

enjambment

Solo exhibition

Charlotte Moth 10/09/2020 – 31/10/2020

Gallery Marcelle Alix

Cecilia Becanovic and Isabelle Alfonsi

«S·he who has thought most deeply loves what is most alive.»

Friedrich Hölderlin

Our relationship with living beings is complicated, even for those who have never had this impression from a personal point of view. Today, it's a never-ending concern. This crisis of sensitivity is more than ever transmitted by artists whose work it is to become affiliated with the living, never losing sight of sociopolitical and natural relations. The exhibition, if it is a décor, can nonetheless help you to feel alive and to become reacquainted with phenomena that are to do with both the tree of the forest and the exhibited sculpture. These phenomena include gravity as much as the feeling of spanning a multitude because of a tree that is growing or a human being who can see. We know that tree branches softly slump at the end of the day to begin a phase of rest. Charlotte Moth has also been attentive to what is going on when you try to find a calm space, a deep thought, or a belief in nature. The exhibition doesn't escape from life's flux and Charlotte has always defended this by replacing certain forms in our imaginations, by seeking the two sides of an exhibition: knowledge and sensitivity. If the exhibition reconstitutes some of the paths of sensitivity, nurturing kinship, it is also a place of revitalisation. There, we can find forms of attention, as well as an availability with regard to the living. The restful silence of Charlotte Moth's exhibition opens this new exhibition programme in response to these times, that are rich in meaning, where we were «both a youth and a girl, a bush and a bird, and a sea-leaping, voyaging fish.»*

CB: Plants have always had an important place in Charlotte Moth's work. Whether they be living or reproductions, they contribute to nourish the artist's reflections that favour a phenomenological approach to the exhibition. Her analogue photography practice has given her a taste for the open air and playing with forms in light. Charlotte comes closer to the oeuvre of Barbara Hepworth because of her great empathy with the living. Numerous sculptures found their place in Hepworth's garden. In a dance studio transformed into an atelier, Hepworth would place the sculptures on plinths with wheels so as to comprehend a space where life is established permanently, thanks to perpetual movement. For Charlotte, this way of working is part of her most long-standing research into works in movement, via kinetic art. Like Hepworth, Charlotte strives for movement as a whole that is only understandable if you work at developing a vocabulary of sensations and emotions to feel the way in which the object can interact with us and monopolise all our attention with its true or artificial appearance. Is the artist's extravagance so different from that of a flower?

IA: Since art's concern has not for a longtime been to successfully imitate nature, it seems that artists today try to position their objects next to nature, in a fraternal

bond. It's about completing, commenting, and referring to different types of living forms. We've seen it in the gallery with Gyan Panchal and his objects that recall visual or tactile sensations specific to our relation with what we call «nature», or with Louise Hervé & Clovis Maillet who took as partners several Kea kept in the Jardin des Plantes so as to make them interact with facsimile of objects imitating works of art. Charlotte Moth undertakes a historiography of the place of «nature» in modernist exhibitions. She likes to give it different forms and to put it at the centre of the conventional «white cube» space. The film *Still Life in a White Cube*, whose title promises us something contemplative, turns, on the contrary, the white cube into a stage for two animals. The cat and the parrot that seem to be coming straight out of a symbolist painting bring to the white cube - and to the very surprising monumental staircase from the Madrid art centre where the film was shot - unexpected eccentricity. It is about, due to the introduction of these animal actors as well as a character dressed in feathers and leaves cut from fabric, «denaturing» the artificially clean aspect of the exhibition space. Or rather to restore its true - theatrical - nature.

CB: During a walk in a forest, I was struck by the sight of a tree branch reflecting silver light. The branch seemed so solid, so cold that it looked like an artwork. There will always be something cultural in our gazes and the game that consists in looking at nature through everything that belongs to human beings can be taken very far. I took the opportunity of preparing for this exhibition to reread the interminable descriptions of Des Esseintes by Huysmans for whom nature only has value if it is brought back to the human, to what s-he creates, to the woes of colour, and to this sophistication that makes blood flow and updates the violence of colonisation. Charlotte's relation to nature passes by figures of artists who look at it very directly, evaluating what it produces and what will never stop surprising us. For Charlotte, it is a matter of organising the exhibition according to a scenography where dreaming is allowed. There are exhibitions in which knowledge is not a hindrance. I already imagine this exhibition with familiar forms that lend themselves to the play of appearances. Charlotte knows that a few weeds are needed in each exhibition to encounter a real presence, which is rich in anomalies, and renewed at will. The exhibition's weeds are the welding lines of a long branch reassembled with care - they are all the colours of a transformed material that calls for an entire garden. These are also points of view that are renewed each day or quite simply an unexpected harmony between the artificial and the natural. This harmony can exist in a real garden as in the exhibition. The exhibition's theatricality resides for me in the words that it brings to life and which make us exist. What I like here, is the silence of a garden, a dissolution of words that builds on the «living silence of the rose»** or the silence of an exhibition capable of winning our intimacy.

IA: This silence of a garden evokes the installation that Charlotte produced for the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2017: four figurative sculptures from the city of Paris's reserves which were illuminated by a set of spotlights on a brass disc produced the sensation of walking through a garden in the heart of the Centre Pompidou. The patina green «sculpture-wall» that she had designed as a backdrop allowed some visitors to project into the very space of the exhibition the impression of a stroll in a well-designed garden, at sunset. This garden no longer contained anything natural and was presented as a game complicit with the 19th century sculptors of the four borrowed works, and with the persistent form of a French garden. It was surprising that Charlotte went to find friends from the past (to quote Pauline Boudry/ Renate Lorenz) well before her modernist references, in a form of classicism. As if she

wanted, in so doing, to underline the decorative destiny of abstract and minimal art (referred to in the dyed concrete plinths that she made for the sculptures). The recognition of what we could call the «garden future» of art is not a cynical observation, but rather a way of considering the works as calming, long-term companions.

* Empedocles, *On Nature*, fragments, 117

** Adolfo Bioy Casares, *The Invention of Morel* (1940), New York Review Books Classics, 2003

translation: Callisto McNulty

Charlotte Moth was born in 1978 in Carshalton, United Kingdom. She has been living in Paris since 2007. The Serralves Foundation in Porto (2011), Centre d'Art contemporain de Genève (2012), Esker Foundation (2015), CA2M-Centro Arte Dos de Mayo, Spain (2019) organised solo exhibitions of her work. Tate Britain commissioned and exhibited her series of works around Barbara Hepworth, *Choreography of the Image* in its Archive Room in 2015-2016. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein has hosted an important solo exhibition of her work in 2016, accompanied by a monographic publication: *Travelogue* (ed. Snoeck). The exhibition has then toured to Parc Saint-Léger art center (FR) and the MIT List Visual Center (USA).

Warm thanks to: Joseph Tang and Beau Moth Tang, Manuel Segade, Caroline Hancock, Mo Laudi, Etienne Bernard, Géraldine Gourbe, Julien Richaudaud, Yoann Gourmel, Ruben Molina, Josephine Medina.