

TANIA MOURAUD / FROM CHAOS TO ART

OPENING OCTOBER 14, 2017

EXHIBITION FROM OCTOBER 14 TO NOVEMBER 25, 2017



Tania Mouraud, a major figure in French contemporary art, has ceaselessly updated her practice. Often turning away from 'trends', to which she proposes an implicit visual counter-culture, she plays a role in the history of art that is feminine, literary and self-taught, in a milieu long marked by the patriarchal seal. Through reasoned experimentation with every medium at her disposal, she has constructed a personal, committed artistic path, which protean works mark like beacons.

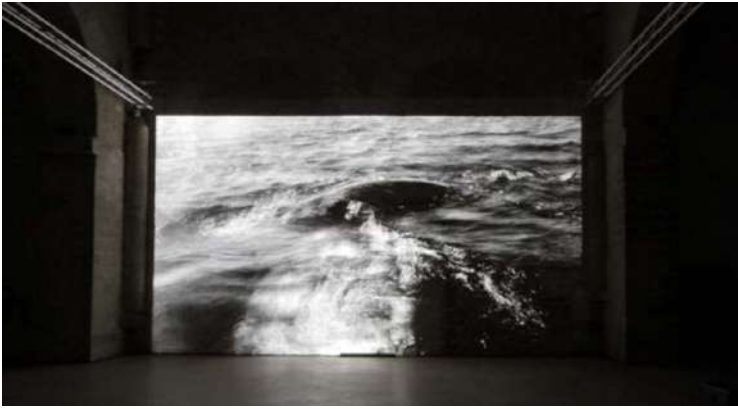
I consider that I'm a thinking citizen, I have my opinion on the city, on politics in the Greek sense of the term. And it's an opinion that I share.

In 2015 the **Centre Pompidou-Metz** devoted a keenly awaited retrospective to her, acknowledging the historic place of this artist in the contemporary French landscape. The **Rabouan Moussion gallery** will present **From Chaos to Art**, a personal exhibition, **from October 14 to November 25, 2017**.

In 1968, upon returning from the Documenta exhibition in Kassel, Tania Mouraud burned all her canvases. Since this *auto-da-fé*, a founding artistic gesture, she has dedicated herself as much to installation and sculpture as to interventions in public spaces, photography, video, sound art and performance, displaying a definite longevity on the artistic scene because always anchored in current issues. From the outset she has been active in the major artistic circles of her generation – frequenting notably Monte Young, Eliane Radigue, Denis Oppenheim, Terry and Ann Riley, Bernar Venet, Dan Graham and Ben.

Regarding her approach, rather than the term universality, the artist prefers the notion of humanism, her current works dealing with themes that cover the course of our civilization as a whole: "Crossed by war, the Shoah, and more recently the mutilation of Mother Earth, [...] the artist is pursuing her reflection on the mechanization of destruction [and] on all forms of annihilation".»¹ We may add that she embraces all forms of disappearance, sometimes provoking it, sometimes isolating the trace of its process in order to render it visible. She positions herself as a *ferrywoman*, each work a vector of strong emotional charge addressed to the onlooker, for whom she intends her work as a confidence related to her perception the world.

¹ H el ene Guenin and Elodie Stroeken, Tania Mouraud de A   ... , in *Tania Mouraud*, the catalogue published for the exhibition Tania Mouraud, une R trospective, at the Centre Pompidou-Metz, from March 4, 2015 to October 5, 2015, published by Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2015, p. 11.



Ad Infinitum (2008). This impressive film provides food for thought on the confrontation with the immenseness and power of nature. Endlessly, *Ad Infinitum* repeatedly plays an eight-minute choreography of whales teaching their young to swim against the current on their journey to Alaska. Framed using a high-angled view, the film is shot in sparkling black and white with desynchronized

echoes edited in. It captures the impressive closeness to the “antediluvian Leviathan” that Herman Melville described in *Moby Dick*. This cetacean symbolises the protection of Humanity in certain religious myths; for Mouraud, it reminds us of how fragile and insignificant we are when facing Nature’s greatness.

The landscapes of **Balafres** [Gashes] (2014-2015), in Garzweiler, Hambach and Inden in Germany, are devastated by the extraction of lignite, a flammable carbon material also known as brown coal and mined in open-pit mines. Some of the landscapes thus mistreated will forever hush up the devastation they have suffered, often redeveloped and turned into nature reserves or recreational areas. Once the gaping chasms have been filled by artificial lakes, Atlantises of a new kind, the incessant ballet of the excavators turns into a peaceful drifting of pleasure boats. A fortunate conversion, but which begs the question as to its swallowing of chaos, this effacement of the traces of an industrious past, leaving no stigma. "As if none of this had existed," points out the artist.



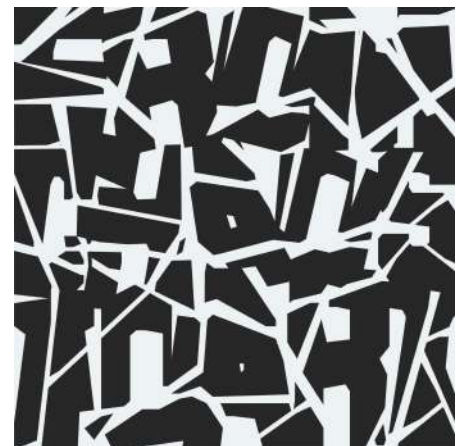
Echoing the dark hours of history, resonating with them through the survival of images that bear witness to them, these scenes of the desolation of Nature also find their counterpart in **Backstage** (2013), black and white photographs of long concrete slabs plunged into dark water. These protruding parts of an engulfed world, which one is hard put to

distinguish from blockhouses, stelae or memorial stones, are in fact the vestiges of an artificial harbor set up in the Channel to facilitate the Allied provision of supplies after the landing of 1945.



I am of a generation where women were silenced and I found in art an area of freedom. Art is the place from where it becomes possible to talk about these things - one can evoke the chaos, its pain, ... you can talk about disasters in a free way.

From Chaos to Art (2017) - Lyrics borrowed from Leonard Cohen. Playing on the polysemy (capacity to have several meanings) of the fertile ground in which she anchors the roots of her work, Tania Mouraud chose the phrase of another author to turn into her work, applying what Charles Reznikoff identifies as "ready-made poetry". The title of the exhibition is also that of an almost illegible writing stretched into large format, "words of form"² according to the expression of Elisabeth Lebovici. The word, its letters, become a material that blurs the perception of the viewer and hinders their eyes, accustomed to a comfortable reading; the signifier disappears almost entirely in favour of the plasticity of the sign.



Knowing how to activate several levels of reading is a quality that this pedagogical artist has been able to cultivate, having long taught art outside the privileged spheres of the capital. From the very beginning, she claimed a practice that was "acceptable to the elite and comprehensible to the concierge",³ and today still works to awaken the consciousness of the greatest number in the hope that the silent heroes that we are can manage to reawaken History.

Alice Cazaux, translated by Chloé Baker

² Elisabeth Lebovici, Tania Mouraud, Mots de Formes [Tania Mouraud, Words of Forms], *Libération*, November 19, 1992.

³ Interview with the artist in Tania Mouraud : Ni Ceci, Ni Cela [Tania Mouraud: Neither This, Nor That] , *Sans titre*, n°20, dec. 1992 - jan. 1993.