

bétonsalon

Centre for art and research

10 years

CAMILLE HENROT *THE PALE FOX*

September 20th – December 20th, 2014

Opening: September 19th, 2014, 4-9pm



Camille Henrot, *The Pale Fox* (detail), 2014. Photo: Anders Sune Berg
(c) ADAGP Camille Henrot - Courtesy Kamel Mennour, Paris et Johann König, Berlin

Bétonsalon – Center for art and research is pleased to announce the first large-scale solo exhibition by French, New York-based artist, Camille Henrot in Paris. *The Pale Fox* is an immersive environment building on Henrot's previous project *Grosse Fatigue* (2013) – a film awarded the Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennial. While *Grosse Fatigue* attempted to tell the story of the universe in thirteen minutes, *The Pale Fox* is a meditation on our shared desire to understand the world intimately through the objects that surround us. As Camille Henrot explains: "The main focus of *The Pale Fox* is obsessive curiosity, the irrepressible desire to affect things, to achieve goals, to perform actions, and the inevitable consequences."

More than 400 photographs, sculptures, books and drawings – mostly bought on eBay or borrowed from museums, others found or produced by the artist – are displayed on a series of shelves designed by Camille Henrot in the environment conceived for the exhibition. They populate a space that is both physical and mental, conveying an almost domestic atmosphere: it could be a bedroom, a room that one could inhabit. Each of the four walls of this space is associated with a natural element, a cardinal point, a stage of life and one of Leibniz's philosophical principles. Opening with "the principle of being" (where everything starts: birth and childhood), the installation progresses with "the law of continuity" (where everything develops: growth and teenage-hood), before touching on "the principle of sufficient reason" (where limitations arise: adulthood), and concluding with the "principle of the identity of the indiscernibles" (where things decline and disappear: old age).

According to Camille Henrot, there is “an excess of principles” in *The Pale Fox*. Through this pathological and almost erotic “cataloguing psychosis”, the potential for disorder returns. There is no harmony without disharmony, and no knowledge without accumulation or deception. This relationship is reflected in an ambient soundtrack which is interrupted by coughing fits, composed by musician Joakim, that is both protective and timeless. *The Pale Fox* proposes a narrative frieze, a dynamic parable of the failure inherent in any attempt of addressing globality. “With *The Pale Fox*, I intended to mock the act of building a coherent environment. Despite all of our efforts and good will, we always end up with a pebble stuck inside one shoe.”

The Pale Fox is a character from Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen’s eponymous book. Published in 1965, this anthropological study of the West African Dogon people profoundly affected the Western perception of African culture, by presenting a complex ancestral cosmogony encompassing elements from physics, astrophysics, agriculture, molecular biology, as well as mathematics and metaphysics. In this myth of origins, the god Ogo, the Pale Fox, embodies an inexhaustible, impatient, yet creative force. “This is what I’m drawn to in the figure of the fox: it is neither bad, nor good, it disturbs and alters a seemingly perfect and balanced plan. In that sense, the fox is an antidote to the system, acting on it from inside.” A meditation on order and disorder, *The Pale Fox* addresses the tragic side of the human species in its most basic dimension, the aspect that emerges, according to Bataille, at the moment of cutting one’s nails or putting on socks. Staging an impossible and fetishistic attempt of ordering thoughts and objects, the exhibition nevertheless offers its enclosed universe to the freeing potential of an insatiable fox.

Extending from Camille Henrot’s collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, where she held an Artist Research Fellowship during the preparation of *Grosse Fatigue* in 2012, *The Pale Fox* has been nurtured by a fruitful collaboration with the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle in Paris. A series of public conversations between artists, curators and scientists will take place between Bétonsalon – Center for art and research and the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle throughout the fall, starting with a talk by Camille Henrot on September 24, 2014. An artist book co-published by Bétonsalon – Center for art and research is forthcoming in 2015.

About Camille Henrot

Camille Henrot (b. 1978) lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include the New Museum, New York (2014); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2014); New Orleans Museum of Art (2013); Slought Foundation, Philadelphia (2013); kamel mennour, Paris (2012) and Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris (2010). Group exhibitions include *Companionable Silences*, Nouvelle Vague, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013) and *A Disagreeable Object*, SculptureCenter, New York (2012). Henrot received the Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennale, 2013 and she is shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize 2014. She is co-curating the forthcoming group exhibition *Puddle, Pothole, Portal* at the SculptureCenter in New York with Ruba Katrib, opening in October 2014.

ABOUT BÉTONSALON

Bétonsalon - Centre for art and research strives to develop a space of reflection and confrontation at the confluence of art and university research by giving form to discourses from the realms of the aesthetic, cultural, political, social and economic. Integrated into the site of the University Paris 7 at the heart of a neighbourhood undergoing reconstruction, the ZAC Paris Rive Gauche in the 13th district of Paris, Bétonsalon aims to ally theory and practice, with the objective of rearticulating the position of research and artistic creation in society.

The activities of Bétonsalon develop in a process-based, collaborative and discursive manner, following different time spans, in cooperation with various local, national and international organizations, and present themselves under different forms:

Three large-scale exhibitions with an average duration of three months each are organized every year, and are enriched by different associated events (workshops, conferences, performances, round table discussions...).

Seminars and workshops take place over the span of the university semester in collaboration with teachers from University Paris 7.

Off-site research projects in partnership with other institutions are now in development, with the goal of offering residency possibilities open to researchers, artists and curators.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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ACCESS:

Metro Line 14 or RER C
Stop Bibliothèque François Mitterrand
Bus 62, 89 et 132 stop Bibliothèque François Mitterrand
Bus 64 stop Tolbiac-Bibliothèque François Mitterrand
Bus 325 stop Thomas Mann
Tramway T3a stop Avenue de France

FREE ENTRANCE

Open Tuesday - Saturday / 11am-7pm



PARTNERS

The Pale Fox is commissioned and produced by Bétonsalon – Center for art and research (Paris), Chisenhale Gallery (London), Kunsthal Charlottenborg (Copenhagen) and by Westfälischer Kunstverein (Münster) where it will tour in 2014 - 2015. At Bétonsalon – Center for art and research, *The Pale Fox* is supported by a partnership with the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, thanks to two grants from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication SG / SCPCI / DREST as part of the call for research projects "Intercultural practices in the heritage institutions", and from the Curating Contemporary Art Programme of the Royal College of Art in the frame of the MeLa* *European Museums in an age of migrations* Research Project. With the support of Saint Maclou.

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