

Press release

From 15 September 2021

Delphine Balley

to 2 January 2022

*Figures de cire*

[*Wax Figures*]

MACLYON



Delphine Balley, *Le Temps de l'oiseau*, 2020 [Film still]  
HD colour video, sound, 17'27"  
Courtesy of the artist

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**The macLYON invites the artist Delphine Balley, photographer and video artist, for her first institutional monographic exhibition.**

**The exhibition *Figures de cire [Wax Figures]* is conceived as a journey into time and the vernacular. It is a narrative ensemble consisting of three screenings, *Le Pays d'en haut [The Land Above]*, *Charivari [Hullabaloo]* and *Le Temps de l'oiseau [The Time of the Bird]*, as well as a series of photographic prints and a sculpture.**

**By adopting the hermetic atmosphere of family portraits and the tradition of genre painting, Delphine Balley creates a portrait of universal human stiffness, in keeping with the exposure time needed for a view camera.**

**The exhibition explores the dysfunction of the social theatre and performances in it and invites visitors to take their place in the procession, in a fictitious symbolic architecture and an incomplete narrative, in which marriage and funeral ceremonies merge.**

**Curator: Agnès Violeau**

The Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon is delighted to host Delphine Balley's first institutional solo exhibition. Born in 1974 in Roman-sur-Isère, Delphine Balley has pursued her own distinctive style of photography and video-image making for twenty years.

*Figures de cire* is a journey through time and the vernacular, structured around three films – *Charivari*, *Le Pays d'en haut* and *Le Temps de l'oiseau* –, fifteen photographs, and a new sculptural work. Through a study of rites of passage, the artist probes depictions and dysfunctions on the social stage. The exhibition is constructed as a narrative with gaps, in which the family portrait, genre painting, still-lives and the iconography of ruin and the body – the body physical and the body social – all come together.

By constructing her own inventory of beliefs, Delphine Balley dramatises social atavisms and symbolic uses of place, from cradle to grave. Domestic space is omnipresent in her work; it allows her to conceive the image at different levels, thus reflecting the passage of time in a narrative. The décor, both in the films and in her photographic work, has a structural role. It is an architecture of intimacy that encloses the rigidity of family space and conveys, quite literally, how uncomfortable it is to take up a position. In the photographs, the reification of the bodies corresponds to the exposure time required by the camera. Which leads to a convergence of the moving and the still, of formlessness and stability, the real and the fake. From the figurative compositions she developed in 2002 in the series *L'Album de famille*, in which trompe-l'œil settings, figures, and accumulated objects interact with each other, right up to her recent pieces, *Figures de cire* marks a shift towards new forms. These associations are fuelled by themes of pretence, metamorphosis and disappearance, drawing on both psychoanalysis and Surrealism to give tangible form to our inner worlds.

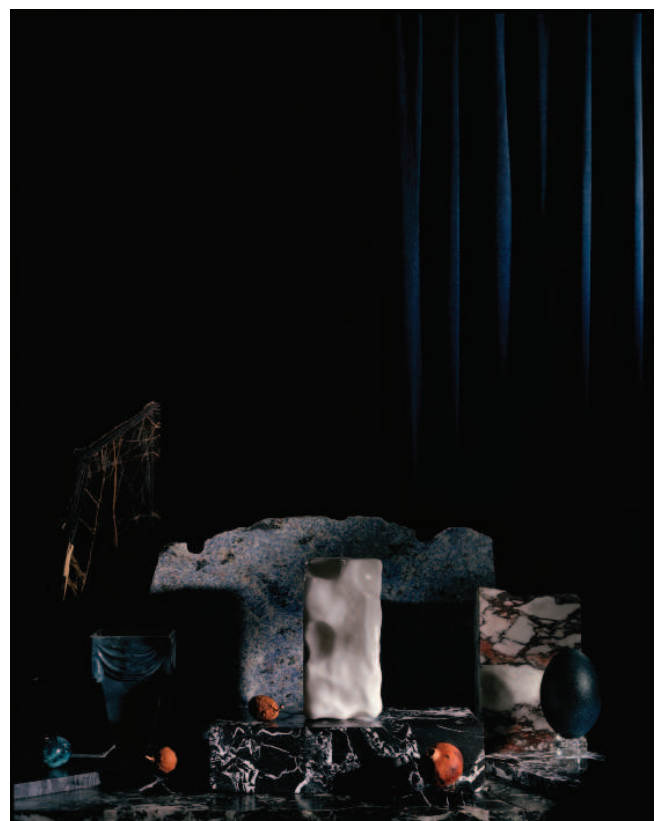
Set against artefacts from funeral customs (such as a wax counterweight that confronts the visitor with his own symbolic value), the large format prints, reminiscent of religious painting, become pared-down vanitas works, disembodied, metaphysical representations of our own perishability.

How can we participate in society nowadays, when we have to practise social distancing from one another? A ruin, an allegory for the decomposed body, also suggests the erosion of a damaged social world. Illusion and reality overlap in Delphine Balley's work to evoke the conformism of social postures. As Foucault says in *Of Other Spaces*, "the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another." The exhibition is built on the model of a procession scene – religious or pagan –, in which we can participate by wandering through the symbolic architecture of the museum.

*Figures de cire* narrates the cycle of life – that which is not made visible. The exhibition provides a temporary stage for our human condition, our ability to take our place in a setting for living together. And it gives substance to the way in which, like wax figures, we strive to overcome the indifference of time.

Agnès Violeau, curator

A catalog will be published, bilingual French/English, rich in exhibition views and with texts by Agnès Violeau, Chantal Pontbriand, curator and Canadian art critic, as well as an interview by the artist with Melanie Pocock, curator at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. Conceived as an extension of the exhibition, it will constitute a reference on the work of Delphine Balley.



Delphine Balley, *Paysage de pierre, sel et ombres*, 2020  
*Figures de cire* series  
 Camera photography, inkjet print on fine art paper from  
 a plan-film on dibond  
 140 x 110 cm  
 Courtesy of the artist

“For groups, as for individuals, living is a constant process of disintegration and reconstitution, of changing state and condition, of dying and being reborn. It means acting and then stopping, waiting and resting, then starting to act again, but differently. And there are always new thresholds to cross, the thresholds of summer and winter, of the season or the year, of the month or the night; the thresholds of birth, adolescence, maturity and old age; the threshold of death. And the threshold of the afterlife – for those who believe in it.”

Arnold Van Gennepe, *Les rites de passage*, Picard, Paris, 2016

Born in 1974 in Roman-sur-Isère, Delphine Balley lives and works in the Drôme department.

After a degree in art history at the Université Lumière Lyon 2, she was graduated a DNSEP from the École nationale supérieure de la photographie in Arles.

As an artist photographer and video maker, Delphine Balley's works involve *mise-en-scène* and narratives on the ancient foundations of our societies and their collective practices. Representing the world by organising it on the basis of rites and beliefs is a way of inhabiting it, organising it and addressing the ungraspable nature of its reality.

“Each artistic project is the result of meticulous research – scientific, sociological, ethnographic, religious and esoteric. Her investigations exorcise ancestral forces in order to conjure them into an artistic practice that is totally of our time.”

Extract from a text by Karine Mathieu, Director of MEMENTO / Espace Départemental Art Contemporain de Hoche

It is these human organisational structures in particular that she observes, interrogates and develops in her artistic work. The first stage of her research focused on family stories: observing a family system, a micro-society organised like a tribe.

Her first *mise-en-scènes* were with her own family, then extended to the inhabitants of her village and to friends. This created a group, on the fringes of reality, and enabled her to invent its structure, along with its rituals, codes, beliefs and dysfunctions.

Staging a *mise-en-scène* amounts to experiencing reality by condensing it, reconstructing it and re-enacting it in a dense, suspended space-time that acquires added intensity from working with a large-format camera; this creates the ideal conditions for the experience.

“When I make a photo, the genesis is very long. But when the scene takes shape in front of me, when the mental images and the fruit of my research become real, it becomes a matter of emergence, of appearance.”

In 2008, she started using a large-format camera to capture a staged *mise-en-scène* of a family, with all the theatricality and artifice that has historically accompanied photographic portraits.

The process of taking pictures with a large-format camera isolates the photographer at that key moment when the image that has been mentally constructed beforehand appears on the ground glass, the moment when she is at last alone with her image, her head enshrouded in the darkness of the black cloth.

This preparation time is an integral part of Delphine Balley's creative process.

She has found an aesthetic with the large-format camera; it involves the stillness of the characters who pose for posterity like frozen presences that have turned into «images», where the artificiality of the pose and the hyper-reality of the photograph intermingle.

Delphine Balley works essentially in series. It is her way of incorporating narrative, which is what principally interests her in photography.

Delphine Balley's taste for *mise-en-scène* naturally led her towards film-making (*Le Pays d'en haut*, 2013), a field that allowed her to introduce gesture and sound into her work. Her photographic tableaux evolved into the moving images which were surely already present in her imagination, needing only to be animated to provide that logical progression in her oeuvre.

“This stage is very important in the evolution of my work. The passage from a motionless, formal register to a world of movement is an invitation to the viewer to follow this transposition, to build bridges between the photographs and the film sequences.”



Delphine Balley

Solos shows (selection)

2020

- *Voir c'est croire*, Prix Camera Clara 2019, Galerie Folia, Paris

2019

- Photographs and projection of the film *Charivari*, Le VOG, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Fontaine
- *Delphine Balley/ Auguste Rodin*, Le 111, Galerie Céline Moine, Lyon
- *Le goût du crime*, ENSSIB, Lyon

2018

- *Trois journées particulières* chez Sophie et Etienne de Baecque, Lyon

2015

- *Le Pays d'en haut, Le Pays d'en bas*, LUX, Valence

2014

- *Le Pays d'en haut*, Centre d'art Image/Imatge, Orthez

2013-2014

- *Le Pays d'en haut*, Galerie Suzanne Tarasieva, Paris

2012

- *Bloo Gallery*, Roma, Italy
- *Carte blanche*, Musée Gadagne, Lyon
- *Le Théâtre de l'esprit*, Espace Vallès, Saint-Martin-d'Hères

2011

- *Aller au chagrin*, Le Garage, Béthune

2010

- *Delphine Balley*, Hamish Morisson Galerie, Berlin, Germany
- *L'Album de famille*, Château des Adhémar, Centre d'art contemporain, Montélimar et Château de Suze-la-Rousse

2009

- *Delphine Balley, Une aventure du docteur Williams... / L'Album de famille - Épisode du Cache-mari*, Galerie Le Réverbère, Lyon

Group shows (selection)

2020

- *10 ans de Documents d'artistes Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes*, Maison du Livre, de l'image et du son, Villeurbanne

2019

- *Some of Us, an overview on the French Art Scene*, Kunstwerk Carlshütte, Büdelsdorf, Germany
- *Elles, question de genre ?*, Musée Paul Dini, Villefranche sur Saône
- *Probabilités 0.33*, Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saône

2018

- *Probabilités 0.33*, Friche Belle de mai, Marseille
- *L'Esprit des lieux, Campagne première*, Revonnas
- *Photographes*, la Salle d'attente, Reims

2017

- *Histoires vraies*, La Filoche, Espace Culturel, Chaligny
- *Horizons d'eaux*, Hôtel des arts, Hôtellerie Sainte-Foy, Moissac (en collaboration avec les Abattoirs-FRAC Occitanie Toulouse et FRAC Occitanie Montpellier)
- *Les imaginaires d'un monde in-tranquille*, Abbaye Saint-André, Centre d'Art Contemporain de Meymac
- *Charivari*, projection aux Rencontres Internationales Paris-Berlin, Gaité Lyrique, Paris

2016

- *Le temps de l'audace et de l'engagement - De leur temps (5)*, Association pour la diffusion internationale de l'art français (ADIAF), Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne
- *Sculptura*, 3<sup>e</sup> édition, exposition-vente organisée par les Lions Club Saint-Péray Guilherand-Granges et Valence Doyen, Valence

2015 :

- *Paris Photo*, représentée par la Galerie Suzanne Tarasieva, Grand Palais, Paris
- *On se tromperait de croire que les bois n'ont pas des yeux*, Delphine Balley, Géraldine Kosiak et Aurélie Pétreil, La Halle, Pont-en-royans

2014

- *Art Cologne 2014*, represented by the Galerie Suzanne Tarasieva, Cologne, Germany
- *Art Brussels 2014*, represented by the Galerie Suzanne Tarasieva, Brussels, Belgium
- *Collection à l'étude à Villeurbanne, Expériences de l'œuvre*, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes
- *Hypothèses et étrangeté*, Collection de l'Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, Collège Samivel, Bonneville
- *On se tromperait de croire que les bois n'ont pas des yeux*, Delphine Balley, Géraldine Kosiak et Aurélie Pétreil, with the support of the Rhône-Alpes Region, General Delegation of Rhône-Alpes in Brussels, Belgium

2013

- *Art Brussels*, represented by the Galerie Suzanne Tarasieva, Brussels, Belgium
- *Tell Me Her Story*, Musée d'art de Corée, Seoul, Korea

Grants, Awards, Competitions

2020 — Winner of Camera Clara Prize 2019

2007 — Support for creation from DRAC Rhône-Alpes

2006 — 1<sup>st</sup> prize *Corps dans la ville*, Septembre de la photographie, Lyon

Support for installation from DRAC Rhône-Alpes

2004 — Support for creation from DRAC Rhône-Alpes

Orders, Acquisitions -Public and private collections

Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne  
FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier  
Ville de Lyon

Artothèque de la Maison du Livre, de l'Image et du Son,  
Villeurbanne

Artothèque d'Auxerre

Artothèque d'Annecy

L'Imagerie Lannion

Fondation AUER, Hermance, Switzerland

Lodeveans Collection, England

### *Le Pays d'en haut*

2013 | 16 minutes | HD

First, there is the world below and there is the world above... times and rituals that intersect in uninhabited houses. Each room retains traces of past generations, clues to troubled lives, hidden children, family secrets... everything seeps out from a past that must be revealed and resolved.



Delphine Balley, *Le Pays d'en haut*, 2013 [Film still]  
HD colour video, sound, 16'19"  
Courtesy of the artist

### *Le Temps de l'oiseau*

2020 | 18 minutes | HD

*Le Temps de l'oiseau* explores rites of passage and social performances, such as the ceremony of mourning and the preparations for it. Delphine Balley draws the portrait of a family rigidity, creating a lacunar narrative in which the ceremonies of the marriage and the funeral merge.



Delphine Balley, *Le Temps de l'oiseau*, 2020 [Film still]  
HD colour video, sound, 17'27"  
Courtesy of the artist

### *Charivari*

2016 | 19 minutes | HD

An intrusion of discordant sounds into the village announces the hunting of the *bête noire* (a.k.a. the bugbear), an inversion of codes, a sinister threat upsetting the established order, a distant rumble drawing near... In the space of one night, something akin to the end of the world, where darkness is resisted by the performance of collective rituals, before the light returns.



Delphine Balley, *Charivari*, 2016 [Film still]  
HD colour video, sound, 19'54"  
Courtesy of the artist

Fifteen photographs produced specially for the exhibition are also featured.

These metaphors of everyday life in the form of playlets are hermetic situations that blend reality and the inner world. The singularity of the artist's visual work takes the audience into a strange, unfamiliar, dysfunctional, sometimes disturbing realm. The images are constructed on one or more levels on the model of *vanitas* paintings, i.e. still representations of perishable items, expertly arranged to remind us of our own inevitable decay.

In the exhibition, the artist switches from representation of the human body to the object.



Delphine Balley, *Les Reliques*, 2021

*Figures de cire* series

Camera photography, inkjet print on fine art paper from a plan-film on dibond

110 × 140 cm

Courtesy of the artist



Delphine Balley, *L'Enfant transparent, les larmes de cire*, 2020

*Figures de cire* series

Camera photography, inkjet print on fine art paper from a plan-film on dibond

110 × 140 cm

Courtesy of the artist



Delphine Balley, *Étude*, 2021  
*Figures de cire* series  
Camera photography, inkjet print on fine art paper from a plan-film on dibond  
140 × 110 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



Delphine Balley, *Portrait sur le vif*, 2020  
*Figures de cire* series  
Camera photography, inkjet print on fine art paper from a plan-film on dibond  
140 × 110 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



## Jasmina Cibic, *Stagecraft*

For Jasmina Cibic, every film project sees this artist-researcher delving into the archives, the accounts recorded there as well as the silences, in order to reveal the attitudes of all forms of power – whether state, government, party political or diplomatic – towards the arts. For the exhibition *Stagecraft*, she has brought together several years of research into the notion of the «diplomatic gift» and will be presenting her film *The Gift*. This film features several emblematic buildings, including the French Communist Party Headquarters in Paris, built by Oscar Niemeyer, the Palace of Nations in Geneva, and the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, all of which, in their collections and architecture, exemplify the notion of «gift» and have established an artistic vocabulary at the service of political dramaturgy. This project by Jasmina Cibic is part of her research into the notion of soft power, which was the basis of her exhibition for the Slovenian pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale.

Curator: Matthieu Lelièvre



Jasmina Cibic, *The Gift*, 2021 [film still]  
Three channel 4K video  
Courtesy of the artist  
© Oscar Niemeyer - Adagp, Paris, 2021

## Christine Rebet, *Escapologie* [Escapology]

Christine Rebet is fascinated by illusion and deception. She prefers drawing because it is manual and spontaneous, and she produces hundreds and thousands of drawings in ink, which she assembles frame by frame using traditional, early animation techniques. Repeated drawing, which is the origin of moving pictures, creates what she calls her «paper cinema.»

Christine Rebet re-interprets personal and collective traumas and mixes history and fiction in fantasy worlds. The subjects of her films are universal and evoke not only political reality, but also the destruction of the world, the oppression of human beings, and the idea of metamorphosis. She transcends imagery with a disturbing poetry, using manipulative techniques to explore the audience's subconscious mind. She creates an imaginative fantasy through which to escape from the world. In her exhibition *Escapologie [Escapology]*, Christine Rebet presents six animated films, including one specifically made for this exhibition. This new film is inspired by the traditional songs of pearl fishermen and sailors in the Persian Gulf. For this exhibition, the strange world of the six films is complemented by paintings and murals as well as drawings.

Curator: Marilou Laneuville



Christine Rebet, *Ultravision*, 2020  
*Otolithe* series  
Ink on paper, 24 x 32 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

Established in 1984 in a wing of the Palais Saint-Pierre, in 1995 the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon moved to the site of the Cité internationale, a vast architectural ensemble spread over one kilometre on the edges of the Parc de la Tête d'Or, in Lyon's 6th arrondissement and gathering hotels, restaurants, offices, housing but also a casino or a cinema. The work of architect Renzo Piano, responsible for the entire site, the museum conserves the facade of the atrium of the former Palais de la Foire, overlooking the park. The Palais was designed by Charles Meysson in the 1920s.

The 6,000m<sup>2</sup> museum is spread over several floors and presents modular spaces that are perfectly adapted to the needs of the different artistic projects welcomed by the museum, as well as new forms of contemporary expression. The macLYON focuses on current national and international art, in all its forms, offering exhibitions and a wide programme of transdisciplinary events.

Its collection includes over 1,400 works. A selection of these is shown in rotation at the macLYON as well as in several partner structures. Works of its collection are regularly loaned for exhibitions in France and all over the world. It consists mainly of monumental works and ensembles of works, dating from the 1940s to the current day, created by artists from all over the world, the majority for exhibitions at the museum or for the Biennales d'art contemporain de Lyon, for which the museum oversees the artistic direction.

Brought together in an arts pole with the MBA since 2018, the two collections form a remarkable ensemble, both in France and in Europe.



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

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**ADMISSION**  
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● Concessions: 4€  
● Free for visitors under 18

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Along quai Charles de Gaulle, carpark  
P0 and P2, reduced rate for our visitors  
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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

Delphine Balley would like to thank:



And also Take Time production, M. et Mme Morin, Brocante Fréour, Brocatelle