



**VISITORS
GUIDE**

Justine Bougerol

Strata

EXHIBITION 03.09 > 08.11.2020

WED > SUN 10:30 > 13:00 - 13:30 > 18:00
Free entrance

CENTRALE
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

lab

Place Sainte-Catherine 16
1000 Brussels
www.centrale.brussels

Brussels
Gallery
Weekend

Justine Bougerol

Strata

OPENING 02.09.2020

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In this new in situ installation, Justine Bougerol (born 1988, France, lives and works in Brussels), travels through the thickness of things. By creating an artificial mountain – or is it an iceberg? – straddling the two superimposed spaces of CENTRALE.lab, the artist works with the concept of the diorama and questions the dreamlike and contemplative potential that emanates from a material image, or in other words, from imagined matter.

By manipulating form, colour and organic substance of this portion of miniaturized landscape, Justine Bougerol draws our gaze to the breach, the crack. Visible as a shameless wound, they echo the intimate value contained in an unfathomable depth.

www.justinebougerol.com



L'Entre-deux, 2017, mixed media. Group show *Va et vient*, Galerie Eric Mouchet, Paris © Gilles Ribero



Là-bas, 2017, mixed media. Friche édition 3. Group show, Brussels © Gilles Ribero



L'Entre-deux, 2017, mixed media. Group show *Va et vient*, Galerie Eric Mouchet, Paris © Gilles Ribero



Fenêtre(s), 2018, mixed media. Kikk Festival. Group show *Species & Beyond*, Namur © Robin Lopvet



Echelle 1/100, 2015, mixed media. Group show *La dent creuse*, Chaussée de Charleroi 50, Brussels © Hadrien Herzog



Fondations, 2016, mixed media. Group show *Déformation professionnelle*, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris © Gilles Ribero

Interview

Justine Bougerol

Can you tell us about your artistic journey?

I arrived in Brussels 11 years ago to study set design. After 5 years spent at La Cambre's scenography section, we (the students) were asked to work either for a director or for a personal project. I decided to work on a poem by Yves Bonnefoy, *La Maison Natale*. I discovered Bachelard – who taught Bonnefoy – at the same time. In this poem, Bonnefoy invites the reader to visit his home, which is a house fragmented by dreams. He invites us on a poetic inner journey, to walk through water-flooded corridors. My desire to work with water also originates from this poem, because there is something that allows for a link between spaces that may be fragmented by the disintegration of the dream, and water can bring this fluid, this link.

Since then, I have worked on several exhibition projects, always *in situ*. With an *in situ* installation, you can only treat the subject once. A priori, I was not going to come back to *La Maison Natale*. However, I decided to continue exploring this theme in different ways.

What brought you to CENTRALE.lab?

I arrived at CENTRALE.lab via a call for projects that artist Edward Little (who exhibited at CENTRALE.lab in the fall of 2018) told me about.

My arrival in Brussels is closely connected with my love of Flemish theatre, especially the vibrancy around theatre and dance that isn't so pervasive in France. This is how I discovered the Peeping Tom Company, with which I am collaborating, in addition to my exhibition projects.

What can you tell us about the title of the exhibition: *Strata*?

The idea was to work on the depth of matter. I had already made an installation

at the Paris-Beijing gallery in Paris. In that installation, I showed the foundations of a basement behind a fake rock made using a wall that gave the illusion of being cracked. Behind the basement, it was deep, and a miniature house was reflected in the water. This house symbolized the mother house in which the gallery was situated. I wanted to speak about the gallery in a more cosmological, all-encompassing way; as though it was seen from above.

For the *Strata* exhibition, I wanted to delve into the matter again, while trying to make my images more universal: I started from the diorama, which is a landscape that speaks to everyone. You can see the call of the landscape in a few abstract images. I try to find an abstraction in these recurring images, to get as close as possible to the matter so that we can escape. In *Strata*, we won't go back as much in my memories, but rather, we will take the path of imagination. The entrance of a cave will appear in a black hole, like an escape hole.

Strata thus encompasses the desire to dig into the breach, to find the image from the breach: to travel through the thickness of things, the thickness of the matter. It's the idea of different strata, like when you go through a mountain tunnel: we go through the thickness, the very matter of the mountain. There's something archaic, something intimate, maternal. A protective alcove for content and container alike. Bachelard speaks of an intimacy in the depths of matter, and that's exactly what it evokes for me, and what I want to find again. The house conveys this idea: home, intimacy, a return to something that we lose as we grow older. Bonnefoy speaks of *La Maison Natale* as the founding house – ultimately, it reflects the conscious and the unconscious, between mourning and childhood.

Matter and form play crucial roles in your work. How does this materialise in your project at CENTRALE.lab?

Usually, for my work *in situ*, I start a project from the space that is offered to me. When I got the call for CENTRALE.lab, I proposed a piece *in situ* and then re-adapted my project according to the themes that came to me. At CENTRALE.lab, it will be the first time that I will work with the diorama: an artificially-reconstructed natural landscape.

In my work, I tend to broach the themes of memories and habitat, hence my interest in *La Maison Natale*, which tells about spaces and reminiscences.

Until now, I worked like this: I was offered a space, with its specificities, and I drew my inspiration from that space. Starting from that, I would instill some form of ambiguity by gradually bringing in a kind of scenography, an intervention, a distortion of reality, through different layers. In general, I try to create a strangeness that is not immediately perceptible. Spectators may not realise it, but this strangeness is close to their reality. For example, I can make a seemingly-mundane hole in a wall. But behind this hole, I will create a second threshold, a second distortion of reality, a bit like a camera. The body might be stuck at the entrance, but the gaze is invited to circulate. The gaze is often framed by a hole, or by an orifice, something that is going to play the role of a camera, that is going to topple over in a "cinema" setting, or in a fictional setting. I thoroughly enjoy injecting some fiction. The space always becomes the main character of this fiction. Thus, in my spaces, the space becomes the protagonist of all my preoccupations.

In this second space, the adaptation occurs through the miniature and the matter, and we are about to cross an umpteenth threshold. Each time, I try to bring it closer to a somewhat fantasized and unapproachable elsewhere. There is something here of the order of doom, of mourning, of a comeback to what is

intimate, to the origin. Several things combine together between childhood and mourning.

In fact, there is a lot of substance, matter or organicity in my installations... Contemplation and imagination come to life through matter. With water for instance, reflections and shapes materialise when the element vibrates. But the drop of water brings us back to the present moment, forcing spectators to participate. The water drop gives back to water its primary quality of fluidity and breaks its mirror effect.

Usually, I work in a very realistic way. Conversely, at CENTRALE.lab, I have decided to work with some artifices - and had to come up with technical solutions.

You spoke of the notion of depth, of layers. You also state your intent to question our usual perceptions through plural spaces. Could the space of CENTRALE.lab - which is built over two floors - echo this notion?

I'd like to connect the two floors for this installation. Upstairs, I'd like to create a mountain with an opening, a crack. And in the basement, I'd like to have an iceberg or an inverted mountain, as an extension of the mountain on the ground floor. I'd like to convey the feeling that the ceiling has been punctured/drilled, and that the two are connected. Upstairs, spectators will see the water through the hole in this mountain, through the creation of a false ground, with the idea of an incomprehensible depth. In the basement, dark water will flow.

Rain is an element that often comes back in my installations. Water, just like nature and the landscape, has a very hypnotic effect on me.

I am inspired by Gaston Bachelard, who talks a lot about the elements: fire, earth, and how they allow the imagination to find an anchoring, an entrance gate to something quite contemplative.

My second source of inspiration is Tarkovsky's entire cinematography. He raises the same issues as Bachelard,

albeit aesthetically and visually - making a connection between matter, memory and space.

That is why I speak of “imagination of matter” or a “material imagination” ..., both terms used by Bachelard.

What would you like to communicate to visitors?

I want to offer a breakaway in these gaps, these interstices, so that the imagination can flee, escape somewhere. I have a close relationship with melancholy, an almost gloomy, disastrous, sad relationship. Melancholy evokes disappearance, but also complacency. These black holes and the falling water will however have something soothing about them. The mountain on two levels embodies this dualism between appeasement and melancholy.

**Justine Bougerol in conversation with
Tania Niaselski & Estelle Vandeweeghe
CENTRALE for contemporary art
February 2020**

ARTISTIC BACKGROUND

Visual artist Justine Bougerol (France, 1988, lives and works between Brussels and Paris) creates installations with a unique perspective. Her approach consists in instilling an unresolved ambiguity in the exhibition space, forcing the spectator to re-examine his or her usual perceptions in order to linger on a new narrative. The viewer's eye discovers plural spaces made up of successive strata devised as fiction. The gaze crosses as many thresholds separating it from the here and now, before toppling over into a fantasized and unreachable elsewhere, an elsewhere that triggers a spatial nostalgia.

After graduating in 2014 with a master's degree in scenography from Brussels' La Cambre, Justine Bougerol started a three-year residency at the Maison d'Art Actuel des Chartreux in September 2019.

Having presented her first solo exhibition entitled *État des lieux* at the MusVerre last September, Justine Bougerol is now hosting her second solo show at CENTRALE. Lab: *Strata*.

The artist has shown her work in group exhibitions at the Eric Mouchet gallery and the Paris-Beijing gallery in Paris, as well as in Brussels at the Island gallery, the Nadine Feront gallery and at Les Halles de Schaerbeek. In 2018, she designed an *in situ* installation at Namur's Kikk Festival.

Full artistic CV

www.justinebougerol.com/a-propos



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This space adjacent to the CENTRALE welcomes emerging Brussels artists at 16 Place Sainte-Catherine. From the CENTRALE, go around the church on your right and you're there.