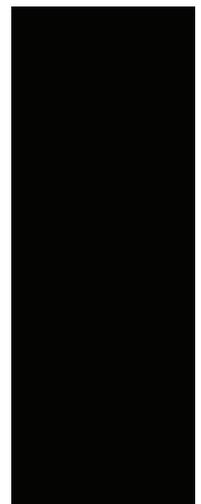
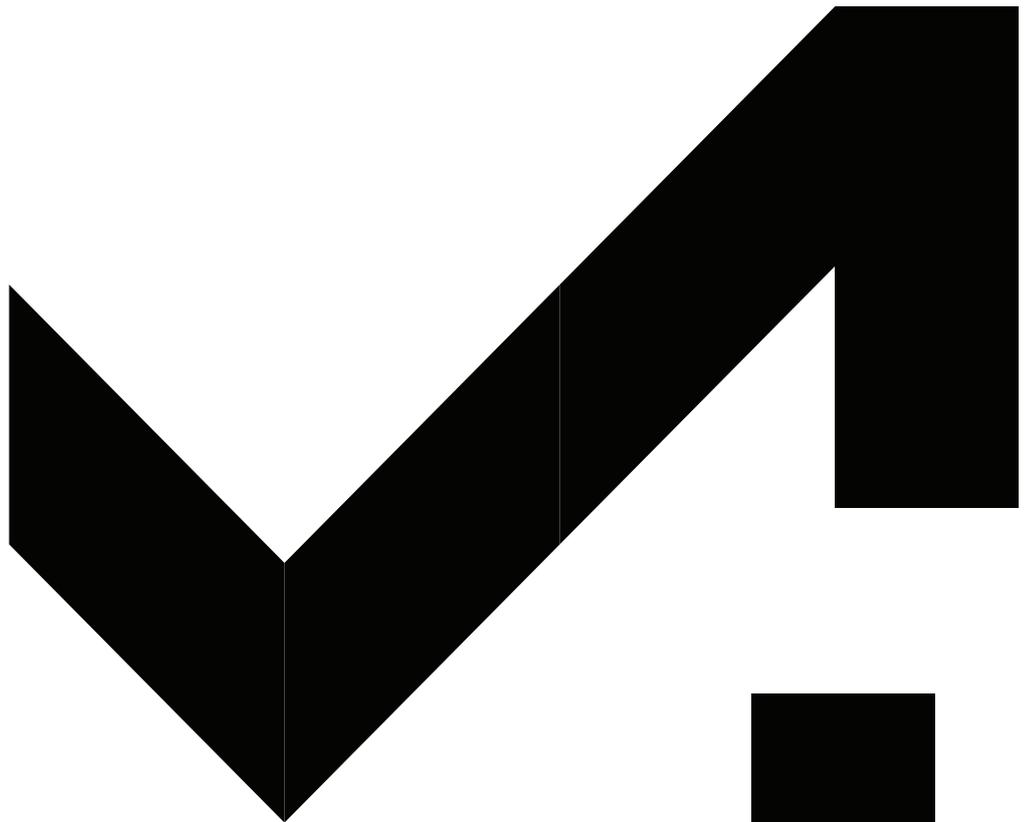
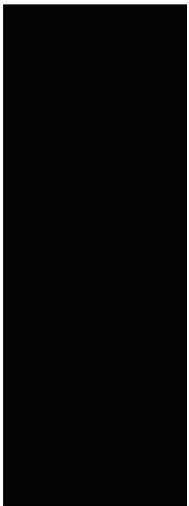


BÉATRICE BALCOU

20.09.19
→ 26.01.20



BÉATRICE BALCOU



The works of art in this exhibition are extremely fragile. It is strictly forbidden to touch them, (except during the activations with a guide)

Béatrice Balcou (1976, Tréguier, France) radically challenges the way art is produced, in part by making her own versions of existing artworks. Her artistic approach is atypical: she carefully examines artworks that are not hers, copies them and takes on the role of technician or conservator.

For Balcou an artwork is not a fleeting image that can be quickly identified or consumed, but rather a physical presence that requires our attention and time. Essential for her is the way we look at things and then process that information. The exhibition space becomes a place where the rapid consumption of artworks and culture in general is resisted and opposed.

At M she is bringing together several existing works in one gallery: sculptures, film, photographs and pieces that can be activated during performances. Specially for this exhibition, she made a work entitled *Four pins for René Heyvaert, 2019* based on the work *Untitled, 1974* by René Heyvaert from the Cera collection.

UNTITLED CEREMONIES AND PLACEBO WORKS

In her *Untitled Ceremonies* series, Balcou explores the meaning of the gesture, drawing on her training in visual art and dance, but also on her fascination for martial arts and Japanese tea rituals. What the gesture symbolizes for her is the importance of touch, feel and movement. Most works of art in collections have a 'score', a sort of handbook or condition report, which sets out how the work can best be conserved and how it should be presented to the public. What interests Balcou are the technical manuals and the learned codes relating to the manipulation of an artwork. From white gloves, special packaging materials and work tools, such as mousse, bubble wrap and silk paper, to the possible archive numbering and installation instructions.

Each *Untitled Ceremony* consists of a series of specific procedures for unpacking the artwork in front of a small group of people. The performances are executed in silence and give the spectator a rare view of an artwork as parts of the work are carefully removed from all the protective material. Consequently, you may well look at the artwork in a different way than if you were to see it in an exhibition. The ceremonies are lengthy, giving the public the time to study the artwork in optimal circumstances rather than just take a cursory, superficial glance. In this series, Balcou is referencing the carefully orchestrated ritual of Japanese tea ceremonies or a state of mind, as in yoga when mind and body are in complete harmony.

In her meticulous preparation of the ceremonial process, Balcou first makes an accurate copy in wood of the original

BIOGRAPHY

Béatrice Balcou (1976, Tréguier, France) lives and works in Brussels. Her recent solo and dual exhibitions include *L'Économie des apostrophes* at La Ferme du Buisson Centre for Contemporary Art in Noisiel (2018), *Béatrice Balcou x Yuki Okumura: double suicide* at Kumagusuku at Kyoto Art Hostel kumagusuku in Kyoto (2018); *Kazuko Miyamoto >> Béatrice Balcou* at Exile gallery in Berlin (2017) and at L'Iselp in Brussels (2016); *Walk in Beauty* at Casino Luxembourg Contemporary Art Forum (2014); *Calme, luxe et volupté* at Le Quartier Centre for Contemporary Art in Quimper (2014); and *Chaque chose en son temps* at FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon (2013). Over the last few years her works have been featured in numerous group shows including *Article 132-75* at Kunstverein, Langenhagen (2019), *Sculptor (faire à l'atelier)* at FRAC Bretagne, Rennes (2018), *Tes Mains dans mes chaussures* at La Galerie Contemporary Art Center, Noisy-le-Sec (2017), *Un-Scene III* at WIELS, Brussels (2015), *Plateforme de jeux* at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015) and *Des choses en plus, des choses en moins* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014). In 2018, she was laureate, with Yuki Okumura, of the French Institute's residency at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, Japan. The works of Béatrice Balcou are part of the collections of FNAC Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; FRAC Corse, Corte; FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon and FRAC Ile-de-France, Paris.

Text: Lore Boon et Eva Wittocx

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SHE FALLS DOWN PLACEBO, 2017

2017 - walnut, ash, cedar, larch, oak, 1m² at floor level (after a work by Susan Collis) - Production: La Galerie, Contemporary art center at Noisy-le-Sec. Collection: National Centre for Visual Arts - FNAC



ST JOHN PLACEBO

2015 - deal, 49 x 25 cm - (after an early 16th-century sculpture, Northern Italy) - Production: Kaaitheater



SOL LEWITT-INSPIRED DOUBLE-CUBE PLACEBO

2016 - oak, meranti, 12,7 x 9,7 x 9,7 cm) - (after a work inspired by Sol LeWitt) - Production: La Galerie, Contemporary art center at Noisy-le-Sec



UNTITLED ARTIFICIAL LIGHT PLACEBO

2017 - oak, 4 pieces, each 114 x 2 x 2 cm - (after a work by Ane Mette Hol) - Production: La Kunsthalle - Contemporary art center at Mulhouse. Collection: Vanessa Desclaux and Émilie Renard (1/4)



UNTITLED PLACEBO

2017 - deal, meranti, 18 x 8,5 x 4,5 cm - (after a work by Pierre Tal Coat) - Production: Musée des Beaux-Arts van Angers



THE K. MIYAMOTO BOXES

2016 - mahoniy, beechwood, oak, birch, meranti, red cedar, deal - Production: ISELP. Collection: FRAC Franche-Comté

A series of seven boxes containing a placebo inspired by the works of Kazuko Miyamoto, those that had been damaged, destroyed, disappeared or had simply not received an interest from curators. Some of these works will be on show in the exhibition, while others are stowed away in their boxes. During the activation of the piece, the artist herself or mediators can invite one or two spectators to move them, put them to one side or unpack new works, possibly in the presence of the visitors, thereby giving the latter an impression of the events that regularly take place in the run-up to an exhibition.

PLACEBO PRINTS

The *Placebo Prints* were originally intended to (not) communicate ceremonies, but have become works in their own right. The photographs feature details of the placebo works, showing to advantage the different types of wood and textures, with their colour, grain structure and surface relief. Though 'just' prints, they are so realistic that you might easily mistake them for marquetry. The *Placebo Prints* emphasize the essential ambiguity of Béatrice Balcou's work: they are image and object, image and drawing, form and matter, all at the same time.



PLACEBOPRINT III

2016 - print on baryte paper, maple frame, 40 x 50 cm after the placebo work taken from *Vitrine (Film 3)* by Bojan Šarčević (2008) Production: ISELP/Ferme du Buisson



PLACEBOPRINT IV

2016 - print on baryte paper, maple frame, 40 x 50 cm after the placebo work taken from *Bain de Lumière* by Ann Veronica Janssens (1998) Production: ISELP/Ferme du Buisson



PLACEBOPRINT V

2016 - print on baryte paper, maple frame, 40 x 50 cm after the placebo work taken from an anonymous sculpture (16th century) Production: ISELP/Ferme du Buisson



PLACEBOPRINT IX

2016 - print on baryte paper, maple frame, 40 x 50 cm after the placebo work taken from *Hexagonal Floor Piece* by Kazuko Miyamoto (1975) Production: ISELP/Ferme du Buisson

ASSISTANT PIECES

Like the *Placebo Works*, the *Assistant Pieces* series is based on research into existing works of art by other artists. Again executed in wood, the works visualize the often invisible aids used to display them, like a shelf, a nail, a stand or a hanging system. You could say they assist the work of another artist. Here the *Assistant Pieces* are displayed with or separately from the original artworks, as pieces that remind us of the absence of the originals.



WALLS FOR K. MIYAMOTO

2016 - painted oak, 127 x 130 x 115,7 cm - Production: ISELP

KAZUKO MIYAMOTO, Illusion of Trail Dinosaur

(remake) 1979 - string, nails - Courtesy the artist



FOUR PINS FOR R. HEYVAERT

2019 - beechwood, 18 mm - Production: M Leuven



FOUR PINS FOR R. HEYVAERT

2019 - beechwood, 18 mm - Production: M Leuven



FOUR WEDGES FOR D. DE TCHARNER

2017 - beechwood, 15 x 3,5 x 1,5 cm



NAIL FOR I. IST HUZJAN

2017 - beechwood, 4,3 cm - Collection Nicole en Olivier Gevart

TÔZAI

2018 - video, colour, sound - 30 mins - Production:
Kyoto Art Hostel Kumagusuku/Villa Kujoyama/Ferme
du Buisson

Tôzai was filmed during Béatrice Balcou's recent residency at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto. It is her first ceremony made specially for camera. The video is based on a work by Yuki Okumura, which in its turn was inspired by the work of another Japanese artist, Genpei Akasegawa. In 1964 Akasegawa made a sculptural piece which he named Canned Universe. He ate the contents of a tin of crab meat and then removed the paper label and stuck it on the inside of the tin before resealing it. By reversing inside and outside, he sealed the whole universe in the can, as the title of the work tells us.

In 2012 Okumura organized a workshop to which each participant was asked to take along their favourite can of food and use it to make their own version of *Canned Universe*. Balcou was fascinated by Okumura's reinterpretation of the original and, while in Japan in 2018, she made a ceremony for it. Each participant sent their can by post, then she orchestrated a ceremony. With the help of a Japanese tea master, all the tins were laid out according to the rules. 'Tôzai' is the word used to signal the start of a Bunraku performance, the traditional Japanese puppet theatre. In accordance with the Bunraku model, several people are required to operate the puppets for the ceremony. Their bodies are concealed and they harmonize their gestures and rhythms in a choreography for hands.

TRANSFORMER



2018 - oak, - Production: Ferme du Buisson

Every Saturday between 14.00 and 16.00 hrs this installation will be operated according to the rules of the Bunraku puppets, with a mediator and a group of between three and five visitors.

Standing on a platform are four oak sculptures, some with handles. Though highly abstract, they nevertheless represent the shape of a head, a torso, a skirt and feet – the various parts of a puppet's body. These 'sculptures at rest' invite the spectators to operate them according to a protocol drawn up by the artist. With the help of the mediators, the sculpture can be assembled and moved by several visitors working together. As in the Japanese Bunraku theatre, three, four or five people work together to form the marionette, synchronizing their rhythmic movements as they do so, and moving and breathing in unison.

STOOLS FOR AN EXHIBITION SPACE



2016 - wood and metal, 31,5 x 45,6cm

These stools scattered around the exhibition space are usually part of Béatrice Balcou's Ceremonies. As a space both physical and mental they can be concretely used by the spectators, while also giving material expression to the presence and circulation of the public. Rather than assigning the viewer a set place, they are an invitation to choose a point of view.

artwork. These *Placebo Works* serve the same purpose as the wooden swords used in practice sessions in the martial arts or other teaching tools for children: they avoid damaging the original.

All the ceremonies and wooden copies are preceded by intensive preparation and meticulous research. For example, the measurements of the artwork that is to be replicated must be systematically recorded in a process that involves physical contact with the works.

Balcou presents her own interpretation of the work, drawing on discussions with the artists of the original works and a study of the instructions for their presentation and conservation. Consequently, the wooden replicas raise the question of similarity and dissimilarity, of the difference between original and copy. At the same time they have gradually acquired an autonomy of their own as independent exhibition pieces. Dissociated from the ceremonies, they form a kind of community of autonomous sculptures, while making reference to other artists. Each have a history and a different genesis. All being made of the same material - wood - these replicas create a tone-on-tone effect; paradoxically, though, this opacity invites us to look deeper, to observe in greater detail.



VITRINE (FILM 3) PLACEBO

2014 - beechwood, paper, 187 x 125 x 80 cm - (after a work by Bojan Šarčević) - Production: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain



BAIN DE LUMIERE PLACEBO

2014 - beechwood, 128 x 40 x 40 cm - (after a work by Ann Veronica Janssens) - Production: M Leuven

ANN VERONICA JANSSENS, Bain de Lumière

1988 - glass, water - Cera-collectie | M Leuven



CARS NON FINITO PLACEBO

2015 - oak, pine, 130 x 30,5 x 30,5 cm - (after a work by Nina Beier) - FRAC Franche-Comté Collection



CHILDREN'S TROLLEY (I HAD TROUBLE IN GETTING TO SOLLA SOLLEW) PLACEBO

2015 - deal, 42 x 43 x 21 cm - (after a work by Rodney Graham) - Production: Wiels



FORTUNATE LOSS #574 PLACEBO, 2018

2018 - cedar, beechwood, 32,4 x 41,9 x 1 cm, 21,5 x 30,4 x 0,1 cm - (after a work by Eva Barto YS) - Collectie Nicole en Olivier Gevart



HARD MEASURE PLACEBO

2015 - birch, mahogany, paper, faux suède - (after a work by Claire Barclay) - Production: FRAC Franche-Comté



LANDSCAPE PLACEBO

2015 - deal, meranti, 106,8 x 89 x 7 cm - (after a work by Théophile Narcisse Chauvel) - Production: Wiels