigid.

UNIVERSE

Artists construct poetic universes with their works, which the visitor is free to enter at leisure. The role of the museum is to facilitate access and to provide the very best setting for the work. The universes of the collection sometimes connect, sometimes clash, and sometimes enter into dialogue.

BIENNALES

THERE HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF BIENNALES IN THE WORLD. THEY ARE A CULTURAL SYMPTOM OF GLOBALISATION. CURRENTLY RANKED BY PROFESSIONALS AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT, THE BIENNALE DE LYON IS THE FRUIT OF A CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART (macLYON). THE MUSEUM, FOR ITS PART, ACQUIRES THE WORKS FOR ITS COLLECTION AND ACTS AS THEIR LOCUS OF MEMORY.

EXHIBITION

Displaying the collection means designing an exhibition like the other exhibitions. It means arranging the museum's works in a trail that the visitor can wander slowly round or take at a brisk pace. It's up to them. It also involves constructing an underlying narrative, setting up a dialogue between pieces to give the exhibition its special poetry.



Eduardo BASUALDO, *La Isla*, 2009-2013
View of the exhibition *MY BUENOS AIRES* at Maison rouge, Paris
Photo: Marc Domage
Collection mac^{LYON}

Eduardo Basualdo was born in 1977 in Buenos Aires (Argentina) where he lives and works

Eduardo Basualdo offers the spectator an unusual experience of perception; somewhere between the familiar and the uncanny. His works are based on the idea that humans are located at the centre of the universe, but are unable to understand it or control it. Influenced by his literary and theatrical studies, the Argentinian artist often designs works in the form of a decor inside which the spectator is both witness and actor. *La Isla*, created in 2009 and acquired by the museum in 2014, involves an inner landscape, a sort of reverie from the artist's imagination, which the visitor is invited to experience. By creating a cramped space, Basualdo was keen to establish a close relationship between the body of the visitor and the work, in order to confront him with his physical presence. Although *La Isla* has something of the fairy tale about it, it does not tell a story. What it actually is, is a moment to be experienced on three levels - mental, emotional and physical.



Eduardo BASUALDO, *La Isla*, 2009-2013
View of the exhibition *MY BUENOS AIRES* at Maison rouge, Paris
Photo: Marc Domage
Collection mac^{LYON}



CAI Guo-Qiang, *Cultural Melting Bath: Projects for the 20th Century*, 1997
View of Biennale de Lyon 2000, *Parage d'exotismes*
© Cai Studio
Photo: Blaise Adillon
Collection macLYON

Cai Guo-Qiang was born in 1957 in Quanzhou (China), lives and works in New York (United States)

Doubly influenced by the culture of his native China and his journeys to the West, Cai Guo-Qiang's works involve a dialogue between those various cultures, and he achieves this by borrowing from them all. In *Cultural Melting Bath: Projects for the 20th Century*, an installation constructed and exhibited in the USA in 1997, the artist took an element from Western culture – the Jacuzzi – and associated it with the Japanese practice of taking a bath, naked, with strangers. He also used a Chinese concept of the world, when he took opposing forces like water, sky and earth, and animal, vegetable and mineral, and combined them in a search for harmony. The work was exhibited at the 2000 Biennale de Lyon. It was designed as a haven of calm with therapeutic virtues. The bath, which is infused with a mixture of Chinese medicinal herbs, specially prescribed for the work, becomes a place where body and mind can be reconciled.

The Museum, in keeping with the public health regulations applicable to 'whirlpool baths intended for collective use, where the public is admitted', cannot allow visitors to bathe in it.



Ilya KABAKOV, *Le navire*, 1986
 Photo: Blaise Adilon
 Collection mac^{LYON}
 © Adagp, Paris 2016

Ilya Kabakov was born in 1933 in Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine, USSR), he lives and works in Long Island (United States)

Le Navire was one of Ilya Kabakov's first installations. This 'ship' imitates the structures in the post-revolutionary 'factory clubs'. They were places where the Bolsheviks 'enlightened' the dark masses in the 1920s. They later turned into spaces for the diffusion of Communist propaganda. The work confronts two opposing views of the life of 'homo sovieticus'. The outside presents imagery that gives an idealised view of the Soviet system, while the interior exposes the daily anguishes of the residents of the communal apartment blocks. The installation is composed of 2000 genuine documents - letters, requests and official complaints. It is a metaphor for the Soviet system. Its layout resembles a ship, with the decks and mast decorated with cheerful images that hide the ship's hold, which is laden with a terrible cargo of daily miseries.

ORLAN, *UN PEU DE TEMPS... ET VOUS NE ME VERREZ PLUS... ENCORE UN PEU DE TEMPS... ET VOUS ME VERREZ...* 8



ORLAN, *Un peu de temps... et vous ne me verrez plus... encore un peu de temps... et vous me verrez...*, 1995
Collection mac^{LYON}
© ORLAN studio
© Adagp, Paris 2016

ORLAN was born in 1947 in Saint-Étienne (France), lives and works in Paris (France), Los Angeles and New York (United States)

Since her early beginnings, ORLAN has criticised the social, political and religious pressures exerted on people's bodies, particularly a woman's body, and the predefined roles that society imposes on it. The way the artist practices her art is a very personal commitment; she sculpts her own body in order to construct a new image of herself, freed from the dictates of beauty. Between 1990 and 1993, she underwent seven surgical operations, which she meticulously staged and recorded. During these performance/operations, the artist, who was conscious, read philosophical, literary and psychoanalytical texts. She produced intentionally violent images as a mirror image to criticise the violence done to the female body. The work, which was presented in the 1995 Biennale de Lyon, will be donated by the artist to the museum in 2016. The title of her piece is taken from the religious sources (Gospel according to St John 16:16) of those norms imposed on women, and is intended as a means of subverting the way they are represented.



ORLAN, *Un peu de temps... et vous ne me verrez plus... encore un peu de temps... et vous me verrez...*, 1995
Collection mac^{LYON}
© ORLAN studio
© Adagp, Paris 2016

JEAN-LUC PARANT, *ÉBOULEMENT*: *UN ENVAHISSEMENT*



Jean-Luc PARANT, *Éboulement*, 1991, 1995, 2004
View of the exhibition *Éboulement deux*, 2004, mac'LYON
Photo: Blaise Adillon
Collection mac'LYON
© Adagp, Paris 2016

Jean-Luc Parant was born in 1944 in Megrine (Tunisia), he lives and works in Fresnay-le-Samson (France)

EXHIBITION
IN THE
EXHIBITION

Jean-Luc Parant makes balls because the Earth is a sphere that one cannot see. He combines literature and the visual arts to reinvent a universe of his own and to construct it on his own scale. Using infinitesimal observations, he interprets the world: the ball is its measure, and the meaning is the human being and rationality. The eyes, the head, the stars and the planets are just the visible part of this poetic universe. The balls have the gift of speech. They proliferate in mirrors or in infinite regress; they are brought to us by words as well as in forms: portraits, shadows, imprints, reliefs and changes of scale. *Éboulement* was exhibited in the 1991 Biennale de Lyon, where balls and portraits of them already occupied the space. It is the result of a moral contract between the artist and the museum: the work, which is based on a project of invasion, will not be complete until the death of the artist or that of the museum. It was added to in 1995, 2004 and 2016, and five additional stages are planned and in the process of being created; but many further stages remain unknown.



Jean-Luc PARANT, *Éboulement*, 1991, 1995, 2004
View of the exhibition *Éboulement deux*, 2004, mac'LYON
Photo: Blaise Adillon
Collection mac'LYON
© Adagp, Paris 2016

EXHIBITION
IN THE
EXHIBITION



Mel RAMOS, *Señorita Rio*, 2000
Courtesy The Hilger Collection
© Adagp, Paris 2016

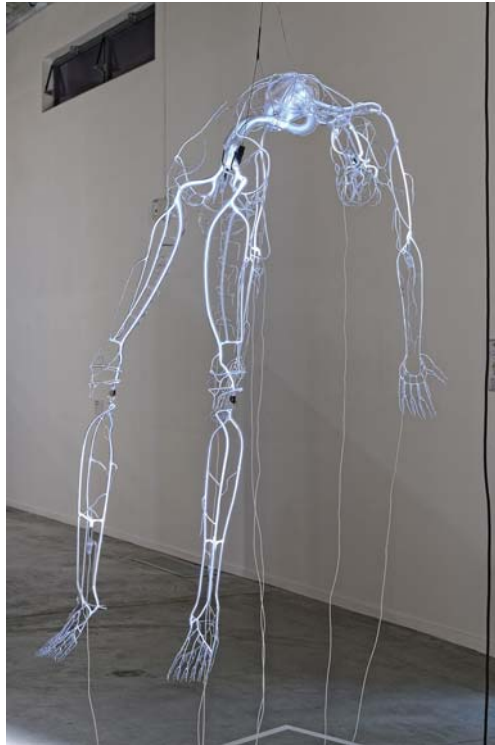
Mel Ramos was born in 1935 in Sacramento (United States), he lives and works in Oakland (United States) and Horta de Sant Joan (Spain)

Mel Ramos became famous in the 1960s when he took part in exhibitions with Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. He was at first fascinated by the figure of the superhero and he developed an imagery of his own, in which he presented comic-strip heroes and then nude models associated with consumer products. By producing identical copies of the logos of emblematic brands and giving these idealised bodies the faces of famous people, Mel Ramos was imitating the language of advertising that typifies our society and turns the female body into a sales argument. These 57 lithographs, donated to the museum in 2016 by the Hilger Collection, are typical of Mel Ramos's technical virtuosity, particularly his use of colour. The suggestive poses and uninhibited attitudes of the models give the works a voyeuristic quality that leaves the spectator questioning himself about the meaning of the images: are they a criticism of the way we look at women, or do they represent a male fantasy?



Mel RAMOS, *Five Flavor Fannie*, 2006
Courtesy The Hilger Collection
© Adagp, Paris 2016

TAVARES STRACHAN : *ASTRONAUT JESUS* AND *CHALK DESK & CHAIR*



Tavares STRACHAN, *Astronaut Jesus*, 2013
View of Biennale de Lyon 2013
Photo: Blaise Adilon
Collection mac^{LYON}



Tavares STRACHAN, *Chalk Desk & Chair*, 2013
View of Biennale de Lyon 2013
Photo: Blaise Adilon
Collection mac^{LYON}

Tavares Strachan was born in 1979 in Nassau (Bahamas), he lives and works in New York (United States)

In 2013, Tavares Strachan was invited to both the Venice Biennale and the Lyon Biennale. After the latter, in 2014, the Museum acquired his works. They tell the story of Sally Ride, the first female astronaut. The works concentrate on two particular moments in her life – her childhood and her death –, and they are a tribute to this space pioneer who was rubbed out of the official history on account of her homosexuality. All that remains of her body floating in space is the cardiovascular system, which allows it to adapt and regulate itself and make the journey into space possible. Tavares Strachan uses his scientific knowledge to fertilise his very personal poetry. This artist from the Bahamas is fascinated by great expeditions and devotes part of his work to forgotten figures who played a pioneering role in the exploration of highly hostile environments.

MAC / MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE LYON

Le musée d'art contemporain de Lyon est ouvert du mercredi au dimanche de 11h à 18h

Informations au 04 72 69 17 17 et sur www.mac-lyon.com



Elliot Tupper, *Equilibrio*, Balneario Huancahuasi, Trujillo (Perou), 2012 © Photo: Victor Zou

Mel Ramos, *Five Flavor Fanny*, 2006, Courtesy Galerie Ernst Hilger © Adagp, Paris 2006

JAN FABRE



Jan Fabre, *Sunguir Manti*, 2001, Photo: Maarten Vandekeuken, Courtesy Angelika Isaacs © Adagp, Paris 2006

WALL DRAWINGS

30.09.16 –
15.01.17



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 www.covoiturage-pour-sortir.fr
 → By bus, stop Musée d'art contemporain
 Bus C1, Gare Part-Dieu/Cuire
 Bus C4, Jean Macé/Cité internationale
 Bus C5, Cordeliers/Rillieux-Vancia
 → By bike
 Several vélo'v stations around the museum
 Cycle lane from the Rhône's banks to the museum.

OPENING HOURS

Wednesday to Sunday, from 11am to 6pm

ADMISSION

→ Full rate: 8€
 → Concessions: 4€
 Free for visitors under 18



View of Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon
 Photo: Blaise Adilon

NEXT EXHIBITIONS
Frigo
Los Angeles, a fiction
 from March 10 to July 9, 2017