

simone dekker basie

LE LiFE · SAINT-NAZAIRE

EXHIBITION FROM 24 JUNE TO 28 AUGUST 2011



Photo : Simone Decker, 2011. Graphics : www.regislebras.com

Exhibition from 24 June to 28 August 2011

Every day from 11:00 to 19:00 except on Monday

Admission free

Opening on Thursday 23 June at 19:30

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SUMMARY

PRESS RELEASE by Eva Prouteau	p.3
PHOTO OF PROJECTS (selection)	p.4-5
BIOGRAPHY	p.6-7
TEXT EXCERPTS FROM PUBLICATIONS	
<i>Raising Ghosts</i> by Michel Gauthier (excerpts) Catalogue <i>Point of view</i> , Simone Decker, joint publication Casino Luxembourg- Forum d'art contemporain, Crédac - Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry (Ivry-sur-Seine) and FRAC Bourgogne (Dijon), 2005	p.8-9
LiFE – International Space for Emerging Arts	p.10
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	p.11

SIMONE DECKER

basic

Exhibition from 24 June to 28 August 2011

LiFE (International Space for Emerging Arts), in partnership with Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire contemporary art centre, presents a solo exhibition by the Luxembourg artist Simone Decker from 24 June to 28 August 2011.

Simone Decker's works are magical incursions into reality that draw on space, matter and perceptual games. While the artist has an instinctive approach to a site, her installations, sculptures or photographs nevertheless develop via some extremely rational procedures. Optical illusions, playing with scale and unexpected materials: these are the tools that Simone Decker handles with dexterity, modifying points of view, tricking the body and transforming the relationship between the spectator and space.

Huge chewing gum sculptures in the streets of Venice (Chewing in Venice, 1999), fifty kilometres of coloured sticky tape in the Delme Synagogue (White Noise, 1999), twelve phosphorescent ghosts cast from the statues of Luxembourg City (Ghosts, 2004), an exhibition space entirely covered in red latex (Untermieter, 1996) - the artist's constructions bear witness to a way of occupying space that is inventive, spectacular and always experimental. For the strict dialogue she enters into with a site is rather like one body researching another: she moulds its print, she prevents access to it or, contrarily, gives it adhesive qualities to capture the visitor. She upsets the order (the relationships of scale, vanishing points, perspective); ultimately, she willingly reveals the illusory nature of our representations. She responds to all the grand questions that she raises (the intimate and the public, the maquette and the monumental...) with playful grace. For Simone Decker's work have a light-footed gravity and an impertinent pertinence: she hides their complexity behind a visual impact and never holds back on pleasure.

On this double mode, intuitive and analytic, ludic and conceptual, at LiFE the artist is showing us her singular vision of the submarine base, a gigantic 'dark' monument of the Second World War. The outsized architecture being 'digested' by the town, a little at a time, becomes the object of a surprising formal rereading that is physical, metaphorical and ... lip smacking. In the centre of the exhibition, like a delicacy, stands a monumental sculpture that Simone Decker imagined as supple and sensual, accessible to the public who are invited to experience, touch and feel the forms of the work.

In counterpoint to and in dialogue with this out-sized foam sculpture, the artist invests the "flesh" of the base itself: fifteen insertions married to the cracks of the building, discrete incrustations made from dental ceramic. Both precious ornamentation and therapeutic dressings, these micro-prostheses are an invitation to discover the architecture intimately: its thickness is scrutinised, its autonomous material life is held up close. A particular temporality of its own can then come about, no longer History but of the body: the aging of the concrete, its chalky leaks, the light piercing its fissures become so many revelations born out of the artist's gestures. In this way she spins out her gourmet metaphor, whereby the base is considered as a mouth - of a monster ? - suggesting unexpected sensory approaches.

With these unique commissions, Simone Decker pursues her intimate interrogation of space, deepens her exploration of materials and confirms that art and its reception are definitively worthwhile experiences of appropriation.

Curated by Sophie Legrandjacques, Director of Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire contemporary art centre.

PHOTO PROJECTS (selection)



Second Life, 2010

Over 200 storage cases for the artworks of the museum's collection and scaffolding with staircases, 19x8x8 m

View of the exhibition *Sketches of Space*, MUDAM Luxembourg - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg

photo : © Simone Decker



Ghosts, 2005

Rhena term, resin, photoluminescent pigment
View of the exhibition *Point de vue*, Crédac - centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry, Ivry-sur-Seine

photo : © André Morin



Curtain wall, 2002
 Inkjet print on fabric
 View of the exhibition *Printemps de septembre, 2002*,
 Toulouse
 photo : © Simone Decker



Chewing in Venice, 1999
 2 series of 15 photographs, 67x98 cm each
 Ilfochrome Classic sur Dibond
 48e Biennale of Venice
 photo : © Simone Decker

SIMONE DECKER

Born in 1968 in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. Lives and works in Frankfurt/Main, Germany.
Graduate of the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg (ESAD). Teaches at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg since 2008.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

- 2005 *Whitening*, S.M.A.K., Gent
Science-fiction depuis ma chambre, FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier
Point de vue, Crédac - Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry, Ivry-sur-Seine (cat.)
- 2004 *Point of view*, Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg (cat.)
- 2002 *Atelier*, Centre National de la Photographie, Paris
- 2000 Liechtensteinische Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Vaduz, Liechtenstein
Brugge Turtles, project in the public space, Bruges (cat.)
Turtle Show, Förderkoje, Berlin
- 1999 *White noise*, Synagogue de Delme - Centre d'art contemporain, Delme
Chewing and folding in Venice, 48e Biennale of Venice (cat.)
Jérémy/Trous, La Box, Bourges
- 1998 *To be expected*, Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg (cat.)
zusammenfaltbar und einteilbar, Ausstellungsraum Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck (cat.)
- 1996 *Untermieter*, Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg
Untermieter, Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain, Luxembourg

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

- 2011 *Animaux / Animots*, FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou
Luftkunst, Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen
- 2010 *Ausgang City / Aufgang Nord*, temporary installation *Meeting*, Lützelbachtunnel Saarbrücken
le Carillon de Big Ben, Crédac - Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry, Ivry-sur-Seine
Sketches of Space, Mudam Luxembourg - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
Shifting shapes, Casanova forever, Carrée Sainte-Anne and city, Montpellier
- 2009 *Um Mundo sem Medidas 2*, MAC USP - Museu de Arte Contemporânea de São Paulo
Um Mundo sem Medidas 1, Museu Nacional do Complexo da República, Brasília
Heidi au pays de Martin Kippenberger, FRAC Aquitaine, Bordeaux & Carré Bonnat, Bayonne
Constellation - Fables du lieu, exhibition in prefiguration of the Centre Pompidou Metz, Arsenal, Metz
- 2008 *ELO – inner exile/outerlimits*, Mudam Luxembourg - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
My generation - 3, Kunstverein Familie Montez, Frankfurt
Second _nature, Parc Luxembourg city and Parc de la Chamarande, Chamarande (cat.)
- 2007 *Welcome to our neighbourhood*, Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Saarbrücken (cat.)
Trans(ient) city - Urban landmarks, Luxembourg et Grande Région Capitale Européenne de la Culture 2007 (cat.)
- 2006 *on/off*, city of Luxembourg (cat.)
Les fils de Marcel, CRAC - Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain, Sète (cat.)
Chauffe, Marcel, Chapelle de la Miséricorde, Montpellier (cat.)
- 2005 *Le génie du lieu*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, Dijon
Affinités, Saline Royale d'Arc-et-Senans, Besançon
- 2004 *Re:location*, Trnava, Slovaquie, (cat.)
import/export # 2, CAN - Centre d'art de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel (cat.)
- 2003 *compilation?*, Maison Populaire, Montreuil (cat.)
Import/export, project in the public space, Besançon
Trésors publics - 20 ans des FRAC, Arles
Collections sans frontières 2, « Zacheta » National Gallery of Art, Varsovie and GAM Torino - Galleria Civica d'Arte moderna e contemporanea, Turin
Mouvements de fonds, [mac] Galeries contemporaines des Musées de Marseille, (cat.)

- 2002 *CQFD*, Maison Populaire, Montreuil (cat.)
Subréel, Musée d'art contemporain, Marseille (cat.)
Printemps de septembre, Toulouse (cat.)
- 2001 *Under Pressure*, Swiss Insitute, New York et Hazmat Gallery, Tucson, Arizona
Artline 5, Borken, Allemagne (cat.)
Sonsbeek 9, Arnhem, Pays-Bas (cat.)
Frankfurter Kreuz, Kunsthalle Schirn, Francfort-sur-le-Main (cat.)
- 2000 *Carnet d'adresses*, Musée de Louviers, Louviers, France (cat.)
Transfert, Bienne (cat.)
Storm Centres, Watou, Belgique (cat.)
Airair, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco (cat.)
Et comme l'espérance est violente..., Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou
- 1999 *Aller et retour*, Bonner Kunstverein, Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken et Stadtgalerie Kiel (cat.)
15e Ateliers du FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire
Ex-Change, La Criée, Rennes
Les coups, FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon
Mayday, CAN - Centre d'art de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel
- 1998 *8 x 8 x 8*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Francfort-sur-le-Main (cat.)
Espaces à construire, Centre d'art contemporain du Parc Saint-Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux
Ausstellungsraum Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck
- 1997 FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon
Nicolaus-Cusanus-Weinkultur-Förderpreis, Traben-Trarbach (cat.)
Take off, Galerie Krinzinger, Benger Areal, Bregenz (cat.)
Fasten Seat Belt, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienne
- 1995 *Germinations 8*, "Zacheta" National Gallery of Art, Varsovie ; The Factory, Athènes ;
 Museo nacional de arte contemporáneo, Madrid (cat.)
- 1994 *Rendez-vous provoqué*, Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art, Luxembourg ; Stedelijk Museum
 "De Lakenhal" à Leyde, Pays-Bas (cat.)
Germinations 8, Centrum voor Beeldende Kunst, Breda, Pays-Bas (cat.)

cat. = catalogue

CATALOGUES D'EXPOSITION (sélection)

- 2005 *Point of view*, texts of Michel Gauthier, Angela Rosenberg, Jochen Volz, joint publication
 Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain, Crédac - Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry
 (Ivry-sur-Seine) et FRAC Bourgogne
- 2002 *Comment s'appelle la partie immergée de l'iceberg ?*, Maison Populaire de Montreuil
- 2000 *Brugge turtles*, Cultuurcentrum Brugge
- 1999 *Chewing and folding in Venice*, 48ème Biennale of Venice
- 1998 *"occuper", dit-elle : Simone Decker : 1994-1998*, texts of Hubert Besacier, Enrico Lunghi et
 Bert Theis, Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain

COLLECTIONS

FRAC Bourgogne
 FRAC des Pays de la Loire
 FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon
 Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris
 Mudam, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg
 Fonds Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Seine-Saint-Denis
 Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris
 Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein

TEXT EXCERPTS FROM PUBLICATIONS

Raising Ghosts by Michel Gauthier (excerpts)

(...) A number of other non-photographic works by Simone Decker are similarly presented as genuine visual traps. One such is *Petite galerie des glaces* (2002). This work comprises four large identical angle pieces able to swing freely through 360° around posts extending from floor to ceiling. These corner pieces are made out of fibre board, with no plastic quality other than its relative poverty, covered on the reentrant side of the angle by the curve of a mosaic mirror giving off a myriad of bright reflections. The four elements can be oriented so as to totally close off a space inside which one or two people can become ensnared. They can also be arranged in such a way as to mark off two lines to walk down, opening up two passages through the exhibition space. And of course all the innumerable intermediate positions are available as well, whatever catches the viewer's fancy. The value of such a piece lies in its offering an object for people's cardinal urges with respect to how they relate to space. In other words, *Petite galerie des glaces* offers common ground for claustrophobics and agoraphobics to come together and dialogue. However, should you fall prey to some overwhelming narcissistic urge and choose to stand inside the structure when it is in the closed position, i.e. inside the mirror, you are in for a disappointment. The perfect face-to-face confrontation with yourself is simply not going to happen, for, as with the material of *Prototypes d'espaces infinis*, the mosaic will only reflect back a fuzzy, short-lived, fragmented image.

With *NY-space* (2004) we come to another kind of visual trap. This is a cell that the viewer enters through a door which once shut leaves him facing an unusual sight. The inner walls of the cell, with invisible vertical neon lights concealed in its four corners, contain two elements. First, a one-way glass plate, transparent on the viewer's side and reflecting on the other. Then, a few centimetres away, an ordinary mirror. So the viewer sees through the glass the reflections of the two reflecting surfaces reverberating to infinity. He also sees the pale reflections of himself that also come off the inner faces of the one-way glass in an interminable *mise en abyme*. This produces two sets of reflections on top of each other: the sharp reflections of the mirrors facing each other, digging four endless tunnels from which the viewer is absent; and the gradually fading reflections in which the said viewer ends up losing his image, like Dracula who cannot see himself in a mirror⁽¹⁾. In this way, *NY-space* affords an opportunity for a singular *in vitro* experience of having the feeling of being both present and absent, of being both here and somewhere else, of standing (a feeling one sometimes gets in the streets of New York) inside a completely enclosed and infinite space. (...)

In 2004, Simone Decker returned to this practice of the imprint she had previously experimented with for *Untermieter*, in an astonishing set of pieces entitled *Ghosts* (2004). For these the artist took imprints of a number of sculptures taken from a broad range of periods, styles and qualities, and all located in the public spaces of Luxembourg. She then used these to make casts with a photoluminescent coating which, when bathed in daylight, stores it up and emits that light once darkness has fallen. Some of the resulting sculptures have been lined up on the roof of the "Aquarium", the architectural appendix on the front of the main Casino building, where they stand out at night in the eerie, ghostly yellow light. Others, perhaps even more strikingly, have been placed in the obscure cellars of the building where they play their role of ghosts to perfection, when the phosphorus starts to give off its glowing effect, once the eye has taken the couple of minutes it needs to adjust. A ghost is the double of someone who is dead. Are we to take this to mean that Simone Decker's phosphorescent casts are replicas of sculptures which, whatever their respective merits, have died of exposure, if not overexposure, in public spaces? Despite the formal novelty they inject into the artist's output, the *Ghosts* tie in with certain concerns seen in earlier pieces. Consisting in the distance, both physical and chromatic, set up between a cast and its model, the idea here is close to that of a work like *Untermieter*. Even more surely than with *Untermieter*, Simone Decker's ghosts of sculptures are to be viewed while bearing the photographs in mind. The insignificant architectures of the *So weiß, weißer geht's nicht* series become like ghostly apparitions of themselves under the camera lens and the beams of powerful spotlights. Like the *Ghosts*, they draw their chimerical new lease of life from the night.

(1) A future version of *NY-space* using of even less reflecting glass, ought to be able to neutralize the reflections of the viewer almost completely, so as to leave him face to face with four series of *mises en abyme* by mirrors from which he will be strangely excluded.

As for the photographs of *Chewing in Venice*, *20 pavillons pour Saint-Nazaire*, *Pavillons im Musterbau und drumherum* or *Glaçons*, their aim is not so very different from that of *Ghosts* as might at first appear. The photographic images seek to establish the monumental reality of ghostlike sculptures; the phosphorescent casts turn sculptures that have actually survived long enough to outlast any significance they may once have had into ghosts, to restore them to reality. Producing in this way a replica of a city feature that people seem to have lost sight of is also the subject of a work like *Water Tower* (1998) by Rachel Whiteread, a translucent resin cast of the volume of water contained in one of those rooftop tanks that are a feature of the New York skyline_(2). Its presence, at once familiar and enigmatic, makes *Water Tower* another kind of ghost. Like *Ghosts*, such a project possibly indicates that in our postmodern, post-utopian age, ghosts are really all we can see any more.

Excerpts of the catalogue *Point of view*, Simone Decker, coédition Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain, Crédac - Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry (Ivry-sur-Seine) and FRAC Bourgogne (Dijon), 2005

(2) See Louise Neri, *Looking Up. Rachel Whiteread's Water Tower*, Public Art Fund, New York City/ Scalo, Zurich - Berlin - New York, 1999.

LiFE International Space for Emerging Arts

The international Space for Emerging Arts is a major component of the reconquest of the former submarine base in Saint-Nazaire. This equipment designed by architect Finn Geipel Berlin is a place for art scenes of today and tomorrow, the performing arts to visual arts, or new music. Opened in 2007, LiFE is as a place of experimentation, meetings and discoveries.



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LiFE and Bay 14

LiFE in Saint-Nazaire is, first and foremost, a physical place. Housed in the huge space offered by Bay 14 of the former submarine base, built by the German army in the Second World War, it has just been redesigned by the LIN Agency, headed by the Berlin-based architect Finn Geipel, a leading light in the "neo-functionalist" movement. Its vast dimensions (approximately 280 feet in length, 65 feet wide and 35 feet high, giving a total floorspace of some 21,500 sq.ft) offers a huge gamut of spatial possibilities, to be determined by the various projects that will be accommodated therein. After "Vertical Works" an exhibition of Anthony McCall (Estuaire 2009), le Grand Café, contemporary art centre, organizes an annual exhibition in LiFE.



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Saint-Nazaire : a Port City

Over the past 20 years, the city has been involved in a full-scale urban programme designed to put the port areas to a different use, and underpinned by a keen desire to orient the city towards its port and its Atlantic seafront. A new neighbourhood called "Ville Port" has come into being. It combines housing, shops, and cultural facilities. The success of phase one made it possible to continue with the novel development of the site, and reveal the atmosphere of the port and the way it opens onto the world, as well as asserting its character as a tourist and cultural destination.

SIMONE DECKER

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> Every day from 11:00 to 19:00 except on Monday
Admission free

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Curator : Sophie Legrandjacques, Director of Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire contemporary art centre

Coordination & production : Franck Bertrand

Assistant coordination & production : Audrey Plantard

Communication : Anne Gourhel

Installation : Eric Chapron, Olivier Paré and the technical staff

Graphic design : Régis Le Bras

Simone Decker's exhibition has received support from the City of Saint-Nazaire, the Regional Council of Pays de la Loire and the General Council of Loire-Atlantique.



Media partner :

