

Miles

julie béna



Les Lettres de Prague, Julie Béna, 2020 (image extraite la trilogie de films – chapitre 1)

**villa
arson**

October 16–December 30 2021
[Extension of the first show
June 12–September 19]
Opening: October 16 2021

Galerie carrée

nice

Julie Béna's work rests at the limits of genres, styles and languages. Unclassifiable, it creates tangents between artistic categories and aesthetics. The artist uses stratagems and subterfuges – theatre, theatricality, performance, film, theatrical object, sculpture, ritornello, scream, tragedy comedy – with an incisive humour. After graduating in 2007, she is returning to the Villa Arson at the invitation of Marie de Brugerolle with *Miles*, a solo exhibition conceived for the Galerie carrée.

It is structured around the oxymoron. Playing with ambivalence and self-contradiction, Julie Béna puts established patterns into question. The counterpoint, the twist, the bringing together of opposites are tools of an operatic ensemble: “light opera”, a work that is open and effective.

From the very beginning we are in another dimension, as if on the surface of crumpled graph paper. Horses, a dead tree, a cart, fake rocks and flame flowers appear as life-size silhouettes in the space of the exhibition. *The Aspirants* is a new group of steel sculptures, produced in Prague. Their sharp black cut-outs contrast with the regular grid of the gallery's ceiling. The twelve pieces form a constellation. Their contours cast diffracted shadows on the ground. Pools form at the base of the flame flowers. They take a position against the orthonormal modernist grid of the square gallery and the white cube with its unequivocal formalism. As if escaped or “extruded” from a B western on television, or the series *Westworld*, they are the carcasses or skeletons of a world in decline: that of the West that is at once pushing back and imposing borders.

The installation brings together a trilogy of films (*Letters from Prague*, 2020) situated as a counterpoint to the monumental group. The first film is shown on a flatscreen sitting at the foot of the tree, the second inserted into the back of the cart, amongst other monitors, while the third is projected onto a cloth stretched between two metal poles. The standard formats of the flat screens are reminders of television and cinema projection. Thus, the scale is an important indicator of the desire to circumvent the visitors' expectations, to render them as spectator. We are invited to bend, to lift our head, to move around the installation.

Three types of narratives, three kinds of shooting and three ways of showing the images are structured in chapters. The artist lets us hear singular voices that evoke the possession of bodies. Each is considered from the angle of love, appropriation or alienation. In Chapter 1, Julie Béna incarnates Czech theorist Jindřich Chaloupecký in order to critique simplistic and misogynistic representations of gender in contemporary exhibitions. The narrative frame is constructed from shots taken at the Moravian Gallery in Brno, in the Czech Republic, with oversized elements of the set and theatrical props. Screens, a piano and fake books make a {set} in red and black, through which the artist wanders, denouncing the cynicism of sculptural forms that play with reductive clichés. Chapter 2 is an animated film (*Welcome to Dicks Wings & Grill*, 2020) in which the character Dick, saunters through a landscape made up of typographic characters. The beings and the things are designated and designed by their letters. Dick is a hero dependent on his phallic function, personified in his name (Dick, a diminutive of Richard, remains one of the most common slang words for “penis”) ends up on the grill. In the film of Chapter 3, Julie Béna performs in real time in the midst of theatrical objects. She inverses the wings and backstage, which here become the stage. Julie Béna talks about perceptions linked to the possess of the body, mixing unique stories and songs. In this one long take, the camera itself literally performs the action to the rhythm of the artist's nonstop movements.

By playing with physical and temporal scales, the artist induces a twisting in our projections of the world. The ellipsis is as important to the narrative from which passages are missing as a film with a nonlinear narrative, or sculptural abbreviations. An aesthetic of the fragment and metonymy unfolds interstitially, in sequences. Julie Béna plays a “wicked game”, one that reverses the rules and pauses the game, and applies it, mainly to itself. This is how the installation puts into question, using reverse angles and cast shadows, what is related to the stage, backstage and off screen, from where the real emerges in all its harshness.

Marie de Brugerolle

Translated by Bronwyn Mahoney

Julie Béna's work is marked by her history. She spent her childhood in an itinerant theatre, where she was an actress until adolescence. Her universe is composed of an eclectic set of references combining literature, art and popular culture, humour and tragedy, time and parallel spaces. Combining sculpture, installation, cinema and performance, her work unfolds against a fictional backdrop, where everything is possible.
Information: juliebena.com

Curating

Marie de Brugerolle

Program

Every day (except on Tuesdays)

- 3pm
Rdv | Point of view on exhibitions. A mediator accompanies the public in exhibitions to discover the works of his choice. Open to all audiences, without prior reservation and with free access, these visits allow visitors to understand the stakes of each exhibition.

Press contact

Federica Forte
federica@annesamson.com
+33 (0)7 50 82 00 84

Visits for groups

School activities & Young audience
servicedespublics@villa-arson.fr

Social networks

#juliebena
#villaarsonnice
@villa_arson

In collaboration with the Jindřich Chaloupecký Society (Prague, Czech Republic) – Karina Kottová, director – with the assistance of Tereza Jindrová (consultant) and production directors Sára Davidová and Jakub Lerch for the films *Letters from Prague*, as part of Julie Béna's new installation for Villa Arson.

Practical informations

Open every day except Tuesday from 2 to 6pm.
Free admission.

La Villa Arson is a public administrative establishment under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture. It is supported by the Région Sud Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, the Département des Alpes-Maritimes and the City of Nice. La Villa Arson is a member of UCA - Université Côte d'Azur and part of L'Ecole(s) du Sud, ANDEA, DCA and BOTOX[S] networks.



20 avenue Stephen Liégeard
F-06105 Nice cedex 2
tél. +33 (0)4 92 07 73 73
servicedespublics@villa-arson.fr
www.villa-arson.fr