

Press release

Fables du doute / Tales of Disbelief

**Athanasios Argianas, Ulla von Brandenburg, Kit Craig, Christian Frosi,
João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva, Nick Laessing, Goshka Macuga**

Guest curator: Simone Menegoi

24 May – 26 July 2008

Opening Friday 23 May, 18:00–21:00

Press preview Friday 23 May, 17:00–18:00, in the presence of the artists

On the evening of the opening a free shuttle will leave Paris – Place de la République, Metro République, exit Rue du Temple – at 18:30. Return to Paris: 21:30. No reservation required, seating subject to availability.

As part of its international outreach strategy, La Galerie is continuing its programme of residencies for curators from abroad. This year it is welcoming Simone Menegoi for a three-month residency in Noisy-le-Sec in order to realise the exhibition “Tales of Disbelief”.

This exhibition explores the connections between science, art and irrational beliefs – spiritualism, magic, etc. – in the 19th and part of the 20th centuries. Seven European artists, most of them showing in France for the first time, confront this aspect of cultural history from a complex, ambiguous standpoint whose critical detachment does not exclude the appeal of the past and the mysterious.

A description of this standpoint could draw on the famous aesthetic theory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The English Romantic poet was convinced that the relationship of the reader to a work of fiction was based on the “suspension of disbelief”, a temporary abandoning of the critical faculty which allowed for emotional involvement in the narrative. The paradoxical title “Tales of Disbelief” alludes to the opposite possibility, imagining a relationship with narrative that is based on both belief and doubt: a relationship which is neither credulous nor merely sceptical, neither nostalgic nor indifferent, but which simultaneously embraces all these possibilities and provides a provisional resolution of their antagonism.

In addition to their interest in the links between science, art and the irrational, the artists taking part in the exhibition have certain aesthetic positions in common. Preferring such historic media as film and vinyl records, they deliberately eschew the digital. They make use of painting and figurative drawing – the oldest techniques for representing reality, or at least creating illusion – and revive inventions and techniques which, obsolete to the point of being unheard of, take on a new aesthetic power.

Thus the works in “Tales of Disbelief” offer the viewer a dual relationship with their content: on the one hand they invite us to an awareness of the historical distance that separates us from certain beliefs and cultural attitudes; and on the other they demonstrate their enduring charm as a contemporary response to the need for the irrational.

Athanasios Argianas's sources of inspiration range from the first electronic instruments to machines imagined by the writer Raymond Roussel in his novels, from the abstract sculpture of the 1920s to folk art. Via these associations, Argianas' painting and sculpture conjure up a parallel universe in which hitherto unsuspected associations emerge. What regulates this world is the geometric spirit that appears in all the artist's works, both visual and musical, and that tends to make them self-sufficient and self-referential. His compositions are based on traditionally-completed forms that return back on themselves (like the canon) and on permutative processes.

Ulla von Brandenburg is interested in the ties between art and magic – as much in the sense of conjuring as of some presumed access to the supernatural. As tools for illusion, magic and art remain bathed in an aura of mystery as regards their essence and mechanisms, and so play on the viewer's expectations and desires. This artist's watercolours, wall drawings, performances and 16mm films make frequent allusion to the 19th century, when this affinity was stronger and more visible, and also to the art that expressed it the most: theatre.

Kit Craig chooses images evocative of esoteric beliefs and analyses their structure by turning them into small abstract sculptures of clay, wood, cardboard and other materials. The sculptures then serve as a starting point for drawings – a further step towards analysis and demystification. In the course of this dual transition the originals lose their inherent mystery; but via a kind of revenge, the drawings then take on an unexpected dimension, offering strange objects, Surrealist assemblages, machines whose workings defy understanding, and scientific curiosities.

Sculptor and video-maker **Christian Frosi's** work starts out neither from objects nor images, but from the beliefs that generate them and from our relationship with those beliefs. At the same time he compares scientific principles and strives to foreground their psychological and emotive content. The sculpture *Ricostruzione approssimativa di un esperimento di levitazione elettrostatica* [Approximate Reconstruction of an Electrostatic Levitation Experiment] (2005), for example, provides all the preconditions for the experiment without really managing to pull it off. What counts for the artist is not so much the concrete outcome as the viewer's expectations, even when he disappoints them.

João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva are fascinated by origins: those of contemporary science, and also those of the media and means of expression. In 16mm silent films, photographs and installations they recreate the stunned admiration someone of the early 20th century might have felt when confronted with the latest scientific and technological innovations; these discoveries made it all the easier to accept such presumably supernatural phenomena as telekinesis and the ability to become invisible.

Nick Laessing takes a fresh look at the history of science, concentrating on aspects of it that now look like fringe fantasies. He overlays his position as artist on that of the amateur scientist, a type of researcher who has since fallen victim to growing specialisation but was a decisive factor in the progress of modern science. With his machines and installations Laessing seems bent on rediscovering the basic laws of physics via direct empirical experience; in his videos he documents scientific figures who really existed but were so eccentric that they now seem imaginary.

Goshka Macuga's approach tends to dissolve the boundaries between artist, collector and exhibition curator. She sets up sophisticated installations in which image storage and exhibition design slide away from their contemporary expert criteria towards a "cabinet of curiosities" rationale. *Magic* (2006) comprises 240 images from the Victorian era taken from *Magic: Stage Illusions, Special Effects and Trick Photography* (1898), a book famous in its time because it exposed most of the ruses used to create the illusion of psychic phenomena for the camera or in public.

“Tales of Disbelief” : list of artists

Athanasios Argianas

Born 1976 in Athens. Lives and works in London.
www.thebreedersystem.com
www.maxwigram.com

Ulla von Brandenburg

Born 1974 in Karlsruhe. Lives and works in Paris.
www.galerieartconcept.com

Kit Craig

Born 1980 in Oxford. Lives and works in London.
www.kitcraig.blogspot.com
www.arcadefinearts.com

Christian Frosi

Born 1973 in Milan. Lives and works in Milan.
www.christianfrosi.net
www.galleriazero.it

João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva

Born 1979 and 1977 in Lisbon. Live and work in Lisbon.
www.galeriagracobrandao.com

Nick Laessing

Born 1973 in London. Lives and works in Berlin.
www.arquebusegalerie.com
www.cell.org.uk

Goshka Macuga

Born 1967 in Warsaw. Lives and works in London.
www.katemacgarry.com

“Tales of Disbelief” : curator

Since 2006 La Galerie has been offering three-month residencies to foreign curators selected after a call for applications. The residency is intended to allow the visiting curator to become acquainted with the French art scene – artists, art professionals, venues, etc. – and to present an exhibition at La Galerie.

This year's choice is Italian curator Simone Menegoi, born in Isola della Scala in 1970 and now working in Verona. Lasting from 2 April – 30 June 2008, his residency will allow him to mount the exhibition "Tales of Disbelief".

Since 2007 the foreign curator residency has been receiving additional support from the Drac Ile-de-France – Ministry of Culture and Communication.

In parallel with the exhibition

Talk on spiritualist photography by Clément Chéroux, photography curator at the Centre Pompidou and co-curator of the exhibition “Le Troisième œil : la photographie et l'occulte” (Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, 2004-2005) and discussion with **Simone Menegoi**, curator of “Tales of Disbelief”
> Saturday 14 June 6 – 8pm at La Galerie

Special opening

> Sunday 22 June, from 11am – 7pm at La Galerie

Films projection and discussion with João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva
> Sunday 29 June 5 pm, at la maison rouge, fondation Antoine de Galbert, 10 boulevard de la Bastille, 75012 Paris. Métro Bastille / Quai de la Râpée
Admission Fees : 6,50 € / 4,50 €
Booking and information : 01 40 01 92 79 / info@lamaisonrouge.org / www.lamaisonrouge.org

And also...

Workshops: "A Time for Art" - Cycle 4: "Tales of Disbelief"

Interpretation of the works in three sessions, including a tour of the show “Traces du sacré” at the Centre Pompidou in Paris

Thursdays, 7:15 – 8:45pm

> First session: 19 June

Free, advance booking required (florence.marqueyrol@noisysesec.fr / T : +33 (0)1 49 42 67 17)

Saturdays at La Galerie

Art workshops for children aged 6 – 12,

> Saturdays in May and June from 2 – 3:30pm

New

Art workshops for children aged 6 – 12 with their parents or an adult

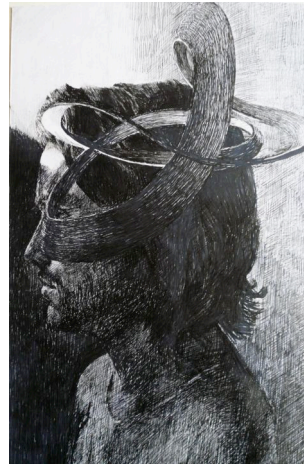
> Saturdays in July from 2 – 3:30pm

> Afternoon tea on Saturdays, 4 – 5pm

Visuals available for press



Athanasios Argianas
Proposal For Reading Consonants As Noise (Pink Copper) (detail), 2008
 Copper leaf, lacquer, cold-cast aluminium, steel, urethane. © Athanasios Argianas
 Courtesy The Breeder, Athens and Max Wigram, London



Athanasios Argianas
Partly Obscured Portrait (Michael, Left), 2008
 Ink drawing on paper
 31 x 46 cm.
 © Athanasios Argianas
 Courtesy The Breeder, Athènes et Max Wigram, Londres
 Courtesy The Breeder, Athens and Max Wigram, London



Ulla von Brandenburg
Geist, 2007
 16 mm film, b&w, silent,
 1' 3" loop
 Courtesy Art: Concept,
 Paris and
 Produzentengalerie,
 Hamburg



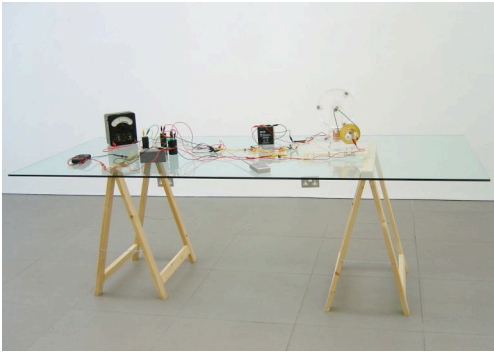
Ulla von Brandenburg
Spectre 1, 2008
 watercolour on silk paper
 147.5 x 116.5 cm
 Courtesy Art: Concept,
 Paris



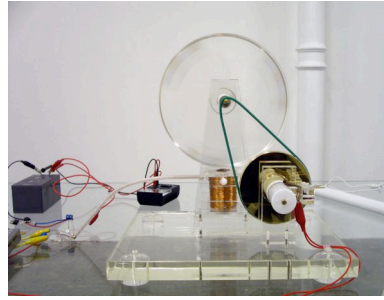
Christian Frosi
Ricostruzione approssimativa di un esperimento di levitazione elettrostatica (detail), 2005
 Site-specific installation; aluminium, wood, balsa, copper and monitor, 300 x 200 x 200 cm
 Photo: Agostino Osio
 Collection Sandra e Giancarlo Bonollo, Italy
 Courtesy ZERO..., Milan



Christian Frosi
Ricostruzione approssimativa di un manifesto spazialista per la televisione, trasmesso il 17 maggio 1952 dalla Rai di Milano, 2007
 Monitor rack, wooden black basement (60 x 50 cm), video 3D (7' loop)
 Installation view at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
 Photo: M. Elia & R. Fatibene
 Courtesy ZERO..., Milan



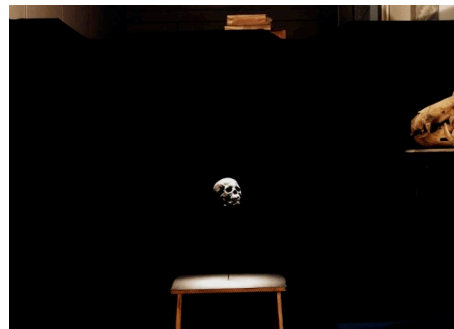
Nick Laessing
The Place of the material world in the universe is that of an exquisitely beautiful precipitate or varied cloud-work in the universal aether, 2004
 230 x 100 x 120 cm
 View of the installation at CELL Project Space, London
 Courtesy ARQUEBUSE, Geneva



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The Place of the material world in the universe is that of an exquisitely beautiful precipitate or varied cloud-work in the universal aether (detail), 2004
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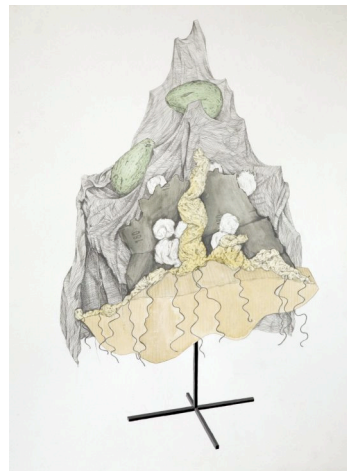
João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva
Eye Model, 2006
 Installation view of *Eflúvio Magnético, Síntese*
 produced by ZDB at TMG,
 Photo: Pedro Tropa e Teresa Santos
 Courtesy ZDB, Lisbon, Ellipse FOUNDATION – Contemporary Art Collection, Portugal



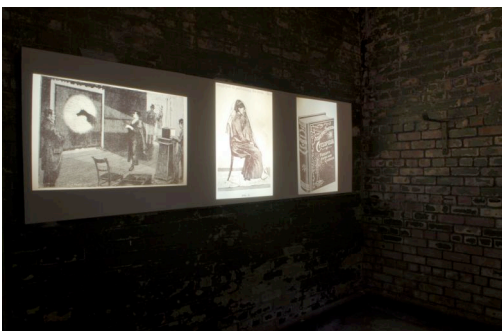
João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva
Macrocefalia, 2006
 Colour photograph,
 125 x 125 cm
 Courtesy Collection POP, Portugal



Kit Craig
Thought Form "Funeral", 2007
 Pencil, gouache and watercolour on paper,
 66 x 56 cm
 © Kit Craig
 Courtesy of Arcade Fine Arts, London



Kit Craig
Thought Form "Wagner", 2007
 Pencil, ink and gouache on paper,
 66 x 56 cm
 © Kit Craig
 Courtesy of Arcade Fine Arts, London



Goshka Macuga
Magic, 2006
 Slide projection, variable dimension
 Installation view *Sleep of Ulro*, Greenland Street, Liverpool
 Courtesy Kate MacGarry, London and A Foundation/Greenland Street

Practical Information

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La Galerie

Contemporary Art Centre

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F-93130 Noisy-le-Sec

T: +33 (0)1 49 42 67 17

lagalerie@noisysesec.fr

Tuesday to Friday: 2 – 6pm

Saturday: 2 – 7pm

Special opening

Sunday 22 June, 11am – 7pm

Entry to La Galerie is free

How to get to La Galerie from Paris:

By RER: line E from Saint-Lazare/Haussmann or Gare du Nord (10 minutes), then 10 minutes' walk to the town hall

By metro + bus: line 11, get off at Mairie des Lilas, then take bus 105 (direction Mairie des Pavillons-sous-Bois), get off at Jeanne-d'Arc

By car: from Porte de Bagnolet, take the A3 toward Lille, exit Villemomble, follow Rosny centre commercial then Noisy-le-Sec centre ville. From Porte des Lilas, follow signs for Mairie des Lilas, then Romainville Place Carnot, then Noisy-le-Sec centre ville

La Galerie is a publicly funded contemporary art centre, receiving assistance from the City of Noisy-le-Sec, the Ministry of Culture (DRAC Île-de-France), the Seine-Saint-Denis département and the Île-de-France Region.



La Galerie is a member of:

tram, Paris/Île de France contemporary art network (www.tram-idf.fr)

d.c.a, French association for the development of art centres (www.dca-art.com)

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