



FONDATION
D'ENTREPRISE
HERMÈS

EXHIBITION

CAMILLE BLATRIX

The Barriers of Antiquity

LA VERRIÈRE, BRUSSELS
SEPTEMBER 5 TO NOVEMBER 8, 2019

CURATOR:
GUILLAUME DÉSANGES

SEASON 'MATTERS OF CONCERN | MATIÈRES À PANSER'

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PRESS RELEASE

CAMILLE BLATRIX 'THE BARRIERS OF ANTIQUITY'

LA VERRIÈRE, BRUSSELS

SEPTEMBER 5 TO NOVEMBER 8, 2019

PREVIEW: WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 2019, 6 P.M. TO 9 P.M.

For the second exhibition in the series 'Matters of Concern | Matières à panser' – launched at La Verrière, the Brussels art space of the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, in April 2019 – curator Guillaume Désanges presents a solo show by French artist Camille Blatrix.

"Sculptures by Camille Blatrix (which the artist terms 'emotional objects') resemble strange, industrially manufactured items, improbable artefacts produced by a transgressive techno-capitalist society. His materials of choice (wood, aluminium, glass...) are combined with complex know-how (such as 3D modelling) and worked using factory production methods, though everything here is produced by hand, with obsessive care and craftsmanship. The result is a perfect finish, its cold formality countered by the indicative presence of motifs evoking the artist's intimate life (a sheet of torn paper, hand-written notes, a flower, tearstains). A little as if their exaggeratedly 'industrious' production masked a whole other register of emotional intensity, the better to channel, standardise and dilute it. And so, these sham objects or simulacra – of uncertain purpose, caught between functionality and decoration – drift into the realm of the imagination, dreams, or the surreal. Does their undeniably seductive, sensual nature resist, or result from, their 'corporate' quality? We cannot tell. Around these ambivalent objects, Blatrix's practice takes a variety of forms: drawing, or marquetry pictures that incorporate figurative motifs, which themselves waver between painterly symbolism, allegory, and graphic communication. The whole builds to create troubling works that play on the tension between design and sculpture, reason and desire, naturalism and artificiality."

From the text by Guillaume Désanges (for the full text, see below).

LA VERRIÈRE

BOULEVARD DE WATERLOO 50, BRUSSELS

TUESDAY TO SATURDAY, NOON TO 6P.M.,

ADMISSION FREE

GUIDED VISITS EVERY SATURDAY AT 3P.M.

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Cover:

Camille Blatrix, *Untitled* (detail), 2017, plastic, paint, stainless steel, silver, Plexiglas, anodized aluminium printing, 5 x 42 x 27 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Balice Hertling gallery and the Andrew Kreps gallery. Photo © Dario Lasagni.



SENSITIVE MATTER

by Guillaume Désanges



Camille Blatrix, *NiNa*, 2014, mahogany, wood marquetry, aluminium, silver, glass, fixing screws, 88 × 55 × 27 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.

“Sculptures by Camille Blatrix (which the artist terms ‘emotional objects’) resemble strange, industrially manufactured items, improbable artefacts produced by a transgressive techno-capitalist society. His materials of choice (wood, aluminium, glass...) are combined with complex know-how (such as 3D modelling) and worked using factory production methods, though everything here is produced by hand, with obsessive care and craftsmanship. The result is a perfect finish, its cold formality countered by the suggestive presence of motifs evoking the artist’s intimate life (a sheet of torn paper, hand-written notes, a flower, tearstains). A little as if their exaggeratedly ‘industrious’ production masked a whole other register of emotional intensity, the better to channel, standardise and dilute it. And so, these sham objects or simulacra – of uncertain purpose, caught between functionality and decoration – drift into the realm of the imagination, dreams, or the surreal. Does their undeniably seductive, sensual nature resist, or result from, their ‘corporate’ quality? We cannot tell. Around these ambivalent objects, Blatrix’s practice takes a variety of forms: drawing, or marquetry pictures that incorporate figurative motifs, which themselves waver between painterly symbolism, allegory, and graphic communication. The whole builds to create troubling works that play on the tension between design and sculpture, reason and desire, naturalism and artificiality.

As the guest of La Verrière’s season ‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’, Camille Blatrix presents an installation conceived on the scale of the Brussels art space. Its title – *Les Barrières de l’antique* (‘The barriers of Antiquity’) – is a simultaneously romantic and technical expression, a kind of artisan argot that refers to the limits imposed by an obsession with detail and finish: a reference to virtuosity and the pursuit of perfection in manual work (the starting point for this new project). A self-reflexive engagement with artisanship. The exhibition is presented as a labyrinthine architecture incorporating objects, marquetry and drawings. The precisely composed topography forms a physical, spiritual and affective itinerary, with particular reference to more or less openly stated, intimate, biographical elements (especially the artist’s father, a painter and boat builder whose own practice – part artist, part artisan – inevitably and plainly echoes that of his artist son). This new installation furthers the artist’s tenuous exploration of the line between method and instinct, with a sustained focus on raw materials and their emotional charge.

In so doing, Camille Blatrix’s work perfectly embodies the presiding spirit of ‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’ and its proposed revisitation of raw materials, imbued with spiritual, symbolic, even therapeutic concerns, as an alternative critique of the dematerialisation of the prevailing economy. Indeed, Blatrix is one of a generation of artists who revisit traditional know-how and artisan techniques (in ceramics, wood carving, marquetry, tapestry work), not out of a sense of nostalgia, or a desire to ‘preserve’ them, but in order to actualise them through engagement with contemporary issues: an engagement that is both physical and intellectual and which, for Blatrix,

is more immanent than transcendent. His artistic economy is founded on the creation of objects as hosts for raw emotions and intuitions, often tinged with a sense of melancholy that suffuses his materials and forms. A sentimental materialism far removed from the irony and cynicism of certain post-modern sculptural practices. Rather, Blatrix's art posits a belief in the ability of physical matter to condense and diffuse emotion, without the need for speech. In so doing, these objects – their function vague – are invariably, vaguely functional. Transitive mechanisms,



Camille Blatrix, *Skin* (detail), 2016, wood marquetry, synthetic ivory, aluminium, 35 × 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.

conveyors of moods and energies. Here, the artist's relationship to the economy and the world of commerce goes beyond mere questions of 'design'; rather, it is more deeply rooted in transactional relationships between values and desires which are themselves connected to the sexually driven nature of late capitalism. As the heir to the American 'Finish Fetish' of the 1960s, which addressed Minimalism by revealing (as its name so perfectly suggests) the totemic, sensual nature of industrial sculpture, Blatrix's art embraces asceticism and desire in a single sweep: an approach reminiscent of the thinking of French artist and writer Pierre Klossowski, in *La Monnaie vivante* (*Living Currency*), on the impact of industry on the moral life of the individual, and the perverse relationships between the libido, consumerism, ownership and the commoditisation of affects. A perspective that points up the sliding spectrum between everyday objects and art, everyday usage and projected phantasms. As Klossowski writes, no one would think to confuse a utensil and a simulacrum, adding that it is perhaps only as a simulacrum, that an object becomes necessary and useful.

And yet these critical and theoretical extrapolations from Camille Blatrix's forms are all external to the work itself. His output as a whole is assertively individual and autonomous, and seemingly unburdened with the concerns and torments of everyday existence. His work is avowedly practical, rather than discursive, more often responsive to shocks to the heart than to critical thought. It lays claim to no particular avowed intent, nor even any particular subject.

Scraps of fiction break the surface here and there; literary or cinematographic images form furtively, but we are never entirely sure what they are saying. Mute and undefined, these precision objects seem, themselves, to have no precise object. As such, they represent the forms of the Vanitas tradition in painting, revisited and renewed – mysterious, hybrid associations of symbols, a representation of melancholy, all the more powerful to us for its lack of a target.”

Guillaume Désanges

‘MATTERS OF CONCERN | MATIÈRES À PANSER’ AT LA VERRIÈRE

Through the ‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’ season, Guillaume Désanges marks a conscious return to the material in art, but invested with spiritual, symbolic, social, therapeutic and magical preoccupations as a critical alternative to the dematerialisation of the prevailing economy. By referencing ‘other’ practices and ways of thinking at the heart of contemporary society, and outside it, the season offers an in-depth examination of the modes of mindfulness and curiosity that are subtly subverting the established categories of contemporary art.

‘Matters of Concern | Matières à panser’ is the third season of themed exhibitions at La Verrière, after ‘Gestures, and thought’ (2013-16) and ‘Ballistic Poetry’ (2016-19).



View of the joint exhibition *Camille Blatrix, Franco Vaccari*, 2017, Andrew Kreps gallery (New York, NY, USA). Courtesy of the artist, the Balice Hertling gallery, and the Andrew Kreps gallery. Photo © Dario Lasagni.

BIOGRAPHY

Camille Blatrix was born in Paris in 1984. He lives and works in Brussels.



© Jean Picon.

Camille Blatrix trained at the Ecole National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (ENSBA). His sculptures evoke artefacts from a not-too-distant future, echoing the forms of everyday objects, freed from their conventional uses. They resemble industrially manufactured machines or devices but are in fact hand-made by the artist, testifying to his significant mastery of 'traditional' techniques: woodwork, glass making, aluminium, marquetry and more. Camille Blatrix was awarded the Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard and the Prix des Amis des Beaux-Arts de Paris, in 2014.

SELECTED RECENT SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS

In recent years, Camille Blatrix's work has featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (*L'ennemi de mon ennemi*), the Hessel Museum of Art – CCS Bard Galleries (Annandale-on-Hudson), the MRAC in Sérignan, Lafayette Anticipations (Paris), Taylor Macklin (Zurich) in 2018, and at Galerie Balice Hertling (Paris) in 2017, and CCA Wattis (San Francisco) in 2016. Camille Blatrix was a participant in the 2016 Rennes Biennale and the 2015 Lyon Biennale.

The Fondation d'entreprise Hermès presented his work in the inaugural group exhibition for 'Matters of Concern | Matières à panser' at La Verrière (Brussels), in spring 2019.

PRESS IMAGES

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WWW.FONDATIONDENTREPRISEHERMES.ORG/EN/PRESS-ROOM
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VIEWS OF THE EXHIBITION WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER THE PREVIEW.



Camille Blatrix, *Two Candles*, 2018, mahogany, wood marquetry, mirror, 12 × 55 × 6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery. Photo © Stefan Stark.



Camille Blatrix, *NiNa*, 2014, mahogany, wood marquetry, aluminium, silver, glass, fixing screws, 88 × 55 × 27 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.



Camille Blatrix, *Damien G., 13^e voyageur*, 2014, wood marquetry, resin, silver, reconstituted ivory, 12 × 26 × 7,8 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.



Camille Blatrix, *Locker (detail)*, 2016, painted MDF, resin, plexiglas, wood, silver, aluminium, plastic, 90 × 25 × 20 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.

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Camille Blatrix, *Skin*, 2016, wood marquetry, synthetic ivory, aluminium, 35 × 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.



Camille Blatrix, *Skin* (detail), 2016, wood marquetry, synthetic ivory, aluminium, 35 × 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.



Camille Blatrix, *And...*, 2018, mahogany, wood marquetry, mirror, 65 × 35 × 4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery. Photo © Stefan Stark.



Camille Blatrix, *Ambird*, 2017, resin, coral, stainless steel, rubber, 25 × 5 × 12 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery. Photo © Aurélien Mole.

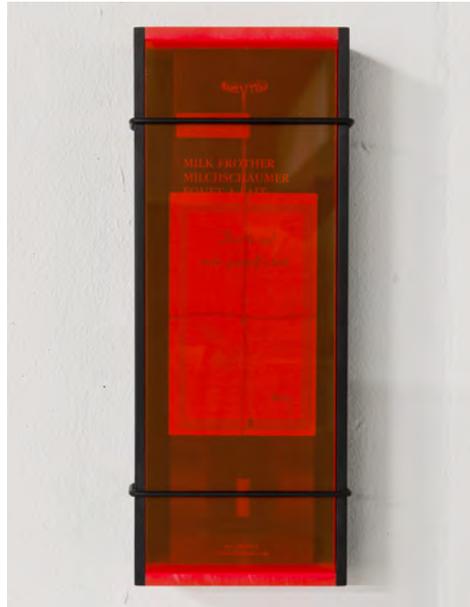
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Camille Blatrix, *Untitled 1*, 2017, resin, varnished MDF, stainless steel, Plexiglas, rubber, paper, peridot, 80 × 45,5 × 18,5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery. Photo © Aurélien Mole.



Exhibition view: Camille Blatrix, *New Day Rising*, 2018, Taylor Macklin, (Zurich, Switzerland). Courtesy of the artist and the Balice Hertling gallery © DR.



View of the joint exhibition *Camille Blatrix, Franco Vaccari*, 2017, Andrew Kreps gallery (New York, NY, USA). Courtesy of the artist, the Balice Hertling gallery, and the Andrew Kreps gallery. Photo © Dario Lasagni.



Camille Blatrix, *Untitled* (detail), plastic, paint, stainless steel, silver, Plexiglas, anodized aluminium print, 5 × 42 × 27 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Balice Hertling gallery and Andrew Kreps gallery. Photo © Dario Lasagni.

GUILLAUME DÉSANGES



© Isabelle Arthuis.

Guillaume Désanges is an art critic and exhibition curator. He is the director of the independent production company Work Method, and develops exhibition projects and conferences worldwide.

Recent projects: 'Amazing! Clever! Linguistic! An Adventure in Conceptual Art' (2013, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria), 'A Universal Exhibition, documentary section' (2013, Louvain-la-Neuve Biennale, Belgium), 'Curated Session #1: The Dora García files' (2014, Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA), 'Ma'aminim, The Believers' (2015, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Saint-Denis & Tranzitdisplay, Prague, Czech Republic), 'The Méthode Room' (2015, Chicago, USA), 'Ballistic Poetry' (2016-2019, La Verrière, Brussels), 'L'Esprit français. Contre-cultures 1969-1989' (2017, la maison rouge, Paris), 'L'Ennemi de mon ennemi' (2018, Palais de Tokyo, Paris), 'Spolia' (2018-2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire).

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EXHIBITION: DOMINIQUE GHESQUIÈRE

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LA GRANDE PLACE, MUSÉE DU CRISTAL SAINT-LOUIS,
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MARCH 28 – SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

EXHIBITION: PATRICK NEU

'MANÈGE'

LA GRANDE PLACE, MUSÉE DU CRISTAL SAINT-LOUIS,
SAINT-LOUIS-LÈS-BITCHE (FRANCE)

OCTOBER 10, 2019 – SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

EXHIBITION: KIM OKSUN

'BERLIN PORTRAITS'

ATELIER HERMÈS, SEOUL (KOREA)

MAY 31– JULY 28, 2019

EXHIBITION: IRFAN HENDRIAN

'SOME OTHER MATTER'

ALOFT AT HERMÈS, SINGAPORE

AUGUST 1 – OCTOBER 13, 2019

NEW SETTINGS #9

SEPTEMBER 10 TO DECEMBER 21, 2019

• ACROSS THE PARIS REGION

BORIS CHARMATZ

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METTE INGVARSTEN

LA RIBOT

LA RIBOT, MATHILDE MONNIER & TIAGO RODRIGUES

DANIEL LARRIEU

NOSFELL

JEANNE MOYNOT & ANNE-SOPHIE TURION

ANA RITA TEODORO

KAT VÁLASTUR

XAVIER VEILHAN

• IN NEW YORK

CYRIL TESTE

ARTISTS' RESIDENCIES

3rd SEASON – YEAR 2

• GUILLAUME DÉNERVAUD IN RESIDENCE

AT LA CRISTALLERIE SAINT-LOUIS

• GUILLAUME POULAIN IN RESIDENCE

AT HOLDING TEXTILE HERMÈS

• YUHSIN U CHANG IN RESIDENCE

AT THE MANUFACTURE DE HAUTE-MAROQUINERIE



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The Foundation operates nine major programmes with a combined focus on skills, creativity and transmission: **New Settings** and **Artists dans la Cité** for the performing arts, **Exhibitions** and **Artists' Residencies** for the visual arts, **Immersion, a French-American Photography Commission** for photography, **Manufacto, the Skills Factory** and our **Skills Academy** for the discovery and perfection of artisan trades. **H³ – Heart, Head, Hand** is the

Foundation's worldwide programme of support for organisations whose work reflects these central aims. Our **Biodiversity & Ecosystems** programme enacts a core commitment to protect fragile ecosystems for future generations. Created in 2008, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is directed by Annick de Chaunac under the presidency of Olivier Fournier.

The Foundation's diverse activities are governed by a single, overarching belief: *our gestures define us.*

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