

Bettina SAMSON

Solo exhibition

5 December 2009 – 13 February 2010

Opening Friday 4 December 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Press preview from 5:00 – 6:00 pm, in the presence of the artist

For the opening a free shuttle will leave Paris (Place de la République / metro République / exit Rue du Temple) at 6:30 pm. Return to Paris 9:30 pm. No advance booking, seating subject to availability.

For her first major solo exhibition Bettina Samson (b. 1978) has come up with a project embracing her recent experiments with scientific discoveries and her interest in the history of utopias. Combining these two lines of research with an investigation of the technical and social implications of progress, about fifteen works – most of them created especially for the exhibition – are on view in a series of complementary, atmospherically coloured spaces.

Occupying the ground floor and the basement, Bettina Samson's installations, sculptures, photographs and videos play with our perception, transforming La Galerie into a landscape of temporal strata. The discovery of the radioactive properties of uranium (1896), a community in the Mojave desert (1914–1917), photography of the solar spectrum (1848) and Aldous Huxley's psychedelic experiments in the 1950s: each of these seemingly unrelated topics embodies a historic turning point under the looming shadow of dystopia.

In this deliberately mixed bag the materials, media and forms chosen by the artist match the distinctive character of each exploration and reveal her work method:

I dig into a site and collect samples of one or more aspects of cultural and technological history, often in connection with the history of modernity. I associate the results with elements taken from other present-day and past contexts, then concentrate the anachronisms and effect shortcuts and accelerations of time. These fictions dramatise reality, drawing on a collective unconscious underpinned by so-called negative utopias and by architecture, the modernist avant-gardes and the cinema.

Thus, in the first daylight room, two crucial scientific discoveries are thrust together: a seemingly Minimalist wood sculpture which turns out to be a simplified recreation of the workbench on which Henri Becquerel discovered the natural radioactivity of uranium in 1896; and a 1939 letter from Einstein to Roosevelt, urging him to set the Manhattan Project in motion. The installation is rounded off by eight abstract photos, produced – in a replication of the Becquerel experiments – by subjecting negatives to pitchblende radiation.

Bathed in a purplish light, the central room presents two lenticular 3D images – as a negative and a positive – of a piece of pitchblende, while the similarly lit room to the left is home to a sculpture of the

colour spectrum in the form of a core bore sample. This latter references Becquerel Senior's first photograph of the solar spectrum in 1848.

With its yellow lighting, the room on the right houses a group of works all linked, in one way or another, to the Mojave Desert. A photorealist bronze statuette of five women in blue overalls is an allusion to the history of a socialist community in Llano del Rio in 1914–1917. The women's gaze is fixed on the far end of the room, where a stroboscopic disc creates the effect of a double reversed rotation, a kind of suspension of time that freezes the word "tomorrow". On a shelf is Aldous Huxley's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, open at the page of the eponymous short story, into which has been inserted a pop-up image of the ruins of the commune.

In the basement, like a older stratum of the exhibition, an abstract video taken from film stock exposed to pitchblende radiation closes the loop.

Biographical background

Born in Paris in 1978 and now living in Marseille, Bettina Samson graduated from the Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon in 2003. Her work has recently been shown at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2009) and, during the Lyon Biennial, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Villeurbanne, as part of the exhibition "Rendez-vous 09".

Her solo exhibition venues include 3bisF in Aix-en-Provence (2005) and the Zoo gallery in Nantes (2006). She has also taken part in many group shows in France (Fondation Ricard, Paris; La Station, Nice; Capc, Bordeaux; RLBO, Marseille; Anne+, Ivry-sur-Seine, La Salle de Bains, Lyon) and abroad (Kunsthalle Basel; Overgaden, Copenhagen and Altefabrik in Rapperswil, Switzerland).

Her monographic catalogue *Laps & strates* has just been published by ADERA:
www.ecoles-art-rhonealpes.fr

Exhibition-related events:

"Un temps pour l'art" (A Time for Art): art criticism workshop open to all
with Laurence Corbel and Sally Bonn

> Two sessions, Thursday 14 and 28 January, 7:00–9:00 pm

In partnership with the University of Paris I Centre for the Philosophy of Art

Closing evening: encounter with Bettina Samson

with Marianne Lanavère, director of La Galerie

Performances by Roxane Borujerdi, artist

> Saturday 13 February, 6:30–9:00 pm

And...

Saturdays at La Galerie

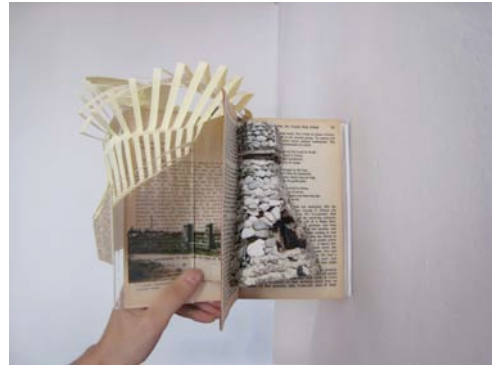
Hands-on art workshops for 6–12 year-olds, 2:30–4:00 pm

For adults: tea and a tour of the exhibition, every Saturday

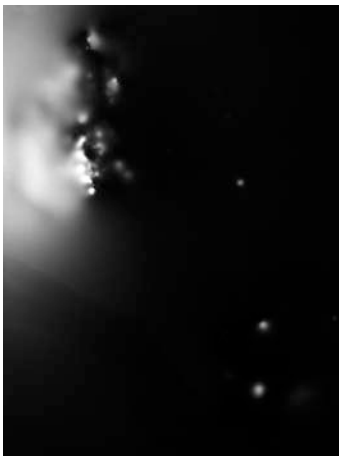
Visuals available for the press



Bettina Samson, *Portrait of a Pitchblende #1*, 2009
Series of 2 lenticular posters
33 x 45 cm



Bettina Samson, *Llano del Rio Pop-up (Ozymandias)*, 2009
Sculpture, book, paper, Plexiglas ®
30 x 30 x 20 cm



Bettina Samson, *How, by chance, Henri Becquerel discovered radioactivity*, 2008
Series of film photographs on barite paper
90 x 115 cm



Bettina Samson, *Nuclear Dust #1*, 2009
Series of two inkjet photographic prints
175 x 114 cm



Bettina Samson, *Becquerel's Workbench, Letter of his future*, 2008
Sculpture, oak and black walnut on wood
116 x 194 x 140 cm
Exhibition view, gallery RLBO, Marseille



Bettina Samson, *Becquerel's Workbench, Letter of his future (detail)*, 2008
Sculpture, oak and black walnut on wood
116 x 194 x 140 cm
Exhibition view, gallery RLBO, Marseille

Visuals in 300 dpi available on request from Marjolaine Calipel

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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(Site under construction)

Admission free

Tuesday to Friday: 2-6pm
Saturday: 2-7pm

La Galerie will be closed from
20th December 2009 to 4th January 2010

How to get to La Galerie from Paris:
10 min by RER E train from Gare Saint-Lazare
or Gare du Nord + 10 min walk

La Galerie is a member of:
tram, Contemporary Art network, Paris/Île-de-France (www.tram-idf.fr)
d.c.a., french association for the development of art centres (www.dca-art.com)

La Galerie Centre for Contemporary Art is financed by the city of Noisy-le-Sec, the Île-de-France - Ministry of Culture and Communications Regional Cultural Affairs Board, the Seine-Saint-Denis Département and the Ile-de-France Region.



Noisy-le-Sec