

Leurs printemps

Curator : Léa Chauvel-Lévy

Pierre Ardouvin
Grégoire Bergeret
Stéphane Calais
Erik Dietman
Morgane Erpen
My-Lan Hoang-Thuy
Emmanuel Le Cerf
Thomas Mailaender
Jérôme Robbe
Alice Robineau
Elsa Sahal

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12 - 9 pm

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12 - 7 pm

on the occasion of **Paris Gallery Weekend**

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My grandmother was a florist. After she lost her memory, shortly before she passed away, she could still remember the names of flowers. Her daily, iterative gestures at Les Halles, the Belly of Paris, and then at Rungis, had fixed a vast number of species in her mind. Robert Doisneau had photographed her friends, her gang. This turned out to be the starting point for an exhibition which would become a form of tribute, although I didn't know it then. Despite its personal origins, the adventure of *Leurps printemps* is collective as it brings together the works of eleven artists who employ the flower as a form and a sign.

Artistic representations of flowers have multiplied since the 16th century, when they became secular.

Through various installations, paintings, drawings, photographs, postcards, ceramics, this exhibition ties several notions together: flowers as formal grammar, flowers in the Anthropocene, flowers as embodiments of a precarious desire.

Stéphane Calais and Jérôme Robbe each experience the need to draw or paint flowers in their own way – daily in the former's case, in intensive phases in the latter's. It is their formal grammar, close to Hockney's, which is quoted here: "I draw flowers every day and then send them to my friends, so that they get fresh flowers every morning." Stéphane Calais embraces, exhausts and renews this motif every day; Jérôme Robbe offers his painted bouquets to people who have helped him throughout his life.

The nature of the flower, its very essence as a sexual reproduction organ, brings about cultural constructions that turn it into a metaphor for the cycle of life. It is there at the beginning. It is there at the end. Thomas Mailaender's printed lava stones illustrate this continuum, for instance with the image of a tombstone and a white rose whose heart symbolizes a skull. Why do we put flowers on graves? Because flowers are sexual. They are tokens of life since the two sexes are present in them: male and female, stamen and pistil. A matte, dense and attractive black pistil by Elsa Sahal stands at the entrance of the exhibition. At the threshold was life... This female organ engages in a flirtatious conversation with a photograph by Emmanuel Le Cerf, a sensual and fluffy poppy flower pierced so as to let a leather lace go through it, the same way one would incise it to collect its opium. The immortalization of a flower as the last photographic gesture of an artist who will then move to sculpture. Equally immortalized are the daffodils which Alice Robineau picks in Les Batignolles and resinates while they are still alive. It is very difficult indeed to turn one's back on the implacable clichés of *memento mori* and *vanitas* – on the "grace in death" which Georges Sand saw in Delacroix's flower watercolours.

This is what Pierre Ardouvin's bouquet of eternal flowers is about: artificial, withered forever, this set placed on a pedestal table puts us face to face with the ultimatum "of time that passes too quickly, fragility and the triumph of death", in his own words.

Conceptualizing flowers through the prism of precariousness, the ephemeral and finitude is legitimate; the lily flowers tattooed by My-Lan Hoang-Thuy do not escape this since she voluntarily lets them die over the course of the exhibition – but an optimistic dialectic is also possible. One by one, the petals fall but, on each one of them, the

implacable beauty of a naked woman is printed, arousing our desire and life force. Let's bet that the artist can colour and metaphorically brighten disappearance. This disappearance is both inevitable and ecological in Morgane Erpen's work. Her installation *Carduus*, which turns thistles into torches, reminds us that Man tends to domesticate nature until its exhaustion. Any act of flower representation is a latent attempt at domestication. In this respect, it is interesting to remember, like Valérie Chansigaud, that "the place of flowers in the arts precisely follows the development of flower gardens. . . the first flower portraits from the late 16th century and early 17th century were made up of cultivated varieties only."¹ Wildflowers are underrepresented pictorially, and often non-existent. With Grégoire Bergeret, a flower opens, explodes, it is a rebellious shell, stopped in its race. Frozen in a specific state, the raw metal defies the organic and the living.

By exploring the contradictory nature of flowers, *Leurs printemps* wishes to celebrate life and rebirth as a producer of reminiscences. "The real tomb of the dead is the heart of the living", Cocteau had decided. After the disappearance of Erik Dietman, Claudine Papillon found an envelope containing a very limited edition – three copies – dated 1963: three quaint, flowery cards, on which the words "happy birthday" had been covered with plaster. The man who would become the former King of Plaster *panse/pense* passing time with these flowered wishes.

¹ Valérie Chansigaud, *Une histoire des fleurs : entre nature et culture*, Paris, Delachaux et Niestlé, 2014.

Pierre Ardouvin

I used cheap artificial flowers, the kind of tacky plastic imitations that people also call eternal flowers. They are usually associated with kitschy or mortuary decorations. I use them unexpectedly and humorously to compose eternally faded bouquets. They are, in a way, vanities, allegories of death, of the passage of time. In allegorical still lifes, flowers represent time that passes too fast, fragility, and the triumph of death. The bouquets were treated, heated and deformed to look eternally faded, and then arranged in vases placed on mats on old-fashioned pedestal tables.

Grégoire Bergeret

Picking this up in the Swiss Alps pastures when you're a kid produces both fascination and questions. You see the torn steel, then you realize it is military, and finally you feel the risk; you also perceive that it is related to something other than war. Then people tell you that Switzerland is a hollow country full of galleries and individuals who participate in the national defense effort, episodically, throughout their lives. You then sense a conflict between what you have learnt about the term "neutrality" and what your experience tells you, when you have your feet in the alfalfa and mountain flowers. The palpation of the object reveals its formerly full and round nature. It was not a blank cartridge. From that you quickly deduce that if you had been there at that moment, BAM.

I had had this object for a few years and one day, to a question of mine (which I was probably asking myself out loud), Julia, my partner, replied: Why don't you just polish the inside? This is the first act of our collaboration.

Stéphane Calais

Flower drawings are gymnastics, permanent exercise. They are my scales, but they are also my most precious drawings. They try to capture what does not last, of course, but on paper. This extends the pleasure a bit and, above all, it punctuates a landscape made of different codes, loops, lines, sometimes blots, hatches, lines and beloved curves. This produces a superb skeleton that evolves, grows, and structures all my decisions as a painter. My hand should think only of colors; freed from drawing, it returns to it in the very bulk of each shade.

And then there is the rest – the weather, ideas, concepts that you keep turning over, painting, and Marie passing in the garden.

Erik Dietman

In the early 1960s, Erik Dietman used Band-Aid to dress the wounds of objects and reflect on them, thus giving them a new position: they looked like ceramics, but he raised them to the status of works of art. These were the "thought objects".

In this piece, is he really wishing someone a "happy birthday"? By concealing the text, he makes it stand out. Does he want to conceal the message and heal the wounds that time inflicts?

With these three copies, did the artist hope for an economic stimulus? We will never be sure as Claudine Papillon found the sum of this "edition" in an envelope.

Morgane Erpen

Carduus is an installation telling an imaginary story around an experimental laboratory. Plunged in the Anthropocene, a species of flower develops new faculties in order to survive in a world that is increasingly hostile to the presence of any form of plant life. The resilience of this plant expresses itself through the fact that it can breathe fire. Suspended in the air, the installation seems light and delicate, in total contrast with the flames, which make it look aggressive and imposing. The height of the plexiglass tubes evokes a worktop and allows

us to imagine the laboratory. The materials and the square layout give off a sanitized and uncluttered impression that also refers to laboratories.

The viewer can walk through the installation, and should become immersed in its environment by finding him or herself in its centre and feeling the warmth it gives off.

My-Lan Hoang-Thuy

I have known many Kims, Mys and Lans. Flowers, which girls are also named after in Vietnam. But I only started living with these specific flowers recently. I am getting to know them. They are different from those I have met in the past, more natural. They are not made of fabric and plastic – they are alive. The downside is probably their sensitivity: to touch them, to manipulate them, to pretty them up, is to change their life line. I began to live in rhythmic harmony with them. I respect them, and at the same time I try to play with their lifespan: sometimes I damage them, other times I preserve them in various states. It's a dance between them and me, a dance with two riders, two imposed tempos, without one ever taking precedence over the other. These flowers, these Mys and these Lans, are in themselves alter egos, but they are also vehicles for photographic self-portraits.

Emmanuel Le Cerf

I had decided to photograph poppy flowers, which I found very attractive. Opium has oozed out of their incised capsules for millennia, their sepals are perfectly sexual; everything seemed to speak of desire. I pierced them, equipped them with eyelets, and harnessed them.

To make a bouquet is to gather flowers; to sew these flowers is a carnage, but they seemed to doze against their leather stake.

This is the last picture I took before definitively parting with my camera. What tied me to photography had been severed.

Thomas Mailaender

"The chosen images are printed from a special printer using enamel oxides onto a clear decal paper. The decal is trimmed then moistened with water so it softens and separates from the paper before being applied to the ceramic, which is then fired for the third and final time so the images become a permanent part of the work. Inspired by his research on traditional imperishable photography involving baking, Mailaender's contemporary ceramics breathe life into the methods used at the beginning of the 20th century which then saw a boom in photoceramics, driven by a newfound popularity of tourist effigies on plates, coffee mugs and more. The photoceramic method is today mainly used for memorial plaques, creating an everlasting picture of loved ones. Adopting this process, Thomas Mailaender monumentalises images taken from his 'Fun Archive' – a personal collection of more than 11000 amateur images amassed from the Internet and flea markets. By featuring these images in his sculptures, Mailaender innovatively raises his occupied images from anonymity."

From Luce Lebart.

Jérôme Robbe

Given that making art is not insignificant, it is not a question of simply satisfying one's ego or that of an eye. Becoming aware of one's position in the medium(s) one uses also requires partly accepting what one is rejecting.

There are many possible conceptions and spheres of activity. Personalities, too. The artist, as a social, paranoid and egocentric being, can be multiple.

So, I examined my own preconceptions. My idea of what it means to paint today. I realized that I was forgetting what had brought me to painting – while it is the only thing that some people recognize: "well-made" representation.

Since I was entering the realm of the image, vulgarizing painting, with a hint of humor, I thought I might as well paint flowers.

Bouquets, made using the same technique as in other more abstract paintings, that reassure the viewer since they are immediately identifiable. That's a painting!

The point is not to make an attack but rather an observation.

Through these very modest representations, similar to paintings on chocolate boxes, I also get to experience the gesture involved in a brushstroke.

Moreover, I very much enjoy painting these images. Traces, forms, gestures unfold thanks to the best possibilities of each brush.

Made without any preparation or reference image, each bouquet is an accumulation of abstract signs, executed over the shortest possible period of time. In the bouquet presented at the Galerie Papillon, the very image of these gestures is imprinted in the layers of varnish.

The people closest to me and at the same time the farthest removed from my work, who found it satisfactory, brought my attention to this simple fact: "My mother likes it."

Alice Robineau

Spring in the Batignolles

Four strong anthracite vultures dominate.

Necklines sheave heads,
undulating hammers.

A thousand daffodils dot the park.

Corollas spring from calyces,

Yellow announces their entries, bursts its light.

Spring, gives the verdict of its first days.

Elsa Sahal

This piece comes from a series of vertical ceramics shaped like pistils initiated in 2017. My pistils refer to the female part of the plant's reproductive organ, while the stamens that surround it are male. To deconstruct these gender assignments, I chose to evoke only the pistil that rises like a female emblem, phallic and imposing.

There is a parallel between the vertical way in which my sculpture is constructed, the way it rises, and the way plants grow towards light.

I chose to treat the surface with a combination of black enamels in different hues, some of them matte. The top part suggests froth that gives birth to a second pistil. This section is more precious-looking as the shiny enamel that composes it reflects light.

Pierre Ardouvin – FR

Born in 1955 in Crest – lives and works in Paris.

Since the early 1990s, Pierre Ardouvin's work has developed like an elliptic scenario of our disillusionment. His poetry, often referring to popular culture, derives from a "disturbed" relationship to language and to the world.

Grégoire Bergeret – FR

Born in 1980 in Annecy – lives and works in Brussels.

In 2005, he completed a national degree in Plastic Expression at the École des Beaux-Arts d'Annecy. His work is eclectic because it stems from lived experience, which is by definition multifaceted and largely unpredictable. The resulting works seem to be states of matter subjected to the workings of chance which the artist only wants to render as he has perceived them, or which he provokes to summon the unexpected.

Stéphane Calais – FR

Born in 1967 in Arras – lives and works in Paris.

Stéphane Calais studied at the Beaux-Arts de Nîmes and at the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques in Paris. "He uses various techniques and contradicts the way they are generally used. Drawing becomes monumental, sculpture fragile, painting seemingly casual. His work saves forms disavowed by aesthetics from indifference: illustrations, kitsch objects, humoristic drawings, discarded objects, for instance, are manipulated, transformed until their essence as fetishes appears." K.L. in "Tempérament et caractères selon les sexes", VillaRose editions, 2007.

Erik Dietman – SE

1937, Jönköping, Sweden – 2002, Paris

Saying that Erik Dietman is an unclassifiable and never classified artist would be an understatement. He voluntarily stood on the margins of the artistic movements of his time, although he had affinities with them. He was a free-thinker and independent artist, who created a corpus of personal works oscillating between reality and poetry. His drawings, assemblages, and sculptures are organised like rebuses giving a material existence to words.

Morgane Erpen – CH

Born in 1991 in Montreux – lives and works in Lausanne.

Morgane Erpen works mainly with installations and sculpture. She graduated from the ECAL in Visual Arts in 2016, after starting her artistic career in graphic design; in 2012 she obtained her CFC at ERACOM in Lausanne. Before she even graduated from the ECAL, she had the opportunity to show her work in several group exhibitions.

My-Lan Hoang-Thuy – EN

Born in 1990 in Bourg-la-Reine – lives and works in Paris.

"Concerns arising from the practice of editing run throughout my whole work: I collect, sort and assemble images and texts, which I re-manipulate to bring out an alternative reading of these materials. I mainly use the way images are printed and materialized to reveal layers of their history. What interests me is not so much the representations contained in images as their manufacturing processes, the other side of the picture, which is always revealing. I use images like tools and raw material that I can stretch and spread out."

Emmanuel Le Cerf – FR

Born in 1984 in Le Havre – lives and works in Paris.

After studying graphic design from 2002 to 2004, he entered the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Paris in 2005 in Photography and Video. Five months of studies at the École de Recherche Graphique in Brussels in 2008 marked the beginning of his sculptural research. His work was exhibited the same year at the Royal College of Arts in London.

Thomas Mailaender – FR

Born in 1979 in Marseille – lives and works between Paris and Marseille.

After a degree in Photography at the Arts Décoratifs de Paris (ENSAD), he briefly studied at Villa Arson. He gradually enriched his original medium, photography, and developed a wider-ranging practice through installation, sculpture, and video. The starting point of his reflection is the documentary field. Thomas Mailaender likes to take insignificant and sometimes grotesque situations and turn them into something monumental. His point of view is always distanced: he offers simple, apparently unequivocal observations in which absurdity actually plays the biggest part.

Jérôme Robbe – FR

Born in 1981 in Paris – lives and works in Paris.

"A painting of possibilities. This could be a way to define the artistic practice of Jérôme Robbe, who relentlessly questions the very object of his work in order to track down its opportunities, to extirpate its occurrences, to study its eventualities, which will ultimately become realities. Pictorial realities, that is, and everything they imply: the acceptance of randomness and accidents in a research process that is never frozen and, on the contrary, in constant motion. » Frédéric Bonnet, Art-o-rama, 2014.

Alice Robineau – FR

Born in 1991 in Coutances – lives and works between Regnéville-sur-Mer and Paris.

She entered the École des Beaux-Arts de Caen in 2009 and then the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris, which she graduated from in 2015. Alice Robineau builds material metaphors of daily epiphanies. In her Normandy studio, her Parisian life invites itself into the elaboration of her sculpted poems.

Elsa Sahal – FR

Born in 1975 in Bagnolet – lives and works in Paris.

Elsa Sahal graduated from the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2000. In 2007, she did a residency in Sèvres which allowed her to develop a practice using enamels that require high-temperature firing. During a residency at the Archie Bray Foundation, Montana, in 2013, she further explored firing techniques and approached new, more refined forms.

Léa Chauvel-Lévy

Léa Chauvel-Lévy studied Political and Ethical Philosophy at the Sorbonne and then at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). She is now an art critic, independent curator, artistic director, and editor. She is the director of the LVMH residencies for artistic professions, and was General Curator of the A PPR OC HE show. She is a member of the jury of the Montrouge show on the occasion of its 63rd edition, and of the artistic committee of the recto / verso sale. She has written numerous texts for galleries (Filles du Calvaire, Galerie Georges-Philippe et Nathalie Vallois, Christian Berst) as well as catalogue prefaces, and artist interviews (Johan Creten, Perrotin editions).

Images



Pierre Ardouvin
Bouquet fané, 2010
Pedestal table, mat, vase, artificials flowers
110 x 49 x 52 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Praz-Devallade Gallery Paris/
Los Angeles



Grégoire Bergeret
Vanity BOUM, 2008
35 mm shell, screw
11 x 11 x 11 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Stéphane Calais
Untitled, 2017
Ink, acrylic and glycerophthalic on Fabriano
paper dyed in the mass, neutral pH
100 x 70 cm
© Marc Damage - Courtesy of the artist



Erik Dietman
*Heureux anniversaire, quelques mètres et centi-
mètres de sparadrap*, 1963
Plaster on postcard
13,8 x 56,5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Papillon



Morgane Erpen
Carduus (detail), 2016
Plexiglass tubes, blue thistles, gas bottles, rubber tubes,
metal tubes, wire ropes and transparent sticker
200 x 200 cm
Courtesy de l'artiste

Visuels



Emmanuel Le Cerf
Untitled, 2015
Photograph, 45 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist



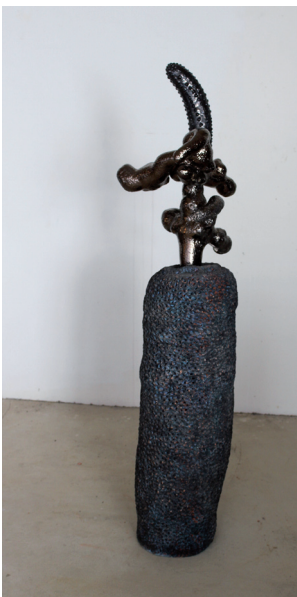
Thomas Mailaender
Lava multiple, 2018
100 copies all different
Glazed Volvic Lava - Variable sizes
Courtesy of the artist



My-Lan Hoang-Thuy
Untitled (flowers), 2017
Inkjet printing, tattoo on fleur-de-lys
About 10 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist © Raphaël Lugassy



Jérôme Robbe
Ma mère l'aime bien, 2014
Varnish, acrylic, oil painting, manual inkjet printing
68,5 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Elsa Sahal
Pistil noir, 2018
Glazed ceramic, 138 x 33 x 38 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Alice Robineau
Jonquilles, 2017
Polyester resin, salt dough, daffodil, Badoit bottles, aluminum
50 x 70 cm
Courtesy of the artist