

denis savary

Exhibition January 23rd to March 5th 2016
Opening Saturday January 23rd 2016 starting at 15h

The Xippas Gallery is pleased to present the third solo show for Denis Savary, a key figure in the Swiss art scene. Meanwhile, from January 22nd to April 3rd 2016 the Swiss Cultural Center dedicates an exhibition, entitled *Jour Blanc*, to the artist.

Interview with Denis Savary

You are showing works at the Xippas Gallery at the same time as at the CCS (Centre Culturel Suisse - Swiss Cultural Center) in Paris. Do these two exhibitions share common elements?

At the CCS, I'm presenting a group of twenty mattresses that represent the space between columns at a Greek temple in Italy and also a model kitchen where the components have been broken apart, covered with cloth, and hung from a grill with small chains. Here on the walls of the gallery, I'm showing a relief model constructed from lightning rods that I've developed into a sequence. All the pieces speak, of course, to my interest in architecture, but also what generally holds my attention at the moment – now questions regarding living spaces that surround us, which we can call landscape and theatre. The piece called *Pool* summarizes this pretty well. It consists of a pool, propped up vertically, the form of which was inspired by the face of the famous German songwriter Karl Valentin and also the contours of a Swiss village in which I grew up and where I filmed the majority of my films.

Most of your productions refer to artists (Corot, Kokoschka, Ensor, Vallotton...) who are not very well "liked" or known as contemporary artists. Most of these artists have a tendency to want to throw out art history, but not you....

All art is born from what came before it. An artist who is interested in art history doesn't seem completely crazy to me. The same goes for a produce man. For me, I'm less interested in artists than in what they produce. I am interested particularly in the circulations of forms. For instance, a Calder mobile serving as the foundation of the construction for a circus show interests me as much as a retrospective of an artist in a large museum.

Your work presents a true interest in vernacular art (dollhouses, napkin folding, etc.).

Yes, even if I don't know exactly how this term is defined today. I grew up in this global culture where everything cohabitates iconography. I am at the same time very affected by the position defended by the Surrealists in the 1930s who combined in the same fashion productions of the imagination (such as tribal art) with art made from children, madmen, and artists. There was no hierarchy. What mattered was that the imagination seemed to emancipate itself from our view of reality and brought about the metamorphoses of the world.

The titles of your works are very precise, certain are even very strange (for example, Otis, Oz, Qilakitsoq...). You don't use "untitled" instead of making of titles....

The titles generally come from the contexts where the pieces are produced. They most often recall people or places. Like these pieces, the importance is their reference to plurality. Otis for example, evokes the first name of the composer *Sitting on the Dock of the Bay*, but it is also the name of a well-known brand of elevators. In a certain way, my entire practice comes down to this, fitting together elements previously disassembled from reality, creating new hybrids, and then grafting them one on top of another.

Dolls and puppets (Alma, Fernando, Marie-Louise, Öyvind, etc...) punctuated your work for several years. Now you are preparing a show (Lagune) that we can see March 22 and 23 at the CCS. In this show, there will be a large marionette and dancers. What does this transition into a theatrical space imply about your work?

Lagune was commissioned for the 100th anniversary of the Dada movement. The first one in France will be held at the CCS in Paris in March. The theatrical space is not new to me as I already experimented with it when I was part of a dance company.

Lagune revolves around the puppet *Soldat de la garde* imagined and constructed by Sophie Taeuber-Arp in 1918 for the representation of the *Roi Cerf* at the opening of the Swiss Puppet Theater in Zurich.

I chose this puppet because it is the most abstract and it evokes at the same time both movement and architecture. It was made larger and is manipulated by a puppeteer. It moves through the dancers on the ground, so that certain body parts are combined with bits of decor and architecture in Plexiglas. *Lagune* portrays an image of a city in movement, its form transforming, growing, and rebuilding, via the dancers' movements. Thus it is as much a puppet show as a dance performance.

Interview by Valérie Da Costa

Valérie Da Costa is an art critic and historian. In 2014 and 2015, she was a guest curator at the Centre Pompidou working on the new series Vidéodanse (Oublier la danse, Le corps en jeu) as part of the Nouveau Festival. Her most recent book focuses on the Arte Povera artist Pino Pascali (Pino Pascali: retour à la Méditerranée, Les presses du réel, Dijon, 2015).

Denis Savary was born in 1981, in Granges-Marnand, Switzerland. He lives and works in Geneva.

After graduating from ECAL (Ecole Cantonale d'Arts de Lausanne), where he teaches at the moment, he was granted residence at the Pavillon at Palais de Tokyo in 2006/2007.

He had numerous solo shows : at Jenisch Museum (2007), Jeu de Paume (2008), Centre Pasquart (2010), La Ferme de Buisson (2010), Kunsthalle Bern (2012), Museum of Art and History in Geneva (2013), MAMCO, Geneva (2015), to name few.

His artwork has also been shown at Palais de Tokyo, Swiss Institute (New York), CAPC Contemporary Art Museum in Bordeaux, Printemps de septembre (Toulouse), FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon...

Starting from January 22nd to Avril 3rd his solo show, entitled *Jour Blanc*, is visible at Swiss Cultural Center in Paris.