



I AM BEFORE, I AM ALMOST, I AM NEVER

Exhibition

26 SEPT. 2020 – 24 JAN. 2021

Opening on Saturday, 26 September, 3 - 6 pm

**GRACE DENIS, CECILIA GRANARA, MARKUS
MARTINOVITCH, MORGANE TSCHIEMBER, IAN
WILSON**

With artist films by:

**VIRIYA CHOTPANYAVISUT, SARAH NEFISSA
BELHADJALI & MÉLANIE VILLEMOT, WURA-NATASHA
OGUNJI, MOE SATT, ENE-LIIS SEMPER, GHITA SKALI,
IP WAI LUNG, GENTLE WOMEN**

Curator: EKATERINA SHCHERBAKOVA

Insomniacs rarely have dreams, so they're forced to create their own dreams. Like I do. In the pitch dark one night, I was looking for a way to be everywhere without actually going anywhere. It meant extending myself, going out, allowing yourself to be bigger. A never-ending quest. Fortunately, you can't be held responsible for your dreams. Rather than completely personal, they offer a large and heightened space that belongs to us all. In response to the Parc Saint-Léger's exhibition invitation, the four dreams presented here open onto countless existential considerations.

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pougues-les-Eaux
www.parcsaintleger.fr



Four. It is the number of points on a compass, seasons, and limbs of the human body. Place yourself in a seed of the world's most common plant, listen to Donna Haraway and Aristotle having a casual conversation about time, find an all-purpose electric tree, and receive a puzzling message from a stranger about the metaphysical properties of breathing...

For Bifo¹, poetry is only perceptible through breath, because it is its projection. Together, these two phenomena provide an ontological rhythm, a tempo that exists beyond established conventions. The duo's super inclusive nature, which stimulates the socio-political imagination, is based on the principle of *poiesis*. Excessive activity results from abundance, not scarcity. The activity of something that didn't exist before is generated. Ubiquitous poetic expression. The exhilarating moment of creating something that doesn't exist, the *kairos* as Donna Haraway² calls it, the time of joy and pain. The time of trouble. The time of becoming.

According to Luce Irigaray³, when ancient Greek philosophers focused on the logos they robbed us of the process of becoming. The latter is called *apeiron* and can be described as an infinite phenomenon, like a fertile void or primal chaos. Seeing the world through the *apeiron* paradigm entails endless variations of relationships, by offering scope for differentiation. For fear of excessively inclusive openness, such a vision was excluded from a world dominated by *logos*, which spawned a closed and determinate framework, where relationships can only exist by similarity.

This exhibition, which started with four semi-theoretical and semi-fictional dreams by the curator celebrating the notion of becoming, features five site-specific atmospheres, a video program, and a sound installation. The latter is a dream reading given by Simon.e Thiébaud.

A dream's message can seem clear to us when we're asleep. But when we awaken, we can only search among many possible interpretations. Were we to summarize the essence of this exhibition in a single sentence, it could be the search for our place in the world in relation to other forms of life. Or a study of our inner worlds and our personal relationships to ourselves. And the acceptance of its sometimes painful diversity as being a part of our own individual space. Accepting non-Cartesian principles as a response to power linked to capitalist and patriarchal networks. The history of introspections about places and people is illustrated through biographical myths and self-fiction.

Upon entering the exhibition, the visitors are greeted by Cecilia Granara's walls breathing a poignant message. Her work *Cycles* personifies an allegorical map of cosmic principles as well as personal self-reflection. Her vibrant painting portrays the complex fusion of

¹ Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2019

² Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2016

³ Luce Irigaray, *In the Beginning, She Was*, Bloomsbury, London, 2012



experiences which permeate flesh and bones, words and thoughts, raw materials and mortal remains. Generous gifts and evictions, the miraculous birth of a being and the death of its origin. The work's coded language can be uncoded with Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. The painting *Seba (Space in Your Head)* changes the beholder's outlook: a room without a ceiling is studded with "Seba" signs, shaped like starfish. In Egyptian mythology, the term 'seba' means discipline or learning and is associated with gates and doorways. Heavenly bodies were also used as data to be interpreted or were given meanings to describe earthly processes. The Seba symbol also often adorned representations of the sky goddess Nut.

In the painting opposite, *Body Confusion (Corpse Pose)*, a green woman is covered with eyes shaped like mandorlas and resembling leaves. She lies under a tree, with her organs and limbs as its fruit incorporating the seven chakra colors. Covered with eyes, she observes her outer and inner selves as she lies in the Savasana pose. The Ouroboros, a snake biting its tail that represents eternal cyclic renewal, becomes a meta-image of the pictorial composition before her, with her skin absorbing the colors of the frescoes on the opposite walls like a mirror. Filled with joy and rage, desire and expectation, sorrow and serenity, this work is a sign by sign depiction of a timeless view of the world, as it exists and becomes apparent solely through ourselves. Without an origin, it can neither see nor view itself.

The nature of Morgane Tschiember's hanging tree trunks sways between a belly and an exuvie (the skin animals shed when they moult), thus illustrating the relationship between substances and psychology. Rubber, a durable and unexpected material, is also extraordinarily malleable. Completely natural, made from trees' latex, it holds the trunks, thus forming a skin or protective layer of what it envelops. Filled with plaster and wood, the rubber tubes offer a space with one side or "belly" touching the other, thus allowing the full structure to exist. The rubber skin is covered in and nourished by jojoba oil and essential spikenard oil, one of the most spiritually and medically significant liquids, extensively used in ancient rituals (Mary Magdalene used essential spikenard oil to massage Jesus Christ's feet, which she then dried with her hair). The metal chains, a cold material, are covered with crystallized wax, which creates a surprisingly smooth surface. These metamorphosing parts are supported by various materials, and at the same time encouraged to unshackle, purify themselves, and shed their skin.

Ian Wilson's *Circle on the Floor* is his last physical object before spending his time exploring the spoken language's potential to provide abstraction in his *Discussions*, the content of which has never been documented. Deciding not to make physical objects came from liking to travel light, and yet give others considerable substance in discussions, which constitute Wilson's body of work after *Circle on the Floor*. Dealing with a circle makes us aware of how nonhomogeneous spaces are. Crossing the circle requires accepting there is no return. The focus of his second work in the exhibition, *Time (spoken)*,

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pougues-les-Eaux
www.parsaintleger.fr



which further stimulated his work on oral communication, shifts from time to the nature of knowledge and non-knowledge, the critical consciousness of the "Absolute".

The immaculate domestic interior presented in the art center's mezzanine gallery is an installation by Markus Martinovitch titled *I am here, I am with you*. The sentence is a mantra that helped young Markus, who has a form of autism, to keep a certain balance as he learned to interact with the world. Since his childhood, Markus' mother has been saying these words to him repeatedly in times of crisis. He incessantly reiterates the sentence in writing on every surface when he feels alone. Markus' deserted and colorless room is filled with his presence: every object and every surface expresses it.

Grace Denis' contribution, the work *En partant, il revient* ('By leaving, he returns'), is on the large mezzanine, which overlooks an old chestnut tree. In the artist's eyes, the tree's life cycle shows the flow and measure of time. When reflecting upon the year 2020's lost Spring, we look outside from above. The photograph the artist took in summer 2020 covers the window from which one would normally see the tree in winter dormancy. The gallery is filled with summer light. Although inedible, the commonly used tree fruit offers a potent homeopathic remedy against sadness, irritability, depression, apathy, and poor concentration. The light-bathed image is also converted into sound waves in the room. Thus, a poem travels through space offering an interpretation of an *aesculus hippocastanum* (horse chestnut tree) evolving over time, in an ode to departure and arrival.

Another important section of the exhibition is the projection space, which opens onto an ample flow of narratives. Viriya Chotpanyavisut's *Late Summer in Bangkok* shows a thunderstorm after an extraordinarily hot day. The lightning and city lights together highlight a fisherman's face, alone against the harsh, overpowering, and unbridled power of nature.

In Sarah Nefissa Belhadjali & Mélanie Villemot's video *Et puis iel se dit que le changement c'est la vie* (And then they tell themselves that change is life), two people take a stone from the Trimouns quarry, the largest talc quarry in the world. Meticulously sawn, cut and sanded by hand, they are then both tied together by their ankles and perform a dance to help heal the world's anxiety about the energy and environmental crisis.

In Wura-Natasha Ogunji's videos, *Marks, Belongings, Two, Ife head walks on water, and My father and I dance in outer space*, the relationship of physical, historical, and emotional connections between Africa and America are physically expressed by the artist who stimulates genetic and cell memory to create movements, memories, and stories.

Moe Satt's observation of hands at work in a city's public spaces in the film *Hands Around in Yangon* reveals a certain amount of anonymous persistence and care. Daily motions

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pougues-les-Eaux
www.parsaintleger.fr



and activities - counting money, cutting fingernails, peeling vegetables - are a kind of communal experience, which are interrupted and repeated almost like rituals.

In *FF / Rew*, Ene-Liis Semper commits suicide in several ways: first with a rope and noose, then with a gun. The video then rolls backwards and cancels these "suicides". A child's intense bursts of joy in Ghita Skali's *Playground* lends a background contrary to her incredible vivaciousness when the focus shifts to this scenario in a graveyard.

The video *Meditation / Walk / Lottery Center* by Ip Wai Lung was created in Thailand's Lottery Center, an intermediary space between speculation and superstition where fortunes are traded. The bustling location of constant efforts to seek and find, win and lose, offers an extension of the artist's selfless meditative walking.

Gentle Women's *Le Lait pour Vera* ('Milk for Vera') shows a personal experience of one of the artists. When her child was born, they spent a month apart in different intensive care units. Not seeing her child, the artist imagined what she was like and collected her breast milk as the sole evidence of having become a mother. The film shows Evgeniya Lapteva's performance with her breast milk when her daughter couldn't breathe on her own.

Other texts may well be written later, towards the middle or the end of the exhibition, and it will certainly be interesting to consider new relationships, between the works, ideas, them, you, me, our eyes, our breathing. But do we write or read in the total darkness of insomnia? Never. Alone inside my room at night, I'm with you, I look at you. Because, like Clarice Lispector, who suggested the exhibition title, said, what I write to you is not for reading - it is for being.

Ekaterina Shcherbakova
September 2020

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pouques-les-Eaux
www.parcsaintleger.fr



Biographies

Cecilia Granara, of Italian nationality, was born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in 1991. She is a painter and writer, drawing on self-fiction, poetry, and feminist and religious iconography. She is interested in cultural attitudes to sexuality, relationship to bodies and the use of color as a vehicle for emotions. She studied at Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design in London, Hunter College in New York City, and at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. Solo shows include "Quatre Coeurs" at Exo Exo, Paris and "Lasciare Entrare, Lasciare Andare" at Studiolo Project, Milan. Her work is represented by Exo Exo (Paris).

Grace Denis is a multidisciplinary artist born in Los Angeles in 1990 and currently based in Belgium. She studied at the California Institute of The Arts in Los Angeles and at the Haute École d'Art et de Design in Geneva. Her practice converges agricultural research with interactive installation, often incorporating edible material, sound, and image. Her work draws reference from participatory action research models and prioritizes collaborations with farmers. She often uses meal as a medium and a pedagogical tool to unravel contemporary consumption patterns. Grace Denis exhibited her work at the Conserverie in Marrakech, Ionian Center for the Arts and Culture in Kefalonia in Greece, Navel in Los Angeles.

Markus Martinovich was born in Moscow in 2006. He is based in Moscow and Düsseldorf. His personal exhibition at the Komod gallery in Moscow took place when he was 8. Today 14, this artist with health conditions does not stop creating. If he can't draw, he makes digital art or creates audio. Markus Martinovich is an artist who finds himself in an area outside of social influence and academic rules, creating his own code of communication with society. Intuitively and non-trivially, through the prism of his unique feelings, he asks questions that concern us all, and develops a deep existential research. His work has been shown at the National Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow, Gazelli Art House in London, at the 6th Moscow International Biennial for Young Art, at Kuensterhaus Lydda in Bielefeld, Germany.

Morgane Tschiember was born in 1976 in Brest, she lives and works in Paris. She graduated from Beaux-Arts in Quimper and Paris. For many years Morgane Tschiember has been exploring the performative qualities of materials that she appropriates in order to test their specificities and limits, and to draw new forms from them. Her approach escapes categorization, and is located somewhere halfway between painting and sculpture, placing body, space and experience at the center. Her personal exhibitions took place at Mac / Val in Paris, at the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, at the Regional Center of Contemporary Art in Sète, at the Portique, Regional Center of Contemporary Art in Le Havre, at the CAC La Traverse in Alfortville, Museum of Fine Arts in Dôle.

Ian Wilson was born in 1940 in Durban, South Africa, and died in 2020. Ian Wilson had been exploring the aesthetic potential of spoken language since the late 1960s. The artist started his career as a painter, but quickly abandoned this medium to explore the act of discussion as the sole medium of his artistic approach. The *Discussions* about time, knowledge or the Absolute were taking place during four decades, never recorded or photographed. His work was presented in many international artistic institutions, notably

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pougues-les-Eaux
www.parcsaintleger.fr



at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, at MOMA in New York, at MAMCO in Geneva or at Tate Modern in London.

Viriya Chotpanyavisut was born in 1982 in Bangkok, Thailand, he lives and works in Bangkok. He graduated from Rangsit University in Bangkok, the École supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse and the École nationale d'arts Paris-Cergy. In his photographs and films, he captures ephemeral natural phenomena, such as particles of dust, light, reflection or humidity of the air. Viriya Chotpanyavisut has exhibited in Thailand and internationally. He participated at the (EVA) Irish Biennial 2018, exhibited at the Saatchi Gallery in London or at the Szczein National Museum in Poland. In France he has notably exhibited at the FRAC Auvergne, IAC Villeurbanne, at the Palais de Tokyo or at the Salon de Montrouge. Viriya is represented by Gilles Drouault, galerie / multiples, Paris, France; and Gallery Ver, Bangkok, Thailand.

Sarah Nefissa Belhadjali was born in 1988 in Lyon, she lives and works in Paris. She studied life sciences at Pierre and Marie Curie University before continuing her education in performative practices at the Beaux-Arts in Paris. Her artistic work borrows from scientific methodology: collect data and propose different visualizations; create simulations where different contexts hybridize. This is for example the case for the Nouvelle Collection Paris, created in 2016, a functional brand at the crossroads of new methods of presenting works of art and extra-artistic practices, such as fashion, communication and partnership. Her work has been presented in group exhibitions in France (Palais de Tokyo -festival Do Disturb-, La Panacé, Le DOC! Palais des Beaux-Arts de Paris, AMAC Projects gallery, Multiples gallery, Foundation Brownstone) and abroad in Turin (The Others Art Fair) and Berlin (Mindscape Universe space project) as well as online at the Virtual Dream Center.

Mélanie Villemot was born in 1988 in Paris, where she lives and works. She graduated from the EESAB in Rennes. Her work, essentially performative, explores the modalities of individual and collective identity construction present in consumer societies. She questions the practices commercialized by the industries of well-being, entertainment and beauty to create body ornaments and gestures that test the states of consciousness of performers and participants. Her work has been shown at Glassbox Paris, at MO.CO Panacée in Montpellier, at the project space Mindscape universe in Berlin, at The others art fair in Turin, at the Zoo Galerie in Nantes, at the Eric Mouchet gallery in Paris, at the Speedy Grandma gallery in Bangkok or the Contemporary art center Le Quartier in Brest. She took part in the Generator program at the 40mcube Art center in Rennes and at the Hong Hub residence in Thailand.

Wura-Natasha Ogunji was born in 1970 in Saint Louis (United States), she lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria. She has a BA in Anthropology from Stanford University in San Francisco and an MA in Fine Arts from the University of San Jose. She makes drawings, performances and videos. Her works explore the notion of homeland, diasporic identity, the role of women in Nigerian society and figures of Yoruba culture, often through her own body. She was a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her work has been exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India, at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen and at the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Moe Satt was born in 1983 in Yangon, Myanmar, he lives and works in Yangon. He graduated from East Yangon University with a Bachelor of Sciences. Moe Satt often uses

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pouques-les-Eaux
www.parsaintleger.fr



his own body as a symbolic field for exploring self, identity, embodiment, and political resistance in performances, photography and video works. He addresses provocative social and political issues in his country, military-ruled Myanmar, such as the role of religion and that of the individual in society. He has been invited to numerous artistic residencies, notably ACC in New York (2017); IASPIS in Umeå, Sweden (2016); International Residence at Récollets, Paris (2015). His work has been featured in several group exhibitions, including Political Acts: Pioneers of Performance Art in Southeast Asia in Melbourne (2017); the CAFAM Biennale, Beijing (2013); the Busan Biennale (2012). Satt was a finalist of the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award 2015.

Ene-Liis Semper was born in 1969 in Tallinn, Estonia. She studied scenography at the Estonian Fine Arts Institute. Ene-Liis Semper creates videos in which she often makes herself experience physically challenging actions. She is also a director and scenographer, and founded with Tiit Ojasoo the N099 theater in Tallinn, Estonia. In 2001, the artist represented Estonia at the Venice Biennale. His theatrical creations have been performed at the Théâtre des Amandiers in Nanterre and at the Avignon festival.

Ip Wai Lung is a Hong Kong based meditation enthusiast who embraces impermanence, as even though conventional religious beliefs are static, the world is constantly in flux. He mediates and intervenes in life in an attempt to process all the impermanence, queerness, and ambiguity the world throws at him. Through art, Ip stages meditation, while detaching from and engaging with the conscious and the unconscious. This constant shifting of roles, modes, and disciplines is the backbone of his artworks. His works might be plain and dry at first glance, but there is a never-ending restlessness bursting from the seams. Artworks of Ip Wai Lung, an entrepreneur-turned-self-taught-artist, have been exhibited at galleries and art shows in New York, Hong Kong, Shanghai and across South East Asia. His latest business venture is The ScreenGuru, a large-scale, data-driven intelligent outdoor display network for video art in Hong Kong and beyond.

Ekaterina Shcherbakova was born in 1990 in Novorossiysk, Russia. She is a curator and PhD researcher at the University of Paris 8, where she is teaching *Learning and unlearning the curating* since 2019. With her background in philosophy she endeavors to apply different optics on systems, structures and functions of the curatorial project, favoring the production of the intangible. Participant at the professional curatorial training program École du Magasin (Grenoble, France, 2012), she curated numerous exhibitions, including *Down to the sunless sea* at Arondit (Paris, 2019), *Apposite Sustainability* at the Gallery of the theater in Privas and at the CAP Saint-Fons (2019), *1 iJ* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Estonia (Tallinn, 2018), *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* at the Russian Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), *Città Invisibili* at La Box (Bourges, 2015-2016).

contact@parcsaintleger.fr
tél. +33 (0)3 86 90 96 60
fax +33 (0)3 86 90 96 61

avenue Conti
F-58320 Pouques-les-Eaux
www.parcsaintleger.fr