

Press release

Sabrina Vitali

À travers les paupières closes / Through closed eyes

May 24 – July 18, 2024 [interruption June 18-25]

Between February 1915 and November 1918, the great socialist theorist and revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg was imprisoned successively in Barnimstrasse Prison (present-day Germany), Wronke Fortress and then Breslau (present-day Poland) for her anti-war activities. There, she created a herbarium with the flowers sent by her friends and those gathered from the prison yard. This herbarium¹ is an illustration of the activist's life force. Despite her imprisonment and the tyranny of power and conflict, she never stopped paying attention to even the most minor plant, birdsong or cloud formation and never stopped being amazed by it.

Sabrina Vitali's new exhibition at Galerie Papillon owes much to Rosa Luxemburg's eminently political and sensitive herbarium. "It has accompanied the production of my works with its evident presence, like a strong partner, a reminder of what the ephemeral can do," she confides. To reconstruct the magnitude of the world in a notebook, enclosed within four walls, marks the artist's relationship with the interior – of body, mind or matter – and the exterior, which is as microscopic as it is cosmic. Like Rosa, Sabrina collects roses given to her by friends and family, flowers she grows on her windowsill, or the wild plants gathered from around her studio in Maisons-Alfort which is located between Paris, the Bois de Vincennes and the Marne. "The city, the highway, the river and the woods are all entangled, porous, and interpenetrating spaces," she remarks. *À travers les paupières closes* is an adventure in the perception of the world "through the flesh of a body which is not enough, which has to be passed through, that must also be considered as entangled, porous and interpenetrated". Starting from our hypnagogic vision (the one we see when we close our eyes), where the membrane of our eye is in no way a barrier but a surface, a translucent interface on which the elements, with their shapes and lights, are deposited. After working with sugar and metal, Sabrina Vitali now uses glass, playing with its mineral, penetrating, transparent and wounding properties. The gaze therefore pierces the material, while networks of red ink flood the works.

It's only a short step from the bloodstream to the waterways. Sabrina Vitali likes to blur the lines by working on different scales. Certain shapes and colors confuse the eye overcome by visual vertigo : a cell becomes a sun, a vein becomes a river, a flower becomes a muscle. The works catalyze upon contact with the manipulated materials – wax, fire, earth, ink, metal and dried plants – and embody that unique moment of the tipping point which can occur just before any metamorphosis. "Here the blood, which had stained the grass as it flowed on the ground, has ceased to be blood, and, brighter than Tyrian purple, a flower has bloomed, which by its form might resemble lilies."² Sabrina Vitali evokes Ovid as much as the anatomical engravings of the 16th and 17th centuries, which merge human limbs with budding vegetation. An demiurge artist, Sabrina's vitality is as chaotic as it is orderly. She breathes new life into her works, in which everything becomes hybrid. A kind of magma, a "primordial soup" in which all elements are connected, digested and telescopic. At a time when technology is confusing and disrupting

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Herbier de prison*, edited and prefaced by Muriel Pic, Héros-Limite 2023.

² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, Les chants d'Orphée (I): Des passions « anormales » (10, 143-297)

the boundaries between man and machine, culture and nature, these works remind us that we form a continuum with the elements that surround us. Sabrina Vitali provokes the decentralization of man, as the philosopher Donna J Haraway understands him, one among the "multiple, viscous and tentacular bodies" that make up the world. A world "where humans, decomposed into humus, compost with other species."³ Vitali's new works combine plants, metals, inks and waxes to form a spirit of partnership. In her sculptures in the center of the gallery, vertical slabs of etched wax and glass, sedimented with earth and rusted with iron, form a combination of cartographies from the sky, constellations and vein patterns. They are superimposed to merge and create new possibilities.

The wall sculptures entitled *3 secondes*, made up of columns of 24 superimposed segments of microscope slides, tell a story about the artist's relationship with time. Sabrina Vitali invites us to slow down, to submit to the time it takes for metal to oxidize or for flowers to grow and fade. Like film, these works also recall the videos of American experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), who, like a scientist in his laboratory, intervened in the image itself to add all sorts of small objects, dust, splashes of color or butterfly wings, inviting the viewer to embrace a

visual sensibility of reality. Sabrina Vitali is also constantly experimenting. Like Rosa Luxemburg through her herbarium, she is politically and poetically committed to the ephemeral, the basis of all ecology.

Joséphine Dupuy Chavanat
April 2024

Sabrina Vitali – Born in 1986 in Thionville, France. Lives and works in Paris, France.

Few key dates

2007 DNAP (with the congratulations of the jury), École nationale supérieure d'art de Nancy

2010 Graduated from the Beaux-arts de Paris (with the congratulations of the jury)

Grant at the Beaux-arts of Paris and Takasago, Japan

2011 32nd international prize of the Takifuji Foundation, Japan

2012 Rothschild Foundation's grant, Paris

2017 Participates in the exhibition *Intériorités*, Centre d'art Labanque, Béthune ;

ATM Tempo, Hermès Foundation ; LeForum, Tokyo, Japan

2018 Participates in the exhibition *Encore un jour banane pour le poisson rêve*, at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris

2019 Personal exhibition *À cœur battant*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Arras

Residency LVMH Métiers d'art, Manifattura Renato Menegatti, Villaverla, Italy

2020 *Fabrica*, 1st personal exhibition at Galerie Papillon, curator Léa Chauvel-Lévy.

2021-2023 Residency at l'Atelier Vermorel and creation of works for the Maison Vermorel, City and Agglomeration of Villefranche-sur-Saône

³ Donna J Haraway, *Vivre avec le trouble*, Les éditions des mondes à faire, 2020