

TOWARDS A NEW POETICS OF CONCRETE

NB: a video is linked when a "white index" appears.



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Critique by E. Bouvard

Biography



PHILOSOPHY

As an artist and an engineer, I associate the most recent technologies to the power of [poetic imagination](#).

Creation process

A synaesthesia (intellectual evocation of the sea when I brushed a concrete wall) provoked my desire to link concrete to the sea.

Now, my work evolves from [sea](#) towards sky, clouds, stars, infinite... [space](#), another fearsome and fascinating universe.

The perpetual motion of the sea resonates with the infinity of space. Continuity, no border... neither in time nor in space.

Concrete

I choose to work with concrete (omnipresent and often unpleasant material) to convey emotions, feelings and messages.

[How, with a few grams of concrete, can we be transported to the sea?](#)

Concrete / Poetry

The human being is at the heart of my creation

My work may be apprehended at different levels. Touching is the most [universal](#) and direct.

Nothing is exclusive

Driven by this deep conviction, I put concrete into museums and take out from there Contemporary Art.



THEMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF ARTWORKS

* public commission

REFERENCE

nOsTRA CENA (2007)
IS TIME TO DREAM THAT SHORT ? (2008)
FIRST STEP (2009)
RENAISSANCE (2009)
IMPRESSION SOLEIL TOUCHANT (2010) *
THE CATHEDRAL (2010)
FUTURE MOON (2010)
SUSPENSION (2012)
TAGS (2011)
THE ARK OF MONET (2013) *
ESCAMPETTE (2014)
BARRE (2014)
INSTANTS (2014) *
PLANETS PHOSPHO (2014) *
NEVERMORE (2014) *
CAUSSE (2016)
BIG BLUE (2017)

MATERIAL

CRYSTALLIZATION (2009)
TAPIS-PLIS (2007)
GREY WAVY (2009)
CONCRETE SQUARE FEET (2010)
À-TEMPS (2010)
ROSE SOLEIL (2010)
FONDANTS (2010)
MIKO (2010)
SOULAGES (2010)
THE PEARL OF LAOS (2011)
WILD PLANETS (2013)
MEURTELLE (2013)
KRYSTALLOS (2013)
COUP DE SANG (2014)
SOUFFFRE (2014)
FUMES (2014)
SPOR (2014) *
GALLOPING FOAM (2014) *
CONTREPEAUX (2014)
BURNT (2015)

TRANSPARENCY

CONCRETE FEATHER (2008)
SECOND MOON (2008)
COSMO (2010)
PLUME (2009) *
WHITE WAVY (2010)
CAKE (2010)
MIRAGES (2010)
WILD CLOUDS (2010)
FEATHERS' BOX (2010)
LITOTES (2011)
PARAMARTHA (2012)
GREEN FLASH (2014)
MIDNIGHT (2014)
MEGACONCRETO (2014)
SHIVERING SHEET (2015)
PHARES (2015) *
A BEAT (2016) *
PYRAMIDIONS (2018)

RECOLLECTION

TIDE MATRIX (2007)
MUR OCÉANE (2008)
BARREL (2008)
MON AMOUR (2009)
MUR NUÉES (2010)
ABYSSES (2010)
VULCANO (2010)
M.D.R. (2011)
MEMORY DE GIRAFFE (2012)
CONCRETOTOGRAPHIES (2012)
MÉMOIRES DE VOYAGES (2013)
MINI WALLS (2013)
IMMÉMORIAL (2014)
AGUA (2014)
MINI AGUA (2014)
SCANNED FROTTAGES (2015)
BLAZING SUN (2015)
CRISTAL A (2015)
DORS-DINE (2016) *
SIREINE (2016)

TAGS



three Colored Engravings® on concrete slabs of 1 ft. * 1 ft. * 0.5 in., 2011.

Two common points between these Colored Engravings on concrete:

- Each character is symbolic of his time. The projection of his image (in fact, his advertisement) is ensured by the most popular media of this time: David's official painting for Bonaparte, poster advertising for Rosie, internet for Obama.
- Each of these visual representations is supported in an implicit or explicit way by a famous slogan, which becomes a signature, a tag: "Follow me", "We Can do It!", "Yes We Can".

Their strength of expression moves them closer to contemporary street tags, since all three are engraved on... concrete!

I also introduce deliberately a solid color fill into each of these pieces which underlines a key distinction for each character: Bonaparte's hat in echo with the eye of his horse, the safety helmet of Rosie and the presidential suit of Barack.

In addition, I choose a diagonal pixel to highlight the dynamics of the portrait of Bonaparte, while I use an identical, more digital pixel for Rosie and Barack, to evoke their proximity with TV.



detail

GREY WAVY



sheets of 4ft. * 2.6 ft. * 0.5 in. made of Craters Concrete[®], 2009.



GREY WAVY crawls, topples and takes off to escape from the workshop.

The top side of this concrete sheet is perfectly smooth.
On the underside, a landscape of irregular craters appears.

This *GREY WAVY* is one of the characteristic illustrations of my work on ambivalence:

- simple design but complex shape,
- raw, heavy, inert material but poetic evocation of a light and alive work,
- pouring all at once in a perfectly smooth mold but different result on each of its faces,
- serial manufacturing by the same technique but each work is unique.



CONCRETE SQUARE FEET

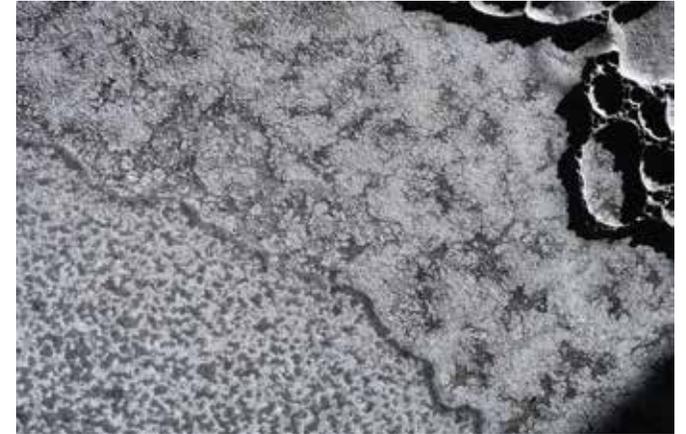


slabs of 1 ft. * 1ft. * 0.5 in. made of Craters Concrete[®], 2010.

Create new planets rather than reaching for the stars.

These *CONCRETE SQUARE FEET* were brought back during the last expedition on *SECOND MOON* (planet released in *Second Life* on December 24th, 2008).

As different pieces of a planet, they are all unique, and their shape reflects their history.



details and views in the studio

WILD PLANETS



Craters Concrete® balls 1 to 4 in. in diameter with embedded optical fibers, 2013.

These *WILD PLANETS* are made of concrete but they seem to float!

Each of these stars has its own identity by its birth, its name, its form, its peculiarities, its course.

When you approach it, you can appreciate its uniqueness with flashes of light, craters, faults, matte parts, colors, lakes, rings,...



CONCRETE FEATHER



numeric data, video, Craters Concrete[®], 2008.

A feather in Craters Concrete takes its flight in four beats:

1st BEAT: VIRTUAL 3D OBJECT

As a contemporaneous creator, it is essential for me to use state-of-the-art tools.

Numerical technologies allow me to give birth to pieces I can't physically create: a feather made of Craters Concrete .

2nd BEAT: ANIMATED VIRTUAL OBJECT

The virtual concrete feather is animated in a short movie.

3rd BEAT: LINK BETWEEN VIRTUAL AND REAL

The movie, being virtual, is in dialogue with the *CONCRETE SQUARE FOOT*, being real. The *CONCRETE SQUARE FOOT* is placed on the floor, in front of the movie screen, with a "TOUCH" sign located next to it.



4th BEAT: VIRTUAL REALITY IN HUMAN BRAIN

In the theme of a festival (based on virtual realities) where this work is shown, a virtual response is expected when a visitor touches the *CONCRETE SQUARE FOOT*.

However, in contrast to this, the movie runs independently.

As the expectation is not realized, the visitor's imagination begins to run...

That is the dive into virtuality.



COSMO



Craters Concrete® balls of 1 to 5 in. in diameter and aerogels in a lighting box of 7 * 4 * 4 ft., 2010.

COSMO is a new universe created within a confined space, but not closed thanks to reflections with its environment.

Resting on its Milky Way ("nebula" light) appear *PLANETS* (concrete balls) and clouds (aerogels), the whole forming an unstable and fragile system.

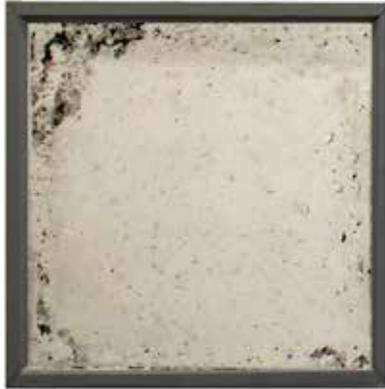
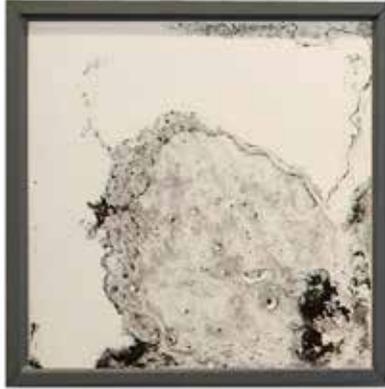
Each *PLANET* is unique, with flashes of light, craters, faults, lakes, rings, colors... Some collided with stellar objects (nails, crystals ...).

Each of these stars has its own identity by its birth, its name, its form, its peculiarities, its course.



different views

MIRAGES



prints of black concrete on wooden panels of 1.8 ft. * 1.8 ft. * 0,1 in., 2010.

Evocation of the transparency, the fragility ...

The a priori opaque, solid, male concrete becomes translucent, delicate, feminine eyelid make-up.

A few grams of powder put in a frame and hung on the wall.
It is the same graphic universe as the Craters Concrete but just with a dust of material, unlike the robust slabs of *CONCRETE SQUARE FEET*, *CRYSTALLIZATION*, *SUSPENSION*...



detail

WILD CLOUDS



concrete projections ranging from 1 to 8 in. long, 2010.



As opposed to utilizing a standard mould technique, this concrete frees itself, going away from any defined shape. It then becomes a wild cloud.

Every piece is the result of a multitude of concrete spatters.



FEATHERS' BOX



3 screens displaying 6 videos, from 2 to 6 minutes, synchronized and played in parallel, 2010.

On the left screen:

FOLLOWING THE LINE (6 min), *PORTHOLE-CHERUBS* (3 min 37 s), *THREE BENCHES OF FEATHERS* (2 min 28 s), *HORIZONTAL FLIGHT OF TALL FEATHERS* (2 min 34 s), *EMOTION ANGEL* (2 min 19 s), *FOUR FEATHERS* (2 min 22 s).

On the central screen:

FOLLOWING THE LINE (6 min), *IMMERSION IN CLOUDS* (3 min 37 s), *SUCH CLOUD* (2 min 28 s), *HORIZONTAL FLIGHT OF TALL FEATHERS* (2 min 34 s), *CLOUD OF FEATHERS* (2 min 19 s), *BIG FALL OF FEATHERS* (2 min 22 s).

On the right screen:

FOLLOWING THE LINE (6 min), *PORTHOLE-CHERUBS* (3 min 37 s), *TWO CLOUDS* (2 min 28 s), *HORIZONTAL FLIGHT OF TALL FEATHERS* (2 min 34 s), *LEVITATION* (2 min 19 s), *ANGEL BACHELARD* (2 min 22 s).

During videos *HORIZONTAL FLIGHT OF TALL FEATHERS*, we see feathers, made of Craters Concrete, floating and circulating from one screen to another.

They arise from the work *PLUME*, realized and performed in the church St. Merri for Nuit Blanche 2009.

They then fell from the sky, licking the stone columns and the other architectural elements of the church.

17 movies were played in synchronization in the church, which was emptied of its chairs and plunged into the dark.

The angel who flew in the crypt of the church appears now in the clouds of videos *FOLLOWING THE LINE* and *PORTHOLE-CHERUBS*.

It is always a matter of transparency, breath, words, colors, synaesthesia ...

MUR NUÉES

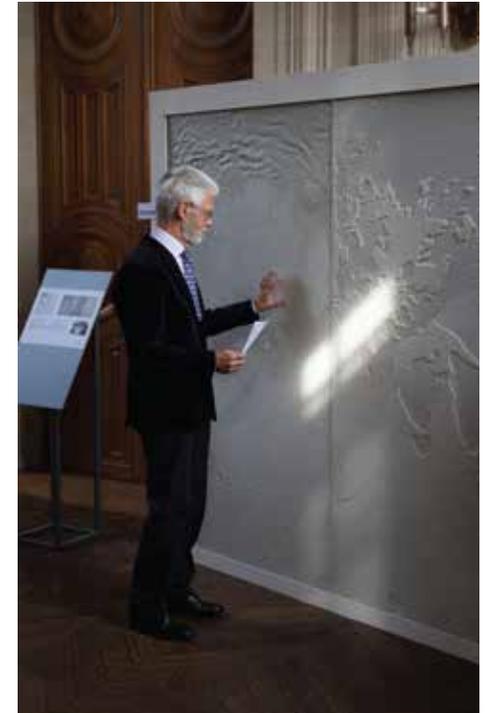


wall: 9.9 ft. * 6.6 ft. * 0.7 in. made of grey Craters and Polysensual Concrete[®], 2010.

This wall is neither a barrier nor a border, but an invitation to travel. This intimate journey paradoxically takes the visitor to a very distant universe: the world of clouds.

Its harshness of surface catches the eye. It is irregular, plural, intriguing. The visitor still approaches and the desire increases ... An irresistible desire to touch, to feel, to find! So, he brushes it. And the wall reacts. It expresses itself: thanks to the sonic and bright effects of its integrated electronic devices, the visitor hears the sound of clouds (that the concrete has recorded previously) and sees blurs of light through the concrete. He will go through an unexpected visual landscape consisting of breaths of air, rustles of clouds, whirlpools of water, crackles of ice or seismic vibrations translated into soft lights or brilliant flashes.

The climatic landscape created by the visitor, according to his magnetic field, becomes chaos or harmony.

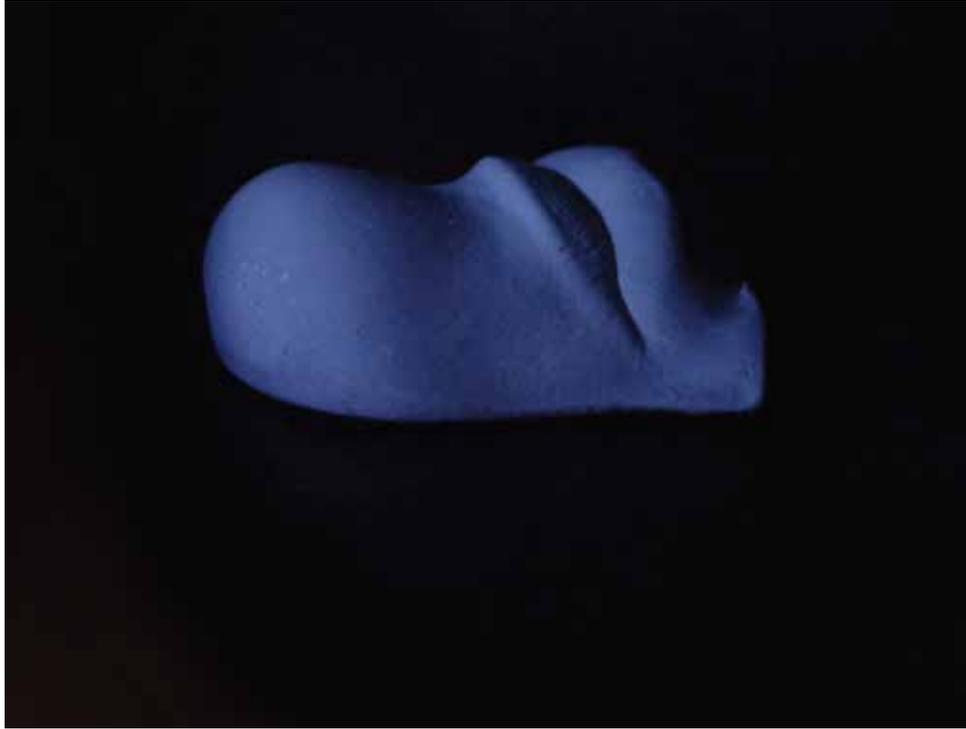


sound recording of the clouds



detail

ABYSSES



sculpture made of grey concrete of 4 * 3 in. from the mould of my lips, 2010.

A square black box is elevated at one meter from the ground.
On one side, there are two holes for viewing into the box.
It is necessary to bend over to discover *ABYSSES* through them.

By getting closer, you will perceive the skin texture and the softness of lips.
By going away, you will discern the surprising hilly relief of this concrete landscape.

The light on *ABYSSES*, hidden inside the box, is bluish to intensify
the strangeness of this piece.

With *ABYSSES*, I aim to question the formal representation (they are my lips ...
and they are not my lips) and the relationship between "concrete" and "touch".



close view

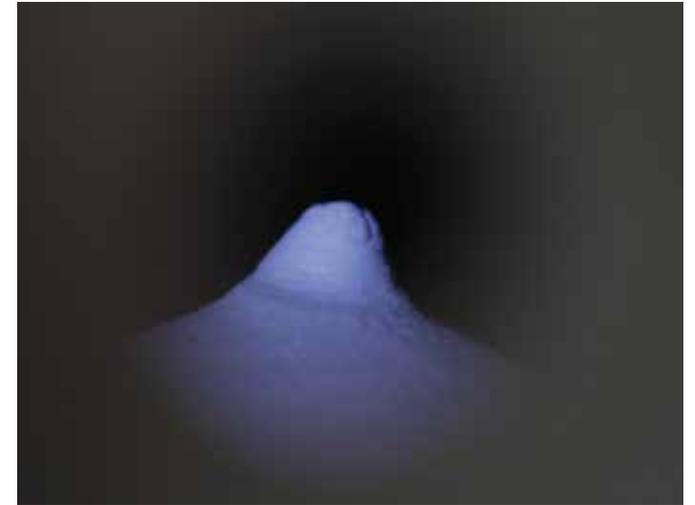


far view

VULCANO



sculpture made of grey concrete of 4 * 3 in. by moulding, 2010.



close view



far view

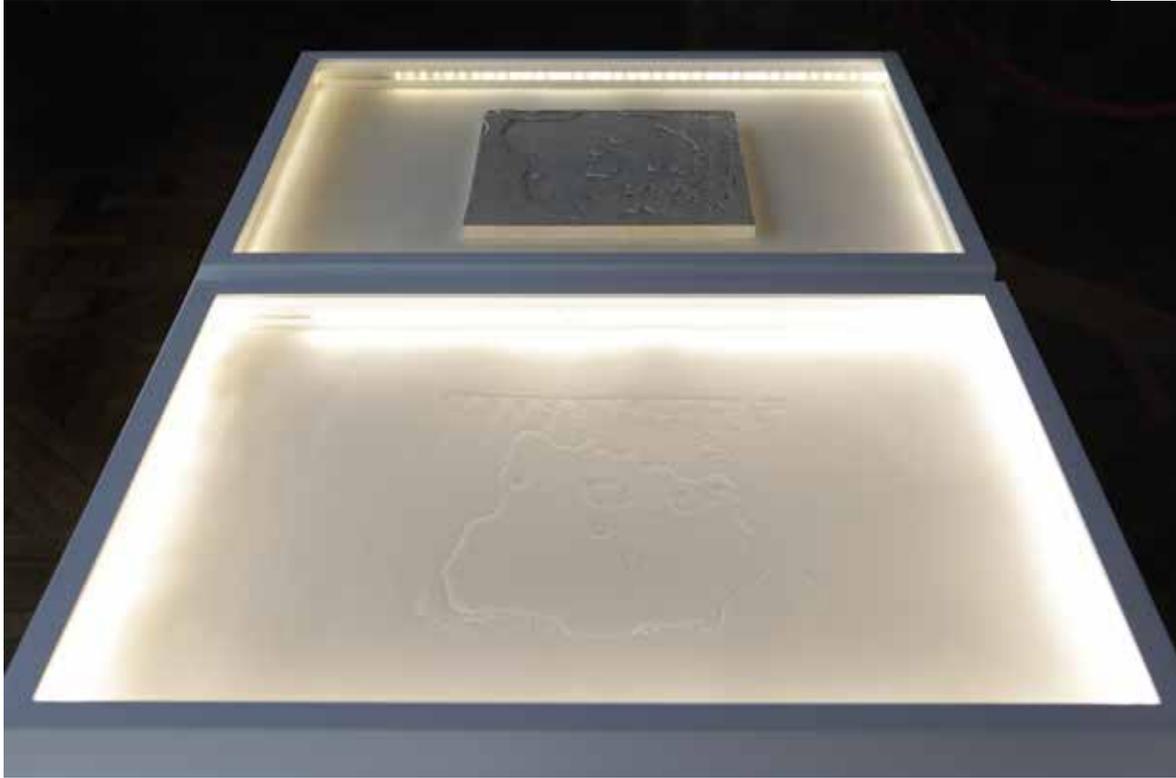
A square black box is elevated at one meter above the ground.
On one side, there are two holes for viewing into the box.
It is necessary to bend over to discover *VULCANO* through them.

By getting closer, you will perceive the skin texture.
By going away, you will discern the soft attractive hilly relief of this concrete landscape.

The light on *VULCANO*, hidden inside the box, is bluish to intensify the strangeness of this piece that sculpts the landscape as a volcano.

With *VULCANO*, I aim to question the formal representation and the relationship between "concrete" and "touch".

CONCRETOGRAPHIES



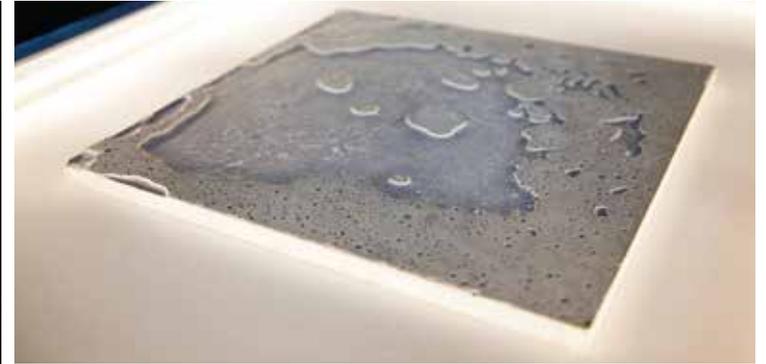
Craters Concrete® slab of 1ft. * 1ft * 0.5 in. and sheet of paper of 1.6 ft. * 2.3 ft., 2012.

Every time we retain and recollect a memory, we modify it.

Each *CONCRETOGRAPHY* works in dyptique.

The first part is a concrete slab placed on a paper sheet.
Its cratered surface testifies to my action on the concrete during its curing phase.

The second part is constituted only of the paper sheet, but its surface is embossed.
It is the impression of the concrete slab provoked by a press, as is for lithography.
Its relief is thus the concrete in negative, a translation distorted by my previous action.



details

CRITIQUE BY ÉMILIE BOUVARD

“Memory and matter

In Physics, we speak about the “memory of the material” for the “alloys shaped by memory”.

It is a metaphor: how can concrete, this composite, or this alloy have memory? These are inert materials, lifeless, soulless, without feeling. What would be their senses?

If a memory lodges itself in the folds and creases of the “grey matter” of the brain, or in the flashes of the nervous system, it cannot be established, in the sense that we understand it. Indeed, we speak of the memory of materials in the sense that they are capable of recalling an ancient form, or keeping a new form. They have no true history, because that would imply a conscience and a narrative, however minimal. Even in general, as shown in Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* of 1896, as memory requires a material substrate, like life or thought of which it is but a synonym, it cannot then be understood as a thing. This is the perennial problem of the relationship between mind and body, from Descartes to Bergson and in the cognitive sciences.

Yet some materials record human memory - its history - in a way that tends to make us forget that they are only ink and paper, parchment, tape: these are the foundations of archives. The singular nature of their content, and sometimes their shape, acting like ancient documents, manuscripts, or modern documents, having been formatted in a particular way, at least awaken our sensitivity and intelligence when they are read - as in front of unique individuals. For people, they are not strictly equal to the sum of what they tell us, even after exhaustive study of everything about them. The value is not purely informative, it is also emotional: they are the material of our collective memory. They have a legitimate existence as objects, they are tangible evidence that “this has been”, they are an actual and real presence of the past, they travel through time, they form our patrimony.



detail of *MUR OCÉANE*, made of Craters® and Polysensual Concretes®, 2007

The concrete of Milène Guermont affects us like archival papers, but also in other ways, using our experiences and our sensory and aesthetic memory (in the etymological sense). For a number of years this singular artist has complex technological practices to animate this inanimate material – the world of matter. Using sensors that trigger sounds or vibrations, embedding optical fibers that create light in this inert material, refining the material as a skin or forcing it into random forms, her work evokes emotion in that from which it should be absent. Therefore the concrete becomes a kind of memory of sounds, tactile sensations, images, capable of reacting to the stimulus of spectators’ bodies, and in turn inspiring their own associations and memories. It awakens the memory of the body, stimulates the mind, and plays on our synesthetic abilities. Here are the “correspondances” of Baudelaire: if this rustling, quivering concrete can cause me to dream of the sea, it is because I remember the hard, wet smash of water which then withdraws, taking with it the sand from the beach.

Our collective sensitivity is memorial and spiritual; memory is a sensitive organ, and that's what interests Milène Guermont. ”

Émilie Bouvard,
art historian, art critic and curator at Musée Picasso Paris, 2012.

BIOGRAPHY

Selection of commissioned & public artworks

- *BALANCE*, Père Lachaise, Paris (2021)
- *SIREINE*, Monaco (2017)
- *CAUSSE*, Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris (2016)
- *AGUA*, GA Company HQ, Toulouse (2015)
- *INSTANTS*, Utah Beach (2014)
- *FREE-PLANETS*, 70th anniversary of World War II, several countries (2014)
- *SPOR*, French Building Federation, Rouen (2014)
- *L'ARCHE DE MONET*, Le Havre (2013)
- *PARAMARTHA*, Buddhist Temple, Bussy-St-Georges (2012)
- *SUSPENSION*, Legallais Bouchard Company, Hérouville-St-Clair (2011)
- *M.D.R.*, Lycée Ste Marie, Neuilly-sur-Seine (2011)
- *FIRST STEP* on the Devil's Bridge, St-Guilhem-le-Désert (2008)

Selection of exhibitions

- *PYRAMIDIONS* at JS-Pathé Foundation, Town Hall of the 13th arr., UNESCO, next to Musée d'Orsay Paris, FR & at Trinity House, ICE-Westminster, London, UK (2018) *
- *NOVA XX*, Halles St-Géry, Brussels (2017)
- *ELEVATION*, St-Maur Castle, Saint-Tropez (2017)
- French Pavilion at the International Exhibition, Astana (2017) *
- *ART PARIS ART FAIR*, Paris (2016, 2008)
- *CRISTAL A*, Best of SCAM, Paris (2016) *
- *SPONGE MAN*, Passager Museum of the Paris Region (2016)
- *A BEAT*, Eiffel Tower, Montparnasse Tower and Place de la Concorde, Paris (2016) *
- *LES CRISTAUX*, Mineralogy Museum, Mines ParisTech (2016) *
- *NUIT BLANCHE & COP 21* with *PHARES*, Place de la Concorde, Paris (2015, 2016) *
- *VILLA DATRIS*, Foundation for Sculpture, L'Isle/Sorgue (2015, 2013)
- *BARRE*, Fine Arts Museum, Caen (2015) *
- *VOILA LES DELTON!*, Musée de la chasse et de la nature, Paris (2014)
- *NUIT BLANCHE PARIS*, Town Hall of the 15th arr. (2014) *, St Merri Church (2009) *
- *STEEL & FREEDOM*, Otto Zoo Gallery, Milan (2013)
- *NUBES*, Caja Galeria, Tijuana (2013)
- *POLYSENSUAL*, XL suite of Au Vieux Panier, Marseille (2013) *
- *ART PROTECT*, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris (2013)
- *BÉTON A TOUCHER*, *BÉTON ENCHANTÉ!*, Children's Museum, Paris (2013) *
- *MEMOIRES SENSIBLES!*, Museum of National Archives of France, Paris (2012) *
- *DÉCOUVREMENTS*, Contemporary Art Center, Epinal (2012)
- *FOLIES OF PHA TAD KE* with Claude Parent, Cartier Foundation, Paris (2011)
- *CONCRETE LANDSCAPES*, Town Hall of the 8th district, Paris (2011) *
- *FLUID ADAGIO*, Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City (2011)
- *NORMANDIE IMPRESSIONNISTE*, Abbaye aux Dames, Caen (2010) *
- *AUTO/PORTRAITS*, Galerie Jeune Création, Paris (2010)
- *LINKS*, New Art Center, New York (2009)
- *ART BASEL MIAMI*, Bertin Toub Blanc Gallery, Miami (2008) *
- International Biennial of young artists, Rome (2007)

MILÈNE GUERMONT

born in 1981

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Selection of distinctions

- Maria & Hap Wagner Award, world competition (2020)
- Eisenhower Fellow, world competition (2020)
- Laureate of Vox Femina - Notable Women, FR (2020)
- Peace Hero Award offered by several international institutions (2019)
- Chair of the jury "Insides" of the World Festival of Architecture, NL (2018, 2019)
- Honorary Fellow of Queen Mary, UK (2018)
- Patronage by the FNC of UNESCO for the international travel of *PHARES* (2017)
- NOVA XX artprize winner (international competition) (2017)
- Named by Ingenieurs et Scientifiques de France to be the voice of France on the Women's Committee of the WFEO, UNESCO's partner (2017)
- *PHARES*, the only artwork (and the only French project) shown at UNESCO HQ for the final ceremony of the International Year of Light (2016)
- *PHARES* supported by the Presidency of France, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Sustainable Development; Interior; Culture; and by the President of Paris Region, the Mayor of Paris City and the Ambassador of Egypt in France; and received distinctions from IYL-UNESCO, COP21 & PARIS POUR LE CLIMAT (2016, 2015)
- *MEGA CONCRETO*, "coup de coeur" of DDessin - drawing art fair (2015)
- *CRISTAUX*, supported by SCAM, CNC, ARCAD, Arts Center Synesthesie (2014)
- *FUNNEL*, finalist in the Anonymous international competition (2012)
- *LITOTES*, awarded in the international competition by the Utah Ballet West Co. and by the American Institute of Architects of Salt Lake City (2011)
- *OSEO EMERGENCE*, prize given by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research for my innovations (2009)
- *MUR NUÉES*, awarded by the Bettencourt-Schueller Foundation (2009)
- *POLYSENSUAL CONCRETE*, awarded in the DEFI JEUNES (2008)
- *ITDTS?*, finalist of the High Prize of Creation of Paris (2008)
- Art&Creation grant given by Paris City (2008)
- *BARREL*, finalist in the Noilly Prat international competition of sculpture (2008)
- *MUR OCEANE*, awarded in the competition by the French Concrete Fed. (2008)
- *CRE@RTEM* first prize given by MEDEF (Association of French CEOs) (2004)

Education

- Art and Object Design diploma from the National Superior School of Decorative Arts (ENSAD), Paris, FR (2007)
- Engineering diploma (major: materials/process) from the National Polytechnic Institute (ENSIACET) in partnership with Mines of Nancy (ENSMN), FR (2004)

* solo show

APPENDIX

Craters Concrete®

Type of concrete with a patented creation process, in which the surface contains a random mix of unique crater depressions. Works best on high-performance concrete.

Polysensual Concrete®

High-performance concrete with embedded electronic sensors that respond differently based on one's magnetism. Such sensual reactions include light, sound, and vibration.

Colored Engraving®

Patented process to engrave colored imagery in 3 dimensions into concrete surfaces. Works best on high-performance concrete.

All the works are proprietary to Milène Guermont.
Patent Pending.
All rights reserved.