

VALENTIN CARRON

interview by Timothée Chaillou, translation by Dramé Antasylla

Timothée Chaillou — You say that the sculptures from the Giannada foundation installed in the city of Martigny have a "tribal function" that they are "trophies symbolizing their owner's power". While reproducing these sculptures, why do you express such an attraction for glory items that already enlighten a space (such as the traffic circle sculptures, and public parks)? I just can't tell if there is some inner disgust for power symbols, or some fascination, some kind of a delight in work about the comeback of the inhibited.

Timothée Chaillou — **Ha! The comeback of inhibited! I actually express disgust and fascination at the same time. I reproduce these sculptures, done with really precious materials - steel, marble, or bronze - to evacuate their original materiality. I did them in resin. I weaken them. I truly and effectively lighten them of their weight, while still saving their appearance. My position on this kind of art is something borrowed from the manifesto. With time going by, my opinion regarding this question becomes more ambiguous, and I feel more and more respectful for the so-called "third-zone artists".**

On this notion of values, Jim Shaw affirms that he presents his paintings from garage sales - his Thrift store paintings - from an urge to resist any interpretation and aesthetic judgment. **Polystyrene or resin allows me to evacuate this notion of value. I use symbols of power the same way Fabrice Gygi does - to turn power against itself.**

Fabrice Gygi says: "I was sometimes blamed for using the same authoritarian figures as the ones used by this society I criticise. But this is just a way of diversion, as a statement saying 'you have the nuclear bomb, so do I'".

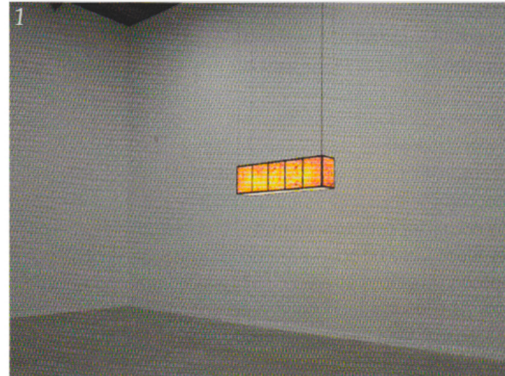
I have the power to reproduce, the power to set a reproduced object in a space, the same as an exhibition organiser who would gather in one place his own sculptures that are in reality set away one from the others. I believe I pay tribute to those sculptures more than I criticise them.

You once said: "I spend my days reproducing in real scale objects that repulse me".

I think this is a position I tend to move away from.

Can you talk about your Monsieur exhibition¹ at the Palais de Tokyo?

I exposed reproductions of sculptures - copies in the inner sense of the term. There were lamps I saw in this brewery in Basel looking like a tavern. They looked at the same time medieval and pre-Raphaelite in appearance. I removed their figurative substance to shape it as a gestural glass painting.



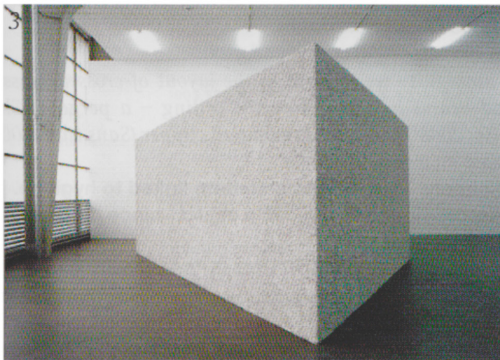
As for the lamps with this "abstract expressionism" pattern, the journey through the exhibition, after walking along the rendered green walls, ends up with the sight of a pale snake⁹ painted on the wall. Is that a metaphor for creeping power? **It's more literal, like a snake trying to get through a rendered wall. It's the figure of the Delirium Tremens. It allows, in the end, to deflate the massive aspect of the sculptures, lamps and walls. It's the only element on the wall**

facing all the heavy built figures set in the space. I wanted the exhibition to close in a gentle way.

In opposition to this lightness, these green rendered walls, the window shown at the Swiss Cultural Centre (Arrangement in Black and Green)², the white rendered bunker,³ playing the Partisans' hymn while bells were ringing – all had a virile side. These forms make a statement; being that massive, they dominate the space where they're lying, like an occupation of territory. In their weight lies the idea of gravitation.

Indeed, and this is on purpose. These pieces are architectural; they represent the typical materials of suburban properties. By emphasizing a masculine shape, they criticize the idea that it would be possible to subtract a production from any political or critical aspect. At the Palais de Tokyo,⁴ the first rendered wall was shaped to accelerate the space perspective, to strengthen a point at which the viewer would catch an illusion. It's a wall made possible by itself - the possibility of a wall. While progressing through the exhibition I had visions of Giorgio de Chirico paintings, as a way of setting elements into spaces.

Scales and perspectives are connected?



Yes. I'm obsessed by basic shapes and colours, and the idea of territory.

Olivier Mosset likes to fail in his paintings - to make the paint,



and the materials physically more present. The rendering is a rough material, and the sensation of its substance is visually obvious. Would that be a metaphor for the bitterness and the harmfulness?

Maybe. This bitterness is in opposition to minimal art productions - smoothed, polished, chromed.

The rendering hurts when you touch it, it's an unpleasant and aggressive material. Its function was to cover houses as a quick and easy decorative solution - like bad camouflage.

Absolutely. These are the symbols conveyed by rendering that made me use it. Rendering tastes like country. My use of it is at the same time sociological, and tied up to some personal stories. I like these basic contrasts between light and shadow, smoothness and sharpness.

This harsh side of rendering evokes one of the questions Monica Bonvicini asked some workmen: "What does your girlfriend think about your dry rough hands?" Monica Bonvicini also says, "that architecture is a fundamental asset in the identification process". And "we all need a roof above our heads. There's something primal in architecture that I sometimes miss when in art. The wall, the most basic structure in architecture meant everything to me".

I definitely agree with this position, especially about the importance of basic elements and basic shapes - the basics of everyday life.

Can you talk about your music?

I used the Bolero from Ravel for its rhythmic, glorious side, played on a xylophone. The music escapes from a rock with a polecat on its top (Fer de Lance, 2004). The Bolero is world music, a colonial sound. I used Frederic Francois's song Laissez moi vivre ma vie (Let me live my life) for an antique sculpture reconstitution (Lasciatemi vivere la mia vita, 2005⁵), which is a structure that hangs body pieces, made of bronze. The music helps me to stage this sculpture. At the Swiss Cultural Centre I use to play a bass version of Alain Barrière's song Ma vie (Ma vie 2008). I wanted something nostalgic.

Or romantic.

Yes, it's a self-portrait.



Variety is commonplace. It's a start point, an easily identifiable support. In François Truffaut's movie *La Femme d'a Côté* (1981), Bernard Coudray (played by Gerard Depardieu) worries that Mathilde Bauchard (Fanny Ardant) would lock herself away from the world. Fixing her radio he says: "I'm happy you show some interest toward the news, to get to know what's happening in the world." To which she replies: "No, I'm just listening to the songs, because they say the truth. The most stupid, the most true. Besides, they are not foolish. What do they say? They say 'Don't leave me', 'Your absence ruined my life', or 'I'm an empty house without you', 'Let me be the shadow of your shadow', or even 'Without love we're nothing at all'".

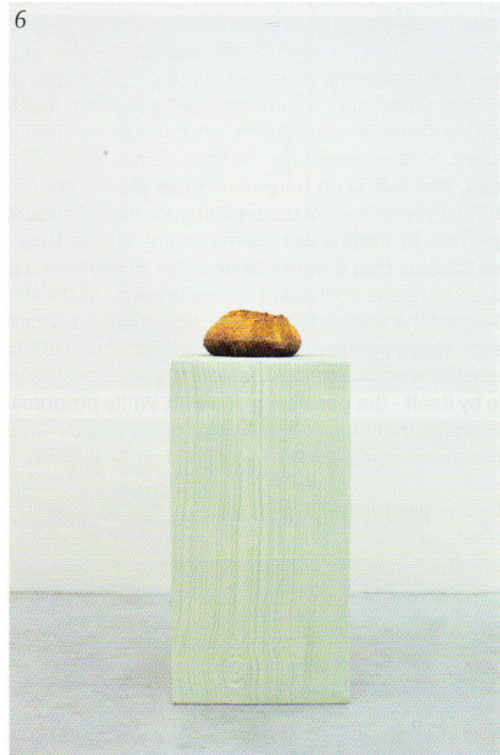
Yes these are the fundamentals, the poetry itself, and the spleen.

The melancholy - the despair - is strong elements in your production.

Yes. In a certain way art always deals with it. For example, I reproduced a piece of bread on a fake greenish wooden beam (*Sans Titre (Le Pain)*, 2010)⁶. It represents at the same time a melancholic form of the family unit, and - as Monica Bonvicini says, a basic - the daily bread. Something essential, which is the same, we find in popular music.

There is frequently in your production this contrast between heroism and its failure. Using falsely authentic elements

- materials inspiring ideas of terror, giving the illusion of a highlander authenticity, a vernacular aestheticism, as in a



tavern. Do you think that's what you're producing, a genuine and honest piece?

In fact, I envy the work of the artists I exploit. I love their honesty, and I'm fascinated by the gentrification, by the Chabrolian countryside, as well as the fierceness of Jacques Chessex farmers.

*An ambiguity we retrieve in the layout of crossed massive wood beams hanging from the ceiling - a pergola (*Clair matin*, 2008⁷) - and a tiny gold nail clipper (*Sans titre*, 2009⁸) hooked on one of the walls.*

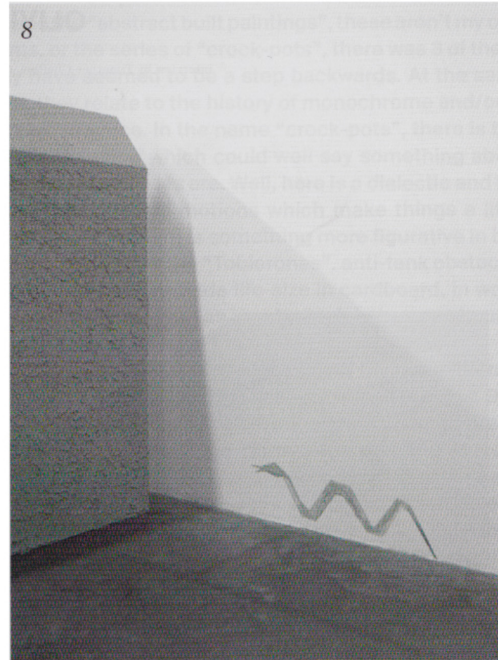
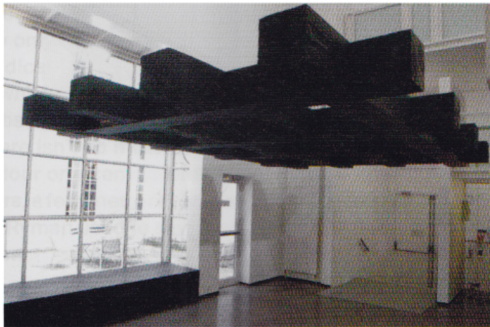
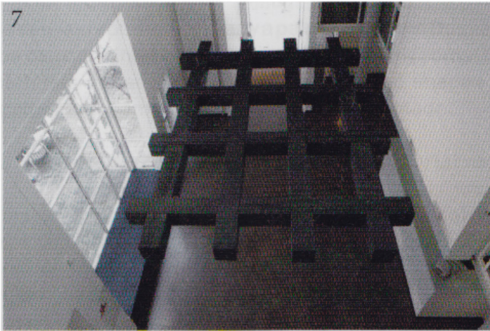
Absolutely. This clipper is an item linked to hygiene. It's a very precious and unusable object - since it's designed from pure gold.

It has the same function as the snake in the exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo.

Yes. Once again it's about contrast. The pergola was a minimal and decorative piece, extremely virile and heavy. The clipper is a tawdry item, useless.

Is that pergola an upside down podium, defining a sociability space, but from the ceiling opposite to the floor?

Definitely. Staged low in the space it's still a symbol of power - a heavy figure that evokes the resting time of a warrior.



1 Exhibition views of *Monsieur*, session Pergola, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (19 février-16 mai 2010)
All photographs by André Morin
Production Palais de Tokyo, courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich et 303 Gallery, New York

Valentin Carron, *lowEnzorn*, 2010
Métal laqué noir, verre translucide peint
Unique, 40 x 88 x 28 cm

Valentin Carron, *Rance club IV*, 2010
Mur crépi, dimensions variables

Valentin Carron, *Stark geträBig nervös*, 2010
Polystyrène, fibre de verre, résine acrylique, peinture acrylique
Unique, 299 x 100 x 100 cm

Valentin Carron, *Erde*, 2010
Polystyrène, fibre de verre, résine acrylique, peinture acrylique
Unique
298 x 100 x 80 cm

Valentin Carron, *5, Place de Rome*, 2010
Mur crépi
Dimensions variables

Valentin Carron, *Löwenzorn*, 2010

Métal laqué noir, verre translucide peint
Unique
33 x 33 x 33 cm

Valentin Carron, *L'inavouable extase*, 2010
Polystyrène, fibre de verre, résine acrylique, peinture acrylique
241 x 123 x 81 cm

Valentin Carron, *Fructus*, 2010
Polystyrène, fibre de verre, résine acrylique, peinture acrylique
190 x 80 x 66 cm

2 Valentin Carron, *Arrangement in Black and Green*, 2007
Wood, cement, sand, paint
Dimensions adaptable

3 *Rance Club II*, 2006
Wood, plasterboard, plaster, paint, sound
Installation 240 x 895 x 405 cm / 94 1/2 x 352 3/8 x 159 1/2 inches
Walls: height 240 cm, thickness 30 cm, lengths 700 cm, 328 cm, 549 cm, 545 cm

4 Valentin Carron, *L'inavouable extase*, 2010
Polystyrène, fibre de verre, résine acrylique, peinture acrylique
241 x 123 x 81 cm

Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich
Photography © André Morin

5 Valentin Carron, *Lasciatemi vivere la mia vita*, 2005
Metal, polystyrene, fiberglass, acrylic resin, paint
370 x 160 x 90 cm / 145 5/8 x 63 x 35 3/8 inches

6 Valentin Carron, *Sans Titre (le pain)*, 2010
Styrofoam, fibreglass, resin, acrylic paint
Installation 98 x 39 x 39 cm / 38 5/8 x 15 3/8 x 15 3/8 inches
Pedestal 85 x 45 x 45 cm / 33 1/2 x 17 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches
Bread ø 85 cm / 33 1/2 inches, Höhe 13 cm / 5 1/8 inches

7 Valentin Carron, *Clair Matin*, 2007
Styrofoam, fibreglass, resin, acrylic paint
Object 500 x 340 x 25 cm / 196 7/8 x 133 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches
4 joists: 500 x 25 x 25 cm;

8 Valentin Carron, *Sans titre*, 2010
Peinture murale
23 x 108 cm
Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich, Galerie

Praz-Delavallade, Paris, et 303 Gallery, New York

9 Valentin Carron, *Untitled*, 2009
750 yellow gold
edition of 5