

## Press release

Christophe Berdaguer & Marie Péjus

*La chair au contact de la chair doit ressembler au vert énergumène des martiens*

*The flesh which touches flesh has to resemble Martian green gook*

May 19 – July 20, 2022 [break June 21 to June 25]

Christophe Berdaguer and Marie Péjus create artistic projects in which the functioning of the human body, its neural system, its molecules, psychoanalysis and all that make up its habitat (architecture, urbanism and natural environment) are essential to their approach, aiming to occupy the intermediate spaces that are necessary to the coexistence of these concepts. In their works, we find these presumably empty and ethereal intermediate spaces inhabited by ghosts, muffled or extraterrestrial voices, viruses, molecules from pharmaceutical products... activating, by their invisibility, an entire imaginary world that gives form to immersive installations. Working as a single entity, the artists disappear behind hybrid works, exhibited in relative incompleteness (prototypical), constantly in the making. For their exhibition *La chair au contact de la chair doit ressembler au vert énergumène des martiens / The flesh which touches flesh has to resemble Martian green gook*, Christophe Berdaguer and Marie Péjus present a set of works marked by the recent events, confirming the speculative potential of situations surpassing the individual cognitive scale, allowing the development of fantasies in which truths, untruths and lies act indifferently on the conscience.

Benoît Lamy de la Chapelle: The idea for the *Intrusion* series came to you when you were confined to your studio/apartment, having nothing on the horizon but this limited living space. What exactly does it show us?

CB&MP: This series of images is the result of capturing rays of light penetrating the studio. This one is a kind of recorder for the outside world, lights, forms, animals come to take refuge here. A bit like "Ghostbusters", we were on the lookout for these apparitions. We developed a technique of "encapsulating" these images in wax that produces both a protective filter and gives depth to the images. Wax has long been used to preserve food. In these works, it plays the role of a protective dermis.

BLdLC: As enigmatic in their rendering as they are in their evocation of a plastic universe that comes close to David Cronenberg's films – and all the existential questions linked to the relationship between the organic body and technology that these films evoke – the *Cires anatomiques* present shreds of flesh hardened by the intrusion of mechanical bodies. These combinations of anatomical and mechanical parts and viscous wax seem to echo current transhumanism with the relationship of attraction/repulsion produced by the collision of organic materials and biotechnology. Opposition to this tends to be fading today. How do you address these issues in your approach?

CB&MP: The anatomical waxes are spatially organized in such a way that each one of them remains single, even though they are connected by a constructed system, made up of metallic bars that bring to mind scaffolding or prostheses, just like an architectural spatial organization. The empty spaces outlined by the structure create a whole construction set and influence the movements of the spectator. We see the whole thing as a city as much as a body-machine exploded in space. Rather than trans humanism, we prefer trance humanism!

Forms and ideas sometimes emerge for unexpected reasons. The first constructions came about by following the line of a fracture after one of us broke a metatarsal bone, perhaps a type of incantation? A way to sculpt the handicap, to freeze the movement...

More than a "robocopization" of the human or other dreams about enhanced humans, we see hybrid, symbiotic forms. In our work, the body is often thought of as a porous organism, penetrated and contaminated by the environment it inhabits. Through these sculptures, we considered machines in the image of the body and not bodies in the image of machines. The debate between Hermann Muthesius and Henry Van de Velde is still ongoing.

BLdLC: Your aesthetic choices and the universes you compose are often very close to those of cinema or futuristic literature. You have explained however on several occasions that you are not interested in science fiction, preferring reality as a tool for speculation. Could you come back to this point and explain to what extent this exhibition draws on the reality of the start of the 2020s?

CB&MP: Let's say that taking science fiction as a starting point would be like working with "second hand" speculative montages. The daily newspapers are a much more interesting starting point. The discovery of the Italian radicals, the continuous monuments by Superstudio as well as the Pill

Architecture of Hans Hollein and other dreams/nightmares of this period have nourished our work much more than the cinema or futuristic literature.

As for the reality of the early 2020's, we can say that it has taken a beating! The number of texts, research, archives and collections on our dreams has never been so large, maybe because we were faced with the impossibility of grasping our present, or that the moments of being awake and being sleeping have become somewhat blurred?

There is surely a kind of disturbing strangeness dear to Freud in these last works. Present, past and future have taken place on a fixed plane. The notions of space and territory have also been redefined, and the attention given to non-humans has also been transformed... So yes, living all this in a studio has effects on the way of thinking about art and its production.

This exhibition attempts to show ways of acknowledging the passage of time and the minute vibrations it produces. For the first time, scientists have heard the sound of the earth, perhaps this is a new form of reality...

BLdLC: *Trajectoire martienne* consists of a sculpture made from networks of chaotic metal loops, physically representing translations of "solid" words from Kathy Acker and Jack Spicer's poems spoken in the "Martian" language. What is this technology and what does it tell us about your interest in the extraterrestrial universe, and for that matter, what kind of extraterrestrial life is your work about?

CB&MP: The solid words continue a discussion we had with the Swiss medium H  l  ne Smith (1861-1929) through a translation process invented from an articulograph (a project carried out with the help of the speech and language laboratory in Aix-en-Provence), a machine that allows us to capture the movements inside the mouth when we speak. We used this machine to capture the Martian words of H  l  ne Smith and translated them into 3D drawings, which were then printed in 3D. The words have somehow solidified and produced sculptures. The new "words" shown in the exhibition continue these games of text translations into sculptures, by imagining "discussions" between two poets, Kathy Acker and Jack Spicer, whose writing processes meet, a writing that summons ghosts, that allows the EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena) to pass through and, lets the alien that hides in each of us speak. The figure of the alien, of the extraterrestrial or of the ghost enables us to play string games to use the image of Donna Haraway. They open spaces, possibilities, there is a future bird, a future Martian, a future ghost.

BLdLC: The visitor's place is usually crucial in your works: you want people entering or looking at your works to experience their existence as much as being stimulated by them. What about this exhibition where the works are perhaps less immersive than in others? How do you see this back and forth?

CB&MP: Indeed, the emptiness around the works, the light, the architecture, the air or the odors work with the pieces: we think of it as a shared landscape. This exhibition functions "in pause mode": the landscape is frozen, petrified, connections blocked, rays of light encapsulated, words frozen in rope ... All the works speak of movements, trajectories but everything is at a standstill. The spectators will somehow come to animate the landscape and disrupt the "freeze effect" to reconnect the whole to a "normal" temporal flow. Duchamp used to talk about delay in some of his works. Some artists are always punctual, others cultivate the delay and the art of breakdowning down time.

Beno  t Lamy de la Chapelle - Director, Centre d'art contemporain - La synagogue de Delme

Christophe Berdager (1968) and Marie P  jus (1969) live and work in Marseille.

Awarded the Prix Ricard in 2007, Berdager & P  jus were residents at the Villa M  dicis the following year. They have had several solo exhibitions: Villa Arson, Nice, 1997; FRAC PACA, Marseille, 2001; Lieu Unique, Nantes, 2006; FRAC Basse-Normandie, Caen, 2007; Circuit, Lausanne, 2010. In 2012, they presented "Insula", an important monographic exhibition at the Institut d'art contemporain Villeurbanne/Rh  ne-Alpes. They have also participated in numerous group exhibitions (*Subr  el*, MAC, Marseille, 2002; *Communaut   1 et 2*, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rh  ne-Alpes, 2004; *Dreamtime*, Mus  e des Abattoirs, Toulouse, 2009). In 2018, the Friche la Belle de Mai in Marseille dedicated a major solo exhibition to them and the Palais de Tokyo presented their *Sculptures hyst  riques* in Gwangju, South Korea. *The flesh which touches flesh has to resemble Martian green gook* is their second solo show at Galerie Papillon.