

Antoinette Jattiot, In praise of double, march 2024 (EN)

« When Leibniz invokes Harlequin's layers of clothing, he means that his underwear is not the same as his outer garments. That is why metamorphosis or 'metaschematism' pertains to more than mere change of dimension : every animal is double — but as a heterogenous or heteromorphic creature, just as the butterfly is folded into the caterpillar that will soon unfold...»¹

A tension similar to the transformation and transitory state of the butterfly in the chrysalis lies in the hollow of Sophie Blet's works. The discreet metamorphoses they invite us to feel or observe in their folds and details reach for the inexpressible. These bursts, pulsations, oscillations, ensembles of discreet movements, are redolent of the magnetism of beings, the energetic schema of all things. Blet's pieces, whether in the form of sculptures or installations, animate emptiness and time through unusual concordances in their assemblages of materials and/or words, brought together by often contrary forces.

Having begun her career as a licensed heritage and culture guide with a background in art history, Sophie Blet's exploration of fine arts at the Beaux-Arts - from 2014 to 2018 - goes on to affirm her affinity with language and the age-old and conceptual compositions of art, blending these fields with the philosophy of science, metaphysics and cosmology. Beckett, Kundera and Borges are never far away in the plays with mirroring and duplication and the processes she employs to approach reality in such a singular way. By embracing the imperceptible, the immaterial and the infinite, the work gradually moves away from the fields of alchemy and esotericism as in the early pieces, while its micro-fluctuations and diverse variations continue to feed on the rigor of scientific methods. Certainties and doubts about the origins of things give rise to a symbolism-tinged shift between representation and perception, a speculative poetry about language: all things blossoming from the apparent dissolution of meaning.

Fascinated by the inventiveness of Fernand Deligny - the artist-educator who founded a free support network for autistic children in the Cévennes in the late 1960s - Sophie Blet has developed a visual vocabulary that describes frictions, «modes of being»², where communication difficulties can produce alternatives that surpass language itself. In the manner of Deligny, something mysterious lies in these processes, searching within a space of omission, a way of making things visible, rendering phenomena in opposition³. Does the act of saying bring things about? How does language lead to doubt, or to a different kind of contact with the other? Objects placed in incongruous situations, like the words of artist Robert Barry, open up an abundant plurality of meanings, depending on the context. Her translation work has given Sophie Blet a nimble grasp of the rules that she distorts, enabling her to retranscribe the contents of the world with finesse, all the while proposing her own narrative.

At Salon du Salon in Marseille, *Looking inside, what outside* (2023) is a fine example of a detail that, as is often the case, turns the whole exhibition on its head. The small, refined composition of ultramarine blue fabric, brass, a cast and a scarab beetle slips into the room like a clue or an enigma, nurturing doubts about what we think we are perceiving. This shift in scale and perspective underscores the artist's assured, ever-present gesture, and her questioning of representation, itself contained within the still life. In her installation *Like a world identical to the world, this one hollow* (2022), the latex pieces placed on a steel bar, between grace and gravity, evoke the fragile, transparent envelopes of snake molts. The trace of the Chullachaqui, an escaped memory from *Embrace of the Serpent*⁴, is a mysterious apparition who wanders through time, again evoking the memory of the double, at once hollow and empty, that fascinates the artist.

1 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* - University of Minnesota Press (01.11.1992)

2 In reference to *Different Modes Of Existence*, Étienne Souriau, Introduction by Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour, translated by Erik Beranek and Tim Howles, distributed by Univocal Publishing

3 Léo Guy-Denarcy, « Hors norme, sur « *Légendes du radeau autour de l'œuvre de Fernand Deligny* », AOC, 5th May 2023, online, consulted 20th February 2024.

4 *Embrace of the Serpent* is a film by Ciro Guerra, 2015

The duality that inhabits the work in the gaps between the inanimate and the living, flat surfaces and their animated reflections, between the current and the potential, defies rationality. Doubles function as relays, drawing us into cyclical thinking and successions of times. In the tangible double blades and the unaborted doubles, the duration of existence marked by Jankelevitch's thought is always longer than that of physical time. *A double shadow* (2019), photographs of a shattered celestial vault on broken glass, transforms the nothingness of the sky into a possible assemblage. Taking as her starting point the inconceivable notion of a grounded or fragmented sky, Sophie Blet disassembles it so as to encourage imagining it in other ways. In the series *Solve-Coagula* (2021-...), printed photographs of the sky are transferred onto brass, a material associated with metamorphosis in alchemical symbolism. The images, dissociated and then restored with oil paint, reveal traces of the reworking of the clouds. A sense of uncertainty persists, caught between reproduction and original, appearance and disappearance.

Among other materials dear to her, pattern-making fabric, raw and minimal, has been central to several installations since 2022, including *White shadow* (2022) as shown at Galerie 22,48m2 in Paris. A few centimeters off the floor, two blades, one metal, the other wax, flank each other on a horizontal, floating piece of fabric. The elements seem suspended, poised to fall should a puff of air cause them to waver. The pieces of fabric are sometimes positioned directly on the floor, dissecting it into grids and reshuffling its lines. Halfway between paper and cardboard, those in *Modules-Measures (possible spaces)* (2022) sketch out, at the threshold, pieces that are still neither physical nor sonic, that speak of the gaps between thought and what is said, in a rough, almost abandoned state. Here again, folding is not reducing. It's an affinity of matter with life, a way of stretching time, a potential into which language can unfold. Within the accumulation nestles a fascination with layers of hypotheses about knowledge and time, inaccessible, impossible decryptions. *Monolith* (2015), a black column of stacked papers, symbolizes the obsession with that which cannot be resolved. From floor to ceiling, the apparently compact block intrudes into the room like a core drill boring in an impossible search for balance.

Among these trompe l'œil instabilities, *Urania* (2017) also defies the logic that would have one of the dominoes with a dot imply a higher weight and tilt its side. Whereas the hollow of the 0-1 domino implies a subtraction of matter, making it lighter than the 0-0 domino; randomness prevails over reason and measurement.

The simple, ingenious works add little matter, rather they transform and complexify it, adding layers of history and mystery between envelopes and their contents. With the fold, divisions are introduced to a system that we find in the modules, unsettling the spaces in which they are arranged. In the stillness of silent architectures, the installations awaken attention by linking body, environment and object. Encountering them reminded me of the almost sacred moments, in the thickness of time, of Béatrice Balcou's Ceremonies.¹

In addition to their relationship with slowness, the two artists share an appreciation of Eastern philosophy and an upside-down approach to beauty and detail. These impressions of the world, which can be found in Junichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, irrigate a vision of beauty that is peculiar to discrepancies and blurred surfaces, where «beauty is usually but a sublimation of the realities of life».

They also evoke *ma*, a term used in Japanese aesthetics to designate the interval and significant pause between moments and objects. In the Chapelle de la Trinité in Castennec (2023), *Counter-lid, Counter-light*, offers one of those evanescent, iconoclastic experiences that sublimate the everyday and the invisible. On the wide, uneven stones of the chapel setting, the wax blades, a material of impermanence and change, stand out against the fabric even as the daylight varies, in the sobriety and silence of the site. In his work on Bergson, philosopher David Lapoujade, whom Sophie Blet is fond of quoting, reminds us that attention to life is what ensures our intellectual equilibrium, the sum of all movements of the material world and the immensity of our memory.

1 Ceremonies are performative works that involve unpacking, installing, then dismantling and re packing another artist's work from a public or private collection. See for example the article published in l'art même n°87, April 2022.

The rhythms of the modules intersecting the twists of the ropes falling from the ceiling sharpen our sagacity, and by virtue of the absence of images, soothe us by inviting us to think about what might have been.

I mentioned as preamble the state of the butterfly and its coexistence with the caterpillar, like the (im)possibility of living in reality, of relating to it or leaving it. For each of her exhibitions, Sophie Blet enters into negotiation. In these indeterminate zones, on the verge of awakening, she explores the tensions between slackening and the risk of rupture - just like in the installation *Interruption Space* (2022), where the break in the cable marks an opening that allows us to inhabit time and space differently, together with the flux of all things.