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VIOLAINE LOCHU

GENERAL BIOGRAPHY VIOLAINE LOCHU

Born in 1987, Violaine Lochu lives and works in Paris. Laureate of the *Aware Price* (Archive Women Archives of Women Artists Research and Exhibitions), she performed in Centre Pompidou (festival Extra 2018), Palais de Tokyo (Liberated Voice, Sound Poetry, 2019), during Parade for FIAC 2017, in Jeu de Paume in Paris, Contemporary Art Center of Geneva in Switzerland, Gallery Kunstverein of Munich in Germany, Gallery GAMU at Prague in Czech Republic, Theatre le 4e art of Tunis in Tunisia (festival *La voix est libre*, 2015)... She made part of collective exhibitions in MAC Lyon (*StoryTelling*, 2019), Ferenczi museum centrum in Hungary (*Reconstructing Eden*, 2018), in Art Center Le Centre at Cotonou in Benin (*Regards sur la performance*, 2018), Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at Toronto in Canada (*Something more than a succession of notes*, 2013) She had solo shows in Contemporary Art Center Albert Chanot and Gallery Dohyang Lee in Paris. She made a lot of residencies in France (Villa Vassilieff, Leclerc Foundation, MAC VAL – Museum of Contemporary Art of Val de Marne...) and Europe (Riclundgarden Museum in Sweden, in Lettrétage at Berlin, Cultural Center in Karlsruhe in Germany...). She worked with a lot of musician, poets and dancers (Joëlle Léandre, Tomomi Adachi, Serge Teyssot-Gay, Maki Watanabe, Julien Desprez, Lotus Edde Khouri...).

GENERAL WORK VIOLAINE LOCHU

« My work is an exploration of voice as a vehicle for encounter and metamorphosis. During periods of immersion in specific contexts, I collect sound and visual materials from which I create performances, sound installations, videos and publications. My practice is transdisciplinary; situated within the field of contemporary art, it involves music, as well as theater or sound poetry, creating bridges between past and contemporary universes, both scholarly and vernacular. It is enriched through human encounters (my project *Mémoire Palace*, for example, was based off of encounters with the inhabitants of a town, *Babel Babel* with babies at a daycare center, *Madame V.* with a Fortune-teller...) or non-human encounters (birds from Lapland in *Hybrid*, artificial intelligence in *E.V.E.*, the mineral world in *Vestiges de Roncevaux...*) and is based on theoretical texts (anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis). Encounters and collaborations — with musicians, choreographers, circus performers, visual artists, graphic designers, researchers in the social sciences... — are central to my work process »

“SWEET IDOL” QUESTIONS THE RELATIONSHIPS OF POWER AMONG ARTISTS, CURATORS AND THE PUBLIC: WHO DOMINATES WHOM? INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH ARTIST VIOLAINE LOCHU BY GRISHMA KHODARIA

NY-ArtNews, May 8th 2020

Who is this “Sweet Idol” exactly? Well, it’s Violaine’s one of the most entertaining, bright & cheerful pieces of performances for Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2019, though it relates with the political context, but it also entertains the audience at the same time. Violaine Lochu is a well-established performance and installation artist based in Paris, who continues to present her art pieces at major art centers of Europe. Violaine presents her artworks in the form of performances, sound installations and videos. She takes the audience to an entirely different world through use of her powerful voice and body. Her voice and body tried to challenge her career since the very beginning, but she made her way out successfully by connecting with them deeply and made them the strongest medium to present her art even in severe medical conditions. Violaine Lochu is also a graduate of National School of Art of Paris Cergy (ENSAPC) and holds a Masters in plastic arts research from Rennes 2 University. She has spent time in Lapland, Sweden during artist residency, for which she thanks the CNAP, the French National Center of Art grant. Let us know more about her art.

Grishma Khodaria : Violaine, which all fields of fine art have you explored so far? How do you balance and relate them with one another?

Violaine Lochu : So far, I have explored different forms of art, like performances, sound pieces, videos and drawings. All these art forms are unique yet connected with each other through transcription, translation and notation. In the ‘Memory Palace’ project for example, the drawings are the graphic transcriptions of a performance, in which I use the prism of my voice and a sound piece itself is composed of recordings from 200 people. In this project, starting from an initial material the language and sound, then performance, and finally graphs. Since 2012, around fifteen editions have been produced in collaboration with graphic designer Christophe Hamery. I would say that exhibitions help me balance and relate them with one another in a single space. Another example would probably be the exhibition Signal Movement presented in September 2019 at Atelier Vortex in Dijon, which invited the audience to dive into sensorial multiplicity, where sound, physical vibrations, video and graphic scores referred to the different physiological modalities of voice. At the moment, I am planning about how publishing and exhibition could be articulated through a project of “performed catalog”.

Grishma Khodaria : You often describe the concept of your artworks based on human sciences, metamorphosis and political context. How do you plan your concepts?

Violaine Lochu : It is true that my projects are based on particularly the human sciences, anthropology and sociology; for example, I worked with the philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour, who was himself interested in the relationships between science, art and politics. But upstream of these references, each of my projects has its source in my obsessions, voice and metamorphosis, which I constantly question and experience, trying to constantly renew this questioning. From the initial impulse, I indeed borrowed from the human sciences the scientific field method, which I deploy in a transposed form and take it towards an artistic approach. I always develop my projects according to their context based on some questions; What are my motivations? What does it imply? What are the economic conditions or symbolic recognition? Who are the different actors of the project? What is everybody’s role including mine? How do we express it? What languages and codes are to be used? The project is for whom? and Where will it be presented. Another important question is about what kind of effect it is going to have on the audience has to be thought before executing the idea? How to use teamwork in a particular situation? How would the project act on its scale?

Grishma Khodaria : How do you describe your artwork Unchorus, which is based on political context, a sound and light installation created for the Contemporary Art Museum of Lyon - Mac Lyon in 2019?

Violaine Lochu : Unchorus was created during the 2019 European elections, when we collectively questioned the meaning and the future of the European project, which today seems largely weakened by Brexit, rise of nationalist parties, etc. In addition, disparate protest movements like the Yellow Vest movement in France and The Sardines movement in Italy were beginning to emerge - without however leading to profound changes. The sound and light installation “Unchorus” seeks to give an account of this complex period, dominated by doubt, worry, and the difficulty of making a common voice. It questions the notions of choir and revolution, which makes our time hollow, difficult and suffer a lot. Talking about the process of creation of this installation, first, I’ve asked a dozen people of European origin such as English, Lithuanian, Swedish, Romanian, Czech, Polish, Italian, Spanish and German to give me a revolutionary

song in their mother tongue.

Along with the spatial arrangement of the twelve voices of the installation, Unchorus explores the notions of plurality and singularity inherent in a choir. At various moments in the sound work, one voice or another stands out, in its own time and key, from the collective sound. Sometimes the voices come together in a kind of stammering choir. In the middle of the installation, there is a bare bulb emitting a light that varies from near darkness to blinding strobe effects, reflecting the sudden violence of a rebellion coming up against the harsh reality. The spectator is left feeling ill at ease and has difficulty moving around in the space, not knowing whether or not they are invited to sit around the bulb and risk being blinded by its light.

Grishma Khodaria : Your most talked performance art “Meat Me”, for Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2019. A really bold, strong and thoughtful piece of art. Would you like to share your personal thoughts about it? How did you plan to execute the whole idea?

Violaine Lochu : The Festival of Living Literature Extra! invited me to create a performance within the context of the Bacon Book Club at the Pompidou Centre, during the exhibition Bacon en Toutes Lettres, on the links between the works of the painter and literature. I proposed a performance based on Bacon's quote: "If you can talk about it, why paint it?" – seeking to make bodies looking at Bacon's paintings resound with the sensation produced by these works. For this I relied on Bacon's recurring formal themes: contradiction, dilation, blur, prosthetic, animality and meat as analyzed by Gilles Deleuze in *The Logic of Sensation*.

The performance takes place on a transparent chair. I start the performance from the back, and finish it in the same position. Between the two, I make a revolution on myself, sitting or crouching on the chair. A single gesture unfolds, stretches slowly for 30 minutes. This minimal choreography is a waking dream, an almost motionless journey, as if a Bacon figure came to life.

My experience as a living model served me a lot for this performance: thinking of the body as an image, playing with its reliefs, shortcuts, poses and pauses, its particularities and its accidents. At the time of the performance, my body had an androgynous appearance, due to the weight loss due to an illness. I play with this ambiguity, especially in back breaks, where my chest (which identifies me as a woman) cannot be seen. Wearing a man's underpants - in reference to the recurring models of Bacon - further accentuated this ambiguity. I tried to question not only the gender identity, but the very humanity of this representation, by bringing it to the side of meat, of animality. As does Bacon, in whom the painting is also like a butcher's stall.

The use of voice in this performance contributes to this intention: the first cry is terrifying and indefinable. Is it a human or animal cry? As the performance unfolds, the sound is structured, articulated first rhythmically, the arrival of the consonants imperceptibly moves it towards an outline of language; at the beginning, these seem to escape, "to hole the mouth".

At the end of the performance, the phrase "If you can talk about it, why paint it?" emerges from this slow progression towards articulated language. The First World War and its broken mouths - so present in Bacon's paintings - mark our minds as something monstrous, on the edge of humanity. In the performance, I deform my face with my hands, these frightening grimaces affect the voice because certain gestures distort the mouth, block the nostrils and strike the cheeks. I also play transparent plastic on the back of the chair, put my face on it; nose, cheeks and lips to deform it like Bacon.

Grishma Khodaria : “Babel Babel” has been the most known amongst the themes of metamorphosis as your solo and collective performance, 2019. It feels like there is your personal style and feelings, along with the voices of a three months born baby. What are these ideas which make it look like a Violaine's piece of art? Is there something more you are trying to convey through these voices?

Violaine Lochu : Babel Babel is a performance composed using recordings of children's babbling made in a few nurseries since 2016. From the age of three months, a child begins to babble: in a purely physical and perceptive game, they explore the possibilities of their vocal apparatus. The sounds that they emit are not necessarily addressed to anyone, nor attempts to convey any particular meaning. In 2016, as part of the project *Vocal Abecedarium*, the sound piece B - Babble was composed from baby voice recordings whose height and speed I had reduced, so that they approach characteristics of an adult voice. This created a disturbance as to the nature of the sound produced, more disturbing than charming as a babble can be. This transposition and displacement game was, as in many of my projects, a way of questioning and making the voice heard differently. Behind the apparently «harmless» dimension of childish language is a network of powerful effects. In 2019, at the invitation of the DRAC Ile-de-France to carry out a project in a different departmental nursery, I wanted to push this idea further, by presenting a performance where I take up the children's baboons myself. For this I again made recordings, during which I could observe the attitude and the face of the babies when they express themselves. The babble is one of their modes of vocal expression, with shouting and crying. All of these manifestations are very emotionally charged. The voice transmits vital information like hunger, thirst, fatigue and need of comfort which of course cannot be articulated in the language at this stage of their

development; the baby's voice «compensates» for this impossibility with its expressive power.

In Babel Babel I do not try to imitate the language of babies, but to rediscover the need and the pleasure of saying so powerful feelings in early childhood. I rework, displace and loop this sonic material to reveal the richness of the different sonic states of babbling, this forerunner of language that brings to mind imaginary and distant idioms, and even non-human expressions of the pure pleasure of speech, close to poetry.

Grishma Khodaria : One of your very entertaining, bright & cheerful pieces is Sweet Idol, performance for Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2019, though it relates with the political context, but it also entertains the audience at the same time. How did you come up with this concept? And how do you explain it?

Violaine Lochu : "Sweet Idol" was performed at the Palais de Tokyo on the occasion of a banquet. The performance was presented as appetizers. I've made fun of the situation by making use of the expressions on different faces and used it as a value. Scheduled for dessert, I became an enjoyable sweet, my face covered in pomegranate seeds, dressed like a wedding cake with a special device hidden up my sleeve that allowed me to distribute whipped cream at will. My hybrid, jester-like figure was a Clown, a Cyborg and a Drag Queen all at once, such as one may find among the characters of Fellini and Rabelais, playing on the ambiguity between what is appetizing and what is disturbing. Dressed in a tight pair of shorts and perched on frightfully high heels, Sweet Idol is a decadent spouse, a birthday strip-teaser, a monster with a shaved head and red-scaly skin. I've strolled about amidst the guests, uttering sounds between Italian operatic lyric singing and animal sounds. I've thrown fruits which indirectly relate to grenades that exploded among the guests, and I've covered the faces of several spectators with whipped cream, in a gesture that is quite similar to pie attacks. This spectacular performance seemed to float constantly between entertainment – the roar laughter of people joining in, expressing acceptance, embarrassment, mockery and unease – and the satirical, derisory attack. The weapons were inoffensive here, like jokes and hoaxes. Inoffensive? That remains to be seen, because satire always represents danger for the court jester. Sweet Idol questions the ambiguous complexity of this type of context and situation for artists: their fear of being reduced to entertaining objects may degenerate into anger, or rejection by the institution they depend on, nevertheless, symbolically and economically. Sweet Idol questions the relationships of power among artists, curators and the public. By using whipped cream on the faces of the guests and use of fruits and dressed in attire of a dessert, Sweet Idol enacts a hierarchical shift, and behind the game of appearances, poses a political question: who dominates whom?

Grishma Khodaria : Talking about "Hybird", your solo performance from bird singing, 2017, which is also based on metamorphosis. What is the aim of this artwork?

Violaine Lochu : Hybird is a performance for voice and accordion, composed from research on bird singing in France and in Swedish Lapland. Barn owl, Bohemian waxwing, wood grouse, great bittern, wood pigeon, Siberian jay, tree finch and willow grouse. I question, in an exercise of hybridization; much more than imitation, that engages not only my voice but also my body the bird-woman figure, perhaps an echo of the mythological sirens. This metamorphosis is accompanied by an accordion which is played, beaten, scraped, scratched and struck. My performances are born from an immersion in specific human and non-human environments; I then try to give a vocal rendering of the interactions that took place, looking for a "third voice", which would be a possible meeting point between my own voice and that of the other. In this sense my work is an exercise in transformation and mutation, much more than imitation. In Hybird, I therefore do not seek to "adapt" the human voice to the song of the birds, but rather a zone of porosity, a range of hybridization which would seek to escape the classic dualism: nature, culture, human and animal. By necessity, functional human language cuts and separates. It is in some way improper to account for the continuity that exists between the elements of the world. Faced with the current ecological situation, we can no longer think of man at the center and above everything. Without being a literal and direct criticism of anthropocentrism, Hybird would be a poetic zone of experimentation, displacement and invention of a new imagination on these questions

Grishma Khodaria : Would you like to share a story from your past experiences in life which has been a driving force to motivate and inspire you to choose all these kinds of artworks that you create?

Violaine Lochu : All my artworks have a deep connection with the events and happenings in my personal life. My major interest in the voice is fueled by my own experience. As a child I had language disorders; for years I had to go to a speech therapist to learn to speak, to enter the "common language". Around 20-25 years of age my voice became the theme of my research and my working tool as I suffered from chronic crises of aphonia. This strong experience felt lack and difficulty. My current practices extend and displace these experiences. More recently, other personal experiences have directly influenced my practice. The solo show Hinterland at the Dohyang Lee gallery in Paris, presented pieces that were produced during and after cancer. Some works had a cathartic value, allowing me to go beyond a medical discourse often associated with symbolic violence, a summons. In the video triptych C'est la peau, where I presented the image of my own body by blindly browsing every inch of my skin with a go pro camera, revealing a dreamlike,

almost abstract landscape.

In this immersive installation Organ Opera, playing on unusual vocal modes, I've tried to make reachable the way I represent my physical and organic interiority. Biographies are drawings inspired by microscopic cellular views. I wrote the diary of recent months, where I interlace and respond to immediate experiences, memories and thoughts.

Grishma Khodaria : What are your upcoming projects? Also, you have been planning to show up in the international art market as well. How has been the response of the audience internationally?

Violaine Lochu : I am currently working on three exhibitions and performance projects. One of them is a solo exhibition, which might happen in June in Paris at the La Pop barge, a place of live performances and every year it invites an artist to create a sound installation inside the boat. I will present the sound installation Orpheus Collective built from children's voice recordings. Here the concept of «prophetic voice» is explored. In certain moments of crisis, the role of the child prophet, which here echoes that of Orpheus, has the role of warning men of future disasters. The voices of children has been collected during a Skype interview carried out during the confinement period due to the Covid 19 - then transforming it into the sound installation will also pose the question of our collective future. Another exhibition on which I am working on is a form of a duo show with the Portuguese choreographer Joao Fiadero, at the National Contemporary Art Center Villa Arson in Nice. Then there is another solo show that I am currently working on, will be held at the Contemporary Art Center La Traverse in the Paris suburbs in September. The project is based on interviews with my relatives during confinement, and will focus on a fictitious community.

I have been able to establish myself as an artist across Europe, I feel it's important to explore new audiences. So, I plan to explore the possibilities beyond and wish to share the content, ideas and emotions of my art pieces with the international audience around the world. The three months spent in Lapland in 2017 were very important from this point of view, and allowed me to open up new avenues of research. If the evolution of Covid 19 allows, a residency followed by a collective exhibition is planned this summer in Africa, in Benin. I would love to spend time in New York, as it has always been one of the most active and important centers of contemporary art in the world.

According to Tate; performance has been understood as a way of engaging directly with social reality, the specifics of space and the politics of identity. The theorist Jonah Westerman calls performance art as "a set of questions and concerns about how art relates to people and the wider social world". Well that's easily relatable after knowing the artworks of Violaine Lochu.

STORYTELLING, REPORT OF AN EXPERIMENT BY MATTHIEU LELIÈVRE

Exhibition catalogue *Storytelling*, MacLyon, p. 180 - 181, 2019

Exquisite corpse is a collective game, a successive juxtaposition of personalities, talents, neuroses, obsessions and imaginations. The exquisite corpse (*cadavre exquis* in French) can only exist as a whole through continuity and discontinuity, resulting in a surrealist confrontation of different worlds. The rules of this game inspired the guidelines for our exhibition *Storytelling*, which unfolded with the participation, one after another, of the artists Chourouk Hriech, Antoine Bellini & Lou Masduraud, Sara Bichao, Celsian Langlois, Hannelore Van Dijck, and Violaine Lochu.

“Storytelling” is a concept used in marketing and advertising. It essentially involves trans-lating the marketing message into narrative form—a way of controlling how the message is received. In French, they use the English word “storytelling” to describe that marketing strategy. Our title, however, was chosen to describe, quite literally, the telling of a story (the *cadavre exquis*), the story of how this exhibition was gradually constructed in full view of the public.

The visitors, with their ability to interpret, to invent and to dialogue, watched the exhibition gradually being constructed and saw the curatorial proposal beginning to make sense, or not—being diffracted and running the risk of descent into an absurd and meaningless cacophony. There was always the danger that that might happen, but the potential success of the exhibition, the experiment, depended precisely on that element of chance.

The guidelines were relatively simple. During the semester dedicated to sound in the macLYON artistic programme, the first artist, Chourouk Hriech, was invited to reflect on the notion of the “wave”. For the first chapter, she presented several works that fitted together thematically in the first

Matthieu Lelièvre

STORYTELLING, RULES OF THE GAME

Exhibition catalogue *Storytelling*, MacLyon, p. 6 - 7, 2019

Storytelling is an exhibition in progress. Seven artists (Chourouk Hriech, Lou Masduraud & Antoine Bellini, Sara Bichao, Celsian Langlois, Hannelore Van Dijck and Violaine Lochu) involve the spectators in the process of creating it. They have been invited to do a two to three-week residency one after another in an exhibition space that gradually becomes the exhibition. It is a new kind of "arts laboratory" that deconstructs the codes of the classic art show, inverting the chronology and interrogating the modes of mediation as well as the relationship with the visitors.

The rules of the exhibition are similar to those of the old Surrealist game *exquisite corpse*, a variation of the parlour game called "Consequences", in which players write in turn on a sheet of paper, folding it over so that the next player continues the story without knowing what has gone before. In the Surrealist picture version, enough of the folded-over picture is left showing for the lines of the next instalment to join up with it. In this exhibition, each artist is invited to ask their predecessor two or three questions as a guide to how they might continue the artistic project. The first artist will be creating a new work inspired by vibrations, waves and composition. The exhibition will gradually come together as a mixture of performance, sculpture, wall painting, installation, and who knows what more.

Storytelling is a challenge for the public, but also for the team at the museum and the artists themselves. It puts the processes of residency, performance and exchange at the heart of the curators' proposition, with all the element of surprise that that entails. The opening will take place at the end of the process, when all the works have been installed and the space defined.

CHOUROUK HREICH'S QUESTIONS TO VIOLAINE LOCHU

Exhibition catalogue *Storytelling*, MacLyon, p. 168 - 175, 2019

Chourouk Hreich : By which detour did you have the wish to link the deafness position and the sound diffusion? Is there any coincidence with the little anecdote that Beethoven was deaf? Your approach that I admire, reminding me the *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-portrait and Other Ruins* by Derrida, which supported me a lot on issues about drawing...

Violaine Lochu : The issue of deafness is at the heart of the sound installation and of the *Unchorus* performance. Both deal with a revolutionary choir whose interpreters would no longer hear each other, would not be able to agree on a tone, a tempo, a language, even the song itself. This difficulty to be one voice, to join voices and forces around the same political message echoes our topicality, refers to a certain nonsense of our time. As Bruno Latour says: "For the first time, we have a government unable to listen and people unable to express themselves." To achieve these two works, I asked participants (performers and registered persons for the realisation of the sound installation) to send me a revolutionary song of their choice. These songs linked to geographical zones, historic periods of time and various politic contexts, some of them almost erased from the collective memory, are reactivated in the performance and in the sound installation. Then, from those various materials, I looked for protocols to create this Unchorus phenomena which questions the notions of plurality and singularity inherent to the vocal choir. At different moments of the performance and of the installation, one voice or another is trapped in its own temporality and tonality, escapes from the collective. At other times, voices meet up together in a sort of fledgling choir.

To put the participants in a situation of partial deafness is one of the strategies that I used in the achievement of the installation's sounding room. Each participant was asked to repeat the songs of others, which they discovered thanks to an audio headset. This situation (an attempt at reproducing a song simultaneously to its listening with a headset on our ears) prevents us from hearing ourself and creates a trouble in the "audiophonatoire" loop. This constraint allowed me to obtain voices of a particular quality: false, arrhythmic, fragile, forced, stuttering, "yodelisante" (a little bit like moulting teenagers). Going through this partial deafness phenomena allows to highlight the classic operation of a choir, the value of listening, the integration into the collective... By the defect and the lack of something, something close to an un-thought arose whose very evidence usually makes us forget about it. That brings me to the following of your question. Your references to Beethoven and this essay by Derrida, refer to a loss experience. The loss and the lack are at the heart of an artistic practice and determine it; the artist must give up something to reach an "other" form of perception. For my part, my interest into the language and the voice is fostered by this type of experience. As a child, I suffered from language impairment. For years I had to go to a speech therapist to learn how to speak, how to fit in the language's common order. Later, between twenty and twenty-five years old, at the time when the voice became the core of my research and my working tool, I suffered from chronic aphonic crisis: I was losing my voice on a regular basis. Those decisive experiences shaped a special relationship with the vocal material and language; this is by the difficulty, the default, the lack, that I have reached the speech, in the "background" of the commune evidence. My current work is replaying those experiences, while transforming them.

For each new creation, I'm returning through these questions and states; each piece is based on an initial lack, the objet does not exist yet, it is anticipated but still needs to be invented. For this purpose, as Derrida says, it is necessary to take a step back from the common vision, but also from one's own knowledge. This is about refuting the gained experience and confronting the loss again.

Chourouk Hreich : The concepts of sound vibration and sound waves must be important in your work. How do you approach them for Storytelling?

Violaine Lochu : These notions of vibration and wave are of course inherent to any work on the sound or the voice, which are at the heart of my practice. From a certain point of view, they also cross the exhibition as a whole; as you know, *Storytelling* is built on the principle of propa-gation—of echo—as each artist offers a work based on clues left by the previous ones.

It is, I believe, the starting point that gave Matthieu Lelievre, curator of the exhibition, to you Chourouk, to develop your piece as the first artist. This principle questions how the initial signal is picked up and transformed throughout the process. The Unchorus installation follows this same principle and leads to hear initially legible messages—in this case revolutionary songs—distorted, or even inaccessible—superimposed, disjointed, partially translated, barely audible... This treatment produces undifferentiation, porosity, hybridisation, and I hope, reinvention: from an apparent sound disorder arises a common voice, certainly dissonant, and yet choral. Why not hear the echo of a pre-revolutionary song?

In the sound installation we hear the voices of two other previously invited artists: Sara Bichao and Hannelore Van Dijck. This was a way to play with the concepts of echo and transmission in the exhibition mentioned above (a bit like radio waves). The fact that they are non-francophones interested me particularly. They both sent me a revolutionary song in their mother tongue, in Portuguese for one (*Grandola Vila Morena*) and in Dutch for the other (*Een, twee, drie, vier, Hoedje van Papier*).

Their voices join those of ten other people I recorded for the realisation of the sound piece. They also come from different European countries and are singing in different languages: Italian, Spanish, Lithuanian, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, English, German, Swedish... Each of these voices, because of its timbre, its flow, its height, its specific intensity, vibrates in a certain way. The composition plays on this vibratory palette, creates effects of dissonances, friction, dialogue, harmonisation.

The spatialisation accentuates these effects: for example, two male voices dialogue in the center, while a female chorus of murmurs is broadcasted in the periphery. From these crossings, approximations, removals emerges a sound material that encompasses and acts on the body of the spectator which evolves in the installation space. Thus, the notion of sound vibration is central in the realisation of *Unchorus*, and is generally central in my practice, when it comes for example to "sound" a collective, but also in the way of thinking about the voice. The voice, of course, results from the vibration of the vocal cords, but in fact it involves the whole body; for example, bones and cavities are spaces of circulation and vibration. The vocal gesture involves a multitude of organs (lungs, diaphragm, larynx, lips, palate, tongue...) without any of them being specifically dedicated to it. In the collective performance *Faire Signe* (elaborated during a workshop at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art et de Design in Marseille with deaf students from the PILAB section and presented at MAC VAL in 2018), one of the performers mixed sign language and personal choreography to translate how she felt when she touches me, without hearing me, while I was singing. This is another (silent) way of highlighting vocal vibration in its physical dimension. What interests me more globally in these notions of wave and vibration is their invisible but permanent presence. The circulation and connection phenomena of which they are the vector extend the field of communication between beings far beyond language.

Chourouk Hreich : The sound object being often perceived differently depending on the one who emits it and the one who receives it, is it relevant to associate an idea of chromatic range with your approach?

Violaine Lochu : It is true that we talk about chromatic range as well in music as in painting. More broadly, I see in your question an inquiry about synaesthesia, the walkways and the equivalences between different perceptive senses. This notion of synaesthesia and transdisciplinarity is a central notion in *Unchorus*. The project brings together different media (performance and installation), and intertwined different ways of perception, mainly sound and visual perception. At the center of the installation, a naked light bulb diffuses a light which ranges from near darkness to blinding stroboscopic effects, and reflects the sudden violence of a revolt that comes up against the harness of reality and keeps on aborting. The light is not a mere repetition, or a visual repetition of the sound, it interacts with it according to its own specificity. The spatialisation of the sounding room and the light variations cause a situation of discomfort; the viewer is struggling to orient himself in the space, he does not know if he is invited to sit or not on the benches all around this light bulb, whose sudden variations threaten to blind him at any moment. In the installation as in the performance, it is about implying physically the listener-viewer, summoning his different senses and arousing a perceptive experience.

In the performance, the whole body is summoned: the skin as well the eyes or the ears enable us to create a common sound. We worked a lot on the notion of global listening. When we sing in a choir, and especially when it is about female polyphony because the voices are close to each other (height and tone), we are flowed by an incredible community sense.

The drawing is also present in my working process. Some sketches allowed me to transfer my ideas and a score of the performative form was also made. My scores are essentially graphic, the notion of chromatic range which you are talking about is rarely developed for the moment, but I always combine sounds and signs.

In *Unchorus*, and in my global work, the sound is always taken in its link with other senses (sight and touch), other media (drawing, light, choreography...), other fields (politic, anthropology, psychology...). This transdisciplinary perspective of the sound field is related to my career as a visual artist and musician. Before my university studies in visual arts and then at Cergy's Beaux-Arts, I followed a training courses in classical music; later I have been interested more especially in traditional music. This double training constantly makes walkways between sounds and images in my mind. Several projects play those parts; in the sounding piece *Follow the Line* for example, created for the *Aware Prize* 2018 exhibition, I vocally translated the line's movement of *Solo pour un trait noir* by Vera Molnar. As you are speaking about chromatic range, more recently I vocally "interpreted" some works of the Supports/Surfaces movement of the Pompidou Center collection. Each colour led me to a particular sound texture. As a follow-on of these experiences between music, voice, painting, drawing, it would be exciting to invite a visual artist to come plastically reinterpret one of my vocal performance.

VIOLAINE LOCHU, MEAT ME ARTICLE BY BARBARA POLLA

published in *Art Critique*, 2019

No single work of art has touched me as deeply as Violaine Lochu's Meat me in the last two years. Performing alone, her body half naked, her soul incarnated by Bacon, she offered the public an essential, unique, and most performative experience. Sharing Bacon.

Violaine Lochu is recognized as a voice performer – but who knows yet the extraordinary power of her screams? Meat me starts with such a terrifying scream, the type of scream animals get out of their body ready to be “meated”. Meat me also and foremost “exhibits” the poignant and devastating transformations the artist is able to impose on her body. With a transparent chair as her sole crutch.

A few young women, during the performance, looked at each other, shook their head and left. “It was such an extraordinary performance that they left, what do you mean?”, the art historian Paul Ardenne asked me when I tried to explain to him what had happened. What happened is that the body of Violaine Lochu, a young and gorgeous female body, wasn't beautiful anymore. On stage, it was sublime, it was terrifying. It was not sexualized, as Bacon's bodies are neither female nor male bodies. It was a human body, as Bacon's bodies are human bodies. It was an animal on stage, as Bacon's bodies are animal bodies. Living bodies soon to be dead. Lochu was reckless enough to override her own female body, to forget about beauty and attractiveness and to become a painting by Bacon. What an homage. At this point, Bacon turned around in his grave, looked down to the open space of Pompidou where Lochu was performing, and, astonished, amazed, frightened, screamed to her: “Sister !”

Pain has no gender. Human beings in pain are human beings. Human bodies. Bodies. Flesh – meat. Violaine Lochu also gave the perfect title to her performance: Meat me. Meat me, meet me, I am made of meat, I am made of scream, I am nude, I am mud, I am blood and shit, I am not myself anymore: I am all of you, I am suffering. I am Bacon.

She arrived on scene with naked breasts, she left the scene with the glory of telling viewers, once again, that the ephemerality of performance has the potential to engrave its images on us forever. Unless, too afraid to keep our eyes wide open to our suffering humanity, we shut them and left before the performance ended.

Barbara Polla

HINTERLAND a solo show by Violaine Lochu

October 06th - November 17th 2018

Performance by Violaine Lochu, *Magnetic Song*, with Chloé Breillot, October 06th, 2018 at 7 PM

Performance by Violaine Lochu, *Fabula*, with Joëlle Lèandre, November 09th 2018, 2018 at 7 PM

The title of the exhibition, *Hinterland*, refers to the inland, a territory sheltered from wind and sea. A place where it is possible to take your time and reconstruct yourself. From a metaphorical point of view, *Hinterland* sends us back to what is not immediately visible. Behind the landscape, backstage, inside the body, its foundations, organs and memory. Because this art work is all about the body. The artist has made the body her instrument: captor, receptor and transmitter of intuitive languages inherited from anterior lives and/or ancestral traditions. **Violaine Lochu** listens to her body, her experience, her languages and her writings. Her works give a physical and sensorial access to this listening.

There is a movement from alienation towards self-determination. "The intruder exposes me excessively. It extrudes me, it exports me, and it expropriates me."¹ Her body is subjected to plural forms of violence: chemistry, the medical profession, the expectations and injunctions of a society that often shows little consideration for women. An experience that **Violaine Lochu** has chosen to put on stage with sound and image. In this manner, the actual space of the gallery is envisaged as a sensitive body: a powerful body entering a phase of reconstruction. Working to re-appropriate the body starts by a refusal, the refusal of being considered as a patient, a passive entity waiting for information, results and precisions. Struggling against dispossession and objectivism, **Violaine Lochu** reveals, with a wry sense of humour, her body's subjective imagination. In this state of a waking dream, she decides to visualize the totality of her organs and attribute a specific song to each one of them. Her body is transformed into a polyphonic orchestra sending us back to an active inner life, a singular symphony through which care and recapture are thought out in song.

Because she is unable to recognize herself in the medical images of an objective body, **Violaine Lochu** generates an intimate, subjective representation. Little by little, she stocks up her body while filming herself with a GoPro camera. Like an archaeologist scanning a statuette about which nothing is known, the artist works towards a form of recognition, reconstruction and self-recovery. Hannah Wilke writes: "To disseminate prejudice about the self, women must take control, be proud of the sensuality of their own bodies and create the signification of sensuality in their own terms, without referring to concepts degenerated by culture."² The video triptych is part of an affirmation, a new mastery over her body and the image of her body. Self-filming is inherent to her artistic practice. Ever since she was 16, **Violaine Lochu** has been filming fragments of her everyday life. 15 seconds here and 15 seconds there... Once edited, the seconds come together to create a film (*Hinterland* – 2018), which brings twelve years of life together, a visual, sensorial, sound diary. A non-chronological narrative, "layers of life" coexist. The question of time is central in her practice. The artist values the visible just as much as the invisible. She explores different temporalities combining past, present and future to shift the passive representations of the feminine body.

"I am concerned by the creation of a formal image that is specifically feminine, a new language that fuses the spirit and body in erotic objects that are both sufficiently abstract and nameable. Its content has always been linked to my body and my feelings, reflecting pleasure as much as pain, the ambiguity and the complexity of emotions. Human gestures, metaphysical symbols made of superimposed accounts translated in an art close to laughter, making love and vibrant hands."³

Violaine Lochu is observant of the conscious and unconscious signs that disrupt an enlarged memory, composed of several lives brought together in a single body. The body's memory constitutes an *inland* that is impossible to map, where the imprints, sensations, reminiscences and clues must be carefully deciphered. In a practice governed by intuition and analogy, the artist proposes gestures, images, scripts, elements of writing and language. This way of listening and extracting memory from the body has become a motor of empathy, resistance and *empowerment* opposite a patriarchal, medical system based on authority and violence. A critical motor that commits the artist to movement, disobedience, shouting and resilience.

Julie Crenn, Valognes, 4th August 2018

Translated from the French by Emmelene Landon

VIOLAINE LOCHU POLYPHONIC PERFORMER BY ROXANA AZIMI

published in M, Le Monde Magazine, 2018

Laureate of the *Aware Prize* for women artists, the artist, inspired by the sounds of Nina Hagen and Cathy Berberian, is exhibiting her work at the Chanot Contemporary Art Center, in Clamart, France, until March 25th.

Is she a bird woman or a bearded woman? A klezmer singer or a feminist artist? Violaine Lochu is all of the above, all at once. A plural identity which contributes to the growing fame of this 30-year-old performer who has made an instrument of her voice. Having won the most recent Aware prize which rewards women artists, her work is currently on display at the Chanot Contemporary Art Center, in Clamart, France.

When she was young, she played piano, unassumingly. At the age of 18, she sought to move away from the confinement of classical music. As a student at the Fine Arts School of Cergy, France she spent her summers travelling across Europe, accordion over her shoulder, searching for new sounds. In Lecce, in the Apulia region of Italy, she fell in love with pizzica pizzica, a dance derived from the tarentella. In Bulgaria, she fell under the spell of polyphonies. At the age of 24, she took up playing klezmer music and learned Yiddish, before immersing herself... in the culture of the Sámi people of Lapland.

Today, her work is enriched just as much by the sounds of Nina Hagen, Cathy Berberian and Meredith Monk. Unbounded curiosity combined with immense empathy are her greatest strengths. "I dive 500% into everything, I let myself be inhabited by sounds and I emerge with forms, » she says. "I am not looking for a synthesis, but a junction, where my voice and that of the other person end up becoming a new, third voice."

During her performances, which are close to sound poetry, her voice becomes elastic, reaching high pitches, squeaking with feedback or whistling in murmurs. Equally as agile, her body, in turns, becomes mineral, animal or plantlike, blurring these identities. Questions around gender inhabit her. In the performance piece *T(h)race*, she reinvents the Amazon language based off of *The Histories* by Herodotus and the essay *This Sex Which Is Not One* by the feminist linguist Luce Irigaray. "My feminism is that of Irigaray or Donna Haraway," explains the young woman. "I refuse domination as a whole, that of a sex over another, but also of humans over nature and animals."

Roxanna Azimi

ARTICLE BY NINON DUHAMEL published in the art critics platform *Portaits*, 2017

Violaine Lochu uses her own voice as a material, that she sculpts and contorsionne to take on a multitude of identities: sometimes human, sometimes animal, woman or man, French, Romanian, Italian, Chinese ... she is a kind of « vocal transformist » « . Videos, sound pieces, radio broadcasts, editions, performances, his work is expressed in several forms, often complementary, where fables and popular rhymes meet, traditional songs, experimental music, sound effects and words from various sources.

Visual artist, but also singer and musician, Violaine Lochu is a graduate of the University of Rennes and the National School of Arts Paris-Cergy. His works have been presented in several group exhibitions including the Center for Art and Research Bétonsalon (2013), the Salon de Montrouge (2016) and the Museum of Contemporary Art Val de Marne (2017). She has recently performed at the Palais de Tokyo, at the Salon Jeune Création or at the Palais de la Découverte, as part of the FIAC 2017. Winner of the Aware 2018 Award, Violaine Lochu is currently presenting her recent works in the exhibition Hypnorama at the Chanot Contemporary Art Center (January 27 to March 25, 2018).

For each of her projects, Violaine Lochu conducts an investigative work and feeds on research, meetings, collaborations, from which she collects sound materials (stories, songs, animal cries ...). During her travels, she learns vocal techniques, musical traditions, foreign languages, and creates a kind of oral library, in which she plunges to give material to her works. Her sound pieces and her performances are born from a formal and methodical work during which she notes, decomposes, transcribes and learns by heart each fragment harvested. Going through the languages and words of others is a way for her to question herself on her position as an artist, and to look for her own voice: « When I sing, I am much closer to what I mean, only when I use the language. «

As she likes to say, Violaine Lochu is interested in the language « in the broad sense ». Beyond the words and their meanings, his attention is more focused on accents and musicalities. By means of assemblages, phonetic slips and vocal arrangements, she creates compositions whose form lies between the Arab telephone, the exquisite corpse and the anadiplose (figure of speech which consists of the resumption of the end of a proposal to start the next one: three little cats, straw hat ...) A « sound thought » that we find at work in his *Abécédaire Vocal* (2016), a kind of repertoire in which each letter is related to the world of voice and language: A for aphonia, B for babbling, J for jargon, S for breath, T for tone ... Each theme gives rise to a sound track composed of words and sounds collected by the artist, and that she reinterprets by deploying a whole panel of « vocal gestures ». As if to look for where the voice comes from inside the body, she blows, shouts, sings, taps her chest, stammers, whispers, ululates... Both organic and musical, the voice is an instrument that Violaine Lochu seizes to reveal all the plasticity, like a sculptor with clay. A capella, accompanied by her accordion or an electric guitar, Violaine Lochu explores the transformative potential of her voice to create uncompromising sound pieces, where the sounds sometimes raw, sometimes lyrical, are destabilizing.

For *Hybird* (2017) she is inspired by a corpus of songs of wild birds, which she has recorded and learned the cries: chaffinch of the north, jackdaw, great owl ... she imitates these « languages of birds » by mixing them with various vocal techniques through which all his musical influences stand out. Thanks to a panel of accessories (feathers, beard, wig, costume ...), she indulges in a series of vocal metamorphoses, imitations, disguises. In *Aoïde* (2014) she tries to recreate the song of the sirens, these mythological creatures half-woman half-fish whose song is at the same time seductive and dangerous, even inaudible. Inspired by techniques of traditional Greek songs, the whistled language of the inhabitants of the island of Gomera, and the singing of whales, she brings her voice to hybrid tones, unusual, at the limit of the human and the animal. Siren, psychic, humanoid robot, animal, strange creature... to Violaine Lochu: « With the voice, you can all become, » she summarizes.

Linked to the body, the gesture, the language, « the vocal imprint » is both the reflection of an individual expression and the marker of belonging to a society. The stamp, the accent, the vocabulary, the intonation ... « Claire Gillie, psychoanalyst and anthropologist, specialist of the voice » (*Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* n ° 14, 2001)). Filigree of her works, Violaine Lochu addresses issues of cultural identity, language and language, transmission and memory.

His video work entitled *Chinese Whispers* is an exploration of the processes of transmission, translation and alteration of the language through the word of mouth asked for a French folk to rhyme (« One, two, three, we will go to the wood ... »), the artist repeats in turn all the versions heard, from Neutral way and face camera. In condensed form, it then gives to hear the transformations of the words, the alteration of the sentences, the non-just phonetic translations that take place, until only the melody remains of the nursery rhyme.

A subject that she also discusses with *Lingua Madre* (2012), a video dyptic in which Violaine Lochu performs an oral metamorphosis of her own first and last name, which she recites twenty or so times, varying the accentuation and the pronunciation. The artist « exotises » her name, thus blurring the tracks of identity: « Violaine Lochu » is multiplied and takes turns Slavonic, Mediterranean, Germanic ... In parallel, she writes the word « mother » by hand in a dozen different languages; the exfoliation and the rewriting of some letters sufficient to operate the passage from one language to another. Violaine Lochu gives us to see and hear the porosity of languages, their friction and their influences on each other.

The voice of Violaine Lochu upsets genres, categories, definitions. She introduces otherness and otherness into our cultural habits of listening and speaks to us about identity, language and culture as living things, transformable, in perpetual change: « The important thing, is to sing true. »

Ninon Duhamel

VIOLAINE LOCHU ANDROID SHAMAN, ARTICLE BY PEDRO MORAIS

published in *Le Quotidien de l'Art*, n° 1137, page 11 - 12, 2016

What belongs to us in language? Violaine Lochu, who participated in the Montrouge Salon in 2016, is a Transformative voice, between species and genres – human and animal, masculine and feminine – to become amazon, car, siren or cartomancer. During his performances, videos and radio plays, it fuses different languages, songs and cultures minority. After a residency at the Art Center Delme Synagogue, she is invited tonight, Friday, by Vanessa Desclaux and Émilie Renard at the Art Center The Noisy-Le-Sec Gallery.

How to explain that, in the field of art, animals are of more and more simply referred to as non-humans? In the whole just published *Animals*, an excellent anthology of texts brought together by Filipa Ramos (responsible for the art-agenda portal), there is a need to consider new inter-species relations, in the wake of debates around a world anthropocentric. Contrary to the ideology of global communication, humans can not access the otherness of non-humans without changing the very foundations of a human-animal differentiation and its presupposition hierarchical. In the book *cross Jacques Derrida, surprised naked by train to be watched by her cat*, Donna Haraway pondering a new *Biopolitical Relationships From Dogs*, Native American *Perspectivism of the anthropologist Viveiros de Castro* or the chimpanzee raised in the laboratory *Tristan Garcia* (in *Memories of the Jungle*, 2010) trying to simulate a memory of the wild world.

This questioning of the nature / culture opposition has been integrated organic way by Violaine Lochu to her vocal performances: the voice is in her a transforming weapon of the animality of the body, assimilating a multitude of identities, idioms and functions of language. In *Aoïde*, she seeks to reinvent the siren song, these women-fish whose call will become with the artist a polymorphous evocation of Greek mourners, singing whales and the whistled language of Gomera. « I'm looking for an outside, a to become a bird of language, she adds. Mimetic animals interest me, be it their ability to reproduce a sound (the mainates, true chameleons voice) or movement (flocks of starlings, packs of wolves, schools of fish) that I translate by voice. Moreover, in *Animal Mimesis*, I explored this collective dimension of language because its learning is done by mimicry while giving us the impression of acquiring a subjectivity ». Violaine Lochu will then turn to oral cultures and popular songs, in dialogue with anthropologists, to compose multi-language scores, out of all identity dimension. « If we continue to speak the same language we will reproduce the same story », expressed in 1976 the feminist linguist Luce Irigaray, calling for imagine a language outside the model patriarchal. « I lived a few months in the Salento in Italy to introduce me to the songs of women southern Italy, associated with tarantism (also-called bite-contracted diseases spider, inducing a state of trance that allowed one to express oneself in a repressive environment), evokes the artist.

To reinvent the language of the people Amazons, I became interested in the Japanese grammatical structure (without genre) and to Ukrainian and Inuit songs, applying tactile trajectories, circulars. Sometimes she literally ruins a text (that of the *Song of Roland*) by a borrowed vocal erosion effect to geology and learned in collaboration with an archaeologist. For another performance, evoking the distorted transformation of oral culture, the origin of the myths, Violaine Lochu deploys a nursery rhyme, crossing the diversity of accents who makes the tongue a living tissue. « I am inhabited by all these voices. The language does not belong to us, the author disappears, we are the conduit of a community, » she says. Seeking to establish an oral memory of Montrouge, she asked to the inhabitants to tell him something they know by heart, replaying all these voices memorized in turn (using the *ars memoriae*, an ancient mnemonic means that connects the speech at places). Violaine Lochu seems yet less close to a documentary approach than of a renewed passion of his generation for the contemporary poetry, looking for a future hybrid, between species and genera, composed of languages minority. It is therefore not surprising to see her dressed up as a psychic for a divinatory performance where she becomes a sensor, a sort of shaman robotics, recalling that in his work (and among mediums) the dimension Performative language is more meaningful than the message. « I know that imitating other voices I risk losing mine, that's it, but I do not want to to encumber me, I would have kept only my body and voices, » she concludes.

Pedro Morais