

Press Release

Zurich, 25 January 2023

Julien Creuzet

*Orpheus was musing upon braised words,
under the light rain of a blazing fog, snakes
are deaf and dumb anyway, oblivion buried
in the depths of insomnia*

Opening: Fri 10 February 2023, 6pm
The artist will be present

On view: 10 February – 21 May 2023

Luma Westbau, Zurich



Julien Creuzet, Luma Arles © Courtesy the artist.
Photo Victor&Simon - Joana Luz

Luma Westbau is pleased to announce a new iteration of the exhibition by Julien Creuzet, opening in Zurich on 10 February 2023. The title, *Orpheus was musing upon braised words, under the light rain of a blazing fog, snakes are deaf and dumb anyway, oblivion buried in the depths of insomnia*, is a poem composed by the artist. The exhibition was conceived during Creuzet’s artist residency at Luma Arles (France) in 2021 and 2022, where the first presentation of the exhibition was on view until recently. In December, Creuzet was selected to represent France at the 2024 Venice Art Biennale.

Creuzet combines in his work experimental filmmaking, music, sculpture, performance, and poetry. Mixing language, dance, and literature, his output is extensively influenced by the history of decolonization. The title of the exhibition reflects on the relationship between peripheries and centers, questioning the idea of time and geographical location as fundamental concepts in understanding cultural production. Reacting against dominant Western narratives, Creuzet looks for inspiration in the legacy of Afro-Caribbean and Creole philosophical thought and literary production. Exploring the ambiguity of representation, identity, the body, movement, and dance as tools for resistance, his intention is to create a meditation on the living spectacle of opera through visual and physical sculptural forms and time-based moving images. Discussing about his practice, Creuzet has said:

“What’s interesting to me is facing an artwork and really encountering it, it’s for the work to enlighten the viewer and for a genuine encounter to take place. [...] For me, a work of art is a true encounter. It’s also something that will escape us.”

A key influence in the work of Creuzet is the surrealist author and poet André Breton, a figure who played an important role in the re-evaluation of African culture in art history. During the Second World War, Breton emigrated to the United States of America. On his way to New York, he stopped in Martinique. While there, he began exploring the local cultural landscape, which inspired his writing. One of the most significant interlocutors he met in Martinique was poet,

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playwright, and future politician Aimé Césaire, one of the most influential authors of the French-speaking Caribbean. Breton's output, questioning the Western canon and complexifying the dominant Western ideology of the time, alongside Césaire's writings on Black identity and the concept of Négritude, are pivotal in Creuzet's work.

Césaire's thoughts, in particular his efforts in creating a more positive sense of humanity through the rediscovery of Black cultural qualities and restoring the cultural history of Black Africans, were fully expressed in his book *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Return to My Native Land). A mixture of poetry and poetic prose, he set about composing it on a small island on the Adriatic coast of Croatia. Seascapes and landscapes, reminiscent of Césaire's journey to Croatia, are represented in the projections and screens that illuminate the exhibition space, offering an ever-moving pictorial horizon.

Foregrounding questions of modernity, postmodernity, and contemporary cultural hybridity, the sculptural forms in the exhibition function as an intimate and powerful discovery of many worlds brought together. Images from diverse sources, including historical African sculptures, abstracted landscapes and compositions inspired by engravings and paintings, some referencing the work of painter Wifredo Lam, compose a path between objects and projected images, reflecting on the way that histories can be markers for change and resistance. The exhibition confronts the viewer with questions about the animate and the inanimate that link the enclosed space of the gallery within a larger universe of references. Avatars of dancers performing in different African traditions, including dances from the African diaspora, coupled with enigmatic spoken word poetry and sounds composed by the artist, are deliberately informal yet unsettling, and echo the ethics of difference, creolization, and the plurality of thought that is at the core of Creuzet's practice. Commenting on the exhibition, he has stated:

"Poetry, read silently or aloud, has a form of musicality to it that seems important to me. I'm very interested in the question of sound, but I'm deeply in love with urban music, in which I find a diversity of experimentation. It is the most innovative from the standpoint of poetic writing or even the transgression of academic codes. Here, I can generate a part of this exhibition that touches on other senses, because I conceive of the exhibition as something total, something with an element of the operatic or of an expanded cinema, in which one could live."

Biography

Born 1986, Le Blanc-Mesnil, France. Lives and works in Montreuil, Paris, France. Creuzet is an artist, video maker, performer, and poet. He spent most of his childhood in Martinique. These first years in the Caribbean, at the crossroads between African, Indian and European cultures, have fostered a practice where the mixture of visions and imaginations has a central place. Through diverse environments made up of composite assemblages, he creates links between the social realities of the current context and forgotten stories.

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Creuzet has had solo exhibitions at LUMA Arles (2022), Camden Art Centre, London (2022), Palais De Tokyo, Paris (2019), CAN Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Switzerland, (2019), Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard, Paris (2018), and Bétonsalon, Paris (2018).

He has participated in numerous institutional group exhibitions including Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago (2022-2023), Musée Tinguely, Basel (2022), The National Gallery of Prague (2022), Wesleyan University Center for the Arts, CT (2021), Manifesta 13, Marseille (2020), Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2020), Kampala Biennale, Uganda (2018) and Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2018).

Creuzet is the recipient of the 2022 Etants Donnés Prize, the 2021 BMW Art Journey Award, and the 2019 Camden Arts Centre Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze London. Julien Creuzet has been named France's artistic representative at the upcoming 2024 Venice Biennale.

The exhibition at Luma Westbau is curated by Vassilis Oikonomopoulos, Director of Exhibitions and Programs, Luma Arles and Martin Guinard, Curator, Luma Arles

Venue

Luma Westbau
Löwenbräukunst
Limmatstrasse 270
8005 Zurich, Switzerland
www.westbau.com

Opening Times

Tue – Sun: 11:00 – 18:00
Thu: 11:00 – 20:00
Mondays closed

Free admission